

Contemporary Kabbalistic Publishing in the Middle Eastern Tradition

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The contemporary librarian might be bemused by the flood of obscure and cryptic volumes published in the area of contemporary Kabbalah. It's not just you. A beginning student from the Diaspora might have great difficulty finding his or her way around a kabbalistic bookstore in the *Machaneh Yehudah* quarter of Jerusalem. Hence, this brief paper must serve as something of a "buyer's guide" to contemporary Kabbalah.

This efflorescence of publishing is based on a school of thought which is called Beit El Kabbalah, and it originates in the kabbalistic communities of Jerusalem, particularly among Middle eastern kabbalists, as opposed to North African. This publishing tradition is rooted in the ideas of Shalom Shar'abi and his Beit El school of 18th century Jerusalem. The complexity of Shar'abi's tradition has produced the avowed need for many of the volumes that are currently flooding the market.

The Beit El kabbalists root their practice in Shar'abi's theoretical writings, which were mainly glosses and commentaries on the Lurianic canon. These writings are uneven in structure and scope and call for much interpretation. A number of them are only extant in manuscript, while others were not published until the early 20th century. In every case, the unevenness of the original canon created a need for greater explication, which has continued into the 21st century. At the same time, Shar'abi's kabbalah is little understood and poorly explicated.

Shar'abi's Kabbalah- What is it?

The recent efflorescence in this sort of publishing derives from Shar'abi's approach to Kabbalah, and the problematics it entails. After Isaac Luria's death, the Safed community began a period of decline. A plague in 1742 and an earthquake in 1759 accelerated this process. By that time, the Ottomans pacified the Jerusalem area and were able to open the city to development, and the Old City of Jerusalem became a great center

of kabbalistic activity. The young Yemenite kabbalist R. Shalom Shar'abi came to dominate Yeshiva Beit El, just across from Nahmanides' synagogue. Shar'abi himself was a romantic figure and the usual hagiography that attends the advent of a holy man and leader was attached to him.

Beit El was devoted to mystical prayer, taking the words of the Prayer book and recombining them, vocalizing them, pondering the vibrations of the sounds of the letters, spending hours entering the inner meaning of Jewish prayer. The members of the Beit El Yeshivah signed spiritual contracts, binding themselves together in this world and in the world to come.

Sephardim, North Africans and *Edot ha-Mizrah*

The kabbalists of the Middle East, comprising Jerusalem, Aleppo, Baghdad, Yemen and points between, developed an advanced interest in Lurianic theory. The students of Jerusalem's Beit El School, led by Shalom Shar'abi, developed a dense linguistic theory of the Lurianic system.¹ This theory was accompanied by a complex practice of kabbalistic prayer, which came to be the dominant element in Middle Eastern Kabbalah.

As the Ottoman empire further consolidated its rule over the Middle East, so the political influence of the Beit El school grew. Beit El kabbalists came to control the Chief Rabbinate of Jerusalem and were thus able to raise funds for the community in the Diaspora, with government sanction. As a result, their complex theory came to be considered the ultimate expression of Kabbalah, particularly by non-practitioners. The latter day ascent of Beit El in influence probably owes much to the general empowerment of Middle Eastern communities.

Where the Prayers Come From

Now let me say something about the sheet that you have before you, which is taken from an early edition of Shar'abi's prayerbook. These siddurim originate in a

¹ See Pinchas Giller, *Shalom Shar'abi and the Kabbalists of Beit El*.

methodological decision on the part of the school's originator, Shalom Shar'abi. Shar'abi's method is concerned with the intersection of sacred names. These names have been part of the parlance of traditional Judaism, not just Kabbalah, since antiquity. These basic name traditions comprise the various Biblical names of God, the Talmudic forty-two letter name of God, the seventy two names of God and the *miluyyim*, or *substitutions*, which make up yet another tradition. These later names dominate the Zohar and the early version of Luria's teaching, particularly in the work known as the early work *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot*.² They are also to be found in the Kabbalah of Avraham Abulafia, which is nonetheless somewhat separate from the Beit El system.

