

~~Osmania University Library~~

E 1258



# THE ZOHAR





# THE ZOHAR

IN MOSLEM AND CHRISTIAN SPAIN

*By*

ARIEL BENSION, Ph.D.

*Corresponding Member of the "Real Academia de la Historia"  
of Madrid*

*With an Introduction by*

SIR DENISON ROSS

*Director of The School of Oriental Studies,  
University of London*

LONDON

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS, LTD.  
BROADWAY HOUSE : 68-74, CARTER LANE, E.C.

1932

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY  
MACKAYS LIMITED, CHATHAM

To  
MY DEAR COUSIN  
KITTIE JUDAH SOMEKH



“ The beings who live below,  
say that God is on high,  
while the angels in Heaven  
say that God is on earth.”

*The Zohar.*



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION BY SIR DENISON ROSS . . . . .	xiii
AUTHOR'S PREFACE . . . . .	xvii

## PART I

### BEFORE THE EXILE

CHAPTER		
I	THE GLORIOUS PERIOD OF JEWISH LIFE IN SPAIN	I
II	THE SPANISH MYSTICS . . . . .	13
III	SIMILARITIES IN THE WORK OF THE SPANISH MYSTICS OF THE THREE FAITHS (JEWISH, CHRISTIAN, MOSLEM) . . . . .	28
IV	FURTHER SIMILARITIES IN THE WORK OF THE SPANISH MYSTICS OF THE THREE FAITHS (JEWISH, CHRISTIAN, MOSLEM) . . . . .	68

## PART II

### THE ZOHAR

V	THE BOOK OF THE SPLENDOUR . . . . .	77
VI	THE MASTER, SIMEON BEN JOCHAI . . . . .	93
VII	LEGENDS CONCERNING SOME OF THE DISCIPLES OF THE MASTER, SIMEON BEN JOCHAI . . . . .	106
VIII	THE REVELATIONS MADE TO THE GREAT HOLY ASSEMBLY . . . . .	114
IX	THE REVELATIONS MADE TO THE GREAT HOLY ASSEMBLY (CONTINUED) . . . . .	149
X	THE REVELATIONS MADE TO THE SMALL HOLY ASSEMBLY . . . . .	173



CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
XI THE REVELATIONS CONCERNING PARADISE AND HELL . . . . .	192
XII THE VISION OF RABBI HIYA (AFTER THE MASTER'S DEATH). . . . .	213
PART III	
AFTER THE EXILE	
XIII THE HILULAH OF SIMEON BEN JOCHAI AS IT IS CELEBRATED TO-DAY . . . . .	216
XIV THE CENTRES OF SEPHARADI MYSTICISM AFTER LEAVING SPAIN . . . . .	224
XV THE SEPHARADI MYSTICS OF BETH-EL IN JERUSALEM . . . . .	241
EXPLANATION OF FOREIGN WORDS. . . . .	247
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	249
INDEX . . . . .	251

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACES PAGE
I INTERIOR OF THE SYNAGOGUE OF SAMUEL HA LEVI IN TOLEDO . . . . .	4
II THE ZOHAR, FIRST EDITION, printed on vellum, Mantua 1558-60 ( <i>From the collection of Mr. David Sassoon</i> ) . . . . .	80
III COPY OF A PICTURE SUPPOSED TO BE THAT OF RABBI SIMEON BEN JOCHAI ( <i>Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris</i> ) . . . . .	98
IV TIKUNE HA ZOHAR MANUSCRIPT, date 1558 ( <i>From the collection of Mr. David Sassoon</i> ) . . .	128
V TIKUNE HA ZOHAR MANUSCRIPT, written in the 16th century ( <i>From the collection of Mr. David Sassoon</i> ) . . . . .	184
VI TOMB OF RABBI SIMEON BEN JOCHAI, in Meron, where the Hilulah festival takes place annually	218



# INTRODUCTION

By Sir E. DENISON ROSS

*Director of the School of Oriental Studies (University of London)*

I HAVE always felt that Judaism was the least generally known of all the non-Christian religions, and I do not believe that the handbooks on this subject have nearly so wide a public as those dealing with Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, etc. I think the reason for this absence of public curiosity with regard to the religious beliefs of the Jews is in a great measure due to our familiarity with their Bible.

I have at various times gathered from conversations with Jews that they may be divided into several groups, including Orthodox, Liberal, and the Mystics, who seek a hidden meaning in the Scriptures. It is with the mystic side of Judaism that the present work deals, and the author, Dr. Bension, a young Spanish Jew of scholarly attainments (descendant of the famous Jewish family Ben Chasdai of Barcelona, 12th century) certainly belongs himself to the mystic school. Being aware of my interest in the Muslim Mystics both in Spain and Persia, Dr. Bension invited me to write a few words by way of introduction to his study of this classic of Jewish mysticism known as "The Zohar."

"The Zohar," or "Book of Splendour," is a cabbalistic work written mainly in the Aramaic language. It takes the form of a commentary on the Pentateuch and is intended to reveal the hidden meaning of the biblical narrative and the divine commands. It is a complete thesaurus of Jewish mysticism, theosophy, and occult traditions. The publication of Dr. Bension's book is especially timely in view of the

fact that Volume I of the first complete English translation of "The Zohar" has just appeared.<sup>1</sup>

"The Zohar" in its present form first appeared in Spain as a compilation by Moses de Leon of Avila, who claimed that the original work had been revealed to Simeon ben Jochai, a saintly Jew of the second century. Various theories have been held with regard to the true origin of the text as it was first known in Spain and first printed simultaneously in Mantua and Cremona in 1558-60. Modern scholars have for the most part ruled out altogether the Simeon ben Jochai legend, and, although charges of fraud have been brought against Moses de Leon, these charges have, I think, been disposed of by Professor G. Shalom, the eminent authority on the Cabbala in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Dr. Bension seems to think that "The Zohar" was compiled and composed in Spain in the thirteenth century but that its roots lie in the old Jewish sources of the Pentateuch, the Prophets, the Talmud, the Apocalypse, and the Book of Enoch, etc.

Whatever its origin, it is certain that "The Zohar" exerted a powerful influence on Jewish life in mediæval ghettos, and opened up new vistas of spiritual worlds. The ideals of universal justice proclaimed by the Prophets of Israel seemed far from realization to the Jews in the Middle Ages and they sought for something that would help them to preserve that belief in the ultimate redemption of their race which stood them in such good stead during centuries of persecution and degradation.

Greek philosophy, through the medium of Arabic translations and interpretations, had conquered the minds of many great Jewish scholars who, like Maimonides, sought to clarify the Jewish concepts of God and to explain his dealings with mankind by the help of Greek philosophy. This process of rational investigation reached a stage where even the miracles recorded in the Bible—which no Jewish scholar

<sup>1</sup> *The Zohar*: translated by Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon, London, The Soncino Press, 5, Gower Street, 1931.

ventured to deny—were elaborately established as phenomena within the scheme of constant laws operating in nature by the predetermined will of God. For the rationalists this may have been satisfying, but not all Jews found adequate food for their spiritual emotions and yearnings either in the rigid observance of the law or in the philosophy of the school-men. The teaching of the Cabbala with its wealth of human metaphor and imagery and its unquestioning belief in the mystical communion of Israel with the Divine Power made a strong and picturesque appeal to many who believed implicitly in the literal truth of the Scriptures, to which it added much but from which it took nothing away.

As to the present work and its author, Dr. Bension has spent the last few years in the study of this subject, with special regard to the Spanish environment in which it was brought to light in the thirteenth century. He points out that the Zohar shows signs of the deep impression made upon its Jewish revisers by the great Christian and Muslim mystics of the period. He also indicates by quotations from their works, the influence which "The Zohar" exerted on non-Jewish thinkers in Spain.

Dr. Bension is, I believe, the first writer to deal with the influence on Jewish mysticism of certain characteristics which underlie so much of the literature produced in Spain both by Christians and Muslims. That fantastic spirit of adventure, combined with a shrewd practical common sense which characterises the sons of Spain, appears equally among the Muslims in the mystical adventures of Ibn al-Arabi—to whom Dante indirectly owed so much of his subject matter—Ibn Tufail's Hayy ibn Yaqzan, the prototype of Robinson Crusoe; and among the Christians, in the writings of Juan de la Cruz and Ramon Lulle, in Don Quixote, and even in the adventures of Columbus and his followers.

Dr. Bension has also attempted to reduce to a simpler and coherent form some of the mystical revelations which lie deep down in the vast ocean of discursive matter which goes to make up "The Zohar," in order to prove that the spiritual messages of Jewish mysticism have grown quite

naturally out of the teachings of the Bible and the Talmud. He has further traced Jewish mysticism from the moment of its revelation in Spain down to the present day.

It may, I think, be claimed that Dr. Bension, by showing a path through the intricacies of "The Zohar," has succeeded in making an obscure work of purely Jewish contents both accessible and interesting to the general reader.

In conclusion I feel I must add a word of praise for the correctness of his English idiom and the clarity of his style, which, it is hard to realise, is the work of a foreigner.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE controversy that has raged round the Zohar (the book known as the *Bible of the Mystics*), beginning with its sudden revelation in Spain at the end of the thirteenth century, has established many divergent currents of opinion with regard to its origin and compilation. The burden of proof points to the fact that its roots are to be found in ancient mysteries dating back to antiquity. But there is no doubt in my mind that the final compilation, retouching, revision, or re-creation (call it what we will) and title, were given to it in Spain—in that Spain that reached the high-water mark of its mystical development. The sources of the Zohar will be found to lie more especially in the hoary foundations of Jewish lore: the Pentateuch, the Prophets, Daniel, the Apocalypse, the Book of Enoch, the Talmudim (Mishnah, Gemarrah, and Haggadah), the Midrashim, and the Gaonic literature. These, together with other mystical treasures of the Jewish genius, found an excellent chance to bloom in the fertile soil of Spain during the period when a similar mystical development was going on amongst the people of the other two faiths: the Christian and the Moslem. Nor must we be surprised that certain similarities found their way into the work of these three groups of mystics, and that some of these similarities crept into the final revision of the Zohar as made by some author whose identity has not yet been established, but who put his final seal upon it, certainly not earlier than a few decades before it was disclosed to us by Moses de Leon.

The Zohar is to be credited with aiming to establish the synthesis between the hidden mysteries and the revealed Law, so that Jewish mysticism—hitherto the prerogative of the chosen few—entered the highroads of Jewish life to become the cherished possession of the rational religious Jew,



and of the people as a whole. Its influence on Jewish life became ever stronger, particularly after the exile from Spain, until the mere perusal of portions of it came to be looked upon as an act of merit by the pious.

Up to the present, those who hold the view that the Zohar is a late creation have set the burden of their proof upon the known sources of the Jewish-Spanish cultural treasure which preceded its revelation. But there is the vast cultural treasure of the Moslem and Christian groups of the same period in Spain, as well as the spirit and the atmosphere of the country itself, to be considered. In the course of this work, I hope to be able to focus the attention on this particular side of it, by bringing to light some of the most striking of the similarities apparent in the work of the Spanish mystics of the three faiths. My examples are chosen from three sources: the work of the mystics who preceded the Zohar; those who were contemporaneous with it; those who came after it.

The principal idea of this research is not only to judge the immediate influences which each brought to bear on the other, through a close cultural contact, but more especially to draw attention to that particular mystical atmosphere to which the mystics of Spain were subjected, and to that spirit of fantastic adventurousness with which all currents of Spanish life were impregnated.

Furthermore, I trust this book will succeed in dissipating the prejudices created by the anti-Kabbalists, and in proving that, despite the doubts surrounding its authorship, the time of its composition, and the place of its origin, the ethical and æsthetical value of the Zohar is indisputable. It is only that the light which lies hidden in it has not been clearly revealed to the modern world. And this light is sometimes so deeply hidden that only the most interested and patient research is able to discover it.

Like the Talmud, which is divided into the Halachah (the legal portion) and the Haggadah (narrative portion), the Zohar, too, includes the exegetic and the narrative. But while, in the Talmud, it is easy to follow the line of demar-

cation between the two, in the Zohar it is very difficult to separate the one from the other. This has, no doubt, proved an additional stumbling-block to the lay reader, be he Jewish or non-Jewish, who is not accustomed to this method of presentation and finds it confusing.

I have therefore allowed myself to eliminate all such elements as do nothing to further the understanding of the mystical revelations: the essentials of the Zohar. And I have gathered together and put into the frame of each revelation such things as pertain to the same subject, but which are now scattered and dissipated in the vast ocean of the Zohar. In the attempt to bind into a coherent whole the various parts pertaining to each revelation I did not concern myself with the order or the place in which the material was found, my object being rather to create a unity of subject matter and a continuity of picturization.

I have divided the revelations into two parts: First, those purporting to have been made by Simeon ben Jochai to his disciples during his lifetime I have put into the frame of the *Idra Rabba Kaddisha*, or Great Holy Assembly. And secondly, those revelations that deal with the hopes and expectations in the realm of future events—whether it be the future of the individual or of mankind; of Israel or of the other nations; whether it be a future on earth or in the next world—I have put into the frame of the *Idra Zuta Kaddisha*, or Small Holy Assembly, which took place on the eve of his death. Again, in order to make the solemn, poetical atmosphere which pervaded these meetings more vivid for the reader, I have sometimes allowed myself to re-create the scene of the Assembly.

Whatever I may have done to make the subject matter conform to modern tastes, the substance of the revelations has remained intact but within a new frame. Like old wine in new bottles. The Zoharistic rhythm has not been disturbed. It will be found to be, in very truth, *The Bible of the Mystics*, revealing the soul of Israel from the creation to the *End of Days*. But any attempt to do entire justice to the beauty and splendour of the Zohar, to the fullness of the

spiritual treasures that lie hidden within its covers, would take me far beyond the aim I have set myself in this book. Hence, I have been obliged to content myself with drawing attention to but a small portion of this treasure, while expressing the thoughts and feelings that assail the one who walks through this garden. But he, who has never even crossed its threshold, must be advised to provide himself, before entering, with a new spirit and a new heart.

Many have been prevented from enjoying the beauties of the Zohar because they often found it exaggerated or devoid of sense. But the Zohar is not to be measured by the modern point of view. In order to appreciate this book we must know something of the historical background of those generations in which it grew, and of those in which it received its final revision. Examined through these historical spectacles, the Zohar reveals to us the varied development of Jewish culture which, begun in the Land of Israel, was continued in Babylon and received its final seal in Spain. And this must convince us that this Jewish mysticism is worthy of an honourable place in the pantheon of the world's culture, and that its creators deserve to be ranked amongst those who have added laurels to the spiritual state.

In order to show the continuation and development of this mysticism amongst the Spanish exiles down to the present day, I felt I could find no more fitting subject for the close of my book than the description of that group of Sepharadi Chassidim belonging to Beth-El in Jerusalem, of which my late father—descendant of a family of Spanish exiles settled in Fez—was one of the Masters of the last century. Within this group I spent the first score years of my life—the age most easily impressed by all that is idealistic, high and noble. And in my soul was caught, through a direct living contact, the spirit of the wonderful life that surrounded me in those days, in the home, in the street, in the school, and in the synagogue. And during the course of the ensuing years, when I turned my face to the West and absorbed myself in the mystical life around me, I found the analogy between the life of the mystical group which I knew, and all that had

gone to make up the beautiful, poetic life of the Jews in Spain—the life which the Sepharadim had managed to preserve in all their wanderings. Unfortunately, however, this mystical life is beginning to disappear and threatens to sink into complete oblivion unless it is brought in some new and attractive form to the knowledge of this generation.

The portrait of the Master, Simeon ben Jochai and of his disciples is made up of legends taken from the sources provided by the Babylonian Talmud, the Jerusalem Talmud, and the Zohar, and arranged so as to present the most coherent and understandable picture. The description of the Hilulah celebration of the Master's death is a modern picture taken from life: the annual festival at Meron, where the Master is buried. The celebration is first mentioned by an Italian traveller in 1322.

As regards the revelations of the Zohar, he who is looking for the exact text and is not conversant with the original sources must go to the literal translations. Unfortunately for such an one, none of the translations at present available may claim to be quite exact.

In spite of the fact that this book is, in principle, a historical research, I have not taken scrupulous note of the exact sources which furnished me with material, but have contented myself with enumerating the books which served to guide me. Thus I hope to spare the reader the distracting task engendered in proving scientific research—a task which often frightens the layman away from books wherein he might find much nourishment for the soul and much food for thought.

Finally, the vast influence exerted by the Zohar upon later poetical, philosophical and mystical works during the last six centuries yet remains to be revealed in its entirety—not only in the few scattered Jewish examples which I have brought within the scope of this book, but even upon the work of well-known non-Jewish authors, as I am getting ready to show in a book at present in process of preparation. And it will be seen that the Zohar, so little understood by the general

Jewish, as well as by the general non-Jewish, public was yet known in every generation since its discovery to certain choice spirits—to poets, philosophers and mystics—who wrote books possessing eternal value, wherein the Zohar influence may be traced.

# PART I

## BEFORE THE EXILE

### CHAPTER I

#### THE GLORIOUS PERIOD OF JEWISH LIFE IN SPAIN

THE spiritual content in the life of Israel springing from three main sources—the Bible in Judæa, the Talmud in Babylon, and the Zohar in Spain—made of the Jew the spiritual entity in the material world.

In a self-imposed seclusion which seemed to shut him into a narrow passageway, where he was ruled by the rational laws of Torah and of Talmud—rather than by their mystical concepts—to such an extent that the mystical elements were lost sight of, the Jew suddenly found a door that let in a stream of dazzling light on his grey world. This light rekindled the sparks that always lay at the heart of his two great books, so that he found the justification for, and the understanding of, the laws that ruled his life, by finding the deep, hidden meaning underlying his belief. The light came from a world which, in contradistinction to his own, was ruled by the feelings and the emotions. And the door that opened to let in the light was that of the Kabbala and Zohar, come to fruition in the fullness of Jewish spiritual life in the Spanish Peninsula. The home of great mystics.

After the exile, *Ashkenazi* and *Sepharadi* communities reacted to the new spiritual message, and in distinctive ways. Within both, special groups who gave themselves up entirely to the practice of mystical faith were formed—known respectively as Chassidim and Kabbalists. But the new faith penetrated all phases of Sepharadi life. And that special Sepharadi trait—the mystical approach to all spiritual subjects—dominated every group, reaching its highest form in the Sepharadi communities of Palestine: first, in Safed, where congregated at one time the most distinguished of the

## 2 ZOHAR IN MOSLEM AND CHRISTIAN SPAIN

mystical teachers and masters of the art of mystical revelation, but which afterwards declined ; later, in Hebron, and then, more especially, in Jerusalem, where the group found its home in Beth-El, where it is now struggling for its last breath of life.

The Zohar is also impregnated with the colour and beauty that tinged Jewish life in the Spanish Peninsula, strengthening the belief that its last revision occurred in that country, where three great faiths—the Jewish, the Christian and the Mohammedan—developed and brought forth some of the finest fruits of their mystical inspiration. Warmed by the same sun, nourished by the same original source of Faith, they grew side by side, resembling and influencing each other on the spiritual plane, even as children of one family resemble and influence each other on the physical plane.

That beautiful page of Jewish history, written during the five centuries of domicile in the Spanish Peninsula, could be set to music. The stately rhythm of a wedding march, through which runs a thread of joy. The joy of a living creativeness. Second only to their great spiritual creativeness in the old Homeland in Judæa. Greater than the other, if we do not reckon the spiritual messages of the Prophets and the Psalmists.

The Arabs—brother-race to the Jews—also made one of the most significant contributions to artistic and cultural life during their residence in Spain. The flowering of the Moslem genius, during their comparatively short sojourn in Spain, was greater than anything they were able to achieve in any one of the many countries they call their own, and where Arab national life has the freest chance to develop. Their creations in stone—the Alhambra in Granada, the Mosque in Cordoba, and the Giralda in Seville, to mention the greatest—were the outward symbols of the spiritual and intellectual flowering that came to them in the Peninsula, while the mystical and literary creations are an even more surprising evidence of the sort of offspring that may come from a happy marriage. The mating of an Oriental people with a land abounding in Oriental seductiveness.

The physical charms of Spain are those of an Eastern land, in spite of the fact that to the Greeks it was Hesperia, Land of the West. Canaanite wanderers, fifteen centuries before the Christian era, had given it the more appropriate Hebrew name, Hispania. The dazzling white light of the Orient is here, even as there, transformed every day to flaming tones of gold under a fiery sky. You cross the Pyrenees and feel you are in a world that belongs to the Sons of the East. It is not surprising that here the exiles from Judæa felt at home.

This land, which made the Jew welcome, recalled the well-loved beauties of his old Homeland. The great white sun of Judæa. The mystery-laden sky of Galilee. The encompassing mountains of Jerusalem. The magic of moonlight-bathed nights, and star-crowded, low-lying heavens. Terraces overlooking valleys drenched in silver mist, when Nature becomes Master of mystical revelation. The natural phenomena which greeted the Jewish arrivals in Spain were the same to which they had bidden a reluctant farewell on leaving Judæa. And the fruits and the wines, and "the seven things for which the Land of Israel was praised as a good land," were also to be found here. With the minimum of difficult adjustments of body and of spirit the Jew from Judæa found himself at home.

And the Jew who visits the Peninsula to-day feels something of that elegiac spirit of desolation that has been stalking through the Land of Israel during the centuries of his exile from it. For this was a land that he understood better than anyone else. An East melted and transformed in the crucible of the West. Here many cultures had met and been blended together. Here Orient and Occident had lived together, worked together, and meditated on the eternal mysteries under the same blue sky. Here they created the eternal values born of the different cultures which they brought with them, and which were here fused together and harmonized into a distinctive whole.

Cordoba, Granada, Seville, Toledo, Barcelona—all are haunted by the ghosts of their splendid past. Toledo bears humbly to-day the royal seal of the memorable meeting of

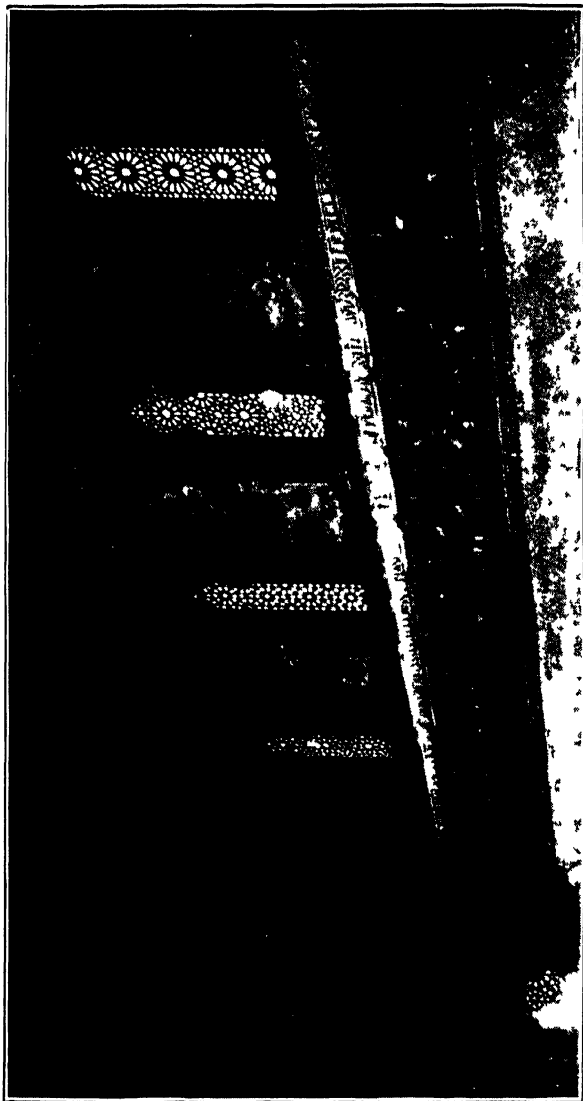


#### 4 ZOHAR IN MOSLEM AND CHRISTIAN SPAIN

East and West. You feel, rather than see, the legendary Toledo, for which it is claimed that " God created His beloved city of Toledo before He created the world. He created the sun and set it first as a crown over the city. He made Adam its first King." Also that, " Toledo was founded by Jews after the destruction of the First Temple at Jerusalem. That Jews came there together with the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar, and gave the city the Hebrew name Toledot, which means generations." A spiritual atmosphere hangs over Toledo that is reminiscent of Jerusalem, the Holy City.

At a time when spiritual creativeness in the rest of the world was at a low ebb, three great cultures—the Jewish, the Christian and the Mohammedan—flowered and rose to supreme heights in the Peninsula. In close proximity they influenced and stimulated each other. Yet each made a distinct contribution of its own. It is with the special contribution of Israel that this book is to occupy itself. With the growth of Jewish mysticism, which, with the creation of the Zohar, added the third great source to the spiritual treasure of Israel. In the course of our study we shall see the influence exerted by this Jewish mysticism on both Jews and non-Jews. Also the influence exerted upon it by Christian and Moslem mystics. And particularly the influence exerted upon them by the Zohar.

Spain became the repository of the message once come forth from Judæa, and Cordoba and Toledo took the place of Jerusalem. The spiritual centre in Babylon, looked to for guidance after the exile from Judæa, had disappeared. The great authorities in religious and Talmudic matters were the Spanish Jews. But they were something more. Their religious leadership, as authoritative as that of Babylon, was richer in breadth of vision, in poetry and in beauty. Stimulated by finding itself under the best social, political and economic conditions, Jewish genius flowered and rose to the highest achievement of which it was capable. From the garden of its blooming came forth values, both holy and profane, both temporary and eternal, that served Israel and



INTERIOR OF THE SYNAGOGUE OF SAMUEL HALEVI IN TOLEDO, BUILT DURING THE GLORIOUS PERIOD OF JEWISH LIFE IN SPAIN. NOW KNOWN AS THE CHURCH OF EL TRANSITO



humanity. Creations of religion, poetry and philosophy. Creations of style in the language of the Prophets. Forms of art : epic, lyric, satiric, humoristic. Religion and philosophy walked hand in hand. Science pursued its enquiring way, unmolested. Music was heard once again : the cymbals, the lyre and the stringed instruments, silent since the exile from Zion.

In contrast to the rest of Europe of the period, Iberia honoured her poets more than her heroes and raised the leaders in science and in art to the highest places in the land. This contrast is best illustrated in the spiritual centres of Cordoba and Carbona. Spanish Jewry had already stepped out of the abysmal ignorance of the time. At the court of Alfonso III.—a patron of the arts—were to be found the outstanding figures in world Jewry. Frederick II. of Germany sought the scientific and cultural opinion of the Jews of Toledo in a long correspondence. In Italian Jewry there was some cultural progress, but France and Germany were poor in great Jews, their communities being made up of manual labourers and petty traders, getting what freedom from persecution they could bargain for.

The great centres of learning set up by Spanish Jews in Cordoba, Granada, Seville, Losina, Toledo, Barcelona, became the guide for the Jewish world. Each community had its great diplomatic figure in the service of the ruling Prince, who might, at the same time, be high in the world of letters and as much admired for his literary and spiritual talents as for his skill in diplomacy. Through Solomon ben Hadereth the spiritual tone of the community of Barcelona was raised to such a height that it came to be regarded as an authority on spiritual matters even in Palestine, and was known as the Community of Princes. And Sheshat Benveniste, poet, philosopher and diplomat, adviser of King Alfonso, had the title of Prince conferred on him.

But it was in Toledo that the centre of Jewish life was focussed and whence went forth the authoritative word to the Jews of the whole world. Spiritual leadership came from there. For, although the High Schools of Babylon were still

## 6 ZOHAR IN MOSLEM AND CHRISTIAN SPAIN

in existence in the eleventh century, and the first germ of science and religious philosophy had already made its appearance, yet was their influence on the wane. Those who succeeded to the spiritual leadership after the death of Hai Gaon, and the disappearance of his followers, were persecuted and obliged to fly to Spain, bringing with them both their spiritual heritage and the family glory.

Oppressed Jews flocked to find refuge in the Peninsula from all parts of the world. It was, strangely enough, due to the influx of newcomers—fanatical and bigoted, incapable of understanding that spirit of tolerance that is the Sepharadi's chief charm—that a certain intolerance crept into Jewish religious thought. Religion and science had heretofore flourished side by side in the greatest harmony. A harmony rudely interrupted by the coming of the great Ashkenazi Talmudic authority, Asheri, a refugee from persecution by the Germans. He was made Rabbi of Toledo. Unfortunately, he introduced the idea that religion is opposed to scientific research. That the Talmud alone is to be taken as the dominant authority. That scholars occupying themselves with the reconciliation of religion and philosophy were to be condemned. On the defensive, they were obliged to excuse or explain their scientific works as not being harmful to religion. Dire punishment was meted out to those who appeared to stray from the path of a rigid orthodoxy. A spirit of intolerance that put limitations on creative activity.

Nevertheless, all the currents and streams of Judaism flowed together here and were deepened into new forms. Men of great wisdom, each one able to lead a school of thought, followed each other, their names as familiar to the great outside world as to their own countrymen. A nostalgia very akin to modern Zionism found its protagonist in the great Chasdai Ibn Chaprut, Minister for Foreign Affairs in Cordoba. And in the poetry of Yehuda Halevi it found its passionate and eternal expression. The exiles from Judæa created both a garden of poetry permeated with the joy of life and a temple for serious research. In Babylon the spiritual treasures

brought by the exiles from Judæa had, with the time, suffered a decline. In Spain both language and literature were perfected.

A new type of Jew was he of the Peninsula. A light, graceful figure, charming, elegant, tactful. With pleasing manners and that suave politeness that distinguished his fellow-countrymen. Different from those brethren who, stubborn and stiff-necked, had set up the hard stone walls of ritual and ceremonial in Babylon. Different, too, from his contemporary in Eastern Europe: the furtive, cringing ghetto type.

What the country did to the Jew it also did to the Arab who settled there. In Tetuan and in Fez, whither the Arab exiles went, the type is more agreeable and refined, more pleasing to the eye, more charming in manner and prouder in bearing than is the Arab anywhere else. In his home life, too, there is a dignity and a charm that is rarely found in Arab life elsewhere.

Judaism had already established itself in a position of classical importance in the Peninsula when mysticism made its startling appearance from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries. A period of life and creation. After more than a thousand years of seeming silence, Jews again took up the broken thread of that high visionary poetry, torn asunder with the uprooting of the nation from Judæa. The broken ends of the thread were knotted together, linked up and continued—even as musical expression is linked up and continued—so as to give the impression of an unbroken line. Both the holy and the profane poetry found its connection and continuation. And its forms of expression were those in which both country and city Prophets had first given it to the world from Zion. Philosophy, which had been in a state of decadence, again raised its head. All that was fine and high in Jewish thinking, all that liberates human thought and is the basis of the development of the human spirit, bloomed once again. The Rabbinic and Talmudic treasures, which the sons of Judæa and of Babylon brought with them to this new home, were developed, broadened and deepened.

## 8 ZOHAR IN MOSLEM AND CHRISTIAN SPAIN

With the dispersion from the Spanish Peninsula, however, began the decline of all that had distinguished the Jews and made glorious the epoch of their sojourn there. And for two distinct reasons : The first is to be found in the heterogeneous composition of the groups of emigrants. The forced emigration from all parts of the country drove together groups composed of elements utterly different from each other. Groups that would never have come together under ordinary circumstances. A hastily-compounded mass clinging together because of its need of finding an immediate shelter, rather than because of any natural association of ideas or of social levels. A mass destined to become even more hopelessly complicated with the admixture of the new elements amongst which it settled. These new elements, with much lower standard of living and of intellectual pursuits, had the advantage of numbers and of precedence. It was inevitable that the newcomers should sink to their level.

The new communities, composed of exiles from Spain, Italy, Greece and Africa were far from being homogeneous, giving evidence of all the chaotic conditions that come with uprooting and dispersion. Home, synagogue and public life all suffered from a decline of spiritual force. The beauty that had lain in old traditions was lost, and these became empty formulæ, observed mechanically. The spiritual leaders lost touch with the soul of the people. Lost the traditions of leadership handed down to them by the great teachers of Cordoba and Toledo.

Gradually they lost interest in science, in poetry, in art, in all that softens the harshness of life. They no longer sang. They sang neither as those who have risen above misfortune, nor as those who intone their songs from the depths of their despair. The folk songs that they sang at times had lost the poetic tradition that had distinguished them in Spain.

The second reason for the decadence which set in with the dispersion is to be found in the fact that the refugees found shelter for the most part in Mohammedan countries. Countries which had either never possessed any outstanding culture, or had long since passed the zenith of their cultural

accomplishment and were already in a state of decline. This was especially true of Turkey, whither the great majority of the Sepharadim went. Security of life was paid for by the forfeit of spiritual growth. In the Turkish dominions there was no spiritual contact with intellectual, non-Jewish neighbours. At no time in its history has Turkey created any spiritual or cultural values. And the poverty of the Turk, in all but that which caters for his most elementary needs, is best illustrated in the poverty of his language. Its characters are Arabic. Its poetic expression, Persian. Its scientific expressions are Arabic. Only those expressions needed for daily physical needs are Turkish.

The exiles found an absence of that high spiritual culture that had marked the Arabs of Baghdad, when the Jewish High Schools of Sura and Pombaditha were founded, and the seeds of a great religious philosophy planted. The glorious period of Arabic culture—that of Haroun Al Raschid—had been for the Jews the brilliant period of the Gaonim. But no trace of this spiritual beauty was to be found in the Mohammedan countries to which the exiles came. And their own spiritual forces gradually became petrified.

But in the Netherlands, where some of the exiles were so fortunate as to find refuge, they found a background and an atmosphere stimulating to creative effort. In this little country of great ideals more than three generations of Jewish thinkers and scholars succeeded each other, culminating in Baruch Spinoza.

Like the Phoenix—symbol of the eternal life of Israel—the Sepharadim found new life breathed into them in this north country that was so bravely going through the pangs of its own national rebirth. The first to throw off the yoke of tyranny and of slavery.

Here the exiles set up stately, exotic homes at which Dutch eyes opened in amazement. The haunting, almost legendary beauty of Old Spain was brought into the flat sameness of the Dutch landscape. And the universal viewpoint brought by the exiles—fallen in so many other countries upon barren ground and perished—flourished in Holland and enriched the



country. Its horizon broadened and extended. Its trade expanded. New commercial and political relations were established, and the trail blazed to Africa. And from the boats plying the lakes and fiords of the north country, sailors could be heard singing the passionate southern melodies of Old Andalusia.

The newcomers found fertile soil also, in the domain of thought, in science and in philosophy. In schools and societies they found the natural sciences taught and liberal ideas welcomed. Under this cultural stimulation the Sepharadim in Holland left their brothers in Mohammedan countries far behind. And as time went on they ceased to have very much in common outside of the form of religious service and the pronunciation of the Hebrew—now accepted as the classical pronunciation in the present-day revival of the language.

Of the intellectual treasures created or developed in Spain one took entire precedence over all the others in the life of the exiles wherever they went. This was the Zohar—the bible of mysticism, the kingdom of ethics, according to which they directed their life and work. The poetic and imaginative quality of their minds—that side of their nature which had been so completely developed by the poetry and philosophy in the Peninsula—did not find complete satisfaction in Rabbinic and Talmudic theories alone, but sought shelter in Kabbala, which deals with the Creator and the creations ; with God and the universe.

In the Peninsula, Jewry had been divided into three distinct divisions : those whose lives were ruled by the Talmud ; those whose faith was based on the philosophy of Maimonides ; and those who were influenced by Kabbala. After the exile all three parties came to be influenced by Kabbala. Even Spinoza. For we find a great similarity in his views on the Infinite with those of certain Sepharadi mystics who preceded him, amongst them, Cordobero.

Under the influence of this mystical faith, which buoyed them up with fresh hope for a glorious future, which promised the forgiveness of sins, which made the coming of a saviour

seem not only sure but imminent, the exiles were ready to put their faith in any leader whose Messianic pretensions bore some semblance of truth. Such pretenders arose one after the other, each sending a flame of fresh hope surging through the hearts of the oppressed people. And although they arose in those countries in which Jewish life was decadent, they had their followers in all parts of the world. Even in Holland where Jewish life was progressive and enlightened.

Thus Sabbatai Zevi had his followers everywhere, rousing them to a frenzy of mystical belief that was like a lease of new life to them and continued to sustain them, even after his failure to prove himself the true saviour. Another was David Reubeni, whose memorable ride through the streets of Rome on a white ass, surrounded by Jewish and Christian believers, is a part of the history of Jewish mysticism. Yet mysticism emerged from each of these trials, stronger than ever. Its hold upon its followers grew firmer with each succeeding generation.

Although they derived their inspiration from the same source—Zohar and Kabbala—Ashkenazi and Sepharadi mysticism inevitably took different directions, each inspiring its followers in its own way. The former relied more upon practical Kabbala, the performance of miracles, and the awakening of ecstasy by mechanical forms, while the latter built up an inner, spiritual life. Amongst the Ashkenazim the Chassidim remained a distinctive group in the community. Amongst the Sepharadim, however, both the Chassidim and other religious groups were united under the influence of this mystical faith. The seed of this mysticism, carried to Palestine by the great mystical poet, Diego Perez—better known under the name of Solomon Molcho—and by Joseph Caro, laid the foundations for the Sepharadi Chassidic movement, with communities in Galilee and Judæa. This grew and developed through the succeeding generations down to our own times, its last stronghold being Beth-El in Jerusalem.

Thus the third source of Israel's spiritual treasure, having gushed forth from the Spanish Peninsula, found its true

## 12 ZOHAR IN MOSLEM AND CHRISTIAN SPAIN

repository in the Sepharadi mystics in the Holy Land. Many streams flowed from this source, watering the dry soil of the ghettos, spreading in all directions, opening up new spiritual highways to humanity. Both Jews and non-Jews drank at the many streams that spread from the source, and many literary masterpieces owed to it their spiritual inspiration and their life.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SPANISH MYSTICS

As the aim of this book is to show the Zohar in the frame of the time and the place in which it was suddenly revealed to us, the author will not deal with its more ancient elements which came, without a doubt, from the mystical treasures created in the Holy Land and during the exile in Babylon, but will confine himself to an examination of those Spanish ingredients which went into the final revision of the Book of the Splendour.

The mysticism that emanated from Spain differed from that of other countries in various ways. It was to be distinguished by its intensive character, by its depth and clarity of spirit and by the courage and daring with which it made its explorations along the path where mystics sought for the Universal Source.

It was a time when the nostalgia for something hitherto unknown was fermenting in the soul of Spain. This longing was most evident in the spirit that gave rise to the romantic type of adventurer who sought for undiscovered treasure, for unknown lands, and for precious things that transcended the imagination of men in other western countries. It was evident, too, in the spirit that gave rise to the discoverers of new worlds—both the worlds of practical reality and the worlds of the imagination. Worlds of the imagination that escaped all the bounds of conservative thinking : they introduced us to men of a luminous whiteness of skin—men of a supernatural beauty, living in palaces of surpassing splendour, with walls and furnishings of gold, with ceilings and floors begemmed with precious stones, where take place feasts of

music and orgies of dancing and pleasures akin to those of Paradise. Here, women, on whose magic beauty the eye fain would feast eternally, exert their charm to please and to delight. Here, heavenly blooms in a riot of exotic colours saturate the wonder gardens with their fragrant perfumes. Here, torrential rivers are spanned by glistening marble bridges. Thousands of slaves run to do one's bidding. Gorgeously-caparisoned elephants convey the humans and their burdens from place to place. And eagles, captive in golden cages, are taught to amuse their captors.

This was the spirit that imagined virgin islands hemmed in by impenetrable walls of fog. Surrounded by sanded seas which harbour monstrous fish, while their valleys witness the gambollings of fairies and elfin sprites.

This was the spirit which gave rise to the legend that after the conquest of Spain by the Moors seven communities fled the sword of the Saracens in seven boats. After many startling adventures on a tempestuous sea they reached an unknown island of the West. There they burnt their boats and shut themselves into a complete isolation in which they erected seven wonder cities, the like of which has not yet been seen by human eyes.

This was the spirit that created the adventurous Hayy Ibn Yaqzan, a man born of neither father nor mother, living upon an island on which there was no other human being and no access to the accumulated wisdom of man. Yet by his own unaided intelligence he was able to attain to all the knowledge needed by man for his practical life on earth, and to achieve an understanding of God and the spiritual world.

In this spirit were nurtured those hardy seafarers whose passion for discovering new lands sent them to face the perils that awaited them beyond the borders of the then known world.

But, centuries before this spirit had as yet given rise to the intrepid adventurers who brought to light new worlds both in the physical and in the literary realms, it was responsible for those who adventured in the mysterious realms of the metaphysical world and discovered the *Wonder Lands of the Soul*.

Under this spiritual stimulus the Sons of Spain began to dream of new worlds to conquer—new worlds in other domains. Their thoughts turned into fantastic channels, so that they overlooked the obvious dangers and were able to chronicle achievements—both in the practical world and in the world of the imagination—whose existence very few were as yet ready to admit.

The student of Spanish history can trace a direct line and a steady growth of this phase of the Spanish genius from the pre-mystical period to the appearance of Don Quixote, who may be regarded as the standardbearer of that fantastic spirit of adventure that informed all Spanish endeavour. He will find it : (a) In the pre-mystical period, when men concerned themselves with tearing aside the veil that separated earth from heaven and life from death. (b) In the mystical period, when the mystics sought to give us a definite picture of those unknown realms of the spirit which they had probed at the cost of the abnegation of self and the denial of the demands of the flesh : the period that witnessed such Christian mystical creations as those of Ramon Lulle ; such Mohammedan creations as those of Ibn Arabi, Ibn Tufail ; and such Jewish creations as those of the Kabbala and Zohar. (c) In the period, two centuries later, when men set forth to discover the lands beyond the borders of the known world, making Spain the first European nation to penetrate Asia and to put the world in contact both with the old culture of the East and with the primitive culture of the New World. The first to bring to Europe the language and wisdom of Oriental nations ; to plant the seed for the growth of new sciences, broadening the horizon, and enriching both the imagination and art with a wealth of new and exotic material. (d) In the golden era of Spanish literature, when Cervantes introduced us to undiscovered realms of the imagination—realms dominated by the same mystical spirit, as informed the works of the mystics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It is this mysticism, giving as it does a fantastic turn to the actions of Don Quixote, which earthbound spirits find so hard to understand and to identify with Cervantes' undoubted genius.

For is not Don Quixote the apotheosis of man's striving to gain ascendancy over the spirits that drag him down to earth, as typified by Sancho Panza? Don Quixote seeks to prove the victory of the infinite over the finite forces. To establish the Kingdom of God on earth through the urge that man feels in his own nature to overcome evil with good. Is not Don Quixote a being driven by mystical forces into fantastic adventures, in all of which there is an underlying meaning—even as in the Bible—that all who run may read?

The complete man of Cervantes' creation is the composite of Don Quixote, the visionary with his head always in the clouds, and of Sancho Panza, the practical, dragging him back to a consideration of things earthly. And this man, while he belongs to no special era and to no particular place, while he belongs to all humanity and to every age, is yet the true heir to the mystical traditions of Spain. To the realm of literature he brought that battle between the material and the spiritual forces, which generations of Spanish mystics had already made familiar. Which sought to establish new worlds, not for time, but for eternity. And furthermore, in the fantastic garment in which Cervantes has clothed the struggle, we find the same spirit of fantasy with which the mystics clothed their visions and their descriptions of the worlds beyond this known world. It is the same spirit of fantasy which, at times, runs riot in the Zohar, investing its legends with dazzling colour and splendour, but making it, at the same time, incomprehensible to sober-minded people.

Thus we see that if we find mysticism in the legends of Don Quixote, we also find Donquixotism in the legends created by the mystics. For mysticism and fantasy were the special heritage of the Sons of Spain and run, like parallel threads of gold, through their creative genius. But with these threads are intertwined, as shall be shown later, a very practical commonsense that sought and found the way to transform fantastic adventure into practical good. In Juan de la Cruz, who is regarded as the most typical, since he is the most imaginative of the Spanish mystics, we see prudence and hardihood, fantasy and practicality combined in such a

way as to make us believe that in him the spirit of both Don Quixote and Sancho Panza have been welded together in a very realistic sort of idealism.

And that the mystics who dreamed of fantastic worlds beyond this world also dreamed of undiscovered worlds within this world of ours, may be illustrated both by a legend concerning Ramon Lulle and by an extract from the Zohar. The legend tells us that when Ramon Lulle, the Christian mystic of Mallorca (1232-1315), was dying, two Genoese sailors (one called Columbus, and, presumably, the ancestor of the discoverer of the New World) took him on their ship to bring him home. On this journey the mystic confided to them his belief that there was land on the other side of the ocean. The sailors, believing him to be a visionary in direct communion with God, were deeply impressed with this belief.

And in the Zohar (Vayikra : 19.b) we read that in the book of the old Rab Hamenouna is an explanation that the whole earth-habitation turns like a ball within an orbit, so that some creatures are on the upper side and some on the under side ; that the creatures on these opposite sides are different in their looks, through the difference in climate ; that each has its own different sort of existence ; that when it is light in the one habitation above, it is darkness in the one below ; that there are also places in which it is day all the time, while night exists for only one short hour. And this mystery, concludes the Zohar, was revealed to the Masters of Wisdom.

The inhabitants of the Peninsula, during the pre-mystical and the mystical periods, were a conglomeration of races and creeds, each throwing his contribution into the melting pot of Spanish culture. In the creation of literary and spiritual values the barriers that usually separate man from man were let down and men were able to regard each other with mutual appreciation and understanding. But it was in the realm of mysticism particularly that the mystics of the three faiths inspired and stimulated each other and gave birth to distinct similarities in their respective creations,



## 18 ZOHAR IN MOSLEM AND CHRISTIAN SPAIN

It was in the cultural and psychological atmosphere which dominated the pre-Zohar period that the foundations for mysticism were laid by the poets, the philosophers and the astrologers.

Nearly all the poets prior to the Golden Era wrote mystical poems in which are to be found some of the most precious gems of mysticism. The Moslem, Ibn Ayshun of Toledo, a lawyer who lived in the tenth century and wrote poetry, has left us some beautiful gems of mysticism, comparing the vision of God with the contemplation of the sun unhidden by clouds. The mystical theology of the Middle Ages was the direct cause of that religious ecstasy which gives its distinctly Spanish character to the succeeding centuries in which the later mystics were nourished. In the Zohar, even as in the various mystical creations of the other two faiths, are to be found the main elements of this attempt to uplift humanity by directing man's thoughts towards the path of God and the good life. As far as Jewish mysticism was concerned it gave birth to a great literary development. Nevertheless, this development was surpassed in importance by the inner spiritual growth which gave renewed impetus to the spiritual life of the people.

It was an epoch of perplexity of the soul for the intellectuals—a perplexity which ran the gamut of all stages of thought and feeling. The soul failed to find its satisfaction in any of the beaten paths hitherto traversed. The mystics protested against scholasticism, which was the compromise between religion and philosophy. They found that the only way to understand God and the universe lay in mystical revelation.

A special characteristic of the history of Jewish spiritual thought has been the simultaneous appearance of the two streams: the mystical and the rational. This was true of all periods of Jewish history, from the earliest ages down to modern times: in Bible times, in Talmudic times, in the Gaonic period. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when we see the rise of the scholastics, headed by Maimonides and Ibn Pakuda, and of the mystical school of Kabbala and

Zohar. And, right up to our own times, we see the Chassidim and Kabbalists (the mystics) and the Talmudists (the rationalists) flourishing at the same time.

Influenced by Greek philosophy, many clear, rationalistic thinkers (whose leader was Maimonides) found no peace in the simple obedience to the dry laws of tradition. They resented the belief that puts the yoke of a despotic God on man forcing him to obedience. They sought a new solution that would reconcile the two currents: philosophy and religion. The school of scholasticism, whose best expression was Maimonides' *Guide to the Perplexed*, was created. It was a solution, however, that did not save many from perplexity. On many, indeed, it had the contrary effect. The time was thus ripe for the mystics to come out into the open: to broaden and develop their teachings for the benefit of those who found no satisfaction either in the scholastic theory, or in any principle that lacked the dynamic infusion of life. Seeking for a new heaven and a new earth they found it in mysticism.

Of the contributions to Jewish-Spanish mysticism, which made their appearance before the Zohar, we have very little real information to guide us. Many manuscripts that lie buried in cloister libraries in the Vatican, the Bodleian, and others, as well as in the possession of private individuals, might throw much light on the Zohar itself, besides revealing more to us of the period under discussion. Who can tell what great treasures are still waiting to be disclosed by those who shall have the temerity to scale the mountains of shelves loaded with manuscripts, which my awe-inspired eyes could but gaze up at, in so many little, out-of-the-way cities of Spain?

At the beginning of the thirteenth century precious fragments began to make their appearance with the spread of the doctrine and revelations of the two great mystics: Isaac the Blind, and his brother. Then came fragments of the work of the disciples of Isaac, the most distinguished of whom were Ezra and Azriel. Isaac the Blind was a great seer, about whom there sprang up so many wonder legends as to make his

blindness seem almost as much of a myth as that of Homer. It was as if this blindness was the first essential for one who would see things invisible to natural sight. Probing into the soul of the one who approached him, Isaac visioned his life, seeing it as it was in the past and as it will be in eternity. The teachings of Isaac the Blind led to the conclusion that the Divine Origin is connected with the four worlds which unite the Kingdom of Man with the *Ten Sephiroth*. In his book *Ha Bahir* (The Book of Clarity) we find this teaching embodied. From this source sprang the real development of philosophical mysticism with the appearance of the book, *Maarecheth Ha Elahut* (The System of the Godhead), by Abraham Aboulafia, and by Joseph, the son of Abraham Djegatila.

But—and this is true of most of the great messengers of mysticism—it was the disciples who gave the Master's messages to the world. They created a school which became popular. They wandered from place to place, spreading the teachings of the Master and found an eager following wherever they went, for many sought to find a nearer approach to the Divine mysteries.

The new Jewish group discarded nothing. Even the Talmudic view of Judaism had new light shed upon it; was given a new soul. A visionary viewpoint was brought to the study of the traditional Jewish classics. Based on prophetic insight it was elevating to the soul and full of promise for the future.

Amongst those who supported the new doctrine with warmth and enthusiasm was Bonastric da Porta, known as Ramban or Nachmanides—a strong moral personality—whose influence helped to spread it throughout the country. In enthusiastic letters to the communities of Aragon, Castille and Navarre, he averred that mysticism lies at the heart of Judaism. A Judaism without mystical interpretation he found inconceivable.

Sepharadi mysticism, as exemplified by the Zohar and Kabbala, did not aim to reveal a mystical philosophy in itself, but rather a permeation of the law with mystical doctrines;

an animation of the spirit of the Scriptures, the precepts, the ritual and the Bible tales ; a revelation of the Bible as the source of mysticism created by God—before the creation of the universe—and written in characters of black fire on white fire : therefore, the Bible is full of sublime ideas. Every letter is a spiritual power. A link in that chain that binds the worlds to each other.

In the Scriptures there are many mysteries hidden in the words : the Zohar uses this idea for the comparison with a beautiful woman, who hides her beauty from the eyes of strangers, permitting only those who admire her to raise the veil from her face. Thus does the Veil of Symbols envelop the Word of the Scriptures, and only those inspired by the Grace of God may hope to achieve the revelation.

The new conception spread rapidly, attracting many enlightened spirits. Even those who opposed the new belief did not dare to come out openly against so powerful a personage as Nachmanides. Books on the subject began to make their appearance. Many of the authors attributed their works to Divine beings : to the revelations of Elijah, or of angels ; to the Prophets and Tanaites ; to ancient heroes around whose existence legends recounting extraordinary experiences had sprung up. Sometimes they are persons known from previous writings, but generally the work was attributed to some historical or mythical personage, of whom no other work is known.

We must understand that this literary self-effacement was actuated by something more than mere modesty. Inspired by the belief that his revelations came from the Source of Divine Inspiration, that they emanated from the very Source of Truth, the author sought to lift his work to a higher plane. He therefore chose some high personality, preferably one who had been a source of inspiration to himself, or the guiding spirit of his own life, and made him responsible for proclaiming this new truth to mankind. Poets have made us familiar with this process. Moreover, the mystic, desiring that the truth revealed to him might, at the same time, find its way to the hearts of the people and be accepted by the Talmudists

and sceptics, hoped to achieve this aim by attributing his work to a higher source.

In the eyes of the Kabbalists the Zohar assumed an importance greater even than that of the Talmud. Its dicta were held in greater veneration than those of Rabbinical literature. In comparing them with the rationalists—that is, the Talmudists—the Zohar classifies the mystics as clairvoyants or seers: those who probe beneath the surface. Those who see by intuition. Thus the mystics are compared to light—the Force element—which penetrates all things and brings them in their true perspective to the eye of the beholder.

The Zohar sought for the Source of Living Waters in all the heritage of Jewish tradition. Not that it attempts to destroy any of the bases underlying Jewish precepts. On the contrary, it aims to uncover the sparks of light hidden in them by the manifold wrappings of the centuries and to bring them before us in their original brilliance. The Zohar sought to endow the precepts with life, to give them a soul, to lift from them the blind, oppressive burden that acts as a yoke, to revivify them with the breath of life that lies in a great love. For love will stimulate man to keep the precepts, even to the extent of sacrificing life itself. Thus to bring to the understanding of man the knowledge of the great good that must result from their observance. And the sum total of the mystic's exhortation to man was this: Good will flow towards him who keeps the precepts and observes the Law. Good will flow towards his fellow-men—be they friends or enemies of his. Good will flow towards the animate and the inanimate objects that surround him. Good will flow even towards God Himself.

But the Bible, asserts the Zohar, is more than a book of precepts, binding in their observance. Men must occupy themselves with the study of the Torah, because it is the only bond that remained when the Covenant was broken and the exile began. It took the place of the Covenant. It is at once a consolation and a reminder. It is the symbol of all that has remained to us from the bridal days of the Father

and the Mother. It is the symbol of that love which continues to exist between the parents and the children. In it are to be found the hope and the belief that the bridal days would return. The solace for the days of pain and persecution. The joy wherewith to nullify their effect. In it are to be found those mysteries which are at once the underlying principle and the soul of the Torah. The Torah, we are told, is a body with seventy faces. A body with a soul. A body clothed in beautiful garments and crowned with a crown.

In view of all this we must not be surprised that the mystics made sweeping indictments against both the *Mishnah* and its commentators. That is, against those who saw in the Torah only dogma, ritual and formalism, but were unable to see its underlying beauty and sublimity. The *Zohar* says: "The grave of Moses is the *Mishnah*!" In another place it says even more positively: "Three things make the earth tremble. One of them is when a servant dares to speak against his sovereign!" The sovereign, according to the mystics, is the Torah, and the servant is the *Mishnah*. Elsewhere, we find the *Mishnah* spoken of as the servant of *Kabbala*. Such references are made frequently and forcefully by the great Sepharadi Kabbalist of Safed, Chaim Vittal.

While the mystics tried to spread the light by means of their books, which they ascribed to divine authors, and by their teachings, their work received assistance and stimulation from men of wealth and learning who were attracted by the new revelations, the most important being Rabbi Todros, a son of the noble family of Abulafia of Toledo, a rich man and a scholar. A man of great influence and held in high esteem by his contemporaries, his poetic soul was attracted by the wealth of new treasure which the new teaching revealed to him. He became the patron of the Masters of Mysticism who appeared during his time. Amongst them were Abraham Abulafia, Isaac Alatif, Moses de Leon. He helped them both with material resources and with moral support, so that knowledge of the *Kabbala* spread rapidly, not only in Spain, but also in Italy. Many Kabbalistic works were dedicated to this powerful benefactor. With his assistance, mysticism

became a strong current in Jewish life, deepening and broadening its course; helping the one responsible for the appearance of that book—the Zohar—that was to be the Kabbalists' greatest contribution to Jewish life in the Peninsula. The book appeared with mysterious suddenness, as a living fountain gushing forth from the Source of all Sources.

