

The Work of Unification and Devekut in the Writings of Moshe Chaim Luzatto

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"The general intent .. is to unite all of the creations - the lower ones and those above them - in the Supreme Glory ..." M.C. Luzatto, *The Knowing Heart*

Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzatto, the RaMChaL

Moshe Chaim Luzatto is not very well known outside Jewish circles but he has an important place in various Jewish schools of thought. There are a number of orthodox groups which are interested in his writings on ethics such as his most famous book 'The Path of the Just'. There are Jewish literary circles where people are mostly interested in his poetry and in his plays and there are of course the Jewish kabbalah schools where people study his kabbalistic writings. One of his books on kabbalah, originally written in Hebrew, has been published in Israel with an English translation. It is called 'The Way of God' and many students of kabbalah in Israel use it as a basic study book. Moshe Chaim Luzatto's life was a complicated and controversial one, but after his death his literary work was soon accepted by many as coming from one of the great Jewish sages. Chassidic teachers, such as the Baal Shem Tov, were among the first to openly declare the high level of his teachings, and they incorporated some of his ideas in their own tradition.

Moshe Chaim Luzatto was an Italian rabbi who came from a wealthy Paduan family. Born in 1707 in the Jewish getto of this university town, he received a wide education including all the traditional Jewish studies, a number of languages, and the sciences of his time. But his heart, from an early age onwards, went to Hebrew, Jewish mysticism and kabbalah. One of his main teachers, R. Yeshaya Bassan the head of the Paduan community describes in a letter how the Ramchal discovered kabbalah at a young age:

"And as he used to come to my house every morning very early, light and swift as a deer, to learn the words of the living God, he searched through all my library, found there some of my writings that God granted me and also tasted of the 'Tree of Life ' [of R. Chaim Vital]. Then his mind began to explore in the valleys of secrets and he began to love it with a sweetness of spirit" (*2 p10). When he was about 18 he started a small kabbalah study group with a few young men from the community. Their idea was to create a circle of friends, the sole purpose of which was to strengthen the presence of God in the world and, possibly, to hasten the coming of the Messiah.

This group had its own code of ethics. They applied rules of behaviour in their relation towards one another, such as relating towards each other with kindness and accepting criticism from one another without resentment. They attempted to banish all selfishness from their spiritual motivation. Their version of the Work of Unification was to be solely for the benefit of the world and not for personal goals. They also chose for themselves a number of disciplines, among them the following one: 24 hours a day, taking turns, one of their group would read from one of the kabbalistic writings, mostly from the Zohar. This was the way in which they chose to uphold a constant connection with the Upper Worlds. This group existed for a number of years until it caused a major dispute, the first of many during the coming years. A number of confrontations between opponents of Luzatto and his supporters followed. These are quite complicated and not all the facts about them are known. The chief rabbis of Padua, Venice and Franckfurt were involved, and during a number of disputes he was forced to hand over to them some of his more controversial writings. These have therefore been lost. There were a number of reasons why his work attracted such opposition.

1) One was his claim that one of his first books on kabbalah had been written, not by himself, but by a spiritual guide, a maggid from the upper worlds.

"While alone in my room, I heard a voice saying,: "- to reveal hidden secrets of the Holy King" I rose a little, trembling, and

then I was able to strengthen myself ... On the second day I endeavored to be alone in my room at the same hour, and indeed the voice returned and told a further secret. Afterwards, it was revealed to me that this was a maggid sent from heaven to acquaint me with detailed Unifications for my attention ... " (from a letter of the Ramchal, 1727, *2 p33)

2) A second cause for concern for the rabbis were the messianic interests of the study group. In the aftermath of the Shabtai Zvi disaster (1626-1676) the rabbinical establishment tended to be wary of any potential messianic unrest.

3) A third point of contention was rabbi Luzatto's idea that kabbalah should be taught to everyone within the Jewish community rather than be kept for small educated circles. He had a vision of a kabbalah accessible to all. This can maybe be compared to the popular mysticism of the chassidim. The chassidim deemed their movement necessary because of the extreme poverty and suffering of the Jewish people in the communities of eastern Europe. Luzatto confronted the problem of science, rationalism and loss of faith.