Shar'abi's Kabbalah is based on the last versions of the Lurianic writings, particularly the composition *Sha'ar ha-Shemot* or "Gate of Names". The *Sha'ar ha-Shemot* is a restatement of the entire Lurianic system from the beginning, incorporating all of the ideas that had been brought into the Lurianic writings in their later version. The work begins with a description of the entire kabbalistic cosmology to date: the ten sefirot, the four worlds, the sefirot within the worlds, the lights that shine through them to the Divine countenances, the celestial palaces and finally the world of the soul. Having presented the most baroque and abstruse portrayal of the kabbalistic universe, the *Sha'ar ha-Shemot* then links each tier of the system to an extant sacred name. Each letter of YHVH is linked to a *sefirah*, and each name has an individual soul at its core. The various permutations of the Divine name enliven various levels of the Universe, for the soul of the Universe dwells in the consonants, while the vowels are enlivening soul of the letters.

When the ideas of the *Sha'ar ha-Shemot* are implemented, the kabbalistic universe is portrayed as nothing more or less than a series of cascading names. As a consequence of this aggregate representation of the kabbalistic universe, many new names were required. In response to the need to project names on all of these aspects of the system, the names and their permutations began to multiply exponentially.

It was Shar'abi's innovation to recast the system of kabbalistic prayer in terms of the *Sha'ar ha-Shemot*. He adapted the linguistic theory of the *Sha'ar ha-Shemot*, which is

² It is a matter of record that the kabbalists of the Beit El yeshivah of Jerusalem far preferred to use the later redaction of the Lurianic teaching exemplified in Meir Poppers' widely circulated work *Ez Hayyim*.

not specifically directed to prayer, into the prayer kavvanot. Every prayer, then, had to be recast in the new system of names presented in the latter text. Shar'abi took what was ultimately a theoretical construction at the far end of the development of the Lurianic system and wrote it back into the prayer service.

He did not finish the task, however. The great labor of perfecting Shar'abi's kavvanot, which was undertaken by his students in the generations after his death, consisted of taking the linguistic theory of the latest version of the Lurianic system, namely the *Sha'ar ha-Shemot* and adapting it into the prayer service, for which it had not originally been conceived. This is what the prayer books of the Beit El community do: they take the concerns of kabbalistic prayer and represent them in terms of the intersection of Divine names, a process that only began with Shar'abi in the 18th century, but that is continuing to today.

Shar'abi's insistence on the primacy of names over mythos led the Beit El kabbalists away from the images of the Lurianic myth and towards a theory of pure theory, devoid of symbolism, imagery or poetics. It is as if computer users were to put away their easier operating systems and run their computers purely through using MS-DOS. Prayers no longer have any of their exoteric meaning, but are now completely given over to esoteric formulae. The overt subject matter of the liturgy, the national and creaturely concerns that it expresses, is missing. The very idea of petitional prayer, emotional investment and the essential sense of prayer as communion and dialogue have been discarded, in favor of a faith in the most abstruse reaches of the Lurianic method, its numerology and linguistic method.

Was this prayer system a response to modernity? Perhaps. Whatever the impetus, this branch of late Kabbalah turned inward, towards an insular theory, rooted in traditions that were primordially old and mysterious, beyond the realm of myth, symbol or the physical image.

Shar'abi's Writings

The Beit El kabbalists root their practice in Shar'abi's theoretical writings, which were mainly glosses and commentaries on the Lurianic canon. These writings are uneven

in structure and scope and call for much interpretation. A number of them are only extant in manuscript, while others were not published until the early 20th century. His central work, *Nahar Shalom*, while being widely circulated, is a random jumble of writings without an inner order. There are many lost fragments in the various editions of Shar'abi's prayer book, with no final edition that resolves the differences. Accordingly, contemporary Beit El kabbalists have applied themselves to compiling them in ever more exact and perfected editions.

