

Absorbing Perfections Kabbalah And Interpretation

In the Zohar, the jewel in the crown of Jewish mystical literature, the verse "A river flows from Eden to water the garden" (Genesis 2:10) symbolizes the river of divine plenty that unceasingly flows from the depths of divinity into the garden of reality. Hellner-Eshed's book investigates the flow of this river in the world of the Zoharic heroes, Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai and his disciples, as they embark upon their wondrous spiritual adventures. By focusing on the Zohar's language of mystical experience and its unique features, the author is able to provide remarkable scholarly insight into the mystical dimensions of the Zohar, namely the human quest for an enhanced experience of the living presence of the divine and the Zohar's great call to awaken human consciousness.

The Value of the Particular assembles original essays by senior and junior scholars in comparative religion, philosophy of religion, modern Judaism, and post-Holocaust studies, fields of inquiry where Steven T. Katz made major contributions.

In *The Beginning of the World in Renaissance Jewish Thought*, Brian Ogren deeply analyzes late fifteenth century Italian Jewish thought concerning the creation of the world and the beginning of time.

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Ogren examines uses of philosophy and Kabbalah in the thought of four important fifteenth century thinkers.

After Franz Kafka died in 1924, his novels and short stories were published in ways that downplayed both their author's roots in Prague and his engagement with Jewish tradition and language, so as to secure their place in the German literary canon. Now, nearly a century after Kafka began to create his fictions, Germany, Israel, and the Czech Republic lay claim to his legacy. Kafka's Jewish Languages brings Kafka's stature as a specifically Jewish writer into focus. David Suchoff explores the Yiddish and modern Hebrew that inspired Kafka's vision of tradition. Citing the Jewish sources crucial to the development of Kafka's style, the book demonstrates the intimate relationship between the author's Jewish modes of expression and the larger literary significance of his works. Suchoff shows how "The Judgment" evokes Yiddish as a language of comic curse and examines how Yiddish, African American, and culturally Zionist voices appear in the unfinished novel, Amerika. In his reading of The Trial, Suchoff highlights the black humor Kafka learned from the Yiddish theater, and he interprets The Castle in light of Kafka's involvement with the renewal of the Hebrew language. Finally, he uncovers the Yiddish and Hebrew meanings behind Kafka's "Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse-Folk" and considers the

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recent legal case in Tel Aviv over the possession of Kafka's missing manuscripts as a parable of the transnational meanings of his writing.

In *Old World, New Mirrors* Moshe Idel turns his gaze on figures as diverse as Walter Benjamin and Jacques Derrida, Franz Kafka and Franz Rosenzweig, Arnaldo Momigliano and Paul Celan, Abraham Heschel and George Steiner to reflect on their relationships to Judaism in a cosmopolitan, mostly European, context.

Metempsychosis was a prominent element in Renaissance conceptualizations of the human being, the universe, and the place of the human person in the universe. A variety of concepts emerged in debates about metempsychosis: human to human reincarnation, human to vegetal, human to animal, and human to angelic transmigration. As a complex and changing doctrine, metempsychosis gives us a well-placed window for viewing the complex and dynamic contours of Jewish thought in late fifteenth century Italy; as such, it enables us to evaluate Jewish thought in relation to non-Jewish Italian developments. This book addresses the problematic question of the roles and achievements of Jews who lived in Italy in the development of Renaissance culture in its Jewish and its Christian dimensions. *Jewish Theology Unbound* challenges the widespread misinterpretation of Judaism as a religion of law as opposed to theology. James A.

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Diamond provides close readings of the Bible, classical rabbinic texts, Jewish philosophers, and mystics from the ancient, medieval, and modern period, which communicate a profound Jewish philosophical theology on human nature, God, and the relationship between the two. The study begins with an examination of questioning in the Hebrew Bible, demonstrating that what the Bible encourages is independent philosophical inquiry into how to situate oneself in the world ethically, spiritually, and teleologically. It explores such themes as the nature of God through the various names by which God is known in the Jewish intellectual tradition, love of others and of God, death, martyrdom, freedom, angels, the philosophical quest, the Holocaust, and the state of Israel, all in light of the Hebrew Bible and the way it is filtered through the rabbinic, philosophical, and mystical traditions.

Time and Eternity in Jewish Mysticism offers a multivalent picture of a central topic in Jewish mysticism by bringing together diverse academic voices. It offers variant approaches, which have stemmed from intense discussion amongst leading scholars in the field.

The history of Western esotericism is rich in references to the domains of eros and sexuality, but this connection has never been explored in detail from a critical scholarly perspective. Bringing together an impressive array of top-level specialists,

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this volume reveals the outlines of a largely unknown history spanning more than twenty centuries.

