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, Reshit 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. 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 a woeful lack of translated material from this period. For example, we have seen but fragments of Cordovero’s Etz Chayim Rabbati (The Great Palm) and Pardes Rimmonim (Orchard of Pomegranates), Cordovero’s ranging—and ultimately quite popular—compilation of kabbalah, is available.†

Some Lurianic works, such as those written and compiled by Hayyim Vital and his son Shmuel (parts of Etz Hayyim/Shemoneh She’arim) have found their way into English in recent years, but these renderings are mere fragments of the Kabbalat Ha-Ari.‡ The major kabalistic work by Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto, Keleb Pithei Hokhmah, has also been produced in English a couple of times.

† See my “Which Lurianic Kabbalah?” at https://www.academia.edu/30928619/Which_Lurianic_Kabbalah.
‡ On Pardes Rimmonim translations, see below, pages 6 and 7.
§ Refer, in particular, to pages 10-17 below.
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OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST
OVERIEWS & PRE-LURIANIC

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 Elijah de Vidas’ “The Rules of Mystical Piety” as codified by Cordovero, Luria, Karo, and others, and practiced by Safed mystics.


“I reflect on the mystical writings of Moshe Cordovero, Eliyahu de Vidas, and Hayyim Vital…”


Gurwirth, 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 Shekhinah according to Moses Cordovero
§ 5. R. Joseph Karo and the Revelation of the Feminine Divine Powers
§ 6. R. Isaac Luria Ashkenaz: 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 Parady Rimmonim and Vital’s Sha’arei Qodesh shedding light on biblical techniques of meditation.


Schechter’s article is considered a classic, but now see Wolfson, Elliot R. “Asceticism, Mysticism, and Messianism: A Reappraisal of Schechter’s Portrait of Sixteenth-Century Safed,” in The Jewish Quarterly Review, Vol.106, No. 2 (Philadelphia: Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, Spring 2016), pages 166-177.


Source material from Solomon Alkabez (Ayelet Abayim), Moses Cordovero (Parady Rimmonim), Moses Alshekh (Shoshanath Ha’Amakim), Abraham Galante (Kinath Setarim), Hayyim Vital (Sefer HaGilgulim), and Israel ben Moses Najara (Zemiruth 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 kabbalah 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 (1488-1575)


§ 5.2 THE SHULHAN ARUKH (pages 90-95)—translated excerpts: § 5.2.1. Haifen Mishpat 26:1-6 – Prohibition against resorting to non-Jewish courts; § 5.2.2. Yoreh De'ah 335:1-10 – 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.


Soae, Rafael Abraham. The Jewish Kitchen: Code of Law Following the Rulings of Rabbi Yosef Karo, updated according to Rabbi Ovadia Yosef (Sephardic Library Bene Issachar, 1994).


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 (1522-1570)

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

“...a new translation of the first chapter of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero’s classic work ... with modern commentary” by Henry Abramson, Dean at Touro’s Lander College of Arts and Sciences, Brooklyn.


Or Ne’erav (The Pleasant Light) “constituted an epitome of Cordovero’s great systematic theology of Kabbalah entitled Pardei Rimmonim (The Orchard of Pomegranates).” (Robinson’s Introduction, page xi)


The preceding four works have been reprinted as “Tome 1 of 12” through “Tome 4 of 12”: © David Smith, LLC, October 1, 2016, and again, edited by Fabrizio Del Tin, by eUniversity.pub, January 1, 2018. “Tome 5 of 12” through “Tome 12 of 12” of this set complete the 32 treatises of Parde Rimonim in these two editions.

Contents of Parde Rimonim – Orchard of Pomegranates, Tomes I-XII, by Moshe Cordovero:

- ([n.p.]: David Smith, LLC, 2016): Tomes 1-6 translated by Elyakim Getz; Tomes 7-10 translated by Sharron Shalit; Tomes 11-12 translated by Avraham Broide.
- ([n.p.]: eUniversity.pub, 2018), Tomes 1 of 12—12 of 12, edited by Fabrizio Del Tin.

