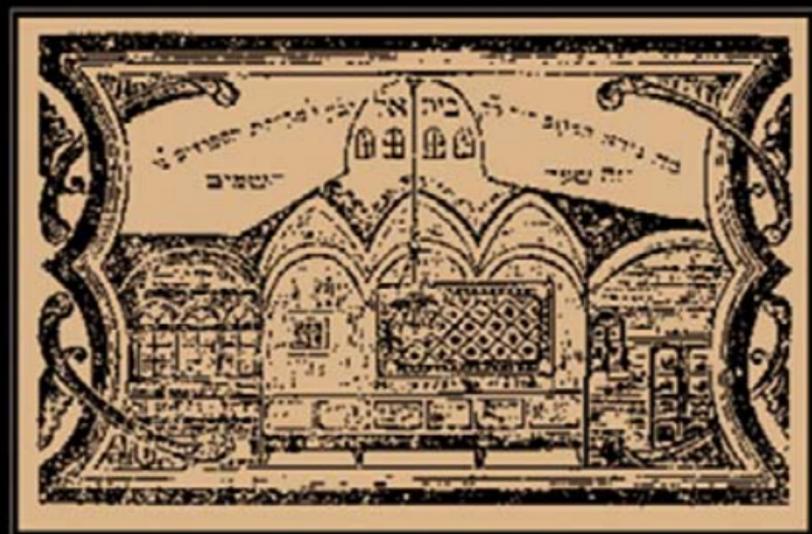


# SHALOM SHAR'ABI AND THE KABBALISTS OF BEIT EL



PINCHAS GILLER

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*For Elliot Wolfson*

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# Preface

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Some research in Jerusalem was made possible by the Roland Fund for Faculty Research of the American Jewish University, which was expedited by the faculty secretary, Judy Dragutsky. Aspects of this study were published earlier in “Between Poland and Jerusalem: Kabbalistic Prayer in Early Modernity” (*Modern Judaism* 24, no. 3 [October 2004]: 226–250), with the gracious help of Professor Steven Katz, and in “Nesirah: Myth and Androgyny in Late Kabbalistic Practice” (*The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 12, no. 3 [2003]: 63–86).

The Beit El mystics are underrepresented in contemporary scholarship, even as they are the most influential living school of

Kabbalah in the world. Living schools have generally been problematic for scholars of Kabbalah. With some exceptions, the scholarly community has neglected the contemporary kabbalists of the Middle East, particularly in comparison to such movements as Ḥasidism or the Jewish enlightenment. This study will, I hope, mark a small beginning in correcting this inequity in the contemporary academy. Nevertheless, it remains a beginning, and I would not be surprised if, in the future, many of its conclusions are successfully queried. I expect that this book should raise more questions than it resolves. Nonetheless, I hope that this little book is useful for limning the contours of rich possibilities for further study.

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# Transliterations

a, e	alef	l	lamed
b	bet	m	mem
v	vet	n	nun
g	gimmel	s	samekh
h	he	‘	ayin
v	vav	p	pe
z	zayin	f	fe
ḥ	het	z	zadi
t	tet	q, k	qof
y, i	yod	r	resh
k	kaf	sh	shin
kh	khaf	s	sin
		t	tav

Quotations from Ḥayyim Vital’s rendition of the Lurianic canon, the *Shemoneh Sha’arim* (Eight Gates), and the *Ez Ḥayyim* (Tree of Life), are from the comprehensive edition by Yehudah Ashlag (Tel Aviv 1962), with the exception of various individual texts not included therein, which will be identified by separate bibliographical data.

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# Shalom Shar'abi and the Kabbalists of Beit El

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# Introduction: Kabbalistic Metaphysics

The *sefirot* are the building blocks of classical Jewish mysticism. The term is first evident in the *Sefer Yeẓirah*, or *Book of Formation*, a brief text written in the Mishnaic style and steeped in Pythagorean mysticism. The idea resurfaced among the mystics of Provence and Gerona in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. They, as well as the mysterious composition *Sefer ha-Bahir*, contributed the idea of reference to the *sefirot* in terms of their *kinnuyim*, or symbolic euphemisms. Eventually, the *sefirot* were portrayed in anthropomorphic form and were utilized in kabbalistic meditation much as the *chakras* were employed in Tantrism.

The *sefirot* may be described as aspects, or stages, in the descent of the Divine into present reality. In the classical works of theosophical Kabbalah, such as the *Zohar* and the works of Joseph Gikatilla, Joseph of Hamadan, and Todros Abulafia, the *sefirot* are clearly hypostases of the Divine, emanations from the apex of the Godhead. They were portrayed in many ways, and the various attempts to organize and structure them were collected in systematic works such as Moshe Cordovero's *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim*. They are most commonly organized in the form of a hierarchy of emanation, beginning with *Keter* or *Da'at*, the highest aspect, which is the abstracted inner nature of God. *Keter* is followed by the *sefirot* *Hokhmah* and *Binah*, which represent the attributes of Divine wisdom and understanding, respectively. The emotive features of the Divine are summed up in the *sefirah* *Hesed*, the quality of loving kindness, and its apposite,

*Din* or *Gevurah*, the faculty of Divine Judgment. These are combined in the central *sefirah*, *Rahamim* or *Tiferet*, which also interconnects with all of the seven lower *sefirot*. The lowest four *sefirot* represent the four aspects of sentient existence. *Nezah* is the aspect of linear time, while *Hod* is the aspect of scope or grandeur. The *sefirah Yesod* governs sexuality, and the final *sefirah*, *Malkhut* or *Shekhinah*, govern the simple fact of existence in the physical world.

Lurianic Kabbalah differed from the interpretations that preceded it in that it emphasized a different structure of the Divine. Instead of the *sefirot* that formed the basis for the Kabbalah of the *Zohar* and the mainstream Safed Kabbalah, Isaac Luria emphasized a different system, which was first presented in the last sections of the main part of the *Zohar*. This universe is visualized in anthropomorphic terms and structured according to a hierarchical family, including a patriarch (*Attika Kadisha*), a set of parents (*Abba* and *Imma*), a son (*Zeir*), and his consort (*Nukvah*). The family, moreover, has been traumatized by its history, following the well-known mythos of the “breaking of the vessels” of Divinity and the need to restore the world through the act of Divine repair. In the midst of this general catastrophe, *Abba* and *Imma* must conceive and nurture their offspring, *Zeir*, and betroth him to *Nukvah*. The various members of the cosmic Divine family, the parents (*Abba* and *Imma*), the youth (*Zeir Anpin*), and his consort (*Nukvah*), have turned away from one another to confront the chaos in the world following the breaking of the vessels. With their backs turned toward one another, they face outward to confront the chaos of the world outside. This turning out is called the back-to-back embrace.

The goal of the adept, in the Lurianic rite, was to bring about the harmonious and untroubled union of the various countenances, thereby causing the conception and nurturing of *Zeir Anpin*, the central countenance. This union is described as the goal of the kabbalistic practice in the later strata of the *Zohar*, where unification with the Divine is a positive act that takes place through the contemplative practice of certain commandments. The central act of all Lurianic theurgy is to turn these dysfunctional figures toward each other, thus effecting “face-to-face” union and thereby fixing the broken and sundered universe.

# I

## Shar'abi and Beit El

A living form of Kabbalah is enjoying a renaissance, in spite of its exotic and obscure nature. In Jerusalem, Safed, New York, and Los Angeles, kabbalists regularly pray in elevated states of high concentration and silence. As they complete the Jewish prayer rite, these adepts contemplate complex and abstruse linguistic formulae. These formulae, known as the *kavvanot*, or “intentions,” are based on a complex set of associations, employing Divine Names, esoteric symbols, and complex vocalized mantras. Across the development of the tradition, it has been defined in various ways. It is a rite, performed by the adepts with the power of their minds. The adepts may also experience an ascent of the soul and even, according to some systems, an experience of union with God. The most widespread understanding is that, in the practice of the *kavvanot*, the contemplative mind is sacrificed to the cathartic processes of the Divine in order to expedite the uniting of Divine and earthly forces according to the teachings of mainstream Kabbalah.

There has been a renewed enthusiasm for this form of contemplative prayer, and it is being propagated with a new urgency. Prayer with *kavvanot* has been the provenance of the wonder-working rabbis who have come to social prominence in the past three decades, a line of recently departed sages that includes R. Mordechai Shar'abi, R. Yisrael Abuḥazeira, the “Baba Sali,” the *Ḥakham* (Sage) Yizḥak Kaduri of the Bukharian community, and his student

R. Shmuel Darsi. Posthumous sainthood has been conferred upon such mendicant figures as Yosef Dayyan, an impoverished Jerusalem pietist who made gravesite pilgrimage his special area of concern and who was a natural subject of hagiography. With the passing of this immigrant generation of religious saints, there are new figures waiting in the wings to assume leadership at the nexus of religious and political power.

There are a number of institutions devoted to the practice of *kavvanot*, and they host a shifting number of practitioners. In Jerusalem, prayer with *kavvanot* takes place formally in the institutions Nahar Shalom, Beit El, Ahavat Shalom, Ha-Ḥayyim ve-ha-Shalom, and Nayot be-Ramah, as well as in a circle that meets every morning at the Western Wall. Among Jews of Middle Eastern extraction, congregations that meet before dawn are likely to include practitioners of the *kavvanot*. I have observed individuals practicing the *kavvanot* among the pious worshippers at the Aboab synagogue in Safed and at the Natan Eli congregation in Los Angeles. Manuscripts of influential prayer books with *kavvanot* are being published in photo offset. At the same time, new editions of *kavvanot* are being prepared in conjunction with the recent political and economic empowerment of the Jews from Middle Eastern communities in locales ranging from Jerusalem to Los Angeles. As the practice of *kavvanot* grows, it is clear that the wider public has accepted the primacy of the most esoteric of practices and ceded the practice to a small elite of venerated adepts.<sup>1</sup>

This tradition is grounded in the lineage and eros of classical Kabbalah. The kabbalistic tradition sees its origins in the disciples of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yoḥai in second-century Galilee. The exploits of this circle were documented in the vast classic of Kabbalah, the *Zohar*. The *Zohar* began to circulate in the thirteenth century. Following the Spanish expulsion, the Galilee hill town of Safed saw a renaissance of kabbalistic activity, in which various refugee scholars attempted to recover and reinstitute the practices laid out in the *Zohar*, as well as the eros of a circle of adepts and the charisma of ecstatic rabbinic leadership. The foremost kabbalist of Safed was Isaac Luria, whose teachings were purveyed mostly by his foremost student, Ḥayyim Vital. Acolytes of the Beit El tradition, like their European contemporaries in Polish Ḥasidism, see themselves as the lineal descendants of the main systems of Kabbalah. From Shimon Bar Yoḥai the tradition passed to Isaac Luria, known as the AR" I (an acronym for "our master R. Isaac"). Luria's revelations, according to the acolytes, then passed to the founder of Ḥasidism, the Ba'al Shem Tov and Shalom Shar'abi of Jerusalem.

## Shar'abi

Shalom Shar'abi (1720–1780; also known as *RaSHaSH*) developed the most popular and normative system of *kavvanot*. Shar'abi was a Yemenite kabbalist who arrived in Jerusalem via Syria in the mid-eighteenth century. His personal history is obscured by the sort of hagiographies that attend the biographies of holy men in other traditions: picaresque escapes, the temptations of the flesh, and the protagonist's obscuring his spiritual identity as an act of piety. The circumstances of Shar'abi's journey to the land of Israel, his progression from obscurity to the head of the Beit El yeshivah, and his acts of saintliness and intercession are legendary.

Shar'abi was raised in Sana, Yemen, although his family originated in Shar'ab, whence his name. He came to the land of Israel from Yemen by way of Aden, Baṣra, Baghdad, and Damascus. In Baghdad, he studied the *Zohar* with a circle of mystics under the leadership of Sheikh Yiṣḥak Gaon, and his ecstatic manner earned him his first recognition. Controversy seemed to follow him: his flight from Yemen was attended by an incident “like that of the wife of Potiphar.”<sup>2</sup> The account bears repeating:

In the holy city of Sana I knew the family of the Rav RaSha”Sh, wise and steadfast people, and they told me of the circumstances of his coming to [Jerusalem]. He was a comely and God fearing youth and his livelihood was to peddle spices and small notions in the city and the villages, as did all the Jewish youths in that district. Once he passed though the gentile city Sana with his peddler’s sack on his shoulder and a wealthy Ishmaelite noble woman saw him through the lattice. She called him up to make a purchase. She let him in to her chambers and locked the door behind him and attempted to induce him to sin with her, threatening otherwise to kill him. When he saw that there was no escape he asked to relieve himself. She showed him to the privy and waited outside. He forced himself through a small window in the privy; fell unharmed three stories to the ground and fled. She waited for him in vain, and when she saw that he had fled she flung his pack outside. He fled, and wandered from city to city until he came to Aden, thence to Basra, Babylonia and from there to Jerusalem.

It is not unusual for revered religious innovators to have a somewhat checkered early history, and, for such a unifying figure, Shar'abi had a career that, as he moved through the great Jewish centers of the Middle East, was

littered with misunderstandings and controversies; trouble seemed to follow him. In Damascus, he was employed as the servant of Samuel Parḥi, the economic adviser of the Pasha of Damascus. R Parḥi did not recognize the young man's real nature and was unkind to him. This led to an emotional denouement some years later in Jerusalem. Parḥi was himself an avid supporter of the Beit El yeshivah and found his former servant sitting at the head of the academy, leading the Damascus householder to beg forgiveness for his mistreatment of Shar'abi.<sup>3</sup> It was also in Damascus that Shar'abi became embroiled in a halakhic controversy over the minimum acceptable weight of the Passover maḥaz, which hastened his departure for Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup>

Upon his arrival in Jerusalem, Shar'abi behaved in a self-effacing manner. He was assigned to be the sexton (*mesharet*) at the Beit El yeshivah and kept to himself, although he visited the sacred graves on the Mount of Olives and listened to lessons in Lurianic Kabbalah from a corner in an adjoining room in the academy. Only after the clandestine circulation of some of his writings did his star begin to rise among the scholars of Beit El. In accordance with the romantic tone of his biography, it was the daughter of Gedaliah Ḥayyun, the academy's founder, who determined that Shar'abi was circulating the responsa, recognizing the true nature of the quiet, handsome, self-effacing young sexton. Ḥayyun elevated Shar'abi's status and gave him his daughter's hand in marriage, at which point Shar'abi entered into the historical record.<sup>5</sup>

## Beit El

At the time of Shar'abi's arrival, the Beit El yeshivah was still a young institution, part of the general flowering of Kabbalah in eighteenth century Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> The kabbalists of Beit El initially organized to study and follow the kabbalistic system of Isaac Luria, which had been developed nearly two centuries before in the Galilee hill town of Safed. The kabbalists were already renowned among the population for their intercessions in times of drought.

Shar'abi's leadership galvanized the Beit El community, in part because he organized and chartered the majority of the Jerusalem kabbalists. The group at Beit El left a number of documents, particularly four charters. The charters are significant because they were based on the type that had been instituted by the Safed kabbalist Ḥayyim Vital with the object of uniting the circles around Luria under his (Vital's) leadership.<sup>7</sup> Hence, the instituting of the charters is evidence that the Beit El kabbalists self-consciously patterned themselves after the circles that attended Isaac Luria, which in turn were patterned on the kabbalistic fellowships described in the *Zohar*. The first charter reflects concerns

about the continuation of the fellowship and the preservation of its social structure and spiritual intensity. As in the case of the charter signed by Vital's companions, the signers committed themselves to attitudes of love and humility toward their fellows in the circle.<sup>8</sup> The second charter deals with responses to catastrophes that occur to members of their community. The signers committed themselves to take responsibility for the education of the comrades' children and to take special measures in the event of a comrade's illness or death. The comrades also committed themselves to reciting all of the books of the Psalms, which is also a common response to catastrophe. In the fourth charter, the comrades designated themselves as the Ahavat Shalom group, an appellation that survives to this day.<sup>9</sup>

The pietistic life of the Beit El kabbalists was distinguished by the structure of the comradeship. In Beit El, there were three main areas of study: exoteric, philosophical (*mahshevet Yisrael*), and Kabbalah. The group divided into three "watches" (*mishmarot*) that effectively kept the study room populated twenty-four hours a day. The first watch began at the midnight vigil (*tiqqun haẓot*) and concentrated on the study of Lurianic Kabbalah, particularly Vital's *Ez Ḥayyim*. The second group commenced after the morning prayers and continued until the afternoon. The third watch ran from the afternoon to the evening services and concentrated on the study of Mishnah.<sup>10</sup> After the evening prayers, this group committed itself to the study of the Talmud. Hence, the social structure of the *mishmarot* was such that merchants and people who worked for a living could be preoccupied with exoteric studies during the day while the full-time practitioners of Kabbalah were busy during the night and morning hours.

Owing, in part, to tensions in the Beit El community, a group broke away and formed another institution, the Reḥovot ha-Nahar yeshivah, in 1896.<sup>11</sup> Reḥovot ha-Nahar was founded in the Yissacharoff synagogue of the Bukharian quarter of Jerusalem's "New City." The founder was Nissim Nahum, of Tripoli, with the assistance of Ḥayyim Shaul Dweck, of Aleppo. Dweck had left Beit El in the midst of a controversy over the proper *kavvanot* to be recited for the Sabbatical year.<sup>12</sup> Reḥovot ha-Nahar was devoted to *kavvanot* practice, to the apparent exclusion of Talmud study. Like Beit El, the new institution operated around the clock. The daily schedule began with nightly immersion in the ritual bath (*mikvah*), the performance of the midnight vigil (*Tiqqun Ḥaẓot*), and the full recitation of prayers with Shar'abi's version of the *kavvanot*.<sup>13</sup> Reḥovot ha-Nahar served as a center for the Aleppo scholars and came to include other newcomers to Jerusalem from Yemen and the west, as well as a significant contingent of Ashkenazim. The leaders of the early Ashkenazic pietistic circles of Jerusalem, Moshe Naḥum Wallenstein, Aryeh Leib Beharad, and Zevi Pesah Frank, as well as the Ḥasidic rabbinical court, gave their

approbation to Ḥayyim Shaul Dweck and Eliahu Ya'akov Legimi's book of popular penitential rites, *Benayahu ben Yehoyada*. By the beginning of the twentieth century, then, the practice of prayer *kavvanot* was constantly taking place in Beit El, within the walls of Jerusalem's Old City and in the Bukharian quarter of the New City. Like the revolving "watches" of the Temple priesthood, the kabbalists of Beit El and Reḥovot ha-Nahar saw themselves, through their constant prayer vigil, as sustaining the peace of Jerusalem.

### Shar'abi's Hegemony

Shar'abi had the happy experience of having his greatness recognized while he was still active. He raised many influential students, and even those who disagreed with his theoretical positions on Lurianic Kabbalah, such as Shlomo Molkho, praised him personally.<sup>14</sup> For Beit El kabbalists and other serious acolytes of Lurianic practice, Shar'abi came to complete a triumvirate of revealers of the Kabbalah, along with Shimon Bar Yoḥai, the hero of the *Zohar*, and Isaac Luria, who had come to preeminence, albeit posthumously, among the sages of the Safed Kabbalah.<sup>15</sup> Shar'abi's portrayal of the Lurianic system is seen as the fulfillment of that system, for he is regarded as the reincarnation of Luria. The Aleppo kabbalist Ḥayyim Shaul Dweck, citing Ḥayyim Palag', expressed this belief accordingly:

It was said of [Shar'abi], that he was the assurance that our teacher Luria gave to his students: "if you are worthy, I will come to you another time," [indicating that] Luria came to them in the incarnation of Shar'abi. From this we learn that Shar'abi was the reincarnation of Luria, and his students were the reincarnation of Luria's students.<sup>16</sup>

Since Shar'abi bore the spark of Luria's soul, the acolytes reasoned that he descended to the innermost workings of Luria's mind in order to seek the resolution of his teachings. Shar'abi revealed nothing new, only the source of revelations with regard to Luria's teaching. Hence, the Beit El kabbalists see no spirit of auteurism in Shar'abi's teachings. They are not original but simply a realization of what Luria would have taught, for Shar'abi was gleaned from the same sources as Vital and the original redactors.<sup>17</sup> As expressed by Yosef Ḥayyim, the influential Baghdad rabbi known as the *Ben Ish Ḥai*:

[There is a] question of how we should regard the new presentations in the words of our teacher RaSha"Sh, which are not to be found in the works of Luria upon which RaSha"Sh was dependent,

such as *Ez Ḥayyim* and *Mavo She'arim*. Know that our teacher the RaSha"Sh is totally credible, for he made no innovations from his own consciousness or from other works of kabbalah, adding nothing to the words of our teacher the AR"l. Indeed, he plumbed the depths of the works of our teacher the AR"l and developed principles which are specifically explained in the writings of the AR"l.<sup>18</sup>

Shar'abi's relationship to the Lurianic canon is parallel to that of the canon's compiler, Ḥayyim Vital. Just as Vital was Luria's authoritative redactor, so Shar'abi is considered the central interpreter of Vital. However, the Beit El kabbalists believed that if Shar'abi's understanding were to contradict that of Vital, then Shar'abi's opinion was to be accepted, for he was the spark of Luria, Vital's teacher.<sup>19</sup> Shar'abi's opinion held sway; for it was commonly believed that Shar'abi clarified and resolved issues that had remained hidden from Vital.<sup>20</sup>

Shar'abi's teachings were accepted as persuasive on purely scholastic terms. Yet, it was also a matter of record in Beit El that Shar'abi had received a revelation of the prophet Elijah, through "apperception in consciousness [*b'ein ha-sekkel*]." <sup>21</sup> A tale circulated among the Beit El kabbalists of a maidservant who saw Elijah communing with Shar'abi, who swore her to secrecy on the matter.<sup>22</sup> The Beit El kabbalist Masoud ha-Cohen Alhadad believed that Shar'abi possessed *ruah ha-kodesh*, "holy spirit," declaring that "we have resolved this according to the Holy Spirit of RaSha"Sh."<sup>23</sup> A contemporary kabbalist, Ya'akov Moshe Hillel, has even defended the fact that Shar'abi developed religious practice on the basis of his revelatory experience on the grounds that it occurred "face-to-face" with the prophet Elijah.<sup>24</sup>

It is theologically brazen, at this late date, to ascribe Divine inspiration to any rabbi in modernity, and some kabbalists are reluctant to address the tradition of Shar'abi's visitation from the prophet Elijah. Yosef Ḥayyim, the *Ben Ish Hai*, provides a more measured explanation of Shar'abi's revelation:

With regards to the issue of Shar'abi's having received a revelation from the prophet Elijah . . . know that there is an injunction from the words of Kabbalah; *do not tamper with my anointed one and my prophets do not oppress* (1 Chron. 16:22). Meaning that it is not for us to speak of such great and vast men according to the measure of our mentality. So I may only tell you one thing of the revelation of Elijah, of blessed memory. Truly, when one merits to speak to him face-to-face as was the case with our teacher the AR"l, such a thing was difficult to imagine even for those of the early generations and all the more so for the later generations. Indeed, it is plausible that a

revelation from Elijah may take place in the consciousness of the *zaddik*. The spark of Elijah is clothed in the perception of the *zaddik*, guiding him in truth. The *zaddik* doesn't feel the revelation of Elijah in his mind. He is merely conscious that he perceives the truth. But it is really not so; he is receiving something from the garmented spark of Elijah that is in his consciousness . . . and I believe that it was so with our teacher RaSha"Sh.<sup>25</sup>

Yosef H̄ayyim defined Shar'abi's revelation as preconscious, an underlying Divine spark that guided all of his actions and decisions. However, the contemporary kabbalist Ya'akov Moshe Hillel has implied that Shar'abi's experience with Elijah was articulate and conscious, a "face-to-face" experience. Seemingly, time and distance have done nothing to diminish the mythos of Shar'abi's revelation but have served only to magnify the tradition.

Shar'abi was widely endorsed as a central kabbalistic authority, adjudicating matters of doctrine according to his decisions.<sup>26</sup> His system of prayer *kavvanot* was considered the authoritative one, and the Beit El kabbalists have formally declared that his interpretation of Kabbalah takes precedence over all others. His student Sasson Bakher Moshe<sup>27</sup> declared, "One must never depart from the path of Shar'abi." Today, Ya'akov Moshe Hillel has declared that "we only rely on Shar'abi's understanding of the AR"1"<sup>28</sup> and "we on the margins [*azuvei ha-kir*] can only align our thinking with Shar'abi's transcendent wisdom."<sup>29</sup> One Jerusalem Kabbalist, Sariah Deblitsky, in his *Mahshevet Bezalel*, described the following situation, in an apparent reference to the disagreements of Shar'abi and Shlomo Molkho:

In the book *Tiqqun H̄azot* from the saintly genius Zevi Melekh Shapiro (2:263b), it is written: one must never move at all, God forbid, from the words of Shar'abi. Once there was a scholar who wrote otherwise, and he even had a revelation that upheld him, yet nonetheless, we pay it no mind, as is known to a number of scholars here in the holy city. Shar'abi's words are like a strong pillar to light the path for the great sages of Israel and the masters of the Holy Spirit.<sup>30</sup>

Despite these examples of Shar'abi's authority, certain prominent Lurianists have qualified their support of Shar'abi's teachings. The Lithuanian kabbalist Shlomo Bar H̄eikel Eliashiv (acronym *Rav ShB"H*; 1841–1926) stated in his work *Leshem Shevo ve-Ohalama* that, while Shar'abi's interpretation is necessary for understanding Isaac Luria's writings, it is still merely "one aspect of Lurianic teaching and it is possible to understand him also in other as-

pects."<sup>31</sup> In the same vein, the influential Baghdadi/Yerushalmi kabbalist Yehudah Petayah was somewhat defensive regarding his methodology of presenting a simple interpretation of *Ez Hāyīm* in light of the hegemony of Shar'abi's approach:

In a given passage, I will not digress to another matter but will explain that passage simply, as if there was nothing in the *Ez Hāyīm* but that passage, that the reader not be confused and [Luria's] words be made difficult for him, for undoubtedly even Shar'abi, at the beginning of his study of the *Ez Hāyīm*, studied it in its simple form, until God graced him with an understanding of the deeper matters . . . so I will explain the matters simply and leave Shar'abi in his place.<sup>32</sup>

Notwithstanding these respectful detractors, it is clear that the majority of the Beit El scholars saw Shar'abi's opinion as definitive. The Beit El community is united by the idea that Shar'abi's theoretical works and prayer *kavvanot* are their sacred doctrine.

### Kabbalah in the Present Tense

In 1947, Gershom Scholem presented a lachrymose view of the prospects of the Beit El community:

Rabbi Shalom Shar'abi . . . founded a center for Kabbalists which exists to this day. This is Beth-El, now a forlorn spot in the Old City of Jerusalem, where even today as I write these lines, men who are thoroughly "modern" in their thought may draw inspiration from contemplating what Jewish prayer can be in its sublimest form. For here the emphasis was again, and more than ever, laid on the practice of mystical prayer, the mystical contemplation of the elect. . . . Kabbalism becomes at the end of its way what it was at the beginning; a genuine esotericism, a kind of mystery religion which tries to keep the *profanum vulgus* at arm's length. Among the writings of the Sephardic Kabbalists of this school, which has exercised a considerable influence on Oriental Jewry, it would be difficult to find a single one capable of being understood by the laity.<sup>33</sup>

Scholem's elegiac appraisal was premature in many ways. A number of his points remain valid, but the reader will see that Beit El continues to thrive in spite of, and even because of, the obscure and unworldly aspects of its esoteric

teaching. Now the Beit El building in the Old City is packed and bustling, and the *kavvanot* are being attempted by dozens of young acolytes. Somehow, the most willfully esoteric of kabbalistic schools is central to the workings of the life of the Old City.

When I began to visit the various circles of *kavvanot* practitioners, in the early 1980s, I imagined a different course for the movement. I believed that they were likely to form the ideological core of the fledging Shas political party, which represented the interests of the religious and poor Israelis of Sephardic background. I thought that the leaders of the circle would become media figures and political players. The common people revered the last wonder-working rabbis of the prior generation, and their blessings were being bundled together with a vote for the Shas party. The activity of rabbis such as Isaac Kaduri and others in the 1992 elections reinforced that suspicion on my part, although it has not come to pass. The Shas party was ascendant in the 2006 elections, and it remains to be seen to what extent it will continue to employ Beit El kabbalists as soteric guarantors in the election process, particularly as the old generation of charismatic saints has passed and a new generation is quietly maneuvering for ascendancy.<sup>34</sup> Still, the growth and spread of *kavvanot* as an intellectual and spiritual phenomenon, if not a political one, has continued unabated.

The practice of *kavvanot* has spread out to newer religious circles outside the purview of the Middle Eastern community. The Jewish renewal movement of the late twentieth century, which brought religiously syncretistic and intercultural influences into liberal Judaism, has retained the most protean of the *kavvanot*, the ascent through the four worlds that forms the basis of the morning service. Chava Weissler has recently begun to document the development of the rite in the Eilat Chayyim community, which is a central location for the Renewal movement. The popular and controversial Kabbalah Centres, currently led by Rabbi Yehudah Berg, have prepared an erudite prayer book and have devised a novel implementation of the *kavvanot*. The prayer *kavvanot* that have been evolving in the Kabbalah Centres differ from those in the Beit El rite, although both traditions draw upon the Lurianic principles regarding the application of sacred names to the liturgy. The Kabbalah Centre rite has, so far, added new emphases and reinstated certain texts that the Beit El kabbalists had neglected. At the same time, dropouts from the Kabbalah Centres have moved toward more traditional practice of the *kavvanot* and have attached themselves to pietistic elements of Middle Eastern congregations in various locales where both such communities are present.

The implication of all of this activity is that the practice of *kavvanot* is a living tradition, unfolding in the present tense, and so one may speak of Beit El

kabbalists, what they believe and what they practice, with some confidence that there is a community in the field, however reclusive and mysterious it may be. The “Beit El kabbalists” comprise a specific historical series of kabbalistic circles and their enthusiasts and supporters from outside the community.

For the purposes of this study, I will refer to Beit El kabbalists in speaking of both the founding members of the circle and the school as it evolved in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I also refer to contemporary kabbalists operating in the discipline, who speak with relative unanimity of purpose. Rav Benayahu Shmueli, of the populist Nahar Shalom community, has embraced the writings and publishing activities of Ya'akov Moshe Hillel, so there is unanimity of opinion between the leading theorist of Beit El Kabbalah and the most active group of acolytes. I have seen nothing to contradict their various conclusions in the activities of the Beit El kabbalists who haunt the Western Wall or in the fiery homilies of the late Rav Shmuel Darsi, of the Nayot be-Ramah circle in the Geulah quarter of Jerusalem. Their influence extends, as well, to institutions that reach out to the newly affiliated, such as the Yeshivat Ha-Ḥayyim ve-ha-Shalom, led by Rav Mordecai Attia, and to the activities of other groups of religious penitents in Jerusalem. There is, from the evidence of the publishing record, a sizable audience for various new manuals on the speculative and practical aspects of Beit El Kabbalah. There is apparently a sufficient market for such studies to justify the expense and effort of publication. Hence, when this study refers to “the Beit El kabbalists,” it means both the sages who flourished in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and practitioners functioning today who subscribe to the same trove of sacred writings and apply themselves to the same challenge—maintaining a prayerful vigil over Jerusalem and the world, their words intoning the common liturgy and their minds filled with the sublime speculations of the *kavvanot*.

### Study and Observation

My observations of the Beit El kabbalists were informal and went on for many years. I began to write this book as an expression of *ga'agu'im*, my yearning for the Jerusalem that I first experienced as a young rabbi, fresh from an orthodox seminary, ensconced in the old Bukharian quarter of Jerusalem, whose population was at the time still largely of central Asian origin. There the locals would point out to me the attic of the Shoshanim le-David synagogue, where Ya'akov Ḥayyim Sofer had sat and composed the voluminous kabbalistic law code *Kaf ha-Ḥayyim*. In the large multiplex synagogue founded by the family Moussaieff, I would hear of the nearby Yissacharoff synagogue and the circle

of kabbalists who had moved there, Ḥayyim Shaul Dweck and the Rehovot ha-Nahar community. Throughout the neighboring communities, stretching in an “L” shape from the Bukharian quarter into the Ḥasidic suburb of Geulah and thence to the area around Jerusalem’s large open-air market, Maḥaneh Yehudah, there were kabbalistic synagogues. The Beit El synagogue, vacated during the fall of the Old City of Jerusalem, had moved to the border of these two neighborhoods and still attracted a circle of initiates, led by members of the Hadaya family.

In those days, when I was a younger man, I had gone for a blessing to the saint R. Mordechai Shar’abi, who was not, despite his name, a lineal descendant of Shalom Shar’abi. He lived in a large facility off the main promenade of the open-air market. It was a crisp morning, and I sat in the courtyard and watched as his young wife fed the cats. After a while, I was shown into a darkened room. Shar’abi sat in robes, cross-legged on a divan, swaying from side to side like a blind man. And, indeed, he seemed not to see me. “Who is it?” he cried. Next to him sat a burly young man, in the garb of any run-of-the-mill yeshivah student. Perhaps it was a young Benyahu Shmueli; I can’t remember now. “He is coming with a question!” called out the burly young man, though Shar’abi was sitting not three feet away from him. “Let him ask,” called Shar’abi in an equally loud voice. He swayed from side to side in a trance, smiling and staring blindly out into the room. I asked my question, and he answered with a certain brusque optimism. And I walked out into the morning light with a good feeling, as if I had encountered somebody who existed between two worlds, this one and the next, and he had leaned down from his other world and brought my needs into it. Now Shar’abi has passed, with his generation of holy men, and the house that I visited is now the Nahar Shalom yeshivah, where a new generation pursues the Beit El practice.

I have prayed with the Beit El kabbalists for more than two decades, in Jerusalem, Safed, and Los Angeles, observed their special rituals, joined their prayer circles long before dawn, and recited the midnight vigil with them and other denizens of the religious world of Jerusalem. I wish that all of my questions about their circles could have been resolved through interviews and observations, anthropologically, seeing, in the words of Robert Orsi, “to bring the other into fuller focus within the circumstances of his or her history, relationships and experiences . . . to stand in an attitude of disciplined openness and attentiveness before a religious practice or idea of another era or culture on which we do not impose our wishes, dreams or anxieties.”<sup>35</sup> Yet, when it came time to ask hard questions about the nature of their practice, I found that discussions and interviews were producing only anecdotal information and preventing a clear understanding of their theological issues and

practical concerns. I found that the works of Ya'akov Moshe Hillel, the leader of the present-day Ahavat Shalom community, in the Meah Shearim district of Jerusalem, were more to the point as a response to my concerns. The questions that I asked were the ones that he, in his contemporary portrayals of the theological and practical issues related to fitting the Beit El practice into the preexisting life of a kabbalist, were the questions that I would ask on the rare occasion where I did gain access to R. Benyahu Shmueli or R. Shmuel Darsi. Nothing that they told me contradicted what Hillel had to say, and sometimes, when I spoke to them, it seemed as if they were hearing such questions for the first time. So it was that, while I was observing, intermittently, the functioning of a community ensconced in a large community, the answers that I sought were to be found in books, not in the practitioners themselves. At the end of the day, my interests were doctrinal and not experiential. I could not gauge the latter dimension, and, for the practitioners, it was too intimate an experience to be discussed with an outsider.

It is no small thing that, in that social milieu, the term “professor” is an epithet and “universita” a curse. At the turn of the last century, the Jerusalem pietist Asher Zelig Margoliot averred that he was uneasy about publishing Shar'abi's prayer book, “for the holy book will be found in the Universities, and the houses of ‘doctors and professors.’”<sup>36</sup> I was now a professor myself, in a liberal seminary, no less, and I had to behave modestly and not create ripples. Although untrained, I was still enough of an anthropologist to know that it would be best that my presence not be the center of attention. So I behaved as a Jew who had come to pray and study and otherwise attach myself to the community.<sup>37</sup>

It is hard to speak definitively about the role of Beit El Kabbalah in contemporary Israeli society, because the attitude of Israeli society toward religion is changing before our eyes. The sharp lines between religious and secular are seemingly being breached, so that there is a new middle ground. New groups like the somewhat degenerate strain in the Breslav Ḥasidism, the Kabbalah Centres, and other elements are conspiring to blur the lines between the religious and the secular elements of Israel. The by now de rigueur pilgrimage to India undertaken after army service is opening a bridge between East and Far East, and returning young people are bringing back inchoate expressions of spirituality that are being encouraged by a new openness. A new generation of religious evangelists such as Rav Amnon Yizḥak is espousing penitential anxieties among secular Israelis. Institutions as Beit El are poised to take advantage of any changes in the Israeli sociopolitical landscape. Populist members of the community are fanning out and gaining new adherents. The circles of *mekavvenim* and the morning lessons are fleshed out with various

dropouts from Israeli society: intellectual bureaucrats who took an early pension; people living on disability, often for military wounds; new penitents; the divorced; people who have hit the invisible walls and glass ceilings that exist, undocumented, in Israeli society.

## Jewish Mysticism

Kabbalah studies have thus far equated Kabbalah, which is a system of metaphysics, with “Jewish mysticism.” Scholars of Kabbalah have fought for its place among the mystical teachings of world religions. It is unusual to uncover a living kabbalistic tradition in Judaism, and unnerving for a Kabbalah scholar. The sources of most of our studies have already folded themselves into the creases of Jewish history or invested effort in covering their tracks, which demand to be uncovered. In this case, Shar’abi and his heirs have been hiding in plain sight. Shar’abi’s followers have remained active and, in recent years, have grown as a group, yet they have not been given scholarly attention. There are many reasons for this. For one thing, Kabbalah scholars have come from a different stratum of Israeli society, separated from the practitioners in the field by social, ethnic, and religious barriers.

In order to examine Beit El in the context of the study of Kabbalah, an initial question is, What is the nature of the mystical experience in the Beit El tradition? How do the activities of the school reflect the substance of Shar’abi’s teachings? The answer reveals a problematic truth in the study of Kabbalah, namely that, in fact, there is little of the mystical *experience* in Beit El Kabbalah. The metaphysical *object* of the practice is clear, however, and nobody in the Jewish or kabbalistic communities disputes the authenticity of Beit El in the kabbalistic lineage and pantheon. In examining Beit El, a distinction must be made between Kabbalah as a form of mysticism, to be equated with the other mystical traditions of civilization, and Kabbalah as the inner metaphysic of much of traditional Judaism. Beit El is the acme of the kabbalistic doctrine in early modernity, yet it has little about it that would conform to many Western typologies of the mystical experience. Is the academy to exclude Beit El from the realm of Kabbalah because it doesn’t conform to Western notions of “mysticism”? Is Kabbalah really to be considered a form of mysticism, or is it best defined as Judaism’s salient esoteric, metaphysical tradition?

## 2

### *Kavvanah* and *Kavvanot*

An astonishing admission, by Shar'abi's son Hizkiahu Yizhak Mizrahi Shar'abi, emerges from the very heart of the Beit El school. As cited in the enormous review of the Beit El rite *Divrei Shalom*, Avner Efg'in quotes the younger Shar'abi:

Even if we intend [*mekavven*] according to our intellects, each one according to his capacity we do not know the explanation of "kavvanah," how it is and what the explanation of what the Rav wrote . . . when he said "intend thus" and so forth, what does "intend" [*tekavven*] mean? What is kavvanah? I have not achieved any spiritual level, [yet] because of our many sins, it has transpired that people think of me that I have the proper intention, and that I am expert in the words of the Rav, and this causes me all of the evils of the world, body and soul.<sup>1</sup>

This revelatory remark suggests that for all of the complexity of Shar'abi's system of *kavvanot*, the writings of the Beit El kabbalists provide little description of the *experience* of the practice. This truth also emerges after an exhaustive review of the Beit El literature. The cultivation of a personal feeling and the achieving of a mystical state were not goals of the practice, and directives about achieving ecstasy or cleaving are largely absent from the literature. Rather, prayer with *kavvanot* was a transitive experience, directed at the object(s) of prayer.

This does not mean that the members of the Beit El school were oblivious to the pietistic and experiential aspects of their practice. In fact, in matters overtly spiritual, they were simply dependent on the rich ethical literature coming out of the Safed tradition, exemplified by the writings of Ḥayyim Vital, Eliahu de-Vidas, Elazar Azikri, and others. The widely circulated works of the ethical (*mussar*) tradition were also universally acceptable to them. The Beit El kabbalists were also empathetic with the Ḥasidic masters. Like their North African counterparts,<sup>2</sup> they felt that some Hasidic thought was talking to them, as well. Otherwise, the spiritual dimension of their practice was derivative and unoriginal, based on earlier kabbalistic traditions. The only exception to this rule is the works of Yosef Ḥayyim, the “Ben Ish Ḥai,” who was an exceptional theologian, operating in every homiletical field of Jewish literary expression.

Conventional notions of emotional intensity are not absent from the *kavvanot* tradition. The nineteenth-century Beit El kabbalist Ḥayyim Shaul Dweck, for instance, was renowned for his emotional intensity at the time of prayer and for the beauty of his melodies.<sup>3</sup> Otherwise, with regard to the nature of *kavvanah*, the Beit El kabbalists relied on the precedents of early writings. If even Ḥizkyahu Yiẓḥak Mizraḥi Shar'abi was uncertain regarding the authenticity of his practice, what can a mere scholar accomplish in determining the inner spirituality of Beit El Kabbalah? Yet, the Beit El kabbalists had an idea of what they were trying to do, and their assumptions were based on traditional Jewish notions of concentration in prayer, or *kavvanah*, and from these notions came the religious practice that defined the Beit El school.

### *Kavvanah* in Prayer

The term *kavvanah* emerges out of Jewish law. In the rabbinic tradition, there is concern as to whether ritual and other acts are performed with the proper intention. This preoccupation is particularly sharp with regard to the act of prayer, in which the rote act may be manifestly insufficient. The concept of *kavvanah*, meaning “intention” or “sincere feeling,” is the product of a certain religious tension in early Judaism. The rote performance of a commandment was often contrasted with the spiritual dimension of the act, which was termed its “intention,” or *kavvanah*. In the case of fulfilling commandments through actions, the intention implies will or volition. Certain commandments could not be fulfilled by the act alone; the act had to be accompanied by the “intention of the heart,” or *kavvanah*. In the case of prayer, the rabbis were highly conscious that the rote recitation of the words of prayer had to be accompanied by an emotional commitment to the words being uttered. As the idea of *kavvanah*

evolved, the sages of the Talmud self-consciously acknowledged that they were legislating the spiritual component of Judaism.

Although there are exceptions to the rule, it is a standard theme of the prophetic tradition that prayer and repentance are the equal of sacrifice in their positive effect on the Divine will. In later antiquity, when most Jews were isolated from the Jerusalem Temple, they formally turned to prayer as the replacement for the soteric agency of the sacrificial rite.<sup>4</sup> The impetus for Jewish prayer remains anxiety over the need for atonement. As the sacrificial altar removed the effects of sin, so the act of prayer allayed punishment and misfortune. Quietistic or meditative understandings of prayer must grapple with the fact that the core of the exoteric prayer derived from the sacrificial rite is petitional, *tefilat bakashah*, a laundry list of needs, couched in communal terms. The primary goal of prayer was to achieve the supplicants' physical needs. Whether or not prayer may have brought the adherent to an elevated state was beside the point. With prayer so heavily freighted with tension and need, it became evident that there had to be an extra dimension to individual prayer beyond the rote recitation of the words. Tannaitic discussions already posit the need for an extra dimension of attention or sincerity in one's prayer, termed "intention," or *kavvanah*.<sup>5</sup>

Inherent in the practice of *kavvanot* is a tension between the mental object of concentration and the words coming out of one's mouth. In the most pious Jewish prayer, the person praying vocalizes the name of God with the word *Adonay* even as he or she reads the name YHVH. Hence, in all formal Jewish prayer, there may be a disparity between the aural expression of the word and the intention expressed.<sup>6</sup> Even in common Jewish prayer, it is possible to ask the question that Joseph Weiss posed about the *kavvanot*: "Was the mind completely separated from lips except insofar as the spoken word of prayer acted as a springboard for the contemplative journey to the corresponding sefirotic realities?"<sup>7</sup> The answer to his question must be in the affirmative; the purified mind was the main instrument of the theurgy of prayer.

### *Kavvanah* in Kabbalah

As earlier stated, in medieval Kabbalah, *kavvanot* are ideas, texts, or formulae to be contemplated while reciting the liturgy. In the annals of Kabbalah, there was a transition from the idea of *kavvanah*, which means, simply, "intention" or "concentration" in prayer, to the *kavvanot*, which, in the parlance of medieval Kabbalah, were ideas, texts, or formulae to be contemplated while reciting the liturgy. Scholarly research has traced a single thread of the notion of

*kavvanah* leading from early Kabbalah to the classical forms of the eighteenth century. The development of *kavvanot* accompanied the emergence of Kabbalah in Gerona, Provence, and the Rhineland. In each case, the preexistent format of the prayers was the instrument of the kabbalistic practice. In Azriel of Gerona's "Gate of Kavvanah of the First Ḥasidim," *kavvanah* is a "systematic absorption in the Divine Will and the desire to be united with it."<sup>8</sup> The German Pietists who flourished in the Rhineland roughly concurrently with Azriel's activity in Spain are described as "interpreters of the listed [*dorshei reshumot*], weighing and counting the sum and number of the letters of prayer and blessings [*Tur Oraḥ Hayim* 113]," namely that they interpreted the words of the prayer service according to its linear unfolding. Hence, the practice of *kavvanot* was defined, at its outset, as the imposition of independent meaning onto a preexistent "list," namely the traditional prayer service. With the advent of this practice among the Ashkenazi Ḥasidim, two ancillary values were developed, as well, as has been noted by Joseph Dan. The first was the understanding that the prayer book, as sacred canon, may not be altered in any way. The second value was that prayer is not merely the fulfillment of a legal demand but is "a vehicle for becoming a participant in a mystical, Divine harmony."<sup>9</sup>

The kabbalists were cognizant of their antecedents. Hence, elements of the earliest statements about *kavvanah* remain relevant in classical and later Kabbalah. The main anthology of lore for subsequent kabbalists was the *Zohar*, and its ideas regarding the mythology of prayer were authoritative for most subsequent kabbalists. The *Zohar* served as a warehouse for many ideas from the early Kabbalah, the Safed kabbalist Moshe Cordovero derived his ideas from the *Zohar*, and his student Isaac Luria operated in the same tradition, so that ideas regarding such a central idea as *kavvanah* remained consistent throughout the development of Kabbalah up to the emergence of Polish Ḥasidism.

The *Zohar* locates the effects of prayer in the overlapping swirl of Divine emanations. These various emanations include a number of contradictory systems anthologized in the *Zohar*: the *sefirot*, or hypostases of the Divine, the successive worlds of existence, and the celestial palaces filled with denizens of the celestial and rabbinic hierarchies. The proper recitation of the set prayer service is the way into these theosophical hierarchies. Hence, kabbalists saw the structure of the liturgy as a code for the interaction of the *sefirot* and the prayer book as a tool for influencing this interaction.<sup>10</sup>

The structure of the prayer service, as rabbinically established, is time based. Moreover, in the worldview of the *Zohar*, the liturgical time represented in the Jewish day, week, month, and year and marked by the prayer rite is, in effect, the basis of secular time. Hence, the performance of liturgical prayer is a

portal into the realm of the true time, God's time. Prayers, like the sacrificial cult, have the effect of setting the world in its proper order, as instruments of renewal.

### Symbols and *Kavvanah*

The study of Kabbalah has widely emphasized the role of the symbol as the main agent of esoteric meaning.<sup>11</sup> The contemplation of symbols through the reading of sacred texts with this charged hermeneutic is widely understood as the central religious act of Kabbalah. Nonetheless, *kavvanah* emerged as a second venue of kabbalistic contemplation. In allowing the adept another way to access the transcendent, Gershom Scholem explained that:

Kavvanah . . . bridged the gap between the ancient forms of Jewish prayer and its new forms. In this way, kavvanah did for a changed understanding of the religious act in prayer . . . what on a different plane and with different means, the symbol and symbolic exegesis did for a changed understanding of the Torah.<sup>12</sup>

In the history of kabbalistic practice, Scholem considered the practice of mystical intentions to be as important as the widely discussed hermeneutic tradition. In this vein, the practice of *kavvanot* also provided a bridge between two understandings of kabbalistic theosophy. The practice advocated by the *Zohar* is largely one of contemplative hermeneutics. As Elliot Wolfson has pointed out, the central noetic of Kabbalah is the apperception of meaning through the constant unfolding of the ever-hidden symbol.<sup>13</sup> Other scholars, particularly Yehudah Liebes, have stressed the role of participation in a given mythos as an essential aspect of the kabbalistic experience.<sup>14</sup> That is, the essential act of the theosophical kabbalist in the tradition of the thirteenth-century Spanish Kabbalah, as exemplified by the *Zohar* and the works of Joseph Gikatilla and others, was to read sacred texts, interpret the symbolic meanings that lie within them, and then look out at the world through the lens of that symbolic tradition. The imagery of the phenomenal world also expanded to become a symbolic universe, and the mystic "read" the nature of reality through the archetypal symbols that had been honed in his reading of the Bible.

In larger terms, the symbolic universe posited by the *Zohar* could be strung together into a larger mythos. The surface nature of reality was not its real nature but only an external sheath, hiding the true reality, which could be perceived through the symbols and clues that it proffered. The kabbalist

lived with engagement in the mythos of larger forces at work beneath the surface of phenomenal reality. One widely known example of this is the myth of the Shekhinah, her estrangement from her consort, the cosmic God in heaven, and her reconciliation with her consort on the Sabbath eve, when she is escorted to the nuptial bower by her knightly escort, the kabbalists. This mythos is presented many times in the *Zohar* and reflected in the structure of the Friday-night service.

The employment of prayer *kavvanot* served as a device that took the kabbalist beyond the realms of both myth and symbol in Kabbalah. By engaging themselves in the prayer rite in this proactive way, theosophical kabbalists left the passive role of theosophical apperceivers and became intercessors in the processes of the Divine. The adept who practiced the *kavvanot* contributed to the workings of the Divine mythos, which he had understood only passively through his study.

The content of a given set of *kavvanot* derives from the system of metaphysics, or the given mythos through which the prayers are being interpreted. For example, the Safed kabbalists identified many prayers as occasions for the unification of the *sefirot*. To that end, it was widely accepted in the common religion of Safed that the prayers and meals attending the Sabbath eve were rites for the unification of the God and the *Shekhinah*. Another product of this underlying rationale for the performance of commandments and the recitation of prayers was the *le-shem yihud* prologue, in which a given rite was preceded by the admission that it was being performed in order to expedite “the union of the Holy Blessed One and his *Shekhinah*.”<sup>15</sup> Contemporary editions of the prayer book are still apt to contain the *Le-Shem Yihud* ascription, namely “for the sake of the union of the Holy Blessed One and his *Shekhinah*, behold I am ready and about to perform the mitzvah of \_\_\_\_\_ as it is written.”<sup>16</sup> The sacred wedding on the Sabbath eve and the *Le-Shem Yihud* prologue are examples of *kavvanot* that became part of common folk religion. Knowledge of these rites was an acceptable Jewish metaphysic in most religious communities.