Shar'abi's essential writings include *Emet ve-Shalom*, his emendations on Vital's *Ez Hayyim*, *Rehovot ha-Nahar*, a clarification of the Lurianic system, and *Nahar Shalom*, a commentary on the prayer kavvanot in Vital's *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot*. *Nahar Shalom* is also the formal name of Shar'abi's prayer book, incorporating his introductions, which are called *Rehovot ha-Nahar*, and the kavvanot themselves. Shar'abi also composed responsa, many of which are lost. Shar'abi also produced a number of *tiqqunim*, that is to say, mystical prayers and incantations to rectify the situation of widows and the sick, and to prevent and rectify nocturnal emissions. Many of these practices were culled from Vital's *Sha'ar Ruah ha-Kodesh* and adapted by Shar'abi. Shar'abi also formalized penitential rituals for donning sackcloth, ritual immersion, charity, self-flagellation, accepting punishments of the rabbinical court (particularly for sexual offenses), and petitions for the ending of plagues. These were the earliest kavvanot to be published, namely rites for the atonement for various sins. Some of these penitential prayers were collected by the Hayyim Shaul Dweck in the works *Benayahu Ben Yehoyada*, *Kavvanot Pratiyot* (literally "Private Kavvanot") and *Sar Shalom*. Hence you will see penitential prayers rising to the surface more readily, as in the film "Trembling Before God" which depicted public prayers on the part of Jerusalem kabbalists repenting for homosexual activity. Hence, acts of public penitence have prompted the circulation of kavvanot.

Shar'abi's emendations to Vital's *Ez Hayyim* are called the *Hagahot ha-Shemesh*. The original copy, which seems to be still extant, was kept under the ark of the synagogue at Beit El. Many of these emendations were put into the *Ez Hayyim* unparenthesized, while others are parenthesized and yet not credited to Shar'abi. This led, at times to the alteration of texts in order to bring them into line with Shar'abi's

emendations. So it is that Shar'abi's teachings had an effect on the eventual published text of Vital's *Ez Hayyim*.

Who Wrote Them

So that is what these prayer books are. Now, where do they come from? The kabbalists of the Beit El might need some introduction to the Western reader. They make up a group among the aristocracy of the Middle Eastern rabbinate, drawn from a limited set of communities. Shar'abi's immediate heirs assumed the initial leadership of the circle and also produced a substantial number of books. Shar'abi's son, Hezkiah Yizhak Shar'abi (1806-1868, referred to as the by his acronym *Ha"i be-SheMe"Sh*) was the fourth head of Beit El, as well as an important rabbinical judge. Rafael Avraham Mizrahi Diyedi'a Shar'abi, Shalom Shar'abi's grandson, was among the first major redactors of the teaching. He was known as Rav Avraham Shalom *Hasid* ("the saint," acronym: *RA"Sh*), for his piety. Rav Avraham Shalom *Hasid* was the author of *Divrei Shalom*, a theoretical work that also details the practices of the Beit El community. He was also involved in developing the eventual version of Shar'abi's prayer book. He was reputed, as well, to have used practical Kabbalah when Jerusalem was under siege in order to limit the carnage.

Another of Shar'abi's grandsons, *Hayyim Avraham Gagin* (acronym: *Rav Aga"n*, 1787-1848), was the sixth head of Beit El, served as *Rishon le-Zion* from 1842-1848 and was the first to be designated *Hakham Bashi*, or the recognized chief rabbi of the Ottomans. Shar'abi's teachings circulated among the Jews of the Orient and the Levant, from Jerusalem to Aleppo (*Halab*) and thence to Baghdad, with contributions from the "sages of Tunis." Acolytes of Shar'abi's teachings also dominated Sephardic chief rabbinate of Jerusalem for much of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A number of those designated *Rishon le-Ziyyon* (Chief Rabbi of the Sephardic community) and *Hakham Bashi* (official religious liaison to the Ottoman Empire) were theorists of Shar'abi's method, were active in the Beit El circles and even his lineal heirs.³

³ Gagin married the daughter of Avraham Shalom Hasid, who was known as "Doda" (Aunt) Rivka.

