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Dov Schwartz ♦ Avi Elqayam ♦ Hanoch Ben-Pazi



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Ronit Meroz

The Archaeology of the Zohar

Sifra Ditseni'uta as a Sample Text¹

Introduction

The authorship of the Zohar has long been an open and often disputed question. Opinions are divided between those who believe that it was written by a single author, and others who see it as the product of multiple authors who each contributed to what must be recognized as a collaborative work. Those who argue for a single author fall into one of two groups: some uphold the tradition whereby the entire work was written in the Land of

- 1 This study was carried out with the support of the National Fund for Science, grant number 1184-09. I would like to thank No'a Dolev-Israeli, Neta' Sobol, 'Oded Porat, and Rakefet Raz who helped prepare the text for publication. I would also like to thank Neta Sobol for instructive discussions on the subject of this article. Additionally, I owe Ada Rapoport-Albert an enormous debt of gratitude for her editorial work, which was particularly meticulous and thoughtful. This article was accepted by her and Willem Smelik for publication over a decade ago, but was delayed for technical reasons, and is now scheduled to be published by the end of 2017, as part of a special volume on the Zohar in Brill's *IJS Studies in Judaica* series. For earlier studies on *Sifra ditseni'uta* see, in particular, Isaiah Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar: An Anthology of Texts*, trans. David Goldstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 1:3-4277, 295-, 2:709; Amos Goldreich, "Sefer hagevul leRabi David ben Yehudah hehasid" (M.A. thesis, Tel Aviv University, 1972), 96-101; Yehuda Liebes, "Peraqim bemilon Sefer hazohar" (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1974), 145-50, 327-32; id., "How the Zohar was Written," in *Studies in the Zohar* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 85-138, esp. 95-98; id. "Zohar ve'eros" *Alpayim*, 9 (1994): 78-9; id., *Torat hayetsirah shel Sefer Yetsirah* (Tel Aviv: Schocken Books, 2000), ch. 18, 127-40; id., "Al 'Sefer Sheqel Haqodesh' leRabi Mosheh de Le'on, hehedir Charles Mopsik," *Kabbalah*, 2 (1997): 271-86, esp. 283; Haviva Pedaya, *Haramban – hit'alut: zeman mahzori vetegst qadosh* (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 2003), according to the index; Boaz Huss, *Kezohar haraqi'a: peraqim behitqabelut hazohar uvehavnayat erko hasimli* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, Bialik Institute, 2008), according to the index; *The Zohar*, trans. and commentary by Daniel C. Matt, Pritzker edn., vol. 5 (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009), 535-88.

Israel by the second-century tannaitic Sage Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai, while others – among them both rabbinic and academic scholars – claim that the author was the thirteenth-century Spanish kabbalist Moses de Leon. As for those who argue for multiple authors – they, too, can be divided into groups: some attribute the Zohar to several discrete thirteenth-century authors, some to a coherent thirteenth-century kabbalistic circle (*havurah*), while others stipulate multiple groups of thirteenth-century authors, whose work was subjected to a continuous process of redaction by subsequent generations of kabbalists. My own position on this question has changed over time. Originally I subscribed to the view that the Zohar was composed by multiple authors during the relatively short period from the end of the thirteenth century to the beginning of the fourteenth. I now believe that the process of composition was much more protracted, stretching from the eleventh century to approximately the third decade of the fourteenth.¹

The hypothesis that the Zohar is the product of several generations of authors has a number of implications. First, Moses de Leon can no longer be considered the single author of the entire work, and the extent of his contribution becomes open to question. At the same time, his notoriety as the avaricious forger of the Zohar loses much of its credibility. His own writings, produced during the 1280s and early 1290s (according to the dates he appended to the works he acknowledged as his own), alongside the works of contemporary kabbalists such as Isaac ibn Sahula, help establish what parts of the Zohar were already available to him and to the kabbalists of his day.² Moreover, the multi-generational authorship hypothesis implies that

1 Isaiah Tishby has surveyed the main positions taken on this question up to his own time. See his *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:13-96. For subsequent opinions, see Liebes, "How the Zohar Was Written"; Huss, *Kezohar baraqi'a*, chs. 2-3, 43-139; Michal Oron, "Sheloshah perushim lema'aseh bereshit umashma'utam beheqer Sefer hazohar," *Da'at*, 50-2 (2003): 183-99; ead., "Motiv hayanuqa umashma'uto beSefer hazohar," in Ronit Meroz (ed.), *Hidushei zohar: mehqarim hadashim besifrut hazohar*, Te'udah 21-2 (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2007), 129-64. 129-64; Ronit Meroz, "Zoharic Narratives and their Adaptations," *Hispania Judaica Bulletin*, 3 (2001): 3-63; ead., "Va'ani lo hayiti sham?!' Qvflanotav shel Rabi Shimon bar Yohai al pi sipur zohari bilti yadu'a," *Tarbiz* 71/1-2 (2002): 163-93; ead., "The Path of Silence: An Unknown Story from a Zohar Manuscript," *The European Journal of Jewish Studies*, 1/2 (2007): 319-42; ead., "Der Aufbau des Buches Sohar," *PaRDeS: Zeitschrift der Vereinigung für Jüdische Studien*, e.v., II (2005): 16-36; ead., "The Middle Eastern Origins of Kabbalah," *The Journal for the Study of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry* (Feb. 2007): 39-56; ead., *Yuvalei zohar: mehqar umahadurot shel zohar, parashat shemot* (in publication). See also the summary in Daniel Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory: Methodologies of Textual Scholarship and Editorial Practice in the Study of Jewish Mysticism*, 2 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press; Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2013), 224-438.

2 For a list of de Leon's works, see Dorit Cohen-Aloro, "Sefer harimon leRabi Mosheh de-

there existed several – probably small and hitherto unknown – centres of kabbalistic creativity, which were engaged in the production and transmission of zoharic texts over a long period. This constitutes a major change in our understanding of the historical development of Kabbalah and indeed of the history of medieval Judaism in general. It points to a new understanding of the nature of the *Zohar*, which should now be viewed as a reservoir of traditions developed and transmitted by generations of authors, evolving as a work in much the same way as did the Bible, the Talmud, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, or the Vedas.

One of the factors weighing most heavily in favour of this hypothesis is the discovery of dozens of ostensibly discrete units of zoharic text, which are, in fact, closely related as adaptations of each other. These adaptations vary considerably, ranging from linguistic corrections of individual words, through translations of whole units of text from Hebrew to Aramaic (or the other way round), to literary enhancements, such as the introduction of framing narratives, stylistic embellishments, or psychological insights designed to flesh out the relations among the *Zohar*'s protagonists. But the most significant modifications reflect fundamental changes in the underlying conceptual framework. So many changes could only have occurred over a long period,³ whose specific duration can be estimated only by resort to historical rather than literary considerations.⁴

To account for adopting this hypothesis, I briefly present two examples of textual units which have undergone a series of such revisions. The first unit, which I call “The Rose and its Scent,” is now extant in three versions,⁵ of which the first differs conceptually from the other two inasmuch as it represents the proto-kabbalistic view, of which only a few other textual

Le'on: mitsvot lo ta'aseh” (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1987), 9-12. Lately, Avishai Bar Asher has identified some more of de Leon's works; see for example Avishai Bar Asher, “*Sefer ha-Ne'elam*, ketaim hadashim mi-Sefer *Or Zaru'a* u-verurim behiburav hamukdamim shel Rabi Moshe di Leon: iyun u-mahadurot mada'iot,” *Tarbiz* 83/1-2 (2015): 197-329; id., “Sama'el ve-nekevato: perush Kohelet ha-'avud le-Rabi Moshe di Leon,” *Tarbiz* 80/4 (2012): 566-539.

3 Cf. the deliberations of David Halivni on the “stammaitic” stratum of the Talmud (David Halivni, *Mevo'ot limekorot umasorot: iyunim behit'havut batalmud* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2009), 75-7).

4 For these considerations, see Meroz, *Yuvalei zohar*, chs. 1-3.

5 The earliest version is printed in the Cremona edition of the *Zohar* (1559), II, col. 9-10; the second one – *ibid.*, col. 33. The third and latest version appears in the standard printed edition of the *Zohar* II, 20a-b. I published two of the versions, together with an analysis of the text, in Meroz, “Zoharic Narratives and their Adaptations,” 3-63. All three versions can also be found, accompanied with a revised analysis, in my book, *Yuvalei zohar*, unit no. 49.

traces remain, whereby the antithesis of the quality of Judgement (*din*) is the quality of Compassion (*rahamim*), and the two qualities are synthesized and reconciled within the quality of Mercy (*hesed*). The second and third versions, on the other hand, represent the dominant kabbalistic view, where the antithesis of the quality of Judgement is the quality of Mercy, and the two are synthesized within the quality of Compassion. In addition, the second version expands and enriches the narrative elements, which are very sparse in the first version. Finally, in the transition from the first version to the third, the text gradually changes from Hebrew to Aramaic.

The second example is the textual unit known as *Yisra'el sava*, which exists in three versions.⁶ The first two concern angels and appear to be unaware of the standard kabbalistic theosophy of the *sefirot*. Only in the third version is the angelology substituted with the familiar sefirotic structure. In addition, the Hebrew sections are translated into Aramaic, and the narrative framework is expanded to enhance the growing stature of Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai.

To date, I have studied thirty-two such textual units (of the several dozen that exist), which are extant in several – between two and five – manuscript versions,⁷ all of which can be added to the examples above. In the present article, I introduce in addition a previously unknown second version of *Sifra ditseni'uta*, which I call “the short version,” and which is quite distinct from the familiar “long version” published in the printed editions of the Zohar. I am inclined to the view, albeit tentatively, that there must have been a text forming the basis of both of the two versions that predated them both.

The existence of multiple recensions of zoharic texts calls for a study of

6 In this case, the earliest one is not printed in the known standard editions of the Zohar. One is printed in Zohar II, 4b, and the latest one is printed *ibid.*, 4a. I present all three versions of the text in my book *Yuvalei zohar*, unit no. 6.

7 A significant majority of these textual units is extant in only two versions. Most of them will appear in my book, *Yuvalei zohar*, which presents a critical edition of the Zohar on pericope “Shemot,” and contains (in Appendix 1) a complete list of these units, that refers to the different sections of the Zohar. Additional textual units of this type appear in Meroz, “Va’ani lo hayiti sham?!”; *ead.*, “Requimato shel mitos: diyun bishenei sipurim bazohar,” in Howard Kreisel (ed.), *Limud vada’at bemahshavah yehudit 2* (Be’er Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2006), 167–205. In addition, see the text published in Gershom Scholem, “Parashah hadashah min haMidrash hane’lam shebazohar,” in Saul Lieberman, et al. (eds.), *Sefer hayovel likhevod levi gintsburg limelot lo shiv'im shanah: heleq ivri* (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1946), 425–46, which presents an unknown version of a text from *Midrash hane’lam*. See also Moshe Idel, “Qeta’ lo yadu’a mimidrash hane’lam,” in Joseph Dan (ed.), *Hakenes habeinle’umi letoledot hamistiqaq hayehudit*, vol. 3: *Sefer hazohar vedoro*, *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 8 (1989): 73–88.

what I have termed the “archaeology” of the Zohar. It entails the search for hitherto unknown manuscript versions of texts belonging to the corpus, and the identification and comparison of apparently discrete textual units which may turn out to be adaptations of each other or of the same core text. This can only be achieved through the careful analysis of the conceptual, literary, and linguistic features that are particular to each textual unit. The results should make it possible to discern the distinct strata of which the Zohar is made up, and to shed light on what I believe was its long-drawn-out process of composition.

Sifra Ditseni'uta

The central axis of this work is an intermittent commentary on the first six chapters of the book of Genesis. It belongs to the “Daniel lore” embedded in the Zohar, that is, a tradition that employs variations on the terms “Ancient of Days” and “White Head” drawn from chapter 7 of the Book of Daniel, which is generally characterised by a tendency to radical anthropomorphism.⁸

Together with *Idra raba* and *Idra zuta*, *Sifra ditseni'uta* (henceforth SD) is considered one of the most difficult, esoteric, and holy sections of the Zohar. As early as the seventeenth century, Aaron Berechiah of Modena wrote, “I was afraid to tackle both the *Idras* and *Sifra ditseni'uta*,”⁹ while in the opinion of a leading Zohar scholar of our day, “this appears to be the most difficult composition within the Zohar literature, which is not only taxing to interpret but also presents the reader with complex textual problems.”¹⁰ These difficulties are at the root of the tradition, which still persists today, to refrain from translating SD into Hebrew, as is evident, for example, in Yehuda Edri’s 1998 edition of the Zohar.¹¹ Daniel Matt, too, in his recent English translation of SD, indirectly paid tribute to this tradition when he wrote: “The enigmatic Book of Concealment requires such extensive interpretation that any commentary threatens to overwhelm the text. Therefore, I have first placed here the text itself, unencumbered by commentary, followed by the same text with commentary.”¹²

8 See also Meroz, *Yuvalei zohar*, introd.

9 See Isaiah Tishby, *Hiqrei qabalah usheluhoteiha* 1 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1982), 186; Huss, *Kezohar haraqi'a*, 185.

10 Liebes, *Torat hayetsirah*, 126.

11 *Sefer hazohar al hamishbah humesbei torah*, trans. into Hebrew by Yehuda Edri (Jerusalem: Yerid Hasefarim, 1998), 5:455-72.

12 *The Zohar*, ed. Matt, 535.

Several problems are bound to confront anyone attempting to decipher SD. Firstly, the succinct, highly condensed writing does not fully reveal its intentions to the reader and often fails to follow an idea or an argument to its conclusion. It appears to present only “chapter headings” rather than a fully developed exposition. This is exacerbated by the fact that claims are set out in no particular order, lacking both thematic and interpretative continuity. These deficiencies should not be attributed solely to the style of writing, as it is almost certain that parts of the work have been lost, omitted, or even censored, while many editorial comments have been inserted into it over time, which are not always consistent with the intentions of the original author.¹³ As a result, it is now difficult to retrace the full textual history of SD, which has a patchwork appearance, with no evidence of any attempt to conceal the rough stitches that hold it together. It can be viewed as a proto-text, truncated and yet full of interpolations, or else as a conglomeration of texts produced gradually, in many stages and from a variety of perspectives, which inevitably resulted in transitions from one subject matter to another that are insufficiently clear.

Nevertheless, the text is not entirely disjointed, and some of the gaps can be filled with the help of information gleaned from other kabbalistic sources. The SD in its extant versions is therefore not devoid of meaning. Like any other text, it consists of a combination of explicit authorial statements and gaps that must be filled by the reader. The relative proportions of each are what distinguishes the fully transparent from the opaque, the perspicuous from the enigmatic. In the case of SD, the particular blend of explicit statements and gaps, especially in the long version, places it closer to the enigmatic end of this spectrum.

The following discussion focuses primarily on the short version of SD, although it may well shed some new light on the long version as well. Occasional references will be made to the long version, but only by way of background, and without treating it exhaustively in its own right.¹⁴

1. *The Text*

1.1 **The two versions, the short and the long, of *Sifra Ditseni'uta***

The recension of the short version that follows is based on MS Vatican 213,¹⁵ pp. 20a-21a, to which I have assigned the siglum γ . The manuscript

13 See section 1.5 for more detail.

14 Unless otherwise stated, all paragraph numbers refer to the short version.

15 Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, MS ebr. 213; the microfilm number of this manuscript in the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts in The National Library of Israel, Jerusalem, is 272.

was written in the fourteenth century in a Sephardi script, and it places SD within *Midrash hane'elam* on the pericope “Bereshit,” *Zohar hadash* 14c, between paragraphs 597 and 598 of the Ashlag edition¹⁶. In the margins of the manuscript, variant readings have been imported from two other sources, both of which locate this version of SD in the same place as the Vatican manuscript. The first, assigned the siglum ⚡, is another manuscript version: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Merton 77 H 22 (microfilm no. 51923), pp. 14b-15a, written in the sixteenth century in a Sephardi-Byzantine script. The second, assigned the siglum ⚡, appears in the printed edition of *Zohar hadash* (Kraków, 1903), 25b-26a. Since this edition is not widely used, the variant readings it offers have not so far attracted the attention of scholars.

After the opening words – “What is *Sifra ditseni'uta*” – the printer of the Kraków edition has added the following words in parentheses: “This matter of *Sifra ditseni'uta* etc. has already been printed in the pericope ‘Terumah’ in another version, and because we noticed a difference between this version and the other one, we decided to print it here again.” The positioning of this text in the pericope “Bereshit” is to be expected, as SD is indeed a commentary on this particular pericope. Moreover, as Tishby has observed, SD was positioned in “Bereshit” in the Cremona edition of the *Zohar* as well.¹⁷ However, its setting within *Midrash hane'elam* requires attention and will be briefly discussed in section 2.12 below.

When noting the variant readings copied into the margins of the Vatican manuscript, I did not reproduce minor variations between plene and defective spellings, between the masculine personal pronoun אָנִי and the feminine אֲנִי, between the presence and absence of the word “etc.” to signal a truncated biblical quotation, contracted words marked by the abbreviation sign, or variant spellings of the Tetragrammaton.

The long version reproduced here alongside the present edition of the short version is based on Margalioth's printed edition of the *Zohar* (ii. 176a-179a, pericope “Terumah”), to which I have assigned the siglum ⚡. Since Daniel Matt has published an edition of this text based on additional manuscripts, as well as an English translation reflecting the variant readings these manuscripts preserve,¹⁸ I have not attempted to

16 Judah Leib Halevi Ashlag, *Sefer ha-Zohar 'im targum uve'ur ha-Sulam* (Jerusalem-Tel Aviv: Ashlag Press, 1955-1963).

17 *Sefer ha-Zohar 'al ha-Torah* (Cremona edn.), 19c-22a. Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:3-4.

18 *The Zohar*, ed. Matt, 535-88. The eclectic version on which his edition is based, and for which I supplied him with all the *Zohar* manuscripts, can be found at <<http://www.sup.org/zohar//Aramaic%20Texts/Vol%205%20Aramaic.pdf>>, 186-93.

Long Version (Margalioth edition)	Short Version (MS Vatican 213)
Sifra ditseni 'uta: Chapter One	
דעד לא הוה מתקלא לא הוה משגיחין אפיין באפיין ומלכין קדמאין מיתו וזיוניהון לא אשתכחו וארעא אתבטלת	דעד לא הוה מתקלא לא הוה משכחין אפיין באנפיין ומלכין קדמאי מיייתין וזיוניהון לא אשכח וארעא אתבטלת ²¹
[ד-ה] עד דרישא דכסופא דכל כסופין לבושי דיקר אתקין ואתחסין האי מתקלא תלי באתר דלא הוה אתקלו ביה אינון דלא אשתכחו מתקלא קאים בגופיה לא אתאחד ולא אתחזי ביה סליקו וביה סלקין דלא הוה והו ויהויין	
[ו] [שבעת תיקוני הראש – גולגלת, שער, עיניים, נחיריים ועוד]	
[ז] בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ [בר' א א] שיתא בראשית ברא שית עלייהו כולהו לתתא ותליין משבעא דגולגלתא עד יקירו דיקירותא	
והארץ תניינא לאו בחושבן והא אתמר ומההיא דאתלטייא נפקא דכתיב מן האדמה אשר אררה יי' [בר' ה כט] היתה תהו ובהו וחשך על פני תהום ורוח אלהים מרחפת על פני המים [בר' א ב] תליסר תליין בתליסר יקירו דיקירותא	[ז] והארץ [בר' א ב] תניינא לאו בחושבן דהא אתמר ומההוא דאתלטיא נפקא דכתי' מן האדמה אשר אררה יי' [בר' ה כט] היתה תהו [שם] עד המים [שם] תליסר סר [?] תלויין בתליסר דיוקירותא ²²
[ח] שיתא אלפי שנין תליין בשיתא קדמאי שביעאה עלייהו דאתתקף בלחודוי ואתחריב כלא בתריסר שעתי דכתיב היתה תהו ובהו וגו' [שם]	[ח] שתא אלפיין שנין תליין בשתא קדמאי שביעאה עליהו ויתחרב כלא בתליסר שעתא דכתי' היתה תהו ובהו וגו' [בר' א ב]

21 §ג, חילופי נוסח: דשקיל] א דשקלין. במתקלא] א במתקלה. לא הוה] ק לאשיה. מתקלא] א מתקלה. משכחין] אק משגיחין. באנפיין] ק באפיין. מיייתין] ק מייית.

22 §ז, חילופי נוסח: סר] אק ליתא. תלויין] אק תליין. דיוקירותא] ק דיוקירותא דיוקנא.

Long Version (Margaliot edition)	Short Version (MS Vatican 213)
תליסר יקים לון ברחמי ומתחדשן בקדמיתא וקמו כל אינון שיתא בגין דכתיב ברא ולבתר כתיב היתה דהא הות ודאי ולבסוף תהו ובהו וחשך [בר' א ב] 'ונשגב יי' לבדו ביום ההוא' [יש' ב יא]	תליסר יקום לון ברחמי ומתחדשן בקדמיתא קמו כל אינון שתא כגון דכתי' ברא לבתר כתי' היתה דהא הות ודאי ולבסוף תהו ובהו וחשך [בר' א ב] 'ונשגב יי' לבדו' [יש' ב יא] ²³
[ט] [פעילותו המחזורית של הנחש, כוחות הרע] [י] ויאמר אלהים יהי אור ויהי אור [בר א ג] היינו דכתיב 'כי הוא אמר ויהי' [תה' לג ט] 'הוא' בלחודוי לבתר אתחזרו חד יהו"י יה"ו וי' בתראה שכינתא לתתא כמה דה' שכינתא אשתכח ובחד מתקלא אתקלן [יא] [המשכה של דרשת האותיות]	
[יב] שיתא נפקין מענפא דשרשא דגופא לישן 'ממלל רברבן' [דנ' ז ח] לישן דא סתים בין יו"ד וה"א [צניעות בעולם העליון] ... ווי למאן דגלי ערייתהון	[יב] שתא נפקין מענפא דשרשא דגופא לישן ממלל [ע"פ דני' ז ח] לישן דאסתים בין יו"ד ה"א ²⁴
[יג] ויאמר אלהים יהי מארת ברקיע השמים [בר' א יד] שליט דכר בנוקבא דכתיב 'וצדיק יסוד עולם' [משלי י כה] [צניעותה של האם בעולם העליון] ... ווי למאן דגלי פתחהא <מ ח"ב, קעז ע"א>...	[יג] ויאמ" אלהי"ם יהי מאורו"ת <20 בברקיע > [בר' א יד] שליט דכר בנוקבא דכתי' 'וצדיק יסוד עולם' [משלי י כה] ²⁵
Chapter Two	
פרקא תניינא [יד] דיקנא מהימנותא לא אדכר בגין דהיא יקירותא דכלא [יד-יז] [פירוט של 13 תיקוני הזקן, שהם גם 13 מבויעים. 9 מהם משקים את הגוף...]	