It was a given of Beit El practice that “before every mitzvah or prayer one says *Le-Shem Yihud*. Even on the days when one does not practice the *kavvanot*, such as the counting of the Omer, and the days between Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur, one says *Le-Shem Yihud*.”<sup>17</sup> The Beit El rite emphasized the recitation of special versions of this prayer. The usual prologues to the Sabbath service were excised from the Beit El rite in favor of the recitation of a special version of the *Le-Shem Yihud*, and another version was instituted before the additional (*musaf*) service of the Sabbath and festivals.<sup>18</sup> On the eve of the Day of Atonement, the congregation similarly recited a particular version of the *Le-Shem Yihud* for each of the five forms of self-affliction prescribed on that day.<sup>19</sup>

In their wide inclusion of the *Le-Shem Yihud* formula, the Beit El kabbalists, it is clear, intended to draw down and enmesh the transcendent Divine in the mundane and corporeal world.

The practice of such rituals with their accompanying intentions was based on certain theoretical premises. These themes have been addressed by the contemporary kabbalist Ya'akov Moshe Hillel. For contemporary Beit El kabbalists, the goal of worship is to effect the union of God and the world through the drawing of the light of the infinite through the five levels of the soul. *Kavvanot* practice brings about a sublime repair (*tiqqun*), drawing down the light of the infinite (*Ein Sof*) into union with the world.<sup>20</sup> Kabbalistic prayer unifies and links all the worlds in the highest levels of the cosmos, to make the Divine flow, or *shefa*, descend into the corporeal world.<sup>21</sup>

### Prayer as Union

Maimonides identified the consciousness of God's unity, *mizvat ha-yihud*, as a specific commandment of the Torah, namely to always know that there is one God.<sup>22</sup> In Kabbalah, this understanding of *yihud*, or unity, evolved from the idea of consciousness of the oneness of God into a specific act. Rather than passively knowing that God is one and unique, the individual, through the act of *yihud*, performs an act of unification: of the individual with God, of God with the world, and of the sundered world itself. In the late zoharic work *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, unification with the Divine is a positive act that takes place through the contemplative practice of certain *mizvot*.<sup>23</sup> A similar point is made in the prayer book commentary of Isaiah ha-Levi Horowitz, the author of the monumental work *Two Tablets of the Covenant*. In one instance, Horowitz quotes the sixteenth-century kabbalist Meir Ibn Gabbai's *Avodat ha-Kodesh*:

The true unification is the root of the religion and faith, of which the Torah commands us in the verse *Hear O Israel, the Lord Our God the Lord is One*. The inner truth of this tradition is to link and unify the emanation, which is the Divine. These are the powers that are gathered in the special Name, in One. The term *Shema* implies gathering and assembly. . . . The essence is that one must link and unify the branches to the root. Hence one must unify with intention and with thought purified from any other impulse, so as not to make any rupture or separation.<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, according to the *Zohar*, *kavvanah* is necessary for the successful act of union with the Divine: "If one comes to unify the holy name and did not

intend [*hitkavven*] it in his heart, the desires and fears that within him are blessed, the lower and the higher. Then his prayer is cast out and evil is decreed on it."<sup>25</sup> In both of these expositions of the relationship between the two terms, unification is the end for which *kavvanah* is the means.

The image of erotic union is common through classical Kabbalah and no less so in the literature of the *kavvanot*. The erotic component of the prayer experience emerges from the fact that in Lurianic Kabbalah, no less than in that of the *Zohar*, the Universe is gendered. The theme of prayer as sexual union is already present in the earliest Lurianic writings, as it is already a theme in the *Zohar*, expressing the intention that the male and the female be united "as they were at the creation of the world!"<sup>26</sup> In the later strata of the *Zohar*, unification with the Divine is a positive act that takes place through the contemplative practice of certain *mizvot*.<sup>27</sup> The prayers are a form of seduction, geared toward raising the "feminine waters" of the Divine superstructure.<sup>28</sup>

One of the earliest, most central, and most widely circulated *kavvanot* is the premise that a given *mizvah* facilitates the union of the masculine and the feminine elements of the emanated Divine, the Holy Blessed One, and the *Shekhinah*. This view is central in the early Kabbalah and is evident in many documents from the Safed renaissance and later that view themselves as fulfilling the mission of the *Zohar*.<sup>29</sup>

In the *Zohar* literature and prior to it, the fitting object of union was the *Shekhinah*. One of the broadest and most popularly circulated kabbalistic ideas was that prayer consists of the unification of the *Shekhinah* with her consort in the upper realms.<sup>30</sup> Any Jew who prays is standing in the phenomenal world and gazing upward. Hence, the first entity that he or she will encounter is the indwelling of God in the World, namely the *Shekhinah*.<sup>31</sup> In the time of the Jerusalem Temples, the *Shekhinah* literally "dwelled" in the Holy of Holies and was the object of the earliest synagogue prayer. Shar'abi acknowledged the centrality of the original Temple to Beit El practice:

The goal of our turning in prayer is to pray and to pour out our souls to the Blessed God, to redeem the Shekhinah from the exile and to break down her prison and to free the prisoners. . . . If there is one who is aroused in repentance to break down her prison, the Holy Blessed One will answer and return the Shekhinah to him, for this is many days and years that the Shekhinah remains in the exile. Since the destruction of our holy and glorious Temple and the blocking of all prophetic vision, the Holy Spirit has ceased, and many of the *mizvot* of the Torah are hidden in the corner, the harvest has passed and the summer is ended and everything is contingent on repentance.<sup>32</sup>

This idea has many antecedents, and many commandments, according to classical Kabbalah, have the sole purpose of bringing about the union of the *Shekhinah* and her celestial consort.<sup>33</sup> In the *Zohar* literature, particularly, prayer is a way of invoking the presence of the *Shekhinah* in the world.<sup>34</sup> Certain prayers also bring about the eroticized union of the male and female aspects of the Universe.<sup>35</sup> The idea of prayer being a form of communion with the *Shekhinah* was retained by the Beit El kabbalists, as is evident from this admonition by Hayyim Shaul Dweck:

Things that help attainment: It is a great mizvah to teach oneself to always do the acts of unification that relate to the *Shekhinah*. There is nothing to control the sins and support her but the one who knows how to perform these acts of unification.<sup>36</sup>

Dweck's admonition appears in one of the popular devotional works that he helped to publish. Hence, it is clear that in Beit El, during the period of its first great flourishing, union with the *Shekhinah* was the goal of the practice. Therefore, it may be assumed that the Beit El kabbalists of today, as at the turn of the twentieth century, see themselves as part of the union of the *Shekhinah* with the upper realms of Divinity during their times of prayer.

### Union in the Lurianic Rite

The theme of prayer as sexual union is present in the earliest Lurianic writings, just as it is in the *Zohar*. Lurianic Kabbalah differed from the interpretations that preceded it in that it emphasized a different structure of the Divine. Instead of the *sefirot* that formed the basis for the Kabbalah of the *Zohar* and the mainstream Safed Kabbalah, Isaac Luria emphasized a different system that was first presented in the last sections of the main part of the *Zohar*. This universe is visualized in anthropomorphic terms and structured according to a hierarchical family, including a patriarch (*Attika Kadisha*), a set of parents (*Abba* and *Imma*), a son (*Zeir*), and his consort (*Nukvah*). The family, moreover, has been traumatized by its history, following the well-known mythos of the "breaking of the vessels" of Divinity and the need to restore the world through the act of Divine repair. In the midst of this general catastrophe, *Abba* and *Imma* must conceive and nurture their offspring, *Zeir*, and betroth him to *Nukvah*. The various members of the cosmic Divine family, the parents (*Abba* and *Imma*), the youth (*Zeir Anpin*), and his consort (*Nukvah*), have turned away from one another to confront the chaos in the world following the breaking of the vessels. With their backs turned toward one another, they face outward to

confront the chaos of the world outside. This turning out is called the back-to-back embrace.

The goal of the adept in the Lurianic rite was to bring about the harmonious and untroubled union of the various countenances, thereby causing the conception and nurturing of *Zeir Anpin*, the central countenance. This union is described as the goal of the kabbalistic practice in the later strata of the *Zohar*, where unification with the Divine is a positive act that takes place through the contemplative practice of certain *mizvot*.<sup>37</sup> The goal of Lurianic practice is to turn these dysfunctional figures toward each other, thus effecting “face-to-face” union and repairing the broken cosmos. Similarly, the aim of prayer with *kavvanot* is to effect unions among these familial elements of the cosmic structure. The role of the *kavvanah* is to draw the Divine effluence from above to below.<sup>38</sup> The initial move of the *kavvanot* is to arouse the ascent of the *mayyin nukvin*, the “feminine waters,” which provoke the excitement of the male countenances. The various prayer intentions and rituals mandated by the culture of Lurianic Kabbalah were exercises in the adept’s self-immolation at the orgasmic center of these unions.

Early Lurianic teachings indicated the prayers that facilitated specific unions and embraces. There are embraces to be repaired at every passage of the day, and these are associated with specific prayers.<sup>39</sup> The recitation of central prayers, such as the *Shema’* prayer and the reader’s repetition of the silent devotion, serves to turn Zeir and Nukvah toward each other and bring about their union.<sup>40</sup> The recitation of the *Shema’* also effects the Divine union, turning the consort, Nukvah, from the back-to-back union to the face-to-face through the ascent of the “feminine waters.” The prostrations during the silent prayer are considered particularly efficacious in bringing about the unions of the countenances.<sup>41</sup> Hence, the real function and meaning of the Jewish liturgy are not to simply profess faith in God and then ask for things, as it would seem from the manifest structure of the *Shema’* and the silent devotion. These prayers are really devices to bring about processes that have nothing to do with the plain meaning of the words but rather evoke supernal mysteries available only to those who are adept in Kabbalah.

### *Devekut* and Thought

One constant in the contemplative aspect of *kavvanot* practice is the principle of *devekut*, or “cleaving” to God. *Devekut* has its origins in the biblical adjuration to “cleave to Him” (Deuteronomy 11:22). This “cleaving” has been described as the central goal and preoccupation of kabbalistic prayer

from the early kabbalists to the Lurianic practitioners, and, of course, it is also ubiquitous in Hasidism.<sup>42</sup> The achievement of *devekut* is intimately attached to the presence and application of *kavvanah*, as Moshe Ḥalamish has defined it:

Kavvanah is the path to the actualization of this cleaving through the stripping of the religious act (in this case, prayer) of its concrete, external nature, through ongoing contemplation of its inner nature. In this way the human thought (or will) combines into this Divinity, and the gap between the two shrinks.<sup>43</sup>

Ephraim Gottlieb portrayed the relationship of *devekut* and *kavvanah* in the medieval period by describing two forms of *kavvanah*. The first kind was a nontransitive form, directed inward, that endeavored to bring the individual to *devekut*. The second form of *kavvanah* was transitive in nature in that it endeavored to repair the Divine world. Gottlieb understood *devekut* as a kind of meditation in that it was the nontransitive aspect of *kavvanah*. The act of *devekut* placed the individual at the center of prayer, rather than the community.<sup>44</sup> Prayer is largely defined by the first kind of *kavvanah*, according to Gottlieb, in which the core of the practice of prayer with *kavvanot* is a quest toward contemplation, or *hitbonnut*.

The tool, or vessel, for the process of *kavvanah* is the kabbalist's thought. The kabbalist uses the prayer form to cleave his thought and soul to the Divine world, shedding the outside world and locating himself in the path of the Divine flow. Thought is the materiel that fuels the union of the individual and the Divine. According to Isaac the Blind, "the way to prayer is through the finite things that a person receives and raises in thought to the infinite."<sup>45</sup> The early kabbalists spoke of the "cleaving of thought" (*devekut ha-maḥshavah*), as opposed to the absorption of the self into God, the *unio mystica* that serves as one of the markers by which scholars recognize "mysticism."

The idea that thought could ascend linked the experience of kabbalistic prayer to classical prophecy. This association with prophecy, in which the prophetic mind is the vessel of the experience, is pronounced in such works as Ḥayyim Vital's *Sha'arei Kedushah*. Such "raising of thought" is also ascribed to the ancient pietists of Talmudic legend, the *Ḥasidim Rishonim*, who "elevated their thought to the source and emptied themselves of their thought."<sup>46</sup>

The authors of the *Zohar* repeatedly concretized thought into a dynamic instrument of theurgy.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Ezra and Azriel of Gerona convey the power of thought as "a spring of water which flows from its source," as demonstrated in this well-known passage from Ezra's commentary on the legendary material in the Talmud:

Thought expands and rises to its place of origin. The simile is: A spring of water flows from its source. If you dig a dam to prevent the water from dissipating then it will go to the source and no further. The early pious ones would raise their thought to the place of its origin and through the adhering thought the [*sefirot*] would be blessed and enhanced and receive from the emptiness of thought. It is like a person who opens a pool of water so that it flows all over. For the adhering thought is the source and blessing and endless flow and from this emanation and adhering of thought, the things would be increased and multiply, and from the joy they would be revealed to him, and thus was the extension of prophecy, when the prophet would concentrate and direct his heart and adhere his thought above. According to his adherence the prophet would see and know what is going to happen.<sup>48</sup>

For Azriel, thought is literally the instrument for “channeling” the Divine flow and its positive effects. Like prophets, who have a tension between their public function and their individual experience, the practitioner separates his activist/theurgic role from his contemplative practice.<sup>49</sup>

In this vein, Elliot Wolfson has identified the constant factor in the development of the *kavvanot* as the formation of sacred space in the mental realm. From the rabbinic period through the thirteenth-century pietists of the Rhineland, visualization of the *Shekhinah*, from its original locus in the Temple to the inner emptiness of the mind, is the object of *kavvanah*.<sup>50</sup> Through the time-based rhythms of the liturgy, prayer with the appropriate *kavvanah* represents a union of this sacred space with sacred time. In the case of the Rhineland pietists, the image of the Temple and the *Shekhinah* were interchangeable. Wolfson further defines the constant and unchanging essence of the role of *kavvanah* as a “phenomenology of affinity”<sup>51</sup> that links the Rhineland pietists, theosophical kabbalists, and prophetic kabbalists in the Abulafian mold:<sup>52</sup> “*Kavvanah* is . . . the internal state of consciousness by means of which the worshipper creates a mental icon of God.”<sup>53</sup> Visualizing the image of the Temple resolved the tension of how to imagine an imageless God who could not be visualized, for “utterance of the Divine names results in the visual manifestation of the Divine glory.”<sup>54</sup>

Eventually, the object of prayer became linked to specific *sefirot*. A manuscript of Jacob the Nazir, a Provençal kabbalist who preceded the emergence of the *Zohar*, cites a tradition of Avraham ben David of Posquieres (RaBa”D). The latter stated that the prayers of thanksgiving that begin and close the silent devotion were directed to the *Ilal ha-Ilaot*, the highest level of the Divine.

According to his point of view, the middle, petitional prayers were to be directed toward Binah, the highest levels of the Divine.<sup>55</sup> In the proof texts of the Lurianic Kabbalah, the *Idra* literature of the *Zohar*, prayer reaches the ears of the secondary anthropos, *Zeir Anpin*, and thence enters the Divine mind.<sup>56</sup> Following this reasoning, in the later Lurianic model, thought may indeed cleave to God, but prayer could rise only to a given point within the Divine anthropos. Accordingly, Gershom Scholem defined the role of Lurianic prayer as an aspect of the world's need for repair (*tiqqun*):

In fact, the Lurianic system appears as a highly developed technique for speeding up the otherwise slow and long process of *tiqqun*. By correlating the words of the daily liturgy with the dynamic movements and the corresponding rising toward God and falling earthward of the mystical worlds, Lurianism taught its adepts to inject new strength into them and to lift them out of the depths into which they had fallen at the "breaking of the vessels." The proper kavvanah establishes a hidden harmony between the meditating kabbalist and the cosmos.<sup>57</sup>

This unification is expressed, from the *Zohar's Idra* literature through the Lurianic Kabbalah, as a kind of immolating self-abnegation. Luria stressed that a person, during prayer, should have intention and prepare himself as if he were a dwelling and a throne for the emanation.<sup>58</sup> It is a preparation for martyrdom. In the *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot*, he declaims:

We have to give over our souls for the sanctification of the Name . . . and one must have the intention of receiving the four death penalties of the court. . . . [This] must be through our merits and good actions. Through our sins we bring it down and from our sins we raise it. So now it is impossible to rise but for the saints among us who rise to the level of Imma. . . . However, in the present, when we have nobody to rise to this level . . . we have a partial *tiqqun*, that we commit our souls totally to death for the sanctification of the name with all of our heart, for if so, even if we have no good deeds and we are wondrously evil, through giving ourselves over to martyrdom, our sins are forgiven . . . as it says, great is repentance from it brings one to the throne of Glory.<sup>59</sup>

For the contemporary kabbalist Ya'akov Moshe Hillel, Luria's goal of martyrdom is transformed into a general stance of self-abnegation. This value, which is manifested in Hasidism as the notion of *bittul*, is a personal and social forsaking of this world, though not an invitation to literal martyrdom. Hillel states:

The one practicing the intentions of Luria, as set forth by Rav Shalom Shar'abi in his holy prayer books, show that he totally deprecates himself and his lowly existence in this limited world, in favor of the grand terrible goal of repairing the upper worlds, to remove and raise everything to the transcendent without any personal or earthly accounting of this world . . . to fix the worlds, for one services the needs of a higher power.<sup>60</sup>

The second-generation Lurianic kabbalist Natan Neta' Shapira portrayed this self-abnegation as necessary to channel Divine energy into the world and bring about the process of the repair of the world:<sup>61</sup>

This is the reason for *kavvanah* in our prayers and precepts, for through this the *sefirot* will be unified. For through the service of the heart, which is prayer, this is the secret of the drawing forth of Divine effluence to the *sefirot* above, that the individual might be a part of God from above, linked in the chain of holiness through the chain of the outpouring of his soul from level to level. Behold, let this aforementioned out flowing be a ladder on which the arousal of his actions should rise until they unify all of the *sefirot*, drawing down the flow of blessing from the first *sefirah* to the last, until in all comes to dwell on him through that ladder.

For these three traditional kabbalists, the cessation of personal needs was the empirical goal of the practice. Only by negating their personal needs could the kabbalists accomplish the soteric ends to which prayer was devoted. Hence, the condition of prayer, that of self-abnegation, was the method for achieving the goal of prayer, which was to immolate oneself and have one's consciousness become, literally, a brick in the wall of the Divine superstructure. Put simplistically, it might be said that in Hasidism, the experience of *devekut* was the object of the practice, whereas, for Lurianic practitioners, it was merely one of the tools of the rite.

## Silence

Since its initial development and among contemporary practitioners, the practice of *kavvanot* has been a mind-only ritual. It was not meditation for its own sake, because it was subsumed into the mechanics of Jewish prayer rituals. One zoharic value that would survive into later kabbalistic practice is a stress on the virtue of silence. Hence, the *Zohar* provides various rationales for

why prayer is best recited in a whisper, a “still small voice.”<sup>62</sup> In contrast, then, to the virtue of boisterousness that characterizes some schools of Ḥasidic spirituality, the *Zohar* stresses the importance of silence in the process.<sup>63</sup> This sensibility comes to the fore in the teachings of Shar’abi and in the practices of the Beit El community. The rules of prayer included a legal stipulation that the lips should move and that the recitation should be audible. The accompanying *kavvanah*, or intention, was never uttered; it remains in the mind and is never sounded out.

While the *kavvanot* are daunting in their complexity, the complexity of the system is brought into sharp relief according to this account of the early-twentieth-century Beit El kabbalist Ḥayyim Shaul Dweck. Dweck was afflicted by blindness late in his life, yet he continued the full practice of the *kavvanot*. This perplexed and impressed his students, as is clear in the following vignette:

Once [R. Suleiman Mozfi] asked Rav Shaul Dweck . . . how was he able to practice so many details of the *kavvanot* laid out in Shar’abi’s prayer book, and so quickly, without the help of the prayer book to guide his eyes. Dweck compared the question by gesturing towards the window of the room, “What is this?” Rav Suleiman answered, “a window.” The master answered, “Yet how many details are combined in it, and yet you say, ‘it is a window.’ So it is with everything that a man is expert in and knows well, with all of its many component elements from which it is grafted and created, and they are all apprehended by thought in one apprehension. So it is with the *kavvanot* of Shar’abi, the one who is expert in the paths of the effluence and the stages of the details of the worlds, the order of their ascent and descent, in an instant they are all apprehended and remembered mentally, etched in his imagination as the rabbis said ‘the paths of the firmaments are as clear as the paths of Neharda’ah.’”<sup>64</sup>

Clearly, Dweck was also able to practice the *kavvanot* through the intuitive application of their theoretical principles. Memory and the application of the basic rules of the *kavvanot* as a “mind-only” aspect of the practice were the tools of its execution.

### Garb: *Kavvanot* and Power

The Jerusalem scholar Yonatan Garb has discussed *kavvanah*, from late antiquity to the civil religion of Safed, in ways that might be useful in understanding the Beit El practice of *kavvanot*. Garb understands the primary nature

of *kavvanah*, from practically the inception of the term in antiquity, as referring to the channeling and harnessing of Divine power.<sup>65</sup> In harnessing *kavvanah*, the adept may draw down the power from the cosmic realm (hydraulic), or he may provoke Divine expression through the relationship between the cosmic form and the human (isomorphism). The premise of the spatial, isomorphic, and hydraulic understandings of prayer is that, through the empowered consciousness, human and Divine thought connect and intersect. Power is “called forth” by the actions of the adherent, which may be linguistic, auditory, or visual, although there are distinctions among these different forms of power.<sup>66</sup> In these cases, the radical isomorphism is that the human chassis is a microcosm of the Divine.

The hydraulic and spatial models posited by Garb are present in the teachings of the *Zohar*. In Garb’s terms, the *Zohar* presents ideas that are both hydraulic and isomorphic. The hydraulic drawing down of Divine energy into the world is described as inherent in the term *brakhah*, or blessing. *Brakhah* is derived not from the Hebrew BRKH of the bended knee but from the *breikhah*, the collecting pool of Divine flow. The prayers of the righteous draw down Divine effluence.<sup>67</sup> Prayers are also independent entities that may be dispatched, particularly with the metaphor of the sling so common in the *Zohar*.<sup>68</sup>

To illustrate his point, Garb has constructed several models in which power is manipulated through *kavvanah*.<sup>69</sup> Each path to the infinite is unique. In spatial models of *kavvanah*, power is transmitted over a lineal distance that is transcended by kabbalistic practice.<sup>70</sup> This theurgy is based on a basic premise of theosophical Kabbalah, namely that human actions influence the Divine. Human and Divine states resemble each other and converge isomorphically, through a relationship between humanity and the cosmic superstructure.<sup>71</sup> For example, one presentation of the *Shema*<sup>72</sup> prayer portrays the act in terms of aligning the embraces and the proper intonations of the letters with the physical layout of the adherent’s own body. Another spatial model posits a drawing down of energy from higher to lower realms, energy that can be mobilized by the gifted adherent. Garb calls this model “hydraulic,” because the material being brought down is the stuff of Divinity, flowing from an endless source. Many popular sources attest to this view: the *Bahir*, for instance, describes power as a flowing stream, directed by reservoirs and pipes, a portrayal echoed in a well-circulated section of the *Zohar* (*Ra’aya Meheimna* 42a).<sup>73</sup>

Garb rejects models of *kavvanah* that are insular in that they view the individual as remaining in constant contact with the Divine. *Kavvanah* is not a meditative experience, because the experience itself is not noetic. Finally, the experience is not quietistic, and the adepts who are using *kavvanah* want to

manipulate the processes of the Divine to their own ends in human history. For Garb, the core of the *kavvanot* lies in the performance and action of the adherent, rather than in the nature of the Divine object being contemplated.<sup>74</sup>

Garb sees the model of *kavvanah* as nascent in rabbinic Judaism from its inception in antiquity.<sup>75</sup> From the studies of Rebeccah Lesses,<sup>76</sup> Garb adopts the term “ritual power” after the Merkavah tradition’s use of the term “power,” or *Gevurah*. Rabbinic texts characterized *Gevurah* as being strengthened or weakened by human activity. Garb argues that, rather than apposing “magical” and “theurgical” elements in the rabbinic tradition, that there is a “cycle of empowerment” in rabbinical notions of *kavvanah* in which God is supported by the righteous and then imparts thaumaturgic power to them. Hence, the rabbinic dictum “Make God’s will your will, so that he will make your will his will. Negate your will before his will, so that he may negate the will of others before yours”<sup>77</sup> is an empirical, as opposed to a figurative, remark, as is the related statement “a *mizvah* follows a *mizvah*, a transgression follows a transgression.”<sup>78</sup>

The *Zohar*’s model of prayer is based on isomorphism between the human and the Divine. The human form is the ultimate model for both the existential and the Divine realms, based on an anthropomorphic theology and anthropology.<sup>79</sup> This tradition is reflected poignantly in the image of the God who observes the commandments, on whose phylacteries the name “Israel” is inscribed.<sup>80</sup> In the same way, the Lurianic rite of intentions directs the adherent to think of the word “throat” (*garon*) at the point in the service at which the energies spread to God’s throat.<sup>81</sup> In the words of Elliot Wolfson, “the ultimate goal of contemplation may be the separation of the intellect from the body, but the consciousness fostered by intention in prayer is predicated on the iconic visualization of the Divine Presence in bodily terms.”<sup>82</sup> Hence, most human actions, if they fall within the realm of halakhah, affect the Divine realm.

Garb’s models of power are further combined and come to the fore in the Kabbalah of the sixteenth century, including the civil religion of Safed. The sixteenth century was a time of efflorescence of theories of power in many world religions.<sup>83</sup> A monolithic figure in the Safed renaissance, Moshe Cordovero, synthesized hydraulic, astral, personal, and linguistic models of power, in Garb’s parlance.<sup>84</sup> Cordovero’s “Gate of Kavvanah”<sup>85</sup> portrays the mode in which the *zaddik* is able to draw down the power of the *Shekhinah*. Similarly, in the mainly non-Lurianic *kavvanot* of the Rashkover prayer book, there are many instances of the community coalescing at moments of particular Divine effulgence. The early and late Lurianic literature repeats that the goal of prayer with *kavvanot* is that the light of the infinite (*Ein Sof*) be drawn down below, as “the whole world is filled with his glory” and his unification.<sup>86</sup>

Whatever the final conclusion, the models employed by the practitioners of *kavvanot* in the eighteenth century had long been established by earlier generations, and they were walking along trails that had been blazed by others. Menachem Kallus has pointed out that “by the sixteenth century virtually all of [Garb’s] models were employed by the major kabbalists of that age, [so that] such a message ceases to be a useful tool for distinguishing the unique features of Lurianic theurgy from that of...Cordovero or...Ibn Araby, as all the models adduced by Garb are locatable in them all.”<sup>87</sup>

In all analyses of *kavvanah*, the reality is that there is no monolithic statement that can be made, because there are so many different types of Kabbalah and so many different understandings of the role of *kavvanah* in them. Ephraim Gottlieb’s portrayals of *kavvanah*, the inward-looking, non-transitive form of *devekut* and the transitive, *tiqqun*-oriented form, were rooted in the early Kabbalah of Provence and Gerona.<sup>88</sup> Garb has based his suppositions on the middle period, from the *Zohar* up to Kabbalah’s spread throughout the world, with particular attention to the saints of Morocco. Joseph Weiss seems to have assumed that the practices posited by Gottlieb were normative for the practice of *kavvanot* that was rejected by Ḥasidism, when, in fact, as Kallus has observed, the Lurianic practice of *kavvanot* was already too complex to categorize according to one model or another. Although Garb’s models are of great value, it can be assumed that the Beit El practice incorporated all of them.

In Judaism, the prayer experience fulfils the same role as the noetic, meditative, or revelatory one in other disciplines; it is the practice that defines the essence of the religion’s given theology. The quintessential Jewish moment is the turning of the individual, whether Abraham, Moses, or Hannah, to God in prayer. In all of Judaism, prayer, liturgical or extraliturgical, is the instrument of breakthrough to God. Whether kabbalistic or not, the goal of Jewish prayer is to access the highest levels of the Divine, for purposes of theurgy, and thence to affect Divine providence. It must follow that the experience of prayer must be “felt” and sincere. But besides that quality of existential sincerity, what should the experience be?

The paradoxes of *kavvanah* as intention are an enormous topic in rabbinic theology. The broadly defined “*kavvanah*” of rabbinic theology evolved into the more narrowly defined “*kavvanot*” of Kabbalah. In each case, the intentions that might accompany the performance of a *mizvah* became far more specific when applied to the act of prayer. Evaluating the effects of *kavvanah* in the context of prayer, with its concomitant values of *devekut* and technical acuity, is challenging because all that is available for this evaluation is the textual record.

The scholar of mysticism Steven Katz has argued that, with regard to the study of mysticism, there are no unmediated religious experiences and that, in interpreting the mystical record, scholars have only the texts before them as witness.<sup>89</sup> In the case of the practice of *kavvanot*, we also have the communities, which are party to the resurgence of these practices. The analysis of lost traditions, such as the works of Abraham Abulafia and the circle of the *Zohar*, differs from the study of the practice of *kavvanot* because the latter are being practiced by living communities. The first question that must be asked of these circles is whether the practice of these communities is authentic to the spirit of the theoretical writings that they are implementing. A second question is whether there is an unbroken chain of this tradition, extending from Shalom Shar'abi to the present acolytes of the tradition.

The person standing next to the scholar in a synagogue may be in a state of mystical ecstasy, but the scholar cannot enter his mind to see, and modern practitioners may and in fact probably *will* be hostile to questions from the academic sector. This raises another question of authenticity, namely the effect of scholarly writing on Kabbalah and its tacit dissemination to the traditional communities.

For example, in one prayer circle in Jerusalem, I noticed a man standing outside the main synagogue on the balcony. During his prayer, he would sob despondently during the silent devotion. The researches of Moshe Idel and Eitan Fishbane have addressed the role of weeping in classical kabbalistic practice, so I was intrigued to encounter this experience in the field.<sup>90</sup> Upon investigation, I determined that the young man in question was felt by all to be mentally unbalanced, that he was a social pariah, and that he was verbally abused by the other kabbalists. He certainly came from outside the community and may, in fact, have been influenced by Idel's articles. If such a "freak" enters the community and recovers practices described in academic writings and then practices them in the community, is this practice "authentic"?

The vast literature of the *kavvanot* does not emphasize the nature of the experience. There are, in general, few accounts of the experience of mystical ecstasy in comparison to the myriad accounts left in other traditions, and some of the accounts that we do have remain unexamined. Shalom Shar'abi's contemporaries in Poland, including but not limited to the saints of early Ḥasidism, made great strides toward an emotional and theologically rich tradition of kabbalistic prayer, which is addressed in a further chapter. Yet this was not the understanding of Isaac Luria's teachings that pervaded Beit El. The Lurianic prayer system, as conceived by the Beit El adepts, is a *rite*, not a meditative process. Therefore, personal sensation is beside the point, because the object of the rite is not the receiving of a noetic experience but simply the

completion of the rite. Hence, the experience of the contemplative is one in which the practitioner enters a realm in which he is no longer motivated by the liturgy's overt concern with human needs.<sup>91</sup> Hence, the search for the inner experience of the Beit El practice of *kavvanot* can proceed only in the knowledge that the answers will be hard to define, if not unknowable.

# 3

## The Names of God in the Beit El *Kavvanot*

The actual texts of the *kavvanot* usually consist of arrangements of the various names of God. The idea that God has different names is, of course, biblical in origin, and traditions of various Divine names may be found at every stage of Jewish intellectual history. Throughout the history of Kabbalah, the premise of the tradition remained constant, namely that sacred names accompanied the emanation of the Divine into present reality and served as instruments for channeling that emanation. As Gershom Scholem expressed it:

The Divine Names . . . are aroused through meditative activity directed toward them. The individual in prayer pauses over each word and fully gauges the *kavvanah* that belongs to it. The actual text of the prayer, therefore, serves as a kind of banister onto which the kabbalist holds as he makes his not unhazardous ascent, groping his way by the words. The *kavvanot*, in other words, transform the words of the prayer into holy names that serve as landmarks on the upward climb.<sup>1</sup>

In the kabbalistic tradition there are innumerable names of God, for, as the thirteenth-century sage Nachmanides observed, ultimately the whole Torah was nothing but a random collection of names of God.<sup>2</sup> These names are taken apart, vocalized in new forms, repeated, and recombined. In their rearranged form, they make up the actual content of the *kavvanah* that accompanies the intoning of

the prayer. This statement from Joseph Dan regarding the thirteenth-century pietists of the Rhineland is equally true of the Beit El kabbalists, namely that "it sometimes seems that where other readers would see letters and meanings in the Bible. [They] would see only rows of figures and numbers, mystically connected."<sup>3</sup> Shar'abi's system of names is by far the most abstract and complex of all of the *kavvanot* systems.

The practice of Lurianic *kavvanot* had a period of efflorescence in Poland from the seventeenth century until the early generations of the Ḥasidic movement and for a while, operated concurrently with the Beit El school. This Polish rite, which is discussed later in this study, was constructed around the same name traditions, although it is less developed and complex. When viewed from without, the manipulation of sacred names in Shar'abi's system seems completely impenetrable, yet the component aspects of the system are clear enough.

The four-letter name of God, YHVH, is the foremost object of contemplation, while its biblical compatriots AHYH, Elohim, El Shaddai, and ADNY make up a second tier in terms of their importance. Other names grow out of ancient Jewish myths and were incorporated into the Lurianic mythos. Yet more names are developed artificially through the permutation of letters and other methods. Names were plucked from acronyms of biblical verses and recovered through the numerical coefficients (*gematriot*) of different vocalizations of the name YHVH. Names are also generated by acrostics of sacred verses and by replacing one letter of a given name with another.<sup>4</sup>

Name traditions developed throughout the course of kabbalistic history. As mentioned earlier, most essential names were the various names of God employed in the Bible itself. Other sacred names are referenced in rabbinic writings and explained in Gaonic materials.<sup>5</sup> In the Heikhalot literature of late antiquity, sacred names accompany and underlie the workings of the Divine.<sup>6</sup> These traditions then spontaneously "recrudesced" in Provence, Gerona, and the Rhineland in the great resurgence of Kabbalah in the twelfth century. Joseph Dan has pointed out that the name HVYH, used "to express Divine Presence and Divine will," emerged as an important terminological innovation in the thirteenth century. This term emerged simultaneously in the thought of two early kabbalists who seem otherwise to have been unaware of each other: Rabbi Eliezer of Worms and Isaac the Blind of Provence.<sup>7</sup> This and other sacred-names traditions developed and percolated beneath the surface of kabbalistic history.

It is well known that the renowned kabbalist Abraham Abulafia's kabbalistic system was based in sacred names, and it is tempting to try to find parallels with and precursors to Lurianic practice in Abulafia's system. However, Abulafian practice emphasized posture, breathing, and bodily movement,

along with the contemplation of sacred names in their permutations.<sup>8</sup> According to Idel:

Abulafia's method is based upon the contemplation of a constantly changing object: one must combine the letters and their vowel signs, "sing" and move the head in accordance with the vocalization, and even lift one's hands in the gesture of Priestly Blessing<sup>9</sup> . . . the letters of the Divine Name are not only a method of cleaving to God; the process of imagining the letters in the first stage precedes the vision of the letters in the final stage of the ecstatic process.<sup>10</sup>

This physical dimension and, moreover, any prescriptive understanding of what the experience entails is absent from the Lurianic literature. The Lurianic practice of *kavvanot* is silent ("mind only") and draws on the halakhic prescriptions for prayer as its mode of implementation. The names are never enunciated but only kept in the mind as silent objects of contemplation. The substance of the name traditions, that is to say certain patterns of vocalization, survived from one tradition to another, while the implementation did not.

### Sefirotic Coefficients

The practitioners of the Lurianic *kavvanot*, including Shar'abi and his students and their contemporaries in Eastern Europe, incorporated a number of contributing elements from earlier traditions. These include the linking of Divine names to elements of the *sefirot*, the vocalization of the name YHVH in ways that have different numerical coefficients, and, finally, the recovery of traditions of sacred names whose origins are in antiquity.

The essential associations of the names with *sefirot* date at least to the early Spanish Kabbalah. The *Zohar*, as well, specified sefirotic coefficients for various Divine names, whether biblical or postbiblical. The name ADNY, which is the name that is uttered in the practical liturgy, is linked to the *sefirah Malkhut*, the realm of present reality. AHYH is the name associated with *Keter*, the highest of the *sefirot*.<sup>11</sup> The name Elohim can represent the *sefirot Binah, Din, or Malkhut*.<sup>12</sup> Zoharic traditions also link names to archetypal aspects of the *sefirot*. The name YHVH represents the central trunk of the sefirotic tree, the *sefirah Tiferet*. As Moshe Cordovero put it, "All names come from YHVH. In the *Tiqqunim*, the name HVYH is called 'the sap of the tree.'"<sup>13</sup> Hence, the mythic "Tree of Life," which is the way of expressing the flow of Divine reality into the present world, is also reducible to the function of Divine names, a principle that would become important to Shar'abi.

In the sefirotic system favored by the *Zohar* and Moshe Cordovero, the *sefirot* were the most important element of the system. In the *Zohar's* latter strata and the Lurianic canon, the countenances, which sit over the *sefirot*, come to the fore.<sup>14</sup> Luria was haunted by the imagery of the countenances and recast the *Zohar's* Kabbalah on the basis of this system. The *sefirah Tiferet*, for instance, is replaced, in the Lurianic system, by the countenance *Zeir Anpin*. Luria embellished the status of *Zeir Anpin* further. He maintained that there were three levels of *Zeir Anpin*, which are indicated by three construct forms of the name YHVH. The first is YHVH AHYH; the second level is YHVH Elohim; and the third level is YHVH ADNY. These permutations of these basic biblical names form the basis of many subsequent *kavvanot*. In Luria's full system, sacred names were interpreted as standing for the various countenances of the cosmic anthropos (*parzufim*),<sup>15</sup> and they also were the energy behind the circulation of the *mohin*, channels of consciousness through the same anthropomorphic structure.<sup>16</sup>

A master list of the combinations of AHYH, HVYH, ADNY, and ELOH and ELOHIM was compiled by the nineteenth-century Lithuanian kabbalist Shlomo Eliashiv, himself the author of the magisterial work *Leshem Shevo ve-Ohalamah* (acronym Rav ShB"H, for Shlomo Bar Heikel). Eliashiv's chart is based on Cordovero and the Vilna Gaon and was reproduced in the printed editions of *Ez Haggym*.<sup>17</sup> Eliashiv developed 120 combinations in all.<sup>18</sup> According to Menachem Kallus, the source for these vocalizations is in Luria's commentary to the zoharic composition *Idra Zuta*. That particular text served as the ur-text for the *kavvanot* of the daily priestly blessing, as well as for the Shabbat service.<sup>19</sup>

### *Miluyyim*: The Vocalizations of the Name YHVH

Luria's system is also reliant on the secret of *miluyyim*, or, as Kallus called them, the "fillings of the Tetragrammaton." This tradition consists of the name YHVH, transliterated, with the vocalization being implemented with different block letters as vowels, rather like the vocalization of Yiddish or Ladino.<sup>20</sup> The numerical sum of these names is then added up, and the names are signified by the *gematria*, or numerical coefficient, of that name,<sup>21</sup> as well as the number of letters or words in a given text.<sup>22</sup> The four *miluyyim* are as follows.<sup>23</sup> The name "seventy-two" is based on the transliteration using the letter *yu*"d, as follows: YVD HY VYV HY.<sup>24</sup> The name "sixty-three" makes use of the *aleph* in the letter *vav*, producing the formulation YVD HY VAV HY, forming the *gematria* "sixty-three." The name "forty-five" vocalizes the HV"H with the letter

*aleph* so as to produce YVD HA VAV HA.<sup>25</sup> The name “fifty-two” makes more extensive use of the letter *hey*: YVD HH VV HH.<sup>26</sup> Hence, the *miluyyim* are identified by the *gematriot* that they produce, rather than by the random consonant that vocalizes them.

These names are implemented in various ways during the Lurianic prayer rite. Different blessings call for different various vocalizations or *miluyyim* of the name YHVH.<sup>27</sup> The *miluyyim*, being four in number, are naturally linked to four countenances of the Lurianic system, Abba, Imma, Zeir, and Nukvah.<sup>28</sup> They are also employed as instruments and signposts in one of the central practices of Lurianic prayer, the ascent through the four worlds.<sup>29</sup>

The *miluyyim* are ubiquitous in the *kavvanot* literature. In his recent sweeping study of Lurianic prayer,<sup>30</sup> Menachem Kallus has emphasized one text that, in his opinion, clarifies and exemplifies the use of names in the Lurianic prayer system. Significantly, it identifies the name “sixty-three” as the most intrinsic of the *miluyyim* for the meditative aspect of the *kavvanot*. Kallus has prepared a composite version of this text culled from the various versions. It is daunting in its complexity but still provides the best window into the origins of the *kavvanot* tradition:

It is appropriate for a person to have intention always, particularly before study and before prayer, to set himself as a dwelling and throne for the holy emanation. For is man not created in the image of God (Gen. 9:6)? In this will his prayer and Torah be answered and accepted! For through this one may link all of the worlds, thereby letting the higher holiness come to rest on it. How [to do this]? He should have intention to prepare his head to be a throne for the name HVYH with the vocalization *kamaz* and its two *mohin*, *Hokhmah* and *Binah*, and well as the HVYH(s) of *patah* and *zeirei*. And his two arms are *segol* and *sheva'*, and his body is *holem*. And his two palms<sup>31</sup> *kubuz* and *hirik* and the *yesod* vocalized with *shuruk* and the diadem is HVYH without vocalization.

The first section of this charge links the various vowels of the Hebrew language to the limbs of the body. The adept is charged to see himself as a vehicle for the energies of the Divine name. This name is infused with the energies of the Hebrew vowels, which are manifested with all of the vocalizations possible in the system of the Hebrew language. The *patah* and *zeirei*, which make an “ah” and an “ay” sound, respectively, are vocalized by the adept in his mind in order to prepare his consciousness to be filled by the presence of the name HVYH. It seems that by visualizing the most auditory aspect of *kavvanot* practice, the mind psychically resonates with the audible aspect of

that vowel. Each one of the vowels of classical Hebrew has a certain role in the act of meditative prayer as linked to the physical body of the adept and, one would assume, isomorphically to the Divine body, as well. This is the closest that the Lurianic *kavvanot* tradition comes to anything resembling the mantra practice of Eastern meditation traditions, insofar as each vowel resonates with the limb to which it is assigned.

The text continues:

As it says in the *Tiqqunim* (129a), he should intend that the “man” is the name of sixty-three. . . . He should have the intention that his ear is the name sixty-three, excepting the last *he*”*h*, and perhaps with this he will apperceive hearing some higher holiness in prayer and at the time of his study. Also his nose is the name of sixty-three, for this is its *gematria*, and perhaps he will smell some holy scent. Also his mouth is the name of sixty-three, and the twenty-two letters from the five linguistic families, perhaps [thus] he will apperceive that the spirit of God will speak to him and the word of his tongue will be at the time of his study and prayer.

Even the orifices are thought of as receptacles for the powers of the sacred names. The name “sixty-three” (YVD HY VAV HY) is particularly efficacious in the basic preparation for prayer. This name is linked here to the linguistic theories first propagated in the ancient text *Sefer Yezirah*, in which the five consonantal families are linked to five essential energies in the creation the Universe. The text continues with a preparation for the ascent through the four Worlds of Creation, an idea that is addressed elsewhere in this study.<sup>32</sup>

Everything is contingent on the depth of his intention and cleaving [*hitdavkuto*]. And the secret of the eyes: if he is the realm of the world of ‘Assiyah, let him intend the five HVYH(s) whose sum is ‘*ayi*”*n*, five times twenty-six, let him intend the name with the *milui* of *he*”*y*. And in Yezirah, which is from the prayer “Blessed is He who Spoke” up to “Let Your Name be Praised Forever Our King,” let him intend the HVYH of *aleph*. And in *prayer* “Creator of Light,” which is the world of *Briah*, let him intend the five HVYH(s) of sixty-three. And in the silent devotion, which is ‘*Azilot*, he should intend the five HVYH(s) of seventy-two. And if he is walking in the market he should intend that his two feet are *Nezah* and *Hod*. And when he looks, he should intend that his two eyes are *Hokhmah* and *Binah*. And so on with all individual things. He should intend that he is a throne for the highest holiness. Doubtless, if he practices this for

some time, he will be able to apperceive anything that he wants to and he will be as one of the angels who serves in the firmament.

This text presents a basic charge for the adherent and combines a number of central aspects of the theories that underlie the use of sacred names. These include the Divine names, their vocalizations and numerical coefficients (*miluyyim*), and the Divine countenances. It is striking that the text is as dense as it is, yet does not even bring in the theory of the countenances that so characterized Lurianic Kabbalah into its thick forest of associations. It goes without saying that the creation tradition of the Divine withdrawal (*zimzum*), the breaking of the vessels (*shevirah*), and repair (*tiqqun*) so beloved of those who read Scholem is nowhere to be found here.

Kallus provides a concise analysis of the text:

We find here that the practitioner is transforming himself into a “dwelling place” for the emanation of the Divine manifestation, in order to pray effectively with the kavvanot. Also it counsels that one integrate the ordinary uses of the senses into the service of the Divine presence. The contemplator rises to different levels of spiritual existence and activates the qualities of Divine manifestation, corresponding to the different configurations of the Name contemplated. It is as if the Name empowers the person to see one’s own qualities as Divine manifestation. This practice uses the different fillings of the Tetragrammaton to invoke the levels of shared human-Divine ontological realms i.e. realms of Being, and transforms the human faculties by invoking the Sefirot in connection to the inner-vocalizations of that Name. Its success depends on “the power of one’s *kavvanah* and *devekut*, one’s intention and mystical union.”<sup>33</sup>

In his presentation of this seminal text, Kallus notes the conflation of the major spiritual traditions of later Kabbalah (*devekut*, *kavvanah*, and union) into the charge for *kavvanot* practice. Clearly, the practitioners of old viewed the text as important; otherwise, it would not have been so widely reproduced. Kallus is correct in emphasizing the centrality of this work, and it remains one of the best indications of the outcome for which the contemplation of the names is intended. It also documents, for the late sixteenth century, the extent to which the contemplation of the sacred names was linked to a spiritual and contemplative state. The attainment of the state would not be so emphasized in the later writings coming out of the Beit El school.

## The Name of Forty-Two Letters and the Seventy-Two Names

The compilers of the *kavvanot* appropriated two ancient sacred name traditions with origins in antiquity. Such names derive from whole sections of scriptural text, reduced to acronyms and recombined. Perhaps the most widely reproduced of these is the forty-two-letter name, which was retained in the Ḥasidic rite. The forty-two-letter name of God is literally ABGaYTaZ KR'A S'TaN NGaD YaKhaS B'TaR Z'TaG HaKBaTN'A Y'GaL PZaK SaKVaZYT. The name is created by the rearrangement of the first words of the first chapter of Genesis.<sup>34</sup> The forty-two-letter name is a popular object of contemplation; it appears in the Friday-evening service as the “prayer of R. Nechuniah ben ha-Kanah” and is widely circulated among the popular practices of the contemporary Kabbalah Centers.

The forty-two-letter name is invoked in the Talmud, one citation stating that it is not to be transmitted except to one who is modest, humble, mature, never angry, never intoxicated, and not arrogant.<sup>35</sup> The forty-two-letter name crossed from tradition to tradition, albeit with different rationales and explanations. According to Hai Gaon, in the eighth century, the forty-two-letter name originated in the Merkavah tradition.<sup>36</sup> The name was also seen as emanating from the world of the angels and as being an instrument for influencing their activities.<sup>37</sup> In discussion of its structure, many ancillary explanations according to *gematria* were also associated with the Name.<sup>38</sup> The kabbalistic tradition produced a plethora of associations and commentaries for the forty-two-letter name, as well as a number of etiological formulae for its derivation from scripture. In the later edition of Luria's teaching, Meir Poppers's *Ez Ḥayyim*, the forty-two-letter name is explained as a quadrupling of the name AHYH.<sup>39</sup>

Kabbalists eventually began to define the function of the forty-two-letter name. The twelfth-century Ashkenazic pietist Eliezer of Worms wrote an entire work, *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*, as a commentary on the name. He saw it as an instrument for influencing the activities of the *Shekhinah*.<sup>40</sup> *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* described the name as emanating from the realm of the *sefirah Gevurah*.<sup>41</sup> The nineteenth-century Vilna kabbalist Pinchas Eliahu Hurvitz echoed the opinion that the name was the original instrument that God used to create the World.<sup>42</sup>

The *Zohar* alludes to the use of different parts of the forty-two-letter name for magic, or “practical Kabbalah.”<sup>43</sup> The segment KR'A ST"N is applied as the *kavvanah* for the blowing of the *shofar*, particularly in rites attending exorcism, a meaning inherent in the overt translation of the words (“tear Satan”).<sup>44</sup> The name was also applied in toto as the *kavvanah* for specific prayers, such as the

recitation of the biblical chapters associated with specific sacrifices<sup>45</sup> and the mourner's Kaddish.<sup>46</sup> Finally, the forty-two-letter name is the acronym for the widely circulated "prayer of R. Neḥuniah ha-Kanah," also known as *Ana be-Koah*, which is a widely circulated kabbalistic meditation. These uses of the forty-two-letter name imply that it has a protective function and is employed in petitionary prayer in times of crisis.

A second tradition, that of the seventy-two names of God, occupies a role in the *kavvanot* traditions similar to that of the forty-two-letter name. The seventy-two names are constructed as an acronym that originates in the three verses of Exodus 14:19–21.<sup>47</sup> The first letter from the first verse is combined with the last letter from the second verse and the first letter of the third verse. Hence, the first aspect of the name is *w"hw*, after which one begins with the second letter of the first word, the second letter from the end of the second verse and the second letter of the third verse, making *γ"ly*. Hence the name is artificially synthesized from a concrete reduction of biblical text into acrostic signifiers.

The seventy-two names have a long history in classical Judaism. The earliest reference to the seventy-two names is in Genesis Rabbah (44), although the actual names are not cited.<sup>48</sup> The formula for deriving the seventy-two names is first cited by Hai Gaon. Rashi alludes to the seventy-two names during a Talmudic discussion of the Exodus.<sup>49</sup> The seventy-two names appear in the first kabbalistic text, the *Bahir*,<sup>50</sup> while a passage in Abraham Abulafia's work *Sefer ha-Heshek* is devoted to instructions for properly reciting the name.<sup>51</sup> For the Beit El kabbalists, the recitation of the seventy-two names became associated with the processes of repentance<sup>52</sup> and routinely served as the *kavvanah* for the second and third paragraphs of the *Shema*' prayer.

The seventy-two names have been revived in the activities of the Kabbalah Centers, under the direction of the Berg family.<sup>53</sup> It has been acknowledged by Yehudah Berg that his affective psychological interpretation of the seventy-two names was influenced by the work *Herev Pifiyyot*.<sup>54</sup> This work was composed by Yeshayahu Ya'akov of Alesk, a member of the *kloiz* of kabbalists in Brody that operated at roughly the same time as the Ba'al Shem Tov. This work presents a method in which the forty-two-letter name and the seventy-two names serve as the inner *kavvanah* of the recitation of the *Shema*' prayer. *Herev Pifiyyot* presents a psychologized version of the names, much as contemporary Ḥasidic works render a psychological interpretation of kabbalistic ideas. This psychological interpretation has been adapted by the Kabbalah Centres as one of the institution's most compelling doctrines. Hence, the forty-two-letter name of God and the seventy two names have their origins in the dawn of Jewish esotericism but remain very much in play among present-day acolytes and enthusiasts.

