

Definition Of Jewish Mysticism

Binah: Studies in Jewish Thought - Vol. 2, By Joseph Dan, Praeger Publishers 1989

Page 234-235-Scholem suggested a definition of mysticism in the Introduction to Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism. This book is based on a series of lectures delivered in New York and was meant to serve as an introduction to Jewish mysticism for scholars and students who do not read Hebrew. (For a long time, Scholem refused to allow its translation into Hebrew, for he claimed that anyone who could read the sources had no need of a book like this.) He explained that because the field is quite difficult to define, many disagreements arose among scholars. The essence of the definition he suggested was that mysticism expresses the attempt to get close to and commune with God -- the aspiration to achieve union with God. A similar definition may be found in many books dealing with mysticism, but it is seriously lacking in one respect: It bases the definition of mysticism on a quantitative, not qualitative, element in religious faith. Every religion embraces, to some degree, the striving to become close to God and to achieve a deep sense of oneness with Him. In mysticism, however, this striving is intensified; its strength is one of the striking and clear signs of mystical experience. Yet, according to this definition, the mystic is distinguished from the nonmystic believer by degree and not by quality; the mystic is apparently more extreme and persevering regarding a phenomenon which also exists among nonmystics. However, mystics themselves have consistently seen in mysticism a qualitative uniqueness differentiating it from established belief.

It is appropriate, therefore, to supplement the definition proposed by Scholem in his Introduction, and to suggest an additional qualitative element: Mysticism is the claim that religious truth is found beyond human senses and intellectual wisdom, and cannot be articulated through the tools with which an individual usually expresses his feelings and his intellectual cognition, namely, language. Indeed, one significant characteristic of mystical truth is that it does not possess the usual linguistic norms for articulation. The way in which a mystic arrives at the knowledge of hidden truth is itself mystical; it is not given to linguistic expression. The only way in which a mystic can describe the methods of mystical understanding and the most rudimentary of mystical ideas is through those special techniques which ostensibly use linguistic means, but at a completely different level -- through symbolism.

*Class Presented By Abe Katz, Founding Director,
The Beurei Hatefila Institute-www.beureihatefila.com*

Prayer During The Period Of The Kabbalists Of Safed

References To Angels In The Five Books Of Moses-1

Genesis 18-1. And the Lord appeared to him in the plains of Mamre; and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; 2. And he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him; and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself to the ground, 3. And said, My Lord, if now I have found favor in your sight, pass not away, I beseech you, from your servant; 4. Let a little water, I beseech you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree; 5. And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and you comfort your hearts; after that you shall pass on; seeing that you are come to your servant. And they said, So do, as you have said. 6. And Abraham hurried to the tent to Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes. 7. And Abraham ran to the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it to a young man; and he hurried to prepare it. 8. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they ate. 9. And they said to him, Where is Sarah your wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. 10. And he said, I will certainly return to you at this season; and, lo, Sarah your wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him. 11. Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well advanced in age; and it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. 12. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am grown old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? 13. And the Lord said to Abraham, Why did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old? 14. Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return to you, at this season, and Sarah shall have a son. 15. Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, No; you did laugh.

Genesis 28-10. And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. 11. And he lighted upon a certain place, and remained there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. 12. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. 13. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, to you will I give it, and to your seed; 14. And your seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in you and in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 15. And, behold, I am with you, and will keep you in all places where you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you, until I have done that about which I have spoken to you. 16. And Jacob awoke from his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. 17. And he was afraid, and

Prayer During The Period Of The Kabbalists Of Safed

References To Angels In The Five Books Of Moses-2

said, How awesome is this place! this is no other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. 18. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon its top. 19. And he called the name of that place Beth-El; but the name of that city was called Luz at the first. 20. And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and garment to put on, 21. So that I come back to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God; 22. And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that you shall give me I will surely give the tenth to you.

Genesis 32- 25. And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. 26. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. 27. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaks. And he said, I will not let you go, except you bless me. 28. And he said to him, What is your name? And he said, Jacob. 29. And he said, Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince you have power with God and with men, and have prevailed. 30. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I beg you, your name. And he said, Why is it that you ask after my name? And he blessed him there. 31. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel; for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. 32. And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he limped upon his thigh. 33. Therefore the people of Israel do not eat of the sinew of the vein, which is in the hollow of the thigh, to this day; because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the vein.

