Notes on the Study of Later Kabbalah in English

THE SAFED PERIOD & LURIANIC KABBALAH

Don Karr


The small Galilean town of Safed (also Tzefat or Zfat) flourished in the sixteenth century as a center of Jewish ideals and spirituality in all of their expressions: law, ethics, philosophy, and mysticism. This community was home to great teachers and thinkers whose works and ideas have proven some of the most influential in all of Judaism.

Luminaries of the great Safed period include Joseph Karo (1488-1575), the renowned legalist, whose codification of Jewish law, Shulhan Arukh (The Set Table), is authoritative to this day, and Elijah de Vidas, author of the popular kabbalistic ethical treatise, Reshith Hokhmah (The Beginning of Wisdom). Moses Cordovero (1522-70) was a late exponent of the classical kabbalah; a prolific writer, Cordovero succeeded in systematizing a vast and disparate body of kabbalistic lore.

Dominant among these figures was Isaac Luria (1534-1572). Though Luria wrote very little himself, his developments of the kabbalah, primarily as recorded by his chief disciple Hayyim Vital, shaped later Kabbalism and, ultimately, Hasidism.1 To quote Gershom Scholem,

The Lurianic Kabbalah was the last religious movement in Judaism the influence of which became preponderant among all sections of Jewish people and in every country of the Diaspora, without exception. (—Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, 3rd edition [London: Thames & Hudson, 1955], pages 285-6)

It should be noted at the outset that there is still a woeful lack of translated material from this period. For example, we have seen but fragments of Cordovero’s Elimah Rabbati (The Great Palm) and Ohr Yakar (Precious Light—a commentary on the Zohar) in English. A full translation of Pardes Rimmonim (Orchard of Pomegranates), Cordovero’s ranging—and ultimately quite popular—compilation of kabbalah, from Providence University (translator: Elyakim Getz) was underway but now seems to have been left incomplete.2

Some Lurianic works, such as those compiled by Hayyim Vital (parts of Etz Hayyim/Shemoneh She’arim) and Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto (Koleh Pithot Hokhmah), have found their way into English in recent years, but these renderings are mere fragments of the Kabbalat Ha-Ari.

1 See my “Which Lurianic Kabbalah?” at https://www.academia.edu/30928619/Which_Lurianic_Kabbalah_-_expanded_version.
2 On the Pardes Rimmonim translations, see below, page 5.
Safed


“…codes embedded in this poem identify pathways on Kabbalah’s Etz Hayim (Tree of Life).”—page iv.


Fine’s introduction gives historical and religious background to his presentation of “The Rules of Mystical Piety” as codified by Cordovero, Larua, Karo, and others, and practiced by Safed mystics.


Gutwirth, Israel. The Kabbalah and Jewish Mysticism (New York: Philosophical Library, 1987).

Brief discussions of topics and personalities, including “The Holy City of Safed, Cradle of Kabbalah,” “Ari the Saint: A Star That Shone with a Light of Its Own,” “Rabbi Chaim Vital: The Faithful Disciple of the Ari Hakodosh,” “Rabbi Yeshayahu Halevi Horvitz: Shela the Saint” and “Rabbi Joseph Caro: Compiler of the Shulhan Arukh.”


§ 4. A Zohar for the Shekinah according to Moses Cordovero

§ 5. R. Joseph Caro and the Revelation of the Feminine Divine Powers

§ 6. R. Isaac Luria Ashkenazi: Revelation as Source of Kabbalah
Kaplan, Aryeh. “Safed” = CHAPTER 5, in Meditation and Kabbalah (York Beach: Samuel Weiser, 1982).


Kaplan includes quotes from Cordovero’s Pardes Rimmonim and Vital’s Sha’arei Qedusha shedding light on biblical techniques of meditation.


Schechter’s article is considered a classic, but now see


pp. 67-79: “The Kabbalah after the Expulsion from Spain and the New Center in Safed”


Source material from Solomon Alkabez (Ayeleth Ahayim), Moses Cordovero (Pardes Rimmonim), Moses Alshekh (Shoshanath Ha’Amakim), Abraham Galante (Kinath Setarim), Hayyim Vital (Sefer HaGilgulim), and Israel ben Moses Najara (Zamiruth Yisrael).


Silberman’s is one of the better popular books on Kabbalah.


“This book examines kabbalah’s passage from the esoteric to the public domain. Few aspects of Jewish life and religious practice were not touched, commented upon, and eventually changed as a result of the spread of kabbalah.” (Weinstein, page 3) The kabbalab Weinstein speaks of is that developed in Safed in the sixteenth century. Thus, we find references to Joseph Karo, Moses Cordovero, and, more prominently, Isaac Luria, with his primary follower, Hayyim Vital.


NOTE: *Abraham Galante: A Biography* by Albert Kalderon (New York: Sepher Hermon Press, Inc., 1983) is frequently listed among works on kabbalists of sixteenth-century Safed. This book is not about Abraham ben Mordecai Galante (d. 1560), student of Cordovero and author of kabbalistic commentaries, but rather a more recent member of the same family, Abraham Galante (1873-1961), journalist, historian, and Turkish nationalist, who “served as a deputy in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey” and “a professor at the University of Istanbul.”

**Joseph Karo**


§ 5.2 THE SHULHAN ARUKH (pages 90-95)—translated excerpts: § 5.2.1. *Hoshen Mishpat* 26:1-6 – Prohibition against resorting to non-Jewish courts; § 5.2.2. *Yoreh De'ah* 355:1-10 – Laws regarding visiting the sick; § 5.2.3. *Qizzur Shulhan Arukh* 36:1-28 – Laws regarding the salting of meat.


§ 5. R. Joseph Karo and the Revelation of the Feminine Divine Powers


Six passages from *Maggid Mesharim*.


An English translation of *Maggid Mesharim*.

Putzu, Vadim. *BOTTLED POETRY* (noted fully above, page 3).

Chapter 3. Joseph Karo


Karo not only wrote *Shulhan Arukh* (THE SET TABLE) but also kept a diary of his conversations with a celestial mentor. This diary, *Maggid Mesharim*, is the focus of Werblowsky's study.