"Just as the world began to systematize (start of the Encyclopedic movement) so it became possible to provide a view of the Torah and its commandments that would stand this newest test of "faith versus reason ". People needed such a view for their Jewish lives, not because their faith was faulty, but because they desired education, a properly formulated truth to take with them into the travails of their working day. Therefore the Ramchal prepared two classic works, *The Knowing Heart* and *The Way of God* ... (in another of his works) ... the Ramchal drew on the treasury of symbolism in the Kabbalah to answer those who saw the world solely as a natural phenomena. New relationships were mushrooming all across the universe of thought- the fruits of Neuwton's calculus and the advanced algebra of Lagrange ... It was hard for anyone to maintain a footing among such rapid change, let alone for Jews as yet untaught in the deeper thinking behind the Torah they knew. Following the talmudic caution "Know how to answer the freethinker " the Ramchal entered the debate with pamphlets that circulated all over Europe ... He saw the start of modern science and how science would come to dominate history, confining the emotional spirit as it spread ...if he publicized the secret Torah among Jews, he could create a new level of privacy and integrity for mankind, an awareness of Divinity that no worldly circumstance, however ugly, could touch ... a place from which to reconstruct the world in its course that was bound to shatter" (*2 p 46-47, 72, 73, 78-80)

4) A parallel area of tension surrounding the mystical work of Luzatto is the conflict within Judaism itself between rationalists and mystics. This conflict has nothing to do with Luzatto personally. It is was, already in his time, an ongoing discussion which had been carried on during a number of generations between the proponents of Maimonides's rational aristotelean view of religion on one side and the mystics on the other. Maimonides rejected all anthropomorphic descriptions of the divine. God was for him, without body, immaterial, inaccessible and especially unknowable. These views were diametrically opposite to those held by the kabbalists of his time such as Nahmanides. Long before Luzatto other heated disputes took place, in the South of France, between the supporters of Maimonides who wished to follow a path of philosophy and the kabbalists surrounding Isaac the Blind (* 5 pl29-159). When one compares Maimonides's ideas on the inaccessibility of the divine to Luzatto's views on the accessibility of direct knowledge of God through prophetic vision, one gets an idea of how, at least in this area, the two paths seem irreconcilable:

"(about) ... 'the form of the Lord.' For there is no doubt in the minds of the prophets that what is revealed to them disguised in that figure is none other than the One Creator, blessed be He and blessed be His Name; and for this reason they can say with full conviction (Ezekiel 6:1): "It is the figure of the Glory of the Lord," and (Isaiah 6:1): "And I saw the Lord." (*6 p 341)

All these various factors emerged, merged with one another and were linked to the fact that he was considered by many to be too young (not yet 40). This caused so many conflicts and disputes that life in Italy became virtually impossible for the Luzatto family. The rabbi and his family became outcasts, they could not make a living and they decided to go to Amsterdam in 1731.

He knew that he had support in Amsterdam and in a letter written at an earlier date he had written, mentioning a book which he was writing, "I hope to have it printed in Amsterdam, where there are those who have affection for me ... and thus the thing will meet with success." (*2 p 72)

What kind of community was Amsterdam in those days?

It was considered one of the most liberal towns in Europe. The Jewish community was divided into two groups: the older Sepharadi community consisting of Jews from Spain and Portugal. They came from converso families who had discovered that they could practice Judaism openly in Amsterdam. The Ashkenazi community, eventually to become the larger one, was formed by a later wave of immigrants from Eastern Europe. The two communities did not see eye to eye, their views of Judaism and their ways of daily practice having developed along separate paths for centuries.

The Sepharadi community which had invited Luzatto was, in those day, mystically oriented, the Ashkenazi community tended, at that time, towards the rational. The two communities had different habits, different chief rabbis and worshipped in the two separate synagogues standing near to each other in the Jewish Quarter.

Rabbi Luzatto stayed 12 years in Amsterdam. He was the chief rabbi of the Sepharadi community in those years, and he earned his living making optical lenses. He wrote in that period, among other things, his work on ethics "The Path of the Just" which was published in Amsterdam in 1740. It achieved immediate world fame. Amsterdam, in those days, became because of this, a "capital of the spirit" for Judaism. Visitors came from all over the world to visit Luzatto where he lived quietly with his family, out of the public eye, and adviser and friend to local families. He does not seem to have taught kabbalah openly. He did, though, have a close study circle around him and those who knew his kabbalah work "138 Gates of Wisdom," which had been published earlier in Padua, went on studying it and could apparently consult him about it.

