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On the Witches' Sabbat and Sabbateanism

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Saturn's Jews

*On the Witches' Sabbath
and Sabbateanism*

Moshe Idel



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וכן שבתי שער ראשון ואחרון ששם יתיחד הכל
And Saturn is the first and last gate,
and there everything will be united.

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Abbreviations

<i>AHDMLA</i>	<i>Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Ages</i>
BN	Bibliothèque nationale
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JSJT</i>	<i>Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought</i>
<i>JWCI</i>	<i>The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes</i>
<i>QS</i>	<i>Qiryat Sefer</i>

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Preface

In 1924, Felix Warburg, the Jewish German-American banker, and his wife, visited the Land of Israel and at the end of their visit, they donated a substantial sum of money. Their donation turned out to be a significant factor in the establishment of the Institute of Jewish Studies, and to a certain extent, an important step for the beginning of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.¹ Since then, the Warburg scholarships at the Institute have been a major financial source for PhD students in Jewish studies at the Hebrew University. As a doctoral student, I benefited greatly from these scholarships, particularly between 1972 and 1976. They gave me the free time to examine hundreds of Hebrew manuscripts in a variety of fields. It was the Warburg family who facilitated, in the first quarter of the twentieth century, the studies of their brother Aby Warburg and the construction of his famous Library in Hamburg, and then the Warburg Institute in London.

In some of my research studies that have been printed since the late 1970s I drew especially on materials from manuscripts that I had collected in the earlier years, and in some cases also published some passages for the first time, especially from manuscript treatises of the late fifteenth-century Italian kabbalist Yohanan Alemanno.² To a certain extent, my reading of the Kabbalistic and magical materials found in many of the manuscripts was carried out through the prism of the Warburg school of research, both its German and British avatars, but especially on account of the famous monograph of Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*. The first English study that I wrote was indeed brought out by the *Journal of the Courtauld and Warburg Institutes*.³ Many discussions with the late Professors Shlomo Pines, Chaim Wirszubski and Moshe Barasch of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, some discussions with Professor Daniel P. Walker in 1982 and 1983, and two written responses by the late Dame Frances A. Yates, some months before her death in 1981, to initial drafts of some of my articles about Jewish Kabbalah in the Italian Renaissance, were very encouraging. They convinced me to pursue this course and even expand its relevance to an understanding of phenomena as late as in eighteenth-century East European Hasidism.⁴ The sustained efforts of both Walker and Yates at the Warburg Institute, and of Eugenio Garin and Paola Zambelli in Italy, to re-evaluate the role of magic in the Renaissance were inspiring indeed. Thanks are due to the

Warburg Institute, and especially its director Professor J. B. Trap, for their gracious hospitality during some working visits I made in London in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as well as to Professor Brian Coppenhaver for our discussions over years.

The first two chapters of this book were written on separate occasions, though they are linked to each other by the dominant leitmotif of the conflicting features of the planet Saturn in Jewish sources and its various relationships to Jews. The first chapter originates from a lecture delivered in 1998, at a conference organized by the Einstein Forum in Berlin, around the image of the Magician, and appeared in a German translation in the proceedings of the conference.⁵ A substantially expanded version appears here for the first time in English. Chapter 2 was written in the autumn of 1994, while I served as Stewart Professor at the Department of Religious Studies at Princeton University. I am very grateful for that kind invitation, which also facilitated the completion of a study on messianism, which has been in print since 1998.⁶ A first Hebrew version of it served as the body of a lecture at the Israeli Academy for Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem, in March 1995, and later at a conference on messianism organized later that same year at Princeton University, and delivered in English, and has been published as part of its proceedings.⁷ Some discussions with Professor Carlo Ginsburg at UCLA in early 1998 concerning the first chapter were extremely helpful and I would like to extend him my heartfelt thanks for them. The third chapter, 'Concluding Remarks' and the Appendix were written for this study.

In their present form there are substantial additions in terms of both the material and expanded perspectives to the original content of the two earlier essays. I have eliminated some overlap between them, corrected some errors and updated them, as well as elaborating on the earlier material. The time that it took to complete the writing of this book was part of my membership, over recent years, at the Kogod Institute for Judaic Advanced Studies at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, and I am very grateful to its directors, David and Donniel Hartman, for that opportunity. These chapters serve as another example of the dramatic enrichment of Jewish thought, when what I call a new type of order, the astral one, was adopted; an adoption that had profound repercussions in the way some Jews thought of themselves, or how they were perceived by others. In a way, they came in the wake of the main thrust that guided the methodological approach of Aby Warburg and his school of research as to the importance of the renewal of some elements of ancient paganism, especially astrology.

However, this time they were related to Jewish sources, which some criticized while others accepted as part of new insights and perceptions

into the nature of Judaism. Following the main distinction of the Warburgian scholars, who emphasized the basic duality in the figure of Saturn, I shall divide the first two chapters into discussions related to the negative aspects or the negative ‘conceptual structure’ – to use a notion of Panofsky – of Saturn, and then I will turn to the positive conceptual structure. This means that some authors identified Saturn as the planetary genius of the Jews, notwithstanding the more sinister attributes of this planet, especially sorcery. To some extent this reflected their fears, and their attempts to preserve a certain type of order, while for others this planet is associated with a positive conceptual structure related to hope and redemption.

Since the first publication of the two chapters, there has been much headway in elucidating aspects of Jewish thought related to Saturn and messianism in the literature available, especially in the research of Dov Schwartz and Shlomo Sela into Abraham ibn Ezra and his commentators; Reimund Leicht’s study of Jewish astrology; Yuval Harari’s recent study on ancient Jewish sorcery; an analysis by Haviva Pedaya about Sabbath and Saturn mainly concerning Kabbalah; Avraham Elqayam and Yehuda Liebes on Sabbateanism; and Bat-Zion Eraqi Klorman’s studies on Yemenite messianism. I have updated my references in order to include these more recent studies, or to take cognizance of a later acquaintance with them.

It is important to point out the manner in which I use some main terms in the following pages: ‘Sabbat’ stands for the myth related to the meetings of the witches, while ‘Sabbath’ will be used in order to refer to the seventh day of the Jewish week. ‘Saturnine’ stands for some qualities of a person under the alleged impact of Saturn, while ‘Saturnian’ are different qualities that are attributed to the planet and the divinity related to it. Moreover, I refer by the term ‘Saturn’ to the planet and sometimes to the name of the Latin god, but never to the name of a person, while ‘Sabbatai’ may refer both to a person and a planet. In order to prevent confusion, I have sometimes added to ‘Sabbatai’ as a planet (as found in the Hebrew sources and in my discussions of their content) the term ‘Saturn’, resorting to the form ‘Sabbatai’/‘Saturn’, when the context is ambiguous.

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ONE From Saturn, Sabbath and Sorcery to the Jews

Introduction

There are many definitions of Judaism: they vary with the passage of time, from an elected people, to a people that keeps the commandments of God (what is called *halakhocentric* Judaism), to a people of the book (basically a Muslim understanding of the Jews), to the assumption that Jews are the portents of monotheism, or according to other views, portents of ethical monotheism in the world, to Jews as the sons of God, etc. In each of these descriptions, different elements are put into relief. During the Middle Ages, with the more substantial encounter between Jewish elites and new forms of knowledge, additional understandings were forged, even if they had a lesser impact both on Jews as a whole and on the perceptions of others about Judaism. Jews were understood as more inclined to philosophical thought and as believers in a transcendental God whose nature was assumed to be, in many cases, an intellect, as by Maimonides and his followers, or those who confess in the divine name in the Kabbalah of Abraham Abulafia. This continuous search for identity is part of the deep changes that took place within Jewish thought and society over the centuries, changes which are sometimes related to interactions with a variety of different cultural and religious backgrounds. Moreover, due to their being a minority group, the search for identity was an acute one. Attempting to resonate with the cultural standards of the majority, or in other cases universal values, Jewish elites sometimes adopted new forms of thought that were validated by the imprint of the general order of reality *en vogue* in their times and in the places they lived. These orders were considered to depend on higher systems, whose impact on lower events was decisive. Their systems might be philosophical, adopting an ontology of astrological or cosmic intellects (assuming the paramount impact of the astral bodies and their conjunctions), or theosophical (presuming the existence of divine powers, *sefirot*, or configurations, *partzufim*, which inform developments on earth below). In these three cases, it is appropriate to speak of different forms as constellating the biblical-rabbinic forms of Judaism, which did not operate with 'constellated' universes, but allowed the intervention of the Divine Will to be the decisive religious event. However, the theosophical-Kabbalistic system, which appeared later than the other two, not only solely displaced

the respective constellations but in some cases also created a constellation that informed what the kabbalists believed to be the lower constellation. The result was the formation of quite complex hierarchies, which also include some linguistic-ontological levels.

In the chapters that follow, I shall address two rather neglected types of self-perception that are found in Jewish texts, both related to characteristics attributed to the planet Saturn, a phenomenon that I propose to refer to as Saturnism. Though the inspiring sources for these new forms of Jewish identity are unquestionably astrological, they spread beyond the modest Jewish astrological literature and found their expressions in books dealing with commentaries on the Torah, supercommentaries, Kabbalistic treatise, and even some forms of philosophical writing which combined astrology, philosophy and Kabbalah to varying degrees.

In the Jewish authors that will be examined below, elements which had been neglected, and even rejected in ancient times and during the early Middle Ages by various forms of Judaism, were thrown into relief, including themes which portrayed Jews and aspects of their religion in a rather negative light, despite the undeniable allegiance of the authors to Judaism. A Saturnization of Judaism generated new views which prompted not only a series of fresh conceptual developments but also carried historical consequences.

The imaginary nexus between the planet Saturn, the seventh of the known planets in those times – in Hebrew *Sabbatai* – and the Jews, with their celebration of the Sabbath, the seventh day of the Jewish week, is quite an ancient theologoumenon, and the few extant ‘testimonies’ had already attracted the due attention of scholars. The nexus is attested to as early as in the *Histories* of Tacitus and reverberated in late antiquity, which provided the source of the astrological discussions as they appear in the Middle Ages. An example of this approach is found, for example, in Augustine’s answer to Faustus the Manichean, who probably regarded the keeping of the Sabbath as related to Saturn:

We are not afraid to encounter your scoffing at the Sabbath, when you call it the fetters of Saturn. It is a silly and meaningless expression, which occurred to you only because you are in the habit of worshipping the sun on what you call Sunday. What you call Sunday we call the Lord’s day, and on it we do not worship the sun, but the Lord’s resurrection. And in the same way, the fathers observed the Sabbath day of rest, not because they worshipped Saturn, but because it was incumbent at that time, for it was a shadow of things to come, as the apostle testifies.¹

Augustine is less concerned with defending the Jews' celebration of Sabbath than in undermining its performance *de facto*, by assuming that the observance in the past is merely a prefiguration for the future, more spiritual, Christian celebration. In fact, the very reference to such a nexus between Sabbath and Saturn in Augustine's book shows that long after Tacitus this association remained a vital topic in the pagan world, whose resurgence in the Middle Ages in different guises will preoccupy us below. In the spirit of Warburgian scholarship, I shall attempt to show how ancient motifs, even when they stem from pagan sources, could recur to play a significant role in quite different contexts as they were reconceptualized and recontextualized by several leading figures in the Jewish elite, first in Europe and then in several other parts of the Jewish world.

Thus, in astrology we have a historical channel, which can be documented in quite a detailed manner, transmitting much earlier Greek mythologoumena into medieval Europe.

Not originally part of the manner in which Jews imagined their identity in ancient times and early medieval ones, in the high Middle Ages, astrology, in some elite types of Jewish literature, becomes an interesting way to explain both the nature of the Jews and their place in the cosmic order. Pre-medieval linkages were found exclusively in non-Jewish sources, since the prevailing rabbinic assumption was that Jews are not dominated by planetary or astral bodies.² In non-Jewish sources linkage is prevalently part of negative associations with the planet, and thus of Jews as well. Later on the connection between these two subjects is often related to a third one, which was understood to serve as a link between them: the Sabbath day, a day holy to the Jews, the seventh day, and the one upon which the planet Saturn was conceived of as presiding.³

On the other hand, there is ample evidence as to the alleged affinities between Saturn and sorcery or magic, and this issue has also caught the attention of scholars.⁴ However, these two distinct forms of describing the properties of the taciturn planet stem from different traditions, and they rarely occur together in the same text. Moreover, the association of Saturn and sorcery has been assumed by scholars to have emerged relatively late in the fifteenth century.⁵

In this chapter I will explore the affinities between the four subjects mentioned above as found in Jewish texts since the twelfth century: Saturn, Jews, the Sabbath day and magic or sorcery. In some cases, a mention of the Plague can also be detected in texts where these four factors are clustered as one unit. This restriction has excluded from our discussions cores of other passages in which only two of the topics occur together. It is my purpose below to suggest a certain solution for the emergence of the

extremely familiar nexus between the concept of Sabbat and witchcraft, a nexus that played such a fateful role in the history of the late medieval and Renaissance periods. By pointing out the affinities between the four issues mentioned above, I hope to be able to draw the attention of scholars to a complex of affinities or what may be called, following the example of the Warburgian scholars, a conceptual structure, which in this chapter we shall survey in its negative dimensions. Dealing with syntheses more than with astrology as a distinct and separate type of knowledge, I am concerned with the nebula of themes and mythologoumena that surround the concept of Saturn, defining it while changing it all the time.

A potential source of the emergence of aspects of a far more complex, variegated and influential concept – that of the Sabbat of the witches – already appears over the centuries in the writings of some Jewish authors, and earlier in an Arabic source. Before embarking upon more detailed analyses, I would like to emphasize that the material presented here does not amount to an attempt to offer a historical picture: I will not be offering a description of some Jews throughout the course of history performing acts of magic on the Sabbath day by resorting to the powers of Saturn. I doubt very much the possible historicity of such a hypothetical event, which, to the best of my knowledge, has never been reported. In this book I will be looking at the convergence of basically disparate motifs which coalesced in the passages I analysed and created a more complex conceptual picture.

This said, I have no intention of claiming what would be patently absurd – that there were no Jewish magicians or sorcerers in the Middle Ages, though their existence or activities may scarcely be deduced from the fact that we have so many texts of the aforementioned complex of affinities. It is a cultural image that will be described here, though such an image does not preclude the possible impact of such imaginary Jewish magicians on the perception of Jews and magic in their immediate environments and even far beyond. As in many other cases, cultural images may be as influential as historical events, and the emergence and the dissemination of various constellations of ideas may shape historical events, even to a dramatic extent.

In chapter 2, I suggest the possible impact of a nexus between a Kabbalistic view of the third *sefirah*, *Binah*, designated as playing an eschatological role (which has been combined with Saturn/Sabbatai), on the consciousness of the most prominent Messiah in early modern Judaism, Sabbatai Tzevi. Tzevi is discussed at length in the following chapter. Here I would like to address the possibility that another avatar of a perception of Saturn has contributed once more to shaping widespread conceptions regarding the particular day presided over by Saturn – the day of the Sabbath – as the Sabbat of the witches. Though it may appear paradoxical,

many of the discussions below are part of the much broader and more profound process of the 'naturalization' of Judaism which took place in the Middle Ages under the strong impact of Greek philosophies in Muslim garb. The adoption of the astral order, one of the many adopted and adapted by Jewish elites in the Middle Ages, amounted to an explanation of some elements of Judaism in terms that are related to forms already well known, and the astronomical aspect was certainly one of the most widespread theories in the Middle Ages. Let me point out that I am not trying to repeat or summarize the vast literature that deals with Saturn and the Jews, or Saturn and witchcraft, or even less Saturn and melancholy, when only two of the concepts are concatenated. The ensuing pages will reveal my concern with broader concatenations, most of which are to be found in texts that have not been discussed at all, and certainly not together.

On Abraham ibn Ezra's Visions of Saturn

During the twelfth century, the impact of astrology, especially that dictated by conjunction, on the Jewish elite in the Iberian Peninsula was particularly marked. The most prominent among them was Abraham bar Ḥiyya, from Barcelona, who wrote an influential treatise entitled *Megillat ha-Megalleh* ('the Scroll of the Revealer') in Hebrew, well known to Jews and Christian authors alike. Bar Ḥiyya was less concerned with what will be called the 'negative conceptual structure' of Saturn and preferred the more positive one that will be addressed in the next chapter. His contribution to our study lies in introducing the theory of Abu Ma'shar, which was not concerned with the magical aspects of Saturn that showed the historical importance of the great conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter and its religious implications. Thus, while certain Jewish astrologers used aspects of historical astrology, specifically the explanation astrologers offered of events in history on the grounds of astrological conjunctions, they could at the same time ignore the magical aspects of astrology.

However, for our focus in this chapter Abraham ibn Ezra's (1089–1164) influential writings in the middle of the twelfth century are far more important. They constitute a major departure from the prevailing patterns of thought dominant in earlier layers of Jewish literature, since he claims it is not only history (including sacred Jewish history) that can be explained astrologically, but also other important Jewish fields of interest. Especially important therefore are both the astrological interpretations ibn Ezra offered of some crucial topics in biblical history, and a new understanding of the nature of some of the commandments (*mitzvoth*). This is a significant watershed which, though rejected by some late-twelfth- and early-thirteenth-century Jewish philosophers, was destined, especially in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, to be taken seriously in many

circles. In Spain as well as outside the country, it attracted the attention of numerous commentators on ibn Ezra's *Commentary on the Pentateuch*.⁶ The main topics in Judaism may be described according to astrological principles as a striking case of what I propose to call an intercorporal reading, namely an interpretation of one body of literature, the biblical one, in accordance with another, the astrological corpus of literature, whose basic concepts are independent from the former.⁷ This meant that the inflexible rules of astrology were imposed upon the more flexible and performative approaches (not only in the form of carrying out one's own sense of self-perfection, but ideally in public and imagined as having an impact) of biblical and rabbinic literature and the looser types of theological reflection. This development is part of the infiltration of astrological forms of thought, as formulated in Arabic, which drew on much earlier sources (Greek, Hellenistic and Hindu) as well as reverberations of Babylonian astronomy. As was the case in most forms of Jewish philosophy, astrology was the result of an acculturation of a section of the Jewish elite to some of the trends dominant in Arabic thought and literature, even though some of their most fundamental reverberations were felt in Christian European areas long after the direct impact of Arabs on Judaism had declined.

As we shall see below, there were quite bizarre results, and perhaps also a kind of transposition resulting from a very different logic from that embraced by rabbinic literature. While the latter is basically particularist, astrology is overridingly universal in its nature. This is also the case with Maimonides' introduction of neo-Aristotelianism, different as this is from ibn Ezra's propensities towards astrology and Hermeticism. These two philosophers, unlike Yehudah ha-Levi or Hasdai Crescas, introduced different forms of a natural understanding of religious lore: Maimonides was much more interested in psychology, physics and metaphysics, while ibn Ezra was far more taken with the astrological understanding of the Bible. Taking a long-term view, these two thinkers contributed to the emergence of tensions between elements found in their religious synthesis and the tenets of rabbinic Judaism, especially when their more veiled and subtle hints were later elaborated, explicated and sometimes even abused by their followers, who commented on their diverging writings. Here I am concerned with one small detail, part of a much greater picture, where the astrological elements conjoin with some magical ones, both strongly influenced by Arabic sources, a view accepted by ibn Ezra but sharply criticized by Maimonides. This tension between the two streams of thought, of the Sefardi Jewish heritage as well as between Maimonides and his followers on the one hand, and Ashkenazi culture on the other hand, echoes tendencies less evident in early Judaism but nevertheless

extant, reflecting trends in elite Arabic cultures, which in turn echo even earlier propensities in classical Greek and Hellenistic cultures.

A major aspect of the theme that will be discussed below – namely the nexus between Saturn and sorcery – is already to be found in some Greek and Arabic treatises on astrology which preceded ibn Ezra by several centuries. It is clear in Ptolemy of Alexandria's (c. 90–168 CE) highly influential *Tetrabiblos*⁸ and it is mentioned by the famous ninth-century Persian astrologer Abu Ma'shar al-Balkhi,⁹ but for our purpose, it is the formulation of his follower Al-Kabi'si, a tenth-century Arab astrologer known in the West as Alcabitius, that is much more pertinent. The latter seems to be the first author to add Judaism to a whole list of qualities that constitute the negative conceptual structure that will concern us here. Alcabitius exploited the much earlier nexus between Saturn and the Jews, but he added Judaism to the list of the objects, events and powers that are dominated by this planet: 'Saturn ... presides over ... the dead, magicians, demons, devils and people of ill-fame ... the right ear ... He has the faith of Judaism, black clothing; of days Saturday, and the night of Wednesday ... and goats and bullocks, waterfowl, black snakes and mountains.'¹⁰

Here all the four topics we shall investigate below are found together in what can be called a negative conceptual structure: Saturn, Jews, Sabbath and magic. For apparently the first time in an astrological treatise, the ancient theme of the nexus between the Jews, Sabbath and Saturn, has been taken a step further by adding the topic of sorcery and magic. This means that though Jews, the Sabbath, and sorcery, among other matters, are each related directly to Saturn, there can be no doubt that they were also considered to have a strong affinity for each other.

In the instructions of the eleventh-century 'Ali bin Rijal [known in Latin as Abenrejal] regarding Saturn, it is said that the 'conjunction of Mercury with Saturn foretells [those] men will deal with matters of sorcery'.¹¹ For this reason, in some of the most influential non-Jewish astrological treatises circulating in the Middle Ages, Saturn and sorcery are frequently linked to one other, in one case even implicating an affinity for Jews, thus creating a conceptual structure that will be analysed below.

In an important passage dealing with the major characteristics of Saturn and the entities and spiritual faculties upon which it presides, Abraham ibn Ezra enumerates the following attributes:

Among the nations, the Jews are presided over by Saturn, the thought and the scarcity of speech and fraud, and the isolation from men¹² and [the power to] overcome them ... and every tree which produces the poison of death¹³ ... and the greatness of thought¹⁴ and the knowledge of secrets and the worship of God.

[And the Jewish nation is the lot of Saturn, among the sciences are the sorceries and the incantations¹⁵ and the science of ethics and metaphysics and philosophy and the science of the dreams, and foretelling the future.] ... hemiplegia¹⁶ and leprosy¹⁷ ... and the day of Sabbath.¹⁸

This is one of the most influential passages on the perception of Saturn in Jewish circles and its impact is evident even in some of the passages dealt with below. This excerpt poses a major problem, crucial to our discussion, as to what extent the phrase dealing with incantation and sorcery is authentic ibn Ezra, or whether it is a later addition by his fourteenth-century commentator Joseph Bonfils. Sorcery is indeed mentioned in *Reshit Hokhmah*, in the same chapter that contains the passage on the path of Saturn, but in connection to lunar characteristics, in a description that is somehow reminiscent of the passage on Saturn: 'Its human traits are excessive introspection, meditation in a mind lacking knowledge, amnesia, phobia, indifference, revelation of secrets,¹⁹ love of pleasure, victory, knowledge of sorcery.'^{20, 21}

Could someone have compounded the two discussions into one and so created a characterization of Saturn that also includes sorcery? I find such a hypothesis quite implausible since sorcery had already been mentioned in connection with Saturn quite a long time before, in Abu Ma'shar and bin Rijal, both plausible sources for ibn Ezra's astrology, and in some Hebrew sources which predate Joseph Bonfils. Unlike bin Rijal, ibn Ezra's passage – if indeed authentic insofar as the sentence on incantation and sorcery is concerned – attributes sorcery to Saturn alone, rather than to its conjunction with Mercury. According to this commentator, Saturn presides over the Jews, and their nature thus includes an inclination to isolation, as it also extends to the contemplative and ruling powers. What is important in this passage is the assumption that Jews are inclined to states of solitude not on account of their spiritual exertions, but on account of their natural constitution. However, an inclination to isolation can be associated with other spiritual qualities, and should not necessarily be conceived of as a religious achievement, as in the passage just cited. There it precedes the indwelling of the divine spirit; here it is part of a list which includes several spiritual qualities. Even more explicit is the relationship between *hitbodedut*, religious perfection and miraculous powers, as expressed in ibn Ezra's commentary on Exodus 6.3, where he avers that he is disclosing a secret:

God created three worlds ... and the mundane world receives power from the intermediary world,²² each individual in

accordance to the supernal constellation.²³ And because the intellectual soul is more exalted than the intermediary world, if she will be wise and will know the deeds of God, those done without any intermediary and those done by the means of an intermediary, and [if] she will leave the desires of the world, and [if] she will isolate herself, in order to cleave to the Exalted God. And if there is the constellation of the stars during pregnancy a bad time destined to come in a certain day, by his cleaving to God, will change the course of the causes in order save him from evil ... and this is the secret of the entire Torah ... this is why Moses was able to change the course of the mundane world and perform miracles and wonders.²⁴

Hitbodedut, a mental activity that means 'concentration' in this context, is described elsewhere in ibn Ezra as related to Saturn, and it functions here as a link in the sequel of acts that culminates in the experience of *devequt*, or 'soul-cleaving'. Therefore, the practice of isolation is conceived of as leading not only to supernatural knowledge, but also as ensuring a much more mystical experience in life – which assists people to avoid bad or unsavoury experiences, and even to perform miracles.²⁵ Thus isolation and cleaving enable someone to circumvent the evil predetermined by the ordinary course of nature, as dictated by astrological constellations. There is a clear congruence between this passage and the earlier one, where greatness of thought is attributed to this planet. *Hitbodedut* is therefore related to a path conducive to miraculous deeds, or to what we might call 'natural magic'. Moreover, as some statements attributed to ibn Ezra from an apparently lost *Commentary on Lamentations* imply, the Torah was revealed when Saturn was in the ascent.²⁶ Is the great secret of the Torah taking into consideration the need to cleave to God and the fact that the Torah was promulgated under the aegis of Saturn? Such a view would be consonant with the more general astrological principle that changes in matters of religion are related to the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter.

Let me now turn to an extensive treatment of Saturn's nature and the things over which he presides, to be found in another book of ibn Ezra:

Saturn. I have already mentioned the reason why this planet is cold and dry. The essence of death is cold and dryness, so it indicates death and sadness and mourning: it indicates primordial things ... and of the Jews because their sign is Aquarius, which is its house, and of the elderly because it is uppermost, and of the farmers because the ground is in its portion. So its portion in

the human body is the spleen and its portions include tanners and privy-cleaners, because the [black] bile, which is its nature, indicates filth ... Its portion of the earth is caves and dark places, because it suits a melancholic nature to be in solitude ... The gall-oak is in its portion on account of its nature, as well as anything that contains a deadly poison, because it indicates death. It indicates frost because it has retention of fluids [i.e. freezing], and of garments, any garment that is thick, because the nature of black bile is thick and it loves only what is thick. Thought is in its portion, because it is uppermost, and so is the knowledge of the arcane, violence, anger, and seduction, because it is malefic; and also all crafts that are exhausting. It indicates long journeys because it is uppermost. The bones are in its portion, because they are cold and dry and they are the mainstay of the body ... It indicates madness²⁷ because it stems mostly from the black bile, and also hemiplegia and leprosy. It indicates pain that lingers many days because of its sluggish motion. It indicates old age, as expounded by Ptolemy ... Proceeding with this method, the diurnal part of Saturday is in the portion of Saturn, and of the nights, Wednesday night is in its portion.²⁸

No doubt this is an example of the strong influence of Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* on ibn Ezra. What is important is the fact that we may discern the precise transition of ancient astrological elements not only into Hebrew, but also as associated with the Jews. All this despite the fact that Ptolemy does not mention the Jews, but ibn Ezra is ready to adopt the Arabic inclusion of the Jews, which incontrovertibly also follows some traditions that predate the Muslim era, as mentioned earlier. At this point I would like to turn to the nexus between the planet Saturn and the Sabbath day, as set out by ibn Ezra in one of his commentaries on Exodus:

The fourth commandment, concerning the Sabbath, corresponds to Sabbatai/Saturn, since the sages of experiments [Ḥakhmei ha-nisayyon, which in fact means astrologers] said that each of the serving planets presides over a certain day of the week when its power will be manifested and it [Saturn] presides every first hour of the day, and every last one of the night. And they say that Saturn and Mars are maleficent planets,²⁹ and whoever will commence a certain labour, or start a journey during one of the two, will be damaged, and this is why our ancient sages said: 'the permission has been given to wreak damage during every night on Tuesday and Friday.'³⁰ Behold, you will not find in any of the

days of the week a consecutive night and day when these two maleficent planets are presiding, but during this day [alone] this being the reason why it is not worthwhile to be preoccupied by things relating to this world, but by things related to the fear of God.³¹

The whole day of Sabbath, as understood by the Jews, is compounded by the night of Friday and the day of Saturday. These two units had been dominated respectively by Mars and Saturn, and in ibn Ezra's astrological system, influenced by pseudo-Ptolemy, by the two nefarious planets: the night of Friday is ruled by Mars and the Sabbath day, by Saturn.³² Thus, in lieu of the biblical explanation of the cessation of work during the Sabbath as an *imitatio dei*, the astrological explanation of this cessation has to do with the negative nature of the two presiding planets. Sabbath regulations, or at least part of them, become apotropaic techniques which prevent the malign impact of the planet on those who keep them, and this is a leitmotif that recurs in many Jewish writings throughout history.

Moreover, in Abraham ibn Ezra's Hebrew free paraphrase of the Arabic story about Ḥay ibn Yoqtan, entitled *Ḥai ben Meqitz*, which means 'the Living, the son of the Awakened', Saturn is described in the following manner:

In the seventh realm³³ there are men of wisdom and shrewdness and understanding and cleverness, difficult in their deeds and slow-going. They maintain and are vigilant of mercy and they revenge felony and guard it ... It³⁴ is the 'responsible over fifty, honourable and expert in magic³⁵ who understand incantations'.^{37, 38, 38}

My translation of the terms related to magic is tentative, taking into consideration the possible biblical meanings of these words, though I cannot state definitively that ibn Ezra himself subscribed to this understanding of these words. Therefore, we may assume that ibn Ezra, an influential, prolific and prodigious writer who flourished in the mid twelfth century, had introduced a long series of thinkers in Judaism, and apparently also in the Christian world, to a conception of Judaism as related to the most nefarious planet. This instance of adopting some elements from 'scientific' sources as to the nature of the Jews, even when it includes explicitly negative treats, is revealing as to the new situation of some of the Jewish elite figures in the Middle Ages. The Arabic sources are the trident of these worldviews, which dramatically shifted the way

some of the Jewish elite perceived themselves by adopting a series of new categories understood as relevant to their self-definition.

Two Thirteenth-Century Kabbalists: Abraham Abulafia and Joseph Ashkenazi on Saturn, Sorcery and Sabbath

In addition to the schematic presentations of Saturn and its corresponding qualities in classical astrological contexts, this planet was also associated with forms of magic and sorcery that were not initially connected to Hellenistic astro-magic and its medieval reverberations. I would venture that no later than the end of the first half of the thirteenth century, a combination of linguistic magic (based on the Hebrew letters and on the use of divine names, and characteristic of Jewish ancient magic) on the one hand, and of astro-magic (including a discussion of Saturn) on the other can be demonstrated.

Some of the discussions below belong to various interpretations of a sentence in the *Sefer Yetzirah*, a text widespread in many manuscripts and printed for the first time in 1562. The date of the composition of this seminal book is still a matter of debate among scholars. The range of views is quite broad and includes datings like that of Yehuda Liebes, in the first century CE, to other scholars, arguing that it is a post-Muslim Jewish composition, written as late as the ninth century. According to the *Sefer Yetzirah*, God created all the entities by the combination of the seven double letters in Hebrew in what the anonymous author called the three dimensions of reality: 'Made *Bet* a king, and bound to it a crown, and combined them one with another, and formed with it Saturn in [the dimension of] the universe, the Sabbath in [the dimension of] the year, and the mouth in [the dimension of] the person.'³⁹

Though Saturn, Sabbath and the mouth are created by the same combinations of the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, *Bet*, with all the other letters, it is not clear whether, according to the *Sefer Yetzirah*, the three created entities are subordinate to each other, though they stem from a higher common denominator. In other words, despite the rather ancient traditions adduced above from non-Jewish circles about the subordination of Sabbath to Saturn, here such subordination is not evident at all. In other words, though the planets have been integrated within a more comprehensive vision of reality, according to the *Sefer Yetzirah* all creatures are subordinate to language, namely its letters and letter combinations, not to the planets. In any case, except for the fact that Saturn is the first of the seven double letters, Saturn's relation to *Bet* does not confer on the planet a special, privileged status according to this book. *Sefer Yetzirah* became a canonical book in many elite Jewish circles, which included philosophers, kabbalists, and both Spanish and

Ashkenazi authors who wrote some two dozen commentaries on the book.

Though many kabbalists interpreted this book, not all of them expatiated on the nature of Saturn and its affinity to other aspects of reality, as found in the above passage. In 1271, a young kabbalist, Abraham ben Shmuel Abulafia (1240–c. 1291), who had been initiated into a special brand of this lore a year or two earlier, wrote a short treatise entitled *Get ha-Shemot* ('The Divorce of the Names'), which sharply attacks the magical use of the divine names. This divorce is the background to what Abulafia wrote some few years later, when he fiercely attacked popular magic. In a passage that includes a discussion of Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, 1: 62, where the latter criticized resorting to amulets, Abulafia writes:

I have found in one of the books, whose title I would like not to mention [explicitly]: 'whoever wants to bring a woman to him so that she will love him, let him pronounce the name of *WHW YLY SYT 'LM*, backwards and forwards seven times, in the night of Wednesday, during the first hour of night, which is the time of Saturn, and let him conjure *Qaftziel*, who is the angel presiding over that planet, by that name. At that time let him write four names⁴⁰ on a parchment of a deer, without interrupting the writing by any speech.⁴¹ Then, let him put the writing on his neck as an amulet and then the woman, whose name and the name of her father he has pronounced, will love him with a great love, by the virtue of that name.' I have found similar things in great number, and they are almost infinite; and these things have been spread and reached the hands of great Rabbis, but they hide them in a scrupulous manner and they think that their archives are replete with pearls. And they are very reverent [awesome] while studying the names when they need them. And these things may cause [even] good-tempered people to become crazy or others like them, as the great Rabbi [Maimonides] has said.⁴²

While I have had the opportunity to analyse some of the aspects of magic in this passage and its context elsewhere,⁴³ here I would like to point out the hybrid nature of the passage, quoted by Abulafia from an existing book whose name he unfortunately decided not to disclose. In that book – which I would suspect it is a lost version of *Sefer Raziel* or *Sefer ha-Razim*⁴⁴ – the name of God's name in seventy-two letters, represented in the text by its first four combinations of three letters, is described as effective in bringing the beloved to the person reciting the incantation. So far,

there is nothing unusual in Jewish magic, as this same name had been used time and again in magical procedure even before the thirteenth century.⁴⁵ Neither is the conjunction of the special timing of the magical procedure and a certain angel a novelty, as we learn from *Sefer ha-Razim*, a book of magic that has come down to us in several versions. However, the introduction of Saturn into the linguistic contexts of the divine and the angelic names is rare before the thirteenth century. It occurs in an older tradition preserved in the twelfth-century Yehudah Barceloni's *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*.⁴⁶ The affinity between the planet and the angelic name Qaftziel, sometimes presupposes a sort of astro-magic, which assumes that each planet is presided over by an angel.⁴⁷

Indeed, in an anonymous Kabbalistic *Commentary on Liturgy*, composed at the start of the second half of the thirteenth century by a kabbalist who was close to ecstatic Kabbalah, we do indeed find the following sentence: 'Qaftziel, right ear,⁴⁸ and the day of Sabbath, and its angel⁴⁹ is Sabbatai.'⁵⁰ Therefore, at least one piece of evidence as to the existence of an affinity between Qaftziel and Sabbatai in Abulafia's lifetime has been found. This statement points to a nexus between the astrological approach and the angelic one, from as far back as the middle of the thirteenth century. However, this affinity between Qaftziel and Saturn is also to be found in the printed version of *Sefer Raziel* and in another version also called *Sefer Raziel*.⁵¹

The text quoted from this book is the butt of Abulafia's derision. While it does represent a positive attitude to magic in circles which had previously produced a book of magic quoted by Abulafia, the above passage does not reflect Abulafia's own position. However, the ecstatic kabbalist was aware of and accorded the possibility of linguistic magic related to Saturn: in his *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, probably composed after the book cited above, he wrote:

The secret of seventy and of seventy-two is an important introduction to the knowledge of the essence of [all] the languages. Behold, seven, seventy and seven hundred and those similar to them, all belong to the principle of seven, the simple and the complex [heptads], are topics which indicate the plurality of the incantations of the Jewish powers⁵² as is testified by Sabbath, because there is a supplementary [soul]⁵³ for those who rest and recreate in this [day]. And the powers of the planet of Saturn testify together with the *Shemittin* and *Yovelin*.^{54, 55}

The main term that interests me in this context is *hashbba'ot*, which we have translated as 'incantations'. In this passage it alone points to

a magical procedure, and if the word does not appear in the text, my whole discussion is mistaken. In all the manuscripts of this text that I have studied carefully, the word appears. However, the editor of the text, Israel Weinstock, has suggested reading *shive'at* in lieu of *hashbba'ot* as part of the expression *Shive'at ha-kohot ha-Yehudiyot*, namely the 'seven Jewish powers'. He does not explain what the meaning of this phrase is and I myself cannot make sense of it and thus I do not see a real improvement in his proposal as it does not clarify the text. However, if we retain the term *hashbba'ot*, found in the manuscripts, we may understand the passage better when we compare it to a passage written in another *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, one composed by Barukh Togarmi, which was well known to Abraham Abulafia.⁵⁶ Let me cite the short quotation and analyse it in some detail before returning to Abulafia's passage: 'The incantation of the language is the secret of the Garden of Eden, known from the three meals, 26, 65, and 86, that are incumbent upon the individual to eat on Sabbath, [during] day and night.'⁵⁷

This compact passage is based upon gematria, namely the affinity between the numerical values of the different phrases constituting this quotation. The basic figure is 177, which is the gematria of *Gan 'Eden* on the one hand and the three divine names, the Tetragrammaton, 'Adonai and 'Elohim, on the other. This is also the case for the phrase 'day and night' – *Yomam va-laylah*. Moreover, according to a certain way of calculation, the phrase 'three meals', *shalosh se'udot*, amounts to 1176, which was understood as $176 + 1 = 177$, while the phrase *hashbba'at ha-lashon* is 1178, when understood as follows: $1178 = 178 - 1 = 117$. The 'incantation of language' is related to the three divine names, this figure, 117, indicating the three meals the rabbis claimed should be ritualistically eaten during the Sabbath day.⁵⁸ These three names are available to the kabbalists, as they are found in the Bible, just as is the possibility of eating the three meals. The Garden of Eden has to do with an experience which is on the one hand magical, on the other ritualistic. In other words, according to Togarmi's passage, the term *Gan 'Eden*, Paradise, is connected to linguistic activities, the incantation of language and the three divine names, on the one hand, and to the performative ritual of 'keeping' the Sabbath on the other.

Incantation, exactly the same term occurring in Abulafia's text, also occurs in the work of his teacher Barukh Togarmi, again in the context of language and Sabbath, just as in Abulafia. Moreover, the nexus between the name of seventy-two letters and Saturn, found in the anonymous book quoted in Abulafia's *Sefer ha-Melammed* adduced above, is obviously part of a book dealing with incantations. In the *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah* the 'secret of the seventy-two' (in Hebrew *sod shiv'im u-shtayyim*) is numerically

equivalent to *mahut ha-leshonot*, 'the essence of the languages',⁵⁹ as each of the two phrases amounts to 1240, as has been pointed out by Weinstock.⁶⁰ Thus, there is no good reason to deny the existence of the word *hashbba'ot*, either from the palaeographical point of view or from the conceptual one. However, it should be pointed out that, in the manner Abulafia uses it, this term does not have a negative connotation.

Let me summarize Abulafia's text: in a discussion circling around the propitious nature of the number seven, several issues related to this number are put together – *the Sabbath, Sabbatai, Shemittin* and *Yovelin*. I assume that the term *hashbba'ot*, 'incantations', stems from a root very similar to *Sheva'*, seven, and should be introduced in this series particularly because it occurs, as we have seen above, in the quotation from Abraham ibn Ezra's *Reshit Hokhmah*. The question is whether a certain nexus exists between them, according to Abulafia's passage. On the basis of several hints in the text, the answer seems to be positive: for the Jews, the Sabbath day carries with it a certain additional spiritual power, which may allow, so I conjecture, the possibility of conjuring using the divine name of the seventy-two letters while Saturn is the presiding planet. Before turning to the views of another influential kabbalist, it should be emphasized that according to Abulafia's Kabbalistic system, there was a shift from external magic (found in earlier sources, especially Ashkenazi ones) towards a mystical technique, which uses many devices characteristic of magic, but is here directed to attain an inner experience that Abulafia often described as prophecy. However, by mentioning the above elements together, he plausibly reflects a tradition (already enigmatically hinted at by Barukh Togarmi) which brought the Sabbath day and some form of linguistic magic into the same context.

A contemporary of Abulafia's, and a thinker who might have been influenced by him, or alternatively had an influence upon him,⁶¹ was Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi, sometime referred also as *ha-'Arokh*, the tall. We do not know exactly the dates that he was active – scholars refer to the temporal parameters from 1270 to 1325. Ashkenazi was a respected kabbalist who was active in several places in Europe and perhaps even in Northern Africa, as well as presumably in Barcelona, where Abulafia started his Kabbalistic career. This uncertainty is heightened by the fact that was not duly recognized in scholarship, that his name, his writings or his specific terminology are neither quoted nor referred to by any of the Spanish kabbalists in the Iberian Peninsula until the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. However, Ashkenazi is quoted in the Byzantine Empire; vestiges of his terminology were found in Central Europe in the mid fourteenth century, and later on in Northern Africa and Italy. This picture from someone who was acquainted with Ashkenazi's thought

complicates both dating the period when he was active as well as further clarification of the precise background of Ashkenazi's idiosyncratic Kabbalistic thought.

Joseph Ashkenazi contributed a very influential passage on the nexus between the three religious factors that is our focus here. It is found in his commentary on *Sefer Yetzirah*, a text widespread in many manuscripts and printed for the first time in 1562. Here is my translation of the passage that was also adduced verbatim by the anonymous *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth centuries, as well as by several other kabbalists:

Sabbatai in the [dimension of the] world,⁶² and Sunday in the year [i.e. in the dimension of time], and the right eye in a person [the third dimension of reality]; namely He elevated the letter *Bet* so that it is the head of 'the power of *Keter* 'Elyon' – 'the highest crown'. And He put it in the power of *Hokhmah* and formed in it the planet Sabbatai, which is beneath the [divine name] 'ABG YTTz',⁶³ and the latter gave wisdom to Sabbatai, despite the fact that Sabbatai is the planet of destruction, by the [dint of the] *Shemittot*, it possesses the power of *Hokhmah*, and the reason why it is appointed over destruction is that it is not concerned with any corporeal issues, and this is the reason why it destroys them and has no mind for them or their adornments, but is concerned with the separated intelligences, and the comprehension of God, blessed be He, and the comprehension of the heptads ... and the prophetic power was added to them [the mindless] ... and it is responsible for maladies and death ... and it is responsible for the Jews and this is the reason they are in trouble in this world ... and on the science of sorcery⁶⁴ and the knowledge of the future ... And it is responsible for bad rumours⁶⁵ and despair ... And because it is appointed on weight, it is responsible for lead, and darkness and everything that is black, and the black bile⁶⁶ ... And because [the planet of Sabbatai] is responsible for the perpetuity, when it will reach the ascent, it will not decline forever, as it is said that⁶⁷ 'the spirit of God dwells upon him, the spirit of *Hokhmah* and of *Binah*' and it is the secret of 'Mashiyah YHWH'.⁶⁸

This seminal passage, part of a much longer text, ushers in a motif that will become more explicit in the fourteenth century. According to this new motif, there is a strong relationship between Saturn and demonic powers, which is presented here independently of the theme of sorcery addressed later in the same text. It is one of the richest and, as we shall see in the

next chapter, one of the most influential discussions related to the nature of Saturn, but one that has been steadfastly ignored in the vast scholarly literature concerning the medieval metamorphoses of this planet-god: for example, it is not acknowledged by the erudite authors of the monograph on *Saturn and Melancholy*. In fact, Ashkenazi's passage reverberates in the work of many authors, some of whom will be mentioned in this chapter, others in chapters 2 and 3.

To a greater extent than Abulafia, the Ashkenazi passage translated above was instrumental in disseminating a very important (in fact, possibly the most important) elaboration of Saturn in kabbalistic circles. As the manuscripts containing in this book are very numerous, this specific passage has been copied verbatim in a separate classic of Kabbalah, the anonymous Byzantine *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*,⁶⁹ so we shall be returning to readdress this passage in chapter 2.

What is crucial to an understanding of this passage is the phenomenon of a synthesis between two types of order, a conceptual structure that may be designated theo-astrology. This presupposes that the astral order, governed by the rhythm of the motion and nature of the celestial bodies, especially the seven planets, is in alignment with the theosophical order, based on ten divine powers, known as the ten *sefirot*, which have their own specific features and interact in accordance with rules that differ from the astrological ones. Thus, it is not only a matter of different levels of reality involved in this theo-astrological synthesis, but also of different numbers of entities – seven versus ten – with different characteristics of factors in each order and different rules of interaction between them. It should be stressed that the two different forms of order, the astral and the theosophical, have related forms of worship or cults. Astro-magic instructs people how to capture or even to draw down the celestial influx by certain rituals, while theosophical systems are related to rabbinic rituals. These two forms of worship are totally different, though in some cases the astro-magical rituals were also translated into Hebrew and have had an impact on the manner in which the rabbinic rituals have been understood, as we shall see below in the context of Sabbath.

Nevertheless, the theo-astrological synthesis strove to build correspondences that brought together the two systems while subordinating the astrological to the theosophical order. Joseph Ashkenazi's work is an early and extremely important example of such a synthesis, which affected some of the characteristics of the theosophical order, which has its own logic, also impacted upon by astrological ways of thought. It may well be that he had an impact on the Zoharic discussions of the planet Sabbatai, as subordinated to the supernal realm. This synthesis is part of the new organization of knowledge that had accumulated in

Jewish circles in Spain since the second half of the thirteenth century: a more complex theosophy and greater openness toward astrology. This is a hierarchical organization, or a theosophical constellation of the astrological constellation, which would have parallels later on in Spain among other figures such as ibn Waqar, ibn Motot and ibn Zarza. Whether Joseph Ashkenazi in fact did have an impact on those thinkers, who wrote somewhat later than Ashkenazi, is extremely uncertain, as I have pointed out above, since his name was never mentioned in this context.

It should perhaps be pointed out that one more ontological level is mentioned in the compact passage cited above: that of the letters of the divine name of forty-two letters, whose first unit *ABG YTTz* is mentioned as being placed, ontologically, between the sefirotic and the astral levels. Whether this level of discussion (in addition to the relationship of the topics mentioned in the passage, such as the limbs of the body) also carries a magical valence, as is the case in some Ashkenazi traditions, is an issue that should not concern us here.

However, what is important here is to emphasize the richness of the fields that are related to each other, in principle though not always in practice, to Saturn. The astrological traditions that entered Saturnism have been enriched by their reconceptualization within theosophical modes of thinking. This complex concatenation emerges out of affinities created between the astral order, the theosophical order, the linguistic order and the anatomical one, which have been in alignment in a rather succinct but systematic manner. It should be pointed out that while astral order is understood as belonging to the celestial world, and as presiding over events and entities in the lower world, it is conceived of as relatively low on the Great Chain of Being: it is subordinate to both the theosophical and the linguistic forms of order.

It should also be mentioned that following the lead of a certain version of *Sefer Yetzirah*, R. Joseph identifies Saturn with Sunday and not with the Sabbath, as the astrologers did. Indeed, the combination of the two modes of discourse, the theosophical and the astrological, is fascinating in terms of the complexity it generates. In a way, the two modes strengthen each other since the qualities of the higher are projected on to the lower depending on the manner in which the kabbalist writes.

We may learn from the juxtaposition of these discourses something about the historical filiation of theosophical discourse. When compared to astrological discourse, it is historically later and indubitably part of the cultural panorama of the early kabbalists. In other words, listing the qualities of each of the seven planets, which is widespread in astrological literature, may be a paradigm for symbols belonging to the enumeration of each of the ten *sefirot*. Moreover, I assume that in many cases this is

not only a matter of transferring a certain type of discourse from one realm to another. I would assume that, at least in our specific case, the qualities of the astrological body have been projected upon the higher hierarchical level, the corresponding *sefirah*. In other words, it would be more beneficial for us to use the present combination of the two types of discourse in order to understand the theosophical one, utilizing the form and content of the astrological type. Furthermore, in my opinion, another type of comparison is called for: a comparison of the discourses of Joseph Ashkenazi and Abraham Abulafia. In the former, there is an ontological centre, whose qualities are enumerated without necessarily assuming a strong relation between the words expressing those qualities. In Abulafia, the importance of the ontological centre is less evident, but the affinities that are established stem from the numerical relations between the words, namely the gematria. In other words, while the astrological-theosophical discourse is more vertical, with each word related to the supernal power that presides over it, in the discourse of ecstatic Kabbalah the horizontal relations are more evident, with each of the words related much more intimately to other words that express the same idea or, in some cases, the opposite. Moreover, astrological discourse is much less concerned with biblical exegesis (or that of another specific book) on its textual level, but is much more concerned, with events; whereas theosophical discourse is more concerned with new theosophical insights into the meaning of the verses and words of the Bible (and other classical Jewish texts) as carrying what may be described as symbolic valence.

The description of the relation between Saturn and the *sefirah* of *Hokhmah* and *Binah* that is to be found in Joseph Ashkenazi's passage in terms used earlier in relation to Saturn is quite characteristic of the new theological modality that was to flourish later, during the mid fourteenth century, in Castile. It was also to appear, in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries, in Yohanan Alemanno's work in Florence, who would also opt for the subordination of Saturn to the third *sefirah*, *Binah*. Neither subordination works so neatly, since the seven planets correspond more neatly to the seven lower *sefirot*, which are often described in theosophical Kabbalistic writings as operating in this world. On the other hand, the planet Saturn was understood to be the third of the ten celestial spheres, found beneath the sphere of the intellect or the Empireum and that of the twelve signs of the zodiac, and from this perspective, more appropriately from the formal point of view, was thought to correspond to the third *sefirah*, *Binah*. The elevation of Saturn, from a planet which would correspond in a formal manner of seven versus seven to the fourth *sefirah*, *Hesed*, counted from above, which is the first of the lower seven *sefirot*, by a higher status conditioned by its subordination to a higher *sefirah*, to the

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second or mainly to the third in fact complicated the relations between the seven planets and the sefirotic system: the seven lower *sefirot* and a higher one now correspond together to only seven planets. Such an elevation has to do with the Kabbalistic perception that this is indeed a high astral body, appointed for prophecy and mental concentration, and probably for contemplation. However, this elevation created a discrepancy between the astrological order and the sefirotic one. From the astrological stance, Saturn has religious characteristics: it is worshiped according to certain rituals, it presides over some qualities of temperament, but at the same time, together with Jupiter when they are in alignment, as in *conjunctio major*, it presides over the changes in religion here below. This vision is not only a matter of astrology, but also reflects some elements found in Greek mythology, where Kronos was ousted by his son Zeus/Jupiter.

By and large, the two different functions have been separated in the Kabbalistic conjugation with astrology. Given the status of *Binah* as higher than the seven *sefirot*, this *sefirah* is responsible, according to some of the texts discussed in this chapter and in the next one, for the change of religions, the *dinim*, while in the theosophical systems it is based on the cosmic cycles, and not a religious system of its own. This change in religion, whose source is, as mentioned above, part of the astrological system, is consonant with the vision of Saturn as destroyer, or with the myth of Kronos/Saturn, who devoured his own children. In the Kabbalistic systems, however, *Binah* is related much more to the secret of *Yovel*, 'Jubilee', which means the cessation of all forms of existence in the fiftieth millennium or, according to other versions, for two millennia, while the *Shemittot* are related to the lower seven *sefirot*. Each of these *sefirot* is perceived of as presiding over a cycle of seven thousand years, and in some versions, each of these cycles has a religious law of its own, which assumes that these changes are taking place in the cosmic Jubilee. The theosophical power now supervising changes is not astral, and the change is not part of a constellation of planetary powers, but an entity that transcends the seven *sefirot*, and one which does not possess a law of its own. Nevertheless, as seen in the text of Joseph Ashkenazi, *Binah* is described as governing both the cosmic Jubilee and the *Shemittot*, as part of the common denominator, that of the heptad, a combined or a simple one, respectively. Higher than and appointed on the seven *sefirot*, *Binah* is conceived of as the building, the *binyan*, as mentioned in Joseph Ashkenazi's text, or the seven sons in other discussions in the same book, and is not considered part of that complex and dynamic system.

It should be pointed out that the two types of order discussed here, the astrological and the theosophical, different as they are, are much closer to each other than to the philosophical order as formulated in

the writings of R. Moshe ben Maimon. While the latter type of thought is anchored in the neo-Aristotelian thought (which presumes the existence of a final type of truth, part of a more static universe), both the astral and the theosophical orders are much more flexible. They deal much more with dynamic situations created by movements and intersections, unions and separations, rather than radiation or emanation alone, as are the philosophical systems. This is why there is a possibility, in both astrology and in some Kabbalistic writings, such as in *Tiqqunei Zohar* and *Ra'aya Meheimna*, of a change of law, while Maimonides, who adopted the Aristotelian view of truth, did not allow for any change in the Torah.

I have dwelt on the two Kabbalistic discussions, that of Abulafia's and that of Joseph Ashkenazi, in order to show that astrological views on Saturn and the Jews were already known in the second part of the thirteenth century beyond the small circles of expert philosophers and astrologers, and were already making their impact on ways of thinking in circles which were not closely related to these. I would venture to locate the place from which the concepts expressed in the two discussions stem as Barcelona, a place where Abulafia started his Kabbalistic career and where Joseph Ashkenazi probably lived, at least for a while. Similarly, the critique of the preoccupation with Saturn by Bahya ben Asher (to be discussed immediately below), an author who lived in the same city sometime later, may be related to developments connected to this centre of Jewish culture. Moreover, these two kabbalists, and those anonymous circles criticized by a third kabbalist – the anonymous author of *Sefer Tiqqunei Zohar*, whose views will be addressed later on in this study – bear witness to the dissemination of views whose deeper impact may be discerned in the fourteenth century. If Abulafia's testimony as to the spread of magic indeed reflects the types of magic and sorcery included in the passage he quoted, then the impact of Saturnine magic was greater in the thirteenth century than may be possible to document today.

