

## THE CABALA.

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ALTHOUGH the Cabala belongs to the past, it nevertheless demands our attention on account of the interest taken in it by men like Raymond Lully, the "Doctor Illuminatus" as he was styled (died 1315); John Picus di Mirandola (1463-1494); John Reuchlin (1455-1522); Cornelius Henry Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486-1535); John Baptist von Helmont (1577-1644); the English scholars Robert Fludd (1574-1637) and Henry More (1614-1687). How much Theophrastus Paracelsus (1493-1541) and Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), called "Philosophus Teutonicus," were influenced by cabalistic doctrines, is difficult to state. At any rate the names mentioned before are sufficient to call attention to a theosophical system which has engaged the minds of Jewish and Christian scholars.

It is surprising how scanty the English literature is on the Cabala. True that in the *History of the Jews* by Basnage, London, 1708, we have a lengthy account of this theosophy (pp. 184-256); but this account is originally given in the French work *Histoire des Juifs*, by the same author. John Gill (died 1771) in his "*Dissertatio de genuina Punctorum Vocalium Hebraicorum Antiquitate, contra Cappellum, Waltonum,*" etc., prefixed to his *Clavis Pentateuchi*, Edinburgh, 1770, refers to the Zohar to prove the antiquity of the Hebrew vowel-points, because it states that "the vowel-points proceeded from the Holy Spirit who indited the Sacred Scriptures" etc. (on Song of Songs 57b; ed. Amsterdam, 1701). Of course so long as the Cabala was believed to be a genuine revelation from God, and Simon ben Jochai (of the second century) was believed to be the author of the Zohar, to whom God communicated all the mysteries, it was but a matter of course to believe in the antiquity and divinity of the vowel-points.

John Allen (died 1839) in his *Modern Judaism*, London, 1816 (2d ed. 1830) also gives an account of the Cabala, in which he

premises the antiquity of the Zohar, which he makes the primary source of the primitive Cabala. Passing over Dean Milman's (died 1868) *History of the Jews*, London, 1829, (often reprinted), in which we naturally also find references to the Cabala, we mention J. W. Etheridge (died 1866), author of *Jerusalem and Tiberias; Sora and Cordova, a Survey of the Religious and Scholastic Learning of the Jews, Designed as an Introduction to Hebrew Literature*, London, 1856. This author seems to have been acquainted with the researches of the Jewish scholars in Germany, but he nevertheless stoutly adheres to the traditional view. Thus he remarks on page 314:

"To the authenticity of the Zohar, as a work of the early Kabbalistic school, objections have indeed been made, but they are not of sufficient gravity to merit an extended investigation. The opinion that ascribes it as a pseudo-fabrication to Moses de Leon in the thirteenth century, has, I imagine, but few believers among the learned in this subject in our own day. The references to Shemun ben Yochai and the Kabala in the Talmud, and abundant internal evidence found in the book itself, exhibit the strongest probability, not that Shemun himself was the author of it, but that it is the fruit and result of his personal instructions, and of the studies of his immediate disciples."

We may say that Etheridge's view is *mutatis mutandis* also that of Ad. Franck, author of *Système de la Kabbale ou la philosophie religieuse des Hebreux*, Paris, 1843 (2d. ed. 1892); translated into German by A. Gelinek (Jellinek), *Die Kabbala oder die Religionsphilosophie der Hebräer*, Leipsic, 1844, with which must be compared D. H. Joel, *Die Religionsphilosophie des Sohar*, *ibid.*, 1840, which is an exceedingly good supplement to Franck's work. But an examination of the works published by Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden*, Berlin, 1831, p. 405; Geiger, *Melo Chofnayim*, *ibid.*, 1840, introduction, p. xvii; Sachs, *Die religiöse Poesie der Juden in Spanien*, *ibid.*, 1845, p. 327, Jellinek, *Moses Ben Schem Tob de Leon*, Leipsic, 1851, could have convinced Etheridge that the Zohar, the text-book of the Cabala, is the "pseudo-fabrication" of Moses de Leon in the thirteenth century. That Landauer (died 1841) in his essays on the Cabala published in the *Litteraturblatt des Orients*, 1845, p. 178 et seq., 1846, p. 12 et seq., ascribes the authorship of the Zohar to Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia towards the end of the second half of the thirteenth century, is the more weighty and instructive because he originally started with opinions of an exactly opposite character (Steinschneider, *Jewish Literature*,

p. 299). Nevertheless Etheridge's book was a good work; it was the praiseworthy attempt of an English Christian to acquaint the English-speaking people with the post-Biblical literature of the Jews.

Four years after the publication of the above work, Canon Westcott (died 1901) published his *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, London, 1860, in which he incidentally refers to the Cabala, without adopting Etheridge's view as to the authorship of the Zohar: on the contrary he says (p. 159, Boston, 1867): "The Sepher ha-Zohar, or Book of Splendor, owes its existence to R. Moses of Leon in the thirteenth century," and this, he says in a note, "has been satisfactorily established by Jellinek in his tract, *Moses ben Schem-tob de Leon und sein Verhältniss zum Sohar*, Leipsic, 1851. The warm approval of Jost is sufficient to remove any lingering doubt as to the correctness of Jellinek's conclusion: *A. Jellinek und die Kab-bala*, Leipsic, 1852."

The publication of Jellinek's *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Kab-bala*, 2 parts, Leipsic, 1852; and his *Auswahl kabbalistischer Mystik*, part I, *ibid.*, 1853; Stern's "Versuch einer umständlichen Analyse des Sohar" (in *Ben Chananja, Monatsschrift für jüdische Theologie*, Vols. I-IV, Szegedin, 1858-1861); Jost's *Geschichte des Judenthums und seiner Sekten*, Vol. III, pp. 66-81, Leipsic, 1859; more especially of Graetz's *Geschichte der Juden*,<sup>1</sup> Vol. VII, pp. 73-87, 442-459; 487-507, Leipsic, 1863, paved the way for Christian D. Ginsburg's (now very scarce) essay *The Kabbalah*, London, 1865. As a matter of course he adopts the results of modern scholarship and rejects the authorship of Simon ben Jochai.

