

# Notes on the Study of Early Kabbalah in English

with an enlarged section on the  
*Hasidei Ashkenaz* (2016)  
to which is appended

KABBALAH STUDY: JEWISH MYSTICISM IN ENGLISH (1996)

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THE PHASE OF JEWISH MYSTICISM conventionally referred to as “early *kabbalah*” begins with *Sefer ha-Bahir* (ca. 1180) and ends with the *Zohar* (1270-1300). The major features and figures of this span can be outlined thus:\*

## A. Early Kabbalah

### 1. Formative Period

- a. *Sefer ha-Bahir* (1180)
- b. Provence (ca. 1200)
  - i. Isaac the Blind (1160-1235)
  - ii. The *Iyyun* School (early to mid-1200s)
- c. Gerona (ca. 1200-1250)
  - i. Ezra ben Solomon (older contemporary of Azriel)
  - ii. Azriel (c. 1160-ca. 1238)
  - iii. Nahmanides (1194-1270)
  - iv. Jacob ben Sheshet (contemporary of Nahmanides)
  - v. *Sefer ha-Temunah* (ca. 1300)
  - vi. *Sefer ha-Yashar* (13<sup>th</sup> century)
- d. Castile (active 1260-80)
  - i. Jacob ha-Cohen (brother of Isaac ha-Cohen)
  - ii. Isaac ha-Cohen (d. ca. 1300)
  - iii. Moses of Burgos (ca. 1230-1300)

### 2. Developmental Period

- a. Abraham Abulafia (1240-1291)
- b. Moses de Leon (1240-1305)
- c. David ben Yehudah he-Hasid (ca. 1240-ca. 1320)
- d. Joseph Gikatilla (1248-1325)
- e. Menahem Recanati (1250-1310)
- f. Isaac of Acre, or Acco (1250-1340)
- g. Bahya ben Asher (1255-1340)

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\* This outline is offered with full awareness that it gives an oversimplified picture of the development of early *kabbalah*. The outline on page 25 of pre-kabbalistic streams is similarly convenient.

Four books cover the FORMATIVE PERIOD; they can serve as the basis of a study of early *kabbalah* in English.

- Scholem, Gershom. *Origins of the Kabbalah* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society/ Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987)—hereafter OK.  
OK is from the German *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbala* (1962), translated by Allan Arkush, edited by R. J. Zwi Werblowsky; *Ursprung...* is an expansion of the Hebrew work, *Reshith ha-Qabbalah* (1948).
- Dan, Joseph; and Keiner, Ronald C. *The Early Kabbalah* [THE CLASSICS IN WESTERN SPIRITUALITY] (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1986)—hereafter EK.<sup>\*</sup>  
EK is an anthology of texts which serves as an excellent complement to OK.
- Dan, Joseph. *Jewish Mysticism, Volume II: The Middle Ages* (Northvale – Jerusalem: Jason Aronson Inc., 1998)—hereafter JMII.  
JMII is a collection of Dan’s articles covering early Kabbalah (concentrating on *Sefer ha-Bahir*) and the Ashkenazi Hasidim (see below, Pre-Kabbalistic Streams of Jewish Mysticism, § 5. *Hasidei Ashkenaz*).
- Dauber, Jonathan. *Knowledge of God and the Development of Early Kabbalah* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2012)—hereafter Knowledge of God  
To state my thesis in broad terms, a major factor that led to the development of Kabbalah was the adoption by the first Kabbalists of a philosophic ethos that, under the influence of the newly emergent Hebrew philosophic materials, had taken root in Jewish communities in Languedoc and Catalonia. This was an ethos in which a sort of meta-reflection on classical Jewish texts and, in particular, the investigation of God as the height of that reflection, was accorded great religious significance. It was their adoption of such an ethos, and the seriousness with which they took it, that spurred the early Kabbalists to actively develop and expand their traditions. (—page 3)