Some Fourteenth-Century Texts

In Jewish culture, the fourteenth century hosted what Alexander Altmann has cogently designated 'a Renaissance of ibn Ezra', something that is more evident in the second half of that century.⁷⁰ Given the staggering amount of manuscript material still awaiting detailed analysis and publication, the following survey is very tentative. Crucial for some of the renewed interest in ibn Ezra was a mid-fourteenth-century Castilian kabbalist named Joseph ibn Waqar, who offered interesting syntheses between philosophy, Kabbalah and astrology.⁷¹

Insofar as the topic of Saturn is concerned, he was explicitly quoted by Samuel ibn Zarza, one of the main commentators on ibn Ezra, in a

way that shows the deep impact of the citation previously given from ibn Ezra's *Sefer Reshit Hokhmah*. Ibn Zarza brings ibn Waqar's view together with what the 'sages of the zodiac signs' have to say about Saturn.⁷² The same view is echoed by his contemporary, Shmuel ibn Motot, though he does not mention ibn Waqar's name. Ibn Motot also quotes the views of the 'sages of the zodiac signs' and of the kabbalist found in ibn Zarza, thus producing the following passage:

Know that according to the truth there is a very great advantage to Sabbath over all the days because the force of the soul will be enhanced by the [faculties of] knowledge and intellect and it is from the power of Saturn to which it has been attributed the presidency over the first hour and it is a superior power and all the planets give power to it. When we shall retain the power of the intellect, and its lot is the rational soul, and the power of thought and understanding and cleverness and the knowledge of secrets and the worship of God and it is the star of Israel and its lot are the Temple,⁷³ the Hebrew language and the Torah of Israel⁷⁴ and this is the reason why the power of the soul will be enhanced in Israel during this day more than during the others.⁷⁵

More than in ibn Ezra's astrological worldview, this quotation expands the presidency of Saturn over more specific and very important areas of Judaism. It adds to the general view of ibn Ezra concerning Sabbath and the Jews, as well as the Torah, the Temple and the Hebrew language. This passage, which reflects ibn Waqar's somewhat earlier stance, amounts to a fairly comprehensive Saturnization of Judaism as it was disseminated in verbatim citations just a generation after his death by the two other Castilian thinkers, ibn Zarza and ibn Motot.

However, the most powerful discussions of the relation between Saturn and maleficent powers are found in the mid fourteenth century, in the supercommentary on ibn Ezra by Shlomo Franco, who describes this planet as the 'great Satan', and the 'great maleficent power', all this in contexts that clearly mention Sabbath and the Jews.⁷⁶ Demonic powers are mentioned explicitly in connection with Saturn in another fourteenth-century follower of ibn Ezra's thought, Shem Tov ibn Major: 'because the matters of the demons had been attributed to Saturn ... Capricorn was the house of Saturn⁷⁷ and behold the demons had been called goats'.⁷⁸

Goats had previously been described as a representation of demons in rabbinic sources and in ibn Ezra,⁷⁹ and the biblical scapegoat was indeed an animal presented to a demonic power, 'Azazel. In fact, this

nexus between demons and Saturn is already found in the second half of Ashkenazi's thirteenth-century *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, discussed above, which reflects much earlier traditions, as was obvious from the passage of Alcabitius also discussed above.⁸⁰

Some Fifteenth-Century Jewish Texts on Saturn

A very similar type of thought, namely the association between different motifs, also persisted in later speculative writings in Judaism. In a mid-fifteenth-century text, an anonymous treatise (most plausibly written in Italy) combining philosophy and Kabbalah, we learn that:

On Jericho the influx of Saturn is found, which is the seventh of the planets and this is the reason they circumambulated it seven times and the wall fell on the day of Sabbath, which is Sabbatai/Saturn's day and there was destruction, because the nature of Saturn is to emanate destruction.⁸¹

Here the magical ritual of the Israelites is not performed during the Sabbath, but its repercussions are intended to occur then – all this in the context of the influx of Saturn.

Drawing mainly on ibn Ezra and his fourteenth-century commentators, as well as on Kabbalistic writings, especially Joseph Ashkenazi, Yohanan ben Isaac Alemanno, an older companion of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, mentions Saturn several times in his writings. Some of these expressions suggest a rather assimilationist religious attitude to Saturn, as we shall see immediately below, though some other discussions found in his writings betray a more confrontational attitude towards the planet. It is interesting to point out that Alemanno, a prolific and erudite thinker who lived for many years in Florence and was linked to the principal contributors to the Florentine Renaissance, including Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, was not attracted (as far as I could inspect the relevant sources analysed by scholars) by the Hermetical formulations used by Marsilio Ficino in this context. In Alemanno's untitled writing extant in a unique manuscript in the National Library in Paris, as part of a lengthy commentary on the ten *sefirot*, he describes the third *sefirah*, *Binah*, and writes in this context:

since *the Binah* is the property of Israel ... *the Binah* is the zodiac sign of all the zodiac signs ... *Yovel*, which is the fiftieth year ... and to this *sefirah* was [attributed] the revelation of the Torah ... and to it the counting of the seven Sabbaths, years, and all the heptads, and the redemptions ... and the third [sphere] is the sphere of

Saturn, which is the first under the sphere of the zodiacal signs, and forty-eight forms [of the Moon] ... and it is a supreme and noble, higher than all the other planets, which is the reason that the ancient sages said of it that it generated all the other planets ... And they say that Saturn is the true judge [*dayyan 'emmet*] and the planet of Moses, peace be with him.⁸² The angel of Saturn is Michael,⁸³ the great minister, so called because of his great power in divine matters and He is the ministering angel of Israel.⁸⁴ And the astrologers who described Saturn say that it endows man with profound thought, laws⁸⁵ and the spiritual sciences,⁸⁶ prophecy, sorcery⁸⁷ and prognostication and the *Shemittot* and *Yovelot*.⁸⁸ The Jewish people and the Hebrew language and the Temple are under its jurisdiction. Saturn's major conjunction is with Jupiter in the dominion of Pisces⁸⁹ occurred to assist the nation, and the Torah and its prophets. This planet endows the people with perfection in sciences and divine matters such as the Torah and its commandments, out of its sublimity, because it is spiritual ... It is concerned only with thought, understanding and design, esoteric knowledge and divine worship and His Torah, and the Sabbath day is under its sway, because its nature causes material existence to cease ... and all the operations that are not corresponding to it are forbidden [during Sabbath] because it corrupts and destroys all [kinds of] destructions. And lightening [fire] should not be done in its lot because it is cold ... and if they will keep its spiritual rules and laws it will impart a spiritual influx abundantly. But if they will not keep the way of God, it will spew out everything which is bad, prophecy will occur to the fools and to babies in an insufficient manner, and to women and to melancholics [*ba'alei ha-shehorah*] and those possessed by an evil spirit, and maleficent demons that obliterate the limbs⁹⁰ and bad counsels and sorceries⁹¹ and anxieties and erroneous beliefs and hypocrisies and cheatings and destruction and famine and poverty.⁹²

This passage, deeply influenced by Joseph Ashkenazi's *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, is also inspired by various commentators on ibn Ezra, who were mentioned above, as well as by theosophical kabbalists, probably even *Sefer ha-Peluy'ah*. This style of writing is certainly eclectic, bringing together, as it does, more theosophical and astrological themes than any other author before Alemanno. On a larger scale than previously, it attempts to contrive an organization of symbols and objects, thus creating a more unified understanding of reality as a whole, as governed

by a series of distinct supernal powers, *sefirot* and the planets, which are related to each other in hierarchical structures. It constitutes the more comprehensive and radical Saturnization of Jewish practices, since keeping Saturn's regulations is implicitly understood as keeping to the path of God. Even more than Joseph Ashkenazi's passage previously discussed, Alemanno's list is repetitious in that it also reflects common denominators from a variety of overlapping sources – astro-magical and Kabbalistic. Interestingly enough, the biblical interdiction on kindling light during Sabbath is explained as corresponding to the cold nature of Saturn. This passage represents the culmination of a process that began with ibn Ezra and fanned out with his followers, but was also joined by kabbalists. A discussion on various later kabbalists follows below.

It is significant that during the Renaissance period this process became more pronounced in a Jewish author at a period when some Christian intellectuals were discovering salient Greek texts which, though recently translated into Latin by Ficino, had not been integrated into Alemanno's synthesis. Elsewhere, in a short discussion inspired by ibn Motot's quote above, Alemanno claims that:

in *Sefer ha-'Atzamim*⁹³ he expatiated on Saturn because it presides over the Israelite nation and their activities in general and in particular the Holy Language, and among the places, the Temple, and the conjunction of Sabbatai and Jupiter is *conjunctio maxima* which is known as being in the ascent for to the nation of Israel.⁹⁴

The resort to the phrase 'their activities in general' points to Alemanno's extension of the role of Saturn in a greater variety of topics than had been specified by earlier authors. In other words, Alemanno's Saturnization of Judaism was based on astro-magical sources available in Hebrew in Spain since the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, though he was active in a cultural environment that fostered similar astro-magical views based on the Hermetic corpus translated by Marsilio Ficino, which was unrelated to Jews. Fascinatingly enough, the Hellenistic literary corpus arriving from the Byzantine Empire and written in Greek, thus stemming from the east of Italy, encountered the astrological concepts arriving from Spain, extant in Hebrew texts, coming from the West, and they all met in the same city: Florence, during the last third of the fifteenth century. In some cases it is hard to discover the precise source of a discussion written in Florence in this period: the Eastern trajectory, represented mainly by Ficino's translations from Greek, or the Western – Hebrew material stemming from Provence and Spain. In my opinion, which will hopefully be expanded elsewhere, Alemanno's family played a role in bringing

manuscripts from Spain to Italy, thus contributing to the strengthening of the Western vector in Italy. Some authors, like Yohanan Alemanno, Isaac Abravanel and his son Leone Ebreo, were acquainted with both vectors.⁹⁵

Saturn in the Sixteenth Century: Joseph ibn Tzayyah, Isaac Karo and Abraham Yagel

In the first part of the sixteenth century, we find an explicit association of Saturn with sorcery in two books of a little known kabbalist who was active in Jerusalem and Damascus, Joseph ibn Tzayyah. His voluminous writings display an unprecedented mixture of theosophical speculations with detailed astrological theories. In two separate texts, which overlap in many details, he describes the planet Saturn in the classical terms found in many of his Jewish predecessors, astrologers and kabbalists:

cold and dry and it is destruction, and bareness, and death and plague⁹⁶ and things that are corrupting by the power of judgement of *Binah* ... and if you wish to use it by means of the path of demoniacs, be careful and guard your soul very much lest you do so ... but its [magical] use should be studied only in order to teach and understand the secrets of the chambers of the attribute of the power of *Binah* and behold its use [magical] involves the aspect of sorcery⁹⁷ which denies and changes the supernal Family [*Pamalya*].⁹⁸

Ibn Tzayyah's influence on the history of Kabbalah seems to be limited to few Kabbalists living in the Land of Israel and Syria. However, Isaac ben Joseph Karo (1458–1525), the uncle of the more famous Rabbi Joseph Karo, author of a widespread commentary on the Pentateuch, *Toledot Yitzhaq*, a title printed three times in the sixteenth century, elaborated on Saturn and Sabbath in two different discussions. In one, he conceived of the planet designated over Israel, on the Temple, the Hebrew language and, last but not least, the Torah of Moses.⁹⁹ However, in his discussion, in which he explicitly mentions the astrologers and ibn Ezra, there is no trace of a negative conceptual structure. His various discussions do testify, however, to the process of Saturnization of Judaism in the sixteenth century.

Moreover, in 1562 the first printing of Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi's *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah* in Mantua had made its content available to much wider audiences, as we learn from the fact that the passage on Saturn discussed above influenced, for example, Abraham ibn Migash in the second half of the sixteenth century in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰⁰

The impact of Joseph Ashkenazi's text (as discussed above) was also formative for Abraham Yagel in Italy in the late sixteenth century. Yagel, a prolific author and thinker, wrote:

You should know that Capricorn and Aquarius are the constellations of Israel,¹⁰¹ their planet is Saturn, since these constellations are its¹⁰² houses, as [Abraham] ibn Ezra explains in *Sefer ha-'Atzamim*,¹⁰³ and R. Abraham ben David in his *Commentary on the Sefer Yetzirah*. Because of these constellations, they [the Jews] are liable to plunder and destruction,¹⁰⁴ to toil and to burdens, like those of our ancestors in Egypt. None of the heavenly hosts are as devastating as these two in summoning evil and suffering to this world. Accordingly, the astrologers assigned as its¹⁰⁵ lot the [black] plague, illness, slaves, graves, the prison, and a place of corpses.¹⁰⁶

Mention of the plague here is one of the clearest instances Saturn being linked to this much-feared disease in Hebrew texts. Since there is no reason to assume that he was aware of ibn Tzayyah's passage quoted above, directly or indirectly, we should better surmise the existence of a common source which predated the composition of both *'Even ha-Shoham* and Yagel's *Gei Hizayon*, where a nexus between the plague and Saturn is made explicit in a Jewish source. In this writer's opinion, in his Saturnization of Judaism Yagel reflects the peak already established by Alemanno, an author whose writings he was acquainted with and quotes, always anonymously, from time to time.

However, the last quote is far from being the most important Hebrew astrological discussion of the plague that I could detect in the sixteenth century. In a treatise dedicated to the nature and treatment of the plague, also written by Abraham Yagel, an astrological explanation is offered for this disease, which is fascinating from several points of view:

We had already mentioned in Ch. V,¹⁰⁷ how the ancients brought about the descent of the supernal powers on the lower [entities] by means of smoke and incense, and how it is the special quality of Saturn and Mars and other bad conjunctions to cause a bad quality and property to the air, which becomes corrupted and there they create the evil animal [*Hayyah ra'ah*] ... and how by the variety of smokes that are contrary to that bad nature we can purify it and kill the 'horned viper on the path'¹⁰⁸ as you know because the nature of Saturn and Mars is related to those things that create a bad smell.¹⁰⁹

As was pointed out several times in this treatise, the corrupted or adulterated air, *ha-'avir ha-me'uppash*, is the cause of the plague,¹¹⁰ and this deterioration of the air depends upon 'the bad conjunctions that cause plague, whose vast majority are those of Saturn and Mars', which cause 'the corrupted air' – namely the pestilential air.¹¹¹ This explanation was known centuries before Yagel, and adduced as one of the reasons for the Black Death,¹¹² though I did not find a significant discussion which connects plague and Saturn in the medical discussions in the astrological books mentioned above.¹¹³

In this context too, Yagel mentions the emergence of 'the serpent and the horned viper, which kills by the breath of his lips'.¹¹⁴ Therefore, the descent of the influences depending upon the two planets creates an entity described in negative terms: serpent, evil animal, horned viper – instrumental in killing people. The plague is therefore personified in an entity described in serpentine terms, with lethal influences. Though there is discussion of the emergence of the maleficent animals in the context of the conjunction of Saturn and Mars, no direct connection is made between either of the two planets and the serpentine animals. However, such a nexus did occur previously in a discussion of the anonymous kabbalist who composed *Sefer Tiqqunei Zohar*, where the serpent is mentioned together with Saturn, as we shall see below. As far back as in the passage by Alcabitius, Saturn is described as appointed upon black serpents.¹¹⁵ On the other hand, the goats mentioned by ibn Major as indicating Capricorn and demons are only further symbols of the demonic aspects of Saturn. A short catalogue of the animals mentioned above will bring out the resemblance between them and the main Satanic figures of the Sabbat of the witches, but this issue will be addressed later in this study. It is therefore possible to speak about a constellation of negative features attributed to Saturn in texts written by astrologers before it was accepted by the Jews. This negative conceptual structure is fairly stable and migrated from century to century with only minor changes and additions.

Jewish Resistance to and Critique of the Saturnization of Judaism

I have attempted to describe an astrological tradition concerning Judaism, shared by some important Jewish authors between the period from the middle of the twelfth to the end of the sixteenth centuries. This survey of the above texts, which form only a part of the literature that has contributed to the Saturnization of Judaism, or at least to quote from them approvingly, should nevertheless be seen from a broader perspective. The texts are representative of various small scholarly circles – which may be designated 'secondary elites'¹¹⁶ – and their views on the above topics were

not circulated widely. Most of the texts mentioned above were written in Spain and they reflect a trend in Jewish Sefardi culture, which adopted it in a significant manner after Maimonides had directed criticism towards astrology and astral magic. There can be no doubt that the dark and pessimistic character of Saturn did not attract too many Jews, and that the vast Jewish speculative literature produced since the twelfth century, when astrology made its first substantial inroads, was less receptive to Saturnian images of the Jew. However, silence was only one way to react to the process of Saturnization as described above. In other cases, resistance proved far more explicit and provoked a polar comparison between Saturnism and Judaism.

Bahya ben Asher, writing some time at the end of the thirteenth century, adduces two quotations concerning Saturn from an *Epistle of Galenus*¹¹⁷ dealing with the knowledge of the stars and their spiritual forces, in Hebrew *ruhaniyyut ha-kokhavim*, preserved most probably in Arabic, one of them describing an ascetic discipline intended to draw down those astral spiritualities. Immediately afterwards he claims that the Torah is a science higher than the astrological one, and this is the reason for the Sabbath regulations which are inverted practices of those prescribed by the astrologers for Saturnian astro-magic.¹¹⁸ In one of the two quotations Galens, or perhaps Balinus/Apollonius, prescribes the sacrifice of a black cat when Saturn is in the house of Capricorn, apparently on the Sabbath day. Let me translate this second passage:

whoever wants to draw down upon himself the spirituality of Saturn, that is the start [= planet] which presides in the day of Sabbath, he should reduce his eating of meat and any other food and avoid sexual intercourse and clothe in black garb, and prepare a form [*temunah* = talisman] of a lion of copper, at the hour of Saturn, and in the zodiac sign of Capricorn, and they should slaughter a black cat on the form and then he should come close to it and worship it and it will tell him future things. This is the language of that epistle that I translated from Arabic to Hebrew.¹¹⁹

What is not specified in the text is the precise time of the event, but from the context it is obvious that it is sometime during the Sabbath day. To be sure, R. Bahya, a fairly conservative figure, rejects this view, claiming immediately afterwards that the wisdom of the Torah is higher than that of the stars, namely the planets, and of zodiac signs, this being the reason why the commandments related to the Sabbath in fact contradict the ritual mentioned in the epistle. Thus, we have here a third description of an astro-magical ritual related to Saturn in Spain, in addition to the *Picatrix* and

Sefer ha-'Atzamim. In fact, in the same generation we have three different titles, in addition to another booklet translated into Hebrew by *Sefer ha-Levanah*, namely *The Book of the Moon*, which deals with astral magic. In fact, a substantial rise in interest in astro-magical information among Jewish authors contributed as much as did an acquaintance with it – there was an awareness of the divergence between the Jewish rituals of Sabbath (based on joy, the consumption of food and sometimes also wearing white clothes) and rituals which concentrated on being sad and donning black garb, something that was to become a topos in Jewish literature to which we will be referring in chapter 3.

However, the most explicit rejection of magic and sorcery as related to Saturn is to be found in some texts which belong to the later layer of Zoharic literature, written in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Some discussions found in this canonical book of Kabbalah, in which Sabbatai is subordinate to higher forms of celestial order, entities called palaces, do not draw undue attention if we remind ourselves that the book was written in Castile in the last decades of the thirteenth century, a period when the Arabic original of *Picatrix* was being translated into Castilian, and later into Hebrew. However, though the *Picatrix*, and perhaps its Hebrew translation, might have determined the negative reaction of the anonymous kabbalist, it is quite plausible that he might also have been responding to developments in Kabbalah in Barcelona, specifically some form of the syntheses mentioned above, including the work of Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi.

A similar reaction to that expressed by R. Bahya to the Saturnian ritual can be found in an addition to one of the volumes of the *Zohar* that may belong to its later stratum. This part is constituted of two main compositions, the *Tiqqunim*, or the amendments to the *Zohar*, and the so-called Faithful Shepherd, *Ra'aya' Meheimna'*. This nexus is indeed significant, but it is not so tight as to make us decide that we actually have a fragment from the later corpus of the *Zohar*, and perhaps we should allow for the possibility of a kabbalist who differs both from Zoharic thought and from that of the later layer though he was close to both. In this addition to one of the volumes of the *Zohar*, we find the following passage:

At the hour that the planet Saturn presides over the world, and one of his branches emanates to descend on low and it exits by a barren head, and it strikes him by the means of Qorqefani and Shamriron, two spirits that preside over that branch. And when it strikes that person, they design two red traces, and that branch that the black trace [which is a third one] is designed on

it, behold the completion of Saturn is using the black [trace]. And this secret presides during the day of Sabbath but not on the holy nation, since the holy nation does not inherit the heritage of planets and zodiacal signs, but the Holy One, blessed be He, alone. And they [the Jews] should evince joy, with eating and beverage, and (fine) garments, and prepare the house and the table during that day, unlike those who seize the planet of Saturn, upon which it is incumbent to fast, and show sorrow and worry and anger, and have black garments, and black covers, and not to consume meat and wine and oil, and not to delight in the delights of the world, but seat in their houses in sorrow, and separate themselves from people. And the two spirits, Qorqefani and Shamriron, emanate upon him and disclose to him things of this world, by the emanation of Saturn. We have seen in the *Book of King Solomon* that there are persons that were born when this branch was presiding, and they are full of sorrow all the time, and are not joyous ever, but when they study the Torah and then they grasp on to the Holy One Blessed-be-He, and despite this there is in this person elements and roots of the Right of the Forefathers.¹²⁰

The author describes some instances of inscribing on his face – in the case of Saturn by means of three lines: two black and one red. The resort to the image of a branch leaves us with the impression that we have here some ritual in which Saturn plays the role of a king, perhaps in the investiture of a vassal, a verbal picture that describes a gesture deserving further attention. Its attribution to an ancient book written by King Solomon is part of the image of Solomon as skilled in the arts of magic, which was a topos in the Middle Ages.

This juxtaposition of Saturnian qualities and the Jews forms a strong parallel to R. Baḥya's passage, formulated on the grounds of a translation that he rendered from the Arabic. Thus, if the latter Zoharic text is indeed similar to that of R. Baḥya, it depends on it, not vice versa. This means that the anonymous Zoharic author reacted to the vision of the *Epistle of Galenus*, not to the rather similar view found in *Picatrix*, especially in Book III, chapter 8, which was influenced by the prayers to Saturn already found in ibn Waḥshiya's *Nabbatean Agriculture*. However, the Zoharic text avoids the description of the ritual of witchcraft found in Baḥya, and instead gives the theme of the branch and the physiognomical traces or lines that reflect the subordination of the person to the planet, in order to describe the effect that Saturn has upon people in this world. Though the details related to the black clothes are indubitably taken from astrological

treatises, it is plausible that the critique is addressed not to that of the basically unknown Saturnians, but rather more to the contemporary Christian monks. Thus, the Saturnization of Judaism created a reaction, which culminated in a Saturnization of Christianity among the Jews who could not accept the astrological domination of the Jews by the malign planet.

One of these critiques formulated in a piece belonging to later Zoharic literature distinguishes between the good Sabbatai – which is related to Sabbath and to the *sefirah* of *Yesod* – and the pernicious Sabbatai – which depends on the ‘other side’, namely on the demonic powers, and ‘when it is dominant on the world the Sabbath departs, and the supplementary souls exclaim “There is no Sabbath!”’¹²¹ The discussion is based upon a pun: the Hebrew spelling of *Sabbatai* was deconstructed into two Hebrew words ‘*Y Sabbath*’ which means ‘there is no Sabbath’. The exact nature of this negative Sabbath is not so explicit in the passage referred to above.¹²² We may assume that this is one of the very rare approaches to the possibility of the existence of the concept of a pernicious Sabbath, apparently cultivated by a Jewish magician or sorcerer, since the ‘supplementary souls’, destined to descend only upon Jews, are described as not descending, on account of nefarious activities. Moreover, several lines before the mention of Saturn, the anonymous kabbalist carefully distinguishes between those figures who reflect the splendour of the primordial light, and the others, ‘preoccupied as they are all the day in sorcery’¹²³ and they are successful with kings and governors, and they are *Me’onen*, and *Menahesh*, and Sorcerer’.^{124, 125}

Moreover, the positive figures are emphatically described as white. It would be logical to assume that the blackness of Saturn, a well-known attribute of this planet, is the background for creating a stark contrast between the two types. Given the strong polarities that govern the whole discussion in this passage, I see no reason not to correlate the pernicious Saturn with the preoccupation with sorcery mentioned earlier in the text, just as those people described as ‘good people’ are plausibly related to the study of the Torah. As we shall see immediately below, Saturnine figures were conceived of as magicians in another pertinent discussion belonging to this literature.

It seems that the author was aware of the religious dangers involved in immersion in astral magic and astrology, which could prove detrimental to the more particularistic propensity of the Jews to be under the sway of Saturn, here related to the study of the Torah. The very fact that the magicians are described as being in contact with kings and governors may demonstrate that their magical preoccupation involves some form of cooperation. Indeed, it seems that the author of the above passage was

aware of and antagonistic to the interest in astro-magic at the court of King Alfonso Sabio, the King of Castile (c. 1280), and the involvement of Jews in translations of magical treatises like the *Picatrix*, which are replete with astro-magic in general and discussions on Saturn in particular.¹²⁶ As I have suggested elsewhere, there was a negative affinity between the interest in astro-magic in the last third of thirteenth-century Castile and the attitude to astro-magic in the Zoharic literature.¹²⁷ Later on in the Zoharic composition, another typology of people with a Saturnine temperament whose 'look is pernicious' is proposed, where again the keeping of the Sabbath in gladness and abundance is conceived of as the opposite of the sadness and poverty so characteristic of Saturn.¹²⁸ In other words, Sabbath and Torah, two topics that loom so conspicuously in the Saturnization of Judaism mentioned above, are described here as forms of resistance to the maleficent influences of Saturn.

In the literature of the later Zoharic layer, entitled *Tiqqunei Zohar*, the affinity between Saturn and Saturnine persons on the one hand and sorcery on the other is expressed even more explicitly. Capitalizing on the dichotomy between the *Tzaddiq*, the righteous man, who belongs in the realm of the *Shekhinah*, namely the divine presence, and the wicked one, who belongs to the feminine counterpart power of evil, the anonymous kabbalist describes the colour black as follows:

If he is a sinner, he is from the side of Saturn, he is a gullible person,¹²⁹ a black one, from the side of the female of the *Qelippah*, where all the magic of the black ravens¹³⁰ and black birds, from the side of impurity, upon which there are some presiding powers named *leilot*¹³¹ ... and they descend under the wings of the ravens and show to them,¹³² by means of the [ir] movements, some evil decrees¹³³ that descend upon the world. And there are others¹³⁴ which preside over their voices, and they cry voice after voice ... and the serpent is riding over the voice of the raven, the Other God, to his spouse, magic,¹³⁵ the poison of death,¹³⁶ in which Samael, the Other God, becomes complete.^{137, 138}

The entire passage is replete with images related to black – night, ravens, black birds – and thus they are symbols of impurity, namely the demonic dimension of reality. The demonology espoused here is not so clear: is Saturn different from Samael, or does the latter represent, as in many other cases, the planet Mars; and does their cooperation point to the particularly nefarious impact of the astral power during the Sabbath, as already hinted at in ibn Ezra?

It would be redundant to emphasize the importance of the addition of the theme of poison as part of sorcery. This connection seems to reflect the

existence of a conception that connects saturnine sorcery with poison, as reflected implicitly in ibn Ezra's book *Reshit Hokhmah*, which was criticized by the anonymous kabbalist. In the vein of the theurgical Kabbalah, which emphasized the need to unify the male and female aspects of the divine powers, the anonymous kabbalist resorts to the pun *Sam* plus 'El in order to invoke the completion of the demonic counterpart by sorcery. In other words, sorcery is the inverse operation, or a counter-ritual when compared to theurgical Kabbalah. Here I should point out that though a clearly masculine noun, Sabbatai as a planet is related in several instances in this layer of the Zoharic literature to a female demonic power. Interestingly enough, the figure of Melancholy in the famous etching of Dürer's *Melencolia I* is also a feminine entity, as is an angel imagined to be related to Saturn and Walter Benjamin, as we shall see in chapter 3.

Some of the motifs mentioned in the Zoharic texts discussed above are to be found together in a short discussion elsewhere in *Tiqunei Zohar*:

'Elohim 'Aherim, Sabbatai, 'Y Sabbath, [since] Sabbatai is composed of the letters *'Y Sabbath*, and Israel should change place and name and deed ... so that the enemy, which is Samael, will not know them ... If someone keeps Sabbath he has to change the clothes, in comparison to other days, as well as the foods, which are the delight of Sabbath. If he is accustomed to eat two meals in the week days, during Sabbath he should eat three meals.¹³⁹

Keeping the commandments related to Sabbath became, therefore, an attempt to escape the attention of Samael, a power which is either identical to, or at least closely associated with, Sabbatai. Apparently, the assumption is that during Sabbath the power of Saturn is even greater than during the week, and hence the need for disguise is more conspicuous in order to escape its nefarious influence. Such a view may reflect the theory of ibn Ezra as to the combined influence of these two maleficent planets discussed above. This confrontational understanding of Jewish ritual, reminiscent of the manner in which Maimonides explained some of the commandments, may point to a struggle that is not a mere matter of theoretical dispute, though unfortunately material on historical events related to Jews practising magic and sorcery is very scant. When promulgating the rituals of Sabbath, Moses (i.e. a Jewish 'Everyman?') was therefore fighting against the practices of the Saturnines, as we shall see below in a more explicit statement found in a much later author. Interestingly enough, the explanation of the Jewish rituals as an attempt to counteract astro-magic is not an innovation of the anonymous kabbalist but an explication of a principle formulated by Maimonides,

who explained some Jewish religious practices as attempts to eradicate what he construed to be ancient pagan forms of worship.¹⁴⁰ It is quite interesting to see how this classical text of Kabbalah is much closer to the 'Great Eagle' than to ibn Ezra: philosophy and Kabbalistic mythology may sometimes cooperate against some forms of astrological worship.

Let me attempt to describe the above passages belonging to the later layers of the *Zohar* from another perspective. Most of the discussions dealing with Saturn are mainly lists attempting to arrange some of the objects and occurrences in the world, as well as human qualities and behaviour, under the aegis of this malign planet. The schematic structure of the discourse and the staccato style of texts like ibn Ezra's and those of his commentators, or those of other astrologers such as Ptolemy and Abu Ma'shar, are conspicuous. In the Kabbalistic texts, however, an attempt has been made to correlate the different entities, predominantly words, arranged under this rubric, though they may belong to different ontological levels: sefirotic, i.e. divine, and astral. One of the aspects of the semiotic process, the assimilation of properties of one of the entities to another, will be discussed below. Here I would like to deal with another aspect of organizing the discourse: the creation of a dynamic that conjugates the different elements into a broader narrative with obvious mythical qualities. The astrologers were concerned predominantly with organizing a map of reality – the kabbalists sometimes following the astrologers were far more concerned to discover types of interaction between the catalogued entities, and they did so by introducing sexual polarity.

In contrast with the work of the astrologers in the later Zoharic material adduced above, there are much shorter sentences to similar effect, and feminine entities are introduced, creating forms of mythical interaction which are very rare in the more scientifically oriented texts. In fact, the anonymous kabbalist created a myth which is designed to counteract the astrological discourse which he has construed as negative. However, the main raw material for this new myth is less an activation of the astral bodies as personifications and more a resort to complex linguistic speculations. While the astrologers were concerned with a description of things and processes, the kabbalists were much more concerned with symbolic interpretations and allegorical words in canonical books and in manipulating their letters. The Greek myths that nourished some of the Hellenistic and medieval astrological speculations were less oriented towards linguistics, whereas the kabbalists capitalized on the linguistic material that designated the basic elements which had already been organized along more 'objective' lines by the astrologers.

As has been pointed out by Dov Schwartz,¹⁴¹ there are reservations to be found concerning the extreme and comprehensive processes of

Saturnization of Judaism in Abraham ibn Al-Tabib's explicit critique of Shlomo Franco's stand¹⁴² and in the reticence of some of the students of a group of interpreters of ha-Levi's *Kuzari*. Some of those Provençal masters were also inclined to accept an astrological understanding of Judaism, describing Moses as aligned with the benevolent and intellectual influence of Mercury.¹⁴³ Other important instances of a critique of astral magic have recently been collected and discussed.¹⁴⁴ However, of particular importance is a passage by Rabbi Menaḥem ben Zerah, an important figure who was active in the second half of the fourteenth century in Castile:

I seal the discussion of the matters of stars and the deeds of sorcery,¹⁴⁵ so that the mouth of the astrologers will be filled with rubble and their premolars will be broken, because in our generation there are many ignoramuses, belonging to the monotheists¹⁴⁶ who follow their own opinion and counsel ... and they do not know the decrees of the Lord of the Earth ... and their opinion and view is that the deeds of all men, without any exception, have been delivered to the motions of the spheres and the aspects of the seven planets ... and they say that God has left the world since the six days of Creation.¹⁴⁷

The Castilian master claims that he is protesting against a more substantial group, whose adherence to astrology and magic amounted to a vision of a universe that was totally governed by astral bodies without any intervention on the part of God. Even if his claim is an exaggeration, the social implications of this passage should not be overlooked, provided that a number of Jewish authors became followers of ibn Ezra in the fourteenth century.

In *Sha'ar ha-Hesheq*, the printed introduction to his manuscript commentary on the Song of Songs, entitled *Hesheq Shlomo*, even Yohanan Alemanno, the author who so warmly espoused a positive attitude to the fourteenth-century Jewish commentators on ibn Ezra, nevertheless claims in a manner especially reminiscent of Bahya ben Asher's attitude, as discussed above, that:

Since Saturn is the cause of sorcery¹⁴⁸ and of pagan worship ... our master Moses, of blessed memory, had to stand in the breach and guard Israel in the matter of the Torah and commandments which issue from the *sefirah* of *Tiferet* and from all kinds of pagan worship. All kinds of sorcery issue from Saturn.¹⁴⁹

Unlike the passage adduced above from an untitled treatise preserved in MS. Paris BN 849, where Saturn is described as the planet of Moses, here Moses is described as striving against the maleficent Saturn and its influence, and as offering a religious system based on the Torah which, according to the kabbalists, was related to the sixth *sefirah*, *Tiferet*. Apparently, this was a divine attribute connected to Mercury, a planet that was instrumental in obliterating Saturnian influences, as we have seen above in one of the commentators on ibn Ezra.¹⁵⁰ In a passage to be analysed below in the Appendix, Alemanno, in a manner perhaps influenced by *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, emphasizes the sharp distinction (and separation) between spirituality and corporeality as the main purpose of Moses.

However, I would like to emphasize that following the tradition of ibn Ezra neither the Saturnian religion nor Judaism were described by Alemanno by creating a mythical narrative, as found in the Zoharic literature, or later on in Sabbatean thought. The 'list type' of discourse remained the backbone of Kabbalistic treatments, and a modest change in the direction of a more sustained narrative may be discerned when Sabbatai Tzevi becomes involved, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Some Possible Repercussions

The above passages do not exhaust the discussions on the nexus between magic and sorcery, Saturn, Sabbath and Jews found in Jewish texts. I hope that I have detected the more important ones. However, the vast literature which is pertinent to our topic – especially the thousands of folios dealing with the various 'supercommentaries' on Abraham ibn Ezra – and still in manuscript has to be perused before a more accurate picture may be offered. Nevertheless, I assume that the passages analysed above will suffice to conclude that in some Jewish intellectual circles, of philosophers and kabbalists alike, the affinities between these topics were conceived of as part of the ordered astrological universe pertaining to the more comprehensive 'scientific' worldview of some of their contemporaries.

However, beyond the more philological analyses, we should bear in mind the semiotic processes involved in the various formulations of these passages. The different attributes and qualities found in relation to Saturn stem from a variety of realms: nations, times, places, spiritual qualities or domains of knowledge. They do indeed reflect unconnected entities which were assembled because of the belief that they were under the aegis of Saturn. The above discussions reveal a great amount of what I have called 'vertical selective affinities' between some of the entities in the mundane world and Saturn and to a certain extent also the *sefirah* related to it. In most cases that *sefirah* is *Binah*. Though the horizontal affinities between

those matters which were individually related to Saturn are rare, they nevertheless exist, as the descriptions of the Jews as suffering, as sorcerers or as intelligent, show. However, a possible and, in my opinion, plausible reading of those texts may emphasize the horizontal affinities beyond what was explicitly specified in the various different passages. They create a greater coherence between the discrete entities found in the mundane realm, or what may be described as a mutual contamination. This is not necessarily part of the discourse on gematria in the School of Ecstatic Kabbalah, but it reflects the same quality.

Hence, the Jews, or the Hebrew language, were to become more 'melancholic' or 'prophetic' or 'magical' or involved in sorcery, as the Sabbath may attract these and other 'relevant' positive or negative qualities. In other words, the reception of the texts discussed above may have taken a path already analysed by Brian Vickers and described as 'assimilation' or 'symphysis'.¹⁵¹ The 'symphysical' process could produce a stronger association, or assimilation, of sorcery and Jewishness, or of Sabbath and sorcery and Jewishness, and each of these and Saturn, even including in some way the theme of Jews as portents of the plague. Both Jews and the plague are 'vertically' related to Saturn, but their horizontal affinity is only rarely made explicit in classical astrological texts. However, this nexus may be activated in special social and religious circumstances based on reading (and frequently misunderstanding) texts and oral discussions.

More common is the tight relation between elements entering vertical relations. One such example, though a late one, consists in descriptions of the Jews as having a Saturnine temperament and as miserable in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹⁵² Even the expression *Lex Saturna* has been coined in order to point to Judaism.¹⁵³

The question that I would like to address now is whether the existence of this complex of affinities could have contributed to the emergence of the much more widespread notion of the 'Sabbat of the witches'. A proof in this direction would indicate a resort to the use of the term 'Sabbat' to designate the encounters between witches. To the best of my knowledge, the possible nexus between the Hebrew term for Saturday, the Sabbath and the 'Sabbat of the witches' has not been unanimously accepted in very recent scholarship.¹⁵⁴ Even Carlo Ginzburg does not commit himself when identifying an earlier suggestion to this effect, and considers the witches' Sabbat to be 'of obscure etymology',¹⁵⁵ though he does not reject it altogether. It seems that among recent scholars only Baroja and Cohn commit themselves, without however adducing detailed analysis, to the nexus of Sabbath-Sabbat.¹⁵⁶ This etymological affinity when adjoined to the more conceptual one – meaning the view that magic can be better performed during the Sabbath because of the extra-soul and the

presidency of Saturn – may suggest an explanation for the otherwise unexplained and bizarre usage of the term ‘Sabbat’ to refer to a general assembly of witches.

However, this conceptual-terminological explanation of the origin of the Sabbat is somehow corroborated by the way the genesis of ‘Sabbat’ is described in recent scholarship. Carlo Ginzburg has proposed viewing the dreadful Sabbat persecutions as the result of a transposition of xenophobic sentiments from one marginal group, the lepers, to another, the Jews, and then to the wider and much vaguer category, the witches.¹⁵⁷ Thus, just before the contamination of the rituals of the so-called witches with the concept of Sabbat, at the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries, the Jews played a similar role as a persecuted group, especially during the social trauma throughout Europe created by the Black Death.¹⁵⁸ This occurred in the mid fourteenth century, a period when the nexus between the entities mentioned above had already been in existence in some Jewish circles for more than a century and a half and, in the views of Alcabitius (found in Arabic and Latin), even earlier. As previously mentioned,¹⁵⁹ in some texts Saturn was conceived of as being related to the Black Death. Prior to the sixteenth century, I have not been able to find connections between Saturn, Sabbath, the plague and the Jews all occurring in one text, and I wonder if the existence of such an earlier, and rather rare, view has been assimilated into the complex of affinities that we have discussed above and whether these provoked a wider nexus between Jews and the Black Death. If further material demonstrates the more widespread persistence of such a multi-faceted complex, then Jews might have been conceived of by Christians, even before the time of the Black Death, not only as Saturn’s *Planetenkinder* but also as people who spread the plague – and not only for social reasons but also on the grounds of more ‘scientific’ astrological speculations.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, as Guerschberg has correctly pointed out, the astrological explanation for the plague was the most widespread one: ‘Aussi de toutes les theories etiologiques concernant la Peste Noire, c’est la theorie astrologique qui a triomphé.’¹⁶¹ Needless to say, this is not what actually happened in history, as the Jews never had anything to do with spreading the plague. But as we know, people’s imagination, when it was founded upon negative attitudes towards Jews and then stoked by great fear, was a powerful historical factor in the religious history of Christian Europe.

However, even now, on the basis of two influential texts, ibn Ezra’s *Reshit Hokhmah* and Ashkenazi’s *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, both of which mention various contagious diseases in connection with Saturn, this possibility should be taken seriously. Meanwhile, it should be emphasized that one of the explanations for the Black Death in 1348, in Western

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Europe, based on earlier sources, is indeed identical to that presented by Yagel almost two centuries later: the conjunction between Saturn and Mars.¹⁶² Indeed, if we follow Ginzburg's research, we may hypothesize a phase when the conception of the cult of demonic powers was posited as being on Friday night, in connection either with concepts found in Judaism or – though this is less plausible – with actions carried out by Jews and misunderstood by Christians that were later transferred to witches. Indeed, it seems that the very fact that the Sabbat meeting often took place on Friday night may point to a connection with Jewish rituals, because, as discussed above, since ibn Ezra this moment in time had been understood as the conjunction of the two most maleficent planets.¹⁶³

Persuasive as some of these points may be for understanding some details of the Sabbat, no claim has been made that the astro-magical themes previously addressed may solve the complexity of the Sabbat mythology. Nevertheless, there is one important detail that should be pointed out in the context of the Saturnian explanation: the famous 'fact' that in Greek mythology Kronos devoured his children, and that during the Sabbat imaginary children were consumed by imaginary witches.¹⁶⁴ If the Saturnine explanation is correct, we have an additional affinity, which, for the time being, cannot be explained by resorting to the astrological sources found in the Jewish writings discussed above. I would like to emphasize that though this theme may point to astrological or mythical traditions regarding Saturn, which are only vaguely represented in Jewish literature, and were transmitted by channels that differ from those discussed above, their existence does not preclude the influence of other astrological traditions mediated by Jewish texts which, so far, I have not detected.

Another major motif of the Sabbat cult is the central role of the goat, which becomes a recurrent protagonist as an embodiment of Satanic power.¹⁶⁵ It is important to stress that all three first visual representations of Satan used the image of a goat.¹⁶⁶ A he-goat may have something to do with the relation between Saturn and Capricorn mentioned above in the text by ibn Major. Even if further research is definitively to explain the emergence of the goat cult as non-astrological, the possibility may nevertheless remain that an archaic cult of this kind could have attracted motifs found in the astrological relation between Saturn, Capricorn and goats. Moreover, the occurrence of the term 'synagoga' in order to point to the Sabbat is further proof of the existence of a Jewish context of the Sabbat.¹⁶⁷

Last but not least: the substantial renaissance of ibn Ezra's thought occurred during the period when the Sabbat ritual was formulated by its ecclesiastic opponents, mainly Inquisitors at the end of the fourteenth century.¹⁶⁸ Is it a mere historical coincidence that a dramatic surge in

the role played by Saturn and its impact on corresponding notions (including the Sabbath and sorcery) is discernible among the Jewish elite within certain geographical parameters, while the beginning of the use of the term 'Sabbat' in Western Christian circles as related to sorcery or witchcraft is contemporaneous? The above explanation, I would like to emphasize, does not attempt to exhaust the more complex social phenomena of the emergence and dissemination of the 'Sabbat of the witches', especially its possible origins, pagan European or Asian. Neither does the proposed explanation disqualify the modern explanations of the emergence of many of the elements of the magical rituals as imagined in medieval Europe as stemming from Eurasian ancient mythologies, as has been proposed by Carlo Ginzburg and others.¹⁶⁹ However, if accepted, this explanation is a further indication of the need to explore medieval European material as pertinent to the emergence of medieval social-cultural phenomena.

If Ginzburg is right in suggesting the importance of much earlier sources, transmitted orally over the course of centuries and perhaps even millennia from another continent – a claim that it is certainly hard to prove conclusively but, in my opinion, not implausible – then the imagery that inspires the concept of the Sabbat of the witches constitutes a conjugation of Eurasian traditions on the one hand and of ancient Greek and medieval Jewish ones on the other, the latter mediated basically by Arabic texts. This conjugation can be described as the application of notions (found in the high culture of Jews in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, which do not refer to specific forms of rituals) to various rituals that had emigrated from Asia and were conceived of as witchcraft or sorcery, and had been unknown earlier to the ecclesiastic authorities.

Indeed, the most widespread conceptualization of the rituals concerning various forms of sorcery in Western Europe began to be articulated during the period of the Black Death. This went together with a fervent persecution of the Jews, later designated by a term related to a central Jewish ritual.¹⁷⁰

Here I propose not to differentiate too sharply between the targets of these persecutions, namely the Jews, and some of their conceptions, but concentrate mainly on their misconception by the Christians. The manner in which the Christians understood both Jews and witches is a misconstruction. However, this misunderstanding is related to some conceptions of the rituals that provoked a misunderstanding in interpretation. In the same way it would not be wise to ignore the possible contribution of the beliefs and rituals of the persecuted women declared to be witches. In doing so, as in the case of the explanation

that Carlo Ginzburg proposes, I basically accept his explanation, which is based on the crucial role of misunderstanding. This is reminiscent of another major and fateful misunderstanding related to the actions of Ashkenazi Jews. As Israel J. Yuval has proposed recently in a study, the fact that some Ashkenazi Jews killed members of their own families, and then themselves, in order to escape forced conversion to Christianity or to avoid being murdered by the Crusaders has been misunderstood in ways that have contributed to the formulation of the blood libels.¹⁷¹

In our case, some Provençal and Spanish Jews developed astro-magical understandings of Judaism that might have contributed to the emergence of several mythological themes concerning the witches' Sabbat, a fantastic ritual whose more substantial sources might nevertheless be found in cultural environments other than in these astrological writings and practices. It should be emphasized, nevertheless, that unlike the eleventh-century pogroms in Germany, which are, historically speaking, well-documented, and had been sometimes seen by Christians, though their significance has been misinterpreted, in our case I doubt whether there were Jewish magicians or sorcerers who performed some specifically astro-magical rituals during Sabbath in the manner stipulated by the astro-magical texts. Nevertheless, I would assume that it is possible that some regular Jewish rituals concerning Sabbath have been understood by kabbalists as having astro-magical valences.¹⁷² On the other hand, the above discussions should be seen in a broader context, one that assumes the existence of indoctrination with deep anti-Jewish attitudes for many centuries in medieval Europe, theories that are totally independent of the astrological sources that we have discussed above. What I have attempted to explain here is just the reason for the adoption of the term 'Sabbat' in its specific meaning as related to witchcraft. In the history of European discourse, it is related to nocturnal magic, a development that could then be grafted upon more profound anti-Jewish religious sentiments, whose historical origins differ dramatically from the astro-magical traditions.

It seems that even a very comprehensive approach to medieval magic in Europe, as proposed by Ginzburg – one attempting to reach back through hoary antiquity to the pre-axial age – should be further expanded in order to include the possible contribution of traditions that permeated some intellectual circles in Europe – elite circles of axial conceptions. While there is no reason to dismiss the 'folkloristic roots of Sabbat',¹⁷³ there is a need for a better understanding of the themes mediated by elite traditions, in our case Jewish ones, that were influenced by Arabic sources and ultimately derived from Hellenistic extraction, but differed from the circles of the Inquisitors. In other words, I propose an additional explanation, which does not necessarily displace the possibility

that elements related to the Sabbath rituals are either autochthonic in Europe, or stemmed from Asian sources, as proposed by Ginzburg.

These elites passed on traditions regarding the nature of the ancient Greek gods via their astrological transformations, and, on the basis of Jewish material unknown to Seznec, our study above confirms his theory on the role of astrology in this context.¹⁷⁴ Likewise, it is consonant with Zafran's explanation of some anti-Semitic descriptions of Jews based on certain Saturnian themes through the Middle Ages.¹⁷⁵ However, in his important study, Zafran restricted his discussions to Arabic astrological material and its plausible impact on mainly Christian depictions of Jews in the pre-Modern period, but did not address the possible impact of the abundant Jewish astrological descriptions available in Hebrew. The self-perception of some Jewish authors, and of quite influential ones in some Christian circles, such as bar Ḥiyya and Abraham ibn Ezra, should also be taken into serious consideration.

Complex situations and constellations of ideas based on the synthesis of concepts from different sources, and concerning perceptions of the 'other', should be approached by allowing, scholarly speaking, the interaction of a variety of sources and social layers. When such a complex approach is applied, the astro-magical sources of Greek and Hellenistic origin (in the forms in which they have been transmitted, mainly by Arabic authors, translated into Hebrew and then appropriated by other Jews in the high Middle Ages) are seen to play a greater role in the way some Christians perceived Jews in Western Europe. In fact, this process, among numerous other instances, exemplifies the role of Jews as mediators of scientific and theological traditions from Arabic culture to Western Europe. This integration necessitates greater openness on the part of scholars in Jewish studies in matters of astrology,¹⁷⁶ magic and sorcery.¹⁷⁷ It also suggests that these literary fields might have contributed to the shaping of life and thought just as much as the more 'sublime', 'spiritual' worldviews inspired by Jewish philosophy or Kabbalah. In medieval Christian Europe, when magic included so many astrological elements and when such elements were also part of magically oriented Jewish branches of philosophy, this type of order attracted some kabbalists, who then integrated it into their systems in varying proportions, though always first subordinating it to the theosophical order.¹⁷⁸

Following my approach, the more interesting question as to how exactly the constellation of ideas connected to the sinister aspects of Saturn (which included the association of the Jews, of Sabbath and of sorcery, as if inseparably linked) has produced the Sabbath complex of themes in the eyes of some Christian authorities is an issue that still

calls for special research to bridge the gap between the approaches of the 'history of ideas' and the 'history of culture'. In other words, how Jewish thinkers, and perhaps the deeds of some Jews, contributed to the emergence of the sorcery-Sabbath nexus and the idea of the Sabbath of the witches is a matter that requires further and more detailed investigation. I hope I have supplied at least a conceptual matrix for this development; it is based upon a possible deep misreading of the textual sources and a possible misunderstanding of the practices of the Jews.

In any case, it is worth pointing out that the development described above is a significant one from a statistical point of view and is, in my opinion, as representative of developments in Jewish culture in Spain as Maimonides' so-called rationalism. Indeed, both the writings of those dealing with Saturnian astro-magic and the writing of Maimonides continue two different trends in Islamic culture, present in the medieval period but relatively unknown in the early Middle Ages in Europe. Different as they are conceptually, they were cultivated by Spanish Jews as revealing the esoteric aspects of Judaism, part of the process of a more comprehensive phenomenon I have described as the arcanization of Judaism.¹⁷⁹ These two different intellectual orientations, sharply divergent as they are, in addition to the various Kabbalistic schools, are part and parcel of the Sefardi heritage, which can only be conceptually reduced to one orientation with the loss of much of its creativity as a historical phenomenon. Again, different as these two orientations are, there may nevertheless be a certain connection between them. To what extent the vigorous rejection of magic by Maimonides contributed to the emphasis on magical views in Judaism is still an issue that requires investigation. According to Daniel L. O'Keefe, magic may surface in places where there is too little religion, i.e. where there are rationalistic visions of religion.¹⁸⁰

As regards the texts discussed in this chapter, we have seen the willingness of some Jews to assert that magic or sorcery is indeed related to the Jews, at least by symphysis. This is expressed in explicit terms in more than one cultural centre of Judaism. Though we may assume the existence of some practices related to astro-magic as expressed by the authors mentioned above, we may also assume that when they used the term *kishshuf*, translated as 'sorcery', they were repeating a term they had found in their sources, a term more representative of a cultural cliché than a specific type of practice. This assumption may be beneficial to scholars of religion, such as Peterson¹⁸¹ and John G. Gager,¹⁸² who suggest not using the term 'magic' because it reflects an image rather than a real fact. However, even if the Jewish authors we have mentioned would have rejected sorcery, their astro-magical practice may sometimes have amounted to more than a theoretical worldview. They might have protested against being

depicted as magicians resorting to *kishshuf*, but they would at the same time have embraced some more elite form of magic. Nevertheless, the role played by astro-magic in ancient Jewish magic is quite marginal. For this reason scholars should distinguish between different practices, and their explanations as expressed by practitioners or others, in order to do justice to the variety and complexity of what were imagined to be powerful performances.¹⁸³

As we have seen above, there are two different contexts that connect Saturn and sorcery or witchcraft. One is the specific claim related to Saturn that it presides over sorcery or witchcraft – unlike the other planets to which such a view is not attributed. The second is the specific form of worship addressed to Saturn, which while it differs in detail from that addressed to other planets is nevertheless part of a more comprehensive astro-magical view that each of the planets should be worshiped according to its special nature. This view is expressed in several of the astro-magical books mentioned above, as well as in the book entitled *Religions of the Prophets*, which I will discuss in chapter 3.¹⁸⁴ The former is a general attribution without specific content; the latter is much more detailed. Nevertheless, both forms of *imaginaire* corroborate one another, strengthening the conceptual affinities that some authors assume to exist between Saturn and witchcraft.

It should be mentioned that the basically negative conceptual structure has not always been associated with the Saturn-Sabbath theme.¹⁸⁵ Though this is rare, Saturn's presence is sometimes conceived in more positive terms influenced by the short formulation of the *Sefer Yetzirah*. This was much more the case from the late fifteenth-century Renaissance in Italy. Another example is the early sixteenth-century discussion of Isaac Karo mentioned above. These are exceptions. However, we shall turn to one of the major examples of such an exception, which integrates the positive aspects, Saturnian and Saturnine, in relation to a new understanding of the image of the Messiah, in the next chapter.

TWO From Saturn to Sabbatai Tzevi: A Planet that Became ‘Messiah’

Some Preliminary Reflections on Jewish Culture

In this chapter we shall deal mostly with the positive conceptual structure related to Saturn and its ‘materialization’ in history, and in the personality of a certain individual, Sabbatai Tzevi (1626–76). This development is based on the wider impact of astrological themes on this messianic figure, and in the following pages I will be proposing a broader spectrum of influences than I have done in my earlier studies. However, this conceptual structure should be seen in a wider context. One of the most interesting characteristics of the various forms of Jewish culture is their continuous undulation and oscillation between the two poles of the ‘particularistic’ and the ‘universalistic’.

Preserving and cultivating some major forms of ritualistic attitude, different Jewish communities have occasionally flourished, often suffered and eventually perished, in cultural ambiances at variance from the main centres where particularistic attitudes were initially articulated. This oscillation affected both the more popular and the elitist forms of Judaism: the former adopted popular practices cultivated in their environments, while the latter often opened themselves up to some of the major forms of the majority elite cultures. The two poles represent the common denominators – understood here as the particularistic attitude – while the ‘universalistic’ aspects represent the adoption of the forms of culture embraced by non-Jewish communities where the Jews lived. In other words, and this does not represent a value judgement, the particularistic approach is much more centripetal, while the universalistic one has more centrifugal propensities. By using the term ‘universalism’, we should be well aware of the specific and often limited nature of the forms of culture that hosted the Jewish ones. Even today ‘universalism’ does not represent more than a reification of values accepted by cultures that constitute small minorities in the global population, but which are nevertheless powerful enough to impose their specific values as generally worthwhile. This was the case with astrology, originally a more universalistic ‘scientific’ approach that imposed a vision of Saturn as the planet dominating the Jews and various aspects of their culture, especially in its effects on the self-perception of some circles of the Jewish elite, as we have seen.