§23, חילופי נוסח: אלפין] אק אלפי. תליין] ק תליא קדמאי] א חד מאי. ומתחדשן] א ומתקדשין. בתליסר] ק בתריסר. שעתא] ק שעת. לבן] ק לון. כגון] ק בגין.

§24, יב, חילופי נוסח: מענפא] מעוביאי. ה"א] ק לה"א.
§25, יג, חילופי נוסח: ברקיע] אק ברקיע השמים. בנוקבא] ונוקבא.

Long Version (Margaliot edition)	Short Version (MS Vatican 213)
<p>[ית] בזמנא דמטא תשרי ירחא שביעאה משתכחי אלין תליסר בעלמא עלאה ומתפתחי תליסר תרעי דרחמי בההוא זמנא 'דרשו יי' בהמצאו' [יש' נה ו] ...</p>	
<p>[יט] ויאמר אלהים תדשא הארץ דשא עשב מזריע זרע עץ פרי וגו' [בר' א יא] ... יהו"ה שלים בסטרוי והכא ברחישותא דא דארעא לא שלים</p>	
<p>[כ] יה"י לא כתיב קרינן יו"ד עלאה יו"ד תתאה וייצר [בר' ב ז] ... כללא דשלימו שלים ולא לכל סטר אתעקר מהאי אתר שמא דא ואשתיל באחרא כתיב ויטע יי' אלהים [בר' ב ח]</p>	<p>[כ] ויהי יו"ד עילאה ויו"ד תתאה וה"א ביניהו וייצר [בר' ב ז] כללא דשלימו אתעקר מהאי אתר שמא דא ואשתיל באחרא כתי' ויטע יי' אלהים [בר' ב ח]²⁶</p>
<p>[כא-כה] [השפעותיו של עתיקא על זעיר אנפין]</p>	
<p>[כו] ותוצא הארץ דשא <מ ח"ב, קעז ע"ב> [בר' א יב], אימתי כד שמא אתנטע [כו-כט] [שבעת תיקוני הגלגלת של זעיר אנפין]</p>	<p>[כו] ותוצא הארץ דשא [בר' א יב] אימתי כד שמא דא אתנטע²⁷</p>
<p>[ל] כתיב 'אני יי' הוא שמי' [יש' מב ח] וכתיב 'אני אמית ואחיה' [דב' לב לט] וכתיב 'ואני אשא ואני אסבול' [יש' מו ד] 'הוא עשנו ולו אנחנו' [תה' ק ג] 'והוא באחד ומי ישיבנו' [איוב כג יג] 'הוא' אקרי מאן דסתים ולא שכיח 'הוא' מאן דלא אודמן לעינא 'הוא' מאן דלא אקרי בשמא...</p>	
<p>[לא] ... א' אזיל לאלף אל"ף אזיל ליו"ד יו"ד אזיל ליו"ד דסתים מכל סתימין דלא מתחברן ביה ו"ד ווי כד לא נהיר י' בו"ד</p>	

26 §כו, חילופי נוסח: ויהי] א ע"ו. דשלימו] ק דשלימא.
27 §כו, חילופי נוסח: ותוצא הארץ] א מוכתם. אימתי] א ליתא.

Long Version (Margaliot edition)	Short Version (MS Vatican 213)
<p>[לב] כד אסתלק י' מן ו"ד בחובי עלמא ערייתא דכלא אשתכח ע"ד כתיב 'ערוות אביך לא תגלה' [ויק' יח ז] וכד אסתליק יו"ד מן ה"א ע"ד כתיב 'ערוות אמך לא תגלה אמך היא לא תגלה ערוותה' [שם] 'אמך היא' ודאי 'כי אם לבינה תקרא' וגו' [מש' ב ג]</p>	<p>[לב] כד אסתלק יו"ד מן דל"ת בחובין עלמא ערייתא דכלא אשתכח על דא כתי' 'ערוות אביך לא תגלה' [ויק' יח ז] וכד אסתליק יו"ד מן ה"א על דא כתי' 'ערוות אמך לא תגלה אמך היא לא תגלה ערוותה' [שם] אמך היא ודאי 'כי אם לבינה תקרא' [מש' ב ג]²⁸</p>
Chapter Three	
<p>פרקא תליתאה [לג-לו] [תשעת תיקוני הוקן של זעיר אנפין]...והא גנזיה קרא...</p>	
<p>[לו]...ותוצא הארץ דשא עשב מזריע זרע למיניהו ועץ עושה פרי אשר זרעו בו למיניהו [בר' א יב] תשעה אלין אתעקרו משמא שלים ואשתילו לבתר בשמא שלים דכתיב ויטע יי' אלהים [בר' ב ח]</p>	<p>[לו] ותוצא הארץ דשא עשב מזריע זרע למיניהו ועץ עושה פרי אשר זרעו בו למיניהו וגו' [בר' א יב] אילין אתעקרו משמא שלים ואשתילו לבתר דשמא שלים דכתי' ויטע יי' אלהים [בר' ב ח]²⁹</p>
<p>[לו-לז] [המשך דיון בזקן] [לז]...דיקנא עלאה דנהירא ... בתתאה דעלאה 'רב חסד' [שמ' לד ו] אקרריה בזעירא חס"ד סתם...</p>	<p>[לז] עתיקא איקפו[!] 'רב חסד' [שמ' לד ו] זעירא חסד וסתם[!]³⁰</p>
<p>[לח] כתיב ויאמר אלהים ישרצו המים שרץ נפש חיה [בר' א כ] כלומר ... אתפשט נהירו דדא בדא כלא אתרחשון בזמנא חדא מים טבאן מים בישן בגין דאמר ישרצו אתכללו דא בדא חיה עלאה חיה תתאה חיה <מ ח"ב, קעח ע"א> טבא חיה בישא</p>	<p>[לח] ישרצו [בר' א כ] אתכללו חיה עילאה חיה תתאה חיה צבא[!] חיה בישא³¹</p>

28 §לב, חילופי נוסח: עלמא] ק דעלמא. עלמא ערייתא דכלא אשתכח על דא כתי' [א מוכתם.

29 §לו, חילופי נוסח: אילין] ק ט אלין. דשמע] ק בשמא.

30 §לז, חילופי נוסח: איקפו] אק איקרי. וסתם] אק סתם.

31 §לח, חילופי נוסח: צבא] אק טבא.

Long Version (Margalioth edition)	Short Version (MS Vatican 213)
<p>[לט-מג] [נוסח אחר; עוסק בכוונות] [מד] ויאמר אלהים נעשה אדם [בר' א כו] האדם לא כתיב אלא אדם סתם לאפקא אדם דלעילא דאתעביד בשמא שלים כד אשתלים דא אשתלים דא אשתלים דכר ונוקבא לאשלמא כלא ידו"ד סטרא דדכר אלהים סטרא דנוקבא אתפשט דכורא ואתתקן בתקונו כאמא בפומיה דאמא מלכין דאתבטלו הכא אתקיימו</p>	<p>[מד] ויאמר אלהים נעשה אדם [בר' א כו] האדם לא כתיב אלא אדם סתם לאפקא דלעילא דיתעביד בשמא שלים וכד אישתלם דא אשתלים דא יהו"ה סטר דכר אלהים סטר נוקבא אתפשט דכורא ואתתקן בתיקונו באמא בפומיה דאימא מלכין דאתבטלו הכא אתקיימו³²</p>
<p>[מה] [טיבם של הדינים] [מו-מז] ...אתא חויא על נוקבא וקינא דוהמא אתתקן בגווה למעבד מדורא בישא דכתיב ותהר ותלד את קין [בר' ד א] קינא דמדורא דרוחין בישין... אתקין ביה בהאי אדם... [פרטים נוספים על טיבו של האדם]</p>	<p>[מו-מז] אתא חניא על נוקבא וקינא אתתקן בטנה למעבד מדורא בישא דכתי' ותהר ותלד את קין [בר' ד א] קינא דמדור דרוחין בישין אתקין ביה בהאי אדם³³</p>
<p>[מח] ... 'דכר ה' נוקבא ו' כתיב זכר ונקבה בראם ויברך אותם ויקרא את שמם אדם [בר' ה ב] דיוקנא ופרצופא דאדם יתיב על כרסיא וכתיב 'ועל דמות הכסא דמות כמראה אדם עליו מלמעלה' [יח' א כו]</p>	<p>[מת] יו"ד דכר ה"א נוקבא וכת' זכר ונקבה בראם... ויקרא את שמם אדם [בר' ה ב] דיוקנא ופרצותא [!] כאדם יתיב על כורסיא וכתי' 'ועל דמות הכסא דמות כמרא' אדם' [יח' א כו]³⁴</p>
Chapter Four	
<p>פרקא רביעאה [מט] עתיקא טמיר וסתים זעירא דאנפין אתגלייא ולא אתגלייא דאתגלייא באתוון כתיב דאתכסייא סתים באתוון דלא מתיישבן באתרוי בגין דאיהו לא אתיישבו ביה עלאין ותתאין</p>	<p>[מט] דאתכסייא סתים באתוון דלא מתישבן באתרוי בגין דאיהו לא אתיישבו ביה עלאין ותתאין³⁵</p>

§ 32 מד, חילופי נוסח: בתיקונו באמה בפומיה דאימא] א בתיקונו באמא בפומיה דאמא; ק בתיקונו כאמר בפומיה דאמא.

§ 33 מזו, חילופי נוסח: חניא] אק חויא. וקינא] ק וקנה. בישין אתקין] א בישא אתקרון.

§ 34 מח, חילופי נוסח: ופרצותא כאדם יתיב] א ופרצופא כאדם דיתיב; ק ופרצופא דאדם יתיב ... כמרא' אדם] ק כמראה דאד.

§ 35 מט, חילופי נוסח: מתישבן] ק איתיישבו.

Long Version (Margaliot edition)	Short Version (MS Vatican 213)
<p>[נ] ויאמר אלהים תוצא הארץ נפש חיה למינה בהמה ורמש וגו' [בר' א כד] היינו דכתיב 'אדם ובהמה תושיע יי' [תה' לו ז] חד בכללא דאחרא משתכחא בהמה בכללא דאדם 'אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן ליי' מן הבהמה' [ויק' א ב] משום דאתכלל בכללא דאדם</p>	<p>[נ] 'ויאמ' אלהי'ם תוצא האר'ץ נפ"ש חי"ה בהמ"ה ורמ"ש' [בר' א כד] היינו דכתי' 'אדם ובהמה' [תה' לו ז] בכלל חד בהמה בכלא דאדם ומשום דאתכלל בכללא דאדם³⁶</p>
<p>[נא] כד נחת אדם דלתתא <מ ח"ב, קעח ע"ב> בדיוקנא עלאה אשתכחו תרין רוחין מתרין סטרין דימינא ושמאלא כליל אדם דימינא נשמתא קדישא דשמאלא נפש חיה חב אדם אתפשט שמאלא ואתפשטו אינון בלא גופא</p>	<p>[נא] כד נחת אדם דלתתא בדיוקנא עילאה אשתכח תרין רוחין מתרין סטרין דימינא ושמאלא כליל אדם דימינא נשמתא קדישא דשמאלא אב אדם אתפשט שמאלא ואתפשטו אינון בלא גופא³⁷</p>
<p>[נב-נג] [קבלת אותיות וסימבוליקה אנתרופומורפית]</p>	
<p>[נד-נו] ויראו בני האלהים את בנות האדם [בר' ו ב] היינו דכתיב 'שנים אנשים מרגלים חרש לאמר' [יהו' ב א] מאי בנות האדם דכתיב 'אז תבאנה שתיים נשים זונות אל המלך' [מל"א ג טז] בגיניהון כתיב 'כי ראו כי חכמת אלהים בקרבו וגו' [מל"א ג כח] אז תבאנה ולא בקדמיתא... תרין מתחבקן הוו לעילא לתתא נחתו ירתו עפרא אבדו חולקא טבא דהוה בהו...<</p>	<p>[נד-נו] 'אז תבאנה שתיים נשים זונות למלך'³⁸ [מל"א ג טז] בגיניהון כתי' 'כי ראו כי חכמת אלהים בקרבו' [מל"א ג כח] תרין מתחבקאן הוו לעילאה לתתא נחתו ירתו עפרא ואבדו חולקא טבא דהוה בהו <א21א³⁹</p>
Chapter Five	
<p>פרקא חמישאה [נז-ס] [עוד על חטא האדם ועל עתיק יומין וזעיר אנפין]</p>	

36 §נא, חילופי נוסח: היינו] א בהמה הינו. בהמה בכללא] אק בהמה בכללא.

37 §נא, חילופי נוסח: אב] א אם.

38 [למלך] במסורה: אל המלך.

39 §נד, חילופי נוסח: בגיניהון] א בגיני כך. מתחבקאן] אק מתחבקן. לעילאה] א לעי'; ק לעילא. ירתו] ק ירתי.

Long Version (Margalioth edition)	Short Version (MS Vatican 213)
<p>[סא] ויאמר יי' לא ידון רוחי באדם לעולם בשגם הוא בשר [בר' ו ג] ויאמר יי' כד אתיישבא בזעירא מכאן... אמרו לומר דבר בשם אמרו דעתיקא סתים קאמר לא ידון רוחי באדם דלעילא משום דבהווא רוחא דאתנשבא מתרין נוקבין דפרדשקא משוך לתתא⁴⁰</p>	<p>[סא] עתיקא סתים קאמ' לא ידון רוחי באדם [בר' ו ג] דלעילא משום דבהווא רוחא דאתנשבא מתרין נוקבין דפרדשקא משוך לתתא⁴⁰</p>
<p>[סב] ובג"כ כתיב... והיו ימיו מאה ועשרים שנה [שם] יו"ד שלים ולא שלים י' בלחודוי מאה תרי אתוון תרין זמנין מאה ועשרים שנה י' בלחודוי כד <מ ח"ב, קעט ע"א> אתגליא בזעירא אתמשך בעשר אלפין שנין מכאן כתיב 'ותשת עלי כפכה' [תה' קלט ה]</p>	<p>[סב] ובגין כך כתי' ימי עולם מאה ועשרים שנה יו"ד שלים ולא שלים יו"ד בלחודוי כד אתגליא בזעירא אתמשך בעשר אלפין שנין מכאן כתי' 'ותשת עלי כפך' [תה' קלט ה]⁴¹</p>
<p>[סג-סד] הנפילים היו בארץ [בר' ו ד] היינו דכתיב ומשם יפרד והיה לארבעה ראשים [בר' ב י] מאתר דאתפרש גנתא אקרי הנפילים דכתיב ומשם יפרד [בר' ב י] היו בארץ בימים ההם [בר' ו ד] ולא לבתר זמנא עד דאתא יהושע ובני האלהים אסטמרו...</p>	<p>[סג-סד] הנפילים היו בארץ [בר' ו ד] היינו דכתי' ומשם יפרד והיה לארבעה ראשים [בר' ב י] מאתר דאתפשט גינתא איקרין הנפילים היו בארץ בימים ההם [בר' ו ד] ולא לבתר זמנא עד דאתא יהושע אסתמר⁴²</p>
<p>[סה]...המה הגבורים אשר מעולם [בר' ו ד] עולם דלעילא אנשי השם [שם] דאתנהגן בשמא מאי שמא קדישא דאתנהגן ביה דלא קדישין לתתא ולא אתנהגן אלא בשמא אנשי השם סתם ולא אנשי ידו"ד... אנשי השם סתם מכללא דאדם נפקו כתיב 'אדם ביקר בל ילין' [תה' מט יג] 'אדם ביקר' ביקרו דמלכא 'בל ילין' בלא רוחא</p>	<p>[סה] מאי אשר מעולם אנשי השם [בר' ו ד] דאתנהגו בשמא קדישא דאתנהגון ביה דלא קדישין לתתא מכללא אדם נפקו⁴³</p>
<p>[סו-סח] [חידות]</p>	

40 §סא, חילופי נוסח: דאתנשבא] א דאתנשבא. דפרדשקא] א דפרד משם; ק דבר נש קא.

41 §סב, חילופי נוסח: יו"ד] א חד.

42 §סג, חילופי נוסח: ההם] א ליתא.

43 §סה, חילופי נוסח: דלא] א כלא. אדם] אק דאדם.

Long Version (Margaliot edition)	Short Version (MS Vatican 213)
<p>[סט] כתיב ויתהלך חנוך את האלהים [בר' ה כב] וכתיב 'חנוך לנער על פי דרכו' [מש' כב ו] לנער הידוע את האלהים ולא את יי' ואיננו [בר' ה כב] בשם זה כי לקח אותו אלהים [שם] להקרא בשמו [ע] [המשך החידות].</p> <p>[עא-עג] [המשך הפירוש לבראשית וקישור לענייני אסכטולוגיה ושמיטות]</p>	<p>[סט] ויתהלך חנוך את האלהים ואיננו [בר' ה כד] בשם זה כי לקח אותו אלהים [שם] להקרא בשמו⁴⁴</p>
Concluding Narrative Framework	
<p>[עג] ע"כ סתים ואתערט צניעותא דמלכא דהיינו ספרא דצניעותא זכאה ... למאן דעאל ונפק וידע שבילוי וארחוי</p>	

1.3 The two versions in English translation

The English text reflects my own selection and interpretation of what I consider to be the best readings in each of the two versions. The translation of the long version, which is based on Daniel Matt's, departs from it whenever my own understanding of the text differs from his. As for the translation of the short version – whenever it departs from the Vatican manuscript reading, either to incorporate one of the variants recorded in its margins or in order to bring it in line with the long version, this is indicated by an asterisk.

Short Version (MS Vatican 213)	Long Version (Margaliot edition)
Opening Narrative Framework	
<p>1 >20a> [1] What is <i>Sifra ditseni'uta</i>, the Book of Concealment?</p> <p>[3] These are the chapters⁴⁵ of the Book which is balanced on scales.</p>	<p><ד ii, 176a> [1] What is <i>Tseni'uta desifra</i>, Concealment of the Book?</p> <p>Rabbi Shimon said: "There are five chapters, contained in a great palace and filling the whole earth. ... So it is for one who enters and emerges; for one who does not enter and emerge, it is not so."</p> <p>[2] [The wheat parable about wisdom]</p> <p><i>Sifra ditseni'uta</i>; The Book of Concealment Chapter One</p> <p>[3] It has been taught: the Book of Concealment, a book balanced on scales.</p>
<i>Sifra ditseni'uta</i>: Chapter One	
<p>For until there was a balance, they did not gaze* face-to-face, and the primordial kings were dead, and their weapons did not exist, and the earth was desolate.</p>	<p>For until there was a balance, they did not gaze face-to-face, and the primordial kings were dead, and their weapons⁴⁶ did not exist and the earth was desolate.</p>
	<p>[4-5] Until the head, the most desired of all that is desired, arranged and bestowed [with] garments of glory,⁴⁷ this balance hung in a place that was not; weighed upon it were those who did not exist. The balance stood⁴⁸ by itself, it was not held and it was not seen. Upon it rose, and upon it rise, those who were not, those who were, and those who will be.</p>

45 This term might mean chapter headings.

46 For the Aramaic 𐤏-𐤊-𐤗 (*shin-khaf- het*) in the sense of "exist" see Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1990), 550. Comparing this par. to §44, which speaks of copulation, we may infer that this paragraph uses the term "weapons" in the common euphemistic sense of semen.

47 These are the enhancements mentioned below – enhancements of the skull and the beard. This wording probably echoes the verse: "clothe yourself in honor and majesty" (Job 40:10). See also section 2.6 below.

48 Stood – the literal translation of the Aramaic text is "stands."

Short Version (MS Vatican 213)	Long Version (Margaliot edition)
	[6] [The seven enhancements of the Head: skull, hair, eyes, nostrils etc.]
	[7] “In the beginning [<i>be-reshit</i>] <i>Elohim</i> [God] created [<i>bara</i>] the heavens and the earth” [Gen. 1: 1]. Six; <i>be-reshit, bara sbit</i> – [(it) created six] – above them. All of them are below, suspended from the seven [enhancements] of the skull until the most glorious of all glorious.
<p>The second “earth” is not included in this calculation, as has been said,⁴⁹ [since] it emerged from that which was cursed, as Scripture says: “from the soil that <i>YHVH</i> cursed” [Gen. 5: 29].</p> <p>“Was waste,” until – ”the waters” [Gen. 1: 2] – thirteen suspended from thirteen of Glory.⁵⁰</p>	<p>The second “earth” is not included in this calculation, as has been said, [since] it emerged from that which was cursed, as Scripture says: “from the soil that <i>YHVH</i> cursed” [Gen. 5: 29].</p> <p>“Was waste and empty, with darkness over the face of the abyss and the wind of <i>Elohim</i> hovering over the face of the waters” [Gen. 1: 2] – thirteen suspended from thirteen of the most glorious of all the glorious.</p>
[8] Six thousand years are suspended from the first six; the seventh is above them. All will be destroyed in thirteen hours, as Scripture says: “was waste and empty.”	[8] Six thousand years are suspended from the first six; the seventh is above them, fortified alone. All was destroyed in twelve hours, as Scripture says: “was waste and empty”...

49 On “the second earth” see the main text, sections 1.5 and 2.3. According to the text here, this matter has already been discussed, but the discussion is not extant in either the long or the short version. It appears therefore that this is a reference to an unknown text, or to an additional version of SD that is unknown to us.

50 I have translated *יקירותא* differently as “Glory” and “glorious,” in the short and long versions respectively, because the reference to the Glory appears only in the short version. See the discussion in the main text, section 2.6.

