The Theosophy of Shabbetai Donnolo, with Special Emphasis on the Doctrine of Sefirot in His Sefer Ḥakhmoni

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I. Introduction

One of the most important yet puzzling books of Jewish esotericism is Sefer Yeẓirah, the "Book of Formation." The fact that scholars have been unable to reach a consensus concerning its date of composition, which has been placed anywhere between the second and eighth centuries, attests to its enigmatic nature.¹ It is not my intention here to review the host of different opinions regarding the literary, intellectual and social context which may have produced this work, nor do I wish to enter into an extended discussion of whether it should be considered a speculative (i.e., cosmological or cosmogonic), magical, or even meditative composition. My focus rather is on one of the earliest commentaries on this work, the Sefer Ḥakhmoni, (vocalized according to some as Ḥakkemoni)² or Tahkemoni by Shabbetai ben Abraham Donnolo (913-ca. 982).³ The author himself mentions two dates of composition for this work, 946 and 982, which makes it difficult to date it precisely.⁴ In the same century that Donnolo wrote his Sefer Ḥakhmoni several other commentaries on Sefer Yeẓirah were written,⁵ the two most important being the commentary of Saadiah ben Joseph Gaon (882-942),⁶ written around 933, and that of Dunash ibn Tamim (ca. 890-ca. 960),⁷ written in 955/56 and based in great measure on the teaching of his master, Isaac Israeli (ca. 855-ca. 955).⁸ It is evident that these works stem from different religious and cultural milieus: the commentaries of Saadiah and Dunash ibn Tamim⁹ reflect the situation of Jews living under Muslim rule in Iraq and North Africa, governed by the Abbasid and Fatimid caliphates respectively, whereas that of Donnolo reflects the peculiar cultural mix of Byzantine southern Italy which, as part of the Eastern Roman Empire, was heir to ancient Greco-Roman civilization and in which Greek and Latin predominated. This does not mean to suggest, of course, that there is no influence of Arabic culture in tenth-century southern Italy.¹⁰ From Donnolo's own
writings it is evident that he was conversant with Islamic science, even if it is not entirely clear that he could read Arabic.\textsuperscript{11}

II. Byzantine Italy: A Center of Jewish Mysticism

In order to appreciate the tenth-century Byzantine environment in which Donnolo wrote one must bear in mind that by the middle of the ninth century the Jews of southern Italy had begun to undergo a major cultural transformation, passing from the Palestinian sphere of influence to the Babylonian.\textsuperscript{12} Such a transformation is reflected in the detailed narrative of the sojourn of Abu Aaron of Baghdad in southern Italy which is found in the \textit{Chronicle of Aḥimaẓ}, written in 1054.\textsuperscript{13} One cannot, therefore, remove entirely from Donnolo’s Byzantine milieu eastern influences, whether those of Arabic science and philosophy, or that of Babylonian Jewish religious and social customs. What is central to our concern, however, is the historical consciousness reflected in the \textit{Chronicle of Aḥimaẓ} that the esoteric lore concerning the divine chariot, i.e., the \textit{merkavah} or \textit{heikhalot} speculation, is said to be cultivated by Amittai and his descendants, presumably continuing traditions received directly from Palestine.\textsuperscript{14} Establishing the continuity from Palestine to southern Italy, especially in terms of these esoteric matters, seems to be one of the author’s primary intentions in the key passage wherein he introduces his genealogy:

Now, with great care, I will set down in order the traditions of my fathers, who were brought on a ship over the Pishon… with the captives that Titus took from the Holy City…. They came to Oria…. Among their descendants there arose a man eminent in learning, a liturgical poet and scholar, master of God’s law, a sage among his people. His name was Rabbi Amittai. And he had a number of amiable and worthy sons, intelligent and learned men, scholars and poets, who taught and instructed worthy disciples, men of merit and renown, masters of secret lore, makers of rhyme, adepts in the mysteries, observing with wisdom, contemplating with understanding, and speaking shrewdly; enlightened in \textit{Sefer ha-Yashar}, and contemplating the “secret of the chariot” (\textit{sod ha-merkavah}). The first one was R. Shefatyah who was involved with wisdom; the second was R. Hananel, who studied the law of God which Yeqtiel [i.e., Moses\textsuperscript{15}] brought down; and the third, Eleazar, who contemplated [the Torah] given in the third [month].\textsuperscript{16}

The above passage extols the various scholarly and literary achievements of Amittai and the members of his family. \textit{Inter alia}, it is emphasized that both father and sons were distinguished as liturgical poets. It may be assumed that they preserved and continued the poetic traditions of the Palestinian \textit{payyəṭanim}, one of the main sources for the knowledge of \textit{merkavah} traditions.\textsuperscript{17} Although in the continuation of the text Abu Aaron is credited with many things, including the performance of
miraculous acts and organizing academies of talmudic study, he is not singled out as the one who transmitted ancient divine secrets. On the contrary, according to the account in this chronicle, as was pointed out by Gershom Scholem and Joseph Dan years ago and reiterated more recently by Robert Bonfil, knowledge of the secrets of the chariot was present in southern Italy before Abu Aaron arrived. The arrival of the latter signifies – at least in terms of historical memory – a merging of the Palestinian and Babylonian traditions in mystical literature, but, in so doing, it also underscores the autonomous nature of the two.

Prima facie, it would seem that the account in the Chronicle of Ahimaaz stands in marked contrast to the tradition which circulated in the circle of Eleazar of Worms (d. ca. 1230). The most celebrated version of this tradition is found in a passage in Eleazar’s commentary on the prayerbook where he states that the secret concerning the arrangement of the prayers (sod tiqqu ha-tefillot) as well as other esoteric matters (simply designated as sodot) cultivated by the German Pietists can be traced in a continuous chain going back to Abu Aaron ben Samuel, the Prince of Baghdad. According to Eleazar, Abu Aaron left Babylonia and came to the city of Lucca in Lombardy where he transmitted the esoteric traditions to Moses bar Qalonymos, who together with his sons, Qalonymos and Yequitiel, were transported by Charlemagne to Mainz. After the establishment of a new center of Jewish life in the Rhineland, the traditions were passed on in a successive chain until Qalonymos the Elder, who transmitted them to Eleazar Hazan of Speyer who transmitted them to Samuel the Pious. The latter, in turn, transmitted the secrets to his son, Judah the Pious, who then transmitted them to Eleazar of Worms. It follows, according to this text, that in the historical recollection of the Qalonymide circle of Pietists the esoteric traditions were transferred from East (Babylonia) to West (Europe) via Italy. Let us for the moment grant historical “factuality” to this legend – though it is evident that the search for factuality ultimately misses the whole point of the narrative – and assume that some of the Pietists’ traditions can in fact be traced back to Abu Aaron. This should not, however, mislead us into thinking that this accounts for all, or even the majority, of the mystical or esoteric doctrines and texts which informed the spiritual mentality of the German Pietists.

On the contrary, it is abundantly clear that the Pietists likewise preserved Palestinian traditions, frequently liturgical in nature, which were rooted in the world of chariot mystical speculation.

That the Pietists themselves traced the path of transmission of their traditions from Palestine directly to Italy, without passing through Babylonia, is demonstrated by a statement of Shem Tov ben Simhah ha-Kohen, mentioned by Dan, but for the most part overlooked by other scholars: “The [mystical] intention of prayer [is transmitted] to the one who fears God, to none other but the modest. [This intention derives] from a tradition of the great rabbi, R. Eliezer [sic] the Roqeah, who received from the mouth of R. Judah the Pious, and he from his father, and son received from father, going back to [the one known as the] “flowing
myrrh” who received from the mouth of Yosef Ma'on, who was exiled from Jerusalem to Rome [i.e., Italy] by the wicked Titus.31 While the personalities mentioned in the second part of this statement cannot be identified with any historical precision, there is every reason to believe that some of the mystical and magical traditions reflected in the writings of the German Pietists, ultimately deriving from the merkavah and heikhalot literature, did reach Italy directly from Palestine without the mediation of Babylonia.32 Even if we posit that the major texts from this corpus were redacted in their final form in Babylonia in the Geonic period, an old view experiencing something of a rebirth in recent scholarly discourse,33 this does not mean that all the key ideas expressed therein best reflect the Mesopotamian milieu.34 Perhaps it is the Byzantine context, and especially southern Italy, with its deep connections to Palestine, on the one hand, and Greco-Roman culture, on the other, including lingering vestiges of ancient mystery and Gnostic religions, that may help us account for the background of much of the early mystical literature as well as its acceptance into Jewry in central and western Europe, particularly in the twelfth century.35

Here it is important to note36 that Hai Gaon (939-1038), in his famous responsum to rabbis from Qairouan concerning the magical or theurgical use of divine names, acknowledges that such techniques were reported by “sages of the land of Israel and sages of the land of Edom,”37 the latter term designating the lands of Christendom within the Byzantine Empire.38 While later on in the same responsum Hai notes that similar techniques are reported by Spanish scholars and members of the talmudic academy in Sura,39 it is instructive that he initially mentions the Palestinian and Edomite (i.e., Byzantine) communities as sources for these traditions. Indeed, according to the language of the responsum, Hai appears to be saying that the rabbis of Qairouan, who addressed their question to him, had heard about the magical use of divine names precisely from “people of Rome [again referring to the Christian Empire in Byzantium] and the land of Israel.”40 Moreover, Hai points out that the formulae which the North African rabbis saw in Palestinian and Byzantine sources are similar to those which appear in the texts in his possession: הנוסח את רומא ואת ארמניא ואת ארמניא ארמניא לארמניא ארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא ארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא ארמניא לארמניא ארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא לארמניא L

Hai goes on to mention several books including Sefer ha-Yashar, Harba de-Mosheh,41 Raza rabbah,42 Heikhalot rabbata (i.e., Heikhalot zu'arta), and Sar Torah.43 While Hai does not say explicitly that the scholars in Mesopotamia had received these sources from the sages of Palestine or Edom, nor even that the latter had these specific works, at the very least the second possibility is intimated in the language he used in introducing the catalog of relevant texts that he had. Support for such a possibility is to be gathered from the account in Chronicle of Ahimaaz where, as I noted above, Amittai and his sons were said to have studied Sefer ha-Yashar as well as the secret of the chariot (sod ha-merkavah) which I take to be in this context a textual reference44 and not merely a generic term designating the esoteric discipline.45 The existence of some of these magical and esoteric works in Palestine is attested to by a polemical statement of
Daniel al-Qumisi, the Karaite author living in Jerusalem in the ninth century, describing the books of magic circulating amongst the Rabbanites. His list includes the following: *Bartalya Qansarin*, *Sefer Bi'ilam*, *Sefer 'Adam*, *Sefer ha-Yashar*, *Sefer ha-Razim*, and the *Raza rabbah*. The *Sefer 'Adam*, *Raza rabbah*, *Bartalya* and *Qansarin*, as well as the *Sefer 'Uza ve-'Uzi'el*, are mentioned by another Karaite author who lived in Jerusalem in the tenth century. Thus we have clear evidence of the circulation of similar texts in learned circles in Palestine, Mesopotamia, and southern Italy in the ninth and tenth centuries.