The particularistic self-perception of rabbinic Judaism has generally been understood by resorting to relatively universalistic clues, an approach that is also evident in many other cases in Jewish medieval philosophy. However, in the case of the astrological themes discussed above, the universal approach is quite problematic since its interpretations use many terms applied to religions and nations that are not only biased but cannot be controlled in a practical manner.

The two poles have attracted two main attitudes among historians of Judaism: while the integrative aspects were more emphasized by nineteenth-century Jewish historiography, in the twentieth century the opposite approach became more dominant. Nineteenth-century Jewish historians, who were active in various European diasporas, especially Germany, at a time when acculturation to the culture of the Christian Enlightenment was still conceived of as an ideal (a phenomenon related to Jewish emancipation), wrote about Judaism from a more universalistic perspective, emphasizing the 'rational' and ethical aspects of the culture, and the concept of a mission of the Jews in the Diaspora. Latter historians, on the other hand, attempted to create a dichotomy between the 'centrifugal' elements, described as negative, and the 'centripetal' ones, described as positive. So, for example, the distinguished historian Heinrich Graetz conceived of Kabbalah as the *bête noire* of the Jewish Middle Ages, while Maimonides was portrayed as the paragon of Jewish culture; in the historiography of another distinguished scholar, Yitzhaq Baer, the most important Israeli historian, the situation is precisely the inverse: Jewish medieval philosophy was conceived of as a major cause of the conversion of Jews.

The positive attitude to Kabbalah as a centripetal type of religiosity is to a very great extent dependent upon the pivotal change in the nature and role of Jewish mysticism produced by the magisterial studies of Gershom Scholem. His positive and sympathetic approach to this body of Jewish knowledge and practice opened the way, and the hearts, of some historians to integrating mysticism as an active factor in shaping Jewish history. Most outstanding in this context was Scholem's *chef d'oeuvre*, his monograph on the seventeenth-century messianic figure Sabbatai Tzevi. A broad description of the historical aspects of Sabbateanism and an incisive analysis of the conceptual and mystical underpinning of this movement, Scholem's book is also the most important scholarly discussion of what he calls the 'messianic idea' in Judaism. It addresses in detail not only an important Messiah but also the history of messianism in Judaism – and sometimes also in Christianity – as well as the emergence of a popular messianic movement of huge dimensions.

Scholem's hypothesis concerning the emergence of Sabbateanism became one of the most well-known theses of modern Judaica scholarship.

This thesis, which may be described as a 'hyperthesis' (my own term), has been repeated so many times that a list of those scholars who have reiterated it, without adducing any additional material to strengthen it, would amount to a short booklet.¹ Scholem's assumption is that the diffusion of Kabbalistic messianism via the dissemination of Lurianism served as the indispensable background for the emergence of Sabbateanism as a messianic collective phenomenon. This major rationale, in fact the only major one according to Scholem's explanation, thrusts Sabbateanism into the history of Jewish mysticism in a dramatic manner. Though affecting the lives, the beliefs and the thoughts of so many Jews, common folk as well as learned rabbis, who lived in different geographical and cultural centres, Lurianism was conceived of as a sufficient common denominator to create a more uniform cultural substratum to nourish Sabbatean messianism.

Although this theory is related to one single type of explanation, Scholem's Sabbateanism is profoundly inscribed within a particularistic framework of historiography. That the exposition of the messianic movement was conceived of as an event that belongs first and foremost to internal Jewish history and culture was primarily the result of the dissemination of Lurianic Kabbalah and its alleged acute messianism.² This more particularistic approach differs from the way Scholem has described the emergence of Kabbalah as a synthesis between neo-Platonism and Gnosticism, or Jewish Gnosticism – namely, that a body of knowledge was generated by the confluence of two spiritual trends that were different from or even antagonistic to rabbinic Judaism.³ With the development of Kabbalah as it is envisioned in Scholem's historiography, and by many scholars who followed him, it became more and more of an internal Jewish affair. This is also evident in Scholem's description of the emergence of Hasidism as a reaction to, and an alleged neutralization of, Sabbatean trends. The various debates between scholars as to whether Hasidism is a continuation of the neutralization of Sabbatean Messianism are played out on grounds that I explain by negative 'proximism' in time (my term) – taking into consideration only the most immediate context as the single relevant starting point for an analytical approach.

Does Kabbalah represent such a definitive movement, turning away from an initially greater openness towards external factors to a much more inward-facing and 'purely' Jewish story? The answer seems to be rather complex. In my opinion, the sources of the nascent Kabbalah should more appropriately be sought within the various Jewish traditions, though not exclusively.⁴ This body of knowledge, in all its different forms, became gradually more and more open to the cultural ambiances that hosted the various centres of Kabbalah, either by responding to the

challenges of these centres or by being influenced by the conceptual views found there. This was the case with the Zoharic Kabbalah, which absorbed more Christian elements than the earlier theosophical Kabbalah;⁵ with the ecstatic Kabbalah, which was initially strongly influenced by neo-Aristotelianism but absorbed more neo-Platonic and Sufic elements in the second phase of its development;⁶ and with the Kabbalah in Italy, which was understood in a much more philosophical manner from the end of the fifteenth century to the first third of the seventeenth century.⁷ Even the Lurianic Kabbalah, which originally emerged from particularistic thought, was interpreted only one generation after its inception in strong Italian Renaissance terms.⁸ Does Sabbateanism, a basically messianic mass movement, represent an exception to this turning of the major forms of Kabbalah towards external forms of thought? The messianic nature of this movement may point in this direction.

However, it seems that a much more variegated type of explanation of the emergence of the messianic movement of Tzevi than that offered by Scholem is in order; recently, the importance of the Marranos to the reception of this messianic theory has been reiterated, as well as the contribution of the pogroms of 1648–9.⁹ These two explanations are of a more sociological nature, as they deal with conditions of the dissemination of this type of messianism rather more than with processes related to its inception.

Here I would like to address the possible contribution of an additional factor in both the emergence of Sabbateanism and in its reception. This factor is the interpretation of Saturn as the planet related to a change of religion, as found in Arabic, Christian and Jewish astrology, its reinterpretation in Kabbalistic sources as dealing with the Messiah, and, finally, the Sabbatean interpretation of Saturn, *Shabbatai* in Hebrew, to Sabbatai Tzevi.¹⁰ In chapter 1, in the passages from Joseph Ashkenazi and Yohanan Alemanno, we noted the view that Saturn is appointed over *dinim*, which I translate as 'religion', on the assumption that it reflects the Arabic meaning of *din*. Thus, though they were active in Europe, Spain and Italy, it is not only the general concepts, drawn basically from earlier Hellenistic sources that were mediated by Muslim authors, but also some more specific linguistic details that depended on the Arabic language. Let me be clear from the outset: by stressing the importance of the astrological factor, I do not intend to reduce the emergence, the evolution or the reception of Sabbateanism to this factor alone, thereby creating a new unilinear explanation of this mass movement. Rather, I would like to propose the presence of a multiplicity of causes of different natures, some of them already mentioned above, as well as to allow the astrological factor a more modest role than the main, or

a main, cause. Nevertheless, it is my claim that while the explanations currently accepted in scholarship deal much more with the reception of Sabbateanism allegedly facilitated by a prior dissemination of Lurianism, in the following argument I shall be concerned more with its emergence and less with its reception.

Astrology, Messianism and Universalism

Astrology, like other corpora of knowledge that reached medieval Europe through the mediation of Arab authors, turned into a branch of knowledge accepted by both intellectual and popular circles. As a science accepted by so many in both the East and West, it offered a common basis of knowledge. Arguments based on the 'book of heaven' were as decisive in some circles as those based on that other widely accepted book, the Sacred Scriptures. Astrological language and concepts carried a universal nomenclature, widespread and influential in many of the areas where Jewish mysticism flowered in the Middle Ages.

Unlike the various forms of Jewish mysticism, astrological terminology was far more understandable to and acceptable in broader Jewish circles. Ostensibly, it also facilitated communication between different intellectuals who did not share the same religious assumptions. If Jewish mysticism, for some of the first centuries of its existence, resorted to particularistic language and symbolism, astrological language could at least be described as far more universalistic. Nevertheless, not unlike Sigmund Freud's renowned interpretation of the Oedipus complex, in the case of Saturn, Greek mythological sources were paramount, and it was the Greek mythologoumena that formed the bedrock of the 'universal' interpretations.

As has been pointed out by several scholars (as seen in the previous chapter), the astrological character of Saturn in the Middle Ages was a composite one, reflecting different, sometimes even conflicting, traditions. On the one hand, there was the ambivalent nature of Kronos in Greek mythology; on the other, there was the more positive nature of Saturn in Roman lore. In any case, the complex figure emerging from this synthesis was cloaked in the negative characteristic of the melancholic.¹¹ This earlier Saturn was designated over the Golden Age and the Islands of the Happy. Saturn is also the paramount planet of the solitary and numerous spiritual qualities are enumerated as falling under its aegis, not to mention some fairly unpleasant occupations, as we saw in chapter 1. This is not the place to address the rich literature concerning this quite complex planet about the 'influences' that have been attributed to it. Let me just note some basic facts that are pertinent to the point I would like to make.

In ancient texts, and much more in the Middle Ages, the nexus between Jews and Saturn was suggested on the grounds that this planet dominates the seventh day, which was conceived of as a time that was holy to the Jews.¹² This is the reason why this planet has been designated in Hebrew as *Sabbatai*, a derivative noun of the name *Sabbath*, the Hebrew term for Saturday. In the Middle Ages, this nexus reverberates in many texts, most of them of an astrological nature. So, for example, Abraham ibn Ezra, one of the most influential Jewish medieval thinkers, is quoted (see chapter 1) as maintaining that 'from the nations, Sabbatai has, [under his aegis are], the Jews'.¹³ I would like to emphasize that in the few cases of astrological discussions where Sabbatai is mentioned by Jewish authors before the impact of Arabic astrology is discernible, all the descriptions of Saturn are negative. Positive qualities may be added to the negative ones only after the twelfth century, and it seems to me that only this positive addition may explain the subsequent developments in Judaism insofar as messianism is concerned. Of special importance in this context is Abraham bar Hiyya's historical astrology, which adopts Abu Ma'ashar's theory about the 'Great Conjunction' and the changes in religion both in the past and in the future.¹⁴

Towards the end of the thirteenth century, Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia, the founder of ecstatic Kabbalah and someone who believed he was a prophet and a Messiah (and acted accordingly), writes about Saturn in a passage different from the one analysed in the first chapter:

The Land of Israel is higher than all the lands ... the known land, whose sign is one thousand two hundred and ninety, and this is the Land of Israel, which was the land of Canaan ... And it is known that among the stars, the power of Sabbatai corresponds to it¹⁵ because it [Saturn] is the highest among its companions, and behold, the supernal entity appointed upon another supernal entity, and the nation of Israel is superior to all the nations, 'for there is one on high who watches over him that is high, and that there are yet higher ones'.¹⁶ And the high is the dust¹⁷ of the Land of Israel, and higher than it, which is appointed on it, is Sabbatai, and Israel are higher than them.¹⁸

Unfortunately, Abulafia did not elaborate upon the significance of the relation between Israel and Saturn, the former being conceived of as superior to the latter. This is an unusual hierarchy, as the much more common assumption is that Saturn is presiding over the nation of Israel. I have no good explanation for Abulafia's passage, but in any case, the nexus between the two entities is quite explicit. For this kabbalist, the

nexus Sabbatai–Israel–Land of Israel, as well as the heptads, constitutes what may be called the positive conceptual structure related to this planet since only a relatively insignificant negative aspect is associated with Saturn. But what seems to be important for our discussion is the fact that the term *Eretz*, mentioned in the extract above, has been interpreted in our context as indicating the year 1290 as the date of redemption: the consonant *'Aleph* stands for a thousand; the consonant *Reish* for two hundred; and finally *Tzade* for ninety. Abulafia changed the reference to a place, the Promised Land, into a hint at a special time, that of redemption. Thus, at least implicitly (below, in another passage from this book, we shall see this stated in a rather more explicit manner), Saturn/Sabbatai is related to redemption, a fact that is even more remarkable if we remember that Abulafia considered himself to be a Messiah.

However, what is much more important and widespread is the existence of the concept that the greatest conjunction between Saturn and Jupiter, the so-called *conjunctio maxima*, in Hebrew *ha-dibbuq ha-gadol*, is the moment of the emergence of new religions.¹⁹ This view had been well known among Jewish writers since the twelfth century and sometimes even explicitly associated with messianic expectations.²⁰ So, for example, in the short, widespread manuscript treatise by the mid-thirteenth-century author Moses ben Yehudah entitled *Commentary on the Hebrew Alphabet*, we see several references to Sabbatai/Saturn in quite positive terms as designated over the Jews, as related to the letter *Lamed*, whose form in Hebrew points upward to 'divine wisdom', namely to metaphysics, as being connected to the revelation of the Torah, appointed upon the true religion, and finally related to redemption.²¹ As to the topic that concerns us here, redemption, let me adduce a passage from the very end of the commentary: 'all [the data] amount to five thousand and twenty years,²² and [then] the rule of Saturn²³ will commence and our redemption will be during it, with the help of God, Blessed be His Name'.²⁴

This author is indubitably expressing a version of the positive conceptual structure related to Saturn. His is by no means an exceptional stand. The conjunction between the two planets was also conceived of as indicative of the arrival of a messianic figure by a contemporary of R. Moshe, Yehudah ben Nissim ibn Malka.²⁵ At the close of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries we learn (from several sources) in a text written by the famous astronomer Abraham Zacuto, who was active in Spain and Northern Africa,²⁶ about the importance of the *conjunctio maxima* for the emergence of an important Jewish figure, a prophet or Messiah.²⁷ A contemporary of Abraham Zacuto, Yohanan Alemanno, describes Saturn as appointed over the Torah of Israel, the Temple in Jerusalem, Moses and the Hebrew language, as we have seen

above.²⁸ As we shall see in the next paragraph, Saturn played a more conspicuous role in the descriptions of Judaism at the end of the fifteenth century in Italy.

Saturn, Binah and Messiah

In some Kabbalistic writings, the planet Saturn has been connected to the third *sefirah*, *Binah*, whose affinity to concepts of redemption is understood from several types of Kabbalistic source. Though the origins of this view may be inherent in the very beginning of Kabbalah, bearing in mind the great importance of this *sefirah* in the theosophy of Isaac Sagi-Nahor and his school where it is often designated as *Teshuvah*, repentance or return,²⁹ it seems that both the book of the *Zohar* and Joseph Gikatilla approached the role of this *sefirah* in much more redemptive terms than the earlier kabbalists. In the main part of the book of the *Zohar*, for example, the fifty gates of *Binah* mentioned in the Talmud are described as opened by God at the time of the Exodus from Egypt, 'in order to take out the people of Israel ... as will He do also in the days of the Messiah'.³⁰ In a manner quite similar to that of Gikatilla, the author of the Zoharic text says that this *sefirah* is the source from where the redemption of Israel will come.³¹

However, these two forms of Kabbalah, unlike the later layers of Zoharic literature (as seen in the previous chapter), did not introduce the planet Saturn in their discussions of *Binah*. For the time being, on the basis of the dating of the Kabbalistic books as available in scholarship, the first instance when the third *sefirah* was plausibly identified with Saturn in a clearly eschatological discussion is found in a book by Abraham Abulafia which addresses the topics in *Sefer Yetzirah*, *Sefer Gan Na'ul* that were mentioned above. This does not mean that he invented it, and I assume that he gave expression to an earlier view, but its first explicit written articulation is found in this book, at least as far as we know for the time being. When interpreting a verse related to David, the quintessentially messianic figure, 'His seed shall endure forever, and his throne shall be like the sun before me,'³² he writes:

*Leil Shmarim*³³ whose secret is 'Et Qetz,³⁴ and by combination of letters is *haker ha-nefesh*,³⁵ and His throne shall be like the sun³⁶ before me [*negdi*]³⁷ ... The secret of *Negdi* is *Binah*,³⁸ which comprises *Ged*³⁹ and *Del*⁴⁰ which are the servants⁴¹ of the star⁴² Sabbatai,⁴³ whose secret is *maḥshavti* and everything is *Binah maḥshavti*, and whoever comprehends it, he has comprehended [the meaning of] *maḥshavti*. And see that *Levanah* [moon] is *Ke-Binah* [like *Binah*]⁴⁴ and also *Ḥokhmah* is *KeḤammah* [like *Ḥammah*, namely like sun]⁴⁵ and know them and when you will understand

them and recognize the linkage of *Moladot* [nativities], during the periods of equinox and solipses,⁴⁶ you will understand from them the influx that emanates from the emanator to its recipient. And know that the paths of the *sefirot*⁴⁷ that I wrote to you are – according to their secret – *Binah*,⁴⁸ whose meaning is twelve [times fifty five amounts to ‘the time of’]⁴⁹ *Qetz*,⁵⁰ and all is *Seter*.^{51, 52}

There can be doubt that for Abulafia, the terms *Binah* and Sabbatai/Saturn and the secrets of redemption are related to one another. For him, as a person who pretended to be the Messiah, redemption would start soon after writing the book – no more than two years. In other instances, he claimed that the time of redemption was the year 1290, which is the fiftieth year of the new millennium according to the Jewish calendar, while *Sefer Gan Na’ul* was composed c. 1289.⁵³ The nexus between *maḥshavti*, namely ‘thoughtful’, and Saturn, is well known in astrological texts, where this planet is conceived of as appointed over ‘the power of thought’ – *koah ha-maḥashev* – according to Abraham ibn Ezra for example, who claims that the power of foretelling the future is also connected to this planet.⁵⁴ The nexus between thought or understanding and Saturn is, however, much older. It is implied in the alleged etymology of Chronos/Kronos, the Greek partial correspondent of Saturn, which has been understood as pointing to *coros*, plenitude, and *nous*, intellect,⁵⁵ and the nexus between the planet and the *virtus intellectiva* is conspicuous in the Middle Ages.⁵⁶ This nexus is related by Abulafia to the reception of the influx from above, apparently by the actualized human intellect. Whether or not this reception of intellectual influx in Abulafia is related in this specific text to the knowledge of the future, contemplation or prophecy, as in other cases when Saturn was mentioned, is a matter of interpretation; though from my reading of his writings this is quite a plausible assumption.

In any case, the above passage not only deals with secrets of the immediate future, but also interprets a biblical verse that has obvious ‘messianic’ implications. The meaning of the phrase *Binah maḥshavti*, apparently ‘understand my thought’, may point to plumbing the secret of redemption found in divine thought. As in the other phrase (see n. 51), ‘*Binah* twelve End’ points within the term *Binah* to the figure 660, the figure that in Abulafia represents the end. Moreover, the occurrence of the discussions on *Ḥammah* and *Binah* may well point to the verse in Isaiah 11.2, where the spirit of *Ḥammah* and *Binah* is described as dwelling upon the messianic figure, a verse that was also exploited in quite specific messianic terms in Joseph Ashkenazi, a contemporary of Abulafia, as we shall see immediately below. A cautious assessment of the contents of

the passage would therefore emphasize the eschatological dimension of the above passage, as it deals with the 'Time of the End', though a more audacious one would insist upon its messianic cargo.

Let me speculate on the significance of the term *Binah*: it means understanding, and in some cases deep understanding, and it therefore also makes sense in a non-sefirotic framework. However, an attempt to disregard a certain type of sefirotic reading is mistaken, because Abulafia explicitly mentions 'the paths of the *sefirot*'. If this is a plausible explanation, then *Binah* points also to the third *sefirah*, and is connected to Sabbatai. If this guess is correct, the above text represents the first nexus between the planet Sabbatai, *Binah* and redemption. Whether or not Abulafia's text had any influence on an even much more influential quote by Joseph Ashkenazi, to be discussed immediately below, is a difficult question to answer, for this is an issue that cannot be decided here.⁵⁷ In any case, of outmost importance for the further history of this interpretation of the function of the third *sefirah* was the reverberation of this view in the writings of a kabbalist of Ashkenazi extraction, whose views we saw in the first chapter.

Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi offered one of the most important and influential descriptions of the connection between the Messiah and the third *sefirah* in a passage of his *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah* that was discussed in the first chapter:

And since it is higher than all the seven planets it is appointed upon religions [*dinim*] and buildings ... And because [the planet of Sabbatai] is appointed over the perpetuation, when it will arrive to the ascent, it will not decline forever, as it is said that⁵⁸ 'the spirit of God dwells upon him, the spirit of *Hokhmah* and of *Binah*'. See and understand that this is the secret of '*Mashiyah YHWH*' ... This is the reason why every ascent of Israel is but by the means of commandments, when they draw upon themselves the power of the *Binah* ... See and understand that the planet Sabbatai has the crown of *Binah*.⁵⁹

This passage is part of a much larger text, partially quoted and discussed in chapter I. In this case we have the central role of a redemptive sefirotic power, the third *sefirah* of *Binah*, which is understood as identical with the Messiah. In a way, the path of the commandments is conceived of as bringing down the supernal power, which is understood as a redemptive moment. The seven lower *sefirot* under *Binah* are presided over by the power that is related to religions, as we find in many sources in the context of Saturn when in conjunction with Jupiter, as appointed upon

changes in matters of religion. From this point of view prophecy and Messianism are understood to be related to a change in religion, just as *Binah* is related to changes in the seven lower *sefirot* that are explicitly related to the commandments, namely the specific regulations of a certain religion. Implied here, and less clear, is the fact that in a certain cosmic cycle dominated by one of the lower *sefirot*, those specific precepts are imperatives, but this changes when the religion change, under the impact of the *Binah*.

Unlike Abulafia, however, who did not connect Sabbatai to the human Messiah but to redemption in more general terms, Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi did so rather explicitly, and his mention of the 'secret of *Mashiyah YHWH*' represents the most positive description of the planet in Hebrew literature from the Middle Ages. Thus, we have three different forms of redemptive entity mentioned here: *Binah*, a divine (feminine) power, which is regarded as presiding over the seven lower *sefirot*, which return cyclically to it as the source from which they emanated, since she emanates in each cycle of fifty thousand years, the cosmic Jubilee or what is called the macrochronoi – the seven lower *sefirot*; then the planetary entity, Saturn, which operates in corporeal events, following the same macrochronic rhythm as *Binah*; and finally, what is called the Messiah of God, which I read as a human entity, who is active basically on the national level as a redeemer.

This reading of the passage assumes a hierarchy, which starts with the divine and descends, reaching the level of the human saviour. We may assume that the two lower levels depend upon the higher one, and indeed Saturn is subordinated, via the first letters of the name of forty-two, to the sefirotic level, which impacts on wisdom. This is also the case insofar as the Messiah is concerned, as the resort to the verse that describes the descent of wisdom implies. This hierarchy, which also assumes a descent and also, according to the last part of the quotation, some form of ascent, is very important in the Kabbalistic worldview of Joseph Ashkenazi, who emphasizes the ascent/descent motions by resorting to a recurring expression that he presumably invented, *Din Benei Halof*, 'the law or rule of the changing entities, either by ascent or descent on the great Chain of Being, transforming themselves as part of these processes'.

As formulated explicitly, not only does *Binah* emanate upon the lower worlds, but Saturn also does, as the assumption that it impacts upon the demons appointed over people's limbs shows. This strongly unified universe, built on strict correspondences between different levels on the one hand, and on strong interactions between them and changes they undergo on the other, is characteristic of Ashkenazi's commentary.

Let me reflect on this crucial statement related to the Messiah of God. In principle, one may regard this term as related to either the *sefirah* or the planet. As we shall see below, such a reading is non-existent in Kabbalah. However, my assumption, as formulated above, is that we may better understand it in this context as also referring to the human Messiah, since it occurs in a context concerning the things that Saturn is appointed over. Ashkenazi mentions the affinity between things that alternate as related to the planet, like boats, which go and return. However, given the fact that the planet is also appointed over inertia, the time of redemption will be long-lasting. Indeed, within the framework of the cosmic cycles known as *Shemittot* and *Yovelin*, the problem of national redemption related to the human Messiah is quite obvious: each cosmic cycle of seven thousand years has its moment of redemption, but it is not going to remain forever since the sum of corporeal reality, terrestrial and astral, as well as the seven lower *sefirot*, will be absorbed within the *sefirah* of *Binah*. Though an ascent to what may be called the Great Mother, this event is, at the same time, also a period of destruction, which may last for a millennium, before the lower *sefirot* will emanate again, and then the cosmological process will be restarted, with a new world, religion and commandments. The precarious status of the historical/national Messiah is evident when the scope of religion is extended to cosmic cycles in such a broad manner. This is the reason for the succinct reference to the Messiah when understood in national terms. National redemption, though not neutralized, is nevertheless marginalized. However, according to such logic, the Messiah is not a unique personality, whose advent means a final redemption, but just one such occurrence, which will recur in other cosmic cycles.

However, the manner in which Joseph Ashkenazi formulated his thought is rather ambiguous, since it allows for an understanding of the term 'Messiah', and 'Israel', on more than one ontological level, conceived of as parallel. This is the reason why it is unnecessary to determine in a conclusive manner that terms such as 'Messiah' or 'Israel' refer to either the supernal sefirotic level or to the mundane one. In principle, according to the law of *Benei Halof*, they may function on both.

Let me now turn to the repercussion of this view of the supernal redemptive power as a *sefirah* in less famous writings. The first of these is authored by the very eclectic Spanish kabbalist David ben Yehudah he-Ḥasid, whose Kabbalah is haunted by a variety of Kabbalistic ideas, of which a few are also present in Joseph Ashkenazi's thought. This is not an example of copying from his writings, though David does do so in many other cases, drawing from a variety of Kabbalistic sources. One of the

most explicit descriptions of the Messiah as symbolic of the third *sefirah* argues:

The King Messiah is the secret of *Binah*; and when the time for the Redemption of Israel will arrive, the Holy One, Blessed be He, who is *K[eter]-E[lyon]* will cause him to smell all those fine smells and perfumes ... that attribute called Messiah as it is written⁶⁰ 'and the spirit of *Elohim* is hovering over the face of the water' this is the spirit of the Messiah ... Then, the *Binah* which is Messiah, judges the poor in a right manner, namely *Knesset Yisrael*, because she arouses stern judgement and justice onto the nations of the world.⁶¹

The mythology of redemption is construed here in terms of an emanative drama in the higher realm of the first group of three *sefirot*; the first *sefirah* arouses the third one by means of smells and perfumes, symbols of the divine influx. Then, by this arousal, and apparently this power received from the higher realms, the third *sefirah* distributes its influx onto the last *sefirah*, symbolized by the *Knesset Yisrael*, the 'Assembly of Israel', while preserving that influx from the demonic powers, symbolized by the nations. This description is characteristic of a whole series of symbolic readings of the meaning of redemption: this is not an extraordinary moment, a rupture with the past or an upheaval. In fact, it is simply conceived of as the distribution of the divine forces from the first to the last *sefirah*. The Messiah as a supernal entity is an agent active in differentiating the distribution of influx, which is perceived of as descending from the first *sefirah*. The apocalyptic judgement which takes place in history is only implicitly referred to – not negated but also not explicated. What is more important for this kabbalist is an understanding of the supernal, divine processes rather than lower history. However, while Ashkenazi's thought is theo-astrological and refers to the human Messiah, David ben Yehudah he-Ḥasid's approach is not, and the name of Saturn is absent in this work as well as in other Kabbalistic books by him. This fact complicates the assumption that he was influenced by Ashkenazi's thought.

The anonymous *Sefer ha-Temunah*, a mid-fourteenth-century Kabbalist classic most probably written in the Byzantine Empire,⁶² also envisions a link between the third *sefirah* and the Messiah, apparently under the influence of the views surveyed above:

'The Son of David will not come until the souls will be exhausted from the Body'⁶³ and then the supernal and lower redemptions will be united to the supernal light ... because everything will

return to the first redeemer, who has safely redeemed everything, and 'that who has been sold, will be redeemed and he will be free at the Jubilee'⁶⁴ which are the days of the 'Supernal Messiah'.⁶⁵

From the context, as well from some parallels found in the writings of Joseph Gikatilla on terms pointing to redemption⁶⁶ and in earlier writers, it stands to reason that the first redeemer, who is identical to the 'supernal Messiah', referred to the third *sefirah*, which is conceived of as pointing to both the redemption of the higher entities, namely the last seven sefirot, and the lower, mundane world. Redemption here stands not for national or individual salvation but for a cosmic process, which involves both the corporeal and the spiritual components of reality. This is a deterministic process, deeply influenced by astrological concepts, which resorts to eschatological concepts in order to make its points in more traditional terms. Thus, we find in the emphasis on the redemptive nature of the third *sefirah*, designated as the Redeemer and higher Messiah, a clear tendency to depict the return of the emanative process to the source, a restoration of the primordial, a circular concept of what I propose to call a 'cosmic macrochronos', and not a historical rectilinear vision of history which ends, or culminates in, the messianic era.⁶⁷

However, the most important repercussion of the views from the circle of Joseph Ashkenazi is to be found in the late-fourteenth or early-fifteenth-century anonymous *Sefer ha-Peliyah*. This vast compilation of various Kabbalistic sources, which includes excerpts from Joseph Ashkenazi and Abraham Abulafia's writings, was composed within the realms of the Byzantine Empire. The author was also well acquainted with the literature of the circle of *Sefer ha-Temunah*, which means all the important Kabbalistic sources where Sabbatai/Saturn plays an important role. However, as we shall see in the Appendix, the compiler also added the phrase 'planet Sabbatai', which occurs another three times in sources where it was mentioned only twice, as well as once more immediately afterwards. The very fact that the anonymous kabbalist brought together all these Kabbalistic sources in one book is in itself a significant development, since any reader of Kabbalistic literature who was interested in topics related to Saturn could now find them together in clear eschatological contexts. The anonymous Byzantine kabbalist also includes the passage from Joseph Ashkenazi's *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah* quoted above, which he reshaped as if it is part of a conversation between two ancient sages:

He said: 'Our Master, tell us why Sabbatai is the planet of destruction, and it is nevertheless informed by the wisdom

of [the name] 'ABG YTTz? He told him: 'Despite the fact that Sabbatai is the power of destruction, by the [dint of the] *Shemittot*, it possesses the power of *Hammah*, and the reason it is appointed over destruction is that it is not concerned with any corporeal issues, and this is the reason why it destroys them and does not mind them, neither their adornments, but is concerned with the separated intelligences, that are the *sefirot*, and the comprehension of God, blessed be He ... and from the power of Saturn ... the power of prophecy.⁶⁸

As formulated in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, this passage should be understood as the continuation of the school of the kabbalists mentioned above, which means that the Messiah was again understood as connected to the third *sefirah*, as we learn from the occurrence of the term *Binah*, the mentions of the *Shemittot* and the heptad, which are related to the third *sefirah*, as seen above. However, what is especially significant in this latter text is the recurrence of the name of the planet Sabbatai, which corresponds to the well-known Latin deity and to the planet Saturn, more than in the original passage of Joseph Ashkenazi, as we shall see in the Appendix. Here the theo-astrological moment that is seminal for my discussions below is preserved intact.

The ambiguity of the qualities related to this planet is well known to scholars, as has been thrown so well into relief in the monograph by Klibansky, Panovsky and Saxl (1989), and it reflects a combination of much older and independent traditions, psychological, mythical and astrological. I prefer not to elaborate on this issue here. In any case, in numerous astrological texts, the planet Saturn has been attributed with both the quality of presiding over wisdom (as understood by a number of authors and artists, especially since the Renaissance) and of being the source of genius, but at the same time with being the celestial power responsible for destruction, for the passive, for fools and for those of a melancholic temperament. I do not see these contradictory qualities as part of an original conceptual structure whose inner logic should be explored in depth, but as the result of a contiguous process of combination. This is the reason why I refrain from attempting to speculate about the possible deeper structure of the discourse of the kabbalists mentioned above, since they reflect earlier, sometimes randomly assembled, astrological traditions. The speculation of James Hillman, in his essay 'Senex and Puer', following the erudite study of the Warburgians' *Saturn and Melancholy*, in the vein of Jung's psychology of the archetype, is groundless; there is no 'puer' in the texts to which he refers. Taking into account this weakness, he claims that the image of the

positive and negative senex subsumed an earlier puer/senex archetype. This refusal to engage with the issue of the positive qualities reflects an original pattern that is important for my study here, since the assumption that the opposites should be understood together is, in my opinion, highly problematic. This is the reason why I assume that the Messiah should not be understood as embodying the opposite features of both wise man and fool. I assume that the phenomenon of the Messiah is part of the positive conceptual structure and should not collide with the negative conceptual structure, even when they occur together, if there is no specific indication for such a 'symphical' reading articulated by the author.

The awareness of the nexus between Sabbatai and Saturn is already to be found in the extremely influential book by the sixteenth-century Christian kabbalist, Francesco Giorgi of Venice, *De Harmonia Mundi*, I, 4, 4–5.⁶⁹ The impact of Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi's passage is formative on the passage by Abraham Yagel, adduced in chapter 1, where the latter wrote that:

You should know that Capricorn and Aquarius are the constellations of Israel;⁷⁰ their planet is Saturn, since these constellations are its [Saturn's] houses, as [Abraham] ibn Ezra explains in *Sefer ha-'Atzamim*,⁷¹ and Abraham ben David in his commentary on the *Sefer Yetzirah*. Because of these constellations, they [the Jews] are liable to plunder and destruction, to toil and to burden, like those of our ancestors in Egypt. None of the heavenly hosts are as devastating as these two in summoning evil and suffering to this world.⁷²

However, the sinister plight of the Jews in the present would find compensation in their success in the future. Speaking of the six lower planets, Yagel wrote that 'all of them will give strength to Saturn, although the later will not give strength to any of them'.⁷³ And, according to an Indian sage, he says:

Since Saturn signifies the Jews, all the Gentiles will acknowledge their Torah and bow down to them while they [the Jews] will not acknowledge them [the Gentiles], as the prophet stated:⁷⁴ 'For then I will make the peoples a pure speech so that they all will invoke the Lord by name.'⁷⁵

These two quotations address the two extremes in the situation of the Jews. Their subordination and humiliation in the present is reminiscent of the negative qualities of the Greek god Kronos, while the promise

of the future, very reminiscent, as we shall see in a moment, of the messianic age, seems to reflect more the character of Saturnus, the Latin god before he was conflated with the Greek one. Like Joseph Ashkenazi, in his *Sefer ha-Peliyah*, or Alemanno's passages, here we also have the combination of positive and negative qualities, of despair and hope. Indeed, the last passage presages a much more articulate discussion that follows it, in which the ascent of the planet Saturn is described in conspicuous utopian terms. No less than the great philosopher Aristotle – in fact a pseudo-Aristotelian source circulated in the Middle Ages⁷⁶ – has been adduced from something written by the famous Jewish thinker Joseph Albo, to the effect that in the golden future 'everyone will accept Israel's Torah'.⁷⁷

After invoking the authority of the Indian astrologer and that of the great Greek philosopher, Yagel approaches the opinion of the kabbalists. He formulates his view, on the basis of ideas already presented above, that:

Binah, the supernal mother, nourishes these constellations and their planets. In the language of the rabbis she is called 'the constellation of Israel' and also 'repentance', by which all repent. [She also is called] 'Jubilee', and through [her power] the slaves were liberated and Israel [came] forth from Egypt.⁷⁸

It is after this passage that Yagel introduces a lengthy verbatim citation from Joseph Ashkenazi's *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, part of it quoted above. Thus, the astrological view related to the messianic character of Saturn and the higher power that rules over it, the third *sefirah*, are in alignment with different eschatological views and some messianic verses and Talmudic discussions.⁷⁹ However, interesting as Yagel's views may be in themselves, they remain on the sidelines of Jewish culture. Nevertheless, the fact that a similar view was expressed by an older contemporary of Yagel, the Christian kabbalist Francesco Giorgio Veneto, who speaks about the nexus between Sabbatai, Saturn and *Binah* in his very influential book *De Harmonia Mundi*, seems to be quite significant since it assumes that there is a Saturnian religion, conceived in quite a positive conceptual structure.⁸⁰ It points to the impact of Kabbalah on the cultural mood in Italy, and to a certain extent in Europe – as is demonstrated by the French translation and the printing of the book in Paris in 1556. However, I assume that an inverse statement might also be correct, namely that the strong Renaissance culture would have had an impact on some Jewish audiences in Italy at the close of the sixteenth century and later, including some of the kabbalists.

Finally, a renowned Lurianic kabbalist, who flourished in the mid seventeenth century, Nathan Neta Shapira of Jerusalem, has attributed a commentary on *Sefer Yetzirah* to a medieval author, Rav Hai Gaon, otherwise unknown, except in pseudo-epigraphic sources, where it is said that: 'Israel's sign of the zodiac is *Deli* [Aquarius], and the planet of Israel is Sabbatai, and if Israel will join to them it will amount [by acronym] to **ShaDaY, Sabbatai, Deli, Yisrael** ... and the brethren will come, which are the ten tribes.'⁸¹

This mention of the ten tribes, described in that context as coming to the Land of Israel, is indubitably adding the eschatological touch to the nexus between Sabbatai, Israel and Aquarius, and when united they are described as forming the divine name Shadday, one of the divine names often used by Sabbatai Tzevi, the famous Messiah, in his speculations about his own special status, and its plene spelling as identical in gematria to his name.

Sabbatai Tzevi and Saturn

Sabbatai Tzevi, the most famous and for some Jews also the most notorious of the Jewish messiahs, was called by the name Sabbatai, like some other Jewish infants, because he was born on the day of the Sabbath. This is an ancient custom, which does not have any eschatological meaning in itself. Nevertheless, this means that a certain affinity between his proper name and a fact that may be interpreted in an astrological manner has been present *in potentia* from the very moment of his birth. What seems to be much more pertinent, however, is the fact that in his youth he had been a student of *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* and, as Scholem has pointed out, he was influenced by it. Three passages from this book, analysed above – two from Abulafia and the third from Joseph Ashkenazi – were quoted in this large compendium of early Kabbalah, all of them anonymously. The fact that the three main passages on the planet Saturn/Sabbatai found in this book have eschatological and messianic implications, and the more general impact of *Sefer ha-Temunah's* kabbalistic worldview, could not, in my opinion, escape the attention of a careful reader. Indeed, a Sabbatean ideologue has quoted Joseph Ashkenazi's passage from *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* framed as follows:

These are the words of Metatron to the holy *Qanah* called *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* who is a wondrous man and it is found in our hands in a manuscript, and his words were copied by Rabad [Joseph Ashkenazi's] in his *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah* ... and these are the words of Metatron to the holy *Qanah*, and these are his [*Qanah's*] words.⁸²

Sefer ha-Peliy'ah, in which the student of Nathan of Gaza is quoted, is attributed in the book itself to a second-century Tannaitic figure, a revered mystic named Nehuniah ben ha-Qanah, who is described as engaging in various mystical dialogues with Metatron, the highest of the angels. In fact, Nathan was convinced that it was the medieval kabbalist who was quoted from the 'ancient' *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, and not vice versa, but this minor historical error does not affect his conviction. Both the occurrence of the name of this mystic and the fact that this book is conceived of as being revealed from above were bound to bolster the authority of the affinity between Sabbatai/Saturn and the Messiah. Actually the name of the planet, as linked to the quotation above is Sabbatai, but at the same time it 'is the secret of the *Mashyah YHWH*', and in Hebrew identical with the proper name of Sabbatai Tzevi.

This may be much more than sheer coincidence. Sabbatai Tzevi studied this book in his youth and might well have been influenced by this passage. In any case, his prophet used it explicitly to prove Tzevi's messianism. I am inclined to attribute to this passage, which has also left other conspicuous traces in Sabbatean literature,⁸³ a much greater role than a belated and retrospective proof text. I assume that Tzevi conceived of himself as Messiah, at least in part because of the content of the passage that has just been cited, in which the planet Saturn, alias Sabbatai, was described as the 'secret of the Messiah'. The manner of reference is rather ambiguous because it is not altogether clear whether the reference to Sabbatai is to a planet or to a human individual. Thus, someone could plausibly enough understand the passage to refer to the expected Messiah who is conceived of as being related to Sabbatai, or understand it to mean that he is called Sabbatai. If this hypothesis is correct, then the late thirteenth-century Kabbalah of the circle of Joseph Ashkenazi might have contributed more to Tzevi's self-consciousness as Messiah than anything in the Lurianic Kabbalah could possibly have done.⁸⁴ Attempts to restrict the impact of Ashkenazi's *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah* to Nathan, and diminish its influence on Sabbatai Tzevi, seem rather bizarre to this writer, since the latter was described as studying the book, not the former.

Here, let me adduce some significant instances of the possible contribution of what may be called the Saturn clue to the understanding of an important passage authored by Nathan of Gaza. In one of his famous epistles, he mentions that faith in Sabbatai Tzevi, accepted by those who believed in him will ensure the reception of:

'the inheritance of the Lord'⁸⁵ which is the mystery of the Jubilee Year that will become manifest at this time and the 'rest', which is

the mystery of the manifestation of 'Attika' *Qaddisha*', within the configuration of *Ze'ir 'Anppin*, in the year 1670.⁸⁶

Two different topics are explicated in this passage. Let me start with the most obvious one: in 1670 a high revelation is to take place, when the highest divine hypostasis, 'Attika' *Qaddisha*', will illuminate the lower configuration within the intra-divine world.⁸⁷ Then those who merit it will gain 'rest', *menuḥah*. Though 'rest' is explicitly related to redemption, it must also have something to do with the concept of the Sabbath. This redemptive significance is hinted at by the term 'secret'. However, an earlier phase of the salvific drama is already emerging 'in this time', referred to by the 'secret of the Jubilee'. I assume that this secret designates a lower form of deliverance – but one already present in 1665.

However, what is the theosophical significance of this present mystery of the Jubilee? In almost unanimous agreement on Kabbalistic symbolism, and on the basis of the above discussions, the Jubilee is a symbol of the third *sefirah*. This symbolism points to the current presiding power, namely the *sefirah* of *Binah*. This distinction between the two phases was overlooked in Scholem's analysis; nevertheless he did quite correctly point out the salvific meaning of *Binah* in this context. However, he did not pay attention to its possible implications, leaving the reader with the feeling that one global redemptive event is mentioned here.⁸⁸ However, in one of the later sentences of the same epistle, describing future events of the next seven years, Nathan wrote explicitly that the miracles mentioned in the book of the *Zohar* would take place until:

the year of the next *Shemittah*.⁸⁹ And in the seventh [year] ben David will come⁹⁰ and in the seventh year is Sabbath, which is the King Sabbatai, and at that time the abovementioned rabbi, [namely Sabbatai Tzevi] will come from the river of Sambatiyon together with his spouse, the daughter of Moses, our master.⁹¹

The emphasis on the seventh is obvious; it is quite reminiscent of the secret of the Jubilee and, at the same time, of the description cited above from *Sefer ha-Peluy'ah*, where Sabbatai/Saturn was described as connected to 'the secret of *Shemittot*'. However, even more explicit is the mention of King Sabbatai in the last passage quoted. The reign of this king should not, in my opinion, be confused with that of Tzevi himself, because immediately after mentioning Sabbatai/Saturn, Nathan introduces the 'Rabbi', namely Tzevi himself – thus preventing a possible confusion between the two. In other words, from this passage we can discern that the importance of the reign of Sabbatai-Saturn, which is indeed the seventh

planet, as part of the redemptive drama, was utilized beyond the direct quotation of the thirteenth and fourteenth-century Kabbalistic writings that served as possible sources of inspiration.

We may assume that, while studying *Sefer ha-Peliyah* in his youth, Tzevi was attracted by the text cited above and may have been influenced by the nexus between Sabbatai, namely the planet Saturn (but also his proper name), and the Messiah and thus led to a sense of his own connection to the concept of Messiah. His vision was passed on to Nathan, his prophet, who integrated both the man and the planet in the same discussion, as both have the same name. Provided that all these suppositions are correct, we are presented with an interesting example of how the contents of some Kabbalistic books may have infused their ideas in certain personalities, and may perhaps have constituted the starting point for far-reaching personal developments, even more than historical events.

Indeed, on the basis of the texts above, it would be plausible to suggest another clue to the inner spiritual life of Tzevi. Gershom Scholem has proposed a diagnosis of mental illness that may explain Tzevi's emotional up and downs: manic depression,⁹² or what in present-day parlance is known as bipolar personality disorder. It is not my aim here, or in general, to dispute the accuracy of this modern diagnosis of the mental malady of a patient who died a few centuries ago. It will be sufficient to mention here the possibility that, due to the Kabbalistic passage triggering a personal affinity to *Binah* and Saturn, Tzevi also internalized the peculiar emotional characteristic connected to this planet: *marah shehorah*, 'black humour' or 'melancholy'. Indeed, Scholem, following the Hebrew sources, refers to Tzevi's melancholy on several occasions. The resort to traditional terminology helps us to discern the existence of a wider context. As is better understood today, since the Renaissance, more and more historical personalities born under the aegis of Saturn have been haunted by the idea of having a troubled fate.⁹³ I hope that this clue will help to give a better understanding of various facets of Tzevi's behaviour, but the psychological aspects of absorbing the melancholic side of Saturn are an issue that still awaits fuller discussion. Here I am concerned with the more explicit material that sustains, in my opinion in a clearer manner, the astrological dimensions of the Sabbatean movement.

In addition to the possible contamination of the young Tzevi by ideas concerning Sabbatai-Saturn as related to a future Messiah, from the point of view of our discussion here it would be pertinent to examine one major issue related to the status of the myth: the deity Saturn metamorphosed into a planet. Despite the astral role of Saturn, some qualities of the ancient Graeco-Latin god remained alive. As pointed out by Seznek, astral concepts in the Middle Ages bore mythical

concepts concerning the ancient gods.⁹⁴ Is it at all possible that we will discover an even greater revival of this ancient myth in Tzevi's thought and self-perception? Or, to pose the question even more bluntly: would Sabbatai conceive of himself not only as a Messiah, perhaps a person ruled by the highest planet or by the third *sefirah*, but also as someone who would achieve, at least for a while, divine status – through some experience of apotheosis or theosis?

In a fairly explicit passage, the ascent of Tzevi to the *sefirah* of *Binah* (a *sefirah* related in many texts to Saturn as has been demonstrated above) is quite conspicuous. In what is called the Yemenite Sabbatean apocalypse, which is a fragment from a lost treatise stemming from a rather early period of the Sabbatean movement, the Messiah is described as ascending from 'one degree to another, [all] the degrees of the seven *sefirot* from *Gedullah* to *Malkhut* ... after two years he ascends to the degree that his mother is there'.⁹⁵ Gershom Scholem correctly interpreted this text as pointing to the third *sefirah*, which is commonly symbolized in the theosophical Kabbalah by the symbol of the Great Mother, and he even proposed, on the basis of this passage, the presupposition of a mystical event occurring in the spiritual life of Tzevi in 1650. Moreover, Scholem correctly intuited that the meaning of this attainment would be an understanding of the 'secret of divinity'.⁹⁶ However, what Scholem did not specify or even conjecture was the possible nature of that 'secret of the divinity'.

On the basis of these extracts and some others dealt with above, I suggest that this secret was not only understood by reaching the third *sefirah*, but may indeed be the very secret of the divinity itself, namely the most intimate secret of Sabbatean theology as proposed by Tzevi himself. This would invite a more detailed investigation, which may find that the Sabbatean secret of the divinity changed as it developed in relation to the vector of time and the ontic hierarchy of the *sefirot*, meaning that the closer the messianic drama comes to the final stage, the higher the divine power that is appointed upon or related to Sabbatai, which ultimately constitutes the 'secret of divinity'. In any case, elsewhere in the same epistle, the nest of the bird, the mystical place of the Messiah according to the book of the *Zohar*, is described as none other than the third *sefirah*. Thus, the return to the third *sefirah*, understood in many texts as redemption, in the symbolism dominant in the Yemenite Sabbatean Apocalypse, is tantamount to a return to the bosom of the Mother, as part of some form of what Erich Neuman called uroboric mysticism.⁹⁷

However, whatever the details of Sabbatai's own 'secret of divinity' might have been, and this secret is far from being clear, the apotheosis described in the above text presupposes a conception that the Messiah,

ascending to the third *sefirah*, has been turned into a divine power in one way or another. Of the many discussions dealing with the nexus between Messiah and *Binah*, it is only the Messiah named Sabbatai to whom this specific form of apotheosis is attributed; none of the others mention the ascent of a historical Messiah to that *sefirah*.⁹⁸ Unlike Marsilio Ficino, Girolamo Cardano or (to a certain extent) Robert Burton, among many others whose mood has been profoundly affected by their belief that they were born under Saturn,⁹⁹ Sabbatai Tzevi attempted, or has at least been portrayed as attempting, to ascend to the celestial source presiding over his character.

Much as King Solomon was turned into a divinity in a fourteenth-century Kabbalistic text by Isaac of Acre,¹⁰⁰ the divinization of the Messiah in Sabbateanism restores the mythical traits of some Greek themes lost over the centuries. It is a plausible assumption that the seventeenth-century Messiah, or the authors who invented the passage cited above, did not know about the original Greek mythological material about Saturn, and I very much doubt that Sabbatai Tzevi intended to restore the status of Saturn as the father of the gods. However, what does seem pertinent to our discussion is that using the hermeneutical apparatus of the median line of the divine powers some vestiges of ancient myths were given a certain dramatic colouring that made it appear as if they were closer to the ancient sources than the medieval versions of these myths.

Saturn, Forbidden Sexual Relations and Sabbateanism

According to some accounts, Sabbatai Tzevi, and Sabbateanism in a broader sense, has been accused of indulging in sexual relations prohibited by Jewish laws.¹⁰¹ This is conceived of as a major breach in Judaism and is perhaps the most controversial aspect of Sabbateanism and its offspring, Frankism. To the best of my knowledge, no serious attempt has been made to explain this drastic development in terms related to astrology and more specifically to Saturnian features. However, such an explanation, even if it is only partial, seems fairly pertinent to me.¹⁰² It should be noted that here I am referring to discussions found in a variety of texts, but not reverberated in *Sefer ha-Peluy'ah*. This would imply that Tzevi was also acquainted with additional sources concerning Saturn.

As far back as in Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* we read about the different aspects of people connected with Saturn when it is in alignment with Venus:

Saturn makes men averse to women and renders them fond of governing, prone to solitude ... indifferent to beauty ... but if he be thus conciliated, and not posited in glory, he makes men

licentious and libidinous, practitioners of lewdness, careless, and impure in sexual intercourse, obscene, treacherous to women, especially of their families, wanton ... adulterous and impious.¹⁰³

Here we have an interesting example of complexity, in which Saturn's impact is different in accordance with whether it is in the ascendant or not – in this case, indifferent towards women or prone to lewd sexuality, a topic that is characteristic of Sabbatai Tzevi. As stated above,¹⁰⁴ Ptolemy's book was well known in Jewish circles, especially among the followers of Abraham ibn Ezra. In some of their writings we find the assumption that incestuous relations are forbidden in the Land of Israel, since it is governed by Saturn, which is understood as a cold and frigid planet. Though this theory may stem from a correct implicit interpretation of ibn Ezra,¹⁰⁵ his followers have made it quite explicit. For example, Shlomo Gatigno writes:

One of the rationales of the *'Arayyot* is that since sexual intercourse corresponds to the Land of Israel, since Sabbatai/Saturn rules over it and this is the reason why Balaam advised Balaq to abandon the daughters of Midian to them so that Israel could prostitute with them, and because of it they will fail, since they will act against their constellation, which is Saturn, which hates lewdness. And because Saturn is the planet of Israel it is cold and dry, while sexual intercourse needs warmth and humidity. And this is the reason, in my opinion, that lighting fire during Sabbath is prohibited ... since it corresponds to the planet of the day that is Saturn.¹⁰⁶

This is an application of Ptolemy's view, as discussed above, of the Land of Israel and of a specific form of sexual relationships – incestual ones. According to another anonymous text copied by Yohanan Alemanno in his *Collectanea*, this planet is explicitly associated with incestuous relationships. In his compilation of excerpts and reflections on a variety of topics, Alemanno quotes from a source (which so far I have not been able to identify precisely) as follows:

The astrologers said that Sabbatai/Saturn, when in alignment with Nogah/Venus, points to ugly and repulsive intercourse, especially with relatives, like a mother, a sister or a daughter. And despite the fact that this is true, this is the reason for the interdiction of relatives, since Sabbatai/Saturn, on account of being spiritual, and because its influxes are spiritual, to whomever merited them, who are pure and holy, because of

its coming close to the holy spiritual world; and its material influxes, because of its coming close to the material world, are inferior and repulsive. This is the reason why the nation that is its lot should prepare itself toward to its pure influxes and keep themselves apart from preparing itself to repulsive influxes such as incestuous [relations], which [are related] to relatives.¹⁰⁷

This is most probably a Jewish text, since it regards as the lot of Saturn those who respect the interdictions of incest. It is based on the contradictory nature of Saturn, whose influxes may be either spiritual, when it turns to the spiritual world, or material, when it turns to the material world. This oscillation of Saturn is quite interesting since it has some parallels in the passages from Joseph Ashkenazi and *Sefer ha-Peluy'ah* discussed in the Appendix. However, what is crucial for our discussion here is the direct nexus between Saturn and illicit sexual relations – incest, which in Jewish texts is called *'Arayyot*. However, this more astral vision is not only a concern of astrological texts but is also hinted at in a Kabbalistic theosophical passage, preserved anonymously in a later manuscript, which expresses views found in the later Zoharic layer:

Sabbatai/Saturn is the secret of spleen¹⁰⁸ which is permanently immersed in sadness¹⁰⁹ ... Idolatry, incestuous relations, and bloodshed depend on the liver, the spleen, and black bile; idolatry on liver, that is angry because of black bile, bloodshed on black bile, which is called *Geheinna* ... and the incestuous relationship on the spleen, which is Lilith, the mother of *'Erev Rav*, who commits adultery against her husband and is called incest in the *Shekhinah*.¹¹⁰

What is crucial to my point here is the relationship between Saturn, the spleen and incestuous relations, which parallels Ptolemy's book or the astrological anonymous text quoted by Alemanno, which may be the source of the Kabbalistic passage. A page later in Alemanno's *Collectanea*, he cites the following statement from Shlomo Al-Qonstantin's book *'Aron ha-'Edut*,¹¹¹ which offers another astral constellation for sexual incestuous relations:

Sabbatai/Saturn points to the bodies. Idolatry – from the power of Sabbatai/Saturn. It is found that idolatry, incest and bloodshed emanate from Sabbatai/Saturn, and from Mars and Venus. Abraham has obliterated the incest from his son and given it to Ishmael, Isaac obliterated bloodshed from his son

and gave it to Esau, Jacob obliterated idolatry from his sons and gave it to the nations. This [was done] by Abraham with the sacrifice of a calf, as against Venus, whose house is Taurus, Isaac sacrificed a lamb instead of him, which is the ram that was sacrificed in correspondence to the zodiac sign of Aries, which is the house of Mars, and Jacob brought two kids corresponding to Sabbatai/Saturn, whose house is Capricorn, and this is because the quintessence of idolatry is rumination of the heart, and Sabbatai/Saturn's power is thought and rumination.¹¹²

The astrological explanation for incest, which was also integrated in theosophical Kabbalah, reached the attention of Tzevi and inspired his deviant behaviour of spending time with married women, his former wives and virgins, a practice against rabbinic regulations. By proposing to identify the astrological sources as one of the important springboards for Tzevi's deviant behaviour, I do not aim to restrict the solution of Sabbatai's behaviour, or its interpretation by others, to just one source. Scholem was undoubtedly right when he pointed to another important source, *Tiqqunei Zohar*, which inspired Nathan of Gaza as to the permissiveness of incestuous relations within the divine sphere, implicitly condoning this kind of behaviour for his Messiah.¹¹³ In fact, permissiveness of this kind is not such a novelty in Kabbalah, as it had been part of its development since its inception.¹¹⁴ In any case, it is hard to minimize the affinity between the astrological concatenation of Saturn and lewdness and improper sexual relationships and Sabbatai's behaviour, which has no antecedent in Judaism.

