Notes on the Zohar in English

Don Karr

The Zohar, or Sefer ha-Zohar (BOOK OF SPLENDOR), is without question the major text of classical Kabbalah. It is not a single book, but rather a collection of tracts of various sizes, there being about two dozen which form fairly coherent units. The bulk of the Zohar is a running commentary on the Torah, into which the numerous shorter tracts have been incorporated, added in the margins, or compiled as addenda to the various chapters. Some of the shorter tracts are in a separate section called the Zohar Hadash (the NEW ZOHAR), and there is yet a third section called the Tikkunei Zohar (the ARRANGEMENTS OF THE ZOHAR).

Research concerning the authorship and chronology of the zoharic strata is on-going, though most scholars agree that the main body of the Zohar was written by Rabbi Moses de Leon (1250-1305) and perhaps some others in his circle toward the end of the thirteenth century into the beginning of the fourteenth. Later strata (Raya Mehemna and the Tikkunim), were written in the fourteenth century and added to de Leon’s work.1

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Regarding the Zohar’s internal chronology and its subsequent collection and publication, the most recent work has been published in Hebrew articles by Ronit Meroz and Boaz Huss; however, note the English articles by Meroz and Huss in the bibliography below.


Two publications which can viably claim to be complete editions of the Zohar in English have been published (1 and 2), and another has been promised (3); see below regarding the following editions:

(i) the Kabbalah Centre International
(ii) Stanford University (= the PRITZKER EDITION)
(iii) Fiftieth Gate Publications

Before the Kabbalah Centre edition of the Zohar of 2001, somewhere between two-thirds and three-quarters of the Zohar had been put into English, and that spread over a handful of separate publications which varied greatly in method and quality.

This paper is divided into six sections:

1. SOURCES OF THE ZOHAR IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION
2. DIVISIONS OF THE ZOHAR: a chart showing the different tracts and sections of the Zohar along with initial-coded entries to indicate books which contain translations of them
3. PARASHAT/ZOHAR §§ chart
4. BIBLIOGRAPHY with notes, listing books, sections of books, and articles which discuss the Zohar or some aspect of it; many of these items contain translated passages
5. RECOMMENDATIONS concerning the pursuit of Zohar study in English
6. “Zohar I 51b-52a…” translated from the French of Jean de Pauly

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Many of Abrams’ articles have been collected and expanded upon in his 743-page Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory: Methodologies of Textual Scholarship and Editorial Practice in the Study of Jewish Mysticism (Los Angeles: Cherub Press – Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 2010; revised and expanded edition, 2014); regarding the Zohar, see CHAPTER 4, “The Invention of the Zohar as a Book.”


1. Sources of the Zohar in English Translation

The most comprehensive guide to the Zohar is Isaiah Tishby’s *Wisdom of the Zohar*, the English version of which came out in 1989. The Hebrew original, *Mishnat ha-Zohar*, has been a standard, lauded by scholars since its publication: volume 1 in 1949 and volume 2 in 1961. In form, *Wisdom* is an anthology of Zohar readings arranged by subject. Each subject is thoroughly and clearly introduced; each translated passage is supported by full explanatory footnotes. While most excerpts are a page or two in length, a few are quite extensive, such as the full translations of the section *Yanuka* (i on the divisions chart), major portions of *Sava* (h on the chart), and the first of the two *Hekhalot* sections (f on the chart). (*Wisdom* is keyed as IT on the chart.)

The principal virtue of Tishby’s rich study is the organization which it lends to the Zohar by bringing together passages on similar or related subjects—which, in the printed editions, are scattered all over the place—and by offering such complete and lucid introductions. In giving the reader so much help, Tishby makes the concepts of the Zohar, many of which are quite difficult and obscure, far more accessible than they would be from a translation standing alone.

The work which, from the ’thirties until rather recently, presented the largest amount of the Zohar in English (maybe two thirds) is the five-volume translation of Maurice Simon, Harry Sperling, and Paul P. Levertoff, *The Zohar*, with an introduction by Dr. J. Abelson (Soncino Press, 1931-4, and a “student” edition by Rebecca Bennet Publications—frequently reprinted; keyed on the divisions chart as SSL). This set is often referred to as *The Soncino Zohar*. Clearly, SSL’s idea was to present a coherent linear commentary to the Torah, but their omissions leave the reader frustrated. Missing are not only most of the inserted tracts but also many of the particularly difficult passages from the running commentary itself. Introductory material and notes are minimal.

Gershom Scholem (in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 387, n. 34) says of SSL,

> This translation is not always correct but it conveys a clear impression of what the Zohar is. It is to be regretted that too much has been omitted. The innumerable deliberate falsifications of the French translator, Jean de Pauly, are of course not to be found in this more solid and workmanlike translation.

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2 Complete publication information on this and all other books which are discussed in this section is given in § 3. Bibliography.


4 *The Soncino Zohar* has been produced on CD-ROM for both Mac and Windows. This *eZohar*, which is the same as the printed books, can be gotten alone or on a CD-ROM, *Soncino Classics Collection*, which also includes an extensive selection of texts in both Hebrew/Aramaic and English: the Bible, the Talmud, and *Midrash Rabba*; the commentaries of Rashi on the Talmud and *Chumash*, and the *Tosafot* on the Talmud are in Hebrew only. *The Soncino Zohar* requires 128 MB RAM, CD-ROM drive, and 1.8 GB free hard drive space for installation. On the Internet, go to [www.soncino.com](http://www.soncino.com).
Daniel Matt’s comments on SSL:

The older English translation composed in the nineteen-thirties reads smoothly but often misunderstands the text. Its genteel prose is more paraphrase than accurate translation, avoiding unfamiliar terms, censoring erotic material, skipping difficult passages—even entire sections. The English flows too fluently compared to the original, subduing the unruly Aramaic, failing to render its untamed vibrancy. Moreover, since the translation is unaccompanied by a commentary, the symbolism remains impenetrable. Despite its shortcomings, I have learned much from consulting this translation....” (“The Zohar: Pritzker Edition,” lecture [SESSION 8:2b] delivered at the Association for Jewish Studies 35th Annual Conference, Boston: AJS, December 21-23, 2003.)

After seventy years, SSL’s Zohar was finally surpassed in scope by “The First Ever Unabridged English Translation with Commentary” offered by Kabbalah Centre International: The Zohar by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, with The Sulam commentary of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag (Yeshivat Kol Yehuda, 2001; VOLUME 23: Index: 2003). In twenty-two volumes, the Zohar is presented, paragraph by paragraph, in the original Aramaic and in English. The English is a translation of Rabbi Ashlag’s Ha Sulam (THE LADDER), namely Ashlag’s Hebrew translation of the Zohar containing his “embedded commentary,” which, in the Kabbalah Centre’s edition, is shown in a different typeface from the Zohar text. (Ha Sulam was originally published in Jerusalem, 1945-55.) Most chapters are introduced by short summaries, which, starting at volume 3, are headlined “A Synopsis.” Some chapters are further set up by additional paragraphs headlined “The Relevance of the Passage.” Each volume contains a glossary of Hebrew words, including biblical names and kabbalistic terms.

Ashlag’s commentary appositively identifies many of the Zohar’s widely (wildly) ranging referents with sefirot, parzufim, and other features fundamental to Lurianic developments. Elsewhere the commentary fleshes out the Zohar’s apparent shorthand, often by simply identifying the antecedents of potentially ambiguous pronouns. In some paragraphs, the commentary overwhelms the text; in others, no commentary at all appears.

Of the Sulam commentary, Isaiah Tishby (Wisdom of the Zohar, p. 105) says,

The explanations follow the Lurianic system and are of little help in clarifying the literal meaning of the text.

Comparison with SSL shows that Kabbalah Centre’s Zohar follows the same order but includes the material omitted from the former work. Thus, here one finds THE BOOK OF CONCEALMENT, the Idrot, both Hekhalot sections, etc.

While not unreasonably priced at just over $20 per hefty hardbound volume, the whole set represents something of a commitment, especially considering that, as editor Rabbi Michael Berg’s introduction puts it, the Kabbalah Centre’s Zohar is “deliberately not a scholarly edition” [Berg’s italics]. What we do have is “a literal—not a vernacular—translation” where “[m]aterial has not been condensed or moved to achieve clarity or a more logical presentation.”

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5 Note from November 2018: The Kabbalah Centre Zohar vols. 1-23 is on sale for $91.00 at the Kabbalah Centre site: https://store-us.kabbalah.com/collections/kabbalist-rav-berg/products/zohar-vol-1-23.
A previous multi-volume work from Kabbalah Centre gives a translation of one particularly significant section of the later stratum of the Zohar—and its longest tract—*The Zohar: Parashat Pinhas*, prepared by Rabbi Philip S. Berg (3 volumes, 1987-8, keyed as PSB on the chart). The set presents a major portion of *Raya Mehemna, The Faithful Shepherd* (t on the chart). This translation is nearly identical to the *Pinhas* portions of the newer Kabbalah Centre Zohar (volumes 20-21), indicating that this work was also based on Rabbi Ashlag’s *Ha Sulam*, though not all of the *Sulam* commentary is included. Here and there Rabbi Berg inserts commentary of his own in clearly marked paragraphs separate from the text. Further, Rabbi Berg uses the Standard English names of biblical books and other terms (e.g., *Numbers* instead of *Bemidbar*). Berg’s *Parashat Pinhas* includes an introduction and helpful indices to the three volumes.

