

Some Aspects of Qabbalat Shabbat

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As is well known, *Seder Qabbalat Shabbat* is an innovation of kabbalistic circles in Safed of the 16th century.¹ It was accepted by Jewish communities throughout the world over the course of the succeeding 200 years, spreading with the popularity of the Safed-based kabbalistic revival and the image of the ARI and other kabbalists as conveyed in the highly successful hagiographic literature of the age. The liturgical form represented by *qabbalat shabbat* can best be appreciated in the context of some parallel liturgical creations of these circles. These would include tiqqunim or sederim for midnight vigils, for Yom Kippur Qatan on the eve of the New Moon, for the nights of Shavu'ot and Hosh'ana Rabbah, and so forth.²

My interest here is in exploring the meaning of this ritual and certain details within it in the context of kabbalistic manuals and commentaries on the liturgy of the age in which it developed and spread. This study does not seek to treat those sources exhaustively, but rather to use them selectively in order to highlight certain key themes. Before proceeding to do so, however, I wish to acknowledge the contributions of two other scholars in this field whose work has been important to me. My student Elliot Ginsburg, originally in a doctoral dissertation under my supervision, studied the *sod ha-shabbat* in *Tola'at Ya'aqov* by Rabbi Meir Ibn Gabbai (Constantinople, 1560), the highly influential kabbalistic prayer manual of the generation immediately preceding the Safed revival. While

- 1 *Qabbalat Shabbat* has been treated by many historians of Jewish liturgy and mysticism. See especially Yizhak Yosef Cohen, "*Seder Qabbalat Shabbat u-Fizmon Lekha Dodi*" in *Sefer Adam Noah*, (Jerusalem, Makhon Fischel, 1970), 321-357 (also published by the author in separate pamphlet form; Jerusalem, 1969); Kimelman, to be cited below in n. 4.
- 2 On this literature see Y. D. Wilhelm, "*Sidrey Tiqqunim*", 'Aley 'Ayin, the Salman Schocken Jubilee Volume (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1948-52), 125-146.

there is no *Seder Qabbalat Shabbat* in that work, the spiritual climate in which it was to emerge is well on its way to full development, as Ginsburg portrays so richly.³ My present Brandeis colleague Reuven Kimelman has written a book-length commentary on *Lekha Dodi*, which he kindly made available to me in manuscript form,⁴ and has been of great help in the preparation of this paper.⁵

I turn first to the phrase *qabbalat Shabbat*, to discuss its origin and meaning in several contexts. Two verbs are used in the sources for the beginning of Shabbat: *QaBBeL* and *KaNeS*, *qabbalat shabbat* and *kenisat* or *hakhnasat ha-shabbat*. *Hakhnasah* has direct roots in the Talmud, where R. Yosi is quoted as saying *yehi helki 'im makhnissey shabbat bi-Teveriah*,"may my lot be with those who bring in the Sabbath in Tiberias,"⁶ referring to those who "bring it in" at the earliest hour and are thus first to welcome the holy day. The precise intent of this phrase - exactly into what are they bringing Shabbat? - into the world? into their homes? into their hearts? - is ambiguous, and this ambiguity may have a role in the later development of Shabbat's rich and varied imagery.

The phrase *qabbalat shabbat* does not appear in the Talmudic sources. It seems to be a coinage of the Geonic age; the halakhic compendia of the Middle Ages - *Shibbolei ha-Leqet* and *Abudraham* - quote it in the name of *Halakhot Gedolot*. Its earliest meaning seems to be halakhic, referring to acceptance of Sabbath obligations and the obligation to cease work. This applies in particular where one follows the rabbinic urging to begin Shabbat before its solar occurrence, *'ad she-lo qiddesh 'alav ha-yom*. In that case, a person who has recited Shabbat prayers, either the 'arvit service or kiddush, has

3 Elliot K. Ginsburg, *Sod ha-Shabbat: The Mystery of the Sabbath* (Albany: SUNY, 1989), and *The Sabbath in the Classical Kabbalah* (Albany: SUNY, 1989).

4 *'Lekha Dodi' ve-'Qabbalat Shabbat': ha-Mashma'ut ha-Mistit* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2002).

5 In addition to these, I have been helped by Yehiel Goldhaber's article "*Li-Qerat Shabbat Lekhu ve-Nelkhah*" in *Bet Aharon ve-Yisrael* 64 (1996) 118-139; 66: 91-112; 70: 125-146; 73: 121-134, which he was kind enough to give me. Although this article is organized in non-historical fashion, its notes contain a wealth of interesting source materials.

6 b. Shabbat 118b. On the matter of adding to the length of the Sabbath, see the remarks by Y. Ta-Shma in "*Tosefet Shabbat*," *Tarbiz* 52:2 (1983) 309-323.

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performed *an act of qabbalat shabbat* and is obligated to observe it. In this case "accept" seems to be the proper translation for the qabbalah of qabbalat shabbat. Kimelman analogizes this usage to *qabbalat 'ol*/"accepting an obligation (literally 'yoke')" or *qabbalat ta'anit*/"accepting a voluntary fast". Of the many examples of this usage, one particularly striking one from the 14th century Abudraham is worthy of quotation:

If the day is cloudy and one believes the sun has set before it really has and he (for that mistaken reason) *qibbel 'alaw shabbat*/"accepted the Sabbath upon himself," he may light fire and add oil to the lamps, since the acceptance was mistaken.⁷

Here we see the phrase *qabbalat shabbat* in a usage that is clearly halakhic/instrumental and entirely of a non-mythical character.

But another dimension of *qabbalat shabbat* has equally ancient roots. The Talmud⁸ describes Rabbi Hanina saying: "Let us go forth to greet the Shabbat queen!" and tells of Rabbi Yannai who would enwrap himself⁹ and proclaim: "Come O bride, come O bride". While neither of these descriptions uses the verb *QaBBeL*, both offer a sense of greeting, going forth to greet Shabbat as one would an honored guest. With time *qabbalat shabbat* came to have this meaning as well, derived from the hif'il use of the stem - *le-haqbil* - to greet Shabbat. Also associated with this motif of greeting is an aggadah whose source is lost but that is quoted by the Tosafists,¹⁰ in which God calls for the singing of Psalm 92 as a song to Shabbat under the rubric of greeting a guest: *panim hadashot ba'u le-khan, nomar shirah*/"a new face has arrived; let us recite a verse". In this case *hakhnasat shabbat* is parallel to *hakhnassat oreah*, greeting and welcoming a newly arrived guest.

