

Pe'amim

Studies in Oriental Jewry

157

Kabbala: Ideology and Psychology

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In This Issue

This article deals with the question of how Kabbalists in Yemen related to Kabbalistic knowledge originating in Europe during the seventeenth century. The article refers to the kabbalistic knowledge that arrived in Yemen in the form of printed books, and addresses this phenomenon as a test-case of the ways in which local scholars dealt with the changes in the scholarly world during the early modern period. The discussion focuses on a comparison between two Kabbalists: R. Isaac Wannah and R. Yisrael HaCohen.

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God as a goldsmith is a well-known metaphor for God in Jewish history. However, there are not many scholars or kabbalists who were actual goldsmiths. One exception is R. Hayim Vital, the famous kabbalist from Safed, who, in addition to being the disciple of R. Isaac Luria, was a renowned goldsmith and had firsthand experience of the different aspects of the goldsmith's craft. A perusal of his Kabbalistic writings reveals that Vital did not limit his craftsmanship to his workshop; it also influenced his unique world-views. Through the eyes of a goldsmith, the entire universe – including the human souls and the fallen parts of God himself – is a primal material, and it is the duty and messianic mission of the kabbalist to distill and refine it up to its final purification. In this manner, the actions of the sledgehammer and

the purgatory were replaced by Vital's acts of repentance, prayers, and *yihudim* ("unifications"), which he used to refine the universe and bring it to its messianic era.

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Tzvi Luboshitz's article presents the Zohar commentary of R. Moses Zacuto, which includes a profound interest in a philological reading of the Zohar and is based on purist Lurianic ideology; at the same time, the commentary rejects various competing currents of the Kabbalah in the Jewish world in the seventeenth century.

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This article presents a panoramic picture of Rabbi Yossef Messas' (1892-1974) approach to the Kabbalah as a source of law. The article illustrates his doctrine of separation between halakha and Kabbalah and proves that, despite the central place of the Kabbala in Morocco, some halakhic authorities attempted to limit its influence on halakhic discourse, even in the first half of the 20th century.

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The paper focuses on the dynamic structure of the *sefirot* by applying the psychoanalytic term “multiple-self” to reflect the interweaving of human narratives in the divine “persona,” this as part of a united theosophical system. The article discusses the identification of figures, such as the Patriarchs as a chariot and as *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tiferet*, as it appears in the book of Bahir (12th century) up until to the Zohar literature (13th century). In addition to the figures of the Patriarchs, the Zohar adds the Matriarch as an embodiment of the feminine *sefirot* in the divine tree.

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