

From Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, *Renewal is Judaism NOW* (formerly “Renewal is Not Heresy”):

If you had been living in the 1600's, you would have been sitting on so much repressed material. Every guide to sexuality that I know of that was available during this period, with the exception only of the *Iggeret ha-Kodesh*, is unbalanced. The advice given is to get it over with quickly. If you, the man, are the one who wants to make love, then you will be under her thumb instead of the other way around. This is in opposition to Scripture... Whenever a man feels a sexual urge, he is counselled to repress and discard it. The power of this repressive message was very great and, from the perspective of someone in the 1600's, universally pervasive.

On the other hand, what is it that makes *davvenen* so exciting? It is the same kind of urge, a longing and yearning for the Divine Beloved. Since the object of longing could no longer be a physical beloved, the object of the longing gets sublimated... it gets invested in the messianic. Loving the *mashiach* is acceptable and if, within the circles of those who believe in and are therefore freed by the *mashiach*, it is possible to enjoy sex in a way not possible before, and not only within marriage, then you can have a sense of the power of this person and possibility.

We experienced some of that power in the 1960s. It was in the air; it was strong and thick. It was something like the vernalizing of seed - when you take seed and it has to get kicked into starting to grow. It's almost as if the “Greening of America,” the beginning of a certain consciousness, was vernalized by the fantastic “itch” that was around for those of us who lived through the sixties. This may be another way for some of us to get a glimpse of what it felt like at the time of Shabtai Zevi, how powerful that must have been...

There is another level of difference between the Jewish renewal of today and the Sabbatian messianism... The Sabbatians were playing out the messianic dream on the classical chessboard, while we say that this chessboard itself is no longer where the game is being played. Thus, our messianism is not an effort to restore, but part of our larger effort at renewal...

On one level, then, it can be said that we are greater heretics than the Sabbatians. The Sabbatians at least bought into the reality map of Luria and played the game according to those rules. They said, “Do you want to release sparks? We can show you how to release sparks the way it can be done in the messianic period... All you need to do is plunge into

the depth of that evil, maintaining your consciousness and all its fervor. Then, pull out that spark, experience the experience, take it back, offer it to God!" They had a fantastic sense of the drama involved in entering into and experiencing that which had always been called so evil that it had to be avoided by everyone without exception. But this was still the old, static stage on which they were playing...

If, in some ways, we are more heretical than the Sabbatians because we accept a changed reality map, I also believe that there are other ways in which we represent an improvement. We share a real concern about what will happen to the Jewish people in this new age. Even if we can't always give it expression, we know that what we have received is valuable. I have the feeling that the best, the juiciest stuff of *yiddishkeit* is bubbling in Jewish renewal and that we are where the sap is flowing. We are committed to the continuation of Judaism.