In the interpretation of Ibn Gabbai, based on kabbalistic readings going back at least to the 13th century, the meaning of *malkah* and *kallah* in the words of the two Talmudic masters is quite clear.

7 *Abudraham ha-Shalem* (Jerusalem: Usha, 1959), p. 144.

8 b. Shabbat 119a.

9 It is not clear whether this refers to a special ritual garment or simply a warm wrap for going outdoors. R. Hanina and R. Yannai are both *amoraim* of the first generation in Erez Yisra'el, third century.

10 Ketubot 7b; see the parallel idea in Midrash Tehilim 92:3.

These two holy men were referring to the same matter, for Queen Esther is the secret bride in the Song of Songs; she is the glory of night. They would go forth early to greet her, receiving the bride and bringing her along in joy. (*U-maqdimim hayu le-qabbel paneha we-la-tset li-qrat kallah le-havi'ah be-simhah.*)¹¹

The term *la-tset*/"to go forth" here is of course taken directly from the Talmudic source. As we shall see, in Safed and later the word is understood quite literally, and this "greeting" aspect of *kabbalat Shabbat* included an obligation to go outdoors. It would be interesting to know how Ibn Gabbai understood it. But he is referring only to a custom of the ancients, described in what is clearly the past tense. This language constitutes important negative testimony; it tells us quite clearly that there is no such practice in his time. If there were, he surely would have said: *la-khen maqdimim anahnu la-tset*/"therefore we go forth," or something of that sort.

For Ibn Gabbai, as for all kabbalists, the Talmudic references to *kallah*/"bride" and *malkah*/"queen" have been fully integrated into the kabbalistic symbol system, where *shabbat* is associated with *shekhinah* and *qabbalat shabbat* is greeting the *shekhinah*. The dual male/female aspects of *Shabbat*, represented by the duality of *zakhor ve-shamor*/"remember" and "keep"¹² along with a host of other symbols, refer to *yesod* and *malkhut*, but the overwhelmingly female symbolism especially of the Sabbath eve makes this the festival of the *shekhinah*, and all later kabbalistic embellishments are based on that foundation.

But it is a third sort of *qabbalah* in *qabbalat shabbat* that is of greatest interest to me here. That is the literal receiving - now joined to the acceptance and the greeting - of *neshamah yeterah*, that "extra soul" or extra degree of soulfulness that a Jew has on the Sabbath. The notion is based on a single Talmudic source, a saying of R. Shim'on ben Lakish:

11 *Tola'at Ya'aqov* (Cracow, 1581), 41a.

12 This change of language between the two versions of the fourth commandment is widely understood in Kabbalah to refer to the last two of the ten *sefirot*, *yesod*, the "male" potency, and *shekhinah* or *malkhut*, the "female". This linkage is based on the association of *zakhor* ("remember") in the Exodus version with *zakhar*, or "male". See the full treatment by Ginsburg in *Sod ha-Shabbat*, p. 86, n. 3.

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On the Sabbath eve God gives an extra soul to the person and as the Sabbath departs it is taken away. Thus it is written (Gen. 2:3) *shavat va-yinafash* - once the rest has departed, Woe! the soul is lost".¹³

This highly graphic description of the coming and going of Shabbat from the human soul is open to a number of interpretations. RaSHI has a notably naturalistic view of it. He defines *nefesh yeterah* as *rohav lev*; "relaxation," one might say. Living at a slower pace in rest and joy allows one to be more expansive, wide open, as it were. This allows one to eat and drink more lavishly than usual without revulsion. Sources quoted by Ginsburg¹⁴ locate R. Abraham Ibn Ezra and Maimonides, as would be expected, in this same vein of naturalistic understanding.

It is the kabbalists, understanding *neshamah yeterah* supra-literally, not as mere metaphor but as describing an ontological reality, who make it into a pillar of shabbat symbolism. While both Nahmanides and R. Azriel of Gerona make brief mention of the extra soul, it is primarily the circle of the Zohar, including the Hebrew writings of R. Moshe De Leon, that is responsible for the development of this motif. Ginsburg treats the various aspect of *neshamah yeterah* in the Zohar quite thoroughly, including the extremes to which this description is taken in the Tikkuney Zohar literature, where the *neshamah yeterah*, itself divided into three parts, replaces the weekday soul completely. An important part of Ginsburg's discussion is what he calls "images of internalization"; that is, the receiving of *neshamah yeterah* into oneself.

The exact moment of *qabbalat neshamah yeterah*/"receiving the extra soul" is defined by the Zohar and De Leon in several different ways. The completion of pre-Sabbath bathing, *ha-'aliyah min ha-rahatsah* in the poetic language of the Song of Songs, is the first stage in that process, allowing for the possibility of the soul to enter the body, since she too has been bathed in the waters of Eden to prepare for her descent into the world, like the bride immersing before entering the bridal canopy. In the famous *raza de-shabbat*/"secret

¹³ b. Bezah 16a. Va-yinafash is intentionally misread here as Vey! nefesh.

¹⁴ *The Sabbath in the Classical Kabbalah*, p. 122.

of the Sabbath" passage,¹⁵ the Zohar seems to say that the new soul has entered before the beginning of sabbath eve prayers: "All of them (Israel) are crowned with new souls, and then the prayer begins". But elsewhere both the *hashkivenu* prayer and *qedushat ha-yom* in the 'amidah¹⁶ are seen as moments of receiving the extra soul. In fact the most complete and beautiful description of that soul's arrival is that associated with *hashkivenu*:

Come and see: In the hour when Israel bless and welcome that Tabernacle of Peace, a holy guest, saying "who spreads the Tabernacle of Peace...", a sublime holiness descends and spreads its wings over Israel, sheltering them as a mother does her child. All sorts of evil are removed from the world and Israel dwell beneath the holiness of their Lord. Then this Tabernacle of Peace bestows new souls to Her children. Why? Because that is where souls dwell and from which they come forth. When She is present, spreading Her wings over Her children, She causes a new soul to enter each one of them.¹⁷

The nature of this event of receiving the *neshamah yeterah* is described in a number of ways. Here it is intimate communion between mother and child, in which the shekhinah in bird-like fashion feeds her child as she hovers over the nest. Elsewhere it is described in the language of a coronation rite, Israel crowned with new souls in the same moment, or as an earthly embodiment of shekhinah being crowned under the huppah as she is united with her spouse and king.¹⁸ A noteworthy passage in De Leon's *Sefer ha-Rimmon* associates this entry of the soul with *qabbalat malkhut shamayim*/"accepting the kingdom of heaven" but then goes on to a most interesting description.

