Notes on the Zohar in English
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THE ZOHAR, or Sefer ha-Zohar, 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).

Work 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 León (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 León's work.*

Since the 2001 update of this paper, it may be said that a publication which can viably claim to be a complete Zohar in English has been published—and two others have been promised; see below regarding the editions of (1) the Kabbalah Centre International, (2) Fiftieth Gate Publications, and (3) Stanford University (= the PRITZKER EDITION). Before this, only two-thirds to three-quarters of the Zohar had been put into English, and that spread over a handful of separate publications.

* On the authorship of the Zohar, see Yehuda Liebes, “How the Zohar Was Written,” in Studies in the Zohar (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993). On the Zohar’s internal chronology and on 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.


This paper is divided into five 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. 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
4. RECOMMENDATIONS concerning the pursuit of Zohar study
5. “Zohar I 51b-52a...”

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. (Complete publication information on this and all other books discussed in this section is given in § 3. BIBLIOGRAPHY.) 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* (b 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 offering such complete and lucid introductions. By 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 Simon, Sperling, and Levertoff: *The Zohar* (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 many of the particularly difficult passages from the running commentary itself.

Introductory material and notes are minimal. Gershom Scholem (*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.”

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

* The Soncino Zohar has been produced on CD-ROM for both Mac and Windows. The Zohar, which is the same as the books, can be gotten alone or on a CD-ROM 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 Tosefta on the Talmud are in Hebrew only. The Soncino Zohar requires 128MB RAM, CD-ROM drive, and 1.8 GB free hard drive space for installation. On the Internet, go to www.soncino.com.
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 earlier work. Thus, here one finds THE BOOK OF CONCEALMENT, the Idrot, both Hekhalot sections, etc. While not unreasonably priced at around $20 per 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.”

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.”

An older multi-volume work from Kabbalah Centre is the translation of one particularly significant section of the Zohar prepared by Rabbi Phillip S. Berg: The Zohar: Parashat Pinhas (3 volumes, Research Centre of Kabbalah, 1987-8, keyed as PSB on the chart). The set presents a major portion of Raya Mehemna (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.

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 portions of the Torah: Bereishit, Noah, Lech Loecha, 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], Zit 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].
The most important recent development in Zohar scholarship and publication is Stanford University’s PRITZKER EDITION* of the Zohar, in both Aramaic and English, prepared by Daniel Matt. The English translation is from a “critical text” which Matt composed (using the Margaliot edition as a starting point) “based on a selection and evaluation of the manuscript readings” (p. XVII) 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 embedded commentary). When completed, this edition will run twelve volumes. The first five volumes have been published (2004: VOLUME I, Z1:1a-76b, omitting Z1:38a-45b = Hekhalot, which will appear in a subsequent volume; VOLUME II, Z1:76b-165b; 2006: VOLUME III, Z1: 166a-251a; 2007: VOLUME IV, Z2: 2a-94a; and 2009: VOLUME V, Z2: 94b-179a, which includes §§ Sava de-Mishpatim and Sifre di-Tsniuta).

The numerous footnotes constitute a helpful commentary to the text. Matt draws on a 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. Matching the highest academic standards with genuine sympathy for the text—Matt describes his translation as “literal yet poetic” (p. XX)—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 deTzeniuta and the Idrat (b, c, d, and e on the chart). Three 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 deTzeniuta** and Idrat de bi Mashkana (b and e); (3) Sifre deTzeniuta in Daniel Matt’s Zohar, VOLUME 5 (Stanford, 2009). For the other versions of these texts, see the bibliography under MATHERS, SASSOON & DALE, RUNES, WORK OF THE CHARIOT, and Zahavy; these sections also appear in the Kabbalah Centre Zohar.

A translation of Midrash ha-Neelam to the BOOK OF RUTH (s on the chart) comprises The 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. Englebard with Herbert W. Basser (Scholars Press, 1993; keyed EwB on the chart).

