

---

**Part 2: Jewish Mysticism from the Middle Ages  
to Modernity**



Ruth Kara-Ivanov Kaniel

## King David as the Fourth Leg of the Chariot – Gender, Identity, and Heresy

The Shabbatean movement included many revolutionary and subversive elements that are as intriguing to contemporary scholars as they were disturbing to the movement's opponents at the time. First among these ideas was the theological, messianic claim that Shabbatai Zevi was the redeemer, an idea that spread through both popular superstitions and doctrinal beliefs. In the realm of practical *Halakhah*, Shabbatai Zevi permitted forbidden foods and illicit sexual relations, in addition to canceling fasts and adding holidays. And in the realm of mysticism and interpretation, Nathan of Gaza and his followers put forward new readings of kabbalistic sources and situated the God of Israel and the *sefirah* of *Tiferet* at the center of the mystery of faith.

In light of these revolutions, one question arises: are the Shabbatean views of women similarly revolutionary and divergent? Do they deviate from the generations of tradition that marginalized women in religious and spiritual life, or are they merely a reiteration of traditional structures masked as rebellion and heresy?

In his monumental book on Shabbatai Zevi, Gershom Scholem posited that in Shabbateanism women enjoyed an elevated status, participating in rituals such as *Aliyah la-Torah* and communal prayer, which he viewed as a feminist revolution. Nevertheless, Scholem failed to recognize the ultimate significance of this phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> Ada Rapoport-Albert was the first to emphasize feminine centrality and leadership as a distinguishing characteristic of the movement:

The Sabbatian movement emerged as a unique and remarkable anomaly, striving to transcend the intransigent polarity of the prevailing gender paradigm by overturning the halakhic norms that set the ritual, social and – most sensationally – the sexual boundaries dividing male from female [...] One of Sabbateanism's most distinctive and persistent

---

<sup>1</sup> Scholem 1973, vol. I, 127–129. Scholem argued that it was Shabbatai Zevi who instigated this revolution, having “envisaged a change in the status of women” (1973, I, 326–327).

---

**Note:** My gratitude to Moshe Idel, Ada Rapoport-Albert, Art Green, Yehuda Liebes, Iris Felix, Vivian Liska, Levi Morrow, Levana Chajes, Biti Roi, Gilad Sharvit, Daniel Price for their comments. Tzippi Kauffman Z”l helped me to crystalize the ideas in this paper but unfortunately she did not live to see its completion.

features was the high visibility of women within its ranks. They were among the movement's earliest and most ardent supporters – championing the messianic cause, proclaiming its gospel and from time to time emerging its chief protagonists [...] It pointed to what I now believe to have been the veritable gender revolution that the Sabbatian movement envisaged, and in no small measure put into effect. (Rapoport-Albert 2011b, 10–13)

Rapoport-Albert argues that the centrality of women in Shabbateanism testifies to its detachment from the rabbinic world – and led to its eventual denunciation. In contrast to Christianity and Islam, which have histories of female mystic leadership, no such feminine echelon appeared in rabbinic, kabbalistic, or hasidic Judaism. In those societies, prophecy, righteousness, and erudition among women were seen as an aberration of nature and a social deviation, since “religious ethics prescribed for women and confined them to the sphere of material existence.”<sup>2</sup> In the concluding chapter of *Women and the Messianic Heresy of Sabbatai Zevi: 1666–1816*, Rapoport-Albert notes that one might have expected that within its framework of idealized sanctification and spiritualization of matter, the hasidic movement would have continued the gender equality revolution that emerged in Shabbateanism. Instead, this movement reverted to the former, oppressive paradigm.<sup>3</sup> With the benefit of historical perspective, we could suggest that the backlash against Shabbatean sexual deviance culminated in the dissolution of the budding feminist revolution.

Following Rapoport-Albert's groundbreaking research on the topic, I will explore questions of femininity/masculinity, leadership and heresy, in revolutionary movements, examining whether contemporary terms such as “gender liberation” and “sexual freedom” can be applied to events that transpired in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Indeed, a glimpse at a later Frankist-era testimony illustrates this complexity:

It is known that the Frankists sinned by violating the Sabbath, eating non-Kosher animals, and having forbidden sexual relations. However, the most unwavering proof for the abominations of the Frankists' secrets is that *most of their wives left them and fled for their lives, choosing a life of despair and fear rather than returning to their husbands who had relinquished them.* (Baer Gottlober 1976, vol. II, 41; emphasis mine)

These words were written by Avraham Baer Gottlober (1810–1899), an opponent of the hasidic movement, in reference to the “hateful act” in Lanzkron at 1756. Even though it constitutes a *maskilic*, tendentious, and historically non-credible essay, based on the words of Emden, Graetz, and others, we can determine from this

<sup>2</sup> Rapoport-Albert 2011b, 9. For her discussion of Scholem's claims, see 13, 321.

<sup>3</sup> Rapoport-Albert 2011b, 13–14, 258–295; Rapoport-Albert 2017, 318–367.

testimony that in Baer Gottlober’s opinion – as well as others’ – the abominations of the Frankists pertained to sexuality and the immoral treatment of women. If *halakhic* observance was not Baer Gottlober’s chief concern and it is not the issue with which he wished to contend, then it may be that his testimony demonstrates the existence of a widespread phenomenon of women’s suppression disguised as sexual liberation. Similarly, Emden quotes from a letter he received from his relative Baruch Yavan: “The women who fled from their husband confessed their sins and cry out against them and their despicable acts; it is within our power only to excommunicate them”<sup>4</sup> (Emden, *Sefer Shimush* 4a).

Indeed, the rabbinical institution was itself oppressive toward women. In a Polish report documented by Meir Balaban, a group of Shabbatean women testified that their husbands confessed their sins before a rabbinic court in Brody at 1752, and were received as repentants, while the women were instead deemed promiscuous and expelled from their communities and families. Then, having no means and no other choice, they turned to the Polish municipal authorities for financial support.<sup>5</sup> The women were caught between the two poles, condemned to ostracism by both communities, the Shabbatean and the rabbinic.

## 1 Gender, Heresy, and Prophecy

The connection between women and heresy has always been a central theme in the history of religion. So it was in the Greek and Roman worlds, in early Christianity, in Talmudic literature, and in Islam, and was exhibited in full throughout the witch hunts and burnings of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages and at the outset of the Early Modern Period.

Adam Ferziger has discussed the tendency to link heresy and religious deviation with female powers of seduction. Throughout the ages, female occupations such as healing and midwifery were accompanied by allegations of magic and demonic powers. Women were often suspected of having been manipulated by the Devil, and even in the contemporary Jewish world, female spiritualists and leaders are often accused of heresy.<sup>6</sup> It is in this context that the Shabbatean messianic

---

<sup>4</sup> Amsterdam (Altona), 1758; Rapoport-Albert 2011b, 89 no. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Rapoport-Albert 2011b, 96.

<sup>6</sup> Ferziger 2009; Elliott 1999. As John Henderson notes, in the struggle against a new heretical movement, its opponents attempt to associate it with an “already defeated heresy,” thus creating a “monstrous amalgam” synthesizing all the deviant teachings of the various heretical movements throughout history. Cited in Ferziger 2009, 498–499.

myth is so interesting to this volume, as it has its foundation in the tradition of the messianic mothers (such as Lot's daughters, Tamar and Ruth). Yet, whereas the transgressive deeds of these ancient figures were merely "imaginary" deviant behavior, that appeared only on the hermeneutical level,<sup>7</sup> in Shabbateanism, the revolution took place in real life and was performed by actual bodies, of men and women. As I will suggest, although female figures were protected usually from a definition of "heretics," in fact, it is precisely this exclusion that facilitated the possibility of them evading prosecution. Thus, we must explore not only the centrality of women leaders, but also feminine identities that are attributed to male heroes in Shabbatean thought.

In addition to the connection between heresiology and gender issues, I would like to add another association – between the psychoanalytical study of sexual perversion, and the role of harlotry in myths of redemption. Yet, in this case, instead of addressing the "already defeated heresy," Shabbateanism instead offers a glorified radicalization of the existing kabbalistic and talmudic messianic theme of "sin for its own sake (*aveirah lishmah*)," "a commandment (*mitzvah*) brought about through sin," and "redemption through sin" – all cases in which the sin is performed by women who are then elevated to an exalted position.<sup>8</sup>

Following this idea, Nathan of Gaza declared, "In the serpent of *kelippah* (shell), the feminine power is greater than the masculine" (*Derush ha-tanimim*, 47). However, we must consider that this ideological constellation remains within the realm of biblical exegesis; it is the redemptive heroines whom the kabbalists depict as "saintly prostitutes," not actual women in their community. What happens when Shabbatean thinkers turn to their female contemporaries and grant them complete sexual freedom? How far can we take the interpretation of this phenomenon, and can we truly view it as a feminist revolution, an emancipation of women? Consider, for example, Rochus, Frank's son, who is described as having raped a virgin on Yom Kippur in the name of ideological antinomianism and mythical heresy – a traumatizing event that silenced the young woman's voice.<sup>9</sup> Moreover,

<sup>7</sup> I have discussed this topic on my book on the Davidic dynasty: see Kara-Kaniel 2017.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Scholem 1982. Moshe Hayyim Luzatto deals with this topic in an unusual manner when referring to the rape of his female contemporaries for the purpose of bringing about redemption. He indicates that these women were initiators who willingly sacrificed their bodies ("*gedolah averah lishmah*"), but he also depicts them as passive in their characterization as *karka 'olam* (inactive "soil"), and as having been ravished: "They ravished the women in Zion" (Lam. 5:11); see Kara- Ivanov Kaniel 2017, Ch. 4.

<sup>9</sup> This event evoked contradictory testimonies; the first one glorified Rochus and describes the maiden's happiness, the other emphasized her traumatic silence and crying. See Rapoport-Albert 2011b, 44–45. Elijah 2001, II, 519–520.

the rumors of Shabbatai Zevi's seclusions with his ex-wives and the virgins he summoned for himself, alongside his advocacy for the breaking of the boundaries of *arayot* (forbidden sexual relationships) as a religious act of *tikkun* (rectification), also may be interpreted as behavior that ultimately led to exploitation – even if his acts have been romanticized as a progressive revolution.<sup>10</sup>

Consider Jacob Sasportas's well-known assertion that Sarah, Shabbatai Zevi's third wife, was the one who motivated him to declare himself Messiah and Redeemer.<sup>11</sup> Similar claims condemning Sarah's central role were made by R. Emmanuel Frances, whose poem "How a Donkey's Voice Brays" describes her as a "transgressive doe (*zevia*), charitable with any passer-by."<sup>12</sup> According to Avraham Elqayam, unlike the Shabbatean opponents who express only contempt for prostitution, the image of Sarah in the new discourse reflects a "change of values in relation to women, ... [which] presents her as a liberated woman whose deviation and struggle against the social order threaten to destroy its boundaries and bring about the redemption."<sup>13</sup> More recently, in his treatment of this enigmatic figure, Alexander van der Haven dubbed Sarah "the Queen of the Shabbateans."<sup>14</sup> Thus, Sarah had gained a reputation as both licentious and virginal, a dualism that bears an affinity to the Christian cult of the Virgin, as well as to the Jewish myth of the Mother of the Messiah.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, Sarah is not the only "Mariological" figure depicted as fluctuating between prostitution and virginity. Shabbatai's mother was also the victim of such slander: "His father would be content with shoes and his mother was a prostitute demanding *treifa* (non-kosher meat)."<sup>16</sup>

Female Shabbatean heroines were surrounded by an aura of promiscuity, and therefore the claim that sexual and gender repression occurred under the Shabbatean and Frankist movements is certainly reasonable.<sup>17</sup> Yet, it does seem

---

<sup>10</sup> This idea is alluded to by writers such as Sherman in the play *Messiah*, which was also the first to raise the issue of sisterhood in Shabbateanism; see also – albeit with less awareness of this question – Barnai 2017.

<sup>11</sup> Scholem 1973, I, 46.

<sup>12</sup> *The Divan of R. Emanuel ben David Francis*, Tel Aviv, 1932, 188.

<sup>13</sup> Elqayam 2016, 227. He also adds that prostitution "was considered to be destructive in the old world, becomes a symbol of Shabbatean Messianic renewal" (235).

<sup>14</sup> van der Haven 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Scholem 1973, I, 146–149, and more; Kara- Ivanov Kaniel 2017, esp. the Epilogue.

<sup>16</sup> Sasportas 1973, 94; see also Scholem 1973, I, 86.

