

TECHNIQUES OF MYSTICAL MEDITATION FOR ACHIEVING
PROPHECY AND THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE
TEACHINGS OF ISAAC LURIA AND
HAYYIM VITAL

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	vii
TABLE OF TRANSLITERATION AND TECHNICAL REMARKS	viii
INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter	
1 MAGGIDIC REVELATIONS IN THE TEACHINGS OF ISAAC LURIA .	18
2 THE PRACTICE OF <i>YIHUDIM</i> : PART ONE	43
3 THE PRACTICE OF <i>YIHUDIM</i> : PART TWO	76
4 READING IN THE <i>MISHNAH</i> : A TECHNIQUE OF MEDITATION	
TAUGHT BY ḤAYYIM VITAL	135
Selected Bibliography	174
Appendix	180

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration	Page
1 Meditation Outline	95
2 A Chart showing Forty-two Names of God which are the basis for one of the <i>yihudim</i> . It is reproduced from <i>Shatar Ruah ha-Kodesh</i> , Jerusalem 1864, 44b-45a.	98-99
3 Circular patterns of the Seventy-two Letter Name of God from <i>Sefer Hayyei 'Olam ha-Ba'</i> , Ms. Heb. 8 ^o 540 folio 7a of the Hebrew University.	107
4 <i>Matamar Hitbodedut</i> , fourth chapter of Hayyim Vital's <i>Shatarei Kedushah</i> , Ms. 749 British Museum, folio 10a.	145

INTRODUCTION

Isaac Luria ranks among the most extraordinary and influential personalities that Judaism has produced. Besides being regarded as the greatest Kabbalist of sixteenth century Safed, Luria's original mystical doctrines and practices were of fundamental importance to virtually all Jewish mystical creativity after him. Lurianism spread throughout the Jewish world and by 1650 had established itself supreme. Lurianic Kabbalah contributed vitally to the Sabbatian and Hasidic movements--neither of which can be adequately understood outside of its relationship to Luria.¹ The immense role of Lurianic Kabbalah is particularly remarkable in light of Luria's short life of thirty-eight years--only two of which were spent in Safed.

Isaac Luria was born in 1534 in Jerusalem to which city his father had emigrated from Germany or Poland.² After his father's death his mother took him to Egypt where he lived in the home of his uncle, Mordecai Frances, a wealthy tax-farmer. In Egypt, Luria studied with David b. Solomon Zimra and Bešalel Ashkenazi. Together with Ashkenazi, Luria wrote several halachic works such as the *Shiṭah Meḳubbešet* on the talmudic tractate *Zevaḥim* and annotations to some of Isaac Alfasi's works.³

While still in Egypt, Luria undertook the study of Kabbalah, retreating in seclusion to the island Jazirat ʿal-Rawda on the Nile not far from Cairo. During this period he apparently studied *Zohar* and other Kabbalistic texts. In 1569, or early 1570, Luria emigrated to

Safed and began to study Kabbalah with Moses Cordovero (1522-1570), the community's leading mystical teacher. It is possible that even before Cordovero's death in the fall of 1570, Luria may have begun teaching on his own to a small group of disciples. In any case, following Cordovero's death Luria attracted to himself a circle of students which included Hayyim Vital (1543-1620), who became his most important follower. Luria's circle, thirty of whose members' names we know, was an elite group of persons who engaged in both exoteric and Kabbalistic studies. That membership was highly restricted is evident from the rejection of Moses Alsheikh as participant in Luria's closest group of associates.⁴

According to the semi-historical and semi-legendary traditions about Luria's life preserved in *Sefer Toledot ha-Ari*,⁵ it seems that Luria quickly became renowned as a saintly person who possessed the "holy spirit" and who had merited the revelation of mystical secrets and heavenly mysteries from Elijah himself.⁶ He instructed his disciples privately in both his innovative mythological system and in the ways of practical mystical life. The hagiographical writings depict Luria as a true visionary. He was known to have indicated to his disciples, while on walks in the environs of Safed, the graves of departed righteous persons (*ṣaddikim*) with whose souls he communicated. These he was said to have known by virtue of revelations and his extraordinary spiritual intuition. Luria was a mystical master in the strict sense. He imparted esoteric wisdom to a select group of persons, vouchsafing to each of them mystical knowledge pertinent to their particular soul. As we shall see, Luria was able to inform

them of such important matters as the ancestry of their souls and the specific meditations appropriate to their soul-status. They engaged in mystical practices and liturgical exercises unique to their group, the secrets of which they carefully guarded. As indicated, Luria's activities in Safed were exceedingly brief as he died in an epidemic on July 15, 1572.

II

Besides the above mentioned halachic works, Luria wrote a short commentary on the section of the *Zohar* known as *Sifra de-Şeniuta*.⁷ This work does not reflect his own original system which he taught at the end of his life, but reveals the distinct influence of Cordovero. Other than this, he committed to writing virtually nothing of his mystical teachings. Like another great Jewish mystic of a later time, Naḥman of Braşlav, Luria seems to have felt unable to express himself in writing.⁸ Luria is reported to have told the following to a disciple who asked him why he did not put his teachings into written form:

It is impossible, because all things are interrelated. I can hardly open my mouth to speak without feeling as though the sea burst its dams and overflowed. How then shall I express what my soul has received, and how can I put it down in a book?⁹

While one can appreciate the mystic's frustrations, it is fortunate for the historian of religion that often colleagues or disciples have recorded and preserved their master's teachings. Such is the case with Isaac Luria. Our knowledge of his system is based entirely on the writings of several of his disciples who recognized the importance

of preserving Luria's teachings.¹⁰ As these were written independently of one another a comparison of them can help verify what Luria actually taught.

The major versions of Luria's teachings are those by Moses Jonah, Joseph ibn Ṭabul, Israel Sarug and Ḥayyim Vital.¹¹ It was Vital, however, whose writings were ultimately most influential. In contrast to the limited scope of the other's versions, Vital recorded Luria's teachings in great detail. Vital became the leader of Luria's circle following the latter's death. In 1575 seven of Luria's disciples pledged themselves to study their master's teachings from Vital only by signing a covenant to that effect. They also promised to refrain from asking Vital to reveal of the teachings more than he wished, and to keep them within the confines of the circle.¹² It is evident from this document that Vital was regarded as possessing teachings not known to all members of the group.

Vital wrote his first versions of Luria's system immediately following his master's death. He included everything Luria had taught in a work called *‘Eṣ Ḥayyim*, which was written down approximately between 1573 and 1576. This work underwent several reworkings as Vital continued to arrange what he had learned from Luria for many years. The original structure of *‘Eṣ Ḥayyim*, however, consisted in "eight gates" (*Shemonah She‘arim*). Based on this version, known as *maḥadura ḳamma* (first version), which remained in Damascus with Vital's son Shmuel, the latter reedited and reorganized the *Shemonah She‘arim* according to the following format:

- 1) *Shḥar ha-Hakdamot*
- 2) *Shḥar Maḥmarei Pashbi*
- 3) *Shḥar Maḥmarei Razal*
- 4) *Shḥar ha-Pesukim*
- 5) *Shḥar ha-Misvot*
- 6) *Shḥar ha-Kavvanot*
- 7) *Shḥar Ruah ha-Kodesh*
- 8) *Shḥar ha-Gilgulim*

In this version, Lurianic teachings were widely circulated from about the year 1660. Before the dissemination of Shmuel Vital's edition, Kabbalists desiring to study Lurianic teachings used either other versions of Vital's writings or those by other disciples.¹³

Hayyim Vital's writings bear unmistakable signs of faithful transmission. His presentation is essentially prosaic and straightforward, indicating an interest in setting forth Luria's teachings as simply as possible. The reliability of his version is enhanced by the fact that he frequently points out that he cannot recall precisely what he had heard, or that he had heard different statements on various occasions. Sometimes he admits that a particular teaching has eluded his memory altogether. Moreover, in most parts of the *Shemonah She'arim* Vital includes teachings which he did not hear directly, but which were transmitted to him by Luria's other disciples. In such cases he does not always mention the name of his source. These obviously are not the editing methods of someone interested in personal embellishment or deliberate misrepresentation. Although necessarily filtered through his own understanding of the complex teachings, Vital's *Shemonah She'arim*

can be regarded as a reasonably accurate and faithful record of Lurias's system.¹⁴

III

This study is concerned with certain aspects of mystical experience as presented in the teachings of Isaac Luria and Hayyim Vital. What immediately strikes the student of Kabbalistic history interested in mystical *experience* is the paucity of attention paid to this dimension of Jewish mysticism. The overwhelming portion of scholarship has been devoted to a presentation and understanding of the theoretical or speculative areas of Kabbalistic literature. Confining ourselves to the period of sixteenth century Safed--the time and place of our writings--this discrepancy is no less apparent. Of the important modern scholarship in this field little of it penetrates the area of mystical experience. For example, the most significant study of Moses Cordovero is that by Joseph Ben-Shlomo, *The Mystical Theology of Moses Cordovero (Torat ha-²Elohut shel Moshe Cordovero)*.¹⁵ While it is an excellent discussion of Cordovero's speculative theology, it refrains from touching at all on his mystical life and experiences. To be sure, the Cordovero who was the great synthesizer of classical Kabbalah and constructor of a comprehensive Kabbalistic system is far better known than the Cordovero who wrote rules of mystical piety for his followers, had an intimate familiarity with Abulafian meditative permutations, and practiced mystical peregrinations along with his brother-in-law Solomon Alkabeş. Similarly, the only significant full length study of Lurianic Kabbalah--Isaiah Tishby's *The Doctrine of Evil and the Shell in Lurianic*

Kabbalah (Torat ha-Ra' ve-ha-Kelippah be-Kabbalat ha-Ari), is concerned exclusively with Luria's theoretical and mythological doctrines.¹⁶ In Gershom Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, the chapter "Isaac Luria and his School" gives a fairly detailed account of Lurianic doctrine while the issues of mystical practice occupy little space.¹⁷ In fact, aside from Scholem's "Tradition and New Creation in the Ritual of the Kabbalists," in his *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*,¹⁸ his monographs on the history of sixteenth century Safed and Lurianism are devoted primarily to historical problems.¹⁹

It hardly diminishes the great importance and contributions of the above mentioned scholars in this area to ask why they have dealt less with matters of mystical experience than with matters of mystical doctrine. The answer to this question is likely to be found in the fact that the bulk of Kabbalistic literature is itself of a theoretical, speculative or doctrinal nature. This point is made most strenuously by R. J. Z. Werblowsky:

The fact remains . . . that the *discursive* and even dialectical elements are so prominent in kabbalistic literature that we may almost speak of an intellectualistic hypertrophy. It often looks as if the sole difference between talmudic and kabbalistic literature resides in the different subject matter. As far as form and approach are concerned both are equally dialectical and argumentative, and more often than not kabbalistic literature is less the record of the *cognitio experimentalis dei* than the substitution of a theosophical *pilpul* for the halakhic one of the rabbinic lawyers.²⁰

Though Werblowsky's statement may be somewhat overdrawn, his point is nevertheless well-taken. The reason why Kabbalistic literature is weighted in this direction, however, is not because Kabbalists

did not experience mystical inspiration and illumination. It is rather that Jewish mystics have tended to refrain from writing about their personal religious experiences. This reticence and the reasons for it have been discussed by G. Scholem. He considers this a distinguishing characteristic of Jewish mystical literature in contrast to the mystical traditions of other religions. Let us quote at length Scholem's remarks on this matter as they are of great interest to us here:

Nothing could be further from the truth than the assumption that the religious experience of the Kabbalists is barren of that which, as we have seen, forms the essence of mystical experience, everywhere and at all times. The ecstatic experience, the encounter with the absolute Being in the depths of one's own soul, or whatever description one may prefer to give to the goal of the mystical nostalgia, has been shared by the heirs of rabbinical Judaism. How could it be otherwise with one of the original and fundamental impulses of man? At the same time, such differences as there are, are explained by the existence of an overwhelmingly strong disinclination to treat in express terms of these strictly mystical experiences. Not only is the form different in which these experiences are expressed, but the *will* to express them and to impart the knowledge of them is lacking, or is counteracted by other considerations.

. . . The Kabbalists . . . are no friends of mystical autobiography. They aim at describing the realm of Divinity and the other objects of the contemplation in an impersonal way, by burning, as it were, their ships behind them. They glory in objective description and are deeply averse to letting their own personalities intrude into the picture. The wealth of expression at their disposal is not inferior to that of their autobiographical confreres. It is as though they were hampered by a sense of shame. . . . On the whole, I am inclined to believe that this dislike of a too personal indulgence in self-expression may have been caused by the fact among others that the Jews retained a particularly vivid sense of the incongruity between mystical experience and that idea of God which stresses the aspects of Creator, King and Law-giver. It is obvious that the absence of the autobiographical element is a serious obstacle to any psychological understanding of Jewish mysticism as the psychology of mysticism has to rely primarily on the study of such autobiographical material.²¹

Moreover, most of those writings which do describe deeply personal religious experiences, or even objectively detailed techniques for achieving ecstasy or divine inspiration, have rarely been printed. This is particularly true of those books which are explicitly concerned with mystical meditation. For example, all of the writings of that prominent contemplative mystic of the thirteenth century, Abraham Abulafia, fall into this category.²² While we possess numerous manuscript copies of Abulafian texts--attesting to their popularity and use--virtually nothing of this immense corpus has been published.²³ Other books following the Abulafian tradition such as *Shatarei Sedek*, Judah Albottini's *Sullam ha-ʿAliyah*, Joseph ibn Ṣayaḥ's *Eben ha-Shoham* have likewise circulated in manuscripts only.²⁴ The unprinted fourth chapter of Ḥayyim Vital's *Shatarei Kedushah* is a striking example of this sort of internal censorship on the part of the Kabbalists. We will have more to say of this last work as it forms the basis for the final part of the present study.

Thus, in answer to our question we can point to the fact that the largest part of Kabbalistic literature does not expressly deal with mystical experience, and that that portion of the literature openly concerned with such matters has been confined to manuscript form. It is not surprising, of course, that those texts limited to manuscripts have been investigated far less than printed works. At the same time, one also wonders whether the reticence of the Kabbalists themselves has not extended somewhat to those who have undertaken the challenge of historically studying the literature of Kabbalah. In any case, an extremely precious aspect of Kabbalistic life and body of material

remains to be explored with the same vigor and precision accorded to speculative and theoretical mystical literature. We agree with Werblowsky when he writes: "Although our understanding of the theoretical and speculative systems evolved by these kabbalists has increased enormously in recent years, the psychological aspects of the lives of the mystics have not yet received the full attention which they deserve."²⁵

IV

Let us define the focus of our study more precisely. We are interested in exploring three different forms of ecstatic or illuminatory experience in the writings of Isaac Luria and Ḥayyim Vital. These are the phenomenon of maggidism, the practice of *yihudim*, and Vital's contemplative technique of reading in the *Mishnah*. These topics constitute a coherent whole from several vantage points. First, they are tied to each other through literary presentation. Luria's theory of maggidism and the performance of meditative *yihudim* are both described in *Shḥar Ruah ha-Kodesh* of the *Shemonah She'arim*, as well as *Shḥar ha-Yihudim*.²⁶ In editing and arrangement they are clearly conceived as bearing upon the same basic subject. Vital's development of the technique of reading in the *Mishnah*, as we shall see, though discussed in his dream diary and *Shḥarei Kedushah*, is firmly rooted in the above mentioned works. Second, all three forms of mystical experience have a common goal. They are concerned with the achievement of esoteric knowledge through supernal revelations and communications--what our texts call the "holy spirit" and "prophecy." Furthermore, all of them

involve communications that become manifest in the form of involuntary or automatic speech. Third, these experiences are phenomenologically bound to one another inasmuch as they take place *outside* of the realm of conventional prayer.²⁷ Finally, two of the three forms of experience are complete meditative *disciplines*.²⁸ Both the performance of *yihudim* and the practice of reading in the *Mishnah* can be successfully accomplished only by a person who has submitted himself to a careful regimen. That is, the aspirant to achieving the "holy spirit" or "prophecy" must qualify himself, prepare himself, and acquire the knowledge of a specific technique. Like the contemplative Zen Buddhist or Indian Yogi, he must pursue a course of rigorous spiritual development and expertise in his quest for mystical illumination.

While we have discussed the dearth of scholarship in the area of mystical experience, there are, of course, a number of significant studies upon which we have been able to draw. In regard to the phenomenon of maggidism a good deal of material has come to light in the recent past. R. J. Z. Werblowsky has written an important study of Joseph Karo's *maggid* called: *Joseph Karo, Lawyer and Mystic*.²⁹ This is the only full length work devoted to the meditative life of sixteenth century Safed. Werblowsky offers a detailed account of Karo's mentor-angel with whom Karo communicated during his entire adult life. In the course of his study Werblowsky touches briefly on the Lurianic theory of maggidism--the only discussion of this subject heretofore. G. Scholem has written a monograph describing a manuscript which contains the maggidic communications of Joseph Taitasak.³⁰ In addition,

there have been several articles treating post-Lurianic examples of maggidism.³¹

As for the Lurianic technique of *yihudim* absolutely nothing has been written beyond bare mention of it.³² Although an entire "gate" of the *Shemonah She'arim*, *Sha'ar Ruah ha-Kodesh*, is devoted to a detailed description of the theory and practice of *yihudim*, no study of this text or its parallel, *Sha'ar ha-Yihudim*, has been attempted. Similarly, no attention has been given the extremely valuable descriptions of Hayyim Vital's own ecstatic experiences in the practice of *yihudim*. These are reported in *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim* and his dream diary, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*. All discussions of the Lurianic *kavvanot* (meditative intentions), of which the *yihudim* are a part, have focused on the *kavvanot* of prayer.³³ But even this very important area has not been the subject of full investigation. Of considerable importance to the student of Safed's spiritual life is M. Benayahu's edition of *Toldot ha-Ari*, the hagiographical work which accounts Luria's mystical life. The critical text, along with valuable notes, is a significant contribution to the issues with which this study is concerned. Mention should also be made of Benayahu's study: "Devotion Practices of the Kabbalists of Safed in Meron."³⁴

The third part of our study, the contemplative technique of reading in the *Mishnah* developed by Hayyim Vital, has not been treated whatsoever. No attention has been given to the texts in *Sefer ha-Hezyonot* or the unpublished chapter of Vital's *Sha'arei Kedushah* bearing upon this practice. The chapter as a whole, though mentioned by Scholem

and Werblowsky to illustrate the Kabbalistic tradition of self-censorship, has never been discussed or explored.³⁵

Finally, some studies of a more general nature relating to the personalities and mystical life of sixteenth century Safed are deserving of mention. A classic and beautiful essay "Safed in the Sixteenth Century" was written by Solomon Schechter quite a number of years ago. It remains a wonderful introduction to the extraordinary life of that community. In addition, Schechter published from manuscripts four different lists detailing rituals, customs and mystical innovations originating from Safed.³⁶ The work of a modern scholar, D. Tamar, is likewise of a more general and popular nature. Two collections of his essays, many of which bear upon the mystical and devotional life of sixteenth century Safed, have been published.³⁷

Notes to Introduction

¹ Concerning the relationship of Lurianism to Sabbatianism see G. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi* (Princeton, 1973), chapter one and passim. On the relationship between Kabbalism and Hasidism see G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1941), pp. 337-343.

² Luria is frequently referred to as Ha-Ari ("the Lion") from the initials of "*Ha-Elohi Rabbi Yiṣhak*." But Luria's contemporaries in Safed often refer to him as R. Isaac Ashkenazi or as R. Isaac Ashkenazi Luria indicating the origin of his family.

³ While *Shitah Mekubbešet* is not extant, the annotations to Alfasi's works were printed in *Tummat Yesharim* (Venice, 1622).

⁴ Moses Alsheikh (d. after 1593) was born in Adrianople. He studied with Joseph Taitasak and Joseph Karo in Salonika prior to emigrating to Safed. In Safed he became recognized as a halakhic authority, biblical commentator and preacher. He was ordained as rabbi by Karo, along with Elisha Gallico and Jacob Berab II in 1546. After Karo died, Alsheikh assumed the right of ordination. Vital writes in his dream-diary that Alsheikh complained that his pupil (i.e., Vital) refused to let him learn Kabbalah. See *Sefer ha-Ḥezyonot* (Jerusalem, 1954), pp. 8, 220, 235. Despite this report, Alsheikh was, in fact, a member of the second most important circle of Luria's students, see *op. cit.*, p. 219.

⁵ *Sefer Toldot ha-Ari* (ed. by M. Benayahu, Jerusalem, 1967) pp. 156-7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

⁷ Luria's commentary on *Sifra de-Šeniuta* is printed in the editions of Vital's *Shetar Ma'amarei Rashbi*.

⁸ The manuscript of R. Naḥman of Braşlav's (1772-1811) most esoteric work, *Sefer ha-Nisraf* ("The Burned Book"), as it is known to Braşlav Ḥasidim, was ordered destroyed by Naḥman in 1808, indicating the extent to which he went to hide his writings. Virtually all of the extant teachings of Naḥman were committed to writing by his loyal literary secretary and disciple Nathan Sternhartz. Concerning the relationship between Naḥman and Nathan see the recent doctoral dissertation by Arthur Green, *A Critical Biography of Naḥman of Braşlav*, Brandeis University, 1975.

⁹ *Likkutei Shas* (Livorno 1790) 33c.

¹⁰ The present study is limited on the whole, to the writings of Hayyim Vital inasmuch as the meditative practices discussed are essentially confined to his version of Luria's teachings.

¹¹ The version of Moses Jonah, *Kanfei Yonah*, was printed in a defective edition compiled by Menahem Azariah Fano (Koretz, 1786). A complete authentic text is extant in many manuscripts, among which there is Ms. Sasoon 993 copied by the author himself in Constantinople in 1582. Joseph ibn Ṭabul edited a systematic account of Lurianic Kabbalah divided into *derushim*. This work was for a long time attributed to Vital under the title *Derush Hefzi-Bah*, and was published in his name at the beginning of Masud ha-Kohen al-Haddad's *Simhat Kohen* (Jerusalem, 1921). Israel Sarug taught Lurianic Kabbalah in Italy and several other European countries following 1590. Though he claimed to have been an actual disciple of Isaac Luria in Safed, the evidence indicates that his version of Luria's teachings was based on his reconstruction of those versions of Luria's true disciples which came into his hands. Nevertheless, his version was considered by many as authoritative and formed the basis for most of the earlier works on Lurianic Kabbalah, such as *Ta'ulumot Hokhmah* and *Novelot Hokhmah* of Joseph Solomon Delmedigo (Basle, 1629-31) and *Emek ha-Melekh* of Naphtali Bacharach (Amsterdam, 1649). Sarug's own version, *Limmudei Ašilut* was published under Vital's name in Munkacs, 1897. Concerning Sarug's relationship to Luria see G. Scholem, "Yisrael Sarug--Talmid ha-Ari?" in *Zion* vol. V (1940) pp. 214-243.

¹² See G. Scholem, "Shtar ha-Hitkashrut shel Talmidei ha-Ari" in *Zion* vol. V (1940) pp. 133-160.

¹³ The first edition of the *Shemonah She'arim*, without the title *Eš Hayyim*, was published in Jerusalem, 1850-1898. Many Kabbalists, especially among the Sephardim, recognized only this version as authoritative and rejected other compilations of Luria's writings, Vital's and others. For a full discussion of the numerous and complex corpus of "Lurianic writings" see the *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Keter Publishing, Jerusalem, 1972) vol. 11, pp. 575-578 and vol. 16, pp. 173-176.

¹⁴ The reliability of Vital's transmission is especially strong in the areas with which this study is concerned--preparations, qualifications and techniques for meditation. While it is understandable that distortions and misunderstandings accompany the presentation of mythological and theoretical matters, it is far less likely that instructions for meditation would be the subject of misinterpretation or re-interpretation. In general, the practical ritual and liturgical innovations of Lurianic Kabbalah were not beset by contradictory and divergent traditions as was the case with the theoretical aspects. Nevertheless, we are fortunate to possess a short manuscript of Joseph ibn Ṭabul's *yihudim* given to him by Luria. This independent evidence confirms the nature of this practice as described by Vital. See below, pp. 88, 89.

- 15 Joseph Ben-Shlomo, *The Mystical Theology of Moses Cordovero* (Jerusalem, 1965).
- 16 I. Tishby, *The Doctrine of Evil and the Shell in Lurianic Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1952).
- 17 Scholem, *Major Trends*, seventh lecture.
- 18 *Idem*, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (New York, 1965), chapter four.
- 19 See, for example, the list of articles in *Major Trends*, pp. 433-434.
- 20 R. J. Z. Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo, Lawyer and Mystic* (Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 40.
- 21 Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 15-16.
- 22 One exception is Abulafia's commentary to the *Sefer Yesirah* entitled *Gan Na'ul* which appeared without the title or the author's name in *Sefer ha-Peliah* (Koretz, 1784) pp. 50-56.
- 23 A number of fragments of Abulafia's works have been published by modern scholars, especially Adolph Jellinek in the second half of the 19th century. See Scholem's bibliography in *Major Trends*, p. 429.
- 24 Concerning these works see G. Scholem, *Kitbei Yad be-Kabbalah ha-Nimsdim be-Bet ha-Sefarim ha Leumi ve-ha Universita bi-Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem, 1930).
- 25 Werblowsky, *Karo*, p. 38.
- 26 Besides the *Shemonah She'arim* other versions of Vital's circulated during his lifetime among the Kabbalists in Palestine. Based on these texts Meir Poppers (d. 1662), a Kabbalist active in Jerusalem after 1640 and a pupil of Jacob Semah, became the last editor of the Lurianic writings. He divided his work into three parts: *Derekh 'Es Hayyim*, *Peri 'Es Hayyim* and *Nof 'Es Hayyim*. Everything having to do with matters of prayer and meditations was included in *Sefer Peri 'Es Hayyim* in four sections: *Kavvanot*, Reasons for the *Misvot*, *Tikkunei Avonot* and *Yihudim*. The third and fourth parts were published together under the name *Sha'ar ha-Yihudim* and *Tikkunei Avonot* in Koretz in 1783. All references to *Sha'ar ha-Yihudim* (hereafter: SY) are to the reprint edition by Mekor Hayyim, Jerusalem, 1970. Poppers' version became the one most widely used in Poland and Germany.
- 27 For a discussion of this issue see chapter three, pp. 76 ff.

28 Strictly speaking the experience of maggidic revelation does not involve a technique of contemplation or a total discipline. It is included in this study because of the similarities to the other forms of contemplation as discussed on pages 10-11 and because the pious Kabbalist can provide the proper circumstances and conditions under which a *maggid* can be produced.

29 See note 20.

30 See chapter one, p. 31.

31 See chapter one, p. 37.

32 See Werblowsky, *Karo*, pp. 39, 46-7; also, Scholem's entry "Kabbalah" in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 10, pp. 629-30.

33 See, for example, Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 275-8 and *idem*, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 10, pp. 627-30.

34 *Sefer Safed* (ed. by Y. Ben Zvi and M. Benayahu, Jerusalem, 1962) pp. 10-40.

35 See Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 121-2 and Werblowsky, *Karo*, pp. 67-8.

36 S. Schechter, "Safed in the Sixteenth Century," in *Studies in Judaism*, second series (Philadelphia, 1908) pp. 202-306, 317-328. Three of these lists are reproduced on the basis of a manuscript in the Jewish Theological Seminary library. The fourth was copied from MS. C812, X893, in the Columbia University library.

37 D. Tamar, *Mehkarim be-Toldot ha-Yehudim be-Ereṣ Yisrael U-be-Italya* (Jerusalem, 1973) and *Bikoret Ve-Masah* (Jerusalem, 1973).

CHAPTER ONE

MAGGIDIC REVELATION IN THE TEACHINGS OF ISAAC LURIA

I

The phenomenon of maggidism which developed within Kabbalistic communities in the sixteenth century constitutes an extremely interesting example of mystical experience. The present study seeks to elucidate the theory of maggidic revelation in the teachings of Isaac Luria. The sources for our knowledge of Luria's doctrine of maggidism are *Sha'ar Ruah ha-Kodesh*¹ and *Sha'ar ha-Yihudim*.

Luria's doctrine of the *maggid* is associated from the start with the attainment of the holy spirit and prophecy. *Sha'ar Ruah ha-Kodesh* begins with a promise to explain the matter of the holy spirit and prophecy and their various aspects.² Likewise, Vital in his own Kabbalistic treatise, *Sha'arei Kedushah*, deals with maggidism within a discussion of how to achieve inspiration.³ Thus, an analysis of the maggidic doctrine will lead at the same time to an understanding of the Lurianic notion of prophetic illumination.

Earlier Kabbalists tended to identify the path leading to *devekut* (cleaving to God) with that of prophecy. No clear distinction is drawn between the prophet and the mystic. The goals of each are the same. Perhaps the finest example of this view is set forth by the thirteenth century Kabbalist, ⁶Azriel of Gerona. According to ⁶Azriel in

his *Perush ha-Aggadot*, the contemplative mystic who cleaves with his mind to the "nothingness of thought" in the divine world above, is likened to the prophet who receives unique revelation and mystical knowledge.⁴ Just as the levels of mystical ascension vary, likewise the degrees of prophetic inspiration. In his *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanah la-Mekubbalim ha-Rishonim*, Azriel claims that just as the *hasidim* of an earlier time, described in *Berakhot* 32b, were capable of achieving prophecy through contemplative practice, so too prophecy is possible in our time. The ultimate effect of contemplative practice is the attainment of prophetic qualities.⁵ Nahmanides in his commentary on Deuteronomy 11:22 defines *devekut* as remembering God and His love constantly. In his *Sha'ar ha-Gemul* he confirms that those who cleave to God in this way are rewarded as Moses and the other prophets with the holy spirit.⁶ Similarly, Isaac of Acre delineates a detailed process of contemplative ascent in which the adept achieves prophetic inspiration by passing through the stages of "cleaving," "equanimity" and "solitude."⁷ Clearly, Luria's equation of certain kinds of mystical experience with the attainment of prophetic inspiration has deep roots in Kabbalistic tradition.

For Isaac Luria one of the means of achieving the holy spirit or the state of prophecy was by meriting angelic revelations in the form of a *maggid*. A *maggid*, according to Hayyim Vital, is the progeny of a man's actions. It is dissimilar to other forms of divine revelation in that its creation is the direct result of a person's spiritual activities. Specifically, a *maggid* is a product of study of Torah,

piety and prayer accompanied by mystical intentions. Thus, we read the following in *Shḥar ha-Yiḥudim*:

. . . when a man is righteous and pious, studies Torah, and prays with [Kabbalistic] intention, from those sounds which emerge from his mouth, angels and holy spirits are created. . . . And these angels created from that which a man utters are the secret of *maggidim*.⁸ (1)

Maggidim, then, are angelic creations whose existence is brought about by the sounds of a man's voice uttered in the course of religious devotion such as prayer or study. Intrinsic to Kabbalistic ontology is the belief that everything below is connected to everything above and that everything below *acts upon* everything above. It is this fundamental assertion which endows Kabbalistic devotion, whether it be prayer, ritual or ethical deeds, with sacred and cosmic significance. In applying this microcosmic-macrocosmic rule to the creation of angelic beings, its quasi-magical implications are laid bare. This alone, however, does not explain how a man's speech issues in celestial beings--a matter whose mythical basis is more complex and to which we shall return shortly.

Vital asserts that angels of varying sorts are brought about depending upon the *nature* of a man's speech and deeds:

As they [i.e., the Rabbis] said: He that performs one *miṣvah* obtains for himself one advocate etc. (*Abot* 4:11). For from man's speech good or evil angels are created, according to [the quality of] his speech.⁹ (2)

Vital cites *Mishnah Abot* 4:11, the second part of which is a key to understanding the influence a man's deeds exert upon the character

of the maggidic creation. It reads: "but he that commits one transgression obtains for himself one accuser." Thus, the quality of the *maggid* depends directly on the quality of a man's actions. Evil or inadequate deeds are just as powerful as righteous ones. Their enactment produces *maggidim* whose composition is fused with good and evil elements. Consequently, nothing that emerges from a man's mouth is without potential significance:

Indeed, everything is according to the action of a man, for if that Torah which a man studies is read for the sake of heaven, the angel created thereby will be extremely pure and supernal, and all its words can be believed as utter truth. And thus, if he reads it without error or mistakes, this angel will be without error, and all its words will be trustworthy. And thus the *misvah* a man performs, if it is properly done, a very pure angel will be produced. . . . And indeed, it is certain that the power of an angel produced from the study of Torah is greater than the power of an angel produced by means of a *misvah*.¹⁰ (3)

There are some persons who are not privileged to receive maggidic communications at all:

There are men to whom these *maggidim* are not revealed at all, and there are those to whom they are revealed. Everything depends on the nature of their soul, or their deeds . . .¹¹ (4)

The supernal world from which the *maggidim* derive is also related to the nature of the deeds a man performs. *Maggidim* created from good deeds performed without appropriate *kavvanah* have their source in the world of *Asiyyah*, whereas those brought about through study of Torah are from the world of *Yesirah*. The most exalted *maggidim* originate in the world of *Beriah* and are created by means of study of Torah or the performance of a *misvah* accompanied by *kavvanah*.¹² Vital

reports that Isaac Luria told him how to determine the truthfulness or reliability of a *maggid*:

And the criterion that my teacher, may his memory be blessed, gave me, [consists in this:] if we see that all his [i.e., the Kabbalist's] words are truthful; if all his words are for the sake of heaven, and if he does not nullify a single letter of his words; also, if he is able to explain the mysteries of the Torah and its secrets--certainly such [a man's *maggid*] we can believe in. And according to his words we can determine and recognize his greatness and according to his knowledge [we can recognize] his rank.¹³ (5)

In other words, a man must be truthful and able to explain esoteric secrets if his *maggid* is to be trustworthy. Moreover, the status of a man's *maggid* can be determined by the wondrous and hidden nature of the Kabbalistic secrets he can reveal.¹⁴

Exactly how does a *maggid* manifest himself and what are the dynamics of his operation? The angelic communicator which Luria propounded makes himself known through vocalization. The process consists of two parts, each of which requires the adept's own vocal functions. First, the voice that a man utters while engaged in study of Torah or mystical prayer ascends above, thereby creating a *maggid*. At a later point in time this created spiritual voice descends below by "clothing" itself in the mystic's current voice--again, during the course of his speaking while in prayer or study. This second moment constitutes a state of prophetic inspiration in which the *maggid* speaks through the adept's own voice, enabling him to perceive the revelation:

And here is the secret of prophecy and the holy spirit. It is assuredly a voice sent from above to speak with this prophet, or with this man endowed with the holy spirit. But this same

supernal spiritual voice cannot by itself materialize and enter the ears of this prophet unless it first clothes itself in his physical voice which emerges from this man's mouth when, at a given moment [*atah*], he studies Torah or prays and the like. And then it [i.e., the supernal voice] clothes itself in it, [i.e., the physical voice] joining it and comes to the ear of this prophet who [then] hears it. And without the man's own present physical voice it cannot achieve existence.¹⁵ (6)

Vital's description stresses the necessity of vocalization through the actual speaking voice of the adept. The celestial voice requires material incarnation by means of the mystic's own physical utterance during the moment of prophetic inspiration. There is a distinction here in time between the act creating the *maggid*, and the reincarnation of the voice at a later moment in time. This is clearly an experience of automatic speech, a form of motor automatism, in which words begin to issue from the Kabbalist's voice without prior reflection. A passage in *Shḥar Ruah ha-Ḳodesh* explicitly attests to this:

This is the secret [explanation] of the verse in II Samuel 23:2: "The spirit of the Lord speaks by me and His word is upon my tongue." For the spirit and the word which is the first speech [i.e., the supernal speech], already created through study of Torah and performance of a *misvah* as described above, rests at this moment on him upon his tongue. And voice and speech actually issue from his mouth, and truly speak through his mouth. And the man then hears it.¹⁶ (7)

There is a second way in which the celestial voice that a man creates can function. It is possible for the maggidic voice to join with the voice of a departed *ṣaddik* (righteous person) in the world above. These two voices, having merged, then descend and speak through the voice of the adept. The *ṣaddik* whose voice joins the celestial voice can also be "of our time." This refers to a contemporary who

has recently departed rather than an actual living person. Vital describes the second process in this way:

It [i.e., the maggidic communication] is also possible another way: That celestial voice will clothe itself in the voice of other early *saddikim* who preceded him, either from the period of the early Rabbis or those of our present time. And the two will unite and will come and speak with him. . . . But know that it is impossible for the voice or speech or breath of another *saddik* to speak with him unless that *saddik* is from the [same] soul-root of this present man. Or unless the *misvah* performed by this man is in accordance with this *saddik's* character. And by means of one of these two conditions [the voice of the *maggid*] will come and rest upon him in the manner described.¹⁷ (8)

The idea that some persons have common soul-roots or that certain *misvot* correspond to particular souls, is based on Lurianic teachings concerning man's psychic structure. According to Luria, Adam's soul contained within it, as the *Midrash* records, all of the souls of mankind.¹⁸ Each of the six hundred and thirteen "limbs" of Adam's soul, corresponding to the same number of *misvot*,¹⁹ formed a complete *parṣuf* (sefirotic configuration) known as a *shoresh gadol* ("great root"). Each of these contained, in turn, six hundred and thirteen, or as some versions have it, 600,000 "small roots." The pertinent point for our consideration is that souls descending from a single "small root" comprise "families" having special relations of attraction and affinity for one another. Because of this, souls having a common root are capable of uplifting one another from the realm of material existence. Knowledge of one's soul-root is of extreme importance as it enables a man to restore his soul to its supernal source through communion with a fellow soul who has departed this world.

Such sympathy of souls makes possible the joining of a man's *maggid* with the angelic voice of a departed *ṣaddik*. Similarly, it explains why the performance of a particular *miṣvah*, which has its source in an individual "limb," can facilitate the communion of two celestial voices. Every soul has its source in a particular root which, in turn, is the place of special *miṣvot*.

