

Simcha H. Benyosef

KEY *to the*
LOCKED GARDEN

Learning to Enhance the Shabbat Experience

Menorah Books

בס"ד

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I immensely enjoyed Simcha Benyosef's *Key to the Locked Garden: Learning to Enhance the Shabbat Experience*, based on the teachings of Rabbi Moses Luria (1931-2009) z"l. It brings inspiration to experience the true joy of Shabbat in its spiritual essence, beautifully weaving the Arizal's inner theme of Shabbat (taken from the *Shaar Hakavanot*) in the course of the book.

Included in the book are all the pieces of advice from our Sages enabling us to receive the delight of Shabbat, and in particular, encouraging us to accept Shabbat earlier in order to fulfill the mitzvah of *Tosefet* (addition to) *Shabbat*, which is a great mitzvah.

In short, I will say that after reading *Key to the Locked Garden*, my Shabbat experience deepened and is not the same anymore. Benyosef so brilliantly brought the Kabbalistic concepts to life, particularly for the layperson, that even a Kabbalist who is familiar with them will find much that is new to him in reading this book.

I conclude with a blessing that all who read this book may experience a new level of Sabbath delight.

I sign in honor of the Torah,
Rabbi Moses Schatz

Contents

Foreword xv

Acknowledgments xix

To Each Reader xxiii

Prefatory Note: Foundations xxvii

CHAPTER 1

CREATOR OF DARKNESS 1

CHAPTER 2

FIERY COALS OF LOVE 11

CHAPTER 3

A TASTE OF THE WORLD TO COME 19

CHAPTER 4

SPIRITUAL KISSES 27

CHAPTER 5	
DEEPER MEANING OF <i>MENUCHA</i> – INNER	
HARMONY	39
CHAPTER 6	
KABBALAT SHABBAT AND THE EVENING	
PRAYER	53
CHAPTER 7	
WHEAVENLY DEW	73
CHAPTER 8	
SECOND <i>SEUDA</i> – ABOVE TIME	81
CHAPTER 9	
SOUL COMPANIONS	93
CHAPTER 10	
WE ARE THE <i>KALLA</i>	101
CHAPTER 11	
A TUNNEL UNDER THE THRONE OF	
GLORY	109
CHAPTER 12	
ASCENDING WITH THE <i>TOSEFET SHABBAT</i>	129
CHAPTER 13	
GROWING WITH THE ADDITIONAL SOUL	145
CHAPTER 14	
YOU WILL CALL ME <i>ISHI</i>	151

CHAPTER 15
ON THE SIXTH DAY 161

CHAPTER 16
I CAME INTO MY GARDEN 177

APPENDIX I
SOUL LEVELS 189

APPENDIX II
BIRKAT HALEVANA 191

APPENDIX III
MYSTICAL READINGS FOR THE
SHABBAT TABLE 201

Bibliography 263
Glossary 267

Chapter 1

Creator of Darkness

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he inner dimension of the Torah understands darkness as a state of mind rather than as a physical restriction of light.¹ At the very beginning of the account of Creation, it says, “and the darkness He named ‘Night.’”² This tells us that the concepts “night” and “darkness” are equivalent. The Hebrew letters of the word “*Layla* (night)” allude to the inner dimension of these terms, for we may rearrange the same letters to form the word “*yelala*” (wailing). Darkness thus designates the emotions threatening to overcome us when we feel distant from *Hashem* (God), such as an anxiety that may lead us to despair.

We may fight darkness by drawing light to ourselves from the highest source – Shabbat. On Shabbat, the night has the same quality of daylight as the day itself. After each of the six days of Creation we read “And there was evening, and there was morning” and the number of the day. However, with respect to the Sabbath the verse says: “By the

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1. The following analysis of prayer is adapted from Rabbi Luria, “Yaakov Tikken Tefilat Arvit,” in *Sefer Beit Genazai al Parshiyot HaTorah, Kolel Biurim Uferushim Laparshiyot: Bereshit* [“*Sefer Beit Genazai al Parshiyot HaTorah*”] (Jerusalem: R. M. Luria, 5761), vol. 2, 683ff.
 2. Gen. 1:5; *The Living Torah*, translated by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan (New York: Moznaim Publications, 1981).

Key to the Locked Garden

seventh day, God completed His work... .”³ The words “and there was evening, and there was morning” do not appear, for the entire Shabbat is considered light.

On Shabbat night there is the same kind of spiritual light as there is during the daytime. Even though there is physical darkness, this is not the same type of darkness as there is throughout the week, which causes the week nights to be called “night.” The darkness of Shabbat night is of a different kind.

In our morning prayers, when we bless Hashem for creating darkness (*boreh choshekh*), we are really referring to the light in the heavenly world of *Beriyah* (Creation), which radiates with such intensity that we have no means of perceiving it. That is why we refer to it as darkness. The light that Hashem shines on us throughout Shabbat is of the same type as that of *boreh choshekh*, so intense that we cannot grasp it. To that end, the Holy One gives us tools to expand our consciousness, thus enabling us to receive the Shabbat light: One of these is the Shabbat additional soul; another is the additional *Amida* (standing prayer) we refer to as *Mussaf*.

The inner purpose of the additional soul is to help us focus our entire mind on the Almighty.⁴ As a result, our ability to feel His Presence intensifies, particularly at the time of prayers. Moreover, the additional soul also sharpens our sense perceptions, allowing us to use all our physical senses as a means to lift the veil of concealment separating us from the Beloved. The *Mussaf Amida* prayer was included in the Shabbat ritual, in addition to our three daily prayers, because saying *Mussaf* helps us absorb the divine light stemming from *Keter* (Crown). We shall see in the pages to come that the light of *Keter* is emitted on the seventh day of each week.⁵

3. Gen. 2:2. *Tanach: The Stone Edition* (New York, Mesorah Publications, 1996). All the citations from Chumash and Tanakh will be from this edition unless otherwise noted.

4. Adapted from Rabbi Moshe Luria, “Maamar Neshama Yetera BeShabbat,” *Sefer Beit Genazai Kolel Maamarim Ubiurim al Derekh Haavoda meyasadim al divrei ha Ari z”l Luria, be’inyanei Shabbat* [“*Sefer Beit Genazai: Maamarei Shabbat*”], 1st ed., 85-89.