<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, we cannot ignore the testimonies of women who, by their own initiative, abandoned their husbands and families to join the Frankist camp, and of groups of women who alone and of their own volition came to his court and remained faithful to their Shabbateanism despite the opposition of their husbands – which often led to divorce. See: Rapoport-Albert, 2011b; Maciejko, 2015.

that cases of female Jewish prophetesses indicate an exceptional departure from the norm. In his discussion of mass female prophecy that accompanied Shabbatai Zevi's appearance, Gershom Scholem noted the affinity of these instances to the parallel phenomenon in the Christian world, where we find numerous examples of women who documented their mystical experiences.<sup>18</sup>

The roots of female Jewish prophecy can actually be traced to the Iberian Peninsula in a number of exceptional testimonies, the main one being Inés from Herrera at the generation of the expulsion – an independent woman who merited a revelation of Elijah the Prophet.<sup>19</sup> As J. H. Chajes has shown, this phenomenon spread in sixteenth-century Safed's Vitalian school of Kabbalah, where one finds descriptions of female prophetesses as well as women possessed by *maggidim*.<sup>20</sup> There are testimonies as early as the medieval Ashkenazi Hasidim of female revelations that followed the massacres of 1096. Another unique example was found in the Cairo Geniza describing a young prophetess in Baghdad at the beginning of the twelfth century, who told of her visions at the synagogue at the time of *Torah reading*, an act that led to the Abas Caliph's intervention and the arrest of some Jews from the community.<sup>21</sup>

In most of these cases, from the Middle Ages up until to the mass Shabbatean female revelations, the heroines are virgins, an idea that supports Rapoport-Albert's claim that both Christian and Sufi women were required to deny their sexuality and femininity in order to serve as holy figures. In this way, the virgin Jewish prophetesses imitate the Christian model, rather than the Jewish traditional ideal.<sup>22</sup> The feminist thinker Bertha Pappenheim (Josef Breuer's patient *Anna O*, who is described in *Studies in Hysteria*) argued in 1907 that in contrast to other religions, the Jewish tradition fixated on a woman's sexual functions.<sup>23</sup> It thus may be argued that the characteristic of Jewish female leaders to be virgins or harlots, based on earlier messianic traditions, reflects a patriarchal unwillingness to tolerate normative women's leadership, which could destabilize Jewish communities and disturb gender power relations.

Still, while in rabbinic and halakhic sources women were identified with fertility and corporeality and thereby were exempted from time-bound ritual responsibility and barred from holding communal leadership, the Shabbatean move-

<sup>18</sup> Scholem 1973, I, 206–210; II, 505, and more.

<sup>19</sup> Melammed 2001, 348–352.

<sup>20</sup> Chajes 2002.

<sup>21</sup> I am grateful to Micha Perry, who brought these sources to my attention. For further discussion, see: Goitein 1952; on *Sefer Hasidim* and parallel testimonies: Dan 1971.

<sup>22</sup> Rapoport-Albert 2011b, 35–36. See there also for more on Inés from Herrera, 59–75.

<sup>23</sup> Pappenheim 1907.



ment stressed sexual antinomianism and focused on breaking the law through physical and demonstrative acts. It would seem that in Shabbateanism, Jewish women could finally express themselves through their bodies, in a communal framework that guaranteed them equality. Later, with the decline of Shabbateanism into an underground movement, the female mass prophecy that had characterized the messianic movement in its heyday ceased. Eventually the sectarian frameworks were emptied of their original content, including sexual antinomianism, and became assimilated either into Jewish communities in the process of modernization and secularization, or into gentile society. Nevertheless, the egalitarian participation of women in ritual practice (alongside the men), the teaching of Zohar to women, and the phenomenon of authoritative women and prophetesses, were sustained for the entirety of the eighteenth century in Frank's court, Shabbatai Prague's circle, and evidently also among the Dönme.<sup>24</sup>

## 2 Masculinities and Zoharic Influence

The longstanding identification of the feminine with the body and the perception of woman as a “vessel” in Jewish texts leads us to one reason why redemption is necessarily tied up with perversion and the breaking of sexual boundaries on the one hand, and virginity and abstinence on the other: since femininity is a category through which people conceived of messianism, the messianic was defined in terms that expressed either destruction and harm, or preservation and purification, of the feminine. The feminine was the underlying structure through which messianism was conceived – not merely as a metaphor but in practice as well.

Yet, in order to investigate the links between sexual promiscuity and messianic leadership, we must ask whether similar antinomian stereotypes are applied to male figures. In other words, are the men associated with messianic leadership accused of the similar licentious behavior? Are these figures also associated with sexual promiscuity and transgressive ideals? Putting the question in Raewyn Connell's terms, how is hegemonic masculinity defined in kabbalistic texts, and what are the relations between masculinity and femininity in the messianic-mystical order?<sup>25</sup>

Rapoport-Albert's research stresses the role of female leaders in the Shabbatean and Frankist world, yet the perception of femininity in the thoughts of

---

<sup>24</sup> Rapoport-Albert 2017.

<sup>25</sup> Connell 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005.

Nathan of Gaza and in the writings of his disciples has yet to be examined.<sup>26</sup> How did the believers view the role of women in the doctrine of salvation? Which mythological heroines were compared to Shabbatai Zevi, and what was the impact of the Zoharic homilies on Nathan's writings? For example, *Derush ha-tanimim* (*Treatise on the Dragons*) emphasizes the status of the concubines Bilhah and Zilpah in their representation of the *ahorayim* (the hidden sides) of Rachel and Leah, and discusses the figures of Judith and Reumah in connection with the mystery of the two birds. This reading draws on allusions to this theme in Zoharic and Lurianic literature, yet it has not received sufficient scholarly investigation. Research in this direction would likely shed light on ideological and textual influences and contribute to our understanding of the myriad forces at work in Shabbatean theology.

Moreover, if the sexual liberation heralded by Shabbatai Zevi, Frank, and their followers was neither a call for the debauching of women and their sexual exploitation nor the liberation of women, then we must reexamine the prevalent nexus between prostitution and messianism.

In this paper I shall therefore illustrate this issue through a discussion of the idea of David as the fourth leg of the Chariot (*Merkavah*). I will focus on themes of femininity and masculinity, subversion, heresy, transgression, and sexual ethics as a basis for understanding Shabbatean thought and its kabbalistic sources.

### 3 Shabbatai Zevi and King David in the Image of the Shekhinah

In the Shabbatean literature, Shabbatai Zevi's character was clearly based on King David, a messianic and androgynous hero whom the Zohar identifies with the *Shekhinah* and the *sefirah* of *Malkhut* (kingship/ kingdom). Below, we shall see how David was integrated into the *ilan* (divine tree) as a liminal figure mediating between heaven and earth. In Kabbalah we find a formulation stemming from the school of Nahmanides that pronounces the *Shekhinah* as connected with the *sefirot* "by Emanation (*atzilut*) and not in Unity," an idea that might bring us to a mistaken marginalization or *kitzutz* (cutting) of the divine feminine.<sup>27</sup> The Zohar

<sup>26</sup> Rapoport-Albert 2011b, 143–327. As she states, within the Shabbatean movement women were equal to men regarding their accessibility to belief in the Messiah, in their power to transgress and violate negative commandments, and in their prophetic ability, through their chastity, which engendered them as masculine (Rapoport-Albert 2011b, 35–36).

<sup>27</sup> Nahmanides on the Torah. Lev. 23:36. *Ma'arekhet ha-elohut* (Jerusalem, 2012), Ch. 13; as Idel claims, this statement emphasizes positive aspects of the *Shekhinah* and her unique ability to

responded to this danger by emphasizing *Shekhinah*'s importance and describing her elevation to the crown and upper *sefirot*.<sup>28</sup> Yet the *Shekhinah*, like King David – the male protagonist that is identified with her – represents the broken-hearted, the poor, the oppressed.

David says in Psalms, “I am a stranger to my brothers, a foreigner to my mother’s sons” (Ps. 69:8), just as the *Shekhinah* is considered the “stone that the builders rejected [that] has become the cornerstone” (Ps. 118:22).<sup>29</sup> The two appear together in almost every Zoharic homily, and their biographies are woven into one. Together they represent an integration of sin and rectification, promiscuity and redemption. Later on, Shabbatai Zevi was also called “the fourth leg of the Chariot,” and identified as a messianic and androgynous figure. Both King David and Shabbatai Zevi were integrated into the *ilan* as mythic figures symbolizing the feminine *sefirah* of *Malkhut*.

As Peter Schäfer and Art Green argue, the rise of the *Shekhinah* in kabbalistic sources from the end of the twelfth century was influenced by the veneration of Mary, a cult strongly represented in the public spheres of Provence and Christian Spain.<sup>30</sup> Both cultures used female figures to represent their collective religions, sub-consciousness, and aspirations. For example, we can see this representation in the prevalent sculptures of *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga* in art and architecture of the time. David, as a messianic figure and representative of the Jewish people (*Knesset Israel*), had to take on, as it were, a feminine image. Later in this paper I will address David’s dual role in relation to anti-Christian polemic that adds another layer to the inner development of Kabbalah and its manifestation in the Shabbatean world, and from which both David and the *Shekhinah* benefit. On the one hand, the *Shekhinah* in David’s image benefits from the embodiment of “masculine strength”; as the Zohar says, David knows how to “draw the world to come into this world” (Zohar III 21a). Thus, she never stands alone as a focal point of religious ritual, since the messianic figure of David supports her. On the other hand, through this identification David is enriched by the “multiple self” of the divine consort. Already in the Bible he symbolizes the “hero with a thousand faces”; now he is not only an earthly hero but is also colored by celestial attributes and attains supernatural features.

---

rule the lower worlds: Idel (forthcoming). See also Weiss 2015, 96–102.

<sup>28</sup> Idel 2018.

<sup>29</sup> On the *Shekhinah* as the “stone that the builders rejected” in *Tikunei ha-zohar*: Roi 2017, 405–407.

<sup>30</sup> see Green, 2002; Schäfer, 2002: 147–172.

## 4 The Fourth Leg – From the 12th Century Book Bahir to the 13th Century Geronese Kabbalah

David's appearance in the divine chariot was not foregone; rather, it entailed the resolution of gender and messianic issues. David does not appear in the "first draft" of the chariot in the Book Bahir, nor does the supernal Anthropos in the image of man include King David. The granting of supernatural attributes and canonization of human figures as *sefirot* began with the Patriarchs, without any mention of David, and only later was he granted transcendent status and the position of the fourth leg of the Chariot. I suggest that this identification reflects a creative way of including David in the mystical shape of the godhead, imagined in such a way that it does not threaten the hegemonic masculinity of the Patriarchs who alone represent the sacred male trinity. David is female and is therefore not entirely included in the divine realm; rather, he is partially still associated with the lower, feminine, and corporeal world.

Indeed, the Book Bahir describes the bestowing of the attributes of *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tiferet* upon the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (§92–94). David does not appear by their side, and in other texts the Bahir only alludes to his relationship to the *Shekhinah*. However, the Patriarchs are again discussed at the end of §131, which suggests that David may have received the precious stone that the Patriarchs did not want:

[God] constructed a beautiful precious stone. In it He included all the commandments. Abraham came, and He sought a power to give him. He gave him this precious stone, but he did not want it ... Isaac came, and he sought a power, and they gave him this attribute but he did not want it ... Jacob came and wanted it, but it was not given to him ... This is a complete inheritance, comprising *Hesed*, *Pahad*, *Emet* and *Shalom*. It is therefore written, 'The stone the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.' (Ps. 118:22) This is the stone that was rejected by Abraham and Isaac, the builders of the world, and became the chief cornerstone.<sup>31</sup>

According to this description, Jacob was granted the attribute of *Emet*, which balances *Hesed* and *Din* (justice), and perhaps suggests that David received the lowest stone, *Dar*, which is positioned before the supernal precious stone, the *Soharet*, which is connected to the "supernal righteous one (*tzaddik*)." According to §50, David was granted his attribute, entitled "*Yamim*" (days), and did

---

<sup>31</sup> The Book Bahir §131, 215–217 (Abrams edition). For Bahir §92–94 see 117–179. Translations of the Bahir are based also on: The Book of Bahir – Flavius Mithridates' Latin translation, the Hebrew text, and an English version. Translated and edited with a foreword by Giulio Busi and edited by Saverio Campanini. Torino: Nino Aragano Editore, 2005.

not receive the attributes of *Emet* and *Shalom* that represent Jacob.<sup>32</sup> Regardless, it seems that David's messianic role is not a central theme in the Book Bahir.

David's superiority over the Patriarchs is already alluded to in the Talmud: "Chief of the captains, *rosh hashalishim* (Chr. I 11:11) you will be head of the three Patriarchs,"<sup>33</sup> as well as in the description of David in b. *Sanhedrin* 107. Here, David desires to be put to the test so that he might deserve the same blessing that is attributed to the Patriarchs, "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

The liturgical practice of joining David to the Patriarchs can be attributed to Isaac the Blind, whose custom it was to pray using the phrase, "the God of David and the Rebuilder of Jerusalem."<sup>34</sup> Later in the thirteenth century, R. Azriel of Gerona quotes the formula "the Patriarchs are themselves the Chariot." This ancient formula of Reish Lakish in Gen. Rabbah<sup>35</sup> is used in R. Azriel's *Commentary on the Talmudic Aggadah*: "the Angels say *kadosh kadosh kadosh* and [in parallel] Israel say God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ... and David is the fourth."<sup>36</sup> This statement references not David's representation in the Chariot, in this case, but the combination of the three recitations of the *Kedushah* prayer, which correspond to the Blessing of the Patriarchs recited in the prayer of *Amidah*.