More on Sabbateanism and Astrology

Let me adduce some examples of an awareness of the nexus between Sabbatai Tzevi and the planet. In an explicit statement as to the affinity between the Messiah and the planet, written by a contemporary Rabbi of Tzevi, who dedicated a poem to him, we read:

Come together like brethren –
 all the planets, in order to praise
 To Thee, the supernal Sabbatai, the head of the seven –
 Greatness and dominion is appropriate.
 This is why God put thou broad knowledge –
 Your name was called by his name on the day of circumcision.¹¹⁵

I propose to interpret these verses as dealing with the Sabbatai the Messiah in terms of the status of the first among the seven planets, namely Saturn,

which also offers the reason for the name given to Sabbatai the infant at the moment of circumcision. Again, I would like not to deduce the development of Tzevi's self-awareness from the reception of Sabbatai Tzevi as a planet, but at least we may argue that the nexus between the very high status of the planet Sabbatai and the Messiah Sabbatai could not have escaped the notice of many of his followers, as it could not have escaped the notice of Tzevi himself. In other words, the relatively young Tzevi, who studied a classic of Kabbalistic literature in the specific geographical area in which he was born, the Ottoman Empire, was shaped by a statement that connected his proper name to the homonymous planet and the Messiah. Another very important nexus between Sabbatai, the Messiah and the planet, in a conspicuously astrological context, is found in a debate related to the epistle of the Italian Rabbi Raphael Supino: 'Even more so the fostering of his messianism by the sages of the nations and their astrologers, as you said that they have seen the light of the star of Saturn that shines and is brilliant, and this is a sign of the Redemption.'¹¹⁶

Sabbatean propaganda had a very conspicuous astrological dimension, and also involved non-Jews and astrologers as well as claims about the significance of recent astronomical phenomena. Moreover, according to another text preserved by Sasportas, Tzevi was described as transmitting the gift of prophecy to his close friend Abraham ha-Yakhini as follows: 'The Master [Tzevi] put upon him his spirit of prophecy. Thereupon something resembling a brilliant star grew on his forehead – and it seems to me that it was the planet Saturn – and it is said that he [ha-Yakhini] too then prophesied.'¹¹⁷

Both the spirit of prophecy and the mention of the star – even without the explicit nexus with Saturn – in my opinion point to Saturn, which was linked with the faculty of prophecy. We have very reliable testimony for an astral understanding of Tzevi emanating from the most intimate circle of the Messiah, but independently of the testimonies of Nathan of Gaza and his followers, who merely reiterated the views of *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*. In other words, in circles closest to Sabbatai Tzevi, statements were made that establish a relation between him and the planet bearing a similar name. If this assumption is correct, we are witness to a classical situation in which a specific type of personality interacted with pre-existent thought forms, in this case an astrological model capable of influencing not only an abstract messianic claim but also other aspects of his inner life and external deeds. In any case, it is quite possible that Tzevi's 'melancholy' is not only part of the Messiah's personal spiritual constitution and the result of his having read and internalized the content of the passage from *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, but also an aspect of the more general attitude towards melancholy in his period.¹¹⁸

In this context, it would be important to mention additional topics, related not to the passage by Joseph Ashkenazi and *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* but to traditions connected with Saturn and to Sabbateanism. The first is the discussion of *conjunctio maxima*, an argument in all likelihood used by propagandists of Sabbateanism, but countered by Sasportas in these words:

Would we come to behave in accordance with their¹¹⁹ calculations, they maintain that at the time of Sabbatai/Saturn found in the zodiac sign of Scorpio, there will be an innovation of religion [*hiddush ha-dat*], as it was at the time when the Israelites prepared the [Golden] calf and when they prostrated themselves to the image of *Nebuchadnezzar*. Because of their words¹²⁰ would you install his rule over the land, so that he will be the policeman and governor, the king of Israel and their redeemer?¹²¹

This is no doubt a critical response to a claim made by Raphael Supino, on the basis of the views of astrologers, on the renovation of religion under the jurisdiction of Saturn. Sasportas here mentions the view that idolatry is related to this planet, an issue that we saw above in Al-Qonstantin's passage as quoted by Alemanno. In this explicit astrological context, let me adduce the view of Joseph Eskapha, Sabbatai Tzevi's teacher in his youth and one of the most important rabbinic authorities in Smyrna, who excommunicated Sabbatai because he had a propensity to change the law, declaring that 'he [will] make a new religion'.¹²² This is quite an important piece of evidence, stemming, as it does, from an early period of Tzevi's life, given that Eskapha died in 1661, long before the return of his former student to Smyrna as a messiah; it may reflect a conversation with Tzevi himself, who probably confessed to him in his youth that the Messiah would change the law.¹²³ This prerogative of the prophet or the Messiah is mentioned in several discussions related to *conjunctio maxima*. If proven, my conjecture would give scope to the assumption that Tzevi planned his messianic career much earlier in his life and that it was 'premeditated' in a much more careful manner than assumed by scholars, allowing astrological elements a more significant part in the development of his thought. My assumption is that it was not only manic elation that informed his 'strange deeds', as Scholem suggests, but that the existence of a more conceptual structure also sometimes nourished them.

Let me turn to the revelation experienced by a simple man after losing his senses at the port of Piraeus, as preserved in Sasportas's collection of Sabbatean material: 'Sabbatai Tzevi, our king, our redeemer, the teacher of justice, crowned with the supernal crown, you will rule over the entire

world, and the host of heaven, and Nathan the prophet is teaching the redemptions of Israel.¹²⁴

I assume that the crown reflects a vestige of theosophical symbolism, while the mention of the host of heaven points to the superiority of Sabbatai over the celestial bodies just as Saturn is the highest planet. The occurrence of the supernal crown is not a void epithet. In the seminal passage by Joseph Ashkenazi, and following him in the anonymous *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* (translated in chapter 1), there is a reference to 'the power of the supernal *Keter*', i.e. the power of the crown, that is characteristic of Ashkenazi's style.¹²⁵ In gematria the consonants of the phrase *Koah Keter Elyon* amount to 814, like the consonants of the words *Sabbatai Tzevi*, and this is indubitably one of the reasons why this phrase recurs so many times in Sabbatean literature. The question remains as to whether this gematria was itself part of Ashkenazi's passage. Though he refers to gematria in his writings, it is not clear that this is the case here. In one of the passages by Nathan of Gaza (discussed above) the concept of 'the King' was associated with Sabbatai but not necessarily with Sabbatai Tzevi. The use of this phrase, in a passage where Sabbatai is mentioned several times, is evidence of the fact that the passage under scrutiny here did indeed have an impact on Sabbatean thought. It is important to note, as Scholem has done, that Nathan applied the phrase 'the power of the supernal *Keter*' to Sabbatai Tzevi himself.¹²⁶ This suggests that both Nathan and I have made the same assumption: that the Messiah pored over Joseph Ashkenazi's passage and used it. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that in the famous magical book *Picatrix*, as well as in some other illustrations, Saturn is described as a king who has a crown on his head.¹²⁷ Thus the coronation of Sabbatai Tzevi, as illustrated in some Hebrew books, may be better understood if we acknowledge the possibility that this is a reiteration of various pictorial versions of the image of Saturn as bearing a crown, something that is widespread in many manuscripts and found to a certain extent in the passage on Sabbatai discussed above.¹²⁸

Other discussions in Sasportas that address the presence of the form of Tzevi, or that of his name, in the seventh firmament are relevant to the possibility that there is a connection between Sabbatai Tzevi and the astral order.¹²⁹ In Jewish texts, the seventh firmament is sometimes related to the planet Saturn. In this context, Nathan's statement that he saw Sabbatai in his seminal vision as a figure ensconced in the *Merkavah*¹³⁰ is reminiscent of the view that Sabbatai's form is to be found in the seventh firmament. We should mention the connection between Saturn and snakes that is also found in Tzevi's documents, a connection that was already familiar from astrological texts.¹³¹

Nathan of Gaza and Moshe Ḥayyim Luzzatto on Saturn and Sabbatai Tzevi

It may be relevant both to Sabbatai Tzevi's self-perception, and certainly to the reception of his act of apostasy, that his conversion has been understood by leading Sabbatean figures as being related to the planet Saturn. Nathan of Gaza, Tzevi's prophet, capitalizes on an interesting discussion found in the latter layer of the *Zohar*, *Ra'aya Meheimna*, where the negative conceptual structure is evident, in order to describe the suffering related to this act and the 'alien deeds' he did or would do.¹³² We may suggest that while the passages from Joseph Ashkenazi's *Commentary on the Sefer Yetzirah/ Sefer ha-Peli'ah* were important for the emergence of Tzevi's self-perception as Messiah, his apostasy is more easily explained in terms of the later layer of the Zoharic literature's anti-Saturnian attitude, though understood in an original manner by applying it to the converted Messiah. It is an interesting case of turning the earlier inversion of Judaism as Saturnism on its head.

However, more explicit than Nathan's view, though simultaneously rather intriguing, is a short passage by Moshe Ḥayyim Luzzatto, known by the acronym Ramḥal (1707–46), a prolific and original kabbalist who had messianic aspirations of his own, as reflecting a complex attitude toward Sabbatai Tzevi:

'And the wicked maidservant is the burial, and within her the lady is [found] etc.'¹³³ It seems from this passage that it is incumbent on the Messiah – who is [found] in the secret of the *Shekhinah*¹³⁴ – to clothe himself in the shell,¹³⁵ in the secret of Sabbatai, that is the shell of Ishm'a'el, in the secret of the diminution of the moon,¹³⁶ as it is explained there.¹³⁷

There can be no doubt that the Messiah who was entering the shell of Ishm'a'el and the secret of Sabbatai is no other than Sabbatai Tzevi. Here the name Sabbatai has a *double entendre*, since it stands both for the planet, which is described in the later layer of the *Zohar* in quite negative terms as part of the negative conceptual structure, and for the fallen seventeenth-century Messiah Sabbatai Tzevi, who is introduced here by adding the topic of messianism to the Zoharic passage. Tzevi's controversial conversion to Islam was considered by Luzzatto and his predecessors to be a necessary move, to find within the planet (conceived here under the influence of the *Zohar* as a demonic feminine power, and described elsewhere in the same context as Lilith) the divine presence of the *Shekhinah*, which is connected to the Messiah.¹³⁸

In the same context, Luzzatto describes Ishm'a'el and Esau as corresponding to Saturn and Mars, the two negative planets corresponding to Islam and Christianity, respectively. This entry into the sphere of Ishm'a'el, referring in my opinion to Tzevi's conversion to Islam, is conceived of as less pernicious than apostasy to Christianity; in fact, we have here an interesting example of Luzzatto's theodicy in relation to Tzevi's religious conversion. Whether this entrance into the maidservant, in other words into Saturn, also entails the consummation of sexual relations with a Muslim woman, conceived of as a shell, namely a demonic power, remains a theoretical question based on the available historical material. However, it should be pointed out that Barukh of Arezzo, an Italian kabbalist who followed Nathan of Gaza's lead on this important point, wrote in Tzevi's lifetime that his apostasy was understood in terms of such a relationship long before Luzzatto, as it was considered comparable to the patriarchs' relation to non-Israelite women – for example, Abraham and Hagar, or Jacob and the daughters of Laban – who were also compared to shells.¹³⁹ Thus it seems that the mid-eighteenth-century Italian kabbalist had been influenced by an interpretation of Tzevi's apostasy which had been formulated in the Ottoman Empire and in Italy a generation before him.

In fact, the theory that the marriage of some biblical figures with gentile women was an act of entering the powers of evil had been a leitmotif since the late thirteenth-century Kabbalah in Castile; it has been neglected in scholarship and I hope to explore it elsewhere.¹⁴⁰ Thus a major argument advanced by both Nathan of Gaza and Barukh of Arezzo – explaining the apostasy as an intentional confrontation with evil by entering a feminine demonic power designated as Saturn – is not necessarily a Lurianic theme, as scholars claim. Surprisingly enough, the demonic aspects of Saturn, thrown into relief by Aby Warburg's studies, became evident in the late layer of the *Zohar* but were more pronounced in some instances in Sabbatean Kabbalah, which resort to the Zoharic discussions as proof texts.

Some Conclusions

Let me distinguish between two main proposals advanced above as they relate to Sabbateanism: one deals with what seems to me to be a demonstrated claim, namely that the astrological background of the messianic and melancholic nature of Sabbatai/Saturn was instrumental in the reception of Sabbatai Tzevi as a melancholic messiah by people already acquainted with the constellation of ideas related to Saturn. Indeed, even in the criticism of the movement the astrological element was adduced. So, for example, Isaac Cardozo, the brother of a major

Sabbatean believer, Abraham Michael Cardozo, writes quite critically about Tzevi: 'What save sadness did Sabbatai, who was born on a funeral day, predict? He was unfortunate in his very name, since, in the Hebrew language, Saturn is called Sabbatai, a sad and malignant star, regarded as a rather great misfortune by the astrologers.'¹⁴¹

Given the fact that both the supporters and opponents of Sabbateanism introduced astrological concepts of Saturn into their discourse, as we have seen above, there is reason to give significance to this type of speculation in the reception and diffusion of Sabbateanism, at least in some cultural areas in Europe. Indeed, as I have suggested elsewhere, it would be less reasonable to look for one basic and universally valid explanation for the emergence of Sabbateanism that allegedly unified all the Jewish communities than to allow that there may be different explanations that fit different communities.¹⁴² In our case, the Renaissance concern with Saturn as the star of melancholics but also of creative geniuses may have influenced some Jews in Italy or Western Europe, and may have had a more minor effect on those who lived in the East.

The second proposal consists in the plausibility of the impact of Kabbalistic discussions about Saturn, as found in Abraham Abulafia and Joseph Ashkenazi and especially as elaborated in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, on the emergence of Tzevi's self-perception as the Messiah and on some of his specific acts afterwards. So far, no attempt has been made to explain what conceptual structure influenced the young kabbalist Sabbatai to claim for himself the role of the Messiah. That his messianic mission was revealed to him in a dream, or according to another version in a revelation while roaming one night, does not explain why such a dream or revelation occurred at all. My proposal is based upon what seems a plausible inference and combines the undisputed testimony of Tzevi's early study of the book *Peliy'ah* with how it casts the aspects of the planet in a positive light, one aspect being an explicit mention of the Messiah of God as related to *Binah*/Sabbatai/Saturn. Though such an explanation includes an imponderable factor, namely the psychological absorption of the content of these discussions by the young Sabbatai, it seems to me, at least for the time being, that this is the only significant proposal that explains the emergence of the messianic consciousness in him. I would like to emphasize that in principle one may accept the validity of the 'reception' theory without accepting the second proposal. However, given the fact that Nathan of Gaza himself used imagery related to expressions in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* to describe the Messiah as *Koah Keter 'Elyon*, such a sceptical attitude, though possible, is less plausible.

The proposals stated above are not intended substantially to mitigate the place of Sabbatean ideology as part of the history of Jewish

mysticism by over-emphasizing the theo-astrological component nor to inscribe it forcefully in the history of the reverberations of Greek or Roman mythologies. Nevertheless, astral mythology should be taken into serious account as it appears in Kabbalistic books. Unlike other forms of comprehensive speculation (such the philosophical or the Kabbalistic), the astrological approaches were much more widespread in the Middle Ages, including in non-Jewish circles, and were an inherent component of the beliefs of many people for long after. This deterministic worldview was accepted by a wider segment of the general population than both Kabbalah and philosophy, and crossed the borders of religions and nations. It is therefore much easier to understand how specific astrological mythologoumena were grafted onto the more generally accepted beliefs shared by elite and popular audiences alike.

My proposals strive, nevertheless, to broaden the pertinent contexts of the emergence of Tzevi's self-awareness and the expansion of Sabbateanism. In lieu of scholarly over-emphasis of the impact and role of Lurianic Kabbalah – which was rejected, or at least neglected, by Tzevi and only barely recognized by Nathan of Gaza in the early stages of his activity – in order to create a unilinear explanation of the history of Kabbalah as it allegedly culminated in Sabbateanism, I propose a picture that is far less developmental. My approach emphasizes the importance of several cross-currents¹⁴³ and particularly the continuous importance of pre-Lurianic forms of Kabbalah, as well as in our specific instance the continuing relevance of fairly heterogeneous Kabbalistic elements preserved in *Sefer ha-Peliyah*. The heterogeneity of the Kabbalistic trends represented in this book is emblematic of the manner in which I propose to describe the history of Kabbalah and Kabbalistic messianism in general.¹⁴⁴ A variety of distinct schools, in our case ecstatic Kabbalah, and strongly astrologically oriented treatments survived mainly in manuscript (of which important excerpts were incorporated in Kabbalistic classics), so their views were able to inspire later forms of Jewish mysticism even after the emergence and the canonization of later forms of Kabbalah such as the various forms of Lurianism.

My further assumption is that astrological concepts served as a conduit for messianic perception related to the nexus between Saturn/Sabbatai much more than Lurianic concepts, considered by scholars to be pregnant with acute messianic cargo, and that astrological concepts could have prepared the ground for Sabbatean ideas and effervescence. The proper understanding of the phenomenon of Sabbateanism as proposed above assumes the need to transcend the often artificial distinctions between literary genres and the literature that belongs to certain types of religion. A reliance on the inspection of Kabbalistic literature alone in order to

understand religious developments of a broad impact, as in Scholem's otherwise very impressive monograph on Sabbatai Tzevi, seems to miss other types of sources, such as the astrological ones, which may shed a different light on the emergence of certain moments in Sabbateanism.

The above suggestion, of viewing the emergence and diffusion of Sabbatean messianism in broader religious and cultural contexts, may, however, be seen as necessary in a variety of topics related to Judaism and especially to Jewish mysticism. It is not my purpose here to give detailed examples of the necessity of reading Jewish topics against backgrounds of far greater scope than ordinarily imagined by scholars. However, some suggestions, related to the direction we outlined above, may be made. Greek mythological themes, for example, also figure large in Heikhalot literature,¹⁴⁵ in some views of the golem,¹⁴⁶ some eschatological and other Kabbalistic themes in Kabbalah, and some topics in Jewish Renaissance mysticism.¹⁴⁷ An overly stark, and oftentimes too artificial, separation between the content of literatures conceived of as belonging to Jewish mysticism and other forms of occult knowledge current in late antiquity and the Middle Ages¹⁴⁸ or between Kabbalah and philosophy,¹⁴⁹ as cultivated in the dominant scholarly forms of treating the history of this mystical lore, has hardly helped to advance the study of the field. We shall be returning to this issue in chapter 3.

In any case, one of the leading kabbalists of the sixteenth-century Safed, Moshe Cordovero, offered a more complex synthesis between Kabbalah and astro-magic than most of the other kabbalists, which was influential in shaping some of the developments in the ensuing stages of Jewish mysticism – and Cordovero refers to Sabbatai as a planet several times in his writings.¹⁵⁰ This synthesis has not been taken sufficiently into consideration in the extant accounts of the thought of this towering kabbalist. Only by gradually liberating the analyses of the Jewish material from the intellectual ghettos invented by scholars, who have portrayed Jewish thinkers as reflecting narrow concerns dealing dominantly with ritual or history, and by scrupulous examination of new Jewish texts, beyond the often artificial walls of literary genres or historical circumstances, may we open gates that have remained closed until now.¹⁵¹

On the other hand, the scholars' acquaintance with various frameworks and backgrounds of Sabbateanism is an important imperative that should not diminish the need to master the details of earlier Jewish traditions known and studied by the kabbalists. In the pages above, I have attempted to bring those two requirements together. It would be more advisable to start with the spadework before turning to larger frameworks. This means that a scholar of Sabbateanism should carefully peruse at least the few Kabbalistic books read by Sabbatai Tzevi himself in his formative years

and try to assess their potential relevance to his spiritual development.¹⁵² Moreover, Tzevi should be understood as part of a wider development of Kabbalah in the former Byzantine Empire, which differs from both the Spanish and the Italian forms of Kabbalah, though it was deeply influenced by them.¹⁵³ These requirements will prove to be as helpful as general considerations about the Muslim and Christian backgrounds to his activities, topics that needless to say should not be neglected.

To sum this up, many of the important kabbalists have been concerned with features of the planet Saturn: Abraham Abulafia, Joseph Ashkenazi, some writers of Zoharic literature, Joseph ibn Waqar, *Sefer ha-Temunah*, *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, Yohanan Alemanno, Moshe Cordovero, Nathan Neta' Shapira of Jerusalem, Sabbatai Tzevi and his followers, as well as, lastly, Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto and, as we shall see below, Israel Ba'al Shem Tov. Their brief reflections, responses, and their more rare critiques, show that the special nature of the planet Saturn and its possible redemptive qualities were topics that preoccupied numerous kabbalists, different as their approaches to this topic might be. At any event, they reflect a specific case, part of an intellectual development that took place in Kabbalah in the last third of the thirteenth century, when astro-magic was adopted in a variety of Kabbalistic schools and among thinkers who were not kabbalists, mainly in Spain, and then disseminated in other centres of Jewish culture.¹⁵⁴

It is this development, coupled with the resort to qualities related to Saturn in the writings of the authors mentioned above, that contributed to the dissemination of the interest in Saturn and related topics in wider circles in Judaism, creating a nexus between the planet, melancholy and Judaism, and sometimes even messianism.¹⁵⁵ Thus, in the discussions adduced in this chapter, we can make out an interesting addition to what I call the constellation of messianic ideas found in medieval Judaism, and significantly different from other messianic ideas adopted in this period. Moreover, the coexistence of astrological themes of messianism with the intellectual ones in Abulafia's thought shows that it is appropriate to speak of complex constellations of messianic ideas even in the writings of the same kabbalist. In fact, some form of cyclical recurrence is implied in other discussions of this kabbalist in various eschatological contexts.¹⁵⁶

One more general remark should be made about the adoption of the astrological order in conjunction with messianism. While popular messianism is rooted in the assumption that the messianic figure is the revelation of divine will and power, and much less a manifestation of an intelligible order, in the astral order we have some significant changes in the very meaning of messianism as accepted in popular Judaist circles in a direction that is more intelligible. This move is part of a more

comprehensive restructuring of messianism in the Middle Ages, and of Judaism in general in some elite circles. In a way, the popular Messiah as an expression of the divine will has been 'chained' to new forms of order, as this figure has been interpreted as a perfect philosopher, as the Agent Intellect or as one of the divine *sefirot* by different kabbalists according to their specific predilection.¹⁵⁷

Moreover, in an intelligible manner the astrological order offered a clue as to the direction of history by resorting to types of knowledge that were *au courant* in the 'science' of medieval thinkers in Europe. Though I am sceptical about the phenomenological understanding of Judaism as a religion, which invented the religious value of history as part of a unilinear conceptualization of time, as claimed by Mircea Eliade,¹⁵⁸ there can be no doubt that an attempt to understand history was one of the concerns of elite forms of Judaism. Astrology, with its cyclical vision of time and able to make predictions according to a perception of events that lend themselves to being precisely calculated and thus understood in an intelligible manner, was one major tool used by that elite in order to do so. Cyclical time as it is reflected in some Kabbalistic sources is not only a matter of returning to the Golden Age but also a form of deterministic vision, something that is problematic in the framework of a religion that emphasizes the centrality of the performance of the commandments.

However, independently of Judaism, astral religions are modalities to understanding the rhythms of the cosmos that were *en vogue* in many other instances,¹⁵⁹ and their existence and influence call into question Eliade's overly stark distinction between historical and non-historical forms of religion respectively dominated by linear and circular forms of time. In fact, there are different concatenations in Jewish theories of time, which preclude simple statements of the sort aired in Eliade's studies.¹⁶⁰ The astrological speculations succinctly addressed here show that cyclical cosmic types of thought, which I call 'macrochronoi', were more influential in elite forms of Judaism than commonly considered. In a manner consonant with Eliade's assertion, the longer the cosmic cycle, the more abrupt, calamitous and total is the eschatological catastrophe.¹⁶¹ In the case of Saturn/Sabbatai/*Binah*, the cosmic cycles are indeed considered to be very long, and the destruction is described as total. However, in my opinion, the deterministic aspects of those macrochronoi, found in medieval Judaism, did not impose too significant or fatalistic an approach on Jewish messianism.¹⁶²

In any case, one of its important developments, as also exemplified by our discussions here, is the significant addition of cyclical 'macrochronoi', and 'mesochronoi', to the centrality of the 'microchronoi' – the cyclical performance of rituals present in all the major forms of Judaism. Each

of these types of time is related to specific forms of redemption, and I assume also of exile, and of redeeming figures and entities, human, astral, intellectual or sefirotic, all of them being part of what I call the constellation of messianic ideas.¹⁶³

Part of the ongoing process of the diversification of this constellation of ideas depends on the gradual opening of some Jewish elites to the variety of Greek and Hellenistic forms of thought, especially in matters of philosophy, the sciences, psychology,¹⁶⁴ and astrology, which facilitated new interpretations of Judaism and its forms of messianism.

However, what is surprising is the fact that though the medieval philosophical, theosophical and astrological forms of order have declined in some Jewish elite circles since the eighteenth century, some aspects of these linkages continued in some discussions of Jewish authors that are extant from the eighteenth and even up to the twentieth centuries, as we shall see in chapter 3. In any case, curiosity about what may be described as Saturnism persisted in small Christian circles, expressed as interest in a reform that would bring back the Golden Age of Saturn, also identified as the glorious time of Adam, by the Rosicrucians in the early seventeenth century in Central Europe,¹⁶⁵ and in testimony regarding a sect active in mid-eighteenth-century England whose members were described as ‘Saturnians’.¹⁶⁶

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THREE From Saturn to Melancholy

Some Saturnian Discussions in the Eighteenth Century

We have surveyed some of the occurrences of the term 'Saturn' in its Hebrew form 'Sabbatai' in Jewish writings since the twelfth century. The passages quoted above are a small part of much wider range of discussions regarding Saturn found in print and in manuscripts, which also deal with other issues.¹ In the first chapter, we concentrated on the negative conceptual structure, whereby Jews were described as dealing with witchcraft, and related this to a series of both positive and negative features dominated by Saturn. In chapter 2, we discussed the positive conceptual structure that related to the nexus between Saturn, redemption and messianism. The complexity of the descriptions of the nature of Saturn, which encompass so many opposite features, has facilitated the adoption of some of these features in the creation of different identities for Jews over the centuries. In a way, Saturn has become the planetary genius of the Jews.

As seen in chapter 2, the eighteenth-century kabbalist Moshe Ḥayyim Luzzatto had a clear awareness of the affinity between Saturn and Sabbatai Tzevi. Three additional discussions, stemming from other eighteenth-century authors, display some acquaintance with the two conceptual structures discussed above. Let me start with two examples dealing with the messianic understandings of Saturn. In Jean-Frédéric Bernard's description of the Karaite Jews, written in Amsterdam and printed in 1733, we find the following passage:

They expect the Messiah, but are against losing any time in calculating his coming, believing its coming may be delayed by their sins, and by the slowness of Saturn's periodical revolution, which is the star of the Sabbath, and of the Jewish nation. It is a question to be asked them, what relation there is between the planet of Saturn and the Messiah, and how are they sure that Saturn presides over Sabbath, or sheds its influence over the Jewish nation?²

Indeed, it is not so much a question of why there was a belief in this conceptual structure, but why it was attributed to the Karaites.

Interestingly enough, Bernard does not mention Sabbatai Tzevi or his movement. Thus we may assume that not only attentive readers of *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, such as I have argued Sabbatai Tzevi presumably was, were acquainted with the Saturn-Messiah nexus, but also people superficially interested in the details of Jewish customs.

Interestingly enough, none other than King David, the figure conceived of as the founder of the messianic line in both Judaism and Christianity, is described as related to the planet Sabbatai/Saturn in an eighteenth-century book by Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye. Jacob Joseph was one of the main disciples of the founder of Hasidism, Israel Ba'al Shem Tov (c. 1698–1760), known as the Besht (the acronym of the Hebrew words that signify the 'master of the Good Name'), and he writes as follows: 'he was [presided over by] a zodiacal constellation in which his thoughts about worship of God, blessed be He, did not emerge properly, and he was from the aspect of the zodiacal sign of Saturn, that receives from *Binah*'.³

Whether this is a statement of the Besht himself or just Jacob Joseph's interpretation of one of his master's comments, is not totally clear from the context, but I am inclined to see it as reflecting the view of the Besht. Moreover, immediately afterwards, and still as part of a discussion that is presumably authored by the Besht himself, the issue of melancholy is mentioned in an explicit manner. Either way, we have here one more reverberation of Joseph Ashkenazi's theo-astrological system applied to a messianic figure, in this case in mystical literature that was basically uninterested in constellated types of worldview. Why King David's improper thoughts were incompatible with the worship of God, and whether they have something to do with a melancholic vision of the famous king, is still a complex question. In this context, the issue is described as 'corporeal', and it may have something to do with David's affair with Bathsheva, or a form of 'alien thoughts' in Hasidic mentality. In any case, it is evident that the role of melancholy in Jewish experience and thought did not come to an end with the death of Sabbatai Tzevi. As has been pointed out more recently, it played an interesting role in the life of some important Hasidic masters active in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁴

It is pertinent to point out that in a hagiographical collection of tales and legends about the Besht's life and deeds, the editor wrote, 'I heard that the Besht stems from the soul of King David, may he rest in peace.'⁵ In what would, I admit, be quite a strong act of interpretation, if we read together the two traditions about King David as part of a rather chaotic web of teachings surrounding the figure of the Besht, we may conclude that he not only identified himself with the glorious king and

thus with a messianic mission, but also with the Messiah as related to Sabbatai, namely the planet of Saturn. If this link is significant, based as it is on what I call an oblique type of connection, it may reflect yet another reverberation of Joseph Ashkenazi's seminal passage, which, in my opinion and as discussed in the previous chapter, had such a strong influence on Sabbatai Tzevi as well as on a certain aspect of the messianic self-awareness of the Besht. It should be pointed out that those short passages stem from a literature that, at least in principle, emphasized the value of joy as an important religious attitude.

Let me turn to a third example, where difficult questions related to Saturn and its attributes are obvious. In a vast mid-eighteenth-century compendium of Jewish customs entitled *Hemdut Yamim*, which stems from a Sabbatean circle whose identity is a matter of debate among scholars, we find a description of the Sabbath as a foil for Saturnian attributes. Capitalizing on the critique of Saturnism formulated in a later layer of Zoharic literature, and after copying the passage on Saturn found in Bahya ben Asher (translated in chapter 1) with few variations, the anonymous author describes the custom of Isaac Luria and his student Ḥayyim Vital of preferring the wearing of white clothes on the Sabbath as an attempt to counteract the pernicious influx of Saturn.⁶ I wonder whether this explanation has any historical value in relation to the emergence of Lurianism and its customs. It certainly shows that the challenge of Saturnism had not disappeared as late as the mid eighteenth century; in fact, we discern it even later in a variety of sources such as the sermons of Jonathan Eybeschutz and in some Hasidic writers.

One of the most distinguished personalities in rabbinic and Kabbalistic eighteenth-century literature, R. Elijah, known as the Vilna Gaon, paraphrased much of the passage by Joseph Ashkenazi in his *Commentary on Sifra' de-Tzeniu'ta'*⁷ another example of the persistence of the negative conceptual structure.

Let us turn now to the survival of this negative conceptual structure in a passage written by an eminent Jewish philosopher active in the second half of the eighteenth century, Solomon Maimon:

It is well known in the science of the planets,⁸ that when someone makes a peculiar image from a peculiar matter which is connected with a peculiar planet, as they [the ancestors] said: 'There is no [leaf of] grass on earth etc.,'⁹ and he will place it under the power of the above-mentioned planet, when the latter is at its ascendant, and in the house of its glory, then will the power of the star pour upon that image and it [the image] will speak and perform certain operations, and they are the *Teraphim*,¹⁰ which

are mentioned in the *Book of the Prophets*.¹¹ Likewise when a person prepares himself for that, for example to receive the power and the spiritual force of the planet Saturn, he would dress [in] black and he would wrap himself in black [clothes] and would cover the place he stood upon with black clothes and would eat things which increase the dark bile, which are under the dominion of Saturn¹² and he should smell things that are attributed to it and will compose of them a perfume to burn incense from the above-mentioned things so that the incense would rise to heaven to the above-mentioned planet, and the light of another planet would not intercede. Then the power and the spiritual force of the above-mentioned planet will pour upon the person. And this is the essence of the prophecy of the Ba'al and the prophets of Ashtoret and similar [phenomena].¹³

To be sure, this astro-magical practice is conceived of as a negative one. It contains few original elements, if any. Nevertheless, it points to the acquaintance of a distinguished intellect such as Maimon, a Jew living in the second part of the eighteenth century who moved from Lithuania to Berlin and later became an accomplished philosopher, with descriptions of astro-magical practices that were related to Saturn. Furthermore, this early passage of Maimon reflects the impact of followers of ibn Ezra, despite his famous allegiance to Maimonides, the sharpest critique of astro-magic. Therefore, in Western, Central and Eastern Europe, the conceptual structures related to Saturn discussed above were persisting in common knowledge long after the death of Sabbatai Tzevi.

Between Aby Warburg's School and Gershom Scholem's School

Now is the time to turn to the relationship between Saturn, melancholy and Jews in the twentieth century. First and foremost, I should point out that many of the studies used in the previous two chapters draw on the scholarship of Jewish scholars. This is obvious not only insofar as Gershom Scholem's outstanding monograph on Sabbatai Tzevi is concerned, but also thanks to the famous monograph on *Saturn and Melancholy* by the three Warburgian scholars Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, inspired and also sustained in their first steps in academe by Aby Warburg.¹⁴ A third book that belongs to the Saturnian scholarly constellation is Rudolph and Margot Wittkover's *Born Under Saturn*. Rudolf Wittkover was also associated with the Warburg Institute in Hamburg and then in London. Aby Warburg himself was preoccupied by this theme.¹⁵ Gershom Scholem, who personally knew some of those scholars and even visited the Warburg Institute in Hamburg twice,

has called their members one of the sects of German Jewry.¹⁶ He even testifies:

This circle was bound to raise my lively interest in the new perspectives which have been opened up there and which were to have momentous consequences. My own studies aroused great interest there from 1926 on, and after two visits to Hamburg, in 1927 and 1932, I established close scholarly contact and friendly relations with a number of scholars from this circle. For upwards of twenty-five years it consisted almost entirely of Jews whose Jewish intensity ranged from moderate sympathies to the point of zero or even below.¹⁷

Despite this rather strong declaration of mutual scholarly interest and friendship, neither Scholem nor his student Chaim Wirszubski (who was in close contact with some of the members of the Warburg Institute in London), not to mention others followers of Scholem who were much less concerned with European culture, capitalized in their studies on the new perspectives opened up by the Warburgian brand of scholarship. As we have seen, Scholem even described them as one of the three 'Jewish sects' that German Jewry produced.¹⁸ Surprisingly enough, in his academic writings Scholem ignored Aby Warburg's intellectual interests, and those of the three Warburgian scholars who treated the theme of melancholy so extensively from the first 1923 German version of their monograph until its publication in English in 1964, when he wrote his comprehensive study on Sabbatai Tzevi, while all the Warburgians with whose writings I am acquainted ignored the figure of Sabbatai Tzevi and its possible contribution to their monograph, which was re-edited twice after its initial publication. Moreover, in 1973, on the occasion of the publication of the translation of Scholem's monograph in English, Daniel P. Walker, a senior member of the Warburg Institute in London, wrote a fairly lengthy review of it, but again there was no hint of a connection between Sabbatai and Saturn.¹⁹ The second possible opportunity to link these two major contributions was the publication of the magisterial French translation of *Saturn and Melancholy*, supervised and significantly enriched by new material from Raymond Klibansky and printed by Gallimard in 1989, an edition which contains plenty of additional sources and images in comparison with the 1964 version. However, it does not contain a single mention of Scholem's *Sabbatai Sevi*, which had meanwhile been enlarged and magnificently translated into English by R. J. Zwi Werblowsky for its publication in 1973.

Nevertheless, it is not an exaggeration to say that the two monographs dealing with Saturnian and saturnine subjects are among the most

outstanding contributions to both Jewish and European studies on the part of scholars of Jewish extraction active in the twentieth century in this field. The Warburgian scholars dealt with Saturn and melancholy, while Scholem was for several decades quite intensively preoccupied with Sabbatai Tzevi, perhaps the most influential melancholic figure in Jewish culture. Moreover, if *Saturn and Melancholy* is the peak of research carried out at the Warburg Institute, *Sabbatai Sevi* is the peak of Scholem's academic enterprise, and Sabbateanism constitutes the topic of almost half of Scholem's scholarly writings. Thus, though thematically unaware of each other, the authors of the two monographs dealt brilliantly, and independently, with a conceptual structure *en vogue* in both the European world and in Jewish culture – two cultures that have been influenced by material that was transmitted by Arab authors, who in their turn capitalized on ideas current in pagan antiquity. The renewal of ancient mythologoumena related to Saturn assumed different forms in the medieval and pre-modern periods. In Christian Europe it was passed down through a long series of images, exemplified in the pictures attached to *Saturn and Melancholy*, particularly its French version (1989), and culminated in Albrecht Dürer's famous engraving *Melencolia I*. In some trends in Judaism, the Saturn mythologoumena were brought in to serve an understanding of classical Jewish values and ideals, like Sabbath and Messiah, and they created conceptual structures that reverberated in many instances (as seen above) and the discussion of which we will be expanding in the 'Concluding Remarks' below.

The non-encounter between the two extensive treatments of similar topics is a fascinating example of how fields of investigation in humanities can remain separate, with no cross-fertilization even when scholars claim to be in contact for many years.²⁰ By neglecting so many of the medieval and Jewish Renaissance discussions of the Saturn constellation of ideas, the Warburgian scholars impoverished the more complex picture of the links between Saturn and melancholy, which they otherwise so skilfully and eruditely delineated. As Yates so aptly recognized, one of the main weaknesses of the monograph *Saturn and Melancholy* is the ignorance of data found in Christian Kabbalah, especially the writings of Johannes Reuchlin and Henry Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim.²¹ I would add that much of the pertinent Jewish material discussed above was left out of this monograph. By ignoring the most important achievement of the Warburg school, the academic picture that Scholem offered of Sabbatai Tzevi lacks an interesting dimension that may explain not only his messianic and prophetic claims, but also something about the nature of his malady. I hope that the above chapters are a modest contribution to bringing together the more historically philologically oriented school of research

presided over by Gershom Scholem and adopted by his followers with the analysis of the mythological and cosmological imagery that was dominant in the Warburgian school of research, where magic and astrology played a much more central role.²²

On Some Elite Jews and Melancholy in the Twentieth Century

Beyond the common interest in Saturn figures, the two monographs mentioned above also deal with melancholy. It is this issue that should be put in the context of the scholars who generated their books: there was a melancholy mindset among Jews, especially in Central Europe, in the period between the two world wars. This is an issue that deserves more detailed analysis, and I shall try to provide a few examples. Let me start with Scholem himself. He wrote a very powerful (and in my opinion also quite emblematic) final stanza of a poem of 1933 that was related to a book by Walter Benjamin:

In days of old all roads somehow led
To God and to his name.
We are not devout. We remain in the Profane,
And where 'God' once stood, [now] Melancholy stands.²³

In contrast to the past, all roads now led – so Scholem declared in 1933 – to 'Melancholy' rather than to God. I would suggest that we pay particular attention to the substitution of God with Scholem's 'Melancholy', coming as it does from the pen of one of the most acute observers of all things to do with Judaism and its theology. Such a radical statement about melancholy as a form of hypostasis is, at the same time, a melancholic statement in itself. However, as towering a figure as Scholem undoubtedly was, and cogent as his formulation is, he was not alone in his sharp discernment of the reign of melancholy at that time. In fact, a variety of other creative geniuses among the Jews in that period were also interested in melancholy, or considered themselves as Saturnine and as belonging to the realm of the profane.

Closest to Scholem was Walter Benjamin, whose self-perception contributes to our topic. When writing of Paul Klee's famous painting *Angelus Novus*, which he was to describe elsewhere as the demonic and destructive angel of history,²⁴ Benjamin speaks of himself as follows – also in 1933, the same year that Scholem wrote the stanza above:

For in taking advantage of the circumstance that I came into the world under the sign of Saturn – the star of the slowest revolution, the planet of detours and delays²⁵ – he sent his feminine form

after the masculine one reproduced in the picture by way of the longest, most fatal detour even though both happened to be – only they did not know each other – most intimately adjacent to each other.²⁶

Saturn now is no more subordinated to a higher power, sefirotic of otherwise. It is simply the 'Lord' of Benjamin's nativity. Its sending two angels, one after another, is indeed an interesting idea, which may have something to do with the assumption that each of the planets has two angels, and Saturn, according to a tradition found in Yohanan Alemanno, has the angels Qaftziel and Hodiël.²⁷

I first propose to emphasize the obvious: the Angel of History, the term Benjamin gave to Klee's *Angelus Novus*,²⁸ is understood to be both Saturn (or sent by Saturn) and related to Benjamin himself. Hence we have an interpretive approach to the angel that deals both with a disastrous celestial power that destroys and with Saturn. From this point of view, Benjamin's description of the angel fits with the malign vision of Saturn in some of the texts mentioned above, and with the general manner in which the planet was described in scholarship as well. If the destructive aspect of the Angel of History that sees ruin is indeed indebted to Saturn, then we may attribute not only a clue as to his own identity to Benjamin's understanding of the planet but also something of the nature of history as seen by his eyes. Moreover, if the personal aspect is interpreted as referring to Benjamin's melancholy, then we have another attribute of Saturn included in this short passage: his being appointed over melancholy. Moreover, the reference to the feminine aspect emanating from the angel needs some form of clarification. In another context, when dealing with the *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin refers to the connection between melancholy and femininity:

according to the Western medical and philosophical tradition, the physiological state of disease is stubbornly linked with the figure of woman (whether as its cause or its icon), the often vague and contradictory symptomatology of melancholia is also what allows it to be manipulated ... in the creation of an elite psychological condition implicitly or explicitly associated with the genius of 'great men'.²⁹

Hence the dimension of the feminine as related to the angel, which should be understood as representing the melancholic aspect of the angel and his own. I wonder whether this gender vision of melancholy was not influenced by the Warburgian treatment of Dürer's etching,

though it is also reminiscent of the role played by Lilith, as related to Saturn, in the later layer of Zoharic literature, as seen in some examples in chapter 2 above.

Indeed, as Scholem has argued, there is some connection between the angel and melancholy: 'The angel, not yet sunk in melancholy as he was later to be, still speaks to both of us, joined in a common cause.'³⁰ I would suggest that this is quite an enigmatic statement: is he intimating that the angel became melancholic after not being so? In fact, it subsequently speaks to Scholem as a melancholic angel, though this does happen later. We might re-read Scholem's stanza quoted above and ask ourselves whether the 'melancholy' that replaced God was not actually a reference to Saturn, since the poem is explicitly related to Benjamin. Scholem's reification, or deification, of melancholy fits the Saturnian vision found in some of the medieval and pre-modern texts addressed in previous chapters.

There is a third important implication related to the angel. Before mentioning Saturn, Benjamin refers to the angel in the context of a revelation that he imagines is related to the secret Jewish name that parents give to their infant but disclose to their child only when it reaches maturity.³¹ I wonder whether this discussion of the name does not find an inverse parallel in Scholem's mention of the name of God in the poem cited above. Thus, in addition to being connected to the destructive aspect of history and to melancholy, the angel is also connected by Benjamin to Jewishness, just as Saturn was in the texts analysed above. Moreover, to follow Scholem's argument, the secret name is no other than 'Agesilaus Santander', which is an anagram of the letters '*Der Angel Satanas*', with which Benjamin presumably identified.³² Do the feminine and masculine angels constitute a reverberation of the themes of Satan and Lilith discussed above? This demonic understanding of the angel, who spreads ruin in history, is quite close to Scholem's vision of a demonic power that is responsible for Jewish history,³³ and is perhaps related to his propensity towards catastrophic vision, as pointed out by Harold Bloom.³⁴ In principle, Benjamin and Scholem are not so different from the medieval figures who regarded Saturn as the planetary genius of Israel.

Indeed, as has already been suggested, Benjamin's concern with and propensity for melancholy should be understood in the broader context of the Warburgian scholars, his Jewish contemporaries in Germany.³⁵ Beatrice Hanssen has drawn attention to this background, and if she is correct in her assumption as to the influence on Benjamin of the two Warburgian scholars writing on Saturn and melancholy (as I suspect she is), this is another example of the self-perception of a figure of the Jewish

elite, a person who was not acquainted with the earlier Jewish examples of Saturnine qualities discussed above or with Jewish material about Saturn. It seems that there were Jewish scholars who were also unacquainted with Jewish precedents who still passed down the mythologoumena that informed Benjamin. However, Benjamin, like the scholars who were the probable source of his inspiration, was less acquainted with Hebrew sources and did not know about the eschatological imagery identified with Saturn. Even though he speculated from time to time about the nature of messianism in his writings,³⁶ he did not declare himself to be a Messiah, though his enthusiastic intellectual followers in Europe and elsewhere today would certainly be ready to proclaim his messages as near-messianic in their revelation.

In any event, in Benjamin's case melancholy was not just an academic topic that had attraction for him or merely a form of self-perception. His tendency to suicide, which became apparent in 1932, culminated in a final (and successful) attempt in 1940. Both these examples demonstrate that in dealing with melancholy there was something much deeper at issue than literary conventions and clichés. Certainly, Scholem diagnosed his friend's melancholy in quite an explicit manner.³⁷

Before turning to other 'melancholics' from Scholem's circle, let me stress that my reading of Scholem's statements and the stanza from his poem together with Benjamin's words assumes that it is self-evident that two such close friends, who were constantly writing to each other, often dealing with similar issues (Klee's painting, for example) and citing one another in their work, should be read together. This seems particularly important given that the material was written in the same year, 1933. Hence the occurrence of themes related to Saturn and melancholy, which surfaced in the early 1930s in Scholem's circle in basically the same manner as they were reflected in the Warburgian scholars and Benjamin.³⁸

The fascination of both Benjamin and Scholem with Klee's *Angelus Novus* is part of what I would like to call the 'angelotropic turn': the fact that some individuals, unable to accept the existence of the divinity as part of a profound personal experience or to take on a totally atheistic worldview, turned to a metaphorical flirtation with angels. This angelotropic attitude is reflected in a series of books published between the world wars, such as Alter's *Necessary Angels* or Stephane Mósés's *Angel of History*. It seems that a saturnine temperament may trigger, or at least encourage, a Saturnian reading of history, but also that a Saturnian reading of history may facilitate the development of a saturnine temperament.³⁹

Scholem perceived melancholic propensities in three other cases in his immediate entourage. One of his best friends, the famous writer

S. Y. Agnon, was depicted by Scholem as living in his (Agnon's) youth 'in an atmosphere of loneliness, and not less of *Weltschmerz*, in a depression of sweet melancholy, which is fitting to sensitive young persons'.⁴⁰ Still in Germany, the physician and writer Werner Kraft who was later to become especially close to Scholem, was described as writing 'profoundly melancholy letters' in which the possibility that he might commit suicide was mildly suggested.⁴¹ Even the decidedly non-melancholic Zalman Rubashov (Shazar), another good friend of Scholem, was depicted as making a 'melancholic friendly gesture' when he accompanied Scholem to enlist in the German army.⁴² Thus, some of Scholem's closest friends in Germany were depicted by him as having melancholy propensities.⁴³ This begs the question of whether Scholem considered himself to be melancholic. So far, I have not found any such self-perception, but the verses quoted above about melancholy in lieu of God hold not only for Benjamin but also, at least potentially, for what Scholem believed (at least as a poet) in 1933. More recently, the concern with melancholy has also been evident in the philosophy of another distinguished contemporary and conversant of Benjamin's, Theodor W. Adorno.⁴⁴

The figures above constitute the second generation of Jewish melancholics in Central Europe. Other melancholics who are also well known and lived slightly earlier than this period are Sigmund Freud, Marcel Proust and, last but not least, Frank Kafka, as we learn from the latter's famous letter to his father.⁴⁵ Both Scholem and Benjamin admired Kafka greatly,⁴⁶ and Benjamin also wrote about Proust's melancholy.⁴⁷ In a letter to Scholem, Benjamin even described Kafka as an angel guarding his bed when he was sick.

In another instance, melancholy was considered to be almost congenital with Judaism, as claimed by the gifted Jewish-Romanian novelist and playwright Mihail Sebastian, the pen name of Joseph Hechter (1907–45). Writing in the late 1920s, he describes the 'very ancient melancholy' of the Jews,⁴⁸ while in his controversial 1934 novel dealing with two millennia of persecutions and suffering he refers repeatedly to the melancholy of the Jews and even considers them as possessed by 'a melancholy that cannot be healed'.⁴⁹ Sebastian was also a great admirer of Proust.

I have brought together the names of Jewish scholars, writers and cultural critics, and though some of them have written studies, essays or at least a poem about melancholy this does not necessarily entail that they were melancholics themselves – although some of them admittedly were. My intention here has been to emphasize the fact that the topic of melancholy remained high on the agenda of some sectors of the Jewish intelligentsia long after medieval beliefs in the astral order had dissipated among modern Jews, though not necessarily divorced from this nexus.⁵⁰

Between the two world wars, Saturn, the mythological source of melancholy, was removed from the theological constellation of Jews who imagined that they might have a saturnine temperament, but whose conception of that temperament was no longer related to the Saturnian aspects of the planet. Some, however, remained obsessed with one of the major influences this planet allegedly had on Jews. Was this, as Sebastian claimed, an incurable state of mind among some leading Jewish figures? Or had melancholy indeed taken the place of God, as Scholem so poetically claimed?

Being the anti-essentialist that I assume myself to be, I cannot answer those questions at all, since for me they represent a form of playful imagery.⁵¹ Presumably, more ordinary people as well as intellectuals are attracted by cultural images and may change their behaviour when they identify with cultural clichés. If I am right, the path of Tzevi's entire life is to be understood differently if we assume that he absorbed the content of Joseph Ashkenazi's writing as found in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* (discussed above), much as the course of Benjamin's life may be considered differently if we imagine that his self-perception as saturnine may have been related to the manner in which he died.

As someone who has read a great deal about Saturn and melancholy over several decades and has also on occasion written on these subjects, I was born in the month of January, under the so-called aegis of Saturn, in a province that was considered by some Romanians as melancholic par excellence –Moldavia.⁵² In addition, I was Jewish. As such, I may add my modest testimony to the meaning of the Saturn-Judaism nexus: I see the above statements as no more than simple reverberations of an ancient Greek myth or a cliché that has been passed down from generation to generation or, to use a phrase that is reminiscent of the title of one of Aby Warburg's studies, as a quite modest 'renewal of pagan antiquity' which may help some thinkers who need it to reflect on their existential situation in a way similar to that of medieval Jews. The 'existence' and 'co-existence' of all the three classical 'characteristics' of melancholy in my biography – a special time: January, place: a melancholy province; and Jewishness – did not, however, transform me into a melancholic, either because I proved an exception to the rule or, and this seems to me to be much more plausible, because even in the past these connections never really worked in reality. My assumption is that they are mainly cultural constructs which some people choose to believe in and even internalize as cultural inertia or fashion. Sometimes they might be linked to innate predispositions, but in my opinion these do not reflect a natural type of astral causality.

For some other Jews, however, this is one more instance of *imaginaire* they have acquired from their cultural environment, in which the

performance of the Jewish rituals demanded some form of rationale, as was the case in the Middle Ages. In modern times, when those rituals lost their spell, other forms of identity were gained, as in, for example, the recognition of melancholy or a saturnine temperament as signs of Jewish identity.⁵³ As in the case of Sabbatai Tzevi's behaviour, it may be described (at least in this writer's opinion) as an internalization of saturnine features – something that also seems to be the case with other twentieth-century figures. In saying this I have no intention of denigrating the importance of possible innate predispositions towards melancholy or depression in some individuals, but I also assume that cultural encounters and textual impact could also play their part in modifying a person's behaviour.

Will the more recent resurgence of interest in astrology in general, including in Israel, also trigger a return of the identification of Jews with Saturn in our present century? If one were to give credence to the warnings of an international health organization, then depression – a form of melancholia – will become the dominant malaise in the very near future, second only to illnesses related to heart disease.⁵⁴

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Concluding Remarks

Let me survey briefly the literatures and authors discussed above: Abraham bar Hiyya, Abraham ibn Ezra and his many interpreters, the kabbalists such as Joseph Ashkenazi and Abraham Abulafia, and those who took up and continued their line of thought, Bahya ben Asher, the later layer of Zoharic literature, especially *Sefer ha-Temunah* and *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, Yohanan Alemanno, Joseph ibn Tzayyah, Moshe Cordovero, Abraham Yagel, Sabbatai Tzevi and his followers, as well as Walter Benjamin – these are the most important names that recur in the chapters above. They all mentioned the planet Saturn by name, whether in Hebrew, Aramaic or German and for all of them its attributes, for better or for worse, constitute a significant challenge. This is the reason why I proposed above to resort to the term ‘Saturnism’ as a dimension of medieval Judaism, either shaping the identity of some Jews or by provoking a reaction against it presented as if the rituals of Sabbath represent an anti-Saturnian form of activity. If my proposal, to see an implementation of the changes in religion connected to the Messiah and to the influence of Saturn in the measures introduced by Sabbatai Tzevi in rabbinic Judaism, is correct, the amplitude of Saturnism is much greater than is speculated in many books. This is also the case with the great Moses Maimonides, whose crusade against astro-magic (albeit without singling out Saturn as a major target of his critique) fills many of the pages of his books. Astro-magic was indubitably a foil for his intellectualistic picture of what he conceived of as the true religion. I would include in this reaction against Saturnism even some forms of early Kabbalah, such as the book of *Bahir* and the Geronese Kabbalah, or the Kabbalistic writings of Joseph Gikatilla and Moshe de Leon, as well as most of the writings of Lurianic Kabbalah, as attempts to retreat from the various forms of Saturnization of Judaism. I mention these retreats so as to lend the right proportions to the phenomena discussed above: just as early Judaism, biblical, rabbinic, Heikhalot literature and early Jewish magical literature¹ may be understood without resorting to the conceptual structures related to Saturn, so we may understand other forms of Judaism, philosophical and Kabbalistic and even more so the continuation of rabbinic literature, without even mentioning the name Sabbatai/Saturn.