See also

- Haskell, Ellen Davina. *Suckling at My Mother’s Breasts: The Image of a Nursing God in Jewish Mysticism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012).  
This book is a reworking of Haskell’s Ph.D. dissertation, METAPHOR AND SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION: THE IMAGE OF GOD AS SUCKLING MOTHER IN THIRTEENTH CENTURY KABBALAH (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005).  
See CHAPTER TWO, “Suckling the Divine Overflow in Early Kabbalah,” which  
...looks at three influential early kabbalistic works that develop and incorporate imagery associated with the nursing divine: *Sefer ha-Bahir* (*The Book of Brightness*), Isaac the Blind’s *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah* (*The Book of Formation*), and Ezra of Gerona’s *Perush le-Shir-ha-Shirim* (*Commentary on the Song of Songs*). (—page 12)
- Mottolese, Maurizio. *Analogy in Midrash and Kabbalah: Interpretive Projections of the Sanctuary and Ritual* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2007).  
While Mottolese’s work covers a broad range (Midrash, Maimonides, and mysticism), the core of the book (from CHAPTER 6 on) treats early *kabbalah* “from

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\* *From the Depth of the Well: An Anthology of Jewish Mysticism*, edited by Ariel Evan Mayse (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2014) contains excerpts of writings from this period drawn from Dan and Keiner’s *Early Kabbalah* (noted above) with passages from Ezra ben Solomon from Seth Brody’s *Commentary on the Song of Songs* (listed below in § 1.c.1).

Provence to the *Zohar*.” The kabbalists whom Mottolese draws upon most are Ezra of Gerona, Nahmanides, and, from a generation or so later, R. Bahya ben Asher (d. 1340).

“Analogy,” which elsewhere might be termed “correspondence,” requires the notion of a sympathetic universe as epitomized by a phrase like “As above, so below.” If nothing else, *kabbalah* is about analogy.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Bodily Rituals in Jewish Mysticism: The Intensification of Cultic Hand Gestures by Medieval Kabbalists* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2016).

Within the confines of his subject, Mottolese covers the entire spectrum of the current bibliography, from the *formative* period to the *developmental* period and the *Zohar*.

- Lachter, Hartley. *Kabbalistic Revolution: Reimagining Judaism in Medieval Spain* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014).

“This study will focus on kabbalistic texts produced in Spain, mainly in the region of Castile-Leon, during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Kabbalists whose works will be of particular importance include Joseph Gikatilla, Moses de Leon, Joseph of Hamadan, David ben Yehudah he-Hasid, and to a lesser extent, Joseph ben Todros ha-Levi Abulafia and Isaac ibn Sahula. Occasional reference will be made, as a point of comparison, to kabbalists who lived and worked either earlier in the thirteenth century (such as Ezra and Azriel of Gerona, Nahmanides, Asher ben David, and the circle of *Iyyun* texts, or ‘Books of Contemplation’), or those who lived contemporaneously with the kabbalists in question but outside the region of Castile, mainly in Catalonia and Aragon (prominent examples would include Bahya ben Asher from Segovia and the students of Nahmanides living in the region of Catalonia), where kabbalists were somewhat more conservative. Notably absent from this list is Abraham Abulafia...” (pages 11-12).

To the above books, add the following dissertations:

- Brody, Seth Lance. HUMAN HANDS DWELL IN HEAVENLY HEIGHTS: WORSHIP AND MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE IN THIRTEENTH-CENTURY KABBALAH (Ph.D. dissertation, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1991).

“Current discussion of Kabbalistic spirituality, originating with Gershom Scholem, tends to differentiate between the ‘theurgic’ and ‘transformative’ sides of Kabbalistic practice and to present them as constituting divergent goals for mystical intentionality and life. Our analysis of thirteenth-century sources dealing with contemplative prayer and the priestly cult indicate that on the contrary, the Theurgic efficacy of a Kabbalist’s worship is a product of his experiential adhesion and absorption into Divinity.” (from the ABSTRACT, p. vii)

- Dauber, Jonathan Victor. STANDING ON THE HEADS OF PHILOSOPHERS: MYTH AND PHILOSOPHY IN EARLY KABBALAH. (Ph.D. dissertation, New York: New York University, 2004).