For further translations from *Ha Sulam*, see Rav Michael Laitman, *The Zohar: Annotations to the Ashlag Commentary* (Toronto – Brooklyn: Laitman Kabbalah Publishers, 2009), which gives—in English—the Zohar’s *Prologue* (roughly the first half of volume one of the Kabbalah Centre’s Zohar: §§1-260) with the *Sulam* commentary, additional commentary from the first part of Ashlag’s *Hakdamat Sefer ha-Zohar* (*Introduction to the Zohar*), plus Laitman’s “own explanations.”

Another “complete” Zohar has been promised but has thus far seen only its first volume published: *Zohar: Selections Translated and Annotated* by Moshe Miller (Fiftieth Gate Publications, 2000). This inaugural volume provides introductory sections: “Historical Background,” “The Structure of the Zohar,” and “The Mystical Concepts of the Zohar.” Translated selections from the Zohar comment on the first four *parashot* of the Torah: *Bereishit, Noah, Lech Lecha*, and *Vayera*. However, Miller does not begin with Zohar 1:1 and progress in the order of one of the printed editions as SSL’s and Kabbalah Centre’s do; he presents the commentary following the order of the biblical verses, drawing on all parts of the Zohar, including *Zohar Hadash* and *Tikkunei Zohar*. Embedded in the Zohar text in smaller type are comments and explanations drawn from classic commentaries, such as *Or Yakar* [R. Moses Cordovero], *Or Ha-Hamah* [R. Abraham Azulai], *Tanya* [R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi], *Ziv ha-Zohar* [R. Y. Y. Rozenberg], *Damesek Eliezer* [R. Eliezer Tzvi of Komarna], and the text for the Kabbalah Centre translation, *Ha Sulam* [R. Yehuda Ashlag].

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The most important recent development in Zohar scholarship and publication is Stanford University’s PRITZKER EDITION of the Zohar, in both Aramaic and English, the great bulk of which, including the translation and annotation of nine of its twelve volumes, has been the work of Daniel Matt. The English translation is from a “critical text” which Matt compiled, using the Margaliot edition as a starting point, “based on a selection and evaluation of the manuscript readings” from some twenty “reliable manuscripts,” some dating as far back as the fourteenth century, along with the Mantua and Cremona editions of the sixteenth century—all in Aramaic, the original language of the Zohar—unlike the Kabbalah Centre’s translation, which is based on a Hebrew translation and which includes Yehuda Ashlag’s embedded Lurianic commentary.

Contents of the PRITZKER EDITION (PE on the chart below, § 2).

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Z1:</th>
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<td>VOLUME I</td>
<td>1a-76b</td>
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<td>VOLUME II</td>
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<td>VOLUME IV</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>VOLUME V</td>
<td>94b-179a</td>
<td>Sava de Mishpatim and Sifre di-Tsiuuta</td>
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<td>VOLUME VII</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>VOLUME VIII</td>
<td>80a-156b</td>
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<td>2016</td>
<td>VOLUME IX</td>
<td>156b-299a</td>
<td>Rav Methivthu, Yanoqa, and Idra Zuta</td>
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<td>2017</td>
<td>VOLUME X</td>
<td>97a-140a</td>
<td>14a-22a, 35b-40b</td>
<td>ZH: 2b-26b, 27b-28d, 59a-c, i.e., Midrash ha-Ne’lam</td>
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<td>2017</td>
<td>VOLUME XI</td>
<td>Midrash ha-Ne’lam on Song of Songs, Midrash ha-Ne’lam on Ruth, Midrash ha-Ne’lam on Lamentations, Matnitin, Tosefta, and Sitrui Torah</td>
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<td>2017</td>
<td>VOLUME XII</td>
<td>Heikhalot Be-Reshit, Heikhalot Pequdei, Piqqudin, Raza deRazin, Sithre Othioth, Qav ha-Middah, the commentary on Ezekiel, Zohar on the Torah Portions, and Tosefta.</td>
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VOLUMES I-IX comprise, for the most part, the Zohar’s “running commentary”—and contain Daniel Matt’s stunning work. Matt describes his translation as “literal yet

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7 PRITZKER is the name of the sponsor of the Zohar translation/publication project, Margot Pritzker, not the name of a publisher or manuscript collection as many assume.

The Aramaic text which serves as the basis for Daniel Matt’s translation can be viewed at Stanford’s site, www.sup.org/zohar > Aramaic Text Online.


9 Note the website, THE ARAMAIC LANGUAGE OF THE ZOHAR – RESOURCES FOR STUDYING KABBALAH IN THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE, at http://aramaiczohar.wordpress.com/. “This site will provide resources for people interested in reading the Zohar, the text at the heart of the Jewish mystical tradition, in its original language, or who are interested in the Aramaic language more generally. It is part of a larger project by Judy Barrett and Justin Jaron Lewis, who are working on a beginner’s textbook and a practical dictionary of the Aramaic of the Zohar.”

10 The Tosefta section in Volume XII is titled “Passages (Mis)Labeled as Tosefta”
with the aim of preserving the character of the Zohar’s rough prose. His numerous footnotes constitute a deep, complex, and most helpful commentary to the text. Matt draws on a wide range of traditional Zohar commentaries, including those of Moses Cordovero, Hayyim Vital, and Yehuda Ashlag, as well as the work of modern scholars, such as Reuven Margaliot, Isaiah Tishby, Gershom Scholem, Yehuda Liebes, Charles Mopsik, Moshe Idel, and Elliot Wolfson.

**VOLUME I** includes an introduction by Arthur Green, which is reduced from his companion volume to the **PRITZKER EDITION: A Guide to the Zohar**, also published by Stanford. Green’s Guide provides an exquisite overview, covering the history, structure, style, and concepts of the Zohar.12

Continuing in the manner and form of **VOLUMES I-IX**, **The Zohar**, **VOLUME X** commences the work of Matt’s Australian colleague Nathan Wolski. This volume contains the main body of **Midrash ha-Ne’elam**, “the earliest layer of the Zoharic literary corpus” (**PREFACE**, page xi). Wolski’s translation is supplemented by articles which appear in successive volumes of **Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts**: “Moses de León and Midrash ha-Ne’elam: On the Beginnings of the Zohar” (**VOLUME 34**) and “Radical Allegoresis and Neoplatonic Myth in Midrash ha Ne’elam” (**VOLUME 35**).13

**VOLUME XI**, prepared by Joel Hecker of Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, contains the translation of and commentary on **Midrash ha-Ne’elam al Shir ha-Shirim (SECRET MIDRASH ON SONG OF SONGS)**, **Midrash ha-Ne’elam al Rut (on RUTH)**, and **Midrash ha-Ne’elam al Eikhah (on LAMENTATIONS)**. While possessing many of the characteristics of the **Midrash ha-Ne’elam** of **VOLUME X**, the **Midrash ha-Ne’elam** tracts on the **megillot** (scrolls) set themselves apart in several ways. For one thing, they lack the “bilingualism”14 of the **Midrash ha-Ne’elam** on the **parashot** of the Torah; they are almost entirely in Aramaic. Further, as Hecker notes in his **PREFACE**, **Midrash ha-Ne’elam al Rut** was known under other titles, namely **Midrash Rut** and **Sefer Midrash Rut he-Hadash**. One senses that the title “**Midrash ha-Ne’elam**” was tacked onto these tracts **after-the-fact**, that is, by a later editor/compiler.

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13 Also find Wolski’s “Metatron and the Mysteries of the Night in Midrash ha-Neelam: Jacob ha-Kohen’s Sefer ha-Orah and the Transformation of a Motif in the Early Writings of Moses de León (Zohar Hadash, Lekh Lekha, MhN 25c-26a),” in *Kabbalah, volume 23*. For more details, see the bibliography below.


14 The term “bilingualism” is used by Wolski in his **PREFACE** to indicate that “[t]he language of the Midrash ha-Ne’elam is partly Hebrew and partly Aramaic, and sometimes the two languages are mixed together in the same sentence”—as Tishby puts it, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1, p. 2.
VOLUME XI also contains Zohar al Shir ha-Shirim (ZOHAR ON SONG OF SONGS), along with Matnitin, Tosefta, and Sitrei Torah, which appear here as “discrete textual units” for the first time; these are usually “dispersed within the Zohar.” (PREFACE to V. XI).

VOLUME XII, featuring the combined efforts of Wolski and Hecker, is everything else: the odds and ends not included in previous volumes, i.e., the two sections on the Hekhalot, Pirkudin, Raza de Razin, Sithre Othioth, Kav ha-Middah, the commentary on Ezekiel’s chariot vision, the Zohar on the Torah portions, and other passages. Raya Mehemna and Tikkunei Zohar, however, are not included due to their being deemed imitative later works.15

Matching the highest academic standards with genuine sympathy for the text, the PRITZKER EDITION will undoubtedly become the English Zohar of choice among scholars and informed lay readers.