Prayer During The Period Of The Kabbalists Of Safed

Isaiah's Vision

Isaiah 6-1. In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. 2. Above it stood the seraphim; each one had six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he did fly. 3. And one cried to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory. 4. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of he who cried, and the house was filled with smoke. 5. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. 6. Then flew one of the seraphim to me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; 7. And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.

Ezekiel's Vision

Ezekiel 3- 10. And he said to me, son of man, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart, and hear with your ears. 11. And go, get you to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them, and tell them, Thus said the Lord God; whether they will hear, or whether they will refuse to hear. 12. Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place. 13. I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels beside them, and a noise of a great rushing. 14. And the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me.

Prayer During The Period Of The Kabbalists Of Safed

Merkavah (Chariot) Mystics

Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History, By Ismar Elbogen, Jewish Publication Society, 1993

Page 287-Only in the post-talmudic period do we encounter the mystics as a unified group with uniform goals. Reacting against the one-sided preoccupation with religious law and against the excessive esteem accorded studies that leave the heart cold, the movement of the Merkava (chariot) mystics arose. These were mystics who observed fasts on consecutive days and hung their faces to the ground as they murmured all sorts of hymns in order to become filled with the divine. They called this "descending to the merkava" and in the tannaitic period merkava was the generic term for all esoteric speculation. "The events in heaven, particularly those that occur in the immediate vicinity of God, the court of heaven with its troops and ranks, and especially the varied panegyrics with which the angels praise the hidden Creator -- all these are the subject of the Merkava." The thoughts and goals of these mystics are set forth in the hekhalot literature, in the description of the seven chambers of heaven filled with angels, which the mystic believed he could see and among whom he could walk. The oldest hekhalot book that has reached us, Hekhalot rabati, is composed for the most part of Kedushah hymns, "strange fantasy-pieces of varying length, each ending with the trishagion. The hymns lack any real thought-content, but occasionally they are suffused with a passionate fantasy carried on top of a surging wave of words." The main subject of these books is the angels, their song, and their praise of God.

The intense veneration of God is expressed through the heaping-up of words that are equivalent in meaning and similar in sound, but that say little and do not advance the train of thought. These hyperbolic hymns are by preference placed in the mouths of the angels, who are introduced and brought forward in troops and camps. In all this they differ considerably from the sober piety of the Bible, the Talmud, and the ancient prayers, which were oriented rather toward the psalmists' proverbial words, "to You silence is praise." In the mystics' zeal to disseminate their ideas, it is not surprising that they had great influence on the liturgy. Even in the statutory prayers there are passages where the abundance of the vocabulary bears no relationship to the content, and where, by contrast to other passages, the angels play a significant role. This is clearest in the Kedushah, the favorite prayer of the members of these circles, who saw themselves as divinely charged to cultivate and disseminate it, and who expected God's grateful recognition in return.

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Prayer During The Period Of The Kabbalists Of Safed

Hasidei Ashkenaz-German Pietists-1

Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History, By Ismar Elbogen, Jewish Publication Society, 1993

p. 288- We do not know how long the Merkava mystics remained in the foreground, but it is certain that mystical ideas won over broad circles of the people and had great influence for centuries. A direct line connects the mysticism of the geonic age to similar tendencies that won significance in Germany from the middle of the twelfth century.

Samuel the Pious b. Kalonymus the Elder, born in Speyer in 1115, and his son Judah the Pious b. Samuel the Holy,¹¹ who died in Regensburg in 1217, were the founders of mysticism among the German Jews. This movement was a reaction to the dominance of the study of Talmud as it was developed at that time by the casuistic system of the tosafists. But these two "pietists" are not to be seen as opponents of the Talmud, for both were authorities on religious law; they simply desired to give the longings of the heart their due and to bring to realization a profound ideal of piety and morality. Both went their own ways, consciously and decidedly deviating from the tendency of their times. What concerns us here is their opinion about prayer and the synagogue service. The talmudists held that piety must be expressed first and foremost in the study of Torah; accordingly, they reduced as much as possible the amount of time to be-p.289-devoted to prayer. But the mystics emphasized that prayer is the highest expression of piety: Not satisfied merely with the received form of public worship, they demanded ecstatic intensity in relation to God, which the soul can attain only through contemplation and abnegation of the things of the world. Since true prayer is the ascent of the soul to God, one can only pray properly in a state of ecstasy. With this attitude as their starting point, these two pietists revealed to their contemporaries the hidden meanings of prayer, till then the secret heritage of their family. Samuel's father, who died while Samuel was still young, transmitted the "order of prayers and their secret meaning" to Eleazar the Precentor in Speyer, so that he could transmit them to Samuel when the latter would be old enough. Samuel then cultivated these doctrines with all the strength of his rich imagination and deep spiritual life, and transmitted them through his own son. The contents of these mysteries can be learned from the commentaries on the prayer book that these two composed,

