

## WELCOMING שבת-BEFORE THE ERA OF THE אר"י

It is fair to say that in current times during תפלת ערבית on ערב שבת we are more conscious of the definition of קבלת שבת that connotes welcoming שבת than we are conscious of the definition of קבלת שבת that represents accepting the obligations and prohibitions of שבת. That is because most סידורים published today identify the chapters of תהילים and the פיוט of לכה דודי that we recite before ברכו as קבלת שבת. That practice is a relatively recent addition to תפלת ערבית on ערב שבת as we will learn and dates from after the death of the אר"י. Do we find any evidence of customs that foreshadowed the practices that developed under the leadership of the אר"י? What we find are comparisons between שבת and a כלה, a bride, and a מלכה, a queen, that were based on the excerpts from the גמרא that we studied last week:

רמב"ם הלכות שבת פרק ל' הלכה ב'—איזהו כבוד? זה שאמרו חכמים שמצוה על אדם לרחוץ פניו ידיו ורגליו בחמין בערב שבת מפני כבוד השבת ומתעטף בציצית ויושב בכבוד ראש מיחל להקבלת פני השבת כמו שהוא יוצא לקראת המלך. וחכמים הראשונים היו מקבצין תלמידיהן בערב שבת ומתעטפים ואומרים בואו ונצא לקראת שבת המלך.

*Translation: What is the definition of honoring Shabbos? That which our Sages described as the obligation for a person to wash his face, hands and feet in warm water on Erev Shabbos to honor Shabbos. He envelopes himself in a Talis and sits in deep contemplation waiting to greet the onset of Shabbos as if he were going out to greet a king. The early Sages would gather their students on Erev Shabbos and together they would cover themselves in Taleisim and say: let us go out to greet Shabbos the King.*

בית הבחירה למאירי מסכת שבת דף קיט' עמ' א'—כשם שאדם צריך לקיים מצות עונג שבת באכילה ושתייה כך צריך לכבדו במלבוש נקיה ובשאר הדורים. מגדולי החכמים היו רוחצים בחמין ומנקים את עצמם בערב שבת ומתעטפים ומלבישים עצמם בערב שבת כאדם המקוה להיות המלך או החתן נכנס בביתו והוא שאמרו מתעטף ואומר בואי כלה בואי כלה:

*Translation: Just as a person is required to fulfill the Mitzvah of enjoying the Shabbos by eating and drinking so too he must honor the Shabbos by wearing clean garments and other adornments. The great Sages followed the practice of washing in warm water and cleaning themselves on Erev Shabbos, envelope and dress themselves like a person who expects the King or a groom to enter his house. That was the*

1. Isaac Luria (1534-1572) ranks among the several most influential religious personalities Jewry has ever produced. Regarded as the preeminent Kabbalist of Safed in the sixteenth century, Luria produced original mythological doctrines and ritual practices that were of fundamental importance to virtually all Jewish mystical creativity after him. By the middle of the seventeenth century Lurianic theology and ritual life had spread throughout the Jewish world and had established a supremacy that was virtually unchallenged. Indeed, it has been observed that Lurianism was the last theological system to enjoy nearly universal acceptance within Judaism. *Safed Spirituality: Rules of Mystical Piety, the Beginning of Wisdom by Lawrence Fine; Paulist Press, 1984, page 61.*

*message of the Gemara when it said: he would don his Talis and say: Come, bride; come, bride.*

On what basis was שבת compared to a כלה and a מלכה?

ראב"ן בבא קמא-ושבת היא כלה לישראל כדאמרין באגדה [מד"ר בראשית י"א] זכור את יום השבת; אמר הקב"ה לישראל זכור מה שאמרתי לשבת כשאמר לפני שכל הימים יש להם בן זוג והוא אין לו בן זוג, ואמרתי לו: ישראל שאין להם זוג, שנקראו גוי אחד, הן יהיו בני זוגך. ומלכא על שם שהוא כמלך שאין בו לא עצב ולא מלאכה.