Chapters include “The Opening to Myth in the Thought of Abraham bar Hiyya,” “Myth and Philosophy in *Sefer ha-Bahir*,” “Ascent and Decent” in *Sefer ha-Bahir*, R. Jacob ben Sheshet, and R. Azriel of Gerona, and “Myth and Discursive Thinking in R. Asher b. David.”

- Goldberg, Joel R. (= Yechiel Shalom Goldberg). MYSTICAL UNION, INDIVIDUALITY, AND INDIVIDUATION IN PROVENÇAL AND CATALONIAN KABBALAH (Ph.D. dissertation, New York: New York University, 2001).

Focusing on the earliest kabbalists (e.g., Isaac the Blind, Ezra ben Solomon, and particularly Azriel of Gerona), Goldberg considers the role of individuality in mystical phenomena, i.e., mystical union and the ritual actions which precipitate it. See below, page 7, § 1.b.

## Formative Period

### 1. a. Sefer ha-Bahir (BOOK OF BRIGHTNESS):

The earliest work considered “kabbalistic” is *Sefer ha-Bahir*. There are substantial discussions of this text in OK (pp. 35-48, 49-198) and Dan’s JMII (xiv-lvii, 1-18—see below in “Other references”). Translated excerpts are given in EK (pp. 57-69).

Using Scholem’s observations as a starting point, Ronit Meroz has presented her conclusions regarding the three distinct strata of *Sefer ha-Bahir* in several lectures (including “A Bright Light in the East—The Babylonian Stratum in *Sefer ha-Bahir*,” Session: HERMENEUTICAL REFLECTIONS ON EARLY KABBALAH at the Association for Jewish Studies Thirty-fourth Annual Conference, Los Angeles: December 17, 2002) and in her Hebrew article, “A Bright Light in the East: On the Time and Place of Part of *Sefer ha-Bahir*” in *Da’at: A Journal of Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah* 49 ([Ramat-Gan]: Universitat Bar-Ilan, 2002):

- about half was written in Provence in the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century
- most of the rest was written in the Jewish Babylonian congregation which lived in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries; this stratum has several layers within it and includes *Raza Rabba*
- a few paragraphs were written earlier in the land of Israel, some time before the Babylonian strata

Regarding all this, refer to Meroz’ articles in English:

- “A Journey of Initiation in the Babylonian Layer of *Sefer ha-Bahir*,” in *Studia Hebraica*, Issue no. 7 (Bucharest: The “Goldstein Goren” Center for Hebrew Studies, 2007), on-line at <https://www.cceol.com/search/article-detail?id=124809>
- “Middle Eastern Origins of Kabbalah,” § B. THE BABYLONIAN STRATUM OF THE BOOK BAHIR, in *The Journal for the Study of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry*, VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1, SECTION 1: ACADEMICS AND RESEARCH (Summer 2007), edited by Zion Zohar, on-line at <http://sephardic.fiu.edu/journal/Summer2007.htm> [DEFUNCT LINK].\*

Fixing a date for *Sefer ha-Bahir* is also taken up in Giulio Busi’s FOREWORD to Saverio Campanini’s edition of Mithridates’ Latin translation, noted immediately below. Busi determines that the redaction of the *Bahir* must have been some time after 1161, namely after Bahya ibn Pakuda’s *Duties of the Heart* and Yehuda HaLevi’s *Kuzari* had been translated from their original Arabic into Hebrew; one, the other, or both are the probable source of the *Bahir*’s “hidden quote” concerning “*whoever frees his heart from worldly occupations*” in its definition of the “*Merkavah*”

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\* Now try ACADEMIA: <https://www.academia.edu/2049611/7. The Middle Eastern Origins of Kabbalah>

mystic.” Regarding further thematic sources for the *Bahir* coming from the *Kuzari*, Busi notes the likelihood

that Yehudah ha-Lewi’s book influenced directly the redactor of the *Bahir*, since, between the final redaction of this one in Southern France and the translation of the *Kuzari* into Hebrew, there is a demonstrable relation in space and time. As a matter of fact, the highly positive meaning of the heavenly agriculture present in the *Bahir* is quite close to Yehudah ha-Lewi’s theories centered on the election of Israel. (*The Book of Bahir*—page 32)