### The *Sha'ar ha-Shemot*

These basic name traditions—the biblical names, the *miluyyim*, the forty-two-letter name, and the seventy two names—dominate the early version of Luria's teaching, particularly in the work known as the early work *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot*. It is a matter of record that the kabbalists of the Beit El yeshivah of Jerusalem much preferred to use the later redaction of the Lurianic teaching exemplified in Meir Poppers's widely circulated work *Ez Hayyim*.<sup>55</sup> The compositions *Sha'ar ha-Shemot* in Poppers's *Ez Hayyim* and the chapter of the same title in Ya'akov Zemakh's *Ozrot Hayyim* present a more involved doctrine of the names, in which the systems of *miluyyim*, *gematriot*, and letter combinations are taken far beyond their original provenance. The *Sha'ar ha-Shemot* serves as the basis of the *kavvanot* used in Beit El and, moreover, is the key to the circle's ontology and, perhaps, to its renewed popularity today.

Poppers's *Sha'ar ha-Shemot* is a restatement of the entire Lurianic system from the beginning. Since it came late in the development of the Lurianic canon, the *Sha'ar ha-Shemot* incorporated all of the ideas that had been brought into the Lurianic writings in their later version. The work begins with a description of the entire kabbalistic cosmology to date: the ten *sefirot*, the four worlds, the *sefirot* within the worlds, the lights that shine through them to the Divine countenances, the celestial palaces, and the world of the soul. The system is presented in its full baroque complexity; the Divine countenances, besides having internal *sefirot*, contain aspects of inner and surrounding light, essence and vessels, five levels of the soul, and four worlds of creation, as well as shadow aspects of each countenance.

Having presented the most baroque and abstruse portrayal of the kabbalistic universe, the *Sha'ar ha-Shemot* then links each tier of the system to an extant sacred name. Each letter of YHWH is linked to a *sefirah*, and each name has an individual soul at its core.<sup>56</sup> The various permutations of the Divine name enliven various levels of the Universe, for the soul of the Universe dwells in the consonants, while the vowels are enlivening soul of the letters. Further complicating the system, the *Sha'ar ha-Shemot* adapts an earlier scholastic discussion between those who believed that the *sefirot* were the essence of God and those who believed that the *sefirot* were merely the vessels (*kelim*) for Divinity.<sup>57</sup> According to the formulation of the *Sha'ar ha-Shemot*, each of the Divine countenances has an essence but also has a secondary system of vessels.

When the ideas of the *Sha'ar ha-Shemot* are implemented, the kabbalistic universe is portrayed as nothing more or less than a series of cascading names. As a consequence of this aggregate representation of the kabbalistic universe,

many new names are required in order to have a specific name for every countenance, with its component *sefirot*, worlds, palaces, essence, vessels, and soul levels.<sup>58</sup> In response to the need to project names on all of these aspects of the system, the names and their permutations began to multiply exponentially. Each of these new names was subjected to new *miluyyim*, leading to more and more *gematriot*, which themselves required analysis.<sup>59</sup>

It was Shar'abi's innovation to recast the system of *kavvanot*, which was more or less universal in its manifestations from Poland to Jerusalem, in terms of the *Sha'ar ha-Shemot*. He incorporated the linguistic theory of the *Sha'ar ha-Shemot*, which is not specifically directed to prayer, into the prayer *kavvanot*. Every prayer, then, had to be recast in the new system of names presented in the *Sha'ar ha-Shemot*. Shar'abi acknowledged his reliance in this exhortation from *Nahar Shalom*:

I am not warning, but merely reminding to strive to have intention in all the details of the *kavvanot* of the Names, the *sefirot* and their surrounding energies, as is explained in the *Sha'ar ha-Shemot*, and the names of [the five aspects of the soul] which are the forms of HVYH as vocalized, and their surrounding energies, to draw them down clothed in the names of the *mohin* which are the un-vocalized names. They are clothed in the form, to draw down the form into these names of the ten *sefirot* of that countenance that relates to those *mohin*, and [the five aspects of their soul]. This is whole *kavvanah*. Without the *kavvanah* of the vocalized names, that are the [five aspects of the soul], all of these *kavvanot* are like a body without a soul!<sup>60</sup>

Shar'abi took what was ultimately a theoretical construction at the far end of the development of the Lurianic system and wrote it back into the prayer service. The great labor of perfecting Shar'abi's *kavvanot*, which was undertaken by his students in the generations after his death, consisted of taking the linguistic theory of the latest version of the Lurianic system, namely the *Sha'ar ha-Shemot*, and incorporating it into the prayer service, for which it had not originally been conceived.

## A Retreat into Pure Theory

Members of Shar'abi's school differed as to whether one should contemplate the Lurianic myth in its figurative mythic essence, as initially presented in the *Zohar* and in the Safed Kabbalah, or whether the system should be reduced to

the disembodied system of names. The abandonment of kabbalistic mythos was presaged centuries before the Beit El community in the remarks of the Spanish philosopher-kabbalist Isaac Ibn Latif, who advocated contemplation of the Divine name and declared:

The desired end is to strip the Name of all matter and to imagine it in your mind, although it is impossible for the imagination to depict it without some physical image, because the imagination is not separate from the senses, and most of what is attained by the activity of the imagination is performed through the contemplation of the shape of the letters and their forms and number.<sup>61</sup>

There was a strong tendency, spearheaded by European kabbalists, to accept the anthropomorphic metaphors of the Lurianic myth in order to understand the relationship of the various elements of the system. This view is exemplified by Moshe Zakhut (acronym RM"Z). Zakhut was a venerable authority in the early circulation of Lurianic Kabbalah. Zakhut advised that the adept should concentrate not on the vocalized names of YHVH but only on the names of the *sefirot* that are germane to a given prayer. His reasoning is somewhat different from the prevailing opinion and bears citation:

It is inappropriate to write the HVVH names with the letters, such as, for instance, inflecting the name of God with a segol, or *Eloheinu* with a sheva, because the HVVH names with vocalization imply the inner nature of the soul.<sup>62</sup>

Zakhut's objection was a lonely voice against the emerging consensus among later Lurianic authorities that, at the moment of prayer, in order to not imagine God physically, it is necessary to use the metaphor of the Divine names. Such was the position of Shlomo Eliashiv, for whom the letters of the names were a more appropriate object of prayer than the images of the myth. Eliashiv warned that the only appropriate version of the *kavvanot* was Shar'abi's version, *because* of its erudition in the use of the letters.<sup>63</sup> For study, one may use the anthropomorphic images.<sup>64</sup> This was also the opinion of the influential Ḥasidic scholastic Zevi Hirsch of Zidhitchov, who admitted that "everything that a man imagines is corporeal."<sup>65</sup> Hence, one could not avoid imagining the Lurianic system in mythic terms, as that was the imagery of the *Zohar* and the Lurianic canon.

Shlomo Eliashiv and Zevi Hirsch of Zidhitchov may have been influenced by a similar discussion regarding the nature of kabbalistic symbolism that had occurred among the generations that preceded them. This discussion took place between two groups, literal and figurative theorists, a distinction that has

been explored by, among others, Elliot Wolfson and Nissim Yosha.<sup>66</sup> According to this division, one group of kabbalists tended to view the processes described in the Lurianic system as metaphors for processes too ineffable to explain. Such figurative theorists include Avraham Herrera (author of *El Puerto del Cielo*), Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto, and the Gaon of Vilna. On the other side were the literalists, who believed in the empirical existence of forces such as the *parzufim*, or Divine Countenances. Among such thinkers were Immanuel Hai Ricci and Schneur Zalman of Liadi. The theological problem of the discussion, of course, is the temptation to idolatry inherent in the bold anthropomorphic nature of the myth of the countenances. The tension is evident in Hayyim Vital's exclamation:

Indeed it is clear that there is neither a body or the force of a body above, Heaven forbid . . . hence permission is given to speak in terms of forms . . . above there are only ephemeral lights, essentially spiritual.<sup>67</sup>

Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto also allegorized the Lurianic myth and was perhaps the most influential of the allegorical kabbalists.<sup>68</sup> A statement of Luzzatto's position with regard to symbolization is included on the first page of many of his books, in an "announcement and warning on distancing oneself from physical imagery [*gashmiyyut*] in the kabbalistic allegories, particularly those of Luria."<sup>69</sup> These concern knowledge of the Tree of Life as explained in Luria's writings and its relationship to the existential state of human beings.<sup>70</sup>

R. Yosef Hayyim, the "Ben Ish Hai," as well, interpreted a remark of Vital's as a defense of the allegorical reading. He insisted that the realities are above contemplation, even though one might find physical forms attached to them. Every letter, on the other hand, points to a separate Divine light.<sup>71</sup> The letters and the linguistic system were therefore a more direct and undeniable vehicle and conduit to the Divine because they were unclouded by the myth.

Accordingly, Shar'abi himself was a figurativist, advocating a metaphorical view of the Lurianic system. He made extensive use of parable, concluding that both the names and the mythos were substitutions for processes too ineffable to recount. This became the opinion of a plurality of Beit El kabbalists. Inevitably, symbols are necessary to explain the spiritual in this base physical world. The objects of the metaphors are but devices to condition the student to the interplay of transcendent forces. So it was that Shar'abi defended the *mashal*, for without it humans would grasp nothing of the spiritual secrets. As one grasped the external metaphor, the sparks of the inner light would clarify the inner nature of the parables. Hence, the Beit El kabbalists are drawn to systems, such as the use of names, which elide the mythic content found in the Lurianic canon. In setting the priorities of contemporary Beit El kabbalists,

Ya'akov Moshe Hillel insists that, while there may be gradations in the nature of study and understanding, they serve the same soteric purpose. Those who study the parable in its mythic form will attain full understanding in the world to come. In fact, it is improper to attempt to understand the essential reality of the processes of emanation.<sup>72</sup>

Ultimately, Shar'abi had no choice but to be a figurativist, for it is the effect of late Lurianic doctrine to reduce the study of Kabbalah from its original myth to a mere linguistic theory. In late Lurianic practice, the mythos of the Divine family was expressed through various names. As a result of this reduction to linguistic-theory names, the system began to be distanced from its original mythic content. The kabbalists no longer visualized the system in terms of the myth of the countenances, the interaction of the sage *Arikh Anpin*, the parents *Abba* and *Imma*, the son *Zeir Anpin*, and his consort, *Nukvah*. The implication is that these names depict the essence of the reality, rather than the mythos of the countenances or *parzufim*. In offering the possibility of a world shorn of myth, the Lurianic system finally cut its moorings from the world of mythos, just as the world of mythos had shut the door on the symbolic systems offered by the *Zohar* literature.<sup>73</sup>

The impulse to move from mythos to sacred names as the focus of kabbalistic practice seems rooted tacitly in kabbalists' discomfort with the bold anthropomorphisms of the Lurianic system. Anthropomorphic images, such as the unification of the Divine parents, *Abba* and *Imma*, and the conception and nurturing of the wonder child *Zeir*, must always exist in tension with normative, exoteric Judaism. This view portrayed the entire process as a passage through the names, with Divine effluence flowing through the permutations of the names. Immanuel Hai Ricci's *Mishnat Hasidim* portrays the emanation of the names and the drama of the countenances as unfolding simultaneously, two sides of the same coin. For many kabbalists to this day, however, the question has been more a case of either/or.<sup>74</sup>

Shar'abi's insistence on the primacy of names over mythos led the Beit El kabbalists away from the images of the Lurianic myth and toward pure theory, devoid of symbolism, imagery, or poetics.<sup>75</sup> It is as if computer users were to put away their easier operating systems and run their computers only with MS-DOS. Prayers no longer have any of their exoteric meaning but are now completely given over to esoteric formulae. The overt subject matter of the liturgy, the national and creaturely concerns that it expresses, is missing. The very idea of petitional prayer, emotional investment, and the essential sense of prayer as communion and dialogue have been discarded in favor of a faith in the most abstruse reaches of the Lurianic method, its numerology and linguistic method.

In the absence of another rationale, perhaps this insistence on the farthest reaches of esotericism was another response to modernity. The Middle Eastern kabbalists of the nineteenth century turned inward, away from Kabbalah's earlier mythos, as a response to the implicit criticism by the rationalism of Enlightenment thought, with its concomitant criticism of myth and superstition. The emphasis on sacred names and their theoretical construct erected a blank wall of metaphysics in the face of rational analysis, defending the circle against the societal changes and existential challenges to which no religiously community was altogether inured. Did the kabbalists of Beit El respond to the emergence of a culture of science and technology with an alternative, metaphysical theory of Divine energy? Or does the turn to a pure name theory reflect a discomfort with the rationalist critique of the mythic element in Kabbalah? Whatever the impetus, this branch of late Kabbalah turned inward, toward an insular theory, rooted in traditions that were primordially old and mysterious, beyond the realm of myth, symbol, or the physical image.

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# 4

## Kabbalists in the Community

The Beit El circles, from their inception to the present, have seen themselves as practicing the most essential and avant-garde form of Judaism. Essential, in that the mystics believe that their practice of *kavvanot* sustains and protects the Jerusalem community and the Jewish people as a whole. Avant-garde, in that its ontology lies in a realm of pure linguistic abstraction, as has been addressed in the previous chapter.<sup>1</sup> The twin poles of the social responsibilities and the esoteric concerns of the Beit El kabbalists led to the development of their lifestyle and values, and this, in turn, led to novel definitions of the kabbalistic lifestyle, as the Beit El kabbalists sought to position themselves in the context of the religious community of Jerusalem and the Diaspora.

To this end, the Beit El tradition developed specific models of behavior for its adepts. Most spiritual fellowships set strong conditions for acceptance, and the Beit El kabbalists are no exception. In the early generations, it was acknowledged that only the saints of Beit El were viewed as qualified to perform the *kavvanot*.<sup>2</sup> Today, if they aspire to practice the *kavvanot*, adepts have to break new ground in holiness and purity, to attain their inner holiness.<sup>3</sup> Yosef Ḥayyim, the *Ben Ish Ḥai*, further restricted the practice of *kavvanot* to those “for whom the secret wisdom was their craft” and who had internalized that wisdom beyond merely understanding it intellectually.<sup>4</sup> These instructions laid the foundation for the arrangements made in Beit El that endure to the present, in which there is a cadre of full-time

mendicant pietists, living on the largesse of the community. Surrounding them are acolytes of various social stations who have achieved different degrees of acceptance into the upper echelons of the circle.

The contemporary Jerusalem kabbalist Ya'akov Moshe Hillel has recently presented a revamped set of rules for the aspiring acolyte. Hillel presents a two-tiered view of the scholarly/spiritual community; he sees it as consisting of those who operate on the level of the Lurianic system and everybody else, the conventional pious Jewish laity.<sup>5</sup> Acceptance into mystical circles had traditionally been left up to the acolytes themselves. Hillel's criteria for the practitioner are based on the values transmitted by Luria to his own students. By delineating the entrance requirements, Hillel implicitly liberalizes them, so that free-lance acolytes can adopt Shar'abi's practices far from the Jerusalem centers.

The circulation of Hillel's manuals has facilitated the spread of Beit El practice, with actual acolytes present to spread the doctrines. I have observed, in the Natan Eli synagogue in Los Angeles, former members of Rabbi Philip Berg's Kabbalah Center using the Rehovot ha-Nahar prayer book in the accepted Beit El style. These dropouts from the Kabbalah Centre are able to recover the Beit El practice through the circulation of the writings of Hillel and others and are able therefore to attempt to reconstitute the practice of the Jerusalem circles in any Diaspora community. The new popular literature provides a way for them to move from the vocal *kavvanot* developed by the Kabbalah Centres into a Shar'abi's tradition, which is socially acceptable in certain segments of the Orthodox community.

For individual Beit El mystics, the practice of the *kavvanot* requires a particular extra degree of religious intensity and a large time commitment. Hence, in order to populate an academy, one must assemble an elite class of practitioners. The practice of the acolytes is strenuous, including at least six hours of prayer daily, with frequent extended periods of daily fasting. There are, as well, the demanding study schedules of the academy, in which the highest acolytes must be present through the night. Certain groups meet in the damp, chilly chambers of the Western Wall complex or in locales otherwise distant from the modest neighborhoods where the pietists may have found a place to live.

The acolytes of such populist institutions as Nahar Shalom or Nayot be-Ramah are drawn from an economic and social cross-section of the Israeli religious community and from the Talmudic academies and also include both random intellectuals and doctrinaire settlers from the West Bank. A number of simple workingmen who anyway keep early hours make a practice of completing the prayer quorum for the *mekavvenim*. There are also, as there are in all

of the outreach groups, such as the newer configurations of Breslav Ḥasidism, the flotsam and jetsam of the Jerusalem streets, namely the left-behinds of contemporary Israeli society: the unemployed, the militarily disabled, divorced men struggling to find a new sustaining meaning in their lives. At the entry level of the community, pensioners and veterans subsisting on disability payments fill the study rooms in downtown Jerusalem and may flesh out the congregations of the core mystical circles. As with the resurgence of Breslav Ḥasidism, which similarly deserves the attention of scholars, the Beit El communities draw on marginalized populations within Israeli society, as well as a number of young rabbinical scholars, members of the *kollel* elite, whose interests have turned to rabbinical study.

Beit El kabbalists have also redefined the role of the mystic vis-à-vis his community. Because of the demands of the practice, the mystics are often reduced to a mendicant lifestyle. To that end, the pietists maintain strong, symbiotic ties to their communities. At intervals during the day, the doors of the yeshivah fly open and pallets of biscuits and rolls arrive from the first batch of the local bakery, while coffee and soft drinks come from the neighboring grocery stores. It is clear that the surrounding working-class communities of Maḥaneh Yehudah, Geulah, and the Old City consider their livelihoods and wellbeing to be sustained by the activities of the mystics in their midst.

### Beit El Discourse and Intellectual Life

The common ground among all Orthodox Jews is the institution of Talmud study. Formal study of the Talmud remains integral to the Beit El community. Control of Talmud study is an article of power in the world of Orthodox Judaism, and anxiety regarding that power extends to the education of women and the disbursement of funds to support its study.<sup>6</sup> Practically, as well, Talmudic acuity is a “use it or lose it” proposition. In order to remain a sharp Talmudist, one must constantly repeat the texts and make a substantial time commitment. To this day, Benayahu Shmueli, the head of the Nahar Shalom community, studies according to the daily *daf yomi* system with his followers, following the program of study of the entire Orthodox world.<sup>7</sup>

As the head of an institution that is a sociopolitical player in the contemporary Israeli theocracy, Hillel has to locate the role of Talmud study in the context of the mystical lifestyle. Hillel adapts Vital’s well-known assertion that Talmudic study has an exoteric goal, namely to break the *kelipot*, or obstructions to divinity. The *kelipot*, which are ubiquitous in the Lurianic system, are here defined as the questions (*kushiyyot*) that impede understanding in exoteric

study. Hillel seems to echo the impulse, best exemplified by the author of *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* and *Ra'aya Meheimna*, that the discursive, abstruse dialectics of Talmud study are a sign of its degenerate nature.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, whoever has a facility with the complexities of Talmudic study (*iyyun*) will break through the obstructions most easily. However, earlier sources indicate some tension between the two forms of practice, particularly with regard to the question of investing one's available time in order to practice "Torah," namely Talmud study, or *yiḥudim*, the Lurianic spiritual exercises. The Aleppo kabbalist Ḥayyim Shaul Dweck's early collection of penitential *kavvanot*, *Benayahu ben Yehoyada'*, contains the following adjuration:

If one has begun to practice the known *yiḥudim*, and yet desists from performing the unification, this causes great damage. If he leaves them for a day, then in two days they will leave him. He causes it to be that those souls that want to cleave to a man will be separated and [those souls] distance themselves from him. One should not say that preoccupation with the Torah is great and should not be neglected, for the matter of the *yiḥudim* is greater than the practice of the Torah, for it unifies the upper worlds, including the practice of the Torah and unifies them, all together. Even though the souls do not appear completely, one should not worry and neglect the *yiḥud*. It must be that one's intent is not only to draw down the souls, but also to fix the upper worlds.<sup>9</sup>

Textual sensitivity is necessary because contemporary acolytes of the Beit El tradition believe that the Lurianic canon is written as esoterically as the Bible or the *Zohar*, in that Vital hid the true meaning, hiding allusions in his writing. The Beit El kabbalists allow that the confusion of the texts in the Lurianic canon may have been willful, and that they may have been intentionally written in an obscure manner. Ḥayyim Shaul Dweck devised a novel taxonomy in order to resolve internal contradictions in Luria's teaching.<sup>10</sup> Dweck declared that all of the writings of Vital that apparently contradict one another were deliberately presented in an opaque style in order to conceal the entrance from the unworthy. Dweck saw in the *Drush ha-Da'at*, from the early recension *Sha'ar ha-Hakdamot*, as the key to all the difficult passages in the canon. This methodology was first implemented by the Tunisian kabbalist Yosef ha-Cohen Sadavon.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, texts that could be thought of as merely poorly written or poorly assembled, such as Ḥayyim de la Rosa's *Torat Ḥakham*, are considered by the Beit El kabbalists to be esoteric, written so allusively that one can even assume the opposite of what the author seems to mean.<sup>12</sup>

Prerequisite to practice, of course, is learning the system.<sup>13</sup> Menachem Kallus has presented the difficulties with this aspect of the practice very succinctly:

The challenge of training a would-be practitioner of Lurianic kavvanot is heightened by the fact that there are no primary introductory texts for this purpose, and there seem to be no extended explanations in the literature . . . of the practical experiential meaning of what Kavvanah in the Lurianic context entails.<sup>14</sup>

Besides the question of how to begin, the erstwhile practitioner faces another problem: how to structure the program of his study. Is it better to study the distant forces of the cosmos or their manifestation in present reality, in the commandments and the phenomena of the manifest world? In answer to these questions, Hillel counsels the adherent to concentrate of the theoretical speculations of Lurianic Kabbalah.<sup>15</sup> In my recent experience, the mystics of the Nahar Shalom community in Maḥaneh Yehudah advocate the study of *Ozrot Ḥayyim*, a recension influenced by Ya'akov Zemakh, as the ideal introduction to the system. In this way, they avoid Shar'abi's bias in favor of the late recension *Ez Ḥayyim*, while eliding the fact that the ideas that were central to Beit El Kabbalah were not present in the first edition of Luria's teachings, Shmuel Vital's *Eight Gates*.<sup>16</sup>

This is not to say that the Beit El kabbalists are oblivious to the idea of personal ethics or to the concern with morality that is commonly called *mussar*. The Beit El mystics have access to the most cosmopolitan library of homiletical and ethical literature. Among the instructions of the Beit El kabbalists was that every day, following the morning service, an ethical work was to be read aloud. The favorite selections for this moment were Bahyah Ibn Pakudah's Sufi-influenced *Ḥovot ha-Levavot* (Duties of the Heart), the Safed kabbalist Eliahu de Vidas's *Reshit Hokhmah* (The Beginning of Wisdom), or Ḥayyim Vital's *Sha'arei Kedushah* (Gates of Holiness).<sup>17</sup> On the New Year, before the blowing of the *shofar*, it was also customary to recite a set text from the ethical tradition. On the first day, Shar'abi selected a section of Ḥayyim Yosef David Azulai's work *Avodat ha-Kodesh*. On the second day, a special oration was composed by R. Avraham Gagín (Aga"n) and inserted into the liturgy.<sup>18</sup>

The very nature of the discourse between the mystics, particularly in their oral study, remains a mystery to me. In a legal or exegetical discussion, the ground of discourse is fairly clear, drawing upon legal principles or exegetical insights. What is the ground of reality in the discussions that take place among Jewish mystics? On what intellectual basis do they recast their theosophy,

particularly at the outer reaches of Lurianism, which is not grounded by exegesis or the technical realities of a situation (*meziut*)? There is a mid-morning class at the Nahar Shalom yeshivah that reviews, along with the rest of the Orthodox community, the *daf yomi*, or Talmud portion of the day. In addition to this text, the kabbalists study the Pentateuch, Prophets, and Writings of the Hebrew Bible, along with Mishnah, the *Zohar*, and ethical and legal writings. Their curriculum resembles but does not directly follow the methodology set forth in the devotional anthology *Hok le-Yisrael*; a work that has its origins in Luria's practice. Yet, for one who comes from the eastern European model of Talmud study, the intellectual climate of the present acolytes is characterized by a startling incuriosity. The study of kabbalistic texts is rote and lacks the Socratic give and take of the rabbinic study hall. The acolytes and their teachers simply sit and review the conceptual works of Kabbalah, from primary works such as Vital's *Ez Hayyim* to the introductory works such as Suleiman Eliahu's *Kerem Shlomo*. The larger question of the role of didactic study in a purely kabbalistic context remains unanswered; hopefully scholars will invest sufficient time among the Beit El kabbalists to resolve it.

### Prayer without Kavvanot

In medieval Kabbalah, before Kabbalah moved to a position of social prominence, the practitioners of *kavvanot* were solitary figures operating within their various Jewish communities.<sup>19</sup> The kabbalist needed the community, because he needed a *minyán*, or prayer quorum, in order to achieve the most efficacious prayer. Yet contemporary scholars have agreed that these early kabbalists seemingly displayed few signs of their practice. Inevitably, there were tensions between the practitioners of *kavvanot* and the exoteric congregations that hosted them. Joseph Dan has written of the prayer of the German Ḥasidim: "Ashkenazi Hasidic literature does not reveal to us whether [its] novel concept of the liturgy had any practical significance that influenced the behavior of a Jew when actually praying in the synagogue."<sup>20</sup> The social role of the practitioner in the exoteric polis was, as Joseph Weiss characterized it, "paradox of solitude and community."<sup>21</sup> The individual kabbalist pursued the complex meditative understanding of the prayers among a quorum of the common folk, praying in the conventional fashion. In the early stage of the practice, there was no outward manifestation or any need for a community of initiates, as there was no specified liturgy for them. In fact, Ephraim Gottlieb disparaged the prayer communities and fraternities that characterized Kabbalah in its classical

and late periods as a debasement of the kabbalists' proper role among the polis, which was to be a lonely sentinel of the true reality.<sup>22</sup> It was inevitable that, with the social rise of Kabbalah and the romanticism associated with the *Zohar* and the Safed Kabbalah, such isolated practice would be overwhelmed by the eros of the new movements.

The Beit El kabbalists, on the other hand, see themselves as a spiritual elite. If the abstruse Beit El practice is the apex of the form, what is the purpose of the exoteric prayer of the Jewish masses? What is the role of the common folk who are inadequate to understand or practice the *kavvanot*? The hermeneutic principle of Jewish prayer is that reciting the words of the prayer properly, in the original Hebrew, constitutes fulfillment of the commandment to pray. All Jews, Israelis notwithstanding, have difficulties with some of the more abstruse language of the liturgy, particularly for the festivals, and need some help parsing its tropes. Yet, if they mouth the syllables of a sacred text without fully understanding it, they are still considered to have "prayed."

The distinction between simple practice and the Beit El system is particularly sharp because there is no middle ground between conventional Jewish prayer and the mysteries of the Beit El system. Such was not the case in other systems and social milieus. The Polish system that was in existence at the time of Shar'abi's arrival at Beit El in the eighteenth century was eclectic and included *kavvanot* based on the earlier, sefirotic tradition of the *Zohar* and the mainstream teachings of Safed. This is particularly true of peak moments of the daily liturgy as performed in the synagogue, such as the Kaddish prayer, the recitation of the *Shema'*, and the sanctification prayer of the silent devotion. Presumably, there were aspiring acolytes in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Poland who attached a *kavvanah* only to these "high points" in the synagogue service. The *kavvanot* that were attached to these prayers drew on much more elemental forms of Kabbalah than the abstruse formulations of Shar'abi and his students. In all of these cases, the most influential compilation of Polish *kavvanot*, the Rashkover prayer book, presented materials that are avowedly Lurianic alongside materials that are broader and more general than even the zoharic Kabbalah of Safed.<sup>23</sup> The Polish rite was based on the premise that there were gradations of possible *kavvanah*. Aspiring acolytes could enter the world of concurrent meanings at a level at which they were comfortable.

Such auteurism is not acceptable in Beit El circles. The Beit El kabbalists repeatedly declare that only Shar'abi's version of the *kavvanot* is usable. A mystic, who is necessarily a scholar, might think that he could synthesize a *kavvanah* to practice through his own scholarly enquiry. This is deemed

inappropriate by the Beit El kabbalists; in their view, it is wrong to utilize the raw material of the *Zohar* as a source for proper intention. Even the simple meaning of the prayers must be mediated by Luria's understanding.<sup>24</sup> Hence, acolytes of the Shar'abi program may not "develop" their *kavvanot* as other liturgy develops, from the simplest sacred texts to the most abstruse. The Polish view, according to which non-Lurianists were enabled to practice *kavvanot* according to the broader, zoharic mythos, is absent here.

There are, however, some exceptions to this rule among the Beit El mystics. Raḥamim Sarim, author of *Sha'arei Raḥamim*, himself a figure of avowed humility,<sup>25</sup> agreed with Ḥayyim de la Rosa that it is permitted to practice *kavvanah* in a limited way without knowing the most intimate details of the linguistic theory.<sup>26</sup> According to Sarim and de la Rosa, simple practice still affects the repair of the worlds of existence. The common folk might recite the penitential prayers circulated by Ḥayyim Shaul Dweck and the Reḥovot ha-Nahar yeshivah. They could practice the penitential rites (*tiqqunei 'avvonot*) that are found in the writings of Luria. In each case, the absence of the practice of *kavvanot* does not hold back the act of Divine repair, or *tiqqun*, although *kavvanot* would surely optimize it.<sup>27</sup>

The sum of these views is that there is ambivalence regarding the role of an adept in the midst of a humble lay group. If a practitioner of *kavvanot* is alone in his pursuit, he still must be a member of a prayer quorum (*minyān*) to accomplish his ends. I once was told that the *kavvanot* were being recited in the Geulah quarter of Jerusalem, at the synagogue of a certain well-known kabbalist. I went to the synagogue before dawn, only to find that the kabbalist in question was reciting the *kavvanot* while the young men of his *kollel*, or ongoing rabbinical program, were dutifully waiting for him to complete his extended prayers. At one point during the repetition of the silent devotion, the members of the *kollel* left the room, leaving the rabbi alone. They motioned for me to come out and offered me a cup of *boz*, black Turkish coffee, which they enjoyed every morning while the rabbi finished his extended prayer with *kavvanot*. The simple prayers of the laypeople support the more advanced practitioner's completion of the *kavvanot*.

Might a mystic, because of his unassuming nature, desist from practicing the *kavvanot* altogether? According to Ya'akov Moshe Hillel, a person who is spiritually worthy of practicing the *kavvanot* should not absent himself from it, even when there are aspects that he has not yet resolved. Therefore, according to Hillel, sages and adepts who have mastered the Lurianic system may not exempt themselves from the practice of *kavvanot*, for the penalty for so withholding oneself from the cosmic struggle is very great.<sup>28</sup>

## Kabbalah at Street Level

As has been noted by Moshe Halamish, the phenomenon of the Lurianic system of *kavvanot* has been that the public has adopted the most esoteric of practices.<sup>29</sup> This is the paradox of the present period, in which the most widely accepted and revered system among accredited mystical circles is that of Shar'abi, which is itself extraordinarily esoteric, dry, and technical. The Lurianic canon, and the Beit El Kabbalah that is based on it, is distinguished by being relentlessly impersonal and psychologically nondirective.

And yet, today, the habitués of the Beit El communities include working people, full-time Talmudists from the world of the *kollels*, or ongoing rabbinical programs, a few tweedy intellectuals beset by midlife ennui, and an otherwise random assortment of the religious Jews of Jerusalem. In every circle, there is something of the eros of the close-knit community, and the leaders, in different ways, display affection for their charges and yet continue to exhort them. In one instance, the leader of *kavvanot* practice at the Western Wall surveyed his class on rainy winter evening and said, "If you weren't at the Western Wall this morning, let me tell you, you lost out [*hifsadeta*]." The Beit El circles are growing, because of a basic idealism about the validity of the most abstruse forms of Kabbalah, passionately implemented to the point of exhaustion.

The development of a pietistic elite is a common phenomenon in many religious cultures. The religious community of Jerusalem that supports the Beit El kabbalists already possesses a large scholarly class, a number of whose members are in straitened economic circumstances. The Beit El kabbalists draw from the population of metropolitan Jerusalem and meet in the most central locations, the shrines of the Old City and the public market. Within the group, leaders come to the fore through force of personality and intellectual acuity, in the way that leaders are customarily chosen in traditional religious contexts. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there was some self-consciousness about the Middle Eastern character of Beit El and how open it was to Ashkenazic acolytes.<sup>30</sup> Today, such concerns are subsumed in the common concerns and culture of Israeli orthodoxy.

Beit El occupies a niche in the Jerusalem religious community that comes from the separation of Kabbalah into an enterprise different from the rest of rabbinic Judaism. This is not to say that Beit El kabbalists have been indifferent to the rabbinic tradition; in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they were dominant Talmudists and social leaders. At this point, however, the energies of the community are wholly given over to a lifestyle based on the kabbalistic rite,

which has expanded to become the all-encompassing focus of their religious practice. This quality is fueled the acquisition of new disciples who are not learned in the Talmud or who have walked away from a preoccupation with rabbinic study. The kabbalists now occupy a separate track in the Jewish community and fulfill a different social role, one that is saturated with the world of prayer and the mystical names that underlie it.

# 5

## Beit El Practice

If one could pinpoint a single trend in Beit El thought and practice, it would be the eschewing of much of “classical” Jewish mysticism in favor of a worldview entirely based on Lurianic Kabbalah. In practice, this move to pure Lurianism is evident in a number of ways. In the development of their literary oeuvre, Beit El kabbalists did not interpret the *Zohar* or compose homilies based in the sefirotic system. Their speculations largely centered on the interaction of the countenances, which was Shar’abi’s preoccupation in most of his writings. Besides limiting themselves to speculative literature, the Beit El circles continued the patterns of canon limitation prevalent in earlier forms of Kabbalah, namely the schools of the *Zohar* and Isaac Luria, in which a limited set of materials becomes the core doctrine of a movement.<sup>1</sup> In the theoretical works of the Beit El kabbalists, the preponderance of references and citations are to the works of other Beit El kabbalists!

In some cases, Beit El kabbalists are at a loss when non-Lurianic practices do enter their culture. For example, Isaac Luria taught that when the prayer *Barukh She-Amar* is recited, the adept should contemplate one of the ten *sefirot* during each of the prayer’s ten stanzas.<sup>2</sup> Other traditions link the recitation of the *Shema*’ prayer to the forty-two-letter name of God. The forty-two-letter name is printed beneath certain paragraphs of the *Shema*’, on the premise that it represents the underlying intention of the prayer.<sup>3</sup> These *kavvanot* are based on kabbalistic teachings that predate even the Safed

Kabbalah and thus do not appear in Shar'abi's prayer book, because, according to Hillel, they do not originate with Luria. In fact, they are cited in the protean Lurianic text *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot*, and they appear in the influential Polish Rashkover prayer book, but they are not specifically *Lurianic* in nature, and that is the reason for Shar'abi's neglecting them.<sup>4</sup> In other cases, earlier practices moved into the vacuum left by Luria and Shar'abi. For example, the completion of the whole Jewish literary oeuvre on the Shavuot holiday, as compiled in the work *Shnei Luhot ha-Brit*, was part of Beit El practice, although its origins were manifestly zoharic and Cordoverean.<sup>5</sup> In this case, the earlier ritual was inserted because Shar'abi left no specific tradition with regard to these practices.<sup>6</sup>

There is, however, one exception to the rule of theoretical basis in late Lurianic ideas. That is the ongoing reference to the vicissitudes of the *Shekhinah* in the popular writings of the Beit El kabbalists. Such references are understandable for kabbalists in Jerusalem in the early modern period, who must have felt that they were at ground zero for the activities of the *Shekhinah*. Nonetheless, their commitment to a purely Lurianic view was such that, like Luria himself, the Beit El kabbalists did not sing the Cordoverean hymn *Lekhhah Dodi* on the Sabbath Eve.<sup>7</sup>

In other instances, Shar'abi was able to develop and institute new *kavvanot* based on practices with which he was familiar in the abstract. If he had the theoretical principle in his Lurianic sources, he could develop new practices. For instance, the nature of the form of the Hebrew letter *shin* made by the straps of the prayer phylacteries, or *tefillin*, is not indicated by the AR"i, but there is a version in Ya'akov Zemakh's *Olat Tamid*, which Shar'abi adopted.<sup>8</sup> There was no set of *kavvanot* for the Sabbath service in the basic Lurianic canon; they were also developed and instituted by Shar'abi.<sup>9</sup> In the same way, the Beit El version of the Passover meal was certainly developed not by Shar'abi but by his student David Majar. Majar and the circle at Beit El withheld the esoteric meaning of the Passover Seder from the Aleppo kabbalists, which was doubtless the cause of friction between the two groups.<sup>10</sup> Hence, the development and emergence of new *kavvanot* and other formulae was a gradual process and often beset by the internecine politics of the various schools.

The *kavvanot* traditions accumulated over time. They were communicated orally, collected by members of the circle, and eventually published in what have become, of late, veritable codes of kabbalistic practice. An early collection of the Beit El practices appears in Rafael Avraham Shalom Shar'abi's *Divrei Shalom*. Ya'akov Ḥayyim Sofer, a Baghdad kabbalist who affiliated with the Rehovot ha-Nahar community in the Bukharian quarter, collected many Beit El practices in his voluminous practical code, *Kaf ha-Ḥayyim*. Later collections of Beit El practices culled materials from random mentions in various theoretical

works. Nahman ha-Cohen's recent *Minhagei Beit El* was a short précis of these issues, while Avner Efg'in's *Divrei Shalom* is a longer treatment, presenting an exhaustive interpretation of the kabbalistic underpinnings of these liturgical refinements. The earliest collections were quite concise and arguably presented the ideas in their essence, while Efg'in's recent work has, after the fashion of many contemporary treatments of Jewish law, expanded the tradition considerably.<sup>11</sup>

It is arbitrary to present only a few areas of Beit El practice, because the scope of the Beit el rite is enormous and is increasing all the time. Nonetheless, in perusing the theoretical literature, one sees certain recurring themes and emphases that characterize the daily and seasonal practice of the Beit El mystics and serve as good examples of their spiritual preoccupations. The aggregate practice of the Beit El kabbalists was based on Shar'abi's reading of Luria. Luria's tradition, in turn, was a selective adaptation of the ideas current in Safed in the sixteenth century, most of which were derived from the *Zohar*, which in turn had adapted them from the rabbinic mythologies of late antiquity. Thus, the mythos of the Beit El was refined through many processes but nonetheless originated in the most ancient myths that Kabbalah recovered from ancient Judaism.

### The Atonement Cycle

The kabbalists of Beit El lived out a basic premise of classical Kabbalah, namely that cosmic processes are unfolding over Jewish liturgical time. Among the most important of these cosmic dramas is the kabbalistic mythos of the seasons. In Kabbalah, the Jewish holidays are merely the surface events of great cosmic struggles and dramas. These mythic themes are the underlying premise and rationale for the exoteric practices of the holidays. For example, as is explored elsewhere,<sup>12</sup> the blowing of the ram's horn (*shofar*) on the New Year literally "awakens" a sleeping aspect of divinity from its slumber in order to advocate for the Jewish people. The Passover holiday, as well, represents a "flight" from the forces of impurity, which is then followed by a seven-week process of purification, ending with the holiday of Shavuot, or Pentecost. By following these cosmic processes and responding to them liturgically, the Beit El kabbalists "lived the myth" in its most developed form.

The cycle of atonement is a period of heightened anxiety in exoteric Judaism. It is a universal belief that the season of atonement, from the beginning of the month of Ellul, continuing through the New Year, and culminating on the Day of Atonement, is a period of Divine judgment. The Jewish nation

assembles; its conduct is reviewed in the Divine court, at which point a ten-day period of “sentencing,” the ten days of repentance, ensues. Finally, on the Day of Atonement, the great gates of heaven close as the Jewish nation assembles outside, wildly singing the praises of the creator. Throughout the ten-day period, the nation avows its faith that God will grant its members agricultural prosperity and freedom from pestilence, sickness, and the oppression of the gentiles. This mythos, together with the imagery of the Divine court, the Book of Life, and the decrees for the year, remains in all Jewish liturgy, in even the most liberal and reductionist movements.

Besides the cosmic dramas of the season of repentance and the Days of Awe, the act of repentance and the expunging of sin were expressed with a muscular spirituality, fueled by a wailing sense of penitential remorse. The Beit El kabbalists saw themselves as the leaders of the public repentance, the advance force of the effort to obtain a good decree for the coming year. Their pietistic behavior in Jerusalem, the locus of the atonement drama, made their activities of paramount importance. Shar'abi also considered his community to be the Jews' legal consul, managing their appeals and limiting their liability. Shar'abi was, therefore, specifically concerned with the legalistic aspects of the period, the release of curses,<sup>13</sup> the release of vows (*Kol Nidrei*), and other aspects of the holiday that lent themselves to the interpretations of halakhic civil law.

In the service of the Beit El kabbalists' special role, many accessory rituals were added in the atonement cycle. In the opening prayer of the day of atonement, *Kol Nidrei*, the Beit El kabbalists include a special supplementary prayer written by Shar'abi and institute a special reading from *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* (143a).<sup>14</sup> From their preoccupation with the actual mechanics of the disposal of the powers of judgment to the esoteric meaning of the blowing of the *shofar*, to the popular drama of the judgment of Israel by the heavenly court, the Beit El kabbalists lived the myth.<sup>15</sup>

The Beit El kabbalists did not hesitate to alter some of the most revered prayers in the liturgy. In Beit El, the famous *Kol Nidrei* prayer is couched in both the past tense, as in most congregations, and in the future tense, in an attempt to prevent any indemnity in the future.<sup>16</sup> There was widespread variation in the confession of sins prayer (*vidui*). In most Beit El versions of the litany of sins, the usual acrostic version recited in most congregations was doubled. For example, instead of merely saying *cazavnu* (“we lied”), adepts substituted the homonym *cazavnu-ca'asnu* (“we lied, we were angry”). Another version altered the recitation of the sins in order to correspond more closely to a certain sacred name.<sup>17</sup> Hence, even the most central aspects of the canon were altered to conform to Luria and Shar'abi's kabbalistic grammar.

Well before the Days of Awe, the Beit El kabbalists were anxious regarding their own records in the celestial court. Before every new month as well as at the New Year, they performed a formal “release of oaths.” The first of these that was directly related to the New Year occurred on the twentieth day of Av, forty days before Rosh ha-Shanah. The kabbalists also practiced a formal rite of humiliation, the acceptance of a formal rebuke by a rabbinical court.<sup>18</sup> Other penitential seasons figured heavily in the Beit El catalog, such as the midwinter period known by the acronym *Shovev”im*, which took the form of two forty-day fasts, and the thirty-seven-hour fast that took place before the rise of the new moon in a leap year.<sup>19</sup>

The rectification of sexual sins was an important part of the atonement process for the Beit El kabbalists. There has, recently, been a resurgence in public rituals for atoning for such sexual offenses as masturbation, adultery, homosexual relations, and intercourse during menstruation. These rituals were apparently performed in the period of the Safed renaissance and were, at some indeterminate time in the recent past, reinstated. Manuals aimed at promoting these various forms of sexual continence have been recently compiled and circulated. These penitential rituals essentially originate with Lurianic Kabbalah and are scattered throughout the Lurianic canon. The Beit El kabbalists continue to publicly perform these rites, as evidenced by the public atonement for homosexual relations recorded in the film “Trembling Before God.” A regular *tiqqun ha-yesod* (prayer for the rectification of sexual sins) is held by the Nahar Shalom community and is usually portrayed as a response to the general debasement of modern Israeli society.<sup>20</sup> The Beit El kabbalists also practiced symbolic, penitential flagellation.<sup>22</sup> This practice was never completely eliminated from the kabbalistic practice, although it is criticized in the Talmud.<sup>23</sup>

The Beit El kabbalists have kept alive a practice that was rife among kabbalists of the classical period but that had fallen out of favor, probably under the influence of positivistic movements such as Ḥasidism. This practice is the symbolic taking on of the four capital punishments of the rabbinic court. By accepting these punishments, as executed by a court of one’s peers, the Beit El kabbalists clearly hoped to prophylactically remove the possibility of having their lives foreshortened by transgression. A number of contemporary spiritual manuals describe these symbolic punishments vividly:

After the morning prayers of the eve of the Day of Atonement, a rabbinical court of three scholars is appointed. One scholar beats each one with forty strips, forty times, corresponding to the four letters of HVYH. Afterwards each one receives the four death penalties of

the rabbinical court, as a remembrance of the matter in order to humble the hearts. This is the order of receiving them: First one brings a beam and sets it up at a slight angle in the floor of the synagogue. The one who is being beaten removes his clothing except for the trousers, and they place the flagellant at the beam. He places his right hand on the left and they are bound to the beam. Afterwards they bring the Rav of the congregation, and he demands that the flagellant repent of his sins. As he is repenting, the Rav beats him with the strap in his hand, once on the right and once on the left, and with every beating he said one word of the verse "And He is merciful, forgiving all sin. . . ." Afterwards he receives the four death sentences of the rabbinical court. This is their order: First they clothe the man in sackcloth from the soles of his feet to his forehead. Afterwards, he receives the punishment of stoning, as they stone him with three or four small stones. The afflicted then takes a large stone and beats himself over his heart. And the sage calls out: "Thus it would be done to a man who angers and vexes his creator, Woe to us from the day of judgment. . . ." And the order of burning: They light a wax candle and drip three or four drops onto his flesh under the sackcloth until they see that he is suffering, and the sage repeats the lament. For the order of death [by sword]: While he is dressed in sackcloth, they lay him on the floor and three or four youths drag him back and forth, as the sage repeats his lament. The order of strangling: Two people strangle him with a single belt, or he does so with his two hands, and he sits on his knees and the sage repeats his lament. Before the stoning the afflicted says, "Master of the Universe, if I have sinned before you and flawed the letter Yu" d of HVY" H and the letter A or ADNY and I have become liable for stoning in you righteous court, behold I receive stoning on myself." Before the burning he says, ". . . that I flawed with the letter H of HVYH and the letter D of ADNY, and thus before the execution he says ". . . the letter V and the letter N," and before the strangling he says, ". . . by the last letter H of HVYH and the letter Y of ADNY." Afterwards he goes to immerse himself.<sup>21</sup>

These rites of self-mortification reflect an ancient pietistic suspicion of the efficacy of Halakhah in really bringing about the cleansing of one's spiritual record. From the early pietists (*hasidim rishonim*) of the Talmud to the graduated repentance of the German pietists, there has been a tendency to add additional afflictions to the process of repentance, and the Beit El kabbalists

remain firmly in that tradition. Moreover, in the context of the Beit El kabbalists' self-image, they make perfect sense. The kabbalists have committed to giving over their minds to the processes of the Divine, to the cathartic union of the higher and lower worlds. It follows that their bodies, as the chassis for their mind, have to be as pure as possible. Therefore, the purification of their bodies takes on paramount importance in the practice of the rite, and there is no more cleansing purgative activity for the body than the mortifications prescribed, at least theoretically, by Jewish law.

### The Sabbatical Year

Since the revival of the Jerusalem community in the sixteenth century, the proper observance of the Sabbatical year (*shemittah*), in which the land lies fallow for a year, has been a source of economic anxiety and social tension. At the end of the nineteenth century, a conflict arose in the Beit El community with regard to the practice of the Sabbatical year, because Shar'abi left two conflicting teachings on the subject. Different wings of the community adopted the opposing interpretations, leading to a schism. According to Yom Tov Algazi,<sup>24</sup> initially, Shar'abi had treated the Sabbatical year like any other year with regard to the *kavvanot* to be performed. In every other year, the practice of *kavvanot* was necessary "labor" that had to be performed, in the Sabbatical year as in any other. As the Sabbatical year was little more than the Sabbath writ large, the Beit El kabbalists continued to maintain the schedule of *kavvanot* for those days.<sup>25</sup> In purely kabbalistic terms, Shar'abi averred that, although certain aspects of the Divine infrastructure had been "fixed," yet others remained unrectified, so one was still required to practice the daily *kavvanot* during the Sabbatical year.

Nonetheless, Algazi recalls that Shar'abi was troubled (*libo nokfo*) at performing the *kavvanot* during the Sabbatical year. Shar'abi's basic inclination was to suspend the *kavvanot* during the Sabbatical year, with the possible exception of certain rites. His reasoning, in the most simplistic terms, was that the Sabbatical year is a time when "work" should be put aside. In this regard, there was no more demanding "work" than maintaining the schedule of the *kavvanot*. The Sabbatical year represents the "labor" of the six years that precedes it, just as the Sabbath is the culmination of the six days that lead up to it. Yet, Shar'abi remained troubled by the idea that he ought to desist from *kavvanot* on the Sabbatical year.<sup>26</sup> Toward the end of his life, he acted on this impulse and refrained from practicing *kavvanot* during the Sabbatical year. The kabbalists saw his death as coming about as a consequence of that

mistake.<sup>27</sup> As a result of this perceived catastrophe, with the onset of the coming Sabbatical year, in Algazi's words, "we, orphans of orphans, are afraid that the neglect of the *kavvanot* caused the great light to be extinguished." So the mystics of Beit El, led by Ḥayyim de la Rosa, decided to go back to the original practice of performing all of the *kavvanot* for the year.

Algazi's rationale for the return to the practice of the *kavvanot* during the Sabbatical year was that the observance of the Sabbatical year in the present era, with the Jerusalem Temple not functional, was merely a rabbinic injunction. If the Sabbatical year was merely being observed with a rabbinic level of stringency, then the requirement of prayer, including the requirement of performing the *kavvanot* of prayer in the approved way, must supercede the lenient elements of the Sabbatical year observance. For this reason, one ought not to neglect the appropriate *kavvanot* for a given day.