The first half of Sava (or Sava d’Mishpatim – Z2: 94b-104a, b on the chart) is given in Aramaic and English, with commentary and 21 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/RESURRECTION/REDEMPTION; translation and commentary by Shabtai Teicher (Jerusalem: 2004 formerly available at www.kabbalaonline.org > RECOMMENDED KABBALA BOOKS IN ENGLISH > RECOMMENDED KABBALA WORKS : TO VIEW COMPLETE ARTICLE > The Old Man in the Sea : “To purchase…click here.” Alas, the times I checked—January 2007 through June 2008—the book was listed “SOLD OUT.” As of December 28, 2008, it’s gone). Fortunately, Sava in its entirety is in Daniel Matt’s Zohar, VOLUME 5.

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* PRITZKER is the name of the sponsor of the Zohar translation/publication project—not the name of a publisher or manuscript collection as many assume. The Aramaic text which serves as the basis for Matt’s translation can be viewed at Stanford’s site, www.sup.org/zohar > Aramaic Text Online.

** See also Pinchas Giller, “A Working Translation of the Sifra de-Tzeniuta,” which is § III of Textual Reasoning: The Postmodern Jewish Philosophy Network, Volume 6, Number 2 (May/June 1997), which can be viewed on-line at http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/journals/tr/archive/pmj97/pmjp6_2.html

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); however, his renderings are, in places, quite different.

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 8 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 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: 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.*

* 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 Joel Covitz’ Visions of the Night: A Study in Jewish Dream Interpretation (Shambhala, 1990), who says (p. 9), “The first part of Pitron Chalomot...is at times heavy, polemical, 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 Hayyim and R. Judah Moses Frayya’s Minhat Yehuda Harnhat Mesappert. Elman’s introduction is scant. To fill this void, see Monford Harris, “The Interpretation of Dreams by a Sixteenth-Century Rabbi,” in Studies in Jewish Dream Interpretation (Jason Aronson Inc., 1994), pp. 39-63. Also find also Annelies Kuyt’s article, “With one Foot in the Renaissance: Shlomoh Almoli and his Dream Interpretation,” in Jewish Studies Quarterly, Volume 6, No. 3 (1999), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck.


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 hefty *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” (i.e., 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.”

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), along with 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.
2. DIVISIONS OF THE ZOHAR

a. commentary on the Torah
   SSL   IT   KC: 1-22/
   M: 1—

b. Sifre de'Tzeniuta
   Z2 176b—179a  RR  PG  KC: 11 / M: 5

c. Idra Rabba
   Z3 127b—145  RR  KC: 17

d. Idra Zutta
   Z3 287b—296b  RR  KC: 22

c. Idra de bi
   Z2 127a—146b  RR  PG  KC: 11
   Mashkana

f. Hekhalot
   Z1  38a—45b3  IT  KC: 2
   Z2  244b—262b  KC: 13

g. Raza de Razin
   Z2  70a—76b  SSL  KC: 10
   Z2  76b—78a  KC: 10
   ZH  35b—37c

h. Sava
   Z2  94b—114a  SSL  IT4/ST  KC: 10 / M: 5

i. Yenuka
   Z3  186a—192a  SSL  IT  KC: 19

k. Rav Methivtha
   Z3 161b—163a  SSL  KC: 18
   Z3 163a—174b5  KC: 18

l. Sithre Torah
   Z1  15a—2b  SSL  KC: 1
   parallel cols
   74b—75a
   76b—77a
   78b—81b  P(G)6
   88a—90a  P(G)7
   97a—102a  Myer8
   107b—111a
146b—149b P(G)\(^9\)
151b—152a DM\(^{10}\)
154b—157b
161b—162b

