

The Shekinah: the Indwelling Glory of God

John Nash

Summary

Over the course of two millennia the Shekinah rose from an impersonal expression of God's glory in the world almost to the status of a divine hypostasis. The Shekinah possibly had biblical roots but took definite form as a feminine aspect of God in the rabbinic period and gathered strength through the Middle Ages. The 16th-century scholars of Safed invested her with much theological and devotional importance.

According to legend the Shekinah was betrothed to the Holy One but was exiled or lost in the wilderness. Her exile mirrored the Babylonian exile and the diaspora, but it also was seen as the result of human failings. In response, pious Jews—and perhaps by implication humanity as a whole—must find her, prepare the royal wedding feast, and present the adorned Shekinah to the waiting bridegroom. Meanwhile, the Shekinah served as a divine (but personalized) mother/daughter, a source of inspiration, and even a reminder of moral behavior.

Clearly, the Shekinah was the product of a particular religious culture, but she remains vitally relevant to modern quests to understand the Divine Feminine and the immanence of God.

Origins of the Shekinah

The word Shekinah (Hebrew: שכִּינָה) was probably coined toward the end of the biblical period. It is thought to be derived from the root verb *shakan* (שָׁכַן, “to dwell or abide”).¹ “Shakan” was often used in the Hebrew scriptures to denote the abiding presence of God in sacred locations like the Ark of the Covenant, the Holy of Holies, or Mount Sinai. For example in *Exodus* we read: “[T]he glory of the LORD abode [shakan] upon mount Sinai.”² And in *Isaiah*: “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth [shakan] eternity,

whose name is Holy; I dwell [shakan] in the high and holy place.”³

The Shekinah was discussed frequently in the *Talmud*. It came to denote the immanence of God, contrasting with the transcendent Tetragrammaton (יהוה), whose name was too powerful to utter. Through the Shekinah “God fills the world as the soul fills the body.”⁴ The Shekinah was the divine presence in the world, the divine glory, or *kavod* (כבוד).

Retroactively, the Shekinah was associated with the rainbow, the expression of God's glory and symbol of his covenant with Noah, with the cloud and pillar of fire that went before the Israelites during the exodus, or more abstractly with the *Elohim* (אלהים) or the Holy Spirit, *Ruach* (רוח).⁵ The Shekinah was linked with the Canaanite goddess Asherah (אשרה), “Great Lady” or “Queen of Heaven,” or sometimes jointly with Asherah and her consort of *El Shadai* (אל שדי), the “High God.”⁶ The compassionate El Shadai watched over his people and responded to their concerns. For example, in *Genesis* we read: “El Shadai bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people;” and “[B]y El, who shall help thee; and by Shadai, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above...blessings of the breasts, and of the womb.”⁷ In turn, Asherah came to women's aid in childbirth.

By the latter part of the first century CE, the indwelling presence of God could no longer be

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found in the temple which had been destroyed by the Romans, but it could still be found in the world and particularly in people's hearts. The Shekinah was sometimes identified with the *Knesset Yisrael*, the Community of Israel. Destruction of the infrastructure of Jewish worship forced many people to turn inward, and one expression of this new introversion was *Merkabah* mysticism.⁸ Devotion to the glory that surrounds the throne of God was a concept of the highest significance in this movement. At times, the Shekinah was linked and with the Archangel Metatron who also featured in *Merkabah* mysticism.⁹

Over time, the fact that "Shekinah" was a feminine noun took on more than grammatical significance. The Shekinah began to be anthropomorphized, with a definite feminine persona. This is evident in the *Sepher ha-Bahir*, "Brilliance," a compilation of textual fragments possibly dating back to the second century CE. After quoting from *Isaiah*: "The whole earth is full of his glory"¹⁰ the author went on to speak of the divine glory thus:

This is like a royal princess who came from a far place. People did not know her origin, but they saw that she was a woman of valor, beautiful and refined in all her ways. They said, "She certainly originates from the side of light, for she illuminates the world through her deeds."¹¹

The association of the Shekinah with light and glory continued through the Middle Ages. The 11th-century Talmudic scholar, Judah ben Barzillai al-Bargeloni of Barcelona, commented:

"When the children of Israel were in exile, the Shekinah was not perfected below or above. This is because the Shekinah is in exile with them." The Zohar ... goes on to say: "the exile is considered the nakedness of supernal Israel." The exile was not just the one that followed destruction of the second temple, it was all exiles, including the one to Babylon in the sixth century BCE; for we are told that "the angels escorted the Shekinah to Babylon, sat there and wept with Israel."