Jonathan Garb's "Yearnings of the Soul: Psychological Thought in Modern Kabbalah" is an original, path-breaking study of the renderings of the "heart and soul" in the works of major, minor, and obscure but important figures of modern Kabbalah. Garb has unearthed a treasure-trove of neglected figures and texts, bringing into dialogue their views on heart and soul with those found in other religious and secular authorities. There is no other study that comes close to the territory Garb covers or, for that matter, provides the historical and cultural context necessary for understanding the rise of such psychological renderings in the works of the modern Kabbalists. His analysis shows that any attempt to essentialize the multiple and varied understandings of heart and soul in Jewish mysticism is mistaken. Analyzing text and figure in context on a case-by-case basis Garb is able to provide comparison without being reductive. This is an invaluable contribution to the discipline that cements Garb as the leading scholar of modern Kabbalah.

How the Jewish culture war over Kabbalah began The Scandal of Kabbalah is the first book about the origins of a culture war that began in early modern Europe and continues to this day: the debate between kabbalists and their critics on the nature of Judaism and the meaning of religious tradition. From its medieval beginnings as an esoteric form of Jewish mysticism, Kabbalah spread throughout the early modern world and became a central feature of Jewish life. Scholars have long studied the revolutionary impact of Kabbalah, but, as Yaacob Dweck argues, they have misunderstood the character and timing of opposition to it. Drawing on a range of previously unexamined sources, this book tells the story of the first criticism of Kabbalah, Ari Nohem, written by Leon

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Modena in Venice in 1639. In this scathing indictment of Venetian Jews who had embraced Kabbalah as an authentic form of ancient esotericism, Modena proved the recent origins of Kabbalah and sought to convince his readers to return to the spiritualized rationalism of Maimonides. The Scandal of Kabbalah examines the hallmarks of Jewish modernity displayed by Modena's attack—a critical analysis of sacred texts, skepticism about religious truths, and self-consciousness about the past—and shows how these qualities and the later history of his polemic challenge conventional understandings of the relationship between Kabbalah and modernity. Dweck argues that Kabbalah was the subject of critical inquiry in the very period it came to dominate Jewish life rather than centuries later as most scholars have thought. The eighteen original interdisciplinary essays in *Lux in Tenebris* explore the alchemical, magical, kabbalistic, rosicrucian and theosophical verbal and visual symbolism in the history of Western Esotericism, from the middle ages to the present day.

A revision of the author's thesis (doctoral)--Hebrew University Jerusalem, 2008.

This volume in honour of Jan N. Bremmer consists of a variety of contributions offering a broad spectrum of original ideas and innovative approaches in the history of religions both past and present, thus reflecting the nature of the scholarship of Bremmer himself.

This volume of conference proceedings investigates the various ways and patterns with which esoteric writings and groups establish their own tradition. This involves concepts of origin and memory, ways of legitimising esoteric tradition as well as techniques and practices of knowledge transmission in esotericism.

Discover the many lost and forgotten secrets of the Kabbalah through the words of famous rabbis and authors throughout

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history. Follow a historical time line of Judaic mysticism and learn the basic principles of the Kabbalah. Devise your own Kabbalah Wheel to spin the legendary 231 Holy Gates of combinations and permutations, as described in the ancient book on Jewish mysticism— the Sepher Yetzirah (also known as The Book of Formation or Book of Creation).

This highly original, provocative, and poetic work explores the nexus of time, truth, and death in the symbolic world of medieval kabbalah. Demonstrating that the historical and theoretical relationship between kabbalah and western philosophy is far more intimate and extensive than any previous scholar has ever suggested, Elliot R. Wolfson draws an extraordinary range of thinkers such as Frederic Jameson, Martin Heidegger, Franz Rosenzweig, William Blake, Julia Kristeva, Friedrich Schelling, and a host of kabbalistic figures into deep conversation with one another. Alef, Mem, Tau also discusses Islamic mysticism and Buddhist thought in relation to the Jewish esoteric tradition as it opens the possibility of a temporal triumph of temporality and the conquering of time through time. The framework for Wolfson's examination is the rabbinic teaching that the word emet, "truth," comprises the first, middle, and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet, alef, mem, and tau, which serve, in turn, as semiotic signposts for the three tenses of time—past, present, and future. By heeding the letters of emet we discern the truth of time manifestly concealed in the time of truth, the beginning that cannot begin if it is to be the beginning, the middle that re/marks the place of origin and destiny, and the end that is the figuration of the impossible disclosing the impossibility of figuration, the finitude of death that facilitates the possibility of rebirth. The time of death does not mark the death of time, but time immortal, the moment of truth that bestows on the truth of the moment an endless beginning of a beginningless end, the truth of death encountered incessantly in retracing steps of

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time yet to be taken—between, before, beyond.

