



Ari, the Lion

Isaac Luria Ashkenazi (1534-1572)

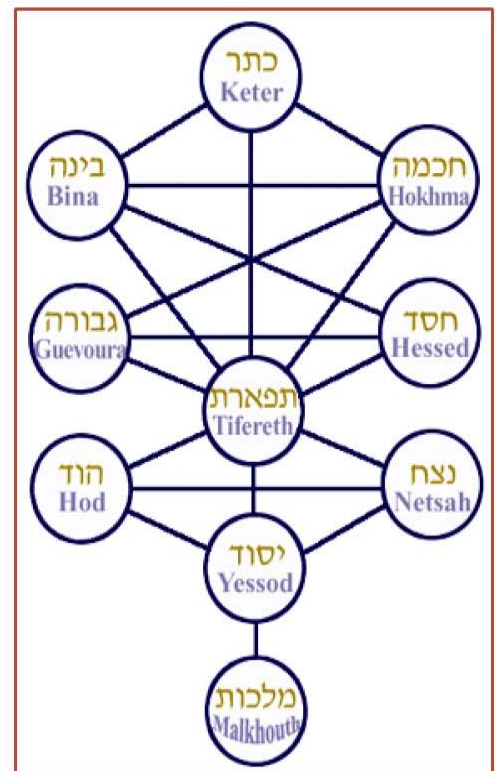
Rabbi Isaac Ashkenazi of Luria, rabbi and Kabbalist, is considered the most profound Jewish mystical thinker, as well as the founder of the Kabbalistic school of Safed.

Imagined portrait of Isaac Luria, based on the *Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione* by Raphael (Studio Barzel)

Isaac Luria Ashkenazi is also known by the name **Ha Ari**, or “**the Lion**,” an abbreviation of **Ha-Elohi Rabi Ytshak**, “the Holy Rabi Isaac.” He descends through his father from the *Ashkenazim*, from Germany or Poland and from France through his mother.

Isaac Luria was educated in Egypt, notably by the Spanish Kabbalist David ben Salomon ibn Abi Zimra (1479-1573/1589). During this period, he dedicated himself to the study of the Zohar, studying the first Kabbalists as well as the work of his contemporaries, particularly that of **Moïse Cordovero (1522-1570)**. He wrote his first work, the *Sifre di-Tsniuta*. In 1569 or 1570, he moved to **Safed** where he taught his disciples, who after his death communicated the essential parts of his teachings orally. Such was the case with his most famous disciple, **Haïm Vital**, who is the actual author of the majority of the writings of the Lurianic Kabbalah.

Main figure of theosophical Kabbalah after the Expulsion of the Jews of Spain (1492), he is the indirect author of an immense work which gradually became the most complete work of Jewish esotericism.



He wrote only a few rare commentaries, but his disciples, among them Hayim Vital, put down his oral teachings on paper. **Tree of the Sefirot, according to the teachings of the Ari zal**

Considered a person visited by the Holy Spirit and the Prophet Elie, he was capable of perceiving the origins of the souls of his interlocutors, his movements in previous lives; and he could prescribe the “repairs” necessary for the definitive salvation of their soul. By his own admission, his prodigious intellectual fecundity prevented him from freezing the flow of thoughts that incessantly sprang from his soul by writing them down.

Many early hagiographic legends circulated about him and some knew him as a forerunner of the Messiah. His prodigiously rich and complex theosophical doctrine was revealed in *The Tree of Life ('Ets Hayyim)* by Hayim Vital.