When the thought arose in God of creating a world, He first created the Holy Spirit to be a sign of his divinity... And He created the image of the Throne of His Glory... which is a radiant brilliance and a great light that shines upon all His other creatures. And that great light is called the Glory of our God... And the Sages call this great light *Shekinah*.¹²

The Shekinah and Qabalah

As the personification of the Shekinah increased, she began to evolve into a female aspect of God, an

hypostatized feminine power. This was particularly noticeable among the medieval Qabalists. Interestingly, this was the same period when *Chokmah* (חכמה, "Wisdom") underwent its own transformation from a feminine to a masculine power, emerging as the archetypal *Abba* (אבא, "Father") of the Qabalah.

Large numbers of Jews fled Roman repression in first- and second-century

CE Palestine to settle in Spain and southern France. Others followed later in the wake of the Moorish invasions. Sorrow over the loss of their homeland was projected onto the Shekinah in the notion that she was banished too. However, despite this mutual exile she expressed the unbreakable link with the divine reality. Through shared suffering with her people, the Shekinah served as the guarantor of the Covenant.

The monumental Qabalistic text *Sepher ha-Zohar*, or "Book of Splendor," compiled in the 13th century, quotes the passage from *Isaiah*

mentioned earlier, adding: “and the Shekinah is revealed below in this world. When the children of Israel were in exile, the Shekinah was not perfected below or above. This is because the Shekinah is in exile with them.”¹³ The *Zohar* also refers to the Shekinah as the “Mother of Israel” and goes on to say: “the exile is considered the nakedness of supernal Israel.”¹⁴ The exile was not just the one that followed destruction of the second temple, it was all exiles, including the one to Babylon in the sixth century BCE; for we are told that “the angels escorted the Shekinah to Babylon, sat there and wept with Israel.”¹⁵

Qabalists conventionally linked the Shekinah, the divine presence in the world, with the tenth and lowest sephirah in the Tree of Life: *Malkuth*, the “Kingdom.” Indeed the Shekinah was often used as an alternative name for *Malkuth*.¹⁶ The feminine character of the lowest sephirah is not surprising when we recognize that it receives the divine force from all higher sephiroth, “receptiveness” being a primary feminine archetype. The immanent Shekinah of *Malkuth* is the “lower Shekinah,” contrasting with—yet inseparably connected with—the transcendental, “supernal Shekinah” of *Binah*.¹⁷ The “combined” Shekinah is a feminine divine expression reaching from the very highest levels to the plane of earthly existence.

Early Qabalistic scholars taught that *Malkuth* had become dissociated from the rest of the Tree of Life. And here we find a close correspondence to the notion of the Shekinah’s exile. The Shekinah-*Malkuth* reflected the light of the higher sephiroth, just as the moon receives its light from the sun. But as a result of the exile, she was cut off from the source of life and nourishment. We are told in the *Zohar* that “whatever the Shekinah has, she receives from *Zeir Anpin*.”¹⁸ *Zeir Anpin* (זַעִיר אַנְפִּין), literally “Short Face”) is one of the *partzufim* (singular *partzuf*, “face”), or divine persons, and it corresponds collectively to the six sephiroth—counting *Daath* as one—lying immediately above *Malkuth*.¹⁹ In particular, the *Zeir Anpin* can be related to the central sephirah *Tiphareth*. Both the *Zeir Anpin* and *Tiphareth* are often referred to as “the Holy One, blessed

be He.” The Holy One is the son of the Most High, and the Shekinah is the daughter—and prospective daughter-in-law. The notion that the Holy one is betrothed to his sister should not be taken as implying incest. We are dealing with symbols, and the sister-wife symbol is an ancient one; for example we find in the *Song of Solomon*: “How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse!”²⁰