In this connection it is also appropriate to recall that, in his responsa to the scholars of Tyre, Maimonides described the Shi‘ur qomah as “a work of one of the Byzantine preachers,” intending thereby to undermine both its traditional literary attribution to Tannaitic figures as well as the view expressed by those who turned to Maimonides for counsel that it was a composition of the Karaites. Whether or not Maimonides’ claim that this work of Jewish mysticism was a product of the *darshanin al-Rum* is in fact historically accurate, it is noteworthy that he located such speculation within the Byzantine orbit. Historians of Jewish mysticism need again to consider the thesis put forth by S. W. Baron that the “transition from Eastern to Western mystic lore” took place through the agency of Byzantine Jewry. Baron was not arguing, as did Scholem, that Jewish mystical texts containing Palestinian elements made their way from Babylonia to Italy and from there to Germany and France. (The “Oriental” source for the Gnostic and mystical currents in Judaism of which Scholem speaks thus comprises Palestine and Mesopotamia.) Baron’s point is rather that within the Byzantine milieu itself the older Palestinian traditions and texts survived and were understood in such a way as to provide the roots for what became the dominant trends of Jewish mysticism in the High Middle Ages. In that sense Byzantium, and especially southern Italy, is the “Eastern” center of Jewish mysticism. To be sure, as I have already indicated, there can be no doubt that some of the works of Jewish esotericism studied by scholars of southern Italy were found as well in rabbinic academies in countries within the Islamic East such as Babylonia. Yet, the cultural context was sufficiently different in the two environments to produce strikingly distinct approaches to the relevant material. The relevance of this claim is borne out when we examine carefully the different readings of *Sefer Yeşirah* found in Donnolo, on the one hand, and Saadia and Dunash ibn Tamim, on the other. It is my contention that an appreciation of the difference in cultural context is critical for assessing their respective interpretations of *Sefer Yeşirah* and, in particular, the key term of that work, *sefirot*. Scholars have argued that certain *merkavah* speculations, originating in Palestine and cultivated in southern Italy, reached other European centers of Jewish life, including France and Germany, where they helped foster subsequent developments in Jewish mysticism, including eventually the crystallization of German Pietism and Provençal-Spanish kabbalah in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. What has not been sufficiently appreciated in previous
scholarly discussions is the extent to which Donnolo himself presents a theosophic understanding of the sefirot.

III. Sefirot in Sefer Yeşirah

Before proceeding to a discussion of the term sefirot let me briefly comment on the possible dependence of Donnolo's Hakhmoni on the other two major commentaries on Sefer Yeşirah written in the tenth century. It is not at all clear that Donnolo had first-hand knowledge of Saadiah's Tafsir Kitāb al-Mabādī, let alone the commentary of Dunash ibn Tamim. (If we assume that Donnolo could not read Arabic, then it becomes very difficult, if not impossible, to maintain that he had direct access to these commentaries.) There is no support for Scholem's claim that Donnolo's commentary on Sefer Yeşirah "was indisputably influenced by the commentary of Saadiah b. Joseph Gaon to the same work." Dan more cautiously remarked that there "is no evidence that Donnolo knew Saadiah Gaon's works" even though "there are some close parallels between the theology of Donnolo and that of Saadiah." Other scholars, including Andrew Sharf and Shlomo Pines have noted that different cultural contexts produced the works of Saadiah and Donnolo. The relevance of this last remark becomes particularly apparent when we turn our attention to the explanation of the term sefirot in these commentaries. Indeed, one of the most significant problems in the scholarly study of Jewish esoteric literature, related especially to the question of the origins of theosophic kabbalah, is the precise connotation of the term sefirot that first appears in Sefer Yeşirah.

It is generally thought by scholars that the term sefirot in Sefer Yeşirah refers to the ten primordial numbers which serve, together with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, as the instruments with which God creates the world. The sefirot and the 'otiyyot together comprise the thirty-two hidden paths of wisdom mentioned in the beginning of the text. This view, as I have already noted, has been widely affirmed by modern scholars, including, to name but two outstanding examples, Gershom Scholem and Ithamar Gruenwald. Scholem, for his part, does admit that the fact that the author uses the term sefirah instead of mispar suggests that the sefirot are "not simply a question of ordinary numbers, but of metaphysical principles of the universe or stages in the creation of the world." Scholem rejects, however, the possibility that in its original source the term refers to emanations from God, i.e., he excludes a theosophic understanding, attributing such a reading only to later kabbalistic interpretations of the text. Yet, Scholem does acknowledge that the sefirot are described as "living numerical beings" which are characterized in terms borrowed from the description of the living beings (hayyot) in Ezekiel's chariot vision. This aspect of the sefirot is highlighted by the statement in Sefer Yeşirah (1.8) that the ten sefirot bow down before the divine throne, a statement which strikingly parallels the comment in 'Avot de-Rabbi
Natan regarding the seven attributes (middot) of God which are said to “serve before the throne of glory.”67 It would seem from Scholem’s analysis, however, that these merkavah descriptions represent a secondary stage in the compositional process for, as Scholem himself puts it, the author of Sefer Yeširah has searched out the merkavah literature for ways to characterize the primordial numbers. An even more extreme formulation of this position is that of A. P. Hayman who has concluded that there is no essential similarity between the two texts, and that heikhalot material has been incorporated into Sefer Yeširah at a later stage in the redactional process in order to make the text acceptable to a wider circle of Jews.68 According to this view, therefore, the sefirot in Sefer Yeširah have nothing to do with the hypostatic beings that fill the throne-world according to heikhalot literature, but are rather the mathematical ciphers through which God creates. This position has been reaffirmed, most recently, in the work of Pines mentioned above in which he compares the term sefirot in Sefer Yeširah to the term ektaseis (extensions) in the Pseudo-Clementine homilies, a Jewish-Christian document of the second century, which speaks of six extensions coming forth and returning to the divine realm (a concept that does in fact closely parallel the six dimensions mentioned in Sefer Yeširah).69 The critical semantic shift occurs when the sefirot are no longer merely numerical units, but rather designate the actual potencies of the divine realm. The supposed transition is expressed succinctly by Scholem when he compares the use of the term sefirot in Sefer Yeširah and Sefer ha-Bahir, the latter considered to be the first major text dedicated fully to a theosophic conception: “The Sefirot, first mentioned in the Sefer Yeširah as corresponding to the ten basic numbers, became in Sefer ha-Bahir divine attributes, lights, and powers, each one of which fulfills a particular function in the work of creation.”70 In another context Scholem described the new explanation of the meaning of the term sefirot in the Bahir as follows: “The word is not derived from safar, to count [as in Sefer Yeširah], but from sappir, sapphire. They are thus the sapphirine reflections of the divinity, and Psalm 19:2, ‘The heavens declare the glory of God,’ is interpreted by the author in accordance with this etymology: ‘the heavens shine in the sapphirine splendor of the glory of God.’”71 According to the conventional scholarly view, then, a fundamental change occurred with respect to the meaning of this term in the later kabbalistic writings which began to appear in central Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

IV. Sefirot in Saadia and Dunash ibn Tamim

The explanation of the term sefirot in Sefer Yeširah as mathematical units is found already in the earliest philosophical commentaries on this work, based perhaps upon the appearance of the term sefirah in talmudic and midrashic literature where it connotes that which is counted.72 Thus, Saadia Gaon explicitly renders the word sefirot as al-‘adad, i.e., numbers (Hebrew: misparim), which correspond in his
mind to the categories of quantitative characteristics that apply to all existents. These numbers are extrinsic to God and therefore have no theosophic implication. This point is emphasized on any number of occasions by Saadiah including, e.g., his interpretation of the passage in Sefer Yeşirah (1.7): “Ten sefirot belimah, their measure is ten without end (midatan ‘eser she-‘ein lahen sof): “The numbers themselves have no end with respect to what may be formed from them by human beings, but they have an end in relation to the Creator.” The same numerical interpretation of the sefirot is to be found in Dunash ibn Tamim and later on in a variety of authors, including Solomon ibn Gabirol (ca. 1020-ca. 1057), Abraham ibn Ezra (ca. 1092-1167),77 Judah Halevi (ca. 1075-1141),78 and Judah ben Barzillai of Barcelona (late 11th-early 12th century), whose commentary on Sefer Yeşirah basically follows – indeed to a great degree paraphrases – the commentary of Saadiah.79 It must be noted, however, that in Dunash ibn Tamim’s commentary there are a few hints that the sefirot are not considered ordinary numbers but rather signify powers or aspects in the divine world, understood in this context Neoplatonically as the sphere of intelligible entities. For example, in one place he writes that God included within the thirty-two paths of wisdom, which are comprised of the ten sefirot and the twenty-two letters, “all the spiritual sciences for they are the beginning [or principle] of the [divine] unity to contemplate things which are beyond nature.”80 In another place, commenting on the enigmatic statement of Sefer Yeşirah (1.8), “Ten sefirot belimah, their vision is as swift as the flash of lightning, and there is no limit to their boundaries, one’s discourse [about them] should be as swift as possible [literally, running and returning, נבזצו נבזצו], and one’s utterances should be as if driven by a storm; and before the throne they bow down,” he remarks that this section “elucidates more about the divine wisdom [i.e., metaphysics]81 which is appropriately [characterized] in the image of the ten sefirot.”82 Insofar as hokhmat ha-’elohut is specified as that science which deals with God’s unity (yihud) and the spiritual entities (rashniyyim), it follows that the sefirot must instruct one about the very nature of the divine and the angelic beings which make up the intelligible world. In yet a third passage the author states explicitly that the “ten ineffable sefirot are the power of [God] which spreads out in everything.”83 From these passages it may be concluded that for Dunash ibn Tamim contemplation of the sefirot can teach one something about the unity of God as well as the spiritual realities. It is possible that ibn Tamim reflects here a Neoplatonic position which may have also been a central characteristic of the commentary on Sefer Yeşirah by his teacher, Isaac Israeli.84 Still, the primary meaning assigned to the sefirot by ibn Tamim is that of numbers in accord with the line set by Saadiah.

The mathematical interpretation of the sefirot in Saadiah and Dunash ibn Tamim can be easily explained in light of the resurgence of interest in Pythagoreanism in the ninth and tenth centuries which is attested to, for example, by Thābit ibn Qurra’s translation of the works of Nicomachus of Gerasa (ca. 100 C.E.) into Arabic as
well as in the elaborate mystical theory of numbers propounded by the Ikhwan al-Safa.\textsuperscript{86} There is clear evidence that both Saadiah and Dunash ibn Tamim were influenced by these trends which no doubt had an impact on their reading of the ancient Jewish work, \textit{Sefer Ye\'ishar}.\textsuperscript{87} It is thus no mere coincidence that in Saadiah's list of his commentary on \textit{Sefer Ye\'ishar} of nine cosmogonic theories, the seventh view is the Pythagorean notion that the world was created from numbers, and the eighth view is that of \textit{Sefer Ye\'ishar} that the world was formed out of the ten numbers and twenty-two letters. These two views are listed next to each other, for in Saadiah's mind the latter represents the more perfect articulation of the former.\textsuperscript{88}

In the case of Donnolo, however, one finds no evidence for a Pythagorean interpretation of the \textit{sefirot}. The commentary of Donnolo, in contrast to the mathematical approach of Saadiah and, to an extent, that of Dunash ibn Tamim, reflects a theosophic understanding of the \textit{sefirot} which anticipates the meaning of this term evident in later kabbalistic works.\textsuperscript{89}

V. Donnolo on the Divine Image

To support my claims it will be necessary to enter into a more detailed discussion of Donnolo's thought. In the first part of \textit{Sefer Hakhmoni} Donnolo categorically rejects the anthropomorphic interpretation of Gn 1:26 which would imply that God possesses a corporeal form in whose image and likeness Adam was created.\textsuperscript{90} According to Donnolo's reading, the plural form of "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," refers to the Creator addressing the world, a process here understood as an allegorical depiction of the fact the human being is a microcosm reflecting the shape and structure of the macrocosm.\textsuperscript{91} Hence, the critical words \textit{selem} and \textit{demut} should not be rendered in terms of physical likeness but rather as a comparison of function or activity: \textit{חיה תכולה והדבר \мерע}, \textit{חיה תכולה}, \textit{לצלולו \א \אמר \תורה \טים \א \ברמה \צותה \אלים \מושש \צלולו}.\textsuperscript{92} Moreover, it has been argued by Castelli that Donnolo, like Saadiah in his time and Maimonides at a later date, sought to combat the "monstrous and invasive anthropomorphism" of the aggadic passages in the talmudic and midrashic literature.\textsuperscript{93} Following this line of interpretation, Sharf adds that Donnolo's detailed anatomical interpretation of this verse is related to his rejection of anthropomorphism which may have been, in part, derived from ancient Jewish mystical or Gnostic doctrines current in southern Italy in his time.\textsuperscript{94} Sharf flatly states that while Donnolo may have had knowledge of the Gnostic doctrines, transmitted either through the Jewish mystical sources such as the \textit{heikhalot} or \textit{Shi‘ur qomah}, or through Christian Gnostic texts,

there is no doubt that he implicitly rejects their fundamental assumption.... He looks at the nature of man as he looks at the nature of God in a way which, while not reaching the level of rational analysis by Sa'adiah or by the Rambam in their fight against superstition, is still a breeze of fresh commonsense in a
jungle of myth and fantasy.... There could be no sharper contrast between his matter of fact, exact descriptions and the emotional ambiguities of the mystics, whether Jewish, Christian or Hellenist, whether the writers of the Gnostic texts or of the Shi‘ur Komah.95