One figure whose works you might receive may be in this sense, perplexing to you. That is Hayyim Yosef David Azulai (acronym: HYD”A, 1724-1826), who, next to Shar’abi himself, was perhaps the most famous of the Beit El students. He produced an entire library of legal, homiletical and theoretical works, and traveled far and wide as an emissary of the Jerusalem community. Yet his homiletical and theoretical writings do not show much influence of Shar’abi’s teaching and he may have pulled back from deep activity in the world of kavvanot. Among Shar’abi’s other prominent students were Yisrael Ya’akov Algazi (1680-1756) and his son, Yom Tov Algazi (1727-1802), who would become a *Rishon le-Ziyyon*. Yom Tov acted as an emissary for the Jerusalem community and made a favorable impression on such monolithic figures of the Hungarian rabbinate as Moshe Sofer, the *Hatam Sofer* and his father-in-law Akiva Eiger. Besides his rabbinical duties, Yom Tov Algazi was the head of Beit El for the last 25 years of his life, to 1802.

Another second-generation kabbalist, Ya’akov Shealtiel Nino, was raised from his youth in Beit El. He authored the work *Emet Le-Ya’akov*, which is widely referenced by other theoretical works, as well as a number of penitential rites (*tiqqunim*). Nino also acted as an emissary for the community.

A humble and unassuming member of the Beit El community, Raḥamim Sarim, produced the work *Sha’arei Raḥamim*, which is a series of responsa elicited from such figures as Hayyim Shaul Dweck. The questions themselves are often simplistic and the various sages often do not respond to the questions asked, but the work is suffused with a charming humility and piety, qualities often in short supply in the Beit El tradition.

It should be made clear that R. Shalom Shar’abi never had access to a “Shar’abi” prayerbook, they were all developed after his death. R. Yedidiah Raphael Hai Abulafia (acronym: the Rav YiR”A) was the seventh head of the Beit El Yeshivah. Abulafia was the primary editor of Shar’abi’s writings and produced the most widely accepted version of Shar’abi’s prayer kavvanot.⁴ Through his efforts, the prayer book expanded to include devotions for the entire year. He also edited the introductions at the beginning of the prayer book, which are commonly called *Rehovot ha-Nahar*. He revised his own

⁴ Like Ya’akov Shealtiel Nino, he was also affiliated with the Beit El community from childhood. His prayer book was acclaimed in Beit El as the authoritative version.

teachings a number of times, based on his acquisition of Shar'abi's autograph manuscripts that were in his possession. Because of the encompassing sweep of his activities, Abulafia is widely considered the final arbiter of the Shar'abi's practices and kavvanot.

Aleppo

Among the Beit El kabbalists, the sages of Aleppo (*Aram Zuba* or *Halab*) have great authority and credibility and are considered to have preserved the most authentic version of Shar'abi's kavvanot. Hayyim Shaul Dweck, the “Rav SaDeH,” was the most influential sage of the Aleppo school. There are many traditions regarding Dweck's bravery in the face of the blindness that afflicted him in his latter years.⁵ His later works, such as his well-known commentary on Vital's *Ozrot Hayyim*, *Eifah Sheleimah*, were dictated orally to Yehudah Petayah and Yosef Hayyim Sofer. Sofer was the author of *Kaf ha-Hayyim*, which he wrote in the loft of the present day Yeshivah *Shoshanim le-David* in Jerusalem's Bukharian quarter. Dweck's *Eifah Shleimah*, a commentary on the Lurianic work *Ozrot Hayyim*, presents many of Shar'abi's teachings with great clarity. Dweck was committed to expanding the popular base of Beit El practice by publishing the penitential kavvanot in a chapbook format. These include *Benayahu ben Yehoyada, Kavvanot Pratiyot*, (Hayyim Shaul Dweck and Eliahu Ya'akov Legimi, eds.), *Kavvanot ha-Sefirah, Kriat Shema' 'Al ha-Mitah* (all Jerusalem 1911), *Or ha-Levanah*. (Ya'akov Kezin; ed., Jerusalem 1915), *Ez ha-Gan* (Jerusalem 1931) and *Sar Shalom* (Jerusalem 1912). These publications were the first instance of the circulation and publication of Shar'abi's penitential prayers.⁶ The publication of these works, as well as the early edition of Shar'abi's prayer book, reflected a messianic tinge to Dweck's activities that bears further attention. Between his fateful decision to popularize the kavvanot, his decision to reinstitute Shar'abi's radical kavvanot for the Sabbatical year and his move from the old