The notion of *Sefer ha-Bahir*’s being the “first kabbalistic work” has been called into question. Note Jonathan Dauber’s conclusion (*Knowledge of God*, page 3): “[T]he *Bahir* did not in fact become known until the thirteenth century and ... its designation as a Kabbalistic work is problematic” (see *Knowledge of God*, CHAPTER FIVE). Daniel Abrams, an acknowledged source for Dauber, raises similar issues, questioning whether *Sefer ha-Bahir* is, in fact, *kabbalistic*—or even *a work* (see *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory...*, CHAPTER 2, “The Interpolation of Marginal Glosses: ‘The *Shekhinah*’ and the Theosophic Revisions of Early Manuscripts of the *Book Bahir*”).

There are five English extended translations of *Sefer ha-Bahir*:

- Campanini, Saverio (ed). *The Book of Bahir: Flavius Mithridates’ Latin Translation, the Hebrew Text, and an English Version* [THE KABBALISTIC LIBRARY OF GIOVANNI PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA – Giulio Busi, General Editor] (Torino: Nino Aragno Editore, 2005).  
The English version is from the Latin of Mithridates.
- Collé, E. and Collé, H. *The Bahir / The Brightness: A New Translation with New Insights into One of the Most Important Books of the Kabbalah* ([n.p.]: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014).  
From the Amsterdam (1651) edition.
- Dennis, Geoffrey W. *Sefer ha-Bahir: Selections from The Book of Brilliance, The Classic Text of Early Kabbalah* (Woodbury: Llewellyn Publications, 2017).  
“Drawing from both the [Moshe] Margolioth (*Sefer ha-Bahir* [Jerusalem: Mossad Rav Kook, 1994]) and [Daniel] Abrams (*The Book Bahir...*[Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 1994]) texts, for this collection I have selected fifty-one of the most piquant and ... accessible passages, enough to allow the reader to see the full scope of the *Bahir*’s interests, but sparing the reader both the seriously fragmented sections and often repetitive nature of the complete work” (page 8).
- Kaplan, Aryeh. *The Bahir: An Ancient Kabbalistic Text attributed to Nehuniah ben HaKana / 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E.* (New York: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1979).
- Neugroschel, Joachim. “From the Bahir,” in *The Secret Garden*, edited by David Meltzer (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), pages 47-96.  
“...translated from the definitive edition prepared by Gershom Scholem,” i.e., *Das Buch Bahir* (Berlin: Arthur Scholem, 1923; Leipzig: W. Drugulin, 1923; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1970).

Excerpts of the *Bahir* appear in the following:

- Bokser, Ben Zion. *The Jewish Mystical Tradition* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1981): § 7. “*Sefer haBahir*” (translated excerpts).
- Dan/Kiener. EK (pp. 57-69).

- Dauber, Jonathan. *Knowledge of God*, CHAPTER FIVE: “Investigating God in *Sefer ha-Bahir*.”  
Dauber translates and comments on *Bahir* §§ 46, 48, 53, and 96.
- \_\_\_\_\_. STANDING ON THE HEADS OF PHILOSOPHERS... (noted above, page 3):  
CHAPTER TWO, Section D, offers a “Textual Analysis of *Sefer ha-Bahir*, Sections 32-60”  
CHAPTER THREE translates § 60  
APPENDIX 2 translates parts of § 32.
- Finkel, Avraham Yaakov. *Kabbalah: Selections from Classic Kabbalistic Works from Raziel HaMalach to the Present Day* (Southfield: Targum Press, 2002).  
Finkel offers *Bahir* §§ 1, 3, 125, 126, 175, 176, and 195.
- Hoffman, Edward (ed.). *The Kabbalah Reader: A Sourcebook of Visionary Judaism*, foreword by Arthur Kurzweil (Boston – London: Trumpeter/Shambhala Publications, 2010).  
Hoffman includes *Bahir* §§ 1, 2, 3, 5, 194, and 195.
- Horowitz, Daniel M. *A Kabbalah and Jewish Mysticism Reader* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2016), pages 76-80.  
With commentary, Horowitz translates §§ 23, 119, 125, and 195.
- Matt, Daniel C. *The Essential Kabbalah: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994).  
Matt translates §§ 22 (THE COSMIC TREE), 104 (THE RIGHTEOUS PILLAR), and 150 (STUMBLING).