This remained the practice of the Beit El kabbalists until the beginning of the twentieth century. At that time, a controversy arose regarding the observance of the Sabbatical year and the performance of its *kavvanot*. As a result of this controversy, the Aleppo scholar Ḥayyim Shaul Dweck left the Beit El academy in the Old City of Jerusalem for the Rehovot ha-Nahar community in the New City.<sup>28</sup> Ya'akov Moshe Hillel summarized that conflict thus:

[Dweck] followed the practice of Shar'abi in his last year, namely to retain the *kavvanah* of the inner consciousness from the word "love" in the silent devotion and onward, unlike [Shar'abi's] practice in the earlier Sabbatical years, in which he made no distinction. . . . Shar'abi's students, after his death in the Sabbatical year 1777 . . . adopted his earlier practice. . . . But the Rav SaDeH [Dweck] upheld Shar'abi's last understanding . . . thus he practiced and taught to his students. This caused opposition, as he differed with the set custom of Beit El, as practiced by hundreds of *mekavvenim* over the course of two hundred years, and he was alone in this interpretation, opposed to the elder kabbalists of the generation, and he did not defer to any man, until for this reason he was compelled to leave Beit El, to break away and to commit himself to the establishment of the new Yeshiva Rehovot ha-Nahar, in the year 1896, a Sabbatical year.<sup>29</sup>

Such anxieties over the Sabbatical year had accompanied Jewish life in Israel since the land's resettlement by Jews and were addressed in the sixteenth century in the responsa of Jacob Berab and Levi Ibn Ḥabib. They came to a head some time later with Rav Avraham Yizḥak Kook's "release of sale" (*heter mekhirah*) in 1910–1911. This well-known responsum released the produce of

the land of Israel for cultivation and consumption during the Sabbatical year, provided that the land was in the titular possession of a non-Jew. The thrust of the responsum essentially enabled the Jews to live on and acquire parcels of land during the Sabbatical year and hence expedite religious Zionism. Hence, the dispute over the proper practice of *kavvanot* in the Sabbatical year must be understood in the larger context of the evolution of the Sabbatical year in contemporary Israel. Dweck's departure outside the Old City walls may well have owed something to internal tensions in Beit El; certainly, the institution he help found, Rehovot ha-Nahar, served a particular cross-section of scholars in the Jerusalem community.<sup>30</sup>

### *Tefillin*

The casual visitor to a group of Beit El kabbalists will be struck by the ubiquitous wearing of the phylacteries, or *tefillin*. Rather than wearing one set, as do most religious Jews, many Beit El kabbalists have the unique practice of wearing two sets of *tefillin*. Shar'abi seems to have formalized the practice of wearing two sets of phylacteries, a practice that had been advocated by Luria.<sup>31</sup> The two sets of *tefillin* reflect two opinions held by the medieval sage Rashi and his grandson, Rav Ya'akov ("Rabbeinu") Tam, on the order of *tefillin*. The disagreement centered on the order of the readings placed inside the leather compartments of the phylacteries. Pious Jews have historically resolved the problem by wearing one set and then donning another. As mentioned, the kabbalists of Beit El often wear two small sets at the same time.<sup>32</sup> It was noted that some pietists frequented the Beit El community in order to practice the stringencies regarding *tefillin*, such as wearing them for the afternoon prayers or wearing the two sets simultaneously.<sup>33</sup>

Shar'abi himself held forth on the matter in an exchange with the sages of Tunis. He felt that each permutation of the acceptable orders of the scrolls reflected different aspects of the Divine physiognomy. Therefore, the order of the texts nestled next to the adept's cranium during the act of prayer with the *kavvanot* had the power to affect those aspects by activating the consciousness, or *mohin*, of the person wearing the *tefillin*. *Tefillin* constructed according to the Rashi's conclusions governed the *mohin* of the countenance *Imma*, which those of Rabbeinu Tam governed the *mohin* of the countenance *Abba*. The *tefillin* ordered according to the work *Shimusha Rabbah* governed the *mohin* of the countenance *Arikh Anpin*.<sup>34</sup>

The Beit El kabbalists try to wear their *tefillin* as much as possible. It was considered best to walk to the synagogue already wrapped in the prayer shawl

and phylacteries. If one didn't want to walk the streets of Jerusalem so attired, it was best to contrive to be at the synagogue before dawn, in order to put them on at the first opportunity.<sup>35</sup> Of course, it should be recalled that the original context for such pious behavior was Jerusalem's Old City, with its intimacy and squalor. The adept, likely as not, rolled out of his tiny room directly into the alleys and larger thoroughfares of the Old City to get to the Beit El synagogue.

Unlike members of the general population, the Beit El kabbalists are also known for wearing their *tefillin*, particularly *tefillin* of Rabbeinu Tam, during the afternoon service.<sup>36</sup> The Beit El kabbalists retain their *tefillin* for the additional prayers of the New Month, even though it is a custom to ostentatiously remove one's *tefillin* for the earlier additional (*musaf*) service of that day.<sup>37</sup> The Beit El kabbalists also continued to put on *tefillin* on the morning of the ninth of Av, which is otherwise proscribed by Jewish custom.<sup>38</sup> In situations that are somewhat unclear regarding the requirement of *tefillin*, such as the ninth of Av and the later service for the new month, the popular impulse is to put aside the *tefillin* and let the special aspects of the day define the ritual.<sup>39</sup> For the Beit El kabbalists, however, the *tefillin* are not a mere sign or a flourish of glorification. The *tefillin* are a prayer tool that augments the adept's prayer and grants it greater efficacy. Hence, the Beit El kabbalists seemed to promote the wearing of *tefillin* as much as possible. The *tefillin* are not a mere "sign" of the Holy, as they are commonly considered in Jewish tradition. They are considered a tool or device to aid the soteric effects of *kavvanot* practice. The impulse of exoteric Jewish law is to limit the use of *tefillin*, while Beit El interpretations of the law want to enable their use in doubtful situations.

### Counting the Omer

Just as the Jewish liturgy changes for the Sabbath and festivals, so seasonal concerns often overwhelm the normal cycle of *kavvanot* practice. The regular *kavvanot* are suspended, and all of the emphasis is put on the time-specific ritual of the season. For example, during the holiday of Sukkot, the waving of the four species of plants is the most important synagogue ritual. The meditations attending the waving of the palm, myrtle, willow, and citron therefore supplant all of the other *kavvanot*. Another situation in which the Beit El kabbalists discarded the regular order of *kavvanot* was during the counting of the Omer, the fulfillment of the biblical precept to count the days between the Passover and Shavuot holidays, which were the days of the gathering of the first wheat in the time of the Jerusalem Temple.<sup>40</sup> The counting of the Omer is one of the most widespread *kavvanot*, a popular ritual that has persisted among

Jews who pray according to the popular Orthodox and Ḥasidic rites.<sup>41</sup> Most Jews simply count off the days every evening, but the kabbalistic understanding was always to link the act of counting to an underling theurgic goal.

The *Zohar* taught that the first days of Passover constitute a spiritual redemption that liberates God's earthly presence, the *Shekhinah*, from the cosmic "Egypt." Similarly, Ḥayyim Vital described the biblical Exodus as an irruption of loving kindness on the first night of Passover, in which the Divine form expanded and then withdrew into itself.<sup>42</sup> There are a number of symbols of this withdrawal, one of which is the performance of a diminished order of celebratory Psalms (*Hallel*) on the days late in the holiday week.<sup>43</sup> However, as this liberating impulse subsides, the redeemed *Shekhinah* is thought of as flawed and menstruous. As a menstruous woman requires seven days of purification after menstruating, so the *Shekhinah* requires seven weeks in order to be presented to her bridegroom for marriage. These are the forty-nine days of the Omer, which purify the *Shekhinah* from what amounts to her menstrual impurity following the sojourn in Egypt. The Divine marriage itself takes place on the holiday of Shavuot, at the end off the counting of the Omer.

The most basic *kavvanah* for the counting of the Omer links each day of the Omer to a particular confluence of *sefirot*. The seven days of purification transform into the forty-nine days of the Omer through a basic premise of Kabbalah, namely that every one of the *sefirot* has a full complement of *sefirot* within it. Therefore, the forty-nine days of the Omer are devoted to the repair of any flaws committed in the bottom seven *sefirot* of each of the lower seven *sefirot*. The most common expression of the sefirotic associations of the day was the prayer that was inserted into many later editions of the prayer book:

Master of the Universe, you commanded us through your servant Moses to count the Omer in order to purify ourselves from our ke-lipot and our impurities, as you have written in our Torah . . . in order to purify the souls of Your people Israel from their impurity, Thus may it be thy will, our God and god of our fathers, that in the merit of the counting of the Omer that I counted today, that it fixed whatever I have blemished in the sefirah \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ and I will purify and I will be sanctified in the Holiness of Above, and through this will flow a Divine effluence through all the worlds to repair our physical souls [*nafshoteinu*] and spirits [*ruḥoteinu*] and highest souls [*nishmoteinu*] from every blemish and to purify us and sanctify us with you highest holiness, *Amen Sela*.

The result of this teaching is the "semipopular" view of counting the Omer, the popular *kavvanah* that is widely reproduced in most Ḥasidic prayer

books and has recently been incorporated into the Ashkenazic rite in the Anglo-Saxon *Artscroll* editions. This system is found in the early codifications of Lurianic practice, Ya'akov Zemakh's *Shulkhan Arukh ha-AR"l* and *Nagid U-Mizaveh*.<sup>44</sup> According to this system, each day of the Omer is aligned with a certain combination of *sefirot*, seven within seven inner *sefirot* of the bottom seven *sefirot* in the macro system. It seems that this sefirotic counting of the Omer is the *kavvanah* that Luria himself practiced, according to the new, reconstructed version of this rite and the writings of Ya'akov Zemakh.<sup>45</sup>

The Lurianic systems of counting the Omer differ from this model in that they concern themselves not with the system of the *sefirot* but rather with the interplay of the countenances. The process of the Omer, like so many Lurianic metaphysics, is devoted to the conception, nurturing, and maturing of the countenance *Zeir Anpin*. All Lurianic understandings concur that the Omer involved the loading of the synapses of consciousness, *moḥin*, into the embryo of *Zeir Anpin*. The basic difference in the Lurianic system, across the board, is that, rather than tracing the act of repair through the seven lower *sefirot*, the entire sefirotic system is reviewed during the process, from *Da'at* to *Malkhut*, with the intermediate seven *sefirot* being collapsed into the amalgam *Tiferet*, which is synonymous with *Zeir Anpin*. Beit El kabbalists saw it as the aim of the counting of the Omer, as with so many other activities, to expedite the circulation of the *moḥin*, lines of consciousness through the countenances, from the highest countenance (*Attika Kaddisha*) to the countenance *Zeir*. In this way, the *moah* of each sefirotic entity undergoes *tiqqun* every week.<sup>46</sup>

In *Hemdat Yisrael*, a commentary on the prayer service by Ḥayyim Vital's son, Shmuel Vital, the order of the Omer is as follows: the first week restores the *sefirot* of the realm of divine wisdom, or *Ḥokhmah*; the second week restores the *sefirot* of the realm of understanding, or *Binah*; the third week restores the *sefirot* of the diffuse lovingkindness (*hasadim*) in the highest level of the intellect, *Da'at*. The following weeks depart from a purely sefirotic model, addressing the diffuse forces of judgment (*gevurot*) in the highest *sefirah* *Da'at*; the fifth week does the same for *Hesed*, the sixth week for the inner judgments of the *sefirah* of judgment itself, *Gevurah*, and the seventh week for the lower *sefirot* *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*.<sup>47</sup> Hence the *kavvanah* follows a different path through the cosmic anthropos and is particularly concerned to expunge the harsh elements from the lower *sefirot*.

Two differences of opinion beclouded the codification of the Lurianic *kavvanot* of the Omer, as interpreted according to the sefirotic "popular" practice just described. The first questioned which of the elements of a given confluence of *sefirot* was primary and which was secondary, the first or the

second. All of the kabbalists concur that the first night is Ḥokhmah of Ḥokhmah, but is the second night Binah of Ḥokhmah or Ḥokhmah of Binah? Shar'abi<sup>48</sup> was inclined to agree with the second view, while Shmuel Vital's commentary favors the first interpretation.<sup>49</sup> Finally, there was an additional discrepancy, in this case between the Beit El kabbalist Ḥayyim Shaul Dweck and the other Aleppo sages,<sup>50</sup> regarding the flow of the lines of consciousness. These wend, according to the two versions, through various gradations of the shadow aspects of the countenances (*Yisrael Sabba* and *tevnah*) and other gradations of the baroque system. They address the nuances of the greater and lesser aspects (*gadlut ve-katnut*) and the essence and the vessels (*azmut ve-kehim*) of each countenance. These differences in interpretation are evident in the two most widely circulated versions of the prayer book, the version published by Dweck and David Majar and the version of Yedidiah Raphael Ḥai Abulafia, which bore the imprimatur of the Aleppo sages.

Hence, there are, in the mainstream kabbalistic tradition, at least five understandings of the metaphysics of counting the Omer in the weeks between Passover and Shavuot. Four of these traditions are Lurianic, and all five largely contradict one another. These discrepancies in the counting of the Omer, according to Shar'abi, originate in the vagaries of the Lurianic canon. In fact, there are two versions of the counting of the Omer presented in the original canon, in Vital's *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot* itself. At the same time, Shar'abi and the later student Ḥayyim Shaul Dweck interpreted these two versions differently.

The great discrepancies in the practice of the Omer point to broad disagreements regarding the interpretation of the Lurianic system during the period that it was taken most seriously by the kabbalists. The emphasis on the counting of the Omer also points to a residual concern with the nature of time, particularly cyclical time, in Jewish practice.<sup>51</sup> The counting of the Omer is a way of fixing reality across time, and concerns with time, in Judaism, lead to concerns with the end of time. The classical Jewish response to time is messianism, and it wouldn't be surprising if at the bottom of the concerns about the counting of the Omer are concerns about rectifying the Divine structure for the final judgment.

## The Ascent through the Worlds

The Beit El rite also included an aspect that is widely distributed in kabbalistic prayer, the rite of "four-worlds prayer." In this rite, the individual's prayer and/or soul ascends through four "worlds" of existence, each of which represents an aspect of the creation of the universe. This rite has an illustrious history and

persists in many quarters to this day; therefore, it bears a broader introduction, beyond the scope of just Beit El Kabbalah.

The names of the worlds are taken from the principle verbs used in the creation accounts of Genesis. The lowest level, consonant with the most prosaic reality, is the world of action, *'Assiyah*. Above the world of action is the phenomenal world, the world of formation, *Yeẓirah*. Above the world of formation is the world of pure creation, *Briah*. The highest is the world of abstracted and inaccessible divinity, the world of *'Azilut*, as posited by Maimonides.

The doctrine of the four worlds is hinted at in early Kabbalah, and the term “worlds” was used as a euphemism for the *sefirot* in a number of early sources, as well as in the main sections of the *Zohar*. The normative conception of the four worlds emerged in a number of sources that began to circulate in the fourteenth century, such as the later strata of the *Zohar*, the sections called *Tiqqunim* and *Ra'aya Meheimna*, as well as in a short contemporary work known as the *Masekhet Azilut*.<sup>52</sup>

The essential act of four-worlds prayer is an ascent through the worlds. The adept's soul rises, propelled upward by the prayer but also following its own track by linking to the collective souls of all the sentient beings that dwell in the various worlds. Otherwise, the ascent is ambiguous, in that it is sometimes portrayed as the individual's prayer, loosed like a slingshot into the upper worlds. In other accounts, it is the adherents' very soul, rising in a visionary experience. Various accounts of the four-worlds rite vacillate between these two understandings.

In order to understand the relationship between prayer and the worlds, it should be understood that there are five major sections of the morning prayer service, which are demarcated from one another by the recitation of the Kaddish prayer. The service begins with the morning blessings, which accompany the morning routines of waking, washing, and preparing for the day. The following section consists of the recitation of psalms, bracketed by a blessing before and after the recitation. The third section is the recitation of the *Shema'* prayer, the essential credo of Judaism, which is also introduced and followed by extended blessings. The eighteen blessings of the silent prayer, or *Amidah*, follow, accompanied on most weekday mornings by a confession of sins. The service closes with a number of additional psalms and hymns.

### Luria's Four-Worlds Rite

In Luria's understanding of the four-worlds rite, the sections of the morning service are stages in an ascent through the mystical infrastructure. The various

sections of the morning service parallel the various worlds of emanation. In Luria's initial teaching, during the morning prayer service, prayer ascends through the successive worlds of creation, peaking at the *Amidah* and then descending.<sup>53</sup> The morning blessings on the first actions of the day, as well as the commemorative recitation of biblical and rabbinic verses regarding sacrifices, represent a traversing of the world of 'Assiyah. The morning psalms, similarly, are parallel to and contiguous with the world of *Yezirah*.<sup>54</sup> The world of *Yezirah* ends with the Song at the Sea.<sup>55</sup> The recitation of the *Shema*' credo, along with the blessings that precede and follow it, signals the world of creation, or *Briah*. Finally, the silent devotion is a sojourn in the abstracted world of *Azilut*. At that point, the Divine *shefa*', or effluence, begins to descend in a series of unions.<sup>56</sup> In the midst of this outflowing, the adherent risks annihilation; hence, the confessional prayer is recited as one prepares oneself for martyrdom.<sup>57</sup>

As mentioned earlier,<sup>58</sup> the ascent through the four worlds is accompanied by the contemplation of special names of God, the name YHVH vocalized with various consonantal inflections (*miluyyim*) and numerical coefficients (*gematriot*).<sup>59</sup> For example, from the first morning blessings until the blessing "Blessed is he who spoke" (*Barukh She-Amar*), which begins the morning service, the practitioner is instructed to visualize the name YHVH filled out with the letter *he"v* for the vowels. This vocalization, which comes to the *gematria* of fifty-two, is specifically associated with 'Assiyah, the lowest world.<sup>60</sup> The morning psalms represent a traversing of the world of *Yezirah*, evoked by the name of forty-five (*M"V*). The recitation of the *Shema*' prayer and its blessings are signified by name of sixty-three, which is linked to the world of *Briah* (creation). The fourth recitation of the Kaddish prayer includes the *Yezirah* with *Briah* through the *milui* of sixty-three.<sup>61</sup> The highest world, *Azilut*, which is indicated by the silent devotion, is indicated by the HVYH of seventy-two. In each of these cases, every mental intonation of the name YHVH must be vocalized silently, with the appropriate consonantal vocalization.

The doctrine of the four worlds was not initially linked to prayer. The association of prayer with the four worlds and the location of the four worlds in line with specific sections of the prayer service seems to have originated with Isaac Luria's circle.<sup>62</sup> It was Luria who "made the connection" between the sections of the prayer service and the four worlds. He averred that the role of the adherent is to "fix" [*metakken*] the four worlds of *Azilut*, *Briah*, *Yezirah*, and 'Assiyah by stripping them of their extraneous aspects [*hizonim*]. The ascent "fixes" the worlds in their places, raising, cleansing, and integrating each world. A later teaching, found in the collection *Pri Ez Hanyim*, avers that the worlds must be unified with one *another*; they have become contaminated by the hard

*kelipot*, the “husks” or detritus left over from the well-known tradition of the breaking of the vessels.<sup>63</sup> At every stage of the ascent, the *kelipot* must be avoided and cleared from the Divine structure.<sup>64</sup> At the point of the silent devotion, one has to elevate all four worlds so that they are all included, this one in that.<sup>65</sup>

The work of the ascent through the worlds is to banish the power of evil (*sitra aħra*) from each of those worlds. This cleansing takes place in the worlds of *Briah*, *Yezirah*, and *'Assiyah*, for the world of *Azilot* is above the struggle.<sup>66</sup> Certain actions, such as hand washing, evacuation, and so forth, sanctified as part of the individual's morning practice, also reflect the purification of the Divine body. In fact, the main difference between the order of prayers on the Sabbath and that for the weekday is that the former lacks an aspect of cosmic repair through the positive commandments.<sup>67</sup>

### Changes in Liturgy

The doctrine of four-worlds prayer came into play in the construction of the Lurianic order of prayers and in the *nusakh AR"l*, popularized by the Hasidic movement.<sup>68</sup> One problematic move in the combination of Ashkenazic and Sephardic rites that characterized *nusakh AR"l* was the placement of the *Hodu* prayer, the recitation of Chronicles I:15, in the preliminary blessings. Kabbalists to the nineteenth century debated the placement of this prayer. In the Ashkenazic rite, it follows the opening blessing of the morning psalms (the blessing “Blessed is he who spoke,” or *Barukh She-Amar*), whereas in the Sephardic rite, *Hodu* precedes *Barukh She-Amar*.<sup>69</sup> The transition from the world of *'Assiyah* to the world of *Yezirah* occurs at the beginning of the morning psalms, at *Barukh She-Amar*.<sup>70</sup> *Barukh She-Amar* is the apex of the world of *'Assiyah* and is simultaneously the end of the world of *'Assiyah* and the commencement of the world of *Yezirah*. As Ḥayyim Vital put it:

The custom of the Ashkenazim is to say it after *Barukh She-Amar*. The reason for their opinion is that now it is already called the world of *Yezirah*, which is from *Barukh She-Amar* to [the blessing that commences the *Shema'* sequence] *Yozer*. . . . But the Sephardim say it before *Barukh She-Amar* before all of this is in the realm of the *tiqqun* of the World of *Assiyah*. For *Yezirah* itself is not really repaired, and does not receive light for itself. . . . Therefore one should not say it except from the *'Assiyah* to the *Yezirah*, which is after the Kaddish of the *'Assiyah*. And before *Barukh She-Amar* which is the

*tiqqun* of the *Yezirah*. So our teacher practiced the Sephardic custom.<sup>71</sup>

The difference between the two rites lies in the ascent of prayer through the successive worlds of creation. The Ashkenazic rite retained the location of *Barukh She'Amar* before *Hodu*, while the Sephardic custom began the preliminary prayers with *Hodu*. According to Vital, the original authors of the rite must have had kabbalistic principles in mind when constructing their respective versions.

### The Ascent through the Palaces

One part of the four-worlds rite derives directly from zoharic and Cordoverean ideas. This is the passage through the Divine palaces, which are described in a number of Zoharic compositions.<sup>72</sup> The *Zohar* explicitly sees prayer as a journey through the celestial palaces, as they are portrayed in the sections of the *Zohar* devoted to them.<sup>73</sup> The Palaces are located at the level of the sefirah *Malkhut* in the world of *Briah*.<sup>74</sup> The lowest palace is called the *Livnat ha-Sapir* (the star sapphire) and is associated with the sefirah *Yesod*. In the liturgy, it is located in the acrostic “Blessed God, great in Mind” (*El Barukh Gadol Deah*) and in the blessing *Yozer Or* (creator of light). The second palace is called the *Ezem Shamayim* (the center of Heaven) and corresponds to the inner sefirah *Hod* in the larger sefirah of *Malkhut*. The third palace is called *Nogah* (glow, Venus) and corresponds to the sefirah of *Nezah*; the fourth palace is *Zekhut* (merit), corresponding to the sefirah *Gevurah*. The Palace of Love (*ahavah*) is for the sefirah *Hesed* and is invoked at the blessing “With great and everlasting love” (*Ahavah Rabbah*). The sixth palace is the palace of will (*Razon*), which corresponds to the sefirah *Tiferet*. The seventh palace is called *Kodesh ha-Kedoshim* (Holy of Holies) and corresponds to the sefirah *Binah*.<sup>75</sup> The palaces are located by Moshe Cordovero and Isaac Luria in the in the world of *Briah* and are paralleled by the seven *medurim* (dwellings) in the world of *Yezirah*. Liturgically, then, they are approached during the blessings before and after the *Shema*’ credo. They are then worked into the structure of the ascent through the four worlds.<sup>76</sup>

In Lurianic Kabbalah, the passage through the palaces has the effect of unifying the countenances *Abba* and *Imma*.<sup>77</sup> Even the later *drushim* on the subject continue to mix Cordovero’s and Luria’s ideas,<sup>78</sup> blending the images of the Palace with the countenances and the building of the *mohin*, through the birth and suckling of the central *parzuf Zeir Anpin*.<sup>79</sup>

The association of the Palaces with the third section of the morning service provided the template for Luria's eventual four-worlds rite. However, at that time the palaces had to be placed in relation to the worlds. This process did not end with Luria. The Beit El rite includes an ascent through the Palaces during the recitation of the passages that deal with the various sacrifices. Shar'abi had a striking, almost monophysite view of the worlds. The lower three worlds were not, in fact, full-fledged worlds but rather emanations of the feminine aspect of *Azilot*. These lower aspects originated during the breaking of the vessels, through the vessels of *Azilot*, in the incident that the *Zohar* famously calls "the death of the kings."<sup>80</sup> According to Shar'abi's dense metaphysical portrayal, the inner vessels of the kings fell into *Briah*, the middle into *Yeẓirah*, and the externals (*hiẓoniyyim*) into 'Assiyah. In this way, the *Malkhut* of *Azilot* overlaps and "nests" the three *sefirot* of *Briah*, the location of the *Heikhalot*, or Palaces.<sup>81</sup> The preexistence of the ascent through the palaces remained a source of anxiety for Lurianists and was viewed, as late as Shar'abi, as a problem to be resolved in theosophical context.

### The Redemption of Souls

The Beit El kabbalists saw the four-worlds rite as linked to the redemption of the souls of humankind, which isomorphically relate to the cosmic soul of God and the attendant apparatus of the Divine. In the course of the ascent through the worlds, the adherent's prayer rises and unifies the souls of the righteous that are built into the cosmic structure,<sup>82</sup> according to the zoharic doctrine of the three levels of the soul.<sup>83</sup> The first stage of the service, in the world of 'Assiyah, has the effect of raising the earthly souls, the *nefashot*, to the world of *Yeẓirah*. At the stage of *Yeẓirah*, the *ruah* or emotive souls should rise to the world of *Briah*. At the stage of *Briah*, one should intend to raise all the *ne-shamot*, the Divine souls to the world of *Azilot*. Moreover, there are kabbalistic practices and interpretations that relate to one's individual soul.<sup>84</sup> Kallus cites Shar'abi's assertion that certain prayers, such as "Light is sown for the righteous" (Psalms 97:11), are created in order to enable the creation of new souls.<sup>85</sup> The extent to which this understanding was popularly embraced and linked to the pathos of exoteric Judaism is evident from this statement by Ḥayyim Shaul Dweck:

RaSha"Sh said . . . the order of the blessings from the morning blessings until "I will bless them", are because the *mohin* have already entered Leah and she has ceased to spread through the whole

length of Zeir Anpin. The inner point of Rachel is completely descending to Briah, entering between the *kelipot*, to *gather and bring out those souls and sparks that have fallen because of our sins through the kelipot* [italics mine]. So she [Rachel] wails and cries out in a bitter voice about her divorce and exile and on the destruction of her temple and on their falling and separation from her beloved Zeir Anpin from the world of *Azilut* . . .<sup>86</sup>

The link between the four worlds and the morning prayer service was central to the basic Lurianic rite in both the Polish and the Beit El schools. The visualization of ascent through the worlds was retained in Ḥasidic practice. The four worlds are still indicated in Ḥasidic prayer books, in the face of the fact that Hasidism had otherwise dispensed with the practice of *kavvanot*. A ritual “Four-Worlds Prayer” is presently being developed in the contemporary Jewish renewal movement, in venues such as the Eilat Chayyim Center, in Vermont.<sup>87</sup>

The tenacity of the four-worlds rite and its persistent presence in the forefront of contemporary mystical practice result from its authenticity to the Jewish sensibility. When the pious Jew perceives his or her prayer as ascending, this act invokes the most ancient notions of celestial hierarchy and discourse. The four-worlds prayer harks back directly to the experience of the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel and the ascents of the Merkavah mystics of late antiquity. The four-worlds rite provides a mechanism and a mythos of ascent that is linked to the familiar morning prayer service, “spiritualizing” the process that, because of its length and technical nature, is at the greatest risk of being rendered “set” and mundane.

### Further Study

The Beit El kabbalists clung to certain totems of piety, such as *tefillin*, penitential fasting, and the practice of the *kavvanot* themselves, over and above the demands dictated by conventional religious practice. Since the movement’s original coalescing under Shalom Shar’abi, the impulses of the Beit El mystics have remained consistent. The school is committed to a mystical practice founded wholly on Lurianic Kabbalah, reducing that system to the theories of sacred names that crystallized in the later stages of that literature.

This commitment to pure Lurianism is startling because it is actually very rare in the phenomenology of later Kabbalah. Most kabbalistic schools operate at a variety of levels. Other groups of kabbalists may dabble in the associative,

symbolic Kabbalah of the *Zohar* and Moshe Cordovero or may even produce biblical exegeses in the mode of Moshe Alsheikh and the other preachers of Safed and Morocco. They may produce works of ethics (*mussar*) or otherwise vary their literary output and preoccupations. This is not the case in Beit El; they “do” Lurianic Kabbalah, at its most abstracted level, nearly exclusively. The only exceptions to this rule are outlying figures, such as Yosef Hayyim, the *Ben Ish Hai*, whose social obligations may have caused them to lift their heads from the main work of the *kavvanot* and attend to the needs of the masses. The customs and practices that have received cursory attention in this chapter are only the outward manifestations of the Beit El kabbalists’ monistic view of a universe governed by forces that are ultimately reducible to the impersonal physics of the sacred names.

Many of the directives for specific “Beit El practices” are really side products of debates over the development of a pan-Sephardic Jerusalem liturgy, parsing the nuances of Sephardic practice as the various communities came to Jerusalem, developed their congregations, and, in a place such as Beit El, which encompassed scholars from multiple districts, developed their combined ritual. The assertion of Beit El practices is also part of a larger phenomenon in which the ascendant non-Ashkenazic communities have moved to separate their practices from those of the formerly dominant European culture and have sought to reassert their religious custom as equally normative.

Ultimately, there are as many possibilities in the investigation of Beit El practice as there are nuances of Jewish law and practice; that is to say, the possibilities are endless. At the same time, as I have pointed out many times, this is a living tradition, whose practitioners are “players” in the internecine religious politics of Jerusalem, itself a community of great religious intrigue and pretension. Moreover, as noted earlier, the religious practices of Beit El are influenced by general trends in the Ashkenazic and Sephardic communities. The phenomenon of publishing and the ever-wider circulation of materials, as well as the recombination of new pietistic practices from many sources, will lead to a more eclectic Beit El rite. The literature of the circle is expanding and, increasingly, popularizing. And, yet, it is also a closed circle, dictated by the internal history of the school and the development of its literature, as is detailed in further chapters of this volume.

# 6

## Shar'abi's School

The personalities who have composed the Beit El school over the last two centuries might need some introduction to the Western reader, although they draw from the aristocracy of the Middle Eastern rabbinate. The Beit El "school" consists of a particular lineage of sages, drawn from a limited set of communities. Shar'abi's teachings circulated among the Jews of the Orient and the Levant, from Jerusalem to Aleppo (Ḥalab) and thence to Baghdad, with contributions from the "sages of Tunis." Acolytes of Shar'abi's teachings also dominated the Sephardic chief rabbinate of Jerusalem for much of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A number of those designated *Rishon le-Ziyyon* (chief rabbi of the Sephardic community) and *Hakham Bashi* (official religious liaison to the Ottoman Empire) were theorists of Shar'abi's method, were active in the Beit El circles, and were even Shar'abi's lineal heirs.

The heads of Beit El, to the present, are as follows:

Gedaliah Ḥayyun	1737–1745
Shalom Shar'abi	1745–1780
Yom Tov Algazi	1780–1802
Ḥezkiahū Yizḥak Shar'abi	1802–1808
Avraham Shalom Shar'abi	1808–1827
Ḥayyim Avraham Gagin	1827–1850
Yedidia Raphael Abulafia	1850–1871
Aaron 'Azriel	1871–1881

Shalom Moshe Hai Gagin	1881–1883
Sasson Bakher Moshe	1883–1903
Masoud ha-Cohen Alhadad	1903–1927
Shalom Hadaya	1927–1945
Ovadia Hadaya	1945–1948
Yehudah Meyer Getz	1975–1995

Moshe Halamish has noted that practitioners of Shar'abi's *kavvanot* were rare among the sages of North Africa, who have an emotional tie to the *Zohar*, the Safed common religion, and the Lurianic system as it evolved out of those sources.<sup>1</sup> The exception to this is Shar'abi's influence on the mystics of Tunis, particularly Yosef Sadavon, who were active in the dissemination of the prayer book.<sup>2</sup> Otherwise, Shar'abi's teachings and *kavvanot* did not dominate the activity of Moroccan sages until the twentieth century, nor were most North African sages involved in the development of the prayer book *kavvanot*.

Shar'abi's immediate heirs assumed the initial leadership of the circle and also produced a substantial number of books. Shar'abi's son, Hizkiahu Yiẓḥak Shar'abi (d. 1808, referred to as the *Ḥa"i be-SheMe"Sh*) was the fourth head of Beit El, as well as an important rabbinical judge.<sup>3</sup>

Rafael Avraham Mizraḥi Diyedi'a Shar'abi, Shalom Shar'abi's grandson, was among the first major redactors of the teaching. He was known as Rav Avraham Shalom Ḥasid ("the saint"; acronym *RA"Sh*), for his piety. Rav Avraham Shalom Ḥasid was the author of *Divrei Shalom*, a theoretical work that also details the practices of the Beit El community. He was also involved in developing the eventual version of Shar'abi's prayer book.<sup>4</sup> He was reputed, as well, to have used practical Kabbalah when Jerusalem was under siege in order to limit the carnage.<sup>5</sup> We have the following account of a shelling in 1835 during a revolt against the Turkish sultan:

During one shelling, Rav Avraham Mizraḥi Shar'abi, the famous kabbalist of Beit El Yeshivah, sat down with his scribe, Rav Yedidiah Abulafia, and wrote various holy names and permutations on a parchment. He ordered his disciple not to move from his place while he concentrated on the holy names. It seemed that Rav Shar'abi's prayers and meditations were effective. The damage from the shelling was extensive, but not a single human being was killed. At the end of the day, Rav Abulafia went outside to see what had happened. As soon as he started down one of the corridors, a piece of shrapnel struck him and left him limping for the rest of his life.<sup>6</sup>

Another of Shar'abi's grandsons, Ḥayyim Avraham Gagin (acronym *Rav Aga"n*, 1787–1848), was the sixth head of Beit El, served as *Rishon le-Zion* from 1842 to 1848, and was the first to be designated *Hakham Bashi*, or the recognized chief rabbi of the Ottomans.<sup>7</sup> Gagin married the daughter of Avraham Shalom Hasid; the bride was known as “Doda” (Aunt) Rivka.

Next to Shar'abi himself, Ḥayyim Yosef David Azulai (acronym ḤYD”A, 1724–1826) was perhaps the most famous of the Beit El students. He produced an entire library of legal, homiletical, and theoretical works and traveled far and wide as an emissary of the Jerusalem community.<sup>8</sup> The original charters of the Beit El kabbalists are written in his hand, implying that he was their author. He organized the circle known as *Ahavat Shalom*, which did not seem to continue after his move to Hebron in 1769. His homiletical and theoretical writings do not reflect Shar'abi's teaching, and he may have pulled back from deep activity in the world of *kavvanot*.

Among Shar'abi's other prominent students were Yisrael Ya'akov Algazi (1680–1756) and his son, Yom Tov Algazi (1727–1802), who would become a *Rishon le-Ziyyon*.<sup>9</sup> Yom Tov acted as an emissary for the Jerusalem community and made a favorable impression on such monolithic figures of the Hungarian rabbinate as Moshe Sofer, the *Ḥatam Sofer*, and his father-in-law, Akiva Eiger. Besides his rabbinical duties, Yom Tov Algazi was the head of Beit El for the last twenty-five years of his life, to 1802.

Another second-generation kabbalist, Ya'akov Shealtiel Nino, was raised from his youth in Beit El. He authored the work *Emet Le-Ya'akov*, which is widely referenced by other theoretical works, as well as a number of penitential rites (*tiqqunim*). Nino also acted as an emissary for the community.<sup>10</sup>

A humble and unassuming member of the Beit El community, Raḥamim Sarim, produced the work *Sha'arei Raḥamim*, which is a series of responses elicited from such figures as Hayyim Shaul Dweck. The questions themselves are often simplistic and the various sages often do not respond to the questions asked, but the work is suffused with a charming humility and piety, qualities often in short supply in the Beit El tradition.<sup>11</sup>

R. Yedidiah Raphael Hai Abulafia (acronym the Rav YiR”A) was the seventh head of the Beit El yeshivah. Abulafia was the primary editor of Shar'abi's writings and produced the most widely accepted version of Shar'abi's prayer *kavvanot*. Like Ya'akov Shealtiel Nino, he was affiliated with the Beit El community from childhood. His prayer book was acclaimed in Beit El as the authoritative version.<sup>12</sup> Through his efforts, the prayer book expanded to include devotions for the entire year. He also edited the introductions at the beginning of the prayer book, which are commonly called *Reḥovot ha-Nahar*.

He revised his own teachings a number of times, on the basis of his acquisition of Shar'abi's autograph manuscripts that were in his possession.<sup>13</sup> He also based his own writings on the conclusions of earlier figures such as Gagin<sup>14</sup> and Ḥayyim de la Rosa.<sup>15</sup> Because of the encompassing sweep of his activities, Abulafia is widely considered the final arbiter of the Shar'abi's practices and *kavvanot*.<sup>16</sup>

## Aleppo

Among the Beit El kabbalists, the sages of Aleppo (*Aram Zovah* or *Ḥalab*)<sup>17</sup> have great authority and credibility and are considered to have preserved the most authentic version of Shar'abi's *kavvanot*. Mordechai Abadi brought the Beit El practices to Aleppo.<sup>18</sup> His colleague Eliahu Mishan, one of the major Aleppo sages, referred to Shar'abi in a number of his responsa in his work *Zedek ve-Shalom*.<sup>19</sup> Mishan was also the author of the commentary *Sefat Emet* on Vital's *Ez Ḥayyim*.

Mishan and Abadi's principle student was Ḥayyim Shaul Dweck, the "Rav SaDeH." Dweck was the most influential sage of the Aleppo school. In his youth, he was also influenced by Nissim Harari Raful, author of *'Aleī Nahar*, an early explication of Shar'abi's prayer *kavvanot*. Early in his career, Dweck contacted Sasson Bakher Moshe, the sitting head of Beit El, to discuss scholarly concerns in the study of Shar'abi's practice.<sup>20</sup> At the age of thirty-two, he moved to Jerusalem, cementing relations between the two communities. He left Syria, supposedly over the problem of immodest behavior of the Aleppo women.<sup>21</sup>

There are many traditions that relate to Dweck's bravery in the face of the blindness that afflicted him in his later years. Two main students of the next generation, Yehudah Petayah and Suleiman Moẓfi, cared for Dweck in his infirmity. His later works, such as his well-known commentary on Vital's *Ozrot Ḥayyim*, *Eifah Sheleimah*, were dictated orally to Yehudah Petayah and Ya'akov Ḥayyim Sofer.<sup>22</sup> Sofer was the author of *Kaf ha-Ḥayyim*, which he wrote in the loft of the present-day yeshivah *Shoshanim le-David*, in Jerusalem's Bukharian quarter. Raḥamim Sarim's *Sha'arei Rahamim* was composed in a similar oral format and contained many contributions from Dweck.<sup>23</sup>

Dweck's *Efah Shleimah*, a commentary on the Lurianic work *Ozrot Ḥayyim*, presents many of Shar'abi's teachings with great clarity.<sup>24</sup> Dweck was committed to expanding the popular base of Beit El practice by publishing the penitential *kavvanot* in a chapbook format. These include *Benayahu ben Yehoyada*, *Kavvanot Pratiyot*, (Ḥayyim Shaul Dweck and Eliahu Ya'akov Legimi,

eds.); *Kavvanot ha-Sefirah, Kriat Shema' 'Al ha-Mitah* (all Jerusalem, 1911); *Or ha-Levanah* (Ya'akov Kezin, ed., Jerusalem, 1915); *Ez ha-Gan* (Jerusalem, 1931); and *Sar Shalom* (Jerusalem 1912). These publications represented the first time that Shar'abi's penitential prayers were widely circulated. Dweck also assisted in the publication of such works as Nissim Harrari Raful's *'Aleï Nahar*, Eliahu Mishan's *Sefat Emet*, and Avigdor Azriel's *Zimrat ha-Areẓ*.

The publication of these works, as well as the early edition of Shar'abi's prayer book, reflected a messianic tinge to Dweck's activities that bears further attention. In his fateful decision to popularize the *kavvanot*, his decision to reinstitute Shar'abi's radical *kavvanot* for the Sabbatical year, and his move from the Old City to the Bukharian quarter, Dweck showed impatience with tradition that seems motivated by the sense that new paradigms of behavior were at hand.

Dweck esteemed the works of the Ḥasidic court of Komarno, particularly Yizhak Eizik of Komarno's Torah commentary *Heikhal ha-Brakhah*, and the feeling between the two communities was mutual.<sup>25</sup> Dweck was also close to other Ashkenazi giants, such as the Muncaczer Rav, Hayyim Eliezer Shapiro, and the rabbis of the Karliner dynasty.<sup>26</sup> In this, Dweck represents a link to the scholastic kabbalists of late Ḥasidism and the coalescing of various social currents in the Jerusalem into one ultra-Orthodox community with shared social and spiritual concerns.

## Baghdad

The influence of the Jewish community of Baghdad extended among the expatriate Baghdadi Jews from Southeast Asia to South America.<sup>27</sup> The leader of the nineteenth-century Baghdadi community at the height of its influence was Yosef Ḥayyim (1835–1909), known as “the Ben Ish Ḥai,” after the title of his most popular work. He was an extraordinary communal leader, scholar, and theologian. Zvi Zohar has best described the scope of his activity:<sup>28</sup>

[He] was an exceptional and unusual spiritual figure. He possessed rare intellectual talents, a phenomenal memory, a fluent and expressive literary and rhetorical style, and an interest in all branches of the Torah creative process. One could describe him as combining the prominent aspects of the Vilna Gaon and the Maggid of Dubno: unusual diligence in study and command of every aspect of the creative Torah literature on one and, and unobstructed involvement in bringing the Torah to the general public through popular

sermons and through the composition of special compositions for the general public, on the other hand.

Yosef Ḥayyim considered Shar'abi's approach to the Lurianic system as prerequisite for the teaching of "true wisdom."<sup>29</sup> His didactic work *Da'at U'Tevunah* invokes Shar'abi extensively, usually as the capstone to the presentation of a given topic. He viewed Shar'abi's understanding as prerequisite and declared that a beginner in Kabbalah should study only works that were in agreement with the introductions of Shar'abi. Yosef Ḥayyim included kabbalistic material in his responsa, *Rav Pe'alim*, as well as in his commentary on the Talmud, *Sefer Benayahu*, and in his popular work, *Ben Ish Hai*. He devised his own versions of Luria's penitential rites in his *Lashon Ḥakhamim*.<sup>30</sup>

Besides Yosef Ḥayyim, Shar'abi's influence was evident in the writings and movements of other Iraqi kabbalists. Another didactic work by a Baghdadi kabbalist, Suleiman Eliahu's *Kerem Shelomo* is also based on Shar'abi's system.<sup>31</sup> Eliahu underwent a crisis of faith much on the order of an intellectual of the Eastern *haskalah*, and the Ben Ish Hai intervened to redirect him toward Kabbalah. *Kerem Shelomo* remains a popular work among Beit El kabbalists today. Another important Baghdadi mystic, Yeḥezkel Ezra Raḥamim, immigrated to Jerusalem in order to study Kabbalah.<sup>32</sup> Eliahu Mani<sup>33</sup> (1818–1899) similarly moved from Baghdad to the land of Israel in 1856, settling first in Jerusalem but two years later establishing himself in Hebron. He established the Beit Ya'akov synagogue in that city, which also hosted a circle of *kavvanot* practitioners (*mekavvenim*). Mani frequently cites Yedidiah Raphael Hai Abulafia and, in turn, influenced Avraham Gagin and Avraham Bakher David Majar (the latter is helpfully referred to as *RaBaD* in the scholarly writings).<sup>34</sup>

Yehudah Petayah, already mentioned, left quite a mark on the social fabric of Jerusalem, through his writings, activities, and the illustrious family that he founded. Petayah is reputed to have exorcized Shabbatai Zevi's *dybbuk* in Baghdad in 1903. He eventually took up residence in Jerusalem, where he composed a number of works still popular among both Beit El adepts and the general populace. Petayah was also a visionary who left a record of his communing with the spirit world.<sup>35</sup>

## Others

Besides the question of how rank beginners in the field should approach Lurianic Kabbalah and Shar'abi's gloss on it, another question presents itself. For the generations of cosmopolitan, seasoned nineteenth-century kabbalists,

what brought about the “conversion experience” that brought them into the Beit El camp? What was the quality that Shar’abi brought to his interpretations that resolved so many textual problems for so many acolytes? Was it simply exposure to the *eros* of the Beit El community?

The persuasiveness of Shar’abi’s teachings was particularly strong for kabbalists outside the Jerusalem-Aleppo-Baghdad corridor. In fact, Shar’abi had disciples elsewhere in the Jewish world.<sup>36</sup> One Ashkenazic acolyte, Ya’akov Meir Shpilman, describes an intellectual and spiritual awakening through exposure to Shar’abi’s teaching in his didactic work *Tal Orot*:

I did not come but to the edge [of the Divine wisdom] until I journeyed to the countries of the west and there I found the works of Rav Shmuel Vital, the son of the holy Rav Ḥayyim Vital, and the works of the holy Rav Shalom Shar’abi. And I found favor by a student of one of his students, who did not withhold from me the early introductions, and I added his words to the earlier and later authors, and thereby came to understand like a drop in the ocean this sweet delightful beloved holy wisdom.<sup>37</sup>

Menachem Menkhin Heilperin, in his editor’s introduction to the enormous Jerusalem edition of *Ez Ḥayyim*,<sup>38</sup> portrays Shar’abi’s teaching as having resolved the problematic elements of the Lurianic canon and its presentation:

With regards to Luria’s writings the *drushim* multiply to infinity, yet every *drush* has a connection to some other *drush*. But we could not connect them and make them into one doctrine until our holy Rabbi, the wondrous light, the pure lamp Rav Shalom Shar’abi crushed them and ground them and kneaded them with pure olive oil, which was the Divine wisdom that was within him, and revealed to us the path of the order of the process in all its details, grafted them and combined them together and made them into own wondrously deep teaching, Blessed is the sage of secrets!

Many of these panegyrics came about in response to perceived attacks on Shar’abi in Shlomo Molkho’s *Shemen Zayit Zakh*, which is a commentary on *Nahar Shalom*. The debate between Molkho and Shar’abi requires further analysis, although its complexities are certainly reflected in the following vignette. The Jerusalem kabbalist Sariah Deblitzky, in his *Maḥshevet Bezalel*, describes the situation as follows:

It is known that the saintly genius Rav Shlomo Molkho, who lived at the same time as Shar’abi, wrote a book known as *Shemen Zayit*

*Zakh* the essence of which was to question Shar'abi's teachings with regards to a number of issues that were written in the introduction to *Rehovot ha-Nahar*. One hundred years ago in Jerusalem there was a righteous sage, Rav Eliezer ben Tuvo, author of *Pekudat Eliezer* on the code of Jewish law, and he practiced the secret wisdom. Once he was investigating a great question in Shar'abi's language, and he could not resolve it. He dozed, and slept, and in his dream a voice said "is this question not resolved in the work *Shemen Zayit Zakh*, in form and image?" He did not own *Shemen Zayit Zakh*, so one was brought to him and he saw the question written!<sup>39</sup>

Initially, Shar'abi's school comprised a largely Middle Eastern circle, giving new resonance to the trope *Sephardim ve-Edot ha-Mizrah*, *Sephardim*, the latter being the lineal heirs of the Spanish community, concentrated, in this instance, in Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, as opposed to *Edot ha-Mizrah*, the community of sages that resided along the strip extending from Jerusalem to Aleppo and thence to Baghdad. The initial leadership of the group was drawn from the latter group, with the Persian community acting as spectators in the process. The spiritual climate of Jerusalem grew increasingly cosmopolitan in the nineteenth century, and many Ashkenazic sages came under the influence of Beit El. Sar Shalom Rokeaḥ of Belz and others in the court of the Belzer Hasidim requested manuscripts of Shar'abi's prayer book and *Nahar Shalom* and were, to all reports, enthralled by Shar'abi's insights.<sup>40</sup> Avraham Yeshaye Kareliz, the influential halakhist known as the *Ḥazon Ish*, meditated in Shar'abi's private quarters and exclaimed, "How awesome is this place."<sup>41</sup> Hayyim Shaul Dweck earned an enthusiastic approbation for his commentary to Ya'akov Zemakh's *Ozrot Ḥayyim*, *Eifah Shleimah*, from Zevi Hirsch Shapira, the estimable Munkazcer Rav.<sup>42</sup> The latter was a member of the late Beit El circle, as was Ben Zion Shapira, from the circle of Mahari"l Diskin. The Jerusalem pietist and zealot Yeshayahu Asher Zeir Margoliot served as an intercessor between the Beit El community and the principle sages of Eastern Europe.<sup>43</sup>

In this way, Shar'abi's influence "crossed over" into the Ashkenazic community of his period and after. Alliances between the Beit El kabbalists and their Ashkenazi counterparts began over a shared interest in Lurianic practice. Within the European rabbinic world, the Beit El kabbalists were understood to be the central receptors of the tradition. One does not see the *Ḥazon Ish* or Rabbi Akiva Eiger as avid kabbalists. Yet, they represented the apex of rabbinic achievement into the next generations and, possibly in a classically rabbinic refusal to engage with Kabbalah, ceded the ultimate authority to the East. As is

demonstrated in a later chapter, the Ḥassidic movement engaged Beit El and yet came to reject its direction. It might be argued, after Garb, that kabbalistic authority was itself a form of power, or at least a currency, when an institution came to promote itself in the economy of Jewish Jerusalem, which was maintained, as today, by donations from supporters in the Diaspora.

Eventually these alliances spread into the realm of social concerns, and the relationships between the European and the Eastern schools coalesced into the shared concerns of what would now be called the *ḥaredi*, or ultra-Orthodox world. The Ashkenazic and Middle Eastern rabbinates found a common ground in the veneration of the Beit El school. Contacts between kabbalists in the East and enthusiasts of Kabbalah in the rabbinic establishments created one line of communication within the religious world that would survive into the British Mandate.

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# 7

## The Literary Tradition of Beit El

The Beit El kabbalists root their practice in Shar'abi's theoretical writings, which are mainly glosses and commentaries on the Lurianic canon. These writings are uneven in structure and scope and call for much interpretation. A number of them are extant only in manuscript,<sup>1</sup> while others were not published until the early twentieth century. Shar'abi's central work, *Nahar Shalom*, while widely circulated, is a random jumble of writings without an inner order. There are many lost fragments in the various editions of Shar'abi's prayer book, with no final edition that resolves the differences. Accordingly, contemporary Beit El kabbalists have applied themselves to compiling his writings in ever more exact and perfected editions. This is particularly the case with Shar'abi's prayer book, which is, after all, more a *tool* than a mere book.

Shar'abi's essential writings include *Emet ve-Shalom*, his emendations on Vital's *Ez Haggim*; *Rehovot ha-Nahar*, a clarification of the Lurianic system;<sup>2</sup> and *Nahar Shalom*, a commentary on the prayer *kavvanot* in Vital's *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot*. *Nahar Shalom* is also the formal name of Shar'abi's prayer book, incorporating his introductions, which are called *Rehovot ha-Nahar*,<sup>3</sup> and the *kavvanot* themselves. Shar'abi also composed responsa, many of which are lost.<sup>4</sup>

Shar'abi also produced a number of *tiqqunim*, that is, mystical prayers and incantations to rectify the situation of widows and the sick and to prevent and rectify nocturnal emissions. Many of these practices were culled from Vital's *Sha'ar Ruah ha-Kodesh* and adapted by

Shar'abi.<sup>5</sup> Shar'abi also formalized penitential rituals for the donning of sackcloth, ritual immersion, charity, self-flagellation, acceptance of punishments of the rabbinical court (particularly for sexual offenses),<sup>6</sup> and petitions for the ending of plagues. The earliest *kavvanot* to be set in type were rites for the atonement for various sins. Some of these penitential prayers were collected by Hayyim Shaul Dweck in the works *Benayahu Ben Yehoyada*, *Kavvanot Pratiyot* (literally "Private *Kavvanot*") and *Sar Shalom*.<sup>7</sup> Because of Dweck's stormy relations with the sages of Beit El, Nissim Nahum sent the manuscript for review to Shlomo Eliashiv, the author of *Leshem Sh'va Ve-Ohalamah*.<sup>8</sup> In his approbation to Dweck and Legimi's *Benayahu Ben Yehoyada*, Eliashiv admitted that Dweck and Legimi augmented and consolidated the *kavvanot* in Vital's *Sha'ar Ruah ha-Kodesh*. Since this work was intended for penitential purposes, it was certainly acceptable because of the volume of successful repentance that it would expedite.<sup>9</sup> Hence, acts of public penitence have prompted the circulation of *kavvanot*.<sup>10</sup> In response to the upheavals of the approaching twentieth century, Dweck and the *Rehovot ha-Nahar* community relaxed their strictures and enlisted the common folk in the cosmic struggle.