Short Version (MS Vatican 213)	Long Version (Margaliot edition)
<p>The Thirteen will raise them* in Compassion – and they will be renewed as before* – and all those six rose, as* Scripture says: “created,” and afterwards is written “was,” for it surely was! And in the end, “waste and empty, with darkness” [Gen 1:2] – “YHVH alone was exalted on that day” [Isa. 2: 11].</p>	<p>The Thirteen will raise them in Compassion – and they will be renewed as before – and all those six will rise, as Scripture says: “created,” and afterwards is written “was,” for it surely was! And in the end, “waste and empty, with darkness” [Gen 1:2] – “YHVH alone was exalted on that day” [Isa. 2: 11].</p>
	<p>[9] [The cyclical activity of the serpent, forces of evil] [10] “<i>Elohim</i> said, “יהי [let there be] light!” ויהי [and there was] light” [Gen. 1: 3], corresponding to what Scripture says: “For He spoke יהי [and it came to be]” [Ps. 33: 9] – “He” alone. Afterwards, they reverted to one: יהוה [yod, heb, vav, yod], יהו [yod, heb, vav]. And the final yod is Shekhinah below, just as heb is found to be Shekhinah, and they were balanced on a single scale. [11] [The continuation of the homily on the letters]</p>
<p>[12] Six emerge from the thickness* of the root of the body, a tongue [which is] speaking [after Dan. 7: 8], a tongue which is concealed between [the letters] ם [yod] and ה [heb].*</p>	<p>[12] Six emerge from the branch of the root of the body, a tongue “speaking grandly” [Dan. 7: 8]. This tongue is concealed between [the letters] ם [yod] and ה [heb]... [modesty/concealment in the supernal world]. ...Woe to one who exposes their nakedness!⁵¹</p>

51 Cf. §§13, 32; and §23 (which is not included in this table).

Short Version (MS Vatican 213)	Long Version (Margaliot edition)
<p>1>, 20b> [13] “<i>Elohim</i> said, ‘Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven’” [Gen. 1: 14] – male ruling female, as Scripture says: “The Righteous One is the foundation of the world” [Prov. 10: 25]...</p>	<p>[13] “<i>Elohim</i> said, ‘Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven’” [Gen. 1: 14] – male ruling female, as Scripture says: “The Righteous One is the foundation of the world” [Prov. 10: 25]... [Mother’s modesty in the supernal world] <נ ii, 177a> ... Woe to him who exposes her opening!⁵²</p>
Chapter Two	
	<p style="text-align: center;">Chapter Two</p> <p>[14] The beard of faith is not mentioned for it is [the most] glorious of all⁵³ ... [14-17] [Thirteen enhancements or curls of the beard, which are also thirteen springs; nine of them water the body]</p>
	<p>[18] When Tishrei, the seventh month, arrives, these Thirteen appear in the supernal world and thirteen gates of Compassion open. At that time, “Seek <i>YHVH</i> when He may be found” [Isa. 55: 6].</p>
	<p>[19] “<i>Elohim</i> said ‘Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed of its kind, trees bearing fruit’” [Gen. 1: 11] ... [The name] <i>YHVH</i> is complete in its facets. [But] here, in this swarming of the earth, [the name] is incomplete.</p>

52 Cf. §§12, 32; and §23 (which is not included in this table).

53 The claim here is that the beard has not previously been discussed because it is “the most glorious of all”; its elevated ontological status entails its esoteric nature. This claim has a distinctly apologetic tone, or from another point of view, it can be seen as a clear declaration that an innovation is being presented here for the first time. In this respect, SD does not set out to conceal but rather to reveal secrets which had previously been concealed. See also §33.

Short Version (MS Vatican 213)	Long Version (Margaliot edition)
<p>[20] ויהי – “And there were” – upper יו”ד [yod] and lower יו”ד [yod] and ה [heb] in between them.⁵⁴ וייצר – “and He formed” [Gen. 2: 7] – the totality of completeness was uprooted from this place, this name, and planted in another, as Scripture says: “YHVH Elohim planted [a garden in Eden]” [Gen. 2: 8].⁵⁵</p>	<p>[20] יה”י – “Let there be” – is not written; we read upper יו”ד [yod], lower יו”ד [yod] – וייצר – “and He formed” [Gen. 2: 7]... Totality of completeness, complete but not in every aspect. This name was uprooted from this place and planted in another; Scripture says: “YHVH Elohim planted [a garden in Eden]” [Gen. 2: 8].</p>
	<p>[21-25] [The influence of the Ancient One upon the Small-Faced One]</p>
<p>[26] “And the earth sprouted” [Gen. 1: 12]. When? When the Name was planted.</p>	<p>[26] “And the earth <נ ii, 177b> sprouted” [Gen. 1: 1 2]. When? When the Name was planted... [26-29] [The seven enhancements of the Small-Faced One’s skull]</p>
	<p>[30] Scripture says: “I am YHVH, <i>Hu</i> [literally – that] is my name” [Isa. 42: 8]; “I put to death and I bring to life” [Deut. 32: 39]; and Scripture says: “I will bear and I will carry” [Isa. 46: 4]; “<i>Hu</i> made us and to Him we belong” [Ps. 100: 3]; “<i>Hu</i> is one, and who can turn Him back?” [Job 23: 13]. “<i>Hu</i>” – designates one who is concealed and not found. “<i>Hu</i>” – one who is not visible to the eye. “<i>Hu</i>” – one who is not called by name.⁵⁶</p>

54 The observation made in this paragraph is based on the parallel structure of the two biblical words ויהי and וייצר, in both of which the letter yod occurs twice.

55 For rabbinic interpretations of “and he formed,” see e.g. Bereshit rabah 14: 1 (pp. 126-9; page numbers for Bereshit rabah throughout refer to Midrash Bereshit Rabba, ed. Julius Theodor and Chanoch Albeck, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Shalem, 1996)).

56 This paragraph creates a sophisticated pun. The plain meaning of the Isa. 42:8 is that God’s name is YHVH, but the Zohar reads it as if *YHVH declares that He has yet another name – Hu. The fact that the Hebrew word hu is a demonstrative pronoun (meaning “that”) is perceived as an indication of God’s nature, namely, of a being whose essence is withheld from human knowledge.*

Short Version (MS Vatican 213)	Long Version (Margaliot edition)
	<p>[31] ... א goes to אלה;⁵⁷ לא goes to וי; וי goes to י,⁵⁸ the concealed of all concealed, which is not joined by ו ו.⁵⁹ Woe when י does not illumine ו, ו !</p>
<p>[32] When the י"ו [yod] withdraws from the דל"ת [dalez] through the sins of the world, the nakedness of all appears. Of this Scripture says: "Your father's nakedness you shall not expose." When the י"ו [yod] withdraws from the א"ה [beh], of this Scripture says: "and your mother's nakedness you shall not expose; she is your mother – you shall not expose her nakedness" [Lev. 18: 7]. She surely is "your mother"! "For you will call understanding 'mother'" [after Prov. 2: 3].⁶⁰</p>	<p>[32] When י withdraws from ו ו through the sins of the world, the nakedness of all appears. Of this Scripture says: "Your father's nakedness you shall not expose." When י"ו [yod] withdraws from א"ה [beh], of this Scripture says: "and your mother's nakedness you shall not expose; she is your mother – you shall not expose her nakedness" [Lev. 18: 7]. She surely is "your mother"! "For you will call understanding 'mother'" [after Prov. 2: 3].⁶¹</p>
Chapter Three	
	<p style="text-align: center;">Chapter Three</p> <p>[33-36] [Nine enhancements of the curls of the Small-Faced One's beard] [...] All that is [...] treasured away by Scripture.⁶²</p>

- 57 The meaning is that the letter א extends (lit. "goes") into אלה (alef; the name of the letter א written out in full), which then continues to extend to וי (yod; the name of the letter י written out in full), as discussed in n. 59 below.
- 58 In the printed editions, the letter yod appears in full as וי, but from the context it seems that the abridged form י is the correct one here.
- 59 The וי (written out in full) "goes" to י, a concealed letter normally written without the letters ו and ו (vav and dalet), which complete the word yod. The situation is considered deplorable, because this letter י should have "illuminated" the letters ו and ו rather than concealing itself and leaving them "naked" (see §32).
- 60 The "mother," who is the "father's" partner, is mentioned again in §44 below. For more on this couple, see the discussion in section 2.8 and n. 163 below. The literal meaning of Prov. 2:3 is "if (im) you call for understanding," but the word *im* is read as *em*, namely *mother*.
- 61 Cf. §§12, 13; and §23 (which is not included in this table).
- 62 This means that not only the topic of the Ancient One's beard but also that of the Small-Faced One's beard had been concealed and has never been revealed before. See also §14 above.

Short Version (MS Vatican 213)	Long Version (Margaliot edition)
<p>[36] “And the earth sprouted vegetation, plants yielding seed of each kind, and trees bearing fruit that has its seed within it of each kind” [Gen. 1: 12]. These were uprooted from the complete name and were planted after [that is: under] the complete name, as Scripture says: “<i>YHVH Elohim</i> planted” [Gen. 2: 8].</p>	<p>[36] “And the earth sprouted vegetation, plants yielding seed of each kind, and trees bearing fruit that has its seed within it of each kind” [Gen. 1: 12]. These nine were uprooted from the complete name and were planted afterwards in the complete name, as Scripture says: “<i>YHVH Elohim</i> planted” [Gen. 2: 8].</p>
<p>[37] The Ancient One is called* “abundant in mercy” [Exod. 34: 6]. The Small One [is called] mercy, without* qualification*.⁶³</p>	<p>[36-37] [More about the beard] [37] ...The higher beard illuminates the lower; for the higher is called “abundant in mercy” (Exod. 34: 6). The Small One [is called] mercy, without qualification.</p>
<p>[38] “Let [the waters] swarm” [Gen. 1: 20] – intermingle: higher creature, lower creature; good creature, evil creature.⁶⁴</p>	<p>[38] Scripture says: “<i>Elohim</i> said, ‘Let the waters swarm with a swarm of <i>nefesh hayab</i> [living creatures]’” [Gen. 1: 20], that is to say, [...] the radiance of one spreading to the other, all swarming at once: good waters, evil waters. For He said, “Let [the waters] swarm”–intermingle: higher creature, lower creature; good <נ ii, 178a> creature, evil creature.</p>
	<p>[39-43] [“Another interpretation” which deals with <i>kavanot</i> (contemplation in prayer)]</p>

63 What is said here is also mentioned in the *Idra raba*. See *Zohar III, 140b (Idra raba)*.

64 SD is exploiting here the ambiguity of the expression “*nefesh hayab*” in Gen. 1:20, where *hayab* can be read either as an adjective, yielding the sense of “a living soul,” or as a noun, yielding the sense of “the soul of a living being,” and in association with the occurrence of the term in Ezekiel’s vision, it yields the sense of “a living creature.” The same ambiguous expression is implied again below.

Short Version (MS Vatican 213)	Long Version (Margaliot edition)
<p>[44] “<i>Elohim</i> said, ‘Let us make <i>adam</i> [a man]” [Gen. 1: 26]. The verse does not say <i>ha’adam</i> (the man), but rather just <i>adam</i> [a man] – excluding the supernal [Adam], who was⁶⁵ made with the complete name. And when this [name] was completed, that [Adam] was completed. <i>YHVH</i> – the male side; <i>Elohim</i> – the female side. The male extended and was arrayed with his enhancement, with the phallus (<i>amma</i>) in the mouth of the Mother (<i>imma</i>).⁶⁶ Kings who had been ruined were here established.</p>	<p>[44] “<i>Elohim</i> said, ‘Let us make <i>adam</i> [a man]” [Gen. 1: 26]. The verse does not say <i>ha’adam</i> [the man], but rather just <i>adam</i> [a man] – excluding the supernal Adam, who was made with a complete name. When this [name] was completed, that [Adam] was completed, male and female, to complete all. <i>YHVH</i> – the male side; <i>Elohim</i> – the female side. The male extended and was arrayed with His enhancements, as the Mother (<i>imma</i>) in the mouth of the phallus (<i>amma</i>). Kings who had been ruined were here established.</p>
	<p>[45] [The nature of the forces of judgement]</p>
<p>[46-47] The serpent* copulated with the female, and a nest was constructed within her, to become an evil abode, as Scripture says: “She conceived and bore קין [Cain]” [Gen. 4: 1] – קינא [qinna, a nest], of habitation of evil spirits ... was constructed* in this <i>adam</i>.⁶⁷</p>	<p>[46-47] ... The serpent copulated with the female, and a nest of filth was constructed within her, to become an evil abode, as Scripture says: “She conceived and bore קין [Cain]” [Gen. 4: 1] – קינא [qinna, a nest], of habitation of evil spirits ... was constructed in this <i>adam</i>... [More about the nature of Adam]</p>

65 The original text actually means “who will be made,” but the past tense makes better sense in this context.

66 I read the last word, אימה, as a spelling mistake for אמה/אימה – imma, meaning mother. This reading makes more sense and would seem to be preferable to the parallel reading in the long version. For further discussion of this, see below, section 2.8.

67 On Cain as the outcome of the coupling between the serpent and Eve, see *Pirquei Rabi Eli’ezer* (ed. David Luria, Jerusalem: n.p., 1990), 21. See also the 13th-century letter attributed to Rabbi Yehushi’el, where Cain is referred to by the name *Shedbeten* (belly-demon), because “the demon’s spirit expands in the vulnerable belly” (Moshe Idel, “Perushim lesod ha’ arayot bereshit haqabalah,” *Kabbalah*, 12 (2004): 89–199 150). See further, *Zohar* 2:101b–102a (*Sava demishpatim*), where man is warned not to marry a widow because her first husband has left his spirit within her, and his spirit writhes in her bowels like a serpent and is liable to level accusations against the spirit of her new husband.

Short Version (MS Vatican 213)	Long Version (Margaliot edition)
<p>[48] מ"י – male; א"ה – female. Scripture says: “Male and female He created them [...] and He called their name <i>adam</i>” [Gen. 5: 2] – image and countenance* like <i>adam</i> sitting on the throne, and Scripture says: “Upon the image of the throne, an image like the appearance of <i>adam</i>” [Ezek. 1: 26].</p>	<p>[48] י – male; ה – female; א – Scripture says: “Male and female He created them and blessed them and He called their name <i>adam</i>” [Gen. 5: 2] – image and countenance like <i>adam</i> sitting on the throne, and Scripture says: “Upon the image of the throne, an image like the appearance of <i>adam</i>” [Ezek. 1: 26].</p>
Chapter Four	
<p>[49] [This <i>adam</i>] is hidden [and] concealed by letters which are not settled in His places, for [as regards] Him – neither those above nor those below settle within Him.⁶⁸</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Chapter Four</p> <p>[49] The Ancient One is hidden and sealed [while] the Small-Faced One is [both] revealed and not revealed: revealed in the letters [with which] it is written; concealed and sealed by the letters which are not settled in His places, because in Him, what is above and below is not settled.</p>

68 Note the differences between the short version and the long. Syntactically, the short version links §49 to the preceding paragraph, which focuses on the lower Adam and his resemblance to the upper Adam. The short version thus tells us that the lower Adam is concealed by letters and marked by a certain instability inasmuch as nothing higher or lower than him, be it letters or any other entities, can ever settle within him. The long version, on the other hand, speaks of the Ancient One and the Small-Faced One rather than the upper and the lower Adam. Here, the Ancient One is entirely “sealed,” while the “sealing” of the Small-Faced One is only partial, as some of his aspects are revealed. Like the lower Adam, the Small-Faced One is distinguished by instability: nothing higher or lower than him can ever settle within him. The letters – to whose dynamic creativity SD generally pays a great deal of attention, describing them as ever emanating or expanding to generate new beings – are associated in this paragraph with the lesser of the two supernal entities, namely with the lower Adam or his counterpart, the Small-Faced One. They are therefore bound to move on and eventually be revealed, even if for the time being they remain concealed. Thus they are similarly described as being unstable – incapable of ever settling down.

Short Version (MS Vatican 213)	Long Version (Margaliot edition)
<p>[50] “And <i>Elohim</i> said: ‘Let the earth bring forth <i>nefesh hayab</i> [a living or animal soul] of each kind – <i>behemah</i> [beasts] and swarming things” [Gen. 1: 24]. – corresponding to what is written: “<i>adam</i> [man] and beast” [Ps. 36: 7] – in one general category. “Beast” [is part] of the general category <i>adam</i>—because it is included in the general category of <i>adam</i>.⁶⁹</p>	<p>[50] “And <i>Elohim</i> said: ‘Let the earth bring forth <i>nefesh hayab</i> [a living or animal soul] of each kind – <i>behemah</i> [beasts] and swarming things” etc. [Gen. 1: 24], corresponding to what is written: “<i>adam</i> [man] and beast You deliver, O <i>YHVH</i>” [Ps. 36: 7]. One is found in the general category of the other, “beast” in the general category of <i>adam</i>. “When <i>adam</i> [a man] from among you brings an offering to <i>YHVH</i>, from beasts” [Lev. 1: 2]—because it is included in the general category of <i>adam</i>.</p>
<p>[51] When the lower Adam descended in the supernal image, two spirits were found on [his] two sides, right and left. Adam comprises, on the right, [a] holy <i>neshamah</i> [spirit]; on the left, [a] <i>nefesh hayab</i>, namely, a living or animal soul].⁷⁰ [When] Adam sinned*, the left spread and those without a body spread.⁷¹</p>	<p>[51] When the lower Adam descended <נ ii, 178b> in the supernal image, two spirits were found on [his] two sides, right and left. Adam comprises, on the right [a] holy <i>neshamah</i> [spirit]; on the left [a] <i>nefesh hayab</i> [namely, a living or animal soul]. [When] Adam sinned, the left spread and those without a body spread.</p>
	<p>[52-53] [Letter symbolism combined with anthropomorphism]</p>

69 In this paragraph, it is claimed that “beast” is a particular example of the general category *adam* (man), hinting at one of the thirteen hermeneutical rules attributed to R. Ishmael – “general and particular” (see *Sifra* 1: 1). It is because of this logical link between beast and man that the animal soul, too, is included in Adam (see §51).

70 *Nefesh hayab* is inserted here on the basis of the long version, after the model of *behemah* mentioned in §50 above. It should be compared to *Bereshit rabah* 7: 5 (p. 54): “*nefesh hayab*: this is the spirit of Adam.” The reference here is to the human soul, which is in the nature of “animal” or “beast,” namely the animal soul. The association of *neshamah* with *nefesh hayab* is based on Gen. 2:7. See also section 2.9 below.

71 See also *Bereshit rabah* 20: 11 (pp. 195-6). “All the hundred and thirty years that Adam was separated from Eve, female spirits were inflamed by him and gave birth, as Scripture says, ‘If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with such plagues as befall the sons of men’ [2 Sam. 7: 14].” For a detailed discussion of this theme, see Meir Benayahu, *Ma’ madot umoshavot: minhag shehayu osim lamet bimei hatana’im umimenu nishtareshu ha’ amidot vebahanot, ha’haqafot veba’isur litsi’at habanim aharei mitat avibem* (= *Sefer zikaron*

Short Version (MS Vatican 213)	Long Version (Margaliot edition)
<p>[54] “Then two women, prostitutes, came to the king” [1 Kgs 3: 16]. Because of them Scripture says: “for they saw that the wisdom of <i>Elohim</i> was within him” [ibid., 28].</p> <p>Two were embracing above; they descended below, inheriting <21 1a> dust. They lost the good share that they had possessed.</p>	<p>[54-56] “The sons of <i>Ha’elohim</i>⁷² saw the daughters of <i>adam</i>” [Gen. 6: 2] – corresponding to what Scripture says: “two men secretly as spies” [Josh. 2: 1]. “Daughters of <i>adam</i>” – as Scripture says: “Then two women, prostitutes, came to the king” [1 Kgs 3: 16]. Because of them Scripture says: “for they saw that the wisdom of <i>Elohim</i> was within him” [ibid., 28]. Then [they] came, and not previously... Two were embracing above; they descended below, inheriting dust. They lost the good share that they had possessed ...</p>
Chapter Five	
	<p>Chapter Five [57-60] [More about Adam’s sin, the Ancient One, and the Small-Faced One]</p>
<p>[61] The concealed Ancient One said “My breath [spirit] shall not abide [strive] in [<i>adam</i>]” – the supernal Adam,⁷³ since through that breath exhaled from the nostrils He draws [emanation] downwards.</p>	<p>[61] “<i>YHVH</i> said, ‘My breath [spirit] shall not abide [strive] in <i>adam</i> forever, for he too is flesh” [Gen. 6: 3]. “<i>YHVH</i> said” – when He settled in the Small One. Because of this we are taught to say everything in the name of its originator; for the concealed Ancient One said “My breath [spirit] shall not abide in [<i>adam</i>]” – the supernal Adam, since through that breath exhaled from the two nostrils He draws [the emanation] downwards.</p>

leHarav Yitshaq Nisim, zekher tsadiq liverakbah, harishon letsiyon, harav harashi leYisra’el, vol. 6), (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute/ Yad HaRav Nissim, 1985). See also n. 138 below.

72 The flaw of the sons of Ha’elohim can be recognized by their name, which contains a reference to *Elohim*.

73 Cf. the following passage from *Midrash bane’elam*, in which this verse is interpreted as a testimony to the lack of consensus among man’s constituent parts. Since they can no longer serve together, they are destroyed: “We have learnt, Rabbi Aha said: ‘As long as the body receives air regularly and benefits from it, it is sustained by it, but when the air is withdrawn, the body ceases to exist.’ The Holy One, blessed be He said, ‘I will cause the air to be in conflict with him, and then he will not endure,’ as Scripture says, ‘My spirit shall not strive

Short Version (MS Vatican 213)	Long Version (Margaliot edition)
<p>[62] Therefore Scripture says [about] the days of the world: “a hundred and twenty years” [Gen. 6: 3]. ׀׀, complete and incomplete.⁷⁴ ׀ alone, when revealed in the Small One, extends into ten thousand years. Because of this Scripture says: “You set Your palm upon me” [Ps. 139: 5].⁷⁵</p>	<p>[62] Therefore Scripture says: “Let his days be a hundred and twenty years” [Gen. 6: 3]. ׀׀, complete and incomplete. ׀ alone is one hundred; two letters, two times⁷⁶ – “a hundred and twenty years.” ׀ alone, when <׀ ii, 179a> revealed in the Small One, extends into ten thousand years. Because of this Scripture says: “You set Your palm upon me” [Ps. 139: 5].</p>

with man,’ etc. [Gen. 6: 3]. This ‘strive’ resembles [the word ‘strife’ in] ‘and all the people were at strife’ [2 Sam. 19: 10], which means ‘were agreed.’ Similarly, ‘My spirit shall not strive with man’ [means that] the air will not agree with man but will strive with him and they [Adam and Eve] will be destroyed in a short time. Rabbi Yosi said, “The Holy One blessed be He removed the air from them and they fell’ ... said Rabbi Bo, “My spirit shall not strive with man” [Gen. 6: 3] ... For what reason? Because he is flesh and desires to sin every day. Yet “his days shall be a hundred and twenty years” [ibid.], for the sake of their existence.” (The original text was published in Meroz, “Va’ani lo hayiti sham?!” 170.)