Chapter 4 of *Joseph Karo* is a particularly good survey of ideas and practices in pre-Lurianic Safed. This chapter was printed separately as “Mystical and Magical Contemplation: The Kabbalists in Sixteenth-Century Safed,” in *History of Religions*, vol. 1, no. 1 (University of Chicago Press, Summer 1961).
Moses Cordovero

Abramson, Henry. *The Kabbalah of Forgiveness: The Thirteen Levels of Mercy in Rabbi Moshe Cordovero’s Date Palm of Devorah (Tome Devorah)* (Lulu.com, 2018).


Ch. 12. Moses Cordovero: selections from Tomer Devorah and Or Ne’erav


Or Ne’erav (THE PLEASANT LIGHT) “constituted an epitome of Cordovero’s great systematic theology of Kabbalah entitled *Pardes Rimmonim (THE ORCHARD OF POMEGRANATES).”* (Robinson’s Introduction, page xi)


Tome Deborah is a kabbalistic ethical treatise on the doctrine of the imitation of God as expressed in the ten sefirot.

The edition from Targum Press/Feldheim Publishers shows the Hebrew and English on facing pages.


_________. *Pardes Rimmonim: Orchard of Pomegranates, Parts 5-8:5.* Integral edition in English, Hebrew, and Aramaic. Translated by Elyakim Getz (Monfalcone: Providence University, 2007 & 2010).


_________. *Pardes Rimmonim: Orchard of Pomegranates, Parts 9-12.* Integral edition in English, Hebrew, and Aramaic. Translated by Elyakim Getz (Monfalcone: Providence University, 2007 & 2010).

The preceding four works have been reprinted, each “tome” (part) individually (i.e., “Tome 1 of 12,” “Tome 2 of 12,” etc.): ©David Smith, LLC, October 1, 2016, and then by eUniversity.pub, January 1, 2018. Despite being produced as print-on-demand hardcovers, new copies of some of these volumes are no longer available.


A passage from Pardes Rimmonim, pages 199-201.

Putzu, Vadim. BOTTLED POETRY (noted fully above, page 3).

Chapter 5. Moses Cordovero.


The goals of Raviv’s dissertation are (1) to offer a more precise biography of RaMaK, his family and overall community in order to shed new light on certain biographical uncertainties and to correct some erroneous data that have infiltrated modern scholarship; (2) to broaden J. Ben-Shlomo’s important analysis of RaMaK’s metaphysics (1965) and to deepen our appreciation of RaMaK’s highly complex theoretical edifice—especially the relations between metaphysical and theosophical concerns; (3) by offering a broader phenomenological canvas as the backdrop to RaMaK’s intellectual command, this monograph challenges the premature tendency to underplay the intricate affinities between RaMaK’s theoretical aptitude and devotional slant” building upon B. Sack’s “stupendous articulation of RaMaK’s devotional piety.”

Chapter 3 offers a useful survey of Cordovero’s writings. “The fourth chapter, which is devoted to RaMaK’s Sefer Gera
din, examines in depth a composition to which no serious attention had hitherto been given in scholarship.”

(Raviv’s PREFACE.)

“Ben Shlomo . . . (1965)” refers to Ben-Shlomo’s Mystical Theology of Moses Cordovero (Jerusalem: Mosad Byalik); “B[achat] Sack’s stupendous articulation” refers to Sack’s Kabbalah of Rabbi Moses Cordovero (Be’er Sheva’: Universitat Ben-Gurion ba-Negev, 1995). Both of these works are in Hebrew, making Raviv’s dissertation the only substantial discussion of Cordovero in English.


Elijah de Vidas – Reshith Hokhmah


Benyosef translates a significant portion of de Vidas’ kabbalistic ethical classic and provides a full introduction.


*Safed Spirituality* includes a translation of a condensed version of Elijah de Vidas’ popular *Reshith Hokhmah* (THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM).


A passage from *Reshith Hokhmah*, pages 207-209.

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3 Elijah de Vidas’ *Reshith Hokhmah* is not to be confused with the medieval astrological text of the same name by Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1167). Translations of Ibn Ezra’s work abound:

LURIANIC KABBALAH: A BIBLIOGRAPHY

ARI – via Hayyim Vital & the Safed school

Translations

Ch. 13. Isaac Luria: a selection from Etz Hayyim; passages from the writings of Luria’s disciples

The selections on the “Kings of Edom,” “Divine Rebirth,” “Adam among the Worlds,” and “Benedictions of the Soul” from the writings of Hayyim Vital, primarily Peri Etz Hayyim (FRUIT OF THE TREE OF LIFE), which was redacted by Meir Poppers.

Kaplan, Aryeh. Meditation and Kabbalah (York Beach: Samuel Weiser, 1982).


Klein offers a translation of Sha’ar ba-Kelalim (GATES OF PRINCIPLES), which serves as a preface to some printed editions of Vital’s Etz Hayyim, though it is almost certainly written by one of Luria’s other students, Moshe Yonah. According to the introduction, “It is obvious that The Gate of Principles is an abbreviated version of the original and complete unpublished manuscript of Moshe Jonah’s Kanfei Yonah…” (—page 23). The text presents a version of Luria’s system which was apparently formulated earlier than Vital’s magnum opus.

Matt includes excerpts from various Lurianic writings.


An English translation of the first (of seven) “palaces” from Vital’s Etz Hayyim with a substantial introduction.

This book presents the Arizal’s original study guide, in both Hebrew and English. (page 4)

“Transmigrations of the Souls – A Translation of Chapter Four of Sifer ha-Gilgulim by Rabbi Hayyim Vital” – introduction, text and notes (pages 73-95).
Tree 4: RA’A/EVIL, edited by David Meltzer (Berkeley: Berkeley/Tree, 1974).

- pp. 28-30: from Sefer ha-Gilgulim, Hayim Vital (translation from the German by Jack Hirschman)


Vital, Chayim. Derush ha-Daat – Explanation of Knowledge, translated by Yair Alon ([n.p.]: David Smith, LLC, 2016)

This work treats the unfolding of the parzufim with explanations and “over 140 drawings.”

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Etz Chayim – The Tree of Life [twelve volumes: Tome 1 of 12, Tome 2 of 12, etc.] ([n.p.]: David Smith, LLC, 2016/eUniversity.pub, 2018).

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Rebenaot ha-Daat – Expansions of Knowledge, translated by Yair Alon ([n.p.]: David Smith, LLC, 2016/eUniversity.pub, 2018).

