On Practical Uses of Ten *Sefirot*: Material Readings in an Early Modern Kabbalistic Collectaneum (MS Michael 473)*

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▉ Abstract

By the end of the sixteenth century, textual manifestations of kabbalah—a variety of Jewish mysticism that first emerged in medieval Provence and Catalonia—achieved the status of elite but authoritative lore in Eastern and Central Europe, even if at times they stirred religious opposition. At the same time, and especially in the seventeenth century, the so-called practical kabbalah, associated with magic and a talismanic approach to religious ritual, gained substantial popularity among Ashkenazi (i.e., Eastern and Central European) Jews. This study centers on a multiple-text and composite codex, Oxford-Bodleian MS Michael 473, and throws into relief the dynamics of circulation of various kabbalistic traditions in early modern Eastern and Central Europe. By zooming in on a single codex, this article foregrounds the hermeneutic potential of contextual reading of texts in complex manuscripts and of interpreting material choices taken by their cocreators. It does so with a methodological agenda that goes beyond tracing of authorial genealogies, and beyond the sociology of texts and their producers, toward exploring the interpretive

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relations of literary and material form in early modern handwritten kabbalistic texts. The article showcases a single textual unit, *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot*, that MS Michael 473 contains, in order to focus on the position of practical kabbalistic texts and practices within the spectrum of kabbalistic traditions of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Eastern and Central Europe, ushered in by the contemporary modes of reading and transcription of texts.

◼ Keywords

kabbalah, practical knowledge, Jewish magic, material text, Jewish manuscript cultures, *sefirot*

◼ Introduction

The Oxford-Bodleian MS Michael 473 is a vast composite manuscript of over 200 folios, predominantly in quarto, cataloged invariably as a kabbalistic collectaneum. Composed of five major codicological units, datable between the mid-seventeenth and early eighteenth century, it contains in its present form over thirty identifiable textual units written in Ashkenazi (Eastern-Central European) cursive, non-square, and occasionally square script.[1] The volume represents a striking and yet very typical material format in which kabbalistic texts recorded in the early modern period have passed down to contemporary library collections. Comprising an array of textual units, from early medieval to early modern, this codex exposes a *tour d'horizon* of the kabbalistic manuscript culture of Ashkenaz (Eastern and Central Europe) that effectively brought it into its current shape.

In the catalog of Adolph Neubauer, who published his description of the Hebrew manuscript collection of the Bodleian Library in 1886, the manuscript is numbered 1960, quite reasonably under the heading of "other kabbalistic *collectanea*."[2] The codex appears just before the end of the "Kabbalah" section of the catalog, indeed following other, often lengthy and seemingly haphazardly ordered, kabbalistic

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[1] What I refer to as a "codicological unit" is an independent structure that was produced and used independently and only later added to another manuscript; therefore, it does not amount to the "paleographic unit." This understanding of codicological unit follows loosely what has been defined in the context of medieval manuscripts as "booklet"; see Pamela J. Robinson, "The 'Booklet': A Self-Contained Unit in Composite Manuscripts," in *Codicologica* 3 (ed. Albert Gruijs and J. P. Gumbert; Litterae Textuales; Leiden: Brill, 1980) 46–69. See also J. P. Gumbert, "Codicological Units: Towards a Terminology for the Stratigraphy of the Non-homogeneous Codex," in *Il codice miscellaneo. Tipologie e funzioni. Atti del convegno internazionale, Cassino 14–17 maggio 2003* (ed. Edoardo Crisci and Oronzo Pecere; Turnhout: Brepols, 2004) 17–42, at 25; and cf. Marilena Maniaci, "The Medieval Codex as a Complex Container: The Greek and Latin Traditions," in *One-Volume Libraries: Composite and Multiple-Text Manuscripts* (ed. Michael Friedrich and Cosima Schwarke; Studies in Manuscript Cultures 9; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016) 27–46.

[2] Adolf Neubauer, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library and in the College Libraries of Oxford, Including Mss. in Other Languages, Which Are Written with Hebrew Characters, or Relating to the Hebrew Language or Literature; and a Few Samaritan Mss.* (Catalogi Codd. Mss. Bibliothecae Bodleianae Pars XII; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886) 639.

collectanea. The precise rationale behind Neubauer's organization of his catalogue might not always be evident, but many of the late, more complex or outwardly convoluted kabbalistic codices of the Bodleian collections closed the catalog list labeled as "other," as opposed to the codices of simpler, less labyrinthine structure, perhaps also of more extraordinary and unique, if not early, content.

Nonetheless, several textual units contained in codex no. 1960 in Neubauer's catalog have drawn scholarly attention in the past, having been recognized as versions of well-known early Jewish mystical texts.[3] This was the case of the piece located on folios 23v–27v, which has been acknowledged in a critical edition as belonging to the so-called *Šiʿur Qomah,* a textual tradition on the anthropomorphic structure and measurement of the godhead, whose limbs consist of angelic names.[4] Likewise, the text that appears in MS Michael 473 on folios 112r–115v served as the basis for an edition of *'Alfa-Beta de-Metatron,* a short medieval commentary of Ashkenazi provenance on the special shapes of letters—a so-called angelic alphabet—whose authorship has been ascribed to the thirteenth-century Nehemiah ben Shlomo, a "prophet" of Erfurt.[5] The "other kabbalistic collectanea" also awoke the curiosity of Gershom Scholem. In his copy of Neubauer's catalog, Scholem noted codex no. 1960 among the sixteen manuscripts of the Bodleian Library of which he wished to secure a photographic reproduction.[6] What perturbed Scholem were two names that appear in passing in the volume: Rabbi Ozer he-Ḥasid[7] and Rabbi Shimshon.[8] Scholem noted the latter name with a question mark in the margin. Next to codex no. 1960 in his copy of Neubauer's catalog, he added a note which was as inquisitive as it is agitated: "*Wer ist R. Shimshon!!?*" ("Who is rabbi Shimshon!!?").

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[3] See a general description of this item in the Neubauer catalog, cited in n. 2, augmented in *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library. Supplement of Addenda and Corrigenda to Vol. 1 (A. Neubauer's Catalogue)* (compiled under the direction of Malachi Beit-Arié, ed. R. A. May; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) 354.

[4] See Martin Cohen, *The Shiʿur Qomah: Texts and Recensions* (TSAJ 9; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985). See also Asi Farber-Ginat, "Inquiries in *Shiʿur Qomah,*" in *Massu'ot: Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Philosophy in Memory of Professor Ephraim Gottlieb* (ed. Michal Oron and Amos Goldreich; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1994) 361–94 (Hebrew). Part of this text is parallel to that printed in *Sefer Raziel ha-Malakh* (Amsterdam, 1701), fols. 38r–v.

[5] Israel Weinstock, "The Alphabet of Metatron and Its Interpretations," *Temirin* 2 (1981) 51–76 (Hebrew); Moshe Idel, "Anonymous Commentary on the Alphabet of Metatron: An Additional Treatise of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo, the Prophet," *Tarbiz* 76 (2007) 255–64 (Hebrew).

[6] See Scholem's copy of the catalog in the Scholem Collection of the National Library of Israel, call no. 14247.

[7] The name of Ozer is mentioned in the collection of predominantly Lurianic fragments (*tiqqunim* and *sodot*) and practical kabbalistic matters on fols. 35r–93v.

[8] The copyist ascribed the commentary on ten *sefirot* (on fols. 6r–18v) to Rabbi Shimshon, who Scholem hesitantly identified with Shimshon [ben Pesaḥ] Ostropoler. On this kabbalist, see Yehuda Liebes, "Mysticism and Reality: Towards a Portrait of the Martyr and Kabbalist, R. Samson Ostropoler," in *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (ed. Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987) 221–55.

Indeed, reading premodern manuscripts to ferret out obscured identities of authorship and works or to resolve perplexing chronological ambiguities in texts and fragments thereof has been a general tendency of modern scholarship of kabbalah, one that had enthralled Scholem in his textual bibliographical explorations and that has dominated critical investigations of kabbalistic texts until today.[9] This modern enchantment of scholars suggests a certain nostalgia for fixed origins, definite sources, and often singular authorship—a propensity that resonates with theological desires and anxieties discoverable in many of the kabbalistic texts themselves—that could validate abundant textual production despite its unruly variability. A methodological tendency to search for the primary or ideal forms of texts imbued with authorial intentionality has had far-reaching consequences for the critical study of handwritten textual sources, including kabbalistic sources.[10] It has habitually cast any relatively late manuscripts as mere depositories of purportedly distorted "variants" or copies of earlier "original" texts and as material that at best contains secondary indications of what is or should have been erstwhile, authentic, or simply "a better reading."[11]

From a different reading perspective—one that arises from the growing field of material text studies—each codex could, and should, be construed as a consequence of textual and material choices predicated on historical circumstances and culturally and epistemically informed assumptions on the part of its producer(s). According to this approach, each textual unit emerges as evidence of multiple decisions of those who engaged in its reading, transcription, and subsequent transmission. Consequently, situating manuscript volumes, be they medieval or postmedieval, in the context of writing and reading practices of the culture that produced them offers a fresh hermeneutic of reading, one that zeroes in on recovering the historical and intellectual conditions that steered the recirculation of particular texts in specific cultural settings, despite any purported textual "distortions" entailed by the mode of their production.[12]

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[9] For a critical overview of historical and modern approaches to studying kabbalistic texts and textuality, see Daniel Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory: Methodologies of Textual Scholarship and Editorial Practice in the Study of Jewish Mysticism* (Sources and Studies in the Literature of Jewish Mysticism 36; Los Angeles: Cherub and Jerusalem: Magnes, 2013) 17–117, 555–73. See, however, the more materially grounded study of Malachi Beit-Arié, "Publication and Reproduction of Literary Texts in Medieval Jewish Civilization: Jewish Scribality and Its Impact on the Texts Transmitted," in *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality, and Cultural Diffusion* (ed. Yaakov Elman and Israel Gershoni; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) 225–47.