⁵ Two main students of the next generation, Yehudah Petayah and Suleiman Mozpi, cared for Dweck in his infirmity.

⁶ Dweck also assisted in the publication of such works as Nissim Harrari Raful's *'Alei Nahar*, Eliahu Mishan's *Sefat Emet* and Avigdor Azriel's *Zimrat ha-Arez*.

city to the Bukharian quarter, Dweck showed an impatience with tradition that seems motivated by the sense that new paradigms of behavior were at hand.

Baghdad

The influence of the Jewish community of Baghdad extended among the expatriate Baghdadi Jews from Southeast Asia to South America. The leader of the nineteenth century Baghdadi community at the height of its influence was Yosef Hayyim (1835-1909), known as “ the Ben Ish Hai,” after the title of his most popular work. You should be on the lookout for his works, although all mention of him has been recently expunged from the Encyclopedia Judaica, his works are studied after Shabbat tefilot in a plurality of North African and Middle Eastern communities. He was an extraordinary communal leader, scholar and theologian. As a young man on pilgrimage to the Galilee he had a transformative religious experience at the grave of the Davidic general Benyahu ben Yehoyada, so that all of his books, Ben Ish Chai, Rav Pealim, Sefer Benyahu and so forth, are derived from the verses in the Bible that treat of that figure.

Yosef Hayyim considered Shar’abi’s approach to the Lurianic system as prerequisite for the teaching of “true wisdom.” His didactic work *Da’at U’Tevunah* invokes Shar’abi extensively, usually as the capstone to the presentation of a given topic. Yosef Hayyim included kabbalistic material in his responsa, *Rav Pe’alim*, as well as his commentary on the Talmud, *Sefer Benayahu* and his popular work, *Ben Ish Hai*. He devised his own versions of Luria’s penitential rites in his *Lashon Hakhamim*.

Besides Yosef Hayyim, Shar’abi’s influence was evident in the writings and movements of other Iraqi kabbalists. Another didactic work by a Baghdadi kabbalist, Suleiman Eliahu’s *Kerem Shelomo* is also based on Shar’abi’s system. Eliahu underwent as crisis of faith much on the order of an intellectual of the Eastern *haskalah*, and the Ben Ish Hai intervened to redirect him towards Kabbalah. *Kerem Shelomo* remains a popular work among Beit El kabbalists today. Another important Baghdadi mystic, Yehezkel Ezra Rahamim, immigrated to Jerusalem in order to study Kabbalah. Eliahu Mani (1818-1899) similarly moved from Baghdad to the land of Israel in 1856, first in Jerusalem but two years later establishing himself in Hebron. He established the Beit Ya’akov

synagogue in the latter city, which also hosted a circle of kavvanot practitioners (*mekavvenim*). Mani widely cites Yedidiah Raphael Hai Abulafia and, in turn, influenced Avraham Gagin and Avraham Bakher David Majar (the latter is helpfully referred to as *RaBaD* in the scholarly writings). That's sort of a joke; it's really not helpful at all to call him RaBaD.

The aforementioned Yehudah Petayah left quite a mark on the social fabric of Jerusalem, through his writings, activities and the illustrious family that he founded. Petayah is reputed to have exorcized Shabbatai Zevi's *dybbuk* in Baghdad in 1903. He eventually he took up residence in Jerusalem, where he composed a number of works still popular among both Beit El adepts and the general populace. Petayah was also a visionary who left a record of his communing with the spirit world. His works are widely in circulation and will end up in your inbox.