It seems that in his *Sefer ha-emuna ve-habitahon* (*The Book of Faith and Trust*), R. Jacob bar Sheshet is the first to explicitly identify David as the fourth leg of the Chariot:

The Patriarchs are only three, and there is no Chariot with less than four – *who is the fourth? David* ... Our rabbis did not mention him [in the daily prayer service], just as they only brought proof of Abraham and Jacob, but it is with the four of them where we find that the name of God is united through each one, as God is called their God and no one else's ... like the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>32</sup> The Book Bahir §50, 147. On *Dar* and *Soharet* in the *Or ha-ganuz*, see: Pedaya 2003, 364.

<sup>33</sup> b. Moed Katan 16b.

<sup>34</sup> Pedaya 2001, 166–169. For the discussion of whether R. Isaac the Blind was referring to the prayer of *Amidah* or to the Grace after Meals, see: Abramson 1974, 93–101; and A. Goldreich's discussion in which he debates with J. Katz: Goldreich 1981, 384–387, 44–47, 66, and more.

<sup>35</sup> Genesis Rabbah 47:6 (28); 82:6 (13), 475, 793, 983.

<sup>36</sup> Azriel of Gerona 1982, 56–57, and also 98. R. Azriel there calls the *sefirot* "gods" and "crowns," and thus the Patriarchs are their offspring based on the verse from Ps. 29:1, "Ascribe to the LORD, you heavenly beings [*Benei Elim*]." See also Ben David 1996, 54.

<sup>37</sup> Bar Sheshet 1964, 353–448, 396; emphasis mine. It is important to note that Bar Sheshet does not mention his use of the Book Bahir, despite discussing the division of the attributes to the Patriarchs in Ch. 13–16. For more on this, see: Tishby 1989, 149, 416–417; Afterman 2011, 201,

David as a redeemer is included by the first kabbalists in the theosophical structure as well as in the liturgical praxis. However, it is only in the distinct Zoharic identification of him with the *Shekhinah* (based on Bar Sheshet's innovation) where we find a fusion of the mythical, gendered, and mystical spheres.

## 5 The Zohar and the Kabbalists of its Generation

The expansion of the Chariot to a framework of four legs is based on the idea found in the Bahir that the Patriarchs “merited their attributes,” and every one of them transformed their unique trait into a divine power that operates in the world (§92–94).

According to the Zohar, the Patriarchs “inherit” and receive their divine portion, while David “conjoins with them,” having “dressed” himself in the attribute of *Malkhut* and masquerading as her.<sup>38</sup> It is important to note the variety of terms that link the character to the *sefirah* as well as to the dual process in which not only the Patriarch is granted a certain *sefirah*, but the *sefirah* is granted the figure of the Patriarch, thus obtaining through it a human countenance, identity, sex, and gender.<sup>39</sup> The Zohar enriches the idea of the dual movement of ascent and descent, the apotheosis and theophany that originated in the Bahir, and thus expands the “divine persona.”<sup>40</sup>

Almost every Zoharic homily describes King David as an image of the feminine divine presence, the *Shekhinah*, who has many names and symbols: the

---

270–279. Idel and Afterman both expound on Bar Sheshet as a Kabbalist who compiled traditions from the school of R. Isaac the Blind, the Bahir, Gerona, and more.

<sup>38</sup> In contrast to Abraham and Jacob, Isaac usually “exits” from within *Hesed* in a passive way, thereby taking hold of his portion. See Zohar I 96a; Abraham inherits his attribute (as in Zohar I 96a); Jacob inherits *Tiferet* (Zohar I 1b); R. Simeon Bar Yohai and the sages inherit the earth according to Zohar I 216a–216b, III 213b, and more.

<sup>39</sup> Schneider, Idel, Afterman, and others, discuss this movement and its roots in ancient mysticism. The idea that there are existing attributes in the supernal world which later are tailored to human figures that actualize and materialize them differs from the radical idea that the Patriarchs create the divine attributes, a matter alluded to in the writings of R. Jacob and R. Isaac Cohen which I will not be able to discuss here. On the enclothement of the righteous in the *Shekhinah* without revoking the body, see: Pedaya 2003, 333–349. And in her words: “If the Divine is “enclothed” in order to descend to man, then man must become “enclothed” in order to ascend ... in turning from the Divine towards human the garments are like a screen, camouflage, and in the turn from the human towards the Divine the garment resembles the act of becoming enwrapped in enlightenment.”

<sup>40</sup> Kara-Ivanov Kaniel 2019b.

*sefirah* of *Malkhut*, the moon, the gazel, the rose, the sea, and the wheel of souls. Particularly conspicuous are portrayals of David as the moon:

When the moon is deprived of light and does not shine, She is impoverished on all sides and darkened, without any light at all. And when the sun turns back toward Her, illumining Her, She adorns Herself for Him, like a woman adorning herself for a man. Then She gains dominion throughout the world. So David adorned himself in the same manner.

(Zohar II 232b–233a; vol. VI 338–340)

The moon, the *Shekhinah*, in kabbalistic terms, has “nothing of her own,” and thus receives all of her light from the masculine. In other words, the *Shekhinah* who cannot be the focal point of religious ritual is represented by the messianic figure of David.<sup>41</sup> To use Judith Butler’s terminology, this is a “performance” of fluid identities, only it operates in one direction.<sup>42</sup>

In another homily, David has double faces, feminine and masculine, while the Zohar designates “Another David” whose beauty is not found among humans:

The blessed Holy One has Another David, who is appointed over many cohorts and camps. When the blessed Holy One wishes to be compassionate to the world, He gazes upon this one, shines His countenance upon him, and has mercy upon the world, and the beauty of this David illumines all worlds.

(Zohar III 84a; vol. VIII 22–23)

Another example of the feminized David can be seen in the Zohar’s description of his lifeless birth:

David derives from the side of darkness. Whoever inhabits darkness has no light at all, no life, so David had no life at all. But these, containing light, illumined King David, who had to be illuminated and animated by them, since from the side of darkness he has no life at all.

(Zohar I 168b; vol. III, 18)

The Zohar states that David comes from the feminine side of darkness, since he “has no life of his own,” yet he gains masculine power and eventually “possesses” eternal life. Unlike the midrash, according to which Adam bequeathed to David seventy years of his own life,<sup>43</sup> the Zohar’s innovative claim stresses that

<sup>41</sup> I expounded on this in my article “King David and Jerusalem: From Psalms to the Zohar” (2019a).

<sup>42</sup> Butler 1990, 619–633. Today, Butler’s arguments represent a mode of thinking that is also implemented in American realia, and it is interesting to see how these ideas began appearing in the Zohar.

<sup>43</sup> b. Sukka 52a. According to the midrash, David was born as a non-viable infant, and therefore was gifted seventy years of life by Adam. See *BT Sanhedrin*, 97a; Zohar I 168b; Zohar III 279a; for traditions on the lending of life to David, see: Liebes 2012, 460–461; Shinan 1995, 183. I hope

all the Patriarchs are involved in the process of “reviving the Messiah” and giving him life. Clearly this homily was influenced by a new concept of David as the fourth leg of the Chariot.

Haviva Pedaya suggests that an awareness of the *Shekhinah* led the Zoharic kabbalists to add the fourth leg to the Chariot, in contrast to Nahmanides, who notably spoke of “the three-legged throne.” The Zoharic traditions were influenced, according to Pedaya’s reading, by the writing of the Castile circle (especially R. Isaac ha-Kohen, the author of *On the Left Emanation*), and his notion of the potential impurity of *Shekhinah*’s camps.<sup>44</sup>

Following Pedaya as well as Adam Afterman’s notion of apotheosis, I identify the innovation with R. Jacob bar Sheshet, who was – as we have seen – the first to highlight, in *Sefer ha-emuna ve-habitahon*, David’s feminine nature as the fourth leg of the Chariot. It was a concept that the Zohar then developed into a profound structure: rooted in the school of R. Isaac the Blind, alluded to by R. Ezra and Azriel of Gerona, and then innovatively formulated by Bar Sheshet.

Tracking the development of this theme will help to determine the degree to which Shabbatean theology subverted the traditions that preceded it, but also how conservative it was and how much it relied on early kabbalistic conventions.

The Zoharic passages all exhibit a gender fluidity as well as the ascribing of “female” attributes to males and vice versa. This gives rise to a surprising – albeit anachronistic – correlation with the principles of queer theory and cross-dressing created in feminist studies by theoreticians such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Sandy Stone, Michael Warner, Judith Shapiro, and others who research cross-cultural transsexualism.<sup>45</sup> David, “the fourth,” is represented as a kind of hybrid between the androgynous, transgender, and queer. In contrast to him, the other three Patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – represent much more stable and masculine aspects of divinity. They are the sefirot *Hesed* (kindness), *Gevurah* (judgment), and *Tiferet*, or the “Three Knots of Faith.”<sup>46</sup>

---

to expand elsewhere on the subject, using the psychoanalytic term of the “stillborn infant” of Ogden.

<sup>44</sup> Pedaya 2013, 87–151. On early kabbalistic traditions, see: Pedaya 2001, Ch. 3. See n. 81 below for discussion of Adam Afterman’s claims.

<sup>45</sup> On theory of transgender identity, see, for example: Sedgwick 2010; Stone 1992; Warner 2000; Shapiro 1991.

<sup>46</sup> The term was Nehemiah Hayyun’s, who hinted at the Trinity and spurred such intense controversy that he was eventually expelled from the Jewish community of Amsterdam.



From another perspective, Erich Neumann suggested adding to the three dimensions of the soul developed by Jung (the reality field, the archetypal field, and the Self) a fourth, relating to mystical apprehension: *the participation mystique*. While the triad embodies stability, the fourth dimension represents a concealed addition, that of shadow and the unconscious.<sup>47</sup> Adapting this structure to our discussion, we could view David as the unstable leg of the Chariot. He is an inevitable but not entirely accepted addition which the kabbalists wove into the divine constellation, so as to establish a theosophy of female leadership that in practice was not actually led by women.

## 6 David as the Shekhinah in Theosophical-Theurgical Kabbalah in Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-Century Castile

Unlike the Zoharic literature, which presented rich narratives as the foundations for its expression of mystical theosophy, other kabbalists of its generation did not share this tendency for personalization.

The kabbalists employ a wealth of metaphors when describing David as the fourth leg. As per the prevalent model in the Zohar, the writings of R. Moses de Leon, *Ma'arekhet ha-elohut (Constellation of the Godhead)*, *Avodat ha-kodesh (Sacred Service)*, and additional theurgic compositions, – King David as *Malkhut* reflects the unstable position of the fourth leg.<sup>48</sup> Like the Zohar, de Leon states that “King David is conjoined with them, with the Patriarchs, without any separation. Therefore, because of the exile and evil, everything is separate. When the supernal structure is moved, the lower levels are moved from their place.”<sup>49</sup> This image first appears in the writings of de Leon in MS Munich 47:

---

<sup>47</sup> Neumann 2013, 28–33, 51–63 [Die Psyche und die Wandlung der Wirklichkeitsebenen (1952); Mensch und Sinn (1959); Die Psyche als Ort der Gestaltung (1960)]. See also Neumann 1973.

<sup>48</sup> As in Zohar I 168b; Zohar I 248b; Zohar II 106a, and more; Idel 1998, 110–112.

<sup>49</sup> Moses de Leon, *Shekel ha-kodesh*, 12 no. 114; and de Leon *Perush le-ma'aseh merkavat yehezkel*, 53; and in de Leon, *Sefer ha-rimon*, 239; de Leon, *Mishkan ha-Edut*, 116a, and more.

Indeed, the Kingdom of the House of David, the Holy Land, which is illuminated by his glory, is a speculum that does not shine ... when King David is a Chariot with the Patriarchs, he then completes the whole, so that the unique name is in the mystery of oneness.<sup>50</sup>

Later on, books such as *Ma'arekhet ha-elohut* and *Avodat ha-kodesh* adopt a similar structure in their portrayal of David as the fourth leg: “The tenth is the Kingdom of Israel ... the attribute of David, the fourth leg of the Chariot” (Ch. 9), and “Indeed, the *Atarah* (crown) is the fourth leg of the Chariot, and she is the attribute of David” (Ch. 11).

