

# Abraham Abulafia's Works and Doctrine

2

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## Foreword by Shlomo Pines

As is understood by the thirteenth-century mystic Abraham Abulafia, Kabbalah is not primarily a form of gnosis or theosophy. In effect, his view has nothing in common with the Sephirotic Kabbalah, whose object is the penetration of the structure of Divine being and the processes occurring therein. With the help of his profound erudition, Moshe Idel has devoted patient and exhaustive study to the analysis of the extant material from the voluminous Abulafian corpus. He concludes that the mystical technique, experiences, and doctrines of this author are focused upon the human being and his upward progress along the path leading to prophetic-mystical ecstasy. This description leaves the reader with a clear sense of the disparity among the elements composing the corpus in question. Idel begins by discussing the senses of sight and hearing of the mystic in a state of extasy and the techniques enabling him to reach this state. He observes that the processes spoken of here which have parallels in Yoga (i.e., in its breathing excercises) and the Greek hesychasm: namely, the peculiar importance given to the pronunciation of Divine Names. All of these have no bearing upon the theoretical basis of

Abulafia's thought, a structure which, at least in terms of its terminology, betrays philosophical influence. There is no doubt that it was a powerful mystical impulse which led Abulafia as commentator of the Guide for the Perplexed to declare in the same work that a certain technique,

x

consisting of the permutations of Hebrew letters composing certain words, is far superior to the cognitive path recommended by the philosophers as a means of apprehending and cleaving to the Active Intellect (i.e., the supreme goal of the Aristotelians). The cognition spoken about by Abulafia is one which is easily obscured by the imagination. Essentially, both Maimonides and, even more emphatically, Abulafia, understand the imagination as opposed to the intellect. On the other hand, Abulafia's thought regarding imagination, like that of Maimonides, entails a certain unacknowledged ambivalence. It is inconceivable that Abulafia thought, in contradistinction to Maimonides, that the imagination played no role whatsoever in the visual and aural experience of

the prophets, an experience which he understood as one of mystical ecstasy. While Maimonides states that all the prophets are philosophers, and Avicenna, in the last work written before his death, articulates his belief that the prophets are mystics, Abulafia inverts Avicenna's statement: all the true mystics are, in his opinion, prophets. From this, the inevitable conclusion is that he himself was a prophet.

## PART I The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia

### Introduction

1. The Question of Abulafia's Status In describing Hayyey ha-`01dm ha-Ba', one of the principal works of R. Abraham Abulafia, the noted mystic R. Hayyim Joseph David Azulai (1724-1807), better known as the Hid"á, wrote:

This is a book written by R. Abraham Abulafia, concerning the circle of the seventy-two letter [Divine] Name, which I saw on the

manuscript parchment. And know that the Raba [R. Solomon ben Adret] in his Responsa, sec. 548,2 and Rabbi YaSar [R. Joseph Solomon del Medigo of Candia], in Sefer Mesdref leHokmdh, 3 expressed contempt toward him as one of the worthless people, or worse. However, I say that in truth I see him as a great rabbi, among the masters of secrets, and his name is great in Israel, and none may alter his words, for he is close to that book mentioned, and his right hand shall save him.

These remarks of the Hid "a aptly summarize the problem involved in Abulafia's thought and his role in the development of the Kabbalah. To begin with, despite his greatness as a mystic, being "among the masters of secrets," he was fiercely attacked by the major halakhic figure of his generation, R. Solomon ben Abraham ibn Adret, and was placed under the ban. It follows from this that R. Azulai's words, "as one of the worthless people, or worse," were a deliberate understatement, intended to safeguard the honor of both Abulafia and his critics. The fact that Hayyey ha-`01dm ha-Btv remained in manuscript form until the eighteenth

century would suggest that the effect of RaÅšba's ban had not worn off even then, or for that matter until our own day.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that, between the final years

3

#### 4 Introduction

of the thirteenth century, when Abulafia was excommunicated by his opponent in Barcelona, and the seventeenth century, a striking change occurred in the status of the banned Kabbalist. A figure such as R. Azulai (Hid"a), who was expert in all dimensions of Jewish culture and who at the same time represented post-Sabbatian Kabbalistic thought in the East, did not hesitate to praise the man and to describe his system in glowing terms: "his name is great in Israel, and none may alter his words." Such a drastic changeâ□□from excommunication to a position in the foremost ranks of Jewish mysticsâ□□is indicative of an unprecedented phenomenon in the development of Jewish mysticism. The present study describes a central question in the vast corpus of R. Abraham Abulafia. The exploration of this

questionâthe nature of the mystical experience and related mattersâwill clarify the importance of this Kabbalist within the framework of medieval Jewish mysticism, and assist our understanding of the ambivalent attitudes toward Abulafia in different periods. Who was Abraham Abulafia, and what was his uniqueness as a Kabbalist?

## The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 5

Spain and traveled to the land of Israel in search of the mythical River Sambatyon. However, the battle between the Mamelukes and the Tatars in Eyn-Harod brought an abortive end to Abulafia's Palestinian travels in the city of Acre. He returned to Europe via Greece, where he was married, and after a few years went on to Italy. There, in Capua, he studied philosophy and especially the Guide for the Perplexed with R. Hillel of Verona, and after some time returned to Catalonia. In 1270 he had a vision, in which he was commanded to meet with the pope. During that same period, and possibly in the same place, he began to study the Kabbalah, which he had earlier opposed, his studies being concentrated



primarily on the commentaries of Sefer Yesirdh. From Catalonia he traveled to Castile, where he taught the Guide to R. Joseph Gikatilla and R. Moses b. Simeon of Burgos, two of the leading Castillian Kabbalists during the 1270's and 1280's. After leaving Castile, he spent the next several years—apparently the entire second half of the 1270's—wandering about, possibly going as far as France. At the end of the decade he again taught the Guide in the Greek cities of Thebes and Patros, and in 1279 returned to the Italian city of Capua, where he continued to teach the works of Maimonides. Because of his peculiar method of studying the Guide, based on combinations of letters and similar linguistic techniques, as well as his messianic statements about his intention to meet with the pope, he was persecuted by his fellow Jews. At the end of the Hebrew calendar year 5040 (i.e., Fall 1280), he attempted to meet with Pope Nicholas III, who rejected these overtures. While the pope was still in his vacation palace in Soriano, near Rome, Abulafia made a daring attempt to evade the pope's threats to burn him at the stake, and arrived at the castle. However, soon after his arrival the pope suddenly died, thus saving Abulafia from a certain death.

## 2. Abulafia's Life

Unlike many other Kabbalists who preceded him or were his contemporaries, Abulafia provided extensive details regarding his life. These are quite numerous, and have not yet been discussed in a detailed biography of Abulafia's life; this subject will be discussed elsewhere. In this context I shall present only the basic information concerning Abulafia's life, based exclusively upon the testimony contained in his own writings.<sup>4</sup> Abraham was born in the Hebrew calendar year 5000 (1240 C.E.) in Saragossa in the province of Aragon to his father, Samuel; the family moved to Tudela, where Abulafia continued to study with his father until the death of the latter, when he was a young man of eighteen years. Two years later, Abulafia left

## 6 Introduction

## The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 7

After a brief period of imprisonment in Rome by the "Little Brothers"â€”the Minoritesâ€”Abulafia left the Apennine Peninsula, arriving in Sicily in the year 1281, where he continued his literary and messianic activities. He succeeded in establishing not only a circle of students and admirers who "moved at his command," but apparently also opponents. His prophetic and messianic pretensions evidently caused the leaders of the island to turn to R. Solomon ben Abraham ben Adret (ca. 1235-ca. 1310, known as Ragba) for instructions as to how to deal with this personality; and ibn Adret, who was both an halakhic sage and a Kabbalist, began an all-out war against Abulafia. Even if his letters against the ecstatic kabbalist did not always find a sympathetic ear among Abulafia's many disciples in Sicily, there is no doubt that Abulafia's status was nevertheless severely damaged, and he was forced to go into exile on the island of Comtino, near Sicily, at least for a brief period. The polemic between Abulafia and ibn Adret continued throughout the second half of the 1280's and concluded, insofar as we can tell, with

Abulafia's death toward the end of the year 1291. In any event, there is no indication of any activity of Abulafia following that date.

**Handbooks for Mystical Experience** The most significant and fully developed genre is that of handbooks for the acquisition of prophecy (i.e., ecstasy) and cleaving to God (debequt) — i.e., what is in contemporary language called mystical experience.

These books detail various techniques, some elements of which will be described below. The most important of these works are Hayyey ha - Oldm ha - Ba), referred to above; 'Or ha - Sekel, 'Imrey Sefer, 'Eden Ganuz, and Sefer ha -1-Ideq. The former three enjoyed extensive circulation, at least insofar as is indicated by the large number of surviving manuscripts, and there can be no doubt that these enhanced Abulafia's prestige among

**Kabbalists Interpretation of Classical Jewish Texts** Abulafia composed a commentary on the Torah, entitled

Sefer ha -Mafttehot, almost all of which is extant. He likewise interpreted Sefer Yesirdh and Maimonides' Guide a number of times

each, as well as the "prophetic books" which he himself composed. Prophetic Works Beginning in 1279, Abulafia composed a series of various "prophetic" books, the vast majority of which have been lost. Their nature is, however, apparent from the single work of this genre which has survived, *Sefer ha - 'Ot*, as well as from the extant interpretations which the author gives to his other works of this kind. One may assume, on the basis of these two documents, that these books contained Abulafia's mystical and messianic visions, which he enjoyed during a very fruitful spiritual period. Several of the subjects of these visions, such as "the man" and "the circle," will be discussed in detail below.

### 3. Abulafia's Writings

Abulafia was an extremely prolific Kabbalist author, doubtless among the most fertile of the thirteenth century. He left behind him an extensive literary heritage, much of which has survived, although certain important items have been lost.<sup>5</sup> During a

relatively short period of time, during the twenty years between 1271 and 1291, Abulafia composed nearly fifty works, long and short, which may be divided into several principal literary types:

## 8 Introduction

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 9

**Occasional Works** There are also occasional works, such as epistles and poems, which constitute only a small part of his corpus; albeit the epistles' contribution to our understanding of Abulafia's thought and his spiritual development is particularly significant. All told, some thirty works or fragments of works written by Abulafia have survived, preserved in some one hundred manuscripts. Only a very small proportion of his total oeuvre has been printed, and even this small number has had the misfortune to have been printed with many mistakes. It follows from this that in almost every case one needs to refer to the

manuscriptsâ€” an unusual phenomenon if one is speaking about a key figure for the understanding of Kabbalah as a mystic phenomenon. The refusal of the Kabbalists and printers to publish Abulafia's literary works creates great difficulties in clarifying his system and, as the reader will find below, the bulk of the material considered here comes from manuscripts scattered over different continents, awaiting a wider audience. This is the reason for our constant reliance upon manuscripts. However, an understanding of Abulafia's mystical path cannot suffice with these written testimonies alone. There is considerable material extant from the period preceding him, such as the writings of the Ashkenazic Hasidim or those of R. Baruch Torgami, from which Abulafia learned fundamental areas of his thought. Until now, those topics in these works relevant to Abulafia's thought have not received any detailed treatment, a fact which presents difficulties for the understanding of Abulafian thought. No less important are those works which were influenced by Abulafia's writings, such as the anonymous *Sefer haSeruf* and *Ner 'Elohim*; the works of R. Isaac of Acre, first and foremost the *'Osar Hayyim*; Sa(arey Sedeq by R.

Nathan ben Sacadyah Harar; and R. Judah Albotini's SuHeim ha-  
(Aliya-h.

Thus, analysis of Abulafia's mysticism demands reference to an entire Kabbalistic school, spreading over many years, and requires careful study of the writings of many different Kabbalists. However, the difficulties entailed and the time demanded to master this extensive background are well justified, as only study of this type can enable us to understand the complex development and spread of ecstatic Kabbalah of the Abulafian type through various regions—Italy, Greece, Palestine—and assist us in comprehending properly the most important contemporary mystical phenomenon: Hasidism.' The present work will clarify only a few of these questions, and others will be dealt with elsewhere, while such major questions as the contribution of ecstatic Kabbalah to the shaping of the Hassidic mysticism will still require extensive clarification.

#### 4. Survey of Research



Scholars had already addressed themselves to Abraham Abulafia's Kabbalah by the middle of the nineteenth century, when Moritz Landauer described the work of this Kabbalist, first based upon the manuscripts available in the Munich Library! Unfortunately, Landauer's distinction as the pioneering scholar of Kabbalistic manuscripts did not assist him when he came to describe the spiritual configuration of Abulafia's Kabbalah. Because he was convinced that Abulafia was the author of Sefer haZohar, he arrived at a totally misguided picture of his thought, in those few cases where he attempted to do so. In the second half of the nineteenth century we find general remarks concerning the life and works of Abulafia<sup>11</sup> but not an analysis of his system<sup>12</sup> in the major works of Heinrich Graetz, 9 Moritz Steinschneider,<sup>13</sup> and Adolph Jellinek,<sup>14</sup> who has devoted several studies to Abulafia's thought, some of which he published. His most important contribution was in the separation of Safer ha-Zohar from the sphere of the ecstatic Kabbalah and its attribution to R. Moses de Leon. 12 Research was henceforth free to address itself to the

## 10 Introduction

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 11

clarification of Abulafia's system on the basis of authentic documents. At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, writers in Kabbalah reiterated the theories of their predecessors, including Landauer's erroneous view that Abulafia was the author of Sefer ha-Zohar. 13 Significant progress in this respect was not made during that generation until the beginnings of Scholem's research. In a series of studies of ecstatic Kabbalah,<sup>4</sup> as well as an entire chapter devoted to Abulafia in his comprehensive work, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*,<sup>15</sup> Scholem expanded, corrected, and improved upon the biobibliographical descriptions of his predecessors. But Scholem's major contribution was in the primary analysis of Abulafia's Kabbalistic thought and the determination of his place

as one of the important creators of Kabbalistic literature.

However, despite Scholem's major accomplishments in removing scholarly errors and the reconstruction of Abulafia's ecstatic mystical system itself, Abulafia's Kabbalah was not included in a long series of phenomenologically oriented works, many of which were presented at the discussions of scholars of religion at Ascona.<sup>16</sup> Thus, for example, ecstatic Kabbalah is completely absent from Scholem's discussions concerning the significance of the Torah in Kabbalah, or the problem of mysticism and religious authority. In all of these areas, the ecstatic Kabbalah could have contributed substantially to expanding the understanding of the Kabbalistic phenomenon. Since Scholem's studies only a few, and to a large extent tangential, other studies have been written concerning Abulafia,<sup>17</sup> nearly all of them inspired by Scholem.<sup>18</sup> The present study represents the first in-depth coverage of a central subject in ecstatic Kabbalah—that of the religious experience. The material presented here is essentially an expansion and reworking of one section of a more extensive work devoted to Abulafia's thought, presented as a doctoral dissertation at the

Hebrew University under the guidance of Professor Shlomo Pines. Since

its original presentation in 1976 I have published a number of articles concerning matters which I did not discuss at length in the dissertation, and the data presented in those studies enriched my own perception of the area of Kabbalah in general and of ecstatic Kabbalah in particular. Several chapters from the dissertation have been reworked from a broader perspective, derived from ten years of additional study. The present expansion also includes significant additions of new material, based on the study of hundreds of manuscripts. Some of this material has been identified for the first time as belonging to the school of ecstatic Kabbalah and was previously unknown in the research literature. My method of dealing with Abulafia's thought has been to gather the relevant material from the scores of manuscripts and to present it, with the intention of enabling the reader to have unmediated connection with the texts, but also to interpret them, both through the act of presenting them within a specific context,

as well as by deciphering the allusions and sources of the author. The success or failure of this approach may only be judged by the overall picture thereby created, which will hopefully contain fewer internal contradictions and will clarify to the reader matters which are discussed in Abulafia's writings in scattered places and in fragmentary form.

5. Abulafian and Theosophic Kabbalah I would like to conclude this introduction by describing several characteristics of Abulafian Kabbalah in comparison with that of the theosophical-theurgic school—that is to say, that Kabbalah which concentrated upon discussions concerning the nature of the Sefirot (theosophy) and the theurgical significance of the miswot, i.e., the ability of the Kabbalist to alter the Sefirotic system, which had been hurt by the sin of Adam.

## The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 13

Abulafia designates this system by two primary terms: prophetic Kabbalah and the Kabbalah of Names. The former term (which I have generally translated as ecstatic Kabbalah in the body of this work) refers to the goal of this mystical path: namely, the attainment of 'prophecy' or 'ecstasy,' i.e., manifestations of revelation and union with the Divine (debequt), designated by the classical term "prophecy" (nebwah) in the absence of any other more suitable, comprehensive term. The second term, the Kabbalah of Names, refers to the esoteric traditions concerning the nature of the Divine Names and their use in order to attain ecstasy. The two terms are not new in principal, and were at most adjusted to the needs of Abulafia's particular system. This Kabbalah is distinguished from the other Kabbalistic systems of its time both by the essential purpose of ecstatic Kabbalah, as well as by the techniques for its attainment. In the extensive Kabbalistic literature composed during the last third of the thirteenth century in Catalonia and Castile, a central place is

given to discussions concerning the nature of the divine system, including both its deepest and most remote level—the Eyn SOf (the Infinite) and its revealed aspect—the ten Sefirot. An additional characteristic of this literature is the stress upon the role of the miszoOt, whose performance in the Kabbalistic manner, with the intention of actualizing the effect of these acts upon the Divine world, is a basic element of Spanish Kabbalah, and specifically of Sefer ha-Zohar. This complex doctrine of Divinity, developed above and beyond that which existed in Kabbalah at the beginning of the thirteenth century, was alien to the spirit of Abulafia, who sees in it a danger of heresy. He accuses certain Kabbalists—apparently referring to Ibn Adret, among others—of being even worse than Christians: while the latter believe in a triune God, the Sefirotic Kabbalists believe in a system of ten distinct Divine forces! Abulafia advocates a theology similar to that of Maimonides in lieu of the Kabbalistic theosophy; he stresses primarily the understanding of God as Intellect/Intelligible/ Act of

Intellection, a definition allowing, as we shall see below, for the union of the actualized human intellect and the divine Intellect. The position of the *miszvOt* is also different in Abulafian Kabbalah from that in classical Spanish Kabbalah. 19 While the Kabbalists of Castile and Catalonia stress the mystical path which travels via the performance of the *miswdt*, Abulafia teaches a completely different way, consisting primarily of the pronunciation of Divine names and a complex technique involving such components as breathing, singing, and movements of the head, which have nothing whatsoever to do with the traditional commandments of Judaism. Another significant and striking difference between ecstatic Kabbalah and the theosophic-theurgic school is manifested in their respective exegetical approaches. While that of Abraham Abulafia is filled with uses of numerology and plays on lettersgematria, *notriqein*, and letter-combinations (*serufey 'OtiyOt*)<sup>20</sup> as may be seen from his commentaries, the main bulk of Spanish Kabbalistic exegesis is essentially symbolic, and only in passing do they make use of the methods favored by Abulafia. In using these methods, this ecstatic Kabbalist followed in the footsteps of the Ashkenazic Hasidim, as he also did in his



mystical techniques based upon letter-combinations and pronunciations.2° Another difference between these two branches of Kabbalah was in their relationship toward the community or the public; Abulafia, more than any other Kabbalist who preceded him, stressed the need for isolation in order to achieve prophetic ecstasy. This elevation of the ideal of separation or withdrawal from society in order to attain religious perfection developed simultaneous with the emphasis in theurgic Kabbalah upon the communal religious service within a community of mystics, as this is expressed in Sefer ha-Zohar. This school turned toward the havurah, the mystical confraternity, the combined force of whose members is able to repair the Divine world, and through that world the entire cosmos.

## 14 Introduction

Finally, an interesting difference which does not pertain directly to the different Kabbalistic systems, but to the biographies of their leading figures: namely, that the vast majority of the works of the

ecstatic Kabbalah were written by itinerant Kabbalists. This was the case with Abulafia; this was also, apparently, the fate of Sa carey Sedeq, by his own testimony, and of R. Isaac of Acre. By contrast, through the 1280's we do not know of any Kabbalists who contributed to the formation of the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah whose lives were uprooted. At most, one hears of a move from Catalonia to Provence and back again, or visits to the various cities of Castile, but not of migration from one continent to another. Many of the Spanish Kabbalists—such as Nahmanides, Ibn Adret, and R. Todros Abulafia—resided permanently in the major cities and constituted the religious establishment. On the other hand, the ecstatic Kabbalists found difficulty in striking roots in any one place, but tended to wander about without being subject to any system of authority for any extended period of time. If we add to this the tension that grew between Abulafia, the spokesman of the ecstatic Kabbalah, and R. Solomon ibn Adret, who was among the major representatives of the theosophic-theurgic Kabbalah, we may conclude by saying that we have two mystical schools whose ideational and experiential structures differ from one another in the most radical

conceivable manner. Abulafia was considered, by the Christian Kabbalist Johanan Reuchlin, 2 ' as a pillar of Christian Kabbalah, 22 as well as one of the two pillars of Jewish Kabbalah. Christian Kabbalah is based to a considerable extent upon the thought of Abulafia, whose writings were translated into Latin and Italian.<sup>23</sup>

## Chapter One Techniques for Attaining Ecstasy

Abraham Abulafia's system differs from that of other medieval Jewish thinkers in presenting a detailed, systematic path enabling the seeker to attain to mystical experience. In this system various concepts used to describe reality by Arab and Jewish philosophers are transformed into subjects of personal experience by means of a suitable technique. This technique paves the way toward the zenith of mysticism: the total unity between man's intellect and the supreme Being, whether this is understood as God or as the Active Intellect. While other medieval thinkers as well saw this experience as their soul's desire, which they strove to attain with all their strength, we nevertheless do not find in philosophical works of this period any

detailed, specific instructions as to the means of realizing such contact. The discussions by R. Abraham ibn Ezra and Maimonides and by their disciples concerning the nature of 'prophecy,' in which they saw the hallmark of this ideal experience are not to be read as concrete instructions, rooted in a specific path toward the realization of the desired goal. They rather describe a phenomenon from the distant past, namely, Biblical prophecy, without claiming although not explicitly denying that similar experiences are possible within their own generation. In my opinion, the path propounded by Abulafia in his books is an adaptation of the Jewish mystical traditions which he had learned from the Ashkenazi world of Franco-Germany to the

**16 Techniques for Attaining Ecstasy**

**The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 17**

spiritual needs of Jews educated within the philosophical schools of Spain and Italy, which primarily thought in Maimonidean concepts. To these were added elements originating in mystical techniques outside of Judaism—Greek-Orthodox hesychasm, Indian Yoga and possibly also Sufism. The last-mentioned is, however, primarily visible in the writings of his students, rather than in Abulafia's own writings. We shall therefore begin by describing the elements of technique as they appear in the writings of Abulafia and his disciples. As recitation of the Divine Names was the main technique developed by this school, we shall begin our discussion with this topic.

of his hands shall count one hundred twelve times—and immediately he descends to and rules the Merkabah.'

A similar passage appears in another treatise belonging to this literature:

His mouth utters names and the fingers of his hands count one hundred eleven times; so shall whoever makes use of this aspect [i.e., technique], let his mouth utter names and the fingers of his hands count one hundred eleven times, and he must not subtract from these names, for if he adds or subtracts, he may lose his life.<sup>2</sup>

## 1. The Ecstatic Character of the Recitation of the Divine Names

Both these passages would seem to imply that this refers to an established custom connected with the "descent to the Merkabah." Similar methods were used during the Gaonic period; in one of his responsa, R. Hai Gaon (939-1038) writes:

And likewise [regarding] a dream question: there were several elders and pious men who [lived] with us who knew them [the Names] and fasted for several days, neither eating meat nor drinking wine, [staying] in a pure place and praying and reciting great and well-known verses and [their] letters by number, and

they went to sleep and saw wondrous dreams similar to a prophetic vision.<sup>3</sup>

The recitation of the Name or Names of God as a means of attaining ecstasy is a widely-known mystical practice, playing a significant role in techniques known from India, Tibet, and Japan, in Islam and in Orthodox Christianity. We shall not discuss these techniques in a detailed way here; some will be mentioned again at the end of this chapter for purposes of comparison with the material found in Abulafia. Before discussing Abulafia's system, however, we shall examine the Jewish precedents for use of the Divine Names in order to achieve changes in human consciousness. In late antiquity, in *flekalot Rabbati*, we read:

When a man wishes to ascend to the Merkd bdh, he calls to Suryah the Prince of the Presence, and adjures him one hundred and twelve times with the Name *twtrsy'y h'*, which is read *twtrsy'y swrtq twtrky'l twfgr 'srwyly'y zbwdy'l wzhray'l tnd'l "qhwzy' dhybwryn w'dyrryrwn Ha- Sem 'Elohey Yisra' el*. He may neither add nor subtract from these one hundred and twelve

timesâ□□for were he to add or subtract he might lose his lifeâ□□ but he shall recite the names with his mouth, and the fingers

In another responsa, R. Hai Gaon testifies that:

Many scholars thought that, when one who is distinguished by many qualities described in the books seeks to behold the Merkabdh and the palaces of the angels on high, he must follow a certain procedure. He must fast a number of days and place his head between his knees and whisper many hymns and songs whose texts are known from tradition. Then he will perceive within himself and in the chambers [of his heart] as if he saw the seven palaces with his own eyes, and as though he had entered one palace after another and seen what is there.`

The former passage from R. Hai Gaon refers to "great and well-known verses and letters by number"; G. Vajda contends



## 18 Techniques for Attaining Ecstasy

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 19 nor does he see or hear or feel his body, but his soul sees and hears and this is called vision and sight, and this is the matter of most prophecy.'<sup>5</sup>

that the sense of the phrase, letters by number, refers to groups of letters which equal one another in their numerical value (i.e., gematria).<sup>5</sup> In my opinion, this in fact refers to the use of the Divine Name of seventy-two letters: the "great and well-known verses" are probably the three verses, Exodus 14:19-21, each one of which contains seventy-two letters in the Hebrew original, i.e., "letters in number." The second quotation also seems to me to be connected with the use of Divine Names. In Sefer ha- cAruk of R. Nathan b. Jehiel of Rome (1035-ca. 1110), we again read in the name of R. Hai Gaon, that "Pardes is that which is expounded in Flekaldt Rabbati and Flekaldt Zutrati; i.e., that they would perform certain actions, and pray in purity, and use the crown and see the HekalOt and the bands of angels in their position, and

see how there was one chamber after another, and one within another."6 G. Scholem has suggested that the expression "use the crown" signifies the use of the Divine Name.' A younger contemporary of R. Hai Gaon, Rabbenu Hanannel, many of whose ideas were borrowed from the works of R. Hai, likewise writes about the sages who entered Pardes, stating that they "prayed and cleansed themselves of all impurity, and fasted and bathed themselves and became pure, and they used the names and gazed at the Hekalot." 8 In Rashi's opinion, the ascent to heaven signifying the entry into Pardes was performed "by means of a name." Similar testimony appears among the Ashkenazic Hasidim; Sefer ha-Ijayyim, attributed to R. Abraham ibn Ezra, presents an interesting description reflecting the widespread use of Names:

A vision (march) occurs when a man is awake and reflects upon the wonders of God, or when he does not reflect upon them, but pronounces the Holy Names or those of the angels, in order that he be shown [whatever] he wishes or be informed of a hidden matter and the Holy Spirit then reveals itself to him, and he knows that he is a worm and that his flesh is like a garment, and

he trembles and shakes from the power of the Holy Spirit, and is unable to stand it. Then that man stands up like one who is faint, and does not know where he is standing,

The disputant of the anonymous author of Sefer haHayyim, R. Moses Taku (ca. 1235), describes a similar technique in a surviving fragment of his book, Ketab Tammim:

And two of those who were lacking in knowledge [among] the schismatics [thought] to make themselves prophets, and they were accustomed to recite Holy Names, and at times performed kawwanot during this recitation, and the soul was astounded, and the body fell down and was exhausted. But for such as these there is no barrier to the soul, and the soul becomes the principal thing [in their constitution] and sees afar; [but] after one hour, when the power of that Name which had been mentioned departs, he returns to what he was, with a confused mind."

The last two passages corroborate one another: during the procedures of reciting the Names, the body trembles violently, freeing the soul from its dependence upon the senses and creating a new form of consciousness. The process is in both cases compared to prophecy; one should note that prophecy is also mentioned, in a similar context, in R. Hai Gaon's previously quoted words: "similar to a prophetic vision." R. Eleazar of Worms (ca. 1165-ca.1230, the Roqeah), a contemporary of the above-mentioned anonymous author of Sefer ha-tlayyim, also knew the technique of recitation of the Names of God—a usage likely to bring about results similar to those mentioned in the works of R. Hai Gaon or in Sefer ha-Hayyim. These are his comments in Sefer ha-Hokmdh:12

abg yts 13 —these are the six letters, each and every letter [standing for] a [Divine] name in its own right:" A - Adiriron; B - Bihariron; G — Gihariron; Y — Yagbihayah; T — Talmiyah; S Satnitayah. By rights, one oughtn't to write everything or to vocalize them, lest those lacking in knowledge and those taken

20 1Ccimique.5 for Attaining Ecstasy (sic!â□□should be "stricken") in understanding and of negligible wisdom use them. However, Abraham our father passed on the name of impurity to the children of the concubines, in order that they not know the future by means of idolatry. 15 Thus, some future things and spirits were revealed to us by means of the [Divine] attributes, through the pronounciation of the depths of the Names, in order to know the spirit of wisdomâ□□thus far the Sefer Yirqah.16

R. Eleazar of Worm's statements reflect an awareness of the antiquity of involvement in Divine Names and their recitation as a means of acquiring knowledge of the future or various wisdoms; the patriarch Abraham already knew these secrets and attempted to conceal them from the children of the concubines, and they were subsequently passed down from generation to generation until the Jewish medieval mystics. The expression, "pronounciation of the depths of the names," is particularly interesting in light of the fact that Abulafia-who explicitly admits to R. Eleazar's influence-was to see his own Kabbalah, that of Names, as the

deepest path within the Jewish esoteric tradition. All of these quotations share the fact that they were formulated outside of the framework of the great speculative systems of the age—the Aristotelian and the Neoplatonic. Indeed, they reflect those types of approaches which Mircea Eliade, the scholar of comparative religions, would designate as "shamanistic." Upon the emergence of philosophy, the use of Divine Names became transformed into a means for realizing forms of consciousness which transcend the ordinary frame of mind. R. Isaac ibn Latif (ca. 1210-ca. 1280) writes in *Ginzey ha-Melek*:"

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 21 philosophical comprehension, grasped through knowledge of those things which exist apart from the First Cause. The second kind is comprehension that the First Cause acts by a simple will, designated as spiritual speech, and this is [known as] prophetic comprehension, grasped by means of the Divine influx emanated upon the prophets by knowledge of the secret of His glorious names, through the comprehension of each one of them and of

their wholeness; this level is one to which the master of conceptual speculation has no entry. The third kind is comprehension of this knowledge by means of the Name which is completely and utterly hidden [and] described as within, and this is the essence and the highest of all comprehensions, and it is this one which is reserved in the future for those who fear God and take into account His name [Malachi 3:16].

The first kind of understanding mentioned here is that of natural theology based upon philosophy, which is the province of "scholars of speculation." The second is a combination of the approach of R. Solomon ibn Gabirol (ca. 1020-ca.1057; known in Latin as "Avicebrol"), which asserts the identity of will and the approach of speech, *i. e.* and speculation upon the Divine Names. At the time, this explicit connection between prophecy and contemplation of the Divine Names was an unusual one and, in my opinion, is indicative of the penetration into Ibn Latif's thought of a view from one of Abulafia's sources. The third kind of comprehension mentioned above involves the hidden Name of God; this is an allusion to the name *hwy*, which was considered the hidden name of God both by the circle of *Sefer ha-lyyun* and

by Abulafia. 2 ° The similarity to Abulafia is particularly great, as both Abulafia and Ibn Latif believed that knowledge of the hidden name of God will be realized in the times of Messiah. In

The attainment of [knowledge of] the existence of God is the highest form, including three kinds of comprehension (hasagi-ilt), 18 which are: conceptual comprehension, prophetic comprehension, and that comprehension which is hidden until the coming of the Righteous one, who shall teach [it]. The first kind is the comprehension of the existence of a first cause for all [things], by means of conclusive proofs: this is speculative

'Osar 'Eden Ganuz, Abulafia writes:21 What we have seen in some of the books of those sages22 concerning the division of the names is that one who has knowledge of their essence will have a great and wondrous superiority in Torah and wisdom and prophecy above all his contemporaries. These are the things which God has chosen above all



## 22 Techniques for Attaining Ecstasy

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 23

else in the world of the soul; therefore, He has given them to the soul in potentia, and when they go from potentia to actu, the soul acts on another soul, so that the souls are renewed, and this knowledge shall save many souls from Sheol.

Three different approaches to the Divine Names appear in this passage: that true knowledge of the names is liable to make one wise; that they are capable of bringing an individual to the level of prophecy, i.e., to a mystical experience; and that they contain hidden powers to change reality by "renewal" of souls. All three of the approaches combined here—the informative, the magical, and the ecstatic—were present within the circle of Kabbalists whom Abulafia knew. R. Moses b. Simeon of Burgos, described

by Abulafia as one of his students, writes: It is truly known that those prophets who concentrated intensely in deed and in thought, more so than other people of their species, and whose pure thoughts cleaved to the Rock of the World with purity and great cleanliness that the supernal Divine will intended to show miracles and wonders through them, to sanctify His great Name, and that they received an influx of the supernal inner emanation by virtue of the Divine names, to perform miraculous actions in physical things, working changes in nature.<sup>23</sup>

of different combinations and vocalizations. This technique of breaking-down or atomizing the Name is the most distinctive characteristic of Abulafia's technique; the Holy Name contains within itself 'scientific' readings of the structure of the world and its activities, thereby possessing both an 'informative' character and magical powers. It is reasonable to assume that both qualities are associated with the peculiar structure of the Name.<sup>24</sup> However, in Abulafia's view this structure must be destroyed in order to exploit the 'prophetic' potential of these Names and to create a series of

new structures by means of letter-combinations. In the course of the changes taking place in the structure of the Name, the structure of human consciousness likewise changes. As Abulafia indicated in a number of places, 25 the Divine Name is inscribed upon man's soul, making it reasonable to assume that the process of letter-combination worked upon the name is understood as occurring simultaneously in the human soul: "In the thoughts of your mind combine and be purified." 26 We shall now see how the Divine Names are used as a means of attaining mystical experience or, as Abulafia writes, 27 "in the name my intellect found a ladder to ascend to the heights of vision." Just as the letters themselves generally appear on three levels—writing, speech and thought—28 so do the Names of God; one must 'recite' the Names first in writing, then verbally, and finally mentally. The act of writing the combination of the letters of the Divine Names is mentioned in several places in the writings of Abulafia and his followers, only two of which we shall cite here: "Take the pen and the parchment and the ink, and write and combine Names" 29 and, in . acarey Sedeq,3Â° "when midnight passed [over] me and the quill is in my hand and the

paper on my knees." The second level, that of verbal articulation, is more complex, including several components which must be analyzed separately: 1) the seeker of mystical experience must sing the letters and their vocalization (this point will be discussed separately in the chapter on music and prophecy); 2) he must maintain a fixed

These words of R. Moses of Burgos indicate that a technique for receiving prophetic flow by means of Divine Names was known in Spain in the second half of the thirteenth century. As we shall see below in the chapter on prophecy and music, Abulafia's approach to music was likewise known to the circle of R. Moses of Burgos. Before we continue to analyze Abulafia's technique, I should like to mention one feature common to all the passages quoted above: namely, that they refer to the Divine Names as distinct linguistic units, which the one 'prophesying' must repeat several times. In these passages, the Name is not broken down into a multitude of units, which constantly change by means

## 24 Techniques for Attaining Ecstasy

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 25

rhythm of breathing; 3) his head must be moved in accordance with the vocalization of the letter pronounced; 4) he must contemplate the internal structure of the human being. These last three procedures will be discussed below at greater length. The third level involves the mental combination of the Divine Names: "Know that mental [letter-]combination performed in the heart brings forth a word, [the latter] being [the result of the letterdcombination, entirely mental and born from the sphere of the intellect." 3 ' A brief description of the movement from one level to another appears in 'Osar `Eden Ganuz.<sup>32</sup> One must take the letters 'mg yhw, first as instructed in the written form which is an external thing, to combine them, and afterwards one takes them from the book with their combinations, and transfers them to one's tongue and mouth, and pronounces

them until one knows them by heart. Afterwards, he shall take them from his mouth [already] combined, and transfer them to his heart, and set his mind to understand what is shown him in every language that he knows, until nothing is left of them.

combination of its letters."<sup>33</sup> The process of attaining wisdom is described in impressive terms in Abulafia's *Hayyey ha-Nefe*:

And begin by combining this name, namely, YHWH, at the beginning alone, and examine all its combinations and move it and turn it about like a wheel returning around, front and back, like a scroll, and do not let it rest, but when you see its matter strengthened because of the great motion, because of the fear of confusion of your imagination and the rolling about of your thoughts, and when you let it rest, return to it and ask [it] until there shall come to your hand a word of wisdom from it, do not abandon it. Afterwards go on to the second one from it, Adonay, and ask of it its foundation [yesodo] and it will reveal to you its secret [sodo]. And then you will apprehend its matter in the truth of its language. Then join and combine the two of them [YHWH

and Adonay], and study them and ask them, and they will reveal to you the secrets of wisdom, and afterwards combine this which is, namely, 'El Sadday, which is tantamount to the Name ['El Sadday = 345 = ha-Sem], and it will also come in your portion. Afterwards combine 'Elohim, and it will also grant you wisdom, and then combine the four of them, and find the miracles of the Perfect One [i.e., God], which are miracles of wisdom.<sup>34</sup>

An explicit process of interiorization is presented here: the letters of the Divine Name undergo a process of 'purification' by which they are transformed from tangible letters, existing outside of the intellect, into intellectual letters, existing in the heart. This process is one of construction of the intellect, beginning with sensibilia and ending in intelligibilia. Thus, through the combination of the letters on all three levels, one may arrive at the highest level of consciousness: prophecy, or mystical experience. Several passages shall be cited below indicating that this technique allows a 'prophet' to achieve unique spiritual attainments. The Castilian Kabbalist R. Isaac b. Solomon ibn Abi Sahula, a

contemporary of Abulafia, writes: "It is known that when he received this verse (I am that I am [Ex. 3:14]), Moses our teacher, of blessed memory, attained the very essence of wisdom and the highest level in the renewal of miracles and wonders, by the

From this passage, as well as from the one cited above from 'Osd'r 'Eden Ganuz, we learn that one must combine the letters of a given Name, and then combine them in turn with the combinations of the letters of another Name. This activity is referred to by Abulafia by the term Ma'aseh Merkdbah i.e., the act of combining [harkavah] the letters of one Name in another which brings about the receiving of metaphysical knowledge, i.e., the standard meaning of Ma'aseh Merkdbah in Abulafian Kabbalah. In Sefer ha-'Ot, p. 75, we read:

One who concentrates upon the Ineffable Name which is combined in twelve waysâ□□six of them invertedâ□□which causes the grandeur of Israel, shall rejoice in it, and the joy and happiness and gladness will combine in the heart of each one who seeks



## 26 Techniques for Attaining Ecstasy

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia

27

the name, in the name Yh'whdyhnwh 'Eloha 'El Sadday YHWH  
Sewadt.

The first and second of these Names are combinations of one  
Name within another: YHWH â□□ ADNY â□□ YHWH â□□  
YHWH.35

2. Combinations of Letters of the Divine Names The two Divine  
Names most frequently used by Abulafia in letter-combination are

the Name of seventy-two letters, whose combinations are mostly described in Hayyey ha-`01am ha-Ba', and the Tetragrammaton (the Name of Four Letters or the "Ineffable Name"), details of whose combinations are discussed in 'Or haSelcel. We shall begin our discussion with the latter. The method of combination expounded in Sefer 'Or haSelcel is exemplified by the use of the letter Aleph, which is combined in turn with each of the letters of the Tetragrammaton, so that one arrives at four combinations, as follows: 'y 'h. Each of these units is in turn vocalized by every possible permutation of the five vowels, holani, gamas, hiriq, sere, qubus, in the sequence of both and y', and so on. One thereby derives four tables, each containing fifty vocalized combinations. The following is an example of one of these tables:36

,

K

This table, as we have mentioned, is one of four in which the letter 'Alef is combined with the four letters of the Divine Names. But, as Abulafia states in the book, it is not only by chance that he

'chose' this form of combination as an example; in his view, the letter 'Alef constitutes part of the hidden Divine Name, 'hwy. 37 However, this explanation seems a kind of exegesis of material which he already found in his earlier sources. In one of the works of R. Eleazar of Worms (ca. 1165-ca. 1230), we find a combination-technique quite similar to that of Abulafia; in this technique, the letter 'Alef is also combined with each of the four letters of the Tetragrammaton, each unit being vocalized by two vowels. We shall cite one example:38

!ti 'K 1K 'K

7,

'K 'K 'K 1K 1K

7K 'K

1K

'K

'K t: NK

7K

'K 1K

'K

7t3

'K

'K'

K'K

K

K

K' 'K

1%,

'K

'K 'tS

7k\$

'K'K

â□ç

7.\*

K'

K'

,T

:K

K'

â□ç 'K

The main difference between Abulafia's table and R. Eleazar's one lies in the total number of vowels used: rather than five vowels," as in Abulafia, in R. Eleazar there are six, by means of the addition of the shewa. The total number of combinations thereby increases geometrically. In my opinion, Abulafia adapted an Ashkenazic system of combination to the Sephardic system of vocalization, based upon five major vowels; the gewa, counted as a vowel by the Ashkenazim, disappeared, thereby decreasing the total number of vocalized combinations. Abulafia, for whom this system of combination was exemplified by the use of the letter 'Alef and the other letters of the Ineffable Name, saw this as an allusion to his view that the Name 'hwy is the Hidden Name of God. Whereas the system described above is based upon a square, each of whose sides contains a different combination of the letters of the Divine Name, the system found in Hayyey

28 Techniques for Attaining Ecstasy

## The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 29

is based upon the circle. The name of seventy-two letters is recited while contemplating circles, each of which contains nine letters out of the 216 letters of the Name; one thereby arrives at a system of twenty-four circles, containing in toto all in all the Name of seventy-two letters. It seems to me that the source of this system can also be identified; in the longer commentary to Exodus by R. Abraham ibn Ezra (1089-1164), the author describes the mathematical qualities of the letters constituting the Ineffable Name, and thereafter writes that "all of the numbers are nine from one direction, and ten from the other direction. If one writes the nine in a circle, and doubles over the end with every number, one will find the units on the left side, and the tens, which are like units, on the right side." It seems unlikely to assume that Abulafia based his system in *l'jayyey ha-`0 him ha-Ba'* upon circles of nine letters by mere chance, without any relation to the above quotation from Ibn Ezra's commentary. 41



ha-Olam ha-Ba'

### 3. Techniques for Recitation of the Names

As we have seen above, the procedure for reciting the Name contained a number of elements, each of which shall now be enumerated separately.

#### A. Breathing

Any technique in which the pronunciation of letters occupies a central place must attach importance to proper principles of breathing. Discussions of breathing appear in Yoga, in Sufism and in Hesychasm, albeit with different emphases. 46 Abulafia's writings contain brief statements and allusions to a technique of breathing to be practiced by one who pronounces the Ineffable Name. We shall attempt here to analyze the fragmentary material which has come down to us. The most significant of these passages appears in Maftali ha-emat,<sup>47</sup> where it states: One must take each one of the letters [of the Tetragrammaton] and

wave it with the movements of his long breath (!) so that one does not breathe between two letters, but rather one long breath, for however long he can stand it, and afterwards rest for the length of one breath. He shall do the same with each and every letter, until there will be two breaths in each letter: one for pausing when he enunciates the vowel of each letter, and one for resting between each letter. It is known to all that every single breath of one's nostrils is composed of taking in of the air from outside, that is, mi-ba"r le-ga"w [from outside to inside], whose secrets allude to the attribute of Geburah and its nature, by which a man is known as gibbOr [mighty]â□□that is, the word ga"w ba"r [a rearrangement of the consonants of the word gibbor]â□□for his strength by which he conquers his Urge.<sup>48</sup> As in the secret of abg yts qr' stn with ygl pzq sqw syt,<sup>49</sup> composed of the emission of breath from within to outside, and this second composition is from g"w to b"r. This passage combines together two significant elements: the technical description of breathing, and the theoretical discus-

As was the case in the adaptation of R. Eleazar of Worm's system of combination to the Sephardic system of grammar, here Abulafia incorporated the idea of the nine-letter number into a circle with the seventy-two letter Name. It is worth mentioning that the nine letters within a circle reappear in Abulafia's *Sefer ha-Hafteirih*,<sup>42</sup> where they appear within the circle of the letters of the forty-two letter Name, while preserving the number nine. We should also note that the use of concentric circles in order to combine the letters of various Divine Names likewise appears in other works of Abulafia, such as *Imrey Sefer*<sup>43</sup> and *Gan Nacul*.<sup>44</sup> It is also interesting to note that circles including Divine Names appear in Islam as well, as one learns from a study by G. Anawati,<sup>46</sup> although I have not yet found significant points of contact between the use of the circle in Abulafia and in the Arabic sources.

### 30 Techniques for Attaining Ecstasy

sion of the meaning of breathing. The technical aspect includes three different elements, comprising one unit: 1) the intake of air, namely, breathing; 2) the emission of air while pronouncing the letter and its vowel; 3) the pause between one breath and the next. In his epistle . ebtic Netibot ha-Torih, p. 7, Abulafia refers to "the secret of the Name and the vocalization of some of its letters, their knowledge, and the resting breath, the interrupting [breath] and the extending [breath]." Comparison of the three terms used in Sefer Mafteti ha-gemiat indicates that the resting breath is parallel to the phrase, "he shall rest for the length of one breath"; the extending breath parallels the intake of air before pronouncing a letter, "so that he not breathe between two letters, but takes one long breath, as much as he is able to stand in length"; while the interrupting breath is parallel to the emission of air which accompanies the pronunciation of the letter, "one for pausing, as at the time of pronouncing the vowel of that letter." Abulafia refers to three breaths elsewhere as well, 5° but only for purposes of gematria, without any technical interpretation likely to assist in the understanding of his approach. The division

of the breathing process into three stages is not new; it already appears in Yoga, in which the process of breathing is divided into puraka, the intake of breath; recaka, the emission of breath; and kumbhaka, the retention of air. 5' True, there is no exact parallel between the retention of breath in Yoga, whose aim is to use up the oxygen present in the air one breathes by means of slight physical effort, to the state of rest mentioned by Abulafia, which follows the emission of breath. It may be that the word 'halt,' which refers to the holding of the air in order to pronounce the letter of the Divine Name, is a parallel to the halt practiced in Yoga, but we cannot state this with any certainty. 52 In both systems, one arrives at an extremely slow pace of breathing, which is a goal in and of itself in Yoga, and in practice also in Abulafia. Without stating so directly, he emphasizes the need for a long period of emission, on the one hand, and the maximum exploitation of the air held in the lungs, on the other: "that he should not breath between two letters except for one long breath,

for so long as he is able to stand." Indeed, in Pe'ulat ha-Yesiralt, he states that "one should pronounce one letter of the Name with a great voice, in one breath, until he exhausts his breath from breathing out."<sup>53</sup> In 'Or ha-Selcel, he similarly states:

When he begins to pronounce one letter with a given vocalization, one should remember that it alludes to the secret of the unity, so do not extend it more than the length of one breath and do not interrupt it during that breath at all until you complete its expression. And extend that [particular] breath in accordance with the strength of the length of one breath, as much as you are able to extend it.<sup>54</sup>

As we have seen, one ought to extend both the breath and its emission. The same is not true, however, for the pause between breaths; Mafteah ha-Semot speaks of the pause as equalling the length of one breath, while in 'Or ha-Selcel there is a slight variation:<sup>55</sup>

Do not separate between one breath and the breath of the letter, but cling to it, whether one long breath or a short one... But

between the letter of the name and the 'Alef, in the direct ones, or between the 'Alef and the letter of the Name, in the inverted ones, 56 you may take two breathsâ□□no moreâ□□without pronouncing anything. At the end of each column, you may take five breaths, and no more, but you may also breathe less than five breaths.

Hayyey ha-`01cim ha-Ba' gives a different version, which al-

lows for the possibility that one may take three breaths between the pronunciation of each letter.<sup>57</sup> Another rule entailed in the act of pronouncing the Names refers to the prohibition against pronouncing the letters while breathing in: "and it is possible that the speaker [i.e., the person who recites] may breathe, and will not speak with his lips between the emission of air and its intake, but he is not allowed to speak with his mouth and take in the breath together, 58 but that the speech and the emission of air may occur together."<sup>59</sup>

## 32 Techniques for Attaining Ecstasy

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 33

Turning to the theoretical significance of breathing, we find that the process of intake and emission of air is alluded to in the aforementioned passage from Mafteah ha-SentOt by the words mi-ba "r le-ga"w, which symbolize the attribute of Geburcih within manâ□□ that is, his ability to overcome his evil Urge. For this reason, man pronounces the Name of forty-two letters 6 Â° incorporating the expression qerac safari ("cut off Satan"] which corresponds, in my opinion, to "conquering his Urge." The ability to overcome corporeality, tantamount to the Evil Urge and to Satan, by means of breathing, is likewise alluded to in another formulation from Hayyey ha-c olcim ha-Ba':

And you may yet again, if you wish, breathe three breaths which are one... And immediately the Satan will die, for they were



enemies to the perceptions which are in the blood of man, and the blood is the animal [attribute]. But the secret of the one breath is Saddayâ□□ [i.e.,] Sin Dalet Yodâ□□ and that is the second seal... which killed the demons with the seal of the Messiah, which kills the evil blood, and also kills the evil attribute, so it immediately dies by the precious hand by the strength of those three breaths.6'

This passage suggests the ability of the breath to bring about a mystical experience, and through that the survival of the soul." The two aspects of breathâ□□that of overcoming corporeality and of strengthening spiritualityâ□□are symbolized by the two angels, Gabriel and Michael: "from his two nostrils one may recognize the two archangels, of whom it is said that the names of all the angels change in accordance with their work and their deeds and their activities, 65 [i.e.,] Michael and Gabriel."66 In Abulafia's writings, Michael is identified with the Active Intellect or Metatron, while Gabriel is identified with Sandalphon, to whom is entrusted the corporeal realm. 67 In two other passages, we

learn of the service and knowledge of God with the help of breathing: "Remember Yah and his activities, for He is the one who seals and makes an impressâ□□know Yah through your breath. 68 "All that has breath shall praise Yah, Halleluyah" 69 and it is said, 7 Â° 'with each and every breath that is within you, praise God.'"71 In conclusion, we must mention the connection between breathing and the recitation of the Name as it appears in Wit Holcmah. 72 The sixteenth-century Safedian Kabbalist, R. Elijah de Vidas, quotes therein a certain book not mentioned by title, as follows:

There are 1080 divisions to an hour, corresponding to which the Tetragrammaton is combined and permutated in various combinations of vocalizations of the alphabet, in a total of 1080 combinations. These 1080 combinations correspond to the 1080 breaths which a man breathes, and to each breath there corresponds one letter of the name of four letters, which gives vitality to that breath.

The function of the three breaths which are one is that, as they constitute one unit connected with the pronunciation of one letter, they may destroy or murder the Satan and the imagination, i.e., the adverse perceptions inherent in the blood of man, in the evil blood, etc. On the other hand, the breath is the means of strengthening the spiritual element in man: the "precious hand," Sadday, the seal of Messiah. 62 Elsewhere in the same work, Abulafia writes about:

...eighteen breaths, which will add to your years of life, which are the life [in gematria: 18] of the soul, from the two creatures in which there is the life of the soul. And there are in you two nostrils in which they are mingled, and understand this, for they are the nostrils of the soul, whose secret is the two cherubim, and they are two chariots which force the Selcinah to dwell on earth and to speak with man.63

And this is alluded to in "For by every thing which comes from the mouth of God may man live." 73 As God gives breath and life, it is appropriate that all his [man's] breaths be devoted to the service

of the Creator, and to this our sages referred in Genesis Rabba [in their interpretation of] the phrase "all that has breath shall praise Yah..." [Ps. 150:6]

### 34 Techniques for Attaining Ecstasy

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 35 Thus, when you extend the vowel of the letter in its pronunciation, move your head up toward the heavens, and close your eyes and open your mouth and let your words shine, 77 and clear your throat of all spittle so that it not interfere with the pronunciation of the letter in your mouth, and in accord with the length of your breath shall be the upper movement, until you interrupt the breathing together with the movement of your head. And if after uttering [the letter] there is a moment left to complete the breath, do not lower your head until you complete everything.

The connection between the act of breathing and the recitation of the 1080 combinations of the Ineffable Name, with all possible vocalizations, 74 is made here, to the best of my knowledge, for the first time. It is based upon R. Eleazar of Worms" Eser 1:lawayOt and on the quotation from 'Or ha - Selcel, both of which appear in Pardes RimmOnim, 75 the major work of de Vidas' master, R. Moses Cordovero. From a practical viewpoint, it is difficult to imagine that one may breathe 1080 times in one hour, particularly when one also needs to pronounce letters; in any event, such a rapid pace would seem to contradict Abulafia's whole approach. However, the very occurrence of the breathing technique together with the pronunciation of letters of the Divine Name evinces the practice of an Abulafian-like technique among the Safedian Kabbalists, a fact further strengthened by other evidence.

## B. Shaking of One's Head

The process described here in detail is also alluded to briefly in Sefer 'Or ha-Selce1:78

And your head is crowned with tefillin, facing east, for from there light emerges to the world, and [from] there you may move your head toward five directions. And on [the vowel] ijolam begin from the center of the east, and purify your thoughts, and lift your head with the breath bit by bit until it is complete, and your head shall be facing up. And after this is completed bow down to the earth once... and on [the vowel] sere move your head from left to right, and on qamas from right to left.

In Abulafia, the act of pronouncing the letters is accompanied by motions of the head corresponding to the vowels of the letters pronounced. A detailed description of this practice appears in *tlayyey ha-`01arn ha-Ba'*, 76 quoted here in extenso:

After you begin to pronounce the letter, begin to move your heart and head: your heart by your intellection, because it is an inner [organ], and your head itself, because it is external. And move your head in the form of the vowel [-point] of the letter which you are pronouncing. This is the manner of the form of the motion: know that the vocalization which is above is called Holam, and

that alone is marked above the letter, but the other four vowel sounds are below the letter. And that [vowel] which is above the letter 'Alef, which you pronounce with the letter Kaf or Qof do not in the beginning incline your head either to the right or the left, nor below or above at all, but let your head be set evenly, as if it were in a scale [i.e., balanced], in the manner in which you would speak with another person of the same height as yourself, face to face.

As one can clearly see, the head motions are simply attempts to imitate the written form of the vowel sounds, an attempt repeated in the use of music, where the vocalization is transformed into musical notes, as we shall see in the next chapter.

### C. The Hands

We find a description in Sefer ha - tiegeq of the hand movements to be performed during the pronunciation of the Divine Names. 79 This description is unique in Abulafia's extant works and it reflects

the position of the hands during the Priestly Blessing.

## 36 Techniques for Attaining Ecstasy

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 37

"Let my prayer be acceptable as incense, the offerings of my hands as sweet meal-offerings." 80 And lift your eyes up to the heaven, and lift your left and right hands, like the lifting up of hands of the kohen, who divides his fingers, five on one side and five on the other, with two on the right and two on the left [in each hand], the two smallest fingers, qemisdh and zeret (i.e., the pinky and the "ring finger") joined together, and these two next to them also joined. And divide between them, with the thumb stuck out by itself, and your hands shall also and your tongue shall be in this form separate between them, like a balance stone... [here details of the pronunciation are given]... and immediately



put down your hands, which you lifted before God with ease, in the image of the ten Sefirot from the right, like the image of the ten fingers, five over against five, to the right and left. And you have switched the powers and made meritorious the one who was guilty; therefore place your left hand on your heart, spread out with the five fingers, and above it place your right hand, outstretched with its five fingers, to indicate that the meritorious one has overcome him... and if you wish to lift your hands for a longer period of time, you are allowed to do so; but if not, you need not worry.

ferent stages of contemplation of the letters of the Divine Name.

In his Surat ha--`61dm, which was apparently written at the end of the second third of the thirteenth century, he writes:8'

The desired end is to strip the Name of [its] matter and to imagine it in your mind, although it is impossible for the imagination to depict it without some physical image, because the imagination is not separate from the sensibilia, and most of what is attained by the activity of the imagination is performed through the

contemplation of the shape of the letters and their forms and number. And it must also be understood that its letters [i.e., those of the Divine Name] are that which make it move and speak, and that the other letters move about, but one cannot image them in speech except for the letters of the Name, even though they do not become mingled and do not change their places in the squaring of the numbers... And it is known to anyone who is wise of heart that when the imagination goes away, so do the letters. Therefore, the straightforward intellect must strip this Name of simple matter, and imagine it in the form of pure mind.

Thus far, we have described those actions which one is to perform while pronouncing the letters. A separate chapter will be devoted to the song or "melody," as Abulafia calls the pronunciation of the letters in different tones. We shall now turn to the third stage of the pronunciation of the Divine Name, namely, the inner activities performed in "the heart," that is, with the powers of the soul: the intellect and the imagination.

#### 4. The Inner Pronunciation

From the mid-thirteenth century, there appears in Hebrew mystical literature a technique, one of whose components is the imagining of the letters of the Divine Names. Evidence of such a practice appears in R. Isaac Ibn Latif, who enumerates three dif-

The subject of this passage is the letters of the Divine Name,  $\aleph$ ,  $ה$ ,  $ו$ ,  $י$ , which enliven speech and whose numerical counterparts (i.e., 1, 5, 6, 10) each retain their final digit when they are squared. 82 According to Ibn Latif, there are three levels of contemplation of these letters: the material, the imaginative and the intellective. The second stage is to be understood, in my opinion, as the depicting of the letters in the power of the imagination, without the physical presence of the written letters. These imaginary letters are thereby transformed into an object of contemplation of the intellect just as, according to the Aristotelian theory of knowledge, every imaginary form is the material for intellectual activity. Ibn Latif's words indicate that the technique which he discusses at length in several places was already in use

some time before its occurrence in Abulafia. In the latter's Hayyey haOldm ha-Ba', we read:

### 38 Techniques for Attaining Ecstasy

#### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 39

Prepare your true thoughts to imagine the Name, may He be Blessed, and with it the supernal angels. And visualize them in your heart as if they are human beings standing or sitting around you, and you are among them like a messenger... And after you have imagined this entirely, prepare your mind and your heart to understand the thoughts whose matters are to be brought to you by the letters you have thought of in your heart.<sup>83</sup>

It becomes clear several pages later that this refers to the letters of the Ineffable Name, of which it is said that they are the ones

portrayed "and he shall close his eyes and intend in his thought, and the first intention is that he is to imagine that there are four camps of the Indwelling, or a Tabernacle around them, and four beautiful flags in round forms surrounding the fifth camp." 84

Following this passage, Abulafia describes the image that is to be imagined: the seventy-two letters Name in the center, with the four names of four letters in the four corners of the square. Next to the seventy-two letter Name is written thirty-two [probably an allusion to the 32 netivot mentioned in Sefer Yesirah]; this is an allusion to the gematria:  $72 + 32 = 104 = 4 \times 26$  [26 is the gematria of the Tetragrammaton]. One also ought to note here the parallels to the techniques of imagining in the writings of other Kabbalists. Abulafia's younger contemporary, R. Joseph b. Shalom Ashkenazi, cites an extremely interesting quotation in the name of "the philosophers." This quotation, to be discussed below, is important in a number of different respects; I shall confine myself here to mentioning just one of them. The unidentified philosophers cited, who were presumably contemporaries or predecessors of Abulafia, proposed a technique of contemplation quite similar in several respects to

that contained in the above quotations from Abulafia, though not identical with it. The following is the text of the passage:85

The philosophers have already written on the issue of prophecy, saying that it is not improbable that there will be a person to

whom things will appear in his imaginative faculty comparable to that which appears to the imaginative faculty in a dream. All this [could take place] while someone is awake, and all his senses are obliterated, as the letters of the Divine Name [stand] in front of his eyes, in the gathered colours. Sometimes he will hear a voice, 86 a wind, a speech, a thunder and a noise with all the organs of his hearing sense, and he will see with his imaginative faculty with all the organs of sight, and he will smell with all the organs of smell, and he will taste with all the organs of taste, and he will touch with all the organs of touch, and he will walk and levitate. All this while the holy letters are in front of his eyes, and its colours are covering it; this 87 is the sleep of prophecy.

The similarity of the content of this quotation to Abulafia's teaching is interesting, despite the fact that he is clearly not the author quoted here; the contemplation of the letters of the Divine Name as a technique for bringing about 'prophecy' is clearly parallel to Abulafia's own path. Moreover, the quotation of these words in the name of "the philosophers," despite the fact that it is mingled with ideas from Sefer Yesirah, fits the mixture of Maimonidean philosophy and Sefer Yesirah mysticism characteristic of Abulafia's own writings. Nevertheless, the presence here of a certain motif which is definitively rejected by Abulafia—i.e., "and its colors are enwrapped in it" 88—makes it difficult for us to identify this passage with any likelihood as one of the "lost" writings of Abulafia. Yet it is precisely this conclusion, taken together with the quotation from Ibn Latif, which is significant for our understanding of the development of the teaching of this ecstatic Kabbalist. Abulafia did not create a new theory, but developed an already existing tendency, albeit one in some respects rather different from that expressed in his works. R. Isaac of Acre, an ecstatic Kabbalist of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, saw the act of

imagining of the letters composing the name of God as a means of achieving the life of the world to come. These are his words in Me'irat Tinayim:89

## 40 Techniques for Attaining Ecstasy

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 41

I, Isaac the young, the son of Samuel, of Acre, may it speedily be rebuilt, say [as follows], to the elite as well as to the vulgus: that whoever wishes to know the secret of attaching one's soul above and cleaving one's thought to Almighty God, so that one may acquire the World to Come with that same constant thought, without interruption, and God will always be with him, in this [world] and the next [do as follows]. Let him place before his eyes and his thought the letters of the Ineffable Name, as if they are written before him in a book, in Assyriac writing, and let him visualize each letter before his eyes as great, without limits. I



mean by this to say that when you envision the letters of the Ineffable Name before your eyes, [imaginatively] put your mind's eye on them but the thought of your heart be on the Infinite ['Eyn Seif], [the envisioning and the thought] both concomitantly. And this is the true cleaving of which Scripture said, "to cleave to Him," 9 Â° "and to Him shall you cleave," 9 ' "and you who cleave," 92 etc. And so long as the soul of man cleaves to the Name, may He be blessed, no evil shall befall you, and you shall come to no error in any matter, either intellectual or sensory, and you will not fall into the hand of chance, for so long as one is cleaving to God, may He be blessed, he is above all chance and rules over them.

element of which is the attainment of cleaving to God (debequt).<sup>95</sup> It may be that R. Isaac of Acre combined Abulafia's teaching with a magical understanding of the imagining of the letters of God's Name which also was predicted in the thirteenth century. In conclusion, it is worthwhile citing a few comments

concerning the imagining of the letters from MS. Sasson 290, p. 648:

You may picture the Ineffable Name like the white flame of the candle, in absolute whiteness, and the light in your looking at the candle, and even when there is no candle, remember the flame, and there you may see and look at the light, from the pure white light. And one must always imagine that you are a soul without a body, and the soul is the light, and you are always within the above-mentioned flames, by way of the pure clouds. And strive to be pure and full, and if it is daytime wearing siset and tefillin and the ring upon your finger, and at night as well the ring upon your finger. And be accustomed to cleanliness in that house where you stand in the sanctuary of God, within His precious, holy and pure names.

Another sentence in the same work describes the technique of imagination:

I, Isaac... of Acre, have come to write a tradition pertaining to the intention of the punctuation of the Holy Name... of which

whosoever knows it will think in his heart of its vocalization as if it is vocalized before him.<sup>93</sup>

In a magical passage appearing in the manuscripts, the idea of imagination appears as follows: "Another way YHWH with the vocalization of debarelca. Imagine in your mind the letters of the Ineffable Name before your eyes, in a circle colored red as fire, and your thought shall perform much. From Rabbi Tanhum."<sup>94</sup> The expression, "your mind shall perform much," and the end of the previous passage from *Meirat Tinayim*, suggest an explicitly magical direction, conveying a technique, the main

I have discussed the visualization of the Divine Names at some length, because it concerns an extremely widespread technique, known to a number of different Kabbalists. However, there is one point which is decisive for the understanding of Abulafia's doctrine: what he assumes to be a means, in the passages we have cited from *Hayyey ha-cohim ha-BcP*, become (in other passages of his to be discussed in the third chapter) the goal. The

letters of the Divine Name are not only a component of the method of cleaving to God; the process of imagining the letters in the first stage precedes the vision of the letters in the final stage of the ecstatic process. 96 This distinction between technique and goal is not clear in other authors, so that in their descriptions the imagining of the letters is transformed into immediate cleaving to them. Finally, let us note that the technique of imagining already appears in the early thirteenth century mystic Ibn Arabi.<sup>97</sup>

## 42 Techniques for Attaining Ecstasy

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 43

Another interesting element of Abulafia's technique of contemplation appears in *klayyey ha-`0- lam ha-Mr* . In several places there, he refers to a technique of recitation and contemplation connected to the three main organs of the body: the head, the belly and the torso:

And he should again pronounce the head of the end, which is L [lamed], and imagine as if you are gazing at your belly, and do not breathe between pronouncing the place of your organ and pronouncing that letter which rules over that organ.<sup>98</sup>

of the organs of the body, for which reason the name of seventytwo letters also includes the combination Mum [defect].<sup>100</sup> What are the sources of this technique? The reference to the navel leads G. Scholem to think that there is a connection between Abulafia and the school of hesychasm, which practiced the contemplation of one's navel. <sup>wi</sup> But it seems to me that precisely that opinion which he sees as "one which is difficult to imagine" is the correct one; namely, that this technique came about through an internal development, based upon study of Sefer Yesirdh. In tlayyey ha-Dldm ha-Ba', it states: Know that there are within man three matters created by the three pillars [i.e., primary letters], pnit, combined with yhw, and these are the angels of fire, wind and water. Behold, the head is created by three forms of fire, corresponding to tacq [corresponding to] fire,

and the belly [is created of] water, corresponding to s rd  
[corresponding to] water, and the torso, created from the wind,  
corresponding to tm"d [corresponding to] wind.<sup>102</sup>

Elsewhere in the same work we read:

Again, go and mention the head of the middle of the Name. You already know that you ought to pronounce [the names of] the organs from what I have said, that there are so-to-speak three spots on your head: the inside, which is the head of the head; the middle, which is the inside of the head; and the behind, which is the end of the head. And likewise imagine as if there are three points on your torso, which is the place of your heart: the head, which is the center of the middle; the middle, which is the middle of the middle, which is but one point in its center; and the behind, which is the end of the end. And likewise imagine that there are three points in your belly: the front, which is the point of your navel, the head of the end; the middle, which is the point of your entrails; the middle of the end, and behind, which is the point of

the end of your spine, which is the place of the kidneys where the spinal cord is completed, the end of the end.99

This passage is based upon the pronunciation of the letters of the Name of seventy-two letters, consisting of units of three letters, each three of which constitute one column. A unit consists of a beginning, the first letter; a middle, the second letter; and an end, the final letter. It follows from this that, by reciting a column of nine letters pertaining to the bodily organs, one thereby refers to the human head, torso and belly. An error in the recitation of one letter is likely to bring about a change in one

This division of the human body originates in Sefer Yesirdh iii, 4, where it states "[There are] three pillars [called] 'ms in the soul: fire, water and wind. The head is created from fire, the belly is created from water, and the torso, which is created from wind, mediates between them." Abulafia added a new element to this division, occurring already in Baraita de-Mazdlot,m3 in which the astrological signs are divided into three groups, each element

belonging to another group: to "q = Taleh, 'Aryeh, Qeget (i.e., Aries, Leo, Sagittarius) = fire; tm"d = Moznayim, Gedi (i.e., Gemini, Libra, Capricorn) = wind; sa'ad = Sartiin, `Aqrab, Deli (i.e., Cancer, Scorpio, Aquarius) = water. Through this, there came about the view that the three parts of the human body are likewise connected to the three letters. Abulafia used the letters of the Name of seventy-two letters rather than the initials of the names of the constellations. Viewed in this way, it is clear that according to his approach the

#### 44 Techniques for Attaining Ecstasy

#### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 45

navel is no more than one of the nine points of the human body, and that there is no special significance to its contemplation. It is worth mentioning here the magical character of the technique of



pronouncing the name of the organ and the letter appointed over it. In Hayyey ha-(Olam ha-Bir , Abulafia writes:

Head and belly and torso, that is, the head, beginning inside the end. The "head" is the first point that you imagine in it; the "end" is the purpose of the head, and is like a tail to it, and the belly is likewise like a tail to the head, and is the image of the torso, wherein the heart is located. And the image that you ought to imagine at the time of pronunciation, in order to change within that image the nature of [one] part of the bodies, alone or with others, is: think in your heart the name of that thing, and if it is [composed] of two letters, such as yam [sea], and you wish to invert it, and the name of the reversal is yabigah [dry land], the companion of yam with yabagiih, and this is "beginning and end, yah." But the middle is me-yabeg yam; behold, Yoili me-yabg Yam ("God makes dry the sea"), for He in truth makes the sea into dry land. And pronounce in this image whatever you remember, and thus you will first say heh, in the middle of your head, and draw it within your head as if you were contemplating and see the center of your brain, and its central point in your

thoughts, and envision the letter heh inscribed above it, which guards the existence of the points of your brain."

stature]; (c) end. As in Hayyey ha- cote- n ha-Ba', the letters of the a Name of seventy-two letters, which are pronounced over the organs of the body, are here mentioned in order to create the homunculus, while in Hayyey ha-Olam ha-B(2', "in order to change nature," namely the spiritual nature of man-his psyche. It is worth mentioning that this technique incorporates two different planes of activity: the letters must be pronounced while one envisions in one's mind the place which they influence. The magical character of this technique is manifested in R. Judah Albotini's Sullam ha- `Aliyah. Here the author copies, almost word for word, the relevant passages from the two major works by Abulafia, 'Or ha-Sekel and Hayyey ha- colam ha-Ba'. 106 Prior to describing the above- mentioned technique, the author writes:1Â°7 ... that the angels were created and all creatures were made

from the twenty-two letters and their combinations and their permutations, and as fire by nature warms, and water cools, so do the letters by their nature create all sorts of creatures, and [fulfill] the requests of those who mention them with wisdom and knowledge. Of this our sages said 108 that Bezalel knew how to combine the letters with which heaven and earth were created. Likewise, the other prophets and pious men in each generation, by means of the combination and permutation of letters and their movements, used to perform miracles and wonders and turn about the order of Creation, such as we find it explained in our Talmud 1°9 that Rabba created a man and sent him to R. Zeira.

We may now understand Abulafia's remarks in Peculat  
haYesirah:

Begin at the head of your head, until there the first eight lines to preserve the head, and he shall mention the second eight lines to fulfill the first, in the first order, and he shall mention the eight third lines, the storm and the wind, and one image emerges.'°5

## 5. Preparations for Recitation

Having described the details of the technique of reciting the Divine Name, we shall now discuss the necessary preparations related to this act. In two of his books, *Hayyey ha-Olcim ha-Ba'* and *'Or ha-Sekel*, Abulafia describes these conditions:

There is no doubt that this refers to the head, the torso and the belly, with the help of a slightly different classification: (a) the head; (b) the first [qarna; the correct reading may be qamah-

## 46 Techniques for Attaining Ecstasy

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 47

engraved above with its vocalization, adorn yourself and seclude yourself in a special place so that your voice will not be heard to

anyone apart from yourself, and purify your heart and your soul from all thoughts of this world."°

... At the time that you wish to recite this Ineffable Name as

Elsewhere, he writes:

Be prepared for thy God, oh Israelite! Make thyself ready to direct thy heart to God alone. Cleanse the body and choose a lonely house where none shall hear thy voice. Sit there in thy closet and do not reveal thy secret to any man. If thou canst, do it by day in the house, but it is best if thou completest it during the night. In the hour when thou preparest thyself to speak with the Creator and thou wishest Him to reveal His might to thee, then be careful to abstract all thy thought from the vanities of the world." A similar description is repeated in Sefer ha-tle°seq: When you wish to recite the name of seventy-two letters, following the preparation we have mentioned, you must arrange to be alone in a special place, to pronounce the secret of the Ineffable Name, and to

separate and isolate yourself from every speaking creature, and from all vanities of [the world, so as not to view them as] attributes [of God]. And also so that there not remain in your heart any thoughts of human or natural things, of either voluntary or necessary [matters], as if you are one who has given a writ of divorce to all forms of the mundane world, as one who has given a testament in the presence of witnesses in which he orders [another] to take care of his wife and his children and his property, and has relieved himself of all involvement and supervision and transferred it from himself and gone away."2

He should also ascend to purify his soul above all other wisdoms which he has learned; the reason for this being that, as they are natural and limited, they contaminate the soul and prevent the Divine forms, which are extremely fine, from passing through it... therefore one must isolate oneself in a special house, and if the house is such that he will not even hear a voice, this is even better.113

A third preparation for the act of recitation is to adorn oneself in tallit and tefillin:

And wrap yourself in a tallit and place your tefillin on your head and your arm, so that you may be fearful and in awe of the Selcinah, which is with you at that time. And cleanse yourself and your garments, and if possible let them all be white, for all this greatly assists the intention of fear and love.'-"

Elsewhere, we read, "And sit enwrapped in clean white pure garments or new garments over all your garments, or over your tallit, and your head adorned with tefillin." 5 To this atmosphere of mystery is added the instruction that "if it is night, light many candles, until it shall enlighten your eyes well." 6 As two contemporary students of hypnotism have attempted to show in a study," to which we shall return later, these instructions constitute a method akin to, though not identical with, that inducing auto-hypnosis. Once these conditions have been fulfilled, the one contemplating begins to combine letters according to the methods

described above. The immediate goal of these combinations is to achieve a state of "warming of the heart":<sup>8</sup>

And begin to combine small letters with great ones, to reverse them and to permutate them rapidly, until your heart shall be warmed through their combinations and rejoice in their movements and in what you bring about through their permutations; and when you feel thusly that your heart is already greatly heated through the combinations... then you are ready to receive the emanated influx."<sup>8</sup>

The two main stipulations appearing here—separation from the vanities of the world and isolation in a special house for the purpose of this recitation—reappear in Sa'adya's *Seder*:

#### 48 Techniques for Attaining Ecstasy

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 49 pronunciation of the twenty-four names, whose mnemonic<sup>123</sup> is "My beloved is



white and ruddy; the voice 124 of my beloved knocks" ( Dacli sah we--)aclam; (261 &VII chifeq).

In Sefer ha-Melamed, Abulafia says, "but that of which I have informed you concerning the matter of the secret of combination, that when you mention the words combined, then the divine spirit shall rest upon you through the heating of your heart.',<sup>120</sup> We read another formulation of this motif in gwarey Sedeq, "all these acts must be performed with rapid motion, which warms the thought and increases the longing and joy. "<sup>121</sup>

This motif warns us to be careful for understanding the nature of the technique suggested by Abulafia; one may easily be misled by the external similarity between the components of Abulafia's path toward the mystical experience and certain details in Yoga or hesychasm. But beyond the details, which are clearly borrowed from outside sources, Abulafia's way is an original one in terms of the psychological mechanism by which the new consciousness which he reaches is activated. While in the other known techniques—Yoga, Sufism and hesychasm—the goal is to

attain the maximum degree of concentration by means of a generally simple formula, to be repeated over and over again, Abulafia's method is based upon the contemplation of a constantly changing object: one must combine the letters and their vowel signs, "sing" and move the head in accordance with the vocalization, and even lift one's hands in the gesture of Priestly Blessing. This combination of constantly changing components is entirely different from what we know of these other techniques. Abulafia is not interested in relaxing the consciousness by means of concentration on a "point," but in purifying it by the necessity to concentrate intensely on such a large number of activities that it is almost impossible at that moment to think about any other subject. By this means, the consciousness is purified of every subject apart from the names being uttered. The concentrated effort also assures rapid results; in kiayyey ha-`olam ha-Ba' 122 Abulafia states that, ... it is the tradition among us, that the influx comes to the complete man when he completes the first verse following the

The point here is that, after one utters the twenty-four Names (symbolized by the gematria of the word cloth), each of which consists of three letters, it is possible to reach contact with the archangel Metatron. This intense increase in the level of mental activity at the time of pronunciation places the Abulafian experience under the category of "intense ecstasy," to use the terminology of Marganit Laski. 125 One does not find in Abulafia experiences of contemplative mysticism which are continued over a long period of time. Instead, his approach is intense; for this reason, the duration of the experience is also limited, as it is impossible for the mind to function on such an intensive level over a long period of time. Abulafia's system directs one toward short bursts into Eternal Life, followed by a rapid return to the life of this world. For this reason, the abovementioned approach, in which Abulafia's technique is seen as a means of bringing about a state of auto-hypnosis, seems difficult to accept.'26 The decrease in the level of bodily and mental activity characteristic of the hypnotic state is absent in Abulafia. In his opinion:

The more the sublime intellectual flow is strengthened within you, the more your external and internal organs become weakened,

and your body begins to tremble greatly and mightily, until you think that you shall surely die at that time, for your soul will become separated from your body out of the great joy in attaining and knowing what you have known.<sup>127</sup>

I would like to note one interesting side aspect of Abulafia's technique: namely, that his method is based upon the actual expression or pronunciation of the Ineffable Name, and that, in every possible combination of vocalization and of the letters themselves. According to the Mishnah, "One who pronounces the Name in its letters [i.e., as it is written] has no share in the World to Come."<sup>128</sup> Abulafia claims the exact op-

## 50 Techniques for Attaining Ecstasy

posite: that the way to attain the World to Come is precisely, and only, by pronouncing the Ineffable Name. Thus, we find here an extraordinary phenomenon: Abulafia's system is based upon the

performance of an act, the recitation of the Holy Name, which constitutes a definite halikic transgression. It is therefore quite surprising that neither Abulafia nor his opponents even mention this problem. 129 This makes an interesting contrast to a somewhat similar case in the Christian world. I refer to a religious movement that sprang up in Russia in 1913, which considered the Name of God as the principal means for connecting with Him; in its view, the recitation of God's name during worship brings about the unification of the worshipper with God Himself through the very act of pronouncing. Its opponents argued against this view that one is categorically proscribed from uttering God's name unnecessarily.<sup>30</sup> In conclusion, one may mention the term used by G. Scholem to characterize the above-described path. In several places, he referred to Abulafia's path as a kind of "magic of inwardness,"<sup>13</sup> whose main intention is to change man's inner structure. Abulafia claimed that one could alter both man's nature and his soul.<sup>132</sup> For this reason, while his path ought to be identified as a magical one because it alludes at times to the possibility of changes in external nature, its main intention of influencing the soul deserves the term technique rather than

magic. As against the vain attempt to change the outside world, Abulafia at least succeeded in changing his own consciousness, as did the other mystics.

## Chapter Two Music and Ecstatic Kabbalah

There are two main aspects to the association between mystical ecstasy and music in the ecstatic Kabbalah: on the one hand, music served as an analogy for the technique giving rise to ecstasy and the ecstatic experience; on the other, it was an important element of the actual technique of Abulafia and his students. We shall first consider music as an analogy.

### 1. Analogy for Ecstasy - Evoking Techniques

In Gan Na cul, we find a passage containing a comparison between the influence exerted by music and the combination of letters:

Know that [letter-]combination is like the hearing of the ears, for the ear hears and the sounds are combined according to the form

of the tune and the sound-enunciation. 2 Witness the (string instruments) kinnor and ?tad; their sounds are combined, and with the combination of the sounds the ears hear variation and exchange 3 in the pangs of love. 4 The strings which are struck with the right hand and with the left hand vibrate, bringing the sweet taste to the ears, from which sound moves to the heart, and from the heart to the spleen. 5 In the meantime, joy is renewed through the pleasure of the variation of the tunes, which can only be renewed by the form of the

## 52 Music and Ecstatic Kabbalah

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 53

combinations. That is, the player plucks the first string, which is analogous to the letter )alef, for example, and it moves from there to one string, 6 to bet, gimel, dalet, or heâ□□that is to say, a second, third, fourth, or fifth string, as we are using five as an

example. From there the pluckings are transposed, and by means of transposition tunes and melodies are brought about which transpose the heart by means of the ears. Thus also is the matter of combining letters from the outside with the pen, in the form of the combinations of the letters ('alef, mem, gin), as follows: 'm g, ' gm, nv g ', nv g, g)m, gm'; thus all cognates and similar things.

on the string with the plectrum with the shift of the plucking from string to string, and with the combination of the soundenunciations which are produced by it, the soul of the man wishing to be joyous is awakened to joy, happiness, and gladness, and it receives from this its pleasure and much benefit to the sou1.8

Abulafia's student, R. Nathan ben Sa c adyah Harar, author of warey Sedeq, largely follows in the footsteps of his teacher when he writes:9 ... And how the letters transpose, change, conjoin, separate and



jump about in the first letters, in the middle of the word, and at the end of the word, and the whole word, and the kind of the form of combination of vowel points, and their pronunciation, and these are carried over to the second degree, which is the form of the sound and melody, until its melodic sound is made to be like kinndr, putting in motion his soul to the fineness of the melody and its variation. Then the true pronunciation of the letter is revealed to him, according to their special natures which function by means of the variation of melody, in a motion working in his soul. Just as music affects the [proper] balance of the body, so has this an effect on the soul by the power of the Name.

There are parallels between music and the technique of combination in three areas: 1) Music-making and lettercombination operate by means of the harmony which is produced by the conjoining of two different principles: two different instruments (kinnor and nebel), two different tones from the same musical instrument, or the joining of two different letters in the process of combination. The movement from one string to

another described by Abulafia is similar to a certain technique of combination which begins with a particular letter and either moves to the adjoining letter or skips over one or more letters: i.e., A-B, B-G, G-D, etc., or A-G, B-D, G-H, etc.' 2) Lettercombination, like music, gladdens the heart; it does so by means of the "hidden things which are found in the transposition of the letters," wherein the joy comes from uncovering the secrets. 3) Like music, lettercombination is an activity which takes place outside the soul, influencing the soul inwards. This parallel between music and letter-combination is repeated in Seler ha-He geq. There, Abulafia writes:

You must first verify in your heart, anyway that you can verify it, that the letters are in essence signs and hints in the image of characters and parables, and were created because they are instruments by which man is taught the way of understanding; and to us they are in the image of the strings of the kinnOr. For by means of the production of sound when it is plucked

When we pronounce the various combinations of the letters, we affect the soul alone, whereas the influence of music is perceptible both in the soul and in the body. There is an important distinction to be added between the citation from Gan Nacul and that from ga(arey Sedeq: the influence of the revelation of the secretsâ□□that is, the intellectual principle behind the process of letter-combinationâ□□in the latter passage turns into an influence or sensation: the voice of the one uttering the letters of the Name is pleasant, as is the sound of the harp, and thus influences the soul." Music is also used as an analogy for 'prophecy' itself.

## 54 Music and Ecstatic Kabbalah

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 55 that the hand of the Lord came upon him" [II Kings 3:15]â□□this is the kinnor hung above David's bed, which used to play of itself and "praise Him with the nebel and kinnor" [Ps. 150:].<sup>16</sup> But this would only be after receiving the divine effluence, which is called the

seventy-two letter name, together with the understanding of its paths.

## 2. Analogy for Prophecy'

The comparison between the mystical experience and the hearing of Music 12 (a motif which often appears in mystical literature) serves to describe the actual occurrence in terms of a non-verbal medium, which makes it possible to compare the sensation at the moment of the experience with something familiar from everyday experience. Abulafia's approach is different: in his view, the analogy of music serves to describe the mechanism of the coming about of 'prophecy' itself. In Mafteah ha-Ra'ayon, we read:<sup>13</sup>

It is known that sound is heard more loudly in a place which is hollow or pierced, due to the purity of the spiritual air which enters therein, as in the case of the kinnOr and similar musical instruments, which produce sound without any speech, and so also the concavities of the upper stories, caves, mountains, bathhouses, ruins, etc., whose interior is hollow. Notice that from

them there is also produced a sound like the sound of one who is speaking. By means of this secret you will understand the meaning of 'Moses spake and God answered him by a voice' [Ex. 19:19], i.e., in a voice similar to that of Moses." You must know that the body of man is full of holes and cavities, from which you may understand how the Sekinah dwells in the body which is pierced and [contains] cavities and which produces speech.

It seems to me that the analogy of the garden to the body also extends to the kinnor: just as the garden and the body are passive, receiving the action of the gardener and the musician with the Name of the seventy-two letters, so also does David's kinnor play "of itself" when the divine effluence reverberates within it. Abulafia here appears to suggest that David's kinnor resembles the human body: like the kinnor, man also makes music "of himself" when the wind blows. Possible support for this interpretation may be found in Flayyey ha-`01am ha-Ba>:

The body is like a garden, which is the master of vegetation, and the soul is Eden, which is the master of delights; and the body is

planted in it. The secret of gan cede,' [Garden of Eden] is cad naggin [through playing], for prophecy dwells when 'ebed naggen [the servant plays?], e.g., "when the minstrel played" [II Kings 3:15], as in the case of 'EliSac.'7

Here, Abulafia compares the body to the kinnOr or some other musical instrument, as the human body is filled with cavities and holes which are apt to produce a sound when a wind blows. This process is similar to the Holy Spiritâ□□the Sekinahmoving in the human body, giving rise to prophecy. The analogy of the human body to the kinnOr appears in 'Imrey Sefer:15

Just as the owner of a garden has the power to water the garden at will by means of rivers, so does the one making music with the Name have the power to water at will his limbs by means of his soul, through the Almighty, Blessed Name; and this is [the meaning of] "and it came to pass, when the minstrel played,

If we have deciphered Abulafia's meaning correctly, then we are confronted with the widespread analogy of man to the kinnor or nebel upon which God plays music. This motif is hinted at as early as Phi10; 18 since Montanus I Â° it appears explicitly several times in mystical literature, 20 nor is it absent from Hebrew literature. The Midrash 21 speaks of prophets as those "who were like an instrument full of speech." R. Judah the Hasid describes the Glory as a nebel upon which God plays in order to arouse the prophet to prophesy.<sup>22</sup> This topic appears several times in Kabbalistic literature.<sup>23</sup> The motif later reached Hasidism, which spoke of converting the musician to a musical instrument, and of the analogy of the

56 Music and Ecstatic Kabbalah solar, which produces a sound when one blows into it, with the prophet, who prophecies only when God dwells within him.<sup>24</sup>

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 57 If he shall praise with [his] voice he is more likely to bring pleasure to the soul and lead it to the Holy Spirit, as it is said, "with nebel and Vol. and hall and kinnOr before them, and they shall prophesy" [I Sam. 10:5], and so also in the matter of IliÂ§a < [II Kings 3:15] "but now bring me a minstrel." You likewise find that in the Eternal House [i.e., the Temple] they played and performed upon musical instruments. You know their saying, "the most important music was by means of instruments," although some said, "the most important music was vocal."<sup>33</sup> It was all through the enunciation of sound alone, rising and falling The main intention was to arouse the soul to make use of all of its glorious power, which is the power of intellectual attainment.

Another interesting testimony is given by an early fourteenth century Byzantine kabbalist, R. Isaiah ben Joseph, who writes:

### 3. Music as a Means of Attaining Prophecy

In the above-cited passages, music does not play any part in the manifestation of 'prophecy,' although such a function is among



the most ancient ascribed to it. It fulfills such a role in the Bible, 25 in the Talmud, 28 and in the medieval literature. 27 In the latter, there was a widely-held view that music performed a two-fold function: through its mediation, 'prophecy' descended directly upon the individual; moreover, it was within the capacity of music to prepare the intellect, the instrument of 'prophecy', and thereby facilitate its reception. Medieval authors considered music as an integral part of their theoretical education and as a means of strengthening their intellectual powers. Isaac ibn Latif writes: 28 "The science of music is a propaedeutic one, leading to improvement of the psychological disposition as well as to understanding of some of the higher intellectual principles." On the other hand, Solomon ibn Adret writes:29

With the increase in joy, the intellectual power which resides in the soul is fortified and is better prepared to grasp the intelligibles, as was the case with 'EliAa c , "bring me a minstrel." As our Sages of blessed memory taught, 3Â° "The Selcinah does not

dwell as a result of inaction or sadness, but rather through a joyous thing."

Joseph ibn Caspi states: 31 "Poetic words: the whole art of song-making performed on musical instruments which have the effect of rousing the intelligent soul, and which was termed in ancient times music." The author of 'Or ha-Menardh, who belonged to Abulafia's school, wrote in the fourteenth century:32

Know that the prophet, when he wishes to prophesy, must first isolate himself for a determined period of time and perform his ablutions. Afterwards he settles into his special place, and he then summons musicians on various instruments who play for him and sing spiritual songs, and he will deal with certain chapters of this book which are unclear to him. Afterwards the musicians will begin to play, as we explained in the eighth chapter of Sefer ha-Haggandh, which is the fourth part of our treatise Hagqdfat ha-Sekel, and there is no need to repeat it here.34

These are the views of some savants of Abulafia's period. We find a different point of view on music in the writings of two other

contemporaries, both of them mystics. One of them, Isaac ben Jacob ha-Kohen, maintains that the science of music was known to those who served in the Temple and to the prophets, who employed it in order to receive the Holy Spirit:<sup>35</sup>

Those who served in our glorious Temple were expert in the subtleties of the nequddot<sup>36</sup> which went forth from their mouths when they made music, with the known measure and references to the musical instruments of David, "the most pleasant

58 Music and Ecstatic Kabbalah of Israel's singers," of blessed memory. At the moment when [the melody] emanates from their mouths with awe, reverence, holiness and pleasant voice, rising and falling, extending and shortening,<sup>37</sup> by the Holy Spirit, of specified measure according to the prophets of blessed memory, and on the basis of the pattern of the notes (nequddot) drawn according to the melodic [evolution] of the rising and falling sounds <sup>38</sup> ... some of them of high [pitch] and others of low [pitch] <sup>39</sup> some are small and others large [rhythmic values?]. The

measures and the drawings [of the notes according to] the melodic [evolution] of the sounds are all based upon and directed to the inner spiritual qualities—then the Holy Spirit awakens, sparkles, and craves.

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 59 time of service, as it is written, "he shall minister in the name of the Lord his God," [Deut. 18:7] and we learned in our tradition: "What service is it which is in the name of God? One must say that it is that of song."  
44 This singing was a great and awesome matter, "a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty" [Isa. 28:5]. By means of the melodic song, both vocal and instrumental, the soul is awakened and the Holy Spirit shines within it and it is elevated, understanding things far more sublime than it had understood beforehand. This praiseworthy song is the sound emanating from the musicians' mouth with awe, reverence, and holiness, rising and falling, extending and shortening [see note 37], as if it were emanating from the song of the heavenly angels. By moving<sup>45</sup> in known measures, which are understood by the pattern of the

notes [nequddat] which are drawn according to the melodic [evolution] of the sounds, they are directed toward the spiritual degrees, as is explained in the science of music. Among the holy musicians there were some who were superior to others in this science, as they said: 46 Hogras ben Levi had a chapter of song, i.e., more than the chapters which his fellow musicians had. This indicates that they had books composed on the tradition of song, arranged like the chapters of the Mishnah. All this was intended to awaken the soul to its loftiness, in order that it arrive at its true character. Then the Holy Spirit arises, sparkles, and craves with fondness, care, and great love, and then it achieves an even greater degree.

We find similar remarks in ha-cAmmud ha-Semdli [Treatise on the Left Emanation] of Isaac ha-Kohen:

The High Priest... knows how to fully direct his concentration on all inner and outer emanations, in order to exert influence by means of the secret of the holy Seraphim; his elevation is according to either his closeness or remoteness, and his power is

awakened by the sweetness of the song and the pure prayer. So do the musicians direct their fingers, according to their elevation and understanding, [placing them] on the key-holes of [wind instruments] kinnorot [!1 and [on] strings, arousing the song and the melody to direct their hearts towards God. Thus the Blessing is aroused and the Selcindh resides in them, each one according to his performance and according to his understanding.<sup>4'</sup>

The first passage had an influence on Isaac ha-Kohen's follower's student, Isaac ben Solomon ibn Abi Sahula, who studied Kabbalah with Moses of Burgos. <sup>42</sup> In his commentary on Song of Songs, Isaac ibn Abi Sahula writes:<sup>43</sup>

Properly speaking, the Sage should have called it "Song of Songs" and no other name, because of the science of song which was known among that nation in that period. The Levites used to perform according to it in the Temple at the

There is a close connection between this passage and the first citation from Isaac ha-Kohen; one might even say that Ibn Abi Sahula expanded upon what was stated by Isaac ha-Kohen. With regard to our subject, these passages may be summarized as follows: 1) There is a connection between the science of music, though it is now lost, and prophecy; 2) The singing of the Levites and of the prophets was connected with the Name of God; 3) The somewhat ambiguous use of the term nequdddh (musical note/vowel-point) seems to indicate a connection between the song of the Levites and vowel points.

60 Music and Ecstatic Kabbalah These ideas appear also in the SOW ha-alÂŞelet. It is difficult to determine exactly when this work was written, but it appears to date from the end of the thirteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth century.<sup>47</sup>

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 61

heed to understand the letters of the Name, so much were their souls enjoying listening to the melody. This can be done also by one graced by God to proclaim Names, by one who knows how to do this, and who directs the letters and performs the necessary activities, and this is the secret of "He within Whose dwelling there is joy." 48 Joy comes only from the joy of music, and the joy of music comes from the Holy Spirit, as it is written, "and when the minstrel played, the power of the Lord came upon him." [II Kings 3:15] Such also was the incident of the two young French girls in the city of Montpellier" in ancient times, who knew how to perform music, and had pleasant voices, and excelled in the science of music. They began to recite [Psalms 45:1]: "to the Chief musician, upon Sogdnim, for the sons of Qorah, Maskil; a Song of Loves." They chanted according to the straight path, and they fused with the higher [entities], and they were so absorbed in song that before they finished half the psalm, God rejoiced at hearing the song from their mouths, as is His way, that the tune rose upwards, they achieved union, and their souls ascended to Heaven:5° See how God rejoices at hearing a tune done correctly, and how much power there is in good music! As proof,



notice that when the cantor has a good appearance, a pleasant voice, clear speech, and good melodies, the congregation rejoices with him, and for this reason the souls, which are sublime, take pleasure. Souls come from God, and thus God rejoices along with them, concerning which they say, 51 "making happy God and men."

In this passage we find some of the ideas which we had found in the circle of Isaac ha-Kohen. Music is described as a science which, in ancient times, was known to the High Priest; it leads to devotion and is connected with the pronunciation of the Name. However, in the passage quoted above, music is described as still effective, and not as a lost science. It seems that this science was preserved in the circle of Abraham Abulafia,

The secret of the gagelet: In a few places in the Torah there is a cantillation note called Sagelet, whose form is: . It is found ' on the words wa-yitmeihmah ("and he lingered") [Gen. 19:16], and wa-yOrnar ("and he said") in the verse: "and he said, '0 Lord, God of my master Abraham' [Gen. 24:12], and also in the Hagiographa

and in the Psalms. The Kabbalists say that this note is like the lovely music which the angels sing and play before God, and that David received some of this music by means of the Holy Spirit. So also with the Levites, who performed the holy songs in the Temple, that is, the Psalms. They made their voice pleasant by singing the song in a lovely, pleasant, clear and good voice. They pronounced their speech with a significant melodic movement, with that same suspended pronunciation as with the great galgelet, in order to elevate that speech with the note of the gagelet, which is made at the beginning of the word, and before he ends that particular word, he makes a lovely turn with the small S alselet. He would thereby elevate his tune higher, and then lower it a little, as, for example, in chanting according to the science of music. He would make this pronunciation while performing the good and pleasant song which he knows by tradition to be fit for the galgelet. If he has received no tradition, and he knows how to innovate a pleasant tune on his own—a tune which will have a pleasant cantillation and a pronunciation similar to the enunciation of the galgelet—then he must pronounce the Name in this order and with this sound, for this is

what the High Priest used to do. He used to proclaim the name with this tune while in the Holy of Holies, and he would vocalize it while employing a tune according to the rule of the galgelet, so that he would swallow the letters of the Name. This was so that all those listening heard the pleasant melody and did not

62 Music and Ecstatic Kabbalah who was closely associated with one of the disciples of Isaac ha-Kohen, namely Moses ben Simeon of Burgos.<sup>52</sup>

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 63 Again, in 'Or ha-Sekel we find: "Until you say he properly, and in the image of the hcilam which extends upwards, play the hiriq which extends downwards." 56 Similarly, in 'Oscir ` Eden Gcinuz: "Your tongue should always speak with a pleasant and pleasing tune, and very gently." 57 On page 70 of Seler ha-'Ot, music is mentioned as an additional element of the sacred text to that of letters and vowel points. The parallel between music and vowelpoints emerges from these citations. The vowel point serves as a sort of note

which gives the pitch to the one proclaiming the Name: holam indicates a high pitch, and hiriq a low pitch. This usage calls to mind the lost science of music mentioned by Isaac ha-Kohen. Both he and Abulafia hold that this science leads to 'prophecy.' There is no doubt that the remarks of the anonymous author of IV& Ilohim 58 also represent in essence a description of a technique which was employed in practice, and not a "lost" science:

4.

#### Music as a Component of Abulafian Technique

In striking contrast to the philosophers and kabbalists, Abulafia says very little about the theoretical aspects of the connection between music and 'prophecy'. In his writings one only finds instructions concerning music-making while pronouncing Divine

Names, which is the path by which we arrive at 'prophecy.' In his book 'Osar 'Eden Ganuz, we read:

The proof that song indicates the degree of prophecy is that it is the way of song to make the heart happy by means of tunes, as it is said, "And when the minstrel played, the power of the Lord came upon him," [II Kings 3:15] for prophecy does not dwell in him [unless there is] joy [see Sabbat, 30b]. This was already hinted at in two words appearing at the end of Ecclesiastes [12:13], where he says, "The end of the matter, all being heard: Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." Join 'Ore' (fear) with 'dmar (keep), and you find 'dmar (i.e., "say a song"). There is a hint [of this] in [Numbers 6:27] "and they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them" .---yare) gdmar 'et gemi.<sup>53</sup>

Elsewhere, Abulafia speaks of music in terms of practical instruction. We read in his book Hayyey ha-cOldm ha-Ba': "In this manner he should transpose each letter frontwards and backwards, using many tunes." <sup>54</sup> In another place he states:

The niggun [i.e., music] is the beauty of pronunciation and indicates the production of sounds, with reference to five matters, because of the five varying pronunciations of the vowel points. 59 Moreover, the lute (kinnor), which has five strings, encompasses all music. 60 The philosophers call this science muzika in Greek, because the word kinnor is [equivalent to] music.61 We also call it nocam and ta'am, as with the cantillation accents (te'amim), which are zarqa, tarsa, tevir, revi'a, gere g, etc., because by means of them the entire recitation is made more beautiful and more pleasing to those listening to it. It [the recitation] climbs up, becomes longer, and then turns backwards.62

Further evidence of the integration of music into the technique of Abulafia's students is found in g a rarey Sedeq:

Make that special breath as long as you can, according to your capacity for taking one long breath, as long as you can possibly make it, and sing the alef and every other letter which you

proclaim with awe, fear and reverence, until the joy of the soul is combined with its understanding, which is great. The form of the tune for each letter should be in the image of the vowelpoints. It should be in the form of the holam upwards.<sup>55</sup>

He should then continue with a pleasant voice and with melodies in the verses of praise and out of love of the Torah, for the joy of the living soul which is partnered to the rational [soul].<sup>63</sup>

## 64 Music and Ecstatic Kabbalah

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia <sup>65</sup> The letters go out in the ways of the paths through the way of music, and this is the secret of the cantillation accents (te'amim) of the Torah, for they come in and go out with the sound of singing. The secret of this is the golden bell and pomegranate with which the High Priest used to enter the Holy of Holies, so that its sound may be

heard. From this you will understand the secret of the Holy Spirit which resides in prophets in the manner of music.

Based upon this passage, Judah al-Botini writes in *Sulldm*

He should continue to play on all sorts of music[al instruments] if he has such or if he knows how to play on them; . if not, he should make music with his mouth, by means of his voice, [singing] the verses of praise and out of love for the Torah, in order to gladden the living soul which is partnered to the speaking, intellectual sou<sup>1</sup>.<sup>64</sup>

Music's sphere of influence is the living soul. Its task is to make this soul happy, so as not to interfere with the proper functioning of the intellectual soul, or the intellect. <sup>65</sup> This view also appears in *YesOd colim*, written at the end of the thirteenth century by Elhanan ben Abraham Eskira, who belonged to a circle whose views were close to those found in *Ginnat 'EgOz* and the *Sefer lyyurt*. There we read:<sup>66</sup>



When the soul craves for solitude and to regale itself in the luxuries of the intellect, were it not that Nature stands in its way with a temptation of images, it would separate itself from the body. For this reason, the kinnOr was struck in front of the altar at the time that the sacrifice was offered. 67 When the priest entered the Holy of Holies, which is the solitude, his garment produced sounds from the thirty-two bells, as it is written, "and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place... that he die not" [Ex. 28:35]. It is known to those who speak of the science of music that music is intermediate between the spiritual and the material, in that it draws forth the intellect at the time of its imprisonment, as it is written, "but now bring me a minstrel" [II Kings 3:15], and as it is written, "awake neTbel and kinnOr" [Ps. 57:9]. As Nature drags the intellect, so to speak, to leave the intellectual [world] and to amuse itself with material things.

he writes:

The author of the Sefer ha-Peli'dh combines the views of Yesad `olcim with those of the "Commentary to Sefer Yesirdh" when He should draw the spirit of the Living God by means of known melodies which are the thirty-two melodies according to which the Torah is transposed. They say that those melodies are the cantillation accents of the Torah (ta'amey tOrdh).<sup>69</sup>

Finally, let us quote the remarks of Hayyim Vital, who in the fourth part of *ÂŞa c arey Qedukili* writes:<sup>70</sup>

And this is the secret of the "sons of the prophets," before whom went the drum and the flute, etc. For by means of the sweetness of the sound of music, dumbness [of senses] descends upon them with the pleasantness of the sound. They withdraw their souls, <sup>72</sup> and then the musician stops playing, and the "sons of the prophets" are left with this supreme union and prophecy.

In another work written in the same period, Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi's commentary to Sefer Yesiriih,<sup>68</sup> the entry of the High

Priest into the Holy of Holies is also seen as a symbol of mystical experience connected with music:

### Chapter Three The Mystical Experience

Abulafia's system of thought is dominated by two major concepts: the intellect and the imagination. The literal meaning of the Torah is associated with the imagination, while its esoteric meaning is associated with the intellect.' These concepts also provide a key to understanding his visions and their hidden meaning. The allegoric approach characteristic of his Scriptural hermeneutics will thus assist us in understanding the meaning of his own visions. While Abulafia's biblical interpretation is a clear example of allegorization of the text—that is, the introduction of an allegorical meaning into a text in which there is ab initio no such significance—his interpretation of his visions is not subject to such a clearcut definition. On the one hand, Abulafia attempts to interpret personal experience through the use of concepts which are inappropriate to the type of material which they are meant to interpret; on the other hand, those concepts which Abulafia made

into cornerstones of his thought may be expressed allegorically in his visions, so that the interpretation itself is not so much an allegorization as an uncovering of the allegorical element inherent within the vision. We will not attempt to decide this question at this point, but it is worth citing here Abulafia's own words concerning the need for an interpretation of his visions. In *Sefer ha-'Ot*, p. 85, he writes of his vision: "This is the meaning revealed to all, but the hidden meaning may only be understood by one who comprehends it by himself."

## 68 The Mystical Experience

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 69 It is impossible for those possessing these imaginative powers not to perform one of those acts by which this power is actualized and brought to light. And among these are those who strike upon the ground many times with a stick which is in their hand, or scream out in strange cries and abandon their thoughts and gaze at the earth a

long time until they find it, as in the matter of falling sickness [epilepsy], and will relate what is to occur in the future.<sup>6</sup>

One may ask why Abulafia felt such a great need to interpret his visions. The answer to this question is imbedded in his prophetic-mystical approach. Following Maimonides, Abulafia states that prophecy is impossible without the imaginative faculty,<sup>2</sup> through which the flow of the intellect is transformed into visual images and sounds. The function of interpretation is to return to the intellective influx, which contains within itself the intellectual contents of the revelation. Abulafia saw himself as a prophet in every respect, as we may see from his *Sefer ha-Haftarah*, which he asked to have read every Sabbath in the synagogue;<sup>3</sup> consequently, his visions include an intellectual message in imaginative garb. Our discussion must therefore be divided into two: one part will concern the sensual-imaginative aspect of his experience, and the other, the interpretive and "intellectual" part. The tangible part of Abulafia's experience is not subject to interpretation; the feeling of joy or of mission, the fear which

pursues the prophet, and similar feelings, are well-known signs accompanying a message in visual or verbal form.

Maimonides is saying here that the strengthening of the activity of the imagination is inevitably accompanied by various external manifestations. Ibn Rushd (Averroes), on the other hand, holds that the fullest activity of the imagination is contingent upon silencing the activities of the senses. In his *Epitome of Parva Naturalia*, we read:

It is fitting that the power of the imagination act more completely and more spiritually in sleep, for at the time of sleep the soul has already nullified the senses of sight and its organs, and has turned them towards the inner sense. And the proof that the inner powers act more perfectly when the external senses are at rest is that, when the thought of the people does greatly, they turn their powers of feeling toward within the body until they faint from sleep, and they will intend to rest the external senses in order to improve the thought. And for this reason.... prophecy indeed necessarily comes about in a similar matter. And that is because,

when these inner powers move a strong movement, the external [organs] contract until at times there occurs in this something similar to fainting.'

## 1. Sensations and Feelings

The connection between mystical experience and related phenomena—such as foretelling the future, magic, and extraordinary physical sensations and emotional feelings—was well known from ancient times. 4 During the Middle Ages, these phenomena continued to be viewed as epiphenomena of prophetic experiences; Maimonides characterizes all the prophets, with the exception of Moses, with the phrase that, at the time of prophecy, "his powers would fail; he would be overcome with dread, and nearly lose his mind."<sup>5</sup> Elsewhere, Maimonides compares the magician to "one who falls sick," and goes on to offer an explanation of the connection between prophecy and various physical and psychic phenomena in terms of the major role played by the imaginative faculty. In *Sefer ha-Miswah*, he writes:

Both of these opinions appear in Abulafia's writings that claiming a strengthening, and that asserting a diminution, of external activity simultaneous with the strengthening of the imagination, while only the latter view appears among the members of his circle. In Sitrey Torah, 8 he states:

Know that so long as you combine letters rapidly, and the hairs of your head do not all stand up in trembling, you have not yet attained one of the levels of the spirit in which all of the

## 70 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 71

limbs [of the body] are moved, and you have not known even His existence, let alone His essence. But the beginning of that apprehension is the whirlwind, of which it is said, 9 "and I looked,



and behold, a whirlwind coming from the north." And it is said,"  
"and God answered Job out of the whirlwind."

A second element manifested in the descriptions of Abulafia's experience is "spirit"; further on in the above-cited passage from Sitrey Torah, we learn that "the second apprehension is that of spirit, not like the spirit of God." 17 In 'Osdr `Eden Giinuz, Abulafia explains the subject of this spirit as follows:

And you shall feel another spirit awakening within yourself and strengthening you and passing over your entire body and giving you pleasure, and it will seem to you that balm has been poured over you from the crown of your head to your feet, once or many times, and you shall rejoice and feel from it a great pleasure, with gladness and trembling."

The "storm" refers here to the storm of the limbs, as Abulafia describes it in 'osar 'Eden Gallia:"

The hairs of your head will begin to stand up and to storm.(!) And your bloodâ□□which is the life blood which is in your heart, of which it is said" "for the blood is the soul," and of which it is likewise said," "for the blood shall atone for the soul"â□□[this blood] will begin to move out because of the living combination which speaks, and all your body will begin to tremble, and your limbs will begin to shake, and you will fear a tremendous fear, and the fear of God shall cover you... And the body will tremble, like the rider who races the horse, who is glad and joyful, while the horse trembles beneath him.

The feeling of pleasure and relief following the trembling is also depicted in Ijyey ha-Oleim ha-Ba):19

Afterwards, should you merit it, the spirit of the living God shall pass over you, 29 and there shall dwell upon you the spirit of God, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of knowledge and fear of God, and one will imagine that it is as if one's entire body has been anointed with anointing oil from head to feet, and he will be the Messiah of God and his messenger.

The meaning of this trembling is explained in the previous page of that same work, where we read:

And his intellect is greater than his imagination, and it rides upon it like one who rides upon a horse and drives it by hitting it with [a whip] to run before it as it wills, and his whip is in his hand to make it [i.e., the imagination] stand where his intellect wills.<sup>14</sup>

In *Âṣa*â□□arey Sedeq, R. Nathan ben Sa'adyah Harar writes in the identical manner as does Abulafia:

Behold, I was anointed from head to foot as with the anointing oil, and we were surrounded with great joy, and I do not know how to compare to it any image because of its great spirituality and the sweetness of its pleasure; all this occurred to your servant at the beginning.<sup>21</sup>

Another description of the trembling which overcomes one who meditates at the time of the 'prophetic' experience appears in *Ilayyey ha-`Oleim ha-Ba'*: "By his concentration he again brings upon himself fear and trembling, and the hairs of his head stand, and all his limbs tremble." 15 Abulafia's disciples likewise testify to such a feeling; R. Nathan ben Sa'adyah Harar, author of *Sa carey Sedeq*, writes, "great trembling seized me, and I could not gather strength, and my hairs stood up." 16

Abulafia's disciples testify to the absence of sensation following "the storm of the organs." In the same work, the author states: "And I immediately fell down as if I were not in the world, for I did not feel any strength in any organs," 22 while R. Judah Albotini writes: "until all of the physical powers were taken away from me, and his intellect also departed him (sic),

## The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 73

like [the will] to act, and he falls to the earth as if dead, and lies down and falls asleep." 23 These texts, which in at least some cases reflect personal experiences, are quite rare in Jewish mysticism, and constitute important evidence of ecstatic moods and tendencies accompanied by distinctive bodily phenomena.

### 2. The Light

In *Sitrey TORah*, Abulafia goes on to describe the various stages of mystical experience. We have already noted above his words referring to the storm and the wind as two primary

"comprehensions." Let us now proceed to the other stages:24

"and the third is the tumult,25 and God was not in the tumult"; and

the fourth, fire: "And God was not in the fire, and after the fire

there was a still small voice." Like the first two, the third and fourth

stages are defined by means of scriptural verses. The

significance of the third stage—the tumult—is not clear to

me, and it may be connected with the movement of the limbs referred to above. We must examine the fourth level carefully, as it includes two different elements: "fire," that is, the visual element; and "speech," the verbal element. The order in which these two elements are cited is determined by the verse from the book of Kings, but this order would seem in fact to reflect the preference of hearing over seeing. In his letter to R. Judah Salmon, Abulafia writes:

But all of the early ones of the Kabbalists mentioned are called "prophets for themselves," and those who know God from His actions [i.e., the philosophers] share with them to an extent this title. Those called prophets in terms of this aspect speak within themselves alone, and the light of God illuminates part of their thoughts at some of the times [by] a small light, and they themselves recognize that this light is not from themselves, but no speech comes to them that they might recognize that it is speech, but rather light.<sup>26</sup>

In this passage, as in the verse cited from Sitrey TOrdh, a distinction is drawn between the visual and verbal element, with preference given to the latter as a higher level of prophecy.