They demand full spiritual concentration in prayer, and the direction of all of the thoughts of the heart to heaven. Conduct in the synagogue must be appropriate to the sanctity of the place where we approach the Lord of the world; strong words and harsh rebukes are addressed to the people of the age for neglecting to apply themselves to the cultivation of such conduct. One should pray only in a language that he understands, for prayer requires proper intention, which is impossible unless the contents are understood. The highest

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Prayer During The Period Of The Kabbalists Of Safed

Hasidei Ashkenaz-German Pietists-2

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moral demands are made of the precentor: moral purity, humility, and unselfishness; he must be generally liked and not at odds with the community. He must understand his prayers, and must not seek to display his beautiful voice, but rather to awaken the heart of the congregation with his prayer. His prayer must be grounded in sincerity and emotion. One who is not actually suffering hardship or one who has a personal interest in the inflation in food prices may not serve as precentor on a fast day on account of drought. One who is not moved to tears should not recite selichos before the congregation that depict the worshiper as weeping.

Prayer During The Period Of The Kabbalists Of Safed

The Mystics Of Safed-1

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The Kabbalah, which originated in Provence and was cultivated mainly in Spain, went a different way from that of the German pietists. It was a reaction against the rationalism of Aristotelian philosophy, which had been disseminated particularly by the writings of Maimonides, and against the evaporation of Judaism in theoretical speculation. Thus from the beginning its concern was primarily theoretical, with the doctrines of God's incomparability and of the emanations of the spheres in the foreground. But the Maimonists had also given offense through their allegorical exegesis of Jewish ritual law; it was therefore only natural for their opponents to accord the ritual law strong affirmation. Magical power was attributed to the performance of ritual acts; these ensure the continued existence of the world and draw down to the lower world the blessing from the world of the spheres. For this purpose prayer was considered to be particularly important; but it had to be understood in its most profound signification and recited precisely according to precept, because the prayer draws down the fullness of grace that proceeds from God. This bounty does not come from Him directly, but through the mediation of the spheres. The tradition must be followed exactly, for only in this way can one exercise the necessary influence on the upper world. It was not long before practical mysticism became known in Spain and became amalgamated with the theoretical. In the Zohar, composed ca. 1300, the union of the two is already complete. Now every means of achieving ecstasy known to us from the Ashkenazic pietists is encouraged: invoking angels, manipulating the letters of the alphabet, hypnotic gestures, and all sorts of techniques that permit man's soul to be translated to the celestial realm, where it can view the supernal splendor. Naturally, prayer again takes first place among the means that serve to unite the upper and lower worlds. "What the burning flame does to the coal, that is what prayer accomplishes for the elevation of man to -291-the world of light." The angels, who are the masters of the spheres, stand ready to receive the true prayers.

The Zohar's view of the meaning of prayer enhanced its status tremendously. In an age when traditional prayer was viewed with apathy by the enlightened and incomprehension by the masses, the Zohar lent prayer new value, and created for it a kind of apotheosis. The Zohar's fantastic ideas freed many downtrodden people from the burdens of their lives; the spiritual uplift that they experienced in traditional prayer and in the recitation of the kabbalistic hymns gave them a taste of the world to come in the midst of the hell of their everyday lives. But at the same time we must not close our eyes to the severe harm done to Jewish piety by kabbalistic theory. It turned prayer into a tool for forcibly bringing about magical effects. By introducing intermediaries between God and man, it spelled a fateful

Prayer During The Period Of The Kabbalists Of Safed

The Mystics Of Safed-2

regression in the history of the Jewish religion. Finally, the new doctrine gave a boost to all kinds of superstition.