There are a number of translations of one particularly important set of Zohar texts: Sifre deTzeniuta16 and the Idrot (b, c, d, and e on the chart). Four versions among these stand out as the most reliable—certainly the most faithful to the original:

(1) Roy A. Rosenberg’s Anatomy of God (Ktav, 1972), which contains all four texts;
(2) Pinchas Giller’s Reading the Zohar (Oxford, 2001), which offers Sifre deTzeniuta17 and Idra de bi Mashkana (b and e);
(3) Daniel Matt’s translations in the Pritzker Zohar: Sifre deTzeniuta, VOLUME V, Idra Rabba in VOLUME VIII, and Idra Zutta VOLUME IX.
(4) in the Kabbalah Centre Zohar, Sifre deTzeniuta appears in VOLUME 11, pages 590-632, Idra Rabba in VOLUME 17, pages 126-333, and Idra Zutta in VOLUME 22, pages 357-477.

One of the founders of the Hermetic Order of Golden Dawn (established 1887), Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers, produced the well-circulated Kabbalah Unveiled (London: Redway, 1887), which contains Sifre deTzeniuta, Idra Rabba, and Idra Zutta (b, c, and d on the chart) in English. Mathers translated these texts from the Latin of Knorr von Rosenroth (Kabbala denudata, tom. II, Sulzbach: 1677-84). Notes and glosses included by Rosenroth are incorporated into Mathers’ translation, along with Mathers’ own additions and notes. With all of this extra material, much of which is

15 On Raya Mehemna and Tikkunei Zohar, see Pinchas Giller, The Enlightened Will Shine: Symbolization and Theurgy in the Later Strata of the Zohar (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993). Giller points out that, “Although these texts have been viewed by scholars as secondary to the rest of the Zohar, they have been particularly beloved by kabbalists themselves” (—p. xv.)

Raya Mehemna is included in printed editions of the Zohar, and thus appears in corresponding volumes of the Kabbalah Centre Zohar, namely volumes 9, 10, 16, 17, 20, 21, and 22. As mentioned, a large portion of Raya Mehemna (Z3 215a-258a) is the text of the three-volume translation prepared by Rabbi Philip S. Berg: The Zohar: Parashat Pinhas.

Two works offering translations of the Tikkunei Zohar are described below, pages 12-13.


quite off the mark, this is not a clear presentation of these subtle, important texts. Alas, Mathers’ is the only version of these texts which has been reprinted—numerous times at that. A recent example: The Kabbalah: The Essential Texts from the Zohar, with a foreword by Z’ev ben Shimon Halevi [SACRED TEXTS] (London: Watkins, 2005). 18

The first half of Sava (or Sava d’Mishpatim – Z: 94b-114a, h on the chart) is given in Aramaic and English, with extensive commentary (including numerous translated passages from other kabbalistic works), tables, diagrams, and twenty-one appendices, in what is described in the foreword as “a work in progress”; Zohar: Sabba d’Mishpatim – The Old Man in the Sea, PART ONE: REINCARNATION-REINCARNATION-REDEMPTION, translation and commentary by Shabtai Teicher (Jerusalem: 2004), formerly available at www.kabbalaonline.org > RECOMMENDED READING > KABBALA WORKS IN ENGLISH > CLASSIC KABBALA WORKS > The Old Man in the Sea : “To purchase...click here.” Alas, the times I checked—January 2007 through June 2008—the book was listed as “SOLD OUT.” As of December 28, 2008, it was gone. 19

Fortunately, Sava in its entirety is in the Pritzker Zohar, VOLUME V, pages 1-139; the Kabbalah Centre Zohar, VOLUME 10, pages 284-455; and the Soncino Zohar, VOLUME 3, pages 282-341. Z 94b-99b, about the first half of Sava, appears in Tishby, pages 177-97.

A translation of Midrash ha-Neelam to the BOOK OF RUTH (s on the chart) comprises the often-overlooked Mystical Study of Ruth: Midrash ha-Neelam of the Zohar to the Book of Ruth, translated and edited, with introduction and notes by Lawrence A. Englander with Herbert W. Basser (Scholars Press, 1993; keyed EwB on the chart). This work offers a translation and extended study of this incomplete segment of the Zohar Hadash in which “two major themes, the soul and the sefirot, alternate continually...” (—page xxii).

“[A]pproximately one half of the text” of Sithre Othioth, The Secrets of the Letters (p on the chart), is translated, and the whole text analyzed, in Stephen G. Wald’s book, The Doctrine of the Divine Name: An Introduction to Classical Kabbalistic Theology (Scholars Press, 1988; keyed SGW on the chart). This important work has not received the attention that it deserves.

18 For the other versions of Sifre deTzniuta and the Idrot, see the bibliography under RUNES, SASSOON & DALE, WORK OF THE CHARIOT, and ZAHAVY.


On this and other “Western Esoteric Translations of the Zohar into English and French” [of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries], see Boaz Huss, “Translations of the Zohar,” pages 99-101. Huss discusses Mathers, Isaac Myer, Nurho de Manhar, and Eliphas Lévi (all of whose works are listed in the bibliography below), along with a few other French translators.

19 Note from 12/04/2015: The Old Man in the Sea no longer appears on the list of “Recommended Kabbala Works: Classic Kabbala Works” at Kabbalah Online: http://www.kabbalaonline.org/kabbalah/article_cdo/aid/380136/jewish/Classic-Kabbalah-Works.htm
Gershom Scholem published a reader of Zohar excerpts in English: *Zohar: The Book of Splendor, Basic Readings from the Kabbalah* (Schocken Books, 1949—reprinted frequently). Scholem’s translations are of passages which appear elsewhere (e.g., SSL, Kabbalah Centre, Pritzker); however, his renderings are, in places, quite different from other translations.

Another collection of excerpts, more extensive than Scholem’s, is Daniel C. Matt’s *Zohar – The Book of Enlightenment* (Paulist Press, 1983). A fine introduction and ample notes supplement the translations. (One wonders, though, about Matt’s setting these passages in a free-verse format.) More recently, a distressing abridgement of this book appeared as *Zohar: Annotated & Explained* (Woodstock: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2002), which offers about half of the passages from the Paulist publication. Explanatory notes, massaged into conventional prose from the more academic notes of the original work, face the pages of text. The most unfortunate victim of the abridgement is the introduction: the commendable 36-page introduction of the original work was chopped to a most inadequate eight pages.

In his foreword to *Tales from the Zohar – PART 1: GENESIS* (Jerusalem: Haktav Institute, 1992), Aaron Avraham Slatki writes, “Anyone who sought to benefit from the tales of the righteous found that they are scattered throughout the sea of the Zohar, and are engulfed in the sea of concealed secret teachings and the forest of esoteric interpretations of the holy Torah. Now … anyone may derive benefit from this magnificent treasure of true practices, moral teaching, fear of G-d, and Torah teachings inherent in the wonderful tales of the Zohar.” *Tales from the Zohar*, the Zohar’s narrative segments selected and translated (into Hebrew) by David Shalom Basri, has been put into English by Edward Levin.

Eight narrative segments from the Zohar are translated, with notes and extensive commentary, in Aryeh Wineman’s *Mystic Tales from the Zohar*, with Papercut Art by Diane Palley (The Jewish Publication Society, 1997). A paperback edition of this book has been published which, unfortunately, does not include the lovely paper-cuts (Princeton University Press, 1998—MYTHOS Series).

In *Dreams of Being Eaten Alive* (Harmony Books, 2000), David Rosenberg treats the Zohar as one of the great works of world literature, albeit one not recognized as such. Rosenberg devotes some sixty pages to “New translations of the Kabbalah,” primarily Zohar, along with passages from *Midrash Rabba*, *Sefer ha-Bahir*, and *Sefer Yetzirah*, arranged by subject.20

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20 On the topic of dreams, in 1515 (Salonika) Rabbi Solomon Almoli first published his book of dream interpretations, *Pitron Halomot*. Almoli’s sources include the Talmud, the Zohar, R. Saadia Gaon, R. Hai Gaon, Maimonides, R. Eleazer of Worms, even Averroes, Avicenna, and al-Ghazzali. Two somewhat shortened translations of *Pitron Halomot* are available in English:

(1) CHAPTER TWO of *Visions of the Night: A Study in Jewish Dream Interpretation* (Shambhala, 1990) by Joel Covitz, who says (p. 9), “The first part of *Pitron Chalomot* … is at times heavy, polemical,
Seth Brody’s selection of translated texts, *Rabbi Ezra ben Solomon of Gerona: Commentary on the Song of Songs and Other Kabbalistic Commentaries* (Kalamazoo: Published for TEAMS [The Consortium for Teaching Medieval Studies] by Medieval Institute Publications / Western Michigan University, 1989) includes “Zohar Hadash: Commentary on Lamentations” which is “considered by scholars to belong to the Midrash ha-Ne’elam stratum of the Zohar” (p. 152). Along with the Zohar passage and R. Ezra’s commentary is R. Bahya ben Asher of Saragossa’s commentary on *Genesis* 1:1-2.


Scores of passages from the Zohar are translated and discussed in the numerous works of Elliot R. Wolfson; refer below to § 3: *BIBLIOGRAPHY*, where items by Wolfson far outnumber those of any other scholar catalogued. Note in particular *Luminal Darkness: Imaginal Gleanings from Zoharic Literature* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2007), which collects eight of Wolfson’s previously published articles; and the substantial *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005) in which the Zohar is central to Wolfson’s protracted and ranging discussions of gender, poetics, existence/non-existence, embodiment, and numerous other topics.