Vital distinguishes three aspects of vocal utterance and their corresponding celestial creations: *ḳol* (voice), *dibbur* (speech), and *hebel* (breath). Depending upon the status of his soul and the quality of his actions, a person's utterance can manifest itself in any of these aspects.²⁰ While a supernal *ḳol* that a person has originally aroused can garb itself, at a later point in time, in the *ḳol* of his current physical voice, a supernal *dibbur* in the current *dibbur* and so on, a variety of other combinations are also possible. Thus, a supernal *ḳol* can descend and clothe itself in the current *dibbur* of an individual, or a supernal *hebel* can invest itself in a current *dibbur*, for example. In addition, Vital introduces the notion that a *ḳol*, *dibbur* or *hebel* "of the past" can descend at a *later* moment of prophetic inspiration.²¹ Inasmuch as every previously created *maggid* manifests itself at some later point in time, the term "of the past" must refer to a celestial *maggid* which materializes at a point *long* after it was originally created.

Based on these distinctions our sources delineate a hierarchy of prophecy and the holy spirit. *Hebel* is the lowest grade of revelation and has its source in the *Sefirah Malkhut*. *Dibbur* is the next highest grade, its source being a combination of *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*. The most

exalted type of celestial communication is through the utterance of *kol* whose origin is in *Tiferet* alone. Whereas prophecy has its origin in the male aspect of the Godhead, that of the holy spirit derives from the female aspect. Inasmuch as *kol* is related to *Tiferet* (male) and *dibbur* to *Tiferet* and *Malkhut* (male and female), Luria defines prophecy as consisting in the descent of the *kol* or *dibbur* which invests itself in any of the three aspects of man's current physical voice.²² The holy spirit, on the other hand, manifests itself when a supernal *hebel* clothes itself in any of the other three aspects. In either the attainment of prophecy or the holy spirit, one whose celestial *maggid* descends directly, without first uniting with the *kol*, *dibbur* or *hebel* of a departed *ṣaddik* is of a superior grade.

Our texts do not shed much light on the substantive distinction between prophecy and the holy spirit.²³ They are two degrees of the inspired state of which prophecy is the greater achievement. Prophecy, as we have seen, is tied here to the male side of the Godhead. This is exemplified in the case of Moses who achieved the level of *kol*. This, according to Vital, means that he prophesied through the "luminous mirror" (*aspekḥariah ha-me'irah*). All the other prophets gained their inspiration from the "non-luminous mirror" (*aspekḥariah she'eina me'irah*). These two terms refer respectively to the *Sefirot Tiferet* and *Malkhut*.²⁴ This view is in accord with that of earlier Kabbalists who, basing themselves on rabbinic passages in which Moses is said to have prophesied by virtue of *aspekḥariah ha-me'irah*, identified this term with the *Sefirah Tiferet*.²⁵ Bahya b. Asher, apparently following Ezra of Gerona, records

such a tradition.²⁶ Similarly, Azriel of Gerona, in his *Perush ha-Aggadot*, indicates that Moses prophesied through *Tiferet* as well as lower *Sefirot*.²⁷ The *Zohar* reports that Moses prophesied through *aspeklariah ha-me'irah* which is *Tiferet*, as opposed to all other prophets whose divine source was the *aspeklariah she'eina me'irah*, that is, *Shekhinah* or *Malkhut* which has no light of Her own.²⁸

The various prophets of Israel can be ranked by means of these criteria. The greatest prophet of all, of course, was Moses. According to Luria, his pre-eminence derives from the fact that his own celestial *kol*, without uniting itself with that of another *ṣaddik's*, clothed itself in his physical *kol*. That is, his prophecy was of the highest possible type and was the result of direct communication. Moses did, however, prophesy from lower levels of inspiration as well.²⁹ Following Moses on the ladder of prophetic exaltedness is Samuel whose actions produced a *kol* which invested itself in his physical *dibbur*. No other prophets, according to Luria, achieved such supreme levels of prophetic illumination. Of all those to have attained the inspiration of the holy spirit, King David stands above the rest. His deeds created a *hebel* which at a later point in time manifested itself in his physical *hebel*. As with Moses, David's maggidic communication was achieved without the assistance of another *ṣaddik*.³⁰

II

Isaac Luria's primary literary source for the development of his theory of maggidic revelation is the *Zohar*. Both *Sha'ar Ruah ha-Kodesh*

and *Shetar ha-Yihudim* allude to several Zoharic texts in the context of discussing the maggidic phenomenon. An examination of some of these sources will elucidate the mystical background of the Lurianic doctrine. In describing the relationship between a man's deeds and the creation of a *maggid*, Vital refers to a passage in *Zohar Beshallah* 59a.³¹ R. Jose is discoursing on the question of how King Solomon, in Ecclesiastes 1:2, could possibly have asserted that all human actions are vanity (*hebel*). He explains the meaning of *hebel* in this way:

And these *habalim* are the basis of the world above and below. . . . It has been explained in the following way, and it is truly so. At the moment that proper actions are done, and a man seeks to serve the Holy King, from that word [that is spoken below] a breath is produced in the world above. And there is no breath which has no voice; and this voice ascends and crowns itself in the supernal world and becomes an intercessor before the Holy One, blessed be He. [Contrariwise,] every action which is not done with this purpose becomes a breath which floats about in the world, and when the soul of the doer leaves his body, this breath rolls about like a stone in a sling . . . But the act done and the word spoken in the service of the Holy One, ascends high above the sun and becomes a holy breath . . . ³² (9)

In this passage the *Zohar* asserts the principle which forms the basis for Luria's own conception. Every human action produces a supernal voice which, depending upon the deed and the intention with which it is performed, benefits a man or functions destructively. In the Zoharic schema, however, the holy breath becomes an advocate before God on behalf of the individual. Rather than return to man for the purpose of communication, as in the Lurianic doctrine, this breath guides the soul of the departed to the region of supernal glory. Other Zoharic texts, however, come even closer to Luria's conception.

In *Zohar Lekh Lekha* we learn that it is angels who hover above prepared to grasp any voice they hear and are ready to carry it away to be judged.³³ But it is in *Tikkunei Zohar* that an actual identification between angels and voices is established.³⁴ Here we find the notion of heavenly voices manifesting themselves as angels. A rabbinic passage in *Hagigah* states that every speech of the Holy One, blessed be He, creates an angel.³⁵ In *Sha'ar ha-Pesukim* of the *Shemonah She'arim*, Vital quotes this passage while alluding to *Tikkunei Zohar* where Exodus 20:15 is interpreted in relation to the *Hagigah* text:

And this is the secret meaning of the sages' statement "there is no speech which emerges from God's mouth which does not create an angel" (*Hagigah* 14a). And this is the matter of the breath and the voice which issue from His mouth at the moment of the supernal union of kissing as mentioned above.³⁶ This is what Scripture said ["By the word of the Lord were the heavens made] and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (Psalms 33:6). And these are the angels which are called voices as mentioned in the book of *Tikkunim* on the verse "and all the people perceived the thunderings" [lit. voices] (Ex. 20:15). And more important, we know that even from man's speech other angels are created, both good and evil.³⁷ (10)

Based on the *Hagigah* text, the author of *Tikkunei Zohar* identifies the voices of Exodus 20:15 with angels which are heard by the Israelites. God's breath or voice is actually an angelic revelation. Drawing upon this motif, Luria carries the idea a significant step forward. According to him, man's own utterance is similarly capable of creating angels. Just as God's speech creates angels, so a man's speech likewise brings about angels which communicate with him. Herein lies Luria's innovative conception. Combining two Zoharic themes--to wit, that man's actions

produce holy voices and that God's speech creates angels--Luria fashions a theory whereby each action below generates a holy voice, i.e., an angelic *maggid*, whose purpose is to reveal Kabbalistic mysteries to its progenitor.

The germ of the notion that the angelic voice returns in order to communicate with man is also found in the Zoharic literature. Vital cites *Tikkun* 22 of *Tikkunei Zohar* which states that the voices and breaths of man while engaged in study of Torah become chariots to the souls of the righteous.³⁸ These voices descend in order to teach this man Torah. In *Zohar Shelah Lekha* explicit reference is made to a celestial voice which a man's utterance has produced. Rav Metivta (the fictitious "head of the Academy") is asked by Rabbi Simeon b. Yoḥai a question regarding new mystical secrets of which he may be ignorant:

He [R. Simeon] said to him: "Do you know something new of which I am unaware?" He said to him: "Speak." He [R. Simeon] said to him: "I want to know [about] the voice that returns. A man speaks out aloud in a field or another place, and a voice returns [to him] and he does not know [where it comes from.] He replied: "If he is a holy saint, by virtue of this [speaking out aloud] a number of voices are aroused."³⁹ (11)

In light of the other Zoharic texts we have discussed, it appears likely that "the voice that returns" in this passage refers to the heavenly voices and breaths aroused by a man's righteous activities. The nature of the communication is left undefined.

Thus, there is a variety of themes in the literature of the *Zohar* upon which the Lurianic theory of maggidism draws. Utilizing these motifs, Luria expounds a specific magico-mystical process whose purpose is the

revelation of esoteric Kabbalistic knowledge. Entirely innovative, however, is the notion that the maggidic voice speaks through the Kabbalist's own voice by means of automatic speech. To shed light on this extraordinary phenomenon we shall have to take into account the occurrences of maggidism prior to Isaac Luria.

III

Maggidism was already a known occurrence by the time Luria arrived in Safed. Both the term⁴⁰ and the experience were sufficiently commonplace for Vital to speak of it as a well-known matter:

This is the matter of the angels which reveal themselves to man, telling them of the future and [Kabbalistic] secrets, and are called in books *maggidim*.⁴¹ (12)

The first instance of maggidism of which we are aware is that of R. Joseph Taitaşak. Taitaşak stands out as a renowned scholar and a central personality among the Kabbalists of Salonika.⁴² A recently discovered manuscript contains maggidic revelations received by Taitaşak.⁴³ The revelations were possibly recorded in Spain shortly before 1492. The text, entitled *Sefer ha-Meshib*, discloses that the communications received by Taitaşak were related to him, not by an angel or other celestial intermediary, but by God himself. Furthermore, the experiences involved the highly unusual occurrence of automatic writing.⁴⁴

The best known experiences of maggidism is that of R. Joseph Karo (1488-1575). There is evidence that Karo knew and was influenced

by Taitaşak while he was still in Turkey.⁴⁵ It is also clear that Karo was acquainted with Taitaşak's maggidic experiences.⁴⁶ Karo met Taitaşak most probably in Salonika where he also entered into the acquaintance of Solomon Alkabeş (1505-1576). It is in an account of an experience during a *Shavıbt* vigil in about 1530 that we learn from Alkabeş of Karo's visitations by a *maggid*-angel.⁴⁷ The revelations appear to have consisted in exhortations, spiritual advice, flattering praise of Karo, and the communication of Kabbalistic explanations on biblical passages. The *Maggid*, speaking through Karo's mouth and enabling others who were present to hear it, manifested itself following the study of *mishnayot*. Such maggidic visitations continued throughout Joseph Karo's life. Instructed by his *Maggid* to record the communications, Karo composed a diary called *Sefer ha-Maggid*, of which a large portion has survived under the title *Maggid Mesharim*.⁴⁸ The *Maggid* would come to Karo at different hours of the day and night, although the most propitious time was after midnight, in the early morning, especially on Sabbath mornings. The diligent and continuous study and repetition of the *mishnayot*, as well as ascetic exercises and austere practices, induced the revelations. The following words of Karo's *Maggid* suggest the conditions under which it made his appearance:

Yet by the merits of the six orders of the *Mishnah* which thou knowest by heart and by the merit of the mortifications and austerities which thou has practised in former days and also now, it has been decided in the Celestial Academy that I return to speak unto thee as before, not to leave thee and not to forsake thee. . . . Therefore, my son, hearken unto my voice whatever I command thee and devote thyself always, day and night without interruption, to my *Torah*; think of no worldly thing but only of *Torah*, of the fear of me, and of my *Mishnayoth*." Then I

slept again for about half an hour and awoke with grief saying, "Now the speech has been interrupted because I fell asleep," and I recited [more] *Mishnayoth*. [Then] the voice of my beloved [again] knocketh in my mouth, saying, "Thou shouldst know that God and the whole Celestial Academy send thee [the greeting of] peace and have sent me unto thee to reveal unto thee the works of God."⁴⁹ (13)

A comparison of Karo's experiences and the Lurianic theory we have delineated is instructive. Whereas according to the Lurianic doctrine maggidic revelation results from the study of Torah, prayer and the mystical performance of *misvot*, Karo's messenger is induced specifically by the study of *mishnayot* and acts of mortification. In both instances the *maggid* manifests himself by means of automatic speech. Karo's *Maggid*, however, at least during his Safed period, is at the same time the *Mishnah* personified, speaking through Karo's mouth. In both situations the function of the *maggid* is to expound upon and reveal Kabbalistic mysteries, as well as foretell the future. In Karo's case there is a significant additional set of functions. His *Maggid* acts as a super-ego who praises him for his proper behavior, purity of thought, ascetic practices and study of *mishnayot*, while admonishing him when he fails to meet these high standards. He is often reprimanded for having overslept and not studied, or for having relaxed his austere life-style.⁵⁰ Finally, just as the quality of one's *maggid*, according to Luria, depends on the quality of the mystic's actions, similarly the fluency of Karo's involuntary speech was contingent upon his behavior. Karo is told that stammering or mistakes made by the *Maggid* are due to his worldly thoughts during prayer.⁵¹

There is ample evidence that Hayyim Vital, and no doubt Luria himself, knew of Karo's *Maggid*. In *Sefer ha-Gilgulim* Vital writes that the *Maggid* has led Karo astray with regard to the former incarnations of Karo's son's soul.⁵² Vital records in his mystical diary called *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*,⁵³ in the year 1557, that Karo's *Maggid* had declared that half of the world existed because of the merits of Vital's father, a famous scribe who wrote "*tefillin* in holiness," and the other half existed through Vital's own merits.⁵⁴ We also learn from *Sefer ha-Hezyonot* that Moses Alsheikh, Karo's disciple and Vital's teacher in exoteric studies, was told by the *Maggid* to instruct his pupil (i.e., Vital) well, as he would someday assume Joseph Karo's place.⁵⁵ This passage instructs us not only in Vital's ambitions and his conviction that Alsheikh received a communication from Karo's *Maggid*, but also in the faith that Vital had in the prophetic character of Karo's mentor.

Another important source for knowledge of Kabbalistic Safed is the hagiographical work of Solomon Shlomo Dresnitz, published under the title *Shibhei ha-Ari* (*Praise of the Lion*).⁵⁶ Dresnitz preserves the following tradition which suggests that Karo's *Maggid* was well-known in Safed, as was the title of Karo's manuscript diary, *Sefer ha-Maggid*:

Every time Rabbi Joseph Karo--may he rest in peace--recited the *mishnayot* by heart, the *Maggid* appeared to him . . . and all the things that the *Maggid* revealed to him he recorded in a book which he called *Sefer ha-Maggid*.⁵⁴ (14)

It is reasonable to conclude that the Kabbalists of the circle around Isaac Luria were familiar, not only with the existence of Karo's *Maggid*,

but with the nature of its communications as well.

We find in the writings of Moses Cordovero, the most important Kabbalist in Safed before the appearance of Luria, a theory of *maggidism* which bears some remarkable similarities to that of *Sha'ar Ruah ha-Kodesh* and *Sha'ar ha-Yihudim*. Cordovero composed as part of his commentary on the *Zohar*, known as *Or Yakar*, a commentary on *Zohar Song of Songs*.⁵⁸ The first part of this commentary is called *Enquiries Concerning Angels* in which Cordovero discusses the nature and function of angels.⁵⁹ Among the different kinds of celestial angels which can enter the human soul is a type known as a *maggid*:

And thus we have seen that an angel can invest himself in him and speak within him words of knowledge and this is what men call a *maggid*.⁶⁰ (15)

According to Cordovero, the angelic messenger can enter a man's *nefesh* (soul), *ruah* (spirit) or *neshamah* (intellectual soul). The angel speaks the words of knowledge through a man's own voice who recalls them only after the angel has departed.⁶¹ Though Cordovero's treatment of the *maggid* is brief and unsystematic, there are several points of similarity with Luria's theory. While Cordovero does not advance the idea that the revelations are man's creation, he does, as in the Lurianic concept, suggest a relationship between receiving communications and the study of Torah and performance of *mišvot*. He also asserts that the grade of exaltedness of the divine powers that rest upon a man is contingent upon his actions.⁶² Moreover, in both cases the *maggid* materializes as automatic speech. Beyond this, Cordovero affirms his belief that some

books were composed under the inspiration of the holy spirit in the guise of a *maggid*. He testifies that *Berit Menuḥah*⁶³ was written in such a manner:

And all the words of this book [*Berit Menuḥah*] are words of the holy spirit transmitted from mouth to mouth or through the mouth of a genuine *maggid* to the pious and holy person.⁶⁴ (16)

Although Cordovero's discussion of the *maggid* reveals nothing about any personal experience, his well-known mystical peregrinations with his brother-in-law, Solomon Alkabeş, suggest a type of experience quite akin to maggidism.⁶⁵ Cordovero recorded their experiences of wandering about the environs of Safed in which they visited the traditional gravesites of rabbinic teachers. They understood these peregrinations (lit. "exiles") as symbolically imitating the exiled *Shekhinah*. By wandering from tomb to tomb they participated, as it were, in the suffering and homelessness of the female aspect of the Godhead.⁶⁶ A corollary purpose of these peregrinations was to receive mystical revelations. The process involved asking a question based on a biblical verse and having an explanation revealed without requiring prior reflection. The communication manifested itself spontaneously by means of involuntary speech inasmuch as the words were "spoken of themselves" or "were shining forth of themselves." Cordovero writes of the experience in the following way in *Or Ne'erab*:

. . . what I and others have experienced in connection with *gerushin*, when we wandered in the fields with the Kabbalist Rabbi Solomon Alkabeş, discussing verses from the Torah, suddenly without previous reflection. On these occasions new

ideas would come to us in a manner that cannot be believed unless one has experienced it many times. The gifts which I received during [these] *gerushin*, and which came to me by the mercy of God, I will set down in a special treatise.⁶⁷ (17)

It is thus evident that Isaac Luria had a considerable tradition of maggidic theories, and experiences of earlier Kabbalists, upon which to draw in the development of his own conceptions. That he in fact did so is apparent from the close similarities of his own theory of maggidic revelation with those of his predecessors. Pre-Lurianic Safed abounded in experiences involving various forms of divine communications and celestial auditions. Techniques designed to encourage and induce such revelations constituted an important dimension of mystical spirituality for these Kabbalists.

It remains to be noted that the occurrence of maggidic experiences became quite frequent following the sixteenth century. The outstanding Polish Kabbalist R. Samson b. Pesah of Ostropol was reported to have had a *maggid* who appeared daily to teach him Kabbalistic mysteries.⁶⁸ Sabbatians of no less importance than R. Abraham Rovigo and Nathan of Gaza are known to have had *maggidim* whose influence upon their actions were decisive.⁶⁹ Finally, mention ought to be made of the *Maggid* of R. Moses Hayyim Luzzato (1707-1746), which played such an important role in this scholar's life.⁷⁰

Notes to Chapter One

¹ All references to *Sha'ar Ruah ha Kodesh* (hereafter: *SRH*) are to the Yehuda Ashlag edition of the *Shemonah She'arim* (Tel Aviv, 1962).

² *SRH*, 9a.

³ *Sha'arei Kedushah* (Jerusalem, 1926) Part 3, gate VII.

⁴ I. Tishby, *Perush ha-Aggadot* (Jerusalem, 1945), p. 40.

⁵ This text is found in G. Scholem, *Reshit ha-Kabbalah* (Tel Aviv, 1948), pp. 143-4; German translation and commentary in his *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbala* (Berlin, 1962), pp. 369 ff.

⁶ *Sha'ar ha-Gemul*, end of chapter 8.

⁷ On Isaac of Acre's theory of contemplation see E. Gottlieb, "Communion with God and Prophecy in *Oṣar Hayyim* by Isaac ben Samuel of Acre," (in Hebrew) in: *Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem, 1968), vol. II, pp. 327-39.

⁸ *SY*, 2a.

⁹ *SRH*, 9a.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, 9a-9b. Cf. *Sefer ha-Gilgulim* (Frankfurt, 1684), 32b.

¹¹ *SRH*, 9b. Cf. *SY*, 2a-b.

¹² *SRH*, 10a. Based on earlier Kabbalistic sources the Kabbalists of Safed adopted the doctrine of four worlds placed between the *Ein-Sof* and the earthly cosmos. They are: *Asilut*, the world of emanation and of the highest realms of divinity; *Beri'ah*, the world of creation, i.e., of the Throne, the Merkabah and the highest angels; *Yesirah*, the world of formation, the chief dwelling place of the angels; and *Assiyah*, the world of making, the terrestrial world.

¹³ *Ibid.* Cf. *SY*, 2b.

¹⁴ *SY*, 2b.

¹⁵ *SRH*, 10a.

¹⁶ *SRH*, 10a-b. Cf. *SY*, 2b-c.

17 *SRH*, 10b. Cf. *SY*, 2c.

18 This motif goes back to *Midrash Tanhuma*, *Ki Thissa*¹² and *Pe-kude* 3 and Exodus Rabbah 40. Cf. L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1955) vol. V, p. 75. See the discussion on this Lurianic motif in G. Scholem, *Von der mystischen Gestalt der Gottheit* (Zurich, 1962), pp. 226 ff.

19 The parallelism of *mišvot* and limbs of the body goes back to the Talmud. *Makkot* 23b records that the 365 negative *mišvot* correspond to the number of days in the year and the 248 positive *mišvot* correspond to the number of man's limbs. Similarly, *Targum Jonathan ben Uziel* on Genesis I, 27 draws a parallel between the 613 *mišvot* and the supposed 613 parts of the human body. This theme is also taken up by the author of the *Zohar*, I, 170b. This correspondence is pronounced in *Sefer Taamei ha-Mišvot* (c. 1290-1300), a work on the reasons for the commandments erroneously ascribed to Isaac ibn Farhi, which A. Altmann has shown to have been written by Joseph of Hamadan. See *Kiryat Sefer*, XL, nos. 2-3, pp. 256-276, 405-412. Cf. in particular the motif expressed in the phrase "limb supports limb" (*eber mahazig eber*), p. 275. The full text has been edited in the doctoral dissertation of Menahem Meier, *A Critical Edition of the Sefer Taamei ha-Mišvot* (A "Book of Reasons for the Commandments") *Attributed to Isaac ibn Farhi/Section I--Positive Commandments/with Notes and Introduction*, Brandeis University, 1974.

20 *SRH*, 10b.

21 *Ibid.*

22 *SRH*, 10a.

23 Dunash ibn Tamim, in his commentary to the *Sefer Yešira*, distinguishes among three types of prophecy, reflecting the theory of his teacher, Isaac Israeli (10th c.). Whereas Luria applies the term *kol* to the highest form of inspiration, Ibn Tamim uses it to refer to the lowest form which is "a voice which God creates in the air and which He directs the ear of him who merits to hear it." Similarly, Israeli's contemporary, Saadya Gaon, interprets the biblical phrase "God spoke" as meaning that God "created a speech, which, through the medium of the air, reached the ear of the prophet or people." A second type of prophecy, according to Ibn Tamim is *ruah*, while the highest type is *dibbur*. This level of inspiration was attained by Moses, as seen in the biblical passage, "God spoke unto him face to face" (Ex. 33:11; Num. 12:8). Ibn Tamim views *dibbur* as a reference to the "union" of Moses' soul with the Supernal light. See A. Altmann and S.M. Stern, *Isaac Israeli* (Oxford, 1958), pp. 209 ff. On Saadya's theory of "created voice" see A. Altmann, "Saadya's Theory of Revelation," in his *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism* (Ithaca and London, P, New York, 1975), pp. 155 ff.

- 24 *SRH*, 12a.
- 25 See *Yebamot* 49b and *Lev. Rabbah* 1:14. Cf. *Sanhedrin* 97b and *Sukkah* 45b.
- 26 E. Gottlieb, *Ha-Kabbalah be-Kitbei Rabbenu Bahya ben Asher* (Jerusalem, 1970), pp. 38-9.
- 27 I. Tishby, *Perush ha-Aggadot*, p. 7.
- 28 *Zohar* II, 23b. Cf. Moses de Leon, *Sheḳel ha-Kodesh*, ed. A.W. Greenup, (London, 1911), pp. 123-4.
- 29 *SRH*, 11a.
- 30 *Op. cit.*, 11b.
- 31 *Op. cit.*, 9a.
- 32 *Zohar* II, 59a. Cf. *Zohar* II, 10b; I, 146b (*Sitrei Torah*).
- 33 *Zohar* I, 92a.
- 34 *Tikkunei Zohar*, 79a (Livorno edition, 1795). Cf. also 63b-64b.
- 35 *Hagigah*, 14a.
- 36 Luria explains that angels are incorporeal inasmuch as they result from supernal coupling which is purely spiritual. This coupling is known as "kissing," *Sha'ar ha-Pesukim*, 54a-b.
- 37 *Op. cit.*, 54b.
- 38 *Tikkunei Zohar*, 64b.
- 39 *Zohar* III, 168b.
- 40 The earliest use of the noun *maggid* as a technical term may be in Rashi's (1040-1105) commentary to *Pesahim* 105b, on the word "*hoza'ah*." In this context the use of the word *maggid* means the visionary, not the angelic communicator as in our texts. According to R. J. Z. Werblowsky, Rashi's use of it in this way seems to suggest that the origin of the term might be found in the literature of the German *Hasidim*. See Werblowsky, *Karo*, p. 265, n. 2. It is interesting that Vital mentions in *Sha'ar ha-Yihudim*, 2a that it is these angels (i.e., the *maggidim*) which are spoken of in the *Sefer Hasidim*. The word *maggid* does not appear, however, in any of the extant texts of that work.

- 41 *SRH*, 9b.
- 42 Concerning Joseph Taitaşak see Werblowsky, *Karo*, passim.
- 43 *Sefer ha-Meshib*; G. Scholem has described this text in *Sefunot* 11, pp. 67-112 (forthcoming).
- 44 For other examples of automatic writing see G. Scholem, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 10, p. 637.
- 45 Werblowsky, *Karo*, p. 90 and pp. 118-9.
- 46 *Op. cit.*, p. 118.
- 47 Alkabeş' account of this event is recorded in Isaiah Horowitz's *Shnei Luhot ha-Berit, Massekhet Shabuot* (Fuerth, 1764), pp. 180-1. This account was primarily responsible for the widespread knowledge of *Karo's Maggid* in later times.
- 48 The first edition of this book was published in Lublin, 1646. Concerning the history of the work's circulation and publication see Werblowsky, *Karo*, chapter three.
- 49 *Maggid Mesharim*, 2a. We have used the translation of this passage by Werblowsky in *Karo*, pp. 257-8.
- 50 *Op. cit.*, pp. 278-9.
- 51 *Op. cit.*, pp. 262-3.
- 52 *Sefer ha-Gilgulim* (Przsemysl, 1876), 87b, ch. 65.
- 53 See p. 14, n. 4. Vital gathered autobiographical notes and diary material including dreams and stories testifying to his greatness and the superiority of his soul. It was compiled while he was in Damascus, primarily between the years 1609-1612. The edition by A. Z. Aeshcoly is based on an autograph manuscript of Vital's.
- 54 *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, p. 2.
- 55 *Ibid.*
- 56 Dresnitz arrived in Safed in the year 1602 and met many of Luria's and Vital's associates. Vital had by this time settled in Damascus. His work is composed of both fact and legend, making use of what must have been common knowledge in Safed during the Lurianic period. It was originally printed in *Taalumot Hokhmah*, Basle, 1629. A second version, *Toldot ha-Ari* appears in many manuscripts from the 17th century, and was generally believed to be based on *Shibhei ha-Ari*. M. Benayahu

has published a complete edition of this second recension, (*Sefer Toldot ha-Ari*, Jerusalem, 1967) and argued that it served as the source of Dresnitz's letters.

57 Benayahu, *Sefer Toldot ha-Ari*, p. 217.

58 This commentary is preserved in Ms. 4^o 74 of the Hebrew University. See G. Scholem, *Kitbei Yad be-Kabbalah*, pp. 94-9.

59 Printed as an appendix in R. Margolioth, *Mal'akhei Elyon* (Jerusalem, 1945).

60 *Op. cit.*, p. 64.

61 *Ibid.*

62 *Op. cit.*, p. 70.

63 This anonymous work, printed in 1648 in Amsterdam, dates from the second half of the 14th century and was incorrectly attributed to Abraham b. Isaac of Granada. It discusses meditations on the inner lights sparkling from the various vocalizations of the Tetragrammaton. *Berit Menuhah* is one of the very few texts dealing with mystical meditations to have been published by the Kabbalists.

64 Cordovero, *Op. cit.*, pp. 9-10. Cf. *Idem.*, *Pardes Rimmonim* (Munkacs, 1906), 89b, 97a and 99a.

65 These experiences are recorded in Cordovero's *Sefer ha-Gerushin* (Jerusalem, 1962). See Werblowsky, *Karo*, pp. 51 ff.

66 Cordovero, *Tomer Deborah*, beginning of chapter nine. See Werblowsky, *ibid.*

67 *Idem.*, *Or Ne'erab* (Venice, 1587), Part V, Ch. 2.

68 See G. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 82.

69 Concerning Rovigo's *Maggid*, see *op. cit.*, p. 919; I. Tishby, *Zion*, 22 (1957), pp. 21-55; I. Sonne, *Sefunot*, 5 (Jerusalem, 1961), pp. 277-95. On the *Maggid* of Nathan of Gaza see G. Scholem, *op. cit.*, passim.

70 Concerning Luzatto's *Maggid* see, M. Benayahu, "The *Maggid* of R. Moses Hayyim Luzatto," (in Hebrew) in: *Sefunot* 5, pp. 297-336.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PRACTICE OF YIHUDIM:

PART ONE

Any attempt to understand the discipline of contemplation in Lurianic Kabbalah requires a thorough familiarity with the theosophical and mythological bases which stand at the root of Luria's system. Indeed, the mystical workings of the Godhead and its highly complex nature constitute the focus of contemplation for Isaac Luria and his disciples. Luria's teachings--which we will summarize here¹--concerning the creation of reality, divine and otherwise, are expressed in three great symbols, corresponding to dramatic events in the life of the Godhead: the *ṣimṣum*, or self-limitation of God; the *shebiraḥ*, or "breaking of the vessels"; and *tiḳḳun*, or reconstruction and mending of the flaw which occurred by virtue of the *shebiraḥ*. We will devote greatest attention to the doctrine of *tiḳḳun* inasmuch as this notion is most central to the activities of contemplation.

The idea of *ṣimṣum* has no place at all in Zoharic Kabbalah.² Whereas the latter conceives of the initial action of the Godhead as an *outward* one--the self-disclosure of the deepest hidden Self known as the *Ein Sof*--Luria describes the first movement as a step *inward*, a withdrawal of God into Himself. *Ṣimṣum* is the process in which He contracts His essence, retreating "from Himself into Himself," abandoning a space within Himself thereby creating an "empty" region. This

step inward seeks to solve this problem: how is the existence of the world possible if the Infinite, that is the *Ein-Sof*, fills all reality? Luria's answer is that by withdrawing into His own depths the *Ein-Sof* establishes room for creation, for actuality that is not *Ein-Sof*.

Šimsūm does not suggest the concentration of God's power *in* a place, but its withdrawal *away* from a place. The space created is a mere infinitesimal point in contrast with God's infinity. Nevertheless, from man's perspective it is the space in which all dimensions of existence are formed, both on the spiritual and corporeal levels.

Prior to *šimsūm*, the various powers of God, the *Sefirot*, were harmoniously balanced without any discernible differentiation. In particular, the opposing forces of Mercy (*Hesed*) and Stern Judgement (*Din*) existed in perfect unity within the essence of the divine. However, in the process of *šimsūm*, *Ein-Sof* gathered in one place all the roots of Stern Judgement. This brought about a separation between it and Mercy. By this means the forces of Stern Judgement became concentrated and achieved a measure of independence and distinctiveness. Thus the *šimsūm*, from one point of view, is regarded as an act of self-limitation or self-judgement for the purpose of separating out and eliminating the forces of *Din*. More radically formulated, the purification of the divine organism from all elements of potential evil took place in this process. The dross within God was purged from His Being.

This empty space into which all the forces of *Din* were concentrated and in which all processes of emanation and creation take place is called *tehiru* (vacuum). It is the vacuum resulting from the divine

withdrawal. According to Lurianic teaching, a vague residue of the divine light, known as *reshimu* (traces), remained in this empty space. At this point, a third element, a ray from God's essence, broke through and entered the *tehiru*. It acted upon the existing mixture of *reshimu* and the roots of *Din*. This illuminating ray is represented by the first letter of the Tetragrammaton, *yud*, and is the *kab ha-middah*, or "cosmic measure" which organizes the structure of the *Sefirot*. The *kab ha-middah* acts as a permanent link between the *Ein-Sof* and the *tehiru* produced through *šimšum*. It seeks to organize the *reshimu* and the forces of *Din* that have filled the empty space and which are inherently opposed to one another.

The manifestation of the divine produced by this first ray of light which penetrates the *tehiru* is termed the Primordial Man (*Adam Qadmon*). Entering the *tehiru* like a beam of light, it is the first and highest form in which the Divinity proceeds to manifest itself following the *šimšum*. In the Lurianic schema it indicates a realm of Divinity above the four worlds of *Ašilut*, *Beri'ah*, *Yeširah* and *Asiyyah*.³ Luria employs two different images to describe the emanative process from *Adam Qadmon*, "circle and line," (*šiggul ve-yosher*). The ten *Sefirot* originally took shape in *Adam Qadmon* in the form of concentric circles, the most external circle remaining in close contact with the *Ein-Sof*. Following this, the *Sefirot* reorganized themselves in a line, that is, in the shape of a human body. From the head of this linear structure lights burst forth. The lights shining from *Adam Qadmon's* ears, nose and mouth constituted a collective structure. In this state the *Sefirot*

were as yet undifferentiated and needed no vessels to contain them. However, the light issuing forth from the eyes of *Adam Kadmon* emanated differently. They were atomized or separated into different *Sefirot* so as to require constraint in special vessels (*kelim*). These vessels, composed of a "thicker" light, were to serve as spiritual shells for the purer light. Additionally, these vessels served the function of purging the aspects of *Din* of the "dross" which they contained.

The vessels designed to contain the upper three *Sefirot*, *Keter*, *Hokhmah*, and *Binah* performed properly. The light flowing into them was held within the vessels and their emanation was orderly. At this juncture, however, the vessels which were to shelter the lower *Sefirot* from *Hesed* through *Yesod* proved insufficiently strong for the task. Under the impact of the simultaneous flow of light into these six lower vessels they shattered and were dispersed into the *tehiru* in a chaotic fashion. This catastrophic event is known by the term *shebirat-ha-kelim* ("breaking of the vessels"). Luria identifies it with the Zoharic image of the "dying of the primordial kings."⁴ While the vessel containing the final *Sefirah*, *Malkhut*, also cracked, it did not completely shatter as did the others. Most of the light that had been contained in the vessels returned to its divine source, while the remainder (288 sparks, according to Luria) fell below and attached themselves to the now broken shards. From these shards of broken vessels the powers of the *kelipot*, that is, husks or shells were produced. These husks are the evil forces of the "Other Side," the *Sitra Aħra*. The sparks of light that failed to return to their primordial source remained . . .

imprisoned, as it were, among the shells.⁵ The shells, in turn, are constantly nourished and strengthened by the holy sparks attached to them. The *kelipot* represent, then, material reality and the manifestation of evil which prevents the liberation and return of the divine light to its proper source. According to some explanations the catastrophe occurred by virtue of the weak structure of the lights emanating from the eyes of *Adam Qadmon*. From another point of view, the *shebirah* took place as a result of the separation of the dross from the holy, a cathartic process within the divinity. Whatever the cause--an issue always the subject of discussion--the Kabbalists all agreed that the *shebirah* constituted the decisive event in the cosmological process.⁶

The problem that Lurianic teaching now confronts is how to mend the injury done to the Godhead and the cosmos. *Tikkun* refers to the processes by which restoration and repair are to be effected. They comprise the greatest part of Lurianic theory and are extremely complex. The primary medium for *tikkun* is the sefirotic light that continued to issue from *Adam Qadmon* following the *shebirah*. This light is now reorganized under different structural principles known as *parşufim* (lit. "faces"). These *parşufim*, or configurations of divine light, are to restore order to the confusion produced from the *shebirah*. The *Sefirah Keter* is reconstituted as the *parşuf* of *Arikh Anpin* (lit. "the long-faced one," i.e., "the indulgent one" or "forbearing one") or *Attika Qaddisha* ("the Holy Ancient One"). The *Sefirot Hokhmah* and *Binah* are formed as the *parşufim* of *Abba* and *Imma*. The fourth *parşuf* is that of *Zeir Anpin* (or simply *Zeir*) which contains the six lower *Sefirot*, from

Geburah through *Yesod*. The final *parşuf* is *Nukba de-Ze'ir*, the "female of *Ze'ir*," representing the *Sefirah Malkhut*. This *parşuf* contains two aspects: *Raḥel* and *Leah*.

The process by which these *parşufim* manifest themselves is described in language of human development: conception, pregnancy, birth, suckling and maturity. The "parents," *Abba* and *Imma* engage in union known as *zivvug* which results in the creation of *Ze'ir Anpin*. *Yenikah* (suckling) is the process by which *Ze'ir Anpin* is nourished after its departure from the womb of *Imma*. By the power of this suckling *Ze'ir* is able to grow and comprise the six lower *Sefirot*. In the course of its development *Ze'ir* receives three formative powers called *moḥin*. These represent three stages of growth from "childhood" to "maturity":

1. *Moḥin* of *ibbur* (pregnancy): in this stage the *moḥin* of *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah* are present in *Ze'ir*, but the final one, *Da'at*, is lacking. The two that are found are not yet activated.
2. *Moḥin* of *katnut* (immaturity): in this stage all three are present, but *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah* are weak and *Da'at* is incomplete. During this stage, *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah* are in the head of *Ze'ir* while it suckles at the breasts of *Imma*.
3. *Moḥin* of *gadlut* (maturity): here the three *moḥin* are complete and are fully situated within *Ze'ir Anpin*, the suckling having been completed. The *moah* of *Da'at* is sent down into *Ze'ir* by means of powers called *ḥasadim* and *geburot* that flow from *Abba* and *Imma*.