He left for Israel in 1743. Why did he leave?

1) It is possible that the controversy followed him to Amsterdam. There may have been pressure put on him from the Ashkenazi community. The chief rabbi of the Ashkenazi community was an opponent of his who feared that he might modernise the Torah on the basis of his mystical revelations.

2) The extreme poverty of the community may have been another reason for leaving. Jews were allowed to practice their religion but they were not allowed citizenship. Most areas of work were closed to them. There was little interaction between Dutch society and the Jewish community. During the 18th century a number of commentators remark on the harsh economic reality of the Jewish community. One political pamphlet states: "One has allowed them to sing Psalms in public ... and to die of starvation." (*11)

3) The Ramchal may have desired to live in the Holy Land because certain specific rituals were only permitted there." The Tzaddikim who embarked on the journey to the Holy Land ... were engaged in a spiritual rebuilding, an expansion of consciousness in upper worlds of which our physical reality is only a reflection. There are certain commandments that can only be observed there; they constitute they very destiny of Creation itself, and only the man who truly desires to perform them will find within the borders of the physical land that haven of divinity described in the holy book..." (*2 p118)

Some believe that he went to Israel in order to be able to practice kabbalah freely.

"Generations of Tzaddikim before him had sought to do this on the soil, ever since Nachmanides ... had reestablished Jewish worship in Jerusalem in the thirteenth century ... in the place nearest to Heaven, whence the Divine Providence was channeled to all the world." (*2 p116)

He and his whole family died from the plague, in Acco, in 1746.

According to tradition he was buried in Tiberias next to the tomb of Rabbi Akiva.

The printing houses of Amsterdam.

When the first Sepharadi conversos settled in Amsterdam, they knew very little about Judaism. Because of the long period of persecution against both Jews and Conversos in Spain and Portugal there was very little literature available regarding Hebrew, or any Jewish matters in Spanish or Portuguese.

Samuel Menasseh Ben Israel (1604-1657) came from Lissabon in 1613 or 1614 and became, the chief rabbi of the Sepharadic community of Amsterdam (from 1622 to 11639). He started a printing house that was to solve this lack of Jewish and Hebrew publications. During the 17th century his example was followed by other printers and publishers. These made possible a flourishing output of study books regarding all aspects of Jewish life.

This literary activity and the relatively open spiritual climate of the community made it possible for the Ramchal to publish some of his books in Amsterdam.

The Work of Unification and the process of Devekut in modern kabbalah.

We recognize, in our modern kabbalah school, various outer ways of bringing about the Work of Unification, such as rituals, art, group work and individual work. We also know that these outer forms need to be connected to an inner process which is the real key to unification. This inner process involves the elevation of one's consciousness to a level where one can become a channel for forces from the Upper Worlds. One does this by helping "the redemption of the Worlds by his conduct and by a knowing contribution towards harmony" (4 p187). Through constant inner effort in awareness linked to constant effort towards correct behaviour, every individual grows towards his or her potential as helpmate in the Work of Unification. The area I wish to concentrate on is the practice of constant attention and remembrance. This is one of the deepest aspects of the Work done within the heart of the individual. It is also the most universal aspect of the Work. It unites orthodox and secular groups, it connects those people from all paths who are more concerned with truth than with form. Attention to all things, awareness of one's Self and remembrance of the Divine Source are both methods and attitudes which can be found in the Inner Schools of all traditions.

In kabbalah, remembering the divine is called 'devekut' which means to 'cleave' to 'cling' to God. It includes: "every act ... to be performed in honour and recollection of God ... to remember God ... to act as a vehicle for the Divine influx that flows down through the Worlds" (*4 p 189).

In devekut, the most evolved part of the individual, the Self in tiferet, places itself consciously in relation to its Higher Inner Source at kether. Within this inner dialogue Grace, Understanding, Wisdom and Knowledge can be received. This is a constant learning process within which the other sefirot of the Tree, that is the archetypes of the psyche and the other areas of life, come under the leadership of the Self. A long process of integration follows within which the individual slowly becomes attuned to higher and more subtle realities.