As far as we are aware, nothing has been published in English since 1865. *The Kabbalah Unveiled* by S. L. M. Mathers, London, 1887, gives only a translation of some parts of the Zohar, which Knorr von Rosenroth had rendered into Latin. Nevertheless this work is interesting, because an English reader—provided he has enough patience—can get a taste of the Zoharic wisdom and unwisdom.

#### NAME AND ORIGIN OF THE CABALA.

By Cabala we understand that system of religious philosophy, or more properly of Jewish theosophy, which played so important a part in the theological and exegetical literature of both Jews and Christians ever since the Middle Ages.

<sup>1</sup>The English translation of this work, published by the Jewish Publication Society of America, is of no service to the student, because the scholarly notes, which are the best part of the original, are entirely omitted.

The Hebrew word Cabala (from *Kibbel*) properly denotes "reception," then "a doctrine received by oral tradition." The term is thus in itself nearly equivalent to "transmission," like the Latin *traditio*, in Hebrew *masorah*, for which last, indeed, the Talmud makes it interchangeable in the statement given in Pirke Abot I, 1: "Moses received (*kibbel*) the Law on Mount Sinai, and transmitted (*umsarah*) it to Joshua." The difference, however, between the word "Cabala" and the cognate term *masorah* is that the former expressed "the act of receiving," while the latter denotes "the act of giving over, surrendering, transmitting." The name, therefore, tells us no more than that this theosophy has been received traditionally. In the oldest Jewish literature (Mishna, Midrash, Talmud), the Cabala denotes the whole body of Jewish tradition. The name is even applied to the prophetic writings of the Old Testament, and the Hagiographa, in contradistinction to the Pentateuch. As a scientific system the Cabala is also called *chokmat ha-cabalah*, i. e., science of tradition, or *chokmah nistarah* (abbreviated *ch'n*, i. e., *chen*, חֵן), i. e., secret science or wisdom, and its representatives and adherents delighted in calling themselves *maskilin*, i. e., "intelligent," or with a play of words *yodé ch'n*, i. e., "connoisseurs of secret wisdom."

Having defined the term Cabala, which was still commonly used for "oral tradition" in the 13th and 14th centuries even after the technical sense of the word was established, we must be careful to distinguish between cabala and mysticism. Like other Eastern nations, the Jews were naturally inclined to theosophical speculation, and though this tendency may have been repressed by the definite teaching of revelation as long as they were confined within the sacred boundaries of Palestine, it found a freer scope after the Exile.

There were two subjects about which the Jewish imagination especially busied itself,—the history of the Creation, and the *Merkabah*, or the Divine apparition to Ezekiel. Both touch the question of God's original connection with His creatures, and that of His continued intercourse with them. They treat of the mystery of nature and of Providence, especially of Revelation; and an attempt is made to answer the question, how the Infinite God can have any connection or intercourse with finite creatures.

It is difficult to say how far back it is possible to trace with certainty Jewish mysticism. Even in the book of Sirach (Ecclus. xlix. 8) it is the special praise of Ezekiel that he saw the chariot of the Cherubim. When we come to the period of the Mishna, we



find the existence of a body of esoteric doctrine already presupposed. It is laid down that "no one ought to discourse the history of Creation (Gen. i) with two, or the Chariot (Ezek. i) with one, unless he be a scholar, who has knowledge of his own" (Chagiga II, 1).

Further allusions to these mysterious doctrines occur in the Talmud, but any rash investigation of them was discouraged, as is shown by the story of the four sages in "the enclosed garden," i. e., who were engaged in theosophical studies. One of them, it was said, had looked round and died; another had looked round and lost his reason; a third eventually tried to destroy the garden;<sup>1</sup> while the fourth alone had entered and returned in safety (Chagiga, fol. 14, col. 2).

Little by little mysticism made its way from Palestine into Babylonia and found many followers. Its adepts called themselves "Men of Faith." They boasted of possessing the means of obtaining a view of the divine household. By virtue of certain incantations, invocations of the names of God and the angels, and the recitation of certain prayer-like chants, combined with fasting and an ascetic mode of living, they pretended to be able to perform supernatural deeds. For this purpose they made use of amulets and cameos (*Kameoth*), and wrote upon them the names of God and the angels with certain signs. Miracle-working was a trifle to these mystics. The books which they wrote only gave hints, and only those were initiated into the mystic secrets, in whose hand and forehead the adepts pretended to discover lines that proved them to be worthy of being initiated.

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Deferring until later the works belonging to this period, we will now speak of the origin of the Cabala. Although the name "Cabala" in its pregnant meaning is first used in the 13th century, yet Jewish tradition claims a high antiquity for the Cabala and traces it back, among others, to three famous Talmudists, as the proper founders of the Cabala, viz., Rabbi Ismaël ben Elisa (about 121 A. D.); Nechunjah Ben-Ha-Kanah (about 70 A. D.), and especially Simon ben Jochaï (about 150 A. D.),<sup>2</sup> the reputed author of the Zohar.

Whatever may be the claims of these traditions they must be re-

<sup>1</sup> In the Talmud he is called Elisha ben-Abuja, surnamed Acher, i. e., "the other one," after his apostasy from Judaism. It is related of him that while attending the Jewish college he had often been noticed to carry with him writings of the "Minim" (probably of Gnostics), and that he had even been in the habit of quoting Greek poetry. Elisha was a pupil of the famous rabbi Akiba; comp. Jellinek, *Elisha ben-Abujja, genannt Acher*, Leipsic, 1847.

<sup>2</sup> See my article *s. v.* in McClintock and Strong's *Cyclop.*, Vol. IX, p. 757.

jected. The mystical speculations of the Cabala are entirely foreign to older Judaism, especially original Mosaism. It is true that the Talmud contains many things concerning God, heaven, hell, world, magic, etc.,<sup>3</sup> but these things were generally assigned to some individuals, and are elements derived from Parsism and neo-Platonism; and much as the Talmud and Midrash may otherwise speak of the three teachers mentioned before, such things are not recorded of them. The Cabala as a mystical system and its development as such undoubtedly belongs to the Middle Ages, beginning probably with the seventh century of our era, and culminating in the Book Zohar. A fuller and more mature development of the Cabala is due to the speculations of later masters.