In its primordial state, union or *zivvug* between *Abba* and *Imma* was constant. The two lower *parşufim*, *Ze'ir* and *Nukba de-Ze'ir* were likewise

in a state of unity with one another. The two pairs of male and female were looking "face to face" (*histakkelut panim-be-fanim*) in a perpetual condition of marriage.

According to Luria, Adam's soul was comprised of all the various worlds and was intended to reintegrate all the divine sparks that still remained within the *kelipot*. When Adam was created the cosmic process of *tikkun* had virtually been completed. It was Adam's task to finalize cosmic restoration through contemplative exercises. He was capable of doing so as his body was a perfect microcosm of *Adam Kadmon*. Through his mystical activities Adam could have separated the holy sparks from their demonic shells, thus reestablishing the primordial unity of all things.. He would have purged the realm of holiness of the final vestiges of dross. The *kelipot* would have sunk beneath the lowest world of *Assiyah* and lost all their power. The cosmos would have achieved its original state of perpetual communion with the divine light. Finally, the cosmic exile would have been ended and the historical process would have come to a close.

None of this, however, came about. Instead of accomplishing his great task Adam sinned, interrupting his communion with the upper spheres and attaching himself to the lower worlds. Adam's sin parallels on an anthropological level what occurred on the ontological plane through the *shebirat ha-kelim*. Among the many injurious consequences, Adam's sin returned the relationship of *Ze'ir* and *Nukba* to one of "looking back to back," (*aḥor-be-aḥor*). Likewise, the "female waters" (*mayyim nukbin*), the power which ascended from *Nukba* to arouse the

energy of *Zéir*, was cut off. Similarly, the "male waters" (*mayyim dukhrin*), the power which flowed from *Zéir* to *Nukba* during *zivvug*, ceased to flow. The existence of the worlds dependent on the union of these two *parşufim* was thrown into disorder and confusion. But there were other consequences as well. The worlds that had begun to rise and to move to their proper position when Adam entered the Garden of Eden once again fell with his exile. The entire world of *Assiyah* descended into the realm of the *kelipot*, and good and evil were again thoroughly mixed in with each other. Mankind and all reality in the world of *Assiyah* became materialized. All that had once been purely spiritual now took on physical existence. Lastly, the sin of Adam caused the sparks of all human souls which had been contained within his own to fall and become imprisoned as well within the *kelipot*. There they nourish the evil powers of the lower world.

Tikkun, therefore, involves two fundamental aspects. First, it means the gathering of the divine lights that had fallen into the sphere of the *kelipot*. It necessitates the complete separation of the holy from the enclosing shells. In addition, it means the gathering of all the holy souls likewise imprisoned in the *kelipot*. The Lurianic term "raising of the sparks" (*hdalat ha-nišoşot*) includes, then, both these responsibilities. But how specifically is *tikkun* to be achieved? If it is each man's greatest challenge and obligation to help bring about *tikkun*--and it stands within his powers to do so-- what is he to do to accomplish this? Man's task, according to Luria's teaching, is essentially a *contemplative* one. Every religious action,

regardless of the kind, requires contemplative concentration on the *parşufim* in order to "raise up the fallen sparks." Each such an act of contemplation is capable of effecting re-unification, even if only momentarily, of the *parşufim Ze'ir Anpin* and *Nukba de-Ze'ir*.⁸ More specifically, every action done in the world below, accompanied by concentration on the dynamics being initiated through such action, causes the "female waters" to become aroused and ascend with the two hundred and eighty-eight sparks that had been in the broken vessels. The "female waters" act as the spiritual "chemicals" which bring about *zivvug*. The crucial point here is that the renewed *zivvug* depends entirely on the works of man. No unification can take place without this ascent of the "female waters." This is a process that can only be set in motion through the contemplative exercises of Kabbalists whose souls are thoroughly cleansed and purified. Thus, the focus of contemplation is the inner dynamics of re-organization and re-structuring that takes place through acts of devotional piety.

What are the activities by which the Kabbalist accomplishes this extraordinary goal. We can divide them into three basic categories: prayer, the performance of *mişvot*, and the practice of *yihudim*. The same general contemplative idea characterizes each of these kinds of activity. There are *kavvanot* (mystical intentions) to accompany all of them. But the practice of *yihudim* constitutes a unique and rather extraordinary meditative discipline. Our study will be organized around the several distinctive features of this discipline. The first of these will be discussed in the current chapter, while the remainder

will be considered separately in the one that follows. These are:

1. special qualifications and purifying exercises which are prescribed for any person wishing to engage in the performance of *yihudim*,
2. the time and place required for such practice which dissociates it entirely from the contexts of prayer and the performance of other *misvot*,
3. communion with the soul of a departed *ṣaddik* for the dual purpose of *tikkun* and meriting the revelation of Kabbalistic mysteries.

II

Intrinsic to virtually every system of meditation is a stage in which the future adept must prepare himself so as to become fit and worthy for successful mystical practice.⁹ According to Luria's teachings, the attainment of prophetic inspiration or the holy spirit was not possible without having first passed through such a stage. Proper mental and physical preparation, though prior to the act of meditation itself, is an indispensable prerequisite. The *yihudim* are not to be practiced by just anyone. Nor can they be performed casually. Rather, intense and methodical effort must be exerted by someone wishing to engage in such activity. The aspiring adept must *train* himself to become worthy to even begin the practice. It is clear that we are dealing here with a systematic meditative discipline whose stages of practice the Kabbalist had to master gradually and carefully. As we shall see,

these preparations had two related goals: the breaking of the powers of the demonic and purification of the soul. They can be divided into two categories for purposes of analysis:

1. spiritual and ethical qualities, and ritual practices,
2. acts of penitence known as *tikkunei 'avonot* ("mendings of sins").

In the first category we can distinguish between those matters having to do with the attainment of various spiritual qualities and particular ritual customs and practices.¹⁰ One quality which Luria considered essential for anyone who wished to practice *yihudim* is happiness. Whenever a man performs a *mišvah*, whether it be study of Torah or prayer, great heartfelt joy is indispensable.¹¹ The joy of performing God's will ought to be regarded as greater than all material wealth. Correspondingly, a man must avoid sadness if he wishes to merit divine inspiration. No quality prevents the possibility of divine revelation as much as sadness. Elsewhere, Vital reports that sadness prevents the soul from receiving supernal light. Sadness during confession of one's sins, however, is permissible.¹² Vital's discussion of happiness and sadness in his treatise *Sha'arei Ke'ushah* sheds light on the concern with these qualities.¹³ He writes that happiness strengthens a person enabling him to love God and cleave to Him whereas sadness derives from *Samael*, the evil power. The *Shekhinah* cannot rest in a place where sadness exists.¹⁴

A closely related spiritual trait is the absence of anger. Luria places great significance on the idea that anger inhibits the prospects for prophetic inspiration. Citing *Pesahim* 66b which states

that a prophet's inspiration will depart when he is angered, Vital writes that Luria was more stringent with regard to this matter than all other transgressions.¹⁵ Whereas every sin causes damage to one "limb," the sin of anger injures the soul as a whole, altering it completely. When a person is angered his intellectual soul (*neshamah*) leaves him and is replaced by a soul (*nefesh*) from the side of the *kelipot*. Citing Job 18:4, "Thou that tearest thyself in thine anger," Luria teaches that anger "tears" the soul making it *trefa* (lit. *torn*). Following earlier rabbinic¹⁶ and Zoharic traditions,¹⁷ Luria identifies anger with idolatry. When a man is angered he is filled with "a strange god" whose removal can only be brought about through great acts of repentance.¹⁸ The danger of anger is such that it draws man to sin and makes divine inspiration impossible. Because it damages the soul in its entirety, atonement requires *tikkun* of every aspect of one's being. Vital relates that Luria reproached him for having become angry with his (Vital's) brother.¹⁹ Elsewhere, Vital is reproached for becoming angry with his wife.²⁰ Nor is anger justified in the performance of a *mišvah*. As with sadness, anger makes one vulnerable to the powers of evil who are prepared to occupy the void created by the departure of holiness.

Qualities of modesty which are stressed in both classical-rabbinic and medieval Hebrew literature are also considered of great importance in order to qualify oneself to receive divine inspiration. A person must conduct himself in meekness, humility and fear of sin.²¹ Correspondingly, one should avoid pride, jesting, gossip and pedantry.

A person ought not be too strict or severe even if there be significant cause.²² Nor should a person indulge in idle conversation, i.e., in talk not related to Torah.²³ All these standards are typical of rabbinic and medieval Jewish piety and ethics.²⁴ Moreover, they were of particular concern to the Kabbalists of sixteenth century Safed who wrote treatises on repentance and Kabbalistic ethics. The particularly Lurianic feature, however, is the stress on the notion that failure to meet these standards results in severe injury to the soul. In addition, Luria establishes these norms as pre-requisites for engaging in the practice of *yihudim*.

Luria also prescribed a variety of ritual observances and special customs designed to qualify one to perform the meditative *yihudim*. The basic purpose of these customs was to destroy the power of the demonic *kelipot* and purify the soul. Such purification necessitated a continuous war with the evil powers whose persistence prolonged the work of *tiqqun*.

As Vital reports, Luria informed him that attainment of the holy spirit depends, among other things, upon the care and *kavvanah* with which blessings on enjoyment (*birkhot ha-nehenin*) are carried out. This is especially true in the case of enjoying food:

. . . Since through them [blessings over food recited with *kavvanah*] the strength of these *kelipot* which cling to physical foods, and cleave through them to man who eats them, is abrogated. And by virtue of the blessings over them [i.e., the food] recited with *kavvanah*, he removes these *kelipot* from them, purifies his physical self, and becomes pure, and ready to receive holiness. And he [Luria] warned me carefully in this regard.²⁵ (1)

Food as a particularly potent vehicle for the demonic is a popular notion among the Safed mystics. We shall see shortly that the

attraction to fasting as a penitential act is directly related to the attitude toward eating. Karo's *Maggid* conveys to him precisely the same warning regarding the relationship between eating and evil:

. . . by your penance . . . your life was prolonged. . . . But then you forsook your ways and made room for the evil powers through [excessive] eating and drinking.²⁶

Elsewhere, the *Maggid* cautions Karo about enjoying eating as well as physical pleasures in general:

Beware of food and drink and bodily pleasures. Whenever you experience pleasure at eating or drinking, meditate on the repulsiveness of food as it is chewed [in the mouth] and even more on its repulsiveness as it is evacuated from the body.²⁷

Luria also enjoined his disciples to practice the custom of rising at midnight for the purpose of praying and studying through the night. This practice he felt was extremely efficacious in qualifying one for the contemplative exercises of *yihudim*.²⁸ In *Sha'ar Ruah ha-Kodesh*, Vital records that the midnight vigil will only be effective for one who has performed certain deeds during the day, including causing others to repent, giving charity anonymously and reading the literature of the *Posekim* (rabbinic legal decisions).²⁹ We shall see that the most favorable time to perform *yihudim* is also at midnight.³⁰

Other special observances included strict observance of the Sabbath in all its details, entering the synagogue with great awe and trembling, and wearing *tefillin* the entire day.³¹ Furthermore, the attainment of the holy spirit requires the fixed study of Scripture, *Mishnah*, Talmud (i.e., *Gemara*) and Kabbalah.³²

An activity which Luria regarded as crucial, calling it essential to achieving divine inspiration, was intensive study of the law (*halakha*).³³ According to Luria, the *kushia*, the difficult problem in a halakhic argument requiring resolution by intellectual acumen, represents the evil *kelipah* which covers the brain, the holy element. In resolving the halakhic difficulty a person must concentrate on breaking the *kelipah* which will result in disclosure of the *halakhah*, the holy inner core. The latter consists of secrets of the Torah and Kabbalistic knowledge. The person to whom such intensive study comes easily is required to spend an hour or two each day engaged in it. One who finds it difficult should study only halakhic rules (*dinim*) rather than neglect the study of Torah by dwelling on complex arguments.

Vital also records those practices which other students of Luria told him they received from the mouth of the master. In the name of R. Jonathan Sagis,³⁴ Vital reports that Luria regarded ritual immersion as essential to attainment of the holy spirit.³⁵ Immersion was deemed a purifying exercise of such significance that it was to be practiced regularly. Vital adds that Luria could not practice ritual immersion for six months during one winter due to illness, though he suffered no loss of divine inspiration.

R. Eliezer ha-Levi Berukhim³⁶ told Vital that Luria related to him the following activities as being conducive to inspiration: avoidance of idle talk, rising at midnight and weeping on account of our lack of mystical knowledge, and study of forty or fifty pages of

Zohar each day without intensive reflection.³⁷ R. Samuel Uceda³⁸ reported he was told by Luria that one who passes forty successive days without speaking anything but words of Torah will achieve mystical knowledge and inspiration.³⁹

The purpose of these customs and rituals is clear. They are intended to cleanse the soul and make it receptive to divine inspiration. This can be done only by destroying the power of the *kelipot* or by preventing the infiltration of evil into the purified soul. The *kelipot*, as we have seen, resulted from the evil dross thrown off by the Deity in the process of creation. Out of this dross originated the *Sitra-Ahra*. This demonic power entrenched itself in the depth of the abyss and established there a reign of darkness. The task of *tikkun*, the removal of the demonic forces from the worlds and the lifting up of the sparks of holiness, involves a never-ending battle. Man is constantly warring with the forces of the "Other Side." Thus, Luria's advice and instructions are concerned with a dynamic process. Laxity or passivity on the part of the aspiring adept fortifies the evil powers and entrenches their position while spiritual qualities and practices destroy their potency. The essence of mystical religious life consists in the shattering and discarding of the *kelipot*. Through the performance of special acts of piety and by adhering to strict standards of personal spiritual conduct, the Kabbalists seeks to save the "Holy Side" from the grasp and defilement of the "Other Side."

The second category of qualifying exercises are acts of penitence known as *tikkunei 'avonot*. The Lurianic Kabbalists, as was the

case with all the sixteenth century Safed mystics, possessed a profound sense of their own sins. The oppressive feelings of guilt harbored by these pious men derived from several sources. In the first place, collective sin was the traditional explanation for historical calamity and suffering. The consciousness of exile weighed heavily upon the Safed Kabbalists precisely because they were convinced it was on account of their sins that the Spanish expulsion of 1492 occurred. Moreover, this sense of guilt and failure was continually reinforced by the belief that the exile was prolonged by virtue of every new transgression. This latter notion was tied to the conviction that every sin participated in the primordial transgression of Adam. Every sinful thought or act was patterned after that original fall. As Adam's sin interrupted his communion with the upper spheres and caused a breach within God, so each transgression prevents communion and deepens the exile of God's *Shekhinah*. The belief that the fate of the Godhead itself was bound up with the Kabbalist's actions served as the most powerful source of guilt. It is one thing to be preoccupied with one's own private spiritual salvation and bliss. It is quite another matter to feel responsible for the destiny of the Godhead as well as the redemption of the cosmos as a whole. In other words, the Kabbalist's concern reached far beyond the vicissitudes of his soul to an objective reality outside himself--the divine life and the fate of the cosmos.

Isaac Luria prescribed specific penitential acts whose purpose, in the words of Shmuel Vital, was "to mend his [i.e., the Kabbalist's] soul" and "cleanse him from the filth of the disease of his sins."

Afterwards, writes Vital's son, he would be prepared to perform the various kinds of *yihudim*. Vital himself introduces the *tikkunei 'avonot* with a discussion of the relationship between man's soul and sin. The following passage provides a clear account of the Lurianic theory of sin and the effectiveness of genuine repentance:

Man is created from matter and [also from] form which consists of soul (*nefesh*), spirit (*ruah*) and intellectual soul (*neshamah*), the divine portion from above, as it is said: "and [God] breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Gen. 2:7). And his body is dark matter from the side of the shell, luring and preventing man from [achieving] perfection of his soul [in order] to cut it [i.e., his soul] off from the Tree of Life . . . and so "there is not a righteous man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not" (Ecc. 7:20). And it is known that sin is a blemish, stain and rust in the soul, and this is the sickness of the pure soul. When it [is immersed] in filth and stain, it is unable to perceive and achieve the true perfection, which is [attainment of] the mysteries of the Torah. . . . And the transgression becomes a barrier separating it [i.e., the soul] from her Creator, preventing her from perceiving and comprehending holy and pure supernal matters, as it is said: "The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul" (Ps. 19:8). . . . When the soul is pure and unblemished then the supernal holy matters take shape in her, and when she dwells in rust and stain everything becomes bitter-sweet [i.e., evil appears as good]. [This is] similar to the sick person who, when he is ill, abhors the good things and loves things which aggravate his illness. The doctor, in order to restore his health, gives him spices including gall, by which his nature will return to what it originally was, and his health as before.

So, too, the sick soul, to remove the sickness from her, must receive the bitterness of medicine and "return" in [the form of] mortifications and fasts, sackcloth and ashes and stripes, ritual immersions, and purifications from filth and the stains of sins. [This is] in order to be able to attain and comprehend supernal matters, which are the mysteries of the world . . . ⁴⁰ (2)

Only the weapons of ascetic practices are potent enough to cleanse the soul of the filth that clings to it. Luria himself, proclaims Vital, is the healer of diseased souls.⁴¹ Luria's powers stem

from the spirit of prophecy which he possessed, meriting him divine light and knowledge with which to teach his followers. But Luria only revealed his knowledge to those disciples who were completely pure and worthy. To this end he prescribed for each of them penitential activities to meet their specific needs:

He [Luria] would not reveal any of the mysteries of this holy knowledge to one in whose soul he perceived, with the [aid of the] holy spirit, a blemish--until he gave him [i.e., the disciple] penitential acts to straighten out all he did crookedly.⁴² And like the expert doctor who prescribes for each sick person the proper medicine to cure this illness, so too [Isaac Luria] may he rest in peace, used to recognize the sin, tell him where he incurred a blemish, and prescribe for him the penitential act needed for this transgression in order to cleanse his soul, so that he could receive the divine light, as it is written: "O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved" (Jer. 4:14).⁴³ (3)

Vital decided to record all the *tikkunim* which he heard from his teacher's mouth for the sake of those who needed to purify their souls. We shall present several of these to illustrate their character.

One *tikkun* prescribes the penitence for the sin of thinking about a transgression.⁴⁴ A fast of eighty-seven days is required to atone for this sin.⁴⁵ A man must concentrate on the name of God *YHWH* (יהוה) as it is written out "plene" (*bi-millui*)⁴⁶ so as to spell the name of each letter in the following way: יו"ד ה"א ו"א ה"א

The *gematria*⁴⁷ of this name equals forty-five. By adding up the number of letters involved in this spelling, i.e., ten, plus the number of letters utilized to spell out the *millui* of the *millui*, i.e., twenty-eight, and the four letters of the simple *YHWH*, we arrive at forty-two. Adding forty-five and forty-two the figure of eighty-seven is achieved,

accounting for the fast of eighty-seven days. This is a relatively simple, though representative example of the way in which the technique of *gematria* is used to derive practical results. It is based on the conviction that the numerical equivalents of names and words are not arbitrary, but suggestive of the "meaning" or "power" of the name or word. In most cases this meaning is made explicit by associating the *gematria* of one name with that of another, thus establishing their "inherent" relationship.⁴⁸

Another *tikkun* is one connected to transgression of the *misvah* of honoring one's father and mother.⁴⁹ According to Luria, the *parşufim* of *Abba* and *Imma* are associated with the divine name *YaH* (ך״). The *millui* of *YaH* equals twenty-six which is the number of fasts required to atone for this sin. In addition, twenty-six lashings are prescribed. In this case the figure of twenty-six is related to the source of the blemish within the Godhead. Performance of the penance atones for the sin, not merely by raising the sinner's consciousness with regard to his act, but also by "mending" the damage done to the relevant *parşufim* through this transgression. Thus, the number twenty-six is of the utmost significance for the penitent. By concentrating on the number of fasts and lashings, their relationship to *YaH* and *Abba* and *Imma*, the sinner repairs the injury suffered by the Godhead.

An exceptional *tikkun* is that required for one who has publicly humiliated another person.⁵⁰ He must roll upon thorns called *Ortigas*.⁵¹ Luria derived this practice from Proverbs 24:31, "The face thereof was covered with nettles." The word face is taken to mean the face of one

who has been put to shame in public. Just as the humiliated person is covered with "nettles," the guilty party must suffer affliction with thorns.

Still other mortification practices were enjoined as acts of repentance. Transgressions involving sexual matters called for particularly severe affliction.⁵² For example, a person who has had intercourse with the wife of another man must submit to a fast of 325 days, corresponding to five times the *gematria* of the name אדנ"י (ADNY).⁵³ For every one of the fasts he must don sackcloth and rub dust on his forehead, traditional signs of mourning. Moreover, the final portion of each meal which breaks a day of fasting must be dipped in dust before eating. In this case Luria equates the number 325 with 320 *dinim* whose severity is "sweetened" by adding five times the letter *alef* from the five times ADNY. In other words, it is concentration on the name ADNY, whose source is in the *parşuf Nukba de-Ze'ir*, that atone for this transgression. The wearing of sackcloth and application of dust signifies the reunification of the *parşufim Ze'ir Anpin* and *Nukba de-Ze'ir*. This is possible because these two *parşufim* are symbolized by heaven (*shamayim*) and earth (*areş*), the *gematria* of which equals that of the Hebrew words for sackcloth and dust, 681.

A man who engages in homosexual intercourse is required to fast a total of 233 days and concentrate on the names YHWH and EHYH.⁵⁴ Raising up these names represents an effort to return the *parşufim* of *Abba* and *Imma* to their proper place within the Godhead. This transgression is responsible for dislocating these *parşufim* and initiating

a union in a place where it cannot take place. In addition, the penitent must fast 161 of the required days during the winter so as to be able to roll in the snow on these days. This is performed by stripping naked and rolling face down as well as on one's back nine times.⁵⁵

One who is guilty of having had intercourse with a menstruating woman must fast for a total of fifty-nine days, corresponding to the *gematria* of the word *niddah* (menstruant).⁵⁶ Moreover, he must be lashed and immerse himself in water each day. He is not permitted to sleep on his bed during the fast days.⁵⁷ Vital asserts that he heard this particular *tikkun* from R. Abraham ha-Levi Berukhim.

How are we to account for the preoccupation with sexual transgressions and the severe penance necessary for their expiation? The answer lies in the very emphasis given to the sexual element in Jewish mysticism. The Jewish mystical tradition reflects a positive attitude towards sexual practice within the boundaries of the law. The Kabbalists regarded married sexual life as a sacred mystery. More than a vehicle for fulfilling the essential *mišvah* of procreation or an opportunity to avoid sinful thoughts and deeds, marriage enabled the mystic to realize the divine union of God and His *Shekhinah*, to mend the breach within God caused by human sin.⁵⁸ In sixteenth century Safed, the sacramental and theurgic qualities of married sex took on great significance. As R. J. Z. Werblowsky has pointed out, this metaphysical understanding of the meaning of the sex act did not represent a romantic notion of sexuality. Rather, the focus of attention was *transferred* from one's partner to the sacred unification of male and

female within God.⁵⁹ As such, one's sexual life, carried out without passion or even pleasure, served a purely instrumental purpose--even if that purpose was of an exalted nature. In his *Sefer Haredim*, Eliezer Azikri testifies to this attitude. He writes that while God has given man a wife of flesh and blood whom he is to love, his real love must be for the daughter of the King, i.e., the *Shekhinah*.⁶⁰

If sexual practice within the bounds of marriage is sanctified, outside of married life it is thoroughly evil. The abuse and misuse of one's sexuality, improper emission of seed, illegitimate sexual acts, serve the purposes of the demonic world. This is most clearly brought out in Luria's *tikkun* for the sin of *hoṣḏat zera' l'batṭalah*, improper emission of seed--also known as *hashḥatat zera'*, "destruction" or "corruption" of one's seed.⁶¹ In its most obvious form this sin involves masturbation or self-pollution of an involuntary nature. According to the *Zohar* this vice is regarded as a sin more serious than all the sins of the Torah:

Of all the sins which defile a man, that which defiles him the most, both in this world and in the world to come, is the sin of spilling one's seed.⁶² (4)

Besides being tantamount to an act of murder by virtue of destroying potential generative seed, this sin is regarded in Kabbalistic literature as responsible for the creation of demons. According to Talmudic tradition, having completed the primary works of creation, God began to produce spirits in the twilight of Friday evening. Before He had a chance to clothe these spirits the Sabbath entered and intervened.

Obligated to cease from labor, God gave up the effort which resulted in demons without bodies.⁶³ This conception was combined with another theme. According to this notion demons or evil spirits were produced from the sperm of Adam during his long separation from Eve.⁶⁴ After the murder of Abel by Cain, Adam decided to cease having sexual relations with his wife. During this prolonged separation of one hundred and thirty years, female demons known as *succubi* came to him and conceived by him. This union brought forth demonic offspring known as *nigfey beney Adam* ("Spirits of harm that come from man"). These rabbinic conceptions were taken up by medieval writers⁶⁵ and the *Zohar*.⁶⁶ Thus, abuse of a man's generative powers is an extremely pernicious activity, responsible for the progeny of *Siṭra Aḥra*.

It is these conceptions which form the basis for Luria's attitude towards this transgression. This sin gives vitality and strength to the *kelipot*.⁶⁷ It causes the male from above to descend into the *kelipah* instead of *Malkhut* where the seed properly belongs. This seed is used for fertilization by the female partner of *Siṭra Aḥra* who produces demonic offspring. Thus, the holy is mingled with the unholy and a man's potential sons become demonic "children" instead.⁶⁸ Luria makes mention in this connection of a rite whose purpose was to retrieve or redeem these "ill-bred" (*banim shobabim*) sons of man. The ritual is known as *Tikkun Shobabim Tat*, the last two words being an acrostic formed by the initial letters of the names of the eight weekly portions of the Torah (Ex. 1-30) read during the winter months. According to this ritual, the Kabbalists fasted on Mondays and Thursdays

between the readings of the Torah portion *Shemot* through *Tešave*, in order to expiate the sin of nocturnal pollution and onanism. It was hoped that through this ritual the "ill-bred sons" would be returned to the realm of the holy.⁶⁹ This Lurianic rite and the earlier Kabbalistic conceptions which serve as its basis, reflect the general Lurianic attitude towards sexual transgressions. Misuse of generative powers, lust and passion, strengthen the realm of the "Other Side" by investing evil with aspects of holiness. Strict penance is required to extract and eliminate this holiness from its improper receptacle.

Before closing our discussion of qualifying procedures, it will be valuable to examine the significance of fasting as a penitential exercise.⁷⁰ Virtually every penitential act involves a certain length of fasting. Vital indicates a variety of reasons for fasting as penitence.⁷¹ In one explanation he writes that a person is to regard himself as a sacrifice in which the blood and fat are given up to God through abstention from eating. This understanding of fasting is tied to the conception that a man's sins initiate a breach within the letters of the divine name *YHWH*. Sacrifice, through fasting, draws the separated letters near to one another again. Such sacrifice nourishes the supernal powers. Another explanation regards fasting as the *tiḳḳun* for that which one has already eaten.⁷² The soul of a departed sinner will undergo transmigration (*gilgul*) and come to reside in an animal or vegetable.⁷³ When a man consumes meat, it is possible that the soul of such an Israelite dwells within the food. During a fast a person should concentrate on the *tiḳḳun* of what he has eaten

with the intention of raising up the soul of the departed sinner. In addition, fasting, receiving lashes and other ascetic exercises serve to eliminate and destroy the power of the *kelipot*.⁷⁴ The light which constitutes the holy inclination is separated from the darkness of the evil inclination. A reason offered for fasting on the third and fifth days of each week is because *Din*, divine strictness, rules on these days. Fasting is intended to "sweeten" the severity with *Hesed*, God's mercy.⁷⁵

It is clear that the ritual exercises prescribed by Luria for expiation of sins and purification of the soul were not intended to be mere physical afflictions. In contrast to Christian mortification practices, these rituals were not designed primarily in order to punish the body and afflict the flesh. Rather, they were to cleanse the soul by calling to mind the blemish within it and the damage done to the corresponding elements within the Godhead. The emphasis rests with the proper attitude of repentance (*teshuvah*) and the mending that this repentance accomplishes. The *tikkunei 'avonot* thus served a dual purpose: the cleansing and complete purification of one's soul, along with the mending of the Godhead by struggling to separate the divine sparks from the *kelipot*. Having purged the filth from his soul, the adept is now prepared to engage in meditative acts of unification.

Notes to Chapter Two

¹ Isaac Luria's mythological system is excellently presented in several places. Our summary of this system claims no originality (and often employs the very language used by G. Scholem) except insofar as we have sought to place Luria's mythology in relation to the issue of contemplation. It is based upon the following works: G. Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 260-86; *idem*, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, pp. 109-17; *idem*, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 22-44; I. Tishby, *Torat ha-Ra' ve-ha-Kelipah be-Kabbalat ha-Ari*.

² According to Scholem, this conception first occurs in an obscure work which was written in the middle of the thirteenth century and which Luria appears to have known. See G. Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 260, 410 n. 42; see also his "Le-yidiat ha-Kabbalah bi-Sefarad 'Erev ha-Gerush," *Tarbiš*, 24 (1955), pp. 167-206.

³ See above, chapter one, p. 38, n. 12.

⁴ G. Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 266, 412 nn. 65-6.

⁵ For earlier conceptions of the *kelipah* in Jewish mystical literature see A. Altmann, "Eleazar of Worms' Symbol of the Merkabah" and "The Motif of the 'Shells' in Azriel of Gerona" in his, *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism*, pp. 161-79.

⁶ Concerning the various theories about the reason for the *shebirah* see I. Tishby, *Torat ha-Ra'*, pp. 39-61.

⁷ Luria took the names of the *parsufim* from Zoharic symbolism, especially as found in the *Idra Rabba* and *Idra Zutta*.

⁸ This Lurianic theurgy is simply an extension of the fundamental tenet of Kabbalah that no action done below is without significance in the world above. In Lurianic Kabbalah everything depends on the mystic's theurgical expertise, his own redemption and that of the cosmos.

⁹ Concerning this see, for example, E. Underhill, *Mysticism* (London, 1926), part II, chapter three.

¹⁰ Shmuel Vital writes that he brought together all the positive qualities that a man must achieve if he desires to attain any degree of inspiration, *SRH*, 33.

¹¹ *Ibid.* Cf. *Shā'ar ha-Miṣvot*, pp. 1-2; *Shā'ar ha-Kavvanot*, p. 2. Based on Luria's prescription to be happy in the performance of *miṣvot*, Elijah de Vidas writes that doing so enables a person to destroy the *kelipot* which imprison the *Shekkinah*, *Reshit Hokhmah* (Venice, 1593), *Shā'ar ha-Ahavah*, ch. 10; Eliezer Azikri, *Sefer Haredim* (Jerusalem, 1958), pp. 16-7, 218, 220. An extreme formulation in regard to joy in the performance of *miṣvot* is reported by Moses Galante in the name of his brother Abraham. He states that the joy with which a *miṣvah* is performed is more important than the *miṣvah* itself. See *Kohélet Yāakob* (Safed, 1578), 36a. Cf. M. Benayahu, *Toldot ha-Ari*, p. 336.

¹² *Shā'ar ha-Kavvanot*, p. 2.

¹³ *Shā'arei Kedushah* (Benei Brak, 1967), part two, gate four.

¹⁴ This notion goes back to *Berakhot* 31a, *Ḥagigah* 5b, *Shabbat* 30b.

¹⁵ *SRH*, 33b.

¹⁶ Cf. *Shabbat* 105b, *Nedarim* 22b.

¹⁷ Cf. *Zohar* I, 27b; II, 182a-b; III, 179a.

¹⁸ *SRH*, 34a. Concerning the emphasis on avoiding anger among the Kabbalists of Safed, cf. Moses Cordovero's special customs, no. 2, printed as an appendix to S. Schechter, "Safed" in *Studies in Judaism*, p. 292; *idem*, *Tomer Deborah*, ch. one, part five; *Shā'arei Kedushah*, part two, gate four; *Shā'ar ha-Gilgulim*, p. 24; Eliezer Azikri, *Sefer Haredim*, pp. 217-8, 220.

¹⁹ *SRH*, 34a-b.

²⁰ *Sefer ha-Ḥezyonot*, pp. 17-8.

²¹ *SRH*, 34b. Cf. *Shā'arei Kedushah*, part two, gate four. Elijah de Vidas devotes an entire gate to discussing humility in *Reshit Hokhmah*, *Shā'ar ha-Anavah*. Cf. also his *Toṣa'ot Ḥayyim* (Jerusalem, 1971), pp. 5a-7b.

²² *SRH*, 34b.

²³ *Ibid.* Cf. *Shā'arei Kedushah*, part two, gate five; Cordovero's customs, no. 6, 9 and 10 in Schechter, *Studies*, p. 292.

²⁴ Cf. for example, Bahya ibn Pakuda, *Hobot ha-Levavot* (Amsterdam, 1737), Jonah b. Abraham Gerondi, *Shā'arei Teshubah* (Fano, 1505).

²⁵ *SRH*, 34b.

- 26 Werblowsky, *Karo*, p. 151.
- 27 *Op. cit.*, p. 163.
- 28 *SRH*, 34b.
- 29 *Op. cit.*, 34b-35a.
- 30 See chapter three, p. 77-79.
- 31 *SRH*, 34b. Concerning entrance to the synagogue in awe, cf. *Shafar ha-Kavvanot* (vol. 1), p. 20.
- 32 *Op. cit.*, 35b. Vital discusses the significance of the various levels of study in *Shafar ha-Misvot, Parashat Vaethanan*. Cf. also Vital, *Tamei Misvot* (Jerusalem, 1972), *Parashat Vaethanan*.
- 33 *SRH*, 35a. Cf. *Shafar ha-Misvot*, 79a; Benayahu, *Toldot ha-Ari*, p. 336; Vital's introduction to *Es Hayyim* (Warsaw, 1891).
- 34 Jonathan Sagis was one of Luria's close disciples and an associate of Vital's. He was one of the signatories to the covenant promising to study Luria's teachings only from Vital. See above, p. 4. Concerning Sagis see Scholem, *Zion*, 5 (1940), 134, 144 ff.
- 35 *SRH*, 36a. For *kavvanot* to accompany ritual immersion see *Shafar ha-Kavvanot*, pp. 24b-26a. Cf. *Shafar ha-Misvot*, 128a where immersion is said to cleanse one who has had a pollution. The same reason is given by R. Abraham ha-Levi Berukhim in his special customs, no. 6, in Schechter, *Studies*, p. 297.
- 36 Berukhim (1515-1593) emigrated to Safed from Morocco. He joined Cordovero's circle but became a member of Luria's group when the latter began teaching. He was well-known in Safed for his extreme piety and his exhortations to others to repent. His rules of piety were published by Schechter in his *Studies in Judaism*, pp. 297-9. He was responsible for collecting sections of *Zohar* which had not been included in the Mantua edition of 1558-60. These were subsequently published under the title *Zohar Hadash*.
- 37 *SRH*, 36b.
- 38 Samuel Uceda (b. 1540) was born in Safed and studied under Luria. He was one of the signatories to the covenant of 1575. When he was forty years old he established an important yeshiva in Safed where both Talmud and Kabbalah were taught. See Scholem, *Zion*, 5 (1940), pp. 134, 145.
- 39 *SRH*, 36b.

40 *Op. cit.*, 39. The basis for the analogy of the sick body to the sick soul appears to be drawn from Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Hilkhot De^eot, ch. 2; Shemonah Perakim, ch.3.

41 *Op. cit.*, 39b-40b. Concerning the theme of Luria as healing doctor and diagnostician of the soul's injuries cf. *SRH*, 14a and *Sefer Toldot ha-Ari*, pp. 156-7.

42 This phrase is an allusion to Ecclesiastes 1:15: "That which is crooked cannot be made straight . . . "

43 *SRH*, 40a.

44 *Op. cit.*, 41a.

45 Vital explains that a fast-day does not include the night. Moreover, two successive days of fasting which do include the night are equivalent to twenty-seven days, whereas three consecutive days and nights are equivalent to forty days of fasting. *SRH*, 25b-26a.

46 *Millui* consists of spelling out the full name of each letter in a word and adding up the numerical value of the combined letters.

47 *Gematria* is the technique of determining the combined numerical value of the letters of a word or phrase and relating it to other words or phrases of numerical equivalence. Through *millui* the *gematria* of a word can be greatly increased. The technique of *millui* can be extended so as to calculate the *millui* of the *millui* etc.

48 Concerning the use of *gematria* see below , pp. 108 ff.

49 *SRH*, 48b.

50 *Op. cit.*, 49a-b.

51 The term "ortigas" is Spanish for nettles. Among the various extreme self-afflictive acts R. Abraham b. Eliezer ha-Levi Berukhim was reported to have practiced was that of rolling upon a bed of thorns called (in German) "Brennesseln" which felt like fire to his flesh. See *Sefer Toldot ha-Ari*, p. 226.

52 Sexual transgressions for which Luria prescribed *tikkunei ^eavonot* include: relations with a menstruating woman, adultery, relations with an animal, necrophilia, homosexuality and pollution.

53 The multiplication of the *gematria* of *ADNY* in this connection by five appears to be arbitrary.

54 *SRH*, 57a ff. Vital reports that he did not receive this *tikkun* from Luria himself, but from three men who performed it.

55 There is no suggestion as to why the number nine is enjoined here. Cf. the remarks of Eliezer Azikri concerning ascetic practices utilizing thorns and snow, *Sefer Haredim*, p. 214. According to precipitation statistics for Israel, Safed has, on the average, five days of snowfall per year. Snow usually falls in January and February, the coldest months. See Efraim Orni and Elisha Efrat, *Geography of Israel* (Tel Aviv, 1971), p. 147.

56 *SRH*, 52b.