Though they deal with some stereotypes inherited from late antiquity appropriated and then elaborated by medieval Jews, who borrowed them

from their gentile predecessors, the chapters above are not only concerned with the history of astrological ideas or concepts that merely migrated from one book to another. My assumptions are that the concatenations between some of these ideas and Jews, albeit imaginary connections, operated in the historical arena in a rather substantial manner. In fact, the transition from one period, that of Arab astrology, to the Christian territories was accompanied by an enrichment in the texture of the themes in which Jews were instrumental. The earlier, shorter, texts about Saturn became longer with time, as the passages of Joseph Ashkenazi, Yohanan Alemanno and Abraham Yagel demonstrate. If the image of the Jews as sorcerers and the concept of the Sabbat are indebted to the Saturnian constellation of ideas, and if Sabbatai Tzevi turned saturnine due to his acquaintance with the messianic interpretation of the role of Saturn, as I have proposed above, a more wide-ranging observation as to the meaning of the writing of history is called for. None of the two connections were systemic developments, but they appeared because of the exposure of a small sector of the Jewish elite to material articulated in non-Jewish environments. These connections could never have surfaced before their adoption by Jews. However, after they emerged, their dissemination and reception were related to various historical developments, the effect of the Black Death in the late fourteenth century or the changing situation of the Jews in the mid seventeenth century, as well as the proliferation of interest in melancholy among wider audiences in Europe in the twentieth century.

If I am right, the developments mentioned above are not part of a grand narrative forged by scholars who bring together different events from periods of history, but the product of much smaller units, whose causality is related to more subjective moments that are far more intimate and rather more closely related to instances of misunderstanding. Not that I assume the grand narratives are not based upon misunderstandings, but this is a topic I cannot address here.

Thus, the astrological element in Sabbateanism is both a continuation of a much older, astrological theme which did not play a significant role in rabbinic Judaism but was emphasized in some medieval elites. In the seventeenth century, however, there was also a new development related to the self-perception of a major figure, stemming from a misunderstanding of the planet Sabbatai referring to a human being, the Messiah, understood to be Tzevi himself. There is also the application of the term 'Sabbath', a Jewish feast, to the 'Sabbat of the witches', which can only be understood as a historical misunderstanding on the part of those who created the ritual of the witches' Sabbat, whose details stem only to a small extent from material related to Saturn. In other words, my approach is that of a much less historicist type of history. Though I do not

argue that this should always be the way to write history, I am nevertheless convinced that this is one of the most helpful ways of understanding personalities who played a major role in changing the course of history. Indeed, I wonder if a history that assumes that people are motivated by a proper understanding of books, facts or persons is a more adequate one than a history that presupposes misunderstandings in these matters. Perhaps a history based on misunderstandings in the past is a more intelligible history than one that attributes overmuch understanding to its protagonists. Moreover, in cases when the transmission of ideas is in question, the factor of misunderstanding is inherent in the very transition of information from one cultural centre to another, and certainly from one language to another. In our case, the Hellenistic sources of disdain towards Jews have been assimilated in astrological treatises by Muslim authors, and imported into Judaism by Jews who certainly did not set out to hurt other Jews. However, if my analysis in chapter 1 is correct, in spite of themselves, they turned out to be agents of the dissemination of anti-Jewish motifs when their views, based on clichés, were applied to a cult that had nothing to do with Judaism, namely one that practised some form of sorcery during the Sabbath. In fact, cultural transmission is bound often to create misunderstandings, sometime quite 'fertile' ones given the decontextualization of some themes and their usage in new contexts, a process that amounts to their reconceptualization.

Let me turn now to a subject that is worth summarizing and even slightly elaborating. Reconceptualizations were discussed above as being the result of new concatenations that emerged within Jewish circles, though the sources of the trigger themes were external: the astrological theories about Saturn as reinterpreted in Kabbalistic contexts. This process can also be discerned in the case of some concepts in philosophy that have been reinterpreted theosophically: for example, the Agent Intellect, the concept of *'Ayin*, Nihil or *in actu* and *in potentia*. The import of the new form of order was significant, not only because it had been adopted, but much more because it was adapted and elaborated. Either through reinterpretation of the qualities of Saturn/Sabbath as an explanation of the significance of the details of the Sabbath commandments or by connecting Sabbatai as a Messiah to specific Jewish figures, the astrological scheme was enriched by resorting to the strategy of concatenation. It is the conceptual addition that is an integral part of the process of adaptation that ultimately created the developments discussed above, not the simple act of adoption alone. Though indubitably quintessential for the emergence of those new developments, the very process of import alone would not be able to impress many Jews; neither would the themes related to Saturn be connected with central Jewish values

such as Sabbath and Messiah. Though cosmic, and to a certain extent also magical, those Graeco-Hellenistic universalistic themes were turned into indicators of particular Jewish practices and aspirations. The various forms of the Judaization of Saturn are therefore among the main clues for understanding the fascinating avatars that constitute the career of this Greek mythologoumenon in the tents of Shem. In our case, we witness an interesting example of the implicit rejection of a rabbinic statement to the effect that the nation of Israel is not presided over by any sign of the zodiac. In more general terms, this is an example of the ascent of the importance of a secondary elite that is capable of introducing important innovations that do not resonate with the main gist of rabbinic culture, an issue to which we shall refer immediately below. In other words, the secondary elite introduced a strong intercorporal hermeneutics.

However, it is not only the Judaization of the Greek themes that constitutes the reason for the impact they had on some figures in Judaism. Concatenation is at the same time an enrichment of the earlier material, which is in alignment with new themes, and thus it has a better chance of attracting additional thinkers who are concerned with more complex forms of thought. In other words, the profound phenomenological differences between the Graeco-Hellenistic and the rabbinic cultures, which consist in the refusal of rabbinic figures to adopt and cultivate the Greek philosophical and scientific modes of writing, were attenuated by a long series of syntheses. In fact this synthetic mode of discourse, which began in late antiquity with Philo of Alexandria, and subsequently assumed a variety of forms, not only shaped the religious structure of nascent Christianity, but also a long series of phenomena that constitute the main aspects of European culture, which includes both its more positive and negative aspects.

This was also the case with Judaism. The installation of Saturn as the planet imagined as being appointed over the Jews as a nation and its various reverberations are some of the less anticipated variations of the vast range of Graeco-Jewish syntheses. These syntheses of the worldview of the Hebrew Bible with that of Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* created Jewish Saturnism, a mentality based on the characteristics of the planet as set out in astrological books, but coupled with a more particularistic emphasis related to values in Judaism. In this context, misunderstanding can be among the most intellectually fertile processes, characteristic of a continent that hosted so many diverging and interacting cultures. However, in order to discern the nature of those misunderstandings, a correct understanding of the misunderstood passages or themes is necessary first, which means that significant philological work should be carefully invested before proclaiming the importance of a misunderstanding.

In this way, cultural fortuities and intellectual misunderstandings should be counted among the most powerful triggers which changed the religious and intellectual landscape of Europe and in some cases also the course of Jewish history. Many of the above discussions are commentaries on *Sefer Yetzirah*, where the brief mention of Saturn attracted many treatments related to this planet that otherwise would not have occurred. The spread of the concept of melancholy in many circles in the sixteenth century is just one European example.² Who could ever have predicted that among medieval Jews, some would prove ready to sacrifice themselves and their families in order to prevent baptism,³ while others would adopt motifs related to a cruel, sinister, often bloody Greek god who devours his own children as the overlord appointed on their nation without any discernible pressure coming from outside?⁴ The type of history that I have tried to advance above is strongly contingent and related to accidents, especially when it is connected to the primacy of an internal experience as a major trigger for someone's decision to believe that he is a Messiah that is later transformed into becoming a Messiah publicly.⁵ At the same time, it is hard to ignore the persistence of the mythologoumena discussed above from late antiquity to inter-war Germany in such a great variety of sources, across different cultures and diverse cultural environments. This is indubitably facilitated by the wide range of qualities attributed to the planet, which has drawn the interest of philosophers, astronomers, astrologers, kabbalists, physicians and eschatologically oriented authors as well as those interested in the events of history and the characters of men, including, later on, a variety of artists and even a distinguished critique of culture such as Walter Benjamin. Thus what I propose is to adopt a vision of history that assumes a variety of different concomitant currents, simultaneously overlapping and contending, a vision that also suggests a certain historical phenomenon may be quite complex and might be at an intersection of more than one cultural development. I would refer to the concept of 'colligation', which means that in order to understand a certain historical event, it is necessary to locate it in its context by mentioning other events with which it is bound up.⁶

The multifarious nature of Saturn, more than that of other planets, therefore attracted a much wider audience and for centuries was able to persist in a more or less metaphorical manner in terms like 'saturnine'. Sectors of the intellectual elite who adopted Saturnian qualities as relevant for understanding Judaism were attracted by some of the qualities they were imagined to secure: depth of wisdom and the knowledge of secrets. It should be pointed out that unlike the more widespread astral myths and the rituals related to them, namely the solar, the lunar or the Mercurian mythologies, Saturnian mythology is related to a far less

visible planet, and thus connected to a more elitist vision of reality. From many points of view it is less related to rituals,⁷ the Sabbath being one of the few rituals attributed to the ancient Jews as worshippers of Saturn. In any case, it is fascinating to observe that descriptions of Jews in late antiquity as worshippers of Saturn, extant since Tacitus (though probably wrong or statistically speaking negligible, and so far certainly difficult to substantiate historically), are far more pertinent in the case of some Spanish and Italian Jews in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance period.

To sum up, the passages discussed above show that an understanding of developments in the metamorphoses of a theme in Europe is much richer if the Jewish materials are also taken into consideration.⁸ Fascinatingly enough, the cultural history of Europe, though written about since the inter-war period by several prominent Jewish authors, has been presented as if the Jews themselves were an unimportant factor, when in fact they were the opposite, not just in cultural transmission but also as independent thinkers, whose works and misunderstandings could affect some significant cultural developments in Europe. Examples include the Jewish translators at the court of Alfonso Sabio, and other Jews who served as teachers of prominent Christian authors, such as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Johann Reuchlin. Though this tendency to suppress the possible Jewish contribution is understandable on the part of Jewish authors writing in the inter-war period and aspiring to build their academic careers in one of the Central European universities, the approach still lingers on even in our times.

Some developments in Judaism are also better understood if we take into serious consideration the wider background of Muslim, European or any other relevant culture. The passages discussed above which stem from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries seem to parallel the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Renaissances.⁹ Last but not least, astrology, like magic, is not an isolated form of knowledge expressed in its own discrete literature, but an alternative that was open to a variety of elite figures, philosophers, kabbalists and Messiahs, who were inspired by the themes it discusses.¹⁰ This means that a much more interdisciplinary approach that takes into consideration topics that cross different types of literatures will better reflect the dynamic of historical development than a unilinear approach that focuses on one type of literature.¹¹

It is obvious that astrological speculations contributed to the mythopoesis of Kabbalah far more than is acknowledged by the extant studies. Myths of the utopian-messianic Golden Ages and of changes of religion, on the one hand, and visions of predetermination, darkness, almost cursed individuals and some form of damnation of the Jews as a nation, on the other, together with assumptions about the extraordinary

powers of the Saturnians and Saturnines, intellectual and magical respectively, are the strongest expressions we may find in the better-known Kabbalistic mythologoumena. However, this does not diminish the inner developments of rabbinic myths and their impact on Kabbalah.¹² These were an important additional source of inspiration for some medieval Jewish myths, rather widespread in the Middle Ages, about the nature of the people of Israel and their practices, especially on the Sabbath, an inspiration that was nevertheless marginalized in scholarship but which had significant effects on Kabbalistic thought in either a positive or a negative way.

Last, but not least, the introduction of astral mythologoumena, with its Saturnian vision of religion, in my opinion contributed to the emergence of a variety of anomian and antinomian visions in Kabbalah.¹³ Some of the authors mentioned above, such as Abraham Abulafia and the writers of the later layer of Zoharic literature, *Sefer ha-Qanah* and *ha-Peliy'ah*, who were acquainted with and resorted to astrology, can be considered to display an uneasiness with some aspects of rabbinic Judaism. Though each of these kabbalists is a complex thinker, and reducing the definition of his approach to the impact of astrology would be a dramatic simplification, I see in the Saturnian elements as adopted or imposed on Judaism the seeds of further development in their thought, which also draw from other important sources. First and foremost, we have seen that flexibility in theosophical and astrological forms of order invited the idea of change in the Torah, or what may be called Torah-mutability.¹⁴ This idea stems from the theory of *conjunctio maxima*, which appears many times in Jewish thought, as we have seen above. It has also been connected to another astrological concept of the cosmic cycles, the *Shemittot* and *Yovelim*, which assumes drastic changes in the law that will preside over the other cycles. This is implicit in Joseph Ashkenazi's use of the term *dinim*, while in *Sefer ha-Temunah* and in *Sefer ha-Qanah* and *Peliy'ah* the theory of dramatic change is quite explicit, and the latter books had a direct impact on Sabbateanism. Other kabbalists, especially the ones from Safed, recognized these theories' antinomian potential and restricted recourse to them, as did Moshe Cordovero,¹⁵ or rejected them outright, as did Isaac Luria and many of his followers. From this point of view, Sabbateanism does not continue the much more cautious and conservative approach of the Safedian masters. These forms of antinomianism were coupled with other tendencies, such as the intellectual antinomianism inherent in the exaltation of intellectual activity as the highest form of religious worship that was implied by Maimonides' philosophical thought, or the vision of an ideal Torah, *Torah de-'Atzilut*, related to the realm of the divine world, suggested in

the later Zoharic layer.¹⁶ Thus, I would say that it is hard to presuppose the existence of pure forms of antinomianism which are not in alignment with some form of positive or negative Saturnism.¹⁷

In the seventeenth century, when the anti-Ptolemaic ideas of Copernicus gained more and more ground in Judaism, especially in Sabbateanism, Ptolemy's astrology, based on geocentrism, reached the height of its influence, rendering it problematic for both conservative rabbinic Judaism and the possibility of integrating Jews in the new scientific worldview. Or to formulate the above remarks in a different manner, the ascent of a new, secondary elite, constituted by figures such as Abraham bar Hiyya, Abraham ibn Ezra, Abraham Abulafia, Joseph Ashkenazi, the anonymous author of *Tiqqunei Zohar* and *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, Yohanan Alemanno and Abraham Yagel, who adopted and adapted Saturnism, created a new situation in which the rabbinic elite, or the first elite, could no longer manage to control the content and distribution of new forms of knowledge that Jews introduced into Judaism and interpreted accordingly. The new views differed from both the rabbinic approaches and also from Maimonides' sharp critique of astrology. Therefore, Sabbatai Tzevi is only the most important representative of a much longer list of thinkers who were able to impose a new agenda that had antinomian overtones.

In the next stage, exemplified by Franz Kafka, Walter Benjamin and, to a certain extent, Scholem, the issue was less about antinomianism, but rather about indifference towards rabbinic law, the assumption that it is not a revealed type of religious instruction or the 'interpretation of the inaudible pronunciation', i.e. a silent revelation.¹⁸

However, great as the role that I attribute to the ascent of the secondary elites in shaping and changing the content of Judaism may be,¹⁹ let me also emphasize what seems to be its corollary: the secondary elites were also dominated, perhaps even obsessed by, the forms of knowledge they imported. For instance, Sabbatai Tzevi was much less of a revolutionary than he is imagined to be, but he was the most important example of Saturnism: someone who read a scenario that had been circulating for centuries in Judaism and who, because of his proper name and his innate disposition (his personality, we might call it), internalized some of its elements and played them out on the stage of history.²⁰ To be sure, external circumstances have their role in selecting what will or will not become more widespread and accepted. Moreover, without the prior widespread popular belief in, and aspiration for, redemption in its personal messianic form, the secondary elite would not have been able to circulate its visions to a wide audience creating what I propose to call the 'messianic pyramid'.²¹ Thus the conjunctures of the historical scene

indubitably dictate the processes of dissemination and work as a selective grid. Selection, however, is not the most creative of the processes that organize knowledge.

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Appendix

I adduce below the Hebrew versions of the seminal passage by Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi on the planet Saturn found in his *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, and its reverberation in the anonymous *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*. This is one of two significant discussions of Saturn in the work of Joseph Ashkenazi; the second will shortly be discussed at the end of the Appendix. My main purpose here is to make available the most important texts on which I have relied in my analyses and, more specifically, to point out the differences between the two versions of the passage, as well as to analyse the meaning of the changes found in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*. English translations of most of the text are to be found in chapters 1 and 2, and more are offered below. Here the reader may see the original Hebrew texts of the translated passages in their wider context. From the general literature about Saturn with which I am acquainted, the two Hebrew passages that follow are among the longest discussions of the negative qualities of this planet, listing a variety of malign and malicious aspects, which in some cases appear twice, probably as part of a careless fusion of elements from two different though nevertheless similar lists that were known to Joseph Ashkenazi. I assume that one of them was related to the list of Abu Ma'shar.¹ The passage by Joseph Ashkenazi shows that material additional to that known in Hebrew literature until the late thirteenth century, especially from the writings of ibn Ezra, most probably stemming from Arabic sources, had an impact on his views.

Let me point out that the two books from which the excerpts below are cited are not found in critical editions, and there can be no doubt that the two passages contain some mistakes, which I have attempted to correct on the basis of manuscripts and which I discuss in the attached footnotes. My thesis as discussed above is that it is the passage as it is found in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* that should be considered Tzevi's primary source, and I shall highlight below the differences between it and its own source. The additions to be found only in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* are in bold text.²

ספר הפליאה⁴

פירוש ספר יצירה של ר' יוסף בן שלום אשכנזי³

[A] ומהם מקבלים ז' ככבי לכת ר"ל ז' כוכבי לכת

[A] פרק ה, מ"ה: 'כיצד

מקבלים מאב"ג ית"ץ צרף מ'ב אותיות ומהם בא הכח

והשימוש בז' ימים ומהם מקבלים ז' שערים שבאדם ר"ל

המליך אות ב' בחיים וקשר לו כתר וצר בו כוכב שבתי בעולם ויום ראשון בשנה ועין ימין בנפש ר"ל שהעלה את הבי"ת להיות ראש בכח כתר עליון⁷ ושם בו החכמה⁸ וצר בו כוכב שבתי אשר מתחת לשם אבגית"ץ והוא הוא אשר מסר חכמה לשבתי.

א"ל⁹ אדונינו: אמור לנו שבתי הוא כוכב של חורבן ולמה יתחכם באב"ג ית"ץ. **א"ל אע"פ** ששבתי הוא כוכב של חורבן בשמיטות¹⁰ 'ש בו כח החכמה ולהיותו ממונה על חורבן לפי שאינו חפץ בענין מעניני הגוף ולפיכך מחריבין ואינו משגיח בהן ולא בקשטון אלא על השכלים הפשוטים הם הספירות¹² והשגת השי"ת. ומשבתי מגיע כח לשרים המבטלים אברי האדם כמו חרשים ועורים¹⁴ וחגרים וסומים וחסרי דעת. **א"ל אדונינו שבתי מקבל מאב"ג ית"ץ** והוא ממונה על החכמה, א"כ איך יצאו ממנו חסרי דעת? כי אדרבא חכמים צריכין לצאת ממנו, א"ל¹⁶ חסרי הדעת מעניני עוה"ז כמוהו אבל נוסף בהם כח נבואה¹⁷ וחכמה לדעת חכמות שלא מעניני עוה"ז, הוא שארז"ל משחרב בית המקדש נתנה הנבואה לטוטים¹⁹ ולתינוקות, וגם היותו ממונה על החלאים והמות ובית הסוהר והדלות והקלון והחרפה מזה העולם, ועל כל עיכוב, ועל היות בו חכמה ממונה על הדינים ועל הבנינים.

[B] בהצטרפו עם שם הוי"ה המורה על חידוש השמיטות, ולהיותו נסתר מורה על כל דבר נסתר כמו על הקרקעות והמטמונות. ולהיותו בשביעי אחרית כל הכוכבים מורה אחרית כל דבר והזקנים, ולהיותו ממונה על החכמה דעת ממונה על היהודים וע"כ הם בצרה בזה העולם. וממונה על העבדים בארצות הכושים. ולהיותו בשמיטה מבטל כל העסקים ומלאכות, ולהיותו מסולק מזה העולם מורה על הדאגה ועל הטינוף בני אדם במעשיהם בבגדיהם ובדבורם, **וזה כוכב שבתי יגיד** על דבר שחור וירידה ממעלות הכבוד והגדולה שבו הם הממונים²⁵ והפקידים, גם מורה על ספנים ומלחים ביים, ואבדה גם

המליך אות ב' בחיים וקשר לו כתר וצר בו שבתי בעולם ויום ראשון בשנה ועין ימין בנפש ר"ל שהעלה את הבי"ת להיות ראש בכח כ"ע ושם בו כח החכמה וצר בו כוכב שבתי אשר מתחת לשם אבגית"ץ והוא הוא אשר מסר חכמה לשבתי.

אע"פ ששבתי הוא כוכב עלחורבן בסוד השמיטות יש בו כח החכמה. וטעם להיותו ממונה על חורבן לפי שאינו חפץ בענין מעניני הגוף לפיכך מחריבין ואינו משגיח בהם ולא בקשטון אלא עלהשכלים הפשוטים ועל השגת השם ית' ועל השגת השביעיות¹¹

וממנו כח המגיע לשדים¹³ המבטלים אברי האדם כמו הנכפים ובעלי הפליגה הקטן והגדול וחסרי הדעת. וא"ת אם הוא ממונה על החכמה, א"כ איך יצאו ממנו חסרי הדעת? ביאור, חסרי הדעת בעניני העולם הזה אמנם נוסף בהם כח נבואי כמו שארז"ל¹⁵ מיום שחרב בית המקדש ניתנה נבואה לטוטים ולתינוק ולתינוקות ועיין במסכת בבא בתרא. וזהו סוד היותו ממונה על החלאים והמות ובית הסוהר¹⁸ והדלות והקלון והחרפה מזה העולם, ועל כל עיכוב²⁰, ולהיות בו החכמה הוא ממונה על הדינים²¹ ועל הבנינים.

[B] בהצטרפו עם שם הוי"ה²² המורה על חידוש השמיטות, ולהיותו נסתר מורה על כל דבר נסתר כמו הקרקעות²³ והמטמונות. ולהיותו בשביעי אחרית כל הכוכבים מורה על אחרית כל דבר ועל הזקנים, ולהיותו ממונה על החכמות והדעות ממונה על היהודים לפיכך הם בצרה בזה העולם. וממונה על העבדים בארצות הכושים. ולהיותו בשמיטה מבטל כל העסקים ומלאכות. ולהיותו מסולק מן זה העולם מורה על הדאגה²⁴ ועל טינופי בני אדם במעשיהם ובבגדיהם ובדבורם, ויגיד על דבר שחור וירידה ממעלות הכבוד והגדולה ולו הם המוכסים והפקידים. ויורה על ספנים והמיית הים

<p>יורה על חטה ושעורה ועל אבני דומם, יורה על עצבות וחושך.</p>	<p>ואבידה. יורה על חיטה ושעורה ועל אבני דומם, יורה על עצות רעות ועל חשך.</p>
<p>יורה על עומק המחשבות ועל עצלות ועל שוחות וקברי מתים, יורה על מחנות גדולות ועל מחנות אויבים ועל השלוחים ועל הספינות ועל התנורים ורחיים ואשפות ועל הניספים במלחמה ועל גנבים ועל חתורי בתים²⁶ ועל חכמת הכשפים ולדעת העתידות ועל השפלות ועל הזול בסחורה ועל החרטה ועל שהוא מאמין בפיו ואינו מאמין בלבו. ועל חוגף ורמאות</p>	<p>יורה על עומק המחשבות ועל עצלות ועל חשך ועל שוחות²⁶ וקברות מתים, יורה על מחנות גדולות ועל מחנות אויבים ועל השלוחים ועל הספינות ועל תנורים ורחיים ואשפות ועל הרדופים במלחמה ואל האסירים²⁷ ועל הגנבים ועל סותרי בתים ועל חכמת הכשפים ולדעת העתידות ועל השפלות וזול בסחורה ועל החרטה ועל שהוא מאמין בפיו ואינו מאמין בלבו²⁸ ועל חגף והרמאות</p>
<p>וחורבן ומדבר יערים וריב ופרצה ורעב ועיני ומבקשי פת לחם ועל מיתות החולים והעבדים והשמעות רעות והיאוש, ועל פסחים ועל עורין ומכוערין ועל תוחלת ממושכה.</p>	<p>וחורבן מדבר יערים והרים ופרידה ורעב ועיני ומבקשי פת לחם ועל מיתות החולים והעבדים והשמעות הרעות והיאוש, ועל פסחים ועל עורים³⁰ וכופרים³¹ ועל תוחלת ממושכה ועל תנאים ועל המשכון.</p>
<p>ועל היותו ממונה על המות בעבור שהוא ממונה על השמיטות וידוע כי החלאים משתנות והוא המשנה כי משנה ומחליף כדין בני חלון, שהיא המורידים בגלגול³³</p>	<p>אמנם היותו ממונה על המות הוא בסוד השמיטות וידוע כי החלאים הוא השתנות המזגים לפיכך בסודו סוד החלאים כי הוא משנה ומחליף בדין בני חלון³²</p>
<p>כל העניינים הנמצאים ומחסרם לפי חסרון הממון הממון וחסרון הכבוד ברשותו. ולהיות תנועתו באיחור מורה על כל עיכוב, ולהיותו עליון לששה³⁴ כוכבים מורה על הדינים.</p>	<p>כל העניינים הנמצאים ומחסרם לפי שחסרון הממון וחסרון הכבוד ברשותו. ולהיות תנועתו באיחור מורה על כל עיכוב, ולהיותו עליון לז' כוכבים מורה על הדינים.</p>
<p>ובהצטרפו בשם הויה מורה על כל ההתחדשות ההיות ובנינים, ולאחור תנועתו מורה על כל דבר כבד בלתי מתנועע כמו הקרקעות וכל דבר שנסתר ועל כל מטמון וחסירות ובורות ושיחין ומערות וקברות.</p>	<p>ובהצטרפו בשם ההויה מורה התחדשות ההיות והבנינים, ולאחור תנועתו מורה על כל דבר כבד בלתי מתנועע כמו הקרקעות³⁵ וכל דבר שנסתר ועל כל מטמון וחסירות ובורות ושיחין ומערות³⁶ וקברות.</p>
<p>ולהיותו אחרית הז' כוכבי לכת מורה על כל דבר אחרית ועל סוף כל דבר והזקנה. וידוע לכם שהבינה היא שביעת מלמטה למעלה ומקבלת מן החכמה ומכתר עליון ולפיכך הוא ממונה מן החכמה על ישראל. הבינה נותנת חכמה</p>	<p>ולהיותו אחרית הז' כוכבים מורה על כל דבר אחרית וסוף כל דבר וזקנה. וידוע כי הבינה הוא ז' ממטה ולמעלה ומקבלת מן החכמה וכ"ע ולפיכך הוא ממונה על החכמה ועל ישראל³⁷ והבינה ירב</p>
<p>לחכמים ודעת לידועי בינה והיא מגלה עמוקים וסתומים וידוע מה 'בחשוכא ונהורא עמיה שריה', והוא מעמיד מלכין והוא מורידן.</p>	<p>חכמתה לחכמיין ומנדעא לידועי בינה והוא גלא עמיקתא ומסחרתא ידע מה בחשוכא ונהורא עמיה שרא, והוא מעדה מלכין ומהקם מלכין³⁸</p>
<p>[C] ולהיותו מסתכל בידיעת העליונים ולא מרגיש בגנות ובבזיונות ובטינופי³⁹ ובמעשים ובדיבור</p>	<p>[C] ולהיותו מסתכל בידיעת העליון ולא ירגיש בגנות ובבזיונות ובטינופי³⁹ ובמעשים ובדיבור</p>

[D] ולהיותו מורה על כובד מורה על אופל ועל כל דבר שחור ועל מרה שחורה ועל אבני דומם וחשוך ואפילה ועלטה ועל חתורי בתים וגנבים ושפלות וחרטה ועל מי שסר מדיבורו לאחור ואינו מקיים. וחורבן ומדבר ושממה והרים ופרידה ושמועות רעות. וכל זה לפי שאינו משים השגחתו ושכלו רק לשכלים של מעלה ממנו ולפיכך הוא מורה על עמקי המחשבות והחכמות. זה הכלל כל מלאכה שתשוב לפעמים לאחור כמו הספינות פעם ילכו ופעם יעמדו ופעם ישובו לאחור וכן התגורר פעם יחס ופעם ישוב לקר וכיוצא באלו כוכב שבתי ממונה עליהם. ולפי שהוא ממונה על ההתמדה לפיכך כשיגיע עלייתו לא ירד עולמית שנאמר 'ונחה עליו רוח ה' רוח חכמה ובינה' והבינוכי הוא סוד משיח ה'.

ולהיות הבינה משותפת מכל שכל ואצילות שש קצוות לפיכך יש בה שני פעולות בעת שמתדבק בעליונים הנה חורבה למטה. ובעת שמתדבק בו' קצוות הנה בנייה מתחדשים.

[E] והוא⁴³ הוא הגורם להעלות למעלה, ולהיות שש קצוותהם ישראל שאינם עוסקים בתורה אשר היא מלאה חכמה לכן כוכב שבתי אשר הוא תחת אב"ג ית"ץ המתחבר עם בראשית ממונה על ישראל, וכוכב שבתי מואס תענוגי עולם השפל כי הבל המה ועוסק לדעת חכמה שלמעלה ממנה וישראל מחוייבים לעשות כמוהו ואינם עושים ולכן מסתלקת הבינה והולכת בעליונים ושש קצוות הנקראים ישראל יפלו ברעה הוא הפחד. ואז אוי לישראל שנפל בסח ומפסיד במה שהשתדל בתענוגי עולם וגופו, ונפשו נאבד.

[F] ולכן כל עליותו של ישראל אינו אלא ממצות ולא ממלחמה כי לא בחרב ולא בחנית יושיע⁴⁶ ה' שהוא הבינה, ומיד שמסתלקין מן המצות מיד מסתלק מהם הבינה וירדו עד תכלית הירידה. זהו 'אם בחקתי תלכו וגו'

[D] ולהיותו מורה על כובד מורה על הבדיל³⁸ ועל כל דבר שחור ועל מרה שחורה ועל אבני דומם וחשוך ואפלה ועלטה ועל חתורי בתים ועל גנבים ושפלות וחרטה ועל מי שסר לאחור בדברו ואינו מקיים. וחורבן ומדבר ושממה וערים והרים ופרידה ושמועות רעות. וכל זה לפי שאינו משים השגחתו רק לשכלים של מעלה ממנו ולפיכך הוא מורה על עמקי המחשבות והחכמות. זה הכלל כל מלאכה שתשוב לפעמים לאחור כמו הספינות פעם תלך ופעם תעמד ופעם תשוב לאחור וכן התגוררים פעם יחס ופעם ישוב לאחור ויקרר וכיוצא באלו הוא ממונה עליהם. ולפי שהוא ממונה על ההתמדה לפיכך כשיגיע עלייתו לא ירד עולמית נאמר³⁹ 'ונחה עליו רוח ה' רוח חכמה ובינה' והוא סוד משיח ה'.

ולהיות הבינה משותפת מכל שכל⁴⁰ ואצילות ושש קצוות לפיכך יש בו שני מיני פעולות, בעת שמתדבק בעליונים הנה חרבן למטה⁴¹. ובעת שמתדבק בשש קצוות מתחדש כל טוב שבענינים.⁴²

[F] לפיכך כל עליותו של ישראל אינו רק במצות בהמשך⁴⁴ עליהם⁴⁵ כח הבינה. ולפיכך נצחונום בלי חרב ובלי חנית ובלי כלי מלחמה כי לא בחרב ולא בחנית יושיע ה' (בינה)⁴⁷. ובזמן שמסתלקים מן המצות מיד מסתלק מהם הבינה וירדו עד תכלית הירידה.⁴⁸ זהו סוד 'אם בחקתי תלכו' וסוד כל התוכחות.

[G] וזהו שנמשלו ישראל לעפר שנאמר⁴⁹ 'והיה זרעך
 כעפרהארץ' ויוכיחו בזה הברכות והתוכחות. הנה
 אמרתי לכם פירוש של ב' בג"ד כפר"ת שהוא תחת
 אב"ג ית"ץ שהוא מתחבר עם בראשית.

The verbatim correspondence between the two texts is obvious and very substantial insofar as most of the content is concerned. Nevertheless, there are some significant changes. One of the most important differences between Ashkenazi's version and that of the anonymous Byzantine kabbalist is the recurrence of the phrase *Kokhav Sabbatai*, five times in the latter versus two in the former. The insertion of this short passage in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* contributed two occurrences of this name, and one more reference to this planet is added within the text the author copied from R. Joseph in order to clarify the identity of the subject. This repetition throws into relief the planet's name much more than is the case in Joseph Ashkenazi's original passage, and presumably contributed to the impression that the passage made on the young Sabbatai Tzevi. It is hard to judge whether the added passage is copied from another source, or is an elaboration made by the anonymous kabbalist, but, on the basis of the examination of other instances in which the kabbalist copied from different sources, I am inclined to the former alternative.⁵⁰

Let me highlight the fact that an understanding of prophecy as a power added to persons who lack knowledge conflicts with the Maimonidean intellectualistic definition of prophecy, which, to a certain extent at least, affected some other discussions by Joseph Ashkenazi on this topic.⁵¹ Moreover, as we see in the last paragraph of the quotation, where the assumption is that by means of the commandments the Jews draw down the power of *Binah* upon themselves, Joseph Ashkenazi not only adopted an astrological view but also an astro-magical one. Whether the power of *Binah* also means the power of Saturn is not clear. Either way, even drawing down the sefirotic power is, in my opinion, the result of adopting and adapting an astro-magical approach.

As has been recognized by many scholars, although the anonymous author of *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* was a compiler on a very large scale, and in some ways a careless one, he was nevertheless intelligent. Eclecticism does not always signal a lack of originality. In some cases, he added theosophical interpretations to texts he copied, which stem, for example, from non-Kabbalistic forms of discourse. In other cases, he appropriated Kabbalistic texts but added new eschatological computations,⁵² which means that he read the texts he copied carefully and adapted them to his purposes. In my opinion, this is also the case with the manner in which he adapted the

passage by Joseph Ashkenazi. He not only edited the text he copied but also added two small passages and some additional words here and there (the original Hebrew is shown in bold above), and I translate one example below for the sake of a short analysis. Let me start with passage E:

And it causes to ascend on high, and since the six extremities⁵³ are Israel, that do not study of Torah, which is replete with wisdom, this is the reason why the star [planet] of Saturn, which is under [the name] *ABG YTTz*, that is connected to *Bereshit*,⁵⁴ is appointed on Israel, and the star of Saturn repels the delights of the lower world, since they are vain, and it intends to know wisdom⁵⁵ which is higher than it, and it is incumbent on Israel to do like him, but they do not do so, and this is the reason why the *Binah* is ascending on high, and the six extremities that are called Israel, will fall into evil which is Fear. Then woe to Israel that fell in the pit and they lose, since they preoccupied themselves with the delights of the world, and his body and soul are lost.

This contemplative and strongly otherworldly approach is also to be found in another statement in paragraph C: 'and since it⁵⁶ contemplates the knowledge of the supernal entities, it will not feel the opprobrium and the contempt and the filth, in deeds and in speech'. Thus, the anonymous author of *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* throws into sharper relief a hint already found in Joseph Ashkenazi: that extreme mental concentration and contemplation are channelled towards the higher intellectual worlds, which is tantamount to a rejection of the corporeal world. The study of the Torah, replete as it is with wisdom, is seen therefore as an extreme contemplative activity, which dissociates the contemplator, here the *sefirah* of *Binah* and probably also Saturn, from immersion in lower, corporeal preoccupations. This dissociation inherently means absorption with the spiritual and a rejection of the corporeal or the lower desires.⁵⁷ As a *sefirah*, *Binah* occupies a liminal space between the two higher *sefirot* on the one hand, and the seven lower ones on the other, and the oscillation in its attachment is presented here either as leaning to a spiritual contemplation or, inversely, as immersion in corporeality. In fact, the transposition of mundane activities as symbols that refer to events within the sefirotic world is characteristic of Joseph Ashkenazi and David ben Yehudah he-Hasid, as seen above in chapter 2, and even more so of *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*.⁵⁸ Such a view is reminiscent of the passage by Yohanan Alemanno in the name of anonymous astrologers adduced above in chapter 2.⁵⁹

Let me point out that the ascent of the *Binah* on high, and its negative repercussions caused by the negligence or the sins of the people of Israel,

is a theme current in rabbinic literature as well as in Heikhalot literature in the context of the retreat of the *Shekhinah* for similar reasons.⁶⁰ However, a similar view is found in Hermetic literature in the context of the retreat of the gods from Egypt.⁶¹ It is not clear what the precise sources that inspired the anonymous kabbalist are.

However, it will be hard to read the added passage as dealing solely with an act of contemplation taking place only within the higher world without assuming at the same time that this is a paradigm for human behaviour, more precisely for the People of Israel. Presiding over a lower entity means not only the subordination of the human to the astral and theosophical orders but, according to this kabbalist, also the imitation of the higher by the lower. Does this sharp emphasis in the book of *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* on some form of extreme asceticism, which shuns corporeal delight in favour of a strong dedication to study and contemplation, antedate the extreme approach of Sabbatai Tzevi, who did not consummate his marriages because of his devotion and marriage to the Torah?⁶² The ambiguous language, which allows for an understanding of human imitation of supernal behaviour, means that the behaviour of the supernal Sabbatai/Saturn that is appointed upon a person, presumably the Messiah, was most probably understood by Tzevi to constitute a paradigm whose details should be internalized by the human counterpart and implemented in his behaviour

Let me summarize the possible implications of the correspondences between details found in our passage and Sabbatai Tzevi. The very 'occurrence' of his 'proper' name in a Kabbalistic visionary book believed to have been written in the second century of the common era, his predilection for staying in caves, his extreme devotion to the spiritual and, very significantly, his much-discussed melancholy, may reflect the impact of this passage on Tzevi's messianism. As seen in chapter 2, other texts also found in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* advocated a linkage between the planet Saturn and messianism. Hence, not just one single passage, the one adduced above, may have been involved in triggering Tzevi's messianic consciousness, but also Abraham Abulafia's discussions of the topic of Saturn and messianism, which were copied quite faithfully in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* as well. It seems that the anonymous Byzantine kabbalist had a particular interest in Saturn and can therefore be described as a Saturnist whose impact on another, Sabbatai Tzevi, proved decisive. It should be mentioned that the discussions on Saturn in the Zoharic texts adduced above were not known at that period in Byzantium despite the fact that some references to *Tiqqunei Zohar* were already to be found there in the fifteenth century.

At this point I would like to speculate about the possibility of learning something about the identity of the anonymous kabbalist who wrote *Sefer*

ha-Peliy'ah or about his sources. If the repeated addition of the name 'Sabbatai' to the original passage by Joseph Ashkenazi reflects his own proper name, which is (one should emphasize) by no means evident, we may perhaps have a candidate: a Byzantine kabbalist active during the mid fifteenth century whose name was Sabbatai – a certain Sabbatai ben Potto of Janina. Here is not the place to offer a more detailed effort to discuss this Sabbatai, who was acquainted with *Sefer ha-Qamah*, as he correctly refers to it in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, and I hope to elaborate on these tentative proposals elsewhere.⁶³ Even if this is mere coincidence, the possible contribution of his many glossae and the sources adduced there for a better understanding of the genesis of the mysterious *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* are worthwhile the rather tenuous effort of perusing the material found in those glossae.

To round this off, it is also worth addressing another Saturnian passage in Ashkenazi's *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah* which was not cited in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*. Though it does not add too much new material to the longer passage, it again demonstrates the attempt to create lists that organize the diverse material found in tradition and reality in a meaningful way. When interpreting the view of *Sefer Yetzirah*, where the dimensions of reality are detailed, in the context of the phrase 'and the depth of the end', *ve-'omeq 'aharit*,⁶⁴ Ashkenazi refers to:

As it is said⁶⁵ 'and I am the last' is hinting at the secret of Jubilees (the *Binah*)⁶⁶ and this is why [it is written]⁶⁷ 'Thou shall count seven Sabbaths seven times' and accordingly, the seventh is the holy of the days, like the day of Sabbath (*Binah*), and in the months – Nissan and Tishrei, and in the years – the *Shemittah* and the *Yovelot*,⁶⁸ and in the thousands – [as it is written]⁶⁹ 'Six thousand years the world subsists and for one is devastated' and there are [authorities who assert] 'and for two [thousands] is devastated'. And in the firmaments – '*Aravot*,⁷⁰ and in the lands – the Land of Israel, and in the years of a human – the sixty years, behold there are six decades and a [nother] decade that is the seventh⁷¹ 'which is holy to God'. And among the stars – Sabbatai (*Binah*), and the secret of the fifty days of [the counting of] 'Omer, and fifty weeks of the year⁷² [namely in the dimension of time]. [In] the ten *sefirot* – *Binah*, the end of all, in all the *Shemittot* and *Yovelim* ... and the principle of all is that there,⁷³ there is [both] 'the beginning and the end'⁷⁴ of all the beings and of all that was the innovated,⁷⁵ from it they emerged and to it they will return.⁷⁶

This passage evinces the same strategy as in the first passage of Ashkenazi of organizing the two forms of order: the theosophical and the astral. Thus,

we have some additions to the longer text: the Land of Israel is added, and we have a parallel to ibn Ezra's and Abulafia's similar assertions.⁷⁷ The addition of the word '*Binah*', which appears beside the word in print, but actually above the term 'Sabbatai'/'Saturn' in manuscripts, constitutes a theosophical interpretation of a basically astrological text in a manner in which Joseph Ashkenazi interprets many other texts.⁷⁸ The manner in which *Binah* is described as the beginning and the end of all shows that Saturn corresponds to it and is conceived of as an essential level in the divine world. Doubtless this is an example of the centrality occupied by Saturn in this Kabbalistic system.

The parallels that were referred to above between the two texts and some details in Tzevi's life⁷⁹ seem to me too significant to be attributed to mere accident. It is plausible that from his youth the seventeenth-century Messiah used the astro-kabbalistic descriptions as a blueprint for his behaviour, though his sources as to the attributes of Saturn were not limited to the texts in this Appendix.⁸⁰

Preface

- 1 See S. p.172
- 2 See, e. Astrak
- 'The Garb'
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- 3 The
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Notes

Preface

- 1 See Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem* (Schocken Books, New York, 1980) p.172
- 2 See, e.g., my 'The Study Program of Yohanan Alemanno', pp. 303–30, 'An Astral-Magical Pneumatic Anthropoid', *Incognita*, vol. 2 (1991), pp. 9–31, 'The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations', 'Prometheus in a Jewish Garb', 'Magical Temples and Cities in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: A Passage of Masudi as a Possible Source for Yohanan Alemanno', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, vol. 3 (1981/2), pp. 185–9, 'The Epistle of R. Isaac of Pisa (?)', Beit Arié–Idel, 'Treatise on the End and Astrology', 'R. Johanan Alemanno and the Astrological Treatise *Ma'amar Hozeh*', *ibid.*, pp. 825–6, and 'Hermeticism and Judaism'. As we shall see below, Alemanno was acquainted with many traditions related to Saturn, more than any other Jewish author writing previously.
- 3 'The Throne and the Seven-Branched Candlestick: Pico della Mirandola's Hebrew Source', *JWCI*, vol. 40 (1977), pp. 290–2 as well as my 'Ramon Lull and Ecstatic Kabbalah'. For an analysis of the metamorphosis of a Greek myth in medieval Kabbalah and Renaissance Kabbalah see also my 'Prometheus in a Jewish Garb'. See also my review of Dame Frances A. Yates's book *Occult Philosophy*, which appeared in *Numen*, vol. 29 (1982), pp. 147–9, and 'Kabbalah and Hermeticism in Dame Frances A. Yates's Renaissance', in R. Caron, J. Godwin, W. J. Hanegraaf, J.-L. Vieillard-Baron (eds), *Esoterisme, Gnosés & Imaginaire Symbolique: Melanges offerts à Antoine Faivre* (Peeters, Louvain, 2001), pp. 71–90. For more on Yates and *Saturn and Melancholy* see the postface to the Romanian translation of the French version, written by Bogdan Tataru-Cazaban, *Saturn si melancholia*, trans. M. Tataru-Cazaban, B. Tataru-Cazaban and A. Vaetisi (Polirom, Iassi, 2002), pp. 564–6.
- 4 See Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 57, 218–21, 381 n. 57.
- 5 'Saturn, Schabbat, Zauberei und die Juden', in A. Grafton and M. Idel (eds), *Der Magus* (Akademie Verlage, Berlin, 2001), pp. 209–49.
- 6 See my *Messianic Mystics*.
- 7 See M. Idel, 'Saturn and Sabbatai Tzevi: A New Approach to Sabbateanism', in P. Schaefer and M. Cohen (eds), *Toward the Millennium, Messianic*

Expectations from the Bible to Waco (Brill, Leiden 1998), pp. 173–202. A Hebrew version of this essay appeared in the translation of Avriel Bar-Levay in *Jewish Studies*, vol. 37 (1997), pp. 161–84.

Chapter 1

- 1 *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* XVIII: 5, trans. Richard Stothert, *Reply to Faustus the Manichaean*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series I, vol. 4 (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1974), p. 238. For fetters in the context of Saturn, see Sela's note in Ibn Ezra, *The Book of Reasons*, p. 305. See also *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* XX: 13, p. 259: 'I refer to this now, to show where you got your silly idea that our fathers kept the *Sabbath* in honor of Saturn. For as there is no connection with the worship of the Pagan deities Ceres and Bacchus in our observance of the sacrament of the bread and wine, which you approve so highly that you wish to resemble us in it, so there was no subjection to Saturn in the case of our fathers, who observed the rest of the *Sabbath* in a manner suitable to prophetic times.' On Sabbath as a prefiguration, and thus the reason why Christians do not keep it after the revelation of Jesus Christ see *ibid.*, XIX: 9, p. 243. On St Augustine, Saturn and Sabbath see also Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturne et la mélancolie*, pp. 211, n. 27, 245–7 and n. 118. For the scholarly literature on the topic of Jews and Saturn in ancient times see the important collection of texts in Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem, 1980), Tibulus, vol. I, p. 319, I Frontinus, p. 510, Tacitus, vol. II, pp. 18–19, 33n., II, p. 143, p. 654 anonymous, Cassius Dio, II, pp. 349–51, 352–3, 360, 373, 375, 377; A. Bouche-Leclercq, *L'Astrologie Grecque* (Paris, 1899), pp. 318, 371, 478; Yohanan H. Levi, *Studies in Jewish Hellenism* (Mossad Bialik, Jerusalem, 1969), pp. 122, 143 (Hebrew); Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, trans. John Bowden (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1974), vol. II, p. 176, n. 47; Zafran, 'Saturn'; Peter Schaefer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes Toward the Jews in the Ancient World* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1998), pp. 84, 228; and Sela, *Astrology and Biblical Exegesis in Abraham ibn Ezra's Thought*, p. 149, his long footnote to his edition of Ibn Ezra, *The Book of Reasons*, pp. 157–8, and his 'Appropriation of Saturn', pp. 23–4; Bar Ilan, *Astrology and Other Sciences*, pp. 19–20; and Kocku Von Suckrad, 'Jewish and Christian Astrology in Late Antiquity: A New Approach', *Numen*, vol. 47 (2000), pp. 1–40.
- 2 For the Rabbinic elements related to magic and astrology see Harari, *Early Jewish Magic*, pp. 263–5, 341–52. These sources show no connection between Jews and Saturn, as many sources deny that astral bodies preside over the nation of Israel. See also Kiener, 'Astrology in Jewish Mysticism', pp. 1–4.

- 3 Halbronn, *Le Monde Juif et l'Astrologie*, pp. 84–7; Ginsburg, *Sod ha-Shabbat*, pp. 163–7; and Pedaya, 'Sabbath, Sabbatai', pp. 150–3. Compare also interesting similarities found in Southern India, in the context of Sani, the Hindu counterpart of Saturn, as analysed in David M. Knipe, 'Softening the Cruelty of God: Folklore, Ritual and the Planet Sani (Saturn) in Southern India', in David Shulman (ed.), *Syllables of Sky: Studies in South Indian Civilization in Honor of Velcheru Narayana Rao* (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1995), pp. 205–47. My thanks to David Shulman for drawing my attention to this study.
- 4 Maxime Preaud, *Les Sorcieres* (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 1973), pp. 16–19 and Charles Zika, 'Les parties du corps', pp. 389–418, now in his *Exorcising Our Demons*, pp. 375–409.
- 5 See Zika, 'Les parties du corps', pp. 404, 411. See also Couliano, *Eros and Magic*, p. 47.
- 6 There are several lists of the numerous supercommentaries compiled by modern scholars. See Uriel Simon, 'Interpreting the Interpreter: Supercommentaries on Ibn Ezra's Commentaries', in I. Twersky and J. M. Harris (eds), *Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra: Studies in the Writings of a Twelfth-Century Jewish Polymath* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1993), pp. 86–128; Moritz Steinschneider, 'Supercommentare zu Ibn Esra, zur Orientirung in verschiedenen Handschriften', *Jüdische Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Leben*, vol. 6 (1868), pp. 121–31 and 'Supercommentare zu Ibn Esra's Pentateuchcommentar', in Abraham Berliner (ed.), *Pletath Soferim* (Schletter'sche Buchhandlung H. Skutsch, Breslau, 1872), pp. 42–6 and 50–4 (German part); Abraham Berliner, 'Super-Commentare zu Abraham Ibn Esra,' *Magazin für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, vol. 3 (1876), pp. 41–51 and vol. 4 (1877), pp. 145–9; Tamas Visi, *The Early Ibn Ezra Supercommentaries: A Chapter in Medieval Jewish Intellectual History*, PhD thesis, CEU, Budapest, 2006; and n. 72 below. See, more recently, the important analysis of the topic of Saturn in Shlomo Sela, *Abraham ibn Ezra and the Rise of Medieval Hebrew Science*, pp. 151–4 and in an expanded argument in the English version of 'Appropriation of Saturn', pp. 21–53. The existence of such voluminous literature demonstrates the paramount impact of ibn Ezra's thought on late-thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Jews and thus of some of the material to be discussed below. To be sure, other Jewish thinkers mentioned Saturn before Abraham ibn Ezra, more eminently bar Ḥiyya. See below, ch. 2, n. 14.
- 7 Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 251–2, 340–2, 415–16. For an example of a short description of Saturn as a malign planet appointed over the Jews and Sabbath, without however referring to sorcery or magic, see the anonymous quotation in the name of Shlomo ibn Gabirol (known as Avicbron) as found at the beginning of the early-sixteenth-century Joseph

- ben Shlomo Al-Ashqar's *Tzafnat Pa'aneah*, MS. Jerusalem, 4^o 154, fol. 2a. There is a good chance that the author of the short treatise is actually Al-Ashqar himself. Compare the occurrence of this passage *ibid.*, fol. 36b, where it appears without mentioning ibn Gabirol's name. I could not detect this negative conceptual structure in the writings of ibn Gabirol himself. On the other hand, let me point out that I found fragments from a lost commentary on *Sefer Yetzirah*, written by one of the teachers of Rashi, in which a negative description of Saturn occurs together with some more positive characteristics, following *Sefer Yetzirah*. I hope to publish and discuss these fragments in a separate study. Let me point out that here I have not brought all the discussions on Saturn in astrological texts in Hebrew, but have rather restricted my discussions to texts where the nexus between the planet and the topics I choose to analyse in the ensuing chapters is explicit.
- 8 *Tetrabiblos* III: 18, (Ashmand), p. 163, III: 13 (Robbins), p. 347. On the Hebrew versions of this book see Leicht, *Astrologumena Judaica*, pp. 72–3, 153. See also Sela, *Abraham ibn Ezra and the Rise of Medieval Hebrew Science*, pp. 138–46; Schwartz, 'Astrology and Astral Magic', pp. 57, 63; and, more recently, Chaim Kreisel, 'Sabbath in Jewish Philosophy: From Supra-Natural to Natural', in Gerald Blidstein (ed.), *Sabbath, Idea, History, Reality* (Ben Gurion University Press, Beer Sheva, 2004), pp. 72–5 (Hebrew). In other parts of this study the author addresses differing philosophical approaches to Sabbath, some of them astrological and related to Saturn. See *ibid.*, pp. 75–81. For more on this chapter in the *Tetrabiblos* see below, ch. 2, para. 5.
 - 9 See Sela, 'The Appropriation of Saturn', p. 31; Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturne et la mélancolie*, p. 207. See Charles Burnett and Keiji Yamamoto, *Abu Ma'shar on Historical Astrology: The Book of Religions and Dynasties on Great Conjunctions* (Brill, Leiden, 2000).
 - 10 Cf. Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturne et la mélancolie*, pp. 207–8; Zafran, 'Saturn', pp. 16–17. On this author see Moritz Steinschneider, *Die Hebraeischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetschers* (Berlin, 1893), pp. 561–2. On snakes and Saturn/Sabbatai see below, chapter 2, in the context of Sabbatai Tzevi. See also the passage cited by Alemanno, MS. Oxford-Bodleiana, 2234, fol. 118a, where death and sorcery are adduced together.
 - 11 MS. Oxford-Bodleiana Hunt. 305, Neubauer, 2029, fols 247b–48a. On this author see Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturne et la mélancolie*, p. 206, n. 10. Similar views were held also by another important Muslim writer, the twelfth-century encyclopedic author Al-Biruni.
 - 12 *Hitbodedut*. In many sources, this is a standard characteristic of Saturn. See also ibn Ezra's *Sefer ha-Te'amim*, ed. Yehudah L. Fleisher (Mossad ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem, 1951), p. 62. For *hitbodedut* as mental concentration see Idel, 'Hitbodedut as Concentration in Jewish Philosophy' and n. 19 below.