Work of Unification and Devekut in the writings of Luzzatto

Luzzato's basic word for the Work of Unification is, in Hebrew, the familiar 'Avodah' meaning both work and worship. It is mostly translated as 'divine service.' Divine service describes very well Luzzatto's attitude to the Work. In the original Hebrew text, Luzzatto uses, however, adjectives and descriptions to the word avodah which are very illuminating. 'Avodah temimah' (*7 p17), means the work which is perfect, unblemished, innocent, honest and upright. It is easy to recognize here a reference to the sefirah tiferet. In another text he calls the Work, 'avodah yekarah,' meaning precious, rare and glorious. This could be seen as a reference to the consciousness of the middle pillar and to the experience of the upper worlds. Yekarah can also mean heavy and costly. This could be understood as the intensity and the difficulties which one encounters on the spiritual path. A kabbalist is supposed to pay his dues, both financially and karmically.

The Work is also called 'avodah nirtsit le shemo' (*7 p10), meaning the Work desired by His Name, the Work pleasing to His Name or the Work necessary for His Name. This is clearly a reference to Kether, or to the world of Atzilut. The Work, as expressed here, is concerned with the divine Will. It is interested in a relationship with the divine. The Work of Unification as 'avodah nirtsit le shemo' can be understood as the process of devekut, within which the Name, or Names of

God play an active role.

In order to further understand Luzatto's views on the Work of Unification, one has to place them within the context of his kabbalistic system. In an extremely simplified form the pattern of creation starts, for Luzatto, with the perfect goodness of the divine, it unfolds into matter and duality, and includes both suffering and justice on the path of return before reaching its conclusion in great spiritual rejoicing.

"... the true nature of His essence is a Oneness that intrinsically contains and encompasses everything that can be considered perfection ... God's purpose in creation was to bestow His good to another ... (and) everything created by the Holy One, Blessed be He, ... He created only for His honor. And this honor is that the Blessed One rejoice in all His creations and provide room, as it were, for all His creations to rejoice in His good. And the ultimate purpose behind all of His acts is to bring all to absolute perfection, so that evil will no longer have any existence whatsoever. (*8 p31-35;37; *6 p199)

Unity is the basis of existence, unity is the nature of the divine. The divine is one, unique and special, a translation of a Hebrew sentence in which these three words come from the same root: echad, yachid and meyouchad. This unity is perfect in every way, it is perfectly simple, totally independent, endless and eternal. It always eludes comprehension.

The Ramchal emphasises again and again that this Divine Unity, this perfection is all good; it is true goodness. It would have been God's desire to share of His goodness with another, to make it possible for another to delight in this goodness, which would have been the beginning of the movement of creation.

Luzatto knew the writings of the Safed kabbalists, Cordovero and Luria, and some Lurianic influences are recognizable in his work (the process of tikkun) but he departs from Luria's views on creation. Where, for Luria, evil occurs through a mistake, a breaking of the vessels of the sefirot, Luzatto clings to the idea that the perfection and the goodness of the Divine are the sole reason for the process of creation. They remain active, as the positive force that will eventually lead to the redemption of the lower worlds. Goodness causes the dynamic evolution underlying all events, at all levels. Men and women who reach this understanding come to share in a deep mystical joy. All aspects of their lives become filled with meaning. The tremendous joy experienced in the return to divine unity makes all earlier suffering and evil worth while. The existence of duality and its subsequent manifestation in evil is then seen to be part of a cosmic process within which people learn to use the free will given to them by the Almighty. Free will is given to the human race as the tool needed so that man can learn to master all things. Mastery comes with the exercise of choice. It includes such possibilities as the choice for the outer or for the inner world or the choice between good and evil. One earns finally the right to choose, out of one's own free will, to partake in the goodness of unity. God wished man to earn this right on the basis of his own merit. This merit is earned during one's journey through the lower worlds. In these lower worlds, evil exists, together with duality, conflict, darkness and suffering. They exist as a consequence of the distance from God. Evil for Luzatto is part of the pattern of creation but there is no evil in the divine.