57 Elsewhere Vital writes that it is proper for one who is fasting and wearing sack-cloth to sleep on the ground using a stone for a pillow. Cf. *SRH*, 25b; *SY* 4d, 34b-c; *Sefer Toldot ha-Ari*, p. 226. Concerning lashings (*malkot*) as a penitential instrument, Vital reported that Luria was not as strict as he was with fasts, inasmuch as "in this generation there are no ordained rabbis (*semukhin*) and experts." See *SY* 34d and *Sha'ar ha-Misvot*, p. 143a-b. Based on Maimonides opinion that "if all the Palestinian sages would unanimously agree to appoint and ordain judges, then these new ordinants would possess the full authority of the original ordained judges" (*Yad, Sanhedrin* 4:11), an effort was made in 1538 by R. Jacob Berab of Safed to reinstitute the practice of ordination. A famous controversy developed between Berab and the chief rabbi of Jerusalem, Levi ibn Habib over the question whether the revival of ordination by the rabbis of Palestine was permissible at that time or not. Berab succeeded in convincing the rabbis of Safed to ordain him, but they were refused the consent and approval of Habib. Despite this, Berab went on to ordain four others before he left Safed--Joseph Karo, Moses di Trani, Abraham Şahalon and Israel di Curial. Of concern to us is the fact that one of the primary motivations behind Jacob Berab's effort was his hope to be able to enjoin the proper rabbinic punishment of lashes. This was felt necessary in order to allow marranos to become fully cleansed of their sins. Lacking the necessary authority to impose such punishment, Berab--who felt that the messiah's appearance was near and that atonement had better be accomplished--sought to attain that prerogative. It is of great interest here that Isaac Luria appears to side with the position taken by Levi ibn Habib that such a right did not exist in their time. Concerning this issue see J. Katz, *Zion*, 16 (1951), pp. 28-45; M. Benayahu, in: *Sefer Yovel le-Yishak Baer* (1960), pp. 248-69; H.Z. Dimitrovsky, in: *Sefunot*, 10 (1966), pp. 113-92.

58 The treatise *Iggeret ha-Kodesh*, incorrectly attributed to Nahmanides, is a Kabbalistic work of the thirteenth century dealing with the problems of leading a moral family life. It is especially concerned with the proper means of having sexual intercourse with one's wife. It is a classic statement of the Kabbalistic view according to which married sexual life reflects the relationship between male and female, *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*, within God. On its authorship see G. Scholem, *Kiryat Sefer* vol. XXI, pp. 179-186.

- 59 Werblowsky, *Karo*, pp. 135 ff.
- 60 *Sefer Haredim*, part seven, chapter four. Cf. Cordovero, *Tomer Deborah*, chapter nine.
- 61 For a full treatment of this concept see D. Feldman, *Marital Relations, Birth Control, and Abortion in Jewish Law* (New York, 1974), chapter six.
- 62 *Zohar* II, 188a.
- 63 *Abot* 5:6; *Gen. Rabbah* 7:7.
- 64 *Gen. Rabbah* 20:28, 24:6; *Midrash Tanhuma*, ed. S. Buber, I, pp. 12, 20; *Eruvin* 18b.
- 65 See J. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition* (New York, 1939), p. 29: Rashi's commentary to II Samuel 7:14.
- 66 *Zohar* II, 231b.
- 67 *SRH*, 63a. Cf. the remarks of Karo's *Maggid* concerning the fortification of evil powers as a result of his (Karo) having polluted himself, Werblowsky, *Karo*, pp. 138-9.
- 68 *Shāar ha-Kavvanot*, p. 363b.
- 69 *SRH*, 62b. On this ritual see Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, pp. 156-7. The complete ritual is developed in Moses Zakuto, *Tikkun Shobabim* (Venice, 1716).
- 70 Concerning the function and motives for fasting among the rabbis of the Talmudic period see S. Lowy, "The Motivation of Fasting in Talmudic Literature," in *Journal of Jewish Studies*, IX, 1-2 (1958), pp. 19-38. Lowy considers, among others, the fast motivated by the need to atone and repent.
- 71 *SRH*, 24b ff.
- 72 *Op. cit.*, 24b.
- 73 *Gilgul*, the transmigration of souls, or metempsychosis, is developed by Luria on the basis of earlier Kabbalistic conceptions. It is elaborated upon by Hayyim Vital in great detail in *Shāar ha-Gilgulim* and *Sefer ha-Gilgulim*. If, as we have seen (see above, pp. 24-5) Adam contained the souls of all persons, all transmigrations are ultimately migrations of the one soul whose exile atones for its fall. *Gilgul* is thus a fundamental part of the process of *tikkun*. *Gilgul* is not concerned so much with retribution, in the Lurianic system, as it

is with providing an opportunity for souls not yet complete to perfect themselves. It enables the soul to fulfill its task by giving it another chance in the life of another person. Souls which have fulfilled the commandments properly are exempted from the need to migrate further. They simply await their integration into Adam's soul when the general restitution of all things is achieved. The exile of a sinner's soul into a non-human entity such as an animal or plant or stone, is regarded as an especially terrible form of punishment. Fortunately, such a soul has an opportunity to be redeemed through the help of souls with mutual affinity. Thus, eating accompanied by proper *kavvanah* may possibly restore a sinner's soul to purity. See Scholem, in: *Tarbiš*, 16 (1945), pp. 135-40; *idem*, *Major Trends*, pp. 280-4; *idem*, *Von der mystischen Gestalt der Gottheit*, pp. 193-247, 297-306.

⁷⁴ *SRH*, 25a-b.

⁷⁵ *Op. cit.*, 25b.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PRACTICE OF YIHUDIM:

PART TWO

I

Having discussed the first of our three subjects in regard to the practice of *yihudim*, preparatory procedures, we wish now to turn our attention to the time and place for the performance of these exercises. The practice of *yihudim* is an independent exercise, detached entirely from the contexts of prayer and the performance of *mišvot*. The total setting suggests an experience quite different from either of the others. According to our sources, there are two places in which *yihudim* can be performed: at the grave of a *ṣaddik* or in one's own home. The former is considered preferable inasmuch as it actually arouses the soul of the *ṣaddik* with whom one intends to commune. Such communion, we shall see, constitutes a fundamental part of these exercises. The special need to perform these meditations at the grave will become clear when we consider the act of meditation itself. The alternative setting in which the *yihudim* can be performed is in one's home. The goal of cleaving to the soul of a *ṣaddik* is equally important in this instance. Far greater purity, however, is required in order to bring about such communion when not done on the grave itself.¹

Certain days were considered more propitious than others for the practice of *yihudim*.² Practice at the grave could be done on all days except for the Sabbath, New Moon (*Rosh Hodesh*) and Festivals. On these days the souls (*nefashot*), which normally hover above the grave,³ ascend to the "terrestrial paradise" to be with God and are thus unavailable for communion and communications. While all other days are acceptable, the most preferable are the eve of the New Moon and the eve of the fifteenth day of the month. On these days a man is considered likely to be more spiritually prepared. In the case of *yihudim* performed at home all days are acceptable--including the Sabbath, New Moon and Festivals. While both types of *yihudim* can be adequately practiced at any hour of the day, the "favored time" is after midnight. For this is the time at which the Holy One, blessed be He visits the righteous.⁴ If one practices at home it is particularly important to wait until the midnight hour. Viewing midnight as the most propitious time for heavenly revelation is an opinion expressed in the *Zohar*.⁵

The following passage illustrates this motif and its meaning:

Rabbi Abba sent out from Tiberias to go to the house of his father-in-law. With him was his son, Rabbi Jacob. When they arrived at Kfar Tarsha, they stopped to spend the night. Rabbi Abba inquired of his host: Have you a cock here? The host said: Why? Said Rabbi Abba: I wish to rise at exactly midnight. The host replied: A cock is not needed. By my bed is a water-clock. The water drips out drop by drop, until just at midnight it is all out, and then the wheel whirls back with a clatter which rouses the entire household. This clock I made for a certain old man who was in the habit of getting up each night at midnight to study Torah. To this Rabbi Abba said: Blessed be God for guiding me here.

The wheel of the clock whirled back at midnight, and Rabbi Abba and Rabbi Jacob arose. They listened to the voice of their

host coming up from the lower part of the house where he was sitting with his two sons, and saying: It is written, "Midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee for Thy righteous judgments" [Ps. 119:62]. The word "at" is not used, and so we assume that "Midnight" is an appellation of the Holy One, be blessed, whom David speaks to thus because midnight is the hour when He appears with his retinue, and goes into the Garden of Eden to converse with the righteous. Rabbi Abba then said to Rabbi Jacob: Now we will surely be with the Presence and be together.

And they went and seated themselves by their host, and said: Tell us again that which you just said, which is very good. Where did you hear it? He replied: My grandfather told it to me. He said that the accuser angels below are aroused and go and flit all about the world during the first three hours of the night, but exactly at midnight the accusations halt, for at this moment God enters the Garden of Eden.⁶ (1)

We have here a mythological conception concerning the varying degrees of God's presence at different parts of the day. The demonic powers are considered most dangerous at dusk and evening. At these hours, when "the accuser angels below are aroused" a man must be on special guard against sin. At midnight, however, God appears in the Garden of Eden to commune with the righteous. His presence suggests His protective power and men need not fear the evil forces. His mercy begins to flow making it the most opportune time to seek Him.⁷

Rising to pray and study at the midnight hour developed, on the basis of the Zoharic motif, into a popular custom in Safed. The testimony of R. Abraham b. Eliezer ha-Levi Berukhim implies that the original ritual revolved around study--and only later became combined with the theme of mourning on account of the destruction of the Temple and the exile of the *Shekhinah*:

Most of the masters of Torah, *when* they arise to study Torah at midnight, sit on the ground, wrap themselves in black, and lament

and weep on account of the destruction of the Temple. Such is the custom of the circle of repentants [on the] day of visiting [the family tombs].⁸ (2)

Moses Cordovero speaks only of rising at midnight in order to mourn the destruction:

Every night [one should] sit on the ground, lament the destruction and weep on account of one's sins which delay the redemption.⁹ (3)

In its fully developed form these themes served as the basis for the Lurianic ritual of *Tikkun Haṣot*. This practice centered around mourning the destruction followed by prayers and psalms extolling the nearing redemption.¹⁰ Independently, Luria advocated the practice of *yihudim* at the midnight hour based on these motifs and earlier customs. There is no evidence that these two distinct practices were ever combined. They represent completely separate devotional activities. Nevertheless, their roots are to be found in the same mythical notions of an earlier time.

This dissociation of contemplation from the context of prayer is not without great significance. In the first place, it is reasonable to suggest that the prayer of mystics, in general, is given to private experience. Mystical prayer is characterized by an unusual degree of concentration and intensity, as well as by a concern for the highly personal apprehension of God or the sacred. As a result, the history of mysticism reveals a strong attraction to individual devotion.¹¹ Jewish mystics, however, have always had to deal with the entrenched tradition of communal prayer, according to which a quorum (*minyan*) of

ten men is required for public worship. Due to this, the earliest Kabbalists never considered developing forms of contemplation not based upon traditional prayer. It was the text of prayer to which the mystic turned in his longing for sacred experience. A most notable exception to this tendency was the teachings of Abraham Abulafia (1240-c. 1291). Abulafia developed a very important system of meditation that was wholly outside of traditional prayer. It was based on contemplation of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the names of God. We will return to Abulafia's teachings as they bear upon our understanding of the *yihudim*.

Other Jewish pietists too gave vent to the urge for devotional solitude. Outstanding among these were Bahya ibn Paḳuda (12th century) and Abraham Maimonides (1186-1237), each of whom were deeply influenced by Ṣufism.¹² It is significant that Eliezer Azikri, the most prominent exponent of the value of solitude in sixteenth century Safed, was greatly influenced by Bahya.¹³ None of these writers, however, suggested that traditional prayer be practiced in solitude. They developed their theories of meditation and solitude outside of the realm of conventional liturgy.

In Luria's case, the practice of meditation in private, as with the *yihudim*, is understandable from several points of view. Although the *kavvanot* of prayer remained tied to communal worship, the nature of the contemplation involved tended to shift the emphasis from collective dynamics to individual experience. Lurianic meditation in prayer was of an extremely complex nature, requiring intense and lengthy

concentration.¹⁴ Moreover, the *primary* focus of contemplative attention was no longer directed toward the text of the prayers themselves as much as toward the sefirotic system to which the words of prayer corresponded. These factors necessarily led to an increased withdrawal into oneself in the course of prayer.¹⁵ As J. Weiss has indicated, the extraordinary difficulty involved in acquiring the meditative technique of prayer with *kavvanot* according to the Lurianic system, ensured that only a contemplative elite would be praying in such a manner within a public worship context. As a result, the adept would need to more or less cut himself off from the public activity so as to successfully pursue his contemplative goals. Weiss speaks of this situation as follows:

The Kabbalistic method of *Kavvanoth* is founded on the "paradox of solitude and community." It is an aristocratic art practised by the Kabbalists within the praying community of simple, plebeian worshippers of the non-Kabbalistic fashion. The usual setting of the Kabbalistic *Kavvanoth* is thus in the solitary practice of the exceptional individual who is outwardly embedded in the prayer-life of his community. The large gathering of the synagogue would never be capable of reciting the prayers with meditative perfection; this is why the Kabbalist, even though praying in a synagogue and thus participating in corporate worship, will practise the *Kavvanoth* in a climate of mental isolation--to say nothing about the unavoidable time-lag between the community praying at a non-meditative pace and himself enveloped in lingering *Kavvanoth*.¹⁶

From this tendency it was an easy transition to meditation detached altogether from public worship. Such a form allowed for the development of freer techniques for raising up one's soul and contemplating the intricacies of the divine world. Furthermore, the goals of

yihudim were not entirely the same as those of prayer and the fulfillment of *mišvot*. The added dimension of communion with the soul of a departed *ṣaddik* for purposes of esoteric communication necessitated a technique and setting other than that of communal devotion. Finally, there existed a wide precedent for contemplative techniques outside of public worship. The peregrinations carried out by Alkabeṣ and Cordovero, the rite of *Tikkun Haṣot* before Luria, and the experience of maggidism all represent examples of mystical devotion unencumbered by communal prayer. It is thus not surprising that alongside of the elaborate system of *kavvanot* of prayer, Luria fashioned a meditative technique detached from public prayer. We will now turn our attention to the technique of contemplation itself.

II

Our discussion of the actual technique of meditation will be organized under the following headings:

1. communion with the *ṣaddik*
2. the content of meditation
3. the experience of meditation

1. Communion with the *Ṣaddik*

In our treatment of maggidism in Lurianic Kabbalah we discussed a form of the phenomenon in which the voice of a departed *ṣaddik* joined that of a pious Kabbalist. One of the primary goals of the practice of *yihudim* is communion between the adept's soul and the soul of a departed

ṣaddik. A passage in *Shāḥar ha-Yiḥudim* recognizes the relationship between this form of maggidism and the performance of *yiḥudim*.¹⁷ It states that whereas in maggidism the souls of departed *ṣaddikim* only reveal themselves to persons with identical soul-roots, or to persons who perform a *miṣvah* in accordance with the root of this *ṣaddik*'s soul, neither of these two conditions is necessary in the case of *yiḥudim*. The reason why this is so is clear. There are many *ṣaddikim*, who, during their lifetime, practiced *yiḥudim* at the most propitious times--at those moments considered especially favorable for communion.¹⁸ *Yiḥudim* performed at such times bring about the unification of *all* the supernal roots, whereas meditation at all other hours unifies only the adept's own soul. By virtue of this superior accomplishment of some *ṣaddikim*, present *ṣaddikim* who also perform *yiḥudim* at the proper moments can cleave to the souls of these former souls--even if they are not from the same soul-root. *Ṣaddikim* who unified all the worlds through their meditative exercises included Moses, Benayahu ben Yehoyada, Rav Hammuna Saba and Rav Yeiba.¹⁹ While divine inspiration is thus possible through the communion of heterogeneous roots, it is even more powerful when the adept and the *ṣaddik* with whom he engages are of the same root.²⁰

The great significance of communing with the souls of departed *ṣaddikim* is reflected in Vital's admonition not to neglect the practice of *yiḥudim*--even at the expense of study of Torah.²¹ A person who begins practicing *yiḥudim* must not curtail such activity abruptly. It is far more important to sustain one's meditation than to break it off for the purpose of study. Thus, Vital writes the following:

Do not say that study of the Torah is great, and it is unfitting to neglect it--for the matter of the *yihudim*, described above, is greater than the study of Torah. For it [i.e., the practice of the *yihudim*] unifies all the upper worlds, and is called: study of Torah and unification. And all is [joined] together.²² (4)

This, it appears, represents a rather extreme view of traditional priorities.²³ Meditational exercises are justified by subsuming Torah study under such practice. Study of Torah is "included" in the activity of contemplation. We have seen elsewhere that Luria enjoined the fixed study of *Mishnah* and *Gemara* as well as the intensive pre-occupation with *kushiot*.²⁴ But it is significant that these activities seem to have less to do with their intrinsic value than with qualification for contemplative exercises. The real goal of study is to become worthy of divine inspiration. It is because of this fact that study can be seen as being involved in the activity of contemplation. Bold as it may have been, Luria proposed the supremacy of meditation over the traditional priority of study. The latter was important primarily insofar as it participated in the goals of cleansing the soul from evil, qualifying one for meditation and leading one to the attainment of divine inspiration. On the basis of this commitment to contemplative activity, the meaning of Luria's injunction against the abrupt curtailment of the *yihudim* for the purpose of study becomes clear.

Vital's account of the process of communion with the soul of another *ṣaddik* is contained in a series of short "introductions." He describes the performance done at the grave in the following way:

Know that in the case of all possible *yihudim*, if you perform the *yihud* by actually stretching yourself out on the *ṣaddik's* grave

[i.e., in a prone position], you should "intend" that by virtue of your stretching out on top of him you also cause the *ṣaddik* to stretch out his soul, which will [then] spread out in his bones that are in the grave: [whereupon] he comes "alive" and his bones become like a "body" to the soul that is stretched and spread out within them. This [particular] soul is the one that remains in the grave, as is known, which is the secret [meaning] of: "And his soul mourneth over him" [Job 14:22]. And it is *as if* this *ṣaddik* lives in body and soul at this moment.²⁵ (5)

This extraordinary technique clearly has a magical quality to it. The adept, through his prostration on the grave of the *ṣaddik*, arouses the latter's soul. This, in turn, activates his bones so as to "revive" him temporarily. In other words, the soul of the *ṣaddik* imitates the adept's action.

Having achieved this, the mystic now directs his mental concentration to raising up his own soul and that of the *ṣaddik* together.²⁶ He seeks to have them cleave to one another. In order to understand the nature of this contemplative goal it is necessary to delineate in greater detail the affinity of soul-roots to which we have made mention earlier.²⁷ Every human soul consists of various lights which, when combined, constitute the "individual spark" of that person. In each spark there is a division into soul, spirit and intellectual-soul (*nefesh*, *ruah* and *neshamah*). These three kinds of souls are ordered in an ascending hierarchy so that an individual realizes his spirit only after having perfected his lower soul and so on. Perfection consists in each aspect exhibiting the complete structure of six hundred and thirteen spiritual limbs. Man's goal is the perfection of his individual spark on all levels²⁸ and the attainment of the highest point within its

soul-root. That is, it seeks to reach the "head" of the *parşuf* in which his soul has its source. The Kabbalist felt it a necessity to discover the root of his soul inasmuch as only such self-knowledge would enable him to restore it to its supernal root within the upper worlds of divinity.²⁹ Finally, it is worth reiterating that there is an inner attraction, a sympathy of souls which binds all sparks deriving from the same root or *parşuf*. G. Scholem writes of this relationship as follows:

These souls have a special aptitude for assisting each other and supplementing each other's actions, and can also by their piety lift up those members of their group or family who have fallen onto a lower plane and can enable them to start on the return journey to higher forms of existence.³⁰

Thus, according to Luria's conception of the adept's communion with the soul of a departed *şaddik*, if both souls have their source in the same root within the Godhead, it is far simpler to join them together. According to Luria, while the soul of the departed *şaddik* has already risen to the highest point within the *parşuf* which is its soul-root, the living Kabbalist must struggle to raise his soul to that same point.³¹ The soul of the *şaddik* has already ascended to the "head" of the root in which his soul is bound up. The adept, however, has to concentrate upon raising up his soul from, for example, the "foot" or "heel" of his root to its "head." At this point the two souls can join together. In the course of such concentration the "female waters," the powers which ascend from *Nukba* to stir the energy of *Zeir*, are aroused, enabling the ascent of the now joined souls to even deeper

recesses of the Godhead. The actual visit to the grave is preferable, as indicated earlier, as it makes the process of communion a more immediate and direct one. Communion between the soul of the adept and that of the *ṣaddik* serves the mutual benefit of each. The Kabbalist arouses the *ṣaddik's* soul, breathing life into it, as it were, while the soul of the *ṣaddik* acts as a sort of vehicle aiding that of the adept in its ascent.

The Kabbalistic doctrine of man and his soul dealt at length with the fate of the soul after death. According to the *Zohar*, there are three different dwelling places for the three aspects of the soul: *nefesh*, *ruah* and *neshamah*.³² One is for the souls of the righteous which hover above the grave following death. The second dwelling place is called the "terrestrial paradise" (*gan Eden de-arah*) in which are found the spirits of righteous individuals. This represents a stage on the soul's way to the highest paradisaical realm. The latter is known as the "bundle of eternal life" (*serora de-hayyei*)³³ and houses the intellectual-souls of the righteous. According to the *Zohar*, the lower souls (*nefashot*) remain in this world in order to protect the living. When the living come to them and beg for mercy the souls inform the spirits setting off a chain reaction of celestial communication:

We have learned that when the world requires mercy and [the intervention of] those righteous ones, that soul which is in the world to shield mankind, ascends, goes and flits about the world to tell the spirit, and the spirit ascends, removes itself, and tells the intellectual-soul, and this tells the Holy One, blessed be He. Then God has pity on the world and the reverse process takes place, the intellectual-soul telling the spirit and the spirit the soul.³⁴ (6)

Our Lurianic sources utilize this Zoharic motif for their own purposes. Both Vital's text and that of Joseph Tabul³⁵ cite the continuation of the above passage, according to which the living inform the souls of the righteous when the world is in distress so that they might cleave soul to soul with the righteous. An interesting discussion follows among R. Simeon b. Yoḥai's companions.³⁶ R. Hiyya wonders whether there are men besides themselves who know how to inform the souls of the departed regarding the world's troubles. R. Abba replies that when there are none who know how to do this they bring out the Torah scroll to the graveyard. The dead thus know, adds R. Jose, that the world is in need of God's mercy. Then men will lament on account of the dishonor done to the Torah by having brought it to the graveyard. If these men repent and weep with all their heart, then all the souls of the departed *ṣaddikim* gather together and seek mercy in their behalf.

It is apparent that the Lurianic practice of communing with the souls of departed *ṣaddikim* at their graves is based, at least partially, on these Zoharic conceptions. The primary concern in the *Zohar* consists in the appeal on the part of the living to the departed, to inform God of their distress. Luria goes further and develops an elaborate rite of contemplation, one of whose central components is the actual *communion* of souls.

There is other evidence of a ritual involving visits to the graves of *ṣaddikim*.³⁷ The German *Ḥasidim* would visit the graves of relatives and scholars in the hope that they would intercede in behalf

of the living.³⁸ There are reports as early as the thirteenth century of visits to the cave of Hillel and Shammai in Meron in order to pray for rain.³⁹ Even before the Expulsion, visits were made to the grave of R. Simeon bar Yoḥai, also in Meron.⁴⁰ Testimony by Abraham Galante, Joseph Karo, Moses Cordovero and Eliezer Azikri indicate the widespread custom of visits to Simeon b. Yoḥai's grave for study, prayer and meditation. For example, Karo's *Maggid* tells him that Simeon b. Yoḥai and his son Eliezer reveal supernal mysteries to those who study *Zohar* at their graves.⁴¹ Cordovero's peregrinations--which, as we have seen, also involved revelatory experiences--took him to the graves of Simeon b. Yoḥai and other sages.⁴² Of great interest is Cordovero's comment on the Zoharic passage cited above describing weeping over the graves of *ṣaddikim*.

And this is the meaning of "soul bound up with soul"--this is when he "pours" his soul upon the grave of the *ṣaddik*, cleaving soul to soul, and speaks with the soul of the *saddik*. He informs him [of the world's distress], and the soul [of the *saddik*] arouses other souls . . . ⁴³ (7)

Commenting on the same Zoharic passage quoted by Vital and Ṭabul in reference to the practice of *yihudim*, Cordovero describes a similar exercise. That is, communion and communication with a *ṣaddik* at his grave. It is not clear whether Cordovero intends by the term "pour" the meaning of stretching oneself out on top of the grave. Were he to mean this we would have before us textual evidence of an earlier prototype of the technique described by Ḥayyim Vital. In any case, it is clear that Cordovero is describing a practice akin to Luria's,

inasmuch as each of them involves communication with the soul of a departed *ṣaddik* at his gravesite. It is also of extreme interest that Cordovero reports that such a practice was performed by "men who worked [wondrous] things in Spain." It is possible that the peregrinations for purposes of mystical communications that he and Alkabeṣ experienced were inspired by this tradition. It is clear, in any case, that by the time Luria arrived in Safed the custom of visiting the graves of sages for various devotional purposes was already quite common. These practices, along with the conceptions of the *Zohar* described above, served as the framework for his own technique of contemplative exercises and communion at the graves of *ṣaddikim*.

2. The Content of Meditation

While maintaining a state of cleaving to the soul of a *ṣaddik*, the adept moves on to a second stage of practice. The primary focus of meditation is now the totality of divine names. These correspond to the *parṣufim* and their sub-configurations whose unification is brought about through such contemplation. If, as we have already seen,⁴⁴ every act of contemplation is capable of effecting re-unification of elements within the divinity, Luria employs in this case divine appellations to bring this about.⁴⁵ To exercise one's concentration successfully upon the names of God is to theurgically reorganize and restructure elements within the world of God. It serves the cause of divine well-being and cosmic *tikkun*. In the state of cleaving with his soul to a *ṣaddik*--thus redeeming his own spark--the adept possesses the power with which to arouse the reunion of male and female within God. We wish to consider

several meditations in order to illustrate the content of contemplation in this stage of the practice.⁴⁶ In this way, we hope to indicate some of the more prominent aspects of these meditations.⁴⁶

a. The very first *yihud* which Vital describes among those given to him by Luria is exemplary.⁴⁷ It exhibits the most essential elements of the meditations. It is concerned with the unification of *Hokhmah* and *Binah* (*Abba* and *Imma*), as well as that of *Tiferet* and *Malkhut* (*Ze'ir Anpin* and *Nukba de-Ze'ir*), the totality of which represents the complete Tetragrammaton (*YHWH-יהוה*).

To understand this meditation it will be necessary to delineate in some detail the relationship between the Tetragrammaton and the elements of the Godhead. According to Luria, the figure of *Adam Kadmon* possesses four structural dimensions, as indicated earlier:⁴⁸ eyes, ears, nose and mouth. Each of these is the source of different *parsufim*, which, in turn, correspond to various forms of the Tetragrammaton. That is, the "organs" of *Adam Kadmon* each have their sefirotic equivalent as well as a corresponding divine appellation. These "organs" can thus be conceived of as divine lights which combine to form names, the expression of which represents different aspects of the divine structure. According to this conception, the Tetragrammaton can assume four basic forms. They are known as the Names 72, 63, 45 and 52 and are based on different spellings (*milluim*) of *YHWH*:

1. Name 72 is expressed by *millui de-yudin* with a *yud* in the *vav*

and is written as follows: י"ד ה"י ו"ו ה"י

The *gematria* of this name is seventy-two.

2. Name 63 is expressed by *millui de-yudin* with an *alef* in the *vav* and is written as follows: יו"ד ה"י יוא"ו ה"י

The *gematria* of this name is sixty-three.

3. Name 45 is expressed by *millui de-alfin* which is written as follows: יו"ד ה"א יוא"ו ה"א

In this name the two *heh*'s and the *vav* are written with an *alef*. Its *gematria* is forty-five.

4. Name 52 is expressed by *millui de-hein* which is written as follows: יו"ד ה"ה יו"ו ה"ה

In this name the two *heh*'s are written with a double *heh*.

The *gematria* of this name is fifty-two.

In addition to represent *g* one of the *parşufim* that make up the entire divine structure, each of these names corresponds to one of the four letters of the simple Tetragrammaton. We can summarize this set of associations as follows:

"Organ" of <i>Adam Qadmon</i>	<i>Parşuf</i>	Name	Letter of Tetragrammaton
Eye	<i>Abba</i>	72	<i>Yud</i> י
Ear	<i>Imma</i>	63	<i>Heh</i> ה
Nose	<i>Zēir Arpin</i>	45	<i>Vav</i> ו
Mouth	<i>Nukba de-Zēir</i>	52	second <i>Heh</i> ה

This *yihud* begins by describing the unification of *Ḥokhmah* and *Binah* (*Abba* and *Imma*). According to this meditation, the adept concentrates on the name *YHWH* within *Ḥokhmah* and on the name *EHYH* within

Binah. In his mind he joins the two names by interspersing their letters--thus forming the single divine appellation: **יאהויה"ה**

To unify *Hokhmah* and *Binah* the adept must do more than simply visualize the combination of *YHWH* and *EHYH*. He accomplishes this by concentrating upon the Name 72 as spelled out above. It is by means of the adept's concentration on this name that the unification of *Hokhmah* and *Binah* is initially stimulated. Moreover, all this is effected by the communion of intellectual-souls of the adept and the *ṣaddik* to whom he is cleaving. Together they are rooted in *Hokhmah* which enables the contemplation on the Name 72, itself rooted in *Hokhmah*, to be efficacious. This action represents the first letter of the simple *YHWH*.

In the second stage the adept concerns himself with the completion of this unification by attempting to bring about the ascent of the "female waters." He does this by concentrating on the Name 63 whose source is in *Binah*. This is aided through the power of the intellectual-soul of the *ṣaddik* with whom one is communing inasmuch as it is rooted in *Binah*. The ascent of the "female waters" aroused by the adept's concentration on the Name 63 acts as the spiritual chemicals which finalize the union of *Hokhmah* and *Binah*. This represents the second letter of the simple *YHWH*.

Following this the adept turns his attention to the unification of the lower two *parṣufim*, *Tiferet* and *Malkhut* (*Zéir Anpin* and *Nukba de-Zéir*). He concentrates on the name *YHWH* within *Tiferet* and *ADNY* within *Malkhut*. In his mind he combines the two names by interspersing their letters--forming the single divine appellation: **יאהדונה"י**

In this instance the initial unification is achieved through contemplation of the Name 45 which itself corresponds to *Ze'ir Anpin*. It is aided by the power of the *ṣaddik*'s spirit, which is rooted in *Tiferet*. This represents the third letter of the Tetragrammaton--*vav*. In the second stage, the adept finalizes the unification of *Ze'ir* and *Nukba de-Ze'ir* by raising up the "female waters" from *Malkhut*. This is achieved by contemplation on the Name 52, itself rooted in *Nukba de-Ze'ir* and by virtue of the *ṣaddik*'s soul which stems from *Malkhut*. *Malkhut* represents the fourth letter of the Tetragrammaton--*heh*.

In sum, then, this meditation consists of two parts, each of which has two stages. In the first part, the unification of *Abba* and *Imma* is achieved, first through contemplation on the Name 72 which corresponds to *Abba*, and then through contemplation on the Name 63 which corresponds to *Imma*. In the second part, the unification of *Ze'ir* and *Nukba de-Ze'ir* is achieved, first through contemplation on the Name 45 which corresponds to *Ze'ir*, and then through contemplation on the Name 52 which corresponds to *Nukba de-Ze'ir*. The net result on the theosophical plane is the total unification of the Tetragrammaton. Inasmuch as each *parṣuf* corresponds to one of the four letters of the simple *YHWH*, when the *parṣufim* are brought into proper relationship to one another through contemplation, the Tetragrammaton itself is restored to its primordial state of unity.

The following chart outlines this meditation:

- Ia. Unification of *Hokhmah* and *Binah*: יאההויה"ה
 יו"ד ה"י וי"ו ה"י (ע"ב)
- Ib. Arousal of "female waters" to
 complete unification: יו"ד ה"י וא"ו ה"י
 (ס"ג)
- IIa. Unification of *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*: יאהדונה"י
 יו"ד ה"א וא"ו ה"א (מ"ה)
- IIb. Arousal of "female waters" to
 complete unification: יו"ד ה"ה ו"ו ה"ה
 (נ"ב)

Illustration 1

b. Vital is specifically instructed to perform this *yihud* at the grave of Yehudah bar Ilai.⁴⁹ He is to concentrate on the name *YEHUDAH* (יהודה) which is equivalent in *gematria* to thirty. The number thirty corresponds to the number of letters that make up the Names 72, 63 and 45--each of them having ten letters. These three names, taken together, represent the mystery of the masculine with the Godhead, according to Luria. Thus an equation is established between the name *YEHUDAH* and the male aspect of God.

Vital is now instructed to draw down these three names (representing *Ze'ir Anpin*) to *Nukba de-Ze'ir*. This is accomplished by concentrating on the Name 42 which derives from each of these three names. Forty-two is established by adding the number of letters of each name spelled out in its simple form, its *millui*, and the *millui* of the *millui*. Taken together their total is 126. The contemplative must draw down this 126--representing the three names 45, 63, 72--to *Nukba de-Ze'ir*. This can be done by concentrating on the Name *ADNY* which is divided into four names in this way: "א"ד"ן אדנ"י . These names similarly equal 126 in *gematria*. By concentrating upon them, the three names belonging to the male side are drawn down to *Nukba de-Ze'ir* and *Ze'ir* and *Nukba* are unified. In this *yihud* the name of the sage upon whose grave it is being performed is the basis for the contemplative associations.

c. Vital records that this *yihud* is one Luria instructed him to perform following the New Moon during the month of *Elul*.⁵⁰ As it precedes the "Ten Days of Penitence" which usher in the *Rosh Hashanah*

festival, the entire month of *Elul* became a period of repentance characterized by special ascetic and devotional practices.⁵¹ Considering the importance of *Elul* it is understandable why a *yiḥud* as elaborate as this one was specified for this particular time of the year. Vital writes the following in regard to this meditation:

On the day of the New Moon *Elul*, the year of creation 4331, my teacher, may his name be blessed, said to me that I should fast successively the two days directly following the day of the New Moon; And that by virtue of this I shall attain some degree of inspiration.⁵² (8)

The focus of this *yiḥud* is the names *YHWH* and *EHYH* which, as we have seen,⁵³ represent the *parṣufim* *Abba* and *Imma*. The *gematria* of these names combined, including one for the total name as a whole (*ha-kolel*), is 48. This corresponds to the number of hours in the two days during which the meditation is to be performed. Forty-eight names are derived from these two names in the following way: Each name possesses four letters. By means of their total number of combinations (*serufim*) they can each assume twelve different forms:

יההא	אהיה	וההי	יהוה
האיה	היהא	היוה	הוהי
האיה	יהאה	הוהה	והיה
ההיא	האהי	ההוי	היהו
האהי	אההי	הוהה	ההוה
ההאי	היאה	ההוי	הויה

To these twenty-four names twenty-four more can be derived by including one form of *EHYH* within one form of *YHWH* and then reversing it. For example: איההיוה"ה. The chart shown on the following two pages appears in *Shetar Ruah ha-Kodesh* (Tel Aviv, 1962, pp. 123-124).

קכג

שער רוח הקודש

(ד) אֶתְהוֹנֶה ה	(ג) יְהוּה פ	(ב) אֶתְהוֹנֶה ל	(א) אֶתְהוֹ א
(טז) הַהוֹנֶה ו	(טו) הוֹה ?	(יד) הַהוֹנֶה ה	(יג) הַהוֹ ד
(כח) וְהוֹנֶה ה	(כו) וְהוֹ ד	(כד) וְהוֹנֶה ו	(כה) וְהוֹ ?
(מ) הַהוֹנֶה ?	(לט) הוֹה ?	(לח) הַהוֹנֶה ה	(לו) הַהוֹ פ
(ח) אֶתְהוֹנֶה ד	(ז) יְהוּה ו	(ו) אֶתְהוֹנֶה ?	(ה) אֶתְהוֹ ?
(כ) הַהוֹנֶה ?	(יט) הוֹה ה	(יח) הַהוֹנֶה ו	(יז) הַהוֹ ?
(לב) וְהוֹנֶה א	(לא) וְהוֹ ?	(ל) וְהוֹנֶה ו	(כט) וְהוֹ ?
(מד) הַהוֹנֶה ?	(מג) הוֹה ה	(מב) הַהוֹנֶה ד	(מא) הַהוֹ ו
(יב) אֶתְהוֹנֶה ו	(יא) יְהוּה ?	(י) אֶתְהוֹנֶה ?	(ט) אֶתְהוֹ ה
(כד) הַהוֹנֶה ה	(כג) הוֹה ?	(כב) הַהוֹנֶה ה	(כא) הַהוֹ א
(לו) וְהוֹנֶה ל	(לה) וְהוֹ א	(לד) וְהוֹנֶה ?	(לג) וְהוֹ ה
(מח) הַהוֹנֶה ה	(מו) הוֹה ו	(מו) הַהוֹנֶה ה	(מה) הַהוֹ י

Illustration 2

Illustration 2 (Cont'd)

שער רוח הקדש

קכד

(ד) אֵתְהוּלֵהָ ה	(ג) יְהוּה פ	(ב) אֵתְהוּלֵהָ ל	(א) אֵתְהוּה א
(ח) אֵתְהוּלֵהוּ ד	(ז) יְהוּהוּ ו	(ו) אֵתְהוּלֵהוּ ז	(ה) אֵתְהוּז ז
(יב) אֵתְהוּלֵהָ ו	(יא) יְהוּהָ ?	(י) אֵתְהוּלֵהָ ז	(ט) אֵתְהוּהָ ה
(טז) הַתְהוּלֵהָ ו	(טו) הַתְהוּז ?	(יד) הַתְהוּלֵהָ ה	(יג) הַתְהוּהָ ד
(כ) הַתְהוּלֵהָ ?	(יט) הַתְהוּהָ ה	(יח) הַתְהוּלֵהָ ו	(יז) הַתְהוּהָ ?
(כד) הַתְהוּלֵהָ ה	(כג) הַתְהוּז ?	(כב) הַתְהוּלֵהָ ה	(כא) הַתְהוּהָ א
(כח) וְהַתְהוּלֵהָ ה	(כז) וְהַתְהוּז ד	(כו) וְהַתְהוּלֵהָ ו	(כה) וְהַתְהוּהָ ?
(לב) וְהַתְהוּלֵהָ ו	(לא) וְהַתְהוּז ?	(ל) וְהַתְהוּלֵהָ ו	(כט) וְהַתְהוּהָ ?
(לו) וְהַתְהוּלֵהָ ל	(לה) וְהַתְהוּהָ א	(לד) וְהַתְהוּלֵהָ ?	(לג) וְהַתְהוּהָ ה
(מ) הַתְהוּלֵהוּ ?	(לט) הַתְהוּהוּ ?	(לח) הַתְהוּלֵהוּ ה	(לז) הַתְהוּהוּ פ
(מד) הַתְהוּלֵהָ ?	(מג) הַתְהוּהָ ה	(מב) הַתְהוּלֵהָ ד	(מא) הַתְהוּהָ ו
(מח) הַתְהוּלֵהוּ ה	(מז) הַתְהוּהוּ ו	(מו) הַתְהוּלֵהוּ ה	(מה) הַתְהוּהוּ ?