- 13 *Sam ha-mawet*. See also *Sefer ha-Te'amim*, p. 62 and below, n. 145. In other versions it is written 'angel of death'. See n. 18 below.
- 14 '*Orekh ha-Mahashavah*. On this issue see especially the Neoplatonic sources discussed in Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturne et la mélancolie*, pp. 250–5. See also the next passage dealing with *hitbodedut*.
- 15 *Ha-keshafim ve-ha-hashabba'ot*. The term *keshafim*, and its parallel *kishshuf*, will recur often in the discussions below; see nn. 21, 96, 100, 106, 132, 133, 154, 157. On this term in the Bible see Jeffers, *Magic and Divination*, pp. 65–70, who indeed proposes to translate it as 'sorcery'. I shall use this term in order to distinguish it from magic and even more from natural magic because of the negative overtones of the term *kishshuf* in the contexts in which it will be quoted. On the different views on sorcery in scholarship see Harari, *Early Jewish Magic*, throughout.
- 16 *Ha-pillug*. See *Sefer ha-Te'amim*, p. 63 and below, n. 69.
- 17 *Tzara'at*. See also *ibid.*
- 18 *Reshit Hokhmah*, ch. 4. I combined the version found in a passage of this book as explicitly quoted in Joseph Bonfils, *Tzafnat Pa'aneah*, I, p. 49, with the common edition of the book. See also *ibid.*, I, p. 270. The common version of this passage, as edited and translated by Raphael Levi and Francisco Cantera, *The Beginning of Wisdom, An Astrological Treatise by Abraham ibn Ezra* (Paris, 1939), pp. xlii–xliv, does not contain the reference to incantation and sorcery found in Bonfils's version, which I have put in parentheses. For a modern French translation by Jacques Halbronn see Abraham ibn Ezra, *Le Livre des fondements astrologiques* (Bibliotheca Hermetica, Retz, Paris, 1977), pp. 140–3. A longer version of it appears in the late-nineteenth-century Hamoi, *Daveq me-'Ah*, pp. 96–7. For more on this passage see Barkai, *Science, Magic and Mythology*, p. 30 and n. 84; Idel, 'Hitbodedut as Concentration in Jewish Philosophy'; Ginsburg, *Sod ha-Shabbat*, p. 163 n. 378, who enumerated the Jewish sources that precede ibn Ezra in their description of the negative nature of Saturn. For more on ibn Ezra's view on the Jews, Saturn and melancholy see Langermann, 'Some Astrological Themes', pp. 59–60, and the edition and English translation of ibn Ezra's passage in ibn Ezra, *The Book of Reasons*, ch. 4, pp. 71–6, and the appendix there pp. 349–50. It should be mentioned that though ibn Ezra's name is mentioned casually in Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturne et la mélancolie*, the major passages from ibn Ezra have nevertheless been overlooked.
- 19 *Gillui ha-sod*. In *Sefer ha-Te'amim*, p. 62: *da'at ha-sodot*, namely 'the knowledge of the secrets', as in the text found in the context of Saturn adduced above. See also Schwartz, *Astral Magic*, pp. 119, 186.
- 20 *Da'at ha-kishshuf*. The English translation is not so precise: 'skill of magic'. See also n. 15 above.

- 21 *Reshit Hokhmah*, p. I, English, p. 202. Interestingly enough, this passage does not occur in the description of the attributes of moon in *Sefer ha-Te'amim*, pp. 69–71.
- 22 Namely the celestial world, constituted by planets and stars.
- 23 *ha-ma'arakhah ha-'elyonah*. This expression, which draws upon a biblical expression related to a specific form of arrangement, has been used in a variety of contexts in order to point to supernal types of order, first the astral and later on the theosophical, like the title of the famous theosophical book, the anonymous *Sefer Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut* written early in fourteenth-century Catalonia. See Idel, 'On Some Forms of Order', pp. lvi–lvii.
- 24 Ed. A. Weiser, vol. II, p. 47. Thus, we have a combination of the astrological, magical and philosophical types of speculation, all of them now applied to another important Jewish value, Moses.
- 25 On this issue and its medieval reverberations see Aviezer Ravitzky, 'The Anthropological Theory of Miracles in Medieval Jewish Philosophy', in I. Twersky (ed.), *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1984), vol. II, pp. 238–9, 250; Barkai, *Science, Magic and Mythology*, p. 20; Howard Kreisel, 'Miracles in Medieval Jewish Philosophy', *JQR*, vol. 75 (1984), pp. 119–21; Gitit Holzman, *The Theory of the Intellect and Soul in the Thought of Rabbi Moshe Narboni*, PhD thesis, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1996, pp. 293–9 (Hebrew). See Langermann, 'Some Astrological Themes', p. 60, and below, the quotation attributed to ibn Waqar and, following him, Yohanan Alemanno.
- 26 See Langermann, 'Astrological Themes', p. 60, and the quotation in the name of ibn Waqar below and, following him, Yohanan Alemanno.
- 27 *Shiga'on*. See also *ibid.*, p. 233.
- 28 *The Book of Reasons*, in Shlomo Sela's translation, pp. 71–3.
- 29 This is the opinion of several ancient authors; see Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturne et la mélancolie*, p. 218, and *Ptolemy in Tetrabiblos*, I: 5. See the Hebrew translation extant in MS. Paris BN 1028, fol. 101b.
- 30 *BT., Pesahim*, fol. 112b. For more on this issue see Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, vol. V, p. 405, n. 72. Therefore, already in rabbinic sources, and under their influence in some medieval *halakhic* discussions, all enumerated by Ginzberg, the astrological view of the negative impact of Saturn on Wednesday night, and of Mars on Friday night, is discernible.
- 31 Commentary on Exodus 20.14, ed. A. Weiser (Mossad ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem, 1977), vol. II, pp. 139–40. See Ginsburg, *Sod ha-Shabbat*, p. 164, n. 379. This text was quoted, without mentioning the source, by Joseph ben Shlomo Al-Ashqar in his *Tzafnat Pa'aneah*, fols 113b–14a, and see also *ibid.*, fols 69b–70a, as well as his contemporary Isaac Karo in *Toledot Yitzhaq*, fol. 12a. See also Barkai, *Science, Magic and Mythology*, p. 31. For a later reverberation of this passage in the seventeenth century see Halbronn,

- Le Monde Juif et l'Astrologie*, pp. 281–2. The vision of the commandments related to Sabbath as counteracting the impact of Saturn constitutes an approach that is reminiscent of the ritualistic behaviour of Marsilio Ficino, who attempted to escape the pernicious influence of Saturn through a certain way of life. See, especially, Peter Ammann, 'Music and Melancholy: Masilio Ficino's Architypal Music Therapy', *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, vol. 43 (1998), pp. 571–88. Thanks are due to Prof. Daniel Abrams for drawing my attention to this article.
- 32 See, e.g., the commentary on Rashi, on *BT*, *Berakhot*, fol. 29b and Joseph Angelet's *Sefer Livenat ha-Sappir*, ed. S. Mussaioff (Jerusalem, repr. 1971), fol. 22bc.
- 33 That of Saturn. See also below, ch. 2 para. 6.
- 34 Saturn.
- 35 *Ḥakham ḥarashim*. On the magical background of this phrase in the Bible see Jeffers, *Magic and Divination*, pp. 49–52.
- 36 *Navon leḥashim*. See Jeffers, *ibid.*, pp. 70–4. The mention of the *sar ḥamishim* – reminiscent of the Rabbinic concept of the fifty gates of *Binah* – and of *navon* may reflect a nexus between Saturn and *Binah* that will later become explicit in some Kabbalistic texts, as we shall see below.
- 37 According to Isaiah 3.3.
- 38 Ibn Ezra, *Hai ben Meqitz*, p. 143 and *Igeret Hay ben Mekitz by Abraham ibn Ezra*, ed. Israel Levin (Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, 1983), pp. 78–9. On the figure fifty, which in many Kabbalistic books is related to the *sefirah* of *Binah*, see also the Kabbalistic texts discussed below.
- 39 *Sefer Yetzirah* 4:5. The book extant in two major versions, the longer, quoted above, and a shorter one, where the day upon which Saturn presides is Sunday. On this book see, inter alia, Peter A. Hyman, 'Was God a Magician? *Sefer Yetzirah* and Jewish Magic', *Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. 40 (1989), pp. 225–37; Idel, *Golem*, pp. 9–26, etc.; Yehuda Liebes, *Ars Poetica in Sefer Yetzira* (Schocken, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, 2000) (Hebrew). For the apotheosis of *Sefer Yetzirah* in Jewish culture see Idel, 'Golems and God', pp. 232–43. On astrology in this book see Kiener, 'Astrology in Jewish Mysticism', pp. 5–7, and now Bar Ilan, *Astrology and Other Sciences*, pp. 83–114.
- 40 Previously mentioned.
- 41 On the writing of the name of seventy-two letters on deer parchment, this can already be seen in a recipe found in a magical text stemming from Ashkenazi Hasidic circles, *Siddur Rabbenu Shelomo of Germaiza*, ed. M. Hershler (Jerusalem, 1972), p. 99.
- 42 *Sefer ha-Melammed*, MS. Paris, BN 680, fols 292b–93a. On this treatise see Idel, *Abraham Abulafia's Works and Doctrine*, pp. 15–17. *Sefer ha-Melammed*, MS. Paris, BN 680, fols 292b–93a. On this treatise see Idel, *Abraham Abulafia's Works and Doctrine*, pp. 15–17.

- 43 'On Judaism, Jewish Mysticism and Magic', pp. 195–213.
- 44 See, e.g., what I wrote in Idel, *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics*, p. 152, n. 89. See also below, n. 53.
- 45 For a survey of the resort to this divine name in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, see M. Idel, 'On *She'elat Halom* in Hasidei Ashkenaz: Sources and Influences', *Materia Giudaica*, vol. 10, no. 1 (2005), pp. 99–109.
- 46 Ed. S.H. Halberstam (Berlin, 1885), p. 247 (Hebrew); see also Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, vol. V, p. 164, n. 61. On the view that each of the planets has an angel which is appointed on it, and the planet serves as its temple and talisman, see the twelfth-century Muslim mystic Shihaboddin Yahya Sohrawardi; cf. Henry Corbin, *L'Archange Empourpré*, (Fayard, Paris, 1976), p. 489.
- 47 See also Eleazar of Worms, *Sodei Razzaya* (Jerusalem, 2004), p. 46; Elhanan ben Abraham of Esquira's *Sefer Yesod 'Olam*, a Kabbalistic book written at the beginning of the fourteenth century, MS. Moscow-Ginzburg 607, fol. 115a, where this angel is connected to Sabbatai and to the seventh firmament of 'Aravot as well as Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, p. 251 and the text printed by Scholem, *Demons, Devils, and Souls*, p. 112. See also in Alemanno's interesting untitled book preserved in MS. Paris BN 849, fol. 64a. For other references see M. Moise Schwab, *Vocabulaire de l'Angelologie d'après les manuscrits Hébreux de la Bibliothèque nationale* (Arché, Milan, 1989), p. 352. See also the discussion found in the mid-nineteenth-century French occultist Eliphas Levi, *The Key of the Mysteries*, tr. A. Crowley, no page numbers, commenting on the Hebrew letter *Resh*: 'Destruction and Regeneration, Time, Saturn, Cassiel, King of Tombs, and of Solitude.' However, in the French original only the issue of the tombs occurs, without any other of the attributes mentioned in the English translation. The affinity between tombs and Saturn appears, for example, in Joseph Ashkenazi's passage, printed in the Appendix.
- 48 Compare to ibn Ezra, *Reshit Hokhmah*, p. xlv, and the quotation we adduced above from Alcabitius.
- 49 *Saro*. This is quite an uncommon vision of Saturn as if it is an angel appointed upon a day rather than a planet. Compare with the view found in an astro-magical epistle attributed to Maimonides, in MS. London, British Library Or. 19788, fols.4b–5a; Abraham Hamoi, *Liderosh 'Elohim* (Livorno, 1870), fols 19b–20a; Z. Edelman (ed.), *Hemdah Genuzah*, (Koenigsberg, 1856), fols 43b–44a: 'And from this verse seven names emerge, which correspond to seven angels of the firmaments that are Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon.' For the context of this statement see Idel, 'Astral Dreams in Judaism: Twelfth to Fourteenth Centuries', *Dream Cultures, Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming*, ed. David Shulman and Guy G. Stroumsa (Oxford University Press, New York, 1999), pp. 239–42.

- 50 *Commentary on Prayers*, MS. Paris BN 848, fol. 15a. For some details on this treatise see Idel, 'Ramon Lull and Ecstatic Kabbalah: A Preliminary Observation', pp. 170–4 and see now the editions of Saverio Campanini, *Yehudah ben Nissim ibn Malka: Perush ha-Tefelot*, in Giulio Busi, *Catalogue of the Kabbalistic Manuscripts in the Library of the Jewish Community of Mantua* (Florence, 2001), pp. 219–358, and Adam Afterman, *The Intention of Prayers in Early Ecstatic Kabbalah* (Cherub Press, Los Angeles, 2004), p. 228 (Hebrew). Though deeply influenced by *Sefer Yetzirah*, whose author relates Sabbatai to Sunday, the anonymous kabbalist nevertheless accepts the view of the astrologers. This is also the case in Joseph Gikatilla's *Sefer ha-Niqqud* (Krakow, 1608), fol. 10a, and in his *Sha'ar ha-Niqqud*, printed in *'Arzei Levanon* (Venice, 1601), fol. 39b. See also n. 45 above.
- 51 See *Sefer Raziel ha-Malakh*, (Amsterdam, 1701), fols 20a, 34b. Elsewhere, fol. 5a, the angel related to Saturn is Michael, considered in many sources to be the angel governing the Nation of Israel. Once again *ibid.*, fol. 41b, Saturn is related to the Sabbath and to an angel who, according to one variant, is called Israel! See also below, n. 85. For another version of *Sefer Raziel* see MS. New York, JTS 8117, fols 70a, 71a. On this manuscript see Leicht, *Astrologumena Judaica*, pp. 332–3, and see also Alejandro García Avilés, 'Alfonso X y el *Liber Raziel*: Imágenes de la magia astral judía en el scriptorium alfonsi', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, vol. 74 (1997), pp. 21–39. The nexus Qaftziel, sometimes Qatzfiel, and Saturn became standard and returned in several later sources.
- 52 *Ribbui ha-hashbba'ot ha-kohot ha-Yehudiyot*.
- 53 Perhaps a hint at the concept of *Neshamah Yeterah*. Cf. *BT, Beitzah*, fol. 16a. Abulafia's text is not so clear, but it seems to me that Weinstock's suggestion to read *Neshamah Yeterah* here is plausible. I assume that Abulafia has been influenced by a view which, though found later, reflects a much earlier one; see the nexus between the supplementary soul, Sabbath, and Saturn in the passage from the *Pericope Yitro* printed in *Zohar H'adash*, to be discussed below, and the supercommentary on Abraham ibn Ezra, by the mid-fourteenth-century Shlomo Franco, printed in Dov Schwartz, *The Philosophy of a Fourteenth Century Jewish Neoplatonic Circle* (Ben Tzvi Institute, Bialik Institute, Jerusalem, 1996), p. 261 (Hebrew), and of the controversy between him and Abraham ibn Al-Tabib, printed in *ibid.*, 'Worship of God', pp. 228–9, and *Studies on Astral Magic*, pp. 168–70. For more on ibn al-Tabib see Schwartz, 'R. Abraham Al-Tabib: The Man and His Oeuvre', *QS*, vol.64 (1992–3), pp. 1397–1400 (Hebrew).
- 54 In the Bible, these two terms stand for the cessation of agriculture respectively during the seventh and forty-ninth years. I assume that the first is an example of a simple heptad, the second of a complex one. Though Abulafia does not explicate his use of the two terms, I assume from the

- context that he is referring to cosmic cycles, of seven thousand and forty-nine thousand years, rather than to the biblical sense of these terms. See also below, n. 97. For another relation between *Yovel*, 'the sphere of Saturn' and the Jews, see the interesting fragment by Yehudah ben Shemiah, *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, ed. Leah N. Goldfeld, printed in *Qovetz 'Al Yad*, (ns) vol. 10 (1982), p. 150 (Hebrew), where the impact of both Ptolemy and Yehudah ibn Matqa are evident.
- 55 Abraham Abulafia, *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, MS. Harvard, Houghton 58, fol. 40a, ed. Israel Weinstock (Mossad ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem, 1984), p. 4. As we shall see immediately below, this claim of an affinity between Saturn and Shemittah can also be found in Joseph Ashkenazi's *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*. For more on incantations, *hashba'ot*, at the inception of prophetic Kabbalah see the material printed and analysed in M. Idel, 'Incantations, Lists and "Gates of Sermons" in the Circle of Rabbi Nehemiah ben Shlomo the Prophet, and Their Influences', *Tarbiz*, vol. 77, (2009), pp. 499–506 (Hebrew). An issue that deserves a separate analysis is the possible affinity between the combination of astrological speculations with linguistic ones, including the art of combinations, in Raimond Lull and Abulafia. On Lull see Yates, *Lull & Bruno*, pp. 14–16, 21, 23–4. For other affinities between the two schools of thought see also my study 'Ramon Lull and Ecstatic Kabbalah', pp. 170–4, and my 'Ashkenazi Esotericism and Kabbalah in Barcelona', *Hispania Judaica*, vol. 5 (2007), pp. 100–4.
- 56 See, e.g., the list of parallels drawn by Weinstock, *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, pp. 51–62, who attempted to show that Togarmi's *Commentary* was in fact composed by Abulafia himself, a theory that I find quite implausible. I hope to deal with these issues in my edition of this commentary.
- 57 Printed by Gershom Scholem as an appendix to his *The Qabbalah of Sefer ha-Temunah and of R. Abraham Abulafia*, ed. Y. ben Shlomo (Akadem, Jerusalem, 1969), p. 235 (Hebrew). On this type of speculation see M. Idel, 'On Paradise in Jewish Mysticism', in Ch. Ben-Noon (ed.), *The Cradle of Creativity* (Ramat, Hod ha-Sharon 2004), pp. 609–44.
- 58 *BT, Sabbath*, fol. 117b.
- 59 On this phrase and its meaning in the *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah* see Idel, *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics*, p. 10.
- 60 P. 4, n. to line 17.
- 61 On this seminal figure, whose thought still deserves a more comprehensive study, see Gershom Scholem's highly important study of *Studies in Kabbalah* (1), ed. J. ben Shlomo and M. Idel (Am Oved, Tel Aviv, 1998), pp. 112–36 (Hebrew), in which it is established in a definitive manner that he is the author of the *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah* otherwise attributed to an earlier kabbalist R. Abraham ben David (Rabad). See more on this passage below in chapter 2. See also Georges Vajda, 'Un chapitre de l'histoire du conflit

entre la kabbale et la philosophie: la polemique anti-intellectualiste de Joseph b. Shalom Ashkenazi', *AHDLMA*, vol. 23 (1956), pp. 45–143; Pedaya, 'Sabbath, Sabbatai'; Moshe Hallamish, 'Fragments from the Commentaries of R. Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi on Psalms', *Daat*, vol. 10 (1983), pp. 57–70 (Hebrew); Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 93–5; Ogren, *Renaissance and Rebirth*, pp. 18–20; Harvey J. Hames, *The Art of Conversion, Christianity & Kabbalah in the Thirteenth Century* (Brill, Leiden, 2000), pp. 139–41, 169–70; and M. Idel, 'Ashkenazi Esotericism and Kabbalah in Barcelona', *Hispania Judaica*, vol. 5 (2007), pp. 101–3; Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 367–77; and 'An Anonymous Commentary on *Shir ha-Yihud*', ed. K. E. Groezinger and J. Dan, *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism* (Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, New York, 1995), pp. 151–4, as well as n. 70 below.

- 62 In space, which is one of the three dimensions of reality according to *Sefer Yetzirah*. The other two will be mentioned immediately below.
- 63 This is the first unit of letters that constitute the name of forty-two letters, each of the six letters corresponding, according to Joseph Ashkenazi's *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, to each of the seven planets. The affinity between the seven planets and the name of forty-two letters is evident in Abulafia's *Gan Na'ul*, p. 38, in a passage that has also been copied in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* I, fol. 76c. See also below, chapter 2, n. 105, *Shirot ve-Tishbahot shel ha-Shabbatayim*, pp. 76, 158, and Elqayam, 'The Rebirth of the Messiah', p. 155, nn. 123, 124.
- 64 *Hokhmat ha-keshafim*.
- 65 *Shemu'ot ra'ot*. In *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* the version is '*Etzah Ra'ah*', 'bad counsel'. On the affinity between Saturn and counsel see Edgard Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1967), p. 279.
- 66 The Hebrew phrase is *Marah Shehorah*, namely 'black humour' or melancholy. The nexus between Saturn and melancholy is conspicuous in many ancient, medieval and Renaissance texts, as the numerous texts found in the monograph by Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturn et la Melancolie*, amply demonstrate. In the many Hebrew sources, which unfortunately escaped the attention of those authors, this nexus is also evident in several instances. See, in addition to the astrological literature starting in the twelfth century, the Zoharic literature: *Zohar H'adash*, ed. R. Margoliot (Mossad ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem, 1978), fols 32a, 33d; *Zohar*, vol. III, fol. 237b (*Ra'aya' Meheimna*); *Tiqqunei Zohar*, no. 21, fol. 56b; no. 70, fol. 124ab. See also Elqayam, 'Sabbatai Sevi's Manuscript', pp. 361–5. On Saturn and melancholy see more in the next two chapters. On the affinity between black bile, black and death or maladies, see the proposal in Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (Tavistock Publications, London, 1967), pp. 116–18.
- 67 Isaiah 11.2.

- 68 *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, fols 51c–52a, copied in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, I, fol. 57b. For the Hebrew originals see the Appendix below. This quotation reverberates in the work of many Jewish authors. See, e.g., the repercussions of this passage in Moses of Kiev's *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, called '*Otzar ha-Shem*', *ibid.* A somewhat shorter variant has been copied anonymously in Alemanno's untitled treatise found in MS. Paris BN 849, fols 73b–74a. A version of this passage that contains some slight differences from the above passage is to be found in the early sixteenth-century Joseph ben Shlomo Al-Ashqar, in his *Tzafnat Pa'aneah*, fol. 71a. See also *ibid.*, fol. 37ab, where another eschatological understanding of Saturn is mentioned. For additional discussions of Saturn in this book, see also *ibid.*, fols 36b, 69b–70a. A late compilation of Kabbalistic tradition extant in MS. New York, JTS 2054, fol. 14b–15a, contains a paraphrase of this text. For a late-nineteenth-century appropriation of this passage, without mentioning the source, as part of a compilation of different traditions about Sabbatai/Saturn, see Hamoi, *Daveq me-'Ah*, pp. 95–6. On the identification between Saturn and the third *sefirah*, without mentioning messianic implications however, see another book by the same R. Joseph, *Kabbalistic Commentary on Genesis Rabbah*, p. 236. Also see the passage from Abraham Yagel in this chapter below. On the affinity between Saturn, a third power within the pleroma on the one hand and an eschatological figure on the other, see previously in Ismailiyah, cf., the discussion of Henry Corbin, *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis* (London, 1983), pp. 91–2, 94. See also Wolfson, 'The Engenderment of Messianic Politics', pp. 243–4, n. 135, and for another possible parallel to Ismailiyah see Bezalel Naor, *Post-Sabbatian Sabbatianism* (Orot, Spring Valley, New York, 1999), pp. 14–20. See also below ch. 2, n. 81.
- 69 On the repercussions of this quote see chapter 2 below and for the entire Hebrew text see the Appendix. It should be pointed out that in the later passage, the anonymous kabbalist mentions the name Sabbatai several times, more than in the original version in Joseph Ashkenazi's *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*.
- 70 Alexander Altmann, 'Moses Narboni's "Epistle on *Shi'ur Qomah*"', in A. Altmann (ed.), *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1967), pp. 241–2; Simon, 'Interpreting the Interpreter,' p. 111; Dov Schwartz, 'La magie astrale dans la Pensée Juive rationaliste en Provence au XIV^e Siècle', *AHDLMA*, vol. 61 (1994), p. 40; Schwartz, 'Different Forms', p. 43; Colette Sirat, 'Moses Narboni's *Pirquei Moshé*', *Tarbiz*, vol. 39 (1970), pp. 296–7 (Hebrew). See also n. 6 above.
- 71 On Ibn Waqar, see Georges Vajda, *Recherches sur la philosophie et la Kabbale dans la pensée juive du Moyen Age* (Mouton, 1962), pp. 117–297; Gershom Scholem, 'R. Joseph ibn Waqar's Arabic Book on Kabbalah and Philosophy',

QS, vol. 20 (1943/4), pp. 153–62 (Hebrew); Altmann, ‘Moses Narboni’, pp. 242–3; Sirat, *La philosophie Juive medievale en pays de Chretiené*, pp. 157–62; and now Paul B. Fenton (ed.), *Rabbi Joseph b. Abraham Ibn Waqar, Principles of the Qabbalah* (Cherub Press, Los Angeles, 2004) (Hebrew). On his crucial role in promoting the interest in ibn Ezra, especially in Castile, see Simon, ‘Interpreting the Interpreter’, pp. 111–13, 127, n. 46. However, it should be pointed out that syntheses between theosophy and astrology are to be found before ibn Waqar in Joseph Ashkenazi and Yehudah ben Nissim ibn Malka.

- 72 *Sefer Meqor Hayyim* (Mantua, 1559), fol. 6, col. 3–4 and the version found in MS. Leiden, Or. 2065, fols C1b–C2a. On ibn Zarza, see Schwartz, *Studies on Astral Magic*, pp. 115–18. For ibn Zarza as the source of an important passage cited by Marsilio Ficino see Stéphane Toussaint, ‘Ficino’s Orphic Magic or Jewish Astrology and Oriental Philosophy? A Note on *spiritus*, the Three Books on Life, Ibn Tufayl and Ibn Zarza’, *Accademia*, vol. II (2000), pp. 19–33.
- 73 Compare to the passages of Ezra Gatigno, printed and analysed by Schwartz, ‘The Philosophical Interpretation’, pp. 85–8, and see also his ‘Land, Place, Star’, pp. 138–50, especially p. 148; Schwartz, ‘The Worship of God’, p. 256.
- 74 See above, n. 27.
- 75 Shmuel Ibn Motot, *Megillat Setarim* (Venice, 1554), fol. 6b and especially the discussion based on ibn Motot found in *Margaliyyot Tovah* (Amsterdam, 1722), fol. 71b, where he refers to ibn Sina and to Yehudah ben Nissim ibn Malka in this context; and the view of ibn Zarza *ibid.*, fol. 8b, based on ibn Motot, cf. 75 above. Cf. also the passage copied in Yohanan Alemanno, *Collectanea*, MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 2234, fol. 125b. On the thought of ibn Motot, see Vajda, ‘Recherches’, pp. 29–63. See also the claim of Shem Tov ibn Shaprut, who argues that prayer and the worship of God strengthen the influx of Saturn, so that it emanates power and intellect. Cf. Norman E. Frimer and Dov Schwartz, *The Life and Thought of Shem Tov ibn Shaprut* (Ben Zvi Institute, Jerusalem, 1992), p. 92 (Hebrew). On ibn Zarza, see Schwartz, *The Religious Philosophy of Samuel ibn Zarza*, PhD thesis, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 1989, especially pp. 118–32 (Hebrew). See especially ibn Zarza’s view that when someone would desire secrets to be revealed to him when he wishes or take revenge on his enemies, he should direct his prayer to Saturn. Cf. Schwartz, *ibid.*, p. 119, pp. 126–7, where the negative conceptual structure of Saturn is quite conspicuous. For the relation of the planet to Jewish nation see *ibid.*, p. 129.
- 76 See Schwartz, ‘Worship of God’, p. 250, and for the broader background see his *Studies on Astral Magic*, pp. 124–80. See also Benjamin’s view of Saturn as related to the angel Satan, as discussed in chapter 3.

- 77 See below, n. 109.
- 78 See the passage quoted by Schwartz, 'Different Forms', p. 33.
- 79 See *The Commentary on Leviticus*, 17:7, ed. A. Weiser (Mossad ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem, 1977), vol. III, p. 53. See also Karo, *Toledot Yitzḥaq*, fol. 89b. On the danger of goats, plausibly pointing to demonic powers, when encountered on a Friday evening, see previously in the Talmudic discussions and *Maḥzor Vitry*, by R. Simḥah, a student of Rashi, ed. Shimeon ha-Levi Horowitz (repr. Jerusalem, 1963), p. 81 (Hebrew). These sources discuss the term *sakkanat se'yirim*, apparently following a biblical theme. See also Nahmanides' *Commentary* on Leviticus 16:8, and for the nexus between Samael and goats see Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, vol. V, p. 312.
- 80 Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturne et la mélancolie*, pp. 207–8 and Zafran, 'Saturn', pp. 16–17. See also para. 6 below.
- 81 *Sefer Toledot 'Adam*, MS. Oxford-Bodeliana 836, fol. 180b. On this treatise see Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy*, pp. 150–2.
- 82 Compare, however, a quite different attitude in a passage from Alemanno's *Sha'ar ha-Hesheq*, to be discussed below. For the view that the Jews worshipped Saturn, see previously in ancient texts, analysed in the bibliography referred to above, n. 1, and in ibn Ezra and David Qimḥi on Amos 5.26, as well as the material collected by Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, vol. V, p. 135, n. 6, and Sela, 'The Appropriation of Saturn', pp. 35–6. For a comprehensive astrological reading of the Bible, at least in principle, see the passage of Alemanno translated in Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy*, p. 183.
- 83 This angel was conceived of as presiding over the people of Israel. On the nexus between this angel and Saturn see Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstitions*, p. 251 and above n. 53.
- 84 See Vajda, 'Recherches', p. 59, n. 112.
- 85 Or religions, *dinim*. Indeed in another important statement on Saturn found in Alemanno's other book *Sefer Hei 'Olamim*, MS. Mantua, Jewish Community 21, fol. 116a, we read: 'the sphere of Saturn and its motions and the depth of its thoughts, and the destruction and dreariness of the land that is under it, and the sorcery and the demons and the religions [*ha-datot*], which are under its spirituality [*ruhaniyyut*]'. Here the term *datot*, religions, parallels the *dinim*. In this context, the mention of the Torah later in this passage is quite relevant. According to such a reading, the Torah is one of those *dinim* he mentions.
- 86 *Hokhmot ruhaniyyot*. On this phrase as indicating astral magic see the studies of Shlomo Pines, 'On the Term *Ruhaniyyut* and its Sources and On Judah Halevi's Doctrine', *Tarbiz*, vol. 57 (1988), pp. 511–40 (Hebrew); 'Shi'ite Terms and Conceptions in Judah Halevi's Kuzari', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, vol. II (1980), pp. 165–251, especially pp. 243–7; 'Le *Sefer ha-Tamar* et les *Maggidim* des Kabbalists, *Hommage à Georges Vajda*,

ed. G. Nahon and C. Touati (Peeters, Louvain, 1980), pp. 333–63. It should be mentioned that at the end of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, there were some definitions of Kabbalah which integrated the views of astro-magic, and conceived of it as creating a connection between the supernal and lower realms. See Idel, ‘The Epistle of R. Isaac of Pisa (?)’, pp. 166–7, 87 n. 141, 213–14. For a late Christian understanding of Kabbalah as a pact with the devil, see Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, p. 86. See also below, n. 185.

- 87 *kishshuf*. See n. 15 above.
- 88 The nexus between these two practices and Saturn is already manifest in the passage of Abraham Abulafia and even more in Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi’s influential *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*. See chapter 2 below. In addition, the prophecy that is accorded to fools is found in the same passage by Ashkenazi, to be discussed below in the Appendix.
- 89 On the importance of the *Conjunctio Maior*, also see the other texts of text of Alemanno printed in Beit Arié and Idel, ‘Treatise on the End and Astrology’, pp. 191–4. On this issue see also below chapter 2.
- 90 See above, beside n. 69.
- 91 *kishshufim*. See n. 15 above.
- 92 MS. Paris BN 849, fols 93b–95a, in a passage dealing at length with the *sefirah* of *Binah*. See also Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy*, pp. 188–90. On Alemanno’s authorship of this treatise see Gershom Scholem, ‘An Unknown Treatise of Yohanan Alemanno’, *QS*, vol. 5 (1928/9), pp. 273–7 (Hebrew). See also Idel, ‘Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations’, p. 209 and *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 149–50, 487–92. On the Spanish background of Alemanno’s discussions, see the debate analysed by Schwartz, *Studies on Astral Magic*, pp. 282–5. Parallel versions of several parts of this quotation are to be found in excerpts from the super-commentaries on Ibn Ezra that Alemanno copied into his *Collectanea*, see MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 2234, fols 125b, 126b and 128b, and see also below ch. 3, para. 5. The analogy of *Binah* to the planet Saturn appears in Joseph ibn Waqar and, following him, in Moses Narboni and ibn Motot. On Alemanno and occult sciences in general, see Erwin Rosenthal, ‘Yohanan Alemanno and Occult Science’, in Y. Maeyama and W. G. Saltzer (eds), *Prismata, Naturwissenschaftsgeschichtliche Studien, Festschrift für Willy Hartner* (Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1977), pp. 349–61. On the presence of Alemanno in Florence in general, see Michele Luzzatti, ‘Documenti inediti su Yohanan Alemanno a Firenze (1481 e 1492–1493)’, in Liscia Bemporad and Ida Zatelli (eds), *La cultura Ebraica all’Epoca di Lorenzo il Magnifico* (Olschki, Florence, 1995), pp. 71–84; Fabrizio Lelli, ‘Biography and Autobiography in Yohanan Alemanno’s Literary Perception’, in D. B. Ruderman and G. Veltri (eds), *Cultural Intermediaries, Jewish Intellectuals in Early Modern Italy* (University of Pennsylvania Press,

- Philadelphia, 2004), pp. 25–38; and *Retorica, poetica e linguistica nel Hay ha-'Olamim di Yohanan Alemanno*, PhD thesis, Università degli Studi di Torino, 1990/91; Michael Reuveni, *The Physical Worlds of Jochanan Alemanno in 'Hai Ha-'Olamim*, PhD thesis, University of Haifa, Haifa, 2004 (Hebrew); Garb, *Manifestations of Power*, pp. 174–84, and in the following footnote. This presence may account for the parallel between *Binah* and *Saturn* found in Alemanno's student, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, according to Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, pp. 100–1. On Alemanno and Joseph Ashkenazi as the former's source see also Ogren, *Renaissance and Rebirth*, pp. 187, 193–8, 216–17.
- 93 Ed. Grossberg, p. 21. On this book of magic, spuriously attributed to ibn Ezra, in the Renaissance, see Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, p. 195; Idel, 'The Study Program of Yohanan Alemanno', p. 312, n. 76; and now Leicht, *Astrologumena Judaica*, pp. 367–8. The Hebrew phrase translated as 'among the places' is *min ha-beqa'ot*. Compare the above quotation from ibn Motot, n. 77 above, and the texts quoted in Idel, 'The Epistle of R. Isaac of Pisa (?)', pp. 166–7. I assume that this phrase has something to do with Saturn as the god of agriculture in Latin mythology.
- 94 *Collectanea*, MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 2234, fol. 126b; on this issue see also *ibid.*, fol. 127b. For more on Saturn in the folios close to these in Alemanno see the quotes adduced in chapter 2. Compare also the ambivalent attitude of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, as adduced by Henri de Lubac, *Pico de la Mirandole* (Aubier, Montaigne, Paris, 1974), pp. 314–15.
- 95 See his mention of Saturn in his *Dialoghi d'Amore*, as discussed in Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturne et la mélancolie*, pp. 404, n. 35, and in the translator's note on pp. 680–1. Ebreo mentions Saturn several times in his book. See *Dialogues of Love*, ed. Rossella Pescatori, tr. Damian Bacich and Rossella Pescatori (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2009), pp. 123–5, 134–5, 147, 148, 150–3, 290.
- 96 *Dever*.
- 97 'Al tzad ha-kishshuf. In his *She'erit Yosef* (see next note) the version is 'al derekh kishshuf. See n. 15 above.
- 98 *Sefer 'Even ha-Shoham*, MS. Jerusalem, NUL, Heb. 8^o 416, fol. 136b. See also the parallel text found in his *Sefer She'erit Yosef*, MS. Warsaw 229, fol. 21a. These texts have been drawn to my attention by Dr Yoni Garb. On this kabbalist see Garb's 'Techniques of Trance in the Jerusalemite Kabbalah', *Pe'amim*, vol. 70 (1997), pp. 47–67 (Hebrew), his *Manifestations of Power*, pp. 187–94 and his 'The Kabbalah of Rabbi Joseph ibn Sayyah as a Source for the Understanding of Safedian Kabbalah', *Kabbalah*, vol. 4 (1999), pp. 255–313 (Hebrew).
- 99 *Toledot Yitzhaq*, fol. 12a. The impact of ibn Zarza's *Meqor Hayyim* is evident in his account. See also *ibid.*, fol. 49b.

- 100 See *Sefer Kevod 'Elohim* (Constantinople, 1585), fol. 111a.
- 101 On Saturn and the two zodiacal signs see the paintings adduced in Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturne et la mélancolie*, pp. 304–6, 312–13. See also above, n. 86.
- 102 Saturn's.
- 103 See n. 102 above. See also Yagel, *A Valley of Vision*, p. 323.
- 104 See, e.g., above the texts referred to in nn. 87 and 90. The assumption that the Jews are predisposed to destruction is an example of the process of assimilation, to be dealt with in para. 8.
- 105 Saturn's.
- 106 Yagel, *A Valley of Vision*, p. 171. On this author in general see Ruderman, *Kabbalah, Magic, and Science*. Slaves, graves and prisons occur in Ashkenazi's *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*. It should be mentioned that elsewhere in *A Valley of Vision*, pp. 323–4, another astro-magical discussion on Saturn, now put in relation with the *sefirah* of *hesed*, symbolized by Abraham, was adduced. Also very important is the discussion, *ibid.*, pp. 303–4, where an implicit relation was established between Saturn and the Hebrew language. For a nexus between Saturn, the Jews and plague, in a context where Kabbalah is also mentioned, see Yagel's contemporary, Giordano Bruno, as translated and discussed in Karen-Silvia de Léon-Jones, *Giordano Bruno and the Kabbalah: Prophets, Magicians, and Rabbis* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1998), pp. 119–21. Let me note that the association of Kabbalah with assinity, so characteristic of Bruno's thought, including the passage translated in this reference, may be related to the connection between an ass and Saturn, found in the later layer of the *Zohar*, *Ra'aya Meheimna'*, *Zohar*, III, fol. 282a, and in Henri Cornelius Agrippa of Netesheim, *De Occulta Philosophia*, I, ch. 26, as well as in another passage of Agrippa, pointed out by de Léon-Jones, *ibid.*, pp. 109–11, 128–30. For the ancient accusation that Jews worship an ass, see John G. Gager, *The Origins of Antisemitism* (Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford, 1985), pp. 40, 46 and Halbronn, *Le Monde Juif et l'Astrologie*, pp. 216–17.
- 107 See fol. 16ab.
- 108 *Shefifon 'alei 'orah*. Cf. Genesis 49:17, where this serpentine is a parallel to *Nahash*, a serpent. On Saturn and serpent see also below the connection between Sabbatai Tzevi and the serpent in ch. 2, n. 108.
- 109 *Moshi'a Hossim*, ch. 8, fol. 27a. On this book see Ruderman, *Kabbalah, Magic and Science*, pp. 32–4. On the issue of the conjunction of the two planets, Yagel was also influenced by bin Rijal. See Yagel, *Valley of Vision*, p. 99. On smell and Saturn see the passage of Solomon Maimon in ch. 3.
- 110 *Moshi'a Hossim*, fols. 13a, 13b.
- 111 *Ibid.*, fol. 17b. See already Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, II:9, p. 86. For more on Jewish views on the Greatest Conjunction and plague in a passage written

- by a witness to the plague, see the important passage by Moshe Narboni printed in Gerit Bos, 'R. Moshe Narboni: Philosopher and Physician: A Critical Analysis of *Sefer Orach Hayyim*', *Medieval Encounters*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1995), pp. 241–3, and the bibliography adduced there concerning recent research on the Black Death. The connection between the tenth of the greatest conjunctions and pestilence can already be found in Abu Ma'shar.
- 112 See below, n. 171.
- 113 See Dov Schwartz, 'The Neoplatonic Movement in 14th Century Jewish Literature and its Relationship to Theoretical and Practical Medicine', *Koroth*, vol. 9, nos 9–10 (1989), pp. 272–84 (Hebrew).
- 114 *Moshi'a Hossim*, fol. 17b. See also *ibid.*, fol. 18a. It should be emphasized that Yagel's interest in plague has much to do with what happened in Italy in his lifetime. See Yagel, *Valley of Vision*, index, under plague. For the nexus between Saturn and serpents see the next chapter in the context of Sabbatai Tzevi.
- 115 Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturne et la mélancolie*, p. 208.
- 116 See, for the time being, Idel, 'Kabbalah and Elites in Thirteenth-Century Spain', *Mediterranean Historical Review*, vol. 9 (1994), pp. 5–19; Idel, 'On Judaism, Jewish Mysticism, and Magic', pp. 212–13. None of the authors cited here reflect a positive attitude towards Saturn and its role as the overlord of Jews, and more belonged, in their lifetimes, to the Jewish Rabbinic elite, where the attitude towards astrology was slightly more circumspect. It should be mentioned that some form of rejection of astro-magic may be discerned in Jewish esoteric literature in late antiquity. See Idel, 'Hermeticism and Judaism', p. 61.
- 117 Perhaps this is a corrupted form for *Balinus*, the Arabic form of the name of Apollonius, to whom some magical words, also dealing with astro-magic, have been attributed. These quotations are reminiscent of concepts found in *Picatrix* and in the spurious *Sefer ha-'Atzamim* which is attributed to ibn Ezra. Indeed the two books surfaced in Castile in the fourteenth century. See Moritz Steinschneider, *Zur pseudepigraphischen Literatur, insbesondere der geheimen Wissenschaften des Mittelalters aus Hebraeischen und Arabischen Quellen* (Berlin, 1862), pp. 29–30, n. 7. See also Schwartz, 'Astrology and Astral Magic', pp. 53–4, 72, and the view of Isaac Pulgar, *ibid.*, p. 58. On the ascent of Hermetic elements in Kabbalah in general and in the second half of the thirteenth century in particular see Idel, 'Hermeticism and Kabbalah', in P. Lucentini, I. Parri and V. P. Compagni (eds), *Hermeticism from Late Antiquity to Humanism* (Brespol, Turnhout, 2004), pp. 389–408. See also the discussions about astral magic in the circles related to Nahmanides and ibn Adret, in Schwartz, *Studies on Astral Magic*, pp. 56–90 and Leicht, *Astrologumena Judaica*, p. 297. This epistle may well be a source of the Arabic original of *Picatrix*. See also Bar Ilan, *Astrology and Other Sciences*, pp.

19–20. The Pseudo-Galen passage has been copied by R. Elijah of Smyrna in his *Midrash Talpiyyot* (ed. Smyrna, repr. Jerusalem, 1963), fol. 171d and Steinschneider, *ibid.*

118 *Commentary on Deuteronomy* 18.10, ed. C. D. Chavel (Mossad ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem, 1968), vol. III, p. 361. See also Ginsburg, *Sod ha-Shabbat*, p. 163, n. 378. The negative aspects of Saturn were duly put in relief in the same commentary on Genesis 29.32, *ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 258–9

119 R. Bahya, *ibid.* There can be no doubt that astro-magic was well-known in Bahya's entourage, especially in the context of astral medicine. See Joseph Shatzmiller, 'In Search of the *Book of Figures*: Medicine and Astrology in Montpellier at the Turn of the Fourteenth Century', *Association for Jewish Studies Review*, vol. 7 (1982/83), pp. 383–407; Shatzmiller, 'The Forms of the Twelve Constellations: A 14th Century Controversy', in Z. Harvey, M. Idel and E. Schweid (eds), *Shlomo Pines Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1990), vol. II, pp. 397–408 (Hebrew); Gerrit Bos, Charles Burnett and Y. Tzvi Langermann, *Hebrew Medical Astrology: David ben Yom Tov, Kelal Qatan* (American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 2005) as well as n. 118 above. See also the reference to Scholem in n. 123 below. Interesting discussions on Saturn are also spread in the various sermons of R. Jacob of Sicily, *Torat ha-Minhah*, who was another student of Shlomo ben Abraham ibn Adret – known as the Rashba' – also the main master of our R. Bahya, and those discussions deserve separate analyses. It should be pointed out that the *Book of the Moon* resorts to a term that is translated in Hebrew as *temunah*, again talisman. On this book, which was known to R. Bahya's entourage, see Fabrizio Lelli, 'Le versioni ebraiche di un testo ermetico: Il *Sefer Ha-Levanah*', *Henoch*, vol. 12 (1990), pp. 147–63.

120 Addition to *Zohar*, II, fol. 275a. It should be mentioned that in Gershom Scholem's private copy of the *Zohar*, printed as *Sefer ha-Zohar shel Gershom Scholem*, ed. Josef, 1873 (The Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1992), vol. IV, fol. 274b, he noted in handwriting the affinity between the two passages, and writes that this is a reaction to *Picatrix* and related to R. Bahya's passage quoted above. He also refers to *Zohar* III, fol. 272b, which indeed has a parallel with the sorrow of some people during Sabbath and the difference from the Jewish ritual, without, however, mentioning Saturn. There, Scholem, *ibid.*, vol. VI, fol. 272b, he again refers to Bahya, and this time mentions the Pseudo-Galenus. However, see my discussion immediately below. On Bahya and the *Zohar* see Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 90–3, and the bibliography on the topic. *The Book of Solomon* is an imagined book, like other ancient ones, which is found in Zoharic literature. On another possible source for Zoharic acquaintance with forms of Hellenistic magic in late antiquity see Liebes, 'Zohar and Iamblichus'. On the contemporary view of Lull that the astral bodies do

- not transmit energy but 'imprint it on them ... their similitudes which are the influences which they transmit to their inferiors', cf. Yates, *Lull & Bruno*, pp. 107–8. On astrology in this layer of Zoharic literature see Kiener, 'Astrology in Jewish Mysticism', pp. 38–42.
- 121 *Zohar Ḥadash*, ed. Reuven Margalioṭ (Mossad ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem, 1978), pericope *Yithro*, fol. 32a. On supplementary souls during Sabbath in a similar context see above n. 57. The composition that is quoted here differs substantially from the style of the conceptual framework of the first layers of the *Zohar*, and is closer to the later layers of Zoharic literature, *Tiqqunei Zohar* and *Ra'aya' Meheimna'*, like the former passage that was added to *Zohar II*, and translated above, though I am not sure that it necessarily belongs to it. (See, however, Scholem, *Devils, Demons, and Souls*, p. 294, n. 209, and p. 299.) For a lengthy and important discussion of Sabbatai and demonic powers, idolatry and maidservants, see the fragment from this layer printed in *Zohar*, III, fols 281b–82a. See also below, n. 128. This layer should be dated to the very end of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries in Spain. See also Ginsburg, *Sod ha-Shabbat*, p. 165, n. 381 and Goldreich, 'The Pessimistic Pole of the Sabbath', p. 58, n. 51. On the negative aspects of the Sabbath in ancient sources and in some medieval ones, see the important study by Pedaya, 'Sabbath, Sabbatai', pp. 169–91.
- 122 For more on Sabbath and Sabbatai, see Elliot K. Ginsburg, *The Sabbath in Classical Kabbalah* (SUNY Press, Albany, 1989), pp. 198, 212 n. 38, pp. 223, 240–1, 253 nn. 53–4.
- 123 *Be-kishshuf*. See n. 15 above.
- 124 *Mekashshef*.
- 125 *Zohar ḥadash*, fol. 32a.
- 126 See also the presence of detailed discussions on Saturn in ibn Waḥ shiyyah's important book on magic, the famous *Nabbatean Agriculture*, which might have had an impact on the original Arabic of *Picatrix*, as pointed out by David Pingree, 'Some of the Sources of the *Ghayat al-Ḥ'akim*', *JCWI*, vol. 43 (1980), p. 12, and as described in Schwartz, *Studies on Astral Magic*, p. 35 and the references there, and see especially the long discussion on Saturn's worship in *Sefer ha-'Atzamim*, ed. Grossberg, p. 21. See also above, n. 124. Some fragments from the book of *Nabbatean Agriculture* were known towards the end of the thirteenth century in Spain, as the quotations found in a lost book of Shem Tov Falaquera demonstrate. See the passage quoted in Raphael Jospe and Dov Schwartz, 'Shem Tov Falaquera's Lost Bible Commentary', *HUCA*, vol. 64 (1993), pp. 199–200, and my 'Golems and God', pp. 239–41. On the Hebrew versions of the book of *Picatrix* see Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy*, pp. 206–7; Leicht, *Astrologumena Judaica*, pp. 316–22; and Schwartz, *Astral Magic*,

pp. 101–3. See also the important discussions in Cohen-Aloro, *Magic and Sorcery in the Zohar*, pp. 137–9, and the footnotes on pp. 320, 322, 329–30. For the impact of *Picatrix* in the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance in Christian thought, see Warburg, *The Renewal of Ancient Paganism*, pp. 643, 687, 691, 701–2, 734, 735, 736, 753; Garin, *Astrology in the Renaissance*, pp. 29–55; Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, pp. 49–57, 69–72, 80–2, 107–8, 141–2, 370–1; and Couliano, *Eros and Magic*, pp. 142–3.

- 127 'The Beginning of Kabbalah in Northern Africa? A Forgotten Document by R. Yehudah ben Nissim ibn Malka', *Pe'amim*, vol. 43 (1990), p. 12 n. 53 (Hebrew). See also the important discussion of Dorit Cohen-Aloro, *The Secret of the Garment in the Zohar* (Research Projects of the Institute of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, 1987), pp. 81–7 (Hebrew).
- 128 *Zohar Hadash*, fol. 33d and Ginsburg, *Sod ha-Sabbat*, p. 165, n. 381. See also the passage cited immediately below from *Tiqqun* 21.
- 129 *Patiya*'. According to another interpretation it means a vessel, apparently used for magical purposes.
- 130 On ravens as birds that are conceived of as belonging to Saturn, see ibn Ezra, *Reshit Hokhmah*, p. xliii. Here we have some form of revelation of the future by means of the movements of black birds, stemming from demonic powers, which are related to Saturn.
- 131 Nights. However, given the frequent correlation between Saturn and Lilith, in this layer of the *Zohar*, I assume that this is a pun, which attempts to connect the darkness of the night with demonic female power. On the nexus between Lilith, Sabbatai and melancholy see the Zoharic text belonging to the same layer and printed in *Zohar*, III, fol. 227b, and the view of Joseph of Hamadan, *Sefer Toledot 'Adam*, printed in Jacob M. Toledano (ed.), *Sefer ha-Malkhut* (Casablanca, 1930), fol. 52d. This kabbalist, active in Castile at the close of the thirteenth century, may well be the main source of the author of the view of the kabbalist who wrote *Tiqqunei Zohar*. For other possible influences of this kabbalist on *Tiqqunei Zohar*, see M. Idel, Introduction to Efraim Gottlieb, *The Hebrew Writings of the Author of Tiqqunei Zohar and Ra'aya Mehemna* (Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem, 2003), pp. 32–4 (Hebrew). See also the Hebrew passage authored by the kabbalist who wrote *Tiqqunei Zohar*, printed by Goldreich, 'The Pessimistic Pole of the Sabbath', pp. 54–5 and the pertinent footnotes. Compare, however, Hillman, *Senex and Puer*, p. 319, who assumes that Saturn is negatively inclined towards women.
- 132 To the sinners.
- 133 *Dinim*. This *Dinim* is quite a different meaning in comparison to *din* as religion, in the text of Joseph Ashkenazi and Sabbatai Tzevi.
- 134 The demonic powers called *Leilot*.
- 135 *Qesem*.

- 136 *Sam ha-Mawwet*. This is a pun on *Sam*, 'poison', and the two last consonants of *Qesem*. The phrase 'poison of death' already occurs in ibn Ezra's description of Saturn. See *Reshit Hokhmah*, p. xliii. See n. 13 above. This issue may be of importance for the claims of fourteenth-century Christians that Jews were poisoning the water. See Guerschberg, 'La controverse'. The vision that venom is related to Saturn also occurs also in Marsilio Ficino's *De vita coelitus comparanda*, in a passage where he refers to views of the Arabs.
- 137 The term translated as poison, in Hebrew, *Sam*, when combined with 'El (God) produce *Samael*. On Samael and Saturn see also Ginsberg, *Legends of the Jews*, vol. V, p. 135, n. 5.
- 138 *Tiqqunei Zohar*, ed. R. Margaliot, *Tiqqun* no. 70, fol. 124a. On this text see Ginsburg, *Sod ha-Shabbat*, p. 166, n. 382, and Scholem, *Demons, Devils, and Souls*, p. 63. On magic based on mantics referring to birds in the main Zoharic corpus see Cohen-Aloro, *Magic and Sorcery in the Zohar*, pp. 229–34. Note the occurrence of the female aspects of demonic power, an issue that will also be addressed in the next two chapters. This passage had an impact on some of the sermons of the important eighteenth-century author Jonathan Eibeschuetz's books of homilies *Ya'arot Devash*, an issue that deserves a separate inquiry.
- 139 *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *Tiqqun* no. 21, fols 56b–57a. On this text see also Ginsburg, *Sod ha-Shabbat*, p. 166, n. 382; Pedaya, 'Sabbath, Sabbatai', pp. 173–4; and M. Idel, 'Sabbath: On Concepts of Time in Jewish Mysticism', in Gerald Blidstein (ed.), *Sabbath, Idea, History, Reality* (Ben Gurion University Press, Beer Sheva, 2004), pp. 57–93. For more on the negative aspects of the Sabbath in *Tiqqunei Zohar*, see Goldreich's important study of, 'The Pessimistic Pole of the Sabbath'. On the three meals on Sabbath, see also above, in the discussion on Abraham Abulafia.
- 140 On this issue see Isadore Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah)* (Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 1980), pp. 389–91. See also Goldreich, 'The Pessimistic Pole of the Sabbath', pp. 55–6, n. 45.
- 141 Schwartz, 'La magie astrale', p. 51.
- 142 See Schwartz, 'Worship of God'.
- 143 *Ibid.*, pp. 50–1. See also below in this paragraph the passage from Alemanno's *Sha'ar ha-Hesheq*.
- 144 Schwartz, 'The Polemic on Astral Magic in 14th Century Provence', *Zion*, vol. 58 (1993), pp. 141–74 (Hebrew).
- 145 *Ma'asei ha-kishshuf*. See n. 15 above.
- 146 *ha-mityahadim*. This is a pun on Esther 8.17.
- 147 *Tzeidah la-Derekh* (Warsaw, 1880), fol. 63b, adduced and discussed by Schwartz, 'Different Forms', p. 17 and *Studies in Astral Magic*, pp. 267–9.