It should therefore be known that an extra soul is added to

¹⁵ Zohar 2:135a-b. For English translation and commentary see D. Matt, *Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983) p. 132ff. It is famous because of the Hasidic custom of reciting it following *qabbalat shabbat*, using it precisely as it was written, to serve as a grand invocation for *barekhu* in the sabbath eve liturgy.

¹⁶ Zohar 3:173a.

¹⁷ Zohar 1:48a.

¹⁸ On early Jewish practices of crowning bridegrooms, see the discussion in my *Keter: The Crown of God in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) 78ff.

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every Jew on the Sabbath eve. Their heads are crowned as they enter the tabernacle of peace that stands over them. As "the spirit settles upon them" and "they are ba-ketuvim", (cf. Num. 11:25-26) each of the noble ones is obliged to testify to the creation of heaven and earth.¹⁹

While these Zoharic sources referring to the entry of *neshamah yeterah* in *hashkivenu* or in saying *qedushat ha-yom* were certainly known to the later kabbalists, the general conclusion seems to have been that the extra soul must be received before the beginning of the evening service, which is the opinion of the Raza de-Shabbat passage. The reason for this is the strong polemic found in the kabbalistic writings on the issue of reciting *ve-hu rahum*/"He is compassionate, forgiving sin" as the introduction to the evening service. According to *Sefer ha-Manhig* of R. Avraham ha-Yarhi (c.1155-1215), the old Spanish custom was to recite these verses on Shabbat as well as on weekdays. The Zohar decries this custom with some passion.²⁰ As Yaakov Katz and Yisrael Ta-Shma have informed us,²¹ this is one of the places where the Zohar prefers French over Spanish liturgical practice. The strong feeling around this issue still seems to be alive in the generation of Ibn Gabbai, the period when Spanish customs are just finding a new home in the Ottoman east, and when clarification of proper ritual practice takes on new importance. Gabbai is a tireless fighter for the rightness of kabbalistic custom. He says firmly that the *barekhu* of Shabbat eve is not to be recited until the *neshamah yeterah* has been received. This of course renders the recital of *ve-hu rahum* inappropriate; one should hardly begin the joyous Sabbath thinking about one's sins.²²

To summarize all these pre-Safed materials, I am suggesting that three motifs combine in the notion of qabbalat shabbat, those of accepting, greeting, and receiving, with the kabbalistic emphasis especially on the last of these three. I would now like to examine the

19 *Sefer ha-Rimmon* 47a; ed. Wolfson (Atlanta: Scholars' Press, 1988), 119. The Biblical echo is that of Eldad and Medad receiving the holy spirit. Thus *qabbalat shabbat* is depicted as rising to a higher form of consciousness.

20 2:135b; *Zohar Hadash Ruth* (Midrash ha-Ne'elam) 79b.

21 Jacob Katz, *Halakhah ve-Qabbalah* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986) 44f.; Yisrael Ta-Shma, *Ha-Nigleh sheba-Nistar* (Tel-Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me'uhad, 1995) 21.

22 *Tola'at Ya'aqov* (Cracow, 1581) 41b.

emergence of the liturgical form called *qabbalat shabbat* as it reflects the interrelationship among these three notions of reception. I will do so by reviewing several kabbalistic compendia on the liturgy beginning with the period when this rite came into practice, younger siblings, if you will, of Ibn Gabbai's Tola'at Ya'aqov. But first I will need to say a few words about the earliest references to the liturgical event called *qabbalat shabbat*. Here I am especially indebted to Kimelman's efforts in compiling the sources.

The idea of greeting shabbat *be-shirot we-tishbehot*/"with hymns and praises," without further definition, begins to appear in medieval France and Spain. It is mentioned in ha-Yarhi's Sefer ha-Manhig, to which we have just referred,²³ and in a number of sources in the late 14th and 15th centuries. R. Ovadiah of Bertinoro, writing from Jerusalem to his father back home in Italy, refers to this as "a custom (of the Jews) throughout the Islamic world".²⁴ Even earlier there is some evidence that Psalm 92, the Song for the Sabbath Day, was added before the evening service.²⁵ Sefer ha-Qaneh, a highly inventive kabbalistic work probably written in early 15th century Byzantium, reflects a home-based version of what may be considered a prototype of *qabbalat shabbat*:

Afterwards one should wrap oneself up in a *tallit*, calling out to one's companions, one's wife, and one's household: "Let us go forth and greet the Sabbath queen!" They join together and respond: "Come, O bride, come O bride!"²⁶

Here the Talmudic accounts of R. Hanina and R. Yannai's practice have been combined into a simple household ritual. This may be the first stage in the revival of these ancient testimonies and their conversion into an active rite.

The first Siddur to print a *Qabbalat Shabbat*, including *Lekha Dodi*, was published in Venice in 1584. But reference to *Lekha Dodi* in the context of a ceremony for greeting Shabbat is found in several versions of the customs of Safed as recorded by contemporaries.

23 *Manhig* 1:198; Kimelman, op. cit (n 4), 11, n. 78.

24 *Igrot Rabbi Ovadiah mi-Bertinoro*, p. 49; Kimelman, op. cit., 13, n. 83.

25 See Kimelman's discussion at n. 69ff.

26 *Sefer ha-Qaneh* (Cracow: S. Diamant, 1894) 65b; Kimelman, op. cit., 13, n. 82.