Among the main currents of opinion with regard to the Zohar, the three outstanding ones are :

1. That the Book of the Zohar is an ancient book of mysteries, revealed in the Holy Land by Simeon ben Jochai—the great Tanaite who lived in the second century—which later found its way to Spain and into the hands of Moses de Leon. This, together with the Kabbalists' tradition that it was revealed to ben Jochai by the Prophet Elijah and the angels, during the thirteen years he spent in a cave, has become the sacred belief of pious Jews.

2. That the Zohar in its actual form was compiled and composed in Spain, in that high mystical period marked by the thirteenth century, but that its beginnings are rooted in the mysteries of antiquity.

3. The opinion of the anti-Kabbalists, who oppose the idea of antiquity, claiming that the Zohar is a new creation by Moses de Leon, which dates back only to the end of the thirteenth century in Spain.

The author of the present work, while being more in agreement with the second theory, accepts it only with certain reservations: these being: 1. That these roots did not spring—as some people claim—from non-Jewish sources (ignoring that mysticism is one of the constituent elements of the Jewish being since time immemorial), but sprang from the old Jewish sources of the Pentateuch, the Prophets, Daniel (in which were concentrated the mystical messages of Holy Writ), the Apocalypse, and the Book of Enoch (prominently mentioned in the Zohar), where this mysticism was broadened and deepened. We also find them in the two Talmuds (Mishnah, Gemarrah and Haggadah), in the Midrashim, the Gaonic literature, etc. 2. That in the

fertile soil of Spain this mystical seed—together with others from unknown Jewish sources—brought by the Judæan exiles from the treasure house of their tradition, found a chance to bloom and put forth fruit: first, in the vague allusions in poetic and philosophic contributions of the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries; followed by a great burst of Kabbalistic development that culminated in the discovery of the Zohar in the thirteenth century. Almost simultaneously, it is significant to note, a similar mystical development was going on amongst the peoples of the other two faiths settled in Spain: the Christian and the Moslem, so that it is not surprising to find similarities in the work of these three groups of mystics—similarities which also found their way into the final revision of the Zohar by some author (or authors), whose identity has not yet been established. And this final revision, it would seem, took place a few decades before the disclosure of the book by Moses de Leon.

In order to compare the Zohar with other mystical works of Spanish origin we must probe beneath the surface and into the hidden meaning, so as to find the many parallels that prove the common source. We find that the mystical element is practically the same in the work of all the Masters who flourished before the Golden Era. Innumerable points of contact occur in the work of the mystics of the three great faiths living side by side in the Peninsula: the Jewish, the Christian and the Moslem. Most of the mystics make use of pictures, of symbols, and of examples taken from life and from Nature in order to make their work more easily understood. Thus we get the mechanical solution of mysteries which is characteristic, especially of the Zohar.

Religious, poetical and philosophical conceptions are welded together in a synthesis that gives an harmonious tone to the whole. This is most clearly demonstrated in the work of Louis de Leon. The lyre of this later Christian mystic—even as that of the mystics of the Zohar—was able to call forth the deepest notes of spirituality.

The Castillian poetry which flourished before the appearance of the Zohar was a multiple bloom of mystical



imagery. Imperishable treasures of virtue, of love, and of ardour were accumulated and concentrated in these poems which sought to force open the doors guarding the passage-way to heaven. All the later mystics drank at this inexhaustible source, until their own inner flame was kindled and given its supreme expression.

One begins to see again that old, mystical trait, lost to us since the days of the Gaonites, in the golden age of Jewish poetry, as exemplified by Ibn Gabirol (1021-1058) and Yehuda Halevi, and in the doctrines of Maimonides, of Ibn Ezra, and of Ibn Pakuda, that was to come to its most perfect flowering in the thirteenth century, with the appearance of the Book of the Splendour (the Zohar)—the book that was destined to become the guide and friend, the philosopher and teacher, the prop and solace of those who could carry with them into exile only the spiritual portion of all the rich treasures they had sown and reaped on Spanish soil.

An example of the Jewish-Spanish mystical poetry that preceded the apparition of the Zohar is to be found in the work of Abraham Abulafia, the great Kabbalist, born in Saragossa (1240-1291). The following two poems best illustrate the work of this mystic .

Praised be His Name !  
 Extolled in beauty, His Might !  
 Praised in treasures of snow ,  
 Praised in torrents of flame ,  
 Praised in clouds of glory ,  
 Praised in sparkling palaces  
 Praised He, Who rides o'er the heavens !  
 Extolled by His myriads of legions,  
 By the mystery that lies in the flame !  
 Praised by the voice of thunder ,  
 Praised by the flash of lightning  
 The earth doth praise  
 The abyss doth praise  
 The waves of the sea beat out His praise  
 Praised be the One,  
 The only Name on the Throne,  
 By every soul.  
 By all creations.  
 Forever and forever !

His servants sing hymns, proclaim the wonders  
Of the Lord, Who circles His Kingdom with Glory,  
Surrounded by the rulers of the spheres  
The Glance of His Eye encompasseth the heavens ,  
Out of His Splendour, the heavens shine forth  
The abyss flares up from His Mouth  
He shatters primeval worlds, demolishes spheres of Glory,  
Proud heavens sparkle from His Face  
All growing things rise up at His Word,  
Sing with joy, and exhale His Words in fragrance  
Spheres rise up, sparkling in dancing flames,  
They praise the Lord of Peace in melody,  
The Beloved King Who is high above the worlds,  
Fear inspiring, exalted

## CHAPTER III

### SOME SIMILARITIES IN THE WORK OF THE SPANISH MYSTICS

EXAMINING the ingredients that went into the final revision of the Zohar, we see : (1) That some had their counterpart in other mystical works created in the Peninsula ; that some were new and quite Spanish in conception and imagery. (2) That, like the Bible, it was the work of many hands and of many elements re-created, re-invested with life, and compiled by a master whose native soil could not have been other than Spanish. And it was the Spain of the mystics : of Maimonides and of Ibn Gabirol ; of Ibn Ayshun, Ibn Tufail, Ibn Arabi, Ibn Hazm and Ibn Massara ; of Ramon Lulle, of Santa Teresa, of Juan de la Cruz, and of Louis de Leon ; of Moses de Leon, of Alatif, and of Abulafia.

In spite of the differences in form, in language, in the manner of interpretation, in the mode of expression and, not least, surely, in the religious viewpoint, there is yet discernible in the creations which they have left us a chord that unites them. In studying the masterpieces of the mystics belonging to the three great religions—in all of which, it is significant to note, there is no trace of the influence of that Hellenism that distinguished the work of the mystics in other European countries—we find, apart from innumerable single instances, that certain dominant likenesses in the work of the three groups may be grouped together under a series of headings somewhat roughly divided as follows : (1) In Their Practical Methods. (2) In the Intensity with which They Probe to the Core of the Mysteries. (3) In Their Conception of the Divine Pantheism. (4) In Their Use of Allegorical Symbols. (5) In Their Conception of Paradise and Hell. (6) In the Manner of

Their Preparation for the Union with God. (7) In Basing their Revelations on Verses from the Holy Books. And in various other special points of resemblance.

#### (I) IN THEIR PRACTICAL METHODS

While other mystics lose themselves completely in visions and seek to plunge themselves in the Infinite, finding satisfaction in this, their ultimate aim, the Spanish mystics believed this to be only the uppermost milestone on the road to the ultimate aim. Therefore they followed vision with action, believing it to be their duty to purify life and every action of life. The burning love that is kindled in their hearts at the moment of union with the Infinite remains to influence their attitude and actions towards their fellow-men. They, too, in seeking for the Intimate Union, plunge themselves into the Vision of the Infinite and swim in the Divine Delight which their vision has caught. But they insist that the personal enjoyment of the beatific state as it is engendered by the Beatific Vision should not be the only aim of such vision. Having attained, through contemplation, to that high state wherein his soul could vision God, the mystic believed that his soul, on returning to the world, was in duty bound to purify life and every action of life. He believed it was his duty to express by his actions and by his mode of living, the brightness, the goodness and the love, which he has had the good fortune to draw into himself, thus making his life an example for less exalted mortals. His role was thus a double one : first, he must direct all his efforts towards the preparation for union with the Infinite. Once that is achieved then must his efforts tend towards preparing others—through the example set by his life and actions—for a similar mode of life.

This practical expression of the spiritual outlook, in life and deed, was common to the mystics of all three faiths. Their teaching took the common formula : that any contemplation that is not followed by positive action has no value, however elevated may be the thinking of the one who indulges in it. Passivity is to be condemned since the whole universe is

dependent upon the active good which may come to benefit it as a result of this experience.

Real wisdom—so taught the mystics of the three faiths in the Peninsula—consists in using one's knowledge about God, the soul, and Nature, in actions and in deeds that will inspire man to do his duty by his fellow-men. For contemplation, or intellectual vision—the highest moment to which the soul can attain in life through the mystical spirit—lasts but a moment. It is as if a door in the innermost recesses of one's being were suddenly opened and the light, pouring out of the opening, envelops and illumines the soul. It is an instantaneous flash, but it has engraved itself on the memory for all time. It has brought illumination and created the longing for further revelations. But its real value lies in this: that it leads man to the execution of noble deeds both in his relation to God and to his fellow-men! Spanish mysticism idealized neither the eternal masculine, nor yet the eternal feminine, but always the eternal human.

From the work of the Jewish mystics who preceded the Zohar and from *the Zohar* itself we learn that it is the righteous man who is the mainstay of the world. It is due to his merit that the world is allowed to continue and to make progress. And the righteous man is represented in Jewish literature as a pillar reaching from earth to heaven. According to the strength of this support, the world is strong or weak. According to the merit of the righteous, the world gains or loses!

The great Spanish-Moslem mystic, *Ibn Arabi* of Murcia, to whom Islam has given the title "*Sheikh al Akbar*," because of the genius of his mystical interpretations, insists upon this very point: that mysticism does not mean only contemplation, but must be translated into action. His mysticism—like that of the Zohar in dealing with the Pentateuch—does not try to nullify the practical tradition of the Koran, but seeks rather to emphasize it, in a gracious and holy way, by dwelling upon the importance of action in conjunction with contemplation. And in the mystical book of romantic adventures of *Abu Bakr Ibn Tufail* (1100?–1185)

we see that the long period of isolation and contemplation of his hero, Hayy Ibn Yaqzan led to the same conclusion : that contemplation must lead man to the accomplishment of active good, both in his relation to God and to his fellow-men.

Amongst the Christian mystics, the one whose work bears the strongest resemblance to that of the Jewish ones and who was, doubtless, influenced by Kabbala, is *Ramon Lulle* (1232-1314)—the *Illuminated Doctor* of Mallorca—the personification of the inherent piety of his nation, who had a mystical concept of all things. In intelligence, he towered above his contemporaries, while surpassing them also in physical prowess and in moral courage. The first to arouse the desire of the Spanish intelligentsia to learn the Hebrew language for the purpose of studying the Scriptures in the original, he established the first department of Hebrew in a Spanish university. He carried on the tradition of mysticism laid down by the poets preceding him in the glorious period of Castilian literature, teaching that mystical experience must be realized in action. His own ardour broke through the shell of his natural reserve, and he became like a living flame urging man on towards God, towards contemplation and especially towards action. He himself turned his practical life into the realization of his contemplative life. He created centres of learning for the sciences and for languages for the benefit of Jews and Moslems, as well as for Christians.

*The Zohar* tells us that the soul has been sent into the world so that it may take an active part in life. It must penetrate and see reflected in its own light all the actions of life with which Fate brings it into contact. Only thus may the soul recognize its own origin. "The purification of life brings man to an harmonious contact with the divine world. He who has come out of the melting pot of the purification has himself become a creator—a companion-artist to God in His creations."

"How long," asks *the Zohar*, "will we remain dependent upon but one pillar?" (That is, how long will man be satisfied with the theories of Tradition without following them up with action?) And further: "Now is the time to work for

God and not to remain idle. Time is fleeting. The creditor is pressing. And few in the world are able to answer the call. Few are those able to act. And even these few are still busy with the fence that encloses the vineyard. They have not as yet entered the vineyard itself, because they are not even sure that they are in the right place. It is time to unite, to arm yourselves and to know the fear of the One Who is the Master of Life. Then will Truth pour down and the Holy Angels be the bearers thereof."

Human life, says *the Zohar* elsewhere, becomes broadened through universal life. The aim of the universe weaves itself through the life of the human being. Therefore, is man cautioned so to live that, with the sunset, he may feel that his day has not been wasted without action. For man, by wasting his own day, has also wasted the day of the whole universe. The existence of the whole depends upon man's existence, and the whole, and the fate of all things is bound up with his fate. It depends upon man whether Nature works, suffers, or consumes herself in desire ; or whether she ceases to suffer and finds the peace and happiness that is assured her in the bosom of the everlasting.

*Santa Teresa* (1515-1582), the mystic who suffered so greatly to attain the Beatific Vision, assures us that nothing can equal the Grace which this experience has brought her. That nothing is so deeply graven as the impression left on the soul after its union with God ! From this union, she says, divine seeds spring forth. It is like rain sent from heaven in answer to the prayer of the parched garden. This means work for the gardener, who must tend it carefully, so that fruit and flowers may blossom and ripen before the winter sets in. If tended with love and care the ripened fruit will bring joy, not only to the gardener, but to all.

When the evening arrived, and *Santa Teresa* was convinced that her day had not been fruitful of any good deeds towards others, she sought to render some service to those about her, such as mending their clothes, or sitting for hours on the stairs with a lighted candle in her hand, to save people from stumbling in the dark.

(2) IN THE INTENSITY WITH WHICH THEY PROBE TO THE CORE  
OF THE MYSTERIES

The mystics of the Peninsula were further to be distinguished by the intensity with which they probed to the heart of the mysteries and brought them out to be examined in the light of life. In the light of the sun which clarifies all things for us. With courage and fearlessness they carried on their search for the Infinite in the most dangerous and difficult of ways: 1. In their mode of seeking for isolation with God. 2. In their manner of trying to reach Him through their visions. 3. In proving that He exists in all things.

*Ezra and Azriel*, the disciples of Isaac, the Blind, who belonged to the pre-Zohar period, say: "In order to make himself worthy of great revelations it is not enough for a man to be a scholar of Bible and Talmud. It is not even enough for him to be a genius. He must be one who is able to strive against all obstacles in order to achieve, in the course of an ordinary lifetime, an understanding of all those high and sublime mysteries that underlie the whole of the real world."

*Ramon Lulle* used to overcome the difficulties and deny the demands of life by shutting himself up in caves, or amongst the trees and their feathered inhabitants, very much as did *Simeon ben Jochai*, the central figure of the Zohar. Lulle fled the great cities and the courts of kings, even as he shunned the rich viands, the splendid apparel of the day, power, and the love of women, all of which were his for the asking. In isolation he hoped to find the divine light which he wished to transmit to others.

The most original, and at the same time, the most inspired of all the Christian mystics of Spain, *Juan de la Cruz*, tells us: "The soul cannot enjoy spiritual liberty—that freedom which comes only at the moment of union with God—except when the heart has succeeded in ridding itself of the tyranny of the passions. How ignorant is the man who thinks it possible to attain the high state of union with God before he has become strong enough to renounce his love for base pleasures."



## (3) IN THEIR CONCEPTION OF THE DIVINE PANTHEISM

The author has used this expression because of that fundamental doctrine of emanation of the Kabbala and the Zohar (taught even by modern Kabbala) which makes everything emanate from the EnSoph. The EnSoph of the Kabbala creates from His Will, so that we see a divine transcendence in it—a constant replenishment from the Creator to His creations. This is quite different from the Pantheism of the Indian Sages and of Spinoza and his school, in which everything is created, not by free will, but from necessity and because it was fated. Of the Jewish conception of Pantheism in Spain the first traces are to be found in the poetry of *Ibn Gabirol*, in the conception: that God is Essence and, at the same time, the Creator and Manipulator of the creations emanating from Him. But as He is above His creations and has no immediate connection with them, God created the Will Power. The connecting link between God and His creations is the will power. By means of it we are able to conceive of the whole of creation. The will is thus made the intermediary between the First Substance, the Matter, and the Form. Through this medium, both the creation and its form could be changed from Force to Action.

This is the first germ of that mystic pantheism that came from the Peninsula, and made Matter, the universal substance—at one with God. God is all and all is God. It inspired the poetry which flourished in the Middle Ages, the generations that succeeded Ibn Gabirol, the Zohar and the Kabbala. It inspired Ramon Lulle and the poetical-mystical rhymes of the Spanish-Christian poets—both those who preceded and those who followed the Mallorcan, particularly those of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. We find this elevating, pantheistic idea also in the mystical prose of the Spanish-Moslems. From the revelations of *Ibn Arabi* we learn: "That God cannot be recognized except through the union of the extremes. For He is the First and He is the Last. He is the Innermost and He is the Outermost. He is the Speaker and He is the Listener. The created thing is just like its Creator."

In another place this Arab mystic tells us : " Everything emanates from the central circle—Light—which is the presence of God. Thus the Substance and the Emanations are one." In almost the same language *the Zohar* clothes the same idea, while *Juan de la Cruz* puts it thus : " The soul is in God, and God is in the centre of the soul."

Long before the appearance of the *Zohar*, in a Kabbalistic work entitled *The Intuition* we find a poetic pantheism : the conception that God is one. That He is identical with Himself. That His force is as the flame whose face has many colours. That this force emanates from Him, even as a glance shoots from the eye, as the scent emanates from the perfume, as the brightness of a torch is gained by lighting it at the flame of another torch, without depriving the other of light or heat.

In the 13th century *Isaac ibn Alatif* shows the relationship between the spiritual and the material worlds, between the Creator and His creations. He says : " When man rises on the wings of a prayer that is pure, his soul rises in union with the prayer, reaches the *Spirit of the World*, and becomes one with Him in the *Kiss of Love*. And the soul performs a high act, which gives birth to a blessing that comes to the world below."

Because everything is in God, says *Ramon Lulle*, general science is possible. This idea is not to be confounded with the idea of unity as expounded by such pantheists as Spinoza or Averrhoes. The unity of Nature with God, of which Lulle speaks, is a unity that does not destroy itself. Everything is one, but at the same time, everything retains its own individuality, for within the general science is to be found the science of the particular. Lulle names his general science *The Tree of Science*.

All the creations and the created things emanate from God, *the Zohar* tells us. The difference between God and His creations lies in this : that they possess form and He is without form. God is, at one and the same time, the Cause, the Substance, the Form, and the Ideal of all that is already in existence, and of all that is yet to come into existence. All is one. Where there seems to be duality it is that which is to

be noted between existence and non-existence ; between higher forms and lower forms ; between light and darkness. The first is active and permanently creative, while the second is the negation of light, of activity, and of creativeness. It is only through the creations and in the creations that God takes visible form.

The idea of continuous creation—the emanations of the Sephiroth, for example—permeates the whole of *the Zohar*. Channels of light come from above to this world, and to the worlds beyond this world. They pour their light—which was first poured into them by the EnSoph—from world to world, unto the very last world. One thing lies hidden in all things : the First Substance, from which there perpetually emerge all the beings who fill the worlds. The souls of the universe also come from the First Substance.

*The Zohar* emphasizes the unity which exists amongst all creations, both above and below. Everything emanates from the Identical Sources : both the container in which each world is wrapped, and its contents. The container is spoken of in the *Zohar* as the Divine Garment. The contents, as the stream of light. The first act of creation is presented as a point of light emanating from the EnSoph. Through the reflection of the light of the EnSoph, light and space and spiritual substance are created. Every manifestation which emanates from this spiritual substance is as a divine garment whose colour, at the beginning, is of that dazzling brightness that distinguishes the spiritual sapphire. Its brightness makes all other brightness seem dull by comparison. But this brightness seems to grow more opaque as it makes its way down to the lower worlds. The light, emanating from the Original Point—which came when the EnSoph drew Himself together in order to allow something of Himself to go into the creation—becomes a stream of perpetual light with channels going through the Sephiroth (literally, all the worlds, the creations, and the created things). This stream of light acts as the spiritual fertilizer and as the irrigator of the Divine Garden : Paradise. This act is full of pleasure and fulfilment, being the symbol of the union of the eternal masculine with the eternal feminine.

"All that has been created," says *the Zohar*, "from the Holy Beasts in the highest firmament, down to the tiniest worm that crawls under the earth, lives in Elohim and through Elohim."

All through *the Zohar*, in the description of the creation and particularly in the description of the emanation of the Sephiroth, the pantheistic idea predominates. God creates and continues to exist in all things: both in the hidden and in the revealed. Both in the seen and in the unseen worlds. Both in physical matter and in spiritual essence. Both in animate and in inanimate objects. One is impressed with the *Zohar's* constant reiteration that within this pantheism lies the Divine transcendence and the constant revitalization of the creations by their Creator.

*Louis de Leon* sought and found in Nature divine harmonies which he transmitted to mankind in his mystical songs. In him, Nature was alive and active, as is flame in fire. Its beauty was reflected in his soul, as in a mirror, and expressed itself in a boundless love to all things. In the mirror which Nature holds up to our eyes he saw the image of God and the unity which governs all creation. He tells us: "Perfection means that each one of us must be a perfect world in himself. For if all is in me and I am in all; if I contain all things within myself and if all things contain me in themselves, then must all this mechanism of the universe be linked up and embraced, the one within the other. And the multitude of its diverse elements united. Without losing their identity, they will mix with one another. And they will remain multiple without actually being so. For so long as there is variety and diversity, unity will triumph above everything."

In her frank confessions *Santa Teresa* tells us: "At the beginning, it was difficult for me to believe that God is so near to us, that He is, in fact, in every creature. But now my visions have shown me clearly that not only is God's grace with us but that He Himself is in us and we in Him." She sees and feels that her own substance and the Divine Substance—as revealed to her with miraculous clarity—are one and the same. "For," she says, "when one understands the great mysteries, it appears as if the soul is visioning them in

God Himself. But this is no imaginary vision. It is an intellectual vision in which the mystic sees that all things may be seen in God since all things are contained in Him." And again, *Santa Teresa* tells us: "The union of man with God is nothing but the re-union of two bodies which have been separated but are always one."

*Juan de la Cruz* impresses upon us the existence of a God Who is present in all things, gives life to all things, penetrates all things everywhere, and never ceases to re-create Himself in His endless creations. What a contrast to the personal God of the cold Theists, who teach that God created the world, gave it fixed laws, and then separated Himself from His creations! From the mystical revelations of *Juan de la Cruz* we learn that it is only through the soul that man can attain to the recognition of God. The soul is full of that love which forces it to go out and seek its lover in the profound caves of feeling. In the deeps of life where rests the Divine Force. In spite of the darkness in which it is engulfed, in spite of its fears of the night, the soul does not give up the search until it has found God.

In the mysticism which the Jewish exiles took with them from the Peninsula, the pantheistic idea continued to find expression in various ways. Thus, much later, *Cordobero* (1522-1570), the Sepharadi leader of the Galilean group of mystics in Palestine, says: "Everything has its existence in God. Through the recognition of himself man comes to the understanding of the whole of existence." And, in another place, he expands this same idea: "The three first Sephiroth—the Crown, Wisdom, and Intelligence—must be considered as one and the same thing. The first represents Knowledge or Science; the second, that which knows; the third, that which is known. In order to understand this identity, we must first understand that the Science of the Creator is not that of the created thing. In the created thing, Science is distinct from the subject that is treated and bears rather on objects that are also distinct from the subject matter. We designate this by three terms: Thought. That which thinks. That which is

thought. But the Creator is at one and the same time : Knowledge. That Which Knows. That Which is Known. And the Creator's manner of thinking does not consist in applying His thinking to things outside Himself, but rather in the knowledge of Himself. For, it is in knowing Himself that He knows all that is. Nothing exists that is not united with Him and that He does not find in His own proper substance. He is the prototype of all that is. All things exist in Him in the purest and most accomplished form. Thus, the perfection of all created things is to be found in that existence in which they become one with the source of their being, while, on the other hand, the farther away they are from this original Source, the less perfect and sublime does their state become. All things that exist in the world have their form in the Sephiroth, and the Sephiroth have their form in the Source from which they emanate."

(4) IN THEIR INTENSE PREDILECTION FOR THE USE OF  
ALLEGORICAL SYMBOLS

Besides their exoteric reality all things have an esoteric reality from which mankind may learn to know those things which remain hidden from the eye. The universe is full of symbols, which—could we but read them—would lead us to the Real Being, Who is not a symbol, but that which stands for reality itself. And, as the whole world is nothing but a gradation of emanations, the human spirit can find a higher significance in all things. In learning to understand this higher significance, man's intelligence may rise ever higher, until an understanding of the Supreme Source is attained. Thus does the mystical allegorism of *the Zohar* submit to the same governing principle as that which governs visible things.

The principal idea, both in *Ibn Arabi* and in *the Zohar*, an idea expressed by both by means of symbols, is that God is light. Furthermore, the allegory of the Two Lights used by Ibn Arabi is also used by *Ramon Lulle* when comparing the light of faith with the light of human understanding. In the work of the mystics of the three faiths in Spain, God is pure light. His manifestations are described with the imagery of light,

reflections, and splendour. Ibn Arabi compares the influence of the upper worlds upon the lower to the flame of a candle.

In the symbolism used by *Ibn Arabi* there are two streams or emanations. One causes the existence of matter capable of receiving the original forms, and prepares it to be animated by the Divine Spirit. The other produces special manifestations which bring external visions. The second he calls the Holy Emanation and makes it dependent on the first which is the Holier Emanation. From the first come the fixed or universal essentials and their place in the Divine Science. From the second comes the external recognition of acts and their consequences, conforming to the phrase so beloved of the mystics: "I was a hidden treasure, and I longed to be revealed."

*Ibn Arabi* goes on to explain emanation by comparing it to a mirror: "We understand by emanation the fact that the Divine Goodness produces the light of existence in every atom that *is*, without separating the form conceived by God, from God the All-Highest. Just as a mirror receives the reflection of the man standing in front of it without separating the man from his face. Different, however, is the case of water flowing out of a pitcher."

Creation is thus represented as the reflection of the Divine Science in a mirror. Adam—who symbolized for *Ibn Arabi* the universal soul—is the clarity of the mirror. Before the coming of Adam, God made the world as a sort of fantastic existence: matter without spirit. A pure cloud, like the matter destined to form the body of Adam before the soul was breathed into it. Adam made the world manifest. He was the light and luminous principle that gave light to the mirror that was, up to then, opaque and shadowy. The luminous emanation of this universal spirit, says *Ibn Arabi*, had no beginning and will have no end.

Long before the appearance of *the Zohar* the Jewish mystics were using allegorical symbols to explain the Scriptures. One of these was *Maimonides* (1135-1204), one of whose allegories reads: "The Torah is like a golden apple in a net of finest silver meshes. The apple has two faces: an outer

face shining like silver and an inner face sparkling like gold. To the one who examines it superficially and at a distance only the outer face is revealed. But the golden inner face is revealed to him who makes a deep and serious study of the Torah." This allegory brings to mind the one in *the Zohar*, which compares the hidden mysteries of the Torah to a beautiful woman hidden away in a mysterious castle.

All the phenomena of life and creation were, to *Ramon Lulle*, the symbols of mysteries. The sun, the moon, the stars, light, shadow, rainbow, and the multitude of colours and forms in Nature. With his fiery imagination he gave life to all inanimate things and personified in them all animate things. In the story of *Blanquerna*, one of *Lulle's* heroes, we are taken with him on a long journey through the forest, arriving at sunset at the door of a sumptuous palace, on which are written the Ten Commandments. Within the palace he finds the Ten Commandments, desolate and alone, spurned and rejected of men. They lament their fate, remembering the honour done them of yore, when, for their sake, God had been honoured and men had received eternal salvation. *Blanquerna* is called upon to prove that he is devoting his life to the service of God. In the large, inner chamber, the walls are covered with the names of those who have broken the Commandments. The Commandments—old men with long white beards and grave faces—are seated on thrones of ivory. *Blanquerna* commiserates with them upon their exile, and promises to do his utmost to help restore them to their former place in the hearts of the people.

Midst the splendours of the vegetation on Mount *Randa*, where it faces the sea and is kindled by the sun, *Lulle* finds Nature offering him inexhaustible opportunities for meditation. He contemplates the splendid trees which he loves, and which he uses as allegorical symbols in all his work. He sees them as sages, as nobles, as womanly figures of Intelligence and Love, discoursing on theology and philosophy to the pleasant murmur of a nearby stream. He compares plants with human beings, to the detriment of the latter. Plants raise themselves above the earth so that their beauty



may delight the eye, while man, having grown to full strength, is dragged down by the vanities of earth. Trees produce progressively : leaves, flowers and fruit. They do not try to pervert the natural laws that govern their existence.

The following allegory is characteristic of the manner in which *Lulle* drove home his messages : three sages, a Jew, a Christian, and a Saracen, *each pursuing a different route, arrived at the same place*. Here, they came upon a noblewoman mounted on a palfrey which was drinking at the fountain. Around the fountain grew five splendid trees. The sages saluting the lady with all humility asked her name and were told that she was called Intelligence. They begged her to tell them the nature and properties of each tree and to explain the significance of the writing on the leaves. And the lady told them : The first tree, with its twenty-one flowers, stands for God and His essential uncreated virtues. It is governed by two conditions : First, that all must be attributed to God. Second, that none is inferior to the other. The second tree with its forty-nine flowers stands for the created virtues, by means of which the Blessed received the Eternal Beatitude. The third tree with its forty-nine flowers stands for the seven great virtues and the seven capital sins. It is governed by the condition that the virtues are strongest in the strength of their opposition to the vices, and that they grow weaker in their failure to deny vice. The fourth tree, with its twenty-one flowers, stands for the seven created virtues which must agree with each other in order that Truth may reign supreme. The fifth tree, with its forty-nine flowers, stands for the seven created virtues and the seven major sins, etc. Which reminds us of the opening allegory of *the Zohar*, comparing the thirteen leaves of the lily to the thirteen categories of Mercy, and the five strong leaves to the five Gates of Salvation.

The mystical symbolism of *the Zohar* has the same governing principle as the one which governs visible things. All the symbols carry their hidden meaning. Their source is to be found in the mysteries which were revealed by the Masters of Mystics in ancient times. The supernatural pictures

presented in the *Zohar* may strike the reader, at times, as being far-fetched and bizarre, but there are also pictures, metaphors and expressions that must produce the impression of great art. It is not an art, however, which can be compared or measured with other forms of art, whose message and appeal carries only to the senses. The art, too, is enveloped in divine mystery. According to it, the phenomena of the world and the text of the Scriptures (also phenomena) are not only the reflection of that which goes on in the upper world, but they possess a double reality: the sensible and the abstract. The tales of the Scriptures are historical facts, but their greater importance lies in that they bear witness to the high truths which they symbolize. We shall bring only three of the numerous examples given to prove this allegorical principle:

(a) A king sent his son into the country so that he might become strong and robust and acquire knowledge at the same time. At the accomplished time he was told that his son had grown up, that he was in good health, and that his education was completed. Because of his great love for his son, the King sent the Queen herself to bring him home. So does Nature beget a son for the King of the Universe—the Divine soul—and the King sends him down to earth to become strengthened and ennobled. In another place *the Zohar* compares this contact of the soul with evil to the test which a father puts upon his son, by throwing him into the arms of a courtesan, so that he may test his moral force and fortify himself in overcoming temptation.

(b) The description of the monster-fish called Leviathan: The drops of water falling from his body are the sources which give rise to nine rivers. When God created the universe, his first act was to create this monster in whose scales all was enclosed in confusion. The first scales which fell away from the fish's body were imperfect worlds which soon disappeared. Had the giant fish been able to join his female the world would never have been able to resist their combined onslaught, and the organized world would never have come into

being. This primordial monster covered all space and cast a thick shadow over everything. Then God cut off his head and threw his body into the depths. There He divided the body and spread the light through all the spaces, thus reducing the monster to complete impotence.

(c) *The Zohar* refers to the heavens as *The Field of Apples*, a figurative name for the Sephiroth, the mysterious apples, brilliantly white, of a striking illumination which gives light to three hundred and seventy worlds. These apples are the offspring of the two apples of *The Old One*.

Another form of symbolism, common to the Spanish mystics, is that the beloved woman is the personification of God—the source of grace and happiness from which all good flows.

*The Song of Songs* formed the basis for many allegorical studies amongst the mystics, and particularly amongst those of the Peninsula. Poems which gave expression to symbolical love were very popular. Amongst those who explained the Song of Songs in symbolical terms were: *The Sepharadi Kabbalists*: the Moslem, *Ibn Arabi*: and the Christians, *Ramon Lulle* and *Juan de la Cruz*. Under the Oriental ornamentation describing the love of Solomon for Shulamith, they found a deeper meaning. It represented to all of them the heavenly love which is free from all sensuality and in which the lovers are humanity and God. Or the mystical union between God and the soul. The Oriental elaboration of the language, the exotic imagery, the fragrant, flower-laden trees of Judæa, the solemn cedar trees, the shining shields, the fairy palaces and the strange islands, the rushing rivers and the flourishing valleys, the purple flower-beds and the vast ewers of gold and silver—all this regal splendour the mystics regarded as the outer fortress enclosing the peaceful centre where the soul lies entrenched. None of the world's tempests may enter here. No movement of material substance, no temptations of passion, no earthly disturbances, and no voices—not even the voices of the angels—can penetrate this quiet recess. Within, there is always the twilight of a beauty too deep for expression, of a longing for

the unattainable that shuts out all lesser considerations. It is this love and this longing that the mystic finds in the passion-laden verses of the Song of Songs.

*Ibn Hazm*, a Moslem mystic living in Cordoba in the eleventh century, expressed in terms of human love and passion the symbolism of the union of the soul with the Infinite in his book *The Necklace of the Dove*.

*Ibn Arabi* asks us to look for the spiritual meaning in his songs about sensual love and to find in the ordinary figures of speech the symbols of sublime mysticism and of divine illumination. The same symbolism as *the Zohar* applies to the Song of Songs *Ibn Arabi* applies to the love songs in his book *Treasures for Lovers*, in the prologue of which he says : " When I resided at Mecca, in the year 598, I made the acquaintance of the daughter of Zahir Ibn Rustam, a young woman, beautiful, devout, modest, binding all who beheld her in chains of love. She was the inspiration for my poems which tell of the sweet fancies of the lover and seek to convey some of the passionate feelings treasured in my heart. But I also make constant allusions to spiritual revelations and to relations with the intelligences of the Divine Spheres. This is customary in our allegorical style, since we consider the things of the future life preferable to those of this world. God forbid that the reader should attribute unworthy thoughts to the writers of poetry such as this ! Such men aspire only to the things of heaven ! If I use the language of love to express lofty thoughts concerning spiritual mysteries and the teachings of philosophy and ethics, it is because men are prone to dally with such amorous fancies and are the more readily attracted to the subject of my songs."

Warning the reader ever to search for the hidden meaning in his narrative, *Ibn Arabi* tells the following story : " One night, I was in the Temple of Gaaba walking, as required by the holy rites, round and round the holy dwelling. A strange peace was in my soul. Suddenly a hand, softer than velvet, touched me on the shoulder. I turned and saw a Greek maiden standing before me. Never had I gazed on so beautiful a countenance, nor listened to so sweet a voice

expressing lofty thoughts in subtle language." And he goes on to picture for us this, his beloved : That she is the symbol of high wisdom ; that her virgin breasts are the nectar which stimulates the high wisdom ; that the smile of her lips is the symbol of illumination ; that her eyes are the symbols of light and of revelation ; that the anxiety of the lover is the symbol of the spiritual nostalgia of the soul ; that the admiration of the lover for his beloved is mystical and represents the sweet longing of the soul which hopes, by means of its ecstasy, to consummate the spiritual union with the beloved.

*The Troubadours* of Provence and of Catalonia were the masters of the poetry of love. To them, love and poetry were synonymous. Only rarely did this gracious art dedicate itself to the symbolization of divine love. This we find at its best in the philosophy of love of *Ramon Lulle*. He was a pupil of the Troubadours and his youth was completely enslaved by earthly beauty, and by the desire for earthly joys. His youthful passion was centred on Ambrose de Castella, the most beautiful woman in Palma de Mallorca. Legend has it that he followed her right up to the doors of the church on horseback. It is to his love for her that we are indebted for some of the most ardent and beautiful of his love-songs. This passion and ardour he later transferred to his songs of God, the Beloved in Whom, with all the warmth of his fiery soul, he had found a refuge. These later love-songs, centred round God the Beloved, are in the tradition of the Song of Songs.

At his best amongst the beauties of Nature, *Lulle* tells us how he goes at dawn to visit the flowers. The lilies sing to him of his beloved, purer and whiter than they. The rose, regarded by human eyes as the most beautiful of the flowers, is like the Beloved Who is, in spiritual eyes, the most beautiful of all the loved ones. He exchanges ideas with the birds : " Oh, birds, you invoke in me the image of my Beloved. Have you ever looked upon the face of God Who saves you from indifference and deepens your capacity for love to immeasurable depths ? " A bird answers him : " Who is

there to make me sing, if not God—the God of Love—Who looks upon indifference as an offence? ” And *Lulle* calls to the Lovers of God from the depths of the forest: “ Lovers, do you need fire? Then come to my heart and kindle your love. Do you need water? Then come to the fountains of my eyes from which the tears are streaming. Do you need thoughts on love? Come take them out of my meditations.”

Again, from the *Love-Songs of Ramon Lulle* we cull the following: “ The leaves of love are the sighs which come from the heart of the friend because of his great love for the Beloved. The tears and fears prove the guilt of the friend towards the Beloved and Love. The flowers of love are God and the Eternal Beatitudes, for God is the end of all existence.” Again, we are told: “ The friend was ill and lay in a chamber of love hung with pictures that reminded him of the beauty and worth of his beloved. He is a prisoner in the Palace of Love. And he thinks of all that has been created and marvels at the greatness and beauty of the Beloved. He is served with choice viands which serve to increase his hunger for love and the Beloved. The friend is shown the goodness and sinfulness of man. He is shown Hell and Paradise. He sees the beatitude of those who have died for a holy love, and he, too, longs to throw off the earthly bonds and fly to the Beloved. And so overpowering becomes his longing for union with the Beloved that he expires for very love.”

*The Zohar* explains the love of the King for *Shulamith*—the heroine of King Solomon’s love-songs—as the love of the King for the Queen, that is, the love of God for the Schechina. (Further examples from the *Zohar* will be brought in the special chapter devoted to the book.)

In the verses of *Juan de la Cruz* we read of the ardour of the lover for the beloved. In language clothed with the lavishness of Spanish-Oriental imagery he speaks of the love which binds them to each other. This love, he explains, is the deeper, spiritual love that exists between the soul and God at the moment of their union.

## (5) IN THEIR CONCEPTION OF PARADISE AND HELL

The most striking similarities to be found in the work of the Jewish and Moslem mystics of Spain is in their conception of the after-life, and particularly in their descriptions of Paradise and Hell. Later Christian mystics borrowed most of their conceptions from these two sources, which can also be traced back to one common source: the old Apocalyptic and Gaonic literature. As will be seen presently it was this original Hebrew source that must have inspired the Moslem mystics, whose work in this respect reached its highest form in the fine descriptions left us by *Ibn Arabi*. He, in turn, may have proved a source of inspiration to the authors of the Zohar. For while the authors of the Zohar knew the original Hebrew sources, they may have been intrigued by the distinctive Spanish garments in which Ibn Arabi clothed the ideas he took from them. In Ibn Arabi's book, *Al Futuhat*, and in the Zohar, we get a grandiose picture of Paradise against a warm background of peculiarly Spanish fantasy. Thus, all that had gone into the making of traditional belief, all that had come down from generation to generation was put into the mystics' crucible and moulded into a creation distinguished for its fantastic splendour, for its mystical depth, and for its poetic beauty.

In the work of the Jewish astronomer, *Ibn Ezra* of Toledo, who preceded the revelation of the Zohar, we see Paradise represented as follows: The pious and the saints live in the spheres of the moon; the savants and the thinkers in Mercury; in Venus live the beautiful women who sing and dance to the strains of flute and harp. In the sun are the heroes who are occupied with arraying the King in his festive garments. In Mars live the people of blood and destruction, the warriors. In Jupiter reside the righteous, the peaceful, the mild, the prophets and the princes. In Saturn are the shrewd and the cunning, those who twist word and action. In the fixed stars are the strong, the giants.

*Ibn Arabi* gathered together all the Mohammedan conceptions, all the legends created with the exotic extravagance

of the Oriental imagination. All that Moslems had contributed to the making of this tradition of the grace, the beauty, the poetry, the faith, and the ardour that filled them. All this had grown with the time into a delightful fantasy with which the Oriental soul, thirsting for colour and splendour, found pleasure in refreshing itself. This oral tradition—relating the wonders and miracles which the Prophet saw on that night of miracles when he wandered through the heavens—*Ibn Arabi* put into the crucible of his poetic imagination. He re-created it and brought forth an artistic description of the future world far superior to, and far more beautiful than, anything that had been conceived up to his time. In the same way, the masters of *the Zohar* moulded all the Jewish legends and traditions about Paradise, extant in oral tradition into one harmonious whole.

There is no doubt but that the fundamental legends about Paradise which had been accepted by Islam in other countries, and by Ibn Arabi in Spain, were based on the *Apocalyptic literature* in existence before the advent of Islam. Later influences were wrought on it by the *Haggadic literature*, to be superseded in turn by the influences of the *Gaonic literature*, created during the period of Islam's dominance in Baghdad. Jewish influence was manifest in Moslem legends from very earliest times. All these influences are to be found incorporated into the work of Ibn Arabi.

*Ibn Arabi's* description of the ascension to heaven of Mohammed bears many striking resemblances to the description found in the early *Apocalyptic literature* of the ascension of Rebi Ishmael, who passed through six palaces before coming to the one in which is the Glory of God. At the entrance to the Seventh Palace he prays that, because of the merits of the High Priest Aaron, he be not cast out of heaven by the angels. The Angel Metatron is sent in answer to his prayer, to guide him into the Palace. He sees God in all His Glory. But the Angels of the Glory and the Seraphim of Flame look at him so sharply that he falls down in a state of unconsciousness. But God reproves the angels and Metatron brings his soul back to him. (A striking resemblance to the experience of Mohammed



in Ibn Arabi.) Rebi Ishmael then begins to intone a psalm of praise before the Throne of Glory. And the Holy Beasts under the Throne join their voices to his in praise. And the Angel Metatron recites for the benefit of all assembled, and especially for the Eagle of the Glory, the great merits of Rebi Ishmael. After that, the pilgrim to Heaven is allowed to look upon the Glory of God unmolested.

In *Haggadic literature*, the Master, Rebi Joshua ben Levi, is guided by the Prophet Elijah and he sees the future world as follows: In Hell, sinners are hanging by their noses, their tongues, or their hands, each receiving punishment according to the kind of sins he had been guilty of. Women are hanging by their breasts. Some are eating their own flesh, others are eating fire. All the horrors of the inferno are enumerated. Then he is taken to Paradise. At the entrance he sees two doors of carbuncle, guarded by sixty myriads of angels. The face of each angel is bright as the celestial splendour. They are waiting to welcome the righteous. They divest them of their grave clothes and clothe them in eight garments of clouds of glory. A two-tiered crown is given to each one. One tier is of precious stones and the second of gold from the land of the Parvaim. To each of the righteous the angel presents a sprig of myrtle, singing his praises all the time. Then he is led to a spring of water, surrounded by eight hundred kinds of rose trees and myrtles. Each one is seated under his own canopy in the order of his merit. At their feet flow four streams, milk, wine, honey and perfume. Each canopy is set with an emblem of gold bearing thirty diamonds, each as bright as the sun. On a table in front of each of the righteous lie jewels and precious stones. He is served by sixty angels who intone while serving him: "Eat with joy. Here is honey for you who were occupied with the study of the Torah, which is sweet as honey. And drink the wine which has been preserved since the creation of the world, you who spent your lives in studying the Torah which is as wine." All the angels are beautiful, the ugliest amongst them being as beautiful as was Joseph, and as that Rabbi Jochanan,

whom women were counselled to look at in order to assure themselves beautiful children.

There is neither darkness nor night. Every day the Zaddik (Righteous) is renewed in the three periods of his life : childhood, youth, and old age. As a child, he comes to the children's heaven and enjoys all the playfulness of childhood. In the second period, he partakes of all the pleasures of young manhood. In the third, he comes into the peaceful joys of old age.

Eighty myriads of trees grow in Paradise, the least amongst them being more fragrant than the most perfumed trees on earth. And sixty myriads of angels sing continuously in the heavenly choir. In the centre of Paradise stands the Tree of Life, its branches reaching from end to end. Each branch is covered with fruit bearing five hundred thousand different kinds of taste and of fragrance. A cloud of glory hovers over the trees while, from four different directions, the winds beat down on it, so that the fragrance is wafted to all the ends of the universe. Under the Tree sit scholars explaining the Scriptures. Each scholar is covered by two canopies, one of the sun, and the other of the moon and stars. Between the canopies is a curtain of the Cloud of Glory, inside of which lie three hundred and ten worlds.

In Paradise the Righteous are divided into seven classes. In the first are the martyrs, such as Rabbi Akiba and his colleagues. In the second are those drowned in the sea. To the third belong Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai and his pupils. In the fourth are those who were buried under avalanches. In the fifth are those who have repented of sin and turned back to righteousness and who are placed higher than those who have never sinned. In the sixth are the celibates, those who have committed no sin. In the seventh are the poor, those who led righteous lives and busied themselves with the study of the Torah. In their midst sits God Himself explaining the Torah to them. Their merit is so high that none is able to look at them but God.

In *Gaonic literature* we also find a description of a journey into the future world. It describes Paradise and its Seven

Palaces and also Hell. Before arriving at the Palaces there is a grandiose preparation for the glory that is to come. Praise and hymns are heard on every side. Every day the angels are seized anew with trembling, for they can never grow accustomed to the marvellous sights. The vision is slowly unrolled, flames envelop it, and fear seizes upon all who behold it. But the music of the spheres breaks forth and an ecstatic joy fills all who hear it. Eight angels guard every Palace door. At the entrance to the Seventh Palace stand fear-inspiring warriors who brandish naked swords. Stars shoot from their eyes and sparks of fire dart from their mouths. Riders on fearful steeds, with blood spurting from their nostrils, spread terror in all beholders. The horses quench their thirst in lakes of fire.

The description of the Seventh Palace is given, even to the most minute details. In reading it, one is led to believe that the description of the angels, of the regal splendour of the palaces, of the hymns and praises heard upon approaching the Throne of Glory, of the bliss of the celestial pleasures on the one hand, and of the depth of suffering undergone by the sinners in hell on the other, must have served as the basis of the descriptions of Paradise and Hell used both by *Ibn Arabi* and *the Zohar*.

It is interesting to note the development of the conception of Paradise and Hell from period to period. In Gaonic literature, it is visionary and spiritual, as compared with the conception that preceded it in Haggadic literature where it was purely physical. When Jewish tradition was already at the stage of ennobling and spiritualizing the dreams of a future life, the Moslem conception of Paradise and Hell, based on the earlier Jewish literature, was still physical and sensual. It was only after the appearance of the Gaonic literature, with its higher conceptions, that there becomes apparent, on the part of the Moslem mystics, the desire to spiritualize the Moslem conception as well. This finer conception of the Moslem Paradise and Hell was brought to its highest development by *Ibn Arabi*. While it did not reach the spiritual heights of *the*

*Zohar* creation it was yet higher than any previous Islamic conception.

Again, it would seem that *the Zohar*, whose debt was owing to the same original Jewish sources as that of *Ibn Arabi*, was at least stimulated by the Moslem mystic who preceded the appearance of the *Book of the Splendour*. In Spain, Arabic literature was well known to the Jews and was widely read in cultured Jewish circles. Moslems and Jews influenced each other in all things spiritual. In the works of many of the Hebrew poets, philosophers and writers in Spain we find traces of this borrowing from Moslem literature, which was held in high esteem. It is not surprising, therefore, that the same should hold true of the mystical literature which originated in the Peninsula.

Comparing the two conceptions of the future life, as expressed by the Moslem mystics and particularly by *Ibn Arabi* and by *the Zohar*, we find that they have not only much in common, but that much of it is not to be found in the earlier Jewish sources, from which they both borrowed. Similarity is to be noted in the following points :

1. Paradise is located directly above Hell.
2. The soul, in its ascent, is shown to pass through the same number of stages.
3. Sinners are divided into different classes, according to the enormity of their sins, while the Righteous are divided according to their merit.
4. In the principle which guides the mode of punishment, and which is not dogmatic, but ethical.
5. In comparing Hell to a serpent.
6. In the idea that in Hell everything comes from the left side only.
7. In the purification by fire. This is called in *the Zohar* "The River of Fire," and in *Ibn Arabi* "Sirat."
8. In the mystical meaning attributed to the tree which stands in the middle of Paradise and from which depends the life of the souls.

9. In describing the whole of the future life as the concentration and the visioning of the great white light, which is God, and that the aim of all things is to seek a complete understanding of the Infinite.

10. In their method of making every soul see God in the light of the degree it has been able to achieve by reason of its merit.

11. In according a higher place to the mystics and to those who concern themselves with the divine mysteries, and in making them appear to possess a greater capacity for enjoying the Light of God than either the Righteous or the Saints.

12. In the conception that the revelation, or the attainment of the Vision of the Infinite, brings to the ecstasy of joy.

13. In making the celestial Jerusalem the centre around which the whole of the future life revolves.

*In the Zohar the earthly Jerusalem is the symbol of earthly perfection. It is the heart of the world. In Jerusalem is manifested the Divine Completeness. The love of the King for the Queen is the love of God for Jerusalem.*

14. In the wealth of description and the lavishness of imagery with which the future world is pictured to us.

15. In the development of the more spiritual conception of Paradise.

We read in *Ibn Arabi* : " God has rendered Paradise in accordance with the varying degrees of man's understanding. The delights of Paradise have been defined as purely spiritual by the teachers of other religions. We must understand that, if the teachers had recourse to none of the allegories used in our Koran, it was because their teachings were for a people conversant with the Torah and the Books of the Prophets and therefore prepared to understand spiritual teaching. It was not so with our Prophet, Mohammed. His divine mission fell among a rude people who dwelt in deserts and amongst mountains. They lacked the discipline of learning and

believed neither in the Resurrection nor in the future life. They were ignorant of the pleasures of the Princes even of this world, then how should they be able to conceive of the pleasures of the Kings of Heaven? It is for this reason that most of the descriptions of Paradise in our teaching are based on the delights of the body, in order that they might be understood by the people and serve as an incentive to their minds." But even before him, in the twelfth century, Shakir Ibn Muslim of Orihuela enumerates the different aspects in which God appears to the elect and that each one sees him according to his own attributes of wisdom, kindness, beauty, eloquence, bounty, mercy and perfection.

16. In the manner of dividing Paradise into different departments as, for example: (a) For the children who have died before their time. (b) For the Righteous. (c) For the Martyrs.

Thus *Ibn Arabi* tells us: "At the Divine Throne are two pearls. One is white and the other yellow. Each of these pearls contains seventy thousand mansions. The white pearl is for Mohamet and his flock. The yellow pearl is for Abraham and his descendants."

Again *Ibn Arabi* describes how the Righteous are divided in the order of their merit: "The Blessed gather round the snow-white hill to await the Vision of the Lord. Each is in his respective grade and place and magnificently arrayed. A brilliant light dazzles them and they fall prostrate. The light penetrates into their innermost depths, so that each one becomes all eye and ear, and sees and hears with his entire spirit. Such is the virtue conferred on them by the Light. The veils of Glory, Majesty and Power are drawn aside, and they are prepared for the Presence of God. Truth is revealed to them as the union of the Beautiful with the Good. The brilliance of the wonderful vision pervades their whole being. The Vision has different aspects because each one sees it according to his own understanding. The Prophets, whose knowledge of God is instinctive and not increased by reason and contemplation, behold the Vision through the Eye of

Faith. The Saint who has been inspired by a Prophet will see it through the eyes of the Prophet. But if he also gained a knowledge of God through contemplation he will have two visions : one of Science, and the other of Faith. The Saint who acquired his knowledge, either through his own reason, or direct from God, will be ranged, in the Beatific Vision, with men of science and of simple faith. Those who obtained the mystical intuition from God will occupy a grade of Glory apart from all the other of the elect.

“ The three aspects in which God is seen by the elect correspond to the ways in which a knowledge of Him was gained on earth. He who acquired that knowledge in all three ways will witness three divine manifestations at the same moment. The Beatific Vision, pure and unalloyed, will be the exclusive heritage of Prophets and mystics, who received divine inspiration on earth. In each grade of vision an approximate degree of bliss will be experienced. Thus, the joy of some of the Righteous will be purely intellectual ; that of others, emotional, physical, or imaginative, as the case may be. As for the mass of the faithful, the enjoyment derived by each from the Beatific Vision will be in proportion to his capacity for understanding. The men of rational science, although superior to the multitude, are yet unable to conceive the absolute abstraction from all matter, hence their enjoyment of the Vision is chiefly imaginative. The greater part of the truths revealed by God through religion have been presented to the multitude in a form adapted to its understanding. But the mystical allusions accompanying these truths are intelligible only to the few of superior intellect.

“ The Divine Light pervades the beings of the elect, and radiating from them is reflected as by mirrors on everything around them. The spiritual enjoyment induced by this contemplation of the reflection is even greater than that of the Vision itself. For, at the moment when they experience the Beatific Vision, the elect are so transported that they cannot appreciate its joys. So intense is their delight that it is impossible for them to realize it. On the other hand, the

reflected light does not overpower them and they are able to participate in all the degrees of its joys."

The *author* of the *Tadkhira* of Cordoba, who lived in the middle of the thirteenth century, tells us : "After each vision of the Supreme Light the splendour continues to reign in the soul of those who have had the vision and the bliss of the Glory goes on uninterrupted."

And again, the same author tells us : "The soul will enjoy the Beatific Vision according to the merit it has gained by adhering to the precepts on earth."

In *the Zohar* the movements of the soul after death are presented as a series of purifying tests by which it may mount, step by step, on the road which leads to original perfection. The movements are many and varied, for every soul must pass through numerous stages. Man does not realize how diverse are the ways of God ! Into which experiences they may lead ! And which judgment might, at any moment, be passed upon them ! Great as are the tests which await the soul in this world, they are even greater in the world to come. How varied, how mysteriously manifold are the forms through which the soul must pass until it reaches the last perfect form !

"The soul knows and attains that which it was impossible for her to know and attain in this world," *the Zohar* tells us, and goes on to relate how the soul, purified at the moment of leaving the body, receives the Kiss of Love from the Infinite. This separates her forever from the ills of the flesh and brings her at once to the heights. It is the Kiss which "joins the soul once more to its root and its principle." Then the soul lives forever in the pure and sparkling reflection of the Divine Light.

In the mysterious depths of the Palace of Love takes place the sublime betrothal of the soul with God. This spiritual union gives the soul the key to the secrets of the passions which come from a knowledge of the Good and the Beautiful. *The Zohar* asks : "What does it mean when God is presented as preparing a banquet in the next world for the Righteous ?" And it gives answer : "The banquet must



be taken in its spiritual sense, since it refers to the spiritual food for the soul. For, 'They will understand the sublime and therein they will find joy.' "

Again, the return of the soul to its celestial home is likened in *the Zohar* to the return of a royal princess. She will return in grace to the court of her father. It is the love she bears her father which has helped her to conquer all the obstacles that lay between them, and to reach his side at last.

