A CHARIOT FOR THE SHEKHINAH

Identity and the Ideal Life in Sixteenth-Century Kabbalah

Eitan P. Fishbane

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I seek to present the range of issues involved in the efforts of sixteenth-century kabbalists to understand the nature of selfhood, and the paths prescribed for the formation of an ideal life. I reflect on the mystical writings of Moshe Cordovero, Eliyahu de Vidas, and Ḥayyim Vital—probing their conceptions of core identity, the polarity between body and soul, and the ethical guidance for a life well lived. In so doing, I consider the following additional themes, and their relation to the matrix of self-formation and religious identity: reincarnation and rebirth; the virtue of humility and self-effacement; the cultivation of wisdom; ideals of piety and prophetic experience; asceticism; and the spiritual transcendence of desire. In presenting this wide range of constituent themes, I argue that sixteenth-century kabbalists understood the soul to be the ultimate marker of personal identity (nuanced and complicated by the doctrine of reincarnation), and that they formulated a vision of an ideal ethics in which the human being functions as an earthly vessel for the divine presence. What is more, the preparation of that vessel required a degree of humility so extreme that the attainment of ideal personhood ultimately involved the effacement of that very identity.

KEY WORDS: *self*, *identity*, *soul*, *mysticism*, *ethics*, *reincarnation*

These come to me days and nights and go from me again,
But they are not the Me myself.
Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am . . .
I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not abase itself to you,
And you must not be abased to the other.

—Walt Whitman (1992, 23–24)

1. The Scope of the Problem and a Typology of Genre: Directions for New Research

How have Jewish mystics understood the nature and meaning of the human self, situated as it is within a prescribed pattern of living? What

are the essential marks of personal identity according to these spiritual thinkers, and what makes for the achievement of wholeness and completion in the religious life? How did the kabbalists of medieval and early modern Jewish civilization express the ideals of a well-lived life, and what are the paradigms of perfection that have guided these conceptions? In framing these questions, and in viewing them as fundamental to an understanding of the kabbalistic phenomena, we take our cue from an extensive theoretical and historiographical literature in the study of philosophy and religion. For as a wide array of scholars have noted, the meaning of selfhood—indeed, the purpose of a human life, and the path to its fulfillment—is an issue that lies at the very heart of the Hellenistic and Neoplatonic philosophical legacies[1] as well as in the inner courtyards of various religious traditions the world over.[2] And while there can be no dispute over the proportions of Jewish mystical literature—which strongly favor the dominant discourses of theology and exegetical homiletics—it is also clear that a significant number of prominent kabbalistic thinkers devoted great attention to the problematics of self-formation and to the representation of its ideal achievement. The quest for purpose and meaning is located within a discourse of personal identity—of the person in relation to the deity, the Scriptures, and the tradition.

As with so many other topics in the study of Jewish mysticism, the current evaluation of this problem takes its starting point from the conclusions of Gershom Scholem—in this case, his assertion that the kabbalists were relatively unconcerned with personhood (as supported by the dearth of autobiographical documents in Jewish mystical literature).[3] As other scholars have already noted, however, there is still a great deal to be learned from the fair number of autobiographical works

[1] See Foucault 2005, 10–17, 46–60; Hadot 1995, 81–125, 251–76; Nussbaum 1994, 316–401, 484–510; Sorabji 2006, 115–99; and Taylor 1989, 115–26.

[2] Of particular relevance to this topic of self-formation in recent comparative scholarship are the essays collected in Shulman and Stroumsa 2002. Also compare several of the essays in Brakke *et al*. 2005. One of the classic monograph-length studies on this topic is certainly Tu 1998. See also the more recent work of Ivanhoe 2000. For a recent book-length inquiry into the cultivation of selfhood in rabbinic culture, see Schofer 2005a.

[3] See the remarks of Scholem in his *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*: "It is well known that the autobiographies of great mystics, who have tried to give an account of their inner experiences in a direct and personal manner, are the glory of mystical literature. . . . The Kabbalists, however, are no friends of mystical autobiography. They aim at describing the realm of Divinity . . . in an impersonal way . . . and are deeply averse to letting their own personalities intrude into the picture" (1941, 14–17, 38). This statement, offered by one of the most revered and influential scholars in the modern study of Judaism, has become the received and accepted wisdom for many contemporary researchers, and the great majority of twentieth-century scholarship has steered clear of a systematic inquiry into the place of autobiography and first-person discourse in the literature of Jewish mysticism. And yet it is important to note that Scholem did in fact devote a number of his scholarly inquiries to

that were composed by mystics in sixteenth-century Tzfat,[4] with rather significant antecedent works produced by kabbalists in the High Middle Ages.[5] There has been some theoretical debate over exactly what genre-label should be ascribed to these diverse texts—a debate that has arisen primarily through the assumption that modern critics of autobiography inevitably project a post-Rousseau conception of literary genre onto earlier works which do not necessarily fit that mold of *life-writing*.[6] Indeed, in application to the Jewish mystical sources, we find much evidence that may be characterized as the fragmentary writing of life and self, without the assumption (which appears to be more modern) that the author aims to compose a linear and complete narrative of the life, the "bio" in question. And so we might frame this genre of kabbalah as a modality of self-inscription, a literary concretization of memory and a representation of the individual path to spiritual, moral, and exegetical attainment. How did kabbalists such as Yosef Karo and Ḥayyim Vital (among others) interpret the trajectory and events of their individual lives? What underlying purpose did each attempt to identify in their

issues that bear on our present problem—especially in regard to conceptions of the holy person (the *Tzaddiq*), notions of the soul and its cycles of rebirth, as well as the idea of *Tzelem Elohim* in the history of kabbalistic thought. See also Scholem 1955, 290–306, and Scholem 1991, 88–139, 197–250, 251–73.

[4] Such works include Cordovero 1962; Karo 1990; Pachter 1991; and Vital 2005. Contemporary scholarship on this genre includes a number of significant advances in documentation, translation, and analysis. See also Faierstein 1999, 3–39, 2005, 23–32, and Idel 1999, xv–xx; Jacobs 1997, 3–19; Ruderman 1990, especially pages 23–27 on the topos of Early Modern Jewish autobiography (though not sixteenth-century *Tzfat*); Oron 1992, 299–309; Pachter 1991, 11–96; Werblowsky 1977, 148–68; and Wolfson 1994, 331–32 (especially n. 21).

[5] Most prominent among these are Avraham Abulafia, *'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*, Natan ben Sa'adya Harar, *Sha'arei Tzedeq* (Idel 2001, 459–505); Yitzḥaq of Akko, *'Otzar Ḥayyim* (MS Moscow-Ginzburg 775). On this text, and its status as autobiographical discourse, see E. Fishbane 2009.

[6] On this score, see the developed inquiry of Moseley (2006, 1–36), and compare this to the research of Alan Mintz on the autobiographical voice, and its relationship to the religious life (Mintz 1989). Of particular relevance to our corpus of texts is the analysis of Chajes (2005, 1–15). In this article, Chajes makes a number of important observations regarding the discernment of genre, suggesting first of all an adaptation of the term "egodocuments" as a more inclusive and ambiguous generic characterization—one that avoids the anachronistic attempt to align kabbalistic confessional writing with later exemplars of the autobiographical paradigm, and which seeks to understand the contours of first-person discourse as it existed in pre-modern times. In this regard, Chajes calls our attention to (among other works) Dekker 2002. Most recently, see the broad study of autobiographical method in several stages of Jewish history in Stanislawski 2004. To be sure, all of this work exists within a much wider spectrum of research on the history and theory of autobiography. Here the bibliography is immense, and so I restrict myself to just a few salient pieces of scholarship: Olney 1998; Smith and Watson 2001; and Weintraub 1978. The interested reader may find a wide array of further bibliographical readings noted in these three works.

life-course, and what meanings were ascribed to various occurrences and key relationships with teachers and peers? In the case of Vital, these questions are bound up in a self-perception of his own messianic significance (especially as seen in his mystical diary, *Sefer ha-Ḥezyonot*), and in his unique role as central disciple of Yitzḥaq Luria. Regarding the latter issue, a future investigation will need to assess Vital's self-representation as transmitter of Lurianic teaching—that is, of the self-understanding involved in a literary rendition of the master's oral communication. With respect to Karo, a range of other fascinating elements emerge. For not only does his *Maggid Mesharim* constitute an extraordinary case of spiritual autobiography (one in which his self-perception of purpose is on clear display), Karo's self-representation in the text is as a medium for the voice of an angelic tutor—a role that playfully blurs the lines of definition involved in the construction of religious identity and the status acquired for a tradent of esoteric wisdom. What self-perception is manifest in the mystic who serves as a vocal medium for a heavenly being, as one possessed by prophetic speech?[7] How does he understand the nature of his own personal identity, and how was that identity perceived by his contemporaries? This last question will certainly benefit from a scrutiny of the famous testimony offered by Shlomo Alqabetz in which a circle of fellow kabbalists witnessed Yosef Karo morph into a medium for a celestial angelic voice (Jacobs 1997, 123–30).[8]

If the autobiographical genre embodies a narration of self-introspection (an inscriptive construction of the subject's life), then the hagiographical genre might well be framed as the direct correlate in extrospective life-writing (the attempt to construct the ideal life of the holy man from the distance of reverence, as opposed to the intimacy of self-representation).[9] To a large degree, the hagiographical genre

[7] The dynamics of similar phenomena in earlier Kabbalah have been considered in detail by Pedaya (2002, 137–207).

[8] This document was first published as an Introduction to the 1704 Amsterdam edition of *Maggid Mesharim*. For an analysis of Karo's representation of these revelatory events, and the insight this lends into the broader phenomenology of religious experience, see Werblowsky 1977, 257–86.