[10] See Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts*, 444–90. Cf. the recent volume of *Jewish History* 34 (2021), dedicated to new perspectives on the study of *Sefer Ḥasidim*, the book and its context. On the issue of the "authorship" of *Sefer Ḥasidim,* see, however, important notes of David I. Shyovitz, "Was Judah he-Ḥasid the 'Author' of *Sefer Ḥasidim*?," *Jewish History* 34 (2021) 31–52.

[11] See a critical reflection on this type of reading in the volume *Textual Distortion* (ed. Elaine Treharne and Greg Walker; Essays and Texts 2017; Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017).

[12] On the methodological influence of the studies on material text on various aspects of literary studies and book history in the contexts of the Western European premodern period, see, e.g.: András Kiséry and Allison Deutermann, "The Matter of Form: Book History, Formalist Criticism,

MS Michael 473, as a multiple-text and composite codex, tells an intricate story of the circulation and status of certain kabbalistic traditions in early modern Eastern and Central Europe. This story shares its implicit collective authorship between mostly anonymous contemporary copyists, compilers, redactors, and readers, who have all engaged in the fashioning of the codex, and its texts, in its present material form. This article draws on the hermeneutic potential of contextual reading of codicological units in complex manuscripts and of interpreting material choices taken by co-creators of codices by centering on MS Michael 473. It does so with a particular agenda that goes beyond tracing the sociology of texts, their producers, and consumers toward testing the interpretive relations of literary and material form in early modern handwritten kabbalistic texts.[13] In doing so, this article spotlights a single textual unit, *Qabbalat ‘Eser Sefirot,* that MS Michael 473 contains, in order to highlight the position of practical kabbalistic texts and performances within kabbalistic traditions of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Ashkenaz, steered by the modes of reading and practices of the contemporary transcription of texts. From the graphic format of the text to its location within the textual compilation to its placement in the composite manuscript codex, this article explores how the material shape of a text molds its potential readings inasmuch as its literary form remains in constant interpretive relation and often depends on the manuscript as the material object that holds it.

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and Francis Bacon’s Aphorisms,” in *The Book in History, the Book as History: New Intersections of the Material Text; Essays in Honor of David Scott Kastan* (ed. Heidi Brayman, Jesse M. Lander, and Zachary Lesser; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016) 29–63; Arthur Bahr and Alexandra Gillespie, “Medieval English Manuscripts: Form, Aesthetics, and the Literary Text,” *The Chaucer Review* 47 (2013) 346–60; Leah Price, “Reading Matter,” in “The History of the Book and the Idea of Literature,” special issue, *PMLA* 121 (2006) 9–16; D. F. McKenzie, “Typography and Meaning: The Case of William Congreve,” in *Making Meaning: “Printers of the Mind” and Other Essays* (ed. Peter D. McDonald and Michael F. Suarez, S.J.; Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002) 198–236; *Textual Cultures: Cultural Texts* (ed. Orietta da Rold and Elaine Treharne; Texts and Essays 2010; Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010). Earlier attempts at a similar approach to textual production have been made by Daniel Abrams in, e.g., “A Commentary to the Ten Sefirot from Early Thirteenth-Century Catalonia: Synoptic Edition, Translation and Detailed Commentary,” *Kabbalah* 30 (2013) 7–63, esp. 8, although, paradoxically, with adherence to the notion of the “genealogy of versions” of texts that would constitute “the definition of ‘the work.’ ”

[13] On such a methodological approach in wider contexts, see Peter McDonald, “Ideas of the Book and Histories of Literature: After Theory?,” in “The History of the Book and the Idea of Literature,” special issue, *PMLA* 121 (2006) 214–28, at 225; Leah Price, “From the History of a Book to a ‘History of the Book,’ ” *Representations* 108 (2009) 120–38, esp. 123; Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, “Surface Reading: An Introduction,” *Representations* 108 (2009) 1–21, esp. 6; Matthew Zarnowiecki, “Reading Shakespeare Miscellaneously: Ben Johnson, Robert Chester, and *Varum Chorus of Loves Martyr*,” in *Formal Matters: Reading the Materials of English Renaissance Literature* (ed. Allison K. Deutermann and András Kiséry; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013) 34–54. See also Henry S. Turner, “Lessons from Literature for the Historian of Science (and Vice Versa): Reflections on ‘Form,’ ” *Isis* 101 (2010) 578–89.

▪ Textual Makeup of *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot*: The Written Matter

Among his observations on MS Michael 473, Gershom Scholem noted that one textual unit that was copied on folios 27v–32v has parallels in two other manuscripts: MS NLI 28 251 and MS Michael Add. 18. This text, which encompasses a textual unit on the uses of ten *sefirot*—that is, of the decadic structure of divine emanation—was included by Scholem in his list of commentaries on ten *sefirot* at number 105.[14] In MS Michael 473, this "commentary" on ten *sefirot* is featured within the third codicological unit that consists of thirteen regular quarto folios and sixty-four pages, written in mid-seventeenth-century Ashkenazi non-square script.[15] This entire codicological unit forms a curious assemblage of brief kabbalistic texts and comments. It begins with a short treatise on the matters of reincarnation—whose authorship has been ascribed to Moshe Cordovero, a sixteenth-century kabbalist of Palestinian Safed—copied on folios 6r–19v.[16] Then follows a selection of short pieces on sundry kabbalistic matters, commenting chiefly on liturgical texts and often quoted in the name of Isaac Luria, arguably the most influential kabbalist of early modernity, active in late sixteenth-century Safed. Finally, several passages of *Ši'ur Qomah,* a late-antique mystical text on the dimensions of the godhead, form a textual unit that occupies folios 23v–27v.[17] This assemblage of early mystical and later kabbalistic texts or excerpts thereof, which at first glance seems haphazardly ordered and thematically incongruous, ends with a text perhaps the most bizarre of all in this gathering—the anonymous commentary noted by Scholem, introduced by the scribe of MS Michael 473 as *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot* ("The tradition/wisdom of ten *sefirot*").[18]

Opening with a square initial word of scribal invocation to the divine, the text of *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot* follows the preceding textual unit without any title or a page break. In its graphic layout, it forms two visually distinct parts. The first part sets forth the so-called traditions (*qabbalot*) about ten *sefirot*—divine energies or emanations that build up the godhead in the majority of kabbalistic theosophies or

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[14] Gershom Scholem, "Index of the Commentaries on Ten *Sefirot*," *Qiryat Sefer* 10 (1933–1934) 498–515, at 509 (Hebrew). Even though the literature of commentaries is often polemical in character, numerous commentaries on ten *sefirot* display a great deal of similarity. The text included by Scholem in his list under no. 105 stands out among the texts of this genre with regard to its thematic purview.

[15] Two types of paper make up this unit; watermarks on one of them are comparable to those produced in the last decades of the 16th cent. in the papermill of Liegnitz, Lower Silesia (Gravell Watermark Archive Arms.906.1; Briquet no. 1157).

[16] On this text, see Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts in the National and University Library in Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: n.p., 1930) 99–100 (Hebrew); Bracha Sack, "Some Remarks on Rabbi Moses Cordovero's *Shemu'ah be-'Inyan ha-Gilgul*," in *Perspectives on Jewish Thought and Mysticism* (ed. Alfred L. Ivry, Elliot R. Wolfson, Allan Arkush; Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 1998) 277–88.

[17] See n. 2 above.

[18] An edition (Hebrew) of this text by Yoed Kadari has been announced in Yuval Harari, "'Practical Kabbalah' and the Jewish Tradition of Magic," *Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism* 19 (2019) 38–83, at 60.

interpretations of metaphysics. These traditions relate to the first six *sefirot* of the ten (from *Keter*, the uppermost *sefirah,* down to *Tif'eret*, the middle, or sixth, *sefirah*). This first section of text formally retains some structural features characteristic of the genre of commentaries on *sefirot*.[19] As such, it unfolds as a sequence of theoretical explications that pertain to the status and essential characteristics of each of the divine aspects, one by one and in descending order—that is, from the *sefirah* that is closest to the one that is farthest from the source of emanation.[20] And yet, instead of the anticipated elucidation of the theosophical significance of each *sefirah* and the implications thereof for liturgy and other ritualistic acts of worship*,* the text of *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot* sets out with detailed instructions for practical procedures and linguistic formulas devised to harness the power of the *sefirot* in the material world for the benefit of its reader-practitioner. The text thus foregrounds the theosophical rationale for practical kabbalistic procedures to be enacted within the human realm, all associated and contingent upon the power of the relevant stratum of the godhead. In practice, *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot* instructs a practitioner to reach to, draw down, and manipulate divine energy via the channel of divine names, with which each *sefirah* is correlated and whose power administers each of the procedures outlined in the initial part of the text. For instance, the passage that prescribes a practice to take vengeance over one's enemies, recommends:

> This is the tradition of the *sefirah* Geburah: if you want to overcome your foes, recite this prayer as it is written in the sphere of the *sefirah* Geburah, in clean clothes and prayer shawl. On the third day [of the week] write on goat parchment: "Let it be your will, holy, pure and appointed angels: Gabri'el, the angel in charge of Geburah, Šamaši'el, the angel of the sun, Ṣuri'el, in charge of the power of the names written in the sphere of the *sefirah* Geburah. And with the power of holy and pure names within the *sefirah* Geburah, outside [of it], [let it be that] they order to anger and wrath, to the angels of death in charge of humans and animals, to Mašbir, the angel of death in charge of large living creatures, and to Mašḥit,[21] the angel of death in charge of the small, so that they break the power of so-and-so, and subjugate him, and

[19] Generally speaking, the commentaries on ten *sefirot* form a type of explanatory literature that aims at exposing the symbolic meaning of Scripture in its reference to the structure and subtleties of the godhead. This genre is rarely considered to be hermeneutically original, but rather, to reflect the processes of conservation and systematization of thought. Its emergence is thus datable to the 13th cent., when a decadic form of symbolism had already been well accepted as part of the literary kabbalistic tradition. See Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988) 216–17; Michal Oron, "The Literature of Commentaries to the Ten Sefirot," in *Studies in Jewish History Presented to Joseph Hacker* (ed. Yaron Ben-Naeh et al.; Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2014) 212–29 (Hebrew); cf. Tsahi Weiss and Na'ama Ben-Shahar, "The Order of Emanation Regarding 'The Unity of Our God and Our Torah for Our People'—A Commentary on the Ten Sefirot from the 'Circle of *Sefer ha-Temunah*,'" *Kabbalah* 41 (2018) 279–304 (Hebrew).

