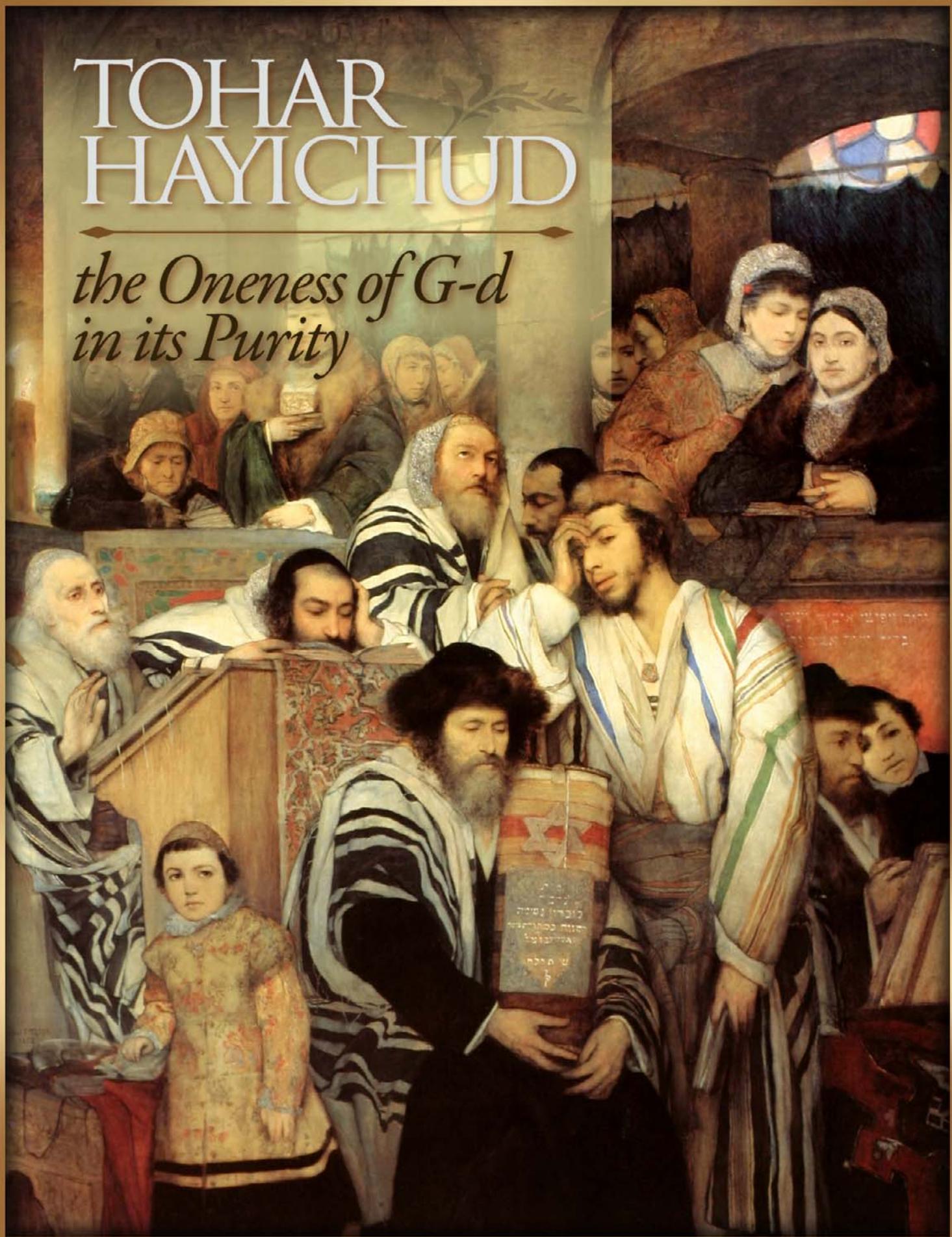


TOHAR HAYICHUD

*the Oneness of G-d
in its Purity*



Tohar HaYichud (see Hovoth Hallevavoth 1:1)
The Oneness of G-d in its Purity

There is a *יסוד היסודות*, Fundamental of Fundamentals, which is the concept of G-d of historic, classic Torah Judaism. It is the concept that, according to the testimony of Rabbenu Avraham son of Rambam, in his *ספר מלחמות השם*, was the *אמונה* (Faith) of the *קדמונים ז"ל* (the Foremost Early Authorities). He enumerates the Geonim of the Babylonian Yeshivoth, like Rav Saadyah Gaon, Rav Hai Gaon, Rav Shemuel ben Hofni Gaon, as well as Scholars like Rabbenu Nissim, author of *מגילת סתרים*, Rabbenu Hananel, Rabbenu Yitzhak Alfasi, Rabbenu Yoseph ben Megas (*ר"י מג"ש*), Rabbenu Bahya ibn Pakudah (*בעל ספר חובות הלבבות*). Also included are R. Yehudah Hallevi (*בעל ספר הכוזרי*), Rambam, his son Rabbenu Avraham, and their many contemporaries -- Scholars of the East and the West too numerous to enumerate.

This Fundamental states that G-d is the only Eternally Pre-existent Absolute Be-ing (Absolute Existence), transcendent in His unlike otherness, the Absolute Incorporeal Unity to Whom no other unity in the universe is similar. G-d is without composition or plurality, objectively or conceptually, One from whatever side you view the matter and by whatever test you examine it. Accidents (i.e., qualities, attributes, relations, circumstances) that are applied to corporeal beings are not applicable to G-d. Combination, separation, place (space), dimension, time, beginning, end, *change* -- all these are not applicable to G-d. He transcends all of these. G-d is beyond description. He transcends any attribute, quality or characteristic that we may attribute to Him. There is no similarity between Him and the creatures that He created. Existence, Life, Power, Knowledge and Will when applied to G-d do not have the same meaning as when applied to us, and the difference is not only one of degree. His Be-ing is absolutely simple (i.e., free from combination or composition), to which nothing is superadded. Whatever attributes are found in Scripture are either attributes of His acts (e.g., a merciful act), or they are to be understood as negations of imperfection (e.g., "strong" means "not weak"). Any Scriptural passages that do not seem to accord with the foregoing are metaphorical.

To quote Rav Saadyah Gaon: "The *extreme abstractness* of the concept of the Creator (G-d) is its true character." Also: "The concept of the Creator (G-d) [is] more recondite than the most recondite, more abstract than the most abstract, more subtle than the most subtle (*דק מכל דק*), more profound than the most profound (*עמוק מכל עמוק*) ... more sublime than the most sublime." G-d is not a substance. He is not like fire, or air, or space. He created all of these and He is unlike anything that He created. Length and width, division and combination are all inapplicable to Him (from *Emunoth VeDeoth* of Rav Saadyah Gaon).

The allegation of the Christian trinitarians "of the existence within Him (G-d) of distinction (i.e., distinct characteristics), *with the result that one attribute is not identical with the other*, is equivalent to their saying that He (G-d) is really a physical being ... *For anything that harbors distinction within itself is unquestionably a physical being*" (Rav Saadyah Gaon, *Emunoth VeDeoth* 2:5). The only alternative would be to consider each distinct attribute a distinct coexisting spiritual entity. This would be polytheism (See Guide 1:58).

Shechinah or "the glory of the L-rd" (*כבוד ה'*) refers to light specially produced (created --

(אור נברא) for *revelational* purposes. Similarly, the Divine form perceived by the prophets was a specially produced *revelational* form that was presented to their prophetic *vision* only for the purpose of prophetic revelation. However, *in reality, objectively*, G-d has no form. The form mentioned in Scripture is merely *visional*. It exists only in the prophetic vision, or as specially produced (created) revelational light.

Therefore, as emphasized by Rabbenu Bahya ben Pakudah (חובות הלבבות 1:10), we must know G-d through contemplating the traces of His activity, which testify to His existence, not through contemplating His Be-ing, His Essence, which is beyond contemplation. When we have removed Him from our imagination and senses as if He had no existence, and have found Him through the traces of His activity as if He is not removed from us, we have attained the ultimate knowledge of G-d possible for human beings.

This sublime and exalted transcendence of G-d is called קדושת ה', the holiness of G-d (Kuzari 3:17). "'The Holy One' (קדוש) expresses the fact that G-d is sanctified and transcendent above any attribute of created beings; if He is referred to in terms of attributes, it is only by way of metaphor" (Kuzari 4:13).

"All the foregoing is undoubted by any Israelite from east to west among all the [Jewish] inhabitants of Arabic lands" (Rabbenu Avraham ben Rambam in his ספר מלחמות ה'). Whoever dissents from this exalted, sublime, transcendent concept of G-d's holiness, and attributes likeness, form or place (space) -- or any other attribute of created entities -- to G-d, the Creator, "such a dissenter is a מין (a sectarian heretic), ואין לו חלק לעולם הבא, and he has no share in the world to come" (Rabbenu Avraham ben Rambam, *ibid.*). Such a heretical dissent is a form of עבודה זרה, idolatry (*ibid.*).

Now let us suppose that in subsequent generations a heterodox concept of G-d were to become popular which would depart radically from the classic, orthodox concept of the קדמונים ז"ל (The Foremost Early Authorities) outlined above. In this heterodox concept the abstract, exalted, sublime, transcendent Absolute Be-ing of G-d, which is beyond description, beyond similarity and beyond conception, would be accepted only with regard to G-d, the First Cause, Who, in this heterodox view, is nameless, to Whom we cannot relate directly and Whom we cannot and do not worship directly. After a complex process of emanation from this First Cause a certain number of distinct Divine Attributes are emanated. They are not created, *not* part of creation, as are the angels. They are rather emanations of Divinity. These emanated Divine Attributes are not metaphorical. They are hypostases, i.e., they are regarded as *objective, existing entities*. Moreover, they are arranged in a number of Configurations. These emanations, in this heterodox view, are considered actual Divinity -- no longer nameless, to which man turns in worship, and addresses as "God", "Hashem", and the other Divine Names, with the following reservation: The worship is addressed to the First Cause in His manifestation of filling the emanated Divine Attributes and Configurations in a manner akin to the soul filling the body of man, according to some; according to others, the soul (the First Cause) and the emanated Attributes and Configurations that are filled with the soul (First Cause) are worshipped *together* as one inseparable Divinity.

This latter-day belief would constitute a clear contradiction to a number of the fundamentals of the concept of G-d of the קדמונים ז"ל (The Foremost Early Authorities) as outlined above. These points of contradiction will be explained in the course of this monograph. From the standpoint of the earlier classic, orthodox concept, this latter belief would constitute מינות (heresy), and would be pronounced as such by the קדמונים ז"ל (The Foremost Early Authorities).

By this time the reader will have realized that the latter-day belief is not a hypothetical case at all, but actually represents the opinion of the kabbalists. Now the following point must be stressed with the utmost force and clarity: No matter which concept of God one accepts, *the God of the kabbalists is not the G-d of the קדמונים ז"ל (The Foremost Early Authorities)*. This is a most uncomfortable fact for us religious Jews, non-kabbalist and kabbalist alike, and apologists are not lacking who would gloss over the differences. However, to the non-apologist, it remains an incontestable, though disturbing, fact of profound historic implications.

The kabbalist has his ready solution to this historic difficulty. He claims that the kabbalistic conception was unknown, except to a select few. It does not seem strange to him that the leading Babylonian Geonim and their numerous followers named above, Talmudic authorities of the first rank, *leaders of Talmudic Judaism who constituted the Foremost Early Authorities of the People of Israel*, had an "incorrect" conception (ח"ו) of G-d, the G-d of Israel!

Moreover, the kabbalistic view has become widespread in the generations subsequent to the קדמונים ז"ל (Foremost Early Authorities) and has been accepted, at least in theory, by a majority of the People of Israel and its Torah Leaders, with only isolated opposition here and there. The kabbalist assumes that this widespread acceptance, especially, on the part of the majority of Torah Leaders of the subsequent generations, constitutes a halachic decision in favor of the kabbalistic concept.

Let us, therefore, digress at this point from the discussion of the substantive issue of differing conceptions of G-d, and analyze this claim of halachic decision in favor of kabbalism. A survey of the Scriptural texts and the halachoth that bear on halachic decision-making will reveal this claim to be fallacious.

Rendering halachic decisions (הוראה, instruction) is referred to in ויקרא (Lev. 10:11): "And that ye may instruct (ולהורות) the children of Israel in all the *statutes* (את כל החקים) which the L-rd hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses. In Kerethoth 13b Rashi defines this הוראה (instruction) as "איסור והיתר" של הוראה, instruction concerning what is *prohibited and what is permissible*."

Also in דברים (Deut.17:8-11) we read:

כי יפלא ממך דבר, If a matter to be judged be beyond thee, בין דם לדם, between blood and blood, בין נגע לנגע, and between stroke and stroke, בין דין לדין, between plea and plea, matters of controversy in thy gates; then shalt thou arise and go up unto the place which the L-rd thy G-d shall choose. And thou shalt come unto the priests, and the Levites, and

unto the judge who shall be in those days, and thou shalt inquire; and they shall tell thee the sentence of judgment. And thou shalt do according to the word which they shall tell thee from that place which the L-rd shall choose; and thou shalt observe to do ככל אשר יורוך, according to all that they shall instruct thee. על פי התורה אשר יורוך, according to the instruction which they shall instruct thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee shalt thou do; thou shalt not turn aside from the word which they shall tell thee to the right or to the left.

Ramban's commentary: "The simple meaning is 'between blood and blood' (בין דם לדם) referring to cases of murder; or ['between plea and plea'] (בין דין לדין) referring to civil suits, [while 'between stroke and stroke'] (ובין נגע לנגע) refers to cases involving wounds and stripes (i.e., physical injuries) ... [However], 'According to the instruction (על פי התורה)' refers as well to the other instructions [concerning Torah law]."

In Sanhedrin 87a בין דם לדם, "between blood and blood" is referred to "the blood of Niddah, the blood of childbirth and the blood of Zivah." בין דין לדין, "between plea and plea" is explained as a reference to cases involving capital punishment, civil suits and cases involving the corporal punishment of lashes (מכות). "ובין נגע לנגע" is a reference to נגע צרעת of a person, of houses and of garments." (This explanation of ובין נגע לנגע, which is also that of Targum Onkelos, is adopted by Rashbam as the simple meaning).

In Second Chronicles (19:10) the judges were exhorted by King Jehoshaphat: "And when any controversy shall come to you ... between blood and blood (בין דם לדם), between law and commandment, statutes and ordinances (בין תורה למצוה ולמשפטים), ye shall exhort them, that they be not guilty towards the L-rd ..." The terminology, which is based on the words of the Torah quoted above, clearly includes "religious law, commandments, statutes and ordinances.

Horayoth 3b:

"הורו ב"ד לעקור את כל הגוף, if Beth Din (the Court) ruled (הורו) to uproot the entire body [of the commandment] (לעקור את כל הגוף), e.g., אין נדה בתורה, they said: there is no prohibition against Niddah in the Torah; there is no prohibition about שבת in the Torah; אין עבודה זרה בתורה, there is no prohibition against idolatry in the Torah," הרי they (i.e., the members of the Court) are absolved (from bringing the sacrifice for ruling that idolatry is permissible). הורו לבטל מקצת ולקיים מקצת, if they ruled to nullify part (of the commandment) and to uphold part, הרי אלו חייבין, they are obligated (to bring the aforementioned sacrifice). E.g., '...There is a prohibition against idolatry in the Torah, but המשתחוה, one who prostrates himself (to an idol) is absolved,' then they (i.e., the members of the Court) are obligated (to bring the aforementioned sacrifices), as it is said: דבר ולא כל הגוף 'and something be hid [from the eyes of the assembly]' (Lev. 4:13) 'something,' but not the entire body [of the commandment]."

The Gemara explains, *ibid.* 4a:

E.g., they (the members of the Court) ruled (mistakenly) that only regular השתחויה (prostration to an idol) is prohibited, i.e., when stretching out hands and feet, but without stretching out hands and feet prostration (to an idol) is permitted.

It is clear from the foregoing that the ruling (הוראה) of the Beth Din applies to *details* of Torah laws (בטורל מקצת וקיום מקצת), not to the body of the basic laws themselves (עקירת כל הגוף). *These are beyond the jurisdiction of הוראה.* They comprise the fundamental Torah itself, which is the axiomatic given, and which is the *inviolable context within which alone* the Court's rulings possess validity and *sanction*. The fundamental axiom itself (i.e., the basic law of the Torah) is not subject to rulings. not subject to הוראה. The יסודי התורה, the Fundamentals of the Torah, e.g., the Existence of G-d, His Unity, His Incorporeality, etc. are even more fundamental and axiomatic, for they are the very *foundations of the Torah*. As such, they are clearly beyond the scope of Court rulings, which deal only with details of law *within the fundamental, axiomatic framework* of the basic laws of the Torah and its basic Fundamentals. We affirm the Existence of G-d, His Unity, His Incorporeality, etc., not because of Court rulings, but for the same reason that basic Torah truth commands the assent of our mind in the process of our total cognition (our אמונה). A Court ruling that abrogates any basic law of the Torah (עקירת כל הגוף) or any of its Fundamentals is not a הוראה within the framework of the basic Torah *which alone is the basis of the Court's jurisdiction*.

Just as we are commanded to accept the authoritative rulings of the Beth Din, so too must we obey one who has been established as a נביא, a true prophet (Deut. 18:15). Even if he commands prophetically to abrogate a law of the Torah *temporarily* for a religious benefit (למיגדר מילתא), we are commanded to obey (Yevamoth 90b.). However, if the prophet commands even the temporary abrogation of the prohibition against idolatry, he must not be obeyed (Sanhedrin 90a based on Deut. 13:2-6). The prohibition against idolatry is the very foundation of the Torah, and no prophet may abrogate, even temporarily, what is fundamental.

On this passage of Sanhedrin the Commentary of Meiri reads as follows:

If an established prophet commands [us] to add [to] or to subtract [from the laws of the Torah] temporarily, [then the law is as follows]: If permission of idolatry is involved, we are not to obey him at all, even if he [prophetically] commands idolatry for one moment, to be followed by a nullification [of that permission]. ... *Included in this [law to disobey the prophet] is any instance in which the prophet seeks to undermine any of the Torah Fundamentals (הריסת פנה מפנות הדת) such as the Existence of G-d, His Unity, His Incorporeality, and such similar Fundamentals. Whenever a prophet does so [i.e., seeks to undermine any of the Torah Fundamentals], the law is as mentioned above [in the case of idolatry].* However, if the prophet commands[us] to add [to] or to subtract [from the laws of the Torah] or to transgress temporarily *other* commandments of the Torah, and not for the purpose of undermining any Torah Fundamentals, but for some [religious] need (i.e., למיגדר מילתא), then we must obey him.

Thus, it is clear from Meiri's Commentary that the inviolability of what is fundamental in Torah applies equally to fundamental מצוות (commandments) and to fundamental Principles of אמונה (פְּנוֹת הַדַּת, יסודי התורה, עיקרים). Neither a prophet nor the Beth Din can violate Torah Fundamentals.

Let us return to the kabbalistic concept of God, which departs radically from the classic concept of G-d of the קדמונים ז"ל (The Foremost Early Authorities), and, which, from the standpoint of the קדמונים ז"ל (Foremost Early Authorities) constitutes a deviation from and an abrogation of Torah Fundamentals.

Let us begin by presenting the concepts of certain non-Jewish schools which are strikingly similar to those of kabbalism:

1. *Gnosticism* has been defined as "a hybrid system of ancient Greek and Oriental philosophy, modified by an attempted synthesis with Christian doctrine, marked especially by the *asserted possession of superior knowledge*, and denounced as heretical by the Church." Gnostics believed in aeons, "one of the group of eternal beings *who together form the fullness ("pleroma") of the supreme being, from whom they emanate.*" The Gnostics spoke of a "demiurge" (from Greek *demiourgos*, a worker for the people, a workman, especially the maker of the world), "a deity regarded as an emanation of the Supreme Being, considered to be the creator of the material world." Gnosticism was a "dualistic religious and philosophical movement of the late Hellenistic and early Christian eras. The term designates a wide assortment of sects, numerous by the 2nd century (of the Common Era), who promised salvation through an occult 'knowledge' *that they claimed was revealed to them alone.*" These ideas have been traced to "Hellenistic mystery cults, Iranian religious dualism (Zoroastrianism), and Babylonian and Egyptian mythology."

It was probably the books of these Gnostics that Elisha ben Abuyah (אחרא) read, as recorded in Hagigah 15b: "Hellenistic song was never absent from his mouth ... [and] when he rose from the study [of the Torah] many books of the *Minim* (Sectarian Heretics) would fall from his bosom." Some hold that the term *Minim* (Sectarian Heretics) so frequently mentioned in the Talmud is, in the main, a reference to the Gnostics (see תולדות ישראל לזאב יעבץ, (חלק ששי, ומוצאי דבר ח' וט')

2. *Neoplatonism* was the "last, in time, of the great pagan philosophies." It was developed by Plotinus (3rd cent.) and derived from the earlier philosophical system of Plato. ... Plotinus himself could not have foreseen the radical transformation his thought would undergo in the hands of his followers." Plotinus set forth "one vast order containing all the various levels and kinds of existence. At the center of the order is the One, an incomprehensible, all-sufficient unity. By the *process of emanation* the One gives rise to the Divine Mind or Logos (=word), which contains all the forms, or living intelligences, of individuals. The content of the Divine Mind hence constitutes a multiple reflection of the unitary perfection of the One. Below the Divine Mind is the World Soul, which links the intellectual and material worlds. These three transcendent relations, or hypostases (the One, the Divine Mind, and the World Soul) support the finite and visible world, which includes individual men and matter. Plotinus sometimes

compared the One to a fountain, from which overflowed the lower levels of reality. ... Many of his philosophical elements come from earlier philosophies; the existence of the One and the attendant theory of ideas were of the later writings of Plato. ... What was distinctive in Plotinus' system was the unified, hierarchical structuring of these elements and the theory of emanation."

3. *Emanation* [Latin = flowing from] is a cosmological concept characteristic of Neoplatonism and of Gnosticism and frequently encountered in Indian metaphysics. In the history of Western thought it has been to some extent, as in Neoplatonism, *opposed to the Judeo-Christian conception of creation, in which the eternal G-d makes all from nothing*. To explain the relation of a totally transcendent G-d to a finite and imperfect world, *the belief in emanation denies that G-d directly created the world but maintains rather that the world is the result of a chain of emergence through emanations*. From God ... the one prime principle, flows *the divine substance*; His own substance never lessens. As the flow proceeds farther from God, however, its divinity *decreases*. ... Emanation never ceases, the whole process moving continuously outward from God."

The kabbalists too speak of One ("En Sof," "the Infinite") who is too transcendent to produce the universe directly. Only after the emanation of a less transcendent realm of divinity, i.e., the Sefiroth, can the "creative" process begin. Thus, in the , the "Book of the Configuration of the Divinity" (sic!), a basic text of the kabbalists, we read:

Translation: "Know that to the 'En Sof,' 'the Infinite' that we have mentioned, there is no reference in the Torah, nor in the Prophets, nor in the Writings, nor in the words of our Sages. However, the 'Men of Service' (i.e., the kabbalists) have received some reference to it." In other words, according to the kabbalists, the ineffable four letter Name and the other Names of G-d mentioned in the Torah, the Prophets, the Writings. and in the words of our Sages do not refer to the Absolute Be-ing (Absolute Existence), Whose existence is eternally prior to all else, the Absolute, Transcendent G-d, the Supreme Being Who is exalted beyond conception. The G-d mentioned in the Torah, Prophets, Writings and in the words of our Sages, and called , , , etc. refers according to the kabbalists to a realm of demiurgical divinity emanated from the Supreme Being ('En Sof'), in other words, the realm of the Sefiroth.

The order of the progressive emanation of the ten Sefiroth is generally presented by the kabbalists as follows:

כתר (Kether)

בינה (Binah)

חכמה (Hokhmah)

גבורה (Gevurah)

חסד (Hesed)

תפארת (Tifereth)

הוד (Hod)

נצח (Netzah)

יסוד (Yesod)

מלכות (Malkhuth), also called
(Shekhinah)

According to Zohar III, llb, 70a: "He is they, and they are He."

The Sefiroth are also viewed in terms of configurations (Partzufim) that are also arranged progressively, as follows: Adam Kadmaah (אדם קדמאה), Adam Kadmon (אדם קדמון, Primordial Man), Attika Kaddisha (עתיקא קדישא, the Holy Ancient One), Arikh Anpin (אריך אנפין, the Long-Suffering One), Abba and Imma (אבא ואמא, Father and Mother), Ze'er Anpin and His Female (זעיר אנפין ונוקביה). This latter פרצוף (Configuration), namely Ze'er Anpin, is according to the kabbalists, our God and we are His people and His servants, according to Rabbi Emanuel Hai Rikki's standard text (דף כ"א ול"א ול"ב), ספר ישר לבב, and others. In many places in Zohar, Ze'er Anpin is called by the שם הוי"ה (the Tetragrammaton, the ineffable Name of G-d), which Name cannot be applied, according to the kabbalists, to the Supreme Being before emanation, Whom they call "אין סוף" (the Infinite Being). In ספר עץ חיים (שער הכללים פרק י"א) of Rabbi Hayyim Vital it is clearly stated concerning the verse "And ye that cleave unto the L-rd your G-d are alive every one of you this day" (Deut. 4:4), that "the L-rd your G-d' is Ze'er Anpin and His Female"(!) Naturally, the kabbalists protest that all these are merely symbols of spiritual potencies. The kabbalists also disclaim the polytheism implied in the multiplicity of the Sefiroth and the Partzufim (configurations), by saying, along with the Zohar, that they all together comprise a unity (וכלא חד, "all are One"). We shall deal with these claims and counterclaims in the course of this monograph.

Kabbalistic ideas of this kind surfaced in Provence in the form of the ספר הבהיר ("The Book Bahir"), which the kabbalists attributed to Rabbi Nehunya ben Hakkanah. They called it the "Midrash of Rabbi Nehunya ben Hakkanah" (and it is by this name that Ramban refers to it in his Torah commentary). Its appearance evoked violent opposition. Rabbenu Meir ben Shimeon (המעילי) of Narbonne (1190-1263), author of the ספר המאורות on the Talmud, and the teacher of Rabbenu Manoah of Narbonne (author of ספר המנוחה on Rambam's Mishneh Torah), was an elder colleague of Ramban. Both were pupils of Rabbenu Nathan ben Meir. With the approval of his uncle, the great Rabbenu Meshullam, author of the ספר ההשלמה, Rabbenu Meir wrote, as follows:

I shall record here, the words of the letter that I wrote some time ago to refute the words of those who speak perversion about G-d and about the sages who walk in the path of the unblemished Torah and those who revere Hashem. They (i.e., those who speak perversion) are wise in their own eyes, invent ideas and incline toward heresy (מינות). They imagine they are bringing proof for their views from the statements of Aggadoth that they interpret according to their [heretical] error. G-d forbid! The intent of the Sages who made those statements was not in accord with their view and intent (i.e., not in accord with the view and intent of those who incline toward heretical error). May G-d approve our effort for good, and may He grant us proper instruction. ... Amen, Amen, Selah. ...

It is already some time now that fools have gone forth with distortions concerning the [true] faith in G-d and concerning the Prayer and the Blessings that were arranged by the Scholars in Council. These distorted views have no root or basis either in the Torah of Moshe, or the Prophets and the Writings, or in the Talmud as edited for us by Rabbina and Rav Ashi -- in a word, not in the Torah and not in the Received Instruction nor in Reason. ... These fools have decided not to render thanks, prayer and blessing to the Eternally Pre-existent G-d, Who is without beginning or end. Woe unto their souls! What happened to them and what did they see concerning this! They have contemned the Holy One of Israel; they are turned away backward in their treason. They have caused themselves to wander away from the Eternally Pre-existent G-d of the universe, the Eternal Divine Refuge, without beginning and end, beside Whom there is no G-d, as many Scriptural verses testify: "I am the first, and I am the last, and beside Me there is no G-d" (Isaiah 44:6); "And You remain the same, and Your years are endless" (Psalms 102:28); and many other Scriptural verses like these.