[9] While this is not the place to provide a comprehensive comparative bibliography on this much-studied topic, several key pieces of research may be considered paradigmatic and methodologically applicable to our examination of the Jewish sources. See, for example, Brown 1971, 80–101; Brown 1987, 3–14; Kieckhefer 1991, 288–305; Kieschnick 1997; and Tu 1998, 73–86. With respect to this issue in the history of Judaism (prior, that is, to the emergence of Hasidism in the modern period), see Diamond 2004, 21–58, 75–91, 121–32; Green 1983, 29–43; Levine 2004, 45–57; Safrai and Safrai 2004, 59–78; Scholem 1991, 88–139; and Yassif 2005, 179–91. The full implications of this bibliography for the study of Kabbalah will be assessed elsewhere.

provides a romanticized window into what a particular disciple, or community of disciples, believe the ideal life to be. Consequently, as interpreters of that literature—reading with an eye to the criteria for and construction of the paradigmatic self—we may utilize the relevant hagiographical texts for an assessment of such assumptions with regard to greatness and the idealized person (here I am thinking particularly of *Shivḥei ha-'Ari* and the antecedent evidence in the *Zohar* about Rabbi Shim'on bar Yoḥai, as well as the writings produced by devotees of Shabbtai Tzvi in the seventeenth century).[10] Hagiographical narrative presents a life of perfection—a narrated embodiment of the well-lived life, a literary form whose extreme hyperbole implicitly instructs the disciple in the path of virtue. The holy man, the subject of hagiography, functions as an inspiration to be emulated—in whatever small measure considered possible. It is in this manner that hagiographical narrative is linked intimately with the ethical literature of self-formation—the virtues that are prescribed overtly in the latter are implied in the former through the holy man's embodiment of perfection. For the purposes of an inquiry into the meaning of selfhood, the extreme hyperbole of these narratives need not be viewed as eccentricities to be winnowed away by the scholar in search of a core historical truth. Instead, such texts should be understood as instances of a discourse of reverence, a genre through which the disciples articulate their vision of the ideal life, of a state of perfection that reflects paradigmatic virtue and spiritual virtuosity.

A third textual genre from this period—one that reveals much about the dynamics of identity and selfhood—concerns the complex journey of reincarnation in kabbalistic anthropology. The disciples of Luria, following the orientation of their teacher, reflected extensively on the condition and cultivation of the individual Jewish soul as it progresses through numerous transmigrations and reincarnations in quest of its ultimate perfection—as well as on the contribution that such a *tiqun* makes to the broader aims of cosmic redemption.[11] The discourse of reincarnation is interwoven seamlessly with the drama of self-formation, insofar as the individual self works on the gradual improvement of that identity over the course of numerous physical lifetimes.[12]

[10] For a recent assessment of the grand and heroic figure of bar Yoḥai in the *Zohar*, see Hellner-Eshed 2005, 41–76; compare this with the classic study by Liebes (1982).

[11] Particularly notable among these works is Ḥayyim Vital's *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim* (Vital 1990).

[12] Here, too, we encounter a category of mystical identity and selfhood that should be understood within a broad matrix of related ideas in the history of religions. As I hope to explore in detail elsewhere, the dynamics of reincarnation and rebirth were core elements of kabbalistic constructions of personhood, and of the formation of an idealized identity. For a comparative context in the study of religion—scholarship which must

In this sense, the journey of rebirth is tied directly to a kabbalistic theory of ethical consequence; what the person does while embodied has a causal relationship to the cycle of rebirth, to the necessity of passing from one life-state to another.[13] *Gilgul* theory thereby emerges as a vivid lens through which the interpreter of religious forms may view an embedded cluster of conceptions with regard to the idealized life and the perceived path to its fulfillment. As one scholar has observed, the increased concern with personal soul-histories among the disciples of Luria was clearly one of the motivating factors for a marked attention to the status and nature of the individual in this time and place (Idel 1998, 145–73). Yet another scholar has examined the heavy emphasis in Lurianic writings on the practices of diagnosis and healing—techniques that were entirely bound up in awareness of the individual's particular soul-root and history of transmigrations (Fine 2003, 150–86, 300–58).[14] This central category, which involves the key elements of soul-history and soul-formation, will be a vital piece in a broader inquiry into kabbalistic constructions of selfhood.[15] And though the present essay will deal only peripherally with this genre, the implications of its doctrine—and its representation of the path to a cultivated moral piety—will never be far from our horizon.

Lastly we come to the genre of ethical-spiritual guidance, a discourse of prescribed self-cultivation in quest of stated ideals of the upright life. Such manuals were common in sixteenth-century Jewish literature, setting out a guided path for the individual to work on the flawed nature of the self, to strive toward the improvement, and indeed the perfection, of the personal identity in question. Texts from this genre and period include Moshe Cordovero's *Tomer Devorah*, Eliyahu de Vidas's *Rei'shit Ḥokhmah*, Elazar Azikri's *Sefer Ḥareidim*, Ḥayyim Vital's *Sha'arei Qedushah*, and Yishayahu Horowitz's *Shnei Luḥot ha-Brit*. The relative proliferation of this mode of creativity in the

affect our understanding of the Jewish material as well—see the essays collected in Mills and Slobodin 1994 and Obeyesekere 2002. In this case as well, it almost goes without saying, the scope of research is far more extensive than the representative examples I have cited.

[13] For reflection on the reincarnational implications of ethical consequence, see Obeyesekere 2002, 173.

[14] On conceptions of the revered qualities of Yitzḥaq Luria, and the construction of his charismatic authority in the eyes of his disciples (as well as a consideration of related literature), see Fine 2003, 78–123. Also see the classic studies of kabbalistic views on reincarnation by Scholem 1991, 197–250 and Elior 1995, 243–69. Consult the studies by Pinchas Giller and Oded Yisraeli with regard to zoharic conceptions of rebirth and the esoteric meaning of levirate marriage (Giller 2001; Yisraeli 2005). Also see Kallus 2003, 159–85; Eylon 2003; Verman 2005a, 2005b; and Magid 2008.

[15] This is an area of research that I plan to develop in the context of a full-length monograph devoted to kabbalistic conceptions of the self.

sixteenth century embodies an attempt to spread kabbalistic wisdom to wider audiences—to set out a clear path to the attainment of a repaired self, a restoration and reintegration of the broken moral-spiritual life. These texts, which speak in a far more accessible voice than the conventional theological-exegetical treatises, present a journey of self-formation to the reader and disciple. Personhood is, in this genre, a true work in progress—an effort that leads ultimately to the greatest heights of prophetic-revelatory access. It is this genre that will form the centerpiece of discussion in the present article (in contrast to the more preliminary and programmatic nature of my comments on the other genres)—and we will consider this category of personhood with an eye to the place of kabbalistic piety in the wider landscape of religious ethics and theories of religious identity. Through consideration of several key texts from the period, I shall offer a general typological picture as well as an exegetical assessment of three interrelated issues: (1) conceptions of the essential nature and identity of the person (the *'adam*); (2) the path of spiritual and moral formation that leads to a state of wholeness and completion; and (3) characterizations and representations of the ideal individual—most frequently labeled the צדיק or the חסיד.[16]

2. Kabbalistic Theories of Personal Identity

In Ḥayyim Vital's *Sha'arei Qedushah* (The Gates of Holiness) and *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim* (The Gate of Reincarnations),[17] a view of the essence of human identity is articulated.[18] Building indirectly on the legacy of Plato and Neoplatonism[19] (and, to be sure, earlier kabbalistic texts), Vital correlates the essence of human identity to the soul that dwells within the human body—to the eternal, divinely derived element of the individual, in contrast to the mortal nature of the body, which is but the garment that clothes the soul as essence. That the soul

[16] Several other contributions to the related problems of self, identity, and individuality have been put forth by various scholars of kabbalah in recent years. A representative sampling of these includes Goldberg 2001; Hecker 2005; Idel and Ostow 1998; and Wolfson 2000, 129–55; Wolfson 2005 (in which a wide range of issues bearing on identity, embodiment, and selfhood are probed); and Wolfson 2006, 17–128.

[17] In a more literal fashion, this title might be translated as "The Gate of Transmigrations" or "Soul-Revolutions."

[18] As Elliot Wolfson has argued, kabbalistic claims about human nature are circumscribed by an ethnocentric consciousness. When speaking about the *'adam*, most kabbalists speak from a particularistic vantage point, not from a universalistic one. See Wolfson 2006, 47–57.

[19] On these earlier sources, see Dillon 1998, 80–87; Hadot 1993, 23–34; and Lorenz 2006, 13–17. On the dialectic of soul and body in earlier Kabbalah, see the classic essays of Tishby 1989, 2:677–722, 2:749–76.

is considered immortal and the body mortal is, of course, no surprise in this literature (nor is the idea that the body serves as a *levush*, a garment, for the soul). What I wish to underscore is the manner in which the body is often dismissed as carrying the properties of personal identity,[20] whereas the soul is *equated* with a particular individual's identity and definitive state of self.[21] As one might anticipate, this correlation of soul and essential identity is textured and complicated by the centrality of *gilgul* theory—the core belief, discussed above, that

[20] For a brief survey of attitudes toward personal identity in pre-modern philosophy (particularly as shaped by the legacy of Plato), see Raymond Martin and John Barresi 2003b, 1–20. A more extensive analysis on the part of these two scholars is now presented in Martin and Barresi 2006. I very consciously seek to adapt this category from its centrality in modern philosophical discourse as well. What are the indicators of identity, and what criteria do human beings use in defining themselves as selves? The Platonic and Neoplatonic answer reverberates in contemporary philosophy among those who claim that it is really our individual mental space and interior life of consciousness that marks personal identity for the human being. Galen Strawson articulates this insight in the following way: "The early realization [in childhood] of the fact that one's thoughts are unobservable by others, the experience of the profound sense in which one is alone in one's head—these are among the very deepest facts about the character of human life, and found the sense of the mental self. It is perhaps most often vivid when one is alone and thinking, but it can be equally vivid in a room full of people. It connects with a feeling that nearly everyone has had intensely at some time—the feeling that one's body is just a vehicle or vessel for the mental thing that is what one really or most essentially is. I believe that the primary or fundamental way in which we conceive of ourselves is as a distinct mental thing" (2003, 338). A more expanded consideration of these issues is undertaken in Strawson 1994.