Both the Talmud and the *Bahir* likened the Sabbath, or *Shabbat*, to a wedding or to the visit of a queen. The same theme was taken up in the *Zohar*:

[One] should prepare a comfortable reclining bed with many pillows and embroidered cushions from all that he has in his house, as when preparing the marriage canopy for the bride, because *Shabbat* is both a queen and a bride. Due to this, the sages of the *Mishnah* used to hasten to come out on *Shabbat* eve to welcome her on the way. And they used to say: “Come bride, come bride.”²¹

We are left in no doubt as to who the bride is: “we should to make a beautiful canopy with beautiful decorations to invite the Supernal Bride, who is the Shekinah.”²² Significantly, the Sabbath is the seventh and last day of the week, and the Shekinah-*Malkuth* is the seventh and last of the lower sephiroth. The six days leading up to the Sabbath correspond to the six sephiroth with which the *Zeir Anpin* is associated.²³

The personification of the Shekinah as the bride provided fertile ground for all kinds of symbolic correspondences. She was the betrothed who had been lost and defiled; now she must be found, re-adorned and reunited with the Holy One, the waiting bridegroom. The notion of defilement was not new; in the *Torah* God had warned: “Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell [shakan]: for I the LORD dwell [shakan] among the children of Israel.”²⁴ A marriage between the Shekinah and the Holy One clearly corresponded to traditional Qabalistic rituals to raise the consciousness from *Malkuth* to *Tiphareth*. *Malkuth*, incidentally, was rep-

resented by lead and Tiphareth by gold, so the elevation of consciousness also corresponded to an alchemical transmutation. In the Christian Qabalah *Tiphareth* became identified with Jesus Christ, and the faithful at the level of Malkuth addressed their devotions to Tiphareth. Even more significantly, the church claimed to be the “bride of Christ.”

The Shekinah’s banishment and the Jews’ exile from the Promised Land were both sources of great sadness. However, this sadness must be transformed into joy. For example, we read in the *Zohar*:

[T]he Shekinah does not dwell in a place of sorrow, but only in a place of joy. If a place has no joy, the Shekinah will not abide there. This is echoed in the verse: “But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of Hashem came upon him.” (II *Melachim* 3:15)²⁵

The 13th-century Rabbi Jacob ben Sheshet of Gerona equated prophetic powers with the presence of the Shekinah, commenting that “The Shekinah dwells only upon him that is wise.”²⁶ On the other hand, the Shekinah was not always regarded as a benevolent presence. A few passages in the *Zohar* portray her as an agent of judgment and destruction, serving forces more powerful than herself.²⁷ Perhaps, in her exile, she became hostage to evil forces, as did her sister the Pistis Sophia.²⁸

The Shekinah in Safed

The Jews’ expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula, by Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492, set in motion further migrations to Eastern Europe and even back to their homeland. Within a

few years, a group of eminent Jewish scholars had established the community of Safed in Palestine, close to the traditional burial site of the early Qabalist Simeon ben Jochai.²⁹ The Safed scholars, whose most famous members were Moses ben Jacob Cordovero (1522–1570) and Isaac ben Solomon Luria (1534–1572), studied the *Zohar* and other basic texts at length, continuing the theoretical work for which it had laid the groundwork. Others strove to transform the theoretical framework of the *Zohar* into ethical and devotional practices.

The rabbis of Safed took a strong interest in the Shekinah. They saw her exile as a metaphor for the Jew’s continued wanderings; but

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they also regarded it as a consequence of man’s continuing sinfulness. Accordingly, everybody shared in the guilt of her exile and defilement, and everyone—at least all pious Jews—shared the responsibility for restoring her to her rightful place. A custom developed in which the faithful would wander through the fields, particularly through graveyards, looking for the Shekinah.