The origin of the Cabala belongs to that period in which Judaism on the one hand was permeated by a crude anthropomorphic notion of the Deity, whereas on the other hand Platonism and Aristotelianism strove for the ascendancy in formulating the fundamental doctrines of Jewish belief. With Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) rationalism had reached its climax. The injunctions of the Bible were only to be explained by the light of reason. Only the simple, primary or literary sense (*peshat*) of the Scripture was recognized, the existing allegorical interpretation (*derush*) was considered either as rabbinical fancy, or one saw in it only a poetical form. Even the Talmud had been systematized and codified. Religion had become a more or less meaningless *opus operatum*. Philosophy had always been treated as something secondary, which had nothing to do with practical Judaism, as it is daily and hourly practiced. Maimonides, on the other hand, had introduced it into the holiest place in Judaism, and, as it were, gave Aristotle a place next to the doctors of the Law. Instead of unifying Judaism, Maimonides caused a division, and the Maimunists and Anti-Maimunists opposed each other. A reaction came and the Cabala stepped in as a counterpoise to the growing shallowness of the Maimunists' philosophy. The storm against his system broke out in Provence and spread over Spain. The latter country may be considered as the real home of the Cabala. When the Jews were driven from that country, the Cabala took root in Palestine and thence it was carried back into the different countries of Europe.

The fundamental ideas of the Cabala are un-Jewish, derived from Philo, the neo-Platonists and the neo-Pythagoreans; we sometimes even notice Gnostic influences. But the close amalgamation

<sup>3</sup>The reader is referred for such things to my article "Talmud," *loc. cit.*, Vol. X, pp. 170, 171.

of these different elements with Biblical and Midrashic ideas has given to these foreign parts such a Jewish coloring, that at the first glance they appear as an emanation of the Jewish mental life.

#### HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CABALA IN THE PRE-ZOHAR PERIOD.

The history of the Cabala comprises a period of nearly a thousand years. Its beginnings may be traced back to the seventh century, whereas its last shoots belong to the eighteenth century. For convenience' sake we can distinguish two periods, the one reaching from the seventh to the thirteenth century, the other from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century. The former is the time of gradual growth, development and progress, the other that of decline and decay. The origin of the Zohar in the thirteenth century forms the climax in the history of the Cabala. It became the treasury to the followers of this theosophy, a text-book for the students of the Cabala, the standard and code of the cabalistic system, the Bible of the Cabalists.

From the seventh to the ninth century we meet with the representatives of the mystèries of the *merkaba*,<sup>1</sup> which is expounded in the so-called *Hekaloth*, i. e., "Palaces." This work, which is ascribed to Ismaël ben-Elisa, opens with a description of God's throne and his household consisting of angelic hosts. In this mystical production, which has been reprinted by Jellinek in *Bet ha-Midrash*, Vol. III, pp. 83-108, the praises of the Almighty God and his chariot throne are celebrated. We are told that each of the seven heavenly palaces is guarded by eight angels; a description of the formula is given by virtue of which these angelic guards are obliged to grant admission into the celestial palaces; also a description of the peculiar qualifications necessary for those who desire to enter into these palaces. Some hymns of praise and a conversation with God, Israel and the angels conclude this treatise, which like the *Shiur Koma* or the treatise on "the Dimensions of the Deity," also ascribed to Rabbi Ismaël, knows nothing of the speculations of the En Soph, the ten Sephiroth and the doctrine of the Transmigration of Souls.

Another work belonging to this period is the *Othijoth de Rabbi Akiba*, i. e., "the Alphabet of Rabbi Akiba," which alternately treats

<sup>1</sup> *Merkaba*, i. e., "Chariot," mentioned in Ezek. i and x, which treat of the Divine Throne, resting on wheels, and carried by sacred animals. Great mysteries are attached by the ancient Jews to all details of this description of the Deity and his surroundings, which in imitation of *Maasey Bereshit*, i. e., "the work of the hexahemeron" or "cosmogony," is also called *Maasey Merkaba*, "the Work of the Chariot," a kind of "theosophy."

each letter of the Hebrew alphabet "as representing an idea as an abbreviation for a word, and as the symbol of some sentiment, according to its peculiar form, in order to attach to those letters moral, theanthropic, angelological and mystical notions." This treatise is also given in Jellinek's work, cited above, Vol. III, pp. 12-49, Leipsic, 1855. A Latin translation of Akiba's Alphabet is given by Kircher, in his *Œdipus Ægyptiacus*,<sup>2</sup> and in Bartolucci's *Bibliotheca Rabbinnica*.<sup>3</sup>

Bodenschatz in his *Kirchliche Verfassung der heutigen Juden*, (Erlangen, 1748) gives in Part III, p. 15, the following specimen: "On the words: 'The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart' (Ps. xxxiv, 18) we read: 'All who are of a broken heart are more agreeable before God than the ministering angels, because the ministering angels are remote from the divine Majesty 360,000,000 miles, as it is said in Is. vi. 2: "Above it stood the Seraphim" (*mimaal lo*), where the word *lo* by way of gematria means 36,000. This teaches us that the body of the divine Majesty is 2,000,000,336,000 miles long. From his loins upward are 1,000,000,180,000 miles, and from his loins downward 118 times 10,000 miles. But these miles are not like ours, but like his (God's) miles. For his mile is 1,000,000 ells long, and his ell contains four spans and a hand's breadth, and his span goes from one end of the world to the other, as is said Is. x. 12: "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span?" Another explanation is that the words "and meted out heaven with the span" denote that the heaven and the heaven of all heavens is only one span long, wide and high, and that the earth with all the abysses is as long as the sole of the foot, and wide as the sole of the foot, etc., etc.'"

Another part of Akiba's Alphabet is the so-called "Book of Enoch,"<sup>4</sup> which describes the glorification of Enoch and his transformation into the angel Metatron, regarding him as "the little God" in contradistinction to "the Great God."