But if, before her descent to earth, the soul had already contemplated the Supreme Splendour and understood the eternal verities, then the return to her sphere holds no new joy in store for her, say the Jewish mystics. Either *the Zohar* is making abstraction of the pre-existence of the soul on earth on the score of pure dogma, or it would prove that the existence of the soul on earth, its association with the body and its trials, all its experiences of the realities of the world, have served to deepen its capacity for understanding and appreciation of the heavenly joys, so that, upon its return to the sphere whence it came, it can experience greater, more intimate, and more sincere joy. Having experienced that which is an imitation, the soul is all the better able to enjoy the beauties of the original. The intensity of the heavenly joys can be measured by the depth of sadness and disillusionment on earth.

*Joseph Caro*, the Sepharadi mystic in Palestine, tells of a vision in which he sees himself burnt at the stake. The flames having purified him of sin and released his soul, he instructs his soul for the vision of Paradise which it is soon to have, as follows: " And all the Righteous from the Garden of Eden will come to meet thee, with the Godhead leading them. And they will receive thee with many songs and with psalms of praise. They will receive thee as a bridegroom. And behold, seven baldacchins have been prepared for thee, and a golden throne with seven steps, in which are set many pearls and precious stones. And all the Righteous will accompany thee to the very last canopy. They will dress thee in fourteen garments of honour. Two of the Righteous, one to the right of thee and one to the left, will set thee upon

the throne and place a crown upon thy head. And all the Righteous will sit around thee and discuss the Torah with thee. After one hundred and eighty days thou wilt give a banquet of the Torah for all the Righteous. And for seven days thou wilt explain to them all the knowledge that thou didst gain upon the earth. Then wilt thou be led to the thirteen streams of balsam, and therein wilt thou sink. After that, the angel Michael will bring thee as a sacrifice before the Holy One. But of that which happens afterwards, nothing may be revealed, for no eye is able to gaze upon the Godhead."

(6) IN THE MANNER OF PREPARATION FOR THEIR UNION  
WITH GOD

In the record of their experiences and of the manner of their preparation for the union with God, the mystics of the Peninsula have shown many common traits. The way, they tell us, is long and full of obstacles. The novice must concentrate on his vision. The soul must be free from the enslavement of the senses and able to nullify any impressions received through them. Memory must be emptied. The power of the imagination must be thrust aside. And then, through the very simplicity of pure wisdom, the seeker is able to see the Face of God. To penetrate in Him. To be at one with Him. With effort and patience, and in accordance with the state of grace which the seeker has been able to achieve, his soul will succeed in attaining ever higher stages, until he reaches the very highest.

The Spanish mystics of the three faiths taught that intelligence, even when combined with the greatest effort and penetration, is not able to accomplish that which the mystical intuition is able to achieve through simple love. Even the simplest man, by virtue of a great love, is able to achieve the intimate union with God, sooner than the greatest philosopher. As *Juan de la Cruz* puts it: "There is nothing either created or thought that can offer to the understanding a means suitable for the union with God. Indeed, the under-

standing may prove an obstacle, rather than a means to such an union."

Knowing that all creation is governed by the love of God the mystic sends forth his love to God. It is a love that is free from jealousy, to the extent that the mystic is desirous that all creatures should love and admire God, and make themselves fit to receive the Divine Grace. Nevertheless, we must understand that there exists another sort of jealousy. There is a jealousy *for* God, a trait that distinguished the Spanish mystics and was able to bring them to the use of cruelty and torture towards the offender and the sinner. Stronger than death is the jealousy that comes through love, whether it be love for a human being, or love for God. In this must be sought the solution of the riddle of the hardening of the heart of even the most delicate and sensitive souls amongst the great mystics. That jealous love that led them to burn sinners alive!

Ecstasy is the higher degree that comes to the mystic seeking for revelation. It is the means for attaining spiritual visions. The physical forces seem to be sleeping. The mystical sweetness enjoyed while in this state is not to be compared with any experience of life. The soul is plunged into the waters of grace, where it fain would remain for ever. It flutters uncertainly between a state of laughter and of tears. In a sort of delirium the soul finds itself in the heart of Wisdom, understanding all things and grasping their true meaning in a flash. While he is going through this experience the mystic feels he could give voice to the greatest song that had ever been composed, since a spirit greater than that ever possessed by any poet has now taken possession of his soul. It is the same spirit that took possession of King David when he composed his songs to the music of his lyre.

*Juan de la Cruz* says: "The very act of recognition is confused, amorous, peaceful and calm at the same time. And the soul drinks deeply of wisdom, love and happiness. Then the soul, simple and pure, becomes transformed into simple and pure but withal divine wisdom. Once the soul is

taken by love the divine is able to penetrate it in the most natural manner."

The Sepharadi poet and philosopher of the pre-mystical period, *Ibn Gabirol*, gives us a hint of this mystical preparation. He shows that without ecstatic meditation—that which overcomes all the obstacles on the way and gives man the power to rise to the First Essence—no sublime knowledge is possible. A great and ardent love must accompany him who would embark upon this pilgrimage. Then he can attain ecstasy and, by means of it, escape from the bounds of the physical world and reach that height which is for the soul, the supreme of happiness.

The *Arab mystics*, who brought forth the finest blooms of their mysticism during their sojourn in Spain, teach that ecstasy emanating from the intuition is greater than that emanating from the reason ; that there is a universal spirit from which all other spirits are derived ; and that man, who is able to reach the heights by means of his ecstasy, is the most perfect thing in creation.

*Ibn Arabi* elaborated a definite method for arriving at a state of intuition when it is desired to attain visions and divine revelation. The manifestations which characterize his mystical revelations are the result of a definite plan in degrees of preparation—a plan which is more methodical, more intensified, and more carefully worked out, than that of any other mystic. One must seek deliberately, says *Ibn Arabi*, to put oneself into a state of receptiveness for divine revelation, during which time the novice " must not allow himself to be overcome by sadness, nor by the terrible ascetic struggle through which he is passing, nor yet to begin to despair of achieving success. He must place absolute reliance in the grace of God, and be ready to recognize the exact moment of his union with the Infinite."

One of the principal preparations for the revelation of mysteries, according to *the Zohar*, is love. Great secrets are revealed only to those who come with love ; only to the lover who sees no other object but that of his love, whose heart and soul are bound up in his beloved, who does not cease to be so

bound until love answers to love. God reveals Himself only to those whose object of love is the beloved. Fear is also precious in God's sight, but only the sort of fear that leads to love. For there are two kinds of fear: one is sterile and destructive; the other is the fear of the Infinite, which is like a servant accompanying the love to God. Love alone unites man with God, for in love lies the divine mystery. Adoration in love rises and attaches itself to the upper world. It is only by means of love that the upper and the lower worlds are united. "When such love has actually taken possession of a man, he flees all earthly joys. Even his love for his wife and children is as nothing compared to the love he feels for God. He attaches himself to God as the coal attaches itself to the flame. He is like unto a young man who dare not approach his beloved, while desiring her with all the violence of his nature. Only after much striving are the lovers able to find each other and to become united at last."

In his revelations, the *Master of the Zohar* tells us that, during an ecstatic contemplation, he saw a ray of the Superior Light spreading over three hundred and fifty-two circles. In the midst of this sea of light something dark was floating. But, at length, this dark spot also became draped in light. Then it began to move towards that profound sea in which all the splendours merge together. The Master calls it *The Vision of the Forgiveness*: "Thus I saw the performance of the forgiveness of sins. Thus is sin purified and illuminated."

*The Zohar* puts a strict guard on the threshold of the senses. And the Masters of the Zohar put their pupils through a series of severe intellectual tests and revealed their mysteries only to a chosen few. They maintained that different degrees lead to the higher knowledge and especially to the sublime ecstasy. These degrees being as follows: First, there is the vision through the mirror that is illuminated indirectly. Then there is the vision through the mirror that is illuminated directly. Then come the three degrees which lead to the intuition, culminating in the vision of the supreme flash of light.

Revelation is vouchsafed only to the elect. But even the elect do not all receive it in the same degree. *The Zohar* compares revelation to a beautiful woman hidden away in her castle, giving only an occasional glimpse of herself to the lover who knows of the entrance to the castle by the secret door. At first she makes him a simple sign in passing, and he tries to interpret the sign. (This is known as the method by allusion.) Later, she comes a little nearer and murmurs a few words of encouragement, but her face remains hidden behind an impenetrable veil. (This is known as the method by interpretation.) Then, her face being but slightly concealed by a fine veil, she remains somewhat longer. (This is known as the Haggadic method.) At length, when her lover has grown accustomed to his surroundings, she comes face to face with him and reveals to him the uttermost depths of her heart. (This is known as the mystical method of revelation.) Thus it is with the soul in its ascent towards the Supreme Wisdom. At first, the soul enters with hesitant steps and is fearful of its first contact with the supernatural. But after some time, feeling more assured, the soul begins to strike out for itself and swims between the waves in the fullness of its joy. Then, having reached its destination, it dwells in peace in its own uppermost regions.

In preparing himself for revelation and for the union with God, *Ramon Lulle* sought the loneliest places and the most arduous ways. He withdrew far from the multitude, where there was nothing to distract him. At the foot of Mount Randa he constructed a little hut in which he received his pupils and taught them. But when he desired communion with God, he climbed to the summit of the mountain. And there, in the clear, untroubled air, he experienced that ecstasy and those sublime revelations which he has set down with such fullness of detail in his books. In his search for isolation he resembled certain Jewish mystics and especially the Master of the Zohar, *Simeon ben Jochai*, who spent thirteen years in a cave near which, we are told, there grew a tree and there splashed a fountain—the tree and the fountain so beloved of *Ramon Lulle*, and oft his sole companions. In later centuries

the *Masters of the Sepharadi mystical group in Galilee* also lived in isolation.

The whole secret of the worshipful devotion of *Santa Teresa* lay in her deep love for God. The conclusion of all her thinking was this : that the principal thing in the inner life of the individual is not to imagine, to feel, or to think, but to love God. She tells us that she went forward to meet God. That she went straight into the arms of Him Who appeared to her. That He made a way in front of her and broke through all the barriers that obstructed her path and showed her the splendours of the upper realms. She also tells us of walking to the Inner Palace through seven stages, which she calls the *Seven Antechambers*. (This was a form of initiation most popular with the mystics of all three faiths.) She calls the seven stages thus : the stage of Prayer, the Novitiate, the First Call, the Purification, the Divine Delight, the Ecstasy, the Union. In order to find grace in the eyes of Him Whom she is seeking, she abandons the security of the senses in order to find the peace of God. She leaves mankind for God. She is absorbed in silence. Slowly God penetrates into her waiting soul. He reveals Himself to her and dwells in her. She compares herself to a garden that has been refreshed by an abundant stream of water. Her whole spirit has been caught and cleansed by a downpour of spiritual grace. And she tells us that, once having reached this spiritual height, she becomes aware that she must take particular care of the great treasure she has found, even as one cares for a rare and delicate flower that one has found after much seeking. From those who have come into His Garden and enjoy His rare delights, God exacts a high price. The man who is trying to reach God must know that he is trying to change a neglected soil full of rocks and weeds into an Eden.

From the moment that the soul decides to be nearer to God it is sustained by a Divine Force which helps to remove the obstacles in its path. The obstacles are changed into trees which must be watered and tended until the buds and flowers appear and bring joy to their Creator. Then will the Gardener Himself come and walk in the garden and find

delight in it. And *Santa Teresa* remembers with pain that once she also found joy in worldly things, loving money and striving for honours. Now she understands that real honours come only from an appreciation of things considered at their true worth. "All the divine treasures which I possess to-day," she says after her initiation, "came to me only after I had learned to live without money." Those who have not passed along this road will not understand her, she avers. They were the sort of people who would not even perceive the great change that had taken place, both inwardly and outwardly, in the one who has had such an experience.

*Juan de la Cruz* was completely submerged in divine inspiration. He possessed the talent for guiding the human soul. He taught his followers that all the things most prized by human beings are as the most abject poverty when compared to the riches and the victories to be gained in God's Palaces. That the good which comes in the ordinary way bears no resemblance whatever to the good that emanates from the Grace of God, and which the soul can receive only after it has been made fit by purification. Freeing herself from the slavery of the passions the soul passes through the darkness of night. In spite of her fear of the enveloping darkness the soul goes forth bravely to meet her Lover. And He takes her out of the path of the senses and sets her in the path of the spirit. From there she is able to pursue her way to the bright light of Divine Love. This flame, that is the love of God, kindles but slowly. But as the soul continues in its upward movement love becomes ever more manifest. It is a stage of preparation that helps to strengthen the soul. Even as Abraham made a feast on the day of the weaning of Isaac, so there is a celebration in heaven on the day when the soul is weaned away from the base desires of the body. Then the angels that guarded its infancy leave it and the soul begins to try out its own strength. Both the sustenance that came from the mother and her caresses are sorely missed as the soul begins to pursue its difficult road alone, working its way up to the source of the All-Good. "All the beauty of Nature is as nothing compared to the eternal beauty of the Creator," *Juan*



*de la Cruz* goes on, "and the soul which is not faithful in its love to God is without splendour and is darkened by its own ugliness which separates it from the Beauty of God."

Thus, all the Spanish mystics came to the same conclusion: How poor are the means at man's disposal—the means with which to meet the claims of the higher nature within him! The means with which to penetrate into the depths of his own inner self-recognition! How inadequate are the resources with which he hopes to break through the hard crust of his passion and desires! Frail, indeed, are the bridges which lie between matter and spirit. There is, however, no royal road from one to the other. It is only through hard, through unceasing toil, that man may hope to rise from the lower to the higher. How many times must the novice plunge into and struggle with the waters, until he has learned to swim! And no one is able to enjoy the plunge into the divine waters, unless and until he has been prepared for it by many tests of his own powers.

(7) IN BASING THEIR REVELATIONS ON VERSES FROM THE  
HOLY BOOKS

Most of the mystics of the Peninsula try to show that their revelations are based on events and prophecies mentioned in their Holy Books. This trait is most significant in the work of the Jewish mystics and particularly in the Zohar.

Underneath the real, *the Zohar* tells us, exists the ideal, which is the truth that underlies the profound sayings about the universe. Man must aim to discover the ideal sense of the universe. This is true of the Bible. He who can find in the Bible nothing but the narration of ordinary occurrences, and which he tries to judge by the same standards as govern ordinary life, has missed the true message of *The Book*. The narrative is clothed in ordinary language so that man may be able to read it. The simple man will see only this outer garment, while the man of wisdom will seek for the hidden mystery that lies in the narrative and that constitutes its soul and its *raison d'être*. *The Zohar* applies the metaphysical to the ordinary stories of the Bible. Thus, the

dwelling-place of Adam in the Garden of Eden is regarded by *the Zohar* as the dwelling-place of the soul in the future life. Adam's nakedness before his fall from grace is the luminous and spiritual nakedness of the soul before coming into this world. Adam's expulsion from the Garden of Eden is the soul's descent to the world of men. The garments of skins with which he covered up his nakedness are the opaque bodies which cover and tarnish the pure white light of the soul. Only virtue can give back to the soul the sublime transparence of its pristine state. Should the soul have failed to find this virtue before leaving the body it is unable to ascend higher until it has been purified by further tests.

In his book, *The Great Art*, *Ramon Lulle* bases many of his revelations on verses of the Bible. It is also one of the distinguishing traits in the work of *Juan de la Cruz*, especially in his book, *On the Summit of Mount Carmel*, which is based on verses taken from the Song of Songs. In *Al Futuhat* the mystic *Ibn Arabi* uses the Koran in the same way. The same is true of *Ibn Tufail* in his book *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*. The revelations are not necessarily comments on the verses which the subject matter has suggested, but rather mystical messages which have taken on form and content. They find expression as allegories, parables, legends, sayings and concepts of high visionary import. It is a simple, modest and impersonal form in which the mystics were able to touch upon all things concerning the spirit with the utmost freedom. And, on occasion, they rose to the expression of such doctrines as are worthy of finding a place amongst the most sublime creations of mankind.

## CHAPTER IV

### FURTHER SIMILARITIES IN THE WORK OF THE SPANISH MYSTICS

SUCH, then, are the broad lines along which the works of the mystics of the three faiths which flourished in the Peninsula are found to bear resemblances to each other. These are the general similarities. Further and more particular similarities may be noted by the student of the period under discussion :

(a) In comparing the doctrine of the *Zohar* with that of the Spanish Illuministic School of Ibn Massara of Cordoba.

(b) In the style and particularly in the novelty of the methods of his distinguished disciple Ibn Arabi—methods hitherto unknown to Islamic tradition, even as the methods of the *Zohar* proved novel to Jewish tradition.

(c) In their manner of clothing their ideas in the brilliant, floating garments of poetic imagery.

(d) In the fact that they considered mystical revelation as superior to all other oral religious tradition.

But the most striking points on which we find Ibn Arabi and the *Zohar* in agreement are the following :

1. That Light is the symbol of God and of His Divine manifestations, while darkness is the symbol of matter.
2. That letters and numbers have ideological value.
3. That a serious interpretation must be placed on the meaning of dreams. *The Zohar* tells us that amongst the phenomena of life, sleep is the one most shrouded in mystery. In sleep, the living feel the foretaste of death. In sleep, the soul feels the thrill of liberation from the shackles of the body. Eagerly it goes forward to experience the marvels lying in wait for it in the realms of the imagination. In dreams there is something higher than

the senses and only one degree lower than prophecy. In sleep, supersensual beings surround the sleeper and influence him both for good and evil.

4. That creation took place from a point or circle emanating from the Infinite, and that from this point all other circles or creations emanate in turn.

5. That the stars exert an influence upon human life.

One of the mysteries of human life, *the Zohar* contends, is the influence exerted by the stars upon man. A relationship exists: (a) Between the stars and humanity as a whole. (b) Between the stars and each individual. (c) Between the stars and the various racial divisions. (d) Between the stars and the differences that distinguish the various nations from each other. (e) Between the stars and the mission appointed to each nation in the world. At the same time, *the Zohar* believes that this influence is limited and that there is also free will.

The following explanation of the stars which appears in *the Zohar* bears much resemblance to the explanation of the stars given by *Ibn Arabi*: "God has set the stars in the sky so that the human spirit may be able to attach itself to them. In the heavenly arch that covers the earth are traced signs which may help us to divine hidden mysteries. In their light, their position, and especially their juxtaposition to each other, may be read that which awaits man in the future. As the aspect of the stars changes, so do events also change. Let him, who is planning to undertake a journey, rise early and look to the East. Certain signs, like letters, which pierce the sky above the horizon, convey to him the mystery of the Holy Name in forty-two letters. He must study them carefully and with ecstasy. He will then see: six *Yod*, three to the right and three to the left. Then three *Vaw*, rising and descending in the sky. These mark the holy benediction.

*The Zohar* tells us that comets were once the hair of the moon, now detached and floating in space. (At the time of King Solomon, however, there were no comets, because the hair was still attached to the moon.)

One evening, while walking in the Garden of Gennesareth, Rabbi Eleazar and Rabbi Abba saw two comets, and this led them into an astrological discussion. Invoking the authority of *The Book of the Sublime Wisdom of the Sons of the Orient*, Rabbi Eleazar said : " In all the stars and constellations that we see are things made for the use of the world of men, each having its own attributes and its own rôle. There is not even a blade of grass, however infinitesimal, that is not ruled by some star. And the star, in turn, reports to God on the service it has rendered. Everything that grows is under the direction of some astral body, which need not necessarily be facing it. There are stars which rise in the night and set before morn ; those which remain all night long ; and those which appear only for that instant in which their influence is to be exerted upon some form of life below. But once having served the purpose for which they were made visible they never appear again. They have gone to shine in other spheres, or they have returned to the place of their origin."

#### POINTS OF RESEMBLANCE IN RAMON LULLE AND THE ZOHAR

As has been said before, the work of *Ramon Lulle* bore a great resemblance to that of the Jewish mystics. Some of the points of resemblance between his work and *the Zohar* may be summed up as follows :

1. The inclination to carry on mystical meditation, beginning with the hour of midnight.

*Lulle*, we are told, rose at midnight, opened the windows of his cell, fixed his eyes on the heavens, and began to pray very fervently, seeking to submerge his soul entirely in the Infinite. He meditated and wept for several hours. Then he entered the chapel, where he was joined by one of the younger brethren. Then followed a spiritual discussion, in which the *Illuminated Doctor* sought to enlighten the understanding and to elevate the love of the younger man towards higher things and to guide him in the art of contemplation. With the coming of the dawn they celebrated the Mass.

Then the young monk went out to work in the garden, while Lulle returned to his cell to note down his spiritual experiences of the night.

The secrets of the night, says *the Zohar*, reveal themselves with all their force to the pious who arise at midnight in order to contemplate the mysteries of the Divine Torah.

A later disciple of the *Zohar*, *Joseph Caro*, who was born in the Peninsula and died in Safed after the expulsion, tells of his visions, in which his mother appeared to him and scolded him for sleeping away some of the most precious hours of the night—hours which should be devoted to meditating on the Torah. Then he would get up to study. The first part of the night he spent in reading a portion of the Mishnah. If he happened to fall asleep from sheer weariness he blamed himself in these words: "I ought to have tried to remain awake the whole night, for, in the still hours, *the Word* comes to me. Nevertheless, as soon as I began diligently to study, the *Voice of My Friend* sounded on my lips!"

2. In seeking in the depths for the beauty of spiritual life and breaking through the walls of the dogmatic and the arbitrary.

In *the Zohar* we find deep sources of extraordinary purity so clear that a child would imagine he had only to put his hand into the water and he would be able to touch the pebbles which seem to sparkle so close to the surface in the light of the sun. The same feeling, we are told, comes to one in the spirit regions, where an extraordinary clarity enlarges the horizon. The farther away the blue arch of the sky really is, the closer does it appear to us.

This clarity is distinctive also of the work of *Ramon Lulle*. In expressing his spiritual messages he seemed to have nothing in common with the monks who were his contemporaries. Shut up in their cells, they wrote in a language that was not only foreign to their thoughts, but unintelligible to most of the people. But Lulle, loving Nature and people, did not want his messages to remain locked up in cloister universities. Hence he expressed himself in a language

whose clarity and simplicity brought his thoughts to the simple as well as to the erudite.

3. Both *Lulle* and *the Zohar* describe Adam and Eve as having been in a perfect state of innocence at the moment of their creation, and as having lived in a such a state until their fall from grace. And that their sin left a stain upon them and upon all who came after them.

There were both Jewish and Christian mystics who looked upon death by persecution as the means for attaining the highest grace. *Joseph Caro* regarded the act of being burnt alive at the stake as the highest honour that could come to him. In many of his visions he foresaw such a death coming to him. *Ramon Lulle* went amongst the heathen to preach and even when he was quite old he could not be dissuaded from facing the danger of death at the hands of unbelievers. Indeed, he seemed to be courting such a form of death and eventually met with it.

In the description of the death of the Master of the *Zohar*, *Simeon ben Jochai*, of *Ramon Lulle*, and of *Santa Teresa*, there are also many similarities to be noted. The mystical conception of death amongst the Spanish mystics was that it was to be regarded as a joy rather than a sorrow, since it was the transition from a life full of pain and sorrow, of sin and suffering, to one of spiritual joy untold. *Simeon ben Jochai* was the first historical Jewish figure whose death began to be celebrated as a feast of rejoicing, after the discovery of the *Zohar* in Spain.<sup>1</sup>

*Ramon Lulle's* death is described as follows: Struck down in the midst of his exhortation to the heathen to be converted, his followers dared not begin to search for his body until night-fall. Two sailors, Columbus—supposedly the ancestor of the one who was later to discover the New World—and *Pastorga*, set out to look for him. It was so dark that they could see nothing, but suddenly they came in sight of an immense shaft of light, reaching from earth to heaven. They approached it and found that the base of this natural

<sup>1</sup> This feast, called *Hilulah* in Hebrew, we shall describe later on.

splendour was Lulle himself. He was still breathing and his whole being was in an ecstasy of delight. All his thoughts were concentrated on the Beloved. The men carried him off to their vessel and set out for Mallorca. Legend tells us that during this voyage Lulle spoke to his rescuers of a yet undiscovered world on the other side of the ocean, and also of the world beyond this world to which his soul was looking forward with so much joy. The shores of his native island were already visible when, with a deep smile of beatitude, he gave up his soul. The Genoese sailors then turned their boat about hoping to bring the body that remained fresh and warm, to Genoa, but a wind arose and drove their boat to Mallorca. There he was buried and miracles of healing, we are told, took place at his tomb.

In the description of the death of *Santa Teresa* we are told that she recognized many mystical signs announcing to her the coming event. All the nuns saw light shining in the chancel. A star, larger than any they had ever seen before, appeared above the steeple and remained fixed there. All the while, Teresa was praying and asking forgiveness of her sins. She lay quietly upon her side, with her face turned towards those who were watching beside her bedside. Her face was beautiful and illumined by a great light. Never in her life had she appeared as beautiful as at that moment. The wrinkles had disappeared, leaving her skin as smooth as that of a young girl. Her face expressed a deep wonder and ecstatic worship. It was as if she was carrying on a delightful conversation with some invisible and supernatural being. Her face seemed to grow ever more radiant, ever more pure and ethereal. Perfumes seemed to exhale from her body and a smile of deep happiness flashed ever and anon across her face. Every breath she exhaled was like a hymn expressing praise and devotion. Even after she gave her soul to God, her face seemed to grow ever more beautiful until its radiance shone like that of the sun. Death seemed to be the evolution of the beauty of life. Her body remained soft and pliant, startling in its whiteness and exhaling a soft fragrance. The nuns, fearing that the people of Avila (the town of her



birth) would come to claim the body, took measures to prevent it.

In the description of the death of the *Master of the Zohar*, we read : Rabbi Simeon, knowing that the day on which he was to leave the world had come, called his favourite disciples to his bedside and instructed them. The Master was gay and happy, and they saw that the light of a great joy shone on his face. And he said unto them : " How great is the joy which awaits you this day ! " And he said : " The hour is propitious. I want to enter the next world without shame. And I shall reveal those divine mysteries which have not yet been revealed. . . ." A light shone round the bed of the Master, so brightly that the disciples could not lift their eyes to look at him. . . . When the Master's voice ceased, all remained silent, for they knew that his soul had left his body and was exploring the heights. Then the light around his bed, which had grown dim, began to shine again with renewed brilliance. A great radiance settled over ben Jochai's face as he opened his eyes and smiled at them, a deep smile, as from afar off. And he taught them. . . . Then the Master's voice ceased. A hush fell over the room, while the light grew brighter and brighter. Suddenly, his lips pronounced the word " life " and at that, the light grew so brilliant that none dared lift his eyes. During the whole of that day flames of light encircled his bed. Then, just as suddenly as it had come the light disappeared and the disciples saw that the Master's soul had left the world. He lay on his side, dressed as if about to go out, a smile of beatitude on his face. The house was full of the most agreeable odours, like fragrant perfumes and oils. A festive air pervaded the place in spite of the sorrow of the pupils that they would no longer have their beloved Master with them. And they put his body on a bier and carried it out of the house. All the people from the surrounding villages came to beg for the honour of having the body buried in their ground, but they buried him in Meron, the city of his birth. When the bier was taken out of the house it rose into the air and proceeded by itself, while a flame led the way in front of it. And a Voice came from

heaven, saying : " Come all ye peoples, prepare yourselves to celebrate the feast of the soul of Rabbi Simeon ben Jochai."<sup>1</sup>

And finally, in the work of the Spanish mystics, we find a certain similarity in the background impregnated with a decided Spanish flavour. In *the Zohar*, for example, may be found certain habits and customs reminiscent of the life of the Grandees of Spain. In the vivid description of the Restoration of the Kingdom of David, " at the end of days," in the description of those races amongst whom the Messiah of the House of David will appear before his appearance on earth, there may be found some justification for the idea that in their form of chivalry, in their armour and armorial bearings, in their habits and in their mode of life, they recall the chivalry prevalent in the Peninsula during the Middle Ages, the descriptions of the art of warfare and of the rules governing it, being remindful of the art of war as it was practised in Spain.

Thus were the threads of the mysticism of the three faiths living together in the Spanish Peninsula woven and interwoven into the warp and the woof of the eternal creations they have left to mankind.

<sup>1</sup> A more complete description of the death of the Master of the Zohar appears in Chapter XI.



## PART II

# THE ZOHAR

### CHAPTER V

#### A GLANCE AT THE CONTENTS OF THE BOOK OF THE SPLENDOUR AND ITS ROLE IN JEWISH LIFE

WE have limited ourselves so far to *the Zohar* in its relation to the soil and the surroundings in which it first saw the light. And we have seen certain ideas gather force :

1. That the *Zohar* was revealed and developed in the garden of Spanish mysticism in the Middle Ages.
2. That in it are to be found parallels with works produced by mystics of the other two faiths in Spain : the Christian and the Moslem.
3. That hidden away in its depths are many treasures of divine beauty.

In this chapter we shall deal particularly with the *Zohar* itself, its holy atmosphere, and its unique features. Many of its most attractive and characteristic features have yet to be examined before we are able to judge how this book came to be one of the great influences in Jewish life, taking its place with the Bible and the Talmud.

In seeking for a better understanding of the *Zohar*, it will be our task to bring into the scope of this book fragments that best illustrate the special atmosphere that surrounds the original and the freshness and fragrance that lie in its message to mankind. But we must first trace the significant outer traits, as a supplement to a better understanding of the inner contents. As the antechamber that must be traversed before entering the palace. Having traversed the antechamber one no longer feels the timidity of those who approach holy things without the proper preparation.

## THE HISTORICAL VIEWPOINT

It is not by accident that this wonder-book was revealed to us in a way that was shrouded in mystery ; that legends were woven about its creator and the time and place of its creation. Like all books of the human spirit, which embody the divine quality, this book was destined to become the immortal possession of all humanity, because its truths lie within our own soul.

Those who revised the Zohar succeeded in making the whole book bear the impress of antiquity. Because of its unconventional beginning and its indefinite ending, the claim that its revelations came directly from on high to a divine personage whose greatness surpasses even that of Moses seemed easier of acceptance. The key wherewith to open the secret doors of this " Book of the Soul," will not be found in the trodden paths of the human spirit. Nor is it a key which will open earthly doors. Possession of it comes only to those who have removed themselves far above the earth. In its truth lies a quality which places it above ordinary truth. It knows neither age nor death, but has the vigour and strength of perpetual youth. A freshness as of dew envelops it.

In the revelations of the Zohar man may find his transcendental ego, even as he may find it in the high moments that occur in the visions of the seers, the prophets and the divine singers. Its secrets make the wonders of creation transparent to our eyes, as a house of mysteries seen through glass.

The amount of historical material that has come down to us concerning the Zohar is exceedingly meagre, and even the generation to whom it was revealed knew no more about its origin than we know to-day. As we have already said, the Zohar manuscript must have received its final seal in the Spanish Peninsula. It contains many religious elements which must have been introduced by Rabbis in times later than that attributed to its creation. Later inventions are also mentioned : amongst them, punctuation. And it

contains allusions to the rise and domination of Ishmael, the circumcized nation, in the Holy Land.

While exact historical data with regard to the origin of the Zohar are difficult to obtain, we know that Rabbi Moses de Leon (1250-1305), a mystic of Spain, brought it to light towards the end of the thirteenth century. He was a native of Leon, but spent the latter part of his life in Arévalo of the Province of Avila, that mystical country cradled in the arms of the austere Sierras, which, later, bore witness to the birth of Spain's greatest Christian mystic, Santa Teresa. A scholar and Kabbalist, he claimed that the Zohar was an ancient manuscript that had come into his possession in a miraculous way. It was attributed to Simeon ben Jochai—a Tanaite of the second century and one of the foremost personalities mentioned in the Talmud—to whom it was supposed to have been revealed during the thirteen years he spent in solitude. Ben Jochai was also known to legend for the apocalyptic books that had been spread in his name. But prior to its discovery by Moses de Leon the Zohar was not known. Nor had its existence been mentioned in any book up to that time.

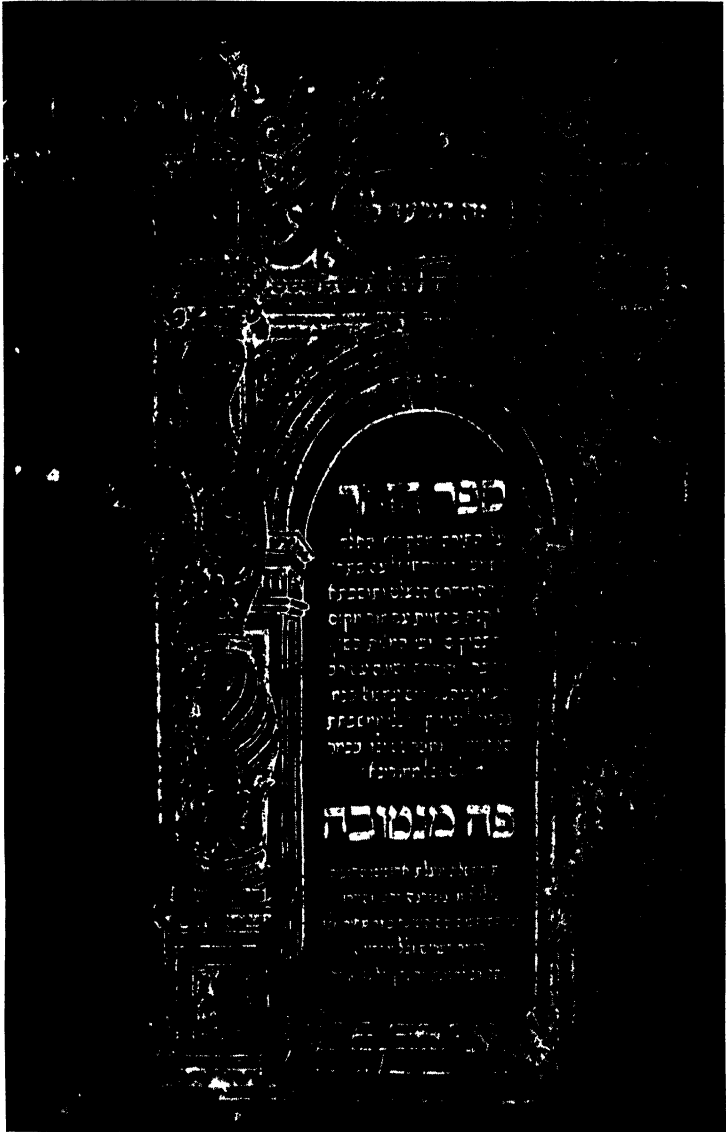
But no sooner was the Zohar revealed than all sorts of legends sprang up regarding its origin. One states that Nachmanides found the Zohar manuscript when he visited Palestine, and sent it to Catalonia, whence it found its way into the hands of Moses de Leon. But as neither the pupils of Nachmanides, nor anyone else in Palestine mentions the existence of the book prior to its discovery in Spain, this story seems unfounded.

Many were curious to see the original manuscript. Rabbi Yitzchak of Acre, while on a visit to Spain, sought out de Leon and exacted his promise to show him the original manuscript. But de Leon died before the promise could be fulfilled. Then, certain rich people of Avila visited the widow and offered her large sums of money and even a rich bridegroom for her daughter in exchange for the manuscript. But the widow denied the existence of any old manuscript; she insisted that her husband was himself the author, and that he had attributed it to ben Jochai in order to give it the *cachet* of antiquity. This naturally gave rise to all sorts of surmises

and led to many differences of opinion as to the authorship of the book, the place of its origin, the date of its creation, etc. A controversy which is becoming less acute with the passage of time. In the smoke which this controversy gave rise to, the personality of Moses de Leon became obscured. His name was vilified and he was referred to as a fraud. This is all the more amazing in view of the fact that his acknowledged works stamp him as a mystic worthy of respectful consideration. So far, no clear picture of the man in relation to his time and to the influences surrounding him has been given to us. When we study Moses de Leon, his time, and his work, when we consider the esteem in which he was held by some of his contemporaries, who were amongst the greatest personalities of the time, we are forced to the conclusion that the whole truth yet remains to be told. Had it not been for the adverse criticism that was strengthened by the statement of his widow that the Zohar was his own creation, Moses de Leon would doubtless have found his proper place in the history of Jewish mysticism.

On the other hand, to consider the man a fraud because he attributed the Zohar to a personage of antiquity is not quite fair, since it was the custom of writers in his time to credit the authorship of their works to well-known historical personages, so as to assure the interest of a reading public. In attributing the Zohar to Simeon ben Jochai, whose name was held in the highest veneration in the Jewish world, its creators simply sought to have the revelations accepted both by scholars and by sceptics.

As already stated, Moses de Leon enjoyed the friendship and respect of certain great scholars of the time. The foremost of these, Todros Abulafia—a man of great wealth and of unbounded influence in state circles, a patron of the arts—was generally conceded to be the greatest figure of his time. To Abulafia, de Leon dedicated his works, inscribing them: "To my Patron, the Prince Todros." Menahem Ricanetti, the Italian mystic and contemporary of Moses de Leon, regarded him as the author of the Zohar and the book as a new revelation. And the great Palestinian mystic, Cordobero



THE ZOHAR, FIRST EDITION, PRINTED ON VELLUM, MANTUA, 1558-60

From the Collection of Mr David Sassoon





speaks of him with reverence in his book *The Garden of Pomegranates*.

After reading the works of Moses de Leon,<sup>1</sup> both in the printed and in the manuscript form, it is the present writer's opinion that there is very little likelihood of his having had anything to do with the actual creation of the Zohar. In spite of his deep mysticism, and of the many ideas permeating his work that bear resemblance to the Zohar, there is missing from his work that high, poetic, visionary spirit ; that depth of content combined with beauty of form and of expression ; that lofty strain ending in flights of high fantasy ; that scholarly art expressed with the simplicity of sincerity that greets us at every turn in the *Book of the Splendour*. Those who support the idea that Moses de Leon was its author point to certain veiled allusions as proof. Once, the Zohar refers to Moses of the City of Leon as being one of its creators. In another place we read the prediction : " And this book shall be revealed at the *End of Days* through Moses who must precede the coming of the Messiah. Then, through the Zohar, will the adherents of Kabbala be illumined by sublime truth." And in yet another place : " The faithful shepherd (Moses) is too modest to attribute to himself his own revelations, therefore the Holy Lamp (Simeon ben Jochai) speaks for him. The second Moses will precipitate the advent of the Saviour. And this new Moses, who resembles the dove of the Ark of Noah, will have success." Again, in the Zohar, under the fragment called " The Faithful Shepherd," the expression : " The Intelligent will shine like the splendour of the sky "—a quotation from the Book of Daniel—is taken to be an allusion to the nine authors of the Zohar, two of whom are from the City of Leon, and the remaining seven from the Kingdom of the same name. But for reasons already stated there is no need to accept this as proof. Besides, these references may be to quite another Moses, or they may have been inserted later into the Zohar manuscript.

Moses de Leon's merit lies for us in this : that he, as a

<sup>1</sup> Works of Moses de Leon : Shushan ha Edouoth, 1285 ; Sepher ha Rimon, 1287 ; Nefesh ha Chachama, 1290 ; Sefer Shekel ha Kodesh, 1292 ; Sefer ha Sodoth, 1293 ; Sefer ha Shem (?).

prominent mystic of the time, and having to his credit several important books on mysticism, not only brought the Zohar to light, but took much pains in spreading a knowledge of it in Hebrew—a language better known to the Jews than Aramaic, the language of the Zohar. And by embodying many of the Zohar ideas in his own books, which were written in Hebrew, he also prepared the ground for a better understanding of the Book of the Splendour.

Many legends were created around Moses de Leon, who was known to the people as “The Man of the Name,” because he could work miracles with the use of the Name of God. Rumour had it that he had written the Zohar while under the influence of the Hidden Name. In his book, *Shekel ha Kodesh*, de Leon says : “Behold, I shall reveal to you a very deep mystery of sublime greatness ; Man who is in this world is here only by the association of the three elements which are one. They are : the rational soul, the vital soul, and the sensitive soul. It is only by the union of these three forces that man is made perfect. It is thanks to this mysterious unity manifested in him that he becomes the reflection of that which is above, that is : the real image of God.”

We have seen that the combination of the classical traditions underlying Judaism and of the richly-embroidered, fantastic ideas essentially Spanish, gives the book its unique character : first, as a work of antiquity, yet bearing the seal of its time ; and also, as a book of the highest spirituality, yet exhibiting at times an almost grotesque touch of light fantasy. And the worth of the Zohar lies for us in this : that it exerted a tremendous influence on Judaism and especially on Sepharadi life—both the religious and the practical life—which lasted from the fourteenth century down to the present day.

There is a belief that the Zohar was brought down to earth by angels, commanded to teach it to man because he had lost his original nobility and splendour. By means of this mysticism man was to return to his original state of goodness. The attempt of a nobler form of Judaism to keep to a higher level. The conception of religion (even as that of

philosophy, of art, or of poetry) undergoes a change, as it comes under the influence of the particular rule of evolution that is present in each generation. One such change in the Jewish spiritual domain may be traced to the influence of the Zohar.

The Zohar is supposed to reveal the secrets of God and of the creation, in the form of comments on the Scriptures. It speaks with frankness about all the things that concern the human spirit. Sometimes, it rises to great heights, teaching doctrines that are worth boasting about, even in the highest spirit of our own times. But the remarkable thing about it—and it is this that brings it out of the small circle of the intellectuals and into a wider sphere of understanding—is that it does not remain for ever on the heights. It sometimes goes down to amazingly low depths and touches the very dust. Further, there is no slavish devotion to the Scriptural text. Often the verse dealt with is but the impulse for some mystical revelation, bringing it into relation with other verses in the Bible which might seem, to the lay reader, to have no connection at all. The truth is that, in the course of the commentary, the verse becomes unimportant, while the mystical revelation becomes the principal and dominating motive. In reality the verses have been brought into a certain connection in order to present that which is necessary to the symbolization of the revelation. For example, the *rose*, in the *Song of Songs*, is used to represent the Community of Israel, and the *garden*, Paradise.

The Zohar is further distinguished by the diversity of its style. Sometimes, the style, the form, the tone, and even the thought remind us of that innocent, ecstatic, yet authoritative tone of the Bible in some of its more ancient periods—that naive simplicity that marked the childhood of Israel. Together with this there is also the spirit of the new discoveries that informed the Middle Ages. There is, on the whole, no meticulousness of style, no polishing of thought to be observed from beginning to end, but there are ups and downs in the book, even as in Nature. Form and manner of expression are quite unusual. We do not feel that it is the

writers themselves who are speaking to us. It is not the language that stirs us, in spite of its magic beauty. It is rather the feeling that the divine spirit, which permeates everything, is speaking to us out of the pages of the book with the voice of authority and life. The authors seem sometimes to stray far afield from the subject started out with. It is as if, overwhelmed by the variety of new and strange experiences that have come to them, they lose sight of the subject matter in the unexpected episodes met with on the way. But once the revelation is freed from this extraneous matter, its beauty becomes apparent.

There are passages in the Zohar that are so elevating in their form, their rhythm, their thought, their simplicity and their beauty as to be beyond any sort of comparison with the precepts laid down for the observance of practical religion. They belong, rather, to the true religion which is the instinctive worship of that *Divine Something* to be found in everything. The Zohar creates a philosophical concept cradled and protected by religion. It teaches that there is a *universal substance* which is permanently thinking and acting. It emanates from the universe, but it is not included in the universe itself. It teaches that : to create means to think, to be existent, to develop oneself. We do not find in the Zohar the idea of the creation of the world out of nothing, nor the going back in the end to nothingness ; but the idea of the evolution of forms without end—forms through which the *Divine Substance* manifests and develops itself, through rules of *thought* which are unchangeable ; the belief that everything which exists is a part of the *Divine Wisdom* before it appears in concrete form. So we have the two worlds : the higher and the lower.

Wisdom, the Zohar tells us, is the mirror without stain of the Majesty of God. Since God is one, He is All-Powerful. At times we may be upset by the unnaturalness of the pictures which the Zohar uses to present God to us. But we must remember that that is to help us to come to one conclusion : that there is no end to the forms in which God may be manifested.

The Zohar is the quintessence of the development of many generations of mystical thought. But, like other works compiled in the Orient, it lacks system, uniformity, homogeneity. There seems to be no order and no association of ideas. This has proved confusing to the general reader who was thus shut out from the treasures which reward those who search more deeply. A further complication was the fact that the Zohar was written in Aramaic. Aramaic, we must remember, was the language in which scholars of the time, and especially scholars of mysticism, were accustomed to set down their thoughts. In Aramaic, too, it was more possible to give to the subject that tone of antiquity best suited to the heroic figures of ancient times which stalk through the pages of the Zohar.

In the many conversations on revelations as reported in the Zohar—discussions supposed to have been carried on by the Master and his pupils—we see an atmosphere prevailing which is in direct contrast to the severity associated with the High Schools of Babylon, and even with those of the Old Homeland of Judæa. In the Zohar the discussion bears the simple character of a casual conversation. It is a conversation carried on with modesty and ruled by a democratic spirit, quite different from that used by the sages of the Talmud. There is no pedantry. Time and place are seized upon as opportunity offers. There is no waiting for a place suitable and sacred to the particular subject to be treated ; neither is there any discrimination in favour of any particular person, excepting for the special revelations in the Greater and Lesser Assemblies. Whether the meeting was with an old man or with a child, whether with a rich man or a poor one, the Master and his disciples showed themselves ready to listen to the spiritual word from anyone with whom they came into contact. Both *naïveté* and love informed all their actions and were manifested in expressions of joy, in feelings of love and in tears that revealed the depth of their feelings when listening to revelations. When they spoke of events experienced during their wanderings they used the simple language of sincerity. And this simplicity is characteristic both of the manner in

which they recounted their symbolical legends, and of the sort of discourse carried on at their mystical meetings.

The Zohar is not a literary work in the usual sense of the term, neither can any of the mystical works that appeared previous to it be compared with it. Sometimes the reader may feel as if he had entered a spiritual mansion whose rarified air and brilliant lights are trying to the ordinary senses. At other times, he may stumble upon phrases and fragments that are both beautiful to the sight and refreshing to the spirit. But this beauty is not the beauty common to mystical works that aim at literary perfection rather than at mystical revelation. It is difficult to grasp the mentality of the creators of these mysteries. As for the mystical atmosphere, it can be grasped either through the silence of complete absorption, or through a sudden flash of enlightenment.

Those who are not steeped in the atmosphere of the Zohar and able to appreciate its beauties are apt to judge it too hastily as a conglomeration of fantastic dreams. And others are unable to appreciate the value of the Zohar because they believe only such things as their eyes are able to behold : the material and the concrete. They are unable to penetrate this veil of limpid silver, behind which the world of the spirit and the soul becomes the real world. On the other hand, the plenitude of exotic colours in this new world simply dazzles the eye accustomed only to the definite greys of ordinary life. Such men are incapable of feeling the joy that comes to one entering a new world ; the joy of a strange experience. They want to subject everything with which they come into contact to the surgical knife of ordinary criticism. They place each new experience under the microscope of their realistic conception of things-as-they-know-them-to-be. Baffled by the maze of mysterious laws which govern this new universe they never realize the vastness of the world from which their own limitations have shut them out. The sober-minded will tell you : What can men who live away from the rush of life, who live in caves underground, reveal to us, besides impractical ideas far removed from real life ?

While the dark style of the Zohar is the dream-style, yet it

would not be right to regard the book solely as a house of dreams. It has conserved sparks of light from the centuries that have passed and is full of enlightenment for the centuries yet to come, in the manner of Oriental thinking, based on the emotion and the intuition. We may also come across a bit of pure lyricism, or some expression that brings us close to nature, but illumined and deepened to express feelings that are above the natural. You feel that here is a nation that has struggled with obstacles and overcome them.

For the sources of inspiration of the Zohar we must look to the old and holy country of Galilee, and to Jerusalem—that heaven-created Jerusalem of which the Zohar speaks. Let him but begin the study of the *Bible of the Mystics*, and the student will no longer be content with admiring only the outer form of the casket, even though it be of pure gold and studded with precious jewels. He will open it in order to examine the treasure it contains. For who, that holds the rose-jar in his hands, does not hasten to scent the perfume it encloses? And on examining the hidden treasure which the Zohar contains, one must come to the conclusion that those who created it were men able to penetrate those depths through which the soul wanders in our House of Life.

Its pages are saturated with an eternal love : a spiritual, a romantic, an ecstatic love which underlies the devotion to all that is good and true and beautiful in life. Into this treasure house have been poured the spiritual and mystical treasures of the nation, as conserved both in the oral and the written tradition, yet grown fuller and more developed with the years.

The appeal of the book lies in this, that it is not the same appeal that draws one to ordinary life ; the appeal is to believe in life eternal ! For we find sparks of a fire that has been burning in deep caverns hidden from human sight : the possibilities to live above the ordinary and higher than the average, even in our daily contacts, so that our relation to the Infinite gradually becomes clearer and more understandable. The eye is trained to regard life and its actions, man and his experiences, from the viewpoint of a life other than the one to which it is accustomed.



How rich and colourful is the material which the Zohar has drawn from the *Book of Books* ! Within its pages we may meet the fathers of the world : the first Adam ; Eve, the Mother of mankind ; the Matriarchs and the Patriarchs ; Joseph, Moses, David and other Bible heroes, described in the picturesque language and clothed in the legendary garments so beloved of the Jewish Orientals. All the figures take on a new grace, and particularly the figure of Rachel—the symbol of the perpetual sorrow, as well as the warm love of the mother for her exiled children, overshadowing them with protecting wings—as she arises at midnight to pray for their salvation and their restoration. No other book has ever revealed to us the infinite variety of this kaleidoscope of colours. Nor has any other ever revealed with as sincere a faith the spiritual beauty that lies hidden in the soul of the Jewish people.

In the Zohar many abstract things belonging to Jewish tradition receive a form of life higher than the ordinary. Sometimes the form given to them is male, at other times female. You will meet them as kings, queens, princes and princesses, as if they were actually endowed with life. You learn to know them and to love them, and in return they bring you happiness. The Torah, the Sabbath and the Hebrew language ; the three things that accompanied the Jewish exiles on their wanderings and whose presence helped to fill a void created by the lack of a country and a king, by the lack of that security that lies in a soil and a homeland, came to be regarded as friends sharing their troubles. The Jew thus persuaded himself that the Divine blessing accompanies him even in his exile, surrounding him with the love and the care that a parent would give to a beloved son.

And this is best illustrated in the interpretation put upon the Song of Songs by the mystical tradition. There, God is the Lover and sings to His Beloved : the *Community of Israel*. And again, Israel, *the lover*, sings to his beloved ; the *Princess Sabbath*. For the Sabbath is endowed with a divine beauty and becomes a bride, splendid and resplendent. Every Friday evening at sunset, *Israel, the lover*, goes forth to greet

the *Bride Sabbath*, with songs of welcome and of praise. Then every individual, and every Jewish community, and the whole of Israel scattered throughout the world, rejoice in the Sabbath and find joy in it.

Ruling the *Book of the Splendour* is a certain democracy of spirit which is quite unique. For example: we see in the mystical figures of the Divine Chariot the spirits of different degrees and forms of life, of birds and beasts and men, forms that are at variance with each other in the ordinary world, united in the divine task assigned to them, co-operating with and supplementing each other.

Another of the characteristic traits of the mysticism of the Zohar, marking its development both in its own and in the succeeding generations, is the marked tendency to use sensual and erotic symbols and expressions, and especially the sex-union, to designate sublime spiritual truths. There are two reasons generally given for this: first, that this is a form of expression that the mind will find easier to grasp; and, secondly, that it emanates from a system which tends in the direction of pantheism and the unity of all things. Both the symbols and their expression refer to the nostalgia and the passion of the soul to be united with God and, through God with all things; and to be lost completely in this union. But underneath the outer sense-symbols things are treated with a seriousness and a purity that befits their sublime origin. Thus the mystics found in the Song of Songs the expression for divine motives. From this basic conception there sprang a series of mystic-erotic poems, developed by the Sepharadi mystics of later generations in Galilee.

The Zohar was able to attract all classes of Jewry: the intellectual class was attracted by the high problems, the mystical messages, and the poetical-religious philosophy to be found in it. The non-intellectual class was attracted to it by the legendary and ethical concepts, by the hopes held out for the future, and by the spirit of courage which emanated from all its pages, and which helped the people to bear the troubles and exile as their lot in this world. The masses were attracted by the festive and holy atmosphere, which remained

as a halo around the book. They came to look upon the Zohar as a book of sanctity, of hope, of miracles, of salvation, of healing for sick bodies and comfort for sick souls. For them it was a book to be read upon all occasions, whether of festival or of mourning; whether of birth or of death. "It is enough that the soul understands that which the mouth of the individual is perhaps unwittingly expressing," says *the Zohar*. The appealing song, the elegy, the festival tune, saturated with the deep sadness that generations of exile have made inherent in it; the melody which holds forth promise and encouragement, after having drawn into itself the living waters from deep sources which lie in the secret mysteries—that melody which is heard on the verge of misfortune, in nights of mourning, on the threshold of joy, or at the doors of the grave, when a beloved mortal is lost to human sight. All these melodies have become traditional to the reading of the Zohar, attaching the Oriental Jew ever more closely to all that he holds most dear. And herein lies the secret of the great fascination which the Zohar held for the exiles from Spain. Even those unable to understand its mysteries found their hearts imprisoned in faithfulness to a book that embodied all that attached them to earth and to heaven. The Zohar brought the greatest encouragement into the lives of the exiles, strengthening their belief in the promises made by their Jewish tradition. And gradually this mysticism with its solemn purity of soul appeared to Israel in exile like a luminous saviour come to lighten his darkness. For example, the Zohar tells us that a thread of Grace runs through the days of exile and solitude; that even if Israel is incapable of finding within his own midst the force to elevate himself to the heights whence will come a real salvation, yet will such salvation come "*At the End of Days*" from the *Source of all Salvation*. And Israel's faith—in spite of the present darkness, in spite of the suffering and the exile—must be stronger than death. He must never cease to believe in the *Restoration of the Tent of King David*.

The Master, Simeon ben Jochai, told his disciples: "The allusion to the Holy Book of the Zohar is made in the Book of

Daniel, 'And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament.' Know that the Zohar reflects the light of the Supreme Mother (the Schechina), who is the source of penitence. And they who study the Zohar shall taste of the Tree of Life and will no longer be subjected to trials. Then shall Israel no longer have to depend upon the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and no longer have to submit to the laws of 'Thou shalt,' and 'Thou shalt not.' "

Thus the Zohar became the perpetual guide for the exiles, and the daily reading from some part of the book became as sacred a duty for the Spanish exiles, as was the reading of a portion of the Bible. Excerpts are read on every occasion : whether of sorrow or of joy ; in public and in private ; in the Synagogue and the home. Mystic-erotic poems, based on Zohar revelations, are sung to welcome the Queen Sabbath, in a brightly-lighted room, under a seven-branched candlestick, with the table bedecked for the Sabbath feast and exhaling the fragrance of myrrh. All this naturally attracted the masses.