Every line of this chart represents four meditative hours. During the first hour the adept is to contemplate the simple name *EHYH*. During the second hour he should contemplate the name *EHYH* interspersed (*ḥibbur*) with the name *YHWH* as above. In this manner he proceeds from one of the forty-eight names to the next. Vital indicates that is is ideal if the adept can contemplate each name during its properly assigned hour. But if one lacks the strength for this (it would require two full days of no sleep!) he can condense the meditation by contemplating all four names of the first four hours during the initial hour. He would then wait until the beginning of the next four hour cycle and contemplate the second four names during that hour. Whether or not he chooses this abbreviated method, Vital is instructed how to condense the meditation to be performed during the nighttime hours. He can include in one hour of meditation the twelve hours of meditation that would normally occupy the night hours. The best way to do it, however, would be this: Contemplate the six hours that precede midnight in condensed fashion, prior to going to sleep. That is, at 6:00 P.M. concentrate on the names for the first six hours during that one hour and then retire. At midnight he is to arise and stay up through the night. This enables him to meditate upon each of the next six names for the full hour allotted to each of them. The following is the writer's own time-table representing the first twenty-four hours according to this method:

6:00 P.M. אהיה
 איהיהיה
 יהוה
 יאההויה
 אההי
 איההההי

Retire until 12:00 P.M.

12:00 P.M.	יההו	9:00 A.M.	ההויההיא
1:00 A.M.	יאהההויה	10:00 A.M.	היאה
2:00 A.M.	איהה	11:00 A.M.	ההויהה
3:00 A.M.	איהההה	12:00 A.M.	הויה
4:00 A.M.	יוהה	1:00 P.M.	ההויההה
5:00 A.M.	יאההההה	2:00 P.M.	ההיא
6:00 A.M.	היהא	3:00 P.M.	ההההויה
7:00 A.M.	ההויההה	4:00 P.M.	ההויה
8:00 A.M.	הוהיה	5:00 P.M.	ההההויהה

When we turn to a consideration of the literary sources behind the Lurianic *yihudim* and the variety of methods employed to manipulate words and numbers, we confront a rather complex situation. The methods Luria uses such as concentration on divine names, *gematria*, *notarikon*, *seruf*, *hibbur* and *temurah*, all have deep roots within Jewish literature. Moreover, a wide variety of literary traditions utilize these different methods.⁵³ It is thus difficult to assess with absolute assurance the exact sources for the content of the meditations and the techniques used to form them. Nevertheless, there is much evidence to support the suggestion that a fundamental influence upon these meditations is the writings of Abraham Abulafia.⁵⁴ Almost all of the

different techniques Luria used to formulate his meditations are found in Abulafian writings. These techniques are basic to Abulafia's system and directly influenced many others. Furthermore, there is strong evidence that Abulafian writings and traditions were well-known in sixteenth century Safed and to Isaac Luria himself.

Abraham Abulafia is an unique figure in the history of Jewish mystical literature. His writings represent a highly eclectic synthesis of devotional ideas and practices. He draws upon such widely divergent traditions as German Ḥasidism, Spanish Kabbalah, Maimonidean philosophy and Indian Yoga. His "Science of Combination" (*ḥokhmat ha-šeruf*) became the basis for an important tradition whose influence manifested itself through fairly recent times.⁵⁵ A consideration of his basic conceptions and techniques will clearly suggest the intimate similarities between his teachings and Luria's *yiḥudim*.

Man, in his normal state, according to Abulafia, resides in the world of sense perception and physical impression. His awareness is dominated by material forms which define and limit his awareness. In this way the soul is protected against the potentially inundating flow of the divine stream. The forms and images which make up the gross, physical environment actually sustain normal functioning.⁵⁶ At the same time, however, the soul is prevented from breaking through to a higher level of existence--a state of consciousness which makes spiritual and divine forms perceptible. In contrast to the world of natural forms there exists the world of the intellect (*ʿolam ha-muskal*), which is characterized by pure intellectual forms, immaterial and wholly

spiritual. The soul, bound to a state of earthly consciousness and "tied up in knots" is capable of freeing itself and becoming elevated to a higher spiritual awareness. This cosmic life is represented by the active intellect (*sekhel ha-po'el*) of the medieval philosophers. Following Maimonides' theory of prophecy, Abulafia asserts that the human intellect is capable of awakening and entering into union with the cosmic principle, the active intellect, producing a purely spiritual mode of consciousness.⁵⁷

Abulafia's system seeks the release of these bonds which imprison the soul and is concerned with the means capable of bringing about such a release. His method is designed to discover ways of making available to man the higher spiritual forms without effacement of individual consciousness. His solution is to use as an object of meditation one which, while capable of acquiring ultimate meaning, has no arresting significance of its own. He believed he found such an object of meditation in the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Following the *Sefer Yesira*, Abulafia views the letters as the building blocks for the entire structure of creation.⁵⁸ The letters and the infinite combinations of which they are capable are, on one level, pure "intellectual" abstractions. According to Abulafia, the soul can ascend to ever higher stages of awareness by focusing on the various configurations of the letters. Here Abulafia accepts the Kabbalistic doctrine of divine language as the substance of reality. According to this doctrine, the Kabbalists described the emanation of divine energy as the unfolding of divine language. In addition to speaking of *Sefirot*, the attributes

of God, they also speak of divine names and the letters of which these names are composed. That is, the hidden world of the Godhead is conceived of as a world of language, of divine names that express the varied dimensions of His existence. According to these conceptions, the Torah is conceived as the Name of God, or more accurately, the many Names of God. The Torah read in this esoteric way is concerned essentially with the concentration of divine energy in infinitely varied combinations of the letters of God's Holy Names. These, of course, are not names in the ordinary sense, but God's transcendent Being, insofar as it is revealed to man. The Torah, then, is the concentrated energy of God Himself, as expressed in His many Names. An important variation of this notion was set forth by Joseph Gikatilla, a thirteenth century Spanish Kabbalist who came under the influence of both the *Zohar* and Abulafia. According to him, the Torah is not itself the Name of God but the *explanation* of God's Name. It is an explanation of His Name in the sense that the Torah was woven from it. In his famous introduction to Spanish Kabbalah, *Sha'arei Orah*, Gikatilla expresses this view:

The whole Torah is a fabric of appellatives, *kinnuyim*--the generic term for the epithets of God, such as 'compassionate, great, merciful, venerable--and these epithets in turn are woven from the various names of God [such as *EL*, *Elohim*, *Shaddai*]. But all these holy names are connected with the tetragrammaton *YHWH* and dependent upon it. Thus the entire Torah is ultimately woven from the tetragrammaton.⁵⁹ (9)

In adapting these conceptions, Abulafia utilizes the names of God to stimulate the mind to higher awareness. By piercing the veil

of natural forms and severing all relations with the senses, meditation on the letters and names was to engender altered states of awareness leading to ecstatic spiritual visions. Abulafia expresses the effect of combining letters in his *Sefer Gan Na'ul* by likening it to the effect of music upon the listener:

Know that the method of *şeruf* [combination] can be compared to music [lit. that which is heard by the ear]; for the ear hears the sounds, and the sounds combine, in accordance with the form of melody and pronunciation. Also, two different instruments can form a combination, and if the sounds combine, the listener's ear registers a pleasant sensation in acknowledging the difference . . . It is impossible to produce it except through the combinations of sounds, and the same is true of the combinations of letters. It touches the first string, which is comparable to the first letter, and proceeds to the second, third, fourth and fifth, and the various sounds combine . . . And the secrets, which express themselves in these combinations, delight the heart which acknowledges its God and is filled with ever fresh joy.⁶⁰ (10)

This "science of combination" is set forth in manuals to instruct the initiate in techniques from the simple act of writing and pronouncing the letters to increasingly complex permutations using a variety of methods. The structure around which Abulafia organizes his instructions is comprised of three basic stages. These are characterized by different techniques and represent different levels of consciousness. They are "writing" (*mikhtab*), "articulation" (*mibtā*), and "thought" (*māshab*). The initial stage, *mikhtab*, recognizes the physical reality of the letters, and involves the act of writing out the letters in simple and complex variations. This phase, the most closely tied to the natural images of the world, sets the entire process in motion. The next stage uses the mode of vocal expression and

represents a less material level of awareness than the written. The final and highest phase, *maḥshab*, consists in relinquishing the grosser forms of writing and speaking to the purer activity of imagining in one's mind the Holy Names of God.⁶¹

The following specific techniques are among the principal methods described by Abulafia in *Ḥayyei 'Olam ha-Ba'*. What is of special interest to us is the similarity of these techniques to those used by Isaac Luria.

1. *Ṣeruf*

This is the simple combining of letters in all their various possible combinations. The most basic form of *ṣeruf* is the combination of each letter of the alphabet with every other one. The heart of *Ḥayyei 'Olam ha-Ba'* is the system of *ṣerufim* derived from concentration on the Seventy-two letter name of God.⁶² This name is divided into twelve groups of six names each. They are written out along the perimeter of twenty-four circular designs, with each circle containing three triads, i.e., nine letters (see Illustration 3). Meditation on the letters and triads comprising this name of God constitutes the basic activity of *ṣeruf*. The following explanation is recorded in *Ḥayyei 'Olam ha-Ba'*:

Know that all these combined Names [found] here explain the secrets of these seventy-two letters. And from them prophets can attain the life of the world-to-come (*ḥayyei 'olam ha-Ba'*). Hence this book is called *Ḥayyei 'Olam ha-Ba'*. . . . at the moment that the enlightened scholar combines them there will emanate upon him the flow of the Holy Spirit . . . [Combine that letter] which is first [in each triad] with the end and the end with the first and the first with the middle, and the middle with the

קולן כן נקראת עיר הנקראת ירושלים והנה אל הנבחר מן השם זרין שם הקדושה וצדקתו אלו להם ומהלכו
 כה: והנה ופניו הן מוכן בנעלם: כעוב בהמון (כיוון הלאה בגלל ה' פניו אנכי) וסוף טיבות
 על עתה אשר במהלכו הסובב לסוגה סוף זרין חזק ויחיל אל צדקתו הפ' לפי: וזה מה המורה באמרן
 לפיך בן האדם באדם בגון הפיך שם הלאה מאהוב קולה אתו האדם וזה כוונן הוא זרין לפיך
 במלות שאם אדם זרין השם באות החזקה בה אבר ואבר ואברי העליון במהלכו יתעון (כ"א)

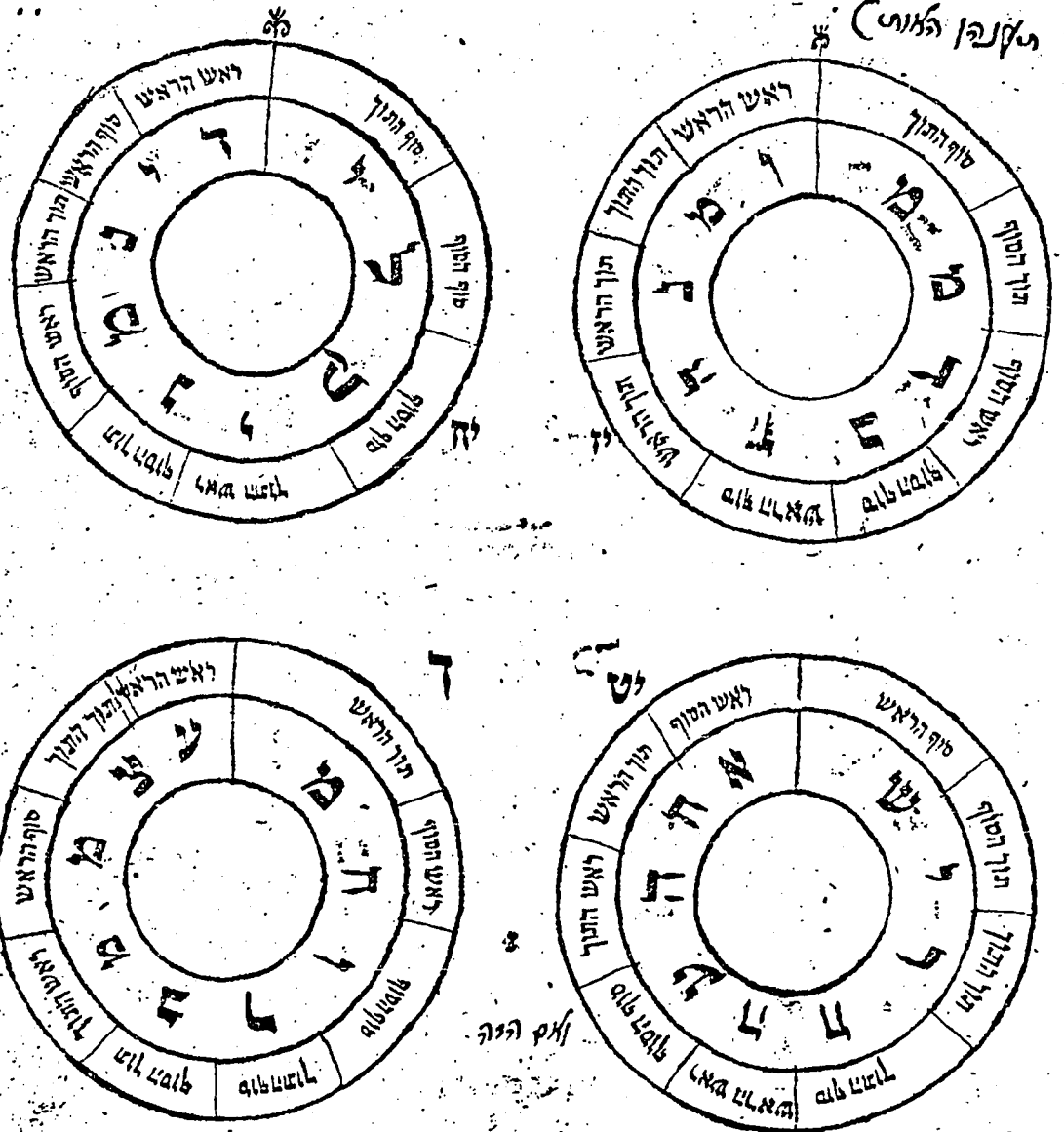


Illustration 3

first and the end with the middle and the middle with the end-- and so by this means every letter will be combined forwards and backwards in many melodies. One should begin easily, quickening and accustoming himself until he is thoroughly expert in the exchange of combinations.⁶³ (11)

2. *Gematria*

Gematria, as we have seen, is the technique of determining the combined numerical value of the letters of a word or phrase and relating it to other words or phrases of numerical equivalence. Abulafia's writings rely on the extensive and extreme use of *gematria*.⁶⁴ He employs it for the purpose of discovering new mystical truths as well as a means of confirming previous traditions. In addition, Abulafia made particular use of the variation of "millui."

3. *Notarikon*

Notarikon is the technique of creating abbreviations by either shortening the words of a phrase or by combining the first or last letter of each word in a passage or phrase. It can also be formed by decomposing one word into several others. Used widely in medieval homiletical and Kabbalistic literature, Abulafia employs it extensively. For example, he decomposes the words *Gan Eden* (גַּן עֵדֶן) into five words: *gimel* stands for *guf* (body), *nun* for *nefashot* (souls), *ayin* for *esem* (essence), *dalet* for *daat*, and *nun* for *nishi* (eternal).⁶⁵ Luria, likewise, indulged in the extreme use of *notarikon* in the *yihudim*.⁶⁶

4. *Temurah* and *Ḥibbur*

Temurah is the manipulation of divine names or words by substitution or permutation of letters, for example, by alternating their component letters. Another means of *temurah* is replacing the letters of a word with artificial equivalents obtained from one or another of a group of formal anagrams. An example of a simple transposition within the letters of a single word is illustrated by the twelve names that derive from the jumbling of the name *YHWH*. Used by Abulafia, we have also seen this particular manipulation in one of the *yihudim*.⁶⁸

Ḥibbur, another variation of *ṣeruf*, is the simple joining of words or the intersperal of more than one word. This method, as we have also seen, is extensively used by Luria. The following Abulafian example combines the methods of *temurah* and *ḥibbur* in a discussion suggesting the relationship between the name of God, *Shaddai*, and the three patriarchs. Taking the final letter of each of the patriarch's names, Abulafia derives the word *BKM* (**ב ק מ**) which, by the technique known as *AT-BASH* equals *Shaddai* in *gematria*. By joining **ב ק מ** with **ש ד י** he derives the words: **ש ד ב ק י ש מ** meaning "clingers to the Name."⁶⁹

As we indicated above, there is evidence that Abulafian writings and traditions were well-known in sixteenth century Safed and that Luria was familiar with them. In the first place, one of the most important books in the Abulafian mystical tradition was written at the beginning of the sixteenth century in Jerusalem by Yehudah Albottini, a Spanish exile. Albottini's work, *Sullam ha-ʿAliyah* ("The Ladder of Ascent") is the finest systematic introduction to Abulafia's prophetic

mysticism. Its eleven chapters are a clear and succinct presentation of Abulafian techniques, elaborated upon by the author.⁷⁰ It is highly improbable that this work was unknown to the mystics of Safed.

David ibn Abi Zimra (1479-1573), with whom Isaac Luria studied in Egypt, as indicated earlier, reveals familiarity with Abulafia's *Ḥayyei 'Olam ha-Ba'*. In his *Magen David*, ibn Zimra cites this mystical manual and remarks that all its words are those of the living God.⁷¹ *Magen David* is, in fact, devoted entirely to mystical explanations of each of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. He extensively uses the method of *gematria* in this work as well as his other Kabbalistic writings.⁷²

The two most important Kabbalists of Safed prior to Luria's arrival, Alkabeş and Cordovero, were likewise familiar with Abulafia's writings. Alkabeş cites *Ḥayyei 'Olam ha-Ba'* in his *Berit ha-Levi*.⁷³ Cordovero, with whom, as we noted, Luria studied for a short while, reveals in his writings a considerable knowledge of and interest in Abulafia's teachings. In three "Gates" of his *Pardes Rimmonim* he makes use of these writings. In *Shā'ar ha-Shemot* and *Shā'ar Peratei ha-Shemot*, Cordovero expounds upon the relationship between the names of God and the *Sefirot*. These two sections unmistakably reflect the direct influence of *Ḥayyei 'Olam ha-Ba'* and *Or ha-Sekhel*.⁷⁴ Chapter one of *Shā'ar Peratei ha-Shemot* is largely a direct quotation from *Or ha-Sekhel*. *Shā'ar ha-Şeruf* is devoted entirely to an exposition of the techniques of *şeruf*, *gematria*, *notarikon*, *temurah* and *hibbur* in the Abulafian fashion. Additionally, Cordovero's commentary *Or Yaḳar* on

Zohar Song of Songs includes a lengthy discussion of *ṣerufim* which is clearly indebted to Abulafia.⁷⁵ Beyond this, Ḥayyim Vital himself, as we shall see in the following chapter, explicitly uses Abulafian texts. It is by no means clear if Luria ever studied Abulafian texts directly, or if his knowledge of that system derived from intermediate sources. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the development of the meditations owes much to the extraordinary creativity of that thirteenth century mystic.

3. The Experience of Meditation

It remains for us to describe the nature of the *experience* itself that the adept underwent in the course of practicing *yihudim*. What were the effects upon the psyche and the body of the contemplative Kabbalist and what were the ultimate consequences of his practice? What answers we are able to provide to these questions derive from two sources. First, we rely upon fragmentary and incidental statements in the theoretical accounts describing the *yihudim* found in *Sha'ar Ruah ha-Ḳodesh* and *Sha'ar ha-Yihudim*. Second, Vital has recorded several of his own experiences during the performance of *yihudim*. These valuable reports are preserved in *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim* and *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*.

We have seen that the adept contemplates upon two matters: cleaving to the soul of a departed *ṣaddik* and the mystical actions generated by his unification of divine names. Both of these elements influence the nature of the mystical experience. The flow of divine power set off by the re-uniting of *Ze'ir Anpin* and *Nuḳba de-Ze'ir*

constitutes the source of celestial inspiration--either for the attainment of prophecy or the Holy Spirit:

All the prophecy of prophets derives only from *Neṣaḥ*, *Hod* and *Yesod* of *Ze'ir Anpin*--because from there they cause an illumination to shine upon *Malkhut*, the feminine [aspect of *Ze'ir Anpin*]. From this illumination prophets draw their prophecy . . . There is no comprehension for any prophet or seer except by means of *Nukba de-Ze'ir*.⁷⁶ (12)

That prophetic illumination derives through *Nukba de-Ze'ir* is in complete accord with the traditional Kabbalistic doctrine of prophecy through *Malkhut*.⁷⁷ Uniting the *parṣufim* of *Ze'ir* and *Nukba* provides the prophet with "nourishment" and enables him to speak words of prophecy. At the same time as he is contemplating this union, he is cleaving to the upper realms through the soul of a *ṣaddik*. As a result of both of these intense activities the Kabbalist merits supernal inspiration. The "Spirit" (i.e., the Holy Spirit or the spirit of prophecy) begins to rest upon him and manifests itself through unreflected speech and other involuntary physical symptoms. The essence of the physical experience, prophetic utterance, requires great power and is not always easily achieved:

There is one who begins to achieve some inspiration and the Spirit rests upon him. But it [i.e., the Spirit] does not possess perfection with which to cause the voice of prophecy and the Holy Spirit to dwell upon his lips and tongue. Without speaking, he only feels at the moment of *yihud* that his hair stands up, his body and limbs shake, his lips tremble--but the power of speaking is not in his mouth.⁷⁸ (13)

This condition may afflict an adept only after he has already achieved a certain degree of inspiration. The Spirit speaks within him,

but does not manifest itself. Luria prescribes several *yihudim* whose specific function is to invest the adept with power to bring forth the prophetic speech:

If the person who performs *yihudim* has already obtained some arousal on the part of his intellectual-soul which speaks to him, by means of some *yihud* which he has performed, but he does not have the strength to bring forth the speech upon his lips from the potential to the actual--he should perform this *yihud*⁷⁹ before he does the other *yihud*.⁸⁰ (14)

Although Vital writes in one place that "God will reveal to him [i.e., the adept] wondrous things from His Torah,"⁸¹ the speech itself which the contemplative either hears from without or utters from his own mouth, derives from the *ṣaddik* with whom he is communing:

On account of these *yihudim* they [i.e., the *ṣaddikim*] reveal to them secrets of the Torah and matters of the future.⁸² (15)

Elsewhere, we read the following:

And how is this mystery of communion [performed]? Let a righteous person stretch out on the grave of one of the *Tanna'im* or one of the prophets, and cleave with his soul to his [i.e., the *ṣaddik*'s] soul, and with his spirit to his spirit. Then the *Tanna* begins to speak with him as a man talks to his friend--and answers all that he asks, revealing to him all the mysteries of Torah.⁸³ (16)

As with the revelation of *maggidim*, the adept obtains knowledge of celestial mysteries and Kabbalistic secrets. He will be able to learn everything that he desires from the *ṣaddik* with whose soul he communes:

There is no doubt that if the person always practices these "intentions" he will be as one of the angels who minister in heaven. And he will attain knowledge of all that he wishes. . . . and everything depends upon the power of his "intention" and his cleaving above.⁸⁴ (17)

Before turning to Vital's autobiographical accounts, we should take notice of a passage in *Sefer Toldot ha-Ari* which mentions Isaac Luria's practice of *yihudim*. Though there seems to be no other testimony concerning Luria's performance of these exercises, it is reasonable to assume that he engaged in the same contemplative practices he prescribed for his disciples. In the course of listing all the esoteric powers that Luria possessed and "sciences" that he knew, the author of this hagiographical work discloses Luria's practice of *yihudim* at the graves of *saddikim*:

He [Luria] also knew how to practice *yihudim* at the graves of *saddikim*, stretch himself out on their graves with extended arms and legs, and draw down [the] soul, spirit and intellectual-soul of that *saddik*, ["revive" him] and speak with him. And this *saddik* would reveal to him mysteries and supernal secrets that were elucidated in the Heavenly Academy. And his face used to shine like the sun, and no creature could gaze upon his countenance.⁸⁵ (18)

This passage suggests a comparison between Luria and the greatest of the prophets, Moses. Moses' prophecy was similarly compared to the sun, and, as we have seen, related to the *Sefirah Tiferet*.⁸⁶

Vital's autobiographical accounts provide us with unusually excellent evidence of his meditational life. We learn that he was accustomed to performing *yihudim* on a regular basis. He reports that Luria reprimanded him for not having engaged in meditation for a month,

and warns him of the necessity to continue. The disciple's account of his own preparatory and qualifying activities, the warning described above, as well as other matters related to the performance of *yihudim*, correspond almost exactly to the instructions as they are formulated in the theoretical sources.⁸⁷ Luria prescribed for his chief disciple certain *tikkunei 'avonot* for sins Vital had committed. Vital had indulged in alchemical studies during the years 1566-68, just prior to his taking up with Luria--a practice which he later regretted.⁸⁸ He considered this to be a great transgression involving neglect of Torah. He also needed to cleanse himself for having become angry with his wife, for having drunk forbidden wine with an apostate, having cursed his parents and having committed a minor sexual transgression on his wedding night.⁸⁹ Luria told him that he would have to undergo a two and one-half year period of absolution and cleansing in order to fully qualify himself for contemplative experience. At the end of this time his soul would have become complete and he would be able to attain powerful inspiration.⁹⁰ Following is an account of one of Vital's experiences:

On the evening of the month of *Elul*, 1571, my teacher, may his memory be blessed, sent me to the cave of Abaye and Rava.⁹¹ There I stretched myself out on the grave of Abaye, may his memory be eternally blessed, and I began by performing the *yihud* of the mouth and nose [of the *parṣuf*] of *Attika Kadisha*, whereupon sleep fell upon me. When I awoke I saw nothing [i.e., I received no revelation]. After this I again stretched myself out once more on Abaye's grave itself, performing the *yihud* written down by my teacher himself.⁹² While I was joining and linking the letters *YHWH* [and] *ADNY*, in the well-known manner, my mind became confused and I was unable to join them. I ceased from contemplating this unification and then imagined that a voice was saying to me:

"Retract, retract," numerous times. And I thought to myself saying: "Indeed, this is the expression used by Akabya b. Mehalalel speaking to his son, as is known."⁹³ Then I returned to contemplating this joining [of letters] and completed it. I then imagined that [the voice] was saying to me: "God will provide Himself the lamb for a burnt offering my son," (אלהים יראה לו השם) [Gen. 22:8] as if expressing to me its meaning [i.e., the meaning of this verse] in this sense: my worry on account of having not succeeded with the first *yihud* was unwarranted. Indeed, [the *yihud*] had been effective and successful before God. And this was [the meaning of] "God will provide Himself the lamb etc." I imagined [the voice] was explaining to me that in this verse the entire *yihud* I performed was hinted at because the *gematria* of the initial letters of [the words] אלהים יראה לו השם is equal to forty-seven [with one added to it for the entire phrase] as in the number of the *yihud* of יהוה אהיה . And the initial letters of השם לעולה בני form [the word] *hebel* [lit. breath]. This is the mystery of the breath of the supernal mouth that I intended with this *yihud*. And it seemed to me as if they were telling me with the initial letters of the words לו השם לעולה : This [i.e., the word formed from the initial letters of these words] is הלל (Hillel) the elder but I do not understand this matter.

I imagined all this at the time whereafter exceedingly great fear and trembling fell upon me in all my limbs. And my hands trembled in touching each other. My lips were also quivering exceedingly, trembling rapidly and unceasingly in a very hurried way. And it was as if a voice was settling upon my tongue between my lips, and was saying extremely rapidly, more than a hundred times: "What shall I say, what shall I say?" And I strengthened myself, as well as my lips, so that they would not quiver, but I could not quiet them whatsoever. After this I thought of asking for wisdom whereupon the voice burst in my mouth and tongue saying: "Wisdom, wisdom" more than twenty times. Then it began again saying: "Wisdom and science, the wisdom and the science," a number of times. Then it began again saying: "The wisdom and the science are given to you." Then it began again saying: "The wisdom and the science are given to you from heaven, like the knowledge of R. Akiba."⁹⁴ Then it began again saying: "And more than R. Akiba." Then it said: "and like R. Yeiba Saba."⁹⁵ And then it said: "and more than R. Yeiba Saba." Then it said: "Peace unto you." Then it said: "From heaven they send you peace." And all this happened very quickly--a wonderful thing--many times while I was awake. And I fell upon my face, stretched out in Abaye's crypt [i.e., the hollow surrounding the grave].⁹⁶ (19)

Vital's experience, as described here, consisted of two distinct stages. The first stage involved the contemplation of the *yihudim*

themselves. His initial efforts at unification appeared to him to be unsuccessful. His mind became confused after attempting a second *yihud*, and he heard a voice uttering the request of the dying Aqabya b. Mehalalel to his son. We learn from Vital's diary that Aqabya was one of the many *ṣaddikim* who made up his *gilgul* ancestry.⁹⁷ That he "heard" the expression used by Aqabya is thus not surprising. Having heard this voice he returned to contemplation of the second *yihud* which he successfully completed. Again he heard a voice which this time uttered a verse, the *notarikon* and *gematria* of which elucidated the meaning of the initial *yihud*. The initial letters of several words in this scriptural passage, forming as they do the word *hebel* (breath), indicated to Vital the mystery of the supernal mouth intended by the first *yihud*. This demonstrated to him that it had been successful before God.

Having achieved a level of inspiration in which he heard the external voices of others speaking *to* him, Vital entered a more intense stage of experience. He was overcome with physical trembling and began to repeatedly and quickly utter short phrases in the manner of automatic speech. He was apparently "possessed" temporarily by the voice that was speaking through his own mouth. He found himself unable to control it at all. The substance of the disclosure elicited after his having "thought of asking for wisdom," consists in a confirmation of the exaltation of his soul. He is promised the attainment of knowledge and power equal to or exceeding that of some of Israel's greatest teachers. We learn from *Sefer ha-Hezyonot* that both R. Aqiba and R. Yeiba Saba were

part of Ḥayyim Vital's *gilgul* ancestry.⁹⁸ The status of his soul, the transmigrations through which it has gone, and the unlimited possibilities for illumination of which he is capable, are themes with which Vital is unceasingly preoccupied.⁹⁹

One useful way of analyzing any experience of meditation is in terms of the nature of the object of contemplation and the nature of the effect such contemplation has upon the mystic. We will consider each of these elements with regard to the experience of performing *yihudim*. Meditative techniques may be divided into two general varieties: those practices which seek to restrict awareness of the external world, focusing attention on the object of meditation; and those which involve a deliberate attempt to "open up" awareness of the external environment. The former is a directive approach in which the individual places himself under the influence of a formal or traditional symbol, whereas the latter is a non-directive approach in which the person allows himself to be guided by his own inner nature. The concentration upon divine names and their corresponding aspects within the Godhead, as in the case of the *yihudim*, clearly illustrates the approach which tends to restrict awareness by dwelling upon an externally given form.¹⁰⁰ We may term such activity concentration meditation.

In all forms of concentrative meditation the first goal is to shatter the normal flow of awareness. Normal consciousness is subject to the infinitely disparate stimuli of the sensual world. Meditative techniques are designed to produce alterations in consciousness. Meditation of this sort represents an attempt to separate oneself for a

period of time from the regular flow of daily life, to interrupt the continuity of normal existence so as to enter a new mode of consciousness. In order to become receptive to especially designated stimuli--be they internal or external--one must "turn off" the automatic stimuli of the outside world. This is almost always done by separating oneself from the normal activities of life. The adept usually isolates himself and finds a quiet place that will reduce distractions to the greatest extent possible. Often, as in Yoga and Zen Buddhism, there is stress on maintaining a specific body posture so as to keep body movements to a minimum and therefore out of awareness during the meditative period.

In concentrative meditation the goal is to restrict awareness to a single, unchanging source of stimulation for a definite period of time. The perfectly sustained nature of the concentration is of the essence. If the exercise involves vision, the adept gazes continually at the meditative object. If it is auditory, such as sound, chant or prayer, it is repeated over and over again. If it consists in physical movements, the movement is repeated for an uninterrupted length of time. What all these methods have in common is the desire to break down the habitual awareness of normal consciousness and pierce through to another mode of consciousness through monotonous and repetitive concentrative activity. Such is the goal, for example, of rhythmic breathing in Zen, gazing steadily on the *mandala* in Yoga, and the rapid spinning and repetition of phrases of the Şufi whirling dervishes.

In these terms we can perhaps better understand the technique designed by Luria. In the first place, arising at midnight to meditate

--be it on the grave of a *ṣaddik* or in one's own home--clearly served to establish a quiet, nondistracting environment. Vital indicates that the adept is to close his eyes while concentrating.¹⁰¹ Moreover, the very deprivation of sleep might reasonably have contributed to inducing an altered state of awareness. Susceptibility for this would surely be enhanced if the adept was fasting as well. Concentration for sustained periods of time upon the various names of God, as with the *yihudim*, appear to have served the purpose of breaking down habitual awareness as described above. It would seem that the names were not recited aloud, but simply imagined in one's mind. The time involved no doubt varied with the adept's ability to successfully unify the divine names. Such concentration served the dual purposes of excluding from the mind's consciousness all external reality and absorbing the mind to an intense degree so as to raise one's awareness to a new level. Thus Vital instructs that the contemplative must exert intense powers of concentration, turn his heart from all external thoughts, and divest his soul completely of its bodily aspect.¹⁰²

Mystical literature speaks of a great variety of responses to concentrative meditation. Vital's experience is characterized by several features that commonly accompany altered states of consciousness. For example, he indicates that while joining the names *YHWH* and *ADNY* his "mind became confused." Mystics frequently report a loss of control and fears of losing their grip on reality. In addition to feelings of disorientation, contemplatives report alterations in concentration, attention, memory and judgement.¹⁰³

The central feature of Vital's experience, of course, was that of hearing voices communicating to him and through his own mouth. Thus he writes: "And it was as if a voice was upon my tongue between my lips . . ." This, as we have seen, was accompanied by violent physical symptoms. Motor automatisms such as automatic speech in the case of *yihudim* and maggidism, or automatic writing such as Joseph Taitaşak experienced, are well documented phenomena in the history of religion. They are similar to other familiar examples of dissociation such as hypnotic states, mediumistic trances, glossolalia, auditions and visions of every variety. In Vital's case, the initial communication is a simple audition in which an external voice is speaking to him, whereas the subsequent experience consisted in unmistakable speech automatism. Such a phenomenon closely resembles that claimed by spiritualistic mediums in which an individual becomes the vehicle for communications from the spirits of departed individuals.¹⁰⁴ As with such spiritualistic phenomena, Vital's automatism was *expected* and thus conditioned by the prevailing cultural environment. This point has been stressed by Werblowsky in speaking of Karo's *Maggid*:

It appears that phenomena of dissociation as psychological processes are indeterminate as far as the precise form of their manifestation is concerned. Their specific form and character (divine voices, angels, spirits, souls of saints or relatives, shamanistic encounters, etc.) are determined by the cultural background of the medium, i.e., by the theoretical background which he or his group provides for the event.¹⁰⁵

That is, even though Vital's sudden bursting forth with speech was genuinely involuntary, the proper conditions for such a thing to

occur had been well set. In a spiritual environment where immense value is placed upon the revelation of heavenly mysteries from such sources as the prophet Elijah, angels, the souls of departed persons with whom one's own soul is bound, it is hardly surprising to find extraordinary psychic experiences assume precisely these forms. In the spiritual life expectations do more than explain reality--they provide the conditions under which alternative realities can be penetrated. To the circle of Isaac Luria "alternative realities" meant the deepest recesses of the divine world--the apprehension of which was a mystical goal of the highest order.

Notes to Chapter Three

- ¹ SY, 4a-b.
- ² *Op. cit.*, 5a; SRH, 108a; *Sefer ha-Ḥezyonot*, p. 150.
- ³ See below, p. 87.
- ⁴ SY, 5a; SRH, 108a.
- ⁵ Cf. *Zohar* I, 77b, 92b; II, 195b-196a; III, 23b.
- ⁶ *Zohar* I, 92b. The translation of this passage is based upon G. Scholem, *Zohar, The Book of Splendor* (New York, 1963), pp. 45 ff.
- ⁷ Rabbinic tradition also considers midnight as the most suitable time for prayer and communion with God. See, for example, *Berakhot* 3b-4a; *Sanhedrin* 95b; *Hullin* 91b; Gen. Rabbah 68: 10-11. The fact that midnight was viewed as a redemptive hour is seen clearly in the *piyyut*, *Az Rob Nisim*, generally attributed to the *Paytan* Yannai who lived in Israel during the seventh century. This poem recounts the numerous events in Israelite history where a miracle occurred at night. It is one of the *piyyutim* read on the Sabbath before Passover, and is included in the *Haggadah*. Cf. *Haggadah shel Pesah*, E.D. Goldschmidt (ed.), Bialik Institute (Jerusalem, 1960), pp. 137-8.
- ⁸ S. Schechter, *Studies*, p. 287. Berukhim was renowned in Safed for exhorting the pious to rise at midnight in order to mourn the exile of the *Shekhinah* and destruction of the Temple. See Letters from Safed, (ed.) S. Assaf, *Kobes 'al Yad*, III (Jerusalem, 1940), p. 122 and Benayahu, *Toldot ha-Ari*, pp. 227-8. *Yom ha-Mishmar* refers to a custom among the Sephardim of visiting the tombs of relatives. Cf. Benayahu, *Sefunot*, 6, pp. 13-14, 19; A. Yaari, *Iggerot Eres Yisrael*, (Ramat Gan, 1971), p. 165.
- ⁹ Schechter, *Studies*, p. 292. Cf. Elijah de Vidas, *Tosdot Hayyim* (Jerusalem, 1971), pp. 21 ff.
- ¹⁰ This rite is described in its classical form in Natan Hannover, *Shdarei Sion* (Prague, 1662); Jacob Semah, *Nagid u-Mesavveh* (Jerusalem, 1965), and *Peri 'Es Hayyim*, Gate 17. See also G. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, pp. 147-50.
- ¹¹ For a detailed discussion of the nature of introversion in mystical practice see E. Underhill, *Mysticism*, chapter six.