Perhaps they were inspired by the passage in the *Song of Solomon* which reads: “Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field.”³⁰ Safed scholar Solomon ben Moshe Halevi Alkabetz (b. 1505) used to go out with his students to pray and meditate on the graves of *zaddikim* (saints), hoping—perhaps as Jacob ben Sheshet did—for mystical insights. Alkabetz was moved by the association of the Shekinah with the lost and defiled bride. “[E]very Sabbath,” he wrote, Jews “should go forth to welcome to Sabbath Queen.” And “Come, my Beloved, to meet the Bride, let us welcome the Sabbath.”³¹

Moses Cordovero suggested: “One should wander, as if exiled from place to place, purely for the sake of Heaven, and thereby make oneself a vessel for the Shekinah in exile.”³²

Through a life of asceticism the seeker “should humble his heart in exile and bind himself to the *Torah* and then the Shekinah will be with him.”³³ Indeed, the *Zohar* states that, when a man reads the *Torah*, “the Shekinah spreads Her wings over him.”³⁴

Medieval Jews, like those of other periods, insisted that the two sexes were complementary and unmarried people were incomplete. Celibacy was considered an anomaly, and rabbis were expected to marry and have children. Indeed, the belief was that the Shekinah could only flow into a man through his wife. Cordovero contended that a man develops a relationship both with his wife and with the overshadowing Shekinah. In *The Palm Tree of Deborah* we are told that man:

“stands between the two females, the physical female below who receives food, raiment and conjugal rights from him, and the Shekinah who stands above him to bless him with these which he, in turn, gives to the wife of his covenant.”³⁵

The model for this dual relationship is the one between Tiphareth; Binah, the “supernal Shekinah” or “Higher Mother;” and the conventional Shekinah, or “Lower Mother”:

This is after the pattern of Beauty [Tiphareth], which stands between the two Females: the Higher Mother [Binah], which pours out all that it requires, and the Lower Mother [Malkuth-Shekinah], which receives from it food, raiment and conjugal rights, namely lovingkindness, justice, and pity as is known. And the Shekinah cannot come to him unless he resembles the Supernal Reality.³⁶

The Shekinah is divine glory dwelling in the world; but she makes demands, not only of Tiphareth and the Jewish race, but of every pious Jew. The sins of the world had driven her into exile, and it was man’s individual and collective responsibility to bring her back: and restore the loving union between the Shekinah and the Holy One. On an individual level the

Shekinah serves, among other things, as a man’s conscience. According to Cordovero she accompanies a man when he is away from home, not only to maintain his wholeness, but also to remind him to be faithful to his wife.³⁷

Elijah de Vidas (died c. 1593), probably a student of both Moses Cordovero and Isaac Luria, urged the pious Jew to confess his sins in order that the soul could “stimulate the female waters within the Shekinah.”³⁸ Then, at midnight, he should rise to study the *Torah* and pray. By so doing he could “feel the distress of the Shekinah [and] weep and mourn over the destruction of the Sanctuary.”³⁹ Midnight is the time when “the Holy One... forgives those who return to Him.” De Vidas no doubt recalled that the *Zohar* identified midnight as the time when the Holy One and the Shekinah are joined in consortium.⁴⁰ It is also the time when she is most accessible to the people: “[A]lthough the Shekinah goes into exile with Israel, nevertheless she is to be found in the domain of her husband.”⁴¹

De Vidas was not the first to identify the Shekinah with the Moon, but he asserted that she “is exiled from time to time inasmuch as Her light has been diminished.”⁴² Both Cordovero and de Vidas saw the Shekinah as an intercessor with the Holy One, very much as the Virgin Mary is for Jesus Christ in Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

The Shekinah in Modern Times

Concepts of the Shekinah were explored by the Hassidic writers of Eastern Europe, many of whom had studied the major Qabalistic sources. Among other things they discussed the Shekinah as the glory of God, her exile, her relationship with Tiphareth, and her association with the Sabbath. For example, the famous Rabbi Isaac Baal Shem Tov (1698–1760) quoted the *Zohar* in explaining the Sabbath as “the coupling between the Holy One and the Shekinah.” He proceeded to point out “The Holy One refers to the Godly Essence that is hidden from creation. The Shekinah, on the other hand, refers to the Godly Essence that dwells in the physical world.”⁴³ That identifi-

cation with matter might in itself constitute the basis of the “exile.”