There were also present all the elements that might have attracted the heart of woman to this mystical movement. For the Zohar held the female as being equally important to the cosmos and equally responsible with the male for the creations. Hence we might have expected to find Jewish women-mystics, even as we find women-mystics in other faiths, as Santa Teresa, and others. But the Rabbis of old had taken care to build a traditional fence around religious study, which made it a closed precinct to the Jewish woman. And the same traditional prohibition kept her away from the study of the Zohar. Although the Jewish-mystical movement had a religious-democratic character, it yet failed to undermine the barrier which kept the Jewish women excluded from religious study. It was feared that the destruction of so fundamental a principle might endanger the whole movement. And this is a great pity. For, in the Zohar, woman would have found that element to which her whole being responds so profoundly : the sentiment of love ; the love through which man becomes the principle of the creations,

and by means of which he influences both the lower and the upper worlds. Here was an element of ecstasy, particularly appealing to woman, and which could not fail to exalt her to the living of an idealistic life. But the opportunity to enter the portals of this new life was denied her. And, excepting for two famous women-mystics of Safed, who were regarded as prophetesses—one of whom, called Francisa, attained quite a degree of fame—there is no other mention of women trying to break through the barrier. On the other hand, when Sabbatai Zevi, seeking to be accepted by all Jewry as the Messiah, broke down the barriers in favour of women and launched his mystic-erotic appeals, women flocked to his banners in great numbers and were amongst the most enthusiastic and ecstatic of his followers. To them must be attributed very much of the success (though temporary) that was achieved by his movement.

A surprise awaits us on opening the pages of the *Book of the Splendour*, for what a freshness and fragrance emanate from between its musty old covers! The language flows lovingly, charmingly; often pleadingly, sometimes warningly. Its parables are full of the ripeness of a matured wisdom. Powerful strokes of the brush outline the Divine beauty—descriptions that force open the doors that bound our horizon. And the beauty we find in it is not the massive, physical beauty of the Greeks, for the Zohar is ruled by quite a different principle from that which inspired the Greeks. The beauty is rather of the very essence of the sanctity of eternal life, full of an endless pageantry of colour and movement, while the fragrance is that of youth. For here are the qualities common to all ages—human sentiments that change neither with time nor with eternity. And the moral value of its mysticism lies in this: that it makes the humblest act of service contribute towards the perfecting of the whole universe. Thus the Zohar is the book, not only for Israel, but for all humanity!

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PORTRAIT OF THE MASTER, SIMEON BEN JOCHAI

THROUGH the pages of the Book of the Splendour stalks the heroic figure of the Master, Simeon ben Jochai. Preaching love ; exhorting man to forsake evil ; bringing the mysterious *other worlds* within the ken of those on earth ; leading man to God and God to man ; giving man a sense of responsibility, of power ; proving man's kinship with all the forces of the universe ; raising the level of life and deepening the sources of faith ; healing the sick ; fighting the forces of evil ; performing miracles ; revealing to a small group of the elect, things that have never been revealed either in heaven or on earth ; seeking the union of man with the *Source of his Origin*—such is the figure of the hero of the Zohar, a figure with whom the masses of the people have established a closer and more human contact than with any other of the great figures of Jewish religious history.

Many legends have been woven round the name of Simeon ben Jochai. To him is attributed the power over the hills and valleys. He is spoken of as a tree whose branches touch the two worlds. The Talmud tells us that the performance of miracles was to him the ordinary procedure of life, and for that reason he was chosen emissary to the Roman Emperor : to request the abolition of a wicked law then in force for converting Jews to paganism. One of his characteristic traits—a trait which is rare in the great teachers of the Talmud—is that he spoke much of the worth of his own personality and often referred to himself as a man of great merit. Ben Jochai says, for example : “ Because of my merit, I am able to save from the Day of Judgment the world that has existed

from the day of my birth to the day of my death. If the merit of my son Eleazar be added to mine, we could save the world from the very creation of mankind to the present day. And if the merit of Jotham, King of Judæa, were added to ours, we three could save all mankind from the creation of the world to the end of the world."

Again, he said : " The noble souls are few in number. If there be a thousand then must I and my son be counted as two of them. If there be a hundred, we are two of that hundred. But if there be only two, then are we the two (!) "

He advises his followers to emulate his qualities, which he boasts are greater even than those of his own great teacher, Rabbi Akiba.

He has the greatness of simplicity. His discourses are couched in simple language and he prefers to deliver them out of doors : in a field, in a forest, at the door of his house, on the banks of a stream. We see him sitting in the centre of a group of his disciples with outstretched hands touching, sitting in a breathless ecstasy for hours and days at a time, listening to his revelations concerning the eternal mysteries. His disciples hold him in such high esteem that we see him—through their eyes—attaining the heights of mystical perfection. They compare him to Moses in that he, also, visioned God face to face. But ben Jochai makes us feel that, while his visionary experience may have been similar to that of Moses, his *understanding* of that which he sees is greater. He says that when he holds an *assembly* with his disciples, the mystical prophet Elijah, all the inhabitants of the celestial dwellings—the angels, the spirits, the souls of great Masters, both the known and the unknown—come down to hear him ; that they listen with veneration, with curiosity, with ecstatic enthusiasm to all that he is revealing. When the Master enters the beatific state, his disciples see him exalted and magnified beyond the power of words to express ; they hear the fluttering of the wings of the celestial hosts which have come down to hear mysteries unknown even to them. They hear the Master take as his witnesses all the heavens and all the earth. He tells them all that he is seeing

—things that no mortal eye has been able to see since Moses went up to Mount Sinai—things that the Great Leader himself could not see. His perception is keener than that of Moses, for he is conscious of the illumination which his face undergoes at that moment.

One of his disciples said of him : “ Wisdom was given to Solomon. But Solomon was wise enough to know that, in spite of the perfection of his generation, it was not the generation that would witness the revelation of great mysteries, because that honour was reserved for the generation of the great Master, Simeon ben Jochai.”

And another said of him : “ One day, when I accompanied the Master, he began to teach me mysteries. And I saw a column of fire descending from heaven to earth, giving forth a dazzling light. It is only because of the merit of our Master that we are permitted to see the performance of miracles.”

Simeon ben Jochai led a strange life. To escape from the persecutions of the Romans he and his son lived for thirteen years in a cave, with their naked bodies buried up to the neck in the sand. There they meditated on the Law, contemplated the great mysteries, and prepared their divine message to mankind.

It was in the troubled times of the second century. Ben Jochai had witnessed the cruel death of his beloved Master, Akiba, at the hands of the Romans. He saw the trials to which his people were subjected by their Roman masters, and his heart was filled with hatred and bitterness against Rome. One day, during the visit of Rabbi Yehuda, Rabbi Jose and one, Judah ben Gerim, the talk turned on the work of the Romans, which Rabbi Yehuda admired. “ See all the advantages they have brought into the country,” he said, “ roads, baths, bridges, fountains, beautiful sculpture and fine architecture.” The others listened in silence, but ben Jochai spoke disdainfully of the Roman achievements, showing that there was naught but selfishness and materialism back of them. “ All that the Romans are doing,” he said, “ is for their own benefit. They want wide boulevards in which to parade



their white women. The baths are for their own sensual pleasure ; the bridges, an excuse for levying taxes."

Judah ben Gerim repeated this talk, which came to the ears of the Roman Governor, who took steps against the offenders. Rabbi Yehuda, who had spoken well of the Romans, was honoured. Rabbi Jose, who had remained silent, was exiled to Sapor, while ben Jochai was sentenced to death. He and his son hid themselves in the secret places of the *Beth Hamidrash*, where his wife brought them food every day. But fearing that she would be forced, through torture, to reveal their hiding-place, they fled to the Desert of Ludd, where they hid in a cave. Immediately, so legend relates, a spring of water and a carob tree sprang up in front of their hiding-place and nourished them during the whole time of their voluntary exile which lasted for thirteen years. In order to save their clothes they spent the whole day out-of-doors, buried up to their necks in the sand, donning them only at times of prayer. During all this time they were instructed in the mysteries of the Torah by the Prophet Elijah, who appeared to them twice every day. At the end of twelve years, the Prophet announced their freedom, saying : " Arise, ben Jochai ! You and your son may now leave your prison. The Cæsar who sought to kill you is dead. You are no longer in danger."

They left their hiding-place and started out. On the way they were shocked to see that people were wholly concerned with their own worldly needs and gave no thought to higher things, neglecting both to study the Torah and to work for God. In great anger the Master cried out : " Oh, the wicked people who occupy themselves only with temporary things and never give a thought to things eternal ! " And such a flame of anger shot forth from his glance that all the things on which it rested shrivelled up. And a Voice came from heaven, saying : " Is it for this that you have need of freedom in order to destroy My world ? It were better for you both to go back to your cave ! " And ben Jochai and his son went back to the cave and meditated on the changed state of mankind for another twelvemonth. At the end of the year

a Voice bade them leave their hiding-place and they came out of the cave and mingled once more in the world of men. And when Eleazar spoke sharply against men and their weaknesses, and sought to hurt them with his bitterness, his father healed the hurt with his love. And the Master said unto his son : " Let the world of men take its own course. It is enough that we two occupy ourselves with things eternal."

Ben Jochai found excuse for those who sinned by propounding the following parable : " A certain king gave to a peasant a piece of land for a farm. The price he asked was ten hectares of wheat a year. The farmer worked it, irrigated it, gave it all the care and attention of which he was capable, but without being able to produce more than one hectare of wheat. When the king sent to claim his wheat, the farmer was obliged to explain the difficulty he had had in raising even this one hectare, and pleaded to be forgiven for his inability to produce the ten hectares agreed upon. The king was moved to compassion and forgave him. So, too, is man brought into the world full of difficulties. The bad instinct follows him all his life long. The soil is poor and it is impossible for him to raise the harvest that is expected of him. Nevertheless, God, the King, must take everything into consideration. He must pardon the faults of man and accept even a poor harvest, so long as the work has been done honestly and sincerely."

We are told that when ben Jochai was absorbed in his meditations his soul was so completely given over to feeling the divine inspiration as to make him oblivious to his own physical pain and insensible to the suffering of his body. He was then completely possessed by the divine harmonies, even as one who has drunk old wine becomes insensible to all around him while revelling in his own pleasurable feelings. When he rose to meet the light from above his own physical being became dissipated. He heard that which has no sound. He saw that which has no form. In a timeless breathlessness he lived through æons of time and through many lifetimes of experience.

While the Master was still in hiding, during the first days in

the cave, he felt the desire to go out. He saw tiny birds able to fly away and to evade those who had set traps to ensnare them, and a great light of hope kindled in his heart. "If these tiny birds are not caught, because God does not wish it," he said, "why should men be afraid?"

#### SOME OF THE ZOHAR LEGENDS ABOUT SIMEON BEN JOCHAI

One day, Rabbi Simeon and some of his disciples were crossing a stream when a bundle of clothing, belonging to Rabbi Jose, fell into the water, and the latter exclaimed, angrily: "It were better for this stream not to have existed!" The Master rebuked him, saying that everything that had been created served God's purpose, and that even the things that seem a nuisance to man have their part in the scheme of creation. On coming to a turning in the road they saw a serpent advancing towards them. The disciples were afraid, but the Master said: "Now we shall witness a miracle. Fear not!" Just then a dragon came out and attacked the serpent, and the two fought furiously until both fell dead. And the Master drew his pupils' attention to the miracle that had been performed on their behalf for, between the two beasts, they would all surely have been destroyed.

While on his way to Tiberias, Rabbi Simeon encountered the Prophet Elijah and asked him what God was doing at that moment. "He is revealing mysteries in thy name," answered the Prophet, and went on: "I have been sent down to ask thee a question. It is a question that has been asked in heaven, and God has sent me to ask thee for the answer to it: 'As there is neither eating nor drinking in the spirit world, why then does man sacrifice food and drink for the sake of the Lord and believe that it is acceptable in His sight?'" And the Master answered and said: "When my beloved comes forth from the nuptial couch and wants to eat, is it not meet that I should sit at table with her? So the King, because of His love for His Chosen People, accepts the sacrifice of food and drink."



COPY OF A PICTURE SUPPOSED TO BE  
THAT OF RABBI SIMEON BEN JOCHAI

From the National Library of Paris Into this, a  
scribe of Tiberias has written the *Iara Zutta* and  
the *Sifra Desenyuta*

(Found in Spanish Morocco)



Rabbi Pinchas was told that Rabbi Simeon, who was his relative, possessed a pearl of great price which spread a light like that of the sun ; that this light reached from heaven to earth ; and that it would continue to shed light on the world, up to the time when *The Ancient One* would seat Himself upon His throne. And Pinchas, desiring to see this precious jewel, decided to go in search of his relative. Not knowing where to go, he embarked on a boat and asked the sea-gulls to bring him news of Simeon ben Jochai's whereabouts. After some time, one of the birds returned with a message on which were written these words : " The son of Jochai has already left his hiding-place together with his son Eleazar." When he came to ben Jochai, he cried out in grief at finding him covered with sores, emaciated and ill. But the Master comforted him, saying : " Be happy to find me in such a state, for were I not in such a state, I would not be what I am." Then the Master asked his son to explain to Rabbi Pinchas the commandment on love. And Eleazar said : " Perfect love is the love of man for God. It manifests itself both in good fortune and in affliction. We must love God, even when He takes away our life. In loving God for His bounties, and in loving God for His penalties, in the union of these two opposites, is perfect love to be found." And Pinchas cried out : " In very truth, it was the Holy One Himself who led me here, telling me that one of my family possessed a pearl of great price that would light up the whole world."

Once, on going out of doors, the Master saw that the world had grown dark, its light having rolled back to the place of its origin. And he set out with his son to seek for the reason for this phenomenon. Suddenly, an angel appeared to them in the form of a huge rock, from the mouth of which there issued thirty flames of fire. The Master asked the rock : " What art thou trying to do ? " And the rock answered : " These thirty flames show that there are thirty people of merit missing from this generation : hence I have been commanded to bring about the destruction of the world."

Then the Master commanded the rock : " Go, and appear at once before the Holy One and remind Him that the Son of Jochai is in the world." And the angel went and presented himself before the Supreme Throne, and said : " Master of the worlds, Thou knowest what message ben Jochai sent to Thee ! What shall I do ? " And the Holy One said : " Carry out that which has been commanded thee. Destroy the world ! "

But when the angel returned to carry out the Divine command, behold Simeon ben Jochai stood before him and said : " Go back at once, before thou art condemned never to return on high, but to sink into the abyss ! Go back and present this, my message unto the Holy One : ' I, Simeon ben Jochai, ask the King of the Worlds : If there be not thirty righteous men in the world, then pray accept twenty. And if there be not twenty, then accept ten. And if there be not ten, then accept two—I and my son, Eleazar, are these two. And if there be not two, there is surely one. I am that one. I know that I am ! "

And as he finished speaking a Voice came from heaven, saying : " Praised be Simeon, the son of Jochai, since he hath been able to change on earth the evil decree sent forth from heaven ! "

Ben Jochai came to Ludd, and saw that the pest had broken out in the town. The people crowded round him, kissing his garment and begging piteously for help. He went about and saw people dying in the streets, while a great multitude came after him, weeping and imploring him to intervene on their behalf. And the Master raised his eyes to heaven and cried in a voice filled with pain : " I call upon heaven to witness that I, the Son of Jochai, am here in Ludd, yet is the city under the spell of evil ! " And a Voice came from heaven, saying : " Betake yourselves from the city of Ludd, angels of Evil ! For Simeon ben Jochai hath the power to change the decrees of heaven ! " And the people of Ludd marvelled in the midst of their rejoicing. And it was said of ben Jochai

that he was like unto Moses, and that none other could compare with his greatness.

Rabbi Simeon was sitting one day at the gates of Ludd when he noticed that the sun's brightness was overcast three times, black and green stains remaining on it. And the Master took his staff in his hand and called his son to accompany him. "The Holy One," he said, "desires to warn me that He has sent forth a new decree. For so does God inform the Righteous, His Servants, thirty days before a decree is carried into effect. Let us then find out what these signs portend." They walked until they came to a vineyard, where they saw a serpent writhing with fury, while fire belched from his open mouth. Ben Jochai placed his hand on the head of the serpent, and it grew calm. But as its tongue continued to dart in and out, he pressed its mouth together, and said: "Go at once to Sammael, the Source of all Evil, and tell him that thou hast seen Simeon ben Jochai!" Then he pressed the head of the serpent into the ground and spoke further: "Hear, now, what Simeon ben Jochai doth command: 'Even as a serpent from the nether regions is now disappearing into the earth, so may the *serpent from above* go into the Great Abyss!'"

When the serpent had completely disappeared, Rabbi Simeon stood up to make his prayer, and a Voice was heard, saying: "Those who carry out evil decrees will descend at once into the abyss whence they emerged. The plots of evil-doers can find no place in the world so long as Simeon ben Jochai is in it. Praised be Simeon ben Jochai, whose decisions are acceptable in the sight of the Holy King! Who hath the power to change evil to good!" Then did the Master raise his eyes once more, and, behold, he saw the sun restored to the brightness of her pristine perfection.

Once Rabbi Simeon and his disciples encountered a child coming from Ludd. The child heard the Master say: "In a short while a great quarrel will arise amongst the rulers of



the earth." And the child answered him and said : " It has already begun this very day. Much blood is being shed." And when the disciples marvelled at the child, the Master said : " Children sometimes see more clearly than prophets." And the child added : " For it is written : The children shall see God ! "

Rabbi Isaac, one of the group of disciples whom the Master called his *Seven Eyes*, was sad, for he knew that his end was approaching. And he said to his friend, Rabbi Yehouda, " I have come to ask you for three favours : first, whenever you mention something that I have taught you, speak my name, so that it may be for a blessing. Secondly, you must teach my son the Torah. Thirdly, you must visit my tomb on each of the seven days after my death and pray for my soul. I know that I am about to die, for my soul leaves me every night. And yesterday, when saying my prayers, I glanced at the wall and saw that my shadow was no longer there ! " And his friend answered : " I shall do all that you ask me, but I beg of you to choose for me a place beside you in the next world."

When they went to join the Master, he noticed that the Angel of Death preceded his disciple Isaac, and he took him by the hand and cried out : " Only those who are worthy of entering here may come in ; the others must remain outside." Then the two disciples entered while the Angel of Death remained outside. Then the Master asked Isaac gently to tell him if he had seen the face of his father lately in his dreams, also of his dead relatives and friends, since these appear to a man who is on the threshold of death, in order to accompany him on his journey to the world beyond. But the disciple answered sadly that he had not seen them. Then the Master raised his voice in prayer and said : " Master of the World, I pray thee leave Isaac to me. He is one of our *Seven Eyes* ! " And a Voice answered : " The spark of the Master, which is the soul of Rabbi Isaac, rests under the sheltering wings of Simeon ben Jochai, who will bring this

soul with him when he comes to occupy his own throne in heaven." At these words, the Angel of Death was seen to depart.

Then did Rabbi Isaac fall asleep. And, behold, his father appeared to him in a dream and said : " My son, happy is thy lot in this world and in the world to come ! A place has been reserved for thee amidst the foliage of the Tree of Life, which is in the Garden of Eden. And that *Power-Tree of the Two Worlds*, Simeon ben Jochai, upholds thee with his branches ! " And the other said : " Tell me, father, what will be my lot in the next world ? " And the father told him : " Since three days they have been preparing thy tent on high. Light doth penetrate it from the four corners of the world. At this very moment twelve righteous souls from amongst our colleagues are being sent out to greet thee." And the father and son rejoiced together. Then the father told him further : " I heard a Voice in Heaven, asking : Which are the souls that will constitute the crown of Simeon ben Jochai ? And I saw that his crown will be composed of seventy regions, each region containing seventy worlds ; each world governed by seventy kingdoms ; each kingdom leading to the outposts of the Supreme Mystery where are to be found the Supreme Delights. And happy is thy lot, my son, for at the *Feast of the Soul* of Simeon ben Jochai thou hast been chosen as one of those who shall serve ! "

And Rabbi Isaac awoke. And the Master said unto him : " Thou hast heard glad news." Then Rabbi Isaac told him his dream. And he bowed before the Master and remained with him all the days of his life.

The Master's son and another disciple came and sat at his feet. And suddenly the light of day vanished and they saw a column of fire fall into the Lake of Tiberias, with such violence that all the land round about seemed to be on fire. The young men looked inquiringly at the Master, who said : " It is the hour when the Holy One remembers His children and their woe, and two tears drop from his eyes into the sea.

But while they are falling, the tears are transformed into a column of fire from the woe that is in them." And the disciples sat, and they wept.

One of the disciples had a vision and he said : " Behold, there is a great noise in all the heavens, in both the upper and the lower worlds." And the angels said : " The voice that you hear is the word of Simeon ben Jochai. All are rushing to hear him. When he begins to expound Torah, all the creations and all the things that praise God stop to listen. Then, not a sound is heard in heaven but the voice of the Holy Lamp. When he stops, all the angels rush to prostrate themselves before the Holy King, and the fine odour of fragrant perfumes fills all the heavens."

#### THE WEDDING OF THE MASTER'S SON ELEAZAR

Simeon ben Jochai prepared a great feast to which he invited the *Masters of the Mishnah*. The house was decorated with carpets and hangings and had a festive appearance. The guests sat on low divans in a semi-circle and the Master sat facing them. His face was lit up by a great joy, and when his guests asked him what was the cause of his rejoicing, he spoke to them as follows : " Know that, on this day, a special holy soul has been sent down as a gift from heaven for my son Eleazar. I saw it carried down on the wings of the Holy Beast, and therefore my soul rejoices exceedingly."

He called his son and made him sit down beside him, facing all the guests. Then the guests noticed that the young man's face shone as if illumined by some inner source of joy. And the father said to him, in the presence of all those assembled : " This day hast thou been chosen to be a saint." And the young man bowed his head.

While the Master was speaking a flame descended from heaven and surrounded the house of feasting, shutting it off

from those outside. Those who arrived late were obliged to remain outside. Rabbi Jose, who arrived late, saw many scholars unable to enter. He asked the reason and was told : " As we came towards the house, behold a fire descended from heaven and surrounded it. And we saw the Holy Eagle come down in the midst of the flames, bearing with him a shining crown. It was the *Crown of Saints* sent down from heaven for Eleazar." And they were obliged to remain outside for some hours until the flame disappeared.

When they entered the house Rabbi Jose said : " We have been witness outside to the signs from heaven and we know what they portend. Now let the joy of Eleazar be complete. Let this day be also the day of his wedding." Ben Jochai asked him : " What do you mean ? " And he answered : " This day, I will give my daughter to your son for a wife." And ben Jochai said at once : " You have spoken truly for she is indeed the destined bride of my son." Then the wedding feast began. And while they were all celebrating the wedding of Eleazar, the Master began to reveal to them the mysteries of the Mishnah. And the guests were held enthralled for three days and three nights by the revelations of the Master.

#### AFTER THE DEATH OF SIMEON BEN JOCHAI

Yehuda, one of the disciples, fell asleep under a tree. And he dreamed that he saw the Master rising into the air, mounted on four wings. Only the Pentateuch was with him, for all the Holy Books had gone to the upper world with him, at his death. When the disciple awoke he told his dream to the others and he said : " That which I have just witnessed convinces me that, with the death of our Master, wisdom has disappeared from the world in having lost this precious jewel, which served as the contact between the upper and the lower worlds. Simeon ben Jochai was the mill that ground the manna for mankind to gather every day. Now, both the mill and the manna have disappeared ! "

## CHAPTER VII

### LEGENDS CONCERNING SOME OF THE DISCIPLES OF SIMEON BEN JOCHAI

THE following legends, chosen at random from amongst a vast quantity of details scattered throughout the Zohar, have been inserted with the idea of acquainting the reader with some of those whom the Zohar mentions as being closest to the Master during his lifetime and who helped to spread the doctrine of his teachings after his death. Through the eyes of his disciples we see the Master like a reflection thrown back by a many-faceted crystal of variations of the same colour. In their veneration and exaltation of him we see the reflection of his personal appreciation of his own merit, in which the disciples evidently believed with as passionate and as sincere a faith as in his teachings.

#### THE MASTER'S SON, RABBI ELEAZAR

In the small coterie of the elect with which the Master surrounded himself, the most outstanding figure was that of his son, Eleazar, to whom he was deeply attached. Eleazar had accompanied him into his exile and remained with him during the whole of the thirteen years spent in the cave, sharing in all his father's trials, but sharing also in the deep knowledge of mysteries that came to the Master in his isolation. Ben Jochai often associated the name of his son with his own as the possessor of unusual merit, and the legends show him to us as one able to perform miracles and as one whose merit established his place amongst the Righteous who are to inherit the world to come. Hence, the first legends concern the Master's son.

One hot summer's day, Eleazar, accompanied by some of his colleagues, sat down under a tree to rest, when a serpent glided by. Eleazar said to the serpent : " Return whence ye came. The man you have been sent to seek has turned from his evil ways ! " But the serpent refused to listen and kept on his way. And Eleazar said again : " Listen, O serpent, this man has repented, hence you have naught more to do with him. But turn in the opposite direction and go seek out a man who has done a great wrong to another ! " At this the serpent reared himself into the air, turned about and went in the direction indicated. The disciples were amazed and asked Eleazar how he knew these things. And he told them : " By a sign given to my father." " But how did you know that the man had repented of his evil ways ? " they asked further. And he answered them : " When I saw the serpent I noticed that his scales and his tail were upright, as if he were bent upon an act of destruction, and I also saw a spirit moving in front of him, trying to get him to turn back. But a serpent who has been given permission to do evil will not be deterred, unless given some other task of the same sort. Just then, I saw that another spirit had come down from heaven to tell the serpent of another evil man who merited death." But as the disciples looked incredulous he bade them : " Come with me and you shall see for yourselves." They went on until they came to a corpse with a serpent coiled round it. Nearby lay a purse of gold which the man had stolen. And while they marvelled at this a Jew came along, looking tired and dispirited. Suddenly he stopped, raised his hands to heaven and said : " Lord, Thou art the God of Justice and I accept Thy Will. Thou knowest that for myself, I am content with but very little, but my parents are old and I have naught wherewith to keep them alive. And Thou knowest that in the purse I had money belonging to a poor man who was saving it to marry off his daughter. How shall I answer these poor people now ? " And he burst out in a great cry of despair.

Then Eleazar approached him and said : " You do well to have faith in the justice of God. A miracle has been done on

your behalf." He showed him the corpse of the one who had wronged him and restored his purse. And the man threw himself on the ground and kissed the hem of his garment, and said : " I know that God has performed this miracle not for my unworthy self, but for the sake of Rabbi Eleazar, the Righteous One ! "

Eleazar saw an old man accompanied by a little boy trying to ford a deep stream, and he decided to help them. " Old man," he said, " place the child on one of my shoulders and rest your hand on the other and thus we shall all cross safely." The old man doubted if one so learned would have the physical strength to perform such a feat. But Eleazar said : " How can you doubt my strength ? Have I not drunk of the elixir that is distilled from the study of the Torah, which helps man to bear the greatest trials ? I could take you in one hand and the child in the other and throw you for half a mile ! " The old man then permitted him to help them across. On the other side Eleazar asked about the boy, and was told : " He is the one to whom I am teaching Torah ! " Then Eleazar promised him : " My power is great in this world and in the world to come, and I promise to use it in your behalf. Because you are spending your time in teaching Torah, I will not allow the Keeper of Hell to touch you. But you will enter the next world as a man of merit." And the old man said : " Your words are indeed great in the other world—great and full of power like the words of the angels who wait on the Lord ! " And as Eleazar looked at him in surprise, behold, the old man vanished from his sight, and he knew that he had been talking with Elijah.

Rabbi Eleazar and Rabbi Abba were making a journey accompanied by a porter who carried their baggage. Suddenly the porter said : " We have a long journey in front of us, let us not waste it, but let us talk about the Torah." And the Master embraced him, and said : " Thy place is not behind, but before us." Nevertheless, the porter insisted on

keeping a little behind them, while saying : " Let us illumine the way by speaking of the mysteries of the universe." They asked him : " Tell us who you are and where you live." He answered : " My habitation is a tower that flies in the air, strong and imposing. In it live the Holy One and a poor man. My father lives in the great sea. He is big and ancient of days. He swallows all the fishes of the sea and then gives them up to new life and filled with all the things that they desire. He is so powerful that he can cover the sea from end to end in one instant. He brought me out, even as an arrow is shot out from the hand of a hero, and hid me for a long time in the place of which I have told you. Then he returned home and hid himself in the sea."

The two disciples were amazed at all that he had told them, and as they prostrated themselves before him he vanished from their sight. They were sad that they had not been able to keep him longer with them, and Rabbi Abba said : " It is even as we have been told : every time that two travel together and speak about the Torah, they are favoured with the company of a saint from the other world."

They pursued their way and came to a mountain just before the sunset. They heard the trees at the foot of the mountain singing their hymns to God, and saw them carried on the wings of the light breeze of evening. Then they heard a voice from heaven, saying : " Children of God, who have descended amongst the mortals on earth, lamps of the school of heaven, gather now in your accustomed place to hear the words of the Master, as he explains the mysteries." The travellers were seized with fright and remained as if petrified. And again they heard the Voice saying : " Hear ye, rocks put in the High Places, the Master has taken His place in the glowing colours of the celestial tapestry, it is time to ascend to the heavens and assemble." Then the disciples prostrated themselves in fear and left the mountain in great haste.

Great was their joy, on coming to their destination, to encounter Simeon ben Jochai, who said to them : " I am sure that on your journey you were witnessing miracles. For while you were journeying I fell asleep and had a dream.



And I saw that Benaisa, son of Joiada, had been sent to accompany you and to crown you both. And even had I not had this dream, I would have known what had happened to you by the change in your faces." Then Eleazar placed his head on his father's knees and told him all that they had seen and heard. And Rabbi Simeon bowed his face to the ground and cried out saying: "You have indeed found favour on high, since you have been allowed to see that torch of divine learning, Rab Hamanouna, face to face! Even I have not been found worthy of such a favour!" And suddenly Simeon ben Jochai had a vision in which he saw the old Rab Hamanouna. He was running and displacing mountains on his way to the Messiah. And the old man said to him: "Master, in this world you will be next to the great masters of the Torah, sitting in the Presence of the Holy One!" And ben Jochai awoke from his trance, and called his son *Peniel*, even as Jacob called a place Peniel, *where he had seen God face to face*.

At first, Eleazar was buried in Gush Halav, far from the grave of his father. But Simeon ben Jochai appeared in a dream to the people of Meron and said to them: "I had a right eye, and you have separated it from me. You must bring it back to me!" Then the people of Meron went to fetch the body of his son in order to place it near him, but the people of Gush Halav, feeling that they were to be deprived of their greatest treasure, refused to give it up. But the people of Meron, desiring to do the bidding of the Master, waited until their neighbours were busy with the celebration of a festival, then took the body of the son and made a tomb for it near that of the father.

The Zohar tells us: "He who cares for the enjoyments of this world and does not give himself to the study of the Torah and to good deeds, to him are given the riches of this world from the Forces of the Left. With this wealth, he does bad deeds and inherits the Valley of Gehinnom. But he who ful-

fills the precepts of the Torah in poverty will, at the end, accomplish his life with the wealth that comes from the Forces of the Right or the Holy Side."

When Rabbi Abba came from Babylon he said : " He who desires riches and he who desires eternal life must absorb himself in the Divine Teachings." And many came to him to learn. One of them said to him : " Master, I wish to absorb myself in the Divine Teachings, in order to become rich." Rabbi Abba took him into his school and he began to study. After some time he asked : " Master, where is the riches that you promised me ? " And the Master answered angrily : " This means that you are not working, that you are not striving for the sake of God, but for your own sake ! " Just then Abba heard a voice from heaven admonishing him not to be angry with this man, who was on the way to achieving great things. And the Master spoke to him more gently : " Bear with your studies yet awhile, my son, and riches will surely come to you."

One day, a rich man came to the Master, bearing a vessel of pure gold. When he uncovered it, such a ray of light shone from it that it illumined the whole house. The rich man gave the vessel to the Master, saying : " I pray thee, Master, help me. I myself am not able to take part in the Divine Study, but if I find a man willing to do it on my behalf, I will gladly give him this golden vessel in exchange and much more of the wealth which I have inherited from my father, but which can bring me no happiness. I want to exchange some of my riches for the merit that comes with an understanding of the Torah." Then the Master called the man who wanted to become rich, and told him of the rich man's offer, which he gladly accepted. And he continued to steep himself in the study of the Divine Word, until its effulgence had penetrated into his very soul. And the love for it suffused his whole being. But one day the Master found him weeping, and asked him the reason for his sorrow. " Alas," said he, " I have bartered away all my chances of happiness in the future life for gold. Now, my whole being is full of longing to keep this spiritual joy for myself." The

Master rejoiced to hear this, and said : " Now I am sure that you are working for the sake of God ! Weep not, for you shall have your heart's desire." And he called the rich man and said to him : " Take your gold and give it to the poor and the orphans, and I will give you a great portion of the merit that lies in learning the Divine Word." And he returned to him the golden vessel.

Rabbi Abba came to Rabbi Jose, who rose to greet him with the words : " Welcome to the Man of the Doctrine ! " And they studied the Torah together until the middle of the night. Abba fell asleep, and his companion saw him smiling in his sleep. At the same time he saw a light spread through the room, which he knew must be the Schechina. He lowered his eyes and did not dare to lift them until the coming of the dawn. When the heavenly light vanished, Abba opened his eyes which were sparkling with joy as if at the sight of a glorious vision. His companion took his hand, and Abba said : " I know what you want to ask me, and I shall tell you all that you wish to know. The moment the *Man of the Nose* (Angel of Sleep) appeared before me, he took my soul on the palms of his hands and brought it to the upper regions. And I saw the souls of the Righteous rising ever higher. And the angel that was carrying my soul said unto them : ' It is thanks to your merit that I am formed in the Holy Form of the Sacred Name, and to have as my task the bringing of the Righteous Souls before the Holy of Holies.' Then the angel pointed to a vast tower, and my soul was filled with an inexpressible joy, for I saw that it was built of my doctrines piled up like a Tower of David. And the light which you saw in the room was the reflection of the joy of the souls which accompanied mine on its heavenly pilgrimage."

One of the disciples had a vision which he related to his colleagues : " Behold, I saw the Prophet Elijah coming down in a halo of fire. And he stopped to greet my soul with the words : ' Come with me to the city of Jerusalem, for I go to

bring them warning that all the cities of the Sages are to be destroyed. But they must know that they can avert the evil decree if they will but turn to the study of the Torah, which is being neglected. But as long as the study of the Torah is carried on in Jerusalem it will continue to exist. For the Torah is the Tree of Life for all that lives ! ' ' "

Rabbi Yosse and another disciple arrived at a certain place, and the former stopped and said : " See, this is the spot to which my father once brought me, as a boy, and said to me, ' When thou shalt be forty years old, thou wilt find in this place the Treasure of Supreme Wisdom, for I have just received a sign from two birds that have flown over thy head ! ' But I have already reached the age of forty, yet I have not found the treasure." Discontented with himself, he wandered about the place, until he came to a grotto which he began to explore. He found a book hidden away amongst the rocks. Bringing it out into the light he found that it contained the seventy-two graven letters of the Holy Name. This secret, he knew, had been confided to Adam and had opened to him the portals of *the Supreme Wisdom of the Upper World*.

Greatly stimulated by this discovery the two friends sat down and began to study the book. But very soon a tongue of flame, accompanied by a violent wind, shot through space, tore the book out of their hands and carried it off. They were greatly perturbed and one of them remarked sadly : " Alas, we are not worthy to know that which this book contains ! We have perhaps been guilty of sin in taking it from its hiding-place." And they decided to consult the Master about it. When they recounted their adventure to Simeon ben Jochai, he said : " The letters contained in the book enclose the secret of the coming of the Messiah. It is clear that the Holy One does not want this secret divulged as yet, but when the Messianic period approaches even little children will know that it is coming. Mankind is not yet fit for this knowledge." He then tried to console them, but the disciples said sadly : " Alas, we have already forgotten even that which we were able to read in the book ! "

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE REVELATIONS MADE TO THE GREAT HOLY ASSEMBLY

IN all the country round about the Sea of Galilee, the Master, Simeon ben Jochai, walked with his pupils. Sometimes there were twelve, at other times perhaps ten, of these faithful followers to whom the Master taught the Torah and expounded the Word of God as revealed by the Prophets and the teachers of Israel: the Written Law preserved for all posterity in that imperishable book, the Bible.

And he said to his followers: "Unhappy is the man who sees in the interpretation of the Law the recital of a simple narrative told in the words of ordinary usage. Were it only that, we should have no difficulty in composing a better and more attractive Torah to-day. But the words we read are only the outer cloak. Each one of them contains a higher meaning than that which is apparent to us. Each contains a sublime mystery which we must try hard to penetrate. Those who mistake the outer garment for the thing it covers will not find much happiness in it. Just as they who judge man only by his outer garments are bound to be disappointed for it is the body and the spirit which makes the man. Under the garments of the Torah, which are the words, and under the body of the Torah, which is the Commandments, lies the soul, which is the hidden mystery. It is this hidden mystery which makes the Law given by God superior to all the laws made by man, even though the latter may appear greater and seemingly more logical. There is a soul within a soul that breathes with the Law."

Nevertheless the Master hesitated to reveal unto them that which their souls longed to know and which his soul longed

to tell them. One day, at the *Hour of Mercy*, the Master walked in the fields with his pupils. The sun was at the moment of setting, but the sky was full of signs and wonders. The sun became more and more brilliant and remained without sinking. The moon appeared in all its majesty and the stars in all their brilliance. The pupils looked questioningly at the Master, and one of them said : " Master, does it not seem that the time has arrived—the time of which you have so often spoken with us—to reveal the mysteries that lie hidden within the Law? How long shall we spend our time in vain pursuits, and occupy ourselves with a Law that rests on one pillar? We want to begin to work for the Lord, for time is pressing and the workers are few in number. And even those few must remain at the very edge of the vineyard, for they are uncertain as to which way to proceed. Therefore, we pray thee, Master, arm us with wisdom, with intelligence, with knowledge. Reveal to us those truths which the Saints of the Upper World hear with joy and try to understand."

Still the Master hesitated, and cried out : " Alas, unhappy am I if I reveal unto you the mysteries, and unhappy am I if I do not ! " At this, the pupils were frightened, but Abba said : " The Master need not fear to reveal the mysteries to us, for it is written, ' The Lord reveals His Law to them that fear Him ! ' And we are of those that fear the Lord." And as they all looked beseechingly at him he called each one of them by name, and there were present : Eleazar, the Master's son, and Abba ; Yehouda and Jose the son of Jacob ; Isaac and Hizquiya, the son of Rab ; Hiya, Yosse and Jesse. They stretched out their hands to the Master, with palms turned upwards and fingers pointing towards the sky. And thus joined as in a holy communion they followed him to a field, close to which ran a gurgling stream, and sat down under a tree with wide-spreading branches.

But the Master remained standing for some time, his hands raised in prayer. Then he sat down in the midst of his disciples and said : " Let each one of you put forth his hand towards me." They stretched out their hands towards him,

and he touched each one of them in turn. Then he placed his son Eleazar in front of him and Hiya on the opposite side. And as they waited thus, his head sank slowly on his breast, and he murmured: "We are the synthesis of all things." The others feared to disturb him. And as they sat silent they heard a great rushing together as of the heavenly hosts assembling to hear the words of Simeon ben Jochai. A flame passed over the earth, and the pupils began to tremble.

Then the Master raised his head and said: "The traitor reveals secrets, but he who has a faithful heart guards well the word that has been confided to him. He is a traitor who has no faith; and he who has no faith has not the serenity of spirit necessary to grasp the meaning of mysteries. He whose spirit is not serene finds that the mysteries keep turning in his head, as a beaver turns in the water. He throws off all that comes to trouble his spirit. Let not the lightness of our tongue cause us to sin, for the fate of the world rests on the secret mysteries. And especially must we beware that we go not from the way of truth, not even by the breadth of one hair."

#### THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CURTAIN

They all listened eagerly, and the Master said: "Behold, I see all the lights shining on the other side of the curtain. The Holy One has stretched a curtain on four pillars, towards the four directions of the world. One of these pillars reaches from the lower to the upper world. A chief guards it and holds the keys that will open the curtain. Between the pillars I see eighteen pedestals illumined by the Supreme Light. Listen to me, for you are all destined to shine as lamps in the world and to illumine the paths of understanding. I have now beheld things that have not been seen by the eye of man, since Moses went up for a second time to Mount Sinai. My eyes are filled by the sight of *The Ancient One* in a vast illumination. I know, too, that my face is shining, while Moses did not know that his face shone when he spoke with the Lord. Yet was Moses greater than the Prophets!

For when God spoke to Moses *with a loud voice*, he did not tremble, but the other Prophets trembled even though the Divine Word was revealed to them in a murmur and in visions ! ”

Then he opened his eyes and seeing his pupils he said : “ May the spirit of the Lord rest upon you : the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of strength, the spirit of science and the spirit of the fear of the Lord ! And may the spirit that comes from the Mysterious Brain of the Ancient One come down and awaken the six spirits that correspond to the six degrees of the Throne of King Solomon. And may the day be hastened on which the Messiah is destined to come and sit on the Seventh Degree, formed by the Ancient One Himself. For, at the time of the coming of the Messiah, no man will have to ask the other to teach him wisdom.

“ Behold, I see all the worlds waiting breathlessly for the words that leave our lips, for all the words to be spoken in this Assembly are holy. And the breath that leaves our lips forms curtains through which the Supreme Light becomes visible.

“ With his ordinary understanding, man cannot understand the revelation of mysteries. All that I am about to reveal to you can be revealed only to the Masters, who know how to keep the balance because they have been initiated.

“ The living soul which God has breathed into us is the seal stamped on man which permits him to elevate himself to the very highest mysteries, to the very heart of all that is hidden. And know that the souls of all who live both above and below depend upon the soul that has reached the highest estate. He who elevates his soul towards God is able to attain the very highest source. *All souls form but one unity with the Divine Soul.* Thus, he who loses his soul has destroyed the Divine Harmony.

“ Know that all the upper and the lower worlds are comprised in the Image of God. All has been and all will be. It has never changed and it never will change. It is the centre of all perfection. It encloses all the images of every-



thing we are conscious of with all our senses and in all forms. But we see it only as a reproduction, for none has seen and none can see it in its true form. All we know is that man bears the closest resemblance to the original. And know that these things are revealed only to those who cultivate the field."

#### THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

And the Master's voice suddenly took on a joyful ring as he began to reveal to them the mystery of the existence of God: "It is no longer time to fear the Lord, but to love Him. He is the Ancient of Ancients; the Mystery of all Mysteries; the most Unknown of the Unknown. He has a certain form that is known to us, nevertheless, He is unknown to us. His garment appears to us as white, His aspect brilliant. He is sitting on a throne of sparks of fire, which is submissive to His Will. He has neither beginning nor end.

"Before He put on His Crown to establish His Kingdom, He outlined and enclosed the Unlimited within limits. He drew a curtain before Him, and on it He began to design His Kingdom. But naught existed, except in name. Real existence became manifest only after the apparition of the Holy One across the veil. And the Supreme Presence became manifest in this way: When God wanted to create the Torah, which had been hidden for æons before the creation of the world, it dared to say, 'The One Who would establish His Law must first establish His Own Being.'

"Nevertheless, the Mystery of Mysteries is but imperfectly determinable. From His works we get a feeble comprehension of His Being. God is the Infinite Being, and is not to be regarded either as the *ensemble* of all other beings, nor yet as the sum total of His own Attributes. Nevertheless, without the attributes and the benefits we receive from them, we should not be able either to understand or to know Him.

*The Attributes.*

“ Before any form had as yet been created, God was alone ; without form and similar unto nothing. And because man is not able to picture God to himself as He really is, he is not allowed to represent Him, either by a picture, or by His Name, or even by a dot. But after He had created man, God wanted to be known by His Attributes : as the God of Mercy, the God of Justice, the All-Powerful God, the God of Hosts and He Who Is. It is only through knowing His attributes that we can say *the whole earth is full of His Glory*. Nor is He to be compared with man, who comes from the dust and is destined for death. He is above all creatures and greater than all attributes. Neither attribute, nor image, nor body, but rather like unto the waters, without form and without limits. Yet when the waters are spread over the earth we are able to conceive of them and to speak of them under various forms : first, there is the source. Then the stream that springs from it and spreads its waters over the earth. Then the basin into which the waters flow and which forms the sea. Then the sea whence the waters run into seven channels, making ten forms in all. But should these forms be broken the waters would escape and return to their original source, while the forms in which they were held would fall into ruin. In this way were created the *Ten Sephiroth* : the first, the Crown, is the Source where gleams a light without end, and which we call the Infinite or EnSoph, since we have no means at our disposal wherewith to understand it. Then comes a vase as concentrated as a point, like the letter *Yod* ; this is the *Source of Wisdom*, by virtue of which we call upon the *God of Wisdom*. Then comes a vessel as immense as the sea ; this is Intelligence and gives us the title *Intelligent God*. But into both Wisdom and Intelligence God has poured of *His Own Substance*, so that from this sea branch out the seven channels of Attributes : *Mercy, Justice, Beauty, Triumph, Glory, Royalty* and the *Foundation*. Thus we are able to designate God as : the Great, the Merciful, the Strong, the Magnificent, the God of Victory, and He Who Is the Basis of all things.

“ God separates Himself from all things, yet is He not separated from them : for all things are united with Him even as He is united with them. In giving Himself form, God has given life to all that exists. And it came about thus : In the beginning, the sound of the Word struck the void and formed an imperceptible point, the origin of light. This point was His *Thought*. From the point He evolved a mysterious form, which He covered in a sparkling garment. This is the universe, which is at the same time a part of the Name of God. Then there emanated from Him ten lights which shine in the form they have taken from Him and send luminous rays in all directions, like a beacon. The Ancient One is an elevated beacon which we recognize by the manifold and brilliant lights that are revealed to our eyes. All parts of the Holy Name are lights.

“ The Holy Name encloses a great secret : when the Mystery of Mysteries wanted to manifest Himself, He created a Point that was the Divine Thought. In this He designed all kinds of Images and engraved all kinds of figures. Thereon, He also engraved the *Lamp*, which is the holiest of all mysteries—the profoundest emanation of the Divine Thought. This was the beginning of the edifice existing before aught else existed and known by part of the Name : *MI* (Who : which means He will never be actually known). But when God wanted to be more fully known, He put on a precious garment and created *ELEH* (This : which means all creation). And these two together make the name *ELOHIM* which means : *The Sacred Point Below*. To it is known the Paradise on Earth and its mystery. The Sacred Point projects a light in four directions, the brilliance of which none is able to withstand. Only the rays which emanate from it can be gazed at. But as all created things are filled with a deep longing to approach the rays emanating from the Sacred Point, there is formed at its extreme end another point of light known as *The Sacred Point Below* : *ELOHIM*. Nevertheless, *ELOHIM* is composed of the same light as *The Sacred Point Above*, which is *ENSOPH*.

“ Now let us try to understand the science of the Sacred

Unity. Look at the flame of a lamp : first, we see two lights, one of a brilliant whiteness, the other dark, or bluish. The white light is above and rises in a straight line ; the dark light is below and seems to form the base for the other. But so closely joined are they that they appear to us as a single flame. But the base, which is the dark light, is attached to the wick which is under it. The white light preserves its luminous whiteness at all times unchanged, while the lower, dark light, seems to consist of many *nuances*. The dark light acts in two opposite directions : above, it is attached to the white light, while below, it is attached to the material which feeds it and, being gradually absorbed into it, rises to the upper or white light. Thus are all things absorbed into the Supreme Whole.

“ The Glory of God is so sublime and so far above the human understanding that it must remain an eternal mystery. Yet there are three ways in which man may perceive the partial Glory of God : the first is the vision which the eye can perceive from afar off, but only an infinitesimal ray penetrates within the eye. It is not enough to suffuse man’s soul. Thus the first vision remains as something seen from afar off and only with the outer eye. The second way is that the eye is plunged without the proper preparation into a radiance which it is unable to bear. Dazzled and confused it is obliged to shut out the great radiance by its own act, after having been able to grasp but a tiny ray of the Supreme Vision. The third way is when the vision is seen as in a bright mirror. Upon this the eye is able to rest and to fill itself so completely with beauty that it finally penetrates to the innermost being and irradiates the soul with an everlasting light. And the soul, having grasped the inner meaning of the light that floods it, may bask in its radiance and satisfy itself at all times with the joy it exudes.

“But the Essence of God is so far above the intelligence of men or of angels that none can come near enough to it to understand it. *The beings who live below say that God is on high, while the angels in heaven say that God is on earth.* God is known to each one according to the depth of his own

understanding. For each man can attach himself to the spirit of wisdom only in so far as the breadth of his own spirit permits. And every man must try to deepen his own knowledge of God in so far as his own understanding permits him to do so. But the Divine Essence must ever remain a profound mystery.

#### THE GREAT FACE AND THE LITTLE FACE

“ God is *the Master in the White mantle and the glowing Visage*. The White of His Eye forms four thousand worlds, and the Righteous of this world will each inherit four hundred worlds illumined by the White of the Eye. Millions of worlds have their basis and their support in His Head. The Dew that rises in the Head and falls from it will revive the dead in the future world. It is this Dew that is the Manna of the Righteous in the world to come. It is white, as the diamond is white, yet giving forth all the colours. Every day there is emitted from the Brain thirteen thousand myriads of worlds, which receive their subsistence from Him and whose weight is supported by Him. The Whiteness of the Head throws light in all directions. Because of the length of the Visage, the Ancient of Days is known as the *Great Face*, Which is composed of three natures or principles superimposed : male, female and son. In order to create the worlds which can exist only in God and through God, the *Great Face* has drawn a veil in front of Itself. And on this veil is graven the Divine Essence, Which is known as the *Little Face*. In front of this veil many other veils are placed at certain intervals, and seen through each of these veils the Divine Essence appears under a different form : as Mercy (the heart) ; as Strength (the arm) ; as Wisdom (the brain) ; etc., and these are known as the *Sephiroth*.

“ The Brain is the symbol of water and the Heart of fire. The one symbolizes the Throne of Mercy, the other of Chastisement. When man’s sins are great, God leaves the Throne of Mercy and seats Himself on the Throne of Rigour.

“ The Ancient of Days and the Little Face are one and the

same. He has never changed and never will change. He is the centre of all perfection. And this is the Image, in which are contained all the other images: the image that can be seen everywhere and under all forms. But what we see is only that which we ourselves have pictured to ourselves from the reproductions with which we are familiar. None can see the real and authentic *Image*. The reproduction nearest to it in similarity is that of man. But all the upper and the lower worlds are comprised in the *Image of God*.

“ In the upper world, the two eyes form one, and it is always open. It is always laughing and always happy. It is known to us under various names as: the Open Eye; the Supreme Eye; the Holy Eye; the Eye of Providence; the Watchful Eye; the Good Eye. The Good Eye sheds blessing upon all things on which its glance rests. With the aid of the Spirit of Wisdom, the Saints may contemplate this Eye. And the Saints shall see “ eye to eye ” when God shall return unto Zion. Should the Upper Eye cease looking into the Lower Eye, the world would perish. The light from the Upper Eye penetrates the Lower Eye and from there it is spread in all directions.

“ To imagine the *White Head*, you must think of the fish of the sea, that has neither eyelids nor eyebrows, that never sleeps, yet needs no covering for its eyes. The white of *The Eye* eclipses every other whiteness. It is the quintessence of all whiteness. It is a whiteness of three *nuances*. The first nuance projects a light which illumines three lamps: Glory, Majesty and Joy. The second nuance projects a light which illumines three lamps: Force, Grace and Beauty. The third reflects the hidden light of *the Brain* and lights the lamp in the middle, which is the seventh in order and from which are lighted all the lamps of this world.

“ When *the Forehead* is uncovered, the prayers of Israel are accepted. It is uncovered only at the moment of evening prayer on the eve of the Sabbath. During the week, Rigour rules the Little Face, but on the Sabbath Day it is changed to Clemency: all irritation ceases, mercy is spread, and prayer is accepted. While on earth the uncovered forehead

is regarded as a sign of insolence, in the world above it is rather a sign of love and clemency. From *the Forehead* there jut out three hundred and seventy thousand rays directed towards the heavenly Eden, which sends down the reflection to the earthly Eden: for one Eden illumines the other. The heavenly Eden is hidden and no road approaches it but the earthly Eden has thirty-two approaches. Nevertheless, no one knows how to get to it. No one knows the earthly Eden but the Little Face, and no one knows the heavenly Eden but the Great Face.

“ Even though the spirits, the angels and the souls are immaterial beings, yet in comparison to the Supreme Being they are as material bodies. For He is the Soul of Souls. He is outside of all things and yet within all things. He is in all directions and fills the upper and the lower spaces. There is no other God outside the *Ten Sephiroth* from which emanate and depend all things. He fills each *Sephira* in length, in breadth and in thickness. And He alone knows how to unite the Schechina with each *Sephira* and with each luminous leaf that hangs from the Sephirotic tree, and is a part of it, even as the nerves, the flesh, the bones and the skin are a part of the body. He has neither body, nor members, nor female parts. He is One. And there is no other. May He be pleased to unite with the Schechina in all the degrees of the *World of the Emanations*, formed by the souls of the Virtuous.”

The Master ceased speaking and the disciples sat and pondered on all that he had revealed unto them. And each man wrestled in his soul with the limitations of his own understanding, trying to grasp the Vision as it had been revealed unto them.

And it came to pass that three of those who had listened to the great Revelation, obsessed by a great longing to unite their souls once more with the *Source of their Origin*, died, and their colleagues saw that they were carried by the Holy Angels behind the Curtain. And a great sadness fell upon the whole Assembly. And Rabbi Simeon cried out: “ Alas, it is as I feared. Punishment from heaven has descended

upon us, because that we have dared to participate in the revelation of mysteries such as have not been revealed since the time of Moses!" And the Master's head drooped in sadness on his breast. But a Voice came from Heaven, saying: "Happy are you, Simeon ben Jochai! And happy are all those who are with you, for to you have been revealed the secret things that have never before been revealed, even to the heavenly legions. But know that they who would penetrate to the inner meaning of those mysteries which cause both those above and those below to tremble, expose themselves to death. As the soul learns about the *Ancient One* she is consumed by the desire to fly to Him, as soon as the mysteries are revealed to her. And the soul, out of her great longing, gives herself up to the KISS. Then do the angels carry the soul behind the Curtain, and she begins her journey upwards."

And consolation stole into the hearts of the colleagues as they listened to these comforting words. And the Voice from Heaven spoke once more to them: "You, who have attached yourselves to the Lord your God, you are alive this day!" Then the disciples arose and went each one his way. And wherever they went, perfumes and fine odours preceded them. And the Master said: "The world and all that is in it is blessed by our presence!" And the faces of all of them shone so that none dared to look upon them!