According to Abulafia, the revelation of light is characteristic of 'prophetic' experience among the Kabbalists who followed the Sefirotic system. There is extensive basis for this statement; in the writings of R. Isaac the Blind, and particularly in those of R. Azriel of Gerona, we find an abundance of symbols related to light.<sup>27</sup> Later on, in a passage from Saar ha-Kawwcinah (attributed to R. Azriel), we read:

Whoever fixes a thing in his mind with complete firmness, that thing becomes for him the principal thing. Thus, when you pray and recite benedictions or (otherwise) wish to direct the kawwcinah to something in true manner, then imagine that you are light, and all about you is light from every direction and every side, and in the midst of the light a stream of light, and upon it a brilliant light, and opposite it a throne, and upon it the good light... And turn to the right and you find [there] pure light, and to the left and you will find an aura, which is the radiant light. And between them and above them the light of the glory, and around it the light

of life. And above it the crown of light that crowns the objects of thought, illuminates the paths of ideas, and brightens the splendor of visions. And this illumination is inexhaustible and unending.<sup>28</sup>

The first sentence is the most important one for understanding this passage: by concentrating his thought upon a particular subject, man is able to enter into a world whose structure is dictated by the contemplator: the "thing" which the contemplator "fixes... in his mind with complete firmness." In our passage, this is the light which he "makes the main thing" in wake of his spiritual effort. Evidence for the connection between the light and prophecy appears already in R. Ezra of Gerona, who writes, "for he sat and learned, and would connect his thoughts on high... for all light requires the supernal light which is above it, and to be drawn to it, for each light is in accordance with the subtlety of its inwardness."<sup>29</sup>



These passages, and others which we could have brought, 31 indicate that the light was an important focal point to the early Kabbalists, and that it continued to be an important source of symbols for the Kabbalah of R. Moses de Leon as well. 31 From this, it follows that Abulafia's distinction concerning the Kabbalists who experience light visions and those who have a "speech" experience is in many cases correct. His second statement is likewise true: the early Kabbalists were "prophets to themselves" — that is, their experiences remained confined to restricted circles, and those who underwent these experiences deliberately refrained from making them widely known. From this point of view, Abulafia argues, the early Kabbalists were similar to the philosophers, who sufficed with knowledge of God in terms of His actions, and did not generally attempt to disseminate their teaching in public. Abulafia's third statement, that the Sefirotic Kabbalists do not receive "the word," is likewise correct; as against the great number of sources dealing with light, there are very few Kabbalists who claim to have heard voices or speech. 32 To Abulafia, the receiving of light seems connected with the Sefirotic system, 33 for which reason it is a lower level of

prophecy. In the continuation of the passage, quoted above from the epistle *We-Zot li-Yehuchih*, he says of the practitioners of the Kabbalah of Names, who are designated there by the term "second," that "they are all prophets who are beginning to see light in the light of life, and from there to ascend from light to light through the course of their thoughts, which are compounded and sweet..." We may infer from this that the revelation associated with light is a first stage in the path of prophecy, which also appears among those who follow Abulafia's path. Study of Abulafia's works indicates that the light has no significant function in his phenomenon of prophecy; this can be explained on the assumption that Abulafia's books are only concerned with the more advanced stage of mystical-prophetic experience, disregarding the initial stages. Abulafia thought of himself as one who had reached the highest level, for which reason it was nat-

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 75

ural that the light would no longer occupy such a prominent place in his system. On the other hand, one of Abulafia's students, R.

Nathan ben Sa c adyah Harar, author of , a c cirey Sedeq, comments that at the beginning of his path he experienced the appearance of light, and only later did he experience speech, exactly as described in Abulafia's above-mentioned comment. In the description of his first mystical experience, the anonymous author writes as follows:

The third night, after midnight, I nodded off a little, quill in hand and paper on my knees. Then I noticed that the candle was about to go out. I rose to put it right, as oftentimes happens to a person awake. then I saw that the light continued. I was greatly astonished, as though, after close examination, I saw that it issued from myself. I said: 'I do not believe it.' I walked to and fro all through the house and, behold, the light is with me; I lay on a couch and covered myself up, and behold, the light is with me all the while.<sup>34</sup>

There is no reference here to speech in this first revelation, which appeared after a number of days, after the author had progressed in the path of the Kabbalah of Names. One ought to point out that

the system of Isaac the Blind. Isaac the Blind presents a synthesis between the Sefirotic Kabbalah and that of Names, a point on which it differs from that of Abulafia. In a passage preserved in SOgrin Soclot,<sup>35</sup> the author of Isaac the Blind stresses the role of lettercombination in the appearance of light: "and by the power of the combination and the meditation, there happened to me that which happened with the light which I saw going with me, as I mentioned in Isaac the Blind." The two passages by this author are characterized by the fact that the source of the light is inside the person's own body. Interestingly, this same phenomenon also appears in a mystical school which emerged in Greece contemporaneously with Abulafia and his disciples. In the biography of Symeon the New Theologian, the eleventh-century thinker who greatly influenced the shaping of hesychasm in Greece in the thirteenth century, we find a description of the uniting of Symeon with the light which he saw:

76 The Mystical Experience And as the light became stronger, and was bright as the sun at noon-time, he saw himself in the

center of the light, and the sweetness which penetrated to his entire body caused him joy and tears. He saw the light adhering to his body in a manner which would not be believed, and gradually penetrating to all his limbs... and the light gradually penetrated into his entire body, to his heart and his inwards, and transformed them into fire and light.<sup>36</sup>

## The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia

77

I might rise and pray, and I saw that it was yet night, and I returned to my sleep with joy; and after I rose from my bed in order to pray, I suddenly saw a secret of the letter Alef.<sup>4</sup>° As in the case of the author of *g a carey Sedeq*, the light ap-

This passage also influenced *The Book of the System of Holy Prayer and Concentration*, the first work of the hesychastic school composed, according to scholars, in the thirteenth century, in which it states: "When you seek the place of the heart in your insides, you shall attain the vision of the light, which will transform you into a being completely shining, and you shall feel a great joy which cannot be described."<sup>37</sup> The experience of light surrounding a holy thing or a mystic is, of course, not in itself extraordinary.<sup>38</sup> However, the appearance of two cases of a mystic enwrapped in light during the same period cannot be merely coincidental, given the feasibility of contact between the two schools in terms of geographical proximity. While *Sedeq* was evidently written in the land of Israel, it may be that the events described therein occurred elsewhere: Abulafia testifies that he had disciples in both Greece and Sicily;<sup>39</sup> we cannot thus disregard the possibility that the similarity in the appearance of light is the outcome of actual historical contact. The vision of light continued to be a form of experience among those Kabbalists who used Abulafia's system. R. Isaac of Acre wrote in *'Osar Hayyim*:

Moreover, in the third watch, when I was half asleep, I saw the house in which I was sleeping full of a light which was very sweet and pleasant, for this light was not like the light which emanates from the sun, but was [bright] as the light of day, which is the light of dawn before the sun rises. And this light was before me for about three hours, and I hastened to open my eyes to see whether the dawn had broken or not, so that

pears to R. Isaac of Acre in a state in which he was half-asleep, in the middle of the night. Let us now turn to the account of R. Shem Tov ben Abraham ibn Gaon: This Kabbalist, who at the beginning of his literary activity was involved with copying manuscripts and had contact with Kabbalists such as R. Solomon ibn Adret and R. Isaac Todros, later changed his path: among other factors were his meeting with the Kabbalists R. Abraham, author of Sefer Yesod Cola and his son R. Hanannel of Esqira. This change is seen in the study of Sefer Yesirdh, a book which did not enjoy an important position in the circle of Ibn Adret. In Baddey ha-'Aron 4 1 which was also written on the basis of a different approach than

that of R. Solomon ibn Adret, 42 R. Shem Tov states that when the Kabbalist... has no companion to himself within his heart (sic!), he shall sit in silence and be still, for it has come upon him, 43 and he shall begin to write what he sees in his mind, like one who copies from a book that is written before him... a ball like the sun (!) in true drawing, for the light has appeared to him at that hour. A similar statement of R. Shem Toy ibn Gaon appears in *gegiin Sadot*, where R. Moses of Kiev states that

... also at the time we composed this book, when we would articulate the Ineffable Name, things came into our eyes from verses in the image of red fire toward evening, until we were astonished by them and we left them. And this happened to us several times [while we were] writing.<sup>44</sup> It seems to me that we may summarize the passages concerning the appearance of light among Jewish authors in terms of two main characteristics. First, light appears in connection



## 78 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 79

with the activity of writing or of combining the letters of the Ineffable Name in writing. Even though this is not explicitly stated by our authors, from our knowledge of the technique of the author of Sa Carey Sedeq and of R. Isaac of Acre there can be no doubt that they followed Abulafia's path in combining the letters of the Ineffable Name; among other authors, R. Shem Tov and R. Moses of Kiev, this is explicitly stated. Second, the appearance of light comes about unexpectedly; the light appears suddenly, and not as the result of a deliberate attempt to bring about an experience of light. Unlike the description in Saar ha-Kawwiinah, in which the experience of light is the result of a deliberate effort, the above-cited authors are astonished by the appearance of the light. An additional difference between them and the anonymous Kabbalist lies in the nature of the experience: from the description in Saar ha-Kawwdruih, the vision of light seems to be a

pneumatic vision, while the other authors stress that this is an actual sensory phenomenon; they even attempt to describe the color of the light or the feelings which accompany the light. An additional distinction concerns the magical possibilities inherent in the lights appearing to the anonymous Kabbalist. These lights constitute a kind of world in itself to which one may turn with "requests," something for which there is no parallel among other authors. In conclusion, I would like to cite the statements of two scholars who attempted to understand the phenomenon of light in mystical experiences, whose explanations remind one of the difference between Saar ha-Kawuninah and Abulafia's circle. Their main claim is that the perception of light is the result of the liberation of spiritual energy that had been stored in the brain; the liberation of this inner energy brings about a stimulation of the visual nerves (for which there is no external cause), as a result of which the sensation of light is transferred to the brain. In the above-cited cases, we may refer to an intellectual effort which preceded the appearance of light: writing or the combining of letters, or a deliberate and channeled effort on the part of the

anonymous Kabbalist who wrote begin with Deikman's  
comments:

Saar ha-Kawwcinah.

We shall

The concept of sensory translation offers an intriguing explanation for the ubiquitous use of light as a metaphor for mystic experience. It may not be just a metaphor. "Illumination" may be derived from an actual sensory experience occurring when in the cognitive act of unification, a liberation of energy takes place, or when a resolution of unconscious conflict occurs, permitting the experience of "peace," "presence," and the like. Liberated energy experienced as light may be the core sensory experience of mysticism.<sup>45</sup>

While Deikman's description is closer to that of Abulafia's circle, in the words of Staudenmaier, as quoted by H. Zimmer, we find an explanation closer to that given in Saar ha-Kawwdndh. In seeing, hearing, smell, touch, etc., the specific stimulus is transmitted centripetally from the peripheral organs, the eye, ear, etc., to the higher centers in the brain and finally to consciousness. In the production of optical, acoustical, and other hallucinations, one must learn to transmit the specific energy in the reverse direction from the higher brain centers to the periphery.<sup>46</sup>

While Deikman deals with sensations appearing without any intentionality on the part of the mystic, Staudenmaier speaks of the results of deliberate efforts, whose primary purpose is magical.

Speech

We shall now return to Abulafia's remarks in his letter to R. Judah Salmon. Following his remarks about the light, he says the following regarding the devotees of the Kabbalah of Names: ... and they ascend from light to light... to the union, until their inner speech returns, cleaving to the primordial speech which

## 80 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 81

is the source of all speech, and they further ascend from speech to speech until the inner human speech [is al power in itself, and he prepares himself to receive the Divine speech, whether in the aspect of the image of speech, whether in the aspect of the speech itself; and these are the prophets in truth, in justice and righteousness.<sup>47</sup>

Unlike light, which is the source of "personal" prophecy, speech is the source of true prophecy—that is, that prophecy which is directed both to the prophet himself and to his fellow man. In Abulafia's doctrine, prophetic speech refers, among other things, to the flow received by the power of the imagination, that is, the voice which is heard at the time of prophecy.<sup>48</sup> In order for the mystic to receive the speech, he must strengthen this intellect, that is according to the medieval Aristotelian epistemology, "the inner speech," so that he may receive the flow—"the Divine word"—whose source is in God or in the Active Intellect: i.e., in the "primordial speech." The perception of speech is accomplished in two ways: either within the Active Intellect, that is, by means of speculation concerning the contents of prophetic flux, or by means of "speech itself"—apparently by hearing voices. Besides this theoretical description of speech, in which it is seen as the outcome of the power of the imagination—for which reason it does not originate in the organs of speech—one also finds other opinions on this subject in the writings of Abulafia and his disciples. The prophet not only delivers the prophecy by means of his voice, but also receives it "into his

throat." There was a wide-spread belief among the Sages that the Se'chug, spoke through the instrument of Moses' voice, 49 while the saying, "the Sekinah speaks from his throat" was known at least from the time of Rashi's commentary on the Pentateuch.<sup>50</sup> The sages based this upon the Biblical verse, "Moses spoke and God answered him with a voice." 51 So long as God was able to answer with a voice, the verse did not constitute an exegetical problem; however, with the emergence of Jewish philosophy,

which developed the doctrine of incorporeality of the Divine, those thinkers who saw God as a spiritual entity found it difficult to interpret this verse literally. In order to remove the difficulties entailed in this, R. Abraham ibn Ezra writes, "The one speaking is man, and the one hearing is man," 52 alluding to the fact that God does not speak with the help of voices, but that He conveys the intellectual content through the instrument of spiritual speech addressed to the soul, whereafter the soul itself transforms this contents into speech which another human being is able to hear. The Divine voice is thus removed from prophecy, and in its place

comes the voice of the prophet. In 'Osar `Eden Ganuz,<sup>53</sup> Abulafia writes:

With this voice came wondrous verses from the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings, and of this it is said, "Moses spoke and God [Elohim] answered him with a voice,"<sup>54</sup> and they said, "with the voice of Moses."<sup>55</sup> And behold, the voice of the living God speaks from within the fire, and it dwells within the heart, and thus is the speech there.

Here it states explicitly that the source of the Divine voice and speech is in man's heart, and not in the fire of the bush.<sup>56</sup> In another work of Abulafia's, we read:

For this speech which comes from the Holy Spirit only comes to the prophet by means of human speech, and the evidence for this is "Moses spoke and God answered him with a voice"; and they revealed its secret when they said "with a voice" this was the voice of Moses."<sup>57</sup>



The speech issuing from man's inner being is also mentioned in Sacarey Sedeq. In describing the latest phase of his experiences, the anonymous author writes:

Behold, like the speech that emerges from my heart and comes to my my lips, forcing them to move; and I said that perchance, God forbid, it is a spirit folly which has entered me, and I

82 The Mystical Experience perceive it speaking wisdoms. I said that this is certainly the spirit of wisdom.<sup>58</sup>

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 83

Elsewhere, he writes, "and a voice went out from me." <sup>59</sup> A similar idea occurs to R. Isaac of Acre, who writes in Commentary to Sefer Yesirdiz: For the one who speaks with the Holy Spirit does not hear that voice, but that spirit comes within him and speaks by itself, as it comes from a high place, that from which

the prophets draw [which is] in Nesah and Had... And there is no bringing together of lips there nor any other thing.<sup>64</sup>

of Izmir, who writes of the maggidim:<sup>64</sup> "from the power of the greatness of the soul <sup>65</sup> which is within man and tells him things, and the manners of the telling, <sup>66</sup> that a great voice comes out of his heart and enters into his heart and he hears, and those who stand before him do not hear anything." The above-mentioned approaches likewise served as the background for the appearance of similar phenomena in Hasidism.<sup>67</sup>

#### 4. Prophetic Speech as Conversation

The concept of the immediate source of speech in the mystical experience as residing within the human soul was further developed in two other works of Abulafia. In *Hayyey ha-coldm ha-13w*,<sup>68</sup> he describes the process of pronouncing the letters of the Divine Name as follows:

When you pronounce that matter found in the letters Ro'â§, Talc Seif (i.e., "head, middle, end"), do not draw them out, but pronounce them as one who inquires quietly to another: what letter does such and such a point guard, which is such and such a place [in the human body]? And prepare yourself to hear that which will be answered in the pronouncing of the letter, and [when] you hear the letter pronounced from his mouth, do not pronounce it, for he has pronounced it for you, but receive the tidings that He shall speak with you, for "in one [word] God speaks;" 69 and in your heart, and pronounce again the head of the end, which is L... And even if you wait a little while to hear, let it all be within one breath, and let the completion of the breaths be in the pronouncing of the letter, and not in any other thing, apart from the time that he answers you, and he shall pronounce the letter at the place which you have stated, and therefore the verse" reads "in every place where I shall mention [My Name]"â□□not "where you shall mention." And the secret of the matter isâ□□if I will mention, you will mention, and if you shall mention, I shall mention. And consider his reply, answering as though you yourself had answered.

The idea of human speech as an expression of the reception of prophecy again appears in the writings of R. Hayyim Vital, who writes in *Sefer ha-Gilgulim*: 61

Behold the secret of prophecy: it is certainly a voice sent from above to speak to that prophet, and the Holy Spirit is likewise in that manner. But because that voice is supernal and spiritual, it is impossible for it alone to be corporealized and to enter into the ears of the prophet, unless it first be embodied<sup>62</sup> in that same physical voice which emerged from that person while engaged in Torah and prayer and the like. It then embodies itself in it and is connected to it and comes to the ears of the prophet, so that he hears; but without the human voice it cannot exist. But there are many changes, as is said, for that selfsame supernal voice comes and is embodied within his voice... The supernal voice of the prophet and that voice mentioned come and combine themselves with the voice of that man at present, which emerges from him when prophecy rests upon him, as is said, "the spirit of God spoke within me, and His word is on my tongue."<sup>63</sup> For the spirit

and the original word dwell now upon my tongue, and there emerge from it the attribute of voice or speech from his throat and he speaks, and then the man hears them.

This striking emphasis upon the appearance of the voice within the act of prophesying is repeated by R. Elijah ha-Kohen

## 84 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 85

This passage depicts the act of pronouncing the letters by means of letter-combination, and the answer received when they are articulated. We may infer two contradictory things from this concerning the nature of the one answering: 1) the respondent is God: "He shall already speak to you, for 'in one God speaks,'" while the subject of the second verse, "I will remember," is God. It

follows from this that a dialogue occurs between God and the one combining at the time of the pronouncing; 2) the respondent is the person himself, "and think when you respond, as though you yourself had answered yourself." This double meaning reappears elsewhere in that book:71

When you complete the entire name and receive from it what the Name [i.e., God] wishes to give you, thank God; and if, Heaven forbid, you did not succeed in that which you sought, know that you must return in full repentance, and weep for that which is lacking in your level, and that you mentioned the Divine Name in vain, which is a grave sin. And you are not worthy of blessing, for God has promised us in the Torah to bless us, saying, 72 "in every place where I will have my Name mentioned, I will come to you and bless you." Behold, "where I will mention My Name"â□□when you pronounce My Name; and the secret of this is that at first you pronounce My Name, when you mention My Name as I have informed you, and the secret [refers to] the matter of the movement of the head at the time of reciting the Qeduthh [Doxology].

other hand, Abulafia hints at the idea that "where I shall mention my Name" means "where you shall mention my Name," an act accomplished by various motions of the head. Testimony relating to such situations of dialogue also appear in Sefer ha-tiegeq in connection with the articulation of the Name:

Direct your face toward the Name, which is mentioned, and sit as though a man is standing before you and waiting for you to speak with Him, and He is ready to answer you concerning whatever you may ask him, and you say "speak" and he answers... And begin then to pronounce, and recite first "the head of the head" [i.e., the first combination of letters], drawing out the breath and at great ease; and afterwards go back as if the one standing opposite you is answering you, and you yourself answer, changing your voice, so that the answer not be similar to the question. And do not extend the answer at all, but say it easily and calmly, and in response recite one letter of the Name as it actually is."

This passage clearly elucidates that, during the process of pronunciation, the "respondent" is the person himself, who has altered his voice and imagines to himself that another person is standing opposite him and answering him. One may ask the significance of the dual meaning of the passages cited from Hayyey ha-Ohim ha-Ba'. The answer is to be found, in my opinion, in Sefer ha-1-legeq, where it states:

Immediately make your heart straight, and prostrate yourself before that thought form [surah nehgebet] which you imagined in your heart, which is before you. And it is "the master of motion"â□□that is, it brings about that response which you have answered, which your heart has implanted within you like a throne, and made it into an angel of God, and it is that which is intermediate between yourself and your Creator, and that is His glory, may He be praised.<sup>74</sup>

Abulafia discusses here that case in which the pronunciation of the Name has no result; the blame is placed upon the one pronouncing it, who is seen here as a kind of false prophet, as



suggested by the expression from Job 31:28, "it is also a grave sin, for I denied without trespass." The allusion to the verse in Exodus 20:7, "thou shall not take the Name of the Lord in vain," is further adduced to describe the guilt of one who pronounces the Divine Name without any consequence. Abulafia's argument is that God always answers, so that the deficiency can only be in the man; it follows from this that the pronunciation of the true Name is a dialogue between man and God. On the

Elsewhere in the same work we read:

86 The Mystical Experience But pronounce the names, one after another, as I have commanded you, whose secret is in the system of their motions, "one two." And if you are clean and perfect in all that I have instructed you, I have no doubt that the Glory will be revealed to you and appear before you in a form such that you will be able to feel its power, or it will bring to you speech so that you will understand that it is from Him, and not from yourself.<sup>75</sup>

## The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 87

and Him." 8 ' The term "Glory" does not interfere with this identification, as it frequently appears as a term for the soul prior to Abulafia. 8 2 Let us now compare Abulafia's words in Sefer ha - Htheq with those of his predecessor in Commentary to Sefer Yesirah: 1) in both passages, the term "one two" appears in the identical sense: i.e., as the Name of God; 2) both authors mention revelation: in Abulafia it refers to "Glory," while in R. Baruch Togarmi it is the "image of God" which is revealed by Gabriel; 3) the revelation involves "speech" in both places; 4) Abulafia speaks of the appearance of "a thought form" or "Glory," while R. Baruch Togarmi speaks of Gabriel (Gabrisel) speaker (medabber), vision (mareh), the image of God (Selem 'Elohim), which equals 246 in gematria, on the one hand, and the human form (surat ha'Adam) on the other. In Abulafia there are also signs of "the human form" which appear at the time of pronouncing. tlayyey ha - `01rim ha - 131p states: "If Heaven

forbid there has not yet come to him, while pronouncing the two verses, either the flux or the speech or the apprehension of the figure of man, and like visions of prophecy, he ought to start again from the third verse." 83 On the other hand, in the same work, Abulafia uses other expressions connected to his teacher's words:84

The angel who advises you of the secret of God is named Gabriel, and he speaks from the first verse of the holy name mentioned by you, and he shows you the wonders of prophecy, for that is the secret of: 85 "In a vision I will make myself known to him, in a dream I will speak to him," for "vision," which is the secret of the verse, equals Gabriel, and "dream," whose secret is86 "Edo," is 'Enoch.

Before discussing these two passages, we must cite the enigmatic sentences written by R. Baruch Togarmi in  
Commentary

to Sefer Yesirdh:76 I have already alluded above to the secret of "the radiance of the Selcindh," concerning the matter of "one two."

It is known that the Torah is called "this" (ha-zot), after the Ineffable Name, in saying, 77 "the words of this (ha-zot) Torah," which is the secret of the Divine image. And it cannot be seen except by a vision when he speaks, or perhaps it refers to Gabriel, in the language of b" (!) that sees the form of man.

The attributes of the "thought form" which is the reason for the "answering" seem contradictory: one may bow down before it, but it is within "your heart," the human heart being its dwelling place, "its throne." The form is portrayed as the Glory of God, whose purpose is to give witness that the source of the speech is not in man, but outside of him. However, the exact character of "the form" is not clear: it is "the angel of God," "the Divine glory," "the intermediary" between man and God, or an "intermediate" between them. 78 It seems to me that these characteristics fit the human intellect, described in 1:layyey

ha - Ba' as "the flux of the intellect emanated upon us always, and it is emanated from the Active Intellect to us, and this is the angel which brings about cleaving between your soul and the Creator, blessed be He." 79 This description was influenced by Ibn Ezra and Maimonides who wrote, respectively, "and the angel which is between man and his God is intellectual" 8 Â° and "this is the intellect, which is emanated upon us from God, may He be blessed, and this is the connection which is between us

Here, too, one finds the gematria for Gabriel â□□> 246 pasuq (verse) -4 mareh (vision) medabber (speaks). There seems no doubt that these expressions allude to the Active Intellect.

Consequently, in the prophetic vision the mystic sees "the figure of a human" by means of the Active Intellect, a revelation accompanied by speech. We infer the connection between this figure,

## 88 The Mystical Experience

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 89 All the camps of the Âšelcineih have there neither image nor corporeal form, but spiritual emanation, and likewise on the other angelic levels.

However, the tenth level, which is closest to human beings, called '12s-im, is visible to the prophets. All agree that they possess the form of a body, similar to [that of] a human being, and very awesome. And the prophet sees all sorts of his powers becoming weaker and changing from form to form, until his powers cast off all forms and are embodied in the power of the form revealed to him, and then his strength is exchanged with that of the angel who speaks with him. And that form gives him strength to receive prophecy, and is engraved in his heart as a picture, and when the messenger has performed his mission the prophet casts off that form and returns to his original form, and his limbs and strength come back as they were before and are strengthened, and he prophesies in human form.<sup>92</sup>

which is the reason for the "response," and the person speaking, from Abulafia's own words, who describes this situation as an answer given by man to himself. It follows from this that we may reasonably assume that the human form is no more than a projection of the soul or intellect of the mystic, who carries on a dialogue with it at the time of pronounciation. The ontic status of this figure may be inferred from Abulafia's following comments in 1-iayyey ha-`01cim ha-Ba):

We, the community of Israel, the congregation of the Lord, know in truth that God, may He be praised, is neither a body nor a power within the body nor will He ever be corporealized. But at the time that the prophet prophesies, his abundance creates a corporeal intermediary, which is the angel.Â°7

It follows from this that the human form seen is an imaginary creation, and is thus "bodily" (real) even though its source lies in the human intellect. These opinions of Abulafia, in which 'prophecy' or mystical experience is interpreted in terms of a dialogue between man and his inner essenceâthe

intellectâ□□are not new. Already in Gnosticism, we learn of meetings between man and his own image as the climax of self knowledge." This idea appears in Hebrew in the book Sefer ha-tlayyim, attributed to R. Abraham ibn Ezra, 89 which states: Image (temunah)â□□this refers to a vision within a thing, like the electrum (hagmal) within the fire, and in the manner that a man sees a form within the water or the form of the moon or the form of some other thing or the form of himself,9Â° "and he shall see the image of God"â□□he sees his own image in the light of God and His glory, and this is,9 ' "a form against my eyes."

In R. Judah ibn Malka's Commentary to Sefer Yesirah, we read a passage similar to that of R. Isaac ha-Kohen:93

The author said: I have seen with my own eyes a man who saw a power in the form of an angel while he was awake, and he spoke with him and told him future things. 94 The sage said: Know that he sees nothing other than himself, for he sees himself front and back, as one who sees himself in a mirror, who sees nothing other than himself, and it appears as if it were something



separate from your body, like you. In the same manner, he sees that power which guards his body and guides his soul, and then his soul sings and rejoices, distinguishes and sees." And three powers overcome him: the first power is that which is intermediary between spirit and soul, and the power of memory and the power of imagination, and one power is that which imagines. And these three powers are compared to a mirror, as by virtue of the mixing the spirit is purified, and by the purification of the spirit the third power is purified. But when the spirit apprehends the flux which pours out upon the soul, it will leave power to the power of speech, according to the flow which comes upon the soul, thus shall it influence the

Testimonies of vision of the self, within the context of the process of prophecy, appear in those circles with which Abulafia had a certain degree of contact:

90 The Mystical Experience power of speech, and that itself is the angel which speaks to him and tells him future things.

## The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 91

Here, as in Abulafia, a certain relationship is posited between the Active Intellect and the human powers embodied within it. However, while in the three examples thus far cited the element of dialogue is totally lacking, this element does appear among Abulafia's students, apparently as a result of his influence. In *S OSan Sochit*,<sup>95</sup> there is a statement quoted in the name of R. Nathan, whom I believe to have been a direct disciple of Abulafia: <sup>96</sup>

Know that the fullness of the secret of prophecy to the prophet is that suddenly he will see his own form standing before him, and he will forget himself and disappear from it, and will see his own form standing before him and speaking with him and telling him the future. Of this secret the sages said, <sup>97</sup> "Great is the power of the prophets, for they make the form similar to its creator," and the sage R. Abraham b. Ezra said, "The one hearing is a man, and the one speaking is the man."

the omission of the subject of speech does not signify that the appearance of the self-image was unconnected with speech. As we have seen above, this anonymous Kabbalist enjoyed speech which emerged from himself, for which reason it is not mentioned in the present context. Abulafia's influence upon R. Isaac of Acre, through R. Nathan, may be seen in the former's 'osar Hayyim, where he writes:

Come and I will enlighten you concerning a major principle in reading; and speaking, or saying or vision (mahazeh) or a sight (huizOn), and of the reality of the hands of God, and the reality of speech or of the burden of speech or elocution or a prophetic dream, or seeing or burden of the spirit or the downtreading of the spirit or a gift of the spirit or the reality of the spirit of God and the spirit of God; all these and more than these you shall find in the written Torah, and all these and those similar to them are the new flux, the spirit of God, which comes to dwell in the pure soul which is worthy of it, in which it was not present at the beginning. It is like the case of a king in a favorable hour, who gives a generous

gift to one of his princes who came before him at that time; the prince will rejoice in it and divide it with the members of his household. So does this supernal spirit of holiness suddenly come and dwell in the soul of this prophet or visionary who is deserving of the spirit of prophecy or in the soul deserving of the Holy Spirit in his soul alone, or the soul deserving only a Heavenly Voice speaking within it, teaching him sciences which have never been heard or have never been seen, written without revealing the future, or revealing to him the future without any order concerning a mission, but to him alone; or with the command of a mission to an individual, or being commanded to go on a mission to many— all these will be heard when the ear hears and understands the voice of the words of its friend who speaks to him, but his fellow will not hear all this, but only he alone, even if at that time he is among a hundred or a thousand people.

The connection between 'prophecy' and foretelling the future also appears in Abulafia, who writes in 1:layyey ha-`01am haBa' 98

that the third level of prophecy is "to receive the command of a thing in telling the future." By contrast, another disciple of Abulafia; R. Nathan ben Sa(adyah Harar, only knows of the appearance of the image of the Self without speech. In , (5g.tin we read the following:

Another sage wrote about this as follows: By the power of [letter-] combination and concentration, that which I described in Sacarey Sedeq happened to me, [namely,] that I saw the light going with me. But I did not merit to see the form of myself standing before me, and this I was unable to do.<sup>99</sup>

This statement incorporates a double testimony: 1) that this disciple knew of the high level attained by R. Nathan; 2) that

92 The Mystical Experience [All this will happen] after he has stripped off every corporeal thing, because of the great immersion of his soul in the divine spiritual world: this "container" [Hebr.: helcala; i.e., form of the body] will see his own form, literally,

standing before him and speaking to him, as a man speaks to his friend; and his own form will be forgotten, as if his body does not exist in the world. Therefore the sages said, "great is the power of the prophets, for they make the form similar to its creator"; their soul stands opposite them in the form of the very "container" speaking with them, and they say that the Holy One, blessed be He, speaks with them. And what caused them this great secret? The stripping out of sensory things by their souls, and their casting off from them and the embodiment in the divine spirit. And this spirit shall at times come to all the prophets, according to the Divine Will. But the master of all the prophets, Moses our Teacher, peace upon him, always received a holy spirit which did not leave him for even one hour, only when his soul was still sunk in corporeal things, to hear the words of the Israelites that he might guide them and instruct them, either in temporary or permanent instructions, for which reason he had to say, "Stay and I shall hear what God commands" (Num. 9:8); he stood and separated from them and isolated himself and cast his soul off from those sensory things with which he was involved on their

behalf, and there rested upon him the spirit and spoke within him.<sup>10</sup>

## The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 93

2. In 'Or ha-Sekel, the above-cited passage is preceded by a dis-

cussion concerning the different levels of prophets, reminiscent of the discussion which appears in R. Isaac of Acre, following the parable of the generous king: "the level of those who pursue prophecy is greater than that of those who pursue wisdom, and the level of the prophets who speak and compose [books] is greater than that of the prophets who make intensive effort in prophecy, and those [prophets] who are sent are superior to the others," etc.<sup>2</sup> These two ideas appear in a book written in honor of R. Nathan, Abulafia's disciple. 3. The double meaning of the word "speech" in Abulafia, as discussed above, is reflected in R. Isaac of Acre in the words: "the form of the very 'container'

speaking with them, and they say that the Holy One, blessed be He, speaks with them.â□□103 4. The understanding of Moses as one who at times abandoned the mystical life in order to lead the people is likewise alluded to in Abulafia, who speaks about the return of the mystic "from God" in order to help others to achieve perfection." Finally, one ought to take note of a passage in 'Eben Sappir by R. Elnathan ben Moses Kalkish, a fourteenth-century Byzantine Kabbalist, who knew Abulafia's writing and his circle well:105

For every apprehension which man receives of the spiritual apprehensions, its beginning is in human thought, and when man thinks continually concerning things which exist and their essence and about supernal and mundane activities, and of the Divine guidance which guides all, and which guards all this order of existence which is ordered by God, may He be blessed, and he removes his thought from everything apart from this, and views all corporeal and bodily matters as the image of contingent things, and spiritual matters as the essential ones; and everyday he adds to these sublime thoughts,



I would like to point out several ideas in this passage which are quite close to Abulafia's approach. 1. The parable of the king's generosity. R. Isaac of Acre's view was apparently influenced by a passage from 'Or ha-Sel. cel, in which it states that, "the flux... And this is compared to a king and a pauper, the latter being in the most extreme destitution. And the king flowed with wealth, to make wealthy each man to his fellow, until the great wealth reached that slave's master. â□□101

94 The Mystical Experience until from the gathering of their multitude there is born its offspring, called wisdom, and from its abundance is born further understanding<sup>6</sup> and knowledge. And he shall do all this by combining the holy letters and words and the pure language, which are the vehicle of all thoughts, then there are born from their combination thoughts of wisdom and understanding, and, because of its intense meditation on them, the intellect will perceive reality, and there will come the renewed spirit, which made the fruit of the intellect, from the source of the

wondrous thought and will speak by itself; but the thinker will recognize that there is a mover and cause which causes him to think and to speak and to guide and to compose until, through the great activity, the inner one will return as if it is external apprehended, and the two of them, the one apprehending and the object of apprehension, are one thing, and they are intellectual apprehension.

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 95

opinion, includes direct first-person evidence of an experience of this kind. We read in *Sefer ha-'o t*, pp. 81-82: I was shown a new vision by God, with a new name upon

a renewed spirit... I saw a man coming from the west with a great army, the number of the warriors of his camp being twenty-two thousand men 107 ... And when I saw his face in the sight, I was astonished, and my heart trembled within me, and I left my place and I longed for it to call upon the name of God to help me, but

that thing evaded my spirit. And when the Man has seen my great fear and my strong awe, he opened his mouth and he spoke, and he opened my mouth to speak, and I answered him according to his words, and in my words I was strengthened and I became another man.'Â°8

We see here a description of the progress from apprehension of the intellectives of external things, their internalization, and their implantation within the human soul. By the process of letter-combination, the inner intellectual objects are likely to be transformed into external ones, causing the impression or the experiences that the motivation for human actions is external to himself.

One need not dwell upon the fact that "the form of a man" appears in this vision. It is worthwhile taking note of the dialogue between them: the man wishes to speak, "opened his mouth and he spoke"; the speech was, however, externally caused: "and he opened my mouth....and I answered him." The expression, "I

answered according to his words," is indicative of the source of the speech. The verse quoted from the Book of Samuel likewise strengthens the interpretation of this passage as an expression of an event taking place within Abulafia's consciousness. It is appropriate to examine more fully the description of the man: On his forehead was a letter inscribed in blood and ink on two sides, and the shape of the letter was like the shape of a staff separating between them, and it was a very hidden letter. The color of the blood was black, and changed to red, and the color of the ink was red, and behold it was black, and the appearance of the letter separating between the two was white. Miraculous was that which was revealed by the seal, [which is] the key within the forehead of he who came [the man], and all the army of the band was turning about and traveling in accordance to it [i.e., the seal or the key].

## 5. The Vision of the Human Form

We have seen above that the appearance of the "human form," and the conversation between it and the mystic, are both a phenomenon discussed on Abulafia's writings and something to

which his disciples referred as a personal experience. Thus far, we have only dealt with the theoretical aspect of this subject in Abulafia's i.e., we have cited various passages which describe the path by which the prophetic state is reached but we have not found any evidence of personal experience in these passages. We shall now turn to another work of Abulafia's which, in my

## 96 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 97

Is this description meant as an external representation of Abulafia's soul? Let us first examine his words in *Sitrey Tarah*:<sup>9</sup>

It is known and conspicuous to all the Sages of the Torah who are Kabbalists, nor is it concealed to the true philosophers, that every man is given a choice without any compulsion and without any force, but there is a human power within man, and it is called the

'Stirring Power' (koah ha-mecorer), and it is that which arouses his heart to do or not to do [any thing]. And after this, man finds in his heart one who forces him between these two opposites, and whichever of them shall be victorious over him will activate the limbs to perform actions for good or for evil; and this principle shall return, of man always struggling and warring against the thoughts of his heart, the two former motivating all of the aspects of his many thoughts, as is written in Sefer Yesirah,"° "The heart in soul [i.e., within man] is like the king in a battle"... And a man possesses these two forms, called impulses or powers or angels or thoughts or comprehensions or however you wish to call them. For the intent of them all refer to one thing, but the main thing is to apprehend His reality and to recognize their essence in truth, by proofs which are based upon tradition and reason, and to distinguish between two paths of reality which they have, and to know the great difference between them in degree. And if the two are one reality or two combined together, and if they may be separated or if they do not receive separation. And when we see their battle in the heart, we may recognize that they are two, and they act one upon the other and affect one another, and therefore

there is time for this and time for that one, and it is like a small moment, like a point which cannot be divided, less than the blinking of an eye. And this is alluded to in [the saying] "There is a time with God like the winking of an eye," for it lacks the letter waw; it is written yeg cet [i.e., the plain spelling of the word yegu cat includes a waw, and signifies 'redemption' or 'salvation']; and know this.

imaginative thought; the intellective apprehension and the imaginative one; the Good Impulse and the Evil Impulse. Abulafia returns to this inner battle in Sefer ha-Dt, p. 81: "and the battle within the heart between the blood and the ink is very intense." On the same page, the nature of blood and ink are portrayed as image [selem, i.e., intellect] and likeness [demut, i.e., imagination]: that is, ink as the spiritual element, the intellect, and blood as the imaginative one." These two elements, as they do battle within Abulafia's heart, are described in Sefer ha-'ot, p. 81: "And I looked and I saw there [in my heart] my likeness and image moving in two paths." The same symbols used by Abulafia

to describe the inner battle of powers within man appear in the description of the man himself: "and on his forehead was a letter inscribed in blood and ink, into two sides." From this, we see that the blood and the ink as they battle within the soul are projected outside, and thus do they appear in the prophetic vision. What is the meaning of the "letter on the forehead" which separates between the other two letters? In Sefer ha-Dt, p. 82, Abulafia relates that a fount of seventy tongues flowed from between the sign of his forehead; "the sign on his forehead was called the potion of death by the man, but I called it the potion of life, for I transformed it from death to life." The allusion to "seventy tongues" may be properly understood if we assume that the meaning of the sign is the Active Intellect, which is the source of the seventy tongues. The Active Intellect is the potion of life for those who are able to receive its flux, while for those who are unable to do so it is the potion of death. 112 This concept also has a double meaning in both the person and the soul; in Sefer ha2ot, p. 82, we read, "And see with your eyes and understand in your heart the hidden letter inscribed on your forehead explicitly." On the one hand, it is possible to see the sign, while on the other



it is subject to understanding by means of the Intellect-your heart.  
On p. 83 of the same work, we find another idea connecting the  
letter to the Active Intellect:

It is clear from this passage that he is speaking about a  
permanent struggle between the Intellect and the Imagination; the  
Angel of Life and the Angel of Death; rational thought and

98 The Mystical Experience And I gazed at the letter inscribed on  
my forehead and I knew it, and my heart was enlightened when I  
looked at it, and my spirit lives with it eternal life, and its statue  
brought me to and its constitution moved me about, to speak and  
to compose this Book of the Sign.

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 99

In the Midrash 'Otiyot de-Rabbi Akiba, it states,"4

What is meant by [the verse], "" "you shall draw a line"? This teaches us that at the time that the Holy One, blessed be He, decreed that Jerusalem was to be destroyed, He called to the Angel of Death [alternative reading, "Gabriel"] and said to the angel: Go first to Jerusalem and pick out from within it the righteous and the wicked; and to every righteous man who is in it, draw a line of ink upon his forehead, a line of life, in order that he may live; and to every wicked person who is within it, draw a line of blood upon his forehead, that he may die. Relying upon this midra, Abulafia writes in Sefer ha-Melis: A line of life, a line of ink; and the line of death, a line of blood. And after this he showed us the form of his apprehension, and informed us that he had made the blood into ink â□□that is, from death to life. That is, he restored the soul of the spirit of life within him, with the apprehension, the form of a living, understanding and wise being, and he knew that it [i.e., the form] was deserving to survive eternally, by reason of the apprehension, and it was transformed from being dead to being alive."6

That cleaving which brings about "eternal life" is identical with that cleaving to the Active Intellect which is the source of the abundance causing the prophet to act and "to speak and to compose." We may now understand several passages from this vision. On p. 82, the man says to Abulafia:

You have been victorious in my war, and you changed the blood of my forehead, and their nature and color, and you have stood up to all the tests of my thoughts. Ink you have raised and upon ink you shall be engrandized; the letter you have sanctified, and by means of the letter ['ot: a pun upon the two meanings of the word, "letter" and "sign"] and wonder you shall be sanctified.

This man, who is the outcome of the transformation of the flow of the Active Intellect from an intellectual flow to an imaginary form, praises Abulafia because he has transformed the blood, the imaginative element, into ink, the intellectual component. This transformation was accomplished by means of the "letter" — evidently a reference to the letters of the Divine name mentioned below, with whose help man can actualize his intellect.

The transformation of the color, mentioned on p. 82, is likewise depicted as a transformation from death to life, "Life replaces death, requires the letter to find innocent and to give life." What is the connection between ink/blood and life and death? In the Talmud, Tractate Shabbat, we read:

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Gabriel: Go and record upon the forehead of the righteous a line of ink, that the angels of destruction may not rule over them; and upon the foreheads of the wicked a line of blood, so that the angels of destruction may rule over them."<sup>3</sup>

A slightly different formulation appears in Sitrey Torah:

"Adam and Eve" in gematria equals "my father and my mother" ('abi we- , immi), and their secret is blood and ink, and this latter is proven by this name, YHWH, and one who merits it will have engraved upon his forehead a *taw*- for one a *taw* of blood, for the other a *taw* of ink. And the secret of the *taw* of blood (*taw sel dam*) is that she is born (*Se-muledet*), and its matter is *taw dam*, which alludes to "likeness" (*demut*) [the letters of *taw dam* form

the word demut], meaning that it precedes man in existence. And from that there comes "your soul" (nafieka), and every "magician" (kagfan) will be turned about the path of magic (kegafim), and one who does so "spills blood" (Wel( dam). And the secret of the law of ink is "and the woman-that-gives-birth" (we-se-yoledet). Thus, you have

100 The Mystical Experience one form when she is born (k-muledet) and another when she gives birth (k-yeiledet)."7

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 101 [in] the form considered mentioned in your heart, which is before you.'2Â°

We learn from this that the message which the man gives to Abulafia is a confirmation of his success in transforming the imagination into intellect, by this means attaining eternal existence. This definition of eternal life appears in 'Or ha-Selcel.18

And when the false apprehension is negated, as mentioned, and is remembered in the mind from the heart of those who feel and the enlightened ones, then "death shall be swallowed up forever and God will erase tears from every face and the shame of his people will be removed for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." That is, the secret of the intellect will be revealed after its disappearance.

The innocent and the guilty doubtless refer to the intellect and the imagination: when the imagination is conquered by the intellect, there appears both inside and "outside" "the form," before which one must bow. Finally, we should take note that in two places in Sefer ha'Otâ passages not included in the vision of "the man" described above the idea of the prophet's conversation with himself appears. On p. 74, it states, "The heart of my heart (libbi) said to the inner heart of my heart (lepci121) to write down the ways of God, etc.," while on p. 80, we read "my heart (libbi) said to my heart (lebtibi)."

More expressively, Abulafia writes in Sefer ha-'Ot, 82 - 83:

More bitter than death is his filth, and therein is sunk his strength, and sweeter than honey is his blood, and therein resides his spirit, in the dwelling of his heart. The soul of every living, enlightened person travels from the tent of filth to the tent of the blood, and from the dwelling of the blood travels to the dwelling of the heart of heaven, and there you shall dwell all the days of your life.

6. The Vision of the Letters We may now refer to another vision appearing in Abulafia's writings to complete our discussion of the subject of "the form of a man." Already in Sefer ha-Nabon, attributed to one of the Ashkenazic Hasidim, we find the letters of the four-letter Divine Name revealed to the prophet 121 or seen as identical to the "Angel of Glory" or to Metatron, who also fulfill an important function in the revelation. 122 Abulafia connected the Ineffable Name to revelation by means of a gematria:

And indeed YHWH is his vision, and this is what is meant by "and he shall see the image of God" 123 â□□that is, that he gazes at

the letters of this Name and at their ways, and all hidden things are revealed to him. And the proof of this is that [the phrase] "and he gazes at the image of God" is the equivalent in gematria to "at the name of God he gazes," for the number of the final mem in ba-gim ("in" or "at" the Name) equals 600.'24

When man abandons the dwelling of the blood / imagination and actualizes his intellect, he cleaves to the Active Intellect, alluded to in "the heart of heaven," and thus brings about his survival. It is worth while mentioning an additional sign of the connection between "the man" and "the form" mentioned in Sefer lia-klegeg. In Sefer t, p. 83, he writes: "And I prostrated myself and bowed before him," referring to the man mentioned in the vision. In Sefer ha-Hekq, he states,

That one who finds a person innocent and conquered beneath him the one who is culpable, until he imprisoned himself and admitted and was conquered; and concerning this you straighten your heart immediately, that you bow before him



This passage deals with Moses who, like Joshua in the passage mentioned from Sefer ha-Niipon, received guidance for

## 102 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 103

his activity through contemplation of the four letter Name.<sup>25</sup>  
Abulafia's formulation of this, in his description of the revelation to Moses, closely matches what he wrote in his Hayyey ha-`01dm  
ha-Ba)<sup>26</sup>

The letters are without any doubt the root of all wisdom and knowledge, and they are themselves the contents of prophecy, and they appear in the prophetic vision as though [they are] opaque bodies speaking to man face to face [saying] most of the intellectual comprehensions, thought in the heart of the one

speaking them. And they appear as if pure living angels are moving them about and teaching them to man, who turns them about in the form of wheels in the air, flying with their wings, and they are spirit within spirit. And at times the person sees them as if they are resting in the hills and flying away from them, and that mountain which the person sees them dwelling upon or moving from was sanctified by the prophet who sees them, and it is right and proper that he call them holy, because God has descended upon them in fire, 127 and in the holy mountain there is a holy spirit. And the name of the holy high mountain is the Ineffable Name, and know this, and the ryw = 216) and secret of the mountain is Geburdh (might = 216), and he is the Mighty One, who wages war against the enemies of God who forget His Name. And behold, after this the letters are corporealized in the form of the Ministering Angels who know the labor of singing, and these are the Levites, who are in the form of God, who give birth to a voice of joy and ringing song, and teach with their voice matters of the future and new ways, and renew the knowledge of prophecy.

present in the vision of the lettersâ□□that is, its being an imaginary expression of an inner process. The latter part of the passage from Hayyey ha-Dlam ha-Ba) seems to allude to this view. In Sefer Ner 'Elohim,'<sup>29</sup> the mountain from which the letters jump off and to which they return is interpreted as an allusion to the head.

For it is known that the Torah was given on a mountain, and the blessing and curse on a mountain. And the harbinger [i.e., of Messianic redemption] will ascend a mountain, as is said, "on a high mountain get thee up, harbinger of Zion" [Isa. 40:9], etc. The mountain thus alludes to the head, for there is no other [organ] in the entire body as high and as distinguished as the head, and its secret is har es (mountain of fire), and it is like the comparison of the mountains to the land, for the heads are the roots, therefore it is said, 13Â° "And the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mountain, and Moses ascended"â□□that is, to the highest place that man may ascend, and even though it exists up above, it is impossible for any person to ascend higher than did Moses.

An identity is established here between the "mountain of fire", i.e., the place from which the Torah was given and the human head.

In Sefer ha-Haftarah , we find allusions to the duality of "mountain." On the one hand, it alludes to the power of the imagination:1-31

He was revealed in his glory on the holy mountain, and it is there a high and awesome mountain, in Italian monti barbaro, and it is alluded to [in the phrase] hizzateq ha-qcgeh (he strengthened the hard... ) and it was an act of miracle, which strengthened the breathing, and will also strengthen the soul, and it is the hidden name, the name of vengeance, which is the abominable name of the end and the sixth, which is "the false." And Raziel transformed the dwelling place of the imagination as he did, for Monti is the imagination, and it is Azazel; in Italian, Monti. Therefore it is said of it, 132 that it is a mighty and difficult mountain, high and steep, and behold, it was hung to his l'alto, and is like "high" in Italian... And Monti, "the heretic" (ha-mini = 115 = monti), "the right hand" ascended, and he is

This passage is interesting in a number of respects: like the image of man which is revealed to the prophet at the time of prophecy, the letters which are revealed also "speak"; these letters, which constitute the Divine Names, 128 do battle with the enemies of God just as did the man in the vision on p. 83 of Sefer t: "And the man was concealed from my eyes after he spoke his words, and he went and grew greater and stronger in his battles until he overwhelmed every enemy." One may ask whether the central idea in the vision of "the man" is also

104 The Mystical Experience Mento, who testifies that he is the 'false one,' and that is the meaning of Sacramento in Italian.

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 105

This passage tells us that mountain equals Monti ha-dimyon (the imagination) Azazel = 155, an identification which seems to have existed even before Abulafia demonstrated it by gematria. On the

other hand, as against the identification of "mountain" with "imagination," it is also identified with "intellect." 133 In the same treatise, further on in the above-mentioned passage, 134 we read:

We have found in this two urges both of which have the form of gold, in the allusion of "They were made two cherubim of gold," 135 and this matter of gold is that it turns [something to] gold, and their allusion is gem we-gem gemd, gam mesayyer u-mesuyydr.

also found within the human soul, and that the flying about and coming to rest are essentially inner processes. In Sefer ha-'Ot, p. 81, we read: "And he showed me the image and likeness moving about in two ways, in a vision in an image TR"Y K"W, one image and one likeness." 136 The Ineffable Name within man's soul incorporates both the image and likeness, which are the intellect and the imagination. On p. 80 of Sefer t, Abulafia again writes that "the people of God, the supreme holy ones, looking upon His Name gaze at the source of your intellects and see the divine

image within the image of your hearts. Indeed, the "image" refers to the head, for therein may be seen the heart of the vision." In 'Osdr `Eden Ganuz, the same idea is repeated with a minor variation, "And the two names are engraved in the heart and in the head, and they are alluded to in [the verse], 'there he gave them a law and a statute," 137 while in Sitrey TOrdh we speak of "the name inscribed in your soul in its truth." 138 The words of the author of Ner 'Elohim should be interpreted according to this same view of the Divine Name:

It is known to us by tradition that it is impossible for any of the prophets of Israel to prophesy without knowledge of the Name which dwells in his heart. And he is not aware [of this] except according to the hidden order in Sefer Yesirdh by which the prophet attains the order in the hidden things, and from both of them he will know the name of the one arranging, and it will speak to him and he will respond to it, and then it will show him the path in which he must go and the deed that he must do.139

The two urges referred to here by Abulafia are identical with the imagination and the intellect, which are the two cherubim, both of which apprehend. The end of the passage from Ner 'Elohim likewise points toward the possibility of interpreting the mountain as an allusion to the highest intellectual virtue to which Moses can reach. One may interpret in similar fashion the passage from MS. Jerusalem 8 1303, fol. 56a, connected to Abulafia or his circle, that "also in the divine mountain one shall apprehend and ascend in level and understand the flux of God, which comes from the highest mountain." It is worth mentioning that, in Sefer hajot, p. 76, it states of Abulafia that "God shall surely find the top of a high mountain, and its name is the fallen mountain and upon it sits the shepherd of his flock for twenty years," an allusion to the redemption anticipated in the year 1290, the twentieth year of Abulafia's prophetic career. To summarize our discussion of the passage in Hayyey hacoldm ha-Ba): the letters, which the prophet sees flying about, landing and returning to the mountains, are the letters of the Divine Name, which originate in the powers of the intellect and the imagination. It may be shown that the Names of God are



The name is found "in his heart," but the prophet speaks to it and the Name answers him and reveals to him his way. This approach is reminiscent of the words of the eighteenth-century Sufi sage, Nasser Muhammad 'Andalib of Delhi: "He sees the blessed form of the word 'Allah' in the color of light, written upon the table of his heart and upon the appearance of his imagination.'",140

## 106 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham AAulafia 107

To conclude, we shall cite a section from Sefer which clearly demonstrates that the letters seen by the prophet resemble in their function the "man" who is revealed:

After you find the appropriate preparation for the soul, which is knowledge of the method of comprehension of the contemplation of the letters, and the one who apprehends it will contemplate them as though they speak with him, as a man speaks with his fellow, and as though they are themselves a man who had the power of speech, who brings words out of his mind, and that man knows seventy tongues, and knows a certain specific intention in every letter and every word, and the one who hears it apprehends it in order to understand what he says, and the one hearing recognizes that he does not understand, except for one language or two or three or slightly more, but he [that one] understands that the one speaking does not speak to him in vain, except after he knows all the languages; then every single word within him is understood in many interpretations."

blessed is the Name of the Glory of his kingdom forever and ever... And I saw a name as follows, thus:

Just thus did I see it in its vocalization.142

Texts of the type mentioned above may have influenced the later practice of answering questions by visualizing the letters of the Ineffable Name, known from the letters of R. Elijah ha-Kohen of Izmir."

### The 'Urim and Tummim

The link connecting between the appearance of the letters of the divine Name and that of "the man" is the 'Urim and Tummim.

Opinion is divided as to the nature of these vessels: Rashi states that they were "the writing of the Ineffable Name." 144 We learn the meaning of this name from several sources: R. Jacob ben Asher, the Baal ha-Turim, wrote in his commentary on Ex. 28:30 that "[the phrase] the 'Urim and Tummim in gematria equals the Name of seventy-two letters," 145 which evidently reflects a parallel opinion given in Zohar II, 234b, "and it is customary in the seventy-two letters inscribed, which are the secret of the Holy Name, and all of them are called 'Urim and Tummim." In yet another tradition it is said that:

In the Kabbalah of R. Meshullam ha-Zarfati, which we received from the book called Raziel, [it states] that when you write these three verses in groups of three letters at a time, one arrives at the name of seventy-two letters, and they help to say great matters, of which there is no greater thing. This is the Ineffable Name of the 'Lrim and Tummim, which was [worn] upon the heart of the High Priest."<sup>6</sup>

The speech of the letters, whose image is like that of a man, which are the source of the seventy languages of man, reminds one of the "seventy tongues" of the man mentioned in Sefer ha-'Ot. Finally, let us note the presence of a strikingly suggestive element in this passage: the mystic must "imagine" the lettersâ□□that is, make use of the technique described in the chapter dealing with this subjectâ□□"and think as if they are speaking." On the other hand, in the writings of R. Isaac of Acre, the author of 'osiir 1-layyirn, we find testimony of the spontaneous appearance of the Divine Names:

The young one, R. Isaac of Acre said, I woke up from my sleep and there suddenly came before me three Tetragrammata, each one in its vocalization and place in the secret of the ten SefirOt of the void, in the middle line, on which depends the entire mystery of [the four worlds] Asilut, Beri)ah, Yesirah, `Asiydh, via the simple and felt intellect, alluded to in the secret of their vocalizations. And my soul rejoiced in them as one who had found a rare treasure, and they were these:

## 108 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 109

On the other hand, R. Abraham ibn Ezra thought that the 'Urim and Tummim alluded to the seven servants, that is, the seven planets.<sup>147</sup> Abulafia attempted to draw a connection between the interpretation of the 'Urim and Tummim as an internal matter with

that which saw it as an external matter. In *gamer Miswah*, 148 he wrote:

But the mystery of *wa-yanuir* (he said) is 'Urim' that is, the 'Urim and Tummim. And why are they called 'Urim? Because they enlighten (me,irim) their words. 149 And the light<sup>15</sup> which was created on the first day was one by which man may see from one end of the world to the other; for God, may He be blessed, saw that the wicked were not deserving of using it, so he hid it away for the righteous for the future. And this is the light of the Torah, as one to whom God has granted a little bit of knowledge and enlightened the eyes of his heart may see the entire world with its light. And these are the luminaries, which were created on the first day and on the fourth day, and that is the meaning of the name [beginning with] A "D'5' half the name and its plene equal Ale'f Dale"t, and it alludes to the thousand (1000) potentialities. And the meaning of that which they said, 152 "May God shine his face upon you," is that there is light before Him, by which every person can see what he sees, and this is the beginning of the light which the sun receives from it, just as the moon receives light from the light of the sun; and all this is a metaphor from light

to light, for the bright inner light which shines is a thing without a body, and it comes from this, for it is hidden away for the righteous. And as the righteous see it with many aspects, that light is itself called "face," and its immediate cause is the abundance from the Divine influx, and it is called by the name, "the Prince of the Face."

received by the righteous, that is, the enlightened ones who possess knowledge. In this passage, Abulafia accepts Ibn Ezra's opinion that the 'Urim refer to the luminaries—the sun and the moon. In another passage, Abulafia introduces the second view, namely, that "the 'Urim and Tummim are letters":154

The strongest of these holy combinations, from which you will know the secret of the Ineffable Names... And these are the letters which are called 'Urim and Tummim, which illuminate the eyes of the hearts, and complete the thoughts, 155 and purify the supernal thoughts, and enlighten the path of understanding, and make known the planetary positions, and teach the existence of separate beings, and tell the future.

With the assistance of letter-combinations, these names teach man wisdom and indicate to him the future. These two functions seem to me to allude to intellect and imagination, as the foretelling of the future was strongly linked to the perfections of imaginative power. 156 Let us now turn to 'Imrey gefer, 157 where Abulafia writes:

And of this (perfect) man it is said, 158 "And upon the image of the throne there sat an image, like the image of a man above it," and it was an image looking like it, and the vision was the image of the glory of God, and he saw himself as in a clear crystal, to the eyes and the heart. And perhaps the 'Urim and Tummim [referred to] are the inner ones, for the external ones are also thus called, but they are as in an unclear crystal; know this and understand it well. And the difference between these and these cannot be known except to one who has apprehended both of them, and he is one who has apprehended knowledge of the three-fold unique Name.



The 'Urim referred to here allude to the inner light and the light which comes from the Active Intellectâ□□the Prince of the Faceâ□□for which reason the intellectual soul is portrayed as the moon, receiving its light from the sun. 153 This influx is only

In the same work, we learn of the significance of the "clear crystal" (aspaqlaryah ha-me)irah), which is identified with the 'Urim and Tummim:

Comprehension of the Name by the Name; and it is a speculative examination into His Name, by means of the twenty-two

## 110 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 111

letters of the Torah, after knowledge of the matter of the ten St:fir-at, from aleph to yod, which include all those which come after

them, for they are fulfilled by them. And they, with their forms, are called the Clear Crystal, for all the forms having brightness and strong radiance are included in them. And one who gazes at them in their forms will discover their secrets and speak of them, and they will speak of him. And they are like an image in which a man sees all his forms standing opposite him, and then he will be able to see all the general and specific things.' 59

becomes the front, and he recognizes the nature of its innerness from outside, like the image of the 'Lrim and Tummim, which in the beginning cast light from within. "And you shall tell" is not straight, but only combines because of its form being incomplete, separate from its essence, until it is separated and enclothed in the form of his imagination, and therein it joins the letters by a perfect joining, ordered and ready. And this seems to me to be that form which is referred to by the Kabbalists as "garment"; but we have already commented on the matter of the names and their activities.'6'

The Divine Names are spoken of in two passages: in the first passage in the phrase "these and these," which is an allusion to the Name of seventy-two letters (eleh we-'eleh = 36 + 36 = 72), and following that by the "three-fold unique name," which is also an allusion to the seventy-two letter Name. In the second passage, the matter is explained as follows: study of the Name is like gazing into a mirror, in which a person sees his own image. This vision of the self is accompanied by speech, "and he spoke of them, and they spoke of him." If we remember that Abulafia explicitly mentions the "human image," we again have the typical prophetic-mystical situation of Abulafia. The 'Urim and Tummim are the inner form of man, that is, the Intellect and Imagination. It seems reasonable to assume that, in the phrase , aspaklaryah se-eyna me , trah (translated above as "the unclear crystal"), Abulafia intends to refer to the heavenly luminariesâ□□the sun and the moonâ□□which are corporeal things outside of man.'6Â° Let us now turn to Abulafia's disciple, R. Nathan ben Sa'aadyah Harar, who writes in g a c arey Sedeq.

If he is able to decide and to further continue (in lettercombination), he shall emerge from within to without, and it

will be imagined for him by the power of his purified imagination in the form of a pure mirror, and this is "the shining rotating sword" (Gen. 3:24), whose back side turns about and

The author associated Abulafia's remarks concerning letter-combination and the *lirim* and *Tummim* with the Talmudic idea that the *thin'* and *Tummim* worked by illuminating certain letters, which combined to provide the answer to the question posed.' 62 Like the *lirim* and *Tummim*, the human form is separated from within his body or his matter; after being separated, the human form, that is, the intellect, is clothed in an imaginary garment, just as the letters, which are isolated in their sense, combine into a word, a combination which is all no more than an imaginary garment for an answer containing meaning to the one inquiring. The stage of dressing is designated by the name *Tummim*, connected with the power of the imagination. Elsewhere in *g a c arey Sedeq*,<sup>63</sup> we read:

Know that these letters which are the holy letters may be called signs and traditions, which are depicted by their exterior form' 64

with prophetic agreement by the Holy Spirit, and that is the form which appears to the prophets, when the inside, concave form is reversed to an external, convex form, like the Tummim, as mentioned above.

The concave inner form is the intellect, while the external convex form is the imaginative form. Thus, we again return to the view that the powers of the soul are revealed to the mystic.

## 112 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 113

a rung, and its appearance was like that of bright blue, which was full around it from the east, and descends to the west strongly, and in its middle there passed through a very thick bar, and its length was like a third of the circle, so that it came out that its head was to the south and its end to the north, and it had four heads at its head [i.e., beginning], and likewise its end to the four

winds. And on each head there was a body, equal, having eight points, and six sections spotted like a carbuncle, and there were twelve lines to each one of them, and a fifth head, from this side and from that, until all of them amounted to five against five. And he said that these go to the right, and these to the left, and they accordingly threw the lots among known names. And he said that the Pur turns about from y"u to y"u, that is, from higher to higher, and from pair to pair, and he said that upon them is a great and awesome king who arranges and estimates all in wisdom. And he completed those visions with wisdom, which is the secret that turns about in wisdom night and day. And behold, I have written for you the plain meaning of the things in detail, but now I must explain to you their meaning, and this is impossible without a drawing of a ladder, and even though it cannot be drawn in truth but in a spherical [form], you will gain a certain benefit from the drawing of this circular [form]:168

## 8. The Circle

We have seen thus far that Abulafia's visions contain revelations of the contents of the human soul. We shall now examine a vision incorporating both a revelation of the soul, on the one hand, and a revelation of the world, on the other. We read in

Sefer ha-Melis:165

This is the meaning of "as the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on a rainy day. .,166 Just as the colored brilliance is seen in the rainbow on a rainy day, and is there with the brilliance of the sun, so do the humours, which are the rain and the showers and the vapor. And the smokes and the steams which are created by them and by the food which is in the principle organs and which ascend and descend, are the clouds themselves. And the brilliance of the soul, which is combined from the sphere and from the stars and luminaries, together with the brilliance of the abundance which flows from the sphere of the rainbow to the organs of the body, in general and in particular, which is "the appearance of the brightness round about, which was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of God."167 Therefore,

Raziel says that when he arrived at this knowledge and acquired it in his intellect, he knew the question which he was asked by the form, which he saw inscribed before him, as engraved by his Rock [i.e., God]. And this is clear testimony that he asked wisdom from his Creator and that wisdom he was taught by Him, blessed be His name. And then he returned to the matter of opening his eyes to see before him the tree of knowledge, whose name is life; that is, that which is to others a potion of death, and is the tree of knowledge, was to Raziel the potion of life, and he did not stumble in it as did others. And now seek to draw for us that which is its image, and he said that it is like a round ladder, and he counted its steps, and said that there are 360 rungs, and he saw that the width of each rung was like the span of a man's step, from foot to foot, and he saw that between each step there was as the length of

Know that this ladder must be drawn as a circle, if it stands before the person's eyes like a full sphere, rolling back and



## 114 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 115

forth before him, as if the man's face is toward the east and his back toward west, and the person is in the middle. And this is the spherical ladder which has two spherical lines and wide rungs, slightly between the two lines, and they are 360 rungs, and between each rung is the width of a rung, so that the length will be equal to the width, and its appearance like that of bright blue, like the image of the sky which turns about for one known special purpose. And man turns about with [the help of] twenty Sefirdtâ□□ five toes of his feet on his right side, and five on his left, and likewise five fingers of his hand to the south and five to the north, and they turn to the right or the left, and there are four heads to his head, and four to his end, and four winds from here to the south side and four winds to the north, and each head of them has upon it a body equal, like the image of a cube, and they are four cubes, and their names are "females" from here, and four

from here, and their names are "males" and they turned about and changed. And each of these cubes has six corners, speckled, a pair above, separated below it, and a pair below it, separated upon it. And all of the dots on them [add up to] 120 for these and 120 for these, with the fifth to here and the fifth to here; and that is the one which preponderates between them. And the number is 24, 24, and the dots are not fixed in them, but are like tablets ready to receive the dots, and because of the [circular] movement they are renewed. And were the ladder to stand [even] a small moment without turning, then all the corners of the cubes would be empty of all dots. But with the turns they are renewed, by justice and uprightness, according to the Divine rule by which he judges every living rational thing according to his deeds, by lot (Pur). And this secret is as it were witness and judge of the retribution and punishment. And this ladder is called the ladder of the world, and scales for the human being. And this is the subject of which Raziel informed me, and he further explained it in saying that the pur fell between the names and always turns about by justice, to judge in it he who is judged, and that when you shall contemplate your essence, you will find that ladder is inscribed

between the eyes of your heart, in general and in particular, and contemplate it very much, and know it.

I do not intend to analyze every detail of this vision; some are not sufficiently clear to me, while others are not relevant to our discussion. The opening statement of the vision is based upon an idea articulated by Maimonides in Guide for the Perplexed, III:7 (Pines, p. 429):

"And the appearance of the rainbow that is in the clouds in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the Glory of the Lord." The matter, the true reality, and the essence of the rainbow that is described are known. This is the most extraordinary comparison possible, as far as parables and similitudes are concerned; and it is indubitably due to a prophetic force. Understand this.

The analogy between man and the rainbow, appearing in Maimonides, was expanded by Abulafia: the rain, the showers

and the vapors of the rainbow correspond to the humours within man, while the clouds correspond to the smoke and steams within him. The circle, symbolizing a sphere, corresponds to the sphere of the cosmic axis (teli), while the bar is the cosmic axis itself.

This is clear from the description of the bar: it passes from south to north just as the axis passes over the world. This bar is already described in this manner in Ch. 1 of Beraita de-Semu'el: "Ndhag Bariah is the cosmic axis." 69 It follows that Abulafia's comparison of the sphere of man to "the sphere of the suspensory" is pertinent to this vision. m Abulafia emphasizes this point of comparison at the end of the vision: and this ladder is called the ladder of the world, and scales for the human being. By contemplation into himself, man may learn about the ladder: "And when you shall contemplate your essence, you will find that ladder, inscribed between the eyes of your heart, in general and in particular." The principle which operates both in the ladder and in man is the point of comparison; in the ladder, he refers to the "lot and die," "justice and uprightness," "witness and judge," "retribution and punishment." These word-pairs allude to the

attributes of mercy and justice operating in the world. Likewise, in Sitrey Torah, Abulafia refers to "the secret of the one who is

## 116 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 117

innocent and guilty, in their coming before the judge, who is both witness and judge." 171 This refers to God, who manifests both the attributes of mercy and judgment—a fact confirmed by the gematria: ced (witness) = 74 = dayan (judge), while zakkay wehaydb (innocent and guilty) likewise adds up to 74. Elsewhere in Sitrey Tcirdh, it is clear that "innocent and guilty" allude to "blood and ink": i.e., the intellect and the imagination.' 72 In 'Osar 'Eden Ganuz, we read:

Behold, man has two urges, good and evil, and they are angels of God without any doubt, and are like the image of the two sides of the scales, which are always weighed and purified in their place

as they are, so that the power of one of them will overwhelm its fellow, will let judge the language and tend toward it, like the balance which inclines thereto.173

The two urges, likened to the two sides of the scales, clearly correspond to the imagination and intellect, alluded to in the expression in the vision, "scales for the human being." Let us now address ourselves to the double character of this vision: i.e., that it speaks about both a sphere and a ladder. The circle which appears in the vision and which is a projection thereof, is a well-known phenomenon; Carl Jung saw it as an archetype of the process of individuation of the personality or, in religious terms, the cleaving of the "I" to God. The emphasis upon the high spiritual level attained by Abulafia at the time he had the vision of the circle fits Jung's assumption.' 74 In the wake of Jung's studies, G. Tucci wrote, in the introduction to his book on mandala:

My aim has been to reconstitute, in their essential outlines, the theory and practice of those psycho-cosmogrammata which may

lead the neophyte, by revealing to him the secret play of the forces which operate in the universe and in us, on the way to the reintegration of consciousness.175

in Buddhist and Hindu practice. From this point of view, one may see in Abulafia's vision additional evidence for the appearance of the archetype of the mandala; like it, the sphere reveals both the structure of the universe and of man and of those powers acting within them. One ought to take note of his words in this vision:

"the matter of opening of one's eyes, to see before him the tree of knowledge, whose name is life; that is, that which is to others a potion of death, and is the tree of knowledge, was to Raziel the potion of life, and he did not stumble in it as did others." This passage, which is connected with the appearance of the sphere, ought to be compared with his words in *Sefer ha'Ot*, p. 82, at the time of the appearance of "the man": "the sign on his forehead is the potion of death, as the man called it, and I called it the potion of life, for I transformed it from death to life." These two passages suggest that the visions are accompanied by an inner event, a

kind of synthesis between the two forces of the soul—the intellect and the imagination—which are alluded to by blood and ink. In Sitrey TOrdh,' 76 we learn that:

The brain is a place which receives all kinds of images. But witnesses come from it and tell us his powers; and they are two trees, and each tree is an image, 177 and all the flux of the likeness 178 constitute two trees, which are two 179 ... but one tree adds wisdom, and the other adds desire; the tree of life adds science, 180 and the tree of knowledge adds science, 181 and the tree of life is a 182 and the tree of knowledge lots. 183 "One lot 184 to God, and one lot to Azazel": the first for good, the middle for the possible, and the last one for evil... For they have sent forth their hand to know the power of their foundation, and they exchanged their glory for an image of flesh and blood, and they did not eat from the tree of knowledge, and their wicked soul cannot be saved, even though the tree of life they did not see, and they did enter by their corrupt ways for they were created in vain, and to joke of themselves they were found, and happy are those who understand the sciences, and in their victory in the wars they shall gain two worlds.



The psycho-cosmogrammaton referred to by Tucci is the mandala, or circle, which forms the central object of meditation

## 118 The Mystical Experience

This passage epitomizes Abulafia's awareness of the need to connect between the intellect and the imagination-that is, to bring the intellect to rule over the imagination, as a consequence of which the soul is saved. We may cite here the words of the anonymous author of Sefer ha-Seruf, connecting together the sphere, the ladder, and the revolution which takes place in man in connection with an experience of sphere or the ladder:

## The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 119

the foundation of the power of the true spiritual sphere... from now on and forever more, Amen, Selah.

It seems reasonable to assume that the things cited in Sefer ha-Seruf influenced R. Elnathan ben Moses Kalkish, who wrote in his book, 'Eben ha-Sappir'88

Know that when the sphere of the intellect is turned about by the Active Intellect, and man begins to enter it and ascends in the sphere which revolves upon itself, as the image of the ladder, and at the time of ascent, his thoughts will be indeed transformed and all the images will change before him, and nothing of all that he previously had will be left in his hands; therefore, apart from the change in his nature and his formation, as one who is translated from the power of sensation to the power of the intellect, and as one who is translated from the telurian process to the process of burning fire. Finally, all the visions shall change, and the thoughts will be confounded and the imaginative apprehensions will be confused, since in truth this sphere purifies and tests."

While this passage does not refer to the vision of the sphere, but to an experience of it, the proximity between the sphere and the ladder and the spiritual contents connected with them remind us

to a great extent of Abulafia's approach. The connection between the ladder and the sphere are again discussed in another passage, related to Sefer ha-Seruf, in connection with the spiritual manifestations connected to 'prophecy': 186

God, may He be praised, gave us the Holy Torah, and taught us the way of combination [of letters] and the steps of the ladder, in describing the letters, in seeing that it is not within the ability of our apprehension to attain knowledge of Him, may He be blessed, without this great and correct proposal... for... from the light and seraphic sphere of the intellect," there shall be born as the image of the prophetic image, which is the intention of combination [of letters]. And according to its refinement and the power of its innerness, they are worthy to be called premises to all those upon its face, for they are the levels by which to ascend on high, because it is the balance of the scales, depending on the light of the intellect, but not in sensible light.

The comparison between the sphere, the circle and the scales, alongside the doctrine of combination of letters and the

achievement of prophecy, constitutes a clear indication that techniques originating in ecstatic Kabbalah were drawn upon during the two generations following the death of Abraham Abulafia within the region of Byzantine culture. Let us now turn to the vision of R. Isaac of Acre, which also includes the appearance of a wheel. In 'Osiir kinyyim, he states:

I swear to you by the vision of the image of God, by the Creator, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, by the Ineffable Name, yhwh, that you inform me of the secret of prophecy at any time that I request it by my mouth, and that you teach me the [secret of the] World to Come' 87 and the law of the king, and inform me of the one ladder by which I may ascend to the house of the Lord God, to know His awesome ways, and to know the ways of the ancient ones, and make constant in me

I awoke from my sleep and suddenly I saw the secret of the saying of the rabbis concerning Moses our teacher's writing of the Torah, that he saw it written against the air of the sky, in black fire

upon white fire. This is that, when a man ascends a very high mountain, standing within a broad flat valley without any hills or mountains within it, but only a great plain, and he lifts up his eyes and they look about and he gazes at the firmament of the heavens close to the earth, around around,

## 120 The Mystical Experience

to the place of the sky close to the earth, as it appears to his eyes, this is half the circle, and is known in the language of the sages of the constellations [astrology] as the circle of the horizon. This was seen by the soul and intellect of Moses our teacher, surrounding him from above the entire Torah, from the letter bet of Beregit ("In the beginning"), which is the first letter, to the lamed of Yisra ,e1 (Israel), written in one complete circle, each letter next to its neighbor, surrounded by parchment. That is to say, it is as if there were a hair's breadth between one letter and the next, for all the air which is around the letters of the Torah is entirely within the circle, and between each letter and outside of the letters there was white fire, dimming the circle of the sun, and

the letters alone were of black fire, a strong blackness, the very quintessence of blackness. She [Moses' soul] gazed at them here and there to find the head of the circle or its end or its middle, but did not find anything... For there is no known place by which to go into the Torah, for it is wholly perfect, and while he yet gazes at this circle, she combines on and on into strong combinations, not intelligible.<sup>19</sup>

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 121 introduction to Nahmanides' Commentary to the Torah, which states that Moses was "like a scribe copying from an ancient book and writing." 192 The expression, "spherical like the sun," which appears in the passage from R. Shem Tov ibn Gaon, is parallel to "the circle of the sun" in that from R. Isaac of Acre. It would [therefore] appear that the appearance of the circle in the visions of both authors is not coincidental, but that an historical connection exists between their words; it seems likely that R. Shem Tov was influenced, in one way or another, by the opinions of R. Isaac of Acre, even though in matters of theosophical Kabbalah the direction of

influence was the opposite.<sup>193</sup> Another motif in R. Isaac of Acre is the vision of the ladder. In a passage published by Gottlieb, R. Isaac states: "so long as I was looking at this ladder, which is the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, I see my soul cleaving to the 'Eyn Sof with the master of creation."<sup>194</sup> The understanding of the Divine name as a ladder first appears in Abulafia, who says: "in the Name my intellect found a ladder to ascend to the level of vision,"<sup>195</sup> while he writes elsewhere:<sup>196</sup>

The ladder seen by Jacob our Father was Sinai,'<sup>97</sup> and this great secret was revealed by means of gematria. .. and it was known to us that the secret of Sinai is double (kefel) and it is easy (gal) and there come out of it the two holy names, Adonay Adonay, and there emerge from the names the five unique ones, the secret of each one of whose secret is heavy (laibed).

The appearance of the Torah, as a circle revealed to the eyes of the one who is contemplating it, reappears in *Baddey ha'ArOn* by R. Shem Tov ibn Gaon:

When he has no friend with whom to practice concentration as he would wish, let him sit by himself... And he shall begin to write what he sees in his mind, like one who copies from a book that is written before him, in black fire on white fire, in a true spherical form, like the sun, for the light has come upon him at that hour.'<sup>91</sup>

It seems to me that the resemblance between these two statements is not coincidental. Baddeley ha-'Aron describes one who writes things down from his own mind as one who copies from a book; there is no doubt that this book is to be identified with the Torah, written in black fire upon white fire. The description of the act of writing is likewise suitable to Moses, who is mentioned by R. Isaac of Acre. The description of the one meditating given by R. Shem Tov is similar to that of Moses in the

Sullam (ladder) = 130 = Sinai = Adonay Adonay = 65 = 65 + 5 x 26 = 130. On the other hand, elsewhere in R. Isaac of Acre we learn that the Divine Names are written in circles.' <sup>98</sup> "I heard them say to me that I ought not to remove the name of the Mighty



One from the thought of my mind in all the ways of my prayers, and my blessings will never be removed from my eyes, in the proper circles." We find evidence for the understanding of the Torah as a circle in the fourteenth century, 199 and it may be that these are

## 122 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 123

in turn indicative of an older idea which saw the Torah as a circle. 200 The articulation of this idea may be found in the works of Abulafia, R. Isaac of Acre, and R. Shem Tov ibn Gaon.

in Arabic one calls an elder a "sheik" (sek), and a young man (na ctir) is numerically equal to [sodo] it sek. One of the disciples said: but in Arabic one does not read [the word] Sek without the letter

yod, but only with it, as follows: "Seyk." And what will one do with these 'ten' extra [numbers]? And he did not answer him at all, and the thing remained in doubt; and "doubt" (safeq) in the Arabic language is called Sek; and today I saw it said that, so long as Metatron the Prince of the Face is satisfied with his own influx, he is a sek without the letter yod, with the accented kaf, and it means "doubt" [in Hebrew sfq may also be vocalized as meaning: "supply"], since the influx of Almighty God is dependent upon the created being, and it is in the hands of the children of Israel; and whether if the generation is guilty the influx stands by itself and does not flow, and each one makes do with the flow of himself, but if the generation merits it the abundance of Almighty God awakens and flows, so that there is neither Satan nor evil influence, and all is peace, life and blessing. Therefore, when there is no influx forthcoming, Metatron Prince of the Face is called sek without yod, being called Metatron without ydd, but when the influx comes within him he is called Seyk with ydd, as he is called Metatron with ycrid.

9. Metatron Let us turn now to another subject concerning Abulafia's influence on R. Isaac of Acre. In Hayyey ha-`01dm ha-Ba', 201 we read:

After you utter the twenty-four names, whose sign is dddi (my beloved), and "the Voice of my beloved knocketh,"<sup>202</sup> then you shall see the image of a youth or the image of a sheik, for sek in the language of the Ishmaelites means "elder," and also in gematria it equals [the phrase] "a youth and he is old" (na ctir we-hu zdtren); and the secret of his name as seen to you is Metatron. And he is a youth, and hearken to his voice... and when he speaks, answer him: <sup>203</sup> "Speak O master, for your servant speaks."

This brief description of the appearance of Metatron is of a didactic character; it is intended to portray the anticipated meeting between the mystic devotee of Abulafia's path with the angel Metatron, i.e., the Active Intellect. Our passage was discussed within the circle of Abulafia's disciples; we find some of the traces of this discussion in 'Osiir

Still on this very day we saw a direct reason why Mo geh (i.e., Metatron, Prince of the Face) is called "a youth" (na car), "For Israel is a young lad, and I have loved him," 205 and he himself says "I was a lad and now I am old," 206 And the Sages say,207 "the Prince of the World said this verse." And I heard from my master, saying, that turtir is a designation referring to the oldest of all the created things, 208 but he is deserving to be called an elder, and not a lad. And I say that this is a designation, for

Hayyim: 204

R. Isaac of Acre's words indicate that the teacher quoted here was either Abulafia or one of his disciples who knew Hayyey ha-Dldm ha-Ba', as may be seen from the striking resemblance between the two quoted passages. In both cases, the same mistake is made, deriving from lack of knowledge of Arabic: geic is calculated as having a numerical value of 320, apparently based upon its sound, while the correct spelling is with yoc1.209 We may now ask whether this is a strictly theoretical discussion

or whether the two passages in fact reflect personal experience. Both authors in fact give evidence of "meetings" with Metatron or of its pseudonyms mentioned in the above section. On p. 84 of Sefer ha-'Ot, we find a description of a meeting with an old man during the course of a vision: "And he

## 124 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 125

showed me an old man, with white hair, seated upon the throne of judgment<sup>210</sup> ... and he ascended to the mountain of judgment, and I came close to the elder and he bowed and prostrated himself." The old man interprets Abulafia's vision and then says, "And my name [is] Yehoel, that I have agreed (ho'il) to speak with you now several years." The name "Yehoel" seems a clear allusion to the fact that the old man is Metatron himself. We learn

from a discussion concerning Enoch and Metatron in Sitrey

Teirdh211 that:

R. Eleazar of Worms said that he [i.e., Metatron] has seventy names, as I have been shown by our holy rabbis concerning this in Pirgey de-Rabbi Eli cezer and by others in the works of R. Akiba and R. Ishmael which are well known... and in order to arouse your mind to it, I will write a few of those things which arouse man's intellect toward the ecstatic Kabbalah, and I will inform you of what he 212 said of him at first. Know that the first of the seventy names of Metatron is Yehoel, and its secret is "son," 213 and its essence is Ana, which is Elijah... and he is the Redeemer.

these kisses of mine were not upon the back of his hand, but upon the palm of his hand, and his hand was very wide.214

Here, as well, the meeting portrayed in the vision is seen as a personal contact, in which there is a relationship going beyond

the revelation of secrets characteristic of the revelations of Metatron in the Merkabah literature. However, one must remember that in these passages as well, Metatron appears as a teacher, and the mystic as a disciple, the vision thus being one of the revelation of the divine teacher.<sup>215</sup>

10. The Fear As we have seen above, Abulafia's visions were given an appropriate interpretation with the aid of philosophical terminology. There seems no doubt that Abulafia was aware of the character of his visions, for which reason it is difficult to understand, on the face of it, why they were accompanied by descriptions of states of fear and panic. If the prophetic experience is, in principle, a revelation of spiritual processes or of the means of guiding the world, why must Abulafia fear that very experience which he seeks with his entire being? Two different possible answers to this question are possible: one may accept Jung's view that man's self-understanding of his soul is accompanied by curiosity and fear, <sup>216</sup> for which reason Abulafia feared the vision; or one may adopt the theory of Rudolph Otto,

who sees the revelation of God as the revelation of a "wholly other" essence, inspiring fear in the heart of the person to whom it is revealed.<sup>217</sup> Let us begin with Abulafia's own words on this matter; in Sefer ha-T) t, p. 82, Abulafia writes in connection with the appearance of "the man":

And when I saw his face in the vision, I was astonished and my heart was frightened within me, and it moved from its

In my opinion, this passage establishes that the old man in Sefer ha-Dt is none other than an imaginary embodiment of Metatron, that is, the Active Intellect. The meeting between the elder and Abulafia bears a personal character: it is not described in terms of a connection between two intellects but as one between two people. In Sefer ha-'0- t, p. 84, we read: "And I fell on my face toward the earth before his legs, and he placed his two hands upon me and he stood me upon my legs before him and said to me: 'My son, blessed is your coming, peace peace unto you.'" This personal approach is repeated in a work of R. Isaac of Acre:



While I was yet sleeping, I, Isaac of Acre, saw Metatron, the Prince of the Face, and I sat before him, and he taught me and promised me many good things that would come to me... and to my joy he came, and at his command I took his hand and kissed him many times, [with] successive kisses of love, and

126 The Mystical Experience place. And I wished to speak, to call to the name of God to help me, but the thing moved away from my spirit. And when I saw that man, my dread was tremendous and my fear was very intense.

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 127

wishes to speak with him more than he wishes to speak with the king. "222 In 'Or ha-Seke<sup>1</sup>, 223 Abulafia reveals the nature of the king whom one must fear: "The intellect, which is the source of wisdom and understanding and knowledge, and which is in the image of the king of kings, whom all greatly fear. And behold, the

fear of this who comprehends is double-fold, for it is [both] fear (or "awe") of [His] Grandeur, and fear [which is coupled with] love."224 What is the reason for the fear, according to Abulafia? In all of the cases mentioned above, fear is connected with the participation of the power of imagination; in the mystical experience, this potential achieves increased activity, and, as we have seen at the beginning of the chapter, one of the consequences of which is fear. Prophecy may be described as a necessary cooperation between the intellect 225 and the imagination: the intellect requires the spiritual posture of love, while the imagination brings about fear since, according to Abulafia, there is a direct relationship between imagination, blood, and fear. Let us now turn to other factors liable to catalyze a situation of terror in connection with ecstatic experience.

An exaggerated description of fear appears in Sitrey

TOrah:2'8

And you become perfect in the knowledge of the well-known attributes of God, by which the world is always conducted. And let your mind pursue after your intellect, to resemble him in them, according to your ability always. And know in your intellect that you have already annihilated those faculties called superfluous to you, and let all your intentions be for the sake of heaven. And be God fearing in the essence of true fear, as you would fear the Angel of Death when you see it, entirely full of eyes. 219 In its left hand is burning fire, and in its right hand a two-edged sword, performing the vengeance of the covenant, and in its mouth is a consuming fire, and he comes to you and asks you to give him his share of your self; and he is half of your existence, for example, and he seeks to cut off your limbs, one by one, and you see it all with your eyes.

It is worth emphasizing here that Abulafia refers to the fear of God, which is "as though you would be afraid of the angel of death." The motif of fear reappears in 1:layyey ha-Ba>: "When you prepare yourself to speak with your Creator... wrap yourself in

tallit and tefillin on your head and your hands, so that you may fear and be afraid of the Sekinah, which is with you at that time." 22 ° This motif is connected with the description of the appearance of "the king" at the time of the vision found in the same book: "Portray this Name, may He be blessed, and his supernal angels, and draw them in your heart, as if they were human beings standing or sitting around you, and you are among them, like a messenger, whom the king and his messengers wish to send." 221 This motif is again found in Sefer where the mystic is portrayed as one "who the king sends after him and wishes to speak with in all events, as the king strongly

11. Dangers So long as the imagination was subject to the rule of the intellect, the images envisaged at the time of prophecy reflected intellectual truths. However, once the power of the imagination grew, there existed the danger that there would appear before the eyes of the mystic visions which have no connection whatsoever with the intellect. These images, which constitute the primary source of danger in mysticism, are

understood as "messengers of Satan," who attempts to mislead man's heart away from the pure intellectual service of God. In Hayyey ha-Boy, Abulafia warns:

## 128 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 129

Do not remove your thoughts from God for any thing in the world; and even if a dog or a rat or another thing jumped across you, which was not in your house, [know that] these are the acts of Satan, who scouts about in your mind and creates things which have no reality at all, and he is appointed over

In 1--layyey

ha-Ba', he writes:

However, this danger is not emphasized much in Abulafia's works. The complicated technique which he advocates, in which one is required to carry out several different activities simultaneously, thereby demanding the greatest possible concentration, is evidently in itself a guarantee against the mind wandering. This differs from both Sufism and Hesychasm, in which the formulae to be recited are simple, so that after a certain period of time these are recited in an automatic manner without any need for concentration. For this reason, there exist there the danger against which they constantly warn: namely, that in the course of reciting the Divine Name, the mystic is likely to think about other subjects. This is almost impossible in Abulafia, for which reason he does not devote much to warning against this. One of the widespread images used to suggest the danger inherent in letter-combination is burning fire. 227 Let us begin with several statements of Abulafia on this subject. In *Sitrey TOriih*, it says: "when you see the abundance of His goodness and the taste of His radiance in your heart, remove your face and afterwards again seek it bit by bit, and with this He will lift you up,

for the great fire guards the gate." 228 Elsewhere in the same work,<sup>229</sup> in connection with the temptation to make magical use of the Divine Names, he states: "Take care... as you take care against being burned by fire, and be not hasty to kill yourself" and "Combine and combine, and do not be burned." 23<sup>Â°</sup> In a similar manner, Abulafia writes in connection with the act of letter-combination: 23 ' "Know that the river Dinur 232 comes out from before Him, and the one combining must take care and be careful of its fear and for the Honor of His name, lest his blood flee<sup>233</sup> and he kills himself."

Take care against the great fire which surrounds the demons (sedim) created from the white seed, whose name is Satan, born from "the tail of the uncircumcised" (zenab carel), who uncovered nakedness (gilliih cerwah) and is deserving for this the retribution of evil (gemul ha-ra'), which is the evil body; and it is a life of the reason and imagination, causing the cause to compel the nature, by remembrance and knowledge.<sup>234</sup>

It seems clear from this that the great fire is vitally connected with human matter, for which reason it endangers the man who attempts to overcome it. In 1:layyey ha- `61iim ha-Ba ,, Abulafia writes:

Now, son of man, if you seek the Lord your God in truth and in wholeness, do not think to yourself use the Name, but of the knowledge of the Name and the comprehension of its actions, and not for the benefit of the needs of the body, and even though it is able to do so, and its activities and nature are such; but because you are compounded of the Evil Urge, you are a body of "flesh and blood," both of which are "angels of death," and one must think of their secret: the details of the matter include all the specific organs, and is called the matter of decomposition, and its name is the River Dinur, and its secret is "the individual living matter" [homer hay periitd, etc.235

A comparison of this passage with others pertaining to this subject indicates that, apart from the subject of the matter of man, there is an additional motif relating to fire, namely, the



involvement in the Divine Names. 236 While combining letters, the mystic is likely to be inadvertently turned into a magician, by means of the incorrect use of the Names; such an act is a serious distortion of the goal of the Names, and brings about the sinking of the sinner into the material over which he wishes to rule. This thought is alluded to in the expression, "to compel the nature," as well as in the last-quoted passage.<sup>237</sup>

## 130 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 131

Unlike the image of the fire, which symbolizes the immersion into corporeality, we find among the students of Abulafia the image of sinking, which is intended to express the immersion of the mystic in the spiritual world, an immersion likely to bring about his death. In Sa Carey Sedeq, the disciple implores his master to give him

the "power" that will enable him to survive the awesome power of the revelation:

I said to him: "In heaven's name, can you perhaps impart to me some power to enable me to bear this force emerging from my heart and to receive influx from it?" For I wanted to draw this force toward me and receive influx from it, for it much resembles a spring filling a great basin with water. If a man [not being properly prepared for it] should open the dam, he would be drowned in its waters and his soul would desert him.<sup>238</sup>

While the motif of drowning is not in accord with Abulafia's spirit,<sup>24'</sup> there does reappear the warning that the moment of ecstasy is also likely to be the moment of death; we shall enlarge upon the subject of "Erotic imagery for the Ecstatic Experience" in Chapter Four.

12. Debequt

The topic of *debequt* (cleaving to God) in Jewish mysticism has been a subject of study by some scholars. Scholem devoted a detailed discussion to the subject, <sup>242</sup> concluding that, while there is a widespread tendency in Kabbalah to acknowledge the possibility of *communio* between the human soul and God, the concept of union or complete identity between the two is alien to the spirit of the Kabbalah. Other scholars, such as Tishby<sup>243</sup> and Gottlieb,<sup>244</sup> have noted passages in which there are nuances suggesting mystical union, but suggest that these cases are few and far between, and that the discussion of the authors of these passages is moreover sketchy, making it difficult to fully understand their exact meaning. <sup>245</sup> Abulafia was the first medieval Jewish mystic in whom we find more extensive evidence of mystical unity, sometimes expressing this in radical ways. I would like to begin by defining the meaning of the terms to be used below. The term "union" (Hebrew: *thud*) is parallel to the Latin *unio*, being used to refer to that state in which the human soul or its intellect cleaves to an external object, making the two of them into one. This broad definition, found among scholars of mysticism,<sup>246</sup> stresses the transformation of man's inner nature

as an essential precondition for the mystical experience. The adjective "mystical" defines and delimits the object of this union; it is union with these objects alone that makes the experience "mystical." A common denominator of all these objects is the fact that they are general or that they encompass more than the human soul or intellect; they include such spiri-

The image of drowning reappears in R. Isaac of Acre's

Now you, my son, make an effort to contemplate the supernal light, since I have certainly introduced you into "the sea of the Ocean" which surrounds the [whole] world. Be careful and guard your soul from gazing and your heart from pondering [upon the light], lest you sink; and the effort shall be to contemplate but [at the same time] to escape from sinking, and you shall see your World [to Come] in your lifetime [i.e., attain a celestial vision while yet alive], and all these words of ours are in order to sustain your soul in her palace.<sup>239</sup>

Elsewhere in the same book, he writes: ... cleave to the Divine Intellect, and It will cleave to her, for more than the calf wishes to suck, the cow wishes to give suck. And she and the intellect become one entity, as if someone pours out a jug of water into a running well, that all becomes one.<sup>24</sup>

## 132 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 133

tual entities as the supernal or general soul, the Active Intellect, the separate intellects, and God or, to use religious terminology, high levels in the various religious hierarchies: the angels or the Godhead. The unity between the soul and these entities transforms the spiritual element within man from particular to general, a transformation accompanied by an experience difficult to describe in words. Unity entails the overwhelming of man's limited consciousness by spiritual or more comprehensive

intellectual contents, an overwhelming which brings about the obliteration of the individual consciousness. Let us now return to Abulafia; In a passage from 'Osdr `Eden Gdnuz,<sup>247</sup> he discusses the principle of the similarity between the one cleaving and that to which he cleaves:

Once the knot is loosened, there shall be revealed the matter of the testimony of the knot, and the one who cleaves to these knots cleaves to falsehoods, <sup>248</sup> for as they are to be loosened in the future, so shall the knots of his debequt be loosened, and nothing shall be left with him. Therefore, before he loosens these, he must tie and cleave through knots of love <sup>249</sup> to Him who does not undo the ties of His love and the cleaving of his desire- that is, God, may He be blessed, and no other by any means. And concerning this it says in the Torah, <sup>250</sup> "And you who cleave to the Lord your God are still living this day"; and this is the matter of which they said, "And cleave to him,"<sup>251</sup> "And to him you shall cleave," <sup>252</sup> for that cleaving brings about the essential intention, which is eternal life for man, like the life of God, to whom he cleaves. And for this [reason] those who perform debequt are of three types: debequt to the supernal entities, like fire, which is

above and constantly ascends; and debeat to the intermediate ones, like the wind, which is in the middle, depending whether it ascends or descends; and debeat to the lower ones, like the image of water, which is below, and constantly descends. And in accordance with the debeat, so shall be the survival [of the soul]—whether above, below, or in the middle.

These three kinds of debeat symbolize the possibility of man's transformation into a supernal, intermediate, or lowly being, depending upon the object of his cleaving. The same idea, expressed differently, appears in Ner

Whoever is drawn toward the vanities of temporality, his soul shall survive in the vanities of temporality; and whoever is drawn after the Name which we have cited, which is above temporality, his soul shall survive in the eternal [realm], beyond time, in God, may He be blessed.253

In both passages, the same principle appears; namely, that the object of cleaving debequt determines the essence of those cleaving after the cessation of the debequt itself. Those who cleave to "the Name" are thereby transformed from mortals into immortals; however, this survival does not in itself have a mystical character. While in both passages he does speak of a change in the soul from being perishable to eternal, there is no indication or allusion to any change in its nature which would change the soul into God or to one of the "supernal beings." Let us begin with the latter passage: by the term "supernal ones," Abulafia refers to the supernal world or the world of the separate intellects, while the "intermediate" refers to the spheres or the intermediate world. In several places he states, in accordance with the view of Ibn Rushd,<sup>254</sup> and in contradiction to that of Al-Farabi and Maimonides, that cleaving to the Active Intellect is possible in this world. The significance of this debequt is the transformation of man's intellect into the Active Intellect, i.e., union. In order to express this union, Abulafia utilizes the wellknown formula originating in Islamic mysticism, <sup>255</sup> "he is he," which is repeated with minor changes in a number of passages in Hebrew



literature.<sup>256</sup> We read in Sitrey TOrdh about "that man who has actualized his intellectual power and prophecies according to that which he has actualized to the final, complete actualization, and returned, he and he are one inseparable entity during the time of that act."<sup>257</sup> The human intellect is actualized by the Active

## 134 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 135

Intellect, and at the time of mystical ecstasy the intellect united with it. This process implies the transformation of the individual consciousness into a universal one, as stated by Abulafia in the same work: "Until the prophet turns his personal, partial [aspect], in the form of permanent, eternal, universal cause like it, he and he are one entity."<sup>258</sup> In Sefer ha-Ydgar, written at that same time as Sitrey Torcih, we read:<sup>259</sup>

If, however, he has felt the divine touch and perceived its nature, it seems right and proper to me and to every perfected man that he should be called 'master,' because his name is like the Name of his Master, 26 Â° be it only in one, or in many, or in all of His Names. For now he is no longer separated from his Master, and behold he is his Master and his Master is he; for he is so intimately adhering to Him [here the term debequt is used] that he cannot by any means be separated from Him, for he is He. And just as his Master, who is detached from all matter, is called... the knowledge, the knower and the known, all at the same time, since all three are one in Him, so shall he, the exalted man, the master of the exalted name, be called intellect, while he is actually knowing; then he is also the known, like his Master; and then there is no difference between them, except that his Master has His supreme rank by His own right and not derived from other creatures, while he is elevated to his rank by the intermediary of creatures.

prophetic-mystical experiences, the unity with the Active Intellect is spoken of in a more personal manner. In the following passage, Abulafia conveys the contents of the voice which he heard in Rome:

And the meaning of his saying: "Rise and lift up the head of my anointed one" refers to the life of the souls. And on the New Year and in the Temple it is the power of the souls. And he says: "Anoint him as king"â□□anoint him like a king with the power of all the names. "For I have anointed him as king over Israel" 262â□□over the communities of Israel, that is, the miswot. And his saying, "and his name I have called Sadday like My Name"â□□whose secret is Sadday like My Name; and understand all the intention. Likewise, his saying: "He is I and I am He," and it cannot be revealed more explicitly than this. But the secret of the corporeal name is the Messiah of God; also "Moses will rejoice," which he has made known to us, and which is the five urges, and is called the corporeal name as well.

It is clear that the transformation is not only a matter of the eternal survival of the soul, but of the transformation of the essence of the soul into an intellectual element, obliterating the differences between the cause of the transformation, i.e., the Active Intellect and that effected by it, namely, the human intellect. These passages refer to the identity of the human intellect with the Active Intellect in an objective sense, for which reason one might argue that Abulafia makes use of no more than figure of speech. However, in Sefer ha- Tdut, 261 which belongs to that group of prophetic books which claim to express Abulafia's

We must begin by deciphering the gematriyat used here: the 'head of my anointed one' roe" megihî = 869 = the life of the souls (hayyey ha-nefigot = and on New Year's (u-we-Ro g ha- .Â§ iindh) = and in the Temple (u-we-Bet ha- MiqclQ = the power of the souls (koah ha-nefeigot) = anoint him as king (tim geheint ka-melek) = by the power of all the names (mi-koah kol ha- gemOt). Israel (Yisra0) = 541 = congregations (qehilleit) = the commandments (ha-misweit). The corporeal Name (ha-Sem ha-

gagmi) = 703 = the anointed of the Name (Magiali ha-Sem) =  
Moses rejoiced (yismaij Moeh) = five urges ( hamigiih yesarim).  
The first gematria alludes to the connection between the  
appearance of Messiah and spiritual development; the second to  
the Active Intellect, which was the cause of this spiritual  
development;<sup>263</sup> while the third alludes to the Messiah himself,  
who is identified with the Active Intellect. This identity is  
suggested by the words, "I called the Almighty by my name," "and  
he is I and I am he. "<sup>264</sup>

## 136 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 137

It seems to me that, by comparison of this passage to that which  
appears in Hayyey ha-`Olcim ha-Ba',<sup>265</sup> we may learn about the  
identity of the Messiah: "Begin to attach the three spiritual Divine  
Names and afterwards attach the three material names of the

patriarchs." Abulafia intends to refer here to the parallel between the corporeal names—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the spiritual ones—'Elohim, Adonay and YHWH. Further on in the passage cited, Abulafia writes that "the ends of the names of the patriarchs in reverse order are bq"m which in the system of a"t b"g (i.e., inverted letters) is Sadday; "And I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the name 'El Sadday "266 In the passage from Sefer ha-Idut, he speaks about the "material name," which must allude to one of the patriarchs, as well as Sadday, which is likewise associated with the patriarchs. We shall now have no difficulty in discovering the name which Abulafia had attempted to conceal: his own name, "Abraham." In Hayyey ha-`61dm ha-Ba', we find another passage which discusses the identity of the mystic with the Active Intellect at the time of the mystical experience:

And he shall appear to him as if his entire body, from his head to his feet, had been anointed with anointing oil, and he will be the Anointed of God and his messenger and be called the angel of God. The intention is that his name shall be like the name of his

master, Sadday, which I have called Metatron Prince of the Presence.<sup>267</sup>

The idea conveyed here is the transformation of the human soul into the Active Intellect, just as the person Enoch was transformed into the angel Metatron. Absolute unity is alluded to here by means of the well-known mystical metaphor of the pouring of water into a spring. While R. Isaac of Acre's remarks seem to have originated in personal experience, the idea of unity also appears in R. Reuben Zarfati, who drew his formulation from the works of Abulafia, apparently without any relation to authentic experience. In his commentary to *Ma'areket ha-'Elohut*,<sup>2</sup> he writes: "The human intellect, after it separates from the body, will turn into a spiritual [entity] and be embodied in the Active Intellect, and she and it will become one thing, and this is the eternal survival of the soul." In G. Scholem's opinion,<sup>272</sup> Abulafia's remarks concerning *debequt* are unusual; nevertheless, so long as his words refer to unity with the Active Intellect, they do not present any particular theological difficulties. In several places in

Abulafia's books other nuances appear: in the passage from 'Osdr 'Eden Gdnuz cited at the beginning of this section, he speaks of the cleaving of the soul to god, a possibility repeated in Hayyey ha- cOldm ha-Ba':273

The benefit of the knowledge of the name of [God] is in its being the cause of man's attainment of the actual intellection of the Active Intellect and the benefit of the intellection of the Active Intellect is in the ultimate aim of the life of the intellectual soul, and its ultimate aim is the reason of the life of the World to Come. This aim is the union of the soul, by this intellection, with God, may He be blessed, for ever and ever and eternally, and that thing called "the image of God" (Selem 'Elohim) and His likeness, "will live in man everlasting life without any limit, like the life of the Creator, which is their cause. And of this it is said,<sup>274</sup> "for it is your life and length of days"â□□your life in this world and length of days in the next world. And it is said,<sup>275</sup> "And you who cleave unto the Lord as your God are living still this day," implying that one who does not cleave to God does not live forever.



Abulafia's words left an impression upon other Kabbalists. R. Isaac of Acre stated in 'Osdar Hayyim<sup>268</sup> that, when the soul: ... cleaves to the Divine Intellect, and It will cleave to her, for more than the calf wishes to suck, the cow wishes to give suck, and she and the Intellect become one entity, as if somebody pours out a jug of water into a running well, <sup>269</sup> that all becomes one. And this is the secret meaning of the saying of our sages: 27° "Enoch is Metatron."

## 138 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 139

One may admittedly argue that what is alluded to in this passage is a Biblical idiom, which refers to the eternal survival of the soul without any substantive change taking place in the soul that would cause it to cleave to god. However, in at least two

passages, Abulafia's words clarify this subject. In 'Or ha-Seke<sup>1,276</sup> we read:

Since between two lovers there are two parts of love which turn to be one entity, when it [the love] is actualized, the [Divine] Name is composed of two parts, which [point to] the connection of Divine intellectual love with human intellectual love, and it [the love] is one, just as His Name comprises ehad ehad, because of the attachment of human existence with Divine existence<sup>277</sup> at the time of comprehension, equal with the intellect, until they both become one entity.

cleaves to it with a strong cleaving, until the two of them are likewise one essence... And the first cause includes everything, and it is one to all, and the intellects are many, the separate [ones] and the ones receiving the flow, and the many souls, and only the Active Intellect is one essence... And behold the comprehension of the human intellect, which flows from the separate Active Intellect, causes the cleaving of the soul to her God.<sup>279</sup>

Described here is the identity between the human soul and God during the process of enlightenment, a process which transforms the intellectual soul into the object of her intellection, which is God, whereby the perfect unity is attained. It is worth citing here certain ideas which appear in some manuscript collections on Kabbalistic subjects, several of which are very close to Abulafia's remarks in 'Or ha-Skel; these collections include, in my opinion, original material borrowed from Abulafia. In these collections we read:

In this metaphor of the candle and the flame, there is a brief remark [which helps] to explain and to portray what is the sekel, and what is the angel, and what is its cause—□□ that is to say, God, may He be blessed, who is called the form of the intellect (surat ha-sekel). And figuratively, and as an example, it is said that the candle is He, may He be blessed, and He is the object of intellection and He is the beginning, and the end of the flame of the candle is the human intellect, which flows from the end of the separate beings. And the middle of the flame is an allusion to the

other intellects, near and far. But that which is close to the candle receives more from the light. And from this issue we may understand that the intermediate one is between man and the Creator, being the intellect which exists in actuality. And when the soul will cleave to the intellect and the intellect speaks to the angel and the angel to the Seraph and the Seraph to the Cherub, part after part are united, from end to beginning, you shall then arrive at the intelligible, and you will find all these one—that is, the intellect and the object of intellection and the intelligible are all one. And you

May the phrase "Divine existence" in this passage be interpreted as referring to God Himself? This seems to me to be the case, as in the same work there appears the view that the human intellect is liable to literally cleave to God. In defining the three meanings of the term *sekel* (generally translated here as "intellect"), Abulafia writes in *'Or ha-Sekel*:

"*Sekel*" is the name given to that thing which guides all, which

is the first cause of all, and it is the name of a thing which is separate from all matter, which is the [intellectual] influx (gefa,) which emanates from the first cause... and it is that which emanates from the separate [things], which is called the sekel which cleaves to the hylic [element].278

With the identification of God with sekel, the question of unity or identity becomes a matter of the connection between two entities, which are liable to be equivalent in terms of their essence. Again, in 'Or ha-Sekel we read:

And they are therefore three levels, and the three of them are one essence, and they are: God, may He be blessed; and his separate [i.e., non-material] influx; and the influx of his influx (gefa c gifo), which cleaves itself to the soul. And the soul which

## 140 The Mystical Experience

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 141

have known that the Creator and the angel and the human intellect, because of its [Divine] image and likeness, which is the inner spirit, [all these] constitute one essence at the time of intellection. However, God, may He be blessed, is always the act of intellection and is always the intellect and is always the intelligible—that is, He is always in actu.<sup>28</sup>

in His presence, without obstacle or separation, and his soul will be united to Him in absolute dehNut, without any more separation for ever, all the days.<sup>283</sup>

The relationship between this passage and that in 'Or haSekel is clear; it is worth adding that the definition of God as "the form of the intellect", which appears in these collections, also appears in 'Or ha-Sekel, where we read concerning the First Cause: "And this is the form of the intellect, which the intellect of man is able to apprehend together with the other intellectual forms

comprehended from Him. "281 These passages clearly raise the possibility of the unity of the human intellect with God during the moment of intellection, in which God is the object of intellection of the human intellect. Abulafia's words can be understood as a use of Aristotelian ideas for the expression of personal experience, even if we have no clear proof that he thought that he had united with God. The Aristotelian ideas used by Abulafia are the unity of the Intellect, Intelligible and Act of Intellection, as well as the view that the human intellect is capable of transformation into Divinity or to the most divine thing which exists among us.<sup>282</sup> Before turning to another subject, I would like to cite the words of R. Isaac ben Yeda'yah, a contemporary of Abulafia, who expresses himself concerning the subject of debequt to God in a manner quite similar to that of Abulafia. In his Commentary to Maseket 'AbOt, R. Isaac writes:

The true intention of the Nazirite is that he take his oath and separate himself from that which is permitted to him in order to know his Creator through that separation. If he were to abandon corporeality entirely, he would not use it except on infrequent occasions, and he would remove his soul from [her connection to]

the material world and purify his intellect for the knowledge of his God, and he will then find himself

This indicates to us that at least a literary expression of mystical unity does appear in Jewish philosophy, a fact indicating the importance of philosophic thought for the understanding of medieval Jewish mysticism. The idea of the unity between man and God which, according to Scholem, is foreign to Jewish mysticism, nevertheless appears in Abulafia in connection with several questions. The passages quoted above from 'Or ha-Sekel, in which God, the Active Intellect and the human intellect are portrayed as having "one essence," suggest the conclusion that the intellectual element in man is no other than a Divine "spark" which has descended to the world of matter, and that the process of intellection is simply the restoration of that spark to its divine source. An allusion to this approach appears in the epistle, WeZot li-Yehuddh: 284 "the ultimate compound, which is man, who comprises all the Sefirdt, and whose intellect is the Active Intellect; and when you will untie its knots you will be united with it



[i.e., the Active Intellect] in a unique union." Several lines later, we read:

It is known that all the inner forces and the hidden souls in man are differentiated in the bodies. It is, however, in the nature of all of them that, when their knots are untied, they return to their origin, which is one without any duality, and which comprises multiplicity, until the 'Eyn & if; and when it is loosened it reaches 'till above, so that when he mentions the name of God he ascends and sits on the head of the Supreme Crown (Keter `Elyein), and the thought draws from there a threefold blessing.

In the first passage, we learn that man's intellect is literally the Active Intellect, which indicates that the Active Intellect and the human intellect are essentially two aspects of the same

## 142 The Mystical Experience

## The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 143

essence.<sup>285</sup> In the second passage, we read of the dispersion of "the inner forces" within the bodies of human beings, <sup>286</sup> who are able to overcome multiplicity in order to cleave to God, "until above where he mentions the name of God he ascends and sits at the head of the Supreme Crown." The unity achieved through *debequt* with God is therefore none other than the return movement from multiplicity to unity, a movement known to us from neo-Platonic philosophy. In 'Or ha-Selcel, there appears an additional allusion to the division of the particular intellectual nature into human bodies:

Think that at that same time your soul shall be separated from your body, and you shall die from this world and live in the World to Come, which is the source of [existent] life dispersed among all the living; and that is the intellect, which is the source of all wisdom, understanding and knowledge... And when your mind (*da-'atka*) comes to cleave to His mind, which gives you knowledge, your mind must remove from itself the yoke of all the

alien ideas, apart from His idea which connects between you and Him, by his honored and awesome Name.<sup>287</sup>

esting passage in the name of R. Nathan, worth quoting here in full:

I heard from the sage R. Nathan I heard an explanation of this name [i.e., the Intellect]. You must know that when the Divine Intellect descends, it reaches the Active Intellect, and is called Active Intellect; and when the Active Intellect descends to the Acquired Intellect, it is called Acquired Intellect; and when the Acquired Intellect descends to the Passive Intellect, it is called Passive Intellect; and when Passive Intellect descends to the soul which is in man, it is called the soul. We therefore find that the Divine Intellect which is in the human soul is called the soul, and this is from above to below. And when you examine this matter from below to above, you shall see that, when man separates himself from the vanities of this world and cleaves by his thought and soul to the supernal [realms] with great constancy, his soul will be called according to the level among the higher degrees

which he has acquired and attached himself to. How so? If the soul of the isolated person deserves to apprehend and to cleave to the Passive Intellect, it is called Passive Intellect, as if it is Passive Intellect; and likewise when it ascends further and cleaves to the Acquired Intellect, it becomes the Acquired Intellect; and if it merited to cleave to the Active Intellect, then it itself [becomes] Active Intellect; and if you shall deserve and cleave to the Divine Intellect, happy are you, because you have returned to your source and root, which is called, literally, the Divine Intellect. And that person is called the Man of God, that is to say, a Divine man, creating worlds.<sup>291</sup>

The understanding of intellectual unity reappears in several places among Abulafia's disciples. The author of Sefer haSeruf writes:<sup>288</sup>

But when you purify the intellect, when it is in matter, when it is still in that same dwelling in truth, this is a great high level, to cleave to the Causa causarum, after your soul is separated from that matter in which it is, and the lower Chariot remains, and the

spirit 289 will return to God who gave it... And when the spirit will be separated from the body, you will have already achieved the purpose of purposes and cleaved to that light beyond which there is no [other] light, and you have joined with the life which is the bundle of all life and the source of all life, and you are like one who kisses something which he loves with the quintessence of love.