He is G-d in heaven above and in the earth beneath, there is none else beside Him, and there is no other alongside of Him. He is a true Unity (אחד אמת), a perfect (i.e., absolute) Unity (אחרות תמימה) *without association and combination of Sefiroth* (בלי שבת כל הסבות וצירוף וצירוף ספירות) Our G-d, blessed be He, is the Cause of all causes (סבת כל העלות ועלת כל העלות) the Maker of great things which He brought into existence out of nothing (ex nihilo, המציאם יש מאין) by His Will alone. He spoke and they came into existence, He created them, and when they stood forth, He called them (i.e., to their functions). To Him it is fitting to give thanks, to bless and extol Him, to pray to Him and to humble ourselves before Him, and to exalt Him and call Him in the Thanksgivings and Blessings "Master of all and Creator of all" -- not to His creatures (i.e., the Sefiroth) who have a beginning and end. He watches over and rules all, in general and in detail, as the Torah testifies: "For all His ways are justice" (Deuteronomy 32:4). Nothing at all is concealed from Him. ...

It is wrong to associate with Him anything else; for it is improper to associate creature with its Creator, [created] substance with Him Who formed it, what has been originated with the Originator, and to say that His Unity is not absolute (שלמה) but that together with them, all is one. For all that is and exists beside Him, He created them and brought them into existence out of absolutely nothing pre-existent -- from the smallest creature to the greatest. "And whoever associates the name of G-d with something else will be uprooted from the world" (Sanhedrin 63a). This is the proper Emunah (Faith) for all Israelites of religion to believe.

Whoever strays from this is a denier (כופר) and a heretic (מיץ). What need is there for lengthy discussion of the opinions of the fools who direct all their prayers and blessings to divinities who, they, say are created and emanated, who have a beginning and end. For they say in their foolishness that whatever is called "first" and "last" has a beginning and an end, and it is written (Isaiah 44:6): "I am the first, and I am the last, and beside Me there is no G-d." So have we found in one of the books of their

error (i.e., of their heresy) which they call Bahir (בהיר), and so too have some of our scholars heard from their mouths. They have said that one should pray in the day to one created divinity and at night to another divinity who is superior to the former, but who is likewise created, and on Holy Days to yet another. During the Ten Days of Repentance they have increased perplexity and backsliding by praying to another created divinity, and to other created divinities below the former during the rest of the year. They have made many distinctions in prayer (i.e., many distinctions in the Divinity to whom their prayers are addressed) [the next word is indistinct in the manuscript] their deficient understanding. They shall be an abhorring unto all flesh; the worm of their folly shall not die, nor shall the fire of their foolishness be quenched. For they have desired many divinities, and say in their deficient understanding that all of them (i.e., the Sefiroth) are connected with one another and all [together] are one.

These fools do not let their ears hear what they declare with mouths. For in truth the G-d in Whom we ought to believe and to Whom we should pray, Whom we should serve, bless and thank is One. If they say that He is more than One, then they deny the Torah which says: 'Hashem our G-d, Hashem is One' (Deut. 6:4) and: '... there is none else beside Him' (Deut. 4:35). If they say He is One, why do they divide their prayer, [praying] to one during the day, and to another one at night? Why do they distinguish [in addressing their prayers] between Holy Days and weekdays? Why do they differentiate between the Ten Days of Repentance and the rest of the year? How are all these distinctions appropriate in relation to Him?

In truth they should know that G-d is One, and His Oneness is from infinity, without beginning or end, without change, as it is written: "I the L-rd change not" (Malachi 3:6). Therefore He is One before the Sefiroth were created and originated, for they have a beginning, and [these fools] also admit that the Sefiroth have a beginning and end, and yet it is to them (i.e., the Sefiroth) that their hearts are directed in their blessings and in their prayers. Must they not recognize the fallacy of their statements? However, their eyes are bedaubed that they cannot see, and their hearts that they cannot understand. The end of the matter: all their words are as the chaff before the wind and as stubble, empty words without substance; demolition and destruction of the Torah; heresy and denial (הריסת התורה וסתירה, דברי מינות וכפירה).

If what they say be true, that it is not proper to bless and to pray to the Eternally Pre-existent G-d Who is without beginning or end, the Cause of all causes, Whom they call in their terminology "אין סוף" ("En Sof," the Infinite One), and that whoever does so is in their eyes מקצץ בנטיעות "a destroyer of shoots" (i.e., a heretic), and does not deserve to see the pleasantness of salvation reserved for those who know G-d and fear Him, then how can any intelligent person imagine that this was not made clear in the perfect Torah that Hashem gave us for everlasting life, in which it is written: "Unto thee it was shown that thou mightest know that Hashem He is G-d, there is none else beside Him" (Deut. 4:35). For how are we to know what Hashem has not spoken (i.e., has not mentioned in the Torah)? Where, then, has He shown us that we might know all these things? And how is it that all this was not made clear to us by

Rabbenu Hakkadosh (רבינו הקדוש) who arranged (edited) the Mishnayoth, and by Rabbina and Rav Ashi who closed and wrote the entire Talmud that we possess, which [two works, i.e., the Mishnah and the Talmud] are the main תורה שבעל פה (Oral Torah)? How did they leave all Israel to err and to be banished from עולם הבא (the World to Come) as מקצצין בנטיעות, "destroyers of shoots"?

Woe unto the eyes that see such [words], woe unto the ears that hear such [words], woe unto the generation in whose days such [heresy] has arisen! How is it that those who declare the declarations of Hashem and are clothed in His fear have not gathered strength [to condemn such heresy]? How is it that the sages of the generation (חכמי הדור) have refrained from speaking out? *See ye, is it for nought that the troubles and the yoke of exile and the [evil] decrees have assumed unusual proportions against us? Is there in this time of ours among all the vain beliefs of the gentiles regarding the Unity of G-d anything worse than these [heresies]?*

If they should say that one who blesses [G-d] and prays to G-d, the Cause of all causes, the Creator of all, is [not] banished from the world [to come], and does attain eternal life, and is not called a "destroyer of shoots" (i.e., a heretic), but they (i.e., the kabbalists) think in their foolishness that this is the faith of the multitude, whereas they (i.e., the kabbalists) know the secret of G-d and are of those who fear Him, and hope to rise to a higher level than the others through this belief of theirs, then these fools abandon what is even according to them certain and adopt what is uncertain. What is certain is that through this [heresy] they and their souls become desolate, and they descend to the lowest level, contrary to their hope and wrong intent. The end of the matter: every intelligent person is obligated to reject their words of folly.

Now we have written all this before you, our Rabbis of every city, in order to reveal all these matters, because we fear the signatures of those whom they have misled to sign for them. Moreover, we have been told that they have forged the signatures of many scholars of this land, who really did not sign. In this way many of the land may go astray after them, and through many deceits they will boast saying: "In the land of scholars of Torah and Wisdom we have found strength and power" -- lest they should say: "our hand is exalted." Heaven forbid, Heaven forbid such wickedness, to incline toward these words of heresy! Such as this shall not come to pass in Israel!

We have heard that a book has been composed for them which they call Bahir ('Bright') mentioned above, in which they see no light. This book has come into our hands, and we have found that they attribute it to R. Nehunya ben Hakkanah. G-d forbid (חס ושלום)! It is utterly untrue! That righteous man never stumbled by means of it, and was not numbered with the transgressors. The language of that book and all its terms indicate that it is by one unacquainted with literary form and style. It contains words of heresy and denial (דברי מינות וכפירה) in many places.

We have also heard that in addition a commentary has been written for them on the *Song of Songs*, on *Sefer Yetzirah* and on *Hechaloth*. This commentary contains words

written in the mode of their heresy (ונכתבו שם דברים בדרך מינותם). Also a commentary on *Koheleth* (Ecclesiastes) and on other [Scriptural] books. Inquire and search well, and if they (i.e., these books) are in your midst, remove them from the land so that this shall be no stumblingblock unto you. Dig them out as we too have removed those found in our midst. And may G-d in His mercy send us a redeemer and gather together the scattered of Judah and Israel. May He remove from the midst of His people their doubts and perplexities, and turn the heart of fathers to children, and the heart of children to their fathers.

We have written all this with the approval of our master, the great Rav, the light of Israel, our teacher R. Meshullam son of the great Rav Moshe, may G-d protect him (בעל ספר ההשלמה, the author of *Sefer Hahashlamah*, who was the teacher and uncle of the writer, Rabbenu Meir ben R. Shimeon המעילי), and the other sages of the land, some of whom knew privately the root of the matter, and what caused us to write [this letter].

"And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn the many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3). Amen, Amen, Selah.

Note I

Obviously, the kabbalists would be, and are, appalled at the use of the term "gods" or "divinities" in relation to the emanated Sefiroth. Kabbalists do not consider their emanative doctrine a departure from Jewish monotheism. However, the author of this epistle, Rabbenu Meir המעילי, basing himself on the axiomatic Fundamentals of the classic, orthodox concept of G-d of the קדמונים ז"ל (the Foremost Early Authorities), had no choice but to call the emanated Sefiroth of kabbalism "gods" ("divinities"). Rabbenu Meir has indeed enumerated some of the Fundamentals of the classic, orthodox concept that are violated by kabbalism and that *lead to the charge of polytheism*. These are:

1) G-d is "a true Unity (אחד אמתי), a perfect (i.e., absolute) Unity (אחדות תמימה), without association and combination of Sefiroth." This is in contrast to the kabbalists, who "associate *creature* (i.e., emanated Sefiroth) with its Creator ... and say that His Unity it not absolute (שלמה), but that *together with them* (i.e., the emanated Sefiroth), *all is one*."

2) Emanation cannot be taken to result in a kind of emanated divinity that may be addressed as "G-d." "For all that exists *beside Him*, *He created* them and brought them into existence out of absolutely nothing pre-existent. There exists only the Eternally Pre-existent Absolute Be-ing, G-d (the Creator), and what is '*beside Him*,' *what is other than G-d*, what has been brought into existence by G-d. There is no middle ground, nothing in between.

3) The very idea of Sefirotic emanation of divinity contradicts the Fundamental of the classic, orthodox concept of G-d as unchanging from infinity ("I the L-rd change not - Malachi 3:6).

4) The emanative doctrine of the kabbalists also contradicts the classic, orthodox concept of Creation of the קדמונים ז"ל (the Foremost Early Authorities) that the Eternally Pre-existent Absolute Be-ing, the Infinite G-d, *created all else that exists beside Himself* out of Absolutely nothing pre-existent" -- "by His Will alone."

Consequently, the *created* Sefiroth that are addressed as "G-d" are "gods," or "divinities." End of Note I.

Thus, Rabbenu Meir המעיילי denounced the kabbalists, who "say that His Unity is not absolute (שלמה), but that together with them, (i.e., the Sefiroth), all is one." Rabbenu Meir declared that "He (G-d) is a true Unity, a perfect (absolute) Unity, without association and combination of Sefiroth (אחד אמתי באחדות תמימה בלי שתוף וצירוף ספירות)"; and that "whoever strays from this proper Emunah is a denier (כופר) and a heretic (מיץ)."

The kabbalists did indeed subscribe to the kind of "unity" that Rabbenu Meir המעיילי here denounced. Here is one example of many:

And according to the way of the kabbalah, "Hear, O Israel ..." Incline your ears and hear [in] the verse "Hear, [O Israel]" (שמע) the meaning of the true Unity which has been received and *privately* held by the "knowers of truth" concerning the secret of unification of the Sefiroth, all of which we are obligated to unite and to join together all as one, whether from below upward, or from above downward. The word שמע is an expression of joining together, as in וַיִּשְׁמַע שאול "And Saul gathered together" (First Samuel 15:4), and as in לְשִׁמְעָ אֹזֶן יִשְׁמְעוּ לִי "As soon as they hear of me, they gather together unto me" (Psalms 18:45). ה', "Hashem" (i.e., the first Name of as in [...] ה' [הגדלה והגבורה והתפארת והנצח וההוד...] "Unto Thee, *Hashem*, [belong the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty ...]" (First Chronicles 29:11), encompasses the three highest degrees (i.e., the three highest Sefiroth: 1. כתר, Kether 2. חכמה, Hokhmah 3. בינה, Binah). א-לקינו, 'our G-d refers to הגדלה, the Greatness (also called חסד, Hesed) and הגבורה, the Power. ה', "Hashem" (the second time) refers to התפארת, the Glory [and the remaining Sefiroth] until the end of the structure, and afterward אחד, "is One." In the word אחד, "One," are included all the ten [Sefiroth]. א' (of אחד) refers to whom thought cannot grasp; ח' (of אחד) refers to the eight things (i.e., Sefiroth) that are with him; ד' (of אחד) refers to the tenth [Sefirah], which is the great crown of gold (i.e., the Sefirah of מלכות, Majesty). It is not proper to separate it (or her), but rather to unify and join together all [the Sefiroth]. And it is proper [mentally] to unify [the Sefiroth] from below and upward (i.e., starting with the last Sefirah, that of מלכות), [because of the rule] of advancing higher in holiness, although it is all the same [whether one unifies upward or downward] as far as the service of unification is concerned. ... And because the middah (i.e., Sefirah) of מלכות (Majesty) is not explicitly included in the three Names [of אחד ה' א-לקינו ה' שמע ישראל ה' א-לקינו ה' אחד] (but only alluded to in the ד' of אחד), therefore the Sages instituted that we add (after the פסוק של שמע ישראל לעולם, "Blessed be the Name of His glorious *Majesty* forever and ever"), which was not mentioned by Moses. But although he did not mention it, he alluded to it in the letter ד' (of אחד). ... Therefore, when declaring the unification, one must include all the ten [Sefiroth] in the word אחד ("One"), because they are all a perfect unity, for the ten manifest the power of the One, Who produced them, and Who includes the ten. ... (From the commentary of R. Bahya ben Asher to the שמע, Deut. 6:4).

R. Bahya ben Asher (died c. 1340), a pupil of Rashba, acknowledges in the preface to his

commentary his indebtedness to Ramban's kabbalistic teachings, which are quoted extensively. Indeed, the passage just quoted above on שמע ישראל can be found almost verbatim in Sefer HaEmunah VeHaBitahon of Ramban, chapter 3. Although the attribution of this work to Ramban has been questioned, it derives, in any case, from the circle of Ramban's disciples (see Rabbi Chavel's introduction in Kitve HaRamban II, pp. 341-349). Moreover, there are also almost verbatim passages in Ramban's Torah Commentary to שמע ישראל (Deut. 6:4). However, the remarks there are very circumspect, and can be understood only through the Sefer HaEmunah VeHaBitahon and the commentary of R. Bahya ben Asher.

It is interesting to note that Ramban, the kabbalist, felt compelled to acknowledge the Torah greatness of Rabbenu Meshullam (the author of Sefer HaHashlamah), the anti-kabbalist, with whose approval the aforementioned letter of Rabbenu Meir המעילי was written. In a letter addressed to Rabbenu Meshullam of Beziers, (the bastion of pro-Rambam sentiment in the controversy around the *Guide*), in which Ramban complained about aspersions coming from Beziers against the family purity of his cousin, Rabbenu Yonah, Ramban is careful to attribute the slander to the hasty youths (כך יעשו הבחורים) and to express his reverence of Rabbenu Meshullam. Thus:

I set before my eyes the honor of praise, the foundation of excellence, the great scholar, R. Meshullam, followed by his disciples, his books, his friends, his companions, his elders, his judges and his officers, all who seek peace in their gates, and every wise-hearted man among them. We know that there Torah and greatness converge. Their excellence is mighty (מעלתם כביר), and their honor is not hidden from us. Their love is in our thoughts and their fear is before us. Nevertheless ... (and here follows the complaint). ... And if our words are aimed proudly at the youths (הנערים), and our rhetoric roars, it is not against the scholars of your place, but against those who revile me. It is not against you, king of Israel, but against the house with which I am at war. For you and the scholars walk in truth and in uprightness. May you prolong your days, and spend your years in pleasantness, as is your desire and that of your pupil (כיש את נפשכם ונפש תלמידכם) - (דורש דמים) - Moses ben Nahman. (Kitve Ramban I pp. 360-364).

The kabbalistic assigning of the three Divine Names of the verse שמע ישראל to various distinct Sefiroth of the Deity, followed by the declaration that all the ten Sefiroth comprise a Unity (אחד, One), is a curious echo of the opening passage of Rambam's Treatise on Resurrection (מאמר בתחיית המתים):

It is not unusual that someone intends to explain a certain point simply, clearly, and precisely, in order to remove any doubt and possibility of misinterpretation; and yet irrational persons will distort that very explanation to mean the opposite of the point that was meant to be explained. Something like this has happened even with the words of G-d, exalted be He. Namely, when the master of all the prophets (Moses) intended to inform us by the Word of G-d that He, exalted be He, is One, with none like Him, and to remove from us the idle opinions of the dualists (i.e., who believe in two or more deities), he (Moses) said in explanation of this fundamental: "Hear, O

Israel, Hashem our G-d, Hashem is One." However, the Christians interpreted this verse to mean that G-d, exalted be He, is a trinity; for they said that the verse speaks of "Hashem", and of "our G-d" and of "Hashem" (a second time), which are three Divine Names, followed by "is One (אחד)". This proves that they are three and that the three are One. "Exalted be He above such foolishness."

This is but one example out of many of how heretical teachings take over, virus-like, the holiest cells of the orthodox body and then use them to promulgate heresy. This promulgation is couched in the most pious terminology so that opponents of the heresy appear to be opponents of the most elevated piety and purest holiness. Hardly a cell of the original orthodox body remains uninfected by the virus.

The similarity between Christian trinitarianism and Sefirotic kabbalism has not gone unnoticed, as might be seen from שו"ת ריב"ש קנז, Responsum 157 of Rivash [R. Isaac ben Shesheth (1320-1407) the illustrious תלמיד (disciple) of RaN (Rabbenu Nissim), and one of the principal sources of the Shulhan Arukh]:

I have also informed you that my teacher Harav Rabbi Peretz Hakkohen never at all used to speak or think of those Sefiroth. I also heard from his mouth that Harav Rabbi Shimshon of Chinon (the author of ספר הכריתות, Sefer HaKerithuth), who was greater than all others of his generation (I too remember him, though I never saw him) used to say: I pray with the intent of this child, i.e., in rejection of the opinion of the kabbalists, who pray sometimes to one Sefirah and sometimes to another Sefirah, according to the subject of the prayer. ... And all this is a very bizarre thing in the eyes of those who are not kabbalists as they are, and they (i.e., the non-kabbalists) consider this a belief in dualism (i.e., belief in two or more deities). I once heard one of the philosophical (i.e., non-kabbalistic) persons denigrate the kabbalists by saying: "The Christians believe in trinity, (i.e., the union of three), and the kabbalists believe in the union of ten [Sefiroth]."

It happened that, when I was in Saragossa, the venerable scholar, Don Yoseph ibn Shoshan ז"ל, arrived there. (I had previously seen him in Valencia). He was a Talmudic scholar, acquainted with philosophy, a kabbalist, a man of great piety, scrupulously observant, and there was great love between us. Once I asked him: "How can you kabbalists in one ברכה (blessing) direct yourselves to a certain Sefirah, and in another ברכה (blessing) direct yourselves to another Sefirah? Moreover, do the Sefiroth possess divinity that one should pray to them?"

He answered me: Heaven forbid that prayer should be directed to anyone but Hashem, blessed be He, the Cause of causes. However, this thing (i.e., this practice of the kabbalists) is like one who has a dispute and turns to the king to settle it for him. He would request of him (i.e., of the king) that he order the minister of justice to judge it for him, not that he order the treasurer who is in charge of the treasury, for this would be a wrong request. Similarly, if one should request of the king that he give him a monetary gift, he would not ask him (i.e., the king) to charge the minister

of justice, but that he charge the treasurer. ... So too with prayer. It is always directed to the Cause of causes, but one directs one's mind to draw the [Divine] influence to that Sefirah which relates to the request.

For example, in the blessing on behalf of the righteous (על הצדיקים) one would direct his mind to the Sefirah called Hesed, which is the attribute of mercy, whereas in the blessing against the heretics one would direct his mind to the Sefirah called Gevurah, which is the attribute of justice, and so on."

This is the explanation of the aforementioned pious man concerning the directed prayers of the kabbalists. Very good. However, who forces us to get involved in all this? Is it not better to pray with devotion in general to Hashem, blessed be He, and He will know how to fulfill the request, as Scripture (Psalms 37:5) states: "Commit your way to Hashem, rely on Him and He will act"? This is what was meant by the great Rav, Rabbi Shimshon of Chinon ז"ל, whom I mentioned above.

Similarly, I have informed you of what my teacher, Harav Rabbenu Nissim ז"ל (RaN ז"ל), said to me, *explicitly* that "much too much did Ramban ז"ל commit himself *to believe* (emphasis added) in the matter of that kabbalah." (הרבה יותר מדאי תקע עצמו) (הרמב"ן ז"ל להאמין בענין הקבלה ההיא). For this reason I do not commit myself to that doctrine, since I have not received it from a scholar who has himself received it, notwithstanding the fact that I have seen commentaries on the secrets of Ramban ז"ל. For they too do not disclose the basic principles of that doctrine, but rather "reveal a handsbreadth and conceal many handsbreadths", making it likely to err in some aspect of them. Therefore I have chosen not to have any occupation with secret (i.e., kabbalistic) doctrines.

Concerning your question whether the Sefiroth are below the level of the angels or above them, undoubtedly the Sefiroth are above them. ... Concerning the book you mentioned, authored by the scholar Rabbi Isaac ibn Latif, called צורת העולם, I have it. ... In addition he authored a commentary on Koheleth, which is a fine commentary, according to the plain meaning (על דרך הפשט) and inclining to the rational and to natural science. In addition, he authored the largest and finest of his books called שער השמים. It is similar to [Rambam's] מורה הנבוכים (Guide of the Perplexed) ... This book is very distinguished, and in it the author writes according to the rational and according to philosophical inquiry (but he rejects [those of] their opinions that contradict our Torah). It seems that this scholar (ibn Latif) studied much philosophy, but yet was a man of Torah and piety. In this book he writes the reasons for the commandments (טעמי מצות). I have not seen in this book any mention of ten Sefiroth, but of ten levels of angels, as mentioned by Rambam in ספר המדע. In this book the explanations are extensive in all aspects, except in a few things which he conceals and says: "Understand this:" But in the book to which you have referred all his words are obscure, and cannot be understood. ... In this obscure book he mentions ten Sefiroth, but not according to the kabbalah of Ramban ז"ל and those who follow his kabbalah. For in this book his opinion appears to be that the levels of the angels are

included in the [Sefiroth]. The three highest levels [of Sefiroth] are the angels that are described as fire, water and wind ..., the fourth form is the light of the sun, the fifth is the sphere of the intelligence, which includes all the spheres; the four remaining forms are the four basic forms, as is mentioned in chapter twenty of this book. This is not at all the view of the kabbalists. ... Therefore I say that one should not rely in matters of this kind except on a scholar who has himself received instruction (מפי חכם) *and even then [only] maybe* (ועדיין אולי)!

A careful reading and analysis of this Responsum will yield the following:

1. The most significant passage is the one in which Rivash quotes his great teacher, the famous and illustrious RaN (Rabbenu Nissim), as saying *explicitly*: "Much too much did Ramban ל"ל commit himself (תקע עצמו) *to believe* (להאמין) in the matter of that kabbalah." It is important to note that RaN was disagreeing with Ramban's *belief* (להאמין) in the kabbalah, not with his preoccupation with it. Rivash also stresses that RaN said this "*explicitly*" (ביחוד). Rivash does not disagree with his great teacher. As a matter of fact, RaN's uncompromising criticism of Ramban's belief in the kabbalah is quoted by Rivash immediately *after* Don Yoseph ibn Shoshan's apologetic explanation of the Sefirotic intentions of kabbalistic prayer, an apologia that Rivash seemingly partly accepted in principle ("Very good. However, who forces us to get involved in all this?").

2. Concerning the passage: "I once heard one of the philosophical persons (אחד מן המתפלספים) denigrate the kabbalists by saying: "The Christians believe in trinity (i.e., the union of three), and the kabbalists believe in the union of ten [Sefiroth]," it should be pointed out that the reflexive term המתפלספים מן אחד may be understood by some as a somewhat derogatory characterization, implying one who is *overly* engaged in philosophical speculation. This is not the case. In the introduction to the Guide of the Perplexed Rambam uses the same term, and writes (according to the classic translation of Ibn Tibbon): שנתפלסף אבל המאמר הזה דברי בו עם מי שנתפלסף: "In this work, however, I address one who has studied philosophy (שנתפלסף) and has acquired true knowledge, and believes in the Torah ...". Rambam clearly is not speaking derogatorily of one who is *overly* philosophical. The reflexive "שנתפלסף" means simply one who has studied and follows philosophical principles. So too Rivash uses the same reflexive (המתפלספים) to denote one of the philosophical persons in contrast to kabbalistic persons.

3. Some have suggested that in writing "I once heard one of the philosophical persons denigrate the kabbalists etc." Rivash was really voicing his own criticism, which he cautiously attributed to "one of the philosophical persons." This is, of course, speculative and unverifiable.

What is perfectly clear, however, is the fact Rivash calls himself a non-kabbalist, as he writes: "For this reason I do not commit myself to that doctrine, since I have not received it from a scholar who has himself received it ... Therefore I have chosen not to have any occupation with secret doctrines." Consequently, when Rivash writes that R. Shimshon of Chinon used to say: 'I pray with the intent of a child,' i.e., in rejection of the opinion of the kabbalists who pray

sometimes to one Sefirah and sometimes to another Sefirah ... and all this is a very bizarre thing in the eyes of those who are not kabbalists as they are, and [non-kabbalists] consider this a belief in dualism," he (Rivash), as one of the non-kabbalists, obviously was identifying himself with this criticism along with all "who are not kabbalists as they are."

4. Even clearer than this are the two objections that Rivash voiced to ibn Shoshan: "How can you kabbalists in one ברכה (blessing) direct yourselves to a certain Sefirah, and in another ברכה (blessing) direct yourselves to another Sefirah? Moreover, do the Sefiroth possess divinity that one should pray to them?" These objections are not attributed to others. It is Rivash *himself* who raised them to ibn Shoshan.

Let us analyze the precise import of these two objections. The first objection is based on variously directed prayer. The fact that some prayers are directed to A and others to B implies dualism of the divine recipients of the prayers. The second objection assumes the non-divinity of the Sefiroth, and consequently asks? "Do the Sefiroth possess divinity that one should pray to them?" The expected answer is obviously: "No!" If this answer were "Yes," the dualism would emerge from *the very existence* of various and distinct entities of divinity -- even if prayers were not variously directed to them.

Now Rivash seems to have accepted ibn Shoshan's apologia in principle, if not in practice ("Very good. However, who forces us to get involved in all this?"). Thus, Rivash must have taken the apologia to mean: a) that prayer is not directed to the Sefiroth, but only to the Cause of causes, and b) that the second objection's assumption of the non-divinity of the Sefiroth is indeed correct. Otherwise, *the very existence* of various and distinct entities of *divinity* would be dualism -- even if prayers were directed only to the Cause of causes.

In this view the Sefiroth are כלים, *created* potencies -- *creatures, not divinity* -- in charge of certain providential tasks. However, as Rivash answered his questioner, the Sefiroth are above, not below. the level of the angels in the hierarchy of spiritual *creatures*.

It must be pointed out that this is not the view of normative kabbalism, which believes, to use the words of the Zohar, that "He (G-d) is they (the Sefiroth or Partzufim, Configurations) and they are He," and that וכלא חד, "all are One," i.e., together they comprise a divine Unity. According to normative kabbalism the ten Sefiroth are alluded to in שמע ישראל ה' א-לקינו ה' אחד, so that when saying אחד ("One") we must have in mind the unification of the Sefiroth in one Unity, as quoted above from ספר אמונה ובטחון, Commentary of Rabbi Bahya ben Asher and of Ramban to Deut. 6:4. See also Zohar to this verse where a similar interpretation is given. It is well-known that the kabbalists consider the Sefiroth and Partzufim (Configurations) of the world of Atziluth (the highest of the four worlds that they assume are emanated between En Sof and our earthly domain) to be אלהות גמור "absolute Divinity," "absolute Godhead."