[20] A well-known exception to this rule is the 13th-cent. commentary *Ša'arei 'Orah* of Joseph Gikatilla.

[21] The Hebrew word *mašḥit* (lit., causing damage) appears as a name of an angel in, e.g., *Pirqei de-Rabbi 'Eli'ezer*, ch. 45.

bring fire and fever into his body, and pierce his body with evil spirits and demons, and not release him until you exhaust [his] strength, Qafaṣi'el, the angel of youth." Put this writing in the garment or shroud of the dead, pierce a hole in a tree that has not yet borne fruits, and when you place this writing in the hole, recite in the name of Panafi'el, [the angel] in charge of trees, and close the hole with tar or mud, and recite these psalms: "God of retribution, YHVH! God of retribution, appear!" [Ps 94:1], and the psalm: "O God of his praise, do not keep silent" [cf. Ps 109:1].[22] [Figure 1 below]
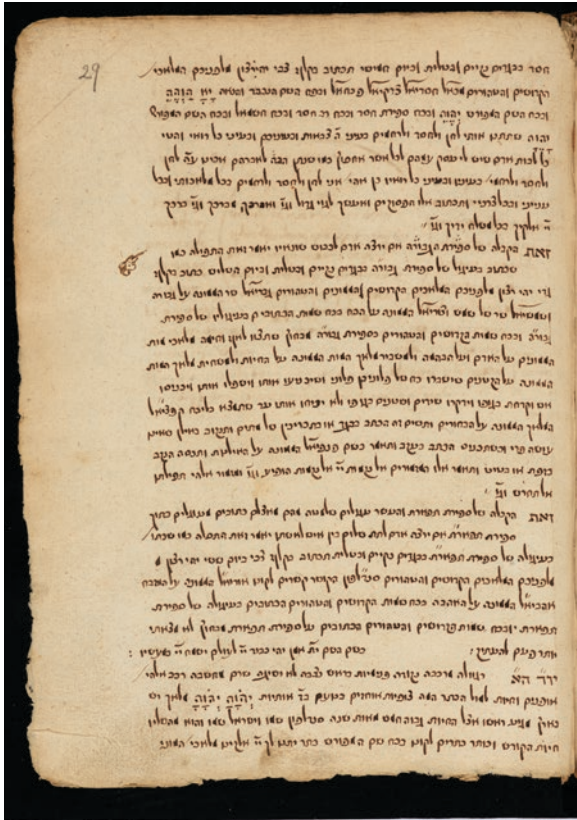

Figure 1
The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford. MS Michael 473, folio
29r. Creative Commons licence CC-BY-NC 4.0.

After a series of similarly detailed descriptions of rituals and practical guidelines that pertain to the first six *sefirot* of the usual decadic structure of the godhead, the text continues with listing the divine and angelic names the practitioner ought to employ during the recommended procedure. Sequences of these names compose

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[22] MS Michael 473, fol. 29r. Translations are my own. Biblical texts follow the translation of the Jewish Publication Society, with minor modifications.

the second part of the text. They feature on the subsequent folios of the manuscript inscribed within circular shapes that represent *sefirot* graphically, with one or two of these shapes per page. The second part of the commentary thus consists of a series of circular schemes embodying the decade of *sefirot,* from the upper one to the lower one, and of complementary texts written around them. A form or two of Tetragrammaton, accompanied with a particular vowel pattern, heads each of the *sefirotic* circles. Apart from the Tetragrammaton, each circle also includes a textual formula for the adjuration of angels, with three to four angelic names per circle, that correlate with the divine name and the particular properties of the respective *sefirah* being referenced.[23] These liturgical and adjuratory formulae ought to be enacted either in writing or vocally, per the reader's understanding, during performances described in the first part of the text:

> YHVH: "Your ways, O God, are in holiness; what god is great as our God?" [Ps 77:13]; O Lord God, the measure of Judgment, the Judgment of fire in Mercy, "the terror of night" [Ps 91:5], "a well of fresh water" [Gen 26:19], "Had not the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, been with me" [Gen 31:42], "Isaac sowed seeds in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because YHVH blessed him" [Gen 26:12], the binding of Isaac, the horn of fear, "There is Solomon's carriage, encircled by sixty warriors, of the warriors of Israel, all of them wearing the sword, all experienced in battle" [Song 3:7–8], Ga<u>b</u>ri'el, Šamaši'el, Ṣuri'el. Yiṣḥaq.[24]

All three elements involved in the ritual performances advised by the text inside the circles—that is, the variant or variants of the vocalized Tetragrammaton, the name of respective *sefirah,* and the angelic names—are therefore jointly correlated in the formula, situated intertextually within biblical citations, as well as visually highlighted by the scribe across the entire textual unit. Additionally, next to each of the *sefirotic* representations there appears another prayer-adjuration, one that includes several further biblical passages, referring both to the power of the respective *sefirah* and to the angelic and divine names that appear in the adjuratory formula inscribed inside the *sefirotic* circle:

> Let it be your will, the holy and pure angels, Ga<u>b</u>ri'el, the warrior angel, Šamaši'el, in charge of the sun, Ṣuri'el, in charge of the power [of the names], so that you bring my soul to the mists of purity and show me in a dream the Garden of Eden and the academies of the righteous, and teach me the following day of the secret wisdom, as the Holy One, Blessed be He, gave this wisdom to Isaac, our forefather, [so too] bring fear and terror on my enemies, through the power of the holy and pure names written within

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[23] On adjurations and incantations in Jewish magical and early mystical literatures, see Yuval Harari, *Jewish Magic before the Rise of Kabbalah* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017) 122–28, 148–49, 170–74, 187–93; and Moshe Idel, "Between Ashkenaz and Castile in the Thirteenth Century: Incantations, Lists, and Gates of Sermons in the Circle of Rabbi Nehemiah ben Shlomo the Prophet, and their Influences," *Tarbiz* 77 (2008) 475–554 (Hebrew).

[24] MS Michael 473, fol. 31r.

the circle of the *sefirah* Geḇurah, and in the honorable name of Y'YTHH, and through the power of the ineffable name YHVH YHVH, "maintaining love to thousands *maintaining love to thousands* [*sic!*]" [Exod 34:7], overpowered in greatness, "YHVH is good to all" [Ps 145:9] who call upon Him.[25]

The prayer-adjuration and related biblical passages add a further explanatory layer to the recommended performances and draw on an early tradition of mystical ascents on high, granted to humans by angels on account of the adjuration of the proper name. Such visions were to endow the initiate with requested knowledge and wisdom, to be utilized particularly for public preaching and inspired writing, deemed enthused by prophetic spirit.[26] These performances emerge here contingent on the power of the respective *sefirah* and the divine name, while situated within the textual web of biblical quotations that establish a scriptural anchor for the practical, often very technical, and quite unconventional rituals suggested in the first part of the text. So, the procedure related to Ḥoḵmah recommends baking a cake of wheat, sugar, and spices and eating a mouthful of it upon reciting the prescribed formula once a day and once a night, for fifteen consecutive days and nights, all while keeping one's hands down, wearing clean clothes, and donning a prayer shawl.[27] The same prayer formula is also claimed to be effective in a related procedure intended to impart knowledge to a youngster, for whom one should write an amulet, dissolve it in white wine, and give the liquid to the youngster to drink. A more intricate technique, the purpose of which is to gain the ability of preaching in public, engages the *sefirah* Binah by concocting a dough mixed with the flesh of a slaughtered white cock and consuming the prepared mixture at night with the first cock's crow,[28] after cleansing hands with rose water and on reciting the adjuratory formula of proper names.[29]

Indeed, the matters of unusual rituals exposed in *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot* may not meet the expectations of readers accustomed to the genre of kabbalistic commentaries on ten *sefirot*. The first portion of this text explores six performances, all of which voice a human concern with the acquisition of extraordinary abilities through the manipulation of powers associated with the *sefirot*. All but one of the procedures mentioned in the text recommend crafting amulets, thus concentrating on manual production and enactment of the artifact inscribed with divine names, made of buckskin for Keter and Tif'eret and of goat leather for Ḥesed and Geḇurah. There is no discussion of the significance of each *sefirah* within the theosophical order

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[25] Ibid.

[26] See Moshe Idel, *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism: Pillars, Lines, Ladders* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2005) 23–72, and the bibliography adduced there; idem, "Between Ashkenaz and Castile," 493–99, 544–45.

[27] The names of necessary ingredients, such as *azucar* (sugar), suggest that the text derives from a Spanish-Iberian linguistic area.

[28] On the uses of slaughtered cocks in Jewish magic, see Yuval Harari, "Three Charms for Killing Adolf Hitler: Practical Kabbalah in WW2," *Aries* 17 (2017) 196–99.