Rebenaot ha-Daat “is a general collection of excerpts (Yossef Daat, Charchavat ha-Daat, Giluy ha-Shem, Makor ha-Shem) connected to Derush ha-Daat as written by our Kabballistic Masters,” e.g., the Zohar, Vital, RaShaSh, Ben Ish Hai.


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Sefer Yetzirah – Book of Formation ([n.p.]: David Smith, LLC, 2016/eUniversity.pub, 2018).

The title page of the text-commentary reads, “Book of Formation / Attributed to our Forefather Abraham – may the Peace be with him / According to the version of our Master and Rabbi, the Arizal / With explanations of our teacher and our Rabbi, the great light, The holy Gaon and divine kabbalist, Rabbi Chaim Vital of blessed memory / [published for the first time out of an unique manuscript in the world].”

Ariel Bar Tzadok⁴ identifies a text matching this commentary as being from Ketavim Chadashim L’Ra’bi Chaim Vital (NEW WRITINGS OF HAYYIM VITAL) published in Hebrew (Jerusalem, 1988). See below under Vital: Ketavim Chadashim.

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Shaar baGilgulim is the eighth gate of Hayyim Vital’s Shemonah She’arim. Yitzchak Bar Chaim has inserted clearly marked “personal annotations … to help the reader” (page v).

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An English translation of the first (of seven) “palaces” from Vital’s Etz Hayim with a perfunctory introduction. This translation comes in two versions: English only and English-Hebrew. There is also an English-only edition.

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⁴ Sefer Yetzirah: The BaGed KaReI of Chap. 4 (CASSSETTE TAPE – Chicago, 1994).

An English translation of the second (of seven) “palaces” from Vital’s Etz Hayyim with a 12-page introduction. This translation is English only.


The Palace of the Crowns includes The Gate of Atik and The Gate of Arikh Anp in. The Palace of Abba and Imma contains The Gate of Abba and Imma, The Gate of the Couplings in the Coupling of Abba and Imma, and The Gate of the Beginning of Abba and Imma and Zeir Anpin and Nukva. This translation is English only.

_______. The Writings of the Arizal (or The Arizal Writings), a brief summary of the “Eight Gates,” the teachings of Rabbi Yitzchak Luria Ashkenazi, the Arizal, as transmitted to his student, Rabbi Chaim Vital. … compiled by Rabbi Abraham, son of Rabbi Nisim Cohen Soae (Jerusalem: Bene Aharon Institute, 2016).

Hundreds of passages from throughout Shemoneh She’arim.

The Ben Ish Hai was asked whether it was permitted to translate the Zohar into Arabic, and he replied that it was forbidden due to the complex, profound concepts that could not be properly explained in languages other than the Holy Tongue. This publication, therefore, focusses on the superficial kabbalistic parts brought in the Eight Gates and leaves aside the rest. (p. 17)


“‘The teachings in the present anthology are culled from several of Rabbi Vital’s works, chiefly Sha’ar HaPesukim, Sefer HaLikutim, and Likutei Torah.” (—PREFACE, page xi)


Academic Studies


Discusses the mystics of Safed, Luria in particular; see “The Dead and the Possessed,” §§: THE LURIA CASES (pp. 45-56), and “The Task of the Exorcist,” §§: LURIANIC EXORCISM (pp. 71-85), and THE AFTERLIFE OF LURIANIC EXORCISM (pp. 85-90).


Physician of the Soul is the most important study on Luria in English to date. Not only is Lurianic doctrine treated but also Luria’s life, his activities, and his circle of fellow kabbalists—all without succumbing to the mythology which surrounds the Ari. Oddly, Fine does not tell us how Luria actually died, just that he died “by a kiss.”


“I have concentrated on the versions of the Lurianic cabala expounded by Haim Vital and Joseph ibn Tabul and have not included the predominantly linguistic innovations of Israel Sarug which merit separate treatment.” (—page 13, n. 3)

Giller discusses how the *Zohar* was interpreted by the Safed Kabbalists, Moses Cordovero and, particularly, Isaac Luria, with special attention to developments of the *Idrot*.


§ II contains five articles on spirit possession in Safed, and there are eight appendices offering texts from this period. The predominant sources for the articles and the texts offered are the works of Hayyim Vital.


The Hebrew original was published as *Mi-Kabalah ha-Ari ʻad la-Hasidut* (Tel Aviv: Misrad ha-biṭaḥon, 1984/5).


Krassen translates and comments on two passages from Vital’s *Shaʻar ba-Gilgulim* (GATE OF TRANSMIGRATIONS). Also in this issue of *Kabbalah* is a segment of *Sefer Etz Hayyim* on the ascent of saints translated by Eliyahu Klein.


Magid argues “that the mythic world of Lurianic Kabbalah is both a response to, and a construction of, the historical reality in which it lived; furthermore, its canonical status influences the way future generations understand their own historical station.” (—page 1)


Magid shows how Lurianic kabbalah, primarily through Vital’s writings, presents itself as a “meta-text” which seeks no justification in Scripture, as its predecessor, the *Zohar,* did. This suggests that only through the Lurianic meta-text can the Torah be understood.


“The texts presented here come from three collections, *Sha’ar Ha-Pesukim,* *Sefer Ha-Likkkutim,* and *Likkkutei Torah,* all of which are running commentaries to the Torah. *Sha’ar Ha-Pesukim* is one of the Vitalian *Shemonah She’arim.* R. Meir Poppers, in his *Derekh Etz Hayyim,* called *Sefer Ha-Likkkutim* (and *Sefer Derushim*) part of the “early edition” the Lurianic corpus. This would make it part of the Vitalian school as well. We know that the first edition of *Sefer Ha-Likkkutim* (published under that title) was edited by R. Benjamin Ha-Levi, a student of Vital. *Likkkutei Torah,* first printed in Zolkeiv in 1775 appears to be a mosaic of various earlier material consisting largely of the second section of R. Meir Poppers’ *Nof Etz Hayyim* combined with portions of R. Ya’akov Zemah’s *Oznot Hayyim,* *Adam Yashar,* and *Sefer Derushim.*” (—7)


______. “Zelom (Image) and Medicine in the Lurianic Teaching (According to the Writings of R. Hayim Vital),” in *Korab,* Vol. 8, Nos. 5-6 (Jerusalem: The Israel Institute of the History of Medicine, Fall 1982), pages 170-176.


