

My Jewish Learning—4/27/2021
The (Kabbalistic) *Peshat* of *Lekhah Dodi*—Welcoming the Sabbath Bride
Professor Joel Hecker



Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz

& The Mystical-Pietistic Context in Tsfat

- Immigration after 1492 expulsion from Spain
- Remarkable assembly of mystics, pietists, and halakhists
 1. R. Yosef Caro (1488-1575)
 - Halakhist & Mystic
 2. R. Moshe ben Yaakov Cordovero (1522-70)
 - grand theoretician BUT personal experience in his voluminous *Zohar* commentary
 3. Yitshak Luria (1534-July 25, 1572)
 - system innovator, visionary, talks to animals, psychic life in all things, physiognomy, soul analyst
 4. Solomon Halevi Alkabetz (c. 1500–1576)
 - master & brother-in-law of Cordovero; best known as author of “Lekhah Dodi” but wrote other kabbalistic works as well

Lekhah Dodi: Parsing the Song

לְכָה דוֹדִי לְקַרְאֵת כַּלָּה, פְּנֵי שַׁבַּת נְקֻבָּלָה.

Come my Beloved Friend to greet the Bride, let us welcome the Presence of the Sabbath.

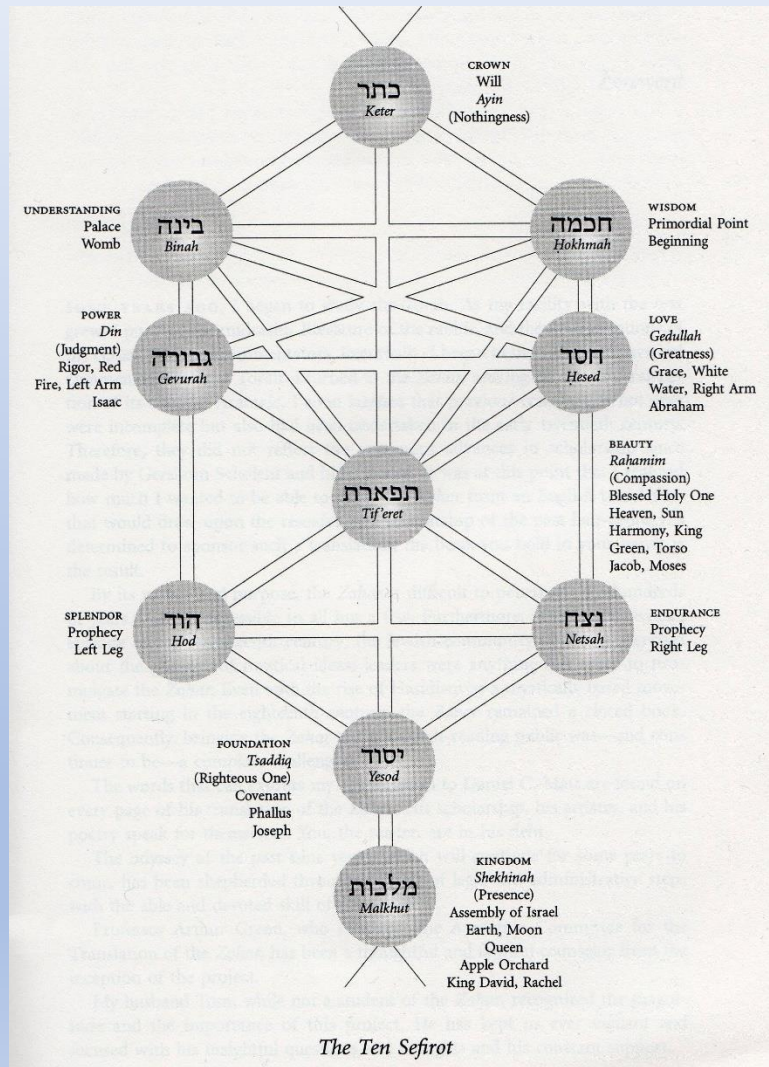
Key Questions

1. Who is the singer?
2. Who is the Beloved Friend?
3. Who is the Bride?
4. Who is the Presence of the Sabbath?

Standing-on-One-Leg Introduction to Jewish Mysticism

- Transcendence
- Mystical Union: Participating in the Life of Divinity
- Ten *Sefirot*: Gradations of Divine Manifestation
 - Divine Anthropos
 - Masculine & Feminine
 - Vertical Axis
- Divine Names
 - Most Important: *YHVH*: יה-ו-ה-י

י-ה-ו-ה and the Ten *Sefirot*



Who is the Bride?

Talmudic Background: BT *Shabbat* 119a

רַבִּי חֲנִינָא מִיַּעֲטָר וְקָאֵי אֶפְנֵיָא דְמַעְלֵי שַׁבְּתָא, אָמַר: "בּוֹאוּ וְנִצֵּא לְקַרְאֵת שַׁבְּתָא הַמְּלֻכָּה". רַבִּי יַנָּאִי לְבִישׁ מָאֲנִי מְעַלּוּ (שַׁבְּתָא) [וּמִיכָסִּי], וְאָמַר: "בּוֹאֵי כְלָה, בּוֹאֵי כְלָה".

Rabbi Hanina would wrap himself in his garment and stand at nightfall on Shabbat eve, and say, "Come and we will go out to greet Shabbat the queen." Rabbi Yannai put on his garment on Shabbat eve and said: "Enter, O bride. Enter, O bride."

Who is the Bride?

- Sefirotic: *Malkhut/Shekhinah*
- Human: *Knesset Israel*
- Spatial: Jerusalem/Temple Mount
- Temporal: Shabbat, seventh day of the week

Who is the Beloved? The Singer?

