

THE ATTITUDE TO CHRISTIANITY IN *SEFER HA-MESHIV*

by MOSHE IDEL*

Sefer HaMeshiv is a unique example of kabbalistic writing.¹ This the first kabbalistic composition, written in large part as a record of personal experience of divine revelation.² The literary successors to this work are the *Maggid Mesharim* of Rabbi Joseph Karo and the writings of several Sabbateans, all descriptions of the appearance and instruction of a Maggid (an angelic teacher) who imparted doctrines particular to the respective authors. By divine revelation, the author of *Sefer HaMeshiv* set down esoteric information on alchemy, astronomy and speculative and practical kabbalah. The eschatological material, found in several places in this work, is significant and merits examination on its own. These discussions of messianism are of particular interest, as they reflect the acute messianic expectation that existed among Spanish kabbalists about twenty years before

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1. For a general description of this work, see G. Scholem, "The Revelations, Attributed to the Maggid (Angelic Messenger) of Rabbi Joseph Taytaczack," *Sefunot* 11 (1971-1978), pp. 69-112 (In Hebrew). (Below: Scholem, Revelations). In an article to be published in future in *Sefunot*, I hope to discuss my recent discovery of additional material from *Sefer HaMeshiv* and topics, concerning the subject of *Maggidut* (divine revelation through an angelic messenger) and the relation of this phenomenon to the legend of Rabbi Joseph Rellan Reina.

2. See Scholem, "Revelations," p. 84. The manuscript passages of *Sefer HaMeshiv*, that I identified, contain *inter alia* communications of an angelic messenger. This explains the meaning of the variant title of the work, (The Book of the Answering Angel — *Sefer HaMalach HaMeshiv*).

the Expulsion,³ Undoubtedly, the exiled Spanish kabbalists Rabbi Abraham Ben Eliezer Halevy⁴ and the anonymous author of *Sefer Kaf HaKetoret*,⁵ among others, were familiar with *Sefer HaMeshiv*. Sixteenth century texts, such as *Sefer Gallei Razayya*⁶ as well as the writings of the kabbalists in Safed⁷ contain literary citations of eschatological discussions, drawn from *Sefer HaMeshiv*. In the seventeenth century, references from *Sefer HaMeshiv* appear in the writings of Sabbatean authors.⁸

The continuation of this article will consider some of the principle aspects of *Sefer HaMeshiv*'s messianic doctrine. In general it will be demonstrated that the historical circumstances surrounding the composition of this work bear directly upon the unique stand adopted by the author of *Sefer HaMeshiv*. In particular, there will be a lengthy treatment of the dialectical relationship between Jewish messianism, presented in *Sefer HaMeshiv* and the Christian doctrine of Jesus as messiah. The author combined extreme hostility toward and deprecation of Christian theology with a Jewish messianic doctrine, incorporating teachings about the birth and nature of the messiah, unique to Christianity.

The author's complex attitude to Christian teaching is a function of his periodization of world history. 1) His condemnation of Christianity past and present, is unambivalent and unequivocal. In this, he based his arguments upon anti-Christian elements in classical Jewish sources and developed these to an extreme. 2) In anticipation of the stage of history immediately preceding the final redemption of Israel, the author presents a more conciliatory description of Christianity, personified as the Messiah, son of Joseph. 3) In contrast to the above, the author ignores Christianity as a factor in the process of the ultimate redemption of Israel, when speaking of the person of the Messiah son of David. At the same time, the author directly applies Christian categories of thought to his description of the person and revelation of the Messiah son of David.

3. See Scholem, "Revelations," p. 85. In this article Scholem expressed reservations about setting the date of *Sefer HaMeshiv* in the period preceding the Spanish Expulsion. However, he inclines toward this view in a later article, "On the Legend of Rabbi Joseph Della Reina," *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History Presented to Alexander Altmann*, The University of Alabama Press, 1979, p. 103, (In Hebrew). (Below : Scholem, "The Legend").

4. Scholem, "The Legend," pp. 102f.

5. This subject is treated in the continuation of this article. See also my forthcoming article, note 1.

6. See *passim*.

7. As I will prove, both Rabbi Moses Cordovero and Rabbi Obadiah Hamun were familiar with *Sefer HaMeshiv* (See note 1 above).

8. See Scholem, "Revelations," p. 73, note 13.

This complex attitude to Christianity needs clarification. The author adapted general and commonly held principles of the Christian religion. Therefore it need not be assumed that his views were formulated in opposition to or in agreement with any particular intellectual or spiritual movement in Christianity. However, the author's expectation that Christianity would undergo a radical transformation at the time of the redemption of Israel and the Christian character of his description of the Messiah son of David suggest that the author of *Sefer HaMeshiv* wrote in reaction to the phenomenon of forced conversion or was associated with conversos in some way. In this regard the author's conscious rejection of historical Christianity and self-conscious adaptation of Christian doctrine may reflect the soul-searching of an individual caught between two worlds. The literary and historical evidence available at this time does not permit positive verification of this assumption.⁹

I

Sefer HaMeshiv's attack on Christianity takes two principle forms. In the one, the association of Jesus is said to have failed. Second, Samael is presented as the guardian and of Christianity. The author described the activity of Jesus in this way. "The Name of the Living God, uttered by all, was exchanged for the graven image¹⁰ of a bastard¹¹ son of Perakhia¹² for they worship a God who cannot save (in Hebrew "*lo yoshiya*").¹³ That is Yeshua (Jesus), the disciple of Joshua. Joshua foresaw the fate of his student, Yeshua, that the "End" would come, the end of days, darkness and not light.¹⁴ For he turned a multitude like the ocean¹⁵ to worship the Baal and the Asherah and the Hamanim and the Ivrim and the Pishim, hated of David. Does not the presence of the Baal, Samael, descend upon the image of Jesus? Is not the Asherah, his mother?" Here Jesus is described as one who caused faith in God to be abandoned and replaced by the worship of Samael and Asherah (Mary). It is a reasonable assumption that in this context, "Samael" is the "Holy Spirit" that engendered Jesus. If so, this is a restatement of the Hermetic interpretation

9. See note 79 passim.

10. Ms. Sasson 290, fol. 177.

11. This is based upon Ps. 106:20, Jesus is called a bastard in the work, *Sefer Toldot Yeshu HaNotzir*. See Otsar Vikuchim, ed. Y. D. Eisenstein, p. 227.

12. B. T. Sotah, fol. 47a. From the point of view of chronology, it is impossible that Jesus was a disciple of Rabbi Joshua Ben Perakhia. See also the Aramaic versions of *Sefer Toldot Yeshu*, published by S. Kreuss and Z. Falk.