[21] Here I wish to acknowledge the different line of argument developed by Lawrence Fine in his monograph, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*. The underlying thrust of Fine's research is to spotlight, typologize, and interpret the deeply embodied practices and techniques that were cultivated in the kabbalistic fellowship of Yitzḥaq Luria. Through extensive textual documentation and exegesis, Fine emphasizes the centrality of the body in the lived religious practice of this mystical circle. In particular, the Lurianic practice of metoposcopy (the discernment of configurations of Hebrew letters on the forehead of his disciples as a diagnostic technique for recognizing the sins and soul-flaws of the individual) reflects a conception of the physical self as a mirror of the person's inner soul-state (Fine 2003, 150–67). The body is therefore crucial to the diagnostician's ability to view the condition of the soul, and is not portrayed as unrelated to the state of a person's self and identity. Soul and body are bound up one with the other, and a rigid divide between them becomes increasingly difficult. Nevertheless, I would suggest that the ultimate marker of the individual's identity in metoposcopic diagnosis is still the soul—even if the veil of the body allows it to be visible to the external eye. Indeed, this last nuance is supported by the Neoplatonic sources of the body-soul polarity, and we may recall the well-known zoharic passage that considers the literal level of scriptural meaning to be a necessary veil for the all-too-brilliant light of esoteric meaning that dwells within it (*Zohar* 3:152a). Even in the zoharic text, this image is directly correlated to the way in which the soul must be encased within the physical body in order to descend to the earthly realm without overpowering mundane creatures with the intensity of its direct radiance.

the soul undergoes a long journey of reincarnations in its quest for completion and perfection. These two ideas taken together (that is—soul as essence of identity and the repeated reincarnation of souls) yield a striking, but necessary, conclusion: the apparently different physical lives inhabited by the same soul (and different parts of that soul) ultimately are one and the same identity, one and the same person! The individual identity is associated not with the physical manifestation of what is *perceived* to be the person in life. Instead, the *actual person* is conceived to be the one soul that travels through multiple physical lifetimes,[22] seeking to work on itself through *middot* and *mitzvot* (ethics and ritual action), all in quest of a final *tiqun* (repair, perfection) of that identity. What is more, that reincarnated identity is, from time to time, inhabited by the perfected soul of a *tzaddiq* (righteous one), so as to aid the flawed soul in its quest for improvement and healing. In this process, called *ʿibbur* (gestation or pregnancy), the lines between distinct soul-identities are blurred (despite the insistence that the *tzaddiq* soul is not sullied by the lower soul, and that it may depart at its own discretion), and the two souls temporarily metamorphose into one contained within the other. The core properties of the great man thereby cross the threshold of time and the wheels of rebirth; the state of personhood in that gestating condition emerges as an ambiguous mixture of the flawed guided by the perfected, the descended saint-soul functioning in the simultaneous roles of spirit possession and spiritual guide.[23] In addition, the understanding of rebirth as a dimension of Vital's theory of personal identity is markedly visible in his conception of levirate marriage (*yibum*)—an ancient Israelite tradition that was taken to be one of the deepest secrets of reincarnational doctrine by kabbalists from the time of the *Zohar* onward (Scholem 1991, 208–9; Giller 2001, 35–68; and Yisraeli 2005, 113–29). In the kabbalistic adaptation of this ritual, the man who dies without children is himself reincarnated in the progeny of the subsequent levirate union (the marriage of the widowed woman to her dead husband's brother), and he is considered *as though he never existed* in bodily form in the first place. In becoming reincarnated in the offspring of this substitute union, the soul of the dead man re-enters the world as though he were a completely new soul—a *neshamah ḥadashah* that had heretofore never undergone *gilgul*. Along these lines, the new incarnated configuration of identity is characterized by

[22] For comparative reflection on this ontological tension in classical reincarnation doctrine, see Sorabji 2006, 13.

[23] In regard to *ʿibbur* as a modality of spirit possession, as well as for extensive reflections on the Lurianic doctrines of the soul and reincarnation, see Kallus 2003, 159–85, especially pages 160–62.

Vital as a *binyan ḥadash mamash*—a truly new structure or, perhaps, a truly new identity (1990, 34).

Without entering much further into the intricacies of Vital's doctrine of reincarnation, I shall remark upon one final related issue as it concerns the construction of identity. In the Lurianic thought-system of souls and their rebirth, all the various soul-elements and soul-sparks—those that link the generations and that return to the mundane realm in quest of their gradual *tiqun*—all these are traceable ultimately to the macro-self of *'Adam ha-Ri'shon* (the first man). Depending on the extent of their greatness or weakness, each of these soul-sparks began as tiny fragments of the gargantuan, ethereal, and luminous Body of Adam. Only through the primordial trauma of Adam's sin did these original sparks scatter to the winds of the cosmos; only consequently did they become dissipated fragments of light. In this sense, then, all of the individual soul-identities throughout the entire history of humankind are in truth part of one Great Human Identity—each and every one is but a fragment of the united oneness of *'Adam ha-Ri'shon*.[24] And while each soul-identity is understood to bear a particular alignment with its predecessors, to follow its path toward the repair of its *pegamim* (flaws), all of those identities are—in the final analysis—derived from a single source (offshoots of the same unitary Self of primordial times). They are each faces and glimmers of light on the unified human prism. For just as the broader redemption of the cosmos is characterized as the *restoration* of that perfect state that preceded the Primal Breaking, so too is the individual soul's redemption found in its restoration to, and reintegration within, the great single Body of Man.

As we shall presently observe, the essence of identity as enduring soul is further characterized by Vital and others as the element of *penimiyut* and *ruḥaniyut* (interiority and spirituality, respectively) that dwells within the superficial physical form of the human being. Vital makes this point clear at the outset of his *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim*, as a prolegomenon to the various issues he sets out to explain on the subject of transmigration and reincarnation:

> Indeed, know that the person himself (*ha-'adam 'atzmo*)[25] is the spirituality that is within the body (*hu' ha-ruḥaniyut 'asher be-tokh ha-guf*), and the body is the garment of the person (*ha-guf hu' levush ha-'adam*) and is not the person himself (*ve-'eineno ha-'adam 'atzmo*) [1990, 1].

[24] I am happy to recognize that my thoughts here were sharpened through a conversation with my friend Rabbi Ebn Leader.

[25] Or—"the essence of a person."

In this excerpt, the primary distinction between that which is the *'adam 'atzmo* (the person himself) and that which is peripheral to personal identity is the corporeal/spiritual divide. A related formulation is found at the beginning of *Sha'arei Qedushah*. Corporeality is once again rejected as a carrier of personal identity, though the essence of the *'adam* is here characterized as *penimiyut* (interiority). The ontology of the person is thus tied to the inner reality and animating force housed by the body; the dimension that is hidden from external observation is deemed to be the real indicator of individual identity. That which can be seen with the physical eyes of another body is not essential to the true being of the subject:

> It is known to masters of knowledge that the body of a person is not the person himself (*guf ha-'adam 'eineno ha-'adam 'atzmo*) . . . It follows from this that *a person is the interiority* (*ha-'adam hu' ha-penimiyut*), while the body is but one garment that the intellective soul is garbed within. For she (the intellective soul) is the person himself (*nefesh ha-sikhlit 'asher hi' ha-'adam 'atzmo*) while he is in this world, and after death this garment will be stripped away from him, and he will be garbed in a pure, clean, spiritual garment [1990, 18; my emphasis].

The true identity of a person is thus restricted entirely to the interior, spiritual dimension of the individual—the particular body in which it happens to reside is but one of many garments that the person, the enduring identity, will wear on his immortal journey.[26] In fact (or perhaps ironically), the very structure and composition of the body is said to directly mirror the structure of the soul—the spiritual "inwardness" that marks the true essence of personal identity. The embodied nature of the physical garment correlates directly to a pure, spiritualized version of that very embodiment—one that is conceived to be enduring and essential to true identity and selfhood. It is for this reason that actions conducted in this physical life have such immense

[26] It is important to note that there are numerous prominent texts from this period (and before) that *do* posit a correlation between identity and the embodied state of the person. In those cases, the vigorously soul-centered view is more muted, and the body is understood to be deeply significant insofar as it reverberates with divine meaning—corporeal form manifests the sacred supernal reality, wholeness is discovered in the structures of an embodied *tzelem 'Elohim* (image of God). Salient examples of this tendency in sixteenth century Tzfat may be found in Horowitz 1993, 1:8, 5:153–54. Quite tellingly, however, in the very context in which Horowitz emphasizes the embodied character of personhood, he also reaffirms the connection between core identity and the inwardness of the soul (*ki 'etzem ha-'adam hu' ha-penimiyi*). See Horowitz 1993, 5:153–54. On the idea that the true human being is defined by his physicality (and thus the notion that the circumcised male Jew represents the paradigm of *tzelem 'Elohim*), see Wolfson 2006, 47–57.

repercussions for the health and wholeness of the person's core dimension of self—that is, for the wellness of his soul. As Vital states in *Sha'arei Qedushah*:

> For just as the artisan will make a garment for a person's body according to the structure of the body's limbs, so too did He, may He be blessed, make the body—which is a garment for the soul—according to the structure of the soul's image (*be-tavnit diyoqan ha-nefesh*), with 248 limbs, and 365 sinews connecting the limbs. Through these [sinews] the blood and life-force is drawn from limb to limb in a manner similar to pipes (*tzinorot*). After the formation of the body, [the Holy One] breathed a living soul into it, composed of 248 spiritual limbs (*'eivarim ruḥanim*) and 365 [spiritual] sinews, and these [spiritual limbs and sinews] were enclothed within the 248 limbs and 365 sinews of the body. Thus the limbs of the soul (*'eivarei ha-nefesh*) act through the vessels—which are the limbs of the body—like a chisel in the hand of a stonecutter [2000, Part 1, Gate 1, 18].