- Beloved: *Tif'eret*—Masculine Aspect of Divinity
- The Singer: The Kabbalist

The Refrain: No. of Repetitions, No. of Letters

לְכֶּה דוֹדֵי לְקַרְאֵת פֶּלָה, פְּנֵי שַׁבַּת נְקַבְּלָה.

Come my Beloved Friend to greet the bride, let us welcome the Sabbath.

Gimatriyyah of יהוה-י (YHVH)

$$10 = \text{י}$$

$$5 = \text{ה}$$

$$6 = \text{ו}$$

$$5 = \text{ה}$$

$$\text{Before the comma} = 15$$

$$\text{After the comma} = 11$$

שמור וזכור בדבור אחד

Observe & Remember in One Utterance

שמות כ:ח

זְכוֹר אֶת־יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ

Exodus 20:8

Remember the sabbath day to sanctify it.

דברים ה:יב

שְׁמֹר אֶת־יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוְּיָהּ | יְהַנֶּה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

Deuteronomy 5:12

Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy

Rabbinic Resolution of the Contradiction (BT *Shevu'ot* 20b)

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy (Exodus 20:8), and:
Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Deuteronomy 5:12),
were spoken in one utterance, in a manner that the human
mouth cannot say and that the human ear cannot hear.

יְיָ אֶחָד וְשֵׁמוֹ אֶחָד
YHVH is One, and His Name is One

שמור (*Keep*): F

זכור (*Remember*): M

“One and one don’t make one, they make one”

Pete Townsend, “Bargain”

יְיָ = י-ה-ו-ה interleaved with י-ד-נ-י and then contracted to first & last letters

שְׁמוֹר וְזָכוֹר בְּדַבּוֹר אֶחָד, הַשְּׁמִיעָנוּ אֵ-ל הַמְּיֻחָד, יי אֶחָד וּשְׁמוֹ אֶחָד, לְשֵׁם
וּלְתַפְאֵרֶת וּלְתִהְלָה.

Keep and Remember in a single utterance the Unique God caused us to hear; *YHVH* is One, and His Name is One; for Name, for glory, and for praise.

לְקַרְאֵת שַׁבָּת לָכוּ וְנִלְכָה, כִּי הִיא מְקוֹר הַבְּרָכָה, מֵרֵאשִׁי מִקְדָּם נְסוּכָה, סוּף מֵעֲשָׂה
בְּמַחְשָׁבָה תַּחֲלָה.

To greet the Sabbath, come let us go for She is the source of blessing; from the very beginning, of old, She was appointed; last in creation, first in thought.

מִקְדֹּשׁ מֶלֶךְ עִיר מְלוּכָה, קוֹמִי צְאִי מִתּוֹךְ הַהִפְכָּה, רַב לָךְ שְׁבַת בְּעֵמֶק הַבְּכָא, וְהוּא
יִחְמֹל עָלֶיךָ חֲמֻלָּה.

Sanctuary of the King, royal city, arise, come forth from the upheaval; too long have you dwelt in the valley of weeping; He will show you abundant pity.

הַתְּנַעֲרִי מֵעָפָר קוֹמִי, לְבָשִׁי בְּגָדֵי תְּפֹאֲרֹתַי עִמִּי, עַל יַד בֶּן יִשָּׁי בֵּית הַלְּחָמִי,
קִרְבָּה אֶל נַפְשִׁי גְּאֻלָּהּ.

Shake the dust off yourself, arise, dress up in your garments of glory, my people; through the son of Yishai of Bethlehem, draw near to my soul and redeem it.

הַתְּעוֹרְרִי, הַתְּעוֹרְרִי כִּי בָּא אֹרֶךְ קוֹמֵי אֲרִי, עוֹרֵי עוֹרֵי שִׁיר דְּבָרִי, כְּבוֹד יְהוָה עָלֶיךָ
נִגְלָה.

Wake up! wake up! for your light has come, arise and shine. Awaken! awaken! utter a song, The glory of YHVH is revealed upon you.

לֹא תִבוֹשׁוּ וְלֹא תִכְלָמוּ, מֵהַתְּשׁוּחָחִי וּמֵהַתְּהַמִּי, בְּדֹיִחְסוֹ עַנְיֵי עַמִּי, וְנִבְנְתָה עִיר עַל
תְּלָהּ.

Do not be ashamed or humiliated; Why are you bowed down, why do you moan? In You the poor of my people will take refuge, and the city will be rebuilt on its ancient site.

וְהָיוּ לְמַשְׁסָּה שׁוֹסֵיךָ, וְרָחֲקוּ כָּל מְבַלְעֵיךָ, יִשְׂיֵשׂ עֲלֶיךָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ, כְּמַשׁוֹשׁ חֲתָן עַל כַּלָּה.

They will be ravaged, those who ravaged you, and they will be cast far off, all who devour you. Your God will rejoice over you as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride.

יָמִין וְשְׂמֹאל תִּפְרוֹצִי, וְאֵת יְהוָה תִּעְרִיצִי, עַל יַד אִישׁ בֶּן פְּרָצִי, וְנִשְׂמַחָה וְנִגְיִלָּה.

Right and left you will spread out, and YHVH, you will praise;
through the man descended from Perets we will rejoice and exult.

בְּאֵי בְּשָׁלוֹם עֶטְרַת בַּעֲלָהּ, גַּם בְּרִנָּה וּבְצִהְלָהּ, תּוֹדֵךְ אֲמוּנֵי עַם סִגְלָהּ, בְּאֵי כַלָּהּ, בְּאֵי
כַלָּהּ, בְּאֵי כַלָּהּ, שִׁבְתִּי מִלְּכֶתָּא.

Come in peace, crown of her husband, come with song and good cheer; amidst the faithful of the treasured people. Come Bride, come Bride, come Bride, Shabbat Queen!