#### THE VISIT OF THE PROPHET ELIJAH

Again the pupils came together to hear the words of the Master as he expounded to them the great mysteries. They waited for the Hour of Mercy. They walked under the trees of the forest, until the sky became suffused with the red glow that told them that *the Hour* had come. Then they stretched out their hands towards the Master and followed as he led them to an open space, where they sat down, as before, in a semi-circle facing the Master, with hands outstretched. And he touched the hand of each one in turn before he began to speak:



“ And where, I ask, is he who wears the Girdle and the mantle of skins? I know that he is amongst the first to come and listen to the revelation of holy mysteries.” Then the disciples saw the Prophet Elijah appear, three rays of light emanating from his face. Ben Jochai greeted him with the words: “ Master, why did you not come dressed in the garments for the Festival? ” And the Prophet answered: “ Master, I swear unto you by your life, that seven days before the meeting of your Assembly there were already chosen in heaven those who were to appear in the Holy Presence during the period of your reunion. I was one of those most anxious to be present, but the Holy One sent me to perform a miracle in favour of Rab Hamenouna who was imprisoned together with his colleagues in a fortress by order of the King. After delivering them I remained with them for a while to help them. Then, on my way back, I saw three of your disciples carried behind the Curtain. I asked what this meant and was told that it was the portion sent to the Holy One from your Assembly. Happy is your lot and that of your colleagues, for many lamps will be lit by you in the world to come! ” And the Master said to the Prophet: “ Indeed, the Righteous are more closely united with the Source of the Souls during Sabbaths and festivals than at any other time.” And Elijah answered him and said: “ Yes, the Sabbath is blessed because it is the Seventh Day. And you, Rabbi Simeon, are blessed because you are the seventh. And your colleagues are blessed because of you! ”

But some of the disciples mourned the death of their three colleagues and brooded upon their going and would not be comforted. Seeing their grief, the Master one day pronounced a *word* and, behold, they saw their three colleagues whom the angels had carried behind the Curtain. They saw them being conducted over mountains whence flowed streams of perfume, in which they were bathed and purified. Then they saw them sitting in the High Places amongst the Righteous and surrounded by a great Glory. And the disciples rejoiced to see the happiness of their colleagues which transcended anything they had ever been able to

picture to themselves. They no longer mourned for them, but felt the longing to be even as they were. They did not leave the Master's side any more, but plunged themselves into an understanding of the mysteries which he revealed to them.

#### THE REVELATIONS CONCERNING THE SCHECHINA

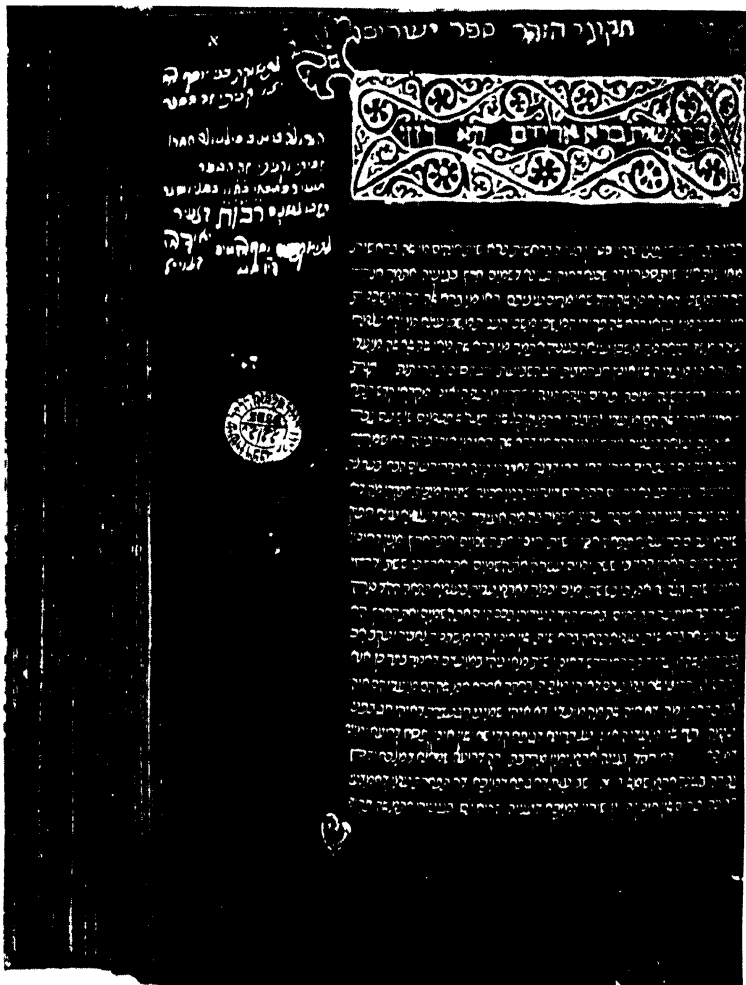
And Simeon ben Jochai began to reveal to his disciples in the Great Assembly the mysteries about the Schechina :

“ Above all the angels is placed the Matrona or Schechina, who looks after the palace of the Supreme King. She also has her legions of angels, each with his sixty faces and armed with a sword. When they fly over the earth they use six wings. They are wrapped in a flame of fire and their swords throw light in all directions. They are the Cherubim who stand before the Garden of Delight and, with flaming sword, guard the road that leads to the Tree of Life. Know that the road that leads to the Tree of Life is the Matrona. When the Matrona moves, all the heavenly hosts move with her. All the messages that the Supreme King sends below must pass through her hands first. And all the messages from this world to the Supreme King come to her and she transmits them. She is the perfect mediator between heaven and earth. And while it may not seem compatible with the Glory of the Great King that He confides all to the Matrona, even to the conduct of His wars, yet may we compare it in our own world to a king who has been united with a woman of high degree possessed of remarkable qualities. And as the king wishes all the people to know and to appreciate the qualities of his queen, he confides all the great tasks of the realm to her and asks his people to obey and respect her.

“ When we think that the Holy One is infinite and that He fills everything, we can understand that any idea of creation would have been impossible without the *Zimzum*. For how can we put water into a cup that is already full to the brim ? As God was everything, He could neither enlarge nor diminish. But as the Light of God is of such a purity and such a splendour that it eclipses everything—even the angels and

the Holy Beasts; even the Seraphim and the Cherubim—then, in order to make possible the existence of both the celestial and the material worlds, the Lord withdrew His powerful light from one part of Himself, even as a man cuts one of his ligaments in order to prevent the blood of the upper part from coming into contact with the blood of the lower part. Thus do we explain the formation of the four worlds: Emanation (Asiluth), Creation (Beriah), Formation (Yecirah), and Action (Asiyah). The two first worlds or degrees are filled with the Holy Light of God. There, all is God and God is all. The last two degrees constitute that part of the Essence of God where the light has been diminished in order to permit the souls, the angels and the inferior worlds to exist. It is to this part of the Infinite—which is the lesser part of the Divine Essence—that our Masters have given the name *Schechina*. The *Schechina* has come down to earth ten times already, for creation is the work of the *Schechina*, who occupies herself with it, as a mother with her children.

“ Even as the sun seeks for the moon, so does the Holy One seek for the *Schechina* and finds her not, for the sins of man separate them. The worlds of the emanation and of the creation lie above the Throne of God. There, it is impossible to distinguish between the Holy One and the *Schechina*, because there all things are one. But below the throne, in the worlds of formation and of action, the distinction begins. As each sin which man commits brings a demon to life, these demons are the barrier that stands between the Holy One and the *Schechina*. The question is sometimes asked why God does not exterminate these demons that come between Him and the *Schechina*. But we have seen that the desire of the Supreme Thought was that, when man had drawn unto himself sin and death—by eating of the forbidden fruit—he was to be allowed Free Will, so that he might, little by little, elevate the lower worlds to the status of the upper. But Free Will would be impossible without the demoniac urge to evil. Hence, the *Schechina* prefers to suffer the pains of the invasion of demons, rather than to weaken the chances for



TIKUNE HA ZOHAR MANUSCRIPT WRITTEN IN 1558  
From the Collection of Mr David Sassoon



eternal happiness given to man. The Holy King is beauty, while the Queen, the Schechina, is the perpetual activity of the divine emanations permeating all existence. The King is the sun, while the Queen is the moon, her light being the true reflection of that of the sun.

“ When Israel assembles for prayers in the synagogue, three legions of angels are united. The first are the Holy Angels who praise God every day. The second are those who praise God simultaneously with Israel, and the third is composed of the heavenly virgins who wait on the Schechina and prepare her for her appearance before the King. The third legion is above the others.

“ The Tree of Life spreads the perfumes with which the Matrona is prepared for her entry under the nuptial canopy of her Spouse. And the Spouse unites with her. At that moment the heavenly hosts are united into one body, animated by the desire to contemplate the Glory of God. But in the End of Days the union will be perfect and constant.

“ The Matrona is the heavenly Esther, who fights against the evil designs of the Demon, even as Esther fought against those of Haman. The Demon tries to exterminate the human race, but the Matrona is full of compassion for her people and intercedes for them with the Heavenly King.

“ When Israel lived in the Holy Land and accomplished all his duties in the sight of God, all was normal. The heavenly throne that rested on Israel was perfect. But when Israel had stained the Holy Land with his sins, he drove the Schechina from her abode and into exile amongst other nations. Because of this, Prophecy ceased and even the second Temple could not succeed, because the Schechina had not returned from her exile. From the moment that the Shechina went into exile the covenant between Israel and God was broken and began to take its force from the other side. Therefore, both the Schechina and Israel are in exile. So, may the covenant between a man and his wife be broken for a time. The Divine pleasure of the union is transformed into sorrow at the triple isolation involving the Father—God,

the Mother—the Schechina, and the Son—Israel. The sons—Israel are also separated from each other and are living in isolation and exile. And Israel bears the sorrows of all nations, for Israel is the heart of the Nations.”

#### THE REVELATIONS CONCERNING THE CREATION

And it was on the eve of the New Moon that the Master and his disciples were walking beside the Sea of Galilee. The heavenly arch above them seemed to have absorbed into itself the deep blue of the waters, while the sea lay calm and peaceful in a silvery pool flecked with twinkling stars. And one of the pupils said to him : “ Master, how beautiful is the creation, and yet we see but an infinitesimal part of it. How much deeper and more magnificent must be the things that are hidden from our imperfect sight ! Master, we pray you to enlighten us on the hidden mysteries of the Creation.”

Then the Master signed to them to take their accustomed places in a semi-circle in front of him and he began to reveal to them the mysteries of the Creation. He taught them far into the night and until the day broke, stopping only at midnight to recite the prayer for the destruction of the Temple. And he taught them :

“ Before the *Ancient of Days*, He Who is the most hidden of all the mysteries, had prepared the first Kingdom, or the forms of the Kings, there were neither limits nor boundaries. And the Holy One began to grave these forms and to design them in His Own Substance. He stretched a veil before His Face and designed thereon the Kingdoms, tracing their limits and forms. Nevertheless, they could not manage to exist. These were the kings who ruled over the lands of Edom, before yet a king ruled over Israel—the celestial kings and the celestial Israel. But although these kings had been created and named, they could not exist until God had descended amongst them and veiled His face before them.

“ There have existed ancient worlds that have been destroyed—worlds without form, that were as sparks of fire, for so does the blacksmith, in striking the iron, send forth

sparks in all directions. But they could not exist because the *Ancient of Days* had not yet assumed form—the worker was not yet at his task. And also because man had not yet been formed. The form of man comprises all things and all things can support life by means of it. As man had not yet been created, the worlds that preceded him could neither live nor support themselves, and fell into ruin until the form of man had been established. After man's creation they were all reborn but under other names.

“ Before the balance was established the King and the Queen—the real world and the ideal world—did not look at each other face to face. Hence, the first Kingdoms died and the first worlds fell into ruin. This balance belongs completely to the inner life and rests upon nothing but its own invisibility. And the scales will hold that which is not, that which is, and that which is yet to be.

“ Then, having created several worlds, the Eternal gave place in *His Thought* to the creation of the one in which we live. And when this last creation was on the point of being accomplished, all the things of this world, all the creatures of the universe, and all that was to have life and being here below, passed before God in their actual forms. For that which was from aforetime will also be in the future, and that which will be, has been.

“ The form of the universe being already present in His Thought, God also formed the souls that were to belong to men. They all appeared before Him in the form they were to assume later in the human body. And He saw a number of souls whose way would be corrupted on earth. When the soul's time arrives it is called before the Eternal and told, ‘ Go where thou art bidden and animate the body of which thou art to be a part ! ’ But the soul shrinks back and pleads, ‘ Master of the Universe, have mercy on me ! I am so happy in this world in which I find myself. I do not want to leave it for that other in which I shall be exposed to all manner of uncleanness ! ’ But the Holy One tells the soul, ‘ From the moment in which thou wast created, thou hast had no other destiny but to go into the world whither I now



send thee.' And, full of sorrow, the soul takes its way down to earth to live amongst men.

#### THE SUPREME LIGHT

" Then did God create the world by causing a spark of the *Supreme Light* to go forth. And He caused a wind to blow from above against a wind that blew from below. From the shock of the meeting of these two winds, a *Drop* emerged and rose from the depths of the abyss. This *Drop* united the winds and from the union of these winds the world was born. The spark then rose to the upper world and placed itself on the *Left*. And the *Left* arose and placed itself on the *Right*. But this change is continual. Now the *Spark* is occupying the *Right* side, and the *Drop* the *Left*. And then it is the other way round. From this continual change there arises an ebb and flow. When the one leaves the *Right* to take its place at the *Left*, the other is leaving its place at the *Left* to change to the *Right*. These two meet and unite. And it is during the meeting and the union of the *Spark* of light from above, with the *Drop* that came from below, that peace reigns both above and below.

" Then did God make a ray of the *Hidden Light* emerge. This ray immediately projected an incalculable number of visible lights, which formed the *Upper World*. The visible lights of the *Upper World*, in their turn, spread rays. These rays the heavenly Architect rendered dull. And thus was formed the *Lower World*. As the lower world is a dark light which emits no rays it must keep in constant touch with the upper world. But the light of the upper world has also the need to remain in contact with the lower world. It is only by keeping up the contact between the upper and lower worlds that this light is able to project any rays at all. But the light here below, which is not connected with the light of the upper world, gives rise to innumerable demons. All that is on earth is formed after the model of the upper world, and there is not a single thing here below that has not its counterpart in the upper world. This counterpart regulates and governs

it. When we set in motion the forces of which we are capable here below, we are also, at the same time, setting in motion the forces above, which control them.

“ The *Indivisible Point*—illimitable and unknowable—because of its strength and its purity has cast an aura outside itself that acts as a veil for the Indivisible Point itself. And the aura, in spite of being a light less pure than that of the Point, is yet too brilliant to be looked at. And the aura has also spread a light outside itself, a ring that is as a garment which veils and softens the light. Thus has everything been formed by a movement of light ever downward and outside itself. In this downward movement was the creation of the world established.

“ Or we may try to understand it in another way : The Indivisible Point or *Supreme Point* sends forth a light of such transparency, limpidity and subtlety that it penetrates everywhere. Around the Point, the penetration of its own light forms a ring or a Palace. The light of the *Supreme Point* being of an inconceivable brilliance, the light of the Palace which is inferior to it looks like a dark circle round it. But the light of the First Palace, though it may seem dark by comparison with the Point itself, is yet of an immense splendour, which gives off another ring or palace forming a sort of envelope around the first one. So that, emanating from the Supreme Point, all the degrees of creation are but envelopes, the one for the other. The envelope of the superior degree forms the *brain* of the degree next to it. This form of creation in the upper world is also repeated in the lower world. Man is made up of the brain and its envelope : the spirit and the body.

“ And God created the body of man on the model of the upper world. Strength and vigour radiate from the centre of the body where is the heart that nourishes all the members. And the heart is united with the brain which is in the upper part of the body. The world, which is also a body, was formed in the same way. When God created the world He placed the waters of the ocean around the earth. And in the heart of the inhabited world God placed Jerusalem. And in

the heart of Jerusalem, the Holy Mountain. The Mountain encloses the seat of the *Sanhedrin*, in the heart of which stands the Temple. In the heart of the Temple is the Holy of Holies where rests the Schechina. And this is the heart of the world.

“ And the upper world was created after the same fashion. There, too, an ocean encloses it, and above that, another ocean. In the heart of the *River of Fire* is the Heavenly Palace, where sits the *Sanhedrin* to whom none have access but the *Descendant of the House of David*. And in the centre of the *Sanhedrin* is the Holy of Holies which is the heart of the upper world and of all creation.

#### THE SEVEN HEAVENS

“ And God created seven heavens above and seven earths below ; seven oceans and seven rivers ; seven days and seven weeks ; seven years and seven times seven years ; and the seven thousand years of the duration of the world. And of the seven heavens above, each has its stars, its astral bodies and its suns. Each has its hierarchy empowered to carry out the Sovereign Will. And those who *serve* are different in every heaven : in some the servants have six wings ; in others, four wings. In some, they have six faces ; in others, two faces. Some are made of fire, some of water, and some of air. And all the heavens are placed one within the other like the leaves of the onion. All obey the Word of the Creator. For, above all, is the Holy One. Blessed be He !

“ And the seven heavens have each their fixed stars and their moving stars. It would take a hundred years of walking to cover each heaven. And the height of each is five times as great as its surface. And the distance that separates one heaven from the other would take five hundred years to cover. And above all of them is the *Araboth*, the highest heaven, whose surface would take one thousand five hundred years to cover, and its height just as much again. The light of the *Araboth* is so great that it illumines all the other heavens. Above the *Araboth* is the heaven of the *Holy Beast*. One claw of the foot of the Holy Beast is as large as

all the firmaments. And the height of each beast is as seven times the distance that lies between earth and heaven. It is like a fiery crystal. Here are to be found the legions of the Right and of the Left.

“ In each one of the heavens there is a ruler who governs the earth and the world. Only the Holy Land is not governed by any of these rulers, but by God Himself. And the power that emanates from each ruler is sent from the heaven to the earth. For each ruler is filled from above with the power which he gives to the world below. In the middle of all the heavens there is a door called *Gabillon*, underneath which are found seventy other doors guarded by seventy chiefs, each being a ray of light equal to two thousand lamps.

“ Our world forms the centre of the heavenly world. It is enclosed by doors that lead to the upper realms. At each door are legions of angels. These angels are nourished by an immense tree that rises out of three huge rocks and whose branches touch both heaven and earth. Our world lies under the protection of the branches of this tree and remains invisible since its light is hidden by the branches. This world can exercise its power only when the shadows of the tree cover it, and when all the doors that give it communication with the upper world are closed. But when hymns of praise arise from the throat of man, two doors are opened, one to the north, and the other to the south, and the heavenly flame comes down to earth and sends its illumination in six directions. If all the doors of the world were not guarded by angels, demons would have entered and destroyed it long ago. But when hymns of praise rise to heaven God Himself comes down to earth and strengthens the world with the Divine Presence.

“ When God wanted to create everything, He began by creating something that was both male and female, and these, in their turn, He made dependent upon some other form that is both male and female. And Wisdom (*Chochma*)—which is the first Sefhira after the Crown (*Keter*), made manifest by the Creator—shines in the form of both male and female. And when Wisdom is made manifest it produces Intelligence

(Binah). And again we have male and female : Wisdom is the Father, Intelligence the Mother. These are the two scales of the Balance. Because of them, all is manifested in the form of male and female. Without Wisdom there would have been no beginning, since Wisdom is the Father of Fathers—the origin of all things. Of this union, Faith is born and is spread in the world. Binah is produced by the two letters of the Name of God : Yod, Heh. Thus Binah is really Ben-Yah, Son of God : which is the perfection of all that exists. When the Father, the Mother, and the Son (who is Mercy—Chesed) are together, there is the perfect synthesis. And when they are together, the Daughter (who is Rigour—Gebourah) is also with them.

“ But know that this is the sum of the whole matter : That all in the lower world has been made in the image of the upper world. All that exists in the upper world appears to us here below as in a picture. It is all one and the same thing.”

#### THE REVELATIONS CONCERNING MAN

One day, when the disciples had come together to hear the words of the Master, ben Jochai noticed that one of the young men, who was sorely troubled by the ills of the flesh, was greatly preoccupied with his own troubles. And the Master spoke to them thus :

“ Think not that man is nothing but flesh ! That which really makes man is his soul. And even as God forms the Hidden Point of which all the heavenly hosts and all the upper regions form the envelope, even so is man represented by his innermost soul of which all the parts of the body form the envelope. The flesh, the skin, the bones and the rest, are nothing but a garment, a veil. They are not man. And when man leaves the world, he sheds all the veils that cover him. Nevertheless, we must not despise our bodies, for the various parts of the body conform to the secrets of the *Divine Wisdom*. The skin represents the firmament, which extends over everything and covers everything like a garment. The skin recalls the bad side of the universe, that is, the

element that is purely external and sensitive. The bones and the veins are like the celestial chariot : the forces which exist internally and which we consider the servants of God. Nevertheless, all this is still a garment, for it is only in his inner being that we shall find the mystery of the heavenly man. Just as the earthly man, so is the heavenly man within. For everything that takes place here below is but the image of all that takes place above. It is in this sense that we understand that God created man in His Own Image. But even as in the firmament, we see different figures formed by the stars and the planets, telling us of hidden things and of profound mysteries ; so, too, on the skin that envelops our bodies there are traits and forms that may be regarded as the stars and planets of the body. And all of them have a hidden meaning.

“ The Essence of the Supreme Wisdom is composed of earth and of heaven ; of divine and of human ; of material and of immaterial, even as man is composed of body and soul. Man is the synthesis of all the Holy Names. In man are enclosed all the worlds, both the upper and the lower. Man includes all the mysteries, even those that existed before the creation of the world.

“ Since the form of man comprises all that is in the heavens above and on the earth beneath, God has chosen it as *His Own Form*. Naught could exist before the formation of the human form which encloses all things. And all that exists is by the grace of the existence of the human form. But we must distinguish between the upper man and the lower man, since one cannot exist without the other. On the form of man depends the perfection of faith. That which we call heavenly man, or the first divine manifestation, is the absolute form of all that is, the source of all forms and ideas : *Supreme Thought*. Man is the central point around which all creation revolves. His is the noblest figure of all those that are harnessed to the Chariot of God.

“ God created man, so that within him is a part of all the heavenly spirits. But it is not the spirits that give a part of themselves to man. If it were so, then, in a moment of

irritation, each spirit might withdraw itself and then what would be left of man? But when God created man He impressed upon him the image of the Holy Kingdom in its entirety, which means the image of all things. This image is the synthesis of all things, both above and below. It is also the synthesis of all the Sephiroth, and of all their names, their denominations, their forms and their variations.

“ God created man in His Own Image so that He might devote himself to the study of the Torah and walk in His way. Adam was made of the same earth out of which was raised the *Sanctuary of the Earth*. And the earth on which was the sanctuary was the synthesis of the four cardinal points of the world. These cardinal points were united at the moment of creation with the four elements: fire, water, air and earth. In mixing these four elements God created a body that imaged the upper worlds. Thus, we say that the body is composed of the elements of both the upper and the lower worlds. The four primary elements constitute the mystery of Faith. They are the origin of all the worlds. They hide the mystery of the celestial hosts. These four elements correspond to the four earthly elements: fire, water, air and earth, which are the symbols of the *Supreme Mystery*. At the creation of man the Holy One formed the body from the earth on which is the Earthly Sanctuary and He formed the soul from the *earth* on which is the Heavenly Sanctuary. When the body was made of the earth, the three other elements came and asked to be included also, so that man represents all the elements.

“ When God created the world He gave to the earth all the generative forces of which she has need. But it was like a bloom enclosed in a bud, for it produced no fruit at all until the creation of man, when the generative forces of the earth became visible to the world. For in producing fruit the earth demonstrated that she had generative forces hidden within her. The heavens, too, sent down no nourishment to the earth till after the creation of man. Thus, the fruits of heaven and of earth became visible at the same moment—that of the creation of man. Then the sky began to

give forth the rain in its appointed seasons and the earth put forth the generative forces within her. And with the appearance of man music was heard for the first time upon earth, for then was the voice of the turtle-dove heard in the land. And in the voice of the turtle-dove was the *Voice of God* heard for the first time on earth after the creation of man.

## GOD'S GIFTS TO MAN

“ Because of His love for humanity God provides each man with an opportunity for some good action by which he may save himself from punishment in the future world. The special gift that God gives to man for this purpose is to send him a poor man towards whom he may prove himself charitable. By practising an act of charity, man draws down upon himself a *Ray of the Divine Grace*, which comes from the Right Side.

“ But God's greatest gift to man is the Sabbath. And he who makes himself perfect on the Sabbath is indeed blessed. For this day is crowned with seventy crowns. And all things are in joy, in blessing, and in holiness on this day. And the holiness of the Sabbath day is equal to that of the first Sabbath, which is the Sabbath of the Creation. In order to separate the Sabbath from the other days of the week, we recite a prayer over fire at its conclusion. For although all fires are put out or hidden on the Sabbath, one fire alone exists on this day : it is the Holy Fire, before which all other fires hide themselves. It is the fire of the altar upon which Isaac was to have been offered as a sacrifice.

“ When we pronounce the blessing on the fire at the end of the Sabbath, four legions of angels come down to be illuminated by this blessed fire. For on the Sabbath day all the legions of angels are absorbed by the Supreme Lamp, but at the end of the Sabbath they are separated from the Supreme Lamp.

“ As soon as Israel begins to sanctify the Sabbath the Tree of Life begins to rustle its leaves. And a wind from the world to come blows over its branches and spreads the



perfumes of the future life over this world, making the holy souls come out. And these souls awaken other souls so that the Tree of Life is full of rejoicing, because each Israelite is provided with one of these holy souls for the Sabbath. And the Sabbath is full of joy.

“ On the Sabbath it is forbidden to speak of workaday matters, even of the business connected with the synagogue. It is a day that must be consecrated to prayer and praise and to the study of the Torah. To speak of everyday matters is a profanation of the Sabbath. And when a man thus profanes the Sabbath, two angels come down, place their hands above his head and say, ‘ Alas, this poor man, who can have no share in the Holy One ! ’

“ When the Sabbath begins to draw to a close we must draw out the last ceremony as long as possible, for the Schechina is our guest on that day and we must make every effort to keep so honoured a guest with us as long as possible.

#### THE FORM OF MAN

“ During the moment in which the terrestrial union is accomplished the Holy One sends down a form on which is imprinted the Divine Seal, and which resembles the form of man. This form completes the earthly union. Had the eye the power to see this form, it would observe at its head an image resembling a human face. This image is the model upon which we have been procreated. But until the moment that it comes down to earth and rests on our head procreation cannot have taken place. It is this Image of God that receives us when we first come to earth. It is this image which grows with us, as we grow. And it is in company with this image that we leave the earth. At the moment when the soul is ready to descend to its earthly abode it appears before the King of Heaven garbed in a sublime form, on which are already engraved the traits by which this particular man is to be known upon earth. The *Divine Image* precedes us upon earth and waits for our coming from the moment in which conception has taken place. It is always present during the conjugal act.

“ The days that are to constitute the life of man are all united at the moment of his birth. Then they come down to earth, one after the other, and each one exhorts man not to sin on his day. When a day sees that man will not hearken, but is determined to sin, it is filled with shame. Then it returns to the upper regions and gives witness to the acts of man. But it is cut off from the rest of his days for ever. However, should man repent, then the day which has been banished from heaven because of man's sin is allowed to return. Otherwise, the day comes down to earth and takes possession of a certain home. Having taken man's form it tries to induce the owner of the home to do evil. But if the owner does only good, then is the day also compelled to do good. At the *End of Days*, when the roll call of man's days is called by the Supreme King, this day is missing. And as the crown of man's days is incomplete he cannot be crowned.

“ Our soul longs for God during the night and our spirit seeks for God from the break of day. When man sleeps, his soul leaves him and ascends to the upper world. But not all the souls are able to come into the presence of the Heavenly King. When the soul leaves the body, she leaves behind her shadow in order to keep life in the body, while she rises from region to region, from step to step. During the ascent she comes in contact with impure spirits who lie in wait for her at the entrance to the upper regions. If the soul herself is pure, she rises above the power of these spirits and continues her upward flight. But if her tendency is to be impure, she is powerless to go on, remaining the whole night in the company of the Powers of Evil. But the souls of those who have not misused their bodies can rise without effort above the importunities of evil spirits. And the man whose soul attains the *Source of its Origin* every night is sure of participating in the future life.

“ God and His Schechina furnish man with his soul, while his father and mother furnish him with his body. The father furnishes the whites of the eyes, the bones, the veins and the brain. The mother supplies the dark part of the eyes, the flesh and the skin. Heaven, earth and all the heavenly bodies

also co-operate in the formation of man. Then there is the action of the Spirit of Good and of the Spirit of Evil, man being moulded by both simultaneously. The sun and the moon provide him with light. Animals and birds and fish furnish him with food. All the trees and plants of the earth combine to give him the nourishment that he needs.

“Man is guided by three things: logic, which is inspired by the holy soul; passion, which is inspired by evil desire; and the instinct for self-preservation. The last two drag man down, while the first elevates him. Passion destroys the instinct. Passion is eager to act in order to do evil and often perverts the instincts of the body to her own evil ways.”

“Beware,” said the Master to his disciples, “that ye be not led into temptation. The *Spirit of Temptation* has no power over man unless he has given himself over to the pleasures of wine and of costly living. We know that the Righteous eat only as much as will preserve them in life, but the belly of the wicked is insatiable. The *Spirit of Temptation* takes no heed of the account which the soul will have to render when she rises to the upper world. It cares only to seduce the body and to satisfy its own desires. When the soul of the guilty is thrown down into Hell, the *Spirit of Temptation* is thrown down with it, in order that it may observe the havoc it has wrought. It is just like the Destroying Angel in that it brings man to trouble in order to deprive him of his soul. But if, at the moment of temptation, man will ponder on the day of his death, he will break, not only the power of the Spirit of Temptation, but its very heart. This spirit takes pleasure only in that false gaiety which is engendered by wine and by vanity. In the humble soul there is no place for the Spirit of Temptation. On the other hand, the Spirit of Good grows and becomes strengthened through the study of the Torah. And man can always rid himself of the Spirit of Temptation by thinking of the account which he will have to render on the last day, when no man can help him. Then only the good works which he has accomplished on earth will stand by him. And he who has sincerely repented will be as he who has never sinned.

“ Man has been created by the same mysterious principle as the heavens and the earth. And as God created male and female, we presume that every figure that does not represent male and female does not resemble the heavenly figure. Nor does the Holy One elect to have His domicile, where male and female are not united. Nor does He send down His blessings excepting upon the place where the male and female are united. For the male does not merit the name of man so long as he is not united with the female.

#### THE TYPES OF MAN

“ Now let us consider the outer traits of the face. This mystery is known only to the Sages who have penetrated to the depths of wisdom. These traits are not congenital, but take their form according to the conduct of man. The twenty-two letters of the alphabet are imprinted on each soul, which in turn impresses them upon the body it animates. The general traits transmitted by the mother form four general types which are : the face of a man, of a lion, of an ox and of an eagle. Then the soul impresses on the face the different traits by which we recognize man. These also take four general types. The first type is the one that walks in the path of truth. The initiated can recognize the virtuous man by his special traits. The virtuous man presents the following distinctive traits : a small vein lies horizontally across the right temple, and another across the left. This last divides into two at its end, and these two are crossed by another, which lies vertically. This mystery is expressed by the letters *Vaw* and *Thaw*.

“ The second type is that of a man who, having gone the wrong way, repents ere it is too late. This type bears the face of a lion, though after repentance the face changes slightly. At first sight, such a face inspires antipathy, but gradually we are drawn to it. On the face are seen three veins : one from the right temple to the cheek ; the second under the nose from where it joins the two on the left side ; and the last two joined to each other by a third. This mystery is expressed in the letter *Qoph*.

“ The third type is that of a man who has completely deserted the straight path. The Holy Spirit has left him and the spirit of impurity has attached itself to him. He has the face of an ox. We see three red spots on either cheek, surmounted by tiny red veins. This mystery is explained in the letters : *Caph*, *Resch* and *Taw*. When such a man becomes converted the spots remain, but the veins disappear.

“ The fourth type is that of a man who has returned again to earth in order to repair the faults committed in his former life. His face suggests that of an eagle. A deep fold appears on the right cheek, vertically and near the mouth, and two very deep vertical folds on the left cheek. The eyes of such a man never sparkle, even when he feels joy. His health is weak, and when he has his hair and beard cut his appearance is completely changed.

“ Before man sinned the other creatures were able to recognize in his face special traits of holiness and strength, which they knew were directly derived from the Godhead. Therefore, even the wild animals respected and feared man. After man sinned these special traits disappeared. Brute creation sees in man's face his perpetual fear of danger and of death. And now they neither respect nor fear him, but make war upon him. For the face of man is a book, in which is written his acts and the state of his soul, which the initiated, who are of the line of King David, are able to read.

“ The lines of the hand, and especially of the right hand, are important. Five weak lines on the inner face of the pointer at the bottom and four lines at the top, as well as four vertical lines on the outside of the same finger, indicate a man careless and lazy. He might succeed if he undertook anything, but his laziness prevents him. This mystery is expressed in the letter *Zain*. A vertical line on the inside of the big finger shows a man who is careful and reflects before every act. Two vertical lines on the same finger, which do not disappear when it is stretched, show a man who thinks little and acts spontaneously. Three vertical lines on the same side, together with two or three lines on that side of the finger which touches the ring-finger, show a fine careful spirit

that ever seeks the right road. Three or four lines on the outside and the same number on the inside of the big finger show a man who thinks only of doing harm. But the lines of the hand are not permanent, and through repentance a man may change his nature.

“ Know that nothing is lost in the world, not even the breath that comes out of our mouth. Like all things, it has its place and its destiny, and God has made it a part of all His Works. Nothing falls into empty space ; not even the words and the voice of man, but all things have their place and their destiny.

“ If God had not put into us both the good and the evil desire, which is the light and the shadow, there would not remain for man either merit or culpability,” said Simeon ben Jochai. But one of the disciples asked : “ And without reward or punishment, would it not have been better for man to have been created incapable of committing sin or evil ? ” And the Master answered : “ It was the wish of the Supreme Thought that man, after having drawn death down on himself, should retain his freedom of will, so that, little by little, he might raise the worlds that are below the Supreme Throne to the level of those that are above it. Even as God has created him, thus shall man be. On his account were the Laws of Creation made. And the Torah is his garment of Divinity. Without man and without Torah the Divine Presence was like a poor man who has naught wherewith to cover himself. Thus we must consider man as the sum total, as well as the highest common denominator of creation. And that is why man was not formed until the Sixth Day. As soon as man appeared, all was achieved, both in the upper and in the lower worlds. For all is contained in man. He combines within himself all the forms.

#### CONCERNING ADAM

“ Now let us consider the first man : Adam. When God created the world Adam was destined to rule : to govern the creatures both above and below. He moved in a halo of

Glory and when he called the living things together, they prostrated themselves before him and were eager to do his bidding. God brought him to the Garden, which He had specially prepared for him to give him pleasure. Angels waited on him and fulfilled his every wish. He was told to obey only one single commandment : not to touch the fruit of a certain tree. As Adam could not control himself and obey the single commandment he was judged and punished.

“ When Adam inhabited the Garden of Eden he was garbed as are those in heaven : in a brilliant garment made from the Superior Light. But when he was banished from the Garden and forced to seek for the needs of the world, God showed him and his wife how to make for themselves tunics of skins. When a man does a good action, a spark of the Superior Light comes down and attaches itself to him. This serves him as a garment when he enters the next world and is obliged to present himself before his Creator. Because of this garment he is able to taste of the *Joys of the Elect* and allowed to look upon the *Luminous Mirror*, face to face. And the soul, to be perfect, must have two garments, one for the earthly world and one for the world to come.

“ Before committing his sin, Adam listened only to that Wisdom which brings us the Light from on High. He had not yet separated himself from the Tree of Life. He consecrated himself to the service of his Master. Then Samael descended upon the back of the serpent to turn him aside. But as his eloquence is the more appealing to the woman, since he emanates from the Female Principle, he presented himself to Eve, who brought the message to Adam. When Adam succumbed to the desire to know the things of earth and to be in the midst of them, then was he led astray : he knew evil and forgot good. Adam and Eve had heard the *Voice from Heaven* and understood the Higher Wisdom, but after their sin they no longer understood even the *Voice on Earth*.

“ When Adam was driven out of the Garden of Eden he was sent down to the lowest of the seven earths, called Eretz. It is full of shadows, for light never penetrates there. Adam

was frightened, and in mercy he was permitted to see the Flaming Sword. When the Sabbath was over and Adam had repented, he was moved up a degree to the next earth, called Adama. Here there is some light and the constellations are visible. There is also day. The men who inhabit it are very tall, for they are the children of Adam during the hundred and thirty years in which he lived with female demons. They are always sad and know no joy. Sometimes they come flying to our earth and commit crimes. On this earth, Adama, Cain and Abel were born. When Cain sinned, he was driven out of Adama, but when he repented he was transferred to the sixth earth, Arqa, where there was the light of the sun. All those living on Arqa are the descendants of Cain. They have two heads, but they have no sense. When Adam gave birth to Seth, he was elevated from Adama to the highest earth which is ours and is called Thebel. It is the only one on which bread is eaten and it represents all the different aspects of the other six earths.

“ When Adam sinned God spake unto him, saying : ‘ Alas, Adam, that thou hast weakened the Highest Power ! ’ The Light went out and Adam was thrust out of the Garden of Eden. And the Voice continued : ‘ I brought thee into the Garden, Adam, so that thou should’st prepare gifts for My Altar, but thou didst not hesitate to offend Me, and now thy portion must be death ! ’ Nevertheless, when Adam died, the Holy One, Who is full of compassion, still kept him near the Garden in which he had once been so happy. In a cave near the Garden, Adam and Eve hid themselves, and they noticed that a faint light penetrated from the Garden into their cave. And Adam stands thus between this world and the next. When a man dies, he meets Adam and says to him : ‘ Alas, Adam, because of your sin, I am obliged to leave this world ! ’ But three times a day Adam goes into the Garden to confess his sin to the Patriarchs. And he sees the Glory of the Righteous in the Garden of Eden, and hears them praising God that He has vouchsafed unto them : the Sons of Adam, the opportunity to find shelter under the shadow of His wings.



“ Thus we see that when God created man it was the Divine intention that he should not change, and that no vicissitudes should touch him, thanks to his faith and to his nearness to the Tree of Life. But Adam and Eve sinned by loosening these bonds and attaching themselves to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. And they brought the punishment of death, not only on themselves, but on all creation. For when Adam and Eve began to worship the variations of Good and Evil, all created things were led to do as they did. Hence, all created things must suffer death. Then did man become the plaything of passions and of vicissitudes. But in the world to come man will again be attached to the Tree of Life and Death will disappear from the world.”

## CHAPTER IX

### REVELATIONS MADE TO THE GREAT HOLY ASSEMBLY (CONT.)

#### THE REVELATIONS CONCERNING THE SOUL

AND behold, it was in the deep solitude of the night when the body is no longer concerned with its own needs, so that man may turn his thoughts to the higher destiny, that the disciples came together. And they sought out the Master and begged him to reveal unto them the mystery that underlies the human soul. And he arose from his bed and led them out into the still night. And when they had taken their accustomed places, he taught them, saying :

“ Through the Will of the Most High a powerful tree grows. It is the highest of all the trees that grow in the upper world. It takes in all the four points of the compass and its roots spread over five hundred leagues. All the Wills hang from this tree. And no Will can act if it be not in accord with this tree. At its base are the waters which give birth to all the seas. From here emanate the souls of the world. Before coming down to earth the souls enter this garden. Here they receive the seven Benedictions and are exhorted to guide the body in a fatherly way and to keep it in the good road. The soul is then exhorted to obey the Law and to observe the Will of God. And each soul is given a hundred keys, corresponding to the hundred benedictions which man must pronounce every day.

“ All the leaders of men in all generations existed in image in heaven before coming down to earth. And each soul appeared in Heaven already outlined in the body which it was destined to enter. All that man learns in this world was

known to the soul before it came down to him. This applies only to the souls of the Righteous. The souls of evildoers must descend into the abyss before coming to earth. They cast off the holiness that is inherent in them and are made impure through their contact with the female of the abyss. In this state the soul comes to earth to animate the body for which it is destined. But if man repents, the soul finds, once more, the holiness which it has lost.

“ When the soul arrives in the Treasure-House of Life, it enjoys the brilliant white light there resplendent. And such is the splendour that emanates from it that the soul could not bear it, were it not at the same time clothed in a mantle of light. Even Moses could not contemplate this great light until he had divested himself of his earthly envelope.

#### THE PALACE OF LOVE

“ In one of the highest and most mysterious of the heavens there is a palace known as the Palace of Love. In this palace takes place the enactment of the profound mysteries. Here are gathered all the souls most beloved of the King. And here is the heavenly King united with His beloved souls in the *Kiss of Love*. In this kiss lies the union of the soul with the Substance from which it sprang.

“ God animated each part of the firmament with a particular spirit. The holy spirits, who are the messengers of the Lord, ascend by only one degree, but in the souls of the Righteous there are two degrees confounded in one. Therefore, the souls of the Righteous ascend higher and their rank is more elevated. The souls of the Righteous are superior to all the powers and to all those who serve in the upper world. Although their place is so high, they yet abandon their Source and come down to earth. We may liken this to a king who has but one son and sends him to a far-off country to be nourished and strengthened and made healthy. And when this has been accomplished, he sends the queen, his mother, to bring her son home again. So, too, does the Holy King with His son—the *Righteous Soul*. He

sends him to this world where he may grow strong and be initiated, through study, into the usages followed in the palace of the King. Then when He hears that His son has grown and that the time has come to bring him back to the Palace, He shows His love for him by sending the Queen—the Schechina—to fetch him. And when this soul leaves the earth, he is accompanied by the Queen, who brings him to the Palace where he is to live eternally. And yet the inhabitants of the earth are accustomed to weep when the son leaves the earth and goes to rejoin his Father. But if there be a sage amongst them he will show them that they have no cause for lamentation. They must remember that Moses said: ‘Do not tear your hair nor weep for the dead, for you are the sons of the Lord your God!’ If the Righteous knew what is awaiting them they would welcome with joy the day on which they must leave the world. And is it not the height of glory that the Schechina should come in her queenly chariot for the Righteous to conduct them into the Palace of the King, their Father, where they are to enjoy the eternal delights?

“When there are righteous men in the world the benedictions flow down from heaven in abundance. When Abraham was on earth he spread blessing on all of it and God showed him that all the inhabitants of the earth would be blessed in him. When Isaac was on earth he made men aware of a Judge over all, Who dispenses justice. When Jacob was in the world he brought God’s mercy down to earth and perfected man’s faith.

“The Rigour can have no force in that generation which still possesses Righteous men. But when God feels that the wicked can no longer go unpunished He calls the Righteous from their midst. And this we may liken unto the King who has a beautiful garden. One day he sees that it is being overrun with weeds which are ruining all the lovely plants. But he must leave the weeds a while longer in order that the roses, which grow near them, may reach their fullness of beauty and of fragrance. So the weeds are spared a little longer. But when the roses have reached the fullness of their

bloom, the King says : ' Now I shall remove my beautiful roses from the proximity of the noxious weeds, then shall I be able to uproot the weeds and to clean out my garden.' Even so does God act with the Righteous when the time has come to destroy the wicked.

" In three things : the spirit, the soul, and the life of the senses we find a faithful picture of all that goes on in the upper worlds. For these three form but one single being where all is joined in unity. The life of the senses does not of itself possess any light, but for this very reason it is closely linked to the body from which it procures both the pleasures and the sustenance which it needs. The animal principle is the seat of the soul. And above the soul rises the spirit which dominates it and sheds upon it the light of life. The soul is clarified by this light and depends entirely upon the spirit. After death, the soul can find no rest, nor are the doors of Paradise opened to her, until the spirit has ascended to its Source to replenish itself in the *Ancient of Days* for all eternity.

" And this is the sum of the whole matter : that all the things of which this world is composed, as well as the soul and the body, will return to the principle and to the root from which they sprang. For God is the beginning and He is the end of all the degrees of creation. And all the degrees are bound with His seal. He is the unique Being, in spite of the innumerable forms in which He is clothed."

#### THE REVELATIONS CONCERNING PRAYER

The disciples, having come together at the hour of prayer, arose and turned their faces to the East. But there was one amongst them who carried a burden of sorrow on his heart, and he began to weep bitterly. His grief pervaded the whole Assembly, so that they remained standing in a heavy silence that pressed down on them from the still air and the drooping, lifeless trees. But the Master signalled to them to take their accustomed places around him. And the one who was grieving he placed at his side and comforted him with these words :

“ All the doors of heaven are closed, excepting the *Door of Tears*. Those who guard the doors of heaven open them to admit the tears shed during prayer, and place them before the Holy King, since God takes part in the sorrows of man. The upper worlds feel towards the region of tears the same desire that the male feels towards the female. When the King comes close to the Matrona and finds her sad, He grants her all that she desires. And as her sadness is the reflection of that of man, God is touched by compassion. Happy is the man who weeps while he is praying !

“ Every heavenly door opens to the prayer : ‘ Oh, Lord, open Thou my lips and my mouth shall declare Thy praise ! ’ It is by means of this prayer that we obtain children, the means of existence, and even life itself.”

Then did the Master continue to reveal unto them the power and the activity of prayer. And he said : “ There are two kinds of prayer : one is pure, and the other is high. The first is the prayer of the poor man. The second is the prayer of the Righteous. The poor man who is completely given over to adoration in prayer, who thinks not at all of himself, who opens himself like a well waiting to be filled at the *Stream of Blessing*—the Love of God flowing down into him—his prayer is pure. But the Righteous man goes even farther. He himself becomes a source, a way which leads others to seek the *Stream of Blessing*. And he who becomes the bearer of this Divine contact is called *The Faithful Son*.

“ There is a multiple motive in prayer : the perfection of the individual, the restoration of destroyed worlds, the liberation of the good from the yoke of the bad, the dominion of beauty over ugliness, the subjection of the low and the degenerated to the high and the noble. And what is prayer ? It is the moment when you experience God in yourself in an unexpected and revealing flash ; when you become suddenly conscious of all the majesty and the sublimity ruling life and Nature : then you find yourself prostrated before the *Supreme Greatness*. Almost unconsciously your lips begin to utter prayers to this *Supreme Greatness*. At this moment man feels that he is as a slave before a Great King.

“ He who blesses the Holy One draws life down to this world from the *Source of Life*. Furthermore, he who utters the benediction receives a share of it for himself, and he who says *Amen* to it is also blessed thereby. And the blessing spreads throughout all the worlds and even descends to the lower regions, where it is announced thus: ‘ Here is the gift sent to the Holy One by so-and-so ! ’ A supreme mystery lies hidden in the benediction, ‘ Blessed be Thou, O Lord our God ! ’ since it designates the *Supreme Source* which gives light to all the worlds—the *Source* whose waters never cease to flow. At this Source begins that which we call the future world, and from this place blessings flow down to all the lower regions.

“ During their union with the Supreme Being the worlds feel a perfect and supreme joy ; the imperfect spirits become perfect ; the spirits hitherto deprived of light spread a great brilliance. And this union is brought about by the prayer of man. He who knows how to approach his Maker and to effect this union will be happy in this world and in the world to come. Those who wish to attract unto themselves the Spirit of all Spirits, the Soul of all Souls ; those who desire that their prayers come directly before the Supreme Being, the Infinite from Whom all blessings flow, will bow the knee in adoration and prostrate themselves with arms outflung and face pressed to the earth. And he who knows how to effect this sacred union through the force of his prayer is able to minimize or even to annul the chastisement pronounced against man, for then the harsh decree pronounced against the world automatically ceases to take effect. For even as the smoke of sacrifice, in olden days, mounted to heaven accompanied by the chanting of hymns by the Levites, so does the elevation of the spirits from one palace to another take place at the moment when man addresses his prayers to the Supreme Light. Then are all the spirits—the small lights—absorbed in the great Light, and showered with benedictions that flow eternally from the Holy of Holies, even as waters spring from an imperishable source !

“ In the Seventh Palace resides the Mystery of Mysteries,

Who is above all comprehension and all calculation. There resides the *Eternal Will* which rules all the worlds: which can only be perceived by means of the acts that obey It. At the moment of the Supreme Union, all the forms and all the images which exist simply to permit of the conception of Supreme Thought disappear, and allow the Supreme Thought to appear in all its purity. In the Supreme Thought rests the Will. Thus man, by means of the prayer which brings about the union, draws the Supreme Will down to earth. And a man who can, by the power of his prayer, bring about the Supreme Union, draw down the Supreme Will, and help all creatures to bask in the mercy and loving-kindness of the Maker Who acts in obedience to the request of him who prays—such a man is loved and feared by all creatures.

#### PRAYER SERVES GOD

“ Know that prayer is the highest form of serving God. God may be served with the body or with the spirit. The way most acceptable in God’s sight is with the spirit. Prayer overcomes space and reaches heaven where all the doors are open to it. At the moment when the Heavenly Light comes out from the shadows a Voice commands the keepers of the doors to see to it that prayer is allowed to enter. The keepers of the doors change night and day. Those of the day are called the Big Light, and those of the night are called the Little Light. When the day-time keepers of the doors take their places, the Schechina descends upon earth and Israel goes to prayer and praise of the Supreme King.

“ When Israel gathers in the synagogue for prayer, unhappy he who talks of profane things, for he brings about the separation of the upper world from the lower. A lack of faith is shown by the man who dares to talk in the presence of God as if he did not believe in His existence.

“ The Heaven which was created on the second day is the highest heaven. From this heaven all the others were formed, both those that encircle it closely and those that are farther away. All are woven into this heaven. Its arch



encompasses the whole world. When Israel arises to pray in the House of Prayer, there comes the Angel Metatron, who stands in the Presence of God. He takes these prayers and spreads them on this heavenly arch. And when the Holy One wants to visualize the purity of Israel, He looks at this dome and sees the prayers inserted there as gems. Then is His Heart filled with love and mercy towards Israel. It was to this heavenly dome that David directed the songs of his lyre. And on this heavenly arch we find the hymns of Israel praising God.

“ The keepers of the doors are placed in the four directions of the world. At the east the chief is called Gazardia. He is accompanied by several of the heavenly Princes, who wait for the word of prayer to leave the lips of man in order to gather it up and carry it to the chief. If it is a great word the chief and his followers kiss it and carry it to heaven, saying: ‘ Happy is the mouth from which this crown has fallen.’ Then the Twelve Letters of the Holy Name fly to meet the word and to become one with it.

“ The chief at the south is called Pasgania. He receives the prayers of those who suffer and are heavy-hearted. The chief at the north is called Patia. He collects the prayers of the persecuted and the oppressed. The chief at the west is called Zabouliel. He is the keeper of nine doors which are opened only with the dawn when the prayers begin to ascend.

“ When prayer reaches the second heaven it is gathered by a chief called Anael, who is the guardian of the twelve doors of heaven, which all open to prayer. Then appears an old man, Machniel, who is chief of six hundred thousand legions, who are all wings. Other legions are entirely covered with eyes and are known as ‘ The legions of the Eye.’ Others, again, are all ears, and it is these which hearken to the prayers of man.

“ When prayer arrives at the third heaven it is gathered by a chief called Gatria. A ray of light is visible in this heaven, but it is never seen in the same spot, since it follows the direction of prayer. At the fourth heaven, prayers are

received by the Chief Schamaschiel, surrounded by three hundred and sixty-five legions corresponding to the days of the year. This chief brings the prayer to Paradise. Then it goes to the fifth heaven, where it is received by the Chief Gabriel, surrounded by the legions who direct wars. As soon as the prayer arrives these chiefs and their legions are defeated and their forces are broken. They are prostrate in the presence of prayer and help it to rise to the seventh heaven, where it is received by Sandalphon, the powerful and splendid celestial chief, who is the *Keeper of the Keys of the Master*. At the seventh palace all the prayers are united and form a Crown for God.

#### MIDNIGHT PRAYER

“ At midnight, when the cock crows, the wind which blows from the north is suddenly stopped by the flow of grace which comes from the south. Then does the Holy One come to take His Delight of the Righteous in the Garden of Eden. Happy is the man who rises at this hour to devote himself to the study of the Law. For such a man is covered by a Ray of the Divine Grace, which becomes his guardian in this world. And all the angels, both those above and those below, are constrained to take care of the man covered with this ray of grace.

“ Midnight prayer has a supreme value for those who occupy themselves by night as well as by day with the study of the Torah. Not those who are occupied solely with the study of its outer garments, nor yet with its body, but those who are occupied with the study of the soul of the Torah and the soul of its secrets. For it is at the moment of midnight that God comes to meet the souls in Paradise, to delight in them and to play with them in the fullness of joy. It is the moment, too, when Rachel—the symbol of the mother, the Schechina—arises every night to weep for her beloved sons who are wandering from exile to exile, from persecution to persecution, fleeing from the tigers of the world. Then does Rachel's prayer arise and flow towards the Highest Throne

and awaken the compassion of all the worlds and of the Supreme King Himself."

The Master ceased speaking and they all sat in silence, meditating on all that had been revealed to them that day. And when they rose to go the sun was setting in the western sky in a blaze of glory. And the pupils exclaimed at the beauty in which the world lay bathed. And the Master said : " Beauty is like the sun, throwing its light and warmth over all without exception or difference. Beauty emanates from both Wisdom and Grace. It is the highest expression of life and of moral perfection. And Beauty, in its most sublime expression, is the Supreme King."

#### THE REVELATIONS CONCERNING LOVE

While all those who gathered for the Assembly loved each other and were bound by the closest ties, yet it was noted that Abba and Eleazar were more devoted to each other than all the rest. The Master regarded their attachment with pleasure and said, one day, to all of them : " The communion of any two lovers is the foundation of Wisdom, whether this love be the love of the master for the pupil ; or the love of a man for his comrade ; or the love of a man for a woman. The instruction which a teacher gives to his pupil brings them closer to each other and to Nature than does the union of a man with a woman. The heavens and their hosts are the garment, while Israel is the body, but the truth is only to be found in the soul : that is, in the real form of the Beloved." And the Master went on and continued his revelations on Love :

" It is through fear that a man is led to love. There are, however, two kinds of fear : the fear of the Infinite, which accompanies the feeling of love to God : and the fear which is nothing but fear, and is sterile and destructive. The man who obeys God because of love is arrived at the highest degree and already belongs, because of his holiness, to the future life. He who loves God is crowned with grace, and shows himself compassionate towards all. But serving God through fear is

also service, even though it establishes a union less elevated between God and the soul. Love is but one degree higher than fear, but in love lies the mystery of Oneness. It is love that draws together the higher degrees and the lower. It is love that elevates all things to that sublime degree where alone all things can be united. In the high spiritual spheres we find regions which are called the dwelling-place of love.

“ Love, in union with Force, which it always generates is the secret basis of the Torah. When the Supreme Throne is adorned by the crown formed by the Written Law, the forms of the letters, the vowels and their sounds are all hidden within the interior of the Throne. Then the image of the Written Law penetrates within the Oral Law and fecundates it, even as a woman is fecundated by a man. And holiness spreads itself over all the upper regions. The one who makes the Laws is the *Yesod Eros*. When the Pentateuch is withdrawn from the Ark to be read, the doors of the heavens of mercy are opened and heavenly love is awakened. But the Law is not to be sought for in the heavens above, nor yet in the depths of the sea, but very near to man : on his lips and in his heart.”

#### THE LOVE BETWEEN MAN AND WOMAN

“ But, Master,” asked one of the pupils, “ is not the love between man and woman also a high, uplifting experience ? ”

“ The world,” said the Master, “ rests upon the union of the male with the female principle. That form in which we do not find both the male and the female principle is neither a complete nor a superior form. The Holy One does not establish His residence in any place where such union does not exist. The name, Adam, was given to a man and a woman united as one sole being.

“ On the eve of the Sabbath a man should have relations with his wife, for on that night an additional soul has been granted to each one of us, and under the guardianship of this soul conjugal relations are sure not to be sullied by the demon.

“ Opposite the creative spirit of God, which is a positive

and therefore a masculine spirit, we find the Schechina—the Matrona, or spirit which receives. This spirit dwells in the *Sphere Malchut*, as the Queen. At times the King of Heaven comes to her, unites with her, and gives her pleasure and delight. Through this union salvation comes to all the world.