The picture, however, is a bit more complex. It can be shown that Donnolo proposed a theosophic understanding of the sefirot, which while not overtly mythical is nonetheless closer in spirit to the speculation found in the Gnostic texts or the Jewish mystical sources than it is to the rational orientation of Saadiah or Maimonides. Donnolo, as will be seen in detail below, espouses a theosophy which posits the existence of a form or image of God (demut ha-‘Elohim), identical with the glory (kavod), and comprised of multiple powers (sefirot) which collectively make up the divine unity (yihud ha-‘El). It is true that Donnolo employs the macrocosmic-microcosmic motif as a tool of exegesis in order to undermine the view that God has a physical likeness (demut) or image (selem) with which Adam was created. This does not, however, imply that he agreed with the claim made by medieval Jewish philosophers that God has no demut at all. Indeed, given Donnolo’s unambiguous rejection of a corporeal understanding of the divine image and the concomitant assertion that all anthropomorphic and anthropopathic expressions are to be treated allegorically,96 it is all the more striking that in his treatment of prophetic visions he does not challenge the notion that God has an image, a demut. Following earlier midrashic traditions, which seem to have connections with the mystical literature as well, Donnolo speaks of the image of God, though in his case there is a fundamental change in the term’s meaning with respect to its ontological referent. It is certain that in the relevant midrashic texts the word likeness, demut, is interchangeable with the words surah (form), and kavod (glory).97 More specifically, as may be gathered from the various sources, the word demut signifies the visible form of God which is the hypostatic likeness of an anthropos.98 In some examples,99 the anthropomorphic image of the divine is associated with God’s activity as creator of the universe,100 whereas in others,101 the context is the epiphany of God at the Red Sea and at Sinai. Although the nature of that likeness or form is not specified in the midrashic pericopae dealing with the appearance of God, it stands to reason that it involved an anthropomorphic manifestation. Indeed, it is plausible that even these passages are rooted in some esoteric tradition, for what the Israelites requested was to see the visible form of God on the throne at each of these critical moments in Israel’s Heilsgeschichte. Thus in parallel texts102 the word kavod is used in place of demut, again suggesting that the latter term, as the former, is being used in a technical way to name the enthroned anthropomorphic figure. It is of interest to note that the same semantic equivalence between demut and kavod is detectable in the heikhalot texts, for both words refer to the divine form upon the throne.103

Donnolo’s language regarding the image of God draws upon this earlier literature, yet in his case the demut denotes not the visible likeness of God, anthropomorphic
or otherwise, but rather the aspect which is invisible due to the inherent limitations of created beings, both angelic and human, to see God. Donnolo thus notes in one place that God did not appear to the Patriarchs, Moses or the other ancestors who stood at Sinai “in any image,” i.e., in any fixed image, so that “Israel would not err and say ‘this is His image,’ resulting in their making an image of God (דמות אלוהים) and bowing down to it. Therefore He appeared on one occasion in fire and on another through a cloud.” Although the theme of God’s invisibility is well-known from midrashic and even some mystical texts, it seems to me that Donnolo’s insistence on God’s not appearing in a specific image (דמות) so that Israel would not err and make an icon of that image and worship it reflects the debate that raged in Byzantine Christianity between the iconoclasts and the iconodules. To be sure, the roots of iconomachy in Judaism can be traced to much earlier sources incorporated in the biblical canon. Specifically, in the case of Deuteronomy, the aversion to using images in sacred worship is connected to the claim that no image of God was seen at Sinai. Nevertheless, it is possible that Donnolo’s interest in this problem, and the particular way he articulates it, may be best understood in light of trends of thinking current in his Byzantine environment. It should be noted, moreover, that parallels to the usage of the word דמות to refer to the invisible image of God can be found in religious poetry originating in the same milieu as that of Donnolo, or one that shares the same cultural matrix as his own. Thus, for example, the ninth-century Italian poet, Amittai ben Shefatyah, upon whom the influence of merkavah mysticism is well-known, expressed the matter as follows: “The angels and seraphs are each covered with six wings, hiding their bodies, the image [of God] they do not see” (תואם אלוהים אמה, רווחה וגו). A similar formulation is found in the piyyut, attributed to Yoḥanan ben Yehoshua ha-Kohen, a pasek who apparently lived in Palestine in the ninth-tenth centuries: “His image [the angels] do not see” (וה湖泊 אל vibré). Just as we find that these poets speak of the divine image which cannot be seen by angelic beings, a fortiori by humans, so too with Donnolo. Let me cite the relevant text from Sefer Hakhmoni in full:

“The secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him; to them He makes known His covenant” [Ps 25:14]. It is written, “O Lord, there is none like You! You are great and Your name is great in power” [Jer 10:6], and it is written, “Who can tell the mighty acts of the Lord” [Ps 106:2]. Who is capable of thinking the slightest bit about the great, mighty and awesome God, to comprehend His image (דמותו) for even the beasts under the throne of glory and the seraphs above it, the ministering angels, the angels called ‘er’elim, and all the host of heaven cannot comprehend His image.... Even the holy ones on earth, the prophets and seers with whom He has spoken did not comprehend or see His image as it is. Moses our master, who was the chief prophet and who spoke to Him mouth to mouth, requested to see the image of His face, but He did not heed him. As it is written, “Show me Your glory” (Ex 33:18), and [God] responded to him, “You cannot see My face” (ibid., 20), and it says, “And the Lord said, ‘See there is a place near Me. Station yourself on the rock, and, as
My glory passes by, etc.’” (ibid., 21). From these verses we understand that Moses, may he rest in peace, requested from God only to see the image of His face as it is, but his prayer in this regard was not heard. Concerning that which the prophet Isaiah, may he rest in peace, said, “I beheld the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne [and the skirts of His robe filled the Temple] seraphs stood above Him etc. and one would call to the other etc.” (Is 6:1-3), even though it says “I beheld the Lord” he did not see the image of His face but he saw the throne. He did not see the glory of the Lord upon the throne but rather the skirts [of His robe] as the skirts of a coat. Thus we have learned that Moses saw the glory of His back standing and Isaiah saw in a vision His glory seated on a throne. From the vision of the throne and the seraphs standing above Him, he understood that [the throne] was that of God.116 He saw, however, the glory of His skirts which is the glory under His feet. When [the glory] was seen by Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel, [even though it is written, “And they saw the God of Israel”],117 they saw only His glory which is under His feet by means of a sign and symbol, as it says, “And under His feet was the likeness of a pavement of sapphire” (Ex 24:10). With respect to Ezekiel the prophet, even though he saw in his vision the beasts and the ’ofanim which were above the heads of the beasts...the image of God did not appear to him as it is, “for man may not see Him and live” (Ex 33:20). [God] did not want to show him [the glory] except in the image of man, in an image which he was accustomed to seeing, so that he would not be frightened and startled by the appearance of His image, resulting in his sudden death. Thus [the glory] appeared to Adam, Cain, Abel, Enoch, Noah, the three Patriarchs, and to prophets and seers in the image of man... And to Daniel [the glory] appeared in the vision of the night in the image of man, as it is written, “As I looked on thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days was sitting etc. A river of fire etc.” (Dn 7:9-10). From all these proofs we know in truth that there is no creature in heaven or earth who can contemplate in his mind the divine image.119

The purpose of this elaborate discourse is to reach the conclusion that an anthropomorphic interpretation of Gn 1:26 is simply inadequate since the image of God is not something available to human comprehension: “One should not think that the human being [bears] the image of the appearance of God (כדרת המברא מ顧 אתלפים). It is written that Adam was formed “from the dust of the earth” (cf. Gn 2:7), [and Adam] was created male and female (cf. ibid. 1:26; 5:2) in order to procreate. Who can say, therefore, that this [corporeal] image and likeness is the image of God?”120 Significantly, to reiterate the main point, what Donnolo does not reject is the very claim that God has a demut, an image or form. On the contrary, he accepts this notion without qualification; thus at the end of the passage he refers to the demut ha-'Elohim, even though no created being can know or comprehend that very image. Indeed, Donnolo characterizes this demut as the “light which has no measure or [dimension of] greatness” and as “the glory which cannot be fathomed” (ואישב אלים וארור ישיא על עיניים וגדולה).121 In yet another context Donnolo uses similar terminology to describe the primordial light whence
emerges the fire from which the spiritual entities, comprising the throne and the angels, are said to derive: “From the radiant splendor of His great and awesome light which cannot be fathomed and has no measure, He shines His splendor within the water. From the force of that splendor which He shone in the water a fire emerged, and from that fire He carved and hewed the throne of glory, the ofanim, the seraphs, the holy beasts, the ministering angels, and all the heavenly host.”

The radiant splendor which is an immeasurable light, also identified as the Holy Spirit רוח ה הקודש, is the glory that cannot be seen, the invisible image of God.

The divine glory assumes the image of an anthropos as it appears to human beings, but this is not the essential form of the glory. This point is underscored in Donnolo’s interpretation of Ez 1:26 contained in the extended passage cited above: “[God] did not want to show him [the glory] except in the image of man, in an image which he was accustomed to seeing, so that he would not be frightened and startled by the appearance of His image, resulting in his sudden death.” It would seem, moreover, that Donnolo is operating with a twofold conception of the glory, a conception that is implied in Saadiah Gaon as well, though interpreted in an entirely different way, and which is developed more fully in subsequent writers largely on the basis of a comment by Nathan ben Jehiel of Rome (1035-ca. 1110). While Donnolo does not explicitly formulate such a position, it is suggested by his interpretation of Ex 24:10 and Is 6:1 mentioned above, i.e., that the nobles of Israel as well as Isaiah apprehended the lower glory.

In the case of Isaiah this is expressed in terms of the prophet seeing the glory seated on a throne, for what he beheld was the “glory of His skirts” or_image, which is also identified as the “glory under His feet” מושב א所所 תחת דרגיו. The same notion is expressed in terms of the nobles of Israel in slightly different language: “Even though it is written, ‘And they saw the God of Israel,’ they saw only His glory which is under His feet by means of a sign and symbol, as it says, ‘And under His feet was the likeness of a pavement of sapphire’ (Ex 24:10).”

The glory described as under God’s feet may be equated with the anthropomorphic appearance which the invisible demut, the unfathomable light and immeasurable glory, assumes in the prophetic vision. This formulation is based in part on a passage attributed to R. Berechiah in Exodus Rabbah 23.15: “This is my God and I will glorify Him’ (Ex 15:2). See how great were those who went down to the sea! How much did Moses have to beg and entreat God before he saw the [divine] image, as it says, ‘Let me behold Your glory’ (Ex 33:18). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: ‘You cannot see My face’ (ibid., 20). In the end God showed him [the demut] by means of a token, as it says, ‘as My glory passes by’ (ibid., 22).”