5. Adapted from Rabbi Moshe Luria, “Selichot Bechodesh Elul Ubimei Hateshuvah,” *Sefer Beit Genazai: Sefer Beit Genazai: Kolel Inyanei Teshuva Bechodesh Elul, Rosh Hashanah, Aseret Yemei Teshuva, Yom Hakippurim, Chag Hasukkot, Ushmini Atzeret*

The darkness of the night comes to the world when the forces of *dinim* (strict justice) overwhelm the heavenly dimensions, causing the state of constriction that we call the darkness of the night. The *dinim* forces are spiritual forces dwelling outside the realm of holiness, in what we would call the realm of evil, or “the other side,” which stands in contrast with the realm of holiness, representing Hashem’s Presence. The outside forces only exist in virtue of the fragments or sparks of holiness that they snatch from the souls of those who transgress divine will as expressed in the Torah. Without these sparks, they would not have any existence. The outside forces are actually part of the plan of Creation. By allowing both good and evil to exist, Hashem established a system in which man has free will to choose between the deeds bringing light and those causing darkness.

In order to understand the inner darkness caused by these forces of impurity on High and below, and how to distance ourselves from them, we must reflect on the special nature of the bond between the Creator and the People of Israel. As described in the Introduction, the higher aspect – the root – of each of the souls of the People of Israel is attached to the Holy One on High, together with all the other souls of Israel, in a collective entity called *Knesset Yisrael Above*. When the highest point of all our heavenly souls – namely, *Knesset Yisrael Above* – is cleaving to Hashem on High, then the People of Israel below become a spiritual entity whose inner souls, in a state of togetherness, are attached to Hashem. This spiritual entity under our physical forms is referred to as *Knesset Yisrael Below*.

Rabbi Moshe Luria zt”l writes:

As it is taught in the holy Zohar, the inner purpose of all the *mitzvot* (commandments) is to [help us reach] passionate attachment to Hashem; the message is that by means of this [effort we supply as we engage in the performance of *mitzvot*] we may attain [what the Prophet Ezekiel refers to as] the “time for love.” And, if it can be said, this is His main will and delight.⁶

Veavodat Yom Kippur Bamikdash Ubiurim BaRambam Hilkhos Teshuva [“*Sefer Beit Genazai – Massekhet Teshuva – Hilkhos Teshuva*”] (Jerusalem: R.M. Luria, 5767), 36-38.

6. “Chiko Mamtakim,” *Sefer Beit Genazai: Shir Hashirim*, 169a.

Key to the Locked Garden

Elsewhere, in a similar vein, Rabbi Luria explains:

The soul comes down to this world so that by fulfilling *mitzvot* and engaging in good deeds she will acquire garments and ornaments of a spiritual nature by means of which she may become pleasing to the King of the world and able to stand before Him and serve Him on High.

One of the ways in which our soul can serve Hashem on High while we are in this world is by means of prayer. At the time of our three daily prayers, there is a spiritual energy inter-connecting all the souls of Israel to form the spiritual entity of *Kneset Yisrael* in the state of togetherness of *yichud* (unification) with Hashem.⁷

The word “*yichud*” alludes to the total togetherness only possible at the soul level. Rabbi Luria explains that when there is a *yichud* on High between *Hakadosh Barukh Hu* and our collective soul-roots, the People of Israel below are included as well. And then the People of Israel below are in a state of happiness, perceiving the closeness to *Hakadosh Barukh Hu*. The higher aspect of their soul is able to ascend on High at the time of the *yichud*, and as a result *shefa* is directed to the world below. The unification brought about by our daily prayers brings well-being to all the People of Israel, but those of us who are actually involved in the prayer may feel a special closeness to Hashem at that time.

In an essay on the Song of Songs, Rabbi Luria explains that there are two types of mystical unification of the Holy One with *Kneset Yisrael*.⁸ The first is likened to the union of two separate entities. The second may be likened to a bond of total unity in which two entities become one. This is similar to our marriage ceremony, in which we first have to go through the *kiddushin* (betrothal) and only then comes the *nissuin* (completion of the marital bond). The second type of union underlies

7. “Ani velo Malach,” in *Sefer Seder Leil Shimurim: Kolel Maamarim Ubiurim al Derekh Haavodah: Meyusadim a”d haArizal Luria Beinyanei Seder Leil Pesach Vehaggada shel Pesach* (Jerusalem: unknown, 5750), 24ob.

8. “Asher LiShlomo,” *Sefer Beit Genazai: Shir Hashirim*, 18ff.

the very purpose of Creation, and each soul of Israel tasted this union at the giving of the Torah, in which the collective souls as well as each individual soul became a dwelling space for the Holy One. The divine intention was that they should achieve this spiritual union through their own efforts.

Rabbi Luria concludes this essay with the verse:

His mouth is sweet; He is חָבוּ מִמְתְּקִים וְכֵן מִחֲבֵדִים זֶה דּוֹדֵי וְזֶה
altogether desirable; this is רָעִי בְּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם
my Beloved, this is my Friend,
O daughters of Yerushalayim⁹

On this verse Rabbi Luria comments:

[This verse] includes two main elements. One of these is [alluded to by] “His mouth is sweet” in the situation [in which we may relate to Hashem] as “This is my Beloved,” evoking Ezekiel’s expression the “time for love,” which is the time of the heavenly unification taking place every day during our *Amida* prayer and on Shabbat as well as Yom Tov (festive days). At these times we may [attain an experiential perception of the words] “His mouth is sweet,” alluding to the delight of divine closeness [while we are engaged in prayer].

[The second element is alluded to by the words] “He is altogether desirable,” referring to the time before and after the unification occurring in the *Amida* prayer. [This second aspect before and after prayer] has the quality of *machamadim* (desirable), for it expresses yearning and desire. [At these times we may relate to Hashem] as “This is my Friend” in the sense that this not the time of unification.

9. Song 5:16. Translated by Rabbi Avraham Sutton. This translation will be part of the second volume of the Breslov Siddur edited by Rabbi Sutton, forthcoming. Rabbi Sutton may be contacted at <avraham.sutton@me.com>. All quotations from Shir Hashirim will come from this translation unless otherwise noted.