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Rabbi Avraham Galanti, a disciple of R. Moshe Cordovero, writes in his *Minhagey Hasidut*:

Every Sabbath eve they go out to the field or the synagogue courtyard to greet the Sabbath, all of them dressed in Sabbath garments. They recite: "Ascribe to the Lord, O sons of the mighty (Psalm 29)," *pizmon shel shabbat*/"a Sabbath hymn," and afterward "A Song for the Sabbath Day (Psalm 92)".²⁷

Kimelman refers to four other versions of this *hanhagah* from contemporary sources, with minor variations. It is interesting here that going outdoors seems to be an essential part of the rite, acting out the meaning of *qabbalat shabbat* with emphasis on the aspect of greeting. We should recall that the phrase *lekha dodi* comes from Song of Songs 7:12, "Come my beloved, let us go out to the field". Going out to the field, or at least to the synagogue courtyard during the cold Safed winter, was the ritual act for which the hymn *Lekha Dodi* was written. R. Moshe Cordovero interestingly is a lone voice in distancing himself from this practice, preferring to greet Shabbat from within the synagogue.²⁸

The most detailed description of the *qabbalat shabbat* ritual is found in R. Hayyim Vital's *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot*:

Here is a brief order of *qabbalat shabbat*: Go out to the field and say: "Come, let us go forth to greet Shabbat the queen, field of holy apples."²⁹ "...Stand still in a fixed place in the field, better if atop a high hill. The place should be as clean as need be in front of him, as far as he can see, and for a space of four ells behind him. Turn your face to the west, where the sun is

27 First published by Solomon Schechter in the appendix to his *Studies in Judaism II* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1908), 295. Also available in *Hanhagot Zaddiqim*, a convenient four-volume collection edited by H. S. Rottenberg, Jerusalem, n.p., n.d. (c. 1990), 63.

28 Cordovero's opposition is mentioned in his prayerbook commentary *Tefillah le-Moshe* (Przemysl, 1892) 193a. Although this work was not previously printed, Cordovero's view was mentioned in the siddur of R. Isaiah Horowitz, *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* (Amsterdam, 1717), 158a-c. This fact has been discussed by Moshe Halamish in *Ha-Kabbalah ba-Tefillah ba-Halakhah uva-Minhag* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2000) 336ff. As will be clear from my remarks below, I do not believe that Cordovero's coolness toward this practice is sufficient explanation for its later decline.

29 A well-known Zoharic symbol-term for *shekhinah*.

setting. Just as it sets, close your eyes, place your left hand on your chest and your right hand over your left. Have the intent, in the fear and awe of one standing before the King, to receive the addition of Sabbath holiness (i.e., the *neshamah yeterah*). Begin by reciting "Ascribe to the Lord, you sons of the mighty" (Psalm 29), all of it with a melody. Then say three times "Come O bride, come O bride, Sabbath Queen!" Then recite "A Psalm for the Sabbath Day" (Ps.92) in its entirety, and then "The Lord reigns" (Ps.93) to "for all time". Then open your eyes and go home.³⁰

This is a most interesting account of what is clearly a developing ritual. There does not seem to be a full *Lekhah Dodi* here (although perhaps its omission is what is meant by "a brief order"), nor are the full six prior psalms mentioned. The ritual positioning of the hands and the closing of eyes have about them the sense of a newly created and intentionally elaborate ritual practice of the kabbalistic community, one meant to deeply impress the participant with the seriousness of the moment.

The recitation of six psalms prior to *Lekha Dodi* is first mentioned in two kabbalistic compendia written toward the close of the 16th century. The first we will treat (it is unknown which was first written) is a local Safed product, *Sefer Seder ha-Yom* by R. Moshe ben Machir, published in Venice, 1599, still in its author's lifetime. R. Moshe lived in Safed in the latter decades of the 16th century and is an important source for local customs. He later established a small yeshivah outside Safed in Eyn Zetim. Moshe ben Machir does not make any point of the number six in listing these psalms, nor does he say that Psalm 92, the psalm for the sabbath, is then the seventh psalm recited. He lists the six psalms, the same that exist in our contemporary *qabbalat shabbat*, under the rubric *u-mihagenu keshe-anu holkhim le-qabbal shabbat lomar elu ha-mizmorim/*"and it is our custom to recite these psalms

30 *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot*, chapter 6 (Jerusalem, 1873; 64c). This work was first printed in Salonika, 1852, but was well known in manuscript much earlier and influenced other works that were in fact printed earlier. On the traces of this description elsewhere in Lurianic sources see Goldhaber, op. cit. (n. 5 above) 64:129, n. 16.

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as we go to greet the sabbath", listing them, and then following with: *ve-ahar kakh nomar pizmon ehad o shenayim ve-elu hem/"* afterwards we recite one or two hymns, and these are they". He then records a version of *Lekha Dodi* with the refrain that we know but with entirely different verses. The relationship between the *Lekha Dodi* recorded by Ben Machir (his own?) and that of Alkabetz has not been fully clarified. Did the refrain become standard practice in the Safed community, while different circles each freely composed verses of their own? Or was the Ben Machir version, not quite as lovely as that of Alkabetz, an earlier attempt on which R. Shlomo ha-Levi then built his own poem?

Parallel to the work of Moshe ben Machir is *Sefer Hekhal ha-Qodesh*, written by R. Moshe Elbaz in Morocco. Elbaz tells us in his introduction that he began writing the book in 1575 in his home city of Taroudant in southern Morocco. The work, his only book, remained unfinished for many years and he took the manuscript with him when the community was forced to flee to Akka in the anti-Atlas because of a plague in 1598. Elbaz never tells us that he visited Eretz Yisrael. The book was completed in that same year but was published only half a century later by R. Jacob Sasportas in Amsterdam, 1653. I mention this chronology in some detail because it is quite surprising that Elbaz already knows the custom of reciting the six psalms of *qabbalat shabbat* (although he apparently considers them to number five):

Some are accustomed (*ve-yesh nohagin*) to recite "Let us go forth in joy," Psalm 95 and 96, 97, and 98, as well as the Psalm "Ascribe to the Lord, O sons of the mighty (29)". For all these psalms teach of *qabbalat shabbat* and the rule of heaven, which spreads forth through all the worlds on sabbath eve. All the *qelipot* are hidden away and secreted in fear and trembling before Her. This is made explicit in Psalm 98: "The Lord rules, the nations fear". In these psalms we are helping the side of holiness to cause the shekhinah to rule over the world.