#### Other references:

- Abrams, Daniel. “The Condensation of the Symbol ‘Shekhinah’ in the Manuscripts of the *Book Bahir*,” in *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts*, vol. 16, edited by D. Abrams and A. Elqayam (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2007); a revised version of this paper appears as “The Interpolation of Marginal Glosses: ‘The Shekhinah’ and Theosophic Revisions of Early Manuscripts of the *Book Bahir*” = CHAPTER 2 of *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory: Methodologies of Textual Scholarship and Editorial Practice in the Study of Jewish Mysticism* (Los Angeles – Jerusalem: Cherub Press – The Magnes Press, 2010—2<sup>nd</sup> revised edition 2014).
- Dan, Joseph. *Gershom Scholem and the Mystical Dimension of Jewish History* [MODERN JEWISH MASTERS SERIES #2] (New York: New York University Press, 1988), CHAPTER 5. “The Enigmatic *Book Bahir*.”
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Midrash and the Dawn of Kabbalah,” in *Midrash and Literature*, edited by G. Hartman and S. Budick (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); also in JMII: CHAPTER I.
- Dauber, Jonathan. *Knowledge of God*:  
- CHAPTER 5. “Investigating God in *Sefer ha-Bahir*”
- \_\_\_\_\_. STANDING ON THE HEADS OF PHILOSOPHERS (noted above, page 3):  
- CHAPTER 2. MYTH AND PHILOSOPHY IN SEFER HA-BAHIR  
- CHAPTER 3: A. SEFER HA-BAHIR: § 30  
- APPENDIX 2. § 32 OF SEFER HA-BAHIR IN LIGHT OF EARLY KABBALISTIC SOURCES
- Esmail, Waheeda. THE TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE OF THE DIVINE IN THE BAHIR AND IBN AL-ARABI’S THOUGHT. MA Thesis (Montreal: Concordia University, 2011).
- Eylon, Dina Ripsman. *Reincarnation in Jewish Mysticism and Gnosticism* [JEWISH STUDIES, Volume 25] (Lewiston-Queenston-Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2003).

- Fishbane, Michael. *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003): CHAPTER 10. A. I. THE MYTHIC DISCOURSE OF THE BAHIR (pp. 256-260).
- Green, Arthur. *Keter: The Crown of God in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997): Chapter Thirteen. “Sefer ha-Bahir.”
- Idel, Moshe. *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism: Pillars, Lines, and Ladders* (Budapest – New York: Central European University Press, 2005): Chapter 2, § 3, “The Pillar in the Book Bahir”
- Krzok, Paul. “A Look at the Bahir,” in *The Hermetic Journal*, Number 22, edited by Adam McLean (Edinburgh: Winter 1983).
- Lehmann, O. H. “The Theology of the Mystical Book Bahir, in *Studia Patristica I* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1957).
- McGaha, Michael. “The Sefer ha-Bahir and Andalusian Sufism,” in *Medieval Encounters*, Volume 3, Number 1 (Leiden – New York: E. J. Brill, 1997), pages 20-57.
- Neubauer, A. “The Bahir and the Zohar,” in *Jewish Quarterly Review*, ORIGINAL SERIES, vol. 4 (London: Macmillan and Co., 1892).
- Schäfer, Peter. *Mirror of His Beauty: Feminine Images of God from the Bible to the Early Kabbalah* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002): Chapter 6, “The Shekhinah in the Bahir” (pages 118-134).
- Scholem, Gershom. *Kabbalah* [articles from *ENCYCLOPEDIA JUDAICA*] (Jerusalem - New York: Keter Publishing House/Times Books, 1974; rpt. New York: Dorset Press, 1987): (article) “Sefer ha-Bahir.”
- \_\_\_\_\_. *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965): Chapter 3. “Kabbalah and Myth,” § II.
- Wolfson, Elliot R. “Before Alef/Where Beginnings End,” in *Beginning/Again: Toward a Hermeneutics of Jewish Texts*, edited by Aryeh Cohen and Shaul Magid (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2002).
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Hebraic and Hellenic Conceptions of Wisdom in Sefer ha-Bahir,” in *Poetics Today*, volume 19, number 1: HELLENISM AND HEBRAISM RECONSIDERED: THE POETICS OF CULTURAL INFLUENCE AND EXCHANGE I, edited by David Stern (Durham: Duke University Press, Spring 1998).
- \_\_\_\_\_. “The Tree That Is All: Jewish-Christian Roots of a Kabbalistic Symbol in Sefer ha-Bahir,” in
  1. (idem) *Along the Path: Studies in Kabbalistic Myth, Symbolism and Hermeneutics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).
  2. *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*, vol. 3, issue 1 [Special Issue: STUDIES IN JEWISH MYSTICISM, ESOTERICISM, AND HASIDISM] (Harwood Academic Publishers GmbH, 1993).