[29] See Harari, "Practical Kabbalah," 57–60.

of divine emanation—apart from asserting the obvious sequence of *sefirot*—nor of the symbolic referents of the divine aspects and the dynamics of relations between them, topics that would customarily find their place in the various commentaries on the ten *sefirot*. Rather, this text focuses exclusively on ritual performances and their accompanying practical procedures and adjurations. The connection between specific performance and the corresponding *sefirah* rests on an elementary, even idiomatic, understanding of the aspects of decadic divine structure. And so, the highest of *sefirot,* Keter, controls the process of automatic writing;[30] Ḥokmah, which stands for the attribute of divine wisdom, governs human memory and processes of acquiring eternal knowledge (or, "opening of one's heart" for learning);[31] Binah, the *sefirah* of the divine intelligence, safeguards the skill of preaching in public;[32] Ḥesed, being the divine aspect of loving-kindness, provides respect and admiration in social contexts; Geburah, the fifth *sefirah* of harsh judgment, assumes the power of wreaking vengeance and administering punishment on enemies;[33] while Tif'eret, the *sefirah* that stands for the male companion of Šekinah, or the lowest and female aspect of the godhead, brings about love between husband and wife.[34]

Ten circular shapes that follow the textual exposition of six performances related to the *sefirot* form the axis of the commentary: they serve the purpose of visual aid for the reader that enables them to correlate properly each of the described procedures with the pertinent level of the godhead. The graphic facet of the commentary—that is, the representation of ten *sefirot* in circular shapes—draws together all of the parts of the text and emerges to be hermeneutically crucial for construing both the meanings and the enactments of the prescribed ritual performances, especially the amulets. Plausibly, the common idiom of visualizing and representing *sefirot* in a circular shape, found in the traditional imagining of *sefirot* in the form of spheres arranged into a more or less complex arboreal schema (*'ilan ha-sefirot*), and known from kabbalistic manuscripts from the thirteenth century onward, modeled the graphic imagery of the commentary.[35] Likewise, the correlation between the names

[30] Ibid.; Amos Goldreich, *Automatic Writing in Zoharic Literature and Modernism* (Los Angeles: Cherub, 2010) 85–92.

[31] See Yuval Harari, "To Open One's Heart," in *Shefa Tal: Studies in Jewish Thought and Jewish Culture Presented to Bracha Sack* (ed. Ze'ev Gries et al.; Be'er Sheva: University of Ben Gurion in the Negev Press, 2004) 303–47 (Hebrew); Gideon Bohak, "A Jewish Charm for Memory and Understanding," in *Jewish Education from Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Studies in Honour of Philip S. Alexander* (ed. George J. Brooke and Renate Smithuis; Leiden: Brill, 2017) 324–40.

[32] See nn. 21 and 22 above.

[33] On Jewish aggressive magic, see Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 123–31; and Alessia Bellusci, "Oneiric Aggressive Magic: Sleep Disorders in Late Antique Jewish Tradition," in *Demons and Illness: Theory and Practice from Antiquity to the Early Modern Period* (ed. Siam Bhayro and Catherine Rider; Leiden: Brill, 2017) 134–74.

[34] On Jewish love magic, see Ortal-Paz Saar, *Jewish Love Magic from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

[35] On the development of visual representation of *sefirot* and its language, see J. H. Chajes, "Spheres, Sefirot, and the Imaginal Astronomical Discourse of Classical Kabbalah," *HTR* 113

of *sefirot* and their qualities with the results of their practical employment, effected in the physical world, seems to have been a consequence of a common and almost rudimentary understanding of the entire decadic structure of the godhead and of divine aspects embodied by each of the ten emanations.[36] The aim expressed in the first part of the text, in each individual *qabbalah,* is fulfilled through ritual performance, one that includes specific bodily preparations and/or technical devices carried out at a designated time and place. Nevertheless, the ritual efficacy of such performances hinges on the enacted formulae placed within the *sefirotic* circles, included in the second part of the text as it is laid out in MS Michael 473 and performed during the recommended ritual. The adjuratory formulae inscribed within and outside the spherical figures are designed to activate divine energy via the names of angels ("with the power of the holy and pure names inscribed in the circle of the *sefirah*"), each of which correlates to the relevant *sefirah* and therefore to the appropriate divine emanation with its attributes. Implicitly, the power that the *sefirot* channel via the angelic figures derives from the Tetragrammaton and its variant vocalizations. These variants feature in the text in the adjuratory phrases that invoke the higher power of the divine name ("by the esteemed name" or "by the power of the ineffable name, YHVH"), placed within the six introductory descriptions of performances, within the formulae around the circular designs, and on top of each of these circles.

The text inscribed in and around the circular designs in MS Michael 473 (fols. 29r–32v) supplies the written material—the adjuration formulae in their particular graphic form—for the performance of rituals (*qabbalot*) exposed in the opening part of the text (fols. 27v–29r), even though the latter pertains only to the first six divine emanations, leaving four formulae without descriptions of their corresponding ritual performances. The anonymous scribe who copied the text of *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot* in MS Michael 473 acknowledged this dissymmetry with a degree of surprise, stating: "I did not find more of this to copy." This statement appears just after the exposition of the *qabbalah* of the sixth *sefirah* (fol. 29r) and before the scribe turns to the adjuratory formula around the circular shape of the first *sefirah,* Keter. In fact, there are a few other textual inconsistencies that are revealing in terms of the scribe's way of reading and their sensitivity to the form and medium of the text being copied. According to the text, only after a practitioner has properly employed adjurations of angelic names related to a particular *sefirah* may they draw from its

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(2020) 230–62; Daniel Abrams, "Kabbalistic Paratext," *Kabbalah* 26 (2012) 7–24; idem, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts*, 618–26; idem, "Divine Multiplicity: The Presentation of Differing Sefirotic Diagrams in Kabbalistic Manuscripts," *Kabbalah* 50 (2021) 81–152; Giulio Busi, "Beyond the Burden of Idealism: For a New Appreciation of the Visual Lore in the Kabbalah," in *Kabbalah and Modernity: Interpretations, Transformations, Adaptations* (ed. Boaz Huss, Marco Pasi, and Kocku von Stuckrad; Leiden: Brill, 2010) 29–46.

[36] On practical kabbalistic and talismanic uses of scrolls that represent trees of *sefirot*, see J. H. Chajes, "Kabbalah Practices/Practical Kabbalah: The Magic of Kabbalistic Trees," *Aries* 19 (2019) 112–45.

supernatural power. In addition to the names playing a crucial role in how the rituals are structured, they also take center stage in the formal layout of the commentary. The circular shapes representing *sefirot*, inscribed with divine and angelic names, form the axis of the text's *mise-en-page* in MS Michael 473. The text references these names at all stages as the source of power for the adjurer and the moving force behind the rituals, but it does so with curious specificity: the supernatural "power of the *sefirah*" (כח הספירה) derives from "the holy and pure names written inside the circlet of the *sefirah*" (השמות הקדושים והטהורים הכתובים בעיגולת של ספירה), but also from those inscribed "on/in the *sefirah* . . . , outside" (השמות הקדושים והטהורים הכתובים על/בספירת . . . מבחוץ). Thus, the text self-references its own written and graphic shape—that is, names positioned in a certain way on the page—as much as it suggests to the reader a tangible reality of the powers it represents in a material format. In the end, the names are copied, as per the scribe's expression "in" and "around" the *sefirot*, and not "in" and "around" the circular designs that merely represent the *sefirot*.

Similar formulations appear across the entire textual unit rather consistently, with reference to all the recommended procedures and prayers as inscribed in and around the ten circlets of *sefirot,* although with slight but telling variations. For instance, when copying the procedures for the second *sefirah,* the scribe noted the power of names related to it and "written inside the *sefirah* Ḥokmah" (fol. 28v), while skipping the word "circlet" (עיגול or עיגולה, *'igul* or *'igulah*)—a slip of pen that may suggest a degree of collapse between the graphical and the metaphysical for the copyist. It seems it was already idiomatic by the late Middle Ages to visualize *sefirot* graphically as spheres, or render them two dimensionally as circles, and also to deploy such depictions to practical kabbalistic or magical ends. In effect, the material (and not symbolic) understanding of *sefirot* allows for the redeployment of their visual representation in practical contexts of all sorts. It is to this specific graphic convention that the copyist of MS Michael 473 related, and which he actively employed. But more than that, as the whole text references divine names embedded in and related to a specific graphic shape, it suggests to the reader that the textual layer achieves meaning and efficacy when enfolded in a specific formal arrangement. The construing of the text, as much as the ritual experience described within it, is effectively molded by a specific graphic convention, mediated by its material distribution at the heart of the textual unit. At that, the reader's expectations ensuing from the formal features common to the genre of commentary on ten *sefirot*—indeed, the text establishes itself smoothly within the authoritative tradition referred to as *qabbalat 'eser sefirot,* "the tradition of ten *sefirot*"—as much as from the text's graphic disposition, shape the reading experience, even more so when the textual content does not easily conform to these convention-related expectations.