A first reading of Donnolo might suggest that his position is quite similar, if not indebted, to that of Saadiah. Thus the latter, in his Tafsir Kitab al-Mabadi, distinguished between the “second” air, also identified as the ruah ha-qodesh, the kavod, and shekhinah, and the “first” air which permeates all reality and in which the ten sefirot and twenty-two letters take shape. Saadiah
emphasized that the “second” air is a created entity, just as in his Kitāb al-Amānāt wa-l-‘iqādat (Book of Beliefs and Opinions) he noted that the kavod or shekhinah is the form (al-ṣūrah) created from light which can take on the shape of an anthropos seen by the prophets.126 Yet, upon closer inspection it becomes clear that Donnolo’s metaphysical assumptions are not at all comparable to Saadiah’s, for Donnolo does not assert that the ruah ha-qodesh, which is the light beyond measure and the incomprehensible glory, is a created form; on the contrary, for Donnolo these terms are different ways of signifying the divine likeness itself, the demut ha-‘Elohim, which is not created.127 He makes no effort to challenge the notion that God has a demut, as do those authors influenced by the Greco-Arabic philosophical tradition,128 nor do we find Donnolo opting for a psychologistic interpretation (developed by Hai Gaon129 and his followers, Ḥananel ben Ḥushiel of Qairouan [d. 1055/56]130 and Nathan ben Jehiel of Rome131) according to which the locus of the visible form is solely within the mind.132 The viewpoint adopted by Donnolo is still very much indebted to the earlier mystical and aggadic traditions which posited a divine form, a demut, that could assume a visible shape to man.

VI. Donnolo on the Sefirot

It can be shown, moreover, that for Donnolo this demut, or the upper aspect of the glory, is the boundless and limitless light that contains, embraces, or encompasses the ten sefirot. Commenting on the passage in Sefer Yeẓirah 1.7, “Ten sefirot belimah, their measure is ten without end,”133 their end is fixed in their beginning and their beginning in their end as a flame bound to the coal,” Donnolo writes: “Their beginning is God and their end is God ṭau ἐπὶ ὅλον ἀκάλον ἑν συνεκκαθαρτόν ἐκ τῆς ἀτέλοιο,”134 for He is the first and last.135 He fixed five σύναφείς these ten ineffable sefirot in His great power (βόστρον τῆς καθαρτίας as a flame bound to the coal.”136 The first thing to note is that koah ha-gadol, the “great power,” is a technical term in Donnolo’s Hakhmoni for the divine glory that is invisible, the demut which no angel or person can apprehend.138 The expression koah ha-gadol is already applied to God in Scripture,139 but its theosophical connotation as synonymous with kavod should be traced to the use of the Greek δύναμις and the Hebrew כבורה in esoteric circles of the first or second centuries.140 As Scholem already noted,141 we find two striking examples – both of which could very well have been known by Donnolo – of this usage: the first in the Jewish apocryphon, Vita Adate et Evae (§21), where the term “great Power” (virtus magna) is used for the divine glory, and the second in the Acts of the Apostles 8:10, where the Samaritan, Simon Magus, is praised as “the power of God which is called Great” (τῇ δύναμις τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡ καλουμένη μεγαλύτητα).142 Although the more common term rendered by “dynamis” is gevurah, one can readily see the philological connection between these expressions and that used by Donnolo, koah ha-gadol, a usage which parallels as well the Syriac ḫwāl raba (probably a translation of the biblical appellation of God, ἡ ἐξουσία ὁ μεγάλος),143
While this precise formulation is not found in the extant *heikhalot* texts, the word *koah* itself is employed in this corpus (for example, in the text published by Scholem under the title *Ma'aseh merkavah*) in a technical sense as referring to the hypostatic power of God.\(^{144}\) It seems to me that this locution should be viewed in relation to another term well-known from early rabbinic texts, e.g., *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shim'on bar Yohai*,\(^{145}\) as well as the *heikhalot* literature,\(^{146}\) "great glory," *kavod gadol*. Scholem has shown on the basis of Greek (μεγάλη δόξα) and Aramaic (מעַלHoly Deity) parallels in apocalyptic and mystical sources, that the expression *kavod gadol* was used as a technical term to name the glory enthroned on the chariot.\(^{147}\) Scholem also suggested that the two terms, the "great dynamis" and the "great glory" seem to have been interchangeable even in the earlier esoteric terminology. It is evident that for Donnolo this is precisely the case, for the great power of God is treated hypostatically as His glory and, as will be seen below, as His wisdom. In this connection it is of interest to mention the following description of wisdom in the apocryphal *Wisdom of Solomon* which may have been known to Donnolo in the Greek translation of the Septuagint or the Latin of the Vulgate.\(^{148}\) The version of the Septuagint reads: 'Αμίλης χάρ ἐστι τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ δύναμεως καὶ ἀπόρροια τῆς τοῦ παντοκράτορος δόξης εἰλικρινής.'\(^{149}\) The Latin text is almost identical to the Greek with the exception that in the second clause the emendation is said to come forth from the "omnipotent deity" rather than the glory: *vapor est enim virtutis Dei et emanatio quaedam est claritatis omnipotentis Dei sincera*. Wisdom (σοφία) is thus depicted as an emanation (ἀπόρροια) from God in two ways (a third way is provided in the next verse, viz., as a ray of God's brightness): the breath that flows from the power of God (δύναμις, virtus) and a pure efflux from the all-powerful glory (δόξα) or deity. From the Greek text it is evident that the power and glory of God are identical, and wisdom is but a manifestation of that power. For Donnolo the power (koah) of God becomes an hypostasis which is identical with his glory (kavod) and wisdom (hokhmah). In marked contrast to the earlier sources, however, Donnolo maintains that the "great power" is not the aspect of divinity which is visible, but rather the form of God that is invisible.

Donnolo describes this "great power" in several other ways in his commentary, including, God's "wonderful power" (θεοῦ ἁγίας δύναμις),\(^{150}\) "His great and awesome light which cannot be comprehended and has no measure" (αὐτοῦ ἁγίας δύναμις ἀναφερομένης),\(^{151}\) the "great and powerful fire which is above the supernal heavens" (ταύτης ἁγίας δύναμις περιέλθος ἁγίας ἁγίας),\(^{152}\) the "splendor of the Holy One, blessed be He" (τοῦ ἁγίου καταφεύγοντος ἁγίας ἁγίας, ἡ θεότης ἀναφερόμενη),\(^{153}\) and the "instrument" (κύριον) utilized by God in the act of creation.\(^{154}\) It should be noted that the expression "great light," which occurs in Is 9:1, appears in *Sefer Josippon*, a work written in southern Italy in the tenth century. In that context the term is used to refer to the eschatological reward of the righteous in the paradisiacal state attained after the death of the body.\(^{155}\) This usage is attested to in earlier Jewish apocalyptic writings that may have directly influenced the author of *Sefer Josippon*.\(^ {156}\) Y. Baer observed that the term reflects
the “influence of the religious ideas that emerged from the school of R. Saadiah Gaon.” As evidence for this claim Baer cites a passage from a responsum of Saadiah to a certain heretic, apparently a Karaita, cited in Hebrew translation by Judah ben Barzillai in his commentary on Sefer Yesirah. In that context the “great light” is identified as “light of the glory” (אילת בר יכבוד) which is the created light (אור יום), the first of all things created and formed,” the “resplendent light” (אור בהדר), which is also identified as the “God of Israel” seen by Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the seventy elders (cf. Ex 24:10ff.) and as Akatriel who, according to a talmudic legend (cf. B. T. Berakhot 7a), was seen sitting on a throne in the Holy of Holies by R. Ishmael ben Elisha. A comparison of the usage of the term “great light” in the three different sources leads to the following conclusions: (1) the specific usage found in Sefer Josippon is not present in this Saadianic text; (2) Donnolo employs the term in a theosophic and not an eschatological way as is the case in Sefer Josippon; (3) Donnolo, in contrast to Saadiah, never explicitly, or implicitly for that matter, describes the “great light” as being created. Hence, we may conclude that the occurrence of the same expression in the different authors (even of the same time and the same geographical area as in the case of Donnolo and Sefer Josippon) does not necessarily mean that they are employing that given expression in the same way.

At this juncture I would like to turn briefly to Donnolo’s characterization of this “great light” as the instrument through which God creates the world. This association suggests that this upper form of God, the splendor and fire, is identical with the logos or Torah in its pristine sense which is, after all, the instrument of God’s creativity according to the standard rabbinic conception, reflected, for example, in the expression used in Genesis Rabbah 1.1: “The Torah declared, I was the artisan’s tool of the Holy One, blessed be He” (היהו אומד ארכר ויהי לי). Such an interpretation is supported by the fact that Donnolo mentions in this connection God’s wisdom as well as the image of beginning to create the world by means of His great power two thousand years before the world was actually created (רומ שיבא מתחל יאלופל עו מיתריה לברוח אולעמל בכליו). One will immediately recognize the rabbinic allusions in this context: in the first instant wisdom is interchangeable with Torah; therefore, if the koah ha-gadol is identical with wisdom (and this in fact is suggested by another comment to the effect that “God suspended the entire world by means of wisdom and His great power on emptiness”), it is more than plausible to suggest that it is also to be identified with Torah. Moreover, the expression “two thousand years before the creation of the world” brings to mind the description in midrashic literature (e.g., Genesis Rabbah 8.2) of the Torah preceding the creation of the world by two thousand years. Indeed, in a previous part of this section of Sefer Hakhmoni Donnolo makes the point rather explicitly, recasting the midrashic image in light of the doctrine of letter-combination expounded in Sefer Yesirah:

We have learnt that two thousand years before the creation of the world the Holy One, blessed be He, played around with the twenty-two letters of the
Donnolo’s metaphors, wisdom with whatever will The Torah, discursive human beings analysis, bodies of attributing and everything, strength sphere (Job 26:7)."169 It thus seems to me that in this passage Donnolo has informed us that in his mind the Torah, which is made up of the twenty-two letters,168 is identical with the word (dibbur or ma’amar) formed on the basis of those letters as well as with the epithet of the great name of God (kinnui shem ha-gadol). The specific connection with the logos is brought out in another passage as well which describes God as “containing and bearing everything, above and below, with His word and the power of His one strength (dibbur or ma’amar).... The Creator, blessed be He, contains and bears everything, and He is upon everything, in His word (dibbur), as it says, ‘He is the who stretched out the heaven over chaos, who suspended earth over emptiness’ (Job 26:7).”169 The linguistic process (seruf ha-‘otiyot ve-gilgal ha-dibburim) is thus the first act of creation, followed by God’s arranging in thought the celestial bodies (the dragon [ieli],170 stars, constellations, zodiac signs, spheres, etc.) that will ultimately control events in the terrestrial realm. The central position accorded to the celestial bodies in the divine plan of creation is reflected in Donnolo’s attributing to astrology the special distinction of being the science that provides the best intellectual means to gain knowledge of God’s greatness.171 Indeed, as has been pointed out by various scholars, for Donnolo astrology becomes the secret wisdom by means of which God created the universe and through which human beings gain knowledge of this process.172 While it is certainly the case that Donnolo thought of astrology as the highest science it is important to bear in mind that he does allow for a prior stage of divine creativity which we have identified as the linguistic process by means of which the word of God, or the Torah, is formed. The word of God generated on the basis of the twenty-two Hebrew letters is identical with God’s great power, also described in terms of various light metaphors, which comprises the ten ineffable sefirot. What is further implied in Donnolo’s presentation, though not stated explicitly, is that the sefirot constitute a sphere beyond the celestial realms, and therefore gnosis connected with them, whatever form it takes, must be higher or more sublime than astrology. In the final analysis, for Donnolo, there is no positive gnosis of the sefirot in the sense of discursive knowledge; on the contrary, he insists on a number of occasions that human beings cannot really know the sefirot in any comprehensive or exhaustive way.173 In my view the unknowability of the sefirot derives from the fact that they are identical with God’s “great power,” koah ha-gadol, which is virtually identical with the image of God, demut ha-‘Elohim, as may be gathered from the similar terms used by Donnolo to describe the two, especially the characterization of each as an immeasurable and unfathomable light.
Let us return to Donnolo’s interpretation of Sefer Yeširah 1.7, “Ten sefirot belimah, their measure is ten without end, their end is fixed in their beginning and their beginning in their end as a flame bound to the coal:” “Their beginning is God and their end is God, for He is the first and last. He fixed these ten ineffable sefirot in His great power as a flame bound to the coal.” It is instructive that for Donnolo the ten sefirot are said to be contained within the hypostatic glory called God’s great power. Whereas the original text of Sefer Yeširah speaks of the sefirot forming a closed circle such that the first is fixed in the last and the last in the first, Donnolo closes the circle with God, i.e., God is the beginning and end of the sefirot which are set within His great power. To be sure, this is based in part on the continuation of Sefer Yeširah, “Know, think, and conceive that the Lord is one and the Creator is one, and there is no second to Him.” That is, after the author of Sefer Yeširah describes the unity of the multiple sefirot in terms of the image of circularity, he must emphasize the oneness of God insofar as the plurality of the sefirot, which may be construed as divine entities or at least as having the status of such, might pose a challenge to the monotheistic idea of a singular God. Yet, what is lacking in Sefer Yeširah is the claim that the sefirot are indivisibly united or enclosed within God, an interpretation later linked by theosophic kabbalists to the image “as a flame bound to the coal.” It is precisely in this vein that Donnolo understands the passage: the sefirot are said to be fixed within God’s great power like a flame bound to the coal. It is of interest to compare Donnolo’s interpretation of this part of Sefer Yeširah with the above-mentioned passage from the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies XVII, “He [God] is the Beginning and the End. For in Him the six infinite [ones, i.e., the extensions] end, and from Him they take their extension towards the infinite.” Even if these extensions are to be viewed numerically, as Pines suggested, it is evident from at least this statement that the extensions constitute the pleroma or realm of fullness for they are said to originate in and project from the divine. A similar claim can be made with regard to Donnolo’s conception of sefirot which, as I have already noted, are never identified by him as numbers or mathematical units.