13. Is. 45:20.

14. This alludes to Lam. 3:4.

15. This is the meaning of the word, according to the spelling in the manuscript. Probably the manuscript should read "ayin-mem," the word 'am, "people."

of prophecy as the entry of a spirit from above into a material image.¹⁶ This conception was known to the author of *Sefer HaMeshiv*.¹⁷ However, Jesus went beyond the apotheosis of his parents, Samael and Asherah (Mary), and attempted to become a god himself. This adventure is described in *Sefer HaMeshiv* as follows:¹⁸ “I will tell you his first deed. Did not this man yearn and pine to reach the habitation of God,¹⁹ to rise upon the winged clouds²⁰ to resemble the Most High? ²¹ He came into the house to do his work and learned to capture prey,²² for he grasped hold of the Ineffable Name and studied occult wisdom so to perform awesome deeds and be as a “Son of God.” He stretched out his hand and brought it back and took captivity captive and went on high ²³ to his master, the swordsman. With movements of his hands he reversed the direction of the sunrise and the flight of birds, for he thought to make the sun shine from the west, so as to say, “I am He and there is no other. Of me the prophets spoke, ‘Behold, a son is born to the house of David.²⁴ Yeshua is his name,²⁵ and he shall save Israel and redeem them from the grave.’ ²⁶ This was the cursed leprosy. After much time, as you know, they embittered him and strove with him and hung him upon a tree. Then he became angry and cursed his King and his God, saying, ‘Who will make me as in former times,²⁷ that the mystery of the Ineffable Name be my shelter.’ Did not Judah cast him to the ground, that he not escape, lest he destroy the world and return it to void and chaos by instruction of the Ineffable Name — its letters, vocalization, stressed and unstressed consonants. All that would he do. Moreover, after that (his fall) the Name of God returned to Its full strength. However, several of his wicked disciples fled to the mountains of Ararat. After a few years they returned from there and led astray the inhabitants of their native city.”

Undoubtedly, the book *Sefer Toldot Yeshu HaNotzri* was the source of the details, appearing in the above description. I will enumerate three of

16. See G. Vajda, *Juda Ben Nissim Ibn Malka*, Philosophe Juif Marocain, Paris 1954, p. 154, n. 2.

17. See, for example, *Sefer HaMeshiv*, Ms. Brit. Mus. 766 (Or. Add. 27002) fol. 47r.

18. Ms. Sassoon, 290, fol. 177,178.

19. Ps. 84:3.

20. This is a reference to Job 7:16.

21. Is. 14:14.

22. Ez. 19:4.

23. This is a reference to Ps. 68:19.

24. I Kings 13:2.

25. In the Book of Kings the name is Yoshiyahu (Josiah).

26. Hos. 13:14.

27. Job. 29:2.

them. 1) Jesus possessed magic powers that he acquired by means of the Ineffable Name. One of the manifestations of this power was Jesus' ascent to heaven. 2) As in *Sefer Toldot Yeshu HaNotzri*, Jesus is brought down by a man, named Judah. 3) *Sefer Toldot Yeshu HaNotzri* mentions one of Jesus' miracles, "(He said) bring me mud, fashioned in the shape of birds, and so they did. He pronounced the Ineffable Name upon them, and they came to life and stood upon their legs and flew in the air." *Sefer HaMeshiv* contains a much changed version of this wonder working. While the author of *Sefer HaMeshiv* adapted material from *Sefer Toldot Yeshu HaNotzri*, one must, in my opinion, emphasize that the overall description of Jesus is new. According to *Sefer Toldot Yeshu HaNotzri* Jesus actually flew about in the air by utterance of the Ineffable Name. *Sefer HaMeshiv* emphasizes only Jesus' aspiration to ascend to heaven. Several statements in *Sefer HaMeshiv* make this suggestion. This particular citation from *Sefer HaMeshiv* contains a rather clear allusion to this matter,²⁸ echoed at another point in the work.²⁹ "Another cause of Jesus' downfall was that he saw the tree (!). Jesus observed himself at the peak of his ascent to heavenly heights, but did not see his downfall." *Sefer HaMeshiv* contains several references to the downfall of one who wished to ascend to heaven and be like God. Certainly this is a reference to the career of Satan, epitomized, for example, in the Apocrypha of Adam and Eve³⁰ in a remark of Satan to the Archangel Michael, "If He be wrath with me, I will set my seal above the stars of heaven and will be like the Highest." I. Ginzburg has concluded that Isaiah 14:14, *I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High*, was the touchstone for the description of Satan's desire to ascend to heaven, found in the Slavonic *Book of Enoch*.³¹ In view of the description of Jesus as one who

28. See the verses, mentioned in notes 19-21 and 23.

29. Ms. Sassoon 290, fol. 180. The discussion is based upon Job 20:6,7. *Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds. Yet he shall perish for ever like his own dung; they which have seen him shall say, Where is he?* Compare this to the parallel passage in *Sefer HaMeshiv*, Ms. Brit. Mus. 766 fol. 94r. Samael and his mother know not the mystery of redemption and "even their ministering angel knows not the secret until this day (i.e. until the beginning of the redemption). As Jesus, Samael knew only the flourishing of Satan, but not his fall. See E. E. Urbach, *The Sages, Their Concepts and Beliefs*, Jerusalem, 1975, Vol. II, p. 740, note 51.

30. *The Books of Adam and Eve, The Fall of the Devil*, XV:3, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, ed. R. H. Charles, Oxford, 1913, p. 137. See the discussion of this passage and parallel citations in J. Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82" *HUCA*, vol. 14, (1939) pp. 101, 102. On the use of Is. 14:14 to describe Satan's fall, See L. Coulange, *The Life of the Devil*, London, 1929, pp. 12-20.