These remarks reflect the opinion, already expressed by Abulafia, according to which the human intellect is nothing other than an overflow of the Divine influx. 292 In addition to the similarity mentioned between R. Nathan's approach and that of Abulafia, it seems that there is also evidence of an historical connection between them.293

'Or ha-Selcel, which concerns itself with philosophical subjects and with topics pertaining to mystical prophecyâ□□and from

In R. Isaac of Acre's *Me'irat Tinayim*,<sup>294</sup> we find an approach which facilitates unity; R. Isaac cites an extremely inter-

## / 44 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 145

which we have cited those passages which are close to the view of R. Nathan. It was written for two of Abulafia's students, "R. Abraham the Enlightened and R. Nathan the Wise (ha-Nabon),"<sup>295</sup> with the express intention "that they receive from this book of mine a path by which they may attempt to cleave to the First Cause."<sup>294</sup> Nathan was a close disciple of Abulafia, as evinced by the fact that his name appears in two additional places in the latter's works, written seven years apart from one another. In *1g 'Adam*,<sup>295</sup> he enumerates "R. Nathan ben Sa'adyahu" among his seven disciples, next to R. Abraham ben Shalom. In the Introduction to *Sefer ha-Maftehd*,<sup>296</sup> he again mentions R.

Nathan ben Sa'adyahu Hadad, once more in proximity to R. Abraham ben Shalom. From the evidence contained in the two books mentioned, it follows that this R. Nathan lived in Messina. It is very probable that R. Isaac of Acre met R. Nathan, and was influenced by him. I have discussed this question at some length, not only because of its historical importance, but also because of its ideational importance. The historical significance is clear: Abulafia succeeded in training, not only disciples, but also a second generation of disciples of those disciples who adhered to his teaching even when they lived and functioned in the environment of Abulafia's great opponent, R. Solomon ibn Adret. 'Oscir Hayyim, written after Me,irat Tinayim, clearly indicates that Abulafia's path continued to exist even after he himself was placed under the ban. From an Intellectual viewpoint, Abulafia's influence upon R. Nathan, and the latter's possible influence upon R. Isaac of Acre, indicates that even "extreme" ideas concerning the Godhead and man's relation to it are very likely to pass from one author to another and give birth to new mystical life.

possible by the removal of human consciousness from "natural" objects and its attachment to a spiritual subject, a process described in Abulafia's writings by means of the image of the loosening or untying of knots. 297 This image is composed of two main sources: from a linguistic point of view, the source of the Abulafian expressions cited below seems to be in the idioms appearing in Daniel 5:12, 16â□□megare qitrin and qitrin le-mtha (loose knots). The original connotation of the expression is magical, referring to Daniel's ability to undo the magical knots by which man is enslaved. 298 The motif of the magical tying is combined with the understanding of nature as a prison of the sou1 299 or as a magician tying the soul to itself. 30 Â° According to Abulafia,30' man's function is to break the knots which imprison the human soul and to attach them to the Active Intellect: ... Man is [tied] in the knots of world, year and soul [i.e., space, time and persona] in which he is tied in nature, and if he unties the knots from himself, he may cleave to He who is above them, with the guarding of his soul via the way of the remnants3Â°2 which God calls, who are those who fear God and take account of His Name, who are called Perusim (separatists), few ones, [and] those who



concentrate, to know God, blessed be He and blessed be His Name. And they must conquer themselves [not] to be drawn after the lusts of this world, and take care lest they be drawn to them, like a dog toward his mate. Therefore, when he becomes accustomed to the [way of] separateness, he will strengthen [his] seclusion and relation [hityahasud and know how to unify the Name [or God]]. This passage resembles an approach found in the quotation brought in the name of Avicenna by R. Shem Tov ibn Falquera, in his book, Meireh ha-MOreh:

And we are immersed in evil appetites, we do not feel that same [spiritual] pleasure, and therefore we do not seek it and do not turn toward it, except when we loosen the knot of lust and anger from our necks.3Â°3

### 13. The Loosening of the Knots

Debequt is considered to be the cleaving or unity of the hu-

man intellect with the Active Intellect or with God. This is made

## / 46 The Mystical Experience

According to Abulafia's opinion, the entire world prevents the soul from uniting with God: For all things which exist are intermediaries between God, may

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 147

cleaving of his desire; and that is God, may He be exalted, and no other in any sense.<sup>305</sup>

In another passage, <sup>306</sup> we read: ... and he shall not wish to leave substances which are intel-

He be blessed, and man. And if you say: how can this be, for if so it would require that man be at the greatest [imaginable] distance from God. I say to you that you certainly speak the truth, for thus it is, for he and the reality and the Torah are witnesses to this,

and therefore these are all tricks of reality and tricks of the Torah, and the abundance of miswot which exist in order to bring near he that was distant, [even if] in the utmost distance from God, to bring him near in the epitomy of closeness to Him. And all this to remove all the intermediaries which are tied in the knots of falseness, and to free him from beneath them, by the secret of the Exodus from Egypt and the crossing of the sea on dry land, and to place an intermediary only between the Name, which is the intellect of the mighty man. 304

The loosening of the knot connecting man to nature also requires the tying of a new knot, between man and the new level which he has reached:

lective in potential, tied to nature, but he should do tricks and teach Torah and command miszvot to those who are immersed [mutba'im] in natural things, to loosen their connections with them, and to tie and to bind the natural forces with them, until every existing thing will attain its part and portion<sup>307</sup> appropriate to it.

The process of loosening and tying is identified with the process of enlightenment:308

However, so long as he does not understand the intelligible and not know that which can be known, which is appropriate in his knowledge, for which he was created, there is nothing that can save him from Nature to which he is tied by nature309 since he has been [i.e., alive].

According to Abulafia, this process is accomplished with the help of the Divine Names:

And the cosmic axis (teli) is none other than the knot of the spheres, and there is no doubt that this is the subject of their existence, like the likeness of the connections of the limbs within man, and the connections of the limbs in man which are suspended in the bones at the beginning are also called the axis in man as well. And its secret is that a magician bring this knot of desire and renew it in order to preserve the existence of this

compound for a certain amount of time. And when the knot is undone, the matter of the testimony of the knot will be revealed, and one who cleaves to these knots [qegarín] cleaves to falsehoods [geqdrín], for as they are going in the future to be undone, the knots of his cleaving will also be undone, and nothing will remain with him any more, and therefore, before he loosens these, he must tie and cleave to the ropes of love those who have not loosened the knots of his love and the

He must link and change a name with a name, and renew a matter, to tie the loosened and to loosen the tied, using known names, in their revolutions with the twelve signs and the seven stars, and with the three elements, until the one tying and loosening will strip off from the stringencies of the prohibited and permitted, and dress a new form for the prohibited and permitted.<sup>31</sup>°

Elsewhere in the same work it says "the names with which one ties and loosens the knot is itself heter."<sup>311</sup> Finally, we should note that the second meaning of the expression, "loosening of the

knots," namely, "the removal of doubts," is suitable to Abulafia's general tendency. The separa-

## 148 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 149

tion of the soul or the intellect from the body is in any event ipso facto a separation from the imagination, which breeds doubt:312 "for in these knowledges the knots are untied, as are the doubts in most of the imagined matters, and man is left with his intellect in wholeness and with his Torah in truth."

'prophetic' experience seems to be the experiential culmination of the mystical possibilities inherent in the cognitive forms found in Maimonides, Avicenna, and Averroes. Hans Jonas' remarks concerning the relationship between mysticism and the

philosophical system within which the mystic functions are pertinent to our question:

Without an antecedent dogmatics there would be no valid mysticism. And mysticism, let it be noted, wants to be "valid," namely, more than a revel of feeling. The true mystic wants to put himself into possession of absolute reality, which already is and about which doctrine tells him. So it was, at least, with the mysticism of late antiquity which still stood in continuity with the intellectual and ontological speculation of the Greek past. Having an objective theory, the mystic goes beyond theory; he wants experience of and identity with the object; and he wants to be able to claim such an identity. Thus, in order that certain experiences may become possible and even conceivable as valid anticipations of an eschatological future, or as actualizations of metaphysical stages of being, speculation must have set the framework, the way, and the goal long before the subjectivity has learned to walk the way.<sup>314</sup>

#### 14. Characteristics of the Mystical Experience

In conclusion, attention should be devoted to certain characteristic features of the prophetic or ecstatic-mystical experience in Abulafia. A brief survey of these features will assist us in understanding Abulafia the mystic, by clarifying his position with regard to a number of major components of the mystical experience.

### "Rationalistic" Mysticism

A central element of Abulafia's understanding of prophecy is his perception of the mystical experience as the supreme realization of the capacities of human consciousness; this fact is made clear in a passage concerning *debegut*, which Abulafia defines in the words, 313 "prophecy is a matter of the intellect." More significant for our purposes is the fact that Abulafia's private experience is subjected to a rationalistic interpretation, as we have seen above in the interpretation of a number of his visions and, no less important, the fact that Abulafia saw in his own personal experience a confirmation of a certain theoretical position. His visions confirm his metaphysical approach, since in them the



intellect, the imagination and the Active Intellect are transformed from theoretical concepts, borrowed from medieval thinkers, used to explain objective reality, or from the prophecy of the ancient biblical figures, into a component of the spiritual life of the mystic himself. We no longer speak of the concept of imagination as the result of the need to explain certain psychological phenomena; Abulafia is now able to see it as a principle guiding his entire world-view. For this reason, Abulafia's

In the case of Abulafia, the sources of the theoretical framework and of the path toward its fulfilment are distinct from one another, but they both preceded Abulafia. The "rationalistic" nature of his experience is likewise seen in the conception of God: the object to which the mystic cleaves is not the Neoplatonic God who is incapable of being known, but the Aristotelian Intellect/ Intelligible / Act of Intellection.

The Mission

As is well known, the concept of mission is a central component in the biblical understanding of prophecy: God chooses a particular person who is made a prophet against his will, delegating him to perform a certain mission which the prophet may at times not wish to carry out, or even find repugnant.<sup>315</sup>

## 150 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 151

While classical prophecy emerged from such revelations of a compulsory character, an interesting change takes place in the later books of the Bible, in which God is understood as a remote entity, causing the prophet to seek to bridge the gap in order to receive a revelation. This new figure is designated by the term apocalyptic visionary, one who combines personal experience with "Wisdom," where the intention of the visionary is not so much to bring a message to society as to achieve salvation for himself.

316 Abulafia's understanding of the concept of prophecy combines these two types: the prophet-messenger is understood by him as a higher type than the prophet from whom the influx of wisdom pours forth, namely a "merely" mysticalcontemplative person. The fourth of the five levels of prophecy is described as follows: 317 "and the fourth is to strengthen the heart until it will be proven and will speak and will write"; elsewhere, he writes/3 '8 "and the level of the prophets who speak and who compose [books] is greater than that of the prophets who attempt to attain prophecy, while those who are sent are higher yet than them." Again 3 19 "and in accordance with the quantity of the influx, the intellect shall force the [prophetic] speaker-author to speak and to write according to the time and according to the place and according to the generation." This definition of prophetic mission as an expression of the power of the Divine influx originates in Maimonides and in Arabic philosophy.32Â° Abulafia describes the activity of the Biblical prophets, and by analogy his own, as a combination of writing and agitation, oftentimes performed against his own will:32'

Know that every one of the early prophets was forced to speak what they spoke and to write what they wrote, so that one finds many of them who say that their intention is not to speak at all before the multitude of the people of the earth, who are lost in the darkness of temporality, but that the divine influx which flowed upon them forces them to speak, and that they are even subjected to shame, as in the saying of the prophet,<sup>322</sup> "I gave my back to the smiters and my cheek to those that plucked; I hid not my face from shame and spitting," while another prophet said,<sup>323</sup> "the Lord God will help me, who shall

condemn me?" And many other similar [sayings] in the way of every chastiser.

Abulafia compared his lot to that of the biblical prophets in a number of places: It is not a miracle that there should happen to my work what happened to the works of Moses our teacher, and to our prophets and our wise men and to Rabbi Moses [i.e., Maimonides], for I shall also suffer what they, of blessed memory,

suffered, from this matter. And so is the way of every author who composes a book for the sake of heaven, in every time and every place, that is, it is incumbent that he suffer what happens to him on account of his work.<sup>324</sup> The process of composition of Sefer ha-Gec uldh is described in the introduction as an act similar to that of the prophets:<sup>325</sup>

A spirit came and made me stand on my legs, and called me twice by my name, "Abraham Abraham," and I answered "here I am" [an allusion to Gen. 22:1, 11]. And a voice came with a great tumult and taught me by the way of justice, and it taught me knowledge and related to me the way of understanding, and it informed me and wakened me as a man who is awakened from his sleep to compose a new thing, nothing of which was composed in its day, for the reason which I have mentioned in the matter of Isaiah the prophet, who called to the members of his generation on account of their being remote from the truth. And it was not enough that they did not know and hear his words and that they did not accept them from him, but that they also hit him.<sup>326</sup>

An additional expression of Abulafia's resemblance to the prophets is found in the composition of Sefer ha-Haftardli, in the introduction to which it states: 327 "And behold Raziel [i.e., Abulafia] commanded in this book to adjure God by His Name to sanctify and to read in this book once every Sabbath, following the reading of the Torah, among the Prophetic readings." As we have seen above, Abulafia includes Moses among the prophets

## 152 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 153

whose lot was similar to his own; one should add that there are other statements in which he expresses his feeling that his own prophecy was superior even to that of Moses. In R. Abraham ibn Ezra's Commentary to the Torah on Exodus 3:13, we read in the name of R. Joshua the Karaite "that there was a tradition in Israel

from their fathers that the redeemer of Israel discovered a new name that was not heard." Just as Moses introduced the name 'Ehyeh 'tiger 'Ehyeh ("I am that I am"), the Messiah will introduce a new name. 328 Indeed, in many passages Abulafia refers to the name )ahwy as the hidden name of god. In his opinion the pearl, which is the symbol of the pure religion in Abulafia's version of the famous three rings parallel, was not to be found among Israel in his time: It follows from this that the mission of Moses. the law-giver, was not entirely successful.329 In my opinion, Abulafia conceived himself as The Prophet, par excellence, superior even to Moses. 33Â° In Sefer ha -cEdut he writes: 331 "Know that most of the visions which Raziel saw were built upon the Ineffable Name and upon its revelation in the world now, in our days, which has not been since the days of Adam and is the root of all his books." This feeling that the Messiah is superior even to Moses made it possible for him to write: 332 "For I innovate a new Torah within the holy nation, which is my people Israel. My honorable Name is like a new Torah, and it has not been explicated to my people since the day that I hid my face from them." While these remarks are cited as God's words to Abulafia, the feeling of

mission revealed by this sentence testifies to the great power of the prophetic experience in Abulafia's eyes. This does not mean that Abulafia will alter the Torahâ□□for this reason, there appears the reservation, like a new Torahâ□□but that it will reveal its true face, that is, its essence as a combination of the Names of God.<sup>333</sup> The two main motifs discussed in this sectionâ□□the prophet as messenger and the Messiah as a prophet on the level of Mosesâ□□also appear in R. Isaac of Acre. We have already seen in the above section that the prophecy of mission appears in an

advanced mystical stage in 'Osar Hayyim. Let us now examine R. Isaac's understanding of the level of Messiah:<sup>334</sup>

There is one who prophesies through the intermediacy of the brilliance of the light of the angel who dwells in his soul, which is the angel who speaks within him, and this angel is intermediary... between him and the great supreme angel, who is Metatron the Prince of the Presence. <sup>335</sup> And there is one who prophesies by the brilliance of the light of Metatron dwelling in his soul, and



there is one who does so by the brilliance of the light of the diadem [i.e., Malkut], while Moses himself [did so] by the brilliance of Titeret which emanated from Titeret] and dwelt in his soul. And Messiah son of David, whom God shall bring to us quickly, by the brilliance of the light of the Crown, will emanate the brilliance of his light from Keter and it will dwell in his soul, and by it he will perform awesome and great things in all the lands. The Eschatological Element

The prophetic experience was understood by Abulafia not only as the apprehension of truths, but also as a path leading to the survival of the soul. His description of the point of departure from which man commences his path toward immortality is depicted in the darkest imaginable colors:336

We eat and drink and have forbidden sexual relations, from which we are born through harlotry and lust and menstrual blood and urine. And we were a fetid drop at the time of our creation, and so we are today, fetid and besmirched with filth and mud and vomit and excrement so that there is no clean place. 337 While alive we

are dust and ashes, and to dust you shall return, and we shall be dead carcasses, putrid and crushed in fire, like rubbish filled with vanity and spirits.

Apart from the bodily element, there also hover over man the truths of the power of imagination:

## 154 The Mystical Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 155

Sometimes it is revealed to you that you are to be killed and your membrum virile swallowed up... And sometimes it is concealed from you, until you think that you will not die until you shall become old, even though he stands before you and sees you, you do not see him; and suddenly he returns to you and demands

his portion, and so it is always, time after time, day after day, until the day of your death.<sup>338</sup>

live for ever." Abulafia stresses the Platonic idea of voluntary death in many passages. <sup>344</sup> In Gan Na<sup>1</sup>,<sup>345</sup> we read:

And these are miraculous secrets, and the general rule from which you will die, and when you divide it into two equal parts, one part shall be tihyeh ("you shall live") and also the second part tihyeh. <sup>346</sup> And this is the secret alluded to in the saying of the supreme Holy Ones, <sup>347</sup> "What shall a man do and live? He shall die! What should a man do in order to die? To live!" And they said that this is alluded to in [the verse],<sup>348</sup> "When a man dies in a tent," and they explained that the Torah is not preserved save by one who kill himself for it. And the Rabbi [i.e., Maimonides] said in The Book of Knowledge, Laws of the Fundamentals of Torah,<sup>349</sup> that the Torah is not preserved except by one who kills himself in the tents of wisdom.

In order to be saved from this situation, man must forfeit this world in every sense of the word: 339 "and cast behind yourself everything that exists apart from the Name, in your soul in truth... and do not place any thought in the world upon anything apart from Him, may He be blessed." Cleaving to God draws the mystic closer to the source of apotheosis:34°

And Divine virtues are added to him until he speaks with the holy spirit, whether in his writing or with his mouth; it is said of this that this is in truth the king of the kings of flesh and blood, as is said among people about a unique king of kings, that he alone and those like him have passed the boundary of humanity, and cleaved in their lifetime to their God, and even more so when their natural and contingent matter dies.

This casting off of corporeality brings out another characteristic of the prophetic experience of Abulafia, namely, the absence of ascetic elements in his system.

**The Absence of Asceticism**

The main purpose of the Torah and of the Kabbalah is:<sup>34</sup> "that man should attain the level of the angels called Ishim and cleave to them for eternal life, until human beings shall turn into separate angels after being, before hand-human beings in actuality and angels in potential, but on a lower level." Man's transformation from transient essence to eternal takes place when he attains 'prophecy': <sup>342</sup> "and likewise he shall be required to call to the prophet with the Divine influx until he returns to cleave to it and live on the day of his death." This is not intended to refer to survival following bodily death, but to the life of the World to Come which is acquired in this life by complete relinquishment of this world:<sup>343</sup> "And his strength shall cast off all natural powers and he shall put on the divine powers, and he shall be saved by this from natural death on the day of his death and

Radical asceticism is a widely used method for attaining ecstatic states in many mystical systems, the purpose of such afflictions being to weaken the power of the body or of matter to enable the

intellect to act without interference. Such an approach is widespread in Neo-Platonic literature, in which matter is understood as evil in its very essence; a struggle was carried on between the intellect and the body, and at times between the intellect and the soul, which is portrayed as the representative of the bodily powers.<sup>35</sup> As Abulafia understood man's inner struggle as taking place between the intellect and the imagination, one cannot find in his writings extreme ascetic instructions necessary for one who seeks to attain 'prophecy.' <sup>35</sup> His approach is rather that, in order to attain 'prophecy,' one must act in the direction of strengthening the intellect rather than that of suppressing the body, the soul or the imagination:

## 156 The Mystical Experience

## The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 157

One who enters the path of combination [of letters], which is the way that is close to knowledge of God in truth, from all the ways he will at once test and purify his heart in the great fire, which is the fire of desire; and if he has strength to stand the way of ethics, close to desire, and his intellect is stronger than his imagination, he rides upon it as one who rides upon his horse and guides it by hitting it with the boots to run at his will, and to restrain it with his hand, to make it stand in the place where his intellect will wish, and his imagination is to be a recipient that he accept his opinion... The man who possesses this great power, he is a man in truth.<sup>352</sup>

There seems no doubt concerning the growing influence of Sufic mystical sources in the works of the disciples of Abulafia, which directed the character of post-Abulafian ecstatic Kabbalah in the matter of asceticism.<sup>358</sup>

Projection or Interpretation

The ideal situation is the negation of those activities of the imagination which are not checked by the intellect: 353 "And when the imaginary, lying apprehension is negated, and when its memory is razed from the hearts of those who feel and are enlightened, death will be swallowed up for ever." The extent to which Abulafia's opinion is opposed to the ascetic tendency which seeks to leave life in this world is evinced by the following passage:354

He shall pray and beseech continuously to the Honorable Name, to save him from the attributes until he be found innocent in the Supernal Court, and... in the lower court, and will inherit two worlds, 355 this world and the World to Come.

Let us now return to the question which we raised at the beginning of this chapter: namely, did Abulafia, in explaining the intellectual meaning of his visions, interpret his own experience correctly, because they were the result of certain concepts in which he was used to thinking, or is this a case in which meaning was imposed upon an experience in which it was initially lacking?



It seems to me significant that a certain answer to these questions may be found in Y5sfir 'Eden

When I was thirty-one years old, in the city of Barcelona, God woke me from my sleep and I studied Sefer Yesirah with its commentaries; and the hand of God [rested] upon me, and I wrote some books of wisdom and wondrous books of prophecies, and my spirit was quickened within me, and the spirit of God came into my mouth, and a spirit of holiness moved about me, and I saw many awesome sights and wonders by means of these wonders and signs. And among them, there gathered around me jealous spirits, and I saw imaginary things and errors, and my thoughts were confused, because I did not find which of my people would teach me the way by which I ought to go. Therefore I was like a blind man groping at noon for fifteen years, and the Satan [stood] by my right hand to accuse me, and I was crazy from the vision of my eyes which I saw, to fulfill the words of the Torah and to finish the second curse [of] the fifteen years which God had graced me with some little knowledge, and God was with me to help me from the year [500]1 to the year [50]45, to save me from every trouble; and at the beginning of the year

Elijah the prophet [i.e., [50]46 = 1286 C.E.], God had favor in me and brought me to his holy tabernacle.<sup>359</sup>

The life of the World to Come may be seen as an allusion to the ecstatic state specifically in this world. Particularly striking is the difference between Abulafia's refusal to make use of the way of asceticism <sup>356</sup> and the suggestion appearing in R. Isaac of Acre:

And you shall live a life of pain in your house of seclusion, lest your appetitive soul be strengthened over your intellective soul, that in this you shall merit to draw down the divine influx upon your intellectual soul, [using] the Torah, namely, the science of combination and its prerequisites, this Glory being the supernal Divine influx, which is the real Glory authentic.'

## 158 The Mystical Experience

Abulafia reveals here that not all of his visions are the result of the influence of the intellect upon the imagination; until the year 1286,

Abulafia testifies that he also experienced visions originating in the realm of the imagination alone, and that this was apparently the reason for his fears. It seems to me that the visions presented by Abulafia set down in writing do not belong to this category, nor do any of his books reveal the darker side of ecstatic experiences. Those descriptions and interpretations of visions which have reached us belong to the "positive" type of experience. Evidently this choice between the intellectual and the imaginative, namely between visions which can be allegorically interpreted as pointing to intellectual contents, and those which originate in the power of the imagination alone, without reflecting, In Abulafia's opinion, speculative conceptions, was carried out on the basis of criteria of the reflection of the intellectual matters in the vision. Since the correspondence between the content of the vision as it has been given and the speculative system is very great, it is difficult to assume that this was a matter of mere chance: in my opinion, his visions are the result of the projection of philosophical concepts onto the imaginative realm, from whence it is quite easy to find their roots in the theoretical system of the author.

## Chapter Four The Use of Erotic Images for the Prophetic Experience

In their attempts to portray the connection between the human soul and the Active Intellect or the Divine, medieval Jewish mystics made use of erotic images. While these images are part of the stock in trade of mystical literature generally,<sup>1</sup> they are particularly common among those mystics belonging to theistic religions, and in those religions in which love enjoys a high place on the scale of values. These images may be classified into two principal groups: 1. Images portraying the spiritual connection between the lover and his beloved, i.e., descriptions of such emotions as longing, submission, etc. Such imagery is extremely common, and by its means one may portray spiritual stances continuing over a period of time; these images appear alike in mystical literature and among philosophers, religious poets and exegetes of the Song of Songs. A wide variety of such images appears in Hebrew literature, and these have been discussed by a number of scholars. 2 In this respect, one finds no radical

innovations in Abulafia, who follows Maimonides in seeing the love of God as the apex of intellectual worship.<sup>3</sup> 2. Images portraying the physical connection between the lover and his beloved. These images are rarer, and are most often used to depict events which by their nature are limited

## 160 The Use of Erotic Images for the Prophetic Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 161

in time. These tend to be restricted to mystical literature, and only rarely appear among non-mystic authors. In this respect, one finds in Abulafia daring use of physical acts as images for the connection between the Active Intellect and the human mind. Generally speaking, these two kinds of images relate to different aspects or directions of the connection. While those in the former group describe the relationship of the soul to God or to the Active Intellect, the latter illustrate the feelings of the mystic during those

moments at which God reveals Himself with greatest intensity. In the attempt to convey the nature of this revelation, use is made of bodily imagery in a manner which at times seems to border on the profane. Analysis of Abulafia's writings suggests that the images belonging to this latter category may be divided into five groups, to be discussed here according to their natural, chronological order: the kiss, sexual union, seed, impregnation, and birth. It is superfluous to add that there is no comprehensive or systematic discussion of any one of these groups in Abulafia; the material discussed here has been gathered from statements found in various places throughout his writings, organized here systematically for purposes of comparison and reconstruction.

When this perfect man is stricken in age and is near death, his knowledge mightily increases, his joy in that knowledge grows greater, and his love for the object of his knowledge more intense, and it is in this great delight that the soul separates from the body. To this state our Sages referred, when in reference to the death of Moses, Aaron and Miriam they said that death was in these

three cases nothing but a kiss... The meaning of this saying is that these three died in the midst of the pleasure derived from the knowledge of God and their great love for him. When our Sages figuratively call the knowledge of God united with intense love for Him a kiss, they follow the well-known poetical diction, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." 6 This kind of death, which is in truth deliverance from death, has been ascribed by our Sages to none but to Moses, Aaron and Miriam. The other prophets and pious men are beneath that degree; but their knowledge of God is strengthened when death approaches.'

## 1. The Image of the Kiss

The term, "death by a kiss," appears a number of times in Talmudic and Midrashic literature,<sup>4</sup> where it is used in connection with the deaths of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to express death without suffering, referring to a concrete act of God, whereby He removes the soul of the righteous by means of a kiss on his mouth. For this reason, the kiss is not thought of as an image for

the relationship between man and God. 5 The transformation of the expression of "death by a kiss" into a figurative image already occurs in Maimonides, who writes in Guide, III:51, 627-28:

Maimonides' interpretation of the verse from Song of Songs, and of the expression, "death by the kiss," requires some explanation. In his view, death by the kiss took place as a consequence of the natural process of aging, which in the cases of Moses, Aaron and Miriam intensified their intellectual powers;<sup>8</sup> this intensification was accompanied by the joy associated with the process of enlightenment, whereby the soul separated itself from the body. This understanding is based upon the Biblical and Talmudic sources, describing the deaths of Moses, Aaron and Miriam as natural ones, occurring in advanced old age. An additional point must be stressed here: that these three figures did not die a voluntary death. To the contrary, Moses did not wish to depart from this world, as we are told at length in the many legends surrounding his death.<sup>9</sup> The Guide for the Perplexed was doubtless the source of inspiration for Abulafia when he wrote in



his 1:layyey ha-`Oldm ha-Ba', 'Â° "but one whose soul is separated from him at the time of pronouncing [the Divine Names] has died by the [Divine] kiss: of this they said: u "R. Akiba's soul departed with [the recitation

## 162 The Use of Erotic Images for the Prophetic Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 163

of the word] 'One'." While Maimonides interprets death by the kiss as the result of a natural process, in Abulafia it is the result of a deliberate process, whereby the mystic enters a state of ecstasy; if death occurs while reciting God's name, this is a sign that he has attained a very high level. The reference to age as a factor making it easier to reach ecstasy is totally absent in Abulafia's writings; death by the kiss is conditional exclusively upon the use of a certain technique. For this reason, Abulafia substituted R. Akiba for Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, all of whom died natural

deaths, despite the fact that it is not stated that Akiba died by the kiss, and he died an unnatural death. One might say that Abulafia so to speak reversed the order of things: whereas Maimonides holds that the process of aging strengthens spiritual insight while weakening the powers of the body, Abulafia believes that intense spiritual apprehension may itself attenuate the connection between body and soul and bring about death. Elsewhere in Abulafia, we read: "For he will kiss him of the kisses of his mouth: immediately he will awaken from his slumber and know the day of his death and understand the great difference between his soul and his body." 12 The voluntaristic aspect of the process here is striking: when the Active Intellect pours its "kisses" upon the soul, the soul understands that it must acquire its eternity by means of study, thereby obliterating death. While in Maimonides the word "death" is intended literally, Abulafia uses it in the metaphorical sense. In 'Or lia-Selcel, he writes as follows about the moment of mystical experience: "think in that hour that your soul shall be separated from your body and you shall die from this world and live in the next world." It seems clear that Abulafia is not referring here to actual bodily death, but to the mystic's transformation into

a participant in eternal life. According to Abulafia's approach, one does not require bodily death in order to attain this level." Death is here a mystical process: man leaves this world so long as he succeeds in adhering to the Active Intellect, and thereby inherits the World to Come.

Abulafia's disciples generally speaking accepted his system, but seem to be unaware of the subtle but important distinction between literal and mystical death. Thus, even while basing themselves upon Abulafia, they repeated Maimonides' formulations regarding the separation between the body and the soul. For example, in *Sulldm ha- cAliyih' 5 R.* Judah Albotini writes as follows concerning the moment of pronouncing the Divine Name:

Without doubt, at that moment he has departed the realm of the human and entered into the realm of the Divine, his soul becomes separated [i.e., from matter] and refined, cleaving to the root of the source from which it was hewn. And it has happened that one's soul became entirely separated at that moment of

separation, and he remained dead. Such a death is the most elevated one, as it is close to death by the Divine kiss, and it was in this manner that the soul of Ben Azzai, who "gazed and died," left this world, for his soul rejoiced when it saw the source whence it was hewn, and it wished to cling to it and to remain there and not to return to the body. Of his death it is said, "Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his pious ones."<sup>6</sup> Some of the masters of Wisdom and those who have engaged in such acts have said that one who does not wish his soul to separate itself from him during that vision ought to make his soul swear an oath, by a curse or by the Great and Awesome Name, prior to the act but while still in his own domain and in his human condition, that at the time of the vision and the appearance, when he shall no longer be under his own volition, his soul shall not separate itself and cling to its source, but return to its container.

This double aspect of ecstasy—the fullness of human experience, on the one hand, and death, on the other—reappears elsewhere in the writings of Abulafia's

disciples. In a passage reserved in two manuscripts containing material from his circle, we read:

And he explained [the verse] "by the mouth of God" [Num. 33:38; Deut. 34:5] as follows: this is compared to the kiss, and it [refers to] the cleaving of the intellect to the object of its

#### 164 The Use of Erotic Images for the Prophetic Experience

intellection so closely and intensely that there is no longer any possibility for the soul [to remain in] matter, and that intense love called the kiss is a rebuke to the body, and it remains alone, and this is the truth. And on the literal level, [it means that] there was none of the weakness of the elements or any element of chance but the edict of God, may He be blessed.'s

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 165 When the soul is separated from the body she has already apprehended the purpose of [all] purposes, and cleaved to the light beyond which there is no other light, and takes part in the life which is the

bundle of all life and the source of all life, and he is like one who kisses something which he loves utterly, and he is unable to cleave to it until this time. And this is the secret of the kiss spoken of regarding the patriarchs, of whom it is said that they died with the kiss: that is, that at the moment that they departed they attained the essence of all apprehensions and above all degrees [ma'alah], because the interruptions and all the obstacles which are in the world left them, and the intellect returned to cleave to that light which is the Intellect. And when he cleaves in truth, that is the true kiss, which is the purpose of all degrees.<sup>22</sup>

One of Abulafia's disciples, the author of Sefer designates those who receive the true Torah as "the seekers of the kiss" (mebatlgey ha-negicialt):

Indeed Moses received the Torah at Sinai and gave it over to those who sought the kiss, and this is a great secret; there is no place in the entire Torah which arouses the soul to its initial thought like this. And this is the secret of the seekers of the kiss—that they may be cleansed of the punishment of Mount

Sinai and receive the known cause on Mt. Gerizim, upon which dwells the created light, which is holy to God; and the entire law hangs upon it, and also all deeds and the Tabernacle, and upon it revolve the heavens, which the entire people accepted and [nevertheless] did not accept upon themselvesâ□□that place which is the sanctuary of the soul with the intellect.'9

I have cited here the view of those authors closest to Abulafia, examination of whose writings indicates that they departed from his path. It is interesting that it was particularly the Neoplatonic tradition within Jewish thought which fostered the viewpoint close to that of Abulafia concerning the subject of death by the kiss, but we cannot discuss this matter in depth in the present context.<sup>23</sup>

It seems to me that the expression "seekers of the kiss" ought to be interpreted here as an allusion to the ecstatic mystics who receive the genuine Torah; the mountain evidently alludes to the soul, while the Torah refers to the intellect. <sup>20</sup> Hints of the nature of this ecstasy likewise appear in the continuation of the passage

quoted above: "Indeed, Gerizim is ten names, but they are only known to those who have heard Torah, in which its truth is hinted, and he is one that the Divine Presence dwells with him and in his heart."<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to compare the opinion of the author of Sefer ha-Seruf, which has been attributed to Abulafia, with that of Abulafia himself. In Sefer ha-Seruf, we read:

2. The Image of Intercourse While the image of the kiss is a very common one, expressing the connection between the human soul and the Active Intellect,<sup>24</sup> that of sexual intercourse, in the sense in which this is used by Abulafia, is far rarer.<sup>25</sup> The emotional power suggested by this image is thoroughly appropriate to the intense experience designated by Abulafia with the term prophecy or ecstasy. Zaehner's comments on this point are significant:

This is absolutely appropriate, for just as the human body knows no sensation comparable in sheer joyful intensity to that which the sexual act procures for a man and woman in love,



## 166 The Use of Erotic Images for the Prophetic Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 167

so must the mystical experience of soul in the embrace of God be utterly beyond all other spiritual joys.<sup>26</sup>

united together—that is, the soul and the intellect—they receive pleasure." Again, ha-nefe g we-ha-sekel (the soul and the intellect) = 796 = lagon ha-gOdeg (the Holy Tongue) = sa c a gti c irn (pleasure). The erotic allusions found in R. Barukh Togarmi were extensively developed by Abulafia, who frequently speaks of the union between the intellect and the soul in terms of the secrets of language. Abulafia uses the image of intercourse more extensively than that of the kiss, which may be an indication that he considered his own experiences to transcend the first level of connection with the active intellect. The primary sources of this

image are naturally found in the Song of Songs: the lover is the Active Intellect, while his beloved is the human intellect:

And by this secret was the Song of Songs composed, that is, in the meaning of the desire of those whose desire is toward their beloved, following the imaging of the love of their loved ones. And this is the image of groom and bride.<sup>29</sup>

In those sources related to the ecstatic Kabbalah, the image of intercourse already appears in the writings of Abulafia's teacher, R. Barukh Togarmi. In his Commentary to Sefer he writes<sup>27</sup>:

And [behold] the jealousy of the male and the female, its cycle is full tint, and in truth it is the beginning of the counting or the Prince of the World. And it is said: twenty-two letters are the foundation, that is, the foundation of the entire world, and this is the secret of, "Mouth to mouth I will speak to him,"<sup>28</sup> that is, in the union of the king and the queen, that is, in the kiss.

gematria

This passage is based upon a series of plays upon the of the words used: immediately prior to the sentences quoted, we read, "a thousand men in the heavens," whose numerical value in Hebrew is 651, equal to the subsequent expressions, ha-qin'ah c al zalcar u-neqebah (the jealousy of the male over the female); =hair dye. Salem (its cycle is full tint); rog ha-minyan (the beginning of the count); and sar ha- c oliim (the Prince of the World). This last phrase undoubtedly refers to the Active Intellect, which is frequently known in medieval literature by the term "Prince of the world." The numerical value of the expression "twenty-two letters" ( c esrim u- getayint 'OtiyOt) is 2199 which, if the thousands are changed into units, becomes 201 (i.e., 2+199), whose value in gematria in turn equals kol ha- c airn (the entire world); peh 'el peh (mouth to mouth); and ha-melek we-ha-malkiih (the king and the queen). It is clear that all this refers to a particular kind of revelation, alluded to by the verse, "mouth to mouth I will speak with him"â□□an image for the union of the king and queen, in which the king corresponds to the Active Intellect and the queen to the human soul. Further on in this

passage, R. Barukh writes: "In you is the tint'â□□that is, in you is the foundation of God, which is the intellect which flows into the soul... for the soul or the intellect both appear in the holy language, and when they are

However, the most interesting use of the image of intercourse appears in Sefer Mafteah ha-SefirOt:3Â°

Apprehension of the nature of prophecy [i.e., ecstasy]: there is nothing more difficult for man to apprehend in all human apprehensions [than this], and the human mind has not the power to apprehend this until it is attached to the divine intellect, in a connection similar to that of the body and the soul, or the connection of form and matter, similar to the union of male and female, the best and sweetest of which is the first [union]â□□that is, a virgin groom with a virgin brideâ□□for the longing between the two of them has continued a long time before their uniting. [Thus,] at the time of their union they attain the pinnacle of their desire, and the movement of the first desire. . . And their hearts receive a great peace, and the movement of their

desire is from then on a calm one, in a moderate manner, neither excessively rapid nor excessively slow, but as is fitting; and after the two minds settle on one matter, they begin to move in the form of the desire of their giving birth, and they will attempt to guide their actions with

168 The Use of Erotic Images for the Prophetic Experience the intention of impregnation, for they have already moved from one desire of a certain aim to another desire, and it is also doubtless a purposive one, and thus the thing continues from purpose to purpose, and all things follow one purpose or another... But I must inform you here of the matter of those who seek out "prophecy," which is similar to what I have said concerning the simile of the groom and the bride, and of this it is said, 31 "If all the songs (sic) are holy, Song of Songs is Holy of Holies." For the entire intention of that poet was to tell us by means of parables and secrets and images the form of true "prophecy" and its nature and how to reach it. And the essence of "prophecy" is that the intellective soul, which is the mover within the body, is first united with all the

ways of the Torah and with the secrets of the misweits and knowledge of their reasons in general, and after it has ascended the rungs of apprehension included in knowledge of the truth and removal of the illusions according to Kabbalah... and the last is the purpose of the general prophecy.

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 169 ... the Song of Songs is a parable of the community of Israel with the Holy One, blessed be He, 35 who is like a bridegroom, is perfect in every respect, and she is to him like a bride perfect in every respect, He in His Divinity and she in her humanity.<sup>36</sup> And the *debequt* and love between them is shared via ascents and descents: she ascends and He descends. 37 "Who is it that ascends from the desert;" 38 "to the garden of nuts I descended." 39 This is an allusion to a virgin, over whose virginal blood one recites the benediction, "Who placed a nut in the Garden of Eden... " 40 And the partnership of the two of them is like that of male and female, man and woman." ... And human love cannot share in the divine save after much study of Torah and much attainment of wisdom,

and after having received prophecy, and this is the secret of  
tlcitan (bridegroom): Torah, [the letter] tav, between Het-Wisdom  
(1:-lokmah) on its right and "Prophecy" (Nebwah) on its left. As in  
the quotation from Mafteah ha-Sefirdt, here too

The interpretation given here to the Song of Songs is strikingly  
different from that generally found in Jewish philosophy and in  
theosophic Kabbalah; in this approach, Song of Songs is seen as  
a love song which describes the erotic contacts between bride  
and groom, on the literal level, and the character of prophecy or  
mystical experience, on the esoteric level. As in the relationship  
between a man and a woman, so in the mystical experience there  
is a progression in the character of experience and its goals. It is  
worthy of note that the soul is understood as a woman, a very  
widespread image in mysticism: 32 just as the ultimate sexual  
contact is the outcome of a long-continued quest, the soul  
likewise attains 'prophecy' only after great intellectual effort, the  
main elements of which are, first, study of the secrets of Torah  
and, second, knowledge of reality as it is.<sup>33</sup> Having seen that the

image of sexual union is intended to portray the relationship of the Active Intellect to the soul, we may now proceed to another passage. In Gan Nacu<sup>1,34</sup> Abulafia writes:

prophecy is preceded by two stages: the study of Torah and of wisdom. Abulafia expresses the idea that within the bridegroom (lidtan), namely within the Active Intellect, there exist Prophecy, Wisdom and Torah. Knowledge, by interpreting the word klatan as an acronym (notariqon): I:1-1:lolcmah on the right; Tâ□□Talmud Torah in the middle; Nâ□□Nebwiih on the left. The sexual connection is alluded to here, among other things, by the words ascent and descent borrowed from Song of Songs. On the mystical level, this refers to the influx of the Active Intellect, alluded to in the term descent, and the elevation of the soul, alluded to in the term ascent. Here, too, Abulafia follows Maimonides, who sees these terms as homonyms.<sup>42</sup> He returns to the concept of ascent and descent in Sefer Or ha-sekel:

This is the [great] power of man: he can link the lower [part] with the higher one, and the lower [part] will ascend and cleave to the



higher, and the higher will descend and kiss the entity ascending toward it, like a bridegroom actually kisses his bride, out of his great and real desire characteristic to the delight of both, from the power of the Name [of God].<sup>43</sup>

## 170 The Use of Erotic Images for the Prophetic Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 171

In Hayyey ha-Nefeg,<sup>44</sup> we read: ... the cleaving of all knowledge to the Name in its activities, in the secret of the pleasure of bridegroom and bride. <sup>45</sup> And it is known that this wondrous way is one accepted to all the "prophetic" disciples, who write what they write according to the Holy Spirit, and they are those who know the ways of prophecy. A leitmotif of these passages is that of the delight accompanying mystical experience. One might argue that this is merely a theoretical inference from the pleasure which accompanies sexual union, but in several passages

Abulafia makes it quite clear that this pleasure is in fact the aim of mystical experience. In Sefer 'Or ha-Selcel, he says:

The letter is like matter, and the vocalization is like spirit, which moves the matter, and the apprehension of the intention of the one moved and of the mover is like the intellect; and it is that which acts in spirit and matter, while the pleasure received by the one who apprehends is the purpose."

In addition to these theoretical expressions, there are descriptions of the mystical experience and of the sensation of pleasure accompanying it. In 'Osiir `Eden Gdnuz, 49 for example, we read:

And you shall feel in yourself an additional spirit rousing you and passing over your entire body and causing you pleasure, and it shall seem to you as if balm has been placed upon you, from your head to your feet, one or more times, and you shall rejoice and enjoy it very much, with gladness and trembling: gladness to your soul and trembling of your body, like one who rides rapidly on a horse, who is happy and joyful, while the horse trembles beneath him.5°

As is well known, in the hierarchy customary in the Middle Ages, the ultimate purpose [telos] of a thing is seen as the most important.<sup>47</sup> For that reason, this passage of Abulafia may be understood as an indication of the primacy of pleasure above apprehension. However, there are also places in which the distinction between apprehension and pleasure is not so sharp, although there too pleasure may be seen as the final goal. Thus, he writes in *Mafteli ha-Tolcalot*:

The purpose of marriage of man and woman is none other than their union, and the purpose of union is impregnation, and the purpose of impregnation is [bearing] offspring, and the purpose of [offspring] is study [i.e., of Torah by the child born], and the purpose of that is apprehension [of the Divine], whose purpose is the continuing maintaining of the one apprehending with pleasure gained from his apprehension.<sup>48</sup>

Abulafia is ready to see physical pleasure as an appropriate means of expressing the feelings which accompany the mystical

experience, unlike other authors who, while using the metaphor of intercourse in order to describe their love of God, were more hesitant to do so to express God's love for them.<sup>51</sup> Abulafia does not suggest anywhere that this image is an inappropriate one to its subject: on this point, Abulafia departs radically from Maimonides' teaching. Following Aristotle, <sup>52</sup> Maimonides sees the apprehension of the Divine as the highest goal of human activity; the joy which accompanies it is only a sideeffect of this activity.<sup>53</sup> Abandoning his path in this respect, Abulafia crystallized an approach, apparently based upon personal experience,â□□ that there is an additional stage to the acquisition of intellectual perfection-namely, that of the pleasure deriving from the mystical experience. <sup>54</sup> In following this path, Abulafia is close to the Moslem mystics, who were accused by Ibn Bajja of limiting the expression of union with God to conceptions of pleasure.<sup>55</sup> Under the influence of Plotinus, a number of Italian Renaissance thinkers thought of pleasure as a value preferable to apprehension; it would seem worthwhile to examine whether the translation of Abulafia's books into Latin might not have also contributed to this tendency.<sup>56</sup>

172 The Use of Erotic Images for the Prophetic Experience The image of sexual union is used as well in other books from Abulafia's circle. R. Nathan ben Sa'adyah Harar describes in Sa'arey Sedeq the relationship between the soul and the body as that between the mistress of the house and her servant, while that between the soul and the intellect is like that between a woman and her husband. He writes as follows of the connection between the intellect and the soul: "'For thy maker is thy husband.' This is her true husband, in terms of the maintenance [of her]." 57 In 'Osar 11ayynn,58 R. Isaac of Acre writes:

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 173 soul. A similar approach appears in a brief discussion in which R. Isaac compares the words of prophecy, received during the course of a mystical experience, to the role of the matchmaker, who acts as a go-between for purposes of marriage:67

Moreover, the word 68 used in the Arabic language to refer to one who speaks of a match between a man and a woman, to make matches and weddings, is qatib. And the words of prophecy<sup>69</sup> of God to the prophet are [also] called qatib.

Finally, I wish to mention the words of R. Nathan, who was seemingly an avenue by which R. Isaac of Acre learned of Abulafia's teachings, who provides the following reading in a collection gathered by R. Isaac:<sup>70</sup>

Likewise, the saying of the Sages: <sup>59</sup> "A wife is acquired in three manners: by money [in Hebrew: also "silver"], by a document, and by intercourse." "See life with a woman whom you love" <sup>60</sup> "He who finds a wife finds goodness"; <sup>61</sup> "Who shall find a woman of valour" <sup>62</sup> — all these allude to Torah, to wisdom and to intellect, which a man acquires by three principles, if he is enlightened in the secrets of three worlds: the lowly world, from which one mines silver — which is a mineral, neither seeing nor hearing nor feeling: this is alluded to [by silver]; the intermediate world, from which there comes light to the sages who read books

written upon documents of parchment, paper alluding to the documentâ□□"For the commandment is a candle and the Torah is light"; 63 and the upper world, the world which the intellect desires, and will rejoice and be glad to come and dwell within the pure reflective soul, as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, for more than the call wishes to suck the cow wishes to give suck 64 â□□this is symbolized by intercourse.

Elsewhere in the same work, 65 R. Isaac of Acre interprets another rabbinic saying :66 "'A woman speaking [i.e., engaged in intercourse] with her husband'â□□this alludes to the rational soul and to the upper world, which is the world of intellect." We see that in both passages, the relationship between the intellectual soul and the upper world, the world of the Intellect, is indicated by explicitly erotic images. We learn here of the cleaving between the soul and its supernal source, whether by its own ascent or by the "descent" of the upper world to dwell in the speaking

That we ought not to remove our thoughts from God, and that our intellectual souls shall always long for supernal knowledge, which alludes to the supernal influx and which sweetens<sup>72</sup> it, just as it is sweet to a woman to receive the influx from her husband who loves her with a strong love; and if she does so, then they shall always be attached in a true union.

The frequent use of the image of intercourse in order to portray the mystical experience, or at times even the experience of unio mystica, is one of the signs of the existence of a Kabbalistic circle for whom mystical experiences was an ideal, and who gave expression to their attainment of these experiences by means of a unique set of images.

### The Image of Seed

Already in ancient times the motif of spiritual union was linked with that of spiritual seed. <sup>73</sup> Irenaeus quotes a sentence from the Gnostic Marcos associating the two motifs: "Prepare yourself as a bride prepares herself, waiting for her bridegroom, so that



you may be that which I am, and I will be that which are; receive in your bridal chamber the seed of light." 74 The idea of

## 1 74 The Use of Erotic Images for the Prophetic Experience

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 175

intellective seed, which is widespread in Stoic literature, 75 found its way to Abulafia via channels that are unclear to me. In 'Osiir `Eden Giinuz,76 he writes:

The seed is a matter of that which exists through the existence of the Active Intellect, which is the influx by which the soul receives it, and it is like the image of the seed born from the man and woman. Of this it is likewise said by way of parable, "and choose life, that you may live, you and your seed,"77 which is the life of the world to come... "Who is wise? He who sees the future [lit.: 'That which is to be born']" 78 He sees the seed which we have mentioned, which is the son that is born.

and became the dominant view within the Kabbalah. Abulafia himself associates the two subjects, and writes of the brain and the heart that "both of them know their Creator... and from both together is issued the power of birth."<sup>85</sup>

4. The Secret of Impregnation As we have seen, the pleasure which accompanies sexual union rendered it an appropriate image for the mystical experience. But there is an additional aspect which was exploited by Abulafia in order to draw a connection between sexual union and ecstasy: the aim of fruitfulness. <sup>86</sup> We have seen above how, in the quotation from *Mafteah ha-SefirOt*, one of the purposes of sexual union is seen as impregnation. The meaning of this term in the context of mystical experience is the flow of the intellectual influx into the intellectual soul and its absorption by the soul. Abulafia was not the first to interpret the term in this manner; already in the earliest phase of Kabbalah, "impregnation" was a symbol for the reception of influx. Thus, in one of the manuscripts containing

material from the Kabbalistic school of Gerona we find the following statement:

I received from R. Abraham] that when the influx descends from the attribute [i.e., sefirah] via the paths, a holy intercourse takes place, and this is the secret of impregnation explained to the pious ones; that when they receive a merciful [sic! should read "spiritual") flow, this is a form of impregnation.<sup>87</sup>

It follows from this that the seed is an image for the influx which reaches the intellective soul, transforming it into intellect in actuality. In 1:layyey ha-coldm Abulafia briefly returns to the point that "every man is the fruit of God, may He be blessed, and His seed, by way of allegory, and he is His son in truth."<sup>79</sup> This idea likewise appears in Sa Carey Sedeq, where R. Nathan ben Sa'adyah Harar writes that "'and she bears seed' [Num. 5:28] which is the Holy spirit, and it is a lasting son."<sup>80</sup> His contemporary, R. Nathan, states, in an extant collection from his writings, that the Sefirah of Malkut:

...is the male among the separate intelligibilia and among the souls of human beings, for the influx which comes from it to the intellective soul is like the seed, which comes from the man to the womb of the woman. And just as a man matures in years, so does his intellect, which is the influx, grow with him 81

The use of the image of seed is a logical sequel to the use of the image of intercourse, in addition to the fact that according to the medieval world view, the connection between the brain and the seed is an organic one: the source of the seed, like the intellect, is in the brain. 82 This outlook is clearly expressed in Sefer ha-Bahir<sup>83</sup> ; it was accepted by the earliest Kabbalists,"

But whereas in Geronese Kabbalah this term is generally connected with the doctrine of transmigration of the soul, 88 in Abulafia it acquires an entirely different meaning. In Sefer ha-Ge'uldh, he writes:

The secret of impregnation depends upon the movements and the Zodiac; behold, when your soul becomes wise it is impregnated with knowledge and gives birth to insights and wisdom in its thoughts, and the active intellect is her husband, and his

176 The Use of Erotic Images for the Prophetic Experience name is isim (i.e., "people"), and he is her husband. And the vessels prepared for her are the letters, which are the material, and they fulfill the place of the womb of the woman [in relation to] the soul.<sup>89</sup>

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 177

Let us now go on to another distinction between two different kinds of impregnation. In Sefer 'Imrey Sefer, Abulafia writes:<sup>93</sup>

The two kinds of impregnation ('ibbur), that is, two forms which alternate with little difficulty and are similar in most respects and

in their common use, and which differ in their offspring, to bear fruit similar to themselves. And if the upper one passes on the seed prior to the lower one, which is impregnated, the offspring will be similar to the lower one, possessing the opening (negeb), which is called female (neqebah) or woman (Ogiih.); and she is Eve (Hawah), because she desired mystical experience, and obliged herself to be the material to the upper one, [who] conquers and inscribes himself in his place below, and is rooted and becomes a model to what comes after him, and it sealed in his form and image to protrude out. And when the lower matter comes to him and is connected with him, and embraces and kisses him and is attached and united with him, warp and woof, like the image of the torch within a torch or of thunder within thunder or of lightning within lightning, and they become connected to one another, then the latter becomes a concave seal, and her opening is opened. And this is the secret, "when this is opened that is shut, and when that is open this is shut." And in the hands of the two is a magical key, which portrays all its forms, warp and woof, and if the action is reversed between the two who are giving seed, and the lower matter conquers the upper, then

the names formed are four: 'Adam (Adam), Zalcdr (Male), le" (Man), Hayah (Living Creature); "and no man remembered that unfortunate man." 94 And as is the offspring between the two of them, so is the offspring of [mystical] "prophecy" in the two substances: the lower and upper matter.

Abulafia attempts to relate the original Talmudic meaning of the term sod ha-c ibbur (here translated as "the secret of impregnation")â□□that is, the calculations necessary in order to determine the additional amount of time to be added to a leap yearâ□□to the meaning which he gives to the same term. The intercalation of the year is dependent upon calculations pertaining to the movements of the constellations, for which reason sod hacc ibbur in its literal sense pertains to the realms of time and space. Abulafia adds the soul to these two dimensions, so that we arrive at the well-known triad of Sefer Yesirah, 9 Â° "soul [i.e., man], world and year" (nef6', coldrn, gandh)." The connection between the impregnation of the soul and the intercalation of the year and the world lies in the fact that both are connected with

calculations: the soul becomes impregnated when it calculates gematriiit and combinations, so that it becomes wise and gives birth to "understandings" under the influence of the Active Intellect. It is worth noting that, like the calculations of gematridt, the calendrical calculations are performed in Hebrew with the help of letters. The triad mentioned in connection with intercalation also appears in

Ner 'Elohim<sup>91</sup>: He who knows the secret of intercalation, which is the secret of the year, will [also] know the secret of the impregnation [c ibbur] of the world and of the impregnation of the soul. For this reason all the letters are twenty-two [in number], and there is the divine Name there: on one side the name YHWH. and on the other side the name 'Ehyeh. The names YHWH and 'Ehyeh add up in gematria to 47, which is the sum of the number of years in the "great cycle" of the sun, 28, and in the lunar cycle, 19.<sup>92</sup>



This passage is based upon a Rabbinic saying in Niddah 31b: "R. Isaac said in the name of R. Ammi: If the woman discharges seed first, then she shall bear a male child; if the

## 178 The Use of Erotic Images for the Prophetic Experience

## The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 179

man discharges seed first, then she shall bear a female child."

The meaning of this Talmudic saying is that the seed which is discharged last determines the sex of the child. It follows that there are two kinds of impregnation: the former, that brought about when the upper or male partner discharges seed first, and the latter, which takes place when the lower or female partner discharges seed first. On the metaphoric level, the upper or male is the Active Intellect, which "passes" the seed, while the lower is the human soul, which becomes impregnated. The result of the former type of impregnation, in which the Active Intellect "emits

seed" first, is negative, i.e., female; as the soul is not yet prepared to receive the intellectual influx, her offspring is similar to herself: that is, she gives birth not to a male, i.e., intellect, but to a female force. i.e., the soul. 95 The sequence of terms: defus (imprint), {zotam (seal), selem (image), and Met (protruding) allude to the Active Intellect and its activities. 96 In this case, one speaks of a seal, that which it is intended to "seal" coming by itself and being "underneath." The sense of the verbs patati (open) and silt= (seal) is not altogether clear; it may be that the expression, "when this opens that shuts" refers to a situation in which the lower matter is prepared to receive the influx, while the upper is still "shut." The negative implication of such a match follows from this; this type of impregnation is also portrayed in the negative images of "warp and woof," 97 "key" and "magical." The meaning of the second kind of impregnation is generally clearer; the "reversed activity" seems to refer to a situation in which the one who emits seed first is the lower matter, in which case the result will be positive, i.e., intellectual. This is the context of the verse from Ecclesiastes, which refers to the first image as wisdom, "and they found there a wise but unfortunate man, and he fled the city in his wisdom."

However, it is difficult to understand the significance of the expression "the lower matter shall conquer the upper."

The two passages analyzed above prove that Abulafia saw the image of impregnation as an appropriate one for the receiving of the influx from the active intellect." Several of the elements discussed above are combined together in a discussion found in *Sefer Yotzer* by R. Joseph ibn Sayyah, a sixteenth-century Jerusalem Kabbalist, who on some points follows Abulafia's path:

For the secret of his right [hand] is the circle of man, and the secret of his left hand is the circle of fire, and the secret of both of them is "the activity in the woman," which is [tantamount to] "he acts in the man," from which there comes "love to the influx," which is "influx to love," [symbolized by] the "roof" of the [letter] Heh, with the aspect of God portrayed, like the letter Dalet, whose number is four, the secret of impregnation, which is squared, and the number of Heh is five, which is the secret of impregnation.

Despite the fact that this passage is rather obscure, it may well be that it refers to the connection between the intellectual aspect symbolized by the expression, "the circle of man," "his right hand," and the material aspect, symbolized here by the words "his left hand" and "the circle of fire." These phrases are evidently understood in terms of the connection of male and female, who correspond to the intellectual and material parts. This is also suggested by the use of the term "efa c (influx), whose results are evidently the impregnation or the "secret of impregnation." This would indicate that Abulafia's type of thought penetrated into the latter Kabbalistic school of mid-sixteenth-century Jerusalem. It is also quite plausible that the above-quoted section is in fact a fragment from one of Abulafia's lost writings, or of one of his circle. In any event, we shall now go on to the results of the process of "impregnation."

## 180 The Use of Erotic Images for the Prophetic Experience

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 181 it is known that the material [i.e., human] intellect is son to the Divine intellect.

## 5. The Son and the New Birth

As we have seen above, the desired outcome of the pregnancy is a male child: the birth of a son symbolizes the appearance of the Intellect within the human soul; in several places, Abulafia designates the Intellect by the term son. Thus, in *tlayyey ha--`61anz ha - Ba'*, he writes: "the human intellect is the fruit of God, may He be praised, and by way of simile is His seed, and he is in truth His son." 101 In *'Osar `Eden Ganuz*, 102 he states: "We require redemption in any event from the one who destroys, and this is the secret of the redemption of the son, as is said, 'All first-born of my sons I will redeem,' and this is a hint of the commandment of redeeming the first born of the powers within man, which is the intellect." 103 At the end of the abovementioned work, we read: "I said at the beginning of this book, in the introduction, that it is a worthy act to redeem the son, who is in the image of the A[leph], that is, one and unique from

the perfect one, which is the intellect in truth. 104 In Sefer ha -Melis, we read "that when this intellect is born, which is his son (ben), from the root "understanding" (binah), he will be assisted by God, because the way [of man] is the way of the turning fiery sword, and he cannot give birth except by study of the intelligibilia." 105 The alleged semantic connection between ben (son) and binah (understanding) reappears in 'Osiir 'Eden Ganuz: "For there is his intellect, called 'son,' from [the word] 'understanding.'" 106 Likewise in Sefer ha - Gculah we read: 107 "For the disciples of the prophets are called their sons [i.e., beney ha - nebi'im], and likewise birth itself, as is said, 'And he begate in his image and likeness,' and we shall explain this matter of image and likeness, which also refers to understanding." 108 Further on in this same passage, we encounter another "etymology":

[A son (ben)], which means Sem [i.e., the name of Noah's son; in Hebrew: "name"], which causes man to understand and to gain understanding from it, and to exist it, just as the son is the cause of the existence [or continuation] of the species. And

With some minor changes, Abulafia reiterates the interconnections among ben (son)â□□beineh (builds)â□□binyan (building) in Sitrey Torah: "For gem (name) comes from the word desolation ( gemtimah) and destruction, while ben comes from the term 'understanding' (binah) and 'construction' (binyan)." 1 Â°9 The significance of these etymological exegeses seems clearâ□□the son who is born is the builder, that is, the Intellect which is the true building of man, which attains eternal life for him."Â° In the sequel to the above-mentioned passage from Sitrey Torah, we read that "man is composed of a desolate and wasted desert (midbar), like his body, and a rational being (medabber), which is prepared and built for perfect and eternal existence." Abulafia's words cited here are reflected in another passage in Sitrey Torah:

"The donkey (hamOr) brays." The pure bodily matter, "your soul" "the magician" (kasfan; an anagram of nafgelca, "your soul"), and it is the appetitive soul. "Dogs barking"â□□this refers to the material powers, that is, the power of imagination and excitation,

and the other powers, which are partly spiritual and partly material. "A woman speaking [i.e., coupling with] her husband"â□□matter and form. "And a baby"â□□intellective powerâ□□"suckling from its mothers breast"â□□the Active Intellect.' 1'

In the writings of R. Judah Romano, a younger contemporary of Abulafia's, the image of the potential intellect is compared with a child, while the active intellect is portrayed as a king 112 It is worth noting here the parallel in R. Isaiah ben Joseph of Greece between the influx of the active intellect and the power of birth:"3 For because the effect of the influx, which is our Active Intellect," 4 is to give birth and to constantly take its spiritual influx, and through this [it] shall constantly be renewed for those who receive apprehension after apprehension, continu-

182 The Use of Erotic Images for the Prophetic Experience ously. Likewise, Jacob our Father, peace upon him, was to beget many



sons... in the essence of strengthening, and in the supreme crown, which is the Active Intellect of the separate intelligibilia, which is called the Throne of Glory, there is likewise the power of giving birth to the influx. Therefore, the power of Jacob our father, peace upon him, is similar to the power of birth from the influx of the supreme crown.

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 183 will understand one thing from another; and they have already alluded to this in saying,' 25 "When he was forty years old Abraham came to know his Creator." And the Torah likewise alluded to this concerning Isaac, "And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebecca." 126 And this is the secret of the forty years that the Israelites wandered in the desert, and that the form of the fetus in the womb is completed after forty days, to require the one pregnant for a male and twice that for a female,' 27 and this is [likewise] the secret of the [Hebrew letter] mem, which gives birth. 128 ... Therefore it is said [of Moses], 129 "forty days and forty nights he did not eat bread and did not drink water."

Finally, it is worth noting that the derivation of the word 'bitted' from ben has an interesting history in the Christian Kabbalah. The apostate Abner of Burgos, known as Alfonso de Valladolid, writes as follows: "The Christians relate to the understanding of the Holy One, blessed be He, the name 'son,' because he was born out of Wisdom, for ben and bindh and tebundh are all from one root."<sup>5</sup> The exegesis found in Sefer ha-Zohar, in which the name of the Sefirah Bindh is divided into Ben and yah ("son" and "God"), influenced R. Reuben Zarfati, a fourteenth-century Italian Kabbalist,<sup>6</sup> and through the Latin translation of his work reached Pico della Mirandola.<sup>7</sup> The emergence of the intellect within the human soul is also discussed by Abulafia from another point of view: that the son born is the true man or the new man. The idea is an extremely widespread one in mystical literature: Hermes Trismegistus taught that man becomes a son of God by means of the new birth,<sup>8</sup> while Christian mysticism speaks of the birth of the son of God within the soul of the mystic.<sup>9</sup> Islamic mysticism knows of the "spiritual child," who is a symbol of renewal,<sup>10</sup> while Buddhism speaks about the man who has

received enlightenment as the son of Buddha.' 21 In all of the cases mentioned above, and apparently also in Abulafia, the appearance of the intellectual element is seen as a new birth, which transforms the mystic into a son of the divine.<sup>122</sup> In his commentary to Sefer ha-Haftardh, Abulafia writes:<sup>23</sup> In truth, when a man is forty years of age, he is ready by his nature to be redeemed' 24 from the physical forces, and he

The phrase, "to be redeemed from the power of the physical forces" is reminiscent of the above passage from 30stir 'Eden ha-Ganuz, 13Â° dealing with the redemption of the first-born "from the powers within man, which is the intellect." The spiritual birth is alluded to here by the parallel to physical birth, forty days as against forty days; there is likewise an association here with a saying in 'AbOt 5:23, "one who is forty years old-for understanding." In 1:layyey ha-`oldm ha-Ba ,,," Abulafia again discusses the above-mentioned idea:

Ydlefiyah [the Prince of the Torah]... taught Torah, that is, the entire Torah, to Moses our teacher for forty days and forty nights,

corresponding to the formation of the fetus in its mother's womb, 132 [the time necessary] to distinguish between male and female. Therefore, it is possible for a person to enjoy the radiance of the Sekindh in this world without food for forty days and forty nights, like Moses and Elijah. 133 And the secret of the names of both of them is known to you, and he combines one with the other: first Moses, and then Elijah, and their combination emerges as a Divine Name (gem ha-'elohi; an anagram of Mogeh, Eliyahu), and it is in its secret [meaning] the name of the son, and he is the son of God [pun on kin and Ha-Sem].

Prima facie, the above-cited passages from Abulafia's works are no more than theoretical discussions of the spiritual

184 The Use of Erotic Images for the Prophetic Experience

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 185

development of Moses and Elijah: Abulafia relies upon literary sources that were known long before him, and upon the number forty years, which is a formulary number. One may ask whether his discussion is merely an intellectual exercise, or whether there are indications of Abulafia's personal experience underlying these arguments; i.e., was the intellect which transformed Abulafia into a son of God born within his soul?' 34 The only two books in which I have found a connection drawn between the appearance of the intellect and the number forty were written in 1280, that is, the Hebrew year 5040, which was the fortieth year of Abulafia's life.' 35 It seems to me that behind these "objective" comments there is a personal confession, his fortieth year also having been the year at the end of which Abulafia went to the pope, a journey entailing explicit messianic characteristics. In the commentary to Sefer ha-cEduot, also written in his fortieth year, we read:136

He said that he was in Rome at that time, and they told him what was to be done and what was to be said in his name, and that he tell everyone that "God is king, and shall stir up the nations," 137 and the retribution of those who rule instead of Him. And he informed him that he was king and he changed (himself) from day

to day, and his degree was above that of all degrees, for in truth he was deserving such. But he returned and again made him take an oath when he was staying in Rome on the river Tiber... and said, anoint him as king by the power of all the Name, for I have anointed him as king over Israel,' 38 over the congregations of Israel, that is, over the commandments, and you have called his saying and name Sadday, like My own Name, whose secret is "my breasts" (gadday) in the corporeal sense. Understand all the intention, and likewise his saying, "that he is I and I am he"... But the secret of the corporeal Name is "Messiah of God" (mdsiah ha-Sem) and also "Moses will rejoice" [yisnzah Mcgeh, the anagram of the previous phrase].

tieth year was an important one in Abulafia's spiritual life, one in which he saw the beginning of his spiritual renewal as Messiah, anointed to rule over the people of Israel. In several other places in the same book, we read of experiences which constitute progress in his mystical life: "And at the end of the fortieth year another sublime opening in vision was opened." 139 There are

detailed testimonies of his unusual experiences during this year, and this is not coincidental, for it was during this period that he began to write his "prophetic" books, which are indicative of personal experience. It is illuminating to trace the influence of the idea of spiritual renewal during the fortieth year in two books from Abulafia's circle. In *Âšwarey Sedeq*, R. Nathan ben Sa c adyah Harar, writes:

And behold Moses changed his nature according to the letters of the name, and he beget a male child before he descended from the mountain, for he stood there forty days and forty nights, as does natural offspring of man... And when his formation was completed after forty days, the skin of his face shone, and therefore he extended [the stay of] in the desert of those who left Egypt for forty years, because of their great poverty, and he, peace upon him, only needed one day for each year.'4Â° Hayyim:

141

R. Isaac of Acre writes in a similar vein in his book )0scir

sianic and an intellectual type, strengthen the claim that the for-

These allusions, which indicate a vision of both a mes-

... The enlightened one who goes to separate himself and to concentrate, to draw [down] upon his soul 142 the divine spirit, in wondrous and awesome deeds which are too terrible to relate; from the day he came from God, strong desire and intense love in the heart of his father and mother gave birth to him, and he who gave birth to him, to connect with [him] and to labor in him until he is today forty years old, which is the time of completion of the building of his intellect and its sanctuary, to adjure evil and to choose good. "For until forty years [man wishes] fine food" 143  
â□□these allude to the sensory and corpo-

186 The Use of Erotic Images for the Prophetic Experience real realms. "From then on, [he wishes] fine beverage"â□□this is the Divine spirit, to apprehend the intelligibilia, and this is what is said



in the verse, ' "God has [not] given you a heart to know and eyes to see and ears to hear, until this day"â□□ which is the fortieth year â□□"and has led you forty years in the wilderness" 145  
â□□an allusion to the house of seclusion.

### The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 187

often copied from the works of other authors, without mentioning them by name, and therefore the above passage may be a reworking of an idea borrowed from Abulafia's without its source being mentioned." 9 Finally, I would like to cite the view of several Jewish authors on the subject of spiritual rebirth. First, let me quote from the author of the Zohar:'5Â°

Come and see: whoever reaches the age of thirteen years and on is called a son of the congregation of Israe1, 151 and whoever reaches the age of twenty years and onwards is called a son of the Holy One, blessed be He, 152 for certainly "You are sons of the Lord your God." 153 When David reached thirteen years and

was meritorious, on that day that he entered his fourteenth year, it is written, 154 "God said to me, you are my son, this day I have begotten you." What is the meaning? That before that day he was not His son and the supernal soul did not dwell upon him, for he was in his years of uncircumcision. For that reasonâ""this day I have begotten you." "Today" certainly "I have begotten you" and not the Other Side (sitra 'Ora), as it had been until now.

The understanding of the age of forty as a turning point in the spiritual development of man also appears in another work written under the direct influence of Abulafia. In TO1dOt 'Adam,146 written in the fifteenth century, we read:

If you wish to learn before a great master, who is the angel of prophecy, whose name is Raziel, and if you understand all that I have hinted of his power and his teaching, then you will know the secret of his name. And if you wish to be one of his disciples and to learn in his book, which is that of the completely righteous, and you wish to be inscribed with them immediately for eternity, then take care to study continually from [the age of] thirteen years until

[the age of] forty years in the book of the intermediate ones before the good angel Gallizur, who is the intellectual master; and from forty years onwards let your principal study be before Raziel, and then secrets of wisdom shall be revealed to you, for you shall already be a great man among the giants.

A comparison with the following passage from the introduction to Abulafia's prophetic books' 47 indicates a certain resemblance between the two books: "I, Abubrahim the young, studied before Raziel my master for thirteen years, and while I was yet thirteen years old I was unable to understand a thing from his books."

Despite the differences between the two passages, it seems to me that they complement one another: both speak about Raziel as a master, while the periods of study complement one another: Teilddt 'Adam speaks of two later periods of studyâ□□from age 13 to 40 and from age 40 onâ□□whereas the introduction speaks of the earliest stage, until the age of thirteen."<sup>8</sup> It is worth mentioning that the anonymous author of 'Mid& 'Adam

It is clear from this passage that the author of the Zohar also interprets the appearance of the soul, which is the supernal component within the personality, as a new birth, transforming man into a son of God. The statement at the end that man is under the domination of the Other Side until the age that one is required to perform the commandments reminds one of Abulafia's statement that prior to the appearance of the intellect the bodily powers of man are predominant. The perception of the appearance of the intellectual soul or the intellect as a symbol of renewal appears in two later authors. In book Yes6dOt ha-Maskil, R. David b. Yom Tov ibn Bilia, a fourteenth-century Spanish philosopher with mystical leanings, writes as follows:<sup>55</sup>

For were the intellectual soul itself present within man at the time of his birth, this would require that we immediately apprehend the supernal knowledge and wisdom, and we do not see this: for if one does not engage in study one knows nothing,

188 The Use of Erotic Images for the Prophetic Experience and if one does so one becomes something else by oneself, 156 and

this is the proof that the soul which comes into being with the person is no more than a preparation. And we learn this principle from the saying of the Psalmist, of blessed memory, who says to his soul, "He who does good on behalf of me, renew as an eagle my youth." 157 There is no doubt that the Psalmist was only speaking to his intellectual soul, which is renewed after man is born, and this renewal is like that of the eagle, which is renewed by itself (sic!) after a [certain] known period.

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 189 Hermetis. 16 '  
Basing himself upon a version of Pec ulat ha-Yesirih,162  
Lazarelli interprets the appearance of the gOlem, referred to in  
that

A combination of these motifs of the self-renewing eagle (probably an allusion to the phoenix) 158 and the man of intellect appear in R. Abraham Bibago, a fifteenth-century Spanish philosopher, who gives striking expression to the way in which the intellect flows into man from the upper world as a son:

However, the human intellect is like the son, which flows down from the world of intellect, and afterwards, just as there is a relation between the son and his father, so is it possible that there may be cleaving between us and the world of the intellect; thus, when God said to me "you are my son," i.e., I will give you understanding brought down into the world, "this day I have begotten you," and that day that you cling to Me, you will be born in a renewed and eternal birth. And this is meant by his saying, "renew as an eagle my youth." 159

work, as a spiritual process of the appearance of renewed man. As in Abulafia, this appearance is defined as the birth of the disciple's intellect under the tutelage of the master's intellect. 163 Using the image of seed, 164 the act of true birth of man is described by Lazarelli in terms of the teacher's resemblance to the creative power of God. 165 Evidently Abulafia's doctrines became known to Lazarelli, by one channel or another, and he used them in practice, as is illustrated by the details of the

spiritual renewal Lazarelli has caused to the King Ferdinand of Aragon.

## 6. Intercourse as Metaphor and as Symbol

Having discussed the use of erotic images for mystical experience, it is worthwhile noting the specific character of these images in Abulafia, drawing a comparison between Abulafia's use of the image of sexual union and that of the theosophical Kabbalah. Scholars of Kabbalah have already remarked upon several unique characteristics of Kabbalistic symbolism. 166 I would like to begin by discussing the use of sexual union as a symbol; as scholars have noted, in Sefirotic Kabbalah "the symbolic relationship is imbedded in the very nature of the symbol." Human sexual union was chosen to serve as a symbol of unification within the Sefirotic realm because, while it is understood as an act whose components are likely to be lowly, but when this act occurs a new element is added to it, incomprehensible and holy, by which it is transformed into a sacral act; from this perspective sexual union becomes, on the

one hand, a symbol of and, on the other hand, a factor in the divine life. In order to exemplify the approach of the theosophical Kabbalists, I would like to cite here a story told by R. Isaac of Acre in *Mcirat Tinayim*: 167

One should also note the words of R. Menahem CAzariah da Fano, a sixteenth-century Italian Kabbalist, in *Ma'amar haNefeg*:<sup>6</sup> "And then God said to me, 'You are my son,' and in this saying he emanated upon him a spark of the spirit. 'This day I have begotten you'—this refers to the spark of the soul, for both of which [the two sparks] he will shine into him, 'today,' in their images." Finally, I wish to comment upon the great similarity between several elements in Abulafia's approach concerning man's true birth—i.e., that of the intellect—and the remarks of the Renaissance thinker, Lodovico Lazarelli, in his work, *Crater*

190 The Use of Erotic Images for the Prophetic Experience A certain sage asked his colleague about the subject of the [Temple] sacrifices, and said: How is it possible that a matter as



disgusting as the burning of fat and the sprinkling of blood, with the smell of the skin and hair of the burnt-offering which is completely consumed, should be a matter by which the world is sustained, that it be a cause for unification above and for blessing and for the sustaining of all that exists? He answered: I will tell you a parable, as to what this resembles. A child is born, and is left alone when he is little, and he sustains himself by herbs and water, and he grows up and it happens that he comes within the habitation of human beings, and one day he saw a man coupling with his wife. He began to mock them and say: what is this foolish person doing? They said to him: you see this act; it is that which sustains the world, for without this the world would not exist. He said to them: how is it possible that from such filth and dirt there should be the cause for this good and beautiful and praiseworthy world? And it is nevertheless trueââand understand this.

**The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 191**

"didactic" element; that is, the sexual act is one that is parallel to mystical experience because of the similar set of components and the interrelationships among them. We do not find any assumption in Abulafia of a substantive connection between the processes; he seeks a schema which is appropriate and wellknown for describing mystical experience, so that he can exemplify its occurrence in a simple way. Another distinction is to be added to what we have said thus far: intercourse is an act whose nature is known to us, and it is used to describe an event which may also be apprehended and defined in intellectual terms. Not so in Sefirotic Kabbalah: the supernal union is a hidden process, which is reflected in human sexual union without our being able to understand its exact nature.<sup>72</sup> Let us now turn to another distinction between the sexual act as symbol and as image. Generally speaking, the human sexual act is used in Sefirotic Kabbalah to allude to processes within the Godhead. Abulafia's use of the sexual act as an image for the connection of the intellective soul with the Active Intellect and its cleaving to it do not appear in earlier Kabbalah. According to Scholem, erotic symbolism was interpreted as a symbolism dealing with

Godhead, while the connection between man and God was not explained by the use of such symbols except in the later period, of Safedian Kabbalah.' 73 It follows from this that the process alluded to in Abulafia is entirely different from that referred to by theosophical Kabbalists. These Kabbalists refer to an act whose actual performance acquires a certain theosophic meaning, provided that it is done accompanied by knowledge and mystical intention toward its true goal. There is no hint of this demand in Abulafia: there is in principle no need for actual sexual contact in order for this contact to serve as an image, while intercourse itself is of no importance whatsoever in the mystical technique of Abulafia. An additional and significant difference between the understanding of the sexual act in the two systems is the identity of the components of this union. In Abulafia, the male or the

The aim of this parable is to demonstrate that there is a certain mystery in the sexual act, and that this mystery, which cannot be given clear expression, enables it to serve as a symbol for the sublime mysteries," and even to influence the divinity despite its

"gross" components. Abulafia, under the influence of the philosophical approach, perceives the sexual act as a lowly one. In 'osar 'Eden Ganuz,' he writes: "Intercourse is called the Tree of knowledge of good and evil,<sup>17</sup> ' and it is a matter of disgust, and one ought to be ashamed at the time of the act [to be away] from every seeing eye and hearing ear." Abulafia emphasizes the lowliness of the sexual act: the aura of mystery which accompanies it in the Sefirotic Kabbalah is here completely absent. If, nevertheless, Abulafia chose it as an image for mystical experience, he did so because in his approach there is no necessary connection between the image and the process or thing to which that image refers. While the theosophical Kabbalists emphasized the mysterious aspect of the sexual act, Abulafia stresses more its

## 192 The Use of Erotic Images for the Prophetic Experience

bridegroom is the Active Intellect, while the female is the human soul. As the mystics were men, there was a certain difficulty

involved in this reversal; but precisely on this point, Abulafia is close to other widespread non-Jewish mystical systems, which consistently portray the soul of the mystic as a female. 174 On the other hand, the theosophical Kabbalists preserve the "proper" psychological relationship in describing, in those rare sources where one can find the connection between Man and the Sekinah, the mystic as the male and the Sekinah as the female;' 75 but, as surmised by Werblowsky, 176 it is difficult to assume that the descriptions of this subject in Sefer ha-Zohar and in the other mystics stem from personal experience. On the other hand, there is ground for assuming that Abulafia underwent mystical experiences, which are alluded to in his writings through the detailed use of erotic imagery. The great gap between Abulafia and the Sefirotic Kabbalah is likewise revealed in the results alluded to by means of the erotic imagery. While in Kabbalah human sexual union may cause harmony in the Divine world by strengthening the connection between the Sefirot of Tiferet and Malkut, 177 the mystic only indirectly benefitting from this harmony' 78; in Abulafia mystical experience has no influence upon the active Intellect or upon God. The human soul is the only

element which benefits from the connection with the Active Intellect: the meaning of mystical experience is psychological, private, in certain circumstances social, but always without the cosmic and theosophical meaning which stems from the theurgic nature of sexual union in Sefirotic Kabbalah.'79

## The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 351

### Notes to Introduction

1. g ern ha-Gedolim, Ma careket Sefarim, VIII, sec. 76. 2. I intend to devote a lengthy discussion elsewhere to the details of

the polemic between Abulafia and ibn Adret, one of the main records of which is found in this responsum of the latter. 3. See Ch. 12, fol. 31b. In practice, Yagar of Candia copied the attack of R. Judah Hayyat, found in the introduction to his Commentary to Macareket ha-'Elohut (Mantua, 1558), fol. 3b of the introduction. It is astonishing that a person as expert in Kabbalistic literature as

R. Azulai saw fit to mention Ydgar's copy of this attack rather than the original, cited here explicitly at the end of Ch. 11. 4. The most important sources for Abulafia's life were published by Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash III*, pp. xl-xlii, and Idel, "Abraham Abulafia and the Pope." See also, idem, "Maimonides and the Kabbalah," [in Twersky, ed. *Studies in Maimonides*, pp. 59-68], on Abulafia as teacher of the *Guide for the Perplexed* (in press). 5. For a full listing of Abulafia's original works-both those that have been preserved and those that were destroyed- and the material ascribed to him or belonging to his circle, see Idel, *Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 3-85. 6. On this subject, see Idel, "Ecstatic Kabbalah and the Land of Israel," in *Studies*, essay VI. 7. See Idel, *"Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic"* (SUNY: Albany, 1995). 8. M. Landauer, *Literaturblatt des Orients*, vol. 6 (1845), pp. 380-383, 417-422, 471-475, 488-492, 507-510, 525-528, 556-558, 570-574, 588-592, 747-750. 9. Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1956), IV: 4-40; idem., "Abraham Abulafia, der Pseudomessias," *MGM* 36 (1887), p. 557-558. 10. For the places of publication of his edition of *Sefer ha-'Oth* and the

epistles, and for We-Zot li-Yehuddh and Seba c NetibOt ha-torah, see the list of abbreviations, p. 234.

352 Notes to Introduction 11. See, for example, Hebrüische Bibliographie, 4 (1861), 71-79, and his numerous footnotes to the descriptions of the manuscripts in the Munich Library. 12. See A Jellinek, Moses ben Schem-Tob de Leon and sein Verhdlniss Zuni Sohar (Leipzig, 1851). 13. See David Neumark, Geschichte der judischen Philosophie des Milttelalters (Berlin, 1907), 1: 183-225; Shimeon Bernfeld, Da cat 'Elohim (Warsaw, 1931), pp. 142-146; Azriel Gunzig, "Rabbi Abraham Abulafia," ha-Egkol , 5 (1964), pp. 85-112 [Hebr.]; S. Karppe, Etudes sur les origines et la nature du Zohar (Paris, 1901), pp. 294-306. 14. See Scholem, Sa carey Sedeq, pp. 127-139; idem, Kabbalistic Manuscripts, pp. 225-230; idein, "Chapters from Sefer Sullam ha-cAliyah by R. Judah Albotini," Qiryat Sefer , 22 (194546), pp. 334-342 [Hebr.] 15. Pp. 119-155. See also his lectures on Abulafia and the texts he published from manuscripts in his Abraham Abulafia. 16. One of the reasons for the absence of any reference to Abulafia's



writings in these studies is the fact that his approach is significantly different from that of the Kabbalistic mainstream with which Scholem dealt in the above-mentioned studies, including that on debequt. 17. See Abraham Berger, "The Messianic Self-Consciousness of Abraham Abulafia," in *Essays on Jewish Life and Thought Presented in Honor of S. Baron* (New York, 1959), pp. 55-61; Pearl Epstein, *Kabbalah, the Way of the Jewish Mystic* (Rome, 1984), pp. 109-120. See also the extensive references to Abulafia in the writings of Aryeh Kaplan, who made considerable use of material from the ecstatic Kabbalah in order to present an original Jewish mystical path to the modern reader. 18. See, for example, the remarks by David Bakan, *Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition* (New York, 1965), pp. 75-82. 19. On the difference between these two tendencies in Kabbalah, see Idel, *Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 434-449; idem, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, Introduction, pp. IX-XVII. 20. On the difference between the Abulafian hermeneutics and that of the theosophical-theurgical school, see Idel, *Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 239-240; idem, "Infinities of Torah in Kabbalah," pp. 151-152; idem, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 200-210.

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 353 21. Gershom Scholem, *Die Erforschung der Kabbala von Reuchlin bis zur Gegenwart*, (Pforrheims, 1969), pp. 11-12. 22. Chayyim Wirszubski, *A Christian Kabbalist reads the Torah* (Jerusalem, 1978), pp. 22, 38 [Hebr.] 23. See, idem, "Liber Redemptionis-An Early Version of Rabbi Abraham Abulafia's Kabbalistic Commentary on the Guide for the Perplexed in Latin Translation by Flavius Mithridates," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities*, 3 (1969), pp. 135-149 [(Hebr.); M. Idel, "Agideo da Viterbo and the Writings of Abraham Abulafia," *Italia*, 2 (1981), pp. 48-50 .

## Notes to Chapter 1

1. Ch.16. The text cited here is based primarily upon S. Wertheimer, *Mai Midragdt*, I, 92, with minor corrections based upon the text in *Beyt ha-Midrag*", III, ed. Jellinek (Ch. 14); Cf. Schafer, *Synopse*, pp. 8889, par. 204-205. On the Divine Names mentioned in this passage, see Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 56 and

p. 363, notes. 57-58. 2. S. Mussaioff, *Merldbah Selemdh* (Jerusalem, 1921), fol. 4b; on the parallelism between this passage and the previous, see the note by Wertheimer, *Batey Midragot*, I, 92, n. 75. 3. Printed in *Tac am Zeqenim* (Frankfort a. M., 1855), p. 54 ffol. The version cited here appears in R. Judah al-Barceloni's *Perug Sefer Yesirdh* (Berlin, 1885), p. 104. See also B. Levin, 'Osar ha-Ge adnim IV, Responsa, p. 17; idem, I, 20, n. 1; MS. New York - JTS 1805 (Enelow Collection, 712) fol.41a. 4. Levin, 'osar ha-Ge'Onim IV, Responsa, p. 14; Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 49-50. n. 33-35. Jellinek thinks that this reflects Sufi influence, but he has not given any reasons for this statement. See *Beitrdge*, no. 22, p. 15. See now also Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 89-91. 5. Vajda, "Etudes sur Qirqisani," *REJ*, 106 (1941-45), p.107, n. 2. 6. 'Arulc ha-Salem, vol. I, p. 14.

354 Notes to Chapter 1 7. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, p. 54. 8. See his commentary on *Hagiggah*, fol. 14b. 9. Rashi on *Hagiggiih* 14b. Compare the aggaddh cited in *Yalqut Simcdni* to *Genesis*,

sec. 44. 10. MS. Cambridge Add. 643, fol. 19a; MS. Oxford 1574, fol. 34b; MS. Vatican 431, fol. 39a. This passage is quoted in the name of Ibn Ezra-with slight changes-in Sefer Ketab Tamim of R. Moses Taku, 'Osar Nehmad, III, p. 85, which matches the version found in MS. British Library 756, fol. 170b-171a. On this work, see Dan, Esoteric Theology, p. 143ff. 11. 'Osar Nehmad, III, 84. See M. Guedemann, ha-Torah welza-Hayyim bi-yemey ha-Beynayim be-Sarfat uwe-)ASlenaz, pp. 123-124, and Scholem, Major Trends, pp. 102-103. pp. 12. MS. Oxford 1812, fol. 55b. On this work, see Dan, Studies, 44-57; idem, "The Ashkenazi Hassidic Gates of Wisdom," in Hommage a Georges Vajda, (eds.) G. Nahon-Ch. Touati (Louvain, 1980), pp. 183-189. 13. The letters of the forty-two letter name are here interpreted as the initials of mystical Names of God. This is an ancient approach, which had considerable influence on the Medieval mystics; R. Eleazar of Worms seems to have been one of the important avenues through which this approach made its way into Europe. On the subject generally, see Idel, "The World of Angels," pp. 1-15. 14. The interpretation of each of the letters as a Name in itself already ed. appears in the He;cal& literature; see, for example,

Hekalot Zutarti, R. Elijah, p. 28. On the influence of this outlook on Abulafia, and of his outlook on R. Moses Cordovero and on Hassidism, see Idel, "Perceptions of the Kabbalah." 15. Based upon Sanhedrin, fol. 91a; see Idel, "The Concept of Torah," p. 28, n. 20. Esoteric 16. On this abbreviation as a reference to R. Eleazar, see Dan, Theology, pp. 118-127. 34 (1867), p. 16. 17. Ch. 41. Printed by A. Jellinek in Kolbe Yischaq, The work was composed at the beginning of the second half of the thirteenth century.

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia 355 18. A certain parallel to the opinion of Ibn Latif appears in the words of an anonymous author whose work was preserved in MS.

MainzAcademie 107, fol. 98a.

And now I shall point out what the three times YHWH refers.

Know that there are two [kinds] of comprehension which one may comprehend of Him, may He be blessed. The first is that He exists: this comprehension is the one spoken of when they say that we may understand God through His deeds, for it is

impossible without there being a first cause. The second is that, even though we have not yet reached it, we are confident that in the future awesome things are to be generated, from which we may recognize the rank [ma caidit] of the cause which generated them, on a level greater than that which we know now, in what has been generated in the act of Creation. And albeit that this comprehension is greater than the former one, the common element of both is that through His actions one knows the Active Agent. But these comprehensions differ in that the former is an comprehension of his existence, and the latter is comprehension of his rank. But there is yet a third [kind of] comprehension, with which created beings are not involved at all, and this is the comprehension of the essence, which is hidden from all beings but God alone, who alone comprehends His essence, and none other. And these three comprehensions are alluded to in the verse, "God has reigned, God does reign, God will reign forever and ever."

The awesome deeds referred to here are evidently parallel to Ibn Latif's remarks concerning the Divine will, on the one hand, and the miracles and wonders performed by means of the supernal will, in the quotation to be brought below from R. Moses of Burgos, on the other hand. 19. For Ibn Gabirol's influence on Ibn Latif in the identification of 'will' and 'speech,' see S. O. Heller-Wilenski, "The Problem of the Authorship of the Treatise Saar ha-Samayim, ascribed to Abraham Ibn Ezra," *Tarbiz*, 32 (1963), pp. 290-291, and note 74 [Hebr.] 20. See Scholem, *Les Origines*, p. 356. 21. MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 149a. On "Torah, Wisdom and Prophecy," see also below, Ch. 4, n. 34. 22. The reference is to R. Ishmael, R. Nehunyah ben ha-Kanah and R. Aqiba, "who are among the great ones of Israel among the authors,

356 Abulafia's Theory of Language 'Otiyeit de-Rabbi 'Akiba," as such as *Pirqey Hekalot*, *Sefer ha-Bahir* and Abulafia explains below, in fol. 148a. *Tarbiz*, 5 23. "Peru'S Sem ben M"B 'Otiyot, printed by Scholem in (1934), p. 56 [Hebr.]

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 357

24. See the chapter devoted to this subject in Idel, *Abulafia*, p. 133 ff. pp. 80-81.

### Abraham

*Sefer ha-'Ot*, 25. *Sitrey Tardh*, MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 156a; 26. *Sitrey Torah*, *ibid.*, fol. 157b. The verbs "combine" and

10, fol. 149a-149b and 150b, which differs in a number of respects from that in *'Or ha - Sekel*. A specimen of the table of lettercombinations which we have printed appears as well in Tocci, "Techniques of Pronunciation," pp. 222-229 which he printed from *'Or ha - Sekel*; he likewise noted the source of the section in *Pardes Rimmonim* in *'Or ha - Sekel*. For similar phenomena of combinations of vowels in ancient pagan magi,



see P. C. Miller "In Praise of Nonsense," in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality*, ed. A. H. Armstrong (New York, 1986), pp. 482-499. 37. MS. Vatican 233, fol. 97a.

38. 'Eser Hawayat, MS, Munchen 43, fol. 219a, as well as in several passages in *Sefer ha -g em*. The section was copied from the works of R. Eleazar in *Minhat Yehuddh* by R. Judah Hayyat (*Ma'areket ha - 'Elohut*, fol. 197b), and from there to *Pardes RirmOnim*, fol. 92b. The expression, "the book of the structures [mwardkod of the living God" is an allusion to *Ma'areket ha - 'Elohut*, R. Moses

"be purified" are different forms of the root srf.

27. *Maftali ha - Rwaycin*, MS. Vatican 291, fol. 21a.

28. See the chapter on language in Idel, pp. 143-146.

Abraham Abulafia,

29. 'Osdre 'Eden Ganuz, MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 161a.

30. MS. Jerusalem 8Â° 148, fol. 63b.

31. Liqqutey Harris, MS. Oxford 2239, fol. 113a.

32. MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 70b.

33. Perus' Sir ha - g irim , MS. Oxford 343, fol. 49a. in 34. MS. Munchen 408, fols. 65a-65b, also published Sefer ha - Peli'idh, fol. 35b. On the dialogic element in Abulafia's mystical experience, see below, Ch. 3.

Cordovero substituting the author for its commentary. The first Spanish Kabbalist to use an Ashkenazic system in his books was R. David ben Judah he-Hasid, in Mar& ha - Sabot, p. 95. This source was also known to R. Moses Cordovero, who mentions him as "the author of Sefer 'Or Zarua'," which, as is known, is the

work of R. David. Compare *Pardes Rinundnim*, fol. 93b with the citation given in *Mardi- ha - SdErdt*. R. David's contemporary, R. Menahem Recanati, also alludes to this system in his *Perug la - TOrdh*, fol. 49b. 39. See chapter on language in Idel, Abraham Abulafia, sec. 3 and note 31. Abulafia based the use of the word *notariqon* upon widespread knowledge in his circle. See MS. BerlinTubingen Or. 941, fol. 88a, which contains a text very similar to part. 3 of *Ginat 'Egdz*, in which the word *notariqOn* appears with the vocalization of five different vowels. 40. On Exodus 3:15.

682, see Idel, 35. On *Ma'aseh Merlai-ah = gem be- gem =* Abraham Abulafia, pp. 179-181.

*Pardes* 36. *'Or ha - Sekel*, MS. Vatican 233, fol. 95a, copied in *Niqqud*. Compare, *RimniOnim*, fol. 92c, under the title *Sefer ha* against this, the table appearing in *Ner Tlohini*, MS. Munchen

358 Abulafia's Theory of Language

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 359

41. M. Steinschneider (Hebraische Bibliographic, vol. 21, p. 35) alludes to the possibility of the influence of ha-Agulat haRa'ayoniyal on the technique of circles in Hayyey ha-colam ha-Ba'. However, it is difficult to substantiate such an assumption in light of the fact that Abulafia does not at all mention ha-rAguliit ha-RacayoniyOr t, despite the fact that this was a widespread work among the Jews. 42. MS. Rome-Angelica 38, fol. 38b; MS. Munchen 285, fol. 30a. 43. MS. Munchen 285, fol. 102a. 44. MS. Munchen 58, fol. 320a. 45. George Anawati, "Le nom supreme de Dieu," Etudes de philosophic musulmane (Paris, 1974), pp. 404-405. 46. Extensive bibliographical material on breathing and on the various techniques of pronunciation was gathered by Tocci in the notes to his article, "Technique of Pronunciation." However, his analysis of the details of Abulafia's system of breathing is based upon a passage from 'Or ha-Sekel and upon the printed portion of Hayyey ha-`01arn ha-Ba); he was unaware of several

important discussions concerning breathing technique, which we shall cite below, for which reason his study is incomplete. 47. MS. New York, JTS 1897, fol. 86b - 87a.

48. 'Abot , 4:1.

51. J. H. Woods, *The Yoga System of Patanjali* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 193; *Yoga-Sutra II*, 49.

52. The accepted interpretation of kumbhaka is "halting" – an interruption in the breathing activity after one draws in air. In one place only have I succeeded finding an interpretation suitable to Abulafia as well: in the French translation of the lectures of Vivekananda on the sutra of Patanjali, Jean Herbert, the translator, remarks that the meaning of kumbhaka is a halt before or after the breath. The former interpretation suits the idea of "rest" in Abulafia, but I cannot verify the reliability of this interpretation. See S. Vivekananda, *Les Yogas pratiques* (Paris, 1939), p. 551, note 1. 53. MS. Vatican 528, fol. 71b. 54. MS. Vatican 233, fols. 109b-110a. Copied by R. Moses Cordovero in *Pardes RimmOnim*, fol. 92c-d, as *Sefer ha-Niqqud*.

55. Ibid., fols. 110a-110b.

56. The straight ones are read as 'Alef-Yod, and the inverted ones as Yod-'Alef. 57. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 54b: "And between each letter you are allowed to wait and to prepare yourself and breathe for the duration of three breaths of the breaths of pronunciation."

58. The sentence "but he is not allowed.... together" appears twice; I have eliminated the repetition.

59. Matteal)ha-emeit MS. New York, JTS 1897, fol. 87a. It is

49. These are the first and last letters of the Name of forty-two letters. 50. , e1)ci, Netibdt ha-torah, p. 25; Hayyey ha-`01tim ha-Ba ,, MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 54b.

worth noting that, despite the difficulty in uttering letters while breathing, such an instruction does appear among the Sufis, who make use of a technique combining pronouncing while breathing

and emitting air. See Anawati-Gardet, *Mystique musulmane* (Paris, 1961), pp. 208-209.

### 360 Abulafia's Theory of Language

#### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 361

the world was, and there is no chance in his words, but through them he splits the Sea and the Jordan.

60. In Sefirotic Kabbalah, the forty-two letter Name serves as a symbol for the attribute of Geburdhâ□□the Sefirah of "Rigor".

61. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 61b.

62. G' ?legit-It& [three breaths] = 814 = negimah 'shat = ha-sdtdn ydmuT = mastinOt [one breath; Satan will die; enemies] = ha-hasagOt be-darn ha-)adarn [the comprehension in the blood of man] = sin dalet yod [the letters of Sadday written out in full] = hOtam Beni [the second seal] = hemit ha-gedim [killed the

demons] = ba-hotiim mcgiah [with the seal of Messiah] = memit  
ha-dam ha-ra c [kills the bad blood] = memit middh ra'ah [kills  
the bad attribute] = met mi-yad yeadrah [dies by a dear hand].  
There may be a connection between

See also note 67 below. 65. Abulafia derives the word mal'ak  
(angel) from meldkah (labor). See Hayyey ha-Nefeg, MS.  
M'unchen 408, fols. 27a-b; Imre Sefer, MS. Munchen 40, fol.  
225b, etc.

66. Mafteah ha-Semeit, MS. New York, JTS 1897, fol. 87a.

67. See Idel, "The World of the Imagination," pp. 168-171. 68.  
The concluding poem of Hayyey ha-Oldm ha-Bw, MS. Oxford  
1582, fol. 82a. 69. Psalm 150:6.

70. Genesis Rabba , 14:9, ed. Theodor-Albeck, p. 134. 71.  
Mafteah ha-g emot, MS. New York, JTS 1897, fol. 87a. Compare  
also 'Or ha-Sekel, MS. Vatican 233, fol. 77b.



the positive valuation of breathing as a means of strengthening the spiritual element, and the idea of the Orphic poets, quoted and rejected by Aristotle in De Anima, 410b, 28, that the soul is drawn in by breathing. 63. MS. Oxford 1582, fols. 54b-55a. Y'H negimOt (18 breaths) = 824 = gen& hayyirn [years of life] = hayye negamOt [life of the soul] = meganneh hayut [the changers of vitality] hayut hanacimith [vitality of the soul]. Sene nehirim (two nostrils) = 678 = carabOt = nehire ne gcimah [nostrils of the soul] = senayim kerubim [two cherubs] = geney murkabim [two compounded] = makrike ha-Sekindh [those who force the elcinah]. See also MS. Jerusalem 8Â° 1303, fol. 55b. 64. Compare Gan Na'u1, MS. Munchen 58, fol. 322a:

As it is said [Gen. 2:7], "And he breathed into their nostrils the breath of life," and one who weighs the letters must contemplate the secret of the recitation of the names, with the hidden breaths sealed by all the wisdoms, and in them he shall live after death.

72. Saar ha-Yir'dh, Ch.10. The section is also quoted in Midrtig Talpiyot of R. Elijah ha-Kohen, fol. 15b. 73. Deuteronomy 8:3. 74.

The division of the hour into 1080 seconds, as well as the 1080 combinations, also appears in Abulafia, but he does not draw any connection between them in his known works, no doubt because no connection of this type exists in actuality. See: V 'Adam, MS. Rome, Angelica 38, fol. 5a; Perug Sefer Yesirah, MS. Paris 774, fol. 60a; 'osiir Gan 'Eden, MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 40b; and many other places. See also the introduction to 'Or Yaqdr, printed in R. Abraham Azulai's *it Or* (Bene Barak, 1973), III, fol. 44c sec, 73 on Bamidbar.

Compare also Nahmanides in his commentary to Ecclesiastes, Kitbey Ramban, ed. Chavel, Jerusalem, 1963 I, 192:

And with the unique name [there are] letters created and revealed miracles performed in the world....for with His Name He spoke and

362 Abulafia's Theory of Language

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 363

Chs. 1-2; as is well known, R. 75. Saar Pirte ha-Semot, Moses Cordovero was the teacher of R. Elijah de Vidas. 76. MS. Oxford 1582, fols. 54a-54b, printed by Scholem, Abulafia, p. 23.

77. Beralcot, fol. 22a. Abulafia, p. 78. MS. Vatican 233, fols. 110a-110b; Scholem, The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in 226. See also J. L. Blau, the Renaissance (New York, 1965), p. 69, n. 12.

Scholem's remarks, *ibid.*, n. 2; Hallamish, Kabbalistic Commentary, p. 223.

86. Sefer Yesirdh 1:9.

156. 87. Compare Genesis Rabbah, 17:5, ed. Theodor-Albeck, p.

88. The problem of the contemplation of colors and lights in Kabbalah shall be discussed in a separate work, in which I will

analyze this passage from R. Joseph from other aspects. Abulafia does not mention colors at all in his works, while elsewhere, in the epistle *We-Zot li-Yehuddh*, p. 16, Abulafia criticizes the contemplation of lights as being of a lower type of Kabbalah than that which he advocates. 235. 89. Ed. Goldreich, p. 217; see also Gottlieb, *Studies*, p. 90. Deuteronomy 11:22. 91. Deut. 10:20. 92. Deut. 4:4. 93. Ed. Goldreich, p. 89. 94. MS. Paris, *Seminaire Israelite de France* 108, fol. 95a, and compare MS. Oxford 1943 British Library 768, fols. 190b191a, and *ibid.*, 771/2. MS. Paris 108 contains sections from both *Meirat Tinayim* (see fol. 92a), and an anonymous work of Abulafia (fol. 82a-89a). The forming of the letters of the Name with colors, while connecting matter to *Sefirdt*, appears as well in MS. Sasson 919, p. 229, which also includes material from the circle of R. Isaac of Acre. 95. There is no doubt that R. Isaac of Acre's remarks were influenced by Maimonides' understanding of providence in

British Li79. MS. New York, ITS 1801, fols. 9a-b; MS. 'Elohim, MS. Ner brary 749, fol. 12a-b, with omissions. See also Munchen 10,

fol. 166b. 80. Psalms 141:2. 81. (Wien, 1860), p. 32. In the printed version the word appears there, which I have corrected in accordance with magiâ□□Ot the meaning here. Here, it refers to the letters of the Ineffable an idea which appears Name, which move the letters of Alef Bet, IV:25, and was already known among the Kabalready in Kuzari, balists of Gerona, and afterwards by R. Joseph of Hamadan. 82. See Ibn Ezra's commentary to Exodus 3:15, which is also cited in the section on circles, below, Ch. 3. 83. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 52a. fol. 57b-58a. On the connection between closing 84. Ibid., "Hitbodedut one's eyes and the use of mystical technique, see Idel, as Concentration," Studies, essay VII, Appendix A. from the commentary of R. 85. Printed by G. Scholem, in his article "The True Author Joseph Ashkenaz i to Pardsat Beregit, attributed to the Rabad and of the Commentary to Sefer Yesirdh 4 (1927-28), p. 299 (Hebr.1; see also his Works," Qiryat Sefer ,

364 Abulafia's Theory of Language Guide, 111:51, albeit his intellectual approach was given a magical

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 365 108.  
Beralcot, fol. 55a. 109. Sanhedrin, fol. 65b. 110. 'Or ha-Sekel,  
MS. Vatican 233, fol. 109a. 111. Hayyey ha-Olcim ha-Ba', MS.  
Oxford 1582, fol. 51b; Scholem, Abulafia, p. 210. English  
translation taken from Scholem, Major Trends, pp. 136-137. From  
this text, Ch. G. Nauert, Agrippa and the Crisis of Renaissance  
Thought (Urbana, Ill., 1965), p. 289, n. 7, concludes that there  
may have been some connection between Abulafia and Agrippa,  
although at present there is no evidence to support such an  
opinion. Compare the words brought in the name of R. Elijah of  
London, quoted below in n. 129.

significance. 96. The circle used by Abulafia in his technique turns  
afterwards into a subject revealed in his vision. 97. H. Corbin,  
Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi (London, 1970), p.  
234, n. 41-42. 98. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 62a.

99. Ibid., fol. 63a-b. 100. Ibid., fol. 12b. 101. Abulafia, p. 170.

102. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 12b. 103. See G. Ben-Ami Zarfati, "Introduction to Baraita deMazalbt" [Hebr.], Bar Ilan; Sefer ha-Saneih, 3 (1968), p. 67 and note 34. This division appears in many places in medieval literature; see Wertheimer's Batey MidrdgOt, II, p. 26, and the comments of Abraham Epstein, Mi-Qadn5niy61 ha-Yehudim (Jerusalem, 1957), p. 82. Abulafia himself also used this distinction in his anonymous work in MS. Sasson 290, p. 235, and in 'Osiir 'Eden Geinuz, MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 81a. It is worth noting that the concept of "forms" Hayyey ha-`01am (surdt), which appears in the section quoted from ha-Ba', means "constellations"; see I. Efrat, Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages, II, p. 93-94 [Hebr.] 104. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 61a. 105. Idel, Abraham Abulafia, p. 131. 106. Published by Scholem in Qiryat Sefer, 22 (1945), p. 161.

107. Ibid., p. 165.

112. MS. New York, JTS 1801, fol. 9a; MS. British Library 749, fol. 12b. 113. MS. Jerusalem 8Â° 148, fols. 71b-72a. This is the

source for the description in Sullam ha-Aliyah of R. Judah al-Botini; See Scholem, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts*, pp. 226-227. The language is more similar to Sa rarey Sedeq than to Hayyey ha-Olcim ha-Ba', as thought by Scholem, *ibid.*, n. 5, even though Abulafia's book greatly influenced the quotation from SuHam ha-Aliydh.

114. Hayyey ha-`61am ha-Ba', MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 51b; Scholem, Abulafia, p. 210; and Sefer SuHeim ha-Aliyah, printed in his *Kabbalistic Manuscripts*, p. 227. The motif of the "white garments" appears in a number of texts connected with the recitation of the Divine Name. The recitation of the Ineffable Name is described in a work entitled Simug Rigon le-girsat ha-Sefarim haHisaniim, MS. Bologna, University No. 2914, fol. 55a. Among the actions which precede this recitation are immersion in a ritual bath, fasting, and wearing white clothes. See also the ceremony of creating the gcilem in the section quoted by Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, p. 185. Compare his words quoted in the name of R. Elijah of Londres (London) in MS. Sasson 290, p. 381:



366 Abulafia's Theory of Language When you wish....to make your question, turn your heart from all other involvements, and unify your intentions and your thoughts to enter Pardes. Sit alone in awe, wrapped in tallit and with tefillin on your head, and begin [to recite] 'Mikt am le-Dawid' [Ps. 16], the entire psahn....and read them with their melodies. 115. 'Or ha-Sekel , MS. Vatican 233, fol. 109a. 116. l:layy ey ha-Oldni ha-Ba', MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 52a; Kabbalistic Manuscripts, p. 227. Scholem,

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 367

126. See above, n. 117.

127. ljayyey ha-`01am ha-Ba', MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 52a. 128. Sanhedrin, fol. 90b.

129. Compare the things attributed to R. Elijah of London (see above, note 114), who writes, after what is cited there:

Thereafter he should bow on his knees with his face to the east and say as follows....and think of the Name which is written before him, but not utter it with his lips....and the Name of four letters, which is divided on the perfection of the vocalization into 38 sections, and they are not to be pronounced, but he is only to direct his thoughts to them. (MS. Sasson 290, p. 381).

117. M. Bowers - S. Glasner, "Autohypnotic Aspects of the Kabbalistic Concept of Kavanah," *Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*, 6 (1958), pp. 3-23. The authors rely almost exclusively upon the material appearing in G. Scholem on Abulafia and his disciples, and also analyze phenomena pertaining to the Helull& literature and to M. H. Luzzatto. It should be noted that the assumption that the ecstatic situation of the "descenders to the Merktibdh" is the result of self-hypnosis already appears in the article by Yitzhak Heinemann, "Die Sektenfrommigkei t der Therapeuten," *MGM*, 78 (1934), p. 110, n.

1. 118. On the sensation of heat among various mystics, see C. Rowland, "The Visions of God in Apocalyptic Literature," *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, 10 (1979), p. 141, and n. 10.

119. Hayyey ha-Olam ha-Ba', MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 52a.

And compare to MS. Sasson 919, p. 210: I, R. Isaac of Acre, felt in myself a great longing to gaze at the mil/4i [i.e., the plene writing of each letter] of the Ineffable Name in all its ways, for I already knew that the ways of heh and waw four and four, thus, h ha hh by w ww waw wyw. But the first one has only one milui, thus, ywd. But now guard yourself and guard your soul lest you read the letters lthwyli, and do not read them, for whoever pronounces the Name by its letters as they are written has no portion in the World to Come. See this and ask your soul, but contemplate them. See also below, Ch. 3, pp. 304-305. 130. R. Fulop - Miller, *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism* (London, New York, 1927), pp. 258-260. The author, who points out the origins of this movement in Mt. Athos in Greece, and sees a continuation thereof in hesychasm, which is likewise based upon the recitation

of the name of Jesus, claims (p. 260) that the source of his approach lies in "Jewish Kabbalah," but there is no proof for such a connection. 131. Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 145.

120. MS. Paris - BN 680, fol. 293a. 121. MS. Jerusalem 8 0 148, fol. 73a. 122. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 53a. 123. Song of Songs 5:10.

124. *Ibid.*, v. 2.

125. M. Laski, *Ecstasy*, (New York, 1968), pp. 47 ff.

368 Notes to Chapter 2

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 369

132. See Idel, *Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 129-133.

## Notes to Chapter 2

1. MS. Miinchen 58, fol. 324a-b; MS. British Library Or. (Ko13136 fol. 7a-b. The passage was printed in *Sefer ha-Peli'uih retz*, 1784), fol. 52a-53a, and appears again in the anthology of . Abulafia's works by Joseph 1- 1ami, MS. Oxford 2239, fol. 114b. MS. Musayoff 30, Joseph ben Joseph copied it in *Sefer McPamarim*, fol. 19a, from *Sefer ha-Peli'uih*. For the edition of the Hebrew text, with textual variants between MS. Miinchen 58 and *Sefer ha-Pell*) *Hebrew Writings Concerning Music* (Miinchen, Oh, cf. Israel Adler, 1975), p. 35-36. *habeirah*, see 2. For the musical connotations of the term Adler, *HWCM*, index, p. 359. 3. For the musical connotations of these terms, see Adler, *hithalefut ha-* (26161 (modHWCM, index, p. 360; *hilluf ciO1* (mutation), 250 Simeon ulating [?] voice); see also the term *tamrur*, *ibid.*, Duran. B. 3 (p. 134). 4. I have not found this metaphorical usage prior to the period of Abulafia. This author uses the combination "pangs of love" ("and the spirit of his love is drawn out with the pangs p. 78. This phrase of true love") in another work, *Sefer* appears a few

years later in the work of the Kabbalist known MS. Jerusalem 8  
3925, as Joseph of Hamadan, Ta c amey ha-MiswOt, fol. 82b.  
and joy stems from 5. This connection between the spleen 51b  
dealing with the Beralcot a misunderstanding of the saying in  
"grinding (soheq) spleen." The reference in the Gemara, as in  
7:37 and others, was parallel sources such as Ecclesiastes  
Rabbah

to the action of grinding (gehiqdh) and not to laughter (sehoq).  
However, in the Middle Ages the verb SHQ was understood to  
mean the same as SHQ. Cf. the sources gathered by Wertheimer  
in Batey Midngiit, II, p. 378, note 111. Add to them . acar  
hagamayim of Gershom ben Solomon (Warsaw, 1876), fol. 33c,  
and Sebiley 'Emundh by Meir Aldabi (Warsaw, 1887), fol. 44a. 6.  
Instead of yeter )ehcid, perhaps read yeter \*Er, giving the  
translation: "...moves from there to another string, such as bet,  
gimmel..."