This book presents a collection of articles that put forward original research and significant insight regarding several key issues related to knowledge and language in Middle Eastern societies. The aspects studied include: the role of knowledge and language in affirming and negating political agendas and self-identities within areas of conflict and tension; ideas regarding the usefulness and interaction of religious and secular knowledge; and the attributes that render knowledge and language, especially that which is believed to be of divine origin, outstanding and worthy of admiration. The selection of studies has been purposefully diverse to include a variety of languages, including Arabic, Turkish, Hebrew and Persian, within multiple traditions, including Hellenism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, while focussing on a range of periods, from the classical to the mediaeval to the modern, and examining a range of issues, such as methods of analysing and interpreting Persian, Turkish and Arabic literature, literary and other attributes of the Bible and the Qur'an, diglossic languages, the Turkish modernisation project, Turkish-Kurdish tensions, Andalusian music, Azerbaijani politics, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By underlining the substantial commonalities that exist between such seemingly different fields of research, the book highlights the idea—increasingly on the wane in departments of Middle Eastern Studies across many universities—that a shared area of study, viz. the Middle East, naturally and inherently entails a shared cultural, historical, and sociological milieu. It suggests that academics who engage in different branches of research related to this area should—rather than focussing singly on their own field—avail substantially and meaningfully of one another's scholarship, learn from each other's methodologies, and collectively build upon a body of knowledge that should never be seen as dissociated.

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This newly revised all-encompassing textbook is a guide to the history, beliefs and practice of Judaism. Beginning with the ancient Near Eastern background, it covers early Israelite history, the emergence of classical rabbinic literature and the rise of medieval Judaism in Islamic and Christian lands. It also includes the early modern period and the development of Jewry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Extracts from primary sources are used throughout to enliven the narrative and provide concrete examples of the rich variety of Jewish civilization. Specially designed to assist learning, Judaism:

- Introduces texts and commentaries, including the Hebrew Bible, rabbinic texts, mystical literature, Jewish philosophy and Jewish theology
- Provides the skills necessary to understand these step-by-step with the help of a companion website
- Explains how to interpret the major events in nearly four thousand years of Jewish history
- Supports study with discussion questions on the central historical and religious issues, and includes key reading for each chapter, an extensive glossary and index
- Illustrates the development of Judaism, its concepts, observances and culture, with maps, photos, paintings and engravings
- Links each chapter to a free companion website at www.routledge.com/cw/cohnsherbok which provides things to think about, things to do and tips for teachers as well as other online resources

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The fourth volume concludes the critical edition of the original Hebrew text and English translation of Moscato's sermons and includes studies on his cultural background and significance.

While many scholars have noted Martin Heidegger's indebtedness to Christian mystical sources, as well as his affinity with Taoism and Buddhism, Elliot R. Wolfson expands connections between Heidegger's thought and kabbalistic material. By arguing that the Jewish esoteric tradition impacted Heidegger, Wolfson presents an alternative way of understanding the history of Western philosophy. Wolfson's comparison between Heidegger and kabbalah sheds light on key concepts such as hermeneutics, temporality, language, and being and nothingness, while yielding surprising reflections on their common philosophical ground. Given Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism and his use of antisemitic language, these innovative readings are all the more remarkable for their juxtaposition of incongruent fields of discourse. Wolfson's entanglement with Heidegger and kabbalah not only enhances understandings of both but, more profoundly, serves as an ethical corrective to their respective ethnocentrism and essentialism. Wolfson masterfully illustrates the redemptive capacity of thought to illuminate common ground in seemingly disparate philosophical traditions. Introduces renderings of, and commentary on,

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Kabbalistic verse that emerged directly from Jewish mysticism and that reveals the foundations of both language and existence itself.

This book analyzes and describes the development and aspects of imagery techniques, a primary mode of mystical experience, in twentieth century Jewish mysticism. These techniques, in contrast to linguistic techniques in medieval Kabbalah and in contrast to early Hasidism, have all the characteristics of a full screenplay, a long and complicated plot woven together from many scenes, a kind of a feature film.

Research on this development and nature of the imagery experience is carried out through comparison to similar developments in philosophy and psychology and is fruitfully contextualized within broader trends of western and eastern mysticism. Theory of shamanism, trance, and modern Kabbalah -- The shamanic process: descent and fiery transformations -- Empowerment through trance -- Shamanic Hasidism -- Hasidic trance -- Trance and the nomian.