Under the influence of both mystical movements, the efforts to fix the traditions of prayer were understandably intensified. If every word and every letter, every motion and every gesture produces an infinite number of effects, then the tradition must be explored and taught in the most exact and detailed way. In a period of intellectual health and sound spiritual life the fact that the customs are so varied would have undermined these doctrines; but this was a period of decline, one less able than any other period to accept such considerations. In the face of the insecurity of life and the fear of the troubles and dangers threatened by tomorrow, the spiritual exaltation provided by the pietistic exercises of the Kabbalists was very desirable. With the deterioration of spiritual life and the establishment of Zohar as a "holy book," the influence of its doctrines increased. After the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, the Zohar found fertile ground in the Holy Land, in the new Jewish community of Safed. Only rarely has history brought together in one place such a large number of enthusiastic and gifted adherents to a single doctrine as it did at that time in the circle of the kabbalists of Safed. The whole atmosphere was suffused with mystical ideas, and a great community was prepared to fulfill the practical demands that followed from them. It was a city of "saints and men of deeds" headed by distinguished talmudists like David Ibn Zimra and Joseph Caro, popular preachers like Moses Alshekh "the Saint" and Abraham Halevi Berukhim, and poets and visionaries like Solomon Alkabetz and Moses Cordovero. But they were all overshadowed by Isaac Luria, whose short life of thirty-eight years and whose sojourn of only two years (1570-72) in Safed were enough to earn him nearly the adulation due a deity. Isaac Luria was the sun in whose rays the light of all the other stars seemed to pale. The new Kabbalah, which spread to wherever Jews lived, was attached to his name. The institutions of the "Holy Ari," as Luria was called by his followers, still enjoy unparalleled respect among all the Jews who have not been touched by the spirit of the religious movements of the modern period. Isaac Luria built a new system founded on the Zohar, but the actual goal of his doctrine and that of the circle of the Safed kabbalists was the absolutely practical one of preparing the age for salvation, when the order of the cosmos will reach its perfection. In pursuit of this exalted moral goal, a kind of religious order came into being in Safed, demanding of its members human virtues at the highest, almost superhuman level, a spirit of -292-repentance that takes hold of the whole man and transforms him from within. Among the pietistic practices of the Safed kabbalists, liturgical assemblies and prayer again played an outstanding part, and new liturgical institutions were devised that spread to all countries. For Luria, prayer is one of the most important functions of life; through his intense attachment to God, man becomes a

Prayer During The Period Of The Kabbalists Of Safed

The Mystics Of Safed-3

receptacle for new reflection of the divine light and a new emanation of His grace. Every utterance in prayer has, besides its literal meaning, a profound mystical meaning; one who recites a prayer without devotion, or who desecrates it with impure thoughts, delays the time of redemption. Therefore, special preparations -- "prayers of intention" -- were devised, that is, words designed to focus the worshiper's thoughts in prayer toward one of the holy names, and "unifications" -- that is, the manner in which a particular occurrence of the divine name in the context of a prayer should be emphasized and pronounced.

p. 293-Lurianic mysticism, with its liturgical innovations, spread in every direction as swiftly as an infectious disease. No other movement was to have such a powerful effect so quickly on the liturgy and the prayer book. Luria's apostle, H'ayim Vital Calabrese (d. ca. 1620),²⁵ propagated the new doctrine so that its adherents spread into all the lands and conquered all the communities. Luria's mystical approach to prayer was disseminated by the printing press, which brought the new prayers, unintelligible meditations, fasts, and penances everywhere. Zunz writes:

No rite was spared, as attested by daily and festival prayer books from Tlemcen to the Crimea. Innumerable prayers beginning "May it be Your will," names of angels, and sefirotic bombast immortalized superstition and spirit worship. What was significant in public worship was pushed to the background, and in its place came charms and talismans filling the prayer books and the heads of the masses.

From Palestine, Lurianic fanaticism passed first to Italy, where Menahem Azaria Da Fano won converts to it. There the first Minor Day of Atonement ceremony was held; there fraternities were established that fasted and prayed every Monday and Thursday; and there the early Morning Devotions and Midnight Services of lamentation were introduced. "Selections were chosen from Ashkenaz, Sepharad, and Rome, and new pieces were fashioned to be added to them, partially kabbalistic in content, and this new prayer was declared to be the more important and more certain to effect the redemption than public worship." All collections of this type were called *tikun*. The texts of the Sephardic rite published from that time on are full of instructions in the kabbalistic spirit of Luria. What did the most for the dissemination of Lurianic mysticism was its taking root also in Poland, home of the greatest concentration of Jews. Since the thirteenth century the "mysteries of prayer" had never retreated from the foreground, and were brought to Poland during the migration there by the sages. At first they remained a kind of secret doctrine whose content was entrusted to only a few select disciples. Only around 1600, when the condition of the Jews deteriorated in Poland, too, did people reach for the kinds of consolation that flowed abundantly from the Lurianic Kabbalah.