◼ Of *Sefirot*, Angels, and Divine Names: Textual Precedents and Material Recontextualizations

An interrelation between divine names, *sefirot*, and angels manifests in practices aimed at harnessing supernatural power for all kinds of earthly purposes, analogous to that transpiring in the *Qabbalat ʿEser Sefirot,* and appears in medieval textual traditions linked to a fourteenth-century kabbalistic *Sefer Brit ha-Menuḥah* ("The Book of the Covenant of Serenity").[37] This text comprises perhaps the most elaborate Jewish medieval attempt at providing a comprehensive theoretical framework for the kabbalistic concepts of language that underpin much of the practices related to utilizing divine names, in both contemporary and later kabbalistic contexts. *Sefer ha-Geburah,* one of the earliest layers that forms the textual tapestry of *Brit ha-Menuḥah,* is the closest parallel to the ideas recorded in the second part of *Qabbalat ʿEser Sefirot.*[38] In essence, the so-called *Sefer ha-Geburah* consists of a short prayer-adjuration intended for use by those who wish to achieve exceptional learning abilities. The adjuration directed to summon the powers of ten angels dubbed "the ten [mighty] warriors" (*ʿAsarah ha-Gibborim*) constitutes its central part*,* one that ought to be recited before any further performance. Remarkably, after a general invocation, each name of the ten angelic figures reappears in an adjuration formula while linked to one of the ten *sefirot* whose power or metaphysical status the angel represents.[39] In the context of *Sefer ha-Geburah,* the adjuration of ten *gibborim,* the mighty warriors, sets out to make practical use of the ontological structure laid out in the earlier parts of the text, presented chiefly in the form of lists of distinct entities that build up the order of the universe. In the passages quoted above, the supernatural power flows from the center of this scheme (i.e., the ineffable divine name) down to the human worshiper, while mediated through the ten angelic figures. Each of these ten supreme angels features within the theosophical structure—that is, as a counterpart to one of the ten *sefirot*. The powers and abilities transmitted through angels toward the earthly realm correlate, although at times only loosely, with the idiomatic meaning and function of their names or of the name of a related *sefirah.* And so, for instance, the *sefirah* Ḥokmah (wisdom) provides the highest form of wisdom, the *sefirah* Binah (intelligence) furnishes one with the abilities of understanding, while the angel Refaʾel (of Hebrew root ר-פ-א, to heal) affords good health. The adjuration thus addresses the Tetragrammaton, the preexisting divine name that underlies the whole of created reality, and whose power extends to the lower worlds via angels as conduits of its transmission, identified with *sefirot.* In this sense, *sefirot* and the ten angel-warriors appear coterminous if not identical,

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[37] See *Sefer Bʾrit ha-Menuḥa (Book of Covenant of Serenity): Critical Edition and Prefaces* (ed. Oded Porat; Jerusalem: Magnes, 2016) 30–31 (Hebrew).

[38] On the relation between *Sefer ha-Geburah* and *Sefer Brit ha-Menuḥah*, see ibid., 30–31.

[39] NY Ms 1967, fols. 15r–17r. Cf. *Book of Covenant of Serenity* (ed. Porat), 369–70: "Ḥakamiʾel and all his camps, with the rank of *sefirah* Ḥokmah, to impart wisdom to me, to save and protect me from all the misery and distress."

since—in the larger context of *Sefer ha-Geḇurah,* as well as other parts of *Brit Menuḥah*—both the *sefirot* and the ten angel-warriors essentially result from the first emanative stimulus of the divine and precede the created world.[40]

Strikingly, the association of each *sefirah* with a specific angelic name in both the prayer-adjuration of *Sefer ha-Geḇurah* and *Qabbalat ʿEser Sefirot* of MS Michael 473 is near-exact: thus, in both texts, the *sefirah* Keter counterparts the angel Yaho'el; *sefirah* Ḥokmah—(Ye)ḥakami'el; *sefirah* Binah—Nuri'el; *sefirah* Geḇurah—Gaḇri'el; *sefirah* Neṣaḥ—Pani'el/Pami'el; *sefirah* Hod—Aza'el/Asa'el; *sefirah* Yesod—Refa'el; and *sefirah* Malkhut—Bar(a)ḵi'el.[41] This similarity suggests a close link between the two textual units*,* even if the angelic lineup in one of these texts is slightly more elaborate: each of the *sefirot* is paralleled in *Qabbalat ʿEser Sefirot*, not with one central angelic name but with at least two or three. Moreover, parts of *Qabbalat ʿEser Sefirot* contain invocations of angelic names whose powers seem to be conferred to the worshiper directly, by the command of the angelic powers ("May it be your will, the holy and pure angels," fol. 28v), who in turn receive nourishment from the source of power within the Tetragrammaton, via the dynamics of its vocalization. In both texts, the angelic, the *sefirotic*, and the divine names ought to be effectively adjured side by side and seem to play the same coercive role in the recommended adjuratory formulae. Indeed, the text of *Qabbalat ʿEser Sefirot* distributes both the angelic and the divine names derivative of Tetragrammaton equally within the circles of *sefirot,* which unambiguously suggests the notion of angels and *sefirot* as equal channels for the transmission of power that has its source and seat within the Tetragrammaton. Last,

[40] On pre-kabbalistic interpretations of the continuity between the divine and its various manifestations, or attributes representing God in the world (referring to the interpretation of *b Ber.* 7a; *b Ḥag.* 15a), see A. T. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1977) x; Peter Hayman, "Monotheism: A Misused Word in Jewish Studies," *JJS* 42 (1991) 1–15; Yehuda Liebes, *The Sin of Elisha: The Four Who Entered the Pardes and the Nature of Talmudic Mysticism* (Jerusalem: Academon, 1990) (Hebrew); Guy Stroumsa, "Aher: A Gnostic," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the Conference at Yale, March 1978* (ed. Bentley Layton; 2 vols.; Numen Book Series 41; Leiden: Brill, 1981) 2:808–18; David Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988) 31–37, 202–5; Menahem Kister, "Metatron and God, and the Problem of Two Powers: Toward an Explanation of the Dynamics of Traditions, Interpretation, and Ritual," *Tarbiz* 82 (2013) 43–88 (Hebrew). On various reformulations of the status of special angels, especially Metatron, as an elevated being, deemed coterminous and yet dependent on God, see, e.g., Daniel Abrams, "The Boundaries of the Divine Ontology: The Inclusion and Exclusion of Metatron in the Godhead," *HTR* 87 (1994) 291–321; Elliot R. Wolfson, "Metatron and Shiʿur Qomah in the Writings of Haside Ashkenaz," in *Mysticism, Magic, and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism: International Symposium Held in Frankfurt am Main in 1991* (ed. Karl E. Grözinger and Joseph Dan; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995) 60–92; Moshe Idel, *Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism* (Jerusalem: Continuum, 2007); idem, *The Angelic World: Apotheosis and Theophany* (Tel Aviv: Yediʿot Aharonot, 2008) (Hebrew); Tsahi Weiss, *Cutting the Shoots: The Worship of the Shekhinah in the World of Early Kabbalistic Literature* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2015) 24–39 (Hebrew).

[41] For the *sefirah* Ḥesed and its counterpart in angel Ṣedaqi'el of *Sefer ha-Geḇurah* there is a precedent in the first part of *Qabbalat ʿEser Sefirot*, so that only *sefirah* Tifʾeret has two different angelic equivalents in both texts: Michael in *Sefer ha-Geḇurah* and Sandalfon in *Qabbalat ʿEser Sefirot.*

the focus on internal dynamics between *sefirot,* so characteristic of theosophical kabbalah in general and of the genre of commentaries on ten *sefirot* in particular, is not to be found in either *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot* or early texts associated with *Brit ha-Menuḥah,* such as *Sefer ha-Geḇurah,* which instead focus entirely on the dynamics of the fluctuating vocalizations of the divine name and on the influence of these on the created world.[42]

Both textual traditions, of *Brit ha-Menuḥah* and of the related *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot*, are reminiscent of the medieval kabbalistic experiment of fitting two ostensibly different if not competing conceptualizations of the divine within one comprehensive metaphysical system, in which the theosophical idea of the ten *sefirot* overlaps with the intricate yet hierarchical angelology.[43] This attempt, advanced textually in the fullest manner by *Brit ha-Menuḥah*, foregrounded the significance of *sefirot* and, crucially, their names as powers that operate in the universe either on a par with, and at times as, angels, within the boundaries delimited by the law of divine onomastics. Such an understanding of the *sefirot* as independent of their nuanced roles in the theosophical system of divine emanation—typical of medieval kabbalah of Spanish derivation, and as supra-angelic figures that conjoin the human and the divine realm, well-grounded in ancient Jewish mystical and magical vision of metaphysics—subsequently allowed for multifarious appearances of the *sefirotic* design in new and often unexpected literary contexts, particularly those practically oriented. These textual and performative traditions that appropriated a conceptualization of ten *sefirot* as angelic counterparts were fundamentally underlain by the view of the Tetragrammaton as a central symbol and overarching framework of the divine structure ready to be influenced and actively deployed by human agents.

Indeed, these kabbalistic textual traditions, especially in the form of smaller textual units and short excerpts of longer treatises, were deployed by scribes and readers in a number of ways in handwritten anthologies and compilations of practical character, where situatedness within new literary and material contexts often offered these texts radically distinctive meanings.[44] And so, apart from its usual setting within the larger *Brit ha-Menuḥah* treatise, the text of *Sefer ha-Geḇurah* appears to have been independently copied into magical and practical kabbalistic manuscript compilations. This is, for instance, the case of a fifteenth-century collectaneum of

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[42] See *Book of Covenant of Serenity* (ed. Porat), 9–21, 35–42.

[43] On other types of relations between *sefirot* and angels as reflected in early kabbalistic texts, especially in performative contexts, see Tsahi Weiss, "Prayers to Angels and the Early Sefirotic Literature," *JSQ* 27 (2020) 22–35. See also Yoed Kadari, "The Debate about Prayers to Angels, R. Abraham Halevi and the Kabbalistic Circle in Jerusalem" (MA thesis; Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2008) 22–28 (Hebrew).

[44] See further in Agata Paluch, "Copying, Compiling, Commonplacing: *Sefer ha-Heshek* and the Kabbalah of Divine Names in the Early Modern Ashkenaz," in *Representing Jewish Thought: Proceedings of the 2015 Institute of Jewish Studies Conference Held in Honour of Professor Ada Rapoport-Albert* (ed. Agata Paluch; IJS Studies in Judaica 21; Leiden: Brill, 2021) 100–25.