31. *Legends of the Jews* (ed. L. Ginzburg), Philadelphia, 1947, Vol. V, p. 84, note 35.

replaced the worship of God by that of Samuel and his mother,³² one may conclude that the quotation of Isaiah 14:14 in *Sefer HaMeshiv* in a similar context is a reiteration of the rebellion of Satan, presented in ancient sources. In *Sefer HaMeshiv*, however, Jesus takes on the role of Satan. The author's association of Christianity with the devil or Samael appears in other of his remarks. All have the same purport — to depict Christianity in demonic terms by the identification of Samael and Amon of No, his deputy, with the guardian angels of Christianity. This is probably an attempt to repay Christianity in its own coin. That is, the church is depicted as "ecclesia diaboli," as Judaism was termed "synagoga diaboli."³³ The Christians are called Satan's offspring, much as Jews were seen to be the children of Satan or his allies.³⁴ A statement in *Sefer Kaf HaQetoret*, a composition that bears a great similarity to *Sefer HaMeshiv*,³⁵ states that Jesus is one of the reincarnations of Samuel.³⁶ "The ruddy one came (Ha-Admoni) . . . that is David and took the inheritance of thrice-born Esau who is Edom. That is what the prophet said,³⁷ Thus saith the Lord, for three transgressions of Israel and for four, I will not turn away the punishment. That is to say, he (Esau) will not merit a fourth reincarnation, for with the third he shall be cut off. In one reincarnation he was Jesus of Nazareth, in another he was Armilus, the Satan,³⁸ and therefore he is (also) God and Magog." In *Sefer HaMeshiv*, however, the principal angelic

32. In effect, Jesus succeeded in presenting himself as the Divinity. This is explicitly stated in *Sefer HaMeshiv* (Sassoon, Ms. 290, fol. 178) "At this time they erred grievously and also worshipped alien gods, Jesus and Miriam." In the manuscript the last two words of the quotation are pointed. Possibly this is an allusion to a gematriah (play on words, based upon an equivalent numerical value of the Hebrew letters). In this instance the numerical value of the letters of the names Yeshu (*Yud-Shin-Waw*) "Jesus" and *Miriam* (*Mem-Resh-Yud-Mem*) "Mary" have a value of 612, equivalent to the value of the letters spelling the phrase, "*Elohei Neychar HaArets*," "alien gods in the land." This gamatriah (word-number homiletic) was a commonplace since the thirteenth century. See M. Idel, "Abulafia, the Jewish Messiah and Jesus," *Immanuel* XI, (1980), pp. 78, n. 47. Jesus is portrayed as a rebel against God, for example, in the Aramaic version of the *Sefer Toldot Yeshu HaNotzri*, published by S. Krauss, *REJ*, vol. 62, (1911), pp. 29-31. On the hubris of an ancient type of anti-christ, see D. Flusser, "The Hubris of the Antichrist in a Fragment from Qumran," *Immanuel*, 10, 1980, pp. 31-37.

33. See N. T. Gospel of John, 8:44.

34. J. Traachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1961).

35. On the relation between these two works, see my forthcoming article, described in note 1 above.

36. Paris, Ms. 845, fol. 48a, Vajda, Passages p. 48 and also p. 54.

37. Amos 2:6.

38. This personality appears in *Sefer Zerubavel* whose description of the Messiah influenced the author of *Sefer HaMeshiv*. See note 72 below.

minister of Esau and Edom is Samael.³⁹ Two additional citations from *Sefer HaMeshiv* suggest that Samael dominates not only the person of Jesus, but also the whole of Christendom. In the author's view,⁴⁰ "The second and more exalted spark, emanated by the left side (the realm of evil)... there sits Amon of No with a drawn bow in his right hand and a cross in his left hand, a hint of pagan abomination." A passage in *Sefer Kaf HaQetoret*⁴¹ clarifies the meaning of this description of the ministers of impurity. "For the wicked Samael, the prince of darkness, holds the pagan abomination in his right hand, and the bow in his left, for those are the powers of Edom and Ishmael, and Amon of No is second to him. He holds a sheep⁴² in his right hand. Therefore God instituted the sacrifice of the paschal lamb... *neither shall you break a bone thereof* (Ex. 12:46),⁴³ so that the sheep come no more in the hand of Amon of No, for that is his power like the signet of the king and of his viceroy. This matter is entirely an imitation of the Lord God (Adonai).⁴⁴ "In His right hand the fruit of a beautiful tree; in His left hand branches of palm, and Supernal Israel is second to Him. In his right hand, the branch of a leafy tree and in his left hand branches of palm." According to this depiction, the forces of evil are constituted as a diabolical imitation of both God and Israel. Through Christianity and Islam, the forces of evil exert their nefarious influence upon our world. On the side of good, the Lulab, the palm, myrtle, willow branches and citron, symbols of powers in the Divinity and Israel enable the descent of pure emanations. In the story of Rabbi Joseph Della Reina, the hero breaks the wings of Samael and Amon of No and binds them with iron chains. The above passage from *Sefer HaMeshiv* explains the significance of this detail in the story of Joseph Della Reina's attempt to hasten the coming of the Messiah. The overpowering of Samael and Amon of No is equated with subduing Christianity and Islam, a necessary precondition for the achievement of complete redemption. This idea is also reflected

39. On the connection of Jesus, the Messiah son of Ephraim, Samael and Christianity in the writings of Cardozo, see G. Scholem, *Sources and Studies of the History of the Sabbatean Movement and its Historical Successors* (Jerusalem, 1974), p. 289 (In Hebrew) note 39 cont. See also *Ibid.*, p. 291.

40. Ms. Brit. Mus. 766, fol. 44r, published by G. Scholem, "Revelations," p. 108. See also *Ibid.*, p. 109. The text appears also in Ms. Sassoon, 290, fol. 557.

41. Ms. Paris 845, fol. 92a.

42. In *Sefer HaMeshiv*, the ram is associated with the practise of magic, forbidden to Israel by God. See the text, published by G. Scholem, "Revelations," p. 109. See also Ms. Musaioff 24, fol. 37 r.v. See also, Moses Ben Nahman,

43. Ex. 12:46.

44. On *Imitatio Dei*, imitation of the processes in the realm of Pure Divinity, by the forces of evil, see R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, "Ape and Essence," *Ex Orbe Religio-num*, (Leiden, 1972), pp. 319, 320, 322-324.

in the epistle *Sod HaGeulah* of Rabbi Abraham HaLevi: ⁴⁵ "For in those days about twenty years before the year 250 (1490), there was a man who employed the Crown of the King (in magic) and presumed to cast down to earth Samael and Amon of No and enfeeble them and bind them and uproot the reign of Edom from the world, for when their ministering angel falls,⁴⁶ they shall fall as well. . ." A statement in *Sefer Gallei Razayya* written in 1552 (approx.) makes it clear that there are two stages in the defeat of Amon of No, Samael's deputy.⁴⁷ "Until Moses came, Amon of No, Samael's deputy, held the likeness of a ram in his right hand, and in his left hand there was the likeness of a he-goat and he required their blood. He would demand the blood of the ram from Abraham and the blood of the he-goat from the tribes, the brothers of Joseph. When Moses came and offered a lamb as the paschal sacrifice, Gabriel immediately went and cast the ram out of the hand of Amon of No, but the likeness of a he-goat remains in his left hand until this day, until the messiah, son of Ephraim will be slain." The general sense of these remarks indicates a conception that regards human sacrifice as means for the redemption of the people. In the words of *Sefer Gallei Razayya*, Abraham the patriarch was to sacrifice Isaac to reduce the power of Amon of No. However, he did not do so and offered the ram in place of Isaac. In consequence, Satan was able to make an accusation against Israel.⁴⁸ Moses succeeded where Abraham had failed. By means of the paschal lamb, he cast the ram from the hands of Amon of No. It is intimated that Joseph was to die so as to wrest the he-goat from Amon of No. As he did not do so, in future the Messiah son of Joseph (or the Messiah son of Ephraim) will be killed. In this,

45. Published by G. Scholem, "The Legend," pp. 102f.

46. Shemot Rabba, IX. Compare with Rabbi Joseph Gikatilla, Shaarei Orah, ed. ed. Yosef Ben Shelomoh, Sifriyat Dorot, Jerusalem, Vol. I, p. 130. See also Sefer HaBahir, ed Margaliyot, Jerusalem, 1978, no. 200, p. 94.