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In tracking the sources of the BeShT’s vocal rites, Idel states,

I shall be concerned here especially with the various forms of the ecstatic one [i.e., Kabbalah] and the Cordoverian corpus and their many reverberations, as well as with the line of a certain type of Jewish astro-magic mediated, especially, by the Cordoverian corpus. (—page 9).


“I reflect on the mystical writings of Moshe Cordovero, Eliyahu de Vidas, and Hayyim Vital…”


“Chapter three focuses on the concept of imitatio dei in Moshe Cordovero’s Toner Devorah.” (FOREWORD, page iv)


A passage from Parades Rimmonim, pages 199-201.


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 Ginzin, examines in depth a composition to which no serious attention had hitherto been given in scholarship.”

(All quotes are from Raviv’s PREFACE.)

“[O]f Ben Shlomo… (1965)” refers to Ben-Shlomo’s Mystical Theology of Moses Cordovero (Jerusalem: Mosad Byalik); “[Bracha] Sack’s stupendous articulation” refers to Sack’s Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero ([B’er Sheva’]: Universität Ben-Guryon 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 (1518-1587) – Reshit Hokhmah*


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


“I reflect on the mystical writings of Moshe Cordovero, Eliyahu de Vidas, and Hayyim Vital…”


A passage from Reshit Hokhmah, pages 207-209.

* Elijah de Vidas’ Reshit Hokhmah is not to be confused with the medieval astrological text of the same name by Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1162). Translations of Ibn Ezra’s work abound:


LURIANIC KABBALAH: A BIBLIOGRAPHY

Isaac Luria (1534-1572) – via Hayyim Vital (1543-1620) & the Safed school

*Etz Hayyim* by Hayyim Vital: THE CONTENTS OF FOUR TRANSLATIONS COMPARED

- **C®C 1 = The Tree of Life – Volume One: THE PALACE OF ADAM KADMON, translated by E. Collé & H. Collé (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015).**
- **C®C 2 = The Tree of Life – Volume Two: THE PALACE OF POINTS, translated by E. Collé & H. Collé (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016).**
- **C®C 4 = The Tree of Life – Volume Four: Part One: THE PALACE OF ZEIR ANPIN, translated by E. Collé & H. Collé (Independently published, 2020).**

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The scope and order of WC’s “ten Branches”* differs significantly from the other versions of Etz Hayyim.

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<td>WC Branch I</td>
<td>M-P PAL 1 Gate 1 Br. 1, pp. 11-24</td>
<td>CeC1 PAL 1 Gate 1 Ch. 2, §§ 9-45</td>
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<td>WC Branch II</td>
<td>M-P PAL 1 Gate 1 Br. 2, pp. 24-27</td>
<td>CeC1 PAL 1 Gate 1 Ch. 2, §§ 46-57</td>
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<td>CeC1 PAL 1 Gate 4 Ch. 1, §§ 1-6</td>
<td>DS/eU2 PAL 1 Gate 4 Ch. 1, pp. 15-17</td>
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<td>WC Branch VI</td>
<td>M-P PAL 1 Gate 4 Br. 3, pp. 131-133</td>
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<td>WC Branch VII</td>
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<td>CeC1 PAL 1 Gate 5 Ch. 1, §§ 1-4</td>
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<td>WC Branch XIII</td>
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<td>CeC1 PAL 1 Gate 7 Ch. 1, §§ 1-9</td>
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<td>DS/eU3 PAL 2 Gate 11 Ch. 1, pp. 77-80</td>
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* “The Work of the Chariot Trust published the first English translation of all ten Branches of the Etz HaChayyim in 1973.”
—Daniel Hale Feldman, Qabalah: The Mystical Heritage of the Children of Abraham (Santa Cruz: Work of the Chariot, 2001), p. 76

“Etz HaChayyim” presents the qabalistic worldview of R.Yitza’aq Lunia, as recorded by his student R. Chayyim Vital. The book is composed of ten ‘branches.’ The Work of the Chariot published an English translation of all ten branches in 1973.”

Clearly, these statements about Etz Hayyim do not square with the bibliographic information and tables above. Etz Hayyim has fifty gates, each containing any number of branches, altogether totaling over 370. Also, WC’s first and second editions of Tree of Life are dated 1970.