7. Cf. Commentary to Sefer Yesirdh by Eliezer of Worms

(Premisla, 1883), fol. 5b-d. This theory of combination appears in Abulafia's epistle known as Ha-Seder ha-mithappelc, MS. British Library 749, fol. 30a-31a, and in several other places. 8. MS. New York, JTS 1801, 31b. 9. MS. Jerusalem 80 148, fol. 48b-49a, and MS. New York, Columbia X 893 Sh. 43, fol. 19b. 10. On the influence of music on the body, Cf. Adler,

HWCM, index, p. 361, "influence of music."

11. Another new principle found in ,Â§a(arey Sedeq is that of the vocalizations or vowel-points which allow for the pronunciation of the consonants. Cf. below, Section IV. 90-93. 12. Cf. Underhill,

Mysticism, (London, 1945), pp. 76-78, 13. MS. Oxford Hebr. e 123, fol. 64b. 14. Cf. Tanhuma ha-hgtin (ed. Buber), Genesis, p.

3. The combination "in the voice of Moses" appears several times

in the work of Abraham Abulafia, in order to emphasize the inner source of prophecy. Cf. 'Osdr `Eden Gdnuz, MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 12a; Sitrey Tordh, MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 140a.

## 370 Notes to Chapter 2

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 371

15. MS. Munchen 40, fol. 246b; in the anthology of Joseph Hamis, MS. Oxford 2239, fol. 130a. 16. The combination of the legend of David's harp with the verse in II Kings 2:3 appears in several places. Cf. *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* (ed. Buber), chapter 7, fol. 62b-63a, and Buber's notes; also L. Ginzburg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1946), VI, p. 262, n. 81-83. 17. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 7a. "Gan ceden in gematria equals (ad naggen, and gan (eden in gematria equals cebed naggen."

18. *De Virtutibus*, 39, 217; Cf. also H. A. Wolfson, *Philo*

24. J. Weiss, "Via passiva in early Hassidism", *JJS*, 11 (1960), 140-145. See also R. Shatz-Uffenheimer, *Quietistic Elements in*



18th Century Hassidic Thought (Jerusalem, 1968), p. 112 [Hebr.]

25. I Samuel 10:5; II Kings 3:15. The latter verse became the scriptural support of all those who connect prophecy to music.

26. TB, Pesahim 117a, g abbat 30a, and other places. 27. Hillcdt

Yesodeye ha-Tordh, 7:4; Sefer ha-Yihud attributed to Maimonides (Berlin, 1916), p. 20-21, and also in Peraqim beHaslahah

attributed to Maimonides (Jerusalem, 1939), p. 7. See also Adler,

HWCM, index, p. 378-379, "prophetic inspiration aroused by

music." 28. Ginzey ha-Melek, ch. 15 (Adler, HWCM, p. 171,

sentence 1); Cf. the translation by Werner and Sonne, HUCA, 16

(1941), 283-284; and see also Musarey hafildsofim, ch. 18: "He

says to the

(Cambridge, Mass., 1947), II, p. 29. 19. M.J. Rufus, Studies in

Mystical Religion (London, 1919), p. 40. 20. Cf. the material

collected by A.J. Heschel, The Prophets (New York, 1962), p.

341, n. 28-29, and E. Meyerovitch, Mystique et poesie, p. 78, 88.

21. Cf. Mekilta on Exodus, 18:19; Cf. also B. Cohen, Law and

Tradition in Judaism (New York, 1959), p. 24, n. 70. 22. Cf. Y. Dan, Studies., p. 179:

It cannot be that the Glory speaks of His Own accord in the same way that man speaks of his own accord. Take the nebel as an example; the man plays on it, and the sound is not of the Webers own accord.

musician: awaken the soul to its honorable power from modesty and righteousness...." (Adler, HWCM, p. 148, sentence 6). See also the remarks of the anonymous author of Told& ha-)Adam, written about 1444 (MS. Oxford 836, fol. 184a):

The experts in this art call these six notes, in their language, [tilt, mi[!], re, fa , sol , la, and there is another fine note which joins in with them all, together and equally, and it is the song of [all] songs, "a great sound which did not cease." It is possible that David of blessed memory alluded at this art with the seven sounds, firstly, the "sound on the water" to instruct us in the Name. This art is truly material and spiritual, and therefore it arouses the perfection of the qualities by which prophecy sets in,

as it is written, "But bring me now a minstrel, and when the minstrel played."

R. Judah transfers the analogy from the sphere of the Godman connection to the sphere of God-glory, given that the Glory is the source of prophecy and the place of its occurrence. 23. A.J. Heschel, *Theology of Ancient Judaism* [Heir.] (London & New York, 1965), II, p. 264-266; Z. R. Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo, lawyer and mystic* (London, 1962), p. 260, n. 7-8. theory.

This work was written under the influence of Abulafia's 29.

Quoted from the *Perug ha-Torah* by Bahya ben Asher on Genesis 1 (ed. Chavel, Jerusalem, 1966), p. 39. Cf. also the

372 Notes to Chapter 2

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 373

commentary by Solomon ben Adret on Baba Batra 74b (ed. L. A. vol. 7-8, 1970), Feldman, in Bar-Ilan: Annual of Bar-Ilan University, p. 141. 30. , abbat, 30b.

31. Sefer Adney Kesef (London, 1912), vol. 2, p. 120.

Adler, HWCM in the preceding note; see also the text by Ibn Sahula below. 38. In ed. Ferrara and MS. Paris-BN Hebr. 745: ha-beten; Scholem suggests the correction: ha-bittuy: the original version may have been a Hebrew transcription (la'az) of the term "notes," such as, ha-noti. 39. For these denominations of high and low pitch, see Adler, HWCM, index, p. 354 (daq) and p. 82, sentence 2, note 1

(gas).

32 MS. Jerusalem 8 1303, fol. 4Th. 33. The two views are found in Stikkah, 50b. 34. 'Osar ha-Flo/cm-14 MS. Musayoff Jerusalem

55, fol. 84a. On this author and his times, Cf. Scholem, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts*, p. 42-43.

Sefer 35. This passage is cited in the name of R. Isaac in *ha-Tmunot* by Shem Tov ben Shem Tov (Ferrara, 1556), fol. 94a, published by G. Scholem in *Madac ey ha-Yahadut*, II (1927), p. 277. Cf. Pitlrey (Oldm by Solomon ben Samuel (who apparently lived at the end of the fourteenth century), Adler, *HWCM*, p. 301, s [1] note 1:

The tenth gate: the musical service in the Temple, vocal and instrumental, in order to draw hearts toward Blessed God, and to lift the souls to the supreme world, the spiritual world. This is the issue of the pleasantness of voice [required] in the synagogues for prayers, *gerobOt* and *piyyutirn*, and in the Temple they had proper command of the science of music.

40. Ed. Ferrara and G. Scholem read "mitmaseset," but see below the corresponding passage of Ibn Sahula, and see also the commentary *Ta c amey ha-NequddOt we-Suratdn*, in *Madacey ha-Yaluidut*, II (1927), p. 267, l. 18; we therefore adopt the

correction mitnosešet. 41. Published in *Mada c ey ha-Yaluidut*, II (1927), p. 247. 42. Cf. Scholem, *Madac ey ha-Yaluidut*, II (1927), p. 169. 43. MS. Oxford 343, fol. 38b. On this work and its relation to the Kabbalah of the Zohar, Cf. G. Scholem, *Perciqim le-toldot Sifrut ha-Qabbaldh* (Jerusalem, 1930/31), p. 62. I have omitted the passage dealing with music, indicated by dots, which deals with music from *Midrag ha-Ne celam*, published there by G. Scholem. Cf. also Adler, *HWCM*, p. 172-174. 44. Numbers Rabbah 6:10. Cf. Adler, *HWCM*, p. 173-174, sentence 1, note 2. 45. *Tentrdh*, (musical) motion; for the various musical meanings, see Adler, *HWCM*, index, p. 380 (*tenti cah*), p. 376 *nu ,nuac*); see as well Werner-Sonne, in *HUCA*, 16 (1941), 306, note 183, and 17 (1942-43), p. 537.

Cf. also *ibid.*, p. 300-301. the term was probably used in the sense of musical notes. Cf. Adler, *HWCM*, p. 172 (the prefol. of 360 / *Ibn Sahula*) and p. 173, sentence 3; see also *ibid.*, index, p. 375: *nequddiih*. 37. For an identical formulation of the melodic

and rhythmic evolution of the song of the Levites, see the reference to

36. Nequddot, usually denomination of vowel points; here,

## 374 Notes to Chapter 2

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 375

46. Mishnah, Yoma, 3:11. The idea that the science of music had originated with Israel and was then lost also appears in the and also in the important passage cited above from `Adney Kesef, part 2, ch. musical discussion of Moses Isserles in Torat ha-4)1A, 38: "the science of music which, due to sin, has been forgotten by us from the day on which the song-service ceased to exist." Cf. also I. Adler, "Le traite anonyme du manuscrit Hebreu 1037 de la Bibliotheque Nationale de Paris," Yuval, 1 (1968), 15-16. MS. Paris, BN 790, fol. 47. SOd ha-aleelet, found in Social, 141a-b; Cf. E. Gottlieb, Studies., p. 120, note 57. 48. The expression in

whose dwelling there is joy" apfrom Pears twice in connection with music in Sod 'Ilan ha-'Asilut, G. Scholem published this small the circle of Sefer ha-Temundh; *ibid.*, p. 83, 97. There treatise in (26bes cal Ydd (n. s.), 5 (1950); see is no question that there is a very close connection between the and that found among conception of music found in Sod ha-Saleelet I hope to write at members of the circle of the Sefer ha-Temunah. length elsewhere on the conception of music in this circle. 49. Cf. H. Gross, *Gallia Judaica*, p. 322. 50. On death due to religious excitement caused by singing, see D. B. Macdonald, "Al-Ghazzali on Music and Ecstasy," *JRAS*, (1901), p. 708, n. 3. 51. Cf. G. Scholem, *Tarbiz*, 3 (1932), 260.

52. See

sense of niqqudim; this is also the case in our following quotation from 'Or ha-Selcel.

56. *Ibid.*, fol. 110b.



57. MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 163a. 58. MS. Munchen, 10, fol. 142a-b. 59. The author refers here to the five long vowels which were accepted in Hebrew grammar from the time of Joseph Qirnhil and which appear in Abulafia's books. Cf. also Hayyey ha-colt-7"m ha-Ba'. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 53b. 60. The four-stringed c ud (short-necked lute), considered by the Arabs to be the musical instrument par excellence ("instrument of the philosophers"), was liable to be supplemented by an added fifth string (had); see, for instance, Adler, HWCM, p. 26 (sentence IVb, 31), p. 38 (sentence 16); A. Shiloah, *The Theory of Music in Arabic Writings* (Munchen, 1979), no. 272. Of particular interest, as regards our text, is the source quoted (after H.G. Farmer) by Werner-Sonne, HUCA, 16 (1941), 275-276, referring to the analogy of the four strings with the four elements, and associating the added fifth string with the soul. This may be related to the following quotation from Ner 'Elohim, fol. 137a:

Indeed man is made up of five elements which encompass the whole body. One element is simple and heavenly, and it is one of the heavenly forces, and it is called in its entirety soul (nefee), spirit (matt) or higher soul (negamiih)" (see also *Ibid.*, fol. 135b).

A. Jellinek, in *Beyt ha-Midreie*, III, p. 21

53. MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 62a. This passage is based upon et semi [cf. wire) Samar =sir amar the gematria of 751, by which Numbers 6:271 . 54. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 11b. In this manuscript, as well as in several other manuscript copies of this treatise, there is an is used in the addendum which explains that the term niggunim

See also the references to the five stringed kinnOr in the *Tiqqney Zohar*; Cf. *Inventory of Jewish Musical Sources*, series B, vol. I: *Music Subjects in the Zohar...* by A. Shiloah and R. Tene (Jerusalem, 1977), tiqqun 10 (p. 119, no. 175, 2), tiqqun 12 (p. 121, no. 178, 4 and 11), tiqqun 21 (p. 128, no. 181, 21). 61. The author probably has in mind the equivalence kinnOr = (ud = the musical instrument par excellence, thus arriv-

## 376 Notes to Chapter 2

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 377

ing at the equivalence kinneir = music (Cf. the beginning of the preceding note). 62. The last five words of this quotation perhaps refer to names of the tecarnim (such as c oleh we-yeired, macarilc). 63. MS. Jerusalem 8o 148, fol. 72a-b. On this treatise, see note 9 above. Published in part by G. Scholem in *Kabbalistic Manuscripts*, p. 227. 64. 65. Averroes wrote on the connection between the animal soul and sounds in his *Epitome of Parva Naturalis*, ed. D. Blumberg. (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), p. 11, 1. 6-9:

The animal soul found in the living being does not deny the action of nature, but rather rejoices in the colors and sounds which nature produces, for they exist potentially in the animal soul...

well as F Rosenthal, "A Judeo-Arabic work under Sufi Influence," HUCA, 15 (1940), 433-484, esp. p. 458-469. 66. MS. Moscow-Giinzburg 607, fol. 8a. This passage seems to be an adaptation from Musarey ha-fihisefint, I, 18 (8); see I Adler, HWCM, p. 148; see also the emendations of the sequence of this passage in Werner and Sonne, HUCA, 17 (1942-43), p. 515516 and p. 525 (English translation). For the connection between music and sacrifices, see Ibn Falaquera's Sefer ha-Mebaqqe (based on the music epistle of the Ihwan al-Safa); Cf. Adler, HWCM, p. 165, sentence 3. 67. The phrase, "the harp was struck in front of the altar" seems to be based on the Mishnaic phrase "the Kalil (flute) was played in front of the altar," in Aralcin 2:3. 68. Ed. Jerusalem, 1965, fol. 31b. It would be superfluous to point out that the connection between High Priest and ecstasy appears as early as Philo, and from there moved on to Plotinus. It also appears in the Zohar. Cf. Scholem, Major Trends, p. 378, n.9. 69. Ed. Koretz, 1784, fol. 50c. In the matter of the number of bells, there is a clear parallel between Yesdd `Olden and Sefer haPeliidh; the number thirty-two does not appear in Zebahim 88b, where 36 or 72, but not 32, bells, are spoken of. 70. The text, still unpublished, is

preserved in MS. British Library 749, fol. 15b. Vital himself admits that his conception of prophecy was influenced by Abulafia, whom he quotes (among others) in chapter 4.

71. Hitbodedut: here the meaning is not "solitude" or "iso-

Cf. Johanan Alemanno's view in Hey ha-Oldmim,  
MantuaBiblioteca comunale, MS. ebr. 21, fol. 56a:

At most times of the day which are the times of solitude, in the morning and in the evening, he should sit in the garden which delights the soul, which [soul] feels through the five senses that there exists a beauty of variety of sightsâ□□the flowers, roses, and the sight of the fruitâ□□and a beauty of the variety of soundsâ□□various songs with which the birds, while nesting, make pleasant melodies...in this manner his sensitive soul will not be sad at the beginning of solitude.

The sensitive soul of Alemanno is the animal soul of Averroes and the living soul of Sa c arey Sedeq. It is worth stressin ing the

difference between Sa c arey Sedeq and Sullam ha- cAliyah: the latter book, primarily instrumental music is discussed, and we may here be encountering the influence of the Sufi practice of sama', which was based upon instrumental music. Cf.

Meyerovitch, *Mystique et poisie*, p. 83 ff. and bibliography, as

lation," as in the usual connotations of this term. See M. Steinschneider, *MGWI*, 32 (1883), 463, n. 8 and *Hebraische Libersetzungen* (Berlin, 1893), p. 74. The interpretation of hitbodedut as 'dumbness of the senses' also seems plausible in Pseudo Ibn-Ezra, *Sefer ha-Asamim* (London, 1901), p. 13.

### 378 Notes to Chapter 3

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 379 ha-Mac alot (Berlin, 1894), p. 41.

72. Mafgitiṅ naḡ-gam: for the meaning of this "withdrawal," see Z. R. Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo.*, pp. 61-62, 69.

version of this passage appears in Shem-Tov Falaquiera's *Sefer*

### Notes to Chapter 3

1. See Idel, *Abraham Abulafia*, p. 232.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 101. 3. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

4. See

8. MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 158a. Compare *Midg ha-Ne'ehim 'al Rut* (Zohar Hddg, p. 92b): "The Rabbis say: storm-this is the storm of Satan, who made turbulent the body of Job." 9. Ezekiel 1:4. 10. Job 40:6. 11. MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 163b-164a, with omissions. 12. Deut. 12:23. 13. Lev. 17:11.

14. *Op. cit.*, n. 11, fol. 162a.

A. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York, 1962), pp.

390-409.

5. *Commentary on the Mishnah. Introduction to Heleq*, translated by Arnold J. Wolf, in I. Twersky, ed. *A Maimonides Reader* (New

York - Philadelphia, 1972), p. 420.

*Sefer ha-Miswat; Lo Ta zaseh*, no. 31. Compare the remarks by the anonymous author of *Saar Samayim*, quoted by Scholem, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts*, pp. 45-47: "For the prophets used 6.

15. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 12a, printed by Scholem in *Kabbalistic Manuscripts*, p. 25. 16. MS. Jerusalem 8o 148, fol. 64b-65a. 17. MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 158a. 18. MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 163b. 19. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 12a, and see note 15 above. 20. Isaiah 11:2. 21. MS. Jerusalem 8 148, fol. 66b-67a.



22. Ibid., fol. 65a.

to prophesy and their limbs would shake, and at times they would fall; and behold the great proof [of this in] the matter of the magicians, who would constantly strike [themselves] with a stick, until their feeling was dulled, and they would then relate future things [and] many of them would cry out in mighty voices, and this was thought by them to abstract their intellects from matter." See also R. Joseph Gikatilla, *Ma'arey Sedeq*, fol. 7a. 7. Ed. Z. Blumberg (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), p. 54. These remarks by Averroes influenced Moses Narboni's Commentary to 'Guide for the Perplexed', II:36 (p. 43a), and also found their way into Toleclot 'Adam, MS. Oxford 836, fol. 158b. Another

228.

23. Sullam ha- cAliyah, printed in *Kabbalistic Manuscripts*, P.

24. MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 158a.

### 380 Notes to Chapter 3

#### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 381

25. I Kings, 19:11-12.

26. We-Zot li-Yehuddh, p. 16, corrected according to MS.

New York, JTS 1887, fol. 98b. (Leit 27. G. Sed Rajna,

Commentaire sur la liturgie quotidienne den, 1974), pp. 166, 168.

On the symbolism of 'light' in R. Isaac the Blind and in the circle of

Sefer ha-1yyun, see G. Scholem, Les Origines., pp. 324, 351 ff.

28. The passage is published by Scholem in Rgit haMWGJ, 78

Qabbalah, pp. 143-144, and analyzed in his article in (1934), pp.

511-512; the English translation follows that of Noah J. Jacobs,

printed in the English version of Scholem's article, "The Concept of Kawcintih," pp. 172-173.

29. Perug ha2AggadOt, MS. Rome - Casanatense 179, fol.

32. However, R. Ariel's Perug la-Aggaddt, p. 39, we find a conversation between God and the one meditating, connected with the uncovering of secrets, but this passage is an unusual one in early Kabbalah. It is also interesting that here the mystic enters premeditatedly into this situation: "and the one praying must see himself as if he is speaking," etc. 33. The Sefirot are called aspaqlarydt or mar& (windows, mirrors); see Tishby, The Wisdom of the Zohar I, 151-152. In Sagan Seidiit of R. Moses of Kiev, fol. 51a, in a passage belonging in my opinion to R. Azriel, we read, "Know that Divine prophecy is compared to the apprehension of the ten Sefirot of light." Cf. R. Asher ben David's Niue' Sem ha-Meforag, p. 16. 34. MS. Jerusalem 8o 148, fol. 63b-64a. The passage was published by Scholem in Qiryat Sefer, 1 (1924), p.134, and translated in Major Trends, p. 150. 35. Folio. 69b. The corrected text was published by G. Scholem in his article in

MGWJ, 74 (1930), p. 287. 36. I. Hausherr, "La Methode d'oraison Hesychaste," *Orientalia Christiana*, 9 (1927), pp. 128-129; J. Lemaitre, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite*, (1952), col. 1852-53.

37. See

134a; MS. Vatican 295, fol. 107a. The passage is cited anonymously by R. Menahem Recanati in *Ferug ha-TOrah*, fol. 90c, and from there by R. Judah Hayyat in *Perug le-Mwarelcet ha-Ilohut*, 95b96a. It is worth mentioning here another passage from Recanati, which appears to be a reworking of the words of R. Ezra or R. Azriel: "When the pious men and men of deeds concentrated and involved themselves in the supreme secrets, they would imagine by the power of depiction of their thoughts [i.e., their visual imagination] as though those things were inscribed before them." *Perug ha-Torah*, fol. 37d. This passage also appears with minor changes in Recanati's *Twam ey ha-MiswOt* (MS. Vatican 209, fol. 28a), where the auto-suggestive principle is clearly expressed. 30. See R. Azriel's letter to Burgos, printed by Scholem in *Mada c ey ha-Yahadut*, II, p. 234. 31. See

Segel ha-Qedeg, pp. 123-124, and in other passages in his books. See also G. Scholem, *Colours and Their Symbolism in Jewish Tradition and Mysticism*, in *Diogenes*, 108 (1979), pp. 84-111; 109 (1980), pp. 64-76.

Hausherr, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

38. We will cite here several examples of mystical experience connected with light. In a work entitled *Ma'aseh Merkabah*, published by Scholem in his *Jewish Gnosticism*, p. 112, par. 22-23, we read: "R. Ishmael said: Once I heard this teaching from R. Nehunyah ben ha-Kanah, I stood upon my feet and asked him all the names of the angels of wisdom, and from the question which I asked I saw a light in my heart like the days of heaven. R. Ishmael said: Once I stood on my feet and I saw my face enlightened by my wisdom, and I started to interpret each and every angel in every palace." In *Leviticus Rabba*, 21:11, we read, "At the time that the Holy Spirit was upon him [i.e., the High

## 382 Notes to Chapter 3

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 383

Priest], his face burned like torches." In *Ketab Tamim* by R. Moses Taku, ('O sar Neuniid, 3 (1860), p. 88), we read "And so the soul of the righteous man shines, and in every place where the righteous go, their souls shines." In *Sac arey Sedeq* itself, we learn of Moses that "When his generation [i.e., the formation of his fetus] was completed after forty days, the skin of his face shone (Ex. 34:29)... When he was weaned, it shone. [All this] to indicate to you the purity of his matter, and the negation of its darkness, until it became, by way of analogy, like the heavenly sapphirelike material. And our rabbis of blessed memory expounded, 'for the skin of his face shone'â□□do not read ' nor' (skin) but 'or (light), for the letters a" h h"r interchange; that is, the enlightened intellect which dwells in the light which is in the

innermost part of the true, perfect intellect" (MS. Jerusalem 8o 148, fol. 33b-34a). For a survey of the appearance of light in mysticism, see Mircea Eliade, *The Two and the One* (New York, 1969), pp. 19-77. The subject of the "shining" enjoyed by the body of the mystic as part of the mystical experience is in itself deserving of a special study.

39. Oseir `Eden Geinuz, MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 165b.

46. Heinrich Zimmer, "On the Significance of the Indian Tantric Yoga," in *Spiritual Disciplines; Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, ed. J. Campbell (New York, 1960), p. 51.

47. We-Zot li Yehudah, p. 16, corrected according to MS.

New York, JTS 1887, and MS. Cambridge Add. 644. 48. See Idel, Abraham Abulafia, pp. 95-96. 49. See the sources collected by Heschel, *Theology of Ancient Judaism*, II, pp. 267-268. 50. L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1946), vol. W, p.

36, n. 201; Werblowsky, Joseph Karo., p. 269, n. 2. 51. Ex. 19:19.

52. See the long version of his commentary to Ex. 19:20:

Know that man's soul is supernal and honorable, and that it comes from the intermediate world, and the body is from the lowly world, and nothing speaks in the lowly world but man himself, and man also hears, for that which speaks to him, he wishes to understand what is in his heart, and the intellectual person cannot create any language, but only that which is known to him... And behold, when man speaks to man in human matters and in the language which he understands, he will surely understand his words.

40. MS. Moscow-Gunzburg 775, fol. 197a. 41. MS. Paris, BN 840, fol. 46a. On the problem of concentration (hitbcidedut) in R. Shem Tov, see Idel, "it HitbOdedut as Concentration," *Studies.*, essay VII, pp. 59-60. 42. Idel, "We Do Not Have." 43. Lam. 3:28. 44. p. 69b. The connection between vocalization and lights already appears in Berit Menuhah. 45. A. J. Deikmanm,



"Deautomatization and the Mystic Experience," in *Altered States of Consciousness*, ed. Ch. T. Tart (New York, 1962), p. 40.

In his commentary to Gen. 1:26, Ibn Ezra writes:

And after we knew that the Torah spoke in human language, for the one who speaks is man, and likewise the one who hears is man, and a man cannot speak things to one who is higher than himself or lower than himself, but only by way of "the image of man."

See also his commentary to Daniel 10:1, and YesOd Mora, where the saying "the one who speaks is human and the one who hears is human," is repeated. Cf. G. Vajda, *Juda ben Nissim ibn Malka* (Paris, 1954), p. 140, note 1; C. Sirat, *Les Theories des visions supernaturelles* (Leiden, 1964), p. 77.

384 Notes to Chapter 3

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 385 57. Mafteah ha-Hokmeit, MS. Moscow 133, fol. 6b; MS.

Abulafia 53. MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 12a. In Sitrey Torah, alludes to this idea without detailing his intention (MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 140a).

And it is likewise said (Num. 10:87), "And he heard the voice speakmittnalel, like mitdabber, i.e., in ing to him," which they translated as the reflexive case. This is likewise the secret of (Num. 12:6) "in a vision I will make myself known to him," and also of (Ezek. 2:2) "I will hear the one speaking to me." Likewise, "Moses spoke and God answered him with a voice" (Ex. 19:19) which they interpreted, And this is a wondrous and hidden secret "in the voice of Moses." among us.

Parma 141, fol. 7a-7b. 58. MS. Jerusalem 8o 148, fol. 65a. Compare the remarks of R. Ezra in Perith ha-Aggadat (MS.

Vatican 295, fol. 107a) concerning the prophets: "And they were saying the things as if they had received them from above, and as if a person had placed the words in his mouth, and they would say them against their will." See also R. Isaac of Acre's remarks cited below, alluded to in note 99. 59. MS. Jerusalem 8o 148, fol. 66b. It is worth mentioning a similar approach which appears in R. Judah ben Nissim ibn Malka, according to which the speech from "the bush" originates in Moses himself; this is based upon the gematria, ha-Sneh (the bush) = 120, which was the number of years that Moses lived. R. Judah interprets the verse in Zach. 4:1 in a similar manner, referring to "the angel who spoke to me", in the sense of "from within me." See G. Vajda, "La Doctrine Astrologique de Juda ben Nisim ibn Malka," *Homenaje a Millas Vallicrosa* (1956), vol. 2, p. 492, n.14. In the Abbreviated Hebrew Version of R. Judah ibn Malka's Writings (Ramat Gan, 1974), p. 31 and p. 41 [Hebr.] See also notes 51, 52 above. On the connections between R. Isaac of Acre and R. Judah ben Nissim, see Vajda's above-mentioned article, and note 129 below. 60. Printed by Scholem in *Qiryat Sefer*, 31 (1956), p. 393. 61. Vilna, 1886, p. 60a-b (Ch. 35), *Saar ha-Nebu'dh*; also cited in R.

Abraham Azulai, *Hesed le-Abraham* (Lvov, 1863), 'Eyn ha-Qore'; Nahar 19, p. 51a. 62. The understanding of the embodiment of the spiritual voice within the corporeal voice for purposes of revelation is related to a commonly held concept in the theosophical Kabbalah, holding that every descent—for example, that of the angel—entails its embodiment in a corporeal garment.

Abulafia attempted to rely upon the words of Maimonides "(Moses ) II: 33, where the latter quoted the Mekilta: and in Guide., would repeat to them every commandment as he heard them." it... s a related t Moses was the one who heard the thing nd Eden 'Osar ` It is worth comparing the end of the passage from with the expression "in the midst of the bush he does 1m tehezeh mi-ben; see Idel Ganuz not eat," which appears in the poem, s ee, p. 33; on the bush as a symbol for "within, Abraham Abulafia, II, 3, p. 45c; III, 7, p. 74 b; Abraham Bibago, *Derek 'Emunah*, fol. 97a, and see R. Nathan ben Avigdor, MS. Oxford 1643, fol. 12a-b. 54. The expression, "YHWH Male" also alludes to man's "YHWH male"

act of speaking, rather than to God's. The term means Yod He  
Wa He = 45 = Adam (man). Were the intention use the to convey  
the idea that God was speaking, one would im male = 86 = loh.  
convention al gematria of the formula YH

Bergit, p. 3. 55. Tanhuma, ed. Buber,

Compare the reaction of John of the Cross, who said 56. of a nun  
who thought that she was speaking with God, "Mysticism and  
only spoke" uoted fromherself. Q with W. R. Inge, Religion  
(London, 1969), p. 35.

386 Notes to Chapter 3

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 387

63. II Samuel 23:2. 64. See G. Scholem, "R. Elijah ha-Kohen ha-  
Itamari and Sabbatianism," Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume (New

York, 1950), Hebr. Section, p. 467. Compare the explanation given by R. Azriel of Gerona, of prophecy as the outcome of "strength of the soul." 65. For the connection between prophecy and "greatness of soul," see R. Azriel of Gerona's letter to the city of Burgos, published by Scholem, *Mada cey ha-Yaluiclut*, II, 239: "in the dreams of the soul and its strengthening." 66. Salomon Pines, "Le Sefer ha-Tamar et les Maggidim des Kabbalistes," *Hommages a Georges Vajda*, ed. G. Nahon -Touati (Louvain, 1980), pp. 337-345.

67. See

73. MS. New York, JTS 1801, fol. 9a, corrected according to MS. British Library 749, fol. 12a-12b. Abulafia's words were copied in the last part of *S'a carey Qedu geih*, which has not yet been printed, under the name *Hayyey ha- colcinz ha-Ba'*, but they are essentially a corrected version of *Sefer ha-Heieq*. See also Abulafia's remarks in *1-layyey ha-`01am ha-Ba , , MS. Oxford 1582, fol. Ma*, "Hold your head evenly, as if it were on the

balance-pans of a scale, in the manner in which you would speak with a man who was as tall as yourself, evenly, face to face."

74. Ibid., fol. 9b, corrected on the basis of MS. British

Library 749, fol. 12b. Abulafia plays on the similarity between tenu'dh (motion) and caniah (response). 75. Ibid., 9b-10a, corrected according to ibid., fol. 12b. The appearance of the Glory (Icabod), as an intermediary witnessing

Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Quietistic Elements*, pp. 119-

121. 68. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 62a. 69. Job 33:14. 70. Ex. 20:22.

71. Ibid., fol. 56b. Compare the remarks appearing in

the force of speech, already appears in R. Saadyah Gaon, in *Imunot we-De ceit*, Sec. II, Ch. 10, etc. On the Glory as having a

human shape, see A. Altmann, "Saadya's Theory of Revelation," Saadia Studies, ed. E. Rosenthal (Manchester, 1943), p. 20.

76. Abulafia, pp. 232-233, and see also our remarks concerning this passage in Abraham Abulafia, p. 169.

77. Deut. 17:18. 78. The reading melis appears in MS. British Library 749, while that of emsai in MS. New York. 79. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 18b.

80. Haqdeimat ha-Pens la-Toreih, p. viii. 81. Guide for the Perplexed, III:51. On the background to this idea, see I. Goldziher, Kitab ma cani al-nafs (Berlin, 1907), pp.

MS. Jerusalem 8 1303, fol. 5a, which belong, in my opinion, to Abulafia:

And know that the Kabbalist receives, that God says to a man, "Receive Me and I will receive you," as it is said (Deut. 26:17,18): "Thou hast avouched [lit., spoken for] the Lord... And the Lord hath avouched [lit.: spoken for] you," and therefore it says (Ex.



20:24), "In every place where I shall cause my name to be mentioned I will go to you and bless you"... and it says to you that if you remember My Name for My honor, I have already remembered your name for your honor.

141-142.

72. Ex. 20:21.

388 Notes to Chapter 3 82. TeguNt Dunag ha-Levi ben Labrat cal Rasa'g (Breslau, 1866),

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 389

14-15; R. Abraham ibn Ezra in his Commentary to Psalms 30:13; 103:1; and R. David Kimhi's Commentary to these and many other verses. In Sitrey Thrall, MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 163b,

Abulafia writes explicitly that "Man alone of all that which is generated and corrupted possesses the human form which is divided into two portions, and receives influx from two sides, which are called *Âšefa c* (influx) and the glory of God." This refers to the human intellect, which is called both "influx" and the "Glory of God." 83. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 56b.

84. Ibid., fol. 4b-5a. In 'Or ha-Selcel (MS. Vatican 233, fol.

88. See the references in G. Scholem, *Von den mystischen Gestalt der Gottheit* (Zurich, 1962), pp. 307-308, notes 12-18; Meyerovitch, *Mystique et Poisie*, pp. 284-286. 89. MS. Oxford 574, fol. 13b. Cf. Scholem, in his abovementioned book, p. 309, n. 20; and Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, p. 224-225, esp. note 8. 90. Num. 12:8. 91. Job 4:16. 92. This text is a corrected version by R. Moses of Burgos, whom Abulafia considered among his disciples, of the saying of R. Isaac ha-Kohen, his teacher. See Scholem, "R. Moses of Burgos, the disciple of R. Isaac" [Hebr.], *Tarbiz*, 5 (1934), pp. 191-192; *Madac ey ha-Yahadut II*, p. 92. The passage also influenced R. Meir ibn Gabbai, who quotes it

verbatim in Abodat ha-(26deg. See G. Scholem, "Eine Kabbalistische Erklärung der Prophetie," MGWJ, 74 (1930), pp. 289-290. 93. R. Judah ibn Malka, Kitab Uns we-Tafsir, ed. Vajda (Ramat-Gan, 1974), pp. 22-23, and p. 26. Ibn Malka wrote his works in the middle of the thirteenth century, and not in the fourteenth century; see note 60 above. A similar idea appears in the anonymous Perug haTefilldt, which is close to both Abulafia and to Ibn Malka, which I shall discuss at length elsewhere. 95. fol. 69b. Corrected by Scholem according to MS. Oxford 1655, and printed in the above-mentioned article (note 92), p. 287. 96. On the identity of R. Nathan, see Idel, "The World of the Imagination," pp. 175-176. 97. Genesis Rabba 27:1. 94.

127b), we learn similar things: "And because man is composed of many powers, it is necessary that he see the influx in his intellect, and that vision is called by the name Intellectual Apprehension. And the influx will further jump to the imagination, and require that the imagination apprehend that which is in its nature to apprehend, and see in the image of corporeality imagined as

spirituality combined with it; and that force will be called Man or Angel or the like." In Sefer ha-Hegeq, MS. New York, JTS 1801, fol. 35b, it states, "For every inner speech is none other than a picture alone, and that is the picture which is common to the intellect and the imagination. Therefore, when the soul sees the forms which are below it, it immediately sees itself depicted therein." Compare the words of R. Baruch Togarmi, Abulafia, p. 232: "the Divine element is in you, which is the intellect that flows upon the soul." 85. Num. 12:6. 86. `Ed/ = Hanolc; Sadday = Metatron. See R. Eleazar of kliilam Worms' Tser Hawayot, MS. Munchen 143, fol. 220a. (dream) = `Edi = Hanok = 84. The definition of Enoch as "witness" (ed) originates in Midrashic literature. 87. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 4b-5a.

390 Notes to Chapter 3

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 391

98. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 50a. 99. See note 95 above. In *ciâ□□iareij Sedeq*, MS. Jerusalem 8o 148, fol. 73b-74a, there again appears information concerning the appearance of the form without any connection to speech. On concentration in the book *Sa c arey Sedeq*, see Idel, "Hitbdddut as Concentration," p. 45.

100. MS. Moscow-Giinzburg 775, fol. 162b-163a. A passage from this treatise is quoted in the name of a "sage" in *SOgiin SOclot*, fol. 69b, as noted by Scholem in his above-mentioned book (note 88), p. 307, n. 11. See also Gottlieb, *Studies.*, p. 247.

101. MS. Vatican 233, fol. 126a-b. 102. fol. 125b. 103. In *'Ostir Hayyim*, MS. Moscow-Giinzburg 775, fol. 222a, there appears a passage with a similiar problematic: "However, I knew with a clear knowledge that the hand which I had grasped and kissed was certainly his (i.e., Metatron's) hand, and I saw myself within the secret of the encompassing totality." R. Isaac of Acre saw himself inside the Active Intellect, which served as a kind of mirror to the mystic.

104. See *1-1ayyey ha-`01dm ha-Ba* , , MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 79b; Idel, *Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 404-405.

105. MS. Paris, BN 727, fol. 158a-b. 106. It is reasonable to assume that the development of the process of enlightenment from thought to

wisdom and understanding, which appears twice in the text, is an interpretation by the Iyyun circle of the order of devolution of the Sefirot. Thought is Keter, followed by Wisdom (Hokm) and Understanding (Binah) in Sefirotic Kabbalah.

107. This number alludes to the parallel between the 22 letters and the people; see also the passage from Sefer ha-'Oti, p. 83, to be discussed at length below in sec. 6. 108. I Sam. 10:6. 109. MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 159b.

110. Sefer Yesirah 5:2.

111. See also Idel, Abraham Abulafia, pp. 101-102. 112.

Compare Sefer ha-Melis, MS. Rome - Angelica 38, fol. 18b, in the passage to be discussed below. 113. Fol. 55a. 114. Wertheimer's Batey Midrash, II, p. 396, Version B. The passage from the midrash is not analyzed by S. Lieberman in his article in Greek in Jewish Palestine (New York, 1942), pp. 185-191. See also R. David ibn Avi Zimra, Magen Dawid (Munkasz, 1912), p. 49b, and

below, n. 247. 115. Ezek. 9:4. 116. MS. Rome, Angelica 38, 12a-b; MS. Miinchen 285, fol. 15a. 117. MS. Paris 774, fol. 166a, and see also fol. 166b. The passage is based upon the following gematria: Adam and Eve (Adam we-Hawah) = 70 = my father and mother ( )abi we-'imi = blood and ink (dam we-dyo). And ink (we-dyo) = 26 = YHWH. Tav dam (sign of blood) = demut (image) = nafseka (your soul) = (magician) = kegdfim (magic) = gofek darn (spiller of blood) = 450. See also below, n. 172, and Cf. 'Or ha-Sekel , MS. Vatican 233, fol. 79a. 118. MS. Vatican 233, fol. 125a.

### 392 Notes to Chapter 3

#### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 393

119. Isa. 25:8. 120. MS. British Library 749, fol. 12b; MS. New York ITS 1801. 121. Dan, Studies., p. 119. Joshua ben Nun gained understanding of the Divine will by means of a vision, as

"the name of four letters changes and turns about in various different ways... and likewise the name of God in its letters resembles the angels and the prophets in many forms and brilliances and has the likeness of human appearance." In Sefer ha-Nec eldm, MS. Paris, BN 817, fol. 75b, we read:

There is no prophet in the world who is able to tell of the various kinds of Glories and levels which are within Him [i.e., within the Glory of the throne]; even that prophet, peace upon him [i.e., Ezekiel], who saw the Glory which was upon the throne, saw nothing but the resemblance of the electrum, as is stated there explicitly; and this great glory was placed upon the throne of glory in order that His great Name might be placed upon it, and by it a number of prophets, and that it be revealed to his pious ones, to each according to his level, so that they not look at the splendor and majesty which is in the essence of His Unity... And when the Holy One, blessed be He, said in his thought, "Let there be light"... "Let there be a firmament"... and so on, His great Name, which is in accordance with His Glory, was immediately revealed in that same word and creature. And this is [the meaning of], "And God said let there be light... a firmament, etc.," and subsequently



"God made the firmament," etc. The Holy One, blessed be He, says it in His thought, and the honorable Name performs it.

by Henri Corbin, this expression is the supreme Name of God; see his article, "Epiphanie Divine et Naissance Spirituelle dans la Gnose Ismaelienne," *Eranos Jahrbuch*, 23 (1954), p. 176, n. 69. 122. Dan, *ibid.*, p. 120: "The King of Glory is the name of four letters"; and Cf. n. 79 there, and Dan, *The Esoteric Theology*, p. 223. 123. Num. 12:8. 124. V 'Adam, MS. Rome - Angelica 38, fol. 1a; MS. Munchen 285, fol. 18b. The gematriyot in this passage are: = 26 = hazehu hOzeh (visionary); we-temunat YHWH Obit YHWH (he shall gaze upon the image of God) = 960 = be4em YHWH ydbit (where the final mem equals 600). In the section preceding this passage cited from V 'Adam, Abulafia concerns himself with a similar matter: Adonai = 65 = ha-ma/lc-Leh (the vision) = ba-nabi (by a prophet). 125. In his *Commentary on the Torah*, Ex. 33 (Chavell ed., vol. 2, p. 346), R. Bahye ben Asher wrote, "that Moses comprehended the Ineffable Name through the Divine Glory which came in a cloud. 'And He stood there with

him.' [Ex. 34:5] Who stood with him there? The Glory, which is called Name... And the Glory is known by the name YH." R. Bahya may have known of the view of the Ashkenazic Hassidism, and realized the great resemblance between his own view and that of Sefer ha-Ndbon, quoted above in note 121. 126. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 59a-b. 127. Ex. 19:18. 128. Clear allusions to this appear in the passage in the form of gematria: we-ha-bar (and the mountain) = 216 = ryo = gebureih (might), which is an allusion to the seventy-two letters name. gdm har qadcg gribOlia (there is the high holy mountain) = 912 = gem ha-mefOrtg (the Ineffable Name). In Sac arey Sedeq, Abulafia's

In Sefer Sioni, fol. 34d (Yitro), it states: "For His great Name, which is the ' elcinah, descended upon Sinai and dwelled upon it in fire, and the Honorable Name speaks with Moses and Israel, 'Hear the Name of God,' which is unique within the fire." A parallel to the description of the Divine Name in Sefer haceldm is found in Nabon, and to a certain extent to that in Sefer ha-Ne Avicenna's Commentary to M'arga Name, in which the prophet sees the

expression, "There is no God but Allah," inscribed upon a crown of light on the forehead of the supernal angel. As noted

### 394 Notes to Chapter 3

#### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 395

disciple speaks about a situation in which "I set out to take up the Great name of God, consisting of seventy-two names, permuting and combining it. But when I had done this for a little while, behold, the letters took on in my eyes the shape of great mountains." The parallel between the letters large as mountains and the passage from Abulafia is striking, for which reason one may assume that the letters of which Abulafia speaks are also those of the name of seventy-two letters. It is worth mentioning the words of the anonymous author of *Peru'at ha-Tefillat*, who was close to Abulafia, who writes, "Know that every one of the letters of the aleph-bet contains a great principle and a hidden

reason, and it is a great mountain which we are prevented from climbing" (MS. Paris, BN 848, fol. 1a ). The mountain appears in other mystical systems as well as an image for the pinnacle of apprehension; see the study by R. C. Zaehner, "Standing on the Peak," *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom Scholem* (Jerusalem, 1967), pp. 381-387. The ascent to the mountain is interpreted in *Hayy re Nefe* as an allusion to spiritual ascent—that is, to "prophecy"; in MS. Munchen 408, fol. 7b-8a, we read:

The matter of the name of ascent is homonomous, as in their saying, "Moses ascended to God," this concerns the third matter, which is combined with their [allusion] also to the ascent to the tip of the mountain, upon which there descended the "created light." These two matters assist us [to understand] all similar matters, and they are [the terms] "place" [magam] and "ascent" [caliyal] that, after they come to the matter of "man," the two of them are not impossible by any means; for Moses ascended to the mountain, and he also ascended to the Divine level. That ascent is combined with a revealed matter, and with a matter which is

hidden; the revealed [matter] is the ascent of the mountain, and the hidden [aspect] is the level of prophecy.

falsehood and imagination. The passage makes use of the Italian words, Monte, alto, Sacramento, and mento (lie).

132. Yoma, 67b.

131. In Sefer ha-Haftdrah, MS. Rome 38, fol. 35a, Monte Barbaro = 525 = hizzeq ha-gli<sup>Â</sup>seh (strong the hard) = ma caseh nes (an act of miracle) = hizzeq ha-negimah (he strengthened the breath) = wehizzeq ha-ne<sup>Â</sup>seimah (and he strengthened the soul) = <sup>Â</sup>sem ha-neceldm (the hidden Name) = sem ha-ndthim (the Name of retribution). Send ha-qes (the Name of the end) = 535 = ha-maggif (the gazer); ha-<sup>Â</sup>si<sup>Â</sup>si (the sixth) = 615 = ha-Seger (the falsehood); ha-dim yin (the imagination) = 115 = monti = Azazel = ha-mini ([of the species] = ha-yemani (the right hand on); Sacramento = Seger (falsehood) + Monte, i.e.,

133. An identification of the mountain with the human intellect appears in Narboni's *Peru ha-Moreh*: "And the limitation he mentioned which exists to the human intellect alluded to that which God commanded Moses, 'you shall fence about the mountain'." [Ex. 19:12 (sic!)] See Moshe Narboni, ed. Maurice R. Hayoun (Tubingen, 1986), pp. 51, 139. 134. MS. Rome, Angelica 38, fol. 35a. 135. Ex. 25:18. 136. On the gematriyot in this passage, see Idel, Abraham Abulafia, pp. 101-102, and n. 126. 137. MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 37b. One should take note that the letters of the Ineffable Name are inscribed upon the heart already in the Merkabah literature and in that of Ashkenaz Hassidism. *Sefer ha-Heṣeq*, sec. 26, says, "That there is inscribed upon His heart the name by which he shows to the prophets the Sekhinah." Is this a development of the idea of the 72 names "written upon the heart of the Holy One, blessed be He," which appears in the text published by Odberg in *Enoch III*, p. lxxv and pp. 160-161?

129. MS. Munchen 10, fol. 133b. Note the comparison of the giving of the Torah to "the seekers of the kiss" on Mt. Gerizim, in Sefer ha-Malmd, MS. Oxford 1649, fol. 204a. 130. Ex. 19:20.

### 396 Notes to Chapter 3

#### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 397

138. MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 156a. On fol. 166a of this basis for this statework, Abulafia supplies the numerologic al -YHWH.

ment: "Blood and ink and the latter indicates this name

d structure of this name, which is

The first indicates the compose Yod He Waw He." Dam (blood) = 44 called, when it is pronounced:

(ink) =- 26 YHWH. See 'Or ha-Selcel, Yod He Waw He, while dyo MS. Munchen 58, fol. MS. Vatican 233, fol. 79a. In Gan Na , u1, 328a, it states:

When the Name, whose secret is in blood and ink, began to move within him, and he will feel it, as one who knows the place of a stone which is within him, he will then know that the knowledge of the Name acted in him, and it began to move him from potentiality to actuality.

144. See his commentary to Ex. 28:30 and on Yoma 73a, and see also Ra gbam [R. Solomon b. Meir] on Ex. 28:30, and Targum Jonathan on this verse. 145. See Perug Baal ha-Turim, ed. Jacob Reinitz (Benai Barak, 1974), p. 190-191. The gematria does not work out properly; evidently, the correct reading is sera ben gibâ□□zm u-setaim (the name of seventy-two). In his Perusg ha-Torcih , fol. 51a, R. Menahem Recanati states, "And I found it said in the name of R. Eliezer [i.e, R. Eleazar of Worms], of blessed memory, that [the phrase] 'et ha-'urim we-ha-tummim (the 'Urim and Tummim ) is equal in gematria to 'the name of



seventy-two letters.' " This version likewise appears in an anonymous Kabbalistic commentary in MS. New York, JTS 2203, fol. 208a: "And R. Eliezer of Wormiza [i.e. Worms] said that "the 'Urim and Tummim" equal in gematria 'the name of seventy-two.' " In Collectanea of R. Johanan Alemanno, MS. Oxford 2234, fol. 150, it states:

"The 'Urim and Tummim.'" The Ineffable Name was placed on the breast plate by which the high priest would direct his thoughts, and in the name called 'Urim the letters would be lit up, while in the name called Tummim he would combine the letters and bring them close so that the high priest would not make any error in them, as they were scattered."

R. Isaac of Acre follows Abulafia's path, in a passage which has been preserved in MS. Sasson 919, p. 209:

plene reading, as follows: Blood is the secret of the Unique Name in plene (numYod He Waw He, and its literal meaning is without the ber)... which is "and ink." Therefore, the secret of the Ineffable Name is blood and ink. The blood alludes to the secret of the

sacrifices and the prayers, while ink is like the writing of the Torah in ink upon a book.

139. MS. Munchen 10, fol. 158b-159a. 140. According to Schimmel, P. 44. 141. MS. New York, ITS 1801, fol. 8a. MS. Moscow, Gunzburg 775, fol. 130a. 142. G. Scholem, "R. Elijah ha-Kohen of Ismir and 143. See (New York, 1950), Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume above the Sabbatianism," Hebrew Section, pp. 466-470, and note 46. Compare texts which I have cited concerning the pronunciation of the roma 73a. letters in R. Hayyim Vital; cf. Rashi on Mystical Dimensions of Islam,

146. MS. Oxford 123, fol. 71a-b. Certain magical subjects are discussed in MS. Ambrosiana 62/7 in the name of R. Meshullam the Saducee, as attested by G. Scholem in Qiryat Sefer, 11 (1933/34), p. 189. Possibly the term Sarfati (i.e., the French) was

corrupted to Secloqi (the Saducee). 147. See his short commentary to Ex. 28:30, and the remarks by R. Joseph ben Eliezer Tuv-Elem, *Safnat Pa :aneah* (Cracow, 1912), pp. 285-286. R. David Kokhavi cites the opinion in the name of the aggiclah, stating that concentration upon the 'Urim and Tummim is similar to an act of astrology; see *Migdal Dawid*, MS. Moscow 234, fol. 175a.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 399

398

Notes to Chapter 3

148.

MS. Paris, BN 853, fol. 56b-57a.

149. Yoma 73b. 150. Hagigah 12a. That is, on Sundays and Wednesdays. 151. 152. Num. 6:25. See also Idel, "Types of Redemptive Activity," p. 261, 153. n. 40.

154. Sitr ey Torah, MS. Munchen 58, fol. 321b-322a: Can na c ul,

are identified with the 'Aspaglarydh ha-motrah (the "clear crystal") and the Tummin with the 'Aspacilaryiih se- ,endh meirtih (the "unclear crystal"). One must take note here of the identity drawn by R. Elnathan ben Moshe between the "Clear Crystal" and the Intellect, on the one hand, and the "Unclear Crystal" and the Imagination, on the other. In his work, 'Eben Sappir, he states (MS. Paris, BN 727, fol. 28b):

And there is a known man within whom there comes to dwell the intellect and the imagination, called the angel and the cherub. These are the cherubim which are visible and stand on the two ends of the ark-cover (kaporet), and they both shine like sapphire, each in its time, according to its level. For most prophets prophesy by the power of imagination, which is the "Unclear Crystal" [corresponding to] the pillar of fire by night, from which

the fire is borrowed, as in the verse (Ex. 13:22) "the pillar of cloud will not depart by day, nor the pillar of fire by night." The word yommdm (by day) does not appear anywhere in Scripture but when the sun is upon the earth, and therefore if the sun rises the stars disappear. And the pillar of fire by night is the image of his Name, and it is against the gaze of the sun. These two pillars served in the wilderness for forty years, to protect them from all the corporeal events... But not so Moses our teacher, of blessed memory, who prophesied in the "Clear Crystal," which is called the seraphic light and daily Intellectâ□□and it is this that is meant by, "mouth to mouth I spoke with him"â□□without distinction and without making use of the power of imagination, which is the attribute of judgment. This is the distinguished level of the man of God, and this is the daily and light intellect, the light of which is above the heads of the creatures inscribed like in the vision, "and upon the image on the throne was an image like that of a man," to whom he cleaved and by whom he ascended. And the prophets who came after him prophesied by the "Unclear Crystal," and that is the imagination of night-time, [which is] dark, like the light of the sun upon the moon, to receive light from the

sparks, and from the flame of his warmth to warm from its extreme cold, like the warmth of the heart which is extreme in its simplicity, to extinguish the extreme cold of the spleen.

MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 157b. Compare

The form of the letters, despite being flat, tend somewhat toward convexity, while the form of the eyes is convex, so that when one receives power from the letters in which their form protrudes, it is very thick and coarse, as in the matter of 'Judah will ascend'â□□i.e., Tummimâ□□and it is pictured in the in the secret of the and the eyes of his head, and the letters illuminate the eyes in their being sunken into them, and from there the power goes over to the heart and is sunk within it, standing out; and the heart receives it and completes with them its actions, and moves from potentia into actua in attaining this hidden wonder.

rocess of enlightenment, Abulafia portrays here the process in feeling—the perception of the convex form of which is by the eyes—and concludes in the understanding of the letters their meaning in the heart, i.e., the sunken, concave shape. The final aspects of the 'Urim on two stages are apparently paralleled by the two. On the 'Urim and Tummim as enlightening and connection with the 'Urim of the concave and convex shapes is of Sa'ad arey Sedeq, sec. the opinion of the author element and less so and Tummim, see 7, who stresses more strongly the prophetic the element of compulsion. as "enlightening" and the The image of the 'Urim There, the 'Urim 155. Yoma 73b. Tummim as "completing" is based upon

156. The connection between 'Urim and Tummim, the Ineffable Name, and the faculty of the imagination, appears later

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 401

400 Notes to Chapter 3

in R. Hasdai Crescas. See S. Urbach, Nebr.] (Jerusalem, 1961), p. 271.

R. Hasdai Crescas

The Philosophical Doctrine of Sefer ha-Zohar New Perspectives,

through that same name, and would imagine in his consciousness the interpretation of those letters which shone before him, and there would cling to his thought the combination of the letters of the answer to his question, in a manner analogous to prophecy.

157. MS. Paris, BN 777, p. 48. Compare 230a-b.

Kabbalah : 158. Ezek. 1:26; see also Idel, Ch. IV, notes 26, 43.



See on this passage Idel, "Hitbodedut as Concentration," pp. 67-68. 163. MS. Jerusalem 8o 148, fol. 75a-b, and see note 157 above. 164. The term surah to'arit refers to a form perceived in the imagination. In Sa carey Sedeq, MS. Jerusalem 8o 148, fol. 77a, we read, "There is a second form present in the second conception, that is, the power of the imagination, and these are the imagined forms, perceived by the senses after they disappear from it through the invention of the power of the imagination." 165. MS. Rome, Angelica 38, fol. 13b-14b; MS. Munchen 285, fol. 156a-16a, and compare Mafteah ha-Hokin& , MS. Moscow 133, n. 19b. 166. Ezek. 1:28.

167. Ibid.

159. MS. Paris, BN 777, p. 49. MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 165a: "But Torah, 160. In Sitrey snow is the darkness alone, and all the prophets gazed upon it and saw it and understood, for it is the 'Unclear also tiavey crystal.' The reference here is toward the supernal matter; see h a-`01arn hatlayyey MS. Miinchen 408, fol. 50b-51a. In ha-Nefg, Oxford 1582, fol. 69a-b, Abulafia explicitly

identifies MS. "'Urim we-Tim, and um Ba , , Tummirn with the luminaries. in the image of the the 'Urim and these are Tummirn, which There is an allusion here they are the 'Urim and luminaries, which enlighten 'Urim and Tummirn, in truth." both to the sun and moon, i.e., the external as well as to the intellect and imagination, which are the inner enlightening the truth. 'Urim and MS. Jerusalem 8 148, fol. 73b-74a, translated by 161. p. 155, and n. 112. Scholem in Major Trends, 7:4. Compare R. David ben Yehiel; JT, Yorna 162. (Munkasz, 1912), fol. ba: Meigen Dawid Zimra's remark in matter of the 'Urim and

168. Compare 'Osar 'Eden Ganuz, MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 134b, ... for no sage in the world could record in a book [all] those things which he imagined in his heart, and he also would be unable to utter them, for the writing would be insufficient even to describe the bodies; and the evidence [for this] is that a man is unable to describe in writing anything which is spherical, but in its place he may draw a circle, and say in the book that this is an allusion and sign for a sphere. 169. On the cosmic axis (tell) and its identity

with the bar or axis of the world, see L. Epstein, *Mi-Qadmoniyot ha-Yehudim* (Jerusalem, 1953), pp. 191-194. It is worth citing here the coin-

Here I see fit to inform you in brief of the ask [a question], the Tummini: when he [i.e., the high priest] would letters of his answer would shine before him. But you still need to know how this was, for letters which are not divided into words forms and various interpretations, as is are subject to many different very clear. But the matter is that one of the Holy Names known to est breas tplate, and the priard the priest was resting in the folds of the tow and intention would direct his consciousness and thought that name and conentrate upon it, and was clothed in the Holy Spirit

402 Notes to Chapter 3

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 403

concerning this axis in MS. ments of the author of Ner 'Elohim  
Miinchen 10, fol. 130a:

The southern point of the world, there is the Prince of the  
Presence, for there is the head of the axis; and the north is its tail,  
and there is the Prince of the Back Part, and the appointed  
[angels] are Metatron and Sandalphon, or say Michael and  
Gabriel. It has the right-hand attribute, which is the attribute of  
mercy, in its head; and at its end, in its tail, is the attribute of  
judgment.

174. C. G. Jung, *Collected Works* (New York, 1959), vol. 9, 1, pp.  
290-390. There have been many attempts to make use of Jung's  
system in the study of the significance of the circle in mysticism  
and in theology in wake of his own pioneering work. See G. A.  
Zinn, "A Mandala Symbolism and Use in Mysticism," *History of  
Religion*, 12 (1972), pp. 326-337; Ewerett Cousins, "Mandala  
Symbolism in the Theology of Bonaventura," *University of Toronto  
Quarterly*, 40 (1971), pp. 185-200. 175. G. Tocci, *The Theory and*

Practice of the Mandala (London, 1961), p. vii. 176. MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 153a. 177. 'es (wood) = selem (image) = 160.

178. sefa' (influx) = demut (image) = 450.

The axis guides the world with both attributes: that of judgment and that of mercy. Cf. note 171 below. MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 41b. 170. 'Osiir 'Eden Ganuz, 171. MS. Paris 774, fol. 145b. On reward and punishment in the conduct of the world, see the same work, fol. 164b, "Metatron the Prince of the Presence... and he is the Prince of Action [i.e., the Active Intellect], the fount of reward and punishment." Sar ha-Panim = 685 = Sar ha-Po'al (the fount of reward and punishment). = Ma c yan Gemul wa-`6n6' The intent is evidently to existence as reward and absence of existence as punishment, whose source is in the motion of the spheres. On fol. 155a, a parallel is drawn between reward and punishment, on the one hand, and intellect and imagination, on the other, after which we read:

When you shall know within yourself that you have been perfected in those attributes which witness to the power of

imagination and the truth of its essence in you, and when you will know that you have achieved perfection in knowledge of the attributes of the Name by which the world is always directed, and let your mind pursue your intellect to imitate it according to your ability, always, and you shall know with your intellect..."

79. tere (two) = demut + selem (image = likeness) = 160 + 450 = 610. (will add wisdom) = 239.

180. we-'es ha-hayyim (and the tree of life) = yeisif hoknuili

181. we-'es ha-da'at (and the tree of knowledge) = yOsif hokmot = 645. 182. we-'es ha-hayyim = gdral = 239. 183. we-'es ha-da'at = Vail& = 645.

184. Lev. 16:8. 185. MS. Paris 774, fol. 2b; the anonymous author of Sefer ha-Seruf makes use of the image of the circle a number of times; see *ibid.*, fol. 2a, 6b. 186. MS. Sasson 290, fol. 552. The

passage is based upon gematriiit, several of which are interpreted at the bottom of the

Cf. 169 above, and notes 218-219 below. fol. 166a, and see also above, n. 117. 172. Ibid., 173. MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 80a.

### 404 Notes to Chapter 3

YHWH) (with the Ineffable Name ne ladder) be-em ha-Mefora-S'  
YHWH pag e: (that you make known toyme o ,ehad it to the we-  
se-todiceni (that I may ascen ani bo beyt YHWH 'Elohim b  
hand I b (and that = se-e(eleh we-Se-telamden din ha-ba, House  
of the Lord our God) = we-k-telarndeni you teach me the law of  
the king) = (and that you teach me the World to Come) = 999.

187. For the significance of the expression, On hk Abraham  
Abulafia, p. 94. (the World to Come), see Idel, (the king), which  
refers either to God or to the Active Intellect,

ha-ba) ha-colama-mele

191. MS. Paris, BN 840, fol. 45b-46a, and see also the subsection "the Light," above; cf. Baddeley ha-'Aron, MS. Paris, BN 840, fol. 25b: "understand the form of these drawings in your mind, and the appearance of the light will come to you." 192. For the possible sources of this view, see A. J. Heschel, *Theology of Ancient Judaism*, II, 346-347, and Maimonides' Introduction to 'Pereq Heleq'.

193. On the connection of R. Shem Tov ibn Gaon to prophetic Kabbalah, see Idel, "Hitbeledut," pp. 58-63.

194. *Studies.*, p. 236. 195. *Mafteah ha-Racayon*, MS. Vatican 291, fol. 21a.

see below, Sec. 10. 188. MS. Paris 727, fol. 10a. Prior to the passage cited by us, there appears a discussion of the combinations of the word *aris* 728, fol. *Sefer ha-Seruf*. In MS P



tire keter (crown), similar to that in includes to the sphere resting  
42b, it states: "for that laddersll upon the earth, which is

42b upon the earth, everlasting, anding the center of the sphere  
as by law ; "and behold, there is one wheel on the earth, and the  
top of the ladder reaches to the upper heavens." See the passage  
preserved in the name of R. Yetiiei Rafael, MS. Firenze-National  
Library 28, fol. 177b: "Lift that sphere which brings about in up  
your eyes on lowerand see arranged in it; the master of this high  
matters the world those that o e this one he throws down n  
ascen matter does not change : he lifts up; the ladder stands  
upon the groundâ□□ and who descends." Compare the remarks  
by A. Elnathan quoted above, 189. note 155. 5b-106a; and see  
MS. Moscow-Giirtzberg 775, fol. 10 rk that in the rema 190.  
Studies., p.244. One ought to also Gottlieb, passage we have  
brought, R. Isaac of Acre theeaks at-

to sequel thethe about letters written in black fire as  
corresponding to tribute of judgment, while the white fire  
symbolizes the attribute ose eleoy, so that the circle of Torah

contains within it the elements of mere elements which likewise characterize the sphere in Abulafia

196. *el-Misbat al-Munir* Netivot ha-Torah, p. 10. It should be pointed out that this understanding of the "ladder" differs in both Abulafia and in R. Isaac of Acre from the image of the world as a ladder and a sphere. Concerning that outlook which sees in the ladder a symbol of the world, Abulafia writes in *Seder Torat*, MS. Paris 774, fol. 122b:

"The entire world is in the image of a ladder, beginning from the very lowest place in locale and level; and the highest place is called 'Throne,' and the lowest place is called 'Footstool.' And as the matter is thus, we found it in reality, and we felt and apprehended in our senses and our intellect that the matter of the universal man in the image of the world, for the world is a macro-anthropos, and the man is a microcosm."

Who

The motif of the ladder in Abulafia includes other subjects, in addition to the vision of the ladder as the Divine Name and symbol of the worlds, a point to be discussed at length elsewhere. Cf. the article by A. Altmann, "The Ladder of Ascent" [Hebr.1, Studies in Kabbalah and History of Religion Presented to Gershom Scholem (Jerusalem, 1968), pp. 1-32.

197. Genesis Rabba, 68:16.

### 406 Notes to Chapter 3

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 407

198. Gottlieb, Studies., pp. 235-236. 199. See R. Joseph Angelino's Qupat ha-Rodin, MS. Oxford 1618, fol. 10a: The book of the Torah is required to be round, for just as in a ball one cannot detect its beginning and its end, so in the Torah is its

beginning fastened to its end." See also R. Simeon ben Semah Duran (Livorno, 1785), fol. 29b; and compare especially R. Judah Barceloni's Commentary to Sefer Yesirakt, p. 107. 200. At the end of the fifteenth century, Johannes Reuchlin reported Nahmanides' words at the beginning of his Commentary on the Torah, concerning the writing of the Torah in black fire upon white fire, adding that the Kabbalists had a tradition that the Torah was written in a "circle of fire,"-in globum igneum. See *Ars Cabalistica*, ed. J. Pistorius (Basel, 1587), p. 705. 201. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 53a. na'ar (youth) = 320 = gelc (sheikh); zagen zagen (old man - old man) = 314 = Metatron. It may be that one is meant to add the total number of letters in MetatrOn and mien zagen-i.e., 6-making the combined gematria 320. 202. Song of Songs 5:2. This verse is interpreted in a number of sources as an allusion to the indwelling of prophecy, or of the Selcinah. See the Targum to this verse, Rashi's comment, and Maimonides' remarks in Guide., 111:51. The Safed Kabbalists mention this verse as an allusion to the appearance of speech in their throats. "Behold the voice of my beloved knocked, and began, 'here O Beloved.'" See Werblowsky,

Joseph Karo, p. 260 and note 7. 203. I Samuel 3:9-10. 204. MS. Moscow-Gunzberg 168, fol. 775a. 205. Hosea 11:1.

206. Psalms 37:15. On these two aspects of Metatron that is, as a youth and an old man-see in Abulafia above, while for earlier sources see Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, "Polymorphie divine et transformations d'un mythologeme: 'L'Apocryphon de Jean' et ses sources," *Vigiliae Christianae*, 34 (1981), pp. 422-424.

207. YebamOt 16b.

208. For the "Prince of the world" as the earliest of the created beings, see Hullin 60a. This idea was then transferred to Metatron when the latter was identified with the Prince of the World. See MidraS" ha-Ne(eltim, Zohar I:126b: " 'And Abraham said to his servant'-this [refers to] Metatron, who was the servant of the Place; 'the elder of his household'-that he was the first of the creations of the Place." See Asi Farber, "On the Sources of Rabbi Moses de Leon's Early Kabbalistic System" [Hebr.], in J. Dan-J.

Hacker, eds. *Studies in Jewish Mysticism, Philosophy and Ethical Literature Presented to Isaiah Tishby* [Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought, III:1-2. (Jerusalem, 1986)], pp. 84-87. 209. As is well known, there is a problem of full and deficient spelling-i.e., with and without the letter yod- with regard to the name Metatron, which is written in early texts as MYttRWN. See G. Scholem, *Tarbiz*, 5 1934, pp., 186-187, n. 3; MS. Vatican 428, fol. 55a; *Yesod Dlam*, MS. Moscow 607, fol. 130b; *Commentary to Sa carey Torah*, MS. Jerusalem 144 8o, fol. 2b. R. Isaac of Acre himself writes, "Prior to this ascent, Metatron was called without [the letter] yod, and after his ascent and his receiving of the influx, he was called Metatron, with Yod." This text is printed in G. Vajda, "Isaac d'Acco et Juda ben Nissim," *REJ*, 155 (1956), p. 66. 210.

The throne of judgment appearing in *Sefer ha-Ot* is evidently connected with the two attributes by which the world is led; see n. 169 above. It is worth noting that Metatron himself is at times depicted as possessing contradictory characteristics, as we find in the words of R. Reuben ha-Zarfati in *Perug ha-Ma'areket*,

## 408 Notes to Chapter 3

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 409

fol. 96b: "For the Active Intellect, which is Metatron, the Prince of the Presence, has two impulses, that is, two angels—one appointed over mercy, and one over judgment—and this refers to the angels Azriel and 'Azah." See also Werblowsky, Joseph Karo, pp. 220-221, and Yalqut Re , ubeni, passim. This dialectic understanding is evidently connected with the perception of Enoch as having both good and bad attributes, as we already find in the midragim.

218. MS. Paris 74, fol. 155a-b, and above, note 171. 219. This description was influenced by that found in `Abodah Zarah 20b. It is worth noting that the same expression, "full of eyes" (male cenayim), used in the Talmud and in Sitrey Mai, in reference to

the Angel of Death, is used by Abulafia in connection with Metatron. In Sefer ha-Dt, pp. 70-71, we read: "And his name is like the name of his master, who portrays him completely, full of eyes, seeing and not being seen." The phrase, "his name is like the name of his master" doubtless refers to Metatron, whose value in gematria is the equivalent of Sadday = 314. In my opinion, the expression, "full of eyes," refers to the form in which the name Sadday is written with the help of the alphabet of Metatron or the writing of "eyes"; see Israel Weinstock, The Alphabet of of Metatron and Its Significance [Hebr.j Temirin (Jerusalem, 1982), vol.2, pp. 51-76. In R. Hananel ben Abraham's Yesod Ilim, MS. Moscow-Giinzburg 607, fol. 130b, the name Sadday is written in Ictab ceynayim. This ambivalent attitude is appropriate to the understanding of Metatron as possessing the attributes of both judgment and of mercy mentioned above, note 171. Is there a connection between this approach and the pun on the letters g addayâ□□Â§ed, whose meaning is "God - Satan" in the interpretation given by Archangelos to Pico della Mirandola's Kabbalistic Thesis No. 19. See Ars Cabalistica (J. Pistorius: Basel 1587), p. 793; Cf. Midriig Talpiyot by R. Eliyahu ha-Kohen of



Ismir, p. 155c, quoting Sefer Abulafia himself makes use of the following gematria: sin dalet yod = 814 = gefac stittin (the influx of Satan) = demut safari (the image of Satan) = 'es nuiwet din (fire death judgment). See also Sefer ha-Malmed, MS. Paris 680, fol. 292a, and elsewhere in his writings. 220. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 51b. The question of the presence of the Sekinah during prayer appears in Maimonides, Migne Torcuh, Tefillah, 4:15-16, based upon Sanhedrin 22a.

211. MS. Paris 774, fol. 129b-130a. Abulafia's remarks are directed toward a work, evidently written by R. Eleazar of Worms, entitled Siv c im Semot gel Metatron [Seventy Names of ,e1 was Metatron]. Cf. Dan, The Esoteric Theology, pp. 220-221. Yeho the original name of the angel which was afterwards known as Metatron, as has been demonstrated by G. Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, pp. 43, 51. 212. R. Eleazar of Worms. 213. This passage is based upon the gematria: Yeho, 0 = 52 = , ancP (please) = 'Eliyahu (Elijah) = ben (son). 214. Gottlieb, Studies., p. 234. 215. C. Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective

Unconsciousness [Collected Works, 9; 1. (New York, 1959)<sup>1</sup>, p. 215-216; 217-230. The old sage who reveals the truth or the correct path is considered as an archetype by Jung. It is worth mentioning here the appearance of the guru among the Hindus and the sheikh among the Sufis, both of whom are images of teachers who appear to their disciples in visions. 216. C. Jung, *Psychology and Religion* [Collected Works. 11. (New York, 1958)<sup>1</sup>, p. 14 ff. 217. R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (New York, 1959), pp. 26-55, Ch. IV.

### 410 Notes to Chapter 3

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 411 and awesome king. And there shall come upon him sinking and trembling until he finds himself in the world of intellectual beings."

52a. The connection between the motif of "the king" and fear already appears in Merkabah literature; cf. Scholem, *Major*

Trends, p. 57 ff. 222. MS. New York 180, fol. 8b-9a. 223. MS. Vatican 233, fol. 109b; on the comparison of the intellect to a king, cf. Henry Malter, "Personification of Soul and Body," JQR vol. 2 (N.S. 1911), pp. 462-463, n. 24; Plotinus, Ennaeds V, 3, 3; and especially Maimonides, Guide., 111:52. In Told & 'Adam, written in the fifteenth century under the influence of Abulafia, it states: "One who chooses human perfection and will be a true man of God will awake from his sleep and know that the great king hovers above him, and that there always clings to him the great God, of all the kings within him ; and if there were David and Solomon and that king who clings and hovers, which is the Intellect which flows into him, which is that which connects between us and the Name, may he be praised and blessed." 224. The term "fear out of love" (yir'at ,andbah) is based upon an outlook whose sources I have not yet been able to determine. Under the influence of R. Joseph Gikatilla, an acquaintance of Abulafia's, it subsequently developed within the realm of Sefirotic Kabbalah. Traces of the term yir'ah penimit (inner fear)â□□that is, fear mixed with loveâ□□appear in one of Gikatilla's early works; see Gottlieb, Studies., p. 126 ff. 225. This dialectical

understanding of ecstasy also appears in the work *Peragim be-Hasliihdh*, attributed to Maimonides, p. 7:

"The one who prays shall turn toward God, stand on his feet and feel pleasure in his heart and his lips, his hands stretched forward, and his organs of speech reflecting, while the other parts [of his body] are all afraid and trembling, while he does not cease uttering sweet sounds; [then] he makes himself broken-hearted, prepares himself, beseeches, bows down and prostrates himself weeping, as he is before a great

221. *Ibid.*, fol.

R. Azriel of Gerona also expresses himself in a similar manner:

"The light of the *Seicindh* which is above their heads is as it were spread about them, and they are sitting within the light... and then they tremble in [their] nature and rejoice about that same trembling" (cited in Scholem, *Debarim be-Go*, p. 330). In *Perug ha-'Aggadot* (ed. Tishby, pp. 39-40), R. Azriel says, "the one who

prays must see himself as if He (i.e., God) speaks with him and teaches him and directs him, and he receives His words with awe and fear." 226. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 63a-b. at ba-moah (swims in the mind) = Satan = 359. Compare his remarks on fol. 31a of the same work: "And the joy shall further arouse your heart to add reverse [combination of letters] and understanding and joy and great pleasure. And be quick to turn about, like the flaming sword which turns about to every side, to do war with the enemies surrounding, for the images and the portrayal of the idle thoughts born out of the spirit of the Evil Urge are those which go out to first greet the account [hegbOn: i.e., act of dealing with the letters], and surround it like murderers, and confuse the thoughts of men." R. Isaac of Acre also knew of the appearance of angels of destruction during the time of letter-combination; in Hayyim, MS. Sasson 919, fol. 215, he writes, "and they shall come to him upon the combination of letters and their unification (sic!), and they shall be turned about, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for every righteousness and imagination is false: angels of mercy and angels of destruction, those who learn merit and those who learn fault, defenders and prosecutors; and he shall be in

danger of death, like Ben Azzai," etc. See Idel, "Hitbodedut as Concentration," p. 51. 227. The burning up of objects during the process of carrying out a mystical technique is already found in Heicalot literature.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 413

412 Notes to Chapter 3

228. MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 157b. Compare the remarks Sefirot: of Johanan Alemanno concerning the meditation upon the

And again when he sends forth his thought to them by a look, he shall immediately turn backwards, lest he may conceive the spiritual as corporeal or his intellect will uproot it or strike it, like one who peers and was hurt or peered and died, for the corporeal intellect is unable to abide the Divine intellect, because of its great vision [i.e., ], and it will be consumed and destroyed, like a great fire brightness ' which consumes a small one, and the light of the sun which blinds the eye of the one who sees it, or a great candle

which extinguishes a small one." (Anonymous work, MS. Paris, BN 849, fol. 81b)

it is the evil impulse; yeser ha-ra c (the Evil Impulse) in gematria equals Rasha' (the evil one)."

235. Ibid., fol. 80a. has& we-dam (flesh and blood) = male ake ha-mdwet (the angels of death) = perate ha-homer (the details of matter) = 'eber perati (private organ) = homer ha-periddh (matter of

decomposition) = 552. 236. The connection between Divine Names and fire is an ancient one. In Midra 'Otiycit de-Rabbi Akiba, Version A (Wertheimer, Bate Midrad, II), p. 365, it states:

"And the Holy One, blessed be He, sits upon a throne of fire, and around and about him are Ineffable Names, like pillars of fire... and when man makes use of them, each and every firmament is completely fire, and they descend to consume the entire world

with fire... so when a man uses them, the entire world is immediately filled with fire."

229. *ibid.*, fol. 158a 230. *Ibid.*, fol. 157b. Abulafia, pp. 204-205,

231. *Intrey Sefer*, printed by Scholem, MS. Oxford 2239, fol.

129b. and also brought in Liqqutey Harris,

232. Daniel 7:10. On the face becoming drained of blood as a

sign of 233. p. 102. fear, see Idel, Abraham Abulafia, MS. Oxford

1582, fol. 60b. The passage is based 234. (the great fire) = 359 =

ha-Sidim upon the gematria: ha- ,g ha-gedOlcih Satan (Satan) =

zeta? zera' laban (white seed) = (the demons) = -rs naked ness)

(uncov e (uncircumcised tail) = megalleh cerwah hay memeameh

c are! d abber u d = ha-gemul ha-ra c (the evil retribution) = c ildh

(the cause of (living, speaking and imagining) = garem lia(to

compel! nature) = be- hazkiirdh uthe cause) = le-hakriah ha-teba

c Kabbalistic (by recitation and science). As Scholem notes in

mada' gernatriyOt guf ra' (evil body) = Satan already Manuscript s

, p. 28, the appears in the writing of R. Baruch Tugarmi, Abulafia's



teacher. ,g ha-gedoldh (the Abulafia, p. 233. The gematria, ha-  
Abulafia, p. 231. See Scholem, great fire) = Satan likewise  
appears there; see tional Compare also the material appearing in  
MS. Firenze, Na and an, Library 28, fol. 173b: "the great fire is the  
secret of Sat

237. On the dangers of the mum, i.e., "blemish," see above, in  
our discussion of "techniques," note 100. 238. MS. Jerusalem 8o  
148 , fol. 65b. 239. MS. Moscow-Giinzburg 775, fol. 161b. On this  
passage, see Idel, Kabbalah: New Perspectives, Ch.4. 240.  
Gottlieb, Studies., p. 237. 241. On the image of sinking within the  
Ocean, see Idel,

Kabbalah: New Perspectives, pp. 67-70.

242. Scholem, "Devekut," esp. p. 204; Major Trends., pp. 55-56;  
Kabbalah, pp. 174-176. For a different view concerning the  
subject of unio mystica in Kabbalah, see Idel, Kabbalah: New  
Perspectives, Ch. 4.

243. Wisdom of the Zohar II, 289-290, and the notes there.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 415

414 Notes to Chapter 3

244. Studies., p. 237. Tarbis, 34 (1965), pp. 203-204.

253. MS. Munchen 10, fol. 154b; compare the words of R. Joseph Karo, cited in Werblowsky, Joseph Karo, pp. 156-157. 254. A. Ivry, "Averroes on Intellection and Conjunction," Journal of the American Oriental Society, 86 (1966), p. 76-85. 255. L. Massignon, in Journal Asiatique v. 210 (1931), pp. 77, 82, 92 ff.; idem, Kitab al Tawasin (Paris, 1913), p. 130. 256. See G. Vajda, "En Marge du Commentaire sur le Cantique des Cantiques de Joseph ibn Aqnin," REJ, 124 (1968), p. 187, n. 1, and his book Recherches sur la Philosophie et la Kabbala

245. See R. J. Z. Werblowsky,

Mysticism, Sacred and Profane (Oxford, 246. R. C. Zaehner, 1973), p. 32. For this scholar, the definition also includes the experience of identification with nature or with inanimate objects, which constitute nature mysticism, although Zaehner's emphasis remains the preservation of the gap between the object and the mystic, in which unity is none other than a bridging of this gap. I will not discuss any further the question of nature mysticism, as the problems entailed do not contribute to our understanding

of Abulafia. b MS. Oxford 1580, fols. 56a-56 , and compare Abu247. , "and that knowledge lafia's words in the same work, fol. 149a [i.e., of the Divine Names) will be a cause for saving many souls of from the hands of Sheol, and bring them alive to knowledgee of the World to Come, and their eternal life will be like the lifof An raised. our d God, by which they cling to Him, may

He be p Lord y God such-like is it said, 'And you who cleave to the n f the one cleaving are all alive this day'â□ç" On the identificatio ha-Qabbalah with the object of his cleaving, see Gottlieb, o Oerusalem, 1970), pp. 115-116 and note 4; Rabbenu Bahya ben Asher MS. Oxford 1618, fol. 70a-b; Qupat ha-Rolclin, R. Joseph Angelino, pp. 252-253. Werblowsky, Joseph Karo, This refers to physical connections, or "the connec248. tion of lust," which will in the end be annulled. 249. Ecstatic Kabbalah," note 4. 250. Deut. 4:4. 251. Deut. 10:20. 252. Deut. 13:5. On this expression, see chapter 2 above, "Music and

(Paris, 1962), pp. 26-28. To the list in Vajda, one may add R. Isaac ibn Latif, who writes in Saar S amayirn, Gate I, Ch. 18: "This is the final purpose of the soul, namely, its unity with the Active Intellect and its becoming one with it." Ibid., Ch. 26: "Let the soul cleave in the upper world, and that is the active intelect, until it and she become one thing." See also Tishby, Perug haAggadart le-R. "Azriel, p. 20. 257. MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 140a. 258. ibid., fol. 155a; compare , ti carey Sedeq, MS. Jerusalem

8o 148, fol. 39a. 259. MS. Rome, Angelica 38, fol. 31b-32a; MS. Munchen 285, fol. 26b, printed by Scholem in Major Trends, p. 382, and in Abulafia, p. 209, under the heading, "Knowledge of the Messiah and the Wisdom of the Redeemer." 260. Sanhedrin 38a. 261. MS. Rome - Angelica 38, fol. 14b-15a; MS. Miinchen 285, fol. 39b. See Scholem, Major Trends, p. 382 and p. 140. 262. Based upon II Samuel 5:17. 263. See Idel, Abraham Abulafia, pp. 89-91.

### 416 Notes to Chapter 3

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 417

264. Compare Sefer ha-Malmd, by one of Abulafia's disciples, where it states (MS. Oxford 1649, fol. 206a), "Say to God, 'you are my son, this day have I begotten you' (Ps. 2:7) and likewise the verse, 'I, I am He' (Deut. 32:39). And the secret is the cleaving

of the powerâ□□that is, the supernal Divine power, called the sphere of prophecyâ□□ with human power, and so they said 'I, I.' " 265. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 20a and 21a. 266. Exodus 6:3. 267. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 12a. p. 237, and notes there. 268.

Printed by Gottlieb, Studies., It is worth noting here that Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, in his Oration on the Dignity of Man, transl. A. Robert Caponigri (Chicago, 1967), pp. 9, 14-15, stresses the possibility that man may reach unity with God and, as does R. Isaac of Acre, this possibility in the case of Enoch, who was transformed into "an angel of the 269. On this image, see Idel, 67-70. V, p. 171. On the subject 270. Jellinek, Bget ha-Midr g, of identification of Enoch and Metatron, see M. Idel, "Enoch is Metatron." fol. 96b and p. 95a, "that the human intellect, after it has been separated from the body, will again become spiritual, and be embodied in the Active Intellect, and he and it are again one." Similarly, and doubtless under its influence, R. Abraham ibn Migash writes in Kebod (Jerusalem, 1977), p. 97a, "For his name is like that of his master, which is the Active Intellect, and when the human intellect cleaves to it, the two shall be one, and he is it,

and his throne is its throne, and its name is his name, and he is the Prince of the

271. Mac areket ha-'Elohut, Kabbalah: New Perspectives, pp.

World." On fol. 97b, "when it is attached to the sphere of the intellect, he is it."

272. Major Trends, p. 141.

273. MS. Moscow 133, fol. 64a-66b; MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 41b-

42a. .274. Deut. 5:20 275. Deut. 4:4. 276. MS. Vatican 233, fol.

115a. This refers to the composition of the Ineffable Name, which

equals 26 in gematria, of two equal parts of  $13 + 13 = 'aliapdh +$

)ahabah. (love + love). On the continuation of this passage, see

Ch. 4 below, on "Erotic Imagery," note 43. This section is cited

anonymously in *Newe* by R. Abraham Shalom, fols. 87a-b. 277.

Compare the remarks made by R. Judah Albotini in *Sulldm ha-*

*cAliya-h* (in *Kabbalistic Manuscripts*, p. 227 and p. 228, 229),

which speak about man's departure "from his human domain,"

and his entry into "the divine domain." Unlike Abulafia, R. Judah Albotini refers to the cleaving of the soul "to the supernal, hidden world of emanation, i.e., the world of the Sefirot, or sometimes to the soul's cleaving to the Active Intellect. See now also Scholem, *Qiryat Sefer*, 22 (1945), p. 162. 278. MS. Vatican 233, fol. 117b-118a. In R. Elnathan b. Moses Kalki g, 'Eben Sappir, MS. Paris, BN 727, fol. 15a, we read:

Therefore he is held accountable, that influx being neither body nor bodily power, because of its resemblance to the One from which it flows; and this influx is likewise separated, and for this reason it brings upon the soul a further influx similar to itself, based on it, to elevate its existence from the level of non-separation to that of separation. And despite this, the separate influx is not corporealized, but only the soul, which is not separated, which speaks and is enlightened with the power and which thinks thoughts of wisdom and

418 Notes to Chapter 3 understanding and knowledge, which are seven levels, one above the other in levelâ□□it receives that



separate influx and clings to it until it returns to be one thing with it, and then it and she [become] one in number.

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 419

see Idel, "Abraham Abulafia and Unio Mystica," *Studies.*, essay 1. 285. This appears to be Averroes' approach. 286. Abulafia was evidently influenced by the expression, "the forces scattered in the world," which appears in *Guide.*, 11:6, although the meaning of this idiom is not the same in Abulafia as in Maimonides. The expression, "the forces scattered in existence," appears in *Hayyey ha- Nefes*, MS. Munchen 408, fol. 90a. 287. MS. Vatican 233, fol. 109a-b, and Scholem, *Abulafia*, pp. 225-226. P. Tocci, "Techniques of Pronunciation," p. 227. According to Tocci, p. 236, note 35, a connection exists between the expressions, "wisdom," "understanding" and "knowledge," and the Sefirotic system; however, in my opinion, these three words have no theosophic meaning. On the same page (note 36), Tocci states that the word *debequt* does not have the meaning of *unio*, relying upon

Scholem, who discusses the meaning of *debeatit* in other authors. It seems to me, in light of the material we have brought both from 'Or ha-Selcel and from other colleagues of Abulafia, that one must reject Tocci's statement. On fol. 118a, Abulafia speaks about the soul which "resembles the separate being in every place." 288. MS. Munchen 22, fol. 187a. 289. Eccles. 12:4. 290. Goldreich, p. 222; this passage was copied from the Munchen 17 manuscript by J. Herz, *Drei Abhandlungen iiber die Conjunction des separaten Intellects mit dem Menschen* (Berlin, 1869), p. 22, Appendix II. In his view, this reflects the impact of Averroes' doctrine. The passage was translated into French by Vajda, who contends that it was influenced by the psychological doctrine of Ibn Bajja; see his *Recherches*, (n. 256 above), p. 379, n. 3. It seems to me that this rather reflects the influence of a Neoplatonic approach comparable, for example, to the approach of *Liber de Causis*

279. *Ibid.*, fol. 118a-119a, with omissions. In the same work (fol. 8a), Abulafia writes: "it may be that they will receive from this

book of mine a path, such that they shall long to cleave to its first cause."

280. MS. Paris, BN 776, fol. 192b; MS. Vatican 441, fol. 115a. Compare R. Pinhas Elijah Horowitz, *Sefer ha-Berit* (Briinn, 1797), Pt. II, fol. 29b. In an anonymous work found in MS. New York - JTS 2203, fol. 214b, we read similar ideas to those appearing in the above collection: "Surely know that the Creator and the intellect [i.e., the human intellect] and the angels, all become one thing and one essence and one truth, and are like the flame of the candle, for example." 281. MS. Vatican 233, fol. 120b. 282. See the long discussion of this matter in P. Merlan, *Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metaconsciousness* (The Hague, 1963), pp. 18 ff., p. 25, 36.

283. *Perusge Rignonim le-Maseket 'AbOt* (Jerusalem, 1973), p. 65. Similar things appear on p. 62; cf. *Sefer ha-Seruf*, MS. Paris,

BN 774, fol. 4a: "When the intellect becomes refined, while it is [still] in matter, when it is still in that same dwelling place in truth, this is a very high level, to cleave to the Source of Sources after the soul has been separated from matter." 284. In the printed edition, pp. 20-21; MS. New York 1887, fols. 99b-100a; and Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 131. W.T. Stace saw in this passage an indication of pantheism; see his *Mysticism and Philosophy* (London, 1961), p. 116. On the understanding of the Sefirot as pertaining to spiritual powers within man, see Idel, *Kabbalah; New Perspectives*, Ch. VI; on man as a compound entity,

420 Notes to Chapter 3

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 421

in the Hebrew translation of Judah Romano (*Sefer ha-Sibbeit*, MS. Oxford 2244, fol. 31a):

The effect is its cause by way of the cause, just as the sense is in the soul by way of the soul, and the soul is in the intellect in an intellectual manner, and the intellect in "reality" in the way of reality, and the first reality in the intellect in an intellectual manner, and the intellect in the soul in a soul manner, and the soul in the sense in a sense manner.

note 3; S. J. Shah, *Oriental Magic* (London, 1956), p. 82. The expression, "the binding of the bridegroom" ('asirat ha-hatdn), which appears during the Geonic period, also bears a magical significance: see L. Ginzberg, *Geonica* (New York, 1909), II, p. 152; S. Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York, 1942), p. 110. On the subject of 'magic' and the 'knot', see Vajda's abovementioned study, *Recherches*, p. 110-112. 299. This Platonic idea appears in several places in Abulafia; see, for example, *Sitrey TOrdh*, MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 160a: "to open blind eyes, to remove the prisoners from bondage, from prison those who dwell in darkness," etc.; *'Or ha-Sekel*, MS. Vatican 233, fol. 117a ff. 300. The motif of nature seducing the soul, in

order to sink within it, is an old one; see *Mussare ha-Filosofim*, I, 18, 8.

301. 'Osar 'Eden Gclnuz, MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 23b.

291. The expression )elohi (Divine man), also appears in MS. Leiden 93, from whence Vajda also translated the passage; see *ibid.*, p. 379, n. 1. It is worth noting here that the expression "Divine man" appears in Maimonides' letter to R. Hasdai ha-Levi. This letter refers to a story concerning the equanimity of the perfect man, an idea which likewise appears in *Me'irat 'Ebert Sappir*, 'Tinayini. The expression z 'elohi similarly appears in *as ConcentraMS*. Paris, BN 728, fol. 154; Cf. Idel, "Hitbodedut tion," *Studies*, essay VII. 292. See above, 'Or ha-Sekel , MS. Vatican 233, fol. 120b. essay V; MS. 293. See Idel, "Mundus Imaginalis," *Studies.*; Vatican 233, fol. 7b; and see also the concluding poem, fol. 128b.

294. *Ibid.*, fol. 8a.

302. Joel 3:5. 303. P. 144.

304. 'Ostir 'Eden Gdnuz, MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 133b-134a. 305. Ibid., 56a; teli = 440 = mekagef (witch). This gematria is very widely used by Abulafia. The knots which sustain the

295. MS. Rome, Angelica 38, fol. 2b. in Idel, Abraham 296. See the description of Sefer ha-Maftehot Abulafia., p. 20. p. 131 ff, as well as 297. See Scholem's remarks, Abulafia, the important article of Mircea Eliade, "The God who Binds," Images and Symbols (New York, 1969), pp. 92-124. 298. On the use of this expression in magic, see R. C. Thompson, Semitic Magic (New York, 1971), p. 166 and p. 169,

human body are already alluded to in R. Judah Barceloni's Perug Sifer Yesirdh, (Berlin, 1885), p. 17: "the creature will be separated and the knots will be undone, and he will die."

306. Ibid., fol. 131b.

307. On the expression, "his law and his portion," see Steinschneider, *Al-Farabi.*, p. 103, note 37, and p. 247.

308. 'Ostir 'Eden Ganuz, MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 131b. This

approach is a well-known one among the Neoplatonists.

422 Notes to Chapter 3 309. On the "creational" fettering of man, see Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston, 1963), p. 204. of the "fettering" and of the putting on the spiritual form also (Koryscz, 1784), fol. 106d, "And the appears in Sefer ha - (Janah intention is that Enoch cast off the bodily element and put on the spiritual element, and was fettered by a spiritual knot."

'er 311. 'Or ha-Sekel, fol. 115b; ha-qeg essay V. (untied). See Idel, "Mundus Imaginalis," *Studies.*,

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 423



322. Isa. 50:6.

323. Ibid., v. 9. 324. Hayye ha-Nefesh, MS. Munchen 408, fol. 47a.

MS. Vatican 233, fol. 117a. The matter 310. 'Or ha-Sekel,

325. MS. Jerusalem 8o 1303, fol. 73b. The passage is based entirely upon fragments of verses connected with various prophets. 326. Further on, Abulafia brings a series of verses expressing the bitter lot of the prophets. 327. MS. Rome - Angelica 38, fol. 34a. 328. See Idel, Abraham Abulafia, pp. 402-408, esp. note 71. In addition to the passages cited there, see Sefer ha-'Olam, p. 68 and Sefer ha-Tikkun, MS. Rome, Angelica 38, fol. 13b. 329. See M. Idel, "Abulafia on the Jewish Messiah and Jesus," Studies., essay III. 330. See Idel, Abraham Abulafia., p. 412. 331. MS. Rome - Angelica 38, fol. 12a; MS. Miinchen 285, fol. 37b. The definition of the supernal revelation as predicated upon knowledge of the Ineffable Name is reminiscent of R.

Abraham Bar Hiyya's description of the climax of prophecy as the revelation to Moses of the significance of the Ineffable Name. In Megillat ha-Megalleh (Berlin, 1924), p. 43, he writes, "and the supreme order of them all (in all the types of prophecy) is that he will tell him the meaning of the name, as he told it to Moses, etc."

332. Sefer ha-Haftarcih, MS. Rome - Angelica 38, fol. 37a.

(the knot) = 605 = hitir

312. 'Oscir 'Eden Gdnuz, II:2 and Samuel ibn Tibbon, Perug Millini on Guide for the Perplexed, Zarot (ed. J. Even-Shmuel), p. 82.

MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 132a, based

MS. Munchen 408, fol. 63a. 313. 1-layyey ha-Nefg, of Objectification 314. "Myth and Mysticism: A Study Journal of

Religion, 49 and Interiorization in Religious Thought," (1969), pp. 328-329.

Nebu ,

r, 1-1azOn Zelyiryeh; min ha315. See Binyamin Uffenheime dh la-Apoqaliptiqah (Jerusalem, 1961), p. 135 ff, and the bibli316. 'Or ha-Sekel, Ms. Vatican 233, 127b-128a. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 50a. 317. tiayyey ha-`01iin ha-Ba', 318. 'Or ha-Sekel, MS. Vatican 233, fol. 125b.

319. Ibid., fols. 149ff.

ography cited in the notes.

II:37. On the prophet-messenger 320. Guide for the Perplexed, (London, 1958), pp in Avicenna, see F. Rahman, Prophecy in Islam pp. 18-19. 52ff., pp. 86 ff., and compare We-Zot li-Yehuclah, MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 154b. 321. Sitrey To-rah,

333. On the Torah as the Name, or sequence of Names, of God, see Idel, "The Concept of the Torah," pp. 45-84.

### 424 Notes to Chapter 3

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 425 336. 'Osar 'Eden Grinuz, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 174a. Com-

MS. Moscow-Gunzburg 775, fol. 160a. 334. )60r Hayyim, given there to the It is appropriate to cite here the interpretation MS. Montefiore 322, fol. 8h, passage from Ijyey ha-cold-1n ha-Ba), "and the Messiah is the High Priest." This idea, discussed in the chapter on Messianism, is interpreted in terms of the theosophic approach:

The secret of the deed is from Israelite to Levite, and from Levite Yesod is called Israel, to Priest... For it is known that the

Sefirah]is called Levite, and it and it is the place of physicality, and Tiferet -in (the Supreme Crown) is is the place of spirituality; and Keter called the Priest, and it is the place of the intellect, and it is the priest. Therefore, it was said to the High Priest Joshua, "Behold, I bring my servant Semah" [Zechariah 3:8], meaning that by means of the upper Messiah he will bring the lower Messiah.

pare R. Abraham ibn Ezra's short commentary on Ex. 23:20 (ed. Fleischer, p. 202). On fol. 134a of the same work, Abulafia again describes reality in bleak terms:

"For everything that is with us is all earthly, and we have no control over it, nor complete power over it, except in a very few cases and occasions; and all is imagination and mockery, like a dream which passes by in the night which, when the sleeper awakes from it, thus shall he find it. And even when he looks at the day past, he will see that all his days are like a passing shadow."

337. Cf. Isa. 28:8.

338. Sitrey Torah, MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 155. The motif

The term, "upper Messiah," also appears in fol. 29b, while the lofty status of the Messiah is mentioned, by R. Moses of Burgos, in a fragment titled "Sefer ben Meir 'Otiyot" mentioned in and 5 (1934), p. 55 fragment published by G. Scholem, Tarbiz note 6. As in the passage from R. Isaac of Acre, in the note from MS. Montefiore as well the Messiah is identified with the Sefirah of Keter. Generally speaking, the Messiah enjoys a relatively high status of Keter. Malkut; see, for low status, and is identified with the Sefirah of pp. 90-91. example, R. Moses de Leon's Segel ha-Messiah (1260-1280), On the definition of the Messiah as "a Divine power," see we-Derek ha-Kefirdh, published by R. Azriel of Gerona, Derek ha-Imunah by Scholem, "New Remnants of the Writings of R. Azriel of Gerona" (Jerusalem, 1942), p. 211. Gerona" (Hebr.), Sefer Gulak we-Klein The Messiah's "divinity" becomes a central element in Sabbatianism is rooted in earlier Kabbalah, but the approach per se are the a point which I cannot discuss in depth here. Comp862; "est (Basel,

1557), p. remarks of Reuchlin, De Arte Cabalistica enim Messiha (sic!) Virtus Dei." 335. Metatron, the Prince of the Presence.

Sefer ha-

of Satan or the imagination perpetually lying in wait for the mystic, who for this reason is required to conduct an unending war against his thoughts, is a common one in hesychasm. See G. A. Maloney, Russian Hesychasm (Morton, 1973), pp. 73-79.

339. Sitrey Torah, MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 155b-156a. 340. 'Osiir 'Eden Gdnuz, MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 32b. 341. Ibid., fol. 27b. In Sitrey Tordh, MS. Paris, BN 774, fol.

120a, it stated that the intelligibilium "will be eternal and exist like the stars forever and ever."

342. Mafteah ha-Hokmot , MS. Moscow 133, fol. 6b. 343. 'Osdr 'Eden Ganuz, MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 101b.

344. On this idea, see A. Altmann & S. Stern, *Isaac Israeli* (Oxford, 1958), pp. 201-202; I. Jadaane, *L'Influence du stoicisme sur la pensie musulmane* (Beyrouth, 1968), pp. 232 ff. 345. MS. Munchen 58, fol. 317a-b; and compare *Sefer ha-Melis*, MS. Munchen 285, fol. 15a:

#### 426 Notes to Chapter 3

"He who wishes to die in the coming [world] shall live in this one, and he who wishes to die in this, will live in the next. And the principle of it is, that in killing his Evil Impulse he will make his Good Impulse to live, and if he kills his Good Impulse he makes his Evil Urge to live."

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 427



351. The opinion of H. Graetz, History of the Jews (Philadelphia, 1956), IV:5, concerning the need for intensive preparations, afflictions and isolation, have no basis in the writings of Abulafia.

352. 'Osdr 'Eden Gdnuz, MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 162a. 353. 'Or ha-Selcel, MS. Vatican 233, fol. 125b. 354. Gan Na'ul, MS. Munchen 58, fol. 328a. 355. Qiddttgin, fol. 71a.

tihyeh (shall live)-tihyeh = [423 346. tamut (will die) = 846 = + 423]. See above, note 115. 32a. The author of Sefer ha-Malmed (MS. Oxford

1649, fol. 207a), similarly stresses the concept of 'willed death,' as in the example of his teacher: ... for in truth, if a man lives it, that man will live; as the philosophers

say: "If you wish to live in nature, die in will and live in nature; and if you wish to die to nature, live in will and die in nature." And this is clear to a man who has been granted by God knowledge and understanding and intellect; blessed is He who has graced us

knowledge. And our sages said likewise, in their saying, "What shall man do to live? He shall die. And what shall man do and die? He shall live."

347. Tamid

356. See particularly the list of conditions Abulafia required of those disciples who would be worthy of receiving the secrets of Kabbalah, in which the ascetic element is conspicuously absent; Hayyey ha-`01am ha-13w, MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 34a.

357. 'Osar Hayyim, MS. Moscow - Giinzburg 775, fol. 170b.

348. Num. 19:14.

Yesaclely ha-TOrah, 3:12; a dis349. See Maimonides, Hilkot cussion of the sources connected with this idea appears in I. Jewish Mediaeval and Twersky, "Aspects of the Mishneh Torah," (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), p. 99, notes 14-19. Renaissance

Studies Liwyat 350. Compare the words of R. Levi ben Abraham in Hen (Ye gurun, ed. Pollack, vol. 8, p. 131):

"He shall subdue his matter and force it down and place it in the service of the Divine power, and he shall afflict his body and hit it with wounding blows, for truthful are the blows of a friend, as [our rabbis] of blessed memory said, 'With what shall a man give life to his soul? He shall kill his body, until he return from the children of On High and attain everything, from the earth to the firmament, and from one end of the heavens to the other, and he shall live for eternity.'"

358. Compare also the appearance of "equanimity" (histawut) [lacking in the writings of Abraham Abulafia] in R. Isaac of Acre, again apparently under Sufic influence; see Idel, "Hitbodedut as Concentration," Studies., essay VII.

359. 'Osar `Eden Ganuz, MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 165b-166a.

428 Notes to Chapter 4

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 429

### Notes to Chapter 4

1. James H. Leuba, *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism* (London, 1925), pp. 137-155; G. C. Anawati - L. Gardet, *Mystique Musulmane* (Paris, 1961), pp. 161-174; M. Idel, "Metaphores et pratiques sexuelles dans la Cabbale," in *Lettre sur la Saintete*, ed. Ch. Mopsick (Paris, 1986), pp. 329-358. 2. See Tishby, *Mishnat ha-Zohar II*, pp. 280-306, and the notes there; R. J. Z. Werblowsky, *Tarbiz* 34 (1965), pp. 204-205; idem, *Joseph Karo*, pp. 57-58. 3. On love as intellectual worship, see Tishby, *ibid.*, pp. 283-284. Abulafia's view on this subject appears in the section entitled "the worship of God via love," *Sod 2. 10, Sitrey TOrdh and tlayyey ha- Nefe*§. There are brief discussions of this subject in several other sources: see *Mafteah ha-SefirOt*, MS. Milano, Ambrosiana 53, fol. 176a. Vajda, *L'amour de Dieu*, pp. 203-204, describes Abulafia's approach to this subject, based upon *Hayyey ha- Nefe*§ alone. On pp. 197-198 he gives a

translation of a passage from 'Imrey Sefer discussing intellectual love, without mentioning either the source of the section or its author. See also Idel, Abraham Abulafia, p. 27. 28a; 4. Baba Batra 17a; Sifrey, Debarim, sec. 357; Moc ed Qatari etc. 5. See the midrash, Petirat Mo geh Rabbenu, in Eisenstein, 'Oscir ha-Midraginz, II, p. 370, 383. 6. Song of Songs, 1:2. 7. It would appear to me that this passage from the Guide for the Perplexed influenced, not only Abulafia and his disciples, but also those Kabbalists belonging to the theosophic school. Its

impression may already be noticed in R. Azriel, PeruÂ§ ha-  
)Aggaddt, p. 5 and p. 59:

And the sages said [Sifra Wa-yiqra, 82: 12), "'no man shall see me and live' [Ex. 33:20]â□□in their lifetime they can not see but at the time of their deaths [they may]," and they are like the candle whose light waxes just as it is about to be extinguished. And this is what is written, "you gather [lit.: "add"] their spirits and they die" [Ps. 104:29] - in that addition their spirit departs.

This passage was influenced by the sentence preceding the above passage in the Guide: "Yet in the measure in which the faculties of the body are weakened and the fire of desires is quenched, the intellect is strengthened, its lights achieve a wider extension." R. Moses de Leon borrowed this idea of R. Azriel's in his *Sefer ha-RimmOn*, MS. Cambridge 1516, fol. 54a and in *Migkiin ha-Tdut*, MS. Cambridge 1500, fol. 14a, as well as in *Sefer ha-Zohar*, I, 218b-219a. 8. On this topic, see Idel, "On the History," pp. 3-6.

9. See L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (New York, 1946), vol. 6, p. 161, note 948. Unlike Maimonides, who saw death by the kiss as the result of the weakening of man's physical powers, Moses is depicted here as being at the height of his powers at the time of his death: "and his eye was not dim" [Deut. 34:7]. 10. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 14b. In *Berit Menuhih* (Jerusalem, 1950), p. 16a, we read, "and when the sage in his wisdom reaches this place, he dies by the kiss, because of his great longing.,

11. BeralcOt, 61b. 12. 'Osar `Eden Gemuz, MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 48b.

13. MS. Vatican 233, fol. 109a. 14. See above, Chapter 3, subsection: debequt.

#### 430 Notes to Chapter 4

#### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 431

p. 15. Published by Scholem in *Kabbalistic Manuscripts*, (MS. 228. Another disciple of Abulafia, the author of *Ner 'Elohim Munchen 10*, fol. 167b), writes that:

He ordered us to hold our tongues against excessive speech concerning them [i.e., the sefirot] and to place a rein to our thoughts and balances to our desire for the love of God, lest the

soul become separated from the body in its great desire, and seek the kisses of the lips of He who pours wisdom and love.

16. Psalms, 116:15. 17. This duality also appears in Gnosticism; see Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston, 1963), p. 285.

Sufism also contains testimonies to the death of the mystic in a state of ecstasy. See above, Chapter 2, note 50. 18. MS.

Jerusalem 8o 303, fol. 53b; MS. Vatican 295, fol. 6b. In his book, *Sereir ha-M*(5r, Ch. 6 [in Jellinek, *Kerem Hemed*, 9 (1956), p.

157], R. Isaac ibn Latif writes, "When the human intellect actually cleaves to the intelligibilia, which are the Active Intellect, in the

form of the kiss." Ibn Latif's approach influenced R. Johanan

Alemanno, *Sa(arey ha-He geq* (Livorno, 1790), fol. 35ab;

*Collectanaea*, MS. Oxford 2234, fol. 187a. In his *Collectanaea*,

fol. 30a, Alemanno cites a passage from Narboni's commentary to

Averroes' *On the Possibility of Conjunction* which speaks of the

"preparation" of the Active Intellect: "Let Him kiss him with the

kisses of His mouth, and let him receive the active intellect in the

light of his soul which rises upon her." See Kalman P. Bland, 96.



The Epistle on the the Possibility of Conjunction with the Active Intellect by Rushd with the Commentary of Moses Narboni (New York, 1982), p.

The substitution of Ben Azzai for R. `Aqiba as the one who died by the kiss likewise appears in a passage in MS. Vatican 441, fol. 34b, in the margins: "and Ben Azzai likewise desired the secret and went beyond the bounds to seek it, and he died with the kiss." It is possible that R. Judah al-Botini grafted the idea onto a description of the death of found in Hayyey ha- ` 01am ha-Ba' Ben Azzai, MS. Vatican 283, fol. 71b:

"Ben Azzai looked and died." He gazed at the radiance of the elcinalz, like a man with weak eyes who gazes into the full light of the sun, and his eyes are dimmed, and at times he becomes blinded, because of the intensity of the light which overwhelms him. Thus it happened to Ben Azzai: the light overwhelmed him, and he gazed at it because of his great desire to cleave to it and to enjoy it without interruption, and after he cleaved to it he did not wish to be separated from that sweet radiance, and he remained

immersed and hidden within it. And his soul was crowned and adorned, and that very radiance and brightness to which no man may cling and afterwards live, as is said, "for no man shall see Me and live" [Ex. 33:20]. But Ben Azzai only gazed at it a little while, and then his soul departed and remained [there], and was hidden away in the place of its cleaving, which is a most precious light. And this death was the death of the pious, whose souls are separated from all concerns of the lowly world, and whose souls cleave to the ways of the supernal world.

19. MS. Oxford 1649, fol. 204a. 20. See above, Ch. 3, section. 6.

21. The author of this work may also be alluding to the gematria:  $10 \times 26$  [i.e., the name YHWH] = 260 [the gematria of Gerizim, in the deficient spelling used in Scripture]. 22. MS. Miinchen 22, fol. 187a; MS. New York, JTS 839, fol. 105b- 106a. The vision of light while in the ecstatic state at the time of death, described in Sefer ha-Seruf, is similar to what is already found in a text from the circle of Sefer ha-lyyun. Several manuscripts contain a passage

belonging to this circle (MS. Vatican, Urbino 31, fol. 164a; MS. New York, JTS 839, fol. 5b; etc.), which reads:

This passage was evidently written during the first half ed. of the thirteenth century; Cf. R. Azriel's *Pens ha-'Aggadot*, Tishby, p. 19. For other descriptions of Ben Azzai's ecstatic MS. Moscow, Ginzburg death, see R. Isaac of Acre, *'Osar Hayyim*, fol. 37d; etc. 775, fol. 138a; R. Menahem Recanati, *Peru' la-Torah*,

432 Notes to Chapter 4 From the time that the righteous person departs to his eternal home, he sees the light of the sphere of the intellect, and immediately he departs. As if the Holy One, blessed be He, has created it and made it known to the eye. And Moses saw the light of the Zebul, and immediately died. And why all this? Because the body has no strength to stand it.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 433

Here, there is no direct connection stated to death by the kiss, but the author of *Sefer ha-Peli*, did draw a connection between the passage from the circle of *Sefer ha-clyyun* and the image of the kiss (Koretz, 1788, fol. 106b):

Know that at the time that the righteous person departs to his eternal abode, he sees the light of the sphere of the intellect, and his soul immediately departs and leaves the body. And know that he is shown it in accordance with the level of that righteous person and his cleaving to that light, and he immediately cleaves [to it], for there is no strength in the body to withstand the soul's longing when it sees that light; and Moses, as soon as he saw the light of the dwelling of the supernal Zebul, immediately cleaves there. And the vision of the light which is visible to the righteous whose soul is there is called the kiss.

the supernal soul and death by the kiss, such an association does appear in Recanati. Recanati's *Perug la-TOrah* influenced, on the one hand, R. Judah Hayyat's *Ma'areket ha-'Elohut* (Mantua, 1558), fol. 95a-96b, and *Christian Kabbalah*, on the other. See

Ch. Wirszubski, *Three Chapters in the History of Christian Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1975), pp. 11-20 [Hebr.1; Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), pp. 155-156; F. Secret, *Les Kabbalistes Chretiens de la Renaissance* (Paris, 1964), pp. 39-40; B. C. Novak, "Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Johanan Alemanno," *MCI*, 45 (1982), pp. 140-144. 24. See Moses Ibn Tibbon, *Perusg Sir ha-g irim* (Lyck, 1874), p. 14; R. Ezra, *Perusg gir ha-girim* (in *Kitbe ha-Ramban*, ed. Chavel, p. 485), which was directly influenced by Maimonides and by R. Joseph ibn Aknin, *Hitgalut ha-SOdit we-Hofwat ha-Me'orot* (Jerusalem, 1964), p. 24; and A. S. Halkin, "Ibn Aknin's Commentary of the Song of Songs," *Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume*, (New York, 1950), pp. 396 ff. 25. On the difference between Abulafia and the Kabbalists in their use of the image of sexual union, see the end of this chapter. 26. R. Zaehner, *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane* (Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 151. There is a similarity between Abulafia's understanding of sexual union and that appearing in Ibn 'Arabi, *La Sagese des Prophetes* (Paris, 1955), pp. 186-187. On prophecy seen as intercourse between the human intellect and the logos,

see R. A. Baer, *Philo's Use of the Categories Male and Female* (Leiden, 1970), pp. 55 ff., p. 57. The pair of concepts, Active Intellect and Passive Intellect, were identified as male and female by Postel; see *De Etruriae regionis* (Florence, 1551), p. 144. This treatise is cited in the introduction to the English edition of *Colloquium of J. Bodin* - M. L. D. Kuntz, ed. (Princeton, 1975), pp. lviii-lix, n. 112.

Here, as in *Sefer ha-Sertif*, death is the cause of ecstasy, and not vice versa. The vision of and cleaving to the light are a Neoplatonic motif, which appears frequently in Bahya Ibn Paquda. One ought to point out that in a text from the circle of the meaning of the sphere of the intellect is similar to that of *Sefer ha-lyyun*, On the relationship between the two intellects to that of the elements. For related concepts, see Colette Sirat, *Mardot 'Elohim le-Rabbi Hanok ben* (Jerusalem, 1976), pp. 16-17, and see also the Talal-Qonstantin's discussion of the light concealed for the righteous, in *Shema Yisrael*, 12a. 23. I refer to the passages in *Recanati*, *Perut la-Torah*, fol. 38b and 77c. These statements

have an explicitly Neoplatonic cast, based upon the ideas found in R. Ezra, Perug fols. 7b-8a, and in R. Azriel's printed in Liqqutey Sikehah u-Fe)iih, p. 40. While R. Ezra and R. Azriel do not draw Perug hajAggadot, anv connection between the cleaving of the individual soul to

#### 434 Notes to Chapter 4

#### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 435

The Torah said, "Behold, I have placed before you today life and goodness, and death and evil." [Deut. 30:15] [This refers to] the practical c ommandments, of which it is said, "good and evil," that is, "life"â□□knowledge and intellectual commandmentsâ□□and foolishnessâ□□that is, death. And the good in his eyes and the evil in his eyes [refers to] the practical commandments, of which it is said good and evil.