Middle Eastern derivation, wherein *Sefer ha-Geburah* features among numerous traditions of linguistic kabbalah combined with magical texts and recipes (viz. NY Public Library MS 190 [formerly MS Sassoon 56]), in between excerpts from *Sefer ha-Razim*, short kabbalistic *sodot* (secrets) on divine names, and formulae of angelic adjurations.[45] It is, however, the early modern Ashkenazi manuscript culture in which the texts of *Brit ha-Menuḥah* burgeoned, copied in full, excerpted into compilations, or abridged, especially into books of practical kabbalistic recipes and how-to books. The circulation of *Brit ha-Menuḥah* or parts of its textual layers in the early modern Ashkenazi compilations of kabbalistic and practical handbooks found its curious counterpart in the distribution of practical formulae that employ *sefirot* as entities that may be adjured and coerced by humans aiming to harness *sefirotic* powers for their own, often mundane, ends. One such exemplary practical handbook, a late seventeenth- to early eighteenth-century Ashkenazi product of mostly singular scribal and compilatory work, Oxford-Bodleian MS Opp. 485, comprises in its current form the full text of *Brit ha-Menuḥah* (following the printed edition of Amsterdam 1648), encompassed by an assemblage of recipes and short magical and kabbalistic textual units or excerpts thereof. Among the latter, there appear several textual pieces in which adjurations of ten *sefirot* were recommended for the practitioner for the purposes of annihilation of evil spirits and forces. These adjurations would be designed to affect the ten *sefirot* directly, as in formulae against powers of impurity addressed to them ("I adjure you, ten *sefirot* . . . ," fols. 239v–240r), and followed by formulations toward their counterpart angelic classes. Similarly structured adjurations feature in recipes against illnesses caused by sorcery, either of human (natural) or spiritual (preternatural) provenance, and resulting in the possession of a person by evil spirits, male or female (e.g., "We beseech you, ten *sefirot,* and ten classes [of angels], and ten [supreme] angels, with the names of angels," fol. 227v).[46]

Adjurations against evil forces that appear in the codex Opp. 485 refer also to a medieval kabbalistic idea of the emanation of the left side—that is, the mirror reflection of the *sefirotic* structure that sustains the powers of evil.[47] This idea gained traction in the early to mid-seventeenth century, particularly in Ashkenaz, to some degree thanks to the circulation of texts accrued in compendia of Lurianic kabbalah, such as *'Emeq ha-Meleḵ* (first printed in Amsterdam, 1648), that entertained interest

[45] Gideon Bohak, *A Fifteenth-Century Manuscript of Jewish Magic: Ms New York Public Library, Heb. 190 (Formerly Sassoon 56); Introduction, Annotated Edition and Facsimile* (2 vols.; Los Angeles: Cherub 2014), fols. 72–73 (Hebrew). See a parallel version in New York JTS MS 1967, fol. 13r.

[46] On exorcism formulae in this manuscript, see Sara Zfatman, *Jewish Exorcism in Early Modern Ashkenaz* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2015) 375–430 (Hebrew).

[47] For medieval kabbalistic conceptualizations of evil and the divine, see, recently, Moshe Idel, *Primeval Evil in Kabbalah: Totality, Perfection, Perfectibility* (New York: Ktav, 2020) 189–236, with further bibliography adduced there. On some early conceptualisations of demonic forces in Ashkenazi kabbalistic traditions, see Boaz Huss, "Demonology and Magic in the Writings of R. Menahem Ziyyoni," *Kabbalah* 10 (2004) 55–72.

in explanations of the metaphysical status of evil.[48] The recipes of MS Opp. 485 recommend invoking the names of ten classes of preexistent angelic figures in order to gain protection from their demonic counterparts that control the evil powers. In the same vein, some recipes in the codex advise adjurations of ten *sefirot* for the procedure of annihilating the influence of the left emanation ("I adjure you, ten *sefirot*, Keter, Ḥokmah, Binah, etc., so that the *sefirot* of impurity disappear," fol. 230r, cf. also fol. 239v). A more practical and somewhat simpler recipe suggested that, in instances when a person needs to be ridden of evil spirits who possessed them, the names of ten *sefirot* should be written down in a bowl inside a drawing of the Star of David, followed by the verses of Ps 109:6 and 91:10 in reverse. The procedure concludes once the possessed person drinks from the bowl: the liquid wipes the text from the bowl's surface and allows ingestion of the verses and the names of *sefirot*, whose power literally wipes the negative influences from the affected individual (fol. 419v, cf. also Oxford-Bodleian MS Opp. 432, fol. 150r, MS St Petersburg 326, fol. 34r).

The latter recipe, well-distributed in other Ashkenazi codices, is perhaps the most acute example of the materialization of *sefirot* in practical procedures that involve coercion of *sefirotic* powers by means of physical action, and not (or not only) via symbolic, mental, and intellectual effort on the part of humans. Equally well represented in the MS Opp. 485 are the adjuratory formulae that list ten supreme angelic figures "in charge of ten *sefirot*" (e.g., fol. 232v), that is, those that ought to be adjured in order to influence *sefirot*. These lists accurately reproduce the order of *sefirot* and the ten names of warrior-angels known from *Sefer ha-Geburah*, subsequently deployed in the text of *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot*.[49] As the main textual unit that MS Opp. 485 holds is the full copy of *Sefer Brit ha-Menuḥah*, it seems only reasonable that smaller texts copied in the same compilation (and by the hand of the same scribe-compiler) would practically engage the theoretical spectrum of the text situated in the center of the compiled volume. The short formulae of adjurations of angels and *sefirot*, evidently extracted from texts belonging to *Brit ha-Menuḥah* and copied into the recipes in MS Opp. 485, are thus fully integrated within the sundry textual make-up of this Ashkenazi practical and kabbalistic manual.

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[48] See Gershom Scholem, *Lurianic Kabbalah: Collected Studies* (ed. Daniel Abrams; Los Angeles: Cherub, 2008) 368–69 (Hebrew). A similar type of textual matter frequently copied and recast in early 17th-cent. Ashkenaz was the so-called *Sefer 'Amud ha-Sma'li* attributed to the 13th-cent. Spanish kabbalist Moses of Burgos. See Avi Kallenbach, "A Reworking of R. Moses of Burgos' Treatise on the Left Emanation: The Interpolation of Kabbalistic Documents in Later Manuscript Witnesses and Prints," *Kabbalah* 41 (2018) 251–78 (Hebrew); Oded Porat, *"Who Is the Beautiful Maiden Without Eyes" and the Riddle of the Tay'a: A Chapter in the History of Kabbalah in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century* (Los Angeles: Cherub, 2019) 288–93 (Hebrew); Na'ama Ben Shahar, "The Author of '*Sefer ha-Qelippot*' (The Book of Shells)," *Kabbalah* 50 (2021) 153–72.

[49] Other recipes that engage ten *sefirot* and bear textual resemblances to parts of *Brit ha-Menuḥah* and *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot* employ vocalization patterns of the Tetragrammaton matched with specific *sefirah* and its counterpart class of angels. See, e.g., MS Opp. 485, fol. 241v.

■ Compiled Matter: Reading a Textual Unit Heterogeneously

Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot, the text in which the adjurations of *sefirot* (based on parts of *Brit ha-Menuḥah*) develop perhaps into the fullest literary form, is, to the best of my knowledge, preserved in three manuscripts, all of which display an integrating compilatory intent and at least partial Ashkenazi provenance. The Oxford-Bodleian MS Michael Add. 18 contains apparently the earliest of the still extant copies of the text, and also the shortest one.[50] The manuscript consists of sixty-five parchment folios (sixty-five folios in foliation) forming a uniform codicological unit, of which 117 pages (up to fol. 59r) are written with fifteenth-century Sephardi non-square script. These pages have been used as material support for a portion of *Ḥayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'* of Abraham Abulafia, a key text of this medieval peripatetic kabbalist's oeuvre that details the techniques of achieving a prophetic experience on meditating the seventy-two-letter divine name arranged into twenty-four units of nine letters each.[51] Folios that had been left empty after the initial assemblage of the quires of the codex were, however, continuously filled with the text of *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot* written in an Italian-Ashkenazi script dating approximately to the early sixteenth century. The text smoothly begins on top of folio 59v. This textual unit consists of four folios, in its first part inscribed in Italian cursive script and in square script with clear Ashkenazi features deployed to highlight initial words and divine and angelic names. The same square script was also used to write the second part of the text that includes adjuration formulae, inscribed both within and outside the ten circular shapes of *sefirot*. The second part of text that contains the sequence of circles representing *sefirot,* with their surrounding prayer-adjurations, is clearly planned on the page and meticulously executed (fig. 2 below).[52] The scribe's choice of writing style and scribal register emphasizes the ritual character of the second part of the text, as the square script evokes the manner of representing canonical texts used for liturgical purposes. Even if of small size, the compilation of MS Michael Add. 18 appears entirely coherent. The later, Italian-Ashkenazi (likely, northern Italian) scribe based their copying project on the principle of transcribing texts that actively deploy divine names in kabbalistic performances, even if these performances were primarily intended to lead to dissimilar ends.[53] The same scribe

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[50] Neubauer, *Catalogue*, 552 no. 1581; Beit-Arié, *Supplement*, 267.

[51] See Moshe Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988) 22–28, 34–37, 88–92, 120–22.

[52] In the present condition, the pair of seventh and eighth *sefirot* appears at the end of the text as if out of sequence, without prayer-formulae around the circles that were provided on earlier folios. From the current damage to fol. 63 and its marks of folding, it appears that the last folio was misbound, probably during the process of modern rebinding of the manuscript, and should appear before fol. 62, on whose recto side the text of *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot* ends.