Key to the Locked Garden

We retain from these teachings that the expression “the time for love” alludes to the moment of *yichud*, not only in our *Amida* on Shabbat and Yom Tov, but also every single day, three times a day. While saying the *Amida* we enter a special state of consciousness in which we may attain a perception of Hashem’s love at these times. In contrast, before and after the *Amida* we may also perceive Hashem’s closeness, but not in the same way.

Although in our generation we have no conscious perception of the heavenly unification at the time of *Amida* prayer, we are nevertheless infused by the immediacy of an unknown Presence whose vibrant energy fills us with a total sense of fulfillment. The *Amida* enables our soul to replenish its former luminous energy as it rises to the Source. The purpose of the prayers that follow the *Amida* is then to bring this energy down with us to elevate our normal consciousness, helping to enhance our awareness of the Divine until the next time we pray the *Amida*.

Rabbi Luria tells us the secret of how to attain the type of bond we have mentioned:

In order to initiate the heavenly unification [that is to take place on Shabbat] we must adopt the way of a bride – namely the longing of *Knesset Yisrael* – [to be close to] the Holy One, for the word “*kalla*” (bride) is related to [the expression] *kalot hanefesh* (longing of the soul). [Our soul’s longing helps to] give rise to the unification which will take place when the Holy King goes to the field to bring the Queen from the field into the Home. By going to the field [on Friday afternoon] and saying “Come O Bride,” we actively arouse divine action on High. *Hakadosh Barukh Hu* then draws *Knesset Yisrael* [close] to Him. As explained in the teachings of the holy Ari z”l, on Shabbat all the worlds ascend on High to the world of *Atzilut* (Closeness).¹⁰

And this is [the way in which we must understand it] when the Torah asks us to sanctify the Shabbat even though the Shabbat holiness is [a gift which] will keep coming from Above [without requiring our intervention]. Even though [on Shabbat]

10. See Chapter 12, “Ascending with the *Tosefet Shabbat*.”

special divine lights, as well as the additional Shabbat soul, are directed onto us, still, in order to initiate the unification on High, the People of Israel below have to show the eager attitude of a bride. As result there is an injunction [which we will explain further] called *Tosefet Shabbat* [addition to Shabbat] to show *Knesset Yisrael's* yearning for *Hakadosh Barukh Hu*.¹¹

In the chapter on *Tosefet Shabbat*, we will examine what we may do on Erev Shabbat (which starts on Thursday night after the evening prayer, and lasts until the Shabbat begins) in order to enable us to receive the Shabbat light at a higher level.

Darkness means exile; it means being in a situation in which we do not feel Hashem's closeness. In contrast, Shabbat is the day in which we gather enough faith to hold on to it for the rest of the week. The mystery of *emuna* (faith) is the consciousness of our contact with Hashem. In other words, it is not just that we believe it but rather that we know it. We can relate to the world around us with an expanded consciousness or with constricted consciousness. The faith that is there for us to absorb on Shabbat is an expanded consciousness in which we are able to push away the constriction of fear and anxiety that beset us the rest of the week. Hashem always keeps an eye on us, but the intensity of His loving look varies according to the way in which we ourselves relate to Him.

The ultimate desire of the Divine is that we should all relate to Him as soul companions.¹² Rabbi Moshe Luria points out that Hashem reveals His love for the People of Israel as He tells them in the Torah: "You shall be My special treasure among all nations,"¹³ and, "God your Lord loves you"¹⁴ – and in the Prophets, "I have loved you, says God."¹⁵

The main feature of the love of soul companions is that it has to be reciprocal, in contrast with the love of *banim* (children) in which the reciprocity is not indispensable. Parental love may be one sided – the

11. *Sefer Beit Genazai: Shir Hashirim*, 140-141.

12. The teachings that follow on *Shir Hashirim* 5:16 are adapted from Rabbi Moshe Luria, "Chiko mamtakim," *Sefer Beit Genazai: Shir Hashirim*, 168ff.

13. Ex. 19:5; trans. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, *The Living Torah*.

14. Deut. 23:6; *The Living Torah*.

15. Mal. 1:2.

Key to the Locked Garden

parent loves the child even when the child is unable to express love in return, nor even realizes s/he has any – but the love of *dodim* (soul companions), expressed in the plural form, has to be actively shared. Consequently, this love was portrayed in Shir Hashirim from both perspectives:¹⁶ One is “My Beloved is mine and I am His,” and the other one is “I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine,” thus indicating that – to the extent that we can express it¹⁷ – the love is equal on both sides. Or rather, as Rabbi Luria writes: “*kesheyesh giluy ahava mishnei tzedadim ze laze* (both sides are aware of this love).” It is thus expressed in the plural form, for it is a double love which stems from both sides: each side feels the love of the other directed toward him, and this is what produces the love of *dodim*.¹⁸

There is no specific element of *avodat Hashem* (divine service) that one aiming for the bond of soul companion can take on. It is more of an inner expression of one’s desire to have such a level of closeness, and that is a very individual thing.

Ahavat Hashem (loving Hashem) and *devekut* (attachment) form an essential part of the *mitzvot* that we have to do. Rabbi Luria teaches:¹⁹

The [preceding discussion about soul sompanions] teaches us a principle regarding the *mitzvot* of loving Hashem and cleaving to Hashem: in addition to the essential issue that these are *mitzvot* like all the others, most importantly, they also [express] the object of divine will directed to completing the relationship of *Knesset Yisrael*, His soul companion.

As will be explained, on Shabbat our closeness to Hashem is like that of soul companions, and we receive a level of emuna which is like the experiential perception of this closeness through the Shabbat *seudot*

16. As explained in “BeShaar Hasefer,” in Rabbi Moshe Luria, *Sefer Beit Genazai: Kolel Maamarim Uviurim Bemitzvot Tefilla... Uferushim Bedivrei HaAri z”l Beshaar Hakavanot* (“*Sefer Pitchei Tefilla*”) (Jerusalem: R.M. Luria, 5762-5764), vol. 3, 1ff.

17. I am grateful to my teacher, Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan zt”l, for this translation of *kiveyachol*, which is usually rendered as ‘as it were’ or ‘if it can be said.’

18. *Sefer Beit Genazai: Shir Hashirim*, 169.

19. “Chiko Mamtakim,” *Sefer Beit Genazai: Shir Hashirim*, 169a.

(meals), which the holy Zohar calls the *seudot* of perfect faith, or the *seudot* of focused consciousness.