5. Rivash's description of the anti-kabbalistic R. Shimshon of Chinon (בעל ספר הכריתות) as one "who was greater than all others of his generation" seems somewhat gratuitous, unless it was meant to counter the great reputation of Ramban, the kabbalist.

6. It is noteworthy that Rivash describes some of ibn Latif's works as "fine"; "according to the plain meaning"; inclining to the rational and to natural science"; "similar to [Rambam's] מורה הנבוכים (Guide of the Perplexed)"; "according to the rational and according to philosophical inquiry"; in which there is not "any mention of ten Sefiroth, but of ten levels of angels, as mentioned by Rambam in ספר המדע"; in which "the explanations are extensive." These works are contrasted with another by ibn Latif in which "all his words are obscure and cannot be understood. ... In this obscure book he mentions the ten Sefiroth ..."

Rivash's philosophical preference is obvious.

7. Rivash's closing statement is very telling: "Therefore I say that one should not rely in matters of this kind except on a scholar who has himself received instruction (מפי חכם מקובל), and even then [only], maybe (ועדיין אולי)!"

He could easily have found a חכם מקובל from whom to receive instruction. Taken together with all the previous points that we have highlighted, it seems abundantly clear that Rivash, like his master, RaN, was an anti-kabbalist. Because of the great influence of Ramban and his pupils, however, Rivash felt himself forced into a circumspect presentation of his true conviction. Thus: "and even then [only] maybe (ועדיין אולי)!" He really would *not* rely on a חכם מקובל whom he could have found and have consulted.

A more recent condemnation of kabbalism is the detailed and documented ספר מלחמות השם (The Book of the Wars of the L-rd) of R. Yahya ben Shelomoh Alkafih, אב"ד ור"מ ומר"צ צנעא, Chief Rabbi of Sana, capital of Yemen (Jerusalem 1931, תרצ"א). Without having seen the Epistle of Rabbenu Meir quoted above, Rav Yahya Kafih raises the same objections to kabbalism, some almost verbatim. He also adds other objections. The following are extensive, but selective, quotations from the entire book:

G-d forbid that any Jew should believe that R. Shimon ben Yohai or any other of our Sages believed in such things: to exchange Hashem our G-d, Who "made known His ways unto Moses, His deeds unto the children of Israel" that He is "Merciful and Compassionate, Slow to anger and Abundantly Kind etc." (Psalms 103:7-8), [to exchange Him] for an impatient alien divinity (Ze'er Anpin); and to combine and associate with Him five Partzufim (configurations) whose very existence has not been demonstrated, and to call them "Hashem our God;" but Hashem the true G-d Whose existence has been demonstrated by many sound and strong proofs, as Rav Saadyah Gaon wrote in his Book of Beliefs and Opinions (ספר האמונות והדעות) and [as wrote] the author of The Duties of the Heart (ספר חובות הלבבות), and Rambam in the Guide of the Perplexed and in Mishneh Torah, [Him] we should forsake and abandon and say [of Him] that He has no Name, and that we should serve [instead] the Partzufim (Configurations) and the Forms that, according to him (i.e., the author of the Zohar), were created and developed from Him! ... The goal of our Holy Torah is to distance us from the belief in idols, whether they be physical or spiritual, and to know that Hashem He is G-d; there is none else beside Him. ...

We are forced to admit [that we are now in the condition] described by the prophet

(Second Chronicles 15:3): "For many days (years) Israel was without the true G-d," as our eyes see and our ears hear, so that one [Jew] can say to his fellow [Jew]: Your people is my people, but your god is not my G-d (a play on Ruth 1:16)!

Unto the true G-d we pour out our supplication to lead us in the path of truth and to deliver us from any alien belief. Amen, so may it be His will ...

Concerning this alien (heterodox) belief of the philosopher-author of the Zohar, our Sages expounded (Yalkut, Parashath Kedoshim, Midrash Haggadol ad loc. and Rambam (ספר המצות, לאוין י')):

"Turn ye not unto the idols, and gods [of molten metal make ye not to yourselves] (Lev. 19:4)-If you turn unto them (to honor them - Sforno), you will in the end make gods of them." This is what happened with the belief of the philosopher-author of the Zohar. For the early students who studied it, thinking that it was authored by R. Shimon ben Yohai, the Tanna, sought to justify its words by calling the Partzufim "instruments" (כלים), which they esteemed and honored. Those who came later made divinities of them, as was the [original] intent of the philosopher-author [of the Zohar], and they accepted them as divinities (as being אלהות גמור, "absolute Divinity," "absolute Godhead," as quoted above -- author). ...

Thus he (the author of the Zohar) seduced and led astray sincere and innocent scholars who believed his falsehoods that "the Holy One, blessed be He" (הקב"ה), called by him (i.e., the author of the Zohar) "the Ancient of ancients" and Moses our teacher and Elijah appeared to him and revealed to him heretical secrets that one may not think about even in the privy, ... [secrets of] divinities distinct in their being and their functions, without being concerned with [the problem of] addition and multiplicity in relation to our G-d, Whose Unity is uniquely absolute ... [of Whom] we cannot say: "together they all form a unity." ... For the Torah demanded strictly that we not attach or associate with Him any created being, whether corporeal or spiritual, as it is written (Ex. 22:19): "He that sacrificeth unto the gods shall be utterly destroyed, except unto Hashem alone"; and R. Shimon ben Yohai, the Tanna, peace be unto him, said [on this verse]: "Whoever associates the Name of Heaven with something else is uprooted from the world" (Sanhedrin 63a); and we do not say "they are all [together] one [unity.]," since the Torah has explicitly stated in many places that He is uniquely One, in contrast to all other unities.

Behold thus "ye that are Hashem's remembrancers, let there be no cessation on you part" (Isaiah 62:6) from making known His Unity unto your children and your pupils as we are commanded [to do].

When I looked at [the kabbalistic book] כסא אליהו ... p. 3, [I found that] he compares the Unity of G-d to other kinds of unity. For he writes there: "A house in its entirety is called 'one house', and if you enter it you will find many rooms, large and small, and other places, each one being described separately; ... you will also find that a wall, before it is built, consisted of [separate] parts, each building block composed of

pebbles, earth, plaster, etc., and after the builder skillfully combines all these parts ... they become one wall. At that point all is one unit. So too is the matter [of Divinity] with us etc." On pages 28-29 he compares it (i.e., the Unity of G-d) to the [unity] of a human body which is composed of bones, sinews, flesh, a head, eyes, ears, a nose, a mouth, hands and feet - and all [together,] is called Reuben or Shimon. On pages 25-27 he writes: "The general point is that the First Cause, called by all the kabbalists En Sof (the Infinite), He it is Who emanated, created, formed and made [all]. He conceals Himself within Ze'er Anpin, so that Ze'er Anpin is the ruler of all creatures, governing them, nourishing them and providing for them through the power of En Sof that is within him. Therefore, he is our God and we are his people, for our souls are his portion (or: are part of him); him do we serve, and he is the God of our fathers, for in his hand is the management of the worlds with regard to reward and punishment. But as for En Sof together with the other Partzufim (Configurations) that are above Ze'er and his Female (Mate), if people will direct their prayers to them specifically, without praying to Ze'er Anpin, then even if they direct their prayer to the Soul Who conceals Himself in them, their prayers will go unanswered. On the contrary, those who pray to them will be punished, for it is the will of the First Cause that he (i.e. Ze'er Anpin) should be the one who brings His influence (i.e., the influence of En Sof) to the lower beings, and there is none else beside him (i.e., Ze'er Anpin)." Read these passages carefully.

These words of the author of **כסא אליהו** stand in contradiction to the words of Rambam ל"ל in the Mishnah Commentary, in Mishneh Torah and in the Guide of the Perplexed; in contradiction to the words of the saintly author of the Duties of the Heart (**חובות** **הלבבות**) in **שער היחוד** (the Gate of Unity), and Rav Saadyah Gaon in the Book of Beliefs and Opinions (**ספר האמונות והדעות**) and the Rokeah who wrote that G-d's Oneness is not like that of one of a pair, nor one of a species (or: kind), nor like that of one man who is divisible into many units, nor like the oneness of a simple physical entity which is susceptible to ongoing subdivision. For G-d, blessed be He, is One, Whose Oneness is uniquely incomparable.

כסא אליהו also writes that En Sof (the Infinite) is the Soul of [the Sefirotic Configurations, Partzufim], Attik and Arikh Anpin, Abba and Imma, and Ze'er [Anpin] and his Female (Mate). But our aforementioned Rabbis wrote that G-d is not a physical entity, nor a force in a physical entity! According to him (i.e., **כסא אליהו**), however, G-d is a force in a physical entity.

Note II

When the kabbalists say En Sof is the soul of the Sefirotic Partzufim, or that He is clothed (**מתלבש**) in them (as is also stated in **נפש החיים**), it is tantamount to saying that G-d is a **כח בגוף**, a force in a corporeal entity. This contradicts the **יסוד** (the Fundamental) of the **קדמונים ז"ל** (of the Foremost Earlier Authorities) that G-d is neither a **גוף** (a corporeal being) nor a **כח בגוף** (nor a force in a corporeal being).

Man's soul is a force in a corporeal being, because the soul spiritualizes the body by giving it its non-material function (i.e., consciousness, intelligence, mind, etc.). However, if the Sefiroth are conceived to be

truly spiritual, incorporeal intelligences (minds) without substance, then it is meaningless to say that another incorporeal being (En Sof) is the soul of a Sefirah.

The truth is that, when kabbalists speak of a spiritual entity (דבר רוחני) with regard to Sefirotic beings, they really mean a גוף דק מאד, a kind of rarefied, ethereal substance, which to the קדמונים ז"ל (the Foremost Earlier Authorities) is a corporeal entity. In this way -- and only in this way -- can the kabbalists speak of En Sof as the Soul of the Sefirotic beings. But this contradicts the יסוד (the Fundamental) of the קדמונים ז"ל (the Foremost Earlier Authorities) that G-d is neither a גוף (a corporeal being) nor a כח בגוף (nor a force in a corporeal being).

One further point. The יסוד (The Fundamental) of the קדמונים ז"ל (the Foremost Early Authorities) that G-d is neither a corporeal being (גוף) nor a force in a corporeal being (ולא כח בגוף) is a statement of G-d's supreme Absolute Transcendence above all *that He has produced*, and to which He is eternally pre-existent. His Existence is unlike and separate from all *that He has produced*. To speak of G-d as the soul of the produced Sefirotic Partzufim, *even if they are taken to be purely spiritual*, is to contradict the Transcendence of the Supreme Absolute Be-ing above all that is produced, just as much as if He were the soul of a *produced* גוף (corporeal entity). His Eternally Pre-existent Transcendent Be-ing, unlike, separate from and *unlimited by anything He has produced*, is not subject to any subsequent change or limitation. אתה הוא עד שלא נברא העולם -- "Thou wast the same before the world was created. אתה הוא משנברא העולם -- Thou hast been the same since the world was created." End of Note II, ורהבן.

He (כסא אליהו) also writes that Arikh Anpin and Abba and Imma preceded (i.e., in the process of emanation) Ze'er Anpin, who is our God (according to כסא אליהו), and that the latter (Ze'er Anpin) is called the son of Abba and Imma. But our Rabbis ז"ל said that G-d is Eternally Pre-Existent to all else that exists, and that all else that exists is not eternally pre-existent. He (כסא אליהו) writes further that, regarding En Sof (the Infinite), no service and no prayer at all are applicable to Him; no name, not הוי"ה (the Name Y-H-W-H) nor the Name ארנות (the L-rd) etc. -- is applicable to Him, but only to Ze'er Anpin and his Female (Mate) of the world of Atziluth, and not to Arikh Anpin, Abba and Imma, nor to Ze'er Anpin who is in the emanated worlds that are above the world of Atziluth (כסא אליהו p. 49, bottom of עמוד א' and p. 53). ...

They (the kabbalists) say that in the world of Atziluth there are גוף (corporeal entities) and נשמה (soul) and מלבוש (garments [of divinity]). ... They (the kabbalists) state clearly that the upper worlds and [Sefirotic] Partzufim (Configurations) which are above Arikh Anpin are never discussed [by the kabbalists], but rather only [the Sefirotic entities that are] below Arikh Anpin which are more dense (i.e., less rarefied, less ethereal in the progression of emanation -- author) and more discernible. ...

The belief of kabbalism includes the following four views concerning which our Rabbis have declared that whoever believes thus has no share in the World to Come (עולם הבא): 1) A multiplicity of divinities: En Sof, Adam Kadmaah, Adam Kadmon, Attik, Arikh Anpin, Abba and Imma, Ze'er and his Female Mate; 2) these entities are rarefiedly corporeal (בעלי גוף דק), namely [they are] light (אור) and En Sof is the Soul of these corporeal entities; 3) Divine Service is not to the First Cause, called En Sof by the kabbalists, but to Ze'er Anpin, who is the last of these [emanated] causes; 4) he (Ze'er Anpin) is an intermediary who draws down the influence from the higher entities which are: Attik, Arikh Anpin, Abba and Imma, and he is in turn the father of

Kether of [the world of] Beriah, in the [emanated] unfolding of the worlds, according to their opinion -- G-d save us [from such views]!

We see the great difference between our רבותינו הראשונים (Early Rabbis) and their Emunah (Faith) concerning G-d and His Unity according to our Holy Torah as explained by Rabbenu Bahya, author of *Duties of the Heart* (חובות הלבבות); and by R. Yehudah Hallevi in his *Book of the Kuzari* and in his prayers; by Rav Saadyah Gaon in his *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions* (ספר האמונות והדעות); by Rambam in *Mishneh Torah*, in his *Mishnah Commentary* and in his *Guide of the Perplexed* (ספר מורה הנבוכים); by Rokeah in his *Gate of Unity*; by Semag (ספר מצות גדול); and by R. Yoseph Albo in his *Book of the Fundamental Principles* (ספר העקריות) ... and many others; [we see the difference between these] and the present belief found in the books of the later rabbis who follow kabbalism ... which has taken a strong hold, and which is a belief in many divinities (i.e., the Sefiroth and Partzufim -- author). The main point of the latter is that all our service and blessings (i.e., prayers) are directed to the last emanated Partzuf of Atziluth, called Ze'er Anpin. ... How can the opinions of the kabbalistic rabbis accord with the words of our aforementioned Early Rabbis!

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[The following is from] Zohar (בראשית כ"ב): "And God said: 'Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness (Gen. 1:26). 'The secret of the Lord is to those who fear Him'. Ps. 25:14). That Old One of the Old (סבא דסבין) began and said: 'Shimon, Shimon, who is the one who 'said' in the verse *and God said*; who is this God? In the meantime that Old One of the Old flew away, and he (R. Shimon) did not see him. And when R. Shimon heard that he called him 'Shimon, Shimon' and not 'Rabbi Shimon', he said to his companions: 'Surely this is the Holy One, blessed be He (קב"ה) of whom it is said (Daniel 7:9): *And one that was ancient of days did sit* (ועתיק יומין) (Commentary of מקדש מלך: The Old One of the Old -- סבא דסבין -- is Attik, as R. Shimon ben Yohai says below that Abba and Imma are called Old Ones, זקנים, while Attik and Arikh are called the Old Ones of the Old, סבא דסבין, and R. Shimon ben Yohai knew that [in this case] the reference was to Attik and not to Arikh.) Now is the time to begin [to explain] this secret, for surely there is here a secret that [until now] was not permitted to be revealed. He began and said: It is compared to a king who had many edifices to build, and the builder did nothing without the permission of the king ... All the edifices that were produced in the manner of Atziluth, Abba spoke to Imma: 'Let it be thus and thus', and immediately it came to pass. As it is said: *And God said: Let there be light, and there was light. And He said*, He said to God (הוה) (אמר לאלהים): *Let there be light*, the master of the edifice -- he said, and the builder made it immediately. And so too with all the edifices in the manner of Atziluth, he said: *Let there be a firmament, Let there be lights* (יהי מארה), and all was made immediately. When coming to the world of separation (עלמא דפירודא) which is the world of separated things, the builder said to the master of the edifice: *Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness*. The master of the edifice said: 'Indeed it would be good to make him, but he is destined to sin before you, for he is a foolish

son,' as it is written (Proverbs 10:1): *A wise son maketh glad a father, but a foolish son is the grief of his mother.* Whereupon she (Imma) said: "Since his sin relates to Imma, and not to Abba, I want to create him in my image," as it is written: *And God created man in His image;* but Abba did not want to participate in his (i.e., man's) [creation]. At the time that he (i.e., man) sinned what is written: *and for your transgression was your mother sent away* (Isaiah 50:1). The king (Abba) said to Imma: "Did I not say to you that he is destined to sin?" At that time he (Abba) drove him (man) away, and he drove away Imma with him. Therefore it is written: *A wise son maketh glad a father,* this refers to man in the manner of Atziluth (Commentary of : Man of Atziluth is Ze'er of Atziluth), *and a foolish son,* this refers to man of Beriah (Commentary of *מקדש מלך*: This is Adam Harishon -- Adam)". End of quotation from Zohar. Earlier comment of *מקדש מלך*: "The builder refers to Imma who said to Abba: *Let us make man* Thus: *And God,* i.e., Imma, *said to Abba: Let us make man.* This is unlike all the other instances of *and [God] said* in the Chapter of Creation, in which the meaning is: And Abba said to God, who is Imma (Binah), for Abba says and Binah makes it."

Commentary of *שבבי נגה*: "From this passage [of Zohar] the implication is that the Holy One, blessed be He (*הקב"ה*) Himself, so to speak, did not agree to the creation of man, but that the Shechinah implored that man should be her lot."

It is clear from the preceding that the Holy One, blessed be He that is called Attik was revealed to R. Shimon in his Beth Midrash in the form of a very old man, for which reason R. Shimon called him the Old One of the Old (*סבא דסבין*), as explained above by *מקדש מלך*, and it was this Holy One, blessed be He that is called Attik, who gave permission to R. Shimon to reveal an interpretation of the Torah which says that the Holy One, blessed be He that is called Imma said to the Holy One, blessed He that is called Abba: "*Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness etc.*"

Thus, it has been made clear that Attik is called "*the Holy One, blessed be He* (*קב"ה*), and so too Abba; Imma is referred to as *אלהים* and Abba too is called *אלהים*, as well as *the Holy One, blessed be He* (*הקב"ה*)" In the entire Chapter of Creation Abba says to Imma "Let there be thus and thus," and she (Imma) makes it. But in the case of *Let us make man*, Imma said to Abba *Let us make man*, but Abba did not agree to the creation of man. Whereupon Imma said to him (to Abba): "What difference does it make to you? If he should sin, he would sin to me, not to you," as it is written: *and a foolish son is the grief of his mother.* And when Adam sinned by eating from the tree of knowledge, he (Abba) drove him (Adam) out together with her (Imma), as it is written: *and for your transgressions was your mother sent away.*

Also Zohar *ע"ב, כ"ב*:

R. Shimon continued and said: "*See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god*

with Me (Deut. 32:39) -- said he (R. Shimon):

Companions! Hear ancient secrets that I wish to reveal now that supernal permission has been granted to reveal them. Who is it who said: "*See now that I, even I, am He:*" This is the Cause of all causes! The one who is called the 'Cause of Causes' refers to the Cause of one of those causes who does nothing without receiving permission from the cause above him. (Commentary of *מלך מקדש* in the name of Ari in *ספר הלקוטים*: The "Cause of *all* causes" -- Adam Kadmon is called the Cause of *all* causes. But when we speak of "Cause of causes", it is applicable to every Partzuf, which is called so because he is the cause of the causes below him. But when we speak of the "Cause of *all* causes," it refers to Adam Kadmon, who is the first of the Partzufim). [In the case of Cause of causes, who does nothing without permission from the cause above him, it is] as we have interpreted above with reference to "*Let us make man. Let us make* surely was said by *two*, i.e., one said to the one above him *Let us make*, for he made nothing until he received permission from the one above him; the one above him, in turn, did nothing until taking counsel with *his* companion. But the one who is called the "Cause of *all* causes", above whom there is no cause, and below whom no cause is equal to him, as it is said (Isaiah 40:25): *And to whom will ye liken Me, that I should be equal, saith the Holy One*, it is he who said *See now that is, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me* with whom to take counsel in the manner of the one of whom it is said: *And G-d said: Let us make man.* (end of quotation from Zohar).

Thus it is clear from the Zohar and its commentaries, *מלך מקדש* in the name of Ari, etc., that the God who gave permission to R. Shimon ben Yohai to interpret things that one is forbidden to think, enumerates multiple divinities: he [who gave permission to R. Shimon] is the God called Attik (Ancient One), who is not the same as he who said to Israel: *See now that I, even I, am He etc.* For the God who said: *See now that I, even I, am He* is Adam Kadmon, who is the first Cause of all the Partzufim (Configurations of Sefiroth), and he has no one from whom to receive permission. And the God who said: *Let there be light; Let there be a firmament; Let the waters be gathered together etc.* is Abba. And the one who said: *Let us make man in our image* is Imma, who said to Abba: *Let us make man;* but the God Abba did not agree to the creation of man, Whereupon Imma said to Abba: "What difference does it make to you? If he should sin, he would sin to me, and not to you, as it is said: ... *and a foolish son is the grief of his mother* (Prov. 10:1), not the grief of his father." Thereupon man was created without the wish of Abba, as explained by *שביבי נגה*; for had Abba agreed to the creation of man, he would not have driven away Imma with man when he sinned. Surely, then, Abba did not agree to this [creation], as stated in Zohar: "And he (Abba) did not want to participate [in the creation of man] etc." Therefore he drove man out of Gan Eden together with Imma.

The true Israelite is seized with very great trembling at the words of the philosopher (the author of the Zohar) with regard to these matters: the interchange of divinities mentioned here, and the assignment of the [Divine] pronouncements, by which the world was created, to divinities *distinct from one another!*

Sanhedrin 38b: "Wherever the *מינים* (sectarian heretics) seek support for their heresy,

their refutation is near by *'Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness'* [is followed by] *'And G-d, created (i.e., ויברא, singular) man in His image; 'come let us go down, and there confound their language (Gen. 11:7) [is preceded by] And the L-rd came down (i.e., וירד, singular) to see the city etc. (ibid. v. 5). ..."*

But the passage of Zohar quoted above states: *"Let us make* surely was said of two:, and goes on to explain that Imma said to Abba *Let us make man*, and she did as she wished and created man without the agreement of Abba, as explained above in the name of שביבי נגה. Is this not the opinion of the sectarian heretics who seek support for their heresy that there are multiple divinities, and each does as he wishes?!

Zohar, פרשת בשלח דף ס"ד, on the verse (Ex. 17:7) *"Is Hashem (Y-H-W-H) in our midst, or not (איך)?* Zohar asks: "Were the Israelites fools etc.? But they wanted to know whether עתיקא סתימא (nameless Ancient One) called איך (Ayin, Nothing) [was in their midst] or Ze'er Anpin called Hashem. For this reason it is not written: *Is Hashem in our midst or not (לא)*, as it is written (Ex. 16): *"whether they will walk in My law or not (לא)"*. (Note: Grammatically, the negative of היש, *Is [Hashem in our midst]*, is איך, whereas the negative of הילך, *whether they will walk* is לא, i.e., אם לא ילך; לא could not have been used as the negative of היש -- author.) The Israelites said: If it is this one (nameless Ancient One), we will petition in a certain manner, and if it is this one (Hashem, Y-H-W-H) we will petition in another manner. For this reason it is stated immediately following: *And Amalek came*. (The Commentary of מהר"י לופיס explains that Zohar means that our ancestors wanted to know who was leading them and performing all these miracles: whether God who is called Ze'er Anpin and by the Tetragrammaton, or Ayin (nothing), who is called Attik (the Ancient One). They sought this information in order to serve him in the proper manner: if Ze'er Anpin in one manner, and if Attik in a different manner. For there is a difference between service and service, and between intention and intention. They remained in doubt until they heard: *"I am the L-rd thy G-d."* Then they knew that it was Ze'er Anpin).

From all the statements of Zohar and its commentaries mentioned above it is clear that they call each of the Partzufim (Configurations of Sefiroth) of Atziluth by the Tetragrammaton, and Lord and God, and they have chosen to serve the last Partzuf, i.e., Ze'er Anpin. They say that to En Sof (the Infinite) and to all the [Sefirotic] Partzufim that emanate from En Sof no service nor prayer is applicable, and that one who prays to them is not answered, because, of their great exaltedness. How much more so the [Sefirotic] Partzufim of the worlds above the world of Atziluth ...! Only to [the Sefirotic Partzuf] Ze'er Anpin do service, prayer and calling to him in time of trouble apply. For he is the central pillar that connects all the powers above and below, inasmuch as Abba and Imma gave him dominion over all things created, and they commanded that we serve him and bless him. He alone, in their opinion, is Hashem our God.

This is clear from Zohar פרשת בלק דף קצ"א ע"ב, which, with the commentary of מקדש מלך in parentheses, reads as follows: *He that withholdeth corn (בר), the people (לאום) shall curse him*, (Prov. 11:26), the secret of this matter is written in an exalted secret.

What is his name, and what is the name of his son, if thou knowest (Prov. 30:4). That name is known (Jer. 31:35) *The L-rd of hosts is His name* (מקדש מלך: "i.e., Abba"); *the name of his son*, Israel is his son (מקדש מלך: "i.e., Ze'er Anpin"), for it is written (Ex. 4:22): *My son, my first-born is Israel*. All the keys of faith are suspended from this Israel, and he (this Israel) boasts and says: (Ps. 2:7) *The Lord said unto me: Thou art My son* (מקדש מלך: i.e., Ze'er Anpin says that Abba, who is called "the L-rd of hosts," said to me: *Thou art my son*). This is surely so, for Abba and Imma have crowned him and blessed him with many blessings, and have said and commanded all (Psalms 2:12): *פֶּן יִאַנֶּף בְּרִי פֶן יִשְׁקוּ בְרִי* (Translation of Jewish Publication Society based on Targum and Rashi: *Do homage in purity lest He be angry*. Christian translation: *Kiss the Son -- בר -- lest He be angry*. Zohar continued:) Kiss (or worship) this son (=Ze'er Anpin); it is as if dominion has been given to him over all, that all should worship him. *Lest he be angry*, because he has been crowned with stern judgment (דינא) and mercy (רחמי); whoever succeeds through stern judgment -- through stern judgment; whoever through mercy -- through mercy. All blessings of above and below ascend to that son (בר) and form a crown. And whoever withholds blessings from this son, his sins shall be specified before the holy king (variant reading: the holy mother, אימא קדישא -- the mother (דייקא) actually (מקדש מלך: "i.e., Binah")." End quote from Zohar. (Note: The specification of sins before "the holy mother -- Binah -- as punishment for one who does not worship and bless the son, Ze'er Anpin, is a play on Proverbs 11:26 which reads *מונע בר יקבֹוהו לאום* (literally: *He that withholdeth corn* (בר), *the people* (לאום) *shall curse him* (יקבֹוהו). *Corn* (בר) is taken as son; *curse* (יקבֹוהו) is taken as *specifying*, as in Numbers 1:17: *who were specified by name*, אשר נקבו בשמות -- author)."

Thus, clearly the Zohar calls Abba "the Lord of hosts", and Ze'er Anpin is called "the son of Abba and Imma," and he (Ze'er Anpin) is called by the four-lettered Name in many places in the Zohar. [It is also clearly stated in the Zohar] that Abba and Imma gave Ze'er Anpin the power and the dominion over all things created, and that they (Abba and Imma) commanded [all] to serve him (Ze'er Anpin) and that all our blessings and prayers are directed only to him and become a crown unto him (Ze'er Anpin). [Our prayers and blessings are directed] not to Abba and Imma, not to Arikh Anpin, not to Attik, not to Adam Kadmon, who is called the Cause of all causes, and not to Adam Kadmaah, in whose circles all the worlds above Atziluth were brought into being (see *מקדש מלך בראשית קט"ו ד"ה ורמז*), and certainly not to En Sof, who is distant and much exalted above all, and to whom the kabbalists say no service, prayer and blessing are applicable. ...