[53] On Abulafia's negative approach to using divine names in practical kabbalistic performances, pronounced especially in his *Geṭ ha-Šemoṭ*, see Moshe Idel, "Between Magic of the Holy Names and the Kabbalah of the Divine Names: R. Abraham Abulafia's Criticism," *Mahanayim* 14 (2002) 79–95 (Hebrew); Harari, "Practical Kabbalah," 45–48.
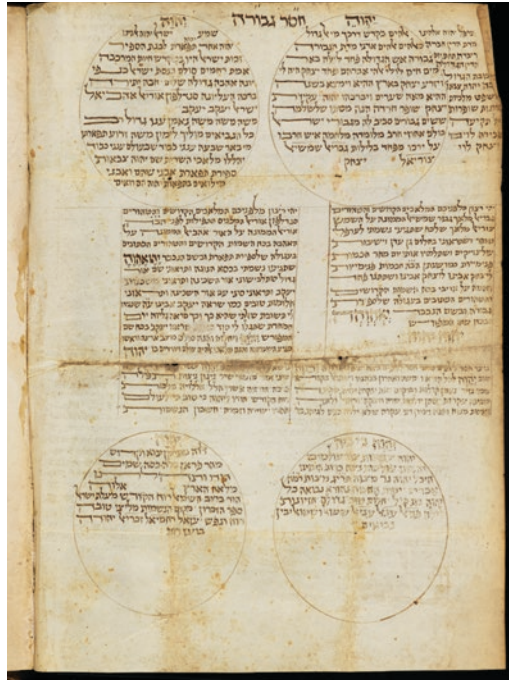
Figure 2
The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford. MS Michael
Add. 18, folio 63v. Creative Commons licence CC-BY-NC 4.0.

not only copied *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot*, but also read and annotated the Abulafian *Ḥayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'* in the first part of the codex, placed two poetical pieces at the beginning and end of the volume, and finally adduced on its last page four short magical pieces that seek the divine name to achieve supernatural protective power over harming spirits.[54] The overarching principle for the compilatory project, one that connects practical kabbalistic commentary on the deployment of angelic names and ten *sefirot* with the Abulafian text on performative uses of the divine name, can be read out of the scribe's highlight on folio 54v, where their handsome *manicula* points to the line: "through the gradual emergence of the name you will comprehend everything that I mentioned to you on this matter, and through the knowledge of the name you will comprehend everything."[55]

The second of the manuscripts that contain *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot* was almost certainly copied in Italy, in late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century Ashkenazi cursive script with a visible Italian influence (NLI 8° 151).[56] In this volume, the

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[54] Poems by Solomon ben Isaac, edited in *Ha-Paliṭ* (Berlin, 1850) 34–36, and partly by Ben-Zion Dinur, *Yisra'el be-Golah* II.4 (Tel Aviv, 1969) 370.

[55] MS Michael Add. 18, fol. 54v.

[56] Scholem, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts*, no. 28.

graphic representation of *sefirot* is fully integrated within the flow of its explanatory textual parts. It contains circular shapes assigned to *sefirot* Keter, Ḥokmah, Binah, Ḥesed, Geburah, Tifʾeret, and Neṣaḥ, with the figures of Yesod, Hod, and Malkut missing; all the parts of the instructive text are, nevertheless, present in full. Here, the first part of the text describing six procedures related to the *sefirotic* circles, as well as adjuratory formulae, constitutes one cohesive textual block. Some of the graphic representations of *sefirotic* circles seem to be mere accompaniments to this textual block but do not constitute a hermeneutically independent and visually separate part of the text, to the point that the copyist seems to have had no awareness of the graphic elements that are clearly lacking, and which would have made some of the recommended procedures coherent. The compilatory intent of the entire one-hundred-folio manuscript, which was copied and compiled by a single scribe, transpires from the selection and order of the assembled textual units. The volume opens and closes with a series of recipes and adjurations (fols. 1r–34, 103v–107v, partially in Italian written in Hebrew script), whose larger part includes a practical guide to using three-letter components of seventy-two-letter divine names for various—mainly therapeutic and apotropaic—ends. *Qabbalat ʿEser Sefirot* follows the introductory recipes in the compilation (fols. 34v–44r) and precedes an anthology of four astrological-magical and medical treatises, juxtaposed with magical and practical kabbalistic recipes.[57] All of the textual units in this codex seem to have been pulled together for a pragmatic reason: the compilation of texts exposes astrological, apotropaic, and medical character in such a manner that the textual pieces in the center of the codex provide a learned, theoretical backdrop for the practical guidelines and more quotidian recommendations for everyday lay use that enclose the whole compilation.

   MS Michael 473 presents by far the most complex organizational enterprise. It is a composite manuscript—a manuscript formed of several originally separate codicological units, arranged together only at the stage of binding or rebinding the material. This process is normally carried out by first owners of manuscripts, and later by book collectors and librarians. In the case of MS Michael 473, the moment of putting all of its textual contents within one binding remains unknown; however, it had already assumed its current composite state before Moritz Steinschneider

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[57] It includes the Hebrew translations of Arnaldus de Villanova, *On the Judgement of Astronomy* (*Panim be-Mišpaṭ,* trans. Solomon ben Avigdor); Pseudo-Hippocrates, *De Esse Aegrotorum* (*Panim le-Fanim,* trans. Tanḥum ben Moses of Beaucaire); *Sefer ha-Tamar* (Book of the Date Palm); and Immanuel ben Jacob Bonfils, *Tequfot* (Solistices)*.* On these texts, see Reimund Leicht, "Toward a History of Hebrew Astrological Literature," in *Science in Medieval Jewish Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 278–89. See also *Sefer ha-Tamar,* ed. Gershom Scholem, in *Qiryat Sefer* 3 (1926) 181–222 (Hebrew); Raphael Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) 98–118; Reimund Leicht, *Astrologoumena Judaica: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der astrologischen Literatur der Juden* (Tübingen*:* Mohr Siebeck, 2006) 306–8. The correlation of angelic names as they transpire in *Sefer ha-Geburah* and the order of planets and stars as they appear in several collections of Jewish astrological texts, primarily of practical character, requires a separate study.

compiled a first brief description of the Michael Collection of Hebrew manuscripts in 1847, shortly after the death of their owner, Heimann Josef Michael, and before its transfer to the Bodleian Library in Oxford.[58] The arrangement of the current codex, now in modern binding, seems to preserve an arbitrary collection of codicological and paleographic units, written in four distinct hands. The largest of these units spans a mid-seventeenth-century compilation of magical fragments and recipes pooled together with a series of short early Ashkenazi mystical commentaries— predominantly on various divine names—and early kabbalistic *sodot* ("secrets"), distributed across the current volume in three separate segments. Two other sizeable units consist of an anonymous *Seder 'Aṣilut* ("The Order of Emanation") and a commentary reminiscent of the teachings of Israel Sarug (fols. 28r–242v)—one of the main proponents of the kabbalah of Isaac Luria in sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Europe—as well as a staggering collection of short moralistic instructions for kabbalistically oriented practices, also of Lurianic provenance, well integrated with various practical recipes and excerpts of magical texts (fols. 35r–93v, 183r–192v).[59]

Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot features in the codex Michael 473 in the third codicological unit (fols. 20r–32v), preceded by a part that holds a compilation headed *'Inyenei qabbalah* ("Matters of Kabbalah," fols. 7r–19v). Crucially, the two neighboring codicological segments had featured together long before they reached the current composite arrangement, since both bear consistent signs of systematic reading and marking of noteworthy passages. While the earlier unit contains marginal annotations by the scribe of its main text, the second lacks such marginalia. However, both units contain identically shaped *maniculae* in brown ink of the same quality as that of the text of the second unit.[60] For one, these pointers highlight references to subject matters that occupy both codicological segments: on the one hand, the issue of the transmigration of parts of human souls (fol. 21r, emphasis in the text *Šemu'ah be-'Inyenei ha-Gilgul,* attributed to Moses Cordovero); on the other hand, the practical expiatory effect of the use of specific *kavvanot* (emphases within a collection of Lurianic provenance, fols. 17v, 18v, 22r, twice on 22v), grounded in the theory of the structural-ontological interrelation of *sefirot* with

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[58] Moritz Steinschneider, *Ozrot Chajim. Katalog der Michael'schen Bibliothek, herausgegeben von den Michael'schen Erben* (Hamburg: J. J. Halberstadt, 1848) 63, no. 742 (Hebrew): "A collectaneum of several matters in kabbalah, especially of the kabbalah of Ar"i (Isaac Luria), a commentary on (a *piyyuṭ*) *Ha'ohez,* spells and remedies." See also Saverio Campanini, "The Michael Collection," in *Jewish Treasures from Oxford Libraries* (ed. Rebecca Abrams and Cesar Merchán-Hamann; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020) 206–29, 295–97.

[59] For a more detailed, although not yet full, enumeration of these excerpts, see Beit-Arié, *Supplement*, 534.

[60] Identical *maniculae* and other reading marks are found in another codex from the Michael Collection of the Bodleian Library, in most part written by the same scribe, who copied the first and the penultimate codicological units of MS Michael 473. The textual, codicological, and paleographic makeup of this volume, its historical setting, and its affinities with MS Mich. 473 will be the subject of a separate study.

divine names (exposed on fols. 7r, 8r, 9v, 11r). Indeed, the reader who distributed the *maniculae* throughout texts in these two units responded with vivid interest to the issues that inform the everyday penitentiary performance, notwithstanding whether these originated within "Cordoverian" or "Lurianic" kabbalistic theories.