The three *seudot* we have on Shabbat are linked to Exodus 16:25, in which the Israelites are given the rules about the manna and Shabbat, because this verse repeats the word “*hayom*” (today) three times.²⁰ We have these meals in the evening, morning and afternoon, thus indicating that all these times are called *yom* (day), and that on Shabbat the concept of “night” in the weekday sense does not exist.

Whereas on weekdays the *Amida* prayer is the same in the morning, afternoon and evening, on Shabbat each of the *Amida* prayers has a paragraph of its own identifying the unique quality of its time. Rabbi Luria writes:

The differences in the Shabbat prayers indicate three levels of closeness and *devekut* (attachment) between *Hakadosh Barukh Hu* and *Knesset Yisrael*. [...]

All three levels are [linked with the divine lights of] *daat* (intimate knowledge), evoking the bond of passionate attachment between *Hakadosh Barukh Hu* and Israel.²¹

There is a different level of love called *daat* (knowledge). It is the higher state of *consciousness* in which one achieves a passionate attachment to Hashem. In this higher form of awareness, each spirit merges with the other, so to speak, until they become one.

Daat is the biblical term for the marital union (“And Adam *knew* Eve”). It is the metaphor used in the Song of Songs to describe Hashem’s love for Israel. To reach the oneness and passionate attachment of the marital bond, both husband and wife must feel the love with equal intensity, and the love must be exclusive. To cleave to Hashem on the level of *daat*, the love must be mutual and exclusive; we must focus upon

20. Ex. 16:25.

21. “Shalosh Seudot beShabbat,” in *Sefer Beit Genazai al Parshiyot haTorah: Shemot*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: R. M. Luria, 5761), 142.

Key to the Locked Garden

Him all our emotions. Anything short of this cannot be called binding to Hashem with passionate attachment.

Hence by means of the three Shabbat prayers we draw down these three types of light – lights of *daat* (knowledge) imbued with *devekut*. We internalize these lights by participating in the *seuda* following each prayer. When we do this, the consciousness of this closeness can be with us for the entire week.

Chapter 2

Fiery Coals of Love

We recall that the Hebrew letters of the expression *Shabbat l'Hashem* may be regrouped to form the word “*Shalhevet*” (flame), as at the end of Shir Hashirim:¹

Love's sparks are fiery coals, a flame of the Divine. רְשִׁיפִיהָ רִשְׁפֵי אֵשׁ שְׁלֵהֶבֶת יְ-הוָה:

Shabbat is a day in which Hashem's love manifests with the strength of a *shalhevet*. The Zohar points out that concealed within the word “*Bereshit*” (in the beginning) are the Aramaic word *tre* (two) and the Hebrew word “*esh*” (fire).² Our Sages thus instituted that when Shabbat comes to a close we should light a candle with multiple wicks and say the blessing to *boreh meorei haesh* (He who creates the illuminations of the fire).³ If we pay attention to the word “*meorei*” (illuminations) in this blessing, we notice that it is worded in the plural form, for we are

1. Song 8:6.

2. *Tikunei Zohar*, Tikun 27, 143b.

3. *The Complete ArtScroll Siddur, Nusach Sefard*, 655.

Key to the Locked Garden

now asking that some of the illumination of our additional Shabbat soul should cast light onto our coming week.

We draw upon ourselves the Shabbat experience with the light of candles, and we leave it with the light of a torch.⁴ The candle only lights its immediate surroundings, whereas the torch lights the way before us. The meaning is that we must leave the Shabbat day with the lasting impression of its fire of holiness, and thirst for a quality of closeness to Hashem the intensity of which evokes the flaming torch of the *havdala* (closing service). We want this torch to illuminate the coming week with a spiritual energy that will last until the following Shabbat.

And the Zohar reveals to us that at the time of Havdala, the *Shekhina* is saying:

Sustain me with *ashishot* (the two illuminations of the fire), [...] for I am lovesick.⁵ סְמִכּוּנִי בְּאַשִׁישׁוֹת [...] כִּי חוֹלֵת אֶהְבֶּה אֲנִי

Rabbi Luria directs our attention to the word “*ashishot*”, pointing out that this word has it in the word “*esh*” (fire) twice.

The *Shekhina* seems to be asking us to sustain her, and we are left to wonder how we may do that.

Our prayers – in particular the *Amida* – act as vehicle in which the *Shekhina* ascends every day and attains a type of unification with the Beloved at the three times in which we pray during the day: in the evening, in the morning, and then in the afternoon.

4. “Beshaarei Shabbat: Ner Biknisat HaShabbat Veavukah Bitziato,” *Sefer Beit Genazai: Maamarei Shabbat*, 2nd edition (Jerusalem: private publisher, 5751), n.p. (at the end of the introduction to the volume).

5. Song 2:5.

The *Tikunei Zohar* explains the value of prayer in Hashem's eyes:

There is no gift [referring to the *Amida*] that is more precious to *Hakadosh Barukh Hu* than a prayer where the person praying has in mind that it should elevate the *Shekhina* for the sake of the heavenly unification.⁶

דְּלִית דְּרוֹנָא חֲבִיבָא קָדָם קוּדְשָׁא
בְּרִיךְ הוּא דְּרוֹנָא דְּשְׂכִינְתָּא

Moreover, on Shabbat it is through our contribution – the contribution of *Knesset Yisrael Themselves* – that the *Shekhina* ascends to the higher aspect of divine revelation, which is why Shabbat is “Shabbat for Hashem” – that is, Hashem’s day of joy.

Hence the main way that we, *Knesset Yisrael Themselves*, can help is by saying the formal prayers every day because somehow, the words of the *Amida* have a special property to bring about this union between the *Shekhina* and *Hakadosh Barukh Hu* that other prayers do not have.

Rabbi Luria explains that according to the Ari z”l,⁷ the words “*Ata kiddashta*” (You have sanctified), which we say in the Shabbat evening *Amida*, allude to the stage of *kiddushin* (consecration) in our marriage ceremony.⁸ After undergoing the *kiddushin* a bride is consecrated to her groom and forbidden to everyone else, but she is not yet permitted to her groom. She will be permitted to him after they go through the next level of union, called *nissuin*.