27. Published by Scholem, Abulafia, p. 232; and compare the end of Sefer ha-Seruf, MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 33b, and above, Chapter 3, note 223. 28. Numbers 12:8. compare also Idel, Kabbalah: New Perspectives, pp. 206-207. 30. MS. Milano, Ambrosiana 53, fols. 170b-171a. 31. On the sources for this evaluation of Song of Songs, see S. Lieberman's comments in Scholem's book, Jewish Gnosticism, p. 119, and note 1. 32. On the comparison of the soul to a woman, see Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Religion, pp. 283-284. and Plotinus' remarks in Ennead VI, 9.9 (ed. MacKenna, p. 629): "The soul is always an Aphrodite... The soul in its nature loves God and longs to be at one with Him, in the noble love of a daughter for a noble father." See also Werblowsky's comment in Tarbiz, 34 (1965), p. 204, and Meister Eckhardt's, "Woman â□□ that is the most noble term with which we may designate the soul: it is a more noble word than (Paris, virgin." See R. Schiirrmann, Maitre Eckhardt ou la joie errante (London, 1972), p. 46, 181; A. E. Waite, The Way of Divine Union 1915), p. 203. 33. The two stages in progress toward prophecy correspond to knowledge of conventional truth, i.e., the secrets of Torah and the reasons for the commandments,



and knowledge of the intelligibilia. This evaluation places the commandments on a lower level than most Jewish philosophers would be prepared to acknowledge . Abulafia's distinction here between conventional truth and the intelligibilia is similar to that of his Provençal contemporary, R. Levi ben Abraham, who writes in *Livyat Hen*, MS. Munchen 58, fol. 84b: MS. Oxford 1580, fols. 131b-132a; 29. 'Osar 'Eden Geinuz,

This division of the commandments, based upon R. Saadya Gaon, radically alters his schema. It should be noted that a similar division to that of R. Levi is found in a work written in the Orient, strikingly reflecting Sufic influence; see F. Rosenthal, "Judaeo-Arabic Work under Sufic Influence," *HUCA*, vol. 15 (1940), pp. 448-449. 34. MS. Miinchen 58, fol. 323a, printed with some variations in *Sefer ha-Peli)tah*, fol. 52b-c. I have made some minor corrections to the version in MS. Munchen, based upon the text in *Sefer ha-Peli)ah*. In an epistle known as *Masref la-keseef*, MS. Sasson 56, fol. 33b, Abulafia writes:

And by his concentration, he prepares the bride to receive the influx from the power of the bridegroom. The Divine elements [i.e., the divine letters and the intelligibilia] should move the intelligibilia, and by persisting in his concentration and intensifying and strengthening it, and by his great desire and the strength of his longing and the persistence of his yearning to attain the cleaving and the kiss, the strength of the bride and her name and her power will be mentioned favorably and preserved for ever, for this is their law, and the separated things will be joined and the conjoined things separated, and reality will be turned about.

Here, too, the image of bride and groom alludes to the human soul and the Active Intellect, which are united by the special technique of Abulafia. On "Torah, wisdom and prophecy," see also above, Chapter 1, in a quotation from '6stir 'Eden Qinuz (n. 21). 35. See Canticles Rabba, 1:11.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 437 39. Ibid., 1:11.

36. The meaning of the idiom Keneset Yisrevel [the congregation of Israel] is explained as follows in 'Imrey Sefer, MS. Paris, Kee BN 777, p. 57: "The secret of Keneset Yisra , - I, whose secret is the congregation of Yod, the prince of God], neset Yod Sar , a [i.e., for the whole person is one who gathers all and is called the congregation of Jacob." Further on, Abulafia speaks of Keneset or the tenth Sefirah but, as we Yisra ,e1 in the sense of the Sekinah have seen in our discussion of the concept of Selcinah, this is also MS. liable to be part of the human soul. See Litiquzey R. Nathan, New York, JTS 1777, fol. 34a:

alludes to the gathering of the souls Maharani [said], Keneset Yisra)el of the righteous of Israel, which brings down mercy and favor upon the poor one, but not upon all the souls within the body, for it alludes only to the Intellective soul.

In 'Or ha-Menorah, a work written in an Abulafian vein, MS.

Jerusalem 8o 1303, fol. 28b, we read:

And the power of speech, called the Rational Soul, which received whose secret is the Active the Divine influx, called Keneset Yisra'el, Intellect, which is also the general influx, and which is the mother of the intellect of the world.

40. See Siddur Ray (Arnram Gaon, ed. Frumkin (Jerusalem, 1912), vol. II, pp. 406-407. The text of the blessing recited by the bridegroom is, "Blessed art thou, o Lord God, King of the universe, who placed a nut in the Garden of Eden, a lily of the valleys, that no stranger may rule the closed well, therefore have you placed the beloved fawn in purity" It is clear that this refers to the virginal blood, and the fact that this blessing was recited over a cup of wine" he is required to recite it if there is a cup" strengthens its sexual connotation. While the editor argues that, in his opinion, "there is a textual error here, and instead of 'egaz [nut] one should read zug [couple]," this

argument in fact has no basis in either the manuscripts or in the subject itself. The version as cited by Abulafia, as well as the interpretation that he gives, completely rules out any possibility of the reading *zug*. 41. The comparison of the woman and the soul to a nut and a garden likewise appear in *Perusg Sir ha-Sirim* of R. Moses ibn Tibbon (Lyck, 1874), fol. 20b: "And it may be that they compared the woman to the nut because of her meanness and her attachment to matter, and she is called a garden (*ginnat*) in the feminine form, because of her meanness... and the soul of man is compared to the nut." in *Song of Songs*.

42. *Guide.*, I:10, without referring or relating to the verbs

See R. Moses Krispin, *Perus Serra' Yisra*, e1, MS. Parma 105 (13979), fol. 45b. It may be that this represents a metamorphosis as was already of the Kabbalistic interpretation of *Keneset Yisra*, a, known to the school of Nahmanides, who writes of *Keneset Yisra' Pirqey YesOd*, p. e1 that "she is the gathering of all." See Scholem, 284. 37. Compare the acrostic of the poem appearing in the p. 5: "'Abraham 'Abraham deepistle, Seba, NetibOt ha-Torah,

scended, 'Abraham 'Abraham ascended." In light of what has it  
may be that we ought to interpret the been stated in Gan Na c ul ,  
['descended' and 'ascended'] as referring to verbs yarad and  
ccilah the mystical ascents and descents of Abulafia himself. 38.  
Song of Songs 3:6.

43. MS. Vatican 233, fol. 115a, and see note 180 in the previous  
chapter. 44. MS. Munchen 408. fol. 65b; see Idel, Abraham  
Abulafia, p. 193. Compare also p. 72a-b there with the passage  
printed here. 45. The following gematria appears in the passage  
at the end of Sefer ha-Seruf, MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 35a: ta cr  
anug (pleasure) = 529 = ha-hdhn we-ha-kaldh (the groom and  
the bride) =

ha-

438 Notes to Chapter 4 hoknidh ha-'Elohit (the Divine wisdom),  
which concisely expresses

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 439

the main features of Abulafia's view on the subject. 46. MS. Vatican 233, fol. 106b-107a. 47. See, e.g., Guide., III:13, "its object or its final end, which is the most important of the four causes." Further on, in the passage from Sefer 'Or ha-Selcel, Abulafia writes, "and the purpose is the most elevated of the reasons." 48. MS. Oxford 1605, fol. 7b; Cf. Sefer 'Or ha-Sekel, MS. Vatican 233, fol. 128a, "and according to the prophet who derives pleasure in attaining the form of prophecy [i.e., a mystical experience]." 49. MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 163b-164a. 50. The comparison of the soul and the body to a horse and its rider is a common one. See the material gathered by H. Malter, "Personifications of Soul and Body," JQR, vol. 2 [N. S.] (1911), pp. 466-467. 51. See Sefer Raziel: "More than a young man, who has gone many days without going to a woman, and he desires her and his heart bums, etc.â□□all this is as nought in comparison with [his wish] to do the will of the Creator." In R. Eleazar of Worms' Sefer ha-Mal'alcirn, "And at the time that a

young man engages in intercourse and shoots like an arrow [i.e., ejaculates], that selfsame pleasure is as nought compared with the slightest pleasure of the World to Come." Sefer Hasidim: "And that joy [in the love of God] is so strong and so overwhelms his heart, that even a young man, who has not gone to a woman for many days, and has great desire, and when his seed shoots like an arrow he has pleasureâ□□this is as naught compared with the strengthening of the power of the joy of the love of God."

These sources are gathered by M. Guedemann, *Ha-Torah we-ha-klayyim 'Es Hayyini bi-yeme ha-Benayini* (Tel-Aviv, 1968), I, p. 124, n. 2. In by R. Isaiah ben Joseph, a Byzantine Kabbalist, written in the

first half of the fourteenth century (MS. New York, Columbia 161.S.1, p. 60), we read:

Know that the pleasure of the indwelling of prophecy, which is the influx of the Active Intellect, known in Arabic as kif "aqal fa'al, is similar to the pleasure derived from intercourse, with the following difference between them: namely, that when a man completes the



evil act of intercourse he despises it, but the influence of the intellect is the opposite.

See note 113 below. 1174a-1176a.

52. Metaphysics XII, 7, fol. 1072b; Ethics, end of Ch. 7, fol.

53. Half & Teghubcih 8:2; Haqdamah le-Pereq Heleq (Sefer ha-Ma'eir, Tel-Aviv, 1948, pp. 121-122); Guide, 111:51. Maimonides took care

to emphasize that the pleasure which accompanies apprehension "does not belong to the genus of bodily pleasures."

Mafia!! ha-Ra cayOn, MS. Vatican 291, fol. 21a: "And I see that

54. Compare his statement, appearing in his earlier work,

until Him [i.e., God], the quintessence of all experience arrives as there comes from Him all the wisdom of logic [and] to every intellectual soul [comes] the pleasure of vision." Compare also the comments of R. Isaac ben Jacob ha-Cohen in his work, *haAsilut ha-Semalit*, in Scholem, *Mada(ey ha-Yanddut II*, p. 85: "And the force of this great influx is that it is the pleasure of the inner souls, and the joy of the spiritual bodies." 55. Sami S. Hawi, *Islamic Naturalism and Mysticism* (Leiden, 1974), pp. 72-73. 60 ff. 56. See Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries* (op. cit., n. 23), pp. 57. MS. Jerusalem 8o 148, fol. 29b-30a. The author makes use of the verse, "for your Maker is your husband, the Lord of

440 Notes to Chapter 4

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 441

Hosts is His name" (Isa. 54:5), in order to emphasize that only by the soul's connection with the intellect has it eternal existence. 58. MS. Moscow - Giinzburg 775, fol. 179b; see above, note 43.

59. QidduSiâ□° i, fol. 2a.

72. The word *matelq* (sweet), used to refer to a sensation of pleasure, also comes to refer to spiritual pleasure. See MS. Jerusalem 8o 148, fol. 67a. See also Geo. Widengren, *Literary and Psychological Aspects of the Hebrew Prophets* (Uppsala - Leipzig, 1948), pp. 101-102. 73. On the spiritual seed, see J. G. Liebes, "Illumination of the Soul and Vision of the Idea in Plato" (Hebr.), *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom Scholem* (Jerusalem, 1967), pp. 152-161. 74. See Leisegang, *La Gnose*, pp. 28-29; Philo, *De Somniis*, I, 199-200. 75. See Walter Wili, "Die Geschichte des Geistes in der Antike," *Eranos Jahrbuch*, 13 (1945), pp. 79-87. 76. MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 75a. 77. Deut. 30:19. 78. Tamid 32a.

60. Eccles. 9:9. 61. Prov. 18:22. 62. Prov. 31:10. 63. Prov. 6:23.

64. Pesahim, 112a.

65. MS. Moscow - Giinzburg 775, fol. 181a.

66. Berdlcot, 3a.

67. MS. Moscow, Giinzburg 775, fol. 160a. p. 68. On this phenomenon, see Werblowsky, Joseph Karo, 50-54. 69. Is there a connection between the use of the Arabic word and its connection to prophecy, and the statement in Berakiit fol. 55b: "R. Johanan said, 'If he woke up and there was a verse on his lips, this is a minor [form of] prophecy' "? 70. MS. New York, JTS 1777, fol. 33b. sometimes 71. In Litiqutey R. Nathan, the crown eatardh) refers to the world of intellect; see Idel, "Mundus Imaginalis," Studies., essay V.

79. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 78b. 80. MS. Jerusalem 8o 148, fol. 31a. See also Seneca, *Epistulae ad Lucilium* 73, sec. 14: "There is no wisdom without the help of God; in the bodies of people are scattered Divine seeds." See also Nicolas Cusanus, in *Idiota III*, *de mente*, c. 5, "Mens est divinum semen." 81. MS. New York, JTS 1777, fol. 33a; see also R. Judah Loeb of Prague, *Dertig cal ha - Tordh* (Warsaw, 1871), p. 72.

There is a complete similarity between man and the earth; for just as the earth has sown in it wheat and all kinds of seed, clean and good, which take root in it within the dust, and which it then causes to spring forth; so does God, may He be blessed, place the pure

#### 442 Notes to Chapter 4

and clean soul within man, a Divine portion from above, within the human body.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 443

The planting of the soul with the body also appears in Sefer ha-Ne'eldm, written at the beginning of the fourteenth century; MS. Paris, BN 817, fol. 73b. 82. It is worthy of note that the connection between 'seed' and 'light,' which appears in Tantra, is also alluded to in Sefer ha-Zoliar, II, 167a:

Similar is the foundation of man at his birth. First he is the "seed" which is light, because it carries light to all the organs of the body, and that "seed" which is light sheds itself abroad, and becomes "water."

p. 20, sec. 4; and G. Vajda, *Recherches sur la Philosophie*, p. 81, n. 1. See also MS. New York, JTS 1889, fol. 32a, "and to those singular elders who are worthy of entering into the secret of the 'ibbur, to them was the secret of the Selcinah revealed."

88. Origines., pp. 481-482, n. 205.

89. MS. Leipzig 39, fol. 8b. 90. On a possible connection between sod ha- c ibbur and Sefer Yesirah, see Vajda's note, cited above, note 87. 91. MS. Miichen 10, fol. 163a. 92. See Idel, Abraham Abulafia, pp. 133-136. 93. MS. Paris, BN 777, pp. 46-47; MS. Munchen 40, fol. 247a-b. The passage is based upon several gematriyOt: negebah (female; 157) + 4griii (woman; 306) + Hawah (Eve; 19) = i/aÂ§qah ha-nebtp eih (the desire for prophecy) = 482; Â§eti we-'ereb (warp and woof) = 988 = pitely5 patualy ([his] opening is opened) = pataly (opened) + satani (closed) = mafteah lcagfani (magical key). 94. Eccles. 9:15. 95. In Sitrey Torah (Sod ha-Seth Ben, MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 121a), Abulafia defines the difference between male and female as follows:

And know that every thing which is a cause or an influx or the like is called son, and if it is a lowly power, it is called daughter or female or woman or some similar name, and among these is Bat Qeil ("heavenly voice"; literally "a daughter of a voice"), and if it is a strong power, it is called a male son or a man.

Cf. 'Iggeret ha-(26de g, Ch. 3 (Chavel, p. 326): "for man's seed is the vital substance of his body and the light of his radiance." See also Mopsik, *Lettre sur la Saintete* (n. 1 above), p. 289, note 86.

83. See section 155 in ed. Margalioth, and Scholem's remarks, *Das Buch Bahir* (Darmstadt, 1970), pp. 111-112, and p. 169. MS. Vatican

84. See, for example, R. Ezra, *PeruS- ha-'Agga-clOt, gin*), fol. 14a; 441, fol. 53b; *Ligqitey Sikehah u-Fe ,dh* (on *Maseket Qiddti R. David b. Judah he-Hassid, Mar& ha-.561kit* p. 135.

85. *Sefer 1:-layyey ha-`01dm ha-Biz'*, MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 27ab.

86. On the image of impregnation in Gnosis, see Leisegang, *La Gnose*, pp. 28-29.

87. See G. Scholem, "On the Doctrine of Transmigration in Thirteenth Century Kabbalah" (Hebr.), *Tarbiz*, 16 (1945), p. 136, note 5. The source of the quotation is MS. Parma, de Rossi 68, fol. 16a; cf. Scholem, *Les Origines de la Kabbale*, p. 481-485; E. (Jerusalem, 1969),

Gottlieb, Introduction to "Me g?, *Debarim Nelcohim*

96. On the term hOtani (seal) as a designation for the Active Intellect, see *Ginnat 'Egoz*, fol. 58c (the second folio), "For He,



may He be blessed, places form in all shapeless matter, and by means of this the Tenth Intellect, called >i gim, whose basis is the name

#### 444 Notes to Chapter 4

#### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 445

YHW eigim = 461 = gem YHW) which is given over to him by the

natural seal, and therefore he is able to portray and to give form to shapeless matter." On the seal and the impression as an image for the Active Intellect, see R. Isaac Ibn Latif, *Ginzey ha-Melek*, Ch. 5 (*KOkbe Yishaq*, v. 28, p. 14): And on the upper impress found in the intellect, the seal, the forms without purpose and without time"; see there also Ch. 8, p. 7. Likewise, in *RIO Pe:eilim* (*Kai\* Yishaq*, v. 25, p. 9), sec. 14:

The secret of the supernal imprint and the lower one is also through that which the mouth cannot utter nor the ear hear, which is alluded to somewhat in a closed manner, "in our form and image," "in his image and form." And what is like this is not this, and the Sages said [see Rashi on Gen. 1:27], "in the image made to him."

sphere of man); semold (his left hand) = 377 = galgal ha-  
,1:41111 (the sphere of the woman). The sum of the two, plus the conjunctive letter 'waw' (= 6), is 499 = pec uldh be-)igith (act in the woman) = ptyel ba-)ig (act in the man). The sum 493 (that is, the same sum without 'waw') = ÂŞefa c le-ahal)dh (influx to love) = lasefa c (love to influx). 'Arbacah (four) = 278 = czbbur (impregnation); hamigdh (five) = 353 = sad ha- c ibbur (the secret of impregnation or intercalation). For further details concerning this Kabbalist and his works, see Eliav Shochetman, "Additional Information on the Life of R. Abraham Castro" (Hebr.), Zion, 48 (1983), pp. 387-405. The phrase, "the sphere of man," occurs already in Abulafia's works; see Chapter 3, note 170. 100. The

metaphor of the father, mother and son also appears in R.

Abraham Kohen Herrera, *g waley Sdmayini* (Warsaw, 1864), who writes in Part 8, Ch. 14 (fol. 73b-74a):

For just as from the father and the mother, who are two distinct subjects, with different personae, there takes place the complete, whole beginning of the becoming of the son, so from the intelligibilia and the power of the intellect, like male and female who between them also change, there comes about the beginning of the intellection or of the intellect which is completely in actu... And know that, just as the father may not sire the son without an intermediary, but by means of the seed sown in the belly of the mother... so it is with the intelligibilia which is not connected.

See also Ibn Latif's *Surat ha-`01c-im*, p. 17; *Liwyat Hen of Levi ben Abraham* (MS. Miinchen 58, fol. 84b); and M. Steinschneider, *Al- Farabi* (St. Petersburg, 1869), p. 253, note 2. 97. The expression "warp and woof" (*geti wa- cereb*) also carries a sexual connotation. In *Â°stir 'Eden Ganuz*, MS. Oxford 1580, fols. 4b-5a, Abulafia writes:

perag mildh bent 'Esaw (half, circumcision, covenant, Esau = 988), which is warp and woof (geti wa-'ereb = 988), to make it known that

thusly do we this covenant: We cut the flesh of desire to the honor of the Name, and we reveal the crown and cut the permitted flesh, warp and woof, and we make a covenant of peace (bent salom = 988). In circumcision [miltih] we cut along the warp, and in peri, cih [i.e., the secondary stage of circumcision] we cut along the woof.

See his comments concerning Aristotle and Galen further on in this same chapter. 101. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 78b. It is worth mentioning that the redemption of the son already has eschatological significance in the Talmud, Baba Kamma, fol. 80a; it is referred to there as yegu(at ha-ben; the remarks of the Tosaphistic authors on this passage allude to an eschatological aspect. 102. MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 3a. 103. Ex. 13:15.

See also *ibid.*, fol. 51a, 65a and 169b-170a. 98. Abulafia speaks of impregnation elsewhere, again with extreme brevity: *We-Zot li-Yehuddh*, p. 14; , *eba c Netibat haTOrah*, p. 1; *'Imre Sefer*, MS. Munchen 40, fol. 277b, but his discussions there are obscure. 99. MS. Warsaw 229, fol. 9a. This passage is based upon the following gematriyat: *yeminO* (his right hand) = 116 = *galgil ha- )aclain* (the

#### 446 Notes to Chapter 4

#### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 447

These three attainments—wisdom, strength and wealth—include all the goods of the soul, the body and possessions, and the three are incorporated in the verse, "Let not the wise man rejoice in his wisdom, etc." [Jer. 9:22]. Finally, our eyes have seen that the world—that is to say, man, who is called a microcosm, as is known—is constructed like Adam before his sin, and was destroyed after his rebellion, and was

rebuilt in Abraham and his seed, in their receiving of the Torah, and was destroyed when they corrupted their ways in making the golden calf, and it is to be rebuilt permanently when they return to their former level, and then destruction will cease forever. And corresponding to these are the three temples, for the first was built and destroyed, and the second was built and destroyed, and the third shall be built and will be established, it will not be moved but will forever be settled.

104. MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 155b. On fol. 122a in the same work, it is stated "and the meaning of the [commandment of] the first-born is known, namely, that it is the human intellect. 105. MS. Rome, Angelica 38, fol. 12a; MS. Munchen 285, fol. 14a. 106. MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 163a. 107. MS. Leipzig 39, fol. 1a. 108. Gen. 5:3. 109. MS. Paris, BN 774, fol. 121a; MS. New York, JTS 2367, fol. 19b. 110. In the Adab literature, we find the saying "Wisdom is the eternal child of man." See Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant* (Leiden, 1970), p. 321. Muslim mysticism also recognizes the idea of destroying the body in order to rebuild the

new man with the aid of wisdom: see L. Massignon, *Eranos Jahrbuch*, 1948 (p. 403); and Meyerovitch, *Mystique et poésie*, pp. 261-262, and note 7. The connection between *benâ□□binahâ□□binycin* appears in the fifteenth-century writings of R. Moses ha-Kohen Ashkenazi. In his polemic with R. Michael ha-Kohen, which took place in Candia, Crete, he writes (MS. Vatican 254, fol. 7a):

"In his form and image"â□□physical offspring and spiritual offspring. Then he established for him from them an eternal building, which shall never die, for it is an established *lialalcah* that one must beget a male and a female. And this alludes in the male to begetting spiritual sons, that is, who are on the level of a male, and the female alludes to physical children, for the preservation of the species, and these are on the level of female.

See also Beralcot, 33a: "Whoever possesses understanding, it is as if the Temple was built in his lifetime." R. Shalem Shabazi, in *Sefer Hemdat Yamim* (Jerusalem, 1956), fol. 3a, writes "The Temple alludes to the speaking soul of the righteous man." 111.

MS. New York, JTS 2367, fol. 61a. The passage is based upon a saying in Beraic6t, 3a. This Talmudic dictum was interpreted in a similar fashion by R. Joshua ben Moshe ha-Levi in his answer to R. Joseph Gikatilla, MS. New York, JTS 1589 (ENA 1674), fol. 86b- 87a:

"And the third watch is when an infant cries in the bosom of its mother, and a woman speaks [i.e. couples with] her husband." Now, my brother, know and understand that the infant refers to the Intellective Soul, which is pure and clean, from underneath the Throne of glory and, like the infant, who does not know either to abominate evil or to choose good, so is the Intellective soul (!) unable to receive and to understand the wisdoms from the intelligibilia, because it is sunken in refuse and filth. And the animal soul, together with it, suck from the breasts of their mother, and those breasts from which she sucks are the two Torahs, the Written Torah and the Oral Torah, and her mother is the Divine wisdom, as is said, "Yea, if thou call for understanding" [Prov. 2:3]â□□do not read im [if], rather em [mother; i.e., the verse should be read, "call understanding your mother"]. And the



woman coupling with her husband is the intellectual soul, which unites with her husband, who is the Holy One, blessed be He,

Building, as a symbol of acquiring a perfection which is not destroyed, is alluded to in R. Judah Moscato's *Nefusdt Yehudiih*, DemÂ§ 9, (fol. 27a):

448 Notes to Chapter 4

as is said, [Isa. 54:5], "for your Maker is your husband, the Lord of Hosts is his Name."

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 449

related it to the son" (in the Hebrew source). See also note 122 below.

118. *Herrnetica*, ed., Walter Scott (London, 1968), I, pp. 240-241; R. Reitzenstein, *Hellenistische Mysterienreligion* (Leipzig, 1970),

112. See Giuseppe Sermonetta, "Judah and Emmanuel of Rome" [From Rationalism to Mystical Faith] [Hebr. Hitgalut, Emunah, Tevunahj (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1976), p. 58 ff.

113. 'Os ha-Hoktnali, MS. Mussaioff 55, fol. 104a-105a,

pp. 75 ff.

119. E. G. Underhill, *Mysticism*, pp. 122-123. 120. Meyerovitch, *Mystique et poesie*, p. 264. 121. I refer to the concept sakya-putto [i.e., the son of the Buddha. See also Mircea Eliade, "Rites and Symbols of Initiation," *The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth* (New York, 1965), pp. 53 ff; *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, ed., R. Wilhelm (New York, 1962), P. 9. 122. Giles Quispel, "The Birth of the Child," *Eranosjahrbuch*, vol. 40 (1971), pp. 285-288; Erich Neumann, *The Origin and History of Consciousness* (New York, 1962), p.253; Corbin, *Creative*

Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi, p. 172, pp. 346-348, n. 70-71; idem, "Divine Epiphany and Spiritual Birth," *Man and Transformation*, p.109, and note 94. While *al-walad al-tamm*, the birth of the complete child, takes place in the *pleroma*, there, too, the sense is the actualization of "the spiritual man." It is worth mentioning here the words of Pico della Mirandola, in his work *On the Glory of Man*, dealing with the transformation of man into an angel and a son of God by means of his intellectual powers. Perhaps in this context one ought to interpret the term 'intellectus' as referring to the human intellect; in *Chaldean Thesis*, No. 13, we read, "Per puerum apud interpretes, nihil aliud intelligibiler quam intellectum." Ch. Wirszubski, *Three Chapters in the History of Christian Kabbalah*, p. 34, explains the word *puer* ("youth") here as alluding to Metatron, i.e., the Active Intellect. However, it may be that Pico is referring here specifically to the human intellect; see p. 66, note 23 in that work, and note 117 above.

with omissions. On another similarity between R. Joseph and Abulafiaâ€”the metaphor comparing the mystical process with

sexual intercourseâ□□see note 51 above. 114. The reference here is to the Active Intellect, which flows into the world and not upon a portion of the human soul." The term selanu (our) is intended to distinguish it from "the Active Intellect of the separate intelligibilia," a term appearing further on in the passage, and referring to the first separate intelligibilium, identified with Keter.

115. See Yitzhak Baer, "Kabbalistic Teaching in the Christological Doctrine of Abner of Burgos" (Hebr.), *Tarbiz*, 27 (1958), p. 281, and notes 7-8 [reprinted in his *Melviarini u-MasOt be-Tolchit `Am Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1986), vol. II, p. 3721.

116. *Zohar* III, 290b. On the souls as sons of God, that is, as the outcome of the union between Tiferet and Malkut, see *Zohar* fol. 3, col. 2b: "All I, 82b, and see also *Sefer ha-Nefe g ha-Halcantah*,

the higher soul is an example of her Creator, like the image of the son from the father, for he is its building, literally; thus, the higher soul is the building of her Creator."

117. See

Ch. Wirszubski, *Three Chapters in the History of Christian Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1975), p. 54 and note 4, and p. 56, note 4. It is worth mentioning that this identification between God and Wisdom appears again in Abulafia in *Sefer ha-Goulah*, MS. Chigi, I, 190.6, fol. 292a, "and they called Wisdom son and

#### 450 Notes to Chapter 4

#### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 451

38, fol. 36a. On the subject of 123. MS. Rome-Angelic a at the age of forty, see intellectual and mystical development Idel, *On the History*," where we discuss the quotations cited below. The concept of man's spiritual redemption is discussed by Idel, "Types of Redemptive Activity," pp. 259-263. I have cited there additional material from the writings of Abulafia and his circle on this subject. 125. See Idel, "On the History," pp. 2-3. 126.

Genesis 25:20. For the sources of this view, see the material gathered 127. by Urbach, *The Sages*, p. 790, n. 60-61. (the birth) = 80 = [Le, the Hebrew letter] 80 = me"m M(e)m. It is worth noting that the parallel molad which disc Netivot ha-Torah, p. 17, = limud (study) appears in t , bri cusses the spiritual creation of study and the physical creation of birth. Compare also the remarks cited by R. Hayyim Vital, Sec. 4 (MS. British Library 749, fol. 21a-b): arey QeduS'ah,

128. MOlad ac

I have found that the matter of the nature of prophecy is that it is an influx poured out by the Name, may He be blessed, upon the intellectual faculty by means of the Active Intellect, and afterwards upon the imaginative faculty, [so that] he forms parables and images. But Moses, our teacher, did not [prophecy] via the imaginative faculty at all, but [the flow was] from the Active Intellect to the separate human intellect. Therefore Moses fasted... for forty days, corresponding to the formation of matter [i.e., of the human fetus] during forty days, to weaken all powers of matter, in order to attain prophecy with wholeness.

129. Exodus 34:28. 130. See above, note 102. 131. MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 22b-23a. the Deng& of R. Joshua ibn Shuaib (Cracow, 1573), fol. 86d: " 'Forty times he may hit him, he may not add' (Deut. 25:3). Our Sages explained that this number corresponds to the fetus, which is formed on the fortieth day, and to the Torah which was given at the end of forty days." See also R. Judah Moscato, NefusOt Yehudah, Deru g 9, fol. 25b.

132. See

133. Based upon Exodus 24:18; I Kings 19:8. 134. It is worth mentioning here the words of Meister Eckhart:

We are celebrating the feast of the Eternal Birth which God the Father has borne and never ceases to bear in all Eternity: whilst this birth also comes to pass in Time and in human nature. Saint Augustine says this birth is ever taking place.... But if it takes place not in me, what avails it? Everything lies in this, that it should take place in me.

Quoted from Underhill, *Mysticism.*, p. 122. See also the comment of Angelus Silesius in his book, *The Cherubic Voyager*, I, 61, "But if Jesus were to be born a thousand times in Bethlehem, but not inside you, you would be lost for eternity." 135. I have found this idea alluded to only in *Imrey Sefer*, MS. Munchen 40, fol. 247b, where Abulafia writes, with extreme brevity, "the power of imagination (koah ha-siyyur), which is mingled with the creative power (koah ha-yoser) and the creaturely power (koah ha-yesur) until the fortieth year, which are in the image of the forty days." 136. MS. Rome, Angelica 38, fol. 14b-15a; Ms. Munchen 285, fol. 39b; Munchen 43, fol. 208a. For a detailed analysis of this quotation, see above, Chapter 3, the section on *debegut*.

As R. Hayyim Vital knew at least two of Abulafia's works, above passage in one of his it seems probable that he read the; books or in those of one of his circ.



## 452 Notes to Chapter 4

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 453

137. Psalms 99:1. 138. Based upon II Kings 9:12; 3; 6. 139. MS. Rome, Angelica 38, fol. 18b, and see also fol. 10a, But he practiced hitbodedut (i.e., concentration) and saw visions and wrote them down, and thus came about this book, and call it a book of testimony, because it is a witness between us and God that he risked his soul on the day he went before therefore there were born to the Pope (Hebrew: apifyuta [sic!]), him two mouths (getey piyeit)." 140. MS. Jerusalem 8o 148, fol. 33b. The expression, "natural change" ( girmuy tibi a ) regarding the change involved in the appearance of the intellect is also mentioned in another book connected with Abulafia's circle, namely, Sefer ha-Seruf (MS. New York, ITS 839, fol. 105b):  
Now when the sphere of the intellect is moved by the Active Intellect and the person begins to enter it and to ascend the

sphere which returns, like the image of a ladder, and at the time of the ascent his thoughts shall be really transformed and all the visions shall be changed before him, and there will be nothing left to him of what he had earlier. Therefore, apart from changing his nature and his formation, as one who was uprooted from the power of feeling [and was translated to] the power of the intellect.

to perform in the house of seclusion, all according to Abulafia's system. In 'osar Hayyim, MS. Moscow, Giinzburg 775, fol. 148a, we read: "for the perfection of matter [comes about] in forty days, and the perfection of intellect in forty years, and the [number of] letters in this section is forty." 142. On the significance of hangalcah (drawing), see Idel, "Hitbeidedut as Concentration," note 95; idem, "The Perceptions of 143.. abbot 152a. 144. Deut. 29:3.

145. Ibid., v. 4.

is

Kabbalah."

146. MS. Oxford 836, fol. 162b. The name of the author there is unknown, but it may be that the book was written in 1444. 147. MS. Rome, Angelica 38, fol. 2a. 148. The reference to the first thirteen years of study must not necessarily be interpreted literally. It seems to me that this refers to the period from the beginning of one's studies, and not from birth. To demonstrate the feasibility of this interpretation, let me cite a story which was widespread at the time of Abulafia:

The sages of philosophy told that a certain king once asked an honorable sage, whom he saw bent in stature and with white hair and many wrinkles, and asked him, "How old are you?" He replied: "Twelve years old." In amazement, he [the king] said to him: "Explain this riddle of yours!" He answered him: "For twelve years I have engaged in wisdom and in the service of God, and whatever I have lived apart from this is not [counted] by me as

days and years. [Menahem ha-Meiri, Peng le- Mgley (Fu"rth, 1844), fol. 5b]

The idea of a change occurring at the moment of cleaving to the Active Intellect also appears in Maimonides; in YesOcley ha-Torah 7:1, he writes:

And when the spirit rests upon him, his soul shall be intermingled the Active Intellect] s with the grade of angels who are called 't.' "iln [i.e., understand by himself and he becomes another person, and he shall that he is not as he was, but that he has ascended above the grade of other sages, as it is said regarding Saul [I Sam. 10:6], "and you shall prophesy and become another person."

141. MS. Sasson 919, p. 215. It is interesting that, further on, R. Isaac of Acre refers to the letter-combinations that one

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 455

149. One is already struck by this in the introduction to the book, where the anonymous author copied from three different works of Ibn Latif without mentioning the source: [from MO 'Adam, MS. Oxford 836, fol. 1434

1. This gate will be closed and not opened, and no unclean man will enter therein, but the God of Israel will come by it, and it will remain closed. 2. The speech of the man, who writes in his hand to God, for I have dared to speak and I am dust and ashes, and do not know any book. 3. And because I have chosen eternal life, my soul has longed and yearned, and goes from a temporary dwelling to a permanent dwelling, which is Hebron, Kiryat Arba, and ascends to the city of heros, which is the city of the great king.

152. Sefirat Tiferet. 153. Deuteronomy 14:1. 154. Psalm 2:7. 155. Printed in Dibrey Hakantim (Mainz, 1849), p. 58. Compare Guide, 1:70. 156. See above, note 140. 157. Psalm 103:5. 158. The verse from Psalms is associated in medieval commentaries with the renewed birth of the Phoenix. See R. Saadya Gaon, Ibn Ezra, and R. David Kimhi on this verse, and R. Bahya ben Asher on Genesis 2:19 (p. 73-74, in Chavel ed.); cf. Dan Pagis, "The Eternal Bird: The Motif of the Phoenix in Midrashic and Aggadic Literature" (Hebr.), Sefer ha-Yobel gel haGimnasia ha-Ivrit be-Yeru galayim (Jerusalem, 1962), pp. 74-90.

159. Derek 'Emunah (Constantinople, 1522), fol. 37a. From

[from the works of Ibn Latif]

1. This gate will be closed and not opened, and no unclean man will enter therein, but the God of Israel will come by it, and it will remain closed. 2. The speech of the man, who writes in his hand to God, for I have dared to speak and I am dust and ashes, and do not know any book. 3. And by reason of my choosing eternal, true life, my soul has longed and yearned... to leave its temporary

dwelling, which is Kiryat Arba, and to ascend to the city of heros, the city of the great king, which is its permanent abode.

Section 1 is taken from Ibn Latif's introduction to Saar 3 Surat ha-`olinn, which of Saar ha-Samayim; Section 2, from Ch. 5 of is formulated as an introduction; Section 3 from the introduction to Ginzey ha-Melek. The title may also have been influenced by a lost work by the same title by Ibn Latif.

150. Zohar II, fol. 97b-98a (Saba de-Migpatim). Malkut. 151.

Keneset Yisra ,e1, i.e., the Sefirah of

connects Ps. 2:7 with the birth of the intellect, whose cleaving to God is seen as a new birth. It is worth noting that, already in Kimhi's commentary to this verse, he speaks about the birth of the spiritual element within manâ□□specifically, the birth of the holy spirit in David. But whereas Kimhi applies it to a past event, Derek 'Emundh and We-yedey Mo geh speak of a process which

continually occurs in every enlightened person. 160. Pietrykow, 1893, fol. 27b.

there, this view was copied by R. Joseph of Rossheim, *Sefer haMayineh*, (Jerusalem, 1970), pp. 105-106, and also influenced R. Moses Almosnino in his *We-Yedey Mo geh*, in which he likewise

161. P. O. Kristeller, "Marsilio Ficino e Lodovico Lazzarelli," *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* (Roma, 1969), pp. 221- 247; D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Cam-*

456 Notes to Chapter 4 panella (Notre Dame, Ind., 1975), pp. 64-72; Cf. Idel, "Judaism

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 457



and Hermeticism." 162. Lazarelli quotes the text of R. Eleazar of Worms in Latin translation, as has been observed by Scholem, *Pircey YesOcl be- Habanat ha-Qabbicileih u-Senialeha* (Jerusalem, 1976), p. 406, note 62 (this subject only appears in the Hebrew version of his article on the *gOleni*). Scholem is puzzled by the way in which this text got to Lazarelli, and conjectures that "perhaps he saw it in Flavius Mithridates's translation from Kabbalistic literature?" However, it should be pointed out that this version appears in R. Johanan Alemanno's *Collectanaea*, MS. Oxford 2234, fol. 95b, from whom Lazarelli may have taken it. 163. See Kristeller, p. 238, "mens mentem generet," and the expression, "syngenea mentis generato." 164. This sentence refers to Lazarelli's own "birth" by means of his bizarre teacher, Giovanni da Correggio. "Aethere to me genuisti semine rursus atque terum nasci me sine fraude doces" (Kristeller, p. 239). 165. Kristeller, p. 238, summarizes the discussion, which is as yet in manuscript only, in these words: "Come Dio e fecondo, cosi all'uomo, immagine di Dio, speta una sua fecondita la quale non riguorta soltanto it corpi ma anche

l'intelletto... Come Dio crea gli angeli, così il vero uomo produce le anime divine." Compare Abulafia's statement in 1:layyey ha-coleim ha-BcP, MS. Oxford 1582, fol. 5a-b; MS. Oxford 1583, fol. 2a:

And the greatest of all deeds is to make souls, as alluded to in [the verse], "and the souls they made in Haran" (Gen. 12:5)" For as God created man directly, in the likeness of God making him, this deed is for us the most sublime of all good deeds. Therefore, the enlightened man is required to make souls more than he is required to make bodies, for the purpose is not the making of bodies, but only in order to make souls. And thereby man comes to resemble his Maker, as in the words of the prophet, "For a spirit shall enwrap itself before Me. and souls I have made" (Isa. 57:16).

a mystery alluding to the creation of souls.

Compare the words of Abulafia's student in *Nei- 'Elohim* , MS. Miinchen 10, fol. 172b-173a, which opposes the literal understanding of the creation of the *&Vern*, arguing that it entails

166. Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 26-28; Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar I*, 146-147; idem., *Netibey Imunah u-Minut*, pp. 11-22; Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, Ch. IX. 167. Goldreich ed., p. 143. The section quoted here also appears in the collection titled *u-TegubOt*, by R. Isaac of Acre, MS. Escorial G. 3.14, fol. 63a, and is based upon the words of the *Haber* in *Kuzari*, 11:53. 168. See Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo.*, pp. 133-134. 169. David Kaufmann, *Die Sinne* (Budapest, 1884), pp. 188-191. 170. MS. Oxford 1580, fol. 130b. 171. See David Kimhi on Gen. 2:17, in the version printed in the *Kamlehr* edition (Jerusalem, 1970), p. 30: "and the knowledge of good and evil was explained by the commentators as referring to knowledge of intercourse, because that tree of knowledge brought about sexual desire in man." 172. It is worth noting here the article by M. Harris, "Marriage as Metaphysics; A Study of the *Iggeret ha-kodesh*," *HUCA*, vol. 33

(1962), pp. 197-220. The author, who has dealt with the question of erotic imagery in a number of other articles, argues that 'Iggeret ha-Qodeg, attributed to Nahmanides, is intended to teach Kabbalahâ□□mistakenly identified by him with metaphysicsâ□□as a means of examining the union between man and woman (see p. 205). It seems to me that the exact opposite is the case: in the epistle under discussion, intercourse has no didactic purpose; its author's assumption is that, through knowledge of Kabbalah, one may understand the true value of sexual intercourse. Harris'

perception of the epistle as opposed to the negation of sex in the Gnostic system is without basis; the author is rather adopting a polemic stance against the negative evaluation of intercourse in philosophy.

173. Major Trends, p. 226; see also Tishby, The Wisdom of the Zohar, II, 298-300.

174. See Werblowsky, *Tarbiz*, 34 (1965), p. 204. 175. See Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, II, 298-300.

176. *Ibid.*, 204. 177. *Ibid.*, p. 609. 178. *Ibid.*, 299, n. 138.

179. There is no basis for the opinion expressed by S. Karppe, *Etude sur les origines et la nature du Zohar* (Paris, 1901), p. 304, who, relying upon an incorrect interpretation of the meaning of the gematria, *zdlair u-neqeptili* (male and female) = androgynos (androgynous), argues that in Abulafia the polarity is transferred from male and female to the divine realm.

## PART II Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia

### Introduction

The Kabbalah of R. Abraham Abulafia is known by two names, both used by him in his writings: the ecstatic Kabbalah, literally the prophetic one, *Qabbahill Nebwit*, namely that type of

mysticism that instructs the Kabbalist to attain a mystical experience conceived of as prophecy; and the Kabbalah of the Names, that is, the divine Names (Qabbalat ha-Semeit), or that type of mysticism that shows the way for attaining that ecstatic experience. This path focused upon practices of reciting the divine names and various combinations of letters of the Hebrew alphabet.' The technique of combining letters, used to attain experiences, was also applied in the hermeneutic system of this Kabbalist, as an advanced exegetical method that enables the mystic to penetrate the most recondite strata of Scripture. It is the apex of a most complex exegetical path that passed unnoted by modern scholarship of Kabbalah and Jewish hermeneutics and which will be exposed here for the first time in a detailed way. To understand, however, the prime-matter to which these hermeneutical devices were applied, we shall survey the views of Abulafia and some of his followers concerning the nature of language and their conception of the Torah, the main object of the hermeneutical endeavor. We may describe Abulafia's view of language and interpretation as basically inclined to an allegorical perception, which influenced his conception of the Torah, his own

revelations, and his interpretations of his revelations. In the line of medieval Aristotelianism, the allegory hints at the psychological processes which consist in the changing relationship between the inner powers: intellect and imagination. Interpretation of Scripture and of his revelations leads him, time and again, to decode texts and experiences as revealing the various phases of the relationship between these two inner senses.<sup>2</sup>

## 196 Introduction

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 197

What is, however, characteristic of Abulafian hermeneutics is not only this allegorical drift, to be found in the luxuriant medieval literature in general, but rather the superimposition of the combination of letters upon the allegorical method. If the latter is Sefardi by its extraction, being already cultivated by Jews in Spain for some few generations before Abulafia, the former was

exposed for the first time in an elaborate way in the Ashkenazi environment, among the so-called Ashkenazi Hasidim of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Totally unrelated to allegorical interpretation, the Jewish German pietists described various complex methods to be used to understand the meanings concealed in the Torah. Although Abulafia's advanced hermeneutical methods are conspicuously derived from Ashkenazi sources, it seems, however, that his special emphasis on the importance of the combination of letters is unique to him. 3 Moreover, although the pietists were motivated by a strong conservative tendency, reinforcing the crucial form of Jewish worship by establishing the relationship between the numerical structure of the prayers and their biblical counterparts, Abulafia was basically motivated by an innovative urge, which culminates, as we shall see below, with freely restructuring the composition of the letters of the biblical text, which is to be "interpreted." 4 Beyond extracting the allegorical meaning of a certain biblical text as it was handed down by the Masoretic tradition, Abulafia points the way to a method of returning the text to its hylic form as a conglomerate of letters to be combined and new meanings being



infused in the new "text." If the allegorical method of the medieval Jewish philosophers reinterpreted Scripture in novel ways, this was done on the implicit or explicit assumption that the novelty had no impact on the structure of the text whose integrity was safeguarded from the structural point of view. This is also the case in the symbolical interpretation of the theosophical Kabbalists. Transforming the text in a texture of symbols related to the divine configuration of Sefirdt, or to the demonic world, these Kabbalists were anxious to indicate repeatedly that the plain meaning of the text is to be preserved, as they leave intact the order of the letters in the text. 5 In both cases, a certain

plot was superimposed on the biblical stories thereby infusing the details of new theologies. The plot could be a physical one, related to the four elements, or a psychological one dealing with the relationship between the intellect and the soul, in Neoplatonic sources or between the intellect and the imagination in the Aristotelian-oriented texts, or a theosophical one. In one way or another, a certain dialogue between the preexisting theology and

the text was established, so that not only was the text reinterpreted but, to a certain degree, also the extra-biblical processes were changed by the attempt to infuse them into the text. With Abulafia, such a dialogue can take place only at certain levels of interpretation; from the moment he applies the advanced methods, which literally destroy the regular order of the text, the biblical texture is conceived only as a starting point which cannot impose its peculiar structure upon the strong interpreter. In the end, the powerful dissection of the text allows, according to Abulafia, a prophetic experience in which the mystic may open a dialogue with the revealing entity, which is, at least in some cases, the projection of his own spiritual force.<sup>6</sup> If every interpreter is finding himself in the interpreted text, Abulafia is one of the most extreme examples of such a selfdiscovery. If someone regularly gives expression to his experience through a peculiar turn in understanding the text, Abulafia transforms his experience into a text; experiencing is, at its highest, a text-creative process. This interest in an interpretingexperiencing-creating attitude to the text was materialized by his writing prophetic books, one of them entitled the Book of the Haftardh,

namely that prophetic work to be read in the Synagogue after the reading of the portions of the Pentateuch instead of a section from the biblical prophets. Although profoundly fascinated by the power of language, more accurately the Hebrew language, we can discern in Abulafia an attempt to transcend it by deconstructing language as a communicative instrument, into meaningless combinations of letters which, following strictly mathematical rules, would

## 198 Introduction

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 199

lead the mystic beyond the normal state of consciousness. Similar to the ancient magicians, Abulafia invokes the divine influx by a series of permutations of consonants and vowels that are the main mystical, and, in the case of the creation of the Golem, also the magical essences of language. The phenomenon of de-

establishing the biblical text is to be understood as part of a feeling that the divine spirit is present and active again.' The interpretative efforts in Judaism were invested when the assumption that the direct relationship between the divine and man was already part of the glorious past: only when the stability of the text was achieved by the feeling that new revelation would not add to or diminish the canonical corpus, attempts were made to decode the implications of the given text. The interpreter came in lieu of the prophet as part of establishing the relationship between man and God, now by the intermediacy of an all-comprehensive and omniscient text. He stands between society and God; now, between God and him, a rigidly structured canon stands as an essential religious fact. The interpreter could understand the activity of the divine spirit as part of the past and as embodied in the Book. When the divine spirit entered again the history of Jewish spirituality, according to the medieval Kabbalists, the interpreter achieved a new status; he could, although it was not necessary, see himself as standing between God and the text. At the beginning of the interpretative journey, even according to Abulafia, the canon is to be understood as an

established order and playing, like language in inter-human affairs, a mediating role: the function of the interpretative process was thus to extract the various meanings implicit in it. As soon as he advances on the path of mystical life, however, the interpreter transcends the standing in front of a structured text and structured language that intervenes between him and God, and he penetrates through the veil of that structured book to attain a state where he feels himself closer to God.<sup>8</sup>

A classic question that arises when dealing with the above problems is to what extent Abulafia, or whoever follows the path of prophetic Kabbalah, opens the way to antinomian views. Does this drive to deconstruct the text lead to an essential antagonism to the values expressed in it? The answer is, I believe, rather complex. If antinomianism is defined as a resistance to, or an opposition to the content of a certain norm, Abulafia may well be excluded from the circle of antinomian mystics. He has no alternative vision of a practical way of life to be suggested or imposed upon the multitude. As far as the contents of the

revealed text are intended to the vulgus, he is as nomian as a great halaisic figure like Maimonides was. The plain sense of the Torah is, so it seems to be implied by his writings, as immutable as the world. In comparison to the concept of the theosophical Kabbalists who envision a change in the nature and forms of the Torah in another aeon, or semitah, for good or for worse, as the anonymous author of Sefer ha-Temunah and his circle think, Abulafia is a traditionalist.<sup>9</sup> He relates to history or time as periods in which various changes are possible, but these changes will not alter, basically, the ideal of transcending the imaginative in favor of the intellective, which are the main motifs in his understanding the allegorical significance of the Torah. Even in the future, no shift in the aim will be possible; therefore, Torah will also serve the same purposes; for the vulgus, it will function on the plain level, for the mystics on the spiritual level. With some of the theosophical kabbalists, the attitude to time, including cosmic time, is different. Presided over by the different Sefirot, each aeon has its own quality and with them the Torah will change its present spiritual configuration. According to another view, espoused by the anonymous kabbalist who wrote Sefer Tiqquney

Zohar and Ra caaya Mehemna, there is an ideal Torah, TOrdh de 'Asi7ut, which will supercede the present Thrall de-Beri'dh. 1Â° In both cases, these theosophical Kabbalists envisage a time when this given Torah will function differently. With Abulafia, this is impossible because Torah is identical, at a certain level, with the world of forms, or with God Himself, a fact that complicates an assump-

## 200 Introduction

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 201

tion of a basic change in its nature. So far Abulafia's attitude can be regarded as a traditional one. Regarding the status of the commandments of the Torah in the present, in relationship to the few elite who reach the apex of spirituality, however, his view is ambiguous. It is obvious that he considered his own system as the culmination of a Jewish religious ideal; striving for a life in

direct contact to the divine is, according to him, the quintessence of Judaism. The specific ways to materialize this type of spirituality, however, as proposed in his mystical manuals, are anomian techniques. In the moment someone decides to enter the World-to-Come while in this life, he can do it in a way neutral toward the specific Jewish modus vivendi, namely the performance of the commandments. As part of a mystical path proposed by Abulafia's handbooks, the ritualistic behavior seems to play no cardinal role. Both as directives to a certain spiritual gnosis and as forms of human actions the commandments which are to be performed in daily life are surely relevant up to the moment the mystic enters the room of isolation and concentration to perform his type of ritual which consists in pronouncing the divine names and the combinations of letters of the alphabets. These commandments may be, indeed, indispensable, even after the mystic returns from the World-to-Come to this world. But they seem to be neutralized in the moments of spiritual elation. It is worthwhile to compare Abulafia's attitude to Torah to that of his contemporary kabbalists in Castile. In the book of the Zohar, and in the writings of some kabbalists closely related to the ideas



expressed in the Zohar, like those of R. Joseph Gikatilla and R. Joseph of Hamadan, Torah as a whole is conceived as the embodiment of a divine power, or of the complex of divine powers named Sefirot." As an embodiment of language in its visual expression in letters it is a body whose integrity is to be carefully preserved, any addition, subtraction or diminution being harmful to this mystical corpus. In the case of the wellknown parable of the Torah as a maiden, we find a full-fledged

personification of the Torah as a feminine entity who came in direct relationship to the mystic. He may become the husband of the Torah, if he is able to fathom her deeper levels. The Zoharic personification is in line with the medieval imagery where Nature, Wisdom or Church are envisioned in personalistic feminine terms. Such a personification is completely absent in Abulafia's Kabbalah, and in the literature of ecstatic Kabbalah in general to the extent that it has reached us: neither in the works of R. Isaac of Acre nor in Nathan Harar's , ci carey Sedeq or in Albotini's

Sulitim ha- cAliyah. It seems that this type of imagery was part of the patrimony of the theosophical Kabbalah, it being found, in addition to the Zohar, in R. Joseph Karo's revelations of the Mishnah.<sup>2</sup> In ecstatic Kabbalah, the imagery connected to the Torah is geometrical: the point or the circle," the latter being not only a literary device but, as in the case of R. Isaac of Acre, also an experience." This imagery seems to be inclined more to an allegorical conception than to the symbolic perception of the theosophical Kabbalah. Beyond this difference, it seems that with Abulafia, the attitude to the Torah is motivated by a tendency not to possess a mythical personification, so evident in the Zohar, as to transcend the taxonomy of a text intended for the vulgus in favor of an abstract intellectualistic conception of Torah as identical to the realm of the separate entities, according to the medieval terminology." The absence of feminine imagery of Torah is to be connected, at least in the case of Abulafia, to his conception of the mystic's intellect as a feminine entity in relationship to the Active Intellect, the male and the supernal Torah at the same time." Theosophical Kabbalah, focused as it is on symbols and rituals of the S ekiniih, was much more inclined to

portray the mystic as a male in his relationship to the supernal world, including the personified Torah. The theosophical approach to Torah and language as mythical organic bodies to be studied in depth is paralleled in Abulafia's doctrine by a view that the ultimate mystical meaning is to be discovered, or projected, in the free associative combina-

## 202 Introduction

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 203

tions of letters whose links are untied to enable the novel combination to emerge. Deconstruction has to precede reconstruction as Torah is much more a process than a static ideal. Indeed, theosophical Kabbalah, and midrashic attitude in general, conceive Torah as a dynamic entity, whose recondite treasures are continuously revealed by the interpreter. Their view of the Torah, however, includes a cardinal element of the dynamic

organism: Torah may be a Tree, a Maiden, the personified Sekincih. Understanding one facet of this body does not imply its disintegration; the theosophical Kabbalist does not presume to manipulate the various organs of this body but to contemplate it as it is: Torah is conceived as a given, perfect form. The basic structure of the verse, of the pericope, and of the whole text is maintained notwithstanding the daring symbolism the theosophical kabbalist is infusing. This is completely different from the last stages of Abulafia's hermeneutics. The text becomes then a pretext for the ongoing process of pursuing a mystical experience rather than understanding a text in depth. This dissolution of the canonical text is evidently connected to the assumption that the elements that construct the text have a meaning by themselves, namely even in their isolated existence. Basic for the understanding of the deconstructive action of Abulafia's advanced stages of interpretation is the conception that each and every letter can be considered a divine name in itself. Backed by such an assumption, which stems from earlier sources, the dissolution of the text from a structured construction to an apparently meaningless conglomeration of letters can be

understood in its proper perspective." The ordinary function of language is possible because of the imposition of an order that relates the powerful letters in a context that serves primarily pedagogical purposes. By binding them together, their force is fettered so that regular men will benefit from the directives intended to instruct them on the lowest level. This 'monadisation' of language has an interesting parallel in the process of transition from classical language to poetic language as described by Barthes: his view of the diminution

of the importance of the isolated word in classical language in favor of the organized formulation is presumably the evolution of language from a primitive focusing of nouns, or names, to their incorporation in a larger grammatical discourse. In that type of language described by Barthes as classical the words are absente or neutralise. The passage to the modern, poetic language which emphasizes the importance of the single word, at the expense of the organised discourse, is apparently, a reversion to the magico-mystical dimension of the language which was, as

it seems, conquered by informative ordinary speech.'<sup>8</sup> This rediscovery of the word functioning alone, beyond the web of grammatical relations, invests the word with a density which is reminiscent of the mystico-magical concepts of single letters as divine names. Abulafia did not invent the monadistic approach to text and language: it was part of the patrimony of ancient Jewish literature and it was accepted also by some of the theosophical kabbalists who preceded Abulafia.<sup>9</sup> What seems new with him, however, is his transformation of an existent concept into a hermeneutic device. Persons accepting a given text, or canon, are passive, or at least, so they are supposed to be at the primary steps of their spiritual development. The structured letters structure unstructured men. With spiritual evolution, the person becomes more and more active in relationship to the text, which gradually, becomes less structured until the strong interpreter reaches the point that he can structure the letters that were formerly untied from their affinities to meanings in a given text or a given word. This process is paralleled by the gradual growth of the mystic's spiritual component which is, at the beginning, indebted to the canonic text or ordinary language, but is freeing

itself from the bonds of nature and is able to liberate the divine letters from their bondage in the canonical text.<sup>2</sup> ° The more spiritual a man is□□in our case, the more free he is in relation to the ordered text□□the more spiritual is his interpretation. In the case of Abulafia, at least as his later writings testify, it seems that the return of the focus to the inherent forces of the elements of language in them-

## 204 Introduction

elves, in comparison to their function in the traditional texts, bears evidence to a certain alienation to the ordered linguistic, social, and religious universes of medieval Judaism. This transcending of the plain sense is coupled by the assumption that, beyond the philosophical approach to the text, there is a supreme method, that of combining the letters viewed as the "wisdom of the inner and supernal logic." Just as the philosophers examined the text or the conclusions reached by people using Aristotelian logical categories, so did the kabbalist examine the

biblical text with the help of his logic, whose categories are extracted from the "traditional" hermeneutic arsenal, combinations of letters, acronyms, and numerology. 2 ' To a certain extent, even the similarity between Abulafia's allegorical exegesis and that of the philosophers is limited to one vital point. The Aristotelian philosophers projected the Aristotelian physics, psychology, and metaphysics onto the biblical texts. Abulafia focused his allegorical interpretations mainly on the psychological level, whereas the other two domains are only marginal in his exegesis. Therefore, we may describe his allegoresis as a psychological one. Even this distinction, however, does not exhaust the difference between him and the classical Jewish philosophical interpretation of the Bible. Indeed they share the same type of nomenclature, which is imposed on the same texts. Nevertheless, Abulafia seems to impose not only nomenclature but also the understanding that the psychological processes dealt with are of actual interest, even when the signatum is the ancient prophetic experience. Whereas the philosophers approached these events as part of the sealed past or, at least, not as a manifest directive in the present, the main interest of Abulafia in



the ancient tradition dealing with spiritual experiences is as a model for the present. Moreover, it is obvious that the allegorical exegesis is applied also in the cases when he deals with his own experiences. Therefore, we may describe this type of allegory as a spiritualistic exegesis, which might have influenced even his attitude to the Bible.<sup>22</sup>

## Chapter One Abulafia's Theory of Language

### A. Language as a Domain for Contemplation

The method for attaining wisdom proposed by Abulafia as an alternative to philosophical speculation is essentially a linguistic one. Language is conceived by him as a universe in itself, which yields a richer and superior domain for contemplation than does the natural world. Beyond its practical use, Abulafia claims, language contains a structure that conveys the true form of reality; therefore knowledge of the components of language is

equivalent and perhaps more elevated than knowledge of the natural world. He writes:'

For just as the [natural] reality 2 instructs the philosopher in an easy way as to the true nature of things, so too the [Hebrew] letters instruct us of the true nature of things, [and] with greater ease. 3 Regarding this, we have traditions that instruct us in a simple manner as to the blessed Divine Attributes and His Providence and Effluence and the nature of His effects. And what you will learn from this is something that the philosophers cannot attain to even after much labor and long effort and learning, for it is something regarding the Holy Names, what you will be taught...

## 206 Abulafia's Theory of Language

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 207 The four sources 9 are denoted by the acronym BKLM which stands for the first letters of these four sources. Their secret meaning consists in the fact that they are the four organs that are at the

forefront of all bodily functions. 'B' at the beginning of these two organs called BSYM [testicles]; 'K' is the first letter of KBD [liver]; 'L' is the first letter of LB [heart], and 'M' is the first letter of MH [brain]. This indeed is the case in our language. And regarding these and other matters we know them by prophetic tradition, from the mouth of God who revealed His secrets to Moses His servant, that the entire world was created by means of the letters of the Holy Language, and that all other languages are in comparison likened to an ape.

According to Abulafia, through revealing the structure of the Divine Names one can reveal the structure and laws of nature. An example of the type of information afforded by the Hebrew language can be found in a discussion by Abulafia of the relationship between the letters BKLM and the four most vital organs of the human body. In his epistle We-ZOt le-Yehudah<sup>4</sup> he writes:

The heart understands. And the [last letter of the word] MVH [nthalâ□□brain], is the first letter of the word HKIVIH

[hokmdhwisdom]. So too, the last letter of the word LB, [10â□□heart] is the first letter of the word BYNH [binahâ□□understanding]. And the last letter of the word KBD [kabadâ□□liver] is the first letter of the word DT da , atâ□□knowledge]. Within these three organs dwell three souls. The vegetative soul dwells in the liver, the animal soul dwells in the heart, and the intellective soul dwells in the brain. An allusion to this may be found in the verse' "KLM K'HD LK YLSU" [kullam ke-Thad leka yegaleguâ□□all of them shall consecrate You in unison]. And these are the three roots of the body... and when the fourth root BSYM [besimtesticles] is combined with them, they form the acronym BKLM [BaKLaM]. Thus do they serve as the first letters of each of these words in the Holy Language. This is the tradition that we have received from R. Yehudah the Pious of Regensburg.6

The secrets of language handed down in the tradition of the prophetic Kabbalah are the essential contents of that tradition. In Sefer Hayye ha--(01dm ha-Ba y, Abulafia announces 10 that the

"principles of Kabbalah" are three: the forms of the written letters, their combinations, and the vowel indicators. We will now discuss the meanings of these three principles.

## B. Letters

We have here a double correspondence: the four essential organs—brain, heart, liver and testicles—correspond in their first letters to the letters BKLM, the prepositions in Hebrew, and to the major bodily functions. Therefore, the essential organs are called *rasirn* (heads).<sup>1</sup> Besides this, in three of the four organs there is another correspondence that refers to their other functions: wisdom, understanding and knowledge. The fact that from the form of the Hebrew language it is possible to discern facts that the natural sciences derive by means of observation indicates to Abulafia the unique quality of the language. In *Sefer linrey Sefer*,<sup>6</sup> he writes:

The second principle of Sefer Yesirah that determines that there are "twenty-two foundation letters" serves as the conceptual basis for Abulafia's ideas concerning the letters. In his opinion it is not feasible that there be more letters than the twenty-two of the Hebrew alphabet, in that these are the only natural letters. Yet his knowledge of other languages forced him to address the question of the gap between the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the larger number of letters in other languages. To resolve this problem, Abulafia developed an essentially phonetic explanation. In his opinion, the twenty-two Hebrew letters are the ideal sounds, similar to the modern theory of phonemes. Whereas other languages contain more letters, these are merely variations of pronunciation of the Hebrew letters, produced by means of different emphases, which would yield the additional

## 208 Abulafia's Theory of Language

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 209

letters that are given separate graphic designation in the other languages. We have here an explanation that is essentially similar to the modern phonetic theory of allophones. It is worth citing here an extended quote on this subject, from the writings of Abulafia: 2 If you were to say "I will add the twenty-two components of

speech, or subtract from them," and you will show cause from the letters that appear in other languages, in addition to the letters of our language, or you will say that there are other languages that contain less letters— for instance, the G of Arabic or the Sin or other examples of letters not found in our language, or you will indicate the Kaf that the Greek language does not possess, or the [Het] or [Ayin] or [Heh] that you do not find in Italian, etc. Know, all of these letters may be pronounced either with or without emphasis, or with a medium or weak emphasis, or with strong emphasis; with medium or slight emphasis. We know regarding our own language that the letters B, G, D, P, R, T, receive either strong or weak emphasis, with strong medium or weak emphasis,

depending on the position of the letter in the word. So too, regarding most other letters, they are sometimes pronounced with emphasis, and at times without. For only the letters H, and R never receive emphasis. And even these receive emphasis in numerous instances. 13 So too, we have the R in YSRTY [yigartiâ□□I have made straight], or SRK [sdrakâ□□twisted]." So too, the H with a point inside, is pronounced as an H with emphasis. And every letter that precedes a letter that receives emphasis is also pronounced with a tendency toward emphasis, as in the verse 15 HNNY 'LHYM KHSDK [hanneni ke-hasdekaâ□□favor me, O Lord, according to your Grace], and there are many others... This being the case, in regard to the letters added to, or subtracted from the twenty-two, we have indicated from where they issue, and have accounted for them in accordance with their places of origin, the five sources [of pronunciation], located in the throat, lips and tongue].

based on their phonetic organ of pronunciation. The twenty-two letters are signs denoting sounds naturally produced by means of



the five organs of pronunciation and are therefore essentially natural sounds. The additional sounds found in other languages are merely variations of emphasis of the natural sound.<sup>7</sup> We move now to the graphic representation of the letters. Whereas the sounds they denote are natural and are shared by other languages, the graphic signs of these sounds are based on convention. Whereas the conventionality of the visual forms of the letters of other languages, however, is based on human agreement, the visual images of the Hebrew letters are based on prophetic convention, i.e., agreement between the Divinity and the prophets who recorded His word. Therefore, there is meaning to the visual forms of the letters and every essential aspect of them has implications. This is so regarding the graphic form, the name of the letter, and its numerical value.<sup>18</sup>

It is necessary that one also learn the names of all the letters. Know that in our language, the name of each letter begins with the letter itself [i.e., the first letter of each letter-name is the letter, itself]. This is a great secret regarding the letters and it instructs us as to the essence of the letter. The combination of the letter with other letters to form the name indicates that these letters are

of the same type as the letter named, and together they form the body of the letter. For instance, the matter of the letters L F that combine with the letter A to form the lettername 'ALF, ['alef] is not accidental, but with great wisdom and prophetic agreement.<sup>19</sup>

Here Abulafia's attention is fixed on two of the three aspects of the letters. He rarely concerns himself with the graphic image of the letter, which also figures in his numerological calculations.<sup>20</sup> In such a manner, each letter is transformed into a "universe unto itself in the Kabbalah."<sup>21</sup> Until now we have discussed two aspects of understanding the letters: the sound, and the graphic image. <sup>22</sup> Abulafia

The comment with which Abulafia concludes is also based on Sefer Yesirdh, th which divides the letters into five groups

210 Abulafia's Theory of Language

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 211

adds to them a third dimension—the intellectual dimension—which regards the letters as they are found in our mental experience.<sup>23</sup> The relationship between the three dimensions is like the relationship between the sensation, the imagination, and the intellect. In *Âstir 'Eden Gatitz*, we read:<sup>24</sup> You must first distinguish the written form [of the letter], then its pronounced form and then its intellectual form. Indeed, these three matters cannot be said to be united unless they actually become one in the mind of the intellectual [maskil], and until then the intellectual grasp of the letter cannot be in its most sublime state. For this is like one whose feelings are fully developed, so that there is a need that his prospective emotional expression reach maturity, and that so too, his intellect reach perfection. And with the perfect combination of all of these, the power of the intellect that was hidden from him will reveal its effluence to him, and his soul will rejoice and take pleasure and happiness in the everlasting joy, and he will benefit from the rays of the Divine

Presence [Selcintil]. The intellectual level of the letters, as experienced by the human Intellect, constitutes an intellectual universe. These letters are the real forms of all phenomena that exist, for they were created by means of the Divine use of the letters. Man recognizes the intellectual stature of the letters only in a general sense, whereas the divine intellectual stature of the letters is only recognized by exalted individuals.<sup>25</sup> The function of the letters is therefore only an aid to man helping him to actualize his potential intellect, whereby he is enabled to attain life in the world to come, as we learn from Sefer )0 stir 'Eden Ganuz:<sup>26</sup> Life is the life of the world to come, which a man earns by means of the letters. And in Seba c NetibOt ha-TOrdh, p. 19, we read: As far as man is concerned, the letters have a threefold meaning, and they are the proximate vessels which by means of the

combination [of letters] aid the soul to actualize its potential with much greater ease <sup>27</sup> than any other means. In Sefer 'Imrey Sefer Abulafia bases the relationship between the letters and the world to come on an etymological argument:<sup>28</sup> [the word] WT [ot-

letter] is related to the word BYT [biat] the arrival of]. Now the Targum (i.e., the Aramaic translation) of 'LM H13 > ha-bw-the world to come] is 1MA D'TY [alma de-)ate-the world that is coming] and its secret meaning is the world of the letters,<sup>29</sup> whence signs and wonders appear. It is worth noting the relationship between the letters and the limbs of the body. In Sefer Sitrey Tordh,<sup>30</sup> Abulafia likens the combinations of the letters to the construction of the body, of various limbs and organs: Know that all of the limbs of your body are combined like that of the forms of the letters are combined one with the other. Know also that when you combine them it is you who distinguish between the forms of the letters, for in their primematerial state they are equal and they are all composed of the same substance, having been written with [the same] ink, and with one sweep you can erase them all from a writing board. So too the particular Angel will do to all the moisture <sup>31</sup> of your body and to all of your limbs until they all return to their prime-material state,<sup>32</sup> i.e. the four elements. Here, as well as in other works by Abulafia, <sup>33</sup> we read of the correspondence between the letters and the limbs of the body, without any indication of the substantive relation

between them. A system of correspondence between the letters and the limbs is already found in the fourth chapter of Sefer Yesinth, and is mentioned again in a short tract Pe,ulat ha-Yesirdh<sup>34</sup> of Ashkenazi extraction, where we read: This creature that you want to create; with regard to each and every particular limb [of it], look inside and see what letter you must appoint upon it, and combine it as I will instruct

## 212 Abulafia's Theory of Language

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 213

you. And you must take virgin soil from underneath virgin earth and seed it here and there upon your holy Temple in a state of [ritual] purity. Purify yourself and form from this soil [the] homunculus Egolend which you want to create and imbue with the spirit of life. See what letter you must appoint upon it, and what proceeds from it. Do so also with the letters of the

Tetragrammaton, by means of which the entire world was created. Recite NotariOn,<sup>35</sup> and recite each of its letters with the vowels OH, AH, EEY, AY, OO, UH, and that organ will immediately be animated.

ship between the body and the soul. In his book 'Or ha-Seke<sup>1,42</sup> he writes: It has already been stated that the letter is like matter, and the vowel is like the spirit that animates it.

The vowel signs serve two functions: On the one hand, they indicate the appropriate vowel sounds used in reciting the letters of the Tetragrammaton, <sup>43</sup> and they also signal the appropriate head movements used in the reciting. On the other hand, the meaning of the vowel signs becomes a topic of discussion that involves the significance of the names of the vowel sounds and the visual forms of the signs.<sup>44</sup> I will present here one example of such a discussion. In this case, it concerns the visual form of the

qamas vowel, and the significance of its name. Elsewhere in the same book we read:45

Every qamas is like a sphere, divided by a patah [ray line] and a hyryq [point]. The form of the qiimas is a straight line and a point, circumscribed in a circle. From here we learn that the patah [a] would properly be depicted as a circle, but is actually depicted as a straight line so that the vowel sign not conflict with the consonant letter. And the qdrizas is secretly surrounded by a circle and is a KDUR MPYK MKYF [kadur mapik makifâ□□a pointed circumscribed sphere].

In this connection we may adduce an interesting passage from Abulafia's Hayyey ha- coldm ha-Ba',36 where we read:

And if when reciting one errs, heaven forbid, in the use of the appropriate appointed letter, he would cause that limb to be detached and switched and would immediately change its nature, and the creature created thereby would be deformed.



In conclusion, we may mention that Abulafia accepts the Midrashic idea that states that at the time of circumcision, the Divine Name SDY (Sadday) is engraved into the body.<sup>37</sup>

### C. Vowels

The second fundamental category in Abulafia's theory of language involves the vowels. We may assume, based on a quote from 'Osiir 'Eden Ganuz, <sup>38</sup> that Abulafia devoted a separate book to this subject, but it has not reached us. In his other works Abulafia enters into numerous discussions on the essential vowels: O (hOldm), A (qamas), EY (sere), Y (hiriq), U (suruq), for which he uses various identification terms, such as N(o)T(a)R(i)Q(o)N, <sup>39</sup> or the acrostic P(i)T(u)l-1(e) 1-1(o)T(a)M <sup>40</sup> (pitutie O-tamâ□□ engravings of the signet), and others. Following Sefer ha-Bdhir,<sup>4</sup> Abulafia identifies the relationship between the vowels and the consonants with the relation-

This quote related the vowel sign to its visual form, by means of numerology, as it was received in the linguistic tradition familiar to Abulafia. QMS (qamas = 230 = MKYF (makifcircumscribed) = MPYK (mapiqâ□□pointed) = KDUR (kadursphere). This association was widespread among the circles close to Abulafia, and occurs occasionally in the writings of his contemporaries.<sup>46</sup>

## 214 Abulafia's Theory of Language

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 215

#### D. Letter Combination: Seruf 'OHM

The third constituent of Abulafia's linguistic doctrine is letter combination. In his opinion, it is the various types of letter combination that determine the character of a given language. For this reason, the words SYRUF (serufâ□□combination) and LSVN (1dÂ§Onâ□□language) have an identical numerical value-386. By means of letter combination we can construct all

languages i.e., the seventy languages. This is also attested to by a numerological equation: SYRVF H'VTYVT (seruf ha-  
 ,atiy Otâ □ □ letter combination) = 1214 = SV'yM LSVNVT (Â§ibc  
 im 166w-itâ □ □ seventy languages).<sup>47</sup> From here we infer that knowledge of the three aspects of language discussed above enables us to attain knowledge of the languages of all nations. This idea is not unique to Abulafia Already in the commentary to Sefer Yesirdh, R. Shabbatai Donollo (913-ca. 982) wrote: <sup>48</sup> "The Holy One, Blessed be He, revolved the letters in order to construct from them all the words of all the nations (literally 'languages') of the land. And after He concluded the combinations of letters and revolutions of the spoken word... " The view concerning letter combination, as being a key to the knowledge of all languages recurs in PeruÂ§ ha-Aggacidt<sup>49</sup> of R. Azriel of Gerona:

[regarding the verse, Ezra, 2:2] "For Mordekhai Bilshan [understood as construed as two names, meaning 'Mordekhai, the expert in Languages']," he is called thus for his knowledge of the seventy languages. <sup>5</sup> Â° It is not that he went traveling here and there in order to learn the languages of each and every nation,

rather, he learned the clueâ□□the means of combining the letters [to form] all languages, as they are included in the Torah. For it is stated: 5 ' "Tat is two," etc. This statement indicates that all languages are implied in the Torah, for were this not so how could [the Talmud] explain the Hebrew language by means of a foreign language.

R. Azriel's explanation of the acquisition of the seventy languages is also found in Abulafia's works. We read in his

PerusÂ§ Sefer Yesircih:52 And it is stated in the Hagglidah53 "[the angel] Gabriel came and taught him the seventy languages in one night." And if you believe that [what was taught was] the actual languages, you make a foolish error. Rather, this is Gabriel, regarding whom it was written [Daniel 8:13]: "Then I heard a holy one speak," i.e., he was speaking in the holy tongue... In actuality, he taught him the order of all languages, derived from the Sefer Yesirdh by very subtle means... so that he will recognize the order that reveals the ways of all languagesâ□□however many there may be. And it is not meant

that there are necessarily only seventy languages or [even] thousands of them.

The meaning of this quote becomes clearer if we compare it with the words of R. Reuben Sarfati, who was well versed in Abulafia's doctrines. In his commentary to Sefer Mwarel.cet ha'Elohut he writes:54

Know that the epitome of human perfection is that one knows the secret of the Angel of the Countenance by means of letter combination. Then he will know the seventy languages. Do not think that they are, literally, languages, for if you believe this, you foolishly believe in error. Indeed, the true faith is that you attain the perception of the Angel of the Countenance, whose name is identical with the Name of his Master.

R. Reuben Sarfati fills in a detail here that was missing from Abulafia's PeruÂ§ Sefer Yesirdh. It is possible to attain by means of letter combination the knowledge of the seventy languages,

and by their means to the epitome of wisdom, 55 which is expressed as 'the Active Intellect' or the conception of the 'Angel of the Countenance', or Gabriel. Elsewhere Abulafia goes to an extreme, and he says:

The true tradition that we have received states that anyone who is not proficient in letter combination, and [who is not] tested

## 216 Abulafia's Theory of Language

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 217

and expert in it, and in the numerology of the letters, and in their differences and their combinations and transformations and revolutions and their means of exchange, as these methods are taught in Sefer Yesirah, does not know the Name [or God] in accordance with our method."

of his works. We will now examine his ideas concerning this matter. Essentially, two diverse standpoints were expressed during the Middle Ages in discussing the origin of language: that language is a result of human convention, or, that it is a result of Divine revelation, or of the revelation of the essences of phenomena. The first opinion was unacceptable to those who believed in the literal meaning of the reception of the Torah from Sinai. Because Hebrew was the language by which the revelation was conveyed, they found it impossible to accept the view that a language that is merely a result of human convention became the vehicle of revelation. The acceptance of a conventional view of language was seen as undermining the foundation of the religion based on revelation expressed in writing. R. Joseph Gikatilla expressed this view well when he wrote:<sup>6</sup>

And it is necessary that we believe that the language of the Torah is not a result of convention as some illustrious rabbis of previous generations had thought. For if one were to say that the language that the Torah employs is a result of convention, as is the case with the other languages, we would end up denying the [Divine Revelation] of the Torah, which was in its entirety imparted to us

from God. And you already know<sup>62</sup> [regarding the verse] "For he desecrated the word of God" that this refers to one who says that the Torah is conventional, but that the rest is from heaven, our sages have already stated" that anyone who says that the entire Torah, save for one word, is of Divine origin, such a person has desecrated the word of God. And if the language of the Torah is, originally, conventional like all other languages, regarding which the Torah states" "for there did God confound the language of all the earth," it [Hebrew] would be like all other languages.

Abulafia goes on to explain here the stages of the combination of letters. At the beginning stage we must "revolve the languages until they return to their prime material state." <sup>57</sup> This refers to the breaking up of words to their constituent letters, which are the prime-material of all languages. The second stage is the creation of new words, i.e. the (re-)combination of the letters from their prime-material state,

to create from the wondrous innovations, for the combinations of the letters include the seventy languages.<sup>58</sup>



This idea returns again in the above mentioned work where we read:59

And the sixth is the method of returning the letters to their prime-material state and giving them form in accordance with the power of intellect that issues forms.

In this process, the human intellect, which provides forms to the amorphous matter of the letters comes in contact with the Active Intellect, also referred to as donator formarum, "the provider of forms."

E. The Nature of the Language The question of the nature of language and its origin is often discussed in the Jewish scholarly literature of the medieval period.<sup>60</sup> The discussions of the Jewish medieval writers were sporadic, however, and we do not find a clear system that deals with this question in a coherent and

comprehensive manner. Abulafia frequently deals with the questions of language in most

Abulafia often differentiates, as does Gikatilla, between the sacred language and all other languages, which in his opinion do result from convention. His opinion regarding the nature of the Hebrew language, however, is different from that of his

## 218 Abulafia's Theory of Language

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 219

student. Hebrew, according to Abulafia, is not a gift from God, but is the natural language that God chose due to its outstanding qualities. To demonstrate the conventionality of language he relies on a quote from The Commentary on de Interpretatione by

Averroes, with which he was familiar in the Hebrew translation of R. Jacob Anatoli:65

The spoken word indicates conceptions originating in the individual soul, and the written letters indicate primarily those words. And just as a script is not uniform to all nations so too all the spoken words used to describe phenomena are not uniform to all nations. This indicates that language originated by convention, and was not [purely] a result of nature. In matters of the soul all are uniform, however, just as concerning matters that souls perceive and which instruct them they are the same for all humankind and in the nature of everybody. In addition he says that words can be likened to intellectual ideas expressed thereby. For just as a concept may be understood without regard to whether it be true or false, so too, it is possible that a [sentence] word be understood regardless of whether it is true or false. And since it is possible that what is understood regarding the idea can be expressed whether accurately or inaccurately, thus, the word is merely what is understood by it, [regardless of] whether it be true or false. And the truth or untruth of the words are grasped by the intellectual perception. And the words that constitute these

prepositions can be separated one from another and recombined. But when they are separated and by themselves they indicate neither truth nor falsehood. These are his words. This being the case, it is understood that all languages are conventional and not natural. And this is also the opinion expressed by the Master in his Guide for the Perplexed [II, 30], where he provides a Scriptural prooftext from the verse "And Adam gave names..." Nevertheless, we find that God chose us and our language and script, and He instructed us in articles of faith and in traditions that were chosen by him from all matters found among

our neighbors, from those mentioned and their like, just as He chose in the process of nature of various phenomena and excluded many other possibilities, as we know by observing the natural existence. 66 This choice is incomprehensible save by the prophets found by God to be more perfect than the other sages of humanity [and] were chosen by God who singled them out to be His messengers and angels in order to instruct the true faith. No one will question this. And we find their words in the holy

language, written with the holy letters, for they indicate the seventy languages by means of letter combination.<sup>67</sup>

It is now appropriate to analyse this important quote in detail. The view of Averroes that language arose by convention is based on two arguments: On the one hand there are differences between languages with respect to the terms used to describe a given object; and on the other hand, we know that an isolated word like an isolated concept is neither true nor false-and this indicates that there is no correspondence between the substance of what is being portrayed and the verbal means of portrayal. Likewise, the opinion of Maimonides is that language is conventional, although he brings proof of this from Scripture. Both Maimonides and Averroes claim that language as such arose through convention. Abulafia makes use of the philosophical authority of his predecessors to determine that all languages arose due to convention. He, however, removes the Hebrew language from this, and claims against the unequivocal opinion of Maimonides, that Hebrew is a natural language. In the section quoted above,

Abulafia argues for the uniqueness of the Hebrew language based on the fact that God chose it from among all other languages, and also from the fact that the prophets, who are regarded as those who reached the summit of human perfection, also chose this language to convey the Divine message. Both of them testify to the exalted quality of the holy language.<sup>68</sup> Another argument found in the above-quoted section is adduced from nature, where we observe that some phenomena

## 220 Abulafia's Theory of Language

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 221

language that all the conventional languages arose. And this served as the elementary matter for all of them. Such is also the case regarding natural writing out of which all other written language arose. This is likened to the first created human form, from whom all other human beings were created... 72

are of higher quality than others, which indicates that such a gradation of quality may also be present in the realm of languages. His more detailed arguments, however, may be found in his other works. In Sefer 'Or ha-Selcel,<sup>b9</sup> Abulafia's attempts to prove that the view that language arose by convention implies there having been a proto-language on whose basis the first conventional language arose:

From this a proof is adduced that language is conventional. This naturally being the case, the Master of our language comes to inform us of the intentional quality of speech. This is also conveyed by the very fact of the conventional use of language and script. Know that for any conventional language to have arisen there had to have been an earlier language in existence. For if such a language did not precede it there couldn't have been mutual agreement to call a given object by a different name from what it was previously called, for how would the second person understand the second name if he doesn't know the original name, in order to be able to agree to the changes. And this is also the case as regards writing, although there is a difference in their conventionality, but here is not the place to explain this.

Thus, we may ask, what is the meaning of the term 'natural language'?

#### F. The Infant's Ordeal

In Sefer Mafteah ha-Rtvaydn, 73 we read of the well-known story of the experiment to discover the identity of the natural language, by observing the language which a child who was never instructed in the use of any language would speak:

Know that for every human being to have come to be there was a human being who preceded him, and so on until Adam. So too, be informed that for any speaker of any language to have come to be spoken, there were earlier users of spoken languages. And if not for the previous existence of language there would never have been a speaker for such is human nature. Observe the various forms and representations and imaginative devices [used by] human education [in order to] determine the language ability



of a child until he becomes a proficient speaker of a language. Therefore, certainly if we were to imagine that if a child would, by agreement be abandoned to be raised by a mute, that he would by himself learn to speak the holy language, this would have no reason to be sustained. And even if you hear that a particular king conducted this experiment and found it to be the case, if you possess reason and perceive truth... so too concerning our believing that the child was a Hebrew speaker, being in actuality a non-speaker, that this would be a very good story for we would thereby raise the stature of our language in the ears of those who adhere to this story, although it be an entirely false fabrication. In addition, he brings a diminution of the stature of the proofs he uses. And as for me, it is not wise to use false claims to raise the

Hebrew as the necessary proto-language, within the realm of the conventional emergence of other languages, is also indicated by Abulafia's reference to Hebrew as the "Mother of all Languages." In Sefer Mafteah ha-1-1o1cmot we read:7Â°

And the entire land was of one language and one speech: this verse instructs us as to the nature of language, each of which, according to our tradition, has as its origin the sacred language, which is the Mother of all Languages.

In another formulation of this idea preserved in Liquey Hanzis nâ□□a collectanea of material including many quotations from ecstatic Kabbalahâ□□we read:

Know that the mother of all conventional languages is the natural Hebrew language. For it is only by means of a natural

222 Abulafia's Theory of Language stature of anything...

However, since our language is indeed of a higher quality, but for different reasons... and therefore it is called the Holy Language.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 223

## G. Language: Divine and Natural

This quote informs us that Abulafia saw the Hebrew language as the earliest language but nonetheless discounts the claim proffered by some of his contemporaries, 74 and also expressed by his teacher R. Hillel of Verona, that an untutored child would speak Hebrew, as this is the natural language. 75 Abulafia's viewpoint is similar to that of R. Zerahiah ben Shealtiel Hen, who also emphatically rejects the claim of R. Hillel of Verona in this regard. According to Abulafia the exalted quality of the Hebrew language is its being "in agreement with nature." In Sefer Sitrey TOM-11 76 he writes: "The name given to anything indicates to us the true nature and quality of the thing named." He is referring here to terms such as 'VR ('orâ□□light), HVSK (hgelcâ□□darkness), or YVM (yomâ□□day) and LYLH (laylahâ□□night), i.e., to Hebrew words. In Sefer ha-Maammed, however, we read:77

Indeed, the convention of calling our language the holiest of all languages is due to its being the result of prophetic convention,

which instructs us as to the modes of effects and the secrets of gradation in quality. So too, concerning the names given to the letters, such as Alef, Bet, Gimel, Daleth, as well as their numerical values 1, 2, 3, 4, knowledge of all of these matters brings about wondrous wisdom in the soul.<sup>78</sup>

In Sefer Gan Na'ama<sup>1, 8</sup> Abulafia returns to the contrast between the nature of the Hebrew language and all other languages:

But the languages exist by convention, and only the [visual] forms of our letters and the composition of our language are by Divine act.

This new contrast between convention and Divinity corresponds to the previously encountered distinction between convention and nature. From here we must conclude that Abulafia, like Maimonides, uses the terms Divine and natural interchangeably,<sup>82</sup> because according to Abulafia, God merely

chose the Hebrew language, but did not create it. In this work Abulafia returns to this topic and says:83

For whereas all languages exist by convention, the forms of the letters of the Hebrew language are Divine. This is the secret meaning of the verse 84 "And the tablets were the work of God and the writing was the writing of God graven on the tablets." As you have seen above, the Divine power surrounds it on all sides.

In the above quoted texts we find the term "convention" (haskamah)<sup>79</sup> bearing two meanings: Accord between a word and the unique properties of the object denoted, and in this sense, the Hebrew language is natural for it portrays the essential nature of the denoted; and this language is arrived at by prophetic convention "for God Himself chose it as the language of prophecy,"<sup>80</sup> as we have read from the end of the quote from . ebtz , Netd2ot

ha-TOrdh.

This analysis of Abulafia's opinion concerning language which assumes, as does Maimonides', the equivalence between the terms Divine and natural informs us of a conception completely different from the concept of the conventionality of language, as found in Maimonides' writings. And just as Abulafia bases himself on Maimonides to construct his theory of language, which is different from that of Maimonides in his Guide of the Perplexed, so too we find a similar relation in Sefer Sa care Sedeq, a work by R. Nathan ben Sa c adyah Harar, a disciple of Abulafia:85

Anyone who believes in the creation of the world, if he believes that languages are conventional he must also believe that they are of two types: the first is Divine, i.e., agreement between God and Adam, and the second is natural, i.e., based

224 Abulafia's Theory of Language on agreement between Adam, Eve, and their children. The second is derived from the first, and the first was known only to Adam and was not passed on to any of his offspring except for Seth, 86 whom he bore in his likeness and his form. And so, the tradition reached Noah.87 And the

confusion of the tongues during the generation of the dispersion [at the tower of Babel] occurred only to the second type of language, i.e., to the natural language. So eventually the tradition reached Eber and later on Abraham the Hebrew. Thus we find regarding Sefer Yesircih, whose authorship is attributed to Abraham, that the Almighty revealed Himself to him. 88 And from Abraham the tradition was passed on to Isaac and then to Jacob and to his sons [the tribal ancestors].

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 225 being given their power. And God will reveal His secrets to him... and the natural and philosophical wisdoms will be despised and hidden, for their supernal power will be abolished. And the wisdom of the letters and Names, which now are not understood, will be revealed.

The equivalence between the language that originated as a result of a natural convention and its Divine quality disappears here. In its place, what confronts us is the contrast between language that

resulted from Divine convention, which is none other than the Kabbalah, given to Adam, and passed on by him, and the vicissitudes of the natural language which is the result of human invention.<sup>89</sup> The natural language itself is missing here. What lies concealed in this discussion on the nature of language is the contrast between philosophy and Kabbalah. Divine convention is the source of the Kabbalah, which originated with Adam, and this is associated with revelation as is clear from the above quote which mentions Sefer Yesirdh to demonstrate this point. The controversy between philosophy and Kabbalah is easily recognizable from another section of Sefer Sacarey Sedeq:<sup>90</sup>

The entire world is conducted in accordance with the laws of nature, which indicate the attribute of judgment. Thus, the world of Names is suspended and obscured and its letters and combinations and its virtues are not understood by those who conduct themselves in accordance with the attribute of judgment...and this is the secret meaning of the cessation of prophecy in Israel; [for prophecy] inhibits the attribute of judgment. [And this continues] until the one whom God desires arrives and his power will be great and will be increased by



The natural and philosophical wisdoms that rule in the world today are apparently the result of the confusion of natural convention, which occurred during the generation of the dispersion related to the tower of Babylon. By contrast, the Kabbalah which is presently hidden, i.e., the 'wisdom of the Names and letters', will in the future be the accepted means of communication. 9 ' Created as a result of the Divine convention, in the future it will be victorious. As we have seen earlier, according to Abulafia, Hebrew is the natural, or Divine language. To these two designations we may add a third: Hebrew is the intellectual language. In Hdtam ha-Haftdrah we read:92

In addition, you must know that on the one hand, the Names in their form of combination are likened to the phenomena that subsist and pass away, and on the other hand, to those that endure. Indeed, those that endure are called the 'Account of the Chariot' [M ESH MRKBHâ□□Ma c aseh Mericabeih] and the others are called the 'Account of the Creation' [M ESH

BR'ESYTâ□□Macaseh Beregit] and the secret of this is TRPB = 682 = 'BRYT [682 = `BRYTâ□□Hebrew].

The meaning of this passage is that the word 'BRYT

(brytâ□□Hebrew) = 682 = MESH MRKBH (Ma'aseh Merkd bdh-

'Account of the Chariot'), which implies that the phenomena that endure do so by means of the Holy Names that exist only in the Hebrew language. This transforms Hebrew into the intellectual language, because only this language has the ability to express the intellectual nature of unchanging existence. Hebrew is construed as the metaphysical language and it is for this reason that God chose it. In Sefer Ner 'EhAim, one of Abulafia's disciples writes:93

226 Abulafia's Theory of Language But the Divine [lore] is understood by means of the Holy Names, and the Holy Names exist only in the Hebrew language. They do not know our

language, but we know theirs. Thus, our language is holy and theirs is profane and although all languages are under the rubric of the twenty-two letters, they are separated by the letter combinations of which they consist and by their conventionality." And God chose one of them, and it alone contains the Holy Names.

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 227

and the profane languages. As we have seen, languages developed as a result of a series of conventions. The cause that brought about the differences between conventional languages is geographical in nature. 99 In 'Osar 'Eden Gdnuz ilm we read:

You must be aroused... that the calling of names are by necessity the results of conventions, which include many individuals. Thus it is possible that in the near or distant future it would change as a result of the geographic location of the participants in the [act of] convention. But in 'Or ha-Sekel Abulafia writes:m The human

mind... that altered languages that were once identical is comprehensible to any speaker. For even today they are all one language, albeit incomprehensible to the speakers. And the case of this is the dispersion of the nations, as indicated in the secret of the dispersion [i.e., the story of Babel] by the words 1Â°2 WYFS [wa-yafesâ□□and He scattered] and BLL1Â°3 [hc-Raiâ□□He confounded]. For when one nation be in India and another in Africa, exceedingly far from one another, each language becomes concentrated in its geographic location and one is not the same as the other, and there is no commerce between them due to the great distance between them. This is the reason why they are mutually incomprehensible, for it has already been demonstrated that they are the results of convention... Now regarding this, you may observe that on the borders of two neighboring countries the members of each would know the language of the other, and perhaps the knowledge of the language would spread in the country, but the knowledge of the other language would not be so widespread in the other, or perhaps they would be well-distributed in both countries, to the extent that the hearer will think that the words of one language are the words of the other, or the

languages may not be well-distributed so that the difference between them is recognizable. Yet, the inhabitants of the far ends of both countries would not understand the language of the other. What occurs in language is similar to what occurs in the natural elements. And just as language arose as a result of convention due to

The distinction between sacred and profane language found in Sefer Ner 'Elohim is even more developed in Sefer cc:50r `Eden Ganuz. There Abulafia writes:95

The collaboration between intellect and imagination is like that between Angel and Satan, and is holy unto God, like the forms of son and daughter... and the antagonism between sacred and profane, i.e., between DM [damâ□□blood] and DT [datreligion, sacred law] which results in sacred and profane language. Also, DM is "YVD He VV He" [the spelling of the Tetragrammaton which numerically equals DM] is the secret of HVL [01â□□profane] is DM, and QDVS [QcidoÂ§â□□holy] is DT,

and DT is TG', one of the Holy Names, for it is the Crown of Torah, whose secret is 26.

This section speaks of two groups of terms: a. SKI., (sekelâ□□intellect), ML'Al< (mal'akâ□□angel), DT (datâ□□religion), BN (benâ□□son), LSVN QVDS go-deg-sacred language), and TG' (Holy Name, meaning Crown) which exemplify the superior element, indicating that the Holy Language corresponds to the intellect; and b. DMYWN (dimyonâ□□imagination), 96 STN (satein),97 DM (diimblood),98 BT (batâ□□daughter) and LSVN HVL hetâ□□ profane language), exemplifying the inferior element, indicating that profane language is inferior. We now pass over to Abulafia's explanation of the transition that occurred between the first Divine-Natural-Intellectual,

228 Abulafia's Theory of Language the geographic distance between them, so too regarding the differentiation of elements in nature, for the reason for both is identical, i.e., distance.

The process of the distancing of language brought about the condition that they lost their similarity, both to the original language, Hebrew, and to each other. In Sefer 1mrey Sefer, 104 Abulafia describes the relation between Hebrew and other languages:

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abu! apa 229

VNKBH 1 Â° 8 (thicar u-neciebahâ□□male and female).

Elsewhere he attempts to define the nature of imagination with the help of the Greek language: 109

The DMYVN [dimyonâ□□imagination] imagines, and its secret is DYMVN [daemon], and the devil and Satan. Indeed it is the likeness of an image, i.e., an intermediary.

Concerning the process of letter combination, discussed in Section 4, it is worth considering cases where a combination of letters has one meaning in Hebrew and another meaning in another language. In Sefer 'Osar 'Eden Ganuz we read: '1Â°

The other languages are likened to Hebrew as an ape, 105 who upon observing the actions of a human being wants to do likewise, and like a person who visually appears to another, through a mirror, and he mimics his actions and does not attempt to add to or diminish from themâ□□but [still] they are not human.

Elsewhere, 'Â° Abulafia writes regarding Greek and Italian, that they "arose to serve the Jewish language." Apparently, he implies here that it is also possible to use profane language to attain the results that are more easily achieved by means of Hebrew language. He makes use of foreign words in his numerological expositions, based on the assumption that within these words are preserved the original Hebrew ideas. We will now provide a number of examples of this. In Sefer 'Osar 'Eden Ganuz] he writes:

As we read in Italian "notte," referring to the word 'night' [LYLH], and they are numerically equal.107



For NVTY [notte] = 75 = LYLH (laylahâ□□night). He continues there:

Indeed, the term 'conventional speech' applies to any consistent usage of words. As for our Holy Language, it is worthy that one make use of it in its original conventional form, in accordance with the conventional meaning originally established. Then it is fitting that one consider if it tolerates other meanings of more sublime quality than the original meaning and then one derives it accordingly and he would consider it as valid as the original meaning. Then he would seek a third meaning, more sublime than the second and he would continue in this way until he removes the term, regardless of whatever type of term it may be and provides for it other conventional meanings, even if they come from other languages they should be accepted. And one continues in this way until he derives the types of meaning most useful for the life of the soul. One should do this always with all things until each and every term is returned to the prime-material

from which it was constructed. This is the [technique of] combination of the letters il 1 that includes the seventy languages.

According to Abulafia language serves two functions: It is a means of expression of thought and it enables one to attain prophecy. In Sefer ha-Melammed 112 we read: "Language is a thing which brings to actuality what is imprinted in the soul in potentia." On the other side, Abulafia writes in his Mafteah

In the Basque language the word for twenty, "ugi" ["VGY] equals "twenty" numerically.

In a number of places we find the numerological equation 'ANDRVGYNVS (andrOgimisâ□□androgene) = 390 = ZKR

ha-HokrnOt:113

230 Abulafia's Theory of Language Indeed when man becomes perfect he will understand that the intent behind language is the

discovery of the function of the Active Intellect, that makes human speech conform to the Divinity. This is the case according to philosophy. And according to Kabbalah the intention is the same, but in addition, one does not suffice with the mere perception of the existence of wisdom, until one perceives the Word from Him, and speaks with Him as one person speaks with another. And in accordance with wisdom one may perceive it in any language. However, according to the Kabbalah, the Divine speech is only attainable by means of the Holy Language, although its existence is ascertainable by means of any language.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 231 in one combination. For the essential intention of language is to convey the soul's intent to another soul, and with the passing of time, the users of the composite language will not know which word is from which language, and the composite language will not be seen as composite. And this matter is similar to the phenomenon readily observable today, to one who speaks to his children in two languages, they think that they are hearing only one language.

This quote indicates that language aids the attainment of wisdom by pointing to the function of the Active Intellect, the cause that actualizes our potential intelligence. Only by means of the Hebrew language, however, which is by its nature intellectual, can a person attain the prophetic word. Abulafia returns to this idea in *S- ebac Netibot ha-Torah*, p. 8:

[As for] the true essence of prophecy, its cause is the word that reaches the prophet from God by means of the perfect language that includes under it the seventy languages." 4 And this is none other than the Hebrew language.

It seems to this writer that the ingathering of languages to one language, occurring at the end of days is neither a linguistic syncretism nor the creation of a new language. Abulafia emphasizes that the dispersion of the Jews was the result of a "Divine Cause"; i.e., it has the intention for return, and when the time comes, for "returning the quality of speech to its former glory." Language during the Messianic era is apparently the

perfect language that includes the seventy languages, as indicated in the quote from g eba( NetibOt ha-Torah. In Sefer Get ha-S' emot, we read:"8

All languages are included within the language that underlies them all," 9 i.e., the Holy Language, expressed through twentytwo letters 12 Â° and five ways of pronunciation,' 21 for there is no speech or writ but this, and there are no other letters, for they are holy and this is the sanctified language LSVN QVDSâ□□QVF VV DLT SYNâ□□[legon qodeg]â□□the sanctified language, Quf VaV Dalet Sin]. This is theo in Greek122 TYV VYV [taw, Vac], and SNTY[santi] or SNTV [canto] in Italian 123 â□□SYN NVN TV VV [sin nun tam vav] or TyT VaV [tet, vav]. So if you recite any of the seventy languages you find that its letters are none other than those of the Holy Language, and that all is but one matter; only that this language is available to those who know, and not available to those who don't. Pay attention to this exalted matter, for it contains a secret derived from the verse:' 24 "And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech," and is further indicated in the verse' 2Â° that refers to the Messianic era: "For then will I turn to all nations

It is worth discussing the function of language during the era of redemption. One of the clear signs of the Messianic aeon is, according to Abulafia, the widespread knowledge of the Hebrew language." 5 In Sefer 'Or ha-Sekel," 6 he writes:

And the dispersion of the unique nation, spread over the entire earth brought about the condition that its language was forgotten so that they speak the languages of the lands they inhabit." ? And this came about by Divine Cause, so that in the end the quality of language will return to its former glory, when the unique nation will be gathered into its unique land. For then this ingathering will also include all the languages of the earth, and this will bring to pass that all will speak the language agreed upon by all, and all languages will be combined

232 Abulafia's Theory of Language a pure language, that all of the seventy languages are included in the Holy Language."

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 233

Here, too, Abulafia writes, that during the era that precedes the redemption, there are differences between languages and not everyone understands all languages, notwithstanding the fact that their common phonetic substratum is the twentytwo lettersâ□□phonemes of the Holy Language. These distinctions between languages will cease in the end of days, when the seventy languages will be absorbed by the Holy Language. We have apparently before us a Maimonidean conception which construes the Messianic era as the time of universal recognition of God. 126 The term "holy language" is used here in place of the term 'perfect language' that contains the seventy languages and serves the purposes of Active Intellect.127 The transition from the multiplicity of languages in exile to the future holy language is most definitely similar to the transition from animality to human perfection. According to Abulafia, 128 the Israelite nation: thought that it could withstand the Divine decrees. This was the cause of its separation [from Him], and its dispersion, by means

of the attribute of judgment that judges them according to other deeds and their clinging to their thought. This brought about the breakup of it from the tribes designated by the same name, and from the power of its ancestors. They exchanged their language for numerous foreign tongues to the extent that one does not understand the other, [and are] almost like animals who do not understand one another and revert to the state of inability of verbal communication.

We note further that in many places Abulafia complains about the loss of knowledge of the Hebrew language among the Jews, and of their preference for foreign languages in the conduct of their conversation. In Sefer 'Ostir 'Eden Ganuz, we read:<sup>13</sup> It is well known that when a nation speaking a particular language comes, for the first time, to live in close proximity in another region or another land, i.e., when some of the people of one nation become residents of another nation, it will come to pass that due to their proximity some will pick up the new language in a short time, and some after a long time, and with some their children will pick it up.



And it will necessarily happen that most or all of the speakers will speak in two languages, and [eventually] none will know which was their original language, [unless] the language has written characters unique to it. And this state of affairs, due to our iniquities, is almost upon us now. Due to our dispersion among many nations, with varied languages, we have forgotten our own language,' 3 ' its clarity and precision, which is nearly lost among the majority of our population. And if not for the continued writing of books, it would have been completely lost. See how the Jews exiled among the Ishmaelites speak Arabic, and those who reside in Greece speak Greek, and those who live in Italy, Italian, and German Jews speak German, and those of Turkey, Turkish, etc. Indeed, it is astonishing that the Jews living all over Sicily, [although] they don't speak the Greek or Italian of their neighbors, they still preserve the Arabic that they learned during an earlier period when the Ishmaelites lived there. Had we preserved the Holy Tongue we would have been more worthy, and the majority of our nation would have been wise and understanding and knowledgeable in our language. And from this they would have progressed to realize the intent behind it.

We may assume that due to the exile, the ability to understand the secrets of the Kabbalah by means of the letters of the Holy Language was lost.

No other nation has a tradition [Kabbalah] like this one, and yet our nation is far from her, and for this reason our exile endures for so long.<sup>129</sup>

A similar complaint is encountered in a later work by Abulafia, *Sefer Mafteah ha-Hokhrnot*, where we read:<sup>132</sup>

<sup>234</sup> Abulafia's Theory of Language And as I observed the holy nation using the profane language [in discussing] our Holy Torah, and all speak the language of the land in which, by virtue of the attribute of judgment they had been exiled, and they teach their children in the foreign tongue and enjoy speaking every language, except for the holy language, I became jealous for the honor of God and the honor of our Holy Torah, for the language of the

tablets of the Law, the language in which God spoke to Moses and to all the prophets of blessed memory. And I desired to return the diadem to its former glory, by making known the verity and essence of the holy language, being the first created thing, and coming certainly prior to all other languages which indeed are her daughters. Among these are worthy, or close to worthy languages, and some are far from being worthy. They turned to defected and illegitimate languages and strayed far' 33 from the holy language, to the epitome of distance.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 235 means of numerology, or transposed by letter exchange. Regarding these Names, although with our current state of knowledge they don't seem to indicate anything, it is quite possible that they may indicate sublime matters that, in our great iniquity, are missing from the conventions of our language and our ignorance of it.

Thus, the exile itself impoverishes the language "which due to our iniquities" is diminished, and causes lack of understanding of

numerous letter combinations that may very well indicate particularly sublime secrets." 9 These combinations are formed by applying techniques that are rare in Judaism but basic to Abulafia's system: letter combination, numerology, and acrostic. From Kalkish we may infer that in the complete form of the Hebrew language, there is a meaning to each and every possible combination of letters, and that it is only due to particular historical circumstances that these meanings are unknown to us. Such a view enables the use of the above-mentioned methods of exegesis as means for discovering the hidden meanings of the language. Abulafia very clearly expresses the idea that only by breaking apart the conventional form of words can one attain a higher level of knowledge, i.e., knowledge of the Name of God:14

Read the entire Torah, both forwards and backwards, and spill the blood of the languages. Thus, the knowledge of the Name is above all wisdoms in quality and worth.

Abulafia's zealous attitude toward the Hebrew language, so striking here, may be better understood in the eschatological context of Abulafia's activity. In Sefer SOmer Miswah, we read that' 34

languages were mixed and confused since the generation of the Dispersion [i.e., Babel] and up to this day. And they will continue to be so confused until the coming of the redeemer, when the entire land will return to the only clear language, as it is written:' 35 "For then I will turn to all nations a pure language, that they may all call upon the Name of God and serve Him with one consent," 136 with One Name.

....the

As we may learn from many quotes, the forgetting of the Hebrew language results in decreased ability to attain to the truths contained in it.' 37 A similar understanding found an interesting formulation in a work by R. Elnatan ben Moses Kalkish,<sup>138</sup> who was noticeably influenced by Abulafia's doctrines. In his opinion there are many Names:

....whose true meaning is unknown to us for they are transposed and combined and formed into acrostics, or known by

Only by means of the murder of the languages, spilling of blood, can one attain to the knowledge of the Name, It seems that Abulafia refers here to the removal of the imaginary structure characteristic of conventional language. The "blood" of the languages apparently refers to the imaginative quality of language. 141 If so, the breaking up of the accepted form corresponds to the purification of the intellect from the imagination, by means of philosophical recognition. 142 This purification

## 236 Abulafia's Theory of Language

is achieved through letter combination, which returns the languages to their original state: seventy languages within one language, as it was during the era of Adam.'43

## H. The Status of Language

In Sefer ha-1:leÂ§eq, Abulafia writes about the use of Hebrew in religious ritual, and remarks that the Jews do not comprehend

it:144

## Chapter Two The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System

The word [or speech], dibbur, is not understood, and although it is recited for the sake of Heaven, it is the most insignificant aspect of all the aspects of the spiritual Divine service, i.e., the physical act on speech. We find it in the mouths of young children who learn Hebrew and do not recognize the significance of what they are saying. And most people are in a similar state, for the language of the prayers of the ignoramuses and the [Hebrew] songs and Torah reading are to them like Tatar or Turkish, of which they are also ignorant. For undoubtedly, one will not

understand the meaning of a speaker if he does not understand the conventional meaning of his language."

## A. Torah as an Intellectual Universe

The various encounters of Judaism with philosophical systems originating in other cultures yielded novel conceptions of the meaning of the Torah. Already in the writings of Philo of Alexandria an attempt was made to equate the inner essence of the Torah with the Logos,<sup>1</sup> or with the World of Ideas. <sup>2</sup> Torah, like the Logos, was perceived as an important set of principles associated with the divine work of creation, being the ideal model of the world. According to some writers,<sup>3</sup> Platonic conceptions even penetrated into Aggadic-Midrashic literature, which saw in the Torah "the artisan's tool of the Holy One, Blessed be He" and the blueprint He consulted to create the world. Although Philo's synthesis did not influence at least not directly the medieval Jewish thinkers, it was in the words of the Talmudic sages, dealing with the meaning of the Torah as such, where Platonic influence is possibly detectable; there the medieval Jewish



thinkers found a foothold for their attempts to again relate the religion of Moses to the theories of Plato. In the introduction to his commentary on the Torah (published by

Notwithstanding the lack of knowledge of the Hebrew language among a portion of the Jews, Abulafia's insistence that by means of the Hebrew language we may attain perfect wisdom and prophecy stands in bold contrast. In his hands it becomes his chief weapon against his adversaries. In his poetic preface to the third section of *Sefer Sitre TOrdh*,<sup>46</sup> Abulafia writes:

The language of the pure Torah is a crossbow that will hit its mark without arrows, in the hearts of fools [causing] healing. The language of Moses became a powerful weapon for Raziel, 147 making known thereby that his books are inestimable.

238 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 239 and His tribunal have decided regarding each of your limbs and have put it in its position...

Friedlander 4 under the title , itah 'Aheret) R. Abraham Ibn Ezra writes:

Five items occurred to Him to be formed [before the creation of the world] and only the two [were] with the Creator and are the masters of His secrets. These are: His Torah and His Throne of Glory. And men of wisdom afford proof to the effect that Wisdom is the first of all existing worlds. The Torah is wisdom-in-faith, in it lies hidden the source of all understanding. And Solomon has stated, [regarding this] 5 "The Lord has made me the beginning of His way...."

In the thirteenth century we come across an author who combines the ideas of Ibn Ezra and Maimonides. In Sefer Saar ha-Samayim

by R. Isaac ibn Latif, we read:" Seven matters preceded the creation of the world," and among them were those that were created then, and those that occurred in God's thought to be created. And it was said that the Torah and the Throne of Glory were created [then], whereas the others arose in God's intention that they be created later. Now, be still and consider the wonders embedded in this dictum: For when in this context they referred to the Torah, it was to the separate intellects that they were referring. And when they mentioned the Throne of Glory, it was to the highest sphere that they called 'Throne' to which they referred. With regard to [the verse]<sup>12</sup> "His Throne is in heaven," concerning which it was said that both [Torah and Throne] were created simultaneously, i.e., the world of the Intellects and the world of nature...

In this quotation this exegete identifies the Torah, which preceded Creation, with wisdom, 6 which symbolises the supernal or the first world. Implied in this is that the Torah is conceived as the world of forms separate from matter, which would therefore place

it prior to the creation of the world as we know it. The intellectual world then was created before the world of the spheres, i.e., the intermediate world that was created before the lower or material world. We now proceed to Maimonides' Guide for the Perplexed, which does not discuss the concept of Torah directly, but which greatly influenced Abulafia's conception of this topic. In II, 6 we read:<sup>7</sup>

They said: "the Holy One Blessed be He, as it were, does nothing without contemplating the host [Pamalya] above." I marvel at their saying 'contemplating' for Plato uses literally the same expression, saying that God looks at the world of the intellects and in consequence, that which exists overflows from Him. In certain other passages, they similarly make the absolute assertion: <sup>8</sup> "The Holy One Blessed be He, does nothing without consulting the host [Pamalya] above." The word Pamalya means, in the Greek language, "army." In Beregit Rabbah and in Midrag Qohelet<sup>9</sup> it is likewise said in reference to the dictum: "What they have already made"; it is not said, "He has made," but "they have made." [That is] He, as it were,

And so did R. Abba state" that the Torah preceded the Throne of Glory. And this is indeed the case, but it refers not to the temporal priority of the world of intellect to the world of nature, but to qualitative priority. And this is also evident. We ought not to remove the meaning of this parable from that of R. Tanhuma, who also likens the Torah to the separate intellects, for we find the dictum of R. Eliezer" "God took counsel for the creation of the world, as it is written:" 'I am understanding, Power is Mine.' "

Thus we find that the dicta of our Sages concur with the words of some philosophers, as known through their writings, that God contemplated the world of the intellects, referring to His angels, and this is the meaning of their dictum: "The Holy One Blessed be He [as it were] does nothing without conferring with the Host [Pamalya] above." And it has already been mentioned [concerning the verse] "What they have already made," that it refers to Him and His tribunal, so to speak, etc. These three

names, Torah, Host [Pamalya] and Heavenly Tribunal, are but various names referring to the existent, the separate intellects.