*Translation: Shabbos is a bride to the Jewish people as we learned in the Aggadata: Remember the day of Shabbos. G-d said to the Jewish people: remember what I said to Shabbos when Shabbos said before Me: each day of the week has a match and I, Shabbos, have no match. I told Shabbos that the Jewish people who also have no match, as they are known as the singular nation, will be your match. Shabbos is also called a queen because Shabbos is like royalty because it is a day bereft of sadness and work.*

מהרש"א חידושי אנדות מסכת בבא קמא דף לב' עמ' ב'—בואו ונצא לקראת כלה כו'. קרא השבת כלה על פי מה שכתוב: לכל יש בן זוג ולי לא נתת בן זוג א"ל: כנסת ישראל יהיה בן זוגך כו' והשבת גופיה היא כנשואה לישראל אבל בפניא דמעלי שבתא היא כהכנסת כלה לחופה וכמו שע"י הקדושין בהכנסתה לחופה נעשית הכלה נשואה כן השבת בהכנסתה בקידוש היום נעשית כנשואה לישראל. וקראה מלכתא שהיא כלת המלך דכל ישראל בני מלכים הם ולזה אמר ר"ה בפניא דמעלי שבתא דהיינו בע"ש קודם כניסתה בואו ונצא לקראת כו' דדרך החתן לצאת לקראת הכלה כמ"ש ה' מסיני בא יצא לקראתם כו' כחתן היוצא להקביל פני הכלה כו' כפרש"י פרשת וזאת הברכה. ואמר דרבי ינאי מדה אחרת היתה לו שלא אמר נצא לקראתה ואדרבה הוה קאי ועומד במקומו והיינו דבכניסתה אמר בואי כלה כו' שהכלה תבא אליו כדרך הכלה אחר כניסתה לחופה שתבא מבית אביה לבית בעלה, ולזה כפל הענין בואי כלה בואי כלה דר"ל בואי כלה לחופה ואח"כ בואי כלה לבית בעלך וק"ל:

*Translation: Shabbos was called a bride based on what was written that other days had a match but Shabbos had no match. G-d said to Shabbos: the Jewish people will be your match. It was as if Shabbos itself was married to the Jewish people. Friday towards evening resembles the moment that a bride steps under the Chuppah. It was through the Kiddushin that takes place under the Chuppah that she becomes a bride. So too Shabbos by way of the Bracha of the sanctification of the day becomes the bride of the Jewish people. Shabbos was called a queen because she was the bride of the King, the Jewish people, who were considered the children of Kings. That was why Rav Chanina said on Friday afternoon before Shabbos: let us go out and welcome Shabbos the queen based on the custom that the groom walked towards the bride as it was written: G-d came from Sinai. This was interpreted to mean that G-d went out like a groom to His bride as Rashi explained in Parshas V'Zos Ha'Bracha. Rav Yanai had a different way of portraying Friday afternoon. He did not say let us go out towards her. Instead he stayed in his home and as Shabbos entered he would say: Come my bride; meaning that the bride was coming to him. That followed the practice that after being under the Chuppah a bride entered into her husband's household. For that reason he said the words: Bo'Ee Kallah, twice; once meaning that the Shabbos should come under the Chuppah and the second time meaning that Shabbos should enter into her groom's house.*

# להבין את התפלה

תורת המנחה פרשת ויקהל / דרשה לא עמוד 823-שבת נקראת כלה ונקראת מלכתא-  
וצריך להקביל את השבת בשמחה ובמנוח לבב, כר' חייא (ב"ק לב ב) דהוה מיעמף וקאי  
אפניא דמעלי שבתא ואמר בואו ונצא לקראת שבת מלכתא. ר' ינאי לביש מאני מעלי  
ואומר בואי כלה בואי כלה. ולמה נקראת כלה ונקראת מלכתא? נקראת כלה על שם ויכל  
אלקים ביום השביעי, שבה נכללו מעשה בראשית. ונקראת מלכתא על שם מלכותך מלכות  
כל עולמים, שבה ירגיע הגוף בעולם הזה, ותנוה הנפש לעולם הבא.

*Translation: It was required to greet the Shabbos with joy and a good heart as Rav Chiya did when he enveloped himself in his Talis on Friday afternoon and said: Come, let us go out to greet Shabbos, the queen. Rav Yanai would wear his Shabbos attire and say: Come my bride, come my bride. Why was Shabbos called a bride and a queen? She was called a bride (Kallah) based on the verse: G-d finished (Va'Yichal) on the seventh day; the word Kallah is derived from the fact that Shabbos subsumes (Nichlal) all that was created during the first six days. Shabbos was called: queen based on the verse: Your Kingdom is the Kingdom of forever, that a person rests on this day and will rest forever in the Next World.*

A possible source for the practices that developed under the direction of the אר"י may have been the custom among Sephardim of reciting chapters of תהילים to "accompany" שבת as שבת departed:

ספר המנהיג הלכות שבת עמוד קצח-מנהג ספרד לומר זמירות לפני ההבדלה בבית  
הכנסת, ובצרפת ובפרובינצא בביתם, וראיתי במדרש משל לכלה ומלכה שמלוין אותה  
בשיר ובתושבחות. ושבת מלכה וכלה כדאמרינן בשבת פ' כל כתבי הקודש, בואי כלה  
בואו ונצא לקראת שבת מלכתא. אב"ן. ואנו אומרים בב"ר ויכל א-להים ביום השביעי אמ'  
הקב"ה בואו ואמרו שירה פנים חדשות באו לכאן, כלומר כהכנסת הכלה הבאה מחדש.