“Four studies by Mordechai Pachter on central ideas in kabbalistic thought: (1) The Root of Faith is the Root of Heresy; (2) Circles and Straightness; (3) Smallness and Greatness; (4) Devequt in Sixteenth Century Safed. The first study describes the most supreme point of deity revealing itself out of the depths of *Ein-Sof* (the Infinite), the point defined as faith. The second chapter goes on to the two modes of revelation and operation of all the Divine *sefirot,* the modes of circles and straightness; and the third
chapter treats the Sefirot, namely the two lower configurations, ze’ir ‘anpin (the Short Countenance) and nruq (the Female), who are the Lurianic equivalents of the sefirat Tiferet and Malkeh, in their two states of development and growth: the state of qatnut (smallness) and the state of gadlut (greatness); the final chapter discusses the lowest point of the Divine world, the point at which man and God meet in communion, i.e. devequt.”


A summary of kabbalistic beliefs concerning the punishment of sin after death, exorcism, and spirit possession. An excerpt from Vital’s Sefer ha-Gilgulim is translated.


pp. 128-44: “The Doctrine of Creation in Lurianic Kabbalah”

pp. 420-8: “Isaac Luria”

pp. 443-8: “Hayyim Vital.”


pp. 108-17: in § “Kabbalah and Myth”

pp. 149-53: in § “Tradition and New Creation in the Ritual of the Kabbalists”


pp. 228-41: in § “Gilgul: The Transmigration of Souls”


Ch.1.IV. “Lurianic Kabbalah and its myth of exile and redemption”

Ch.1.IV. “The historical role and social significance of Lurianic Kabbalah”

Ch 1.VI. “The spread of Lurianic Kabbalah until 1665”


“... This book, cited by every significant bibliography in kabbalistic scholarship, is the first and only comprehensive work ever to provide a definitive description of Lurianic kabbalah. Working with an immense range of texts, Isaiah Tishby approached his discussion from one specific angle—the problem of evil. Tishby demonstrates that Luria's unique contribution to theodicy was to indicate that the source of evil is the result of a profound catastrophe that takes place deep within the Godhead itself. This idea is consistent with ancient gnostic themes but is reinterpreted by Luria to provide a uniquely Jewish response to the problem of evil. This is the first ever translation of the work into English, and represents a valuable contribution to the world of Jewish scholarship.”

(– Kegan Paul description)


Tishby’s brief article deals with the Lurianic ideas of the “breaking of the vessels” and the “falling of the sparks.”


The legends of Luria’s “wondrous knowledge,” *i.e.*, unlimited access to truth.


“In the remainder of this study I would like to concentrate on one specific ecstatic technique, that of weeping, which appears a number of times in the writings of Vital” (—page 215).

*Adaptations, recent authors’ commentaries, lessons, legends*


Contains numerous legends of the Arizal, then selections of Hayyim Vital’s works: *Ets Haim, Peri Ets Haim, Shaar Hagigulim, Shaar Hakavanot, Shaar Hamitsvot, Shaar Hapesukim,* and *Shaar Ra‘a‘b Hakodesh.*


The book includes Dudaim Basadeh’s essay, “Kabbalah and the Modern Sciences” (3rd April 1952), which offers brief chapters on astronomy, psychology, and cosmology.


Derived primarily from Vital’s Etz Hayyim and Peri Etz Hayyim, Sur mera va’aseh tov “is unique in its blending of classical kabbalah with the approach of Beshitian Hasidism” (Jacobs’ PREFACE).


“This book attempts to present an accurate picture of Luria’s thoughts, and is based on the writings of Luria’s favorite student, Rabbi Chaim Vital. … It is said that Luria authorized only Vital from his many students to preserve his system.” (—PREFACE, p. i)


“Wonder tales” from Sefer Shivchai ha-Ari with tired “modern art” drawings.


“…adapted and translated for the English reader directly from the original text, Gateway to Reincarnation [Shaar ha-Giligulim], written by Rabbi Chaim Vital, z”l, as taught to him by the Arizal.”

Part I of this work has been reissued with a new introduction as The Gateway to Reincarnation: Translation of the Work of the Arizal (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018).


“This book … is primarily derived from the work of Rabbi Chaim Vital called The Fruit of the Tree of Life [Pri Etz Hayyim].” (—FOREWORD, page xvii)
Hayyim Vital’s personal, eclectic, and non-Lurianic works

Sefer ba-Hezyonot (BOOK OF VISIONS)


The texts translated are Sefer ba-Hezyonot (BOOK OF VISIONS) by Hayyim Vital and Megillat Setarim (BOOK OF SECRETS) by Rabbi Yitzak Isaac Safrin of Komarno, a 19th-century hasid who thought himself to be a reincarnation of Isaac Luria.


On passages from Vital’s Book of Visions.


See pages 70-84, § IV, on Vital and The Book of Visions on the spirit possession of Raphael Anav’s daughter.


Chapter 11: “The Visions of Hayyim Vital” (five selections from Sefer ba-Hezyonot).

Sefer ha-Pe’ulot (BOOK OF OPERATIONS)

Brodt, Eliezer “R. Chaim Vital and his Unknown Work Sefer ha-Pe’ulot: A Work on Science, Medicine, Alchemy and Practical Magic” (2010) at THE SEFORIM BLOG: 


Ch. 28. “Hayyim Vital, Alchemist,” on the alchemical content of Sefer ha-Pe’ulot.

Vital’s interest in magic and alchemy has been underplayed to such an extent by the historians of Jewish mysticism that one has the impression that they are embarrassed by the fact that this great Kabbalist devoted much of his attention to such subjects.” (page 341)


Sha’arei Qedusha

Sha’arei Qedusha is included under Vital’s works because, while written under Lurianic influence, it shows reliance on a wide range of other kabbalists: Nahmanides, Azriel of Gerona, Abraham Abulafia, Joseph Gikatilla, Menahem Recanati, Isaac of Acre, Cordovero, and Elijah de Vidas, among others. (ref. Fine, Lawrence. “Recitation of Mishnah...,” p. 189; see full citation immediately below.)