- 74 After the sin of the first man, who is the supernal Adam (see the main text, section 2.8), there is no more “agreement” between him and the Ancient One (see n. 73 above), and therefore the spirit of the Ancient One is no longer emanated to the supernal Adam; rather it descends directly into the terrestrial man, but only for the prescribed duration of “one hundred and twenty years,” instead of the ten thousand years that he could have had (see n. 75 below). This spirit emanates from the Ancient One in two measures, one from each of His nostrils: the letter ׀, which measures one hundred, and the same letter in its expanded form, when it is written out in full as ׀׀ (see the discussion in section 2.10 below), which by way of numerology, with the combined value of its three constituent letters, amounts to no more than twenty (and therefore appears to contain less light than the one-hundred measure of emanation that comes from the other nostril).
- 75 If Adam had not sinned, this lack of agreement would not have occurred and the yod would have been able to illuminate “Ze’ir Anpin” (which is another name for Adam) for “ten thousand years.” But Adam’s sin caused his measure of illumination, and therefore also his allotted years, to diminish, with the result that [the terrestrial] man is granted no more than one hundred and twenty years of illumination, namely, life. On the diminution of Adam in the classical rabbinic sources, see e.g. BT *Hag. 12a*: “Rabbi Judah said, Rav said: “The first man [Adam] extended from the earth to the heavens [according to another view, from one end of the world to the other] ... As soon as he sinned, the Holy One, blessed be He, placed His hand upon him and diminished him, for Scripture says, ‘And laid thy hand upon me’ [Ps. 139: 5].” See also *Bereshit rabah* 8: 1 (p. 55). It appears that in SD, this theme includes an allusion to the pans of the scales, known as “palms” in Hebrew (see the discussion in section 2.11 below)
- 76 This refers to the two ways of writing the letter yod, which correspond to the two nostrils, and yield two different numerical values.

Short Version (MS Vatican 213)	Long Version (Margaliot edition)
<p>[63-64] “The Nephilim were on earth” [Gen. 6: 4]—corresponding to what Scripture says: “From there it divides and becomes four riverheads” [Gen. 2: 10]. From the place where the garden spread they were called <i>hanefilim</i> [the fallen ones], as Scripture says: “from there it divides.”⁷⁷</p> <p>“Were on earth in those days” [Gen. 6: 4]—but not at a later time—[only] until Joshua came and [since then the sons of <i>Ha’elohim</i>] have been hidden.⁷⁸</p>	<p>[63-64] “The Nephilim were on earth” [Gen. 6: 4]—corresponding to what Scripture says: “From there it divides and becomes four riverheads” [Gen. 2: 10]. From the place where the garden divided they were called <i>hanefilim</i> [the fallen ones], as Scripture says: “from there it divides.”</p> <p>“Were on earth in those days” [Gen. 6: 4]—but not at a later time—[only] until Joshua came and [since then] the sons of <i>Ha’elohim</i> have been hidden...</p>

77 The creation of man is described as the planting of the Garden of Eden (see the discussion in section 2.8 below), while his expulsion from this Garden is described as the emergence of the rivers that flow down from it (see also the discussion in sections 2.9 and 2.12 below), and his preclusion from the general category of adam. This claim is reinforced here by the reference to “the fallen ones,” of whom Scripture says that they “were on the earth in those days,” that is to say, they were already in existence at the time of Adam, not only later, as the literal meaning of the verse suggests when it refers to them as the generations that descended from Adam. For a similar claim see the text cited in *Midrash hane’elam* as published in Meroz, “Va’ani lo hayiti sham?!” 167.

78 In this paragraph, it is claimed that the “fallen ones” remained in the world until the time of Joshua but no later. The argument is based on the identification of the spies with the “fallen ones,” since Scripture says of the spies: “Your terror has fallen upon us, and all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you” (Josh. 2: 9, although according to the literal meaning of the verse, this refers not just to the spies but to the entire people of Israel), while about “the fallen ones” it says, “And there we saw the Nephilim [the ‘fallen ones’], the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so were we in their sight” (Num. 13: 33). The biblical narrative also describes how the spies were hidden (Josh. 2: 4) and were not found when their pursuers sought them (Josh. 2: 22). SD interprets this final concealment of the spies as evidence that they existed on earth until, but not any later than, the time of Joshua. Another reason for identifying the “fallen ones” with the spies is the association of both with illicit sexual relations; see also §54 in the long version. For a similar claim, see the text cited in *Midrash hane’elam* as published in Meroz, “Va’ani lo hayiti sham?!” 166 ff. These two texts resemble each other also in that they both ignore the order of events as told in the Bible. For SD see, for example, the discussion in section 2.2 below, and for the *Midrash hane’elam* see the explicit statement (after BT Pesa. 6b) that there is no earlier and later in the Bible (Meroz, “Va’ani lo hayiti sham?!” 168).

Short Version (MS Vatican 213)	Long Version (Margaliot edition)
<p>[65] Who are “<i>anshei hashem</i> [men of the name]”? [Gen. 6: 4] – those who conduct themselves by the Name by which the unholy ones below conduct themselves; they have excluded themselves from the general category of <i>adam</i>.</p>	<p>[65] “These are the heroes <i>me’olam</i> [of old; of the world]” [Gen. 6: 4]– of the world above, “<i>Anshei hashem</i> [men of the name]” [ibid.] – who conduct themselves by the Name. Which name? The Holy Name by which the unholy ones below conduct themselves, doing so only by the Name. “Men of the name” – unidentified, not men of <i>YHVH</i> ... “Men of the name” – unspecified, they have excluded themselves from the general category of <i>adam</i>. Scripture says: “<i>adam</i> [man] does not abide in the Glory [<i>yegar</i>]” [Ps. 49: 13]. “<i>adam</i> in the Glory” – in the Glory of the King. “Does not abide” – without breath.⁷⁹</p>
	<p>[66-68] [Riddles]⁸⁰</p>

79 Since the “men of the name” linked themselves to the name Elohim, they no longer “abide” in *YHVH*, that is the Glory or the thirteen attributes. According to §61, entities such as these do not receive the “breath” of life or the spirit, and are, therefore, dead; however, it should be remembered that, according to SD, death is nothing but a fall. Cf. the following: “The king of Egypt died’ [Exod. 2: 23] – the Archon of Egypt was removed from his station and fell from his pride” (Zohar ii 19a; Meroz, Yuvalei zohar, unit no. 45 [*Midrash hane’elam*], §393). See also Bereshit rabah 96:3 (p. 1193).

80 These riddles are briefly discussed in Liebes, *Torat hayetsirah*, 127-8.

Short Version (MS Vatican 213)	Long Version (Margaliot edition)
<p>[69] Scripture says: “<i>Hanokh</i> [Enoch] walked with <i>Ha’elohim</i>, and he was no more” [Gen. 5: 24]–with this name. “For <i>Elohim</i> took him” [ibid.]–to be called by His name.</p>	<p>[69] Scripture says: “<i>Hanokh</i> [Enoch] walked with <i>Ha’elohim</i>” [Gen. 5: 24], and Scripture says: “<i>hanokh lana’ar</i> [train the youth] according to his way” [Prov. 22: 6]–the well-known “youth.” “With <i>Ha’elohim</i>” [Gen. 5: 24]–and not with <i>YHVH</i>. “And he was no more” [ibid.]–with this name. “For <i>Elohim</i> took him” [ibid.]–to be called by His name.</p>
	<p>[70] [More riddles] [71-73] [More of the commentary on Genesis]</p>
Concluding Narrative Framework	
	<p>[73] Until here, sealed and crowned is concealment of the King, that is, <i>Sifra ditseni’uta</i>, the Book of Concealment ... Happy is he who has entered and emerged, knowing its paths and ways!</p>

1.4 The textual relation between the two versions

The most obvious difference between the two versions is their respective lengths: the short version contains approximately a quarter of the number of words found in the long version. It is also strikingly clear that the short version has been completely absorbed into the long version (albeit with some minor variations), or, alternatively, that it is the product of extensive omissions from the long version. This is quite unlike the relationship between other units of zoharic text that are extant in several versions, which tend to differ from each other not only in length but also in their actual wording.⁸¹

Since SD clearly belongs to the esoteric tradition, it is not impossible that the short version is a précis of the long, and that its laconic style reflects a deliberate attempt to convey no more than “chapter headings,”⁸² without revealing too much to the uninitiated. The implication of this supposition would be that the differences between the two versions do not affect their core substance, as the main ideas are the same in both. Consequently, it would be difficult to determine which version might be the earlier of the two. The long and more developed version may have been composed first, aiming at a restricted group of adepts, while the “chapter headings” of the short version might have been extracted from it subsequently in order to further restrict the dissemination of knowledge that was deemed to be unfit for wider circulation. Conversely, the enigmatic “chapter headings” may have constituted the original version of the work in its entirety, only later to be expanded on the basis of oral traditions.

Another approach to the relationship between the two versions is to focus on such differences between them as may point to a disparity of substance rather than of length or literary form. For example, the long version can be seen as a particular development of the ideas suggested by the short version, which may have reached the authors of the long version without an accompanying oral tradition to elucidate its original meaning. They therefore interpreted and expanded it to the best of their knowledge and understanding, or according to some other, quite different oral tradition that was accessible to them. In this case, we would have to demonstrate that even though the long version they produced shared its textual core with the original short version, they had altered it enough to invest the long version with an altogether new meaning. On the other hand, it is also possible that the short version was extracted at some point from an original long version by a process of selection and sifting based on the conscious rejection of some of its ideas.

81 See n. 2 above.

82 After BT Hagiga 13a.

These considerations should help us determine whether the two versions share their core substance, and which one predates the other. It is, however, possible that even if one version was the earlier of the two, each would have been corrected in light of the other during the centuries of continuous copying of Zohar manuscripts. This would mean that the relationship between the two versions was reciprocal, and that the differences that kept them distinct from each other progressively levelled out. Moreover, if the relation between the two versions was as complex as this, then it is not impossible that there existed at least one other version of the same unit of text.

My analysis of the relationship between the two versions pursues all these avenues of enquiry, giving equal consideration to each of the hypotheses outlined above, but the conclusion I have reached is that the versions differ from each other not only in length and form but also significantly in substance. Assuming for a moment that the short version is indeed the earlier of the two, I argue that although the long version depends on it as its conceptual source, it clearly takes a different direction, investing the old tenets with new meaning. The novelty of the long version emerges clearly from the additional details it supplies, which render it relatively comprehensible. This contrasts with the textual structure it inherited from the short version, which is over-concise or deliberately enigmatic, almost totally obscuring its meaning. On the other hand, if we nevertheless assume that the short version was formed out of the long one by a gradual process of selection, then certain elements of the long version would have been deliberately omitted from it, in particular the expressions of radical anthropomorphism. Either way, the comparison between the versions helps us to disentangle the threads from which the long version was woven, and to identify the distinct motifs that were entwined in it, apparently with no concern for coherence.

Having weighed all the options considered above, I am inclined to the view that the short version, in the form in which it is extant today, is closer to an earlier, unknown text that was the source of both versions. Although I cannot as yet determine the matter conclusively, it is on this assumption that the present article is based. For the time being, at any rate, the very comparison between the two versions should enable us to gain a better understanding of SD as a whole.

1.5 The continuous process of literary and conceptual revision

The two versions of SD as presented above should by no means be assumed to be the only ones that came into existence. In fact, my claim is that they

form only part of a continuous process of revision, in the course of which an original set of concepts and textual units would have been expanded by the incorporation of many new elements. SD is thus the product of contributions by numerous individuals over time, rather than the work of any one author, and it is doubtful that we would ever be able to unearth and distinguish from one another all the textual strata that now make it up. Yet the existence of such distinct strata becomes evident not only when we compare the two versions to each other, but also as we note in each one certain incongruities that may well point to the seams that have somewhat clumsily stitched them together out of discrete sources.

The textual incongruities discernible in the short version may indicate the presence of glosses, inserted in order to introduce new ideas. An example of this might be the rhetorical question “What is *Sifra ditseni’uta*?” which appears at the very beginning of this version. Does it actually belong to the original text? Prima facie, “the Book of Concealment” is already available to the questioner, who is attempting to describe or to define it, and in asking the question, he is implicitly adding a new layer of commentary. If this is the case, then the answer provided in §3 might also belong to this new layer of commentary. It relates SD to the theme of the kings, which forms the basis of the anthropomorphic expansion characteristic of both the long version and its subsequent adaptations in the *Idras*. Furthermore, in the long version, the theme of the kings follows directly on the answer to the opening question (at least implicitly, in §4 ff.). But this is not the case in the short version, which returns to the topic only in §44. Was the original text of the short version so disjointed from the start, or does its present structure point to the gradual accumulation of diverse materials, resulting in a patchwork of texts (or perhaps one basic text attracting additions)? For the time being, this question must remain unanswered.

An additional textual incongruity is encountered close by. The short version discusses the expression “the second earth” (§7) without divulging its meaning or its source. Only further in the text does it become apparent that it refers to Genesis 1: 2. By contrast, the long version shows, step by step, that it is commenting on the opening verses of Genesis, clarifying not only that the concept of “second earth” originates in Genesis 1: 2, but also what argument the commentary is making about it. In this case, the short version seems clearly deficient.

Yet another anomaly comes into view when the short version interprets the phrase “the earth sprouted” (Gen. 1: 12) in §26, then turns to other subject matters, only to pick up the phrase again in §36. The break might be accounted for by a well-known editorial practice of medieval manuscript

copyists: when they finished inserting their own comments into the copied text, they would return to the original by copying again the last few words of the sentence preceding their own comments. The material now found in the short version between the two references to Genesis 1: 12, which clearly breaks the flow of the discussion, suggests the probability of precisely such an interpolation.

Finally, the presence of apparent terminological and conceptual inconsistencies in the short version raises the question whether the diverse views expressed throughout it are compatible with each other. For example, the greater part of this version (from §13 on) refers to the originator of all that happens by the divine name *Elohim*. However, *Elohim* is virtually absent from the preceding paragraphs. In the discussion below (sections 2.3, 2.5, and 2.7) I attempt to resolve some of these difficulties, but the possibility should not be excluded that they result from the amalgamation of disparate texts.

The textual problems stand out even more clearly in the long version, which, in addition to the many incongruities it inherited from its precursor (if we assume that the long version is indeed the later of the two), presents many difficulties of its own. For example, the commentary it provides on the first six chapters of Genesis – the central axis of *Sifra ditseni'uta* – is interrupted time and again by apparent interpolations, which offer no comment whatsoever on Genesis or any other biblical text. Instances of this include discussions of the supernal countenances (§§4-6, 14-17), the serpent (§9), and the riddles that feature in §§66-7, which all break the flow of the Genesis commentary. The diversity of these disruptive passages strongly suggests that they were added in several stages and by multiple hands.

The printed editions themselves testify to the existence of an additional recension of the long version. From page 177*b* to page 178*b*, the text is printed in two columns, one of them bearing the heading “another matter.” This column adds new elements to the text, which focus on the technique of contemplative prayer (*kavanot*).

While the Zohar manuscripts containing the short version of SD position it within the pericope “Bereshit,” which is appropriate, given its subject matter, the printed editions (except for the one published in Cremona) place the long version within the pericope “Terumah,” despite the fact that it has no particular relevance to the substance of this pericope. Nevertheless, in the introduction attached to the long version (Zohar ii. 176*a*), an association is established between SD and the main theme of the biblical pericope “Terumah,” by the attribution to the work of the following statement, which refers to the building of the tabernacle according to Exodus 27: “And in

SD we learnt: hooks [after Exod. 27: 10] above and hooks below, and all of them are weighed in a single balance.”⁸³ This apparent quotation from SD does not appear in either the short or the long version of the work; its only attestation is in the introduction appended to the latter.⁸⁴ It therefore suggests that there existed an additional version of SD, which dealt with the connection between the creation of the world and the building of the tabernacle – the probable reason why the printed editions incorporated the long version in the pericope “Terumah.” The same applies to another passage (Zohar iii. 146*b*), which may similarly belong to a layer of the Zohar that linked SD to the pericope “Terumah.” The passage, which does not exist in either of the versions, attributes to the work a discussion of the laws of the Levite, which originate in Exodus 28 within that biblical pericope. It reads: “In *Tseni’uta desifra*⁸⁵ we learn that a Levite who consecrates a priest must first be consecrated himself.” The existence of such unknown quotations from SD indicates that additional versions of the work, either partial or whole, have not been preserved.

The continuous process of textual and conceptual reworking does not stop at the borderlines of what is considered to be SD. It goes on in many other Zoharic units. This is especially true of the bulky *Idras* literature,⁸⁶ which can be seen as an expansion, even as additional versions, of the ideas and text of the SD.⁸⁷ That this process of reworking was continuous is evidenced by numerous quotations from SD; notably, the Zohar contains thirty-seven such quotations, all citing SD by name. Most of these quotations vary only slightly from the readings found in the printed editions, but occasionally, as we have seen, they are completely unknown.⁸⁸ It is significant that all the known quotations are taken from the long version, which, in its basic form, I am inclined to view as the later of the two versions.

In addition to the citations that appear in the Zohar, I have located sixteen quotations from the SD in the writings of Joseph Angelit, who was

83 On the balance, see section 2.11 below.

84 See also at n. 179 below.

85 On the changes to the name of the book – *Sifra ditseni’uta* (“Book of Concealment”), *Tseni’uta desifra* (“The Concealment of the Book”), or *Tseni’uta demalka* (“The Modesty of the King”), see Liebes, *Torat hayetsirah*, 130.

86 The use of this term follows Yehuda Liebes, “The Messiah of the Zohar: On R. Shimeon bar Yohai as a Messianic Figure,” in *Studies in the Zohar* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 1-84, 163-193 especially pages 4-12.

87 This was first noted by Liebes, “How the *Zohar* was Written,” 95ff. For additional details, see Neta Sobol, “*Ĥativat ha’idrot besifrut hazohar*” (Ph.D. diss., under the supervision of R. Meroz, Tel Aviv University, 2011), 116-199.

88 Yehuda Liebes has already noted this phenomenon in “How the Zohar Was Written,” 95-98.

active during the first three decades of the 14th century.⁸⁹ All the quotations are drawn from §§3-5 (usually as a single unit), 19, and 55-6 (the latter are not included in the text presented in sections 1.2-1.3 above). As is evident from the parallel versions of the text, Angelit based these quotations on the long version. Additionally, at the turn of the 13th century, Rabbi David ben Yehudah he-ḥasid wrote a commentary (*Sefer ha-Gevul*) on an unknown version of the Idra Rabba, which, likewise, makes several references to the long version of SD.⁹⁰

Thus, in addition to the *Idras* literature, there are a considerable number of both transparent and opaque identifiable quotations from SD in the zoharic corpus. A minority of them, those that are explicitly acknowledged by the Zohar as quotations from SD, are unknown and do not actually occur in the extant versions of SD, indicate the existence of further versions, while the identifiable citations all originate in the long version. Several conclusions may be drawn from these findings. First, it is clear that the authors of the Zohar literature attributed a great deal of importance to SD, which formed, it seems, the conceptual basis of many of the major themes that feature in the corpus. Second, it appears that these authors were familiar only with the long version of the work. Third, SD is clearly older than all the zoharic texts that cite it. Hence the long version must have come into being relatively early in the genealogy of the Zohar.⁹¹ If the short version, which is never cited, is even earlier than the long, it may have been rejected by the zoharic authors because it was superseded by the richer and more expansive long version.⁹² On the other hand, if the short version is even

89 The following is a list of the references to SD in Angelit's works (some pages contain more than one such reference): *Sefer livnat hasapir: perush Midrash hane'elam vetosefta leSefer hazohar* (Jerusalem: Dfus Azriel, 1913), on Genesis 1a, 3d, 4a, 12b, 65b; *Livnat Hasapir* on Leviticus (London, British Library, MS Add. 27000 [Margoliouth, 767; microfilm no. 5663]), 16th-century Sephardi script, 328b, 335b, 347a; *Qupat harokhlin* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Opp. 228 [Neubauer, 1618; microfilm no. 17196]), 15th- or 16th-century Sephardi (Provençal?) script, 96b; *Sefer esrim ve'arba'ah sodot* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Opp. Add. Qu. 40 [Neubauer, 1663; microfilm no. 17404]), Italian script, dated 1583, 96a, 98b; *Perush sha'arei orah* (Jerusalem, The National Library of Israel, MS Heb. 8^o144 [microfilm no. B 252]), eastern Sephardi script, dated 1546, 26b, 30b, 33b, 36b (In the last reference SD is cited as "*Midrash hane'elam*, pericope Pinḥas," *Midrash hane'elam* being Angelit's standard name for the Zohar).

90 See Goldreich, "*Sefer ha-Gevul*," Liebes, "How the Zohar Was Written," Sobol, *Ḥativat ha'idrot*, 254-321.

91 As most scholars agree. For some of the studies that deal with this question, see n. 1 above.

92 In other parts of the Zohar, too, where early variants have survived in a handful of manuscripts, this was precisely because they were superseded by more contemporary versions. See n. 8 above.

later than the long, then it may not have been cited because it had not yet existed when the zoharic corpus was coming into being. In this case, we would have to conclude that the short version was created in the course of the 14th century (to which the Vatican manuscript of this version is dated).

2. *Cycles of Creation and Failure*

2.1 A preliminary remark on methodology

Zohar scholars and commentators alike tend to base their interpretations on the juxtaposition of parallel texts within the corpus. When a zoharic text appears to be defective in one place, it is supplemented by material drawn from another, where the same issues are discussed at greater length or expressed more clearly. This method is warranted and effectively unavoidable, but it is based on the assumption that the ideas expressed throughout the Zohar represent one and the same conceptual framework. If, however, as we now begin to realize, the Zohar is made up of disparate strata, piled one above the other like the layers of an onion, then this method must be used with great caution. Where no alternative is available, every effort should be made to ascertain, as far as this is possible in the present state of our knowledge, that the juxtaposed parallel passages belong to the same “archaeological” stratum of the text. At the same time, careful attention should be paid to all possible sources of conceptual inspiration that are unquestionably earlier than any zoharic text. In other words, when the synchronicity and conceptual compatibility of apparent zoharic parallels is in question, the relative weight ascribed to data drawn from earlier sources should be increased.⁹³

2.2 The basic principles of SD’s commentary on Genesis

SD’s commentary on Genesis is based on a well-known distinction between the two consecutive accounts of the creation at the beginning of the book of Genesis. In the first account, God’s name is *Elohim*, while in the second, it is *YHVH Elohim*. SD interprets this disparity by assuming that *Elohim* is an incomplete version of God’s name, while *YHVH Elohim* is the complete form 44 ,36 ,20§§ (שם שלם). For this reason, everything created by *Elohim* is itself incomplete, in contrast to *YHVH Elohim’s* creation, which is complete.⁹⁴

93 For an additional discussion of this methodology, see Meroz, *Yuvalei zohar*, particularly ch. 5.

94 Note that in *Bereshit rabab*, 13: 3 (p. 115), *YHVH Elohim* is called a “full name (שם מלא) over a full world,” and in Zohar 1:20a (and elsewhere), the same combination of names is referred to as the “full name.” For more on this, see section 2.4 below.