That Donnolo operated with a theosophic conception of sefirot is evident from other texts in his Sefer Hakhmoni as well. Thus, for example, in his first extended comment on the term sefirot in Sefer Yeširah he writes:

Ten ineffable sefirot, these are arranged in the image of the ten fingers on the hands and the ten toes on the feet, and the one God is set within the ten ineffable sefirot. Similarly, the covenant of unity [or covenant of the One, בורא בעומד אחד] is set within the ten fingers on the hands, which are five against five, in the tongue and mouth so that one may unify God (ל(hdrש). In the same way the covenant of unity is set within the ten toes of the feet, which are five against five, in the circumcision of the foreskin.

Just as the one God is represented by the two covenants set within the fingers and toes of the human body, so the one God is set within the ten powers that are called
in this book by the name sefirot. The point is repeated in another comment by Donnolo explaining the passage in Sefer Yeširah 1.5 (his reading is slightly different from the standard text, but I will cite it according to his reading): "Ten ineffable sefirot. Close your heart from meditating and your mouth from speaking. If your heart runs, return to God, for thus it says, 'the living creatures were running to and fro' [Ez 1:14]. Concerning this a covenant has been made." Donnolo comments: "[The covenant is made] by means of the tongue and mouth, i.e., the holy language [through which one proclaims] the unity of God, and through the covenant of the foreskin so that one will remember God who has given him the covenant, to strengthen his heart and to set in his mind that he cannot contemplate at all His divinity." It follows that comprehension of the sefirot would amount to knowledge of God, and it is precisely for such a reason that this knowledge is not attainable by human beings. This step is taken explicitly by Donnolo when he comments on the language of Sefer Yeširah, "Ten ineffable sefirot, their measure is ten without end." (midatan 'eser she-'ein lahem sof):

This is the import of what is written, "they have no end." This instructs us that there is no sage in the world who can know, comprehend, and penetrate the knowledge of God, לוחמי דרש ההוא, to discover the end and to reach the limit of these ten profound [impenetrable] sefirot. If a sage pursues them and seeks in his mind all the days of the world to comprehend them, it will not amount to anything. For a person cannot delve with his mind to pursue in order to know these ten things which are infinitely and endlessly deep.

From the above passage, then, it is clear that, for Donnolo, knowledge of God involves knowledge of the ten sefirot, but these are beyond the realm of human comprehension. Using his own language, to penetrate the knowledge of God, le-ha'amiq be-da'at ha-'el, would consist of discovering and reaching the limit of the impenetrable sefirot. The contrast between Donnolo and Saadia is brought out in clear terms when we compare their respective interpretations of the phrase midatan 'eser she-'ein lahem sof in Sefer Yeširah. According to Saadia, as I noted above, this characterization of the sefirot is meant to convey the notion that the ten primary numbers have no limit with respect to their combinations which human beings can produce, but they are limited in relation to God. Hence, the claim that the sefirot have no limit does not at all, for Saadia, imply that they are intrinsically related to God. For Donnolo this is precisely the force of the claim, viz., the sefirot are ten without end for they are indicative of, indeed identical with, God's "great power" which cannot be fathomed by finite human minds.

The essential unknowability of the sefirot is reiterated several times by Donnolo including his comment upon the language of Sefer Yeširah 1.8, "Ten ineffable sefirot, their vision is as swift as the flash of lightning," concerning which he says: "It is forbidden for a person to think about them even for a moment." In one place Donnolo remarks that with the permission of God, the "one who grants knowledge and understanding," he has set out to explain
something of the solutions to the riddles of Sefer Yeṣirah which the Holy One, blessed be He, transmitted to Abraham, our patriarch, in His love for him, to teach him and his descendants after him about His divinity, unity, greatness, and power, and His powerful works, as it says, “He revealed to His people His powerful works” (Ps 111:6). For if it were not so who would be permitted to consider and think in his heart in order to comprehend the simplest and smallest thing of all these matters?

From this it can again be concluded that in Donnolo’s mind Sefer Yeṣirah provides one with knowledge not only of the universe, referred to in the above citation as the force of God’s action, but also of the divine nature itself, i.e., God’s unity, greatness, and power. Still, this knowledge is very limited insofar as the finite human mind cannot grasp the ten powers, the sefirot, which ultimately comprise this unity, greatness, or power.

VII. Conclusion

It is evident from the above analysis that the term sefirot in Sefer Ḥakhmoni, unlike the other tenth-century commentaries, does not simply denote numbers that are extrinsic to God. On the contrary, the sefirot are the incomprehensible entities which constitute the luminous, immeasurable and unfathomable power, the invisible image of God. What is visible within the parameters of human experience is the anthropomorphic form that this demut assumes in the moment of prophetic disclosure. The notion of placing the sefirot within God’s “great power,” which is the glory or the twenty-two letters of Torah whence emerges the name of God, brings Donnolo’s conception of sefirot remarkably close to the theosophic notion proffered by the Provençal and Spanish kabbalists in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. While the complicated mythology of the divine world as developed by the later kabbalists is not present in this tenth-century text, it is significant that a theosophic understanding of the sefirot is developed at such a relatively early stage on the soil of southern Italy.

The fact that in southern Italy a theosophic interpretation emerges at roughly the same time that in the Muslim East the scientific or rational explanation is prevalent is a significant fact that should be weighed carefully when one sets out to chart the history of Jewish esotericism. This point has been virtually ignored in the scholarly literature. One major exception is David Neumark who noted that the commentaries on Sefer Yeṣirah composed in the tenth century reflected a struggle between those oriented towards philosophy, among whom he counts Saadiah and Dunash ibn Tamim, and those oriented towards kabbalah, e.g., Shabbetai Donnolo. Neumark elsewhere speaks of the relation of Donnolo to kabbalah in terms of the influence of Sefer Ḥakhmoni on later kabbalists, including the author/editor of Sefer ha-Bahir,
specifically with respect to the macrocosm-microcosm motif as well as the doctrine concerning the permutation of the Hebrew letters and names of God. Neumark's view on this matter is well summarized in the following passage: "Shabbetai Donnolo expresses ideas which are not yet the distinctive teachings of the Kabbalah, but which helped in the development of the latter. Yet at times he expresses ideas in a way that is very close to the formulation of the later Kabbalah." One may question Neumark's peculiar understanding of the evolution of philosophical and kabbalistic thought in medieval Judaism, but with respect to this issue he displayed a remarkable sensitivity to the text of Donnolo, although he did not fully articulate the implications of his own thinking. The importance of Donnolo's Hakhmoni for the development of "western Kabbalah" has also been noted by Sharf, though his comments are in fact limited to the German Pietists, an influence which has been noted by other scholars including Epstein, Scholem and Dan. Indeed, what I am suggesting goes substantially further than the more limited claims of previous scholars, viz., that already operative in Donnolo is a theosophic notion of the sefirot which is the cornerstone for later kabbalistic thought. The appearance of a theosophic reading of Sefer Yeşirah in Byzantine southern Italy should be considered in light of the fact that in that environment older Jewish magico-mystical texts were preserved and studied without the characteristic rationalistic interpretation that one finds in the contemporary Babylonian Geonic material. This is especially evident, as was discussed above, in terms of the profound impact that merkavah mysticism had on Hebrew liturgical poetry composed at that time and in this region. Whatever the explanation offered to account for the presence of the theosophic orientation in Donnolo, it may be concluded that the mathematical approach of Saadia represents a general tendency in his own commentary on Sefer Yeşirah (not to mention any of his other works) to reinterpret earlier mystical ideas in a philosophical or scientific vein. Donnolo too is scientifically sophisticated, especially in the areas of medicine and astrology, but he does not employ the scientific mold to recast the Jewish mystical doctrine. The contrast between Saadia's conception of the sefirot and that of Donnolo highlights the different orientations of these authors with respect to Jewish esotericism.

In sum, the reading of Donnolo that I have suggested pushes back a theosophic interpretation of Sefer Yeşirah, and especially the key term sefirot, to a date much earlier than is usually conceded in scholarly circles. This possibility must be taken into account by the intellectual historian who seeks to uncover the "origins" of kabbalistic speculation in medieval Europe.
NOTES

An earlier and highly condensed version of this paper was read at the Twenty-Second Annual Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies, Boston, December 1990. The comments of those in attendance at that session, and particularly those of Steven Bowman, have been helpful in the formulation of the final draft of this paper. I would also like to acknowledge the useful comments and criticisms which I received from my colleagues, Moshe Idel and Ronald Kiener, who read an earlier draft of the paper. Finally, a debt of gratitude is owed Barry Walfish who made a number of important suggestions for stylistic changes.

3. The title is obviously derived from the word ḥokhmah, or wisdom. Cf. David Castelli, Il Commento di Sábadota Donnolo sul Libro della creazione (Firenze, 1880), 7-8; Andrew Sharf, The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo (New York, 1976), 5. Both words, Ḥakhamonî (cf. 2 Sm 23:8) and Ḥakhmonî (cf. 1 Chr 11:11) appear in Scripture as proper names.
4. For the first date given as 4706 (i.e., 946), cf. Sefer Ḥakhamonî, ed. Castelli, 6; and for the second date, 4742 (i.e., 982), cf. Adolf Neubauer, “Un Chapitre inédit de Sábadota Donnolo,” Revue des études juives 22(1891): 214-215. Cf. Sharf, The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo, 11, who concludes that Donnolo wrote his commentary sometime between these two dates. See, however, idem, Byzantine Jewry from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade (London, 1971), 169, where Sharf gives the date of composition as 982. For the alternative view of 946, cf. David Flusser, ed., The Jostipon (Hebrew), 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1980), 2:82.
6. Cf. Georges Vajda, “Le commentaire de Saadia sur le Sefer Yeẓira,” Revue des études juives 106 (1941): 64-86. See also other references given below at n. 190.
9. I place Dunash ibn Tamim in the same circle as Saadia despite the fact that in the preface to his own commentary Dunash notes that he has examined the commentary of Saadia and found various mistakes or misreadings that need to be corrected. Cf. Sefer Yeẓirah with commentary by Dunash ben Tamim (Hebrew), ed. Menasseh Grossberg (London, 1902), 17; Georges Vajda, “Le commentaire kairouanais,” 113-114. For the most recent analysis of Dunash ibn Tamim’s commentary on Sefer Yeẓirah and its relationship to that of Saadia, cf. Raphael Jospe, “Early Philosophical Commentaries on the Sefer Yeẓirah: Some Comments,” Revue des études juives 149 (1990): 381-388.
The Robert Contribution
medicinischen
Ben-Sasson, Constantine
text written
Arabic-Hebrew
Fragmente
Roman
99-136,
Literary
studies
was developed
by his son, Hananel (d. 1055/56). Cf. Samuel Poznanski, “Anshe Qairwan,” in
Festschrift zu Ehren des Dr. A. Harkavy, ed. David Ginzburg and Isaac Markon, vol. 1 (St.