i. b. Provence:

The fragments of material that were to become *Sefer ha-Bahir* made their way to Provence where they fed the development of a mystical school, ca. 1200. This school’s second generation was headed by R. Isaac the Blind (d. 1235), “...the first Jewish scholar whom we know by name that dedicated all his creative powers to the field of Kabbalah” (Dan’s introduction to EK, p. 31). On Isaac the Blind, see EK (pp. 31-4, translations on pp. 71-86), and OK (pp. 248-309).

R. Isaac’s major work, *Commentary on SEFER YEZIRAH*, “the first systematic treatise of Kabbalah,” is fully analyzed and translated by Mark Brian Sendor in THE

EMERGENCE OF PROVENÇAL KABBALAH: RABBI ISAAC THE BLIND'S COMMENTARY ON SEFER YEZIRAH, Volumes I & II (Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge: Harvard University, 1994). In MYSTICAL UNION, INDIVIDUALITY, AND INDIVIDUATION IN PROVENÇAL AND CATALONIAN KABBALAH (noted above, page 2), Yechiel Shalom Goldberg analyzes key passages from R. Isaac the Blind's *Commentary on SEFER YEZIRAH* as well as passages from the works of R. Isaac's nephew, R. Asher ben David, and R. Azriel of Gerona (see below).

Further references:

- Halbertal, Moshe. *Concealment and Revelation: Esotericism in Jewish Thought and Its Philosophical Implications*, translated by Jackie Feldman (Princeton – Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007): CHAPTER 9, “From Transmission to Writing: Hinting, Leaking, and Orthodoxy in Early Kabbalah.”
- Koren, Sharon Faye. “Kabbalistic Physiology: Isaac the Blind, Nahmanides, and Moses de Leon on Menstruation,” in *AJS Review*, vol. 28, no. 2 (Cambridge: Association for Jewish Studies, 2004); and Koren's *Forsaken: The Menstruant in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2011): PART II: MEDIEVAL KABBALAH, chapter 7.
- Matt, Daniel C. *The Essential Kabbalah: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994).  
Matt includes excerpts from Isaac's commentary on SY.
- Zinberg, Israel. *A History of Jewish Literature*, Volume III: THE STRUGGLE OF MYSTICISM AND TRADITION AGAINST PHILOSOPHICAL RATIONALISM (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973): CHAPTER 1, “The Mystics of Provence.”

Also circulating in Provence in the early-to-mid 1200s were the writings of the *Iyyun* (CONTEMPLATION) school. The *kabbalah* of these strange texts is quite different from the doctrines which developed into classical Kabbalah. See EK (p. 26, translations on pp. 43-56, “Book of Speculation,” “Fountain of Wisdom,” and “Explanation of the Four-Lettered Name”), OK (pp. 309-363), and especially Mark Verman's study, *The Books of Contemplation: Medieval Jewish Mystical Sources* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992—a revision of Verman's Ph.D. dissertation, *SIFREI HA-IYYUN*, delivered at Harvard, 1984), which includes translations of several major texts of this group.