Polish Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heshel (c. 1745–1825) continued the tradition of revering the Shekinah as the revealed glory of God:

When [God] desired to reveal the glory of His kingship and power in the lower worlds, He first caused His light to bring forth the upper worlds... From there, He continued step by step... This continued until His Light reached the level that we call the Shekinah.⁴⁴

Baal Shem Tov’s great-grandson, the Ukrainian Rabbi Nachman (1772–1810), explored a similar theme, explaining that “glory” refers to Israel and adding that “God’s Shekinah dwells inside... each and every Jew.”⁴⁵

Dov Baer (1704–1772), the so-called Magid of Mezrich, echoed the sentiments of Elijah de Vidas in relating the Shekinah to prayer:

When you want to pray to God for something, think of your soul as part of the Shekinah, like a raindrop in the sea. Then pray for the needs of the Shekinah... Then, if you are properly attached to the Shekinah, this influence will also be transmitted to you.⁴⁶

Reverence for the Shekinah extended beyond Judaism. Golden Dawn initiate Arthur Edward Waite (1857–1942) made an extensive study of Zoharic references to the Shekinah. Among other things, he examined the issue of whether the Shekinah can reliably be equated with the Holy Spirit of Judaic tradition: that is with *Ruach* (רוח). Waite concluded that the weight of evidence indeed supports this equation.⁴⁷ He does leave open the possible association of

the Holy Spirit with Binah but reaffirms his conclusion by the argument that Binah is the Shekinah’s higher aspect.

Modern Qabalists still project the Shekinah back to biblical times. For example, she was said to have been the subject of musical devotion: “The ancient Levites and prophets used music so that the Shekinah would descend upon them.”⁴⁸

Twentieth-century Judaic scholar Gershom Scholem (1897–1982) gave much thought to

the issue of whether Jews of the biblical period considered the Shekinah—or her antecedents—to be a divine hypostasis or whether she was merely a literary personification or poetic metaphor. He also examined the possibility that the Shekinah was not just destined to be united in matrimony with the Holy One but that she was in fact *identical* with the Holy One.⁴⁹ Scholem acknowledged the long, rich

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tradition of the Shekinah, with roots in scripture and the *Talmud*; but his main conclusion was that her status as a distinct feminine aspect of God was a construct of medieval Qabalistic thought.⁵⁰ Further research will either support or refute his conclusion.

Concluding Remarks

The *Shekinah* has played a conspicuous role in esoteric Judaism for more than two millennia, expressing the notion of the revealed glory of God, the divine presence in the world. At times, “She who dwells within,” has even assumed the status of a feminine divine hypostasis distinct from or complementary to the Father God. Efforts to show that the Shekinah

was recognized as such during biblical times have generally been unsuccessful, but her qualities do seem to have been anticipated in the Hebrew Bible.

According to the Qabalists, the Shekinah is identified with *Malkuth*, “the Kingdom;” and just as Malkuth was once detached from the Tree of Life, the Shekinah was cut off from the source of life and lost in the wilderness. Significantly, in the Hebrew gematria, “Shekinah” has a value of 385, the same as *ha-raqira* (הַרְקִיעַ, “the firmament”), *mitsryma* (מִצְרַיִם, “into Egypt”), and *shemamah* (שְׁמָמָה, “desolation”).⁵¹ As the story of the Shekinah’s exile developed, there was an interesting shift of emphasis away from blaming those who had driven her—and the Jewish people—from their homeland toward the recognition that her exile might have been the result of human weakness. The Shekinah shared in the sufferings of her people; but the people must now find her, adorn her for the divine nuptials, and reunite her with the waiting bridegroom. She must be sought not just in the fields and graveyards but in each person’s heart.

Certainly the Shekinah was, to a great extent, a product of male theological speculation. She emerged in a society with rigid gender roles: one where women were not permitted to study the Torah, still less the Qabalah. Not surprisingly we can detect some degree of gender bias. The Shekinah has a lower status than the Holy One; Shekinah-Malkuth is below the Zeir Anpin-Tiphareth on the Qabalistic Tree of Life. It was she, not the Holy One, who was exiled—although we might offer the counter-argument that she deserves the greater credit for not abandoning her people.