These mystical treatises came into existence in the course of time, and their teachings rapidly spread. So numerous became the disciples of mysticism in the twelfth century that Maimonides found it necessary to denounce the system. "Give no credence to the nonsense of the writers of charms and amulets, to what they tell you or to what you find in their foolish writings about the divine names,

<sup>2</sup> Rome, 1652, Vol. II, p. 225 f.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. IV, pp. 27 f.

<sup>4</sup> Also reprinted in Jellinek's *Bet Ha-Midrash*, Vol. II, pp. 114-117.



which they invent without any sense, calling them appellations of the Deity, and affirming that they require holiness and purity and perform miracles. All these things are fables: a sensible man will not listen to them, much less believe in them."<sup>5</sup>

A new stage in the development of the Cabala commences with the publication of *The Book of Creation or Jezirah*, which is the first work that comprises the philosophical speculations of the age in one systematic whole. Scholars are now agreed that the Book of Jezirah belongs to the eighth or ninth centuries, and that it has nothing to do with the Jezirah-Book mentioned in the Talmud, where we are told that "Rabbis Hanina and Oshaya studied it every Friday, whereby they produced a calf three years old and ate it" (*Sanhedrin*, fol. 65, col. 2), and whereby Rabbi Joshua ben Hananya declared he could take fruit and instantly produce the trees which belong to them (*Jerusalem Sanhedrin*, chapt. VII towards the end).<sup>6</sup>

The Sepher Jezirah as we now have it, is properly a monologue on the part of Abraham, in which, by the contemplation of all that is around him, he ultimately arrived at the conviction of the Unity of God. Hence the remark of the philosopher Jehudah Halevi (born about 1086)—"the Book of the Creation, which belongs to our father Abraham. . . . demonstrates the existence of the Deity and the Divine Unity, by things which are on the one hand manifold and multifarious, whilst on the other hand they converge and harmonize; and this harmony can only proceed from One who originated it" (*Khozari*, IV, 25).

Referring the reader to the literature on the Sepher Jezirah to Goldschmidt's book, pp. 35-46,<sup>7</sup> we will state that the Book of Creation consists of six *Perakim* or chapters, subdivided into thirty-three very brief *Mishnahs* or sections, as follows: the first chapter has twelve sections, the second has five, the third five, the fourth four, the fifth three, and the sixth four sections. The doctrines which the book propounds are delivered in the style of aphorisms or theorems, and, pretending to be the dicta of Abraham, are laid

<sup>5</sup> More, *Nebuchim* I, 61. Wünsche thinks that the treatise *De Judaicis superstitionibus* by Agobard, bishop of Lyons (died 840), was directed against this mystic tendency.

<sup>6</sup> L. Goldschmidt, *Das Buch der Schöpfung*, Frankfurt a. M., 1894, p. 10, remarks: "I am inclined to put the time of the composition of the Book Jezirah into the second century B. C., and assert that it is the same book of the Creation which is mentioned in the Talmud." He is also inclined to make Palestine the place of its composition.

<sup>7</sup> We may add the English translation of the book by Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Vol. II (1883), pp. 690-695.

down very dogmatically, in a manner becoming the authority of this patriarch, who, according to Artapanus instructed King Pharaoh of Egypt in astrology (Eusebius, *Præp. evang.*, IX, 18); fulfilled the whole law, before it was given (*Apoc. Baruch*, chap. 57; *Kiddushin*, IV, 14 fin.), and victoriously overcame ten temptations<sup>8</sup> (*Pirke Aboth*, V, 3).

The book opens with the statement that "by thirty-two paths of secret wisdom, the Eternal, the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, the living God, the King of the Universe, the Merciful and Gracious, the High and Exalted God, He who inhabits eternity, Glorious and Holy is His name, hath created the world by means of number, word and writing (or number, numberer, numbered)" I, 1.—The book shows why there are just thirty-two of these. By an analysis of this number it seeks to exhibit, in a peculiar method of theosophical arithmetic, on the assumption that they are the signs of existence and thought, the doctrine that God produced all, and is over all, the universe being a development of original entity, and existence being but thought become concrete: "in short, that instead of the heathenish or popular Jewish conception of the world as outward, or co-existent with Deity, it is co-equal in birth, having been brought out of nothing by God, thus establishing a Pantheistic system of emanation, of which, principally because it is not anywhere designated by name, one would think the writer was not himself quite conscious."

The following will illustrate the curious proof of this argumentation: the number 32 is the sum of 10, the number of the ten fingers (I, 3), and 22, the number of the Hebrew alphabet, this latter being afterwards further resolved into  $3+7+12$  (I, 2). The first chapter (I, 2-8) treats of the decade and its elements, which are called figures in contradistinction from the 22 letters. This decade is the sign-manual of the universe. In the details of this hypothesis the existence of divinity in the abstract is really ignored, though not formally denied. Thus the number *one* is its spirit as an active principle, in which all worlds and beings are yet enclosed. "One is the spirit of the living God, blessed and again blessed be the Name of Him, Who liveth for ever—Voice and Spirit and Word, and this is the Holy Ghost" (I, 9).

*Two* is the spirit from this spirit, i. e., the active principle in

<sup>8</sup> Comp. in general Beer, *Leben Abraham's nach Auffassung der jüdischen Sage*, Leipzig, 1859; Grünbaum, *Neue Beiträge zur semitischen Sagenkunde*, 1893, pp. 89-132; Bonwetsch, *Die Apokalypse Abrahams*, 1897, pp. 41-55.

so far as it has beforehand decided on creating; "in it He engraved the twenty-two letters" (I, 10).

*Three* is water; *four* is fire; "in it He hewed the throne of glory, the Ophanim<sup>9</sup> and Seraphim, the sacred living creatures, and the angels of service, and of these three He founded His dwelling place, as it is said, He maketh His angels breaths, and His ministers a flaming fire (I, 11. 12). The six remaining figures, 5-10, are regarded severally as the sign-manual of height, depth, east, west, north and south, forming the six sides of a cube, and representing the idea of form in its geometrical perfection (I, 13).