Also Rabbi Hayyim Vital in *ספר עץ חיים שער הכלל פ' יא* writes that "Moses said to Israel who were entering the land [of Israel]: *And ye that did cleave unto the L-rd your G-d are alive every one of you this day*" (Deut. 4:4), *the Lord your G-d is Ze'er Anpin and his Female ...*"

Also *מקדש מלך דף י"ב*: "... If one directs himself to En Sof, because of His exaltedness

above any name or point that can limit Him, his prayer is not a prayer. He should rather direct himself to Him (En Sof), *as He is clothed in His attributes (i.e., in His Sefiroth) ...*" (emphasis added).

How greatly astonished must be the reader who cleaves to the Torah of Moshe Rabbenu ע"ה, Written and Oral, and who is proficient in it, i.e., in the Mishnah, the Talmud and the Midrashim of the Sages, and who sees the words of the Geonim, the saintly author of the חובות הלבבות (Duties of the Heart), R. Yehudah Halleivi, Rabbenu Saadyah Gaon, Rambam in his [various] works, R. Eliezer of Worms in [his] Rokeah, the ספר מצות גדול, the ספר מצות קטן, the author of the Ikkarim and similar works that speak of the Unity of Hashem, blessed be He, according to its true meaning, according to the Received Teaching of our Sages (כפי קבלת חז"ל), the Transmitters of the Received Torah (מעתיקי השמועה)! How greatly must the heart of the reader tremble and be moved when he hears the array of multiple divinities that have multiplied in Israel from the beginning of the sixth millenium on the part of some authors. And from generation to generation since the aforementioned time this belief has grown greatly, i.e. the belief in [a hierarchy of] of many Causes, one above the other, so that when one of the Causes wants to create something, he takes counsel with and receives permission from the Cause that is above him as it is clearly and explicitly stated in the Zohar (בראשית כ"ב) i.e., that each one of the Causes receives permission from the Cause above it: Malkhuth from Ze'er, Ze'er from Imma, Imma from Abba, Abba from Arikh, Arikh from Attik and Attik from Adam Kadmon. For he (Adam Kadmon) is the head of all the [Sefirotic] Partzufim of Atziluth, and he alone says: *See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with me;* for he does not need to receive permission from Adam Kadmaah who is above him. And in all the Act of the Creation the creating king was Abba, called in the Zohar "the exalted King" (מלכא עלאה), whereas Imma is the architect. And at the time of the creation of the first man (Adam) Abba did not want to create him; because he was destined to sin. (Whereupon Imma responded to him (Abba): "Since his sin is in relation to me, as it is written *and a foolish son is the grief of his mother,* it is no concern of yours," as stated there (i.e., in the Zohar *ibid.*) and in מקדש מלך.

Our Sages were very strictly opposed to anything that leads to the belief in multiple divinities, and they said: "He is to be silenced. So what good does it do to declare: "and all are one," after having enumerated many Causes who receive permission each from the Cause above him. As if we were commanded to declare: "One" with our mouths, though in our minds they be multiple divinities.

[It is against such that] Rambam writes in the Guide 1:50: "... However, if you have a desire to rise to a higher level, viz., the level of reflection, and truly to hold the conviction that G-d is One and possesses true Unity without any combination at all, and without your assuming any divisibility in any way or manner whatsoever, then know that G-d has no essential attribute at all, in any sense or form, and that the rejection of corporeality is the rejection of essential attributes. But whoever believes that G-d is One, and that He has a number of attributes, such a person declares that He is One with his mouth, and believes that He is many in his thought. This is like

what the Christians say: He is One and He is Three, and the Three are One. So too is he who says: He is One, but He has a number of attributes, and He and His attributes are One, while he negates corporeality and affirms His absolute simplicity (i.e., freedom from combination); as if our goal and effort were only how to say it and not how to fix [the thought] in our minds. ..." Thus far the words of the Rav, the guide (Rambam) ז"ל.

Thus, in this matter too the error of the kabbalists is clear, for they depict and describe G-d in many different depictions and descriptions, viz., circles and straight lines in many [Sefirotic] Configurations (פרצופים) different from one another: one within another, and one above the other. ... The kabbalists also say that originally G-d filled the space of the whole universe; afterward He contracted Himself and constricted Himself to the side round about; He was changed from the way He was in order to make place and space for the whole universe.

The following is from Rabbi Hayyim Vital, ספר עץ חיים שער עגולים ויושר ענף ב', "Now after the contraction (הצמצום), after which there was left a place of void and empty space in the middle of the actual light of En Sof, there was then place for the emanated, and the created, and the formed, and the made entities to exist. Then there was drawn from the light of En Sof one straight ray from the light of his circle from above downward, which descended into that empty space. The upper end of the ray proceeded from En Sof Himself and touches Him, but the lower end of that ray below does not touch the light of En Sof below. And in the place of that space He emanated, and created, and formed, and made all the worlds. This ray is like a thin duct through which the flood of light of En Sof spreads and is drawn to all the worlds that are in the place of that air and space. ...

"Now when the light of En Sof was drawn as a straight ray into the empty space, it was not drawn and spread immediately, but was drawn gradually. I mean to say that initially the ray of light began to spread there, and immediately when it began to spread as a ray, it spread and was drawn and became a kind of circle round about. This circle was unattached to the light of En Sof that surrounded it from all sides. For were it to be attached to it, it would return to the way it was, and become covered in the light of En Sof, so that its power (i.e., the power of the ray that became a circle) would not be revealed at all. It would all be the light of En Sof alone as at the beginning. Therefore this circle is near En Sof but unattached to it. The entire connections and attachment of that emanated [circle] with En Sof, the emanator, is through that ray, through which the light of En Sof, the emanator, descends and is drawn into that circle. But En Sof surrounds it on all sides and is removed and equidistant from it. ... Moreover, even that [connecting] ray is very thin and not thick, in order that the light drawn to the emanated entities should be in a fixed measure, for which reason the emanated entities are called Ten Measures (עשר מדות) and the Ten Sefiroth (Numbers), because they have a fixed measure and a fixed number. Now this first circle that is most attached to En Sof is called the Crown (כתר) of Adam Kadmon. After this the ray spreads and is drawn a little, and again becomes circular

to form a second circle within the first circle. This is called the Wisdom (חכמה) of Adam Kadmon. The ray spreads further downward, and becomes circular to form a third circle within the second circle. This is called the circle of Understanding (בינה) of Adam Kadmon. This manner of forming circles continues until the tenth circle, that is called the Kingdom (מלכות) of Adam Kadmon.

"Now we shall explain a second aspect of the Ten Sefiroth, the aspect of יושר, straightness, (i.e., rectilinearity in contrast to the aspect of circles -- author) in the form of Supernal Man (אדם קדמון). The aforementioned ray that spreads from above downward, from which the circles spread, also spreads from above downward from the top of the highest circle until below all the circles, consisting of Ten Sefiroth according to the secret (סוד) of the image of a Rectilinear Man of erect stature consisting of two hundred and forty eight limbs etc. Now this second aspect (of straightness, rectilinearity) is called צלם אלהים (the image of God), and to it does Scripture allude when it says (Gen. 1:27): "And God created man in His image, in the image of God created He him etc." Almost most of the words of the Zohar and the Tikkunim deal with this second aspect, the aspect of rectilinearity." End quote of Rabbi Hayyim Vital.

In ענין ג' (Rabbi Hayyim Vital) reiterates that the Ten Sefiroth of the world of Atziluth are not the first and uppermost of all that were emanated, for many worlds of אביע (= עשייה, יצירה, בריאה, אצילות) preceded them. But because of their great concealment the kabbalists did not touch upon them to mention them in the Zohar and the Tikkunim, except by extraordinary hint. There he (Rabbi Hayyim Vital) explains further until what point the feet of Rectilinear Adam Kadmon (Primal Man) reach; until what point the feet of Attik Yomin (the Ancient One) reach; and the feet of Arikh Anpin; and the feet of Abba and Imma; and the feet of Ze'er Anpin; and the feet of his Female. [He also writes] that Abba and Imma are of short stature and their height is only from the neck of Arikh Anpin until the navel of Arikh Anpin. These points are also stated in שער ההקדמות, and in ספר כסא אליהו, and in מלך פרשת, and in בראשית, which see.

From all this it is perfectly clear that the body of the Sefiroth together with their inner light, which is the soul of the Sefiroth, together with the surrounding light, which is their garment - all are spread and drawn from one substance, from En Sof. This is explicitly stated in שושן סודות, as follows: "Know that the Ten Sefiroth are *not something created, but something that spreads from the substance of the Creator*, blessed be He; and they are not separated from Him, and He is always found in them, like a קמצא (grasshopper) whose garment is part of himself, etc.," see there. So too ט"ק דף בהר דף ק"ט writes that the vessels of Atziluth have the aspect of Godhead (כלי האצילות יש להם בחינת אלהות). So too משינת החסידים בסוף מס' העשייה: "All of Atziluth both its aspect of lights and its aspect of vessels, and even its garments -- all of them are actual Godhead. But [the worlds of] בריאה [and] יצירה [and] עשייה, from their spirit downward, and including the spirit, are not actual Godhead".

Of these kabbalists who depict En Sof, who after the contraction (צמצום) surrounds [all] as a round ball, hollow within, inside of whom there are thousands and tens of thousands of circles drawn from his essence, and also innumerable Rectilinear Configurations (פרצופים דיושר) drawn and developed from his essence through the ray that spreads from him, from Primal Man (אדם קדמאה), who is above the world of Atziluth, unto the end of the Configurations (פרצופים) of all the [worlds] of אבי"ע (Atziluth, Beriah, Yetzirah, Asiyah) -- of such (i.e., as these kabbalists) our teacher and master, Rambam ז"ל, said in the Guide 1:50: "Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins" (Jer. 12:2). For with their mouth they say that He (G-d) is One, and with all their heart, and with all their soul and their mind [they assume] that He is divisible into many Configurations (Partzufim) and levels, one above the other, with each one receiving permission from another, as has been clarified above.

This [kabbalistic] belief in almost worse than the belief of the Christians, as mentioned by Rivash (quoted above) in the name of one of the philosophical (i.e., non-kabbalistic) persons.

The proper course for us is to uphold the faith of our Early Authorities (קדמונינו) in the unity of G-d without combination and association.

The following is from the [kabbalistic] ספר הברית:

"Thus you will know, my brother, that our belief is not like the belief of the (religious) philosophers and the Arabs concerning the {Divine} Unity and the Creator. For they do not know the honored and revered name הוי"ה (i.e., the four-lettered ineffable Name). They only believe in the indefinite One of Absolute Existence (מחוייב המציאות) in His simple aspect (בבחינתו הפשוטה) before the Creation; this is His aspect that is beyond reference and allusion. In this aspect the (irreligious) philosophers are correct in saying that no service or prayer is applicable to Him, for in this aspect He is above all blessing and praise, and all Torah and commandment are null, as Rabbi Meir Gabbai wrote. To one who analyzes this well it becomes clear beyond a doubt that there is no room for all this (i.e., service, prayer, blessing, praise, Torah and commandment) without the emanation of the Sefiroth. Not so the people of the God of Abraham, who believe in the One of Absolute Existence *clothed in His attributes* (i.e., Sefiroth); this is the secret of הוי"ה (the ineffable Name), which is the [Divine] aspect after the Creation, the aspect apprehended by the House of Jacob; [in this Sefirotic aspect] he was revealed to Moses in the bush, took us out of Egypt and gave the Torah of truth to our ancestors, the generation of the Wilderness, face to face. [To this Sefirotic aspect] service, sacrifices, prayer, and all the commandments mentioned in the Holy Torah apply. ..."

So too writes Rabbi Hayyim Vital in his 'א סוף פרק ב' that the light that issues from Primal Man (אדם קדמון, Adam Kadmon) is very rare (i.e., not thick or dense), and through its descent and increasing distance it becomes increasingly dense. How so? The light that issues from the ear is very rare; and as this light proceeds to

the nostril and is emitted there, it becomes dense, acquiring some density and thickness because of the distance it travels downward until the mouth, where some of it is emitted, becoming increasingly dense as it issues from there etc. Similarly, he writes in שער הנקודים פרק א' that the more the light descends downward, the more recognizable, palpable and revealed it becomes there.

This idea explains their statement that service and prayer apply only to a palpable divinity who possesses some density, so that you can conceive him by the likeness of his form which has become dense and substantial. But concerning En Sof or Adam Kadmaah and Adam Kadmon, and even Attik and Arikh who have not yet become so dense and substantial, no service is applicable to them; for they have not yet become dense and substantial enough that you can conceive them. Service and reverence apply only to Ze'er Anpin, who alone, in their opinion, is our god because of having become substantial and revealed to Moses in the bush, and at Sinai to our ancestors.

...

And in ספר הברית the author writes at length in מאמר עשרים פ' ט"ו in the name of many kabbalists that whoever believes in and serves the exalted G-d Who is exalted above all and Who has not changed after the Creation to associate and join with His creatures that have emanated and developed from Him, according to their opinion, but rather according to the concept [of transcendent Divinity] of our Rabbis of the Talmud and the Men of the Great Assembly who have fixed the prayers and the Blessings, and who did not see the alien book of Zohar, and according to the Geonim, R. Saadyah Gaon, and R. Yehudah Hallevi and the author of the Duties of the Heart, and the author of Sefer HaIkkarim, and the Rokeah, and סמ"ג, and R. Levi ben Gershom, and Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra, and the many and great Sages of Israel who received the doctrine from one another back to Moshe Rabbenu and back to Avraham Avinu -- which is the true Kabbalah (i.e., the Received Teaching), has departed from the generality [of Israel] and has denied a fundamental teaching (כפר בעיקר), that is the honored and revered Name, and (Heaven forbid) of such a person Scripture says (Deut. 29:19): "and the L-rd shall blot out his name from under heaven." ...

See, dear reader, how they have dared to speak falsehood (*by implication* -- author) against the aforementioned great Sages of Israel (who know and speak of only the exalted, transcendent G-d -- author)! And they have uprooted four principles of the fundamentals and principles of our Holy Torah that are contained in *Yigdal*. This is clear from the ספר הכוונות that states that Ari did not recite *Yigdal*, see there in מחברת מ"ב הקדש דף כ"ח ע"ב. The author of חמדת ימים, who was a disciple of Ari explained the latter's point of view in the end of פרק ו' מתקוני שבת as follows: "After we have testified in ויכול concerning the Creation, it is customary to recite the poem *Yigdal* every Sabbath. It is proper for each person to sing it in his home with this intention. And although it has been reported that Ari was not pleased with it, and that he very much resented the first four stanzas, which do not accord with the way of truth (=kabbalism) ..., however, beginning with הנו אדון עולם (i.e., the fifth stanza), one need not refrain from saying it." (Note: The first four stanzas read: "1) Exalted and

praised be the living G-d! He exists and His existence transcends time. 2) He is One, and there is no Oneness like His; He is hidden, and His Oneness is infinite (אין סוף) (לאחדותו) 3) He has no semblance, and He is incorporeal, beyond comparison is His holiness. 4) He preceded all that was created; He is the First, without beginning. 5) Behold, He is Master of the universe "הנו אדון עולם ..." End of Note -- author). ... Sometimes my teacher (Ari) used to say אדון עולם instead of it (i.e., instead of *Yigdal*).

(Note: Ari's opposition presumably was based on the fact that the first four stanzas of *Yigdal* are addressing G-d before emanation and creation, Whom the kabbalists would call אין סוף, En Sof, to whom no address, service and praise are applicable. Therefore, he commenced with עולם אדון, Behold, He is the Master of the universe "...", which addresses emanated divinity in relation to the created universe. Sometimes Ari substituted אדון עולם, "Master of the universe" to whom service and praise are applicable. -- author.)

When the time came for Moshe Rabbenu ע"ה to leave this world, the Holy One, blessed be He, informed him what would happen to us in the future when we would be in exile, and He said unto him: "Behold, thou art about to sleep with thy fathers, and this people will rise up, and go astray after the foreign gods of the land, whither they go to be among them etc. ..." (Deut. 31:16). And this is what has happened to us. For they (i.e., the kabbalists) have misled us to turn away from Hashem our G-d, and to serve other gods and to believe in many divinities. (Refer back to Notes I and II). ... The false kabbalah (=kabbalism) has become the mistress, whereas the true kabbalah (=the Received Teaching) that has been transmitted to us by the successive generations following Moshe Rabbenu until Rabbi [Yehudah HaNasi] and until Rav Ashi and Rabbina, and Rabbi Yohanan, the master of the Land of Israel, has become a disgraced and rejected handmaiden ז"ר, and the earth trembles beneath itself. ... And so "we lie down in our shame, and our confusion covers us." How have we forsaken our pure faith that we have received from our Prophets and our Talmudic Sages, and have been seduced by the author of the Zohar and the Tikkunim, who incites us with smooth talk to believe in many divinities and to serve other deities: Ze'er and his Female! The Arabs have remained steadfast in their faith in the Unity of G-d. a faith which they received from Israel, as Rambam writes in a responsum to a righteous proselyte. Many of our learned men (in practice -- author) accept the Unity of G-d as we do, and as is clear from our Talmudic Sages; not as the kabbalists have written that our faith concerning the Unity of G-d is unlike that of the Arabs and the religious philosophers, but rather along different lines that include the association [of G-d] with His [emanated] creatures; this is like the faith of the Christians, who believe in trinity, as has been explained above. ...

[Our pure faith is as presented by] Rambam in his large work (*Mishneh Torah*) and in his Mishnah Commentary and in the Guide; by Rav Saadyah Gaon in his *Book of Beliefs and Opinions* (ספר האמונות והדעות) and in his Arabic translation of Scripture; and by R. Yehudah Halleivi in his *Kuzari* and in his Petitions and his poems, by R. Bahya in his *Duties of the Heart* (חובות הלבבות) etc. -- that He, blessed be He, is One

sake of the unification of the Holy One, blessed be He, and his Shechinah, in fear and love to unify (unite) "Y-H' with 'W-H' in perfect unification etc." The intent is to unify (unite) Abba and Imma and Ze'er and his Female, who are referred to, in their opinion, in the Ineffable Four-Letter name, as well as Arikh and Attik alluded to in the point of the י"ד (Y). ...

G-d forbid that we should entertain ideas so alien to our Holy Torah. The Holy One, blessed be He, did not command us in the Torah to *unite* Him and associate Him with anything created (= produced, emanated, i.e., the Sefirotic Partzufim), but rather to know and to believe that He is One, as it is said (Deut. 4:39): "Know this day, and lay it to thy heart that Hashem, He is G-d in heaven above and upon the earth beneath, there is none else." ...

Although he says (i.e., R. Shimon ben Yochai, says, *according to Zohar*) that Attika Kaddisha was revealed to him ... or Eliyahu, or the loyal shepherd (i.e., Moshe), as stated in Zohar in many places, we have already been warned in the Torah not to believe him and not to listen to him, as it is said (Deut. 13:2-6): "If there arise in thy midst a prophet or a dreamer of dreams ...," for he is a false prophet. Even if he should cause the sun and the moon to stand still as did Joshua in Gibeon and in the valley of Aijalon, we are not to believe him, as our Sages stated in the Talmud, and as codified by Semag ... and Rambam ...

And the reason is that Hashem our G-d is testing us, as it is said (ibid. v. 4): "for Hashem your G-d is testing you, to know whether you do love Hashem your G-d with all you heart and with all you soul." For a prophet has no right to promulgate anything new from now on (i.e., from the time of the Giving of the Torah). Even if a heavenly voice should proclaim from heaven, saying: "Listen to him!" we are not to listen to him to deviate from the path that Hashem our G-d has commanded us, nor to disregard any Fundamental of the Fundamentals of the Torah or any of its commandments. ...

If the Ancient of ancients was revealed many times to R. Shimon ben Yochai and his son, R. Elazar, as is stated in Zohar, why did R. Shimon ben Yochai weep and say (as recorded in Meilah 17b): "The handmaiden (Hagar) of my father's house (i.e., of the house of Avraham Avinu) was addressed by an angel three times, but I not even once." ...

This is our unswerving principle. Since the agitator, the author of Zohar, has come to instigate us and to lead us astray from Hashem our G-d; and he has struck at the honor of our Father, our King, and at the Fundamentals of our Holy Torah and its pure basic principles concerning the Unity of Hashem, blessed be He, Who is the First Cause; and he has come to found for us a new religion and Torah, i.e., to believe in multiple [divine] causes who develop from one another, each one called by the Four-Letter Ineffable Name, and "Lord", "God", and "the Holy One, blessed be He"; and he relates prayer, service and the sacrifices brought by Israel at the time of the Holy Temple to a created (= produced, emanated) being, namely Ze'er Anpin, who is

(according to their belief) the last cause among the Partzufim of Atziluth; even though he says that Attika Kaddisha or Eliyahu or Moshe, and the like, was revealed to him, we shall not believe him; for he speaks lies. For so have we received the teaching from our Sages, that a prophet has no right to promulgate anything new from now on (i.e., from the time of the Giving of the Torah). And even if a heavenly voice should proclaim from heaven, saying: "Listen to him!" we are not to listen to him to deviate from the path that Hashem our G-d has commanded us, to disregard any Fundamental of the Fundamentals of our Torah. ...

Hashem our G-d has never changed and will never change, as the prophet says (Malachi 3:6): "For I Hashem change not." Our Early Authorities -- Rav Saadyah Gaon, the author of *Duties of the Heart* (חובות הלבבות), R. Yehudah Halleivi, and Rambam in the *Mishnah Commentary*, in *Mishneh Torah* and in the *Guide*, etc., have expounded at great length that no change or affectibility is attributable to Hashem. ... The kabbalists, however, not only attribute to G-d plurality, and distinct and various forms, Partzufim and lines (קוים), but also attribute to Him many changes in His Essence. For they say that originally He filled the entire universe, and afterward He changed drastically by constricting Himself to the sides in order to make place and a great empty space in which all His creatures could exist; and He became like a round ball, empty in the middle. Then another change took place in Him, for He drew from His great surrounding light the Circular Sefiroth of hidden Primal Man (אדם קדמאה (סתמיאה)), followed by the Circles of Adam Kadmon, the Circles of Attik Yomin (Ancient of Days), the Circles of Arikh Anpin (the Long-Suffering), the Circles of Abba and Imma, and also the Circles of Ze'er and his Female. Then many other changes took place in Him, in order also to draw from His Essence the Rectilinear Sefiroth in the form of a man, and they are the main Godhead, in their opinion. [These are] first the [Rectilinear] Partzuf of Adam Kadmon, followed by the Partzuf of Attik Yomin, followed by Arikh Anpin. These are male and female, except that this is in the manner of right and left, whereas that is in the manner of front and back. These are followed by the Partzufim of Abba and Imma, male and female, separated from one another. These are followed by Ze'er and his Female, also separated from each other. They are the main Godhead, on whom, according to the kabbalists, we call in all our prayers. All our blessings (Berachoth) are directed to them, for they are our God, in the opinion of the kabbalists.

Thus it is clear that various changes and transformations take place in our G-d, according to kabbalism, which contradicts the Faith of our Holy Torah.

In the following passages the author, Rav Yahya Kafih זצ"ל decries the sexual symbolism of the kabbalists. Before we continue with this quotation, we shall introduce the subject with a quotation from *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* by Gershon Scholem, שם רשעים ירקב. He was, indeed, a secularist academic, a כופר בתורה (a denier of the Holy Torah). However, he spent a lifetime researching kabbalistic documents, and his knowledge of kabbalistic sources was encyclopedic. Moreover, he was *not* an opponent of kabbalism. On the contrary, in his secularist way he supported kabbalism as a legitimate historical development of the Jewish religious spirit (ח"ו). His *opinions* and *judgments* are of no significance to *us* Torah Jews. His vast *factual* knowledge of sources and the objective information contained in them cannot, and should not, be

ignored.

Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, pp. 227-230:

But while in all other instances the kabbalists refrain from employing sexual imagery in describing the relation between man and G-d, they show no such hesitation when it comes to describing the relation of God to himself, in the world of the Sefiroth. ... The "sacred union" of the King and the Queen (Zohar I, 207b uses the term זווגא קדישא; III, 7a ומטרוניתא דזוגא דמלכא, the Celestial Bridegroom and the Celestial Bride, to name a few of the symbols, is the central fact in the whole chain of divine manifestations in the hidden world. In God there is (according to the kabbalists) a union of the active and the passive, procreation and conception ... This sexual imagery is employed again and again and in every possible variation. One of the images employed to describe the unfolding of the Sefiroth pictures them ... as the offspring of mystical procreation, in which the first ray of divine light is also the primeval germ of creation; for the ray which emerges from Nothing (אין) is, as it were, sown into the "celestial mother", i.e. into the divine Intellect, out of whose womb the Sefiroth spring forth, as King and Queen, son and daughter, Dimly we perceive behind this mystical image the male and female gods of antiquity, anathema as they were to the pious Kabbalist. (The critics of Kabbalism have fastened on this point as proof of its essentially pagan character. Cf. in particular the well documented but very superficial treatise by S. Rubin, Heidenthum und Kabbala, Wien 1893, p. 85-114, and the eloquent polemics of the Yemenite scholar Yahya Kafih in his work against Kabbalism ס' מלחמות השם Tel Aviv 1931).

The ninth Sefirah, Yesod, out of which all the higher Sefiroth -- welded together in the image of the King -- flow into the Shekhinah, is interpreted as the procreative life force dynamically active in the universe. Out of the hidden depth of this Sefirah the divine life overflows in the act of mystical procreation. ... It is to be noted that the Zohar makes prominent use of phallic symbolism in connection with speculation concerning the Sefirah Yesod -- not a minor psychological problem considering the author's strict devotion to the most pious conceptions of Jewish life and belief. (Outstanding examples of this symbolism are to be found in Zohar I, 162a; II, 128a/b:III, 5a/b and 26a).

Certain it is that in the Zohar this form of symbolism confronts us in a far more uncompromising form than it wears in any other literary document of Spanish Kabbalism, though to some extent it is common to the whole of this literature. We are obviously dealing here with a special individual characteristic of our author and it is not surprising that it has aroused the criticism of the opponents of Kabbalism. An example of his radicalism is to be found in one of the sublimest (sic!) passages of the whole book, where he describes the end of his hero, Simeon ben Yohai: Death comes to him at the moment when, after a long monologue on the deepest (sic!) mysteries, he concludes with a symbolical description of the "holy union" in God, a description, whose drastic and paradoxical character can scarcely be excelled (sic!). Here as elsewhere, an unprejudiced analysis of the phenomenon would be of greater

assistance for the understanding of the Zohar than the eloquent denunciation of so-called obscenities which Graetz and other detractors of this "book of lies" have permitted themselves. Charges of this kind simply misconstrue both the morality and the tendency of the Zohar ...; but above all they completely ignore the problem presented by the resurrection of mythology in the heart of mystical Judaism, of which the Zohar is the classical representative. ...

In this connection, attention must be directed above all to the new meaning infused into the idea of the Shekhinah. ... In all the numerous references to the Shekhinah in the Talmud and the Midrashim ... there is no hint that it represents a feminine element in G-d. Not a single metaphor employs such terms as Princess, Matron, Queen, or Bride to describe the Shekhinah. It is true that these terms frequently occur where reference is made to the Community of Israel in its relation to G-d, but for these writers the Community (= *כנסת ישראל*) has not yet (sic!) become a mystical hypostasis of some divine force; it is simply the personification of the real Israel. Nowhere is there a dualism, with the Shekhinah, as the feminine, opposed to the "Holy One, praise be to Him," as the masculine element in God. The introduction of this idea was one of the most important and lasting innovations of Kabbalism. The fact that it obtained recognition in spite of the obvious difficulty of reconciling it with the conception of the absolute unity of G-d, and that no other element of Kabbalism won such a degree of popular approval, is proof that it responded to a deep-seated religious need. ... Not only for the philosophers, but for the strict Talmudists as well, insofar as they were not themselves mystics, the conception of the Shekhinah as the feminine element in God was one of the main stumbling-blocks in approaching the Kabbalistic system. It says something for its vitality that, despite the opposition of such powerful forces, this idea became part and parcel of the creed of wide circles among the Jewish communities of Europe and the East.

