Contents

Acknowledgments xiii

Introduction I
The Structure of This Book 2
Methodological and Personal Reflections 5
The Basic Structures of the Composition and Its Performative Aspects 10
The Internal Coherence of the Zohar's Language 17
Definitions of Mysticism 19
Overview of Zohar Research 23

PART I THE ZOHAR'S HEROES: RABBI SHIM'ON BAR YOḤAI AND THE COMPANIONS 29

- I. The Figure of Rabbi Shim'on bar Yohai 3 Rabbi Shim'on, Moses, and Rabbi Akiva 37 Rabbi Shim'on in His Own Eyes 42 In the Master's Presence 51 The Death of the Master 53
- The Companions of Rabbi Shim'on in Their Own Eyes 62
 "Those who entered and emerged" 63
 "The wise of heart" 67
 "Initiates of Matronita's palace": The Bridesmaids 69
 "The enlightened ones" 75

Awakeners and Arousers 80
"Those who turn darkness into light . . ." 81

Contents x

3. "Happy is this generation": The Three Generations with Which the Zoharic Circle Identifies 85

The Wilderness Generation 86

The Generation of King Solomon 93

The Generation of Rabbi Shim'on bar Yohai 99

PART II "WHILE YOU WALK ON THE WAY,
WHEN YOU LIE DOWN, AND WHEN YOU RISE":
ON THE COMPANIONS' WAY OF LIFE 105

- 4. Mysticism of the Group 107
- 5. "While you walk on the way":The Locus of Mystical Experience III
- 6. "In the wee hours of the night": The Nocturnal Delight 121

 Introduction to the Nocturnal Delight 121

 Arenas of the Nocturnal Delight 125

 Participants in the Delight 128

 Rituals of Preparation 129

 The Order of the Night in the Upper and Lower Worlds 131

 The Experience of Delight 136
- 7. Wondrous Characters and Journeys in the Upper Worlds 146
 The Appearance of Wondrous Characters 146
 Collective Journeys in the Upper Worlds 150

PART III THE ZOHARIC QUEST: METHODS OF GENERATING MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE 155

8. Concealed and Revealed: The Dimension of Mystery 157
Who Needs Mysteries Anyway? 165
The Never-ending Story 171
"But now (Aval hashta)": The Portal into Mystery 173
The Ideal State of Disclosure:
Between the Concealed and the Revealed 176
Total Concealment of Mystery 181

Disclosure without Concealment: A World without Mystery 183

Contents xi

9. Zoharic Midrash 189 Hermeneutical Dynamics 190 A Jazz Interlude 202

10. "If you wake and rouse love":
Language of Awakening and Arousal 204
Human Beings, Torah, and the Study of Torah 206
Voices of Awakening and Arousal 209
Awakening and Erotic Arousal 217
"Arousal below and arousal above" 222
Pekihu de-'Eina: Eyes Wide Open 225

"A river flows from Eden": Verses of Awakening and Arousal 229
"A river flows from Eden to water the garden": A Code Verse 229
"A river flows from Eden" in Prior Exegesis 231
Components of the Code: Nouns and Verbs 233
The Verbs Yatsa (Flow, Issue) and Shakah (Water) 235
Citations of the Code Verse 237
"A river flows from Eden" and Mystical Experience 239
The River of Human Creativity 249

PART IV MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE IN THE ZOHAR 253

The River: Conclusion 250

Light 256

Basking in the Divine Light 258

Zohar (Radiance) 261

The Light of Dawn 265

The Speculum That Shines 268

The White Light 271

Water 274

Delight and Pleasure 279

Devekut (Cleaving) 290

Kiss, Embrace, and Intercourse 296

Altered Sense of Time 300

Contents xii

Fragrance 302 Fire 304 Radiant Face 305

13. General Characteristics of Zoharic Mystical Experience 309

The Mystical Wave 309

Ecstasy 312

A Multifaceted Experience 318
A Pleasurable Experience 319

Softening of the Boundaries between the Divine and the Human 320 A Contained Experience 321

Elements of Contained Mystical Experience 326

- 14. The Zohar's Three Main States of Mystical Consciousness 340
 The Malkhut Experience: Rose Consciousness 341
 The Tiferat Experience: Tree of Life Consciousness 343
 The Atika Experience: White Light Consciousness 348
 - 15. The Ability to Express Mystical Experience 352
 - 16. On Books and Writing 365

Concluding Remarks 379

Notes 383

Bibliography 341

Index of Names and Book Titles 443

Index of Subjects and Terms 447

Index of Works Quoted 459