In the words of the Book of Creation the hexade is thus described: "*Five*: Three letters from out the simple ones; He sealed spirit on the three, and fastened them in His great Name J H V.<sup>10</sup> And He sealed with them six outgoing (ends, terminations); He turned upwards, and He sealed it with J H V. *Six*: He sealed below, turned downwards, and sealed it with J V H. *Seven*: He sealed eastward, He turned in front of Him, and sealed it with H J V. *Eight*: He sealed westward and turned behind, and sealed it with H V J. *Nine*: He sealed southward, and turned to His right, and sealed it with V J H. *Ten*: He sealed northward, and turned to His left, and sealed it with V H J. These are the Sephiroth: (1) Spirit of the living God, and (2) wind [air or spirit?]<sup>11</sup> (3) water, and (4) fire; and (5) height above and (6) below, (7) east and (8) west, (9) north and (10) south."

[*Sephiroth* is the plural of the word *Sephirah*. Azariel derives the word from *saphar*, "to number"; later Cabalists derive it either from *saphir*, "Saphir," or from the Greek *σφαῖραι*, "spheres," and are not at all certain whether to regard the Sephiroth as "principles" (*ἀρχαὶ*), or as "substances" (*ὑποστάσεις*), or as "potencies, powers" (*δυνάμεις*), or as "intelligent worlds" (*κόσμοι νοητικοί*), or as "attributes," or as "entities" (*azamoth*), or as "organs of the Deity"

<sup>9</sup> Ophanim (אִוְפָנִים, plural of אִוְפָן), translated "wheels" in the English version (Ezek. i. 20), is taken by the Jewish Rabbis to denote "a distinct order of angels," just as Cherubim and Seraphim. Hence the Talmudic explanation of Exod. xx, 20, by "Thou shalt not make the likeness of those ministering servants who serve before me in heaven, viz., Ophanim, Seraphim, sacred Chajoth and missive angels." (*Rosh ha-Shana*, fol. 24, clo. 2). *Ophan*, the prince of this order, is regarded by the ancient sages as identical with the angel *Sandalphon*, סַנְדַּלְפֹּן = *συνάδελφος*, co-brother or fellow-companion of the angel Metatron.

<sup>10</sup> These three letters mean Jahu, or Yahveh, now pronounced Jehovah, of which they are the abbreviation; what follows shows how the permutation of these three letters marks the varied relationship of God to creation in time and space, and at the same time, so to speak, the immanence of His manifestation in it.

<sup>11</sup> The word *ruach* means all these.

(*Kelim*). We might fairly well translate the word *Sephiroth* by "emanations."]

We see, however, that this alone establishes nothing real, but merely expounds the idea of possibility or actuality, at the same time establishing that which is *virtualiter* as really existing in God, the foundation of all things, from which the whole universe proceeded. The actual entities are therefore introduced in the subsequent chapters under the twenty-two letters. The connection between the two series is evidently the Word, which in the first Sefhira (number) is yet identical in voice and action with the spirit (I, 9); but afterwards these elements, separating as creator and substance, together produce the world, the materials of which are represented by the letters, severally divided into gutturals, labials, palatals, linguals and dentals (II, 3), since these by their manifold manifestations, name and describe all that exists.

These twenty-two letters of the alphabet are then divided into three groups, consisting respectively of:

1. The three mothers or fundamental letters (ch. III);
2. Seven double (ch. IV), and
3. Twelve simple consonants (ch. V).

First are subtracted from the twenty-two letters the three mothers (Aleph, Mem, Shin), i. e., the universal relations of (1) principle, (2) contrary principle, and (3) balance (i. e., the intermediate).

In the world, we have air, water, fire. This means, the heavens are from fire, the earth from water, and the air indicates the intermediate between the fire and the water.

In the year . . . there is fire, and water, and wind. The heat comes from fire, cold from water, and moderation from wind (air) that is intermediate between them.

In man . . . . . there is fire, water and wind. The head is from fire, the belly from water, and the body from wind that is intermediate between them.

The three mothers or fundamental letters are followed by the seven duplicate letters—Beth, Gimel, Daleth, Caph, Pe, Resh, Tau<sup>12</sup>—duplicate, because they are opposites as life and death; peace and evil; wisdom and folly; riches and poverty; grace and ugliness;

<sup>12</sup> These letters of the Hebrew Alphabet are called double because they have a double pronunciation, being sometimes aspirated and sometimes not, according to their being with or without the *dagesh* (i. e., a point in the middle).



fertility and desolation; rule and servitude (IV, 1). These seven duplicate letters correspond to the seven outgoings: above and below, east and west, north and south, and the holy Temple in the middle, and it upbears the whole (IV, 2). From them God created:

In the world. Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon.  
 In man . . . . . Wisdom, Riches, Dominion, Life, Favor, Progeny,  
 Peace.  
 In the year. . . Sabbath, Thursday, Tuesday, Sunday, Friday, Wed-  
 nesday, Monday.

With these seven letters God also formed the seven heavens, the seven earths or countries, and the seven weeks from the feast of Passover to Pentecost (IV, 3, 4). These letters also represent the seven gates of issue in the soul: two eyes, two ears, and a mouth, and the two nostrils.

Turning finally to the twelve single letters (ch. V), they show the relations of things so far as they can be apprehended in a universal category. By means of these twelve letters God created the twelve signs of the zodiac, viz.:

In the world. Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra,  
 Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricornus, Aquarius, Pisces.  
 In the year . . . the twelve months, viz.: Nisan, Ijar, Sivan, Tamus,  
 Ab, Elul, Tishri, Cheshvan or Marcheshvan, Kislev,  
 Tebet, Shebat, Adar.  
 In man . . . . . the organs of sight, hearing, smelling, talking, taste,  
 copulating, dealing, walking, thinking, anger, laugh-  
 ter, sleeping (ch. V, 1).