The idea of *kiddushin* as Shabbat begins is that in order to come together with Hashem you have to separate yourself from everything else. You have in mind: I am giving myself over to Him because He wants me to be with Him on Shabbat, and in doing so, I am leaving my past behind.

6. *Tikunei Zohar*, 37b.

7. *Pri Etz Chaim, Shaar HaShabbat*, chapter 13; cited by Rabbi Luria in “Beshaarei Shabbat: Ner Biknisat HaShabbat Veavukah Bitziato” (see note 3 above).

8. The teachings on *kiddushin* are adapted from Rabbi Moshe Luria, “*Ata Kidashta* [א] and [ב], *Sefer Beit Genazai: Pitchei Tefilla*, vol. 3, 226ff.

Key to the Locked Garden

“*Ata kiddashta*” refers to the *kiddushin* between *Hakadosh Barukh Hu* and *Knesset Yisrael*. The legal state of *kiddushin* entails that the outside forces have no longer any right to attach themselves to *Knesset Yisrael* and derive nourishment from her as they do on the weekdays.

On Shabbat the *Amida* prayer has only seven blessings instead of the weekly eighteen. The *Rishonim* (Early Sages) said that this is because Shabbat is the day in which we become Hashem’s soul companion, and the Shabbat *Amida* prayer may be likened to the seven blessings of the marital ceremony.⁹

The Bride of the Shabbat *kiddushin* is thus the spiritual entity of *Knesset Yisrael*. As we say the seven blessings of the evening *Amida*, she becomes forbidden to the outside forces.

Three times on Shabbat – once within the *Amida*, then right after we finish the *Amida*, and the third time within the Kiddush at the *seuda* – we say the verse “*vaychulu hashamayim vехаaretz* (the heaven and earth were finished).”¹⁰ This is because we are testifying that *Hakadosh Barukh Hu* created the world in six days, and for testimony to be legally valid you need two or three witnesses. We say it standing up because testimony has to be given standing. In this way we are also acting as witnesses to the *kiddushin*. We want everything we do below to be a mirror replica of what happens on High in order to help the process come to fulfillment.

There is a *piyyut* (liturgical poem) for the Shabbat day authored by Rabbi Masud Abuchatsira, father of the famed kabbalist and miracle worker Rabbi Israel Abuchatsira, known as Baba Sali.¹¹ This song contains all the elements of the preparation for Shabbat as taught in the

9. As mentioned by Rabbi Luria, the names of these early Sages include the Ramban (Nachmanides), the Abudarham, and the Shiblei haLeket.

10. Gen. 2:1.

11. The word made up of the first letter of every stanza forms the acrostic of Rabbi Masud’s name.

Shaar haKavanot on Shabbat of the Ari z”l, some of which I discuss in this book.¹² Concerning the *kiddushin*, Rabbi Masud says:

Then must be said the testimony of *kiddushin*, established in the three times [we say] *Vaychulu*,¹³ at the time *Chakal Tapuchin Kaddishin* (Field of Holy Apples).¹⁴

אז תאמר עדות קדושים. בשלש
ויכלו נוסדה. ראשונה חקל נגד שיין
חקל תפוחין אחר עמידה. חקל
תפוחין קדושים. נקראת בקדוש
סעדה.

While the six days of Creation are considered a time of building the *dira* (dwelling place) worthy of His Name, Shabbat is the day of *nissuin* between *Hakadosh Barukh Hu* and *Knesset Yisrael*. We derive that the inner purpose of Creation was to attain the bond of *nissuin* between *Hakadosh Barukh Hu* and *Knesset Yisrael*, which is the deeper reason behind our stopping creative activity on Shabbat, for on the day of the marriage ceremony neither bride nor groom work. This bond is also the inner reason behind the Shabbat morning *seuda*. Just as after a wedding there is a reception and there is great joy, so we say in the Shabbat morning *Amida*, “*Yismechu beMalkhutkha* (They will rejoice in Your Kingship).”

According to the *Rishonim*, there are three different stages to the *nissuin* of *Hakadosh Barukh Hu* and *Knesset Yisrael* on Shabbat. *Kiddushin* occurs in the evening when we say, “*Ata kiddashta*.” On Shabbat morning, the phrase “*yismach Moshe* (Moses will rejoice)” in the morning *Amida* anticipates the joy of *nissuin*, which takes place in the *Mussaf* (additional *Amida*). At the peak of the Shabbat experience, on Shabbat afternoon, we say “You are One and Your Name is One and who is like Your people Israel, one nation on earth,” for at this time the unification occurs. It is for this reason, according to the Early Sages, that

12. My deepest gratitude to Ruth Shira for “discovering” this *piyyut*, and for not only sending it, but for persisting until I took the time to study it and realized that it encapsulates all the elements of Shabbat. At Ruth Shira’s suggestion, the *piyyut* is included in its entirety in the Mystical Readings for the Shabbat Table, at the end of the readings for the first *seuda*.

13. See chapter 12, “Ascending with the *Tosefet Shabbat*.”

14. See chapter 4, “Spiritual Kisses.”

the Shabbat afternoon *Amida*, unlike the others, does not include the paragraph *Yismechu beMalkhutchah*, for this is the moment of union, so intense that it goes beyond joy.

And yet according to the Ari z"l, there is no unification at the time of Mincha. The teachings of the *Rishonim* and the Ari z"l do not contradict each other, however, for they are referring to two different aspects of divine revelation. In a nutshell, the Ari z"l is referring to the *Shekhina on High* – our collective soul roots on High attached to *Hakadosh Barukh Hu* – whereas the early Sages are referring to *Knesset Yisrael Themselves* in the world below, under their physical garb.

As mentioned,¹⁵ there are two types of mystical unification of the Holy One with *Knesset Yisrael*.¹⁶ The first is likened to the union of two separate entities, while the second is likened to a bond of total unity in which two entities become one. This is similar to our marriage ceremony, in which we first have to go through the *kiddushin* and only then comes the *nissuin*.

In the light of the preceding, we can only say that it is no wonder that it is the *Shekhina on High*, who is *etzem meatzamav* (part of the essence of the Divine), who attains the first type of unification at the Shabbat *Mussaf*, a bond of total unity in which two entities are attached as one – the bond of One.

Kiddushin and *nissuin* are only required when there are two separate entities, who want to become one single being. Consequently, we – *Knesset Yisrael Themselves* under our physical bodies – are the ones who need *kiddushin* and *nissuin*!

