In the previous chapter we discussed Abula fi a’s identification of the Teli with Jesus via recourse to the motif of the brazen serpent. Along these lines we may scrutinize the name “Teli” itself. Its relationship to the Hebrew word *talui*, which indicates hanging or suspension, may be understood in terms of the astrological figure’s perceived demiurgic role. Creation itself is suspended from it and depends upon it.\(^1\) However, the term *talui* is also used to refer to hanging as a mode of execution, and, in fact, Jews—Abula fi a included—applied the term to Jesus’ crucifixion.\(^2\) We may wonder whether the name Teli itself—at least for Abula fi a, if not for some of his predecessors as well—already evoked, through both of its meanings, notions of Jesus.

We also considered at some length in the previous chapter the significance for Abula fi a of the head and tail of the Teli. These, we noted, represented both the two halves of the Tetragrammaton, the Jewish messiah and Jesus, respectively, and masculinity and femininity. We observed that, in *Qsar ʿEden Ganuz*, Abula fi a referred to the front and back of the Tanin (the Teli) as being woven together “in the secret of ‘twenty-two’ letters, from which is created ‘my flesh.’”\(^3\) This weaving together of the two aspects of the Teli we understood, after Idel and Wolfson, in erotic terms. The latter frames this erotic dimension as the reconstitution of the phallic potency achieved through the integration of male and female dimensions, from which we may understand Abula fi a’s reference to his “flesh”—that is, his phallus—in the aforementioned passage. As well, the equation, via gematria, of “my flesh” with “twenty-two” letters results, we saw, from the mystic’s divinization

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1. The demiurgic connotation for the Teli may be gleaned from *Sefer Yeẓirah*, Gruenwald ed., 6:1–2 (para. 59).
subsequent to his phallic reconstitution, represented as the weaving together of the head and tail of the Teli. This is achieved via recourse to the mystical manipulation of the twenty-two Hebrew letters, which conform directly to the mystic’s own body. Abulafia conveys the notion that a divinization occurs by indicating that the expressions “in my flesh” and “Prince in me” share the same consonants. That the Prince—Metatron—dwells within the mystic is representative of the latter’s coming into both a divinized and a messianic status.

Sheti va-’Erev, *Warp and Woof*

The term which Abulafia employs with regularity to indicate the woven quality to the Teli’s two aspects and to the nature of the reconstituted mystic is *sheti va-’erev*, warp and woof. The usage of the term *sheti va-’erev*, with respect to the head and tail of the Teli, occurs already in the tenth century *Sefer Hakhmoni* of Shabbatai Donnolo. The latter draws upon the much earlier *Sefer Mazzalot*, which referred to the Teli, the *axis mundi*, as a “weaver’s beam.”

4 Donnolo describes the planets as joined to the Teli as warp to woof, although he also suggests that the two opposed aspects of the Teli itself, its head and tail, are themselves this warp and woof.

It is conceivable that Donnolo’s focus is not purely astrological, that mystical elements are present in his work. Donnolo discusses the Teli as the spinal cord, joining the brain, or the righteous end of the Teli, with the genitals, or its evil end. The cosmological Teli thus parallels, in

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4 Reads *Sefer Mazzalot*, “When the Holy One, blessed be He, created the two luminaries, the sun and moon, and the five stars and the twelve constellations, he created the Teli to be a beam (מנור) for the luminaries, and a beam for the five stars, and for the twelve constellations, like a weaver’s beam (אורחים), and He extended it in this firmament from one end to the other, like an axis (בריח), like the ‘crooked serpent’ (Is. 27:1), and made for it a head and a tail, as is written in Job (26:13), ‘By his wind the heavens were made; his hand slew the bent (בריח) serpent.’” Sharf, *The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo*, p. 184.

5 Donnolo writes, “…and all the stars and luminaries and constellations are connected to it [the Teli], as the threads of warp and woof are connected in a weaver’s beam.” Ibid., p. 181. See also ibid., pp. 33–38, 43–45, 55, 58, 66.

6 Wolfson observes in Donnolo’s thought an interest in a theosophic gnosis pertaining to the *sefirot*, in their connectedness with God, which transcends astrology. *Through a Speculum That Shines*, p. 138; “The Theosophy of Shabbetai Donnolo,” pp. 286, 290, 294, 297.