47. See Mahalov's edition, 1812, fol. 30c. On the influence of the description of Amon of No as found in *Sefer HaMeshiv* upon the author of *Sefer Gallei Razayya*, see G. Scholem, "The Legend," p. 107, note 17. On the battle between Gabriel and Samael at the End of Days, see the text, published by G. Scholem in his article, "The Kabbalist, Rabbi Abraham Ben Eliezer HaLevi," *Kiryat Sefer* II (1925/26), p. 131, (In Hebrew). Two portents of redemption, cited by HaLevi, are the discontinuation of sacrifices to the Serim (devils) and the downfall of Esau's representative ministering angel. These events will occur before the coming of the Messiah. (See *Ibid.*, ppc 130f). It is known that Rabbi Abraham Ben Eliezer HaLevi was familiar with the conceptions of the circle of kabbalists in which *Sefer HaMeshiv's* author was active.

48. *Sefer Gallei Razayya*, fol. 30b. *Sefer Kaf HaQetoret*, Ms. Paris 845, fol. 22v-23r. The death of the Messiah son of Joseph is rationalized as a necessary expiation of the sin of Jerobiam son of Nebat. This explanation is to be found in earlier kabbalah. See the *Zohar*, Part III, fol. 276b (Ra'ya Mehemna) and the *Zohar*, Part II, fol. 120a.

sacrifice of human life is understood to be an atonement for sin and its purpose is to bring the redemption. This may well be the reworking of a Christian conception in a Jewish context. What do the ram and the he-goat in the hands of Amon of No signify? What is meant by the fall of these? A comparison of the passage in *Sefer Gallei Razayya* with those of *Sefer Kaf HaQetoret* and *Sefer HaMeshiv*, quoted before, indicates that the ram corresponds to the cross and to Edom while the he-goat, held in the left hand, corresponds to the bow and to Ishmael. Does the order of the fall of the ram and the he-goat parallel astrological events, relating to Christianity and Islam? In my opinion, there is an absence of hard literary evidence to provide an unequivocally positive answer. However, it is possible that the authors of these works considered the fall of Constantinople in 1452 to herald the collapse of Christianity⁵⁰ while the fall of Islam was an event, anticipated in future. The latter would occur with the coming of the Messiah son of Ephraim.⁵¹

II

Alongside *Sefer HaMeshiv's* insistence upon the demonic character of the ministering guardian angels of Christianity and Islam, Samael and Amon of No, and his deprecating view of the life of Jesus, one finds statements of a more moderate kind. As part of a portrayal of the breaking of the wings of Samael and Amon of No in preparation for the appearance of the Messiah son of Ephraim, the author states that Samael is the spiritual progenitor of that same savior, the Messiah son of Ephraim. In future, Christianity will undergo a process of Judaization to stand at Israel's right hand at the time of redemption. This process begins, however, with smashing the power of Christianity. In *Sefer HaMeshiv*, the course of events is

50. On messianic expectation among Jews following the fall of Constantinople, see Y. Hacker, "The Connections of Spanish Jewry with Eretz Israel between 1391 and 1492," *Shalem*, I, 1974, p. 122. For the author of *Sefer HaMeshiv*, the fall of Constantinople had messianic import. "For the mystery of the (Hebrew) letters Resh-Aleph-Yud is the secret of the number two hundred eleven, the time at which the mystery of the Sabbath begins to be manifest in the world. That is the esoteric meaning of the words "Ro'iy." That is the secret, concerning Constantinople, laid waste in the year, Resh-Aleph-Yud (1451)" (Ms. Brit. Mus. 766, fol. 29r). Clearly, the word "Sabbath" has an eschatological significance and is associated with the fall of Constantinople. Although that city fell in 1452, the author's inaccuracy in no way detracts from his understanding the event in a messianic context. Notably, the author of *Sefer HaMeshiv* held the opinion that Rome would be burned in the year 1504, signalling the final collapse of Christian messianism. See G. Scholem, "Revelations," p. 78, note 24.

51. Ms. Hamburg, 152, fol. 26 r,v.

My forthcoming article includes a discussion of material in this manuscript and literary parallels in *Sefer HaMeshiv*. See note 1 above.

depicted in this manner. "By virtue of the power of the Great Name of Forty-Two Letters,⁵² I adjure you⁵³ even against your will to have not the power to fly or do anything or to make any further accusation against the Israelite nation⁵⁴ than you have done until now. I bind you and adjure you⁵⁵ that you will have no more power to accuse Israel for all time. Rather, from this day forward, you will defend the Israelite nation. . . so shall you and Rabbi Joseph⁵⁶ do, both of you together . . . and by this you will break the power of Samael and hasten the redemption in your time." The transition from prosecution to defense⁵⁷ is but a reflection of a process occurring within the Divinity, a topic treated in *Sefer HaMeshiv*,⁵⁸ "Know that Esau is the creation of the Supernal Isaac (The Sefirah *Gevurah*) to ruel and guide the world, and he is called Lot, and is called Esau. . .⁵⁹ when the kingdom is him, he will ascend through the window of the Supernal Isaac (receive emanation directly from the Sefirah *Gevurah*). he will be prince over you and will make an accusation against you that you have no right to exist in the world⁶⁰. . . for Esau is Lot, but will be known by the names Esau, when the time comes for the arrival of the King Messiah. Then will this secret become known, that Esau is (none other than) the wicked Samael . . . and during the time of the birthpangs of the messiah, he is named Esau, (the Hebrew letters, Ayin-Sin-Waw) that signify 'Asu (lit.: they made). That is, they coerced him to enter the mystery of the Supernal Covenant of Circumcision, for until this day, he has yet to descend lower than the mystery of "ruddiness," that is the mystery of the Sefirah *Tiferet* (a symbol of the messiah). However, they will now coerce him to enter the mystery of the Covenant of Circumcision (The Sefirah *Yesod*). That is the celestial secret of the name Ayin-Sin-Waw (Esau-'Asu). It is an allusion to that matter, for unless he enter the mystery of the Supernal Covenant of Circumcision, so that he cleave to the opening of the Shechinah (lit.:

52. The Divine Name of Forty Two Letters has a central role in the practical kabbalah of *Sefer HaMeshiv*.

53. This is a reference to Samael and Amon of No.

54. The Israelite woman.

55. I adjure. The Ms. reads "Shin-Bet-'Ayin"—the Hebrew root "to swear an oath."

56. This is an allusion to Rabbi Joseph Della Reina.

57. On the transformation of Satan from prosecutor to defender on Rosh HaShanah (Jewish New Year), see B.T. Rosh HaShanah, fol. 26a.

