

KABBALAH

A NEWSLETTER OF CURRENT RESEARCH IN JEWISH MYSTICISM

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JERUSALEM

NEWS

SCHOLEM MEMORIAL CONFERENCE

Between February 18 and 20, the Gershom Scholem Center for the Study of Jewish Mysticism and Kabbalah, the Faculty for Humanities of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Jewish National and University Library will hold the Second International Conference on the History of Jewish Mysticism in Memory of Professor Gershom Scholem. The theme of the conference is "The Beginnings of Jewish Mysticism in Europe." Titles include:

- Bland, K. "Between Philosophy and Kabbalah in the Works of Nachmanides."
Dan, J. "Mystical Elements in Hasidei Ashkenaz."
Elbaum, J. "Tanna de-Vei Eliyahu and Early Mystical Literature."
Farber, A. "The Concept of Revelation in the School of Rabbi Judah the Pious."
Gavarin, M. "The Problem of Time in the Works of Rabbi Azriel of Gerona."
Goetschel, R. "'Ehyeh asher Ehyeh' in the Circle of Gerona."
Goldreich, R. "Studies in the Works of the Iyyun Circle."
Gruenwald, I. "Problems in the Definition of Jewish Mysticism in the Transition from *Sefer Yezirah* to *Sefer ha-Bahir*."
Grözinger, K.E. "Studies in the Works of Rabbi Azriel of Gerona."
Heller-Wilensky, S. "Between Mysticism and Philosophy in the Writings of Ibn Latif."
Idel, M. "The Sources of the *Sefer ha-Bahir*."
Kiener, R. "Astrological Elements in Early Kabbalah."
Liebes, Y. "*Sefer Yezirah* in the Works of Ibn Gabirol."
Oron, M. "The Kabbalah of Castile: Continuation or Revolution?"
Pines, S. "Studies in the Commentaries on the *Sefer Yezirah*."

Ptaya-Goodman, H. "Rabbi Isaac Sagi-Nahor's Commentary on *Sefer Yezirah*."

Rappaport-Albert, A. "Elements of Asceticism and Types of Spirituality in the Twelfth Century."

Rosenberg, S. "Between Philosophy and Mysticism: Commentaries on *Gan Eden*."

Shatz-Uffenheimer, R. "Between Psychology and Theology in the Works of Menasseh ben Israel: The Early Kabbalistic Sources."

Shokek, S. "*Sefer ha-Yashar* and the Gerona Circle."

Van Uchelen, N. "*Ma'aseh Merkavah* in *Sefer Hasidim*."

Additional presentations by: N. Rotenstreich and M. Beit Arie.

JTS INVITES MOSHE IDEL

In honor of its Centennial, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, has invited Dr. Moshe Idel, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, to conduct a seminar on "Jewish Mysticism and the Phenomenology of Religion." Between March 2 and 4, his lecture topics will include: Survey of Scholarship; Methodological Observations on Modern Research into the Kabbalah; Varieties of *Devekut*; *Unio Mystica*; Kabbalistic Mystical Techniques: Four "Ways" to Paranormal States of Consciousness; and, between April 6 and 8, Kabbalistic Types of Theosophy; Jewish Theurgy I (in Antiquity); Jewish Theurgy II (in Kabbalah); From Jewish Esotericism to European Philosophy: An Intellectual Profile of Kabbalah as a Cultural Factor; Mystical Hermeneutics. Further information may be obtained from JTS, Nancy Wingerson, (212) 678-8064.

Kabbalah is compiling an annotated directory of people involved in the study of kabbalah. Readers are invited to submit names, addresses and a description of research interests, projects, abstracts and publications.

ZOHAR PROJECT SEEKS FUNDS

A critical edition of the *Zohar*, a commentary and a computerized text and concordance are a *desideratum* in the field of Kabbalah, and Professor Rivka Shatz-Uffenheimer of the Hebrew University's Institute of Jewish Studies has proposed to undertake this major project. Anyone with information about financial support should contact Prof. Shatz.

Vox Medievalis is a new forum encouraging scholarly exchange between North American and European medievalists and published every spring by the European Center for Medieval Study at the University of Copenhagen and the Medieval Institute at Western Michigan University.