¹² In Bahya ibn Pakuda's *Sefer Hobot ha-Lebabot* the practice of solitude is discussed in *Shā'ar ha-Perishut*. Abraham Maimonides major work is *Kifāyat al-Ābidīn* (Complete [Guide] for the Pious). It has been translated into English by S. Rosenblatt as *The High Ways to Perfection of Abraham Maimonides*, 2 volumes (New York, 1927-28). Portions have been translated from the original Arabic into Hebrew: *Sefer ha-Maspik le-'Obdei ha-Shem* (Jerusalem, 1965). The final chapter deals with solitude.

¹³ For a treatment of Azikri's teachings concerning solitude and his relationship to Bahya see Werblowsky, *Karo*, pp. 57-65.

¹⁴ Already in Vital's circle in Safed special prayerbooks were compiled containing the detailed *kavvanot* of prayer. Many redactions of these circulated in manuscript form under the title *Siddur ha-'Ari*. Subsequently many such prayerbooks were published. Among them were: *Shā'arei Rahamim* (Salonika, 1741); *Ḥesed le-Abraham* (Smyrna, 1764); and the *Siddur ha-'Ari* of the Brody *klaus* (Zolkiew, 1781).

¹⁵ Concerning this issue see J. Weiss, "The Kavvanoth of Prayer in Early Hasidism," in *The Journal of Jewish Studies*, 9 (1958), pp. 163-192.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 165. The Lurianic system of *kavvanot* was practiced in a small kabbalistic community in Jerusalem known as *Bet-El*. *Bet-El* was headed by the great Yemenite kabbalist Shalom Mizrahi Sharabi (d. 1777) from 1751 on following the death of that community's founder, Gedaliah Hayon. The latter established the synagogue in the year 1737. *Bet-El* continued to function until the Old City of Jerusalem was lost in 1948. Since the recapture of Jerusalem the synagogue has been restored. The Lurianic meditative life of *Bet-El* is described in A. Bension, *The Zohar in Moslem and Christian Spain*, (London, 1932), pp. 242-6.

¹⁷ *SY*, 3b-c.

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, 3c, *SRH*, 74a-b.

¹⁹ Benayahu ben Yehoyada, a courageous warrior in the Bible, appears in II Samuel 23: 20-23; I Chronicles 11: 22-25. Concerning his role in the *aggadah* see L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, VI, pp. 279, 302. Rav Hammuna Saba, a Babylonian *Amora* appears in the *Zohar* (III, 186a-192a) as the father of a wonder child who teaches the companions Kabbalistic mysteries. R. Yeiba Saba, also a Babylonian *Amora* in the school of Rav, is represented in the *Zohar* (II, 94b-114a) as an old man and a great Kabbalist who is disguised as a poor donkey driver.

²⁰ *SRH*, 75a; *SY*, 3c.

21 *SRH*, 75a.

22 *Ibid.*

23 In general, the Rabbis viewed the study of Torah as more important than any other activity. For example, the Talmud (*Kiddushin* 40b;) records a discussion between R. Tarfon and R. Akiba concerning the obligation to study versus the obligation of performing deeds. The former argues that "doing" takes precedence, while R. Akiba claims that study is more important. The decision is in favor of R. Akiba on the ground that "study leads to action." Elsewhere, (*Shabbat* 10a) the Talmud records that one rabbi disapproves of another who prolongs his prayers excessively, arguing that "they leave aside eternal life [i.e., Torah] to engage in temporal existence [i.e., prayer]." *Shabbat* 11a records a tradition that R. Simeon b. Yohai, whose exclusive activity was Torah study, refrained from interrupting his study in order to pray. Concerning the primacy of Torah study see, for example, G.F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (Cambridge, 1966), vol. II, pp. 239-47.

24 See above, pp. 56-7.

25 *SRH*, 75a. This text is paralleled in Tabul's discussion of the practice of *yihudim* (see above, p. 15). Tabul's text is preserved in Ms. Jewish Theological Seminary 931 (Deinröd 430) folios 175A-180A. Cf. folio 1756.

26 *SRH*, 75a.

27 See above, pp. 24-5.

28 That is, in the process of individual *tikkun* the soul ascends from the lowest world of *Assiyah* up through the worlds of *Yesirah*, *Beriah* and *Ashlut*. It perfects its structure in each world before ascending higher.

29 For a study of a related theme: self-knowledge in Islam and Judaism as a means of knowing and communing with God see A. Altmann, "The Delphic Maxim in Medieval Islam and Judaism," in *idem*, *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism*, pp. 1-40.

30 G. Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 283.

31 *SRH*, 75a-b, 109a-b; *SY*, 4b.

32 Cf. *Zohar* II, 141b; III, 70b. See I. Tishby, *Mishnat ha-Zohar*, vol. II (Jerusalem, 1961), pp. 3-93.

33 The phrase *serora de-hayyei* is based on I Samuel 25.29: "And though men be risen up to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul, yet the

soul of my lord shall be bound up in the bundle of life (*seror ha-hayyim*) with the Lord thy God . . . " In rabbinic literature the "bundle of life" is understood to mean the safekeeping of the souls of the departed righteous in a heavenly "treasure" beneath the "throne of glory." Cf. for example, *Shabbat* 152b; *Hagigah* 121b; *Abot de-Rabbi Natan* 12. For the use of this phrase in medieval kabbalistic literature see for example, Nahmanides, *Shā'ar ha-Gemul*, chapters 8 and 9; Azriel of Gerona, *Perush ha-Aggadot*, 2b, 5a, 21b where it is identifiable with the *Sefirah Tiferet*; Jacob b. Sheshet, *Sefer Meshib Debarim Nekhoḥim*, chapters 20 and 25, ed. G. Vajda (Jerusalem, 1968).

34 *Zohar* III, 70b.

35 *SRH*, 109b; Cf. Tabul's version, folio 175a.

36 *Zohar* III, 71a.

37 Rabbinic literature also reflects the custom of visiting cemeteries on public fast days to offer prayers at the graves of the departed "in order that they may intercede in behalf of the living." Cf. *Taanit*, 16a, 23b; *Sotah* 34b; Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, *Taanit* 4:18; Karo's *Shulhan Arukh*, *Orah Hayyim*, 579:3.

38 See J. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition* (New York, 1939), pp. 64-5. Cf. *Sefer Hasidim*, ed. R. Margolioth, (Jerusalem, 1973), #1171 and sources cited by Trachtenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 284-5.

39 Cf. the references cited by M. Benayahu, *Sefunot* 6, p. 11.

40 The first evidence of fixed visits to the grave of Simeon b. Yohai is the testimony of a traveller to Israel from Candia in the year 1473. It seems that by this time visits were transferred from the cave of Hillel and Shammai to R. Simeon b. Yohai. Cf. Benayahu, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

41 *Maggid Mesharim* (Venice, 1649), *Parashat Emor*.

42 *Sefer Gerushin* (Jerusalem, 1962), pp. 8, 20.

43 Abraham Azulai, *Or ha-Hammah*, vol. III, 56a.

44 See above, pp. 51.

45 Correspondence between the *Sefirot* and various names of God were already established by the Spanish Kabbalists. The following equivalences are found in the *Zohar* as well as Joseph Gikatilla's *Shā'rei Orah*:

Keter=EHYH
Hokhmah=YaH
Binah=YHWH vocalized as *Elohim*
Hesed=EL
Din=Elohim
Tiferet=YHWH
Nesah=YHWH *Sevdot*
Hod=Elohim *Sevdot*
Yesod=*Shaddai* (in the *Zohar*) and *El Hai* (in *Shaarei Orach*)
Malkhut=*Adonai*

46 The *yihudim* were personalized. That is, Luria gave each of his disciples meditations that were appropriate to each of them alone. In *SRH* Vital records twenty-five *yihudim* which he claims to have received from Luria. In addition, he records those *yihudim* given by Luria to other members of their circle:

Joseph Arzin-7 (*yihudim*)
 Joseph Cohen-4
 Elijah de Vidas-10
 Gedaliah Levi-34
 Moses Alsheikh-1
 Elias Falkon-4
 Y. Shneur (?) -1
 Abraham ha-Levi Eliezer Berukhim-5
 Moses Yonah-9

Rather blatantly missing from this list of disciples is Joseph Ṭabul. In Ṭabul's text, however, eight *yihudim* are recorded, the first of which is also claimed by Vital to have been given to him. Given the apparent competitive tension between these two men Vital's omission makes sense.

47 This meditation is found in *SRH*, 101a-111a. Vital indicates at the end that he copied this from a manuscript of his teacher. The remainder he learned from Luria by direct communication. It is this meditation, however, which is also found in Ṭabul's text. Ṭabul, as we have seen, claimed that he received his *yihudim* directly from Isaac Luria as well. Inasmuch as the *yihudim* were given individually it is clear that either Ṭabul or Vital is not telling the entire truth. Since this is the only one of Ṭabul's meditations to be found in Vital's account, and given the fact that this particular *yihud* happens to be the only one Vital claims to have received by reading it in a manuscript, it would seem that Ṭabul's claim is authentic. It is possible that Ṭabul received it orally from Luria, and wrote it down when he later remembered what he had been taught. This written version may have come into Vital's hands, whereupon he decided to appropriate it. Concerning this problem see G. Scholem, *Kiryath Sefer*, vol. XIX (1943), pp. 184-99; *idem.*, *Zion*, vol. V (1940), p. 152.

48 See above, p. 45 ff.

49 SRH, 121a. Judah bar Ilai was a *Tanna* of the mid-second century. He studied under both R. Tarfon and R. Akiba and was especially known for his piety. According to *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, he was one of Vital's and Karo's *gilgul* ancestors. Cf. pp. 90, 144, 196, 198. Cf. also *Sefer ha-Gilgulim*, 87b, where Karo's relationship to bar Ilai is discussed. In Vital's list of the graves of *saddikim* in *Shdar ha-Gilgulim*, 184a, bar Ilai's gravesite is mentioned. Cf. also M. Ish-Shalom, *Qibrei Abot* (Jerusalem, 1948), pp. 142-3 for references to his gravesite by travellers.

50 SRH, 121a-126a.

51 For some of the traditions surrounding the month of *Elul* see S.Y. Agnon, *Days of Awe* (New York, 1948), pp. 16-26.

52 SRH, 121a-b.

53 See above, pp. 92-93.

54 The relationship between Lurianic Kabbalah and Abulafian tradition has been noticed by G. Scholem and R.J.Z. Werblowsky. Neither scholar, however, indicates the nature of this relationship to any significant extent. Scholem writes in *Major Trends*, p. 277:

As for the general principles concerning the direction of such meditation [i.e., Lurianic meditation], the principles which everyone may apply in his own way and in his own time to the standard prayers of the liturgy, Luria believed he had found them, and his followers developed them in great detail. They represent an application of Abulafia's theory of meditation to the new Kabbalah.

In the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 10, p. 631, Scholem writes that "the Lurianic *kavvanot* were especially heavily influenced by *hokhmat ha-zeruf*." Werblowsky, speaking of Vital's use of the term *yihudim* in his *Shdarei Kedushah*, writes:

In fact, Vital's *yihudim* are simply the modified and transformed successors of Abulafia's permutations.

See Werblowsky, *Karo* p. 38. Elsewhere, (*Karo*, pp. 71-2) Werblowsky seeks to suggest the background of Vital's use of Holy Names in *Shdarei Kedushah* with the following words:

One need but read Abraham Abulafia or the fourteenth century Spanish work *Berith Menuhah* to form an idea of the breadth and weight of the tradition on which Vital could draw.

55 See G. Scholem, *Ha-Kabbalah shel Sefer ha-Temunah ve-shel Abraham Abulafia* (Jerusalem, 1969), p. 163. Scholem indicates that in

the synagogues of *Bet-El* and *Porat Yosef* in Jerusalem's old city, head movements used in Abulafian meditation were still employed in recent times. Many Abulafian manuscripts were copied by the Kabbalists of *Bet-El*. It is not likely that they would have bothered to preserve these texts were it not for their interest in using them for practical purposes.

56 This summary of Abulafia's system is based primarily on the accounts of G. Scholem in *Major Trends*, lecture four; *idem.*, *Ha-Kabbalah shel Sefer ha-Temunah ve-shel Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 85-253. We have also drawn directly from two of Abulafia's most important instructional manuals: *Hayyei 'Olam ha-Ba'* (Ms. Heb. 8^o 540 of the Hebrew University National Library) and *Or ha-Sekhel* (Ms. Munich 285).

57 Abulafia believed that his doctrine of prophetic mysticism was the logical extension of Maimonides' theory of prophecy. The latter also understood prophecy as a temporary union of the human and divine intellects, brought about by the influx of the active intellect into the soul. The prophetic faculty, according to this theory, consists in the union of the human intellect, at its most advanced stage of development, with the active intellect. For Abulafia, the divine intellect was the highest principle--permeating all of creation. It allows for the possibility of union between the human and divine spheres. But instead of the intellectual process prescribed by Maimonides, Abulafia's means of elevating the human soul is through a complex system of meditational practices and devotional techniques never considered by the foremost Jewish Aristotelian. Abulafia wrote a commentary to the *Moreh Nebukhim* which is extant in two versions: a) *Hayyei ha-Nefesh* (Ms. Munich 408); b) *Sitrei Torah* of which there are more than twenty-five manuscripts. Parts of it were anonymously included in the collection of Kabbalistic literature *Likkutei Shikhnah u-Fe'ah* (Ferrara, 1556), pp. 23-31. See G. Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 138-9; *idem.*, *Ha-Kabbalah shel Sefer ha-Temunah*, pp. 118-9, 129-34. For an illustration of Abulafia's attempt to show the essentially mystical character of the *topoi* of the *Guide*, see A. Altmann, *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 80, (1936), pp. 320-2.

58 The *Sefer Yesira* (*Book of Creation*) represents the earliest extant Hebrew text of systematic, speculative thought. It was written sometime between the third and sixth centuries. According to its author, all of creation came into being through the interconnection of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and particularly by means of the "231 gates" or combinations of the letters into sets of two, representing what he felt were the possible roots of the Hebrew verb. All that exists contains these linguistic elements and exists by virtue of their power, the foundation of which is the Tetragrammaton. This linguistic-mystical cosmogony played an enormously important role in the history of Jewish cosmological speculation--philosophic and mystical. For the relationship of the *Sefer Yesira* to Kabbalah see G. Scholem, *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbala* (Berlin, 1962), pp. 20-29; *idem.*, *EJ*, vol. 16, pp. 782-787.

⁵⁹ *Shaarei Orach*, 2b. We have used Scholem's translation in *On the Kabbalah*, p. 42.

⁶⁰ *Sefer Gan Na'ul*, Ms. Munich 58, folio 322b. We have used Scholem's translation in *Major Trends*, p. 134.

⁶¹ Abulafia relates these three levels to the external realities of the eyes, tongue and heart. Moreover, they correspond to *Muskal* (known), *Maskil* (knower), and *Sekhel* (knowledge), the latter corresponding to the highest level, *Mahshab*. See *Sheba Netivot ha-Torah* by Abulafia, published by A. Jellinek in *Philosophie und Kabbala* (Leipzig, 1854), pp. 18-20, where these levels are described.

⁶² The Seventy-two letter name of God is based on three verses of Exodus 14: 19-21, each of which contains seventy-two letters. It was constructed by joining the first letter of vs. 19, the last letter of vs. 20, and the first vs. of 21, to form the first triad; the second letter of vs. 19, the penultimate of vs. 20 and the second of vs. 21, to make the second triad; and so on until 72 triads are constructed comprising all the letters of these verses. The composition of this name was well known in Geonic times, and it was used by Rashi. It was also an important magical name to the author of *Sefer Razi'el*. See J. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, pp. 95-6. Moses Cordovero discusses this name in chapter twenty-one of *Pardes Rimmonim*.

⁶³ *Hayyei Olam ha-Ba*, 6a; Cf. 11a, 23a, 34a.

⁶⁴ For a description of a variety of types of *gematria* formation see J. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic*, appendix I: The Formation of Magical Names, pp. 262-3. In Ms. Oxford 1,822, folios 141-6, a special tract lists seventy-two different forms of *gematriot*. In *Sha'ar ha-Seruf*, chapter eight of Cordovero's *Pardes Rimmonim*, he describes nine different types of *gematriot*. The use of *gematria* is already prevalent in Rabbinic literature. It was especially developed by the *Hasidei Ashkenaz* and by circles close to them in the 12th and 13th centuries. In the beginnings of Spanish Kabbalah *gematria* occupied a very limited place. The Gerona Kabbalists used it little and its impact was slight upon the *Zohar* and the Hebrew writings of Moses de Leon. Only those currents influenced by the traditions of the *Hasidei Ashkenaz* absorbed *gematria* into Kabbalistic literature of the second half of the 13th century, primarily in the work of Jacob ha-Kohen and Abulafia. Joseph Gikatilla's *Ginat Egoz* (Hanau, 1615), written in 1274 under the influence of Abulafia, is greatly concerned with *gematria*. Much of the literature after this period was heavily influenced by the Abulafian stress on this technique.

⁶⁵ *Hayyei 'Olam ha-Ba'*, 172. For details of the method of *notarikon*, see J. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic*, pp. 261-2.

⁶⁶ Luria's use of *notarikon* is particularly evident in those *yihudim* given to other members of Luria's circle. Most of these are based on a biblical verse from which the initial letters of each word are drawn to form a word. The word formed in this manner is then related to divine names and *parṣufim* to create the meditations. See *SRH*, 146 ff.

⁶⁷ See J. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic*, pp. 263-4.

⁶⁸ See above, p. 130.

⁶⁹ *Hayyei 'Olam ha-Ba'*, 20a. There are a number of important techniques conceived by Abulafia which the Lurianic writings do not utilize whatsoever. For example, the techniques of *dillug* and *kefiṣah* ("skipping" and "jumping") and the use of breathing exercises and head movements play no role in our sources. Concerning these techniques, see the references cited in note 56.

⁷⁰ See Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 141. *Sullam ha-'Aliyah* draws heavily upon the work *Shā'arei Ṣedek* by an anonymous student of Abulafia's, as well as on *Hayyei 'Olam ha-Ba'* and *Or ha-Sekhel*. See G. Scholem, *KS* 2 (1925), pp. 107, 138-41; *idem.*, *KS* 22 (1945), pp. 161-71; *idem.*, *Kitbei Yad*, pp. 32-3, 225-30; M. Benayahu, "Rabbi Yehuda ben Rabbi Moshe Albottini and his book *Yesod Mishne Torah*," in *Sinai* 36 (1955), pp. 240-74.

⁷¹ *Magen David* (Amsterdam, 1713), 15b.

⁷² Ibn Zimra's other works include *Migdal David* (Lvov, 1883) on the Song of Songs and *Meṣudat David* (Zolkiew, 1862) on the meaning of the commandments. See I. Goldmar, *The Life and Times of Rabbi David Ibn Abi Zimra* (New York, 1970).

⁷³ *Berit ha-Levi* (Jerusalem, 1970), 14c-d.

⁷⁴ In no place in these two sections, however, does Cordovero mention Abulafia's name. In *Shā'ar Peratei ha-Shemot* in which he quotes from *Or ha-Sekhel*, he refers to this work as *Sefer ha-Nikud*.

⁷⁵ See above, p. 35 and p. 42, note 58. Cordovero's strong relationship to Abulafia's *hokhmat ha-seruf*, as revealed in these writings, deserves further scholarly attention.

⁷⁶ *SY*, 1a.

⁷⁷ See above, pp. 26-7.

⁷⁸ *SY*, 5a.

79 The *yihud* referred to here is found in *SRH*, 1161. Three other *yihudim* are described on 116a-117b for this purpose.

80 *SRH*, 115b-116a.

81 *Op. cit.*, 111a.

82 *SY*, 3b.

83 M. Benayahu, *Toldot ha-Ari*, p. 157, note 6.

84 *SRH*, 143b.

85 Benayahu, *Toldot ha-Ari*, p. 157; *cf. idem.*, p. 199, note 2.

86 See above, p. 26-7.

87 See, for example, *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim*, 131b.

88 *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim*, 132b. *Cf. Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, p. 152. According to M. Benayahu, Vital wrote his work on practical Kabbalah and alchemy, extant in a ms. of the Musayoff collection, not before 1610 when he had returned to live in Damascus. This would, of course, mean that he once again took up his interest in alchemical studies after having atoned for just this activity. See Benayahu, *Toldot ha-Ari*, p. 290. The difficulty of this problem is complicated by the fact that it was mainly between the years 1609 and 1612 that he assembled the material for his diary--in which he recalls atoning for having once pursued alchemical studies!

89 *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim*, 128-36 passim; *cf. Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, pp. 153, 157.

90 *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim*, 136a-b. *Cf. Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, p. 161.

91 Vital describes the cave of Abaye and Rava in *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim*, 185a. Abaye and Rava were famous amoraic teachers of the 4th century.

92 For this *yihud*, see *SRH*, 110a-111a.

93 Akabyah ben Mahalalel (first century C.E.) was a member of the Sanhedrin. According to *Eduyot* 5.6, Akabyah was offered the position of *ab bet din* ("President of the Court") if he would renounce four of his decisions in which he disagreed with the majority opinion. He refused to do so, saying "It is better for me to be called a fool all my days than that I should become even for one hour a wicked man in the sight of God; and that men should say, 'He withdrew his opinions for the sake of getting power.'" In *Eduyot* 5.7, however, Akabyah, in the

hour that he was about to die, told his son to retract these four opinions: "In the hour that he died he said to his son, 'My son, retract (*hazor bekha*) the four opinions which I gave.'" It is this phrase that Vital imagined he heard.

94 Vital believed that his soul was bound up with that of R. Akiba through *gilgul*. Cf. *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim*, 136b ff; *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, p. 135 and passim.

95 See above, p. 124, note 19.

96 *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim*, 140b-141a. A version that differs only slightly is found in *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, pp. 170-1.

97 *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, pp. 143-4 and passim.

98 See above, p. 132, notes 92-3.

99 Much of *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim* is taken up with the issue of Vital's *gilgul* ancestry. It is also the predominant concern of part four of *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*. In another experience of *yihud* (*Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim*, 141b), the extent to which Vital was obsessed with the status of his soul is made vividly clear. He learns that not only is he a great man like R. Akiba and his colleagues, but that he will attain that which no other person of his own generation will attain--including his teacher, Luria! He is also vouchsafed the promise of an audition of Elijah. Concerning Vital's understanding of his relationship to Elijah see, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, pp. 6, 143-4, 161.

100 The distinction between these two types of meditation is discussed in C. Naranjo and R. Ornstein. *On the Psychology of Meditation* (New York, 1971, pp. 16 ff. See also R. Ornstein, *The Psychology of Consciousness* (San Francisco, 1972), pp. 104-40.

101 *SRH*, 117b.

102 *Op. cit.*, 111a.

103 For a discussion of such features of meditation see A.M. Ludwig, "Altered States of Consciousness" in C. Tart (ed.), *Altered States of Consciousness*, pp. 15 ff.

104 For a full discussion of auditions, automatism and mediumistic phenomena in the history of religions see, E. Underhill, *Mysticism*, pp. 266-97. An enormous amount of research has recently begun on the physiological and psychological dimensions of meditation and altered states of awareness. See for example, C. Tart (ed.), *Altered States of Consciousness* and the lengthy bibliography given there; *Altered States of Awareness*, Readings from Scientific American, (San

Francisco, 1971). For such a study on the kind of experience described here see, C. Evans and E. Osborn, "An experiment in the electroencephalography of the mediumistic trance," *Journal of Psychical Research*, 1951-1952, 36, pp. 588-96.

¹⁰⁵ Werblowsky, *Karo*, p. 283.

CHAPTER FOUR

READING IN THE *MISHNAH*: A TECHNIQUE OF MEDITATION TAUGHT BY ḤAYYIM VITAL

I

It is the destiny of many great historical figures to stand in the shadow of a personality more luminous than their own. Though not forgotten men, their full importance remains unappreciated. Such has largely been the fate of Ḥayyim Vital. Vital is recognized primarily for his role as Isaac Luria's chief disciple, the diligent student and faithful recorder of his master's teachings. In the introduction we have already discussed the nature of this teacher-disciple relationship and the crucial role it played in the preservation and dissemination of Luria's teachings. It will suffice for us to reiterate that without Vital, despite his own efforts at concealing it, much of Luria's system would have been completely lost.

But Vital was far more than the most important formulator of Lurianic Kabbalah. He was a distinct personality in his own right, with a spiritual career whose creative dimensions moved beyond the confines of his relationship to Luria. In the first place, Vital was not only a student of "hidden" (*nistar*) knowledge. He was also well-versed in "revealed" (*nigleh*) or exoteric subjects. Vital studied in *yeshivot* in Safed where he became immersed in the classical tradition of Judaism. His foremost teacher in talmudic studies was Moses Alsheikh, by whom he

was ordained as rabbi in the year 1590.¹ His proficiency in talmudic studies is attested to by the fact that he served as rabbi and head of a *yeshivah* in Jerusalem from 1577-1585. Though only some of his rabbinic writings have been preserved, they are sufficient to reveal Vital's interest and involvement in halakhic affairs. Included among those that do remain are: a responsum from Damascus published in the responsa of Joseph di Trani;² halakhic responsa contained in his son Shmuel's *Be'er Mayyim Hayyim*; talmudic commentaries collected along with those of his son.³

Vital's interest in Kabbalah began before he met Isaac Luria. He had studied with Moses Cordovero beginning in 1564, and composed a commentary to the *Zohar* based upon Cordovero's system. To this commentary he subsequently added Lurianic notes. It was included by Abraham Azulai in his compilation of Zoharic commentaries, *Or ha-Hammah*. We possess small parts of another work, *Es ha-Daat*, also following Cordovero's teaching. It apparently included Kabbalistic comments on most of the books of the Bible.⁴ Furthermore, Vital composed several Kabbalistic works intended for a wide audience. The most well known of these is *Shaarei Kedushah*, to which we have made frequent reference. This little book became highly influential and was reprinted many times.⁵ His other books in this genre were *Leb David* and *Derekh Hayyim*.⁶

Beyond all this, Vital had an intense interest in the esoteric sciences that flourished in his day. We have already had occasion to speak of his enthusiasm for alchemical studies. In addition, Vital indulged in all manner of magic and esoterica. He used to visit fortune-tellers, palm-readers, oil-readers and magicians in order to inquire

concerning the past history of his soul and learn about the promises of the future.⁷ His willingness to seek out neighboring Moslem wonder-workers and holy men attests to his extraordinary eclectic spiritual interests. *Sefer ha-Ḥezyonot* depicts the portrait of a man inclined to drink at the well of a vast variety of magical and esoteric specialties. Vital wrote, in addition, a treatise dealing with astronomy entitled *Sefer ha-Tekhnah*.⁸

The aspect of his life with which we are concerned presently, however, is Vital's unceasing attempt to achieve altered states of consciousness and merit esoteric communications and revelations. We have already discussed how Vital experienced mystical illumination through the Lurianic practice of *yihudim*. We wish now to consider another technique which Vital himself developed for such purposes.

II

Ḥayyim Vital was a true visionary. His diary reflects a life filled with experiences of auditions and visions through encounters with a plethora of spirits, demons, angelic personalities, departed colleagues and ancient rabbinic teachers. A highly imaginative and suggestible spirit--even for the world of sixteenth century Safed--Vital was addicted to super-natural experiences. According to the testimony of *Sefer ha-Ḥezyonot*, such celestial revelation and discourse characterized nearly all of Ḥayyim Vital's long life. The major source of these communications was dreams. The largest portion of his dream-diary consists in accounts of Vital's rich dream life. In them he holds

conversations with, among others: Elijah, Luria, Cordovero, *tanna'im* and *amora'im*, members of his family, fellow Kabbalists and Moslem Sheikhs. Often he suddenly finds himself in a strange environment: praying in a synagogue in a different city, confronting an invading army of soldiers, or walking through gardens surrounded by large mountains and rivers. While his dreams contain a wealth of information concerning Vital's inner life, his anxieties and aspirations, they do not represent a technique of contemplation. Vital only occasionally reports a dream-revelation brought about by asking a dream-question before going to sleep.⁹ While he was acutely conscious of the value of dreams as a revelatory medium, he appears to have refrained from employing the dream-question technique to any significant degree.¹⁰ *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, however, contains more than dreams. For example, several passages in this text describe an interesting contemplative practice in which the recitation of *mishnayot* induces visions and auditions. Though he draws upon the techniques of others, Vital's practice is original and unique. The first entry to describe such a practice indicates that Vital had already become Luria's disciple:

1571. *Rosh Hodesh Iyyar*. At the time of the afternoon prayer I secluded myself by means of reading in the *Mishnah* three times, as is known to be my custom. And I concentrated upon inquiring: "Who was my *gilgul* prior to myself?" I became drowsy and I perceived my teacher, may his memory be blessed. He grasped me by my arm and said to me: "Behold, this handsome young man who is standing near us is my brother-in-law, and you were his teacher. And I [suddenly] awoke."¹¹ (1)

Whereas Luria specifically prohibited the practice of *yihudim* at the grave on the day of the new moon, Vital does not seem to be

averse to this form of contemplation on this day. The time of the afternoon prayer was considered by Vital as a "favored time" for spiritual activity.¹² It is unclear whether the reference to "three times" indicates that Vital practiced reading in the *Mishnah* several times that afternoon, or the number of times *mishnayot* were read on one occasion. We shall see other evidence which points to the latter explanation. Vital uses an unique phrase with regard to the function assigned to the reading of *mishnayot*: "I secluded myself by means of reading in the *Mishnah*." Apparently, the very act of repeating *mishnayot* served the purpose of inducing a state of solitude, i.e., a state free from the distractions of the material world. While reciting a *mishnah*, Vital asks a question having to do with his former incarnation and descends into a form of drowsiness. Thereupon, he immediately sees Luria who informs him that in his former *gilgul* he was the teacher of Luria's brother-in-law. Having learned this, he is aroused from his drowsy state. On the heels of this experience Vital returns to reciting *mishnayot*:

And I began again to read a *mishnah* and I became drowsy. I heard a loud voice actually calling: "Ḥayyim, Ḥayyim." I was aroused and awoke. And I thought to myself that my teacher, may his memory be blessed, is Rabban Gamliel, and he is the brother-in-law of R. Eliezer, the disciple of Rabban Yohanan ben Zaccai. I went to my teacher and told him all this. He said to me: This is without a doubt a supernal arousal [that you have experienced.] However, I do not wish to reveal to you the meaning of these matters, as I do not want you to know the *gilgul* of my intellectual-soul.¹³ (2)

In this second experience Vital seeks to determine whom Luria meant when he said that he (i.e., Vital) was the teacher of Luria's

brother-in-law. Vital solves this puzzle for himself by imagining that Luria is identified with R. Gamliel, whose brother-in-law is R. Eliezer. Thus, Vital places himself in the exalted position of having once been the teacher of R. Eliezer. Structurally, this experience follows the basic pattern of the earlier one. The recitation of *mishmayot* induces a state of solitude and he becomes drowsy. In this case, however, Vital receives a communication without first asking a question. Whereas in the original instance it is Luria who appears to him and speaks, here the communicator is merely perceived as a "loud voice" with no other specific identity.

Again Vital secludes himself in the same manner.¹⁴ Upon inquiring whether his *gilgul* is bound up with that of "our holy Rabbi" (i.e., Judah ha-Nasi), Luria appears to him and reports that he is indeed related to the soul of Judah ha-Nasi. It is perhaps significant that Vital aspired to such a relationship, inasmuch as Judah ha-Nasi was responsible for editing the *Mishnah*. We also learn explicitly here that the drowsiness which Vital experienced each time he reads in the *Mishnah* is not to be construed as actual sleep. Instead, it is a state of consciousness in which he is fully aware of what is transpiring:

And I awoke from this slumber of solitude since I was not actually sleeping.¹⁵ (3)

In yet another experience Vital again inquires concerning his soul. However, in this case a most significant variation is added. Vital recites a specific *mishnah* and thereby cleaves to the soul of the *tanna*⁷ who has authored this text:

The 27th of *Iyyar*. I secluded myself as mentioned above. And I asked myself: "Is the soul of R. Eleazar b. Arakh that is impregnated within me, still impregnated so?" And I cleaved with my soul to his soul by means of reading the *mishnah*: "R. Eleazar b. Arakh says: Be eager to study the Torah" etc. (*Abot*, 2:19). And while I was completely awake with my eyes closed, I saw a group of sages studying Torah. They said to me: "Know [concerning] this book which is in our hands, in which we are presently reading, and in which are written certain verses; know that the sage R. Eleazar b. Yohai while he was alive, told us that the verses written in this book indicate the name Eleazar as being alluded to therein.¹⁶ (4)

Of all the variations of this technique, this one seems to represent a more highly developed stage of practice. Here, it is not any *mishnah* that is recited, but one chosen because it contains the teaching of a *particular* sage. Moreover, the intended goal is to commune with the soul of this *tanna*.⁹ Vital desires to cleave with his soul to that of R. Eleazar b. Arakh; therefore he recites a *mishnah* in which this *tanna*'s opinion is stated. By doing so he indeed succeeds in cleaving to the soul of this particular *ṣaddik*. The communication that Vital receives, however, is not from the *tanna* himself, but from a circle of sages who are studying Torah. In part four of *Sefer ha-Ḥezyonot*, in which Vital delineates the *gilgulim* through which his soul has passed, he mentions R. Eleazar b. Arakh:

He [i.e., Luria] also told me that when I was thirteen years old the soul of R. Eleazar b. Arakh, disciple of Rabban Yohanan b. Zaccai, was impregnated within me through the mystery of *ibbur*.¹⁷ (5)

Vital's question is answered affirmatively inasmuch as he succeeds in communing with this *ṣaddik*.

We are fortunate to possess a text which clarifies the nature and meaning of the passages in *Sefer ha-Ḥezyonot* which we have described.

It is found in the unpublished fourth chapter of Vital's popular ethical treatise, *Sha'arei Kedushah*. Before discussing the fourth chapter, however, it will serve our purposes to consider the chapter that precedes it. The third part of *Sha'arei Kedushah* is called: *Concerning the Ways of Achieving the Holy Spirit*. It consists primarily in a condensation of some of the qualifications and techniques for achieving inspiration which have been described by us earlier. Vital emphasizes the need, as did his teacher, for proper preparation in order to achieve mystical inspiration by any means. He summarizes the procedures in the last gate of chapter three:¹⁸

- a. Repentance from all sins; avoidance of such qualities as anger, strictness, pride, gossip and slander; practice of such qualities as humility, joy and modesty.
- b. Observance of all *mišvot*; fixed times for study of Torah; prayer with *kavvanah*; love of one's fellow and rising after midnight to mourn the destruction of the Temple.
- c. Material purification through ritual immersion and donning of clean clothes.
- d. Seclusion, preferably at night, in a house where there will be no distractions.

According to Vital, the contemplative Kabbalist, having prepared himself, may attain mystical inspiration by one of several means. He delineates five different sources of celestial revelation, all of which we have seen discussed in Lurianic sources:¹⁹

- a. The adept can draw down upon his soul supernal light from his

celestial soul-root. This Vital calls the Holy Spirit in the strict sense.

- b. By means of study of Torah or the performance of a *mišvah*, an angel known as a *maggid* will reveal itself.
- c. The revelation of a departed *šaddik* will be merited by the most worthy pietists. This is the most superior form of illumination.
- d. Elijah will reveal himself by virtue of stringent piety.
- e. Revelation can manifest itself in dreams. This is the lowest form of inspiration.

Against the background of the general concerns of this chapter, we can better appreciate the last part of Vital's book. The introduction to the fourth chapter is found in the printed edition of *Šhārei Kedushah*. It indicates that Vital conceived of it as a continuation of the third chapter's basic theme: how to achieve heavenly inspiration. Thus, we read the following:

We have already explained in part three, gate seven, that there are five means of achieving inspiration (*hasagah*): The Holy Spirit, the souls of departed *šaddikim*, angels called *maggidim*, Elijah and dreams. And every one of them can be attained by itself by means of a man's holiness and study of Torah, without recourse to any other activity. [But] it is also possible to attain them as a result of special actions after one has become worthy and is prepared for inspiration. And this second matter will be explained in this part, from everything that is found in the books of the ancient scholars.²⁰ (6)

Much to the disappointment of the reader of *Šhārei Kedushah* the promised fourth chapter does not appear in any printed edition. Instead we find the following words of the original printer:

Thus speaks the printer: This fourth part will not be copied or printed, for it is all [holy] names, combinations (*serufim*), and secret mysteries which it would be unseemly to print. (7)

Fortunately, however, at least three manuscripts of the fourth chapter are extant. Of the two manuscripts available to us, only one contains the entire text. It alone has the section in which Vital discusses the proper method of reading in the *Mishnah* for purposes of mystical inspiration.²¹ But before considering this particular section we wish to offer a general description of this chapter entitled: *Māamar Hitbodedut* (*Essay On Solitude*). This chapter is primarily an anthology of older Kabbalistic authors, nearly all of which were already in print by the time the printer rejected the manuscript. These selections constitute an extremely interesting collection of Kabbalistic around the themes of prophecy, holy spirit, cleaving to God and achieving heavenly inspiration of various kinds. Vital was apparently seeking to offer the modern aspirant to mystical illumination the benefit of earlier traditions. He culls from, among others, the writings of Nahmanides, Azriel of Gerona, Abraham Abulafia, Moses de Leon, Joseph Gikatilla, Menahem Recanati, Isaac b. Samuel of Acre, Moses Cordovero and Elijah de Vidas.²² Being drawn as they are from a vast variety of Kabbalists, they form a highly eclectic composite of earlier contemplative trends. By the same token, the chapter as a whole lacks any real uniformity and cannot be considered a manual of instruction in the strict sense.²³ What then was so offensive to the sensitivities of the original printer to compel him to exert such powers of censorship? It was evidently the

serufim and the extensive use of "holy names" such as the seventy-two letter name of God which frightened him.²⁴

Now, in addition to that which Vital gleaned from earlier mystics, there are several pages of original material.²⁵ It is here that we find descriptions of several techniques for achieving mystical illumination. One of these bears directly upon the technique described in *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*. The following is a translation of the section to which we have alluded from this hitherto unpublished chapter:

[This is] the second way of the practical methods to achieve the three types [of inspiration] mentioned above. And I will not record any practical activity [accomplished] by means of magic formulae (*hashbdot*) and Holy Names (*hazkarot shemot*)-- other than by means of reflection and thought alone, or through prayer to God in the [traditional] manner of prayer.