Shar'abi's emendations to Vital's *Ez Hayyim* are called the *Hagahot ha-Shemesh*.<sup>11</sup> The original copy, which seems to be still extant, was kept under the ark of the synagogue at Beit El.<sup>12</sup> Many of these emendations were put into the *Ez Hayyim* unparenthesized, while others are parenthesized and yet not credited to Shar'abi.<sup>13</sup> This led, at times, to the alteration of texts in order to bring them into line with Shar'abi's emendations.

Perhaps because of the complexities attending the compilation of Shar'abi's oeuvre, the mystics of the Beit El School have taken a view of it that parallels understandings of Luria and Vital's elastic canon. Shar'abi's surviving writings are considered only a fragment of his production,<sup>14</sup> a tradition also associated with the *Zohar* itself. Shar'abi's acolytes have developed theories of the development of Shar'abi's ideas, the archaeology of his writings, and their gradual assembly.<sup>15</sup> The desiderata and discrepancies that remain in Shar'abi's *Nahar Shalom* are sometimes resolved in *Rehovot ha-Nahar*.<sup>16</sup> Eliahu Mishan was the first to advance a documentary view, maintaining that Shar'abi initially left matters unresolved until his later writings.<sup>17</sup> An important later interpreter, Sasson Bakher Moshe, denied that there were stages in Shar'abi's teaching, claiming, rather, that "it is all true." However, creditable figures such as Ya'akov Moshe Hillel and Yedidiah Raphael Hai Abulafia identified archaeology and development in Shar'abi's teaching.<sup>18</sup> In fact, the contemporary kabbalist Ya'akov Moshe Hillel posits the existence of earlier and later editions in Shar'abi's oeuvre, much like the archaeology of Vital's writings. In any case, Hillel concurs with Abulafia's insistence that only the later edition be seen as

authoritative.<sup>19</sup> Hillel opines that if Shar'abi had edited his own works, they would have been well edited and publishable as is.

### Shar'abi's Prayer book

The most widely known evidence of Shar'abi's activity is "his" prayer book, the *Siddur ha-RaShaSh*. Shar'abi did not reveal his *kavvanot* during his lifetime; his students and descendants circulated them. A complex taxonomy attaches to the various versions of Shar'abi's prayer book. Shar'abi amended and corrected his prayer book throughout his life, adding and erasing, until he came to the conclusions of the final edition.<sup>20</sup> As he wrote,<sup>21</sup> "for many years I have performed the intention with which God has graced me by heart, until I wrote out the intentions of the silent devotion." This is the reason, according to the faithful, that so many versions of the *kavvanot* were found in Shar'abi's notebooks.<sup>22</sup>

The prayer book that has come to be called *Siddur ha-RaShaSh*, or "Shar'abi's," was developed over successive generations following Shar'abi's death. Since the early twentieth century, it has been published a number of times and in a few editions, and the format and presentation of the *kavvanot* are still evolving. There are a number of traditions attending the prayer book's original redaction and its circulation.

It is popularly believed that Shar'abi's original version of the prayer book was transmitted to the kabbalists of Aleppo and was hidden for some time. After Shar'abi's death, his son Hizkiah took the manuscripts to Tunis, and there the writings became disordered. To further contribute to this confusion, the scribes who copied the various prayer books did not fully understand the material and made a number of mistakes. An important source for the redactors was a copy of Vital's *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot* that included Shar'abi's emendations and that belonged to David di Silo. Finally, the last edition of the prayer book was lost. In any case, it was widely acknowledged that the material published in Jerusalem in 1916, nearly a century and a half after Shar'abi's death, was nothing but a portion of the original.<sup>23</sup>

As a result of these factors, there are many versions and editions of the prayer book. There are "long" and "short" versions, as well as the editions preferred by the Beit El and Aleppo communities.<sup>24</sup> The prayer book used in Beit El was the "long" edition, while the printed edition was the short Aleppo or *Aram Zovah* edition. There is some confusion as to whether the *Aram Zovah* edition was ever extant in the longer version. Most of the prayer books in circulation were based on the "short" *Aram Zovah* edition, while the Beit El "long" edition was, until the present era, circulated mainly among the inner

circle of adepts. The Beit El edition was not published in its full form, as the Beit El kabbalists had an antipathy to publishing the prayer book.<sup>25</sup>

The decision to begin the publication of the *kavvanot* was obviously a fateful one. Hayyim Shaul Dweck was involved in the early publication of the prayer book. He based his version on a number of manuscripts from Eliahu Mishan and Nissim Harari Raful, as well as on texts from Shar'abi's scribe, Yosef Der'i.<sup>26</sup> He also drew on the later versions of the prayer book from Yedidiah Rafael Hai Abulafia that were based on the work *Divrei Shalom*. The first editions were published with the help of Reuven Haaz of the *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* yeshivah. The later versions came out under the aegis of Yom Tov Yedid Levi. This led to the edition of the prayer book published by David Majar, which was based mainly on Shar'abi's "first edition." This version of the prayer book is in the public domain and has been widely circulated.<sup>27</sup> However, Dweck was involved only in the publication of the *kavvanot* of the first section of the prayer book (1911). After the publication of the first sections, Dweck withdrew from the enterprise, having had second thoughts about the probity of circulating the *kavvanot*.<sup>28</sup>

The prayer book editions prepared by Yedidiah Raphael Hai Abulafia have the greatest credibility among the canonizers.<sup>29</sup> His theoretical introductions were published as Shar'abi's *Rehovot ha-Nahar*. Contemporary mystics believe that the introductions are best rendered in Yedidiah Raphael Hai Abulafia's *Kinyan Perot*.<sup>30</sup>

In recent years, new editions of Shar'abi's *kavvanot* have been published and earlier editions republished. These include new editions of the prayer book, *kavvanot* for special occasions and practices, such as the counting of the *over* or the bedside *Shema'*, and specifically penitential prayers. A version of the prayer book was developed by and for the use of the Hasidim of Arele Roth, the Shomrei Emunim community.<sup>31</sup> Another edition was developed that uses an obscure form of color coding as part of the practice.<sup>32</sup> The Nahar Shalom community, in collaboration with Ya'akov Moshe Hillel, has developed the extensive version *Rehovot ha-Nahar* that is based on the long *Aram Zovah* editions and the version by Yedidiah Raphael Hai Abulafia. Thus, the early prayer books circulated by members of the *Rehovot ha-Nahar* circle, such as Dweck and David Majar, have been usurped by the *Aram Zovah* school among the contemporary kabbalists of Beit El.

### Canon Limitation

Religious movements, as they gain social momentum, often move to limit their accredited body of sacred writings.<sup>33</sup> The canonization or sacralization of

the *Zohar* led to further limitations on the kabbalistic canon. The *Zohar* itself limited the sources that it was willing to cite as authoritative. References to *Sefer Yeẓirah*, for instance, are almost wholly absent from its main sections. The very size and scope of the *Zohar* tended to run less presumptuous speculative works to ground. This tendency to limit creditable sources is also present in the teachings of the central figure of post-*Zohar* Kabbalah, Isaac Luria. Luria was openly critical of prior kabbalists in a well-known passage referred to as “Naḥmanides and his Comrades,” in which he says that up to the time of the *Zohar*, kabbalistic teachings had been imperfect.<sup>34</sup>

In order to reinforce Shar’abi’s authority and spiritual hegemony, the Beit El kabbalists employ forms of canon limitation that are characteristic of both the *Zohar* literature and the Lurianic literature that is based upon it. The Beit El kabbalists have taken pains to valorize the authority of Shar’abi’s reading of Luria among practicing kabbalists. Shar’abi willfully limited his sources, further maligning the early Kabbalah in these passages from his *Nahar Shalom*:

My word is already before the witness of heaven that all of my pre-occupation and study is only with the words of the AR”I and his student Ḥayyim Vital alone. Besides them I have no business with any work of the kabbalists, early or latter. I didn’t even study the writings of the AR”I’s other students. When I come across their words, I skip them. So I am not warning, but reminding, for God’s sake, do not touch their words . . . only the Work *Ez Ḥayyim* and *Mavo She’arim* and the *Eight Gates*, which are well known as all words of the Living God. I have been as concise as I can on this matter, for I feared that these pages might fall into the hands of one who has not yet studied the words of the AR”I appropriately, and they might suspect that I had studied other books. And it is not so, as I have stated.<sup>35</sup> . . . Let the Heavens and all on high bear witness that that is written [in the work *Reḥovot ha-Nahar*] are all the words of the living God spoken through Luria and Vital, and nothing besides. And even the words of the other students of the AR”I I did not study, nor did I touch the books of the kabbalists, not the earlier nor the latter. I did not study them nor do I have any knowledge of them, and it is revealed and known before the One who spoke and the World came into being that this is true.<sup>36</sup>

Yedidiah Raphael Ḥai Abulafia further echoed Shar’abi’s impulse to limit the acceptable sources for the Beit El kabbalists in his approbation to Vital’s *Sha’ar he-Pesukkim* and *Sefer Likkutim*:

Whoever is expert in his words and orders will see with his eyes that he did not depart from the works of the Rav's students, only from the Eight Gates, *Ez Ḥayyim* and *Mevo She'arim* and *Sefer Likkutim* and *Olat Tamid*, and from them he brought to light the pearls of his introductions.<sup>37</sup>

Shar'abi proposed a very limited group of acceptable sources for the development of his teachings, avowing that he drew all of his ideas from the simple interpretation of Vital's *Eight Gates* and Poppers's *Ez Ḥayyim*. Materials from the later Lurianic corpus then augmented these basic kavvanot. Hence, Shar'abi's *kavvanot* represent doctrinal conclusions about the development of ideas in the Lurianic canon.<sup>38</sup> Shar'abi seems not to have made use of *Pri Ez Ḥayyim*, or of Zemakh's *Olat Tamid*, preferring to use Ḥayyim Vital's *Derekh Ez Ḥayyim* and *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot*.<sup>39</sup> Among contemporary Beit El kabbalists, the text of choice seems to be *Ozrot Ḥayyim*, the version compiled by Ya'akov Zemakh in the second wave of editorial work on the canon.

### *Mishnat Ḥasidim*

Among analysts of Shar'abi's oeuvre, there is speculation about the influence of Emanuel Hai Ricci's *Mishnat Ḥasidim* on Shar'abi's teachings.<sup>40</sup> This influential work limned the entire Lurianic system and presented in it a flat, declarative, yet wholly mythologized style. *Mishnat Ḥasidim* circulated the *kavvanot* in the form finalized in Poppers's *Pri Ez Ḥayyim*. Ricci's work became the most widely circulated primer on the Lurianic method, and it had wide influence in the absence of any of the genuine Lurianic writings. In the absence of a full-scale study of this important kabbalist, a few words must suffice to detail the problematic aspects of this teaching.

In the absence of much scholarly assessment, Ricci's biography is contained the introduction to his commentary on the psalms, *Ḥozeh Ziyyon*. He was born in Ferrara, Italy, but spent his early adulthood as an itinerant teacher. Shortly after being appointed rabbi of Trieste, in 1717, he emigrated to Safed, where he sojourned for two years. After his daughter's death from the plague, he spent his remaining years in a number of Mediterranean locales, as well as in London. At the age of fifty-five, on the first day of Adar, 1743, Ricci was murdered by bandits, throttled with his own *tefillin*, and was buried in Gennetto.

A whiff of scandal, namely a rumored association with the Shabbatean apostasy, attached to the reputation of *Mishnat Ḥasidim*, and it affected the reception of the work in subsequent history.<sup>41</sup> Ricci was ordained by a Shab-

batean, Hillel Ashkenazi of Ḥania, Crete, in Trieste, on the ninth of Av, 1717. In fact, Ricci's work *Ḥoshev Maḥshavot* posits the occultation of the Messiah, a manifestly Shabbatean idea.<sup>42</sup> Other Shabbatean elements in Ricci's teaching include his advocacy of the wearing of phylacteries at the afternoon service on the Sabbath eve, with regard to which he ruled leniently. In connection with this, he quoted Ya'akov of Vilna, a known Shabbatean in the eyes of modern scholarship.<sup>43</sup> In this matter, he shared the opinion of the notorious Shabbatean work *Ḥemdat ha-Yamim*, as well as the practice of Ephraim of Ostrow.<sup>44</sup>

As a result of these concerns, Joel Teitelbaum, the renowned Satmar Rav, in his letters, is said to have intimated darkly that the "mixed multitude" came with Ricci's writings.<sup>45</sup> The eighteenth-century kabbalist Aryeh Leib Epstein also indicated that "it would be better to desist from writing such texts, unless the Holy Spirit rested upon one."<sup>46</sup> This question of Ricci's ties to Shabbateanism also preoccupied Yeshayahu Asher Zelig Margoliot, as evinced in a communication to Zevi Moskowitz in the latter's *Ḥayyei ha-RaSHaSH*.<sup>47</sup>

Notwithstanding the intimations of Shabbateanism, many prominent sages attested to the importance of *Mishnat Ḥasidim*. In the words of the Ḥasidic scholastic Zevi Elimelekh of Zidatchov: "I have warned people to believe only the words of Ḥayyim Vital, and the words of *Mishnat Ḥasidim*, that I have found to be fine flour, worthy to believe in, for he was a faithful copyist."<sup>48</sup> A later Hasidic figure, Zedok ha-Cohen of Lublin, seems to have thought that Ricci was acceptable, referring to him as a "great and holy man . . . (who) erred only in his belief."<sup>49</sup>

Questions about the reliability of *Mishnat Ḥasidim* as a source recur among Beit El kabbalists. For one thing, the *kavvanot* of flagellation published at the end of the work *Emet le-Ya'akov*<sup>50</sup> are not found in Luria's writings on flagellation. The author of *Emet le-Ya'akov*, Jacob Shealtiel Nino, noted that:

I went to find the source of these things, whence they are found. I found its source opened in the *Sha'ar ha-Mizvot* . . . and I further found the matter further explicated in *Mishnat Ḥasidim* [*Masekhet Teshuvah* 7] and in the work *Sha'arei Zion*. And nearly all of these *kavvanot* are brought in *Mishnat Ḥasidim* with specification, for this is [Shar'abi's] holy method. . . . Apparently he recanted, at the end of his life, [his admonition not to use any works other than Luria's] or it seems that [the admonition] was only in cases where there was a contradiction to Lurianic teaching. And I have already committed to memory more than ten teachings in his order of *kavvanot* that are written in the *Mishnat Ḥasidim*, yet not mentioned in any gate of [Vital's] *Eight Gates*.<sup>51</sup>

Clearly, even to an authoritative figure such as Nino, Shar'abi had absorbed the influence of *Mishnat Ḥasidim*.<sup>52</sup> Hillel quotes Yedidiah Raphael Ḥai Abulafia, who was the author of the definitive version of the prayer service:

Specifically our teacher Rav Sar Shalom Shar'abi did not leave any corner or niche in his ordering, for he did them all with the Divine spirit which shone upon him from the study house of Shem, and he specifically wrote that one was to pay no mind to the works *Mishnat Ḥasidim* and *Ḥemdat Yamim*.<sup>53</sup>

In spite of the avowed concerns of so many kabbalists, *Mishnat Ḥasidim* gained its greatest influence during a period when very few Lurianic works were readily available. In the absence of Vital's writings, *Mishnat Ḥasidim* was widely circulated as an authoritative work, notwithstanding the aforementioned concerns. As a concise and systematic presentation of the Lurianic system, it was embraced by the masses in the face of increasingly faint rabbinic objections. A similar phenomenon has occurred in the rehabilitation of the work *Ḥemdat ha-Yamim*, which has been reintroduced into the market and has worn down its opposition. As indicated elsewhere,<sup>54</sup> the Beit El kabbalists were decidedly blasé when they encountered Shabbatean materials. Nonetheless, they did not hide their reserve about other aspects of the Lurianic canon.

### Vital's Hegemony and the Italian School

As mentioned earlier, Shar'abi accredited only a limited number of Lurianic sources, on the basis of the fact that he saw Ḥayyim Vital as Luria's central redactor. The years following Luria's death saw a campaign by Vital to establish his hegemony over the other students. Vital's students declared that his appointment as Luria's redactor was divinely inspired. According to the past life regressions commonly practiced by the members of Luria's school, Vital was considered to bear the spark of Rav Abba, who was the redactor of the *Zohar* from Shimon Bar Yoḥai.<sup>55</sup> In stressing the centrality of Vital's edition, Shar'abi effectively continued Vital's efforts to have himself considered the official source of the Lurianic teaching.

In order to establish Vital as the sole redactor of the Lurianic teaching, all opposing schools had to be discredited. The most threatening one was the nascent Italian school, founded by Yisrael Sarug. Sarug was a young scholar who sailed to Italy in the sixteenth century and began to purvey Lurianic teachings to important figures of the Renaissance. Over time, his terminology

altered and assumed a tone more consonant with Italian Neo-Platonism. Even contemporary scholars have differed over Sarug's authenticity as a purveyor of Luria's teachings. Gershom Scholem argued that Sarug was not an authentic purveyor of Lurianic teachings, a view that was challenged by Yosef Avivi and Ronit Meroz.<sup>56</sup> Any mention of Sarugian teachings is apt to be accompanied by a disclaimer. Consider, for instance, the remarks of Vital's final redactor, Meir Poppers, upon invoking Sarug:

For Rav Ḥayyim Vital commanded, in the introduction to *Ez Ḥayyim*, that we not study the words of any man besides him. And it is a *mizvah* to uphold his words, so in all of my compositions you will not find that I mention any *drush* besides the holy words of Rav Ḥayyim. But here I have come to show you that I said nothing from my own theory, for this is true and correct.<sup>57</sup>

What did Shar'abi think about Sarug and the Italian school? He polemicized against the use of the works of Luria's other students,<sup>58</sup> unless they were cited by Vital.<sup>59</sup> Shar'abi himself would cite other students besides Vital, but the assumption is that he could determine the correctness of an ancillary tradition. He was also known to have disagreed with traditions that Vital derived from Luria's other students.<sup>60</sup> In the work *Kinnus Hakhamim*, there is an indication that Shar'abi did not permit the study of Sarug's *Drush ha-Malbush*. However, his student David Majar, in his *Hasdei David*, did refer to it.<sup>61</sup>

In this light, the contemporary kabbalist Ya'akov Moshe Hillel proscribes much of the Italian Kabbalah, including the works of Menachem Azariah de Fano and Naftali Zevi Bakharakh; Moshe Yonah's *Kanfei Yonah*; and Menachem Azariah de Fano's revision of that work, *Yonat Ilem*, as well as the anonymous works *Hathalat ha-Ḥokhmah*, *Ma'ayan ha-Ḥokhmah*, *Shever Yosef*, *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, *Va-Yakhel Shlomo*, *Adam de-Azilit*, and *Raza de-Atvan Glifin*.<sup>62</sup> However, some works are acceptable, notwithstanding their citation of Sarug. These include the Shabbatean work *Sha'arei Gan Eden*, by Jacob Koppel Lifschuetz, and Shalom Buzaglo's *Mikdash Melekh*.<sup>63</sup>

The Beit El School continues to limit acceptable sources. It has already been noted that Shar'abi limited his sources to a few sections of the late Lurianic canon; contemporary mystics limit their study to the acolytes of the Beit El school itself. In this fold are the work *Shalom Yerushalayim*, by Shlomo Adani of Beit El; *Hasdei David*, by David Majar; *Da'at U-Tevunah*, by Rav Yosef Hayyim, the "Ben Ish Ḥai"; and the works of Shlomo Eliashiv. Hillel endorses much early Kabbalah, perhaps more than his heroes Luria and Shar'abi: Recanati, Meir Ibn Gabbai, Yosef Gikatilla, and *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut* with the

commentary of Yehudah Ḥayyat. He does warn against Abraham Abulafia, however, whose works were not in general circulation until recently and do contain antinomian ideas.<sup>64</sup> Moshe Cordovero's Kabbalah remained acceptable to Shar'abi as a foundational work, as Cordovero was Luria's teacher.<sup>65</sup>

For Hillel, the odd intrusion of occasional Shabbatean materials into the Shar'abi canon is less of a problem than the appearance of Sarugian materials. Among another group of Beit El kabbalists, the compilers of the recent series of devotional works *Ez Tidhar*, Shar'abi's *kavvanot* are combined with the earlier common religion and even with manifestly Shabbatean ideas, reproducing the commemorative meal for *Tu Be-Shevat* that has its origins in the Shabbatean work *Ḥemdāt ha-Yamim*.<sup>66</sup>

There is an ideological dimension to this polemic. In the contemporary milieu, Hillel's polemic against the works of Luria's other students reflects anxieties regarding contemporary scholarship. Scholars such as Ronit Meroz and Yosef Avivi have developed documentary theories of the development of the Lurianic canon that give particular attention to the works of the ancillary students as reflecting better the essential Lurianic teaching in its early stages. Hillel's continuation of the strident advocacy of Vital and his deprecation of the "other students" serves as an attack on the archaeological reading of the Lurianic teaching as a response to scholarly analyses and a concomitant interest, among adepts as well, in the alternative recensions of other members of Luria's circle. The contemporary mystics of the Beit El school have declared war on the academic notion of the evolution of Kabbalah.

Nonetheless, Hillel is only echoing an old concern, voiced by no less a figure than Isaiah Horowitz, the author of the authoritative kabbalistic work the *Shnei Luḥot ha-Brit*, (abbrev. *SheLaH*). Horowitz, in a letter to Shmuel b. Meshullam Feibush in Jerusalem, warned against the profusion of "small compositions" (*kuntrusim*) that profess to originate from the AR" I."<sup>67</sup> Polemics against the use of extraneous interpretations appear in the earliest published editions of Shar'abi's writings, which appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>68</sup>

This notion of the appropriate redaction and taxonomy of the Lurianic canon flies in the face of critical archaeology of the canon, which views Vital's redaction as embellished over time and valorizes Luria's minor students as purveyors of the core teachings. Hillel projects a rejection of this view onto Shar'abi's teaching, developing an inverse view of the development of the Lurianic canon. According to his view, the more laconic presentations of the "other students" are suspect in comparison to the full, exhaustive redaction presented by Ḥayyim Vital and his students.

## The Unfolding of Revelation

It should be noted that, more than the historical acceptance of Shar'abi by acolytes, adherence to Shar'abi's spiritual authority has taken on some of the muscle of contemporary postmodern messianism. Many Jewish works aver that their very composition is a harbinger of the end-time. Such works that are the most canonical and credible often emerge during periods of messianic surge. For example, the *Zohar* avers that it is the central kabbalistic document, with messianic roles for its central figures. Lurianism, in turn, sees itself as the correct interpretation of the *Zohar*. Both the *Zohar* and Luria's writings are messianic works whose very revelation presages the beginning of an end-time.<sup>69</sup>

Ya'akov Moshe Hillel declares that, since Luria's teaching derives from a reading of the *Zohar*, one should have no doubt as to the validity of his reading. Hence, Luria's understanding is preferable to the *Zohar's* plain meaning. Indeed, Luria's emergence was the "appointed time" to reveal the doctrine of cosmic repair, or *tiqqun*. For various reasons, the secrets of the world of Divine repair, or *tiqqun*, had been unrevealed until the time of Luria. The processes of revelation are such that if the *Zohar* had not been revealed, the worlds would have returned to their state before creation, of being "unformed and void [*tohu va-vohu*]." <sup>70</sup> As clarified before, Shar'abi is the third stage in the unfolding of revelation, after Luria and the *Zohar*.

For contemporary kabbalists, the existence of enlightened sages in a given generation and the teachings and general enlightenment that they spread have a direct effect on the forces in the cosmos. In the case of kabbalistic enlightenment, the *Zohar* disappeared from late antiquity to the Middle Ages; consequently, the wisdom of the sages was reduced. According to the contemporary view, the upsurge of Kabbalah in the Safed renaissance consisted of a new revelation, an outpouring of celestial light to the benighted world below.<sup>71</sup> According to Lurianic ideas, each revelation of the secrets of the Torah in successive generations comes about in order to further cleanse the successive worlds of existence. Along with contaminated secular knowledge, there is a growth in esoteric knowledge. Hence, Shalom Shar'abi's teachings represent another stage in the redemption. If this is the end-time, his teachings are the key to redemption, and if this is not the end-time, it is the best that the kabbalists have.

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# 8

## The *Kavvanot* in Ḥasidism

At the same time that Shalom Shar'abi was making his way to Jerusalem, Gershom of Kitov, brother-in-law of the mysterious and charismatic founder of Hasidism, the Ba'al Shem Tov (acronym *Besh"t*), was also establishing himself among the kabbalists of the holy city. By most accounts, Rav Gershom came to Jerusalem in the mid-eighteenth century and, by some accounts, attached himself to the Beit El community, as well as at the yeshivah of Ḥayyim Ibn Attar.<sup>1</sup> The evidence is that he had established a relationship with Beit El's founder, Gedaliah Ḥayyun, as early as 1748.<sup>2</sup> According to *Shivḥei ha-Besh"t* ("In Praise of the Ba'al Shem Tov"), the central record of the Ba'al Shem Tov's legend,<sup>3</sup> Shar'abi called upon Gershom Kitover to lead public prayers for the release from a drought.<sup>4</sup> *Shivḥei ha-Besh"t* records that Rav Gershom was an avid practitioner of *kavvanot* and received a formula from the Ba'al Shem Tov of the blessing "who quickenest the dead" that was too overwhelming for Rav Gershom to execute.<sup>5</sup>

The shared language among such geographically disparate figures as the Polish Kitover, the Moroccan Ibn Attar, and the Yemenite Shar'abi was their practice of the *kavvanot*. *Kavvanot* practice flourished briefly in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, in such communities as Brody, Rashkov, Zolkva, and Medzibez, as evidenced by the accumulation of manuscripts and printed prayer books from the area, which we assume indicates concomitant activity.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, Besh"tian materials penetrated

the North African Kabbalah of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>7</sup> The Besh"t moved among groups of pietists, already known as *Ḥasidim*, who were functioning in the same area at the same time, including the mysterious Klaus in Brody.<sup>8</sup> These communities produced the earliest manuscript prayer books, which in turn formed the basis of the "Nusakh AR"i," the order of prayers in the Lurianic style. Yet the Polish tradition of *kavvanot* practice was fated to be abolished in the next generation of Ḥasidic leaders. In the course of a study of the Beit El school, which came to include so many Eastern European adherents, the role of the *kavvanot* of early Ḥasidism must be addressed.

### Lurianic Prayer Books

Ḥasidism was a dynamic movement that circulated along new paths of economic and social access in Eastern Europe. One agent of the spread of *kavvanot* was the preparation and circulation of special prayer books with the exoteric *kavvanot* inserted into the margins of the prayers. Among *mekavvenim* in Europe and the Middle East, the special prayer book with *kavvanot* was born of necessity. Lurianic *kavvanot* had grown so complex that the average adept could not remember all of them during the course of prayer. The prescribed *kavvanot* for a given rite had come to include a daunting number of sacred names and associations that had to be presented on the page, linked directly to the prayer itself as it was being recited.<sup>9</sup> The "prayer book with the *kavvanot* of the AR"i" became the characteristic instrument for the practice of contemplative prayer.

Most prayer books with Lurianic *kavvanot* were adopted from a number of sources, which are intermingled. A central text was Vital's *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot*, from the first edition of Lurianic writings, the "Eight Gates" of Shmuel Vital. A second source was *Pri Eẓ Ḥayyim*, edited by Meir Poppers, comprising the very last stage of the compilation of Lurianic writings. The writings of Ya'akov Ṭemakh were also critical, as Ṭemakh had mastered a very didactic form of expression. A converso who first encountered Judaism at the age of thirty-five, Ṭemakh came into the world of the Jerusalem kabbalists very much from the outside. Hence, he was able, and was compelled, to organize the materials he found in formats that were more coherent than those of the kabbalists who were used to the study of the *drushim*.<sup>10</sup> Ṭemakh wrote out prayer *kavvanot*, as well as two handbooks of kabbalistic practice, *Nagid u-Mizaveh*<sup>11</sup> and *Shulkhan 'Arukh ha-AR"i z"l*. Ṭemakh's version was the template for the various subsequent editions of other kabbalists.<sup>12</sup> Ricci's *Mishnat Ḥasidim*, as well, was incorporated in toto in a number of editions.<sup>13</sup> The importance of these later

recensions is evident in the development of the Lurianic prayer books. These works reflected no interest in the documentary archaeology of Luria's teachings. They were based largely on the last recensions of the Lurianic writings, the *Ez Ḥayyim* and particularly the *Pri Ez Ḥayyim* of Meir Poppers.

### The Rashkover Prayer Book

An influential source for the spread of *kavvanot* in Poland was Shabbatai of Rashkov's prayer book, which quotes the Besh"t several times.<sup>14</sup> This work served as a template for subsequent Lurianic prayer books.<sup>15</sup> The prayer book was written in 1755 but was published only in 1797, with a more exact version produced in 1864. Avraham Shimshon of Rashkov, the son of Ya'akov Yosef of Polnoye, transcribed another copy, available in manuscript facsimile.<sup>16</sup> Kallus has demonstrated that this edition is substantially the same as Shabbatai's original.<sup>17</sup> Another influential prayer book, compiled by Asher Margoliot (Lvov, 1788), acknowledges its debt to the earlier Rashkover prayer book.<sup>18</sup>

In the published version of the Rashkover prayer book, the quotations from the Ba'al Shem Tov are presented in the present tense, which may represent a bit of artistic license on the part of the publishers.<sup>19</sup> The Rashkover prayer book, for instance, presents the *kavvanot* for ritual immersion as the pivotal *kavvanot* from the Besh"t. This may demonstrate that the Ba'al Shem Tov's *kavvanot* may have been of the "occasional" variety, as opposed to the comprehensive *kavvanot* of the full system.<sup>20</sup>

Although it is generally considered the Lurianic prayer book par excellence, the Rashkover prayer book reflects earlier kabbalistic teachings as much as the specifically Lurianic tradition. In the great set pieces of the service, the moments of greatest suffusing of Divine effluence, the Rashkover prayer book also presents *kavvanot* based on the general sefirotic Kabbalah, as well as *kavvanot* derived from the pure Lurianic method. Such moments include prayers such as *Barukh She-Amar*, the introduction of the preliminary psalms, the *kedushah*, the moment of entrances into the synagogue, and the hymn *El Adon* and other central hymns. In all of these cases, the Rashkover prayer book presents materials that are avowedly Lurianic alongside materials that are broader and more general than even the zoharic Kabbalah of Safed. In many instances, two levels of *kavvanah* are presented. Often, the more popular, sefirotic aspect survives into the popular recensions of the Ḥasidic rite, such as, for instance, portraying the counting of the Omer in terms of the interplay of the *sefirot*.<sup>21</sup>

### Did the Ba'al Shem Tov Practice *Kavvanot*?

When thinking of Ḥasidism as an independent movement, scholars have emphasized the Ba'al Shem Tov's development of an atomistic approach to prayer. This form of Ḥasidic prayer demanded meditation on the constituent letters of every word of the prayer.<sup>22</sup> Descriptions of this type of prayer often invoke notions like "simplicity," "emotionalism," and "ecstasy." Teachings attributed to the Besh"t also counsel the importance of ecstatic prayer, evinced in music, dance, drinking, and, particularly, emotive power. The movements help to create an experience that is emotional in nature, a great welling up of emotion in dance and song.<sup>23</sup> In one instance, atomistic reading is portrayed as a substitute practice for one whom, for whatever reason, is not on the spiritual level to practice the *kavvanot*:

For the wise man, whose eyes are in his head and may understand and intuit, if the time has come that he can intend (*le-kavven*) the inner secret and thus rejoice . . . it is good. But if he still sees himself as diminished, and cannot concentrate, for the strange thoughts are overcoming him, let him pray like a day-old infant, from out of a book, as so happened to my teacher [the Besh"t], when he was in another land and lost [his wisdom] so he cleaved himself to the letters, for when he prayed from a text and cleaved himself to the letters, he attained the World of *Assiyah*.<sup>24</sup>

This remark is significant in that it describes the activity that would later be associated with Ḥasidic prayer: an emotive and naïve meditation on the plain liturgical text. According to this account, this practice is recommended as a substitute for prayer with Lurianic *kavvanot*. According to Ya'akov Yosef, all prayer, not just the kabbalistic form, when executed properly, is considered to have the appropriate soteric effect on the upper worlds,<sup>25</sup> as well as provoking what scholars have termed the "radical immanence" that so characterized early Ḥasidism.<sup>26</sup> Eventually, Shlomo Lutzker, a disciple of the Maggid of Mezeritch, developed the standard substitution for the formal system of the *kavvanot*, namely that one becomes lost within the letters themselves, after the fashion of the Besh"t.<sup>27</sup>

The Besh"t's facility with the world of sacred names for magical use, which is an integral aspect of his persona, could easily have extended to the manipulation of those names for prayer *kavvanot*.<sup>28</sup> Joseph Weiss noted that the Ba'al Shem Tov neither advocated nor condemned the use of prayer *kavvanot*. It was Weiss's argument that the Besh"t seems to have been indifferent to the *kav-*

*vanot* or to have gone beyond the need to use them.<sup>29</sup> However, Weiss, following the lead of Scholem, characterized the Ba'al Shem Tov as a classical *am ha-arez* (unlettered person) of the eighteenth century.

Menachem Kallus has argued for the Besh"t's being an adept at *kavvanot*. Kallus contends that the Ba'al Shem Tov was a practitioner of *kavvanot* himself, on the basis of readings of the Rashkover prayer book.<sup>30</sup> Weiss's view that the Ba'al Shem Tov was "too much of a plebian to have practiced the Lurianic *kavvanot*"<sup>31</sup> is also belied by recent researches by Moshe Rosman.<sup>32</sup> Kallus and Rosman have demonstrated the Ba'al Shem Tov's literacy and social position. Kallus points to three practitioners of *kavvanot* who were linked to the Ba'al Shem Tov: Moshe ben Dan of Dolena,<sup>33</sup> Yisrael of Satanov, and Shabbatai of Rashkov.<sup>34</sup>

*Shivhei ha-Besh"t* alludes to the Ba'al Shem Tov's possessing certain *kavvanot*, as in the aforementioned account of Gershon Kitover. However, most of the accounts in *Shivhei ha-Besh"t* reflect the type of prayer that had developed into the Ḥasidic style by one generation later.<sup>35</sup> The Besh"t is described as strenuous, emotional, centering spiritual intensity, but there seems to be little recourse to an esoteric formula in the text. If, as Kallus argues, the Besh"t was an avid practitioner of *kavvanot*, then the accounts in *Shivhei ha-Besh"t* are anachronistic.

One may assume that the Besh"t's use of *kavvanot* was auteuristic and ad hoc; that is, he specified certain *kavvanot* linked to specific prayers that had been composed by specific and closely related sages. It is reasonable to expect that he made novel use of *gematriot*, or numerical coefficients, as is evident in many early Ḥasidic writings. Positive attitudes toward the practice of the *kavvanot* survived among a number of Ḥasidic formalists, such as Zevi Hirsch of Zidhatchov.<sup>36</sup>

### The Rejection of *Kavvanot* in Ḥasidism

In recent years, Moshe Idel, Menachem Kallus, Rivka Schatz, and Joseph Weiss have differed over the process by which the Ḥasidic movement dispensed with the practice of *kavvanot*. It is unclear whether the disapproval of *kavvanot* began as early as the Ba'al Shem Tov or whether it originated with his successor, the Maggid of Mezeritch. On the face of it, the Maggid abolished the practice. He argued that *kavvanot* could not bring about the emotional dimension necessary for cleaving to the Divine.<sup>37</sup> According to the Maggid, the emotional cry of the enthusiastic and pneumatic prayer of conventional Ḥasidism is the more effective practice. The practice of *kavvanot* is not sufficiently

brazen to awaken the flow of divinity from heaven.<sup>38</sup> The result of this rejection, as Joseph Weiss put it, was that for Ḥasidism, “kavvanah has become a vehicle of the central Hasidic virtue of *devekut*.”<sup>39</sup> That is to say, the value of a *devekut*-driven lifestyle overwhelmed the interest in *kavvanot*. *Kavvanah* passed from being the object of the practice to being an aspect of a larger idea, namely *devekut*.

The Maggid of Mezeritch deintellectualized the idea of *kavvanah*. It lost its old kabbalistic meaning of the contemplation of sacred names at the time of prayer. Its intellectual character thus lost, *kavvanah* became one of the various synonyms of *devekut*, that ubiquitous Ḥasidic concept.<sup>40</sup> Schatz defined the rejection in terms of the technical object of the *kavvanah*:

It follows . . . that there is indeed a substantial difference between the goal of the kabbalist, which is “to unite the World of the *sefirot*” and that of the ḥasid, which is to nullify his individuality by means of immediate *devekut* with the Infinite.<sup>41</sup>

Were *kavvanot* abolished in order to substitute a new form of prayer, or were the founders of Ḥasidism simply pessimistic about the possibility of such use of *kavvanot* in the degenerate contemporary age? According to the latter way of thinking, the rejection of *kavvanot* was an act of piety, a recognition of the adept’s spiritual inadequacy. Such was at least partly the argument of non-Ḥasidic quietists with regard to this practice, as has been demonstrated by Alan Nadler.<sup>42</sup>

R. Ze’ev Wolf of Zhitomir saw the creation of such *kavvanot* as an example of human arrogance.<sup>43</sup> The Maggid also criticized the Lurianic system for being limited, as it specified a random selection of ideas from the *Zohar* and the speculations of Cordovero and Luria.<sup>44</sup> The randomness is an artificial limitation of the expressive possibilities of Kabbalah. Even Naḥman of Breslav, one generation beyond the central debate, was still compelled to polemicize against the practice of *kavvanot*:

One of the “people of the Name” told me that he spoke with our Rebbe about the service of God as it should be. Our Teacher understood that [the adept] was engaging a bit in the kabbalistic intentions in his prayer. Our teacher was very stringent with him, saying that he should longer engage in it, nor pray with the *kavvanot*. Rather, he should only pray with simple intention (even though this man had studied Luria’s works according to his instructions, nonetheless he did not want him to engage in the *kavvanot* at all). Our teacher said to him when an unworthy person prays with the

kavvanot it is like witchcraft. For of witchcraft it is said that it is studied for understanding but not for practice. The Rabbis of Blessed memory<sup>45</sup> explained that one does not learn them to do but to understand and to instruct. And the same is true with the issue of the kavvanot. One only learns them to understand and to know, but not to practice if one is not worthy of it. For the essence of prayer is cleaving (*devekut*).<sup>46</sup>

R. Nahman was concerned that specifically unworthy people were risking the practice of the *kavvanot*. Throughout early Ḥasidism, there was a sense that the generation was no longer worthy to practice the more recondite kabbalistic traditions. In practical terms, the *kavvanot* remained extant in Ḥasidism among the leadership. Theoretically, the *kavvanot* were beyond the ken of the simple folk, but a worthy caste of practitioners could continue to practice the *kavvanot*, with the support of the community. Such designated practitioners were the saintly rabbi or *zaddikim* themselves. A number of citations limit the practice of *kavvanot* to adepts of a frankly unattainable level,<sup>47</sup> as was the case in Shabbateanism.<sup>48</sup>

Avraham Ḥayyim of Zlatchov indicated that the proper prayer intention was to link oneself with the ecclesia of Israel, particularly with those who practiced the *kavvanot*.<sup>49</sup> In the absence of the ability to pray, people confess their inadequacy, saying, “Let it be as if I upheld it with the appropriate kavvanot.”<sup>50</sup> Others, such as Benjamin of Salositz, opined that the generation as a whole had lost its worthiness to practice the *kavvanot*.<sup>51</sup>

## Nusakh AR”I

Notwithstanding their rejection of the formal Lurianic *kavvanot*, the early Ḥasidic movement constructed an order of prayers, which they called *nusakh AR”I*, or “the order of the AR”I.” The *nusakh AR”I* was an amalgam of the Ashkenazic and Sephardic rites developed as a result of the influence of the manuscript Lurianic prayer books. The structure of this rite is rooted in an ethnic ambivalence in Luria’s own life. Despite his coming from an Ashkenazic family, Luria took for his own liturgical practice the Sephardic rite, which differed, in its text and structure, from the Ashkenazic rite.<sup>52</sup> In order for an Ashkenazic Jew to implement the Lurianic system of *kavvanot*, one would have to make changes in the order of prayers.<sup>53</sup> Those who wanted to emulate Luria would rearrange the structure of the prayers to mimic the Sephardic rite, even when the texts themselves still followed the tropes of the Ashkenazic custom.

In developing the new order, the aforementioned manuscript prayer book of Avraham Shimshon of Rashkov<sup>54</sup> was most influential, as has been demonstrated by Yizḥak Alfasi. Alfasi compared the Rashkover prayer book to the Zolkava and Rashkov editions, as well as to the *nusakh* developed by Schneur Zalman of Liadi, asserting that the former was a model for the others.<sup>55</sup> As the “Lurianic” *nusakh* developed, certain things were added that had nothing to do with the Sephardic rite practiced by Luria. There has also been resistance to changing the custom of certain communities, as in the recent efforts by Ovadiah Yosef to defend the Eastern communities from the encroachments of artificial influences.<sup>56</sup> Hence, this altered amalgam of the two prayer forms, *nusakh ha-AR”I* or, contemporarily, *nusakh Sepharad*, became the normative order for Ḥasidism and, later, the state of Israel.

Ḥasidism has won a place in the study of religion for its exemplary theology, which was interpreted by some as applicable to monotheistic belief even beyond the scope of Judaism. Nobody can deny that the social values of Ḥasidism or the historical patterns of its spread through Eastern Europe, and its populism influenced the formation of the Zionist movement and thus the very course of Jewish history.

In rejecting the practice of *kavvanot*, the early masters of Ḥasidism specifically turned away from a central feature of the Kabbalah that otherwise informed their thinking. In removing the practice of *kavvanot*, the implication was that the general thrust of Ḥasidic thought was going to bypass the most abstruse formulations of the Lurianic system, to back away from the cutting edge of kabbalistic innovation, labeling it as obscurantist and an obstruction to spiritual attainment. The position of Ḥasidism was a return to the more symbolic and contemplative form of Kabbalah espoused in the works of Moshe Cordovero and the common religion of Safed.<sup>57</sup>

There is a possibility that there is a relationship between the negation of the self that was necessary in bringing about the reconciliation of the sundered countenances (*parzufim*) in Lurianic practice and the ethic of self-abnegation, *hitbatlut*, of subsequent Hasidism. Although there is no causal or semantic relationship, there is an intellectual closeness that links these ideas. Throughout the *kavvanot* traditions of the Safed renaissance, the systems propounded by Moshe Cordovero and Isaac Luria, the theurgic aspect of the practice is essential. The role of prayer is manifestly to bring about a *tiqqun*, a theurgic “fixing” in the structure of the worlds.<sup>58</sup> The goal is a transitive act, bringing a change in an “other,” namely God. In order to have the desired effect, the individual is called upon to negate himself,<sup>59</sup> to immolate himself in joining the embraces of the *parzufim*. This aspect of self-negation may have trans-

formed itself during the development of the widely known concept of *bittul*, self-abnegation, advocated in Ḥasidic teaching. The early Ḥasidic polemics regarding prayer and the *kavvanot* reveal that the early masters were concerned with jettisoning the apparatus of *kavvanot*, while retaining the spiritual experience. This experience, as implied in the writings of the Safed kabbalists, was one of self-abnegation and immolation.<sup>60</sup>

By and large, the Ḥasidic masters rejected the practice of *kavvanot*, seeing it as an impediment to a religious view that was emotional, self-conscious, and deeply psychological. Rather than view the tradition of sacred names as a secret code that underlay the function of the cosmic order, the Ḥasidic masters took another tack that presaged the yearnings and impulses of modern society. It is significant that, in terms of its kabbalistic influences, one of the first orders of business for the nascent movement was to dispense with the obscure, esoteric, and elitist practiced of *kavvanot* in order to forge a theology based on popular sensibilities.

Ḥasidism drew on an aspect of the kabbalistic that the world of *kavvanot* would neglect, namely the eros of the road and the romance of the wanderer. The kabbalistic circles that are described as surrounding Shimon Bar Yohai in late antiquity were picaresque and populist. The sages of the *Zohar* were depicted as wandering the paths of the Galilee, having encounters with marginal members of Jewish society: wagon drivers, women, and children. The unencumbered contemplative experience that one gains by being a wanderer on the paths of life is central to the Safed tradition, as well, as is evident from the accounts of Moshe Cordovero and Shlomo Alkabetz of their wanderings or “exiles” in the environs of Safed, a practice that was continued by Isaac Luria.<sup>61</sup> The Ḥasidic movement in its first century was similarly dynamic; it spread through Eastern Europe and was nourished by the peregrinations of a newly mobile Jewish society.

The practice of *kavvanot*, as it evolved at Beit El, marked a return to the study house. Rejecting the mobility that defined the other streams of Kabbalah, the Beit El kabbalists clung to the oldest Jewish quarters of Jerusalem. It was from the alleys of the Old City and the Bukharian quarter that their teachings radiated to the Diaspora. The lack of the personal element in Beit El Kabbalah, its roots in Jerusalem, its domination by the Middle Eastern rabbinate, and its willful obscurity caused it to drop from the concerns of Ḥasidism, as that movement moved to its present position of social and historical importance in the Jewish world.

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# 9

## Conclusions: Mysticism, Metaphysics, and the Limitations of Beit El Kabbalah

This book is a combination of a historical survey of a kabbalistic school and a study of a “lived tradition,” that is, a living community of kabbalists. The kabbalists of Beit El have become the most influential single kabbalistic order of the past two hundred years. Their influence crossed into Eastern Europe practically from the inception of the fellowship, and they become the flagship institution for all kabbalists who clung to the study and application of the most abstract form of Kabbalah. The Beit El scholars arguably produced the most complex and linguistically theoretical interpretation of Lurianic Kabbalah, as well as a mystical practice based on the contemplation of the most abstruse prayer intentions (i.e., *kavvanot*).

In approaching Beit El, I was guided by a few premises that form the basis for the way Kabbalah is viewed by the academy and the general Israeli community. First, whether one likes it or not, Beit El is surely the last link to the old schools of Kabbalah in its classical period, the last school of “pure” kabbalistic endeavor, in that its interest was in kabbalistic study and practice for its own sake. Beit El maintained a direct historical link to earlier schools going back to the Safed revival. As a living kabbalistic school, or “mystical” school, it would, a scholar would assume, have a definition of mystical experience to which adherents were aspiring and that would come out of the application of adherents’ lifestyle. It is unusual to uncover a living kabbalistic tradition, and, in proceeding to analyze it, one has to determine the set of scholarly rules and negotiate various anxieties.

In order to examine Beit El as a source of Jewish mysticism, the “academy” asks certain initial questions and makes certain assumptions. In forcing Beit El practice into the definitions inherent in “the study of mysticism,” I began to come to some unsettling conclusions.

Among these assumptions are that Kabbalah is Jewish mysticism and that, as “mysticism,” it shares common properties with other mystical traditions in the religions of the world. As stated, the study of Kabbalah as a metaphysical tradition has thus far been equated with “Jewish mysticism,” and scholars of Kabbalah have fought for its place among the mystical teachings of world religions. Kabbalah has been accepted as Jewish mysticism in the industry of academia, and it is in that context that investigations of Kabbalah have gone forward.

An organizing principle of the study of mysticism is based on the “mystical experience.” Hence, the first question to be asked is, What is the mystical experience in Beit El? How do the activities of the school reflect the substance of Shar’abi’s teachings? After surveying its literature and observing its practices in the field, however, the observer will find little of the mystical experience in Beit El Kabbalah. The metaphysical object of the practice is clear, however. As has been discussed, this involves the surrender of the mind to the processes of divinity coming down into the world, even though these processes are apparently not felt or otherwise perceived. Beit El Kabbalah is obviously an authentic form of Jewish esotericism. Nobody in the Jewish or kabbalistic communities disputes the authenticity of Beit El in the kabbalistic lineage and pantheon. It is a lineal descendant of the kabbalistic tradition coming out of Safed into Jerusalem and applies the metaphysical system of Isaac Luria in its most refined and theoretical form. However, it manifestly lacks the characteristics of a mystical school as defined by the theorists of mysticism and therefore drives a wedge into the association of Kabbalah with the academic construct of “mysticism.” The distinction between mysticism and metaphysics must be examined in defining Kabbalah as an area of study.

There are kabbalistic movements that are mystical, such as Ḥasidism, but it is not necessarily a given that the content of a given kabbalistic school will fit into the contemporary definition of mysticism. Kabbalah represents the prevalent metaphysical traditions that have lain beneath the surface of traditional Judaism. Occasionally, the practice of Kabbalah overlaps into the realm of mystical experience as defined by the Western academy, but not always. Certainly the original definition of mystical experience by William James, namely that it was pantheistic, optimistic, antinaturalistic, and in harmony with “otherworldly states of mind,”<sup>1</sup> is simply too broad for an intelligent assessment of the varieties of spirituality proffered in medieval Jewish thought.

## Scholem

Shar'abi and his heirs have been hiding in plain sight. They have remained active and, in recent years, have grown as a group, yet they have not been given scholarly attention. The reasons for this reluctance to confront Beit El are social and historical, dictated by the mores of the academy, as well as the internal politics of Kabbalah study. Professor Boaz Huss of Ben Gurion University has addressed these reasons with a bracing clarity in recent years.<sup>2</sup> Otherwise, they are only beginning to be acknowledged, as the study of Kabbalah moves out from the hegemonic influence of its founder, Gershom Scholem.

To tell the story simply, Gershom Scholem and his older colleague Martin Buber began their activity in the early twentieth century, when the academy was largely closed to the study of Jewish religion, if not closed to Jews altogether. Enlightened Jews were apt to view Kabbalah and Ḥasidism in the way that North American intellectuals might view Pentecostal snake handlers in the Florida panhandle or late-night televangelists on obscure public-access channels. There was a social gap between the “enlightened” world and the world of the practitioners. Buber and Scholem “dropped out” of enlightenment Germany with a socially quixotic interest in recovering and exhuming Ḥasidism and Kabbalah, respectively, and presenting them to the academy, as well as to the Jewish community. In the course of this endeavor, Scholem continued the earlier equation of Kabbalah with “Jewish mysticism” in order to introduce it to the Western academy.

The “study of mysticism” has often devolved into a Christological attempt to define the religions of the world in Western terms, all in the name of “understanding.” But the “mysticism” proffered by William James and Evelyn Underhill emphasized one experience as the common thread linking all mystical traditions. As the latter put it: “The mystic act of union, that joyous loss of the transfigured self in God, which is the crown of man’s conscious ascent towards the Absolute, is the contribution of the individual to this, the destiny of the cosmos.”<sup>3</sup> From William James and Evelyn Underhill to the present, Western scholars have sought, with mixed success, to force the square pegs of various mystical systems into the round holes set out by the “purest” forms, which often tend to be Christian or maybe Sufi. The original tendency of the study of religions was to assume that all mystical experiences are the same. This idea may have developed from missionary concerns. Often, the premise of a unified comparative field that united various mystical schools served as a device that allowed theorists to bludgeon all other positions into the mold of their teleological bias. Even Aldous Huxley, in reducing mystical

experience to a series of physiological reactions (his chemical dimension of the *philosophia perennis*) was practicing this sort of intellectual imperialism.