“ Before coming to this earth, each soul and each spirit is composed of a man and a woman, united in one single being. On coming down to earth these two halves are separated and sent to animate two different bodies. When the time of marriage arrives the Holy One unites them as before, and they once more become one soul and one body. But this union depends upon the life of a man and the way in which he is going. If he has lived a pure and pious life he will enjoy a union similar to the one which preceded his birth and which was the perfect union. Thus man and his mate belong to each other for ever. And each soul seeks its own mate in the after-life. The souls which have not found their true companions on earth, wander, after death, in search of the twin soul. And he who has not sought, or has not found his true mate on earth is, after death, like an atom tossed about by all the winds. He will not find peace until he has been united with his true mate. The sighs of those parting from their loved ones are echoed by the soul seeking its sister soul.”

#### THE REVELATIONS CONCERNING THE STARS

One night, the Master came upon a number of his pupils trying to read the mystery of the stars, and he said unto them: “ Know that in the arch formed by the heavens surrounding the earth, there are figures and signs by means of which we are able to discover the most secret and profound mysteries. These figures are formed by the constellations and the stars, which are for the Sage a source of contemplation and of a mystical happiness. These brilliant forms are the letters with which God has created the heavens and the earth. They form His Name, mysterious and holy.

“ On the eve of the Sabbath a brilliant star rises in the

north, surrounded by seventy other stars of lesser brilliance. The great star spreads its rays out to touch the smaller stars and, at the touch, behold, they all become fused into one ! The star then spreads until it resembles an immense fire projecting flames in all directions. The fire surrounds the thousand mountains and makes an impassable wall around them. From the centre of this fire there shoots out a flame which changes colour with every moment. When it has passed through the whole range of colours it approaches the Supreme Mysterious Point into which it is absorbed.

“ There is a firmament for the stars. It has one hundred windows, fifty of which look to the east and the rest to the south. At each window there is a star. When the sun passes these windows it projects sparks. Then some become red as copper and others yellow as gold. The stars to the east are yellow. Those to the south are red. If, at midnight, we see three, five or seven stars together, it is a sign that pagan kings will invade the Orient and seize the gold in that part of the world. If we see two, four, or six stars shining together, it is a sign that great terror will reign in this part of the world. Nevertheless, we must not attach too much importance to the constellations, for we know that all comes from the Holy One, and that He alone can influence our lives.

“ Above all the heavens there is one hidden and sealed with the Seal of the Holy One. It is called *Idra Maschcana*. Here are many windows, each with its own rôle. Six of these windows are larger and there is one hidden, which dominates all the others. One of these windows, which is called *The Window of the Brilliance*, is the gateway for a star known to the Sages under the name of *Yad*. The Tribe of Judah is under the influence of this window and of this star. It appears in the form of a hand with five fingers spreading the light. The second window is called *The Window of the Nail*. Out of it comes a star known to the Sages under the name of *The Serpent*. It has a head and a tail similar to those of a serpent. From this window there come sixty million demons who pounce on the human nails that are thrown away in a

public place. From the third window comes a star called the *Light of the Lamp*. Under its influence tranquillity reigns in the world and abundance is found everywhere. From the fourth window comes a star known as *The Grape*, because each of its sparks resembles the grape. Under its influence peace and mercy rule the world. From the next window a star moves in and out, never remaining in one place, so that its attributes have never been determined. The star shining at the last window is called *The Decree*. Under its influence trouble is renewed every day, great diseases attack mankind, and Israel is in distress. But when the Holy One shall send salvation to Israel the seventh window, out of which comes *The Star of Jacob*, will become visible and will remain visible for forty days."

#### THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

One day the Master was walking with his pupils through the forest. The air was very still but they noted that in the murmur of the wind through the trees there was a certain harmony, faint, yet discernible. Simeon ben Jochai, noting their preoccupation with this harmony, said to them: "Hearken well to the music of the spheres! There are choirs of angels intoning the music and the harmony of the spheres. The Prophets, the Singers, the Seers and the Mystics, when they feel themselves possessed of the Divine Spirit, and their spiritual eyes see naught but the whiteness of a mirror, are able to disengage themselves from this material world and to vision themselves climbing to the heights to the music of this divine melody.

"And the birds, who also contribute their share to this universal music, have yet another significance. In flying through the pure ether above the earth they live in the neighbourhood of the spirits and through them know the future. A flock of birds, by its flight and by the position which it assumes in the sky, reveals to those who can read the coming of important events."

THE REVELATIONS CONCERNING ISRAEL

And it came to pass that when they were gathered together for an Assembly that the Master revealed unto them the mysteries concerning Israel. And he taught them, saying: "When the Holy One revealed the Ten Commandments to Israel on Mount Sinai, each word divided itself into seventy sounds, and each sound appeared before their eyes in the form of a sparkling light. Thus Israel saw with its own eyes the Glory of God. And the sounds addressed each one of the Israelites and said unto him: 'Dost thou accept the Law: both its negative precepts and its positive commands?' And as each Israelite answered 'Yes,' the sound kissed him on the mouth and sealed the compact. Then did Israel behold a vast light which spread and spread until it had absorbed into itself all the others.

"So, too, when God spoke unto Israel, the people not only heard the Voice but saw the Words. For the Words, as they came from the Mouth of God, imprinted themselves on the shadows and there took form, so that Israel heard them and saw them at one and the same time. And they saw a light more brilliant than any that has yet been seen by the eye of man. Nor will such a light again be visible until the coming of the Messiah.

"When the Israelites were crossing the Red Sea, God manifested Himself unto them in all His Glory, so as to give them the courage to go on. But they were so enthused by the gorgeous spectacle that they wished to remain standing as they were, on the bed of the sea, so that they might continue to feast their eyes on the Glory. In order to make them go on, God transferred the Vision to the desert. Only then were the Israelites willing to follow Moses into the desert. And it was there that they were able to contemplate the Glory of God and to see things, the like of which has never yet appeared to the eyes of mortal man, not even to Ezekiel in his visions.

"Happy is Israel to have been chosen from amongst all other peoples and to bear upon him the mark of his covenant



with God ! For whoever bears this mark and has passed his life in chastity, who has not allowed himself to be dominated by the forces of evil, nor violated his vow taken in the Name of the Holy King, he shall not be driven down to Hell. The moment when a man causes his son to enter into the covenant, the Holy One calls together the heavenly hosts and announces to them : ' See the son I have brought into the world ! ' And Elijah, the Prophet, comes down to earth to be present at the circumcision. That is why man is cautioned always to leave a chair empty during the ceremony and to say : ' This seat is for Elijah, the Prophet ! ' After the ceremony the Prophet goes back to the upper world and bears witness to the event. And when man leaves this world the legions of angels, who come forth to punish the wicked by dragging them down to Hell, do not touch him who bears the mark of the covenant and who has kept himself pure, for he is united with the Holy Name.

" God favoured Israel above all other peoples by allowing the Holy Spirit to come out of the people. Jacob consecrated the tribe of Levi for the service of God. And God anointed their heads with sacred oil from on high. And from this tribe came forth the Holy Spirit, fortified by faith. When Moses was to be born, God caused the Holy Spirit to come out of the Tabernacle ornamented with precious stones. And he appeared crowned with two hundred and forty-eight crowns. Then did God fill the Holy Spirit with power and give him one hundred and seventy-three keys. On his head God placed five diadems, each of which spread a light that illumined one thousand worlds. Then did God raise the Holy Spirit to His Palace and make him the chief of all the heavenly hosts. And a Voice was heard, saying : ' Bow before this Holy Spirit which will descend one day amongst men ; and the Law, which is now hidden, will be revealed.' And the letter *Mem* appeared and placed on the head of the Holy Spirit three hundred and twenty-five crowns and gave the heavenly keys into his possession. And the letter *Schin*—wearing the three sacred crowns of the Patriarchs—came, took off the crowns, and placed them, and the *Keys of the*

*Lord*, before the Holy Spirit. Then came the letter *HeH*, and presented to the Holy Spirit the King's own Crown. Then the Holy Spirit, having promised to work only for the glorification of God's Name, came down to earth in the ships that sail on the heavenly oceans. And he took with him the arms necessary to vanquish Pharaoh and all his legions. He also took with him the Sabbath and the Holy Days. And four hundred and twenty-five heavenly chiefs accompanied him, bearing torches. When the Holy Spirit arrived on earth he found the Schechina already there, her face radiant. And the Holy One said unto Moses : ' I knew thee before ever thou wast formed in the entrails of thy mother ; I sanctified thee before thou didst leave her womb, and I established thee as a Prophet amongst the nations.'

" When Moses entered into the cloud and was carried aloft he met a powerful angel called *Quemouel*, surrounded by his twelve thousand followers. But when the angel tried to approach Moses, the latter pronounced the Holy Name in its seventy-two letters, which the Holy One had revealed to him in the burning bush. At this the angel fell back twelve thousand leagues. Moses continued his passage in the cloud, and his eyes shone like two burning coals. He met a second angel, more powerful and more radiant than the first, called *Hadarniel*. His speed was greater than that of the other angels by ten million, six hundred thousand firmaments of white fire which surrounded him. When Moses saw him, he was filled with such fear that he could proceed no further. But the Holy One said unto him : ' Moses, when I appeared unto thee in the burning bush thou didst feel no fear, and now thou art afraid of one of my servants.' At this, Moses called his courage back to him and once more pronounced the Holy Name. Hadarniel began to tremble and, approaching Moses, said : ' Happy art thou, Moses, since God hath revealed unto thee mysteries that have never been revealed even unto the higher angels.' Then Hadarniel placed himself at the side of Moses to guide him. Then Moses perceived the angel *Sandalphon*, who lives above the other angels at a distance of five hundred years. He is hidden behind the veil

that shuts off the Holy One, to Whom he presents crowns made from the prayers of Israel. When the Holy One places the crown upon His Head it means that the prayer has been accepted. At this there is heard the tuneful intonation: 'Blessed be the Glory of the Lord, in the place of His Schechina.' And Hadarniel feared to accompany Moses when he saw Sandalphon, for he feared to be consumed by his fire. And Moses could not go on, but the Lord gave him courage, and brought the Law before him and began to teach him. And the light from all the heavenly firmaments gathered round Moses, so that when he turned to descend, carrying the two tablets of the Law before him, all the heavenly Hosts trembled at his coming. But when Israel began to sin, God reduced the brilliance of Moses' countenance to one five-thousandth part of what it had been. Then God said to Moses: 'Go down, for thy people is sinning.' When he went down all the higher angels wanted to consume Moses with their fire, but he mentally invoked the Name of God, and God said to him: 'Hold fast to my Throne.' And the Holy One reprimanded the heavenly hosts, who then permitted Moses to go down bearing the two tablets on which were written the Commandments.

"In the Song of Songs we find, in miniature, the whole of Israel's existence. For this song contains in concentrated form a résumé of: (a) All the works of creation. (b) The mystery of the Patriarchs. (c) The exile of Israel in Egypt. (d) Israel's deliverance from Egypt and their song at the passage of the Red Sea. (e) The Decalogue and the revelations on Mount Sinai. (f) Israel's sojourn in the desert. (g) Israel's entry into the Holy Land and the construction of the Temple. (h) The dispersion of Israel amongst the nations and his salvation. (i) The mystery of the Holy Name. And finally (j) the resurrection of the dead and the happenings up to the day that is the *Sabbath of the Lord*. This Song embraces all that exists, all that has existed, and that will continue to exist. All the events that will happen at the seventh millennium, which is the *Sabbath of the Lord*. And when a man uses a verse of the Song of Songs as a profane

song, Holy Writ envelops itself in a sack, ascends before the Holy One and complains : ' Thy children, behold they are profaning me and vilifying me and using me for low purposes.' The Song of Songs is to be held sacred, for each word is a crown of honour.

" The close relationship of God to Israel has its origin in the ancient sources of the Books of Moses, in the Prophetic visions and in the Talmudic legends. This relationship bloomed and grew so long as Israel was in its own country. But as soon as Israel went into exile the Schechina also went into exile, and the relationship weakened and withered. It will be renewed only when Israel and the Schechina will be freed from their common exile through the coming of the Messiah. The Messiah accepts the pains and sorrows of mankind. The purification of the world is concentrated in him. Therefore does Israel await his coming.

#### THE STANDARDS OF ISRAEL

" The special standards of Israel bear the images of the Holy Beasts, which are : the lion, the eagle, the ox, and man. Four angels carry the standards. The angel Michael carries that of the lion. He is surrounded by three hundred and seventy thousand angels, each with the head of a lion. When the lion Michael roars, all the firmaments tremble and shake. A flame rolls out of his mouth and spreads over fifteen hundred worlds. The fires of Hell are lit by the flame. And when the guilty hear Michael roaring they tremble. Then do three hundred and seventy thousand lion-cubs begin to roar as well. Under Michael are the Chiefs of the Rigour. They are provided with four faces turned in the four directions of the world and illuminated by the white light of the sun. The side facing east is lit by the light of Joy ; on the west side the light is concentrated ; the north is lit by the penumbra of the sun ; the right and the left are here united.

" The second standard bears the image of the eagle and is carried by the angel Oriel, who is at the south. The breath of the *Mysterious Spirit* lifts up the wings of the eagle. When

the eagle lifts up his right wing he reunites the three hundred and fifty thousand winged masters born of the union of the eagle with the lion. When the eagle raises his voice all the groups of angels begin to fly. The third standard bears the image of the ox. It is held by the angel Gabriel, who stands at the north. When the ox comes up out of the abyss all the spirits of anger run before him. Seven rivers of fire flow in front of him and when he is thirsty he drinks up a river of fire. The sun never rises in this region. Myriads of spirits run about in the darkness, and the fire which flows in the rivers is black. The fourth standard bears the image of man. It is carried by the angel Raphael, who stands at the west and brings healing to those who are sick.

#### THE EARTHLY JERUSALEM

“ The Sanctuary of Israel—the earthly Jerusalem—was founded midst the rejoicing of all the worlds. The City of the Kings is on the side whence comes the North Wind. Now I shall reveal to you how Jerusalem came into being : Before the world was created God threw a precious stone that had formed part of His Throne into the abyss. One end of this stone became fixed in the abyss, while the other end emerged above the chaos. Then the projecting end, which was at first but a point in the immensity of space, began to stretch to the right and to the left and in all directions. And on it the world was established. The formation of the earth around this point passed through three different phases : the first circle is formed of diaphanous and limpid matter. The second circle, which surrounds the first, is made of matter less limpid than the first, but more delicate than the earth. The third circle is made of opaque earth which is surrounded in its turn by the ocean. This formation also corresponds to that of the Sanctuary—Jerusalem. The first circle around the Supreme Point is the Temple and around it the city of Jerusalem hemmed in by its walls. The second circle is the Holy Land. The third circle is the rest of the world.

“ And even as there is an earthly Jerusalem so is there a heavenly one. Know that in the upper world there is an

ocean. And above it there is a second ocean. The River of Fire surrounds the heavenly Palace, to which none may have access, but the 'Descendant of the House of David.' And in the centre of all is situated a Holy of Holies. This is the *Heart of the Universe*. It is nourished by the Supreme Brain, with which it is one.

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

"And Solomon, the wise King of Israel, turned his face every morning to the four cardinal points. When he lifted his eyes at the end, to the north, he saw advancing towards him two pillars: one of fire and the other of cloud. Above the pillars he saw a gigantic eagle with wings outspread, its left wing resting on the column of cloud and its right wing on the column of fire. The eagle descended before King Solomon and bowed before him, and placed the two leaves which it was carrying in its beak at his feet.

"Solomon took the leaves, scented their perfume, and said: 'The first leaf has been sent to me by *The One Who Falls*, and the second leaf by *The One Whose Eyes Are Open*.' He knew that the two demons had sent him news. Then he sealed his throne with the seal on which was graven the Name of God, mounted the eagle, which arose to a great height, and flew away. His outspread wings obscured the light of the sun so that darkness reigned all along the route of his flight. And the Sages, seeing the darkness, said: 'Behold, King Solomon is passing.' After a flight of four hundred leagues the eagle arrived at the Mountains of Shadows, called in the Bible *Taramond*, or mountains of the desert. Here Solomon dismounted, showed his ring and was permitted to approach. When he had learned all that he wanted to know he again mounted his eagle and flew back to his country. Then when he sat on his throne he pronounced words that showed such a depth of wisdom that all men marvelled at him."

SIN ALSO SERVES GOD

The Assembly then dispersed, and as they wended their way homewards Simeon ben Jochai noticed that one of his

pupils seemed to be very downcast. Sunk in his own gloomy thoughts he held aloof from the others. The Master asked the reason of the others and was told that he was sorrowing because he believed himself guilty of sin. Then did the Master make them sit down in their usual order and spoke to them about the rôle of sin, and he said : " All that is done, both in the upper and the lower worlds, is done to obey God's Will. Even the Spirit of Evil obeys God's Will. This you may liken to the story of the King who, having an only son and wishing to strengthen his moral force, forbids him ever to approach an evil woman, as that would make him unfit ever to enter the royal palace again. The son promises to obey his father, but the King, desiring to test the strength of his morality, invites a beautiful courtesan into the palace and urges her to use all her powers of seduction on his son. The woman tempts him, but the Prince resists her and the King is made so happy thereby that he bestows great honour on his son. But the courtesan, who had but obeyed the will of the King and brought him joy in his son, also merits reward rather than punishment. Thus, the spirit of Evil, which is only obeying the *Will of the Master*, is rightly designated 'good,' since it is the instrument through which good is produced in those who obey the Will of God."

#### THE GREAT FISH

Then the Master and his disciples embarked in a boat and crossed the Sea of Galilee. They saw the fishermen drawing in their nets. And the Master began to reveal to them the mystery of the Great Fish that lies at the bottom of the Great River. And he said :

" From the right side of the Great Fish there flow out thirteen sources, giving birth to thirteen streams, some of which go up and others down, but all are united by the tiny streamlets that flow between them. From these streams a thousand rivers rise and make their way towards the four cardinal points. Of these five hundred are on the right and five hundred on the left side. But the half of one river on

the right and the half of one river on the left are joined together in the middle to form one river. In this middle river there is a great fish, with his head as red as a rose, his scales as hard as iron, and his fins reaching out into the waters of all the other rivers. When he moves his tail, all the other fishes flee before him, fearing to be destroyed. Fire bursts from his mouth, and when he moves a fusillade of fire shoots out and spreads amongst the demons. Then the waters in all the rivers become troubled and turn a dark-blue colour. And the wheels at the four cardinal points begin to move. His tail in movement can reach from the heavens to the lower world. Every seventy years this fish is allowed to enter the rivers, but he is not allowed to remain lest he demolish the upper and the lower worlds. Then he is muzzled and thrust into the abyss, and all the angels praise God, saying: 'Let us appear before the Holy One and prostrate ourselves before His Divine Presence and worship Him, and let us be blessed by the Lord Who has created us.' "

They came to the shore and the Master, ben Jochai, having finished his revelations, began to take leave of his pupils so that each might go his own way and meditate upon all that he had seen and heard, so that they might continue to study the Torah with greater understanding. And Simeon ben Jochai wept and said :

" It were better that all those who have been present at this Assembly go to join the Assembly in the upper world. For if they disappear from this world, naught will ever be repeated of all that has transpired here. Nay, I am wrong, for all is known to the *Ancient of Days*. He knows that I have not revealed these mysteries either for my own glory, or for the glory of my father, nor yet for that of my colleagues, but only for the purpose of showing you the right way to take in your meditations, so that you may at the end be able to cross the threshold of the *Heavenly Palace* without being ashamed and without encountering obstacles."

The Master embraced them, one by one, and said: " I call upon the heavens and upon all the upper worlds to wit-



ness that all that has been spoken here has been perceived by us across the curtains which the Holy One has drawn before *His Face*. Before we began our studies, you, my colleagues, were ignorant of all that I have been able to reveal to you. You were ignorant of all these holy mysteries. Blessed be the lot of all who are present here ! ”

And the Master said further : “ The traitor reveals secrets, but he who has a faithful heart guards well the word that has been confided to him. And he alone is a traitor who has no faith ! ”

Again the Master said : “ Happy is the man who merits this Grace : that the Lord breathe upon him and he disappear ! There are two kinds of Grace : the interior and the exterior. The Priests of the Temple bore the symbol of the refuge of the Interior Grace, which is hidden in the corners of the *Beard of the Great Face*. But the grace of the world is the Exterior Grace. May the Ancient of Days shed His Grace upon you, and may it accompany you all the days of your life ! Go in peace ! ” And they took leave of each other and they went their separate ways.

Yet the Master continued to gather his disciples together at stated times and to reveal to them the Divine Mysteries until the day of his death. On that day he gathered his disciples in the Small Assembly in order to reveal to them the Greater Mysteries, that opened their eyes to all the bliss awaiting Israel and humanity in the worlds beyond this world.

## CHAPTER X

### THE REVELATIONS MADE TO THE SMALL HOLY ASSEMBLY

WHEN the Master, Simeon ben Jochai, knew that the time had come for him to leave the world, he called his faithful disciples to him. They came together at his bedside and stood about the room in a hushed silence, their eyes fixed on the face of the Master whom they ardently desired to keep with them, yet a while. The Master lay still, his eyes closed. When he opened his eyes he saw that a fire encircled the house. And he raised his hands in prayer. He was happy and smiling, and he said : " Let those who have heard me reveal the Divine Mysteries remain here with me." And six remained, while the rest went outside. Ben Jochai said to those that remained : " We are the *Seven Eyes* of the Lord." But one of the pupils said : " We are the six lamps which receive their light from the seventh ! " And another one added : " *The Holy Lamp* is like unto the Sabbath, for the Sabbath doth bless the other six days ! And the Master is holy, even as the Sabbath is holy. He is the *Holy Lamp* ! "

They saw that on the Master's face there shone the light of a Great Joy. He said to them : " How great is the joy that awaits you this day ! " And he motioned them to come nearer, and said : " The hour is propitious. I want to enter the next world without shame. And I want to reveal, in the presence of the Schechina, those Divine Mysteries that have not yet been revealed so that none may say that I have not fulfilled my task on earth, guarding these mysteries in my heart in order to take them with me into the future world. Now I shall open my heart and reveal them to you. Abba will put down my words in writing ; my son will repeat all

that I say ; and the rest of you will sit and meditate in silence on those things which you shall hear and which shall be heard throughout all the worlds for the first time." And his son came and placed himself in front of him, but the Master said : " Not here, my son, for another is coming to sit in your accustomed place ! "

The Master put on his *Talleth* and said to those around him : " It is written : ' The dead will not praise thee, O Lord ! ' Which means that those who are dead never come into the Presence of God Who is the Living God and is surrounded by those who are living. For those who have gone down to Hell remain there."

And ben Jochai said : " This Assembly is holier than all the others, for the Holy One has come together with all the Righteous to shed glory upon us ! I see old Rab Hamenouna, surrounded by the Seventy Righteous, wearing crowns which reflect the sparkling light of the Mystery of Mysteries. They are full of joy because they have come to listen to my words. Make room for them ! " When the disciples heard these words they were seized with terror and they withdrew to the farther end of the room. Only Eleazar and Abba remained near the Master, and they heard him say : " To-day, I alone shall speak and all shall listen to me, both those who are above the earth and those who are on it. How happy am I at this moment !

" I am for my Beloved," continued the Master, " and His Desire draws Him towards me ! During all these years in which I have been attached to this world, I have also been attached to God. And now His Desire draws Him towards me ! He is here with all His Holy Hosts. He hears with joy the revelations and the praise of the *Ancient of Days*. Behold, He is separated from all things and at the same time He is not separated from them. For all things are in Him and He is in all things. He is established, since He upholds everything, and at the same time He is not established for we can find Him nowhere. When He is established He projects nine brilliant lights that throw light in all directions. So, too, does a lamp throw the light in all

directions, but when we approach the brilliance we find there is nothing outside the lamp. So is the Light of all Lights. Nowhere can we find God. We can only find the light which He spreads and which appears and disappears. This light is called by the many Holy Names. But all the Holy Names stand for but one thing.

“ Behold, now I shall teach you things that I myself have not always known. And since I have begun to know them, I have kept them secret and hidden away in my heart. Now I shall reveal them in the Presence of the Holy King and of all the Righteous who have come to hear the Truth that lies in my words.” And the Master began to reveal the Great Mysteries which lie in : the Immortality of the Soul ; the Resurrection of the Dead ; the Visions of Paradise and of Hell ; the Destiny of Israel ; and the Coming of the Messiah.

All the time a light shone around the bed of Simeon ben Jochai, so bright, that the disciples could not lift their eyes to look at him. But his voice penetrated to the farthest corners of the room as he taught them :

#### THE REVELATIONS CONCERNING THE DESTINY OF ISRAEL

“ Gather now round me and hear about the glorious destiny that awaits Israel in the future. Just now, when I was in heaven, I saw the Holy One occupying himself with the promise made to Israel, that when all the troubles closed around him the salvation would be sent to deliver him. The Angel Michael, who is the protector of Israel, was standing before the Holy One and asking : ‘ When will thy beloved children be saved from the yoke of Edom ? Surely they have been sufficiently punished for their sins ! ’ But before the Holy One could answer, behold, Sammael stood before Him and said : ‘ O Master of the World, Thou hast said that the community of Israel would remain under the yoke of Edom until such time as they can stand in Thy Presence, in purity and in cleanness. Thou knowest that there are still many sinners amongst them.’ At this, the Holy One shot a look of anger at Sammael, who had dared to vilify Israel, so that

the Evil One fled three thousand miles and hid himself. Then the Lord turned to Michael and said : ' Alas, that he should have spoken truth ! Yet do I make a vow this day, that so soon as the Community of Israel will open its heart unto Me, even so little as the opening of the eye in a needle, then will I open wide to them the doors of salvation.'

" When the Temple was destroyed, the Schechina wept, and all the legions of heaven wept with her at the destruction of the Sanctuary. And the Schechina mourned, saying : ' My sons are in exile and my sanctuary is destroyed, and I must climb to the roof-tops ! ' And again she said : ' Oh, city full of tumult ; city full of people ; city triumphant ; your children are killed and your princes have been dragged away in chains ; and you must leave me to weep bitter tears alone ! ' Then the Holy One tried to comfort her thus : ' Let thy mouth smother thy complaints, and thine eyes cease to shed tears, for thy works shall receive their recompense and thy children shall return from the lands of those who would destroy them.'

" Since the destruction of the Sanctuary, no day has passed without its curse. For while the Schechina lived in the Sanctuary watching as a mother watches over her children, blessing spread both above and below. There was not a day without its benediction and its joy. Israel was the foundation of the world and all peoples lived upon the merit of Israel. But since the Sanctuary has been destroyed and the Schechina is with Israel in exile, the world is accursed and there is no joy either above or below. But on the day on which the Holy One will send salvation to Israel there will be joy in all the worlds. And they shall return weeping, but God will bring them back in His mercy."

And the Master spoke further about the exile : " When Israel started out on its exile to Babylon their sorrow was so great that all the Hosts of Heaven wept with them. The *Angels of Peace* wept bitterly. Then did God call together all the celestial hosts and say to them : ' What are you doing here, while my beloved children are captives in Babylon ? Go down to Babylon, and I, too, will go down with you.'

Thus, when the Children of Israel were in Babylon, the Prophetic Spirit descended upon Ezekiel and he saw all the revelations, and said to his people: 'Fear not! For your Master and all the heavenly Powers have come down to you. They are in the midst of you. They share your exile!' Then Israel was comforted, knowing that God would not abandon them. And all the time the Schechina remains in exile with Israel.

"Egypt did not become a great power until the coming of Israel to that land. With the coming of Israel, Egypt became mistress of the world. Babylon, too, rose to the status of a great Power, only with the coming of the Israelites. And it is the same with Rome. The beginnings of these three great Powers were very humble. It was only due to the presence of Israel that they became great. For he who rules over Israel is just as great as if he dominated the whole world. And Israel's merit is this: that he alone accepted the Law of Moses, which is destined to re-establish the union between God and the world. And even as the Divine Name is One, even though it is sub-divided into seventy different names, so is Israel one, though dispersed amongst seventy nations.

"But as long as the Schechina is in exile the union is not perfect. The Schechina must be free in order to become attached once more with her *Spouse*. During the exile the Schechina lives with Israel in order to guard the people from harm. But the Schechina will not always be far from her *Spouse*. At the moment of the Salvation of Israel, she will return to her place. When the Schechina was obliged to accompany Israel into Egypt, God promised to deliver her four times from the four exiles of Israel. And that is why, in the prayer which precedes the *Amidah*, the word *deliverance* appears four times, and the word *truth* also appears four times, for it is by *Truth* that Israel will be delivered for the last time. *Truth* is the word engraved on the *Seal of the King*. And if, up to the present, the deliverance of Israel has only been temporary it is because *Truth* has not yet been applied in the perfect manner, so as to provoke the *Sacred Union*.

"The Temple, which was to have been built by God

Himself, has not yet been built. We still await the building of the Temple which is to take place during the Messianic epoch. Then will the First and the Second Temple arise simultaneously. For when the Israelites left Egypt, God wanted to build for Himself a Holy House in order to come down and live amongst them. The Temple was to have been the work of God's own Hands! But because the people sinned, both the First and the Second Temple were built by human hands and, therefore, they could not stand. But at the time of the Messiah, God Himself will build the Temples. The First will be hidden away in the very highest heaven, but the second will be visible to all the world. It will be Jerusalem—that Jerusalem that is to be built at the *End of Days*. And there will Israel reside. For Israel is the heart of humanity. It cannot exist without the other members, nor can the other members exist without the heart. The heart is delicate and sensitive and suffers more than the other members, but its joy is greater as well. And great will be the joy of Israel at the time of the Messiah!"

Suddenly the Master raised himself upon his bed and, stretching out his arms imploringly towards his disciples, pleaded with them: "Think! Think on the *ECHAD!* Meditate on the perfect union of the lower world with the upper! As long as the Schechina is in exile the union is not perfect. The Schechina must be free in order to attach herself to her Spouse! Meditate long and earnestly on the *ECHAD!*"

He fell back, his strength spent, and lay still. And out of the stillness came his voice, softly, sweetly, infinitely wistful: "What is that which advanceth like the dawn? Which is beautiful as the moon? Sparkling like the sun? And terrible as an army ranged in battle? That which advanceth is Israel, when the Lord is delivering him from his exile. And God will cast over Israel a thin thread of light; and then, a bigger ray of light; and again, more light, little by little. Then will the Holy One open the doors to Israel in the four directions of the world. And God will reveal the

light to Israel, a little at a time. For, even as one who has always lived in the dark, Israel must grow accustomed to the light gradually.

“ When the Sanctuary was destroyed and Israel was exiled on account of his sins, the Holy One withdrew Himself to the very highest heaven and refused to look either at Israel in exile or at the destroyed Sanctuary. But the Schechina, because of her great love, exiled herself together with Israel. Then did the Holy One descend and see His Sanctuary destroyed and His People exiled. And He asked for His Matrona. But she had disappeared. Then did both heaven and earth weep for the destroyed Sanctuary. And the heavens were enveloped in dark shadows. And the sun and the moon wept for the destruction of the Sanctuary, so that their light was obscured in dark shadows. Thus were both the heavens above and the earth beneath in mourning for the Sanctuary.

“ The man who is accustomed to suffering can bear each fresh blow with fortitude, whereas he who has led an easy life breaks down whenever trouble assails him. Thus, when the Israelites were in bondage in Egypt they were able to bear it because their forefathers had already suffered much, but when they were dragged off into captivity in Babylon, their pain was so great that their cries reached to the very highest heavens. And all wept. Even the *Angels of Peace* wept bitterly, for Israel had already lived as a free people and experienced royal pleasures, so that it was very difficult for him to submit to the yoke of the oppressor. And the Israelites felt that God had abandoned them for ever. Then did the Holy King call together His heavenly hosts and bid them go down to comfort His people. Then the heavens opened and the Prophetic Spirit descended upon Ezekiel! He saw all that was going on in the upper world. And he was able to comfort sorrowing Israel. And as soon as the Children of Israel were assured of God's Presence amongst them, they ceased to lament their fate. But because the Schechina is in exile with Israel, you must meditate on the *ECHAD!* Strive to bring an end to the exile of Israel



and of the Schechina! And bring about the union, the perfect union, both above and below!"

#### THE REVELATIONS CONCERNING THE MESSIAH

The light continued to shine around the Master's bed, while the pupils sat with lowered eyes and listened to the beloved voice of Simeon ben Jochai as he taught them the holy mysteries concerning the coming of the Messiah:

"There is a heavenly David, as well as an earthly one. When God wants to show clemency to the world, He looks at this David, and *His Visage* becomes illuminated. This, in turn, illumines the universe and gives life to the world. The beauty of this David brightens all the worlds. His golden head is crowned by seven diadems. It is due to the merit of this David that love and mercy are awakened on all the steps of the heavenly hierarchy. It is with this David that God wishes to be united and of whom He has said: 'Behold the fragrance of My Son, which is like that of the field that has been blessed!'

"At the moment of the appearance of the Messiah, Son of David, many signs and wonders will be made manifest and many miracles will take place. In the Paradise-on-earth there is a secret spot unknown even to the celestial legions. This spot contains a thousand hidden palaces. None but the Messiah may penetrate here. He comes often to these palaces, where he finds the Righteous seated on their thrones. The Messiah leads all the armies formed by the souls of the Righteous and assembled in this Garden of Eden. On the first day of each month, and on festivals, the Messiah comes to the palaces. In the centre of the palaces is a place called Eden. It is hidden from all eyes. And the Messiah stays hidden away in it, until the day when he will come forth to save the world. When the Messiah enters this Palace he meets the Patriarchs and he sees Rachel weeping. The Holy One tries to console her, but she will not be consoled. Then the Messiah, too, raises his voice in lamentation, and desolation spreads over the Garden of Eden, as all weep

with him. When the sound of their sorrow reaches the Supreme Throne, the Holy One gives the signal for *the Bird* to leave its nest, and from there the Messiah also emerges. Then there take place certain acts which are above human understanding. Three figures are seen on the Supreme Throne: one is *the Bird*, and one is the figure of the Messiah, for all have risen to the highest. And the Holy One conjures them both to spread the *All-Good* in the world. Then do the two of them return to their respective places and the Messiah is again hidden away as before.

“ Each Sabbath day the souls of the Paradise-on-earth go to visit the region known as *The Walls of Jerusalem*, where are several guardian angels. They can penetrate this region only after having been purified. Then the souls go to visit all those who are suffering, who are ill, or who are oppressed because of their faith. After these visits the souls go to visit the Messiah. When they tell him of the sufferings of Israel in exile, and when they tell him also how many guilty ones there are in Israel who know not God, the Messiah weeps, for his heart is full of pain to hear of this iniquity.

“ In Paradise there is a palace known as *The Palace of the Sick*, which the Messiah enters and calls upon all the sicknesses, the pains, and the sufferings, bidding them take possession of him. This they do, and the Messiah then suffers all the punishments of which Israel is worthy. Had not the Messiah taken upon himself all the punishments merited by Israel, none would be able to endure the sufferings of the world. But the Messiah bears the sufferings of all mankind.

“ Our knowledge of the Holy One is imperfect, because He is the Soul of Souls; the spirit of all spirits; the most mysterious of all the mysteries. We know Him only because certain doors are open to those souls who seek a knowledge of God. One door leads to all the degrees, and it is by this door and this degree that we know the Glory of God. The first door by which one must enter is the *Door of the Just*.

Once that door is entered, all the other doors of heaven open. He, who has the merit to enter by this door, will also see all the other doors open in front of him, for all the higher doors rest on this one. But this door is really unknown because Israel is in exile! And all the other doors are therefore unknown! But when Israel shall be freed from his exile, then will he reascend to all the higher degrees. Then shall all the inhabitants of the world know and recognize the higher wisdom, such as they had never been able to do before. And behold, men's eyes shall be opened and they shall be able to see the first door, which is *the Door of the Tent*, or *the Door of the Just*. And all will trust in the Messiah who is to judge the world."

And the Master's face shone with a new radiance, as he cried out: "Alas, for those who will be living at this time! Yet, happy are they who will then be found worthy of the joys destined for those who bask in the Light of the Lord. He hath promised: 'I shall make them pass through the fire, and I shall purify them even as silver is purified. And I shall try them even as gold is tried in the fire.'"

#### THE BIRD'S NEST

"During the time when Israel shall be chastised with all the nations and the kings in league against him, when he shall be oppressed by one evil after another, each new evil so terrible as to make him forget the last one, then shall a column of fire reaching from earth to heaven become visible to all the people of the earth for forty days. Then shall the Messiah leave the earthly Paradise, which is called *The Bird's Nest*, and reveal himself in the Land of Galilee. Then shall the earth be troubled and men hide in caves. But as Galilee was the first city to be destroyed at the time of the destruction of the Temple, Galilee will be the first city in which the Messiah will reveal himself. And from Galilee will go forth the declaration of war from the Messiah to oppressor nations. After the forty days of the appearance of the column of fire and of the Messiah, a glorious star will appear in the east

composed of all the colours. Three times a day this star will fight with the other stars surrounding it. This sight will be visible to the dwellers on earth for seventy days. The combat will take place as follows : fuses of fire will shoot out from the great star in the centre and destroy all those around it. But every morning they will reappear, the combat will start all over again and last for seventy days. Then will the bright central star be hidden for twelve months, during which the column of fire will reappear as before. At the end of this period the column will disappear, for then the Messiah will have mounted to heaven to receive the power and the crown of royalty.

“ When the Messiah shall come down to earth again the column of fire will again become visible to the whole world. The Messiah will manifest himself by a declaration of war on all the world. Many nations will submit to him. And the power of the Messiah shall be made manifest, and all men shall know him. Many kings will declare war on him, and many Jews without shame will range themselves against the Messiah and on the side of the earthly kings. Then will the world be in shadow for fifteen days and a great number of Israel will perish in the shadows. At the end of twelve months the sceptre of Israel will be elevated, which means that the Messiah will arise in the Garden of Eden. The Righteous will place *the Crown* upon his head, and around his waist a belt made up of the letters of the Holy Name. A Voice coming from the Tree in the Garden of Eden will speak these words : ‘ Arise, ye Holy Saints, and go before the Messiah. The moment has come when the heavenly wife is united with her heavenly Spouse. And behold, the Spouse will avenge His wife in chastising the world that refused to know her. Now the Wife is to be lifted up again from the earth.’

“ Then will all the saints of heaven arise and arm the Messiah. Abraham will be on his right hand, Isaac upon his left, and Jacob in front of him. Moses, the faithful pastor, will dance at the head of the Righteous in the Garden of Eden. And the Messiah, surrounded by the Righteous, will enter his

place, which is *The Bird's Nest*. There he will see the reproductions of the image of those who lived at the time of the destruction of the Temple, as well as of the Righteous who died for the Faith. There, he will put on ten garments, known as *The Garments of Vengeance*. For forty days he will remain hidden in the Palace and see no one. Then, a Voice coming from the Supreme Throne will tell him to leave *The Bird's Nest*, and he will rise to heaven. And when the Holy One shall see him in his *Garments of Vengeance*, belted and armed, He will embrace him and kiss him on the brow. At this, three hundred and ninety firmaments will be destroyed. Then the Holy One will make a sign to one of the firmaments that has remained hidden since the first day of the creation of the world, and a palace within this firmament will open, and out of it will come a crown on which are engraved the Holy Names. This is the crown that was worn by the Holy One Himself while the Israelites were crossing the Red Sea. This same crown the Holy One will place on the head of the Messiah, and embrace him once more.

“ Then shall all the angels of heaven come to offer gifts to the Messiah. He will enter the Palace in which the angels are called *Those who weep for Zion*, since they are for ever mourning the destruction of the Temple. These angels will give the Messiah a purple mantle—*The Mantle of Vengeance*—which he will put on and again remain hidden for thirty days in *The Bird's Nest*. Then will he come down to earth and become visible for seven days. The ignorant shall tremble with fear, for they will not be able to understand it, but those who have been initiated into the mysteries of Eternal Wisdom will understand its significance. Happy is their lot! During these seven days the Messiah will walk on the earth accompanied by *The Bird's Nest*. He will go to the Tomb of Rachel to console her. And she, who would not receive the consolation of the Holy One, will accept the consolation of the Messiah. She will arise and embrace him. Then the light will spread over the whole world, beginning with the city of Jericho—the city of date trees. During twelve months the Messiah will be enveloped in the light

שרבו דקוה לה תימנא בה דבר ו כדום פלאי הא חו הה זרדא  
 ליתענענה ועדא ככח עורין ועקוק נהין ואהחטט מיד אערט  
 רבין אברה קן איתא בדרת ל' אטא כשיטא לענין לפסאטא שליט  
 זמני ודאי קא אוארעוועט להחזק אורחין ואיהו שפוק לפרי  
 אירחין ואשכח זעב טוקאן אמרת לה יונה יונה שליח תהוועט הויה  
 למרמך הדין וישלח אתה צונו ואיתכחא בקם ורשב הילן ייזנה  
 תבטלה בשליחותה באינאה עלך דהיא יונה קדישא חסיד  
 כשליחא די ל' ורדעבדי ח' אורגת יעד לשקורחטין חזרת  
 בשליחותא דהי חזרת לנח לשערב ההו ותבא לך וזוהי <sup>מחשבת</sup>  
 גדיהו וחפרה כורבן יעד יפתיקאן וארבעת להאק עלמא  
**דא זה ספר תולדות אדם דא ספא דחמין**  
 דעלנה איתמי ויהיך חמך תרביאהים ואיננו  
 כ' ל' קח את טאהים וחמאי קרי ליה תולדות אדם אה ראה <sup>דעלנה</sup>  
 תולדות אדם היקרי דעייט נפיק וזויה הוה תולדות די אה  
 ואמאי איתפיקי עבד אהכא רמא ויסוב ליה עלוונני כתיב דהוה  
 כדחמאי לעילא ולבד עיית בהווא דאיחמך ציה והוא שער אה  
 כל בלה ואה כט זלפי שויאכין ויבא זמן אה דכחם דעה  
 לא דהוה געזעט ד' ל' איתחיה אעט כ' רחטטין ובכ' תפיקין  
 ותרסרוהו מעט יואהים דיהבת לה כל גני שתיא וכל מעשה  
 אה גמלוה בכל י' ליה כ' ווען דעלפא דאזע לוסין דה הכסא  
 איהו ל' חייך והא עמך ויעזאל הוילן איהו ליה וכה

TIKUNE HA ZOHAR MANUSCRIPT WRITTEN IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY  
From the Collection of Mr David Sassoon



which comes out of *The Bird's Nest*, and after that he will spread the light between earth and heaven. Beginning his mission in Galilee where the exile of Israel began, he will reveal the light which emanated from *The Bird's Nest* and return to his place.

“ After that,” continued the voice of Simeon ben Jochai, as from afar off, “ there will be a great earthquake, felt from one end of the world to the other, so that all may know that the Messiah has begun to reveal himself in Galilee. Those who consecrate themselves to the study of the Torah will be his followers, but their number will be small. He will call the children unto him, for it is the merit of the children that gives him force. He is strengthened by the innocence of the children who lie at their mother's breast ! It is thanks to the children that the Schechina remains with Israel in exile, for small is the number of the true sages !

“ Twelve months later, when the Schechina shall be united with her heavenly Spouse, the Messiah will reassemble those who are dispersed from one end of the earth to the other, and miracles as great as those that were performed in Egypt will be performed by the Holy One. This is the mystery of the thirty-two paths that lead to the Holy Name. But as long as these miracles remain unaccomplished the Holy Name will not be perfect, and love will not reign in the world.

“ Behold, there is a tower that elevates itself above all the others ! This tower symbolizes the Law. A bird comes, lifts it up and places it under the wings of the Cherubim. There are three hundred doors which give access to it. In the middle door there is light given out by the Scrolls of the Law in which the *King of Israel* will read the part that begins with the word ‘ *Assemble. . .* ’ Happy are the Righteous who shall hear the voice of the Messiah as he reveals the mysteries of the Law on the Sabbaths and festivals ! For, when the Righteous wish to go up into the heavenly school, they assemble before the King Messiah, who explains to them the *Mystery of the Ten Words*. When the doors of the Tower are opened, the cherubim spread their wings, so as to cause the heavenly light to shine forth, and cry out : ‘ How great



is the goodness that Thou hast reserved for them that fear Thee!' When the Scrolls of the Law are returned to the Tower and the doors are closed, a light comes from above, composed of four colours, and none can look at it excepting the Messiah. The Cherubim are silent and the flying tower returns to its place amongst the other towers. On this middle door there is a very fine and very precious crown inset with gems, which is invisible to everyone. It is to be placed on the head of the Messiah, when he goes into the tower, by the two eagles that accompany him carrying the crown. When he begins to read the Law another door opens and out of it flies the Dove of Noah, holding a crown in its beak over the head of the Messiah. When he recites the Pentateuch two eagles are at his side, and he descends to the very last degree, the crown remaining always above his head.

"And it will come to pass, at the end of time, that the Holy One will rebuild Jerusalem. A fixed star will be surrounded by seventy other stars and will be visible for seventy days. After that the star will reappear only once and on the Sabbath day. The first day the star will be visible in the city of Rome and there three great towers will crumble; the great Palace will fall to pieces and the Sovereign will die. On the following day the star will become visible to all the earth. And terrible wars will break out everywhere. Then will a great king arise and conquer the world. And on the day when this star will disappear there will be a violent earthquake in Jerusalem, spreading for forty-five leagues around the place on which the Temple had stood. This will reveal an immense, subterranean grotto, from which fire will belch forth, menacing all the earth. Powerful men will issue from this grotto and dominate the world. This branch will become royal and the great saints of the world will rally round it. Then shall all men's eyes behold the King Messiah, though at that moment mankind will be in great distress, one adversity following close upon another. But when the Holy One shall revive the dead, sorrow and death will disappear from the world,"

## THE REVELATIONS CONCERNING THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

Simeon ben Jochai opened his eyes and saw that the flames still surrounded his bed, and that on the other side his pupils stood about, their faces alight with the ecstasy of hope and faith in all that he was revealing unto them. And he continued to teach them saying :

“ Know that your souls are immortal ! The soul leaves only when the Angel of Death has taken possession of the body. And once more the soul assumes the form in which it was garbed before coming into the world. Nor can the soul experience any real joy until it feels itself wearing its own heavenly form once more. For only then can it continue to learn the meaning of the profound mysteries. And the soul that does not find its heavenly envelope at once knows that it is not to enter heaven at once, but only after having been punished. So long as there has been a desire for repentance, even though it has not been carried out, yet is the soul given another chance and allowed after some time to return to its Paradise.

“ Even as the body is composed of elements coming from the four cardinal points, so is the soul formed in the upper world by the four winds that blow out of Paradise and form its envelope. It is this envelope that gives to the soul the same form it had on earth.

“ If the soul which is placed here below fails to take root, it is withdrawn again and again and transplanted until it has taken root. For the soul which has not achieved its task on earth is withdrawn and transplanted again on earth. Unhappy is the soul that is obliged to return to earth to repair the mistakes made by the man whose body it animated ! For transmigration is inflicted as a punishment on the soul—a punishment that varies according to the nature of the sins the soul has committed. And every soul that has sinned must return to earth until, by its perfection, it is able to attain to the sixth degree of the region whence it emanated. Only the souls which have emanated from the side of the

Schechina—which is the seventh heavenly degree—are never subjected to transmigration.

#### THE ALLEGORY OF JONAH

“ In the story of Jonah we find an allegory of that which happens to the soul when it enters the body. When Jonah embarks on the boat it is the soul embarking upon its voyage here below in order to traverse the ocean of life. When a man sins, he is like Jonah, who imagines that he can flee from the wrath of his master. Then does God send a great tempest, for the Angel of the Rigour demands the chastisement of the sinner. When Jonah fell into a deep sleep, the pilot said to him : ‘ How can’st thou sleep ? Better arise and call upon thy God.’ The pilot is the Spirit of Good which guides the ship and which tells him to think back upon his whole life to see if there is in it something that makes him worthy of forgiveness. Or it may be that he had amongst his ancestors a righteous man on whose merit he could now count to save him. Thus, when a man is judged in the next world, numerous accusers as well as numerous defenders are present. If he is found guilty, the soul is separated from the body and cast into the sea. Then is the ship able to find calmness again in the tomb.

“ When a man dies, three messengers are sent down from heaven to be present. The first inscribes his good and his bad actions ; the second writes the number of his days ; the third is the one who accompanied him while yet he was in his mother’s womb. When the man is carried to the cemetery, and he has been a good man, these three call out : ‘ Give honour to him, who was in the Image of the King ! ’ But if he was bad, they cry : ‘ Unhappy is this man ! Better that he had never been born ! ’

“ The fish that swallowed Jonah is like the tomb. After three days in the tomb, man’s entrails pour forth their filth upon his face, crying : ‘ Take back that which thou hast given us, thou who didst gorge thyself while the poor remained hungry ! ’ From the third day of death, up to the

thirtieth, the various members of the body are punished for sins committed. And the soul is judged at the same time as the body, remaining on earth during the first month. Then the soul rises and the body becomes dust until the time when God shall revive the dead. And when that day comes a Heavenly Voice shall be heard crying: 'Wake up! Wake up from your long sleep and sing praises, you who rest under the earth. For the dew that falls on you now is the Dew of Light. The time has come for the earth to give up her giants!' And even as the fish, after keeping him three days in her belly, threw up Jonah, so will the earth throw up her dead.

"On the day when man must leave the earth, the four *Chiefs* of the Punishment come together from the four corners of the world. And the four elements of which man's body is composed begin to dispute with each other. When man's death is announced it is heard in two hundred and seventy worlds. If the man has been good there is joy in all these worlds, but if he has been bad how unhappy is his lot!

"When man's death is announced a flame shoots out from the north and throws itself into the River of Fire, which flows in the four directions of the world and burns the souls of the guilty. Then the flame leaves the river and penetrates the wings of a black cock, which is beating its wings against the door of a certain house. Then do the deeds which man has done on earth testify before him and he must admit when they speak the truth. At the hour of midnight the flame strikes the bird again and it begins to sing. But the bird is visible only to the dying man, who is then able to see supernatural things. He also sees his dead relatives and friends. He sees that those who were good on earth are full of joy. But if he himself has not been a good man, then only those who are expiating their sins in Hell appear before him. They are sad and downcast, and the dying man sends forth a great cry of anguish. When he dies, the souls of his relatives and friends accompany his soul into the next world and point out its delights and punishments. During the first seven days the man's soul revisits its earthly home. Then it goes

to the Garden of Eden and stands before the door with the whirling sword. If the soul is found worthy it enters, and four angels present it with the envelope that resembles the body it inhabited on earth. The soul puts it on and waits in the Garden-of-Eden-on-Earth until its fate is decided. Then does a column appear in three different colours. This is the *Column of Zion*. The soul mounts it and reaches the *Door of Justice*, where Zion and Jerusalem are to be found."

#### THE REVELATIONS CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

And the Master, Simeon ben Jochai, took from them the fear of death, as he comforted them, saying: "Know that the bodies of the dead will be revived and animated with the same souls as they had before. And they will renew the face of the world. The souls of those who are to be resurrected are always in the presence of the Almighty, waiting for His signal to go and animate the bodies. At the moment of the resurrection God will cause a dew to fall upon the earth, wherein the dead are buried, and they will arise. This dew comes from the Tree of Life and is a Dew of Light. Only since the Evil Serpent rules the earth this dew does not fall and the heavenly river is dried up, so that the Spirit of Life no longer flows out from it. But at the moment of the Resurrection the Spirit of Evil will be exterminated. And then the light of the moon will never more be obscured. And the waters of the Heavenly Flood will never more be dried up. And the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun. And the light of the sun will be seven times greater than is its light at present on the whole of the seven days of the week.

"The dead who come to life outside the Holy Land will roll under the earth, right up to the Land of Israel, for only in that land will the bodies receive their souls. After the Resurrection the Holy One will bless the bodies of the Righteous and make them like unto the body of Adam, as it was before entering the Garden of Eden. The souls that are living in heaven are nourished by the Superior Light. And

when they come down to earth at the moment of the Resurrection they will bring this Light with them and beautify the body they inhabit. Then will the body glow with an inner splendour, even as the splendour of heaven. And men will have a perfect knowledge of Divine things. Then will all creatures know that the soul that animates them is the Soul of Life ; the Soul of Happiness ; the Soul which receives the Great Delights directly from on high and transmits them to the body. And all those that are privileged to taste of this joy will cry out : ' How sweet art thou, Love full of Delights ! ' And their joy will be such that man's present intelligence cannot even comprehend it.

“ We sometimes see that God has taken one of the Righteous before his time. And he leaves the world while still exhaling the agreeable perfumes of delight. We must know that the Righteous leave the world for two reasons : First, if the generation is found guilty, it is the Righteous who are punished before any others ; and secondly, it is because God sees that the Righteous may also be corrupted later. Nor must we be surprised when we see, as oftentimes we do see, that bad men live as if they had done good works and were being rewarded. We must understand that God sees further than the one generation. He sees also their children who are to come later and who may be amongst those who will do good, or that they themselves will yet repent of their evil-doing and turn to do good. We must remember that it was Terah, the idol-worshipper, who brought forth Abraham, the man of God. And it is because God treats mankind in this far-seeing way that the world continues to exist.”

## CHAPTER XI

### THE REVELATIONS CONCERNING PARADISE AND HELL

THE Master's voice ceased. And all in the room, both the visible and the invisible listeners, both the earthly and the heavenly visitors, remained united in a great chord of silence. The disciples saw, through the diminished light surrounding the bed, that the Master lay like one dead, but they knew that his soul had left his body and was exploring the upper regions. And they waited in a breathless tensity, vacillating between hope and fear. While they thus lived through a long moment of eternity, the light around the bed began to renew itself with a fresh radiance. A sun of joy illumined the features of Simeon ben Jochai as he opened his eyes and smiled at them—a deep smile, as from afar off. And his voice vibrated with a deep assurance as he taught them, saying :

“ I know that my face is reflecting joy, but the joy you see on it is but an infinitesimal reflection of the happiness that has come to me. My soul has but just returned to me from the other world, where I beheld the Glory of those who gave themselves for the Holy Name. And I saw them bathed in thirteen rivers of perfume, and then led before the Holy Throne, where the Holy One showed His delight in them. And when I asked : ‘ For whom is all this glory ? ’ I was told : ‘ These are the men who served God on earth, out of love and not out of fear ! ’

“ And now come nearer and hearken unto all that I shall tell you of what happened to me, as my soul liberated itself from its casket of flesh and joined the myriads of souls that were leaving the earth for the journey to the next world.

And I saw them separated into groups by the spirits of the air. Those destined for the joys of the celestial Kingdom, joyously took their flight upwards, while those destined for the torments of Hell sadly turned their faces to the lower regions. And I saw the souls of the Righteous guided through Seven Doors, through Seven Regions and through Seven Palaces in their journey of purification for the life of eternal joy that awaits them.

#### THE SEVEN DOORS

“ I saw the souls pass through the First Door and come to the Cave of Macpelah, which is near to the Garden of Eden. And when Adam, who is the guardian, saw a great soul coming, he cried out : ‘ Welcome unto you, Great Soul ! ’

“ And we came to the Second Door, which is before the entrance to Paradise. Here I saw the Cherubim with the *Flaming Sword*, which whirls and shoots forth sparks of flame. The souls that were completely pure passed through this door at once. But those that were not completely pure remained behind to be judged, punished and purified, with the flames that dart forth from the Cherubim. The souls, which were in Grace, were given a pass in the form of a brilliant jewel. Then we came to the *Paradise-on-earth*. Here, I saw a pillar of cloud, lined with radiance, around which both smoke and light flashed and curled, which reached right up to the very doors of heaven. And the purified souls began to ascend this pillar. The others remained in the *Paradise-on-earth* in order to be completely purified. Here they enjoy the pleasures which come from above, but which provide the soul with no nourishment.