58. Ms. Brit. Mus. 766, fol. 92v-97v.

59. See the above quotation from *Sefer Kaf HaQetoret*, Ms. Paris 845, fol. 48r, where Jesus is portrayed as a reincarnation of Esau, and is to return in a later reincarnation as God and Magog. This text concerns an earlier stage in the reincarnation of Jesus, that of Lot in Esau.

60. On Esau and Samael as prosecutors, see the above citation from Ms. Hamburg, fol. 26 r,v. The conclusion of this citation from *Sefer HaMeshiv* describes Esau's transformation from prosecutor to defender in a similar way.

tent door),⁶¹ it will be impossible for the King Messiah, the mystery of David, to be revealed. Then both of them as one (Esau and Jacob — the Sefirah *Tiferet*) shall ascend as the mystery of the Supernal Covenant and will have sexual contact with the mouth and opening of the Shechinah... and that is the mystery of the pregnancy of Rebecca, “for both of them as one shall enter and both of them shall emerge as one... and that this profound and concealed mystery be consummated, Esau must be included, but he cannot participate when he is drunk with the cup of staggering.⁶² Thereafter he will drink of spiced wine, so as to help you, for the King Messiah cannot come until an end is made of the mystery of Esau in the upper and lower worlds and when he comes within the needle (eye) and signet seal, when this world will be in a state of exceeding mighty pain and travail, and this is the mystery of the birthpangs of the Messiah... and at that time the children of Esau will succeed as never before and possess great wealth, but when Esau will pass through the eye of a needle, thus the image shall depart⁶³ from them *and the Lord is with us, fear them not* (Num. 14:9). That is the mystery of *Tiferet*,⁶⁴ and that is the mystery of Esau who enters the opening of the Shechinah. At that time the Shechinah will conceive of Jacob and Esau, and that is the mystery of the two messiahs, the Messiah son of Joseph and the Messiah, son of Ephraim. All are one, the mystery of the Son of Joseph is as his name, Joseph (in Hebrew *Yosef*)⁶⁵ “*Yosef... li ben akher...*” (Gen. 30:24)... *shall add me another son*. That is the mystery of the Messiah son of David. The Messiah son of Ephraim is the mystery that he shall enter the opening of the *Shechinah*... as the mystery of Esau, the Messiah son of Ephraim must elevate him by means of the mystery of the Covenant of Circumcision. He will be constrained to help the lower Covenant, that is Israel. By virtue of this mystery he will enter the Covenant, for he will be coerced to become another man⁶⁶ for before that he will be a prosecutor, but at the time of

61. Section III of this article explicates the symbolism of the “tent door” of the Shechinah.

62. Preceding their demise, Samael and his band drink of the “cup of bitter poison” or of the “cup of staggering”. Only thereafter does the redemption of Israel come. See *Sefer HaMeshiv*, Ms. Brit. Mus. 766, fol. 26v, 27r; 83v. 93v. See note 69 below.

63. Num. 14:9.

64. The Tetragrammaton, preceding the phrase, “and God is with us” is a symbol of the Sefirah *Tiferet*.

65. Gen. 30:24.

66. The verse in I Samuel 10:6 is understood to mean forced conversion to Judaism. That is “becoming another man against his will.” See Ms. Brit. Mus., 766, fol. 91r. “He will be coerced to enter the Covenant of Abraham (circumcision). This is the meaning of the verse: *He will ever be mindful of His covenant* (Ps. 111:5). This is the secret of the Messiah’s son of Ephraim.”

redemption he will be an advocate for the defense. He will speak good for you and will fight your battles and will bring forth the sons of Moses. In Scripture there is an allusion to this, the name, *Eli-Ezer*.⁶⁷ That is the mystery of the Covenant. That will be a help to you, and that is the mystery of Gershon,⁶⁸ and that is the mystery of Samael . . . and this was done to him against his will that he enter the mystery of the Covenant and that he, together with all his armies, help you. This is the meaning of the verse, *and they please themselves in the children of strangers* (Is. 2:6).⁶⁹ Esau shall be forced to do this. They will enter one after the other, as Esau came in after Jacob, (a reference to Genesis 25:25,26). This is the mystery of the name Esau, given to him against his will, that he enter the mystery of the Covenant, as hinted by the verse.” Here the process of the coming of the messiah is described as a series of descents from the upper to the lower Sefirot. At first Esau is situated within the Sefirah *Gevurah* (symbolized by Isaac). After that, he descends to the Sefirah *Tiferet* (Jacob); he is coerced to enter the Sefirah *Yesod* (The Covenant of Circumcision) together with Jacob. This entry signifies the transition from “Edom” to “Covenant,” that is, the conversion of Christianity to Judaism.⁷⁰ The next

67. In the understanding of the *Sefer HaMeshiv* author, the name Eliezer (Eli-Ezer, My God is a Help) alludes to the help that Israel will receive from God. This signifies the Sefirah Yesod.

68. According to I Chron. 23:15, Moses had two sons, Eliezer and Gershom. The author of *Sefer HaMeshiv* applies the polarity between Jacob and Esau to these two sons of Moses. In *Sefer Gallei Razayya*, Eliezer, the servant of Abraham is associated with the Sefirah *Yesod*, the Sefirah of the Covenant of Circumcision. This parallel in my opinion is the result of the influence of *Sefer HaMeshiv* upon the author of *Sefer Gallei Razayya*. See *Sefer Gallei Razayya*, fol. 34c and note 67 above.

69. Is. 2:6. The author's reference to Is. 2:20 suggests that Esau will “help the children of strangers”—the Jews. Ms. Brit. Mus. 766, fol. 93v, speaks of Esau in these terms. “Once he becomes drunk with the cup of poison, he will immediately become the servant of Jacob.”