Traces of this conception are to be found already in the book Bahir, the oldest document of Kabbalist thought, upon whose relation to earlier Gnostic sources I have already commented in a few places. This fact is further proof, if proof were needed, that, so far from being Christian, the idea originally belonged to the sphere of pagan mythology. In the Gnostic speculations on the male and female aeons, i.e. divine potencies, which constitute the world of the *pleroma*, the 'fulness' of God, this thought assumed a new form in which it became known to the earliest Kabbalists through the medium of scattered fragments. ...

The union of God and the Shekhinah constitutes the true unity of God, which lies beyond the diversity of His various aspects, *Yihud* as the Kabbalists call it. ... Every true marriage is a symbolical realization of the union of God and the Shekhinah. In a tract on the "union of a man with his wife," which was later ascribed to Nahmanides, Joseph Gikatila gave a similar interpretation to the mystical significance of marriage (Ps.-Nahmanides *בענין חבור האדם אל אשתו*, first edition Rome 1546) (End quote of Major Trends").

Incidentally, the above-quoted passage is typical of Scholem's approach. To him the difficulty of reconciling the notion of distinct elements in G-d with the absolute Unity of G-d

results not from the very plurality of distinct divine elements, but only because one element is masculine and the other feminine. Scholem, as a כּוּפּר, was not concerned with theological truth, to which he did not subscribe. Monotheistic Judaism to him was merely an evolution of the religious psyche of the Jewish people.

In this context, the contradistinction (i.e., distinction by *contrast*) between a masculine and a feminine element poses an obvious problem even to an unsophisticated monotheist. The plurality of distinct divine elements which are not *in contrast* is a problem only for the sophisticated monotheist, i.e. the theologian; it does not concern one who subscribes to no theological truth. To Scholem the problem is *contradistinction*, not *distinction*. Even the contradistinction is ultimately rationalized because, according to Scholem, "it responded to a deep-seated religious need..." This is the way to read Scholem -- ושם רשעים ירקב --

ספר מלחמות השם of Rav Yahya Kafih ז"ל continued:

[The kabbalists] attributed to G-d the most indecent and lowliest of the five senses, i.e., sexual mating. ...

... Certainly if one sees the disgrace and dishonor of the king, and fails to protest -- how much more so if one's own words disgrace and dishonor the king! -- such a one forfeits his head to the king. How much more so one whose words dishonor the King of the universe by attributing to Him sexual mating and procreation! Surely such a person is uprooted both from this world and the world to come, and has no portion in the G-d of Israel! How can we attribute to our G-d Whom we worship a sexual mate and sexual organs (even if these are not meant literally, but only figuratively -- author)! *Yesod* [as is known] is a phallic symbol ... Even of a human being we are embarrassed to mention such things, except indirectly when necessary, e.g., when there is a medical problem. ...

In all the Torah, the Prophets and in the words of our Sages in the Talmud and in the Midrashim we do not find the influence imparted by G-d [on a recipient of that influence] described in terms of male and female and sexual mating. Rather, the terms used are 'giving' or 'opening', e.g., "May G-d *give* thee [of the dew of heaven]" (Gen. 27:28); "... for it is He that *giveth* thee power to get wealth" (Deut. 8:18); "The L-rd will *open* unto thee His good treasure, the heaven " (Deut. 28:12); "He *giveth* food to all flesh" (Ps. 136:25); "Thou *openest* Thy hand, and satisfiest every living thing with favor" (Ps. 145:16); "... and Thou animatest them all" (Nehemiah 9:6) -- and similar innumerable expressions. In the words of our Sages we find: "The Holy One blessed be He, sits and *feeds* the world etc.;" He *feeds* and *sustains* all;" "He *sets a table* [for everyone];" "He gives food - and similar expressions. Why should we forsake the phraseology of the Holy Scriptures, which employ pure expressions, and substitute indecent terms like males and females, matings, drops of semen from the genitals of the male to the womb of the female, and the conception and coagulation of seed in the womb -- all of which is well-known from the books of the alien kabbalism. And if this were not enough, the agitator, the author of Zohar, dares to call the genitalia that he enumerates in the Master of the universe (רַחֲמָנָא לִיצְלָךְ) by the name the "house of

God" and the "gate of heaven", as is stated in Zohar **וּיֵצֵא דָף ק"ו ע"ב**

Can there be a greater disgrace and shame than to attribute (even figuratively -- author) to G-d Whom we serve genitalia, penis, testes, a woman and womb (see Zohar **פרשת בהר דף ק"ט וסוף אדרא רצ"ו ע"א**), and longing to embrace her and to kiss her as she adorns herself before him. And when he mates with her, he affords her pleasure in her womb, so that their liturgical poet (=Ari) in his brazenness says: "*Her husband embraces her, and in her Yesod (=sexual organ), in which he affords her pleasure, he threshes threshings*" (**יחבק לה בעלה, ובסודא דילה דעביד ניהא לה יהא כתיש**) (כתישין -- (from **אתקיננו סעודא**, sung on Sabbath Eve).

G-d forbid that we should believe that our holy Rabbis should say such things about Hashem our G-d. ...

Is it with regard to alien kabbalism that the nations shall say of us: "Surely a wise and understanding people is this great nation." (Deut. 4:6)? Is this the Unity of G-d concerning which the Torah commands us: to think of all these forms and configurations as if they were One? Is it of them that King David said: "And I will speak of Thy testimonies before kings, and I will not be ashamed" (Ps. 119:46)? Would we not lie down in our shame and be covered with our disgrace if we were to tell any Arab such things!

Note: The Jerusalem rabbis, including Rav Kook, sent letters and a pamphlet to Yemen in an attempt to answer R. Yahya Kafih's objections to kabbalism, and to dissuade him from pursuing his anti-kabbalistic course. Rav Kafih, addressing Rav Kook very respectfully, reaffirmed his objections in great detail. He ended his response: "To all these arguments and similar ones [I ask] his Torah excellency, our master, to apply his understanding and intelligence and to adduce evidence from the words of the living G-d, i.e. the Torah, the Prophets and the Holy Writings (**כתובים**) and the words of our Sages, the recipients of **הקבלה האמיתית**, the true kabbalah (the true received Torah teaching), who received the general rules and the details of the Torah and transmitted them to us in the Mishnah, in the Babylonian and the Jerusalem Talmud, and in their Midrashim of unimpeachable authenticity -- to respond [to my arguments] in clear and logical words, and *not in flights of fancy*; and all this for the honor of our Father, our King, Who favors man with knowledge ..." However, it was to no avail. A Yemenite emissary returned from Jerusalem with a copy of excommunication, signed by tens of Jerusalem rabbis. Undaunted, Rav Yahya Kafih pronounced over them the verse (Isaiah 1:21): "How is the faithful city (Jerusalem) become a harlot"! (End of note -- author.)

ספר מלחמות השם of R. Yahya Kafih continued:

In a pamphlet sent from Jerusalem the writers quote at great length from the words of latter-day rabbis (**אחרונים**) who plaster up the alien beliefs [of kabbalism] in an attempt to remedy them, but without success. The whole object of the Jerusalem rabbis in all their quotations from the latter-day rabbis is to negate the corporeality of the Sefiroth, the forms and the Partzufim (Configurations) mentioned in Zohar and in the other kabbalistic works. But if they have rescued us from corporeality, have they

rescued us from the worship of alien gods, whether corporeal or spiritual?

Note III:

(Rav Yahya Kafih writes this only in the sense of: "even if we grant that they have rescued us from corporeality, there is still the further objection that follows". But in truth the objection of corporeality has not been answered, as becomes clear from the words of Rav Saadyah Gaon in Emunoth VeDeoth 2:5, which we have quoted in part earlier, but which are repeated here: "In this matter the Christians erred when they assumed the existence of distinction within God, which led to make of Him a trinity, and thus they went forth into heresy. ... The point of refutation is that they cannot escape the following alternative: either they believe (a) that G-d is a corporeal being or (b) that He is an incorporeal being. If they believe that He is a corporeal being, then they walk in the path of the common herd of their people and are accordingly subject to all the refutations that have been presented against the corporealists. If, on the other hand, they do not believe that G-d is a corporeal being, their allegation of the existence within Him of *distinction* (i.e., distinct characteristics), *with the result that one attribute is not identical with the other*, is equivalent to their saying that He is really a corporeal being. They merely express the idea in different words. For anything that harbors distinction within itself is unquestionably a corporeal being." The Gaon means that it is impossible for an incorporeal being to consist of a combination of various distinct entities and still be one incorporeal being. This kind of distinction within one entity applies only to a combined corporeal entity. The only alternative would be to consider each distinct attribute a distinct coexisting incorporeal entity, in contrast to the allegation that "all are one;" this, of course, would be polytheism.

This is also expressed by Rambam, Guide 1:50, as follows: "Those who believe that G-d is One, and possesses many attributes, declare that He is One with their lips, and assume that He is many (i.e., more than One) in their minds. This is like the allegation of the Christians that He is one, but He is three, and the three are one. So too is the allegation of those who say that He is One, but He is of many attributes, and He and His attributes are one, *while at the same time asserting the negation of corporeality and affirming the absolute simplicity [of G-d]*." The point of the emphasized words is that it is possible for many distinct attributes to be combined in *one corporeal being*, but in one incorporeal entity of absolute simplicity such a combination of distinct attributes is impossible. Thus the apologia of the kabbalists that they negate the corporeality of the distinct Sefiroth, the forms and the Partzufim (Configurations) while at the same time they assert that all of them combined are one, is a contradiction in terms. Such things can only be said with the lips, but not conceived in the mind. It is of such self-contradictions that Rambam concludes with the words (ibid.): "as if our object and analysis were only how to verbalize the matter, and not how to fix it in our mind." Also in the following chapter (chap. 51): "All these [self-contradictory] words are only *said*; they exist only in words, not in thought, much less in objective reality. But as you know, and as anyone who does not delude himself knows, these assertions are defended by a *multitude of words* and by *misleading similes* (=analogies), and verified by declamation and invective, and by numerous pointless arguments and sophistry." Note 28 (ad loc.) by Rabbi Yoseph Kafih, grandson of Rav Yahya: "These people customarily compensate for the weakness of their arguments by verbosity and verbal abuse of the opposition: כופר (denier), בור (ignoramus), עם הארץ (unlettered), and the like."

To repeat what we have written earlier, the truth is that to the kabbalists דבר רוחני (a spiritual entity) does not mean *an absolutely incorporeal entity of absolute simplicity*, but rather a kind of rarefied, ethereal *substance*, a kind of extremely tenuous light in contrast to a dense corporeality. Only in this way can the kabbalists assume that the combination of all the Sefiroth and Partzufim constitutes Divine unity (כולא חד, "all are one"). To the Early Authorities (הקדמונים ז"ל), however, the rarefied ethereal substance of the kabbalists, no matter how tenuous, would still be classified as a rarefied *corporeal* entity. Note this well, for it is one of the roots of the kabbalistic error.) End of Note III.

For they admit that they (i.e., the Sefiroth and Partzufim) are created (i.e., produced through emanation) light. It is these powers that they (the kabbalists) worship and call upon in time of trouble, and whom they praise and thank in time of deliverance. They (the kabbalists) accept them (the aforementioned powers) as divinities -- as though we were permitted by our Holy Torah to worship created (produced) powers, so long

as we do not consider them corporeal, but spiritual; so long as we divest them of corporeality and imagine them to be lights (אוריות). They do not realize that light and air are also rarefied corporeal entities; Rabbi Hayyim Vital states explicitly that the more the *light* descends [through emanation] the more thickness and density it acquires, as quoted above). They cite "evidence" -- "withered, thin, and blasted by the east wind" -- to negate their corporeality. They consider the source of influence "male", and the recipient of influence "female", and [view] the matings in a non-literal sense. The receiving influence is called mating! For all that, they have not given us interpretations of the disgraceful names of organs, e.g., *Yesod* (foundation) which is the penis and the male testes, and the female *Yesod* and the anus. What is the function of these with regard to light that is divested of all corporeality?!

What is worst and most bitter is that they (the kabbalists) conceive of many causes in the Divinity, all of which are created (i.e., produced, emanated), and are considered by them (the kabbalists) the main Divinity. They author books on the order of their arrangement (Author: Compare the basic kabbalistic text, ספר מערכת האלהות, the Book of the Arrangement -- or Configuration -- of the Divinity"!) as one arranges the order of the *challos* (חלות) on the שלחן (the Table). They call each of the Configurations (Partzufim) by the Ineffable Four-Letter Name, by "Lord", by "God", and "[Lord] of Hosts", and they accept upon themselves their Divinity, as is written in ספר הברית, in כסא אליהו, and in נחלת יוסף, viz. that service should be rendered unto Ze'er Anpin only and not to the Highest G-d Who (in their opinion) created (i.e., produced by emanation) all the Configurations (פרצופים) and forms. ספר הברית writes further that if one should serve the Supreme G-d who is above all of them, then Ze'er Anpin, called by the kabbalists by the Ineffable Four-Letter Name, as well as by the name "the Holy One, blessed be He", "will not be willing to pardon him, but then [his] anger ... and his jealousy shall be kindled against that man etc." For unto him alone (i.e., Ze'er Anpin) has dominion been granted by the divinities above him who have agreed that he should reign. (Notwithstanding the word of Hashem through His prophet: "And My glory will I not give to another" -- Isaiah 42:8!). These views are clearly stated in Zohar with the commentary מקדש מלך.

To mitigate the obvious apostasy and heresy inherent in this belief the kabbalists say the worship of Ze'er Anpin -- although he is created (i.e., produced through emanation), as יושר לבב writes -- is [really] the worship of his soul (i.e., En Sof who fills Ze'er Anpin as his soul -- author). This despite the fundamental belief that G-d is not a corporeal entity, nor a force in a corporeal entity! (Author: The contradiction inherent in these statements has already been discussed above in detail in Note II.)

The [aforementioned] lengthy Jerusalem pamphlet quotes סוד ישרים, who denies the existence of males and females among the divinities (Sefiroth) worshipped by the kabbalists in their prayers and blessings, and [who states further] that whoever says that G-d has a mate is an apostate (כופר בעיקר) and is accursed, his sin is as great as that of idolatry (ע"ז); and that the term Shechinah designates created light (אור נברא) that G-d created above together with a number of spiritual holy lights higher than the

angels, and these are called Sefiroth. This light is called Shechinah, which is really created light -- "nur" in Arabic. It is very spiritual, and has no form or likeness at all. It is impossible for anyone to conceive its essence in his mind, just as it is impossible to conceive the essence of the soul within the human body. This light is attributed to G-d, for it is called the light of G-d as in the verse "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the L-rd" (Isaiah 2:5). The writer then concludes with the words of Rambam in the Guide concerning Shechinah.

Author -- Note: Rambam speaks of Shechinah as created light, created *only for the purpose of visual revelation - a revelational light* that is created specially to enable those who witness a revelation to perceive it visually. In contrast, the light of which the kabbalists speak is, in their view, an objective being in itself, a real hypostasis, and not a mere vehicle of visual revelation. Now either this created being of light is like the created angels, or it is divinity; the latter is really the opinion of the aforementioned pamphlet which states of the created being of light that "it is very (sic) spiritual, and has no form or likeness at all". If it were not divinity, but rather a created being like the angels, why should there be concern whether it has form or not? The belief that the angels have a form and likeness does not undermine any fundamental of faith, as has been made clear by Rambam in his *מאמר תחיית המתים פ"ב* (Treatise on Resurrection, Chapter 2). As for Rambam's comments on Shechinah, we find that in discussing Targum Onkelos' avoidance of anthropomorphism Rambam states (Guide 1:28): "As to the words, 'and there was under His feet the like of sapphire stone' (Exodus 24:10), Onkelos, as you know, in his translation, considers 'His feet' a figurative expression for 'throne', and he translates *ותחתו כורסי יקריה*, 'and under the throne of His glory;' Consider this well and you will observe with wonder how Onkelos distances himself from the idea of the corporeality of G-d, and from anything that leads to it even remotely. For he does not say *ותחתו כורסייה* 'and under His throne;' the direct relation of the throne to G-d, according to the literal sense of 'His throne,' would have implied that He is supported by a material object, and would thus lead to corporeality. He (Onkelos) therefore refers to *יקריה*, 'His glory,' that is, to the Shechinah, which is a created light (*אור נברא*)."

Also (Guide 1:64): "The same is the case with *כבוד ה'*, 'The glory of the L-rd.'

The phrase sometimes signifies the created light which G-d causes to rest on a certain place as a distinction [of that place] in a miraculous manner, e.g., 'And the glory of the L-rd abode upon Mount Sinai and the cloud covered it' (Ex. 24:16). And sometimes ..." End of Note.)

Text of Rav Kafih's *ספר מלחמות השם* continued::

The words of disavowal [of this pamphlet] are in fact contradicted by and stand in opposition to the Zohar, Rabbi Hayyim Vital and the other kabbalists. According to the words [of this pamphlet], the kabbalists have labored in vain at great length and with much verbosity to describe their concepts of the Deity. [This pamphlet] constitutes a complete recantation of all description of the Sefiroth, which are [now said to be] created light. [Accordingly], all those words of kabbalism are [in vain], except as a transgression of the words of our Sages, who said that whoever has no consideration for the honor of his Master ought not to have been born! ... According to *סוד ישרים*, [quoted in the pamphlet], nothing has been gained from knowing the concept of *צמצום* (contraction) and the development of circles and the rectilinear Partzufim in sequence, except to contradict the anointed one of the G-d of Jacob (i.e., King David), who said (Psalms 113:5): "Who is like the L-rd our G-d, Who is enthroned on high, Who looketh down upon the heaven and the earth;" and (Psalms 4:5): "Tremble, and sin not; reflect in your hearts while on your beds and be utterly silent, Selah." ... Why should we engage in manifold speculations that lead to heresy, to the worship of another god, i.e., Ze'er Anpin. ... Even according to the

assumption (=recantation) of סוד ישרים that the created light (האור הנברא) together with various spiritual holy lights above the level of the angels are called Sefiroth and are devoid of any form and likeness, nevertheless they are included in the "host of heaven" that G-d created, and it is forbidden to serve them, since they are created (i.e., created *objective beings*, *real hypostases*, not mere vehicles of visual revelation, as is the case with the אור הנברא, the created light, according to Rambam -- author). For it is not proper to serve other than the Eternally Pre-Existent G-d Who created them (even if their existence be granted, which we do not really grant in any case -- author), whether they be corporeal or spiritual. Nor is it proper to combine them, unite them and associate them with the Creator; for it is forbidden to serve anyone "except Hashem alone" (Ex. 22:19), Who is the First Cause, as our Sages have received the teaching ... In vain have the kabbalists written of all those forms, corporealities and Partzufim (Configurations of Sefiroth) and their different levels. G-d, by His Will only, shows His glory (i.e., created revelational light -- author) to the prophets, in the Mishkan (Tabernacle) and in the Permanent Temple (Beth Hamikdash) in order to fix our faith in Him in our hearts, as it is written (Ex. 20:17): "For G-d hath come to prove you, and in order that the fear of Him remain before you, so that ye do not sin" (This was the purpose of the Revelation at Sinai -- author). However, with reference to the aforementioned [created revelational] light there is no specific, fixed [objective] *being* so as to say this is the Partzuf of so and so, and this the Partzuf of so and so; this one is Impatient, and that one is Long-Suffering; the level of distinction of this one is above the level of distinction of that one ... It is only according to His Will that He shows us [a revelational light].

Our latter-day rabbis followed the Zohar blindly, thinking [wrongly] that it represented authentic tradition. ... They looked forward to the redemption through occupying themselves with the Zohar without realizing that this spurious belief itself is the cause of the prolongation of our exile and our subjection among the nations. As the prophet Ezekiel said in the name of Hashem: "And I said unto them: Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the L-rd your G-d. But they rebelled against Me, and would not hearken unto Me ...; then I said I would pour out My fury upon them ..." (Ezekiel 20:7-8). ...

Enlightened remnants of our people who sensed the alien nature of kabbalism ... distanced themselves from its study ... However, they did only as we did for many years. We dissociated ourselves from it, because it was impugned. But we did not speak out against it as we were commanded, i.e., to make known the statutes of G-d and His teachings, and to make clear Who is deserving of our worship. For this reason Hashem's anger was directed against us, and He punished us [with imprisonment] for our rebelliousness. For we heard words that lead to מינות (heresy) from the mouths of those who study the works of kabbalism, and we kept our silence as if in acceptance. We failed to protest out of respect for books and their authors, and so those who saw and heard could come to error.

[Here the author details an account of all the slander that the kabbalistic camp employed against the author and his followers, calling *them heretics* (sic) with the

result that the author was imprisoned twice, and excommunicated by the rabbis of Jerusalem.]

All this has come upon us, but we have not forgotten the Name of our G-d, the great, mighty and revered G-d, to worship Ze'er Anpin and his Mate. ... But because we did not protest in order to protect the honor of Hashem when we had the power to do so (Note: Presumably when the author was the official Chief Rabbi of Sana, capital of Yemen), therefore we were ensnared [in the consequences of punishment]. ... Were it not that we put our trust in Hashem our G-d, the great, the mighty and revered G-d, whether or not He would perform a saving miracle, we would have been exiled ... because of the slander. But countless thanks to our G-d, our King, Who brought us forth from prison to peace once and twice, and saved us from a third imprisonment, and our feet have not slipped, praise unto Him.

Ah, woe and alas for the deplorable condition of the "emunah" (faith) of the people (Israel) whom G-d has chosen to be His treasure! ...

The pure faith in G-d's Unity persisted and was widespread throughout Israel all of the fourth and fifth millennia and a small part of the sixth ... [With the publication of the Zohar] many scholars of Israel failed the test and accepted a number of objectionable, speculative beliefs, which thereupon spread in Israel among those who occupied themselves with it (i.e., the Zohar). They authored books on this [kabbalistic] faith, which were added to the Mishnah and the Talmud, as if they were in accord regarding the faith in the Divinity. They did not study critically what was being said in vague expressions and inarticulately.

Indeed, our Talmudic rabbis who occupy themselves [exclusively] with the Mishnah, the Talmud and the [authentic] Midrashim of the Sages, as well as the general public who know nothing of kabbalism, stand firm in their complete faith, pure and unsullied. This is especially true of those who study carefully the works of Rav Saadyah Gaon, the Kuzari, Rambam, and the *חובות הלבבות* (Duties of the Heart) and similar works. All these persons are committed to the true faith of the [Divine] Unity, and the crown of our G-d, blessed be He, has remained with them in its ancient [glory], as in the days of the *אנשי כנסת הגדולה* (the Men of the Great Assembly). What is distressing, however, is that they believe [theoretically] that the specious books of kabbalism are holy, and that they contain sublime ideas that are beyond our comprehension, but which are in accord with the pure *אמונה* (faith). They do not sense the reptilian venom contained in it (i.e., in kabbalism) that uproots the foundations of our Holy Torah, causing its pillars to totter. Many of our scholars erred regarding it (i.e., kabbalism) and became a stumbling block to those coming after them.

Many [others] who reflect [upon the matter] know, testify and declare privately and in great secrecy that kabbalism is very alien to the faith of our Torah with regard to the faith in the Unity of Hashem. However, they do not wish to reveal their opinion out of fear of the "pietists" ...

Discerning persons who believe in His Unity in the true sense, and who hold fast to the true Torah, Written and Oral, fear for themselves to declare and make mention of the real truth in the face of the fraudulent "truth" voiced by the "pietists", lest they

attack them with ostracisms and excommunications ... Out of fear of the "pietists" discerning persons are afraid to sacrifice their honor (i.e., social standing, reputation) for the Sanctification of the honored and revered Name [of G-d] (על קדושת השם הנכבד) (והנורא). ... They ignore the history of our ancestors who gave up their lives for the Sanctification of the Name [of G-d]. Avraham Avinu was cast into the flame of the the Chaldeans (אור כשדים). Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah gave themselves up and were cast into the fiery furnace. Daniel was thrown into the lions' den. And it is recounted in the Gemara and in the Midrashim of our Sages that many of the righteous and the pious offered up their lives for the Sanctification of the Name [of G-d]. Some were saved and some were killed because of sins of their generation. But the aforementioned discerning persons not only do not give up their *lives* for the Sanctification of the Name [of G-d], but they are even reluctant to offer up their supposed honor (i.e., standing, reputation) on the altar of excommunication at the hands of the faithless worshipers of Ze'er Anpin. They are concerned lest their own honor and glory be diminished, but they are not concerned for the honor of G-d that has been profaned by the house of Israel through kabbalism. ... In this time of ours there has been an increase of חנופה (flattery), in showing favor and honor improperly to those who entertain vain concepts that lead to heresy. ...

"For this our heart is faint." How the Faith of the People of Israel has been transformed, whom G-d has chosen to love Him and to serve Him unanimously, to declare His Unity in their prayers and in their service with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their might without associating any produced being, above or below! For they have forsaken Hashem their G-d, and they have exchanged their glory, i.e. the great, mighty and revered G-d for an alien god, i.e., Ze'er Anpin. For they think that his father and mother (Abba and Imma) appointed him over all the worlds as a prince, manager and leader, and they (Abba and Imma) commanded all to worship him (according to the kabbalists), for all the keys were given over to him, and whatever he may desire he may do -- G-d save us (רחמנא ליצלן)!

One who fears the word of Hashem and who studies with understanding His Written Torah and the Orally Transmitted Torah of our Sages in the Mishnah and the Talmud must not allow his heart to be secretly enticed to worship any entity or Partzuf that (according to the kabbalists) G-d abstracted from His Essence, making the "wisdom" of G-d the soul of the Sefirah "Wisdom" (חכמה); the "intelligence" of G-d the soul of the Sefirah "Intelligence" (בינה) called Imma; the "greatness" of G-d was placed in the Sefirah Greatness (גדולה, also called חסד); the "power" of G-d was placed in the Sefirah Power (גבורה), etc. These [abstracted] parts [of G-d's Essence] became for the kabbalists the souls [of the Sefiroth] ... whom the kabbalists worship, saying: "When we worship the Sefiroth, we are worshipping their soul, which is actually the First Cause."

This idea is borrowed from the pagan philosophers (mentioned by Rambam in the Guide 3:29) who said that G-d is the soul of the spheres and the stars and the constellations. They, therefore, worship them, and say that they are worshipping their soul, which is the First Cause (G-d), in their opinion. (Note: The aforementioned passage from the Guide. reads: "Those who were able to think, and were philosophers

in those days, could only raise themselves to the idea that G-d is the spirit (soul) of the spheres; the spheres with their stars being the body, and G-d the spirit (soul). ... When the pillar of the world (Abraham) arose and it became clear to him that there is a transcendent G-d, Who is not a body, nor a force in a body, and that all these stars and spheres are His created works, and he understood the invalidity of those absurdities on which he had been brought up, he began to refute the opinion of the Sabians, and to expose the falsehood of their views. He publicly proclaimed the opposite of their views, 'and he called on the name of the L-rd, the G-d of the universe' (Gen. 21:33), a proclamation that includes the Existence of G-d, and the Creation of the universe by that G-d "[Who transcends what He created -- author]. In his imaginings, the kabbalist invents these Sefirotic Configurations (Partzufim) from Adam Kadmaah down to Ze'er and his Mate. He evolved them from the First Cause, which he contracts upward in his imagination, and from which in turn he evolved all the Configurations (Partzufim) in the innumerable worlds, and also in the worlds below the world of Atziluth. He viewed the evolving thread (הוט המשתלשל) as their soul, and he enjoined his readers to serve them with the claim that they are not serving the body of the Partzufim, but their soul -- as the early pagan philosophers claimed regarding the stars and the constellations.

All these Configurations (Partzufim) he (the kabbalist) calls Ma'aseh Merkabah (the Divine Chariot), and he considers them divinities because of the [abstracted] part that evolves from G-d, Who has become contracted to the surrounding areas, according to the kabbalist. This evolving [abstracted] part descends by way of a thin channel [according to kabbalistic imagination], and from it all the Sefirotic bodies, in their circular forms, their souls and their garments are brought into existence. These become divinities for the kabbalists, whom they call by the names of G-d. But the transcendent G-d they (the kabbalists) leave nameless and inaccessible to our praise and blessing ... and they the (kabbalists) declare that if one prays to Him (i.e., to the Transcendent G-d), such a prayer is a non-prayer, and will not be answered.