This paper includes a “partial rendering of part 4 of the Shaarei Kedusha” (p. 234, n. *).

Tree 4: RA’A/EVIL, edited by David Me'ltzer (Berkeley: Berkeley/Tree, 1974).


Ktavim Chasidim contains Vital’s commentary on Brit Menucha (attributed to Avraham ben Yitzchak of Granada), which “deals with Kabbalah Ma’asit (Practical Kabbalah),” and the fourth part of Shaarei Kedusha, which “deals with practical ways to force Ruach Ha-Kodesh (Divine Inspiration) to descend upon us.” This work, thus, completes Shaarei Kedusha, listed immediately below.


“Shaarei Kedusha is an inspirational work by Rabbi Chaim Vital (1543-1620), the foremost disciple of The Ari. It contains instructions and exhortations for a life of utmost holiness, which will ultimately elevate the person to the point where he will be worthy of Divine Inspiration (Ruah Ha-Kodesh). … Respectful of the tradition, we will here omit the fourth part, which was published only recently for the first time in history in Ktavim Chadashim (THE NEW WRITINGS). We will publish its translation separately.”

——from the preface by Fabrizio Lanza, page viii

other works


Discusses Vital’s Kabbalah Ma’asit ve-Alkhemi’ah (PRACTICAL KABBALAH AND ALCHEMY).


Israel Sarug


Hertz, Naftali. *Mystic Tales from the Emek HaMelech*, with commentary by R. DovBer Pinson (Brooklyn: IYYUN Center for Jewish Spirituality, 2015).


______. “Italy in Safed, Safed in Italy: Toward an Interactive History of Sixteenth-Century Kabbalah,” in *Cultural Intermediaries: Jewish Intellectuals in Early Modern Italy*, edited by David B. Ruderman and Giuseppe Veltri (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Sarug is discussed on pages 255-256.


Matt offers a brief excerpt from Sarug’s *Limmudei Atsilut* called “TRACES” on page 97.


Analyzes two passages from Limmude ‘Aṣiḥat on God’s pre-creation “shaking” and “delight” translating the second of these at length.

Menahem Azarya of Fano


Chapter 6, § 4. RE-EDITING AS A RELIGIOUS IMPERATIVE: A PSYCHOLOGICAL APPRECIATION OF THE THEURGIC JUSTIFICATION OF EDITORIAL PRACTICE, which discusses “the repeated efforts of Menahem Azariah da Fano to revise, edit and claim as his own the work known as Kanfei Yonah” (—p. 703).


Matt offers a brief excerpt from Fano’s “On the Tebiru” from the beginning of his Yonat Elen, titled SHATTERING AND GROWTH—page 96.


An annotated translation of Gilgulei Nesamot, an account of the reincarnations of figures throughout Jewish history, presented alphabetically.

Joseph Solomon Delmedigo


**Naftali Hertz Bacharach**


“Emek HaMelech, besides being a profound work on Kabbalah, contains a wealth of spiritual stories embedded within the text, which the author utilizes to illustrate or animate a particular point of interest”—from the back cover.


Some brief passages from *Emek ha-Melekh* on evil (apparently influenced by Israel Sarug) appear on pages 81-82.


Isaiah Horowitz


An introduction to Shney Luchot Habrit.


Abraham Cohen de Herrera


Accessed at https://www.academia.edu/2393215/Challenging_the_Trinity

______. “Circle, Point and Line: A Lurianic Myth in the Puerta del Cielo,” in Creation and Re-Creation in Jewish Thought [FESTSCHRIFT IN HONOR OF JOSEPH DAN ON THE OCCASION OF HIS SEVENTIETH


**Shabbatai Zevi, the Shabbatean Movement and Its Aftermath**


The original of this dramatization was likely in Yiddish.


Within this book about an eighteenth-century anti-heresy campaigner is much on the dispersal of Lurianic kabbalah.


Ezra, N. E. B. Shabbethai Sebi: The Pseudo-Messiah. Lecture delivered before a meeting of the LITERARY CIRCLE of the Shanghai Zionist Association on Sunday, 18th November, 1906, reprinted from “ISRAEL’S MESSENGER.” 30th November, 1906 (De Souza & Co.).


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Also in *Kabbalah* concerning other figures of the Sabbatean movement:

- “Judah Leib Prossnitz,” pages 441-442.


Jacob Frank
(variously Yakov, or Ya’akov, Franck, Yankiev Leivitch, 1726-1791)


Joseph ben Immanuel Ergas


Immanuel Hai Ricci (Ricchi, Riki, or Rikki)


Fraenkel, Avinoam. *Nefesh HaTzimtzum*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem – New York: Urim Publications, 2015): Fraenkel outlines points (pp. 63-71) and translates passages (pp. 228-263) re. Ergas vs Ricci on whether tzimtzum should be taken literally.


Jacob Koppel Lifschuetz


Hayyim ben Moshe ibn Attar


Moses Hayyim Luzzatto

KABBALISTIC WORKS:

Luzzatto, R. Moses C. 138 Openings of Wisdom [Ql.”Kh PiTkheI HoKhMaH], translated by Avraham Yehoshua Greenbaum (Jerusalem: Azamra Institute, 2005).

The first full translation of Luzzatto’s summary of Lurianic Kabbalah, 138 Openings (or Gates) of Wisdom, from the Hebrew text of Rabbi Chaim Friedlander.

______. General Principles of the Kabbalah (Research Centre of Kabbalah, 1970; distributed by Samuel Weiser, New York).

An abridged version of Luzzatto’s outline of Lurianic Kabbalah.

______. The Kabbalah of the Ari Z”al according to the Ramchal, Rabbi Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto, translated and commented by Rabbi Raphael Afilalo (Montreal: Kabbalah Editions, 2004).

The ten chapters of Luzzatto’s 17-page Kelalut ba-Ilan ba-Qadosh are the basis of this introduction to Lurianic Kabbalah of RaMHaL.

OTHER WORKS:


The ethical treatise for which Luzzatto is best known.

______. Secrets of the Future Temple, translated by Avraham Greenbaum (Jerusalem: Temple Institute / Azamra Institute, 1999).

Secrets… offers a translation of Luzzatto’s Mishkney Elyon, DWELLINGS OF THE SUPREME, which “explains the inner meaning of the Temple services and their role of bringing Shefa to the souls on their level and to angels on theirs” (p. 44).