“ The purified souls went up the pillar of cloud, which was lined with flame. They reached the Third Door, which lies opposite the sphere called Zevoul, and came to the celestial Jerusalem. At the door, angels stood on guard. Only the most deserving souls were allowed to enter while those found unworthy were deprived of the jewels that had been given them previously. And I heard them cry out in a voice of lamentation ; ‘ Alas, now my jewels have been taken from



me, and I am unfit to enter !' But the deserving soul went on to the Temple above, where she began to sing praises unto God. Then I saw the Angel Michael, the Prince Priest of the Temple, take the soul on the palms of his hands and carry her slowly through all the glories of the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Doors, praising God at every step and bringing the soul on the palms of his hands, as a sacrifice before the Holy One.

#### THE SEVEN REGIONS

" And behold, I saw Seven Regions, one above the other, in which the Greater Angels reside. They are united with the earth, and exist only because of the earth. They sing continual hymns of praise unto the Eternal. The greater the angel the higher is the region which he inhabits. The lowest region is a space without light. The angels who live in it look like shadows, whose passage is felt but not seen. They are invisible, having neither light, nor shadow, nor any sort of colour. They are unconscious of their own existence, because they have no form of any sort in their region, wherewith to compare themselves. These angels are struck down by an invisible blow every afternoon and are revived every morning. The disappearance and reappearance of these angels indicates day and night.

" Behold, the spreading arch that overhangs the Paradise is in the most glorious colours, and in the centre of it the name of the Holy One is engraved. I saw all the secrets of the upper worlds, and I learned all the wisdom that must be learned in order to be able to behold and to gaze upon the Glory of God !

" And I came to the Second Region, where there is some light. Here I met the angels who watch over man and try to turn him from following evil. Sometimes, they make war on man also. They are nourished by the odours that rise from the good deeds of man on earth. I heard them begin to intone their hymns of praise, but you must know that they stop every now and then, waiting for Israel to join them. If Israel does not join in their hymns they are unable

to continue. But as soon as Israel's voice was heard joining in the hymns, I saw that the angels began to shine with a renewed splendour. And when Israel consecrates himself to the study of the Torah, these angels are able to rise to the very throne of God to testify. And there they receive their due praise.

"When I came to the Third Region, behold, it was filled with fire and flame. And I saw the River of Fire fall from here, on to the heads of the guilty in Hell. Here were the Destroying Angels who torment the wicked. They are also the accusers of Israel, excepting when he is in a state of repentance, as on the Ten Penitential Days. And here, my eyes gazed upon Sammael, the Evil One!

"Behold, the Fourth Region was brilliant with light and the Angels of Right came to meet me. I saw that they are the Angels of Mercy who do not change. I knew them, for they have often come to me in dreams and brought me special messages. They are the Guardians of the Keys to the Door of Mercy. I saw them open the doors to those who have repented and to allow the vows and prayers of those who are sincere to enter. And I saw the prayers and the vows mount up and up to the Throne of the All-Highest.

"In the Fifth Region, my eyes were dazzled by the brilliant light. The Angels, who came to meet me, were of fire and water. And I saw them being sent out with the heavenly messages, some being of clemency and others of punishment.

"In the Sixth Region, behold, they took me to sail in many ships and we traversed many rivers. We went to the south, and we met the Angel Michael; and to the north, where we met the Angel Gabriel; to the east, where we met the Angel Raphael; and to the west, where we met the Angel Oriel.

"And, behold, in the Seventh Region, I met the souls of the Righteous, and saw them basking in the joy of all the heavenly delights! We stood under a perpetual shower of the blessings of Peace, of Benediction and of Grace. And as

they poured over our souls, we felt ourselves being washed by a stream of joy that is indescribable.

“ And when I came to the Paradise, I saw the Seraphim resembling torches, and wheels of fire turning about them. Their eyebrows were burning brands, and their faces and eyes were sparkling flames. Their leader is called Adomeus, and when he caught sight of me, he cried out : ‘ Who has allowed the fruit of woman’s womb to come amongst us ? ’ I at once pronounced the Letters of the Holy Name. And still they tried to scorch me with their Breath. Then there advanced towards me a great Prince who asked who I was. I told him my name and he said : ‘ Welcome, thou art our friend ! ’ And he said further : ‘ Know that all those who come into this world must pass through my hands. Night after night, from the moment that man lies down and entrusts his spirit to the Master of all the Worlds, the spirit flies to me. But I can admit only those whose names have been submitted to me, as well as those who have done good deeds during the day and whom we ourselves go forth to seek out.’ Then were my eyes opened and I was shown the three hundred and five Palaces on the east. Each palace has many guardians, all of the same appearance and height, called *The Servants of the East*. On the south everything is like that of the east, but I saw a door bigger than all the others, and the guardian told me : ‘ Through this door pass the souls of those who are oppressed and persecuted as well as those who have repented of their wickedness.’ Above this large door, I saw yet another door, standing in the midst of ten smaller ones. This door is opened only on the New Moon. Above it is a dome with four windows, each one being a letter of light of the Holy Name. At all the doors stand spirits dressed in garments that recall their earthly form. And I saw them fling off these garments and enter by the windows and by the ten doors.

#### THE SEVEN PALACES

“ Within each of the Seven Regions of the Paradise, there is a Palace. The aim of the Heavenly Palaces is to preserve

the Schechina for the world, and it is done by keeping the contact between the upper worlds and this world of ours. Now you shall hear about the Seven Palaces of the Paradise and the seven corresponding Palaces of Hell :

“ The First Palace that my eyes beheld is the *Palace of the Sapphire*. This is the Home of Faith. Here the mysteries of faith begin to be revealed. The prophets got their visions by attaining the First Palace. This Palace is guarded by *Tahariel*, and he, and all the angels under him look like flames and carry burning brands in their hands. The chiefs of this palace are called : *Masters of the Eyes*. And I saw the souls that are not found worthy to enter here, being snatched and carried off to the Inferno by millions of waiting demons. I saw the guardian open the door and the prayers made by certain sinners with sincerity were carried off by *Shadiel* to a lower plane. And the prayers were told that if the person who made them were to repent they would be allowed to mount higher. Above this palace I saw another door which was guarded by the Holy One Himself. Through it came the tears of the penitents and the tears of those—both in the upper and in the lower worlds—who mourn the destruction of the Temple. And I saw the Angel of Mercy, *Rahmiel*, mounted on a chariot borne by six hundred of the Holy Beasts, collect all the tears and weave them into a crown.

“ I saw the souls of many converts. They were dressed in garments of light which were both bright and dull. They were enveloped in mantles of bright light. The floor of this Palace is studded with gems and precious stones. One of its doors is exactly opposite to the door leading to Hell, so that the converts are able to see how the wicked are being punished. And behold, I looked through the door leading down to Hell, and I saw the Angels of Destruction torturing them and burning them. While the converts rejoiced that they had taken the right road. Three times a day the converts are allowed to bask in the Light of God, which sustains their own faint light. And I recognized *Obadiah* and *Onkelos*, and other great converts.

“ I saw the spirit *Satouriel* giving forth sparks of light in all directions. He is the guardian of the male souls that come from the Right Side, while another spirit guards the female souls that come from the Left Side. When the souls leave the world they come to this palace first and here the males and the females are united again. When this union takes place, sparks fly in all directions. Here are four angels guarding the keys to the Holy Name. From the middle of this Palace, I saw arising the pillar *Adrahaniel*, which leads to the Second Palace where the prayers are transmitted.

“ And just as God has created an earthly Paradise, so He has created an earthly Hell. And just as God has created a heavenly Paradise, so He has created a heavenly Hell.

“ And, behold, my eyes were opened, and I looked down and I saw the first Palace of the empire of Satan, which bears the name of *the Pit*. Its banks are soft and slippery, and there is no projection to which a person, thrown into the pit, may attach himself. The guardian *Douma* is constantly watching the upper Palace, and as soon as a soul is rejected in Paradise he seizes it and brings it down to Hell. And I saw in *the Pit* those whose eyes had gazed upon impure and forbidden things. In the centre of this inferno I saw the impure spirit of *Gamghina*, whose body is a dull red. He is the keeper of those whose prayers have been rejected on high.

#### THE SECOND PALACE

“ Then I was taken to the Second Palace of the Paradise, which is the *Palace of Azure*, and the resting-place of Faith. This Palace is more mysterious than the first. Its three doors are guarded by the Angel *Ourphaniel*, whose brightness never changes. This Palace is enclosed within the first, but its light is brighter. The whole of it is set with precious stones. In it is one light which contains all the colours and sends its light from the heavens above to the earth below. And I met those who must bear troubles and sicknesses for their purification. Many of those who come to this Palace are people who had spent their time on earth in praising God.

And here I also met the souls of those who had been killed on account of the Faith. The Guardian Angel carried a cup filled with fire and with life. This is the Cup of Consolation, which is offered to the afflicted as soon as they arrive. After drinking from this cup, each soul is conducted before Sadkhiel, who guards the garments which the soul has woven for itself by its deeds on earth. After that the soul is led for the plunge into the River of Fire for the purification. Some of the souls remain in the purifying fire all night, and when the south wind springs up in the morning to awaken them, they are completely renewed! And they are garbed in their own garment of *Deeds on Earth*. Then do the purified souls sing their songs of praise and give themselves as a sacrifice to the High Priest of Heaven, Michael, who presents each soul to the Holy One. And there the soul remains until it has achieved its complete and ultimate form.

“ And I saw the union of two spirits take place. This gives birth to Seraphim with the face of an eagle and with six wings. Above the Seraphim stands the Holy Beast *Jophiel*, *The Beauty of God*, who holds the keys of the beauty of Wisdom. As each soul entered it presented itself to the Holy Beast, who examined it to see what degree of wisdom it had attained on earth. And each soul received its place, according to the measure of its wisdom. And the souls of those who had neglected to attain wisdom, were ashamed and were put out of the door of the Palace, and Seraphim beat them with flaming wings, so that they burned but were not consumed. These souls were not completely bright because of their imperfect wisdom, nor yet quite dark because of a certain measure of perfection of good deeds that is in them. When their complete merit shall have been restored, their light will become entirely brilliant and they will become fit to recognize their Master.

“ The Holy Beast *Jophiel* dominates four other beasts, each one provided with four wheels. The one towards the east is called *Haniel*; the one towards the north, *Quarschiel*; the one towards the south, *Ezriel*; and the one towards the west, *Aniel*. They all sing praises and sanctify the

Name of God in order to cause the *Spirit of Mercy* to appear. It is from this source that all the wise, the seers, the dreamers, and the prophets, get their force. From the highest place in their region comes the gift of prophecy. And it was from the very crown of this highest place that Moses was endowed with the prophetic spirit. From the lower degrees in this region the minor prophets, the seers and the dreamers get their gift of prophecy. It is *Jophiel*, the Beauty of God, who dominates and governs all the degrees of Wisdom. Into his hand are delivered the judgments so that he may use his goodness in softening the harsh decrees, before delivering them to the Judge of the First Palace, whose decision is final. Then does the Guardian of the First Palace deliver them to the leader of the Evil Side, who is hard and cruel. His name is *Sanghiel*. He is also the guardian of the First Region of Hell. He has myriads of legions under him to execute the judgments all over the world. At the moment that *Sanghiel* receives a judgment he opens the door that leads to the side of darkness, where myriads of his servitors are waiting for each new decree, which they herald with shouts of joy.

“ The second door is the door from which life and death depend, for it is there that the last seal is put upon each judgment. I saw two angels standing here. The one on the right holds the seal of life, the one on the left holds the seal of death. And behold, I saw many lights flow together and unite into one light, and then flow apart again. And they flowed together and they flowed apart, again and yet again. And above these lights in their perpetual union and reunion I saw the suffering Messiah !

“ And behold, the chasm opened for me and I looked down into the second palace of Hell. It is called *The Precipice* and is full of dark shadows. It has three doors. Through the first door come those who are guilty of the sins of perversion and who will never be permitted to see the Schechina. Through the second door come those who are guilty of incest with animals, and with members of their own families. As each one enters, he is given a drink out of a cup which contains *The Bitterness of Death*. Through the third door come

those guilty of adultery. And here I saw those demons who run about the earth at night, disguised either as men or as women. They appear to men as beautiful women, and to women as handsome men in order to tempt them. They bear the name of *Scourge*.

#### THE THIRD PALACE

“ In sorrow I turned away my gaze from the horrors of hell to look upon the indescribable beauty that surrounds the life of the Righteous in the next world. And it was the Messiah himself who led me into the Third Palace, which is more brilliant than the other two and is called *The Palace of the Splendour*. Its four doors lead in the four directions. The first door is guarded by the Angel Malkhiel, who receives the decrees of the judgments of the world from the court of the King and sends them forth to be executed. The guardian of the second door is the angel Gazriel, who holds the decrees of life and death. This door is open only on the Sabbath and on the first day of every month. On the Day of Atonement it is closed until nightfall until after the decrees of life and death have been given out.

“ On the fourth step I saw the angel of Diphtheria, who was created at the crescent moon. He is present at the death of little children, when he appears to them in the form of a woman who clasps their throat and gently strangles them. The souls of these children are brought to this Palace and the angel takes care of them and nourishes them with light, fills them with joy, purges them of all bitterness, and brings them at last into the presence of the King of Kings. And there, on Sabbath days and on the days of the New Moon, they receive the blessings of the Fathers. When God sees these little ones, His heart is stirred with pity towards all mankind. And I saw the children, who had been saved from leading a wicked life, basking in the joys of purity and love.

“ The third door is guarded by Qaphtziel, who holds the decrees of sickness, suffering and poverty. When this door



is shut to man's prayer he is miserable until his true state of repentance opens it once more. Here I met the Spirit of Splendour who dominates and governs the whole palace and its great lights. To him come the souls of those destined to have a share in the next world. I saw these souls, as they entered, being crowned with lights of honour, so that they were able to pass through all the palaces without any hindrance. This spirit receives his light directly from on high, and from his light are illumined all the lights under him. The souls were bathed in light as in a river of ointment, while they were on their way to the River of Fire. Three colours continually flashed out of this light. And behold, out of this same light, I also saw a Holy Beast emerging in two colours. Its form was that of a lion and an eagle. When the light touched the Beast sparks flew in all directions. And from the sparks there emerged four wheels, each provided with eight wings and brilliant with many colours. These are the Chiefs of War, who put all the legions of heaven and the stars in the sky, into the front ranks for war. These wheels are also the ones that tempt human beings to commit sins.

“ And I saw forty spirits prepared to beat the souls who say things that should not be spoken by those who do not wish to profane the good words that come out of their mouths. These spirits are covered with flame and they drive the souls out of the Palace and beat them. And the souls are obliged to remain in exile, until the period of their punishment has been accomplished. The forty spirits are also armed with shields, with spears and with lances, in order to protect Israel from his enemies.

“ And behold, I saw twelve wheels turned by twelve Seraphim, six of them red, and six white, who represent Clemency and Punishment and who protect suffering Israel. They are always ready to receive the prayers sent up by sincere hearts. They carry these prayers from Palace to Palace, to the very highest of the doors. There the prayers appear before the King of Kings and are transformed into gems for the Holy Crown. Happy is the man whose prayer is allowed to enter the Third Palace! And happy is the man

whose prayers are guarded from the Spirits of Evil and reserved for the Day of Judgment ! ”

And a great sigh went up from the heart of the Master as he began to tell them of the corresponding region of Hell : “ And I was told to look down into the Third Palace of Hell, but I could hardly see anything, so deep were the shadows that lay upon it. And little by little, I began to distinguish the wretched forms of those writhing there. I saw those who have used their tongues wickedly in order to provoke riots, murders, wars and bloodshed. And I saw the Great Serpent that lies coiled at the bottom of this pit. His scales are made up of the lies that are spoken on earth. Every lie adds another scale to his hide, and he grows constantly in order to make room for all the lies that cover him.

#### THE FOURTH PALACE

“ But I could not bear to look upon this horrible sight, and behold, I was led by the Messiah into the Fourth Palace of the Paradise, which is *The Palace of Merit*. Here are measured the rewards and punishments which man has earned for himself. And I saw also those who are mourning for the destruction of the Holy City Jerusalem and of Zion. When he saw the mourners the Messiah also gave way to his sorrow and wept. All the Princes of the House of David rushed to console him, but he wept loudly until a Voice was heard joining its tones to the voice of the Messiah. Both voices rose and fell in unison, shedding new light on all the Palaces and bringing healing and joy to those who were sick and suffering. Then the angels dressed the Messiah in a purple garment, which bore the names of all those killed for the Glory of God. And behold, the purple flowed out of this mantle and attached itself to the Purple which is worn by the King of Kings until the Day of Salvation. Then came angels in their chariots, bringing the balsams and the perfumes for the consolation. They were garbed in garments of light. And in the centre sat Ten Princes enthroned : Rabbi Akiba and his colleagues. The faces of the Martyrs were

illuminated by the *Light of the Good*, which no eye has yet looked upon.

“ It is from this Palace that God proclaims His Dominion in the world. And here are shown the Ways of the Holy One. Within the Palace, four other palaces are enclosed, each one different to the others. The guardian spirit of this palace is called *Zacout-El*. From him emerge seventy sparkling lights, which range themselves in a circle, where all may look upon each other and none may disappear from sight. All the merits, the judgments, and the punishments stand before these seventy lights. In their midst are two great columns of light. These two columns bear witness and write down the judgments, both the good and the bad decrees. Seventy-two lights are ranged on the right side and seventy-two lights on the left side. These are the forces of Good and Evil. At the door of each of the four palaces there stands a guardian, taking note of all the judgments and announcing them as soon as they are brought down from the *House of the King*. When the judgment is given out, the heralds take it and proclaim it in each one of the lower palaces, degree by degree. Even the birds take a share in the announcement. Even the dreams of man take a share in the announcement. The guardians of the sun announce them to the guardians stationed on the *Left Side*. And the guardians of the *Left Side* announce them to the Kings of the earth.

“ During the time of our Prophets, they knew, for they took their knowledge from the pillars of the Torah. When the Prophets disappeared, the seers and visionaries took their place. And I saw two spirits go forth from this first door: the one to assist those who seek the right road and the other for those who want to take the wrong road. At the second door, I saw the guardian angel *Hariel*. He is placed on the right, and is the guardian of man's merits. When man's merits are great, *Hariel* recommends him to the angel *Padhiel*, the guardian of the Third Palace, who then tries to save him from Hell.

“ At the third door I saw the angel *Gadhiel*, who weighs and measures the sins of man. And when I came to the

fourth door I saw man's sins and merits thrown into the scale in order to be weighed for the judgment. And while the sins and merits, which are balancing each other on the scales, are being weighed, the Spirit of Evil is doing his best to pull the scale down on his side, which is the left, while the Spirit of Good does the same on the right side.

“ And behold, I saw the Spirit of Merit give birth to a Holy Beast, from whose eyes came forth all the Good Deeds. And the imperfect deeds, which have been carried out with a sincere heart, come forth in the company of the Good Deeds. Under the Holy Beast are four flaming Seraphim. When they move sparks of fire shoot forth from them and give rise to the River of Fire, with its myriads of servitors. Day after day, this flowing stream of fire purifies all the spirits which are placed in its care. But on the Sabbath it stops flowing. And the Holy Beast crosses it and comes to the other side, where the Sabbath is being observed with ineffable joy in the Palace.

“ Then I forced my eyes to look into the abyss, where I saw the Fourth Palace of the Inferno, which lies directly opposite the Fourth Palace of the Paradise. Here the evil actions of man are gathered, weighed and judged. And if these evil actions outweigh the good actions, then is man's name inscribed in the *Book of Death*, and he is sent down into the Fourth Chamber of Hell. Amongst the unhappy inmates of this dreadful place I discerned many who had desecrated the Sabbath.

#### THE FIFTH PALACE

“ Then I came to the Fifth Palace, which is lit by the light of the Faith, and gives light to the four other palaces below it. The guardian angel is called *Synigouria*. He pleads the cause of man before the Master. Here I saw a spirit composed of four colours: white, black, yellow and red. He basks in the confidence of the Master and knows all the treasured secrets of the upper world. He is also the Guardian of Israel, and I heard him called the *Guardian of the Covenant*. But his true name and the one which he bears with the

greatest joy is *Love*, and for this reason the Fifth Palace is sometimes called *The Palace of Love*. Even the Righteous do not come here. But the Chassidim, those who have served God with love, are allowed to enter. From this *Guardian of Love* there emanate all the ways and roads that lead the spirits in the other palaces to create the *Spirit of Love*. And I beheld how the four colours were merged together and how there came forth from this marriage a Holy Beast called the *Beast of the Splendour*. Then were my eyes allowed to gaze upon all the Holy Spirits that are nourished by the *Kiss of the Eternal*.

“ And I was shown all the souls that had gathered from on high in preparation for their journey into the world. But since the day of the destruction of the Temple no new souls have entered this Palace. And when the number of those who are already gathered there shall have been exhausted, then will the Messiah make his appearance. And the Messiah will consummate the marriage between the upper and the lower worlds, and bring about the union between *EL* and *SHADDAI*.

“ And I saw the Flaming Sword, which revolves and changes colour with every revolution. And I saw that from this Palace, emanating from *the Great Love*, there goes forth the nourishment for mankind when there is a famine in the land. From here also come those presents of love in the form of light, which are called : *The Wine of Love*; *The Pomegranates of Love*; which stimulate the love between Israel and the Holy One. When this love comes from those below to those above, and from those above to those below, there flows into this Palace, Goodness, Mercy and Clemency, which engender love both below and on high. These are the Guardians of Love who take charge of those who give their souls *in love* for the sake of the Holy Name. Here appear all the merciful actions that human beings do. They appear in this palace crowned with *the Crown of Pure Love*.

“ And lo ! I looked down into the Fifth Palace of the Kingdom of Hell, which is called by the name of Scheol. The

spirit that guards it is called *Hate*. I saw wild-eyed famine trying to break its bonds in order to ravage the earth and mankind. And I saw innumerable demons carrying off the drops of bitterness that are injected into the earth every time a man sins. Each drop of bitterness is hailed by the Demon of Famine with a shout of joy, for it brings him a little nearer to breaking his bonds and rushing to earth to destroy mankind.

#### THE SIXTH PALACE

“ And I turned my eyes from darkness to light. And I came to the Sixth Palace, which is the Palace of Clemency. I found the prayers and vows of man gathered here. The Palace has six doors, four of them leading to the four points of the compass, one above and one below. The guardian of the doors is Raziel. He is in charge of the supreme mysteries, which are pronounced only from mouth to mouth, when the *Heavenly Degrees* unite and embrace, and Love is kissed by Love. These mysteries will never be revealed. When the doors of this Palace are opened the angels know that it is the moment of Clemency.

“ In this Palace I saw the *Lovers of God*, for none may enter here but those who, like the Holy Chassidim, serve God with pure love. All the lower spirits strive to be united with the spirit of this Palace in the *Kiss of Love*—which is the kiss in which Moses and five others died. This is the *Kiss of God*, by which a soul is drawn out of the body and drawn up to the Schechina, even as a smaller flame is drawn into a greater one. And I saw Moses, who died *in love* and with the *Kiss of God* on his lips. And I also saw the soul of my great Master Akiba, and of his colleagues, who all died for the *Love of God*.

“ At the doors of this Palace stand those who proclaim the unity of God every day. They come into the Palace and are the first to ascend to the Holy Throne, where stands Abraham, the Beloved, on the right hand of God. At another door stands Isaac, who was prepared for the *Sacrifice of Love* on the *Altar of God*. And I saw Jacob and the Twelve

Tribes. And the Schechina was floating over their heads like a crown.

“ On the south side of this Palace I saw a great light, which covers all the world. This light is Michael, the great advocate of Israel. Whenever Israel is attacked by the other side, Michael takes up his defence and saves him. But at the time of the destruction of the Temple, Israel’s guilt was so great that even the pleading of Michael could not prevail against the evil decree.

“ On the north, I saw the great light, which is Gabriel, who brings sickness and healing at the same time. And I went to the east to see Raphael, who brings healing for all the ills. At the west I saw Nariel, who is the synthesis of all the others. And while it is the same light coming from the same Source, it appears different to each one who receives it. Thus, one may find in his light, joy : another, sadness ; one may find Paradise : another, Hell.

“ And I saw that the Spirit of this Palace is in contact with the spirits of the six lower palaces, and with those of the six upper ones. From him emanate twelve lights which represent the union of the upper palaces with the lower ones. Those who know how to accomplish the Will of God, *in love*, bring about the union of the upper with the lower worlds. And I saw that in the Sixth Palace I had found the quintessence of all that is to be found in the other six Palaces.”

And the disciples noted that when he spoke of the realms of Hell, the light around ben Jochai’s bed grew somewhat fainter so that they were able to look at him. And they saw that upon his face there lay an agony as he spoke of the torments meted out to those who have sinned. And he taught them, saying :

“ And my eyes gazed down, and they beheld the devastation that goes on in the Sixth Palace of the realms of Hell. This vast region is opened by four doors, which are called : the Door of the Shadows ; the Door of the Shadows of Death ; the Door of Evil ; the Door of Death. And I saw all the evils of the flesh that tempt man to sin, exposed in an attractive form. And I saw that when the man who has

committed the sins of the flesh is about to die, the Guardian of the Sixth Palace of Hell appears to him as a demon of fire, holding three drops of bitterness. The first drop falls into the man's mouth, spreads through his whole body and begins troubling his soul. The second drop kills him, and the third drop begins the decomposition of the body. And I saw those who are filled with vanity and with love of self, being brought to this Palace. When the time comes for an evil man to die, Lilith appears to him and induces him to sin with her, and during his sin she kills him. And I was obliged to turn away my eyes from all the misery that I saw there.

#### THE SEVENTH PALACE

“ And I came to the Seventh Palace which is the most hidden of all. It has neither form nor image, nor can it in any way be presented to the imagination.” And the Master's voice took on the hushed accents of deep veneration as he went on : “ Here in the most mysterious recess is the Holy of Holies, towards which all souls are striving. The light that comes from here is radiated in all directions. Before me, a curtain descended and I was told that behind this curtain the seed of life lies hidden and finds its way to the lower worlds by way of a river whose waters never stop flowing. When the holy seed leaves the Holy of Holies it is sent into channels and fecundated before being sent down.

“ In this palace are to be found all the joys, both the known ones and those that are beyond the imagination of man. Here takes place the union of the upper world with the lower—the union of the male with the female. And in the middle of this Palace I saw a pillar arise. It was coloured : red, green, white and black. And I saw each meritorious soul being led to its own pavilion, which is lit by the colour which the soul has achieved in achieving its ultimate perfection of form.

“ The Seventh Palace is also called the *Ark of the Covenant*, because all the souls come forth from it. In its most secret recess is to be found the *Hidden Point*, And the Hidden



Point is this : when all the Holy Spirits, all the Palaces, and all the Chariots are united to form one, this unity is animated by the Supreme Spirit. The Supreme Spirit is the Hidden Point. The Seventh Palace is the greatest of all because it contains the *Source of Life*, from which blessing pours down ceaselessly upon all that has been created."

The Master lay still for a moment, while the pupils filled themselves with the glorious vision of eternity which he had conjured up for them. Then the light around his bed began to dim, a shudder passed over his frame, and the pupils knew that he was looking into the depths of Hell, as he spoke : " And I gazed down into the Seventh Palace of Hell, where I saw men drowning in the wine of drunkenness. This is the wine that Eve gave to Adam to drink, and which brought death to them and to all humanity. The unhappy souls gathered in this region feel their wickedness more than in any one of the other palaces of the Hell, and a deep and harrowing remorse seizes them. But in some parts of this Palace a sort of redemption is going on, and I saw gleams of the Divine Light penetrating the obscurity and bringing hope to the guilty. This light is also enjoyed by those amongst the nations who have not oppressed Israel and have treated him with a certain measure of justice."

And the Master stretched out his hands imploringly to his faithful followers, and cried : " Now ponder well upon all that I have this day revealed unto you ! And know that none of these celestial palaces are light, nor are they spirits, nor are they souls, nor are they any form that may be seized hold of by any of the senses. Know that the Palaces are *Thoughts-seen-through-curtains*. Take away the thought, and the Palace becomes nothing that the mind can grasp nor the imagination picture ! And know, finally, that all the mysteries of the Faith lie in this doctrine : that all that exists in the Upper World is the *Light of Thought—The Infinite*. Lift the curtain, and all matter appears immaterial ! Lift another curtain, and the immaterial becomes even more spiritual and sublime ! And as each succeeding

curtain is lifted we are transported to ever-higher planes of sublimity until *the Highest* is reached ! ”

And Simeon ben Jochai went on to reveal to his disciples great secrets that had never yet been revealed concerning Holy Writ, and he came to the mystery that lies hidden in the verse of the Psalm : “ How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity ! It is as the dew of Hermon and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion ; for there, the Lord commanded the blessing, even *life*, for evermore.” But at the word *Life*, his voice was extinguished and they heard it no more. Nevertheless, the light in the room grew ever more brilliant, so that none might raise their eyes to look at him. And fear seized them, as they heard a Voice saying : “ For length of days and long life. . . . ” And again, a Voice said : “ He asked life of Thee. . . . ”

During the whole of that day the flames encircled his bed and the house, so that none were able to approach it. And then, just as suddenly as it had come, the light disappeared. Then the disciples saw that the soul of the Holy Lamp had left this world.

He was lying on his right side, dressed in his mantle. A beautiful smile lit up his face. His son Eleazar seized his father’s hands and covered them with kisses, while Abba kissed the dust under the Master’s feet. The rest of the disciples wanted to cry out, but they remained as if stricken dumb. Then Eleazar fell upon his face in the dust and cried out : “ Father, Father, there were three that are now become one !<sup>1</sup> Now the Beasts<sup>2</sup> will begin to lament, and the birds will flutter about ere they go down to hide themselves in the holes of the great rocks that lie at the bottom of the immense ocean ; and all in the Assembly will welter in the blood of their pain.”

<sup>1</sup> This is explained by the mystics as the three degrees Nefesh, Ruach, Neshama, which were in the soul of the Master during his lifetime, as having now become one.

<sup>2</sup> Beasts refers to the Holy Beasts in the high heavens, and birds, refers to the angels who fly : i.e. that all the heavenly hosts will mourn,

And Hiya reminded them : " Up to now, the Holy Lamp took care of us, now is the time for us to do him honour." Then they washed his body with sweet-smelling oils. A festive atmosphere pervaded the place in spite of the sorrow of the disciples, who seemed confused and helpless. The house was full of the most agreeable odours.

They put his body on a bier and carried it out of the house. All the leaders of the surrounding villages came to beg for the honour of having his body buried in their ground. But it was decided to bury him in Meron, the place where he was born. When the bier was taken out of the house it rose into the air and proceeded by itself. And a flame led the way in front of it. And they heard a Voice proclaiming : " Come and take part in the Hilulah of Simeon ben Jochai. May peace be upon him ! May he, who had a faithful heart, be at rest ! "

When the body was placed in the sepulchre, a Voice was heard, saying : " This man makes the earth tremble and agitates the kingdoms ! Myriads of those who plead on the Right Side are to-day gathered in heaven because of him ! Because of Simeon, the son of Jochai, in whom the Holy One glorifies Himself every day ! Happy is his lot in the world above and in the world below ! Innumerable are the heavenly treasures waiting for him ! "

## CHAPTER XII

### THE VISION OF RABBI HIYA

(AFTER THE DEATH OF SIMEON BEN JOCHAI)

RABBI HIYA, who was one of those whom the Master called 'The Seven Eyes,' prostrated himself to the earth and wept, saying: "Oh, Earth, Earth, how insolent art thou! And how self-opinionated, to reduce to dust all that has brought delight to the eye! To consume and to destroy the Righteous, the pillars of the world! How presumptuous of thee, to reduce to dust the Holy Lamp, Simeon ben Jochai, who has from of yore given light to the whole world; thanks to whose merit the world exists!"

And Hiya continued to lament his Teacher, saying: "Oh, my beloved Master, how comes it that you, who are the Head-light of the world, who uphold and govern the world, that you should be reduced to dust in the earth?" And again he addressed the earth: "But Earth, I warn thee, be not too proud! The Pillars of the world will not be delivered up to thy voracity! I know that Rabbi Simeon is not reduced to dust in thy bosom!"

Then he fasted for forty days in order to make himself worthy of seeing the Master in a vision. But he was told that he was not yet worthy of such a vision. Then he fasted another forty days. And he had a vision in which both the Master and his son, Eleazar, appeared to him. They were explaining a verse of the Torah, and they were accompanied by many legions of the heavenly hosts who were listening to the explanation. Then a number of winged angels came down and took the Master and his son on their wings, and mounted with them to the heavenly school. The angels remained outside the school. And as they stood there they

took on all sorts of brilliant colours and their radiance was greater than the radiance of the sun. Then the Master said : " Let my pupil, Hiya, enter here and see how great are the joys which the Holy One has reserved for the Righteous in the heavenly school. Happy is the man who comes in here without shame. And happy is he who arrives here strong as a pillar and without faltering ! "

When Rabbi Hiya entered he was troubled to see that Eleazar and the rest of the Righteous stood up to do him honour. He bowed his head and went and placed himself at the feet of the Master. Then he heard a Voice saying : " Lower thine eyes ! Do not lift up thine head ! " He obeyed and felt himself penetrated by a great light that seemed to be coming from a long distance. And the Voice said again : " Look up, all you that are invisible, yet have traversed the whole universe ! Wake up, you beings down below that are plunged in sleep ! I call upon those who, before coming up here, transformed darkness into light, and bitter into sweet ! Come, all of you ! All who have prayed for the light to spread when the King would visit the elect, by whom He would be glorified and called the *King of Kings* ! Come together, all of you, who hoped for this Light, who prayed for it, and worked for it ! But those who passed through their life on earth, without thinking of this Light, they will have no share in it ! " And the Voice ceased speaking.

Then the chief of the winged angels, Metatron, came to instruct Rabbi Hiya. And he told him that the King visits His Beloved every day. But He finds her not, for she has remained in exile on earth. Then the King weeps and His tears fall into the ocean, and give birth to an angel, who gives life to all things in the water. This angel sanctifies the name of the King. Then he absorbs into himself all the waters of the sea, as a symbol of the time when all the nations of the earth shall unite against the Chosen People.

Then Rabbi Hiya saw the Messiah enter the school of Simeon ben Jochai. And the Messiah said to the Master : " You are indeed favoured in heaven, for the mysteries which

you explain mount up to the Highest Throne in the form of three hundred and seventy lights. And each light is divided into six hundred and thirteen *motifs* which are perpetually bathed in rivers of pure balm. The Holy One visits only three of the heavenly schools : that of ben Jochai ; that of Hezekiah, King of Judæa ; and that of Ahas of Shiloh." As the Messiah ceased speaking, ben Jochai brought him the vow pronounced by the chief of the winged angels. Suddenly the Messiah perceived Rabbi Hiya at the feet of ben Jochai, and cried out : " Who has introduced into the heavenly world a man clad in earthly garments ? " Rabbi Simeon explained that Hiya was a torch of the Torah, and the Messiah gave him permission to enter. But Hiya, feeling that he was not yet prepared for such a high honour, asked for a delay in order to prepare himself. It was granted and he took leave of the Master, his eyes full of tears. When he awoke from his trance he cried out : " Happy, indeed, is the lot of the Righteous ! And happy is the lot of Simeon ben Jochai who has merited so much glory ! He it is of whom it has been written : ' I walk in the ways of the Righteous to enrich those that love me and to enlarge their treasure ! ' "

# PART III

## AFTER THE EXILE

### CHAPTER XIII

#### THE HILULAH OF SIMEON BEN JOCHAI

(AS IT IS CELEBRATED TO-DAY)

SIMEON BEN JOCHAI is the first historical figure the anniversary of whose death was celebrated as a festival of rejoicing throughout the Jewish world. The celebration is known as *Hilulah*, a Hebrew word signifying joy or feast, and is used to denote the joy that is felt at the departure of a great soul from the earth, because it has gone to rejoin the *Source of its Origin*.

The Hilulah celebration probably began with the revelation of the Zohar by Moses de Leon in Spain. It is first mentioned by an Italian traveller in 1322. The celebration, while marked by Jews in all parts of the world, takes on its most festive character in Simeon ben Jochai's native village of Meron. There, vast throngs of people make an annual pilgrimage to the tomb of the Holy Man on the thirty-third day of the counting of the Omer (generally occurring in the month of May or June), the day of ben Jochai's death, known under the Hebrew name of "*Lag la Omer*."

The village of Meron is situated to the west of Safed, at the foot of Mount Asmon, the highest of all the mountains that lie to the west of the Jordan. The village can be seen from all the surrounding hills. From afar one distinguishes the chain of the Hills of Galilee, and some of the mountains of Golan, clothed in purple. From Meron one sees Safed, the Holy City, gleaming whitely on its little hill.

In the centre of the village of Meron is a large enclosure. Within it there is a spacious room with a big white cupola, supported by four pillars. The arch of the cupola is painted to resemble a starry sky, offset on either side by vases of flowers and by an eagle with outspread wings. In the

southern corner of this room is the tomb of ben Jochai. It is visited at all times and in all seasons by the devout, and many miracles are reputed to take place there. But in order to appreciate the true meaning of the Hilulah festival, and the reverence in which it is held by the masses to the present day, we must go to Meron for the Lag la Omer—the anniversary of ben Jochai's death.

On that day, Jews come from all parts of the world to take part in the memorial festival, first in order to do honour to the saint, and secondly, because there is the tradition that miracles are more likely to happen on that day than on any other. For the faithful believe that the *Holy Lamp*, Simeon ben Jochai, is willing to be the intermediary between man and God.

For several days before the Hilulah festival all the roads leading to Meron are crowded with throngs of people. The crowd is a motley one, speaking the dialects of many lands. One hears several kinds of Spanish. It is a Spanish full of haunting memories, for this is a Spanish that left its Motherland in the fifteenth century and has never returned to have itself modernized. It is spoken by the Sepharadi groups from Salonika, Smyrna, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Morocco, and from various parts of the Orient and is mixed with Portuguese, Hebrew and Arabic. The Ashkenazim from Eastern Europe speak Yiddish dialects. On every side one hears Hebrew, the Holy Tongue, revived and modernized and made to serve the needs of a people determined to rebuild its Homeland and to revive its culture. It is especially the language of the younger pilgrims. One also hears Russian, Arabic, Polish, English, Czech, German and Dutch—all the languages and dialects of the world—come to pray at the sacred shrine.

The people, dressed in their best, present a bewildering variety of sartorial accoutrement, particularly as to head-dress. The Sepharadim in fez, in turban, and even in the broad-brimmed black velvet, recalling the old Spanish caballero; their women charming, whether in the veils that swathe the Baghdadi Jewess, or in the jingling gold coins that frame the head of the Jewess from Arabia. The Ashkenazim



in the high fur hats worn by the mystics and framing the inevitable side curls of the truly orthodox.

The crowds are animated and good-humoured as befits a feast day. Their belief that miracles will be performed on this day, as every year, at the Hilulah is unshakable. Kindly relatives and friends are leading the sick, the maimed, the lame, the halt, the blind, for healing comes from the shrine of the *Holy Lamp*. Miracles of healing have been known to happen there. Many a sterile woman has come to pray for the fruition of her womanhood.

Some of the Sepharadi groups carry canopies made of costly old brocades, offset with gold fringe and heavy, metallic tassels. Under the canopies walk young boys carrying the sacred Torah Scrolls. And, as they pass, the others stretch their outspread fingers towards the Holy Word, then touch them reverently to eyes and lips. One very old Scroll has been making this pilgrimage for many years. When it is returned to its own community afterwards, it has absorbed into itself fresh powers of healing, so its proud possessors believe.

Outlining the steep road to Meron are tombs marking the resting-place of famous scholars who desired to be buried as close as possible to the sacred shrine. And many of the pilgrims turn aside for a moment to offer up a prayer at the graves of these righteous ones in Israel.

A bonfire has been lighted the night of the feast on the upper terrace of the building enclosing the shrine and is kept burning brightly the whole of that night. It is the sacrificial fire into which those seeking some special act of grace, will throw some precious objects. It is the test of self-abnegation, which the pilgrims voluntarily submit to.

The shrine is enclosed in a large open court, surrounded by bare whitewashed walls. At one side there are ten sepulchres, where holy men of great merit have been buried. The lamps, burning dimly, throw a weird light over the figures swaying and chanting prayers around these tombs.

On one side of the courtyard is a door leading into the room where ben Jochai taught his pupils. It is a large room with a domed roof painted to look like the firmament. In

PLATE VI



THE TOMB OF RABBI SIMEON BEN JOCHAI, IN MERON, WHERE THE HILULAH FESTIVAL TAKES PLACE ANNUALLY

[*face p. 218*]



the dim light one can barely make out two sepulchres of grey stone, worn smooth by the tears of the suffering and the penitent throughout many generations. The tomb nearer to the entrance has a spiked iron fence around it. This is the tomb of ben Jochai. All around it women are lighting tiny oil lamps and candles and invoking special benedictions. Old men sit on the stone floor, as close as they can get to the tomb, chanting the Psalms of David, or reading portions of the Zohar aloud. At one side there is a small Ark, containing the Holy Scrolls of the Torah. An embroidered curtain covers it, the embroidery being the words of one of the mystical songs attributed to ben Jochai.

The other tomb in the room is marked by a large, round stone, on which are engraved the words: "Here lies Rabbi Eleazar, the son of Rabbi Simeon ben Jochai." This stone is almost entirely covered with oil lamps, guarded by women chanting the Psalms. Nearby, a group sits swaying to the words of an Oriental song chanted in Arabic. These are Jews from Morocco, from Yemen and from Baghdad.

The next room is filled with hanging lamps—gifts of the pious—each one in memory of some holy man, whose name it bears. On this night of the feast of ben Jochai the privilege of lighting one of these lamps—regarded by the pious as a very meritorious act—is auctioned off to the highest bidder. As soon as all the memorial lamps are lighted, and the blessings suitable to the occasion recited, the crowd repairs to the upper terrace, where the "Dance of the Fire" is carried on all night. In the centre a huge bonfire is burning. An old man is feeding the fire with costly articles of apparel, with ornaments and jewels, with precious shawls and scarves, after having dipped them in a large vessel of oil standing nearby. These treasures have been brought as a "sacrifice" by those who have come to ask for the intercession of ben Jochai, whether on their own behalf or on behalf of some sick relative or friend.

Sometimes a group brings the most precious possession to be found in their community. It may be a valuable old brocade or carpet, that is to be sacrificed for the sake of some

beloved member of the community—some great Rabbi or teacher—who is ill. Before their departure the pilgrims have wrapped the sick man in the precious *Sacrifice*, and the prayers of the whole community accompany them as they depart on their errand of mercy—an errand which may mean weeks of travel and entail endless sacrifice. It is brought up reverently to the devouring, yet healing flames, and reverently the old man pours over it the drops of ointment that shall sanctify it, while a fervent prayer goes up from the heart of the multitude. And as the flames flare up, and the precious sacrifice disappears, a rondo is formed round the dancing purple flames, and the chant of faith in the power of ben Jochai to intercede with the Holy King rises to the starry sky. And they sing :

1. Bar Jochai ! Bar Jochai ! Happy One,  
Anointed with oil of Joy !  
With holy ointment, poured from sacred urn  
Have they anointed you !
2. Bar Jochai ! Bar Jochai ! You who wore  
A diadem upon your head !  
Which shone as with a glory  
Round your head !
3. Bar Jochai ! Bar Jochai ! In rockbound cave  
You had your dwelling.  
There, were you crowned with splendour,  
There, you became sublime !
4. Bar Jochai ! Bar Jochai ! Upstanding trees  
Surrounded you,  
They hearkened to your words,  
They were your pupils.
5. Bar Jochai ! Bar Jochai ! With Holy Fire  
You fought your fight.  
Cut off from the Face of Destiny,  
You learned the hidden mysteries.
6. Bar Jochai ! Bar Jochai ! How goodly your portion  
In the world to come !  
Blessed by the *Mouth of God* !  
Blessed from the *Day of Creation* !

Women bring precious embroideries that have lain for generations in old cedarwood chests. And a fragrance, full of fugitive memories, rises on the air for a moment as the sacrifice is lifted high and thrown into the flames. The women turn aside to hide their tears, for this sacrifice has cost them dear. A sterile woman, approaching the dreaded tenth year of her barrenness—when her husband has the right to divorce her according to the Law—has decided on a last supreme act of faith. She has brought her wedding-gown, a filmy-white, lacy garment, into which have been woven all her girlhood's dreams and hopes. It has lain tucked away in rose leaves for almost a decade, and now it is to be consigned to this *Fire of Hope*, and to wend its way transformed into a tiny curl of smoke—an incense of prayer rising to the highest spheres to plead for a seed of life to brighten a childless home. Oh, Spirit of bar Jochai, are you nigh to hear the plea of this faithful heart? And to carry it before the Holy of Holies, you who are the Beloved of God? And a little group begins to dance and chant :

Elijah, the Prophet,  
Greatest of the Prophets,  
Beloved of God !  
Simeon bar Jochai,  
Leader of the Righteous,  
Beloved of God !

An old man approaches and throws a handful of coins cheerfully on the fire, and the others cheer him and shout with glee. Candles are thrown from all directions, and sparks fly out, catching in beards, in ear-locks and in hair, to be put out midst shrieks of laughter, before much damage has been done. Ever and anon, a dancer carried away by the emotion of the moment, jumps into the flames, while the watchers shriek in an ecstasy of fear and excitement. They surround him, laughing and embracing him and each other, as he jumps out again unharmed. It is indeed a miracle that the various groups, dancing, jumping, leaping madly into the air, outlined like gyrating geometric figures against the fire of which they seem a part, yet remain unharmed,

And this goes on the whole night long, fresh groups coming up from the courtyard to replace those who have sunk exhausted, wherever they can find a place to rest. A group of Jews from Yemen shows the greatest endurance, dancing feverishly all through the night, half-naked because of the garments they have cast into the fire. And the dawn breaks against a dismal pall of smoke—all that is left of the brilliant bonfire—near which the old guardian has fallen into an exhausted sleep. And all around the smoking remains of the fire, sleeping figures stir uneasily in the chill that precedes the awakening of the new day.

When the fire has completely burnt down scores of poor beggars come and poke around in the charred remains, taking away whatever they can find. Charred bits are very precious, being sold as amulets to those who have not had the good fortune to be present at the celebration.

All that day, a long line of pilgrims moves out of Meron. A sober spirit of contentment has given place to the boisterous gaiety of the preceding days. There is also a deeper feeling of intimacy knitting the crowd together, for to most of them this has been a deep spiritual experience that will be lived over and over again when they are at home once more and pursuing the ordinary tenor of their lives. And they will tell their fellow-townsmen in hushed tones of that moment of rapture when the flames greedily swallowed up their precious *sacrifice*, and shot up in one triumphant flare of light that lit up the sombre Galilean sky and illumined the souls of the Righteous who had come to the Hilulah of Simeon ben Jochai! And they will tell of the lame who had thrown their crutches into the fire and danced madly on their feet, along with the best of them; of the blind who had cried out suddenly: "I see! I see the glory of bar Jochai and of all the angels come to do him honour!" "Aye, we have seen miracles," the pilgrims will assure their hearers. "Blessed be the Holy One, Who has permitted that our eyes should see miracles at the celebration of the Hilulah of His Beloved, bar Jochai!" And many a dark hole in some far away ghetto will be lit by the light of hope, as plans are made,

and penny is laid to penny, for the coveted pilgrimage to the sacred shrine.

During the rest of the year Meron lies quiet and tranquil under the warm Galilean sun. Only an occasional pilgrim, bound on some special mission that cannot wait for the annual pilgrimage, or the regular observance of holidays and Holy Days at this sacred spot, disturbs its brooding peace. But the Mausoleum is not deserted. Within the old *Yeshibah* men are studying the Torah day and night. And some seek to plunge themselves into the mysteries of the *Zohar* according to the revelations of Simeon ben Jochai, whose death was a cause for rejoicing in all the worlds, since it meant that his soul had returned to the *Source of its Origin*.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE CENTRES OF SEPHARADI MYSTICISM AFTER LEAVING SPAIN

WE have seen that the Zohar succeeded in influencing Jewish life to such an extent that it became the third source of inspiration—inspiring to life, literature and religion: a source of delight on occasions of joy; a refuge in time of trouble; a beacon of hope in the days of despair; a measure of consolation for the days of mourning. In general its influence on the life of the people was most nearly like that of the Bible. Even as different interpretations put upon Bible teaching had given rise to differing sects within Jewry—as the Samaritans and the Karaites—so the Zohar, too, gave rise to different sects: the sect of the Ma'aminim, Jewish converts to Islam who yet retained the Zohar, and the sect of the Frankists, converts to Christianity, who also kept the Zohar. In some cases the Zohar seems even to have superseded the other two great Books in the popular imagination. It filled Jewish life so completely that the Zoharistic tradition was carried on unbroken, in spite of the vicissitudes which drove the people hither and yon. The Zohar teachings gave rise to great Sepharadi centres of mysticism, while the large Chassidic groups amongst the Ashkenazim showed how effectively these teachings had penetrated to every part of the Diaspora.

And the Sepharadi exiles—detached suddenly from the land in which their development had come to so perfect a flowering—continued to treasure the book that expressed the rich fantasy of their nature, seeking refuge during this period of utter despair in this creation of the days of joy; the book full of the warm sun of pulsing life—offspring of the creative

genius that can best flower under the sun of freedom. And even as the exiles from Judæa took the Bible as the treasure of all the wealth that had been theirs in the Holy Land, so, too, did the exiles from Spain take the Zohar as their capital for the dark days ahead of them. And even as the Bible and the Talmud proved adequate for the exiles in helping them to withstand the destructive forces that threatened the Jew on every hand, so, too, did the Zohar prove adequate in saving the Sepharadi groups—in the various countries to which they were obliged to adjust themselves—from falling into the pit of despair. With the same love and devotion—with the same careful examination of precepts and of ways of life with which succeeding generations of Jews had occupied themselves and had succeeded in making an integral part of home and of life—with this same devotion did the exiles from Spain now attach themselves to the Zohar and seek to create for it a constructive rôle in their new life. And so closely did they succeed in weaving it into the pattern of their life that it soon became difficult to find the line of separation between Judaism and its mystical spirit. Life and all the actions of life took on the colour and the seal of this mystical interpretation, and both the intellectuals and the masses became impressed with it.

It was through this book that they learned to know the deeper meaning of love ; to understand the hidden message underlying all of life's problems ; to bear pain and not to be embittered by it ; to look upon all the troubles of this world as transitory, and hence, not to be taken too deeply to heart. Israel must not be turned aside by temporal things when all eternity is his to contemplate. Here we have the key to that extraordinary force which sustains the Jewish people ! Here, indeed, is a people that has learned to bear suffering and not to indulge in vain thoughts of revenge ; that has no place in its scheme of life for hatred ; that does not poison its soul with thoughts of evil-doing. Thus is its will power strengthened from generation to generation learning to look upon this earthly life as but a step in the universal scheme of which Israel is taught to feel so vital a part !

Thus we owe to the Zohar a measure of gratitude in that this exile, terminating a glorious period of great productivity of mind and of spirit—thrusting the people suddenly from the peaceful course of their settled existence into the harsh realities of an unsettled one—yet failed to break their spirit. Indeed, a spirit of fatalism took possession of them. They accepted all the troubles and all the pain with resignation. And the greater the troubles life brought them the greater became the desire to fling themselves into the door of escape offered them by the Zohar, and to allow the soothing balm of its atmosphere of hope and of promise to flow over their tortured souls.

The exiles went from the Peninsula to all the countries that were open to them: Morocco, Palestine, America, Egypt, India, Turkey, and later to Italy, England, Holland and Poland. To each country they brought the gift of the talents developed in the centuries of productive existence and their treasure—the Zohar. Every interlude of peace was filled with developing their talents along lines that were spiritual, humanistic, Jewish. And each country gave them the facilities for progress both in the measure of its own needs and of the cultural possibilities it could offer. And especially did the Spanish exiles continue to broaden and to deepen the spiritual treasure of Zohar and Kabbala.

#### THE CENTRE IN SAFED

In Salonika and Smyrna, where the exiles settled in largest numbers, this mystical tradition flourished and gave birth to that Messianic movement, whose unfortunate expression was Sabbatai Zevi. But more particularly did it grow and expand in Palestine. Safed was the first place to which the more important of the mystics flocked. Here the first Messiah, ben Joseph, was destined, according to mystical tradition to make his appearance. And here came holy men, steeped in Kabbala and in mystical lore, trying to live according to Zohar teachings, to prepare in this way the perfection of Israel and of the world—a state which must precede the coming of the Messiah. Holy men spurred on by a mystical

enthusiasm, like Molcho, Cordobero, Caro, Vittal Calabressa, as well as his father, Joseph, and his teacher, Louria or HaAri—these are but a few of the renowned names in the world of Jewish mysticism connected with the establishment of the centre in Safed.

From Safed went forth the authoritative word to other Jewish centres in Palestine : Tiberias, Hebron and Jerusalem, as well as to the great centres of Jewish life in the Diaspora : Sepharadi, Ashkenazi and Italian (the last-named being also reckoned Sepharadi). Here, in the mother-country of old, the Kabbala coming back from Spain was made brighter, richer, surer of its message for Israel and for humanity ; more definite in its Messianic hope ; stronger in its promise of consolation for present sorrows as well as in its promise of a brilliant and elevated future.

Up to the time of the exile, the Kabbala had been the portion mainly of the Spanish Jews. Now, after coming out of Spain, it became the possession of greater Jewry outside. Avidly, it was grasped by the Jewish centres in Palestine—that Palestine to which a fragment of the Jewish people spurred on by Messianic faith was always returning ; that Palestine of which the Zohar speaks as the land over which the souls of the elect of Israel are fluttering : the souls of the prophets, the seers, the sages, the singers. To the small groups which sought to hasten Jewish destiny, the new exiles brought a fresh strength and a special gift.

Thus Safed, which had been a small, insignificant group before the coming of the messengers of the Zohar teaching, now began to grow and expand with marvellous rapidity. Here was established the first mystical centre to be created in Palestine. For Safed, apart from its clear and healthy air, had a special attraction for the mystics. It was very close to the little village of Meron, which was both the birthplace and the tomb of the hero of the Zohar, Simeon ben Jochai. And Safed became the centre of this Jewish mysticism. Safed became the legendary city of signs and wonders. Safed, we are told, has a special sort of air which helps man to grasp the secret mysteries with greater ease than anywhere

else. And we are also told that all the souls of the righteous dead must pass through Safed on their way to Hebron and the Cave of Macpelah, which is the first door to the Paradise-on-earth.

Thus it came to pass that the wise and the great amongst the Sepharadim journeyed to Safed in Galilee, the city of righteous men, and established themselves there. And there arose a centre that was high in culture and in moral value and from which went forth creations that enriched mankind's spiritual treasure, not only in the hidden mystical teachings, but also in the revealed truths to which men adhered. Safed was also the birthplace of a new mystical poetry, practically the first of its kind since that of Spain and the last up to the present day. Here also was dreamed the dream to create an institution like that of the ancient Sanhedrin.