An alternative kabbalistic and theurgic model views David as the fourth leg, but struggles *not* to identify him with a feminine *sefirah*, portraying him instead as masculine and identifying him with a masculine *sefirah* such as *Tiferet* in the spirit of *Sefer ha-plich* (*The Book of Wonder*),<sup>51</sup> or as the *sefirah* of *Yesod* (foundation) as R. Joseph of Shushan (which I discussed elsewhere).<sup>52</sup> A similar idea can be found in R. Joseph Gikatilla’s *Sha’arei orah* (*Gates of Light*):

He would observe the Torah with the attribute of ‘Good Sight,’ *Tov Roi* [Sam. I 16:12] ... These three attributes – *Hesed*, *Din*, and *Rahamim* – were conjoined with the attribute of *El Hai*, and David grasped all three of them and thus became the fourth *regel* (leg) of the Throne (*kiseh*) which the other three bear ... What did Leah say? ‘This time I will give thanks (*odeh*) to God, so she called his name Yehudah and stopped giving birth’ (Gen. 29:35). ‘This time’ certainly [refers to] three, which is the mystery of the fourth time, the fourth leg; ‘I will give thanks,’ which is David, who was overflowing with thanks and praise for God; ‘and she stopped giving birth,’ until this point is the structure (*amidath*) of the *sefirot*, from here on there is separation. When *Zakhor* (remember) and *Shamor* (keep) are conjoined, *the Kingship of the House of David to David*, then ‘A river flows from Eden to water the Garden, and from there it separates into four headstreams.’<sup>53</sup>

In *Sha’arei orah* David is represented by *Yesod* (foundation – *El Hai* and *Tov Roi*), which indicates the end of the world of *Yihud* (unity), while the *Shekhinah* represents the World of Division. It is particularly interesting to compare this

<sup>50</sup> MS Munich 47, 374b. As I learned from Avishai Bar Asher, in his work *Or Zarua* (*Shining Light*) de Leon describes the Chariot in a cosmogenic context, without the accepted sefirotic structure that relates to the Patriarchs.

<sup>51</sup> *Sefer ha-plich*: “Know, my son, that King David is the *Tiferet* of Israel [...] that is to say, the *Tiferet* that is David is called brother, together with *Hesed*, since both of them were emanated from one place.” (See the statement beginning with “See my son a great thing”).

<sup>52</sup> See my article on mutual responsibility *Journal of Jewish Studies* (forthcoming); and in the words of Rabbi Joseph of Shushan: “*Hesed*, *Gevurah*, *Tiferet*, *Tzaddik* [=*Yesod*], corresponding to the four attributes of the Passover, Shavuot, Sukkot, and Hag ha-shmini.” Joseph of Shushan.

<sup>53</sup> Gikatilla 1981, 148–149, emphasis mine.

discussion to a similar reading in Zohar *Vayetze*, where there is a depiction of the birth of Judah and the idea that the fourth leg is *Malkhut*:

‘This time I will praise God’ (Gen. 29:45) ‘Then she stopped giving birth,’ (ibid.) for here four supports were established ... Why did she say ‘I will praise God [=YHWH]’ concerning this one and not all the others? From here we learn that *as long as the Assembly of Israel is in exile, the Holy Name is incomplete* ... Come and see: Although there were three sons, the throne was incomplete until she gave birth to Judah. Therefore, ‘This time I will praise God,’ not for all the others. So ותעמוד (*va-ta’amod*), ‘she stopped, giving birth.’ Why ‘*va-ta’amod* (she stood)’? Because the throne stood on its supports. ‘*Va-ta’amod* (She stood)’ for until here She stands *in unity*; from here below is the World of Division.<sup>54</sup>

Both homilies refer to the same verse. However, it is evident that while Gikatilla emphasizes the birth of the son and his masculine and phallic quality, the Zohar, in light of the myth of the exile of the *Shekhinah*, establishes the affinity of Judah and David to *Malkhut* while alluding to their role in the redemption as the completers of the tetragrammaton. In contrast to Gikatilla, who calls the fourth leg *El Hai* and distinguishes it from *Malkhut*, the World of Division as discussed in the Zohar, indicates the liminality of the fourth leg that is stable but also represents the source of separation.

The Zohar focuses primarily on the idea of unity: the difficulty in separating the masculine from the feminine, the *Tiferet* from *Malkhut*, the three Patriarchs from David, and the letters *YHW* from the lower H. Gikatilla speaks of the completion of the constellation and describes this state as the flowing of the river from Eden to the material world that separates into four rivers, and then again separates between David (*Yesod, zahor*) and between *Malkhut* and the house of David (*Shekhinah, shamor*). A similar duality can be found in Gikatilla’s words in Gate Nine, “Abraham is the right, and Isaac is the left, and David, who is the fourth leg, is the last of the *sefirot*, and he grasps the point of the lower *vav*, which is called *Yesod*.”<sup>55</sup>

There are also ambiguous instances in which it is not entirely clear if the fourth leg is identified with *Malkhut* or *Yesod*, as in the words of R. Isaac of Acre in *Meirat ‘Einayim* (Illumination of the Eyes):

Our rabbis further said that David is the fourth leg of the Chariot ... This is why there are those who conclude the Blessing of Thanksgiving in the Grace After Meals with the phrase ‘God of David and builder of Jerusalem’; God drew David close to him and anointed him

<sup>54</sup> Zohar II 154b, vol. II, 364–365, emphasis mine.

<sup>55</sup> Gikatilla 1981, 9, vol. 2, 86.

with Holy Oil, and he became the fourth leg of the Chariot, but the Sages did not include him in the daily prayer service, so they included him in the Grace After Meals.<sup>56</sup>

More to the point of my argument, in the Zohar there is a pronounced tendency to portray David as a feminine character, in contrast to other kabbalists who are less comfortable with the duality of gender and sex and prefer not to emphasize the fluid symbolism of the *Shekhinah* and her identification with a masculine figure.<sup>57</sup> This process teaches us as much about the exegetists as it sheds light on theosophical Kabbalah. As Yehuda Liebes states: “Man and the Divine create each other and are created in the image of each other continuously throughout human culture.”<sup>58</sup> As I shall demonstrate in the concluding remarks, the designation of the name *Malkhut* to the lowest *sefirah* illustrates the self-perception and national attitude of the Spanish kabbalists who maintained a “spiritual monarchy,” concealed and supernal.

Moreover, the intensified identification of David with the *Shekhinah* and the attempt to establish the feminine Goddess as a “leg” and foundation of the entire constellation suggest a veiled polemic with Christian theology. As has been recently shown by Ruth Mazo-Karras, throughout the twelfth and fifteenth centuries we find an increase in the Christian depictions of David as a king, prophet, priest, and warrior, as well as an overtly masculine portrayal.<sup>59</sup> In contrast with this stance, the Castilian mystics and the circle of Zoharic authors established a feminine heroine with androgynous characteristics. As a female character, this Davidic character has no agency or responsibility for her actions, and so is free of the sin enacted by David in his killing of Uriah the Hittite and adultery with Bathsheba; as a masculine figure, however, he is portrayed as repentant, and as married to the supernal *sefirah* of *Binah* as well as the lower *sefirah* of *Malkhut*. Every culture fashions its heroic figure, thus reestablishing the boundaries of identity and its concept of masculinity and femininity.<sup>60</sup> Since the *Shekhinah* cannot be the focal point of religious ritual, this *sefirah* is therefore represented

---

<sup>56</sup> R. Isaac of Acre, *Meirat 'Einayim*, 66b, lines 31–35. The identification of Jerusalem with the attribute of *Malkhut* is prevalent, and it seems that its connection to David lies in the tradition of R. Isaac the Blind and R. Jacob bar Sheshet. According to Yehuda Liebes, the identification of David with the fourth leg as the *sefirah* of *Malkhut* is alluded to already in the talmudic literature in the discussion of the Blessing of the Rebuilding of Jerusalem; Liebes 1984.

<sup>57</sup> On “the symbolic correlation of David and *Shekhinah*” as an expression of the assimilation of the feminine into the masculine, see: Wolfson 2004, 84, 458–459 n. 250; Wolfson 2001.

<sup>58</sup> Liebes 2009, 145.

<sup>59</sup> Mazo-Karras 2018, 201–218.

<sup>60</sup> Connel 1995.

by the messianic figure of David.<sup>61</sup> In addition, interpreted through the lens of national identity, the figure of the *Shekhinah* may represent the fragile reality of the Jews, who, though deprived of political sovereignty, might find in the fantastic realm of the divine *sefirot* a sense of power and an imaginary kingdom.

## 7 From Lurianic Kabbalah to Shabbateanism

It seems that in Safedean Kabbalah the perception of David as feminine figure influenced ideas of messianic redemption, sin, and heretical thought, through the identification of the savior with psychological characteristics and personality traits, such as dark side, depression, and “absence,” that are symbolizing already in the Zohar “feminine nature.” As articulated by R. Hayyim Vital in *Sha’ar ha-gilgulim* (*Gate of Transmigration*):

Know that a person who has come into the world for the first time will struggle greatly to subjugate his *yetzer* (evil inclination), even if his soul is very high, since it is the beginning of his purification from the *kelipot* (shells, i.e., the forces of evil), since even in the state of *tzelem* (image) he was still enfolded in *kelipot*, as mentioned. As a result, this person will be sad all of his days and always worry without reason. However, the true reason is that the *kelipot* cause sadness, as is known. This is the secret of what happened to King David, who was close to God, and yet we find that his *yetzer* overcame him in the incidents involving Bat Sheba and Abigail, which is a great wonder. However, as said, it occurred because it was the beginning of his departure from the depths of the *kelipot*. You can thereby understand several verses that David said of himself: ‘I am sunk in the mire of the shadowy depths,’ (Psalms 69:3) and other verses to this effect. Know, therefore, that the sins of someone who has come into the world for the first time do not count before God as they do for others, since he is still affected by the *kelipot*, and it takes great effort to leave them. This is the secret of our Sages, may their memory be a blessing: ‘Had you not been David and he Saul, I would have destroyed many Davids before Saul.’<sup>62</sup> Understand this well. Sometimes the soul of a new person is very lofty but he [still] cannot overcome his *yetzer* – if he could, he would easily be very pious. This is a powerful lesson, for it explains why sometimes a person may only transgress lightly but receive a serious punishment, while someone else may perform a terrible sin, and yet not get punished for it. (*Sha’ar ha-gilgulim*, Introduction, 27; emphasis mine)

Vital draws here a connection between certain exalted souls that are sunk in the depths of the *kelipot*, and worry and sadness, like King David himself. As noted by Lawrence Fine, these ideas were applied by Vital and R. Issac Luria to their own souls, a subject whose personal aspects Liebes examined in relation to the

<sup>61</sup> As I show in my article, “King David and Jerusalem: From Psalms to the Zohar.”

<sup>62</sup> b. Moed Katan 16b.

*Mystery of the Doe* and to Luria's messianic self-perception.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, underlying this reading is the messianic identification of R. Hayyim Vital with the redeemer, son of David.<sup>64</sup> "Even though his soul originates from a very high place" hints at the ability of the Messiah to sin grandly. Even though David's soul was from a high place, he was a sinner, due to the circumstances of his soul being in its first incarnation, as it had only now emerged from the shells. Depression therefore stems from the exit of the soul from the husks, so that it exists for the first time on the outside, and not from the state of the soul inside them.

As we have already discussed, according to the Midrash and the Zohar, David was stillborn,<sup>65</sup> and his lifeless state was connected to both the original sin of Adam as well as his father Jesse's problematic coupling with his concubine,<sup>66</sup> motifs that may allude to some biographical elements in Vital's life. On this basis, the kabbalists developed the concept of the "holy deceit." According to this idea, Jesse's sinful act lured the *kelipot* into believing that he was already a lost cause, so that they left him alone, and did not notice how the soul of his newly conceived son arose and escaped from the confines of their world, the world of the husks.<sup>67</sup>

Moreover, according to the Lurianic doctrine, King David is a reincarnation of the first man, Adam (following the letter acronym of ADaM as *Adam, David, Messiah*).<sup>68</sup> Therefore, the sins of David mirror the sin of Adam. For example, in Sefer *ha-Gilgulim* he claims:

Here David changed his sleep habit, and slept in the day rather than the night, and this caused the chain of events (according to b. Sanhedrin 107a). This is the secret of the verse,

<sup>63</sup> Fine 2003, 113–169. Liebes 1992.

<sup>64</sup> On Luria and Vital as the Messiah son of David and Son of Joseph, see: Vital 2006, Introduction, 5a–b, 8a; *Toldot ha-Ari* 1967, 199; Ronit 1988, Ch. 2–3, especially 336–352 and 265, 299–303; Fine 2003, 246; Liebes 1992, 125; Tamar 1970, 115–123. In *Sha'ar ha-gilgulim*, introduction 36, Vital identifies himself also with the suffering son of Joseph: "Shmuel [Vital = his son] said, even though my father, of blessed memory, hid his words in this place, I remember that face to face, he one day revealed to me, that this verse alludes to the intimacy [*korvat*] of his soul ... However, in the time of my father it is possible that, if Israel repents, my father will be the messiah from the line of Joseph."

<sup>65</sup> See n. 32 above.

<sup>66</sup> As brought in an aggadic story in Yalkut Hamikhiri; see Kara- Ivanov Kaniel 2017, Ch. 3.

<sup>67</sup> On the "holy ruse," see: Scholem 1973, 50, 249, 258; Tishby 1992, 131–132; Liebes 1995, 311–312 n. 88–89.