Despite the fact that Vital explicitly asserts that the inner self (the soul), and not the body, constitutes personal identity, the soul is nevertheless imagined and represented in embodied terms! Just as the body is composed of limbs and sinews, so too is the soul—even if that composition is spiritualized. In this way, the embodied character of existence is preserved, even while it is transferred to the lasting core of selfhood—the true marker of identity that is *ruḥani* (spiritual) and *penimi* (inward). This passage underscores the subtle interplay between embodiment and spiritualization in kabbalistic thought. For even in the process of rejecting physicality as an indicator of real selfhood, Vital maintains the interwoven texture of these two facets of religious identity. Elsewhere in *Sha'arei Qedushah*, Vital applies this relationship in asserting the impact of physical *mitzvot* upon the embodied structure of the soul:

> The man whose spirit has moved him to be one who comes to be purified and sanctified (*lihyot ba' litaher u-le-hitqadesh*), to take upon himself the yoke of the heavenly kingdom in its true way, should prepare himself with all of his strength (*yakhin 'atzmo be-khol koḥo*), and he should hurry to fulfill all 613 commandments. For in their fulfillment, the 613 limbs and sinews of his intellective soul will be perfected [or made whole] (*be-qiyumam yushlemu TRYG 'eivarim ve-gidim shel nafsho ha-sikhlit*), as was mentioned earlier. For if he lacks even one *mitzvah* from among the 248 positive commandments, then he still lacks one limb of his soul (*'adayin hu' ḥaser 'eiver 'eḥad mi-nafsho*) [2000, 29].

Alluding to his prior excursus in Gate 1 of *Sha'arei Qedushah*, Vital posits a causal relationship between the performance of external-physical ritual actions and the health of the soul. Just as the physical

body will weaken and become ill if it does not receive the proper food nourishment, so too will the spiritual body (the anatomy of the soul) become weak if it does not receive the necessary nourishment of ritual enactment.[27] The deep structure of selfhood is found in the inwardness of the soul, but its patterns of brokenness and wholeness mirror the rhythms of the mundane physical body. Let us also note the rhetoric of preparation and intention that accompanies Vital's statement here: the person who wishes to achieve his ideal self (characterized through the terminology of purification and sanctification) must rouse his attention to punctilious and focused ritual performance. Such cultivation and effort will lead to nothing less than the full realization of wholeness and completion, of homeostasis and wellness in the soul's "body."

In Part Three of *Sha'arei Qedushah*, Vital again addresses the question of personal identity and its core properties—though here the term *mahut ha-'adam* (essence of the person) is utilized in the process of formulating a view of the essential composition and markers of personhood. This phraseology functions in complement to the language of *'atzmut* (essence) or *ha-'adam 'atzmo* (the person himself, the essence of the person) that we already observed, and which persists in this later section as well. As Vital states,

> It has become very clear that the essence of the person (*mahut ha-'adam*) is that a person is composed of all the worlds (or—includes all the worlds, *kolel kol ha-'olamot*), both in their generality and in their particularity, something that is not so with respect to all the other creatures, upper and lower [2000, Part 3, Gate 2, 121].

Thus the distinctiveness of the human being, according to this passage, is his status as a microcosm—a condition that endows the person with a special power to stimulate and orchestrate the cosmic energies. Being one whose essential identity includes the properties of the upper worlds and the divine life, the person is uniquely able to draw forth the flow of the *sefirot*. The manner in which the human state refracts the supernal reality of divinity has a direct impact on the theurgical power of the person. In the words of Vital, "It follows that it was necessary that the person be composed of all the worlds (*murkav mi-kol ha-'olamot*), for these will help him, through his actions, to draw forth the flow (*lehamshikh ha-shefa'*) to himself and to them" (2000, Part 3, Gate 2, 127). The fact that the human person is composed of all the worlds is, in Vital's view, one of the definitive characteristics of identity, and this state of containment ultimately endows the human with a

[27] An extended reflection on the relationship between—and polarization of—physical and spiritual nourishment (as regards the kabbalistic literature of the thirteenth-century zoharic circle) has been presented in the recent book by Hecker 2005, 57–71.

divine-like creative ability. As Vital concludes the matter: “For the human being, through his actions, draws forth life to the heavens and the earth, and it is as though he himself planted them and established them (*harei hu’ ke-’ilu neṭa‘an vi-yesadan*)” (2000, Part 3, Gate 2, 128).

3. Paths of Self-Formation

If these are the markers of essence and core identity, what view is taken of that individual’s quest for wholeness and completion? For it is within the frame of moral space, and indeed in the transformation of the self into a worthy vessel for the sacred, that the core dimensions of identity are actualized and given their requisite *tiqun* (Taylor 1989, 25–52). The ontology of selfhood—the meaning and definition of an individual identity—is inseparably tied to the organic process of ethical formation; the person strives throughout his lifetime (and, indeed, through multiple physical lifetimes) to realize the fullness of his being, to attain his true and ideal self. This is reflected in the remarks cited above in which an *’adam* attains his complete state (*sheleimut*) through the gradual process of living a life of perfected *mitzvot*. In this sense we may adapt the position of Charles Taylor, intimated above, that the identity of the individual is constructed and marked within a moral framework—within a particular conception of right and wrong, of ideals to be sought. As Taylor articulates the matter, we cannot separate what a person *is* from an explicit or implicit set of criteria for how a person *ought* to be (1989, 27). Indeed, such a formulation is highly applicable to the kabbalistic conceptions, insofar as the core soul-identity is *formed* through the actualization of a set of prescribed ideals (the “ought” of kabbalistic ethics). The identity of the person is inscribed and fashioned by the contextual vision of how that life is to be lived.

The work of Aaron Stalnaker and Jonathan Schofer in comparative ethics is also quite pertinent to the theoretical framing of my approach to the kabbalistic material. As Schofer argues (building upon his work in classical rabbinic ethics), the self, or *subject*, “finds itself through its relations with others”—one cannot separate the ontology of selfhood (the truth of identity) from the interactive character of the ethical life (2005b, 267–79). For the prescriptions of moral guidance are fundamentally other-oriented; the ethical pedagogue seeks to instruct the follower in the proper ways to behave vis-à-vis other people. The markers of selfhood emerge through a life in constant formation—a life that is constructed through postures of relation to both the human community and the commanding divine presence. And yet, at least as far as kabbalistic thought is concerned, the ontology of identity is not entirely circumscribed within the dynamics of relation—the person’s

essence is located in the soul, and that soul is the direct mirror of Divinity. The ethical life seeks to realize a state of selfhood in the soul that lives up to its celestial source, one that realizes its supernal divine reflection. What is more (as noted above in the section on personal identity), Lurianic kabbalah posited the origins of individual selfhood within the one primordial identity of Adam. Within this theoretical matrix, each soul is formed in relation to the others of this world, and yet we are each and every one of us derived from, and destined to return to, the original luminous Body of Humanity. The formation of selfhood in kabbalistic thought accords even better, I believe, with the dialectic proposed by Stalnaker, in which selfhood constitutes an evolution from a core state of *human nature* to the finished product of *personhood*—a transformation that is bound up in the life-long process of ethical growth and cultivation (2005, 194–97, 208–19). Indeed, in the kabbalistic thought explored in this paper, the religious practitioner strives after the attainment of his own humanity—a state of being that is ultimately a realignment of the human condition with the perfected paradigm of Divinity. The irony and nuance of this identity, situated as it is within a moral space, is that, for the kabbalists, the highest ideal of selfhood is *selflessness*. To realize the human refraction of Divinity, the devotee must push the boundaries of identity even to the point of their dissolution. Or to frame the matter in parallel to Stalnaker's terminology, the egoistic character of raw human nature must be crafted into the personhood of radical, self-effacing humility—an intriguing counterpoint to John Reeder's claim that "religions search for the good in light of the limits and possibilities of the real" (1998, 160).[28] The pragmatism of religious ethics put forth in Reeder's argument is notably evaded in the kabbalistic sources. The practitioner is instead expected to strive for a humility so thoroughgoing that it inverts ordinary assumptions about individuality and personal ontology, aiming as it does to embody the most elusive dimension of God's own self—the infinite nothingness of divine origins, the mystery of the cosmos as the deity unveils that which is hidden.

What then makes for the attainment of that perfected self, and what are the ideals cultivated in the pursuit of such perfection? At what point may the individual be deemed to have attained the status of *Ḥasid, Tzaddiq*, and *Qadosh* (Pious, Righteous, and Holy)—markers, according to Vital, of the ultimate fulfillment of self-cultivation? Building explicitly on earlier Jewish ethical literature, the thinkers of this period center on a cluster of virtues believed to lift individual identity to its highest point of achievement in search of paradigmatic personhood and the well-lived life. As I have just intimated above, the first

[28] See discussion of Reeder's formulation in Lewis *et al*. 2005, 179.

and most fundamental of these virtues—underscored by Moshe Cordovero, Eliyahu de Vidas, and Ḥayyim Vital, among others—begins in seeming paradox: to realize the ultimate state of being human is to radically efface any affirmation of that very identity. By this statement I refer to the repeated emphasis that is placed in kabbalistic-ethical works of the sixteenth century—that a pious and righteous person must, first and foremost, be driven to rid himself of all vestiges of pride and egoistic desire. Instead, the person of ideal character will be anchored and guided by the belief that he is nothing, and he will approach others with a posture of the most extreme humility.[29] An excerpt from Moshe Cordovero's *Tomer Devorah* may be considered paradigmatic of this attitude. In these lines, the kabbalist conceives of the ideal human state as one that embodies the supernal divine dimensions in the full active realization of moral-spiritual conduct. The root of this realization is the awareness and projection of humility—indeed a rejection of ego and pride so deep and so thorough that it implies and venerates the complete *effacement* of that very self. Speaking of the moral attributes represented by the divine *sefirot*, Cordovero states:

> Every person must slowly train himself in these virtues (*lehargil ʿatzmo be-ʾelu ha-middot meʿat meʿat*). The essential one of them (of which he must take hold)—the key to them all (*she-hiʾ mafteaḥ ha-kol*)—is humility (*ha-ʿanavah*). For humility is the head of them all, the first aspect rooted in *Keter*, and all will be included within her. The essence of humility is that a person should not find any value in himself whatsoever (*she-lo yimtzaʾ be-ʿatzmo ʿerekh klal*)—rather, he should think of himself as nothing (*yaḥshov she-huʾ ha-ʾayin*) . . . For just like *Keter* . . . who

[29] On this subject, see the recent work of Wolfson 2006, 286–316. For a striking parallel to this ideal in medieval Christian mysticism, see the reflections of McGinn 2005, 275–76. "Humility," McGinn states, "is particularly praised by [the fourteenth-century German mystic John] Tauler, because it is the virtue that is most necessary for self-negation. Just as earth, because it is the lowest element, draws down heaven's power into itself to become fruitful, so too the humble person will be filled by God." McGinn then cites a formulation by Tauler himself, the words of which display a spiritual conception that is deeply akin to our kabbalistic-ethical sources: "Before everything else, a person shall set himself in his nothingness. In order to attain the crown of perfection, there is nothing more important than to sink down into the deepest ground and into the root of humility. Just as a tree's height comes out of its deepest root, so too everything that is high in this life comes from the ground of humility." Two tropes articulated by this Christian mystic are particularly notable in relation to the kabbalistic sources. The first of these is the belief that the posture of humility leads directly to a state of being filled by the deity, of serving as a vessel for the influx of divine Being into the earthly realm. The second is the seemingly paradoxical assertion that radical self-negation leads to self-perfection. The ultimate cultivation of nothingness and selflessness is considered to be the height of self-realization.