- 148 *kishshuf*. See n. 15 above. On talismanic magic as sorcery see also Alemanno's contemporary, Isaac Abravanel; cf. Idel, 'The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations', p. 214.
- 149 Halberstadt, 1860, fol. 44a. See also another text from this book, quoted and analysed in Idel, 'The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations', p. 205. For the vacillation between a pro and a contra astrological position see also the circle of scholars in Florence, especially Giovanni Pico, cf. Walker, *Spiritual & Demonic Magic*, pp. 54–9 and Henri de Lubac, *Pic de la Mirandole, Études et discussions* (Aubier Montaigne, Paris, 1974), pp. 307–26. On Saturn, see especially pp. 309–11, 324–6. See also Karo, *Toledot Yitzḥaq*, fol. 92a, for a counter-Saturnian vision of Judaism.
- 150 See n. 145 above.
- 151 See his 'On the Function of Analogy in the Occult', in I. Merkel and A. Debus (eds.), *Hermeticism and the Renaissance* (Cranbury, New Jersey, 1988), pp. 265–92; and see also his 'Analogy versus Identity: The Rejection of the Occult Symbolism, 1580–1680', in B. Vickers (ed.), *Occult & Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986), pp. 95–164. See above, n. 112.
- 152 Guerschberg, 'La controverse', pp. 38–9 and Halbronn, *Le Monde Juif et l'Astrologie*, pp. 217–18.
- 153 Cf. Guerschberg, 'La controverse', p. 36. Unfortunately, Guerschberg, who duly though shortly pointed to the possible affinity between the relations between Saturn and Jews on the one hand, and their persecution during the plague on the other, could not pursue this path given the fact that she acknowledged that she did not have access to Jewish material. See *ibid.*, p. 35, n. 72.
- 154 Even Trachtenberg's *The Devil and the Jews*, which also discusses the Sabbat of the witches and the image of the Jews as sorcerers and magicians, did not contribute to a significant connection between Sabbath and Sabbat; see p. 210. Moreover, his contemporary, Montague Summers, a rather uncritical mind altogether, writes in 1925 in his *The History of Witchcraft* (The Citadel Press, Secaucus, NJ, 1974), p. 111: 'The derivation of the word Sabbat does not seem to be exactly established. It is perhaps superfluous to point out that it has nothing to do with the number seven, and is wholly unconnected with the Jewish festival.'
- 155 *Ecclesiasties*, p. 1.
- 156 Baroja, *The World of the Witches*, p. 88 and Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, p. 101.
- 157 *Ecclesiasties*, pp. 33–86.
- 158 *Ibid.*, especially p. 80.
- 159 See nn. 105, 116 and 120 above.
- 160 See Guerschberg, 'La controverse', pp. 8–9, 10, 36.

- 161 Ibid., p. 11.
- 162 Ibid., pp. 10, 36; on the corrupted air, see *ibid.*, pp. 10, 15, 17, 39; Lynn Thorndike, *History of Magic & Experimental Science* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1953), vol. III, pp. 244–5, 336–7; I assume that Ginzburg's remark in *Ecstasies*, p. 81, n. 8 should be corrected accordingly.
- 163 See above, n. 29. On the impact of the translations of ibn Ezra's astrological writings in Western Europe, see Thorndike, *History of Magic & Experimental Science*, vol. II, pp. 926–30.
- 164 On this point see Zika, 'Les parties du corps' and *Exorcising Our Demons*. For the resort to Saturnine imagery of the planet as killing his children in Christian anti-Jewish pamphlets, see the important contribution of Zafran, 'Saturn', pp. 24–6.
- 165 See Baroja, *The World of the Witches*, pp. 87–8. For another early mention of the cult of the goat; see H. C. Lea, *Materials toward a History of Witchcraft* (Thomas Yoseloff, New York, London, 1957), vol. I, p. 232; Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, pp. 46–8, 206, 208, 227 n. 11.
- 166 See Zika, 'Les partie du corps', p. 390, n. 2; Zika, *Exorcising Our Demons*, p. 375, n. 2; Zafran, 'Saturn', pp. 16–18, 21.
- 167 See Baroja, *The World of the Witches*, p. 88; Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, pp. 100–1.
- 168 See n. 6 above. See also the methodological approach of Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths*, pp. 156–63, which may be supplemented by the assumption that the Inquisitors not only learned from medieval books about Diana and applied their knowledge to the practices in the various part of Western Europe but also applied the concept of Sabbat as time for witchcraft.
- 169 See, especially, Eva Pocs, 'Le sabbat et les mythologies indo-européenes', in N. Jacques-Chaquin et M. Preaud (eds), *Le sabbat des sorciers en Europe, (XVe-XVIIIe siècles)*, (Jerome Millon, Grenobles, 1993), pp. 23–31.
- 170 I have discarded the 'earliest' document dealing with Sabbat explicitly, attributed to the Toulousian witches, which is frequently adduced as such in modern scholarship on witchcraft, since it is, as pointed out by Cohn, a late forgery. See his *Europe's Inner Demons*, pp. 129–32. Nevertheless, what is surprising in this forgery is a fact that did not attract the attention of Cohn, namely that one of the women 'described' the pact she signed with the Devil, and after incantations 'the Devil Berit appeared to her' (cf. Baroja, *The World of the Witches*, p. 86). I did not find any explanation for the term *Berit*. However, in Hebrew it means 'pact' or 'covenant'. Was the forger, Baron Lamother-Langon, using a Hebrew term at the beginning of the nineteenth century in Paris in order to create a nexus between Jews and the Sabbat ritual? See also Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, p. 86, n. 74.

- 171 'Vengeance and Curses, Blood and Libel', *Zion*, vol. 58 (1993), pp. 70–90 (Hebrew), now in Israel Jacob Yuval's *Two Nations in Your Womb*, pp. 92–203.
- 172 See the passages discussed in Idel, 'The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations', pp. 202–10; Idel, 'The Epistle of R. Isaac of Pisa (?)', pp. 166–7.
- 173 See Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, p. 11.
- 174 See Seznec's fine monograph *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*.
- 175 'Saturn and the Jews'.
- 176 See the marginal role astrology played in Frantisek Graus, *Pest – Geissler – Judenmorde* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Goettingen, 1987).
- 177 See especially the important contributions of Trachtenberg's two books for the Middle Ages and John G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism, Attitudes Toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1985), pp. 63, 107–12.
- 178 See Idel, 'On Some Forms of Order', pp. xlix–liv. For the marginalization of the roles of astronomy and astrology in the descriptions of the general economy of Kabbalistic literature see, e.g., Scholem, *Kabbalah*, pp. 186–7. Neither has it been taken into account seriously in most of the more recent discussions of this literature. The manner in which Kabbalah has been described in the studies of Isaiah Tishby, Efraim Gottlieb, Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, Rachel Elijor and Joseph Dan, to mention only some of the pertinent names, reflects this neglect of the 'occult' facets of Kabbalistic literature, far more interested as they are in the theological aspects of Kabbalah. On the other hand, astrology plays an important role in Georges Vajda's analyses of Kabbalah, but since they were written in French, these studies escaped the attention of many scholars of Kabbalah. It should be mentioned that the more recent ascent of the study of the magical dimensions in the scholarship of Kabbalah is reminiscent of the ascent of magic and astrology in the manner in which the Italian Renaissance is understood, after the studies of Daniel P. Walker, Frances A. Yates, Eugenio Garin, Paola Zambelli, Charles Zika and, more recently, Stéphane Toussaint.
- 179 See my *Absorbing Perfections*, throughout.
- 180 *Stolen Lighting, The Social Theory of Magic* (Vintage Books, New York, 1983), p. 133.
- 181 See 'Magic-Religion: Some Marginal Notes to an Old Problem', *Ethnos* vol. 22 (1957), pp. 109–19.
- 182 *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992), pp. 24–5.
- 183 Compare the view of Harari, *Early Jewish Magic*, who recommends resorting to the term *kishshuf* as a generic category.

184 See n. 10.

185 See, e.g., Johannes Reuchlin, *On the Art of the Kabbalah*, pp. 124–5, where it seems that for the first time Saturn, Sabbatai and Sabbath have been mentioned together in a context that has a positive overtone. In many other discussions in Jewish tradition, the celebration of the day of the Sabbath with joy is described as a contest with the negativity of the day, but these views do not concern us here. However, at the beginning of his much earlier *De Verbo Mirifico* there is a classical negative vision of the Jew Baruchias as Saturnine. See Johann Pistorius (ed.), *Ars Cabalistica* (Sebastianus Henripetri, Basle, 1587), p. 891 and Yates, *The Occult Philosophy*, p. 23. The diverging attitudes to Saturn in Reuchlin's writings require a separate study.

Chapter 2

- 1 More recently, it has been faithfully summarized by R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, 'Shabbetai Zevi', in H. Beinart (ed.), *The Sephardi Legacy* (Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1992), vol. II, pp. 207–16, where he offers, in wonderful English, a very faithful version of Scholem's views, consistently ignoring all the scholarship written after the master's death. On the other hand, see the innovative approach to the subject by Liebes, *Studies in Jewish Myth*, pp. 93–114, and his collection of studies *On Sabbateism*. For an innovative treatment of Nathan of Gaza's thought see Abraham Elqayam, *The Mystery of Faith in the Writings of Nathan of Gaza*, PhD thesis, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1993 (Hebrew). See also the references in nn. 3, 10 below. Compare the interesting critique of some of Scholem's views of the Sabbatean movement in Tishby, *Paths of Faith and Heresy*, pp. 235–75, who duly emphasizes the centrality of Tzevi for the emergence of the Sabbatean movement, as against Scholem's attribution of a greater role to Nathan of Gaza.
- 2 For critical reviews of Scholem's over-emphasis on the role of messianic Lurianism in the emergence of Sabbateanism, stemming from different angles, see Idel, "One from a Town"; Idel, 'On Prophecy and Magic in Sabbateanism'; and Ze'ev Gries, *Conduct Literature (Regimen Vitae), Its History and Place in the Life of the Beshtian Hasidism* (Bialik Institute, Jerusalem, 1989), p. 15 (Hebrew); Ze'ev Gries, 'The Fashioning of *Hanhagot (Regimen Vitae)* Literature at the end of the 16th and during the 17th Century and Its Historical Importance', *Tarbiz*, vol. 56 (1987), pp. 561–3, 570 (Hebrew); as well as Joseph Hacker, 'The Intellectual Activity among the Jews in the Ottoman Empire in the 16th and 17th Centuries', *Tarbiz*, vol. 53 (1984), p. 593 (Hebrew); Bat-Zion Eraqi-Klorman, *Messianism in the Jewish Community of Yemen in the Nineteenth Century*, PhD thesis, University of California, Los

- Angeles, 1981, pp. 42–8; Ya'aqov Barnai, *Sabbateanism: Social Perspectives* (Merkaz Shazar, Jerusalem, 2000), pp. 28–30 (Hebrew), and his studies mentioned in n. 9 below.
- 3 See, e.g., Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 45; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 404–14.
 - 4 See Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*.
 - 5 See Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 139–61.
 - 6 Alexander Altmann, 'Maimonides' Attitude toward Jewish Mysticism', in A. Jospe (ed.) *Studies in Jewish Thought* (Wayne University Press, Detroit, 1981), pp. 200–19; M. Idel, 'Maimonides and Kabbalah', in I. Twersky (ed.), *Studies in Maimonides* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1990), pp. 54–70.
 - 7 M. Idel, 'Major Currents in Italian Kabbalah between 1560–1660', *Italia Judaica* (Roma, 1986), vol. II, pp. 243–62, repr. in D. B. Ruderman (ed.), *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy* (New York University Press, New York, 1992), pp. 345–68.
 - 8 This strategy started before the emergence of Lurianism; see Idel, 'The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations', pp. 186–242; and for later phenomena see Alexander Altmann, 'Lurianic Kabbalah in a Platonic Key: Abraham Cohen Herrera's Puerta del Cielo', *HUCA*, vol. 53 (1982), pp. 321–4; Nissim Yosha, *Myth and Metaphor, Abraham Cohen Herrera's Philosophic Interpretation of Lurianic Kabbalah* (Ben Zvi Institute, Magnes Press, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1994) (Hebrew). See also M. Idel, 'Italy in Safed, Safed in Italy: Toward an Interactive History of Sixteenth Century Kabbalah', in David B. Ruderman and Giuseppe Veltri (eds), *Cultural Intermediaries, Jewish Intellectuals in Early Modern Italy* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2004), pp. 239–69.
 - 9 Yaakov Barnai, 'Christian Messianism and the Portuguese Marranos: The Emergence of Sabbateanism in Smyrna', *Jewish History*, vol. 7 (1993), pp. 119–26; Barnai, 'The Outbreak of Sabbateanism: The Eastern European Factor', *Journal for Jewish Thought and Philosophy*, vol. 4 (1994), pp. 171–83. See also Silvia Berti, 'A World Apart? Gershom Scholem and Contemporary Readings of 17th century Christian Relations', *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, vol. 3 (1996), pp. 212–14.
 - 10 On Kabbalah and astrology in general, see Halbronn, *Le Monde Juif et l' Astrologie*, pp. 289–334, as well as n. 117 below.
 - 11 See Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturne et la mélancolie*, pp. 210–12; For the ancient psychology of melancholy, afterwards connected to Saturn see Jean Pigeaud, *Aristote, l'homme de genie et la mélancolie* (Rivages, Paris, 1988), and Jean Starobinski, *La mélancolie au miroir* (Julliard, Paris, 1989) and his *Histoire du traitement de la mélancolie des origines à 1900* (Basle, 1960), as well as Mortimer Ostow, *The Psychology of Melancholy* (Harper and Row, London,

- 1970). On the negative perceptions of Saturn, in addition to what has already been demonstrated above, see Jane Chance Nitzsche, *The Genius Figure in Antiquity in the Middle Ages* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1975), pp. 22–3, 75–7. See also Eleazar Gutwirth, ‘Jewish Bodies and Renaissance Melancholy: Culture and the City in Italy and the Ottoman Empire’, in Maria Diemling and Giuseppe Veltri (eds), *The Jewish Body: Corporeality, Society, and Identity, in the Renaissance and Early Modern Period* (Brill, Leiden, 2009), pp. 57–92 and C. G. Jung, *Aion* (Princeton, 1979), pp. 74–7.
- 12 On Saturn and the Golden Age see Gianni Guastella, ‘Saturn, Lord of the Golden Age’, in Ciavoletta, *Saturn from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, pp. 1–23. See the important text of the tenth century Al-Qabisi, known as Alcabitius, discussed in *Saturne et la mélancolie*, p. 208, and quoted in chapter 1 above, as well as the passage from *Picatrix* adduced in Hillman, ‘Senex and Puer’, p. 316. The name of Saturn, Sabbatai in Hebrew, often surfaces in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Hebrew texts, which mingled philosophy, astrology, and magic, a subject studied in recent years by Dov Schwartz. See, e.g., his *Studies in Astral Magic*, and n. 15 below.
- 13 *Reshit Hokhmah*, as quoted and analysed above, chapter 1.
- 14 See his *Megillat ha-Megalleh*, pp. 116, 119, 128, 148, 149, 151, 152. See also Ben-Shalom, *Facing Christian Culture*, pp. 156–7 and Garin, *Astrology in the Renaissance*, pp. 21–3, 120, n. 24. Alemanno quotes bar Ḥiyya to this effect in his untitled treatise in MS. Paris BN 849, fol. 121b.
- 15 To the Land of Israel. On the later nexus between the Land of Israel and Saturn see Schwartz, ‘Land, Space, and Star’, p. 148 and n. 40.
- 16 Ecclesiastes 5.7.
- 17 On the relation between ‘the power of dust’ and Sabbatai see also Abulafia’s *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, ed. I. Weinstock (Mossad ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem, 1984), p. 34. This is part of the correspondence of Saturn to earth, one of the four elements in many texts. See, e.g., the view of *Ra’aya Meheimna*, *Zohar* III, fol. 282a. It should be pointed out that dust became a symbol of the *sefirah* of *Binah* in the writings of Abulafia’s contemporary, Moses de Leon.
- 18 *Sefer Gan Na’ul*, MS. Munchen 58, fol. 327a, ed. Gross, pp. 37–8. This passage is quoted verbatim in *Sefer ha-Peliy’ah*, I, fol. 76c, a book that was studied by Sabbatai Tzevi, as we shall see below. On this book, see Kushnir-Oron, *The Sefer Ha-Peli’ah*, especially pp. 75–6, where Abulafia’s influence on the book is discussed. For more on Sabbatai, the image of the Jew, and the Land of Israel, see Abulafia’s *Sefer ‘Otzar ‘Eden Ganuz*, MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1580, fol. 95c. See also *ibid.*, fol. 102a, as well as Joseph Ashkenazi’s *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, translated below in the Appendix. On Sabbatai and black bile see *Sefer ‘Otzar ‘Eden Ganuz*, fol. 109a. On another issue, the pronunciation of the divine name by a messianic figure,

as shared by both Abulafia and Sabbatai Tzevi, see Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 185–7 and ‘On Prophecy and Magic in Sabbateanism’. On the nexus between Saturn and prophecy, see also William of Auvergne. Cf. Idel, ‘On Prophecy and Magic in Sabbateanism’, p. 34. Elsewhere I shall address the astrological underpinnings of some of Abulafia’s revelations, based upon unknown Kabbalistic material found mainly in some manuscripts.

- 19 See O. Loth, ‘Al-Kindi als Astrolog’, *Morgenlaendische Studien* (Leipzig, 1875), pp. 263–309; Halbronn, *Le Monde Juif et l’astrologie*, pp. 139–42, 156–9; Frederik A. de Armas, ‘Saturn in Conjunction: From Albumasar to Lope de Vega’, in Ciavolella, *Saturn from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, pp. 151–71; Laura Ackerman Smoller, *History, Prophecy, and the Stars* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1994); Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos*, pp. 106–7. For the Jewish discussions of *conjunctio maxima*, see, e.g., the texts printed in Beit Arié–Idel, ‘An Essay on the End and Astrology’, and see also nn. 24 and 58 below. For an explicit reference to this conjunction as a proof for Sabbatai Tzevi’s messianism see the argument of Raphael Supino, preserved in Sasportas, *Tzitzat Novel Tzevi*, p. 93 and discussed further in this chapter.
- 20 See bar Hiyya, *Megillat ha-Megalleh*, pp. 11, 119, 128, 153–4.
- 21 See MS. Firenze-Laurentiana, II, 5, fols 230a–36b, MS. Paris, BN 711, fol. 66b, etc. Whether this Moshe is a son of Yehudah ibn Matqa, a Toledan Jewish thinker, whose views are close to some of the aspects of the *Commentary on the Alphabet*, is a matter that cannot be discussed here. On the views of ibn Matka, see Colette Sirat, ‘Juda b. Salomon Ha-Kohen – philosophe, astronome et peut-etre Kabbaliste de la premiere moitie du XIIIe siecle’, *Italia*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1979), pp. 39–61. In her book, *La philosophie Juive medievale en pays de Chretiené*, pp. 70–1, she quotes this commentary on the name of Yehudah ben Moshe ibn Matka. See also now Y. Tzvi Langermann, ‘From My Notebooks: Two Treatises on the Letters of the Hebrew Alphabet’, *Aleph*, vol. 3 (2003), pp. 293–7; and Nissan-Ophir Shemesh, *Saturnine Traits*, pp. 114–15. For an important translator at the court of Alfonso Sabio, Yehudah ben Moshe, who was active later than the previous author with the same name, and perhaps was involved in the translation of the Arabic original of *Picatrix*, see Norman Roth, ‘Jewish Collaborators in Alfonso’s Scientific Work’, in Robert I. Burns, SJ (ed.), *Emperor of Culture, Alfonso X the Learned of Castile and His Thirteenth Century Renaissance* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1990), pp. 64–7. It should be pointed out that the connection between *Lamed* and Saturn appears also in *Sefer ha-Temunah*, fol. 6b. Both books are commentaries on the Hebrew alphabet. In general, the genre of commentaries on the alphabet in Judaism deserves special inquiry, and it may well be that this is the result of the influence of Islam. See Yair Zoran, ‘Magic, Theurgy, and the Knowledge of Letters in Islam

and their Parallels in Jewish Literature', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore*, vol. 18 (1997), pp. 19–62 (Hebrew). Let me point out that in addition to the many manuscripts in which this commentary is extant, its traces are visible in the thought of a leading Italian kabbalist of the mid sixteenth century, Mordekhai Dato. See the material printed by Jacobson, *Path of Exile and Redemption*, pp. 406–8, n. 257, where Dato quotes several times from an anonymous manuscript, adducing in fact some interesting parts of the commentary including some of the discussion related to Saturn. It may well be that Dato has seen a longer version than the one found in the two manuscripts I used. Dato himself, however, does not attribute any importance to the astrological approach in his own vision of the end. See Jacobson, *ibid.*, p. 199.

- 22 Namely, the year 1260 in the common calendar. On this year as related to redemption, see also Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb*, p. 293. As to its reliance, see *ibid.*, pp. 293–4 and n. 103; on Scholem's conjectural remark regarding the possibility of Joachim of Fiore's impact on the Kabbalistic theory of *Shemittot* and Jubilees, I would like to point out that the astrological explanation is far better documented and more convincing than the assumption of Christian influence. It is a complex methodological subject as to how the selection of the sources of influence that are quite broad is to be made in order to point the research in a specific direction without first surveying all the other possibilities, but this is an issue that cannot be dealt with here. See, meanwhile, M. Idel, 'The Jubilee in Jewish Mysticism', in E. Rambaldi Feldman (ed.), *Millenarismi nella cultura contemporanea* (F. Angeli, Milano, 2000), pp. 209–32. A similar selectivity is found in Scholem's resort to Gnostic sources, in order to bolster his theory of the Gnostic origin of Kabbalah. In my opinion, if late-antiquity texts written in Greek did influence Kabbalah in a significant manner, it was more likely to have been Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*, not the Gnostic works. It should be pointed out that there is a strong affinity between Saturn and time, as the essay by Erwin Panofsky, 'Father Time' demonstrates. See his *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1962), pp. 69–93.
- 23 Sabbatai.
- 24 See also MS. Paris BN 711, fol. 66a, and the rather contemporary astrological view printed in Alexander Marx, 'Ma'amar 'al Shenat Ge'ullah', *ha-Tzofeh le-Hokhmat Yisrael*, vol. 5 (1921), p. 198, mentioning the *coniunctio maxima* between Saturn and Jupiter. The material found in this document stems from a variety of sources and the collection cannot be dated earlier than the mid thirteenth century. On the origin of religions as linked to the great conjunctions of Saturn and Jupiter, see also Sela, *Astrology and Biblical Exegesis in Abraham ibn Ezra's Thought*, pp. 85–97; Georges Vajda, *Recherches*

- sur la philosophie et la kabbale dans la pensée juive du Moyen Age* (Paris, 1962), p. 264, n. 3; and Warburg, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, pp. 622–3, 637, 768–9. See also above n. 19.
- 25 On the dating of his floruit, see M. Idel, 'The Beginning of Kabbalah in Northern Africa? A Forgotten Document by R. Yehuda ben Nissim ibn Malka', *Pe'amim*, vol. 43 (1990), pp. 4–15 (Hebrew), especially p. 10, n. 42. On this author and his views on astrology see Vajda, *Juda ben Nissim ibn Malka*, pp. 45–6, 136–41, 143
 - 26 See the texts on this conjunction printed in Beit-Arié-Idel, 'An Essay on the End and Astrology', pp. 174–94, 825–6.
 - 27 See *ibid.*
 - 28 See the texts collected and translated in Idel, 'The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations', pp. 209–10 and our discussions in chapter 1.
 - 29 in Michal Oron and Amos Goldreich (eds), *Massu'ot, Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Philosophy in Memory of Prof. Ephraim Gottlieb* (Mossad Bialik, Jerusalem, 1994), pp. 28–9 (Hebrew). See also below, n. 77.
 - 30 *Zohar*, I, fol. 261b.
 - 31 *Zohar*, II, fol. 46b. Similar views recur in Kabbalistic literature; see, e.g., the late-fifteenth-century Italian kabbalist Elijah ben Benjamin of Genazzano, *'Iggeret Hamudot*, ed. A. Greenup (London, 1912), p. 60, analysed by Charles Mopsik, *Les grands textes de la Kabbale* (Verdier, Lagrasse, 1993), pp. 303–4.
 - 32 Psalm 89.37. See especially verse 41 where the term *meshihekha*, your anointed, which was later understood as 'your Messiah', is mentioned. The eschatological interpretation of these verses is standard, though Abulafia's extraction of precise dates seems to be unparalleled.
 - 33 The night of watchfulness. This is apparently a deficient spelling of *Leil shimmurim*, an expression found in Exodus 12.42, a verse understood as pregnant with messianic implications.
 - 34 Both expressions amount to 660, just as the phrase. See below, n. 36.
 - 35 The recognition of the soul, a phrase that in gematria also comes to 660.
 - 36 *Ka-shemesh* amounts also to 660.
 - 37 Psalm 89.37. For the Sabbatean interpretation of this verse as the gematria of Sabbatai Tzevi, see the text printed by Benayahu, *The Sabbatean Movement*, p. 501.
 - 38 *Negdi* and *Binah* amount numerically to the same figure – 67 – as do the combination of the words *Gedi* and *Deli*.
 - 39 Capricorn.
 - 40 Aquarius.
 - 41 On Saturn and the two signs of the zodiac, which are its houses, see, e.g., the paintings adduced in Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturne et la mélancholie*, pp. 304–6, 312–13, and see also below, n. 75.
 - 42 Namely, the planet.

- 43 *Kokhav Shabbatai* amounts in gematria to 760, like *Mahshavti*. Saturn has been connected in many sources with the intellect. On Sabbatai as related to the two signs of the zodiac and as the star of Israel, see the introduction to Abulafia's commentary on Genesis, *Mafteah ha-Hokhmot*, ed. A. Gross (Jerusalem, 2001), pp. 42–3.
- 44 Like *Binah*. In gematria both are equivalent to 87.
- 45 Like the sun. *Hokhmah* and *ke-Hamah* amount to 73.
- 46 *Ba-tequfah*.
- 47 Abulafia differentiates between the higher form of Kabbalah dealing with the divine names and the lower one dealing with the *sefirot*. See M. Idel, 'The Contribution of Abraham Abulafia's Kabbalah to the Understanding of Jewish Mysticism', in P. Schaefer and J. Dan (eds), *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, 50 Years After* (J. C. B. Mohr, Tübingen, 1993), pp. 124–7, and 'On the Meanings of the Term "Qabbalah": Between Prophetic Kabbalah and the Kabbalah of *Sefirot* in the 13th Century', *Pe'amim*, vol. 93 (2003), pp. 39–76 (Hebrew). Here, the secret of the paths of the *sefirot* is the numerical calculation, which extracts the meaning of the *Binah*, understood as Kabbalah, by the gematria of the two signs of the zodiac *gedi ve-deli* = 87.
- 48 *Binah* as a term for Kabbalah, see Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 209–15. See also the view found in 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz, ed. A. Gross, (Jerusalem, 2000), p. 286, where there is a nexus between Sabbatai/Saturn, Sabbath and *Teshuvah*, repentance, a symbol that in theosophical Kabbalah stands for *Binah*.
- 49 The phrase in brackets is found in *Sefer ha-Peluy'ah*, but not in MS. Munchen.
- 50 The time of the End, in Hebrew 'Et Qetz, amounts in gematria to *Seter*, namely 660. Elsewhere in this book Abulafia proposes the gematria *Qetz* = 190 = *ne'elam*, namely hidden, like *seter*. See MS. Munchen 58, fol. 338b, ed. Gross, p. 76. The gematria of *Qetz* as *ne'elam* is already found in Nehemiah ben Shlomo of Erfurt, one of the sources of Abulafia. See M. Idel, 'Some Forlorn Writings of a Forgotten Ashkenazi Prophet: R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo ha-Navi', *JQR*, vol. 96 (2005), pp. 186–7. See also the next note.
- 51 In many places in this book *Seter*, *arcanum*, stands for the figure 660, which has a messianic meaning in Abulafia. See, e.g., MS. Munchen 58, fol. 328b, ed. Gross, p. 76. In other words, the quintessential *arcanum* is the eschatological one. This figure is also the result of the multiplication of 12 by 55, which is *Yod Bet*, and *Nun Hei*, the four consonants of *Binah*, and it is also the numerical value of 'like the sun', *ka-shemesh*. For more on Abulafia's calculations of the end, see M. Idel, "'The Time of the End": Apocalypticism and Its Spiritualization in Abraham Abulafia's Eschatology', in Albert Baumgarten (ed.), *Apocalyptic Time* (Brill, Leiden,

2000), pp. 155–86. On Abulafia and messianism in general see also Abraham Berger, ‘The Messianic Self-Consciousness of Abraham Abulafia: A Tentative Evaluation’, in J. L. Blau et al. (eds), *Essays on Jewish Life and Thought Presented in Honor of Salo Wittmayer Baron* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1959), pp. 55–61, Harvey J. Hames, *Like Angels on Jacob’s Ladder: Abraham Abulafia, the Franciscans, and Joachimism* (SUNY Press, Albany, 2008); Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 58–100; and ‘Torah Ḥadashah: Messiah and the New Torah in Jewish Mysticism and Modern Scholarship’, *Kabbalah*, vol. 21 (2010), pp. 68–76

- 52 See his *Gan Na’ul*, MS. Munchen 58, fol. 323b, ed. Gross, p. 26, copied in *Sefer ha-Peliy’ah*, part I, fol. 75a, where the version is, however, deficient. See also above, the previous paragraph for another discussion of Saturn in Abulafia. It should be pointed out that a connection between the Messiah and the seventh day, Sabbath, based on gematria, is found several times in Abulafia and in texts close to his thought. This is an oblique connection to Saturn too. See M. Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah* (SUNY Press, Albany, 1988), pp. 51–2, 54–5. However, given the explicit references to Saturn in Abulafia’s writings, it stands to reason that there is quite a significant and stable nexus also between Sabbath, Messiah and Saturn in Abulafia’s thought. It is not so certain if Abulafia invented the gematria *Yom ha-Shevi’y* = *Melekh ha-Mashiyah* = 453, and it may be he inherited it from the circle of kabbalists from which he learned his Kabbalah. See also another book by Abulafia, also written around 1289, *Sefer ha-Ḥesheq*, in which he mentions Sabbatai/Saturn together with Sabbath and redemption. Cf. ed. M. Safran (Jerusalem, 1999), p. 108.
- 53 See Idel, *Abraham Abulafia’s Works and Doctrine*, p. 19. For the explicit resort to the figure fifty in the context of redemption and Saturn, see *Gan Na’ul*, pp. 37–8.
- 54 See above, chapter 1, the passage from ibn Ezra’s *Reshit Ḥokhmah*.
- 55 See Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturne et la mélancolie*, p. 247. On Sabbatai and men of understanding – *Binah* – see also ibn Ezra’s *Ḥai ben Meqitz*, p. 143.
- 56 *Saturne et la mélancolie*, p. 255.
- 57 There are some points of resemblance between Joseph Ashkenazi’s Kabbalah and some topics in Abraham Abulafia, despite the huge differences between their approaches to Kabbalah. This topic requires a separate study.
- 58 Isaiah 11.2.
- 59 *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, fols 51b–52a. For the Hebrew original, see the Appendix below. This quotation has reverberated in many Jewish authors. See, e.g., its repercussions in Moses of Kiev’s *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, entitled ‘*Otzar ha-Shem*. A version of this passage, which contains

some slight differences from that quoted above is to be found in the early-sixteenth-century work of Joseph ben Shlomo Al-Ashqar, *Tzafnat Pa'aneah*, fol. 71a. See also fol. 37ab, where another eschatological understanding of Saturn is mentioned. See also additional discussions of Saturn to be found in this book, on fols 36b, 69b–70a. On the identification between Saturn and the third *sefirah*, without messianic implications however, see Joseph Ashkenazi's *Kabbalistic Commentary on Genesis Rabbah*, ed. Moshe Hallamish (Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1984), p. 236. See also above, chapter 1, the passage from Abraham Yagel. See also above, ch. 1, n. 70. *Dinim* as religions reflects an Arabism. See also the use of *din* in such a manner by Sabbatai Tzevi, cf. Liebes, *On Sabbateism*, pp. 21–2, 31–2. Joseph Ashkenazi was acquainted with Arabic customs. See, e.g., his *Commentary on Bereshit Rabbah*, p. 249, and compare to Bernard Septimus, 'Petrus Alfonsi on the Cult of Mecca', *Speculum*, vol. 56 (1981), pp. 134–6. See also the recurrent affinity between Saturn and religions – again *dinim* – or Torah in Alemanno's passage translated above in chapter 1, from MS. BN Paris 849 and in another text translated there, n. 88. It should be mentioned that Isaac Abravanel, a contemporary of Abraham Zacuto and Yohanan Alemanno, refers several times to *conjunctio maxima* in his discussions of redemption in his various eschatological books.

60 Genesis 1.2.

61 *Sefer Mar'ot ha-Tzove'ot*, ed. D. Ch. Matt (Scholars Press, Atlanta, 1982), pp. 100–1. For the connection between smell and Sabbatai Tzevi see the material about his special odour in Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 139–40, 654.

62 On the more recent tentative dating of this book to the end of the thirteenth century, see Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 460–1, n. 233; however, see Moshe Idel, 'The Meaning of "Ta'amei ha-'Ofof ha-Teme'im" by R. David ben Yehudah he-Hasid', in M. Hallamish (ed.), *'Ale! Shefer, Studies in the Literature of Jewish Thought Presented to Rabbi Dr. Alexandre Safran* (Bar-Ilan University Press, Ramat Gan, 1990), pp. 18–21 (Hebrew), and my 'Kabbalah in Byzantium: A Preliminary Inquiry', *Kabbalah*, vol. 18 (2008), pp. 208–14 (Hebrew).

63 *BT, Yevamot*, fol. 62a.

64 Leviticus 25.24. See also Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 262.

65 *Sefer ha-Temunah* (Lemberg, 1892), fol. 44b. In this book, the planet Saturn, and some of its qualities, are connected, as in Isaac of Acre's *Sefer Me'irat 'Einayyim*, to the ninth *sefirah*, *Yesod*. See fols 3b, 16a, and Pedaya, 'Sabbath, Sabbatai', pp. 165–91. For more on the concept of Jubilee and the cosmic cycles in Kabbalah, see Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 460–74, and Haviva Pedaya, *Nahmanides, Cyclical Time and Holy Text* ('Am 'Oved, Tel Aviv, 2003), pp. 215–437 (Hebrew).

- 66 See those sources in Moshe Idel, 'Types of Redemptive Activities in the Middle Ages', in Z. Baras (ed.), *Messianism and Eschatology* (Merkaz Shazar, Jerusalem, 1983), pp. 264–5, 270–1 (Hebrew) and *Sefer ha-Temunah* itself, fol. 55ab.
- 67 See above, n. 64. It should be mentioned that a connection between redemption and the motions of the sphere of Saturn occurs twice in the literature that is described as *Sefer ha-Meshiv*, written before the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, presumably in Castile. See the texts printed from MS. Mussaioff 24 in my study 'The Lost Books of Solomon', *Daat* vol. 32/33 (1994), pp. 235–46 (Hebrew).
- 68 *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, I fol. 57ac. For the Hebrew original of this passage see the Appendix below. On the major influence of Joseph Ashkenazi's commentary on this book see Kushnir-Oron, *The Sefer Ha-Peli'ah*, pp. 94 n. 48, 187–93. For the relation between Sabbatai Tzevi and prophecy, see also Idel, 'On Prophecy and Magic in Sabbateanism'. I assume that prophecy represents some transformation of the concept of mania, related to melancholy, in texts from antiquity. See Toohey, *Melancholy, Love, and Time*, p. 299, n. 31.
- 69 See n. 80 below. For a discussion of Saturn in the sixteenth-century Jewish thinker Abraham ibn Migash, see Shalom Rosenberg, 'Exile and Redemption in Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century: Contending Conceptions', in Bernard D. Cooperman (ed.), *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1983), pp. 406–7 and the pertinent footnotes.
- 70 See also above, n. 41.
- 71 On this book of magic, spuriously attributed to ibn Ezra, in the Jewish Renaissance see Idel, 'The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations', p. 195; Idel, 'The Study Program of Yohanan Alemanno', p. 312, n. 76.
- 72 Yagel, *Valley of Vision*, p. 171. See also above, chapter 1. Abraham ben David is the kabbalist to whom Joseph Ashkenazi's commentary has been attributed.
- 73 *Ibid.*, p. 173.
- 74 Zephaniah 3.9.
- 75 Yagel, *Valley of Vision*, p. 173.
- 76 See Samuel M. Stern, *Aristotle on the World-State* (University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, SC, 1968), pp. 78–85, especially p. 85, n. 1.
- 77 Yagel, *Valley of Vision*, p. 173.
- 78 *Ibid.*, p. 173. For repentance as related to *Binah* and Redemption see above, n. 28, and the Kabbalistic texts dealt with in M. Idel, 'Multiple Forms of Redemption in Kabbalah and Hasidism', *JQR*, vol. 101 (2011), pp. 27–70.
- 79 Yagel, *Valley of Vision*, pp. 173–5 and the pertinent notes.

- 80 I, 4, 5. See also Catherine Swietlicki, *Spanish Christian Cabala* (University of Missouri Press, Columbia, 1986), pp. 140–5, especially p. 143 and Yates, *The Occult Philosophy*, pp. 33–4, and especially p. 100, where she claims that Giorgio's book had an impact on Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queen*. F. Giorgio was well acquainted with *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*. See Giulio Busi, 'Francesco Zorzi, A Methodical Dreamer', in J. Dan (ed.), *Christian Kabbalah* (Harvard College Library, Cambridge, 1997), pp. 97–125
- 81 MS. Harvard, Houghton, Heb. 50, fol. 125b. This is a quotation from a sermon delivered around 1665, presumably in Italy. I hope to address Nathan Shapira's manuscript containing his sermons, in a future study.
- 82 See the epistle of Abraham Peretz, entitled 'Magen Abraham', printed in Gershom Scholem, *Studies and Texts, Concerning the History of Sabbatianism and its Metamorphoses* (Mossad Bialik, Jerusalem, 1974) (Hebrew), pp. 175–6, which differs from the original in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* as printed later on in the eighteenth century only in insignificant details. On the wide recurrence of manuscripts of *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* in circles of Sabbateans see the important remarks of Benayahu, *The Sabbatean Movement*, pp. 350–4. The Sabbateans were aware of the literary nexus between Joseph ben Shalom's *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah* and *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*; see Benayahu, *ibid.*, pp. 369–70, and p. 151. Compare the note printed by Amarillo, 'Sabbatean Documents', p. 269. See also the important additional material concerning the affinity between Sabbateanism and astral magic, and between Sabbatai Tzevi and melancholy, discovered and analysed by Elqayam – after reading a first version of this presentation – in his study 'The Rebirth of the Messiah', pp. 104–11, 129, 136, 139–40, n. 57, 157, n. 137, 162.
- 83 See Scholem, *Studies and Texts*, p. 267 and n. 288, the text hinted at by Scholem in his *Researches in Sabbateanism*, p. 44, and Liebes's remark, *ibid.*, p. 175, n. 143, as well as the lengthy quotation from *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* adduced in Elijahu of Smyrna, *Midrash Talpiyyot* (Smyrna, repr. Jerusalem, 1963), fol. 163a, another Sabbatean figure. See also Liebes, 'Bounds', pp. 1–13.
- 84 As Scholem has correctly indicated, both *Sefer ha-Temunah* and *Sefer ha-Qanah* – in fact he might also have included *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* – have 'influenced the Sabbatians tremendously'; cf. his *The Messianic Idea*, p. 111. In general, I would say that the trend of Kabbalah represented by the writings of Joseph Ashkenazi, and adopted by some other important kabbalists, has been one of the most influential schools in the history of early Kabbalah, especially in Byzantium. See M. Idel, 'An Anonymous Commentary on *Shir ha-Yihud*', in K. E. Groezinger and J. Dan (eds), *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism* (Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, New York, 1995), pp. 151–4, also below in n. 130. It should be pointed out that astronomical events could have facilitated the reception of Sabbatai Tzevi in Yemen, as the

- documents mentioned by Eraqi-Klorman, 'The Sabbatean Movement in Yemen', p. 55, show.
- 85 See I. Tishby's remark in Sasportas, *Tzitzat Novel Tzevi*, p.7, n. 8.
- 86 Sasportas, *Tzitzat Novel Tzevi*, pp. 7–8; Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 270 and his notes there.
- 87 This is a view found both in Zoharic theosophy and in Lurianic Kabbalah, and connected sometimes with the glory of redemption. See *Zohar*, III, fol. 136b and Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 44–6, 60–2.
- 88 *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 275–6.
- 89 Namely within the span of a maximum of six years. The term *shemittah* does not always refer to the cosmic cycles in the Kabbalistic texts.
- 90 Tishby, in Sasportas, *Tzitzat Novel Tzevi*, p. 11, n. 9, mentions the parallel to *BT, Megillah*, fol. 17b.
- 91 Sasportas, *Tzitzat Novel Tzevi*, p. 11; Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 273–4. Here Sabbatai is spelled with an '*Aleph*'. On the distinction between the plene spelling of Sabbatai, with an '*Aleph*', which sometimes points to a maleficent spirit, very similar to Saturn, and the deficient spelling, without an '*Aleph*', as pointing to a private name, see the thirteenth-century Ashkenazi authors in the gloss on the Talmud, *Ba'alei ha-Tosafot, Gittin*, fol. 11a. In the Talmud itself there are rabbis whose name 'Sabbatai' is spelled with an '*Aleph*'. Sabbatai Tzevi's name is sometimes spelled with an '*Aleph*'. My interpretation of King Sabbatai as referring to Saturn is related to the citation adduced above from p. 7, where the Jubilee and the revelation of the '*Attiqa' Qadisha*' are mentioned, as well as on the reading offered by Sasportas himself, adduced on p. 9, n. 44. See also p. 13: 'this Rabbi whose name points to him, Sabbatai'. Compare however, Liebes, 'Bounds', p. 2, n. 4.
- 92 *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 125–38.
- 93 See Wittkover, *Born Under Saturn*. For a description of Tzevi as both accomplished in the wisdom of the Torah and as acting foolishly, see the text printed by Benayahu, *The Sabbatean Movement*, pp. 63–4, the discussion of Tobias Rofe, a younger contemporary of Tzevi, adduced by Zvi Mark, '*Dibbuk and Devekut in the Shivhe ha-Besht: Toward a Phenomenology of Madness in Early Hasidism*', in Matt Goldish (ed.), *Spirit Possession in Judaism, Cases and Context from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 2003), pp. 273–4 and see the Appendix, n. 15 below.
- 94 Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*.
- 95 Scholem, *Researches in Sabbateanism*, pp. 214–15. For more on the possible non-Yemenite background of this treatise, see Yehudah Nini, 'Sabbatean Messianism in Yemen', *Pe'amim*, vol. 65 (1995), pp. 5–17 (Hebrew) and Joseph Tubi, *Tunim be-Megillat Teiman*, (Jerusalem, 1986), pp. 82–150

- (Hebrew). It should be stressed, as Eraqi-Klorman, 'The Sabbatean Movement in Yemen', p. 54 states, that a perusal of this early document does not reveal any significant trace of Lurianic Kabbalah. For a Freudian interpretation of this passage, which emphasizes the importance of mentioning 'his mother', see Avner Falk, 'The Messiah and the *Qelippoth*: On the Mental Illness of Sabbatai Sevi', *Journal of Psychology and Judaism*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1982), pp. 25–6. For a Jungian interpretation see Siegmund Hurwitz, 'Sabbatai Zwi, Zur Psychologie der haeretischen Kabbala', *Studien zur analytischen Psychologie C.G. Jungs, Festschrift zum 80. Geburtstag von C.G. Jung* (Rascher Verlag, Zurich, 1956), vol. II, pp. 239–63. See also Idel, *Ben*, pp. 457–8.
- 96 Idel, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 119–23, 146–7, 149; Idel, *Studies and Texts*, p. 49; Liebes, *Studies in Jewish Myth*, pp. 107–13; and Aharon Telenberg, 'The Sabbatean Theology in Judah Levi Tova's Commentary on Genesis', *Kabbalah*, vol. 8 (2003), pp. 169–72 (Hebrew).
- 97 Scholem, *Researches in Sabbateanism*, p. 222 and Neuman, 'The Mystical Man', in Joseph Campbell (ed.), *The Mystic Vision, Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, tr. Ralph Manheim (Bollingen Series, Princeton, 1970), pp. 375–415. For Sabbatai's special attitude to his mother, see Goldish, *The Sabbatean Prophets*, pp. 4–6
- 98 On the apotheotic impulse in Jewish mysticism, see M. Idel, 'Metatron: Comments on the Development of Jewish Myth', in Idel, 'The World of Angels', pp. 74–92; Idel, *Ben*, throughout; and Michael Schneider, *The Appearance of the High Priest: Theophany, Apotheosis and Binitarian Theology, from Priestly Tradition to the Second Temple Period through Ancient Jewish Mysticism*, PhD thesis, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2007 (Hebrew).
- 99 See Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturne et la mélancolie*, pp. 389–432; Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos*, pp. 112–13; Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, pp. 45–50; Yates, *The Occult Philosophy*, p. 136; Wittkover, *Born under Saturn*, throughout; Couliano, *Eros and Magic*, pp. 137–43; Sylvain Matton, 'En marge du *De Lumine*, splendeur et mélancolie chez Marcile Ficin', in *Lumière et Cosmos, Courants occultes de la philosophie de la Nature* (Albin Michel, Paris, 1981), pp. 45–51; Anthony Grafton, *Cardano's Cosmos: The Worlds and Works of a Renaissance Astrologer* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2000); Valery Rees, "'A Bono in Bonum omnia Diriguntur": Optimism as a Dominant Strait in the Correspondence of Marsilio Ficino', *Accademia*, vol. 10 (2008), pp. 7–27, especially p. 20; and for Ficino in general, Michael J. B. Allen, 'Masilio Ficino on Saturn, the Plotinian Mind, and the Monster of Averroes', *Bruniana & Campanelliana*, vol. 16 (2010), pp. 11–30.
- 100 See Idel, 'Prometheus in a Jewish Garb', pp. 119–22.
- 101 See Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 243, 387, 403–4, 669–71, 810–11, 880; Scholem, *Researches in Sabbateanism*, pp. 302, 350, 373; Scholem, *The*

- Messianic Idea*, p. 75; Liebes, *On Sabbateism*, p. 294, n. 258; Telenberg, 'The Sabbatean Theology', pp. 172–4; and Goldish, *The Sabbatean Prophets*, pp. 3–6, 54.
- 102 This is not the place to discuss the possible affinities between Tzevi's sexual problems and his saturnine character, as well as between Sabbatean sexual orgies and the celebration of the Saturnalia, since the later seem not to be related to the planetary dimensions of Saturn. Nevertheless, the claims as to the *lucerna extincta*, in the context of the witches' Sabbat, and the event of the 'extinction of lights' in eighteenth-century Frankism still require further examination. See Mircea Eliade, *Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions* (Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1976), pp. 85–9.
- 103 *Tetrabiblos*, III:18, (Ashmand), p. 163, (Robbins), III:13, p. 345, III:14, pp. 369–73. This view reverberates in the Renaissance period. See the case of Cardano discussed in Massimo Ciavolella, 'Saturn and Venus', in Ciavolella, *Saturn from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, pp. 173–81.
- 104 See above ch. 1, n. 9.
- 105 See ibn Ezra, *The Book of Reasons*, p. 247: 'Saturn indicates filth because the black bile belongs to it, and similarly with sexual intercourse because it is impure, and Venus indicates women.' See also Schwartz, *Studies on Astral Magic*, p. 25, n. 74.
- 106 *Sod ha-Shem by-Yre'av*, MS. Munchen 15, fol. 258ab, printed in Schwartz, 'Land, Place, and Star', p. 148. For other references to similar views see *ibid.*, pp. 148–9.
- 107 MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 2234, fol. 118a.
- 108 See *Tiqqunei Zohar*, fols 85a, 134a. On Saturn and spleen compare to Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, IV:9, (Ashmand), p. 198, (Robbins), p. 429, and the material collected by Bar Ilan, *Astrology and Other Sciences*, p. 135, n. 242.
- 109 *Ra'aya' Meheimna'*, *Zohar*, III, fol. 227b.
- 110 MS. New York, JTS 2034, fol. 71a.
- 111 On this figure see Schwartz, 'Astrology and Astral Magic'.
- 112 MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 2234, fol. 119a. I did not find the source of this quotation, besides which the title of the book constitutes a problem into which I cannot enter here.
- 113 See *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 810–11.
- 114 See Moshe Idel, 'R. Joseph of Hamadan's Commentary on Ten Sefirot and Fragments of His Writings', *Aley Sefer* vol. 6–7 (1979), pp. 74–9 (Hebrew) and Moshe Idel, 'The Kabbalistic Interpretations of the Secret of 'Arayyot in Early Kabbalah', *Kabbalah*, vol. 12 (2004), pp. 89–199 (Hebrew).
- 115 Simon Bernstein, 'The Letters of Rabbi Mahalalel Halelujah of Ancona', *HUCA*, vol. 7 (1930), p. 515, and Scholem, in the Hebrew version of *Sabbatai Sevi* ('Am 'Oved, Tel Aviv, 1957), p. 405 (a text not translated in the English version, p. 493).

- 116 Printed in Sasportas, *Tzitzat Novel Tzevi*, p. 93 and see also p. 68 as well as Nathan's vision printed in Freimann, *'Iniane'i Shabbatai Tzevi*, p. 50. See also Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 647, n. 155. Supino, like Mahallalel, was an Italian rabbi, and the importance of the Italian cultural context is obvious in the astrological theme. For additional though later examples of the nexus between Saturn the planet and Sabbatai Tzevi see the material printed by Elqayam, 'The Rebirth of the Messiah', pp. 104–11.
- 117 Cf. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 430, and the Hebrew passage printed in Sasportas, *Tzitzat Novel Tzevi*, pp. 165–6, also p. 186. On the affinity between Saturn and prophecy see the passage from Joseph Ashkenazi, part of which was dealt with above, as copied in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, part I, fol. 57b. See also above, n. 54. It should be emphasized that from the formulation of the last sentence, it also appears that Tzevi was conceived of as a prophet. See also Giacomo Saban, 'Sabbatai Sevi as Seen by a Contemporary Traveller', *Jewish History*, vol. 7 (1993), p. 106. On prophecy and Sabbateanism in general, and by resorting briefly also to the astrological moment see Goldish, *The Sabbatean Prophets*, pp. 100–1. See also Idel, 'On Prophecy and Magic in Sabbateanism'.
- 118 For a recent outstanding treatment of melancholy in the period of Tzevi see Michael Heyd, 'Be Sober and Reasonable', *The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Brill, Leiden, 1995), pp. 44–70; Samuel L. Macey, *Patriarchs of Time, Dualism in Saturn-Cronus* (University of Georgia Press, Athens and London, 1987), pp. 23–39; H.S. Versnel, *Transition and Reversal in Myth and Ritual* (Brill, Leiden, New York, Koeln, 1993), pp. 136–227; Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Belknap, Harvard, Cambridge, MA, 1980), pp. 64–92; Vito Teti, *La melanconia del vampiro, Mito, Storia, Immaginario* (Manifestolibri, Roma, 1994), pp. 161–200. For more on the recurrence of the idea of melancholy in the period of Tzevi's life see Lawrence Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady: A Study of Melancholia in English Literature from 1580 to 1642* (Michigan State College Press, East Lansing, 1951), and John Owen King III, *The Iron of Melancholy, Structures of Spiritual Conversion in America from the Puritan Conscience to Victorian Neurosis* (Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, CT, 1983), as well as the considerable scholarly literature about Robert Burton's classic *Anatomy of Melancholy*, the most important discussion on melancholy printed in Oxford in 1621, shortly before the birth of Sabbatai Tzevi.
- 119 Of the astrologers.
- 120 Again the words 'of the astrologers'.
- 121 Sasportas, *Tzitzat Novel Tzevi*, p. 93. For the conjunction in Scorpio see Tishby's note *ibid.*, and for earlier sources Sela, in ibn Ezra, *The Book of Reasons*, p. 162. See also Benayahu, *The Sabbatean Movement*, p. 151, where a

- Sabbatean figure, Shlomo Ayalon, shows the passage by Joseph Ashkenazi on Saturn to leading kabbalist Moshe Zacuto and asks his opinion. See also Freimann, ed., *'Inianeî Shabbatai Tzevi*, p. 237.
- 122 Cf., Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 142. The Hebrew original is *'Emunah ḥdashah*, which may be translated, literally as 'a new faith', a translation that better fits the Sabbatean emphasis on faith.
- 123 For Tzevi's change of the law see Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 162–6, and 673. For earlier instances of discussions on the change of law see also nn. 19, 24 and 58 above.
- 124 Sasportas, *Tzitzat Novel Tzevi*, p. 73.
- 125 The expression '*Koah Keter 'Elyon*' recurs again in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, I, fol. 57c, again under the influence of Joseph Ashkenazi's *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*. See also the next footnote. It should also be mentioned that in the Kabbalistic passage of Joseph Ashkenazi, Saturn/Sabbatai is connected to the first unit of the divine name of forty-two letters. See above, ch. 1, n. 66. Interestingly enough, Nathan of Gaza describes Sabbatai as related to this specific divine name. See the poem printed by Bezalel Naor, *Post-Sabbatian Sabbatianism* (Orot, Spring Valley, New York, 1999), p. 3 (Hebrew part). On this poem see also Elqayam, 'The Rebirth of the Messiah', pp. 118–21. See also the expression 'crown of *Binah*' in a passage quoted above and related to Saturn. In any case, Nathan of Gaza also borrowed other topics from Joseph Ashkenazi/*Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*. See especially Liebes, *On Sabbateanism*, pp. 33, 294 n. 261 and 295 n. 276 and below, n. 125.
- 126 See, e.g., Gershom Scholem's footnote to *Shirot ve-Tishbahot shel ha-Shabbatayim*, pp. 27, 30, 34, 63, 130, 135, and 206 n. 2; the material adduced in Abraham Amarillo, 'Sabbatean Documents from the Archive of R. Shaul Amarillo', *Sefunot*, vol. 5 (1961), p. 270 (Hebrew); and Wolfson, 'The Engenderment of Messianic Politics', pp. 234 n. 105, 243–4 n. 135. See also the view of Nathan in Freimann, *'Inianeî Shabbatai Tzevi*, p. 50. It should be pointed out that in a poem found in an epistle Nathan of Gaza sent to Tzevi, he interprets the thirty-two intellects, as found in Ashkenazi's introduction to his *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, fols 10a–12b, and copied verbatim in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, I, fols 68d–70b, on Tzevi himself. See the text printed by Benayahu, *The Sabbatean Movement*, pp. 384–97. Liebes, *ibid.*, p. 295, n. 276 pointed to this correspondence. Moreover, in Benayahu, *ibid.*, p. 387, it is said that God will put his throne, namely Tzevi's, higher than all the signs of the Zodiac. This is incontrovertible proof of the importance of the Kabbalistic material found in the two books regarding the two heads of Sabbateanism.
- 127 See Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, p. 71. See also figures 14, 16–19, 37–8, 40, reproduced in Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturne et la mélancolie*, pp. 305–6, 328–9, 331, respectively. For a Hebrew example of Sabbatai/Saturn

- bearing a crown, see the picture preserved in the codex containing magical treatises, MS. Jerusalem-Schocken 102, fol. 79a.
- 128 Compare, however, the explanation of Tzevi's coronation offered by Wolfson, 'The Engenderment of Messianic Politics'. Though the Kabbalistic sources mentioned by Wolfson could, at least in principle, impact on some aspects of Tzevi's coronation, the existence of pictorial and verbal expressions of relations between a crown and Saturn as personified as a human person should not be ignored or neglected. For three pictures of Sabbatai's coronation see the reproductions adduced in Wolfson, *ibid.*, pp. 248, 251, 253. It should be pointed out that in addition to resorting to the term 'diadem', *'atarah*, which is interpreted by Wolfson according to his phallogocentric 'clue' to the profound structure of Kabbalah, in many other instances related to Sabbatai Tzevi, it is the term 'crown', *Keter*, that is mentioned in the context of the Messiah. See the epistle of Isaac Abohab of Amsterdam, printed in Sasportas, *Tzitzat Novel Tzevi*, pp. 106–7, where crown recurs several times, the discussion printed in Freimann, *'Iniane'i Shabbatai Tzevi*, p. 50, and the bowls decorated by a deer with one or three crowns printed by Itzhak Einhorn, 'Three Shabbatean Plates', *Pe'amim*, vol. 44 (1990), pp. 76, 79 (Hebrew). See also *Shirot ve-Tishbahot shel ha-Shabbatayim*, p. 200.
- 129 See Sasportas, *Tzitzat Novel Tzevi*, pp. 96, 258. See especially the second passage by Joseph Ashkenazi, to be translated in the Appendix and the passage in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, I, fol. 58c, on the firmament of Sabbatai/Saturn. See also Alemanno's untitled treatise found in MS. Paris BN 849, fol. 64a, where he describes the seventh firmament, using details presented in the much earlier *Sefer ha-Razim*, as the firmament of Sabbatai/Saturn.
- 130 See Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 206–7.
- 131 See above, ch. 1, n. 10. Moreover, in the Middle Ages there are representations of Saturn as holding an ourobuos, reminiscent of the connection between Sabbatai Tzevi and the concept of a serpent. See Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 227, 274, 235–6, 308–9. On p. 236, Scholem claims that Tzevi himself never refers to an ourobuos. However, as Liebes has pointed out, such an ouroboric symbol occurs in eighteenth-century Sabbatean literature. See *On Sabbateism*, pp. 174–5. This possible parallel deserves a more detailed inquiry. See also above ch. 1, n. 110.
- 132 See the very important passage printed by Wirszubski, *Between the Lines*, pp. 136–7, and the pertinent analysis by Liebes, 'Bounds', pp. 10–11 and his footnotes there, as well as Goldreich, 'The Pessimistic Pole of the Sabbath', pp. 48–9, 55–6 n. 45.
- 133 See *Ra'ya' Meheimna'*, printed in the book of the *Zohar*, III, fols. 281b–282a, as well as fol. 279b. In this context Ishm'a'el is also mentioned, thus facilitating Luzzatto's interpretation.