70. See note 66 above. A similar view is expressed in *Sefer Kaf HaQetoret*, Ms. Paris 845, fol. 23r. “*And the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick* (II Sam. 12:15). For Bat Sheba was a righteous woman, so she was punished, for the child died on the seventh day and did not merit circumcision and died uncircumcised. For that reason, Samael's power increased, as his is the power of “Orlah” (Hebrew for foreskin, symbolic of the powers of evil). Thus forces of evil would not permit him (the child) to pass over (into paradise). However, David said, *I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me* (II Sam. 12:23). Why did he say this? Rather he said, “He shall not return to me, but shall become another person and will take the covenant upon himself and the foreskin will then be cut off. Then he will extirpate all the forces of “*orlah*,” and they shall be cut off, for the soul of David will be reincarnated within him.” This is an explicit suggestion that the child who died in a state of *Orlah* will be reincarnated, will enter the covenant at last, and will overpower the forces of evil. This parallels the idea that the successive incarnations of Jesus from Lot to Esau and from

stage is the sexual coupling of Judah and Esau with the Shechinah — that is the Sefirah *Malchut* who conceives from both brothers. This results in the conception of two messiahs, the Messiah son of Ephraim from Esau and the Messiah son of David from Jacob. Several passages in *Sefer HaMeshiv* expressly state that the Messiah son of Ephraim originates not only from Esau, but actually from Samael. “The mystery of Samael is the mystery of Joseph, that is the mystery of the Messiah, son of Ephraim.”⁷¹ At another point in the work, the death of Samael is equated with the death of the Messiah son of Joseph. “. . . And he will kill the Messiah son of Joseph, that is the mystery of Samael.”⁷² This represents not only the transformation of the prosecutor into an advocate for the defense, but also Samael’s active participation in the redemption of Israel. This conception is of particular interest, given the historical background of *Sefer HaMeshiv*. At a time of relentless persecution and forced conversion, the author envisioned an eschatological future when Christianity would be forced to enter the covenant of circumcision and would be transformed into a defender of the Jews. Christianity, so converted, would finally meet its death in the war whose outcome will pave the way for the complete redemption of Israel. The Christians mock the Jews for waiting for a Messiah⁷³ that in their belief has already come. Those same Christians will be transformed into the saviors of the Jews. This doctrine appears to be an ironic interpretation of the Christian claim that the messiah has already come. Indeed the Messiah has come, “the Messiah son of Joseph,” that is Christianity, to pave the way for the Jewish Messiah son of David! Perhaps this is the meaning of the claim of *Sefer HaMeshiv* that redemption will not come

Esau to Jesus will finally result in the birth of the Messiah son of Ephraim. On the extirpation and excision of “the shell,” the realm of evil, see note 86, below. See also the text, printed by Scholem, “Revelations,” pp. 106, 107.

71. Ms. Brit. Mus., 766, fol. 21 r.v. *Ibid.* fol. 91v, states, “This Messiah is known by the name Joseph, for he will enter the mystery of the Covenant against his will.

72. *Ibid.*, fol. 21v. The author of *Sefer HaMeshiv* was influenced by the description of the death of the Messiah in Sefer: Zerubavel and shaped his account accordingly. On the coercion of Samael to help Israel, see also *Ibid.* fol. 21a.

73. *Sefer Kaf HaQetoret* contains an interesting description of Christian mockery of Jewish belief in the Messiah. In Ms. Paris 845 fol. 78v, we find, “. . . *make haste to help me, O Lord* (Ps. 70:1). Give me strength and help from Your Holy Habitation that I may do to my enemies what they have done to me. *Let them be put backward . . . that desire my hurt* (Ps. 70:2). *Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say Aha Aha* (Ps. 70:3). This speaks of the end of those who seek to persuade the souls of Israel to abandon their faith and say to me, ‘Aha! Aha!’, two words of mocking laughter, for when a man laughs, he is accustomed to say, ‘Aha! Aha!’. They say, ‘Your messiah has yet to come, and when will he come?’ With this they shame the Jews about the length of exile and the Jews have no answer for this, but only the hope, and they mock and say, ‘To us has come the one for whom you.’”

until Esau is destroyed in the spiritual and terrestrial realms. In this, the death of the Messiah son of Ephraim (of Joseph) will be part of its process of the eradication of evil from the world,⁷⁴ a preparatory stage for the coming of the Messiah son of David. This conception of the Messiah son of Ephraim as a reincarnation of Samael and Jesus was adopted by two subsequent authors, Rabbi Obadiah Hamun and Abraham Cardozo. Rabbi Obadiah Hamun states,⁷⁵ "The root of the Messiah son of Ephraim is in his mother Asenat, daughter of Potiphra of the side of Samael. That is the power of Samael who is the source of the snake." Even more significant are the traces of the Messianic conception of *Sefer HaMeshiv* in the writings of Abraham Cardozo.⁷⁶ "It is a known fact that the Supernal Samael has his root in the Holiness of the World of Emanation. In consequence Jesus the Messiah of the Shells (the evil realm) was engendered by both realms and is a Jew."⁷⁷ He declares another time, "The believers in Jesus violated the covenant of circumcision, because Samael, the alien god, is uncircumcised." Furthermore, "...and the Messiah, the son of David, will not be born among the pagan, uncircumcised peoples as will be the Messiah son of Ephraim... while he (the Messiah son of Ephraim) will be born in future among the uncircumcised peoples and will be coerced to practise idolatry and will study their divine science, called "theology."⁷⁸ The con-

74. See note 62 above. The author of *Sefer HaMeshiv* held the opinion that "the uncircumcised will not be able to join Israel at the time of the redemption." We read the following in Ms. Musaioff 24 fol. 5r, "...Tishbi (Elijah, the prophet) and Metatron will be revealed. That is the secret meaning of the 'angel of the covenant,' for at that time both the mystery of the covenant of circumcision and of *orlah* (the foreskin) will be known, and they shall make a covenant to be one people, but the angel of the covenant will not accept them. This is the esoteric meaning of the statement that 'proselytes will not be accepted in the future time,' and that is the secret meaning of the saying, 'the one who lived with you in your poverty will come into your wealth.'"

75. Rabbi Obadiah Hamun, *Commentary on the Book of Ruth*, Jerusalem 1889, fol. 3a. In my forthcoming article, I have demonstrated Rabbi Obadiah Hamun's familiarity with *Sefer HaMeshiv*. The Commentary on the Book of Ruth was written in Safed at the beginning of the second half of the sixteenth century. Compare this citation with the remarks of the *Sefer HaMeshiv* author, Ms. Brit. Mus., 766, fol. 20v, 21r. "Ephraim was conceived (an allusion to the Messiah) in impurity and borne by the daughter of impurity, the daughter of the Amorite... Asenat Bat Potiphra. This is a great mystery. In a certain respect the Messiah son of Joseph shall issue from the Amorite, and for this reason he will be killed."