“A full translation and in depth commentary” by Perets Auerbach covering the first section of the “Zohar Volume I: Introduction” (*Haqdamat* or *Prologue: Z I*:1a-14b) is available as an e-text: *Zohar: The Book of Splendor* (Jerusalem: Association of Authentic Kabala Educators [A.A.K.E.], 2009). A.A.K.E. is described on the title page as “[a] society of sincere, genuine, dedicated kabalists who work individually and collectively to bring the light of the ancient mystical texts to the contemporary modern mind.” Find at the *KABBALA ONLINE SHOP*:  

repetitive, and even boring… In the abridged text, I have sought to spare the modern reader (Almoli’s) obsessiveness…”;

(2) Yaakov Elman’s translation, *Dream Interpretation from Classical Sources* (Ktav, 1998), which is rather less abridged than Covitz’, includes two appendices: passages from R. Manasseh ben Israel’s *Nishmat Hayyi’m* and R. Judah Moses Ftyyya’s *Minhat Yehuda Haruhot Mesapperot*.

Newly translated narratives—all from portions within the Zohar’s commentary to LEVITICUS and NUMBERS (3:20a-23a, 3:39a-41a, 3:67b-68b, 3:149a-150b, 3:157a-b, 3:159a-b, 3:267a-b, 3:303a), and two selections from ZOHAR HADASH (15 b-d, 53 c-d)—open the chapters of Nathan Wolski’s book, A Journey into the Zohar (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010). Each passage is followed by a “discursive commentary”; these commentaries cite further passages from the Zohar and other sources. Wolski writes (pages 19-20),

Zohar scholarship, which has attracted some of the greatest minds in Jewish studies, has not concerned itself with making its insights and discoveries amenable to a general readership and has been concerned instead with the kinds of questions that are quite properly the focus of academic work. This book seeks to redress this void and aims to open the mysterious, wondrous, and at times bewildering universe of one of the masterpieces of the world of mystical literature. Given the great luminaries who have explicated the world of the Zohar, it is not the intention of this study to present any radically new thesis about the Zohar. My aim, rather, is to mediate the Zohar itself, as well as the body of fascinating scholarship surrounding it—a body of literature beginning with the pioneering works of Gershom Scholem and Isaiah Tishby and continuing in our days with the works of Moshe Idel, Yehuda Liebes, Elliot Wolfson, and my teacher Melila Hellner-Eshed. My focus on zoharic exegetical narrative with particular emphasis on the literary and performative elements of the composition does, however, offer a new mode of Zohar analysis and has the additional advantage of providing nonspecialists a much clearer view into the world of the Zohar than is currently available.

From the Depth of the Well: An Anthology of Jewish Mysticism, edited by Ariel Evan Mayse (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2014) contains Zohar passages drawn primarily from Daniel Matt’s Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment, plus the Zohar Hadash passages from Seth Brody’s Commentary on the Song of Songs (both listed above).

“Translations of parts of all seventy Tikkunim, translations of parts of all 148 sections including both a and b sides,” claims the ad copy for Mark Siet’s 643-page introduction-text-commentary, Tikkunei Zohar Revealed: The First Ever English Commentary (CreateSpace, 2015). Thus, the lead-in translations of Tikkunei Zohar (u on the list) are dispersed through 550 pages of commentary, which are mostly metaphorical interpretations. For example, a passage from Siet’s commentary on Tikun 69 reads (—page 426),

Here is a deep mystery. The tree of life is contained within the garden in which the tree of knowledge of good and evil resides. It is one inside the other. The tree of life is the absolute. The tree of knowledge of good and evil represents the random occurrences or rather the chaotic occurrences that may happen.

The Tree of Life is inherent in the soul and yet the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil enwraps it. ...

What appears to be the complete Tikkunei Zohar, i.e., all seventy commentaries on the word bereshit, has been published in English as Tikkunei Zohar – Rectifications of Splendor by Shimon bar Yochai, in five volumes, listed as “tomes,” that is, Tome 1 of 5, Tome 2 of 5, etc. ([n.p.: David Smith LLC, 2016]. The ad copy at Amazon states,
[The Tikunei Zohar] contains deep secret mystical teachings, such as the account of Creation through the Hebrew letters, permutations, stirring dialogues, fervent prayers, and the explanation of the Hawayah (Tetragrammaton). The Tikunim, literally Rectifications, are meant to repair and support the Shekinah (Divine Presence), so that we can restore Man from the fallen to the perfect state again. ...

Passages from throughout the Zohar are drawn upon to compose a commentary to Tehillim in Zohar – Psalms: A Prayer Book and Teaching for World Unity and Peace, by Rabbi David M. Wexelman ([n.p.]: CreateSpace, 2017).

Most of the selections of Zohar translated on Tehillim in this book come from a translation of Zohar called Zohar Hebrew translation on Psalms. Other translation[s] that I have used are Sulam of Ashlag, Mituch Devash, etc. (—page 7)

The Zohar calls for peace. The Zohar is a book preaching unity of God and man; unity of man and man. Everyone has to change to achieve the goal of World Unity and Peace. (—page 23)

Numerous Zohar passages—and other sources—newly translated by the author appear in Eitan Fishbane’s literary analysis, The Art of Mystical Narrative: A Poetics of the Zohar (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018). Moshe Halbertal’s comment on the back cover says it well:

From Fishbane’s masterful presentation we learn that the poetic and dramatic dimensions of the Zohar do not serve merely as a narrative frame to its content, but rather they embody, enact, and perform the calling of the master of the mystical circle and his disciples.
2. **Divisions of the Zohar**

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Key to Initials:

(Full descriptions of these books and articles are given above or in the bibliography.)

DS........... David Smith (publisher). Tikunei Zohar — Rectifications of Splendor, in five volumes
GE........... Pinchas Giller. The Enlightened Will Shine.
GR........... Pinchas Giller. “Appendix” to Reading the Zohar.
IT........... Isaiah Tishby. The Wisdom of the Zohar.
KC........... Kabbalah Centre International. Zohar. (KC — followed by volume number)
MS........... Mark Siet. Tikunei Zohar Revealed.
Myer........... Isaac Myer. Qabbalah.
PE........... The Zohar: PRITZKER EDITION. (PE — followed by volume number).
SB........... Seth Brody. “Zohar Hadash: Commentary on Lamentations”
             (in Commentary on the Song of Songs)
WK........... Nathan Wolski in Kabbalah: “Metatron and the Mysteries of the Night...”

Notes to “DIVISIONS OF THE ZOHAR”:

1. IT (Tishby) contains numerous passages from the running commentary. KC 1-22 and PE 1-9 follow the running commentary. PE omits some of the inserted texts (e.g., Midrash ha-Neelam, Zohar on Song of Songs, Matnithin, Tosefta, Sithre Torah, Hekhalot, and a few others), which are published separately in VOLUMES X-XII.

2. What constitutes the Idra de bi Mashkana is a matter of some confusion. Scholem (Kabbalah, page 215) identifies it as Z2 127a-146b, whereas Roy Rosenberg (RR = Anatomy of God), following standard editions of the Zohar (i.e., paged according to the Mantua Zohar), places it at Z2 122b-123b, in apparent agreement with everyone except Scholem.

   A translation of Idra de bi Mashkana = Z2 122b-123b appears in Rosenberg (pages 182-188), Tishby (IT VOLUME 1, pages 337-341), and Giller (Reading the Zohar, pp. 169-173), as well as KC 10 (pages 547-559) and PE 5 (pages 150-158). Giller calls this section simply “The Shorter Idra” and suggests (Reading the Zohar, p. 90) that the actual Idra de bi Mashkana is lost or not identified as such because it lacks the characteristic framing narrative of the other Idrot, i.e., that of the forum of Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai and his circle. Matt states (PE 5, page 150, note 33) that while this section is surely part of the Idra literature, its identification as Idra de bi Mashkana “is doubtful.”

3. Hekhalot Z1 38a—45b and Z2 244b-262b do not appear in PE 1 and 6; these are in PE 12.

   For Z1 41a-45b, see IT, vol. II, pages 597-614, and for both sections of the Hekhalot, see KC 2, pages 14-111 and KC 13, pages 260-494.

   In the abstract to “From Hekhalot Rabbati to the Hekhalot of the Zohar: The Depersonalization of the Mysticism of the Divine Chariot,” in Jewish Studies 52 (Jerusalem: Journal of the World Union of Jewish Studies, 2017), pages 118-119*, Joseph Dan notes that the hekhalot descriptions of the Zohar differ from those in Hekhalot Rabbati in three main ways:
   • the personal aspect is completely absent
   • the divine palaces are depicted at a low stratum in the celestial realms instead of at their summit
   • a separate system of “palaces of evil,” parallel to the divine palaces, is added.

5. As a separate section, Raza de Razin is included at Z2 70a-75b in parallel columns; it is continued in ZH 35b-37c. At this juncture of the Zohar, Matt includes what is apparently part of the Zohar’s running commentary: a discussion of physiognomy, which is occasionally viewed as a separate tract.