11. Cf. Sefer Hakhamoni, ed. Castelli, 4. On the possible stylistic influence of an Arabic form
writing on Donnolo’s introduction to Hakhamoni, cf. Marcus Salzman, The Chronicle of Ahimaaz
(New York, 1924), 4-5. On another possible use of Arabic philology in the work of Donnolo, cf.
Andrew Sharf, “Shabbetai Donnolo’s Idea of the Microcosm,” in Studi sull’ebraismo italiano: in
memoria di Cecil Roth, ed. Elio Toaff (Rome, 1974), 218, n. 58. See also Joshua Starr, The Jews
his comments on the works of Moritz Steinschneider, Donnolo, Fragment des ältesten
medizinischen Werkes in hebräischer Sprache (Berlin, 1867); Donnolo, Pharmakologische
Fragmente aus dem zehnten Jahrhundert, nebst Beiträgen zur Literatur der Salernitaner,
hauptsächlich nach handschriftlichen hebräischen Quellen (Berlin, 1868). See also Süssmann
Munther, R. Shabbetai Donnolo (913-985), First Section: Medical Works (Hebrew) (Jerusalem,
1949), esp. 45-108, 145-151. On Donnolo’s presumed knowledge of Arabic, see also Cecil Roth,
The History of the Jews of Italy (Philadelphia, 1946), 62. For those who question Donnolo’s
(Israel, 1961), 298-299; Encyclopaedia Judaica, s.v., Donnolo, Shabbetai; Colette Sirat, Jewish
Philosophical Thought in the Middle Ages (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1975), 378. On the issue of
Arabic-Hebrew contact in the tenth century, see Rina Drory, The Emergence of Jewish-Arabic
Literary Contacts at the Beginning of the Tenth Century (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv, 1988). (Reference
supplied by Ronald Kiener.) Knowledge of Arabic was far more central in the case of the medical
school at Salerno where relevant material was translated into Latin by the Muslim convert,
Constantine the African (d. 1085), at the monastery of Monte Cassino. Cf. Charles H. Talbot,
“Medicine,” in Science in the Middle Ages, ed. David C. Lindberg (Chicago, 1978), 396, and
references to other scholarly literature given on 424, n. 15. For discussion of the Salerno school,
cf. the magisterial study of Paul O. Kristeller, “The School of Salerno: Its Development and Its
Robert Browning, “Greek Influence on the Salerno School of Medicine,” in Byzantium and
legendary relation of Donnolo to this school, cf. Süssmann Munther, “Donnolo et la contribution
des Juifs aux premières œuvres de la médecine salernitaine,” Revue d’histoire de la médecine
hébraïque 9(1956): 144-161.

12. The transmission of Palestinian forms of cultural and religious expression to Italy and from Italy to
centers in northern Europe, especially France and Germany, is to be explained at least in part by
the economic trade-routes of the medieval world. Cf. Cecil Roth, “Economic Life and Population
Movements,” in The Dark Ages, 43-44.

10-12, 19; idem, “Myth, Rhetoric, History? A Study in the Chronicle of Ahima’az,” (Hebrew) in
Culture and Society in Medieval Jewry: Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Haim Hillel
Ben-Sasson, ed. Menahem Ben-Sasson, Robert Bonfil, and Joseph R. Hacker (Jerusalem, 1989),
99-136, esp. 103-107. See also Adolf Neubauer, “The Early Settlement of Jews in Southern
Italy,” Jewish Quarterly Review, o.s., 4(1892): 606-625, esp. 611ff. This account has been
discussed by a variety of scholars. Cf. Adolf Neubauer, “Abou Ahron, le Babyloniens,” Revue des
études juives 23(1891): 230-237; Roth, The History of the Jews of Italy, 63-64; Starr, The Jews in
14. Cf. Klar, Megillat 'Ahima'as, 118. This resonates with the view of Scholem that Palestine was “the cradle of the movement” of merkavah mysticism even though later traditions report the transmission of this lore from Mesopotamia to Italy and then to other parts of Europe. See, in general terms, Gershom Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, 3d ed. (New York, 1954), 41, 47; idem, Kabbalah (Jerusalem, 1974), 14-15, 20; and the detailed studies in his Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition (New York, 1960). See also the article of Bonfil referred to below at n. 20. On the Romanite mystic tradition in the case of the Byzantine poets, Benjamin ben Samuel, Isaac ben Judah, and Tobia ben Eliezer, presumably deriving from Palestinian antecedents, cf. Leon J. Weinberger, Anthology of Hebrew Poetry in Greece, Anatolia and the Balkans (University, Alabama, 1975), 8-11 (Hebrew section), 2, 3, 9 (English section). See also idem, “A Note on Jewish Scholars and Scholarship in Byzantium,” Journal of the American Oriental Society 91(1971): 143-144. For the influence of heikhalot literature on the twelfth-century Balkan poet, Moses ben Hiyya, cf. idem, Early Synagogue Poets in the Balkans (University, Alabama, 1988), 3-4.


22. MS. Bibliothèque Nationale [henceforth BN] (Paris) hêb. 772, fol. 60a. This text has been discussed by a number of scholars. Cf. Dan, The Esoteric Theology, 14-19, and the extensive bibliographical references given there, 14-15, n. 1. To those may be added the following studies: Avraham Grossman, “The Migration of the Kalonymos Family from Italy to Germany,” (Hebrew) Zion 40(1975): 154-185; idem, The Early Sages of Ashkenaz (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1981), 29-44; Robert Chazan, European Jewry and the First Crusade (Berkeley, 1987), 206-207; and, most recently, Ivan G. Marcus, “History, Story and Collective Memory: Narrativity in Early Ashkenazic Culture,” Prooftexts 10(1990): 365-388, esp. 372-375. Cf. MS. Jewish Theological Seminary of America [henceforth JTSA] Mic. 8122, fol. 88b, where it is reported that Moses b. Kalonymos was the disciple of Abu Aaron b. Samuel, the “father of all secrets,” אל שם רפרסית.

23. As noted by Bonfil, “Between Eretz Israel and Babylonia,” 22. Regarding the channel of transmission from Italy to Germany, see the suggestive remarks of Ronald Kiener, “The Hebrew Paraphrase of Saadiah Gaon’s Kitāb al-Amānū wa-l-‘Iṣqāq,” AJS Review 11 (1986): 24-25, concerning the possible Byzantine/Italian milieu for the composition of the anonymous paraphrase of Saadiah’s philosophical text.


25. A strong case for such a possibility was made by Israel Weinstock, “Discovered Legacy of Mystic Writings Left by Abu Aaron of Baghdad,” (Hebrew) Tarbiz 32(1963): 153-159, and his response to Scholem’s critique (see n. 18), “Osoh ha-sodot shel ’Abu ’Aharon — dimyon ’o mes’ ut,” Sinai 54(1964): 226-259. See also idem, Be-ma’agelei ha-nigleh ve-ha-nisfar (Studies in Jewish Philosophy and Mysticism) (Jerusalem, 1969), 81-83.

26. See, however, Dan, The Esoteric Theology, 19.

27. Thus, for example, in his writings, Eleazar of Worms often cites and comments upon poems of Eleazar Kallir which deal with matters pertaining to merkavah speculation. Here I provide only a few examples of the many that could have been mentioned: cf. Sodei raza, ed. Israel Kamelhar (Bilgoraj, 1936), 14; Sodei raza, ed. Shalom Weiss (Jerusalem, 1988), 143, 147; MS. BN (Paris) hêb. 772, fol 123a. See also Eleazar’s own commentary on the piyut, יְבִי תַּפָּן, attributed to Yannai (cf. Ernst Daniel Goldschmidt, Mahazor la-Yamim ha-nora’im, vol. 1: Rosh ha-Shanah (Jerusalem, 1970), 225), MS. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, hebr. 92, discussed by Scholem, Origins of the Kabbalah, ed. R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, trans. Alan Arkush (Philadelphia, 1987), 125, n. 129. In my study, “The Image of Jacob Engraved on the Throne of Glory: Further Speculation on the Esoteric Teaching of the German Pietists,” (Hebrew) Efrevam Gottlieb Memorial Volume (Tel-Aviv, forthcoming), I have shown that in some critical passages Eleazar is dependent on earlier paseyutim such as Kallir even if he does not mention them by name. The interpretation of liturgical poems of Palestinian as well as Italian, Northern French, and German provenance which have to do with matters pertaining to merkavah mysticism is, of course, one of the the key features of the voluminous commentary on piyutim by one of Eleazar’s students, Abraham ben Azriel, Sefer ‘Arugat ha-bosem, ed. Ephraim E. Urbach, 4 vols. (Jerusalem, 1939-1963). On


Cf. Ex 30:23.


This point was recognized by Scholem; see references above, n. 14.


The point I am making was already noted in some detail by Klar, Megillat ‘Ahima’as, 118-119.


Ibid., 20.


For discussion of this text and its possible relations to Sefer ha-Bahir, cf. Scholem, Origins, 106-123.

Lewin, ‘Ozar ha-Ge’onim, 4:2:20-21. In another responsum (cf. ibid., 10-12) issued by Hai Gaon and his father, Sherira Gaon (906-1006), it is evident that they had knowledge of Shi‘ur qomah.
They mention as well the book on physiognomy and chiromancy called Toledot 'Adam which is cited by various medieval authors.

44. Thus we find in later literature as well that specific texts are designated as sod ha-merkavah. See, for example, Eleazar of Worms’ commentary on the prayers, MS. BN (Paris) heb. 772, fol. 38b, where a passage from Shī'ur qomah is introduced in this way (the manuscript actually reads ברכות סוד המרכבה, but it is evident that this is a scribal error and should be corrected to ברכות. (The reading in MS. Bodleian Library [henceforth BL] (Oxford) Opp. 160 (ol. 1010) (Neubauer 1204), fol. 29d is ברכות סוד המרכבה). It should be noted as well that the second part of Eleazar’s large compendium of esoteric teachings, Sodei raṣaya, is called Sod ha-merkavah which corresponds more or less to the text published by Kamelhar (see n. 27). Eleazar also uses the term sod ha-merkavah in a doctrinal and non-textual way; see source cited by Dan, The Esoteric Theology, 83.

45. Cf. Starr, The Jews in the Byzantine Empire, 69-72, who adduces various examples of magical and mystical traditions connected with Byzantine Jewry, especially in southern Italy.

46. It is unclear to what this title refers. From the writing of another Karaite author, living in Jerusalem in the tenth century, it appears that this term refers to two separate works. Cf. Jacob Mann, Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1935), 2:82, and nn. 66-67. See also Scholem’s tentative suggestion in Origins, 106.

47. The text reads פָּרָשַׁת הָרִיאֵי but I have corrected it to פָּרָשַׁת היום, following Mann’s suggestion, Texts and Studies, 2:76, n. 15.

48. Mann, Texts and Studies, 2:75-76.

49. Ibid., 2:82-83.


52. Cf. Starr, The Jews in the Byzantine Empire, 72, 237, n. 185; Weinberger, “A Note on Jewish Scholars and Scholarship in Byzantium,” 144. Apparently, the Shī’ur qomah and Sefer Yesirah were known in ninth-century France as may be gathered from the polemical comments of Agobard, the archbishop of Lyons (779-840), in his De Judaeus superstitionibus X. in Migne PL 104:86. Cf. Graetz, “Die mystische Literatur,” 110-111; Dan, “The Beginnings of Jewish Mysticism in Europe,” 289; Sharf, The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo, 80.

53. Baron, History, 288, n. 34.

54. Cf. Major Trends, 47. Such an understanding of the transmission of esoteric doctrine from Babylonia to Italy to Germany and Provence underlies Scholem’s reconstruction of the origins and literary redaction of Sefer ha-Bahir. See Origins, 97-123. Cf. David Biale, Gershon Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), 133-134. Biale (134) points out that Scholem’s theory is very close to Nachman Krochmal’s description of the evolution of kabbalistic theosophy. For a Mesopotamian milieu for the Bahir, see also O. H. Lehmann, “The Theology of the Mystical Book Bahir and Its Sources,” Studia Patristica 1 (1957): 477-483, esp. 482.