The 21st International Conference on Medieval Studies, sponsored by the Medieval Institute of Western Michigan University, will be held May 8-11, 1986 in Kalamazoo, Mich. Sessions include: "The Women Mystics: Is There a Feminine Mysticism?" and "Crossing Linguistic Boundaries: Problems in Translating Medieval Texts."

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RABBI EZRA BEN SOLOMON OF GERONA

(Part I)

In the annals of scholarship Rabbi Ezra ben Solomon of Gerona, Spain (born c.1175 and died c.1240) won recognition as the faithful disseminator of the teachings of his kabbalistic master, R. Isaac the Blind of Provence. Prof. I. Tishby asserted that R. Ezra was the dean of one of Gerona's kabbalistic academies (reflected in R. Ezra's two kabbalistic responses, published by Prof. G. Scholem), whose approach was characterized by a combination of mysticism and Neoplatonism with an emphasis on the doctrine of Divine Will as the first *sefirah*, *Keter*.

Modern scholarship has come closer to restoring Ezra to his rightful place in kabbalistic history, for later thirteenth and fourteenth century kabbalists confused R. Ezra with his colleague, R. Azriel, in the ascription and citation of their works. The early scholarship of H. Graetz had assumed that both names, Ezra and Azriel, referred to one person, or that these two individuals were of one opinion, and need not be differentiated. The critical text studies of G. Scholem and I. Tishby established R. Ezra and R. Azriel as distinct personalities and enumerated the literary works of each. However, further evaluation of the works of R. Ezra and R. Azriel led both Scholem and Tishby to consign R. Ezra to an intellectually secondary position compared to R. Azriel.

Tishby characterized R. Ezra's works as conservative in content and simple in style as exemplified by his *Aggadah Commentary*, a collection of mystical and abstruse *aggadot* which were arranged according to Talmudic tractates and esoteric topics. Ezra's style of exegesis included citation of sources and brief kabbalistic allusions. Tishby concluded that R. Ezra wrote this work for initiates and adhered to the principle of esotericism, and he characterized R. Ezra as a "perpetuator of tradition," lacking in depth and imagination, in contrast with the creativity and theosophical originality of R. Azriel. In Tishby's view, R. Ezra's non-speculative, traditionalist bent led him to concentrate on practical religious life, namely, the commandments, the human soul and eschatology, while R. Azriel concentrated on Biblical and rabbinic sources relevant for theosophical speculation.

A shift in Tishby's research occurred when he observed the extent to which later kabbalists directly cited R. Ezra and preserved parts of his *Aggadah Commentary* and other writings. In Tishby's study of Azriel's *Aggadah Commentary* he listed citations of R. Ezra's *Aggadah Commentary* by subsequent kabbalists: Rabbi Yaakov ben Sheshet, Rabbi Todros Abulafia, Rabbi Meir ibn Sahula, Rabbi Menachem Recanti, *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut*, *Sefer ha-Shem*, and the commentary on *Sefer ha-Ma'arekhet* (ed. Ferrara). Prof. E. Gottlieb extended this list of references to include R. Bahya ben Asher, R. Joshua ibn Shu'ayb and R. Isaac of Acco. Tishby concluded that R. Ezra's faithful presentation of material assured him a position as an important representative figure in the history of kabbalah.

Forty years have passed since Tishby's pioneering studies and more than twenty years have passed since the publication of Scholem's *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbalah*, as well as Vajda's critical French edition of R. Ezra's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. Scholarly progress in the study of kabbalah and Jewish intellectual history demands that the works of R.

Ezra be re-evaluated. For example, no critical Hebrew edition of his *Commentary on the Song of Songs* exists. E. Gottlieb has observed that C. Chavel's printing of the *Commentary* under the name of Rabbi Moses ben Nahman, utilizing the copy of an early printing, is full of errors and emendations.

Scholarship on rabbinic philosophy and exegesis in Europe from the twelfth century onward has highlighted the significance of the allegorical interpretation of the *Song of Songs*. Rabbi Ezra's mystical-symbolic interpretation is an important part of this development and awaits serious attention. His *Aggadah Commentary* also needs to be published in a critical edition to facilitate the study of early kabbalah and to examine the relationship between *aggadah* and mysticism in the history of Jewish thought. Furthermore, the doctrines transmitted from the study house of R. Isaac the Blind through R. Ezra had a significant and complex impact on the development of Jewish mysticism. Thus, it is imperative that these intellectual and spiritual treasures of R. Ezra's legacy come again to light.