From out this centre came the genius of the new Kabbala. Out of this rarified spiritual atmosphere came two prophetesses, great in their wisdom and in the spirit of prophecy that possessed them. The greater one of them, called Francisa, claimed she was taught and inspired by a mentor. From Safed came the wonder Messiah, Joseph de la Reina. Then the Kabbala spread to the great Jewish world outside. First it went to Italy and from there to certain Oriental countries having business relations with her; then to the rest of Israel in Poland, Germany and other large centres of Europe. The great interest aroused in these centres of Jewry for the new mystical learning brought moral and material help to the Safed group, freeing it from practical cares so that it was able to pursue its mystical life and to develop into a community distinguished by the purity of its manner of living. And here sprang up the mystical tradition that such a life must be founded on joy.

This gave rise to the beautiful custom of repairing to the fields on Friday evening at sunset, clothed in white garments, to greet the Sabbath; to receive her as a Princess; to sing hymns to her as a Queen. This gave birth to a mystic-erotic poetry and to a number of mystical customs, founded on the idea of joy in the mystical life.

Amongst the Sepharadi mystics of Safed, there was one who carried on an extraordinary activity : Moses Cordobero (1522-1570), offspring of Cordoba. His teachers were the two great pillars of the Safed community : Joseph Caro, who taught him the revealed Law, and the poet Moses Alkabetz, who taught him the revelations of the hidden truths. Cordobero, himself a poet-philosopher, gave himself over more completely to the influence of the mystic than to that of the Talmudist, often accompanying his teacher Alkabetz to the fields, where the Master would reveal the mysteries to him alone. And Cordobero tells us in his interesting diary that one of their favourite spots for mystical intercourse was at the grave of Simeon ben Jochai.

It was Cordobero who actually created the mystical centre in Palestine and continued the tradition—first begun in Spain with Kabbala and Zohar—of seeking for the mystical-poetical trend in Jewish teachings. His system, clad in poetic garments, reads like a hymn. Having drunk from the source of the Zohar, he calls himself the pupil of Simeon ben Jochai. And we find in him the same elevation of spirit as distinguished the hero of the Zohar. Yet, because of his modesty and self-effacement, Cordobero has not received the full meed of veneration due to him. Full of humility and patience, with malice towards none and forgiveness even for those who offended him, full of love towards all mankind, he was ready to reveal the mysteries to all who came to him with the desire to learn. Regarding himself as the bearer of a universal message, he permitted no artificial barriers to come between himself and those less inspired, but sought to bring them nearer to himself so as to purify their thoughts and to sanctify their deeds. Thus he carried on the Spanish-Jewish mystical tradition : meditation to be followed by action. But, notwithstanding Cordobero's true greatness, his light was overshadowed by that of his contemporary Isaac Luria Ashkenazi, known under the abbreviated name of HaAri (1534-1572).

At first, HaAri came to Safed from Egypt, where he had lived a life of complete isolation and asceticism on the Nile.

His contrast to Cordobero was most evident in his mode of living, in his manner of thinking, in his aloofness from those whom he considered as belonging to a lower sphere than himself. Proclaiming that within him was a spark of the soul of Simeon ben Jochai, and that his soul was that of the Messiah ben Joseph—the first Messiah—whom the mystics were expecting to appear in Safed—he claimed that Elijah had revealed to him alone those secrets of the Zohar that had not yet been revealed to anyone.

At first, HaAri was the disciple of Cordobero, but when his Master died he assumed the rôle of teacher and guide, despite the unwillingness of both the Ashkenazi and Sepharadi groups to accept his authority. Still under the influence of Cordobero's attitude of love and tolerance, they were repelled not only by HaAri's mode of life, which he sought to force upon them, but even more so by the evident confusion of his mind, by the obscurity of his thinking, by the vagueness of his expressions, and by his long-winded and dry discourses. Thus, he was obliged to begin to preach his mystical doctrines in the *Midrashim* of the Ashkenazim. But his oral teachings lacking the art, the beauty and the mystical intuitiveness that had distinguished his Sepharadi teachers, failed at first to make any impression. And HaAri might have passed through the community unnoticed and unremembered were it not for his success in attracting to his side a Kabbalist who outlived him long enough to make him famous.

Haim Vittal Calabressa (1543-1620), the son of the great Kabbalist, Joseph Calabressa—a man of lively imagination, with the temperament of a dreamer and the outlook of the visionary—was drawn to HaAri by his austere mode of life, which he lived according to his own teachings. He accepted him as his Master; accepted HaAri's arbitrary dictates: the self-flagellation, the fasting, the isolation from the haunts of men, the wearing of sackcloth and ashes next to the skin, the drinking of water from *Miriam's Well*,<sup>1</sup> and the practice

<sup>1</sup> *Miriam's Well*. In Talmudic-Haggadic legend (Tract. Taanit 9.1) the well that accompanied the Israelites in the desert—a miracle due to Miriam's merit. Kabbalists believe: (1) That the waters of this well have a separate existence and are in continuous movement, passing through

of complete self-denial. Vittal not only accepted HaAri as his Master, but set about having the rest of the Safed community accept him as theirs.

Completely under the spell of HaAri's personality, Vittal devoted his own considerable talents to making the Master immortal. Embodying his master's teachings in the books called *The Eight Doors*,<sup>1</sup> he so deepened, broadened and beautified them, as to turn them into an entirely new creation. For when we compare the version of HaAri's revelations given us by some of his other disciples with that of Vittal's, we are forced to the conclusion that the superiority of the latter's version—both in *The Eight Doors*, which he attributed to his master, and in *The Tree of Life*, which he announced as his own—is due to his own special mystical and visionary qualities. And our conclusion is strengthened by a further comparison with the meagre writings which some scholars regard as HaAri's own work.

Vittal was with HaAri only for one short year when the Master died, before the spell which he had cast over his disciple by his unusual manner of living had had a chance to become dissipated. The pupil saw that the Master had actually tried to live the sort of life which legend attributed to ben Jochai, and his imagination completed the picture, so that he believed that he discerned in HaAri the supernatural being he claimed to be.

Thus we see that, instead of the mystical-poetical inspiration brought by Cordobero to Safed through his original intuitive system, which gushed like a stream of living waters, came the dry system of HaAri, which led to the sort of life we have already described. It led particularly to the practice of the Kavanoth (meditations) as the most imperative of the commandments incumbent upon the mystic, as laid down in all the bodies of water in the world in rotation (2) That the one so fortunate as to drink this water becomes endowed with supernatural powers HaAri claimed to know the exact time in which this water passed through the waters of Galilee and advised his disciple Vittal to drink of it, in preparation for the proper understanding of the revelations which he was about to make to him

<sup>1</sup> The books comprising *The Eight Doors* are *Shaar HaAkdamoth*; *Shaar Hagulgulim*; *Shaar HaKavanoth*, *Shaar Hapikusim*; *Shaar Mamare Rasal*; *Shaar Mamare Rishbi*, *Shaar Ruach Ha Kodesh*.



his book, *The Door of the Meditations*. Thus, his teachings made the meditations the sole means for the redemption of the rift in the Sephiroth, all of which is stipulated, in the name of the Master HaAri, by his disciple, Haim Vittal Calabressa, both in the book which he attributes to his master, *The Door of the Prefaces*, and in his own book, *The Tree of Life*. It is postulated that :

When the EnSoph, Who fills the All with His Light, felt mounting on the wings of His Desire—ere yet time had begun to be—the wish to create the universe, since He wanted not only to be, but to appear to His creatures and to be recognized by them as Perfection—perfect in all His Attributes of Love, Pity, Patience, Mercy, Truth, Forgiveness, etc.—He contracted Himself (Zimzum), leaving a space (Chalal) through which there emanated a Ray of His Light (Adam HaCadmon). Out of this Ray sprang the ten Sephiroth—all pure light and contained in vessels of light. The upper three of these Sephiroth remained in the perfection of their creation, while the lower seven shattered their containers by the strength and purity of their light. And the light flowed out of the broken vessels. Because of this rift in them—and which came through them into all the worlds, into all the finite creations which have been endowed with the light of the EnSoph—Discord was born, and mothered Destruction, Evil, Death, Apparent Annihilation, Grief, Cynicism, and the kindred ills. These defects came first to the high worlds of the spirit and finally to the world here below : the world of action, of helpless creation.

But HaAri commanded that meditation with intention to restore, accompany the prayers and precepts ; that thus will be brought about the redemption of the universe, which is in perpetual conflict, and also the redemption of him who is praying. Nay, more, it will bring redemption to the very highest worlds and spheres. Thus will man bring into his own life the flux of the All-Good, while aspiring to free both the *Schechina* and the creations from the shackles of the common exile—bringing on *the Redemption which cannot come from above, unless it has first come from below*,

But when we remove from HaAri's works the wrappings of the artful interpretation put upon them by Vittal, we find that his revelations are like shadows in the great light cast by Cordobero, who was, nevertheless, thrust into obscurity by the ascendancy of the other. For while HaAri reduced the whole of the high Zoharistic conception and mystical experience to a mere ritualistic, dry practice of the Kavanoth, basing the whole hope of the restoration of harmony in the world upon the practice of this commandment, Cordobero, as we see from his work, placed the greater importance on the deepening and developing of the Zohar tradition brought from Spain, which led to direct religious experience and to mystical elevation.

The central work upon which Cordobero built up his mystical system is the Zohar. From this garden, as he poetically tells us, he culled flowers, replanted them in his own soil, and made them grow and bring forth beautiful blooms. There is no doubt of the greatness of his mystical genius when one reads his books, and especially the best-known one, *The Garden of Pomegranates*, which most truly reveals his poetic talent. His revelations, he tells us (in contrast to HaAri, who claimed that he heard either the voice of Elijah or the voices of the angels), came to him through the inspiration of his own inner voice. He uses colours, pictures and examples from life and from reality; from man, from wisdom, and even from the field of the erotic, but used with fine, æsthetical shadings and draped in garments of poetry in shy, fugitive pictures. A few examples of his manner of expressing his revelations will be found interesting:

1. The *Sephiroth* are like precious stones whose brilliance brightens the world. They are like the sapphire in that they reflect the light from all sides.

2. The light of the *Sephiroth* is a part of, and inseparable from, the Light of God. And the light of the *Sephiroth* may be likened unto the fire-stone which emits sparks when it is struck by the flint.

3. The tenth and last *Sephira* is called Malchut (Royalty). It is the last of the lights and the first step in the beginning of

action. It is the architect through whom are created the creations of the beginning.

4. The light of the *Sephiroth* is one with the Light of the EnSoph, but because the vessel in which it is wrapped is different, the light of each *Seph'ra* seems different in colour and clarity. It is like water which has been poured into vessels of different colours—red, white, rose, blue—and which takes on the colour of each vessel, so that each division of water looks different from the others.

5. Each *Sephira* is like a ray of the sun reflected for a moment in a clear mirror and giving the impression of being an entity in itself. But soon its reflection will be withdrawn from the mirror, since it will have returned to its own source.

6. Everything is illuminated from the EnSoph, from Whom light emanates eternally. There is no light, either great or small, that can have an existence outside of Him or outside of His Will. He, it is, Who gives the measure to all the creations.

Let us imagine a lamp lit in a large hall, whose wall is divided up into many small, narrow windows and many large, broad ones. The light flows out of each window in large or small bits, according to the size and shape of the windows which cut it up. But were all the pieces that divide the windows from each other to be removed, the light would be streaming out as one piece and would be seen coming from the one source, which is the lamp.

#### THE MYSTICAL POETRY

But if the Zohar was, for the descendants of Spain, a source of religion and philosophy, as we see from the creations of Cordobero and others, it was also a source of poetry—that source which had been dried up after the Jews left Spain. Contemporary with the creation of Cordobero's poetical-philosophical system of Kabbala in Safed there sprang up a series of elevating lyrical poems. And that which Cordobero taught in his mystical revelations was expressed by his pupil Abraham Maimin—who lived in the second half of the sixteenth century—in his mystical poetry, of which the following is an example ;

## GOD THE MYSTERIOUS

EL, hidden in a mysterious veil,  
 Strange and hidden from every thought,  
 Age-old abyss, crowned with the highest crown.  
 The crown they offer Thee, Lord.

Mysterious wisdom dost Thou prove  
 In learning of the earliest times :  
 He who would solve the mystery,  
 First must learn to fear the Lord.

The broad bed of the stream of faith  
 Is deep and inexhaustible,  
 At the fifty doors of the Recognition,  
 The righteous are guarded by God.

---

Great God ! All eyes are turned to Thee,  
 Seeking Mercy in the heavens.  
 We ever remember Thy Mercy, remember Thou  
 Thy slave. Remember, oh Abraham's God !

Thou everlasting Might,  
 Absorbing light unceasing,  
 Grant justice, Israel's Eternal—  
 Save us, Adonai.

Out of the grave of exile,  
 Let us arise to serve Thee,  
 Strong for God are Thy children.  
 Deep-versed in Wisdom of the Lord.

Strongholds of the Righteous, enveloped sevenfold,  
 Symbol of the Covenant everlasting,  
 Establish Thou the Kingdom. Place  
 In the midst of it the Crown of Adonai.

In sweetest melodies dost call on us again  
 Thy faithful bride,  
 The crown most glorious in Thy Splendour :  
 The ten Sephiroth. One with Adonai.

Oh, Lord of Worlds !  
 Unite the rays of polished brilliants  
 With the rays of the great luminary—  
 With the one great ray in Adonai.

Thus was the mystical centre in Safed permeated by two seemingly contradictory systems. On the one hand, there were those following the teachings of HaAri, preaching the denial of life and its pleasures. And, on the other, there were the mystical poets like David Gavison, writing Kabbalistic poems, full of an earthly, sensual, erotic lyricism, finding in their earthly life a positive force not to be denied, and aiming to make it an active expression of their mystical thinking and belief. It was a triumph—though probably an unconscious one—of the temperament and talent of the *Sepharadi* mystics.

Another interesting influence in the expression of the mystical life in poetry was that of the Arabs with whom the *Sepharadi* exiles again came into contact in the Orient. The mystic poets were influenced especially by the popular folk-lyrics on love and by the melodies which accompanied them. The best examples to be found are the poems of Israel Naggara, born in Damascus (died in Gaza, 1587) who elevated the earthly Arabic love to spiritual, symbolical heights. The following, which is based on the Song of Songs, is an example :

#### COME, LOVELY ONE

THOU lovely, thou charming, thou sweet one, come with me  
 To my room prepared for the Princess with praise and song.  
 My beloved, my promised, my sister, I love thee.  
 The sun hath burned thee, men have spurned thee, banished  
 art thou,  
 But fear not, thy foes shall be broken in the storm !  
 With outspread arm, I set thee free. Then why dost thou  
 weep ?  
 Thou'rt crushed and robbed and burdened, but I will release  
 thee  
 From thine humbled enemies. Restore thee once more to  
 peace.

I take thee by the hand and lead thee into my Palace.  
 Rise, Zion. Rise to the uppermost heaven with song and  
 dance.  
 Pour forth thy poems, let thy songs be heard !  
 Unhappy people, the day of thy freedom is nigh !

Another poem, expressing this erotic tendency, purporting to be a dialogue between God and Israel, is by Menahem de Losano (born 1540, died 1608), from the book, *Shetai Yadoth*, printed in Venice in 1617.

### THE LION ROARS

ONCE I had a lovely gazelle,  
 A noble daughter was my portion.  
 Strong was she, and girded in finest of fabrics ;  
 Necklaces hung on her breast.  
 I lived in joy of her, she sang hymns to me,  
 Nights she lay on my breast.

She sinned, and my anger was kindled,  
 I sold her, would see her no more.  
 Now my tears flow fast when I think of her.  
 When I think of her beauty ! The light in her eyes !  
 Then I wring my hands with sorrow,  
 And I bellow because of the pain !

Woe is me, Lord ! my friends know me not,  
 So much have I changed in Thy prison.  
 For so many masters possessed me,  
 Placed their heavy yoke upon me,  
 Destroyed my dwelling and drove me out ;  
 Insulted and abused ; bitten by their serpent's teeth,  
 Because I would not deny Thee.

—Is this then thy voice, shrieking in pain ?  
 I have come. I bring thee healing.  
 Thy cries have moved me deeply, wretched sister.  
 Hush, tortured one, soon wilt thou be released.  
 See, I am clothed in vengeance ! I am wrapped in fury  
 and passion !  
 I shall crush them with my anger.

Crush them till their blood bespatters my garment !  
 My hand will avenge the blood of the slave !  
 I will shatter their idols, destroy their temples !  
 Then, my vengeance accomplished, my anger appeased,  
 I'll remember the loved one, remember the Covenant,  
 Take pity on Zion, the unhappy one, show pity, show  
 mercy.

### I BRING THEE GIFTS

(From the book *Melech Béoozecha*)

I BRING gifts to the Living God,  
 Spread incense—the fragrance of prayer.  
 The streams in God's City overflow.  
 Rejoice in all the brothers,  
 Pardon thy beloved dove as of yore.  
 Behold, I have prepared for thee : bed, stool and lamp,  
 Then sit down beside me, breathe deep the perfume of my  
 flowers.  
 Oh, King, whose might doth so rejoice Thy friend !  
 He doth place before Thee the bread and the wine.  
 The stream in Thy garden swells.  
 Strengthen me, Lord, deeply I long for Thee.  
 I bring Thee into my house, into the room of my mother.  
 I offer Thee new wine, the spiced wine from the gourd.  
 Thy light will brighten my couch,  
 And my heart will be filled with joy.

### WHAT AILS THEE, LILY ?

WHAT ails thee, then, my lily ? My smiling rose of the plain ?  
 Thou blameless, delicate beauty,  
 Why fear'st thou to come into our house ?  
 Hasten, gazelle, into thy high castle,  
 And thou, virgin, turn back.  
 Gaze out of the little window. See, now I have bloomed !  
 Thy help came ! Thy deliv'rance ! Now the winter is past.  
 I loosen the fetters about thy neck,  
 Daughter of Zion, take courage !  
 Arise to God, the Master ! Bow before the Palace !  
 And joyfully we shall play in the bridal chamber.

## ISRAEL SPEAKS

My heart has grown numb with suffering, because  
 Of God's wrath as I piled up sin on sin,  
 And I am confused and sleepless.  
 I shiver with cold, I burn with fever. My strength  
 Shrivels up, in the bitter unrest of my spirit.  
 I struggle and strive yet fail to make my course.  
 Turn back, my God ! Comfort me ! Breathe life into me !  
 For the crater of Thy wrath still smokes sullenly.

An interesting figure amongst the mystical poets who gathered in Safed was David ben Sholomo ibn abu Simra, who was born in Spain in 1479 and died in Safed in 1589. He was Chief Rabbi of Egypt for forty years and, while there, he taught HaAri. At the age of 90 he became a member of the Beth Din of Jerusalem, and remained serving his community in an active capacity until well over a hundred. He died at the advanced age of 110. We bring one of his poems as an example :

## OR CADMON

(Printed in Venice, 1703)

CONFUSED am I, helpless before Thee,  
 Have mercy, because of Thy Holiness !  
 Wretched am I and unworthy,  
 Yet put not my sorrow to shame.

Adonai ! Great as is Thy perfection,  
 So great is my need.  
 Great is Thy wisdom, so great is my folly.  
 Who shall measure Thy might ?

Thou art for Thyself, not for another,  
 Exalted above all thought, above each glance.  
 Hidden in the highest, most secret myst'ry,  
 Yet guiding each miserable wretch.

Incomprehensible, hidden mystery  
 Encloseth the name YAHWEH,  
 Stamped with the seal of reason  
 And buried deep in the heart.



Thou sendest forth innermost light,  
 In tender, unutterable beauty  
 It radiates a strength that is sanctity,  
 That comes from the Soul of All Souls.

Pillars of Light, whom no eye can see.  
 A light breaking forth from the dark,  
 In a garment of snowy whiteness.  
 Ancient of Days ! For ever and aye !

The development of this mystical-erotic poetry was tempered by the presence, and later by the teachings of HaAri, who utterly rejected the affirmative demands with which others sought to express life. He even expressed his aversion to the great Sepharadi poets who had brought so much beauty into Jewish life in Spain: Ibn Gabirol, Yehuda Halevy and others. Thus, he interrupted the existing inclination—an inclination typical of the Sepharadi mystics—to accept any influence that was good, whatever its source, whether Jewish or non-Jewish.

The influence of HaAri, spreading to Italy and to other parts of Europe, weakened the work begun in some of these mystical centres by the Sepharadi teachers. The result was that a period of sterility set in, so that the later development of Chassidism lacked that continuity which is the outcome of a direct line of thinking, coming straight from the Zohar, as typified by the system of Cordobero. Notwithstanding the ecstatic poetical teachings, the beautiful legends, the joyous life, which the Ashkenazi Chassidim brought into their centres, their mysticism lacked that fine thread of mystical lyricism which, begun in Spain, had come to influence the group in Safed. But there came into the Safed centre—even as in the other mystical centres—the very opposite of this lyricism, arbitrary rules of life: days of fasting, of mortification of the flesh, of petty dogma, of pilpulistic hair-splitting, of punishment for transgression of rules, of a pedantic sterility of ideology, of a petrification of spirit, of superstition, of faith in amulets, of pilgrimages

to sacred shrines, of the belief in the metempsychosis. The beauty, the light and the lightness of spirit, which the Sepharadi exiles had brought with them out of Spain, came to an end in most of the new mystical centres with the acceptance of the methods of HaAri.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE SEPHARADI MYSTICS OF BETH-EL IN JERUSALEM

IN the mystical group that centred round Beth-El in Jerusalem the Sepharadi tradition remained an underlying principle, even though the centre was also directed by the teachings of HaAri, as expounded by his pupil Vittal. For the heavy and sombre spirit that went with this system was somehow eliminated. Practical Kabbala was completely prohibited. In its place came the insistence on the living of a pure and holy life underlying which was a joy as sincere as it was silent ; a silence which was helpful and productive ; a brotherly love. There was no pilgrimage to graves, no use of amulets. The seal of the true Sepharadi tradition marked the spiritual centre in Beth-El.

The centre consisted of a small group of the intellectual élite, whose mystic joy lay in the heart of the silence which enveloped them in its seven veils for centuries. Living in a retirement that screened it off from the vulgar gaze of the public the group pursued its upward course, striking the synthesis between conviction and action. It was a community agreed to live in unity and sanctity. Of those who sought to enter its portals it demanded the attainments of the scholar and the self-abnegation of the ascetic. Thus it missed the masses.

Although Beth-El held the same Kabbalistic-pantheistic conceptions as other mystical groups, the form of its manifestation, as exemplified in synagogue, home and life, was different. While Ashkenazi Chassidim glorified the individual—the wonder-working Rabbi—and occupied themselves with practical Kabbala, such as the performance of miracles, the

distribution of amulets and blessings, the chanting of special prayers on behalf of those rich enough to expect special favours from the Lord, the Sepharadi Chassidim of Beth-El—while their faith was similar—demanded of their followers the living of a pure and harmonious life, based on the sense of personal responsibility for the discord in the universe, coupled with the use of *Kavanoth* for its redemption, as commanded by HaAri.

That joy which is an essential of Chassidism—for only through joy can man recognize the Infinite—was attained by the Ashkenazi Chassidim by means of the stirring sing-song, the dancing, the body-swaying, the hand-clapping and the shouting, reminiscent of certain mystic Christian sects, such as “The Jumpers” and “The Shakers.” To such practices the mystics of Jerusalem had shown an aversion in their rejection of Sabbatai Zevi, the pseudo Messiah, when he sought the seal on his Messianic pretensions in Jerusalem. For that which attracted the masses everywhere to his standard repelled the mystics of Jerusalem. They refused to accept the worship of a divine leader, the mechanically-aroused ecstasy, the pretensions of performing miracles, and the rest of the well-known devices.

In Beth-El joy was attained by no artificial means, but by silent meditation, by introspection in an atmosphere in which music, blending with men’s thoughts, induced a forgetfulness of externals. Each man’s eyes were turned inwards. Seeking to mine the wealth of his own soul he found there the soul of the universe. Amazed at his own discovery of this hidden treasure the mystic pursues his course upwards until he attains the ecstasy that brings him to the mystery of creation, where sits Joy enthroned. In a silence in which alone the soul may meet its God, destroyed worlds are reconstructed and restored to their pristine perfection. And this is the aim of the *Kavanoth*—the meditation on the mystic meaning of a certain prayer with intention to bring restoration.

In a song which follows the meaning-full word, continuing and deepening its meaning—even as a pause in the rendition of a symphony is but the continuation of the music—this wordless

song attains that which cannot be reached through the medium of words. And the word of prayer, arising at a given moment from the throats of all Israel, attains its highest form in the silence of Beth-El, imaged in song by the Master seated on his divan and surrounded by silent, thought-inspired mystics.

The members of the mystical group in Beth-El were known under the name of *Mechavenim*, i.e., those who make prayers with meditation. The harmony that ruled Beth-El followed the Mechavenim into their public as well as their private lives. At home and abroad Beth-El was at peace. While Askenazi Chassidim were involved in controversies and animosities with the Rabbinists, for whom was coined the characteristic name *Misnaggdim* (opponents), Beth-El opened its doors to both the Rabbinists and the Chassidists, but regarded the latter as having achieved a higher degree on the ladder of Truth. The Chassidists of Beth-El did not look upon the Rabbinists as opponents but rather as fellow-seekers after Truth. And that union of groups and sects, which had not been found possible elsewhere in Jewish life, was accomplished in Beth-El, where all were able to meet in mutual respect and appreciation. In this way Beth-El's power and influence outside its own walls were greatly enhanced. At one time the whole Jewish community was influenced by Beth-El and governed by the same spiritual head, the *Rav HaChassid* being at the same time the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem and of the whole of Palestine.

A unique historical document may still be found in the old city of Jerusalem—a pact of friendship drawn up and signed by the great Sepharadi Rabbinic and Chassidic authorities of the day. Filled with expressions of the deep and abiding love of man for his neighbour, of the readiness of each to sacrifice himself for the others not only in this life, but in all lives to come—it shows the striving after complete union. Amongst the signatories are Algazi, the famous Azulai, and the Master Sharaabi.

Beth-El exists down to the present day—though at present its state is on the decline—but it is enveloped, as it has always

been, in a mystery of silence which the uninitiated cannot but fail to penetrate. The books which its members have written—*The River of Perfection*, *The Perfume of Joy*, *The Words of Greeting*—were books meant to light their own path to Kabbalistic understanding. The casual visitor could not but be baffled by the mystery of silence that walls Beth-El in.

#### BETH-EL, AN HOLY ORDER

The group in Beth-El, founded by the descendants of some of the exiles from Spain, was at first small and but loosely held together, lacking cohesion and unity. As time went on, however, and under the guidance of devoted leaders, the group was transformed into a co-ordinated body possessing both authority and strength. And through the harmony thus brought into its spiritual life the Holy Community of Beth-El was created. Dominated by what may be called the categorical imperative of HaAri's teachings, the prayers were made with *Kavanoth*. This helped to bring together all the *Mechavenim* in a unison of prayer and meditation—the mystical practice of universal love which came to distinguish the Sepharadi Chassidim of Beth-El.

The doors of Beth-El were open to all who came prepared to live in holiness, according to the high standards set by the Order. To the poor and to the exalted, to the downtrodden and to the illustrious, it restored the mystical tradition in which the Creator and the created thing, in which man and a grain of sand, meet together and are essential to each other.

Beth-El also introduced something new to Jewish liturgy: melodies to mark the period of meditation. The meditation is sung aloud by the Rav HaChassid to stimulate and inspire the silent meditation of the *Mechavenim*. At first it had been the custom to carry on the meditation in a deep silence—the meditation on a single word, sometimes lasting for fifteen minutes. But with the introduction of the musical interludes the *Kavanoth* began to be performed during the intoning of a melody that was at the same time suggestive of the form which the meditation was to take. So true are these tunes, in

searching out and expressing the emotions of souls dwelling on the mystic meaning of the prayer, that even the listener, uninitiated though he may be, feels himself transported into the realms of thought, where dwell those who commune with the Infinite. Under the magic of these tunes *Mechavenim* and listeners, animate and inanimate objects, become one in the true pantheistic sense.

Thus, on hearing the Master sing the *Umevi Godl* ("And He will bring a Redeemer unto their children's children for His Name's sake in love")—hearing his voice rise in triumphant rapture to the words—"In Love"—when the *Mechaven* must be prepared to die for the sanctity of the Ineffable Name "In Love"—the listener feels himself a heroic spirit ready to do battle for pure love. And he is able to understand the ecstasy of saints and of martyrs as they joyfully gave themselves to the flames of the stake "In Love."

And hearing the Master sing the *Shema* ("Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is ONE!"), it is as if a great music had come into the soul washing away its imperfections, bringing man nearer to his fellow-men: his hates transformed, his world unified and ennobled. Thus it came about that the *Kavana*—sent forth in the hope of bringing together the conflicting fragments of the shattered *Sephiroth* and of re-creating them into the perfect *UNITY*—first pours its healing balm into men's souls, bringing them into unity with things eternal.

The life of the Sepharadi Chassidim of Beth-El was a life of beauty, of sanctity, of melody, of silence. And it was in this fashion that Beth-El in Jerusalem kept alight the flame of Sepharadi mysticism down to the present day.

And we see that the long, golden chain of Jewish mysticism which had its beginnings in the days of the birth of the nation, which passed through the highroads opened up by the Bible, the Apocalypse, the Talmudim, the Midrashim, the Gaonic Literatures, etc., which broadened and deepened its course in the Spanish Peninsula, found its eternal expression in the *Book of the Zohar* and pursued its own peculiar, yet well-marked course down to our own generation.

## EXPLANATION OF FOREIGN WORDS

- ASHKENAZI** (*pl.* Ashkenazim). The Hebrew name for Jews of Germany and Eastern Europe, generally used to denote all Jews who are neither Sepharadi nor Oriental.
- BETH HAMIDRASH.** The religious High School. *Lit.*, House of Study.
- CHASSID** (*pl.* Chassidim). Jewish mystics belonging to certain special groups, mostly in Eastern Europe.
- CHAYOTH.** The Holy Beasts.
- ECHAD.** One. The Unity.
- KAVANAH** (*pl.* Kavanoth). Meditation on the mystic intention of prayer.
- MEHAVEN** (*pl.* Mechavenim). *Lit.*, One who meditates—a distinctive name given to the Sepharadi Chassidim of Beth-El.
- MISHNAH.** The Taniitic oral Law.
- MITHNAGGED** (*pl.* Mithnaggedim). *Lit.*, Opponents. The Rabbis who opposed the mystics, insisting that Jewish life must be interpreted only according to the Rabbinical tradition of the Law.
- PILPULISTIC.** From pilpul, casuistry.
- RAV HACHASSID.** Head or Chief of the Chassidic group.
- SCHEMA.** First word of the prayer announcing the Jew's monotheistic belief. This prayer is repeated every day and is the last prayer before death.
- SEPHARADI** (*pl.* Sepharadim). The Hebrew name for the Jews who lived in the Iberic Peninsula and their descendants.
- SEPHIRA** (*pl.* Sefhiroth). Sphere. Spiritual worlds created through the emanations of the light of the Infinite.
- TORAH.** The religious Law (originally the Five Books of Moses, later used loosely to denote all Jewish religious teaching).
- YESHIBAH.** *Lit.*, House of Study where the Torah is studied. (Practically the same meaning as Beth HaMidrash )
- YOD, VAW.** Hebrew letters of the alphabet.
- ZOHAR.** Hebrew word for splendour.





## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ABULAFIA, ABRAHAM : *Sefer Razi'el* (date uncertain).
- ASIN PALACIOS, MIGUEL : *Aben Massara y su Escuela*, Madrid, 1914.  
*La Escatologia Musulmana en la Divina Comedia*, Madrid, 1919.  
*El Mistico Murciano Aben Arabi*, Madrid, 1928.
- CALABRESSA, HAIM VITAL : *Shaar HaAkdmoth*, Jerusalem, 1871.  
*Shaar HaGilgulum*, Jerusalem, 1863. *Shaar HaKavanoth*, Salonika, 1852. *Shaar HaMizvoth*, Salonika, 1852. *Shaar Pesukim*, Jerusalem, 1863. *Shaar Mamare Rasal*, Salonika, 1862. *Shaar Mamare Rishbi*, Salonika, 1862. *Shaar Ruach HaKodesh*, Jerusalem, 1863. *Sefer HaGilgulum*, Franckfort, 1684. *Osroth Haim*, Korzec, 1783. *Mebo Shearim*, Korzec, 1783. *Arba Meod Shekel Kesef*, Korzec, 1804. *Shaare Kiddusha*, Constantine, 1731. *Etz Haim*, Jerusalem, 1927.
- COLLET . *Jean de la Croix : Sa Vie*, Paris, 1826.
- CORDOBERO, MOSES BEN JACOB : *Pardess Rimonim*, Korzec, 1780.  
*Elima Rabbati*, Lemberg, 1881. *Shi'ur Koma*, Warsaw, 1883. *Or Ne'erab*, Venice, 1587.
- CRISPIN, ISAAC MENAHEM : *Zahore Shama*, Salonika, 1738.
- EMDIN, JACOB : *Mitpachat Sefarim*, Altuna, 1768.
- FLEG-PAULY : *Le Livre du Zohar*, Paris, 1927.
- FRANCK, AD : *La Kabbale*, Paris, 1843.
- FRANK, N. : *Haggadoth HaZohar*, Warsaw, 1923.
- GRAETZ, HEINRICH : *Die Geschichte des Judentums*, Leipzig, 1860-76.
- HAEBLER : *Ramon Lull und Seine Schule*, Leyden, 1921.
- HALEVI, YEHUDA : *HaKusari*, Panot, 1506.
- HARAMBAM (MOSHE BEN MAIMUN) : *More Nebuchim*, Lisbon, 1497.
- HARAMBAN (MOSHE BEN NACHMAN) : *Ha Emuna Ve Ha Bitachon*, Venice, 1601.
- HORODETSKY, S. A. : *Cordobero*, Berlin, 1924.
- IBN ARABI : *Al Futuhat*, Cairo, 1329 Heg. *The Treasures of Lovers*, Beyrouth, 1312 Heg.
- IBN EZRA, ABRAHAM : *Chukoth HaShamayim*, Koenigsburg, 1848 (MS.).  
*Sefer HaOlam*, Venice, 1507.
- IBN GABIROL, SOLOMON : *Keter Malchuth* (poem). *Mikor Haim*, Venice, 1507.
- IBN HAZM : *Tawq al-Hamama*, Brill, Leyden, 1914.
- IBN TUFAIL, ABU BAKR : *The History of Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* (Sir Denison Ross ; Nicholson), London, 1929.

- KARPE, S. : *Le Zohar*, Paris, 1901.
- KONITZ, MOSHE : *Ben Jochai*, Vienna, 1818.
- LATIF, ISAAC IBN : *GINZE MELECH*, Jellinek, 1847.
- LEON, LUIS DE : *Los Nombres de Cristo*, Madrid, 1583.
- LEON, MOSES SHEMTOB DE : *Shekel HaKodesh*, London, 1911. *Nefesh HaChachama*, Basle, 1608.
- LONSANO, MENAHEM DE : *Shetai Yadoth*, Venice, 1617.
- LULLE, RAMON : *Blanquerna*, Madrid, 1783. *El Arte Magna de Raimundo Lulio* (J. Casadésus), Mallorca, 1916. *Opusculum de Auditu Kabbalístico*, Paris, 1578.
- MAIMIN, ABRAHAM : A Hymn.
- MUELLER, ERNST : *Der Zohar und Seine Lehre*, Vienna, 1920.
- NAGGARA, ISRAEL : *Semiroth Israel*.
- PEREIRA, PEREZ COHEN : *Maarecheth Ha Elahut*, Mantua, 1558.
- SANTA TERESA : *Confesiones*, Madrid, 1587. *Camino de Perfeccion*, Barcelona, 1704.
- Sefer Ha Bahir*, of ISAAC, THE BLIND. Edited Amsterdam, 1651.
- SEFER HA ZOHAR : Mantua, 1558-60.
- SIMRA, DAVID BEN SHLOMO IBN ABU : *Or Cadmon*, Venice, 1703.
- SOKOLOW, NAHUM : *Baruch Spinoza*, Paris, 1930.
- TALMUD (BABYLONIAN) : *Tractates : Succah, Meilah, Gettin*, Venice, 1522-26.
- TALMUD (JERUSALEM) : Venice, 1523.
- TIKUNE HA ZOHAR : Mantua, 1558.
- UNAMUNO, MIGUEL : *Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho*, Madrid, 1905. *En Torno del Casticismo*, Barcelona, 1902.
- WIENER, M. : *Die Lyrik der Kabbala*, Vienna, 1921.
- ZOHAR CHADASH : Salonika, 1597.

## INDEX

- AARON**, the High Priest, 49  
**Abba**, Rabbi, 158  
**Abel**, 147  
**Abraham**, 55, 65, 183, 191  
**Abulafia**, Abraham, 23, 26  
**Abulafia**, Todros, 23, 79  
**Adam**, 4, 67, 85, 159, 189, 193  
     Coming of, 40  
     Revelations concerning, 145  
**Adam Ha Cadmon**, 232  
**Adama**, 147  
**Africa**, 8  
**Ahias of Shiloh**, 215  
**Akiba**, Rabbi, 51, 94, 207  
**Alatif**, Isaac ibn, 23, 35  
**Alfonso III.**, 5  
**Algazi**, 244  
**Alhambra**, The, 1  
**Alkabes**, Moses, 229  
**Allegory**, 39  
**Amen**, 154  
**Amulets**, 222, 240  
**Andalusia**, 10  
**Angels** :  
     **Adrahaniel**, 198  
     **Anael**, 156  
     **Angel of Death**, 102, 187  
     **Angel of Sleep**, 112  
     **Angels of Mercy**, 195  
     **Angels of Peace**, 176, 179  
     **Angels of Right**, 195  
     **Aniel**, 199  
     **Douma**, 198  
     **Ezriel**, 199  
     **Gabriel**, 168, 195, 208  
     **Gadhiel**, 204  
     **Gadria**, 156  
     **Gamghina**, 198  
     **Gazardia**, 156  
     **Gazriel**, 201  
     **Hadarniel**, 165  
     **Haniel**, 199  
     **Hariel**, 204  
     **Machniel**, 156  
     **Malkhiel**, 201  
     **Metatron**, 49, 156, 214  
     **Michael**, 59, 167, 175, 194, 199,  
         208  
     **Nariel**, 208  
     **Oriel**, 167, 195  
     **Ourphaniel**, 198  
     **Padhiel**, 204  
     **Pasgania**, 156  
     **Patia**, 156  
     **Qaphtziel**, 201  
     **Quarschiel**, 199  
     **Quemouel**, 165  
     **Rahmiel**, 197  
     **Raphael**, 168, 195, 208  
     **Raziel**, 207  
     **Sadkhiel**, 199  
     **Sammael**, 101, 146, 175, 195  
     **Sandalphon**, 165  
     **Sanghiel**, 199  
     **Satouriel**, 198  
     **Schamaschiel**, 157  
     **Shadiel**, 197  
     **Synigouria**, 205  
     **Tahariel**, 197  
     **Zabouliel**, 156  
     **Zacout-el**, 204  
**Anti-Kabbalists**, xiv  
**Apocalypse**, xiii, 24  
**Apocalyptic Literature**, 48  
**Arabic**, 9  
**Araboth**, 134  
**Arabs**, 1, 7, 236  
**Aragon**, 20  
**Aramaic**, 82, 85  
**Arevalo**, 79  
**Arqa**, 147  
**Asheri**, 6  
**Ashkenazi**, 1, 11, 227  
**Asia**, 15  
**Asiluth (World of Emanation)**,  
     128  
**Asiyah (World of Action)**, 128  
**Attributes**, The, 119, 232  
**Averrhoes**, 34  
**Avila**, 73, 79  
**Azriel**, 20, 33  
**Azulai**, 244

- BABYLON**, xvi, 1, 4, 13, 83, 176  
 Babylonian Captivity, 179  
 Baghdad, 9  
 Bahir, Ha, 20  
 Barcelona, 3, 5  
 Beatitude, The, 42  
 Beauty, 158  
 Beloved, The, 47, 174  
 Benaiasa, Son of Joiada, 110  
 Benveniste, Sheshed, 5  
 Ben-Yah, 136  
 Beriah (World of Creation), 127  
 Beth-el, xvi, 2, 11, 242  
 Binah (Intelligence), 136  
 Bird, The, 181  
 Bird's Nest, The, 182  
 Birds (revelation on), 162  
 Blessings, 195  
 Bodleian, The, 19  
 Book of Enoch, xiii, 24  
 Brain, The, 133  
 — The Supreme, 169
- CAIN**, 147  
 Calabressa, Joseph, 227  
 Canaanite, 3  
 Carbona, 5  
 Caro, Joseph, 11, 58, 227  
   Midnight Prayer, 71  
   Vision of Martyrdom, 72  
 Castille, 20  
 Castillian Literature, 31  
 — Poetry, 26  
 Catalonia, 46, 79  
 Cave of Macpelah, 193, 228  
 Cervantes, 15  
 Chalal, 232  
 Chasdai ibn Chaprut, 6  
 Chassidim, 1, 11, 19  
   Ashkenazi, 240, 244  
   Sepharadi, xvi, 243  
 Cherubim, 185, 193  
 Chesed (Mercy), 135  
 Children, 102, 185, 201  
 Chochma (Wisdom), 135  
 Chosen People, 163  
 Circumcision, 164  
 Cock, The, 189  
 Columbus, 17, 72  
 Comets, 69, 70  
 Conjugal Relations, 159  
 Converts, 197  
 Cordoba, 2, 5  
 Cordobero, Moses, 10, 227  
   Pantheism, 38  
   Revelation, 233  
   "The Garden of Pomegranates," 81, 232
- Covenant, The, 22  
 Creation (revelation), 130  
 Cruz, Juan de la, 16  
   Ecstasy, 60  
   Love-songs, 47  
   Pantheism, 35  
   Self-denial, 33  
   "The Summit of Mount Carmel," 67  
   Union with God, 59  
 Cup of Consolation, 199
- DANCE** of the Fire, 219  
 Daniel, xiii, 24, 80, 91  
 David, King, 60, 88, 156  
   Restoration of the Tent of, 90  
   The Heavenly, 180  
 Day of Atonement, 201  
 Days (of Life), 141  
 Death, 151, 189  
   Book of, 205  
   Of Ben Jochai, 211  
   Disciples, of Ben Jochai, 115  
 Djegatila, Abraham, 20  
 Door, of Death, 208  
 — of Tears, 153  
 — of the Just, 181  
 — of Justice, 189  
 — of Mercy, 195  
 Dove, of Noah, 185
- EAGLE**, 167  
 — of the Glory, 50  
 — Holy, 105
- Earth, 213  
 Earth's Generative Forces, 138  
 Eastern Europe, 7  
 Ecstasy, 243  
 Edom, 130, 175  
 Egypt, 177, 179  
 El, 206  
 Eleazar, 99, 158  
 Elements, The, 138  
 Elijah, 21, 24, 50, 96, 108, 125, 230  
 Elohim, 37, 120  
 Emanations (of the Sephiroth), 37  
 Ensoph, 120  
 Eretz, 146  
 Esther, 129  
 Eve, 88  
 Eye of Providence, 123  
 Ezekiel, 177  
 Ezra, 20, 33

- FACE, The Great**, 122  
**Famine**, 207  
**Fear**, 158  
**Fez**, xvi, 7  
**Field of Apples**, 44  
**Fire** :  
     **Creation of the River of**, 205  
     **River of**, 53, 134, 169, 189,  
         195, 202  
     **The Sacrificial**, 218  
**Flaming Sword**, 147, 193, 206  
**Force**, 159  
**France**, 5  
**Francisa**, 228  
**Frankists**, 224  
**Frederick II.**, 2  
  
**GAABA, Temple of**, 45  
**Gabillon (Door to the Heavens)**,  
     135  
**Galilee**, 11, 64, 87, 185, 216  
     **Sea of**, 114  
**Gaonim**, 9, 26  
**Gaonic Literature**, xiii  
**Garden of Eden**, 58, 157, 180, 190  
**Garden of Gennesareth**, 70  
**Garment of Vengeance**, 184  
**Gavison, David**, 246  
**Gebourah (Rigour)**, 136  
**Gemarrah**, xiii, 25  
**Genoa**, 73  
**Gerim, Judah ben**, 95  
**Germany**, 5, 228  
**Giralda**, 2  
**God (Revelations of the Exist-  
     ence of)**, 118  
**Golan, Mts. of**, 216  
**Grace**, 157, 172  
**Granada**, 2, 5  
**Greek**, 3, 8  
     **Beauty**, 92  
     **Philosophy**, 9  
**Gush Halav**, 110  
  
**HAARI**, 227, 229  
**Hadereth, Solomon ben**, 5  
**Haggadah**, xiii, xiv, 25  
**Haggadic Literature**, 49  
**Hai Gaon**, 5  
**Halachah**, xvi  
**Halevi, Yehuda**, 6, 26, 240  
**Haman**, 129  
**Hamenouna, Rab**, 17, 110, 126,  
     174  
**Hand, Lines of the**, 144  
**Haroun al Raschid**, 9  
**Hate**, 207  
  
**Hayy ibn Yaqzan**, 14  
**Hebrew Language**, 88  
**Hebron**, 2, 227  
**Hellenism**, 28  
**Hermon**, 211  
**Hesperia**, 3  
**Hezekiah, King of Judæa**, 215  
**Hidden point**, 209  
**Hilulah**, xvii, 212  
**Hispania**, 3  
**Hiya, Rabbi**, 213  
**Holland**, 9, 11  
**Holy Beasts**, 37, 50, 104, 167,  
     197  
     **Creation of the**, 134  
     **The, Jophiel**, 199  
**Holy Lamp, The**, 81, 173, 212  
**Holy Land, The**, 13, 129, 189  
**Holy of Holies, The**, 134, 154,  
     169  
**Homer**, 20  
**Hour of Mercy**, 115, 125  
  
**IBN ARABI**, 15, 28, 48, 55, 67  
     **Allegory**, 39  
     **Intuition**, 61  
     **Pantheism**, 34  
     **Paradise**, 49  
     **Sheikh al Akbar**, 30  
     **Treasures for Lovers**, 45  
**Ibn Ayshun**, 18  
 — **Ezra**, 48  
 — **Gabirol**, 26, 240  
     **Ecstasy**, 61  
     **Pantheism**, 34  
 — **Hazm**, 45  
 — **Massara**, 68  
     **Muslim, Shakir**, 55  
 — **Pakuda**, 19, 26  
 — **Tufail, abu Bekr**, 15, 30, 67  
**Idra Maschcana**, 161  
 — **Rabba Kaddisha**, xv  
     **Zuta Kaddisha**, xv  
**Illuministic School**, 68  
**Indian Sages**, 34  
**Indivisible Point**, 133  
**Isaac**, 65, 151, 183  
**Isaac, The Blind**, 19  
**Ishmael, Rebi (Vision of Para-  
     dise)**, 49  
**Islam**, 49  
**Israel**, 9  
     **Destiny of**, 175  
     **Land of**, xvi, 3  
     **Revelations concerning**, 163  
     **Standards of**, 167  
**Italy**, 5, 8, 228

- JACOB, 151, 164, 183  
 Jericho, 184  
 Jerusalem, 2, 87, 227  
   Centre of World, 133  
   Rebuilt, 185  
   The Heavenly, 54, 193  
 Jochanan, Rabbi, 50  
 — ben Zakkai, 51  
   onah (Allegory), 188  
   ose, Rabbi, 95, 98  
   oseph, 50, 88  
 Joseph de la Reina, 228  
 Jotham, King of Judæa, 94  
 Joy, 243  
 Judæa, 1, 3, 6, 11, 44, 85  
 Judah, Tribe of, 161  
 Judgment, 200  
 Jumpers, The, 243  
 Jupiter, 48
- KABBALISTS, I  
 Karaites, 224  
 Kavanoth (Meditations), 231, 243  
 Keter (Crown), 135  
 Kiss, The, 207  
 — of Love, 150  
 Koran, 30, 54
- LAG LA OMER, 216  
 Legions of the Eye, 156  
 Leon, City of, 79  
 Leon, Louis de, 25, 37  
 Leon, Moses de, xiii, 23, 79, 82  
 Levi, Rabbi Joshua ben (Paradise), 50  
 Leviathan, 43, 170  
 Levy, Tribe of, 164  
 Life, Seed of, 209  
   Source of, 154, 210  
   Tree of, 51, 113, 129, 139, 148, 189  
 Lilith, 209  
 Liturgy, 245  
 Losano, Menahem de, 237  
 Losina, 5  
 Love (Revelations concerning), 158, 208  
 Lovers of God, 47, 207  
 Ludd, Desert of, 96  
 Lulle, Ramon, 15, 41, 63, 67  
   Allegory, 39  
   Intelligence, 42  
   Love-Songs, 46  
   Pantheism, 34  
   The Illuminated Doctor, 31  
   Unity, 35  
 Luminous Mirror, The, 146
- MA'AMINIM, 224  
 Maarecheth HaElahut, 20  
 Mahomet, 49, 54  
 Maimin, Abraham, 234  
 Maimonides, 10, 19, 26, 40  
 Mallorca, 17  
 Man (Revelations concerning), 136  
   Form of, 140  
   Types of, 143  
 Marriage, 160  
 Mars, 48  
 Martyrs, 203  
 Matriarchs, 88  
 Matrona, The, 153, 160, 179  
 Mecca, 45  
 Mechavenim, 244  
 Mercury, 48  
 Meron, xvii, 212, 216  
 Messiah, ben David, 75, 167, 180  
   ben Joseph, 226, 230  
 Metempsychosis, 241  
 Middle Ages, 34  
 Midrashim, xiii  
 Miriam's Well, 230  
 Mishnah, xiii, 23, 25  
   Masters of the, 104  
 Misnaggdim, 244  
 Molcho, Solomon, 11, 227  
 Moon, The, 196  
 Moors, 14  
 Moses, 23, 88, 150, 183  
   Birth of, 164  
 Mosque, The, 2  
 Mount Asmon, 216  
   Randa, 41  
 — Sinai, 116, 163  
 Music, 5, 162, 243
- NACHMANIDES (Ramban), 20, 79  
 Naggara, Israel, 236  
 Navarre, 20  
 Nebuchadnezzar, 4  
 New World, 15  
 Nile, The, 229
- OBADIAH, 197  
 Old One, The, 44  
 Onkelos, 197  
 Oppressor, 182
- PALACES, THE :  
   a. In Heaven :  
     Palace of Azure, 198  
     — — Clemency, 207  
     — — the Covenant, 209  
     — — Love, 57, 150, 206

- Palace of Merit, 203  
     Sapphire, 197  
     — the Splendour, 201  
     b. In Hell :  
 Scheol, 206  
 The Door of Death, 208  
 The Fourth Chamber of Hell,  
     205  
 The Great Serpent, 203  
 The Pit, 198  
 The Precipice, 200  
 The Scourge, 201
- Palestine, 2  
 Paradise, 36  
     On Earth, 180, 193, 228  
 Pastorga, 72  
 Patriarchs, The, 88, 180, 207  
 Penitents, 197  
 Pentateuch, xiii, 24, 30, 105, 159  
 Perfection, 232  
 Perfume of Joy, The, 245  
 Persian, 9  
 Pest, The, 100  
 Pharaoh, 165  
 Philosophy, 5, 6  
 Phoenix, The, 9  
 Pilgrimage, 223  
 Pinchas, Rabbi, 99  
 Poetry, Mystic, 228  
     — Erotic, 234  
 Poland, 228  
 Pombaditha, 9  
 Power-Tree, The, 103  
 Powers of Evil, 141  
 Prayer, 152, 202  
     Midnight, 157  
 Prophetesses, 92  
 The Prophets, xiii, 2, 5, 7, 21,  
     24, 54, 117, 204  
 Provence, 46  
 Psalmists, The, 2  
 Purification, The, 199
- RABBINISTS, 244  
 Rachel, 88, 157, 184  
 Rav HaChassid, 244  
 Redemption, 210, 232  
 Red Sea, 166, 184  
 Religion, 4  
 Resurrection, 55, 166, 185, 189  
 Reubeni, David, 11  
 Ricanetti, Menahem, 80  
 Righteous, The, 150, 183, 215  
     Premature Death of, 191  
 Rigour, The, 151  
 Romans, 95  
 Rome, 177, 185
- SABBATAI ZEVI, 11, 92, 226, 243  
 Sabbath, The, 88, 126, 159,  
     160, 205  
     Bride, 89  
     Princess, 228  
     Queen, 91  
     Revelations concerning, 139  
 Safed, 2, 22, 216, 226  
 Salonika, 226  
 Salvation, 176, 203  
 Samaritans, 224  
 Sancho Panza, 15  
 Sanctuary-on-Earth, 138  
 Sanhedrin, 134, 228  
 Saracens, 14  
 Saragossa, 26  
 Saturn, 48  
 Schema, 246  
 Seraphim, 49, 196, 199, 202  
 Seth, 147  
 Seven Doors, 193  
     — Eyes, 102, 173  
     — Heavens, 134  
     — Palaces, 196  
     — Regions, 194  
 Seventh Millennium, 166  
 Seville, 2, 5  
 Shaddai, 206  
 Shakers, The, 243  
 Sharaabi, Shalom, 244  
     " The River of Peace," 245  
 Shulamith, 44, 47  
 Sickness, 181  
 Silence, 242  
 Simra, David ben Shelomo, 239  
 Sirat, 53  
 Smyrna, 226  
 Solomon, King, 44, 95, 117, 169  
 Song of Songs, 44, 83, 166  
 Soul, The (Revelations), 149  
     Immortality of, 187  
     Transmigration of, 187  
 Spinoza, Baruch, 9, 33, 35  
 Spirit of Good, 142, 188, 205  
     — — Evil, 142, 170, 189,  
     205  
     - Mercy, 200  
     - Merit, 205  
     - Temptation, 142  
 Spouse, The, 177, 183  
 Star of Jacob, 162  
 Stars, The, 69  
     Revelation concerning, 160  
 Stream of Blessing, 153  
 Supreme Light, The, 132  
 Sura, 9



- TADKHIRA, 57  
 Talmud, The, xiii, xvii, 1, 22, 85  
 Tanaite, 21, 79  
 Taramond, 169  
 Tears, 197  
 Temple, The, 163, 166  
   Destruction of, 176  
   The Second, 178  
 Ten Commandments, The, 41, 163, 166  
 Teresa, Santa, 32  
   Death of, 72  
   Pantheism, 37  
   Union with God, 64  
 Tetuan, 7  
 Thebel, 147  
 Thought, 210  
   Supreme (Revelation), 137  
 Tiberias, 227  
   Lake of, 103  
 Toledo, 3, 5  
 Toledot, 4  
 Tomb, The, 188  
 Torah, The, 22, 129, 157, 191  
 Troubadours, The, 46  
 Truth, 177  
 Turkey, 9
- UMEVI GOEL, 246  
 Unity, 178, 246
- VALLEY OF GEHINNOM, 110  
 Vatican, 19  
 Venus, 48  
 Vittal, Chaim, 23, 227, 230 *seq.*
- WHITE HEAD, THE, 123  
 Wicked, The, 151  
 Will, The, 128, 149, 155  
 Wisdom, 158  
   The Supreme (Revelation), 137  
 Wonder-working Rabbi, The, 242  
 "The Words of Greeting," 245
- YECIRAH (World of Formation), 128  
 Yehuda, Rabbi, 95  
 Yemen, 222  
 Yeshiba, 223  
 Yitzchak, Rabbi of Acre, 79
- ZADDIK, 51  
 Zimzum, 127, 232  
 Zion, 5, 184  
 Zionism, 6

**PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY  
MACKAYS LIMITED, CHATHAM.**