The incomplete creation was soon destroyed, or, as we shall see, “fell,” and it required renewal and restoration. Furthermore, the name *Elohim* is known as “the female side” in SD, while *YHVH* is referred to as “the male side” (§44). I assume that SD also holds the rabbinic view that these two names refer to the qualities of Judgement and Compassion respectively.⁹⁵ Idel has already shown that the kabbalistic theology of sexual union between these two divine names has its origin in the classical rabbinic sources, and the examples he adduces would seem to apply to SD as well.⁹⁶

Thus, according to SD, the first chapter of Genesis, and the first three verses of the second chapter, describe actions carried out by the quality of Judgement – a feminine quality, acting alone and producing flawed beings that cannot be sustained in the state in which they were created. These flawed acts of creation cease with the cessation of all work on the Sabbath (Gen. 2: 1-3). By contrast, from Genesis 2: 4 onwards, the qualities of Judgement and Compassion are described as co-operating in the production of sustainable beings, or the “renewal” of beings whose creation was flawed at its inception.⁹⁷ From this point on, the names *Elohim* and *YHVH Elohim* alternate, and the products of their respective actions are accordingly either flawed or complete. This alternation between completion and flaw applies not only to the creation of Adam but also to the generations of his descendants, and by implication, it continues to this very day.

However, one of the SD’s innovations is the claim that all these creative processes were preceded by an even earlier stage, concealed within the first verse of the Book of Genesis. According to this reading of the verse, the entity called *bereshit*, identified with the divine name *YHVH* and associated with the quality of Compassion alone, created six other entities, among them the divine names *Elohim*, as well as *Shamayim* (Heaven) and *Eretz* (Earth). The very fact that *Elohim*, one of *YHVH*’s own creations, was incomplete and incapable of producing anything but incomplete creations, implies that when *YHVH* acted alone, it, too, was incomplete. The entire creation, therefore, alternates between completed and flawed, incomplete states of being, and when it is flawed, it requires renewal and restoration. These alternations begin with *YHVH* acting alone to produce an incomplete creation; they continue with the incomplete creations generated by *Elohim* on

95 *Bereshit rabab*, 12: 15 (pp. 112-13).

96 See, Idel, in many of his publications, e.g. Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah – New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 128-136.

97 Cf. Nachmanides’ commentary on Gen. 2: 1, which draws an analogy between the first and second creations. In SD the two creations are not analogous, but rather the second is a renewal of the first.

its own; and they reach conclusion only when the two of them collaborate by mitigating Compassion with Judgement to produce a complete creation.

SD associates the incidents of corruption that occurred in primordial history with a cyclical process that repeats itself from the creation of the world to this day. Although the primordial incidents of corruption were not man's fault, once he was created, they clearly came to depend on his actions, particularly, as we shall see, on his mystical practices and sexual behaviour. The short version of SD is concerned with cycles which are not time-bound, but rather comprise a fixed set of recurrent events – creation, fall (as distinct from total destruction), and renewal. The wealth of ideas crammed into the long version has obscured this characteristic of the short version, and moreover, the long version, unlike the short, is expressly concerned with temporal cycles as well (see §9; and the beginning of §73, which is not included in the text presented in sections 1.2-1.3 above).

Another principle underlying the short version is that these cycles indicate fixed patterns of activity that are repeated at every stage of the creation. Admittedly, the basic contours of the biblical text on which SD is commenting⁹⁸ prevent it from drawing precise parallels between all these stages of creation, but a partial parallel, however incomplete, suffices for its purpose. For example, it is enough that the “incomplete” name *Elohim* (rather than the “complete name” *YHVH Elohim*) is mentioned in a biblical text for SD to detect a flaw in the activity associated with it; it is enough that some “fall” is alluded to in a biblical or classical rabbinic source (e.g., the diminution of the moon), for SD to fill in the “gaps” according to its own principles. The fact that the biblical text does not lend itself fully to SD's cyclical patterning, at least not as an overall organizing principle, makes it harder to understand how SD chooses to read it. It is therefore no wonder that unlike many of its other distinctive ideas and terms, SD's particular notion of cycles has left hardly any imprint on the later development of the Kabbalah.⁹⁹

In its interpretations of the biblical text, SD makes use of diverse midrashic techniques, often without sufficient indications of its method. Examples of this are the frequent switches from one meaning of a word to another, leaving the readers to work out for themselves which meaning is relevant in each case. Thus, when commenting on the verses in Genesis where the Hebrew word *hayah* (“living creature”) occurs, SD takes it to

98 Or, more accurately, the midrashic interpretations of the biblical text.

99 The notion that everything reflects what lies above it or has preceded it is common in Kabbalah, but this is not the case with the principle of cycles of creation and destruction.

mean not only “animal” but also – as in Ezekiel’s vision of the Chariot – an angel or some other heavenly entity, as well as the soul that enlivens all creatures, and the basest element of the human soul, the “animal soul.” Another example is the ambiguity of the term *tzeni’uta* in the very title of the work, whose multiple meanings, as will be shown below, are exploited to allude to the complex ideas contained in the text.

All in all, SD’s exegetical methodology is markedly aggressive. As we have seen (in section 1.5, for example), it violates the chronology of the biblical narrative of man’s creation by taking the first account, in Genesis 1: 26, to refer to a later stage of the process than the one described in the second account, in Genesis 2: 7. By the same token, the “earth” of Genesis 1: 2 is assumed to have been cursed by Adam’s sin, even though in the Genesis narrative, Adam had not yet been created at that stage of the proceedings. It would seem that these blatant departures from the plain chronology of the biblical text are driven by the distinction between the divine names *Elohim* and *YHVH Elohim* – an exegetical principle to which SD gives precedence over all other considerations.

2.3 Creation (§7)

SD begins its exegesis with the Hebrew letters that make up the opening verses of the book of Genesis. The interpretation it offers concerns the substance of the biblical text, but it focuses primarily on the structural and mathematical aspects of the language.

The first verse of Genesis, which deals with the creation, consists of seven Hebrew words, normally translated into English as: “In the beginning (*be-reshit*) *Elohim* [God] created [*bara*] the heavens and the earth.” For SD, which takes the Hebrew sentence to mean that Beginning (*bereshit*) created *Elohim*, the heavens and the earth, these seven words represent seven distinct hypostases, the first being the ontological origin, and thus the creator, of the other six (§7), although regrettably, they are not fully identified by name or defined by their characteristics. In addition, SD assumes that the biblical text furnishes us with two other allusions to its true meaning. First, from the six letters that make up the Hebrew word for “in the beginning” (בראשית) it learns that this word in its entirety – itself one the seven hypostases – contains within it six other hypostases, each represented by one of the six letters that constitute the word. Secondly, it arrives at the true meaning of this word by breaking it up into two distinct words, “created” (ברא) and “six” (שית). Thus “six” becomes the direct object of “created,” and the two words are understood in the sense of “[He/it] created six [hypostases].” This exegesis is based primarily on counting words

and letters, but it nevertheless retains a connection to the plain meaning of the Genesis text inasmuch as it concerns the process of creation and the nature of some of the created beings. This *be-reshit* is also *YHVH* as well as God's glory, and it is also called *hu*, the Hebrew demonstrative pronoun, which is supposed to designate its concealment from human perception.

This part of the exegesis appears in the long version but is missing from the short one. However, since the discussion that follows, which is present in the short version, is entirely based on the concept of created hypostases and makes no sense without it, this concept must lie at the basis of the short version as well, and is missing from it for technical reasons only (see section 1.5 above).

The commentators on SD assume that the hypostases discussed here are the divine *sefirot*. This theosophical interpretation can indeed find "anchorage" in the long version (for instance, in §10),¹⁰⁰ but not so in the short version, which can be understood without it. I suggest, therefore, that the short version was not based on the kabbalistic theosophy of the *sefirot*, but rather drew on pre-thirteenth century exegetical traditions regarding the Hebrew alphabet. These comprise certain classical rabbinic sources,¹⁰¹ the *Heikhalot* literature, and some geonic commentaries on the alphabet, such as *Seder raba dibereshit*, *Sefer otivot deRabi Aqiva* (versions a and b), *Midrash alfa beitot*, and several others.¹⁰² It appears that the latter group has the clearest links to SD.

100 For the methodological principle of "anchoring" any symbolic interpretation of a zoharic term in no other textual unit but the one in which that particular term occurs, see Meroz, *Yuvalei zohar*, ch. 5, §4. See also section 2.1 above.

101 See e.g. *Bereshit rabab*, 1: 10-11 (pp. 9-10), 12: 9-10 (pp. 107-9); *BT Shab. 104a, Men. 29b, Suk. 53a-b; JT Hag. 77c*.

102 For *Seder raba dibereshit*, see Solomon A. Wertheimer, *Batei midrashot: esrim v'hamishah midreshei hazal al pi kitvei yad migenizat Yerushalayim uMitsrayim* (Jerusalem: Ktav – Yad Vasefer, 1953), 1:5-48, 354-87 (the quotations below are taken from that edition); Peter Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, in collaboration with Margarete Schlüter and Hans Georg von Mutius (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981) (the paragraphs that belong to *Seder raba dibereshit* are listed on xiv-xvi). For a comprehensive discussion of this work, see Nicholas Séd, "La 'Berayta di Ma'aseh Bereshit': Une cosmologie juive du haut Moyen Age," *Revue des études juives*, 124 (1965): 259-305 259-305; Peter Schäfer, "In Heaven as It Is in Hell: The Cosmology of *Seder Rabbah di-Bereshit*," in Ra'anana S. Boustani and Annette Y. Reed (eds.), *Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities in Late Antique Religions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 233-74. For *Sefer otivot deRabi 'Aqiva* (versions a and b), see e.g. Wertheimer, *Batei midrashot*, 2:333-418 (the quotations below are drawn from that edition); Eliane Ketterer, "Otiyot deRabi 'Aqiva (nusah a-b): mahuto shel midrash zeh, megamato, ray'onotav uqesharav im zeramim shonim bayahadut uvanatsrut," (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2005), vol. 2 (her entire study is devoted to this text). On

The text that is most relevant to our discussion is *Seder raba dibereshit*, which states in its opening paragraph: “Do not read ‘in the beginning’ [בראשית], but [read] ‘created six’ [ברא שית],”¹⁰³ although it does not clarify what these six created entities might be.¹⁰⁴

There is, however, one clue in SD as to the nature of the created entities: §7 draws our attention to the fact that the second verse in Genesis begins with “and the earth,” which it takes to be a reference to “the second earth,” since this is the second appearance of the word in the chapter. However, this observation is immediately qualified by the statement that this second “earth” should not be discussed at this stage, since it was produced from the “soil that *YHVH* cursed” (Gen. 5: 29). According to SD, the “second earth” is cursed because of the sin of Adam, whereas everything that happened to the “first earth” – as emerges from the context – happened before the creation of Adam, so that Adam could have had no part in its downfall. This reinforces the suggestion that the “first earth” was indeed one of the six hypostases created in the beginning. It thus seems that SD brings us back to the literal meaning of Genesis 1: 1 (and to *Seder raba dibereshit*), by taking the verse to mean that, indeed, the heavens and the earth were created in the beginning.

2.4 Destruction (§§7, 8, 12)

Up to this point, SD has introduced the six entities that were created from “the beginning” (*be-reshit*), and alluded to certain mishaps that blighted the early stages of the creation. What, then, were these mishaps, which preceded the creation of man? What happened to the “first earth” and to the other entities created with it? According to SD, these events are described by the thirteen Hebrew words that follow the initial reference to “the earth” in Genesis 1: 2. The verse reads: “[And the earth] was waste and empty, with darkness over the face of the abyss and the wind of *Elohim* hovering

Midrash alfa beitot, see Wertheimer, *Batei midrashot*, 2:419-59. In Wertheimer’s view, this work is part of *Sefer otivot deRabi ’Aqiva. Midrash alfa beitot* is briefly discussed also in Ketterer, “Otiyot deRabi Aqiva,” 2:148-59. For a comprehensive discussion of the commentaries on the alphabet, see also Elias Lipiner, *Hazon ha’otiyot: torat ha’ide’ot shel ha’alefbeit ha’ivri* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1989); Tzahi Weiss, “Otiyot shenivre’u bahen shamayim va’arets” (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2008).

103 Wertheimer, *Batei midrashot*, 1:19, and version b, *ibid.*, 365; Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, §§429, 832. For similar interpretations in rabbinic literature, see BT *Suk.* 49a; *Bereshit rabah* 1: 4 (p. 6) and the editor’s notes ad loc.

104 Although this is followed by the statement that the beings created were either heaven and earth or this world and the next. See also *Bereshit rabah* 1: 14 (p. 12).

over the face of the waters.” According to SD, this refers to the destruction of the created thirteen supernal entities (§7), which were destined to be renewed at a later stage (§8). To remove any doubt about this, SD repeats and emphasizes that the earth “was” (Gen. 1: 2), “for it surely was!” meaning that it was and is no longer, as it has become desolate.¹⁰⁵

According to the long version, this devastation was completed in twelve hours, while according to the short version, it lasted thirteen hours. In this case, the text of the short version fits more naturally into the immediate context of the discussion, where the exegesis is based on the count of thirteen words following the word “the earth” in Genesis 1: 2. In addition, while previously each of the six letters in the word *be-reshit* (“in the beginning”), or each of the seven words in Genesis 1:1, represents a created entity, now each of these elements represents a stage of devastation, and their total number represents the duration of the entire devastation. Here too, the exegesis is not entirely divorced from the substance of the verse, if not necessarily cleaving to its plain, literal meaning: “waste and emptiness” are taken to refer not to the initial state of the creation, but rather to its subsequent destruction, which preceded its renewal in sustainable form.

And so, according to both versions, “six were created” and “those six” (§8) were destroyed. Yet according to all the commentaries on SD, the number of entities that were destroyed was decidedly seven, not six! One of the earliest commentaries, the *Idra raba*, which forms part of the Zohar itself, highlights the point by evoking the symbol of the seven kings of Edom.¹⁰⁶ Might the discrepancy between six and seven be explained as arising from scribal error in the transmission of SD? There are a number of indications that this is not the case. Firstly, the text alludes to the number of destroyed entities by stating: “as Scripture says [Gen. 1: 1]: ‘created’” (§8). That is to say, the entities that were destroyed are to be counted from the second Hebrew word of Genesis 1: 1 – *bara* (“created”), not from the first – *be-reshit* (“in the beginning”), and the total number of Hebrew words in that verse, counting from the second word on, is indeed six, not seven. Secondly, SD goes on to describe (still in §8) the destruction of these entities in laconic style, suggesting that “afterwards Scripture says [of the earth, that it] ‘was’ [Gen. 1: 1], for it surely was! And in the end, [according to Scripture, it became] ‘waste and empty, with darkness’ [ibid.] – ‘YHVH alone was exalted on that day’ [Isa. 2: 11]” (§8). From this we learn that,

105 SD bases itself here on the exegesis in *Bereshit rabab* 1: 14 (p. 13), albeit with a certain change of meaning.

106 Zohar 3:135a-b (*Idra raba*); Gen. 36: 31-9.

according to SD, two verses refer to the destruction – one from Genesis and another from Isaiah. The first describes the actual destruction, while the second introduces a reservation – not everything was destroyed; one entity, represented (according to the Isaiah verse) by the name *YHVH*, remained, exalted in solitude. Following the earlier claim whereby the words from “created” onwards in the first verse of Genesis represent the entities that were destroyed, we must assume that the one exalted entity that survived, the name *YHVH*, is the originator of the other six, represented by the opening word of the verse – *be-reshit* (“in the beginning”).¹⁰⁷

A third reason for rejecting the possibility that the number six is a scribal error arises from the fact that in both versions of §12, six entities feature again, depicted as branches emerging from a root.¹⁰⁸ This “root,” according to the same paragraph, is the name *YHVH*, which – as we have just seen – is probably yet another representation of the hypostasized Hebrew word for “in the beginning,” *be-reshit*. The branches, emerging between the letters *yod* and *heb* of the name, are likened to a tongue “speaking grandly” – a phrase which carries the negative connotations of its biblical origin in Daniel 7: 8 into SD’s description of the devastation. The description acquires yet another

107 In the account of the creation in the first chapter of Genesis, *YHVH* is not mentioned at all; in this sense, surely, it is “exalted” beyond perception.

108 Isaac the Blind uses a similar image; see his commentary on *Sefer Yetsira*. See the text in Gershom Scholem, *The Kabbalah in Provence [Haqabalah biprovens]*, edited from lectures by Rivka Schatz (Jerusalem: n.p., 1976), appendix 10 and the discussion *ibid.*, 210-13; Haviva Pedaya, *Hashem vehamiqdash bemishnat R. Yitshaq Sagi Nebor: 'iyun masbveh bekhbitvei rishonei hamequbalim* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2001), 75. As noted above (section 2.2), SD tends to subject the physical creation and the principles governing its conduct to a fixed pattern of cycles of creation and destruction. This pattern may be discernible in the six created entities, which may refer also to the descendants of Adam and Eve – Cain and his twin sister, Abel and his two twin sisters (see e.g. *Bereshit rabah* 22: 2 (p. 205)), and Seth. For other rabbinic views on the number of Adam and Eve’s descendants, see Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, trans. from the German manuscript by Henrietta Szold (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1910-1954), 5:138-9, n. 17, in reference to *ibid.*, 1:108. This suggestion may be supported by the observation that many of the 13th-century discussions on forbidden sexual relations utilize terms taken from the semantic field of “branch/root.” See, for example, Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, book 3, ch. 49; Asher ben David in the name of Isaac the Blind, in *R. Asher ben David: kol ketavav ve'iyunim beqabalato: venosaf lo perushei ma'aseh bereshit shel hamequbalim biProvans uveGeronah*, ed. Daniel Abrams (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 1996), 305, 315-16 [Hebrew]; Zohar 3:77b; Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1367-9; Idel, “Perushim lesod ha'arayot,” 89-199 (very detailed with a great many examples). See also section 2.10 below. In its present state, SD does not belong to any of the traditions mentioned above, but its possible connection to them should be noted, as an unknown link may come to light in future research.

negative connotation from the following depiction of branches emerging from a root:

Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah used to say: ... one whose wisdom exceeds his deeds, to what is he to be compared? To a tree whose branches are many and whose roots are few, so that when the wind comes, it uproots it and overturns it ... but one whose deeds exceed his wisdom, to what is he to be compared? To a tree whose branches are few and the roots many, so that even if all the winds in the world come and blow upon it, they move it not out of its place, as Scripture says, “For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters” [Jer. 17:8].¹⁰⁹

SD refers to these ruinous events mainly by terms derived from the Hebrew root **ח-ר-ח** (*het-resh-bbet*), whose most common meaning is “destroy.” But does this mean that the six created entities were completely destroyed? Note that their re-creation is referred to by the Aramaic root **ק-ו-ק** (*quf-vav-mem*), which has multiple meanings, and the text appears to be consciously exploiting at least some of them – exist, rise or raise, as well as resurrect.¹¹⁰ Thus the re-creation of the six “destroyed” entities is described as follows: “The Thirteen will raise them in Compassion – and they will be renewed as before – and all those six will rise” (§8). If destruction is contrasted here not with what is perhaps the most common meaning, namely “existence,” but rather with being “raised” and “rising,” then surely, it must signify a fall or a descent. According to the analogous events repeatedly described in the subsequent paragraphs of SD, the root **ח-ר-ח** should indeed be understood as a reference not to destruction but to a fall (see below, sections 2.7, 2.8, 2.9). This interpretation is reinforced by the contrast between the fate of the six “destroyed” entities, which I take to be fallen or impaired rather than annihilated, and that of the single entity that remained intact. The latter is said to be “exalted,” that is, lofty and elevated,¹¹¹ which again suggests that the former are fallen or brought low. Note also the phrase “renewed as before,” which appears to echo the biblical verse “Renew our days as of old” (Lam. 5: 21). SD is therefore referring expressly to

109 *Pirkei avot* 3: 17.

110 See Sokoloff, *Palestinian Aramaic*, p 479 ff.; id., *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2002), 992 ff.

111 See Ben-Yehuda, Eliezer, *Milon halashon ha'ivrit bayeshanah vebahadashah* (Tel Aviv: Hotza'at La'am, 1948-1959), 7521-2, s.v. **שגב**.

renewal, not to creation anew.¹¹² If the entities that were destroyed were not completely annihilated but had only fallen or been brought low, their renewal is the restoration of what survived but had become desolate. It appears that “renewal” anticipates the term that was to become so popular in later Kabbalah (and has even found its way into contemporary common parlance), that is, cosmic “rectification,” known by the Hebrew term *tiqun*.¹¹³

This description of the destruction seems to be based on a wide range of traditions. Its association with the “complete name” (שם שלם) evokes, as noted above,¹¹⁴ the expression “full name” (שם מלא), and occurs again in the context of cosmic destruction in the midrashic anthology *Pesiqta derav kabana*:

For he said, because *YH* [has sworn], by the laying of His hand on His throne, that the Lord will wage war on Amalek [from generation to generation] [Exod. 17: 16] ... As long as the seed of Amalek exists in the world, neither the name nor the throne is complete (שלם). When the seed of Amalek is destroyed, both the name and the throne will be complete. What is the reason for this? “The enemy is no more – ruins everlasting; you have torn down their cities; their very names are lost” [Ps. 9: 7]. What is written after that? “But the YHVH abides for ever; He has set up His throne for judgement” [Ps. 9: 8].¹¹⁵

112 See also *ibid.*, 1456-7, s.v. שחר. This root occurs in Isaiah, the Talmud, and the commentaries on the alphabet (see below, at nn. 120, 118, 122, respectively).

113 The root ת-ק-ת (*tav-quf-nun*) does appear in the short version of SD, but not in reference to the restoration of a destroyed entity to its previous state. In §46 we find it referring to “a nest” which was set up or constructed (אתתקן) within Eve, to become “an evil abode.” Since there is no mention of any previous existence of such a nest or evil abode, the verb in this case cannot possibly refer to the nest being “restored” (for more on this, see section 2.9 below). Similarly, in §44 the male organ is described as extending and preparing itself (אתתקן) to enter the mouth of the Mother, but this, again, is not a reference to its “restoration” to a previous state of being (see also section 2.8 below). However, the text goes on directly to describe what clearly is the “restoration” or “re-establishment” of previously destroyed entities: “the kings who were ruined were here established” (see section 2.8 below). and in this case, the root ת-ק-ת is not mentioned at all. See also Ben-Yehuda, *Milon halashon ha'ivrit*, s.v. תקן, 7879-85. In the long version, a noun derived from the root ת-ק-ת acquires a new meaning in the description of the “enhancements” of the supernal Head, which are its “garments of glory” – the divine countenance and, specifically, the beard. Here the reference seems to be to decoration, beautification, and grooming, especially of the hair. For all these meanings, see Ben-Yehuda, *Milon halashon ha'ivrit*, s.v. 7879-85, תקן; Liebes, “Messiah,” 19-20, 52-74.

114 See section 2.2 and n. 94.

115 *Pesikta de Rav Kabana*, ed. Bernard Mandelbaum, 2nd edn. (Newark: Jewish Theological

The completion of the name [YHVH instead of YH only] depends, therefore, on the destruction of Israel's typological enemy, Amalek. In light of this exegesis, it seems that SD associates the "full name" (שם מלא) with the "complete name" (שם שלם), and with the restoration of the flawed creation to a state of perfection, implying that the forces of evil have been destroyed. By contrast, the previous state of the creation, while the name was neither full nor complete, is identified in SD with the presence of evil and ruination.