Initially, Shar'abi's school was a largely Middle Eastern circle, giving new resonance to the trope *Sephardim ve-Edot ha-Mizrah*, *Sephardim*, who should really be thought of as North Africans, the latter being the lineal heirs of the Spanish community, concentrated, in this instance, in Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, as opposed to *Edot ha-Mizrah*, the community of sages intermingling along the strip extending from Jerusalem to Aleppo and thence to Baghdad. The initial leadership of the group was drawn from the latter group, with the Persian community acting as spectators in the process. The spiritual climate of Jerusalem grew increasingly cosmopolitan in the 19th century, and many Ashkenazic sages came under the influence of Beit El. Sar Shalom Rokeah of Belz and others in the court of the Belzer Hasidim requested manuscripts of Shar'abi's prayer book and *Nahar Shalom* and were, to all reports, enthralled by Shar'abi's insights. Avraham Yeshaye Kareliz, the influential halakhist known as the *Hazon Ish*, meditated in Shar'abi's private quarters and exclaimed, "How awesome is this place." Hayyim Shaul Dweck earned an enthusiastic approbation for his commentary to Ya'akov Zemakh's *Ozrot Hayyim*, *Eifah Shleimah* from Zevi Hirsch Shapira, the estimable Munkazcer Rav. The latter was a member of the late Beit El circle, as was Ben Zion Shapira, from the circle of Mahari"l Diskin. The Jerusalem pietist and zealot Yeshayahu Asher Zeir Margoliot served as an intercessor between the Beit El community and the principle sages of Eastern Europe.

In this way, Shar'abi's influence "crossed over" into the Ashkenazic community of his period and after. Alliances between the Beit El kabbalists and the Ashkenazi counterparts began over a shared interest in Lurianic practice. Within the European Rabbinic world, the Beit El kabbalists were understood to be the central receptors of the tradition. One does not see the Hazon Ish or Rabbi Akiva Eiger as avid kabbalists. Yet, they represented the apex of rabbinic achievement into the next generations and, possibly in a classically rabbinic refusal to engage with kabbalah, ceded the ultimate authority to the East. Eventually these alliances spread over into the realm of social concerns, and the relationships between the European and Eastern schools coalesced into the shared concerns of what would now be called the *haredi*, or ultra-orthodox world. The Ashkenazic and Middle Eastern rabbinate found a common ground in the veneration of the Beit El school. Contacts between kabbalists in the East and enthusiasts of Kabbalah in the rabbinic establishments created one line of communication within the religious world that would survive into the British Mandate.

Shar'abi's Prayer book

The most widely known evidence of Shar'abi's activity is "his" prayer book, the *Siddur ha-RaShaSh*. Shar'abi did not reveal his kavvanot during his lifetime; his students and descendants circulated them. During his whole life, Shar'abi was amending and correcting his prayer book, adding and erasing, until he came to the conclusions of the final edition.

The prayer book that has come to be called *Siddur ha-RaShaSh* or "Shar'abi's" was developed over successive generations following his death. Since the early 20th century it has been published a number of times in a few editions and the format and presentation of the kavvanot is still evolving. There are a number of traditions attending the prayer book's original redaction and its circulation.

It is popularly believed that Shar'abi's original version of the prayer book was transmitted to the kabbalists of Aleppo and was hidden for some length of time. After Shar'abi's death his son Hezkiah took the manuscripts to Tunis, and there they became confused. To further contribute to this confusion, the scribes who copied the various

prayer books did not fully understand the material and made a number of mistakes. An important source for the redactors was a copy of Vital's *Sha'ar ha- Kavvanot* with Shar'abi's emendations belonging to David di Silo. Finally, the last edition of the prayer book was lost. In any case it was widely acknowledged that the material published in Jerusalem in 1916, one hundred and forty years after Shar'abi's death, was nothing but a portion of the original.