6. Z2 94b-99b, 103a, 106a-b; see IT pages 177-197, 517, and 1511-1513.


7.b. Mark J. Mirsky states that the Zohar passage translated by Yaakov Elman in Rabbinic Fantasies (eds. Stern and Mirsky, pages 239-252—refer to the bibliography: “Elman”) is based on Z3 332-5 of the Margolioth edition. This pagination does not, indeed cannot, agree with our DIVISIONS OF THE ZOHAR chart in that our [Mantua] Zohar stops at Z3 299b. Mirsky notes that the translation appears in Zohar be-Midbar: Shelah Lecha, which, by our pagination is Z3 156b-176a; Rav Methivtha covers Z3 162a-174a. SSL omits 163a-174a; the Rabbinic Fantasies passage falls inside this gap (at Z3 166b-168a). Other passages from this gap are given in Tishby: for Z3 168b-169a, Z3 168a, and Z3 170a, see IT pages 672-3, 784-5, and 794-5.

8. Z1 81b; see PG page 427.

9. Z1 89a-90a; see PG pages 484-5.

10. Z1 97a, 98b, 99a 100a; see Myer pages 427-8.

11. Z1 148a-b; see PG pages 461-2.

12. Z1 147a-148a; see DM pages 74-79.

13. ZH 38a, 38a-b, 38d, 39d-40a, 41a; see IT pages 619, 492-3, 619-20, 643-5, and 615.

14. Z1 98a-99a, PG 496-7; Z1 135b-136a, see PM pages 243-5.

15. numerous passages

16. ZH 53 c-d in WJ, at the opening of CHAPTER 4. See also “Metatron and the Mysteries of the Night in Midrash he-Ne’elam,” in Kabbalah 23 (2010).

17. Wolski’s “Metatron and the Mysteries of the Night...” treats ZH Midrash ha-Neelam 25c-26a.

18. ZH 26b and 18d-19a; see DR pages 90-1 and 95-7.

19. numerous passages

20. Z2 40b-41a, 42b-43a; see IT pages 1317 and 265-6.

21. numerous passages

22. Matt does not identify these passages as Raya Mehemna. Indeed, Raya Mehemna is not included in the PRITZKER EDITION as it and Tikkunei Zohar have been “identified as imitations written by a later kabbalist.” (PE 1, page xv, note 2)

23. Z3 124a-126a; IT pages 1147-54.

24. Z3 275b-285a; see IT pages 262-5.

25. numerous passages

26. numerous passages

27. Giller, Reading the Zohar, p. 176, n. 8. Giller notes that Ta Hazei “was not identified [as a separate division] by Scholem or Tishby in their original delineations,” but that later Scholem (Kabbalah, pp. 217-218) added it into the list, and places it in ZH 7a and in the Cremona edition, 55-75.

PE Z1, which follows the Mantua folio numbers, stops at 251a.

28. Piqqudin = “Commandments,” i.e., commentary on the mitzvot sprinkled through the Zohar. My list is likely incomplete. The Piqqudin are not usually listed as an independent section of the Zohar.
3. **The Running Commentary: Parashot/Zohar §§**

Pritzker Edition (PE) volume numbers are included. Inserted texts that appear within the “running commentary,” i.e., Pritzker Edition volumes 1-9 are shown in green (■). Inserted texts that are appended in Pritzker Edition volumes 10-12 appear in blue (■). Texts which do not appear in the Pritzker edition are shown in red (■).

*Parashot* shown in grey (■) have no Zohar sections.

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4. BIBLIOGRAPHY


———. “The ‘Zohar’ as Palimpsest: Dismantling the Literary Constructs of a Kabbalistic Classic and the Turn to the Hermeneutics of Textual Archeology,” in


§ 1.7, “Mysticism,” discusses the Zohar; § 8.3 offers translations of Z2 42b-43a (on ein sof and the ten sefirot), Z Z3 152a (on the Torah), Z2 173a (on the ‘other side’), Z3 77b and Z2 40b (on exile and redemption) and Z1 183b (on the spiritual constitution of man).


Anidjar discusses the literature and milieu of medieval Muslim Spain via Maimonides’ Guide of the Perplexed, the Zohar, and the Arabic rhymed prose of Ibn al-Astarkuw.

Ashlag, Rabbi Yehuda. An Entrance to the Zohar [Hakdamot: Part 1] (Jerusalem: Research Centre of Kabbalah, 1974).

An introduction to the Zohar according to Ashlag’s version of Lurianic kabbalah.

_____. A Tapestry for the Soul: The Introduction to the Zohar by Rabbi Yehuda Lev Ashlag. Explanation of the text uses excerpts collated from Rabbi Ashlag’s other writings, and includes suggestions for inner work, compiled by Yedidah Cohen (Safed: Nehora Press, 2010).

“This book is a study guide to a key text in Kabbalah, The Introduction to the Zohar by Rabbi Yehudah Ashlag, as published in English in In the Shadow of the Ladder.” –PREFACE, page ix. See the explanation for the next entry.

_____. In the Shadow of the Ladder: Introductions to the Kabbalah. Translated from the Hebrew with additional explanatory chapters by Mark Cohen and Yedidah Cohen (Safed: Nehora Press, 2002).

This collection’s CHAPTER 3, “Introduction to the Zohar,” is a new translation of the text which appears as PART ONE of An Entrance to the Zohar, “A Preface to the Zohar.” CHAPTER 4 is another substantial piece by Ashlag, “Introduction to the Study of the Ten Sefirot.” The Ladder of the title refers to Ashlag’s Hebrew translation (with commentary) of the Zohar, Ha Sulam—the work translated into English now distributed by The Kabbalah Center. See below: Berg.


—Vol. II, Introduction to the Book Zohar includes “Preface to the Book of Zohar,” which is the same text as An Entrance to the Zohar, PART TWO; and “Introduction to the Book of Zohar” which is the same text as An Entrance to the Zohar, PART ONE, and In the Shadow of the Ladder, Chapter 3. Both are presented with extensive commentary.
Rav Michael Laitman, a student and personal assistant of R. Yehuda Ashlag’s son, R. Baruch Ashlag, has also written a series of introductory books on Kabbalah which are available in print and on the Internet at www.kabbalah.info > Free Kabbalah Books. See below, under “Laitman.”


Introduction = Haqdamat or PROLOGUE, i.e., Z I:1a-14b, available as an e-text from KABBALA ONLINE SHOP at http://www.kabbalaonline-shop.com/Zohar-the-Book-of-Splendor-p/perets-zohar.htm


“He is one of the first Kabbalists to quote the Zohar (the Book of Splendor).” – PREFACE, page vii.


https://www.academia.edu/3452948/A_Grammatical_Analysis_of_All_of_Israel_saw_the_letters_Zohar_Hadash_41b-c


https://www.academia.edu/34453218/A_Grammatical_Analysis_of_The_Secret_of_Sabbath_Zohar_II.135a-b


https://www.academia.edu/18890640/Embarking_on_the_Sea_of_the_Zohar_some_preliminary_questions_and_aids_to_understanding_2015


https://www.academia.edu/33838355/Exercises_in_Advanced_Grammar_of_the_Zohar


https://www.academia.edu/26967754/Teaching_the_Syntax_of_the_Sentence_in_the_Zohar_Subordinate_Clauses


Berg blends history and legend to tweak the drama of this (according to Berg) 2000-year-old text. Thus, the *Zohar* is behind Columbus, Michelangelo, and Thomas Edison. If only there hadn’t been a Ron Brown.


An extended translation of Raya Mehemna (t on the chart): vol. 1 = Z3 213a-229b, plus introduction; vol. 2 = Z3 229b-245b; vol. 3 = 246a-259a, plus indices.


With Zohar excerpts and eclectic commentary, Rav Berg attempts to make the Kabbalah’s “wisdom universally available.” It seems likely that Rav Berg intended this book as an introduction or guide to the 22-volume Zohar, which was published “under his guidance” (incorporated quotes are from the end flaps).


A central preoccupation of the Zoharic literature is the relationship between the divine and the demonic, the Sitra Ahra (Other Side). This article argues that understanding this relationship requires a close examination of the rhetorical techniques employed to portray it.


Visions includes an abridged translation of R. Solomon Almoli’s Pitron Halomot, which draws on the Zohar for its comments on dreams and their interpretation.


Khart 7. From Gerona to the Zohar
Chapter 8. The Zohar
Chapter 9. From the Zohar to Safed


Chapter 12. The Zohar: THE BEGINNING (Z1:15a-15b, 16b-17a)
Chapter 13. Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai & His Society of Mystics (Idra Rabba: Z3:127b-128a)


See especially CHAPTERS 3 and 4, “The Kabbalah in the Middle Ages” and “Main Ideas of the Medieval Kabbalah.”


Daubert translates—and Karr amends—a section from the Zohar omitted from SSL, from the French of Jean de Pauly: Le Livre de la Splendeur (Paris: 1906-11, six volumes). Tishby notes that de Pauly’s Zohar is “a notoriously unreliable version” (Wisdom of the Zohar, p. 1530). This brief translation is reprinted as § 6 below.


An abridged translation of R. Solomon Almoli’s Pitron Halomot, which draws in part on the Zohar for its comments on dreams and their interpretation.


In *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (Yale University Press, 1988: p. 8), Moshe Idel notes

> The first major work devoted to a detailed description of mainly Zoharic Kabbalah and making use of historical, philological, comparative, and conceptual perspectives was Adolphe Franck’s *La Kabbale...* Franck’s presentation contributed more to the knowledge of Kabbalah in modern Europe than did any other work prior to the studies of Scholem.