Cosmic destruction similarly features in a number of other sources, echoing the rabbinic questions whether the world was created by the quality of Judgement or the quality of Compassion, and whether it would have endured had it been created by either one of them alone.¹¹⁶ For example: "God created worlds and destroyed them until He created these, saying, 'These please me and those do not.'¹¹⁷ Another example is the talmudic tradition on the same theme, which introduces the additional notion that worlds are repeatedly created and destroyed in cyclical time:

R. Qattina said: "Six thousand years shall the world exist, and one [thousand, the seventh], it shall be desolate, as Scripture says: 'And YHVH alone will be exalted on that day' [Isa. 2: 11]." Abaye said: "It will be desolate two [thousand] ..." It has been taught in accordance with R. Qattina: Just as the seventh year is one year of release in seven, so the world: one thousand years out of seven shall be fallow, as Scripture says [Isa. 2: 11]: "And YHVH alone will be exalted on that day" ... the day that is altogether Sabbath ... the Holy One, blessed be He, will renew His world only after seven thousand years.¹¹⁸

According to this passage, the world will endure for six thousand years, and on the seventh, the cosmic Sabbath, it will be fallow, waste, and desolate, after which time, the Lord will renew it. This talmudic passage provides SD with the reference to the verse in Isaiah, which enables it to emphasize that the destruction does not affect the deity itself.

Seminary, 1987), pisqa 3, "Zakhor" (p. 53). See also Pedaya's discussion of this idea in early Kabbalah, in *Hasbem vebamiqdash*, 103-47.

116 See e.g. *Beresbit rabab* 12: 15 (pp. 112-13). Notably, for SD, the world was first created by the quality of Mercy, then by the quality Judgement, but in neither case did it achieve sustainability until the qualities of Judgement and Compassion combined to complete it and to ensure its endurance.

117 *Beresbit rabab* 3: 5 (p. 23).

118 BT *San.* 97a-b.

The doctrine of cyclical time is more developed in the kabbalistic tradition. Nachmanides and his followers are particularly well known for espousing this doctrine, as are also the anonymous *Sefer hatemunah* and the sixteenth-century kabbalist and legalist, David ben Zimra.¹¹⁹ The salient characteristics of the kabbalistic doctrine of cyclical time are the identification of the cycles (*shemittot*) with the divine hypostases (the seven lower *sefirot*), and the claim that each cycle of the world's physical existence (*shemittah*) is an incarnation of a particular *sefirah*. These doctrines are of no help in understanding the short version of SD, since kabbalistic theosophy is not discernible in its conceptual background.

Of more relevance to the short version are the commentaries on the alphabet dating from geonic times, which clearly reflect doctrines of creation and destruction, and whose relationship to the SD has not been noticed so far. The destruction of the worlds features in these texts in a wide range of contexts, with particular emphasis on the parallels between the creation and the end of the world. They present a more radical perspective on the biblical view of the end of time. On the one hand, they rely on the biblical descriptions of the “day of the Lord,” the day that precedes the redemption and is marked by affliction, distress, and desolation; on the other hand, they make use of the words of Isaiah (65: 17), “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind.”¹²⁰ Thus, in these commentaries, cosmic destruction is regarded as an important part of the process of new creation, characteristic of the end of days and paralleling the first creation:

[The Holy One, blessed be he] scrambles heavens and earth, [throwing] one on top of the other.¹²¹ He destroys the entire world and returns it to emptiness and waste, as Scripture says: “Lift up your eyes to the heavens,” etc. [“Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon

119 For a more comprehensive discussion, see e.g. Gershom Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 460-75; Pedaya, *Haramban*, *passim*.

120 According to the literal meaning of the verse, the “former” which shall not be remembered are the afflictions discussed in the preceding verse. However, it seems that the commentary understands these verses to mean that the former heavens and earth are the ones that will be forgotten, as will be shown below.

121 Compare this presentation of the throwing of heaven and earth together as a destructive “scrambling” of the creation, with the following account of the mixing together of fire and water, which is presented as a positive act of “formation”: “The Lord took fire and water, he beat them up together and from them the heavens were formed” (*Beresbit rabah* 4: 8 [p. 31]).

the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish like smoke, and the earth shall become old like a garment, and those who dwell in it shall die in like manner; but my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished” – Isa. 51: 6.].¹²²

Here, as in SD, the world is destroyed and returns to chaos. The main difference, however, between these two visions of destruction is that the geonic exegesis is concerned with events in the future, while SD deals with events in the past.

To leave no doubt as to the nature of this future devastation, the geonic commentary goes on to describe it in greater detail:

And He takes from every angel and from every seraph his soul and his spirit and his dominion and his holy spirit, so that they will all perish as one. At that time, no progeny of the heavens or the earth will remain, neither of ministering angels nor of the creatures created by the Holy One blessed be He, but He alone, as Scripture says: “And *YHVH* alone will be exalted on that day” [Isa. 2: 11]. What is *alone*? Without His throne, without His glory, without His servants, His slaves, His palaces, without anything apart from the righteous, whom the Holy One blessed be He bears on His wings, as Scripture says: “He shall cover you with His feathers [and under His wings shall you find refuge,” Ps. 91: 4] ... And when He renews the world to come, He renews His throne and His glory, His canopy and His seat of glory, and He places the righteous in the world like the ministering angels.¹²³

All that was created is destroyed, with the exception of the Lord and the righteous, who alone endure. Note that the verse from Isaiah, “And *YHVH* alone will be exalted on that day,” appears again and again in the classical rabbinic texts, in *Midrash ha’otiyot*, and in SD. According to the passage from *Midrash alfa beitot* just quoted, at the time of the destruction, the Lord alone will remain, together with the righteous, but in another part of the same text, God’s throne survives the destruction rather than the righteous:

He [the Holy One, blessed be He] injures, rends, and scrambles the heavens and the earth, one on top of the other, beneath His two

122 “Midrash alfa beitot,” in Wertheimer, *Batei midrashot*, 2:436. See also *ibid.*, 2:429, 436, 442, 445-6; “Sefer Otiyot deRabi’Aqiva” (version a), *ibid.*, 355-7, 363-5, 373.

123 “Midrash alfa beitot,” in Wertheimer, *Batei midrashoth*, 2:442.

arms,¹²⁴ and He destroys the entire world in a moment, as Scripture says: “For His anger lasts but a moment; in His favour is life” [Ps. 30: 6]. And all that would be left of them is the throne of glory, and the Holy One, blessed be He would sit on it alone in His glory, as Scripture says: “And *YHVH* alone will be exalted on that day” [Isa. 2: 11]. What is *alone*? That even the living creatures of the Chariot, the *ofanim*, cherubim, wheels, seraphim, *tafsarim*, and *er’elim* will perish with them, as Scripture says: “None can deliver out of my hand” [Deut. 32: 39].¹²⁵

2.5 Renewal (§8)

Six entities were created, destroyed, and – after a time – renewed, or rather, “raised” from their fall. How? According to SD, “The Thirteen will raise them in Compassion – and they will be renewed as before” (§8). “As before” suggests that there would be no difference between the first creation and the second, which raises the question why it was ever necessary for the six entities to be destroyed. Generations of kabbalists have grappled with this question, generally responding to it with the assumption – clearly formulated, for example, in Lurianic Kabbalah – that a certain flaw in the makeup of the first creation necessitated its destruction.

SD similarly assumes that the original creation was indeed flawed: the world was first created by the quality of Compassion alone, and then by the quality of Judgement on its own. These two creations were destroyed and subsequently renewed by the mitigation of Judgement with Compassion, and the product of this renewal did endure.¹²⁶

It should be emphasized that according to the long version of SD, the capacity of this renewed creation to endure depended on the enhancement of the uppermost “countenance” of the “Head,” thus enabling what had already been created to endure (mainly §§4-7). But this idea is unique to the long version, and therefore it cannot shed any light on the rather obscure notion of “renewal” in the short version. On the other hand, one of the geonic commentaries on the alphabet, already referred to above, offers relevant material on this point.¹²⁷ According to *Midrash alfa beitol*,

124 According to Deut. 33: 27, “The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”

125 “Midrash alfa beitol,” in Wertheimer, *Batei midrashot*, 2:429.

126 Cf. *Beresbit rabah* 12: 15 (pp. 112-13).

127 For the methodological background of this scrutiny see section 2.1.

the destruction of the first creation is the manifestation of God's free will and His opportunity to demonstrate that just as He alone had created the world, He alone would destroy it.¹²⁸ This interpretation is reminiscent of the classical rabbinic view whereby the creation of the world was accomplished by God alone¹²⁹ – a view which is commonly taken to represent a polemic stand against dualistic or binitarian beliefs. It is not impossible that the same polemical intent underlies the following passage from *Midrash alfa be'itot*:

Why did the Holy One, blessed be He, not leave the holy living creatures of the Chariot, the *ofanim*, seraphim, cherubim, wheels, *tafsarim*, and *er'elim* which stand and serve before Him and His glory? So that not even one of those who stand and serve before Him would be able to say, "I created the renewal of the world with the Holy One." As Scripture says: "I have made, and I will bear" [Isa. 46: 4]; *I have made* the world, *I will bear* the generations of the world, *I will carry* [ibid.] the burden of its destruction, *and I will deliver you* [ibid.] from the whole world.¹³⁰

Whether or not the same answer is implicit in the short version of SD, it is worth noting that a geonic commentary on the alphabet shares with the short version the claim that the world was re-created by the quality of "Compassion":

Said the Holy One, blessed be He: "I created the world with the quality of Compassion, I conduct it with the quality of Compassion, and I shall create it anew with the quality of Compassion."¹³¹

128 See e.g. *Bereshit rabah*, 3: 5 (p. 23).

129 For example, according to *Bereshit rabah*, 1: 3 (p. 24): "All agree that nothing was created on the first day, so that no one would be able to say: 'Michael stretched out the southern end [of the heavens], Gabriel the northern end, and the Lord measured in the middle,' rather, 'I am the Lord who makes all things; who stretches the heavens alone; who spreads abroad the earth by myself' [Isa. 44: 24]. 'By myself' – who was my partner in the creation of the world?" The same idea is probably at the basis of the view that the divine name *ehyeh* (אֶהְיֶה) is an acronym of the phrase "Lord of all, I created all" ("Sefer otivot deRabi 'Aqiva," in Wertheimer, *Batei midrasbot*, 2:364).

130 Wertheimer, *Batei midrasbot*, 2:429.

131 "Sefer otivot deRabi 'Aqiva," *ibid.*, 364.

2.6 The Thirteen (§§7, 8, 37)

Who is, or are, “the Thirteen” who reinstate the six that were destroyed? The short version provides few details about this recondite entity, which apparently comprises thirteen distinct aspects. It stands to reason that ontologically, it exists above the entities it “raises” from destruction and thus it must be the same one referred to as both *YHVH* and “the beginning,” the only one that survived the destruction of the other six. The “Thirteen” must therefore be identified with it. From §7 we learn that the Thirteen are “thirteen of glory,” which seems to refer to God’s glory, and from §8 we learn that this entity acts “with Compassion.”

The long version offers no clue as to the nature of the “thirteen of glory” mentioned only in the short version. According to the long version, there is a Head in the supernal world, desired by all, which prepares for itself certain “garments of glory” (§4). These comprise seven garments (or enhancements) for its skull, such as the hair on its head or the nostrils of its nose (§6), as well as the thirteen curls of its beard, which are the choicest of its “garments” and its most glorious enhancements (§§14-17). This is presented as a condition of the renewal of the creation, a condition that is not mentioned at all in the short version (§4). Since, moreover, the motif of the Head and its enhancements is altogether absent from the short version, whose decipherment does not seem to depend on it in any way, there is no reason to assume that it was ever a part of the short version, even though it subsequently became central to all the commentaries on SD, forming the basis of both *Idras* and featuring prominently in the doctrines of such illustrious kabbalists as Moses Cordovero and Isaac Luria.

What, then, does the short version make of the Thirteen? It would be helpful in this connection to consider the two main appearances of the number thirteen in the rabbinic sources that undoubtedly predate the Zohar.¹³² These are the thirteen principles of biblical exegesis, and the thirteen attributes of God based on Exodus 34: 6-7. However, the link between either version of *Sifra ditseni’uta* and the thirteen principles of biblical exegesis is at best tenuous,¹³³ while there is more scope for linking them to the thirteen attributes of God, if only because, as a description of the creation, *Sifra ditseni’uta* is likely to refer to the nature of God and His benevolence as creator. Furthermore, in §7, the “thirteen” are referred to by the term “glory” (*kavod*), which occurs in the biblical introduction to the enumeration of the thirteen attributes of God (Exod. 33: 17 ff.):

132 This is in line with the methodology presented in section 2.1 above.

133 See n. 69 above.

[33: 18] And he [Moses] said: "I beg you, show me your glory."

[33: 19] And He [the Lord] said, "I will cause my goodness to pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion to whom I will show compassion."

[34: 5] And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord.

[34: 6] And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, "The Lord, The Lord God, compassionate and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in mercy..."

It is possible, therefore, that on the basis of this Biblical text, the short version identifies the thirteen attributes with the term "glory," as well as with God's compassionate modes of action. Moreover, there is an allusion in the long version (§18) to the prayers for the month of Tishrei, where these thirteen attributes are frequently mentioned, and Tishrei is traditionally considered to be the month in which the world was created.¹³⁴

Thus, it seems that both the long and the short version of SD implicitly identify the "thirteen of glory" with the thirteen attributes derived from the verses in Exodus. This runs counter to the idea that became fixed in the commentaries on SD, beginning with the *Idra raba*, that there are two sets of thirteen divine attributes: the thirteen attributes of compassion that derive from Micah 7: 18-20, which are associated with the higher divine entity, and which the *Idra raba* calls "Arikh Anpin" (the Long-Faced One), and the thirteen attributes of both compassion and judgement, derived from Exodus 34, which are associated with the lower divine entity known as "Ze'ir Anpin" (the Small-Faced One).¹³⁵

2.7 Creation and failure again: the luminaries (§13)

We have learnt that the heavens and the earth, as well as some other entities, were all created, destroyed, and created anew. But were peace and stability thus restored to the creation? It seems that not: it seems that the world continues to alternate between episodes of destruction and restoration. One of these episodes, which is hinted at without being explicitly described, is the creation of the luminaries in the heavens by God, who is referred to as *Elohim*, namely, the quality of Judgement, associated with the female (§13). According to rabbinic legends on the "diminution of the moon,"

134 BT *RH* 10*b*.

135 See e.g. Zohar 3:131*b* (*Idra raba*).

when the two luminaries were first created they were equally bright, but in response to the moon's discontentment with this parity, God punished her by diminishing her light. Since then, the two luminaries, referred to as the male sun and the female moon, are no longer equal, although their parity will be restored in the messianic future.¹³⁶

SD briefly alludes to this legend and the calamity associated with it, when it claims (in both versions) that the creation of the luminaries by *Elohim* alone, namely, by a divine name which is identified with the quality of Judgement, results in a flawed state of affairs, in which the male dominates the female. Two paradigmatic parallels can be discerned between this episode and the earlier one depicting the creation of the six primordial entities: it appears that in both cases, the creative force of Judgement has not been tempered with Compassion, so that in both cases, the creation inevitably results in a failure – the destruction of the six entities in the first, and the diminution of the moon in the second.

2.8 The supernal Adam (§§19, 20, 26, 36, 44, 61-2)

After the heavens and the earth are renewed, they (as the counterparts of the supernal beings – *YHVH* and *Elohim*) give birth to “a man” (*adam*) or, more accurately, the supernal man, Adam (§44). The supernal Adam is “complete” because he is created by a “complete” name: “And *YHVH Elohim* created Adam” (Gen. 2: 7; §20; see also §§36, 44). His completeness distinguishes him from his earthly counterpart and can be explained by the co-operation of his two progenitors: “*YHVH* – the male side; *Elohim* – the female side” (§44). The supernal Adam is also called “*Ze'ir*” (“the Small One”), while his creator, referred to by the complete name *YHVH Elohim*, is also known as “*Atiqā Satim*” (“the Concealed Ancient One”), from which we can deduce that the radical anthropomorphic tradition so evident in the long version is already discernible in the short version as well,¹³⁷ and that both versions draw on the “Daniel tradition” incorporated into the Zohar. However, here, too, not everything is straightforward.

At the very beginning of the process that culminated in the creation of the supernal Adam, *Elohim* commanded the Mother, “earth,” to bring forth her “seed,” that is, her progeny: “*Elohim* said ‘Let the earth sprout vegetation: plants yielding seed of each kind’” etc. (Gen. 1: 11; long version, §19). Indeed, the earth does precisely this – “And the earth sprouted [vegetation:

136 BT *Hul.* 60b.

137 If indeed the short version is earlier than the longer one than it is not impossible, however, that these anthropomorphic terms were added to the short version at a later stage of recension.

plants yielding seed of each kind]” (Gen. 1: 12, §26). However, this does not happen immediately. At first, the earth “swarmed,” and “in this swarming of the earth [the name of God] is incomplete” (§19 in the long version. That is to say, the swarming results from *Elohim*’s action alone rather than from action by the complete name, *YHVH Elohim*. The earth produces seed, but it is infertile – a “swarming” whose progeny are of limited viability.¹³⁸ In other words, the female earth gives birth without union with her male partner – the heavens, and for this reason her progeny are flawed, or rather, “incomplete.” She manages to produce viable seed only “when the Name was planted” (§26), a process on which §36 provides further details:

“And the earth sprouted vegetation: plants yielding seed of each kind, and trees bearing fruit that has its seed within it of each kind” (Gen. 1: 12). These were uprooted from the complete name and were planted after [that is: under] the complete name, as Scripture says: “*YHVH Elohim* planted” (Gen. 2: 8).¹³⁹

§20 offers a similar description:

וַיִּצַר (*vayitser*), “and He formed” (Gen. 2: 7) – the totality of completeness was uprooted from this place, this name, and planted in another, as Scripture says: “*YHVH Elohim* planted [a garden in Eden]” (Gen. 2: 8).¹⁴⁰

The view that without a male partner, the female is capable of giving birth, but only to flawed progeny, is not unique to SD. It is based, in general terms, on Aristotle’s opinion that without the contribution of male semen, a woman would give birth to a formless child, a lump of unformed matter. This notion was probably based on the medical observation of the expulsion

138 This might mean that the “earth” does not unite with her partner at all, or that instead of uniting with her rightful partner, she unites with the forces of evil. Cf. the description of Adam and Eve as quoted in n. 71 above.

139 Note that this verse refers to the planting of the Garden of Eden, which is identified here with the creation of man. This is evident also in the description of the actions of the “fallen ones” as the rivers which flow down from Eden. See nn.77 above.

140 See *Beresbit rabah* 12: 5 (p. 100): “And the earth sprouted’ [Gen. 1: 12] – that was commanded of her.” Our text assumes that this was indeed commanded of the earth but not immediately fulfilled. See also *Beresbit rabah* 15: 1: “And *YHVH Elohim* planted a garden eastward in Eden’ [Gen. 2: 8] ... the full name is mentioned ... they were like locust’s horns, and the Lord uprooted them and planted them in the Garden of Eden.”

from the womb of various pathological growths, and on the analogy to chickens laying eggs. It was accompanied by the belief that a man is capable of giving form to the infant even after its birth, by providing it with the warmth required to turn it from a lump of matter into a whole being. Many of the Gnostic traditions rely on these medical opinions, postulating, for example, that Sophia wanted to give birth without a partner to a replica of herself, but the fruit of her womb, *Yaldabaoth*, was indeed born formless and incomplete; it could achieve completion only with the intervention of a complete male figure.¹⁴¹

To return to our text: the new progeny is mentioned for the first time in verses 11-12 of Genesis chapter 1, a chapter which stands entirely under the sign of the name *Elohim*, and which according to SD, is the sign of a flawed, incomplete creation. The rectification of the flaw, the renewal of this creation, and the restoration of the divine name to completion occur only at a later stage, described in the second chapter of Genesis. There, in Genesis 2: 8, we learn, according to SD, that the seed is torn out of the complete name, or rather, out of its female element – the earth – to be appropriately planted in a new place. Simply put – birth now takes place through the union between the male and the female elements of the creator; in the course of this process, the seed of the female is “torn out,” that is, born, and is planted in the world, where it can achieve viable existence in wholeness, without blemish. The supernal Adam, like the other two primordial entities, the heavens and the earth – his father and his mother – similarly undergoes a process of destruction and renewal. In all these cases, the destruction does not signify complete annihilation but rather a fall; thus it was in relation to the six primordial entities that fell and were raised by the Thirteen (section 2.4), thus it was in relation to the diminution of the moon (section 2.7), and thus we will shortly see it again below (section 2.9).

In light of all this, §44 of the short version is of particular interest:

“*Elohim* said, ‘Let us make *adam* [a man]’” (Gen. 1: 26). The verse does not say *ha’adam* [the man], but just *adam* [a man] – excluding the supernal [Adam], who was made with the complete name. And

141 See Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1990), 1-62; Richard Smith, “Sex Education in Gnostic Schools,” in Karen L. King (ed.), *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988). In this context one could also mention the Greek goddess Nyx who similarly gave birth without a partner, and her progeny was marked by detrimental characteristics; she gave birth, for instance, to death, sleep, and the like (see Hesiod, *Theogony*).

when this [name] was completed, that [Adam] was completed, *YHVH* – the male side; *Elohim* – the female side. The male extended and was arrayed with His enhancements, with the phallus (*amma*) in the mouth of the Mother (*imma*). The kings who had been ruined were here established.

Previously, we had learnt that the mother’s “seed” was wasted, namely, that she “swarmed” rather than giving birth to complete beings. Now we find that the father’s attempt at creation was also flawed, for until now, he had not placed his member “in the mouth” of his female partner, implying that he, too, had wasted his seed.

If we compare this formulation with what is stated in §51, it becomes clear that here, too, loss of seed does not mean total annihilation, but rather a flawed existence. In §51, Adam’s sin is said to have produced disembodied progeny, and it seems that this refers to the creation of demons, who are traditionally defined as disembodied beings.¹⁴²

If we return to §3, we realize that this problem has already been defined at the very beginning of SD: “For until there was a balance, they did not gaze face-to-face.” If the the divine couple did not “gaze face-to-face,” it is almost certain that they were standing back to back, very likely in accordance with the rabbinic version of the Platonic myth of the androgyne.¹⁴³ The result of this state of affairs is described in §3 – “the primordial kings (that is, the first entities to be created) were dead, and their weapons did not exist”; namely, the union between the male and the female was irregular and therefore infertile. In §44, on the other hand, a proper union is described, and thus, the “kings who had been ruined were here established.” In light of what has been said until now, the “weapons” (which “did not exist”) would seem to be a euphemism for the infertile semen of the “primordial kings,” while the “kings ... who were here established” are the sustainable progeny of the properly united male and female, here to be understood as a reference to the supernal Adam.¹⁴⁴

142 See *Pirkei avot*, ch. 5, and a few places in the Zohar, e.g. Zohar 1:19b; ZH 17a (*Midrash hane’elam*, “Bereshit”); Benayahu, *Ma’amadot umoshavot*, passim.