As a result of these factors, there are many versions and editions of the prayer book. There are the "long" and "short" versions, as well as the editions preferred by the Beit El and Aleppo communities. The prayer book used in Beit El was the "long" edition, while the printed edition was the short Aleppo or *Aram Zuba* edition. There is some confusion as to whether the Aram Zuba edition was ever extant in the longer version. Most of the prayer books in circulation were based on the "short" Aram Zuba edition, while the Beit El "long" edition was, until the present era, mainly circulated among the inner circle of adepts. The Beit El edition was not published in its full form, as the Beit El kabbalists had an antipathy to publishing the prayer book.

The decision to begin the publication of the kavvanot was obviously a fateful one. Hayyim Shaul Dweck was involved in the early publication of the prayer book. He based his version on a number of manuscripts from Eliahu Mishan and Nissim Harari Raful, as well as texts from Shar'abi's scribe, Yosef Der'i. He also drew on the later versions of the prayer book from Yedidiah Rafael Hai Abulafia based on the work *Divrei Shalom*. The first editions were published, with the help of Reuven Haaz of the *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* yeshivah. The later versions came out under the aegis of Yom Tov Yedid Levi. This led to the edition of the prayer book published by David Majar, which was mainly based on Shar'abi's "first edition." This version of the prayer book is in the public domain and has been widely circulated. However, Dweck was only involved in the publication of the kavvanot of the first section of the prayer book (1911). After the publication of the first sections, Dweck withdrew from the enterprise, having second thoughts about the probity of circulating the kavvanot.

The prayer book editions prepared by Yedidiah Raphael Hai Abulafia have the greatest credibility among the canonizers. His theoretical introductions were published as

Shar'abi's *Rehovot ha-Nahar*. Contemporary mystics believe that the introductions are best rendered in Yedidiah Raphael Hai Abulafia's *Kinyan Perot*.

In recent years, new editions of Shar'abi's kavvanot have been published and earlier editions republished. These include new editions of the prayer book, kavvanot for special occasions and practices, such as the counting of the *over* or the bedside *Shema'*, and specifically penitential prayers. A version of the prayer book was developed by and for the use of the hasidim of Arele Roth, the Shomrei Emunim community. Another edition was developed which uses an obscure form of color-coding as part of the practice. The Nahar Shalom community, in collaboration with Ya'akov Moshe Hillel, has developed the extensive version *Rehovot ha-Nahar* that is based on the long Aram Zuba editions and the version of Yedidiah Raphael Hai Abulafia. Hence the early prayer books circulated by the Rehovot ha-Nahar circle, such as Dweck and David Majar, have been usurped by the Aram Zuba school among the contemporary kabbalists of Beit El.

It has already been noted that Shar'abi limited his sources to a few sections of the late Lurianic canon. Contemporary mystics limit their study to the acolytes of the Beit El school itself. The odd intrusion of occasional Shabbatean materials into the Shar'abi canon is less of a problem than materials from other students of Lurian than Hayyim Vital. Among another group of Beit El kabbalists, the compilers of the recent series of devotional works, *Ez Tidhar*, Shar'abi's kavvanot are combined with the earlier common religion and even with manifestly Shabbatean ideas, reproducing the commemorative meal for *Tu Be-Shevat* that has its origins in the Shabbatean work *Hemdat ha-Yamim*.

Shabbatean influences, then, are less toxic to Beit El than the forces of modernity. There is an ideological dimension to this polemic. The Beit El kabbalists have limited their canon. Ashkenazic materials, materials from Luria's other students, and contemporary documentary scholarship are all the same hametz in the dough. Hillel's continuation of the strident advocacy of Vital and his deprecation of the "other students" serves as an attack on the archaeological reading of the Lurianic teaching as a response to scholarly analyses and a concomitant interest, among adepts as well, in the alternative recensions of other members of Luria's circle. Among other things, he contemporary mystics of the Beit El school have declared war on the academic notion of the evolution of Kabbalah, as they guard the purity of their practice. So when a Beit El volume comes

across your acquisitions desk, it is a little glass of distilled Yerushalmi Kabbalah, protected from all other influences, direct from the Old City, Machaneh Yehudah and Geulah.