*Translation: It was the custom in Spain to recite songs before Havdalah in synagogue, while in France and in Provence, it was the custom to do so at home. I found in a Midrash that we conduct ourselves towards Shabbos in a manner similar to how we act in accompanying a bride or a king. We accompany them with song and with words of praise. Shabbos was compared to a queen and a bride as we found in the following excerpt from Maseches Shabbos: Come, my bride. Let us go out and welcome Shabbos the queen. We further learned in Bereishis Rabbah on the verse: that G-d finished on the seventh day, that G-d said: come and say words of song because a new face has come here; in other words like the entry of a bride who each week appears as if for the first time.*

ספר אבודרהם סדר מוצאי שבת-נהגו לומר במוצאי שבת קודם התפלה שירות שבתלים  
ואמר הטעם במדרש משל לכלה ומלכה שמלוין אותה בשירות ותשבחות, ושבת מלכה  
וכלה כדאמרינן בפרק כל כתבי הקודש ובא ונצא לקראת שבת מלכתא. בואי כלה בואי  
כלה. ואנו מלוין כך השבת בשירות ותשבחות. ודכותה אמרינן בבראשית רבה ויכל  
א-להים ביום השביעי אמר הקב"ה בואו ואמרו שירה פנים חדשות באו לכאן כלומר  
בהכנסת הכלה שבאה מחדש. וסימן לשירות שבתלים אאשאלה בלא רמיזהה? ובלבד

2. Ed.-I am not sure what this means.

שיהיו אלף ראשונה של אשאלה וה"א רמיזה כפולות.

*Translation: It was the custom on Motzei Shabbos before Tefilas Maariv to recite chapters of Tehillim. The practice was based on a Midrash that related that Shabbos was viewed as a bride and as a queen whom we accompany with songs and words of praise. Shabbos was viewed as being similar to a queen and a bride as it was written in the Gemara: let us go out and welcome Shabbos the queen. Come my bride. Come my bride. As a result, we accompany Shabbos with songs and words of praise. This was clarified in Bereishis Rabbah on the verse: and G-d finished His work on the seventh day. G-d said: come and sing songs, a new face has come here; in other words, with the entry of the bride as if for the first time. The order of the chapters of Tehillim that were to be recited can be remembered by remembering the letters in the word: Esh'Ala. The first chapter must begin with the letter Aleph and the last one must begin with the letter "Hay". The ones in the middle can follow any order.*

The practices described for מוצאי שבת were based on the need to honor שבת both בבניסתו, as it began, and ביציאתו, as it came to a conclusion.

רמב"ם הלכות שבת פרק ל' הלכה ה'—מסדר אדם שולחנו בערב שבת ואף על פי שאינו צריך אלא לכזית, וכן מסדר שולחנו במוצאי שבת ואף על פי שאינו צריך אלא לכזית, כדי לכבדו בכניסתו וביציאתו, וצריך לתקן ביתו מבעוד יום מפני כבוד השבת, ויהיה נר דלוק ושולחן ערוך ומטה מוצעת שכל אלו לכבוד שבת הן.

*Translation: A person should prepare his Shabbos table on erev Shabbos even if all he plans to eat is a small amount. He should further prepare his table on Motzei Shabbos even if all he plans to eat is a small amount. That is done to honor Shabbos both as it begins and upon its conclusion. He should clean his house during the daylight on Friday because of the honor of Shabbos. A candle should be lit; the table set and his bed prepared. All these acts are necessary to honor Shabbos.*

Concerning honoring שבת as it began, the גמרא described many practices that were to be followed; i.e. washing, changing clothes, preparing food and lighting candles. In many ways, the whole day of Friday was viewed as a day of preparation for שבת. Concerning the departure of שבת, very little was described other than eating a meal. The practice of reciting chapters of תהילים and פיוטים as שבת departed may have been an effort to enhance the honor shown to שבת as it departed. Safed at the time of the אר"י was populated primarily by descendants of Sephardim who had been expelled from Spain and Portugal in the late 1400's. We can surmise that they brought with them the custom of accompanying שבת as שבת departed by reciting chapters of תהילים and פיוטים. The students of the אר"י may have decided to duplicate the custom that was followed on מוצאי שבת by adding it to כניסתו, to the commencement of שבת. The modern day סידור that follows the Moroccan rite still includes the recital of many chapters of תהילים before מוצאי שבת on תפלת ערבית (תהילים צה) לכו נרננה that is recited.