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 241

Ibn Latif adds the term Torah to the other two terms Host [Pomona] and Heavenly Tribunal<sup>6</sup> that refer in Maimonides' writings to the separate intellects. This synthesis of R. Abraham Ibn Ezra and Maimonides" apparently influenced R. Baruch Togarmi's commentary to Sefer Yesi-rdh,<sup>8</sup> where we read:

As regards Him, may He be exalted, nothing is perceptible except for His Name. And thus we may contemplate the verity of what is subsumed in His Name, i.e., the Torah Scroll, which is also the Heavenly Tribunal. With reference to the Torah Scroll, as indicating the genuineness of the Exalted Name, our Sages o.b.m. have associated the verse "He is your Glory, He is your God." He illumines the end from the beginning, He is the source of the effluence, the root of the world, speaking and declaring the

letters of the Throne of Glory, as will be explained to you. Also, the holy living creatures [Hayyot] are the Throne of Glory. All of this indicates the principal secret of the Torah, know this. So too it is declared that the 'Ofanim ["wheels"; a class of angels] and Serafim are the Throne of Glory.

cal with the Divine Name, and thus refers to the essence of God. By equating the Divine Name with the Torah, R. Baruch Togaiiii is following the theology of R. Ezra and the school of Gerona.2Â° We may also derive an allusion from his words, equating God, His Name and the Torah. In this writer's opinion the terms source of effluence and root of the world refer to God Himself. We may strengthen this supposition by looking at another section of R. Baruch's Commentary on Sefer Yesirdh,21 where we read: I have already alluded to the secret of the ray of the Divine

Presence [Selcindh] in our discussion on the One and the Two. And in addition, it is known that the Torah is called HZ'T [harotâ□□this one], as a reference to the Unique Name, as we read: 22 "The words of this Torah [FITVRH HZ'T]." This refers to

the secret of the Divine Form which remains unseen except through the vision of a looking glass, which is the speaker or, perhaps, Gabriel.

G. Scholem deciphered the numerologies upon which this quote is built: SFR TVRH (Sefer Tordhâ□□Torah Scroll) = 951 = BYT DYN SL MIH (Bet Din gel Macal dhâ□□Heavenly Tribunal) = HV' THLTK HV' 'LHYK (Hu tehildteka, hu 'Elohekaâ□□He is your praise, He is your God) = WHV' M'YR MRâ□□RSYT TIRYT (we-hu mcir mi-regit )aharitâ□□He illumines the end from the beginning) = R'S Â§F` (Rog S- efarâ□□the source of the effluence) = SRS HIM (Â§dreg ha-<oleim)â□□The Root of the world = 'VTYVTh KS' HKBVD ( )any& kisse' ha-kabeidâ□□the letters of the Throne of Glory) = H'VFNYM

WHSRFYM KS' HKBVD (ha-'ofanim we-ha-serafim kisse) ha-kabod-



The numerologies operating here are: a) 413 = ZYV WYNH [Ziv ha-Selcindhâ□□the ray of the Divine Presence] = ' HD SNYM Pehad genayimâ□□one two) = HZ'T (ha-zotâ□□this one] = SM HMYVHD [gem ha-meyuliddâ□□the unique Name]; b) 246 = SLM 'LHYM [selem 'Elohimâ□□the Divine Form] = MR'H [mar ehâ□□loicing glass] = MDBR [medabberâ□□speaker) = GBRY'L (Gabriel)]. We will first examine the implications of the numerology 246. No doubt it refers to the Active Intellect, called Gabriel by many writers;<sup>23</sup> and the numerological equation MR'H = MDBR = GBRY'L also appears in the writings of Abulafia <sup>24</sup> with this implication. Thus, in addition to the equivalence of Torah, the Divinity and the separate Intellects, Torah is also identified with the Active Intellect. The first numerological equation, containing the words 'HD SNYYM genayyimâ□□one two] refers apparently to Godâ□□One, and to the separate intellects which, during the Middle Ages, were also called SNYYM [seniyyimâ□□seconds].<sup>25</sup> Thus, Torah is equated with the world of the Spirit, in all of its

the Ofanim and Seraphim are the Throne of Glory). The term Torah Scroll has a double meaning: it refers to the world of the intellects, because its numerical value is equivalent to the Heavenly Tribunal and, on the other hand, it is identi-

## 242 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 243

tually cognizes the light of His garment" and "intellectually cognizes the active intellect," which is on par with the wise intelligent ones of Israel. And all issues from the power of the Torah. Know this.

levels. The implications drawn from the words of Togarmi are much more explicitly stated in the works of his student. In the writings of Abulafia we also come across the three implications of the term Torah. We will first examine sources for the term Torah,

as referring to the Divinity. In Sefer Maftaal ha-Talcahat, 26

Abulafia writes:

Know that the Torah is like the matter of all views, and is as the form of all [animating] souls, and is as the form of all forms<sup>27</sup> [of] the separate intellects. Because the Torah is the Word of God and includes the Ten Sefirot.

Regarding the Torah as being the base material of all forms of knowledge, and also the form of all (animating) souls, we will discuss these later. Now we will concentrate on the phrase form of all forms [of] the separate intellects, a term which can only refer to God. The expression 'the Word of God' refers to the Active Intellect, as we will see below, whereas the 'Ten Sefirot' refer to the ten separate intellects. This last equivalence is reiterated in a section of Sefer Sitre Torah 28 that is closely related to the text of R. Baruch Togarmi quoted earlier:

Contemplate these wondrous secrets, for by their means you will understand the essential Names [Sem& ha-Isen], i.e., the essence of the Names. Know that all of them are engraved upon

the Torah Scroll, for He is your Glory and He is your God, and He is without a doubt the Heavenly Tribunal, and it is He who is the One who hears your prayer. Behold, He will inform you as to how the Essential Name is intellectually cognized, and how the intellectually cognized Name is essential. From this you will understand that the Essential Name is completely intelligible. For the name of the intellect is entirely the essence, and therefore the essence of the intellect is intellectually cognized. Also, the essence of the intellectually cognized is intellect. Know that the intellect intellectually cognizes the entire world, for the intellect is the eternal intellectually cognizing subject, and is the intellectually cognizing subject of the world of the intellects and the secret is "the one who intellec-

As with the quote from R. Baruch Togarmi, this section is also based on the numerological equivalents of 951 as the common number: 951 = ' MVT H`SM (gem& ha-'esemâ□□essential Names) = `SW! HSMVT ('esem ha-gemotâ□□the essence of the Names) = SFR TVRH (Sefer Torahâ□□Torah Scroll) = HV'

THLTK VHV' (hu' tehilateka, we-hu g 'Elohelcaâ□□He is your  
 glory and He is your God) = BYT DYN SL MIH (Bet Din gel  
 macalahâ□□Heavenly Tribunal) = VHV' HSVM` TFLH (we-hu ,  
 ha-gameca tefillahâ□□and He is the One who hears prayer) =  
 SM ITSMY MVSKL (gem ha'asmi muskalâ□□the essential  
 Name is intellectually cognized) = SM HMVSKL `WY (gem ha-  
 musical casmiâ□□the intellectually cognized name is the  
 essence) = SM ITSM KLV SKL (gem ha-(ern kullo sekelâ□□the  
 essential name consists entirely of intellect) = SM HSKL KLW  
 (SM (gem ha-sekel kuld cesemâ□□the name of the intellect is  
 entirely the essence) = `SM HSKL MVSKL ('esem hasekel  
 muskalâ□□the essence of intellect is intellectually cognized) =  
 `SM HMVSKL SKL ('esem ha-muskal sekelâ□□the essence of  
 what is intellectually cognized is intellect) = SKL MSKYL KL  
 HTLM [sekel maskil kol ha- colamâ□□the intellect intellectually  
 cognizes the entire world] = SKL MSKYL `LMYM [sekel maskil  
 calamimâ□□the intellect intellectually cognizes worlds) =  
 HMSKYL 'VR Lpvsv (sekel maskil 'Or lebu goâ□□the one who  
 intellectually cognizes the light of His garment) = HMSKYL SKL  
 HPV1 (ha-maskil ha-sekel ha-pocelâ□□the one who

intellectually cognizes the active intellect) = MSKYLY YSR'L  
(maskile Yisrweleâ□□the intelligent ones of Israel). Here too, the Torah Scroll is identified with the Heavenly Tribunal and also refers to God, who is the unity of the intellectus, intelligens and the intellectum. This follows, moreover, from the fact that the Name is His Essence-Name. 29 God intellectually cognizes the world of the intellects, i.e., the Torah, i.e., the light of His garment, i.e., the Active Intellect.

## 244 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 245

Torah, being identical with the Active Intellect, contains the forms of all existence. In Sefer Sitrey TOrdh, 30 we read:

For the Torah indicates the path of motion and the essential and accidental forces of both the supernal and lower worlds.

Therefore Torah is the activator of all deeds and is the Divine

directive that indicates what is to be done on both the supernal and lower [levels], as to both human beings and celestial spheres, for the heavens and earth and all of their hosts come to completion by means of Torah, and owe their subsistence to it as we may see by means of innumerable proofs that afford no refutation demonstrate, accepted, intellectual and sensory [proofs].

In 'osar 'Eden Ganuz,<sup>3</sup> ' Abulafia again emphasizes this idea:

Torah reveals certain things and hides certain others. Likewise, Nature works in both revealed and occult ways. For nature is the activity-function of the Blessed Name and is the corporeal existence, whereas the Torah is the activity-function of the Blessed Divine Name and is the spiritual existence. Physical and spiritual existence are nothing more than systems and orders, ordered and systematized in accordance with all that is ordered and systematized by the One who orders and systematizes. For the 'systematizer' 32 is the Name, and all is ordered in accordance with the Name of God.

have said:<sup>37</sup> "Torah declared to the children of Israel: 'I was the artisan's tool of the Holy One Blessed be He' as it is written: 'then I was by him an 'MVN' do not read 'MVN ['amun], but VMN ['uman]-artisan.'" So too [regarding] the word BR 'SYT [Beregitâ in the beginning], read BY R'SYT [bi resitâ by or within me was the beginning]. He gazed onto me and created the world. And it has already been stated <sup>38</sup> "By Me do kings reign." Indeed these Rabbinic homilies are inexplicable and are not at all to be understood literally, for their meaning is exceedingly sublime. It is that the Torah, et al., is a name referring to the Active Intellect, which is called the Word of God, or the Spirit of God, or His Speech, or His Name, or His Glory, for it instructs the sages of the Name, in the knowledge and comprehension of Him. Indeed, this is the veritable Holy Spirit.

The identity of Torah as the Active Intelligence recurs in

Sefer Hayyey ha-cOldni ha-Ba):<sup>39</sup>



In contrast to the texts we quoted above that conceive Torah as identified with the world of Intellects, we also find in Abulafia's writings a number of discussions wherein he equates the Torah with the Active Intellect, 33 In his introduction to his own prophetic books 34 he writes concerning the function of the Torah in the act of Creation:

As regards the meaning of the order within which the Name of God systematised and ordered the entire order of what will be, what is, and what was, regarding which the verse states: 35 "by the Word of God were the heavens made," etc. It is stated:36 "then I was by Him a nurseling ['MVN]". And [the Sages]

The Tree of Life is the pre-existent life of the essence, the life of [everything] above and below, and its secret is the power that judges the world, and the parable is known. Insofar as her numerical value is the holy letters, it is thus stated, 4° "she is a Tree of Life for them that lay hold upon her, and happy is everyone who holds her fast," which refers to the numerical value

of YSR'L (Yisra ,e1â□□Israel), for no other nation upholds the Torah as we do. And the secret of Israel is the Active Intellect.

The idea that lies hidden behind these sentences is that Torah is identical with the Tree of Life and with the Active Intellect.

Abulafia makes use of a series of numerical equivalents to prove his point: 'S HHYYM ha-hayyimâ□□the Tree of Life) = 233 = HYY ITSM (hayyey ha-'esemâ□□the life of the essence) = HYY MIH V-MTH (hayyey ma'aldh u-matchâ□□life of above and below) = KH DN HIM (koah ddn ha-(eiltimâ□□the power that judges the world) = 'TYVT HQDS ('atiyyeit ha-qOdeg = holy letters = 1232 = 232 + 1 = 233). On the other hand, there is the numerology of 541 = M'VSR (me,ugarâ□□ happy) = YSR'L (Israel) = Israel =

246 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 247 And when intellect is to be found in the soul the success of the intellectually cognizing subject is complete and he is chosen and remembered in the supernal realms and turns into an everlasting intellect like all the supernal intellects. Thus is completed his genuine repentance and it is accepted. Likewise his prayer is constantly and eternally acceptable without interruption or diminution. For it was for this intent that the Torah was given, as it is conceived by us and received in truth.

HPVI (sekel ha-pO celâ□□Active Intellect) and the link between the two is provided by the verse quoted from Proverbs. The function of Torah is defined by Abulafia in a manner similar to his description of the acts of the Active Intellect. In Sefer Mafteah ha-Holcmot ,41 we read:

The Torah is perfect for it makes the simple wise. And being sure testimony, it was given to us only in order to actualise one's potential intellect. Anyone whose intellect has emerged from

potentia to actu is worthy of it being said that the Torah was given for his sake.

Elsewhere in this work we read:42

The truth of the Torah consists in its being the means by which one may attain the effluence of prophecy, and this was the exalted intention behind its being given to us at Sinai, for certainly there could be no other intention but this. As proof of its efficacy it raised for us a prophet, and of all types of human beings it informs us that the most perfect of the species, the epitome of perfection is attained by the prophets.

The idea of Torah as an intermediary is also found in Sefer Hayyey ha-Nefes and occurs often in the works of Abulafia, based on the numerological formula: TVRH [Torah] = 611 = 'MSTT (Demisor itâ□□intermediary), expressing the stature of the Torah as Active Intellect, creating a chain that connects God and man. In Sefer Sitrey Torah 4 6 we read:

The soul is a portion of the Divinity and within it there are 231 gates, and it is called 'the congregation of Israel' that gathers into herself the entire community, under its power of intellect, which is called the 'supernal congregation of Israel,' the mother of providence, being the cause of providence, the intermediary<sup>47</sup> between ourselves and God. This is the Torah, the result of the effluence of the 22 letters.

Aside from its function of actualising the potential intellect, and its function as the source of prophecy, the Torah is conceived as being the means by which one attains the eternal life. In *Sefer Hayyey ha-Nefe*,<sup>43</sup> Abulafia writes:

God's intention in giving us the Torah is that we reach this purpose, that our souls be alive in His Torah. For this is the reason for our existence and the intention for which we were created. Torah is the intermediary between God and ourselves, for it is the covenant established at Horeb, regarding which it is written,<sup>44</sup> "The Torah of God is perfect."

The soul, having comprehended all the intellectual concepts, transforms the lower congregation of Israel into the supernal congregation, i.e., the Active Intellect that is identical to the Torah.

## B. Torah as the Wheel of Letters

In *Sefer Sitrey Torah*<sup>45</sup> this idea recurs in a similar formulation:

We turn now to another motif, that again enables us to view the Torah as a symbol for the Active Intellect. In *Serer 'or ha-Seke*<sup>1,48</sup> we read:

The 22 letters are the foundation of speech, and they constitute the tenth sphere, i.e., the sphere [or wheel] of the letters, which

<sup>248</sup> The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System is the most sublime of all the spheres of existence and is the most exalted sphere preceding in existence all other spheres. And it is the

sphere of the Torah and the miswah and all the supernal and lower orders are conducted by its accord. Regarding it it is said, 49 "By the Word of God were the Heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth."

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 249 of the tenth level is called by the general name 'Sphere of the Intellect' or 'Active Intellect.'

Abulafia himself uses the term tenth sphere with reference to Torah and Wisdom. In Sefer Hayyey ha-`01am ha-Ba' we read:54  
But the excellency of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it; and the secret of this excellency is the entirety of the Torah, and the secret of the Torah, the tenth sphere, will preserve the life of him who has it, the masters of resurrection. Every sage is in need of it.

Indubitably, the sphere that controls all the higher and lower realms, and which was the artisan's tool in the creation of the world refers to the Active Intellect. Its being referred to by all of these names, however, demands an explanation. The term the tenth sphere, anomalous in Maimonides' terminology, has its source in Neo-Platonism wherein it is identified with the intellectual world, or with what is called the Sphere of the Intellect.<sup>50</sup> Abulafia makes use of this term very infrequently, and only once do we learn its meaning: 5' אֵלֶּיךָ The secret of the tenth sphere, which is called kodesh [holy];

and this is the sphere of the intellect, which is distinct and unique from among all other spheres, being of a higher order. And being distinct and unique it is called the Holy Tiara.

This passage associates three terms by means of the numerological equation 666 = YTRVN (yitron אֵלֶּיךָ excellency or advantage) = KL HTVRH [kol ha-Torah אֵלֶּיךָ the entire Torah) = GLGL H SYRY (galgal ha-אֵלֶּיךָ ciasiri אֵלֶּיךָ the tenth wheel). The



next term, the wheel (or sphere) of letters was developed through the agency of the

Sefer Yesirah, 2:4: Twenty-two foundation letters set in a wheel [sphere] in 231 gates, in the vision of a wheel [sphere] from the front and from behind.

Notwithstanding the fact that Abulafia does not identify the Sphere of the Intellect as the Active Intellect, it is quite certain that this was the implication of the term as he accepted it. Already in the mid-thirteenth century we read that

....according to the opinions of the philosophers, the Active Intellect is the last of the levels of the separate intellects, and is regarded, based on the reasoning of the intellectuals of our nation who are of a philosophic orientation, as being the Sphere of the Intellect, because its quality is below that of the separate intellects and above that of the other spheres.<sup>52</sup>

The wheel of the letters, which contains the various letter combinations, is likened to the Torah, which is also composed of the 22 letters in various combinations. A number of writers in their various works associate the 22 letters with the angel Metatron. In a fragment of a text closely aligned to the school of the Sefer ha-7yyun, we read:55

Metatron is intellect forged of intellect. The highest sphere is the intellect, within it are engraved the 22 letters and the Sefirdt, and unto them did Metatron gaze, and he activated the first blessed intellect.

R. Moses of Burgos, an acquaintance of Abulafia, also writes in this way:53

And the philosophers of the nations provide no name at all for the Active Intellect. However, in their opinion the entirety

This association also appears in the writings of Abulafia's circle. In Sefer ha-Seruf, 56 the anonymous author writes in a similar vein as that of the passage just quoted:

250 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System The movement of the sphere of the Intellect is given into the hand of Metatron. And you already know that the letters are engraved in that sphere. And all of these are seen and enacted and controlled by the cause of causes, may His Name be praised.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 251 the secret of the World-to-Come, dependent upon the point.6Â°

And in a fragment beginning with the words SVRT Y`QB (surat Ya caqob),6 ' we read:

All is dependent on the fear of God, and all is dependent on the point.62

In Perug Sefer Yesirdh of R. Isaac of Acre, 57 we similarly read:

And Metatron, the angel of the Countenance, is the highest sphere, above the heads of the hayyot and all the other supernal dominions, and the wheel of the letters is given into his hand.

This wheel of the letters brings us to a discussion on the Active Intellect in another sense: As we have seen in the Mishnah from Sefer Yesirdh, this wheel [sphere] contains 231 gates. Thus, the wheel of the letters containing 231 gates is associated with the Active Intellect for YSR'Lâ□□Israel = SKL HPYL (sekel ha-po celâ□□Active Intellect) = 541.58 Before we conclude our discussion on the intellectual essence of the Torah in Abulafia's thought, it is fitting to direct our attention to an additional matter. A question may be asked: Is there a relationship between, on the one hand, the conception of the Torah as both an intermediary and a central point, and, on the other hand, the well known simile of R. Joseph Gikatilla, regarding the Torah as the intermediate,

central point, or the center. 59 Gikatilla associates the Torah with a point in the following:

The secret of the one point from upon which the entire world depends.

On the other hand, Gikatilla knew of the term NKVDH SKLYT [nequddah siklitâ□□intellectual point], which in Sefer Ginnat Igdz symbolizes the Torah. These and other examples may be used to indicate a connection between Abulafia and Gikatilla on this matter. We may assume that both of them derive their associations from a common source that spoke of the Torah as both sphere and central point, but whereas Gikatilla chose the point for his fixed symbol for the Torah, Abulafia tended to view the sphere as the appropriate symbol. In conclusion, it is worth noting the influence of Abulafia's works with reference to the relation between the wheel of the letters, the Torah, and the sphere of the Intellect. In his *Perug Ma c areket ha-'Elohut*, R. Reuben Sarfati writes:63

The Torah contains seventy faces, for the Angel of the Countenance is appointed to the sphere of Torah, which is the sphere of the Active Intellect.

Elsewhere in this work we read:64

[For] the secret of the Throne refers to the Angel of the Countenance who is the sphere of the Letters, which is called the Torah, and is also called the Sphere of the Intellect, and is in addition called YSR'L [Israel], since YS [ye gâ□□there are] RI [RL 231] gates in the sphere of the letters, as mentioned by the Sefer Yesirdh.

What he is saying is in reference to the letters of the name 'IVY, when they are fully spelled out )alef [= 111], hey [= 15], vav [=13], yod [= 20] = 159 = NQDH (nequdahâ□□point) = 50 +100+4+5 = 159]. We know that Abulafia makes use of this numerological equation, i.e., NQDH without the vav, not the usual plain form NQVDH and regards the point as

## 252 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 253

C. The Two Tablets of Testimony Until now our discussion centered on the theme of the Torah as a symbol for metaphysical concepts: God, the separate intellects, the Active Intellect. We turn now to a discussion of the Torah, in its revealed state. In 'Ostir 'Eden Ganuz, Abulafia writes:"

Surely, the designation 'Torah' according to the path of truth refers to a book written with 22 letters, to a narrative expressed through the five vocalizations, and to an intellectual book [Sefer ha-Mahgabah] which expresses itself in the heart and in the organs of intellectual faculty, and which includes all the physical and spiritual functions, emerging from the 22 letters by which means heaven and earth and all of their hosts were created.

Regarding this third one [i.e., the intellectual Torah] it is said:" the Torah was created two millenia prior to the creation of the world.

agrees that here was a natural occurrence; however, the term natural to him refers essentially to a psychological process. 69 God indeed inscribed the Tablets of the Covenant, but this was done 'upon the heart of man.' In Sefer 'Or ha-Sekel, we read:7Â°

It is only that the hearts for Him are like parchment for us, i.e., matter that carries upon itself the forms of the letters inscribed in ink, manifest in the immediate material form. So too, for God, may He be exalted, the heart is like the tablets and the animating soul like ink, and the word that comes to it from Him is the perception in the likeness of letters written upon the tablets of the covenant, perceptible from both sides, inscribed on both of them so that they may be read front and back. And this is indicated in the verse, 71 "you have formed me in behind and before." And although as regards God there is no speech of the type mentioned, from the point of view of the heart of the recipient it is construed as speech.



The Torah, in this last sense, is identical with the view of the Torah discussed in the previous sections of this chapter. Thus, the question may be asked: How was the Torah transformed from an intellectual entity to a written narrative with pronounceable words? Abulafia does not directly answer this important question, but it is possible to discern his opinion from his description of the process of the giving of the Ten Commandments. In the Guide for the Perplexed (1,66), Maimonides writes:

'And the tablets<sup>67</sup> were the work of God.' He intends to signify by this that this existence was nat-

Abulafia's words do not merely describe a simile; his intent is in accordance with the plain meaning of the verse. In his opinion the 'tablets of the covenant' refer to the power of the human intellect that receives the speech, i.e., the prophetic effluence, the source of which is the Active Intellect. Indeed, this section is about the heart, a physical organ that is seen as a simile for the Scriptural image of the tablets. This manner of expression is not uncommon

in Scripture.<sup>72</sup> From what we know through the pseudo-Maimonidean work *Perakim be-Haslandh*, <sup>73</sup> we find an idea similar to Abulafia's words in *Sefer 'Or ha-Sekel*:

Know that the Tabernacle of your heart is the Tabernacle within which hid the Ark [of the Covenant], in which are hidden the tablets of Testimony. And so too, it is hidden in your heart, written upon the slate of your heart. Behold the blessed pronouncement,<sup>74</sup> "[the people] in whose heart is my law." Indeed the cherubim animate you and raise up your elemental state higher and higher.

ural and not artificial; for all natural things are called 'the work of the Lord':

These<sup>8</sup> saw the works of the Lord.'

Maimonides' view concerning the tablets of Testimony is clear.

They are composed of natural substance, which Moses found at

the mountain, and are not the outcome of a miracle that would have occurred at the time they were given. Abulafia

## 254 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 255

Elsewhere, however, the image of the heart is that it consists of two parts, two inclinations. In *Sefer ha-Hegeq*,<sup>75</sup> Abulafia writes: "...and the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tablets" [Ex. 32:16]. Consider the tablets as matter... for the term 'tablets' is a homonym denoting inner natural processes. For in the A-\*T, method of permutation, where the first letter of the alphabet is exchanged for the last, and the second for next to last and, so on, LHT [hi/jotâ□□tablets] = KS' [kisse)â□□throne] = TB` [teba'nature], and in their outward manifestation they are tablets of stone. Now the secret meaning of the word 'stone' is that it also is a

homonym, since the word 'ABNYM ['abanimâ□□stones] has the same numerical value as 'VTIYVT [otiyy6tâ□□letters]. This also is the name used for the letters in Sefer Yesirdh, where he says: 76 "Two stones build two houses." Now the numerical value of SNY LHVT 'ABNYM [ geney luhot 'abanimâ□□two tablets of stone] = 891, which is identical with 'BNY SYS THVR ['abne gayiS" tatirâ□□stones of pure marble], and they denote YSR TNT V-YSR [yeser tob we-yeser ra'â□□the good and evil inclinations].

The letters also represent inner processes and thus, the tablets of stone represent inner processes. We now come to the end of the quote; here the numerological equivalents are not fully clear: the expressions 'BNY SYS TVR and YSR W V-YSR TVB are equivalent in their numerological value to 893, and indeed the number 891 is also not precise with regard to SNY LHT 'BNYM. It is clear, however, beyond doubt that Abulafia equates the two tablets of stone with the stones of pure marble and with the good and evil inclinations. What does this mean? In 'Osar 'Eden

Ganuz79 he elaborates on this subject, after quoting a long section from Ex. 34, where the Scripture talks about the second set of tablets, and then Abulafia writes:

LHT = KS' in A-T, B-& This is as they said: 8Â° "the tablets were taken from the Throne of Glory and these are tablets of stone in its secret meaning," the form of the Throne. Regarding this it is written:8 ' "the likeness of a Throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone... " The revealed and concealed aspects of [ebenâ□□stone] and tefillinâ□□(phylacteries). And the hidden aspect of My Name is the imagination. This is My likeness in a general sense, the partnership of intellect and imagination, for both are sanctified unto God and both are in the form of a letter combined with stone; in the partnership of son and daughter.

This text deals with two pairs of terms that illustrate the contrast between the inner and outer dimensions; tablets contrasted with throne, stone with letter. Abulafia believes that the word LVHVT [luhotâ□□tablets] is a homonym, i.e., a term that has both inner and outer, esoteric and exoteric implications. In order to derive its

inner meaning, he makes use of the method of permutation A-\*T, B so that the word LHT, which can be spelled with or without the two occurrences of the letter 'vav', becomes KS'

(kisse,â□□throne),<sup>77</sup> both of which refer to the inner nature. The implications of the term KS' are further explicated in Sefer ha-Ge)uldh:<sup>78</sup>

Consider the secret of the throne, and the brain and the heart, thereby you will understand the secret of the throne, i.e., HKSE [ha-kiseâ□□the throne] = 86 = MI-1 VLB [moah va-lebâ□□brain and heart].

This quote is based on the following numerical equivalents: VT 'BN [ot 'ebenâ□□letter [of] stone] = 460 = SKL DMYVN (intellect, imagination) = DMVTY (demutiâ□□my form) = BN VBT [ben u-batâ□□son and daughter] = QDVS LYHVH (qaddg to YHVHâ□□sanctified to God). Here we have correspondences between stone and letter, intellect and imagination, son and daughter. The contrast between intellect and imagination accords well with Abulafia's previously mentioned correspondence

between the good and evil inclinations, because according to Maimonides the term evil inclination refers to imagination. This propensity is associated with the heart, whereas the brain is the seat of the intellect. Now we can also understand Abulafia's words in *Sefer Sitre Torah*,<sup>82</sup> where he writes: "The form and likeness upon

## 256 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 257

which the Torah was given." Form and likeness correspond, according to Abulafia, to intellect and imagination. The conception of Torah as something grasped by these two inner senses fits well with Maimonides' conception of prophecy, where the effluence is received upon both the intellect and the imagination.

<sup>83</sup> Whereas Maimonides, however, holds that the Torah is the outcome of the reception of prophetic effluence by Moses without

the agency of the imagination, Abulafia sees the imagination as the background into which the effluence is received. The difference between them stands out in 'Iggeret ha-Musdr, attributed to Maimonides. The anonymous author of this work, who attempted to imitate Maimonides' style within a spiritualistic framework, writes of the aforementioned matter: 84

Know, my son Abraham, may the blessed God be merciful to you, that as for the Tabernacle and its vessels, they are parables for the blessed body. He commences with the Ark that is undoubtedly the heart, which likewise is the commencement of the body. In the Ark are the tablets, which refer to the human intellect.

#### D. The Written Torah and the Oral Torah

The double character of the Torah is also evident in other connections. In his various works Abulafia quotes Nahmanides regarding the latter's ideas about the giving of the Torah, discussed in the introduction to his commentary to the



Pentateuch. We begin with a quote from Abulafia's 'Oscir 'Eden Ganuz:88

And the perfect rabbi and Kabbalist o.b.m, has already elaborated on this, and said that there is yet a true tradition handed down to us, stating that the entire Torah consists of the Names of the Holy One blessed be He, for its words are divisible into Names, which constitute a different stratum [of meaning]. For example, the verse [Gen. 1:1] BR'SYT [beresitâ□□the beginning] can be recomposed as BR'S YTB HYM, and so too, as regards the entire Torah. And this is so, aside from the strata of letter combinations and the numerological operations of the Names. He also said there, that R. Solomon [Rashi] wrote in his commentary to the Talmud, regarding the Great Name of 72, how it is derived from the verses [Ex. 14:19-21], and that he adduced from this that the entirety of the Torah has to be taken into account in all of its exact compositional details, without addition or diminution. He also said that it appears to him as if the Torah was [primordially] written in the form of black fire on white fire, being written continuously with letters not divided into words, thus enabling it to be read as either the Names, or as we do, as narrative and commandments. And it

was given to Moses in the discrete form of narrative and commandments, and was given to him orally in the form of a reading of Names. So too the Great Name<sup>89</sup> may be written serially without interruption, and then divided into three letter units, or into other divisions, as practiced by the masters of the tradition. These are his words, o.b.m. Observe how he is in agreement with us in stating his doctrine that the 'Oral Torah' refers to the knowledge of the Names. Nahmanides is of the opinion, traceable to a particular magical tradition,<sup>90</sup> that there exists an alternative possibility of reading the amalgam of letters that constitute the Torah. Whereas to us, only the aspect of the Torah as relevant to the commandments was handed down, Moses received

The writer of this epistle is faithful to Maimonides, and although he refers to the two tablets, he compares them with one function, the intellect." Echoes of Abulafia's opinion are found in *S efer Toled& 'Adam*, the author of which was influenced by Abulafia. There he writes:<sup>66</sup>

And the tablets... two, referring to the hylic intellect and the imagination. And Abuhanunad 87 writes in his work The Intentions that the hylic intellect is like a clear slab ready to receive the wholeness and engraving of any intelligible form. So too it is with the imagination, when one is perfect in his moral qualities and his intellect perfect in intellectual issues He will write upon the tablets the Ten Commandments.

258 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System orally, a form of reading the Torah, wherein it is construed as the Names of God. Proof of this is to be found in the verses of Ex. 14:19-21 wherein three consecutive verses contain seventytwo letters that taken together construct seventy-two triplets. The great difference between Nahmanides' conception and that of Abulafia is in their respective evaluations of this tradition of Torah reading. Whereas for Nahmanides this tradition was given orally to Moses, according to Abulafia this in itself is what constitutes the oral tradition. His opinion may be formulated as follows: The written Torah, as we possess it, deals with the commandments, whereas

the oral Torah, which not everyone knows about, deals with the Names of God. This distinction is associated with the twin nature of Torah as intellectual effluence received by two disparate potencies, the intellect and the imagination. Whereas the oral Torah corresponds to the intellect, the written Torah addresses the intellect and imagination together.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 259 This is because as for what God actually said, it is virtually impossible that these matters be put into writing, and thus He decreed that these matters only be discussed orally. Also, our Holy Rabbi, R. Yehudah the Prince, in writing down the Mishnah, and Ravina and R. Ashi in writing down the Talmud, did not transgress the Word of God, for although their words are referred to as the 'oral Torah' and the 24 books of Scripture are referred to as the written Torah, Heaven forbid that we should think that any of these saints transgressed with intent [in the measure of] even one iota of the Word of God. It is rather that the designation 'Torah' as well as the designation 'oral' are homonyms and these associations are

contemplatable only if received by direct oral transmission that goes back to Moses at Sinai. It is this that is called the genuine oral tradition, referring to the actuated Torah, found at the beginning of the act, from which the seed emerges; the one who knows it is enabled to annul its vow and also to remove its dust [material or literal meaning] for afterwards, he will be enabled to increase its effluence with the permission of its Maker.

We will now attempt to strengthen this thesis. In Nir `Eden Gattuz, Abulafia writes that:<sup>91</sup> I feel great necessity and pleasant compulsion to write herein the genuine meaning of the matter, and without fear of retribution to inform you of this awesome secret, and explain and interpret it for you so that you and those like you will not be lacking in the knowledge of this wondrous secret, the pillar upon which all things depend. And although I already know that there will occur to me and my work certain pleasant consequences, I will not be deterred on their account of saying what I was instructed to by heaven <sup>92</sup> regarding this matter, and what we received from the most eminent of our

prophets and sages, our master Moses, peace be upon him, who received it directly from God. And although it is written 93 "for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel," and we have a tradition 94 that "words that I have spoken to you and that appear in writing must not be said orally, and words that I said to you orally must not be put into writing," nonetheless we are not in transgression of this by stating what we are stating.

Abulafia is of the opinion that there exist two types of 'Torah' the 'oral Torah' that cannot be put into writing due to its very nature, and this is the true oral Torah, i.e., the reading of the Torah according to the Names, the true oral tradition; 95 and, on the other hand, the 'written Torah' is the Torah that is possible to be written down. The very fact that a particular work, in this case the Mishnah and Talmud, was put into writing indicates to us that it does not belong to the oral tradition but to the written one.

Therefore Abulafia claims that R. Yehudah the Prince did not transgress in writing down the Mishnah as the writers of the

Talmud also did not. Allusions to the substance of the oral Torah appear at the end of this quote in the form of numerological allusions: TVRH 131 PH [Torah se-ba cal peh oral Torah] = 1098 = HTVRH SBF AL [ha-Torah se se-be-fo cal actuated Torah] = BRSYT HPAL [beregut ha-po'al at the beginning of the act] = LHFR SWATH le-haft-7 gebu catak-to annul its oath) = LHSBYT TRH [le-ha bit 'afarah to

## 260 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 261

remove its dust] = BRSYT HP:!/LH [bereA'it ha-pe qildh-at the beginning of the act]. The number 1098 also equals 99, if we take the 1 in the thousand place and add it to 98 = 99, and this explains the association here of the word HTPH [ha-tipcih the seed], apparently a reference also to hatcifah, one of the ten terms for prophecy according to the Midrash. 96 The

oral Torah is the actuated Torah, in that it was given in the form of the Names. Regarding these, Abulafia says in *Sefer Sitrey*

Torah:97

It [i.e., the Names] does not help one who is not a master of this matter, for we have already received a true tradition [regarding this] that any Name that does not instruct us in something, in whatever form this may be understood to inform us, is nothing as far as we are concerned.

interrupted script as black fire on white fire, its original genuine intellectual form. We may learn about the intellectual stature of the oral Torah by investigating another of Abulafia's views, his conception of the nature of the 'Account of the Chariot' (*Ma'aseh Merkabdh*). As we know, the Sages considered the 'Account of the Chariot' to be the most esoteric topic of the tradition.<sup>102</sup> In the Hermetic literature, the 'Account of the Chariot' was associated with the visionary experience of the *Merkabah*, and was viewed as the objective of the mystical life of the 'descenders to the *Merkabah*.'" <sup>3</sup> A philosophical explanation originating with



Maimonides 104 saw in the Ma'aseh Merkdabah a term denoting metaphysics, in the fullest sense of the word. The other interpretation, the Kabbalistic one, saw in Ma'aseh Merkdaba-h a symbol for the world of the Sefirot. 105 Aside from these three views, however, there existed an additional view that has not yet received attention: I am referring to the view of Ma'aseh Merkabah as hariccibdhcombination of the Names of God. Already in the Helcaldt literature, we learn of the connection between the vision of the chariot and the Names of God. In one of the works of this corpus we read:"6

This is the Name revealed to R. `Aqiha as he gazed into the Account of the Chariot. And R. `Aqiha descended and taught it to his disciples. He said to them: "My sons, be careful with this Name for it is a great Name, and a Holy Name and a Pure Name."

Abulafia construes the Names as forms of information, with reference to the laws of nature, or other forms of conceptual truth. Therefore we may see in Abulafia's conception of the oral Torah,

an understanding of the sum total of intellectual truths, and in this sense it is identical with the meaning of the Active Intellect. The oral Torah existed 'at the beginning of the act,' for it is identical with the Intellectual Torah, 98 i.e., the Torah read in its form as the Names of God. In Osiir 'Eden Ganuz, Abulafia writes concerning the Torah as it is in thought, in a passage quoted in extenso above:99

And concerning the intellectual book that speaks in the heart and in the organs of intellectual faculty, which includes all spiritual and physical functions, for it is constituted by the twenty-two letters through which the heavens and earth and all of the Hosts were created, it is said 100 that it existed for two millenia before the world was created, and also it was said regarding this: 1 Â° that before it was given, it was written as black fire on white fire.

R. Menahem Ziyuni quotes another view in the name of the "Master of the Secret," a title generally referring to R. Eleazar of Worms:"7

And they concealed the names of most of the angels so that human beings would not adjure them to reveal to them the secret of the Merlaibah.

We have seen at the beginning of this chapter concerning the primordial Torah, created before the creation of the world, that it refers to the world of the intellects and is written in un-

## 262 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 263

The earliest source, however, that identified Macaseh Merkabdh as occupation with the Holy Names, is from the early thirteenth century. In *Perug Habddldh de-Rabbi `Aqiba*, written by one of the Ashkenazi Pietists, we read: 'Â°8

And I the writer, have saved my life by (heeding) these warnings. I extracted from the 'Account of the Chariot', from the complete books that I found which included the Name written on the doorpost scroll [mezuzah] and its decipherment: KVZV BMVKS V KVZVâ□□its meaning as known to the men instructed in the secret lore, the Masters of Knowledge, is YHVH 1HYNV YHVH. The 'Y' is exchanged for a 'K' [the following letter in the alphabet] and so on. This is the meaning of the Name and this process is known as Macaseh Merkdah.

By reading the writing of Abulafia one can see that he was greatly aroused by the matters contained in the 'Account of the Chariot' for all of his discussions aim at one goal: the reconciliation of the traditions he received from his teachers with the view of Maimonides, who saw Ma(aseh Merkdah as metaphysics. We will now provide a number of quotes on this subject: In 'Oscir 'Eden Geinuz 113 we read:

For the Torah and its pathways constitute the 'Account of the Chariot', whereas the laws of heaven and earth are the Account of Creation.

We find additional confirmation of this from Sefer Malmdid ha-Talmichin 1Â°9 by R. Jacob Anatoli, who writes: ... and to refer to Mac aseh Merkabah as meaningless names

that they themselves made up in their own hearts, those children without hearts.

Here, Abulafia views the Torah as an allegory for the world of the intellects, called Ma'aseh Merkabah, whereas the intermediate and lower worlds are the domain of Macaseh Beregit ('Account of Creation'). In his Se-Jeri:161am ha-Haftardh,"4 he distinguishes between Ma'aseh Merkabdh and Macaseh Beregit differently:

The Names and their combinations are likened, on the one hand, to matters that exist and pass away, and those that, on the other hand, continue to endure. Indeed, those that endure are called by

our sages the 'Account of the Chariot,' and the others are called the 'Account of Creation'. And the secret of this is 682 `YBRYT [Ibritâ□□Hebrew], and this is the secret of the staff [gebetâ□□this association is never explained]. This distinction, between names that denote enduring essences and those that denote mutable essences parallels the two views of the Torah. When we are capable of reading the Torah in accordance with the Names, it becomes transformed into metaphysics, and when it is read in the conventional way, it deals with the commandments, the deeds of mutable human beings.

His words refer apparently to the name KVZV that "they themselves made up of their own hearts"â□□those who occupied themselves with the 'Account of the Chariot'. This quote is associated with what we read in the Peru' Sefer Yesirith of R. Baruch Togarmi:"Â°

KVZV BMVKSZ KVZVâ□□YHVH IHYNV YHVH: this is the secret of the Merkdah.

In a fragment apparently written by R. Joseph Gikatilla we read, similarly:11'

Know that the letters of the Honourable Name, whose secret is YHWH are exchanged by combining them with the letters that follow the letters of the Name. This is the secret of the Merkabah,"2 and you must be aroused concerning the great matter contained therein.

This pairing returns in Abulafia's understanding of Sefer Yesirah. In his Perusg Sefer Yesirah, 115 he writes:

By his first word, BSLSYM [bi-gelagimâ□□with thirty] he hints to us that whereas this is the "Book of Formation," the title of

## 264 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 265 farsin] where there are the opinions of Rab, Samuel, R. Yotianan.

which indicates that it should discuss the 'Account of Creation,' the real intention is to deal with the 'Account of the Chariot'.

Whereas in Sebw NetibOt ha-Torah (p. 11) he explains this:

Sefer Yesirah, which exoterically refers to the 'Account of Cre-

ation,' refers esoterically to the wisdom of the 'Account of the Chariot'. As witness to this, the first word of this tract, BSLSYM is numerically equivalent to MSH MRKBH, and for us, its meaning is the combination of one Name with another.

One construes it as 'NM 'NM LQTNY-FRSV, and another [R. Ashi] sees it as NM' NM' QTL PVRSYN, and [Samuel] says it refers to MMTVS NNQPV 'LRN. And the great statement, expressed by the general statement [of Rab], that it is a numerological statement that read YTT 'DQ PVG TMT. This is a



recondite secret, but what is clear from it is that it is based on the B-6 method of letter exchange. And they are fifteen letters regarding which it is written' 22 "but they could not read the writing," and as a sign as to the number of letters, the [verse uses the word] YD' [=15]. And this is explicable by interpreting the three verses, 28, 26 and 22. Combine the two numbers of the plain meaning with the interpretation and you will find that they equal MN'. And in the secret of regrouping, [the verse] yields 'MN 'MN. For they represent the end of the verse as the word indicates, MN'-MN' 'LH' MLKVTK' [mane' mane' 'elaha malkutka-- God has taken away your kingdom]. And yet, it was interpreted not from the two, but by one MN' alone, whereas the word TQYLTA (teqe'elataâ□□weighed in the balance) is the meaning of TQL, and the word PRYST [prisatâ□□your kingdom is divided] is the meaning of V-FRSYN. And these matters are derivations, plays on words.

These two texts utilize the numerological equation  $682 = M`SH$   
 $MRKBH = SM BSM$  [gem be-gemâ□□one name with another

name]."6 Aside from the 'Account of the Chariot,' however, the oral Torah also contains methods by which we may interpret the written Torah." 7 In Sefer ha-Ijjeq," 8 Abulafia writes that the oral Torah—referring here to the Talmud—also contains both exoteric and esoteric meanings:

and do not be baffled by what was said, that with regard to the matters that were written down, i.e., of the written and oral Torah there are two faces, one revealed and one hidden.

One example of Abulafia's view, as regards the esoteric layer of the written oral Torah tradition that corresponds to the unwritten oral tradition, the genuinely true Torah, will clarify this matter. In his epistle , el?w Netibot ha-Torah (p. 12), Abulafia writes concerning the chapter headings and the secrets of the Torah, that they are passed on exclusively in oral manner only to those worthy of them. On pages 12-13, however, Abulafia illustrates how the oral Torah that has already been written down (i.e., the Talmud) contains allusions to matters that ought not to be conveyed in writing:

120 See [B.T.] Sanhedrin, 119 regarding "the palm of the hand that wrote," in the book of Daniel, referring to the letter combinations 121 MN' MN' TQL VFRSYN [mene) mene' teqel

In Tractate Sanhedrin we find suggested various ways of deciphering the words MN' MN' TKL VFRSYN. The first suggestion was based on reversing the letter order of the words MN'-4'NM, etc. The second construes the correct combination of these letters as MN'--NM', etc. The third repeats the first letter in the fourth position: MN'â□□M TKLâ□□T VFRSYNâ□□N-4MMTVS, etc. And the fourth opinion is based on A- IT, IS exchange that yields YTT = MN' etc. Abulafia continues by explaining this verse in Daniel. The sum total of letters in this phrase is fifteen = YD'. The word MN' is explained in verse 5:26, based on twenty-two letters. The word TKL is explained in 5:28 by means of twenty-six letters and the sum total of all of these is 91 = 28 + 26 + 22 + 15 = MN'.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 267 Torah. They say that this science was revealed by God to the Patriarchs and to Moses in order to engrave it not only in the letters, but even in the souls of these saints and of the prophets who followed them ... and that it was by the power of these Names that they enacted the miracles.

As only one of these two mentions of the word MN' is explained, Abulafia believes that the double mention of MN' holds the secret solution to the verse. Therefore the number 91MN' is doubled: MN' 'NM. According to Abulafia the word 'MN indicates that the king will die. And yet, why didn't the Sages explain this secret? The answer to this is given in Sefer Ijayyey

ha-Nefeg:123 And so, consider "MN 'MNâ□□and this secret was not revealed by the Sages o.b.m.; however, within me was aroused a complete explanation; it is, that the end becomes the beginning, and the beginning, the end. For this is the secret of the curse of this king, regarding which it is written [Daniel 5:30-6:1] "In

that night Belshazzar the Chaldean King was slain and Darius the Mede received the kingdom." And the secret of MDâ□□RH is H'IDM [ha--)adam-the man], and because Belshazzar made use of the vessels of the Temple, he was immediately condemned to die.

It seems that like Abulafia, the Jewish sages that Ficino alludes to were of the opinion that the oral Torah, based on the Names, refers to an intellectual realm that cannot be conveyed in writing, but is instead, engraved on one's soul.

E. The Written Torah: The Commandments After having described the significance of the 'Account of the Chariot' 127 and illustrated how Abulafia perceived the hidden layer of meaning contained in the oral Torah, we return to the meaning of the written Torah, which, as we will see, constitutes the lowest level of the tradition. 128 The written Torah, as Abulafia makes use of this term, has as its source the 'true' reading of the Torah, but was revealed in its present form divided into words that express

the Commandments. 129 The commandments are the main objective of the written Torah, the Mishnah, and the Talmud. Concerning them and their relationship with the 'Torah' Abulafia writes:13Â°

The method of our Torah is a combination of revealed and concealed matters. The revealed aspect is useful to all who do not know the concealed aspect, for it contains traditions suited to his level of capacity, so as to guide him in this world, and to gain him his inheritance in the world to come. And the revealed aspect is called Commandment, for it conveys merely the command and nothing more. And the concealed aspect is called Torah for it refers to the entire body of wisdom of this commandment; its purpose and its substance. And regarding this secret level, it is written" "and the Torah and the commandments which I have written that you may teach them," and it is further written 132 "for the commandment is a

Abulafia is of the opinion that the Sages suggested the method by which one may interpret the verse, by means of the various

techniques of interpretation, without actually mentioning the correct method in this context. 124 Only one who is capable of taking this additional step forward can understand the hint that was not explicated. In 'osar 'Eden Ganuz, 125 Abulafia describes the process of the study of the secret doctrine:

You give him the chapter headings of the corpus, little by little, and since he is wise and has the capacity to understand by himself, he will place his heart into what he received, and will add and analyse in his thought.

It is proper, at the end of the discussion, to mention the description of the oral Torah given by Marsilio Ficino, which is similar to that of Abulafia. He attributes to Jewish scholars the following appraisal of the Wisdom of the Names:126

They value it to the extent of considering it higher in quality than all other forms of wisdom, even greater than the written

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 269

lamp and the Torah teaching is the light;' and it was said' 33 that 'a transgression may extinguish the lamp of the commandment, but is not able to extinguish the light of Torah'."

The hidden aspect of Torah is the oral Torah whose light is not extinguished, because it is intellectual. What is the plain level of the commandment whose light is extinguished? In Sefer Hayyey ha-Nefe' 34 Abulafia distinguishes between various types of commandments:

The commandments are divisible into three categories. They are [a] the commandments that instruct us as to the proper view toward what exists, in the realms of nature, humanity and Divinity, and warn us to be far from the opposite, i.e. false views; [b] the commandments that arouse knowledge in those whose conduct is proper and instruct them on their proper path, and repel their



opposite; [c] the commandments that restore human societies to proper harmony and remove the opposite. These three constitute commandments in the realms of opinions, morality and deed.

This categorization includes various types of commandments.

The first two types are intended to perfect the individual, whereas the third is intended to perfect society. The first two are aimed at the intellect whereas the third is aimed at the imagination. This mixture of intellect and imagination illustrates the character of the written Torah. Its source is the intelligence, but it also contains elements whose source is the imagination. We are informed of the imaginary side of the commandments in various discussions in Abulafia's writings. In 'Osiir 'Eden Ganuz, 135 we read:

spirit. However, he is also a 'likeness', i.e., an intermediary, and all his machinations are political. He is a man of argument, whose attribute is anger. And he was created from the life-giving blood, and concerning him does the entire book of Proverbs speak...

Proverbs [MOE] on the government [mingd1] of the imagination... and observe, that the Proverbs all refer to political matters... for in

your youth you were taught imaginary information, [in the form of parables and enigmas that coincided with your capacity at the time, for then you were full of imaginings and were entirely attracted to the senses. And you already know that youth are not legally bound to keep the commandments until after they are thirteen years and one day old... nevertheless, they are educated in the commandments, and these are the concerns of the realm of state alluded to by the term DMYVN.

Abulafia enlists his knowledge of the Greek language to prove, by quasi-linguistic means, the inferior character of cognition by the faculty of the imagination, a necessary component in the process of the reception of prophecy, and by extension, also part of the nature of Torah. The term DMYVN is acoustically similar to the Greek daemon, i.e., devil, composed also of the same letters, and by means of letter transposition DMYVN becomes MDYVN [medyunâ□□medium]. In addition, the letters of DMYVN can also be associated with the letters of the Hebrew word MDYNY (mediniâ□□political). Thus, the daemonic inferior component of the Torah serves as a medium [emsaA for the education of the

masses, thereby fulfilling a clear political function. In a later work, Abulafia writes:136

The potency of the imagination is a vessel for the apprehension of prophecy, for all of his [i.e., the prophet's] apprehensions are imaginary; they are parables and enigmas... and the sense of this is contained in the plain meaning of the word DMYVN, which is MDMH [dimyonâ□□imagination; medammehimagenerative faculty] and its secret is 'daemon', a devil and evil

And [there are] those who say that the Book of the Torah is true and worthy of honor for its words are the words of the living God, but some of its commandments are not to be taken literally. Such a claim would arise due to well-known reasons. However, the enlightened one would understand those things easily by himself as being strategems to draw the hearts of fools so that they become released, rather than being fettered by his ropes, in order to establish a powerful Divine bond easily. For they are not aware of the nature of the evil inclination

## 270 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 271

so as to be able to receive his opinions and find truth in it for themselves, and indeed be able to see in his words that he desires to turn to the path of the wise men of speculation yet his words are not sustained in this turning toward the true sages of speculation, for he takes half and leaves half. And such a person is not aware that the first stratum is intended for the masses, i.e., the righteous of the masses as was mentioned. It is proper to heed these three paths, for all three are true although they all contain three levels'<sup>37</sup> ... For the Torah was not given only to men of intelligence. Our young children bear witness to this since they are not obligated by the commandments, and yet it is proper to educate them in the commandments by means of conditioning them in good habits so that they reach the path of perfection.

We may summarize these two quotes as follows: Because prophecy is not possible without the participation of the imagination, we find in the Torah commandments that have the character of the imagination and are political, i.e., commandments that are of a practical-active nature, not of an intellectual nature. These commandments are oriented toward that sector of society not capable of grasping the intellectual truths, i.e., youth and 'the righteous of the nation', people capable of performing good deeds, but not capable of progressing beyond this level. The double nature of the written Torah, which is also expressed in the form of the political-imaginative, is well-explained in Sefer Toted&'Addm, 138 a work mentioned earlier:

'On both sides are they inscribed'â□□this is an allusion to the element of imagination of our master Moses, peace be upon him, which has been perfected to its fullest potential, and was impressed on the image of political conduct and on the image of conduct with reference to intellectual conceptions. Since the imagination tends to manifest in sense perceptions, the tables

were engraved in writing within the context of orders of law of a social-political nature. And on the other side of the imagination, the side that tends toward the intellect, was also engraved and written the Divine intellectual conceptions, in that the in-

tellekt is etched and engraved in the presence of the imagination.

In this way, 'remember' and 'observe' were written as one expression [in the Tablets, referring to the commandment of the Sabbath], as our sages have said. Moreover, in this way the second tablet, i.e., the hylic intelligence, was engraved from both sides; within the lower side that faces the imagination was engraved and impressed and etched what may be understood from the imagined forms so that they may be abstracted from their material form and returned to their intellectual form. And on its other side that faces toward the supernal on high, to God, are words of wonder within which is engraved the Divine Effluence. All of these writings are in accord with both the knowledge of the intellect and with the popular knowledge, etched within actual

tables, and thus was their actual form. None of these meanings can be perceived without the mediation of the imagination.

At least one of the three types of commandments is merely the expression that the imaginative faculty gives to the intellectual effluence. Thus the true form of the fulfillment of the commandments must of necessity include two dimensions.

Although the act in and of itself contains no intellectual content, yet the performance of the deed, done with conscious awareness of its intention, succeeds in combining the intellect and the imagination. In 'oseir 'Eden Gdnuz, 139 Abulafia criticises the performance of commandments without understanding:

Man is like an ass. For he, as representative of the majority of his species, does no damage, but carries a burden. Now the ass fastened to a millstone, going round and round, does not move from his place. As for man, the intention behind his existence is not the same as that of an ass, for he is not fulfilling his goal by carrying a burden like an ass without rising higher by carrying this burden. And the abundance of the commandments is the burden.

Rather, the epitome of the intent of the commandments is that man recognise himself and by self-recognition come to recognise his Creator, and this constitutes the epitome of his success.

## 272 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 273

So that the person be enabled to perform the commandments in the proper way, he must understand their objectives, because doing them without this understanding constitutes a lack in its significant content. In Sefer Hayye ha- colim ha-Bw, 140 we read:

Do not consider saying that my heart is for the heavens and all that I do is for the sake of heaven, and yet, not be interested that the doing of the deed bring about wisdom and love of God. For does not the person know that it is study that leads to deed, and not deed that leads to study! 141 Yet, he does not consider that to do something is easy, even for children, and certainly for



intellectuals and Talmudists. And yet, doing it within the presence of Divine Wisdom is difficult even for Sages, and certainly for people subject to the false imagination. Yet he thinks that his deeds are acceptable, because this is what he was told, or due to the false imaginings of his heart. For indeed there are no genuinely good deeds unless they be done with the awareness of the intent of the deed. Then it is acceptable before God, so that they are not merely performances out of habit."2 See how our Sages o.b.m. indicated this by their saying that "the heathens do not truly worship idols" and yet we see the opposite; that all of their efforts and all of their deeds are involved in idol-worship! It is only due to the lack of understanding on their part, of what they are doing, that their action without understanding is considered as nothing. This is evident from the end of the above pronouncement; "they are merely carrying out the rituals of their ancestors"â□□rituals performed out of habit.

of Ma'aseh Merkdabah ['Account of the Chariot'] and Ma'aseh Bergit ['Account of Creation'], which are Divine deeds. And one

who knows the secret of why the tablets were made of stone, as it is written "and the tables were the work of God," we may surmise that he knows the secret of the 'writing' regarding which it is stated:' 47 "and the writing was the writing of God, graven on the tables."

The deed in this case has two implications: 1) deed in the sense of commandment, and in this sense it is inferior when compared to Torah as study; 2) deed in the sense of natural or Divine's function, i.e., that a person must be in a state of recognition, and this form of deed is superior to pursuit of wisdom, which is merely a contracted form of natural wisdom.

## F. The Written Torah: The Narrative Part

We now proceed to another aspect of the written Torah: the Biblical narrative. This aspect, like the aspect of the commandments, has two sides: the plain meaning as perceived by the imagination, and the hidden meaning as conceived by the

intellect. We are capable of understanding the Biblical narrative only after understanding the hidden meaning, which generally refers to the constant battle between imagination and intellect that takes place within each and every individual, just as it took place within the lives of the Biblical heroes. Just as the commandments instruct us that their essence is the proper intention, i.e., the intellectual aspect of the commandment, so, too, the narrative instructs us that our aim is that the intellect be victorious. We will illustrate Abulafia's outlook by analysing two stories: one associated with the individual, the binding of Isaac; and the second story associated with the collective, the Exodus from Egypt.

We read similar words in Sefer Gan Na(u/:144

Torah [study] supercedes the commandment, since study leads to action, and action in and of itself does not lead to study.

Nonetheless, study is not the essence, but the deed is, 145 and only for one whose deeds outweigh his wisdom is his wisdom

sustained. 146 Deed [Ma'aseh] is understood in the secret [sense]

## 274 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 275

#### The Binding of Isaac

In Sefer Hayyey ha-Nefeg, in explaining the secret of the divine ordeal, Abulafia expounds on the psychological implications of the binding of Isaac. First he explains that the meaning of the trial is the actualisation of what is in one's potential by means of the deed that the trial involves. This actualisation takes place as a result of the intellect overpowering the imagination, or by the overpowering of the positive inclination over the evil inclination:

person may consider in his heart and place his attention to discover to which of these he would yield. For to transgress the love of God would be unthinkable, for their love should be uninterrupted, as this is the root. And, on the other hand, to slaughter one's son is also impossible, for it is out of the bounds of human nature, due to the mercy of the father that cleaves to him powerfully. Such a person would form within himself two inclinations, imaginary and intellectual. The imaginary one would tell him that under no circumstance is he to kill his son, for it is not the will of God that a person should spill blood, even foreign blood, and certainly not the blood of one's own son who is his own blood. One who spills blood is a murderer, and the Torah said, 155 "whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," etc., and it is also stated: 156 "Do not murder." The imagination will give the person many reasons such as these and will offer him proofs that are sensed or imagined, though accepted as if they were intellectual. If the person on trial is a perfected intellectual, like Abraham, he will not be persuaded and will not listen to this, but will laugh at him and tell him "the Lord rebuke you, Satan," [Zachariah 3:2] - is there any comparison

between love of God and love of my only son, so that they may be weighed one against the other; that I should not perform the Will of my Master; for both my son and I are obligated to honor Him. And if you tell me that He commanded us not to spill blood, I will answer you, 157 that the mouth that forbade is the mouth that permits. For did not God command us to spill the blood of a murderer who perpetrated his crime with premeditation? And is it not written, 158 "and if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbor," etc., and is it not said "life for life" [Ex. 21:23]? He only commanded us not to murder when the will to do so comes only from the murderer. Notwithstanding this He commanded us to kill a murderer convicted by [the evidence on two witnesses, by means of [one of] four types of [judicial] death penalty: stoning, burning, beheading and asphyxiation. He commanded us to destroy the seven nations, and also [the

And perhaps the imagination will test him, and he will accept the challenge and consider it an intellectual challenge. This then brings about dependence on the two inclinations which

undoubtedly are the intellect and the imagination, both of which are angels [Divine messengers]. Although one is a good angel, and the other its opposite, the one an angel and the other Satan, both together exist for the good of the species, whereas one is good and the other bad for the individual;" one is called the Angel of Death, and Satan, and evil inclination; and the other is called Angel of God... Thus, it is written, "And God tested Abraham," and at the conclusion of the trial it is written, 151 "and the Angel of God... " Trials and tests come only for the sake of good, "for God is come to test you" etc. [Exodus 20: 17]. This is a great benefit. And so too: 152 "that He might test you only to benefit you in the end." If the one who is tested is found to be perfect in the actualisation of his intellect and his words are true, then his success is complete.153

This is the pragmatic aspect of the secret of the trial. In the course of the discussion, Abulafia explains how this trial actually takes place in the case of Abraham who was tested.154

At times a person may think in his heart that he loves God with a great love, to the extent that if a command would come to him, and it appears to him that it is God's will that he takes his only son and slaughter him, due to his great love of God, in order to illustrate to himself that great distinction between these two types of love: love of God and love of his son. A

## 276 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 277

nation of] Amaleq and his seed, until his memory and seed be erased from under the heavens. From these accepted intellectual claims come great gifts, when God aids the intellectual. Thus, he goes to fulfill the Divine command, referred to as the trial of the



intellect, or of wisdom, or the purification of knowledge. And it is known that God did not command any prophet to commit any act of madness, and certainly not to slaughter his son. And as witness to this Abraham indeed did not kill his son. Rather, the will was only in the domain of the intellect and was a trial of the insight alone, in the form of prophecy. Regarding this and other such situations His Honor was revealed as a result of the binding of Isaac. And it is said that Satan wanted to impede Abraham so that he would not be willing to sacrifice Isaac. So too he wanted to hinder Isaac, so that he would not be drawn after the will of his father. And thus did Samael say to Abraham, "Old man, what are you doing?" etc. 159 The entire narrative was clearly recounted, as the Rabbi indicated in II, 30 [of the Guide for the Perplexed]. Indeed, the Rabbi revealed the nature of the powers, and their names: Samael, serpent, camel, and what is implied by these names.

Rather,

the Will was only in the domain of the intellect, and was a trial of the insight in the form of prophecy.

We ought to examine the claims of the two sides: the imagination bases its claims on the plain meaning of the verse, i.e., on the imaginary aspect of Scripture. Accordingly, the injunction against spilling of blood is to be taken literally. 160 The answer of the intellect is, at first glance, an attempt to show that it is impossible to prove the argument of the imagination from the plain meaning because the claims of the imagination are contradicted in other verses. In fact, the intellect answers in accordance with the intellectual understanding of the verse. When the intellect claims that the destruction of the seven nations and `Pimaleg are explicit commands that contradict the prohibition of murder, we must understand this according to the hidden meaning. In Sefer Sitrey Torcuh, 16 ' we read:

V-PSTYM [u-pigtimâ□□flax] and V-PSTN [u-pigtanâ□□flax] are equal in numerical value, and their secret is that they are combined of two inclinations within the souls [NFSVT nefigot].

And the root of this [is hinted at in the verse]: not to don clothes of mixed material, so that the purified will be unified. If one dons clothes of mixed materials, one will not be unified. And 162 "God will erase his name from under the heaven." Behold, it is said, 163 "I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amaleq;" and He also commanded you, 164 "You shall blot out the remembrance of Amaleq from under the heaven, do not forget;" and He said, 165 "the hand is upon the throne of God, God will have war with Amaleq from generation to generation" [YD KS YHâ□□yad cal kes yah] Since this is so, observe how much this commandment benefits us. And although it seems to us one of the easiest commandments to perform, it is yet considered a severe commandment. For this reason our sages o.b.m., have stated, 166 "be as careful with an easy command as with a severe one, for you do not know the reward of the commandments." This is one of the commandments that

In analysing the words of Abulafia, we learn that the story of the binding is conceived as an inner conflict, a man testing himself to

see if he is capable of having his intellect rule over his imagination. The opening of this section does not speak of Abraham necessarily, but rather of a man who thinks in his heart of what his response would be if commanded by God to sacrifice his son. Will he be able to forego his physical-imaginational propensity as a result of a command from the intellect? In various places we find statements that leave no room for doubt as to Abulafia's conception concerning the actuality of the experience: God did not command any prophet to commit any act of madness, and certainly not to slaughter his son.

278 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System the nations of the world complain about and persecute us on its account... It appears to me that I have already revealed to you all the reasons of the Torah, and it is as the Rabbi [Maimonides] o.b.m., said, that the entire intent of the Torah revolves around [the two commandments] "I am the Lord... ," and "You shall have no other gods... " i.e., to prevent idol worship from contaminating the pure soul.

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 279

murder constitutes the plain meaning of that commandment, is not the correct explanation of the verse. In *Sefer tiottim haHaftareih*, 169 he writes:

And it is written,' 70 "whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed;" and the verse goes on to provide the reason for this, "for in the image of God He made man." The secret meaning of this is that if one kills the true body of the other, and does not perfect himself, he will be punished by the punishment of death. And this is indicated in the verse "sheds man's blood [sofek darn ha-,achirnl."

The murder of 'Amaleq is construed within the framework of the murder of the inclinations of the soul—the imaginary element. On account of this, Satan complains. For a clearer presentation of this matter, we read in the anonymous *Sefer Toledet*

For [with respect to] 'Amaleq , the distorter, the swift nation ['MLQ M`KL QL â□□`Amaleq me-(akkel le- cam gal], the battle against him goes on from generation to generation]. For the hand is upon the Throne of God [KY YD KS YH]â□□the Throne will not be whole, nor will the Blessed Name be whole so long as Amaleq the distorter exists. For the secret of 'LHYM ['Elohim] is YH, which, when fully spelled out [as] YVD HH contains the numerical value of the Tetragrammaton. Then, He will be made whole. And 'LHYM = 86. And when the Throne is made whole, it will also be 86, and the Throne [HKS" (= 86)] will be called 'LHYM. 168 And within the mind is the imagination, which is [called] 'Amaleq â□□ Mecaqqe1 [the distorter]. And thus, upon his destruction, Nature [HTIYâ□□ha-teba c ] will be whole, for it is also numerically equal to 86.

He who does not perfect himself, i.e., his intellect, he is the true murderer, because he destroys his own Divine image. Indeed, he who is successful in the trial, and his imagination is under the

control of his intellect, regarding him Abulafia writes:"

One who exchanges one sheep for another, which is called a ram, and this one is slaughtered as a sacrifice and the other is saved, it will be remembered for the good, and he will laugh in his heart; he is the victor.

Here Abulafia bases himself on R. Abraham Ibn Ezra, who says regarding the meaning of sacrifice:'72

For when he gives up each portion in its time, such a one saves his portion for the world to come.

Just as the commandment to kill 'Amaleq is important, because it results in perfection, so too the killing of a murdererwith-intent is also a commandment. The imagination that attempts to rule over the intellect is its intended murderer, and therefore there is a command to kill him. From analysing Abulafia's works it is

possible to state that even the claim of the imagination, that the prohibition against

Let us consider Ibn Ezra's statement in a psychological light: when the 'sheep', i.e., the lowest aspect of the soul, the imagination, also called a 'ram', is sacrificed, then the intellect is preserved. Moreover, there is the play on the words 'and he will laugh [YSHQ yisaheqâ□□Yishaq] in his heart; he is the victor' also indicates this meaning. The one who is defeated in this battle is the imaginationâ□□Satan. In Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed (11,30) we read with reference to the Binding of Isaac: And the Holy One, blessed be He, was laughing at both the camel and its rider...

280 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 281



The camel and its rider refer to Samael and the Serpent. Thus, "YsHQ" the intellect, which vanquishes Satan, is also an allusion to the story of the binding. Up until now we have seen an interpretation based on a reading of the Binding of Isaac that makes use of philosophical terminologyâ□□intellect and imaginationâ□□employed to explain the imaginary text of the written Torah. 173 There is one final stratum, however, in the esoteric understanding of these verses in the Torah. A more sublime layer becomes revealed in the process of Abulafia's explanation of particular passages from this story, based on his unique method of exegesis. In Sefer Sitrey TOrdh,174 he writes:

Said the great Rabbi Moses son of Nahman [Nahmanides] in his commentary on the Torah, for it is already revealed that even a seemingly insignificant detail is an Explicit Name.

HDYN [middat ha-dinâ□□the attribute of Judgment]. 'YL HLB  
 ['ayil ha-lebâ□□the sheep, the heart] is an acronym for the verse  
 'LHYM YR'EH LV HSH L'OLH BNY = 78 = HVH VHYH VYHYH

[hOweh we-haydh we-yihyehâ□□is, was and will be] = 3 times the Tetragrammaton (3 x 26 = 78). N'HZ BSBK = 150 =BGLGVLY HGLGL (be-gilgule ha-galgalâ□□in the revolution of the wheel).

Not all of the details of this quote are clear, but notwithstanding this, we have here an example of how to explain one verse which may be understood as referring to the powers of the soul and, in addition, expressing theological truths by means of reading it in accordance with the Holy Names. In concluding this section we call attention to the fact that this spiritualistic method, based on linguistic foundations, as related to the narrative in the 'Binding' is also encountered in an early work of R. Joseph Gikatilla. In one of the versions of Sefer ha-Niqqud), 176 we read: If you, my son, want to rise up to the level of intellect - to

the secret levels of wisdom, in the process of your learning let your eyes be diligent' 77 and prepare the knife and altar and fire. Stand and bind hand and foot, and contemplate the verse and its intellectual conception, place the words and letters to their sum, and also contemplate the secret of the vowels. It seems that the very task of this linguistic method, which

In this work Abulafia illustrates how one ought to understand the verse ('LHYM Y'EH LV HSH BNYâ□□Iohim yir'eh 10 ha-seh beni) "God will provide Himself the lamb for the burnt offering" (Gen. 22:8):' 75 'LHYM is a holy name, and YR 'H = 216 = 3 times the name of 72 letters; LV = 36 = 3 times the Name of 12 letters. After pointing this out, Abulafia writes:

And every Master of the Kabbalah knows that 'LHYM is an adjective and thus, He is the Judge, i.e., the attribute of Judgment. This is the meaning of HSH LOVLH BNY. Indeed, L WLH = HIVL [he-calulâ□□the caused], and 'YL is taken as an acronym referring to the everlasting heart, which is present past and future. And N'HZ BSBK BQRNYW [ne-,eehaz ba-sebak be-garnawâ□□caught in the thicket by his horns] (Gen. 22:13)] in the revolutions of the wheel [or sphere], for they are in the form of the thicket.

is similar to that of Abulafia, requires preparation similar to that of Isaac's preparation for the binding to sacrifice. What is implied

here is that we must gain control over ourselves and bind our materiality to be able to contemplate the conceptual realm.

## The Narrative of the Exodus from Egypt

Concerning the secret of the trial, as it appears in Sefer Sitrey Tardh,' 78 Abulafia again discusses it in terms of the conquest of the intellect over the imagination; however, here he illustrates it in a different way:

'LHYM at the beginning refers to the Judge, and thus, we find at the end of the verse HSH L'OLH BNY = 513 = MYDT

## 282 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 283 of the Active Intellect upon the human intellect, after having subdued the power of the imagination and placed it under its control. The realization

of the intellect is associated with the supernal waters, which refer to the conceptual forms, whereas the imagination dwells within corporeality. This is the implication behind Israel's rise and Egypt's fall. The person who succeeds in having his intellect be victorious is the true Israelite, whereas one who is sunk in the depths of imagination is the Egyptian. With slight variation, Abulafia returns to the motif of the Exodus in his 'Osdra `Eden Gdnuz:182

If the Testor will probe the experienced sage, the subject of this providential event will be victorious. And he will thus know and recognize the nature of the imagination and will always subdue its power by his intellect and be saved in eternal salvation under the watchfulness of Providence. For He will take His true and trustworthy servant out of the bondage of time and will rescue Israel from Egypt, from under the control of Pharaoh, King of Daemons, the master of sorcerers and magicians, and he and his nation will be drowned in the sea of reeds. And then [the sage] will receive the Torah from Sinai with confidence and his reward

will be great... and when a nation that passes through the sea, as on dry land, over the supernal water, is exchanged, in place of a nation drowned in the Sea of Reeds [the last sea], in the depths of the lower waters and one is rescued and the other destroyed, so too will one lamb be exchanged for another.

The victory of Israel over Egypt is expressed as the victory of the intellect over the imagination. Pharaoh is conceived as the king of 'daemons' and is the symbol for the demonic imagination."°  
This view returns again in 'Iggeret ha-Musdr, 181 attributed to Maimonides, where we read:

And all that is mentioned in this Book of Exodus concerning the biography of the one who saved Israel from Egypt and Pharaoh, and concerning the sinking of their enemies in the sea, that was passed through by Israel, and the story of the [bitter] waters of Marah, which occurred prior to the reception of the Torah, all refer to the liberation of the bodies and the salvation of the souls upon the reception of the Torah. And again, in Sefer ha-Idut:183 "And [that the people] may also believe in you forever" 184 this refers

to the two kings: Moses king of Israel, and Pharaoh king of Egypt. And the secret meaning of this is that the title 'king' always refers to another of its own kind, just as the earth element is king over the inclinations, i.e., of those of the earth, and so too the intellect is king over the intellect. In order that the words we always say, 'A remembrance to the Exodus from Egypt' not be construed in error, its true secret refers to a remembrance to the exodus of the YSRYM [yesdriminclinations]. This is derived by exchanging the letters YM [of MSRYMâ□□ misrayiniâ□□Egypt] by means of Aâ□□J, B-6, or by exchanging these two letters for one another. And its secret allusion is to Israel's Exodus, as a remembrance to the intellect that activates the intellect.

Moses is conceived here, as also in 'Iggeret ha-Musdr, as the Active Intellect, 185 and PROH [Pharaoh = HTR he-afarâ□□the

My son, you must know that Pharaoh, king of Egypt, is really the evil inclination and that all of Israel genuinely constitute one entity in relation to the human intellect, and this may be derived from the degree of the name Israel, and its composition. Our master,

Moses, peace be upon him, is the divine intellect, and Misrayim in general constitutes one body, i.e., the universal body. Within it are organs that are the masters and rulers, and other organs that are servants, i.e., secondary organs. And the land of Goshen is the place of the heart. And you know that the children of Israel were ruled over by the evil Pharaoh, who enslaved them by means of hard labors.

In these two quotes the Exodus from Egypt is explained as the actualization of the human intellect by means of the Active Intellect. Thus, there is a correspondence between the Exodus and the reception of the Torah, which also involved the effluence

## 284 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 285

12 pathways for the 12 tribes. All of this took place on the physical plane. And regarding what was confirmed by proofs, being regarded as wisdom among the men of speculation with



reference to three types of perception: physical, imaginary and intellectual; the intellectual is the most sublime of these, and after that comes the physical, and after that the imaginary... This being so, if one today understands this wonder by the power of his knowledge of God, it would undoubtedly be the case that he would grasp regarding Him more than those who passed through the sea on dry land but only perceived the experience in their bodily sensation. Indeed, if there were people there, who did understand the truth in their intellect by the power of their knowledge of God, so as to perceive it wholly to its end, with both sensation and intellect, then certainly they are more greatly distinguished than one who comprehended it with his intellect alone. And so too did our Sages o.b.m. state to us regarding that generation by calling them the 'generation of knowledge', for the least among their women perceived wondrous perceptions, as they said,' 88 "a maidservant saw on the sea what the prophet Ezekiel, peace be upon him, did not."

element earth] refers to the inclinations rAFR (afarâ□□dust = 350 = YSRYMâ□□yeariniâ□□inclinations]. The true liberation to which the Torah refers is not (merely) a physical exodus from exile, but Israel's spiritual redemption, i.e., the liberation of intellectual powers from the prison of the body. The Exodus from Egypt is also explained as the step that the person takes to come closer to his Creator because as long as he is in exile, i.e., sunk in illusion, these imaginings are obstructions to the comprehension of the Divine; when the intellectual becomes actualized, however, it becomes a bridge between man and God.

All the cunning of reality, all the stratagems of the Torah and the craft of the commandments exist in order to bring close those who are far, at the epitome of distance, to the epitome of proximity to Him. All of this is in order to remove all intermediary [levels] that bind man in ropes of deceit, so as to liberate him from their hold, as was the case with the Exodus from Egypt and the crossing of the sea as on dry land. And this is in order to place only one intermediary between man and God, i.e., the powerful heroic human mind that empowers itself with the power of the Torah and commandment, the revealed and concealed, which in themselves

constitute the Divine Intellect. Indeed, when he reaches this completely, some of these intermediaries that enslaved man with their hard labor, in mortar and brick, will be removed, and he will be given the Torah, and it will be received, after the enemies are drowned in the sea. 186

We who succeed in emerging from 'Egypt' today, i.e., in realizing our intellect from potentiality to actuality, are more distinguished than those of the earlier generation who actually passed through the sea of Reeds, without having understood the hidden significance of the event. In Sefer Get ha-ÂŞemat, 187 Abulafia writes:

For every intellectual knows that regarding the splitting of the Sea of Reeds, which was a miracle of the highest quality known to us, its meaning, as we received it in Kabbalah [apparently meaning tradition] is that they passed through by means of

These quotations explain the Exodus from Egypt in a manner corresponding to the explanation of the Binding of Isaac. As we have seen regarding one of the verses of the story of the Binding, which was transformed into the various Names of God, we similarly find a reading of three verses that depict the splitting of the Sea at the time of Exodus from Egypt, based on the Names. I refer here to the verses of Ex. 14: 19-21. These verses were already explained during the Geonic period as referring to the Name of seventy-two triplets of letters, for each of these verses contains seventy-two letters. Abulafia discusses this Name derived from the verses in various places, and we will cite here one quote that relates these verses to the idea embodied within the Exodus from Egypt. In *Sefer Sitre Torah*,<sup>1</sup> 89 after a discussion of the Name of seventy-two, Abulafia writes:

These three verses... For He is the One who hears your prayer, and He is the Name of the activities, the Name that changes all the natures, the Name that animates the soul and also the

heavens, and by it does the sun function on the waters, and with it do all the suns [gemagim] function. It is a witness to the function of the Name, and also attests to the functions of Moses... the comprehension of the Holy Spirit. And know that the point [nequdah] was innovated by the comprehension of the Creator and the form [be-siyyur ha-yOser we-ha-surah, nithaddthiih ha-nequdah]. The Name of the Creator and the form is SDY [Scidday], but the Name of the form of what was formed is Metatron. Know that at the end there are three verses and they are the epitome of the sphere [or wheel] and these three bespeak and indicate three, but the tenth verse is the meaning of the Explicit Name.

#### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 287

was renewed); BSYYVR RVH HQVDS (be-siyyur ruah ha-qc;idegin the form of the Holy Spirit); HSVRH 1:115SVH BYSR (ha-surah hidguhiih ba-yeserâ□□the form that was renewed by the impulse); SM HYVSR WHSVRH SDY (km ha-yoser we-ha-

suriih Saddayâ□□the Name of the Creator and the form is Sadday); and SM SYVR HYVSR MTTRVN (km

siyyur ha-yesur Metatronâ□□the name of the figure of what was formed is Metatron). These expressions are the only ones that concern

us here, and thus omitted the other combinations in this quote that contain the numerical value of 931, for they have no direct bearing on the Exodus.

This quote is based entirely on the numerological equivalents of 931, and all of the combinations that I will discuss below, have the numerical value of 931: SLSH PSVKYM (geldgeih pesuqimâ□□three verses) refer to Ex. 14: 19-21, which by means of a numerology refers to God, who is ' ' VM'A TFYLH (kmeac tefillcihHe who hears prayer). And this Name is the SM HFULVT (gem ha-pec ulatâ□□Name of the activities) and the SM HMSNH KL HTB `YM (km ha-meganeh kol ha-teba

cimâ□□the Name that changes all the natures). These matters are associated with the Exodus from Egypt, because the hearing that is attested to in Ex. 2:24 and 3:7 constitutes the beginning of the redemption, which took place by means of Divine functions which were manifested as alternation of nature.<sup>19</sup>° What was spoken of until now was only the external manifestation of nature; whereas all the following expressions refer to the emergence of the intellect into actuality, by means of the function or intellection of Metatron, or Shadday, or the Holy Spirit:

el SM HPVEL HNSMH (km ha-pOc ha-negamahâ□□the Name that

makes the soul), and BSYYVR H-YVSR WHSVRH (be-siyyur ha-yOser we-hasurahâ□□in the figure of the Creator and the form); and 'NTHDSH HNQVDH (nithaddegah ha-nequclah- the point

Actually, this commentary on the Exodus is part of the general framework of Biblical narrative containing spiritual content.

Indeed, we may find motifs of the story of the Exodus, combined

in the context of a more elaborate Biblical epic form, also interpreted in accordance with the spiritual principles:191

For this reason did we leave Egypt and receive the Torah, upon exiting from the narrow places to the wide spaces, so that we subdue our hearts upon entering the land of Canaan, the land wherein our holy ancestors received their revelations, where they subdued their inclinations to the Creator.' 92 For the entire intention behind the giving of the Torah was for this, to conquer and subdue the inclinations and unnecessary desires. For indeed, God knows our nature and remembers that we are dust 193 and therefore He did command to save the remnant of our beloved 194 from destruction. What is referred to in the expression 'the remnant' S'ERYT (ge,erit) is the same as the term S'ER BSRYNV (serer besdrenuâ□□kinsmen), in the context of S'R (seerâ□□blood relation). And YDYD (yedidâ□□beloved) refers to the One, called "Beloved above and Delightful below," 195 referring to the Divine Intellect, whose effluence is in partnership with man.



In conclusion we note that the conception of the Exodus as the emergence of the spiritual potency from under the rule of the corporeal realm may be found, apparently due to Abu-

288 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System lafia's influence, in Sefer Hemdat Ycimim by the important Yeminite Kabbalist, R. Shalom Shabazzi, who states:'96

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 289 not accidental. According to Abulafia we are obligated to remove the verse from its plain meaning, for otherwise we are not able to discover the mysteries hidden therein, which, in particular instances, contradict the plain meaning. This dialectical view introduces a severe split between the revealed and hidden Torah. Man cannot accept both the plain and hidden meaning if they contradict one another. The Torah in its plain meaning, i.e., the written Torah, is set aside for the intellectuals. In Sefer Hayye ha-Nefeg,' 99 Abulafia writes: -

"And the Egyptians dealt ill with us": 197 the soul is speaking here of the power of the body: "and they laid upon us hard bondage:" in the world of time and its vanity: "and we cried out to God:" in prayer and repentance: "and He saw our affliction:" in the hands of the material world: "and our toil:" in the desires of the body: "and our oppression;" referring to the soul and the intellect in the hands of the angry one who causes diminution by the servitude of the clinging mud [the place of suffering] and the heating of the fire of hell: "and He sent an angel:" referring to the intellect "and He took us out of Egypt": by means of suffering, from the body... to torment the sinful body, through Moses and Aharonâ□□the good inclination and the intellect in the brain, and Miriamâ□□the soul.

G. The Two-Fold Torah In our foregoing discussion we provided the essential

quotes dealing with two stories that constitute high points in the history of Israel: the Binding of Isaac and the Exodus from Egypt, both of which were explained as allegories for one process: the

victory of intellect over imagination. In this sense there is an identity of purpose between narrative and commandment. Thus, a question may be asked, which many of the opponents of philosophy have asked: Is there not a contradiction between the secrets hidden in the Torah, sought after by the intellectuals, and the plain meaning of the verse? Did the Binding and the Exodus actually take place or are they merely inner meta-, non-, a-historical processes? Do the commandments come to teach us the truth or to help the intellect overpower the imagination? In all of the quotes provided above, Abulafia does not refer much to the principle taken by many of the allegorists who followed Maimonides: "The sense of the verse does not leave its plain meaning." 198 And it seems to this writer that this omission is

The Divine Wisdom from which the Torah overflows must necessarily be revealed in such a way that there would be within it internal contradictions 2  $\hat{\text{A}}^\circ\hat{\text{A}}^\circ$  [debdrim soterim 'et 'elu] and issues concealed in each other [mistaterim be-tok 'elu]. What is understood by those who take interest in it, i.e., the sages who

are on the level of the plain meaning, is what they can accept, based on what they are able to think before they begin to study the Torah. All of this is as the essential quality [of the Torah] that the plain and widespread [meaning of the] Torah should remain in the hands of the multitude of sages and fools, righteous, and wicked together, for as long as the world exists. Within it were placed golden apples, hidden within silver filigree work, with pearls and fine precious stones concealed in its belly and hidden within the halls of the letters, so that the treasures will be found only by those who truly seek them out. And the intent behind this is that the true Torah be preserved in the hands of the few, the elite of the species, the choicest of the human species so that the unique individual perceive from its effluence the secret of the Unique Name and its mysteries, and receive from this Name, bliss and pleasant benefit.

Indeed, according to Abulafia, Torah as it was studied by the heads of the academies of learning, who were his contemporaries, was merely the physical Torah: These combinations provided wondrous information to

those who understand them. I am well aware that there are those who consider themselves wise, who would look at them

290 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System as nonsense, but woe to those self-proclaimed sages who are indeed perplexed. For I know that of most of the sons of the Hebrews today, the educated ones study the Torah merely on a physical plane; do not possess spiritual souls. For they mock when they see in this work spiritual matters, and though they be Hebrew (BRYM, c ibrim) they are blind (VRYMâ□□wrim), and do not possess a true heart. But, rather, most of them made for themselves gods of gold and silver, and transgressed in view of the Divine Presence and [in view of] His Holy Torah, and to them gold is spirituality. And they forgot by making for themselves wings. But indeed, as for the entire Torah in general and in all of its particulars, from beginning to end we have received a true tradition, based entirely on the understanding of the Tetragrammaton.2"

The enormous gap between Abulafia's view of the essence of the Torah and that of his Rabbinic contemporaries brought him to the conclusion that the Torah is not yet to be found in the hands of Israel, but will be revealed in its purity only during the Messianic era. 2 ° 5 In the story of the pearl, Abulafia's parallel to the famous medieval parable of the three rings, 206 he indicates that the unique pearl, which symbolizes true religion, is in the hand of no one. Indeed the nation of Israel has priority in receiving it, in that they are the 'son' of God, but they have not yet received it. The concept of Torah as it appears before us in Abulafia's writings, reveals the influence of Averroes. Each level of human being received the Torah on the level appropriate to his understanding. The masses receive the plain meaning, and it is in accordance with the Divine Wisdom, that this stratum alone be in the hands of the masses. By contrast, the Sage is obligated to understand the intellectual Torah:

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 291 masses.  
And this is due to the depth of the true understanding and the  
weakness of the recipients.m7

To prevent faith in illusions,

all the works of the thought of the philosophers were composed,  
so that they [the intellectuals] be able to find the truth in what they  
investigate and so that those who come after them not err on  
account of the illusions and lies that caused many to err, and  
were a stumbling block for them as regards the articles of faith.  
Numerous invented doctrines arose, resulting from improper  
deliberation and they were called by names similar to those that  
the philosophers called 'effects', 'consequences,' which they  
already call signs and proofs and miracles and wonders, having  
established that nothing is impossible from the point of view of  
wonder, and it is no wonder that all of them were drawn to the  
religion; and yet the Torah and the religion [can be considered]  
true, only as it results from proper speculation.2Â°8

A sage who attained to proper understanding of the secrets of the Torah is not permitted, however, to reveal it to the common people, the 'vulgus': It is proper that every sage should know that this [i.e., hiding

the secrets of the Torah from the masses] is the divine intent, for He desired to reveal hidden matters to the sages, and to obscure [even] revealed matters from the fools, as the Rabbi [Maimonides] explained in part HI of his Guide, in his introduction to the Merkcibith.209

In Sefer Sitre TOrdh,210 moreover, Abulafia emphasizes that Maimonides did not reveal any of the secrets that the prophets did not reveal. He says:2"

It is an obligation to all who have the capacity to understand it, and follow its path, that they investigate and know and recognize it, in order to verify the tradition and remove from it the imaginings provided by the tradition out of necessity, to the



'speak not in the ears of fools, for he will despise the wisdom of your words,' and the ancients 212 have said in their parables 'place not pearls before swine.'

## 292 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 293

It would seem that Abulafia's stance as regards the need for secrecy contradicts our previous analysis, because in two additional places in this work he emphasizes that:

Regarding the Torah, its revealed aspect is complete truth and its concealed aspect absolute truth, and both together are unified in their truth. Understand and investigate deeply this secret and its words, one by one, and know and be illuminated by what you derive, from what is proper to be conceived in accordance with

the human intellect, and what is proper to be believed, in accordance with the effluence of the Divine Intellect, with regard to these three matters that I have indicated: the Creation, or the pre-existence of the world, the parables of the Torah, new or primordial, and the revealed and concealed aspects of the Torah. And I know that my intent will be deliberated, if one look at the various works worthy to be read, and one should consult deeply, as it is proper to deeply consider these matters.<sup>213</sup>

Elsewhere in Sefer Sitre TOrdh, Abulafia summarizes the point of this quandary with the following words:<sup>214</sup>

And do not think that regarding what I indicated to you concerning the secret of the knowledge of the Name and the splitting of the sea by virtue of it, that the revealed aspect of the Torah is merely a parable. No, Heaven forbid! For this is complete denial of the truth of the Torah. However the truth is... that the Torah operates on two modes of existence, and both together are good. These are the revealed and the concealed aspects; and both are true. This you may understand by considering the body [and the soul]

together. That as for them, one is new and the other primordial; one revealed and the other concealed, as if one is the parable and the other the referent to it but both are found together. And this is a sufficient hint as to the wondrousness of this secret that I have already revealed completely and properly to your eyes, in this book.

In these two quotes, Abulafia presents together, with equal value, two opposing stands; on the one hand, the preexistence of the world, the Torah, and the hidden layer within it, and this stand is understood 'according to the effluence of the Divine Intellect': on the other hand, he presents the world as created, the Torah as new, and the plain meaning of the Torah as 'according to the power of the human intellect.' It appears to this writer that Abulafia's reference to 'the wondrous allusion,' tips the scales in favor of the first stance, and he urges the student to decipher the meaning of his allusions. We cannot expect that such an unconventional view, during the Middle Ages, and, particularly, the belief in the pre-existence of the world, would find clear

unequivocal formulation. If, indeed, Abulafia sees the hidden aspect of the Torah as its main feature, we must expect a great conflict between this and the level of plain meaning, notwithstanding Abulafia's words regarding the truth of both of these levels. In connection with this, it is in order to cite a passage found in an anonymous manuscript that belongs to the school of Abulafia:215

The curse of the plain [meaning] is the blessing of the hidden one, and the curse of the hidden [meaning] is the blessing of the plain [one].

The view of the Torah as the Active Intellect, as we explained earlier, does not only transform the Torah to the cause that actualizes the potential intellect; the Torah is also perceived as the medium for the striving toward self-identification with the Active Intellect. This identification is made possible due to the partnership, as it were, between man and Torah. Both are intellectual beings who can integrate into one another. In Sefer ha-Tdut,216 we find testimony to this:

And they said "a nation likened to a [burning] thorn bush": on this condition did we receive the Torah at Sinai. For if it be observed, it would appear as fire, as it is written, 217 "at His right hand was the fiery law unto them." On Mount Sinai God descended as in fiery flame, and Moses saw the Angel in

294 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System the fiery flame, and the Torah was written as black fire upon white fire. 218 Behold! We are fire, and also He is fire, and 219 "the house of Jacob shall be as a fire and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, kindle in them and they shall devour them." If they do not heed the Torah, all this would occur in reverse, except for "and devour them" for the Israelite [burning] thorn bush burns with fire and is not consumed.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 295 erly deepen our understanding as is appropriate. As the Sages o.b.m. have said: 226 "invert it and turn it around turn it and turn it again for everything is in it, and all of it is within you, and all of you, in it;

look into it and do not stray from it... " for it illuminates everyone of the six directions, and all four corners of the world, and she is at the center 227 of all [in the form of its] numerologies.

The comparison of Israel to a burning bush and to fire, on the one hand, and that between the Torah and fire, on the other, is not original. Abulafia derives it from Midrashic sources,<sup>221</sup> or from commentaries 221 that make such comparisons. What is new in his presentation is the idea that by means of upholding the Torah we become likened to it. This conception parallels the expression the solitary 'meditators' who come to be likened in their activity to the activity of the Active Intellect.<sup>222</sup>

The first part of this quote deals with the Torah as the Active Intellect which contains within it all the forms of the world. The second part speaks of man as he is contained in the Torah, by virtue of it containing all the forms of the world. And yet, on the other hand, man contains within himself the Torah, by virtue of his

being the intellect that intellectualizes the forms, or the ideas, of the world. Abulafia relies on the text of Pirq-y e 'AM-228 that contains the saying "turn it and turn it again, for everything is in it... ," adding to this formulation the expression "and all is within you." Regarding the path by which we achieve the state in which the Torah is found within us, we learn from his words in Seler Sitrey Torah, 229 that:

22 letters of the Torah are the holiest of the holy. Regarding

It is worth mentioning that the word ['esâ□□fire], as having the numerical value of the word SVRH [surdhâ□□form, shape] appears already in the writings of R. Isaac Ibn Latif, and later in Abulafia and Gikatilla. The image of brightness can depict the nature of the intellect of both man and Torah. Regarding this we read in Sefer Sitrey Torah:223

"The voice of God speaking from the fire," i.e., from within the brightness.

In Sefer Mal-teal:1 ha-Sefirot, 224 the idea of the identity of Torah and man appears in a clearer form:

And as for us, with all of this, were it not for the perfect Torah we would all be lost. And, indeed, by the mercies of God, blessed be He, the Torah instructs us today, and all is depicted before us: both the supernal and lower worlds. All is recognized by us in accordance with it,<sup>225</sup> if we are willing to be drawn by it to the Divine prophetic intention and prop-

them it is stated at the end of Tractate 'AbOt, that our sages said "Ben Bag Bag said: turn it... everything is in it," and all of you are in it. We have received and know beyond doubt that the name mentioned twice [Bag Bag], at the end of this tractate of spirituality, composed by the rabbis, the saints of the land, o.b.m., was doubled in order to reveal wondrous secrets. After we had been informed about all positive attributes and all intellectual qualities, they returned to explain the epitome of the intent, and alluded to it by saying 'turn' the 22 letters. And they said that the



entire world is within it [the Torah] and all of us [are] in the Torah, and from within it do we see, and from it we [do not] stray.

By means of the combination of the twenty-two letters, from which the Torah is composed, man is enabled to reach the

## 296 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 297

knowledge of the hidden essence of the Torah, and thereby to identify himself with it. At the end of Sefer Sitrey TOrdh 230 we find in various manuscripts a fragment that explains a poem composed as the conclusion of this commentary on the secrets of Maimonides' Guide. The commentary to this poem was apparently written by Abulafia himself. Thus we read in the margin of the verse:

'And son of Bag Bag, the enigma of enigmas, it is 'HVY they proclaim,'- meaning, son of BG BG = son of H' H'. Thus you have 22, and these are 22 letters, the holiest of the holy. By means of their combinations and revolutions the intellectual will understand all riddles and all hidden things; as they o. b. m. said: 'turn it and turn again, it seems that 23 ' all is in it.' And so did they o. b. m. say: 232 "in the future the Holy One Blessed be He will reveal the rationales of the Torah to Israel," and it is explained among us that this study is identical with the study of letter-combination. "It is 'HVY they proclaim"meaning, 'HVY is also numerically equivalent to 22, and they proclaim enigmas and hidden matters as we have stated. According to this text we were commanded to turn, i.e., to

struction the human intellect is also constructed. 234 The original order of the Torah is seen, according to midrashic sources, 235 as having a magical character:

The Torah and its sections were not given to us in their proper order, for had they been given in their proper order, anyone

reading it would be able to resurrect the dead and enact miracles. Therefore the order of the Torah was obscured. But it is revealed before the Holy One Blessed be He.

Abulafia paraphrases this quote with two changes:<sup>236</sup>

The entire Torah constitutes the names of the Holy One, blessed be He, and in this there is neither addition nor diminution and every letter is a world in itself. <sup>237</sup> Our sages o.b.m. have already stated that had the Torah been given to us in its proper order, man would be able to resurrect the dead. And God obscured the order (so that it not be misused by the degenerates of the generation), and revealed it to those who are worthy of being able to resurrect the dead by its means.

combine, the twenty-two letters numerically equivalent to 'HVY, the true Name of God, and by means of this the 'rationales of the Torah' will be made known to us, i.e., the intellectual view of it. Accordingly, it [the Torah] would be within us and we within it in

that the intellect becomes actualized by means of letter combinations.<sup>233</sup> Regarding letter combination there is another important issue connected with our discussion: The rationales of the Torah constitute its hidden aspect, i.e., the Oral Torah, which is arrived at by reconstruction, i.e., re-arranging the order of the letters, and constructing a new division of the words of the Torah. It may be that (the expression) turn it is intended to point to the attempt to arrive at the oral Torah. In other words, by contradicting the revealed structure of the Torah, by means of letter combination we are enabled to construct the hidden Torah and by this con-

The magical character of the source of this statement 'and enact miracles' is missing, whereas the expression, 'resurrect the dead' here implies to enliven the souls of mortals and transform them to activated intellects. <sup>238</sup> The second difference, no less important, within this formulation, is the determination that the true order of the Torah is revealed to those worthy of it; no doubt, this

revelation is embedded in the turning which Abulafia spoke of in connection with the passage from Pirtle 'Abot.

## H. Final Note

Before ending this discussion, it is fitting to note a parallel concerning the process of transformation from the stratum of plain meaning to that of the secret meaning between Abulafia and Averroes' theory of comprehension. The plain meaning of the Torah contains within it imaginary phenomena: corn-

## 298 The Meaning of the Torah in Abulafia's System

mandments and stories, and the enlightened one derives the intellectual component of it by transforming these imaginative forms into intelligibles. 239 The meaning of this transformation implies the emergence of the true Torah from potentia to actu,

and therefore Torah SWAL PH [Torah pehâ□□the Oral Torah] is called Torah SBFV`AL [Torah se-be foalâ□□the actualized Torah]. Because Torah is received by the intellectual and imaginative potencies, both together, the meaning of this transformation is that the imaginary matters become transformed to intelligibles and thereby they too reach their actualization. This process is, in actuality, the theory of comprehension according to Averroes. According to him, the potential intellect contains the imaginary forms, and man's intellect becomes actualized when these imagined forms are transformed into intelligibles. Just as the Torah that was given to us is the reflection of the Active Intellect in a material faculty, i.e., the imagination, so too, according to Averroes, the potential intellect is merely the corporeal, or potential aspect of the Active Intellect.<sup>24</sup>°

### Chapter Three Exegetical Methods in the Hermeneutical System of Abulafia

During the period when the Spanish Kabbalists began interpreting the Torah in accordance with the fourfold method of

interpretation,' which later came to be known as PaRDeS, in Italy, Abraham Abulafia developed a hermeneutic system based on seven layers of meaning. As in the case regarding R. Moses de Leon and the Zohar, so too with R. Abraham Abulafia, it is difficult to discern with precision the origins of those methods of exegesis.<sup>2</sup> Whereas a fourfold method of interpretation was widespread among Christian commentators and may have served as one of the sources from which the Spanish Kabbalists derived their methods, sevenfold methods are unknown among the classical conceptions of Christian hermeneutics. There were scholars<sup>3</sup> who likened Abulafia's system to that of his Christian contemporary St. Bonaventura, who proposed a system of seven levels in the ascent of the human intellect to the Divine Intellect.<sup>4</sup> These levels, however, are not construed as modes of Scriptural exegesis, and it is therefore as difficult to support such a comparison as it is to disprove it. By contrast, in Islam, in addition to the layer of the plain meaning of the text, we find sevenfold methods of mystical interpretation of the Koran.' It may be the case that here we can

## 300 Exegetical Methods in the Hermeneutical System of Abulafia

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 301 some traditions until he becomes an exemplar of the accepted faith.

discern a possible predecessor that, by various metamorphoses, influenced the Jewish Kabbalist. Abulafia's methods of Biblical exegesis have not yet received their due scholarly attention s and it is therefore proper to conduct a detailed discussion of them, in terms of their hermeneutic uniqueness, bearing in mind also that it constitutes the most detailed presentation of a system of Biblical commentary known among Jewish sources. Abulafia exhibits his system in many of his works that were written after 1285. 7 It is possible that an additional discussion of this subject was in existence, included in a work by Abulafia written apparently before 1285. I refer here to a commentary to Sefer Ye?-trah which is as yet unrecovered. 8 Based on the material in our possession it seems that this system was developed in Italy, as



this is where Abulafia lived from the year 1279 until 1291, after which we lose track of him.

Therefore, two types of people are associated with the method of plain meaning: those who have learned to read but who are not capable of advancing beyond that level of knowledge, and those who receive the plain message of the Torah from others. It is possible to describe the level of plain meaning as the pure transmission of the tradition, whose function is to guide those who are not capable of finding their path by means of their own intellectual initiative.' 2 In Sefer Mafteah ha-Hokmdt," Abulafia enters into an extended discussion on the nature of the nationaleducational function of this method:

For if at the onset of one's receiving the tradition, one were not given the articles of faith that would bring him under the wings of the Divine Presence [Selcinolh] and if one were not told of the matters that are under the dominion of his Master [i.e., God], His laws and statutes, and His Providence, to reward and to punish, for everything is His, and is under His dominion, [and if one were]

not given the testimony regarding what occurred to this or that one of His servants, who feared and loved Him, that they were rewarded the goodly reward due them, in accordance with the aspirations of the righteous of the masses, [and that He] brought retribution against evil deeds even before death, upon those who rebelled against Him and transgressed His will, and that He keeps grace for an extended time for the sake of the upright, and grants it even to their offspring and to the children of their offspring for many generations, and grants the opposite to those who stray far from Him and make Him angry; were it not for this Wondrous Divine Stratagem, a Wisdom not open to question, it would not at all be possible, the nature of man being what it is, that one would accept any of the articles of faith without this [form of] compulsion and verity.

A.

Peat, or Plain Meaning

Abulafia's definition of the way of pesha derives from the Talmud:9

The [meaning of] the verse does not lose its plain sense.

The 'plain meaning' is oriented to "the masses of people, women, and children." 10 Essentially, this is the first way by which one comes to understand Scripture:

and it is known that every human being at the beginning of his existence and in his youth is at that stage.

This is to say that "the masses" are likened to a 'child's mentality' in that the intellect at that stage is undeveloped. The plain meaning has clear pedagogic features; inasmuch as "man is born a wild ass," he must be given

302 Exegetical Methods in the Hermeneutical System of Abulafia

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 303

The purpose of the method of plain meaning is the education of the masses to perform good deeds and to cause submission to the authority of the law. Only those who are capable of developing beyond this level may receive the "true articles of the faith." This type of education is conducted by means of the instilment of fear:

And because the Torah was to frighten those who in the future were going to accept it, by means of reporting the retribution:

"And He will shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the ground will not yield her fruit" 14 all in consequence of the sin of idol worship, and then, the Scripture turns to the reward: 15 "The Lord will open for you His good treasure the heaven, to give the rain of your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands," all of which are promises on the physical plane... 16

of them for they will all die an unnatural death before your eyes; you will behold and your hearts will be glad. And so too did King Solomon say: 21 "Trust also in Him and He will bring it to pass," meaning to say: that which you wanted to do He will bring to pass and you will not need to do it. This matter which we are discussing is derived from the plain meaning of the verses discussed. This is to say that it is God who does battle against His enemies, the enemies of the Name, and the enemies of those who love Him.

This pedagogical passage tells us that within the plain meaning of the Torah there also lies the experience of teaching the masses conceptual truths in accordance with their level of comprehension. An example of such an attempt is found in the biblical account of the creation:

The articles of faith are causes that reinforce deeds, and therefore it is proper that they be related before anything else. This was the Scriptural intent in the plain meaning of the narrative of the work of creation, as related by God and by Moses. Since

the cycle of days which are sustained in their order is in accordance with the Divine intention it is therefore proper that we be told of them, that there was one day at the beginning, from which the seven days issued, which are the seven days of creation. It is proper that we be informed that on each day some particular thing was created. And as light is something exalted to the senses and is useful to the eyes of all living beings, who possess eyes, more than any other known boon, and being an all-inclusive phenomenon it was necessarily created first, ex nihilo, and having been created first, it is necessarily more exalted than all others. For one who is not wise has no way of construing the difference between essence and accident, and not only this, but the mind might construe the existence of darkness as necessary in order that there be light. For it is only the wise who can know the great difference between them. And as for the masses, it is not difficult to consider that light would illuminate the entire earth without the body of the sun [as its source], and to construe darkness as being something other than the absence of the light from the view of the

The subject of fear is repeated in Abulafia's description of plain meaning in 'astir `Eden Gdnuz:17

God, according to the plain meaning is conceived of in connection with the verse 18 "God will do battle for you and you shall hold your peace." This is the good and fitting way, as it arose in the battles (!) against the Egyptians. They [the Hebrews] were afraid, after being released from bondage. When they were observed behaving in this way, God let it be known that this fear was indeed their ultimate goal, as it is written:" "Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will work for you today, for the Egyptians whom you see today you will never see them again." This He said after saying "Fear not." Thereupon He provided the reason for the removal of their fear by saying, 2 Â° "God will do battle for you"â□□i.e., if the war were only between you and them, it would be proper that you be in fear of them, as a slave is naturally in fear of his master. But since in this case it is their Master and your Master who is doing battle on your behalf, it is proper that you not be afraid. Although it will not come to pass that [the roles would] be reversed so that you will be their masters

and they your slaves, today your eyes will behold your being avenged

304 Exegetical Methods in the Hermeneutical System of Abulafia  
surface of the earth. Also, the masses would not know that the Earth is spherical. They would construe it as a half-sphere or as flat, as their eyes would dictate to them ... for they would not observe the world structurally but would accept what they are told, that such and such is the case.<sup>22</sup>

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 305

B.

Perug or Interpretative Commentary



Abulafia's understanding of the plain meaning of the Torah as a pedagogic device for the education of the masses by means of threat and promise on the one hand, and of the communication of truths that the vulgus can understand, on the other, is similar to the opinion of R. Isaac Albalag, an Averroist thinker at the end of the thirteenth century, on the nature of the Torah:

The essential intention of the Torah is the success of the masses, their departure from evil, and their being taught the truths up to the point that their minds can understand. For due to their lack of knowledge and the limitation of their comprehension, they lack the capacity to understand the essence of the intelligibles and apprehend them as they are, but only in corporeal forms to which they are accustomed... The faith of the masses which results in agreement because of hope and fear... and the success of the masses consists in imaginary forms of behavior and in performing deeds that promise the hope of reward, due to the different types of service, and the fear of punishment, [which brings about] their departure from matters that would bring about the dissolution of society, and the disadvantage of the few in the hands of the few.<sup>23</sup>

This level includes the oral tradition's interpretation of the written Torah, i.e., the Mishnah, Talmud, and Targumim, namely, the Aramaic translations of the Bible. Its function is to explain those passages where the plain meaning of Scripture is unacceptable to commonsense. In Sebaâ□□ Netivot ha-Torah, (p.2), Abulafia illustrates the function of interpretation:

The Mishnah and Talmud explain the plain meaning of the Torah in such instances as [the meaning of terms such as]

"uncircumcised heart', which the Torah commands us to circumcise, as it is written: 25 "And you shall circumcise the foreskin of your hearts" - for according to the plain meaning it would never be possible to fulfill such a commandment.

Therefore, it needs further elucidation. It is thus explained in terms of the verses: 26 "And the Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of etc.," and further, it is written 27 "And you will return unto the Lord your God." Thus the circumcision of the heart refers to embarking upon the path of return to the Blessed God, and is unlike the act of circumcision

performed on the eighth-day old child, which, contrary to what the uncircumcised of heart and foreskin may think, cannot be interpreted as repentance. Thus, the circumcision of the child must be taken literally, and indeed, it serves many functions.

Another feature of the plain meaning is its involvement in matters of sense perception. This viewpoint appears in the sections quoted above, but is more clearly expressed in Abulafia's work *Sefer Mafteah ha-Holcmat*:<sup>24</sup>

The plain meaning involves the particulars. This is because the plain meaning is based on what can be sensed, and it is only particulars that may be sensed.

According to Abulafia, what we find in the Talmud are the authoritative interpretations of those sections of the Torah that are difficult to understand according to their plain sense but which do not cancel the plain meaning of the verse, as the Christians have done.<sup>28</sup> Abulafia's view, as reflected in the above quote, was

influenced by R. Abraham Ibn Ezra, who in the introduction to his commentary on the Torah, 29 writes about the methods of the uncircumcised sages who say that the entire Torah is [nothing but] allegoresis and parables.

The same commentator discusses the necessity of interpreting the verse "and you shall circumcise the foreskin of your

306 Derug- and Haggadah

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 307

hearts" as based on a "figure of speech." Another point that indicates Ibn Ezra as Abulafia's source is the former's determination that the nose with its two nostrils was created for the sake of "four functions" which parallels the expression by Abulafia regarding the circumcision serving "many functions."

Whereas Ibn Ezra claims, however, that the Talmud in its present form was authored by sages who were expert in the natural sciences, and that it is incumbent upon us to study the natural sciences as they are derived from the Talmud, 3 ° Abulafia considers the Talmud as an interpretation of the Torah that solves only problems relevant to the performance of the miswat.

Commenting on the verse in Ex.15:3, Abulafia makes use of the second method of commentary:31

Regarding the interpretation of this verse, we may say that it instructs us that God, may He be exalted, does not forsake the sons of man, but watches over them like a man conducting a war. This being so, it is fitting that He be called 'man of war,' i.e., powerful hero, master of war. From this verse we receive confirmation that He is indeed so. Observe, that the Targum interpreted this as 'Mare Nashan Kerabaya ["The Master of Victory in War"]; i.e., the Master who is victorious in [all] battles.

Abulafia here refers to the statement by R. Samuel ben Nahman, recorded in Genesis Rabbah, 4; in answering the question,

Why, on the second day of creation, did the verse not state "it is good"?

he says:

"because the functioning of the water was not complete."

Homily, too, is intended for the masses:

This method is called Deru [exposition or homily], to instruct us that by its means it is possible to investigate and expound also to the masses, to the ears of all.

By contrast, the designations haggadah or Yiggadah refer, according to this system, to the idea of attractiveness, i.e., a rendering of the content that works well in its ability to draw the hearts to the proper path. It is the pleasant narrative to which the listener is drawn and wants to adhere. 33 In Osar 'Eden Ganuz,<sup>34</sup>

Abulafia exemplifies the various exegetic possibilities that avail themselves to the methods of Derug and Haggadah:

By means of Derug and Haggadah, the word , i2s- ['man'] refers to [the angel] Gabrie<sup>1,35</sup> as it is written<sup>36</sup> "And Gabriel the man Pis]...;" and it is written<sup>37</sup> "and a man Pts'I found him... ;"

alternatively we may say that refers to Adam, as it is written<sup>38</sup> "To this one we shall give the name igah [woman] for this one was taken from man [A..." "Or we may say that refers to Moses,<sup>39</sup> or, that it refers to the Messiah," as it is written<sup>4'</sup> "Behold a man Pts1 Semah is his name and from beneath him shall sprout... " And so too," "God is his name," for in the future time when the Messiah will come, he will be called [by the name of] God. This is the name the Righteous Lord will bestow upon him. To conclude, [we may say that] there is no end to the matters of Derug.

C. Derug and Haggadah, or Homiletics and Narrative Legend<sup>32</sup>

This method involves exegesis by means of broadening the meaning of the verse and augmenting it with details that appear to be missing. In Sebaâ□□ Netivot ha-TOrah (p.3), Abulafia says, regarding the third method, that it is:

like what the sages o.b.ni. explained: Why on the second day of creation the verse did not proclaim "it is good"; because the function of the water was not complete.

### 308 Derug and Haggadah

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 309 tation and in accordance with their homiletic and aggadic interpretations. [In this category we include] the commentaries of the illustrious Rashi, the plain-meaning commentaries of Ibn Ezra, the commentaries on the Torah by Nahmanides, and Leqah Tab by Rabbi Tuvia o.b.m., and [the commentary of Judah ben Samuel] Ibn Balam, and many others like them within [the Midrashim],



Genesis Rabbah, and Tanhuma, and so on among MidrasÂŠim and 'Aggadot.

The three modes of exegesis discussed above constitute a coherent group within the system of the seven paths explicated by Abulafia. The characteristic that unites them is the fact that the masses make use of them to understand Scripture. In his epistle Seba, Netibeit ha-Tdrah (p.3), the author writes:

And the masses will understand [the sacred Scripture] by means of one of these three methods. Some verses will be taken literally, some will be explained [Perussa] and some will be expounded upon homiletically [Derush-].

However, in Sefer Mafteah ha-Hokmdt, we read:43

The Torah was given because it instructs us for any and all purposes by means of three methods: the way of grace [Hesed] the way of righteousness [Sedeq] and the way of prophecy [Nebwah]. By their means three types of people are inspired and for

each type there is a [particular] method, corresponding to his ability and interest. The Torah first needed to be whole for the sake of the house of the righteous in the three methods: the first ones are dependent on the plain meaning and their like... and second to it is its *Perush* (interpretation) for the words of interpretation are also taken in their plain meaning; and third, the *derug* and *aggadah*, when they are understood as their plain meaning as well. This is the case, for the masters of the plain meaning did not divulge to the masses that within their words there is a secret meaning, nor did the masters of interpretation and homily. It is therefore proper to include these three methods under one rubric, bearing the name of the first method, for they are all the plain meaning.