On the *Iyyun* school, see

- Dan, Joseph. *The ‘Unique Cherub’ Circle: A School of Mystics and Esoterics in Medieval Germany* [TEXTS AND STUDIES IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN JUDAISM, 15] (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999); comments regarding the *Iyyun* school, or “circle,” appear throughout.
- Grözinger, Karl E. “Handling of Holy Traditions as a Path to Mystical Unity in the *Kitve ha-‘Iyyun*,” in *Rashi 1040-1990: Congres européen des Études juives*, ed. by Gabrielle Sed-Rajna (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1993).
- Verman, Mark. “The Evolution of the Circle of Contemplation,” in *Gershom Scholem's MAJOR TRENDS IN JEWISH MYSTICISM 50 Years After*, edited by J. Dan and P. Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993).



i. c. Gerona (Catalonia):

The most prolific circle of kabbalists from the period before the *Zohar* was that of Gerona, which followed up on the teachings of R. Isaac the Blind. The primary figures of this group were (1) R. Ezra ben Solomon and (2) R. Azriel, who established a school which included (3) R. Moses ben Nahman (Nahmanides) and (4) R. Jacob ben Sheshet.

On the Gerona circle, see EK (pp. 34-36), OK (pp. 365-475), and Moshe Idel's article, "Some Remarks on Ritual and Mysticism in Geronese Kabbalah," in *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*, vol. 3, issue 1 (Harwood Academic Publishers GmbH, 1993).

Other references:

i. R. Ezra ben Solomon:

- Altmann, Alexander. "A Note on the Rabbinic Doctrine of Creation," in (*idem*) *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969).  
Includes excerpts from R. Ezra ben Solomon's *Perush 'al Shir ha-Shirim* and a letter to R. Abraham on God's garments in English.
- Brody, Seth. *Commentary on the Song of Songs* [= *Perush 'al Shir ha-Shirim*] (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 1999).  
Along with R. Ezra's commentary are the "Hidden Midrash to the Book of Lamentations" from the *Zohar Hadash* and R. Bahya ben Asher of Sargossa's commentary on Genesis 1:1-2 (composed 1291).
- Dauber, Jonathan. *Knowledge of God*.
- Gavarin, Martelle. "Rabbi Ezra ben Solomon of Gerona," PART 1, in *Kabbalah: A Newsletter of Current Research in Jewish Mysticism*, vol. 1, no. 2, edited by Hananya Goodman (Jerusalem: Winter, 1985-6); PART 2: "Annotated Bibliography: Source Texts and Criticism," in *Kabbalah: A Newsletter...*, vol. 1, no. 3 (Jerusalem: Spring 1986).
- Green, Arthur. "The Song of Songs in Early Jewish Mysticism," in *Orim: A Jewish Journal at Yale*, vol. 2 (New Haven: Spring 1987).
- Goldberg, Yechiel Shalom. "The Foolishness of the Wise and the Wisdom of Fools in Spanish Kabbalah: An Inquiry into the Taxonomy of the Wise Fool," in *The Journal for the Study of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry*, Volume 1, Issue 2 (October-November 2007), edited by Zion Zohar, on-line at <http://sephardic.fiu.edu/journal/> [DEFUNCT LINK].
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Spiritual Leadership and the Popularization of Kabbalah in Medieval Spain," in *The Journal for the Study of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry*, Volume 2, Issue 2 (Winter 2008/2009), edited by Zion Zohar, at <http://sephardic.fiu.edu/journal/> [DEFUNCT LINK].
- Mottolose, Maurizio. *Analogy in Midrash and Kabbalah* (noted above, page 3).
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6. *Sefer ha-Yashar* [ShY]
- Scholem placed this tract “in the circle of the Kabbalists of Gerona in approximately 1260.” Indeed, it is generally believed that ShY was written by a kabbalist who attempted to render his kabbalistic ideas more acceptable—and accessible—by using the language of ethics and philosophy. Shimon Shokek argues for Rabbi Jonah Gerondi (13<sup>th</sup> century) as the possible, if not probable, author. Some traditions attribute ShY to Rabbenu Tam from the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.
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7. *Commentary to the Ten Sefirot*
- In “A Commentary to the Ten Sefirot from Early Thirteenth-Century Catalonia” (in *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts*, vol. 30, edited by Daniel Abrams, Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2013), Abrams offers a synoptic edition of six manuscripts, with an English translation, based on MS London Reg. 16 A x (Margoloth 755), chosen “because it lacks many of the scribal errors that mar the other manuscripts” (page 15). “In some manuscripts there is an attribution to Nachmanides which was quite common with short, anonymous texts which were copied in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries” (p. 11).