The passages that were highlighted most frequently in these two interrelated units of MS Michael 473 refer to the question of the ever-changing balance between the power of mercy and of stern judgment, embedded within the *sefirotic* ontologies, and which, within the human reality, manifestly incline toward the side of judgment (fol. 16r). In continuation with these highlights, the reader also marked up sections on receiving an additional soul (*nešamah*) on the night of shabbat that equally may be good or may be contaminated by evil and sin, leaving one's constitution with a lasting negative imprint (fol. 21r).[61] Another of the spotlighted excerpts explains the idea of a dividing screen (*masak̲*) between each of the four upper worlds of the kabbalistic metaphysics, extending vertically from the source of emanation toward the material world, each of which prevents some of the divine light from fully penetrating into the lower world.[62] The reader's mark, however, highlighted a sentence that clarifies that, in spite of the separating screen between the world of emanation (that is, the uppermost divine level of so-called *aṣilut*) and the world of making (i.e., the lowest, called *'asiyah*), there still exists a direct, even if fine, connection between the two (fol. 16v). This remark adds an instructive layer to the reading of *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot*, the text situated at the end of the two related codicological units. Here, the same *manicula* points to three passages on using the adjuration of *sefirot* that may directly impact the material reality, all apparently emphasized by the reader on the grounds of the connection between the upper and the lower worlds, despite an ontological divide between these two realms—an issue that drew their attention in the previous textual units. It seems not without reason that one of the *maniculae* in the margin of *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot* directs attention to the direct, practical use of the *sefirah Geḇurah* that stands for the aspect of divine judgment. According to the underscored text, in order to gain the upper hand over one's enemies, it is necessary to engage the power of harsh divine judgment—and this was the predominance of harsh judgment in the material world that preoccupied the same reader in the texts assembled across several quires of the two codicological units.

Certainly, this motley of texts and excerpts annotated with the same *maniculae* but stemming from various kabbalistic and intellectual traditions need not have been initially—and some of them surely were not—interrelated, historically or otherwise. They were cogently put together by a reader (likely, the scribe of the

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[61] On this matter of the so-called evil *'ibbur* (incarnation) in Moses Cordovero's thought, see J. H. Chajes, *Between Worlds: Dybbuks, Exorcists, and Early Modern Judaism* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2003) 17–22.

[62] Cf. J. H. Chajes, "Imaginative Thinking with a Lurianic Diagram," *JQR* 110 (2020) 48. On the idea of the "screen" or "veil" between the worlds, see, e.g., Scholem, "The Garment of the Soul and *Ḥaluqa de-Rabanan*," *Tarbiz* 24 (1956) 297–306 (Hebrew).

second unit) who expressed much interest in the matters of evil and its rectification by humans, but equally so in accessing the supernatural powers to steer the divine structure, including its penchant toward stern judgment, in accordance with their needs. Thus, the collection of these textual units became less haphazard for the reader than it appears to the modern eye that is shaped by dominant narratives of the historiography of kabbalah and that has tended to separate the "practical kabbalistic *sensu stricto*" from other types of discourse ingrained in kabbalistic literatures,[63] or simply, to read textual units out of the contexts of their material genre. As it appears in early modern multitext codices of various origins—and kabbalistic codices are no exception to this fashion—one subject matter may be treated by texts grappling with it from various angles, be they conflicting or incongruous for a contemporary reader, across a given compilation. The reader's responses lock this potential polyvalence of texts often by providing a unifying trait or by discerning some commonalities, thus overcoming the sense of interpretive unease. This was the case of the reader-scribe who marked off the margins of the two-unit compilation in MS Michael 473. By reshaping the literary and material aspects of the compilation for their own use and according to their own intellectual agendas, they co-composed the compilation's textual identity, or one of its meaningful layers, thus partaking in a project of its collective textual authorship.[64]

Readings in Composite Matter

In this regard, it is not only the reader-maker of the text in its material format that assumes a role in the collective enterprise of its "authorship"; as parts of one textual entity that share common features, the compiled texts constitute that entity integrally as much as they are shaped by its particular organization. In this sense, the compiled matter displays an interdependent, collective identity, while conveying meanings specific to the time and culture of their copyists and contemporary readers. *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot*—a text whose supposed origins reach the fourteenth century and the theologies of the divine name that much precede the medieval period—features in the compilation of MS Michael 473, while coherently and purposely continuing discourses on engaging with divine (*sefirotic*) powers. The theoretical basis of these discourses provides more speculative texts placed within the same compilation and ascribed by the copyists to Moses Cordovero and Isaac Luria—the two key figures of the kabbalistic panorama in early modernity. In effect, *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot* and MS Michael 473 as a whole expose intellectual interests rooted in kabbalistic traditions of diverse provenance but textually reworked and materially

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[63] Cf. Harari, "Practical Kabbalah," 57.

[64] On an elevated role of readers to that of "authors" in premodern Western European literary contexts, see Roger Chartier and Peter Stallybras, "Reading and Authorship: The Circulation of Shakespeare 1590–1619," in *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare and the Text* (ed. Andrew Murphy; Oxford: Blackwell, 2007) 35–56. For the ideas of "dispersed authorship" in early modern English literature, see Adam Smyth, *Material Texts in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

redeployed according to reading interests manifest in the learning/scribal centers of mid-seventeenth-century Eastern and Central Europe. The clout of Moses Cordovero or Isaac Luria plays an important role in the politics of crafting textual matter, but neither one of these individuals stands as the only participant in the process of textual creation.[65]

The text of *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot* centers on a detailed description of rituals whose efficacy rests on ontological assumptions latent in kabbalistic theosophy that allow the practitioners to access the dynamics of the godhead directly and consequently to assume control over perceivable reality with the use of divine power. As marked out by the scribe who transcribed *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot* in MS Michael 473, the text and its prescribed procedures depend on a particular graphic arrangement of the text, one that ought to be replicated in the performances of writing divine and angelic names and one that shapes the practitioner's relation to the matters and powers referred to in the text. Even if not simply effecting it, the (material) form of *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot* in MS Michael 473 amplifies and highlights its potential performative import.[66] As any text is only available in its material form, and this particular text exists in three material renditions, the current article has set each of those three formats forth, highlighting the similarities and idiosyncrasies of their compilatory intent. As it appeared, locating *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot* in its immediate material contexts enabled its "miscellaneous reading,"[67] which showcased various ways in which it was integrated into textual compilations and the role this textual unit achieved in codices oriented toward practical knowledge of all kinds.

The material format of multiple-text manuscripts (often labeled as collectanea)—especially uniform compilations of miscellaneous type that respond to a related range of topics—allows for the recontextualizing of traditions and shifting of purported thematic import of any individually conceived textual unit. So, for instance, pieces of text that belonged to *Brit ha-Menuḥah* and that underlay *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot* were reworked into early modern recipe books as integral parts of practical (magical) and medical know-how (such as Opp. 485) in such a way that the kabbalistic and magical traditions effectively blended in semivernacular contexts. Likewise, the same traditions related to ten supreme angels and ten *sefirot* that developed into *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot* featured in larger early modern compilations, especially those originating as miscellaneous compilations. This material format of compiled short texts and excerpts thereof enabled particular modes of textual consumption that could confront new and contemporarily dominant types of kabbalistic knowledge by blurring their literary and authorial boundaries. These heterogenous ways of

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[65] See, e.g., Agata Paluch, "Intentionality and Kabbalistic Practices in Early Modern East-Central Europe," *Aries* (2019) 83–111.

[66] Paraphrasing D. F. McKenzie's now idiomatic expression "form effects meaning," in his *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 13.

[67] To apply the phrase coined by Zarnowiecki, "Reading Shakespeare Miscellaneously," 34–36.

reading and crafting texts not only resulted from the "unfixed" material format of a miscellaneous collectaneum that had the potential to be expanded and assembled by readers through binding and rejoining of quires (as was the case of MS Michael 473); rather, it made them possible.

It is through a reading of the textual unit of *Qabbalat 'Eser Sefirot* as materially situated, trailing its scribe's and early reader's footprints, that we may recover a partial vestige of the otherwise lost compilatory intent behind the gatherings of MS Michael 473, and the layers of meaning that it had assumed and fashioned close to the time of its creation. Anonymous compilers' and editors' intentions in creating meaningful volumes are usually ambiguous in the case of nonuniform composite volumes, which to all appearances seem disorderly and unsystematic, especially as they underwent subsequent rebinding and repositioning of quires. And yet, active involvement in the contents of composite textual arrangements bestrides the layers of meanings anchored in the material form of the text, at times escaping the forethought of their producers, with that of their modern readers (both sides unfailingly conditioned, historically and culturally).[68] Each codex ensues from a historically embedded procedure predicated on certain epistemic and cultural presumptions. And so, multiple-text and composite manuscripts, aptly described by scholars as "corpus organizers,"[69] might be perceived as practical strategies of organizing and communicating the divergent corpora of knowledge that they carry and thus (re)produce in time. As objects of the transmission of kabbalistic knowledge, miscellaneous and composite volumes (collectanea) involve readings that reach beyond texts as individualized or idealized objects and toward their reframing within the compilatory context of each codex—a material evidence of decisions taken by those involved in their making and transmission. In the study of premodern Jewish kabbalistic literatures, appreciating texts from the perspective of their material genre offers a fresh hermeneutic of reading kabbalah as a multifaceted textual tradition, one that zooms in on how and why some of its layers circulated in miscellaneous cultural milieus across centuries.

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[68] See, further, Arthur Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages: Forming Compilations of Medieval London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013) 1–50, for a mode of "compilatory" reading in the context of English medieval literature. See also a thought-provoking attempt at such reading of a composite codex by Naomi Howell, "Reflecting (on) the Other: Jewish-Christian Relations in Cligès and Ms. Michael 569 (*)," *Speculum* 91 (2016) 374–421.

[69] Alessandro Bausi, "A Case for Multiple Text Manuscripts Being 'Corpus-Organisers,'" *Manuscript Cultures Newsletter* 3 (2010) 34–36.