The theorists who came after, such as W. T. Stace and Jess Hollenback, along with Aldous Huxley's advocacy of the drug experience and R. C. Zaehner's theological response,<sup>4</sup> kept "mystical union" as the central definition of the experience. The unifying element of such systems was the meeting between the individual and the transcendent, defined in Western theism as God. Such union might be entirely creaturely in nature, available to anyone through the act of philosophical contemplation, according to Jacques Mauritian,<sup>5</sup> or through the ingestion of a drug, according to Aldous Huxley and others.

In portraying Kabbalah to the eyes of the world, Scholem adopted various strategies to make the field palatable to the academy. For example, the ancient Merkavah tradition became, for Scholem and Saul Lieberman, "Jewish Gnosticism," even though, as has been pointed out by Moshe Idel, Gnostic ideas could very well have had their origins in Judaism and therefore the Gnostic tradition itself might really be "Gnostic Judaism."<sup>6</sup> In this way, Kabbalah was recast as "Jewish mysticism," in order to place it in the continuum of experience defined as "mysticism." Scholem campaigned for Kabbalah's place at the table, even as he allowed that there may be no "mystical union" in kabbalistic practice, which had been one of James's main criteria. Nonetheless, he insisted that Kabbalah was, in fact, "Jewish mysticism."

Huss has explored the association of Kabbalah with mysticism in his article "The Mysticism of Kabbalah and the Myth of Jewish Mysticism."<sup>7</sup> Huss dates the adaptation of the term "Jewish mysticism" to the second half of the nineteenth century. It springs from the general attempt to couch Jewish religious expression in Western terms. Adolph Jellinek termed Kabbalah "Jewish Mysticism" in 1853.<sup>8</sup> Buber echoed this view in his initial studies of R. Naḥman of Breslav, whom, in 1906, he termed "Die Judische Mystik." Huss points out the speciousness of equating Kabbalah with the romantic nineteenth-century construction of mysticism. When in doubt about the mystical nature of Kabbalah, scholars turned to the phenomenological methodology, which located given mystical systems in the context of seemingly similar understandings. Such a phenomenological impulse is in the air presently in the popular mercantile syncretism of the new-age movement. Psychological forms, particularly Jungian symbolism, have proven to be a fertile ground for analyzing the *Zohar's* psychological imagery.

Scholem repeated the anecdote about a young secular scholar who comes to a venerable kabbalistic academy asking to study with the acolytes. He is accepted, provided that he "ask no questions," a response that caused him to withdraw in alarm, such a proviso being anathema to his whole conception of

the didactic and justified nature of Jewish study and scholarly inquiry. The student was Scholem himself, of course, and the academy was Beit El.<sup>9</sup> Huss observes that, “paradoxically enough, by his negative response Scholem effectively accepted the condition proposed by the kabbalist, for he chose not to ask questions about—and not to study—Kabbalah as a living contemporary phenomenon” and adds that “Scholem’s meetings with contemporary kabbalists left no impression whatsoever on his vast corpus of scholarly work.”<sup>10</sup> He rejected the possibility of studying from contemporary sources, even their textual record.

Huss has argued that this rejection was an ideological one, influenced by Scholem’s embrace of the Zionist mythos, which required the marginalization of all previous ethnic categories and the cultural identity of Diaspora Judaism. According to the devastating critique offered by the late Arthur Hertzberg: “Scholem was quite clearly re-evoking these fascinating shades but ultimately, to use the language of his charge against the scholars of the *Wissenschaft* school, in order to bury them with due respect. It was part of the Jewish past, the present was Zionism.”<sup>11</sup> Scholem’s reference to Beit El as the expression of “the Sephardic and arabized tribes”<sup>12</sup> even as his interlocutor at Beit El was the Ashkenazi kabbalist R. Gershon Vilner points to his orientalist distancing. Huss notes that this tendency to reject the present-day manifestations of Kabbalah has continued into the activities of contemporary scholars. For much of the academy, the forms of Kabbalah taken up by the masses are, with the exception, perhaps, of Chabad Hasidism, regarded as false or at least declassé.<sup>13</sup> According to Huss:

This approach is typical of hegemonic Israeli discourse. . . . Early kabbalistic literature and the academic investigators who work with it are regarded as worthwhile, authentic and “professional,” but contemporary kabbalistic belief and practices (such as prostration on the graves of the righteous, ritual reading of the *Zohar* and the exorcism of dybbuks) and the kabbalists who believe in and practice them are considered to be the primitives, charlatans and even a menace to modern Western-Israeli culture.<sup>14</sup>

Two impulses in Scholem’s school have emerged as problematic at the present juncture. The first of these is the tendency to isolate “true” Kabbalah in the historical past. The second problematic element is the general tendency to define Kabbalah in terms of mysticism, in the frankly appropriationist, Christological way. The anxieties in Israeli social life played their part in this, as well, particularly the coercive tendencies of the religious establishment and the rabbinate.

## Contemporary Forms of Kabbalah

These anxieties have blinded scholars to certain new developments in the history of Kabbalah that have come about as recently as the late twentieth century, and there has been some resistance, in the scholarly community, to the examination of contemporary trends in the development of Kabbalah. Contrary to the apparent belief of many scholars, Kabbalah did not cease to evolve in 1948, and its recent manifestations may in fact bear the sin of inel-  
egance.

The most notorious of these developments is the recent flourishing of the Kabbalah Centre, founded on the teachings of the impoverished Jerusalem scholar and Marxist Yehudah Ashlag and flowering, in recent years, under the direction of Yehudah Berg and his family. This particular circle has put the word "Kabbalah" on the lips of the general populace, to the chagrin of both the scholarly and the general Jewish communities. The Kabbalah Centre has promoted a doctrine of psychological understandings for a number of classical sacred names, apparently derived from the eighteenth-century work *Herev Pi-fyyot* by Isaiah Alesker of the *kloiz* in Brod. The Kabbalah Centre's tradition of citing without attribution is maddening to the scholar but not an insurmountable obstacle. Like Beit El, the Kabbalah Centre is a late-Lurianic school that has emerged in modernity and that bears scrutiny on a purely historical basis.

The Jewish renewal movement, which has formed in the context of North American liberal Judaism, is also evolving new approaches to Kabbalah. This movement evolved from the Jewish student movement of the 1960s and 1970s, dovetailing with the activities of two prodigies of postwar Ḥasidism who in turn embraced the counterculture, Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach and Rabbi Zalman Schachter. Another example of contemporary Kabbalah is to be found in the activities of Jewish evangelists such as R. Amnon Yizhak, who operates in Israel and among expatriate Israel communities in the Diaspora. Such figures draw their apparent spiritual lineage from the Moroccan wonder-working rabbis of the twentieth century and the Beit El school of the Middle East, but their function is a post-Zionist religious evangelism. Finally, there are late-twentieth-century mutations of Ḥasidism. The messianic irruption in the Chabad movement is well known. There has also been a revision of Breslav Ḥasidism, which has split the group into various camps, some of which have transgressed the social limits and restrictions of the conventional ultra-Orthodox social milieu.

These movements represent late, manifestly inelegant interpretations of aspects of the kabbalistic tradition, shaped by modernity yet emerging from

within the closed walls of each sect. All of these circles are arguably “popular,” as they have been embraced by broader elements of the modern Jewish community, beyond the traditional closed circles of classical Kabbalah. Neo-Breslav Ḥasidism, in particular, has made inroads into Israeli youth culture, particularly as embodied in the phenomenon of the postarmy trip to India and the sensibilities brought back to Israel by the returning youth. The evangelical groups, neo-Breslav, and Kabbalah Centres have also served to blur the traditionally rigid lines between religious and secular in Israeli society.

The academy lags behind the polis in the acknowledgment and analysis of these phenomena. Anecdotally, it seems that academic papers and articles on the subject are greeted with some skepticism; postings of syncretistic material on Web sites have been greeted with dismay or looked upon askance or with ambivalence. It is understandable that scholars of Kabbalah might be resistant to new manifestation purely because they are doing more elemental work themselves; the field is in its infancy, and many central themes and schools remain unexplored. Is contemporary Beit El Kabbalah an accurate representation of the intention of its founder, Shar’abi? Is the Kabbalah Center an accurate portrayal of the ideas of Isaac Luria? Are Jewish Renewal, Chabad, or Breslav true reflections of Ḥasidism? These questions remain open. It is not enough to say that contemporary Kabbalah is “fluffy” or “not serious” or inauthentic. In fact, it is possible that many of the historical irruptions of kabbalistic activity were not pleasing to the refined religious esthetes of the period. There were certainly many who found the early manifestations of Hasidism to be not a pretty sight.<sup>15</sup> In order to examine these phenomena, if only for the larger good of the community, text scholars must sometimes turn into anthropological observers, as is the case in the recent studies of the Kabbalah Centre by Jody Myers as well as in this author’s review of the Beit El school. For the conventional historiographer, whose mission may be to recover and secure the textual record, the monitoring of new developments in such a fashion is likely to induce vertigo.

A further impediment to the clear consideration of the Kabbalah Centre, as well as Beit El, is the relatively few Kabbalah scholars who work with the most sophisticated and obscure Lurianic texts from which these groups derive their doctrinal innovations. For instance, many scholars have held forth on the subject of “kabbalistic hermeneutics,” but there have been few who, like Joseph Dan and Lawrence Fine, have waded in and grappled with the raw material of the various Name traditions of Kabbalah.<sup>16</sup> Few scholars are prepared to explain why the Kabbalah Centres have the success that they have had. Scholars are drawn to Kabbalah for its elegance and profundity, as well as for its psychological insight. Admittedly, there is no way that an encounter with

contemporary Kabbalah is not going to be painful to one who prefers Kabbalah to be ideologically pure and elegantly rendered, unsullied by syncretism, learned, and literate.

Another area of tension is social. There is clearly social discomfort between the academy and, in particular, the adepts of the Beit El school, a discomfort rooted in religion and class. The question of a social gap between the scholarly community and the working and pietistic classes in Maḥaneh Yehudah and the Nahlaot may in fact prove to be a painful one. As a result of the academic community's origins in the Jewish enlightenment of early modernity, there may remain disgust for the willfully inelegant naïveté of enthusiasts in contemporary Breslav and Chabad. With regard to much contemporary Kabbalah, members of the academy had best check such biases at the door in order to proceed.

Additionally, there is a historical problem in considering contemporary enthusiastic movements within the Jewish community, Boaz Huss has alluded to the complexities inherent in Gershom Scholem's personal history and its effect of the academic study of Kabbalah. Scholem, although certainly personally polite and respectful toward his conventionally religious friends and acquaintances, nonetheless rendered himself anathema to the larger community by virtue of many of his boldest historical assertions. These include, famously, his defense of the late authorship of the *Zohar*, his belief in the Shabbatean origins of many of the Ba'al Shem Tov's teachings, and his confirmation of Shabbatean connections for such religious icons as Yonatan Eibschuetz and Ya'akov Koppel Lipschuetz. These positions made Scholem a pariah in the religious community and shadow interactions between contemporary scholars and the pious populations that support the development of Kabbalah. Although such scholars as Moshe Idel have called for the forming of relationships between scholars and practitioners, interactions remain tinged by suspicion.<sup>17</sup>

### What Is Kabbalah?

In querying the lineal construction of Kabbalah according to Scholem's historiography, Huss has begun to examine the critical differences between the various things that are called "Kabbalah" and has asked serious questions about their relevance to one another and to the Western definition of "mysticism." Huss has taken issue with one aspect of Scholem's historical arrangement of Kabbalah. According to Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, disparate historical movements, such as the apocryphal compositions of the

Merkavah tradition, the radical pietism of the German Hasidism, Abraham Abulafia's teachings, the theosophy of the *Zohar*, and its reception in the Safed and Lurianic Kabbalah, are considered part of one historical continuum, which he calls "Jewish mysticism." In fact, these various phenomena may contain certain common elements, but, as religious forms, they often end up at wild variance with one another. For example, the zoharic sensibility, in which the phenomenal world is portrayed as a universe of symbols segueing in and out of the sacred text, is largely absent in Beit El. Yet the Beit El tradition sees itself as the lineal descendant of the *Zohar* and Lurianic traditions, and the *Zohar* is studied reverently as canon. Huss notes that the various kabbalistic movements in Scholem's historiographical scheme differ elementally from one another. In many cases, there is no phenomenological commonality that necessarily leads a given form of Kabbalah to be called "mysticism."

Huss contends that "Kabbalah" has been reduced by the academy to an aspect of the Western construct of "mysticism."<sup>18</sup> Huss has even questioned the validity of the expression "experience" (Heb. *havvaya*), noting that the Hebraic use of the term originated with the early Zionist ideologue A. D. Gordon, as has been pointed out by Melila Hellner-Eshed.<sup>19</sup> Huss concludes:

"Mysticism" and "Jewish mysticism" are scholarly categories, Christological terms couched in an imperialistic and colonialist context in order to categorize non-European cultures in terms, texts, doctrines and practices. The use of the category "mysticism" to catalog different traditions, based on the premise of the universalism of the mystical experience, creates a synthetic connection between phenomena that are unrelated and alienates them from their historical and social context. . . . In other words, Kabbalah has no connection to prior definitions of world "mysticism."<sup>20</sup>

Huss presents two models of contemporary scholarship in mysticism. There are those who equate all forms of mystical experience, comparing mystical systems according to psychological, social, or other reductionist methodologies. At the other extreme, there are scholars who argue for the specificity of every individual tradition and contend that there cannot be one understanding of the mystical experience. As noted earlier, the initial impulse to equate all forms of mysticism was impelled by a Western wish to appropriate other cultures. This saccharine tendency underlies perennial and universalist views, which appropriate the compliant systems and critique the obstinate traditions that refuse to be so digested.

Scholem's remark that "there is no mysticism as such, there is only the mysticism of a particular religious system, Christian, Islamic, Jewish Mysticism,

and so on”<sup>21</sup> is echoed in the school of comparative mysticism founded by Steven Katz. Throughout his long association with the subject, Katz has maintained that world mysticism cannot be reduced to a single, common core of pure, undifferentiable, unmediated experience, for such a common well of experience does not exist.<sup>22</sup> Experiences are processed through, organized by, and available through complex epistemological processes, most often embodied in the mystical doctrines of one’s own tradition. Katz’s rejection of the universal mystical experience was a response to the reductionist element in the perennialist school. His arguments against a “unified theory of mystical consciousness,” a Buddhist concept in itself, may be the last redoubt of Kabbalah scholarship in the study of mysticism.<sup>23</sup>

With all of his objections to the shortcomings of typologies, Katz does offer a model of some common elements of mystical experience.<sup>24</sup> Mystical experience can be an instantiation of the proper attitude or practice to be emulated or an existential representation of its source tradition. It can be a demonstration of the lived reality of doctrinal truth or proof of the continuing presence of the reality of the tradition. With regard to the existent structure of the religious tradition, the mystical experience can critique the existing practices of the tradition, be a potential source of a new revelation, or provide the basis for a new interpretation of an existing doctrine.<sup>25</sup> Within these models, I do find common elements in the doctrines and practices of the Beit El kabbalists and their lifestyle. The attempt on the mystics’ part to fuse their minds to the processes of the Godhead, their devotion to the production of new sacred names based on Shar’abi’s models and new didactic presentations of their kabbalistic systems, and their continued development of Shar’abi’s linguistic theories all are ways in which Beit El Kabbalah might still be counted in the study of world mysticism.

### The Mystical Experience in Beit El

Beit El Kabbalah certainly sees itself as the final link in the kabbalistic lineage. It models itself on the traditions of the *Zohar* and the Safed Kabbalah. These traditions valorized the exploits of wandering pietists, illuminated by mystical visions and drawing their experience from the symbols proffered by the phenomenal world around them. This is the avowed tradition of Beit El, from Shimon Bar Yohai to Isaac Luria and thence to Shar’abi.

Yet, in practice, the Beit El milieu is one in which the literary tone, spiritual elegance, and contemplative poetics of the *Zohar* and the Safed Kabbalah are subsumed in the battle against exhaustion. The *mekavvenim* are the

watchmen over Jerusalem; it is their mental labor that guards the city and its inhabitants. The point of Beit El practice as I have observed it is to keep going, at all costs, to stay awake through the rigor of the practice itself. Many are the times that I have seen Beit El mystics doze in the midst of prayer or study; they are nudged awake and continue their activity without penalty. In this, they are torn by two impulses, namely to commence their prayers as early as possible and not to neglect the *kavvanot*. The only factor that keeps them from constantly praying at the crack of dawn is the realization that to do so would leave the *mekavvenim* insufficient time to complete Shar'abi's *kavvanot*.<sup>26</sup> Were one to ask them how they felt, or to reflect on the nuances of their experience, they would frown and turn back to their activity. They are no more contemplative than soldiers at war.

Beit El kabbalists spend their waking hours enmeshed in the kabbalistic myth. The central concern of the Beit El adept is to commit the very functions of his mind to a union with the most abstruse processes of kabbalistic metaphysics. When the very mind is being devoted to God, there is little point in the cultivation of the personal. In a sense, the adept's whole attention is given over to a larger struggle, and personal reflection is not important. Otherwise, if the adept falls asleep in the course of his exhausting prayer schedule, he is simply nudged awake and recommitted to the task. If he desists from practicing a given *kavvanah*, he is still counted in the community as completing the prayer quorum and providing cover and contexts for the practitioners who are going deeper and higher into the rite. Adepts do not display any of the radical self-consciousness that characterizes Eastern European spiritual forms, either of the Hasidic variety or as is found among their fatalistic opponents, the *mitnagdim*. In the Beit El literature, the personal, expressive, and contemplative aspect of Judaism is ceded to earlier sources in the tradition, with no loss of standing for Shar'abi and his students. From the Safed kabbalists to the Ben Ish Hai in the nineteenth century, there has been no shortage of ethicists and homileticists preceding and operating within the traditions, but it is not the central business of the Beit El kabbalists.

Two decades ago, I knew one Beit El kabbalist who made a practice of fasting every day, eating only at night. There is a contemporary obsession in Israel with external signs of one's religious allegiance; this kabbalist flouted such concerns with an affect that was *sui generis*. Although obviously of Middle Eastern origin, he wore the striped robes of the most recidivistic Jerusalem Ashkenazim (except for his headgear, which was a turban made up of a fez with a sort of khaffiyeh wound around it). To the best of my knowledge, he would get up from his garret somewhere in the nexus of the Mahaneh Yehudah and Geulah neighborhoods and make his way to the Nahar Shalom

synagogue. He would recite *Tiqqun Hazot*, the midnight prayer, probably immerse himself in the *mikveh*, return to the synagogue, and commence the three-hour morning service. He would study for the rest of the morning and make his way to the Bukharian quarter, two neighborhoods over from the Beit El centers. In the Bukharian quarter, he would go to sleep on a bench in the Shoshanim le-David synagogue, renowned as the headquarters of R. Ya'akov Hayyim Sofer, author of the halakhic work *Kafha-Ḥayyim*. He would sleep the heavy, hypoglycemic sleep of the fast until midafternoon, when he would get up, wash his hands, and make his way back to the Geulah quarter. There he would begin the three-hour commitment to the afternoon and evening services, after which he would eat something and go back to sleep, presumably to begin the process all over again. Had I asked him about his mystical experience, I doubt that he would have been able to articulate an answer. He simply carried out his practice, with all of its effort and struggle, secure in the faith that he was working to realize soteric rewards for the greater good of his community.

One might say that in Beit El Kabbalah, meaning proceeded from the “top down,” whereas in conventional Kabbalah it was gathered “from the ground up.” An adept fortified himself with an aggregate knowledge of the Talmud and the *Zohar*, with a strong sense of the symbolic associations of the kabbalistic system. Combining these learnings with a pious and ascetic lifestyle, the adept could hope to peer beneath the fabric of present reality and see, from time to time, the inner meaning of things. Through the study of the material, combined with the purifying practice of Jewish religious life, the kabbalist might attain a state of perception through which he could gain a deeper meaning of reality and even act on his predictive powers.

Beit El Kabbalah and other forms of late Lurianism manifestly do not work this way. The contemplation of the sacred name is the focus of the practice. These names are mathematically or linguistically derived and lack the sensibility characteristic of the *Zohar* and the mainstream Safed Kabbalah. Conventional Kabbalah is composed of symbolic associations culled from the sacred texts and the phenomenal world. As a consequence, the Beit El practice can be described as being apodictic and otherworldly. The Beit El kabbalist mystic begins with the power and force of names that are largely without psychological or literary valence or religious content. One would think that this willfully obscurantist view would not be compelling or popular in the contemporary milieu, yet it has captured the imaginations of both the Beit El circles and the doctrines of the contemporary Kabbalah Centres.

A self-conscious doctrine of mystical experience as a lens through which to view the world is conspicuously absent in Beit El. Socially, the kabbalists are in

many cases indistinguishable from the most unassuming elements in the religious population of Jerusalem, with the exception of their sometimes flamboyant leaders. The theology of Beit El is avowedly late Lurianic, but its personal dimension is altogether conventional and ceded to earlier branches of the Jewish intellectual canon. When the kabbalists want to draw on the personal aspect of Judaism and Kabbalah, they go elsewhere; they have not produced a literature or tradition of personal experience themselves. Hence, in the parlance of scholars of mysticism, it doesn't matter whether or not there are mediated or unmediated "mystical" experiences. Beit El Kabbalah doesn't claim to have them.

The Beit El school is acclaimed in the Jerusalem community as existing at the apex of Kabbalah, but nonetheless it has few of the characteristics of what various romantic Englishmen call "mysticism." It is contemplative and based in religious practice, but it has not recorded a body of instances of transcendent, ecstatic practice. The Beit El kabbalists trace their origins to a circle that is frankly legendary, the central cast of the *Zohar*. The Safed kabbalists straddled the fence between legendary accounts of mystical revelations and associated thaumaturgic activities and a strong scholastic tradition devoted to the elucidation of their sacred texts. The Beit El kabbalists are manifestly concerned with a contemplative practice and the review of their mystical tradition. However, they are manifestly not a "mystical circle" according to the terms in which that is usually construed, because they do not emphasize personal experience.

Yet, "Kabbalah" is not an artificial construct, and the roots of the spiritual community that calls itself kabbalistic are very deep. Kabbalistic ideas saw the light of day in the medieval period, in the free market of ideas in traditional rabbinic discourse. If, in that context, one consistently favored the arguments of Nahmanides over those of Abraham Ibn Ezra and Maimonides, what would that person be called?<sup>27</sup> The resiliency of antirationalist aspects of Judaism cannot be denied, even when theologians such as the Maharal of Prague chose to clothe them in nonkabbalistic language. The kabbalists established themselves as the response to rationalist philosophy in the Middle Ages. Kabbalistic ideas and schools of thought are not constructs that exist in the imaginations of scholars. In fact, Kabbalah came to stand, in the public eye, for "that which is not Maimonidean," and this became the position that encompassed "that-which-is-not-philosophical," or "antirationalism." The consistent "essentialist" points of kabbalistic belief, namely that ritual impurity is palpable, that prophets need be of no particular gift or talent, because God is all powerful, that God can subvert the natural order at any time and work miracles, that there is a pantheon of angels in heaven standing by to do God's bidding, and so forth,

presage the eventual kabbalistic view. Hence, if one adheres to these positions consistently then one is surely not a philosopher, but one need not be, in Evelyn Underhill's terms, a "mystic." One has merely taken a view of Judaism in which given sets of metaphysics are salient and the transcendent is assumed. Thus, we retain, in Beit El, an avowedly kabbalistic circle whose relationship to mysticism demands a rethinking of the term itself.

## Appendix: *Nesirah*— The Development of a *Kavvanah*

To better understand the *kavvanot*, it is instructive to examine the archaeology of a given practice. The Beit El kabbalists “lived the kabbalistic myth” in its most developed form. Their aggregate practice was based on Shar’abi’s reading of Luria. Luria’s tradition was a selective adaptation of the ideas current in Safed in the sixteenth century, most of which were derived from the *Zohar*, which in turn had adapted them from the rabbinic mythologies of late antiquity. Thus, the mythos of the Beit El kabbalists originated in antiquity but was refined as kabbalistic theosophy evolved over the centuries.<sup>1</sup> Many *kavvanot* are based on arcane traditions that originate in antiquity.

One meaningful and widespread body of *kavvanot* centers on a cosmic phenomenon known as the *nesirah*, or “slicing away.” The “slicing away” in question refers to the separation of the male and female aspects of the Divine infrastructure, a phenomenon that occurs on a daily, weekly, and yearly basis. The term “*nesirah*” is usually associated with one rite in particular, specific the Days of Awe. During this period, between the New Year and the Day of Atonement, Beit El and European kabbalists contemplate specific permutations of God’s name. This contemplation takes place during the refrain of the silent devotion for these festivals: *Remember us for life, King who desires life, and write us in the Book of Life, for your sake, living God.* The soteric purpose of this specific *kavvanah* is to dispose of the harsh judgments that have accrued to the Jewish people during the year

by “off-loading” them onto the feminine aspect of God, the *Shekhinah*, or, more specifically, to her incarnation in the Lurianic system as *Nukvah*. On the Day of Atonement, at the end of the ten days of repentance, *Nukvah* is jettisoned from the Divine structure. By separating from the Divine infrastructure, she carries away all of the judgments that would have fallen upon the people of Israel, just as the scapegoat of the Temple-period atonement rite was sent into the desert bearing the communal sins.

## Basic Themes

To understand the practice of a mystical intention, such as the *nesirah*, one must be cognizant of a whole body of underlying and prior traditions. The history of the *nesirah* follows the classic developmental arc of a kabbalistic symbol. The original tradition was a cross-cultural archetype that was appropriated by the Midrash as a response to a textual problem in the Bible. Later, the *Zohar* interpreted the midrashic theme in mythic terms, retaining the central tropes and exegetical formulae that the Midrash introduced. Finally, the *Zohar*'s mythic narrative of the *nesirah* was adapted by Lurianic Kabbalah, which incorporated the myth into its mystical ritual. The Polish and the Beit El schools then incorporated the *nesirah* into their respective rituals.<sup>2</sup>

In this case, the *kavvanot* of the *nesirah* developed around a number of mythic themes. The most essential of these themes are the separation of Adam and Eve and Adam's postcoital slumber. In the Lurianic system, these themes evolved into a proactive rite to nullify the forces of Divine judgment and to reconcile the Divine parents.

The rabbinic *ur-text* of the *nesirah* is Genesis Rabbah (8:1):<sup>3</sup>

R. Yoḥanan began [Psalms 139:5] *back and front you formed me*. . .

R. Yirmiya ben Elazar taught that when the Holy Blessed One created Adam, He created him as androgynous. As it is written [Gen. 1:27] *male and female He created them*. R. Shmuel bar Nahman observed, when the Holy Blessed One created Adam, He created him with two faces.<sup>4</sup> He separated<sup>5</sup> him [Heb. *nasro*] and made him into two backs, a back here and a back there. They asked him, isn't it written [Gen. 2:21] *he took one of his ribs* [Heb. *zela*]? He answered, from his side, as it is written: [Ex. 26: 20] *And to the zela [side] of the Tabernacle*.

R. Tanḥuma in the name of R. Benayah and R. Berekhiah in the name of R. Elazar said, “The Holy Blessed One created Adam as a golem. And he was stretched from one end of the Earth to the other.”

Most of the salient themes of the *nesirah* are present in this text. Adam was originally androgynous. The stealing of Adam's rib, described in Genesis, was his separation into two separate beings. A second rendering of this account, in the tractate *Eruvin*, introduces the theme of *du parzufim*, "two countenances," which would remain central to the tradition:

R. Yirmiya ben Eliezer said, Adam had a two countenanced face, as it is written *back and front you formed me*. . . . In the beginning, it arose in [the Divine] thought to create two and in the end, only one was created. . . . and God built up the rib, teaching that God braided Eve's hair and brought her to Adam.<sup>6</sup>

The *Zohar* develops a number of themes from these initial readings. Some texts explore the image of Eve's creation from Adam's *zela'*, which is interpreted as either "rib" or "side," in that Adam "was whole from all of his sides, even though the female cleaved to his side."<sup>7</sup> Later zoharic interpretations equate the "side" with the two "faces" of Adam, a metaphor for his original androgyny,<sup>8</sup> as evidenced by the statement that "Adam existed as both male and female, as it is written, *and the Lord said let us make Adam in our form and image*,"<sup>9</sup> as well as the reference to "Adam, male and female, female contained in male. . . . female born of male."<sup>10</sup> When the term *zela'* is read as "side," then the mythic image of the division of the original anthropos may be derived from the Genesis account. In this ancient cross-cultural myth, the original female was conceived as secondary to the male.<sup>11</sup>

The later sections of the *Zohar* examined the esoteric meaning of the midrashic image of *du parzufim*, or "two faces." A number of authors made use of the pyrotechnics of concrete poetry to extract the name D"U (two) from the letter YU"D, the transliterated first letter of the name of God as written in its full consonantal explication, or *milui*.<sup>12</sup> This idea appears in the zoharic text *Sifra de-Zeniuta*, which states: "Outside are hidden the Adam, the man and woman who are two [D"U]."<sup>13</sup> Internally, the letter *dalet*, with its numerical coefficient of four, signifies the name YHVH, while the letter *va"v* stands for the number six, representing the middle *sefirot* unified under the banner of *Tiferet*.<sup>14</sup>

A number of the midrashic themes of the *nesirah* survive from the rabbinic literature into the *Zohar*. These include a play on the use of the word *ahat* (one), which signifies the presence of the *Shekhinah*.<sup>15</sup> Discussions of the verse *back and front you formed me* (Psalms 139:5) continue throughout the *Zohar* literature.<sup>16</sup> Pivotal exegeses are triggered by discrepancies in the language of the creation story, such as the observation *that it is not good that Adam should be alone*, as well as the oblique *Male and female he created them*.<sup>17</sup> Finally, Psalm

44, “Awake, why does God slumber?” is invoked in these original accounts of Adam’s sleep and is retained in the *nesirah* rite in the Rashkover prayer book.

## Divine Marriage

The earlier Talmudic passage introduced the idea that God presented Eve to Adam, braiding her hair and adorning her like a bride. A related rabbinical tradition links the formation of Adam, and by implication the *nesirah*, to the wedding ceremony. This ceremony contains two blessings that address the theme of formation, “he who formed man in his image” and “Blessed art thou, who forms man.” The sages speculate that the two blessings of formation in the wedding service reflect two acts of formation in the creation of Adam, that is, the formation of the undivided Adam and his division into male and female:

Levi visited the house of Rabbi on the wedding celebration of R. Shimon, his son, and he blessed five blessings. R. Assi visited the house of R. Ashi on the wedding celebration of Mar, his son, and he blessed six blessings. Perhaps they differ on this point: one maintains that there were two formings and one maintains that there was one forming? No, everyone is of the opinion that there was one forming. One is of the opinion that we follow the intention and one is of the opinion that we follow the act. This is as that [statement] of R. Yehudah who points to a contradiction. It is written [in one verse] *God created Adam in His image*, and it is written *Male and Female He created them*? How so? In the beginning, it arose in [the Divine] thought to create two and in the end he created one.<sup>18</sup>

The repetition of the image of formation begs the explanation that, at the creation of humankind, there were “two formations,” the initial creation of the androgyne, followed by the separation of the male and female aspects. The *Zohar* echoes the rabbinic tradition that God brought Eve to Adam and blessed them, “as the cantor blesses the bride and the groom.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, as early as the rabbinic period, both the mythos of the Garden of Eden and its Platonic subtext were reflected in religious ritual, namely the wedding service. The expression “*nesirah*,” or “slicing away” is not invoked here, as it is in the passage in *Eruvin*. However, the physical *nesirah*, the “two formations” and the “two countenances” (*du parzufim*), are all aspects of this tradition, according to the reading of classical Kabbalah.

The wedding service contains two blessings of “formation” because, at the creation of humankind, there were “two formations,” the initial creation of the

androgynous, followed by the separation. The *Zohar* repeatedly portrays God “transforming” the woman into a bride through the act of ornamentation, which is also, tellingly, referred to as an act of fixing, or *tiqqun*, with all of the implications inherent in the use of the term.<sup>20</sup> The *Idra Rabbah*, one of the penultimate sections of the *Zohar* literature, also invokes the Divine marriage. The *Idra Rabbah* introduces the idea that the goal of the *nesirah* is to expedite the face-to-face embrace of the various aspects of the Divine:

And in her place was left mercy and loving-kindness as it says (Gen 2:21) *he closed up the flesh beneath it* and elsewhere it is written (Ezekiel 36:26) *I will take away your heart of stone from your flesh and give you heart of flesh. . . .* When the Matronita dwells with the King and they embrace, face to face, who will come between them, who will draw near to them? When they embrace, they perfume each other and everything. They perfume each other’s judgments [*dinnim*]; all above and below receive their *tiqqun*.<sup>21</sup>

The *Idra Rabbah* stresses that the *nesirah* is a prelude to Divine marriage. Moreover, this phenomenon did not just happen once in history to a limited number of individuals but continues to unfold, daily and yearly. The relocation of a creation myth to the ongoing present is evident elsewhere in the *Zohar* literature.<sup>22</sup> In the case of the *nesirah*, its yearly recurrence is the basis for its inclusion in the Lurianic rite.

In one of his early teachings, Isaac Luria interpreted the *nesirah* passages as referring to sefirotic unions.<sup>23</sup> In an early composition, Luria portrays the vicissitudes of Jewish history in images of familial dysfunction. The Jewish exile is referred to as the “divorce” of the transformative feminine “Matronita.” In this, as in other teachings, Luria equates the vicissitudes of exile with the trauma of familial upheaval. The separation of the *nesirah* is the separation of exile, and the role of the adept is to reconcile the celestial family and therefore end the social upheaval of the Diaspora. In subsequent kabbalistic practice, acts of repentance and mythical self-immolation are required in order to heal and rectify the upheavals mentioned in the midrashic and zoharic sources, such as the broken family, the fractured world, and the dispersed nation.

Initially, Luria understood the *nesirah* as the remedy for the Jewish people’s exile. This would come about through the “bequeathing of crowns,” an early and euphemistic metaphor for the processes of the emanation. The “bequeathing of crowns” means to dowry children, to bequeath crowns to the children to “unify them that they may unify.”<sup>24</sup> This giving of the dowry restores the children’s essential natures and repairs the upheaval of the historical exile.

## Neglect

Luria adopted another zoharic theme, one that is also a poignant reflection of the upheavals of his own upbringing. This is the *Zohar's* motif of Eve's neglect by Adam, as evinced in this remark:

Adam was created with two faces. . . . He did not service<sup>25</sup> his wife, and she was not a help-meet to him. . . . [Eve] was on his side and they were united back-to-back and so, *the man was alone*. . . . What did the Holy Blessed One do? He separated them and took the woman from him.<sup>26</sup>

The “back-to-back” embrace is described as a source of sexual dysfunction, as a result of which Adam could not “service” [*ishtadel*] his wife.<sup>27</sup> Later Lurianic interpretation would clarify that it was not the case that Adam *wouldn't* service his wife; rather, he *couldn't* do so, because both Adam and Eve were too preoccupied with defending the family from the detritus of the breaking of the vessels, the animating cosmic catastrophe in the Lurianic mythos. The Lurianic tradition emphasized the original embrace of the female and male aspects of the original androgyne. For the Lurianic reading, the most important aspect of the *nesirah* is its movement from a “back-to-back” to a “face-to-face” embrace. Only when *Abba* and *Imma*, the cosmic parents of the Divine superstructure, move their embrace from back-to-back to face-to-face could the conception and growth of *Zeir Anpin*, the wonder child, be expedited. According to Luria's formulation, the back-to-back embrace is part of the basic dilemma of the breaking of the vessels (*shevirat ha-kelim*), as evidenced from this passage in his *Zohar* commentaries. Speaking of the creation of Adam, Luria retells the account of the *nesirah* with particular poignancy:

In Adam, He placed and set forth the essence of male and female. When He had completed them, he left it between his two arms. According to the *Zohar* (II 254b), they were initially created back to back. He was compelled to separate them and to return them face to face . . . because all of the extraneous aspects were attached to the upper rearmost parts to receive the Divine flow from there. So initially *there was no Adam on the Earth to till the soil*, to guard it from the extraneous elements.<sup>28</sup>

The impetus for the creation was the unredeemed nature of the Divine embraces. The back-to-back embrace is necessary because of the dangerous, broken state of the world. Elsewhere, a Lurianic source portrays the dangers of the Divine couple attempting to embrace in the broken state of the cosmos:

Therefore, had they been created face to face, their backs would have been exposed, and the extraneous forces would have adhered to them, for the backs are the sources of the *dinnim*, therefore the ke-lipot would have adhered there. Therefore, they were initially created back-to-back, the rear parts were covered this one in that, and there was no place for the extraneous forces to adhere. Afterward, when he separated them, these rearmost parts were sweetened in the secret of the *hasadim*, in the secret of the closed up the flesh beneath it . . . so that there would be not adhesion by the extraneous forces.<sup>29</sup>

The cosmic parents, the progenitors of existence, have to stand back-to-back to protect the children from the shards of the shattered vessels. Hence, the gender dysfunctions in the Divine realm originate from the general dystopia in present reality. The *nesirah kavvanot* were intended to expedite the turning of the countenances, the better to drive away the forces of judgment.<sup>30</sup>

The adaptation of the *nesirah* by Luria also follows a number of rules of his hermeneutic, particularly the reading of the *Idra Rabbah* and the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*. Luria disagreed, in classical terms, with Moshe Cordovero, who portrayed the *nesirah* in terms of the play of *sefirot*.<sup>31</sup> Luria's interpretation led, in turn, to his student Ḥayyim Vital's emphasis on the Divine union and impregnation. In all cases, the *nesirah* is interpreted as a metaphor for different metaphysical interplays. In the late Lurianic recension *Pri Eẓ Ḥayyim*,<sup>32</sup> the *nesirah* is presented as the turning or reconciliation of the Divine couple from their back-to-back position to a face-to-face union. The late editions also present the *nesirah* in purely theoretical terms, outside the context of religious practice, in such documents as the *Sha'ar ha-Nesirah* ("Gate of the Nesirah") in the late, and authoritative, work *Eẓ Ḥayyim*.<sup>33</sup>

## Sleep

The culminating texts of the *Zohar* are the *Idrot*, a group of compositions including the "Great *Idra*" (*Idra Rabbah*), the "Lesser *Idra*" (*Idra Zuta*), and the "Hidden Book" (*Sifra De-Zeniuta*). These works advance a kabbalistic theory from that in the earlier sections, namely the theory of the Divine countenances, or *parzufim*. This theory would become the animating myth of Lurianic Kabbalah.<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, the *Idrot* recast the *nesirah* account in terms of the doctrine of the countenances. In the version to be found in the *Idra Rabbah*, which was influential in subsequent Lurianic doctrine, the countenance *Zeir Anpin*, a

heroic masculine archetype, takes the place of the biblical Adam as the one who falls asleep:

The Ancient of Ancients, the most hidden One separated this one from that one and joined them to be fragrant, and unified. When he separated them, he caused slumber to fall upon *Zeir Anpin* and separated the female from the anterior side and he made her *tiqqun* and hid her away for her day, to bring her to the male, as it is written (Gen 2:21) *the Lord caused a slumber to fall on Adam and he slept*. What does it mean: *and he slept?* As it is written, (Psalms 44:24) *Awake, why does God sleep?*<sup>35</sup>

In two *Idra* accounts, the references to the *nesirah* are preceded by a strange prelude. Lurianic interpreters<sup>36</sup> considered these passages as part of the *nesirah* tradition, and they form the basis for many of the subsequent *kavvanot*. Both of these texts describe a preponderance of *Din*, the *sefirah* of harsh judgment, in the Divine superstructure. These forces of judgment are linked to the feminine aspects of the Divine. When they depart during the *nesirah*, the male aspect of the Divine is left as an entity of pure loving-kindness. The first allusion to this theme is found in the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*, which makes a mysterious and cryptic reference to an act of mischief prior to the *nesirah*, based on *Zeir Anpin's* postcoital slumber:

The male extended and set forth its *tiqqunim* like a mother in the mouth of a maidservant . . . the *dinnim* of the male are mighty at the beginning and rest at the end, while the reverse is true of the female.<sup>37</sup>

God's stealing of Adam's *zela'* while he was asleep derives from the natural disparity of male and female excitation and the trickery of the feminine "sheath," which steals the Divine seed during postcoital slumber. According to another *Idra* text, the *Idra Rabbah*, the womb of *Imma*, the Divine mother, euphemized as the "mouth," sheathes the extended phallus of *Hokhmah* and in turn "sweetens" the aspects of *Din* that are inherent in the receptive sexual nature of the feminine:

We learn in the *Sifra de-Zeniuta* that "the male extended and set forth its *tiqqunim*," the *tiqqun* of pure covering. . . Everything is contingent on the mouth of that *Imma* who is called *yu"d*. When this *yu"d* is revealed in *Imma's* mouth, the higher *Hesed* is revealed. This *Imma* is called *Hesed*. It is contingent on that *Imma's* mouth. It is not called *Hesed* until it is revealed in the mouth of *Imma*. . . Whoever uncovers this *yu"d* is protected and will never go the *yu"d* of the other

realm. He is assured of the world to come, bound in the knot of life. When this mother extends, the realm of *Gevurah* extends from the *gevurot* of the left side of *Nukvah*. It takes root in one place in *Nukvah*. These are called the hidden places [*arayot*] of everything, the hidden place of Imma that is called *Ḥesed*, *Ḥesed* in the right and *Gevurah* is the left, and they are scented, this one in the other and called Adam, made up of two sides, *Ḥesed* and *Gevurah*. All the *sefirot* have right and left, *Din* and *Raḥamim*.<sup>38</sup>

According to this dense and difficult passage, which immediately precedes a *nesirah* account, the letter *yu"ḏ*, transliterated according to the system of the *miluyyim*,<sup>39</sup> evokes the power of Divine loving-kindness, the *sefirah* *Ḥesed*. This is the esoteric meaning of the "revelation of *yu"ḏ* in the mouth of this great mother." The womb/mouth of the *sefirah* *Nukvah* appropriates the seed of the letter *yu"ḏ* in order to conceive. During the course of this process, the *Idrot* also portray the *nesirah* as an outpouring of *hasadim*, Divine loving-kindness. When this wave of loving-kindness recedes, it provokes an irruption of *dinnim*, or judgments, from the realm of the feminine, which only exacerbates the separation and rupture in the cosmic structure.

These references to the beginning of the *nesirah* evoke the give and take of sexual intercourse. The male extends and, upon withdrawing, provokes an irruption of judgment from the feminine side. The implication of these texts that precede the *nesirah* accounts is that the *nesirah* is preceded by a stormy act of Divine sexual congress, which leaves the masculine countenance *Zeir* exhausted and spent, as the renegade feminine makes her escape bearing the "seed" in her mouth.<sup>40</sup>

### Luria on Sleep

Isaac Luria conflated the doctrine of the uncovered *yu"ḏ* and the perfuming of the *dinnim* into one concept.<sup>41</sup> The "uncovering" of the *yu"ḏ* is a euphemism for the enclosing of the male member in the womb, or "mouth," of the female. Subsequent interpreters called this the "tiqqun of the pure garment," in that the womb of *Imma* serves as a sheath for the engendering phallus, whose tumescence is signified by the extension, or *milui*, of *yu"ḏ*.<sup>42</sup> The *yu"ḏ* is "uncovered" at its tumescence, as well as at the moment of circumcision. According to this tradition, the transliterated *yu"ḏ* is symbolic of the moment when *Imma* carries the seed of *Ḥokhmah*, thereby conceiving the seed and carrying it into the Divine embrace.<sup>43</sup>

Luria also expanded upon the image of the transfer of powers of judgment, which he defined in the plural as *dinnim* or *gevurot*. These noxious elements are transferred from the highest *sefirot* into the lowest, namely the feminine *Nukvah*, who is then summarily jettisoned. *Nukvah* is forced into a position analogous to the scapegoat of the Temple's Yom Kippur rite, carrying off the accumulated impurities of the sefirotic system.

The motif of Adam's slumber also leads the *nesirah* to be associated with the daily passing of day into night and vice versa.<sup>44</sup> According to Luria's reading, *Zeir Anpin*, the central countenance, was the "sleeper," so that *Zeir* took over the myth from the primordial Adam. When *Zeir* was asleep, his souls and consciousness ascended and thereby "sweetened" a number of the harsh judgments [*dinnim*].<sup>45</sup> In classical Judaism, as well as in Kabbalah, a sense of dread is commonly associated with the coming of the night, as is reflected in the blessing "lay us down" in the evening service, as well as in the blessing of the night prayer itself. The first part of the night is the time when the *kelipot*, or demonic forces, are ascendant. In the mystical rite, the dread of the night is equated with the dread of exile.<sup>46</sup> This situation changes at midnight, which is considered a time for Divine favor and arousal. Shaul Magid<sup>47</sup> has pointed out that the slumber, *tardemah*, imposed on the primordial man during creation is replicated isomorphically in human sleep.<sup>48</sup> According to the *Zohar*, Adam's sleep (the Latin *dormita*) is associated with all sleep, so that every act of sleep recreates the conditions of the original creation myth. Sleep also reflects the experience of the exile and the mythos of the *Shekhinah* in exile. In Vital's words, "We are asleep because we are the children of the Shekhinah, our mother Rachel!"<sup>49</sup> In terms of the kabbalistic rite, sleep exists so that the adherent may rise to perform his work at midnight. Hence, it was standard practice among Lurianic kabbalists to sleep the early part of the night.<sup>50</sup>

One nightly rite that assumed great significance in kabbalistic ritual was the midnight vigil, *Tiqqun Ḥazot*.<sup>51</sup> This ritual consisted of the adherent's rising at midnight, smearing ashes on his forehead, and bemoaning the exile of the Torah. The ashes on the face reflect the burning of the Torah, or the theft of its secrets among the nations, a possible reference to Christian Kabbalah.<sup>52</sup> The *Tiqqun Ḥazot* ritual is divided into two sections, or "orders," which are recited at different times. One order is devoted to the Matriarch Leah, the paradigm of the *sefirah Binah*. The other order is devoted to the Matriarch Rachel, paradigm of the lowest *sefirah*, *Malkhut*, and equivalent to the *Shekhinah*. Natan Neta' Hanover, in *Sha'arei Ziyyon*, provides for a third section in which one's body becomes "a chariot for the Shekhinah."<sup>53</sup> Needless to say, Shalom Shar'abi also left specific *kavvanot* for this midnight vigil.<sup>54</sup>

Much as in the midnight vigil, the night *nesirah* reflects the vicissitudes of the *Shekhinah*, in her split incarnations as Rachel and Leah, as reflected in *Tiqqun Ḥazot*. The multiple significations for the *sefirot* as presented in the *Zohar* are interpreted as discrete and unique figures in the Lurianic interpretation of the cosmic structure. Therefore, the figure of Jacob, who signifies the *sefirah Tiferet* in the plainest meaning of the term, “splits” into two alter egos, Jacob and Israel. *Nukvah* becomes Rachel, who is then shadowed by her biblical sister Leah.<sup>55</sup> This set of extra gradations in the relationships of the countenances complicates the dynamics of the *nesirah* as it is explained in its later passages. Every night, therefore, is a rite of *hieros gamos*, sacred marriage, albeit a *ménage à trois*. The early part of the night is devoted to the union of Jacob and Leah, the countenance *Zeir Anpin* with the countenance Binah. Leah then grows to full size, appropriating, at that moment, some of the properties of Rachel, the countenance *Nukvah*, equivalent to the *Shekhinah* of the sefirotic system. In the course of her vicissitudes, according to the Lurianic system, the *Shekhinah* shrinks to a tiny point and then reinflates. This loss of mass is a result of the *Shekhinah*'s experience of exile. Diminished thus, the *Shekhinah* is really *Nukvah*, the faceless “orifice.” Hence, one function of the Lurianic reading of the ritual is to resolve the distinction between the colorless *Nukvah* of the countenance tradition of the *Idrot* with the fully realized *Shekhinah* as portrayed in the general sections of the *Zohar*.<sup>56</sup>

The evening prayer brings about the conjunction of *Zeir Anpin* and Leah. However, the early part of the night is demonic, and that precludes any further *tiqqun*. Hence, the adherent had better sleep during the early part of the night.<sup>57</sup> Leah has to grow in order to bring about the union with Jacob. In order to grow in this way, she borrows from the light of her sister countenance, Rachel.<sup>58</sup> The countenance Rachel inflates after the countenance Leah. This process takes place during her ascent through the heavenly palaces.<sup>59</sup>

The role of the adept in both *Tiqqun Ḥazot* and the *nesirah* rite is to help expedite the *Shekhinah*'s union with Jacob in order to expedite her eventual expansion. Rachel, the *Shekhinah*, has to be positioned into the face-to-face embrace with Jacob. This requires that Leah be pushed to the side. Eventually, Leah is absorbed in Rachel, the true consort of *Zeir Anpin*.<sup>60</sup> In expediting the *Shekhinah*'s union, the adept sees himself as being in a moment of intimacy with her. Rachel, the *Shekhinah*, is not in exile; her status has merely been reduced. It is the darkness of the night that is the reason for Rachel's “diminishment in size and power.”<sup>61</sup> After the face-to-face embrace has been achieved, Rachel falls to the feet of *Zeir*, at the corona of the Divine phallus.<sup>62</sup>

## The Morning *Nesirah*

The *nesirah* myth is “lived out” in another body of liturgy, the rituals attending waking in the morning. One would think that the activity attendant on getting up in the morning would be devoted to isomorphically awakening *Zeir*, as in the ancient *nesirah* myth. In fact, the purpose of the morning *nesirah* is to excite or raise the “feminine waters,” the impulse on the part of the lower, feminine *sefirot* to rise to the upper, masculine forces. The morning *nesirah* is not concerned with waking *Zeir*. Rather, it is devoted to expediting the face-to-face union of *Abba* and *Imma*, the celestial parents.<sup>63</sup> At the beginning of the process, *Imma* relinquishes union with *Zeir Anpin* and unifies with *Abba*. The *Amidah* prayer brings about the union of the celestial parents and their excitation and the conception of *Zeir Anpin* as the child of *Abba* and *Imma*.

*Imma*’s “weaning” *Zeir* leads to another central Lurianic theme incorporated into the *nesirah* narratives. This theme concerns the development of the *mohin*, or nervous system, in the newly conceived embryo of *Zeir Anpin*. Many mystical practices are devoted to the development of these networks of inner consciousness. In terms of Lurianic metaphysics, it is during the slumber that the *mohin* enter the feminine, with all of the overtones of mischief inherent in the original accounts in the *Idrot* and the *Sifra de-Zeniuta*.<sup>64</sup> According to this interpretation, *Zeir* does not lose the *mohin* but gives them away to *Nukvah* and gets new, better ones. The *mohin* develop through the powers of the lower *sefirot* *Nezah*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*. These *sefirot* bring about tumescence as the various *mohin* of *Zeir* “load” through them. As a consequence of this process, *Zeir Anpin* becomes identical with the biblical Adam. When *Nukvah* was behind *Zeir*, the light of his *mohin* did not flow directly into her but rather was filtered through him, so that she could not directly receive his light. After the morning *nesirah*, when God, as it were, presented *Nukvah* to *Zeir* as the celestial bride, she became an independent countenance, nurtured directly by *Abba* and *Imma*.<sup>65</sup>

## *Nesirah* on the Days of Awe

Lurianic analysis of the *nesirah* passages in the *Zohar*, particularly the *Idrot*, gel in a passage in the *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot* that deals with the mysteries of the New Year.<sup>66</sup> This *drush* is elsewhere described as the ur-text of the *nesirah* tradition.<sup>67</sup> The central premise of this homily is that since the rites of the Days of Awe originated in the Temple service, the *nesirah* belongs in the New Year,

because the New Year resembles the creation of the world in that all of the accounts have been turned back to their status at the beginning of time.<sup>68</sup> Thus, the *nesirah* reoccurs every year, reflecting certain existential changes in the condition of the world since the destruction of the Temple. In liturgical time, the *nesirah* occurs during the ten days of repentance and the Days of Awe.