> thinks of itself as nothing before its Emanator, so too should the person place (or make) himself as utterly nothing (*kakh yasim ha-'adam 'atzmo 'ayin mamash*), and he should consider his absence from existence a very good thing [2000, 189–90].

It is clear from this passage that all fulfillment of the moral-spiritual life depends upon radical humility—so bold as to negate any worth and value in that very self! To be an ideal self, Cordovero implies, is to be an erased self. To achieve the highest realization of divine embodiment—of having been created in the image of God—the cultivated individual must think and act as though that personal identity has been deconstructed into complete erasure and nothingness. It is in this way that the person reflects the *'ayin*/nothingness name of *Keter*; in the correlated ontologies of God and the individual human, the highest form of being is nothingness. Insofar as this orientation is defined as the pinnacle of *imitatio dei*, the conduct of radical humility is consequently understood by Cordovero to guide (and to be reflected in) the embodied posture of the person. An individual's physical eyes should be cast down to the earth in a gesture of submission; his forehead should be relaxed so as to exude a calming effect upon others; his smile should be bright and his demeanor gentle, so as to send forth the energies of compassion onto his fellow man. Indeed, Cordovero constructs a regimen of conduct in which the devotee speaks with a very clear body language, a speech of his physicality that reflects the mindfulness of his humility; the emotional state of *raḥamim* (compassion) serves as the anchor of physical posture, an embodied condition that functions through a semiotics of gesture. The particular ways in which an individual carries his body exude the signals and signs of an emotional, and indeed an ethical, orientation. *Raḥamim* is understood to characterize the plenitude of the *sefirah Keter*—its posture one of giving, its calm and selflessness the compass for physical existence. As Cordovero states at the beginning of his *Tomer Devorah*,

> It is fitting for a person [to cultivate] resemblance to his Creator (*ha-'adam ra'ui she-yitdammeh le-qono*), and then he will be in the secret of the supernal form, in image and likeness (*ve-'az yihyeh be-sod ha-tzurah ha-'elyonah, tzelem u-demut*). For if he resembles [his Creator] in his body, but not in actions (then he shames the form *she-'ilu yidumeh be-gufo ve-lo' ba-pe'ulot*), and others will say of him: "a beautiful form and ugly deeds." For the essence of the supernal image and likeness are his actions (*she-harei 'ikar ha-tzelem ve-ha-demut ha-'elyon hein pe'ulotav*) [2000, 1:1].

The interior emotional state is thus exteriorized as a semiotics of physical expression and interactive ethics. In order for the person to

realize his embodiment of the divine image, his corporeal condition must reflect an inner moral center; the compassion and humility of *Keter* should become manifest in the gestures that function as indicators of ethical posture, the moral language of the body in its interaction with others. And yet this ideal is not restricted by Cordovero to the first *sefirah*; in fact, he appears to imply that the virtue of humility frames the *totality* of an individual's realization of *tzelem 'Elohim* (the image of God), one that extends to include the full circle of divine dimensions, and by extension, the circle of human virtues as well. For despite the fact that Cordovero does devote significant attention to the cultivation of other central virtues and ideals, he appears to link the first and last of the divine emanations (the *sefirot*) through this very quality, and in so doing presents a particular vision of the human holy life—one fundamentally marked by an intentional brokenness, all in an effort to become aligned with the divine image:

> How should a person train himself in the attribute of *Malkhut*?[30] First of all, his heart must not take pride in anything that he has, and he should always make himself as though he were a poor man—he should place himself before his Creator as a lowly supplicant. He should accustom himself to this attribute, such that even if he is wealthy he will think that nothing he has cleaves to him—that he is left in perpetual need of the Creator's compassion, that he has nothing but the bread that he eats. He should humble himself and make his heart submissive—and all the more so at the hour of his prayers—for this is a wondrous virtue. . . . He should humble and repair himself in the secret of this attribute [2000, 212].

Just as *Shekhinah*/*Malkhut* is the lowest of the ten divine emanations, so too must the person cultivate a corollary condition in the life of piety. *Shekhinah* has no light of her own: she is like the moon that only reflects the brightness of the sun; she receives from the upper *sefirot* in a posture of openness and submissiveness; she awaits the overflow of divine blessing into her as the sea receives the intersecting currents of river water. In this passage, Cordovero presents the ideal human state as one of complete submission to the divine—the pure devotee comes before God most profoundly when all positive valences of materiality and wealth have been erased, and a paradigmatic condition of poverty has been attained (Wolfson 2006, 286–316). Only in the effacement of the material and prideful self, only in the negation of mundane egoism, can the devotee reach toward the summit of personhood. Only in the undoing of the ordinary self can the individual come close to the condition of *tzelem 'Elohim*. Taking this startling exhortation to

[30] *Shekhinah*—the tenth of the inner divine dimensions.

poverty and self-abnegation to the next level, Cordovero asserts that this life process is further embodied in the symbolic act of identification with the exiled *Shekhinah*. That divine dimension participates in the diasporic condition of Israel (an adaptation of a well-established midrashic motif),[31] and the kabbalist is encouraged to undergo a personal, self-imposed, state of exile and wandering, so as to align himself with the exilic pain of *Shekhinah*—presumably bringing himself closer to the condition of *tzelem 'Elohim*.

> A further [related] teaching was explained in *Sefer ha-Zohar* (1964, 2:198a), and it is very significant. One should wander in exile from place to place for the sake of Heaven, and in so doing he will fashion a chariot for the exiled *Shekhinah*. And he should think of himself [in the following way]: Behold, I have been exiled, and still the articles of my service (the instruments of my worship) are with me (*klei tashmishai 'imi*). [By contrast], what will the Great Glory do—for *Shekhinah* has been exiled, and yet her articles of service (the vessels of worship in the destroyed Temple) are not with her (*keilehah 'einam 'imah*); they are lacking by virtue of the exile. And for this reason, a person must minimize the articles [in his possession] to the extent that he is able, as it is written (Ezekiel 12:3): "Get yourself gear for exile (*klei golah*)." He should make his heart submissive in the exile, and he should bind himself to the Torah—then *Shekhinah* will be with him. He should engage in [frequent] exiles. He should constantly exile himself from his house of rest, just as Rabbi Shim'on [bar Yoḥai] and his companions used to exile themselves—engaging as they did in [words of] Torah. And how much more [will he resemble Rabbi Shim'on and his companions] if he walks at length from place to place, without horse and carriage. About such a person it is said (Ps. 146:5): "His hope (*sivro*—שברו) is in YHVH his God." And they (the zoharic companions) interpreted this to be the language of *shever* (שבר), in that the person breaks his body for a higher glory (or for the sake of the supernal divine honor) [2000, 212–13].

Here we have a rather extraordinary passage, one that reveals the pietistic ideals and ethical conceptions of Cordovero and his fellow mystics. The life lived in deep humility emulates the divine condition; and in order to align the self with the image of God, the devotee must undergo a self-imposed state of exile and wandering—a symbolic act that anchors and orients the life of piety. Indeed, we know from Cordovero's first-person testimony in his *Sefer Gerushin* that he and his mystical companions did engage in just such a ritual of wandering through the Galilean countryside, and that these wanderings were performed in emulation of the zoharic paradigm of sacred wandering. This re-enactment of the intentional travels of Shim'on bar Yoḥai and

[31] See the remarks in Urbach 1987, 43.

his disciples was clearly understood by Cordovero to be a cultivation and sanctification of selfhood—an overt entrance into a condition of physical suffering and difficulty for the sake of a higher spiritual goal—that is, *the transformation of the human individual into a vessel, a chariot for the divine Presence*. Only by a dramatization of, and identification with, the exiled and broken state of the *Shekhinah* will the kabbalist be able to reach toward an elevated condition of religious identity, and consequently serve as a conduit for the Presence. The physical performance of brokenness (of *shever*) is bound up in the radical effacement of a mundane ego; the ascetic battle with corporeality, an identification with the spiritual value of bodily suffering, emerges as the means by which the kabbalist reflects the truth of having been created *be-tzelem 'Elohim* (in the image of God). The *Keter* dimension of Divinity is realized through one path in the process, the *Shekhinah* dimension through another. In this manner, as with the other prescribed virtues, identity is not only given as essence—it is also *formed* through an intensive process of work, introspection, and even suffering.

In a related passage in *Sha'arei Qedushah*, Ḥayyim Vital associates this ideal ethical state with the indwelling of Divinity—thereby interweaving the attainment of mystical revelation with a prerequisite of moral cultivation. After asserting that pride leads directly to a sinful condition, Vital states,

> Indeed, there is no greater virtue than humility (*ha-'anavah ve-ha-shiflut 'ein midah gedolah mimenah*). For Moshe our teacher, peace be unto him, greatest among all the prophets in Torah, *mitzvot*, and fear of sin, was only praised in terms of humility. As it is written (Num. 12:3): "the man Moshe was very humble." Go and learn from [the deeds of] the Holy One blessed be He, that He fixed the high heavens and yet descends to dwell among the lowly (Hebrew *shefalim* also means "the humble"). As it is said (Is. 57:15): "I dwell on high in holiness, yet with the contrite and the lowly in spirit (*shefal ruaḥ*)." And it is written (Ps. 34:19): "YHVH is close to the broken-hearted (*qarov YHVH le-nishberei lev*), those crushed in spirit He delivers" [2000, Part 2, Gate 4, 65].