The prayer leader then begins "A Psalm for the Sabbath Day

31 *Hekhal ha-Qodesh* (Amsterdam, 1653), 30b.

(Psalm 92). He stands before the ark and says: "Bless the Lord to whom blessing is due!.." ³¹

Elbaz makes no mention of Lekha Dodi and says nothing about going outside. Reading Elbaz's work gives one the impression that *qabbalat shabbat* did not emerge as a single unit, but that its various elements - reciting Psalm 92 (the oldest and most obvious part of the rite³²), going outdoors to greet Shabbat and chanting Lekha Dodi, the use of Psalm 29 (famed for its eighteen invocations of the name YHWH), and beginning the ceremony with the five kingship psalms - each developed as a separate unit, and parts or all of the package were accepted in varying combinations by individuals and communities over the course of half a century or more, until the custom became firmly rooted (due in part to its acceptance by the printers of prayerbooks).³³

Elbaz's interpretation of these psalms and their meaning in this liturgical context is quite correct. They represent the powerful arrival of God or "the kingdom of heaven," the scattering of God's foes, and the universal joy at His arrival. It is interesting to see how close the kabbalists are here to the original meaning of these psalms, although they have now applied them to their own mythic context. They naturally understand the theme of majesty in these sublime poems; the arrival of Shabbat is in many kabbalistic sources described as the coming of the queen (an obviously important gender change from the Biblical setting) or as a moment of coronation. The universal joy expressed in these psalms, in which both nature and the idolatrous nations join into the great chorus of God's praise, is here applied to the kabbalist's own version of the uprooting of the forces of cosmic evil on Shabbat and the freeing of all the worlds from their yoke, so that they can unite in accepting God's kingdom. We will probably

32 See the extensive treatment of sources on this by Goldhaber, op. cit. (n 5 above), 64:123ff.

33 A printing history of *qabbalat shabbat* would be particularly interesting. (Parts of it are to be found in Goldhaber's work.) Was it certain publishers who included the new liturgy in all their prayerbooks, or did inclusion vary, even at the same press, by liturgical rite? At what point did Ashkenazic prayerbooks begin to include *qabbalat shabbat*, and how long did it take before the inclusion of it became standard throughout Ashkenaz?

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never be sure whether the much discussed "enthronement ritual" proposed by biblical scholars³⁴ as the original setting of these psalms actually took place in ancient Israel. But its transformed offspring, the greeting/coronation ritual of Shabbat, using the very same texts, is indeed a reality.

Surely a key phrase in the kabbalists' re-reading of these ancient songs is the conclusion of Psalm 95, the opening creation-hymn of qabbalat shabbat. The warning not to be hard-hearted like those at Meribah is being re-read to mean that there is no room for hard-heartedness in this sacred time. Those who harden their hearts "may not come into My rest (verse. 11)". The *menulah* of the verse is of course the Land of Israel, a holy place into which that hard-hearted generation could not enter. But here the meaning has been shifted from the dimension of space to that of time, and the text stands as a liturgy of entrance guarding the gateway to this sacred time.³⁵ Its recitation as the first act on the way into Shabbat reminds the one who speaks it that hard-heartedness, like the weapons of war in ancient times, has to be left outside when entering this temporal *miqdash*/"holy place".

The third work to which I would like to turn is the greatest and most elaborate of all the liturgical compendia of Kabbalah, that is the *Hemdat Yamim*, written by an anonymous Jerusalem³⁶ kabbalist in the early 18th century and first published in Izmir in 1731-32.³⁷ In the

34 See S. Mowinckel, *Psalmstudien* (Kristiana: J. Dybwad, 1921). For a discussion and evaluation of this controversy see M. Brettler, *God Is King: Understanding an Israelite Metaphor* (JSOT Supplement Series #76; Sheffield: JSOT, 1989) and the bibliography there.

35 I have discussed the transposition between sacred space and sacred time regarding shabbat in "Sabbath as Temple: Some Thoughts on Space and Time in Judaism" in *Go and Study: Essays and Studies in Honor of Alfred Jospe* (Washington: Bnai Brith Hillel, 1980) 287-305.

36 In passages to be quoted and discussed below, the author clearly describes himself as a Jerusalemite. However Moshe Fogel suggests (see the following note) that his origins were in Izmir. Perhaps we are dealing with more than one author. Identifying the author of this section might be helped by his reference (f.40c) to his own *Sefer Mahamadey 'Ayin*. There is no published book by this title, but a thorough check of manuscripts or cross-references might yield some results. That work extends well beyond the scope of this paper.

course of a very lengthy and detailed description of the beginning of Shabbat - he has page after page about the kabbalistic meanings of such details as setting the table, making the bed, and making the cholent - the author makes only brief mention of the recitation of Psalm 95ff. He discusses the ascent of souls from Gehinom to Gan Eden on Friday afternoon before Shabbat, an old kabbalistic notion that was important also to his Ashkenazic contemporary R. Yisrael Ba'al Shem Tov. Here he gives us an account of Rabbi Isaac Luria's vision of the coming of these souls and he also finds a special role for Moshe Rabbenu in the raising up of souls.

...Our holy teacher the ARIZaL, as he went forth with his disciples outside the town to greet the sabbath, would stand atop the mountain and see troops of souls rising from their graves (in the cemetery below). They were going upward toward Gan Eden above. So too he would see innumerable soul, tens of thousands, coming down, parallel to those others. These were the extra souls being added to the proper people (*anashim keshirim*) every Sabbath. Because of the great chaos and confusion caused by all those multitudes of souls, his sight began to fail him and he was forced to close his eyes. But even with eyes closed he saw them...