*Secret Wisdom* is an effort to introduce the core of “Qabalistic” doctrine, covering cosmogony, notions of good and evil, fall and redemption, etc., drawing on—and frequently citing—SSL, which Fuller refers to as the “Soncino edition”). Fuller’s other sources include Ginsburg’s *Kabbalah*, Waite’s *Holy Kabbalah*, Levi’s *History of Magic*, Myer’s *Qabbalah*, Ariel Bension’s *Zohar in Moslem and Christian Spain*, and Knut Stenring’s translation of *Sefer Yezirah*.


**Volume 1, pp. 369-398: Midrash ha-Neelam (Zi 122b-ff) and Tosefta (Z1 121a).**

_____.


Gersh’s efficient study manual is divided into two sections, Part One: “Kabbalah: An Overview,” and Part Two: “Selections from the Sources.” Of the ten passages, all but two (Vital’s *Etz Hayim* i:2 and *Yosher Divrei Emet*) are from the Zohar (Z3: 152a, Z2:42b, TZ:12bff [*Petch Elyahu*], Z1:83a, Z1:11b, Z1:55b, Z1:49b, and Z2:39b). All passages are accompanied by Gersh’s explanations. Appended to each chapter are study questions.

_____.


Chapter 13, “Mysticism: The Kabbalah and the Zohar,” includes a passage from the Zohar (Z2:70a-76a) on physiognomy—an odd choice for a survey chapter.


This article reappears as Chapter 2 of *Reading the Zohar*.

_____.


Giller discusses how the Zohar was interpreted by the Safed Kabbalists: Moses Cordovero and, particularly, Isaac Luria—with special attention to developments of the *Idrot*. English translations of *Sifra DeTzeniuta* and *Idra de bi Mashkana* are provided.


Later strata of the Zohar = *Raya Mehemna* and *Tikkunei Zohar*. This work has been cited as *The Tiqqunim: Symbolization and Theurgy*.


§ 4. Allegorical Interpretation of Scripture, and § 6. Cabala


“The thesis examines the hermeneutic structure of the Parashat “Lekh Lekah” of the *Zohar*, arguably the most influential work of Jewish mysticism. The thesis argues and demonstrates that the *Zohar* continues the modes of classical midrashic exegesis through the incorporation of common stylistic and formal hermeneutical elements. At the same time, the thesis will also claim that the skillful use of hermeneutical and rhetorical techniques allows for the unique concealment and disclosure of esoteric-kabbalistic meaning. In order to show the idiosyncratic relationship between mystical content and narrative elements, the thesis focuses on the detailed examination of four areas: (i) the use of frequently recurring rhetorical and linguistic formularies in the text; (2) narrative characters and personalities; (3) the significance and depiction of theurgical activities; (4)
the presence of various intertexts incorporated into the substructures of the Zoharic narrative.” (ABSTRACT, page iii)


See Volume IV, From the Rise of the Kabbala (1270 C.E.) to the Permanent Settlement of the Marranos in Holland (1618 C.E.), Chapter I: “Cultivation of the Kabbala, and Proscription of Science.” Grätz’ attitude toward the Zohar and kabbalah is reflected in segment titles such as “The Impostor Moses de Leon” and “Forgeries of the Kabbalists.”


See pp. 157-165, where two Zohar texts (Z3 209a and Z3 98a-b) are discussed. Writes Green, “Crowns and accounts of coronation are used by the Zohar with astounding frequency and in a great variety of ways” (p. 157).


This excellent introduction to the Zohar is the companion to the 12-VOLUME translation by Daniel C. Matt (vols. 1-9), Nathan Wolski (vols. 10 & 12), and Joel Hecker (vols. 11 & 12), The Zohar PRITZKER EDITION (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004—).


This superb piece is also in Essential Papers on Kabbalah, edited by Lawrence Fine (New York University Press, 1995).


Hall, Elton (intro). In the Beginning: Bereshith (Santa Barbara: Concord Grove Press, 1983).

Contains Z1 15a-24b and 29a-32a. Beyond a few alterations to the opening lines of each section, this is simply an unacknowledged copy of SSL.


*VOLUME XI: Diagram of the Ten Sefirot, Midrash ha-Nelam on Song of Songs, Midrash ha-Nelam on Ruth, Midrash ha-Nelam on Lamentations, Zohar on Song of Songs, Matnitin, Tosefta, and Sitrei Torah.*


Selections from Scholem’s *Zohar: Book of Splendor (THE BEGINNING AND THE TEN SEFIROT)* prefaced by the editor’s commentary (pp. 81-93).


There are countless references to the Zohar in this work; see in particular pp. 101-2 “Infinities of the Zohar” and the segment which follows; also pp. 304-11, “The Hidden Layer of Torah as a Maiden,” “Massive Remytholization of the Biblical Text in the Zohar,” and “Sexual Polarization as a Zoharic Exegetical Device.”


Ch. 8. The Zohar on the High Priest’s Ecstasy (Z3 67a, 102a)


Ch. 8. The Zohar on the High Priest’s Ecstasy (Z3 67a, 102a)


“The Zohar” (translated excerpts, pp. 28-34), “Publication of the Zohar” (pp. 147-54)


Admonition and apologetic burden this introduction to the Zohar and Kabbalah by a follower of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag.

“In literature and psychology as in religion, intricate constructs have been developed that speak to the human search for an inner unity that is predicated on the polar opposition of sexual and parental imagery. However it is in the Zohar, the mystical Book of “Brightness,” that sexual imagery and its concomitant qualities reach their zenith if not their extremity. It is here that the mystical speculation surrounding God and God’s attributes, derived from verses in Genesis (1:26-27), most explicitly affirms the androgynous nature of reality, a reality rooted in existence itself.” (INTRODUCTION, page 17)


This study focuses on the writings of Joseph Gikatilla, Moses de Leon, Joseph of Hamadan, David ben Yehudah he-Hasid, and to a lesser extent, Joseph ben Todros ha-Levi Abulafia and Isaac ibn Sahula.

Laitman, Rabbi Michael. See above: “Ashlag.”


“No prior knowledge is required when reading this book. Part 1 explains the essence of the wisdom of The Zohar, the reasons for its concealment for so many years, and how it can benefit us today. Part 2 talks about the way we perceive reality and the plan of Creation, and finally, how we will unlock The Zohar together to hopefully decode its secret. ... As a special treat for the curious among the readers, Appendix 3 contains selected excerpts from Zohar for All. After reading this book, you will be able to feel the power of The Zohar and enjoy its benefits.” (p. 6)


Levi includes a compacted paraphrase of Idra Rabba (though Levi refers to it as “The Idra Suta”) which can be compared with Mathers’ rendition: the divisions and subheadings correspond, indicating that Levi’s source was also Knorr von Rosenroth’s Kabbala denudata.


An English translation of Sifre deTzeniuta, Idra Rabba, and Idra Zutta rendered from the Latin of Knorr von Rosenroth’s Kabbala denudata (Sulzbach: 1677 & 1689). The translation is full of extranea—some Rosenroth’s, some Mathers’—so it is hardly a fair representation of these complex texts.


Includes a handful of Zohar passages, nearly all from Matt’s Zohar (1983).


“An important feature of The Book of Mirrors is the large number of passages from the Zohar which Rabbi David translates into Hebrew from the original pseudo-Aramaic. His renderings represent the first lengthy translations of the Zohar. Through them we see how a contemporary Kabbalist read and understood (sometimes misunderstood) the seminal Work of Kabbalah” (HUCA 51, p. 129).


The Zohar. PRITZKER EDITION (Stanford: Stanford University Press):

—2004


• VOLUME II: Diagram of the Ten Sefirot, Parashat Lekh Lekha, Parashat Va-Yera, Parashat Hayyei Sarah, Parashat Toledot, Parashat Va-Yetse.

—2006


—2007

• VOLUME IV: Diagram of the Ten Sefirot, Preface by Daniel Matt, Parashat Shemot, Parashat Va-Era, Parashat Bo, Parashat Be-Shellah, Parashet Yitro

—2009

• VOLUME V: Diagram of the Ten Sefirot, Preface by Daniel Matt, Parashat Mishpatim (Sara de-Mishpatim) plus commentary which includes the so-called Idra de bi Mashkana, Parashat Terumah plus commentary, Sifre di-Tsiuuta.

—2011

• VOLUME VI: Diagram of the Ten Sefirot, Preface by Daniel Matt, Parashat Tetsaveveh, Parashat Ki Tissa, Parashat Va-Yaqhel, Parashat Peqdei.

—2012


—2014

• VOLUME VIII: Diagram of the Ten Sefirot, Preface by Daniel Matt, Parashat Qedoshim, Parashat Emor, Parashat Be-Har, Parashat Be-Hqqotai, Parashat Be-Midbar, Parashat Naso, plus commentary which is interrupted by Idra Rabba, Parashat Be-Ha’alotekha.

—2016

• VOLUME IX: Diagram of the Ten Sefirot, Preface by Daniel Matt, Parashat Shelah Lekha which is interrupted by Rav Metivta, Parashat Qarah, Parashat Huqqat, Parashat Balaq which is interrupted by Yanoqa, Parashat Pinehas, Parashat Va-Ethannan, Parashat Va-Yellkh, Parashat Ha’azina which is interrupted by Idra Zuta.