143 See Plato, *Symposium* (Stephanus edn.), 189-93; *Bereshit rabah* 8: 11 (p. 55), and elsewhere.

144 At the same time, it seems that the “kings” are a symbolic name for the letters of the alphabet, as in *Sefer yetsirah* (*Sefer yesira: edition, translation and text-critical commentary*, ed. and trans. by A. Peter Hayman (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), §41), for according to SD, the process of creation can be described as the formation of the letters. See Liebes, *Torat hayetsirah*, 137-8.

2.9 The Terrestrial man and his progeny (§§38, 44, 48-51, 63, 65)

The terrestrial man, too, was created flawed, since he was the product of action taken by the name *Elohim* on its own. This view is anchored in the verse “*Elohim* said, ‘Let us make *adam* [a man]’” (Gen. 1: 26), on which SD comments (§44): “a man,” not “the man,” to distinguish between the supernal Adam and the terrestrial man. A little further, the Scriptural narrative again ascribes the creation of *adam* to *Elohim*: “On the day when *Elohim* created *adam*, in the likeness of *Elohim* He made him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 5: 1-2). Although *adam* and his partner were created “male and female” from the outset, they were created by *Elohim* alone, and therefore, together they constitute only an “image and countenance like *adam* sitting on a throne” (§48), that is, not an *adam* but only a likeness of *adam*. This might be another reference to this *adam*’s androgynous form – male and female back to back, which is incapable of proper sexual union. Be that as it may, for this reason, *adam* is “hidden ... concealed by letters which are not settled in His places,” “for [as regards] Him – neither those above nor those below settle within Him” (§49). A creation of this inherent instability does not bode well, and indeed, the events described in all the subsequent books of the Hebrew Bible (as well as the reality in which we live to this day), suggest that the “restoration” of man is yet to be completed.

SD presents two additional, alternative descriptions of the creation of the terrestrial man. According to the first (§62), he was not created ex nihilo, but is, in fact, none other than the “fallen” supernal Adam. This is deduced from the verse “You set Your palm upon me” (Ps. 139: 5, §62), which was taken by the rabbis to be a reference to the diminution of Adam as a consequence of his sin.¹⁴⁵ Indeed, §51 explicitly mentions a time “when the lower Adam descended in the supernal image,” referring to the descent of the supernal Adam, who then became known as the “terrestrial man,” but who, despite his fall, was still fashioned in the “supernal image.” An alternative formulation of the same idea occurs in §54: “Two were embracing above [as the supernal Adam was by nature both male and female]; they descended below, inheriting dust. They lost the good share that they had possessed.” This suggests that the supernal Adam had sinned, although the nature of his sin is not explained. Based on the parallels with other passages mentioned above, the sin was probably sexual, perhaps union with supernal entities of a destructive nature.¹⁴⁶

145 See n. 75 above.

146 Cf. Isaac Hakohen, “Ma’amar ‘al ha’atsilut hasemalit,” in Gershom Scholem, *Qabalot Rabi Ya’aqov veRabi Yitshaq benei Rabi Ya’aqov hakohen* (Jerusalem: Makhon le-mada’e ha-Yahadut, 1927), 82-102 [=Mada’ei hayahudut, 2 (1937), 243-64], 94-5.

This sin had caused his father, the Concealed Ancient One, to deny him the breath of the spirit of life, and to transfer it instead to the terrestrial man (§61), which entailed a diminution of the “light” that could have sustained the supernal Adam in life for “ten thousand years.” That light now gradually diminished until it reached the level of the “one hundred and twenty years” allotted to the terrestrial man (§§61-2), permitting him only a faltering and temporary physical existence.

The second alternative description of the creation of the terrestrial man similarly refers to the descent of Adam as a “fall,” but now he is portrayed as one of the “fallen” (*nefilim*).¹⁴⁷ Recall that the creation of supernal man was described above as the planting of the Garden of Eden,¹⁴⁸ and hence the text now associates the rivers flowing away from the garden – “From there it divides and becomes four riverheads” (Gen. 2: 10) – with the “fallen ones” who separated from the supernal Adam and the garden by “falling” away from him (§63). Moreover, the “fallen ones” are excluded from the general category of *adam* (humanity), that is, from the wholeness that is inherent in “man,” for they conduct themselves by the same Holy Name by which the “unholy ones below conduct themselves” (§§63, 65).¹⁴⁹ The identity of this divine name is alluded to in the long version of §65, which states categorically that it is not *YHVH*. But the overall discussion in any case implies that the name in question must be *Elohim*, which is again held to be responsible for the flaw that marks all that it creates. Now according to Genesis 6, the “fallen ones” were the products of sexual transgression, which SD identifies with the sin of the supernal Adam. Yet here, we have these “fallen ones” associated with an altogether different type of transgression – the inappropriate use of holy names, which is one of the perennial pitfalls on the path of the mystic.

As a consequence of all this, “man” now dwells “below,” as a fallen being, flawed from his very conception, and it is not long before another calamity befalls him: “The serpent copulated with the female, and a nest was constructed within her, to become an evil abode, as Scripture says: ‘She conceived and bore קין [Cain]’ [Gen. 4: 1] – קינא [qinna, a nest] of habitation of evil spirits was constructed in this *adam*” (§46). The sexual aspect of the sin, veiled in the events described earlier, now appears more clearly. Moreover, “When the lower Adam descended in the supernal image,

147 This is suggested by a parallel to our text, cited in section 2.12 below. Without this parallel, it would have been necessary to identify the fallen ones with Adam’s descendants, though the characteristics of the sin would still stand as described.

148 See n. 139 above.

149 See also n.77 above.

two spirits were found on [his] two sides, right and left. Adam comprises, on the right, [a] holy *neshamah* [spirit]; on the left, [a] *nefesh hayah* [a living or an animal soul]" (§51). The term *nefesh hayah* seems to betray the influence of the Aristotelian concept of the inferior "sensitive" or "animal" soul (see also §50). Thus, not only was Adam's conception flawed, but so was the process by which his "animal soul" was created: "*Elohim* said, 'Let the waters swarm with a swarm of *nefesh hayah*' (Gen. 1: 20; §§38, 50)." The time was not long in coming, therefore, when he, too, would sin, as did his female partner: "When Adam sinned, the left spread" (§51). This statement is immediately followed by "and those without a body spread," which seems to allude to the sexual sin of "spilt seed" from which disembodied demons are traditionally believed to come into being.¹⁵⁰ As in all the earlier descriptions of the process of creation, here, too, the process fails, resulting in the creation of evil spirits and demons, which fall into the category of the inherently flawed, "fallen" beings.

Out of the generations that followed the "terrestrial man," *Sifra ditseni'uta* mentions only one figure – Enoch. His life, too, is flawed by a distinctly negative trait, for "Enoch walked with *Elohim*," that is, like the "fallen ones," he conducted himself by the power of the wrong divine name, the "incomplete" name *Elohim*, which is associated with the unmitigated attribute of Judgement. For this reason, he did not come to a good end, "For *Elohim* took him" (Gen. 5: 24, §69), which seems to be a reference to actual death rather than a rectifiable "fall."¹⁵¹

2.10 Revelation and concealment (§§12, 30-2, 49)

We return to the study of §12, which deals with the six entities that were destroyed and renewed: "Six emerge from the thickness of the root of the body, a tongue [which is] speaking [after Dan. 7: 8], a tongue which is concealed between [the letters] *yod* and *heb*."

¹⁵⁰ See n. 142 above.

¹⁵¹ This is a negative view of Enoch's end, which does not accord either with the positive evaluation of Enoch in the biblical text or with the esoteric-mystical tradition about Enoch's apotheosis, but it is consistent with the evaluation of Enoch in a number of classical rabbinic sources, e.g. *Bereshit rabah* 25: 1 (pp. 238-9). See Annette Y. Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), esp. 136-40. However, the long version of SD adds here a fragment of a verse from Prov. 22.6: "*hanokh lana'ar* (train the youth) [according to his way]," which it associates with the esoteric doctrine of Enoch as a youth, hinting at his celestial role as a ministering angel. This gloss seems to introduce into the long version's view of Enoch a positive note which is at odds with Enoch's negative portrayal in the short version.

How do these new entities emerge? A tongue that is hidden and unknown (could it be the tongue of the Lord, which commanded the creation by “Let there be” etc.?) is said to be articulating new letters, which had previously been concealed between the letters *yod* and *heh* but which are now emerging from potentiality into actuality. The echoes of Neoplatonic thought are discernible, at least implicitly, in both the terminology and the very concepts of concealment and revelation; these are philosophical notions, though they have been profoundly mythologized. Note that it is specifically the concept of revelation to which a degree of ambivalence is attached: while the revelation, namely, the existence of the creation, is presumably held to be desirable, nevertheless, negative connotations arise from the evocation in this context of the beast “speaking arrogantly” of Daniel 7: 8.

As in Neoplatonic thought, the concealed is a transcendent source of existence, which lies beyond human perception. This is why its name, *YHVH*, should not be pronounced. Thus it is known – according to the long version (§30) – by the allusive Hebrew demonstrative pronoun *Hu*, which has become one of his other personal names:

Scripture says: “I am *YHVH*, *Hu* [literally – ‘that’] is my name” [Isa. 42: 8]... *Hu* – designates one who is concealed and not found.

Hu—one who is not visible to the eye.
Hu—one who is not called by name...

From this paragraph it appears that the concepts of concealment and revelation are not only ontological but also (as in Neoplatonic thought) epistemological. The concealed is that which is invisible to the eye and lies beyond human perception, while the revealed is in plain sight.

SD relies not only on philosophical traditions but also, and in this context, primarily on the myth of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. It presents the emergence of all existence from potentiality into actuality as the emergence of the letters one from another – flowing into one another, joining up and splitting apart, to create new combinations of letters. Thus, for instance, we read in §31 of the long version: “א goes to אלה; אלה goes to יהי; יהי goes to י – the concealed of all concealed, which is not joined by ו.”¹⁵² To the extent that this odd sentence is at all decipherable, it seems to say that a letter becomes fully revealed when its name is spelled out in full, namely, when each of the constituent letters of its name is

¹⁵² See nn. 57-59 above.

written out. Thus the letter ך (y) is fully revealed only when its three-letter name is spelled out as ך׳׳ (yod), and so on. Notably, the concealment of the letter which has not had its name spelled out in full does not mean that it has not altogether emerged from potentiality into actuality, for surely, its concealed one-letter form already exists in actuality. Its concealment, put in Neoplatonic terms, is the withdrawal of its “light,” as is indicated by the exclamation: “Woe when ך does not illumine ך, ך!” (the long version of §31).¹⁵³ When the link between the “concealed” ך and the remaining two letters that make up its full name, ך, ך, is broken “through the sins of the world,” the ך remains revealed, namely, exposed. The result of this process is now described in sexual rather than abstract terms: once the concealing entities have withdrawn, “the nakedness of all appears” (§32 in both versions). The creation is thus flawed by “the exposure of nakedness” (*giluy arayot*),¹⁵⁴ which results not only from the flaws that are inherent in the deity itself, as SD consistently claims, but also from man’s sinful conduct (§32 in both versions).

Thus, creation – the emergence of existence from potentiality to actuality – amounts to the emergence of existence from concealment to revelation, concealment having been effected by the very letters that now emerge from it into revelation: “revealed in the letters [with which] it is written; concealed and sealed by the letters” (§49 in the long version). Once the existent has emerged from potentiality to actuality and become revealed, it can neither revert to its previous state of concealment nor remain totally exposed; rather it must “cover” and conceal itself again. The uncovering of an existent formed out of the Hebrew letters that cover and conceal it, namely, the rending asunder of the dense fabric of language that forms the creation, is an “exposure of nakedness” and counts as “forbidden sexual relations.”

The immense tension discernible in SD between concealment and

153 See also §49.

154 The term traditionally refers to forbidden sexual relations. For some of the late-medieval discussions on this topic, especially in Kabbalah, see Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1367-9; Ephraim Gottlieb, *Haqabalah bekhitvei Rabenu Bahya ben Asher* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1970), 75-6, 238; Ellion R. Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia: Hermeneutics, Theosophy, and Theurgy* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2000), 191-5; Idel, “Perushim lesod ha’arayot,” 89-199; id., “We Have no Kabbalistic Tradition on ‘This,’” in Isadore Twersky (ed.), *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides (Ramban): Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), 36-55; id., “Perush ’eser hasefirot useridim mikitveiheim shel R. Yosef haba miShushan habirah,” *Alei sefer*, 6-7 (1979): 74-84; id., “Perush anonimi latorah meḥug haRashba,” *Mikba’el*, 11 (1989): 9-21; id., “*Sitre Arayot* in Maimonides’ Thought,” in Shlomo Pines and Yirmiyahu Yovel (eds.), *Maimonides and Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1986), 79-91; Liebes, “Messiah,” 36-ff.

revelation is also evident in its account of human action: on the one hand, human sin plunges the creation into a state of illicit “exposure,” but on the other hand, it is human action that has the power to rectify this through the appropriate use of holy names by the mystics who have mastered the doctrine of the alphabet. Thus, in order to preserve the “modesty” of the concealed existent, it is necessary to be in possession of highly esoteric knowledge.

As a rule, SD seems to move back and forth from one mode of discourse to another, across three distinct domains, which it takes to be analogous by dint of sharing the same built-in polarity: when it adopts the ontological mode of discourse, it discerns this polarity between the overt and actual versus the covert and potential nature of existence; when it switches to the epistemological mode, it finds the polarity in the tension between revelation and concealment; and in the sexual mode of discourse, it points to the polarity of “exposure” versus modesty. The easy movement back and forth between the ontological and the epistemological mode are facilitated by the common vehicle of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, but in order to integrate the sexual mode into this structure of analogous domains, the letters of the alphabet must be anthropomorphized and invested with gender.

2.11 The Balance

The motif of the balance appears in the short version with little explanatory detail. The context suggests that it was introduced in order to describe how the male and female unite by being balanced on the two pans of the scales. Yehuda Liebes has already pointed out a number of precedents for this idea.¹⁵⁵ One of them is the reference, in an Aramaic liturgical poem originating in Byzantine Palestine, to “perfect pairs ... from your mother’s womb were you both weighed ... blessed is he who united you, a union of the balance scales ... bride with groom.”¹⁵⁶ Isaac the Blind, too, uses the Hebrew root ל-ק-ש (*shin-quf-lamed*), meaning “weigh” or “balance,” in just the same way.¹⁵⁷ The theme of the balance is universally associated with justice and human morality,¹⁵⁸ but in our text, it is linked to sexuality –

155 Liebes, “Peraqim bemilon Sefer hazohar,” 327-32; id., “How the Zohar Was Written,” 103-119; id., *Torat hayetsirah*, 133-4. For an additional aspect of this weighing, see at n. 183 below.

156 Michael Sokoloff and Joseph Yahalom, *Shirat benei ma’arava: shirim aramiyim shel yebudei erets-Yisra’el batequfah habizantit* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1999), 272-3, and see also 258-9.

157 Isaac the Blind’s commentary on *Sefer yetsira*, in: Scholem, *Haqabalah biProvans*, appendix 9.

158 See e.g. Lev. 19: 35-6; Deut. 25: 12-16; Hosea 12: 8; Amos 8: 2; Prov. 11: 1; and particularly Job 6: 2, 36: 1.

either licit or illicit, and possibly also to the question of the sexual purity of the copulating couple.

The same motif is more fully developed in the long version, which is valuable not only in its own right but also because it demonstrates how the additional material that found its way into this version has given it an enigmatic, poetic, and visual form of its own. §4, which appears only in the long version, reads as follows:

Until the head, the most desired of all that is desired, arranged and bestowed [with] garments of glory, this balance hung in a place that was not; weighed upon it were those who did not exist. The balance stands by itself, it is not held and it is not seen. Upon it rose and upon it rise¹⁵⁹ those who were not,¹⁶⁰ those who were, and those who will be.

According to the opening lines of the two versions, the primordial kings died because of the flawed, androgynous state of their parents, “who did not gaze face-to-face” (§3 and section 2.8 above). The short version returns to this topic only in §44, in the context of the descendants of the “supernal Adam,” also known as the “Small One” (*Ze’ir*; §§61-2). But the long version seems to return to the topic much sooner, in §4, where it refers to the six entities that were destroyed at an earlier stage as “kings” (see section 2.4). The identification of the dead kings with the destroyed entities signals a turning point in the development of this theme, as the entire literature of the *Idras*, and all the later kabbalists, such as Moses Cordovero, Isaac Luria, and the Gaon of Vilna, who based their interpretations of SD on the *Idras*, identified the six entities with the kings as a matter of course.

The key to understanding §44 is the realization that the scales envisaged here consist of two pans suspended from a horizontal beam moving freely on a central fulcrum. Scales of this type must be supported, either by resting on a fixed base or by being held in the hand; when they are not supported, they simply cannot fulfil their function.¹⁶¹ According to the long version, the

159 They first “rose upon” the scales in the past, when the scales were unstable, and they “rise upon them” again now that they have achieved stability, since the “head” has been enhanced.

160 That is, those who were weighed at first, before the scales were stabilized, did not endure.

161 On the scales as an instrument and their symbolic connotations, see e.g. *Entsiglopedyah miqra’it: otsar hayedi’ot al hamiqra utequfato* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1950–1988), iv., cols. 540-3, s.v. *moznayim*; *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2nd edn. (Detroit: Thomson Gale/ McMillan Reference USA, 2007), 3:183, s.v. “balance,” and xx. 700-9, s.v. “weights and measures”; *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. P. J. Bearman, et al., 2nd

scales were supposed to be supported by the supernal “head” – “the most desired of all that is desired,” which corresponds here to the top of the base supporting and stabilizing the scales. For as long as this base, together with its “head,” were not suitably “arranged,” “this balance hung in a place that was not,” that is, it was not hung at all, since “it was not held and it was not seen.” Rather, it “stood by itself,” which means that it was not suitably supported or hung, and consequently it could not function as a balance. While it was in that dysfunctional state, “those who were not” were being weighed in it, but this proved to be futile, as in effect, they could not be weighed at all and thus did not achieve existence. Only when the scales were properly hung were the other “kings” weighed in the balance, and this time they did achieve existence.

The motif of the scales seems to preserve its original context of licit and illicit, enduring and unsustainable, sexual unions, but this context is gradually subsumed in the visual imagery of the balance, which becomes independent of the sexual imagery embedded in it, and ultimately displaces it altogether.

The motif of the scales can also be viewed as belonging in the biblical tradition of wisdom literature, where God the creator is often depicted as an architect or a builder, who creates by way of measuring or weighing each of his creations. Thus, for instance, Isaiah 40: 12 reads: “Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and marked out the heavens with a span, and enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?” From this point of view, it is possible to present SD’s view of the cycles of creation and destruction as reflecting God’s fluctuating ability to make proper use of His utensils: at times He cannot “hang” His scales as required and they lie slack and ineffective, while at other times He manages to stabilize them and proceeds to effect an unblemished creation. The “fallen” or flawed aspects of the

edn. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), Brill Online: <<http://www.brillonline.nl/browse/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2>>, vii. 195, col. 2, s.v. ‘al-Mizān; Gershom Scholem, *Pirquei-yesod bahavanat haqabalab usemaleiba* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1976), p. 181, who mentions the use of this term in the context of “holy names” in early Christian mysticism; Steven M. Wasserstrom, “Sefer Yesira and Early Islam: A Reappraisal,” *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*, 3/1 (1993): 1-30, esp. 12, n. 38; id., “Further Thoughts on the Origins of Sefer Yesirah,” *Aleph*, 2 (2002): 201-21, esp. 216 (these two articles deal with the linguistic and cosmological context of this term in relation to Islamic mysticism from the 8th to the 10th centuries); Liebes, “Peraqim bemilon Sefer hazohar,” 145-50, s.v. *butsina deqardinuta*, and 327-32, s.v. *tiqla* (these entries are concerned with the meaning of the term in the Zohar in its entirety and its sources); Ellion R. Wolfson, *Circle in the Square: Studies in the Use of Gender in Kabbalistic Symbolism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 179-88 (this mostly deals with the Iyyun Circle).

created world are therefore a reflection of God's own shortcomings in using His own utensils and thus – as a creator!

In the subsequent paragraphs of the long version, the motif of the balance moves further away from its original context as preserved by the short version, where concerns with birth and sexual morality are expressed in terms of weighing the “parental” couple. In the long version, on the other hand, the balance mostly weighs the letters of the alphabet of creation against each other. Thus, for example, the creation of light in the verse “*Elohim* said, ‘יהי [let there be] light!’ ויהי [and there was] light” (Gen. 1: 3) is described as balancing the letters of “let there be” on one pan of the scales, against the letters of “and there was” on the opposite pan. And in order to create the Shekhinah (rather than for her to unite with her male partner, as in the short version), the letter *heb* (which has the numerical value of five and is one of the Shekhinah's common symbols) is cast on both pans of the scales at the same time. Thus the Shekhinah comes into being and is now symbolized by the letter *yod*, which has the numerical value of ten, combining the two fives of the two letters *heb* which had been cast upon both pans of the scales (§10).¹⁶²

2.12 *Sifra Ditseni'uta* and *Midrash Hane'elam*

All the extant sources of the short version of SD integrate it into *Midrash hane'elam*. This suggests that at least in part, it may have originated in *Midrash hane'elam* and was only subsequently adapted and integrated into another stratum of the Zohar. A few significant points of similarity between *Midrash hane'elam* and SD would seem to lend support to this hypothesis and are discussed below, although the full complexity of the issue lies beyond the scope of the present study.

One of the close similarities between SD and *Midrash hane'elam* is evident in their respective interpretations of Genesis 6 – the final chapter of pericope “Bereshit.” *Midrash hane'elam* claims that the source of the flaws

162 The tenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, *yod*, which the context here demands, is far from being a common symbol for the Shekhinah, who is normally symbolized by the letter *heb*. But the *yod* may be linked to it nevertheless on the grounds that, in kabbalistic theosophy, the Shekhinah is considered to be the tenth Sefirah. The breakdown of the *yod*'s numerical value of ten into the two fives of the letter *heb*, each cast on one pan of the balance scales, supplies a somewhat contrived harmonization of the two discrepant symbols. The weighing, therefore, becomes part of a symbolic process that is not ontologically necessary. For additional examples of the weighing of the letters, see §§22, 52 (which are not included in the present edition of the text).

observed in the “sons of God” (*benei ha’elohim*) was that they were “created by that name,” that is, by the name *Elohim*. It further claims:

The fallen ones [*nefilim*] ... are Adam and his wife, who fell to earth without mother or father.¹⁶³ Why are they called “fallen”? Because they fell from the position that they had, that is, they are reduced from their former state. They are fallen in that they were driven away from the Garden of Eden and did not return there ... All creatures feared them ... and they did not prevent their generation from sinning [by engaging in illicit sexuality] ... they could prevent themselves from sinning for their sakes, but they did not, and in their very presence they [*benei ha’elohim*] whored with the daughters of men and they bore them children.