You already know that all types of inspiration require a man to be alone in a house so that his mind will not be distracted. The person must seclude himself in his mind to the farthest limits and divest his body from his soul as if he did not feel that he was clothed in matter at all--as though he was only soul. The more he separates himself from matter the more his inspiration will be increased. If he senses any voice or movement that disturbs his concentration, or if any material thought comes to him of his own accord, this will stop his soul's concentration upon cleaving to the upper realms, and he will not gain any inspiration whatsoever because the supernal holiness does not rest upon a man while he is [still] clinging to matter, be it even a hairsbreadth [of attachment to matter]. Therefore prophecy or the Holy Spirit are called "deep sleep" or dreams or vision [i.e., states free from distraction]. The end of the matter is that one who wants the Holy Spirit to rest upon him, if he does not become adept at completely divesting his soul from his body, the Holy Spirit will not rest upon him.

And this is the secret [meaning of]: "the sons of prophets with a timbrel and pipe before them" etc. [I Samuel 10:5]. For by means of the sweet voice of the melody, solitude descended upon them with the pleasantness of the voice, and they divested their souls [of worldly sensation] and then the musician stopped the melody and the sons of the prophets remained cleaving to the upper realms and prophesied. This is the first condition.

The second condition is that a man should annul all those things which cause solitude to be interrupted. For in the first condition we mentioned only the material things of a natural character [i.e., things external to him] which cause the interruption of solitude. And they [i.e., with regard to the second condition] are the powers of impurity which are derived from the evil inclination with which a man invests himself. They are strengthened by virtue of man's sin. Therefore, he who intends to seclude himself must first repent of all transgressions. Afterwards, he must be careful not to resume sinning by way of any one of these. Following this he should accustom himself to remove the evil qualities which have become ingrained in him such as anger, sadness, pedantry, idle conversation and the like. After he has mended the sicknesses of the soul—whether they be sins or [injurious] qualities—then the impure Spirit has no power with which to cut off his cleaving to the upper realms.

Then he will accustom himself in the avoidance of material things as mentioned above in the first condition. And after [having accomplished] all this he should begin with the activities that bring about [lit. draw down] the [state of] cleaving to the upper realms as I recorded with the help of God, according to that which I was able to find in the words of the sages and the words of those who seclude themselves. However, the matter of the second condition consists in removing from himself the impure powers--and this [is accomplished] by means of repentance of his sins and his dissociation from blameworthy qualities.

We have already explained matters with regard to the first method according to that which I have found in books. And having instructed you concerning these two conditions, I will now consider the activities which are [designed] to cause the power of a man's soul to cleave to the upper realms--after there being [found] in him the two conditions mentioned. Would that it might be as this.

Seclude yourself in a lonely house, as mentioned above, wrap yourself in a prayer-shawl, and sit and close your eyes, divesting yourself of the material world as if your soul had left your body, and was ascending to heaven. Following this abstraction [from matter], recite whichever single *mishnah* that you wish, many times in uninterrupted succession. Concentrate your mind upon attaching your soul to the soul of the *tanna* mentioned in this *mishnah*. And this is what you should concentrate your mind upon: That your mouth is an organ which articulates the letters of the text of this *mishnah*. And that the voice that you produce from the mouth's organ consists of the sparks of your inner soul which emerge and recite this particular *mishnah*. It [i.e., the soul] becomes a throne so that in it [the soul] there may be invested the soul of this *tanna*?

the author of the *mishnah*, and so that his soul will be invested within your soul. When you become exhausted from reciting the text of the *mishnah*--if you are worthy of it--it is possible that the soul of this *tanna* will abide in your mouth, and he [i.e., the *tanna*, viz. his soul] will become invested within it [i.e., the mouth] while you are reciting the *mishnah*. And then while you are reading the *mishnah* he will speak with your mouth and offer you a salutation of peace. Everything that you then think of asking him will he answer you. He will speak with your mouth and your ears will hear his words. It is not you yourself speaking, but he is the one who speaks. This is the meaning of: "The spirit of the Lord speaks by me and His word is upon my tongue." [II Samuel 23:2].

And if you are still unfit for this exalted level [of inspiration] it is possible for it to occur in another fashion. That is, on account of the vigor of your speaking, you will weary and become silent without your intending so. And direct your question in your mind and you will become drowsy, half asleep and half awake. Then in [this state of] drowsiness you will perceive an answer to your question--either as a veiled reference or explicitly. And it is all in accord with your preparedness.²⁶ (8)

Vital begins the instructions for this form of meditation by rejecting the path that employs magical formulae and holy names. Such methods are undoubtedly what he means by "special actions" in his opening statement of this chapter. Whereas earlier in the chapter he records such formulae and names, in the text we are considering here he disavows these means in favor of less magical methods.²⁷

Similar to the practice of *yihudim*, Vital sets forth two stages prior to the actual contemplation, a qualifying period in which the adept makes himself worthy, and a preparatory period in which he seeks to achieve a state of solitude. The qualifying stage parallels the *tikkunei 'avonot* required by Luria for the performance of *yihudim*. Those evil qualities, such as anger, sadness and idle conversation, must be expurgated from the soul. Such "sicknesses of the soul" serve as nourishment to the *Sitra Aħra* and are thus an impediment to cleaving

to the upper realms. The preparatory stage consists in those activities designed to bar all normal sensation and stimulation from the contemplative's psyche. Vital goes to some length to emphasize the intimate relationship between detaching oneself from matter and the attainment of divine inspiration. Anything that distracts a person's concentration will prevent his cleaving above. Undistracted attention produces a state of solitude. Here Vital clarifies what he means by the "slumber of solitude" or drowsiness to which he alludes in his diary. Such solitude is a solitude of the mind and body from all external and material sensation. The mind achieves a vacuity which enables it to become a vessel for divine inspiration.

Vital was particularly intrigued by the practice of solitude. Many of the authors whom he cites discuss the issue of solitude including Isaac of Acre, Recanati, the author of *Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut*, de Vidas and Cordovero.²⁸ Vital's instructions for achieving solitude resemble closely those in Abraham Abulafia's *Hayyei 'Olam ha-Ba'*.²⁹ Though Vital makes extensive reference to this Abulfian text he does not quote the passage dealing with preparations for contemplation. Nevertheless, the similarities between the two are striking. As in Vital's instructions set forth in the third and fourth chapters of *Shaarei Kedushah*, Abulafia includes: using a lonely house where there will be no distraction; wrapping oneself in a prayer-shawl, cleansing the body and wearing clean clothes; shutting out all mundane sensations and practicing contemplation at night.

As for the technique itself, it joins two elements of meditative methods with which Vital was well acquainted: recitation of

mishnayot and communion with the soul of a departed *ṣaddik*. It is clear that he drew upon both of these meditative ingredients in developing his own technique of reading in the *Mishnah*. In our analysis of maggidism we have discussed the nature of Joseph Karo's *Maggid*. Karo was able to induce the audition of his angelic mentor through the repetition of *mishnayot*. Often a great number of *mishnayot* had to be recited before the *Maggid* would visit him. He would fall asleep at night amid thoughts of the *Mishnah* and then begin to recite again upon wakening. In one case, Karo indicates that he recited about forty chapters before his *Maggid* appeared to him. Karo did not concentrate on any one *mishnah* in particular. The sheer quantity of *mishnayot* recited, as well as the incessant regularity with which it was done, appear to be the crucial features for him. Vital instructs the adept to recite the same *mishnah* over and over again. The mystic's simultaneous concentration on the communion of his soul with that of the *tanna* mentioned in the *mishnah*, is designed to produce a state of awareness in which he becomes open to such communion and the consequent communications. That is, the repetition of the *mishnah* appears to serve two functions. It deepens the contemplative's solitude, already somewhat achieved through physical actions. In addition, the vocalization of the *mishnah* functions as the means by which he focuses in on the sparks of his soul. By concentration on his voice, which consists in the "sparks of his inner soul," the adept brings his soul to the surface, as it were, from its deepest recesses. Here, as in the case of maggidism, vocalization is absolutely necessary for the

materialization of the revelatory voice. Even though "it is not you yourself speaking," the *tanna*'s voice becomes incarnate through the voice of the mystic himself. It would seem that at the moment speech burst forth involuntarily the *mishnah* reading is forcibly suspended, and the adept begins uttering the answers to whatever queries he might make of his communicating spirit.

As we have shown earlier, Vital was quite familiar with Karo and his *Maggid*. Vital appears to have had a deeply ambivalent attitude towards Karo. On the one hand, he extols Karo's greatness and admires the latter's position in the Safed community.³⁰ Vital even reports that his and Karo's soul-root are the same.³¹ On the other hand, Vital seems concerned with convincing himself of Karo's inferior status *vis-à-vis* his own. On one occasion, for example, Vital dreams that Karo appears in his house to honor him. Vital eats in his customary way, i.e., sparingly, whereas Karo consumes milk and cheese--displaying his less ascetic character.³² In another dream, God offers Vital the seat of honor to His right normally reserved for Karo!³³ Thus, it is evident that Karo held a special place in Vital's unconscious life. It should, therefore, not be surprising that he was drawn to a contemplative technique practiced by Karo. Inasmuch as Karo was the only person we know to have used the recitation of *mishnayot* for such purposes, it is apparent that Vital was directly influenced by the experiences of the renowned talmudist.

We must now consider the question of why Vital used the *Mishnah* as a vehicle for contemplative practice. While the link between Karo's

experiences and Vital's is evident, it alone does not explain the significance of the *Mishnah* to him. Was there any special meaning attached to *Mishnah* by the mystics of Safed? It is clear that the special study of the *Mishnah* became a popular activity in sixteenth century Safed. From several different sources it appears that renewed interest in learning the *Mishnah* was widespread. Moses Cordovero, in his list of special customs--presumably written for his followers--specifies the important place of *Mishnah* study. The following are required of the pious:

1. To study every Sabbath night as many *mishnayot* as he can.
2. To review each week all the *mishnayot* that he knows.
3. To learn at least two chapters of *mishnayot* by heart each week.³⁴ (9)

Cordovero's student, Abraham Galante, echoes his teacher's instructions regarding the study of the *Mishnah* on the Sabbath:

On the Sabbath night they [i.e., the pious] recite eight chapters from *Mishnah Shabbat* [i.e., the tractate of the *Mishnah* dealing with the laws of the Sabbath], in the morning eight and in the afternoon eight, since this was designed by our holy Rabbi [i.e., Judah ha-Nasi] when he arranged twenty-four chapters in the tractate *Shabbat* corresponding to the twenty-four ornaments of the [Sabbath] bride.³⁵ (10)

R. Abraham b. Eliezer ha-Levi Berukhim reports that most of the students of Torah study two or three chapters of *Mishnah* when they rise to study at midnight.³⁶ According to Elijah de Vidas, the pious study at least one chapter from each of the six orders of *Mishnah* every day.³⁷

One of the goals of regular study was memorization. Karo's *Maggid*, for instance, praises him for his diligence in attending to the

Mishnah and tells him that although there are also others who know the entire *Mishnah* by heart, none of them merit communications as he does.³⁸ An anonymous pietist informs us that there are a number of students of Torah who know all six orders of *Mishnah* by heart, though most have memorized only one.³⁹ Vital himself writes that Isaac Luria instructed him that he is only obligated to learn by heart the order of *Mishnah Nashim*.⁴⁰

We know also of a custom which involved chanting *Mishnah*. R. Joseph Ashkenazi (1525-1577) was known for his practice of chanting *mishnayot* and his intense interest in textual criticism of the *Mishnah*, by virtue of which he was called *ha-Tanna' ha-Gadol*.⁴¹ *Sefer Toldot ha-Ari* records that when Luria emigrated to Safed, one of the wise men that he met was the Ashkenazi called *Tanna' Gadol* because he always teaches *mishnayot* in melody.⁴² This was apparently a method by which he memorized the *Mishnah*. A story preserved in *Toldot ha-Ari* describes an experience in which Joseph Ashkenazi's singing of *mishnayot* produces a strange effect that Luria interprets as an omen of evil:

Once on a Sabbath night the Rabbi [i.e., Luria] came before the sage R. Joseph Ashkenazi known as *ha-Tanna' ha-Gadol*. They found that he was learning *mishnayot* by heart, as was his custom. [According to other versions: . . . learning *mishnayot* by heart melodically].⁴³ In the midst of study the candle [by which they were studying] began to bubble [*le-fa'pe'a*] as does a candle that has fallen into water. It did so for about half an hour. Upon leaving for home he encountered R. Avigdor, the son of R. Joseph Ashkenazi. He said to him: How is your younger brother? Frightened of answering he asked: Why does my lord ask about him? He is healthy. He [i.e., Luria] said to him: The candle has told me that in the course of this week he will depart for his eternal home. And so it was.⁴⁴ (11)

While this preoccupation with studying, memorizing and chanting the *Mishnah* on the part of the Safed Kabbalists represents an important backdrop against which to understand Vital's attraction to reading in the *Mishnah*, it remains for us to seek the meaning the *Mishnah* held for him elsewhere. For this we must turn to consideration of a complex set of associations which the *Mishnah* possessed in Hayyim Vital's Kabbalistic universe.

In classical Kabbalism the *Mishnah* is the representative of the Oral Torah, and as such, symbolizes the *Shekhinah*, i.e., *Malkhut*.⁴⁵ Correspondingly, the Written Torah is symbolized by *Tiferet*. The *Shekhinah* constitutes the female aspect of the Godhead, that part of God which is most manifest and closest to the world of man. She is the culmination point of God's ever-flowing self-revelation, containing within Her the light of all the other *Sefirot*. As such, the *Shekhinah* stands on the line between the world of God and the world of man. Most important, She is the point of contact between the Godhead and man through which the latter must pass during the course of mystical ascension. That is, She is the initial goal of the Kabbalist in his attempt to achieve *devekut*. While the *Shekhinah* is the fulfillment of all the other *Sefirot* from God's perspective, She is the beginning of the world of God from man's point of view. Because She is symbolized as the Oral Law, study of Torah and prayer draw a person closer to the *Shekhinah*. Moreover, in her guise as Oral Law the *Shekhinah* is the outspoken or articulate aspect of the divine Being. She is symbolized by the "speech of God"--*dibbur*--the final manifestation of God's "vocal"

revelation. Consequently, as we have seen earlier, She is the source of virtually all prophecy and divine inspiration.⁴⁶

In all these guises the *Mishnah*, as a symbol for the *Shekhinah*, makes an appropriate instrument of meditation. To pierce through the realm of the divine from that of the material, to experience esoteric revelations, the *Mishnah* served as a powerful tool. If *Mishnah/Shekhinah* is the well-spring of prophetic utterance and divine inspiration, the reading of *mishnayot* for contemplative purposes is especially potent. This identification of the *Mishnah* with the feminine principle within God is not overlooked by the Lurianic Kabbalists. In Vital's account of the *kavvanah* with which *mishnayot* ought to be read, found in *Sha'ar ha-Misvot*, the equation is made via another term associated with *Shekhinah*, i.e., *Metatron*:

Know that the *Mishnah* is the mystery of *Metatron*, which is [in the divine world of] *Yesirah*. One must concentrate upon raising up *Yesirah* to *Beriah* by this means in this fashion [i.e., reading of the *Mishnah*]. For the *Mishnah* is [in] *Yesirah*: intend that by your reading in it, the *Mishnah* which is *Yesirah* becomes *Neshamah* which is *Beriah*, as is known. And their letters are equivalent: *MSNH-NSMH* (משנה-נסמה).⁴⁷ (12)

The varied role of *Metatron* in Kabbalistic literature explains its association in this passage with the *Mishnah* and its relationship to *Shekhinah*. According to the *Zohar*, the "upper brightness" of Adam's soul which left him as a result of his sin, came to reside in Enoch so that he could perfect himself in this world. After achieving this, Enoch became transformed into *Metatron*, an angel who stood at the head of all angelic creatures.⁴⁸ *Metatron*'s most common appellation is *Naar*

(servant). This name indicates the role of *Metatron* as a servant to the *Shekhinah* (*Naḏar ha-Shekhinah*). He serves Her, aids in Her tasks and suckles divine light from Her. He is sometimes called the "light of the *Shekhinah*."⁴⁹ Elsewhere, *Metatron* is known as the *Shekhinah*'s son who draws all his strength from his mother.⁵⁰ *Metatron* is thus depicted as deriving from the light of the *Shekhinah*. Moreover, he is represented as the master of mystical secrets who opens the gates of wisdom and serves as the soul's guide to that hidden wisdom.⁵¹ He possesses the light of understanding which endows the soul with the ability to perceive heavenly mysteries. This light arouses a person, enabling him to attain that which would otherwise remain hidden from him.⁵² Even more, he gathers the souls of the righteous each night and raises them up to sing praises to God.⁵³ *Metatron* also has a special relationship to the souls of the departed righteous. They are in his hands, and in the world to come he will be responsible for their bodily resurrection.⁵⁴ In possession of the light taken from Adam before his sin, *Metatron* returns that light to the righteous individual. The latter require it for their soul's perfection and its ascent to the heavenly realms. *Metatron* thus symbolizes the goal of man's ascent---his self-perfection.

We see here, then, that just as *Mishnah* is always associated in Kabbalah with *Shekhinah*, *Metatron* is associated with *Shekhinah* as Her son and servant, who radiates his mother's light and receives those who ascend to the heavenly realm. According to Luria, man's task is to raise up *Metatron* to the higher world, i.e., that of the throne,

known as *Beriah* from the world of *Yeşirah*. This, according to Lurianic teaching, can be achieved through the contemplative act of reading and studying the *Mishnah*. Such activity transforms *Mishnah* into *Neshamah*, two words whose composition is equivalent. Vital adds that the word *Mishnah* in *gematria* is equal to the words: "I shall not forget her" ($\aleph \delta \aleph \delta \epsilon \iota \kappa \iota \kappa \delta$). This teaches us not to remiss in studying *Mishnah*.⁵⁵ Thus, according to Luria, study and recitation of *mishnayot* serves a deeply mystical purpose. It raises up the lower *Shekhinah* from the world of *Yeşirah* to that of *Beriah*.

This same set of associations is found in Karo's system as propounded by his *Maggid*. We have seen elsewhere that not only did Karo's mentor speak as a result of his *Mishnah* study, but it was *identical* with the *Mishnah* itself. In other words, the *Maggid* was the personification of the *Mishnah*. That the *Mishnah* is also identical with the *Shekhinah* is also clear. The *Maggid* often says: "I am the *Shekhinah* that speaketh to you."⁵⁶ In one passage the *Maggid/Mishnah* suggests its guise as *Shekhinah/Bride* by describing herself as being adorned by the recitation of *mishnayot*:

Lo, I am the *Mishnah* that speaketh in thy mouth, that adorneth herself with excellent adornments, the strings of *mishnayot* which thou always recitest.⁵⁷

This description parallels the earlier-quoted passage by Abraham Galante, in which the twenty-four chapters of *Mishnah Shabbat* to be read on the Sabbath constitute the ornaments of the Sabbath bride. As in the Lurianic scheme in which the *Mishnah* is identified with *Metatron*,

the servant of the *Shekhinah*, Karo identifies the *Mishnah/Shekhinah* with the lesser servant of the female *Sefirah*.⁵⁸ Thus, we see in Karo the same basic set of associations: *Mishnah-Shekhinah-Meṭatron*.

Of what significance is all this for Vital on the plane of mystical contemplation? It is reasonable to suggest that the transformation of *Mishnah* to *Neshamah* which is realized by the study of the *Mishnah*--as our text in *Sha'ar ha-Miṣvot* indicates--represents the ascent of the mystic's own soul to a higher world. The transformation represents the elevation of the soul to the place of *Meṭatron*--the world of *Beriah*. That is, the adept himself undergoes a mystic transformation to a higher plane in which he comes into contact with the divine light radiating there.⁵⁹ Moreover, the Zoharic associations with *Meṭatron* suggest that *Meṭatron* also represents the soul's guide to the hidden mysteries of the divine sphere. Luria's association of *Mishnah* with *Meṭatron*, the keeper of heavenly secrets, is perfectly understandable. The study of *mishnayot*, with proper *kavvanah*, raises one to the level of *Meṭatron* where the keys to divine mysteries are held.

The second constituent element of Vital's technique of reading in the *Mishnah* consists in the communion with souls of departed *ṣaddikim*. We have already discussed in some detail two other meditative techniques in which such communion was an intrinsic goal. One of these is in the case of maggidic revelation where the celestial voice produced by a man's actions joins that of a departed *ṣaddik*. The voice that speaks through the mystic's mouth is that of the *ṣaddik*. This merging is only possible if the adept is from the same soul-root

as the *ṣaddik*, or if the adept performs a *miṣvah* which is in accordance with this *ṣaddik*'s character. Strictly speaking, this Lurianic theory of maggidism does not talk of soul-communion, but rather of the uniting of voices. Nevertheless, the essential concept remains the same. Moreover, the result is identical in both cases: automatic speech in which the voice of the *ṣaddik* or *tanna'* discloses esoteric or Kabbalistic knowledge.

The second technique in which such communion is a primary component is the performance of *yihudim*. This is true whether they are performed by actually prostrating oneself upon the grave of this *ṣaddik*, or in one's home. As with maggidic revelation and Vital's technique of reading in the *Mishnah*, the result of successful meditation is again mystical illumination by means of automatic speech. As in the technique developed by Vital, the voice has a particular identity--in this case it is the *ṣaddik* upon whose grave the *yihud* is performed. We have seen, of course, that Ḥayyim Vital practiced such *yihudim* on a regular basis and experienced esoteric communications in just this manner.

Why was discourse or revelations from the mouths of *ṣaddikim* or *tannaim* so highly prized? Why is so much effort devoted towards cleaving to the soul of a departed saint? In our analysis of the *yihudim*, we learned that this technique enabled the souls of the living and the departed to mutually aid one another in their heavenly ascent. Moreover, it was believed that the souls of the departed had greater access to the realms above. But beyond this, the Safed Kabbalists were immensely interested in the origins and fate of all souls. They did

not tire of speculating on the vicissitudes of the souls of biblical personalities, talmudic figures as well as their own souls. The doctrines of *ibbur* and metempsychosis compelled them to learn their personal "soul-tree" as well as seek the soul-ancestry of their contemporaries. They felt that their own destinies were intimately bound up with, and in a sense controlled by, the nature of the souls with whom they were connected. In other words, their religious consciousness was thoroughly immersed in the world of past spiritual personalities. The accomplishments, shortcomings, status and importance of former rabbinic figures was not a matter of mere historical curiosity to them. It was a question of immediate and ultimate significance. It was a method of analyzing oneself--of delving into one's spiritual origins and learning about the possibilities in store. No less important, it was a means of fixing one's status within the community--a concern that appears to have been especially strong for this extraordinary group of individuals. All this resulted in a situation where communication and communion with departed souls was considered not only possible, but extremely advantageous. The latter were a repository of wisdom and knowledge of a specific sort. They knew all about the situation and the destiny of the souls of the living. Furthermore, they possessed Kabbalistic knowledge that was hidden and shielded from present day Kabbalists. The truly righteous of earlier ages, who merited God's grace and mercy, were fortunately within reach of those pietists who had made themselves fit and worthy for such communion.

III

How are we to understand the immense preoccupation with the revelation of new mystical knowledge on the part of the Kabbalists of the Safed community? Aside from the personal aspirations described above, what other significance was attached to the acquisition of esoteric wisdom? This question applies to the several methods of achieving mystical illumination with which this study has been concerned.

We have already seen, particularly in reference to the Lurianic *yihudim*, the relationship between mystical contemplation and messianism. Luria is ultimately concerned with the task of *tikkun*--the goal of all religious activity. There is an aspect of the relationship between contemplation and messianism which we have not considered, however, and which is relevant to the variety of methods studied. This is the intimate relationship between the approach of redemption and the increasing knowledge of Kabbalistic mysteries.⁶⁰ An analysis of this theme will help us understand more fully the meaning of the meditative techniques and theories we have treated.

In the *Rāya Mehemna* the eschatological aspect of Kabbalistic knowledge forms a significant motif.⁶¹ Although rooted in a traditional halakhic framework, the *Rāya Mehemna* is written out of an acute messianic expectation. Utilizing the biblical symbols of the "Tree of Life" (*Etz ha-Hayyim*) and the "Tree of Knowledge" (*Etz ha-Da'at*), also known as the "Tree of Death" because its fruit brings death, the author

of this Zoharic text distinguishes between the "Messianic Torah" and the "Torah of Exile." The "Tree of Knowledge" represents the world in its present state of exile and sin--a world in which both good and evil exist. This world requires all the laws and restrictions in order to cope with the powers of evil. Unredeemed existence is sustained by the limits and standards imposed upon man. The "Tree of Life" represents the pure continuous flow of divine light in which no admixture of evil is present. Prior to Adam's sin this tree prevailed in the world; it will rule again in the time of redemption. This Torah, now hidden, contains the mystical meaning of the Torah which will be completely revealed in the messianic future. The "Messianic Torah," i.e., the "Tree of Life," is *partially* revealed, however, through the *Zohar*. Not only will the esoteric layer of meaning prevail in the redeemed future but the very study of the *Zohar* will *facilitate* the redemption. Through the merits of the book *Zohar*, writes the author of the *Raya Mehemna*, the children of Israel will be redeemed from exile:

And the enlightened will understand [for they are from] the side of *Binah* which is the Tree of Life. Of them it is written: "And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness [*zohar*] of the firmament;" [Dan. 12:3], by this composition of yours [R. Simeon b. Yoḥai], which is the book *Zohar*; from the brightness of the supernal Mother [Binah] *Teshubah*. Those [who study the *Zohar*] do not need to be tested--and since in the future Israel will taste the Tree of Life which is the book *Zohar* they will be delivered from the exile in mercy.⁶² (13)

This motif is also found in *Tikkunei Zohar*. The end of days will be accompanied by the complete disclosure of the *Zohar*, the

repository of all divine mysteries. Moreover, the revelation of the *Zohar*'s inner secrets will be instrumental in bringing the redemption near:

And how many men below will be nourished by this book of yours when it will be revealed below [in this world] in the final generation, at the end of days. And because of it [i.e., the *Zohar*] "you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land." [Lev. 25:10]⁶³ (14)

A further attestation of the prevalence of this doctrine is found in the debate surrounding the publishing of the *Zohar* in Mantua in 1558. The proposal to publish the *Zohar* and the *Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut* aroused bitter dispute among the Italian rabbis. Isaac de Lattes (d. c. 1570), vigorously supporting the publishing plan, wrote a decision in which he systematically refuted the opposing arguments that had been set forth.⁶⁴ His argument draws upon the conception found in the *Zohar* itself to the effect that Israel would merit redemption by virtue of the *Zohar*:

Hence it is clear to you that the merit of studying the book *Zohar* is sufficient to deliver us and to overturn our exile-- and of this it is said: "If they are worthy I will hasten it" [i.e., the redemption].⁶⁵ For, on account of it [the *Zohar*] Israel will be redeemed.⁶⁶ (15)

This theme assumes immense significance in the sixteenth century. In the messianic tension which was rife following the Spanish expulsion, Kabbalism turned fully outward in its appeal to the masses. It now demanded of the community of Israel at large participation in religious activities in order to quicken a process already set in motion. These

activities included not only penitential acts, pious living and mystical prayer--but preoccupation with the secrets of Kabbalah itself. It is not that Kabbalah was no longer viewed as esoteric knowledge. Now, however, such knowledge was not to be restricted to a small number of initiates. The esoteric nature of Kabbalah did not depend wholly on the fact that it had been confined to small mystical circles in earlier Kabbalism. It derived from the deeper level of knowledge that it represented. Thus, Kabbalism could make a general appeal without divesting itself of its special qualities. It is precisely because redemption was nearing that study of the hidden wisdom became necessary. This issue is directly addressed by an anonymous sixteenth century Kabbalist whose testimony is preserved in the introduction to Abraham Azulai's *Or ha-Hammaḥ*:

I have found it written that the heavenly decree prohibiting the study of the Kabbalah in public was valid only for a limited period until the end of the year 250 [1490 C.E.]. Thereafter it [i.e., the generation living at that time] would be called the last generation [before the final redemption]. The decree was abrogated and permission was granted to study the *Zohar*. From the year 300 [1540 C.E.] onward it will be accounted an act of special merit to both old and young to study [Kabbalah] in public, as it is stated in the *Rāya Mehemna*. And since the messianic king will appear through the merits [of this study] and through none other it behooves us not to be remiss.⁶⁷ (16)

This theme is also found in Lurianic doctrine. Sin and exile have caused the exile of the secrets of the Torah. But though the Torah's mysteries are essentially hidden, in the end of days they will be revealed once again. In *Shḥar ha-Kavvanot* we read of the "Exiled Torah."

And concentrate in this regard, upon the burning of the Torah that has become ashes. And also concentrate, as we have explained in *Sha'ar Ruah ha-Kodesh*, as to how since the Temple was destroyed and the Torah burned, its mysteries and secrets have been delivered up to the external powers [*la-hiṣonim*]. And this is called the exile of the Torah.⁶⁸ (17)

This doctrine goes to the heart of Lurianism. Holy sparks have become trapped in impure shells. But a spiritually pious and rigorously ascetic life, combined with adeptness at certain mystical techniques, can enable a person to redeem elements of holiness. In this case, that which is imprisoned or "exiled" are the mystical secrets of Torah itself, that is Kabbalistic knowledge. Religious life involves developing those skills by which one will be capable of inducing esoteric revelations. In the future end of days, every Israelite will attain knowledge of the entire Torah, whereas now only fragments are within reach.⁶⁹

In the Lurianic framework the revelations merited in the unredeemed state are not merely foreshadowings of redemption; they are actually *instrumental* in hastening the messianic age. The celestial communications that abounded in Safed were symptomatic of redemption in that their disclosure pointed to the nearing of the end. But they were also conceived of as salvational in and of themselves. Explicit evidence of this is found in a passage in *Sefer ha-Gilgulim*:

. . . in these, our generations, which are the final generations, it is necessary to reveal the true knowledge in order that the Messiah will come, as it is written in the *Tikkunim*, that by the merit of the *Zohar* the King Messiah will be revealed.⁷⁰ (18)

By the time of Luria's arrival the Kabbalists of Safed believed strongly in the imminence of redemption. The year 1575 was widely held to be the year of the Messiah. Mordecai Dato, an important Italian Kabbalist who studied with Moses Cordovero from 1560 to about 1566, composed the book *Migdal David* which was devoted to predicting the redemption in 1575.⁷¹ The Yemenite traveller al-Dahari, who visited Safed in 1567, reports messianic expectations for 1575.⁷² D. Tamar has suggested that Luria himself was probably convinced that this would be the year of redemption, and that it was this belief that compelled him to leave Egypt and come to Safed.⁷³ There is evidence that Luria was looked upon as the Messiah son of Joseph, the figure who would appear prior to the Messiah son of David, in order to combat the forces of evil. Luria's death in 1572 seemed to strengthen this conviction.⁷⁴ When the Messiah failed to appear in 1575 it was believed that this was merely the beginning of the messianic age, after which each year might be the redemptive one. A text written by the Kabbalist Moses Prager toward the end of the seventeenth century claims that in the year 1575 all knowledge which was esoteric had become exoteric by virtue of Luria's teachings. Men are duty bound to purify the holy sparks by the study of the *Zohar* and *Tikkunei Zohar* according to their Lurianic interpretations.⁷⁵ In other words, Lurianic teaching itself came to be seen in this same salvational way. Luria's doctrines were regarded as part of the new revelations whose acceptance and understanding pointed to and helped bring near the Messiah.

Thus it is clear that both during Luria's lifetime as well as after his death, the conviction was commonly held that the study of Kabbalah, disclosure of new revelations and the increasing spread of Kabbalistic knowledge were directly connected to the coming of the Messiah. No mere promise of redemption compelled Luria and his followers. They were driven to seek celestial communications and novel Kabbalistic interpretations, as these were regarded as crucial features of the fulfillment of time and the messianic deliverance. They were convinced that they were living at a dramatic turning point in history in which the final secrets of the Torah were being disclosed.

Here we witness a perfect fusion of two tendencies: mystical and messianic. Kabbalistic contemplation has as its goal not merely the spiritual fulfillment of the individual, but the end of historic time and the beginning of messianic time. As a central and determinative element of Lurianic Kabbalah, messianism penetrated the most private realm of religious practice, mystical contemplation. The Lurianic Kabbalists who devoted themselves to the techniques for achieving mystical illumination which we have studied, had to have been acutely aware of the cosmic significance of their sacred task.

Notes to Chapter Four

¹ See above, pp.2, 16. Concerning Alsheikh's literary work see S. Shalem, *Sefunot*, 5 (1961), pp. 151-206; *idem*, *Sefunot*, 6 (1962), pp. 197-258.

² Published in Constantinople, 1641, 88c.

³ *Be'er Mayyim Hayyim* is preserved in Ms. Oxford Neubauer Catalogue Bodleian no. 832; his commentaries on the Talmud are extant in Ms. Guenzburg 283 and have been published at the end of the *El ha-Mekorot Talmud*, appearing in Jerusalem since 1959.

⁴ Chapters two and six of this work were preserved in his own handwriting in the collection of R. Alter of Gur (no. 185; dated 1575); the part on the Torah was published as *Es ha-Daat Tov* in Zolkiew, 1866 and another section, including commentaries on Proverbs and Job was published in Jerusalem, 1906.

⁵ First published in Constantinople, 1734.

⁶ *Leb David* (Leghorn, 1789); *Derekh Hayyim* (Jerusalem, 1938).

⁷ The publication of this book in 1954 by A. Z. Aeshcoly aroused embarrassment and controversy in some rabbinic circles in Israel. There were some who were unwilling to accept the authenticity of a work which revealed Hayyim Vital's interests in "occult sciences." Mosad ha-Rav Kuk did not choose to print a second edition. Professor G. Scholem has drawn my attention to this matter in a personal communication.

⁸ Jerusalem, 1866.

⁹ See for example, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, pp. 42, 49, 66, 87.

¹⁰ Vital offers a justification for recording his dreams and cites rabbinic sources where dreams are deemed significant, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 54.

¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 42. The time of *Minḥah* is traditionally a "favored time" (*et rason*).

¹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 54.

14 *Op. cit.*, p. 55.

15 *Ibid.*

16 *Ibid.*

17 *Op. cit.*, p. 135.

18 Chapter 3, gate 7.

19 *Ibid.*

20 This introduction to the fourth chapter is found in all the printed editions of *Shafarei Kedushah*.

21 I have used Ms. 749 British Museum (BM), folios 10-28; I know of two other copies: Guenzburg 691 which is presently inaccessible and a ms. copied by R. Sasson b. Moshe, author of *Shemen Sasson* and member of the *Bet-El* circle. The latter ms. is in the collection of M. Benayahu but contains only part of the BM text. Of the BM and Benayahu mss. only the former includes the portion with which we are directly concerned.

22 See Ms. BM, folios 10-28, passim.

23 In general, the format of the text does not give the reader a sense of it being well conceived.

24 See, for example, folios 11-12.

25 *Op. cit.*, folios 15b-16b.

26 *Op. cit.*, folios 15b-16a.

27 In *SRH*, 41a-42a, Vital reports that Luria told him why "practical Kabbalah" can no longer be practiced in their time. By "practical Kabbalah" Vital means purely motivated "white" magic, practiced primarily by employing esoteric Names of God and angels. According to Vital, Luria told him such practice ought not be done inasmuch as present day men have no means of completely purifying themselves. Vital also indicates, however, two other answers given by Luria to this matter when asked about it by Elijah de Vidas. On the one hand, Luria tells de Vidas that persons in whom there is found no blemish whatsoever can utilize Names of God. Such persons are not vulnerable to the dangers of the *Sitra Ahra*. Contradicting this report, however, is the statement that Luria believed it was prohibited to employ such means because the Names which have come down to us are incorrect: ". . . indeed, if we knew the proper and true Names, we would be permitted to use them." Vital discusses this issue in chapter

three, gate six of *Sha'arei Kedushah*. Concerning Vital's attitude see Werblowsky, *Karo*, pp. 71 ff. Vital's ambivalent attitude appears to be reflected in chapter four in his simultaneous use and disavowal of such angelic names. It would seem that he adheres to that opinion which prohibits their use to all but the absolutely pure pietist.

28 BM MS., folios 15b, 18a.

29 *Ḥayyei 'Olam ha-Ba'*, 36b.

30 Cf. *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, pp. 22, 90.

31 Cf. *op. cit.*, pp. 146, 198.

32 *Op. cit.*, p. 75; cf. *op. cit.*, p. 82.

33 *Op. cit.*, p. 46.

34 Solomon Schechter, *Studies in Judaism*, p. 294.

35 *Op. cit.*, p. 297; concerning such practice by Luria and Vital see Benayahu, *Sefer Toldot ha-Ari*, pp. 330-1 and n. 4.

36 Schechter, *Studies*, p. 297. Cf. Elijah de Vidas, *Toṣa'ot Ḥayyim*, p. 26.

37 Elijah de Vidas, *Toṣa'ot Ḥayyim*, p. 44.

38 Werblowsky, *Karo*, p. 274. Memorization was, of course, the means by which the *Mishnah* was originally taught and transmitted. Cf. *Abot* 3:8-9; *Ḥagigah* 9b; *Erubin* 54b.