Though the editor claims that neither of these selections from the Zohar had been previously translated, the so-called “Hechaloth” (hekhalot) section had already appeared in English several times:

- in SSL (1931-4) vol. 3, pages 130-7, in a section which, in SSL, is rightly referred to as Raya Mehemna
- in Scholem’s Zohar – The Book of Splendor (1949), pages 77-81
- in R. Yehuda Ashlag’s Entrance to the Zohar (1974), pages 143-52, though this rendering appears to be paraphrased.

Translations of “Petach Eliyahu,” a hymn from Tikkunei Zohar, had also previously appeared in English:

- in Raphael Ben Zion’s Way of the Faithful (1945), pages 5-7; this collection was reprinted in the early ‘seventies by Yesod under the title Anthology of Jewish Mysticism (reprinted again in 1981 by Judaica Press, New York);

In The Secret Garden (p. 149), the Zohar segment there called “Hechaloth” was mistakenly numbered Z1 42b-43a, which, if correct, would set this passage into the first of the Hekhalot sections. However, the correct number for the section given is Z2 42a-43b, which is, in fact, part of Raya Mehemna.


The same translation as in Matt’s Zohar, pp. 75-9.


Myer, Isaac. L.L.B. Qabbalah. The Philosophical Writings of Solomon Ben Yehudah Ibn Gebirol or AVICEBRO and their connection with the Hebrew Qabbalah and Sepher ha-Zohar,
with remarks upon the antiquity and content of the latter, and translations of selected passages from the same. Also An Ancient Lodge of Initiates, Translated from the Zohar, and an abstract of an essay upon the Chinese Qabbalah, contained in the book called the Yih King; a translation of part of the Mystic Theology of Dionysios, the Areopagite; and an account of the construction of the ancient Akkadian and Chaldean Universe, etc. (Philadelphia: privately printed [by MacCalla & Company], 1888 [350 copies]; reprinted New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974; reprinted San Diego: Wizards Bookshelf, 1988).

Myer’s book discusses ibn Gebirol’s work in relation to the Zohar and analyzes his Mekor Hayim. The bulk of the book is a survey of kabbalah’s history and relationship to other religious systems. Myer’s last chapters are devoted to translated excerpts from the Zohar (Zohar excerpts appear in Chapters 3, 4, 18, 19, 20, and Appendix A).

Myer confused, or reinterpreted, some doctrine, e.g., the roles and order of the second and third sefirot: hokhmah and binah (pp. 259-63).


Neubauer disputes the antiquity of both texts. He includes translations from Meir ben Simeon of Narbonne (1245) on the Book Bahir and from Isaac of Acco’s letter on the Zohar.


Nurho offers the first three portions of the running commentary (Z1 1a-96b), including sections omitted by SSL (e.g., the first scheme of the hekhalot. This version is a “non-literal” translation rendered in the light of Mme. Blavatsky’s teachings, and throughout there are explanatory notes drawn from her works.

Nurho de Manhar was William Williams, an early member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.


Excerpts of the Zohar; see especially those passages listed on the divisions chart: P(G)


Zohar excerpts throughout; see especially those listed on the divisions chart: P(M).


Translated passages: Z1 249b-50a, Z2 23a, Z2 23b-24b, Z2 73a-b, along with excerpts from de Leon’s Sefer Sheqel ha-Qodesh.


   Ch. VI. Introduction to the Letter of Rittangel and the Jew of Amsterdam
   Ch. VII. The Letters Translated
   Ch. VIII. Rittangel, the Mystic – the Zoharic Passage in the Letters

   Ch. 8. The Afterlife Journey of the Soul in Kabbalah (pages 273-327)


Raskin, Saul. Kabbalah in Word and Image, with the Book of Creation and from the Zohar (New York, Academy Photo Offset, Inc., 1952): “The Zohar, Its Author and Teaching,” with illustrated translations from the Zohar:
   “I must add with appreciation that all references and excerpts from the Zohar are based upon the translations in English made by Maurice Simon and Harry Sperling.” (—page 3)


   “New Translations of the Kabbalah,” primarily Zohar (along with passages from Midrash Rabba, Sefer ha-Bahir, and Sefer Yetzirah), gathered according to theme.

   Rosenberg’s is among the best translations of Sifre deTzeniuta and the Idrot (b, c, d, and e on the divisions chart; Rosenberg is keyed as RR).

   The text portion of Mathers’ Kabbalah Unveiled.


*Kabbalah Decoded* gives yet another translation of *Sifre deTzeniuta* and the *Idrot* (b-e on the chart), though with a unique purpose. Sassoon and Dale see in these texts a technical manual for a “manna machine,” thus offering a “non-mystical” explanation of how the Jews were fed in the wilderness. This theory is exhaustively developed in *The Manna Machine* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1978) by the same authors, in which they “lay bare the description [of the Ancient of Days of the Zohar] in all its anthropomorphic detail, matching it piece by piece to similar machines made today for oxygen regeneration and food production in closed environments.” They theorize that this manna machine was brought down by a being from outer space, who set it up to help the Jews. In spite of this far-flung interpretation, *The Kabbalah Decoded* offers a clear, “literal” translation of the texts from the original Aramaic, with many interesting notes on the peculiar language of the Zohar.


The same translation appears in Meltzer’s *Secret Garden*.


22. The Decree (ZH 26b)
23. The Curtain of Fire (Z2 14a-15a)
24. A Saint from the Other World (Z1 5a-7b)
25. The Golden Scepter (Z2 13a-b; Z1 1721-b)
26. The Book of Adam (Z1 117b-118a)
28. The Celestial Academy (Z1 117b)
29. The Book of Flying Letters (Z1 216b-217a)


Schwartz reports dozens of passages from the Zohar in this award-winning book (National Jewish Book Award, 2005). A cluster of material from the Zohar is cited within Schwartz’s treatment of the shekhinah (pages 53-60).


“Chapters on Kabbalah will [cover] some of the analogues for tselem that are used in Zoharic literature to extend the divine image to aspects of the created world. The midrashic notion that the human unites heaven and earth through being in the tselem of the ‘upper ones’ or heavens will be compared with the ideas that evolved in Kabbalah, especially in Yosef Ashkenazi and Isaiah Horowitz, in which the tselem within the human is comprised of the image of all beings and levels of creation.” (from the ABSTRACT)


[Shimon bar Yochai]. *Tikunei Zohar – Rectifications of Splendor*, in five volumes = Tome 1 of 5, Tome 2 of 5, etc. ([n.p.: David Smith LLC, 2016/eUniversity.pub, 2018].


§ I of *Jewish Mysticism*, “The Zohar,” lists a total of 18 primary and 13 secondary sources, some of which I have not seen. Of these, Spector includes

**Primary Sources:**

- **I3:** Hebrew Literature, Comprising Talmudic Treatises, Hebrew Melodies and the Kabbalah Unveiled. Intro. Epiphanius Wilson (New York: Colonial Press, 1901) [anthology – The Kabbalah Unveiled portion is, indeed, from Mathers. “Public domain” reprints of Hebrew Literature are circulating.]
- **I10:** Shahn, Ben. *The Alphabet of Creation: An Ancient Legend from the Zohar*. With drawings by Ben Shahn (New York: Schocken Books, 1954. rpt. 1965, 1982). [I have seen this; the whole production has always struck me as rather cutesy. The text is from SSL.]

**Secondary Sources:**

- **I20:** Fluegel, Maurice. “Philosophy and Qabbala: The Zohar, Copernicus and Modern Astronomy.” *Menorah* 29 (New York: Menorah Publishing Company, 1900), 77-84. (translates ZIII 9-10)
- **I28:** Levertoff, Paul P. “Some Aspects of Jewish Mysticism.” *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute, or Philosophical Society of Great Britain* 65 (1933), 71-87. [Excerpts from Levertoff’s portions of SSL.]
- **I29:** Stern, S. M. “Rationalism and Kabbalists in Medieval Allegory.” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 6 (1955), 73-86.


“In this chapter, I present the Zohar as an alternative to the philosophic conception of happiness and, in turn, to the philosophers’ approach to the religious life.” (page 291)


Two extracts from the study portions of Wisdom are reprinted in Essential Papers on Kabbalah, ed. Lawrence Fine (New York: NYU Press, 1995): “The Doctrine of Man in the Zohar,” and “Prayer and Devotion in the Zohar.”


“...I have concentrated on the three main areas of Kabbalistic creativity: the literature of the Zohar, the Lurianic corpus as expressed by Chaim Vital and parts of the Chasidic mystical tradition.” (page xlii)


This piece appears in revised form as Chapter 11 of Verman’s History and Varieties of Jewish Meditation (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc., 1996).


Translation of the first half of Sithre Othioth, p on the divisions chart; Wald is keyed SGW.


An inexpensive (alas cheap) paper edition of this book has been published which, unfortunately, does not include the lovely paper-cuts (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998—MYTHOS Series).

Wijnhoven, Jochanan H. A. “The Zohar and the Proselyte” in Texts and Responses: Studies Presented to Nahum N. Glatzer on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday by His

“Two major streams of thought on the proselyte coexist in Jewish literature. One stresses the equality of the convert and the born Israelite, the other views the convert as of lower status. ...one has to say that the Zohar stresses inequality.” (—page 120)


Translated excerpts.