This passage goes on to claim, much like SD (§63), that the “fallen ones” existed until the time of Joshua.¹⁶⁴

Moreover, Tishby has already noted the similarity between descriptions of the soul of man in *Midrash hane’elam* and in SD.¹⁶⁵ Here (§51) we learn that Adam possessed two spirits, one on each of his two sides: “Adam comprises, on the right, [a] holy *neshamah* [spirit]; on the left, [a] *nefesh hayab* [a living or an animal soul],” which is considered “the animal within the category of man.” Similar descriptions occur in *Midrash hane’elam*, for example, in *Zohar hadash* 10c, where the claim is made that, like every other living creature, man is born with one soul only, his “animal soul,” but he receives an extra soul – his “holy spirit” – at the age of thirteen. There follows an intriguing statement, which strengthens the affinity to SD, to the effect that the reason for this has been explained in “the thirteen attributes of Compassion within the *Matnita* [tradition or teaching] of Rabbi Eleazar.” No work by such a title has come down to us,¹⁶⁶ but the statement clearly

163 Adam’s mother and father are similarly mentioned in SD, §§32, 44. See also the discussion in section 2.8 above.

164 See *Zohar hadash*, 20b (*Midrash hane’elam*, “Bereshit”); Meroz, “Va’ani lo hayiti sham?!” The reference to Adam’s transformation into a fallen being that all creatures feared might be an adaptation of the talmudic statement whereby “the nine hundred and seventy-four generations who were pressed [that is, destined] to be created before the world was created, but who were not created – the Holy One, blessed be He, arose and planted them in every generation, and they are the insolent of each generation” (*Hag. 13b-14a*).

165 See Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:709. Similar claims can be found in the bible commentaries of Abraham ibn Ezra (on Gen. 1: 20) and Nachmanides (on Gen. 1: 26).

166 See also Tishby’s comments in *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, 2:725.

evokes yet another motif we have already encountered in SD – that of the thirteen attributes of Compassion. Works referred to by similar titles and attributed to a similarly named sage are mentioned twice more in *Midrash hane'elam* within *Zohar ḥadash: The Matnita of Rabbi Eleizer [sic]*,¹⁶⁷ and *The Ancient Book of the Matnita of Rabbi Eleizer [sic] ben Arakh*.¹⁶⁸ On the other hand, in the pericope “Ḥayei Sarah,” Rabbi Eleazar discusses the relation between body and soul according to “that *Matnita*,” or “as explained in the thirteen attributes of Compassion” – seemingly a reference to the same *Matnita*, attributed to the same Rabbi Eleazar (rather than Eliezer). Further on in the same pericope, Rabbi Eleazar claims that the secrets of the “crowns” of the letters, like the secrets of the *tefilin*, have already been alluded to, “And the reasons for all these [can be found] in the thirteen attributes [of Compassion].”¹⁶⁹

All these examples suggest that the authors of *Midrash hane'elam* had before them an earlier text, which they attributed to Rabbi Eleazar (or Eliezer). This text seems to have been similar to the short version of SD inasmuch as it dealt, among other subjects, with the thirteen attributes of Compassion and the structure of the soul. It thus seems that not only the *Zohar* but even *Midrash hane'elam* – one of its components – was itself a compilation of diverse strata of literary tradition, of which at least some, such as the *Matnita of Rabbi Eleazar* (or perhaps Eliezer) retained its distinct literary identity, and resembled certain elements of SD.

Summary and Conclusions

The worldview underlying SD is only partially retrievable from the two extant versions of the work. Ideas and beliefs emerge from these versions in a disjointed, disorganized, and incomplete manner, rendering them rather difficult to decipher. Nevertheless, the comparison between them has made it possible to disentangle and highlight some of the motifs that comprise them. We have no clear-cut evidence as to which version is earlier, but the distinct theology that emerges from the present analysis of the short version would seem to tilt the balance towards the view that it preceded and was not merely a summary of the longer version.

167 *Zohar ḥadash*, 13a (*Midrash hane'elam*, “Bereshit”).

168 *Ibid.*, 18c (*Midrash hane'elam*, “Bereshit”).

169 These examples appear in *Zohar 1:124b* and *129b* (*Midrash hane'elam*), “Ḥayei Sarah.” The brackets enclosing the final “of Compassion” appear in the Margaliot edition and signify that not all the witnesses to the text include these words.

According to the short version, at the head of the chain of being stands the divine Glory; it has thirteen aspects corresponding to the thirteen attributes of Compassion based on Exodus 34. This Glory is identified with both the divine name *YHVH* and the Hebrew word *be-reshit* (“in the beginning”). From “in the beginning” emerged six other entities, including *Elohim*, the heavens, and the earth, all of which “fell” and were destroyed within thirteen hours, while *YHVH* alone – the entity that brought them all into existence – remained “elevated” in splendid isolation. Subsequently, the six “fallen” entities arose and were restored to their former state of existence through the “Compassion” of “the Thirteen.” These assertions suggest some resemblance to Gnostic ideas about the creation whereby the divine creator (*YHVH* in SD) gives rise to an inherently flawed creation, but the resemblance ends with the SD’s notion that the same creator is also the source of the Compassion that ensures the “renewal” of the creation and establishes a sustainable world.

The short version displays no awareness of kabbalistic theosophy and the concept of the *sefirot*, nor any indication that *Sefer yetsirah* – the foundational text of the kabbalistic tradition – was familiar to its authors. It draws on a range of literary works of various times of composition, up to and including, perhaps especially, the geonic period. In addition, it betrays some acquaintance with Neoplatonic doctrines and the Aristotelian concept of the “animal soul.” But all this does not enable us to determine with any precision or certainty when the text might have been composed, or whether – as I suggested tentatively – the short version might have preceded its long counterpart.

In contrast, according to the long version, the godhead comprises a hierarchy of emanated divine entities. In other words, there is evidence here that the authors were acquainted with the kabbalistic theosophy of the *sefirot*, which in turn suggests that they would have been aware also of *Sefer yetsirah*. At the top of this hierarchy of entities stands the “Head” – “the most desired of all that is desired,” who corresponds to the top of the base supporting the balance scales. The short version’s characterization of this supreme entity as the divine Glory is so marginal in the long version’s account as to be barely discernible, and to the best of my knowledge, none of the Zohar commentators have ever remarked on it. Following the destruction of the first six entities that lie beneath it, this entity is enhanced by being clothed in “garments of glory” (seven “enhancements” of the skull and thirteen “enhancements” of the beard), after which, thirteen emanations emerge from it and renew the entities that were destroyed. Notably, most of the commentators on SD, beginning with those whose

work was incorporated in the Zohar itself, have taken the entities that were destroyed and renewed to be seven (sic!) *sefirot*.

As we have seen, the short version reflects familiarity with traditional doctrines on the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, but in the long version, these doctrines are vastly expanded; the anthropomorphic character of the letters is highlighted and their creative function acquires a major role, so that the whole creation is presented as the product of the proliferation of letters by way of flowing in and out of each other, joining together and separating again as they bring the world into existence.

In spite of the state of disorganization that marks the short version, a thread can be discerned running through it, providing a relatively coherent focus. This is the distinction between the three biblical creation narratives. The first narrative is hinted at in the first verse of the Book of Genesis; in this early stage of the creative process, three entities, *Elohim*, the earth and the heavens, were created by *YHVH* but became desolate. The second narrative (Gen. 1 and its sequel in Gen. 5), where *Elohim* is the only active agent, describes a flawed creation whose progeny are equally defective or “fallen.” The third narrative (Gen 2 and 3), in which *YHVH Elohim* is the active agent, describes the renewal and restoration of this creation to its rightful place. The centrality of the notions of “falling” and “rising” invests the short version, once more, with a somewhat Gnostic flavor.

All the motifs of “falling” and “rising” appear also in the long version, but they are not as central to it or as distinctive as in the short version, not only on account of the patchwork character of this version, but also because it is dominated by two themes, which are not compatible with the concepts of falling and rising. One of these is the myth of the configuration of the divine countenances, and the other the doctrine of the letters of the alphabet, which are taken to be representations of man, for even though they are not described in terms of human form as such, they are invested with gender and said to multiply sexually, just like humans.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, in the transition from the short version to the long, the Gnostic element is obscured, while the kabbalistic theosophy, comprising both Neoplatonic and anthropomorphic features, becomes much more pronounced.

The short version alludes to a range of reasons for the world’s “fall”: the first creations were unbalanced, as they were formed by one quality alone – either the quality of Judgement or the quality of Compassion – without the mitigating influence of one upon the other; they were marred by various, mostly sexual, transgressions – a female giving birth without

¹⁷⁰ see, for example, §26.

proper insemination, union with the serpent who represents the realm of evil, unproductively spilt seed, and the misuse of holy names by the mystical adepts.¹⁷¹ The structural analogy between all the cycles of creation and “fall” invests the very first sequence of failures with the negative connotations of sexual and mystical transgressions that are overtly associated with the subsequent sequences of failure. Notably, the emphasis on negative sexuality as a mark of the flawed creation is characteristic of a number of late-antique Gnostic schools. Scholem maintained that the notion of Sophia in the Valentinian Gnosis had an important impact on the depiction of Wisdom in the Book Bahir (and through this book, on the whole history of Kabbalah): just like Sophia, Wisdom had split, and one of its elements (called Shekhina – the divine presence) “fell,”¹⁷² but eventually, at the end of time, it will rise and regain its earlier status. In SD, on the other hand, the notion of Wisdom as such does not come up at all, while the ideas of falling and rising are connected first and foremost to negative sexuality. As Scholem has already observed, “The multifaceted sexual etiological myth, which purports to account for the existence and the origin of evil in this world, reveals a major aspect of Gnostic consciousness,”¹⁷³ but although this is true of some Valentinian texts, it is much more conspicuous in and typical of the Sethian mythical tradition.¹⁷⁴

A comparable emphasis on negative sexuality occurs in *Ma’amar al ha’atsilut basemalit* by the thirteenth-century Spanish kabbalist Isaac Hakohen. Overall, there are a number of motifs that connect SD to Isaac Hakohen’s writings, among them the very notion of the thirteen attributes, the view of serpents or sea-monsters as representations of the forces of evil, the concept of the repeated destruction of worlds as opposed to a fixed end of time, the tension between licit and illicit sexuality as a mark not only of humanity but also of the divine realm, and the conceptualization of the history of mankind (Adam, Eve, and their descendants) as the history of the godhead.¹⁷⁵ It is also worthy of note that Isaac Hakohen repeatedly claimed that most of his traditions had reached him from the Levant,

171 Note that the transgression associated with practitioners of the esoteric-mystical tradition is confined to the misuse of holy names, without reference to the possible misapprehension or misuse of the kabbalistic theosophy of the *sefirot*.

172 see e.g. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, especially 91-97.

173 See Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 73.

174 *Ibid.*, passim but especially 35-70. The resemblance of Sethian Gnosticism to Kabbalah has not been noticed by scholars.

175 For a detailed account of these parallels, see Meroz, “Va’ani lo hayiti sham?!” 178-82.

France and the Rhineland, and this points to the sources from which SD, too, may have drawn the ideas it shares with Isaac Hakohen.

Previous studies of SD have detected in the work the presence of a doctrine of cosmic cycles. In such a doctrine, the created world is envisaged as being repeatedly, and at fixed times, subject to total destruction followed by a wholly new creation. This accords with the view of the long version (as in §9 and the beginning of §73, which are not included in the present edition of the text), but the view of the short version requires a more nuanced interpretation. According to the short version, the world is indeed subject to cycles of creation and destruction, but the destruction in each case is presented as a “fall” – a flawed or an incomplete state of being, which never amounts to total annihilation, and by the same token, the creation that follows is never entirely new. Thus, in the view of the short version, the world we currently inhabit is essentially the same world as the one first created by the godhead at the beginning of time. Nor are the cycles of creation, “fall,” and “renewal” temporally fixed; the duration of each stage depends on the variability of human action on the one hand, and of certain processes taking place within the divine world on the other.

The short version moves, in effect, from a discussion of primordial processes to a discussion of the deeds of man, comprising both sexual and mystical practices. The text thus bears an ethical as well as a practical message, providing guidance not only on how to avoid damaging the creation again, but also on how to rectify the damage, and to induce the “complete name” to act on it so as to enable the creation to achieve “completion,” namely, a state of perfection. The aspiration to realize these goals effectively redefines and gives new meaning to the life of the kabbalist.

All this is present in the long version as well, but with an emphasis specifically on man’s manipulation of the letters of the alphabet, which aims to preserve the “modesty” of the creator, in other words, to avoid exposing His “nakedness” to the world. The long version thus provides man with a wider scope for action, and offers the opportunity to engage in a wider range of mystical practices, but the sexual dimension of the processes it describes is just as prominent here as it is in the short version, which suggests that the transition from the short version to the long did not obscure the Gnostic theme of illicit sexuality.

We saw in section 1.5 above how often SD features in other parts of the zoharic literature. It is not impossible that in SD itself, or perhaps in the intersection between SD and the works of Isaac Hakohen, lies the well-attested concern of the kabbalists to maintain a particularly rigorous standard of sexual purity. Not only do they endeavour to preserve the purity of sexual

relations by refraining from contact with menstruating or gentile women, but they also view the sin of spilling one's seed in vain with the utmost severity, to the point of insisting without precedent, as in one well-known zoharic passage, that for this transgression no amount of repentance would ever atone.¹⁷⁶ Be that as it may, it is clear that adherence to the rigours of sexual purity was conceived by the authors of SD as a means of both combating the forces of evil so as to prevent the decline of the world to chaos, and "elevating" or "restoring" the creation to wholesome existence.

Apart from their considerable disparity of length, the most conspicuous difference between the two versions is the division of the long version into five chapters, which is not present in the short version. This division, which may allude to the five books of the Pentateuch,¹⁷⁷ is explicitly referred to in the introduction to the long version (most of which is missing from the short version). Hence, even if the transition from the short version to the long was effected in several stages, it is still likely that the introduction and the division into chapters belonged to the same editorial stage of composition.¹⁷⁸ In light of this, other elements belonging to this editorial stage now come into view. They include, for example, the insertion of SD into the pericope "Terumah," which concerns the temple cult and the priesthood. This points to the existence of a layer of the text, of which little else remains, that connected the themes of SD to the temple cult and the priesthood – the subject matters of this particular pericope.¹⁷⁹ Another example is the appearance in the introduction to SD of the motif of "entering" and "emerging," which appears again only in the narrative framework that concludes the book (§73). This motif is based on the famous talmudic story of the four who entered Paradise (BT *Hag.* 14*b*), where Rabbi Aqiva is described as the only one who "entered" and "emerged" unhurt. The motif is further developed in the *Idras*, but it does not appear in any other part of SD. If it is indeed an interpolation designed to evoke the memory of Rabbi Aqiva's mystical experience, it may well attest to a conscious attempt to integrate the experiential dimension of the *Idras* into SD. This would seem to suggest that the ideas articulated in SD were revealed in the course of a dramatic event, comparable to the revelatory experiences described in the *Idras*.

176 See Zohar 1:219*b*; Pachter, Shilo, "Shemirat haberit: letoledotav shel isur hotsa'at zera levatalah" (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2006), ch. 4.

177 See Liebes, *Torat hayetsirah*, 130.

178 It should be noted that we are dealing with editorial stages or textual strata that are close but not necessarily identical to each other.

179 See also the discussion at n. 84.

Several conclusions may be drawn from these findings. Firstly, it is clear that both the introduction and the concluding narrative of SD constitute a single literary unit, which is extraneous to the work itself. Secondly, this observation corroborates the hypothesis that the short version preserves the earliest foundations of the work and has served as the basis of the long version, although in its present form, it contains additional materials that entered it at subsequent stages of composition. Thirdly, the literary framework (comprising the introduction and the conclusion) is in broad terms contemporaneous with the *Idras*, which themselves are an interpretation of the long version of SD.

Finally, SD's enigmatic name has to be explained in relation to both its contents and its style. Over the years, it has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention, lending itself to many ingenious and diverse interpretations. My sense is that the significance of the name can be appreciated only against the background of the book's highly evocative but extremely sparse language. Each of its turns of phrase triggers a wide range of associations, which I do not believe to be accidental but rather a deliberate strategy.

Gershom Scholem suggested that the Aramaic title should be translated into Hebrew as *Megilat setarim* and into English as the "Book of Concealment" – both equally ambivalent phrases which could mean either a work about concealed matters or a work which is itself a matter of concealment.¹⁸⁰ Both are appropriate, especially for the short version, which conceals much more than it reveals. By contrast, the long version occasionally claims that it is revealing, for the first time, the most esoteric doctrines, particularly those that entail the anthropomorphic depiction of the divine, as it does, for example, when it refers (albeit without full explication) to the supernal beards.¹⁸¹ In this context, mention should be made of a work known by precisely the Hebrew title proposed by Scholem for SD, *Megilat setarim*, which is attributed to Nachmanides and deals, not unlike our SD, with the link between forbidden sexual relations and cosmogony.¹⁸²

Yehuda Liebes has proposed a number of linguistic contexts and conceptual affinities that may elucidate the name SD. He focuses on the diverse meanings of the Aramaic and Arabic root ט-נ-צ (*tsade-nun-'ayin*) giving rise to the noun *tseni'uta*, and suggests, for example, that the book's

180 Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 160, 386 n. 9.

181 And see also §§14, 33, and the notes ad loc.

182 The latest discussion of this question is in Idel, "Perushim lesod ha'arayot," 138-48, 196-9. See also his references to earlier studies, especially in relation to "sod ha'arayot" and to the identity of its author.

title may point to its function as a repository of esoteric traditions, stressing particularly the purpose of storing them for future generations; to its poetic literary character, marked by carefully weighed metered speech; and to the mystery of the creation, which is the book's primary subject matter.¹⁸³

Some specifically Hebrew connotations of the root *tsade-nun-'ayin* may be added to these. According to Kaddari's dictionary of biblical Hebrew,¹⁸⁴ the root occurs only as a verb in the *pa'al* (as a passive participle) and the *hif'il* forms. The former connotes humility and submissiveness (as opposed to insolence), which Kaddari illustrates with Prov. 11: 2: "When insolence comes, then comes shame; but with the humble (*tsenu'im*) is wisdom," while latter means to conduct oneself submissively, as in Micah 6: 8: "Walk submissively (*hatsne'a lekhet*) with your God."¹⁸⁵ As Kaddari points out, the sense of humility survives into Rabbinic Hebrew, as in "How humble [*tsenu'ah*] this woman was" (BT *Shab.* 53*b*). In this sense, therefore, the title *Sifra ditseni'uta* would mean the "Book of Humility,"¹⁸⁶ which fits both the short version and the long, since both of them focus on matters, such as holy names, that are accessible only to the "humble." Moreover, since we know that humility preconditions access to and safe exit from *pardes* (namely paradise, in reference to mystical experience),¹⁸⁷ the name *Sifra ditseni'uta* may well reflect also the long version's concern with this topic.

In Rabbinic Hebrew the root *tsade-nun-'ayin* can have the connotation specifically of sexual modesty.¹⁸⁸ As we have seen, SD deals at length with the primordial couple's illicit sexuality, its fateful consequences and subsequent rectification.¹⁸⁹ This suggests that the sexual connotation of

183 For these, and additional suggestions, see Liebes, "How the Zohar Was Written," 200-201 n. 58; id., "Zohar ve'eros," 78-9; and id., *Torat hayetsirah*, 128-31. See also *The Zohar*, ed. Matt, 587-8.

184 Menahem Z. Kaddari, *Milon ha'ivrit hamiqra'it* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2006), 917.

185 Ariel Klein, who was kind enough to share with me a chapter from his incomplete London doctoral dissertation, which deals specifically with all the possible meanings of the name *Sifra ditseni'uta*, has already studied all the biblical connotations of the root טצנ, using a wide range of dictionaries. He drew attention to the significant fact that the reference in Prov. 11:2 to "the humble" (*tsenu'im*) is directly preceded, in the previous verse, by a reference to a balance. See also Matt, *Zohar*, 587-588.

186 See also Ben-Yehuda, *Milon balashon ha'ivrit*, s.v. 5550-1; 5256-7.

187 See Liebes, "How the Zohar Was Written," 200-201 n. 58; id., *Het'o shel Elisha: arba'ab shenikhnesu lapardes vetivo'ab shel hamistiqaq hatalmudit* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1986).

188 See ט-נ-א in the Israel Academy of the Hebrew Language's Historical Dictionary Project: <http://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il/Pages/PMain.aspx>.

189 Where it seems that the blame is not attributed specifically to the woman.

the root is particularly relevant here,¹⁹⁰ associated as it is with secrecy, concealment, and modesty in relation to the sexual parts of the body.¹⁹¹ In the following zoharic passage, for example, referring to Abraham and his wife Sarai, *tseṇi'uta* in the sense of the modesty displayed by both partners has clear sexual connotations:

And he said to Sarai his wife, “Behold, now I know that you are a beautiful woman” [Gen. 12: 11]. Did he not know that until then? Rather, we have learnt¹⁹² that until that time, Abraham had never looked at her figure because of the great modesty that existed between them.¹⁹³

According to the Mishnah (Hag.2:1), access to three esoteric bodies of knowledge should be strictly limited: licit and illicit sexual relations (*arayot*), the account of the creation (*ma'seh bereshit*) and the workings of the divine chariot (*ma'seh merkavah*). SD deals with all three, albeit not in equal measure.¹⁹⁴

Having observed SD's tendency to employ few words by which to express multiple meanings, we may be entitled to decipher its title in this spirit along the follows line: it is a scroll of secrets and a metered poem, stored for the meek and the sexually modest, to reveal to them alone, and in short-hand only, the esoteric wisdom concerning sexual relations (both licit and illicit), the mysteries of Creation, the workings of the divine Chariot, the safe experience of paradise, and the creative use of holy names.

190 See also Matt, 587-588.

191 See Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (Jerusalem: Horeb, 1995), 1291, s.v. *tseṇi'ut*.

192 BT *BB* 16a.

193 Zohar 1:81b. Notably, modesty is ascribed here to the sexual behavior of the couple, not specifically of the wife. Cf. Zohar 3:125b, where a woman displays her modesty by covering her hair even at home.

194 For the brief reference to the workings of the Merkavah, which has not featured in the present analysis, see §38. It should be emphasized that SD's references to “licit and illicit sexual relations” concern primarily those that take place within the godhead, on the metaphysical plane.