Z2 146a

m. Mathnithin Z1 64a, 74, 97, 100b, 107b, 121, 147, 151, 154, 161b, 165, 232, 233b, 251
Z2 4a, 12b, 68b, 74, 270b
Z3 49, 73b
ZH 1d, 3a, 122b, 195a

n. Z to S OF S ZH 61d—75b

o. Kav ha-Middah ZH 56d—58d

p. Sithre Othioth ZH 1b—7b SGW

q. comm. on EZ ZH 37c—41b IT\(^{11}\)

r. Midrash ha-Neelam Z1 97a—140a P(GM)\(^{12}\) IT\(^{13}\) KC: 3-4
Z2 4a—5b SSL KC: 8
14a—22a SSL IT\(^{14}\) KC: 8
35b—40b SSL KC: 9
ZH 2b—26b NW\(^{15}\) DR\(^{16}\)
27b—28d IT\(^{17}\)

s. M h-N on S OF S ZH 60a—61d

M h-N on RUTH ZH 75a—90b EwB

M h-N on LAM ZH 91a—93b

t. Raya Mehemna Z2 40b—43b SSL IT\(^{18}\) KC: 9
114a—121a IT\(^{19}\) KC: 10
Key to initials:
DR…………David Rosenberg. Dreams of Being Eaten Alive.
EwB………Englander with Basser. The Mystical Study of Ruth.
IT…………Isaiah Tishby. The Wisdom of the Zohar.
KC…………Kabbalah Centre International. Zohar. (KC followed by volume number)
Myr…………Myer. Qabbalah.
NW………Nathan Wolski. A Journey into the Zohar.
P(G)………Patai. Gates to the Old City.
P(GM)……Patai. Gates to the Old City and The Messiah Texts.
PG…………Pinchas Giller. “Appendix” to Reading the Zohar.
PSB………Phillip S. Berg. The Zohar: Parashat Pinhas.
SB…………Seth Brody. “Zohar Hadash: Commentary on Lamentations”
(S in Commentary o n the Song of Song s)
SGW………S. G. Wald. The Doctrine of the Divine Name.
SSL………Simon, Sperling, and Levertov. The Zohar.

(Full descriptions of these books are given in the bibliography.)

Other abbreviations:
Z……………Zohar
ZH…………Zohar Hadash
cols……….columns
comm……….commentary
M h-N………..Midrash ha-Neelam
S OF S……….SONG OF SONGS
LAM…………LAMENTATIONS
EZ…………….EZEKIEL
Notes to “DIVISIONS OF THE ZOHAR”:

1. IT (Tishby) contains numerous passages from the running commentary. KC and Matt’s PRITZKER EDITION follow the running commentary. Matt omits inserted texts; these will be published separately.

2. What constitutes the Idra de bi Mashkana is a matter of some confusion. Scholem identifies it as Z2 127a-146b (which is included in SSL), whereas Rosenberg, following standard editions of the Zohar (i.e., paged according to the Mantua Zohar), places it at Z2 122b-123b, which is not included in SSL; translations of this section appear in Rosenberg, Tishby, and Giller. Giller calls it simply “The Shorter Idra,” and he 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.

3. Hekhalot Z1 38a—45b does not appear in Matt’s VOLUME 1; it will be included in a later volume. For Z1 41a-45b, see IT 597-614.

4. Z2 94b-99b, 103a, 106a-b; see IT 177-97, 517, 1511-13.

5. Mirsky states that the passage translated in Rabbinic Fantasies (ed. Stern and Mirsky—see the bibliography) is based on Z3 332-5 of the Margolioth edition. This pagination does not, indeed cannot, agree with our divisions 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 covers Z3 156b-176a. SSL leaves a huge gap at 163a-174a: Mirsky’s passage falls inside this gap, probably somewhere around Z3 167a-168a. Other passages from this gap are given in Tishby: Z3 168b-169a, Z3 168a, and Z3 170a; see IT 672-3, 784-5, 794-5. For this section intact, see Kabbalah Centre’s Zohar, volumes 17 and 18; the section which matches the Rabbinic Fantasies segment appears in KC, volume 18, pp. 112-130.