STUDIES:


Garb, Jonathan. “Mussar, Curriculum and Exegesis in the Circle of Ramhal” (working paper). The Tikvah Center for Law & Jewish Civilization (New York: NYU School of Law, 01/12).


An introduction to Luzzatto’s *Kalah Pitkei Hokhmah*.


This dissertation takes a close look at Mesillat Yesharim, “Luzzatto’s most enigmatic work.”


Ezekiel Landau


Elijah ben Solomon, Gaon of Vilna, the GRA


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“...Mithnagged worship is neither about personal needs [n]or experience, rather it is a cognitive act of adoration of the Divine.” (—page XXXII)


“In this paper, I will present three aspects of the Vilna Gaon’s own unique mystical path to God, that will evidence the need for the Gra’s writings to be addressed in scholarship. I will start with his innovation within the theory of Lurianic Kabbalah that pertain to his mysticism, then I will examine the nature of his mysticism, and finally, I will conclude with his relationship to the world of Hasidic spirituality.” (—pages 131-132)


“He viewed the knowledge of the Torah that he acquired by force of hard intellectual work as the most exalted expression of divine revelation...” (page 3)


“An exciting expansion of the Vilna Gaon's powerful ideas on the purpose of Creation, the Jewish People and its history and destiny, and the coming of Mashiach.”—Feldheim’s description.


Teachings of the Vilna Gaon are referenced throughout; see in particular, volume 2, pp. 71-91.


Glotzer quotes and refers to the Gaon’s commentary on SY throughout.


Hofets Hayyim, or Chofetz Chaim (1838-1933), was the popular name of Yisrael Meir Kagan Poupko, a leader of the Musar movement. Martyr Elhanan (or Elchonon) Bunim Wasserman (1874-1941) was one of Hofets Hayyim’s principle followers.
In English, see Wasserman’s *Epoch of the Messiah* (Brooklyn: Ohr Elchonon Publications, n.d.) and *Reb Elehonon: The Life and Ideals of Rabbi Elehonon Bunin* Wasserman of Baranovich, by Aaron Sorasky (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications Ltd, 1982).


**CHAPTER FIFTEEN.** “The Mystical Experiences of the Gaon of Vilna,” offers a report by R. Hayyim of Volozhin, haGra’s primary disciple.


Morgenstern’s book is “based on discoveries originating in hitherto unknown documents that were buried in archives across the former Soviet Union,” namely Poland.

“These diverse collections … recount attempts by rabbis and kabbalists to reveal the messianic redemption by interpreting codes embedded in Scripture, and records their taking various mystical actions to hasten the redemption, using ‘practical Kabbala (mystical practices), searching for the ten lost tribes, and making ‘aliya’—immigrating to Erez Israel.” (from the PREFACE, page xi)


Nadler gives special attention to Phineas ben Judah, Maggid of Polotsk (fl. 1788-1820, d. 1823), as “A Paradigm of Mitnagdic Religion.”


Shaklover (or Shklober), Rabbi Hillel (Rabbi Hillel Rivlin of Shklov). *The Voice of the Turtledove: In the Footsteps of the Mashiach* [orig. Kol haTor]. A Digest of Seven *Pirkei Ha-Geulah / CHAPTERS ON REDEMPTION*; principal translator, Rabbi Yechezkel Bar Lev (with K. Skaist) (Pethach Tivka: [n.p.], [ca. 1994]; distributed by Feldheim, New York – Jerusalem).

Rabbi Hillel Shklober (1758-1838) was a grand-nephew and student of Rabbi Eliyahu, the Vilna Gaon, upon whose teachings *The Voice of the Turtledove* is based. Note, however, that this edition is incomplete; see above under “Bakst…The Secret Doctrine….”


“Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin … reports some interesting details of his master’s life in his Introduction to the Gaon’s commentary on the Sifra de-Seni’utha…” Werblowsky offers a condensed rendering.


The Gaon of Vilna (Elijah ben Solomon Zalman: 1720-97) is “cited to illustrate the linguistic process of God’s self-disclosure” through his comments on Sefer Yezirah and the Zohar.


Wolfson discusses the Gaon of Vilna’s commentary on the Sefer Yezirah.

Hayyim ben Isaac Volozhiner, or Chaim Volozhin


Chapter 26, “Hayim of Volozhin” (excerpts from Nefesh baHayim, Gate 4, pages 253-258.


This edition has been described as “Rabbi Abraham Yaakov Finkel’s excerpted colloquial translation … [which] left out the translations of the many sections they deemed too sensitive” (Leonard Moskowitz’ introduction to The Soul of Life, page ix—listed below).

Finkel’s approach seems to reflect that taken by “those Yeshivot where [Nefesh Hachaim] is formally studied, [where] most only focus on specific sections … [usually just the Fourth Gateway and sometimes also the Second Gateway] avoiding “sensitive Kabbalistic subject matter” (Avinoam Fraenkel’s introduction to Nefesh HaTzimtzum, page 29 and page 29, note 2—listed immediately below).


This edition provides the complete Nefesh HaChaim in English and Hebrew, along with a wealth of supplementary material, including a “deeply Kabbalistic” tract by Rabbi Yitzchak, Rabbi Chaim’s son, known by the title Maamar BeTezLeL, DISCOURSE ON THE IMAGE.

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Unterman’s collection contains numerous excerpts from *Nefesh HaChaim*.

**Shneur Zalman of Lyady & HaBaD**


Annotated passages from the works of the early hasidim arranged by topic, scores from Shneur Zalman of Lyady, with extremely helpful introductions.


**Bet El:** Shalom Sharabi, Yosef Hayyim b. Elijah al-Hakam of Baghdad, Yehuda Fatiyah, & Sha’ar ha-Shamayim


See Jonathan Meir, “Ariel Bension and the Imagined Decline...,” which is chapter 1 “The Last Kabbalists,” §1 (pages 1-3), in Kabbalistic Circles in Jerusalem, listed below.

Bratt, Yerachmiel (trans.) The Light of the Ben Ish Chai on Rus [Ruth] (Southfield: Targum Press, 2018).


CHAPTER FOURTEEN, “The Mystical Meditations of Shalom Sharabi and the Kabbalists of Bet El.”