Paradoxically (and as similarly observed in Cordovero's text), the virtue of humility is a marker of greatness—the highest praise accorded to the prophet Moshe is in his effacement of pride.[32] To embody greatness is to be unconcerned with greatness. This humble state is related directly to prophecy and the revelatory encounter, insofar as the deity is drawn to descend and dwell among those of an

[32] As is well known, this conception of Moshe was also prevalent in classical rabbinic literature. See, for example, *Midrash Tanḥuma, parashat Bereishit*, ch. 1; *Mekhilta, parashat Ba-Ḥodesh*, section 9; and in many other places as well.

extremely humble condition. To break the heart, to cut open the shells of pride in the human self—this is the path that leads to idealized personhood, a state that automatically stimulates the influx of prophetic experience. This association is a clear undercurrent of Vital's writing, and particularly so in *Sha'arei Qedushah*. The moral life—represented by this highest rung of humility—is interlaced in a causal fashion with the exalted achievement of prophetic mind. It should also be noted that the rhetoric of *shever* (brokenness) is utilized here in a manner parallel to the Cordovero text. Divine indwelling, manifest as prophetic consciousness, is enabled through the extreme state of broken-heartedness—the trope for humility reflected in Psalm 34.

The ascetic posture toward the body—one in which a breaking of the physical enables a transformation and facilitation of the spiritual—was an attitude common to Cordovero and to the Lurianic tradition transmitted and articulated by Vital. For Vital, as for earlier thinkers, this involved an imperative to conquer desire, to become liberated from the inner turmoil of the passions and the appetites.[33] As was the case with Vital's conception of ideal humility, such an ascetic practice was understood to pave the way for a heightened state of wisdom and prophetic consciousness; only once mundane mind has been transcended can the devotee cross the threshold into an otherworldly revelation of the divine secrets. In the quest for a perfected identity, a summation of the life of piety, the individual adept must overcome the vices of desire and temptation—emotional states which keep the kabbalist trapped in the realm of the physical, at a distance from the wholly spiritual realm of divine disclosure and prophecy. To reach the level of *tzaddiq* (righteous), the individual must attain a completion of the soul (*lehashlim nafsho*)—a process that requires ritual compliance to the utmost degree. This is an extension of the idea we noted above: each of the 613

[33] This paradigm builds directly upon the ethical ideals articulated in early rabbinic culture, and (less directly) upon Hellenistic (particularly Stoic) conceptions of the good life. See Nussbaum 1994, 359–401. For a recent treatment of this tension in the foundational thought of Plato and Aristotle, see Lorenz 2006. On this theme in rabbinic literature, see Schofer 2005a, 84–105. In regard to the ascetic transformation of desire in the kabbalistic sources, see the recent work of Wolfson 2005, 296–332 (and notes). Wolfson's treatment of the subject addresses mystical asceticism as a mode of transformed eroticism. Situating his work in relation to the scholarship of Wendy Doniger and others (see the pertinent comments and references in 2005, 296–98, 558–59), Wolfson makes a persuasive argument for understanding the kabbalistic negation of physical desire as a move toward a spiritualized eros—a contemplative sexuality that is directed to the deity, and that is reflected in an idealization of celibacy in the carnate realm. In parallel fashion to Tantric conceptions of withdrawing the semen back into the brain, the kabbalists depicted contemplative enlightenment as such a withdrawal of physical eros back into the mind-source of the mystic (2005, 322–24). In this manner, the sexual desires of the carnate realm are transformed into, and subsumed within, the contemplative consciousness of the kabbalist.

commandments correspond to a component of the soul's inner anatomy, and thus wholeness of self can be attained only by first achieving ritual perfection. Then building upon the mishnaic statement (*'Avot* 4:1),[34] Vital asserts that such a *tzaddiq* realizes his higher form when he is able to conquer the forces of his desire, to triumph in the ongoing battle that a person inevitably negotiates with impulse and appetite. This achievement, however great, is nevertheless contrasted with an even higher condition of self-cultivation and development—the state of having utterly nullified the very impulse to desire. In that exalted condition—associated only with the *ḥasid* and not the *tzaddiq*—the person no longer feels the need to wage war against his innate appetites. As a *ḥasid*, he has reached the heights of indifference to the powerful forces of *yetzer*. In an extraordinary formulation, Vital characterizes that *ḥasid* state as one in which the emotions are overhauled completely; having attained the level of *ḥasid*, the kabbalist achieves a rebirth of his own natural constitution. This is a state of being in which he not only exists in an emotional realm of nullified and transcended desire (to be distinguished from vanquished desire), but exists *as though he had always been that way*! His entire self—at least as far as emotion and desire go—has been reborn, reinvented. In the words of the author,

> And when all the good attributes become naturalized in him (*yutbe'u bo*) in complete naturalness (*be-teva' gamur*), to the point that he fulfills the 613 commandments in joy, and out of love, without any provocation from the evil urge whatsoever—then he has completely purified his corporeal matter. It will seem as though these attributes were naturalized within him (*ke-'ilu hutbe'u bo kol ha-middot*) from the moment that he emerged from his mother's womb (*mi-she-yatza' me-reḥem 'immo*). . . . The principle that follows is that one who performs the 613 commandments whilst the evil urge is within him, and he conquers that urge—he is called a *tzaddiq*. But one who performs the commandments through a nullification of the evil urge—for this indicates the acquisition of the good attributes in complete naturalness (*be-teva' gamur*)—this person is called a complete *ḥasid* (*ḥasid gamur*) [2000, Part 1, Gate 3, 30].

The ultimate ideal of selfhood would therefore appear to be an unimaginable human state; for is the human animal even conceivable without appetite and desire? The paradigm of the *tzaddiq* is one thing, of course: building upon the mishnaic dictum, the kabbalist idealizes the individual who is master of his emotions, the adept who is able to encounter his ever-present urges head-on, and is further able to

[34] In the *mishnah*, it is the *gibbor* (the strong, valiant one) who is able to vanquish his desire.

vanquish them like a warrior on the battlefield of mundane temptation. But the one called *ḥasid* seems to achieve an almost supernatural condition—he is able to conduct his life with no appetitive urges present. With complete equanimity toward the tumult of the passions, the *ḥasid* is able to perform the commandments out of complete purity and joy of heart; he is free of the negative motivations born of the fear of punishment, and he is one who has transcended the realm of the physical as it is commonly known. But what is perhaps most striking here—an element also noted above—is the motif of complete self-transformation (even *re-creation*) that occurs through such a state of transcendence. In achieving the rung of *ḥasid*, the individual also attains a reborn identity, a condition of self and emotion so new and so complete that it is unimaginable that this man was ever subject to the winds of the evil urge. Indeed, he has attained a new nature, a new constitution, in which the transcendence of desire is written into the very texture of his being—imprinted and naturalized into the deepest core of his self. Entering into the status of *ḥasid* bears the marker of a new identity, a state of being that overwrites the nature that came before. In this way, a new condition of personal identity arises through a formative process—the path to the prescribed ideal (the "ought" of ethics) results in the shifting planes of individual ontology (the "is" of a new nature).

These stages of self-cultivation, of an orienting posture toward the currents of desire, lead ultimately to a new state of wisdom (*ḥokhmah*)—a condition of mind that ultimately becomes capable of a direct encounter with Divinity, a self transformed into a vessel for the divine presence, a conduit for the stream of prophetic consciousness. In this manner, the kabbalistic sage is fashioned through his ascetic transcendence of physical desire, thereby preparing his mind for the summit of self-formation and wisdom: the love of God. As Eliyahu de Vidas (disciple of Cordovero and author of the classic text, *Rei'shit Ḥokhmah*) considers the matter (himself building upon the earlier thought of Baḥya Ibn Paquda),[35] that first state of wisdom is correlated to the preparatory cultivation of *yir'ah* (fear of God)—a condition of mind that is only gradually transformed into the exalted and liberated state of *ahavah*, the love of God. The posture of *yir'ah* is reflected in the ascetic mode of devotion; the body is to be transcended through an attitude of detachment in which the mystic seeks to allow his wholly spiritual core to be bound up in the pure spirituality of the divine self. Only once the devotee has passed through these challenges and trials

[35] On this subject in the thought of Ibn Paquda, see the work of Mansoor (Paquda 1994, 7–10, 29–32, and 63–65). For a more recent assessment of the devotional and mystical legacy of Ibn Paquda, see Lobel 2006.

of *yir'ah* will he then be able to rise to the pure state of *ahavah*—the constitution of self in which the kabbalist's wisdom is pure enough to receive the influx of divine presence, the indwelling of a prophetic Holy Spirit.

This state of devotional love is thus a reflection of ultimate self-cultivation and transfiguration; attainment of true wisdom, the formation of oneself into a kabbalistic sage—this is the culmination of a life-path of moral-spiritual piety. The posture of pure love can only be reached once the individual has moved beyond *yir'ah*, and has transcended the imprisonment of physicality and its associated desires. As de Vidas argues, this complete detachment from physical desire and attainment of the ascetic ideal enables the devotee to finally approach the deity with utter joy (*simḥah*).[36] Indeed, in such a condition, the individual is able "to rejoice over the bad as over the good, and he will tolerate it with joy—for the one who tolerates [in this manner] is free from the worries of this world" (de Vidas 1997, 432). And it is precisely in this state of total joy and love that the person receives the influx of prophecy and the Holy Spirit. As such, prophetic revelation marks the summit of self-formation—the perfection of a life lived in sacred quest. De Vidas describes the one who performs the *mitzvot* with this pure joy as follows:

> The Holy Spirit dwells in his midst, his heart rejoices and fills with the love of the Holy One blessed be He. And his soul is bound up in celebration (*gilah*), and the supernal secrets and innovations (*razim ve-ḥidushei ma'alah*) are revealed to him. Because he feared God (*lefi she-hayah yar'ei 'et ha-shem*), and because of his upright [conduct], this grace (*no'am*) entered into his midst. This is what King Solomon of blessed memory [meant] when he said (Song. 5:6): "My soul expired when he spoke" (*nafshi yatz'ah be-dabbro*), and (Prov. 23:16): "I shall rejoice with all my heart [lit. 'kidneys'] when your lips speak right things." And so too did David say (Ps. 104:1): "Bless YHVH, O my soul." For when the soul ascends, and as she knows the matter of her secret—then she will love the Creator, and she will be able to perform His commandments. . . . Happy is the soul that merits to realize this joy, and the *Shekhinah* only dwells [on the person] as a result of *simḥah*. All the prophets did not prophesize at whatever moment they wished; instead they would focus their minds, and they would sit joyous and good-hearted, and they would meditate (*u-mitbodedim*). For prophecy does not dwell [on a person] as a result of sadness or sloth (*lo mi-tokh 'atzvut, ve-lo mi-tokh 'atzlut*), but rather as a result of joy (*simḥah*). For this reason, the prophets would

[36] For extensive reflections on the history of this prescription in Jewish piety, see Fishbane 1998, 151–72. For particular analysis of de Vidas on this question, see 163–67.