They are so organized by God as to form at once a province, and yet be ready for battle, i. e., they are as well fitted for harmonious as for dissentious action. "God has placed in all things one to oppose the other; good to oppose evil, good to proceed from good, and evil from evil; good to purify evil, and evil to purify good; the good is in store for the good, and the evil is reserved for the evil" (VI, 2). "The twelve are arranged against each other in battle array; three serve love, three hatred; three engender life, and three death. The three loving ones are the heart, the ears and the mouth; the three hating ones: the liver, the gall, and the tongue; but God the faithful King, rules over all three systems. One (i. e., God) is over the three; the three are over the seven; the seven are over the twelve, and all are joined together, the one with the other" (VI, 3).

We also learn that the twenty-two letters, though a small number, by their power of "combination" and "transposition," yield an endless number of words and figures, and thus become the types of all the varied phenomena in the creation. "Just as the twenty-two letters yield two hundred and thirty-one types by combining Aleph (i. e., the first letter) with all the letters, and all the letters with Beth (i. e., the second letter), so all the formations and all that is spoken proceed from one name" (ch. II, 4). To illustrate how these different types are obtained we will state that by counting the first letter with the second, the first letter with the third and so on with all the rest of the alphabet, we obtain 21 types; by combining the second letter with the third, fourth, etc., we get 20 types; the third letter combined with the fourth, etc., yields 19 types; finally the twenty-first combined with the last letter yields 1 type. In this way we get as the Hebrew table shows:  $21+20+19+18+17+16+15+14+13+12+11+10+9+8+7+6+5+4+3+2+1=231$ ; or

*ab ag ad ah av az ah at ai ak al am an as etc.*

*bg bd bh bv bz bh bt bi bk bl bm bn bs etc.*

*gd gh gv gz gh gt gi gk gl gm gn gs etc.*

*dh dv dz dh dt di dk dl dm dn ds etc.*

*hv hz hch ht hi hk hl hm hn hs etc.*

The infinite variety in creation is still more strikingly exhibited by permutations, of which the Hebrew alphabet is capable, and through which an infinite variety of types is obtained. Hence the remark: "Two letters form two houses, three letters build six houses, four build twenty-four, five build a hundred and twenty houses, six build seven hundred and twenty houses;"<sup>13</sup> and from thenceforward go out and think what the mouth cannot utter and the ear cannot hear" (IV, 4). A few examples may serve as illustration. Two letters form two houses, by using the first two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, א ב in the following manner:

$$1 = ab$$

$$2 = ba$$

Three letters, א ב ג, build six houses, namely:

$$1 = abg; 2 = agb; 3 = bag; 4 = bga; 5 = gab; 6 = gba.$$

<sup>13</sup> In order to ascertain how often a certain number of letters can be transposed, the product of the preceding number must be multiplied with it, thus:

Letter	$2 \times 1 = 2$	$5 \times 24 = 120$
	$3 \times 2 = 6$	$6 \times 120 = 720$
	$4 \times 6 = 24$	$7 \times 720 = 5040$ and so on.

Four letters, א ב ג ד, *a, b, g, d*, build twenty-four houses, viz.:

1 = <i>abgd</i>	7 = <i>bagd</i>	13 = <i>gabd</i>	19 = <i>dabg</i>
2 = <i>abdg</i>	8 = <i>badg</i>	14 = <i>gadb</i>	20 = <i>dagb</i>
3 = <i>agbd</i>	9 = <i>bgad</i>	15 = <i>gbad</i>	21 = <i>dbag</i>
4 = <i>agdb</i>	10 = <i>bgda</i>	16 = <i>gbda</i>	22 = <i>dbga</i>
5 = <i>adb g</i>	11 = <i>bdag</i>	17 = <i>gdab</i>	23 = <i>dgab</i>
6 = <i>adgb</i>	12 = <i>bdga</i>	18 = <i>gdba</i>	24 = <i>dgba</i>

The Book of Creation closes with the statement: "And when Abraham our father had beheld, and considered, and seen, and drawn, and hewn, and obtained it, then the Lord of all revealed Himself to him, and called him His friend, and made a covenant with him and with his seed; and he believed in Jehovah, and it was computed to him for righteousness. He made with him a covenant between the ten toes, and that is circumcision; between the ten fingers of his hand, and that is the tongue; and He bound two-and-twenty letters on his tongue, and showed him their foundation. He drew them with water, He kindled them with fire, He breathed them with wind (air); He burnt them in seven; He poured them forth in the twelve constellations" (ch. VI, 4).

\* \* \*

The examination of the contents of the Book of Jezirah proves that it has as yet nothing in common with the cardinal doctrines of the Cabala, as exhibited in later works, especially in the Zohar, where speculations about the being and nature of the Deity, the En Soph<sup>14</sup> and the Sephiroth, which are the essence of the Cabala, are given.

To the period of the Book of Jezirah belongs the remarkable work which in the Amsterdam edition of 1601 is entitled: "This is the book of the first man, which was given to him by the angel Raziel." In this work the angel Raziel appears as the bearer and mediator of astrological and astronomical secrets, and shows the influence of the planets upon the sublunary world. To the same period belongs the Midrash Konen, a kind of romantic cosmology (newly translated into German by Wünsche in *Israels Lehrhallen*, III, Leipsic, 1909, pp. 170-201).

With the thirteenth century begins the crystallization of the Cabala, and Isaac the Blind (flourished 1190-1210) may be regarded

<sup>14</sup> *En Soph*, אֵין סוֹף = *ἄπειρος*, i. e., "Endless," "Boundless," is the name of the Deity given in the Zohar, where it is said of God (III, 283b) that he cannot be comprehended by the intellect, nor described in words, for there is nothing which can grasp and depict him to us, and as such he is, in a certain sense, not existent (יָסֵף).

as the originator of this lore. The doctrines of the Sephiroth<sup>15</sup> taught already in the Book Jezirah are further developed by his pupils, especially by Rabbi Azariel (died 1238), in his "Commentary on the Ten Sephiroth, by Way of Questions and Answers," an analysis of which is given in Jelinek's *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Kabbalah*, Leipsic, 1852, Part II, p. 32 f. In this commentary Azariel lays down the following propositions:

1. The primary cause and governor of the world is the En Soph (i. e., a being infinite, boundless), who is both immanent and transcendent.