† I have yet to locate passages that parallel WC Branch III. The themes which are combined there appear separately elsewhere:
- **DIRECT LIGHT and REFLECTED LIGHT** are discussed in Palace 1, Gate 6, Branch 6: —M-P, p. 275, —CeC vol. 1, p. 214, —Sm/eU, tome 2, p. 109.
- the combination of YHVH and ADNYY into YADHVNHY turns up in the introductory “Prayer to be recited before the study of the book Tree of Life”—Sm/eU, tome 1, p. xii; in Palace 7, Gate 44, Branch 2—Sm/eU, tome 11, p. 104; and in Palace 7, Gate 46, Branch 6—Sm/eU, tome 11, p. 202.

Translations: Isaac Luria — via Hayyim Vital & the Safed school


Ch. 13. Isaac Luria: a selection of passages from the writings of Luria’s disciples, i.e., Etz Hayyim (Vital), Shulpan Arukh ba-Ari (Yakov Zemach), Nagid u-Mezaveh (Zemach)


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.


Lengthy passages of Ets Hayyim (translated by M. Kallus) and Sha’ar baHaqdamot (translated by B. Ogren).

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


Klein offers a translation of Sha’ar ba-Kedaim (GATE OF PRINCIPLES), which serves as a preface to some printed editions of Vital’s Ets 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.


Passages from Hayyim Vital’s Ta’amei ha-Mitzvot: Parashat Bereshit and Sha’ar ha-Katannah.


“The texts presented here come from three collections, Sha’ar Ha-Pesukim, Sefer Ha-Likkutim, and Likkutei 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-Likkutim (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-Likkutim (published under that title) was edited by R. Benjamin Ha-Levi, a student of Vital. Likkutei Torah, first printed in Zolkiew 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 Osnei Hayyim, Adam Yashar, and Sefer Derushim.” (–¶ 7)


Matt includes excerpts from various Lurianic writings: Isaac Luria, “a kavanah recorded by Joseph Don Don, ca. 1570”; Hayyim Vital’s Likkutim Hadashim and Sha’arei Qedushah; Israel Sarug’s Limmudei Atsilut; Menahem Azariah of Fano’s Yonat Elemen; and Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto’s Mesillat Yesharim.


“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 Sefer 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, Hayyim Vital (translation from the German by Jack Hirschman).


Vital, Chayim. Derush ba-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.”

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

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

A collection of excerpts (Yossef Daat, Charchvat ba-Daat, Giluy ha-Shem, Makor ba-Shem) connected to Derush ba-Daat “as written by our Kabbalistic Masters,” e.g., the Zohar, Vital, RaShaSh, Ben Ish Hai.


Yitzchak Bar Chaim has inserted clearly marked “personal annotations … to help the reader” (page v).

______. Sha’ar HaPeshukim – Gate of Verses, Book 1, SEFER BEREISHIS, An English Translation of the Arizal’s commentary on the Torah, by Pinchas Winston (Kiryat Yearim: Thirtysix.org, 2020).

Covering parashat Bereishis through Vayechi Within the book Bereishis (GENESIS)

The commentaries included begin with a lengthy section on the parashat Shemot (pp. 13-144) with shorter sections on the other parashat (V’aira, Bo, Beshallach, etc.) within the book Shemot (EXODUS).


On aspects of Sha’ar Raach ba-Kodesh, see Lawrence Fine’s papers, listed below under Academic Studies.


This translation comes in two editions: English only and English-Hebrew.


With a 12-page introduction. This translation is English only.


This translation is English only.


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 [The Writings of the Arizal], therefore, focuses 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). While slightly smaller in format, the fourth printing adds over 200 pages of new content to the original.

Hayyim Vital’s personal, eclectic, and non-Lurianic works: texts & studies

—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 believed 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.


Passages from Morris Faierstein’s translation of Sefer ba-Hezyonot revised and introduced by Assaf Tamari.

—Sefer ba-Pe'ulot (BOOK OF OPERATIONS)

Brod, Eliezer “R. Chaim Vital and his Unknown Work Sefer ba-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 ba-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)

—Shā‘arī Qēdusha[b], or Kēdusha[b] (Gates of Holiness)

Shā‘arī Qēdusha is included under Vital’s independent 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 bibliographic details immediately below.)