CHAPTER 2. “The Kabbalah Seminaries of Jerusalem.”


Phineas Elijah Hurwitz


Pinchas Hurwitz (1765-1821) touted Book of the Covenant (Sefer ha-Brit) as a commentary on Hayyim Vital’s Sha’are Tedshita (GATES OF HolINESS). More, it appears to be an attempt to reconcile kabbalah and science.

Elyakim Getzel Hamilzahgi


Yizhak Isik Haver Waldman


Haver’s ideas are discussed pp. 155-163.


Shlomo Bar Heikel Eliashiv, “Leshem”\(^1\)


Leshem is cited and quoted throughout both of Baskt’s books.


Passages from Leshem Shevo VeAchlama on pp. 168-229.

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\(^1\) At the HASHKAFACIRCLE website (http://www.hashkafacircle.com/) is a series of video shiurim (lessons) by Rabbi Triebetz, one of which is “Rabbi Triebetz’s introduction to the Leshem, and the Leshem’s introduction to the Hakdamos u-She’arim.”

Also find Joey Rosenfeld’s lecture series, “Leshem Shevo V’Achlama,” on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/user/joro230


Elishav’s ideas are discussed pp. 136-144.

Rosenfeld, Joey. “A Tribute to Rav Shlomo Elyashiv, Author of Leshem Shevo v-Ashloma: On his Ninetieth Yahrzeit,” at The Seforim Blog (Thursday, March 10, 2016):
http://seforim.blogspot.com/2016/03/a-tribute-to-rav-shlomoelyashiv-author.html?m=1


These articles are a study guide to a key text in Kabbalah, Bereishis, Noach, Lech Lecha, etc.) which are based on the teachings of Rabbi Shlomo Elyashiv (1841-1926).

Yehuda Leib HaLevi Ashlag, Baal HaSulam

Many of the items listed below published by “Bnei Baruch” or “Laitman Kabbalah” are available free in e-versions at BNEI BARUCH KABBALAH EDUCATION & RESEARCH INSTITUTE:
http://www.kabbalah.info/eng/content/view/frame/2373/eng/&main


A collection of essays covering a wide range of subjects.

_____ A Sage’s Fruit: Letters of Baal HaSulam (Toronto – Brooklyn: Laitman Kabbalah Publishers, 2014)

_____ A Tapestry for the Soul: The Introduction to the Zohar by Rabbi Yehuda Leib Ashlag. Explanation of the text uses excerpts collated from Rabbi Ashlag’s other writings, and includes suggestions for inner work, compiled by Yedidah Cohen (Safed: Nehora Press, 2010).

“This book is a study guide to a key text in Kabbalah, The Introduction to the Zohar by Rabbi Yehudah Ashlag, as published in English in In the Shadow of the Ladder.” (PREFACE, page ix.)

See the description of In the Shadow of the Ladder, below.

_____ And You Shall Choose Life: An Essay on Kabbalah, the Purpose of Life, and Our True Spiritual Work, edited by Michael Berg (Los Angeles: The Kabbalah Centre International, 2011).

_____ Entrance to the Tree of Life (HAKDAMOT, Part 2) (Jerusalem: Research Centre of Kabbalah, 1977).

_____ Entrance to the Zohar (HAKDAMOT, Part 1) (Jerusalem: Research Centre of Kabbalah, 1974).

_____ In the Shadow of the Ladder: Introductions to the Kabbalah. Translated from the Hebrew with additional explanatory chapters by Mark Cohen and Yedidah Cohen (Safed: Nehora Press, 2002).

This collection’s CHAPTER 3, “Introduction to the Zohar,” is a new translation of the text which appears as PART ONE of Entrance to the Zohar, “A Preface to the Zohar.” CHAPTER 4 is another substantial piece

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by Ashlag, “Introduction to the Study of the Ten Sefirot.” “The Ladder” in the title refers to Ashlag’s Hebrew translation (with embedded commentary) of the Zohar, Ha Sulam, which has been translated into English and published by The Kabbalah Centre.


- Vol. II, Introduction to the Book Zohar includes “Preface to the Book of Zohar,” which is the same text as An Entrance to the Zohar, Part Two; AND “Introduction to the Book of Zohar,” which is the same text as In the Shadow of the Ladder, Chapter 3, and An Entrance to the Zohar, Part One. Laitman presents both with extensive commentary.


These volumes represent the first two parts of Talmud Eser Sefirot: TZIMTZUM AND KAV and IGULIM AND YOSHER.

Parts 1-8 and 16 of Talmud Eser Sefirot in English are online at BNEI BARUCH KABBALAH EDUCATION & RESEARCH INSTITUTE, founded by Rabbi Michael Laitman: http://www.kabbalah.info/eng/content/view/frame/326952/eng/content/view/full/326958&main


Wisdom of Truth contains all the same essays as Kabbalah: A Gift of the Bible (noted above); Wisdom… includes the Hebrew on facing pages.

Ashlag, Rav Yehuda; Ashlag, Rav Baruch; and Laitman, Michael. Kabbalah for the Student (Toronto – Brooklyn: Laitman Kabbalah Publishers, 2008).

Kabbalah for the Student is a vast collection of articles (some quite lengthy), prefaces, excerpts, and explanations from R. Yehuda Ashlag, with additional material from Yehuda’s son Baruch, and Baruch’s personal assistant, Michael Laitman. Many of the writings presented in Kabbalah for the Student have been published elsewhere before:

- “Hallan” (12 diagrams) = “Sefer Ha-Ilan” in Laitman’s Introduction to the Book of Zohar (2005)
- “Introduction to the Book of Zohar” ≈ “Preface to the Zohar” which is PART ONE of An Entrance to the Zohar (1974); the same text is given piece by piece, surrounded by commentary as “Introduction to the Book of Zohar” in Laitman’s Introduction to the Book of Zohar (2005)
- “Introduction to the Study of the Ten Sefirot” is also Chapter 4 of In the Shadow of the Ladder (2002)
- “Preface to the Book of Zohar” ≈ “An Introduction to the Zohar” which is PART TWO of An Entrance to the Zohar (1974); the same text is given piece by piece, surrounded by commentary as “Preface to the Book of Zohar” in Laitman’s Introduction to the Book of Zohar (2005)
• “Preface to the Wisdom of Kabbalah” = “The Preamble to the Wisdom of Kabbalah” in Laitman’s Introduction to the Book of Zohar (2005), surrounded by Laitman’s commentary
• “This is for Judah” ≈ “This is for Yehuda” in Kabbalah: A Gift of the Bible (1984)—also in The Wisdom of Truth (2008)
• Appendix C. “Diagrams of the Spiritual Worlds” ≈ “Album of Drawings” in Laitman’s Introduction to the Book of Zohar (2005), except all of the drawings are in reverse, and Kabbalah for the Student adds nine diagrams