Abulafia's words regarding the commentaries of Ibn Ezra and Nahmanides are surprising, for as we indicated in the previous chapter Abulafia derives from these two commentators many of his intellectual conceptions concerning the Torah. A possible explanation of this classification is found in Abulafia's *Sefer*

Netivot ha-Torah (p.4). There he claims that Ibn Ezra's commentary expresses an attitude antipathetic to gematria [numerology], because Ibn Ezra wanted to obscure the secret. And in this case he had just cause, in accordance with what we mentioned regarding the first three methods of exposition. For his (i.e., Ibn Ezra) work by and large was written for the masses, with the exception of countable sections where he explicitly states that he is referring to a secret, and the intellectual will understand "and, if he merits, he will discern."

Structurally, Nahmanides' commentary is similar to that of Ibn Ezra, in that the hints to secret doctrines are few, and most of his commentary is oriented to the explication of the plain meaning.

This formulation corresponds to the description recorded in the previous section which sees the written Torah in terms of

Scriptural verse, Mishnah, and Talmud. In *Sefer Mafteah haHolcmot*,<sup>44</sup> Abulafia includes other works in this category:

We have already stated regarding these worthy matters, explanations which suffice to explain their intention in accordance with the plain meaning and in accordance with the interpre-

#### D. Philosophical Allegory

The fourth exegetical method "instructs as to the esoteric meaning that tends toward the opinions of the philosophers".<sup>45</sup> According to Abulafia, those who follow this method,

310 DeruS and Haggadah removed most of the Torah from [the level of] plain meaning, and were quite aware of this. And they tread the path of philosophy and said that the entire Torah [consists of] parables and enigmas.<sup>46</sup>

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 311 will investigate the plain meaning. And he will recognize that those words are said to fools. My indication of this is by virtue of the fact that after little reflection it is clear that it is not the intent of the Author of the Scripture to inform us of the literal story of [for example] Adam, Eve and the Serpent - that these three particular characters be taken at face value. For upon little reflection, if these three individuals be taken at face value the story would indeed be laughable, in accordance with human nature. And clearly it is not the intent of the Torah to relate laughing matters. And our sages have already hinted at this when they said, "that the Holy One, blessed be He was laughing at the camel and riding him." This pronouncement indicates the wholesomeness of the wisdom of our sagacious and pious philosophers o.b.m. and it directs our attention to the fact, that when the philosopher sees that his intellect does not suffer the plain meaning, he investigates its inner sense [penirniyutO], and he already knows that it is possible to abstract the [allegorical] meaning from the literal sense, even in the event that the one speaking was a fool who only intended his words to be taken literally.49

In a similar vein, in the epistle , e. boic Netibot ha-Tdrah (p.3), we read :

And the fourth method consists of the parables and enigmas of all the [sacred] texts... and the few elite will comprehend that these are parables and will investigate them and provide equivocal names as these matters are explained in the Guide for the Perplexed.

We will see presently how Abulafia explains the verse

from Ex.15:3, based on this method:

The fourth method is based on the procedure of philosophy wherein the power of the intellect is denoted by [the name of] God, and they would state that He is constantly at war with the limbs of the body. The higher powers of the soul are called 'the children of Israel' and the corporeal powers are referred to as 'the Egyptians'. It is worthy of every wise sage to be drawn to Him

who has ultimate victory, and after the One regarding Whom we would accept that no one can stand against Him in war. 47

The four methods explained above correspond, according to Abulafia, to the fourfold method of exegesis of Scripture developed by the Christians. In his epistle *Seba c NetibOt ha-Tarcill* (p.3), we read:

The four paths mentioned... all of the nations make use of them; the masses [make use of ] the first three and their sages [make use of ] the fourth.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the above quote is Abulafia's own interpretation of Ex.15:3: the intellect battles against the powers of the body. This level of commentary corresponds to the second of the three types of man mentioned above: the *Siiddiq* (righteousâ□□Sedeq), the *Hasid* (piousâ□□Hesed) and *Nabi* (prophetâ□□Nebwah ). Abulafia sees in the sage, the type of person who makes use of allegory.

He describes the allegorist's attitude toward the plain meaning as follows:

According to the opinions of the perfect and pious philosophers the plain meaning, commentary, Midrash, and Haggadot are all parables and enigmas, and it is thusly that the philosopher

This observation is indeed noteworthy for this is the first explicit testimony that the fourfold method of Christian exegesis was known to the Jews, and that comparison between the Jewish and Christian hermeneutic methods, according to this Kabbalist, bears out their similarity. These words of Abulafia, which scholars 5Â° have not yet noted, strengthen the assumptions of Bacher and Scholem that the Kabbalists developed their exegetical methods in consonance with Christian exegesis.<sup>5</sup>

312 Derug and Haggadah

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 313



"and you will circumcise the foreskin of your hearts."

We must, however, bear in mind that Abulafia uses the plural form "all of the nations" (kol ha- ,ummcit) and if we may derive from this that the Jewish Kabbalists were aware of the hermeneutic methods of the Christians, we can also infer that the widespread distribution of the fourfold method was also in use outside the Christian community, i.e., among the Muslims." Before we go on to explain the fifth method, it is appropriate that we compare these four methods of Abulafia with those found in the writings of his disciple, R. Joseph Gikatilla. In his commentary to Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed,<sup>53</sup> Gikatilla divides the methods of Scriptural exegesis into four categories: Perust (meaning interpretation), Be'ur (explanation), Peter (clarification) and Derut (homily-exposition). In our opinion, there is a great similarity between these four methods and the four methods of Abulafia explained above. Perust, according to Gikatilla, is explained as follows:

The Perust consists in distinguishing each word from words similar to it by the accepted means.

Derut is explained by Gikatilla in great detail: Derut denotes homily on the plain meaning, but not on the inner meaning. [Thus] it is a word composed of two words 'De Res' ('of the poor'), since for a poor person a small coin is sufficient, whereas for the wealthy, unless you give him a great gift he will not thank you. So too for the person void of the secrets of Torah: if you expound to him according to the manner of the plain meaning of the Torah, it will suffice him.

The correspondence between Perust and Abulafia's third method is clear. In both cases Derut refers neither to secrets nor to parables,<sup>55</sup> and its appraisal is of relatively low value, as is implied by the parable of the poor person and the coin. Be'ur (explanation) is defined as the passing on of the inner secrets that flow from the source of

Divine wisdom like into a wellspring of explanation; to know each secret unto its verity.

According to G. Scholem, 54 the implications of this term correspond to what the Kabbalists call *Pettit* [plain meaning], and it corresponds to Abulafia's first method. The term *Peter* is explained by *Gikatilla* as follows:

The term *Peter dabdr* [clarification of a matter] implies that [there is] something that the reader finds difficult to explain. When he partially understands the matter, but does not understand the entire intention [of it], it is called *Peter*, as in *mayini poterini* — tepid water.

This method, in our opinion, corresponds to the remaining methods of Abulafia, allegory and the subject of the Hebrew letters and their combination.

E. The Method of *Sefer Yesirdh*

The designation of the term Peter as a method used to answer questions that arise out of the investigation of the verse, corresponds to Abulafia's second method, in that the Perust [of Abulafia's methods] is used in solving problems connected with the proper understanding of verses such as

The fifth method is the first of three paths that constitute Abulafia's Kabbalistic hermeneutic approach. In his work 'osar `Eden Ganuz he calls it the Kabbalistic method based on the Sefer Yesirdh.<sup>56</sup> However, his description of it within the framework of Seba Netibot ha-Tardh (p.3) is different:

An example of this method is the lesson that the Torah instructs us in its use of the large-case letter Bet [א] of the word Berekt, the opening word of the Torah, which must be written larger

314 Deru g and Haggadah than the other letters. <sup>57</sup> So too, as regards the twenty-two large case letters as they appear within

the twenty-four books of the Scripture, such as the Het of we-  
Harah 58 which must also be written so (n) 59 So too, as regards  
the two inverted letters Nun of "And it came to pass when the Ark  
set forth... " 60 which appear there [3 3] and so too many others  
such as these, as they were received according to the Masoretic  
tradition, regarding the instances of difference between the form  
as it is written and the form as it is read, and orthographic variants  
[as regards the presence or absence of the letters YOd and Waw  
in words], and cases where letters are enswathed or written  
crooked."

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 315

Sin) correspond to the first three supernal Sefirot: Keter, Holy nah  
and Binah (Crown, Wisdom, Understanding).<sup>63</sup> Indeed, it is  
difficult to consider that the purpose for choosing this section of  
Weiha-Bahir, to illustrate this particular form of exegesis is  
because of its allusions to the Sefirot. Comparison between the  
words of Sefer ha-Bahir and the description of the fifth method, as

it appears in the epistle ebt/< Netibot ha-Torah indicates one similarity: Both refer to single letters. Based on this we can understand why this method is called the "Method of Sefer Yesirah," for in Sefer Yesirah we also find discussions of isolated letters. The question arises, however, why does Abulafia not mention Sefer ha-Bahir in his Seba c NetibOt haTOrdh? It seems to us that it was not the theosophical content of the section that drew Abulafia's attention, but the fact that within it he found an explanation based on isolated letters. For this reason he refrained from quoting a discourse with theosophic implications when years later he returned to the topic of exegesis in Seba c Neap& ha-TOrah. Instead he chose the Masoretic tradition as an example of the fifth method. This method is reserved for the Kabbalistic sages of the nation of Israel. In Sebac NetibOt ha-Torah (p.3), we read:

This fifth [method] is the first of the levels of interpretation reserved only for the Kabbalistic sages of Israel, and it constitutes a method different from those used by the masses. It is also different from the methods used by the sages of the nations of the world, and differs also from the methods of the Rabbinic sages of

Israel who make use of the [first] three methods... and none of these [the letters] veritable matters was revealed to any other than our holy nation. Those who tread the path of the nations will mock [this method] and will consider them to have been written for nought and are merely [examples of] the mistakes of the [Masoretic] tradition. Yet, they are gravely mistaken.

This description corresponds well with the Masoretic tradition, and it is difficult to explain its association with the Sefer Yesirah.

Furthermore, when Abulafia gives an example of this method, to explain the verse in Ex. 3:15, he chooses the explanation of Sefer ha-Bahir and says as follows:

And the fifth method is by means of the Kabbalah, in terms of what is written in Sefer ha-Bahir regarding a king who possessed many fine palaces, and gave names to each of them, and each palace possessed a fine quality unique to itself. He said "I will give a palace to my son  $\square\square$  the one whose name is 'Ale." Also the one whose name is "YOcl" is good; also the one whose name is "Sin". "What did he do? He gathered all three together, and

made from them a Name, and made one house. It is also said there [Bdhir] "Alef is the head, Yod is second to it, and Sin includes the entire world. Why does Sin include the entire world? Because (it is a [prominent] letter in the word) Te g ubah" (repentance).

This section contains a precise quote from Sefer ha-Bahfr (paragraph 26 of the Margolioth edition), 62 and raises many questions. First and foremost, does Abulafia consider the method of exegesis based on the Sefirot to be the level following after the allegorical method? The quote from Sefer ha-Bdhir has a definite theosophical connotation: The three letters (Alef Yod

It is worth noting that the method of the Massorah, which Ibn Ezra considers the lowest level of understanding the Torah,<sup>64</sup>

316 Derug and Haggadah



Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 317 tihâ□□a  
call], BKTR, HSPG, SHG SSD SVH [gawehâ□□equal], or  
KRHG, KRZD, QRVH [karuhaâ□□they called her], HUKR  
[hukdrrecognized], and so on. Or, we can consider it [i.e., 'YS-  
'isman] as 311 [its numerical value], as single letters, Alfin or  
Betin or Gimlin, etc.... and so on with all their combinations. This  
also can be done with any word of any conventional language.  
Another method is substitution [hamarah], for instance, to take the  
word 'YS, and by means of the A-43, G-+D method [i.e., a letter is  
substituted by the following letter in the 'Alef Bet series], it  
becomes BKT, which can be recombined to form [the word] KTB  
[ketdb- writing], or we may use the A- \*T, B-6 method of  
substitution [where the first letter becomes the last, second letter  
next to the last, etc.] and yield TMB, and so on with the other  
methods of substitution. Indeed, the essence of letter combination  
is that the substitution is acceptable only if it involves the process  
of natural 'revolutions'. This refers to the substitution of the first  
[letter] for the last, the last for the first, and the middle to the last  
and the first for the middle, and the middle to the first. For  
example BZH-4-1ZB, etc... everything within its similitude, for

example, as regards the verse [Ex. 3:15], we would take the first letters of each word, Y'MYS, recombine them and yield the word 'YSYM ['igim] [a class of angels and according to Maimonides] a term denoting the Active Intellect. So too, we take the last letters of each word of the verse, HSHHV, which has the secret meaning of 'YS ( p ig-man) and refers to Divine Providence (HSGHH). Together, the first and last letters yield [the words] HHSBVN SVH (ha-hegbcin gaweh-the sum is equal), also MASH MRKBH (Ma'aseh Merktibtih-works [speculation of the Divine Chariot], 'MS 'SM, [the combination of the three 'mother letters'] HRKBT SM BSM [harktibat gem be-tern-the combination of one Name with another], YHVH BSM SDY, SDY BSM [Sadday within the name Tetragrammaton]. The inner letters of the verse [Ex. 15:3] are HVY LHM HVM which can be rearranged to form VVY HMLHMH [w(ave ha-milhamah-the connecting points of the war (?)).

is transformed by Abulafia into one of the important methods of his exegetical system.

## F. Restitutio Literarum

This method is explained in various of Abulafia's writings as follows:

The method of returning the letters to their prime-material state until they make possible the issuing of new forms.<sup>65</sup> Elsewhere we read: The sixth method [consists of] returning all the letters to their prime-material state and you, i.e., [the practitioner] give them form in accordance with [your] insight.<sup>66</sup>

In his work 'osar 'Eden Ganuz, <sup>67</sup> we find an illustration of this method in a commentary to the verse Ex. 15:3:

The sixth [is] the method of returning the letters to their primematerial state and giving them form in accordance with the power of wisdom that confers form. This is the inner path of the Kabbalah and is called among us by the general name 'the wisdom of letter-combination' which includes seventy languages. Regarding this [method] it is stated in Sefer 'Twenty-two cardinal

letters; He engraved them and hewed them and weighed them and permuted and combined them and formed by their means the souls of all formed beings and [the souls] of all that in the future will be given form.' This matter is like taking the word ['ig"---man] and considering it as SY' [i.e., a word composed of the same letters, meaning 'Summit'] based on its primary weight [equivalent letter and numerical value]. In addition, it involves weighing it with its established scales [i.e., equivalent numerical value which yields] RF'EL [angel Raphael] or SM . [Sebetâ□□staff], or KYRH [kirahâ□□wax] or YQR' [yiqreâ□□will occur] or QRYH [qeri'

318 Derug and Haggadah Taken all together, the three numerical values [of the first, middle and last letters] are 361, 321, 150, which yields altogether MNYN HHSBVN HSVVH [minycin ha-hegbOn ha-gawehthe sum of the equation is equal]. And its secret, the sum 832 = NSMH BNFS [negdmiih ba-nefegâ□□the soul is in the animating power of the body], NFS BNSMH [nefeg be-negcimcih-the animating power of the body is in the soul], and many other equivalents may be derived. Indeed, the secret of

MLHMH = HY HSM MLING ruilhamcih = hay ha- gem male)- man of war = the full life of the name] SMV YLHM [gem6 yilahem-His Name will do battle]. Behold, the secret of YHVH MLHMH is QDS LYHVH [YHVH milhamcih= qadog lyhvh: Tetragrammaton is a man of war = sanctified into Tetragrammaton] YHVH SMV [YHVH genial = YH times YH, yielding 225, and VH times VH = 121. Combine 2(00) with 1(00) to yield 300 [Sin] and 2(0) with 2(0) = 40 (Mem) and 5 with 1 = 6 [Wa y ] i.e., SMV. Thus, YHVH = SMV. In working with this sixth method you will discover wonders upon wonders in each and every matter.

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 319

In the section just quoted, Abulafia illustrates various techniques belonging to the sixth method:

1. Gematria (numerology): 'IS (man) = RF'EL (Raphael) 68 = Â§-pT (Sebetâ□□staf) = KVRH (Korehâ□□occurrence or reader)... HVKR (hickarâ□□ recognized) = 311.
2. Ternurah (substitution):

)1Â§ within the A--43 G-+D substitution method becomes KTB (ketc-i12 - writing) and within the A-FT B- . S substitution method becomes TMB (no meaning) (and kolel).

which denotes the Active Intellect. By taking the last letters of each of the words, HSHHO, which has the numerical value of 321, we yield the word HSGHH (itaggandhâ□□Divine Providence). The term which denotes the Active Intellect is related to Divine Providence. Thus Abulafia combines 'ISYM = 361 and HSGHH = 321 together, equaling 682, yielding M `ASH MRKBH (Ma'aaseh Merkabdh- the account of the Divine Chariot) = 'ASM + 'AMS (the three essential letters of the 'Alef Bet according to Sefer Yesiriah which represent (A = air; S = fire; M = water) = (SM BSM gem be-gemâ□□a name within a name) = YHVH BSM SDY (YHVH be-gem S adday-Tetragrammaton within the nameSadday) = SDY BSM YHVH (Sadday be-gem YHVH-Sadday within the Name Tetragramma-ton) = HSBVN Â§VVH (hegbOn gciweh- equal value). What he intends to say is that by means of combining one Name with another (SM BSM), i.e., by

means of employing Abulafia's technique, we are enabled to attain a relationship with the Active Intellect (ISYM), which is a sufficient cause for activating the Divine Providence (HSGHH). We now come to the middle letters of the verse: VVY LHM HVM = VVY HMLHMH (wawe ha-inilhamah- the connecting points of the war) = 150. The sum total of the first, last, and middle letters, 150 + 321 + 361 = 832 = MNYN HHSBVN HSWWH (minyan ha-hegbOn ha-gciwweh- the sum of the equal equation) = HNSMH BNFS (ha-negamah ba-nefeg - the soul is within the animating power) = HNFS BNSMH (ha-nefeg be-negeimah- the animating power is within the soul). Abulafia considers the words IS MLHMH ('e millyimah- man of war) which equals HY HSM ML'E (Hay Ha-em Male- the full life of the Name) = SMV YLHM (genid yilcihein- His Name will do battle). He then makes further use of Gematria; YHVH 'ITS MLHMH = 460 = QDVS LYHVH (qcicidg la-YHVH- sanctified unto God Tetragrammaton).

3. Seruf (letter combination): a technique whereby the position of the letters is rearranged without changing the letters themselves.

In accordance with this method, the verse Ex. 15:3: "YHVH 'IS  
MLI--. IMH YHVH SMO" is rearranged. First, by taking the first  
letters of each word Y'MYS = 'ISYM eLgim)

### 320 DeruS" and Haggadah

4. By means of the multiplication technique he derives that YHVH  
= SMV (Tetragrammaton = His Name) YH multiplied by YH = 225,  
WH times VVH = 121 = 346 = = 300 M = 40 W = 6. In the epistle  
Sheba Netibot ha-MI.(71h (p.4), Abulafia lists the above-  
mentioned techniques, in addition to others that are within the  
parameters of the sixth method:

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 321

One who employs the sixth method is likened to the Active  
Intellect, who gives form to matter. In the epistle Seba c Netibot  
ha-Torah (pp. 3-4), we read regarding the sixth method that: It is  
suitable to those who practice concentration 69 who wish



And under the rubric of this method are Gematria [numerology], Notariqdn [initials], klillufim [exchange of letters according to a certain pattern], Temurdh [substitution], Hillufey hillufin [ongoing exchanges] and Hillufely hillufin up to ten operations of exchanges. And we stop at ten [exchanges] due to the inherent weakness of the human intellect for regarding exchange, to which there is no limit.

When we compare this method with the fifth one we find that the two oppose each other. For whereas the Masoretic method is careful in preserving the exact form of the Scriptural text in all its details, the primary technique of the sixth method consists in breaking apart the existing order of the letters, and "returning the letters to their prime-material state." One who employs it breaks apart the unique form within which a word appears in the text, and "liberates" the letters from their initial meaning, and through a series of operations one introduces within the matter which lacks form (i.e., the letters) a new form and a new meaning. The source of the interpretation is the mind of the interpreter, who is regarded as donator formarum, and the source is not within the material, i.e., the letters which in and of themselves are not bound to

particular forms. In this sense, the sixth method also differs from the fourth, the allegorical method. For whereas in the fourth method, the commentator is construed as discovering the allegorical meaning originally hidden within the verse, and his mind is merely a tool, according to the sixth method the verse receives a meaning whose source is within the mind of the commentator.

to approach God, in a closeness such that His activity  $\hat{\square}\square$  may He be blessed  $\hat{\square}\square$  will be known in them to themselves, and it is they who come to be likened in their activity to the functioning of the Active Intellect." And the name of this method includes the secret of the seventy languages (SIYIM LSVNVT(gib(im legiinot) which is numerically equivalent to SYRWF H 'OTYWT [seruf ha-acitiyyot  $\hat{\square}\square$  letter combination] 71 ... since they [i.e., the operations of exchange] are likened to the particular forms, which are endless. And although as far as their material level [is concerned] they are all one, their forms change and appear to him [the practitioner], this one following that secret one.

## G. The Method of the Names

### that Leads to Prophecy

The seventh method is, according to Abulafia "the holy of holies."

This method is called Holy and Sanctified.<sup>72</sup> It is called the Holy of Holies and is the inner sense of the inner meaning."

The aim of this method is to bring the contemplator of the Torah to the state of prophecy, by means of transforming the verses of the Torah, or other sentences, into Divine Names.<sup>74</sup> We will now consider Abulafia's description of this method in his 'Osar 'Eden Gdnuz:<sup>75</sup>

[this method] is divided into many sub-sections. Among these [the verse Ex.1 5:3] YHVH 'IS MLHMH YHVH SMV may be

322 The Method of the Names That Leads to Prophecy construed as one word, or [we may] consider each and every letter as it stands by itself. In accordance with these and similar methods, which do not involve the transposition of letters, you may regard the entire Torah as Names of the Holy One, blessed be He. It is as if you yourself create the words and their conventional meaning. Know that when you rise up to this most exalted level, which is attainable to the understanding intellectual sage by means of divine aid, it would be an easy matter to make an effort to adequately grasp this method, and then you will immediately succeed in all that you endeavor and God will be with you. This is the method which I called 'the Seal within a Seal' [hjtam be-tolc Nitam], and it impresses the seal by means of the engravings of the seal, they considered it also as Holy unto the Lord. Thus you will be worthy of being called 'IS MLHMH YHVH SMW [a man of war whose name is God]. For from war are born both ONG [cOnegâ□□pleasure] and NUA [nega câ□□plague] [citation from Sefer Yesirdh]. These corresspond to the war between the constellation of Aries, born of VH [of the Tetragrammaton] and the

constellation of YH [of the Tetragrammaton] and [you will] know them.

This method bases itself on the transformation into Divine Names of linguistic phenomena which are in need of interpretation. In the above-mentioned quote the verse was first transformed into a Name of God, and afterwards each and every letter was construed as a Divine Name. The first approach derives from a conception noted in the previous chapter, according to which the entire Torah is a Name of God. 76 Here, one verse is considered in its entirety, as a Name of God. Abulafia's second approach is also not original with him. In *Perug Habdiila de-rabbi `Aqiba*, we read:<sup>77</sup>

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 323

Elsewhere in this work we read:

72 names, from 22 letters, which are 22 names of each and every letter of the Torah.<sup>78</sup>

In both of these approaches Abulafia's intention is identical: the transformation of the Scriptural verse, or of the Torah itself into Names of God. This act of transformation is likened to the creation of new words:

You create the words and confer onto them [or innovate] a [new] meaning.

In a similar vein, the seventh method is so defined:

You should consider that [it is] you [who] decided on its meaning, and you [who] created it in accordance with your wish.<sup>79</sup>

Whereas in Sefer Mafteah ha-Ho garding the seventh method:

101161-8<sup>o</sup> .

Abulafia writes re-

It is proper for those who walk on this path to produce on her behalf a new universe, a language and an understanding. Abulafia's use of descriptive verbs is very interesting in this regard. Twice he uses the verb 'create' [barad and once 'innovate'. Can it be that these expressions indicate a function different from "the provision of new forms" of the sixth method? For while in the sixth method the practitioner is likened to the Active Intellect, can it be that through the 'creation' or 'new' words the practitioner is likened to God Himself? In the section quoted from 'Oar 'Eden Gtinuz we find a sentence that contains magical implications: ... when you rise up to this most exalted level, which is attainable to the understanding intellectual sage by means of divine aid it would be an easy matter to make an effort to adequately

At the beginning of the [operation] one recites the Tetragrammaton. And as for the letters of the Name each and every one is a Name [as if it were written by] itself. Know, that the Yod is a Name, and YH is a name, and YHW is a name. The Yod

by itself is a name to inform you that each and every letter is a name in and of itself.

## 324 The Method of the Names That Leads to Prophecy

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 325

grasp this method, and then you will immediately succeed in all that you endeavor, and God will be with you.

R. Samuel bar Nahman said in the name of R. Yohanan "three are called by the Name of the Holy One Blessed be He: the righteous, the Messiah, and Jerusalem."

This magical element is also indicated in the expression "to make on her behalf a new universe..." This idea of Abulafia is apparently related to a section in Midra Dotiyyilit de-rabbi `Aqiba,



version 1:81 In the future the Holy One, blessed be He, will reveal His

Explicit Name to each and every one of the righteous in the world to come. By its means are created a new heaven and a new earth, in order that each and every one will be able to create a new universe, as it is written: 82 "I will give them an eternal Name that will not be cut off." How do we know that this refers to the explicit Name [the Tetragrammaton]? Because it is written here 'an Eternal Name' and it is written 83 "This is my Name forever." Just as there this refers to the Explicit Name, here too it refers to the Explicit Name.

Whereas the Midrash states that the righteous will be called by the Name of God and will receive the Explicit Name and will be able to create a new universe, Abulafia refers here to the Messiah who will be called by the Name of God and will be able to create a new universe, for according to what we quoted earlier from Abulafia, "the righteous" denotes the lowest of the three spiritual levels. Before we continue our discussion on this matter we will

present the description of the seventh method as it appears in the epistle Seba( Neap& ha-TOrah (p.4):

The seventh is a unique method which includes all the other methods. It is the holiest of the holy, appropriate only for the prophets. It is the sphere that encompasses every thing, and with the apprehension of it, the speech [dibbur] that issues from the agency of the Active Intellect by the power of speech will be perceived. For it is the effluence that issues from the Blessed Name through the mediation of the Active Intellect upon the power of speech, as the Master [i.e., Maimonides] stated in the Guide for the Perplexed, II, 36. This is the path of the veritable essence of prophecy and it involves the knowledge and perception of the essence of the Unique Name, as is made possible to the unique specimen of the human species, the prophet who perceives it. For he [i.e., the Active Intellect] creates the Divine Speech [dibbur] for the prophet [and places it] in his mouth. It is not proper that the techniques of this method called holy and sanctified be expressed in writing a book, and it is impossible [to pass it on] unless the one who desires it first receive the knowledge of the Names of 42 and 72 [letters] from

another living recipient and is given some of the traditions, even the chapter headings.

Whereas according to the Midrash it is God Himself who reveals His Explicit Name, according to Abulafia, this Name is revealed also by means of the correct investigation into the Torah. An additional proof-text which indicates a parallel between the Midrash and Abulafia may be found in the abovequoted Midrash, in the section that immediately precedes the one just quoted:<sup>84</sup> In the future the Holy One, blessed be He, will bestow His Name on each and every righteous one.

This idea is formulated by Abulafia as:

Then you will be called a "man of war" whose name is YHVH.

We know from the Midrash:<sup>85</sup> In the above quote the seventh method is described as the method of attaining prophetic perception, on the one hand,

326 The Method of the Names That Leads to Prophecy and as the method of perceiving the Divine Name, on the other. The highest level of prophecy is described by Abulafia as the prophet's ability "to change any aspect of nature in order to verify (his) Divine mission. <sup>86</sup> The act of changing the processes of nature is elsewhere called "the veritable act," and is made possible by the debequt (cleaving) of the prophet and his becoming likened to the Divinity:<sup>87</sup>

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 327 Maimonides' conception of prophecy is explained by Abulafia as the unification of the part with the whole, and this unification is of a mystical nature. The term [the power of] dibbur (speech) appears in both the section quoted from Sebw Netibot ha-TO-rah where it refers to "the Divine effluence which prophesies." And it appears in

'oscir 'Eden Ganuz, where it is brought up in the context of Sefer Yesirah: dibburâ□□speech yesur (the creation of a human form), and in the context of Sefer Yesirah, we read:

This is the final aspect which He would make known to every unique and distinguished enlightened person [maskil] who is separated from the rest of the nation which proceeds in darkness and [who] did not perceive the clear light which illuminates above and below, [it is] the secret of the veritable act which changes aspects of the natural[ly formed] world by means of the general power of speech [until] the partialness of all species be returned and unified within his uniqueness by means of his likeness to the One who created him in His image and likeness. Thus he will have a whole portion in the world to come and will be blessed in the three worlds in all things, with all things, and [being] all things. And this knowledge will be for this person the aim of all his endeavors.

Here we are informed of the conception that stands behind the claim that the prophet has the ability to alter the course of nature.

This act of alteration is achieved by the unio mystica of the person; the part unto the whole, i.e., unto the Active Intellect through the agency of the Divine Name. In this regard, Abulafia went in the footsteps of Ibn Ezra who wrote:<sup>88</sup> "I have been made known to you by my name": for the virtue

Therefore the entire creation, and the entire act of speech [dibbur] emerges within the Name.

Here, it refers to the combinations of 'Alef Bet, mentioned at the beginning of the Mishnah. G. Scholem claims that the term dibbur refers either to the Name of God or to the letters of the Alef Bet, which both possess magical power. <sup>99</sup> The viewpoint that sees within the letters of the Alphabet a Divine Name is found in Habdalah de-rabbi Aqiba:<sup>9</sup>

Know that T S R Q, etc. [i.e., the letters of the 'Alef Bet from last to first] constitute the Explicit Name... Indeed, T S R Q A, is a Name.

Are we therefore able to see within the act of breaking up the words of the Torah to its individual letters, each of which is a Name, a technique for attaining *dibbur*—Divine Speech, or for attaining a Name which confers the magical power that enables one to create the world and (new) forms? It seems to this writer that we may establish a relationship between the terms *dibbur* (speech) and creation, and between language and world which appear in the section quoted from *Sefer Mafteah ha-Holcmdt*. Speech is the language to be created, by which we are enabled to create a new world. The explanation that associates the Name, which includes all the letters of the 'Alef Bet with language, which is also composed of these letters, and with *dibbur*, which is associated with both language and the Divine

of Moses is that he cleaved to the whole and thus through him the Name enacted signs and wonders in this world.

Elsewhere Ibn Ezra writes:89

When the part knows the whole, he will cleave to the whole and will create within the whole signs and wonders.

### 328 The Method of the Names That Leads to Prophecy

Name, is reinforced by Abulafia's words in 'Osar 'Eden Gdnuz<sup>92</sup> regarding the seventh method:

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 329 from your species [and] even more those forms that are inferior to your own species. Thereby you will be isolated and separated and set apart from all the ignoramuses who think themselves wise and thus every person will be in your eyes like unto domesticated and undomesticated animals and birds and you shall comprehend with your senses and intellect true apprehensions. And those similar to you will possess an image and a likeness and they are the true masters of Torah and those who truly fulfill the Divine commandments.<sup>94</sup>



Assuredly, Abulafia here follows the path that R. Abraham Ibn Ezra and R. Isaac Ibn Latif traveled before him, who, in accordance with Ibn Sina considered the ability of the prophet to perform miracles to be the summit of prophecy.<sup>95</sup> We now proceed to analyse two terms that appear in the sections quoted earlier with reference to the seventh method: *haskamdh*, namely, consent or convention, and *habandh*, understanding. The linguistic material transformed to its constituent letters from a verse that apparently had a clear plain meaning, or had philosophical-allegorical significance, needs to receive new meaning; a meaning that Abulafia calls *haskamah* or *habandh*. This meaning is nothing other than the understanding of the Torah by means of the Names, i.e., the transformation of the imaginary Torah to its true intellectual stature. For this sake the Torah is reordered to its original form, the form which enables the prophet to enact signs and miracles.<sup>96</sup>

This is the method that you are obliged to use for all the twentyfour books of Scripture that we have today, and after them,

for all the words of the sages of blessed memory, and after that you apply it to all books of wisdom, for thereby you will ascend and perceive properly what is worthy of being perceived, regarding every matter.

From here we learn that the transformation of verses into Divine Names or into letters which are Names of God is not associated exclusively with Scripture and may be done with any other book. Therefore the letters of the 'Alef Bet may indicate Divine Names without their having any exclusive association with Scripture. In other words, one who is capable of perceiving Divine Names in all linguistic phenomena or who can transform any linguistic phenomenon into a Divine Name is said to cleave to the Active Intellect and perhaps even to God Himself, in that he transforms everything that is not in and of itself intelligible into something intelligible:

Indeed, each and every body is a letter, and a distinguishing sign for one who perceives, so that by their means one may recognise God and His enactments. Every letter is a wonder and a sign and

a proof that instructs us as regards the effluence of the Name which causes dibbur (speech) to overflow through its means; and thus, the entire world and all years and all souls are full of letters.<sup>93</sup> By means of this transformation the human mind emerges

from potentia to full actualisation, for within his mind, one includes all concepts:

Now I will further reveal to you the secret of the real operation which changes the nature of parts of creatures by the virtue of the totality of speech [dibbur] until your intellectual spirit will become universal after it was partial; and [then] there will be comprised in you all the general substances which are

Because our intention is not for them [the letters], in order to illustrate to you the clarity of speech, or how the grammarians spoke; rather our intention is to transform everything that comes from Him in its conventional form (muskdin) and to purify the

language in the crucible of wisdom and the furnace of understanding, and by the probity of knowledge to have the languages revolve until they revert to their prime-material state. Then it will be possible to invent through their agency wondrous inventions. The combination of letters include seventy languages. They are the 22 letters, whose secret is the wheat (1:ITHâ□□hitahâ□□wheat = 22) full of goodness (TVBH -

### 330 The Method of the Names That Leads to Prophecy

tObditâ□□goodness = 22), twenty-two foundation letters, the foundation of the entire world. They constitute all completenesses and are set in the wheel, within 231 gates, and they are the secret of YSR'EL (Yisraelâ□□Y6' ['there are'] R'EL = [231] the name of the Active Intellect which transforms nature... 97

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 331

We may now point to the possible influence that this seventh method had on Abulafia's disciple, R. Joseph Gikatilla. In Saar ha-Niqqud, one of Gikatilla's later works, we read:98

Within the secret of the 22 letters you will find the entire creation of the world, its structure and all of its species. All is dependent on the letters. One who understands their hidden mysteries [as explained] in Sefer Yesirdh, will contemplate the depth of the letters, and no created being can contemplate their depth. This is certainly so in view of the fact that the Torah is a fabric woven of the letters. For when you say the word Beregit [BR'ESYT - in the beginning] whose six letters are combined, through the [act of] combination of these letters and the depth of the implications of their revolutions and combinations the prophets entered into and perceived the depths of the Torah .

may attain. The perfection of the masses is attained by the Saddiq (righteous), the perfection of the realm of the Saddiq is the Hasid (sage), and the perfection of the realm of the hasidim is the NOP (prophet). The distinctive quality of the Torah is that it is

capable of leading each of the three classes of people to their perfection. In Sefer Mafteah ha-Hoicmdt] Abulafia writes:99

The Torah was needed in order to guide us in these paths of three levels. The first level—the plain meanings of the Torah—is intended for the perfection of the righteous (saddiqim). For their sake the plain meaning of the parables and riddles endure, as do the simple meanings of the Midrash and Haggadah and their like. All of these are construed in terms of their plain meaning. And yet, the ultimate purpose of these is not in their plain meaning, as we indicated earlier, for the ultimate purpose of the Torah and its commandments, statutes and laws, is not that people should merely be righteous, without knowing any wisdom, merely rendering the service of a servant. Rather, there is a second purpose. The Divinity also intended that human beings should be righteous and that they should learn until they are wise. And when they observe the ways of righteousness and wisdom they ought to become sages. And further, there is a third intention: God intended that after human beings become sages they should attain to prophecy, for this is the epitome of the capacity of human intellectual grasp in this world, and it is for this

end that God originally intended the creation of man in this form... The Saddiq needs to take this form in its plain sense, in order to perfect himself in righteousness; but if he wishes to be a sage, it is proper that he take it [i.e., the meaning of the Torah] in its hidden philosophical sense. And indeed, if he further desires to prophecy, he is obliged to grasp it in accordance with the path of Names, the hidden path of the Kabbalah based on the Divine Intellect.

The connections between the Torah, the combination of the letters and the visions of the prophets who behold the secrets of the Torah, undoubtedly indicate the influence of Gikatilla's teacher. Gikatilla associates the method of letter combination with the prophetic experience, which instructs the prophet in the secrets of the Torah.

#### H. Threefold Categorization of Abulafia's Exegesis

As we have seen earlier, we may classify the seven methods of interpretation into three basic categories: methods 1-3, the various aspects of the plain meaning, applicable to the masses; method 4, allegory, is the method of the philosophers; and methods 5-7 are those of the ecstatic Kabbalah. This tripartite classification corresponds to the various levels of perfection that one

### 332 The Method of the Names That Leads to Prophecy

The plain meaning of the Biblical narratives concerning the binding of Isaac and the Exodus indicate the realms of knowledge of which the masses are in need. The mode of parable indicates the philosophical truths, i.e., the emergence of the intellect from potential to actualization, and the Divine Names derived from these sections of the Torah indicate the prophetic truths, those matters that relate directly to the Divinity. We may describe these three groups: The masses, the philosophers, and the prophets form a ladder whose beginning is in the material realm and whose end is in the spiritual realm. As for the masses, we saw in Section



One that they understand only the material realm. The philosophers understand the processes of the actualization of the mind, and they constitute the intermediate stage between the material and the spiritual realms. The third level concerns itself with the Divinity, i.e., the spiritual realm. To further illustrate this tripartite system of classification which stands behind the seven methods described earlier, we provide a quote from Abulafia's work *Sefer Mafteah ha-Hoktnot*:<sup>10</sup>

The men of speculation would apply the names of the forefathers to the human intellect and the rest of the names would refer to the powers beneath it, some closer to it and some farther away. In any event, they refer to the Tetragrammaton and other Divine Names as designations for the Active Intellect. Indeed, all the Kabbalists will invoke the Name in all places as instructed by means of any of the Divine Attributes... and the men of speculation have determined that the name 'Lot' is a symbol for the material intellect, and that his two daughters and wife refer to the material realm itself. And we are instructed that the angels are the advisors of the Intellect. They are the straight paths that advise the intellect to be saved from the evil ones, which refer to

the limbs (of the body),'Â° 1 whose end is to be. consumed in sulphur and heavenly fire - this is the full extent of the parable. This is in accord with what they say, that the Torah would not have deemed it important to relate such a matter, even in the

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 333

event that it actually did occur, for what is the point of such a story for the man of speculation? Indeed it is conceivable in only one of three ways: either it is construed in its plain sense, or it may be a parable, or it occurred to Abraham in a dream in the manner of prophecy. If it is construed literally, it would exclude the men of speculations who have no use for the plain meaning of the story as it is. Thus, this realm is intended for the masses and comes to instruct them of the difference between the righteous man and the evil man, and the Providence accorded to each. There is no way to bring this [lesson] to [the level] of wisdom. And if it is a prophetic dream, or a prophecy itself, it is worthy of being written in order to instruct the prophets in the methods of prophecy, and what may be derived from them regarding Divine conduct, and in

any case the prophet will be able to see in it parables and enigmas. And if it be a parable for a great purpose, it is to inform us of the potencies in accordance with this sublime method. The explanation of the Kabbalist is that they are all Names and therefore worthy of being recorded. This is how each of them would construe any of these matters, such as the stories of the Torah wherever they occur.

This quote contains an anomaly in terms of the order of classification: For whereas in the place of the philosopher we find the prophet, based on the content, it seems that for the prophet the story is an allegory. We move now to another quote from the same work: 'Â°2

And, [if it be] Isaac in place of Abraham, in reference to the Intellect, sometimes [it is] with lesser emphasis, sometimes with greater emphasis, and sometimes with mediate emphasis; and at times it refers to a weak emphasis with either strong or weak tendency or toward a strong emphasis with weak or strong tendency. Thus [these matters] would be related at times using

the name Abraham, at times using the name Isaac, at times using the name Jacob, and at times other names, in accordance with the unique qualities of these figures who are the figures of intelligence.

### 334 The Method of the Names That Leads to Prophecy

#### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 335

This approach to the forefathers coincides with the method of allegory. In *Sefer Hayyey ha-`oltim ha-Ba'*, 103 however, we find Abulafia's kabbalistic interpretation of the names of the forefathers:

Indeed the name 'ABRHM ['Abraham] contains the form of the Name 'ELHYM ['Elohim]. The first and last letters of both names [A. : .M] are identical, and the middle letters are respectively BRH and LHY. Regarding the name YSHQ [Isaac, Yishaq] it bears the form of YHVH, which is immutable. This is so as a remembrance:

104 "This is My Name... this is My Remembrance." Herein we find the secret of all remembrance [namely recitation]. In the form of the Yod [of both YHWH and YSHQ ] are the ten known remembrances [i.e., recitations], . . . and the first letters of both are identical. What is left is SHQ and HWH respectively. And as for the name YA`AQB [JacobYwaqoh] it bears the form of 'ADNY ['Adonay], the first letter of one being identical with the last letter of the other, and what is left is `AKB and 'ADN respectively. By virtue of these remainder letters you may discover in their combinations the wonders of the Name. First you must combine all three. You combine the three remainders of the three Divine Spiritual Names, and then you combine the three remainders of the material names of the forefathers. Know that the forefathers unified the Name by a veritable union, and the Blessed Divinity also unified His Name upon them, as it is written, 105 "The Lord of Abraham and the Lord of Isaac and the Lord of Jacob sent me to you." ['ELHY 'ABRHM, 'ELHY YSHQ We-'ELHY Ya`AQB].

indicated in the verse. 'ADN (which in many manuscripts appears in place of DNY), HVH and LHY: the 'A of DN and LHY yield 'ELHY (Tolle -"the Lord of." ... in the verse); the D (D = 4, numerically) of 'ADN = G + A (3 + 1); 'A + BRH = 'ABRH. The N (numerical value 50) of 'ADN M + Y (40 + 10); and the M is combined with 'ABRH to yield 'ABRHM (Abraham), and the remaining Y is combined with SHQ to yield YSHQ (Yishaq - Isaac). The HWH (5 + 6 + 5) = YW (10 + 6). The Y is added to 'AQI3 to yield Y`AQI3 (Ya(aqol? - Jacob). There thus remain two letters that do not enter into the names, G and W. The G, numerically equivalent to 3, implies three times the name 'ELHY (as it appears in the verse) and the W combines with the third 'ELHY to yield the third W'ELHY, and thus, the verse: "'ELHY 'ABRHM 'ELHY YSHQ We-ELHY Y`AQI3. Before we conclude our remarks on the verse, Ex. 3:6, it is worth noting that Abulafia pointed out in Sefer Maftealj ha-HolcniOt:

These matters, 1 Â°7 when they are taken within the philosophical approach, become related with each other in a general manner, and not in all particulars. Whereas according to the methods of Kabbalah not one letter is left without being used.

Abulafia's insistence that in the Kabbalistic modes of exegesis every letter is used, is clearly indicated in the verse Ex. 3:6. In Sefer Hayye ha-`01am ha-Ba', we read:

The forefathers unified the Name in the veritability of the union.

In this section we find the plain meaningââthe actual names of the forefathers, and the Kabbalistic meaningââthe references to Divine Names within the names of the forefathers. It is worthwhile to explain in more detail how the names of the forefathers are associated with the Divine Names. According to Abulafia, the verse in Ex. 3:5 refers to both the names of the forefathers and to the Divine Names. The remaining letters of both the Divine Names and the names of the forefathers are

This is indicated in the W- of W'ELHY Y`AQI3 as stated by Abulafia in his Sefer Imre Sefer, where he writes"" regarding this verse:

'ELHY YAQI3 with the connecting W-[meaning 'and'] to in-

form us that among the forefathers there was no "qisus ba-

336 The Method of the Names That Leads to Prophecy netict5t" ['cutting of the shoots'], namely, an heretical division between the attributes applied to God.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 337 one understands that entire matter. This is certainly so in a case where one word, or many words, or an entire topic constitutes the defining setting. Thus, since 'Adam' here refers to the species name, the name HWH [Hawahâ□□Eve], although a person's



name, it also refers to the name of her entire species, and this defining setting is indicated in the Scriptural" 3 reference to her being 'the mother of all life' ['em kol hay]. The verse does not state that she was the mother of all men. This led the philosophers to conclude that the term Hawah [Eve] denotes matter, and 'Adam denotes form. Abulafia, in this section, brings together Ibn Ezra's ideas within a conceptual framework derived from Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed. In his preface to that work Maimonides compares the plain meaning which contains allusions, to a maskitâ□□setting, i.e., silver filigree network, and the secrets alluded to, are likened to inlaid 'golden apples'. Abulafia takes the word maskit and

## I. Settings: Maskiyot

The attention that Abulafia paid to individual letters also stands out in other instances. In Sefer Mafteah ha-Holcmeit we find another type of usage in explaining the implications of a single letter:109

But one who is in doubt should contemplate the settings  
 [maskiyyeitaw] and they will instruct him as to the path, be it in the  
 manner of plain meaning or parable or the wondrous way. And by  
 means of [them, i.e., properly understanding the setting] we  
 depart from doubt. For this sake it was said: "° "And the Lord  
 God formed man [H'ADMâ□□ha-adtini] out of dust from the  
 earth." Take now the 'H of H'ADM, which is the grammatical  
 definite article, as the setting [maskit] for the man of speculation.  
 He placed the man in a particular spot, etc. The term 'man' refers  
 here to the name of the species, and we do not consider it  
 reasonable to regard it as merely the name of that particular  
 individual named Adam, for the noun form in Hebrew is never  
 found to take as a prefix the 'H' of the definite article, just as we  
 never find 'the Abraham' [ha'ABRHM] or 'the Isaac' [ha-YSHQ1] or  
 'the Jacob' [ha-l'AQB], etc. And, as Ibn Ezra indicated in his  
 worthy commentary regarding the 'H' of the definite article," there  
 are four forms with which it is never conjuncted. We have  
 indicated that its mnemotechnical abbreviation is PRDS: P  
 [Peculah]â□□verb form, R [Ribbuy]â□□plural form, D  
 [Da(at)]â□□definite article, S [Sernilcah]â□□the construct state.

All of this is evident from his [Ibn Ezra's] work. Thus, regarding the verse," 2 "And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden to the east and He placed therein the man that He had formed," here too [the] man is used to denote the entire species. From here we derive that one letter, in this instance, defines the entire setting [maskit], and thereby

transforms it into a technical term.

In Sefer ha-Dt (p. 77), we read:

On that very day did Zekaryah the shepherd begin to record wonders of wisdom, and to seal settings [maskiyydt] of understanding, based on the letters of the Torah.

The correspondence between the wonders and settings, and the relationship between settings and the letters ['atiyyijt] of the Torah indicate the technical usage of the term. Just as wonder refers to something esoteric, difficult to understand, belonging to the realm

of wisdom, so too regarding the settings, which denote the insights contained in them. We now move on to another example of the use of the setting, though in this case, the technical term itself is not mentioned. In 'osar 'Eden Ganuz," 4 we read regarding the verse, Dt. 11:9:

338 The Method of the Names That Leads to Prophecy "So that you will long endure on the land that God swore to your fathers that He would give to them [and their offspring, a land flowing with milk and honey]". The 'H' of 'LHM' hemâ□□to them] indicates eternity, and instructs us that today and always the land referred to is the inheritance of the forefathers, for they have already inherited it. And when we, their sons, follow in their footsteps we too will inherit. This refers to the supernal land which is exalted over all exalted lands.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 339 you will understand the verse" 8 "And I was by Him as a nurseling, and I was His delight day by day [YVM YVM]... " which informs us of

the days of creation and of the two millenia indicated in the manner of the hidden secret meaning.

Here, the discussion refers to two settings of the letter H which, according to Abulafia, denotes the eternal giving of the land, and not an event that happened in the past. "(That He would) give to them (la-tet lei-hem)." Besides this, the words 'HYOM' (ha-yamâ□□today) and H'ARS (ha-)acesâ□□the land) are also mentioned by Abulafia as indicating the eternal giving. In Hayy-e ha-`olam ha-Ba), 115 we read:116

"And you who cleave to the Lord your God are all alive today"  
From here we gather that one who does not cleave to God does not live in eternity, which like 'today' is always present. For this reason the verse adds the word 'today'. So, too, in all instances where the Torah refers to the constancy of something it uses the word 'today' or 'heaven and earth' or 'sun and moon' or another of the constant forms of the world, i.e., the species names, because they continue to endure. It is easy to sense their endurance and to picture it in their mind.

Abulafia refers here to the words YVM YVM [day by day] which equal numerically the sum of 26 + 86, i.e., YHWH and 'ELHYM = 112. It is probable that he is referring to the idea that the Torah, as it existed before creation, consisted in having been 'written' in the manner of Divine Names. In a more elaborate manner, in his later works, Abulafia speaks of the implications of the word YVM as referring to God's Name. In Sefer ha-Tdut,"9 we read:

And this is implicated in the word V-HKSF [we-ha-kosefâ□□and the one who yearns for] which, when reconstructed, yields 26, 65, and 86, the numerical equivalent of three levels, which refer to the three meals [of the Sabbath]; this is the secret of silence [Belima]. When you count 10 ten times, which equals 100, and return in the taking of it, which is the receiver who receives from the Kabbalah, day and night. This is the secret of [the three occurrences of] the word HYVM [ha-yam - today] in the verse' 20 "Gather it today for today is a Sabbath of the Lord. Today you will not find it in the field." These are the three worlds and the three qualities and the three meals, and what is found and the finder and the finding.

In these quotes, the word HYOM [ha-yamâ□□today] implies the philosophical layer of meaning in the given verse and refers to the eternity of the soul. In yet other places the setting [maskit] refers to something else. In Sefer ha-Melaninied," 7 we read:

And know that it is by means of the two Divine Names YHWH and 'ELHYM [Ilohin] that the entire world was created. And their secret is [in the mean equality of their numerical value] 26 + 86, which is YVM [= 56; yamâ□□day], and both names taken together have the numerical value of YVM YVM. Thereby

As we know, the Sages"" derived the [law of having] three meals on the Sabbath from the three times the word HYWM is mentioned in the verse just cited. Abulafia associates this matter with the Names of God. The word V-HKSF is rearranged to form three numbers and three names: 26 (KV) = YHWH; 65 (I-1) = 'ADNY, and 86 (PV) = 'ELHYM. Their total numerical value is 177 = SLS S'eWDVT (Salag Sec uclotâ□□three meals) = 1176 = 1 + 176 = 177 = SLS MrALVT (Salog Ma calatâ□□three levels

[qualities]) = SLS LMVT (galog (Oldinotâ□□three worlds) = (BLYMHâ□□silence = 87 = 15 = 1 -h 1 h- 7 H- 6]. The source for these numerological

### 340 The Method of the Names That Leads to Prophecy

#### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 341

Spirit. Indeed, it flows out to irrigate, for the river that flows out to water the garden, flows out from all places to give life and health to plants, each according to its nature...

equivalents is Abulafia's teacher, R. Baruch Togarmi, who in his commentary to Sefer Yesirdh, writes:'22

Also, the incantation of the language is the secret of the Garden of Eden, known from the three meals, 26, 65, and 86, incumbent upon the individual to eat on Sabbath, day and night.



This passage explains the verse

"And a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden... "

GN cEDN (Gan `Edenâ□□the Garden of Eden) = 177 = 26 + 65  
+ 86 = YVMM V-LYLH (yomam wa-laylcih--day and night) = SLVS  
SINDVT (galOg se c uddt-three meals). These numerological  
equivalents from R. Baruch Togarmi reappear in Sefer Ginnat  
'EEgoz,' 23 by R. Joseph Gikatilla and in various other works of  
Abulafia.124

NHR (nciharâ□□river) = 255 = K"B 'VWTYWT HQW1iS (kafbet  
)iitiyyelt ha-qodegâ□□twenty-two holy letters) =1254 = 1 + 254 =  
255. The words M`EDN 'ET HGN [me-Teden - from Eden the  
garden] = 623 = H'EMT GN (EDN (ha- ,emet gan cedenâ□□the  
truth (is) the garden of Eden) = RWH HQWDS (ruah ha-qo-  
cleSâ□□the Holy Spirit). Thereby a new verse is constructed:  
"Twenty - two holy letters flow[ed] out to water the Holy Spirit."

J.

## Algebraical Commentary

As we have seen earlier, in section F, numerology belongs to the nomenclature of the sixth method. According to this method, it is possible to return the letters to their primematerial state, i.e., to break up the unique order of the letters of a word or verse, alter their sequence and compose new words. Besides this method, we come across attempts by Abulafia to explain verses by means of numerology, when basic construction of the verse does not change but where particular components of the verse are exchanged for words that contain their equivalent numerical value. We give here two examples of this method. In Sefer Ijayyey ha-Olcim ha-Thr, 125 we read:

[the] 22 holy letters are numerically equivalent to [the word] :126 NHR [naharâ□□river]. This is [the secret meaning of the verse] "And a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden," i.e., the truth

[which is] the Garden of Eden. [This is] the secret of MIDN 'ET HGN [me - Teden 'et ha -pinâ□□from Eden the garden] which is numerically equivalent to RVH HQDS [ruah hatiodeS1 â□□the holy spirit], and now, call them BK [bak] â□□within you = 22]; twenty-two holy letters flowed out to water the Holy

Thus, the verse refers to the Divine effluence, symbolized by the twenty-two letters that water the Holy Spirit, referring to the inner, personally experienced holy spirit. 127 Man is the entity upon whom the watering river is working constantly in order to actualize his potential. This idea is made clear by comparing this section with Abulafia's words in Sefer 'Imre efer:128

And just as it is within the power of the Gardener to water the garden by the five rivers, as he wishes, so too, the singer who recites the Name has the ability to give sustenance to the limbs of his body through his blood according to his will by means of the Great Blessed Name ... but this is not possible unless one receives the Divine effluence by reciting the Name called the 'Name of 72', according to its pathways.

Now, we will see how Abulafia explains a passage of the sages in a similar manner. In Sefer Hayye ha-Olcim ha-Ba', 129 we read:

"Ministering angels do not know the Aramaic language."<sup>13</sup>

Now, if you observe the construct: ML'AKY HSRT [mal ,ake hagdret □□Ministering angels] you will recognize the Divine Name.

342 The Method of the Names That Leads to Prophecy Know that they are the sect [kat] of Israel, and they do not know the Aramaic language, because the sect of Israel is the illumination of the intellect and their secret is SFYRH 'ARMYT [sefirih 'Aramitâ□□the uplifted counting?]. Indeed the secret of the Aramaic language is 231 breaths [the secrets of] which return the kingdom of Israel to its [full] stature. This is the secret meaning of [the sentence] the sect of Israel does not recognize the kingdom of Israel, so as to make His faith known in the Aramaic language.

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 343

Another example of such a type of commentary may be found in Abulafia's *Sefer Hayye ha-colam ha-Ba*):132

... The secret of Adam and Eve are within all people in the likeness of form and matter, for they are the beginning and principle of all the account of creation. Thus, Adam is likened to form and Eve is his spouse, created from his rib, as Scripture attests: 133 "Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh, this one shall be called woman [ISHâ□□ ,thiih] for this one was taken from man [ISâ□□ )4" The verse does not state: "for this one was taken from him," but "from man." This is to instruct us that 'adam' [human] is called "'IS" [man]. Therefore it is said regarding Cain, who was born of the first existing human couple, 134 "I acquired a man [IS-->ts1 by God." So too it is written: "The sons of Adam also the sons of 'IS." Man is also called "bene 'Enos," for it is written: 135 "What is man ['Adam] that You should know him, or the son of man [bene 'Adam] that You make account of him." It is also written: 136 "What is man [ 'EnA that You are mindful of

him... " From these verses we derive the secret of the terms 'Adam, 1i, and 'Enog, each of which is both a name of the species and of an individual. '1S"' in Greek means 'one' and the Aramaic translation of "'IS" is [the same as] "Enos' and the 'one' in Greek is also 'enos'. Also, 'Eno' and enos are identical. Adam and Eve are both called in the Torah by the same species name 'adam., as it is written:137 "And He called their names 'Adam on the day that they were created."

The numerological equivalents in this passage are: ML'AKY HSRT = 1006 = TKYR SM H'EL (takir gem ha-'El--- you will recognize the Name of God) = HM KT YSR'EL, 131 (hem kat Yisra) elâ□□they are the sect of Israel) = MYRT HSKL (me'irat ha-sekelâ□□the illumination of the intellect) = SFYRH 'ARMYT (sefircih 'Aramithe uplifted count); LSVN 'ARMYT Orison 'Aramitâ□□the Aramaic language) = 1037 = RL'A I\I YMVT (231 breaths) = MLKVT YSR 'EL (malkut Yisrtrelâ□□the kingdom of Israel). After deciphering the numerological equivalents we can render the meaning of this section as saying that the Israelites do

not recognize the path of acquiring the Active Intellect, i.e., the Kingdom of Israel, which is achieved by the technique of breath - 231 breaths.

#### K. S upercomna entary

According to Abulafia, the angel Sandalfon represents the prima materia. He derives this by means of numerology, in con-

The passage is based on the words of Maimonides, who, in his Guide of the Perplexed, III, 30, writes:

One of these dicta is their saying that Adam and Eve were created together having their backs joined and they were divided, and one half of it, namely Eve, taken and brought up to [Adam].

The expression 'one of his ribs' means according to them one of his sides... as it says "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh."

This has received additional confirmation through the fact that it says that both of them have the same name: for she is called "gah' [woman] because she was taken

junction with an earlier philosophic ideaâ€¦ Maimonides' conception that the *Ofin* ("wheel") in Ezekiel's vision of the Divine Chariot refers to the *prima materia*. This idea is associated with the Talmudic identification of the *ofan* with *Sandalfon*. This type of exegesis is suggestive of a sort of supercommentary, in that it creates a layer of commentary based on an earlier layer of commentary.

344 The Method of the Names That Leads to Prophecy out of ' , IA' [man]. It also confirms their union by saying:138 "And shall cleave unto his wife and shall be one flesh."

Maimonides explains here the words of the sages regarding the original unity of Adam and Eve as referring to form and matter.' 39 Abulafia attempts to base this unity on a linguistic foundation: >/:s" and 'En6g , which exemplify Adam, both mean one in Greek.'" This mode of commentary is based on the assumption that whatever the inquiring sages are able to know by means of their investigations of the natural world may also be learned by



means of linguistic investigation, that is by means of the techniques of letter combinations or by means of our knowledge of other languages."

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 345 [thought intent] becomes known. This trial constantly takes place in interpersonal relationships; at times within [the conscience of] the person himself and at times in relations between people. For instance, one person thinks regarding his friend that he may be relied upon for anything. He may need a small favour, which is easily within his friend's ability to grant, but he returns empty-handed. By contrast with regard to another acquaintance whom he may think would not come to his aid even in a small matter, when this acquaintance is approached he comes to his aid in even a great matter. And so too, a person may consider himself capable of helping another in a small matter, but when he is tested, he finds a want in his ability and it turns out that his intent does not become actualized. A parable may be provided for this [understanding the nature of the trial] with regard to one's sexual

inclination in reference to forbidden forms of sexual contact. One may think himself totally immune to this inclination, and that if an opportunity were to present itself to him, he would not transgress. But when the opportunity actually presents itself, and he finds that nothing would prevent him from transgressing, due to the total seclusion that he finds himself in, together with a woman, he actually does transgress. At that point he will know that his previous self-estimation was false. Whereas if he is able to take control of himself he would know that his self-estimation was accurate. Thus, it [the trial] is for the sake of [obtaining self-] knowledge. It is the person who is actually testing himself so that he would know in actuality the truth of his self-estimation. And this, only he will know.

The transformation of Scripture into a text that narrates, in accordance with the philosophers, the biography of the Soul, was made possible, in our opinion only because Abulafia emphasized one level of interpretation, i.e., the Kabbalistic level, which regards Scripture as entirely composed of the Divine Names. He was enabled to forego direct reference to God in the philosophical level commentary only because God is omnipresent in each and

every letter of the Scriptural verse. This approach constitutes an attempt to bridge two conceptual frameworks whose

## L. Concluding Remarks

In analysing the views of Abulafia regarding the nature of the Torah, its levels of meanings, and methods of commentary we are informed of an approach that may be counted among the most spiritualistic orientations that appeared during the Middle Ages. His free orientation to the Scriptural text enabled him to transform the text into a narrative of the history of the Soul and its potential, 142 to the extent that in most instances where Abulafia makes use of the allegorical method, the Divinity becomes absent from the events of the story. By means of this, the stories of Scripture become reconstructed as full-fledged narratives of spiritual life.

In *Sefer Mafteah ha-Hoicnuit*, 143 Abulafia writes, regarding the nature of the divine trial in Scripture:

This is for the sake of [obtaining] knowledge, so that the one being tested knows the actual nature of his own thought processes [intent]. And this is called 'complete knowledge,' for the true nature of one's thought [intent] is known only as potential, and indeed with actualization the true nature of one's

### 346 The Method of the Names That Leads to Prophecy

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 347

fundamental principles are different from each other. On the one hand, there is the philosophical conception which regards revelation as the outcome of the conjunction between the soul and the Active intellect. Thus, a direct reference to Divinity does not play a central role in the psychological processes depicted in the Scriptural narrative. 144 On the other hand, there is the Jewish conception that perceives the Torah as the actual Word of

God, with all its implications, or perceives the Torah as an intimation of the Divinity Himself.<sup>145</sup> Some concluding remarks on the nature of the relationship between the above hermeneutical methods and the interpreter are pertinent at the final stage of our discussion: Two parallel and similar processes take place as the interpreter uses those techniques; the Biblical text is gradually atomized, so that at the end of this process Torah is dissolved into separate letters, whose order is to be decided by man, who also infuses the new meanings into the combinations of letters. At the same time the interpreter is himself transformed from a person on the level of the masses to a prophet, the perfect man who is separated from society at least in the moment of the interpretative event; he has to concentrate himself, to isolate himself, and finally to transcend the state of being part of nature, so as to be able to conquer nature. This transformation includes an expansion as it is reasonable to assume from the description of the seven methods as seven paths that are at the same time seven spheres, the first being the smallest, the seventh the largest; <sup>146</sup> this expansion apparently points to a broadening of the consciousness of the commentator. <sup>147</sup> It is as if the

commentator performs, during his development as an interpreter of the text, a celestial journey 148 which takes moxldspher, viwaolest of the holy, but basically it seems that this journey is an inner process, focused on the purification of his mind and its expansion. The prophet-commentator is, as part of the interpretative act, undergoing a mystical transformation, which posits him as

beyond the ordinary status of man in society and nature, and at the same time as in a special position in relationship to the existing canonical text; the revelation of the individual is propelled into the linguistic material of the canon which is also the result of the ancient revelation. On the relationship between the peculiar state of mind of the interpreter and the possibility to comment on a text written in a prophetic state of mind, I have elaborated elsewhere. 149 Here I shall adduce only one text, written under the influence of Abraham Abulafia, apparently in the fourteenth century:

One cannot comprehend the majority of the subjects of the Torah and its secrets, and the secrets of the commandments cannot be comprehended, except by means of the prophetic holy intellect which was emanated from God onto the prophets... Therefore, it is impossible to comprehend any subject among the secrets of the Torah and the secrets of performing the commandments by means of intellect or wisdom or by *intellectus aqisitus*, but [only] by means of the prophetic intellect... the divine intellect given to the prophets, which is tantamount to the secret of the knowledge of the great [divine] name.'5Â°

Implicitly, the divine facets of the Torah, mainly the divine names, are hidden in the ordinary order of the letters in the canonical text, and only the mystic is able to restore this dimension by returning to the mystical state of mind which originated the divine revelation in illo tern pore. The present revelation is propelled into the linguistic texture of the ancient canon by the restructuring of its elements, namely the combination of letters, and not only by the reinterpretation of the text, as we witness in a long series of

examples in the history of canonical religions. Strong hermeneutics is therefore part of a basic attempt to restructure the ultimate meaning of Judaism from a religion based upon the historical and halakhic dimensions of its scriptures, to a devotional ecstatic religion focused upon divine names.<sup>151</sup>

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 461

#### Notes to Introduction

1. Cf. Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, Chapter 1. 2. *Ibid.*, 144-145, and at the end of the Introduction. 3. No detailed study of Ashkenazi Pietist's hermeneutics is available, although it is a major issue of their mystical thought. See, for the time being, Joseph Dan, "The Ashkenazi Hasidic Gates of Wisdom," in eds. G. Nahon-Ch. Touati, *Hommage a Georges Vajda* (Louvain, 1980), 185-189. 4. See J. Dan, *The Esoteric Theology of Ashkenazi Hasidism* (Jerusalem, 1968), 56-57 [Hebr.] 5. Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, 200-210, where I discussed also



divergences between Abulafian exegesis and that of the theosophical kabbalists. 6. Idem, *The Mystical Experience*, 144 - 145. 7. On the relationship between hermeneutics and revelation, see Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, 234 - 243. 8. Abulafia is returning to a precanonical situation when the prophet could be in direct contact with the divinity without the mediation of the text. See Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford, 1985), 108-109, 245. David Weiss-Halivni, *Midrash, Mishnah and Gemara* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1986), 16; and Idel, "The Infinities of Torah in Kabbalah," 141-142. 9. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 460-474. See also below, ch. 2, note 129. 10. Idem, *On the Kabbalah*, 66-73, 83-85. 11. See Idel, "The Concept of Torah," 66-67. 12. See, R. J. Z. Werblowsky, R. Joseph Karo, *Lawyer and Mystic* (Philadelphia, 1977), 257-277.

13. See below, Chapter 2. 14. See Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, 114 - 115.

462 Notes to Chapter 1 15. See Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 55-56; Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, 227-229. 16. Cf. Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, 205. 17. See Idel, "Perceptions of Kabbalah." 18. Roland Barthes, *Le Degre zero et l'écriture* (Paris, 1972), 35-38. 19. See Idel, "The Reification of Language," par. VI. 20. For the use of the metaphor of loosening of the knots as an expression of liberation from corporeality in Abulafia's mysticism, see Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, 134-137. 21. See Idel, "The Interdiction to Study Kabbalah before the Age of Forty," *AJS Review*, vol. 5 (1980), 17 [Hebr.]; idem, "Infinities of Torah in Kabbalah," 149. 22. My distinction between psychological allegoresis, widespread in the medieval literature and spiritualistic exegesis, is based on the assumption that an interpreter who used allegory to decode his own spiritual experiences, will inject, by the means of the same method, his experiences also in the biblical text.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 463 in the ontological sense in the Kabbalah, see M. Idel, "'Iggarto gel R.

Yisshaq mi-Pisa (?) be-galcg nusha ,oteha," in Koves ,a1 Yad, 10 (2) (1982), 177-179, and notes 88,89. See also the section, indicated in note 28 below, of Sefer 'Imrey Sefer. Particularly important for our discussion is the distinction between the Kabbalists' knowledge of the Divinity by means of his contemplation of the Tetragrammaton, and the philosopher, who contemplates the effects of the Divinity. This distinction is found in Sefer 'Or ha-Sekel [Ms. Vatican 233, fol. 114a]. This passage, copied by Moses Narboni, was published and discussed in my Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah, pp. 63-66. See also the epistle We-zot li-Yehudah, 15. 2. Abulafia makes three distinctions, which we will enumerate here: 1) the philosopher as opposed to the Kabbalist; 2) the natural existence as matter for contemplation, as opposed to the letters; 3) knowing the "verity of matters," which presumably means the "essence(s) of natural phenomena" that philosophers attempt to understand, as opposed to the blessed divine attributes which are the goal of the Kabbalist. The distinction between knowledge of the letters and knowledge of the natural world is already present in one of Abulafia's early works, Sefer Mafteah ha-Ra cayOn (Ms. Vatican 291, fol. 27a), where

we read: Each language is divided into three constituents: Name, Word and Verb [Pe'uliih]. And each of these three has numerous subclassifications. One who knows more of these subclassifications is more excellent than his fellow who hasn't reached his degree of knowledge of language. This is the case in each nation and language, when you compare the qualities of human beings in reference to the comparison between knowledge of the natural realm and knowledge of the divine qualities, the highest of all human potentialities.

## Notes to Chapter 1

1. Sefer Sitrey TOrah (Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 163a). A similar conception is found in the writings of the Sufi author Tirmani Hakim: "All forms of wisdom are contained in the letters of the Alif Bet, for the fundamental principles of science are the holy names which serve as the sources of the creation of the world and function as the laws of the parameters of Divine decree." Cf. Paul Nwyia, *Exigese Coranique et Langage Mystique* (Beyrouth 1970), 365. The view concerning language, as matter for contemplation

more sublime than the contemplation of nature, is also easily recognisable in the theories of the Hurufia because in that system the world of letters mediates between the intellectual world and the physical world. See Nwyia, *ibid.*, 366-367. As regards the world of letters as a universe

An interesting comparison between the contemplation of the natural world and contemplation of language is found in the writings of R. Yohanan Alemanno, one of Abulafia's admirers, who wrote in *Sefer Hay ha-colamim* (Ms. Mantua, Jewish Community 21, fol. 199a-b): the sages of the Talmud and of the Kabbalah and of astrology have stated regarding the forms of the Alef and Bet, and so too with regard to all the letters, awesome secrets which are recorded in their writings. This is so with reference to the names of the letters as well; for instance 'Alef Binah' [instruction, understanding], 'Gimel Daleth' [the benefactor of the poor]. For just as there are transformations of forms in the natural world, for reasons known to the Creator, and the names

## 464 Notes to Chapter 1

of those phenomena indicate their essential nature, and these names and forms, of plants and animals and people were made known to the human intellect, either by way of convention or by contemplation or prophecy or magic or dreams or by observation, so too were the forms of the letters and their names revealed to man. And each wrote in his way, in accordance with the source that revealed itself to him. Regarding the revelation of the elements of language, see below, note

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 465 Yehudah 'Naggid' mentioned by Abulafia as R. Yehudah ben Hanagid, mentioned in Sefer Sa caarey Tegupdh, par. 5. The responsum recorded there, however, is a Kabbalistic pseudoepigraphy, penned apparently by R. Moses de Leon. The claim of Graetz regarding the identity of R. Yehudah Hanagid was accepted by Abraham Gottlober in his *Died& ha-Kabbaldh we-ha-hasidut* (Zhitomir, 1870), who dates them both to the thirteenth century. 7. Use of these standard terms for the four organs, (caparim

rasglyim, or hagubim) essential organs or important organs, or kings (meldcim), is also found in pseudo-Maimonidean works such as Sefer ha-Nimscip published in Ben Gorni, p. xvi, as well as in Ta'am ha- cOrldh (attributed to Maimonides), Ms. Moscow 133, fol. 153a, and in Sefer Sebiley halmundh by R. Meir Aldabi (Warsaw, 1883), fols. 41d-42a, and in the book by R. Moses de Leon, published by G. Scholem in "Âšney Quntresim le-R. Moshe de Leon" in Qdbes Yad, vol. 8 (1976), 336 and note 45. See also Y. Zlotnick, Ma wmarim (Jerusalem 1939), p. 11, in the footnote there. See below, note 66. 8. Ms. Munich 285 fol. 68a. Also Liqqutey Harris, Ms. Oxford 2239, fol. 126a. 9. The use of the term mail& (source), implying principal organ appears in Sefer ha-Hayyim attributed to R. Abraham Ibn Ezra (Ms. British Library 1055, fols. 173a, l 74b), a work close in spirit to the Ashkenazi pietists. We do not, however, find such usage in the works of either R. Yehudah the Pious or R. Eleazar of Worms. It is worth noting that this term was known to R. Moses de Leon, who uses it in Sefer ha-RimmOn (Ms. Oxford 1607, fol. 51) and in Zohar II, 133a. See Y. Liebes, Peraqim be-MilOn Sefer ha-Zohar (Doctoral Dissertation, Jerusalem 1976), 257, 267. 10. Ms. Oxford 1582,

fol. 45a. We note that these three elements are mentioned together also in Sefer fIOrayOt ha-(2Cire,, published by J. Derenbourg, Manuel du Lecteur (Paris 1871).

The letter does not stand by itself, but with the combination of letters the word is made whole. However we don't know its pronunciation except through the kings, which are the vowel marks.

80. 3. This is an additional distinction between philosophy and Kabbalah; the philosophers are not successful even after great effort, in achieving what the Kabbalists achieve with ease. Regarding this, see the text quoted below besides note 27, and also Idel, Abulafia, 442-443. 4. Pages 24-25, amended in accordance with Ms. New York, JTS Mic. 1887, fol. 101a. In Ms. Paris, BN 464, fol. 164a, the text reads: "This is as we have received from the book by R. Yehudah the Pious of Ashkenaz o.b.m., from Rottenburg, and the first matter we received from R. Eliezer(!) Ashkenazi." 5. Based on the prayer of the 'Eighteen Benedictions.' The correspondence between the brain, the heart,



and the liver, and the three-fold Sanctus is also mentioned in 'Oscir 'Eden Ganuz, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 96b. 6. In the published edition we read ha-nagid. No doubt this ought to be corrected in accordance with Ms. New York, JTS, to read he-lids-id. A.

Jellinek's attempt in his *Philosophie and Kabbala*, p. 46, to identify R. Yehudah "Hanagid" as R. Yehudah 'Mkenazi Da g an, mentioned by R. Isaac of Acre in his *Sefer Me, irat Tnayim*, p. 47, is totally without foundation. In the course of the quote from the epistle *We-Zot Li-Yehuddh*, Abulafia states explicitly regarding R. Yehudah and R. Eleazar of Worms that they "were not contemporary with us, but left their intellectual record in their books," whereas R. Isaac of Acre describes R. Yehudah Dar g an as his contemporary. See also M. Steinschneider, *Catalogus Librorum Hebraeorum in Bibliotheca Bodleiana* (Berlin, 1852-1860), p. 2525, based apparently on a manuscript of *WeZot Li-Yehuddh* similar to the one published by Jellinek, which was copied by the important Christian Kabbalist Francesco Giorgio in *De Harmonia Mundi* (Paris 1545), 131, where we read: "Jehuda Nagid qui sanctos dicitur." Graetz, in his essay "Die Mystische

Literatur in der Gaonaische Epoch", MGWJ, vol. VIII (1859), 252-253, identifies R.

This quote appears in the version of Mahberet ha-Tigan.

Regarding the influence of these three elements as construed by Abulafia, on R. Moses Cordovero, see Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 136-137.

466 Notes to Chapter 1 11. In *Sefer ha-Melamzed* (Ms. Paris, BN 680, fol. 290b), we read: For you already know that the [ending] letters M, N, S. P, K were bequeathed us by the 'gazers' and are not included within the alphabet proper, but are the amendments of the scribes. For it does not seem to me that intrinsically in nature any language would have any more or less than 22 letters, as explained by the author of *Sefer Yesirtih*.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 467

The system of twenty-two letters of the language [of Abraham] is the exemplary form of the alphabet, having been derived from the languages of all of his contemporaries. Thus, within our language the letters are seen as exemplifying the celestial realms. In addition, it is only the language of his offspring that makes use of all the letters, for most of the Ishmaelite languages do not make use of the P [peh], and the Christian languages do not use the H [Het] or ' [Ayin], and this is certainly the case with all the languages of the rest of the nations, which are merely stammerers.

This position by Abulafia, based on an emphasis of the 'phonetic' elements as opposed to the 'graphic' elements, was not accepted by most Kabbalists who continued Abulafia's tradition. In a work entitled 'Iggeret `Aseret Meinint, written by R. Aaron Hayun, during the generation of the Spanish Expulsion (Ms. Jerusalem, Mussayoff 64, fol. 97a) we read:

You find that there is a difference in the letters M, N, S P, K between when they are written as upright and closed, or when

they are written as curved and open. And if not for these variants the number of letters of the 'Alef Bet' would not be complete, as we have [already] indicated.

See also the anonymous Sefer Medal Adam (Ms. Oxford 836, fol. 169a) that asserts:

Observe regarding any of the letters that may be combined in any language, that they are the 22 letters divided into five modes of pronunciation in accordance with their physical [vocal] origin.

A similar view is expressed by R. Yohanan Alemanno, who writes in it Sefer Hey ha-`01amim (Ms. Mantua, Jewish Community 21, fol. 197b):

It is the human soul that pronounces the twenty-two sounds with five pronunciations, which are the foundations of all speech that human beings are capable of producing, being set apart from animals by their verbal capacity. For even if one produces by his vocal capacity other sounds besides the twenty-two symbolised

by the Hebrew letters, this is not by virtue of his humanity, but by virtue of his physical animal capacity. For you may observe the human imitations of animal calls such as those produced by pigs or horses or mules or birds. And some of them also conduct themselves in accordance with animal forms of behaviour, due to their rejection of the straight path of human conduct. However, one who conducts himself with proper human demeanor will not add to these twenty-two sounds, the origins and foundations of all speech and language. As we will see from the text we are about to quote, the letters of

Abulafia also examines the particular shapes of the letters, as we will see below, but this form of investigation was particularly prevalent in the Kabbalistic theosophical tradition. See Idel, "The Concept of the Torah," 63ff. 12. *Sefer Mafteah ha-Racayan* (Ms. Oxford 123 Hebr. e., fol. 63a-63b). This interesting discussion of languages continues beyond the passage quoted here, and deals also with variants of pronunciation among Jews of different lands. See I. Adler in *Legeinenu*, 40 (1976), 159. Following Abulafia, the

anonymous author of Sefer Ner 'Elohim (Ms. Munich 10, fol. 135b), who was of the school of Abulafia, writes:

Know, my son, that the exemplary speech of all languages is essentially contained in the 22 letters. And the vocalisations that impel the consonants of any language are located in the five different vowel designations.

Regarding the five vowels mentioned here, denoted in Abulafia's school by the term . NOtariciOn, see below, note 39. A similar view to that of Abulafia, with reference to the 22 natural r letters is found in Sefer Me gOel? Netibdt, a commentary to Sefer Yesiriih by R. Samuel Ibn Motot (Ms. Cambridge Add. 1015, fol. 18a), where we read:

the Hebrew language are seen as distorted by other languages, and thereby the natural form of the Hebrew language is damaged: So too you will find among many of the distortions of the sounds

and pronunciations, [and] the languages that were distorted by their combinations, whereas others have preserved the sounds and language so as to be in consonance with nature. And the relationship to the Hebrew language, constructed by God in direct consonance with reality, to the other languages, which God confounded during the

#### 468 Notes to Chapter 1

generation of the Dispersion [i.e., Babel] is duplicated in the relation of the wisdom of Shem, Eber and Abraham to the foreign wisdoms not of our nation. [Alemanno, *ibid.*, fol. 198a]

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 469 it, including Hebrew. With regard to the argument mentioned earlier about the naturalness of the twenty-two letters, we observe Abulafia's influence. Galen's theory of language and the criticism of it by Maimonides is discussed at length in a work by R. Azaria de Rossi, *Me)dr `Enayim* (Vilna 1866), 464, and in R. Jacob Hayyim

Zemah, Sefer Tiferet 'Adam (Ms. Benayahu, Peer 4, Section 12 (Bene Berak, 1982), 105-106. 13. Gen. 43:26; Lev. 23:17; Job 33:21 and more. 14. I have not located YSRTY (yigarti) with an R emphasized. On SRK (saralc), see Ezekiel 16:4. 15. Psalms 51:3. 16. Sefer ha-Ge'ulih, Ms. Leipzig 39, fol. 7b. 17. The idea that there are elemental letters that construct the superior language, and deviant letters added to these by means of which inferior languages are constructed, is already found in the tenth century, in the works of the Ismaili writer Abu-Hatim Ahmed Ibn Hamdan alRazi; see G. Vajda, "Les Lettres et les sons dans la langue arabe d'apres Abu-Hatim al-Razi," Arabica VIII (1961), 120, notes 4, 5 (henceforth, Vajda, "Letters and Sounds.") 18. Sefer ha-Ge'ulah, Ms. Leipzig 39, fol. 7b. 19. Abulafia refers, apparently, to the fact that the numerical value of 'ALF (Alef) is 111, which expresses clearly the 'Alef' as a symbol of unity. 20. Regarding these three dimensions of the letters, see Ginat TgOz (Hanau 1615) fol. 34b, Ms. Jerusalem 8 1303, fol. 52a, and Ms. Vatican 295, fol. 6b. It is worth pointing out a discussion on the letters of the alphabet in an epistle attributed to Aristotle, who sent it to his pupil Alexander. It was preserved in Arabic, in Ms. Leiden 1132,



and regarding it, see P. Kraus, *Jabir: Memoires de l'Institut d'Egypte*, vol. 45 (1943) II, 340. R. Saadya ben Danan attributes to R. Joseph Halevi and to his student Maimonides, occupation in the study of letters:

And they tersely expounded upon them, hinted at deep secrets and explained some but not all of the names of the letters. Due to this my heart was aroused and the Spirit of God spoke within me, to expound on all the letters. (*Literaturblatt*, vol. 10, 1849, 731 note 27).

There he continues:

For the Hebrew language was created by Divine agency, as was the human intellect.

Alemanno bases himself here on the *Kuzari* which he immediately quotes, indicating to us that Hebrew is, according to him, at once divine and natural, which is Abulafia's view. Alemanno was influenced by both Abulafia and R. Yehudah Halevi. Regarding R.

Yehudah Halevi and the influence of his theory of language during the Renaissance, see A. Altmann, *Essays in Jewish Intellectual History* (University Press of New England, 1981), 115-116. It is worth noting that although Alemanno's idea of the distortion of natural sounds, i.e., the 22 letters, is similar to that of Abulafia, there is here the additional influence of the theory of the Greek language expressed by Galen, for in the continuation of the above-quoted passage we read:

In the *Sefer Yesirih* we find the Hebrew letters, which among all the letter systems of all languages is the most suitable for combining speech and verbal sound. So too did Galen say, that the Greek language is the most pleasant of languages, as it is the closest one to reason, and affords the finest possibilities for expression. For if you investigate the words of the languages of other nations you will discover that indeed, some of them sound like the noises produced by pigs, and some like the croaks of frogs and some like the sounds produced by the crane. Some have deep sounds and thick pronunciations produced by contortions of the mouth and some have guttural sounds produced in the throat, and some produced by distorting the

mouth to make whistling noises.... and Galen referred not only to the Greek language, but to other languages related to it such as Hebrew, Arabic, Assyrian [Aramaic?] and Persian. And indeed, the Hebrew and Arabic languages are clearly related to each other, as is observable to all who speak them both. And Assyrian [Aramaic] is somewhat related, and Greek is closer [to Hebrew] than Assyrian, etc.

Obviously, Alemanno borrowed Galen's estimation of the Greek language and used it for the languages that in his opinion are related to

470 Notes to Chapter 1 Discussions of the names and shapes of the letters are already to be found in the Talmud and Midrash, but by the time of the Middle Ages the commentaries on the alphabet had already become a literary genre that was especially widespread in the theosophical Kabbalah. We also find various philosophical commentaries on the twenty-two letters; see Kerem Honed (1843), vol. 8, 23-24 and footnote, and haPali!, 18, 37. As

we know, Moslem mysticism attributed meaning and significance to the letters and their graphic forms. See the material gathered by Goldziher in his article "Linguistisches aus der Literatur der Muhammedanischen Mystik," ZDMG, XXVI (1872), 780 ff.

(henceforth, Goldziher, Language) and above, notes 1, 2. 21.

Peruâ§ Sefer ha-Melis (Ms. Munich 285, fol. 10b). The expression "a world in and of itself," referring to groups of letters, is also found in Sefer Mafteah ha-Ra cayOn (Ms. Vatican 291, fol. 41b). We have here a hieroglyphic view of letters, because they denote concepts and not merely meaningless sounds. It is worth noting that during the Renaissance, Egyptian hieroglyphics and Kabbalistic ideas gained in esteem among Christian circles, and this includes also the Kabbalah of Abulafia. See E. Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance (Penguin Books, 1967), 206-208, note 54, and L. Diekmann, Hieroglyphicsâ□□The History of a Literary Symbol (St. Louis, 1970), 31-44. Compare also to terms similar to those used by Abulafia, in the circle of the Maggid of Mezehrich: "each and every letter is an entire universe," Sefer 'Or ha'Emet (Brooklyn 1960) fol. 77b; "for every letter is called a universe"â□□ R. Solomon of Lutzk, Dibrat Selomoh (Jerusalem

1955) fol. 6b, etc. 22. Abulafia does not use different terms for graphic as opposed to vocalised letters, just as the Arabic grammarians before him do not: see Vajda, *Letters and Sounds*, 114-115 and note 3. 23. Regarding these three planes, see P. Kraus, *Jabir, II*, 259, 268; and Vajda, *Letters and Sounds*, 129 and n. 1. 24. Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 67a. For additional discussion on those three, see Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, ch. 1. 25. On this, see Chapter 3 below, and Vajda, *Letters and Sounds*, 128, n. 1. 26. Ms. Oxford 1580 fol. 75a. 27. See above, note 3.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 471 28. Ms. Munich 40, fol. 245a, Ms. Munich 285, fol. 75b. See also Scholem, "The Name of God," 191. Also in *Sefer ha-Idut* by Abulafia (Ms. Rome, Angelica 38, fol. 17a). Already at the beginning of the historical Kabbalah we find the connection between 'OT and the Aramaic root 'TH. See Scholem, "The Name of God," 166. 29. Regarding "the world of letters," see note 1 above, and the bibliographic data supplied there. 30. Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 155b; and *Liqutey gilcehah* 1556) fol. 27b. (Ferarra,

31. This is definitely a play on the words LVH-LYHH (luah-leyttah: table-moisture). 32. Regarding the return of the letters to their prime-material state, see below, Chapter 3; and in the work indicated here below, note 57. 33. Seba' Netihdt ha-Tordh, 17-18. 34. Regarding this quote and its relation to Abulafia's Sefer Hayyey ha`Olcirn ha-Ba', see Idel, Abulafia, 132. 35. On Notarigon, see the following section of this chapter, and especially, note 39. 36. Ms. Oxford 1582 fol. 14b. 37. Sefer 'Osdre 'Eden Ganuz (Ms. Oxford 1580, fols. 64b-65a). There Abulafia bases himself on Midrash Tanhuma, gemini, par. 8. This idea was widespread during the period when Abulafia was writing, and is found in the Zohar and in the writings of R. Moses de Leon. See Adolf Jellinek, Moses de Leon (Leipzig, 1851), 31; see also in R. Bahya ben Asher in various places in his commentary on Torah: Gen. 2:7; 17:1; Ex. 25:18; Dt. 28:10. Additional material was collected in David Kaufmann, Die Sinne (Leipzig, 1884), 156, n. 25, and in G. Scholem "Hakarat Ha-panim we-Sidrey Sirtutim," Sefer Assaf (Jerusalem 1953), 493. 38. Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 152b, referring to Sefer Pores Sefer. 39. One of the first to make

use of the term NOtariOn to indicate the five essential vowels is R. Yehudah Hadassi, who writes in Sefer 'Eskol ha-KOfer (1536), fol. 61a:

472 Notes to Chapter 1 The kings of the points, the five essential Notarician of clear speech, are the five vocalisations, and on fol. 62a: the kings of the vowel points, which are five kings; the NOtariqdn of [your] language. And see also *ibid.*, fol. 60c. See Sefer tlayyey ha-coldm ha-Ba' (Ms. Oxford 1582, fol. 53b), and Sefer 'Or ha-Sekel (Ms. Vatican 233, fol. 99b ff. and elsewhere); Sefer Sa c arey Sedeq (Ms. Leiden 24, fol. 134b), and in passage cited above, referred to in note 35, and below, note 121. 40. Sefer tlayye ha-`01dm ha-Ba' (Ms. Oxford 1582 fol. 53b). 41. In Sefer ha-Bahir (Margolioth edition p. 5 par. 1 1 5) we read: This (vowel) point in the Torah of Moses, which is entirely [round] and is in relation to the letter like the soul dwelling in the human body. Regarding the sources of this idea, see Scholem, *Das Buch Bahir*, 88, and the material collected by Naftali ben Menahem in *Legonenu Le'am*, 16 (1965), 3-9. This passage from Sefer ha-

Bdhir is quoted often by Abulafia. In Sefer Get ha-Semot (Ms. Oxford 1682, fol. 107a), Abulafia quotes the Sefer ha-Bahir using two designations which we will quote here: And so did our sages o.b.m. state, that the vowel points in relation to their respective letters are like [their] souls. And in the Barayta and Yerushalmi it is stated that the [vowel] points of the Torah of Moses are likened to souls that dwell in human bodies, i.e., that the vowels of the consonants are like the souls of creatures.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 473 Gdnuz in the name of Sefer ha-Bahir (Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 107a), and in Sefer tlayyey ha-NefeS, Ms. Munich 408, fol. 74b), it is cited in the name of "our sages o.b.m." 42. Ms. Vatican 233, fol. 106b. 43. On this topic, see Idel, The Mystical Experience, chs. 1, 2. 44. There are already substantial discussions on the graphic representations of the vowels, in the works of R. Abraham Ibn Ezra, in R. Joseph Gikatilla's Sefer Ginat 'Egoz and by R. Isaac ha-Kohen in Seler Tac amey ha-Nequdot we-Surtdtm. 45. Ms. Vatican 233, fols. 100b-101a. These words by Abulafia influenced



the writer of Sefer Net' 'Elohim (Ms. Munich 10, fols. 140a-140b):  
 There are places where the patah and kamaz are written above  
 the letter, and indeed it would be proper that it surround the entire  
 letter, but we write it as it is, in order not to obscure the form  
 representation of the letter on its account. And the kamaz,  
 composed from a line and a point below its middle indicates that  
 the line of the patah stands in place of the circle. Also  
 numerologically the word QMS [(l)amas] equals KDVR  
 [l)cadurâ□□circle], and MQYF [makifâ□□surrounding]; and  
 every circle has a point at its center around which it revolves. See  
 also Sefer 'Osar 'Eden Ganuz (Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 12b), and  
 Sefer Hayyey ha-Oldm ha-Ba' (Ms. Oxford 1582, fol. 56a). 46.  
 The source of this view is R. Abraham Ibn Ezra's Sefer ha-  
 Moznayim (Offenbach 1791), fol. 10a: "the great patah is a line,  
 indicating a revolving circle." See also R. Yehudah Hadassi, ha-  
 KOfer (Eupatoria, 836), fol. 62b, par. 165. R. Joseph Gikatilla in  
 Sefer Ginat 'Egoz (fol. 72c-d) writes: Know that the qiimas is  
 regarded as a circle that surrounds [in the printed version we read  
 "MUQF"â□□'is surrounded by', but evidently we must correct  
 this to MQYFâ□□'surrounds']. Know too, that all circles

eventually take the form of the (lamas, since any circle is limited by diameter. Know also, my brother, that every circle has a point in its center, which is the secret of the point of the qamas. So too, you should contemplate, and you will find that every letter returns in the revolving wheel, the secret of the 231 [gates], which constitutes a circle [KDVRA], i.e., a surrounding circle. And this is called the center, the secret of the qamas.

It is clear that Abulafia distinguishes between the quote from the sages and the other source referred to as Barayta and Yerushalmi, which was a designation used by a number of the early Kabbalists, referring to the Bahir; see Scholem, *The Origins of the Kabbalah*, 40, n. 68, and Y. Weinstock, *Be-Ma c agaley ha-Nigleh ve-ha-Nistar* (Jerusalem 1970), 40, 45. It is not clear to this writer what exactly was the source of the quote from "the Sages," and it may be the case that Abulafia saw one of the sources used by the author of the Bahir. It is worthy noting that R. Menahem Recanati, in his work *Ta c amey ha-Miswot* (H. Lieberman, ed. London 1962, fol. 32a) distinguishes between Yerushalmi and

Sefer 'Eden ha-Bahir. The quote from Sefer ha-Bahir is cited by Sefer

474 Notes to Chapter 1 Gikatilla relates the fact that all the letters revolve by way of the 231 gates, to the fact that the qamas surrounds letters as a circle. In this he also makes use of numerology: KDVRA (one circle) = 231 = RL'A. R. Hananel ben Abraham, author of Sefer Yesod `Oldm (Ms. Moscow Gilinzburg 601, fol. 72a), basing himself on Gikatilla, writes:

The qamas is a point, and a line stands upon it, and its numerical value is 230, the value also of [the word] KDVR. And the point beneath the line refers to the 231.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 475 mystical attainment, Augustine writes that the state of Divine Grace: "omnis lingua et omne quidquid transuendo fit si cui sileat" (Confessions, IX, 10). See note 54 below. 53. BT Sotah, 36a. On this text as illustrating Midrashic literature, see James L. Kugel,

"Two Introductions to Midrash," in eds. G. Hartman S. Budick, *Midrash and Literature* (New Haven □ □ London, 1986), 93-100.

54. Ms. Cambridge, Trinity College 108, fol. 123b. The text was published by Scholem in Abulafia, who thought that it was by Abulafia or by one of his disciples. Compare to Ra gBaS, Magen 'Abot (Livorno 1785) fol. 15a: "And He taught him 70 languages," i.e., he activated his potential intellect. See below, notes 114, 127. R. Isaac of Acre depicts language SFH [siifih] as the Selsincih (SKYNH), based on their numerical equivalence, and in his discussion of this we find a conception of effluence associated with the Hebrew language; on this issue see Idel, "Reification of Language," where Sefer 'Oscir Hayyini (Ms. Moscow, Giinsburg 775, fol. 70a), is discussed. 55. Knowledge of the seventy languages was regarded as an important attainment even during the Talmudic era; see sources compiled by Goldziher, *Language*, 469, n. 4. The seventy languages are associated with revelation, as we learn from Midra g Sem & Rabbah, 5:9:

And the whole nation perceived the thunderings [sounds; cf. Ex. 21: 15]: the Voice emerged and became 70 voices and 70 languages so that all nations would hear.

See also Sefer Gan Na'ul (Ms. Munich 58, fol. 3221b); and cf. M. Steinschneider, *Hebriische Bibliographic*, vol. 18 (1818), 81, and *ibid.*, vol. 4 (1861), 78. 47. Sefer 'Or ha-Sekel (Ms. Vatican 233, fol. 89a). SBYM LSVNVT = 1214 = SYRUF H'OTYVT ( gibim Ida-notâ□□seventy languages = seruf ha' otiyOtâ□□combination of the letters). This equation recurs frequently in Abulafia's writings; see Sefer 'Osar 'Eden Ganuz (Ms. Oxford 1580, fols. 48a, 1.41b), and elsewhere. See also below, citations in notes 67 and 111, and also in this chapter itself. 48. Sefer Yesircih (Jerusalem 1965) fol. 10b. This passage is also found, verbatim, in Peru g Sefer Yesirah of R. Eleazar of Worms (Jerusalem 1918) fol. 1a, and also in the commentary on the Torah of R. Menahem Ziyuni (Jerusalem 1964) fol. 3c. Abulafia was familiar with the first two of these works. The idea under discussiOn is also apparently related to material preserved in Safer Baddey ha-'Ariin by R. Shem Tov ben Abraham Ibn Gaon, and also found in Ms. Paris, BN 770, fol. 147a. See also the untitled work by R. Yohanan Alemanno, preserved in Ms. Paris, BN 849, fol. 120a, and in his Sir ha-Ma c al6t, which was partially published under the name Saar ha-

He'Âsheq (Livorno 1790) fol. 36a. 49. Tishbi ed., 28. 50. BT Menahot, 65a. 51. BT Sanhedrin, 4b. 52. Ms. Paris 768 BN, fol. 2a. The emphasis on the desirability of knowing the "seventy languages" even if we do not take this literally, expresses the importance that Abulafia attaches to language, as opposed to most non-Jewish mystics who minimise the significance of language. Whereas Abulafia regards it as one of the summits of

See, *ibid.* 28:4, and Midrag ,ÂOher TO1? on Psalm 92, and observations by A. Schreiber in his article "Das Problem des Ursprung der Sprache in Judische Schriften," *Magyar Zsido Szende*, vol. LIX (1937), 334-349. It is worth pointing out that an unusual conception, which sees the knowledge of the seventy languages as an inferior quality, may be found in *Perug ha-TORah* by a certain R. Zerahyah, written apparently during the fourteenth century, where we read:

And it is written [Psalm 19:3] YHVH D'AAT [yeljaweh dacatâ□□reveals knowledge]. So too, HVH in Aramaic means serpent [niihtig], because he knew all languages; 'And the tree

was desirable to make one wise' [Gen. 3:6]. Thus, she knew the entire secret of languages, whereas this was not the case with Adam. And she was thus chosen for the sake of providing for humanity... For subtlety depends on the eye, which wants to be great.... And this is the secret of [the numerical equivalence] 'ADM NHS HVH = SWIM (Adam Naha [serpent])

#### 476 Notes to Chapter 1

Havah [Eve] = [70]). And this is the secret of the NHS: "And the serpent was more subtle... " [Gen. 3:1]: Forty-nine gates of understanding were revealed to him and he understood the 70 languages: NHS refers to 50; H-HTH [hita-wheat] = 22 [letters], S-SWIM-70. And because he caused Eve to sin and removed from the moon seven luminaries and from the sun, seven times seven, the serpent was cursed sevenfold and returned to 49. (Ms. Paris, Alliance Israelite, 146, fol. 32a).

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 477 57. Sefer 'Eden Ganuz (Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 33a). Concerning the return of the letters to their prime-material state, see above, note 32, and the quotes in note 59 below. 58. Ibid., fol. 33a. On the 70 languages, see above, note 55. 59. Ibid., fols. 171a-171b; and compare to .ÂŞeba, Neap& ha-Torah, 4. 60. Rosenberg, Logic and Ontology, 164-167, 282-284; Isadore Twersky, Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (New Haven-London 1980), 324.

61. "Ma'amar c al Penimiyut ha-TOrah," published by G. Scholem,

Notwithstanding the fact that the author of these words makes use of methods of commentary similar to those of Abulafia, here the 70 languages are regarded as a quality possessed by Eve and not Adam. It seems that we have here a concept of languages that emphasises its imaginative aspect. Language is associated with particulars limited in finite space and time, as opposed to intellect, which is beyond both time and verbal expression. We also find an anti-linguistic orientation in the



anonymous Sefer Toledot 'Adam, a work also influenced by Abulafia. In this writing we find an argument to the effect that as language is conventional, the intellectual attainment is not essentially dependent on it; see Ms. Oxford 836, fol. 169a:

For all of these words and letter exchanges [of places in the word] are merely convention, originating from the realm of the imagination, whereas the intellect and prophecy in and of themselves require neither speech nor language to be perceived, as [it is required by] imagination. And the words of the sages are parables and enigmas, very terse but containing much meaning. And prophecy does not require even this minimal amount of speech. However, since the sage cannot convey [the depth of] his message to the masses, for they do not understand his unique language, since they do not share the same [level of] convention, for "wisdom is as unattainable to the fool as corals" [Prov. 24:7], for this reason we will observe among the sages that they are always laughing in their hearts at the fools, as they speak to them in the language they had learned from their early youth. During the sixteenth century we come across a view in the writing of R.

Kiryat Sefer, 6 (1930), 111-112. G. Scholem was doubtful in attributing this work to Nahmanides, as was the writer of the manuscript; and Gottlieb, in *Studies.*, 128-131, proves that this work was written by R. Joseph Gikatilla. For another appraisal of language, coming from circles influenced by Gikatilla, see below, note 92, and Gikatilla's own opinion, note 83. 62. Num. 16:31. 63. BT Sanhedrin, fol. 99a. 64. Gen. 11:9. 65. *ÂŞebac NetibOt ha-Torah*, 16-17. These two sections are also found, with minor variations, in R. Jacob Anatoli's translation of the first gate of *Be'ur Sefer ha-Melis* (Ms. Paris, BN 928, fol. 33a). On Anatoli's translation of Averroes's commentary on Aristotle's *Organon*, see Rosenberg, *Logic and Ontology*, 8-10. 66. Compare with Abulafia in *Sefer* 63: *Sefer*, Ms. Paris, BN 777, p.

And so too it was among the masses of various passing nations,  
the

one who was the most distinguished of them was chosen. And  
this is, as it was with the passing stars of the sky, where the sun

was chosen. And similarly within the person's own body, where there are principle organs and organs under their domain.

On the principal organs, see above, note 7. 67. See above, note 47. 68. See also in Nafrtanides, Commentary on Torah, Ex. 30:12, and see below, in the text indicated in note 132.

Isaac Sarfati similar to that of Abulafia in reference to the relationship between the Active Intellect and the 70 languages. See Y. Hacker, Ha-Hevrah ha-Yehudit be-Saloniki ve-Aggapea be-Me'ot ha-Tet-Vav ve-haTet-Zayin (Doctoral dissertation, Jerusalem 1979), 8. 56. Sefer Sitrey Torah (Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 163a).

478 Notes to Chapter 1 69. Ms. Vatican 233, fol. 59a. The idea that the first language was the medium by which the conventions of the other languages were established is also found in the works of the Arabic grammarian Ibn Hazm, see R. Arnaldez,

Grammaire et Theologic chez Ibn Hazm de Cordoue (Paris 1956), 45; and in Al-Ghazali, see M. A. Palacios, "El Origen del Lenguaje y Problemas Conexos," *Al-Andaluz*, IV (1936-1939), 266. 70. Ms. Moscow 133, fol. 16b. See also another text from this volume, that will be quoted in connection with note 133. Compare this also with Abulafia's conception that the prophetic wisdom is the mother of all wisdoms ....for they all derive sustenance from her, and by her means will one easily attain to the Active Intellect. ebt2 c Netibot ha-Tordh, 6. And see note 114 below.

71. Ms. Oxford 2239, fol. 125b; and compare with *Sefer ha-Melammed*,

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 479

for something [learned] as a result of chance cannot cause one to forget his inborn knowledge.

74. This story is mentioned in a chronicle written in Italy during the lifetime of Abulafia, *Cronica Fratris Salimbene* (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, vol. 32, 350):

Secunda eius superstitio fuit, quia voluit experiri, cuius modi linguam et loquelam haberent pueri, cum adolevissent si cum nemine loquerentur. Et ideo precepit baiulis et nutricifus ut lac infantibus darent ut mamans sugerent et baenearrent et mundificarent eos, sed nullo modo blandiscentur eis nec loquerentur. Volebat enim cognoscere utrum Hebream linguam haberent que prima lingua haberent que prima fuerat an Grecam vel Latinam vel Arabicam nut certe linguam parentum suorum ex quibus nati fuissent. Sed laborat in cassum quia pueri sive infantes moriebant omnes.

Ms. Paris, BN 680, fol. 297a:

Know that all agreements about language necessarily presuppose an already existing language [and] Adam knew the 70 languages, for all 70 languages are subserved under 22

letters. From this we may conclude that according to Abulafia, the 70 lan-

The administrator of this experiment was, as is known, King Frederick II, and it was considered one of his cruel escapades.

75. See 'Osar Nelynad, v. 2 (1863), 135-136; also, Joseph B.

Sermoneta, R. Hillel Ben Samuel Ben Eleazar of Verona and His Philosophy, (Ph.D. thesis, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1961),

167 ff. and 190. This story was known to another Italian author,

the Kabbalist R. Aaron Berakyah de Modena; in his work Ma cabar YcibOq (Amsterdam 1732) fol. 144b, we read: For nature implanted these [words] in the mouths of babies, as can

be investigated. And even with children not of our nation, their first words will be "God make thee as Ephraim and Menasseh," as we have mentioned. And we already know from the

occurrence of a child who never heard the speech of any

language, that his first words were of the Holy language, because the name of the master of nature, 'ELHYM rElohind has the same

numerical value as HTI3` [ha-teba'â□□nature], and He

implanted it so in his world in the secret of the letters of the Torah, within which He looked and thus created His world. An additional version of this story, that bears a similarity to the one

languages are, in effect, one language by whose means all the other language conventions arose, and that they are all delimited by it. Compare this with the conception of the Hebrew language, as the mother of all languages, found in the text of Sefer Mafteah ha-Holcmot indicated

in note 70; see that note and note 69. 72. Compare with Maimonides' Guide for the Perplexed, III, 50.

73. Ms. Vatican 291, fols. 29b-30a. The source of this story is found in

Herodotus 2:2. This legend was known to R. Abraham Ibn Ezra, who writes in Sefer Safeih Berurah (Fiorda 1839), fol. 2a-b = Devir, vol. 2, p.

286, notes:

So first I searched to discover which is the first of all languages. Many have said that Aramaic is the most ancient, and that it is even in the nature of man to speak it without having been taught it by anyone. And that if a newborn child be placed in a desert with no one but a mute wet-nurse, he would speak Aramaic. And that it is because a child is taught a foreign language that he forgets his natural language. But these words are utterly without significance,

told by Herodotus and to the one that Salimbene told concerning King Frederick II, is found in the notes of R. Obadaya the Prophet, published in H. Liebermann, *Sefer ha-Rahel* (New York 1980), I, 319-320. See also Y. H. Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto* (New York-London 1971), 277.

480 Notes to Chapter 1 76. Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 151b.

Compare with *Sefer ha-Klayyey ha-Nefeg* (Ms. Munich 408, fols. 38b-



39a). Thus Abulafia attributes an intrinsic connection between the name of an object and its form:

Know that for anything in existence, its form corresponds to the name that nature bestowed upon it; for the form, name, and remembrance are identical.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 481 nection with the language of revelation, is also found in the Hindu philosophical school, the Nyaya; see A. Padoux, *Recherches sur la Symbolique et l'Energie de la Parole dans certain textes Tantriques* (Paris, 1975), 147 n. 5. Regarding divine convention, we read in *Sefer Sa'arey Sedeq*:

And that the convention as to the forms of the letters of the Torah and the combinations of the Names are in truth divine conventions, and are not like the other conventions of the world as to the form of their letters, which came about as a result of the imagination and inventiveness of the human mind. See below, in the text indicated by note 85, where we find the expres-

In Sefer 'Or ha-Sekel (Ms. Vatican 233 fol. 70a-b) we read: "The noun is the root indicating (its) substance and essence." And in Sefer Maftatt ha-Sefirah (Ms. Milano-Ambrosiana 53, fol. 154b), Abulafia delimits the implications of the noun:

And the noun informs us as to the true substance and essence when it is the name of a species or a genus. But the [proper] noun does not inform us as to its essence, because it is not specifically designated for him and is not within him.

This indicates that language has intellectual content, because in itself it can inform us as to the form of the species and genera.

77. Ms. Paris, BN 680, fol. 291a. 78. The claim for the superiority of the Hebrew language, based on the wisdom hidden in the forms, names, and numerical values of the letters is also found in the writing of R. Joseph ben David of Greece, who writes:

Know that our language is called holy for two reasons: one, is that by means of its letters everything in existence from the highest to

the lowest, can be explained... and also, by virtue of the letters and their names many matters are explained in ways not found in any other language, to one who [carefully] delves into its [intrinsic] details.

sion "agreement between God and Adam" which corresponds to "Divine convention" here. And compare to Sefer Ma'aseh 'Efod (Vienna 1865), 30: "And as this language is a result of Divine, not human convention... " Is it possible that the author of Ma'aseh 'Efod was influenced by Sefer Sa'arey Sedeq? On the possible influence of Abulafia on the author of Ma'aseh 'Efod, see I.

Twersky, "Religion and Law" in Religion in a Religious Age (ed. S. D. Goitein, Cambridge, Mass. 1974) p.82 n.35. And see below, note 82, and the words of R. Yohanan Alemanno quoted in note 2, and Jean Bodin in note 133 below. 81. Ms. Munich 58, fol. 327a, which corresponds to Sefer ha-Peli)ah, fol. 53d. 82.

Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed, III, 32: "If you consider the Divine actions, I mean to say the natural actions ...;" and see below note 83. On the congruence between the divine and natural

properties of language, as opposed to the opinion of Maimonides, see Yehudah Halevi, *Sefer Kuzari*, IV, 25. Maimonides himself clearly supported the view of conventionality of all language, including Hebrew; see Twersky (cf. note 60 above) p. 324. 83.

Ms. Munich 58, fol. 333a, corresponding to *Sefer ha-Peli*, fol. 55b. There the word natural is missing. The source of this idea is in Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*, I, 66:

and the Tablets were the work of God. He intends to signify by this that this existence was natural and not artificial, for all natural things are called the work of the Lord.

This fragment was published by L. Dukes in *Literaturblatt des Orient*, 10 (1849), 730 and was influenced by *Sefer Midra ha-klole* of R. Yehudah Ibn Matka. 79. This connection between conventional and natural language is already found in Plato's *Cratylus*, par. 435-436; and see, H. A. Wolfson "The Veracity of Scripture. *Religious Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass. 1961), 225. See also in Abulafia, *Sefer 1:1-ayyey ha-Nefeg* (Ms. Munich 408, fol. 38b-39a), note 76 above. 80. The term prophetic convention

or Divine convention found in a passage of Sefer Sa carey  
Sedeq, which will be quoted below in con-

And see below, Chapter 2, on Abulafia's conception of the Torah.  
Compare with Abulafia's Sifer ha-Melammed (Ms. Paris, BN 680,  
fols. 296b, 297a, 300a). There Maimonides' opinion on the  
Tablets is mentioned

482 Notes to Chapter 1 a number of times. It is particularly  
relevant to quote here Abulafia, *ibid.* fol. 297a:

And you already know that our sages o.b.m., the sages of wisdom  
and astronomy have said that God, may He be Blessed, gave  
names to light and darkness, as it is written (Gen. 1:5) "And God  
called light day and the darkness he called night," and so too  
[*ibid.*, 1:8] "God called the firmament heaven" and [*ibid.*, 1:10]  
"and He called their name Adam on the day He created them."  
Know that these names, that Scripture states were given by God,  
contain wondrous secrets, and are not all limited to merely the

plain meaning, but rather, they inform us as to the veracity of the hidden meaning of language and its secrets; that God gave them names not out of convention, but in accordance with their nature. It seems that there is a distinction to be made in reference to language

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 483 This tells us that man issued names to phenomena after understanding their true nature—the secret orders of the universe—the ways of causality." Thus, language is not only a result of revelation but is the true expression of the essence of phenomena. With this in mind, we may say that the aforementioned quote from Be'urey ha-Moreh: "... since they are the results of human convention, and do not reflect nature," means to say that their languages are conventional, as opposed to Hebrew, which is natural. On the attribution of this work to Gikatilla, see Gottlieb, *Studies.*, 110. On the 'calling of names' as an expression of the understanding of the link between phenomena in the lower world and their roots in the supernal world, see R. Goetschel, *Meir Ibn Gabbay* (Leuven,

1981), 366-367, 416. It is worth clarifying here the meaning of the expression *diquduq penimi* (inner structure) used in *Be'urey ha-MOreh*. According to Vajda (below, note 85) p. 128, it refers to "symbole esoterique;" whereas he translates it as "structure intrinseque." In this writer's opinion, Vajda's translation, rather than his interpretation, concurs with the intent of the author.

Gikatilla, like Abulafia, analyses the inner structure of words to derive their essential meaning. In his work, Gikatilla bases his discussion on the assumption that language is an elaborated expression of the Divine Name, ramified in various ways, which became the stuff of language. For an analysis of one example of this type of discourse, in reference to Jerusalem as a symbol, and an elaboration on the Name of 72 groups of letters found in *Be'urey ha-Moreh*, fol. 24c-d, see M. Idel "Jerusalem in Thirteenth-Century Thought," *The History of Jerusalem, Crusaders and Ayyubids (1099-1250)*, eds. J. Prawer and H. Ben Shamay, pp. 276-279 [Hebr.] What characterizes Gikatilla in the particular stage of his intellectual development during which he wrote *Be'urey ha-Mareh* is his attempt to bring to light the inner structures of language more than his attempt to understand their

symbolic content. And in this sense, his similarity to Abulafia is manifest. Later, in his works based on definite theosophic principles, such as *Sefer Sa carey Sedeq* and *Sefer Sa: arey 'Orah* the symbolic ramifications of words become the focus of his interest, at the expense of analysing the particular constituents of the word itself. 84.Ex. 32:16. 85. Ms. Jerusalem 80 148, fols. 78b-79a, corrected by Ms. Leiden Warner 24, fol. 131b. This section was translated into French in an

between, on the one hand, prophetic convention in communication between God and man; and on the other hand, the names that God Himself gave to phenomena before the creation of man. We may also recognize Abulafia's influence on Gikatilla's *Be'urey ha-Moreh*:

Regarding all the languages of the world, with the exception of the holy language, there is no purpose in asking the reasons for the particular letters of a word, since they are the results of human convention, and do not reflect nature, i.e., that a nation decided to call something such and so. Therefore, the words of



their languages do not possess inner structure. Whereas with the holy language this is not the case, because it is not a language that people agreed upon, but rather, it is indeed born of Divine wisdom which has no end, and is entirely established in accordance with Divine intent. (published in Se,eldt le-Hdkiim R. Saul Ashkenazi, (Venice, 1574) fols. 20c-d.)