**SUPPLEMENT**

*An Excerpt From  
Safed Spirituality: Rules of Mystical Piety, the Beginning of Wisdom  
by Lawrence Fine; Paulist Press, 1984, pp. 61-65*

**Isaac Luria  
Introduction**

Isaac Luria (1534-1572) ranks among the several most influential religious personalities Jewry has ever produced. Regarded as the preeminent Kabbalist of Safed in the sixteenth century, Luria produced original mythological doctrines and ritual practices that were of fundamental importance to virtually all Jewish mystical creativity after him. By the middle of the seventeenth century Lurianic theology and ritual life had spread throughout the Jewish world and had established a supremacy that was virtually unchallenged. Indeed, it has been observed that Lurianism was the last theological system to enjoy nearly universal acceptance within Judaism.

Luria was born in 1534 in Jerusalem, where his father had settled after having migrated from Germany or Poland. After his father's death his mother took him to Egypt, where he lived in the home of his uncle, Mordecai Frances, a wealthy tax farmer. In Egypt, Luria studied with two prominent rabbis, David ben Solomon Zimra and Bezalel Ashkenazi, collaborating with the latter on works of a legal character. According to some accounts, Luria was still living in Egypt when he decided to seclude himself on the island Jazirat al-Rawda on the Nile. During this period he is reported to have immersed himself in the study of the Zohar and other kabbalistic texts.

In late 1569 or early 1570, Luria traveled to Safed and began studying with Moses Cordovero, to whom he refers as "our teacher whose light may be prolonged" and "my late teacher." It is possible that even before Cordovero's passing in the fall of 1570, Luria may have begun teaching on his own to a small group of disciples. In any case, following Cordovero's death Luria attracted to himself a circle of students that included Hayyim Vital (1543-1620), who became his most important student.

Luria's circle, approximately thirty-five of whose names we know, was an elite--not to mention elitist--group that engaged in both normative rabbinic learning and kabbalistic studies. Besides Vital, his more illustrious disciples included Joseph Arzin, Gedaliah ha-Levi, Elijah de Vidas, Moses Jonah, Joseph ibn Tabul, Jonathan Sagis, Samuel Uzeda, Judah Mishan, and Elijah Falkon. That membership was highly restricted is evident from

---

the apparent rejection of Moses Alsheikh, Vital's teacher in rabbinic studies, as a participant in Luria's most intimate group of associates. Luria's activity in Safed was brief as he died at the age of thirty-eight in July 1572.

Besides the few legal writings to which I have referred, Luria composed a short commentary on the section of the Zohar known as Sifra deSeniuta. This work, however, does not reflect his own original system, which he taught toward the end of his life, but suggests the distinct influence of Cordovero. Except for this commentary and some religious poetry, he committed to writing virtually nothing of his mystical thinking. Whereas Moses Cordovero possessed a natural talent for literary expression, the precise opposite was the case with Isaac Luria. He seems to have been unable to adequately express himself in writing, and is reported to have told the following to a disciple who asked him why he desisted from putting his teachings into written form:

It is impossible, because all things are connected with one another. I can hardly open up my mouth to speak without feeling as though the sea burst its dams and overflowed. How then shall I express what my soul has received, and how can I put it down in a book?

While we can appreciate such frustration, it is fortunate that Luria's students recorded their master's teachings. Our knowledge of his system is based entirely on the writings of several of his disciples who recognized the importance of preserving Luria's teachings. Drawing on the basic themes of exile and redemption that permeated Safed even prior to Luria's activities there, he devised a complex and distinctive set of mythological doctrines. At the heart of this mythology stands the radically gnostic notion that sparks of divine light have, in the process of God's self-disclosure or emanation, accidentally and disastrously become embedded in all material things. According to Luria, these sparks of light yearn to be liberated from their imprisoned state and return to their source within the G-dhead, thus restoring the original divine unity. The human task in the face of this catastrophic situation is to bring about such liberation through proper devotional means.