2. From the En Soph emanated the Sephiroth which are the medium between the absolute En Soph and the real world.

3. There are ten intermediate Sephiroth.

4. They are emanations and not creations.

5. They are both active and passive.

6. The first Sephirah is called "Inscrutable Height" (*rum maalah*); the second, "Wisdom" (*chokma*); the third, "Intelligence" (*binah*); the fourth, "Love" (*chesed*); the fifth, "Justice" (*pachad*); the sixth, "Beauty" (*tipheret*); the seventh, "Firmness" (*nezach*); the eighth, "Splendor" (*hod*); the ninth, "the Righteous in the Foundation of the World" (*zadik yesod olam*); and the tenth, "Righteousness" (*zedaka*).

The first three Sephiroth form the world of thought; the second three the world of the soul; and the four last the world of body—thus corresponding to the intellectual, moral and natural worlds.

That Isaac the Blind must be regarded as "the Father of the Cabala," is acknowledged by some of the earliest and most intelligent Cabalists themselves. And the author of the cabalistic work entitled *Maarecheth haclohuth*, said to be a certain Perez of the second part of the thirteenth century, frankly declares that "the doctrine of the En Soph and the Ten Sephiroth is neither to be found in the Law, Prophets, or Hagiographa, nor in the writings of the Rabbins of blessed memory, but rests solely upon signs which are scarcely perceptible."

Another remarkable book of this period is the *Sepher Bahir*, or Midrash of Nehunjah ben-ha-Kanah. According to this work, long before the creation God caused a metaphysical matter to proceed, which became a fulness (*melo*) of blessing and salvation for all forms of existence. The ten divine emanations, which are not yet called Sephiroth, but *Maamarim* and appear as categories en-

<sup>15</sup> See above p. 123.



dowed with creative power, are connected with the attributes (*mid-doth*) of God as well as with his fingers and other members.

The doctrine of metempsychosis is already given here in its most important features. The work itself, though ascribed to Nehunjah is of much later date, because it speaks of the Hebrew vowels and accents. Only a part of the Bahir book has been published, first at Amsterdam, 1651; then again at Berlin, 1706. The greater part is still in manuscript in the libraries at Paris and Leyden.

The conversion of the famous Talmudist and scholar Moses Nachmanides<sup>16</sup> (1194-1270) to the newly-born Cabala gave to it an extraordinary importance and rapid spread amongst his numerous followers. In the division of the synagogues caused by the writings of Maimonides, Nachmanides took the part of the latter, probably more on account of the esteem he felt for this great man than for any sympathy with his opinions. Maimonides intended to give Judaism a character of unity, but he produced the contrary. His aim was to harmonize philosophy and religion, but the result was a schism in the synagogue, which gave birth to this queer kind of philosophy called Cabala, and to this newly-born Cabala Nachmanides became converted, though he was at first decidedly adverse to this system.

One day the Cabalist who was most zealous to convert him was caught in a house of ill-fame, and condemned to death. He requested Nachmanides to visit him on the Sabbath, the day fixed for his execution. Nachmanides reproved him for his sins, but the Cabalist declared his innocence, and that he would partake with him of the Sabbath meal. According to the story, he did as he promised, as by means of the Cabalistic mysteries he effected his escape, and an ass was executed in his stead, and he himself was suddenly transported into Nachmanides's house! From that time Nachmanides became a disciple of the Cabala, and was initiated into its mysteries, the tenets of which pervade his numerous writings, especially his commentary on the Pentateuch.

To the first half of the twelfth century belongs the *Massecheth Azilûth* or "the Treatise on the Emanations," supposed to have been written by Rabbi Isaac Nasir. From the analysis given by Jellinek (*Auswahl kabbalistischer Mystik*, Part I, Leipsic, 1853) we learn that the prophet Elijah propounded that

1. "God at first created light and darkness, the one for the pious and the other for the wicked, darkness having come to pass by the divine limitation of light.

<sup>16</sup> See my article *s. v.* "Nachmanides" in McClintock and Strong's *Cyclop.*

\* 2. "God produced and destroyed sundry worlds, which, like ten trees planted upon a narrow space, contend about the sap of the soil, and finally perish altogether.

3. "God manifested himself in four worlds, viz., Azila, Beriah, Jezirah and Asiah, corresponding to the four letters of his name J H V H. In the Azilatic luminous world is the divine Majesty, the Shechinah. In the Beriatic world are the souls of the pious, all the blessings, the throne of God, who sits on it in the form of Achteriël (the crown of God, the first *Sephira Keter*), and the seven different luminous and splendid regions. In the Jeziratic world are the sacred animals in the vision of Ezekiel, the ten classes of angels with their princes, who are presided over by the fiery Metatron,<sup>17</sup> the spirits of men, and the accessory work of the divine chariot. In the Asilatic world are the Ophanim, the angels who receive the prayers, who are appointed over the will of man, who control the action of mortals, who carry on the struggle against evil, and who are presided over by the angelic prince Synadelphon.<sup>18</sup>

4. "The world was founded in wisdom and understanding (Prov. iii. 13), and God in his knowledge originated fifty gates of understanding.

5. "God created the world—as the book Jezirah already teaches—by means of the ten Sephiroth, which are both the agencies and qualities of the Deity. The ten Sephiroth are called Crown, Wisdom, Intelligence, Mercy, Fear, Beauty, Victory, Majesty and Kingdom: they are merely ideal and stand above the concrete world" (pp. 2, 3).

The conversion of Todros ben Joseph Halevi Abulafia (1234-1304) to the Cabala, gave to this science a great influence, on account of Abulafia's distinguished position as physician and financier in the court of Sancho IV, King of Castile. The influence of Abulafia, whose works are still in manuscript, can be best seen from the fact that four Cabalists of the first rank ranged themselves under his banner and dedicated their compositions to him. These four Cab-

<sup>17</sup> The angel who stands behind the throne of God.