Moshe Rabbenu takes great care about this matter, each Sabbath eve raising up all those souls that are given over to the *qelipot* and are unable to ascend (on their own). So too the souls of other people that do not have the merit to ascend. Moshe Rabbenu comes down every Sabbath eve with several *zaddiqim* accompanying him. In accord with their own qualities they raise up the souls of both the living and the dead. This is hinted at in Psalm (92) *Mizmor Shir Le-yom Ha-shabbat*, the acronym

37 There is an extensive scholarly literature on the authorship of Hemdat Yamim and its relationship to Sabbatianism, a link that was both suspected and vigorously denied already in the eighteenth century. The most recent contribution to this scholarly debate is Moshe Fogel's "The Sabbatian Character of Hemdat Yamim: A Re-examination" in *The Sabbatian Movement and Its Aftermath: Messianism, Sabbatianism, and Frankism*, ed. R. Elijor (Jerusalem: Institute for Jewish Studies, 2001=*Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 16-17), v. 2, pp. 365-421. There the reader will find full references to the earlier studies.

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reading *Le-MoSheH*. That psalm goes on to talk about the righteous and the wicked, "as the wicked sprout like grass" and "the righteous blossoms like a palm tree," for they reach upward like the palm to receive the light that is prepared for them.³⁸

Here Hemdat Yamim adds a crucial reference to the practice of *qabbalat shabbat*:

I believe this is the reason for the custom of the early hasidim (*hasidim ha-rishonim*) to recite the psalms *lekhu neranenah* (95) and following, since these psalms were authored by Moses. They chose these six parallel to the six days of the week.³⁹

The author of Hemdat Yamim neither defends nor argues with this custom, but moves on immediately to discuss the recitation of Shir ha-Shirim on the Sabbath eve and the many mystical meanings he finds within it. There is something surprisingly abrupt about his brief mention of this custom, given the length and affection with which he

Hemdat Yamim (ed. Venice, 1763) 37-2c. I have not found an earlier Kabbalistic source for this role of Moses in the bestowal of neshamah yeterah. The association is explained a bit more in f. 42b. Referring to yismah Moshe/"Moses rejoices" from the shabbat morning liturgy, the author remarks that Moses' joy comes from his weekly act of restoring to Israel all the crowns that were taken from them at Sinai, after they made the Golden Calf, and were given to Moses. The coming of the additional soul is here homologized to the restoration of those crowns.

The designation of these six Psalms as parallel to the six days of the week is not mentioned either by Machir ben Moshe or Moshe Elbaz. The first source to note it, according to Goldhaber (64:131f.), is *Tiqquney Shabbat*, Cracow, 1613. (This is the second edition of *Tiqquney Shabbat*; the first is Venice, 1594. I have not had the opportunity to check these works independently.) From there it was

lingers on every other detail of the Sabbath ritual. But several pages later he gives us his own order of psalms for *qabbalat shabbat*, which is entirely unrelated to this "custom of the early hasidim," and seems to be offered in place of it. It might be, in that case, that we should translate rishonim in the above text as "former," rendering the phrase "it was the custom of hasidim in former times". Hemdat Yamim begins its own qabbalat shabbat with the following meditation:

To unify the name of the blessed Holy One (and His shekhinah), etc., I hereby come to recite the psalms of qabbalat shabbat the Queen, to glorify and raise up the higher worlds. May it be Your will, Lord our God and God of our fathers, that You turn toward my reading of these psalms to cut down the proud⁴⁰ and to cut off the qelipot that have dominated and overwhelmed the worlds of *'asiyah*, *yesirah*, and *beri'ah*. Scatter them! May the wind take them away and the storm disperse them. Let them dare not come up and join into the ascent of the worlds. May You uproot, smash and destroy all the thorns and brambles that surround the sublime Rose. Join the tent so that it be one, the youthful wife together with her beloved; let the tabernacle be one. Spread over us their shining flow so that our persons (*nefesh*) be enlightened with added spirit (*ruah*) and soul (*neshamah*). "As with a rich feast sate my soul; I will sing praises with joyous lips"(Ps. 63:6). "Create a pure heart for me, O God; renew a proper spirit within me" (Ps. 51:12). "I will thank the Lord with all my heart, in the secret of the upright assembly" (Ps. 111:1). "For as long as my soul is within me and the spirit of God in my nostrils" (Job 27:3). "May the sweetness of God be upon us.." (Ps. 90:17), "May the words of my mouth be acceptable" (Ps. 19:15)," etc.⁴¹

Here the purpose of reciting the psalms is similar to that offered by R. Moshe Elbaz, namely the defeat of kabbalistic "foes" in the spirit world. But the ceremony of qabbalat shabbat here is defined more fully and positively as the ascent of the worlds, the union of shekhinah

40 He is deriving *mizmor* from *le-zammer 'aritsim* (cf. Is. 25:5), a well-known play on words.

41 *Hemdat Yamim* 1:40d.

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and her beloved All that provides the dramatic background for the entry of neshamah yeterah. The ascent of the worlds and the descent of the soul are simultaneous events, completely inseparable from one another, manifestations on the cosmic plane and the interior plane of the same sublime moment.

Now the author of *Hemdat Yamim* offers his list of psalms for *qabbalat shabbat*, one that seems quite original and that I have not seen documented in any other source. He begins with Ps. 24, "The earth is the Lord's". This is followed by Psalms 148, 45, 48, 87, 133, and 122. It is possible to characterize this list as one that reflects the sensibilities of Shabbat in Jerusalem of old, combining the beauty and praises of nature and the wonders of the holy city. But it is also interesting to speculate on the reason or setting for this new order of psalms. Why should *Hemdat Yamim* be interested in changing the custom of *hasidim rishonim*? He who is so very conservative not only about halakhah, but with regard to Lurianic custom, here sets aside the practice he himself attributes to the ARIZaL in favor of a new order of *qabbalat shabbat* psalms. I suspect that this important change may have some relationship to the alleged Sabbatianism of the work. I would tentatively suggest that what we have here is a new *qabbalat shabbat* service for the dawning messianic age. To support this claim, let us examine his list a bit more closely.

Psalm 24 concludes with the dramatic announcement of the King's arrival. The Sephardic liturgy uses this psalm very powerfully in the evening service for the Days of Awe. Of course the King in the psalm is God Himself, and Luria's *qabbalat shabbat* psalms are also filled with kingship themes. Nevertheless, the dramatic opening announcing the royal arrival is important, and it is continued with the chorus of praises offered by heaven and earth in Psalm 148. Psalm 45 speaks of God's chosen anointed one, his power over the nations, noting the presence of his concubine next to him. The verses of that psalm, when read in the early eighteenth century, must have been heard as referring to the messiah:

You are fairer than all men;
your speech is endowed with grace;
rightly has God given you an eternal blessing.