On the other hand, we must also recognize that the rabbis accorded her the highest honors of their culture. Significantly, the Shekinah was not forced into the role of the Virgin Mary, eternally unable to fulfill her role as a woman. The persona of the Shekinah perhaps reflects the healthier life of men in the rabbinic tradition, contrasted with the celibate ideal of Catholicism or the puritanism of the reformed churches. It was a life based on the principle that men and women are incomplete without each other and that their natural, joyful state is

to be united in marriage. Cordovero’s assertion that the Shekinah can only flow to a man through his wife is another affirmation of the importance of marriage—although it could also be interpreted allegorically. Bearing in mind that, in Hebrew and most other ancient languages, “soul” was a feminine noun,⁵² the assertion might mean that we can only contact the divine presence through our souls.

The story of the Shekinah can be viewed in the historical terms of a particular religious tradition, or we can seek its more general legacy and relevance to us today. The latter seems to be the more appropriate response. The Shekinah affirms the immanence of God, expressing the divine glory in the world—albeit not without tension due to human weakness. Her role as a feminine aspect of God, distinct from the masculine but destined for eternal union with it, provides insight into gender symbolism at the highest levels. The Shekinah speaks to us as an important figure in today’s quest for the divine feminine and for greater understanding of the multi-faceted nature of God.

¹ For a discussion of the origins of “Shekinah” see: Fred P Miller. *Zechariah and Jewish Renewal: From Gloom to Glory*. Moeller Haus, 1999, ch. 8.

² *Exodus* 24:16. (Unless stated otherwise, all biblical quotations are from the King James Version.)

³ *Isaiah* 57:15.

⁴ Karen Armstrong. *A History of God*. Ballantine Books, 1994, p. 74.

⁵ “Elohim” is an irregular feminine noun with a masculine plural ending. The fact that it is plural is lost in most English versions of the Bible where it is translated as “God” or “the Lord.” “Ruach” is a regular feminine noun.

⁶ *El Shadai* is also rendered “Mighty God” or “God of the Mountain.” *El* became *Allah* in Arabic.

⁷ *Genesis* 28:3, 49:25 (KJV with substitutions).

⁸ Gershom Scholem. *The Mystical Shape of the Godhead*. Schocken Books, 1991, p. 21.

⁹ The name “Metatron” means beside or above the throne.

¹⁰ *Isaiah* 6:3.

¹¹ *The Bahir*, 132. (Transl: Aryeh Kaplan.) Weiser Books, 1998, p. 48.