Evil is part of the process through which we learn, during a cosmic period, to know the goodness of the divine. The Ramchal perceives a number of reasons for the existence of evil. Evil and suffering can be seen as tools at work in the perfect system of providence which rule the lower worlds. The main function of suffering, here, is to purify, to help souls discover a greater sensitivity within themselves. It is only through this sensitivity that one can experience the higher dimensions of reality. Furthermore, in the lower worlds and in an insensitive state of consciousness, largely defined by matter, we are unable to perceive the 'Whole.' We perceive only limited parts. This causes us to perceive as evil things which are not so when seen in the total context: "there is no evil in the world except in element in isolation prior, to their being seen as contributing elements in a complete process" (*6 p197-199). Our conclusions about what is evil is conditioned by this limited view. Once we know the whole, we will recognize the total goodness of the scheme of creation. "For at that time all the aspects of each act will be complete, and it will be truly recognized as entirely good." (*6 p199)

The process of creation in which we find ourselves disconnected from unity is the learning process through which every individual has the possibility, through the application of free will, to eventually return and consciously rejoice in unity. For Luzatto one of the goals of the Work of Unification is this tremendous joy. "The further a person is privileged to enter into the chambers of the knowledge of the greatness of the Blessed One, the greater is his happiness and his heart rejoices within

him." (*7 p253) It is the ultimate reason for creation and when experienced in the full consciousness of the spirit Self, it both explains and justifies the path of descent into matter with all its ensuing suffering. All things in the world serve just this purpose as some talmudic sages say: "realize that the world has been created for your benefit."

Original unity exists at all times and in all places. It is beyond form and time. Mankind on the other hand finds itself in an experience in which both form and time dominate its reality. For some people the world of matter becomes, for a while, the only reality. Others experience in themselves the pull of the upper worlds. When the inner call is heard a dialogue begins between two areas of consciousness which kabbalah calls the 'upper face' and the 'lower face.' People may then experience themselves as being pulled, in different directions between two different selves.:

"Of all things that exist, ... only man alone consists of two absolute opposites, namely a spiritual soul and a physical body. Nothing else in creation shares this quality ... It is only through God's decree that the two are bound together, for the purpose ... of attaining true good ... the tranquility of the Future World." (*8 p77;95)

Most people experience tension and struggle between the higher and lower levels of consciousness within themselves. For the Ramchal, this is only natural, seeing that, within the history of creation, humanity goes through phases during which these two states appear indeed to be totally separated from each other. Original Unity has developed into total duality. Every individual carries, within him or herself, this cosmic movement: the descent from Unity into matter and duality and the path of return towards integration, consciousness and joy. These are the realities of the lower face of the tree, malkhut-yesod-hod-nezach-tiferet, and of the upper face, tiferet-binah-chochmah-kether. Luzatto pays much attention to the differences between malkhut, as the determining factor in the Lower Face, and to kether as being the determining factor within the Upper Face.

The Upper Face

"... true perfection ... radiance appropriate to ... excellence ... exists when man grasps the path of wisdom and is engaged in devotion to his Creator. In such a world, truth is obvious and unambiguous ... The source of all such things is ... the Light of God's presence ..." (*8 p55; 167-169)

Luzatto follows the traditional division of the souls in five levels, including the lower souls of the nefesh, the individual soul, the spirit, the connection with the divine and the divine Essence.

When speaking of the spirit level of mankind he refers in various ways to both the upper triads tiferet-binah-chochmah and to binah-chochmah-kether. Both are illuminated by the Light of the Divine.

Many qualities are present at this level. Free will is applied in choosing for good. God includes here, on the path of devekut, all things which bring one closer to God. The upper intellect is developed through the practice of contemplation. Understanding, wisdom, knowledge and grace are experienced as the divine manifests through the Upper Sefirot, the higher faculties of man. As transpersonal consciousness develops in the individual it then teaches the soul and takes leadership over the animal soul.

Through this development of spiritual attributes people may eventually join the Perfected community "fit to exist in an eternal state of intimacy with God" (*8 p99)

The ultimate expression of divinity and spirit will be in the Olam ha Ba, the World to Come. While working towards it and awaiting its coming, one can experience a fraction of its potential. This spirituality is the ultimate destiny of mankind, and its reality is diametrically opposite to the one centered in malkhut. It is a reality of goodness and security, tranquility, rejoicing and divine blessings.