<sup>68</sup> Isaac Luria also explains that Uriah was an incarnation of the primordial snake, while Bat-sheva was Eve. For some remarkable similarities to the church fathers' reading, see: de-Lubac 2000, Ch. 7, 64–67; Mazo-Karras 2018. On Lurianic exorcism and the role of David in cursing the devil by use of Ps. 109:6, see: Chajes 2003, 72–79. For recitation of exorcistic hymns attributed to King David already in antiquity by Josephus and others, see: Bohak 2008, 98–100.

‘David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king’s house; and from the roof he saw a woman bathing’ (2 Samuel 11:2) – washing away the filth of the serpent; ‘for she was purified from her uncleanness’ (11:4) – of the primordial snake.<sup>69</sup>

The identification of Haim Vital with King David and his own messianic yearnings stands in the foreground of these readings. On the roof of the King’s house recurs an archetypal repetition of the scene in the Garden of Eden. Eve and Batsheva are just sparks of one entity, while Vital explains his sorrows and tormented soul through the soul roots of the Davidic line. Moreover, in the first printing of the *Sha’ar ha-gilgulim* that was expunged, the messianic ability of David to repair the sin of Adam was presented in extremely radical way. David’s troubled soul and the justifications of his sins were explained by the great size of his soul: wherein his evil deeds “were not considered sins at all,” and were even able to “increase his reward” (!).<sup>70</sup> This explanation was printed in the addenda to the volume of *Sha’ar ha-gilgulim* published by Samuel Vital, which also included the subject of his father, Haim Vital’s, soul.<sup>71</sup> To be sure, there is a deterministic element here, which aims to soften and ease Vital’s conflicts about his own behaviors – despite the grandeur of his soul.

Moshe Idel has emphasized the centrality of the issues of messianism and eschatology to the nascent kabbalistic literature, arguing that already in the Bahir, “theurgic activity causes the descent of the new soul of the Messiah.”<sup>72</sup> Whereas all human souls can suffer reincarnation for even up to a thousand generations, the soul of the redeemer is assigned specifically to him, and has never yet been incarnated in a human body.<sup>73</sup> Even if Luria does not directly oppose the Bahir, it is significant that he thinks David’s soul is not necessarily new, since it had suffered numerous reincarnations, beginning with the primordial fall of Adam, with subsequent appearances through various personalities. Nevertheless, there is a sense of a newness to David’s soul, according to Vital, since it is the first time that the soul of the redeemer emerged from the husks by way of the ruse of the “holy deceit.”

<sup>69</sup> *Sefer ha-gilgulim* 1982, Ch. 62, 63b–64a.

<sup>70</sup> *Sha’ar ha-gilgulim*, Jerusalem: Ahavat Shalom, 1917, 160.

<sup>71</sup> *Sha’ar ha-gilgulim, Hosafot ha-Rashu* [= R. Samuel Vital], Jerusalem 1902, 64b–65a. I am grateful to Yehuda Liebes and Uri Safrai for the discussion of these sources.

<sup>72</sup> Idel 2006; Idel 2012 (citation from page 36 n. 36). Fine 2003, 94–95, 192–193, 321–339. See also in Chajes 2003.

<sup>73</sup> See the Book Bahir §126, 209, “And when Israel is good, the souls deserve to exit and come to this world [...] This is the reason why we say the son of David will not come until all the souls that are in the human body will be consumed [b. Nida 13b] and new ones will deserve to exit, then the son of David will deserve to be born. How? Because his soul will exit among the others.”

Indeed, in Lurianic Kabbalah we are witness to an expansion of the simple theory of a “one united” soul, which passes from body to body (as promulgated by the school of Nahmanides), to a more complex theory of a tripartite division of the soul, which includes subsidiary particles called “sparks,” terms that already appear in kabbalistic works penned in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Castile.<sup>74</sup> This concept of transmigration resonates with a modern psychoanalytic theory of the “multiple self,” which in David’s case commits his soul to pass through various personalities (including Vital himself, as he testifies).<sup>75</sup>

In an additional known segment from *Sha’ar ha-gilgulim* referencing the mystery of impregnation and reincarnation in the Zohar, Vital outlines ideas regarding the journey of the souls, and the personal biography of King David.

Knowing this, you can understand King David’s fear [of God] when he said, ‘Many have said, “For nafshi (my soul) there is no salvation for it from God.” Selah.’ (Ps. 3:3) For it is strange that people could have spoken so badly about such a great person as King David ... The *nefesh* (physical soul) of King David was very elevated, but as a result of the primordial sin of Adam it descended into the depths of the *kelipot*, to the feminine side of the *kelipot*. David’s birth was its first departure from the *kelipot*. Therefore, it began its rectification only from the level of *Asiyah* (making), which is called *Nefesh*. The reason is that it was a transmigration from the third level. This is the secret of what is mentioned in *Sava de-mishpatim* and in other discourses as well, *that David was from the feminine side and not the masculine side. Rather, [the origin of his soul was] in the ‘World of Death,’ which is called Nukva (feminine). Understand this.* It was therefore asked there: ‘Why was he called “Obed”?’ The tree was lacking, and he rectified it.’ (Zohar, 2:103b) [...] When David sinned with Bat Sheba he blemished his *nefesh*. As a result, the one who possesses his *ruah* will merit the completion of its rectification before David rectifies his *nefesh* [...] This is why he said, ‘there is no salvation for him [the body],’ and not, ‘there is no salvation for her [the soul]’ [...] ‘many say of my soul (*lenafshi*) [God will not deliver him (Ps 3:3)]’ since there is only a *nefesh* within me, it indicates that she has no salvation in David’s body at the time of the *Resurrection of the Dead*.  
(*Sha’ar ha-gilgulim*, Introduction, 7; emphasis mine)

According to this homily, following the sin of Adam, David’s potential soul descended into the depths of the feminine side of the *kelipot*. When David was actually born, his soul began the process of rectification from the lowest level in the World of *Asiyah*, related to the *sefirah* of *Malkhut* and to the level of *nefesh*. Here Vital relies on the following passage from the Zohar’s *Sava de-mishpatim* (*The Old Man*). In this Zoharic homily we learn that David’s soul derives from the

<sup>74</sup> Scholem 1991, 197–250.

<sup>75</sup> On the “multiple self” following Mitchel and Bromberg, see Kara-Ivanov Kaniel 2019b.



feminine side. Therefore, like all the heroes of the Judean dynasty, he is capable of overcoming the tragic fate of the *Tikla*, the wheel of souls governed by harsh rules of impregnation and transmigration:

When David came *he remained in the lower tree of the Female, and had to receive life from another*. [...] in all aspects, transformed by transmigration: so it was with Perez, so it was with Boaz, so it was with Obed [...] But by these, evil was consumed and good eventually emerged – the one of whom is written ‘Goodly to look on, and YHVH is with him.’ (1 Sam. 16:12, 18). Here, the lower tree stood firm, and ‘(Ps. 47:9) God reigned over nations.’  
(Zohar II 103b; vol. V, 63–64)

Over the course of the Zoharic *drasha*, David is described as one who, as a result of the restoration (*tikkun*) he performed, is attached to the female tree, echoing the commandment to “work ... and take care of” the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:15).

In contrast to the rest of the world that is mired in the despair imposed by the forces of evil (as long as man rules man), in the Davidic dynasty there is a mechanism to transform evil to good. Here in *Sava de-mishpatim* the Zohar alludes to the fact that all the men of the Davidic dynasty – Judah, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, and David – are from the feminine side and function as receivers, since they draw sustenance from the inverted supernal tree and receive light and “life from another.”<sup>76</sup> This idea appears also in other Lurianic texts, such as the statement in *Sha’ar ha-psukim*: “and it is known that David comes from the feminine side” (*Sha’ar ha-psukim, Psalms, 63*).

In conclusion, according to Vital, David’s soul was full of extreme contrasts; on the one hand, David was possessed by the husks, and on the other he had the power to rise above them and repair them – from the bottom of the world of ‘*asiyah*’ to the world of ‘*azilut*’. These internal conflicts were the source of David’s terrible suffering, as it is said in *Sha’ar ha-gilgulim*, Introduction, number 27, “because depression draws down (its power) from the husks, as is known.” This homily would later be adapted and utilized by Nathan of Gaza to explain the nature of Shabbatai Zevi’s soul, as it was rooted in David’s soul.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>76</sup> This idea recurs in many Zoharic homilies, such as Zohar II 232b–233a. On the idea that “the seed of David is inverted,” see: *Secret of Secrets (Raza de-razin)*, a homily that was central in the external identification of Shabbatai Zevi: Zohar II 73a–74a.

<sup>77</sup> On this in the Shabbatean context, see: Scholem 1973; Mark 2003, 293–294 no. 44.

## 8 Symbolic Chariot – Ma’arekhet ha-elohut and Shoresh Yishai

The Zohar ascribed to the *Shekhinah* classic archetypical and feminine symbols such as the moon, ocean, wellspring, doe, and rose. In the sixteenth century, with the rise of reflective consciousness and early modern notions of identity and selfhood, an additional aspect of David’s messianic figure was revealed.<sup>78</sup> As illustrated by Eitan Fishbane, *kawanot* (mystical intentions) create a Throne and Chariot for the Divine, an idea that later evolved in hasidic literature through the view of the Patriarchs as *behinot* (aspects) who are employed when working on one’s own traits.<sup>79</sup> In fact, this perception of the *tzaddikim* (the righteous ones) as God’s Chariot somewhat replaced the quadrilateral personal Chariot composed of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David.

As Adam Afterman has shown, this process began with R. Asher ben David, who combined traditions from different schools of thought – the school of R. Isaac the Blind, the Bahir, Maimonides’ doctrine of *dvekut* (cleaving) to the Active Intellect, and R. Judah Halevi’s principle of divine choice and the transformation of man into a vessel – to broaden the doctrine of the Chariot to include *every righteous person* to become a messenger, a “Chariot” or “Throne,” for the Divine. In R. Asher’s interpretation this process happens only after death, but according to Bar Sheshet, it can take place even during one’s lifetime. This idea later took on new forms, such as the enclotement in the tetragrammaton and Holy Spirit in the Geronese and in Nahamanides’ Kabbalah, as well as in the narrative-based interpretation prevalent in Zoharic and Castilian Kabbalah, which emphasized the affinity between biblical figures’ personal storylines and the *sefirot*.<sup>80</sup>

R. Asher asserts that the Patriarchs “would see that His *Shekhinah* dwelled upon them when He would reveal himself to speak with them, and they became a Throne for the *Shekhinah*... because the attributes of Holy One, blessed be He, *Hesed*, *Din*, and *Rahamim*, are called Patriarchs, every one of them is called ‘Throne’”<sup>81</sup> (Ben David 1996, 74). However, according to R. Jacob bar Sheshet, “it is possible that when they said that the Patriarchs are the Chariots they did not intend to refer only to the Patriarchs alone and to David, but rather to *every*

<sup>78</sup> Weinstein 2011.

<sup>79</sup> Fishbane 2009, 385–418.

<sup>80</sup> Afterman 2011, 216–219, and more; Scholem 1991, 146; Tishby 1989, 416. Afterman focuses on the cleavage of the soul rather than the idea of the body as a vessel for the unification, while I would like to emphasize the narrative storylines of heroes such as David and the Patriarchs.

<sup>81</sup> Afterman 2011, 218.

*single righteous person* who cleaves to one attribute of the attributes of Holy One, blessed be He” (Bar Sheshet 1964, 397–398; emphasis mine). This reading regards as allegorical the notion that David and the Patriarchs are the Chariot, while the Zohar, and subsequently Lurianic Kabbalah and Shabbateanism, prefer to emphasize the mythic and personal aspects by expanding the narrative plot of the characters. *Ma’arekhet ha-elohut*, for example, goes even further and “invents” a pseudo-Talmudic formula, stating:

Regarding this matter our Sages, may they be blessed, said that *the righteous are the Chariot*. This means the Chariot of the *Shekhinah*. Because there is a righteous person above in the Chariot, as it is written ‘the righteous is an everlasting foundation’ (Prov. 10:25), the *Shekhinah* rests on the lower righteous one who likens the form to its creator, according to the principle *matza min et mino ve’na’or* (varieties of like kind find each other).

(*Ma’arekhet ha-elohut*, Ch. 11, 229; emphasis mine)

It seems that in several instances the Zohar contests the notion that the righteous entail the Chariot and emphasizes that the Patriarchs and David are uniquely chosen:

Rabbi Abba said, ‘There we learned: From four sides, all derives; therein all roots of those above and below intertwine. And it has been taught: One enters, another emerges; one conceals, another expresses; linked with one another – fathers of all!’ (Zohar I 216b; Vol. III, 306)

Rabbi Shim’on said, ‘Only your fathers did YHVH desire.’ (Deut. 10:15) It is written: *your fathers – precisely, three! As indicated by only – literally, only!* From these, all others branch and intertwine, raising the name to be crowned.’