The position of classical Judaism is that petitionary prayer was developed to compensate for the loss of the soteric powers of the Temple rite. This is particularly the case in the Days of Awe, which literally replace the passion of the High Priest in the Temple with the petitions of the synagogue congregation. Luria's presentation extends this understanding. Ḥayyim Vital, in the late recension *Pri Eṣ Ḥayyim*, implies that, before the destruction of the Temple, people did not even need to pray.<sup>69</sup> At that time, prayer had the power to elevate both the inner and the outer nature of the cosmic structure, but only at the celebration of the New Year. Since the destruction of the Temple, however, mere prayer is no longer efficacious. Now, it has the power to lift the soul of the adherents to God but not to fulfill their desires. Hence, prayer no longer "works" for the purposes that it claims to rectify, namely the fulfillment of the concrete needs of the Jewish people.

The loss of this idealized situation is reflected in the *nesirah*. In the idealized past, the Temple rite and petitionary prayer were enough to expunge harsh judgment from the world. Today, all that remains of the process is the mystical rite. The liturgical refrain that recurs on the Days of Awe, *Remember us for life, O King who desires life, and write us in the book of life*, is an explicit reference to the *nesirah*. The adherent beseeches God to return the people Israel to the condition that they enjoyed before the destruction.<sup>70</sup>

Ḥayyim Vital echoed the theme, so present in the *Idrot*, that prayer is the instrument to counter the harsh judgment that is present on the first day of the New Year. The process is especially pronounced on the first day of Rosh ha-Shanah because of the severity of the *Din*, the "harshes, most unsweetened" form of judgment. On the second day of the holiday, the effects of the *Din* are already alleviated or "softened somewhat."<sup>71</sup>

Other accounts present this process in terms of the interactions of the countenances, according to which, the action of the *nesirah* draws down the *dinnim*, forces of judgment from the countenances *Zeir* to the countenance *Nukvah*.<sup>72</sup> Over the course of the ten days between the New Year and the Day of Atonement, the *dinnim* pass through the *sefirot* and the countenances. The process ends with the *dinnim* loaded into the feminine countenance, *Nukvah*, which is then jettisoned from the system. According to the Lurianic view, the off-loading of judgment onto *Nukvah*, the empty receptacle of the feminine, is literally the separation of male and female depicted in the first *nesirah*

accounts. This process is concentrated into the ten days of repentance and coincides with the descent through the ten *sefirot*. Eventually the *dinnim* are transferred into *Nukvah* from *Zeir* until *Nukvah* is finally jettisoned on the Day of Atonement.

Each day of the ten days of repentance is characterized by the aura of *sefirah* or countenance that is being stripped of its *dinnim*. The first two days are marked by the conditions of the apex of the Godhead.<sup>73</sup> These days were considered the essential holiday from late antiquity, an “extended day.”<sup>74</sup> On the third day of the ten days of repentance, the *dinnim* move from the countenance *Zeir* and begin to fill up *Nukvah*. The third day is traditionally a fast day, the Fast of Gedaliah. That day is still beset by the forces of judgment, but it doesn’t have the blowing of the *shofar* to neutralize them, as was the case on the first two days. It is the day that Gedaliah, the Babylonian governor in the first Temple period, was killed, thereby hastening the destruction of the first Temple. Having disposed of the *dinnim* by off-loading them into *Nukvah*, the *nesirah* begins the central process of the Lurianic system, the conception and regeneration of the countenance *Zeir Anpin*.<sup>75</sup>

The dynamics of the *nesirah* provide the metaphysical underpinnings for some of the halakhic nuances of the New Year observance. On Rosh ha-Shanah, the blowing of the *shofar* is thought of as awakening *Zeir* from his slumber.<sup>76</sup> The five forms of self-affliction that are practiced on Yom Kippur reflect the function of the sweetening of five “judgments” (*gevurot*), exemplified in the five acts of penance or abstention associated with that day.<sup>77</sup> The adepts practice the *kavvanot* in the silent *amidah*, but not for its repetition. However, one does practice the *kavvanot* for the repetition in on the Days of Awe.<sup>78</sup> Transpersonally, the one who prays has to sweeten the judgments (*dinnim*) that are rife in the phenomenal world.<sup>79</sup>

## Conclusion

The *nesirah* is a strong presence in such sources as Vital’s *Pri Ez Ḥayyim* and was retained in the Polish traditions, particularly deriving from the traditions of Shabbatai of Rashkov,<sup>80</sup> the *kloiz* in Brod, and the first published Lurianic prayer book in Zolkava.<sup>81</sup> It is also a theme in Moshe of Dolena’s *Seraf Pri Ez Ḥayyim*, an influential analysis of the *kavvanot*.<sup>82</sup> An emphasis on slumber and the *nesirah* is also evident in the influential prayer book commentary by the Shabbatean Jacob Koppel Lifschuetz, *Kol Ya’akov*.<sup>83</sup> The *nesirah* rite was so widespread that Ḥayyim Vital wondered why it wasn’t mentioned in the exoteric prayer service!<sup>84</sup> His son Shmuel Vital’s prayer book commentary con-

tains an explication of the *nesirah* that parallels the entry in *Sha'ar ha-kavvanot: Rosh ha-Shanah*, although this composition might not be original.<sup>85</sup>

Surprisingly, the compilers of *kavvanot* did not universally embrace the theme of the *nesirah*. Among the manuscript prayer books that lack a *nesirah* rite for the New Year are the manuscript editions of Yom Tov Lippman Heller II (the grandson of the author of *Tosafot Yom Tov*),<sup>86</sup> Yisrael of Satanov,<sup>87</sup> and Moshe Yosef of Lubmila.<sup>88</sup> Shalom Shar'abi acknowledged the *nesirah* but did not build the entire structure of his *kavvanot* around the phenomenon. According to Shar'abi, the *kavvanot* attached to the *shofar* are not primarily intended to awaken *Zeir* from his slumber but are meant for other soteric purposes attendant upon the nature of the day.<sup>89</sup> However, the *nesirah* rite is an important part of the kabbalistic practice of the Jerusalem circles, and the Nahar Shalom community in Jerusalem has prepared an extensive *nesirah* rite.<sup>90</sup>

The *nesirah* emerged from pagan myth, was adapted into rabbinic tradition, and blossomed into kabbalistic practice, finally finding expression in the Lurianic *kavvanot*. The high profile of the *nesirah* in the Lurianic prayer rite recovers the original myth of antiquity.<sup>91</sup> Like other such motifs, it then entered the liturgy through the Lurianic system of *kavvanot*, which functioned as an open canon for later kabbalists. The midrashic origins of the myth lent it weight and authenticity and further expedited its incorporation into the mystical rite.

The *nesirah* account posits an ancient Jewish myth, which speaks of a flaw in the original relationship of man and woman. In this case, the flawed relationship is secondary to a prior ideal relation, which is androgynous. Lurianic tradition attempted to unite the flawed couple and to repair the celestial relationship and, with it, the whole Divine family. The flaw was not intrinsic; the Divine couple was compelled by catastrophe to stand back-to-back in order to confront the *kelipot* that assailed them as a result of the breaking of the vessels. In addition to this poignant portrayal of the family beset by stresses from without, a negative view of the elementary feminine survives from the original Eden account. In this case, *Nukvah*, the spouse, is viewed as a mere receptacle for the discarded powers of judgment.

The persistence of the image of the *nesirah*, from aggadic motif to kabbalistic rite, is also a by-product of the formal similarity between the various expressions of the androgynous anthropos. Male and female are created in a static union in the original midrashic accounts. Similarly, the hypostatic structures of the *sefirot* and the countenances as portrayed in the *Zohar* and adapted by Cordovero and Luria contain similar static relationships of union between male and female *sefirot* and countenances. The unions are constant

and yet ever shifting and evolving, through the liturgical day and into the rhythms of the year. In the aggadic narratives, God is the trickster, as well as the matchmaker, expediting the separation and the reunion of the genders. In the mystical rite, the kabbalist is the catalyst for the union, as well as for the rebirth of the central figure in the system, *Zeir Anpin*.

Every prayer rite that was adopted by Kabbalah has its own archaeology and career through history. For whatever reason, the image of the reconciliation of the countenances has proven very resilient among mystics from Eastern Europe to the Middle East, remaining the focus of the mystical rite and undergoing revival particularly in this generation. In the case of the *nesirah*, different mystics in varying locales agreed that the primordial Man was always fated to lose his consciousness, fall asleep, and require the efforts of humankind in order to be reborn. The process of evolution that has been herein detailed for the *nesirah* was repeated for the various climactic moments of the daily, weekly, and yearly prayer service. The night vigil of *Tiqqun Ḥazot*, the counting of the Omer, and the priestly blessing all originated with one set of cultic assumptions and then began the long process of evolution through halakhic, magical, philosophical, and eventually, in these cases, kabbalistic interpretations of Lurianic and non-Lurianic provenances.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion reached by Scholem that the Lurianic system is a psychological projection of a historical reality. The flaw in the relationship of the countenances came about as the result of deleterious influences in the cosmos. In one respect, seeing the Divine family as a metaphor for Luria's own sundered family lends credence to Scholem's famous thesis that Luria's teaching reflected the vicissitudes of the Spanish expulsion. Martin Cohen (in a monograph, unpublished) has recently theorized that Luria made the countenance system of the *Idrot* central to his own mystical system because the images of an extended family under stress from the vicissitudes of history mirrored his own life experience. Cohen has argued that Luria's teaching is related to familial trauma. In the mind of a young child rendered fatherless and exiled to Egypt with his widowed mother under the protection of an ambiguously benevolent patriarch, the world offers mostly catastrophe. The terrors inherent in the *nesirah* account, such as the dread of night, the breakup of the family structure, and the anxieties attending the wellbeing of the celestial parents, reflect a child's anxiety and the hope that *Abba* is not gone forever but is only sleeping. The lachrymose aspects of Lurianic teaching certainly indicate great emotional pain on the part of the author. Whether engendered by external or familial factors, Luria was, indeed, a perennial orphan, whether of his family or of history.

# Notes

## CHAPTER I

1. Moshe Ḥalamish, "The Requirement of Intentions," in Ḥalamish, *Kabbalah: In Liturgy, Halakhah and Customs*, p. 80.
2. Zevi Moscowwitz, *Ḥayyei ha-RaSHaSH*, pp. 5–6; drawn from Ya'akov Sapir, *Even Sapir*, 110b.
3. Aaron Ḥeibi, *Giant of the Spirit*, p. 14.
4. Moscowwitz, *Ḥayyei ha-RaSHaSH*, p. 6.
5. Shar'abi died on the tenth of Shevat, 1777. The anniversary of his death is celebrated by the Beit El kabbalists. Avraham Shalom Shar'abi, *Divrei Shalom, Minhagim* #58.
6. Moscowwitz, *Ḥayyei ha-RaSHaSH*, p. 9.
7. Gershom Scholem emphasized this phenomenon in his "A Charter of the Students of the AR" I." The Beit El charters have been translated by Louis Jacobs (*Jewish Mystical Testimonies*, pp. 199–202) and Lawrence Fine (*Judaism in Practice*, pp. 210–214).
8. The signers of the first draft include Shar'abi, Yom Tov Algazi, Shmuel Al-Ḥadif, Avraham Balul, Aaron Ben Kavod Rabbi Eliahu ha-Levi, Menachem ben Rabbi Yosef, Ḥayyim Yosef David Azulai, Yosef Amnon, Shlomo Bela'ah, David Fernandes Dias, Ya'akov Biton, Rafael Eliezer Parḥi, Ḥayyim de la Rosa, Rafael Moshe Gallik, Avraham Yishmael Ḥayyim Sangevinitti, and Ya'akov Algazi (Nahman Ha-Cohen, *Minhagei Beit El*, pp. 83–85; Ḥeibi, *Giant of the Spirit*, pp. 49–50).
9. Nahman Ha-Cohen, *Minhagei Beit El*, pp. 85–91; Aaron Heibi, *Giant of the Spirit*, pp. 51–55; Meir Benayahu, R. *Ḥayyim Yosef David Azulai, HYD*"A, p. 17.

10. Hayyim Shaul Dweck and Eliahu Ya'akov Legimi, *Kavvanot Pratiyot*, 4a–5b.
11. See p. 72.
12. See pp. 71–72. Moscowitz, *Ḥayyei RaSha"Sh*, pp. 80–81, taken from *Divrei Shalom* of Raphael Avraham Shalom Shar'abi, 17d; Ya'akov Moshe Hillel, introduction to Hayyim Shaul Dweck, *Peat ha-Sadeh*, pp. 40–41.
13. Moscowitz, *Ḥayyei ha-RaSHaSH*, p. 95; Y.A.Z. Margoliot, introduction to Zevi Hirsch of Zidatchov, *Zevi le-Zaddik*, p. 38.
14. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 155–157.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.
16. Dweck, *Peat ha-Sadeh*, 2:223, citing the Hayyim Palag's work *Tokhaḥot Ḥayyim*, 2:96b. On Luria's prior incarnations, see Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, pp. 321–326.
17. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 15, 48, 50, 57–59.
18. Yosef Ḥayyim, *Rav Pe'alim*, 2, in the appendix *Sod ha-Yesharim*, 13 3c.
19. Avraham Ferreira in his work *Toldot Aaron U'Moshe* (in the appendix *Kuntrus Efer Yizḥak*, 9d).
20. Hayyim Shaul Dweck and Eliahu Ya'akov Legimi, *Benayahu ben Yehoyada*, 6a; Dweck and Legimi, *Eifah Sheleimah*, in the section *Sha'ar ha-Nikkudim*, 9:4, 13a; Ya'akov Moshe Hillel, introduction to Dweck, *Peat ha-Sadeh*, p. 40.
21. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 145; the role of revelation, as opposed to scholasticism in kabbalistic teaching, is not confined to this instance. See Pinchas Giller, *Reading the Zohar*, pp. 30–33.
22. Moscowitz, *Ḥayyei RaSha"Sh*, p. 71.
23. Masoud Alhadad, *Simḥat Kohen*, 39a; Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 149. Alhadad is joined in this opinion by Yosef Ḥayyim, the *Ben Ish Hai*, Sasson Bakher Moshe, and Avraham Ferreira, author of *Me'il ha-Kodesh U-Vigdei Yesha'*.
24. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 146, 148–149. Hillel maintains that in antiquity the sages relied on revelations from Elijah quite commonly. Luria's revelation from Elijah was more akin to the experience of a rabbinical mentor and his student.
25. Ḥayyim, *Rav Pe'alim* 3, *Sod ha-Yesharim*, 4, 3d.
26. See further, pp. 65–67.
27. *Petaḥ Einayyim*, 68d, 98a. Sasson was also the author of *Shemen Sasson*, a commentary on the Lurianic canon.
28. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 159.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 160; see also pp. 150–151.
30. Sariah Deblitsky, *Maḥshevet Bezalel*, p. 83.
31. *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 158; Kallus, "The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah," p. 171 note 121.
32. Petaya, *Beit Lehem Yehudah*, 2a; Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 158.
33. Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 328–329.
34. I expect that R. Benyahu Shmuely of the Nahar Shalom community will emerge as a communal force.
35. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, pp. 7, 8.
36. Moscowitz, *Ḥayyei RaSha"Sh*, p. 36.

37. There is also the danger of being unwittingly coopted. Professor Michelle Rosenthal of Haifa University has been monitoring the evangelist Amnon Yizhak, presenting his activities vividly in a session at the American Academy of Religions conference, in 2004, titled “Textual Poaching as Popular Religious Performance: The Case of Rabbi Amnon Yitzhak.” In the course of her study, she found herself quoted approvingly in his publicity materials, and a number of Kabbalah scholars were interviewed for a film that, unbeknownst to them, was being produced by the Kabbalah Center for one of its own promotions.

## CHAPTER 2

1. Originally found in Ya’akov Kezin’s *Pri Ez ha-Gan* 28a, cited in Menachem Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 127 note 26, and in A. Efg’in’s *Divrei Shalom*, 2, p. 180 note 1.

2. Louis Jacobs has noted the need for an exploration of the relationship between the Sephardic saints and Eastern Judaism and Hasidic thought. See *Hasidic Prayer*, pp. xii–xiv.

3. Ya’akov Moshe Hillel, introduction to Hayyim Shaul Dweck, *Peat ha-Sadeh*, pp. 30–32.

4. Identification with the Temple rite is present in *kavvanot* practice from its earliest stages, as evidenced by Elliot Wolfson’s demonstration that the visualization of the *Shekhinah* was imported from the Temple rite to the practice of the German pietists. See Wolfson, “Sacred Space and Mental Iconography: *Imago Templi* and Contemplation in Rhineland Jewish Pietism.”

5. *Berakhot*, 13a–b.

6. Ḥalamish, “The Obligation of Intentions,” in Ḥalamish, *Kabbalah: In Liturgy, Halakhah and Customs*, p. 73; “The Halakhic Authority of the Zohar,” in *ibid.*, p. 120; Menachem Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 167 note 110.

7. Joseph Weiss, *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism*, p. 96.

8. Scholem, “The Concept of Kavvanah in the Early Kabbalah,” pp. 167, 171–174. Gershom Scholem saw this work as key to the *Zohar*’s understanding of prayer. The Beit El kabbalists also cited Nachmanides’ directive to recite certain verses for the rectification of the ten *sefirot*, reproduced in Dweck and Legimi, *Benayahu ben Yehoyada II*, 16a.

9. Joseph Dan, “The Emergence of Mystical Prayer,” in *Jewish Mysticism: The Middle Ages*, p. 230. Another early instance of the appending of specific *kavvanot* to the preexistent prayer service is an anonymous thirteenth-century commentary that shows the influence of Abraham Abulafia’s early kabbalistic work *Bahir* and *Sefer Yezirah*. On this work, see Adam Afterman, *The Intention of Prayers in Early Ecstatic Kabbalah: A Study and Critical Edition of an Anonymous Commentary to the Prayers*, p. 9.

10. Yoni Garb has parsed the nuances of this relationship as “power in texts” rather than “power over texts” or “power through texts” in his “Power and Kavvanah in Kabbalah,” pp. 2–3. See also Weiss, *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 95, 117 note 1 and in Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 277.

11. This subject has recently been the subject of a full-scale study by Moshe Idel, *Absorbing Perfections: Kabbalah and Interpretation*. The use of symbols in Kabbalah is addressed in Joseph Dan, “Midrash and the Dawn of Kabbalah,” in *Midrash and Literature*, pp. 127–139; Pinchas Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 7–20; Giller, *Reading the Zohar*, p. 175 note 6; Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 173–249; “Infinites of Torah in Kabbalah,” in Geoffrey H. Hartman and Sanford Budick, *Midrash and Literature*, pp. 141–157; Hartman and Budick, “Reification of Language in Jewish Mysticism,” in *Mysticism and Language*, pp. 42–79; Ronit Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” pp. 33–35; Mikhal Oron, “Place Me for a Sign upon Your Heart: Studies in the Poetics of the Zohar’s Author in *Sabba de-Mishpatim*,” in Goldreich and Oron, *Massuot: Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Thought Presented in Memory of Professor Ephraim Gottlieb*, pp. 8–13; Gershom Scholem, “The Meaning of the Torah in Jewish Mysticism,” in *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, pp. 32–86, Scholem, “The Name of God and Linguistic Theory of the Kabbalah,” pp. 59–80, 164–94; Isaiah Tishby, “Symbol and Religion in Kabbalah,” in Tishby, *Paths of Faith and Heresy*, pp. 11–22; Elliot Wolfson, “By Way of Truth: Aspects of Nachmanides’ Kabbalistic Hermeneutic,” pp. 116–117 note 43; Wolfson, “Female Imaging of the Torah: From Literary Metaphor to Religious Symbol,” in Wolfson, *From Ancient Israel to Modern Judaism, Essays in Honor of Marvin Fox II*, pp. 271–307; Wolfson, “The Hermeneutics of Visionary Experience: Revelation and Interpretation in the Zohar,” pp. 311–345; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, pp. 283–285, 298, 356–392.

12. Scholem, “The Concept of Kavvanah in the Early Kabbalah,” p. 168.

13. Wolfson, “The Hermeneutics of Visionary Experience: Revelation and Interpretation in the Zohar,” pp. 311–345; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, pp. 283–285, 298, 356–392; Wolfson, “Beautiful Maiden Without Eyes: Peshat and Sod in Zoharic Hermeneutics,” pp. 155–203.

14. Liebes, “Mythos as opposed to Symbol in the Zohar and Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 205.

15. Ḥalamish, “LeShem Yiḥud and Its Generations in Kabbalah and Halakhah,” in Ḥalamish, *Kabbalah: In Liturgy, Halakhah and Customs*, pp. 45–70.

16. See Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 213–215.

17. Ya’akov Ḥayyim Sofer, *Kaf ha-Ḥayyim*, 60:11, 1:103b, citing Vital, *Sha’ar Ruah ha-Kodesh*; Ḥayyim de-la Rosa, *Torat Ḥakham*, 172a.

18. Sofer, *Kaf ha-Ḥayyim*, 621:14, 8:63b.

19. Rafael Avraham Shalom Shar’abi, *Divrei Shalom*, 82, Sofer, *Kaf ha-Ḥayyim*, 1, 18:15.

20. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 243, 254, 262, 272; see Shar’abi, *Nahar Shalom*, 18a–b, 27c–d, 34a–b; Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot*, p. 153.

21. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 272–273.

22. Maimonides, *Book of Mizvot*, Positive Mizvot 2.

23. *Zohar III (Ra’aya Meheimna)*, 277a–b.

24. Meir Ibn Gabbai, *Avodat ha-Kodesh* (Jerusalem, 1973, p. 222; Jerusalem, 1992), p. 404; Isaiah ha-Levi Horowitz, *Siddur Sha’ar ha-Shamayim*, 1:329. See also

Isaac the Blind, in his commentary to the *Sefer Yezirah* (1:8), brought in by Scholem, “The Concept of Kavvanah in the Early Kabbalah,” pp. 165–166.

25. *Zohar II* 57a, see Ḥalamish, “The Requirement of Intentions,” in Ḥalamish, *Kabbalah: In Liturgy, Halakhah and Customs*, p. 77.

26. *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 213–215.

27. *Zohar III (Ra’aya Meheimna)*, 277a–b.

28. *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 78, 152; Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” pp. 191, 222 note 241, 259–261; 263 note 361. See Wolfson, “Coronation of the Sabbath Bride: Kabbalistic Myth and the Ritual of Androgynization.”

29. See *Zohar (Ra’aya Meheimna) II*, 119a, *III* 109b. See Ḥalamish, “Le-Shem Yihud and Its Permutations in Kabbalah and Halakhah,” in Ḥalamish, *Kabbalah in Liturgy, Halakhah and Customs*, p. 5.

30. Kallus considers the ur-text of kabbalistic prayer to be *Zohar II*, 262a–b, expanded by Cordovero, *Tefilah le-Moshe*, 101a–b; Vital, *Sha’ar Ruah ha-Kodesh*, 4; also Vital, *Ketavim Ḥadashim me-Rabbeinu Ḥayyim Vital*, pp. 16–17.

31. *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, 87a.

32. Shar’abi, *Nahar Shalom*, 39a.

33. On the Sabbath, in particular, she is the world soul, and so union with the *Shekhinah* is union with the inner nature of the phenomenal world (*Zohar I*, 132a, 228a–b; *II*, 44a, 260b; *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, 92a; *Tiqqunei Zohar Ḥadash*, 102a). For Talmudic antecedents, see *Berakhot*, 5b, *Eruvin*, 53b, *Avodah Zarah*, 11b.

34. *Zohar II*, 245a.

35. *Zohar I*, 148a; *Zohar III (Ra’aya Meheimna)*, 238a; *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, 92a; Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, p. 957; Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 190.

36. Dweck and Legimi, *Benayahu ben Yehoyada II*, 18b.

37. *Zohar III (Ra’aya Meheimna)*, 277a–b; *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 117–118, 129, 136–137, 141, 144–145; Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, pp. 224–225; Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 189.

38. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 269, 271.

39. *Sha’ar Ma’amarei RaSHB”Y*, p. 262a.

40. *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 249–253; Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” pp. 153 note 69, 155.

41. *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 188–191, 195; *Pri Eḏ Ḥayyim*, chapter 12.

42. The literature on *devekut* as a religious phenomenon is vast. The idea is best represented in Gershom Scholem, “‘Devekut’ and Intimate Linking to the Divine in Early Hasidism” (Hebrew); Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, pp. 203–227; Mordechai Pachter, “The Concept of Devekut in the Homiletical Ethical Writings of 16th Century Safed”; Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 67–90; Elliot Wolfson, “Walking as a Sacred Duty: Theological Transformation of Social Reality in Early Chasidism.”

43. Ḥalamish, “The Requirement of Intentions,” in Ḥalamish, *Kabbalah: In Liturgy, Halakhah and Customs*, p. 76.

44. Gottlieb, *Studies in Kabbalistic Literature*, pp. 38, 41; Tishby, *Perush ha Aggadot le Rabbeinu Azriel*, pp. 39–40.

45. Gottlieb, *Studies in Kabbalistic Literature*, pp. 39–43, 45.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 41. Further discussions of this theme, when expressed in terms of the cross-cultural value of *unio mystica*, have formed the crux of a debate between Gershom Scholem and Moshe Idel. See Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 59–73; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 299–309 (esp. p. 302, “*Debhequth* is . . . not *unio* but *communio*.”); Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 140–141; Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, pp. 226–227; Tishby and Lachover, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, p. 947; Gottlieb, *Studies in Kabbalistic Literature*, pp. 41, 237–238; Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 165 note 110; Elliot Wolfson, “Mystical Theurgical Dimensions of Prayer in *Sefer ha-Rimmon*,” pp. 43, 66 note 16.

47. Asi Farber, “On the Problem of Moshe de Leon’s Early Kabbalistic Tradition,” pp. 84–87.

48. Translated from the *Perush ha-Aggadot le-Rabbeinu Azriel* (pp. 39–41) with parallels from the commentary of Rabbi Ezra, as published by H. Pedaya, “Seized with Speech: Clarifying the Ecstatic Prophecy of the Early Kabbalists.” See Garb, “Power and Kavvanah in Kabbalah,” p. 101.

49. Gottlieb, *Studies in Kabbalistic Literature*, p. 48.

50. Wolfson, “Sacred Space and Mental Iconography: *Imago Templi* and Contemplation in Rhineland Jewish Pietism,” pp. 594–596.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 599.

52. In this regard, it is important to note a distinction between Wolfson and Liebes on the nature of the kabbalistic symbol (Wolfson, “Sacred Space and Mental Iconography,” pp. 597 note 10, 600).

53. *Ibid.*, p. 600. Wolfson, unlike Matt, argues for a lack of apophysis in Jewish sources (*ibid.*, p. 600 note 17). Daniel C. Matt, “*Ayin*: The Concept of Nothingness in Jewish Mysticism,” pp. 67–108. See also Wolfson, “Negative Theology and Positive Assertion.”

54. Wolfson, “Sacred Space and Mental Iconography,” p. 604.

55. Joseph Dan, “The Emergence of Mystical Prayer,” in Dan, *Jewish Mysticism: The Middle Ages*, pp. 248–249; Dan, “Prayer as Text and Prayer as Mystical Experience,” in *ibid.*, p. 270.

56. See Giller, *Reading the Zohar*, pp. 116–117.

57. Gershom Scholem, *Ṣabbatai Sevi*, p. 77.

58. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 284.

59. Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot*, p. 153.

60. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 248–249, 262.

61. In his introduction to the work *Pri Ez Ḥayyim*, *Meorot Natan*, p. 4; Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 245.

62. *Zohar III*, 230; on the latter appellation, see *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, 26a, 78b; *Zohar Ḥadash*, 34a.

63. *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, 3a.

64. Hillel, introduction to Dweck, *Peat ha-Sadeh*, p. 35; Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 127.

65. Garb, “Power and Kavvanah in Kabbalah,”; Garb, *Manifestations of Power in Jewish Mysticism*.

66. Garb, “Power and Kavvanah in Kabbalah,” pp. 172–216; Garb, *Manifestations of Power in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 142–247. Garb points out that this understanding is present in the thought of the Renaissance figure Yohanan Alemanno.

67. *Zohar I*, 199b, II 62a; Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, p. 962.

68. *Zohar I (Tiqqunei ha-Zohar)*, 24a, 108a.

69. Garb, “Power and Kavvanah in Kabbalah,” pp. 86–90; Garb, *Manifestations of Power in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 60–64.

70. Garb, “Power and Kavvanah in Kabbalah,” pp. 144–171; Garb, *Manifestations of Power in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 113–141.

71. This isomorphic relationship may have its origins in the original rabbinic conceptualization of *kavvanah*, as has been demonstrated by Elliot Wolfson. See Wolfson, “Iconic Visualization and the Imaginal Body of God: The Role of Intention in the Rabbinic Conception of Prayer,” pp. 137–162; Wolfson, “Sacred Space and Mental Iconography: *Imago Templi* and Contemplation in Rhineland Jewish Pietism.” See also Moshe Idel, *Language, Torah and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 6–7.

72. *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 132–140; see Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 95 note 57. On cataphasis in Lurianic Kabbalah, see Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 100.

73. Garb, “Power and Kavvanah in Kabbalah,” pp. 98–143; Garb, *Manifestations of Power in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 72–113.

74. Garb is intrigued by the suggestion of *kavvanot* as a way to channel Divine power, particularly when juxtaposed against the historical reality of Jewish powerlessness. In this understanding, Garb is influenced by postmodern understandings of the nature of power, particularly in terms of their critique of the notion of an active/intending subject. According to an understanding posited by Michel Foucault, power has no center but is itself a field, made up of manifold interactions between various shifting sites. Garb suggests that Foucault’s understandings of the nature of mysticism may have their roots in the interest in Kabbalah during the Italian Renaissance by the likes of Pico de la Mirandola. Hence, Garb suggests that kabbalistic theosophy influenced Renaissance thought and, therefore, Western political tradition as a whole. (Garb, “Power and Kavvanah in Kabbalah,” pp. 15–21, 30 note 164. See Chaim Wirszubski, *Pico de la Mirandola’s Encounter with Jewish Mysticism*; Garb, “Power and Kavvanah in Kabbalah,” pp. 24–28; Garb, *Manifestations of Power in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 11–14; Garb, “Power and Kavvanah in Kabbalah” pp. 593–601; Jess Byron Hollenback, *Mysticism: Experience, Response and Empowerment*, pp. 197–229). An interesting review of this issue, not cited by Garb, is David Biale’s *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History*, which is acknowledged by Garb in his later work.

75. Garb, “Power and Kavvanah in Kabbalah,” pp. 4–5, 34–65; Garb, *Manifestations of Power in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 5–8, 28–46.

76. See Rebecca Macy Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power: Angels, Incantations and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism*.

77. *Avot*, 2:4.

78. *Avot*, 4:2.

79. Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 95–96.

80. *Berachot*, 6a.

81. *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 133–134.

82. Wolfson, “Sacred Space and Mental Iconography,” p. 605.

83. Garb emphasizes four particular contributors to this discourse: Joseph Ibn Sayah of Jerusalem, Moses Cordovero in Safed, Meir Ibn Gabbai, and David Halevi in Dar'a, Morocco. In fact, Garb and Rachel Elijor argue for the influence of the Dar'a community upon the Safed kabbalists, as evidenced by linguistic and astral usages as well as by specific doctrines regarding the *Shekhinah*. Garb, “Power and Kavvanah in Kabbalah,” pp. 217–285; *Manifestations of Power in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 185–247; Moshe Halamish, *The Kabbalah in North Africa: A Historical and Cultural Survey*, pp. 29–30, 173; Rachel Elijor, “The Kabbalists of Dar'a,” pp. 36–73.

84. *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim*, Gate 27, Chapter 1.

85. *Ibid.*, Gate 32, Chapter 1.

86. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 272; see Shar'abi, *Nahar Shalom*, 18a–b, 27c–d, 34a–b; Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot*, p. 153.

87. Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer In Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 18 note k.

88. See p. 29.

89. Steven Katz, *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, p. 24.

90. Eitan Fishbane, “Tears of Disclosure: The Role of Weeping in Zoharic Narrative,” pp. 25–47; Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 74–111.

91. Gottlieb, *Studies in Kabbalistic Literature*, p. 40.

### CHAPTER 3

1. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 177.

2. Nachmanides, Commentary to the Torah, Introduction; Elliot Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia: Kabbalist and Prophet*, pp. 73–74. Moshe Idel and Elliot Wolfson have examined the use of sacred names in the teachings of Abraham Abulafia. Joseph Dan has done the same with regard to the German pietists and probed the origins of these names. The tradition of multiple names of God predates both of these medieval movements, as detailed in Scholem's famous discussion of the linguistic theory of Kabbalah. Nonetheless, sacred-name traditions remain a relatively unexplored aspect of Kabbalah studies, when considered in proportion to their occurrence in the literature. Gershom Scholem, “The Name of God and Linguistic Theory of the Kabbalah,” *Diogenes*, no. 79–80 (1972): 165; Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, Ch. 1 note 29; also Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia: Kabbalist and Prophet*, p. 58.

3. Joseph Dan, “The Emergence of Mystical Prayer,” in Dan, *Jewish Mysticism: The Middle Ages*, p. 229.

4. *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 247, 271.

5. Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, p. 15.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 14; on *Heikhalot Rabbati*, p. 16.
7. Joseph Dan, “The Book of the Divine Name by Rabbi Eliezer of Worms,” pp. 142, 157; Dan, “The Emergence of Mystical Prayer,” in Dan, *Jewish Mysticism: The Middle Ages*, p. 229. See Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, p. 23. See David ben Yehudah he-Ḥasid, *Sefer Mar’ot Ha-Zove’ot*, p. 95.
8. Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, p. 28; Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia: Kabbalist and Prophet*, p. 57; Adam Afterman, *The Intention of Prayers in Early Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 20, 26.
9. Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, p. 40; Idel, *Language, Torah and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia*, p. x.
10. Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, p. 34; Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 176 note 135.
11. *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 114; *Pri Eṣ Ḥayyim I*, p. 152.
12. *Zohar II*, 22a, III 183a. See Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia: Kabbalist and Prophet*, pp. 102–103.
13. Moshe Cordovero, *Elimah Rabbati* 89a.
14. See Giller, *Reading the Zohar*, pp. 138–150; Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 269–271.
15. *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 101, 151, 277; *Sha’ar Ma’amarei RaSHB”Y*, p. 254.
16. *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 194.
17. *Eṣ Ḥayyim*, Ashlag 2:335–236; Jerusalem 99a–d.
18. *Eṣ Ḥayyim*, Ashlag 2:342; Jerusalem 100a; see Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, p. 92; Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia: Kabbalist and Prophet*, p. 62.
19. Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 242.
20. For example, see *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 99–100, 101, 103, 151–152, 156, 174, 238; *Eṣ Ḥayyim*, *Sha’ar*, 18, p. 5; Dan, “The Book of the Divine Name by Rabbi Eliezer of Worms,” pp. 171–172; Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” pp. 134–135.
21. *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 157, 277.
22. *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 65, 168; *Eṣ Ḥayyim*, 2 p. 4. *Zohar Ḥadash*, 90a.
23. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, p. 213.
24. Menachem Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 182, note 137.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 184, note 142, 206.
26. *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 85.
27. *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 132.
28. *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 155–156.
29. See pp. 78–83. *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 79, 118, 241, 276; *Pri Eṣ Ḥayyim I*, pp. 9–11; Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 135.
30. Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” pp. 198–201. The text in question appears a number of times in the Lurianic canon (*Pri Eṣ Ḥayyim*, *Sha’ar Hanhagat ha-Limmud*, pp. 354b–355a; *Sha’ar Ruah ha-Kodesh*, 1 57b, *Sha’ar*

*ha-Yihudim*, 15c. It is also quoted in a number of Lurianic prayer books; see Rashkover, *Siddur R. Shabbatai*, 36b–37a; Margoliot, *Siddur Rav Asher*, 27b.

31. Kallus notes, in the *Sha'ar ha-Yihudim*, “his two thighs” and, in the *Sha'ar Ruah ha-Kodesh*, “the right thigh.”
32. See pp. 77–80.
33. Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 199.
34. *Sefer Ha-Kanah*, 88a; *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 85.
35. *Kiddushin*, 71a.
36. Gershom Scholem, “A Commentary on the Forty-two Letter Name, Attributed to Hai Gaon, with the Commentary of R. Nissim,” *Kabbalistic Manuscripts in the Collection of the Hebrew University Library*, pp. 213–217.
37. *Sefer Ha-Pliah*, 53d, 54a–b, Moshe Cordovero, *Sefer Pardes Ha-Rimmonim*, *Sha'ar Pratei ha-Shemot*, 12–13, pp. 102b–103a, *Sefer Ha-Kanah*, 88a–b.
38. *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, 13a, 19a, 26a, 104a.
39. *Ez Hayyim* Ashlag 2:342; Jerusalem 100a.
40. Brought in Dan, *The Esoteric Teaching of the German Pietists*, pp. 122–126; Dan, “The Emergence of Mystical Prayer,” in Dan, *Jewish Mysticism: The Middle Ages*, pp. 254; Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, p. 17. See Eliezer of Worms, *Sodei Razei Semukhim*, pp. 31–86.
41. *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 147.
42. Pinchas Hurvitz, *Sefer ha-Brit*, 1:4:14, pp. 75–76; See Bahyah ben Asher, *Commentary to the Torah*, Vol. 1, p. 32.
43. *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, 130a, *Tiqqunei Zohar H'adash*, 107c.
44. See J. H. Chajes, *Between Worlds: Dybbuks, Exorcists and Early Modern Judaism*, p. 82; Moshe Cordovero, *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim*, 102c–3b.
45. See Shmuel Vital, *Siddur Hemdat Yisrael*, 19b.
46. *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 96.
47. Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 15, 32, 35, 38.
48. See Boaz Huss, “All You Need is LAV—Madonnah and Postmodern Kabbalah,” pp. 612–614.
49. *Sukkah*, 45b.
50. Sections 76–77, in the edition of Gerhard Scholem, *Das Buch Bahir*, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1980), p. 78; Daniel Abrams, *The Book Bahir* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 1994), p. 165.
51. Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, p. 38. See Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 178 note 137.
52. Dweck and Legimi, *Benayahu ben Yehoyada*, 2a.
53. See, in particular, Yehudah Berg, *The 72 Names of God: Technology for the Soul*.
54. Lvov 1786, reprinted Jerusalem 2001. This information is gleaned from a discussion between Professors Joel Hecker and Boaz Huss on the E-Idra list, 3–3–04.
55. See p. 100.
56. *Ez Hayyim* Ashlag 2:327–328a; Jerusalem 96d–97a.
57. See Giller, *Reading the Zohar*, pp. 17, 53, 140, 181 note 88; Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 136–144.

58. Giller, *Reading the Zohar*, pp. 36–37.
59. *Ez Hayyim* Ashlag 2:330; Jerusalem 98a.
60. Shalom Shar'abi, *Nahar Shalom*, 33c.
61. Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, p. 31; Ibn Latif, *Zurat ha-Olam*, p. 32. See also Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, p. 33; Isaac of Acre, *Meirat Einayim*, p. 89.
62. Zakhut, *Iggerot ha-Remez* 6 (Jerusalem, 1999), p. 16; Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 258.
63. Eliashiv, *Hakdamot Ve-She'arim*, 43a; see Cordovero, *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim, Sha'ar ha-Kavvanah*, 2; Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 254–255.
64. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 255.
65. See Zevi Hirsch mi-Zidhatchov, *Pri Kodesh Hillulim*, 2a–c; Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 257.
66. Wolfson, “From Sealed Book to Open Text: Time, Memory and Narrativity in Kabbalistic Hermeneutics,” pp. 153–167; Nissim Yosha, *Myth and Metaphor: The Philosophical Exegesis of Avraham Cohen Herrera on the Lurianic Kabbalah*, pp. 281–339; Giller, *Reading the Zohar*, pp. 31–32.
67. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 254, Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Hakdamot*, p. 2.
68. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 133–134.
69. See Luzzatto, *Hoker u-Mekubal*, frontispiece, 3a; *Adir Ba-Marom* 2a–b.
70. On the issues of the Vilna Gaon's position, see Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 135, note 51. The nineteenth-century Vilna kabbalist Pinchas Eliahu Hurvitz is a literalist; see *Sefer ha-Brit* 1:4:14, pp. 75–76. On this kabbalist's activity, see Ira Robinson, “Kabbalah and Science in Sefer ha-Berit: A Modernization Strategy for Orthodox Jews,” *Modern Judaism* 9 (1989): 275–289; Shlomo Eliashiv, *Sefer ha-Deah; Leshem Shevo ve-Ohalamah* 1:56d–59a.
71. Yosef Hayyim, *Da'at U'Tevunah*, 5a–c.
72. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 117; see also pp. 118–124, 139, 142–144.
73. On this topic, see Liebes, “Mythos as Opposed to Symbol in the Zohar and Lurianic Kabbalah,” *Mythos in Judaism-Eshel Be'er Sheva*, vol. 4.
74. Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” pp. 62, 124. See also Halamish, *Kabbalah: In Liturgy, Halakhah and Customs*, pp. 80–105.
75. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 254.

## CHAPTER 4

1. See pp. 49–53.
2. Halamish, “The Requirement of Intentions,” in Halamish, *Kabbalah: In Liturgy, Halakhah and Customs*, p. 81; Dweck and Legimi, *Benayahu ben Yehoyada*, 1b.
3. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 282–285.
4. Yosef Hayyim, *Rav Pe'alim* 3:13; see Hayyim, *Ben Ish Hai*, p. 60.
5. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 244, 265.
6. Luria himself was an adept Talmudist. In Egypt, he absorbed the influence of Bezalel Ashkenazi, the author of the famous halakhic anthology *Shittah Mekubezet*.

Tradition has it that Luria himself was the author of the volume dealing with the tractate *Zevaḥim*, which was destroyed in the great fire of Izmir, in the eighteenth century (Ronit Meroz, “Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” p. 1; Giller, *Reading the Zohar*, p. 18.

7. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 313, 331, 337–338, 341–345.
8. See Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 59–79.
9. Dweck and Legimi, *Benayahu ben Yehoyada II*, 18a.
10. He prescribes reliance on the *Drush ha-Da’at* in *Sha’ar ha-Hakdamot* (65b), cited in *Nahar Shalom*, 41b.
11. Ya’akov Moshe Hillel, introduction to Dweck, *Peat ha-Sadeh*, p. 39.
12. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 346.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 241.
14. “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 127 note 26.
15. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 135.
16. See p. 48.
17. *Divrei Shalom, Minhagim*, #24.
18. *Ibid.*, #75. These appear in the current *Rehovot ha-Nahar* holiday prayer books, Vol. 4, pp. 127–133.
19. Gottlieb, *Studies in Kabbalistic Literature*, p. 38.
20. Dan, “The Emergence of Mystical Prayer,” in *Jewish Mysticism: The Middle Ages*, p. 230.
21. Weiss, *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism*, p. 96.
22. Gottlieb, *Studies in Kabbalistic Literature*, p. 39.
23. Moshe Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic*, pp. 12–15.
24. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 53, 250–253.
25. See pp. 77–78.
26. Ḥayyim de la Rosa, *Torat Ḥakham*, 34b; Raḥamim Sarim, *Sha’arei Raḥamim*, 4a–b.
27. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 277.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 301–302, 305, 306, 308, 309.
29. Ḥalamish. “The Requirement of Intentions,” in Ḥalamish, *Kabbalah: In Liturgy, Halakhah and Customs*, p. 80.
30. See p. 84.

## CHAPTER 5

1. See pp. 98–100.
2. *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 109.
3. *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 99, 168, 238.
4. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 90 note 40.
5. Yedidiah Rafael Ḥai Abulafia, *Kinyan Perot*, p. 51; Ḥayyim de la Rosa, *Torat Ḥakham* 113a. A similar goal is achieved through the study of the Vitalian primer *Ḥok le-Yisrael* (Abulafia, *Kinyan Perot*, p. 54).

6. Eliahu Mishan, one of the major sages of Aleppo, referred to the lack of a set of *kavvanot* for Shavuot in his work *Zedek ve-Shalom* (74b). Contemporary practitioners fall back on the *Shenei Luhot ha-Brit* version for the *Shavuot* night ritual.
7. Reuven Kimelman, *The Mystical Meaning of Lekhah Dodi and Kabbalat Shabbat*, pp. 19–23; Sasson Bakher Moshe, *Petaḥ Einayyim*, 61d; Daniel Remer, *Sefer Tefilat Ḥayyim*, p. 151.
8. Zemakh, *Olat Tamid* (Jerusalem, 1997), p. 66.
9. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 10; Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 286 note 383.
10. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 216–217.
11. On this phenomenon, see Haym Soloveitchik, “Rupture and Reconstruction: the Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy.”
12. See pp. 144–145.
13. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 5.
14. Shar’abi, *Divrei Shalom, Minhagim*, #83. Shar’abi also composed a prayer for taking out the Torah Scroll. See Ḥayyim Yosef David Azulai, *Avodat ha-Kodesh*, 111a.
15. Ḥeibi, *Giant of the Spirit*, pp. 39–43. This living of the myth was selective, however, and certain folk practices did go by the wayside. One popular custom, *tashlikh*, the symbolic “throwing away” of sins by a body of water, was neglected. *Tashlikh* was done in the synagogue, usually by a dry well in the Old City of Jerusalem (Sofer, *Kaf ha-Ḥayyim*, 8:483).
16. Sofer, *Kaf ha-Ḥayyim* 8, 619:17. See the special version of the *Kol Nidrei* prayer in Azulai, *Avodat ha-Kodesh*, 78b.
17. Sofer, *Kaf ha-Ḥayyim*, 2, 131:7.
18. Rafael Avraham Shalom Shar’abi, *Divrei Shalom, Minhagim* #64.
19. Sofer, *Kaf ha-Ḥayyim*, 240:6 (3, pp. 185–186). Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 218; see Ya’akov Shealtiel Nino, *Emet le-Ya’akov: Sefat Emet* 7, 117b.
20. See Shaul Magid, “The Sin of Being/Becoming a Woman: Male Homosexuality and the Castration Complex” (forthcoming, as part of Magid’s *From Metaphysics to Midrash: Myth, History, and the Interpretation of Scripture in Lurianic Kabbalah* (Indiana University Press, 2008). Thanks to Professor Magid for making this material available to me. The contemporary head of the Nahar Shalom circle, Rav Benayahu Shmueli, has recently compiled a series of manuals for the rectification of sexual transgressions, *Sefer Benayahu* (Jerusalem: Nahar Shalom, 1995).
21. Shar’abi, *Divrei Shalom*, #81, Sofer, *Kaf ha-Ḥayyim*, #607:41.
22. There are extensive *kavvanot* regarding flagellation in Ya’akov Shealtiel Nino’s *Emet le-Ya’akov*, which Nino himself ascribed to Immanuel Ḥai Ricci’s *Mishnat Ḥasidim*, as well as to Natan Hanover’s *Sha’arei Zion*. The contemporary Jerusalem kabbalist Ya’akov Moshe Hillel argues that Shar’abi drew his *kavvanot* of flagellation from the Lurianic *Sefer Likkutim*. See Nino, *Emet Le-Ya’akov*, 121a; Immanuel Ḥai Ricci, *Mishnat Ḥasidim, Masekhet Teshuvah*, 7; Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 61–62.
23. *Sotah*, 20a.
24. This may be found in a responsum contained in Shar’abi, *Divrei Shalom*, 17d.

25. Shar'abi, *Nahar Shalom*, 10a.
26. The only relevant *kavvanah* would be that of the *nesirah*, since the Sabbatical year is a similar discharging of the powers of Divine. See pp. 131-146.
27. Moscowitz, *Ḥayyei RaSha"Sh*, pp. 80-81, citing Raphael Avraham Shalom Shar'abi, *Divrei Shalom*, 17d.
28. See p. 9.
29. Ya'akov Moshe Hillel, introduction to Dweck, *Peat ha-Sadeh*, pp. 40-41.
30. See p. 9.
31. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 54; Efg'in, *Divrei Shalom*, 1, pp. 206, 208. Ya'akov Gartner has located the roots of this practiced in the early Kabbalah. See his essay "The Custom of Donning Two Pairs of Phylacteries During the Period of the Rishonim."
32. There were, in fact, four interpretations of how the tefillin should be arranged, namely the various understanding of Rashi, the understanding of Rabbeinu Tam, the understanding of the RaBaD, who advocated that the tefillin be written in mirror script, and the type that conformed to the dictates of a halakhic work known as *Shimusha Rabbah*, which refers to a minimum size requirement (Moshe Zakhut, *Iggerot ha-Remez*, 5, p. 14; Naftaly Zevi Bakharakh, *Emek Ha-Melekh*, p. 620, both citing *Shimusha Rabbah* 97b; Efg'in, *Divrei Shalom*, 1, pp. 239, 241; Masoud ha-Cohen Alhadad, *Simḥat Kohen*, 31c).
33. Naḥman Ha-Cohen, *Minhagei Beit El*.
34. Efg'in, *Divrei Shalom*, 1, p. 239, citing Aharon Ferreira, *Me'il ha-Kodesh U-Bigdei Yesh'a*, 88b.
35. Efg'in, *Divrei Shalom*, 1, p. 201.
36. *Ibid.*, *Minhagim*, #27, Sofer, *Kaf ha-Ḥayyim*, Volume I, 25:37, 100.
37. Sofer, *Kaf ha-Ḥayyim*, 1, 25:92.
38. Efg'in, *Divrei Shalom*, #62, Sofer, *Kaf ha-Ḥayyim*, Volume I, 18:16, 38:21, Volume 7, 455:4; see *Minhagei Beit El*, p. 46.
39. Similarly, when the ninth of Av falls on the departure of the Sabbath, the Beit El kabbalists retain the hymns attending its departure, despite the onset of the fast, unlike the conventional custom (Sasson Bakher Moshe, *Shemen Sasson 80a*, 116b; *Petaḥ Einayyim* 53c).
40. Efg'in, *Divrei Shalom*, *Minhagim*, #53, Eliahu Mishan, *Sefat Emet*, 3; Moshe, *Shemen Sasson*, 85c; Sofer, *Kaf ha-Ḥayyim*, 1, 60:11. Shar'abi also tended to forbid cutting hair on all of the first forty-eight days of the Omer, which was at that time an unusual practice (Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 16).
41. See pp. 113-114.
42. *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot* (Jerusalem, p. 84) as interpreted by Shar'abi (*Nahar Shalom*, 35b, 35d).
43. Samuel Vital, *Siddur Ḥemdat Yisrael*, 207b; see Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, p. 54.
44. See Ya'akov Zemakh, *Nagid U-Mezaveh* (Premishla, 1880), pp. 142-143; *Shulkhan Arukh Shel Rabbeinu Yizḥak Luria* (Munkaz, 1940), pp. 70-71; Zeev Gries, "The Formation of the Hebrew Conduct Literature Between the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and Its Historical Significance," 563, 568. See also Yosef Avivi,

“Ya’akov Z̄emakh’s Editing of R. Ḥayyim Vital’s Writings That Were Found in Jerusalem,” pp. 61–77; Avivi, “The Versions of R. Ya’akov Z̄emakh’s *Nagid U-Mezaveh*,” pp. 188–191.