55. Cf. the references to David Neumark given below at nn. 185-187. See also Sharf, The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo, 80, 125; Bowman, The Jews of Byzantium, 161. With respect to the influence of Donnolo on the German Pietists, particularly Eleazar of Worms, cf. Abraham Epstein, Mi-qadmoniyot ha-Yehudim, ed. A. M. Habermann (Jerusalem, 1957), 206-210, 211, 214-216; Scholem, Major Trends, 113, 376, n. 115 (to the sources cited by Scholem one might add the following passages which utilize Donnolo’s notion of the great fire in an innovative way: Eleazar of Worms, Sodei raṣaya, ed. Kamelhar, 32; idem, MS. BN (Paris) heb. 772, fol. 30a); Dan, The Esoteric Theology, 18, 23, 39, 48, 63, 85, 129, 214. For Donnolo’s influence on subsequent Jewish mysticism, see also Georges Vajda, “Quelques traces de Sabbatai Donnolo dans les commentaires medievaux du Sefer Yeẓira,” Revue des études juives 108(1948): 92-94. On Donnolo as an important link in the chain of transmission of ancient mystical traditions, see also

56. See references given above, n. 11.


63. Ibid., 27.

64. Ibid., 27.


67. *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan*, version A, ch. 37, ed. Solomon Schechter (Vienna, 1887), 110. In this connection it is of interest to note the following language employed in a poem attributed to Kallir: יא יא נא בגדתינו, which should be rendered, “one cannot comprehend the enumeration of [God’s] attributes.” Cf. *Collection of Piyyute Sephard* (Poems from the Golden Age of Spain), Based on a Manuscript 197, in the David Guenzburg Collection in the Lenin Public Library in Moscow, ed. by David Samuel Loewinger (Jerusalem, 1977), 110. Is it possible that the association of the words middah and sefirot in Sefer Yeziarah has a similar connotation as the expression sefer midot ekha? Here it may be worthwhile to recall the expression used by Kallir in his siliq for parashat Shegalìm, in S.I. Baer, ed., *Seder ‘Avodat Yisra‘el* (Berlin, 1868), 656.


72. See, e.g., P.T. Pesahim 8:1; Sifra, ‘Emor, 12:3; B.T. Menabot 65b; Niddah 73a. This point was made by David Castelli (cf. *Il Commento di Sabbatai Donnolo*, 22), but largely overlooked in more recent scholarship.


74. Ibid., 54; cf. 90, 105.
76. Cf. Shem Tov ibn Falaquera, ed. Liqqütim mi-Sefer Meqqor ha-yyvim 2.27, in Salomon Munk, Mélanges de philosophie juive et arabe (Paris, 1859), 9 (Hebrew text) = Abraham Zifroni, ed., Meqqor ha-yyvim, trans. Jacob Bluwstein, (Jerusalem, 1926), 2:21, 46. For a discussion of this passage, cf. Yehuda Liebes, "Rabbi Solomon Ibn Gabirol's Use of the Sefer Yeẓirah and a Commentary on the Poem 'I Love Thee.'" (Hebrew) Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought 6(1987): 78-79. See, however, Moshe Idel, "The Sefirot Above the Sefirot," (Hebrew) Tarbiz 51(1982): 278, who notes that the term sefirot in the poem, Shokhen 'ad me-ẓaz, of Solomon ibn Gabirol functions in a specifically theological sense and does not connote mere numbers: by means of contemplating the ten sefirot one attains knowledge of the unity of God. As Idel also notes this interpretation bears a strong similarity to the view of Eleazar of Worms who, in turn, was undoubtedly influenced by Ibn Dunash. For further discussion of these passages in ibn Gabirol, see Pines, "Points of Similarity," 122-126; and Jospe, "Philosophical Commentaries," 390-392. Finally, in this connection mention should be made of the use of the term sefirot in a piyyut on the Ten Commandments for Shavu'ot (falsely attributed to Saadia Gaon; cf. Israel Davidson, Thesaurus of Mediaeval Hebrew Poetry, 4 vols. [New York, 1924-1938], 1:277, no. 6071); cf. Maẓẓor Romania (Constantinople, 1574), 129b. In this poem the Ten Commandments, referred to as the ma'amorot, i.e., sayings of God, are said to parallel the ten sefirot which are the principles of everything created: alle ma'amarot, according to almighty God. For a wide-ranging discussion of the correlation between the ten ma'amorot, the ten dibberot, and the ten sefirot, cf. Idel, "The Sefirot Above the Sefirot," 268-277.
77. See, e.g., Abraham ibn Ezra’s commentary to Ex 3:15.
81. On the division of sciences see Grossberg, 36, 71; Vajda, "Le commentaire kairouanais," 113.
82. Grossberg, 34. For an entirely different reading of this passage, see text established by Vajda, "Le commentaire kairouanais," 148: המדה של שבתא אומרים הם של שבעה דורים ביהו vídeos, and translation on 147: "Ce chapitre...montre la sagesse de son auteur, car c'est une représentation encore plus belle des dix sefirot.
83. Grossberg, 46; cf. the reading in Vajda, "Le commentaire kairouanais," 78.
84. See above, n. 8.

89. Cf. Castelli, Il Commento di Sabbatai Donnolo, 21-27, esp. 24, who concludes that according to Donnolo (and Eleazar of Worms) the sefirot are the “primary elements of the universe” which form an absolute unity. Cf. Starr, The Jews in the Byzantine Empire, 55, who translates the word sefirot as used by Donnolo as “spheres,” without however elaborating in any detail.


91. Sefer Hakhamoni, ed. Castelli, 15. The microcosmic-macrocosmic motif is not entirely lacking in the thought of Saadiah. See, e.g., his Perush Sefer Yesirah, ed. Kafiḥ, 102-103.

92. Sefer Hakhamoni, ed. Castelli, 16.


96. Sefer Hakhamoni, ed. Castelli, 14-15.


101. Cf. Exodus Rabbah 23.15, 41.3.

102. Cf. Exodus Rabbah 29.3; Song of Songs Rabbah 1.2.3.


104. This is the reading of the printed text (see following note for reference) as well as most of the manuscript versions which I consulted. One exception (not noted by Castelli in his edition even though he used this manuscript; see Il Commento di Sabbatai Donnolo, 11-12) is MS. Biblioteca Palatina [henceforth BP] (Parma) 2425 (De Rossi 417), fol. 95b which reads וו in place of וו.
105. Sefer Ḥakhmoni, ed. Castelli, 9.

106. See, e.g., the interpretations of Ex 33:20 attributed to R. Aqiva and R. Shimon ben Azzai in Sifra on Lv 1:12, to the effect that neither the celestial beings who bear the throne nor any of the angels can behold the divine glory. Cf. Sifre 'at Be-midbar, ed. H. S. Horovitz (Jerusalem, 1966), 103. 101.


111. Cf. Scholem, Major Trends, 84; Sharf, The Universe of Shabbetai Tzvon, 80.


114. Cf. Habermann, A History of Hebrew Liturgical and Secular Poetry, 1:71; Fleischer, Hebrew Liturgical Poetry in the Middle Ages, 118. See, however, Mirsky, Ha’Piyut, 168, who considers Yoḥanan ben Yehoshua ha-Kohen to be Italian.


116. Castelli’s reading here: יד פה ויהי. The text is based on MSS. BP (Parma) 2123 (De Rossi 399) and 2425 (De Rossi 417). See, however, MS. Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana [henceforth BML] (Florence) Plut. 44. 16, fol. 91a: HOLD, פה ויהי. And similarly in MS. BN (Paris) hēb. 770, fol. 47b and MS. JTSA Mic. 2141, fol. 1b:を持つを行く. But see MS. BN (Paris) hēb. 767, fol. 1a: מחזיק לא תבוננה. The words in brackets, which are lacking in Castelli’s text, have been added according to the following MSS: BML (Florence) Plut. 44.16, fol. 91a; BN (Paris) hēb. 767, fol. 1a; BN (Paris) hēb. 770, fol. 47b; BP (Parma) 2425 (De Rossi 417), fol. 95b; and JTSA Mic. 2141, fol. 2a.
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118. Cf. MSS (Florence) Plut. 44. 16, fol. 91a: 
BN (Paris) heb. 767, fol. 1a: and BN (Paris) heb. 770, fol. 47b and JTSA Mic. 2141, fol. 2a (which from Castelli’s transcription, 8, n. 3, appears to be the same as MS. Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria (Turino) 88 [cat. Pasini] or 159 [cat. Peyron]: 

119. Sefer Hakhamoni, ed. Castelli, 6-8.

120. Ibid., 10.

121. Ibid., 8. Moshe Idel called my attention to the fact that the views of Donnolo as I have outlined them share several interesting features with ideas expressed by some of the Byzantine monks, especially St. Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022) and St. Gregory Palamas (1296-1359). On the centrality of the metaphor of light to describe the uncreated glory of God in the case of the former, see, e.g., Symeon the New Theologian, The Discourses, trans. by C. I. DeCatanzaro and intro. by George Maloney, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York, 1980), 193-197, 295-307. Gregory similarly maintained that the transcendent and incomprehensible God manifests Himself in an “hypostatic” light (φως ευφωτισμοντος) which is further described as “an illumination immaterial and divine, a grace invisibly seen and ignorantly known.” Cf. Gregory Palamas, Défense des saints hésychastes, ed. John Meyendorff (Louvain, 1959), 403; English trans. by Nicholas Gendle in Gregory Palamas, The Triads, ed. John Meyendorff, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York, 1983), 57. The “uncreated light” (ακοπόστιστος φωτός) is identified as “the glory of God” which is characterized further as Christ the Lord (Ω Θεός ἐστιν δήμα καὶ Χριστὸς Θεός). Cf. Gregory Palamas, Défense des saints hésychastes, 525; idem, The Triads, 67. Although Gregory insists time and again that this light is not identical with the essence of God, he emphasizes that it is the “uncreated” glory which “cannot be classified amongst the things subject to time...because it belongs to the divine nature in an ineffable manner.” Cf. Gregory Palamas, Défense des saints hésychastes, 405, 419; idem, The Triads, 57, 60. Employing the language of Pseudo-Dionysius, the Areopagite (Mystical Theology, V), Gregory in one context describes this hypostatic light as the “not-being by transcendence” (καθα υπερχειν μη ὄν) “which is definitely not the divine essence, but a glory and radiance inseparable from His nature” (Gregory Palamas, Défense des saints hésychastes, 461; idem, The Triads, 66). On the identification of the divine as light, see also Gregory Palamas, “Argumenta Ex Codicibus Coislinianis,” in Migne PG 150:818; idem, “Theophanies,” ibid., 150:919.

122. Sefer Hakhamoni, ed. Castelli, 40.


124. Let me note that the association of the lower glory and the feet, based on Ex 24:10, is further developed in the esoteric theosophy of the German Pietists, especially in the writings of Eleazar of Worms, whose knowledge of Donnolo has been well noted in the scholarly literature. See above, n. 55. For a discussion of this aspect of Eleazar’s theosophy, see my study referred to above, n. 27. To the sources discussed there one could add the treatise on prophecy, perhaps written by Eleazar of Worms, extant in MSS. BP (Parma) 2784 (De Rossi 1390), fol. 77a and JTSA Mic. 2411, fol. 10b. The second part of this text, or perhaps an independent source attached to the former, which consists of citations from Saadia and Hananel ben Hushiel on the nature of the glory and prophetic experience, is printed in ’Arugat ha-bosem, 1:199-200.