NOTE: Items by Elliot R. Wolfson marked with an asterisk (*) are reprinted in Luminal Darkness—listed below.


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The Gaon of Vilna (1720-97) is “cited to illustrate the linguistic process of God’s self-disclosure” through his comments on Sefer Yezirah and the Zohar.

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*“Light through Darkness: The Ideal of Human Perfection in the Zohar,” in *Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 81, no. 1. (Cambridge: Harvard Divinity School, 1988).*


*“Occultation of the Feminine and the Body of Secrecy in Medieval Kabbalah,” in *Rending the Veil: Concealment and Secrecy in the History of Religions [NEW YORK UNIVERSITY ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN COMPARATIVE RELIGIONS]* [NEW YORK UNIVERSITY ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN COMPARATIVE RELIGIONS], edited by Elliot R. Wolfson (New York: Seven Bridges Press, LLC, 1999); also in *Elliot R. Wolfson: Poetic Thinking*, edited by Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and Aaron W. Hughes (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2015), pages 35-68.


A chapter (CHAPTER 7) bearing the same title appears in Wolson’s Through a Speculum That Shines (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), which is a greatly revised and enhanced version of the original article.


“In a particularly beautiful Zoharic composition known as Rav Metivta, the Master of the Academy, the Companions of the Zohar ascend to the celestial academies of the members of this generation where they not only learn of their blessed fate, but also merit to participate in a most dynamic and animated fashion in their celestial existence.” (pages 83-4)

Appendices offer two passages from Rav Metivta: “Appendix A: The Companions in the Garden of Eden” and “Appendix B: Rabbi Shimon and the Spirit-Guides.”

Wolski, Nathan; and Hecker, Joel. The Zohar. PRITZKER EDITION (Stanford: Stanford University Press):
—2017

• VOLUME XII: Hekhalot, Pikkudin, Raza de Razin, Sithre Othioth, Kav ha-Middah, the commentary on Ezekiel, and Tosefta.


Contains “Hechaloth” (incorrectly numbered Zt 42b-43a) and “Petach Eliyahu” from Tikkunei Zohar – the same pieces as in Meltzer’s Secret Garden.

[WC #2]
2. 2 – C . [ii] Idra Rabba (Hollywood: Work of the Chariot, n.d.)
3. 2 – C . [iii] Lesser Holy Assembly (= Idra Zutta) (n.p., n.d.)

Work of the Chariot has a website (www.workofthechariot.com) where one can find all of the translations listed along with articles on the “Mystical Qabalah” covering “Background,” “Sources,” “Core Teachings,” “Practices,” and a glossary. These articles also appear in a book advertised at the site: Qabalah: The Mystical Heritage of the Children of Abraham, by Daniel Hale Feldman (Work of the Chariot, 2001).


https://www.academia.edu/14658006/The_controversy_on_the_antiquity_of_the_Zohar_in_its_Sabbatean_context


Mathers' translation of Idra Zutta is introduced by Zahavy's ten-page essay, “Some Basic Elements of Kabbalah Study.”


Ziegler describes the rites of Passover, Sabbatical and Jubilees “in terms of the electrical effects that caused a divine light to shine on the devotees.” Ziegler draws on the Zohar to “rediscover the ancient wisdom of the Bible.”


BOOK ONE, Chapter Three: “The Zohar.”
5. RECOMMENDATIONS

If the reader wishes to get acquainted with the Zohar but is reluctant to spend several hundred dollars in doing so, there are some fine sources in paperbound editions. (Refer to the bibliography for details on the following titles.)

- Green A Guide to the Zohar
- Matt [DM] Zohar – The Book of Enlightenment
- Scholem Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism

For the committed reader, researcher, or librarian wishing to acquire a definitive selection (as far as that is possible in English), to the above list add

- Berman Divine and Demonic
- Fishbane The Art of Mystical Narrative
- Giller The Enlightened Will Shine
- Hecker Mystical Bodies, Mystical Meals
- Hellner-Eshed A River Flows from Eden
- Huss The Zohar: Reception and Impact
- Kabbalah Centre [KC] The Zohar — [22 volumes]
- Liebes Studies in the Zohar
- Rosenberg [RR] Anatomy of God
- Tishby [IT] The Wisdom of the Zohar [3 volumes]
- Wolfson Luminal Darkness
- Wolski A Journey into the Zohar
- Yisraeli Temple Portals

This list is confined to works on the Zohar, so it must not be thought of as an adequate list of works on kabbalah or Jewish mysticism in general. Scholem’s Major Trends would be an excellent place to start.

To obtain a solid impression of Jewish mysticism and kabbalah, my recommendation is to read

- Scholem’s Major Trends...
- Idel’s Kabbalah: New Perspectives
- Wolfson’s Through a Speculum that Shines


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21 This title might not bear the critical scrutiny which the other works on the list would. See my comments above, page 4.

6. Zohar I 51b-52a


(51 b) Note: the beings on high are all of the same illumination, being of celestial essence, whereas the beings below are of a different essence. They (the lower) are to this illumination (the higher) as the candle is to the flame.

Note: all space is divided into 45 parts (of which) each shows a different color. These seven different colors are the ones which, upon the striking of their emanations against the gems from seven mines, draw forth water, for it is the air of the color white which changes itself in water.

The light and the shadows are the only elements which form air and water. The one constituent element with light forms air, the one with shadows forms water.

On leaving its source, the light divides into 75 channels directed toward the material world. Upon the light’s entrance into each of these channels a voice thunders which causes the deep to tremble. The voice makes heard these words: DIVIDE YOURSELF, O MATTER, IN ORDER FOR THE LIGHT TO PENETRATE WITHIN YOU. Thus it is written: DEEP CALLS TO DEEP AT THE THUNDER OF THY CATARACTS (channels) [Ps. 42:7].

\(^{23}\) This rendition of Zv51b-52a was completed in the winter (January-February) of 1978, being the first of a proposed series of translations from various sources selected to fill the numerous gaps in SSL. Subsequently, four English translations of this passage have appeared:

Below these channels there are 375 trenches, of which one part is of the color white, another of the color black, and the third of the color red. These trenches are divided into 17 classes, of which each presents the shape of a chain-net. Two of these chain-nets have the quality of iron, and two others that of copper (or brass).

At the two extremities of space are situated two thrones which are in constant communications with the channels and the trenches which go from one to the other. Each of these thrones forms a sky, one of which is on the right side and the other on the left. The one on the right is of the color black and the one on the left is multicolored. (52 a)

As the light goes from one throne to the other, it follows, for each time that the light of a throne has reached the other, by means of the course of channels mentioned, it returns near to the first throne to draw for itself new strength.

Thus, the light travels, through specific channels, from the throne on the right to the throne on the left, and returns, through certain other channels, from the throne on the left to the throne on the right. So it is with the blood in the veins of the human body. The blood ascends to the heart through specific veins and returns through others.

Such is the vision of this area of space which forms seven different colors. These seven colors constitute the supreme mystery.

Seven other lights are divided into seven seas, which together amount to one giant sea. This last is the supreme sea where seven others are concentrated.

The seven lights previously discussed fall into this giant sea and then become separated into seven parts, to correspond to the number of seven seas which, in essence, form the branches of the greater one, and thus is it written: AND SMITE IT INTO SEVEN CHANNELS [Is. 11:15].

Each of the seven branches subdivides into seven pools, each pool into seven rivers, each river into seven streams. The result is that the one preceding the water of the giant sea, of its branches, of its seven pools, of the seven rivers, of the seven streams, is connected (all with all).

A large fish, emanating from the left side, runs over all these courses of water. Its scales are as solid as iron. A flame shoots from its mouth which consumes all that returns along its path. Its tongue is tapered like a sword. With all its might it strains to penetrate the sanctuary, which is the giant sea, to defile its holiness, to extinguish the lights, and escape from the waters of the giant sea, once frozen, never again to impose itself on its (the sea’s) branches.
This mystery is conveyed in the words of the scriptures: NOW THE SERPENT WAS MORE SUBTLE THAN ANY OTHER WILD CREATURE THAT YHVH ELOHIM HAD MADE. The awful serpent wanted to realize his goal: to defile the upper holiness by beginning to contaminate man here in the lower world. Recognizing the manner of construction of all the courses of water, he understood that causing the water of a stream to be briny would, in effect, reach all the way to the great sea. That is why he came to seduce man down here (on earth): in order to intercept the inferior watercourses with the major ones. The serpent had thus brought on the death of the world. He emanated from the left side. He was able to furtively enter the interior of man. But there is another serpent which emanated from the right side. Both serpents accompany man throughout his life.

The scriptures said: …MORE SUBTLE THAN ANY OTHER WILD CREATURE THAT YHVH ELOHIM HAD MADE. For not all the animals on earth had been endowed with so much skill at wronging man as has been the serpent—because he constituted the veinstone of gold.

Bad luck to him who permits himself to hurry away from the serpent, for the serpent will cause that person’s demise, and that of his successors as soon as that have arrived.

Adam was unable to avoid the serpent because he wanted to taste all of the pleasures (secrets) of the world below. The serpent, in showing him all of the pleasures of the world, interested him, and caused death for him and for all the generations which succeeded him.

Until the day when Israel was placed at the foot of Mount Sinai, the contamination of the serpent did not vanish from the world. As the scriptures said, That was when Adam and Eve sinned by attaching themselves to the tree of death.