76. Scholem, "Texts and Studies," p. 292.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 293.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 294, notes 59, 60. Discussion of the eschatological significance of the return of conversos to Judaism are to be found in *Sefer HaMeshiv* as well. See the passage published by Scholem "Revelations," p. 80. The author of *Sefer Kaf HaQetoret* also had a positive attitude to conversos. See Ms. Paris 845, fol. 149v. See also Vajda, *Passages*, pp. 56-58.

nection between Samael and Christianity is obvious. Jesus is described as a Jew while the Messiah, son of Ephraim is said to be one, born among Christians and forced to practise idolatry. This means that the Messiah, son of Ephraim will be a converso who will return to Judaism. As Gershom Scholem has remarked, the biography of Cardozo conforms to this description.⁷⁹ However, the idea that the Messiah son of Ephraim will be a Christian before his revelation to the people apparently originated from *Sefer HaMeshiv*. It seems that the author of *Sefer HaMeshiv* had studied some "theology" as did Cardozo.

III

Another mark of Christian influence upon the author of *Sefer HaMeshiv* is to be found in the description of the personality of the Messiah, son of David. This is indeed a paradox. The author of *Sefer HaMeshiv* made a considerable effort to associate Christianity with the demonic sphere, a realm that must be defeated before the achievement of final redemption. All things Christian belong to the realm of Samael as well. At the same time, the author of *Sefer HaMeshiv* adopted doctrines unique to Christianity in his exposition of messianism, and this at a time of severe Christian pressure on the Jews. Apparently he was not at all troubled by the fact that the Christian teachings, adopted into his work, had been consistently rejected in Jewish theological literature until his time.

The author of *Sefer HaMeshiv*, adapted the Christian teaching about the Divinity of the messiah and the virgin birth through the Holy Spirit. My discussion of these themes will begin with a treatment of the second of the two subjects. As stated before, the two messiahs, the Messiah son of Ephraim and the Messiah son of Joseph are conceived by the Shechinah. "The fathers" of the two messiahs are Jacob and Esau, who descend from the Sefirah *Tiferet*, become incorporated as the Sefirah *Yesod* (The Covenant of Circumcision) and have intercourse with the Shechinah. However, on fol. 96b, the conclusion of the citation suggests that this intercourse is not only genital but also oral. The meaning of this efflux into the mouth of the Shechinah is to be found in another statement in *Sefer HaMeshiv*.⁸⁰ "...And the Holy Blessed One was reconciled with Israel and these are days of acquittal and forgiveness,⁸¹ and this is the mystery of a virgin, neither had any man known her⁸² (Gen. 24:14). He misled the nations

80. Ms. Musaioff 24, fol. 34v.; Ms. Musaioff 5, fol. 120

81. This is a reference to the month of Elul whose corresponding constellation is Virgo.

82. Gen. 24:16.

through this secret power, for the Supernal Power is joined with this constellation. This is the mystery of Virgo. There is an actual virgin, made of fire, and she is sexually receptive (lit., has a receptive vessel) and this likeness was created for Israel, as a wife and as a virgin, so that the mystery of the point⁸³ have connection with her. That is the mystery of *a virgin, neither had any man known her* (Gen. 24:14). At the time of the redemption the mystery of the Messiah will come forth for Israel. Until that time, she will remain a virgin and then the supernal spirit will enter her mouth and a spirit of consuming flame will come forth at her opening and will emerge from that sanctuary,⁸⁴ for there it will reside, shut away. At the time when the spirit emerges, it will take the form of fire. This is the mystery of the constellation Virgo. Therefore, it is the constellation of Israel and this is the esoteric meaning of the verse, *rise, the virgin of Israel*⁸⁵. . . that is the secret interpretation of the verse, *a virgin, neither had any man known her* (Gen. 24:24) until the Lord's anointed one will come." Despite the literary parallel of the "mouth" and "the spirit entering there," the figure of the virgin in this passage and the figure of the Shechinah in the passage, quoted above from *Sefer HaMeshiv*, are not necessarily synonymous. However, in another part of *Sefer HaMeshiv*⁸⁶ there is an explicit reference to the Shechinah as a sexually receptive woman, made of fire. "It is known that the mystery of the Shechinah is actually the likeness of a female, a spiritual woman, made of green fire, created and revealed in the upper and the lower worlds. Like a woman, she has an opening to receive the supernal spirit from the pure Divinity, from the form of the Supernal *Ishim*⁸⁷ and the Supernal *Tsikhtsukhim*. That opening is the tent door. That is to say, the

83. In kabbalah the point signifies the male or semen.

84. This is one of the permutations of the Tetragrammaton and governs the constellation Virgo. The author explains the matter in a passage preceding this particular citation.

85. Amos 5:2.

86. Ms. Brit. Mus. 766, fol. 35r. Compare this to another passage in *Sefer HaMeshiv* (Ms. Jerusalem 80147, fol. 102v.) "... of that time of redemption the verse said, *For as a young man marries a virgin* (Is. 62:5). This is a mystery of the restoration of the Shechinah to its former state and first strength, as the verse suggests. That is the mystery of the descent of My Messiah from heaven before the eyes of all living creatures." This epiphany depends upon the extirpation and excision of the forces of evil (the shells).

87. The phrase "*Ishim Elyonim*" as a term for spiritual forces appears in Rabbi Judah Ibn Tibbon's translation of *Sefer Hobot HaLevavot* (Bahya Ibn Paquda, *Duties of the Heart*), Shaar HaBekhinah (The Gate of Self Examination), ch. 5 and subsequently appears in several Jewish compositions, for example, *Sefer HaYashar*, attributed to Rabbenu Tam, Gate II. However, the word "*Ishim*" in this context possibly means "Fires" (Esh-fire; in the plural—*Ishim*, fires). In this sense it is a synonym for the word "*Tzikhtzukhim*," "Radiances," that appears in the text immediately after the words "*Ishim Elyonim*." However, the word "*Ishim*"

mystery of *and he sat in the tent door...* (Gen. 18:2) and he is joined with the tent door, that is her opening.”⁸⁸ In my opinion, the author of *Sefer HaMeshiv* gave a kabbalistic interpretation to the immaculate conception by the virgin and the Holy Spirit when he equated the idea of a virgin with the Shechinah, mother of the two messiahs, an idea, already expressed in the Zohar.⁸⁹ This affords a better understanding of another statement in *Sefer HaMeshiv*⁹⁰ “The open letter *mem* is an allusion to *Binah* and the closed letter *mem* has another meaning. It is an allusion to *Malchut*.” This also represents a departure from the symbolism of the Zohar, where the open *mem* is an allusion to *Malchut* in particular, while the closed *mem* is an allusion to the Sefirah *Binah*.⁹¹ The author of *Sefer HaMeshiv* reverses this symbolism, a convention in kabbalah since the fourteenth century.⁹² Possibly, this change reflects the Christological exegesis of Isaiah 9:6 where the closed letter *mem* is taken as an allusion to Jesus’ virgin birth.⁹³ In *Sefer HaMeshiv*, the discussion of the closed letter *mem* is associated with the subject of the coming of the Messiah.⁹⁴ “This is the mystery of the

may also signify Sefirot. See G. Scholem, “Revelations,” p. 93 on the meaning of the expression “*Ishim Elyonim*,” as Divine *Ishim*.