All these things are to be believed without thunderings and lightnings, without a thick cloud and the sound of shofar (a reference to the Revelation at Sinai -- author). We did not hear or see even some sign or wonder as offered by a false prophet (see Deut. 13:2-6). No Bath Kol (heavenly voice) called to us from heaven. There is only black ink on white paper inventing marvelous tales of Attika Kaddisha being revealed in the Beth Midrash of the pseudo-Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai (and not Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai, our Tanna, G-d forbid) and who asked him concerning the verse, "And G-d said: Let us make man etc.", as may be found in Zohar, Genesis 22.

Would it enter the mind of a [loyal] Israelite to ask concerning any of the Ten Divine Statements of the Creation (each beginning with "And G-d said"): "Who made this statement and Who made this statement?" Or would it enter an Israelite's mind to say that He Who said: "See now that I, even I, am He and there is no god with Me" (Deut. 32:39) is not the same One Who made all the Ten Statements of the Creation?

There are also many tales in the name of Elijah and the faithful shepherd (Moses) and others of the later Tannaim and Amoraim, concerning which every understanding student of the unblemished Torah, of the Prophets and of the Sages is struck with

hissing astonishment and amazement: How shall we replace the old Torah that we heard at the Revelation at Mount Sinai when G-d established a testimony in Jacob and set down a Torah in Israel to instruct them and their children amid thunderings and lightnings and thick cloud; when the voice of G-d spoke powerfully from the midst of the fire, which was not done unto any other nation; and in a powerful voice He spoke with us face to face: "I am the L-rd" thy G-d Who brought thee out of the land of Egypt ...:" and in the words of our Sages: "I have neither father, brother nor son;" "See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me" (Deut. 32:39)!? How shall we replace this Torah and believe a new Torah that says that G-d created out of His Essence (i.e., through emanation -- author) five Partzufim (Configurations) and gave them dominion over all creation, and they, in turn, gave dominion to Ze'er Anpin over all creatures, and commanded all to serve him (i.e., Ze'er Anpin), and he is our God and we are his people and inheritance?!

This is the prophet Isaiah's rebuke of Israel: "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly; they have forsaken the L-rd" (Isaiah 1:4). Not concerning *tzitzith*, *tefillin*, *succah* and *lulav* did he rebuke them and call them a sinful nation and a people laden with iniquity. For they certainly ate *matzah* and *maror* and kept all the other מצוות (Commandments). But they performed all these to serve the Baalim and the Asheroth whose forms were fabricated by the false prophets. They told the people that the soul of the Baalim and the Asheroth is a part of G-d above. They made forms of wood, stone, silver and gold in order to serve a tangible god, and to draw down through these physical forms the influence of the heavenly forms that the false prophets invented and commanded the people to serve. The kabbalists have done the same. They have said that our fathers have inherited falsehood to serve, pray to and call upon Hashem the true G-d, Who is the First Cause, because He is beyond any thought (i.e., because the kabbalist cannot picture Him in his imagination)! This is the opposite of the words of the prophet (Jeremiah) who said: "O L-rd, my strength and my stronghold and my refuge in the day of distress. Unto Thee shall nations come from the ends of the earth, and say: 'Our fathers have inherited only falsehood'" (Jeremiah 16:19). The nations shall accept the true religion, but Israel shall not accept the religion of the nations to worship false gods! This is what the kabbalistic followers of the Zohar have done; for it is claimed that it is proper to serve only the Sefirotic Causes that emanate and are drawn from G-d, in their opinion, as a tree that sends forth its branches in all directions. For these Sefirotic Causes are subject to conception, according to their concepts. The kabbalists relate all the מצוות (Commandments) of the Torah to these created (i.e., produced, emanated) Sefirotic entities, which they call the Body of the King (גופא דמלכא). Some מצוות relate to the Hand of the king, and to His Feet and the other Organs, and some מצוות relate, in their view, to *Yesod* (i.e., Basis or Foundation), which corresponds to the Dishonor (Genitalia) of the King, which it is not proper for us to behold, which is the kabbalistic reason for covering the blood (כסוי הדם) of wild beasts (חיה) and fowl, according to הרב מקור חיים! For all these things "let the Kohanim, the ministers of Hashem, weep between the porch (האולם) and the altar, and let them say: 'Spare, O L-rd, Thy people' (Joel 2:17); incline their heart to know and

to understand Thy truth; to know Thy ways that Thou hast commanded Moses, Thy servant, to teach Israel Thy deeds and serve Thee wholeheartedly. And not to serve created (i.e., produced, emanated) bodies that the kabbalists call Divine Lights, because of the Divine substance that is mingled in and associated with them, which is their soul, according to the notion of the kabbalists."

A malignant plague and a festering sore has spread and grown amidst our people, namely, hatred of wisdom and knowledge (i.e., philosophy, science) by which Avraham Avinu (our father) recognized his Creator before He revealed Himself to him, as our Sages state in their Midrashim. It is stated there that Avraham Avinu searched and contemplated G-d's works in heaven and earth and in all creation until he perceived that the world has a Ruler, Who thereupon revealed Himself to Avraham saying: "I am the Owner of the Castle."

The kabbalistic enemies of knowledge do not know how to distinguish between the defiled philosophy of sophistry and fallacy and philosophy based on sound reason with which G-d has endowed man. The word "philosophy" has become for the kabbalists a term of opprobrium used to denigrate the Torah scholars who know how to understand and contemplate the work of Hashem יתברך, and to know Him clearly, citing clear evidence of His Existence, His Unity and His wondrous providence over His creatures, from the greatest to the smallest.

The kabbalists are greatly astonished at the *Hasid* (Pious One), R. Bahya, author of *חובות הלבבות* (Duties of the Heart), for saying that one cannot serve the Cause of causes (G-d) except a prophet by his [prophetic] nature or an accomplished philosopher by his acquisition of knowledge; but others serve a being other than G-d. Their astonished recrimination crumbles and rebounds against themselves: How can they complain against the consummate *Hasid*, the author of *חובות הלבבות* (Duties of the Heart), at the same time that they accept the words of the *Zohar* that G-d consists of many Sefirotic Causes (Sefirotic Partzufim), as mentioned above many times ..., and that Divine service is to be rendered to Ze'er Anpin, and not to the Sefirotic Causes who precede him?! Is there any service to a being other than G-d more than this?! Had the kabbalists taken to heart with discernment and understanding the words of Rav Saadyah Gaon, and the *חובות הלבבות* (Duties of the Heart) and Rambam etc. they would not have served a being other than G-d. ... Faith in the Unity of G-d does not consist of mere verbal declaration, but of true convictions and acceptance of the Kingdom of Heaven in the faith of G-d's Unity that is unlike any other unity in existence, without any association with created (i.e., produced, emanated) Sefirotic Partzufim. ...

There is a grievous evil over which all should grieve: How shall we forsake Hashem, Who is the living G-d and King of the universe, and listen to the *Zohar* to serve new divinities, i.e., created (i.e., produced, emanated) Partzufim in association with the Divine substance that is mingled in them, which is the soul, in the opinion of the kabbalists, and how shall we perform all our mitzvot (commandments), not for the Name of Hashem Who commanded that His will be done, but rather that our mitzvot serve as adornments for the Brides -- the Higher Shechinah and the Lower Shechinah

-- to unite them with their Husbands, i.e., Imma with Abba, and the Son (ברא) with the Daughter (ברתא), i.e., Ze'er and Malkhuth. ... The kabbalists adorn their Sefirotic divinities with their (the kabbalists') prayers and their, performance of mitzvot in the belief that, by praying to them they are giving vitality and sustenance to the Sefirotic divinities, enabling them to draw Divine influence and vitality from the Supreme G-d, in order that they in turn be able to direct their influence to us. The kabbalists believe that prayer and worship are for the benefit of Heaven, as Rabbi Meir Gabbai writes, that is to say, for the benefit of the worshiped Sefirotic Partzufim, and not for our benefit. This is in contradiction to R. Shim'on ben Yohai's view in Yerushalmi, Shabbath, Chapter One where it is stated:

(Note: Here follows a lengthy quote that we have omitted. See also Yerushalmi, Nedarim 9:1 where the Gemara speaks of the impropriety of using the honor of G-d as an opening (פתח) for retracting a (vow), citing as an example one who vowed not to build a *succah*, not to take a *lulav* or not to put on *tefillin*. Against this the Gemara raises the objection: "[Is this a matter of the honor of G-d? We can infer that the performance of mitzvot is for one's own benefit, as it is written (Job 35:17): 'If thou be righteous, what givest thou Him?'" End of Note.)

It is a principle and fundamental with us that G-d does not need His creatures. On the contrary, His creatures are in need of Him to grant them life.

Therefore, whoever is loyal to Hashem our G-d, Who is the First Cause (without association with any other Sefirotic cause) of all that exists, should not listen to the מטרת (seducer), the author of the Zohar, and his followers! For Hashem our G-d, He alone brought all into existence in His goodness and loving-kindness. He is the Uniquely One of all other unities. He alone is the First, without beginning. He brought us out of Egypt. It is He Who was revealed at Sinai, and gave us the Torah amidst thunderings and lightnings and the sound of shofar ... declaring loudly: "I am Hashem thy G-d Who brought thee out of the land of Egypt; Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" -- and all the rest of the Ten Commandments that were proclaimed at that chosen occasion with great publicity. ... And all our ancestors, six hundred thousand men on foot beside the aged, the women and the children, all stood at the foot of the mountain, Mount Sinai, to receive the Torah and the commandments. All answered and said: "All that Hashem hath spoken will we do and obey" (Ex. 24:7). And out of fear and great fright of the powerful voice of Hashem they said to Moshe Rabbenu: "Speak thou with us and we will hear, but let not G-d speak with us, lest we die" (Ex. 20:16).

All this G-d did with us in order that we should believe in Moses, His chosen one, that he gave us a true Torah. G-d will not change it nor exchange it. It is also stated (Deut. 26:17-18): "Thou hast avouched Hashem this day to be thy G-d ... and Hashem has avouched thee this day to be His treasured people ..." And we are not to believe any prophet or diviner who wants to seduce us to serve any other god beside Him. Only Him alone are we to serve without the association of any other entity with Him. ... Even if a false prophet should perform signs and wonders in heaven and earth before our very eyes, [we are not listen to him], as it is written (Deut. 13:3-6): "and he (i.e., the prophet) give thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to

pass, whereof he spoke unto thee - saying: 'Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them'; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or unto that dreamer of dreams, for Hashem your G-d is testing you, to know whether ye do love Hashem your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul. After Hashem your G-d shall ye walk, and Him shall ye fear, and His commandments shall ye keep, and unto His voice shall ye hearken, and Him shall ye serve, and unto Him shall ye cleave. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken perversion against Hashem your G-d, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of bondage, to lead thee astray from the way which Hashem thy G-d commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put away the evil from thy midst."

All the more so, shall we not listen to the author of the Zohar, a book that suddenly springs forth from the earth, whose origin and author are not really known, unlike the works of our Sages, whose authors are known and famous from the time of their composition by the great men of Israel, the transmitters of the Received Torah, until now. ... We certainly shall not listen to the author of the Zohar to serve any of the Sefirotic Partzufim ..., but only our G-d, blessed be His Name, Whose service we have received from our ancestors, and of Whom our Holy Torah teaches that He has no form and no beginning, and Who is One, and Whose Unity is unique. All the Sefirotic Partzufim and Circular Entities (עגולים) have a beginning (i.e., the point at which they were emanated, according to kabbalism), and we should worship only the Creator of all, without associating any entity, created or emanated (according to the belief of the kabbalists). It is wrong to unite and combine with His Unity any of the Sefirotic entities (in which the kabbalists believe), as stated by Rabbi Shim'on ben Yohai: "Whoever associates the Name of G-d with something else will be uprooted from the world" (Sanhedrin 63a).

According to all the foregoing, one must guard against all customs, leniencies or stringencies, or changes of ritual in prayers that have been instituted in accordance with the Zohar and its followers. For most of them are based on reasons that involve heresy and polytheism. ...

Therefore, anyone whose heart is touched by the fear of Hashem, blessed be He, should distance himself from all the customs and rules (דינים) that have been instituted according to the spurious tradition of kabbalism. ... For all of them uproot fundamentals of the Holy Torah, and cause its pillars to be convulsed. For in all their blessings and prayers, when they mention the honored and revered Name of G-d, they have in mind Ze'er Anpin in association with the Sefirotic Partzufim above him, as is made clear in their books in innumerable places.

Not only against kabbalistic customs must one guard himself, but also *against all those consequences about which our Sages warned us*. Here are some of them:

1) A *Sefer Torah*, *tefillin* and *mezuzah* written by one who is a devotee of kabbalism are פסולים (unfit for use), because the Divine names contained in them were consecrated to Ze'er Anpin. All the Divine names are thus like those of Michah (see

Judges 17) which are considered profane (although they are the ineffable four-lettered name), as Rambam writes at the end of Chapter Six of הלכות יסודי התורה. We should very nearly apply to them the rule that they should be burned, as is the rule with a *Sefer Torah, tefillin and mezuzah* written by a Min (sectarian heretic)

2) One should not eat meat of an animal slaughtered by a kabbalist, because, when he pronounces the Divine name in the blessing (ברכה) that precedes the slaughtering (שחיטה), he has his Sefirotic divinity in mind.

3) If the שליח צבור (hazzan) is a devotee of kabbalism and conversant with it, one should not respond with "amen", "kadosh" (קדושה) and ברוך ה' המבורך (the response to ברכו), because the hazzan's intent (כוונה) is directed toward Ze'er Anpin.

4) At a marriage ceremony (קידושין) or a divorce (גט) the witnesses should not be believers in kabbalism, because the *kiddushin* and the *get* are invalid, since they are Scripturally unfit witnesses. Thus a married woman will be remarrying on the basis of an invalid divorce (גט).

There are many other things that involve מינות (heresy) and polythesim (עבודה זרה). One must guard against them and against the food and drink of the kabbalists, lest they pollute one's soul through forbidden foods.

Woe! Through the misleading book, the Zohar and the Tikkunim, we have become like the idolatrous peoples (the Indians-Hindus-the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, the Persians and Medeans, and the other religions that are based on secret lore and fantastic "secrets" that originate in imagination ...), peoples that are in conflict with the straightforward knowledge of the works of our Sages who teach man knowledge and understanding in our Holy Torah, that we stray not and err not through vain imaginings that constitute a transgression of Hashem's command: "And ye shall seek not after your own heart" (Numbers 15:39), which is a warning against heretical notions (זו מינות), according to our Sages.

Through the Zohar and the Tikkunim the statement of our Sages in Sanhedrin 39b has been realized: "R. Yehoshua ben Levi noted a contradiction. Scripture writes (Ezekiel 5:7): 'And like the laws of the nations that surround you, you have not done.' And later Scripture writes (ibid. 11:12): 'And like the laws of the nations that surround you, you have done'. (The resolution of the seeming contradiction is as follows:) You have not done as the best of them (i.e., those who believe in the Unity of G-d). But you have done as the worst of them" -- to serve Ze'er Anpin and to unite him with is Sefirotic Mate.

The Zohar and its followers have contradicted and corrupted our Emunah (Faith) in One G-d Whose Unity is Unique. They have made worshiped divinities out of the attributes that Scripture uses of G-d.

(Note: As mentioned at the beginning of this monograph, our קדמונים ז"ל, our Foremost Early Authorities, have made clear that "whatever attributes are found in Scripture are either attributes of His acts, or they are to be understood as negations of imperfection." But the kabbalists have corrupted the attributes by hypostasizing them. The conceptual, metaphorical attributes of Scripture have been

converted by the kabbalists into hypostases, i.e., Sefirotic divinities that have real existence as objective entities, and are to be worshiped as such. End of note.)

Almost all the readers of the Zohar have not understood [the full implications of] its intent. They thought that it is all part of one and the same Torah. Thus, they did not relinquish their study of kabbalism, [but pursue it] along with their study of the authentic Torah. "Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider" (Isaiah 1:3). ...

Praised be the Name of Hashem Who grants man knowledge and understanding to discern truth, and to shatter the vision of corrupters who raise themselves up to establish a vision, but stumble and cause multitudes to stumble by means of deceitful and seductive language to believe the deceptive falsehood that Hashem our G-d is not a Unique Unity. Now let all the wise of heart grow in wisdom by studying the perfect Torah of Hashem, the Written and the Oral; the Mishnah, the Talmud and the authentic Midrashim of our Sages; together with the Commentaries of Rav Saadyah Gaon and his work ספר האמונות והדעות (The Book of Beliefs and Convictions); R. Yehudah Hallevi (The Book of Kuzari); Rambam, i.e., all his books, including his Mishnah Commentary and all his Introductions; as well as the rest of our rational Scholars. Thus will their souls be sated with the bread of pure cakes, spread with the oil of the pure אמונה (Faith) as it was given at Sinai; through which they will merit "to behold the pleasantness of Hashem, and to contemplate in His palace" (Psalms 27:4). ... Blessed be He Who grants man knowledge to understand and to benefit others. "Come ye and let us walk in the light of Hashem" (Isaiah 2:5), which is His Holy, perfect and pure Torah, that will give us understanding and teach us knowledge of Hashem, the true G-d. Thereby will we merit to behold the pleasantness of Hashem in this world and in the future world. Amen. May it thus be His Will.

[Rav] Yahya ben Shlomo Kafih

It was not to be expected that this scathing criticism of kabbalism would not call forth a reaction. The kabbalistic Yemenite opponents of Rav Yahya Kafih published a response under the title אמונת ה' (Faith of Hashem). In it they attempted a point by point rebuttal, quoting Rav Kafih's criticism, which is then followed by a reply. An examination of some replies should prove useful. We shall limit ourselves to substantive issues and omit the polemical vituperations and vulgarities of personal abuse.

Rav Kafih's "Wars of Hashem" (Quoted)

G-d forbid that any Jew should believe ... in such things: ... [to exchange Hashem] for an impatient alien divinity (Ze'er Anpin) and to combine and associate with him five Partzufim (Configurations) whose very existence has not been demonstrated, and to call them "Hashem our G-d;" but Hashem the true G-d ... we should forsake and abandon and say [of Him] that he has no Name, and that we should serve [instead] the Partzufim (Configurations) and the Forms that, according to him (i.e., the author of the Zohar), were created and developed from Him!

... The goal of our Holy Torah is to distance us from the belief in idols, whether they

be physical or spiritual, and to know that Hashem He is G-d; there is none else beside Him. And He has no father nor brother, nor son (Midrash Rabbah, Yisro); and He did not receive His kingship from anyone, nor will He in the future give it over to anyone, as our Rabbis explained (Midrash Rabbah Numbers; Song of Songs Chapter One; Yerushalmi Sanhedrin ממונות (פרק דיני ממונות) on the verse (Isaiah 44:6): "I am the first, and I am the last, and beside me there is no G-d."

Response of the kabbalistic "Faith of Hashem"

He writes: "G-d forbid that our Rabbis should exchange Hashem our G-d etc." Where do we find in the Holy Zohar that there is any other G-d? On the contrary, we find the opposite of what this lying man claims. To quote the Holy Zohar (Introduction ט' דף ט"א): "Rabbi Shimon opened and said: 'In the beginning G-d created' (Gen. 1:1). One should see from this verse that whoever says there is another G-d is destroyed from the world, as it is said (Jeremiah 10:11): 'Thus shall ye say unto them: The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, these shall perish from the earth, and from under the heavens.' Because there is no other G-d beside the Holy One, blessed be He alone." (End quote of Zohar). Now that we find the words of the Holy Zohar clearly stated, how fitting it is to disparage and treat with disgust this man who lied about it.

Analysis of the kabbalistic response

Surely no one expects the kabbalistic Zohar to sanction explicitly belief in another G-d beside Hashem; nor does its open declaration that there is no other G-d weaken in the least the accusation of Rav Kafih that Zoharic teachings' *perforce constitute* belief in alien divinities although, the author from his own point of view, would hardly agree.

In all such cases the claims and counterclaims can be evaluated only by disclosing the conceptual root of divergence from which the divergent views follow as logical consequences. This is the Talmudic method of במאי קמפלגי ("what is the *underlying* principle being disputed [that lies at the root of the controversy]?"). In our case the basic point of divergence is the Fundamental of Fundamentals of G-d's sublime and exalted transcendence: His unlike otherness; His absolute Oneness by any test; His freedom from substance of any kind; His absolute simplicity; His freedom from any attributes; His unchangeability; and His being beyond all conception. *According to this Fundamental of Fundamentals* (summarized at the beginning of this monograph) the Zoharic teachings willy nilly constitute belief in alien, distinct divinities. Only by departing from this Fundamental of Fundamentals of our classic Foremost Early Authorities (קדמונים ז"ל) can the kabbalists defend their Sefirotic system as being monotheistic. It is a specious monotheism when viewed from the standpoint of the aforementioned Fundamental of Fundamentals of the classic Foremost Early Authorities (קדמונים ז"ל). This test is to be applied *relentlessly* to counter the apologetic obfuscation of the kabbalists. See above, Notes I, II and III.

Response of kabbalistic "Faith of Hashem": (continued)

Concerning his [Rav Kafih's] objection to the concept of Ze'er Anpin. (literally: the Impatient One), the kabbalists have already explained that Ze'er Anpin is an

instrument (כלי) for the action of the Creator. He (Ze'er Anpin, the Impatient One) is one of the cherubs on high. The following is from the Tikkunei Zohar "There are Great Faces (אנפי רברבי) and Small Faces (אנפי זוטרי), Faces of Mercy and Faces of Anger by which 'G-d is angry every day' (Psalms 7:12). Therefore G-d said to Moses (according to Berachoth 7a on Ex. 33:14): 'Wait until the countenance of anger passes'" (End quote of Tikkunei Zohar). So too Hagigah (13b) with regard to the cherubim that Ezekiel saw [in the prophetic vision] of the Merkavah (chariot) on the verse (Ezekiel 10:14): 'The first face was the face of the cherub, and the second face was the face of a man'. [On this the Gemara comments]" "Great faces and small faces". We also find King David praying: "Thou that art enthroned upon the cherubim, appear".

But now we have to inquire what are the cherubim? If we say that they are of wood or similar material, then we are led too [believe in] corporeality, Heaven forbid. Rather, they are the names of G-d, blessed and exalted by He. How so? The Name "I AM" is the cherub that is called in the Holy Zohar and in the Gemara "Great Face" (אנפי רברבי). The Ineffable Name of Four Letters is the other cherub that is called in the Holy Zohar and in the Gemara "Small Face" (אנפי זוטרי).

We must further inquire what are the Names of God on high? If we say they are something written or similar to this, then we are led to [believe in] corporeality, Heaven forbid. Rather, they are lights of the Creator through which He carries out His Will. In this sense the Men of the Great Assembly instituted the prayer: "For by the light of Thy countenance Thou hast given us, Hashem our G-d, a Torah of life, etc.," as Scripture says (Psalms 89:16): "Hashem in the light of Thy countenance they walk." The Ineffable Name of Four Letters is Ze'er Anpin in the language of the kabbalists, who say that prayer passes by way of that Instrument (Ze'er Anpin) to En Sof (the Infinite), blessed be He. This is the view of King David, peace unto him, who prayed by way of the cherubim that are called "Great Faces" (אנפי רברבי) and "Small Faces" (אנפי זוטרי) When we speak of "Great Faces" (אנפי רברבי), and Small Faces" (אנפי זוטרי), these are not to be taken literally. Rather, "Great Faces" refers to Mercy, and Small Faces" refers to Anger. Concerning his (Rav Kafih's) statement: 'G-d forbid that we should associate [with G-d] five Partzufim (Configurations)', the kabbalists have explained what the Partzufim are. They are the Names of God, blessed be He. These Names exist above as simple lights (אורות פשוטים). If we use them as the means by which we worship the Creator, what harm is there in this, since they are the Names of G-d? So too writes the pious author of חובות הלבבות (Duties of the Heart in שער חשבון הנפש פ"ג: "One must know that G-d is One; that there is no other Unity like His; that there is no Creator beside Him -- and His other good names and exalted attributes." Thus you see from the author of חובות הלבבות that there is no harm in mentioning G-d's names.

The author of (דף י"ט) שבילי אמונה has also testified that -- "the Names of God, blessed be He, are the Ten Sefiroth in true unification, attached to Him, blessed by He, as the flame is attached to the coal."

Analysis of the kabbalistic response

To the objection that Ze'er Anpin and the five Partzufim (Configurations) are alien divinities the kabbalist replies that "Ze'er Anpin is an *instrument* (emphasis mine) for the action of the Creator," and that Ze'er Anpin "is one of the cherubs on high." The implication of this reply is that rather than being a divinity, Ze'er Anpin is a mere created (or emanated) *instrument* (כלי) in the hands of the Creator, through which G-d performs His acts. This is also implied in the description of Ze'er Anpin as "one of the cherubs on high." The cherubs are, as we know, angels, and thus created. They are not Divinity.

Yet, the kabbalist continues. "But we have to inquire what are the cherubim? If we say that they are of wood or similar material, then we are led to [believe in] corporeality, Heaven forbid (ח"ו)". Now what is so heretical about the belief that the cherubim are material that the kabbalist replier should be shocked into saying that through this belief "we are led to [believe in] *corporeality* (הגשמה), *Heaven forbid* (ח"ו)"? Whether the angels are material (consisting of a rarefied substance), or they are purely spiritual is *not* a matter of Torah Fundamentals, as we read in Rambam's *Essay on the Resurrection of the Dead* Chap. II (מאמר בתחיית המתים פ"ב): "It is our opinion that the angels are not material ... and we have already presented Torah proofs of this in our work called "The Guide of the Perplexed." If some unenlightened person should think otherwise, preferring to think that the angels are material, and that they eat (because of the Scriptural verse "and they ate" -- Gen. 18:8) ... we would not resent him for this, nor consider him a denier (כופר) [of the Torah], nor would we denigrate him. ... May all the unenlightened be in error only about such, so long as their views be not impaired by attributing corporeality to G-d. There is no harm if they assume the corporeality of incorporeal *creatures* "(i.e., angels)."

Clearly, then, the kabbalist's reference to Ze'er Anpin as an *instrument* (כלי) and as "*one of the cherubs on high*" is conceptual confusion at best, or a disingenuous smoke screen at worst. Ze'er Anpin is really *Divinity* according to the belief of the kabbalist. Therefore he shrinks from attributing "corporeality (הגשמה), Heaven forbid (ח"ו)" to Ze'er Anpin, though he be called "an Instrument," "one of the cherubs," and "one of the Names of God." These Names of God (Partzufim) are (to the kabbalist) the Ten Sefiroth "in true unification, *attached to Him as the flame is attached to the coal.*" The kabbalist shrinks not only from attributing "corporeality (הגשמה), Heaven forbid (ח"ו)" to this *Divinity*. He also wishes to avoid the problem of plurality in relation to this *Divinity*. He thinks the challenge to strict monotheism can be met by the simplistic formula of "in true unification, attached to Him as the flame is attached to the coal" -- a formulation that violates the Transcendent, Absolute *Unity* (not *unification*) of the Absolute Incorporeal G-d of the קדמונים ז"ל (our Foremost Early Authorities), to Whom unification and combination of any kind are inapplicable. Moreover, if the Sefiroth and Partzufim are merely instruments and cherubs, why is the kabbalist concerned about *Divine* Unity and unification? Nor can a corrupted concept of Divinity be justified by calling the Sefirotic Partzufim "the Names of God?" which "exist above as simple lights (אורות פשוטים)." The responding kabbalist protests: "If we use them (i.e., the Parztufim) as the means by which we worship the Creator, what harm is there in this, since they are the Names of God?" This is another example of either confusion or deception. To worship the true G-d by calling His Names is, of course, proper. But

to worship Sefirotic Partzufim that have been *hypostasized* as objective beings of pure light is (idolatry, i.e., worship of *any being other than the Transcendent G-d*, to Whom nothing can be attached). This is plurality, despite the fact that the kabbalist calls them "the Names of God" and "simple lights."