The Influence Of The Introduction Of Coffee Into The Middle East

Judaism and Hebrew Prayer, by Stefan Reif, Cambridge University Press, 1995

page 244-It has even been suggested by Elliot Horowitz that such a humble matter as the drinking of coffee had an influence on the acceptance of one of the practices of the Safed school of mystics and the convincing case that he has made indicates that the wider social sphere, what he calls the 'social history of piety' is another one that has to be taken into account in arriving at explanations of liturgical developments. Although there were precedents in the land of Israel and Italy for prayer vigils at night and in the early morning, the fact is that it was the midnight tiqqun hasoth championed in Luria's Safed, that succeeded in becoming the popular form of such piety in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Although on such occasions as Shavu'oth and Hosh'ana Rabbah it became customary to spend the whole night in prayer and study, the tiqqun hasoth was generally adopted as a lengthening of the evening and it is Horowitz's thesis that the increase of the drinking of coffee and the opening of coffee-houses in the Holy Land and Italy were major factors in the preference for staying up at night over arising at dawn. The introduction of this stimulant brought with it 'the emergence a new perception of the night in which the hours of darkness could be shaped and manipulated by human initiative rather than condemn man to passive repose.' Thus it was that laments for the destruction of the Temple, prayers for the restoration of the Jews to their land, and the recitation of certain psalms, centred around the midnight hour, became a popular addition to the catalogue of Jewish acts of worship in the form chosen by the AR'I (the 'lion' i.e. Elohi Rabbo Yisshaq, R. Isaac the divine).

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Prayer During The Period Of The Kabbalists Of Safed

Prayers Directed To The Angels

A Prayer Recited At The End Of The Selichos Service

מבניסי רחמים

You, angels who bring in pleas for mercy, bring in our plea for mercy before the Presence of the Master of mercy. You, angels who cause prayer to be heard, cause our prayer to be heard before the Hearer of prayer. You, angels, who cause outcry to be heard, cause our outcry to be heard before the Hearer of outcry. You, angels who bring in tears, bring in our tears before the King who is appeased by tears. Intercede and increase supplication and entreaty before the King, the high and exalted G-d. Mention before Him, cause to be heard before Him, the Torah and the good deeds of those who repose in the dust. May He remember their love, and give life to their offspring, so that the remnant of Jacob not be lost. For the flock of the faithful shepherd has become a disgrace; Israel, the unique nation, an example and a taunt. Hasten, answer us, G-d of our salvation, and redeem us from all harsh decrees; and in Your abundant mercies save Your righteous anointed and Your people.

A Song For Before Friday Night Dinner

שלום עליכם מלאכי השרת

Peace be unto you, you ministering angels, messengers of the Sabbath Most High, the supreme King of Kings, holy and blessed is He.

Angels- May your coming be in peace, messengers of the Most High, the supreme King of Kings, holy and blessed is He.

Bless me with peace, you messengers of the Most High, the supreme King of Kings, holy and blessed is He.

May your departure be in peace, you messengers of peace, messengers of the Most High, the supreme King of Kings, holy and blessed is He.

The Source For The Song Shalom Aleichem

Talmud-Maseches Shabbos 119b-It was taught, R. Jose son of R. Judah said: Two ministering angels accompany man on the eve of the Sabbath from the synagogue to his home, one a good angel and one an evil one. And when he arrives home and finds the lamp burning, the table laid and the bed covered with a spread, the good angel exclaims, 'May it be even thus on another Sabbath too,' and the evil angel unwillingly responds 'Amen'. But if not, the evil angel exclaims, 'May it be even thus on another Sabbath and the good angel unwillingly responds, 'Amen'.