The Lower Face

"Nothing ... is done except through this lowering of the essence of man. For through it, evil holds sway over him, and when

he perfects himself and ascends, evil is transformed to good; for it is the evil inclination itself which secures this merit for him. It emerges, then, that his defect is his perfection. For if he were always in a state of sublimity, insusceptible of evil, he would not achieve the perfection of transforming evil to good, which is the chief perfection of the creation." (*6 p277)

Malkhut is the earth. The Ramchal sees this other end of the spectrum, embedded as it is in matter as a world of darkness, a world of pain and suffering in which we forget our Roots in Light. Matter is, firstly because of its coarseness (in comparison to spirit), the primary cause of our forgetfulness. It is "opaque and unenlightened" (*8 p63). The second cause, for forgetfulness, is the necessity, in the world of matter, to be involved with matter in order to survive. Being in malkhut means that we have descended into a body, a physical vehicle demanding a very specific kind of care and attention: housing and food leading to the need for work, for money, for possessions and for involvement in community life... The needs created by this struggle for survival consume our attention. We become caught up in the world of action. As we proceed deeper in this world of action, our link with the world of spirit diminishes and the more this connection weakens the more our fascination with all material things grows. At this stage matter may appear as the only 'real' thing. The body is allowed to seek out more and more of its own needs and pleasures until it dominates the screen of our reality and great fear may arise at the idea of letting go of it. Our involvement with the world of matter becomes, during this phase, much greater than our basic needs for survival necessitate. Malkhut has become a goal in itself. The other sefirot of the lower face develop under the leadership of malkhut. When people become involved, to such an extent, in the pursuit of physical interests, little time and attention are given to reflection or to devotion. The value of truth is lost, while a world of false values, supporting the malkhutan system of behaviour takes place. "As a result of this, tranquility ceases to exist, and there is not security, while there is much suffering and injury. God hides His Glory from the world, and it goes on as if left to chance, abandoned to the laws of nature... Man neither realizes nor recognizes even what it means for creation to rejoice before its Creator. In such a world, the wicked become strong, and the good are deprived of all status." (*8 p169)

All these things take place through identification with life in malkhut and through forgetfulness of God's Unity, Light and Goodness.

The Work of Unification, the Work desired by His Name, aims at restoring the power of the Upper Face, in full consciousness and for all mankind. Luzatto describes many aspects of this divine service including 'devekut.' He describes it as both a major spiritual exercise and the goal of kabbalistic work.

Devekut

"When you look further into the matter you will see that only union with God (devekut) constitutes true perfection, as King David said (Psalms 73:28), "But as for me, the nearness of God is my good," and Psalms 27:4), "I asked one thing from God; that I will seek - to dwell in God's house all of my life ... For this alone is the true good ..." (*7 p19)

Devekut, in Luzatto's work includes remembering and relating to Kether. It means directing oneself to God. It means recognizing God every day and finding ways to understand His presence in the world. This could include the study of holy books. This could take the form of prayer or meditation. This could be a process of contemplation whereby one attempts to unravel the meaning of one's fate. When one understands the scheme of Providence one also gleans some information about the divine. Devekut would most certainly include practicing and refining the commandments. Whatever form one uses for one's devekut, the force behind the practice is one's intention: purity of motive, total attention and devotion to the One Source. For kabbalists like Luzatto, for whom devekut is a central theme, all the processes of inner knowledge which belong to the higher sefirot, take place as a result of cleaving to Kether. They are not an independent goal. The search is one for Unity, for the closeness to God which is the "rightful state" (*8 p63) of man.

A devekut method, used by many kabbalists both to start the process of attunement and to deepen it, is the concentration of the Name or on the Names of God.

Devekut through the Names

"he cannot be seen ... (He is) ... pure essence ... (yet) ... God makes Himself accessible to all who call upon Him ... (*6 p 339-341; *8 p 195)

"God also desired to be called by a Name. Through this Name, His handywork could be aware of Him and call Him, and also bring themselves close to Him by uttering it." (*8 p193)

There exists an ancient tradition of Unification through the Names which has its roots in the Old Testament "On that day, God will be One and His Name will be One" (Zechariah 14,9; *8 p261). It runs like a thread through the complex imagery tradition of the Merkavah. It is mentioned as being practiced by the "Baalei ha-Shem," the masters of the Name in Babylonia. It was brought over to Italy, together with other teachings before the 9th century, and remained an essential part of a flourishing Italian line of kabbalah. (*9 p30-34).