Gikatilla negates the naturalness of foreign languages, and contrastingly, sees Hebrew as the Divine language. Elsewhere (ibid., fols. 27d28a), in criticising Maimonides' conception of language, he writes:

But the meaning of [Gen. 2:19] "This is its name" is that it is its true name, in accordance with Divine wisdom, based on the Supernal Book. For [Adam] received it all in the Kabbalah, and the Holy One Blessed be He informed him as to the secret orders of the universe, and the secrets of His Chariots [merkabot] and the ways of causality and the hidden potencies behind all orders, and after He had informed him of these he was properly able to

call each thing by its true name, in accordance with the Divine Intent.

484 Notes to Chapter 1 addendum to G. Vajda, "Deux Chapitres de l'Histoire du Conflit entre la Kabbale et la Philosophie: la Polemique Anti-intellectualiste de Joseph b. Shalom Ashkenazi," *AHDLMA*, XXXI (1956), 131-132. On "Divine convention" in *Sefer Sa'arey Sedeq*, see the quote cited above in note 80, that was not dealt with in Vajda's essay. In this essay, Vajda also deals with aspects of theory of language in *Be'urey ha-Moreh* that we discuss here, but he is not inclined to accept *Gikatilla* as the author of this work. 86. This according to Ms. Leiden, whereas Ms. Jerusalem reads "Sem." 87. We have here a transformation of the concept 'Divine issue' (צניאן 'Elohi) into the term *Kabbalah*. See Vajda (note 85 above), 132-133. 88. *Sefer Yeirah* was attributed according to various traditions known to Abulafia to the Patriarch Abraham or to R. 'Aqiba. 89. Concerning Adam as the first receiver of the traditions of the *Kabbalah*, as opposed to Moses, there are many sources contemporary with Abulafia. See

Sefer Segel ha-Qcideg by R. Moses de Leon (London 1911), 22; Abulafia himself, in his epistle Masref la-Kesef (Ms. Sasoon 56, fol. 25a) reports that according to a contemporary theosophical Kabbalist the chain of Kabbalistic tradition of the sefirot started with Adam:

And so according to him, the tradition [Kabbalah] goes back in [an unbroken] chain down to Ravina and Ra y Ashi o.b.m., until R. Yehudah the Prince o.b.m., and from him, down to the prophets until our master Moses, down to Abraham o.b.m., to Noah, until Adam, who received the secrets of each and every sefirah from God.

#### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 485

that he also is flesh," etc. Moses o.b.m. studied the Kabbalah in its most perfect form, with a pure spirit and a new heart, more so than any other man, and he attained to certain knowledge of the Creator. Regarding him it is written [Dt. 34:10] "And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knows face to face," not before or after. And so too, we find in

Sefer ha-Mafteah that before Moses [was returned to] Egypt, the Holy One blessed and exalted be His name, chose him from among the tribe of Levi so that he may serve Him. And Moses learned the entire Kabbalah from the alphabets, and his study of wisdom and knowledge and understanding refers to the letters and their vowels. And anyone who will understand and know [and understand] the power of the letters and vowels, and their [visual] forms and the effects of their forms, will understand and have knowledge of the Blessed Creator.

We have here before us a clear claim that the study of the Names of God, classified as the "Kabbalah" existed in writing even before Moses, and that Moses studied it in its complete form. The content of the Kabbalah consists of the different alphabets, the forms of the letters, the vowels, and the power hidden in them. As for his reliance on Sefer ha-Mafteah, we quote the colophon of Sefer ha-Yihud: This is the Sefer ha-Yihud, a 'mafteah' [key] to the Book of Raziel,

[containing] deep words and hidden secrets, the book of Kabbalah. (Ms. Schocken, *ibid.*, fol. 120b).

In one text we find also that the connection between the Divine Name and language was also part of a tradition that predates Moses, and we may assume that the origin of that tradition was Adam. In *Sefer ha-Yihud*, preserved in Ms. Schocken, Kabbalah, 14, fol. 120b, we read:

And the knowledge of the Creator, May His Name be blessed and exalted, consists of eight sets of alphabets such as [Ex. 14:19-21] "Wa-yisa c , Wa-yabo', Wa-yet," which contain 216 letters. And before the Torah proper was given at Sinai, Moses was in Egypt. And it is accepted that Levi possessed a book of Kabbalah and he studied from it, as did those who preceded him. But Moses didn't learn in the same way as his predecessors, Heaven forbid, regarding whom it is written [Genesis 6:3] "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever for

We know from various sources that the angel Raziel revealed his book Sefer Razi'el to Adam; see Sefer ha-Razim (ed. Margolioth, Jerusalem 1967), 31. If so, the Kabbalah of Sefer Razi'el is said to teach the most ancient Kabbalah, originating with Adam, who passed it on until it reached Moses' generation. See also Sefer ha-Tmundt of R. Shem Tov ben Shem Tov (Ferrara 1556), fols. 95a, 19b, and the report of the opinion of Athanasius Kircher on the language of Adam, in Deikman (see above, note 2) pp. 97-99. 90. Ms. Leiden, Warner 24, fol. 127a, Ms. Jerusalem 80 148, fols. 47a-b, the text in the second Ms. is missing in those lines. 91. Apparently, the study of the names and letters is also associated with the esoteric reading of Scripture as an amalgam of Divine Names, a method supported by Abulafia and the author of Sefer Sacarey Sedeq. See Ms. Jerusalem, 80, 148, fol. 79b:

#### 486 Notes to Chapter 1

And Moses o.b.tri. ordered the Torah with consecutive letters in accordance with the way of Names...

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 487 95. Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 55b. SKL (sekelâ□□intelligence = 350) + DMYWN (dimyonâ□□imagination = 110) = 110 + 350 = 460 = HM.L'AK (ha-mal'ak--the angel = 96) + HSTN (ha-scitdn--Satan = 36) = QDS LYHWH (qaddg la-Semâ□□sanctified to God) = BN VBT (ben u-batâ□□son and daughter). HWL (holâ□□profane) = 44 = DM (damâ□□blood) = YWD HA WW HA (a plene spelling of the Tetragrammaton); QDS = DT (datreligion) = TGA (tagaâ□□crown, crownlet on the letters) = 404. TGA also has the implication of Sem ha-Meforag, the Tetragrammaton. KTR TWRH (keter TO-rahâ□□the crown of Torah) = 1231 = ISRYM WSYSH ('esrim we-gigiih-26, the numerical value of the Tetragrammaton). The correspondence between, on the one hand, profane language and holy language; and on the other, blood and religion is already to be found in Perug Sefer Yesirah of R. Baruch Togarmi, published by Scholem in Abulafia, 235. There we find also the contrast between sekel (intellect) and dimyon (imagination). 96. See end of note 95 above. 97. On Satan and imagination, see Idel, Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah, 34-38. 98. On the relation between blood and imagination, see Idel, Abulafia,

102. 99. This theory of the origin of languages was already known by Maimonides and his followers through their reading of Al-Farabi's *Sefer ha-Otiyot*; see Rosenberg, *Logic and Ontology* (Ph.D. thesis, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1973), 167, 282. This theory also reached the early Kabbalists, as can be seen in the *Perush ha-'Aggadot le-R. 'Azriel* (ed. I. Tishby, Jerusalem, 1945) where we read, on p. 28:

And I heard it said that there would be variations in language corresponding to differences in [geographical] atmosphere. For speech is merely the air articulated by the tongue, and heard in attunement with the different manifestations of the vessels of speech. And all languages originating from the North would be similar to each other, and so on regarding all directions, there are similarities of language in the lands of the respective nations. It is worth pointing out in this connection the explanation offered by

And compare with Abulafia's claim in *Sefer ha-Hegeq* that his method will be revealed in the messianic era, whereas now it seems strange to the ...."sages of Israel who hold themselves to



be wise(!) in the wisdom of the Talmud." (Ms. New York, JTS 1801, fol. 13b). See also the material in Sefer ha-Yihud, mentioned in note 89, from which it is clear that the Kabbalah constitutes the study of the Holy Names and letters. See also below the section quoted from Sefer Sitrey TORah in note 129. 92. Ms. Rome, Angelica 38, fol. 45b. The numerology of IBRYT (עברי) = 682 = MESH MRKBH (מַעֲשֵׂה מֵרְכָבָה = the Account of the Chariot) is also found in Ms. Jerusalem 80 1303, fol. 54a, in a passage of an untitled work by Abulafia. See also Chapter 2 below, on Abulafia's conception of the Torah. We may also compare Abulafia's conception of Hebrew as an intellectual language to the description of the Hebrew language found in Tig(titi Peratiim be-Yihud, attributed to Maimonides, and published by Vajda in Qobes (al Yad, 5 (1951), 127 where we read:

Among all languages there is not one that can reach the quality of the Holy language. And this is due to the fact that the [usage on the Holy language [is identical] with the usage of the Blessed Name, and the secret of the Great Name, is instructed in the essence of God, Blessed be He. Thus, anyone who purifies and

comprehends with keen intellect His Great and Blessed Name will understand in his mind the truth of Creator of the World.

As Vajda pointed out, there is a clear affinity between sections of the above-quoted work and Gikatilla's Sefer Ginat Tgoz, and it is quite possible that its theory of language is influenced by the school from which Abulafia emerged. Regarding the pseudo-Maimonidean work, see G. Vajda, "Le Traite Pseudo-Maimonideen 'Neuf Chapitres stir l'Unite de Dieu'," AHDLMMA, vol. 28 (1953), 83-98. 93. Ms. Munich 10, fol. 135b. 94. See above, in our discussion of the 22 letters as the source of all sounds for tones of the other languages.

Epicurus for the origin of linguistic variation, which he says is the outcome of variation of phonetic pronunciation related to variation in geographic location, and that it is only at a second stage that various

488 Notes to Chapter 1 different conventional languages arose from the different phonetic pronunciations: See C. Bailey, *The Greek Atomists and Epicurus -A Study* (Oxford 1982), 380-382. 100. Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 140a. 101. Ms. Vatican 233, fol. 35a. 102. Genesis 11:8. 103. Ibid. 11:9. 104. Ms. Munich 285, fol. 68a, corresponding to Liqqutey Hamis, Ms. Oxford 2239, fol. 126a. 105. The image of the monkey recurs often in the writings of Abulafia, in various contexts. See also Z.R.J. Werblowsky "Ape and Essence," *Ex Orbe Religionum* (London 1972), 318-325. See below, Abulafia's view in his *Sefer Mafteah ha-I:lokniht*, quoted beside note 132 and compare with the words of R. Yehudah ben Solomon ibn Matka: For the comparison between our letters and theirs is like the comparison between a sculpture made of stone and a living person. (*Sefer Midrcig ha-Hotanah*, published by B. Z. Dinur, *Yisrael Ba-Golah* (Tel Aviv-Jerusalem 1973) B,6, p. 19).

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 489 in reference to prophecy, it can be seen as identical with the Active Intellect

from which emerge 70 languages, as we have seen above, note 54. See also below, note 133 and in the text, beside note 70, concerning Hebrew as the mother of all languages. 115. See in Testaments of the Tribes, the Testament of Yehudah 25:4, and Midrag Tanhuma on Noah, par. 19 as reported in the name of Thomas Aquinas by R. Azaria de Rossi in Me-or `Enayim (Vilna 1866), 257. See also Shalom Rosenberg, "Ha-Sihah le-Gan 'Eden" in Ha-Rwayon habe-Yisrael - Yom Iyyun le-regel Mele'at Senwnim Sanah le-Gershom Scholem (Jerusalem 1982), 77-78. 116. Ms. Vatican 233, fol. 36a-36b. See also Idel, Abulafia, p. 399 and note 25. 117. Regarding this see text indicated in note 130 below, and the text indicated above by note 66. 118. Ms. Oxford 1582, fol. 105b and compare to text that will be quoted further from Sefer Â§Omer Miswiih. 119. This is how it appears in the Ms., and apparently the word meculeh (excellent) or some such word, is missing. On the first language that included all other languages, see the analysis by Arnaldes, regarding the opinion of Ibn Hazm (indicated above, in note 69). 120. See above, in our discussion of the twenty-two fundamental letters, and note 12. 121. See above, note 39. 122. QDWS (qaddg-holy) = 410, like the

morpheme Thl as in TheosDivinity in Greek. 123. In Italian, santo means holy-from here we derive that the word La'az means (in the context of Abulafia's usage): Italian. 124. Genesis 11:1. 125. Zephaniah, 3:9. 126. See Aviezer Ravitsky, "Kefi Koah ha-'Adam, YemOt ha-Magiah be-MiSnat ha-Ramban," in MeÂšihiyut we- )eskatologiyah, (ed. Z. Barns, Jerusalem, 1984), 194-203.

106. Sefer ha-Ot, p.71. 107. Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 21b. 108. ibid. fols 17b, 21b, 169b and more. Contemporary with Abulafia, we find this numerological equation in the writings of R. Hananel b. Abraham of Esqira, the author of Sefer Yesikl `Olam, Ms. Moscow, Giinzburg 607, fol. 78a. As a numerological equation we find it already in an early commentary on the Torah preserved in Ms. Paris, BN 353, fol. 69a. 'Eden Ganuz, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 21b. 109. Sefer 110. Ibid. fol. 141a. 111. See note 47 above. 112. Ms. Paris, BN 680, fol. 29a. 113. Ms. Moscow 133, fol. 16b. 114. Seventy thousand faces of the Active Intellect, according to Ibn Tufail. Considering the place that the complete language occupies

490 Notes to Chapter 1 127. See above, notes 54, 114. A more moderate view (see particularly note 52 above) is taken by R. Yohanan Alemanno; in his work *Sir ha-Mwaal6t*, he writes:

And what occurred to the intellect also occurred to the words of the wise. For the intellect in and of itself, is one and is simple and yet we see that it manifests in multiplicity as it dawns on a multitude of people and as it is rendered into many changing ideas. For as with the changing of imaginary forms within people's minds, so too regarding the words of the wise and of the prophets who make use of the holy language. In the effluence of conception they are one and simple, yet we see that they multiply, upon being perceived by many people with changing thoughts. And it is necessary that they be made use of in this manner, in order to bring the masses to greater or lesser perfection, and in this way they are useful to the public. And in this way it is fitting for sages that they deepen their facility of language in order to reach this goal. But as for more than this, beware my son that you not overdo your study of language, for it in itself does not

represent any perfection at all, because the perfection of wisdom lies in the inner form and in the speech of the soul, and not in the outward speech. (Ms. Oxford 1535, fols. 67a-b).

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 491 129. Seler Sitrey Torah, Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 162a. Regarding the identity between the language created by means of Divine convention and the Kabbalah, see above, in the texts quoted from Sefer Sa,iirey Sedeq. It is worth noting the parallels here to Abulafia's idea that the Kabbalah is not widespread among the Jewish people, and that this state of affairs is one of the causes of the length of the Exile; and also, Abulafia's idea that on the one hand, the Messiah will reveal the secrets of the Kabbalah; and on the other hand, the "spiritualistic Judaism" about which Abulafia wanted to converse with the Pope. On the diminution of the Kabbalah as a result of the Exile, see, in reference to Nahmanides and his followers: M. Idel, "We Have No Kabbalistic Tradition on This," in Rabbi Moses Nahmanides (Ramban): Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity (ed. I.

Twersky, Cambridge, Mass. 1983), 54, 62-63. Maimonides, in *Guide for the Perplexed*, I, 71 and following him R. 'Ezra in his introduction to his commentary on the Song of Songs, state that the ancient secrets were lost and that there is a need to return the diadem, namely the ancient tradition, to its former glory, whereas Nahmanides and his disciples claim that there are remnants of these particular secrets still in our hands. 130. Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 140b. This was already published by A. Neubauer, in *REJ*, IX (1884), 149 and by B. Z. Dinur, *Yisra)el ba-Golah*, I, 4, 372. On the admixture of the Hebrew language and the spoken languages of the nations, see in the words of Immanuel of Rome, in W. Bacher "Immanuel b. Solomon's 'Eben Boban," *MGM*, 34 (1885), 245. 131. Complaints such as this on the state of the Hebrew language are quite frequent during the Middle Ages. See A. Halkin, "The Medieval Jewish Attitude Toward Hebrew." *Biblical and Other Studies* (ed. A. Altmann, Cambridge, Mass. 1963), 235 ff. Abulafia's words do not concur with Halkin's determination (*ibid.*, 237) that in Christian lands the Jews were not worried by the fact that Hebrew ceased being used as a language of conversation. See also above, note 128, and in Immanuel of



Rome, in the text published by Bacher, "Immanuel ben Salomon's 'Eben BOljan," p. 243. 132. Ms. Parma 141, fol. 3b. Concerning the claim that the superior quality of the Hebrew language is associated with its being the language of Revelation, see above, note 67.

According to Alemanno, the study of languages has value in the pursuit of the one intention that was scattered in many forms and various languages. But this study has no value in and of itself, because it is incumbent upon a person to arrive at the "inner form," i.e., the spiritual intellections, and not the various physical descriptions of this form. On the limited validation given by Abulafia to the study of Greek and Latin, based on a viewpoint similar to that of Alemanno, see above in the text, beside note 106. 128. Sefer Hayyey ha-Nefe, Ms. Munich 408, fol. 46a. The corruption of the Hebrew language and its being forgotten during the exile, as one of the stumbling blocks to redemption, is mentioned in Raymund Lull, *Le Livre du Gentil et des Trois Sages*, ed. A. Llinares (Paris, 1966), 91:

Encore devez savoir que nous avons autre empeichement, c'est a savoir que nostres langages est ebrieu et n'est mie tant en usage comme estre soloit et [s]'est ebraye per defaute de science.

According to the editor, "c'est ebraye" is an error, and should be "altere," (i.e., "was altered" or "corrupted"); and see below, note 131.

492 Notes to Chapter 1 133. This is an allusion to the relation between language and geography, about which Abulafia wrote in the texts we have quoted from earlier. On Hebrew as the mother of all languages, see quote from Sefer Mafteah ha-Hokmot mentioned earlier alongside note 70. Regarding linguistic creativity in the distancing process from the use of the Hebrew language, see the opinion of R. Azaria de Rossi, Sefer Me'Or Tinayim (Vilna 1866), 456, in the name of an anonymous author who declares that:

during the period of the Dispersion [Babel] a number of words from the holy language were scattered and corrupted in most of the new languages, and whereas among those languages that developed near the geographic area of the dispersion they remained close to the Hebrew language, like for instance, Aramaic and Arabic, and those neighboring them to the east, and the farther away the nation, like, for instance, Ashkenaz [Germany], and other countries to the west, the greater the change from Hebrew. And compare to p. 457: And from these statements emerge a great indication that the holy tongue is the earliest language and the father of all other languages. As for Abulafia's description of the languages of the nations being

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 493 136. The coupling of the one language of the Messianic era and the one divine service indicates the affinity of these two matters, an idea that we came across in the quote above from Sefer Sa'arey Sedeq. 137. See the end of the quote from Sefer 'Osar `Eden Gcinuz. This is also hinted at in the quote from Sefer Mafta ha-

Hokmat alongside note 132. 138. Ms. Paris, BN 727, fol. lib. 139. Before us we have an interesting parallel to the formation of the symbolism in the Kabbalah of the Zohar, that tends to find its sublime secrets in particularly incomprehensible and apparently superfluous Scriptural narratives. See, for instance, the Zohar's commentary to the kings who died (Gen. 36:31-39) discussions of the matter in the Idrat sections of the Zohar. 140. Perug Sefer 'Adam, Ms. Rome, Angelica 38, fol. 2a. 141. Idel, Abulafia, 102. 142. Compare also to what is said at the end of par. 2. 143. See above, note 71, and in the text quoted from Sefer Get ha-Âšemot, indicated by note 118 above, and in the text indicated by note 128. 144. Ms. New York, JTS 1801, fol. 29b. 145. It seems that Abulafia had certain ideas about the Tatar language, because he makes use of that name in a number of his numerological calculations. 146. Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 159b. 147. "RZY'EL" (Razi,e1) is the numerological equivalent to 'ABRHM (Abraham) = 248, and is a pseudonym that Abulafia took for himself.

inferior and illegitimate, as opposed to Jean Bodin, who places in the mouth of Solomon, the Jewish disputant of his colloquium, these words:

They [i.e. the Jews]....preserved the inviolable majesty of the sacred language. This language alone has been granted to the race of men by divine gift. The other languages, as we see, are illegitimate and fashioned by the will of men. This language alone is the language of nature is said to have given names to things according to the nature of each.

J. Bodin, *Colloquium of the Seven about Secrets of the Sublime* (transl. by N.D.L. Kuntz, Princeton U. Press, 1975), 204. On Hebrew as a language bestowed by God, see above, note 85. 134. Ms. Paris, BN 853, fols. 69a-70a, compare with the quote from *Sefer Get ha-Semdt* mentioned above. 135. Zephaniah 3:9.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. Harry A. Wolfson, *Philo* (Cambridge, Mass. 1947) I , 258, n. 43.
2. *Ibid.* p.119; A. J. Heschel *Tardh min ha-gamayim be-'spaklarya ha-Doreit* (London-New York 1965), vol. 2, 10-11.

494 Notes to Chapter 2

3. Yitzhak Baer, *Yisrael ba-cAmim* (Jerusalem 1969), 3-4, and in his article "Le-Berurah sel Torat ha-Yamim Bi-yeme Bayit Seni," in *Zion*, 23-24 (1958/1959), 143-144 and 154. In contrast, see Avigdor Aptowitzer, "Derdedh be-Sebah ha-TO-rah," in *Sinai* 7 (1940-1941), 180-181, and Urbach *The Sages*, vol. I, 200-201, and in Heschel, *ibid.*, 10-12.
4. M. Friedlander, *Essays on the Writings of Abraham Ibn Ezra* (London 1877). Hebrew Appendix, p. 4.
5. Proverbs 8:22.
6. The identification of Torah as Wisdom is not new, as the expression "There is no wisdom except for the Torah" (Midrash Tanhuma, *Wayelek* 2) attests. What ibn Ezra innovated is the association of Wisdom with the Intellectual Universe.
7. See ibn Ezra's commentary on Psalms 8:4, and on Ex. 3:15 in the long version, and elsewhere.
8. BT Sanhedrin, 38b.
9. Ecclesiastes, 2: 12.
10. Saar 1, ch. 7, Ms. Vatican 335, fols. 20b-21a. On the background

of this passage, see S. A. Heller-Wilensky, *Li-geelat Mehabro gel Sefer Saar ha-Samayini, meyulyis ibn Ezra, Tarbiz*, vol. 35 [1961], 283-284. Ibn Latif already hints at the Torah and Kise ha-Kabod (Throne of Glory) as referring to the Intellectual Universe and the physical world, in his *Sefer Saar ha-Samayini ha-Qcitdn*, published in *Kerem Hemed* 4 (1839), but there he does not elaborate. 11. BT Pesahini 54a, and Pirciey de-R. Eliezer, ch. 3. See also Heschel, *ibid.*, 8-11. 12. Psalms 11:4. 13. Genesis Rabba, 1:5. 14. Ch. 3. The identification of the Torah as the Heavenly Tribunal is also found in a work from the early circle of R. Joseph Gikatilla, *Sefer Sereir ha-klayyint*, by R. Shemayah ben Isaac Halevi, who writes:

When the Holy One, blessed be He, delighted Himself in the Torah, He began to create the world. He called to the Torah and conferred with with her. This is as the Sages o.b.m. stated, that he conferred

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 495

the Heavenly Tribunal. Thus the Torah merited to be called 'advice' Peysdh]. (Ms. Leiden, Warner 24, fol. 187b).

An extensive discussion on the Torah as the Heavenly Tribunal is found also in Abulafia's Sefer ha-Hegeq, Ms. New York, JTS 1801, fols. 33a-35b. 15. Proverbs 8:14. 16. These two terms are quite uncommon. See L. Ginsberg, Legends of the Jews, (Philadelphia, 1946) vol. V, 3, n.3. 17. The identity of Torah as the World of the Intellect also appears before ibn Latif. R. Nathaniel A1-Fayumi writes in his Sefer Buskin Al-'Ukkul (Kaph ed., Jerusalem 1954), 5: The first creation subsisted on the level of the first [one] whereas the

universal soul is on the level of second, and so on with respect to the rest of the levels. As for the Torah, the Sages have applied to it the term 'Divine Wisdom.' It is thus on the level of the first.

The 'first creation', i.e., 'first creature' according to Al-Fayumi, refers to the universal intellect. It is worth noting that although the



term 'first creature' appears also in the works of ibn Latif, it is difficult to assume that Al-Fayumi's writings influenced him. It rather seems to this writer that the conception of Torah as Intellectual Universe is a result of Moslem influence. Regarding the identity of the Quran as the first creation, i.e., first intellect, according to the Brethren of Purity, see Yves Marquet 'Coran et Creation,' in Arabica 9 (1969), 279-285, and compare with M. Idel "Ha-SefirOt ha-SefirOt," Tarbiz 51 (1982), 270-272.

18.Scholem, Abulafia, 238. 19.Ibid., 243. 20. See Idel, "The Concept of the Torah," 45, 49-58. On the influence of R. Ezra on R. Baruch Togarmi in another matter, see Efraim Gottlieb, Ha-Kabbalah Be-Kitbe Rabbenu Bahya Ben A gher, (Tel Aviv 1970), 55. 21. Abulafia, 232. The numerological equation SM HMYWHD (gem ha -nuyuheid--unique name) = ZYW HSKYNH (zib ha-gekindhâ□□ray of the Divine Presence) is also found in Sefer 'Eben Sappir of R. Elnatan ben Moses Kalkish, Ms. Paris, BN 727, fol. 11a. See also below, note 25.

496 Notes to Chapter 2 22. Dt. 17:19. 23. For example, Sefer Kuzari, 1,87, and in Abulafia's circle, in Sefer Ginnat Igaz by R. Joseph Gikatilla, fol. 50b, and elsewhere.

24. Sefer Hayyey ha - `lam ha - Ba), Ms. Oxford 1582, fol. 53b.

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 497

of the Torah) = `ASRT HDBRYM easeret ha - delvirim (the Ten Commandments). "ISRYM WSSH" refers to the numerical value of the Tetragrammaton, i.e., 26. Compare also with the numerologies found in Sefer Ginat 'Egaz, fol. 60b-d, and elsewhere. 29. Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 137b.

30. Ibid. fol. 124a. Compare with Sefer ha - ZOhar, I, 34b: All matters supernal and material, and all matters of this world and of the world to come, are in the Torah. Compare also in ibid., fol. 234b: The Torah is the perfection of all, the perfection of above and below.

25. In Abulafia, 234, R. Baruch Togarmi writes:

Z'T (z)Ot (this), that is to say, the entire Merkabah is 'ELHYM ['Elohim] and it refers to the ray of the Divine Presence. And the secret of this is known as the Divine Name.

As we have seen, the word Zfi (z'Ot) is associated with the Torah, and it may be assumed that we have here the following numerological equation: 408 = Z'T = KL HMRKBH 'ELHYM (kol ha - merkdbah (the entire Merkabah is 'Elohim) = ZYW HSKYNH = SM HMYVHD (see above note 21). This again indicated the Torah, identified as the World of the Intellect (the entire Merkabah is Elohim', and identified as the Divinity (the Unique Name.' It is worth noting that the numerological equation Z'T = SM MYVHD appears again in a fragment from the circle of R. Baruch Togarmi, in Ms. New York 1851, fol. 94a. Regarding this anonymous work, see Gottlieb, Studies., 111. 26. Ms. Oxford 1695, fols. 16b-17a. 27. Compare with the conception of R. Joseph Gikatilla, who writes in Sefer Sa carey Sedeq:

Know that the Torah Scroll is the form of the Supernal World, but I cannot explain further. (Printed in Gottlieb, Studies, 155).

See also in Tishbi, Mgnat ha - Zohar, II, 369. 31. Ms. Oxford 1580, fols. 92b-93a. On the Active Intellect as a spiritual model of the material world, see H. A. Davidson "Alfarabi and Avicenna on Active Intellect," Viator, vol. 3 (1972), 126-127. Concerning R. Levi ben Gershon's conception of the order of intelligibles in the Active Intellect, see S. Pines Ha - Skolastikah she -aharey Thomas Aquinas u -Mishnatan shel Hasdai Crescas we -Kodmav (Jerusalem 1966), 4-5. The congruence between the Active Intellect and the Torah, according to Abulafia, is based on the fact that both order all phenomena of the material world. Compare this to the conception of the Quran as the first intellect, expressed by the Brethren of Purity, as presented by Marquet (above, note 17), and in particular, with reference to the manifest and occult cycles of nature, which call to mind, according to Marquet, *ibid.*, 279, the manifest and occult aspects of creation. On the history of the concept of the existence of all the forms in the supernal intellect

see now S. Pines "Some Distinctive Metaphysical Conceptions in Themistius' Commentary on Book Lambda and Their Place in the History of Philosophy," *Aristoteles Werk and Wirkung*, Paul Moraux Gewidmet, ed. J. Wiesner [Berlin, New York, 1987], 177-204, esp. 180-182. Actually, Abulafia could have been acquainted with the view of Themistius on the "living Nomos," because his text was translated into Hebrew in the middle of the thirteenth century. 32. HSM (ha - gem  $\hat{\alpha}$   $\square$   $\square$  the name) = 345 = FIM'ARYK (ha - ma < arik  $\hat{\alpha}$   $\square$   $\square$  the evaluator) = HMERK (ha - necerak  $\hat{\alpha}$   $\square$   $\square$  that which is evaluated). 33. It is worth noting that the words of ibn Ezra in the two versions of his commentary to Ex. 23:20-21 may be interpreted as referring to

28. The identification of the Torah as the Name of God is clearly indicated in *Sefer Sitrey TORcuh*:

"Anyone who does not study the Torah at all deserves to die. And all who make [practical] use of the Crown of the Torah perish."

This refers no doubt to the Tetragrammaton, having the numerical value ISRYM WSSH ( cesrim we - S'igah - 26), whose secret is

the Crown of the Torah. This in its verity includes the Ten Commandments. Understand this well, and know that whosoever makes use of the Torah, i.e., the Name of God, not for its own sake, transgresses the command of God. (Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 147b.)

This passage is based on the numerological equation 'ESRYM WSSH ('esrim we- ggcih-26) = 1231 = KTR TWRH (keter Torahâ□□the Crown

498 Notes to Chapter 2 an equation of Torah with the Active Intellect. In the long version, on 23:20 we read: "There are those who say that the angel is the Torah Scroll, for the verse states 'My name is within him' [ibid., 23:22]." Ibn Ezra indeed does not accept this idea, but if it be accepted, the words 'for My Name is within him' may easily be construed as an allusion to Metatron, who came to be known as the personification of the Active Intellect. In his short version, we read in Ex. 23:21, regarding the words 'for My Name is within him':

And this is the angel who is the Great Ministering Angel. And as far as his having been Enoch, this is an homelitic interpretation.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 499 37. Genesis Rabbah 1:1. 38. Proverbs 8:15. 39. Ms. Oxford 1582, fol. 6b. 40. Proverbs 3:18. 41. Ms. Moscow 133, fols. 23a-b. The beginning of this quote is based on Psalm 19; compare to the words of Abulafia in Sefer Hayyey ha-Nefeg Ms. Munich 408 fol. 72a: It is called Torah for by its means the Providence of God is upon us so as to actualize our intellect from potentia to actu. Compare also to R. Joseph Gikatilla who, in one of his poems, expressed this as follows:

And the human intellect is given to us in its potential. And there are those who actualise it and those in whom it stands wasted. The Torah helps to actualise it so that the soul does not stand forlorn.

Here the indication as to the identity of the angel is clear: he is Metatron, whereas some identify him as Enoch. We note that the identity of Torah and Active Intellect appears in one of the important supercommentaries to Ibn Ezra. See R. Joseph b. Eliezer Tuv Elem, who writes in Sofnat Pa caneah (Cracow 1912), I p. 22: And the Torah refers to the Active Intellect. See also R. Shalom Shabazi, Sefer Hemdat Ytimim (Jerusalem 1956), fol. 3a. This identification of Torah and the active intellect, itself considered as identical to the revelatory angel, Metatron, may hint at the role of Torah as angelus interpres. Torah is at the same time the content and its interpretation. See also below, note 46, where the Torah is described as an intermediary. 34. Ms. Roma, Angelica 38, fol. 3b-4a: In this Ms. we read HSKYL (hiskilâ□□comprehended), but it ought to be amended to read HSTKL (histakkelâ□□contempla ted ), which corresponds to MBYT (mabitâ□□gaze) and VBWRâ□□R (u-bore'â□□and creates) that appear in the text of Genesis on Rabbah. Perhaps Abulafia is following the text of Midrag Legah Tob Gen. I:1 where we read: (fol. 2a)

In the Torah did God gaze and created His world.



I. Gruenwald "Seney Siren gel ha-Mequbbal Yoseph Gikatilla," *Tarbiz* 36 (1965-66), 88. It is the case with the Torah, as with language, that it is seen as a medium by which the intellect becomes actualised. 42. *Ibid.* fol. 8a. 43. Ms. Munich 408, fol. 42a. 44. Psalms 19.8. 45. Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 125b. 46. *Ibid.*, fol. 155b. And in *Sefer Liqqutey c ikeheih u-fe)ah* (Ferrara 1556) fol. 27b: 'VTYVT HKWDS ('otiydt ha-qadeâ§â□□holy letters) = 1232 = HTWRH H'EMS'YT (ha-Torah ha-)emsa c itâ□□the Torah [is] the intermediary). Abulafia mentions the relation Torahâ□□intermediary in his *Sefer Get ha- gemot*, Ms. Oxford 1682, fol. 106b, and *Sefer Gan Ncrul* Ms. Munich 58, fol. 316a, and in *Sefer ha-Ge)uldh* Ms. Kigi, I, 90, 6 fol. 258a, and elsewhere. See also note 33 above. 47. Apparently there is a relation between the numerological equation  $TWRH = MSYT$  (Torah = middle way, intermediary) and the Aristotelian conception of the 'middle way' (DRK 'MSYT) as the proper mode of conduct. Compare also to the *Guide for the Perplexed*, II, 39 and III, 59 and elsewhere. We note also a different interpretation

of WMSY in Abulafia's works; see 'Osar `Eden Ganuz, quoted below in

Ms. Abulafia knew this ntidng as he states in Sefer Mafteah ha-Hokmot, by R. Tuvya o.b.m." The version Moscow 133, fol. 8a: "And Leqah Tob "contemplated and created" Imistakkel u-bara)" is also found in the introduction to Hakik& GedOlat, published by A. Aptowitzer as "Deragah be-Sebah ha-TOrah," Sinai 7 (1940 - 1941), 181. 35. Psalms 33:6. 36. Proverbs 8:30.

500 Notes to Chapter 2 this chapter, alongside note 135.

Regarding the intellect as MSY, see below in this chapter, alongside note 186. 48. Ms. Vatican 233, fols. 48b-49a. 49.

Psalms 33:6. 50. This term appears first in Keter Malkut of R. Solomon ibn Gabirol, par. 24:

Upon Your being raised above the ninth sphere, the sphere of the intellect, a palace before the tenth, holy unto God, the sphere

exalted above all supemals. A term similar to this is found in the Hebrew translation of the Perusg

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 501 Hakohen.

See also R. Meir Aldabi, Sebiley ha-Imundh (Warshaw, 1887) fol.

20b, and also the words of Pico della Mirandola, quoted by H.

Wirszubski, Selogdh Perdkim be-Toleddt ha-Kabbalah ha-Nosrit

(Jerusalem, 1975), 49-50. 54. Ms. Oxford 1582, fol. 80a, Ms.

Paris, BN 777, fol. 132a. See also Sefer 'Osar 'Eden Gdnuz, Ms.

Oxford 1580, fol. 170a and Sefer Ner 'Elohim, Ms. Munich 10 fol.

152b: And the secret [of this is] "the superior [quality]" of the

"world as a

Prince" is "the tenth sphere," which is the secret of the "entire

Torah." This is in the same sense as the 'superior [quality]' of

wisdom. YTRWN (yitronâ□□advantage, superior quality) = 666

= 'WLM KSR

Sefer Yesirdh by R. Dunash ibn Tamin, Ms. Paris, BN 680, fol. 200b201a. There we read of the Sphere of Knowledge [Galgal ha-Da'at] used in the same sense as World of the Intellect. There we do not find, however, a description of the tenth sphere. Ibn Ezra writes at great length about the tenth sphere and also mentions the term Sphere of the Intellect. In the Divan (ed. I. Egger, Berlin 1886), 21, we read:

From knowledge exalted - drawn from the Sphere of the Intellect.

( cOldm ke-sdrâ□□the world as a Prince) = HGLGL H'SYRY  
(ha-galgill hacasiriâ□□the tenth sphere) = KL HTWRH (Kol ha-Torahâ□□the entire Torah). 55. Ms. New York, JTS 839, fol. 5a, and Ms. Vatican, Urbino 31, fol. 1 64a. 56. Ms. Munich 22, fol. 184a. The mention of the giving of the sphere of the Intellect into the hands of Metatron, mentioned by Sefer ha-Seruf apparently influenced R. Elnatan b. Moses Kalkish who wrote in his Sefer 'pen Sappir, regarding Moses:

And when he departed from the material plane and was made king, and ruled over the Sphere of the Intellect... [Ms. Paris, BN 728, fol. 167b].

Compare to R. Simon Duran, Magen 'Abot, fol. 84a. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, this term was understood as symbolising the separate Intellects, in a letter sent by R. Samuel-ben Mordekhai to R. Yekutiel (Ms. Vatican, Neophiti 11, fol. 203a):

The Sages called the supernal world [by the name] "the Sphere of the Intellect" and this refers to the world of the angels who are neither corporeal [bodies] nor corporeal powers.

57. G. Scholem, *Kiryat Sefer*, 31 (1955), 392. 58. We note that the relation between the letters of the Torah and the letters of YSR'L (Israel) is also found in the Zohar. In addition to the words of the Midrash concerning the close connection between Israel

and Torah, we read in Midrah Rut ha-Ne celdm (Zohar 1:-ladag) [Jerusalem 1944], fol. 108a:

R. Hanina said regarding the matters that arose in thought before the Holy One, blessed be He, created His world, one of them was Israel, for they are worthy of receiving the Torah. And all of the letters were chosen at first, and as soon as Israel arose in thought the Holy One, blessed be He, stood up, so to speak, and engraved therein the Torah. And all of the letters were written upon his head, and upon him was the Torah fulfilled. This is as it is written: "Now this (Z 1) was wisdom in former times in Israel." And 'this' (Z'T) refers to

Compare also to the words of R. Jacob Anatoli in Sefer Malmad haTalinidini, fol. 65b. This term was more widespread than the examples given here, and elsewhere we will elaborate on it. In the meantime, see M. Idel in Kiryat Sefer 50 (1975), 153-156. 51. Sefer 1-1"ayyey ha-Nefeg, Ms. Munich 408, fol. 75b. This term appears twice more in the works of Abulafia: Sefer 'Or ha-Sekel, Ms. Vatican 233, fol. 85a, and Sefer ha-Ge, uldh Ms. Kigi, I,

190.6, Sod B.1. 52. R. Isaac B. Jacob Hakohen, Peru' Mirkebet Yihearel, printed by G. Scholem in Tarbiz 2 (1931), 201-202.

53. Perug Mirkebet Yihezqel, Tarbiz 5 (1934), 186. On that page, R. Moses of Burgos quotes the passage of the Perug Mirkebet Yittezilel by R. Isaac

## 502 Notes to Chapter 2

the Torah, which preceded Israel. And 'in former time' refers to the letters. And all were engraved and impressed upon Israel.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 503 69. In this it seems that Abulafia was influenced by the opinion of

Maimonides, who, in his Guide for the Perplexed, I: 1, describes the Intellect, created in the image of God, as a natural form.

Regarding this, see Moshe Idel "Deus sive natura: the

Metamorphosis of a Dictum from Maimonides to Spinoza,"

Maimonides and the Sciences, eds. S. Cohen and H. Levine, pp.

87-110. 70. Ms. Vatican 233, fol. 122b, and see below, note 87.

71. Psalms 139:5. 72. Proverbs 3:3; 7:3; Jeremiah 17:1; 31:33, and in the New Testament, Epistle to the Corinthians, 3:3. 73.

Peraqim be-Hasalitih (Jerusalem 1939), 2. The comparison between the heart and the Ark of the Covenant appears also in the pseudoMaimonidean 'Iggeret ha-Musar which is quoted below. See also the introduction to Tikkuney Zohar, fol. 13a:

"And every wise-hearted man among them wrought the work."  
(Ex. 36:8)â□□they made the Ark.

59. Ginat 'Egaz, fols. 54d-55b. Concerning the influence of this image on the Zohar, see Scholem, Major Trends, 391, n. 80-81. It is worth noting that these words of Gikatilla influenced R. Hananel b. Abraham; see his Sefer YesOd `Oltim, Ms. Moscow, Gunzburg 607, fol. 80a. 60. PeruÂ§ Sefer Yesirdh, Ms. Paris, BN 768, fol. 9a. 61. Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 69b. 62. Sefer ha-Nikkud, Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 41a. 63. Ms. Cambridge, Trinity, 108, fol. 123b; see also Minhath Yehudah on Maâ□□arelcet ha-'Elohut [Mantua, 1558] fols. 97b-98a. 64. Sefer Ma'areket ha-'Elohut, fol. 97b, and elsewhere, Sefer Minhath Yehudah, in the name of "another"



commentator. These words of R. Reuben Sarfati are quoted by R. Yohanan Alemanno in an untitled work found in Ms. Paris, BN 849, fol. 67a, but the source is not indicated. See also the collectanea of Alemanno in Ms. Oxford 2234, fol. 157b, where he again quotes similar words from R. Reuben Sarfati. R. Abraham ibn Migash collected from Sefer Minhath Yehudah much material regarding the Torah and the wheel of the letters. See his work Kebab 'Elohini (Jerusalem 1977), fol. 97a. On that page we find quoted the two passages from R. Reuben Sarfati mentioned above. 65. Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 25b-26a. This is based on the Mishnah from Sefer Yesirah that speaks of SFR SPVR SPhR (Safer, sippur, seferwriter, narrative, book) which, beginning with Saadyah Gaon, came to refer to writing, speech, and thought. In Sefer Mafteah ha-1'615120f (Ms. Oxford 1605 fol. 17a) Abulafia writes similarly: Indeed it [the Torah] is divided into various matters, as you may see that a portion of it is written in books, and it is also expressed by the lips in various languages... and it is conceived, found in the thoughts of the soul. 66. Leviticus Rabba, 19:1. 67. Ex.32:16. 68. Psalms 107:24.

See R. Samuel ibn Tibbon, in a treatise that was apparently penned by him, Ta cam we-ha-Menorcih, Ms. Hamburg 251, fol. 230b, who compares the human body to the Holy Ark containing the Tablets of Witness. R. Baruch Togarmi, Abulafia's teacher, likens man to the Tabernacle, as Gottlieb pointed out in Ha-Kabbalah be-Khitve Rabbenu Bahya ben Asher (Tel Aviv, 1970) 56-57, and Abulafia himself also refers to the correspondence between man and the Tabernacle in 'Osar 'Eden Ganuz, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 170a-b, and on fol. 42a. 74. Isaiah, 51:7.

75. Ms. New York, JTS 1801, fols. 19b-20a. The numerological equa-

tion YSR TVB WYZR R` = 'ABNY SYS THWR also appears in Sefer 'Osar 'Eden Ganuz, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 18a. 76. Ch. 2, Mishnah 12. 77. The derivation reinforces the idea found already in Midrash Tanhuma, `Eqeb, par. 9) where we read: From where were they [the tablets] carved? One says, from underneath the Throne of Glory.

504 Notes to Chapter 2 The above-mentioned A-4T, B -4S derivation appears already in Sefer Hokinat ha-Nefeg by R. Eleazar of Worms (Safed edition) fol. la , and in the works of writers contemporary with Abulafia; see in R. Bahya b. Asher Penis ha-TOrdh on Ex. 31:8 (Chavel edition p. 327), where we read: and the word LHT in A--a, is KS'. Thus, the 8ekinah dwells upon them as on the Throne of Glory. And since the tablets were taken from the Throne of Glory, and is called 'Glory' as it is written (Proverbs 3:35) "The wise shall inherit Glory." So too the intellectual soul is rooted in the Throne of Glory and is called 'Glory'.

#### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 505

five books of the Torah. Moses engraved the forms of all the worlds within the Tree of Life whose writing was graven upon the tablets, in His form and likeness.

83. It is worth pointing out a passage from Sefer Yesod Mora' by ibn Ezra, where we find a comparison between the Torah and the potencies of the soul. In chapter 10 we read: And the soul of man alone when it was given by God is like a tablet

ready to be written on. And the writing on the table is the writing of God, i.e., the knowledge of the universal general ideas....

Regarding the source of the soul in the Throne of Glory, see Idel, in Kiryat Sefer, 50 (1975), 150 and notes 9,10. Bahya's words that associate the tablets and the intellectual soul with the Throne of Glory potentially also imply the equivalence between the tablets and the intellectual soul, which was made by the pseudo-Maimonidean Iggeret ha-Musar. The equation  $LHT = KS'$  also appears in Sefer ha-Peli'dh (Koretz 1784), fol. 77d. 78. Ms.

Leipzig 39, fol. 2a. 79. Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 4ab. topic of the

Throne of Glory is 80. Leqah Tob on Exodus, 31:18. treated also in Abulafia's work Soma Miswah, MS. Paris, BN 853, fol. 76b,

The secret of the Throne of glory is the 'nature of the heart,' the former in the supernal [realm], the second in the lower [realm].

Ibn Ezra uses here the Aristotelian image of the tabula rasa whereas the expression 'writing of God' is taken from Ex. 32:16

"And the tablets were the work of God and the writing was the writing of God graven on the tablets."

This yields the view of the soul as the tablets of Testimony.

Compare also to ibn Ezra on Psalms 49:16:

And the writing of God is engraved upon his soul....

84. Iggerot u-Tegubot of Maimonides (Jerusalem 1968), 9. 85.

Compare also with R. Yehudah Muscato in Sefer Nefuseit Yehuddh, discourse 9 fols. 25c-26b, which was apparently influenced by the (pseudo-Maimonidean) Iggeret or by Abulafia, in his comparison between the Tablets of the Covenant and the speculative and practical intellects. 86. Ms. Oxford 836, fol. 178b and see also fol. 147a:

The tablets are ready to receive the forms of any possible inscription which the hylic intelligence, also called 'the Sages within Me' and 'the guarded Tablet.' This is so for it is prepared to accept only the intellection, for man is born wild, lacking the intellections.

See also Abulafia's commentary on Sefer Yesirdh, Ms. Paris, BN 768, fol. 10b and in a fragment occurring in Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 69b. 81. Ezekiel 1:26. p. 71 we read 82. Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 136b. In Sefer ha-'Ot, similarly:

Raise your eyes on high and gaze by means of the eyes of your soul to the heights of heaven and observe the orders of the Living God all established upon the order of the Divine Torah. And when you comprehend the orders of the heavens you will find them engraved by the order of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the orders of Israel. And upon their being engraved by Divine command, so too were graven by the power of the Designer the words of the Book that includes the

Compare this also with the quotes adduced in the following note.  
87. This refers apparently to Al-Ghazali's Intentions of the Philosophers. I am not aware of an allegorical explanation of the tablets of Witness by this author; however we may assume that this spiritualist explanation refers to the guarded Tablet. See in the Quran, Sura 85:21, and compare with A. J. Wesnick, On the Relation between Ghazali's Cosmology and his Mysticism (Amsterdam 1933), 14-16. See also the Hebrew version of the Intentions of the Philosophers, where we read:

#### 506 Notes to Chapter 2

And when she has found an opportunity, and from her is removed the withholder, she is ready to cleave to the glorious intellectual spiritual essences, wherein the souls are mentioned in the Torah, and are inlaid in the tablet set aside and imprinted with its own nature, i.e., inlaid within the soul are the essences of the forms of substances.

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 507

involves the knowledge of Torah as it is understood in its secret meaning, having to do with the secret Names and the reasons for the commandments, called the hidden aspects of the Torah. This is for the sake of the perfection of two types of people—the intellectuals and the fools. (Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 119a.)

Narboni explains here: "... of the forms of substances," i.e., the writing was the writing of

God, graven from the guarded tablet, with the finger of God within the tablets referred to as having been graven on both sides, written on this side and on that. [Ms. Paris, BN 956, fols. 206b-207a.] It is likely that Narboni was influenced on this point by Abulafia. As

And compare with the quote from Sefer Hayyey ha-`01am ha-Ba', below in this chapter, alongside note 199. 89. This refers to the Name of 72 letters (i.e., triplets). 90. See Idel, "The Concept of



the Torah," 53-54. 91. Ms. Oxford 1580, fols. 25b-26a. 92.

Concerning this expression, see Isadore Twersky, *Rabad of Posquieres* (Cambridge, Mass. 1962), 291-297. Notwithstanding his claims of having merited many revelations, Abulafia rarely uses this expression. 93. JT Pe,dh, ch. 2, mishnah 2, 17a.

94. BT Gittin 60b, and elsewhere.

we have demonstrated elsewhere, Narboni was clearly influenced by *Sefer 'Or ha-Sekel* of Abulafia which he quoted without attribution in his commentary to *The Intentions of the Philosophers*. See Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 63-66. Regarding the tablets of Testimony as a symbol for the heart, in one of the writings of Ibn Arabi we read:

My heart is capable of being transformed into all forms: it is a Christian monastery, a Palace of the Gods, a Meadow for gazelles, a Kaaba for pilgrims, the tablets of the Law of Moses, and the Quran.

See G. Anawati-L. Massignon, *Mystique Musulmane* (Paris 1951), 59-60; Shelomo Pines "Notes sur l'Ismailiyya" *Hermes* vol. 3 (1939), 56-57; Fritz Meier "Nature in the Monism of Islam," *Spirit and Nature*, ed. J. Campbell (Bollingen Series XXX, 1, New York 1954), 153; Van den Bergh, *Averroes' Tahafut al-Tahafut* (London 1969) vol. I p. 300, II p. 165. 88. Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 26a-26b. Abulafia, with minor changes, brings the well-known words of Nalunanides in the introduction to his commentary on the Torah concerning the Torah as Names of God. (See Idel, "The Concept of the Torah," 52-53). In *Sefer Sitrey TORiuh*

Abulafia writes: And as Moses our master attained to the epitome of wisdom, and was the father of the Torah, the father of Wisdom, and the father of Prophecy [cf. BT Megillah, 13a1 he was taken to the supernal effluence, to which he veritably clung, in order to receive the Torah, which was given him by the Blessed Name in two strata: the first involves knowledge of the Torah as understood in its plain meaning, all of its matters and commandments in accordance with the tradition, i.e., the entire Talmud and what was derived from it. And the second

95. Compare with Abulafia in the introduction to *Perti, la-Torah*, Ms. Parma, 141 fol. lb: Indeed when I observed that a new idea had taken hold in the world,

that a few of the sages of the Talmud who liken themselves to the sages of the Tosaphists, and pride themselves with [knowledge on] the Kabbalah, so as to negate the Talmud, which is called the Oral Torah according to the way of truth - not according to the false imaginings of those who are worthy of them and of those who are not. Thus there arose in me a spirit of zealousness for God, Lord of Israel, who sits upon the cherubim, my God and the God of my ancestors. And He aroused me and I was impassioned to enter the path of the perfection of the soul - the desire of the One who loves me.

The distinction between the 'true' Oral Torah and the 'imaginary' Oral Torah concurs apparently with the distinction between the Torah in actu and the written Torah, i.e., the Talmud which was written down, as opposed to the Oral Tradition of the Kabbalah,

apparently opposed by the sages of the Talmud. Compare this also with the two-fold value of the *halal*\* in Zoharic literature, as presented by Tishby in *Mishnat ha-Zohar* , II, 396-397. 96. *Song of Songs Rabba* , 3:4.

508 Notes to Chapter 2 97. Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 136b. 98. The view of the Oral Torah as intellectual substance that existed before the creation of the world, as opposed to the written Torah, containing both intellectual and imaginary forms and which serves a clear political purpose is reminiscent of the distinction between *themos* and *nontos* in the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius; see R.F. Hathaway, *Hierarchy and Definition of Order in the Letters of Pseudo-Dionysius* (The Hague 1969), 38-46. See also the affinity between the mental law and the oral law as discussed by Jose Faur, *Golden Doves with Silver Dots* (Bloomington, 1986), 133-138. 99. Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 25b. 100. BT Pesahim, 54a. 101. See the sources gathered by Heschel in *Torah min ha-Shamayim bejAspatilarialt shel ha-Dorot*, II, 22-23. 102. BT Sukkah , 28a; BT Baba Batra 134b, BT Hagigah Ia. 103. The opinion of the German

Pietists in this regard was influenced by the Heylulilot literature as understood in light of Saadyah Gaon. See Joseph Dan, *Torat ha-Sod shel Hasidut Ashkenaz* (Jerusalem, 1968), 205-210 and elsewhere. 104. *Perug Haggigah*, ch. 2 mishnah 1, Introduction to *Seder Zeracin*, and elsewhere. See Isadore Twersky "Aspects of *Mishneh Torah*," *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies* (ed. A. Altmann), Cambridge, Mass.1967, 111-118. 105. Tishbi, *Mishnat ha-Zohar*, vol. I, 415-421. 106. *HekalOt Zutarti*, ed. Rachel Elijor (Jerusalem, 1982), 22; Idel, "The Concept of the Torah," 37, n. 39. Also 'Otiyyot de-Rabbi `Aqiba, ed. Wertheimer, in *Batey MidragOt*, II, p. 365. 107. *PeruÂ§ ha-TORah* (Jerusalem 1964) fol. 30a. See also Joshua ibn Shu'aib, *Deragat* (Cracow 1573), a sermon for the last day of Passover, fol. 42b, where he says regarding the Song of Songs:

For the words of this song are exceedingly hidden and sealed, etc. and for this reason they [the Sages] regarded it as the Holy of Holies, for all of its words are the secrets of the Chariot and the Names of the Holy One, blessed be He.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 509 108. Ms. Vatican 228, fols. 100b-101a. In many manuscripts we find a passage that contains a pentagram, and alongside it is written: This is the Account of the Chariot KVZV BMVKSZ KVZV, and under these letters is written: YHVH 'LHYNV YHVH.

See, for instance, Ms. British Library 757, fol. 117b. 109. (Lyck 1866). In the author's introduction, toward the end. See also the words of R. Jacob Anatoli, *ibid.*, concerning the Account of the Chariot. 110. Abulafia, 237, 238. 111. Ms. New York, JTS 1891, fol. 65b. See also the words of one of the authors of Gikatilla's circle in Ms. Vatican 428, fol. 88a:

ABGD , these, in the secret of the Merkalkih, etc.

and in *Sefer Seresr ha-Hayyim*, from Gikatilla's circle (Ms. LeidenWarner 24 fol. 190a): ... For the Name 'HYH was emanated from the Name... and this is the secret of the Merkabcih.

112. The equivalence of the 'Account of the Chariot' and the art of the combination of the Names of God and metaphysical deliberation receives extended discussion in the writings of Abulafia, as we will see in the course of this chapter. In *Sefer Hayyey ha-Nefesh*, however, the term Account of the Chariot is explained differently:

When the word 'Ma'aseh' [the Account] is combined with the word 'Bere'ashit' [creation] and with the word 'Merkabah' we must conclude that it refers to complexes of bodies, for no true composites exist in the intellects or in what is separate from matter (Ms. Munich 408, fol. 58a).

113. Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 131b. 114. Ms. Rome, Angelica 38, fol. 45b, and compare with *Sefer Ner 'Elohim*, Ms. Munich 10, fol. 135b, printed in Chapter 1, note 12. 115. Ms. Paris, BN 768, fol. 10a, and compare with *Sefer Gan Na'ul*, Ms. Munich 58, fol. 328b. 116. These numerological equations also appear in , warije

Sedeq, written by one of the ecstatic Kabbalists of the thirteenth century:

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 511

510 Notes to Chapter 2 Sefer Yesirah, when Some Kabbalists have stated that the beginning of it says "with 32..." refers to the Account of the Chariot, i.e., the of one Name with another. Yet clearly it is necessary to sense to combination respond that the 'Account of the Chariot' refers in its exoteric aspect of the supernal realm.... indeed, the esoteric of the phenomenon the Account of the Chariot, based on the path of Names, consists in the knowledge of the vowels, which are [forms on the [letter] Yod that each and every vowel mark manifests in accordance with its mode and particular features.... When Moses ascended on of manifestation high, the All-Powerful Master revealed to him all supernal powers, how they are composed of combinations of hidden letters that are beyond likeness (Ms. Jerusalem 80 148, fols. 32a-33a).



Sedeq, classified R. Nathan ben Sadyah Harar, the author of "Shararey of the Chariot" exoterically in a way similar to Abulafia's conception of the "Account of Creation."

According to him this natural realm" refers to the "revolving forces which cause "supernatural of the potencies that function in the elements." Therefore, the descent of the Chariot" refers to the intermediate world the exoteric "Account in the cosmological system current during the Middle Ages, i.e., to the notion of the secret aspect World of the Spheres . Also, in his classification of the Chariot, Sedeq diverges from the "Account of the Chariot," the author of the idea of the Chariot from Abulafia's ideas, although essentially he accepts "Account of the Chariot" as containing secrets of a linguistic nature, i.e., vowel and letter combinations. In this work, Abulafia's distinction of the Chariot" and the Work of Creation lies between the "Account of the esoteric and exoteric aspects of only between becomes a distinction of the Chariot." In an untitled work by R. Yanan Ale- a the "Account of the Chariot" are preserved many Abulafian traditions, and we find many, wherein Account distinction between the esoteric and exoteric aspects of the Chariot between the

Creation" which is similar to Abulafia's distinctio of the Chariot' and the "Account of the Creation":

hid it and began with the revealed aspects of creation to be known by the masses. (Ms. Paris, BN 849 fol. 17b.)

See also Sefer ha-Heseq, Ms. New York, JTS 1801, fol. 13a. 117.

The conception according to which the principles of biblical exegesis constitute part of the Oral Tradition "the methods by which the Torah is explicated" already appears in the early Talmudic literature; see Boaz Cohen, *Law and Tradition in Israel* (New York 1959), 6, note 6; Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkdbah Mysticism* (Leiden, 1980), 23-24, and *Midrtth ha-Goiddl on Exodus* (Margolioth ed.), 459, and *ibid.* on Leviticus, 12; and see particularly, Nahmanides, *Sefer*

ha-Ge)ula-h:

Man is not permitted to innovate novel numerologies and derive from them whatever occurs to him. Rather, we have a tradition

from our rabbis, the holy sages of the Talmud, which states that together with the rest of the Oral Torah Moses was given particular numerologies as mnemotechnics and signs for what was explained to him orally, with respect to matters of 'Aggadah [legend] and the forbidden and permitted. (In Kitbey Ramban, ed. Chavel, vol. I, 262.)

These words of Nahmanides and others similar to them clearly state that the numerologies are traditions passed down by Moses from Sinai. This declaration has a clear implication: One cannot freely innovate numerologies as was done by Abulafia and his disciples. It is proper that we compare the words of Nahmanides with those written by a member of Abulafia's circle. In Sefer Ner 'Elohim, after a discussion that included the use of various numerological methods, the anonymous author of this work states:

Understand my words for they are the wonders of the omniscient God, pure prophecies, decided upon laws, received by Moses at

Sinai and passed on to his disciples orally. (Ms. Munich 10 fols. 144b145a.)

"Account The Account of Creation in its primary root meaning refers to the ten Sefer Yesirih which was written counted in Abraham of sefirot that his He formed all down by Rabbi `Aqiba, and to the letters with which God knew them of creation, just as Bezalel who dwells in the shadow and understood the letter combinations through which the world was the counted remnants that He calls forth in created. And it is only to teach them the letter-combinations with which each generation But for people of flesh and blood it is almost were created creatures . impossible [for them to understand this]. Therefore Moses our master

It seems that the expression 'pure prophecies' refers to the wonders derived by means of various numerological methods used to explain the word BSLWâ□□SLVB (be-sild--in His shadow / salubâ□□crucified); see Idel, Abulafia, p. 50, note 118.

Nahmanides forcefully protests the free use of numerology when he says:

## 512 Notes to Chapter 2

Since one can remove various passages [from the context of] and derive evil and foreign matters by means of this method.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 513 127. It is worth noting the influence of this particular view of the 'Account of the Chariot'; In his commentary to Chronicles, I 4:9 R. Joseph ibn Kaspi writes:

And his mother called his name Ya c bes, saying: "... because I bore him with pain" [B'ZBâ□□be-'eseb] This constitutes sufficient testimony that they composed names by altering vowels such as "and he called his name BRYH (Beriyah)" for his daughter was named 'Bereiah' [BR'Hâ□□with evil]. And this was a worthy custom on their part so that the names not be like common nouns or phrases. But from these mundane matters we

may understand the more significant names in matters such as the 'Account of the Creation' and the 'Account of the Chariot.' [ `ilsarah Keley Kesef (Pressburg, 1903), 47.]

118. Ms. New York, JTS 1801, fol. 14b. 119. BT Sanhedrin, 22a.

The term numerology in this quote refers to the A-\*T; B-6 method of permutation, as is implied by the results arrived at by the

Rabbis and as Abulafia goes on to explain. It is worth noting that

the term numerology (Gematria) occurs in both the early printed

editions of the Talmud as well as in the manuscripts. However, in

the corresponding sections to this quote from BT Sanhedrin, in

Yalqut Sim cani, par. 1063, and in Sir ha-Sirim Rabba, 3:3, it does

not appear. 120. Daniel 5:5.

121.. Ibid. 5:25.

In Sefer Menorat Kesef, ibid. p. 95, ibn Kaspi writes:

When our master Moses, peace be upon him, wrote these three

Names of the Unique One [i.e., the Tetragrammaton, YH and

'HYH], he came to inform us of the essence of the Account of the Chariot.

122. Ibid. 5:8.

123. Ms. Munich 408, fol. 67b, quoted in Sefer ha-Peli, dh (Koretz 1784)

fol. 42a. It is worth noting that Abulafia returns to this in many of his other works; see Sefer Mafteah ha-Holcmdt (Ms. Parma 141, fol. 22a), and in 0Âšar 'Eden Gdnuz (Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 26a.), and in Sefer 'Or ha-Selcel (Ms. Munich 40, fol. 199a). In Ms. Munich 59, f. 218a, we find a note that refers the reader to Sefer Hayyey ha-Nefe g, and apparently, the writer had the above quote in mind. 124 Cf. Sefer Hayye ha-Nefe, Ms. Munich, 408, fol. 39a:

By [the techniques of] letter combination, numerology and acronyms, the majority of the secrets of the Torah are derived.

And see in his *Peru* Meireh Nevukim (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1848), 65-66 in the note, and 109-110. See also the words of H.Y.D. Azulai in *Sem ha-Gedolim*, entry on R. Isaac of Acre, and the words of R. Yohanan Alemanno in his collectanea, Ms. Oxford 2234, fol. 17a, in the margin, and Ms. Oxford 49, fol. 92a.

128. Preference for the Oral Torah over the Written Torah is found already in the writings of the Sages. See Urbach, *The Sages*, 301-302. Also see R. Yehudah Barceloni, *Perue" Sefer Yesirdh*, ed. A. Berliner (Berlin, 1885), 5-6, 100, 273-274.

129. The idea that the Torah as it is read "as a compendium of commandments" is not the true Torah, and that there exists another more sublime reading which would yield not the commandments, but intelligibles, is potentially an antinomian idea. This calls to mind the idea expressed in *Sefer ha-Temundh* that the Torah in its current state of letter arrangement is the Torah of the era of Judgment, and therefore contains laws regarding the permissible and the forbidden. See Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 460-474 and his *Sabbatai Sevi* (Princeton, University Press, 1975), 811 ff.

130. *Sefer Sitrey TOrdh*, Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 125a 131. Ex., 24:12.



125. Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 72b. Compare to the words of R. Hai Gaon, printed in Ha-Tehiyah (Berlin 1850), 41-42, Osar ha-Geonim, ed. B. Lewin (Jerusalem, 1931) vol. 4, 11-12:

Secrets of the Torah are given only to the resourceful sage who knows how to keep secrets, to the silent one of understanding. They are whispered to him and given to him as general principles; he runs with them and from heaven is shown in the great secret recesses of his heart, as the Midrash states 'one who understands the whisper'. One who understands means that he can derive the implications of what he is told.

126. See Francois Secret, Les Kabbalistes Chritiens de la Renaissance (Paris, 1964), 77.

514 Notes to Chapter 2 132. Proverbs , 6:23. 133. BT Sotah, 21a. 134. Ms. Munich 408, fol. 91b. This classification corresponds in outlook to Maimonides' words in his Guide for the Perplexed, III,

28: A commandment, be it a prescription or a prohibition, requires abolishing reciprocal wrongdoing, or urging to a noble moral quality leading to a good social relationship, or communicating a correct opinion that ought to be believed. 135. Ms. Oxford 1580, fols. 61a-62a. See also above note 47, and below in the text, near note 180. 136. Sefer Mafteah ha-HokmOt, Ms. Parma 141, fol. 16a-16b. 137. These three levels are discussed in the following chapter. 138. Ms. Oxford 836, fol. 179a. 139. Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 53a. The idea expressed at the end of the quote, that the commandments are intended for bringing a person to self-recognition and thereby, to recognition of the Divine, is not found in the literature that associates self-knowledge with the knowledge of God. See Alexander Altmann, "The Delphic Maxim in Medieval Islam and in Judaism." *Biblical and Other Studies*, ed. A. Altmann (Cambridge, Mass. 1963), 208-231. 140. See A. Jellinek, in the sections he published at the end of Sefer ha-'Ot, 85-86. Jellinek does not indicate the manuscript from which he copied these words, but to a large degree they are identical to what we find in the "Sod ha-Nel2wah" of Sefer Hayyey ha-NefeÂ§, Ms. Munich 408, fol. 64a. In comparing the text of this

Ms. with others (such as Vienna 141) we learn that there are great differences between the various manuscripts. The version quoted here is found only in Sefer (Koretz 1784) fol. 35b.

However, because Jellinek entitles this section "Addenda and Explanations from Manuscripts of Abraham Abulafia's Writings," I assume that he used a manuscript and did not merely copy the text from Sefer ha-Peli'at. The author of Sefer ha-Peli'at brings this passage due to the antinomian content that he perceived which suited his purposes. 141. Based on BT Megillah , 26a; BT Kiddugin 40a; JT Pesahim 3:7. 142. Isaiah 29:13.

13b:

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 515 143. The closest passage to this formulation that I found is in BT Hullin Heathens from outside Israel are not idol worshippers, they are merely following their ancestor's customs.

144. Ms. Munich 58, fol. 316a. 145. M. 'AbOt, 1:17. 146. Ibid.

3:12. 147. Exodus 32:16. 148. See above, section 3. 149.

Compare to the words of Albalag, in his Tikkun ha-De cdt (ed. G. Vajda, Jerusalem 1973), 18: ....nature is an evil angel and a satan who leads astray and causes

harm and injury, etc. as to names that denote evil. They called the intellectual aspect the good inclination, and it functions as a good angel, so that those who hear of them would think that there are indeed within the soul a good angel and an evil angel. However, both are indeed good. One sustains the soul and one sustains the body. And it is impossible for one to subsist without both. And if one of them would vanish the person could not exist.

Abulafia and Albalag base their words on the Guide for the Perplexed, III, 22. See Shalom Rosenberg "Heardt le-Par'ganut ha-Miqra weha - Aggadah be -MOreh Nebukim," Sefer Zikkaran le-Ya'akov Friedmann, Jerusalem 1974, 220-221. 150. Genesis, 22:1. 151. Ibid., 22:11. 152. Dt., 8:16. 153. Ms. Munich 408, fol. 83b. The view concerning the Divine trial as a matter intended for

the benefit of the one being tested is derived apparently from Nahmanides conception of the nature of the 'binding'. In his view, it is for the sake of "the actualization of one's potential, so as to give him reward for a good deed." See his commentary on the Torah, Genesis 22:1, and the comments of J.Z. Melammed, *Mefarse ha-Miqra* (Jerusalem 1975), II, 938, and n. 8. Unlike Nahmanides, however, who emphasizes the actual occurrence, Abulafia considers

516 Notes to Chapter 2 the inner experience as the most important feature. Undoubtedly, he follows Maimonides' view, expressed in *Guide for the Perplexed*, III, 48, which saw the binding as a battle between intellect and imagination, as he viewed the love of father for son as the expression of the power of the imagination. Compare also to the commentary on the binding by the author of *Sefer Toledot 'Adam*, Ms. Oxford 836, fols. 182b-183a. 154. *Ibid.*, fols. 84a-b, corrected in accordance with Ms. Vienna 141, fols. 67a-68a. An interesting discussion on the nature of the Divine trial, based on the conceptions of Maimonides, may

be found in Abulafia's commentary to Deuteronomy, Mafteah ha-T(341-01, Ms. Oxford 1605, fols. 25a-26b. 155. Genesis, 9:6. 156. Ex., 20:13-14 157. M. Dam'ai, 6:7. 158. Exodus, 21:14. 159. See Genesis Rabbah, 56:4, and Guide for the Perplexed, II, 30 and also the article by S. Rosenberg, (note 14 above) p. 219. 160. This argument, based on the injunction against bloodshed, as applied to the 'binding' was raised in the Aggadic literature by Satan who attempts to convince Abraham to give up his binding enterprise. See Tdrah Selemah of M. M. Kasher, vol. III, 2 p. 888. 161. Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 169a-b. WP S TYM = 836 = WPSTN = NFSWT. 162. Ex., 17:14. 163. Exodus, 17:14. 164. Dt., 25:19. 165. Ex., 17:16. 166. Tractate Abot, 2: 1. 167. Ms. Oxford 836, .fol. 171b. 168. HKS' (ha-kise'-the throne) = 'LHYM (Elohim) = HTB' (ha-tebarnature) = 86. Regarding this numerological equation, see the paper referred to in note 69 above. No doubt the anonymous author who used it derived it from one of Abulafia's works.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 517 169. Ms. Rome, Angelica 38, fol. 43a. 170. Gen., 9:6. 171. Sefer Sitrey Tordh, Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 136a. 172. Ibn Ezra's commentary to Leviticus 1:1. Ibn Ezra's ideas concerning the meaning of sacrifice were associated in the mind of R. Yohanan Alemanno with the story of the 'binding'. In his collection of miscellaneous passages, Ms. Oxford 2234, fol. 24a we read: Remember, that the story of the 'binding' informs us of the false

custom of the ancients to sacrifice one's son, in order to remove the wrath of the powers of the constellations from the other sons and from the fathers. This is because they intended that good be drawn upon them due to this sacrifice, for by its means they would nullify the power of evil. This is based on a true concept, that it is impossible to abolish the judgments of the constellations without giving them a place where they can manifest themselves. However, they [the ancients] believed that it was necessary that the form of the manifestation must be of the same type as the decree that they wished to nullify, and therefore they offered a man in place of man. But they did not know the secret, that it is possible to sacrifice an animal in place of a man.

173. By his understanding of the story of the binding as an inner experience, Abulafia joins the extremist followers of Maimonides, such as R. Zerahiah ben She'altiel Hen. We know that R. Hillel of Verona, one of Abulafia's teachers, asked R. Zerahiah about the meaning of the binding in Maimonides' thought, and the answer he received was that the binding took place in a prophetic vision. See 'Osdre Nehmad, II pp. 127, 133, 138, 141. It is interesting that in this question, as in the question regarding the original language, which we discussed in the chapter on Abulafia's theory of language, Abulafia finds himself holding the opinion of R. Zerahiah, as opposed to that of his teacher R. Hillel. The view of the binding as a prophetic experience is found at the beginning of the fourteenth century in the writings of R. Nissim of Marseilles. See He-Halus 7 (1865) p. 133, where the binding is called 'a sign'. On p. 132, *ibid.* we read: "a prophetic vision or dream is called among us 'a sign'." 174. Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 170a. 175. Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 136a.



518 Notes to Chapter 2 176. Ms. New York, JTS 1887, fol. 121a; Sefer Ginat 'Egoz, fol. 65d. 177. In Sefer Ginat 'EgOz we read "essence" (2Mâ□□ cesem), however, it seems that these two versions are in error, and in its place we ought to put cZYM ('esim â□□wood). 178. Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 169a. 179. In the circle involved with Abulafia's ideas, the view of Pharaoh as Asmodeus was widespread, because 'SMD'Y = PRI-I. See Ms. Paris, BN 680, fol. 152b, and G. Scholem "Belial, Melek ha -gedim," *Madda'ey ha - Yahadut*, I (1926), 112, and *Tarbiz* 19 (1948), 160, note 3. 180. Abulafia is also describing imagination as a demonic power and he uses the pun daemon - dimyon; see *Dsar 'Eden Giinuz* Ms. Oxford 1582, fol. 61a-61b quoted above note 135. 181. Maimonides' *Epistles* [Jerusalem, 1968], 8. Interestingly, this passage was quoted in sources influenced by Abulafian thought; see R. Elnatan ben Moses Kalkish, 'Eben Sappir, Ms. Paris, BN 727, fol. 103b and the anonymous *Died& 'Adam*, quoted several times in our discussion, Ms. Oxford 836, fol. 171a-171b. 182. Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 27a. The subject of the Exodus is reiterated in this work on fol. 122a:

And it is known that whoever did not exit from Egypt is still a servant of Pharaoh and as yet still works in mortar and brick and is drowned among them.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 519 This passage is based on the following numerological equivalence: MZRYM (Misrayimâ□□Egypt) = MYM MRYM (mayim nuirim â□□bitter waters) = RKY' (rakia câ□□firmament) = LYSRYM (li-yesarim â□□to the inclinations) = RFL ('arafelâ□□fog) = 380. Some of these numerological equivalents are repeated in Sefer Get ha - Semot, Ms. Paris, BN 853, fol. 76b, and in the text of Ms. Paris, BN 774, mentioned above in note 178. See also Idel, The Mystical Experience, pp. 121-123 regarding 'mystic drowning,' and see Ms. Jerusalem 8o 488, fol. 44b. 184. Exodus 19.9. 185. Moses, characterized as 'king of Israel' is mentioned already by ibn Ezra in his commentary to Genesis 36.31. See also M. Kasher, Torah Shelemah, vol. 5, p. 1379. In the works of Abulafia, see Sefer Hayyey ha - Nefe g, Ms. Munich 405, fol. 86a-b. 186. 'Oscir 'Eden Ganuz, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 133b-134a, and

compare with a similar conception encountered at the end of the fifteenth century, in the work of R. Yohanan Alemanno, who in many of his ideas was influenced by Abulafia:

For you were sojourners in the land of Egypt, you were not immersed there because you did not go to settle there, only to dwell temporarily, as did your ancestor [Abraham]... And due to the tribulations brought upon them by the Egyptians, they constantly and daily were hoping and pining to leave, liberated and free. So too do the sages feel visa vis this world. All of their days they feel themselves in tribulation and distress in the material realm. The sage finds liberation in his intelligence, as it emerges from the womb of its corporeality, for there it dwells, in its own graveyard. [Sefer tlegeq Selomoh, Ms. Oxford 1535, fol. 146b.]

The conception of Egypt as the place of matter was already widespread in the ancient period. See Jean Pepin "Utilisations philosophiques du Mythe d'Isis et Osiris dans la tradition Platonicienne," *Sagesse et Religion, Colloque de Strasbourg*

(October 1976) (Presse Universitaire de France, 1979), 51-52; Hans Leisegang, *La Gnose* (Paris 1971), 258, note 1. 183. Ms. Rome, Angelica 38 fol. 14a. in 'Oscir 'Eden Ganuz, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 164b we find a similar passage: The secret meaning of Egypt is the bitter waters. And the secret meaning of the King is the waters. And the secret meaning of the Icing of Egypt is the King of the Firmament, the Fling of the Inclinations, which is the fog.

187. Ms. Oxford 1682, fol. 102a-b. 188. Mekhilta, Beshalah, 2. 189. Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 139a, and compare also *ibid.*, fols. 150b151a:

Know that every Israelite who enters there, i.e., to split the sea by means of the Divine Name, need prepare himself, by looking this way and that, [to] smite the Egyptian who struck the Israelite and hide him in the sand. Then in the end he will be able to split the Reed Sea and by means of this splitting attain additional knowledge. Thus

## 520 Notes to Chapter 2

he will drown all of his enemies in the [Sea of Reeds  
(BSVFâ□□ba-suf, which is the end [1-1SVFâ□□ha-sOf].

## Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 521

straw and feed. Each one is given what is fitting for him. So, too, the Torah elaborated on the Attributes of the Creator using material expressions, due to the weakness of the intellect of the masses, whereas these matters indicate intellectual ideas to the masters of wisdom and ethics.

It is interesting that this section creates a continuity in the form of a spiritualistic commentary between the acts of Moses before the splitting of the Seaâ□□the killing of the Egyptian by means of the Divine Name, as the Midrash states, and the splitting of the Sea. 190. See above, note 189, the words of Abulafia in Sefer Sitrey Tertih. 191. Sefer Hayyey ha-Nefe g, Ms. Munich 405, fols. 86a-b. 192. Plays on words visa vis the term YSR (yeser -

inclination), found already in the 'Piyyut' literature, are found again in the works of Abulafia. See Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, 222, n. 135; *Sefer Ner 'Elohim*, Ms. Munich 10, Sol. 147b and elsewhere. 193. Cf. the Piyyut. 194. Yedid (friend) standing, apparently, for the spiritual aspect within man, is contrasted with Seer (blood relation) referring to the physical aspect of man. 195. Cf. TB Kiddushin, 71a, following Maimonides' interpretation of this passage. 196. Jerusalem 1956 p. 549. Regarding Abulafia's influence on this Kabbalist, see Scholem in *Kiryat Sefer*, 5 (1938-9), 267-272. 197. Dt., 26:6. 198. See BT Shabbat, 63a, BT Yebamot 24a; and Abulafia, *Seba' NetibOt ha-TOrchih*, p. 2. 199. Ms. Miinich 408, fols. 72a-b. It is worth noting that ideas similar to those of Averroes on religion appear not only in the works of writers such as Albalag, but also in the works of writers thought of as conservative. Among his other comments regarding the stories of the Torah as outer forms containing inner meaning, R. Baktya Ibn Paqudah, in his *Duties of the Heart* 1:10, and R. Bahya ben Asher, in his commentary on the Torah, Genesis 1:27 (Chavel ed., p. 46), tell the following parable: The sages of speculation have likened this matter to a wealthy man to whom a person

comes as a guest, together with his livestock. To the guest he gives various delicacies and to his livestock he gives

See also Baktya ben Asher's words in his commentary on Deuteronomy 32:43 (Chavel ed. p. 471); and see also Tishby, *Mishnat ha-Zohar*, II p. 391. 200. Regarding the double meaning of the word STR (seter) in this context, see A. Altmann "Das Verhältnis Maimunis zur Judischen Mystik," *MGWJ*, LXXX (1936), 34, n. 20. 201. See Proverbs, 25: 11. See also Maimonides' Introduction to his *Guide for the Perplexed*.

202. On the pleasure that accompanies the prophetic experience, see

Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, 188-189. 203. *Sefer Hayyey ha-Bw*, Ms. Oxford 1582, fol. 73a-b. And in *Sefer ha-Hee"eq*, Ms. New York, JTS 1801, fol. 1 3b, Abulafia writes regarding his theories that will be revealed in the Messianic Era, whereas at this juncture they seem strange in the eyes of the

Sages of Israel who make themselves wise in the wisdom of the Talmud, but are at the utmost distance from its second layer of wisdom. For it [the wisdom] contains two paths, one revealed and one hidden. And both of them are true, only the revealed meaning refers to the material matters of all of existence.

204. This refers to the letters of the Tetragrammaton, punctuated with their different vowel marks. Regarding additional meanings of the term habanot in Abulafia's writings, see M. Idel, "Ha-Sefiret she-meCal ha-Sefirelt," *Tarbiz*, vol. 51 (1982), 260-261. 205. In speaking of the understanding of matters by means of the letters, Abulafia writes in *Sefer Sitrey Tercih*, Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol.

162a: No other nation has a tradition such as this, and even our own nation

is far from it, having quickly turned away from the path. Therefore our exile continues.

206. See Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 48-49.



522 Notes to Chapter 2 207. 'Osdr 'Eden Ganuz, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 91b. 208. Ibid., fol. 57b. 209. Ibid., fol. 132a. See also Sefer Sitrey TOrdli, Ms. Paris, BN 774, fols. 149a-b. 210. Sefer Sitrey TOrdh, Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 161a. 211. Proverbs, 23:9. 212. He refers here to Sefer Mibhar Peninirn, 1:67. The end of this aphorism reads: "Do not pass on wisdom to one who does not realize its worth." 213. Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 150a. The posing of the question regarding the Torah as primordial or newly-created calls to mind the same question visa vis the Quran, as well as the concept of the Logos in Christianity. See I. Jadaane, *L'Influence du Stoicisme sur la Pensée Musulmane* (Beyrouth 1968), 171 ff. 214. Ibid., fol. 151a. See also above, note 199. 215. Ms. Oxford 2047, fol. 69a. 216. Ms. Rome, Angelica 38, fols. 13b-14a; Ms. Munich 285, fols. 38b-39a. On the identity of the mystic with the Torah, see Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 243-248. 217. Dt. 33:2. 218. See the sources mentioned by Idel, "The Concept of the Torah," 43-45. 219. Obadiah, 18. 220. See L. Ginzburg, *Legends of the Jews*, vol. V, 415, note 115. 221. *Malritad ha-Talmidim*, fol. 45b, and the words of "He-Halcam

Semb Yafet ha-Sefardi," in Ms. Milano, Ambrosiana 62, fol. 85a; and Perug Sefer Yesirdh of R. Yehudah of Barcelona, 134-135. 222. , ebac Neap& ha-Tdrali, p.4; in Sefer Sitrey TOrdh, Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 143b Abulafia writes concerning the figure of the intellectual: And the Sage....studied and became wise by means of these three

methods, making an effort to attain to the depth of intention of each of these works. And having investigated and understood them he knew the intent of the authors who used these three methods. This

### Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 523

is what each potential intellectual makes use of in order to actualise itself in all matters that require perfection. And he perceives that which subsists constantly in actuality and likens himself to it in all manner of ways of which he is capable.

That which 'subsists constantly in actuality' is the Active Intellect.

223. Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 162a. And compare with *ibid.*, fol.

166b:

And so too woman [ʿSF1 = )thCili] from my fire [M'SY = me- Dgi],

and from man (ʿYS -)g), fire (ʿS), and from fire, man. Understand

this, for it refers to the form, created by the Creator, i.e., that

which was formed from the Form. 224. Ms. Milano, Ambrosiana

53, fol. 164b.

225. The context here is the correspondence between the

candelabra and the other vessels of the Tabernacle and the

world. 226. M. AlʿOt, 5:2. 227. See above, note 47. 228. Charles

Taylor, *Sayings of the Jewish Fathers* (Cambridge, 1897), English

section p. 60; Ms. Cambridge Dd 13.7, written in 1387; and Ms.

Cambridge, Add. 420.1, printed in *ibid.*, p. 69 229. Ms. Paris, BN

774 fols. 169b-170a. Ms. New York, JTS 2367, fol. 56a. Compare

with *Sefer Hayyey ha-13(r)*, Ms. Oxford 1582, fols. 30b-31a:

Son of man, take heed lest you forget your Torah, which you set

in revolutions in order to sustain your soul in all of its aspects.

Rather, turn it over and turn it over again until it be sustained by you, in that which you need so as to sustain you. Do as I command you for it is your life and the length of your days. From it you will recognise all matters that the intellectual cannot do without. And then your way will be successful and you will be wise. And the path you need to take hold of and cleave to for all of your days is the path of letter permutation and combination. Certainly you will understand and rejoice in your understanding, and take great pleasure. You will hasten to permute in the manner of the flaming sword revolving in all directions so as to do battle with the surrounding enemies. For the imaginings and the forms of idle thoughts, born of the spirit of the evil inclination emerge toward the reckoning.

## 524 Notes to Chapter 2

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 525 See also note 116 above. Regarding the 'general' and 'particular' types of Kabbalah, see M. Idel "Hamer Kabbali mi-Bet Midra gO gel R.

David ben Yehudah he-Hasid," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, 2 (1983), 177-178, 240 (Hebrew). This topic is worthy of discussion in its own right. 240. R. Levi ben Gershon, *Sefer Milliamdt ha-gem*, I, ch. 1:

Averroes' commentary on Aristotle's *On the Soul*, where Averroes advances the doctrine that this disposition is actually the Agent Intellect itself; but insofar as it attaches itself to the human soul, it is a disposition and has a potentiality for knowledge.

In this quote, the method of letter permutation is used as a means to do battle with the power of the imagination. 230. Ms. New York, JTS 2367, fol. 60a. 231. The word SM' (samme), which does not appear in the usual printed versions, does appear in some manuscripts. See Taylor (n. 228), 62. 232. See Idel, *Abulafia*, 428, n. 83. 233. There is some degree of similarity between the identification with the Torah of a person who engages in letter-combination, and the identification of the mystic with the Quran in Arabi's thought. See Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi* (London, 1970), 211-212, 227-228. 234. See

Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 195-200. 235. Midrash Tehillim, 3:2, p. 33, and Urbach, *The Sages.*, 311-312, and Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 37-38. 236. *Sefer Mafteah ha-TOlcalicit*, Ms. Oxford 1605, fol. 17b. Compare to Nahmanides' words in *Sefer Torat ha-gem Teminvili* (Kitve Ramban, Chavel, ed., vol. 1, p. 108), concerning the virtues of the Name of 72, derived from Ex. 14: 19-21:

Used by the pious of the generations, who, by its means know how to revive and kill.

Cf. S. Feldman, *Levi Ben Gershon: The Wars of the Lord [Book One]* (Philadelphia, 1984), 110, and his footnotes there. Moses Narboni writes in his commentary to *The Intentions of the Philosophers* by Al-Ghazzali (Ms. Paris, BN 909, fol. 69a):

The opinion of Averroes is that the soul is the Active Intellect together with its disposition.

On fol. 69b, *ibid.*, Narboni writes that the hylic intellect is a mixture of the Active Intellect and its preparation. See Averroes' *Commentarium Magnum in Aristotle's 'De Anima Libra'*, ed. F.S. Crawford (Cambridge, Ms. 1953), 450-451.

237. See Idel, "Perceptions of Kabbalah;" and *Sefer Sitrey Toriih*, Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 170a. 238. Idel, *Abulafia*, 427, and n. 77.

239. Compare to *Sefer Mafteah ha-Sefirdt*, Ms. Milano-Ambrosiana 53, fol. 171a:

And the essence of prophecy consists in the intellectual soul, which is a potency within the body, at first becoming wise in all the ways of the Torah in general, and in the hidden meanings and reasons for the commandments in general. After rising to the level of general comprehension of the true intellections, removing the imaginings previously thought to be primary traditions, one would need in addition to receive the principal true traditions of letter combination.

## Notes to Chapter 3

1. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 50-65, Frank Talmage, "Apples of Gold: The Inner Meaning of Sacred Texts in Medieval Judaism," in ed. A. Green, *Jewish Spirituality from the Bible through the Middle Ages* (New York, 1986), 318-321. See also the footnote of Joseph B. Sermoneta to his critical edition of R. Hillel of Verona's *Sefer Tagmuley ha-Nefes* (Jerusalem, 1981), 180-181, n. 370, where he hints at the possibility that this scholar, אֲבִיבִי who inter alia, was Abulafia's mentor in the study of the *Guide for the Perplexed* אֲבִיבִי was cognizant of the Christian fourfold exegesis. However, Sermoneta's note regards the possible attitude of R. Hillel to the views of the sages, namely the ancient Talmudic-Midrashic authors; the possible affinity between the sixfold

526 Notes to Chapter 3 classification of the Jewish author to the fourfold Christian interpretation of the Bible, but it is mainly an inference of Sermoneta, which may, or may not be corroborated by further findings. For some other discussions of the "Pardes" exegesis, without providing new elements beyond those of



Scholem, see A. van der Heide, "PARDES: Methodological Reflections on the Theory of the Four Senses," *JJS*, 34 (1983), 147-159, Menahem Haran, "Midrashic Exegesis and the Peshat, and the Critical Approach in Bible Research," [Hebr.] in ed. M. Bar-Asher, *Studies in Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1986), 75-76. 2. Scholem's assumption (*On the Kabbalah*, p. 61) that Christian systems of Scriptural exegesis served as the source for the development of the fourfold system of Kabbalistic exegesis seems to be a correct one, but we ought not to limit the range of possible influences of another cultural field; as Islamic influence is also a very strong possibility; see notes 5 and 52, below, also Scholem, *ibid.*, 51. 3. German introduction to *Sefer ha-Torah*, p. IX. 4. Ewert H. Cousins, *Bonaventura and the Coincidence of Opposites* (Chicago 1977), Ch. III, 69-95. 5. Regarding the 'Hadit', see Henry Corbin, *En Islam Iranien* (Paris 1972), vol. III, 214-232. It is worth noting the common motif of both Abulafia and the Arab sources: the seven methods are depicted as concentric circles; see note 146 below, and Corbin, *ibid.*, 217-218, and the rest of this chapter. Regarding the influence of Ismaili forms of exegesis on *Sefer ha-Seruf*, a work

that came out of Abulafia's circle, see the article co-authored by S. Pines and myself. 6. It was not discussed at all in Scholem, *ibid.*, note 1. 7. Sefer 'Osar 'Eden Ganuz, Ms. Oxford 1580, fols. 170b-172b; Sefer Mafteah ha-1-Iolcindi, Ms. Parma 141, fols. 8b-9a; and the epistle Sebac NetibOt ha-Thrall, pp. 2-5. See also Litiquzey Hamis, Ms. Oxford 2239, fol. 124a. 8. Sefer Mafteah ha-HolcmOt, Ms. Parma 141, fol. 9a where we read: "And I have already discussed these seven methods in 'Osar 'Eden Ganuz, and in my Pe-rug Sefer Yesirah." This Peru' Sefer Yesireih did not reach us. 9. BT Shabbat , 63a; BT Yebamot , 24a. On this important dictum in medieval Jewish exegesis, see Sarah Kamin, *Rashi's Exegetical Categoriza-*

*Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia* 527 tion in *Respect to the Distinction Between Peshat and Derash* (Jerusalem, 1986), 122-129; Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton, 1987), 213-221. 10. Seba' Netilyiit ha-Torah, p. 2. 11. *Ibid.* 12. In many respects the 'plain meaning layer of

Abulafia's system is similar to the 'Haggadah ne'emanah', trustworthy tradition, in Saadiah Gaon's system. However, in this system, this level also would include Abulafia's second method; i.e., the Oral Tradition. Regarding Saadiah's conception of 'Haggadah Neemanah', see H. A. Wolfson, "The Double Faith Theory in Clement, Saadia, Averroes, and St. Thomas," JQR (NS), 33 (1942/3), 239-243. 13. Ms. Parma 141, fol. 9a. The source of the distinction between compulsory faith and true faith is in Maimonides' Guide for the Perplexed, HI, 28. 14. Dt., 11:17. 15. Dt., 28;12. 16. Sefer Mafteah ha-Holcmot, Ms. Parma 141, fol. 9b. On the affinity between interest in the plain sense of the scripture and interest in the world of senses, see Morton Bloomfield, Essays and Explorations (Cambridge, Mass. 1970), 87-88. 17. Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 171a. 18. Ex., 14:14. 19. Ex., 14:13. 20. Ex., 14:14. 21. Psalms, 37:5. 22. Ms. Parma 141, fol. 9b. 23. Tiqun ha-De cot (Jerusalem 1973); p. 2, 11, 20-22; p. 3, 11, 1-12; 22-24. 24. Ms. Parma 141, fol. 14b. 25. Dt., 10:16.

528 Notes to Chapter 3 26. Dt., 30:30. 27. Dt., 4:30. As Scholem pointed out (On the Kabbalah, 62, note 1), it was Pico della Mirandola who compared the fourfold method of exegesis of Bahya ben Asher to Christian exegesis. It is also worth noting the work of Yehudah Moscato, who in Sefer NefusOt Yehuddh, Discourse 7, fols. 20d-21a, compares the Kabbalistic fourfold system of exegesis to the one used by the Christians. 28. As Jellinek pointed out in his work Philosophie and Kabbala (German part), 32, n. 3, Abulafia is aiming his criticism against the spiritualist interpretation of circumcision in Paul's Epistle to the Romans, ch. 2-3. Indeed, Abulafia's criticism is not original with him, but is influenced by ibn Ezra. 29. M. Friedlander, Essays on the Writings of Abraham ibn Ezra (London 1877), Hebrew appendix, p. 1, and in the introduction by ibn Ezra to his 'Commentary on the Bible', published in Miqra'Ot GedOlot. 30. See specifically, his work Yescid Mora'. 31. Sefer 'Osar 'Eden Grinuz, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 171a-171b. For other commentaries on this verse, from the Rabbinic tradition, see A. Marmorstein, Old Rabbinic Doctrines of God (Oxford 1937), vol. II, 7-9. 32. On 'Derush' in medieval exegesis, see now Kamin (note 9 above),

136-158. 33. Seba' Neap& ha-TOrdh, p. 3. Compare to Midrash Kohelet Rabbah, II, 10:

And these pleasures are the 'AggaclOt (legend-narrative), for they are the pleasures of the Scripture.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 529 of texts in R. Hillel of Verona, Sefer Tagmuley ha-Nefe g, p. 181; see note 1 above. 34. Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 171b. 35. Midrash Tanhuma, Waye geb, Par. 2. 36. Daniel, 9:21. 37. Genesis, 37:17. 38. Genesis, 2:23. 39. Midrash Deuteronomy Rabbah, II, 2: Sifrey Deuteronomy, section on We-Zot ha-Bercilceih, par. 38. 40. Compare with Rashi's commentary to Zekariah, 6:12. 41. Ibid. 42. BT Baba Batra, 75b. 43. Ms. Parma 141, fols. 8b-9a. 44. Ms. Parma 141, fol. 10a. 45. 'Oscir 'Eden Giinuz, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 170b. 46. Sefer Mafteah ha-Holcmot, Ms. Parma, fol. 9a. The terms 'parable' (magal) and 'enigma' (hiddh) as referring to allegory appear in the commentary on the Torah of R. Joseph Bekor Shor, who on Numbers 12:8 writes:

From here is broken the arms of the nations of the world, who say that everything that Moses said was 'allegoria,' i.e., enigma and parable, and not what their plain meaning purports to say. And they exchange the meaning of the prophets for something else and completely remove the Scripture from its plain sense.

Regarding Haggadah and parable in Maimonides, see B. Bacher, *HaRambam Ke-Farshan ha-Miqra* (Tel Aviv, 5692-1932), 34-37, and specifically, p. 34, n.1. Haggadah, as a medium that draws the hearts of the people, is already mentioned in BT Haggigah 14a, and Sifrey Deuteronomy, Par. 317 (Finkelstein edition, p. 359):

These refer to the Haggadot, for they draw the hearts of man like wine.

Abulafia's words constitute a slight variation on the words of Ibn Ezra, who in the introduction of his commentary on the Bible (in

Friedlander, op. cit. p. 1) says: And one of the methods of the uncircumcised sages who say that the entire Torah consists [merely] of enigmas and parables.

See also in the disputation of R. Yehiel of Paris, in 'astir Wiquhim, ed. Eisenstein (New York, 1928), 82, and the formulation of the fourth type

Whereas ibn Ezra opposes this method of the uncircumcised sages, Abulafia makes use of it because Maimonides' Guide gave it his approbation. Regarding the term 'enigma,' which always refers to 'alle-

530 Notes to Chapter 3 gory' in Abulafia's writing, see Scholem, On the Kabbalah, p. 55. For Maimonides' use of parable and enigma, see Bacher, op. cit., 19-20, note 6. and Talmage (note 1 above), 314-315, 321-322, 334-335. 47. Sefer )00r 'Eden Ganuz, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 171b. 48. Guide for the Perplexed, II, 30.

49. Sefer Maftaal! ha-Hokmdt, Ms. Parma 141, fols. 14b-15a. 50. Perez Sandler "Le-I3wayal PaRDeS we-ha-itah ha-Meruba cat," in Auerbach Volume (Jerusalem 1955), 234, note 50. 51. Scholem, On the Kabbalah, p. 61. 52. Regarding the fourfold method of exegesis of Islam, see Henry Corbin, Histoire de la Philosophic Islamique (Paris 1964), 19-20. 53. Published in Tegubot R. Yizhak Abarbanel le- geelot ga ,111 R. Saul haKohen (Venice 5334-1574) fol. 21a-21b. G. Vajda published an essay that analyses sections of this work: "Deux chapitres du Guide des Egares repenses par Kabbalistes," in Melanges offerts a Etienne Gilson (Paris 1959), 651-659. He is of the opinion that this work was falsely attributed to Gikatilla. Against this, E. Gottlieb was of the opinion that Gikatilla composed this work during the period between his Sefer Ginat Tgaz and Sefer Sacarey 'Orah. See his Studies., 110-117. To add to his proofs that Gikatilla was the author of this work, we read on fol. 21a, regarding the 'middle' point: And one who read the word as BWR [bar- it] is a BUR [burignoramus], for he is unsanctified in all his six directions and has no part in the middle point, the secret of the B'R [beer-well, spring]. This is to say, that one can come to a true understanding



of the Torah only by knowing the secret layer of the Torah-the beer- wellspring. And one who is mistaken in this, and reads instead 'bar' is himself a

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 531 54.

Scholem, On the Kabbalah., p. 60. 55. Op. cit., p. 61:

And the deragith includes the allegorical meaning as well as the Talmudic method of deriving the law from the Scriptural verse.

In our opinion, there is absolutely no indication that allegory is subsumed under the category of derds in Gikatilla's system. 56. Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 171a, and Sefer Mafteah ha-Hoktnot, Ms. Parma 141, fol. 9a., where we read regarding the fifth method that it is the first of the Kabbalistic methods, which goes according to the form of matter(s) as related by the Sefer Yesirah. 57. Midreig Soher Tob on Psalms 90; also Midrag 'Otiyydt GedOlat in Bate MidragOt (ed. Wertheimer), vol. II, p. 484. 58. Deuteronomy, 7:4. 59. See also Sefer Imrey Sefer, Ms. Paris, BN 777, p. 41. 60.

Numbers 10:35-36; BT Shabbat 115b. 61. Maimonides Mishneh Torah, Hilkot Sefer Torah, ch. 7:7. 62. Regarding the sources of this passage, see Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 103-104. 63. An interpretation of these words of Sefer ha-Bahir is already found in the works of the Gerona Kabbalists; see Ms. Oxford 2456 fol. 9a which contains dicta whose source is the Gerona Kabbalah. We read there: 'YHVH 'YSh MLHMH' (YHVH 'tg inilhaniah-Tetragrammaton is a man of war); the word 'YS indicates the three supernal Sefirot, A the first, Y the second, and S the third. 64. Sefer Yeseid Mora', Saar I; and his introduction to Sefer ha-Moznayim. 65. Sefer Mafteah ha-Hokmot, Ms. Parma 141, fol. 9a. 66. Sefer 'Osar 'Eden Ganuz, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 171a. 67. Op. cit. 171b-172a. 68. This numerological equation is already found in Perush Sefer Yesirdh of P. Baruch Togarmi. See Scholem Abulafia, 236. It is found as well in Abulafia's other works, see 'Os\* `Eden Ganuz, Ms. Ox-

'b ur' . Compare this to the expression used in Sefer Ginat 'Egoz, fol. Mc:

And they never arrived to the inner point, the point of the Torah (and regarding them it is said:) "but they are altogether brutish and foolish."

See also op. cit., fol. 55b: "but they are altogether brutish and foolish," this refers to the secret of the one point....

532 Notes to Chapter 3 ford 1580, fol. 51a; Sefer Gan Na'ul, Ms. Munich 58, fol. 329a, and elsewhere. 69. Regarding the term mitbOdedim as applied to those who practice concentration, see Idel, Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah, 108-111. 70. Regarding a similar discussion concerning achieving the likeness of the Active Intellect, see Sefer Ner 'Elohim, Ms. Munich 10, fol. 170a. 71. See above Chapter 1, section 4. 72. ebtI, Netivot ha-Tardh, p.4. 73. 'Eden Ganuz, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 172a. 74. I do not accept Scholem's statement in On the Kabbalah, 43 where he says that the image of the Torah as a woven fabric of Holy Names did not contribute anything to actual methods of commentary on the Torah. See above, Chapter 2, in our discussion of Abulafia's

commentary on the binding of Isaac and on the Exodus from Egypt. 75. Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 172a-172b. 76. See note 13, of the previous chapter. 77. Ms. Vatican 228, fol. 99a. Similarly, we read in Sefer ha-NdbOn, authored by one of the Ashkenazi Pietists; "THYH; each letter is expounded by itself." See Joseph Dan *Iyunim be-Sifrut Hasidey Ashkenaz*, (Ramat Gan, 1975), 119; and Idel, "The Concept of the Torah," 63-64. 78. Ms. Vatican 228, fol. 99b. This idea appears again on fol. 100a.

And in conclusion, [they are] 22 names and they emerge from each letter of the Torah.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 533 79. Sefer 'Eden Ganuz , Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 171a.

80. Ms. Parma 141, fol. 9a; Ms. Moscow 133, fol. 8a, and compare to Abulafia, *Imrey Sefer*, Ms. Paris, BN 777, p. 103:

And after you are proficient in it, return to the revolutions of their combinations whenever you have the opportunity and consider

that all is in your possession, and the material of the seventy languages is within your pen and it is in your power to write of them what you will, and to omit what you will....and the sage makes his choice always in the finest. So too, you should consider that the substance of speech is entirely in your mouth and is fluent in your utterance. And you gaze according to your will and you revolve its old forms and originate in them new understandings, comprehensible to you, but not to another, even if you were to explain it to him in any language or by any clear means of explanation. And this substance of utterance is with you, and is in your possession, and under your discretion to place within it any form of understanding you want....is material is set aside for you to give you life, and therefore you should not be remiss in giving it its proper form.

81. Batey Midrig<sup>51</sup> of Wertheimer, vol. II, p. 373. 82. Isaiah, 56:5. 83. Exodus, 3:15. 84. Batey Midragot, 372-373. 85. BT Baba Batra 75b and see Idel, Abulafia 396, n. 71. In Sefer Hayyey ha-Nefes Ms. Munich 408, fol. 65a Abulafia writes: And you recite the

Names in your mouth. However, you must sanctify them and honour them, for they are the kings of the existence and the Angels of God [or the Name] that are sent to you to raise you up higher and higher... so that all the nations of the Lord shall behold you for the Name of the Lord is called upon you.

This view is also found in *Perug Sem Mem Bet 'Otiyydt*, attributed to R. Hai Gaon, and published by G. Scholem in *Kitve Yad Ba-Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1930), 217: "And each letter is a name in itself." See also Scholem's comments in "The Name of God," 169-170, n.44. Also, in *Hiddushe Halakot we-'Aggadot* by Maharsha (= R. Shemuel Edeles) on BT Shabbat 102a, we read: And it appears, as indeed it is stated in various places, that the letters of the Torah, in and of themselves are the Names of the Holy One Blessed be He.

86. *Sefer 'Or ha-Sekel*, Ms. Vatican 233, fol. 123b. 'Eden Ganuz, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 161b; and compare 87. *Sefer* with

similar words that appear on fol. 163a, quoted below, note 94. 88. Perusg ha-Torah, Exodus, 33:12 (short version), ed. Y. Fleisher (Vienna 1926), 313. 89. Op. cit., Numbers, 20:8 and compare to Sefer gacarge Sedeq, Ms. Jerusalem 80 148, fols. 53b-54b.

See note 90, below.

### 534 Notes to Chapter 3

90. "In the Name of God," p. 75. 91. Ms. Vatican 228, fol. 100a. is there a connection between the Perue" Habdalah and what is written in Ms. Vatican 428, fol. 38b-39b: And I observed the customs of Sarfat [France] and Provence and other lands, of pronouncing the Alpha-Beta from end to beginning [backwards] and this is an ancient custom of the early sages and was promptly reinstated with great wisdom. See also above, note 77. The quotation is part of a collection of Kab-

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 535 98. Sefer 'Arzge Lebdrui (Venice 1601), fol. 39b. See also Idel, "The Infinity of Torah in Kabbalah," 148. 99. Ms. Parma 141, fol. 7b, Ms. Moscow 133, fols. 6b-7a. See also Chapter 2 above, section E, and notes 134-139. It is worth pointing out that this classification of people who perform the miswet based on having received them by tradition or based on speculative wisdom, or based on the way of prophecy is also found in Sefer Sullyin Kesef by R. Joseph ibn Kaspi ( `Asarah Kele Kesef; Pressburg 1903, 171-172). 100. Ms. Parma 141, fols. 23b-24a, Ms. Moscow 133 fols. 19b-20a. 101. Compare with Sefer Mafteah ha-Hokniat, Ms. Parma 141, fol. 26b:

The limbs of the righteous, being evil, since the substance is the cause of sin.

balistic secrets of R. Moses de Leon. 92. Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 171a. 'Eden Ganuz, Ms. Oxford 1580, fols. 32a-32b. Compare 93. Sefer also to op. cit., fol. 165a; "The entire world is filled with holy letters." 94. Op. cit., fol. 163a. These words by Abulafia are



similar in many respects to the opinion of R. Isaac ibn Latif in his commentary on the Torah called *Gin\* ha-Melek*, in *Kokkve Yizhaq* (5622-1862), p. 12, chapter 4: There is no way for the human intellect to be perfect, in actu, unless

he has within his intellect the general and particular form of the world, at the extent of the measure of his comprehension.

Thereby within him shall be all and all will be within him. The meaning of this is, when one's knowledge spreads to all particulars of existence he himself is then found within all of them and when likewise the natural and intellective forms are engraved in his mind in a veritable manner it will be the case that all is within him. And for the perfect who includes them all in his mind in actu it will be possible that by him would arise a miracle for a short duration within a part of the natural reason, (if it is) in accordance with the desire of the Blessed Creator.

102. *Sefer Maftati ha-Hokmot*, Ms. Parma 141, fol. 24a. Ms. Moscow 133 fol. 20a. 103. Ms. Oxford 1582, fol. 20a, Ms. Paris, BN 777, fol. 112a. 104. Ex., 3:15. 105. Ex., 3:6. 106. Ms. Parma

141, fol. 30b, Ms. Moscow 133, fol. 25a. See also Scholem, *Major Trends*, 25-32. 107. The topic here is Jacob's wrestling with the angel. I quote it because of the exegetical principle it uses, which, in our opinion, is also used by Abulafia in other instances. 108. Ms. Paris, BN 777, p. 24. 109. Ms. Parma 141, fol. 18b, Ms. Moscow 133, fol. 15b and see below, section K and note 139. 110. Gen., 2:7. 111. He is referring to Ibn Ezra's long version of his commentary on Exodus 3:15, which deals with the term ha-'adam and the distinguishing qualities of the noun form, which Abulafia summarizes in the acronym PRDS. It is worth noting that it was precisely during that time that this term PRDS started being used as an acronym for the fourfold method of exegesis by the Spanish Kabbalists. 112. Gen., 2:8.

95. Louis Gardet, *La Pensée Religieuse d'Avicenne* (Paris 1951), 183-184. Ibn Sina's influence in this matter is also noticeable in one of the passages of *Perush ha-'Aggadot* by R. Solomon ben Abraham ibn Adret, BT, Hullin ch.1. See also the responsa of R. Kalonymus to R. Joseph ibn Kaspi (Munich 1879), 4-5. 96. Op.

cit., ch. 2, section 7. 97. Sefer `Eden Ganuz, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 33a.

536 Notes to Chapter 3 113. Gen., 3:20. 114. Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 122a. 115. Ms. Oxford 1582, fol. 42a; Ms. Moscow 133, fol. 66b. 116. Dt., 4:4. 117. Ms. Paris, BN 680, fol. 295b. See Sefer Sitrey Torah, Ms. Paris, BN 774, fols. 14a-b. 118. Proverbs 8:2. 119. Ms. Roma, Angelica 38, fol. 38b. 120. Ex., 16:20. 121. BT Shabbat 117b; Mekhilta, Wa-Yissa, Section 4. 122. Idel, Abulafia, 235. 123. Ginat 'EgOz, fol. 14c:

The three names, whose secrets [numerical values] are 26, 86 and 65, are the secret of the stages of the intellectual ladder, and are called by the general name of "Gan 'Eden" [Garden of Eden] for by means of their grasp one enters the Garden of Eden while alive.

Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abulafia 537 the sect of Israel) , also appears in Sefer Ner 'Elohim, Ms. Munich 10, fol.

134a. 132. Ms. Oxford 1582, fol. 6a. 133. Gen., 2:23. 134. Gen., 4:1. 135. Psalms 144:3. 136. Psalms 8:5. 137. Gen., 5:2. 138. Gen., 2:24. 139. Maimonides does not express this opinion explicitly, but this is how most of his commentators understand him. Among the first of Maimonides' followers, R. Isaac ibn Latif, writes in Sefer Ginzey haMelelc, ch. 21: Indeed the word 'adam' bears two implications: one is the physical material plane, being formed of earth, and the second is the mental form.

124. For example, Sefer 'Ostir 'Eden Ganuz, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 50b, 55a. Introduction to Sefer Sitrey TOrdh, Ms. Paris, BN 774, fol. 90a, and elsewhere. In contrast to the use of the standard equation hayarn feast (meal) Divine Names, which is widespread in all of Abulafia's works, the author of Sefer Ner 'Elohim, Ms. Munich 10, fol. 136a, speaks about the three souls of the Sabbath feasts. 125. Ms. Oxford 1582, fol. 24b-25a. 126. Genesis 2:10. 127. See Idel, Abulafia, 107-108.

128. Ms. Paris, BN 777, p. 48, Likkutey Hamiz, Ms. Oxford 2239, fol.

See also above, section H, the citation quoted from Sefer Mafteah haHokmdt. 140. 'Y-'zvs, 'ENM-,eneg. 141. See chapter 1. 142.

Compare with the words of Ibn Ezra in his commentary on Exodus 16:28: For all of the mizvot and statutes are understandably true as they are

[in their plain sense] and they contain secrets having to do with the [nature of the] soul and these are understood only by the illuminati. 143. Ms. Parma 141, fol. 25b.

130a; and compare to Idel, The Mystical Experience, pp. 55-57.

129. Ms. Oxford 1582, fol. 64b-65a. 130. BT Shabbat 12b. 131.

The use of the numerical value of ML'KY HSRT (mal ,alce ha-garetMinistering Angels) = 1006 = HM KT YSR'1\_, (hem kat yisrael-they are

144. The possibility for this 'absence' of the Divinity, in the viewpoint that stresses the personal redemption, is a well-known phenomenon in the history of religions: See Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (London, Oxford 1955) vol. II, p. 225. 145. See G. Scholem "Hirhurim 'al 'Efsharut shel Mistikah Yehudit Be-Zemanenu," *Devarim be-Go* (Tel Aviv, 1975), 78-79.

538 Notes to Chapter 3 146. Abulafia uses the term Galgal, which can be translated as both 'wheel' and 'sphere,' in order to describe his seven methods. This item recurs in *Seba c NetibOt ha-TOrdh* several times. This use may be influenced by Ibn Ezra's description of the commentators that are circumambulating the center, viewed as the true meaning of the Torah. See his introductions to his commentary to the Torah. It is important, however, to remark that a parallel phenomenon is found in Christian sources, where the exegetical methods are referred as *rota*. See Henri de Lubac, *L'Ecriture dans la tradition* (Paris, 1966), 276 and Jean Leclercq, "Un temoignage du XIIIe siecle sur la nature de la theologie," *AHDLA*, vol. 15-17 (1940-1942), 321.

147. See Idel, "Infinities of Torah in Kabbalah," 149, 156 note 42.

148. Abulafia's mysticism seems to ignore the ancient Jewish model of ecstasy as part of the celestial journey; the passage of consciousness from one sphere to another has nothing to do with this theme.

149. See Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, 234-249. See also Elliot Wolfson, "The Hermeneutics of Visionary Experience: Revelation and Interpretation in the Zohar," *Religion* (forthcoming).

150. Ms. New York, ITS 1805, fol. 6a.

151. The affinity between Abulafia's hermeneutics and his ecstatic-devotional religiosity, and the similar phenomena in eighteenth century Hasidism, is a topic to be elaborated elsewhere.

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Abbreviations AJSRâ□□Association of Jewish Studies Review  
BTâ□□Babylonian Talmud HTRâ□□Harvard Theological  
Review HUCAâ□□Hebrew Union College Annual  
JBLâ□□Journal for Biblical Literature JJSâ□□Journal of Jewish  
Studies JQRâ□□Jewish Quarterly Review ITSâ□□Journal for  
Theological Studies JSJTâ□□Jerusalem Studies in Jewish  
Thought PAAJRâ□□Proceedings of the American Academy of  
Jewish Research QSâ□□Qiriat Sefer REJâ□□Revue des  
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