- ¹² Quoted in: Scholem. *The Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, p. 155.
- ¹³ *Zohar*, 9, *Vayetze*: 27, verse 272. Kabbalah Centre International, 2003. The Shekinah is mentioned 1,065 times in the *Zohar*.
- ¹⁴ *Zohar*, 2, *Beresheet A*: 25, verse 268.
- ¹⁵ *Zohar*, 25, *Vayakhel*: 2, verse 20. This is a reference to *Psalms* 137:1-2: “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.”
- ¹⁶ The *Zohar* asserts that “Malkuth is a body to the Shekinah.” 49, *Ki Tetze*: 21, verse 102.
- ¹⁷ *Zohar*, 33, *Kedoshim*: 4, verse 36.
- ¹⁸ *Zohar*, 19, *Yitro*: 22, verse 403.
- ¹⁹ There are five partzufim: *Arikkh Anpin* (אֲרִיכְהָ אֲנָפִין, “Long Face”), which corresponds to the sephirah *Kether*; *Abba* (“Father”), which corresponds to *Chokmah*; *Imma* (“Mother”), corresponding to *Binah*; *Zeir Anpin*, corresponding to *Chesed* through *Yesod*; and *Nukvah* (“Daughter” or “Bride”), corresponding to *Malkuth*. The relationship between the Zeir Anpin, Tiphareth and neighboring sephiroth is discussed in John Nash. “The Trinity and Its Symbolism.” *Esoteric Quarterly*, Spring 2005, pp. 33-46.
- ²⁰ *Song of Solomon* 4:10.
- ²¹ *Zohar*, 47, *Ekev*: 3, verse 32.
- ²² *Zohar*, 21, *Trumah*: 80, verse 789.
- ²³ *Zohar*, 44, *Pinchas*: 123, verse 854.
- ²⁴ *Numbers* 35:34.
- ²⁵ *Zohar*, 11, *Vayeshav*: 3, verse 29. “Melachim” is the Hebrew name of the Book of *Kings*.
- ²⁶ Joseph Dan. *The Early Kabbalah*. Paulist Press, 1986, pp. 145, 149.
- ²⁷ Scholem. *The Mystical Shape of the Godhead*., pp. 189ff.
- ²⁸ The *Pistis Sophia*, a 2nd- to 4th-century Gnostic text, relates how Sophia fell from heaven and became the hostage of the archons. She was eventually rescued by Jesus Christ.
- ²⁹ It is sometimes claimed that Simeon ben Jochai wrote the *Zohar*; however this is unlikely, given the sophistication of this work compared with, say, the *Bahir* that probably was written in the 2nd or 3rd century. Most authorities attribute the *Zohar* to the Spanish Jew Moses de Leon (1238–1305).
- ³⁰ *Song of Solomon* 7:10.
- ³¹ Solomon Alkabetz. “The Pious Customs of Moses Cordovero” and “Come, My Beloved.” Quoted in: Lawrence Fine. *Safed Spirituality*. Paulist Press, 1984, pp. 36, 40.
- ³² Moses Cordovero. *The Palm Tree of Deborah*, ch. 9. (Transl: R. J. Z. Werblowsky) Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 52. A translation by Louis Jacobs has “chariot” in place of “vessel.”
- ³³ *Ibid*.
- ³⁴ *Zohar*, 28, *Tzav*: 27, verse 182.
- ³⁵ Moses Cordovero. *The Palm Tree of Deborah*, ch. 9. (Transl: Louis Jacobs.) Sepher-Hermon Press, 1960.
- ³⁶ *Ibid*.
- ³⁷ Here, Cordovero was quoting from the *Zohar*, 3, *Beresheet B* : 51, verse 225.
- ³⁸ Elijah de Vida. *Beginning of Wisdom*, “The Gate of Holiness,” ch. 7. Quoted in: Fine. *Safed Spirituality*, p. 106.
- ³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 107.
- ⁴⁰ *Zohar*, 50, *Vayelech*: 3, verse 18.
- ⁴¹ *Zohar*, 44, *Pinchas*: 84, verse 562.
- ⁴² E. de Vida. *Beginning of Wisdom*, “The Gate of Humility,” ch. 1, p. 117.
- ⁴³ Rabbi Aaron (ed.) *Kether Shem Tov*: teachings of the Baal Shem Tov. Quoted in: Aryeh Kaplan. *The Light Beyond*, Maznaim Publishing Corporation, 1981, p. 265.
- ⁴⁴ Avraham Y. Heshel. *Ohev Yisrael*. Quoted in: Kaplan. *The Light Beyond*, p. 35.
- ⁴⁵ Rabbi Nathan (ed.). *Likutey Moharan: Teachings Rabbi Nachman*. Quoted in: Kaplan. *The Light Beyond*, p. 137.
- ⁴⁶ Rabbi Shlomo (ed.). *Magid Devarav LeYaa-kov: Teachings of the Mezricher Magid*. Quoted in: Kaplan. *The Light Beyond*, p. 218.
- ⁴⁷ Arthur E. Waite. *The Holy Kabbalah*. Citadel Press, undated, p. 368.
- ⁴⁸ Matityahu Glazerson. *Music and Kabbalah*. Jason Aronson, 1997, p. 7.
- ⁴⁹ One could of course argue that any distinction between these concepts is no more than a matter of semantics.
- ⁵⁰ Scholem. *The Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, pp. 140-160.
- ⁵¹ Matityahu Glazerson calculates the “inner numerical value” of *shirah* (שִׁירָה), “song,” to be 385. *Shirah* itself has a value of 515. See: *Music and Kabbalah*. Jason Aronson, 1997, p. 50.
- ⁵² The Hebrew words for “soul”: *nephesh* (נֶפֶשׁ), *ruach* (רוּחַ), and *neshamah* (נִשְׁמָה) are all feminine. The Greek *psyche* (ψυχή) is also feminine.