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Prayer During The Period Of The Kabbalists Of Safed

A Liturgical Poem Composed By The Kabbalists Of Safed, Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz

Lecha Dodi

Come, my beloved, to greet the bride; let
us welcome the Sabbath;
"Observe and Remember " in one act of
speech,
The One and Only Lord made us hear;
The Lord is One and His name is One
For renown, for splendor, and for praise
To greet the Sabbath, come let us go;
For blessing she is the source,
From the outset, as of old, ordained:
Last in deed, first in thought
Sanctuary of the King, royal city,
Arise go forth from your ruined state.
Too long have you dwelt in the valley of
tears!
Now shall God's tenderness shepherd
your ways.
Rise, O my folk, from the dust of the
earth,
Put on your clothes of glory, My people;
Through the son of Jesse the
Bethlehemite
Will freedom be achieved and the return
of glorious days.
Wake and bestir you,
For the light has come! Rise, Shine!

Awake, awake, break out song!
For the Lord's glory is revealed on you
Be not ashamed ", said the Lord, "nor be
distressed;
Fear not and doubt not. The people
oppressed,
Why be downcast? Why do you mourn?
In you, Zion, my people shall find shelter
And the city shall be rebuilt on its hill.
"Those who despoiled you shall be
plundered,
All who devoured you shall be far away
God shall exult and rejoice in you,
Joyful as bridegroom over his bride".
Your borders will stretch out to the left
and to the right;
Fear but the Lord, Whom to fear is
delight,
The man, descendant of Perez, shall
gladden our sight,
And we shall rejoice to the fullness of
days.
Come in peace, O crown of her husband
Come in joy and jubilation;
Among the faithful of the treasured
people,
Enter O bride, Enter O bride.

Source for the poem-

Talmud Babba Kamma 32a-For R. Hanina used to say'Come, let us go forth to meet the
bride, the queen!' Some [explicitly] read:'. . . to meet Sabbath, the bride, the queen.' R.
Jannai, however, while dressed in his Sabbath attire used to remain standing and say: 'Come
you, O queen, come you, O queen!'

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Prayer During The Period Of The Kabbalists Of Safed

The Besht's Epistle To R. Gershon of Kutov

On Rosh Hashanah of the year 5507 (1746), I made an oath and elevated my soul in the manner known to you. I saw wondrous things in a vision, the like of which I had never witnessed since the day my mind first began to awaken. The things which I saw and learned when I ascended there would be impossible to communicate, even if I could speak to you in person. When I returned to the lower Garden of Eden, I saw many souls, both living and dead, some known to me and others unknown-their number was beyond reckoning. They were hastening back and forth in order to ascend from one world to another through the pillar known to those initiated into the mysteries. Their joy was too great for the mouth to express or the physical ear to hear. Also, many evil-doers were repenting, and their sins were being forgiven, since it was a special time of Divine favor. Even to me, it was amazing how many of them were accepted as penitents, a number of whom you also know. There was great joy among them, too, and they ascended in the same manner.

Together they begged and implored me unceasingly, "Because of the glory of your Torah, God has granted you an additional measure of understanding to grasp and to know these matters. Ascend with us so that you can be our help and support."

Because of the great joy that I beheld among them, I agreed to go up with them... And I sought my master (Achiyah HaShiloni) to accompany me, for the ascent to the Supernal Worlds is fraught with danger. From the day of my birth until now, I never experienced such an ascent as this.

I went up from level to level until I entered the Palace of the Messiah, where the messiah studies with the Tannaim (rabbinic sages) and tzaddikim, as well as the Seven Shepherds. There I found extremely great rejoicing, but I did not know the cause of this delight. At first I thought that it might be due to my having passed away from the physical world, God forbid. Later they told me that I had not yet died, for they have great pleasure on high when I effect mystical unifications in the world below through their holy Torah. However, to this very day, the nature of their joy remains unknown to me.

I asked the messiah, "When will you come, master?" And he replied, "By this you shall know: it will be a time when your teachings become publicized and revealed to the world, and your well-springs have overflowed to the outside, [when] that which I have taught you-and that which you have perceived of your own efforts-become known, so that others, too, will be able to perform mystical unifications and ascents of the soul like you. Then all the evil klippot [shells] will be destroyed, and it will be a time of grace and salvation."

I was amazed at this and greatly troubled, since a long time must pass for this to be possible. But while I was there I learned three segulot and three Holy Names which are easy to learn and explain. My mind was then set at ease, and I thought that with these teachings the people of my own generation might attain the same spiritual level and state as myself. They would be able to elevate their souls and to learn and perceive just as I do. However, I was not granted permission to reveal this during my lifetime. I pleaded for your sake to be allowed to teach you; but I was denied permission altogether and took an oath to that effect.