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Gird your sword upon your thigh, O hero,
in your splendor and glory...
let your right hand lead you to awesome deeds...
Your divine throne is everlasting;
your royal scepter is a scepter of equity.
You love righteousness and hate wickedness;
rightly has God, your God, chosen to anoint you
with oil of gladness, over all your peers.⁴²

These descriptions of the ancient king, more than any other single passage in the entire psalter, can be applied readily to the Messiah and certainly would be fitting as a sabbath ritual for messianic times. Read in this way, the use of Psalm 24 combines with that which follows to welcome and proclaim the divine King and his human representation in King Messiah. Psalms 48, 87, and 133 are all hymns to Jerusalem, very much befitting the theme of the king (God, Messiah, or both) entering the holy city. Of course the image of the triumphant Messiah entering Jerusalem remained central to the imagination of Sabbatian loyalists throughout their history. I would thus like to tentatively suggest that what we have here is a new *qabbalat shabbat* service for the messianic age or for a Sabbatian community. The author of *Hemdat Yamim* has taken a liturgical event that is a key to kabbalistic practice and imagination, but not yet firmly rooted in halakhah. He is thus free to propose this very dramatic change, strongly suggestive of the surge of messianic energy that underlies his entire oeuvre, without trespassing formal authority. Indeed, to my knowledge this innovation has remained unnoticed by scholars until now. It would be most interesting to know if this liturgy was followed anywhere and whether a prayerbook with this order for *qabbalat shabbat* was ever published.

I would like to add a bit more detail concerning the ceremony of going outdoors to greet Shabbat as bride and queen. The link between reciting the Seder *Qabbalat Shabbat* and going outdoors, and

42 Ps. 45:3-8. Jewish Publication Society translation.

43 I am emending the Venice edition's *shabta* (?) to *shivha*, based on the Constantinople, 1737 edition, f. 44b.

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especially the understanding that *Lekha Dodi* was a song specifically to be sung out of doors, was long preserved among kabbalists. Because those opposed to this innovation had the very considerable authority of R. Moshe Cordovero to call upon, the matter became quite controversial and aroused strong feelings. Here are the words of the Hemdat Yamim, a precious description of kabbalistic practice in Jerusalem and elsewhere in the early 18th century:

In my own house of study, after reading the Song of Songs I was accustomed to delve into the praises⁴³ of the Matronita together with the companions, may God preserve them. (We would read) the sixth of the Tiqqunim, folio 143a (beginning): "Rabbi Simeon arose and said: 'Assemble, supreme holy forces'" and so forth, to the end of the tiqqun.⁴⁴ They then recited qaddish de-rabbanan. (Says the editor: I found in the author's writings that this passage should be recited on the eve of Shavu'ot, preceding the Idra.) Then they should join together again in perfect love to go forth and greet the Sabbath Queen.⁴⁵

Here follows a lengthy homiletical digression on the description of Shabbat as "bride" and "queen," in which the author suggests that those who say "bride" believe that she is only betrothed to *tiferet* at this moment, while those who call her "queen" believe that the cosmic marriage has already taken place. Further discussion concerns Jacob and Moses who went forth to greet their brides at the well, these passages taken as biblical paradigms for greeting the shekhinah. The ritual description then resumes:

Our holy master the ARIZaL derived from the expression "Let us go forth and greet" (the words of R. Hanina, quoted above) that one should go outdoors, to the field, in the secret meaning of "Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field" (Gen. 31:4), that of the holy apples (shekhinah). This was the master's custom. On each sabbath eve, he and his disciples would go forth to wander meditatively in the field (*la-suah ba-sadeh*; Gen. 24:63) to greet the Sabbath Queen. Beyond the deeper meaning of this matter for those

44 I do not have handy a first edition of the Tiqquney Zohar. In the Ortakoy, 1719 edition this passage is on f. 144b in a section of addenda to the Tiqqunim.

45 Hemdat Yamim 1:40b-c.

who know it, the clever eye can see it from without as well as from within (cf. Ex. 25:11). When a king of flesh and blood comes to a city, all the townsfolk walk forth several miles to greet him. This is mentioned in the Midrash on (parashat) 'Emor: "The leaders of the town praised him as the townsfolk went five miles out in greeting". How much more fitting is it to go forth to greet the sabbath queen, the holy Matronita, outdoors. The man of perfect faith (*ish hatamim*) should not think of this allegorically (*'al derekh hashe'alah*) but indeed as going forth to greet the supreme king and queen, as we have said. He should rejoice in the coming of Shabbat like one who has gone to greet the king or to greet a bridegroom, as is well-established custom.

So too in our day, here in Jerusalem, may she be rebuilt and established, many wholehearted people hold firmly to this custom of the ancients and go forth from the city into the field with great joy, there to perform Seder Qabbalat Shabbat. They then return and do it again around their tables,⁴⁶ with two torches of fire in their hands⁴⁷ as they come inside...⁴⁸

The author then tells us of his difficulty in continuing this Jerusalem practice during his times of wandering in other communities:

During my exile, for I am exiled today from dwelling in the inheritance of the Lord, in the places I have passed I was for various reasons not permitted to do these things (*lo hursheyti la*

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by the sages are only in accord with each person and his place; a person is obliged (to follow them) only in accord with his own measure (i.e. insofar as he is able). To this day, in all those places they hold to the custom of going out to the courtyard, an open-air place. But they understand the matter quite simply, like going outdoors to greet a bride and groom. Enough said.

It is fitting for every Jew who has it within his power to protest, and whose words are listened to, to address the hearts of the holy people so that they establish this practice in every synagogue and house of study, for the honor and glory of the shekhinah. They should not just greet her from their places inside the synagogue, lest this, God forbid, be an insult to the shekhinah.