The responding kabbalist's reference to the "great faces and small faces" mentioned in Hagigah with regard to cherubim reminds one of the tendentious out-of-context Christological quotations from Scripture. The Talmudic passage of Hagigah (13b) reads as follows: "What is כרוב, cherub? (i.e., what is the etymology of the word כרוב, cherub?) Said R. Abahu: כרביא, *cerabia*, like [the face of] a child. For in Babylonia they call a child 'rabia'. Said R. Pappa to Abaye: "But according to this, when it is written [of the angels called Ophanim] (Ezekiel 10:14): 'The first face was the face of the cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle', what is the face of a cherub, and what is the face of a man? (Rashi: are they not the same?). A great face and a small face! (Rashi: One is the face of a grown man (i.e., 'the face of a man') and one is the face of a child (i.e., the face of a cherub')." The Gemara is explaining the difference in appearance (i.e., in prophetic vision) between the *angel* that had the small face of a cherub, and the angel that had the large face of a grown man. This has nothing at all to do with the hypostasized Faces of *God*, Great Faces (אפי רבני) of God's Mercy and Small Faces (אפי זוטרי) of God's Anger. This is the idolatrous heresy of kabbalism, not of the Gemara, ח"ו. The Gemara speaks of *Angels*, not Divinity.

Similarly, King David did *not* pray to G-d *through* the cherubim, through "Great Faces" or "Small Faces" of *God*, ח"ו, or *through* Ze'er Anpin, or *through* the "Light of [God's] Countenance (Face)," ח"ו. King David prayed directly to G-d alone, Whose Shechinah (i.e., *specialty produced revelational light*) appears, in prophetic vision or on the ארון הקדש, the Holy Ark of the Tabernacle and the Holy Temple, as enthroned on or between the *angelic* cherubim. Now angels, cherubim, Ophanim, etc. are *creatures* of G-d; they are *not* Divinity!

When the Men of the Great Assembly instituted the prayer: "For in the light of thy Countenance Thou hast given us, Hashem our G-d, a Torah of life, etc.," they were not referring to "[lights of the Creator through which He carries out His Will]" as the kabbalist claims. This prayer is part of the *Sim Shalom* (שים שלום) blessing which parallels in content the Priestly Blessing (ברכת כהנים). The latter reads (Numbers 6:25): "The L-rd make His countenance to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee." Rashi: "The L-rd make His countenance shine upon thee' -- i.e., May He show thee a friendly (lit., smiling) countenance -- a beaming countenance." Corresponding to this Priestly Blessing, we pray: "Bless us, our Father, all of us together with the light of Thy countenance. For in the light of Thy countenance hast Thou given us, Hashem our G-d, a Torah of life, and the love of kindness, righteousness, blessing and compassion, life and peace." In other words: "Be favorable unto us; for in Thy gracious favor Thou hast given us, etc." A shining countenance is simply a figure of speech for showing favor, in contrast to an angry countenance. Thus: "Wait until the countenance of anger passes" (Berachoth 7a) is simply a figure of speech denoting the passing of anger.

The kabbalist responds that the Partzufim (Configurations) are Names of God that exist

above as simple lights (אורות פשוטים), and protests: "If we use them as the means by which we worship the Creator, what harm is there in this, since they are the Names of God? We have already exposed the fallacy of this kabbalistic response above: "To worship the true G-d by calling His Names is, of course, proper. But to worship the Sefirotic Partzufim that have been *hypostasized* as objective beings of pure light is עבודה זרה, idolatry and plurality ... despite the fact that the kabbalist calls them "the Names of God." -- The kabbalist adduces "proof" for his heterodoxy adding: "So too writes the pious author (החסיד) of חובות הלבבות (Duties of the Heart in שער השבון הנפש פ"ג: 'One must know that G-d is One; that there is no other Unity like His; that there is no Creator beside Him -- and His other good names and exalted attributes.' Thus you see from the author of חובות הלבבות that there is no harm in mentioning G-d's names."

Now the kabbalist certainly did not mean to adduce from the pious author of חובות הלבבות simply that, "there is no harm in mentioning G-d's names." Scripture is replete with "mentioning G-d's names." For this the kabbalist did not need to quote "the pious author of חובות הלבבות"! Seemingly, the kabbalist would have us infer from the pious author's demand that "One must know that G-d is One ... that there is no Creator beside Him" followed by: "... and His other good names and exalted attributes," that the belief in *hypostasized* Names and attributes (the simple lights called Partzufim), beside belief in the Transcendent Creator, is acceptable, since they are God's Names and Attributes.

This is either sheer audacious deception or simple-minded confusion. In no book more than in חובות הלבבות is there repeated stress on the need for the *purity* of monotheism, the belief in the Absolute Oneness and Transcendence of G-d. The pious author of חובות הלבבות would have shuddered at the inference drawn from his sublime words by the deceptive or confused kabbalist.

Let us read the aforementioned quotation from חובות הלבבות in context:

The eighth way [of the soul's accounting] is the accounting one makes with his soul regarding his obligation of purity (הטוהר) before G-d, exalted be He. This purity is twofold: 1) the purity of [G-d's] Oneness (i.e., pure monotheism), as we have explained at the beginning of this book; and 2) the purity of one's inmost thought when performing acts that relate to [one's] Hereafter (i.e., obligatory commandments or voluntary service of G-d) as we have explained in the Fifth Gate (i.e., Fifth Essay) of this book. The prerequisites of the purity of the Oneness of G-d are: that one should not serve a god beside Him nor believe in [another god] even without worshiping him as such; one should not attribute to G-d likeness, or form, or traits, or motion, or change, or corporeal attributes, or conditions of substance and accident; nor should one think that there is a beginning to His Eternity, or an end to His Existence. There is no "one" like His Oneness, and no unity like His Unity; and no Maker beside Him; and no Creator beside Him -- and His other good names and exalted attributes" (our translation follows the rendering of Rabbi Yoseph Kafih, which is closer to the Arabic original than the standard Hebrew translation of R. Yehudah ibn Tibbon)

The intent of the pious author of חובות הלבבות is clear. Having declared that we must know that "there is no "one" like His Oneness, and no unity like His Unity, and no Maker (יוצר)

beside Him, and no Creator (בּוֹרֵא) beside Him, which is an *enumeration* of names (Maker, Creator) and attributes (One, Unity), he adds: "and His other good names and attributes," which means: "and whatever else we may *properly* affirm of G-d." The proper way of affirming attributes of G-d has already been explained by the pious author in his Gate One, Chapter Ten. As does Rambam, R. Bahya ibn Pekudah also distinguishes between G-d's essential attributes and those that relate to His acts. Of His essential attributes R. Bahya says (*ibid.*): "Therefore understand of G-d that there is nothing like Him, and all [essential] attributes that you ascribe to Him are to be understood as negations of their opposites (cf. Rambam's Guide 1:58) ... And these [negations] are appropriately applied to Him, for He transcends any [positive] attribute and characterization, and is exalted above any likeness and similarity."

This sublime conception of G-d's attributes is the farthest removed from the kabbalistic hypostatization of Divine Attributes as objective Sefirotic Beings arranged as Partzufim (Configuration), a mythological dream-world that is heretical, idolatrous and polytheistic. To attribute such an idea to the pious philosopher-author of חובות הלבבות is an example either of deception or of muddled confusion.

Rav Kafih wrote: "G-d forbid ... that we should forsake and abandon [Hashem, the true G-d] and serve [instead] the Partzufim (Configurations) and the Forms (צורות) that, according to him (i.e., the author of the Zohar) were created and developed (i.e., through emanation) from Him!"

The response of the kabbalist is: "Heaven forbid that they be actual Forms. [They are presented as Forms] only for human comprehension, according to what is able to be grasped. This general rule is stressed by all the kabbalists."

Analysis

Whatever the Sefirotic Partzufim (Configurations) are, they are beings that are *distinct* from the Infinite Transcendent G-d (whom the kabbalists call "En Sof"), and they are *distinct* from one another. Yet they are considered by the kabbalists to be אלהות גמור, *actual Divinity*, and they are addressed as such. This is heretical, idolatrous and polytheistic, even if they are not conceived as *Forms* (צורות).

To Rav Kafih's objection that kabbalism contradicts the comment of our Sages on Isaiah 44:6 ("I am the first and I am the last, and besides Me there is no G-d"), who comment: "'I am the first,' i.e., I have no father; 'and I am the last,' i.e., I have no brother; 'and besides Me there is no G-d,' i.e., I have no son," the apologetic response of the kabbalist is: "This applies only to the essence of the soul (i.e., En Sof, blessed be He), Who has no father, brother or son. However, [such relationships] are applicable to [His] Names."

Our Analysis

We have already seen above that "His Names" in the kabbalist's terminology is a reference to the Sefirot. Thus, when something objectionable is predicated of G-d by the

kabbalists (which even they must admit is objectionable), their standard solution is to shift the reference to Sefirotic Divinity in contrast to En Sof Divinity. This device is used by the kabbalists again and again.

For example, R. Isaiah Horowitz in his *Shnei Luchos HaBris* (של"ח, Shelah) quotes Rambam's opposition to enumerating positive attributes of G-d when we pray. Rambam writes of this in great detail in the "Guide." The following is a segment of what Rambam writes:

The attributes found in Holy Scripture are either qualifications of His actions, (i.e., Merciful means acts that *in us* stem from *feelings* of compassion -- author) without any reference to His essence, or they indicate absolute perfection, but do not imply that the essence of G-d is a compound of various elements. For in not admitting the *term* "compound," they (i.e., the Attributists) do not reject the *idea* of a compound when they admit a substance with Attributes.

Therefore we, who truly believe in the Unity of G-d, declare that as we do not believe that some element is included in His essence by which He created the heavens, another by which He created the elements, a third by which He created the Intelligences, *in the same way we reject the idea that His essence contains an element by which He has power, another element by which He has will, and a third by which He has a knowledge of His creatures. On the contrary, He is a simple essence, without any additional element whatever* (Guide 1:53).

Know that the negative attributes of G-d are the true attributes (Note: He is "Wise" is a positive attribute; He is "not ignorant" is a negative attribute. He is "strong" is a positive attribute; He is "not weak" is a negative attribute). They (i.e., the negative attributes) do not include any incorrect notions or any deficiency whatsoever in reference to G-d, while the positive attributes imply polytheism, and are inadequate (1:58).

[We read in the book of Psalms (65:2)]: "Silence is praise to Thee." It is a very expressive remark on the subject; for whatever we utter with intention of extolling and of praising Him, contains something that cannot be applied to G-d, and includes derogatory expressions; it is therefore more becoming to be silent. ... You must surely know the following celebrated passage in the Talmud (Berachoth 33b): A certain person reading prayers in the presence of R. Haninah, said, 'G-d, the great, the mighty, the revered, the powerful, the strong, the feared and the potent.' -- The rabbi said to him, 'Have you finished all the praises of your Master? The three epithets, 'G-d, the great, the mighty and the revered,' we should not have applied to G-d, had Moses not mentioned them in the Torah, and had not the Men of the Great Assembly come forward subsequently and established their use in the Prayer; and you say all this! ...

There is no necessity at all for you to use positive attributes of G-d with the view of magnifying Him in your thoughts, or to go beyond the limits which the Men of the Great Assembly have introduced in the prayers and in the blessings, for this is

sufficient for all purposes, and more than sufficient, as R. Haninah said. Other attributes, such as occur in the books of the Prophets (i.e., Scripture) may be said when we meet with them in reading those books; but we must bear in mind what has already been explained, that they are either attributes of G-d's actions, or expressions implying the negation of the opposite (1:59).

Shelah (Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz), after quoting Rambam's opposition to mentioning positive attributes in prayer, other than what was composed for us by the Men of the Great Assembly, states that *Tur* in the name of R. Isaac (the Tosafist) writes that this applies to public, not private, prayers. On this *Beis Yosef* (R. Yosef Caro) comments: "It seems that the general custom follows the opinion of R. Isaac (the Tosafist)."

After quoting the opposing views of Rambam and R. Isaac (the Tosafist), *Shelah* (R. Isaiah Horowitz) suggests the typically kabbalistic approach that has been noted above. He writes:

In relation to G-d's aspect as En Sof, from the point of view of His essence, no attribute at all ... is justified, for He is an absolutely simple essence. In relation to Him the statement of the philosophers, who negate the attributes, is correct. But in relation to *אצילות* (*Atziluth*, the realm of Emanated Divinity, the aspect of God Emanated, i.e., Sefirotic Divinity -- author), the attributes are justified.

The heterodox conception of G-d that inheres in this kabbalistic transformation needs no elaboration. It has been pointed out repeatedly in this monograph. (Refer especially to Notes I, II, and III.) And yet, the kabbalistic apologist of the "Faith of Hashem" resorts to this heterodoxy again and again. Thus he writes: "The words of the Holy Zohar indicate of En Sof, blessed be He (i.e., Unemanated Divinity -- author) that there is no plurality in Him; if there are found in *Him* (emphasis added) things that imply plurality, they are in His Sefiroth, which are His Names (i.e., Sefirotic, Emanated Divinity -- author), as the author of *שבילי אמונה* ("Paths of Faith") has testified. As has already been explained, these are not created, but emanated."

Again: "See what has been written by Rabbi Joseph Gikatila, ... Rabbi Menahem Recanati ... and Rabbi Yehudah Hayat: 'The end of the matter, wherever you see things that are not appropriate to say of the Creator, blessed be He, as, for example, *שעור קומה* (the "Measure of the Stature" of God) and the like, it is all said of the Sefiroth (i.e., Sefirotic Divinity -- author) and when you see praise and glorification, it is all said of the Creator blessed be He, Who is in them (i.e., Sefiroth -- author) and outside of them."

This heterodox identification of God's Name with the supposed Sefiroth is a recurrent theme in kabbalistic apologetics. Thus, Rav Kafih had written: "From the Written Torah and the Oral Torah transmitted to us successively from Moshe Rabbenu, peace be unto him, we shall bring strong and authentic proofs that Hashem our G-d Who is called 'Y-H-W-H and 'A-D-O-N-A-I,' and in the words of our Sages 'the Holy One, blessed be He (הקב"ה).' is the First Cause Who alone is the Absolute (Self-existent) Be-ing (*מחוייב המציאות*) ... in opposition to the author of *ספר הברית ב'* and *ישר לבב* and to what has been said in the name of Ari who, influenced

by the Zohar, say that He is Ze'er Anpin."

To this the kabbalistic apologist responds:

We (i.e., kabbalists) know his (i.e., Rav Kafih's) alien (sic!) goal. His intent is to deny that His Names, blessed be He, have [actual] existence (i.e., are existent beings -- author). He (i.e., Rav Kafih) thinks that they (i.e., the Divine Names) have no existence (i.e., are not existent beings), like the names of human beings, who are called "Reuben" or "Simeon" (i.e., which *names* are not existent beings -- author). I, the author, shall bring strong proofs that the Names of En Sof, blessed be He, Who is the First Cause, all have existence (i.e., all the Names are existent beings), and they (i.e., the Names as existent beings), constitute His Glory (והם כבודו יתברך), and are called Sefiroth. It is written in the Torah (Deut. 28:58): "[If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this Torah that are written in this book], to fear this honored and revered Name, the L-rd (Y-H-W-H) thy G-d." In the Prophets (First Kings 8:16): "[Since the day that I brought forth My people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel] to build a house, that My name might be there." In the Holy Writings (Ps. 74:7): "They have profaned the dwelling-place of Thy name." These verses are rendered by the Aramaic Targum: "to fear this great and revered Name, the L-rd thy G-d" (Deut. 28:58) and "... to build a house that My Presence (שכינה, Shechinah) might dwell there."

Our Analysis

The "honored and revered Name" is synonymous with G-d, as may be seen by the very next words in apposition, אֵת ה' א-לֹהֶיךָ, "the L-rd thy G-d." The use of "the Name" as a synonym for G-d has been mentioned by Rambam in the "Guide" 1:64, as follows: "Know that in some instances by the phrase 'the name of Hashem,' the name itself is to be understood; comp. 'Thou shalt not take the name of the L-rd thy G-d in vain' (Ex. 20:7); ... This occurs in numerous other passages. In other instances it (i.e., the Name) means the essence and reality of G-d Himself ... (Note: Comp. Judges 13:17 and Radak ad loc.)." The Aramaic Targum to which the kabbalist refers as "proof" states nothing more than the Hebrew verse itself, which does not contain a shred of evidence in favor of the kabbalistic identification of G-d's Name with the supposed Sefirotic beings. The "proof" is tendentious; the Name refers to the Sefiroth only according to the kabbalistic assumption that it refers to the Sefiroth!

The "proof" from First Kings 8:16 ("... to build a house, that My Name might be there") is just as tendentious. The Targum renders the verse: "... to build a house that My Presence (My שכינה, Shechinah) Might dwell there," which the kabbalistic author seems to think supports his identification of G-d's Name with the Sefiroth. But Rambam (Guide 1:25) has already explained Shechinah:

The verb שָׁכַן (from which the noun שכינה derives -- author), as is well known, signifies "to dwell, "as in באלוני ממרא , "And he was dwelling in the plains of Mamre" (Gen. 35:22). This is the most common meaning of the word. "Dwelling

in a place" means the continued staying in a place; when a living being stays long in a place, general or specific, we say of it that it dwells in that place, although it unquestionably moves about in it.

The term שכך has been applied metaphorically to inanimate things; even of all things that are continuously connected to something, we use the term "dwelling," even if the thing to which it is connected is not a place, and the thing itself [that dwells] is not a living being. For instance, it is stated (Job 3:1): "[After this Job opened his mouth, and cursed his day. And Job spoke and said]: 'Let the day perish wherein I was born ... Let that day be darkness ... Neither let the light shine upon it. Let darkness and the shadow of death claim it for their own; תשכך עליו עננה, Let a cloud dwell upon it'" (i.e., upon the day of birth -- author). There is no doubt that the cloud is not a living being, and that the day is not a corporeal thing, but a division of time.

In this metaphorical way the term (שכך, dwell) is used in reference to G-d, exalted be He, that is to say, to denote His continued Presence or His Providence, in some place where [His Presence] has been continued or something that has been the object of His continued Providence. Thus, וישכך כבוד ה', "And the glory of the L-rd dwelt [upon mount Sinai]" (Ex. 24:16); ושכנתי בתוך בני ישראל, "And I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel" (Ex. 29:45); ורצון שוכני סנה, "And the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush" (Deut. 33:16). Whenever this term (שכך, dwell) is used with reference to G-d it refers either to His continued Presence (His שכילה, His Shechinah) -- i.e., the created [revelational] light -- or to continued Providence in relation to something, according to the context.

There is nothing in שכך, "dwelling" as explained by Rambam that constitutes even a hint of the Sefiroth.

Rav Saadyah Gaon (Beliefs and Opinions 3:10) explains the function of the Sanctuary similarly:

They were also bidden to honor the dwelling-place of that [created -- author] light called Shechinah by means of their substance; namely with silver and gold and precious stones and other things of value. In return therefore G-d would recompense them by prophetic revelation from that place, as Scripture says of the Tabernacle: "And there I will meet with the children of Israel" (Ex. 29:43). Likewise it (i.e., the Sanctuary) was to be a place for accepting the prayer of the nation in any trouble that might befall it. Thus Solomon enumerated at the time that he built the Temple the various instances [in which the prayers offered in it] were to be answered, whereupon G-d said to him: "I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication that thou has made before Me" (First Kings 9:3).

A reading, in context, of the Scriptural verses alluded to above documents the approach of Rambam and Rav Saadyah Gaon that has just been quoted.

Rambam quoted Ex. 29:45 (ושכנתי בתוך בני ישראל), "And I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel"), and Rav Saadyah Gaon quoted Ex. 29:43 ("And there I will meet with the children of Israel"). Verse 42 there reads: "... at the door of the tent of meeting before the L-rd, where I will meet with you, *to speak there unto thee.*" Thus the meeting and the dwelling (v. 45) are defined in terms of the revelation there of G-d's word, i.e., the prophetic message of Hashem to Moshe, as explained by Rav Saadyah Gaon.

"Dwelling" in the sense of the dwelling of the *specialty produced revelational* light called Shechinah is indicated in the verse quoted by Rambam, [על הר סיני ויכסהו הענן וגו'] וישכן כבוד ה' "And the glory of the L-rd dwelt [upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days]" (Ex. 24:16). The very next verse (v. 17) reads: "And the appearance of the glory of the L-rd was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel." As for the Sanctuary, it is stated (Lev. 16:2): "And the L-rd said unto Moses: 'Speak unto Aaron thy brother that he come not all times unto the Sanctuary within the curtain, before the ark-cover which is upon the ark, that he die not; for in the cloud do I appear upon the ark-cover.'"

The words of King Solomon at the dedication of the Holy Temple (First Kings 8:12ff) alluded to by Rav Saadyah Gaon (and following), are most instructive when seen in context:

And it came to pass, when the priests had come out from the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the L-rd ... for the glory of the L-rd filled the house of the L-rd. Then said Solomon: The L-rd hath said He would dwell (לשכן) in the thick cloud.

(This is an instance of "dwelling" as it refers to the *specialty produced revelational light* called Shechinah, the glory that appears in the cloud, as explained above by Rambam and Rav Saadyah Gaon. -- author).

(*Rashi to this verse*: "Then said Solomon", i.e., when he saw the [revelational] cloud, he said: "Now I see that the Shechinah dwells in the house that I have built; for so He promised that He would come and dwell in it, in the midst of the cloud." And where did He say (i.e., promise)? כי בענן אראה על הכפרת, "For in the cloud shall I appear upon the ark-cover" (Lev. 16:2). So is it explained in Sifre.")

I have indeed built Thee a house of habitation, a place for Thee to dwell in for ever. (In the sense just mentioned -- author) ... (v. 27ff) But will G-d really dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens do not contain Thee; how much less this house that I have built! But turn Thou unto the prayer of Thy servant and to his supplication, O L-rd my G-d, to hearken unto the entreaty and to the prayer which Thy servant prayeth before Thee this day; that Thine eyes be open toward this house night and day toward the place whereof Thou hast said: My Name shall be there, to hearken unto the prayer which Thy servant shall pray toward this place. And hearken Thou to the supplication of Thy servant and of Thy people Israel, when they pray toward this place ...

(*Radak to the above*: Is it really true that G--d will dwell with man on earth? This

cannot be believed, for Thou art blessed and exalted above everything. There is no place that contains Thee. For Thou art מקומו של עולם, the place of the universe (Note: i.e., the universe "stands" -- קום -- on Thee; for the existence of the universe is supported by, depends on, Thee, for Thou causest it to exist -- author), but the universe is not Thy place (i.e., does not support nor contain Thee -- author). Therefore, my building the house for Thee is only a metaphor, in the sense that Thy will and glory may be found in this house (i.e., in relation to this house -- author) *to hearken to the prayer which is offered in this place* (emphasis added). Even though G-d's will relates to one who cries out unto Him wholeheartedly *in all places* (emphasis added), to hearken to his prayer, Solomon petitioned G-d that this chosen place (i.e., בית המקדש, the Holy Temple) should be of [special] assistance to one who prays [there or toward it] ... more than if one prays elsewhere.) -- end quote of Radak.)

The foregoing Scriptural verses make it clear that:

- a) G-d really transcends place (space), whether of heaven or of earth;
- b) His "dwelling" (שכינה, שכך, Shechinah) is *revelational*, in order to satisfy the human need to relate to G-d in terms of place (*Divine Presence*);
- c) This Presence (שכינה) manifests itself in a specially produced revelational light or cloud,
- d) and in the special Providence that relates to the בית המקדש (the Holy Temple) in which prayers are more readily answered -- as has been explained by Rambam and Rav Saadyah Gaon and Radak.

All this is expressed with subtle nicety in the words (ibid. v. 29): "toward the place whereof Thou hast said: *My name shall be there.*" The בית המקדש (the Holy Temple) does not house G-d, for He transcends place (space) of heaven and earth. It houses His *Name* in the revelational and providential senses just mentioned. Yet, the tendentious kabbalist would have us believe that this very expression is a Sefirotic reference!

After quoting First Kings 8:16 ("to build a house, that My name might be there") with its Targum ("that My Presence -- שכינה -- might dwell there") in the vain attempt to find in it a Sefirotic reference, the kabbalist quoted Ps. 74:7 ("They have profaned the dwelling-place of Thy name") without appealing to the Targum. His quotation of the Targum to this verse would have been counter-productive to his contention that "the dwelling-place of Thy name" is a Sefirotic reference. The Targum makes it abundantly clear what "the dwelling-place of Thy name" really means. The Targum renders the verse: "They have profaned the dwelling-place that is *called* by Thy name"! This tells the whole story! -- as we have explained above.

The kabbalist writes: "And the Men of the Great Assembly, who instituted the prayers, formulated: 'Throughout the generations He endures, and His Name endures, לדור ודור הוא קיים

ישמו קיים etc'. Note how they have placed side by side the endurance of His Name and His endurance -- "הוא קיים וישמו קיים" -- end quote of the kabbalist.

The kabbalist would have us believe that just as G-d exists as an objective Being, so does His Name exist as an objective Being, which, in the opinion of the kabbalist, alludes to the Sefirotic Beings.

What is overlooked is the common use in the Tefillah of *rhetorical flourish* that expresses itself in synonymic embellishment, and in the balanced, parallel phraseology of elevated prose. It is akin to classical Hebrew poetry, in which parallelism reigns supreme. Rav Saadyah Gaon refers to *אתסאע אללגה* (הרחבת הלשון) "the extension of language" that is characteristic of the style of classical Hebrew (Emunoth Vedeoth 2:3). He complains that misinterpretation of rhetorical terms is "due to unfamiliarity with the [classical] Hebrew language" (ibid. 2:5). The Gaon speaks there of the use of metaphor. But the complaint is equally applicable to the frequent attribution by the kabbalists and others of esoteric ideas to synonymic expressions that were intended as eloquent rhetoric, not as mystical allusions

Thus, having accepted the "yoke of Divine Kingship" (קבלת עול מלכות שמים) in שמע ("Hear, O Israel") by declaring the Unique, Absolute Oneness of the Divine King (G-d), we reaffirm in the ensuing berachah (אמת ויציב, "True and firm etc.") the eternal endurance of the Divine Kingship, and we say with synonymic rhetoric: "Throughout all generations *He* endures, and *His Name* endures, and *His throne* is firm, and *His kingship* and *His truth* endure forever:" All the emphasized words express the same theme, e.g., the eternal endurance of the Divine King. As Rambam writes in the "Guide" 1:64 (quoted above): "Know that in some instances by the phrase 'the name of Hashem', the name itself is to be understood; comp. 'Thou shalt not take the name of the L-rd Thy G-d in vain (Ex. 20:7) ... In other instances it (i.e., the Name) means the essence and reality of G-d Himself, i.e., the "Name of Hashem" is another way of saying "Hashem." "His throne" means "His kingship;" and "His Name" is a synonym for "He" in the preceding phrase. This berachah of אמת ויציב is an eloquent reaffirmation of orthodox monotheism, not a heterodox allusion to Sefirotic kabbalism.

We have thus analyzed the kabbalistic response contained in the book, "The Faith (sic) of Hashem," and have found it wanting. The remainder of the book is a continuous repetition of the "responses" given thus far. There is no point to go on and on in the same vein. I have made marginal notes on the remainder of the book, but nothing is to be gained by quoting them. There also remains in the book much polemical material on non-substantive points. I shall therefore conclude the analysis of the book with a number of general observations.

Rambam speaks in his Guide of שפע, which is translated as "influence" (from Latin "influer," to flow in) or as "emanation" (from Latin "emanare," to flow out). However, he explains this term very carefully to mean something fundamentally different from the heterodox emanation of the kabbalists.

Rambam writes (Guide 2:11-12):

Since we have repeatedly spoken of the influence (שפע) emanating from G-d and from the Intelligences (angels), it is proper that we should explain to you its true meaning ...

It is clear that whenever a thing is produced, an efficient cause must exist for the production of the thing that did not exist previously. This immediate efficient cause is either corporeal or incorporeal. ...