Known as the process of *Tiqqun* (restoration or mending), this effort is essentially a contemplative one. Every religious action, regardless of the kind, requires contemplative concentration in order to "raise up the fallen sparks." The focus of contemplation is the inner dynamics of reorganization and restructuring that takes place within the G-dhead through acts of devotional piety. The successful struggle on the part of the community, according to this theology, will result not only in the final separation of holiness from materiality, but also in a return of all divine reality to the original state of primordial unity that preceded the creation of the world. Capturing the imagination of a people preoccupied with the realities of exile and visions of redemption on an earthly, historical plane, Lurianic ideas exercised profound influence and had enduring appeal long after Safed itself ceased to be a prominent center of Jewish life.

Turning from issues of theological mythology to the sphere of mystical experience we face

an important problem. When dealing with the sources having to do with Luria's devotional life, extreme care must be taken to isolate historical biographical data from the more abundant, but frequently less factual, hagiographical material. Not long after Luria's death, and for the succeeding decades, legendary accounts of the master's life began to emerge. Much of this literature bears only the most tenuous relationship to reality. Nevertheless, with caution, it is possible to reconstruct a fairly reliable picture of Isaac Luria's actual role as teacher and pietist.

It is clear that Luria possessed the traits of a genuinely visionary personality. He quickly became known in Safed as a saintly person who had experienced the Holy Spirit and who had merited the revelation of esoteric wisdom from the prophet Elijah. He was known to have disclosed to his disciples, while on walks in the environs of Safed, the gravesites of departed saints and teachers with whose souls he was supposed to have communicated. Hayyim Vital's writings point to Luria's skills as a diagnostician of the soul, able to determine an individual's spiritual maladies and the sins for which he was responsible. Moreover, he was able to provide those in need with the specific penitential exercises by which they could effect atonement and restitution.

Isaac Luria was a mystical master in the strict sense. To his formal disciples he imparted esoteric wisdom, vouchsafing to each of them mystical knowledge pertinent to their particular soul. Of special significance was his practice of telling every student the ancestry of that person's soul and the transmigrations through which it had gone. As indicated, he instructed each of them personally in the performance of ethical and penitential exercises by means of which they were to purge their souls of all impurity; he also gave each one detailed instructions about meditation rituals whereby he could achieve visionary experiences of his own.

Thus, long before the phenomenon of charismatic leadership emerged in Eastern Europe among the Hasidim (as evidenced by that sect's impressive line of vivid religious personalities), Isaac Luria established himself as mystical master par excellence. Indeed, there is ample evidence that the figure of this sixteenth-century teacher served as a prototypical model among some of the Hasidic masters.

The Hanhagot presented in this section include neither the intricate mythological theology of Lurianic Kabbalah, nor the highly esoteric forms of meditation to which we have made reference. Rather, they represent the day-to-day ethical, devotional, and ritual practices that Luria promulgated. These are likely to have been widely known in Safed beyond the confines of Luria's fellowship. While some of these customs reflect common practice in Safed as a whole, most of them provide us with information about Luria's distinctive habits. In this category belong, for example, the tradition concerning the importance of almost ritualistic study of the Zohar, intensive investigation of rabbinic law for the purpose of disclosing its inner holiness, and the high mystical significance attached to ritual

---

immersion. Luria's characteristic flair for reshaping and redesigning elaborate ritual is attested by the detailed descriptions of Sabbath-eve prayers and devotional rites at the table.

While I have referred to the general dissemination throughout the Jewish world of rites developed in Safed, it is important to note that Luria's customs became especially popular. These practices are to be found in a great variety of Lurianic texts, although the primary source for most of them is Hayyim Vital's account of his master's teachings, the *Shemonah She 'arim* [Eight Gates]. In this multivolume collection we find an abundance of material bearing on Luria's personal customs, habits and practical teachings. As part of an appendix to his study of the hagiographical accounts surrounding the personality of Isaac Luria, *Sefer Toldot ha-'Ari*, Meir Benayahu brought together a series of such Lurianic customs from the works edited by Hayyim Vital; they are thus written from Vital's point of view. The texts that follow are based on the list assembled by Benayahu.

Following the *Hanhagot* I have provided a translation of three brief invocations composed by Luria for the Sabbath meals. These invocations introduce the three different liturgical hymns that he wrote for the Sabbath, one of which (the hymn for Sabbath eve) is presented here in translation. Written in much the same Aramaic style as the *Zohar*, this song dramatically depicts the welcoming of the beautifully adorned Sabbath Bride. In rich mystical symbolism and vivid erotic imagery, Luria describes the love between Male and Female that occurs on the Sabbath and the joy that love creates.