An unprecedented annotated anthology of the most important Jewish mystical works, *A Kabbalah and Jewish Mysticism Reader* is designed to facilitate teaching these works to all levels of learners in adult education and college classroom settings. Daniel M. Horwitz's insightful introductions and commentary accompany readings in the Talmud and Zohar and writings by Ba'al Shem Tov, Rav Kook, Abraham

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Joshua Heschel, and others. Horwitz's introduction describes five major types of Jewish mysticism and includes a brief chronology of their development, with a timeline. He begins with biblical prophecy and proceeds through the early mystical movements up through current beliefs. Chapters on key subjects characterize mystical expression through the ages, such as Creation and deveikut ("cleaving to God"); the role of Torah; the erotic; inclinations toward good and evil; magic; prayer and ritual; and more. Later chapters deal with Hasidism, the great mystical revival, and twentieth-century mystics, including Abraham Isaac Kook, Kalonymous Kalman Shapira, and Abraham Joshua Heschel. A final chapter addresses today's controversies concerning mysticism's place within Judaism and its potential for enriching the Jewish religion.

Sephardic Jews trace their origins to Spain and Portugal. They enjoyed a renaissance in these lands until their expulsion from Spain in 1492, when they settled in the countries along the Mediterranean, throughout the Ottoman Empire, in the Balkans, and in the lands of North Africa, Italy, Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, mixing with the Mizrahi, or Oriental, Jews already in these locations. Sephardic Jews have contributed some of the most important Jewish philosophers, poets, biblical commentators, Talmudic and Halachic scholars, and scientists, and have had a significant impact on the development of

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Jewish mysticism. Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry brings together original work from the world's leading scholars to present a deep introductory overview of their history and culture over the past 1500 years.

The book presents an overarching chronological and thematic survey of topics ranging from the origin of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry and their history to kabbalah, philosophy, and biblical commentary, and Sephardic Jewish life in the modern era. This collection represents the most up-to-date scholarship about Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry available.

Contributors include: Mark R. Cohen, Norman Stillman, David Bunis, Jonathan Decter, Yitzhak Kalimi, Moshe Idel, Annette B. Fromm, Zvi Zohar, Morris Fairstein, Pamela Dorn Sezgin, Mark Kligman, and Henry Abramson.

Since the publication of her first book, Emmanuel Levinas: The Problem of Ethical Metaphysics, in 1974-the first book about Levinas published in English-Edith Wyschogrod has been at the forefront of the fields of Continental philosophy and philosophy of religion. Her work has crossed many disciplinary boundaries, making peregrinations from phenomenology and moral philosophy to historiography, the history of religions (both Western and non-Western), aesthetics, and the philosophy of biology. In all of these discourses, she has sought to cultivate an awareness of how the self is situated and influenced, as well as the ways in which a self

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can influence others. In this volume, twelve scholars examine and display the influence of Wyschogrod's work in essays that take up the thematics of influence in a variety of contexts: Christian theology, the saintly behavior of the villagers of Le Chambon sur Lignon, the texts of the medieval Jewish mystic Abraham Abulafia, the philosophies of Levinas, Derrida, and Benjamin, the practice of intellectual history, the cultural memory of the New Testament, and pedagogy. In response, Wyschogrod shows how her interlocutors have brought to light her multiple authorial personae and have thus marked the ambiguity of selfhood, its position at the nexus of being influenced by and influencing others.

Representing Jewish Thought offers essays on modes and media of transmitting and re/presenting thought pertinent to Jewish past and present, zooming in on textual and visual hermeneutics to material and textual culture to performing arts.

This third volume of completes the Zohar's commentary on the book of Genesis. Throughout, the Zohar probes the biblical text and seeks deeper meaning--for example, the divine intention behind Joseph's disappearance, or the profound significance of human sexuality.

In Knowledge of God and the Development of Early Kabbalah, Jonathan Dauber offers a fresh consideration of the emergence of Kabbalah against the backdrop of a re-evaluation of the relationship between Kabbalistic and philosophic discourse.

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Entangled Histories: Knowledge, Authority, and Jewish Culture in the Thirteenth Century provides a multifaceted account of Jewish life in Europe and the Mediterranean basin at a time when economic, cultural, and intellectual encounters coincided with heightened interfaith animosity.