(Zohar I, 223b–224a; Vol. III, 345; emphasis mine)

Contrary to the emphasis on the Patriarchs as three, R. Abba argues that the Chariot is made stable by four legs. However, R. Simon bar Yohai insists on a triadic foundation, relying on the verse, “*Only* to your fathers did he show his loving favor” (Deut. 10:16; emphasis mine). The debate regarding the essence of the divine chariot as being combined from three legs or four legs continues to accompany kabbalistic, Shabbatean, and hasidic literature. This debate is not technical, but rather deals with questions of messianic salvation, gender fluidity, identity, and heresy.

Another issue that is connected to the symbolic function of the Chariot is that of transmigration, impregnation, and reincarnation, since the human soul has the ability to transcend into the divine realm, as we have learnt from Vital’s identification with King David’s place in the Chariot. Even though at first glance it does not appear to be an explicit work of Kabbalah, in the sixteenth-century *Shoresh Yishai* (*Root of Jesse*), Shlomo Halevi Alkabetz sets forth an amalgamation of ideas and traditions on the question of transmigration, combining positions from the

Bahir, the Nahmanidian school, R. Joseph of Shushan, Recanati, and others.<sup>82</sup> In his discussion, Alkabetz dedicates considerable attention to the commandment to be fruitful and multiply. Like the *Sava de-mishpatim* in the Zohar, Alkabetz views the intentional abstention from this commandment as a grave sin, since, as he puts it, the well is filled from the river, and whoever does not procreate causes the supernal river to dry up, “because the unification that is achieved by procreation cannot be interchanged.”

Indeed, Ben Azzai says [...] it is a great thing that must be considered, a great mystery which you will only discover in the depths of the great sea, the *Book of the Zohar*, and in the *Tikkunim* (*Tikunei ha-zohar*) in particular. It [the mystery] is what we have said previously, that whoever is without sons has no rectification (*takkana*). You should know that this is the case when one comes to procreate and did not procreate. However, if one comes to this world to fulfill another commandment that he had previously lacked, or to receive *karet* or another punishment, or to do kindness for his generation – that person does not require sons, and will not be punished if he does not procreate, and if he does procreate his seed will not live on through them [...] and she is not his wife and they are not his sons. Rather that woman belongs to he who was not blessed to reproduce. (Alkabetz 1978, 77–79)

Alkabetz justifies Ben Azzai’s statement in the Talmud, that anyone who does not engage in the mitzva to be fruitful and multiply “is considered as though he sheds blood and also diminishes the Divine Image.”<sup>83</sup> Then he adds that in certain transmigrations, one can return without being required to procreate – and in those cases, avoiding the commandment to be fruitful is not deemed sinful. We thus already find a creative process, one that will be developed by subsequent kabbalists, of open transmigrations that incorporate a variety of options. In closing, Alkabetz quotes Karo’s *Maggid Mesharim* (*Preacher of Righteousness*) as though quoting the Talmudic sages (!): “Furthermore, it has been said that we have found *tzaddikim* who in their death procreate because they already died pre-

---

<sup>82</sup> On *Shoresh Yishai*, see: Zak 2018, 40. The kabbalistic sources in *Shoresh Yishai* mostly refer to subjects relating to levirate marriage and transmigration; Zak 2018, no. 50. According to Alkabetz there are three levels of transmigration: the highest level is that of Moses, Abraham, and *Raya Meheimana* (the Loyal Shepherd) who returned “to do kindness for their generation.” The next level reinstates the person to transmigrate as “punishment for certain sins that cannot be rectified ... since for every transgression of *karet* (excision) the person will return.” Here, the author combines the Bahir’s idea of a thousand transmigrations with the three transmigrations posited by Nahmanides, along with the transmigration of animals and beasts as set forth by R. Joseph Hamadan. This level is connected to the fear of punishment and to the attribute of Isaac, as well as to the negative commandments (*mitzwot lo ta’aseh*). The third level, conversely, is connected to Jacob and the attribute of *Tiferet*, and is meant to fulfil the positive commandments (*mitzwot aseh*) that had been lacking.

<sup>83</sup> In the Talmud, *b. Yevamot* 63b.

viously” (*Shores Yishai*, 80).<sup>84</sup> The phrase “*tzaddikim* who in their death” Alkabetz interprets conversely as indicating that they died previously and became righteous through death and returned to rectify their generation. His words do not concern David, but his grandmother Ruth, the Moabite. Like the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century kabbalists, Alkabetz highlights the kindness that Ruth did “for the dead” as an allusion to levirate marriage.

He extensively discusses here and elsewhere (*ibid.*, 14a–16a) the mystery of the soul quivering inside the womb of the widow and divorcee, as described by the *Sava* in the Zohar. In his discourse on the mystery of transmigration, Alkabetz borrows the metaphor used by the thirteenth-century kabbalist R. Joseph of Shushan, of the souls as the image of the supernal family.<sup>85</sup> Alkabetz goes on to say that levirate marriage of the brother instead of the father is like water drawn from a spring, and “these things are water that have no end.” In his discussion Alkabetz frequently employs water imagery, such as “to draw water from a far-away place,” as an explanation of Ruth’s deeds, which initiates the circle of *Hesed* (both in the literal meaning that appears in the *Book of Ruth*, as well as in kabbalistic doctrines of metempsychosis).<sup>86</sup> Following the Zohar, *Shores Yishai* offers a female perspective on the subject of transmigration while describing Ruth and Tamar as righteous women and broadly illuminating the distinctiveness of the messianic family, without revolving around the personal character of the “son” and the fourth leg of the Chariot. Yet, it is clear that the Zoharic tradition about the “feminized Messiah” is standing at the background of these homilies.

## 9 Shabbatai Zevi and David as the Feminine Leg of the Chariot

As we have seen, Shabbatai Zevi, the great heretic of the Shabbatean movement, derived his power from messianic kabbalistic trends and, in particular, from his identification with the feminine divinity: the *Shekhinah*. I suggest that the pursuit

<sup>84</sup> Karo’s original phrasing is slightly different: Karo 1960, 47: “The righteous procreate in death more than in life.”

<sup>85</sup> R. Joseph of Shushan the Capital, MS Jerusalem 597 80 201b, “Know, that each family of Israel is a tree in the Garden of Eden and a branch in the Tree of Life, and it is one organ of the Heavenly Chariot. Therefore, family relations are a metaphor for the divine unity; for the entire family is one entity ... the dead are like the roots of the tree, and the branches are the living, for it is thanks to the dead that the living exist.” See also Scholem 1991, 197–250.

<sup>86</sup> On Alkabetz’s poetics and mysticism, see: Zak 2018.

of heresy was aimed primarily at *male* Shabbatean figures, while female figures relatively were protected from persecution.<sup>87</sup> Perhaps believers identified Shabbatai Zevi with King David (rooted in Zoharic symbolism) in order to protect their messiah. As feminine figures, whose kingdoms are based on subterfuge, intrigue, and trickery, both David and Shabbatai Zevi represent the “power of the powerless.”<sup>88</sup> Because the *Shekhinah* appears not to possess “agency,” David and Shabbatai Zevi, as her representatives, are not liable for their sins. Moreover, as a metaphor for the personal messiah, David symbolizes the entire congregation of Jewish men (*Knesset Israel*), who are all absolved of guilt along with him. Therefore, the feminine aspect of the Messiah and its representation as the fourth leg of the Chariot is essential in any attempt to understand their unique heretical behavior.

These opposing tendencies – suffering and a sense of spiritual elevation, melancholy, depression and spiritual enlightenment – all constitute the map to the souls of Shabbatai Zevi and of King David. As described by the Shabbatean believers, at times Shabbatai Zevi is at “a state of alienation [from God] but after a while it [the illumination] came back to him and this went on until he was hidden from us.”<sup>89</sup> In times of spiritual elevation, Shabbatai Zevi would frequently sing psalms in the street, accompanied, like David, by musical instruments and song. Scholem noted that this musicality is among the most prominent traits in Shabbatai Zevi’s character, one that drew hearts to him. Even during the periods of his weekly fasts and asceticism, Shabbatai Zevi led the feast of *Melave Malka* (escorting the queen) between his fasts from Sabbath to Sabbath. Attributed to King David, this “fourth” meal originated in fourteenth-century Kabbalah, appearing, for example, in *Ma’arekhet ha-elohut* and in later customs developed in Lurianic Kabbalah. Influenced by Shabbatean tradition, this meal became known as the “Meal of the Messiah.”<sup>90</sup> As written in *Hemdat Yamim (The Beloved of Days)*:

We have prepared the feast of faith, we have prepared the feast, this is the feast of King David the anointed one (*meshihah*), and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob come to take part [...] My teacher would break off a morsel of bread, [to eat it] as a poor man would, in the spirit of the aspect of *Malkhut* (David) and did not leave any for us.

(*Sefer Hemdat Yamim*, The Holy Sabbath I, Ch. 18)

---

<sup>87</sup> Elisheva Carlebach defined Shabbateanism as a movement that inspired a “pursuit of heresy” within the pre-modern Jewish world: “This exclusive focus on combating heresy as a mainstay of a rabbinic career is a virtual novum in early modern Jewish history”; Carlebach 1994, 7.

<sup>88</sup> See: Doniger 2000; Fonrobert 2006; Ashley 1988; see also: Boyarin 1999, 67–92.

<sup>89</sup> Scholem 1973, I, 132–133.

<sup>90</sup> On the development of this tradition, see: Hallamish 2006, 504–508.

It is clear that Shabbatean authors sought to strengthen the affinity between Shabbatai Zevi, on the one hand, and David as the Messiah and as a feminine figure connected to the *Shekhinah*, on the other.<sup>91</sup> The decision to call the fourth meal the “Meal of the Messiah” references their current redeemer, Shabbatai Zevi, who was saved and “graced with life” as David was. Both protagonists are identified with “the bread of the poor” (*lechem oni*), because of their ordeals and the internal and external persecution they experienced. It may be that this meal grew out of Talmudic traditions regarding the death of David on the Sabbath.<sup>92</sup> When the Patriarchs arrive at David’s fourth meal, they come to honor the attribute of *Malkhut* identified with him. Shabbatai Zevi, who has plenty of feminine characteristics, attracted a similar tradition. Thus, the departure of the *neshama yetera* (the additional soul) and the *Shekhinah* at the conclusion of the Sabbath are attributed to Shabbatai Zevi by way of the *Melave Malka*, and allude to his feminine persona.<sup>93</sup> This is a cyclical ritual that may refer to the rebirth of the redeemer, just as the days of the week are reborn again and again from the Sabbath.

According to the author of *Hemdat Yamim*, the Patriarchs come to David’s meal: “This is the meal of David the King Messiah; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are coming to dine with us.” The Babylonian Talmud in tractate *Pesahim* discusses the wording of the prayer and the placement of the blessing of *Matzmiah Keren Yeshu’ah* (Who Causes the Horn of Salvation to Flourish) adjacent to the *Magen David* (Shield of David) blessing which completes the blessings of the Patriarchs. The homily of the sages in *Pesahim* 117a based on God’s words to David, “I will make your name great like the name of the greatest men” (2 Sam. 7:9) alluding to the Patriarchs.<sup>94</sup> This homily, alongside the description of David as one superior to the Patriarchs in *BT Moed Katan*, points to his unique role in the Chariot. His supremacy over the Patriarchs coupled with his jealousy of them may elucidate Shabbatean messianic motifs, but also illuminate the conflictual perception of the fourth leg which represents, as noted above, imperfection and instability.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>91</sup> The topic of Shabbatai Zevi’s feminine characteristics is discussed by Idel, Liebes, Elqayam, Papo, and others. I will expand on the subject elsewhere (El Prezente, forthcoming).

<sup>92</sup> *BT Shabbat*, 30a (following Ps. 39:5, “Show me Lord, my life’s end.”). According to *Ruth Rabbah* 3:2, David died on *Shemini Atzeret* on Sabbath. According to *BT Ketubot* 103b, “If one dies on Sabbath eve it is a good sign for him; at the conclusion of Sabbath it is a bad sign for him.” The question of the Shabbatean nature of *Hemdat Yamim* was discussed by Ya’ari, Tishby, Liebes, Huss, Elqayam, Fogel, and others.

<sup>93</sup> Scholem expounded on the subject of Shabbatai Zevi as the Sabbath. In the *Idra Rabbah*, *Zohar* III 144b, Rashbi also symbolizes the Sabbath. See also below after n. 99.

<sup>94</sup> b. *Pesahim* 117a. For the Judeo-Christian messianic context of this blessing, see: Liebes 1984.

<sup>95</sup> On the legs of the *Shekhinah* and her faults, see: Roi 2017, Ch. 2.

Nonetheless, the Zohar suggests that the *lechem oni* (the attribute of *Malkhut*) is superior to the stable legs of the Patriarchs that are engraved in the Chariot.<sup>96</sup>

I suggest, therefore, that Shabbatai Zevi viewed himself as the fourth leg of the Chariot, like King David before him. Accordingly, he wished to rectify the three *regalim* and celebrate them, *consecutively in one week*, in order to join them as the fourth *regel* which both incorporates and transcends them. As is stressed in the addition to the apocalyptic vision of Nathan of Gaza, *Mar'ah le-Avraham* (*Vision of R. Abraham*), in the book *To'ey Ruah* (*The Apocalyptic Vision of Rabbi Abraham the Hasid*), this was a recurring custom for Shabbatai Zevi before his death in exile in Ulcinj (Passover 1676).