This paper includes a “partial rendering of part 4 of the Shā‘arī Kēdusha” (—p. 234, n. *).


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


“Shā‘arī Kēdusha 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

For the publication which includes the fourth part, see below, —other works: Vital, Ktavim Chasidim…
—other works


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


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 above.

______. Sefer ha-Goralot: The Book of Oracles, translated by Elyakim Getz (Belize City: Providence University, 2007).


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 out 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 Tzadok identifies this commentary as being from Ktavim Chadashim l’Rabbi Chaim Vital (NEW WRITINGS OF RABBI HAYYIM VITAL) published in Hebrew (Jerusalem, 1988). See above Vital: Ktavim Chadashim.

** Sefer Yetzirah: The BeGeD KaPeReT of Chap. 4 (CASSETTE TAPE – Chicago: Yeshivat Benèi N’vi’im, 1994).
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).


### Bibliography


"I reflect on the mystical writings of Moshe Cordovero, Eliyahu de Vidas, and Hayyim Vital…"


"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.

“Yosef Hacker of Hebrew University in Jerusalem discusses "Introduction to R Hayim Vital and his Treatise ‘Etz Hayim’ – The Tree of Life and to the ‘Sha’ar haHaqdamot’ – Gate of Principles (1572).” Unfortunately, Hacker is repeatedly interrupted by argumentative colleagues—one in particular.


Krassen translates and comments on two passages from Vital’s *Sha’ar ba-Gilgulim* (Gate of Transmigrations) (pp. 4-5 and 6). Also in this issue of *Kabbalah* is a segment of *Sefer Etz Hayyim: Sha’ar baKlalim*, p. 10ff, on “The Ascent of Saints” translated by Eliyahu Klein (p. 7).


Magid argues “that the mythic world of Lurianic Kabbala 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.


______. “Zelem (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), pp. 170-176.


“[F]our studies by Mordechai Pachtner 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 sefiroth, 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 *nqap* (the Female), who are the Lurianic equivalents of the *sefirot* Tiferet and Malkhut, 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. *devqut*.”


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. 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.V. “Lurianic Kabbalah and its myth of exile and redemption”

Ch.1.V. “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 discusses 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 Hagilgulim, Shaar Hakavanot, Shaar Hamitsvot, Shaar Hapesukim*, and *Shaar Ratz’b Hakodesh*.


“Herein are discussed in-depth lessons from the master Kabbalist, Rabbi Hayyim Vital, who recorded for us the Kabbalah Torah of the Arizal. Rabbi Vital’s language is more intense in its usage of metaphor and symbol that any other school of Kabbalah. Yet, to understand it literally is a terrible misfortune.” (—*The Evolution of God*, back cover)


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


Derived primarily from Vital’s *Ets Hayyim* and *Peri Ets Hayyim, Sur mera va’asah tov* “is unique in its blending of classical [i.e., Lurianic] kabbalah with the approach of Beshtian 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 Shivchei ba-Ari* with tired “modern art” drawings.


- “Creation Impossible: What Is Tzimtzum Like?”
- “Immanent Transcendence: Chassidim, Mitnagdim, and the Debate about Tzimtzum”
- “Everywhere Revealed: How Everyone, Children Included, Can Apprehend the Unknowable Essence of G-d”
- “About Presence: The Revelatory Trace (RESHI'MU) of the Divine Withdrawal”
• “Covert Luminosity: The Reshimu, the Kar, and the Concretization of Creativity”
• “Making Space: The Chassidic Concept of Tzemuzm and Its Applications in Our Service of G-d”

(VIDEO)


Wexelman, David M. The Jewish Concept of Reincarnation and Creation, based on the writings of Rabbi Chaim Vital (Northvale – Jerusalem: Jason Aronson, 1999). Part I on reincarnation is “…adapted and translated for the English reader directly from the original text, Gateway to Reincarnation [Shaar ha-Gilgulim], written by Rabbi Chaim Vital, , as taught to him by the Arizal.” Part II on creation “…is adapted from the Great works of Rabbi Chaim Vital, of blessed memory: The Gateway to the Introductions [Sha’ar ha-Hakdamot] and the Treasury of Life [Otsrot Hayim].”

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).