Luzatto would have been as familiar with this tradition as he was with the writings of the kabbalists of Spain and Safed. He would have been aware of many nuances in the traditions of the Names.

In his own writings, the usage of the Names is interwoven with the process of Devekut and the Work of Unification. The Names are a vital part of his 'theurgy,' his teaching that one should use the physical world through the spiritual (*8 p189).

Luzatto differentiates between The Name, the Names and the Name Ha Shem.

By the Name, Luzatto refers, as in older traditions, to the Name YHVH:

"God also desired to be called by a Name ... For His Glory, God specified the Unique Name, regarding which He said (Exodus 3:15), "This is My Name forever" ... (*8 p193)

When someone utters the Name, divine illumination, higher Influence and blessings may be bestowed, but only when the process takes place within an ethical framework and when it is the Will of God:" .. a Name should only transmit an Influence when uttered under specific conditions within defined limits." (*8 p193)

Other Names exist in Atzilut besides the one Name and God wishes them to be used by us in order to connect with the upper Worlds. The various Names of Atzilut can be seen as various channels through which different Influences flow: "God makes use of other influences ... and with respect to each of them, He also has various names ..." (*8 p 193)

The Name Ha Shem means 'The Name.' It is used by Luzatto, as many orthodox Jews do in order to replace the tetragrammaton. It can be understood, in this case, as an expression of caution and respect in dealing with holy things.

Luzatto also uses 'Ha Shem' as a Name in its own right.

Reading Luzatto, I have understood Ha Shem to be an abstract, general and inclusive Name. It is a collective Name including all other Names. Like all other Names it both partakes in and separates from the divine Essence. The Name Ha Shem therefore means God, His Essence and all His expressions through Names and divine Attributes.

The word Shem is further related to the word 'shamaim,' which means Heaven, so that the Name Ha Shem come to include all heavenly things. Heaven in kabbalah is the World of Beriyah which is beyond form. One could then perceive the Name Ha Shem as the subtlest of forms at the very edge between the Yeziratic world of forms and the formlessness of Beriah and Atzilut. The Name Ha Shem is an inclusive one, it is a Name concerned with the whole. It therefore includes all possible Names which are expressed with the true intention of reaching unity. Ha Shem could then be seen as a basic fabric in which all the words, qualities, names, sounds and vibrations which are concerned with unity are interwoven. 'Avodah nirtsit le shemo' can then be understood as the work desired by Totality in order to achieve Wholeness. Every individual walking an individual path, adding to the work of unification is his or her unique way and using as focus a Name, a prayer or a divine quality is working from, for and within Ha Shem. The Names of Ha Shem have a positive influence as they connect us to

fundamental goodness for "God does not relate His Name to evil" (*8 p83). They are a gift, an act of Divine Love, making it possible for men and women to approach the divine "... man is ... permitted to stand before God and call Him by His Name. Man is thus able to ... elevate himself ... to exist in an state of closeness to God ..." (* 8 p287)

Ways and attitudes on the path of devekut through Ha Shem.

A name only truly become a Name when it is expressed as one. The intention of the speaker or thinker gives the Name its power and direction. This is the kavanah which can bring even a simple action to a higher level: "not all men are alike, nor are all acts alike; ... so that two men may be seated at the same table, speaking, eating and drinking, and yet the acts of one may reach the heavenly heights ... and those of the other not ascend ... at all ... (one needs) The general intent to unite all of creation ..." (*6 p181; 295)

True intention is a process, constantly refined by the inner desire of the kabbalist to achieve spiritual liberation for himself and for all the world.

The intention to reach integration and unity on a path of faith is best linked to dedication and devotion for "The main initiation ... depends on ... devotion to God. To the degree that they make themselves worthy through their deeds and continually purify themselves" (*8 p215).

Inner work needs also to be connected to outer work so that inner devotion will be linked to all other areas of life. In this way all things can be elevated. It includes one's ethical development which in kabbalah means developing one's understanding of the 10 commandments. It includes practicing bringing harmony between one's insights and one's actions. The cleaving to the highest state of consciousness possible through the uttering or the mentally repeating of a Name, is not magic. It is part of an intricate process of awakening and of raising one's consciousness. It is connected to all work of self-awareness: "And all of the character traits, which are in such great need of correction and cultivation ... (are one of the reasons why) ... a man must constantly - at all times, and particularly during a regular appointed time of solitude - reflect upon the true path ..." (*7 p9; 43)

All areas of the Tree have qualities which tend towards matter and others which turn towards the Spirit and the Divine. The qualities which are in harmony with the higher worlds can be cultivated and they will integrate with our meditations on the Name.