The Zohar, paragraph by paragraph, is presented in the original Aramaic and in English. The English is a translation of Rabbi Ashlag’s Ha Sulam (THE LADDER), i.e., Ashlag’s Hebrew translation of the Zohar containing his “embedded commentary,” which, in the Kabbalah Centre’s edition, is shown in a different typeface from the Zohar text. (Ha Sulam was published in Jerusalem, 1945-1955.) Most chapters are introduced by short summaries, which, starting at volume 3, are headlined “A Synopsis.” Some chapters are further set up by additional paragraphs headlined “The Relevance of the Passage.” Each volume contains a glossary of Hebrew words, including biblical names and kabbalistic terms.

Ashlag’s commentary appositively identifies many of the Zohar’s widely (wildly) ranging referents with sefirot, parzufim, and other features fundamental to Lurianic developments. Elsewhere the commentary fleshes out the Zohar’s apparent shorthand (often by simply identifying the antecedents of potentially ambiguous pronouns). In some paragraphs, the commentary overwhelms the text; in others, no commentary at all appears.

Of the Sulam commentary, Isaiah Tishby (—Wisdom of the Zohar, p. 105) says, “The explanations follow the Lurianic system and are of little help in clarifying the literal meaning of the text.”


LEVI ISAAC KRAKOVSKY, A STUDENT OF ASHLAG:


Krakovsky, a student of R. Yehuda Ashlag, presents a detailed summary.


Other items of interest


“In Jerusalem there is a kabbalist who dedicates his life to teaching others how to search for God where He can be found, namely, at the days on the Jewish calendar where a special Divine energy is available. This is Rabbi Rafael Moshe Luria, a descendant of the father of kabbalists, Rabbi Isaac Luria of sixteenth-century Sefad, (sic) who is known as the holy Ari.”

(—Living the Kabbalah, preface, page xiii)


Contains passages from Shelomoh Alkabetz, Yitzhak Luria, Shabbatean hymns, Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto, and Shneur Zalman, among many others.


Contains passages from Cordovero, Luria, Vital, Avraham Azulai, Shalom Sharabi, Luzzatto, the Vilna Gaon, Chaim Volozhin, Shneur Zalman, Ben Ish Hai, and Yehudah Ashlag, among many others.

Garb, Jonathan. “’Alien’ Culture in the Circle of Rabbi Kook,” in Study and Knowledge in Jewish Thought, edited by Howard Kreisel (Beer Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2006), pages 253-264.


See in particular CHAPTER THREE, “Empowerment through Trance” (pages 47-74), which discusses, among others, Hayyim Vital and Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto.


Gutwirth, Israel. The Kabbalah and Jewish Mysticism (New York: Philosophical Library, 1987).

Brief discussions of topics and personalities, including “The Holy City of Safed, Cradle of Kabbalah,” “Ari the Saint: A Star That Shone with a Light of Its Own,” “Rabbi Chaim Vital: The Faithful Disciple of the Ari Hakodosh,” “Rabbi Yeshayahu Halevi Horvitz: Shela the Saint” and “Rabbi Joseph Caro: Compiler of the Shulhan Arukh.”


“Contributors” of brief passages include Joseph Karo, Moses Cordovero, Chaim Vital, Judah Lowe, Shalom Sharabi, Moses Chaim Luzzatto, Elijah ben Solomon, Schneur Zalman, Chaim Volozhin, Ben Ish Hai, and Yehudah Ashlag, and many others.

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_____. *Messianic Mystics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); see CHAPTER FIVE “From Italy to Safed and Back.”

_____. “One from a Town, Two from a Clan”—The Diffusion of Lurianic Kabbala and Sabbateanism: A Re-Examination,” in *Jewish History*, Volume 7, Number 2 (Haifa: Haifa University Press, Fall 1993), pp. 79-104.

_____. “Ta'anug: Erotic Delights from Kabbalah to Hasidism,” in *Hidden Intercourse: Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism* [ARIES BOOK SERIES, vol. 7], edited by Wouter J. Hanegraaff and Jeffrey J. Kripal (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2008); see especially § DELIGHT IN ECSTATIC KABBALAH (pages 123-130).


The section on Jewish mysticism includes passages—with Jacob’s comments—from Cordovero, Vital de Vidas, Azikri, and several others.


Texts and introductions: Rabbi Joseph Karo, Rabbi Hayyim Vital, Rabbi Moses Hayyim Luzzatto, the Gaon of Vilna, Shalom Sharabi, along with many others.


Schwartz offers four models of the Jewish approach to the natural world: (1) the rational, (2) the biblical, (3) the “radical amazement model” highlighted by Abraham Joshua Heschel, and (4) the “holy sparks model” of Lurianic Kabbalah developed by later Hasidim.


“...I have concentrated on the three main areas of Kabbalistic creativity: the literature of the Zohar, the Lurianic corpus as expressed by Chaim Vital and parts of the Chasidic mystical tradition.” (page xlii)

Thus, there are snippets not only of Vital, but of Moses Jonah, Joseph Irgas, Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, Abraham Azulai, Chaim of Volozhin, and others.


“Fifty-four charming and evocative tales... [which] form the important transitional link between the esoteric mystical teachings of the sixteenth-century kabbalists and the populist tales of the eighteenth-century European Hasidim.” (back cover)
Sources include *Emek baMelekh* (Naphtali Bacharach), *Or baYashar* (Meir Poppers), *Reshit Hokhmah* (Elijah de Vidas), *Sefer Haredim* (Eliezer Azikri), *Shulhan Arukh shel haAri* (Jacob Zemah), and many other works.


See **CHAPTER 5**, “The Decline of the Renaissance Era; Leo de Modena,” and **CHAPTER 6**, “Joseph Solomon Delmedigo.”