45. See Remer, *Tefilat Ḥayyim*, pp. 242–243.

46. *Nahar Shalom*, 37b; *Torat Ḥakham*, 71a.

47. Vital, *Siddur Hemdat Yisrael* 204b; Moshe mi-Dolena, *Seraf Pri Ez Ḥayyim*, pp. 423–425.

48. Vital, *Siddur Hemdat Yisrael* 204b; also *Nahar Shalom*, 36a.

49. *Siddur Hemdat Yisrael*, 204b.

50. *Or ha-Ḥayyim*, pp. 236–239, cited in the recent Armoni’s *Derekh Eṣ Ḥayyim*, p. 74.

51. See Ḥavivah Pedayah, *Nahmanides: Cyclical Time and Holy Text*.

52. The complete presentation of the development of the four-worlds traditions remains Gershom Scholem’s “The Development of the Tradition of the Worlds” (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 2:415–442; 3:33–66.

53. Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 77–79, 93; Weiss, *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism*, p. 96.

54. Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” pp. 123, 169, 173.

55. Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 78.

56. Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 77–79, 93; *Pri Eṣ Ḥayyim I*, p. 2; see ‘Olat *Tamid*, p. 12.

57. Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 261.

58. See p. 43.

59. Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 79, 118, 241, 276; *Pri Eṣ Ḥayyim I*, pp. 9–11; Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 135.

60. See Z̄emakh, *Siddur Kavvanot ha-Tefilah be-Kiz̄arah*, p. 1; *Eṣ Ḥayyim Ashlag* 2:342; Jerusalem 101c.

61. *Zohar I*, 23a; *II*, 246b; *III*, 272b, 283a; *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, 9b, 130a; *Tiqqunei Zohar Ḥadash*, 107c; Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 97.

62. See Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 72: “Among the novel dynamic features in the functional structure of the AR”I theurgic practice in daily prayer which are absent in Cordoverean practice; particularly the ascending-descending Four-Worlds structure of the liturgy, which made its first appearance only in the Lurianic Kabbalah” (note 143).

63. See *Zohar I*, 78b, 211a; *II*, 219b; *III*, 120b; Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 78, 83, 85, 87–89, 97–98; *Pri Eṣ Ḥayyim I*, pp. 116–119.

64. Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 77–78, 93.

65. Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 78–81, 83–84, 92–96, 105, 106–107; *Pri Eṣ Ḥayyim I*, pp. 2, 9–11, 114–116, 139.

66. Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 186.

67. Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 81.

68. See pp. 113–114.

69. Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 106–107; *Pri Eṣ Ḥayyim I*, p. 139; Adam Afterman, *The Intention of Prayers in Early Ecstatic Kabbalah*, p. 13.

70. There were also many differences between the versions of *Barukh She-Amar* in classical Kabbalah, including widespread variation on the number of stanza, which finally was agreed upon at the number thirteen in the Lurianic writings. (Ḥalamish, *Kabbalah: In Liturgy, Halakhah and Customs*, pp. 33, 41; Yosef Avivi, “Yosef Ibn Tabul’s Homilies of Divine Intention”: 76–77; Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 176; Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 78).

71. Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 106.

72. Cordovero, *Tefilah le-Moshe*, pp. 61–78; Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 78.

73. *Tiqqunei Zohar Ḥadash*, 108c; Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 207.

74. *Zohar I*, 45a; *II*, 244b–262b.

75. Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 216.

76. See Dweck and Legimi, *Benyahu ben Yehoyada I*, 3b–4a. There are discrepancies even in something so essential as the *kavvanot* of the recitation of the *Shema’*, as brought out in *Bati le-Gani* and *Divrei Shalom* and as pointed out by Menachem Kallus (“The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 269 note 370).

77. Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 216.

78. *Ibid.*, pp. 141–160.

79. *Ibid.*, pp. 164–182.

80. See Giller, *Reading the Zohar*, pp. 95–98, 146–147, 209–210 note 49.

81. Shar’abi, *Rehovot ha-Nahar*, 2b; see Vital, *Mavo She’arim*, 15d.

82. Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 78; *Olat Tamid*, p. 12.

83. See *Zohar II*, 211b; *III*, 102b; Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 80–81; *Pri Eẓ Ḥayyim I*, pp. 7–8; Yosef Avivi, “Yosef Ibn Tabul’s Homilies of Divine Intention,” pp. 76–77.

84. Dweck and Legimi, *Benyahu ben Yehoyada II*, 2a.

85. Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 290 note 383; on Shar’abi, *Nahar Shalom*, 30b.

86. Dweck and Legimi, *Benyahu ben Yehoyada II*, 4a.

87. Thanks to Chava Weissler for pointing this out to me.

## CHAPTER 6

1. Moshe Ḥalamish, *The Kabbalah in North Africa*, pp. 22, 115; see Elior, *The Kabbalists of Dar’a*.

2. Ḥalamish, *The Kabbalah in North Africa*, p. 74.

3. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 166.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 167, 232. Eliahu Mishan, *Zedek ve-Shalom*, Introduction; Moscovitz, *Ḥayyei RaSha”Sh*, pp. 14–16.

5. Moscovitz, *Ḥayyei RaSha”Sh*, p. 67.

6. David Rosoff, at <http://www.jewishmag.com/14MAG/ISRAEL/israel.htm>.

7. His sermons were preserved by his son, Shalom Moshe Gagin (d. 1883). Gagin also composed *Minḥah Tehorah* on the tractate *Menahot*, the responsa *Ḥukei Ḥayyim*,

and *Saviv le-Hole*, a commentary to Shmuel Ben Meshullam Yarondi's book *Ohel Moed* (Zvi Zohar, *The Luminous Face of the East*, p. 224).

8. Meir Benayahu, *R. Ḥayyim Yosef David Azulai, ḤYD" A.*, pp. 15–18.

9. Moscowitz, *Ḥayyei RaSha"Sh*, p. 76. Yom Tov Algazi authored a number of works. These include *Simḥat Yom Tov*, responsa on the *Turim*, *Kedushat Yom Tov*, responses to Maimonides' halakhic rulings, the small composition *Da'at Le-Hishael*, which addresses unresolved matters in his father's writings, *Yom Tov de-Rabanan*, on aggadah and the work *Get Mekushar*, published in the end of his father's work *Naot Ya'akov*.

10. Moscowitz, *Ḥayyei RaSha"Sh*, p. 41; Zohar, *The Luminous Face of the East*, pp. 44, 199, 403 note 29.

11. Hillel, introduction to Dweck, *Peat ha-Sadeh*, p. 13.

12. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 238; see Alhadad, *Simḥat Kohen*, 25c.

13. See *Kinyan Perot*, pp. 32, 88, 166. See also Ḥayyim de la Rosa, *Torat Ḥakham* 34b, as an eyewitness for Shar'abi's practices on the Day of Atonement. Abulafia (p. 32) invokes the authority of David Majar as an eyewitness to Shar'abi's practices (Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 233, 236, 237).

14. See Abulafia, *Kinyan Perot*, p. 5.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 6.

16. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 236–238.

17. Zohar, *The Luminous Face of the East*, pp. 75–99.

18. Moscowitz, *Ḥayyei RaSha"Sh*, p. 94.

19. *Zedek ve-Shalom*, 74b.

20. Hillel, introduction to Dweck, *Peat ha-Sadeh*, p. 20, 22.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 51–53.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 33–38.

23. Y. M. Hillel voices reservations about this text; see *ibid.*, note 14.

24. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 179 note 3.

25. Hillel, introduction to Dweck, *Pe'at ha-Sadeh*, p. 46, note 22; Moscowitz, *Ḥayyei RaSha"Sh*, p. 113; Kallus, "The Theurgy of Prayer in Lurianic Kabbalah," p. 128 note 26.

26. Hillel, introduction to Dweck, *Pe'at ha-Sadeh*, pp. 55–56.

27. On Baghdad, see Zohar, *The Luminous Face of the East*, p. 20; on relations to Bombay, see *ibid.*, pp. 9, 35, 69.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 40–41. See also pp. 55–61. On Yosef Ḥayyim's halakhic decisions, see *ibid.*, pp. 47–49, 82, 325. See also David Solomon Sassoon, *A History of the Jews in Baghdad*, pp. 149–156; Shlomo Doshen and Walter Zenner, *Jews Among Muslims: Communities in the Precolonial Middle East*, pp. 70–71, 78, 189–190, 191, 193.

29. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 161. Ḥayyim provides a typology with regard to who should pray with Shar'abi's prayer book in *Rav Pe'alim*, 3; *Kuntres Sod ha-Yesharim*, 13.

30. Yosef Hayyim, *Lashon Hakhamim*, 1:118–160; Dweck and Legimi, *Benayahu ben Yehoyada*, 1a.

31. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 162–165.

32. Zohar, *The Luminous Face of the East*, p. 50; Sassoon, *A History of the Jews in Baghdad*, pp. 145–149. His brother, Yizhak Nissim, became Sephardic chief rabbi of Israel in 1955.
33. Zohar, *The Luminous Face of the East*, pp. 35, 68–69, 70.
34. *Kinyan Perot*, p. 92.
35. *Minḥat Yehudah*, Jerusalem, 1985.
36. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 9, 150–164; Ḥayyim Yosef David Azulai, *Shem ha-Gedolim* 57a.
37. *Tal Orot*, 1c.
38. Jerusalem: Heilprin 1910.
39. Deblitsky, *Maḥshevet Bezalel*, p. 83; Molkho was a disciple of Hayyim de la Rosa.
40. Moscowwitz, *Ḥayyei RaSha"Sh*, pp. 84–85.
41. See the introduction to *Zevi le-Zaddik* (of Zevi Hirsch of Zidatchov) by Asher Zelig Margoliot (p. 35, note 2); Moscowwitz, *Ḥayyei RaSha"Sh*, pp. 93–94.
42. Reprinted in full in Moscowwitz, *Ḥayyei RaSha"Sh*, p. 99–100.
43. Hillel, introduction to Dweck, *Peat ha-Sadeh*, p. 19.

## CHAPTER 7

1. The contemporary redactors of the *kavvanot* have worked from a number of manuscripts in wide circulation. At the Jewish Theological Seminary (ms. 1544) is a manuscript of emendations to the Zohar texts *Sifra de-Zeniuta* and *Idra Zuta*, emendations to Luria's Sabbath hymn *Azamer Shevaḥim*, *kavvanot* of circumcision, and general principles, called *Kelalai ha-RaSHaSH*. Another manuscript (J.T.S. 1949) includes the same *Kelalai ha-RaSHaSH*, along with Luria's *Sha'ar ha-Yiḥudim* and *Sha'ar Ruah ha-Kodesh*. A number of Shar'abi's published works are in manuscript in another mss. (2019, c. 1866), which includes *Nahar Shalom*, *Emet Ve-Shalom*, and *Reḥovot ha-Nahar*. Two pages of this manuscript are in Shar'abi's own hand. The *Kelalim* (general rules) are also available in mss 2027, from Tunis, 1778. Finally, mss. 2042 includes the introduction to *Reḥovot ha-Nahar*, *Nahar Shalom*, and the *kavvanah* of the eighteen benedictions, dating from the eighteenth century (Ḥeibi, *Giant of the Spirit*, p. 16).

2. *Emet Ve-Shalom* was published in 1806, thirty years after Shar'abi's death. This early version is generally considered inferior to a later edition published in 1856, republished in 1891 in Warsaw and in 1910 in Jerusalem (Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 179, 182, 216).

3. The introduction, *Reḥovot ha-Nahar*, was published in 1779, two years after Shar'abi's death.

4. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 173.
5. Dweck and Legimi, *Benayahu ben Yehoyada II*, 20a, 40a.
6. *Ibid.*, I 6a–b.
7. Hillel, introduction to Dweck, *Pe'at ha-Sadeh*, pp. 27, 46, 51.
8. Hillel, introduction to Dweck, *Pe'at ha-Sadeh*, p. 42.

9. Shlomo Eliashiv, Approbation to Dweck and Legimi, *Benayahu ben Yehoyada*.
10. A prayer appended to the midnight vigil, composed by Shar'abi, appears in Moscowwitz, *Ḥayyei RaSha"Sh*, p. 47.
11. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 173, 195.
12. Shar'abi's emendations to *Ez Ḥayyim* were published together with *Ez Ḥayyim* (Salonica, 1838).
13. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 193–195. Ferreira's readings were mixed into the Salonica and Jerusalem editions.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 173, 176.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 171.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 197–199. Ya'akov Moshe Hillel maintains that the phrase "requires further study" (*zarikh iyyun*) found in Shar'abi's writings is merely didactic (Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 198; see Yedidiah Raphael Abulafia, *Kinyan Perot* (on *Emet le-Ya'akov*), p. 183; Yosef Ḥayyim, *Rav Pe'alim* 2, *Sod ha-Yesharim* 13, 130b).
17. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 200.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 209, 222 note 17. Hillel (*Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 186–192) provides many insights into the archaeology of *Nahar Shalom*. He identifies a number of sections as specifically from Shar'abi's earlier teaching, or "first edition" (*mehadurah kammah*), and I cite his conclusions here:  
 Earlier Edition: The scattered gleanings (*Nahar Shalom*, 16b–17a) are from the first edition (see Abulafia, *Kinyan Perot*, p. 155). The *yihudim*, or rites of union, for the High Holy Days (39b–40b) are also early.  
 Later Edition: The introduction to *Rehovot ha-Nahar* is entirely from the later edition. On page 4a (Warsaw), however, the editors changed the text without indicating that they were doing so according to the teaching of Yedidiah Raphael Abulafia. The introduction to the "*Tiqqun* for the Hewers of Souls" (*Nahar Shalom*, 9b–11a) is from the latter edition. The second introduction to the four worlds (*Nahar Shalom*, 11a–13b), with the exception of the material on Sabbatical year (*Nahar Shalom*, 13c) and the two types of unions (*Nahar Shalom*, 14d–15a), is late and is published in his corrections to *Ez Ḥayyim* (15:1). The prayer for Rosh ha-Shanah (37d–38b) also dates from this period.  
 Other materials: The introduction to the commandments (*Nahar Shalom*, 13d–14d) also appears in Dweck's introduction to the devotional work *Benayahu Ben Yehoyada I* 2a, as well as in Eliahu Mani's *Me'il Eliahu*, p. 54. The material commencing with the phrase "And it is known" (*ve-yadua*) (19b–28a) is from Yedidiah Raphael Ḥai Abulafia's introductions to the prayer book. The ascent of the *Ḥasadim* (28a–29b) and the discussion of holiness (29b–c) are close to Yedidiah Raphael Ḥai Abulafia's prayer book (p. 166), while the questions on idolatry originate with Yosef ha-Cohen and Yosef Sadavon. More responsa take up *Nahar Shalom*, 32a–34c, including material on the silent devotion (38c–d), blowing of the *shofar* (39b), and the Divine Unions (39b–d). The material on Purim (41a) is a responsum, part of which is found in the work *Efer Yizhak* (28a). The emendations on certain *kavvanot* (46a–c) are from Shar'abi's personal edition of *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot*.

Other Authors: Abulafia also interspersed a number of introductions throughout *Nahar Shalom*, such as the sections “Hewer of Souls” (*Nahar Shalom* 9d), the “Smaller Introduction” (*Nahar Shalom* 11a), the “Introduction to the Positive and Negative Mizvot” (*Nahar Shalom* 13d), the “Introduction to Midnight” (*Nahar Shalom* 19d), and the Introduction to the format of the Blessings (*Nahar Shalom* 20b). Shar’abi’s learning program (23, 37) is based on the teachings of Abulafia and Eliahu Mishan. The introduction on *tefillin* (*Nahar Shalom* 17a–c) and the section on holidays (34c–37c) are from Shar’abi, with the exception of a section (35d–36c) that is taken from Eliezer Hazan (see Yosef Kolomaro, in Ferreira, *Me’il ka-Kodesh U-Vigdei Yesha’* 78b). The *kavvanot* of Rosh ha-Shanah (37c) are from Avigdor Azriel, the author of *Zimrat ha-Arez*. Sections on knowledge (41b–441) are all from Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Hakdamot*, and the “general principles (*kelalim*)” (44c–46a) are gathered from Luria’s writings. Hillel (*Ahavat Shalom*, p. 191) suspects that some materials (46c–47b) are Shabbatean in origin and observes that the statement “another kavvanah *mi-MoHaRaN*” refers to Nathan of Gaza!

20. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 209. There are a number of examples of this process of emendation (Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 210).

21. *Nahar Shalom*, 28b; Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 171.

22. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 219.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 84, 211, 215, 224, 219.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 226. See Yizḥak Alfaya, *Reaḥ le-Yizḥak*, 166b; Yizḥak Harari Raful, *Alei Nahar*, 50:51, 52; Eliahu Mishan, *Zedek ve-Shalom*, p. 121.

25. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 227–229.

26. Hillel, introduction to Dweck, *Pe’at ha-Sadeh*, p. 43; See also Dweck, introduction to *Benayahu ben Yehoyada*, 1b.

27. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 207, 209. The early editions do not include the materials on the parts of the soul. See Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 253; Abulafia, *Kinyan Perot*, p. 8.

28. Hillel, introduction to Dweck, *Pe’at ha-Sadeh*, p. 43; Dweck and Legimi, *Benayahu ben Yehoyada II*, 12b.

29. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 172.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 218.

31. Asher Anshel Broin, *Siddur Kavvanot ha-RaSha”Sh* (Jerusalem: Broin 1990).

32. Yosef Bar El, *Siddur Edut be-Yehosef* (Jerusalem: Yeshivat Ma’ayan ha-Hokhmah 2002).

33. Professor Boaz Huss has distinguished between canonical and sacred writings; see Boaz Huss, “*Sefer ha-Zohar* as a Canonical, Sacred and Holy Text: Changing Perspectives of the Book of Splendor Between the Thirteenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” pp. 257–307.

34. The printed version is to be found in *Ez Hayingim* 2, p. 413 (119a in the Jerusalem edition). This translation follows the manuscript edition (Columbia mss. X 893 M 6862) published by Meroz (“Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching,” p. 169, cf. p. 79). See Giller, *Reading the Zohar*, p. 14.

35. *Nahar Shalom*, p. 34. See also p. 32.

36. *Nahar Shalom*, p. 32a, also p. 34a.
37. *Sefer Sha'ar ha-Pesukkim/Sefer ha-Likkutim*, Approbations.
38. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 202, 206, 208. There is some discussion over revision of the *kavvanot* between the later and earlier editions; see Abulafia, *Kinyan Peirot*, p. 76.
39. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 90 note 41, 92–93; Yedidiah Rafael Ḥai Abulafia, *Kinyan Perot*, pp. 46, 48. Yosef Ḥayyim (*Rav Pe'alim* 1 10a) seems to accept *Pri Ez Ḥayyim* as authoritative.
40. *Mishnat Hasidim* (Amsterdam 107a); Boaz Huss, “Holy Place, Holy Time, Holy Book,” p. 254; Barnai, *The Jews in Palestine in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 120.
41. Bezalel Naor, *Post-Sabbatian Sabbatianism*, pp. 53–57, 178–184; Arie Morgenstern, *Mysticism and Messianism from Luzzatto to the Vilna Gaon*, pp. 19–25.
42. Ricci, *Hoshev Mahshavot* (Munkacz, 1896), 112d, brought in by Naor, *Post-Sabbatian Sabbatianism*, p. 53, 177 note 1.
43. Naor, *Post-Sabbatian Sabbatianism*. p. 178 note 6.
44. On the Shabbatean activity of the latter kabbalist, see Gershom Scholem, *Studies in Sabbateanism*, pp. 107, 364 note 144.
45. See also Ya'akov Emden's critique of Ricci in his polemic *Mitpahat Sefarim*, (Altoona, 1768, 31a; Jerusalem, 1995, pp. 115–119).
46. Aryeh Leib Epstein, *Sefer ha-Pardes*, 2:8a.
47. (Jerusalem: Safra, 1969), pp. 52–58.
48. Zevi Hirsh of Zidatchov, *Ateret Zevi, Exodus*, 9a; Zevi Moscovitz, *Ḥayyei ha-RaSHaSH*, pp. 53–55.
49. *Divrei Sofrim* (Bnei Bark, 1967), brought in by Naor, *Post-Sabbatian Sabbatianism*, p. 182. See Moshe Ḥalamish, “Typology of Kabbalistic Books in the Teaching of Rabbi Zadok ha-Cohen of Lublin,” in *Studies in Hasidism* (Hebrew) *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, p. 221.
50. Ya'akov Moshe Hillel (*Ahavat Shalom*, p. 62) argues that Shar'abi drew his *kavvanot* of flagellation from the Lurianic *Sefer Likkutim*. Interestingly, the frontispiece of *Sefer Likkutim* indicates that it was published from a single manuscript from Shar'abi's library (see *Kuntrus Sefat Emet* 110, 121:b in Jacob Shealtiel Nino, *Emet le-Ya'akov*; Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 61–62).
51. Nino, *Emet Le-Ya'akov*, 121a.
52. See also Nino, *Emet le-Ya'akov* 55a, 110a; Zevi Moscovitz, *Ḥayyei ha-RaSHaSH*, p. 52.
53. In the work *Kinyan Perot*, p. 180; see also Dweck and Legimi, *Seder Kriat Shema' Al ha-Mitah*, end; Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 63, 88.
54. See p. 165 note 19.
55. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 3, 59, 65–66; Zevi Hirsch of Zidatchov, *Pri Kodesh Ḥilulim*, 9a; Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, pp. 305–315.
- A particular *bête noir* among these ancillary Lurianic writings is Sarug's *Drush ha-Malbush*. Hillel avers that Vital accepted the *Drush ha-Malbush* but prohibited its transcription. The *Drushei ha-Malbush* are also found in the writings of Moshe Yonah and Yosef Ibn Tabul (Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 106, 109–111, 115).

56. Gershom Scholem, “Was Israel Sarug a Student of the AR”I?” pp. 214–243; Yosef Avivi, “Luria’s Writings in Italy to 1620,” *Alei Sefer* 11 (1984): 91–134; Jacob Elbaum, *Openness and Insularity*, pp. 190, 205 note 90; Yehudah Liebes, “On the Image, Writings and Kabbalah of the Author of *Emek ha-Melekh*,” 101–139; Ronit Meroz, “Was Israel Sarug a Student of the AR”I? New Research,” 41–56; Meroz, “Faithful Transmission Versus Innovation: Luria and his Disciples,” in *Gershom Scholem’s Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism 50 Years After*, pp. 257–274; Meroz, “An Anonymous Commentary on *Idra Rabbah* by a Member of the Sarug School,” 307–378.

57. *Zohar ha-Raki’a*, 23b.

58. See Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 69–70, 95–96.

59. *Ibid.*, pp. 97, 99, invoking Zadok of Lublin, *Sefer ha-Zikhronot*, 31a–d.

60. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 10, 87, 89. See Vital, the end of the introduction to the *Sha’ar ha-Hakdamot*, introduction to *Edot le-Ya’akov*, end of the introduction to *Ez Hayyim*. Hillel indicated that at certain times Shar’abi would skip blocks of text in *Ez Hayyim* that he felt originated from the other students. Hillel (*ibid.*, note 39) also located the source for two *kavvanot*, Hanukkah and the ritual washing of hands, in Natan Neta Shapira’s *Torat Natan* (see *Nahar Shalom*, 19c, 40b).

61. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 105, 106.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

63. On *Zohar* 1:15a see Giller, *Reading the Zohar*, pp. 29–30.

64. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 100 note 46.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 101

66. See Miles Krassen, “Peri Eitz Hadar: A Kabbalist Tu B’shvat Seder,” in Arthur Waskow, ed., *Trees, Earth and Torah: A Tu B’shvat Anthology*, pp. 135–153. Yizḥak Algazi copied and published an early edition of *Hemdat ha-Yamim*.

67. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, p. 91.

68. One such adjuration appears at the end of Dweck and Legimi, *Kavvanot Pratiyot* (Jerusalem, 1911).

69. See Liebes, “The Messiah of the Zohar”; Scholem, “Isaac Luria and His School,” in Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*.

70. Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, pp. 28–30, 52, 54, 56.

71. *Ibid.*, pp. 36–40.

## CHAPTER 8

1. Moscowitz, *Hayyei RaSha”Sh*, p. 17 note \*.

2. The Beit El charter indicates a Rav Avraham Gershom, and many contemporary records of the Jewish community of the Land of Israel refer to Gershom Kitover in that fashion. Zevi Moscowitz in his *Hayyei RaShaSH* expresses doubts about the matter, while A. J. Heschel and his editor S. Dresner accept the reports of *Shivḥei ha-Besh”t* at face value, although their presentation contains a number of errors. They erroneously list Shar’abi’s death as occurring in 1753 (p. 83 note 158); in fact, it took place in 1777, providing the possibility of extensive interaction between Kitover and Shar’abi.

3. There is a wide range of views regarding the historicity of *Shivhei ha-Besh*"t. Some view it as a fabrication, a *roman à clef* referring to the conflicts of a later period (Moshe Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba'al Shem Tov*, pp. 16–18, 59–60, 143–155). Other scholars have defended the historicity and integrity of *Shivhei ha-Besh*"t (Immanuel Etkes, *The Master of the Name*, pp. 217–265; Joseph Dan, *The Chasidic Tale*, pp. 64–131). If one takes the majority of the views expressed, it becomes clear that *Shivhei ha-Besh*"t, while having been heavily revised, still offers a wealth of useful and authentic historical material.

4. Avraham Rubinstein, ed., *Shivhei ha-Besht*, p. 114.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 96–98; Abraham J. Heschel, *The Circle of the Baal Shem Tov*, pp. 90–91.

6. Halamish, "The Requirement of Intentions," in Halamish, *Kabbalah: In Liturgy, Halakhah and Customs*, p. 105.

7. Halamish, *The Kabbalah in North Africa*, p. 11, 119.

8. Etkes, *The Master of the Name*, pp. 169–178; Weiss, *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 9, 27–46, 96–97.; Rubenstein, *Shivhei ha-Besh*"t, pp. 56–59, 224–226, 245–247, 264, 266, 291–292.

9. Moshe Halamish, "Luria's Status as a Halakhic Authority" (Hebrew), in Yehudah Liebes and Rachel Elior, eds., *The Kabbalah of the AR"l: Jerusalem, Studies in Jewish Thought 10* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992), p. 284.

10. Zemakh organized this material into five compositions: *Ozrot Chayyim*, *Kehilat Ya'akov*, and *Edut le-Ya'akov* on the grandiose aspects of the Lurianic system; 'Olat Tamid on prayer, *Zohar ha-Raki'a*, interpretations of the *Zohar*; and *Adam Yashar* on the anthropomorphic structure of the universe. These apparently include material written before the year 1598 (Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 17, 56–57, 96, 98; Gershom Scholem, "On the Biography and Literary Activity of the Kabbalist Rav Ya'akov Zemakh," pp. 285–294; Avivi, "Ya'akov Zemakh's Editing of Hayyim Vital's Writings That Were Found in Jerusalem," 61–77; Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, pp. 17, 56–57, 96, 98; Ya'akov Moshe Hillel, Introduction to Zemakh's 'Olat Tamid and Kehilat Ya'akov; Giller, *Reading the Zohar*, pp. 23–24).

11. *Nagid U-Mezaveh* was completed in Damascus in 1638. Originally there were two versions, a short and a long. The short version was the one that was widely published, while the short remained in a hitherto unpublished manuscript, *Lehem min ha-Shamayim*. Zeev Gries, "The Formation of the Hebrew Conduct Literature between the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and its Historical Significance," pp. 563, 568.

12. Ya'akov Zemakh, *Siddur Kavvanot ha-Tefilah be-Kizarah*; Menachem Kallus, "The Relation of the Ba'al Shem Tov to the Practice of Lurianic Kavvanot in Light of His Comments on the *Siddur Rashkov*," p. 154. Kallus identifies the three recensions of Ya'akov Zemakh's prayer book as extant in the following manuscripts: mss. Jerusalem-Mussayoff 146 #22964; mss. Oxford, Bodleian 168 "24783; mss. London, Montefiori 221 #5191. Avraham Azulai also recorded a parallel version of these *kavvanot*. Azulai's *kavvanot*, which closely resemble versions to be found in the standard Lurianic canon, have been published in the volumes *Kenaf Rananim* and *Ma'aseh Hoshhev*.

13. See pp. 100–101.

14. Weiss, *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism*, p. 99.

15. Kallus, “The Relation of the Ba’al Shem Tov to the Practice of Lurianic Kavvanot in Light of His Comments on the *Siddur Rashkov*,” pp. 151–167. See also Yizḥak Alfasi, “A New Source for the Lurianic Prayer Book of the Ḥasidim,” pp. 287–305; Moshe Ḥalamish, “Thirteen Gates in the Firmament,” in Ḥalamish, *Kabbalah: In Liturgy, Halakhah and Customs*, p. 111.

16. The facsimile was reprinted in Bnei Barak 1995. According to the *Encyclopedia le-Hasidut* (p. 141 in *Helek Ishim*; also Alfasi, “A New Source for the ‘Nusakh AR’I’ of the Ḥasidim,” pp. 291–292), Avraham Shimshon settled in the land of Israel after 1760 (Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 281 note 383).

17. Kallus, “The Relation of the Ba’al Shem Tov to the Practice of Lurianic Kavvanot in Light of His Comments on the *Siddur Rashkov*,” p. 157.

18. Publisher’s Introduction, Asher Margoliot, *Siddur Rav Asher*. Kallus alludes, as well, to another important manuscript, presently in private hands (Kallus, “The Relation of the Ba’al Shem Tov to the Practice of Lurianic Kavvanot in Light of His Comments on the *Siddur Rashkov*,” p. 161 note 66).

19. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 154–159; The Besh”tian *kavvanah* for the annulment of harsh decrees is extant in the writings of Yisrael of Satanov, *Sefer Ateret Tiferet Yisrael*, (Warsaw, 1871), p. 91a; in Kallus, “The Relation of the Ba’al Shem Tov to the Practice of Lurianic Kavvanot in Light of His Comments on the *Siddur Rashkov*,” p. 162. This is not to be confused with Israel ben Raphael of Satanov, who composed the manuscript *Siddur ha-AR”I* (Satanov, 1778). In fact, Luria did not leave any *kavvanot* for the Day of Atonement (*ibid.*, p. 163).

21. Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic*, pp. 1–44.

22. Etkes, *The Master of the Name*, pp. 158–159. Idel feels that this material resembles Cordoverean and even Abulafian practices (Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 104, 149–170; *Sefer ha-Ba’al Shem Tov*, pp. 123–199).

23. Etkes, *The Master of the Name*, pp. 138–139. Apparently the Besh”t conflated the Lurianic idea of the gathering of the sparks with his doctrine of the uplifting of strange thoughts. See Etkes, *The Master of the Name*, p. 157; Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 179–181; Mendel Piekarcz, *The Beginning of Hasidism*, pp. 276–279; Moshe Ḥalamish, “The Requirement of Intentions,” in Ḥalamish, *Kabbalah: In Liturgy, Halakhah and Customs*, p. 86.

24. Ya’akov Yosef of Polnoye, *Ketonet Passim* (New York, 1950), 43b.

25. Etkes, *The Master of the Name*, p. 140.; Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 107 note 85.

26. Etkes, *The Master of the Name*, p. 146.

27. *Dibrat Shlomo* 6b, brought in by Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 219–221.

28. This would speak, as well, for the authenticity of the commentary on Psalm 107, which is largely based on a series of *gematriyyot*. The authenticity of the Besh”t’s

authorship of this work has been contested and debated. See Schatz-Uffenheimer, “The Besh”t’s Commentary to Psalm 107,” in Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 342–382; Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, pp. 122–123.

29. Weiss, *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 101–104.

30. Kallus, “The Relation of the Ba’al Shem Tov to the Practice of Lurianic Kavvanot in Light of His Comments on the *Siddur Rashkov*,” pp. 154–159; Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” pp. 114–121. Kallus considers Zevi Hirsch Zidatchover’s commentary to *Zohar II*, 262a–b, to be key in understanding the early Hasidic approach to prayer; see his *Pri Kodesh Hīllulim*, 10a.

31. Kallus, “The Relation of the Ba’al Shem Tov to the Practice of Lurianic Kavvanot in Light of His Comments on the *Siddur Rashkov*,” p. 152.

32. Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, pp. 114–186.

33. Moshe mi-Dolena’s *Seraf Pri Eṣ Ḥayyim* is, according to Kallus, “the only extant Eastern European full-length commentary on the Lurianic kavvanot, and the only work of its kind that contrast the non-Vital recession of Lurianic kavvanot recorded in *Sefer Kanfei Yonah* (Korez, 1786) with the recensions of Ḥayyim Vital” (Kallus, “The Relation of the Ba’al Shem Tov to the Practice of Lurianic Kavvanot in Light of His Comments on the *Siddur Rashkov*,” p. 151). Moshe mi-Dolena was also the author of the popular compendium *Divrei Moshe*.

34. Kallus; “The Relation of the Ba’al Shem Tov to the Practice of Lurianic Kavvanot in Light of His Comments on the *Siddur Rashkov*,” p. 227; see Scholem, “The Historical Image of Yisrael Ba’al Shem Tov,” pp. 319–320 note 59. See also Abraham J. Heschel, “Rabbi Gerson Kutover: His Life and Immigration to the Land of Israel,” in *The Circle of the Ba’al Shem Tov*, pp. 107–108.

35. See Etkes, *The Master of the Name*, pp. 217–265; Joseph Dan, *The Chassidic Tale*, pp. 64–131; Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, pp. 143–155.

36. *Pri Kodesh Hīllulim* (Arcsiva, 1927), brought in by Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 226–227.

37. Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 214–241.

38. See *Or Ha-Emet* 14b, brought in by Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, p. 217.

39. Weiss, *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism*, p. 105.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 107.

41. Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, p. 227.

42. Alan Nadler, *The Faith of the Mithnagdim*, pp. 61–77.

43. *Or ha-Meir*, 14a–b; 132c; brought in by Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 221–222.

44. The Maggid, *Or ha-Emet* 77b and *Liqqutei Yeqarim* 15a, brought in by Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, p. 218.

45. *Shabbat*, 75a; *Rosh Ha-Shanah*, 24b; *Sanhedrin*, 68a.

46. *Liqqutei Moharan II*, 120.

47. Moshe Ḥalamish, “The Requirement of Intentions,” in Ḥalamish, *Kabbalah: In Liturgy, Halakhah and Customs*, pp. 98–105; Ḥalamish, *The Kabbalah in North Africa*, pp. 115, 138.

48. Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic*, pp. 149–156; Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 272, 277–278; Ya'akov Emden, *Mitpahat Sefarim* (Jerusalem ed., 1985), p. 119. Nathan of Gaza had abolished the Lurianic system of *kavvanot* in 1666, comparing those who practiced them to “one who would do work on the Sabbath.” Joseph Weiss, *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism*, p. 99.

49. Ḥalamish, “The Requirement of Intention,” in Ḥalamish, *Kabbalah: In Liturgy, Halakhah and Customs*, p. 104.

50. Ḥalamish, “Problems in the Analysis of Kabbalistic Influence on Prayer,” in Ḥalamish, *Kabbalah: In Liturgy, Halakhah and Customs*, p. 28.

51. *Turei Zahav* 57c, brought in by Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, p. 218. See Meshulam Feibush of Zbarazh, *Derekh Emet*, pp. 22–23, brought in by Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 239–240.

52. Moshe Ḥalamish, “Luria’s Status as a Halakhic Authority,” in Ḥalamish, *Kabbalah: In Liturgy, Halakhah and Customs*, pp. 199–200. A reconstituted version of Luria’s own prayer book has been produced by Rabbi Daniel Remer of Betar, Israel; see his *Siddur Tefilat Ḥayyim*, as well as the scholarly apparatus in Remer, *Sefer Tefilat Ḥayyim*.

53. “One must only pray for the version of the prayer book of Luria in the Lemburg edition or in the Prayer book of Rav Shabbatai, not from the other versions which are in the new prayer books.” Rafael of Berszada, *Pe'er le-Yesharim*, brought in by Weiss, *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism*, p. 105.

54. See p. 109.

55. Alfasi, “A New Source for the ‘Nusakh AR’I’ of the Ḥasidim,” pp. 287–203.

56. Zvi Zohar, *The Luminous Face of the East*, pp. 331–336.

57. See Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic*, pp. 1–44.

58. *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 89, 141, 153, 195–196, 220–221, 224, 228–229, 233.

59. For examples, see *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 78–80, 97, 143; *Pri Eẓ Ḥayyim I*, pp. 6, 9–11.

60. Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kavvanot,” pp. 122–123 note 23.

61. For general discussions of this topic, see Giller, “Recovering the Sanctity of the Galilee: The Veneration of Sacred Relics in the Classical Kabbalah”; Elliot Wolfson, “Walking as a Sacred Duty: Theological Transformation of Social Reality in Early Chasidism.”

## CHAPTER 9

1. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 400.

2. Huss, “Ask No Questions: Gershom Scholem and the Study of Contemporary Jewish Mysticism,” *Modern Judaism* 25, no. 2:141–115; Huss, “The Metaphysics of Kabbalah and the Myth of ‘Jewish Mysticism’” (Hebrew), *Peamim* no. 110 (Winter 2007) : 9–30.

3. Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* p. 534.

4. W. T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, pp. 46–47; R. C. Zaehner, *Concordant Discord*, pp. 40–46; Zaehner, *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane*. p. 12.

5. “The Natural Experience of the Void,” in Richard Woods, ed., *Understanding Mysticism*.
6. Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 30–32.
7. *Peamim* no. 110 (Winter 2007): 9–30.
8. Idel, “On Aharon Jellenik and Kabbalah,” *Peamim* 100 (2004): 15–22.
9. Scholem, “On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism,” p. 87; Scholem, *Essential Chapters in the Understanding of the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (Hebrew), p. 86; Scholem, *Devarim be-Go*, (Tel Aviv: Am Oved 1975) p. 45. Steven Wasserstrom, *Religion After Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade and Henry Corbin at Eranos*, p. 32.
10. Huss, “Ask No Questions,” p. 141.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 145, citing Arthur Hertzberg, “Gershom Scholem as a Zionist and Believer,” 12.
12. Scholem, *Devarim be-Go*, p. 71.
13. Huss, “Ask No Questions,” p. 149.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 149–150.
15. With regard to these phenomena, the recent study by Yonatan Garb, *The Chosen Will Become Herds*, serves as an important corrective. (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2005).
16. See Fine, “The Contemplative Practice of Yichudim,” in Arthur Green, ed., *Jewish Spirituality*, p. 89; Joseph Dan, “The Book of the Divine Name by Rabbi Eliezer of Worms,” pp. 142, 157; Dan, “The Emergence of Mystical Prayer,” in Dan, *Jewish Mysticism: The Middle Ages*, p. 229; Dan, *The Esoteric Teaching of the German Hasidim*, pp. 122–126.
17. Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 25–27.
18. A similar querying of a historical construct is Michael Allen Williams’s questioning the definition of Gnosticism; see Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*.
19. Melila Hellner-Eshed, *A River Issues Forth from Eden: On the Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar*, pp. 28–32.
20. Huss, “Mysticism and Metaphysics”: 26–27. Another interesting view of this problem is that of that of Matt Goldish, “Kabbalah, Academia, and Authenticity,” *Tikkun* 20.5 (Sept–Oct 2005): 63(5). The distinction is also made by Elliot Wolfson in the title of a recent study *Venturing Beyond: Law & Morality in Kabbalistic Mysticism*, implying that the terms Kabbalah and Mysticism may complement one another but are not, necessarily, synonymous.
21. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 6.
22. Katz, *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, p. 24.
23. S. Katz, “Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism,” in Katz, ed. *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, p. 26; Katz, “The Conservative Character of Mystical Experience,” in Katz, ed., *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, pp. 3–60. See E. R. Wolfson, *Through A Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 7, 52, 54–55.
24. Katz, *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, p. 40.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

26. Hillel, introduction to Dweck, *Peat ha-Sadeh*, p. 33.

27. In a recent study, the Haifa scholar Menachem Kellner has answered, “a mystic,” as opposed to a Maimonidean. His conclusions arrived too late for an adequate response in this volume, but his excellent study *Maimonides’ Confrontation with Mysticism* advances the discussion considerably.

## APPENDIX

1. See pp. 46–47.

2. Avivi, *Binyan Ariel*, p. 292.

3. Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, pp. 44–46. See Ephraim Urbach, *The Sages: Their Beliefs and Opinions*, pp. 228, 231, 787 notes 39–40; Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia: Kabbalist and Prophet*, p. 15. The Greek parallel to this tradition, of course, may be found in Plato’s *Symposium*, in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds., *Plato: Collected Dialogues*, pp. 189–193.

4. See *Berakhot*, 61a.

5. Boyarin translates this as “sawed him apart,” which agrees with other instances of the Semitic root NSR.

6. *Eruvin*, 18a.

7. *Zohar III*, 117a; see also *Zohar III*, 19a, 44b.

8. *Zohar I*, 165a; *II*, 55a, 231a; *III*, 44b; *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, 39a, 78a. See also *Sifra de-Zeniuta*, *Zohar II*, 178b, although this passage is excised from the Gaon of Vilna’s text.

9. *Zohar II*, 55a; *III*, 44b.

10. *Zohar III*, 19a, *Zohar III*, 117a; see also *Zohar III*, 19a, 44b.

11. Some Talmudic traditions describe the *zela’* not as the hindmost side of the original androgyne but as Adam’s tail. This echoes a theme explored by Elliot Wolfson, namely that the feminine is often viewed as a subsidiary crown on the phallogocentric structure of the cosmos. See, in particular, Wolfson, “Woman—The Feminine as Other in Theosophic Kabbalah: Some Philosophical Observations on the Divine Androgyne.”

12. See pp. 42–45.

13. *Zohar II*, 178b.

14. *Zohar II*, 178b; *III*, 10b.

15. *Zohar I*, 34b; *III*, 19a.

16. *Zohar II*, 55a.

17. *Zohar III*, 44b.

18. *Ketubot*, 8a.

19. *Zohar II*, 55a.

20. *Zohar I* 34b; *II*, 55a; *III*, 19a, 44b, 83b.

21. *Zohar III*, 142b–143a.

22. See Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 33–58.

23. *Ez Hayyim*, Ashlag 1: 22–23; Warsaw 10a–b.

24. See Giller, *Reading the Zohar*, pp. 156–157; Liebes, “Two Young Roes of a Doe,” in Liebes and Elior, *The Kabbalah of the AR”I: Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*

10, pp. 117–118, 126–127, 144; Zeviyah Rubin, “The Zohar Commentaries of Yosef Ibn Tabul,” in Liebes and Elior, *The Kabbalah of the AR”I: Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 10, pp. 363.

25. The term *ishtadel*, a Tibbonism, is one of the most widely mutable terms in the *Zohar*, meaning literally to “strive” or “exert oneself” but also to “quest.”

26. *Zohar III*, 44b.

27. *Zohar III*, 44b.

28. *Ez Ḥayyim I*, p. 22.

29. *Sha’ar Maamarei RaShB”Y*, pp. 164, 221.

30. Shabbatai Rashkover, *Siddur R. Shabbatai*, 52a–65a.

31. This approach survives to Vital’s drush for *Rosh ha-Shanah (Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 228).

32. *Pri Ez Ḥayyim II Rosh ha-Shanah*, 2–5, pp. 446–465; *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 206.

33. *Ez Ḥayyim II*, pp. 69–87. The emergence of the *nesirah* from the *Idra* texts into Lurianic doctrine is also clear in Ya’akov Zemakh’s commentary to the *Idra Rabbah*, *Kol be-Ramah* (pp. 377–381).

34. See Giller, *Reading the Zohar*, pp. 139–157.

35. *Zohar III*, 142b.

36. See Ya’akov Zemakh, *Kol be-Ramah*, p. 377.

37. *Zohar II*, 178a.

38. *Zohar III*, 142a.

39. See p. 42–45.

40. This idea may be linked to earlier zoharic passages that portray the tradition with the startling departure that the woman in the account is not Eve but the demoness Lillit. According to such a thesis, the *nesirah* took place only in the first creation account, in the first chapter of Genesis, to which the Lillit traditions are appended (*Zohar I*, 34b; see *Zohar III*, 19a; *Zohar Ḥadash*, 16c).

41. In Luria’s dense presentation:

The higher *yu”d* is crowned in the knot of ‘Attika, [it is] the gleaming higher closed membrane. “The higher *yu”d* is Abba, while the lower *yu”d* is *Zeir Anpin*, as it says in the *Idra Zuta* [289a], “in the hidden book we learn of the higher and lower *yu”d*.” And it says that the higher *yu”d* is crowned and influenced in the knot [*kitur*] of ‘Attika, that is the intense [*kitur*] that goes out of ‘Attika through the purifying membrane. (*Sha’ar Maamarei RaShB”Y* p. 108)

42. See p. 70.

43. The nuances of “revelation” at the moment of circumcision are extensively addressed in Elliot Wolfson’s *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 357–368; Wolfson, “Circumcision and the Divine Name: A Study in the Transmission of an Esoteric Doctrine,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 78, nos. 1–2. (July–October 1987): 77–112; Wolfson, “Circumcision, Vision of God and Textual Interpretation, from Midrashic Trope to Mystical Symbol,” pp. 198–215;

Wolfson, “From Sealed Book to Open Text,” p. 149, 169 note 23. Wolfson points out the valorization of the feminine according to the interpretations of the Gaon of Vilna; see *Sifra de-Zeniuta ‘im Biur ha-GR”A*, 6a; *Yahel Or*, 6a–b, 23a; *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar ‘im Biur ha-GR”A*, 19b; *Sefer Yezirah ‘im Perush ha-GR”A*, 3c, 7b.

44. Abulafia, *Kinyan Perot*, p. 8; Shar’abi, *Nahar Shalom*, 55a, Emendations to *Ez Ḥayyim*, 100a.
45. See Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 81 note 26.
46. Fine, *Safed Spirituality*, pp. 17–18; Magid, “Conjugal Union, Mourning and Talmud Torah in R. Isaac Luria’s *Tikkun Ḥazot*,” xxvi.
47. Magid, “Conjugal Union, Mourning and Talmud Torah in R. Isaac Luria’s *Tikkun Ḥazot*,” xxxv.
48. *Zohar I*, 34b; *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, pp. 206–209, 341–342.
49. *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 208.
50. *Sha’ar Ruah ha-Kodesh*, pp. 108–109.
51. The midnight vigil and the recitation of the *Shema’* at night have been investigated by Magid, “Conjugal Union, Mourning and Talmud Torah in R. Isaac Luria’s *Tikkun Ḥazot*,” and by Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 309, 313–314.
52. Vital, *Pri Ez Ḥayyim*, p. 348; Zemakh, *Siddur Kavvanot ha-Tefilah be-Kizarah*, p. 78.
53. Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, p. 317; Hanover, *Sha’arei Ziyon*, 3b–4a. See also Israel Weinstock, “R. Yosef Ibn Tabul’s Commentary on the Idra,” 129–130. On gender issues in Lurianic Kabbalah, see Kallus, “The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah,” p. 142.
54. Heibi, *Giant of the Spirit*, pp. 45–48.
55. *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 209.
56. *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 209; Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, p. 309.
57. Magid, “Conjugal Union, Mourning and Talmud Torah in R. Isaac Luria’s *Tikkun Ḥazot*,” xxvii.
58. *Zohar I*, 178b, 245b, 173b; *II*, 217b; *III*, 193a; Magid, “Conjugal Union, Mourning and Talmud Torah in R. Isaac Luria’s *Tikkun Ḥazot*,” xxix.
59. *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 206–207.
60. Vital, *Ez Ḥayyim I*, pp. 21; *Pri Ez Ḥayyim*, pp. 21, 346–350; Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, p. 312.
61. Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, p. 313.
62. Wolfson, “From Sealed Book to Open Text: Time, Memory and Narrativity in Kabbalistic Hermeneutics.” pp. 155–158; Wolfson, “Woman—The Feminine as Other in Theosophic Kabbalah: Some Philosophical Observations on the Divine Androgyne,” pp. 186–187.
63. *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 206. In the morning, *Zeir has moḥin* from Abba and Imma and doesn’t need to go to sleep to have them removed to the lower aspect, because a *reshimu*, or residue, will remain with him. See also Abulafia, *Kinyan Perot*, p. 10.
64. *Ez Ḥayyim I*, pp. 21; *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot I* pp. 206, 208, 340–342; *II*, p. 221; also Dweck and Legimi, *Kavvanot Pratiyyot*, 1b.

65. *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 209.
66. *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot II (Rosh ha-Shanah, Drush 3)*, p. 220–233.
67. *Sha'ar Maamarei RaShB"Y I*, p. 221.
68. *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 206.
69. *Pri Ez Hayyim*, 91c; Magid, "Conjugal Union, Mourning and Talmud Torah in R. Isaac Luria's *Tikkun Hazot*," xxiii.
70. *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 206; *II*, p. 220.
71. *Zohar III*, 231b; *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot II*, pp. 220, 224.
72. *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot II*, pp. 224, 227–228, 340–342.
73. For instance, the empirical wisdom, or *Hokhmah*, in the *Keter* is called *Roshim*, "heads," as in *Rosh ha-Shanah*, literally "head of the year." *Sha'ar Maamarei RaShB"Y*, p. 237.
74. *Bezah*, 4b–5a.
75. *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot II*, p. 220, 228–230.
76. *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot II*, pp. 224, 227.
77. *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot II*, p. 231.
78. *Abulafia, Kinyan Perot*, p. 5.
79. Kallus, "The Theurgy of Prayer in Lurianic Kabbalah," p. 102 note 73; also Zemakh, *Zohar ha-Raki'a*, 68c.
80. Rashkover, *Siddur R. Shabbatai*, 3:50b–52a.
81. *Siddur Tefilah* (Zalkova, 1781), 163b.
82. Moshe of Dolena, *Seraf Pri Ez Hayyim*, pp. 439–444; Kallus, "The Relationship of the Baal Shem Tov to the Practice of Lurianic Kavvanot in Light of His Comments on the *Siddur Rashkov*," 151.
83. Jacob Koppel Lifschuetz, *Siddur Kol Ya'akov* (Lemberg, 1859), pp. 215–226.
84. *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot I*, p. 206; Kallus, "The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah," p. 181 note 137.
85. Vital, *Siddur Hemdat Yisrael*, pp. 219b–220b; see also Menachem Azariah de Fano, *Sefer Kanfei Yonah*, p. 378.
86. Yom Tov Lippman, *Siddur ha-AR"i*, mss., Crakow, 1738.
87. *Siddur ha-AR"i*, mss., Satanov, 1778.
88. *Seder Tefilah me-ha-AR"i Z"L* (Yampol, 1750; reprinted Jerusalem, 1999).
89. Shar'abi, *Nahar Shalom*, p. 38a; *Pri Ez ha-Gan*, pp. 3, 7.
90. Benyahu Shmueli, ed., *Siddur Rehovot ha-Nahar: Kavvanot Nesirah ve-Shofar le-Rosh ha-Shanah*, p. 91. A similar tradition is the interpretation of the flood in *Tiqunei ha-Zohar* as being located in an existential explanation for present reality. See Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 33–58. Elliot Wolfson has fully examined this process with regards to circumcision; see his "Circumcision, Vision of God and Textual Interpretation: From Midrashic Trope to Mystical Symbol," pp. 189–215; Wolfson, "Circumcision and the Divine Name: A Study in the Transmission of Esoteric Doctrine," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 78, no. 1–2 (July–October 1987): 77–112; Wolfson, "The Mystical Significance of Torah Study in German Pietism," pp. 74–76.

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