<sup>18</sup> This Synadelphon is no doubt the same as "Sandalphon," the theme of Longfellow's poem of that name, which commences thus:

"Have you read in the Talmud of old,  
In the Legends the Rabbins have told  
Of the limitless realms of the air,  
Have you read it,—the marvelous story  
Of Sandalphon, the Angel of Glory,  
Sandalphon, the Angel of Prayer?"

In a note on page 668 (Boston and New York edition, 1893) it is stated that Longfellow marked certain passages in Stebelin's *The Traditions of the Jews*, which evidently furnished the material.

alists were Isaac Ibn Latif or Allatif, Abraham Abulafia, Joseph Gikatilla, and Moses de Leon, all Spaniards.

Isaac Ibn Latif (about 1220-1290), starting with the thought that a philosophical view of Judaism was not the "right road to the sanctuary," endeavored to combine philosophy with Cabala. "He laid more stress than his predecessors on the close connection between the spiritual and the material world—between God and his creation. For the Godhead is in all, and all is in it. In soul-inspiring prayers the human spirit is raised to the world-spirit (*sechel ha-poel*), to which it is united 'in a kiss,' and, so influencing the Deity, it draws down blessings on the sublunar world. But not every mortal is capable of such spiritual and efficacious prayer: therefore the prophets, the most perfect men, were obliged to pray for the people, for they alone knew the power of prayer." The unfolding and revelation of the Deity in the world of spirits, spheres and bodies Allatif explained by mathematical forms. The mutual relation thereof is the same as "that of the point extending and thickening into a line, the line into the plane, the plane into the expanded body."

An enthusiastic contemporary of Allatif was Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia<sup>19</sup> (born at Saragossa, 1240; died 1291). He was an eccentric personage, full of whims, and fond of adventures. Not satisfied with philosophy, he gave himself to the mysteries of the Cabala in their most fantastic extremes, as the ordinary doctrine of the Sephiroth did not satisfy him. He sought after something higher, for prophetic inspiration. Through it he discovered a higher Cabala, which offered the means of coming into spiritual communion with the Godhead, and of obtaining prophetic insight. To analyze the words of Holy Writ, especially those of the divine name, to use the letters as independent notions (*Notaricon*), or to transpose the component parts of a word in all possible permutations, so as to form words from them (*Tsiruf*), or finally to employ the letters as numbers (*Gematria*), are indeed means of securing communion with the spirit-world: but this alone is not sufficient. To be worthy of a prophetic revelation, one must lead an ascetic life, retire into a quiet closet, banish all earthly cares, clothe himself in white garments, wrap himself up with *Talith* (i. e., the fringed garment) and Phylacteries, and devoutly prepare his soul, as if for an interview with the Deity. He must pronounce the letters of God's name at

<sup>19</sup> See my article *s. v.* "Abulafia" (*loc. cit.*, Vol. XI, p. 18); comp. also Günzburg, *Der Pseudo-Messias Abraham Abulafia, sein Leben und sein Wirken*, Cracow, 1904.

intervals, with modulations of the voice, or write them down in a certain order under divers energetic movements, turnings and bendings of the body, till the mind becomes dazed and the heart is filled with a glow. When one has gone through these practices and is in such a condition, the fulness of the Godhead is shed abroad in the human soul: the soul then unites itself with the divine soul in a kiss, and prophetic revelation follows quite naturally. In this way he laid down his Cabala, in antithesis to the superficial or baser Cabala, which occupies itself with the Sephiroth, and, as he gibingly said, erects a sort of "ten unity" instead of the Christian Trinity.

Abulafia went to Italy, and in Urbino he published (1279) prophetic writings, in which he records his conversations with God. In 1281 he undertook to convert the Pope, Martin IV, to Judaism. In Messina he imagined that it was revealed to him that he was the Messiah, and announced that the restoration of Israel would take place in 1296. Many believed in him and prepared themselves for returning to the holy land. Others, however, raised such a storm of opposition that Abulafia had to escape to the island of Comino, near Malta (about 1288), where he remained for some time, and wrote sundry Cabalistic works. Of his many works Jellinek<sup>20</sup> published his Rejoinder to Solomon ben Adereth, who attacked his doctrines and pretensions as Messiah and prophet.

A disciple of Abulafia was *Joseph Gikatilla of Medina-Celi*, who died in Penjafiel after 1305. He, too, occupied himself with the mysticism of letters and numbers, and with the transposition of letters. His writings are in reality only an echo of Abulafia's fancies; the same delusion is apparent in both. Gikatilla's system is laid down in his *Ginnath egos*, i. e., "Garden of Nuts," published at Hanau, 1615; and *Shaare ora*, i. e., "the Gate of Light," first published at Mantua, 1561, in Cracow, 1600, and translated into Latin by Knorr von Rosenroth in the first part of his *Kabbala Denudata*, Sulzbach, 1677-78.

But far more influential and more pernicious than Allatif, Abulafia and Gikatilla was Moses de Leon (born in Leon about 1250, died in Arevalo, 1305), the author of a book which gave the Cabala a firm foundation and wide circulation,—in brief, raised it to the zenith of its power. This book is known by the name of Zohar or Splendor. At first he published his productions under his own name (about 1285). But as his writings were not sufficiently noticed, and brought him but little fame and money, he hit upon a much more effective means and commenced the composition of

<sup>20</sup> *Auswahl kabbalistischer Mystic*, Part I, pp. 20-25 (German part).



books under feigned but honored names. If he put the doctrines of the Cabala into the mouth of an older, highly venerated authority, he was sure to be successful in every respect. And he selected for this purpose the Tanaite Simon ben Jochaï,<sup>21</sup> who according to tradition spent thirteen years in a cave, solitary and buried in profound reflection, and whom ancient mysticism represented as receiving revelations from the prophet Elijah. Simon ben Jochaï was assuredly the right authority for the Cabala. But he must not write or speak Hebrew, but Chaldee, a language peculiarly fit for secrets, and sounding as if from another world. And thus there came into the world a book, the "Zohar," which for many centuries was held by the Jews as a heavenly revelation, and was studied even by Christians.

<sup>21</sup> See my article *s. v.* in McClintock and Strong's *Cyclop.*, Vol. IX, p. 757.