- 134 On the Messiah and *Shekhinah* see Tishby, *Paths of Faith and Heresy*, p. 321, n. 120 and Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 110–15.
- 135 This view is expressed elsewhere in the same book. See *Sefer Qine'at H' Tzeva'ot*, printed in H. Friedlander (ed.), *Ginzei Ramhal* (Benei Berak, 1980), vol. 2, pp. 99, 104. See also the text printed by Gershom Scholem, *Studies and Texts Concerning the History of Sabbateanism* (Mossad Bialik, Jerusalem, 1974), p. 242 (Hebrew).
- 136 On this issue in earlier texts see the important analysis of Pedaya, 'Sabbath, Sabbatai'.
- 137 *Sefer Qine'at H' Tzeva'ot*, p. 106, also p. 113. On this book see Meir Benayahu, *Kabbalistic Writings of R. Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto*, *Studies and Texts* (Jerusalem, 1979), pp. 133–48 (Hebrew). Luzzatto elaborates on the nature of Sabbatai in this context, dealing with the subordination of the Ismaelites to both Saturn and the moon, issues which are not relevant to our discussions here.
- 138 On the historical details of Tzevi's apostasy and on other Kabbalistic explanations of his conversion to Islam, see Wirzubski, *Between the Lines*, pp. 121–51 and Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 792–820, 830–5. On Luzzatto's view of the *descensus ad inferos*, see Tishby, *Paths of Faith and Heresy*, pp. 172–82, especially p. 182, where he cites the passage discussed here, without, however, referring to the astral dimension of the term 'Sabbatai'.
- 139 See Freimann, *'Inianei Shabbatai Tzevi*, p. 58. See also Wolfson, 'The Engenderment of Messianic Politics', p. 256 and Elqayam, 'The Rebirth of the Messiah', pp. 139–40 and n. 57.
- 140 See, meanwhile, Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 118–20. See also the passage of Nathan of Gaza in Wirzubski, *Between the Lines*, pp. 139–40.
- 141 See Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics* (University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1981), p. 345. The funeral day is *Tisha' be-'Av*. Compare also Sasportas's critique of the resort to the argument of astronomers, *ha-Tokhenim*, who described Saturn as a bloody star, in order to criticize Sabbatai Tzevi. Cf., especially, Sasportas, *Tzitzat Novel Tzevi*, pp. 99–100, adduced above, where it also states that Sabbatai devours his children, and see Tishby's remark there, p. 100, n. 2. See also *ibid.*, p. 298, where the term *kokhav Shabbatai*, the planet of Saturn, is mentioned in a fairly negative manner, and p. 93, where the light of the star of Saturn is conceived after the astronomers, a sign of redemption. See also Elqayam, 'The Rebirth of the Messiah', pp. 104–6. It is therefore obvious that several seventeenth-century Jewish authors understood the nature of Sabbatai Tzevi to refer to the astrological features of Saturn. See also Freimann, *'Inianei Shabbatai Tzevi*, p. 50. There is an immense amount of literature on Saturn and devouring his children, but see the relevant nexus between

- sorcery and cannibalism in the important studies of Zika, *Exorcising Our Demons*, pp. 445–80 and Sela, 'Appropriation of Saturn', p. 29. On Saturn as related to a day of sorrow, see above, ch. 1.
- 142 See Idel, 'One in a Town', p. 94.
- 143 See, e.g., Idel, 'Metatron', pp. 32, 44; *Hasidism*, throughout. For the impact of the later layer of the *Zohar* on the view of Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto's understanding of Tzevi's conversion see above in this chapter.
- 144 See Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, throughout, and more details regarding Nathan's scant acquaintance with Lurianic Kabbalah at the outset of his prophetic career discussed in Idel, 'On Prophecy and Magic in Sabbateanism'. The ecstatic nature of some aspects of Nathan's visions does not allow too a significant role to Lurianic elements. Compare, however, more recently Wolfson, 'The Engenderment of Messianic Politics', pp. 205–6, n. 8, and Elqayam, 'The Rebirth of the Messiah', pp. 106–7, but compare to the latter's 'The Absent Messiah', p. 38.
- 145 See Guy G. Stroumsa, 'Mystical Descents', in John J. Collins and Michael Fishbane, *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys* (SUNY Press, Albany, 1955), pp. 137–51. Elsewhere I shall deal with the impact of a mythologoumenon related to Apollo on a passage in Heikhalot literature. It is well known that the myth of Orpheus had an impact on the ancient paintings of King David found in ancient Jewish synagogues in the Land of Israel and elsewhere.
- 146 See M. Idel, *Golem: Jewish Magical and Mystical Traditions on the Artificial Anthropoid* (SUNY Press, Albany, 1990), pp. 4–5.
- 147 See Idel, 'Prometheus in a Jewish Garb'; Liebes, *Studies in Jewish Myth*, pp. 65–93 and his important discussions of a myth of Helene in a variety of Jewish texts in his *God's Story*, pp. 237–98.
- 148 For the importance of astrological-magical terminology for the better understanding of Kabbalah and Hasidism, see also Idel, *Hasidism*, index under astrology. On Kabbalah and astrology in general, see Halbronn, *Le Monde Juif et l'Astrologie*, pp. 289–334 and Kiener, 'Astrology in Jewish Mysticism', pp. 1–42; on astrology and magic in the Renaissance in general, see Garin, *Astrology in the Renaissance*; and for Kabbalah see Francois Secret, 'L'Astrologie et les kabbalistes chretiens a la Renaissance', *Le Tour Saint-Jacques*, vol. 5 (1956), pp. 45–9.
- 149 See M. Idel, 'Abulafia's Secrets of the Guide: A Linguistic Turn', in Alfred Ivry, Elliot Wolfson and Allan Arkush (eds), *Perspectives in Jewish Thought and Mysticism* (Harwood Academic Publishers, Amsterdam, 1998), pp. 269–72.
- 150 See his *Pardes Rimmonim*, XXVII:15, where he identifies Sabbath with the *sefirah* of *Binah* and mentions Sabbatai in that context. See also *ibid.*, xvii:23, and his *Commentary on the Zohar*, 'Or Yaqar, vol. 3 (Jerusalem 1964), p. 184,

vol. 8 (Jerusalem, 1976), p. 174 (on this text see Margolin, 'Physiognomy and Chiromancy', p. 219, n. 57), vol. 9 (Jerusalem, 1976), pp. 66, 171, vol. 11 (Jerusalem, 1981), p. 83–4, vol. 17 (Jerusalem, 1989), p. 21, and 'Or *Yaqar* on *Tiqqunei Zohar*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1983), p. 99, etc. See also the quote from Cordovero in Abraham Azulai's *Sefer 'Or ha-Hammah* (Premyslany, 1887), vol. III, fol. 120a. In most of those cases Cordovero connects Saturn to the last *sefirah*, *Malkhut*, and basically follows the approach he took in *Tiqqunei Zohar*. It should be mentioned that in an important discussion about Sabbath, found in his commentary on the prayerbook, *Tefillah le-Moshe* (Premyslany 1892), fol. 190b, in which Cordovero describes its rituals as preparations which are similar, in his explicit terms, to the preparations of astrologers to bring down influxes from stars, he does not mention, at least in this specific context, the name of Saturn. See M. Idel, 'Sabbath: On Concepts of Time in Jewish Mysticism', in Gerald J. Blidstein (ed.), *Sabbath: Idea, History, Reality* (Ben Gurion University Press, Beer Sheva, 2004), pp. 81–4 and Goldreich, 'The Pessimistic Pole of the Sabbath', pp. 66–8. For more on the astral thinking of Cordovero, see the important analysis of Garb, *Manifestations of Power*, pp. 200–24. See also Liebes, *God's Story*, pp. 184–5, where astrology and physiognomy are combined. However, there are no traces of his interest in Saturn in the student oeuvre of Mordekhai Dato, who expatiated on eschatological issues. See Jacobson, *Path of Exile and Redemption*, p. 199. However, Shlomo ha-Levi Al-Qabetz, Cordovero's brother-in-law, was probably acquainted with Joseph Ashkenazi's passage about Saturn and Messiah. See Liebes, 'Bounds', p. 8, n. 46. Sabbatai/Saturn also occurs several times in Azulai's *Hesed le-'Avraham*, I:25 (Lemberg, 1863), fol. 6d, a very popular compendium of Cordoverian thought. In this case Saturn is related to destruction and to the Land of Israel.

- 151 See above, chs 1 and 3. It is worth pointing out that talismanic theories, which are strongly related to astrology, are an important component of Cordovero's thought that still requires detailed analysis.
- 152 See Idel, 'On Prophecy and Magic in Sabbateanism'.
- 153 On Sabbatai Tzevi qua Byzantine kabbalist, see Idel, 'On Prophecy and Magic in Sabbateanism'; Idel, 'Neglected Treatises by the Author of *Sefer Kaf ha-Qetoret*', *Pe'amim*, vol. 53 (1993), pp. 75–89 (Hebrew); Idel, 'Kabbalah in Byzantium: A Preliminary Inquiry', *Kabbalah*, vol. 18 (2008), p. 227 (Hebrew); and Elqayam, 'Sabbatai Sevi's Manuscript', pp. 358–61.
- 154 See Idel, 'Hermeticism and Kabbalah', in P. Lucentini, I. Parri and V.P. Compagni (eds), *Hermeticism from Late Antiquity to Humanism* (Turnhout, Brepol, 2004), pp. 389–408. It should be pointed out that an outstanding example of an early-fifteenth-century Jew living in Constantinople, who was described as a polytheist and had an impact on a Byzantine figure who influenced the Italian Renaissance, was the mysterious Elisha, one of the

- teachers of Gemistos Plethon. See Francois Masai, *Pléthon et le Platonisme de Mistra* (Les belles lettres, Paris, 1956), pp. 55–60, 63.
- 155 It should be pointed out that the rich pictorial tradition about Saturn that is to be found in Christian sources, as exemplified by the last French version of *Saturne et la mélancolie*, in Panofsky's *Studies in Iconology*, in Cesare Ripa's seventeenth-century *Iconologia*, or Charles Zika's *Exorcising Our Demons* has no significant correspondence in Jewish manuscripts.
- 156 See my *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 79–82.
- 157 See *ibid.*, pp. 101–20.
- 158 See, especially, his *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*, tr. Willard R. Trask (Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1959). Apparently following him, a scholar claimed more recently that Jewish eschatologies are only 'historical'. See Samuel L. Macey, *Patriarchs of Time, Dualism in Saturn-Cronus* (University of Georgia Press, Athens and London, 1987), p. 18.
- 159 See, e.g., David Brown, *Mesopotamian Planetary Astronomy-Astrology* (Brill, Leiden, 2000); Brian G. Baumann, *Divine Knowledge: Buddhist Mathematics According to Antoine Mostaert's Manual of Mongolian Astrology and Divination* (Brill, Leiden, 2008); Franz Cumont, *L'Égypte des astrologues* (repr., Editions culture et civilisations, Brussels, 1982); Franz Cumont, *Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism* (Dover Publications, New York, 1956), pp. 162–95; Henry Corbin, *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis* (Kegan Paul International, London, 1983). This means that some aspects of the monotheistic religions, adopted comical cycles and adapted circular modes of understanding time in addition to what had been in existence beforehand, especially the microchronoi related to normal forms of rituals that were performed daily or weekly.
- 160 See Jacobson, *The Path of Exile and Redemption*, pp. 181–200, especially p. 199 and pp. 406–8, and M. Idel, 'Some Concepts of Time and History in Kabbalah', in E. Carlebach, J. M. Efron and D.N. Myers (eds), *Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi* (Brandeis University Press, Hanover and London, 1998), pp. 153–88.
- 161 See his *Myth and Reality*, tr. Williard R. Trask (Pantheon Books, New York, 1954), p. 52.
- 162 See, e.g., Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 158–60, and also Idel, 'The Chained Messiah: The Taming of the Apocalyptic Complex in Jewish Mystical Eschatology', forthcoming in Nadia Al-Baghdadi, David Marno and Matthias Riedl (eds), *The Apocalyptic Complex – Origins, Histories, Permanences* (CEU, Budapest, New York, 2012).
- 163 My approach differs from the more homogeneous approach adopted in modern scholarship on the topic. See, e.g., the title of Scholem's *The Messianic Idea*, in the singular, versus the complex typologies of the constellations of messianic ideas I offered in my *Messianic Mystics*.

- 164 Insofar as ancient forms of psychology are concerned and their contributions to the conceptual structures related to Saturn, see Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturne et la mélancolie*, and Toohey, *Melancholy, Love, and Time*.
- 165 See Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (ARK Paperback, London, New York, 1986), pp. 56–7.
- 166 See Keith Thomas, *Religion & the Decline of Magic* (Scribners, New York, 1971), p. 384. In the Middle Ages, there were claims that the Muslim Ka'aba, with its black stone, reflects a worship of Saturn. See Septimus's study mentioned in n. 59 above.

Chapter 3

- 1 See, e.g., the seventeenth-century Ashkenazi figure Samuel ben Benjamin's *Sefer Devarim 'Attiqim*, a commentary on various parts of the book of the *Zohar*, extant in a unique manuscript, MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1563, fol. 288a. This manuscript, which includes many discussions on astro-magic, merits a separate study.
- 2 *Ceremonies and Religious Habits of all the People Représentés by Figures Drawn by Bernard Picart* (1733), III, p. 180. More on Christian views of the Jews as Saturnine in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Halbronn, *Le Monde Juif et l'Astrologie*, pp. 217–18, 281–2.
- 3 *Tzafnat Pa'aneah*, ed. Gedaliah Nigal (Jerusalem, 1989), p. 359. Thanks to Dr Zvi Mark, who drew my attention to this passage. The discussion of the topic also includes a revelation which the Besht received from his 'teacher', probably Ahijah the Shilonite. Interestingly enough, in Al-Ashqar's, *Tzafnat Pa'aneah*, MS. Jerusalem, 4^o 154, fols. 36a, 37a, the assumption is that the tribe of Yehudah corresponds to Sabbath and Sabbatai, but in order to struggle against the planet's influence, and here the fact that David stems from this tribe is mentioned in a messianic context. I hope to return to the content of this passage in a separate study. For melancholy in Hasidism see Zvi Mark, 'Madness, Melancholy and Suicide in Early Hasidism', *Kabbalah*, vol. 12 (2004), pp. 27–44.
- 4 See Zvi Mark, *Mysticism and Madness in the Work of R. Nahman of Bratslav* ('Am 'Oved, Tel Aviv, 2004), pp. 31–4 (Hebrew), and his 'Dibbuk and Devekut in the *Shivhe ha-Besht*: Toward a Phenomenology of Madness in Early Hasidism', in Matt Goldish (ed.), *Spirit Possession in Judaism, Cases and Context from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 2003), pp. 272–85. Nahman of Bratslav, the Besht's great-grandson, considered King David to have been quite a melancholic figure.
- 5 See *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*, p. 234. Compare to Scholem, *The Messianic Idea*, p. 196, who describes another statement of the Besht as 'deeply melancholic',

- 6 *Hemdut Yamim*, Sabbath, ch. 3 (Constantinople, 1735), vol. I, fol. 21ab. Discussions on Sabbatai/Saturn and Sabbath recur in this book.
- 7 See *Perush Sifra' de-Tzeni'uta'*, ch. 1.
- 8 In Hebrew *kokhavim*, but Maimon refers afterwards only to planets. See also S. Maimon's commentary on the *Guide of the Perplexed* entitled *Give'at ha-Moreh*, ed. S. H. Bergman and N. Rotenstreich (Israeli Academy for Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem, 1965), p. 96 (Hebrew), and Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, I: 63, III:29.
- 9 *Genesis Rabbah*, X, 6, p. 79. See also *ibid.*, MS. Berlin, p. 33, where this dictum is interpreted again in a mystical vein..
- 10 See Idel, 'The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations', p. 213; Idel, 'Hermeticism and Judaism', p. 66. On the magical perception of the *Teraphim* see M. Idel, 'Jewish Magic from the Renaissance Period to Early Hasidism', in Jacob Neusner et al. (eds), *Religion, Science, and Magic. In Concert and in Conflict* (Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford, 1989), p. 112, n. 12; M. Idel, 'An Astral-magical Pneumatic Anthropoid', *Incognita*, vol. 3 (1991), pp. 19–23, elaborated in Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy*, pp. 269–86; and Schwartz, 'Different Forms of Magic', pp. 24–5. See also Joseph Albo, *Sefer ha-Iqarim*, III:18, where Saturn is mentioned.
- 11 In some other versions of this passage, *Sefer Datot ha-Nevi'im*, 'the Book of the Religions of the Prophets' is written. On this book, which has been sometimes attributed to Enoch understood as a prophet, see Vajda, *Judah ben Nissim ibn Malka*, p. 154; Schwartz, *Astral Magic in Jewish Thought in the Middle Ages*, pp. 281–2; Sela, *Abraham ibn Ezra and the Rise of Medieval Hebrew Science*, pp. 184–5; Idel, 'Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations', p. 204; Idel, 'Enoch, the Mystical Cobbler', in *The Angelic World*, pp. 110–11; and the reference in Samuel ben Benjamin's *Devarim 'Attiqim*, mentioned above, n. 1.
- 12 Cf. the pseudo-Ibn Ezra's *Sefer ha-'Atzamim*, pp. 17–18. This book was highly influential on many discussions of magic in Judaism from early fourteenth-century Spain and Italy and had an impact on Shmuel ibn Zarza. See also above, chapter I.
- 13 *Hesheq Shlomo*, MS. Berlin, Jewish Community, now in Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem, 6426 8^o pp. 130–1, and see also Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 39–41, 73, 195–8. On this manuscript see Abraham Geiger, 'Salomon Maimon's Entwicklungsgeschichte', *Jüdische Zeitschrift*, vol. 4 (1866), pp. 189–99.
- 14 About the members of the Warburg Institute see Silvia Ferretti's, *Cassirer, Panofsky, and Warburg*, especially pp. 59–60, 66, 197–202, where the issue of melancholy is discussed. On Saturn see *ibid.*, pp. 66, 198–201, 212. On the method of this school, see Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths*, pp. 17–59. See also Cassirer's 1926 dedication to Aby Warburg in *The Individual and the Cosmos*.

To what extent Warburg's melancholy shaped the interest of his colleagues is an issue that I cannot prove. See also Nissan and Ophir Shemesh, *Saturnine Traits*.

- 15 See Warburg, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, pp. 641–50.
- 16 Cf. his *From Berlin to Jerusalem* (Schocken Books, New York, 1980), pp. 130–1.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 131. This means that Scholem was twice in Hamburg some few years after the first German version of *Saturn and Melancholy*, written by Saxl and Panowfsky, had been printed in 1923. So far, I have not found a trace of interest in Scholem's studies, or in Kabbalah in general, among Warburgians of the first generation. However, the first edition in German and the 1964 English version of the monograph on Saturn and melancholy were found in his library and it seems that he read them.
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 See his 'Mystery and History', *New York Review of Books*, 4.10.1973, pp. 17–19. Neither has Yates, who mentioned the name of Sabbatai Tzevi several times in her 1979 book, made any connection between him and the planet Saturn, a topic that recurs in her volume. See Yates, *The Occult Philosophy*, pp. 21, 109, 186.
- 20 Scholem was indeed fond of Aby Warburg's dictum that 'the dear God is to be found in the details'.
- 21 Yates, *The Occult Philosophy*, pp. 54–7. See also pp. 23, 33–4. Unfortunately, not too much of her proposal has been integrated into the 1989 French version of *Saturn and Melancholy*. See also Moshe Idel, 'Kabbalah and Hermeticism in Dame Frances A. Yates's Renaissance', in R. Caron, J. Godwin, W. J. Hanegraaf and J. L. Vieillard-Baron (eds), *Esoterisme, Gnosés & Imaginaire Symbolique: Melanges offerts à Antoine Faivre* (Peeters, Louvain, 2001), pp. 71–90.
- 22 The only Warburgian scholar to take Scholem's oeuvre a little more seriously into consideration in some of her studies was Frances A. Yates, especially in *Giordano Bruno* and in her latest book, *The Occult Philosophy*.
- 23 Gershom Scholem, *The Fullness of Time: Poems*, ed. Steven M. Wasserstrom, trans. Richard Sieburth (Ibis, Jerusalem, 2003), pp. 98–9. I made some slight changes to maintain a more literal rendition. See, especially relevant in a poem explicitly related to Kafka's *Trial*, *ibid.*, pp. 104–5. For a reference to melancholy stemming from this verse, see Alter, *Necessary Angels*, pp. 19, 119.
- 24 See Walter Benjamin's 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in his *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, tr. Harry Zohn (Schocken Books, New York, 1969), pp. 257–8. See also Baruch Kurzweil, *Struggling for the Values of Judaism* (Schocken, Jerusalem, 1969), pp. 213–40 (Hebrew); and Alter, *Necessary Angels*, pp. 113–15.

- 25 Whether this delay is related to Scholem's concept regarding deferment in Judaism is an issue that deserves a separate study. See Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 283–9.
- 26 Walter Benjamin, 'Agesilaus Santander' (the version written in Ibiza, 13 August 1933), as translated in Gershom Scholem's, 'Walter Benjamin and his Angel', in Werner J. Danhauser (ed.), *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, p. 207, and see Scholem's short comments on Benjamin and Saturn in *ibid.*, pp. 219–20. It should be mentioned that, as seen above, Saturn was sometimes described as having an angel, Qaftziel, Michael or Samael, and even Satan in the case of Shlomo Franco. On Benjamin and melancholy see, e.g., Max Pensky, *Melancholy Dialectics: Walter Benjamin and the Play of Mourning* (University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 2001); Rodolphe Gasche, 'Saturnine Vision and the Question of Difference: Reflections on Walter Benjamin's Theory of Language', in Rainer Naegele (ed.), *Benjamin's Ground* (Detroit, 1988), pp. 83–104, and see also the following notes. Benjamin, who was born on 15 July, was therefore not alluding to a personal astrological connection which could have had something to do with his time of birth. Let me draw a tentative parallel between Benjamin's discussion and a Zoharic passage, found in *Zohar*, III, fol. 104ab, discussed in another context by Couliano, *Eros and Magic*, p. 45. On Saturn as an angel, see above several traditions to be found in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance.
- 27 See MS. Paris BN 849, fol. 64a. Scholem printed his study, where he identified Alemanno as the author in 1928/29 (see above ch. 1, n. 95) which means that he read the manuscript at least a year or two beforehand. *En passant*, I am not sure whether indeed we may attribute an androgynous nature of Saturn or the angels to Benjamin's description. On the androgynous nature of the angel to be found in Paul Klee's picture see Steven M. Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion, Mircea Eliade and Henry Corbin at Eranos* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1999), pp. 206–7. On the existence of a pair of angels, male and female, though not connected to Saturn, in ancient Gnostic traditions, which in my opinion reflect Jewish mythologoumena, see M. Gaster, 'Das Shiur Komah', *Monatschrift fuer Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, vol. 37 (1893), pp. 213–30, repr. in M. Gaster, *Studies and Texts in Folklore, Magic, Medieval Romance, Hebrew Apocrypha and Samaritan Archaeology* (London 1925–8), II, pp. 1330–53; Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape*, pp. 26–7; Idel, *The Angelic World*, pp. 20–2; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 211–12, n. 178.
- 28 On this painting and its background, and the pertinent scholarship, see Ester Muchawsky-Schnapper, 'Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus*, Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem', *Israel Museum Journal*, vol. 8 (1989), pp. 47–52.

- 29 Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, tr. John Osborne (London, New Left Books, 1977), p. 151.
- 30 See Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, p. 212.
- 31 See *ibid.*, pp. 206–7.
- 32 *Ibid.*, pp. 216–29. See also above in chapter 1 the discussions from *Tiqqunei Zohar* on Samael as the angel of Saturn.
- 33 See my analysis in *Old Worlds, New Mirrors*, pp. 102–5.
- 34 See his ‘Scholem: Unhistorical or Jewish Gnosticism’, in Harold Bloom (ed.), *Gershom Scholem*, Chelsea House, New York 1987), p. 217.
- 35 See Susan Sontag’s Introduction to W. Benjamin, *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, tr. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (Verso, London, 1985), pp. 7–28, and especially Beatrice Hanssen, ‘Portrait of Melancholy (Benjamin, Warburg, Panofsky)’, *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 114, no. 5 (December 1999), pp. 991–1013, who analyses Benjamin on the ground of the scholarship of the Warburgian authors who were already interested in Dürer’s engraving, *Melencolia* in 1923. See the early version of *Saturn and Melancholy*, as Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, *Dürer’s Melencolia I: Eine quellen und typengeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Studien der Bibliothek Warburg, Leipzig, Berlin, 1923).
- 36 See his different statements in his ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’, in *Illuminations*, pp. 254, 255, 263, 264.
- 37 See Gershom Scholem, *Explications and Implications, Writings in Jewish Heritage and Renaissance* (Am Oved, Tel Aviv, 1982), p. 428 (Hebrew).
- 38 The question that may be asked is why Benjamin’s closest friend, Gershom Scholem, did not refer to the monograph printed in Leipzig and Berlin, if it indeed had an impact on Benjamin.
- 39 On the recent angelotropic turn see Idel, *The Angelic World*, pp. 14–15. See the nexus between apocalypticism and melancholy, adduced in the context of both Benjamin and Scholem, in Anson Rabinbach, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment* (California University Press, Berkeley, 1997), pp. 7–8, and the pertinent footnotes, where he points to Julia Kristeva and Martin Jay’s connection between apocalypse and melancholy in more general terms. I would add, however, to the Gestalt-consonance between the two concepts also the quite plausible impact of the conceptual negative structure as related to Saturn, which Benjamin could have learned from the Warburgians and to a certain extent also from Scholem. At least in the case of Benjamin it is an imperative to take Saturnian conceptual structure in consideration; while in the case of Scholem, it is a plausible assumption, especially since, in 1933 he was acquainted with at least some of the views expressed in Kabbalistic texts mentioned above. So, for example, in 1928 he published his important study on Joseph Ashkenazi in *QS*. Why Saturn does not

- loom more conspicuously in his own writings or in his interpretation of Benjamin is a matter that is hard to fathom.
- 40 See Scholem, *Explications and Implications*, p. 467, originally a speech delivered in Jerusalem in 1966, when Agnon received the Nobel Prize for Literature, and also in Scholem's later memoirs *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, p. 93.
- 41 *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, p. 102. As to the temperament of Franz Rosenzweig, and his attempt to commit suicide, a more detailed analysis is called for.
- 42 See the Hebrew version of *From Berlin to Jerusalem* ('Am 'Oved, Tel Aviv, 1982), p. 98. The phrase does not occur in the first German and English shorter versions.
- 43 See also Scholem's description of a statement of the Besht as 'deeply melancholic'. Cf. *The Messianic Idea*, p. 196. For another reading of the same statement as non-melancholic, see Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 218–19. Here, I cannot enter into a more sustained discussion of melancholy in Scholem, which is a desideratum for understanding his personality and the manner in which he reacted to the Holocaust. See meanwhile, *The Messianic Idea*, p. 34.
- 44 See Gillian Rose, *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno* (McMillan, London, 1978).
- 45 'I was soon finished off; what remained was flight, embitterment, melancholy, and inner struggle.' For the attitudes of Kafka, Scholem and Benjamin to their fathers, see Alter, *Necessary Angels*, pp. 29–30.
- 46 See Alter, *ibid.*, throughout, as well as William S. Allen, 'Melancholy and Parapraxis: Rewriting History in Benjamin and Kafka', *Modern Literature Notes*, vol. 123, 5 (December, 2008), pp. 1068–87.
- 47 According to Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, p. 196, 'Proust and Kafka were probably the authors truly familiar to him at the deepest level.'
- 48 In a piece by Sebastian, written in 1927, and quoted by Geo Serban in a piece on this author, 'Remember', *Realitatea Evreiasca*, no. 277 (1077) 1–20 June (2007), p. ii. The Romanian expression is 'melancolia straveche'.
- 49 *De doua mii de ani* (repr. Hasefer, Bucharest, 2000), p. 60. See also pp. 48, 81, 100, 107, 215, 228.
- 50 See also Jean Starobinski, *La mélancolie au miroir, Trois lectures de Baudelaire* (Julliard, Paris, 1989) and Susan Sontag, *Under the Sign of Saturn: Essays* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1980).
- 51 For attempts to identify a special Jewish melancholic character or a specific sensibility towards spirituality, see the views of Gustav Landauer, or recent attempts, like that found in Roger Bartra, 'Arabs, Jews, and the Enigma of Spanish Imperial Melancholy', *Discourse*, vol. 22, no. 3 (2000), pp. 64–72, as well as other more recent opinions as discussed and criticized by Kate Miriam Loewenthal, 'Depression, Melancholy and Judaism', *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, vol. 2 (April 1992), pp. 101–8.

- 52 For the rather widespread cliché concerning Moldavia as a melancholy region see, e.g., Sebastian, 'Remember', pp. 101–4, 228, and Mircea Eliade, *Autobiography, vol. I, 1907–1937, Journey East, Journey West*, tr. Mac Linscott Ricketts (Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1981), p. 16 and his 'Against Moldavia', reprinted in his collection of essays, *Profetismul Rominesc* (Roza Vinturilor, Bucuresti, 1990), vol. I, pp. 97–8.
- 53 The preoccupation of contemporary scholars with the inter-bellic fascination with melancholia is part of a wider phenomenon of their trying to continue the astonishing creativity of Jewish intellectuals in the period between the world wars, and identifying with them to create an identity of their own – and an issue into which I cannot enter in detail here. See, meanwhile, my discussion of the 'desolates' in Idel, *Old Worlds, New Mirrors*, pp. 6–9.
- 54 See Justin Clemens, 'On Depression Considered as Acephalic Melancholia', *Double Dialogue*, vol. 4 (Winter 2003), p. 2. On the history of the relationship between the two emotional phenomena see Stanley W. Jackson, *Melancholy and Depression from Hippocratic Times to Modern Times* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1986).

Concluding Remarks

- 1 See, e.g., three recent monographs dealing with late antiquity and early medieval Jewish magic which do not mention the name Saturn: Harari, *Early Jewish Magic*, Michael Swartz, *Scholastic Magic, Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996); and Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York, 2007). Neither does the magical literature of the early-thirteenth-century figure, Nehemiah ben Shlomo, the prophet of Erfurt, display any interest in astrology and astro-magic. See, e.g., M. Idel, 'Some Forlorn Writings of a Forgotten Ashkenazi Prophet: R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo ha-Navi', *JQR* vol. 96 (2005), pp. 188–96; M. Idel, 'On Angels in Biblical Exegesis in Thirteenth-Century Ashkenaz', in D. A. Green and L. S. Lieber (eds), *Scriptural Exegesis, Shapes of Culture and Religious Imagination, Essays in Honour of Michael Fishbane* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 2009), pp. 211–44, as well as the studies referred in n. 11 below.
- 2 See above ch. 2, n. 96.
- 3 See Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb*.
- 4 Interestingly enough, though the first medieval documents adduced above are of Sefardi extraction, including the material found in Joseph Ashkenazi's passage, some of the later figures who appropriated Saturnian views, like Yohanan Alemanno and probably also Sabbatai Tzevi, were of Ashkenazi origin.

- 5 See my *Messianic Mystics*. By saying so, I do not assume that connections between events that have a causal nature cannot be drawn, and indeed the entire project of this book goes in this direction. However, I am sceptical about a Hegelian, unilinear and mono-causal vision of history.
- 6 See W. H. Walsh, *Philosophy of History: An Introduction* (Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1967), pp. 24–5.
- 7 For the Jewish discussions in medieval and Renaissance books as to the alleged ancient cult of Saturn by the Romans see Ben-Shalom, *Facing Christian Culture*, pp. 104–6.
- 8 See Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology, Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (Harper & Row, New York, 1962), p. 77, who attributes the contemplative, positive dimension of Saturn in the Renaissance to the impact of Plotin, and Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn*, pp. 103–4. See also Ferretti, *Cassirer, Panofsky, and Warburg*, p. 199, who attributes this positive aspect to Dante. Compare also to Couliano, *Eros and Magic*, pp. 48–9. However, as seen above in chapters 1 and 2, the connection between thought and contemplation and Saturn is already found in rather a clear way in ibn Ezra, Abraham Abulafia, Joseph Ashkenazi and ibn Motot. See also the Appendix below.
- 9 See M. Idel, ‘On European Cultural Renaissances and Jewish Mysticism’, *Kabbalah*, vol. 13 (2005), pp. 43–78.
- 10 See, e. g., the more prominent place of astrology in the new histories of Jewish philosophy as written by Colette Sirat, *La philosophie Juive medieval en pays de Chretienté* and *La philosophie Juive medieval en terre d’Islam* (Presses du CNRS, Paris, 1988), and Raphael Jospe, *Jewish Philosophies in the Middle Ages* (Academic Studies Press, Boston, 2009), in comparison to its marginality in Julius Guttman’s classical *Philosophies of Judaism*, tr. David W. Silverman (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1964).
- 11 See Amos Goldreich, *Automatic Writing in Zoharic Literature and Modernism* (Cherub Press, Los Angeles, 2010) (Hebrew); M. Idel, ‘Incantations, Lists, and “Gates of Sermons” in the Circle of Rabbi Nehemiah ben Shlomo the Prophet, and Their Influences’, *Tarbiz*, vol. 77 (2009), pp. 475–554 (Hebrew); and Sela, *Astrology and Biblical Exegesis in Abraham ibn Ezra’s Thought*.
- 12 See, e.g., Liebes, *God’s Story*; Liebes, *Studies in Jewish Myth and Jewish Messianism* tr. Batya Stein (SUNY Press, Albany, 1993), pp. 1–92; Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003); Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, ‘From Mythic Motifs to Sustained Myth: The Revision of Rabbinic Traditions in Medieval Midrashim’, *Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 89 (1996), pp. 131–59; and Idel, *Kabbala: New Perspectives*, pp. 156–7; M. Idel, ‘Rabbinism versus Kabbalism: On G. Scholem’s Phenomenology of Judaism’, *Modern Judaism*, vol. 11 (1991),

- pp. 281–97; M. Idel, 'Leviathan and Its Consort: From Talmudic to Kabbalistic Myth', in Ithamar Gruenwald and M. Idel (eds), *Myths in Judaism: History, Thought, Literature* (Zalman Shazar Center, Jerusalem, 2004), pp. 145–86 (Hebrew); M. Idel, 'On Jerusalem as a Feminine and Sexual Hypostasis: From Late Antiquity Sources to Medieval Kabbalah, in Mihail Neamu and Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban (eds), *Memory, Humanity, and Meaning. Selected Essays in Honor of Andrei Pleșu's Sixtieth Anniversary* (Zeta, Cluj, 2009), pp. 65–110; and Idel, *Ben*, throughout.
- 13 While scholars of Kabbalah did not resort to astrological theories as one of the reasons for Kabbalistic antinomianism, it was done so in the context of the nexus of incestuous relations and the Land of Israel in philosophical texts. See Schwartz, 'Land, Place, and Star', pp. 146–9, and his *Studies on Astral Magic*, pp. 25, n. 74, 104–5, 169.
 - 14 On the various forms of mutability, see Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 352–7.
 - 15 See Bracha Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moses Cordovero* (Ben Gurion University Press, Jerusalem and Beer Sheva, 1995), pp. 279–90 (Hebrew).
 - 16 See Scholem, *The Messianic Idea*, pp. 75–7, 111–13.
 - 17 See Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, p. 357.
 - 18 See Idel, *Old Worlds, New Mirrors*, pp. 119–25.
 - 19 See Idel, 'Kabbalah and Elites in Thirteenth-Century Spain' *Mediterranean Historical Review*, vol. 9 (1994), pp. 5–19.
 - 20 Compare what I wrote in *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 256–9, 268–9.
 - 21 See *ibid.*, pp. 265–9.

Appendix

- 1 This list has been translated in Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*, pp. 130–1.
- 2 For a list of the parallels between Ashkenazi's *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah* and *Sefer ha-Peli'ah*, including some more detailed comparisons between some of the passages in the two sources, see Kushnir Oron, *Ha-Peli'ah and Ha-Kanah*, pp. 106–10, n. 85.
- 3 *Sefer ha-Peli'ah*, I, fol. 57b. The passage has been copied, anonymously, in a form that is combined with Ashkenazi's passage in Hamoi, *Daveq me-'Ah*, pp. 97–8. The comparison of the printed version to the early manuscript of the book, MS. New York JTS 2202, fol. 101b–102b, shows that the printed version is better and I did not refer to variations which are inferior.
- 4 *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, fols. 51b–52a. For a reprint of the text and corrections according to a manuscript and some footnotes see Liebes, 'Bounds', pp. 2–5.

- 5 However, elsewhere, the author of *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* adopts the view of the astrologers and identifies Sabbath with the day upon which Saturn is appointed. See I, fol. 58c:

אב'ג ית'ץ רקיע שבתי שבתי וארצו ושמתו

- 6 This version differs from the long version of *Sefer Yetzirah* adduced in chapter 1 above.
- 7 On the phrase *Koah Keter 'Elyon*, see above ch. 2, nn. 124–5.
- 8 *Hokhmah* stands here instead of *Hayyim* in the passage of *Sefer Yetzirah* R. Joseph comments upon. The consonants of both *Hokhmah* and *Hayyim* come to 68 in gematria.
- 9 This is the acronym of *'amar lo*: He said to him, a strategy of creating a dialogue between two ancient figures.
- 10 According to some Sabbatean sources, redemption is related to the *shemittah*. See in Elqayam, 'The Absent Messiah', pp. 36–7.
- 11 The anonymous kabbalist added the explanatory note that identifies the separate intellects with the *sefirot*. See also below, n. 40.
- 12 So also in MS. Vatican 291. In MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1942 and 1953, the version is *ha-Shavu'ot*, which is a corrupted version. Compare to Liebes, 'Bounds', p. 3, n. 8, where the version is השבעות, namely 'incantations'.
- 13 *Shedim*, namely demons, as in the two Oxford manuscripts mentioned above, while in the printed version of *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* the version is *Sarim*, namely angels. However, in MS. New York JTS 2202, fol. 101b, the version is indeed *Shedim*. Compare also to *Tetrabiblos*, III:14 (Robbins), p. 365.
- 14 The connection of Saturn to the blind is known already in Abu-Mash'ar, and it seems that the anonymous author had a reliable source for his inserting it. See Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturne et la mélancolie*, p. 206, English, p. 130, and Zafran, 'Saturn', p. 17.
- 15 Again 'He said to him'.
- 16 *BT, Baba' Batra*, fol. 12b. For the description of Tzevi as a fool, see Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 128, 136, 137, Liebes, 'Bounds', p. 9 and above ch. 2, n. 92.
- 17 In Ashkenazi the version is *Koah nenu'iy*, and this is also the version in MS. New York of this book.
- 18 See especially the statement that the fool cleaves to Saturn, found in *Sefer ha-Qanah*, fol. 132b. The language of *Sefer ha-Qanah* is reminiscent of that of the text found in the Zoharic passage that was translated above in ch. 1.
- 19 See n. 27. below, and also *Tiqqunei Zohar*, fol. 124b: 'Sabbatai/Saturn has two houses: one is with lowered head, and the second is a prison, where the prisoners of the king are to be found imprisoned there in exile.'

ושבתא'י אית ליה תרין בתין, חד שפל

ראש, ותניינא בית הסהר, דאסירי מלכא אסירין תמן בגלותא

See the way in which Sabbatai Tzevi has been described as incarcerated in the prison of where the king's prisoners are found. See Freimann, *Inianei Shabbatai Tzevi*, p. 50.

- 20 See also above in ch. 3 the passage by Benjamin on delay.
- 21 Namely on religions, *dinim* as I read it, though in theory one may also read it as *dayanim*, 'judges', which may sometime stand for 'deacons'. See also, immediately below, the reference to the same term in a similar context, as related to Saturn, as another example of a repetition. On the Hebrew *din* as referring to religion see the medieval letter of the Kazar monarch to Hisdai ibn Shafrut. Saturn is higher than the other planets, which correspond to the lower seven *sefirot*, which are parallel to the commandments, the *mitzvot*. See also above, ch. 1, n. 87 and ch. 2 n. 58.
- 22 Namely with one of the permutations of the letters of the Tetragrammaton. See also below, for the recurrence of the same theme, and Idel, *Golem*, pp. 119–26.
- 23 This is again a repetition, and is related to Saturn as the god of agriculture in the Roman religion.
- 24 On the term 'worry', *de'agah*, in the context of Tzevi's depressive states, see this appearing three times in Samuel Gandoor's testimony, adduced by Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 129.
- 25 This is a mistake for *Mokhsim*.
- 26 *Shuhot*, which means 'pits'. This attribution recurs immediately below, again together with 'tombs'. On Tzevi's custom of visiting tombs, see Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 186, 244, 247, n. 138 and Liebes, 'Bounds', p. 10.
- 27 Compare above, in no. 18, the mention of prisons as related to Saturn. The term is absent in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*. It should be mentioned that in a diagram of ten concentric circles representing the ten spheres, in the third circle we find the inscription:
- גלגל שבתי מורה על שממון קדחת וכל קלון ובית הסוהר וחושך וצער ומשם השפעת
לעולם השפל.
- 'The sphere of Saturn refers to desert, fever, and all ignominy, and prison and darkness and sorrow and from there the influx descends to the lower world.' Cf. MS. Cambridge Or. 2116, fol. 77b. This diagram is part of a collection of Kabbalistic traditions from a variety of sources but the diagrams reflect the views of R. Joseph Ashkenazi on the one hand, and I would assume that they influenced *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* on the other.
- 28 The phrase also occurs below and is part of a repetition whose meaning is not clear. *Hotrei ha-Batim*, or *sotrei ha-Batim* in Ashkenazi, refers to those who destroy houses. Compare to Job 24.16.
- 29 The hypocrite is reminiscent of the situation of Tzevi after conversion to Islam, yet I do not believe that this is the reason he converted.
- 30 See ibn Ezra, *The Book of Reasons*, pp. 223, 349–50. Compare also the episode of Tzevi as blinded and miraculously cured afterwards. Cf. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 183.
- 31 *koferim*, 'heretics', seems to be less appropriate in this context than in

Peliy'ah, where it is written *mekho'arim*, 'ugly', which is also found in the MS. New York. However, in Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*, the word *atheoi*, 'atheists', is related to the inhabitants of Coelo Syria, Judea and Idomea. See II:3 (Ashmand), p. 68 (Robbins), p. 143, translates as 'godless'.

- 32 This explanatory note is very resonant with Ashkenazi's style. *Gilgul* does not mean here metempsychosis, as in many other cases, but the 'rolling' (meaning moving both up and down) of beings in a vertical manner on the great Chain of Being.
- 33 *Din benei halof*, which may be translated as the rule of the transient entities, is one of the phrases that characterize the style and thought of Joseph Ashkenazi. It means the rule concerning the transformations an entity suffers by its ascent or descent on the great Chain of Being. See also Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 315.
- 34 Unlike Ashkenazi, where it is said that Saturn is highest of the seven planets, *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* described it as higher than the other six.
- 35 The Latin god Saturnus is appointed over agriculture.
- 36 Caves. The source is found in ibn Ezra's *Book of Reasons*, quoted above in ch. 1. On Sabbatai Tzevi as spending time in caves, see Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 137, 177 n. 185, 189 n. 214, 187, 358. This connection of Saturn to caves may have something to do with the Greek myth about the expulsion of Kronos to the cave on the island of Ogygia.
- 37 Daniel 2.21.
- 38 As in MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1942, and this is the correct version. The meaning is the metal lead.
- 39 Isaiah 11.2.
- 40 The term *sekhel* here, as well as above and below in our quotation, stands for some form of sefirotic entity. See also above, n. 12.
- 41 The destruction is therefore not the absorption of the lower entities within the higher, but the ascent of the root of the lower entities, higher, and the disruption of its influences on the lower entities.
- 42 Probably a better version would be *Be-binyanim* since the lower *sefirot* are also called *binyan*. In MS. Oxford-Bodleiana 1942 and 1953 and Vatican 291 כל טוב 291 is missing and it is written בעניינים מתחדש, a version that is closer to *ha-Peliy'ah*.
- 43 This passage is not found also in Moshe of Kiev's *'Otzar Ha-Shem*, thus showing that it has been added by the anonymous author of *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*. For translation and discussion see the Appendix below.
- 44 I Samuel 17.45. See also the view that Redemption will not come by means of arms but through Sabbatai Tzevi's sinning, as discussed in Elqayam, *The Absent Messiah*, p. 37, n. 13.
- 45 The verb *MShKh* as pointing to the drawing down from a *sefirah* is widespread in theosophical Kabbalah, but it appears also in astro-magical

- texts like that quoted by R. Bahya from *Pseudo-Galenus* as in chapter 1 above, and in the passage from the *Zohar*, quoted immediately following that of R. Bahya's. See also Margolin, 'Physiognomy and Chiromancy', pp. 236–7. It should be pointed out that Joseph Ashkenazi, in his *Kabbalistic Commentary on Genesis Rabbah*, pp. 248–9, mentions the worship of talismans as pure idolatry and criticizes those who praise Islam, a veiled attack in the direction of Maimonides.
- 46 In manuscripts the version is אליהם in lieu of עליהם in print, which means 'to them' rather than 'onto them'.
 - 47 In the manuscripts the word *Binah* is written over the name of God. See also n. 46 above and n. 78 below.
 - 48 Compare to the ascent and descent of the Jews according to the discussion in *BT., Megillah*, fol. 16a.
 - 49 Genesis 28.14.
 - 50 See M. Idel, 'On Angels in Biblical Exegesis in Thirteenth-Century Ashkenaz', in D. A. Green and L. S. Lieber (eds), *Scriptural Exegesis, Shapes of Culture and Religious Imagination, Essays in Honour of Michael Fishbane* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 2009), p. 218.
 - 51 See M. Idel, *Enchanted Chains: Techniques and Rituals in Jewish Mysticism* (The Cherub Press, Los Angeles, 2005), pp. 228–32.
 - 52 See *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, I, fols. 12c–13b, where he gives the year of redemption as 1490, which is not found in the sources he uses.
 - 53 Namely the six lower *sefirot*, which are described as surrounding the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*, that is called Israel. This identification recurs in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*. The concept is found in *Sefer Yetzirah* but has been interpreted theosophically by many kabbalists.
 - 54 The affinity between the six first letters of the divine name of forty-two letters and *Bereshit* is based upon the assumption that it is already found in earlier sources, that the divine name is taken from the first forty-two letters of Genesis 1. See also *Sefer ha-Qanah*, fol. 88ab. Thus, the first six letters of the two formulas correspond, as we also learn from another rather lengthy passage found in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, which I analysed in 'On R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo the Prophet's *Commentaries on the Name of Forty-Two* and *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*, attributed to R. Eleazar of Worms', *Kabbalah*, vol. 14 (2006), p. 244 (Hebrew). See also below, the addition at the end of the quotation from Joseph Ashkenazi in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, and *ibid.*, I, fol. 55c, and especially the discussion of Abulafia in *Gan Na'ul*, ed. Gross, pp. 76–7. See also the view of Bahya ben Asher to the effect that Saturn was the head of the planet at the time of creation. See *Kad ha-Qemah*, in C. D. Chavel (ed.), *Kitvei Rabbeinu Bahya* (Mossad ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem, 1969), p. 338. On the view of Sabbatai Tzevi that his name is included in the consonants of the Hebrew *Bereshit*, see Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 234.

This is one more testimony to the relation of the Messiah to the Kabbalistic text he studied. The only antecedent of such a view is found in Abraham Abulafia's Commentary on Exodus, *Mafteah ha-Shemot*, ed. Amnon Gross (Jerusalem, 2001), p. 152.

- 55 Namely the *sefirah* of *Hokhmah*, which is higher than that of *Binah*.
- 56 In Hebrew, the form is masculine, hence it is probably related to Saturn and not to *Binah*, which is feminine. See, however, the previous note. It should be pointed out that in Alemanno's variant of Joseph Ashkenazi's passage, found in MS. Paris BN 849, fol. 74a, there is an interpolation, where it is written in the vein of *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*: 'This is the reason why they [the fools] or belonging to the lot of Saturn, who hates the material reality, out of his high spirituality.'
- ולזה הם מחלק שבתי השונא המציאות החמרי לרום רוחניותו.
- 57 Such a view is not rare in the Middle Ages, and it occurs, for example, in Abraham Abulafia. See M. Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, tr. Jonathan Chipman (SUNY Press, Albany, 1987), pp. 134–7. Also here there is some similarity to Sabbatai Tzevi's behaviour. See Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 112–14.
- 58 See Idel, *Ben*, pp. 434–7.
- 59 See MS.Oxford-Bodleiana 2234, fol. 118a.
- 60 See Idel, 'Hermeticism and Judaism', pp. 61–2.
- 61 See *Asclepius* paragraphs 23–4, cf. Brian Copenhaver, *Hermetica* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995), pp. 80–1.
- 62 On this event see Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 159–60, 400–1.
- 63 On R. Sabbatai's acquaintance with *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* see the many quotes in his glossae as *Qanah*, on Menahem Recanati's *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, MS. Paris BN, 786, e.g. fols 108b, which have been pointed out by Kushnir Oron, *Ha-Peli'ah and Ha-Kanah*, p. 15. See also Idel, *Ben*, p. 347, n. 16.
- 64 *Sefer Yetzirah* I:5.
- 65 Isaiah 44.6.
- 66 This form of pointing to the sefirotic valence of a certain word by introducing paranthesis is late and started with the printing of Kabbalistic books. In the school of Joseph Ashkenazi, which perhaps includes David ben Yehudah he-Ḥasid, and manuscripts of *Sefer ha-Temunah* and some manuscripts of *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, the sefirotic valences were written upon the words. This form of reference distinguishes this school from other Kabbalistic schools, in addition to the common conceptual structures.
- 67 Leviticus 23.15.
- 68 Here, and below, as in the longer text adduced above, lordship over both *Shemittot* and *Yovel* is attributed to *Binah*.
- 69 *BT.*, *Sanhedrin*, fol. 97a.
- 70 See above, ch. 1, n. 49.

- 71 Namely, the age of seventy.
- 72 See also the connection between *Binah* and fifty in many Kabbalistic texts and that of Saturn and fifty in the passage from *Hai ben Meqitz*, adduced in chapter I above.
- 73 Namely, in *Binah*.
- 74 This is an 'ouroboric' image applied to *Binah*. See Liebes, 'Zohar and Iamblichus', p. 107, n. 7. The terms *reshit* and *takhlit* are reminiscent of the view that Sabbatai is the first and the last, *Rishon va-'aharon* (see below, n. 76), but also of the way in which Tzevi has been described by Abraham Cardozo: *Reshit ve-'Aharit*. See Liebes, *On Sabbateanism*, p. 43.
- 75 The term *mehuddashim* is a term characteristic of Joseph Ashkenazi's thought, and it refers to the seven lower *sefirot*, described as innovated from the *Binah*. See, e.g., *Perush Sefer Yetzirah*, fol. 3a. This term is also found in Joseph ibn Waqar.
- 76 *Perush Sefer Yetzirah*, fol. 26d:

רומז אל סוד היובלים 'ואני אחרון' שנאמר 'עומק אחרית'
 ולפיכך השביעי קדש בימים. שנים שבע שנים שבע פעמים 'וספרת לך שבע שבתות' (הבינה) ולפיכך
 כמו יום שבת (בינה) ובחדשים ניסן ותשרי ובשנים שמטה ויובלות ובאלפים שיתא אלפי שנין הוו
 עלמא וחד חרוב, וי"א ותרי חרוב. וברקיעים ערבות, ובארצות ארץ ישראל, ובשנות האדם ששים
 שנה, הרי שש עשרות ועשר השביעי קדש לה'. ובכוכבים שבתי (בינה). וסוד חמשים יום לעומר
 וחמשים שבועות בשנה י"ס הבינה אחרית הכל בכל השמטות והיובלים ולפיכך בן ארבעים לבינה כי
 היא בסוף השמטה הששית וכן בן חמשים לעצה (בינה) כי היא בסוף השמטה השביעית וכללו של דבר
 ממנה באו ואליה ישובו, שם הוא ראשית ותכלית כל הנמצאים וכל המחודשים

Compare views found later in writings that belong to the circle of *Sefer ha-Temunah*, where it is said of Saturn:

וכן שבתי שער ראשון ואחרון ששם יתיחד הכל

'And Saturn is the first and last gate and there everything will be united.'
 Cf. MS. Vatican 194, fol. 67a. See also n. 74 above. In another statement from the same circle, found in another codex, MS. Vatican 431, fol. 87b, we read: 'the *Binah* is the end of all the gates'.

- 77 See above, ch. 2, n. 18.
- 78 See above nn. 47, 66.
- 79 See above nn. 15, 24, 36, 54, 74. In this context, the visit to the Land of Israel may be triggered by its alleged relation to Saturn. See the last passage translated in the Appendix and in ch. 1, n. 18 and ch. 2, n. 149 above.
- 80 See especially ch. 2, 'Saturn, Forbidden Sexual Relations and Sabbateanism' above.

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