And in the year 5418 (1657) there will be three *regalim* in one week to atone for all the sins committed by Israel during the *regalim*. To him the Holy one, blessed be He, will give a new Torah and new commandments to rectify all the worlds. In the year 5418 he will recite the blessing “*matir asurim*” (“He permits the forbidden”). (Scholem 1942, 182)

The image of the Chariot that was completed with the appearance of Shabbatai Zevi and his request to seat the King upon his throne joins with the testimonies of his companions that describe his unification with the Patriarchs who anointed him with the *shemen ha-mishha* (anointing oil): “a voice called out three times night after night, ‘do not touch my anointed Shabbatai Zevi.’”<sup>97</sup> In *Sefer ha-beriah* (*The Book of Creation*), and *Raza de-ma'aseh merkavah/Raza de-malka meshiha* (*The Mystery of the Workings of the Chariot/The Mystery of the King Messiah*),<sup>98</sup> Nathan expounds on Shabbatai Zevi's figure as engraved in the Chariot. It is from these discourses that we learn the extent to which Shabbatai Zevi was connected to sanctified ritual – both with the cyclical week in his identification with the Sabbath (he even asserted that his “name is Sabbath” and he is referred to as “*Shabbat ha-gadol*” [Great Sabbath]), and in the yearly cycle and the holidays of the month of *Tishrei*. Again, the basis for this identification can be found in the Zohar: “‘God included in the seventh day His work that He had made.’ [Gen 2:2] This is Sabbath, fourth leg of the Throne” (Zohar I 5a; vol. I, 31). It seems that the

<sup>96</sup> Zohar I 250b. On David's pauper's prayer which bypasses the rest of the prayers, see: Zohar I 168b. For an alternative tradition, see: Zohar III 195a.

<sup>97</sup> Sasportas 1973, 94; Scholem 1973, I, 111–112. According to Coenen and Sasportas, this transpired in 1648, when he was about twenty-four years old.

<sup>98</sup> On this composition, see: Tishby 1964, 320 no. 110; Scholem 1973, II, 693 no. 3; Liebes 1995, 281 no. 77; Elqayam 1993, 99–106; and in Noam Lefler's PhD dissertation (forthcoming). In *Sefer ha-beriah* (*Book of Creation*) Nathan describes the service of God through spiritual love as a tool for the transformation of man into a Chariot for the Divine (as in Wirszubski 1990, 291). For Nathan's attestation to having looked upon the Chariot, see: Scholem 1973, I, 168; Scholem 1991, 308.



influence of Bar Sheshet theology led the Zoharic kabbalists to transform Talmudic midrash into a new structure, one that emphasizes the role of the Patriarchs and David with them, as an embodiment of the divine chariot. In addition, this myth enhances the dependence of the three legs of the Chariot on the fourth leg, and evokes an image of two messiahs that were not meant to be born, in the sense of “*bar niflei*” (stillborn).<sup>99</sup>

Shabbatai Zevi depends on the Patriarchs to anoint him and join him to them as the Chariot, resembling the once-stillborn David’s reliance on the Patriarchs for his very life. Despite this dependence, both characters are nonetheless superior to the Patriarchs. Zevi sees himself also as the fourth New Year – *Tu bi-Shvat*, the new year of the trees, a festival that became ritualized because of the influence of *Hemdat Yamim*.<sup>100</sup> By the believers he was perceived to be the sanctified *ilan* (tree) and the one who “will deliver us to the Tree of Life.”<sup>101</sup> He was called “The Pleasant Tree Son of Jesse Lives upon the Earth,” a phrase, as Boaz Huss demonstrates, that is numerically equal to his own name in Gematria. Like the Shabbatean poems, the prayers that precede *Seder Tu-bishvat* in *Hemdat Yamim* also strengthen the messianic link between David and Shabbatai Zevi: “Therefore, swiftly cause the offshoot, Your servant David, to blossom and raise up his horn through Your salvation. And His glory will be lifted and be delivered upon the whole world in its entirety.”<sup>102</sup> Like David, Shabbatai Zevi’s identification with the fourth leg of the Chariot alludes to his affinity for the spiritual *heikhal* (palace), which is the “*mikdash adam*” (human temple).<sup>103</sup>

## Conclusions

This paper demonstrates the links between David as a feminine figure and Shabbatai Zevi, and shows how their symbolization as the fourth leg of the Chariot further developed the connections between femininity and heresy. In both cases

<sup>99</sup> See n. 32 above. On Shabbatai Zevi’s companions who called him *Bar Naflei*, see: Scholem 1973, I, 107; II, 511, 693, 774. On nature which hesitates and becomes impregnated, wishing to compensate for an essential lack in their existence, see: Pedaya 2002, 216, 226.

<sup>100</sup> Huss, “*The Pleasant Tree Son of Jesse Lives upon the Earth*” – *On the Shabbatean Origin of Seder Tu bi-Shvat*.

<sup>101</sup> As stated in the Shabbatean poem translated from Ladino by M. Attias.

<sup>102</sup> *Sefer Hemdat Yamim*, The Holy Sabbath, Ch. 1.

<sup>103</sup> These traditions reinforce Maoz Kahana’s assertion that Shabbatai Zevi represents “sacred time” and “sacred place”; Kahana 2016. This is how Kahana explains the eating of the forbidden animal fat and the rest of the prohibitions that were permitted in the new Torah.

the characters' imperfections "allow" them to sin as they do, for as "feminine" figures they do not bear full responsibility for their actions and deeds. The feminine Messiah may be regarded as weak, ill, or mad – without losing his appeal as a deviant seducer and brave, heretical hero. To put it differently, the identification of David with the *sefirah* of *Malkhut* was one of the main reasons for the Shabbatean fascination with the Zohar. Not only did the Zohar place the feminine Messiah at the heart of its homilies, but it glorified the sins of David and in so doing created a precedent for Shabbatai's own behavior. In the case of David and Shabbatai Zevi, heresy indeed accompanies femininity. If the present order and its law are typically gendered as masculine, the threatening, disruptive forces that attempt to bring forth redemption are identified as feminine.

Beyond the *kitzutz* and heresy, the keys to redemption are related to the *Shekhinah* as well, precisely because unification with her is not constant and she moves and connects between the worlds, as Nathan states in *Sefer ha-beriah* regarding the designation of *Malkhut* as *Yirah* (fear): "The serpents have a claim on her, for she [*Malkhut*] is not united in the entire sacred *Yihud* [unification], because, God forbid, she is *kelo* [as not]."<sup>104</sup> This statement ascribes to the serpents a claim of ownership over the divine feminine, marking her as a figure that requires protection because of her liminal state as a gateway to the divine world – a state that renders her vulnerable to the powers of the *sitra aħra* (the other side) that lie in wait. Since it is impossible to avoid encountering the forces of evil that seek control over the feminine, it is necessary to strengthen her through the serpents of the *kelippah*, as a kind of vaccination: "Since in the serpent of *kelippah* the feminine power is greater than the masculine" (Nathan of Gaza, *Derush ha-taninim*, 47). This statement is key to understanding the central theme of women in Shabbatean thought, and the double-sided game that allows for the identification of masculine leaders with the divine feminine, while simultaneously avoiding the actual threat involved in placing real women at the heart of messianic activism.

In more general sense I would propose that this feminized version of David that was innovated and remarkably developed by the Zohar may have been rooted in an anti-Christian polemic: as a rebellion against the Christian concept of messianic redemption and the idea of Original Sin; as the humiliation through feminization of an archetypically male Christian hero; or, rather, as the internalization of Christian attitudes by the kabbalists, as happens with the veneration of

---

<sup>104</sup> Wirszubski, *Between the Lines*, 218. The word "*kelo*" appears to be a mistake, and it may be that the intended meaning was "*kilayon*" (annihilation) by the *sitra aħra*, or the word "*be-lo*" (without). Since the *zivug* union between her and *Tiferet* is not constant, the *kelipot* have a claim and a place to grasp her when she is "without" *zivug*.

Mary.<sup>105</sup> David's centrality in medieval art, and his influence on the royal dynasties and kings in developing European religious culture, exposed the kabbalists to overt images that challenged them and their assumptions regarding sin, repentance, and salvation. The phenomenon of a feminized David might also have been influenced by the perception among Christians during the High Middle Ages that Jesus and leaders such as Bernard of Clairvaux were feminine and motherly figures.<sup>106</sup> In the Middle Ages, the kabbalists resisted Christian ideas of asceticism, martyrdom, and suffering, substituting extreme sexuality, the reversal of roles, and gender fluidity. In addition, symbolizing David through the *Shekhinah* may be an indication of how kabbalists turned Christian accusations of "feminized" Jewish men into advantage.<sup>107</sup>

The Zohar embraced the dichotomous David (sinner turned saint, hated turned chosen, jester turned king), as presented in the Bible and the Talmud, but enhanced this David in its own image. Through a process of creating "counter-history," the Zoharic David underwent a process of transgenderization, as the medieval kabbalists indeed saw themselves as "female" and powerless (despite their heightened mystical awareness, given the un-redeemed world in which they lived). Yet by identifying themselves with David and the *Shekhinah*, both of which represented the simultaneous power and vulnerability of the Jewish nation, these (male) kabbalists transformed the shameful situation into a virtue.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

- Alkabetz, Shlomo. *Shoresh Yishai (Root of Jesse)*. Jerusalem, n.p. 1978.
- Azriel of Gerona. *Commentary on the Talmudic Aggadah*. Tishby edition. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1982.
- Baer Gottlober, Avraham. *Memories and Journeys*. Jerusalem: Dorot, 1976.
- Bar Sheshet, Jacob. "Sefer ha-emuna ve-habitahon (Book of Faith and Trust)." *Kitvei Ramban*, Vol. 2. Ed. Hayyim D. Chavel. Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1964.
- Ben David, Asher. *Perush yud gimel middot (Commentary to the Thirteen Attributes)*. Abrams edition. Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 1996.
- Emden, Jacob. *Sefer Shimush*. Amsterdam, n.p., 1758.
- Frances, Emmanuel. *Divan*. Tel Aviv: Devir, 1932.

---

<sup>105</sup> This is an idea that was discussed intensely by Art Green and Peter Schäfer.

<sup>106</sup> Bynum 1982.

<sup>107</sup> Cuffel 2007; Resnick 2012.

- Genesis Rabbah*. Albeck edition. Jerusalem: Shalem Books, 1995 (second print).
- Gikatilla, Josef. *Sha'arei Orah (Gates of Light)*. Ben Shlomo edition. Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1981.
- Isaac of Acre. *Meirat 'Einayim*. Goldreich edition. Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1980.
- Karo, Yoseph. *Maggid Mesharim (Preacher of Righteousness)*. Jerusalem: Shemot, 1960.
- Ma'arekhet ha-elohut*. Jerusalem: Becker, 2013.
- Meier, Menachem. "A Critical Edition of 'Sefer Ta'aamei ha-Mizwoth' by Joseph of Shushan." PhD dissertation. Brandeis University Press, 1974, 232–233.
- Moses de Leon. *Mishkan ha-Edut (The Tabernacle of the Covenant)*. Bar Asher edition. Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2014.
- Moses de Leon. *Perush le-ma'aseh merkavat yehezkel (Commentary on the Ezekiel's Work of the Chariot)*. Farber edition. Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 1998.
- Moses de Leon. *Sefer ha-rimon (The Book of the Pomegranate)*. Wolfson edition. Atlanta: Brown Judaic Studies, 1988.
- Moses de Leon. *Shekel ha-kodesh (The Holy Shekel)*. Mopsik edition. Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 1996.
- Nahmanides. *Nahmanides on the Torah*. Shavel ed. Jerusalem: Mosad Rav Kuk, 1960.
- Nathan of Gaza. *Derush ha-taninim (Treatise on the Dragons)*. Ed. Gershom Scholem, *Beikvot Mashiach – Anthology of Sources from the Early Days of the Development of the Sabbatean Faith*. Jerusalem: Tarshish, 1944. 9–22.
- Sasportas, Jacob. "Sefer Tzitzat Novel Tzevi (Book of the Decaying Deer's Fringes)." *Sabbatai Şevi: The Mystical Messiah, 1626–1676*. Ed. Gershom Scholem. Trans. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.
- Sha'ar ha-gilgulim*. Jerusalem: Ahavat Shalom, 1917.
- Sefer ha-gilgulim; Sefer Torat ha-Gilgul*. Jerusalem: Ahavat Shalom, 1982.
- Sefer Hemdat Yamim (The Beloved of Days)*. Kushta, n.p 1735.
- The Book Bahir*. Abrams edition. Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 1994.
- Toldot ha-Ari*. Meir Benayahu editon. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1967.
- Vital, Hayyim. *Sefer ha-hezionot (The Book of Visions)*. Faierstein edition. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2006.