According to the Ari z"l,¹⁷ *Ata kiddashta* in the evening prayer alludes to the higher level of holiness and divine revelation drawn onto the *Shekhina on High* at the beginning of Shabbat, whereas the *yichud* of the *Shekhina on High* occurs at the time of *Mussaf*. This *yichud* is not comparable to the unification at the Giving of the Torah, for

15. See chapter 1, "Creator of Darkness."

16. The teachings on the Song of Songs are adapted from Rabbi Moshe Luria, "Asher LiShlomo," *Sefer Beit Genazai: Shir Hashirim*, 18ff.

17. See *Shaar Hakavanot: Shabbat*, cited in Rabbi Moshe Luria, "Asher LiShlomo," *Sefer Beit Genazai: Shir Hashirim*, 18ff.

only once a year on Yom Kippur can the *Shekhina* ascend that high, though this will happen permanently in the Ultimate Future. In our time, however, the *Shekhina* is unable to go that high on Shabbat. As a result, in the afternoon at the time of Mincha in which the unification is even loftier than that at *Mussaf* in the morning, the *Shekhina* is not in a state of joy, and out of empathy with the *Shekhina* we do not say *Yismechu beMalkhutcha*.

As will be discussed in the pages to come, according to the *Rishonim*, *Kneset Yisrael* *Themselves* take over and become the Shabbat soul companion during Mincha and the third meal.

Rabbi Luria here poses a question: We have learnt that we want everything we do below to be a mirror replica of what happens on High in order to help the process come to fulfillment. How, then, can there be a unification involving us below if it is not occurring simultaneously on High?

The answer is that it is our participation below which helps the *Shekhina on High* attain a higher level of fulfillment at the time of the Shabbat *Mussaf* and earns us divine favor as result at the time of Mincha.

Shabbat afternoon is when we have a chance to taste Hashem's love for *Kneset Yisrael* that is like *rishpei esh* (fiery coals).

Furthermore, our divine service also supports the *Shekhina on High*; for from the time in which she returns Home at the beginning of Shabbat, we play an essential role, enhancing her return with the eagerness of our Shabbat preparations; and while she receives levels of holiness on High, we act as the soul companion below. That is the reason why, in each of the Shabbat prayers, we ask *Hakadosh Barukh Hu* to want us as His soul companion. The Sages state that the wife only reaches the inner harmony of rest in her husband's home. Consequently, every time we pray "*Retze na bimenuchatenu* (May You look with favor upon our *menucha*)" in the Shabbat *Amida*, we are saying: "May it be Your will that we will be Your soul companion and find *menucha* in You."

As we will see, our participation in the different steps of the *Shekhina's* return Home continues all the way through till the end of Shabbat.

Chapter 3

A Taste of the World to Come

The prophet Isaiah promises:

If you restrain your foot because it is the Sabbath; refrain from accomplishing your own needs on My holy day; if you proclaim the Sabbath “a delight,” and the holy [day] of Hashem “honored,” and you honor it by not engaging in your own affairs, from seeking your own needs or discussing the forbidden – then you will delight in [al] Hashem.¹

אם תשיב משבת רגלך עשות
חפצך ביום קדשי וקראת לשבת
ענג לקדוש ה' מכבד וכבדתו
מעשות דרכיך ממצוא חפצך ודבר
דבר: אז תתענג על ה'

The words “*az titanag al Hashem*” are translated “then you will delight in Hashem,” but *al* means literally “over.” The Sages explain that the word “*al*” alludes to a lofty level of divine revelation that is beyond the ability of human translators to render.

1. Is. 58:13.

Key to the Locked Garden

Since none of us can truly conceive of or imagine Hashem Himself, we have to think in terms of how He revealed Himself to us. There are different levels of divine revelation and a revelation means that the Holy *Ein Sof* (Infinite Being) condenses His light at different levels of con- striction and allows us to call Him by His Names.

For instance, the words in the Haggada “*ubemora gadol zu gilui Shekhina*” (and with great ‘awe’ means the revelation of the *Shekhina*) tell us that at the moment of the Exodus the Jews experienced a revelation of the *Shekhina*. However, they could not have registered it as an actual vision, because at that time they were still in Egypt, and the *Shekhina* cannot reveal herself where there is impurity. At that point they could only have experienced an inner feeling of awe. In contrast, at the moment when they crossed the sea, they were able to have an actual vision.

In our times Hashem reveals Himself to us through His Names. For example, we may examine Psalm 55, in which King David tells us how hurt he is because his best friend has betrayed him. If we pay attention to the simple meaning of the words, we see that he does not use divine names indiscriminately. On the contrary, different names are applied to different levels of divine revelation, that is, to specific ways in which Hashem inter- acts with the world.² King David calls upon a certain name when he desires to draw downward the type of divine revelation or interaction associated with that name. At the end of the psalm, in verse 23, David’s final advice is:

Cast *al* (literally over) Hashem
[what you conceive as] your
destiny, and He will sustain you.

הַשְׁלֵךְ עַל ה' יְהִיבְךָ וְהוּא יְכַלְכְּלֶךָ

2. For instance, in verse 2 (“Give ear, *Elokim*, to my prayer”) he first addresses his prayer to the Divine as *Elokim*. Speaking of his former friend who has slandered him, he says in verse 10: “*Adonai*, (spelled with the Hebrew letters *alef, dalet, nun, yud*), consume and confuse their tongue.” The divine name spelled in this way is associated with the execution of strict justice. Then in verse 17 he says, “As for me, upon *Elokim* shall I call.” The divine name *Elokim* is associated with the divine attribute of strict justice. He ends verse 17 “and Hashem will save me.” To ask for compassion, David addresses the name of *Havaya*, associated with the attribute of mercy. In verse 20, he expresses his deep wish for divine compassion, saying, “May *Kel* (God) hear and answer.”

Another example is Hannah, mother of the Prophet Samuel; somehow, she realized that, according to the normal channels of Providence, it might have been decreed on High that she could not have a child, “and Hannah prayed *al Hashem*.”³ Although most of this verse’s translations read “and Hannah prayed to Hashem,” the Zohar stresses that we have to pay attention to the Hebrew word *al*, for there is no word, indeed no letter in the Torah that does not allude to divine mysteries.⁴ The holy commentator Shelah explained that there are different levels in divine revelation: The name *Ad-nai* is a lower form of revelation, the name of *Havaya* an intermediary one, and the name *Ekieh* a higher form.⁵ When Hannah – somehow – ascended to the highest level in her prayer, at that level of unconditional lovingkindness in which the concept of merit becomes irrelevant, her wish was fulfilled.