39 From a list of Safed customs published by Y.M. Toledano, *Oṣar Genazim* (Jerusalem, 1960), p. 51.

40 *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, p. 158.

41 Concerning the life and work of R. Joseph Ashkenazi see, G. Scholem, "New Information about R. Joseph Ashkenazi, the *tanna* from Safed," (in Hebrew), *Tarbiṣ*, vol. 28 (1958-9), pp. 59-89, 201-35.

42 Benayahu, *Sefer Toldot ha-Ari*, pp. 122, 156.

43 *Op. cit.*, p. 187, n. 6.

44 *Op. cit.*, pp. 187-8. According to one source, Luria himself used to recite *mishnayot* by singing, *op. cit.*, p. 321, n. 4.

45 See, for example, I. Tishby, *Perush ha-Aggadot*, 1a-b, 24b and *Zohar II*, 200a. Cf. Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim*, *Sha'ar ha-Kinuyim* on *Mishnah*.

46 See above, p.35, 143-4.

47 *Sha'ar ha-Misvot*, p. 80.

48 Cf. *Zohar Hadash*, 68c-d, *Shir ha-Shirim*, 16b-c. This motif and the others described here are connected to the role of *Metatron* in the esoteric literature of the talmudic period. Concerning this see, G. Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 67-70; *idem*, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York, 1960), pp. 43-55. Concerning the extremely varied role of *Metatron* in Jewish literature see the extensive references and citations in R. Margolioth, *Malakhei Elyon* (Jerusalem, 1964), pp. 73-108.

49 *Zohar II*, 65b-66b.

50 *Op. cit.*, I, 223b.

51 *Op. cit.*, I, 36b, 56b.

52 *Zohar Hadash*, 63c-64a.

53 *Op. cit.*, 38a, 41a.

54 *Zohar I*, 126a-128b; 181b-182b.

55 *Sha'ar ha-Misvot*, p. 81.

56 Werblowsky, *Karo*, p. 267.

57 *Ibid.*

58 *Op. cit.*, p. 271; Cf. all of chapter ten.

59 While Vital does not spell out this step, it is precisely this understanding of *Mishnah* study that motivates the following comment by an important later Kabbalist who came to Palestine in 1621, Isaiah Hurwitz:

Therefore, let thine occupation be mainly the *mishnayot*, to study and rehearse them constantly. . . . Blessed is he who comes to know the six orders of the *Mishnah* by heart, for thereby he makes a ladder on which his soul ascends to the highest degree. This is hinted at by the equivalence of the letters of the words *Mishnah* and *Neshamah* . . . , *Shnei Luhot ha-Berit*, 181b.

Hurwitz, known as *Ha-Shelah ha-Kadosh*, "the holy *Shelah*," from the initials of his major work, *Shmei Luhot ha-Berit*, grew up and studied in Poland. In the year 1621 he moved to Jerusalem where he became the rabbi of the Ashkenazi community. Hurwitz's *Shmei Luhot ha-Berit* is a vast compendium of *halakhah*, homily and Kabbalah which became enormously popular in Central and Eastern Europe.

60 G. Scholem has discussed this relationship in *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 17-22. Concerning the fusion of Kabbalah and messianism, in general, see *idem*, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York, 1971).

61 The *Raya Mehemna* is a separate part of the *Zohar* on the Kabbalistic significance of the *mišvot*. It belongs to the latest layer of the Zoharic literature, and was composed in the final years of the thirteenth century or the early years of the fourteenth.

62 *Zohar* III, 124b.

63 *Tikkunei Zohar*, 23b-24a. Cf. 53b.

64 For a full study of the controversy see I. Tishby, "*Ha-Pulmus 'al Sefer ha-Zohar bi-meah ha-shesh 'esreh be-Italyah*," *Perakim* (Jerusalem, 1967), pp. 131-82.

65 *Sanhedrin*, 98a.

66 This decision appears at the beginning of the Mantua edition. I have used the Jerusalem edition of 1844-6.

67 *Or ha-Hammah*, 1b of the introduction. I have used the translation of this passage in G. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 21-22.

68 *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot*, 375a.

69 Cf. *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim*, 48a; *Sha'ar Ma'amarei Razal*, 86a.

70 *Sefer ha-Gilgulim* (Przemysal, 1875), 34.

71 *Migdal David*, Bodleian Library, Ms. Opp. Add. 4^o 153. See regarding this work and the matter of 1575 as the year of redemption, D. Tamar, "The Messianic Expectations for 1575 in Italy," (in Hebrew) *Sefunot*, 2 (1958), pp. 61-88. Concerning Dato's life and his years in Safed see I. Tishby, *Sefunot*, 7 (1963), pp. 137-66.

72 See the extract from his *Sefer ha-Musar* published in *Ohel David*, the Catalogue of Mss. in the Sassoon Library, col. 1026.

⁷³ D. Tamar, "Luria and Vital as the Messiah ben Joseph," (in Hebrew) *Sefunot*, 7 (1963), pp. 167-79.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ See Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 69.

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APPENDIX

HEBREW TEXTS

CHAPTER 1

- (1) . . . בהיות האדם צדיק וחסיד ועוסק בתורה ומתפלל בכוונה מאותן הקולות שיוצאין מפיו נבראו מלאכין ורוחין קדישין. . . . ואלו המלאכים הנבראים ממה שיוצאים מפי האדם הם סוד המגידים.
- (2) וכמשז"ל, כל העושה מצוה אחת קנה לו פרקליט אחד וכו', כי מדבור האדם, נוצרים מלאכים טובים או רעים, כפי דבורו.
- (3) אמנם הכל כפי מעשה האדם, כי אם אותה התורה שיעסוק בה, קורא אותה לשמה, יהיה המלאך הנברא משם, קדוש הוא מאד, ועליון מאד, ונאמן בכל דבריו באמת גמור. וכך אם קורא אותה בלי שבושים וטעיות, יהיה המלאך ההוא בלי טעות, ויהיה נאמן בכל דבריו, וכך המצוה שעושה האדם, אם היא כחקנה נעשה ממנה מלאך קדוש מאד. . . . ואמנם ודאי הוא שגדול הוא כח המלאך הנעשה מעסק התורה, מכח (המלאך) הנעשה ע"י אותה המצוה.
- (4) ויש אנשים שאין המגידים הנזכרים מתגלים להם כלל, ויש מי שמתגלים להם, והכל הוא כפי בחי' נשמותיהם, או כפי מעשיהם. . . .
- (5) והסימן שנתן לי מורי ז"ל הוא, בראותינו אם הוא מאמת בכל דבריו. או אם כל דבריו לשם שמים, ולא יבטל אפילו אות אחת מדבריו, וגם אם ידע לבאר רזי התורה וסודותיה. זה ודאי נוכל להאמין בו. וכפי דבריו נוכל לידע ולהכיר גדלו ומעלתו כפי ידיעתו.
- (6) והנה סוד הנבואה ורוח הקדש, ודאי שהוא קול שלוח מלמעלה, לדבר עם הנביא ההוא, או עם בעל רוח הקדש ההוא, אבל אותו הקול העליון הרוחני, אי אפשר הקול ההוא לבדו, להתגשם וליכנס באזני הנביא ההוא, אם לא ע"י שיתלבש תחלה באותו הקול הגשמי, שיוצא מפי האדם ההוא, בהיותו עתה עו-

סק בתורה או בחפלה וכיוצא, ואז מחלבש בו, ומחבר עמו, ובא עד אזן הנביא שהוא ושמעו, ובלתי קול האדם עצמו ה- גשמי עתה, אי אפשר להיות.

(7) וז"ס פסוק שמואל ב' כ"ג ב', "רוח ה' דבר בי ומלתו על לשוני." כי הרוח והמלה שהוא דבור הא', הנעשה כבר ע"י עסק התורה והמצוה וכנז"ל, הוא השורה עתה עליו על לשונו, ויוצא ממש מחוך פיו קול ודבור, ומדבר ממש בפיו, ואז האדם שומעו.

(8) גם אפשר באופן אחר: שיתלבש אוחו קול עליון, בקול של צדיקים אחרים ראשונים שקדמו אליו, מזמן הראשונים, או מאותם שבזמנו עכשיו. ושניהם יתחברו, ויבואו וידברו עמו. . . דע, שאי אפשר כלל שיבא קול, או דבור, או הבל של צדיק אחר לדבר עמו, אא"כ יהיה הצדיק ההוא, משו- רש נשמת האיש הזה של עכשיו, או אם יהיה שעשה האיש ה- זה איזו מצוה, כפי גדר הצדיק ההוא. וע"י אחד משני תנ- אים אלו, יבא וישרה עליו ע"ד הנזכר.

(9) ואינון הבלים קיומא דעלמא דלעילא וחתא. . . אלא הכי אוקמוה והכי הוא. ה"ח בשעתא דעובדין מתכשרן לתתא ובר נש אשתדל בפולחנא דמלכה קדישא ההוא מלה דעביד הבל אתעביד מיניה לעילא. ולית לך הבל דלית ליה קלא דסליק ואחערט לעילא ואחערט סניגורא קמי קב"ה. וכל אינון עובדין דאשתדל בהו בר נש דלאו אינון פולחנא דקב"ה ההוא מלה דעביד. הבל יתעביד מיניה ואזלא ושאתת בעלמא. וכד נפקת נשמתיה דבר נש ההוא הבל מגלגלא ליה בעלמא כאבנא בקוטפיתא. . . אבל ההיא מלה דאיהי פולחנא דמריה דא סליק לעילא מן שמשא ואחערט מניה הבל קדישא. . .

(10) וז"ס מ"ש רז"ל, "איך דבור ודבור יוצא מפי הקב"ה, שאינו נברא ממנו מלאך." והוא ענין ההבל והקול, היוצא מפיו בעת זרוג הנשיקין העליונים כנזכר. וזש"ה, (תהלים ל"ג ו') "וברוח פיו כל צבאם." ואלו המלאכים הנקראים קולות,

כנזכר בספר התקונים, על פסוק (שמות כ' י"ח) "וכל העם רואים את הקולות." וגדולה מזאת נודע, כי אפילו מדבור האדם, נוצרים מלאכים אחרים, אם טובים ואם רעים.

(11) א"ל אי מלה הדתא ידעת דאנא ערטיא בה. א"ל אימה. אמר קלא דהדרא בעינא למנדע. ב"נ יהיב קלא מחקלא או באתר אחרא ודהרא קלא אחרא ולא ידיע א"ל אי חסידא קד-ישא על מלה דא כמה קלין אתערו . . .

(12) וזה ענין המלאכים המתגלים אל (בני) האדם, ומודיעים אותם עתידות, וסודות, ונקראים בספרים מגידים.

(13) See p. 41, n. 49.

(14) ר' יוסף קארו ע"ה (ש) בכל פעם ופעם שהיה חוזר על המשניות בעל פה נחגלה עליו המגיד . . . וכל הדברים שגילה לו המגיד העלה אותם על ספר ויקרא אותו ספר המגיד.

(15) וכך ואינו יחלבש בו מלאך וידבר בו דברי חכמות, וזה שיקראוהו בני אדם מגיד.

(16) כל דברי הספר ההוא (ברית סנוחה) דברי רזה"ק נמסר מפה אל פה או על פה מגיד נאמן לחסיד וקדוש.

(17) . . . היא מה שנסיחיו אני וזולתי בענין הגרושים, שהיינו מחגורשים השדה, עם האלהי כמהר"ר שלמה בן אלקביץ הלוי נר"ו לעסוק בפסוקי החורה פתאום בלי עיון, והיו הדברים מחדשים דברים שאי אפשר להאמין ענין זה, אלא מי שראה או נסה הענין פעמים רבות, ומתנוח שקבלתי בגרושים, ובאו לחלקי בחמלת ה' עלי, אעתיק אותם בקונטרס בפני עצמו.

CHAPTER 2

(1) לפי שעל ידם מתבטל כח אותם הקליפות, הנאחזות במלאכים החומריים ומתדבקים בהם באדם, האוכל אותם. ועל ידי הברכות שעליהם, הנאמרות בכונה, הוא מסיר מהם הקליפות ההם

ומזכר החומר שלו, ונעשה זך, ומוכן לקבל קדושה. והז-
הירני מאד בזה.

(2) לפי שהאדם נברא מחומר וצורה שהוא נפש ורוח ונשמה, שהיא חלק אלוה ממעל, שנאמר ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים. וגופו הוא חומר עכור מצד הקליפה, המקטרגת ומונעת האדם משלי-מות הנפש להכריחה מאילנא דחיי. . . . ולכן אין אדם צדיק בארץ אשר יעשה טוב ולא יחטא. וידוע שהחטא פגם וכתם וחלודה בנפש, וזהו חולי הנפש ה-טהורה. וכשהיא בטנופה ובכתומה, אינה יכולה לראות ול-השיג השלמות האמיתי, שהוא סודות התורה. . . . והעון נעשה מסך ומבדיל בינה לבין קונה, לראות ולהבין בדברים העליונים קדושים וטהורים, שנאמר תורת ה' תמימה משיבת נפש. . . . כך הנפש כשהיא טהורה וזכה, אז מצטיירים בה הדברים הקדושים העליונים, וכשהיא בחלודה ובכתומה אז כל מר מתוק. כמו שהחולה כשהוא בחליו, הוא מואס ה-דברים הטובים ואוהב הדברים המכבדים החולי(ם). והרופא לקרב לו הבריאות, נותן לו סממנים, מהם כלענה. שבאותם הדברים יחזור הטבע לטבעו הראשון, ובריאותו כשהיה. כך הנפש החולה, להסיר החולי ממנה, צריך שיקבל עליו מ-רירות הרפואה, וחשובה, בסיגופים ובתעניות, בשק ובאפר ומלקיות, ובטבילות, וטהרה מטינוף וכתם העונות. כדי שיוכל להשיג ולהבין בדברים העליונים, שהם כבשונו של עולם. . . .

(3) והוא לא היה מגלה שום סוד מסודות החכמה הקדושה הזאת, למי שהיה רואה ברוח הקדש, פגם בנפשו, עד שהיה נוחן לו תקון לתקן את כל אשר עיוות, וכמו שהרופא הבקי, נותן לכל חולי הסם הצריך לרפאת אהוה החולי, כך ע"ה היה מכיר העון, ואומר לו המקום שפגם, ונותן לו התיקון שצריך לאותו עון, לכבס נפשו, כדי שיוכל לקבל האור העליון, כדכתיב "כבסי מרעה לבך ירושלים למען חושע" (ירמיה ד: יד).

(4) בכל אינון חובין דאסתאב בהו ב"נ בהאי עלמא דא איהו
 חובא דאסתאב ביה ב"נ יחיר בהאי עלמא ובעלמא דאתי מאן
 דאושיד זרעיה בריקניא.

CHAPTER 3

(1) רבי אבא הוה אחי מטבריה לבי סורניא דחמוי ור' יעקב
 בריה הוה עמיה. אערעו בכפר טרשא. כד בעו למשכב אמר
 ר' אבא למריה דביתא איה הכה תרנגולא. א"ל אצטרוך דהא
 סימנא לי בביתא דהדין טקלא דקמי ערסאי מלינא ליה מיא
 ונטייף טייף בפלגות ליליא ממש אתרקן כלהו מיא ואחגל-
 גל האי קיטפא ונהים ואשתמע קלא בכל ביתא וכדין הוא פל-
 גות ליליא ואשחדל באורייתא ובגיני כך עבד האי. אמר
 ר' אבא בריך רחמנא דשדוני הכה. בפלגות ליליא נהים ה-
 הוא גלגלא דקיטפא. קמו רבי אבא ורבי יעקב שמעו לההוא
 גברא דהוה יתיב בשפולי ביתא ותרין בנוי עמיה והוה אמר
 כתיב חצות לילה אקום להודות לך על משפטי צדקך מאי קא
 חמא דוד דאיהו אמר חצות לילה ולא בחצות לילה אלא חצות
 ודאי לקב"ה אמר הכי וכי קב"ה הכי אקרי. איך דהא חצות
 לילה ממש קב"ה אשתכח וסיעתא דיליה וכדין היא שעתא דעייל
 בגנתא דעדן לאשתעשעא עם צדיקיא. אמר רבי אבא לרבי יעקב
 ודאי נשתחף בשכינתא ונתחבר כחדא קריבו ויתיבו עמיה אמרו
 ליה אימא מלה דפומך דשפיר קאמרת. מנא לך האי. אמר
 לון מלה דא אוליפנא מסבאי. וחו הוה אמר דתלת (נ"א ד-
 חלת) שעתא קמייתא דליליא כל דינין דלחחא מתערין ואזלין
 ושאיין בעלמא בפלגות ליליא ממש קב"ה אתער בגנתא דעדן
 ודינין דלתתא לא משחכחן.

(2) רוב בעלי תורה כשקמים בחצי הלילה ללמוד יושבים לארץ
 ומאעטפים שחורים ומקוננים ובוכים על חרבן הבית וכך עו-
 שים חברת בעלי תשובה יום המשמר.

(3) בכל לילה ישב על הארץ ויקונן על החרבן ויכוון לבכות

- גם על עוונותיו שמאריכין קץ הגאולה.
- (4) ואל תאמר שעסק התורה גדול, ואין ראוי לבטלו, כי ענין היחודים הנז', הוא גדול מעסק התורה. כי הוא מייחד את-עולמות העליונים, ונקרא עסק התורה ויחוד, והכל הוא ב-יחד.
- (5) דע כי בכל היחודים שבעולם, אם מיחד אותו בהשתתחך על קבר הצדיק ממש, צריך שתכוין, כי ע"י השתתחותך עליו אתה גורם שגם הצדיק ההוא ג"כ ישחטח נפשו, ותחפשט בעצמותיו אשר שם בקבר, וחוזר לחיות, ונעשים עצמותיו בחי' גוף אל הנפש המשתחטח ומחפשט בתוכם, וזו הנפש היא אותה הנשארת בקבר כנודע, בסוד ונפשו עליו תאבל. והרי הצדיק ההוא באותה שעה, כאלו הוא חי בגוף ונפש.
- (6) ותאנא בשעתא דאצתריך עלמא רחמי ואינון צדקייא זכאין. ההוא נפש דאשתכחא בעלמא לאגנא על עלמא, נפש סליק ואזיל ושאט בעלמא ומודע לרוח. ורוח סליק ואחטור ומודע לנשמה ונשמה לקב"ה. וכדין חט קב"ה על עלמא, כדין נחתא מעילא לתתא, נשמה אודע לרוח ורוח אודע לנפשא.
- (7) וזהו קשר נפש בנפש וזהו בהיותו שופך נפשו על קבר ה-צדיק ומתדבק נפש עם נפש ומדבר עם נפש הצדיק ומודיעו והנפש יעורר שאר הנפשות. . . .
- (8) בר"ח אלול שנת השל"ה ליצירה, א"ל מורי ז"ל, שאתענה או-חם שני ימים רצופים, אשר אחר יום ר"ח עצמו של אלול, ושעי"ז אשיג איזו השגה.
- (9) כל התורה כולה נארגת על הכינויין, והכינויין על השמות, והשמות הקדושים כולם הלויים על השם יהו"ה וכולם מתאחדים בו. נמצאת כל התורה כולה נארגת על שם יהו"ה.
- (10) דע לך שהצירוף דומהלשמע האזניים כי האוזן שומעת הקול-ות והקולות יצטרפו לפי צורת הניגון וההברה וזה לך העד כינור ונבל שמצטרפים ובצירוף הקולות האוזן שומעת חלוף ותמורה בחבלי אהבה. . . . ואי אפשר זה לחדשם כי אם ב-

צורת הצירופים. והצירוף כן הוא טכה ביתר (= במיתר) הראשון הנמשל לאות ראשונה בדרך משל ויעבור היפני אל יתר אחד או שניים או שלשה או ארבעה או חמישה יתירות ומהיתר החמישי גלגול ההכאות. . . . והסתרים שנמצאים בגלגולם משמחים הלב שאז הלב יודע את אלוהיו ושמחה נת-ווסף אליו.

(11) דע כי אלה השמות כולם המצורפים פה בפירוש הסודות של ע"ב אותיות אלה. ומהם יושג למתבאיים חיי עולם הבא. וע"כ נקראו (צ"ל נקרא) זה הספר חע"ה: . . . שבעת שהחכם המשכיל מצורפים תשפע עליו שפע רוח הקודש . . . מה שבראש עם הסוף והסוף עם הראש וראש עם תוך ותוך עם ראש והסוף עם תוך והתוך עם סוף--וכן כולו לפי הדרך יתגלגל כל אות פנים ואחור בניגונם רבים. ויתחיל בנחת וימהר עוד וירגיל עצמו עד שיהיה בקי מאוד בחילופי ה-צירופין זה בזה.

(12) והנה כל נבואת הנביאים אינם (צ"ל אינה) כ"א מנה"י דז"א כי משם מאירין אל המלכות נוק' דילי' ומאותו הא-רה נמשכת לנביאים נבואתם. . . שאין שום השגה לשום נביא או הוזה אלא ע"י נוק' דז"א.

(13) יש מי שהתחיל להשיג קצת השגה ותנוח עליו הרוח אלא ש-אין לה שלימות להתישב קול נבואה ורה"ק בשפתיו ובלשו-נו ואינו מדבר רק מרגיש בעצמו בעת היחוד שייעיר שערו וזעזוע גופו ואיבריו והנעת שפתו ואין בפיו כח המדבר.

(14) והוא אם כבר זכה האדם המיוחד אל איזה התעוררות מצד נשמתו המדברת עמו, על ידי איזה יחוד שעושה, ואין בו כח להוציא הדבור בשפתיו, מן הכח אל הפועל, יעשה יחוד זה קודם שיעשה היחוד האחר שהוא עושה.

(15) ע"י אותן היחודים מגלין להם סתרי תורה ועתידות.

- (16) ורוא דדביקות כיצד? ישתח אדם א' על קבר אחד מן הת-
נאים או על אחד מן הנביאים וידבק נפשו בנפשו ורוחו
ברוחו, והתנא מתחיל לדבר עמו כאשר ידבר איש אל ראהו
ומשיב לו על כל מה ששאלוהו ומגלה לו כל רזי תורה.
- (17) ואין ספק כי אם יתמיד האדם לנחוג עצמו בכונות אלו,
שיהיה כאחד מן המלאכים המשרתים ברקיע, וישיג לדעת כל
אשר ירצה. . . . והכל חלוי כפי עוצם כונתו והתדבקותו
למעלה.
- (18) גם היה יודע לעשות יחודים בקברי הצדיקים, ומשתח על
קבריהם בפישוט ידים ורגלים, ומוריד נפש רוח ונשמה של
אותו צדיק ומדבר (נ"א ומחיהו) עמו. והיה הצדיק ההוא
מגלה לו סודות ורזין עילאין שנחפרשו במתיבתא דרקייעא.
והיו פניו מאירות כשמש, ולא הי(ת)ה שום בריה יכול ל-
הסתכל בפניו.
- (19) ערב ר"ח אלול שנת השל"א שלחני מורי ז"ל, למערת אביי
ורבא, ושם נשתטחתי על קבר אביי זלה"ה, וייחדתי יחוד
תחלה של הפה וחוטם דעתיקא קדישא, ונפלה עלי שינה וא-
יקץ ולא ראיתי דבר. אח"כ חזרתי ונשתטחתי פעם אחרת
על קבר אביי עצמו, וייחדתי היחוד שכתוב מכתבת ידי מורי
עצמו. ובהיותי מחבר ומשלב אותיות יהו"ה אדנ"י כנודע,
נתערבה מחשבתי, ולא החחתי יכול להברם, ואחדל מלחשוב
בחבור ההוא, ואז נתדמה אלי במחשבתי כאלו קול אומר לי
חזור בך חזור בך פעמים רבות, והייתי מחשב בדעתי לומר,
הנה זהו לשון עקביא בן מהללאל אל בנו כנודע, ואז חזר-
תי לחשוב בהבור ההוא וגמרתיו, ואז נדמה במחשבתי, כאלו
אומרים לי, אלהים יראה לו השה לעולה בני, ובאלו היו
מבארים לי פירושו, והוא: כי מה שהייתי דואג על שלא
הועלתי ביחוד הא' שאינו כן, אמנם הועיל והצליח לפני
השי"ת, וזהו אלהים יראה לו השה וכו', ויתדמה במחשבתי
כאלו היו מבארים לי, כי בפסוק הזה נרמז כל היחוד הא'
שעשיתי, כי ר"ת של אלהים יראה לו השה בגימטריא מ"ו,
כמנין יחוד יהו"ה אהי"ה, ור"ת השה לעולה בני הוא הבל,

והוא סוד הבל הפה העליון שכונתי ביחוד ההוא. ונדמה לי כאלו היו אומרים לי, בר"ת של תיבת לו השם לעולה, היא הלל הזקן. ואיני מביין ענייניו.

והנה כל זה נתמדה לי אז במחשבה, ואחר כך נפלה עלי חרדה ורעדה גדולה עד מאד בכל איברי, וירי רועדות זו לזו, גם שפתי היו רועדות דבר גוזמא, ומתנועעות בטהי-רות ובכיפות ובמרוצה גדולה, וכאלו קול היה יושב על לשוני בין שפתי, והיה אומר במרוצה גדולה יותר ממאה פעמים בלשון, מה אומר, מה אומר, ואני הייתי מחזיק את עצמי ואת שפתי שלא לנענעם ולא יכולתי גם להשקיטם כלל, ואח"כ חשבתי לשאול על החכמה ואז היה הקול מתפוצץ בפי ובלשוני ואומר החכמה החכמה יותר מעשרים פעמים. ואח"כ חזר ואמר, החכמה והמדע, החכמה והמדע, עד כמה פעמים.

ואח"כ חזר ואמר, החכמה והמדע נתון לך. ואח"כ חזר ואמר, החכמה והמדע נתון לך מן השמים, כידיעת ר' עקיבא. ו- אח"כ חזר ואמר, ויותר מר' עקיבא. ואח"כ אומר, וכרב ייבא סבא, ואח"כ אומר, ויותר מרב ייבא סבא. ואח"כ אומר שלום עליך, ואח"כ אומר מן שמיא משדריך לך שלמא. וכל זה היה במהירות גדולה, דבר נפלא פעמים רבות בהקיץ, ואני נופל על פני, משתטח בכורך של אביי.

Chapter 4

(1) של"א. ראש חדש אייר. בעת המנחה נתבודדתי ע"י קריאת המשנה ג' פעמים, כנודע אצלי, ונתכונתי במחשבתי לשאול: מי היה גלגולי קודם אלי. ואודם וארא מורי ז"ל. ויח-זק בזרועי ויאמר לי: הנה איש הבחור יפה תואר הלזה העומד אצלנו הוא גיסי בעל אחותי, ואתה היית רבו. ו- איקץ.

(2) וחזרתי לקרא המשנה ונתמנמתי, ואשמע קול גדול ממש קו-רא: חיים, חיים. ואירא ואיקץ. ואחשוב בלבי, כי מורי ז"ל הוא רבן גמליאל והוא גיסו של רבי אליעזר תלמיד רבן יוחנן בן זכאי. והלכתי למורי וספורתי לו הכל. ויאמר לי: זה הוא התעוררות עליון בלי ספק. אך איני

רוצה לגלות לך פירוש דברים אלו, לפי שאיני רוצה ש-
תדע גלגול נשמתי מי הוא.

- (3) ואיקץ מאותה תודמה של ההתבודדות, כי לא הייתי ישן ממש.
- (4) כ"ז לאייר. נתבודדתי כנ"ל, ואשאל במחשבתי: אם נפש רבי אלעזר בן ערך המתעברת בי, אם עדיין היא מתעברת בי. ונדבקתי נפשי בנפשו על ידי קריאת המשנה של "רבי אלעזר בן ערך אומר: הוי שקוד ללמוד תורה", וכו'. ובהיזיה בהקיץ לגמרי ועיני סגורות, ראיתי חרות תלמידי-חכמים עוסקים בתורה. ויאמרו לי: דע, כי זה הספר שבידינו, שאנו קורין עתה בו, ובו כתובים כמה פסוקים. דע כי החכם ר' אלעזר בן יוחי בהיותו חי אמר לנו, שאלו הפסוקים הם הכתובים בזה הספר מורים על שם אלעזר שהוא רמוז בהם.
- (5) גם אמר לי שבהיותי בן י"ג שנים נתעבר בי בסוד עיבור נפש ר' אלעזר בן ערך, תלמיד רבן יוחנן בן זכאי.
- (6) כבר ביארנו בחלק השלישי בשער השביעי כי חמשה אופני ה- שגה הם: רוח הקודש, ונשמות צדיקים, ומלאכים הנקראים: "מגידיים", ואליהו ז"ל, וחלום. וכל אחד מהן--אפשר שתו- שג מאליה, על ידי קדושת האדם ועסקו בתורה, מבלי הצורך מעשה אחר. גם אפשר להשיגם על ידי מעשה פרטי, אחר שיקדם היות האדם ראוי ומוכן להשגה. וענין זה השני יתבאר בחלק הזה, מכל הנמצא כתוב בספרי החכמים הקדמונים.
- (7) אמר המדפיס: החלק הזה הרביעי, לא בא להעתיקה ולא להדפסה. כי מאחר שהכל שמות וצירופים וסודות נעלמים אשר לא כדה להביאו על מזבח הדפוס.
- (8) האופן הב' באופני המעשה להשיג ג' מינין הנ"ל, ולא אכ- תוב שום פעולה של מעשה ע"י השבעות והזכרות שמות זולתי ע"י הרהור ומחשבה בלבד או ע"י חפלה אל השי"ת בדרך התפלוח. כבר ידעת כי כל ענייני ההשגה צריכים להיות האדם יחידי בבית שלא יסרידוהו ממחשבתו. והאדם בעצמו צריך שיחבודד ממחשבתו עד קצה האחרון ויפשיט גופו מעל נפשו כאלו אינו מרגיש שהוא מתלבש בחומר כלל אלא כאלו נפשו בלבד. וכל

מה שיתפרד מן החומר יתגבר השגתו, ואם ירגיש איזה קול או תנועה המבטלת מחשבתו, או אם בו בעצמו יבוא לו איזה הרהור חומרי, הנה תפסק מחשבת נפשו על התדבק בעליונים ולא ישיג מאומה יען כי קדושה העליונה אינה שורה על האדם בהיות דבק עם החומר, אפילו כחוט השערה תלבן (צ"ל ולכן) הנבואה או רוה"ק נקרא כשם (צ"ל בשם) תרדמה או חלום או חזיון. סוף דבר הרוצה שישרה עליו רוה"ק אם לא ירגיל עצמו בכך להפשיט לפשוט נפשו מגופו לגמרי לא ישרה עליו הרוח.

וז"ס בני הנביאים שלפניהם תוף וחליל וגו'. כי ע"י מתקן קול הניגון, נופל עליהם התבודדות בעריבות הקול ומפשיטי נפשם ואז המנגן מבטל הניגון ובני הנביאים נשארים באותו הדביקות העליון ומתנבאים. והרי זה תנאי הא'. התנאי הב' הוא שיבטל האדם מעליו כל אותם הדברים הגורמים להפסיק ההתבודדות כי בתנאי הא' לא זכרנו רק הדבר-ים החומריים בדרך טבע אשר מפסיקים ההתבודדות. והם כחות הטומאה הנמשכים מן היצה"ר המתלבש באדם עצמו והם מתחזקין ע"י חטאת האדם. ולכן צריך הבא להתבודד תחלה יעשה תשובה ומכל (צ"ל מכל) אשר חטא, ואח"כ יזהר לא יוסיף לחטוא באחת מהנה. ואח"כ ירגיל עצמו להסיר מעליו המדות הרעות המוטבעות בו, כמו מדת הכעס והעצבון וההקפדה ושיחה בטילה וכיוצא בהם. ואחר שתקן חולי הנפש בן (צ"ל בין) ב-עבירות בן (צ"ל בין) במדות אז אין כח ברוח הטומאה להפסיק דביקותו בעליונים.

ואז ירגיל עצמו בביטול דברי החומר מעליו כנ"ל בתנאי הא'. ואחר כל זה יתחיל בפעולות הממשיכים הדבקות בעליונים כמ"ש בע"ה כפי אשר מצאה ידי בדברי החכמים ובדברי המתבודדים. אפנים ענין התנאי הב' שהוא להרחיק מעליו כחות הטומאה וזה ע"י תשובת חטאיו וריחוקו מהמדות המגונות.

כבר ביאר עניינם באופן הא' כפי אשר מצאתי בספרים, ואחר שהוריתך ב' התנאים הנז', אזכיר עתה הפעולות אשר

הם לדבק כח נפש האדם בעליונים אשר (צ"ל אחר) היות בו ב' התנאים הנז' . וזה אהלי .

התבודד בבית יחידי כנ"ל ותתעטף בטלית וחשב ותעצים עיניך ותתפשט מן החומר כאלו יצאה נפשך מן גופך והיא עולה ל- רקיע . ואחר ההתפשטות תקרא משנה אחת איזו שתרצה , פעם-ים רבות , תכופות זו לזו , ותכוין להדביק נפשך בנפש התנז' הנז' במשנה הזיא . וזה מה שתכוין : שפיך הוא כלי המוציא אותיות לשון המשנה הזיא . והקול שאתה מוציא מתוך כלי הפה הוא ניצוצי נפשך הפנימית שיוצאים וקוראים המשנה הזיא . ונעשית מרכבה לשיחלבש בתוכה נפש התנא בעל המשנה הזיא ותחלבש נפשו תוך נפשך . וכאשר תהיה נלאה בקודאך לשון המשנה , אם תהיה ראוי לכך , אפשר שישרה בפוך נפש התנא ההוא , ויתלבש עמו בעודך קורא המשנה . ואז בעודך קורא המשנה ידבר הוא בפוך ויתן לך שלום , וכל זה שחה-שוב אז במחשבתך לשאול ממנו הוא ישיב לך וידבר עם פוך ואזנ(י)ך שומעות דבריו . ואין אתה המדבר מעצמך אלא הוא המדבר . וזהו רוח ה' דבר בי ומלתו על לשוני .

והנה אם עדין אינך ראוי למדרגה הגדולה הזאת אפשר ש-יהיה באופן אחר . והוא כי מרוב מרוצת פוך תלאה ותש-תוק מאלריך בלי כוונתך . ותכוין שאילתך במחשבתך ותת-נמנם נימם ולא נים , תיר ולא תיר , ואז בתנומה הזיא תראה שמשיבין לך תשובת שאלתך ברמו או בגירור . והכל כפי הכנתך .

(9) ללמוד בכל ליל שבת משניות כפי כחו . לחזור בכל שבוע כל המשניות שיודע . לידע בכל שבוע ב' פרקים משניות על פה לפחות .

(10) ובליל שבת קורין ה' פרקים ממ' שבת ובבקר ה' ובמנחה ה' דלהכי כיון רבינו הקדוש לסדר כ"ד פרקים במ' שבת כנגד כ"ד קסוסי כלה .

(11) גם פעם אחת בליל שבת נכנס הרב לפני החכם ר' יוסף אש-כנזי הנקרא תנא הגדול ומצאו שהיה לומד המשניות על פה

- כמנהגו (נ"א לומד המשניות על פה בניגון). ובאמצע ה-
לימוד התחיל הנר לפעפע כדרך הנר הנופל במים, ועשה כן
כמו חצי שעה. וכשיצא הרב (ו) הלך לביחו, מצא לכמה"ר
אביגדור בנו של הר"י אשכנזי הנז'. אמר לו: אחיך הקטן
איך שלומו. אז נבהל להשיב ואמר: למה אדוני שואל עליו,
הנה הוא ישן במטה בקו הבריות, אמר לו הנר ספר לי ש-
בשבוע זה יפטר לבית עולמו, וכך היה.
- (12) דע, כי המשנה ה"ס מטרוון, שהוא היצירה. וצריך לכוין
להעלות היצירה אל הבריאה עי"כ, באופן זה. כי הנה
המשנה היא היצירה, ותכוין כי ע"י קריאתך בה, חוזרת
המשנה שהיא היצירה, לעשות נשמה שהיא הבריאה כנודע
ואותיותיהן שוות: משנה, נשמה.
- (13) והמשכילים יבינו מסטרא דבינה דאיהו אילנא דחיי בגינ-
ייהו אתמר "והמשכילים יזהירו כזהר הרקיע" גהאי חבורא
דילך דאיהו ספר הזהר מן זוהרא דאימא עלאה חשובה. ב-
אילן לא צריך נסיון ובגין דעתידין ישראל למטעם מאילנא
דחיי דאיהו האי ספר הזהר יפקון ביה מן גלוחא ברחמי.
- (14) וכמא בני נשא לתתא יתפרנסון מהאי חבורא דילך כד ית-
גלי לתתא בדרא בתראה בסוף יומיא ובגיניה "וקראתם דרוו
בארץ."
- (15) הרי לך מבואר שזכות העיון בספר הזהר מספיק להשיב שבות-
נו ולהעביר גלותינו ועליו אמרו "זכו אחישנה" כי בעבורו
יהיו ישראל נגאלין.
- (16) ומצאתי כתוב כי מה שנגזר למעלה שלא יתעסקו בחכמת האמת
בגלוי היה לזמן קצוב עד תשלום שנת הר"ן ומשם ואילך
יקרא דרא בתראה והותרה הגזירה והרשות נתונה להתעסק
בספר הזהר. ומשנת ה"ש ליציר' מצוה מן המובחר שיתעסקו
ברבים גדולים וקטנים כדאיתא ברעיה מיהמנא. ואחר שב-
זכות זה עתיד לבא מלך המשיח ולא בזכות אחר אין ראוי
להתרשל.
- (17) ותכוין בזה על שריפת התורה, שנעשית אפר. וגם תכוין,

למה שנחבאר אצלינו בשער רוח"ק, איך מיום שנחרב בית
המקדש, ונשרפה התורה, נמסרו סודותיה ורזיה לחיצונים,
דזה נקרא גלות התורה.

(18) . . . בדורותינו זה עתה שהוא דרי בתראי וצריך לגלות
בו חכמת האמת כדי שיבא המשיח כנזכר בתיקוני' דבזכות
הזוהר יתגלה מלכה משיחא.