## Secondary Sources

- Abramson, Sheraga. *Issues in Geonic Literature*. Jerusalem: Rav Kuk Press, 1974. [Hebrew]
- Afterman, Adam. *Devequt: Mystical Intimacy in Medieval Jewish Thought*. Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2011. [Hebrew]
- Ashley, Kathleen. "Interrogating Biblical Deception and Trickster Theories: Narratives of Patriarchy or Possibility." *Semeia* 42 (1988): 103–116.
- Barnai, Jacob. *Two Works about Shabbatai Zevi*. Jerusalem: Carmel, 2017. [Hebrew]
- Bohak, Gideon. *Ancient Jewish Magic*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Boyarin, Daniel. *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Bynum, Caroline W. *Jesus As Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.

- Carlebach, Elisheva. *The Pursuit of Heresy: Rabbi Moses Hagiz and the Sabbatian Controversies*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Chajes, J. H. *Between Worlds: Dybbuks, Exorcists, and Early Modern Judaism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003.
- Chajes, J. H. "In a Different Voice: The Non-Kabbalistic Women's Mysticism of Early Modern Jewish Culture." *Zion* 76, 2 (2002): 139–162. [Hebrew]
- Connell, Raewyn. *Masculinities*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.
- Connell, Raewyn, & James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." *Gender and Society* 19, 6 (2005): 829–859.
- Cuffel, Alexandra. *Gendering Disgust in Medieval Religious Polemic*. Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2007.
- Dan, Joseph. "Rabbi Judah the Pious and Caesarius of Hiesterbach." *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 22 (1971): 18–27.
- De-Lubac, H. *Medieval Exegesis, Vol. 2: The Four Senses of Scripture*. Michigan: Grand Rapids, 2000.
- Doniger, Wendy. *The Bedtrick: Tales of Sex and Masquerade*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Elior, Rachel. "Divrei haAadon leYaacov Frank," *The Sabbatean Movement and its Aftermath, Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 17 (2001): II, 471–548.
- Elqayam, Avraham. "The Burden of Silence: Queen Esther as a Messianic Prototype of Fluid Identity in Sabbatean Mythopoesis." *Conceal the Outcasts: Jews with Hidden Identities*. Eds. A. Elqayam and Y. Kaplan. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2016. 173–249.
- Elqayam, Avraham. "The Mystery of Faith in the Writings of Nathan of Gaza." PhD dissertation. Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 1993. [Hebrew]
- Elliott, Dyan. *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.
- Fishbane, Eitan. "A Chariot for the *Shekhinah*: Identity and the Ideal Life in Sixteenth-Century Safed Kabbalah." *Journal of Religious Ethics* 37/3 (2009): 385–418.
- Ferziger, Adam S. "Feminism and Heresy: The Construction of a Jewish Metanarrative." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 77.3 (2009): 494–546.
- Ferziger, Adam S. "Feminism, Heresy, and the Boundaries of American Orthodox Judaism." *A New Spirit in the Palace of Torah: Jubilee Volume in Honor of Professor Tamar Ross on the Occasion of her Eightieth Birthday*. Eds. Dov Schwartz and Ronit Irshai. Ramat Gan: BIU Press, 2018. 327–372. [Hebrew]
- Fine, Lawrence. *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.
- Fonrobert, Charlotte. "The Handmaid, the Trickster and the Birth of the Messiah." *Current Trends in the Study of Midrash*. Ed. Carol Bakhos. Leiden: Brill, 2006. 245–275.
- Goitein, S. D. "A Report on Messianic Troubles in Baghdad in 1120–21." *JQR* 43 (1952): 57–76.
- Goldreich, Amos, "R. Isaac of Acre's Meirat 'Einayim." Master's thesis. Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1981. [Hebrew]
- Green, Arthur. "Shekhinah, the Virgin Mary, and the Song of Songs: Reflections on a Kabbalistic Symbol in Its Historical Context." *AJS Review* 26, no. 1 (2002): 1–52.
- Hallamish, Moshe. *Kabbalistic Customs of Shabbat*. Jerusalem: Orhot Press, 2006. [Hebrew]
- Heinemann, Joseph. "The Blessing for the Rebuilding of Jerusalem." *Lunei Tefila*. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1981. 93–101. [Hebrew]

- Huss, Boaz. *The Pleasant Tree Son of Jesse Lives upon the Earth – On the Sabbatean Origin of Seder Tu bi-Shvat*. 39–50 [forthcoming, Meir Benayahu book. Hebrew].
- Idel, Moshe. “Commentaries on the ‘Secret of ‘Ibbur in 13th Century Kabbalah and their Significance for Understanding of the Kabbalah at its Inception and its Development.” *Da’at* 72 (2012): 5–49. [Hebrew]
- Idel, Moshe. *Messianic Mystics*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.
- Idel, Moshe. *Recanati*. Vol. II. (forthcoming).
- Idel, Moshe. *The Privileged Divine Feminine in Kabbalah*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019.
- Idel, Moshe. “The Secret of Impregnation as Metempsychosis in Kabbalah.” *Verwandlungen. Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation IX*. Eds. A. Assmann & J. Assmann. Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2006. 341–379.
- Joseph of Shushan. *Sefer Ta’amei ha-mitzwot, Mitzwat Aseh (The Book of the Reasons; Positive Commandment) 57*. In Menachem Meier, A Critical Edition of the “Sefer Ta’amei ha-mizwot,” (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1974). 232–236.
- Kahana, Maoz. “Cosmos and Nomos: Rabbi Joseph Karo and Shabtai Zvi as Portable Heavenly Temples.” *El Prezente* 10 (2016): 143–153.
- Kara-Ivanov Kaniel, Ruth. *Holiness and Transgression: Mothers of the Messiah in the Jewish Myth*. New York: Academic Studies Press, 2017.
- Kara-Ivanov Kaniel, Ruth. “King David and Jerusalem: From Psalms to the Zohar.” *Perspectives on Jewish Texts and Contexts*. Eds. Ophir Muntz-Manor and Ilana Pardes. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019a. 67–107.
- Kara-Ivanov Kaniel, Ruth. “‘Sefirot in the Image of Man’: Multiple Self in Kabbalistic Literature.” *Pe’amim* 157 (2019b): 135–175.
- Liebes, Yehuda. *God’s Story: Collected Essays on Jewish Myth*. Jerusalem: Carmel, 2009. [Hebrew]
- Liebes, Yehuda. “Long Live the King: The Weakness of the King and his Strength.” *Jubilee Vol. presented to A. Ravitzky*. Eds. B. Brown, A. Rosenack, et al. Jerusalem: Israel Institute for Democracy, 2012. 452–489. [Hebrew]
- Liebes, Yehuda. “Matzmiah Keren Yeshu’a.” *Mehkarei Yerushalayim be-Mahshevet Yisrael* 3 (1984): 313–348.
- Liebes, Yehuda. *On Sabbateanism and its Kabbalah: Collected Essays*. Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1995. [Hebrew]
- Liebes, Yehuda. “Two Young Roes of a Doe: The Secret Sermon of Isaac Luria before his Death.” *The International Conference for the study of Jewish Mysticism* 4 (1992): 113–169. [Hebrew]
- Mark, Zvi. “Dybbuk and Devekut in Shivhe ha-Besht: Toward a Phenomenology of Madness in Early Hasidism.” *Spirit Possession in Judaism*. Ed. M. Goldish. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003. 257–301.
- Mazo-Karras, Ruth. “King David as a Figure of Masculinity in Christian and Jewish Medieval Culture.” *God’s Own Gender? Religions and their Concepts of Masculinity*. Eds. Daniel Gerster and Michael Krüggeler. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2018. 201–218.
- Melammed, Renee Levine. “Visionary Experiences Among Spanish Crypto-Jewish Women” (Translations with Commentary). *Judaism in Practice: From the Middle Ages through the Early Modern Period*. Ed. Lawrence Fine. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. 348–352.
- Meroz, Ronit. “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching.” PhD dissertation. Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1988. [Hebrew].
- Neumann, Erich. *Eranos Lectures – Mensch und Sinn*. Trans. Tamar Kron and David Viller, with introduction and commentary. Tel Aviv: Resling, 2013.

- Neumann, Erich. *The Origins and History of Consciousness*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.
- Pappenheim, Bertha. "Zur Sittlichkeitsfrage." Lecture given at the 2nd Delegates Day of the Jewish Women's Association in Frankfurt am Main on 2–3 October 1907. Hamburg: Jüdischen Frauenbundes, 1907.
- Maciejko, Pawel. *Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement 1755–1816*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.
- Pedaya, Haviva. *Nahmanides: Cyclical Time and Holy Text*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2003. [Hebrew].
- Pedaya, Haviva. *Name and Sanctuary in the Teaching of Rabbi Isaac the Blind*. Jerusalem: Magnes, 2001. [Hebrew]
- Pedaya, Haviva. "Ve-Ima Hashata Let Lan – A Geneology of the Shekhina as a Mother." *As a Perennial Spring: A Festschrift Honoring Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm*. Ed. Bentsion Cohen. New York: Downhill, 2013. 87–151.
- Pedaya, Haviva. *Vision and Speech*. Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2002. [Hebrew]
- Rapoport-Albert, Ada. "From Prophetess to Madwoman: The Displacement of Female Spirituality in the Post-Sabbatian Era." *Hasidic Studies: Essays in History and Gender*. Liverpool: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization in association with Liverpool University Press, 2011a. 269–317.
- Rapoport-Albert, Ada. "On Women in Hasidism: S. A. Horodetsky and the Maid of Ludmir Tradition." *Hasidic Studies: Essays in History and Gender*. Liverpool: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization in association with Liverpool University Press, 2017. 318–367.
- Rapoport-Albert, Ada. *Women and the Messianic Heresy of Shabbatai Zevi, 1666–1816*. Oxford and Portland: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2011b.
- Resnick, Irven M. *Marks of Distinction: Christian Perceptions of Jews in the High Middle Ages*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012.
- Roi, Biti. *Love of the Shekhina – Mysticism and Poetics in Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*. Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 2017.
- Schäfer, Peter. *Mirrors of His Beauty: Feminine Images of God from the Bible to the Early Kabbalah*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002: 147–172.
- Scholem, Gershom. *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. New York: Schocken Books, 1941.
- Scholem, Gershom. "Mitsvah haba'ah be'aveirah": *Studies and Texts Concerning the History of Sabbateanism and its Metamorphoses*. Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1982. 9–67. [Hebrew]
- Scholem, Gershom. "New Sabbatian Documents from the Book 'To'ei Ruah'" *Zion* 7.3 (1942): 172–196. [Hebrew]
- Scholem, Gershom. *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah*. New York: Schocken Books, 1991.
- Scholem, Gershom. *Origins of the Kabbalah*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.
- Scholem, Gershom. *Sabbatai Ševi: The Mystical Messiah, 1626–1676*. Trans. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. "Epistemology of the Closet." *Theory and Critique* 37 (2010): 284–304.
- Shapiro, Judith. "Transsexualism: Reflections on the Persistence of Gender and the Mutability of Sex." *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*. Eds. J. Epstein & K. Straub. Routledge: New York, 1991. 248–279.
- Shinan, Avigdor, "Al Demuto shel ha-Melekh David be-Sifrut Hazal." *David: From Shepherd to Messiah*. Ed. Y. Zakovitch. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1995. 181–199. [Hebrew]
- Stone, Sandy. "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto." *Camera Obscura* 10 (1992): 150–176.

- Tamar, David. *Studies in the History of the Jews in Palestine and Italy*. Jerusalem: Reuben Mass, 1970.
- Tishby, Isaiah. *Paths of Faith and Heresy: Essays in Kabbalah and Sabbateanism*. Ramat Gan: Masada Publishing, 1964. [Hebrew]
- Tishby, Isaiah. *The Doctrine of Evil and the “Kelipah” in Lurianic Kabbalism*. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992.
- Tishby, Isaiah. *The Wisdom of the Zohar: An Anthology of Texts*. 3 vols. Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1989.
- Van der Haven, Alexander. *From Lowly Metaphor to Divine Flesh: Sarah the Ashkenazi, Sabbatai Tsevi’s Messianic Queen and the Sabbatian Movement*. Ramat Gan: Idra Press, 2018. [Hebrew]
- Warner, Michael. *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Weinstein, Roni. *Kabbalah and Jewish Identity*. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2011. [Hebrew]
- Weiss, Tzahi. *Cutting the Shoots: The Worship of Shekhina in the World of Early Kabbalistic Literature*. Jerusalem: Magnes, 2015. [Hebrew]
- Wirszubski, Chaim. *Between the Lines: Kabbalah, Christian Kabbalah and Sabbateanism*. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1990. [Hebrew]
- Eliot Wolfson. *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2004.
- Eliot Wolfson. “*Min u-minut be-heker ha-kabbalah*.” *Kabbalah* 6 (2001): 231–262.
- Zak, Bracha. *Solomon had a Vineyard*. Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion University Press, 2018. [Hebrew]