We derive from the preceding that we can relate to Hashem at different levels, and Hashem’s Names are directly related to the way we may experience divine revelation. The expression *al Hashem* seems to take us higher than all the other divine revelations. We could liken this level of divine revelation to a crown, just as the crown stands over the head of the king, and not inside his head. This expression may thus be telling us that *al Hashem* is a level of revelation above human perception.

We cannot access this level of revelation directly.⁶ Hashem’s divine flow comes down to us like a heavenly ladder made up of the different levels of divine revelation, and the Zohar gives names to the different levels to help us integrate the meaning of each level. In general terms (somewhat simplified for our purpose), the higher level of divine revelation is referred to by the Aramaic name *Atika Kadisha* (the Ancient Holy One), is also called *Arikh Anpin* (long countenance), and is part of the infinite light of *Ein Sof*. The word “*anpin*” (countenance) alludes to the Creator’s will and desire to create man and reveal His light to His

3. I Samuel 1:10.

4. Zohar, Acharei Mot 300 (*Matok Midvash* edition).

5. HaShelah Hakadosh, Hagahot on Masechet Pesachim.

6. The explanation that follows on the different levels of divine revelation is adapted from the work of Rabbi Yaakov Hillel, *Binyan Ariel: Kitzur Vetamzit Sefer Etz Chayim* (Jerusalem: Machon Ahavat Shalom, 5766), 110-111.

Key to the Locked Garden

creatures. The word “*arikh*” (long) implies an unconditional compassion which would interfere with our ability to exercise free will.

In contrast with the infinite compassion manifest on the level of *Arikh Anpin*, we have a condensed aspect of Hashem’s revelation referred to in the Zohar as *Zeir Anpin* (reduced countenance). This refers to an interaction with the world based on judgment. *Zeir* (reduced) indicates the condensed nature of the light this manifestation of Hashem is imbued with. Still, this manifestation too is called *anpin* (countenance) because this constitutes the main source of our illumination from the Creator. *Zeir Anpin* is referred to in the Zohar as *Kudsha Brich Hu*, in Hebrew *Hakadosh Barukh Hu* (the Holy One, blessed is He), for it is at this level that God relates to man.

The Zohar explains the process of divine flow directed from Above to below:

At the time that the Creator supervises the world and sees that men’s deeds are meritorious, He reveals His light to *Atika Kadisha* who is *Arikh Anpin*, who in turn directs his light onto *Zeir Anpin*. All the different aspects of divine providence are then imbued with light, receiving light from the level above and directing it onto the level below. The *shefa* is transmitted directly from above to below, infusing all the levels in turn till this flow reaches the *Shekhina*. All the spiritual dimensions are then filled with light and join together like one single entity, as alluded to in the verse:⁷ “Hashem is One and His Name is One.”⁸

In contrast, when sin is rampant in the lower world, then *Atika Kadisha* conceals his extended countenance. Consequently, divine flow may not be transmitted directly from one level of revelation to the other, and *dinim* (forces of strict justice) are directed onto the world, because *Atika Kadisha* conceals his light and does not direct it onto the levels below. In the words of Daniel:

I watched till thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days sat
(*ve-atik yomin yativ*), His garment white as snow, and the hair

7. Zech. 14:9.

8. Zohar, *Vayikra* 15 a-b.

of His head like clean wool; His throne fiery flames, its wheels blazing fire.⁹

The expression “the Ancient of Days sat,” says Rashi, implies that *Hakadosh Barukh Hu* is sitting in judgment on *Malkhut* (i.e. the *Shekhina*). The *dinim* stemming from Above then multiply, reaching the *Shekhina*, and then outside forces are given permission to overcome the forces of lovingkindness and cause suffering in the world below, as alluded to in the verse “the assembly that was gathering against (*al*) Hashem.”¹⁰

As a result, says the Zohar, the aspect of Hashem that is above all others – *Atika Kadisha* – sits alone¹¹ in judgment, as alluded to in Daniel, and the word “alone” implies that the divine flow remains on High, concealed from the lower levels of revelation or interaction. The latter are then unable to direct divine flow to the world below, and then lovingkindness turns into strict judgment. The *Shekhina* suffers from this situation, for instead of directing divine flow to her children, our holy *Shekhina* has to let loose executioners of strict justice against them!

Such expressions of divine revelation as *Atika Kadisha* appear in many *siddurim* (prayer books) before the Shabbat *seudot* (meals), in the *piyyutim* (hymns) beginning with the Aramaic word *atkinu* (prepare), which we are to read before each of the three *seudot*. Three levels of revelation appear in these *piyyutim*: *Atika Kadisha*, alluding to the level of revelation linked with *Keter* (Crown); *Zeir Anpin*, alluding to *Hakadosh Barukh Hu* (the level of revelation on which Hashem interacts with the world) and *Chakal Tapuchin Kadishin*, which we will discuss further on, alluding to the *Shekhina*. These three levels appear in a different order in the *Atkinu piyyutim* because each of the three *seudot* is dedicated to one of these levels. It is thus important to read these *piyyutim* before each of the three *seudot*.

Reading the *piyyut* from the *siddur* before each *seuda* is like a declaration that we would like to be aware of the process alluded to in these concepts, and to contribute to divine joy in any way that is pleasing on High, even if it seems to be challenging to us.

9. Dan. 7:9.

10. Num. 27:3.

11. Zohar, *ibid.*

What Hashem wants of us on Shabbat is that we should strive to ascend on High through our preparation for Shabbat as well as through the special *mitzvot* of the day, and thus contribute to the heavenly union occurring on this day. The union is going to happen in and of its own, initiated from Above, for that is the nature of the Shabbat day.¹² However, we are able to contribute before Shabbat through all the preparations included in the *Tosefet Shabbat* supplement, beginning Thursday night and ending when Shabbat comes in,¹³ and then on Shabbat by participating in the prayers and the *seudot* following them.

