



*Authentic Kabbalah - Sephardic Studies
Benei Noah Studies -- Anti-Missionary/Anti-Cult Materials*

A Guide to the Practices of the Prophetic Kabbalah

The Introduction into Sefer Yikrah B'Shmi (Call Upon My Name)
(Based on Rabbi Haim Vital's Sha'arei Kedusha)

*By Rabbi Ariel Bar Tzadok
Copyright © 1993 - 2003 by Ariel Bar Tzadok. All rights reserved.*

Many are those who seek to have an experience of G-d as opposed to simply learning about Him.

While the majority of Kabbalistic literature revolves around the discussion of metaphysical concepts (Kabbalah Iyunit), there are other schools of Kabbalistic learning. One of the most erudite and secretive of the Kabbalistic schools, known only to select Kabbalists, is the school of the Prophetic Kabbalah.

The lessons taught herein include all the metaphysical concepts taught in the other schools but with one great difference. Rather than merely talk about the upper worlds and how they are arranged and what happens therein, the prophetic school teaches its students how to ascend above and to interact with holy spiritual forces who dwell above the angels. In others words, we have the system that teaches how one can reach out and touch G-d. More than this, one feels the touch of G-d in return.

The advanced levels of these spiritual practices although difficult and dangerous, when performed correctly enable one to discover not only hidden knowledge but hidden powers as well. Such were the experiences of many master Kabbalists, most notably the Ari'zal and his student Rabbi Haim Vital.

Rabbi Haim Vital was chosen by his Rabbi, the Ari'zal, to codify that which he had taught. Rabbi Haim made this codification his life's work and pursued it with passion. Now, the vast majority of students of Kabbalah believe that the system that Rabbi Haim received from the Ari'zal was exclusively the theoretical Kabbalah Iyunit system,

mentioned above. Most, however, are unaware that Rabbi Haim was also well versed in the Prophetic Kabbalah and wrote a small number of texts about it. Rabbi Haim even wrote a commentary to the Kabbalistic magical work the Sefer Brit Menuhah, which is a masterpiece that instructs how to invoke angelic powers to perform whatever deeds one needs performed.

This work, however, is properly guarded safely in the hands of the Kabbalistic elite, those who have been found worthy and able to use these powers properly. Such Kabbalistic masters are called Ba'alei Shem Tov, meaning "masters of the good Name." These enlightened souls have been entrusted by G-d to safeguard His secrets.

Granted there is a long road ahead of anyone aspiring to walk the paths of holiness, especially those of the Prophetic Kabbalah. Beginners and intermediary students of Kabbalah should never fool themselves into believing that they can accomplish such a status as the Ba'alei Shem Tov. Nonetheless, they must also realize that there are doors open to them that can enable them to climb to sublime spiritual heights. In order to instruct the layman how to elevate his/her soul and how to practice the basic forms of the prophetic Kabbalah, Rabbi Haim Vital wrote a small treatise entitled, "Sha'arei Kedusha." This work, though small in size is yet a giant of a manual to direct students into the practices of spiritual ascents, which some call the prophetic forms of Kabbalistic meditation.

In his Introduction to Sha'arei Kedusha, Rabbi Haim writes:

"[Thus] says the young Haim, son of [his] honor Rabbi Yosef Vital [may the] remembrance of the righteous be for a blessing; I have seen the "sons of ascent" and they are few. They greatly desire to ascend and the ladder is hidden from their eyes. They contemplate the books of the ancients to look for and [thus] find the paths of life, the way therein which they should go and the action that when performed will elevate their souls to its supernal source and to bond with Him may he be blessed. For He is the Eternal Completion.

This is similar to the prophets who [spent] all their days bonded with their Creator. And through the intermediary of this bonding [with] G-d the Divine spirit (Ruah haKodesh) dwelt upon them to instruct them in which path dwells light to radiate their eyes in the secrets of Torah. As King David, upon him be peace said, "Open my eyes and I will understand wonders in Your Torah." (Psalm 119:18). And to guide them in the straight path to go to the settled place reserved for them alongside the sons of ascent.

After them came the original pious ones who were called the Perushim (Pharisees). They requests to go in the paths of the prophets and to be similar to them [and to dwell] in narrow caves and deserts and they separated from the ways of men. Among them were those Perushim [who] in their homes [acted] similar to those who went into the desert.

Each day and night, continuously they were not silent from praising their Creator, in study of Torah or [with the] songs of King David, upon him be peace. [These especially] make the heart rejoice until their thoughts bind, with power and strong passion with the supernal lights. They maintained [this degree] all their days until they ascended to the level of the Divine spirit and they prophesied and did not cease...

It is not found the manners of their paths and their deeds how these holy ones served blessed HaShem, even more so us. Therefore have the hearts been lessened and also the knowledge of the generations who followed them. [Thus] the masters of the Divine spirit came to an end. We were left without comfort; we were abandoned to suffering. We are thirsty and hungry to such a point that there has arisen despair in the hearts of [those] men who seek this wondrous wisdom. . . . All visions are blocked because is not written in any book the nature of the practices [used] to draw close and come near to the inner holiness."

So many people seek to experience G-d in the godless society that the secular world has created. Our souls feel like they are truly cut off from Heaven, from G-d and sometimes from anything good.