> request prophecy with drum and flute and harp before them. As it is written (II Kings 3:15): "And when the musician played his instrument, the hand of YHVH came upon [the prophet]" [1997, 432–33].

An extraordinary passage in many respects, this text underscores the direct link between self-formation and the summit of mystical experience. The divine being enters into the individual who has made himself into a worthy chamber for the Holy Indwelling. Having removed himself from the shackles of mundane desire, having pursued the values of an ascetic ideal, the mystic is now able to progress into a more exalted state of wisdom—a condition of *ḥokhmah* in which pure love and pure joy facilitate the disclosure of the most recondite and precious secrets of the divine mystery. Much like the model articulated centuries earlier by Moses Maimonides, the height of cultivated mind (one which arises directly out of an individual's ability to cleanse consciousness of worldly desires and distractions) is marked by the receipt of the divine overflow—the influx of the exalted divine mind into the transfigured intellect of the ultimate philosopher-prophet (Maimonides 1974, 3:151). Indeed, the path to prophecy articulated here by de Vidas—one that emerges from the cultivation of a precise emotional posture—is a direct citation from (and expansion upon) the formulation of Maimonides in his *Mishneh Torah* (*Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah*, 7), which in turn cites the older rabbinic sources in the Babylonian Talmud (BT *Shabbat* 30b; *Baba Batra* 121a). For de Vidas, this condition of *simḥah* is the prophetic capstone to a process of formation in which radical humility and ascetic detachment serve as the guides to self-perfection. The person reaches the summit of individual cultivation by preparing that entity to become the sacred space for an immanent divine presence. As such, the highest modality of selfhood is constructed as the ability to serve as a vessel for the presence of divine holiness, one that endows the individual with the sanctification of that indwelling. To achieve true greatness of self is thus once again bound up in the posture of *selflessness*—to be but a receiver and container for the divine presence.

Ḥayyim Vital characterizes this state as one of *preparation*—as a process of purifying the self so completely that it may be worthy of the divine indwelling. As he remarks in *Sha'arei Qedushah*,

> And he [is called] holy, for he has been purified of all manners of impurity, and he has sanctified himself through the sanctity [of God], blessed be He (*ve-qidesh 'atzmo biqdushato yitbarakh*). For the language of holiness (*qedushah*) is the language of preparation and invitation (*hakhanah ve-hazmanah*), as [it is written (Num. 11:18)]: "Purify yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat." For [the person] makes himself a chariot for the holiness [of God], blessed be He (*ki 'oseh 'atzmo*

> *merkavah 'el qedushato yitbarakh*), and does not worry about his own honor (*'eino ḥoshesh likhvod ʻatzmo*), only the honor of his Maker [2000, Part 1, Gate 3, 30–31].

The process of purification (which also involves a deliberate detachment from the desires and sins spawned by the *yetzer ha-raʻ*) is a formation of the self into an entity worthy enough to house the divine presence. Indeed, the person *makes himself* into a chariot for the divine holiness. By fashioning this vessel, the individual ultimately achieves that highest rung of self-cultivation—the quality of holiness, a condition of identity that is defined by its state of being inhabited by the divine indwelling. As Vital asserts elsewhere in *Shaʻarei Qedushah*, it is those impurities—those desires and sins—that obstruct a person's ability to receive the downflow of Holy Spirit, the indwelling of the divine presence in the human self:

> When the flow of Holy Spirit becomes aroused to descend to the person, to dwell upon him—if he sins, behold the evil urge (*ha-yetzer ha-raʻ*) causes a dark veil [to separate] the intellective soul (*nefesh ha-sikhlit*) from the source of the Holy Spirit. As it is written (Is. 59:2): "But your iniquities (*ʻavonoteikhem*) have been a barrier (*hayu mavdilim*) between you and your God (*beineikhem le-vein 'eloheikhem*)." [When a person is in that state], the Holy Spirit does not dwell upon him. . . . Therefore, one who comes to be purified must have all of his rungs (*madreigotav*) be like clear glass, cleansed of all the filth of the evil urge that is mixed in with all the rungs of the soul. This is what was said to Moshe our master, peace be unto him (Ex. 3:5): "Remove your sandals from your feet" (*shal naʻalekha me-ʻal raglekha*), that all of [the person's] bodily limbs and the powers of his soul . . . be purified, with no dross or foul materiality whatsoever . . . and none of the filth of the evil urge (*ha-yetzer ha-raʻ*) will remain in him at all. . . . Then there will be no obstruction that will separate between the powers of the soul and its source in the light of the quarry of souls (*be-'or maḥtzav ha-neshamot*), that is joined to the source of the Holy Spirit, that is in the light of the ten *sefirot* [2000, 130–31].

Desire, sin, and impurity function as the dark clouds of obstruction between the individual self and the supernal source of divine light. The process of overcoming physicality and the weight of temptation is likened to the unveiling of that light—an opening up of the human soul to become a chamber for the divine indwelling in order to be infused with the winds of prophetic inspiration. As was articulated in an earlier era by the master commentator Baḥya ben 'Asher, the divine command to Moshe that he remove his shoes before approaching the holy ground (*'admat qodesh*) is presented as the great paradigm of ascetic preparation and transformation (1994, 2:25). Only once the shoe is removed (the shoe here functioning as a metonym for desire and

physicality) can the devotee approach the domain of the sacred—the terrain of divine *qedushah*—and thereby be sufficiently purified to receive the divine prophecy. In Baḥya ben 'Asher's commentary, the phrase *shal na'alekha* (remove your sandals/shoes) is read as a prescribed process of *shelilat ha-ḥomer* (the negation of materiality), a wonderful homiletical play on the word *shal*, and a great example of the ingenious twists and turns of Jewish exegetical creativity. To negate the filth and coarseness of physicality, to strip away the outer layers and obstructions of mundane desire—these are the preparatory measures by which the pure light and *ruaḥ* of prophecy, of the divine indwelling, may come to reside in the human being, in the self transfigured into a chariot for the Divine.

In conclusion, this study has sought to fashion a portrait of self-understanding in the mystical thought of several prominent kabbalists from sixteenth-century Tzfat (Safed)—an examination that bridges the related sub-fields of religious ethics, the phenomenology of religious experience, and the philosophy of personal identity. Seeking to clarify the varied ways in which identity and human purpose were constructed by these seminal thinkers, our inquiry has probed kabbalistic conceptions of the soul, and the implications of those conceptions for a theory of personal identity; the dialectic between body and spirit in the doctrine of *tzelem 'Elohim* (the image of God as incarnate or ensouled in the human being); the tropes of moral and spiritual self-formation, and the emphasis on a rigorous ethic of extreme humility; the pursuit of an ascetic ideal of detachment from physicality and the transcendence of desire; the cultivation of wisdom as a result of desire's effacement; and the consequent transformation of the self into a prophetic vessel to receive the influx of Divine Spirit. To be sure, this work constitutes an initial foray into a broader terrain of research, and the picture constructed here seeks to lay the foundation for a new understanding of the place of selfhood, identity, and notions of the holy life in Jewish mystical thought. In framing the analysis this way, I have set out to ask of this literature a question that is indeed central to the larger endeavor of humanistic research: what is the nature and purpose of a human life as it exists within a particular religious matrix, and how should that life be lived to attain its measure of holiness in relation to the divine?

REFERENCES

Baḥya ben 'Asher
1994 *Be'ur al ha-Torah*. Edited by C. D. Chavel. Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook.

Brakke, David, Michael L. Satlow, and Steven Weitzman
2005 *Religion and the Self in Antiquity*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press.

Brown, Peter
1971 "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity." *Journal of Roman Studies* LXI: 80–101.
1987 "The Saint As Exemplar in Late Antiquity." In *Saints and Virtues*, edited by John Stratton Hawley, 3–14. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.

Chajes, J. H.
2005 "Accounting for the Self: Preliminary Generic-Historical Reflections on *Early Modern Jewish Egodocuments*." *Jewish Quarterly Review* 95.1: 1–15.

Cordovero, Moshe
1962 *Sefer Gerushin*. Jerusalem: Verker Publishing.
2000 *Tomer Devorah*. Edited by J. S. Weinfeld. Jerusalem: Eshkol Press.

Dekker, Rudolf, ed.
2002 *Egodocuments and History: Autobiographical Writing in Its Social Context since the Middle Ages*. Hilversum: Verloren.

Diamond, Eliezer
2004 *Holy Men and Hunger Artists: Fasting and Asceticism in Rabbinic Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dillon, John M.
1998 "Rejecting the Body, Refining the Body: Some Remarks on the Development of Platonist Asceticism." In *Asceticism*, edited by Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis, 80–87. New York: Oxford University Press.

Elior, Rachel
1995 "The Doctrine of Transmigration in 'Galya Raza.'" In *Essential Papers on Jewish Studies*, edited by Lawrence Fine, 243–69. New York: New York University Press.

Eylon, Dina Ripsman
2003 *Reincarnation in Jewish Mysticism and Gnosticism*. Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press.