The celebration called *shalom zachar*, held on the eve of Shabbat in honor of a newborn baby boy before his *brit mila* (circumcision), sheds light on the role of the *Shekhina* at the first Shabbat *seuda*.¹⁴ Rabbi Luria gives us the inner meaning of this ceremony. He begins by citing the instruction: “When a bull, a sheep or goat is born, it must remain with its mother for seven days. Then, after the eighth day, it shall be acceptable as a sacrifice for a fire-offering to God.”¹⁵ He then cites a Midrash explaining why the animal may only be presented on the eighth day. The Midrash says that this is like a king who entered a city and pronounced a decree, saying, “All the people present here will not see me until they first see the queen.”¹⁶ In a similar way, *Hakadosh Barukh Hu* says, “Do not bring me a *korban* (offering) until after the Shabbat day.” The “queen” is Shabbat. The inner reason why the *brit mila* has to be held on the eighth day is that there should be a Shabbat before the *brit*, so that the newborn may be exposed to the light of Shabbat, which is extended to us at this time.

At the onset of Shabbat, we are to go to the field to welcome our holy *Shekhina* returning from the lower world. The first Shabbat *seuda* is thus that of the *Shekhina* – we are her guests and, if it can be said, she

12. See “Maamar Shamor VeZachor,” *Sefer Beit Genazai: Maamarei Shabbat*, 2nd ed., 115ff.

13. See Chapter 12.

14. The following teachings are adapted from Rabbi Luria’s essay “Shalom zachar,” *Sefer Beit Genazai: Koleh Biurim Bearba Mitzvot shel Simcha Shehaav Chayav Laben: Simcha shel Brit; Simcha shel Pidion; Simcha shel Mitzvot; Simcha shel Nisuim* (Jerusalem: Private Publication, 5763), 57-59.

15. Lev. 22:27 (*The Living Torah*).

16. Midrash Rabbah.

becomes like a heavenly hostess taking care of her guests. We thus say to Hashem, “Come O Beloved! Let us go toward the Bride!”

As Rabbi Masud sings:

Going out to the field, to receive the Shabbat Queen. Sparks of Cain and Abel we must elevate from the depths, causing them to find the hereditary portion [in the Holy Land].¹⁷ My soul yearns, even pines.¹⁸ She will then declare: Here I am.

יְצִיאַת שָׁדָה לְהַקְבִּיל. אֶת פְּנֵי שַׁבָּת
מִלְפָּתָא. נִיזְוֹצוֹת קִיּוֹן וְהַבֵּל לְעֹלוֹת מִיָּי
עֲמִיקָתָא. יִמְצְאוּ נַחֲלַת חֵבֶל. נִפְשֵׁי נִבְסְפָה
גַם כְּלָתָהּ. תְּשׁוּעַ תֹּאמַר הַנְּנִי:

The eve of Shabbat is the time of the *Shekhina*. This is evidenced by one small variation in the wording of the *Amida* prayer we read on Shabbat. The Shabbat *Amida* contains a special paragraph for each of the three times of Shabbat (in contrast with the *Amida* of the festivals, which is the same for all festivals except for minor changes). However, there is a paragraph in the Shabbat *Amida* which is *almost* the same in all the *Amida* prayers we say on Shabbat. In the evening *Amida* the paragraph reads:

May You look with favor on our rest. Sanctify us with Your commandments and grant our share in Your Torah; satiate us from Your goodness and gladden our souls with Your salvation, and purify our heart to serve You sincerely. And grant us, O Hashem our God, with love and favor, please grant us Your holy Shabbat as a heritage, and may all of Israel who sanctify Your Name, rest on it.

רְצֵה נָא בְּמַנוּחָתֵנוּ. קְדֹשְׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ
שִׁים חֶלְקֵנוּ בְּתוֹרָתְךָ שְׂבַעֲנוּ מִטּוֹבֶיךָ.
שִׂמַח נַפְשֵׁנוּ בִישׁוּעָתְךָ וְטִהַר לִבֵּנוּ
לְעַבְדֶּךָ בְּאַמֶּת. וְהַנְחִילֵנוּ ה' א'
בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרַצוֹן שַׁבָּת קְדֹשְׁךָ
וְנוּחוּ בָּהּ כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל מְקַדְּשֵׁי שְׁמֶךָ:

17. Paraphrasing Zech. 2:16.

18. Paraphrasing Ps. 84:3.

Key to the Locked Garden

Here, in the expression *veyanuchu bah* (they shall rest on it), *bah*, referring to Shabbat, is a feminine particle. But in the Shabbat morning *Amida* the same paragraph substitutes the word “*bo*” (on it) which is the masculine form. And in the *Amida* of Shabbat afternoon Mincha it is written *Veyanuchu bam*, using a plural form, which refers to *Knesset Yisrael Themselves*.

As Rabbi Luria continues, when a couple invites people over, it is usually the woman who will care for the guests, making sure that each one is comfortable and has what s/he needs. The same is true, if it can be said, of the *Shekhina* at the time of her *seuda*. Consequently, if a person comes into Shabbat having rectified his behavior of the past week, at the time of this *seuda* a holy *shefa* will come onto him, as it will be directed onto the male baby, to help him enter the covenant of Abraham.

The commentators explain that the idea of *shalom zachar* is to comfort the newborn who is mourning for all the Torah that he learned while in his mother’s womb and then forgot on coming into the world. The Sages teach that while an infant is in the womb there is an angel teaching him the entire Torah, and there is a light ignited in its head by the power of which it is able to see from one end of the world to the other. As the infant enters the world, the angel taps its mouth and it forgets all the Torah it learned.

Rabbi Luria objects: Why is the baby being comforted at this special time? Shabbat is not a time appropriate to comfort mourners!

On Shabbat, however, we receive a taste of the World to Come. On Shabbat eve, many family members and dear friends come to join us at the Shabbat table. This is the time that the *Shekhina* rejoins her beloved Soul Companion; and as she does so, every one of us shares in this union and closeness and receives a higher level of soul to rise to the occasion. Moreover, on a Shabbat that is preceded by a *shalom zachar*, this spiritual ascent may be regarded as a “redemption” occurring in the merit of the newborn, which adds holiness to his soul.

The inner meaning of Shabbat is that the *Shekhina* – *Knesset Yisrael* – is coming back home; and every one of us, her children, has to do our share to integrate the consciousness of her coming home more and more.