What are we being told in this rather pained personal recollection? Why would the kabbalist/author not have been permitted to go outdoors for *qabbalat shabbat*? It could be, of course, that Cordovero's opposition to this custom, popularized by its mention in the Shney Lufot ha-Berit, had already come to carry the day in the various diaspora communities he visited. But would this lead synagogue leaders to actually forbid a respected kabbalist from following a well-documented Lurianic practice? The author of Hemdat Yamim is terribly insistent about this matter. After commenting on *Lekha Dodi*, he returns to the question of going out to the field and offers still another folio or more (42c-44b) of kavvanot to be recited while going forth, of Biblical verses associated with fields, and so forth. Here again I think it is appropriate to raise the Sabbatian question. Might it be that the custom of going outside to greet the Sabbath was a bit of enthusiasm that in Sabbatian times came to be linked to the dream of going forth to greet the King Messiah? Such a connection was already aroused in the widely known pre-Sabbatian tale told of Luria's calling upon his disciples one Friday evening to continue from this trip out to the field onward to Jerusalem. When some doubted that they could walk so far, or at least said that they

hour. Had you accepted it, the Temple would have been rebuilt and the dispersed of Israel gathered into Jerusalem. Now the hour has passed, and Israel have returned to exile..."⁵⁰

It would seem only likely that this association of *qabbalat shabbat* with the moment of redemption was highlighted in Sabbatian circles and given great importance. This would explain the severity of the argument around it and the great emphasis placed on this practice within the book, though without explicit explanation. It would also account for the forbidding of this practice to a kabbalistic guest, possibly a suspicious one, as he visited various communities.⁵¹

Finally, a comment on *Lekha Dodi* and its relationship to the *neshamah yeterah*. Of course I agree with Kimelman and others that the main subject of the song is the shekhinah, her arrival on Shabbat, her joy in uniting both with her divine and human spouses, and especially the longing for her complete redemption. But the poem was also written to serve as the climax of *qabbalat shabbat* in the sense of receiving, to be recited at the moment when the *neshamah yeterah* enters the person, immediately before the start of the evening service. The final verse, *bo'i ve-shalom*/"Come in peace," is precisely a celebration of that moment. On it Hemdat Yamim says: "Here one should intend to receive the additional nefesh, according to the secret of 'Awareness is pleasant for the soul' (Prov. 2:10). And one should prepare also to receive the additional ruah".⁵² Versions of this understanding of the final verse of *Lekha Dodi* persist even in recently printed prayerbooks. A siddur I own, published in Jerusalem for the Iraqi community in 1960, says just before the *final bo'i kallah*/"come O bride": *yekhaven le-qabbel tosefet neshamah yeterah*/"one should intend to receive the addition of the extra soul".

- 50 From the letter of R. Shlomo Shlumieli of Dresnitz, first published in *Ta'alumot Hokhmah* by Joseph Solomon Delmedigo (YaSHaR of Candia) in Basel, 1629, f. 46. See Goldhaber, *op. cit.*, 64:134, n. 31. For another messianic association with going out to the field, see *Siddur Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* by R. Isaiah Horowitz (SHeLaH) (New York, 1958), f. 157; Kimelman, *op. cit.*, n. 139.
- 51 See the corroborating explanation of the Hemdat Yamim author's exile from Jerusalem offered by R. Yehudah Moshe Fatayyah, quoted by Goldhaber, *op. cit.*, 64:136, n. 41 from a manuscript notation in his copy of Hemdat Yamim.
- 52 Hemdat Yamim 1:42b.

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If this final verse is indeed the climax of qabbalat shabbat, I contend that a purpose of *Lekha Dodi*, along with its other meanings, is to arouse the worshipper to receive this extra soul. Part of the poem's richness lies in the ambiguity of the phrase *lekha dodi liqrat kallah*/"go forth my beloved to greet the bride". Who is the *dod*/beloved? Whose is the bride? Of course one is addressing God, and the Sabbath is the bride of both God and Israel. But I propose that there is another level of meaning hidden within the song as well. Here I return to the earlier question of "receiving". What is the nature of this receiving? From where does the extra soul come at this moment? The Zohar's mythological answer is quite clear: it comes from above, from the upper Garden of Eden. But *Lekha Dodi* addresses itself to another, more naturalistic, answer as well: the *neshamah yeterah* is hidden within the person. During the week it is too frightened and too shy to emerge. As Shabbat begins, we call it forth, telling it that it is now safe to let itself be revealed. *Lekha Dodi* may be read, if you will, as a flirtation or seduction song to the *neshamah yeterah*, seeking to coax her out of hiding. If we look at a number of lines from the poem with this in mind, we will see that they fit this meaning as well as they do the adventures of the shekhinah. The gloomy soul, oppressed by the weekday world, is now told: "Enough of dwelling in the vale of tears...Shake yourself off! Arise from the dust...Awake, awake! Yes, shekhinah is described as being "asleep" in exile, but the dormant inner self also needs to be aroused from its slumber. The key verse for this reading is:

lo tevoshi ve-lo' tikalmi, mah toshtohahi u-mah tehemmi/"you will not be shamed, not disgraced. Why are you downcast, why disheartened?" The scriptural context for this verse is Psalms 42-43. There the phrase *mah tishtohahi*, a verb form found nowhere else in the Bible, is repeated four times, each with the noun *nafshi*/"my soul".

So the phrase here too, I suggest, refers to the soul, hesitant to arrive (or "come forth"), too downcast to emerge in this moment of Shabbat joy. This verse is more clearly about the soul than it is about the shekhinah. There is not much reason, without forced explanation, that shekhinah should be *boshah ve-nikhlemet*/"shy or shamed" to enter

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her huppah. Here the clearer explanation is that the poet has turned to the *neshamah yeterah*, seeking to convince her, almost to seduce her, to emerge, for the time of her forced hiding has ended.

Here, at least, the *dod* to whom the poem is addressed is the inner self. And indeed Berakhah Zak reminds us, in her reading of Ayelet Ahavim, Alkabetz' unique commentary on the Song of Songs:

"The beloved (*dod*) for Alkabetz is the person...When Alkabetz turns to the *dod*, he is turning to himself, his companions, and his disciples".⁵³ The self toward which he is turning here, I would add, is the inner self, that which is about to reveal itself in the form of *neshamah yeterah*.

53 Berakhah Zak, *The Mystical Theology of Solomon Alkabetz* Ph.D dissertation, Brandeis U., 1977 (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms), 188.

Sabbath

Idea, History, Reality

Edited By

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