Qualities which tend exclusively towards malkhut will interrupt our meditative practices and make integration impossible. Luzatto mentions many such qualities such as laziness and fear based on illusion and projection. Luzatto also looks at the extreme manifestations of the forces within the left and the right pillars and comments on the constant tendency towards inertia present in the left pillar. This is created by the pull of the earth but is reflected among other things in negative thinking which in turn leads to weakness and lack of discipline in all spiritual matters. One can practice the arousing of the positive energy present in the right pillar and learn to connect it to the practice of devekut. "One who seeks to transform his nature completely requires great strengthening." (*7 p77)

One needs to develop one's gevurah and chesed in relation to the divine in the form of the fear and love of God. Fear is really awe of the Presence. "... fear of God ... refers to ... awe of His greatness, rather than ... fear of His punishments." (*8 p253)

Awe, says Luzatto, is developed by becoming aware that God is present in every moment and every place in which we find ourselves. God is also present in our inner world, in our thoughts and in our emotions. It seems to me that one can best relate this sense of awe to one's deepest spiritual or meditative experiences. Awe stresses the importance of remembering these moments, as fleeting as they may be, for they are our door to truth. Once one practices remembrance one can then try to realise the quality which one is remembering is present in every moment, in the here now, even though one is no longer aware of it. Luzatto suggests that we then become more aware of how we affect that higher reality from moment to moment. Are we reaching towards it, adding to it or walking away from it? In the long term this should make us more aware of our

behaviour. Awe means walking in the awareness of both the upper and the lower faces. Remembering the upper face and letting go of the lower face.

Love of God is love for its own sakes. "... love .. of God ... refers to ... love of God's Name ... rather than love of His rewards ..." (*8 p253)

Love of God can be learned by looking at the beauty of creation, by trying to understand that all things, plants, and animals exist by the grace of God and are there to help us enhance our consciousness. Love of God includes such qualities as communion, tranquility and joy.

Communion means that one brings oneself to the highest level of devekut possible as often as possible. Luzatto follows in this the text: "... to love the Lord your God with all your heart ... and to cling to Him." (Deuteronomy 30:20; *7 p19)

Luzatto stresses, as said earlier, the relation between inner devotion and the commandments for: "The purpose of all religious observance is to make man constantly aware of His Creator. It should make him realize that he was created for the singular purpose of experiencing God." (*8 p67). This certainly applies to the third commandment which has direct bearing on devekut through the Names. The third commandment states that one may not mention the Name of God 'in vain' and an analysis of this commandment, placed in Binah, can teach us more about the ways of developing devekut through the Name.

The word 'in vain' has many meanings: it comes from vanity which means self-complacency, self-conceit, self-glorification and (according to the dictionary) valuing oneself inordinately on the basis of some trivial personal distinction. We can learn from this that one should avoid saying the Names when one is at an ego consciousness level, that is or in a yesodic state or for a yesodic reason. One does not say the Name for oneself or to enhance oneself. The attitude to be developed during the practicing of the Name is one of receptivity, modesty and humility. 'In vain' also means fruitlessly, without result. One must therefore use the names for a specific result, which is a higher state of consciousness. One needs to direct one's attention and intention to one's spiritual goal so that the dynamics brought about by the name can take place. One needs to "run within and ... be raised on high" (Proverbs 18:10).

Practice:

Devekut through the Names is practiced through concentrating consciously on a Name. This can be one word or a prayer, like the 'Sh'ma,' which includes a number of Names and the idea of Unification. A Name can be repeated inwardly or said out loud. Devekut can be practiced, in this way, during special meditations and moments of prayer. It can also be integrated with one's daily activities. Luzatto suggests "to cast one's burden upon Him" (*8 p287). He means by this taking time to dedicate one's creativity in the world to the highest source; to call on the Name when one is going to do something; to see the role of one's actions, even the smallest, in the context of the Whole, as a contribution to the Work of Unification. Devekut can also be practiced as an act of constant remembrance and devotion.

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[Back to top](#)

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