6. Z1 81b; see P(G) 427.
7. Z1 89a-90a; see P(G) 484-5.
8. Z1 97a, 98b, 99a 100a; see Myer 427-8.
9. Z1 148a-b; see P(G) 461-2.
10. Z1 147a-148a: see DM 75-79.
11. ZH 38a, 38a-b, 38d, 39d-40a, 41a; see IT 619, 492-3, 619-20, 643-5, 615.
12. Z1 98a-99a, P(G) 496-7; Z1 135b-136a, see P(M) 243-5.
13. numerous passages
14. numerous passages
15. ZH 53 c-d in NW, at the opening of CHAPTER 4.
16. ZH 26b and 18d-19a; see DR 90-1 and 95-7.
17. numerous passages
18. Z2 40b-41a, 42b-43a; see IT 1317, 265-6.
19. numerous passages
20. Z3 124a-126a; IT 1147-54.
3. BIBLIOGRAPHY


§ 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-Astarkuwi.


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


“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 below.


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.
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.


Zohar passages, pp. 118-132


*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.


Chapter 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)


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.


*Midrash ha-Neelam* is s on the chart.


Ch. 9. A View from the Zohar: The Dynamics of the Sefirot
Ch 10. The Harmony of the Sefirot: The Conjunctive Points


*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 Yetzirah*.


a. *Midrash ha-Neelam* (Z1 122b-ff)

b. *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* 1:2 and *Yeshur Dinei Emet* are from the Zohar (Z3: 152a, Z2:42b, TZ:12hff (*Petich Elyahub*, Z1:83a, Z1:11b, Z1:55b, Z1:49b, and Z2:39b). All 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.


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


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.


The Zohar is cited throughout Ginzberg’s voluminous notes. See vol. 7, “Index of Passages,” pp. 573-580. The 1956 abridged version, Legends of the Bible (Simon and Schuster) and the paperback reprint of it from 1961, Legends of the Jews (one volume), are not very helpful, having neither notes nor an index.


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).


The thesis examines the hermeneutic structure of the Parashat “Lekh Lekhah” 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: (1) 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.” Regarding the Zohar, Grätz’ attitude toward the subject is reflected in segment titles such as “The Impostor Moses de Leon” and “Forgeries of the Kabbalists.”

This excellent introduction to the Zohar is the companion to the (proposed) 12-volume translation by Daniel C. Matt, *The Zohar PRITZKER EDITION* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004—).


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


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, which is problematic to begin with.


See especially CHAPTER FIVE, “The Image of God as Suckling Mother in *Sefer ha-Zohar*.


id


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; and 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)


“The Zohar” (pp. 28-34 contains translated excerpts)

“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.


The paradoxes are those “the Zohar maintains regarding the being of the world and the human self. … [T]he Zohar presents a picture of reality in which the cosmos and the human self are both one with and other than God simultaneously,” (from the ABSTRACT, p. v) “Becoming one with God is a central aspect of the dialectical worldview of
the Zohar in a way that does not resolve the tension of these paradoxes. Moreover, mystical annihilation itself is paradoxical, in that the unification of the self with God is also a unification of the cosmos and the divine self with transcendence in a way that is both annihilative, yet renewing and sustaining.” (p. 270)

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


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.


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 quite off the mark, this is not a clear presentation of these subtle, important texts. Ironically, it is the only version which has been reprinted—several times at that. The most recent example: The Kabbalah: The Essential Texts from the Zohar, with a foreword by Zev ben Shimon Halevi (SACRED TEXTS). London: Watkins, 2005.


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


“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 Scholars Press edition of Book of Mirrors is a slightly revised version of Matt’s Ph.D dissertation, SEFER MAROT HA-ZOVE’OT by Rabbi David ben Yehuda he-Hasid: Text and Study


  —2006.
  —2007
- VOLUME IV: Diagram of the Ten Sefirot, Preface by Daniel Matt, Parashat Shemot, Parashat Va-Era, Parashat Be, Parashat Be-Shallah, Parashet Yitro
  —2009
- VOLUME V: Diagram of the Ten Sefirot, Preface by Daniel Matt, Parashat Mishpatim (Sava de-Mishpatim) plus commentary, Parashat Terumah plus commentary, Sifre di-Tsniuta.