Numerous tales, many from the writings of Hayyim, Vital are quoted in full; the primary protagonists are the Ari and Vital.
Israel Sarug (†, 1590-1610)


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


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


  Analyzes two passages from *Limmud 'Ašilut* on God’s pre-creation “shaking” and “delight” translating the second of these at length.
Menahem Azarya of Fano (1548-1620)


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 Teshiru” from the beginning of his Yonat Elum, titled SHATTERING AND GROWTH—page 96.


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


Sierka states that Azaria’s compilation/redaction of Kanfei Yonah “was part of Naftali Bacharach’s Kabbalistic library, and was intensively studies by the Italian branch of post-Lurianic kabbalists” (ibid, page 75).
Joseph Solomon Delmedigo (1591-1655)


Naftali Hertz Bacharach (fl. early-to-mid-1600s)

Bakhrak, Rab Naftali. [EMEQ HAMELEKH] / The Depth of the King – Gates 1 & 2, A Lucid Translation by The Chief Magician of Mystery Babylon, Rab Ya’aqob Bar Ilah & Rab Yeshua Bar Sakhar (n.p.): independently published, [2021]).


“Emek HaMelekh, 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.


http://kabbalahselfcreation.blogspot.com/2010/03/kabbalistic-curiousities-wheel-of-lights.html

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Isaiah Horowitz (ca. 1560-1630)


An introduction to *Shnei Luchot Habrit.*

[________. *Shnei Luchot Habrit,* translated and annotated by Eliyahu Munk, 3 volumes (Brooklyn: Lambda Publishers, Inc., 1999).]


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Abraham Cohen de Herrera (ca. 1570-ca.1635)


Shabbatai Zevi (1626-1676), the Shabbatean Movement & Its Aftermath


The original of this dramatization was likely in Yiddish.


Within this book about an eighteenth-century anti-heresy campaigner is a lot of material 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.).


Oegema, Ger bern S. “Thomas Coenen’s ‘Ydele verwachtinge der Juden’ (Amsterdam, 1669) as an Important Source for the History of Sabbatai Sevi,” in *Jewish Studies Between Disciplines / Judaistik zwischen den Disziplinen* [PAPERS IN HONOR OF PETER SCHÄFER ON THE OCCASION OF HIS 60TH BIRTHDAY], edited by Klaus Herrmann, Margarete Schüter, and Giuseppe Veltri (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2003).


Also in Kabbalah concerning other figures of the Sabbatean movement:

• “Hayyim Malakh,” pages 429-431.
• “Joshua Heshel Zoref,” pages 452-453.
• “Judah Leib Prosnitz,” pages 441-442.
• “Nehemia Hayon,” pages 412-415.


CHAPTER 7, “The Sabbatian Movement” and CHAPTER 8, “Developments in Sabbatianism.”


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

Joseph ben Immanuel Ergas (1685-1730)


Immanuel Hai Ricci (Ricchi, Riki, or Rikki) (1688-1743)


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 (fl. early 1700s)


Jonathan Eibeschütz (1690-1764)


Hayyim ben Moshe ibn Attar (1696-1743)


Moses Hayyim Luzzatto (1707-1746)

KABBALISTIC WORKS IN ENGLISH:

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, i.e., Kelah Pithei Hokhmah.

#####. The Kabbalah of the Ari Z’al according to the Rambal, Rabbi Moshe Hayim 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 IN ENGLISH:


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:


https://www.academia.edu/988830/A_Study_of_Moses_Hayyim_Luzzatto_s_letters_as_a_source_regarding_the_dissemination_of_the_Shabbatean_movement_between_the_second_half_of_the_17th_and_the_first_half_of_the_18th_century


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).


CHAPTER TWELVE, “The Maggid of Rabbi Moses Hayyim Luzzatto,” contains a letter from Luzzatto regarding “mystical claims made on [his] behalf” (page 137).


An introduction to Luzzatto’s Kelach Pitkei Hukhmah.


Sclar, David. LIKE IRON TO A MAGNET: MOSES HAYIM LUZZATTO’S QUEST FOR PROVIDENCE. Ph. D. diss. (New York: City University of New York, 2014).