Ascensions on high took many forms in Jewish mysticism and they permeated most of its history from its inception until Hasidism. The book surveys the various categories, with an emphasis on the architectural images of the ascent, like the resort to images of pillars, lines, and ladders. After surveying the variety of scholarly approaches to religion, the author also offers what he proposes as an eclectic approach, and a perspectivist one. The latter recommends to examine religious phenomena from a variety of perspectives. The author investigates the specific issue of the pillar in Jewish mysticism by comparing it to the archaic resort to pillars recurring in rural societies. Given the fact that the ascent of the soul and pillars constituted the concerns of two main Romanian scholars of religion, Ioan P. Culianu and Mircea Eliade, Idel resorts to their views, and in the Concluding Remarks analyzes the emergence of Eliade's vision of Judaism on the basis of neglected sources.

In this wide-ranging discussion of Kabbalah—from the mystical trends of medieval Judaism to modern Hasidism—one of the world's foremost scholars considers different visions of the nature of the sacred text and of the methods to interpret it. Moshe Idel takes as a starting point the fact that the postbiblical Jewish world lost its geographical center with the destruction of the temple and so was left with a textual center, the Holy Book. Idel argues that a text-oriented religion produced language-centered forms of mysticism. Against this background, the author demonstrates how various Jewish mystics amplified the content of the Scriptures so as to include everything: the world, or God, for example. Thus the

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text becomes a major realm for contemplation, and the interpretation of the text frequently becomes an encounter with the deepest realms of reality. Idel delineates the particular hermeneutics belonging to Jewish mysticism, investigates the progressive filling of the text with secrets and hidden levels of meaning, and considers in detail the various interpretive strategies needed to decodify the arcane dimensions of the text.

Moshe Idel, the Max Cooper Professor Emeritus at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Senior Researcher at the Shalom Hartman Institute, is a world-renowned scholar of the Jewish mystical tradition. His historical studies of rabbinic, philosophic, kabbalistic, and Hasidic texts have transformed modern understanding of Jewish intellectual history.

Addressing discourses of perfect knowledge in Western culture between 1200 and 1800, this book integrates the study of Western esotericism in a larger analytical framework of European history of religion.

As *Light Before Dawn* explores the mystical thought of Isaac ben Samuel of Akko, a major medieval kabbalist whose work has until now received relatively little attention. Through consideration of an extensive literary corpus, including much that still remains in manuscript, this study examines an array of themes and questions that have great applicability to the comparative study of mysticism and the broader study of religion. These include prayer and the nature of mystical experience; meditative concentration directed to God; and the power of mental intention, authority, creativity, and the transmission of wisdom.

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This volume explores perceptions of the "Jewish body" in variety of early modern Jewish sources. It discusses, among other topics, ideas of the ideal body in normative sources, the influence of Kabbalistic ideas on Jewish-Christian discourse and the link between melancholy and exile.

The set of Jewish mystical teachings known as Kabbalah are often imagined as timeless texts, teachings that have been passed down through the millennia. Yet, as this groundbreaking new study shows, Kabbalah flourished in a specific time and place, emerging in response to the social prejudices that Jews faced. Hartley Lachter, a scholar of religion studies, transports us to medieval Spain, a place where anti-Semitic propaganda was on the rise and Jewish political power was on the wane. *Kabbalistic Revolution* proposes that, given this context, Kabbalah must be understood as a radically empowering political discourse. While the era's Christian preachers claimed that Jews were blind to the true meaning of scripture and had been abandoned by God, the Kabbalists countered with a doctrine that granted Jews a uniquely privileged relationship with God. Lachter demonstrates how Kabbalah envisioned this increasingly marginalized group at the center of the universe, their mystical practices serving to maintain the harmony of the divine world. For students of Jewish mysticism, *Kabbalistic Revolution* provides a new approach to

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the development of medieval Kabbalah. Yet the book's central questions should appeal to anyone with an interest in the relationships between religious discourses, political struggles, and ethnic pride. Provides the first comprehensive overview by world-renowned experts of what we know today of medieval Jews' engagement with the sciences. In this book, the world's foremost scholar of Kabbalah explores the understanding of erotic love in Jewish mystical thought. Encompassing Jewish mystical literatures from those of late antiquity to works of Polish Hasidism, Moshe Idel highlights the diversity of Kabbalistic views on eros and distinguishes between the major forms of eroticism. The author traces the main developments of a religious formula that reflects the union between a masculine divine attribute and a feminine divine attribute, and he asks why such an "erotic formula" was incorporated into the Jewish prayer book. Idel shows how Kabbalistic literature was influenced not only by rabbinic literature but also by Greek thought that helped introduce a wider understanding of eros. Addressing topics ranging from cosmic eros and androgyneity to the affinity between C. J. Jung and Kabbalah to feminist thought, Idel's deeply learned study will be of consuming interest to scholars of religion, Judaism, and feminism.

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