So many people today thirst for true spirituality that in their desperation they compromise and accept teachings and practices that are not kosher. Such practices actually do harm to the soul and take a person further away from G-d and not closer.

Yet, in order to address the spiritual needs of so many starving souls, it is not enough to merely take away what is bad. It is necessary to replace it with that which is good. It is for this reason that this unique text has been written. I wrote this work for you.

This book is not an academic guide to detached metaphysical concepts and beliefs. This book is a manual of kosher kabbalistic prophetic practices arranged to provide sound spiritual nourishment to the starving souls.

I have based this work on Rabbi Haim's Sha'arei Kedusha and cover most of the important points therein. I have chosen this forum of teaching as opposed to an outright translation of the whole text because many of the concepts Rabbi Haim addresses in the text would require abundant explanations. The work therefore would become bogged down in details. This is not the purpose for which this work is dedicated.

Rabbi Haim divided his Sha'arei Kedusha in four sections. Sections 1 through 3 of the text have been published numerous times and hold a position of great respect and adoration in the Torah community. Section 4 of Sha'arei Kedusha however has enjoyed no such esteem.

The fourth section of the work, which is almost as long as the other three sections combined, offers practical direction and guidance how to use G-d's holy Names in a meditative format. This fourth section was censored by the original publisher and to this day has never been printed with the rest of the text.

Only recently in the past decade or so has the fourth section of Sha'arei Kedusha been published for the very first time. The lessons therein are profound and awe inspiring. While some of them are not appropriate for translation, other in fact are exactly what today's starving souls have been seeking.

While much of this text is based on the Sha'arei Kedusha, I have not limited myself to it exclusively. I have included teachings and meditative techniques from the others works of Rabbi Haim Vital. I have also included in this text some teachings from Rabbi Yisrael ben Eliezer, the Ba'al Shem Tov, founder of the European Hasidic movement.

Many are not aware but the original Hasidic teachings of the Ba'al Shem Tov were all based upon the prophetic Kabbalah. It was only after a two generations that the prophetic nature of Hasidut slowly was lost. While the prophetic/meditative teachings are still to be found in the great Hasidic texts, without an understanding into the nature and workings of the prophetic Kabbalah, many of these teachings were simply misunderstood and ignored.

I have endeavored to choose selections from the sayings of the Ba'al Shem Tov that will help the student attain a greater understanding into the prophetic/meditative experience. Another source of material that I have included in this work comes from great Sephardic Sage, Rabbi Yosef Haim, and the Ben Ish Hai of Baghdad. This master Kabbalist was a major figure for mysticism and Halakhic authority for Sephardim throughout the 19th and early 20th century. His works are studied today in every Sephardic yeshiva and his mystical teachings have added refreshing depths and elucidation to the teachings of the Ari'zal and Rabbi Haim Vital.

Although the Ben Ish Hai was not a practitioner of the prophetic teachings, he nonetheless produced prayers and supplications that are used today as meditations. These special prayers of the Ben Ish Hai are found in most Sephardic siddurim (prayerbooks) today.

The unique compilation of material presented in this book makes it a rare treasure. I am providing this material in an attempt to enable many souls to find emotional, intellectual and spiritual fulfillment in their practices and observances of Torah and mitzvot.

While these teaching are specifically geared towards Torah observant, G-d fearing Jewish men and women, nonetheless the Benei Noah (Righteous Gentile) will also find great benefits herein. For drawing close to HaShem, the One true King of the Universe is a universal commandment, incumbent upon by Jew and Gentile.

As for secular non-religious individuals, both Jewish and Gentile, the teachings of this book will be most informative. Yet, the exercises in this book will truly challenge the secular individual at the core of their being. For once one has an experience of the Divine, nothing can make it go away. Once one sees a glimpse of Kedusha (holiness), there is no turning back.

Drawing near to G-d is a psychological experience. It transforms the soul. It elevates us, purifies us and sanctifies us all at the same time. When anyone calls upon HaShem's Name, He does answer. However, just because HaShem answers us when calling upon His Name, this does not mean that will like the answer that we receive.

I have entitled this book, Yikrah B'Shmi, Call Upon My Name based upon the following prophecy recorded by the prophet Zecharia in the TaNaKh, "And it shall be, in all the land, says (HaShem) two parts in it shall be cut off, and die, but the third shall be left in it. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried, he shall call upon My Name and I will answer him: I will say, this is My people, he will say (HaShem) is my G-D." (Zech. 13:8,9)

These infamous verses speak about the future coming of Mashiah. A time of great tribulation and testing is destined to come upon the Jewish people. Our only salvation will be our ability to call upon the Name of HaShem, not in theory, but in deed. While no one knows when the future apocalypse is expected, we do not have to wait for it to begin in order to learn the spiritual exercises that will save us at that time. These exercises are of great benefit for us here and now.

I dedicate this work to all those who like me have starved for the experience of G-d and knew not how to fill our empty spiritual bellies. This work I have arranged to be a guide to both beginner and advanced students of Kabbalah and meditation. I have included all necessary prerequisite concepts, admonitions and exercises to make these techniques work successfully for you as they have for countless other thousands of yearning souls. In accordance to kabbalistic tradition I dedicate this book for the sake of unity of the Holy One, Blessed be He and His Shekhina, in love and awe, in awe and love, to unite the letters Yod Key with Vav Key in perfect union in the name of all Yisrael.