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


Ezekiel Landau (1713-1793)


Elijah ben Solomon, Gaon of Vilna, the GRA (1720-1797)


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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 XXIII)


“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.

“R. Eliyahu of Vilna and His School” (pp. 129-133) and “The Moderation of the Vilna Gaon’s School” (pp. 159-162).


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 Elchonon: The Life and Ideals of Rabbi Elchonon Bunim Wasserman of Baranovich*, by Aaron Sorasky (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications Ltd, 1982).


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 timing of the messianic redemption by interpreting codes embedded in Scripture, and records their 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 Mithnagdic Religion.”


Shaklover (or Shklober), Rabbi Hillel (Rabbi Hillel Rivlin of Shklov). The Voice of the Turtledove: In the Footsteps of the Mashiach [orig. Kol baTor]. A Digest of Seven Pirkei Ha-Geulah / Chapters on Redemption; principal translator, Rabbi Yechezkel Bar Lev (with K. Skaist) (Petach 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 Yeẓirah and the Zohar.


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

**Hayyim ben Isaac Volozhiner, or Chaim Volozhin (1749-1821)**


Chapter 26, “Hayim of Volozhin” (excerpts from Nefesh haHayim, 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 … [u]sually 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 BeTzeLeM, DISCOURSE ON THE IMAGE.


Unterman’s collection contains numerous excerpts from Nefesh Hachaim.
Shneur Zalman of Lyady (1745-1812) & 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:  
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.  
CHAPTER 2. “The Kabbalah Seminaries of Jerusalem.”  

Shalom Sharabi (1720-1777)  
“The Near Eastern Hegemony of R. Shalom Shar’abi” (pp. 123-129).  
Giller’s book is the first and, so far, only full-length study of Shar’abi and Beit El in any language.  
CHAPTER FOURTEEN, “The Mystical Meditations of Shalom Sharabi and the Kabbalists of Bet El.”  
Yosef Hayyim b. Elijah al-Hakam of Baghdad—Ben Ish Hai (1835-1909)


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


Yehuda Fatiyah (1859-1942)


The second and third of these offer translated excerpts of Fatiya’s Minhat Yehudah.


Harari’s article gives an account of Yehudah Fatiyah’s involvement in the “Circle of Blood” incident of WWII (September 1942).

Sha’ar ha-Shamayim


CHAPTER 3. “Merging Traditions: The Sha’ar haShamayim Yeshiva.”

CHAPTER 4. “The Search for Lost Tribes”

Phineas Elijah Hurwitz (1765-1821)


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

Elyakim Getzel Hamilzahgi (1780-1854)


Yizhak Isik Haver Waldman (1789-1853)


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


Shlomo Bar Heikel Eliashiv, “Leshem” (1841-1926)


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


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


* 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-Shiurim.”


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


Winston offers commentary on the weekly portions (*Bereishis*, *Noach*, *Lech-Lecha*, etc.) which are based on the teachings of Rabbi Shlomo Elyashiv (1841-1926).

Yehuda Leib HaLevi Ashlag, Baal HaSulam (1885-1954)

Many of the items listed below which are 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 Tapestry for the Soul: The Introduction to the Zohar by Rabbi Yehuda Lev 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 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.


______. *Shamati (I Heard)* (Toronto – Brooklyn: Bnei Baruch/Laitman Kabbalah Publishers, 2008).

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/32695?/eng/content/view/full/32695&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.*


*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. Most of the writings presented in *Kabbalah for the Student* were previously published in the books listed above:

- “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 (1891-1966)

A STUDENT OF ASHLAG


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, Schneur Zalman, Ben Ish Hai, and Yehudah Ashlag, among many others.


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 Horovitz: 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.


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’amut: 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).


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.


“The Karaite sources for Kabbalistic influences are twofold. The first source was the surrounding Polish-Ashkenazi society, with its limitations and censorship imposed by the rabbinic establishment, which expressed apprehension over the allegedly pernicious mystical thought. Second, Karaites corresponded with Turkish Karaites and even traveled to Turkey for the purposes of study. This blend of
European-Ashkenazi and Turkish-Sephardic-Karaite mysticism is intriguing for future students of Karaism.” (p. 197)


“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 ba'Ari* (Jacob Zemah), and many other works.


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