General Bibliographical Works

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--, *Les Origines de la Kabbale*. Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1966, pp. 387-499.

--, *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbalah*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1962.

--, *Reshit Ha-Kabbalah*. Jerusalem, 1948, pp. 127-130.

--, "Aggadah ve-Kabbalah be-Perushei ha-Aggadot shel R. Ezra ve-R. Azriel me-Gerona." In *Minhah le-Yehudah, Sefer Zlotnik-Avida*. Jerusalem, 1950, pp. 170-174.

Tishby, I. "Ha-Mekubbalim R. Ezra ve-R. Azriel u-Mekomam be-Hug Gerona." *Zion* 9(1944): 178-185.

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Part II will include a description of primary works and relevant studies on R. Ezra.

Martelle Gavarin: Bar-Ilan University

KABBALISTIC YESHIVOT IN JERUSALEM TODAY

This survey lists the names and addresses, directors, and when possible, the history, orientation, nature of population and type of instruction of contemporary centers of traditional kabbalistic study in Israel.

Ha-Hayyim ve-ha-Shalom, Yosef Mattityahu 18, Jerusalem. Director: Rav Mordechai Attiya. History: In 1940s, it became the first yeshiva in Israel to openly teach kabbalah to young people. Orientation: The method of study follows the approach of Shalom Sharabi, involving the literal analysis of the language of the text without entertaining metaphysical tangents. Correct and clear reading of the text is emphasized and Talmudic techniques are applied in examining *kavvanot* of the *Etz Hayyim* and prayer. Population: Mostly Sephardi *kollel* students and some *ba'alei teshuvah*. Instruction: Although most students study Talmud, there is an afternoon advanced kabbalah group of 10-15 students and a weekly beginner's class. Taught in Hebrew.

Beit El, Corner of Rashi and Mattiyahu, in Shalom Mizrahi Synagogue, Jerusalem. Directors: Rav Yitzhak Kaduri and Rav Shmuel Darzi. History: Continuation of the old Beit El which was run by the late Rav Ovadia Odia. Orientation: Approach based on Shalom Sharabi's three dimensional arrangement of the *partzufim*. Text read literally with basic commentary of *Shemen Sasson*, by Sasson ben Moshe. Population: A few elderly men sit in the afternoon to study. Taught in Hebrew.

Sha'arei Shamayim, Rashbam St. 9, Jerusalem. Director: Rav Fishel Eisenbach and Rav David Orbach. Orientation: Quick skimming of the ARI and commentaries. Population: Closed atmosphere; about 100 Ashkenazi and Hasidic kolel students. Instruction: Several groups study kabbalah in the afternoon. Taught in Yiddish.

Ahavat Shalom, Strauss St. Near Kikar Shabbat, Jerusalem. Director: Rav Yaakov Hillel. Orientation: Close detailed reading of text with in-depth analysis of commentaries. Population: Closed, highly selective; About 150 Sephardi kolel students. Instruction: Kabbalah class has about 15-20 participants. Taught in Hebrew.

Rishpei Aish, Above Western Wall, Old City, Jerusalem. Director: Rav Meir Yehuda Getz. Orientation: Approach of Shalom Sharabi which reduces the text to an organismic world-view. Population: Intellectuals and modern religious professionals. Instruction: After 2 a.m. Rav Getz teaches. Taught in Hebrew.

Kol Yehudah and Or ha-Gannuz, Habad 48, Old City, Jerusalem. Director: Rav Mordechai Sheinberger. Orientation: Approach of Yehudah Ashlag which takes the anthropomorphism out of kabbalah and deals with the dynamic

inter-relationships of concepts. Instruction: Taught in Hebrew but some introductory classes in English.

Nahar Shalom, Near Mahne Yehuda off Agrippas and Shilo Strs, Jerusalem. Director: A student of the late Rav Mordechai Sharabi. Orientation: Older Sephardim skimming and reciting the ARI, Shalom Sharabi and *kavvanot*. In Hebrew.

Devash Bitzion ha-Shalom, Takoah St. 10, near Nahalot neighborhood, Jerusalem. Director: Rav Ben Zion Bracha. Orientation: Follows the late Rav Mordechai Sharabi. Open to *ba'alei teshuvah*.