Faierstein, Morris
1999 *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies: Book of Visions and Book of Secrets*. New York: Paulist Press.
2005 *Sefer Ha-Ḥezyonot: Yomano Shel R. Ḥayim Vital*. Jersualem: Ben Tzvi Institute.

Fine, Lawrence
2003 *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Fishbane, Eitan P.
2009 *As Light Before Dawn: The Inner World of a Medieval Kabbalist*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Fishbane, Michael
1998 *The Exegetical Imagination: On Jewish Thought and Theology*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Foucault, Michael
2005 *Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the College De France 1981–1982*. Translated by Graham Burchell. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Giller, Pinchas
2001 *Reading the Zohar: The Sacred Text of the Kabbalah*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Goldberg, Joel (Yechiel Shalom)
2001 "Mystical Union, Individuality, and Individuation in Provençal and Catalonian Kabbalah." Ph.D. Diss., New York University.

Green, William Scott
1983 "Storytelling and Holy Man: The Case of Ancient Judaism." In *Take Judaism, for Example: Studies Toward the Comparison of Religions*, edited by Jacob Neusner, 29–43. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hadot, Pierre
1993 *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision*. Translated by Michael Chase. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
1995 *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Edited with an introduction by Arnold I. Davidson. Translated by Michael Chase. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing.

Hecker, Joel
2005 *Mystical Bodies, Mystical Meals: Eating and Embodiment in Medieval Kabbalah*. Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press.

Hellner-Eshed, Melila
2005 *A River Issues Forth from Eden: On the Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishers (Hebrew).

Horowitz, Isaiah
1993 *Shnei Luḥot Ha-Berit*. Jerusalem: ʻOz ve-Hadar Publishing.

Idel, Moshe
1998 "On Mobility, Individuals and Groups: Prolegomenon for a Sociological Approach to Sixteenth-Century Kabbalah." *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 3: 145–73.
1999 "Preface." In *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies: Book of Visions and Book of Secrets*, edited by Morris Faierstein, xv–xxii. New York: Paulist Press.
2001 *La Porte Della Giustizia*. Milano: Adelphi Edizioni.

Idel, Moshe, and Mortimer Ostow
1998 *Jewish Mystical Leaders and Leadership in the 13th Century*. Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson.

Ivanhoe, P. J.
2000 *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*, 2nd edn. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Publishing.

Jacobs, Louis
1997 *The Schocken Book of Jewish Mystical Testimonies*. New York: Schocken Books.

Kallus, Menachem
2003 "Pneumatic Mystical Possession and the Eschatology of the Soul in Lurianic Kabbalah." In *Spirit Possession in Judaism: Cases and Contexts from the Middle Ages to the Present*, edited by Matt Goldish, 159–85. Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press.

Karo, Yosef
1990 *Sefer Magid Mesharim*. Edited by Yehiel Bar Lev. Petaḥ Tikvah: Feldheim.

Kieckhefer, Richard
1991 "Holiness and the Culture of Devotion: Remarks on Some Late Medieval Male Saints." In *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*, edited by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Timea Szell, 288–305. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Kieschnick, John
1997 *The Eminent Monk: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography*. Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press.

Liebes, Yehuda
1982 "The Messiah of the Zohar: The Messianic Image of R. Shim'on bar Yohai." In *The Messianic Idea in Jewish Thought*, edited by Shmuel Re'em, 87–236. Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities (Hebrew).

Levine, David
2004 "Holy Men and Rabbis in Talmudic Antiquity." In *Saints and Role Models in Judaism and Christianity*, edited by Marcel Poorthuis and Joshua Schwartz, 45–57. Boston: Brill Publishing.

Lewis, Thomas A., Jonathan Wyn Schofer, Aaron Stalnaker, and Mark A. Berkson
2005 "Anthropos and Ethics: Categories of Inquiry and Procedures of Comparison." *Journal of Religious Ethics* 33.2 (Summer): 179–85.

Lobel, Diana
2006 *A Sufi-Jewish Dialogue: Philosophy and Mysticism in Bahya Ibn Paquda's Duties of the Heart*. Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Lorenz, Hendrik
2006 *The Brute Within: Appetitive Desire in Plato and Aristotle*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Magid, Shaul
2008 *From Metaphysics to Midrash: Myth, History, and the Interpretation of Scripture in Lurianic Kabbala*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press.

McGinn, Bernard
2005 *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company.

Maimonides, Moses
1974 *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Translated by Shlomo Pines. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Martin, Raymond, and John Barresi
2006 *The Rise and Fall of Soul and Self: An Intellectual History of Personal Identity*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Martin, Raymond, and John Barresi, eds.
2003a *Personal Identity*. Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishing.
2003b "Introduction: Personal Identity and What Matters in Survival—An Historical Overview." See Martin and Barresi, eds. 2003a, 1–74.

Mills, Antonia, and Richard Slobodin
1994 *Amerindian Rebirth: Reincarnation Belief among North American Indians and Inuit*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Mintz, Alan
1989 *"Banished from Their Father's Table": Loss of Faith and Hebrew Autobiography*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press.

Moseley, Marcus
2006 *Being for Myself Alone: Origins of Jewish Autobiography*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Nussbaum, Martha
1994 *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Obeyesekere, Gananath
2002 *Imagining Karma: Ethical Transformation in Amerindian, Buddhist, and Greek Rebirth*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.

Olney, James
1998 *Memory and Narrative: The Weave of Life-Writing*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Oron, Michal
1992 "Dream, Vision, and Reality in Hayyim Vital's *Sefer Ha-Ḥezyonot*." *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 10: 299–309 (Hebrew).

Pachter, Mordechai
1991 *Milei De-Shemaya by Rabbi Elazar Azikri*. Tel Aviv: University Productions.

Pakuda (Paquda), Baḥya Ben Joseph Ibn
1994 *The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart*. Translated by Menahem Mansoor. Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.

Pedaya, Havivah
2002 *Vision and Speech: Models of Revelatory Experience in Jewish Mysticism*. Los Angeles: Cherub Press (Hebrew).

Reeder, John P.
1998 "What Is a Religious Ethic?" *Journal of Religious Ethics* 25.3: 157–81.

Ruderman, David B.
1990 *A Valley of Vision: The Heavenly Journey of Abraham Ben Hananiah Yagel*. Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Safrai, Channa, and Zeev Safrai
2004 "Rabbinic Holy Men." In *Saints and Role Models in Judaism and Christianity*, edited by Marcel Poorthuis and Joshua Schwartz, 59–78. Boston: Brill Publishing.

Schofer, Jonathon
2005a *The Making of a Sage: A Study in Rabbinic Ethics*. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press.
2005b "Self, Subject, and Chosen Subjection: Rabbinic Ethics and Comparative Possibilities." *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 33.2 (Summer): 267–79.

Scholem, Gershom
1941 *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. New York: Schocken Books.
1955 "The Clothing of Souls and the *Ḥaluqa' De-Rabbanan*." *Tarbiz* 24: 290–306.
1991 *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah*. New York: Schocken Books.

Shulman, David, and Guy G. Stroumsa
2002 *Self and Self-Transformation in the History of Religions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Smith, Sidonie, and Julia Watson
2001 *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press.

Sorabji, Richard
2006 *Self: Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life, and Death*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Stalnaker, Aaron
2005 "Comparative Religious Ethics and the Problem of 'Human Nature.' " *Journal of Religious Ethics* 33.2 (Summer): 187–224.

Stanislawski, Michael
2004 *Autobiographical Jews: Essays in Jewish Self-Fashioning*. Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press.

Strawson, Galen
1994 *Mental Reality, Representation and Mind*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
2003 "The Self." See Martin and Barresi, eds. 2003a, 335–77.

Taylor, Charles
1989 *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Tishby, Isaiah

1989 *The Wisdom of the Zohar: An Anthology of Texts*. 3 vols. Translated by David Goldstein. New York: Oxford University Press.

Tu, Wei-ming

1998 *Humanity and Self-Cultivation: Essays in Confucian Thought*. Boston: Cheng & Tsui Co.

Urbach, Ephraim E.

1987 *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*. Translated by Israel Abrahams. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Verman, Mark

2005a "Reincarnation (gilgul) and Sephardic Societies." *International Sephardic Journal* 2.1: 158–76.

2005b "Reincarnation and Theodicy: Traversing Philosophy, Psychology, and Mysticim." In *Be'erot Yitzhak: Studies in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, edited by Jay M. Harris, 399–426. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

de Vidas, Eliyahu

1997 *Rei'shit Ḥokhmah*. Jerusalem: Vagshal Publishing.

Vital, Ḥayyim ben Yosef

1990 *Sha'ar Ha-Gilgulim*. Edited by Shim'on Agassi. Jerusalem: Keren Hotza'at Sifrei Rabanei Bavel.

2000 *Sha'arei Qedushah*. Jerusalem: Eshkol.

2005 *Sefer Ha-Ḥezyonot: Yomano Shel R. Ḥayim Vital*. Edited by Morris M. Faierstein. Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute.

Weintraub, Karl

1978 *The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Werblowsky, R. J. Zwi

1977 *Joseph Karo, Lawyer and Mystic*. Philadelphia, Pa.: Jewish Publication Society of America.

Whitman, Walt

1992 "Song of Myself." In *Leaves of Grass*, 21–69. New York: Quality Paperback Book Club.

Wolfson, Elliot R.

1994 *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

2000 "Ontology, Alterity, and Ethics in Kabbalistic Anthropology." *Exemplaria* 12.1: 129–55.

2005 *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination*. New York: Fordham University Press.

2006 *Venturing Beyond: Law and Morality in Kabbalistic Mysticism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Yassif, Eli
2005 "The Medieval Saint as Protagonist and Storyteller: The Case of R. Judah He-Hasid." In *Creation and Re-Creation in Jewish Thought: Festschrift in Honor of Joseph Dan*, edited by Rachel Elior and Peter Schafer, 179–91. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Yisraeli, Oded
2005 *The Interpretation of Secrets and the Secret of Interpretation: Midrashic and Hermeneutic Strategies in Sabba De-Mishpatim of the Zohar*. Los Angeles: Cherub Press (Hebrew).