In Physics it has been shown that a body in acting upon another body must either directly be in contact with it, or indirectly through the medium of other bodies. For example, a body that has been heated has been in contact with fire, or the air that surrounds the body has been heated by the fire, and has communicated the heat to the body; the immediate cause of the heat in this body is the substance of the heated air. A magnet too attracts iron from a distance through a certain force communicated to the air around the iron. The magnet therefore does not attract at all distances, just as fire does not heat at all distances, but only as long as the air between the fire and the object is affected by the fire. When the air is no longer affected by the fire which is under a piece of wax, the latter does not melt. The same is the case with the magnet. When an object that has previously not been warm has now become warm, a heating cause must have been introduced; either some fire has been produced, or the distance of the fire from the object has been changed, and the altered relation between the fire and the object is the newly produced cause.

In a similar manner we find the causes of all changes in the universe to be changes in the combination of the elements that act upon one another when one body approaches another or separates from it. There are, however, changes that are not connected with the combination of the elements, but concern only the forms of things; they too require an efficient cause that produces the form. This cause is incorporeal. ... The action of this incorporeal cause cannot depend on a certain relation [of distance] to the corporeal product; being incorporeal, it cannot approach a body, or recede from it; nor can a body approach the incorporeal agent, or recede from it, because there is no relation of distance between corporeal and incorporeal beings. ... These actions [of incorporeal beings] do not depend on impact, or on a certain distance. They are termed "influence" (or "emanation") on account of their similarity with a water-spring which sends forth a flow of water in all directions; it has no specific side for receiving or spending its contents; it springs forth on all sides, and continually waters both neighboring and distant places. In a similar manner incorporeal beings, in receiving force or imparting force to others, are not limited to a particular side, distance or time. They act continually; and whenever an object is sufficiently prepared, it receives the effect of that continuous action called, "שפע" "influence" (or "emanation"). G-d, exalted be His Name, being incorporeal and everything being the work of Him as the efficient cause, we say that the universe has been created by the Divine influence, and that all changes in the universe emanate from Him. In the same way we say that He caused knowledge to emanate from Him and to come upon the prophets. The point of it all is that these are the actions of an incorporeal Being and it is in this sense that His action is called שפע, "influence" (or "emanation"). This term שפע, "influence" (or "emanation"), has been applied also in Scriptural Hebrew to G-d, exalted be He, because of the similarity [of His actions] to that of a water-spring, as we have

mentioned. For there cannot be found a better metaphor than this, i.e., שפע, "influence" (or "emanation"), for the similarity to the action of an incorporeal Being, since we are unable to find a term that accurately corresponds to the matter as it really is. For to form an idea of the action of an incorporeal Being is as very difficult as to form an idea of the incorporeal Being. Just as our imagination does not conceive of an existing being other than corporeal so too can we not imagine the performance of an action other than through contact with the agent, or at a certain distance from the agent, and from a certain side (direction). There are therefore some common people who on learning that G-d is incorporeal, or that He does not have physical contact with the object of His action, imagine that He commands the angels, and that the angels perform those actions directly through physical contact as we do in our actions. These persons thus imagine that the angels too are corporeal. There are others who think that He, exalted be He, commands an action in words consisting, like ours, of letters and sound, and that thereby the action is performed. All this results from following the imagination, which is, in truth, identical with the "evil inclination". For every defect in logic or in character is the work of the imagination directly or indirectly. However, this is not the purpose of the present chapter, which is intended only to explain the matter of שפע, "influence" (or "emanation") which is applied to G-d and to the Intelligences, i.e., the angels, because they are incorporeal. ... As to our assertion that Scripture also uses the idea of שפע, "[influence," in relation to the action of G-d, it is the verse "They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters" (Jeremiah 2:13), that is, the Divine influence that gives life, i.e., existence, which is undoubtedly life (as it is used in this passage -- author). Similarly: "For with Thee is the fountain of life" (Psalms 36:10), i.e., the Divine influence that gives existence (i.e., the source of existence -- author).

Thus, at length and in detail does Rambam very carefully make clear in what limited sense the term שפע, "influence" or "emanation," may be used acceptably. It is simply an inaccurate metaphor to express the fact that an incorporeal Being is the Cause of a certain effect that has been produced; no term can be found that would accurately describe this fact. The Incorporeal Absolute Being (G-d) Whose Existence is absolute, causes the universe to spring into being out of non-existence, out of absolute nothingness (יש מאין, creatio ex nihilo, creation out of nothing). To repeat the words of Rambam: "G-d, exalted be His Name, being incorporeal, and everything being the work of Him as the efficient cause, we say that the universe has been created (out of non-existence, out of absolute nothingness -- author) by the Divine influence (or "emanation") and that all changes in the universe emanate from Him (i.e., He is the Source - the incorporeal Cause, Originator, Creator, of all -- author).

Fundamentally different is the heterodox sense in which the term "emanation" is used by the kabbalists. In the kabbalistic use of the term, emanation means literally that something of G-d -- His substance, or His Will, or His *something* -- flows outward and *emerges* as something else, no matter how the category of that emergent something else be defined. Here lies the root of the heterodoxy.

The outstanding latter-day apologist for kabbalism, Rabbi Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto (1707-47), wrestles with this problem in his *ספר חוקר ומקובל* ("Philosopher and Kabbalist"), a dialogue between a classic, orthodox Torah philosopher and a kabbalist, as follows:

Philosopher: If Atsiluth is אלהות, Godhead, then how can you say that אלהות, Godhead derives from אלהות, Godhead? Is this view different from the view of the Christians, who propound the trinity, saying he is three and He is one? ... Thus far I have spoken only of Atsiluth. When we come to Beriah, Yetsirah and Asiyah, the objections and perplexities increase greatly. ... For you assume the derivation [from Atsiluth] of Beriah, Yetsirah and Asiyah, and you call them, too, אלהות, Godhead, and you make distinctions -- one part being called by this name, and another part not so called, and so on. Tell me, in the name of your faithful friendship, and by your life, whether an intelligent person can conceive of a distinct part of G-d, of a half, of a third, or of a tenth -- and direct his service sometime to this part and sometimes to another? ... It would indeed have been better to believe along with the entire congregation that the Cause of all causes is One in an absolute sense. ...

I have heard you kabbalists say that the Sefiroth evolve by degrees until this physical world emerges. This is an impossibility which I cannot accept -- namely, that אלהות, Godhead, evolves and develops until the murky world of matter emerges. ... If you say that the Sefiroth are an emanated radiation of En Sof, I have already raised the objection at the beginning: How is it possible to cause the derivation and the emanation of Godhead from Godhead? Furthermore, if they are emanated from Him -- then they are outside of Him! And if you say even a hundred times: 'like the flame which is connected to the coal' -- these are only words said by the mouth, that do not pass through the ear. How much less do they enter the heart to be accepted concurrently that its essence is not Godhead, and yet, at the same time, Godhead. Certainly this is impossible and entirely inconceivable. Now I have heard that your service relates to the Sefiroth. I see no way to permit this, if they are not Godhead in essence. And if you answer that Godhead cleaves to them to such an extent that they are called by His name, what, then, will you say to the Christians, for you have no justification to answer them.

I am telling you what I have read and heard concerning these things that you explain as development [i.e., emanation]: how the created evolved from the Creator, as though the Creator were primal matter for the created, which evolves from Himself, and that matter continues to be acted upon gradually until it reaches the created themselves -- which are the Sefiroth; all that you kabbalists expound is along these lines. For you say that the Creator, blessed be His name, caused Himself to be acted upon until He became the radiance of Himself, which continues to be acted upon by evolving until there emerge the lower forms of existence. ... But I have already objected that it is impossible for His light to evolve. And you have already admitted this -- that no characteristic of corporeality applies to Him, blessed be He.

Kabbalist: I admit all this. Indeed it is the foundation of my entire structure that the Emanator possesses no characteristic of corporeality at all, G-d forbid; and it is impossible to say in any way that His light is acted upon and evolves so that the Creator becomes something created. For as long as I have lived I have never heard concerning creation anything else than that it was effected from nothing. Consequently, how can one speak of evolving and being acted upon? ... I will now start you on the road to understand what you have never understood.

Philosopher: Speak!

Kabbalist: Know that the Emanator is One who is possessed of will. Now understand; *He and His* will (emphasis added).

[Note: In his work *Milhemeth Moshe*, Rabbi M.H. Luzzatto makes this point more clearly: "That is to say, you must distinguish between 'Him' -- *the Essence of G-d -- and His 'Will'*, *that they are two [distinct] things* (emphasis added) (page 8). Further: For example, when speaking about a man, the man is called the 'subject,' while what is said about him, his characteristics, are called the 'predicate,' or 'predicates.' Thus in speaking of a man, we can speak of a predicate of him: that he is a man of Torah, or a man of charity or that he is wise. All these are distinct predicates, so that we are able to speak of each predicate separately."]

Philosopher: I understand you to mean that we can speak of Him in two aspects: in the aspect of Himself, and in the aspect of His Will.

Kabbalist: Do you admit this or not?

Philosopher: Certainly. Every subject can be discussed in the aspect of each of his predicates separately.

Kabbalist: Know that of the Essence of the Emanator, exalted and blessed be He, we are not permitted to speak, and we have no need to enter into any discussion about Him, for it is enough for us to know of His existence. Beyond this we are not permitted to speak at all. But know *that whatever we say is about his Will* (emphasis added), for this is closer to us, and is permitted, since we are not touching upon His Essence, blessed be He, at all.

(from p. 17-18) Know that [His] Will they (i.e., the kabbalist) call 'haarah' (radiated light), while En Sof they call 'simple light.' Therefore, in this way the forces of [His] Will and His attributes are called: lights.

Philosopher: If so, according to you, these names are figurative expressions; these things have no [objective] existence except [subjectively] in [our] mind.

Kabbalist: See how you err in understanding the beginning of my words. ... Know

that whoever wants to understand the matter of Sefiroth must consider the human soul. The matters of the soul are not [subjective] in thought alone, but rather an actual [objective] force. True, it so subtle that it is not subject to our senses, but in any case it is a [real] force, and it is possible for a man to discern it without [treating it] figuratively. In the same way the supernal characteristics and forces of the Sefiroth which we mentioned are actual [objective] things. The existence of the Emanator, blessed and elevated be He [=En Sof] - is certain, and the existence of His Will is also certain and this is His radiated light. For radiated light is what a luminary radiates and sends forth. So too what the One and Only Master wills is called radiated light. ... The forces of this Will are called lights, as mentioned. But they are lights of actual [objective] existences, analogous to the objective soul [of man]. ...

Philosopher: In that case, your general point is that the Sefiroth are the forces of the supernal Will in its finite aspect, and through them all acts occur."

Thus Rabbi M.H. Luzzatto comes to terms with the perplexing problems posed by the concept of kabbalistic emanation by relating emanation not to G-d's Essence, but to His Will. Not G-d's Essence is emanated; His Will is emanated and evolves into the Sefiroth. But this emanated Will, *which is not G-d's Essence*, as Rabbi M.H. Luzzatto stresses, is, nevertheless not a mere figure of speech. It is an actual objective force, *an objective entity*. From the point of view of classic Judaism this inescapable dualism is a heterodox conception. For the classic doctrine is that He and His Will are identical. There can be no distinction between Him (i.e., His Essence) and His Will, nor between His essence and His knowledge, etc. As Rambam states in the Guide (1:53)

Therefore we, who truly believe in the Unity of G-d, declare, that as we do not believe that some element is included in His essence by which He created the heavens, another by which he created the elements, and third by which He created the Intelligences, in the same way we reject the idea that His essence contains an element by which He has power, *another element by which He has will*, and *a third by which He has knowledge* of His creatures. On the contrary, He is a simple essence, without any additional element whatever.

Rambam expressed this also in his Mishneh Torah, Yesode Hatorah 2:10:

The Holy One, blessed be He, perceives His true essence, and knows it as it is in reality; for His knowledge is not like ours, separate from His essence; we and our knowledge are not identical, but the Creator with His knowledge and His life are one (i.e. identical) in every respect, in every way, and in every sense of the term unity; for, if He possessed life and knowledge as things separate from His essence, there would be several divine beings, G-d Himself, His life, and His knowledge, This is not the case; He is One in every respect, in every way, and in every sense of the term unity; consequently He is the One Who knows, that which is known, and also the knowledge itself; all these are One (i.e., identical) -- a concept which cannot be clearly described in words, perceived by the ear, or understood by the heart of man. (In the Guide 1:68 Rambam states that this is "a fundamental principle of our Torah,"

(.יסוד תורתנו)

What is true of His knowledge is equally true of His Will or His power, as is clear from the above-quoted passage from the *Guide*.

Also Guide 2:18:

All things owe their existence to His eternal and constant wisdom, but we are utterly ignorant of the ways and methods of that wisdom, since, according to our view [that G-d has no attributes], His *Will* is identical with His *Wisdom*, and all His attributes are one and the same thing namely, His *Essence* or *Wisdom*.

Guide 1:69:

According to either opinion, the series of successive purposes terminates, as has been shown, in G-d's *Will* or *wisdom*, which in our opinion (i.e., that G-d has no attributes) are His *Essence*, and not anything separate from Himself *or different from His Essence*. Consequently, G-d is the final purpose of everything. Again, it is the aim of of everything to become, according to its faculties, similar to G-d in perfection; this is what is meant by "*His Will, which is identical with His Essence.*"

Guide 3:13:

We also meet with this view in Scripture: "The L-rd hath made everything *lamaanehu* for its (or His) purpose (Prov. 16:4). It is possible that the pronoun in *lamaanehu* refers to the object (viz., "everything"); but it can also be considered as agreeing with the subject; in which case the meaning of the word is, for the sake of Himself, or *His Will which is identical with His Self [or Essence]*.

See also the last of the Eight Chapters (שמונה פרקים) in which Rambam states that G-d's attributes such as His knowledge, power *will* and life, etc. are inseparable from His *Essence*, and that they are identical.

Ramban's Disputation (ויכוח הרמב"ן):

I stood up and objected, "Hearken and hear my words, Jews and gentiles. Fray Paul asked me in Gerona if I believe in the trinity. I asked him, 'what is the trinity? [Does it mean) that G-d is [composed of] three coarse (i.e., substantial) bodies like the bodies of men?' He answered, 'No' [I asked], [Are they three ethereal substances like souls or three angels?' He said 'No' [I inquired further]; Is it one thing composed of three [elements] as [physical] bodies consist of four elements? He said, 'No.' 'If so,' [I challenged], 'What is the trinity?' He answered, '[It is] the wisdom , will and power [of G-d],' I said. 'I admit that G-d is wise and not foolish (=negation), that He wills without emotion, and that He is powerful, and not weak (=negation). However, the expression trinity is a fundamental error. For wisdom, when said of the Creator, is not an accident (i.e., a quality that is not *identical* with the essence). Rather He and His

Wisdom are One (i.e., identical), *He and His Will are One (i.e., identical)*, He and His Power are One (i.e., identical). Consequently, the Wisdom, and the Will and the Power [of G-d] are all One (i.e., identical), [not three].

Thus, to escape the concept of an emanating, evolving essence of Godhead, Rabbi M.H. Luzzatto is forced into the equally heterodox concept of distinction between G-d's Essence and His Will; His Essence does not emanate and evolve, but His Will does exactly that -- not figuratively, but as an actual objective entity of Divine Will as a hypostasis.

Thus, Rabbi M.H. Luzzatto is in basic contradiction to the Fundamental of the קדמונים ז"ל (the Foremost Early Authorities) that G-d's Will (or His Wisdom, etc.), *unlike that of man*, is *identical* with G-d's *Essence*. The example given by Rabbi M.H. Luzzatto that "in speaking of a man, we can speak of ... [his] distinct predicates, ... of each predicate separately," is a shocking analogy that is not applicable to G-d with Whom all such predicates are identical with His Essence, as stressed over and over again by the קדמונים ז"ל (The Foremost Early Authorities), as cited above numerous times. But Rabbi M.H. Luzzatto says of G-d: "He *and* His Will." "That is to say, you must distinguish between 'Him' -- the Essence of G-d -- and His 'Will,' that they are *two* things." To avoid the idea that G-d's Essence emanates and evolves, a concept that is unacceptable to Rabbi M.H. Luzzatto, he is forced to distinguish between G-d's Essence (which does not emanate) and His Will (which does emanate).

Thus we repeat what was stated at the beginning of this monograph: "Now the following point must be stressed with the utmost force and clarity. No matter which concept of G-d one accepts, *the God of the kabbalists is not the G-d of the קדמונים ז"ל* (The Foremost Early Authorities).

This criticism applies even to Rabbi M.H. Luzzatto, who among the kabbalists went to the greatest lengths to *reinterpret* the original kabbalistic concepts, stripping them, *as much as possible*, of those elements that blatantly conflicted with classic doctrine, and arranging them in impressively systematized detail and in philosophical terminology that in itself produces a specious plausibility.

Viewed in its simplest sense, it [i.e., the doctrine of yesh me-ain, of "creatio ex nihilo"] affirms the creation of the world by G-d out of something which is neither G-d Himself nor any kind of existence, but simply the non-existent. The mystics, too, speak of creation out of nothing; in fact it is one of their favorite formulae. But in their case *the orthodoxy of the term conceals a meaning which differs considerably from the original* (emphasis added). This 'Nothing' [=Ain, as in *En Sof*] from which everything has sprung is by no means a mere negation. ... In a word, it signifies the Divine itself, in its most impenetrable guise, [i.e., *En Sof*]. And, in fact *creation out of nothing* means to many mystics just *creation out of G-d*. Creation out of nothing thus becomes the symbol of emanation, that is to say, *of an idea which, the history of philosophy and theology, stands farthest removed for it*. (Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, p. 25).

The heterodox concept of a *hypostatic* Divine Will which is other than.... G-d's Essence,

and which is intermediate between His Essence and created existence, is not an original idea of Rabbi Luzzatto. We find it expressed by Ibn Gabirol (ca-1057), who is known to have been strongly influenced by the emanations theories of Neoplatonism. Thus he writes in his *כתר תורה*: "Thou art wise, and from Thy wisdom Thou emanated a commissioned will as an artisan and a craftsman to draw the draught of being from the void" (כפועל) (אתה חכם, ומחכמתך אצלת חפץ מזומן, כפועל). (ואומן למשוך מְשֻׁךְ היש מן האיין).

This is but one of Ibn Gabirol's ideas that has found its way into the writings of the kabbalists.

The notion of Divine Will, or Divine Word or Divine Wisdom, as a hypostasis, an objective entity that is other than G-d's Essence and that is intermediate between G-d's Essence and created existence, appears in the works of Philo, the Alexandrian, and in other such works of that period that were written *under Hellenistic influence*. This is the Greek concept of Logos (Greek = word), the Word of G-d as an objective entity other than G-d's Essence, and intermediate between God and created existence. This concept is *Hellenistic, Alexandrian* and *Neoplatonic*. It is not the classic orthodox Torah concept of the *קדמונים ז"ל* (the Foremost Early Authorities) according to which there is only the *Creator* (God's Essence) and that which is *created* (including the *created* angels and *created* forces), but nothing intermediate.

תניא רבי שמעון בן יוחי אומר ח"ו שתשתכח תורה מישראל ... אלא מה אני מקיים ישוטטו לבקש את דבר ה' ולא ימצאו, שלא ימצאו הלכה ברורה (רש"י: בטעמים שלא יהא בה מחלוקת) ומשנה ברורה במקום אחד (שבת קלה, ב).

No matter how great the confusion that may reign in *ישראל*, the true *דבר ה'* is preserved in Torah literature and among a loyal remnant of *עבדי ה'* from which the pure *אמונה* can be regenerated and restored to *ישראל*.

Conclusion

With this prayerful hope this lengthy monograph must be concluded. The issues have been discussed in detail. The reader who has been convinced by the logic of this lengthy, detailed presentation must still overcome the natural reluctance to dissociate himself from what has become, at least in theory, the normative outlook. And yet, this is precisely what is required. We are faced with an unparalleled *נסיון* (test). *Kiddush Hashem* in the past often meant sacrificing one's life rather than submitting to an idolatrous distortion of Divine worship. Today the sacrifice required is more subtle, less dramatic, and in some ways, more difficult. It means applying the *פסוק* of Mishle 22:17 in the way R. Meir did (Hagigah 15b): "Incline thine ear, and hear the words of the wise (i.e., wise in Scripture and Talmud), but apply thy heart unto *My* doctrine (i.e., the true Torah doctrine) -- it does not say *to their view*, but *to My* doctrine." Necessity demands that we study the valid Scriptural and Talmudic commentaries of some scholars of great stature who were intellectual giants and geniuses. At the same time we must dissociate ourselves from their invalid theological doctrines. We are faced with conflicting loyalties, i.e., loyalty to great Talmudic masters versus loyalty to Hashem and His authentic Torah doctrine (as expounded by the Early Foremost Authorities -- the *קדמונים ז"ל*). But we are taught: "Wherever there is *הליל השם* (infringement of Divine honor) we must not be deterred by the requirement to honor one's rabbinic master" (Sanhedrin 82a). (The fact that halachic decision is inapplicable in this context has already been discussed at length earlier in this paper.) No post-Talmudic scholar was as great as the *Tannaitic* master of R. Meir (Elisha ben Abuyah), with

reference to whom the פסוק of Mishle (ibid.) was applied. Thus, great scholarly stature and genius are no guarantee against error in fundamental religious doctrine.

Among non-Jews, Sir Isaac Newton, who is considered to have been one of the greatest intellectual geniuses in history, was a devout Christian! Emanuel Swedenborg, 1688-1772, was a scientific genius in almost every field of scientific investigation of his time. He wrote extensively, and anticipated many later discoveries. In 1901 the Royal Swedish Academy was called upon for an issue of all his scientific treatises for the *use of modern scholars*. Yet Swedenborg was a Christian mystic who claimed to have visions of, and communication with, spirits and angels who, he asserted, taught him the Bible according to what he claimed was the "true" Christian religion! He describes these visions in great detail, and in 1901-16 there was issued an 18-volume edition of his writings! To repeat, great scholarly stature and genius are no guarantee against error in fundamental religious doctrine. Even intellectual giants bow to what they have been indoctrinated to accept as the revealed truth of their religion.

An additional deterrent to dissociation from the prevailing kabbalism is the formidable psychological problem of a sense of *alienation* from the religious mainstream. If one is demonstrative in his anti-kabbalism, the alienation may be forced upon him by being shunned and discredited by the community -- a kind of "excommunication," which makes any further personal influence in the religious community impossible. This is more likely to occur in strongly kabbalistic communities, e.g., in Israel and in Chasidic circles. With a measure of prudence and circumspection this shunning can usually be avoided.

To be effective we must communicate anti-kabbalism strategically to persons who *may* be receptive to such communication. To communicate anti-kabbalism indiscriminately is to invite obfuscating responses and "excommunication" that would make even a limited effect impossible. It is an ironic twist of Jewish history that when kabbalism first surfaced its adherents were prudently secretive so as not to incur the opposition of the Jewish mainstream, which was then non-kabbalistic. בעונותינו הרבים, the reverse situation now prevails. Kabbalism has invaded most aspects of Torah Judaism and has become entrenched as part of the Torah creed. It is unlikely that any authority, no matter how great and widely accepted, can reverse this condition. His very attempt to do so would discredit him. The task of purification seems to be reserved for the Mashiach, שיבא במהרה בימינו, who will effect the ultimate and total purification of Israel from all spiritual blemish.

In any case, when there is an unavoidable conflict, we should seek to be accepted by Hashem rather than by our contemporaries. We say several times daily: "Sh'ma Yisrael, Hashem our G-d, Hashem is One. And thou shalt love Hashem thy G-d with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." When R. Akiva was being led out to execution by the Romans for teaching the Torah publicly, it was time to recite the *Sh'ma*. The Romans were tearing his flesh with iron combs at the time that he was accepting the rulership of G-d by reciting the *Sh'ma*. His students asked: "Even now, master?" R. Akiva answered: "My whole life I was troubled by the verse ['and thou shalt love Hashem thy G-d with all thy heart] and with all *thy soul*', i.e., even if He takes away your soul. I thought: "When will I have the opportunity to fulfill this? And now that I have the opportunity should I not fulfill it?" (See Berachoth 61b). In our time we are not being forced to give up our lives, but only, at most, our social acceptance! When necessary we

should deem it a small price to pay to demonstrate our loyalty to, and love of, Hashem.

שמע ישראל י-ד-ו-ד א-להינו י-ד-ו-ד אחד

"The Absolute Pre-existent Divine Be-ing (Y-H-W-H) is One." The realm of Divinity (Godhead) is not multiple, not divisible into many forms or aspects, as in polytheism. He is "One" - "One" as it applies to this Absolute Pre-existent, Incorporeal Divine Be-ing (Y-H-W-H).

ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד

Blessed be the Name of the glory of His kingship forever and ever.

ונאמר: והיה י-ד-ו-ד למלך על כל הארץ ביום ההוא יהיה י-ד-ו-ד אחד ושמו אחד

"And the L-rd (Y-H-W-H) shall be King over all the earth;.....
in that day shall the L-rd (Y-H-W-H) be One, and His Name One".... (Zechariah (14:9)
-- במהרה בימינו

Additional Note

Anti-kabbalists see the attribution of the Zohar to R. Shimon ben Yohai as a fraudulent fabrication, an example of pseudepigraphy.

Even חת"ם סופר, who was not an anti-kabbalist, said to the students of his Yeshiva that of the vast Zohar only a small portion that would make up a very small book of few pages, is attributable to R. Shimon ben Yohai (ג"ר אליעזר) (כפי שהביאם תלמידו הג"ר אליעזר) (ליפמן נייזאטץ, מי מנחות, דף מג, ע"ב).

An even stronger statement is found in רבי אליעזר פלקלש by שו"ת תשומב מאהבה ח"א סי' כ"ו, the outstanding תלמיד of the ביהודה, נודע ביהודה, and subsequently the Rav of Prague:

I swear by Hashem's Torah that in the Zohar there are many forgeries and destructive statements (זיופים וקלקולים) that have been added. One page of the Talmud Bavli [containing] the discussions of Abaye and Rava (הריות דאביי ורבא) is more holy than the entire Zohar (קדוש יותר מכל ספר הזוהר) -- the [authenticating] seal of R. Shimon ben Yohai is not affixed to them (i.e., to the words of the Zohar). ... Anyone with half a mind must admit this, for a number of Tannaim and Amoraim are mentioned who lived many years after R. Shimon ben Yohai ... [This has been] explained by the Gaon מוה' יעב"ץ זצל"ה (Rabbi Yaakov Emden), who declared that [unidentified] hands have been at work on it (i.e., the Zohar).

Seemingly רבי אליעזר פלקלש was objecting only to the numerous parts that were *added* to the Zohar. However, his extremely strong language: 1) "I swear by Hashem's Torah", 2) "forgeries and destructive statements;" and particularly, "one page of the Talmud Bavli is more holy than the *entire* Zohar" seems to suggest a more general opposition to Zoharic kabbalism.

The נודע ביהודה, the great *rebbe* of רבי אליעזר פלקלש, made similarly strong statements in שו"ת נודע ביהודה, מהדור"ק, יו"ד סי' צ"ג:

Concerning the formula לשם יחוד that has recently spread and has been printed in the Siddurim ... in my view this is a sore evil in our generation. Generations prior to our time knew nothing of this formula, and did not say it. They toiled all their days in Torah and Mitzvos, and did everything according to the Torah and according to the Poskim whose words stem from *the source of living waters, the sea of the Talmud* (ממקור מים חיים, ים התלמוד). Of them it is said; "The integrity of the upright shall guide them" (Proverbs 11:3). It is they who produced fruit above; their piety is great above the heavens! But in this generation of ours ... each one says: "I am the seer! The gates of heaven have been opened to me! The world exists because of me"! ... I have much to say about this, but just as it is a מצוה to say what will be accepted, so too is it a מצוה to refrain from saying what will not be accepted. May Hashem have mercy upon us.

The emphasis of the נודע ביהודה that the words of the Poskim stem from *the source of living waters, the sea of the Talmud* (ממקור מים חיים, ים התלמוד), seems to suggest a contrast to the Zohar.

The aforementioned sources are cited in ספר שרשי מנהג אשכנז, נדפס בבני ברק תשנ"ה, ח"א ע' 169 – 162.