126. Sefer Ha-Nivhar be-'emunot u-ve-de'ot, ed. Y. Kafi (Jerusalem, 1970), 2.10, 103-104. Dunash ibn Tamim likewise speaks of the light of the Creator (אלהים וביש המשוא) which is distinct from God, though it is not clear if it is a created or emanated light. Cf. Perush Sefer Yeisrah, ed. Grossberg, 31; Vajda, “Le commentaire kairouananis,” 145.
127. See the description of the kavod in Donnolo’s thought as an “emanation from divinity” (una emanazione della divinità) in Castelli, Il Commento di Sabbatai Donnolo, 40. Cf. Dan, The Esoteric Theology, 112-113, who similarly suggests that the kavod in Donnolo “alludes to the actual divine glory which is not created but is closer to the nature of the divine power that emanates through the concatenation of lights in a Neoplatonic way.” Dan relies on an interpretation of Donnolo which he heard orally from his teacher, Isaiah Tishby (see 113, n. 29; cf. 175, n. 9), but does not mention Castelli’s earlier observation. On the philosophic influences on Donnolo, see Giuseppe Sermoneta, “Il Neo-platonismo nel pensiero dei nuclei ebraici stanziai nell’occidente latino (Riflessioni sul ‘Commento al Libro della Creazione’ di Rabbi Sabbatai Donnolo),” in Gli Ebrei nell’alto medioevo, 2 vols., Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull’alto medioevo, 26 (Spoleto, 1980), 2:867-925.

128. In this regard, then, Donnolo’s view is to be contrasted sharply with that of Judah ben Barzillai; cf. the latter’s Perush Sefer Yesirah, ed. Halberstam, 12-14, passim.


132. It is of interest to note that the German Pietists already blurred the distinction between Donnolo and the Geonic view expressed by Saadiah, Nissim ben Jacob (ca. 960-1062), and Hananel ben Hushiel. Thus see the statement in MSS. BP (Parma) 2784 (De Rossi 1390), fol. 78b, and JTSA Mic. 2411, fol. 12b (cf. Arugot ha-bosem, 1:200), after the citations from Saadiah’s Emunot ve-de’ot on the nature of the created glory and Hananel’s commentary on Berakhot denying that God has an image, the author (presumably Eleazar of Worms) writes: “And so R. Nissim Gaon explained [the matter], as well as Shabbetai the doctor and sage, and I received it from my teacher, R. Judah [the Pious], who received it from our teacher, R. Samuel the Pious, his father.”

133. Here Donnolo adds the words, דלת א工作报告 לי (cf. Sefer Hakhmoni, ed. Castelli, 37), which do not reflect a variant reading of the text of Sefer Yesirah, but rather the commentator’s exegetical gloss. Cf. Epstein, Mi-qadmoniyot ha-Yehudim, 204-205, and examples adduced in n. 3. See also Nicolas Séd, La Mystique cosmologique juive (Paris, 1981), 244-246.

134. Cf. the reading in MSS. Cambridge University Library, Add. 651, fol. 246b, and JTSA Mic. 1903, fol. 2b-3a: היחסינע את הבדא היספ את הבדא שד....


137. Sefer Hakhmoni, ed. Castelli, 38.


139. Cf. Ex 32:11; Dt 4:37, 9:29; 2 Kgs 17:36; Jer 27:5; 32:17; Neh 1:10. It is evident from these occurrences that the expression בּוֹרֵא דִּבְרֵי בְּכָּז when applied to God in Scripture is used to refer exclusively to the manifestation of the divine creative (Jer 27:5; 32:17) or redemptive (Ex 32:11; Dt 4:37, 9:29; 2 Kgs 17:36; Neh 1:10) power. Moreover, the term is paired frequently with other technical expressions for God’s power, such as מָצָא כְּתוֹנֶה (Ex 32:11, Neh 1:10) or מָצָא מִסְחִית (Dt 9:29; 2 Kgs 17:36; Jer 27:5, 32:17).

140. In New Testament passages as well the power (δύναμις) is equated with the glory (δόξα). For references, see Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, s.v., δύναμα,δύναμις (2:305, n. 76).

142. Cf. the usage ידיעת עולם רבי to refer to the manifestation of God in *Tibat Marqe: A collection of Samaritan Midrashim*, ed. Zeev Ben Hayyim (Jerusalem, 1988), 127. Cf. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 133. It is of interest to note that in the Samaritan amulet published by Gaster, *Studies and Texts*, 3:109-130, God is frequently addressed as ידיעת עולם רבי. Cf. Hegesippus’s account of James the Just’s description of Jesus recorded in Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.23.13: “He is sitting in heaven on the right hand of the great power (μεγαλός θεός), and he will come on the clouds of heaven.” Cf. Mk 14:62 where a similar description is placed in the mouth of Jesus himself, but in that case mention is made of the power (δυναμεως), without the adjective “great.” Cf. *Ascension of Isaiah* 11:32 where the visionary is said to have seen Christ seated at the right hand of the great glory. All of these traditions are exegetically linked to Ps 110:1; cf. David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Nashville, 1973).


144. See, e.g., Synopse, §§ 557, 588, 590.


146. *Synopse*, §§ 9, 22, 858 (3 Enoch); 568 (*Ma’aseh merkavah*). See also *Massekhet Heikhalot*, MS. BP (Parma) 3531, fol. 2a. The expression “the great glory,” נבון הסדר של מלכותו הרוחני והח withRouter ה”splendor,” and the “glory of the Presence,” נבון ה”splendor” occurs frequently in the writings of the German Pietists from the circle of Judah the Pious. See, e.g., Joseph Dan, “Sefer Sha’arei ha-sod ha-yihud ve-ha’emunah le-R. El’azar mi-Vorms,” in *Temirin*, ed. Israel Weinstock, vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1972), 149; Eleazar of Worms, “Perush ha-tefillot,” MS. BN (Paris) héb. 772, fol. 97b, 102b, 140a; idem, *Sodei razaqya*, ed. Kamelhar, 32; commentary on the *merkavah* hymn, *Ha-Adderet ve-ha’emunah*, MS. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. ebr. 228, fol. 105b (for a slightly different version, see *Siddur Mal’ah ha’are’es de’ah* [Tieneng, 1560], Yom Kippur, 10a-13a [pagination supplied by author]). Concerning this text, and particularly its relationship to Eleazar of Worms, see Joseph Dan, “Ashkenazi Hasidic Commentaries on the hymn *Ha-Adderet ve-ha’emunah*,” (Hebrew) *Tarbiz* 50(1981): 396-404; MSS. BP (Parma) 2784 (De Rossi 1390), fol. 75b; JTSA Mic. 2411, fol. 9b.


148. On the knowledge of this work by the author of *Sefer Josippon*, a work written in the same milieu and at the same time as Donnolo, see Flusser, *The Josippon*, 1:144, n. 6, and 2:132.


151. Ibid.

152. Ibid., 62. The expression is based on the biblical idiom used by the Deuteronomist to refer to the fire out of which the Israelites heard the divine voice at Sinai; cf. Dt 4:36, 5:22, 18:16.

153. Ibid., 28.

154. Ibid., 28, 38.


158. See Israel Davidson, *Introduction to Salmon ben Yeruham, The Book of the Wars of the Lord* (New York, 1934), 25-26, who identifies this responsum as part of Saadiya’s *Kisqal Radd ala al-mutahamil* (“Refutation of an Overbearing Antagonist”) which is, in his view, the second part of
the Kitāb al-Radd "alā Ibn Sākawaihī ("Refutation of Ibn Sākawaihī"). Concerning these two works, see Henry Malter, Saadia Gaon: His Life and Works (Philadelphia, 1921), 265-67, 382-84. Malter himself, following the views of Hirschfeld and Epfenberg (see references on 266, n. 558), maintains the possibility that the antagonist in the former treatise may in fact be that of the latter. According to Davidson, moreover, Ibn Sākawaihī is to be identified with Salmon b. Yeruṣīm. See, however, the criticism of Mann in his Texts and Studies, 2:1469-70.


162. Sefer Hakhmoni, 34.

163. Ibid., 38.

164. This image is based on the interpretation of Pr 8:30 in Genesis Rabbah 1:1; see also Ps 119:77. The midrashic motif is reworked in the piyut literature as well. Here I will provide only two examples from relatively early sources. Cf. Piyyutei Yose ben Yose, ed. Aharon Mirsky (Jerusalem, 1977), 123: שמואל התה יָסָרְרִי עַדְהַד הָיְמִים, and the anonymous poem, presumably written in southern Italy in the ninth or tenth century, in Simon Bernstein, Piyyutim u-fayanim hodashim me-ha-tequfah ha-bi sanṭnit (Jerusalem, 1941), 20 (originally published in Horev 5 (1939): 63):

165. This is the reading of MSS. BML (Florence) Plut. 44.16, fol. 87b and JTSA Mic. 2141, fol. 10a. See, however, MS. BP (Parma) 2425 (De Rossi 417), fol. 100a: יָדְה יֵשֶׁרְנִים שֶׁצְּלָמְנוּת אָנוּ שָלַמְנוּחַ יָדְה יֵשֶׁרְנִים and MSS. JTSA Mic. 1640, fol. 170a and BL (Oxford) Mich. Add. 9 (Neubauer 1638), fol. 60b: יֵדְה יֵשֶׁרְנִים שֶׁצְּלָמְנוּת אָנוּ שָלַמְנוּחַ יָדְה יֵשֶׁרְנִים.

166. According to the reading of MSS. BP (Parma) 2123 (De Rossi 399) and 2425 (De Rossi 417); cf. Sefer Hakhmoni, 33, n. 2, and see parallel passage on 54. The presence of the technique of letter-combination in relation to combination of vowels in Donnolo was already noted by Moshe Idel, Golem: Jewish Magical and Mystical Traditions on the Artificial Anthropoid (Albany, 1990), 75, n. 35.


169. Sefer Hakhmoni, 83.

170. Donnolo interprets the teli of Sefer Yeshirah in terms of the concept of the celestial dragon which possesses astrological and astronomical functions.

171. Cf. Sefer Hakhmoni, 82.


174. See above, n. 69. Cf. Pines, "Points of Similarity," 68, 85. It is important to recall here the observation of Gruenwald, "Some Critical Notes on the First Part of Sefer Yeẓirah," 492, that in some Neoplatonic texts, including Plotinus, there are to be found similar notions concerning the indivisibility of the emanations in their source. While Gruenwald does not rule out the possibility of some connection between Sefer Yeẓirah and the Neoplatonic writings, he does caution against such a position on the grounds that the terminology of Sefer Yeẓirah is "vague and slippery" and thus defies any scientific exactitude.

175. See the reading in MS. JTSA Mic. 1640, fol. 170b: ידוות כָּמוֹת אָדָא בְּנוֹךְ יְשֵׁרְנִים.
Cf. MSS. BL (Oxford) Mich. Add. 9 (Neubauer 1638), fol. 60b, and JTSA Mic. 1640, fol. 170b:


See Dunash ibn Tamim’s commentary, ed. Grossberg, 38. Cf. Idel’s interpretation of a statement of Solomon ibn Gabirol cited above, n. 76, to the effect that contemplation of the seφirot leads one to knowledge of the divine unity.

The text of Sefer Ḥakhmoni adds here the word תושbattle, a reading not attested to in any other version but representing rather an exegetical gloss of Donnolo. See above, n. 133.

Sefer Ḥakhmoni, 35-36.

Ibid., 37.

MSS. BML (Florence) Plut. 44. 16, fol. 88b; BP (Parma) 2425 (De Rossi 417), fol. 101a; BN (Paris) héb. 843, fol. 50b; BL (Oxford) Mich. Add. 9 (Neubauer 1638), fol. 61a; and JTSA Mic. 2141, fol. 11a, add: סכפש ידוע התdoctrine. And cf. MSS. Cambridge University Library, Add. 651, fol. 246a, and JTSA Mic. 1903, fol. 2a: סכפש ידוע התdoctrine. The only manuscript which I examined that corresponds to the printed text is MS. JTSA Mic. 1640, fol. 170b.

Sefer Ḥakhmoni, 36-37.


Ibid., 188, 190. Cf. Weinstock, Be-ma’gelei ha-nigleh ve-ha-nistar, 49.

Neumark, History, 1: 258, n. 4.

Regarding Neumark’s approach to the history of Jewish philosophy and mysticism, see the interesting speculations of Scholem, Origins, 8, n. 7.

The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo, 80, 125. See references above, n. 55.


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