88. The Zohar, Part III, fol. 67b-68a (*Ra’ya Mehemna*). Compare to the statements of Cardozo who presents Miriam, the mother of Jesus, as a profane counterpart of the Shechinah (G. Scholem, *Texts and Studies*, p. 291 and p. 294.) A literary parallel of this type appears in the writings of the Christian kabbalist, Edigio di Viterbo. See the remarks of G. Javary, *Recherches sur L’Utilisation du Theme de la Sekimah dans l’Apologetique Chrétienne* (Paris, 1978), pp. 520, 524, 526.

89. In this the author of *Sefer HaMeshiv* has taken a view diametrically opposed to the Zohar author who claims that with the destruction of the Temple, the Shechinah has ceased to give birth to souls. See the Zohar, Part III, fol. 136b. Note that the “fiery virgin” is reminiscent not only of the Christian description of Mary, but also of the “virgin of light” in Gnosis. See W. Bossuet, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis* (Gottlingen, 1907), pp. 61-63, 76-77. Gershon Scholem has noted the similarity between the portrayal of the Sefirah *Malchut* as a daughter in *Sefer HaBahir* and the conception of the “Virgin of Light” in Gnosticism. See G. Scholem, *Les Origines de La Kabbale*, Paris, 1966, p. 102. There is another noteworthy parallel between the remarks of *Sefer HaMeshiv* about the fiery woman, revealed in the upper and lower world and the Gnostic conception of a virgin of light that appears at night. This appears in the context of a discussion of astronomy. See J. Doresse, *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics*, London, 1960, pp. 220-271.

90. Ms. Hamburg, 152, fol. 14b.

91. The Zohar, Part III, fol. 10b.

92. See Part II of my forthcoming article, “Rabbi David Ben Yehudah HeHasid’s Translation of the Zohar and Commentary on the Alphabet,” *Alei Sefer*, X, (1981?) note 2. (In Hebrew).

93. See Y. Liebes, “*Sefer Tsaddiq Yesod Olam*—A Sabbatean Myth,” *Da’at* 1, (1978), pp. 103, 104. See *Ibid.*, the conclusion of note 165 in particular.

94. G. Scholem, “Revelations,” p. 1002. Compare this to a statement of *Sefer Ha-Meshiv*, Ms. Brit. Mus. 766, fol. 93v. “The mystery of the time of redemption is that of the closed letter *mem* which then will be opened.”

Kingdom (The Sefirah *Malchut*). That is the mystery of the closed letter *mem*, when He will send him — that is the meaning of the words *Lekh Lekha* (Gen. 12:1), (the Hebrew letters Lamed-Kaf — Lamed Kof form the words, *Get you out*). The word (Lamed Kof) is doubled to indicate this great mystery, the nature of the descent of the Messiah.”

In my understanding, the conception of the Messiah in *Sefer HaMeshiv* bears the clear marks of Christian influence. As does a Christian theologian, the author asks,⁹⁵ “Who will be this Messiah? Will he have the virtue of a man or of God?” *Sefer HaMeshiv*⁹⁶ contains an unequivocal answer to this question, repeated several times. “For the mystery of my Messiah is the mystery of my Divinity.” This and more. The descent of the Messiah is presented in terms of divine revelation.⁹⁷ One finds a statement like this, “. . . the descent of the Messiah and My swift revelation to you.” It must be emphasized that the divine character of the Messiah is discussed in connection with the personality of the Messiah son of David. This represents an interesting intersection of ideas. The Messiah, son of Ephraim is Christian in origin, but becomes a Jew by entering the covenant of circumcision. In contrast, the Messiah, son of David, a Jew from birth, is described in Christian terms.

Finally, this integration of Christianity, kabbalah and magic in the writings of an anonymous Spanish kabbalist of the late fifteenth century has an interesting parallel in the eighties of the fifteenth century when Christianity, kabbalah and magic are interconnected and interrelated in the writings of Pico Della Mirandola in Italy. Though geographically separate, culturally distinct and nourished by different systems of thought, there is something

95. Scholem, “Revelations,” p. 103.

96. See also *Sefer Kaf HaeQetoret*, Ms. Paris 845, fol. 10r, “For the mystery of the Messiah is the mystery of Pure Divinity, for the creation of the Messiah’s soul preceded the creation of the world.” Undoubtedly the author of *Sefer Kaf HaQetoret* changed the wording “the mystery of My Messiah, that is the mystery of my Pure Divinity,” found in *Sefer HaMeshiv* for a less definite characterization, a stylistic habit of the author of *Sefer Kaf HaQetoret*. Another statement in *Sefer Kaf HaQetoret* possibly reflects the considerable influence of Christian conceptions. See Ms. London Rabbinic College 5 fol. 148r. “The Holy Blessed One will bestow glory and beauty upon the Messiah son of David, for He will place the Glory of His Majesty upon Him.” In my estimation, the author of *Sefer HaQetoret* meant to contrast the incarnation of Jesus with an apotheosis of the Jewish Messiah. There are suggestions of a conception of incarnation in the passages of *Sefer HaMeshiv* that describe the engendering and birth of the two Messiahs by means of the Divine Sefirot.

97. Scholem, “Revelations,” p. 103.

common to both phenomena. In *Sefer HaMeshiv*, a Jew formulated the mystery of Jewish messianism in Christian concepts and expressed them in kabbalistic terminology. Pico, the Christian, considered kabbalah to be an expression of the mysteries of Christianity. In both authors the subject of magic is given considerable attention.⁹⁸

EDITOR'S NOTE :

Several additional notes and amendments were received by the editors immediately prior to printing, too late to be included in the text of this article. These will be published in *Immanuel* 13. Our readers are referred there for the full apparatus of Dr. Idel's article.

98. I want to emphasize that the similar integration of Christian, kabbalistic, and magical elements in the writings of the author of *Sefer HaMeshiv* and of Pico Della Mirandola cannot be interpreted as an instance of direct literary influence.