Mercaz Hochmat Halev, HaKinnor 1, Old City, Jerusalem. Director: Rabbi Yoel Glick. Orientation: Open approach to whole range of Jewish spirituality. Instruction: Tutorials and classes in kabbalah, Hasidism and Jewish meditation. Taught in English.

Ahavat Torah, HaShla 13, Sha'arei Hesed, Jerusalem. Director: Rabbi Nosson David Rabinowitz. Population: *ba'alei teshuvah*. Instruction: Classes in kabbalah related to astrology, *gematria* and music taught by Rav Matitayhu Glazer. Taught in English.

INDIVIDUALS

Rav David Aaron teaches classes on kabbalah and prayer to English speaking, modern Orthodox youth and adults and *ba'alei teshuvah* at *Israel Center*, Straus St. 10, and *Israelight*, Habad St. across from Zemach Zedek Habad, Old City, Jerusalem.

Rav Gedaliah Fler teaches texts of Kabbalah and Bratslav Hasidim at Shone Halachot 8, Old City, Jerusalem

Rav Yitzhak Ginsburgh teaches combination of Hasidut and kabbalah at Ramban Synagogue, Old City and Yoel St. 3, Jerusalem. Taught in English and Hebrew. Open to all.

Rav Shmuel Toledano teaches *Etz Hayyim* with approach of the Vilna Gaon and Moshe Hayyim Luzzato; *gematria* used. Open to all and taught in Hebrew, Spanish or French and located at Mihlin 5, Jerusalem.

For other individuals see *Notes on Some Israeli Rabbis*. (a pamphlet listing current Hasidic and kabbalistic *zaddikim* and *rebbe*s). Jerusalem: Yeshivat Devash Bitzion ha-Shalom, 1985. See above.

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- Friedman, Maurice. "Hasidism: The Buber-Scholem Controversy." *Midstream* 30 (Fall 1984): 40-47.
- Galili, Ze'ev. "On the question of the Authorship of the Commentary *Or ha-Gannuz* Attributed to Rabbi Meir ben Solomon Abi Sahula" (in Hebrew). *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 4, nos. 1-2 (1984): 83-96.
- Goldberg, Arnold. "Das Schriftzitat in der Hekhalot-Literatur." *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 13 (1985): 53-60.
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GRADUATE RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Cohen-Elior, Dorit (Hebrew University). Magic and Witchcraft in the *Zohar*. Supervisor: Rivka Shatz-Uffenheimer.

Holdrege, Barbara A. (Harvard). Veda and Torah: The Cosmological Status of Scripture in the Hindu and Judaic Traditions. Supervisor: John B. Carman.

Wolfson, Elliot (Brandeis University). Moses de Leon's *Sefer ha-Rimmon*: Critical Edition and Introductory Study. Supervisor: Marvin Fox.

Yoshe, Nissim (Hebrew University). The Kabbalah of Avraham Cohen Herrera: Critical Edition and Translation of *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*. Supervisor: Rivka Shatz-Uffenheimer.

KABBALAH invites university faculty and scholars to submit citations of promising or serious undergraduate and graduate essays on Jewish mysticism for inclusion in the newsletter.

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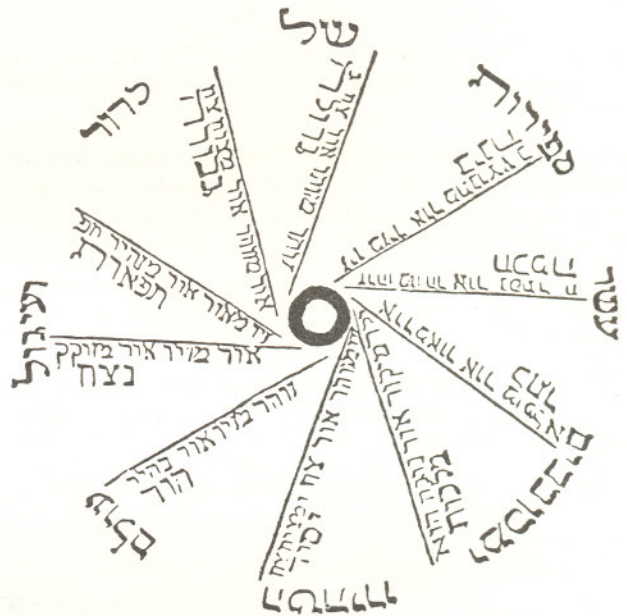
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