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

a. in SSL (1931-4) vol. 3, pp. 130-7, in a section which, in SSL, is rightly referred to as Raya Mehemna;
b. in Scholem’s reader (1949), pp. 77-81;
c. in R. Yehuda Ashlag’s Entrance to the Zohar (1974), pp. 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), pp. 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.


website: http://kabbalah_1.tripod.com/kabbalah/id2.html


Also in Matt’s Zohar, pp. 75-9.


Zohar excerpts in Chapters 3, 4, 18, 19, 20, and Appendix A.


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 Golden Dawn.


Excerpts of the Zohar; see especially those 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


“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 one of the better translations of *Sifre deTzeniuta* and the *Idiot* (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 de Tzeniuta* 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.*


One of the better popular books of (Zoharic) Kabbalah.


Fifth Lecture. The Zohar 1. The Book and Its Author

Sixth Lecture. The Zohar 2. The Theosophic Doctrine of the Zohar


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 4a-b)*

29. The Book of Flying Letters *(Z1 216b–217a)*


“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)


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

Primary Sources:

Secondary Sources:
- 120: Fluegel, Maurice. “Philosophy and Qabbala: The Zohar, Copernicus and Modern Astronomy.” Menorah 29 (1900), 77-84. (translates ZIII 9-10)
- 128: 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. —DK)


Chapter 11. “Love in the After-life: A Selection from the Zohar” (Z3 167a-168a)


“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.”


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


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


An inexpensive (as 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.


Translated excerpts.

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


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


*_____________. “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], edited by Elliot R. Wolfson. New York: Seven Bridges Press, LLC, 1999.


__________ “The Hermeneutics of Visionary Experience: Revelation and Interpretation in the Zohar,” in Religion 18 (1988.)

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


_____________. “Woman—The Feminine as Other in Theosophic Kabbalah,” in The Other in Jewish Thought and History: Constructions of Jewish Culture and Identity, edited by Laurence J. Silberstein and Robert L. Cohn (New York University Press, 1994).


“In a particularly beautiful Zoharic composition known as *Raw Matieta*, 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)


Contains “Hechaloth” (incorrectly numbered Z1 42b-43a) and “Petach Eliyahu” from *Tikkunei Zohar* – the same pieces as in Meltzer’s *Secret Garden*.

[WC #2]


Work of the Chariot has a website ([www.workofthechariot.com](http://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).


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.” For descriptions of Ziegler’s books, refer to the Knowledge Computing / Stop Press website: [www.knowledge.co.uk/sxs/cat/ziegler/index.htm](http://www.knowledge.co.uk/sxs/cat/ziegler/index.htm). The link to Ziegler’s own website no longer works.

4. 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.)

- Scholem  
  *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism.*
- Scholem  
  *Zohar – The Book of Splendor.*
- Matt. [DM]  
  *Zohar – The Book of Enlightenment.*
- Wolski  
  *A Journey into the Zohar.*

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

- Giller  
  *The Enlightened Will Shine.*
- Hecker  
  *Mystical Bodies, Mystical Meals.*
- Hellner-Eshed  
  *A River Flows from Eden.*
- Kabbalah Centre  
  *The Zohar.* [22 volumes]
- Liebes  
  *Studies in the Zohar.*
- Matt [M]  
  *The Zohar – PRITZKER edition** [12 volumes projected]*
- Rosenberg [RR]  
  *Anatomy of God.*
- SSL  
  *The Zohar.* [5 volumes]
- Tishby [IT]  
  *The Wisdom of the Zohar.* [3 volumes]
- Wolfson  
  *Luminal Darkness.*

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.†

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* This title might not bear the critical scrutiny which the others on the list would.
** Including the introductory companion, Arthur Green’s *Guide to the Zohar.*
† To obtain a solid impression of Jewish mysticism and *kabbalah,* my recommendation is to read Scholem’s *Major Trends…,* Idel’s *Kabbalah: New Perspectives,* and Wolfson’s *Through a Speculum that Shines,* in that order.
5. 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].

* This rendition of Z1:51b-52a was completed in the winter 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.