i.d. Castile:

In the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a circle of kabbalists grew around the brothers R. Jacob and R. Isaac ha-Cohen (or Kohen), along with their pupil Moses ben Solomon ben Simeon of Burgos. Scholem refers to their developments as “the Gnostic reaction”—reaction, that is, to the philosophic leanings of the Gerona mystics (ref. Scholem, *Kabbalah* [1974], pp. 55-6). Joseph Dan points out, however, that

The two brothers presented two different conceptions of the celestial and divine worlds. While Rabbi Jacob followed the traditions of the merkavah exegesis of Rabbi Eleazar of Worms and other earlier Jewish scholars, Rabbi Isaac adopted the basic concepts of the ten divine emanations, the *sefirot*, as described in the writings of Rabbi Isaac the Blind of Provence and Rabbi Azriel of Gerona. To their teachings, Rabbi Isaac added a new, revolutionary dimension: he claimed that parallel to the *sefirot* on the holy side, the right, there are evil *sefirot* on the left. (—Dan, “Conflicting Views of the Origins of Evil...,” in *Envisioning Judaism* [noted immediately below], page 823)

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- Dan, Joseph. “Conflicting Views of the Origins of Evil in Thirteenth-Century Kabbalah,” in *Envisioning Judaism: Studies in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, edited by Ra‘anan S. Boustan, Klaus Herrmann, Reimund Leicht, Annette Y. Reed, and Giuseppe Veltri, with the collaboration of Alex Ramos, Volume 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), pages 821-835.  
Dan devotes the last half of his paper to “The Theodicy of Rabbi Moses of Burgos in *The Pillar on the Left*,” offering a comparative analysis of this work and Rabbi Isaac’s *Treatise on the Emanations on the Left*.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “The Emergence of Messianic Mythology in 13<sup>th</sup>-Century Kabbalah in Spain,” in *Occident to Orient: A Tribute to the Memory of A. Scheiber*, edited by Robert Dan (Budapest: Akademiai Kiado/ Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988). Also JMII: Chapter 9.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Samael, Lilith, and the Concept of Evil in Early Kabbalah,” in *AJS Review*, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Association of Jewish Studies, 1980); in *Essential Papers on Kabbalah*, edited by Lawrence Fine (New York: New York University Press, 1995). Also JMII: Chapter 11.
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On Castilian *kabbalah* further, see

- Abrams, Daniel. “Metatron, the Lesser Lord, the Angel Called Elohim – A Kabbalistic Treatise from Thirteenth-Century Castile: Text, Translation and Commentary,” in *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts*, vol. 34, edited by Daniel Abrams (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2016), pages 7-26.
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Kanarfogel’s article leads us to a later phase of Castilian *kabbalah*—the subject of Hartley Lachter’s *Kabbalistic Revolution* (see above, page 3), which treats the writings of Joseph Gikatilla, Moses de Leon, Joseph of Hamadan, and David ben Yehudah he-Hasid—what we call here the “Developmental Period.”

## Developmental Period

2. a. Abraham Abulafia: Abulafia is the focus of Scholem’s 4<sup>th</sup> lecture in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. Further, refer to the following:

- Abulafia, Abraham ben Samuel. “The Book of the Sign,” in *Revelation and Redemption: Jewish Documents of Deliverance from the Fall of Jerusalem to the Death of Nahmanides*, translated & edited by George W. Buchanan (Dillsboro: Western North Carolina Press, 1978): pp. 293-307.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Chaye Ha-Olam Ha-Ba: Life in the World to Come*. Translated by Yaron Ever Hadani and Sharron Shatil (Belize City: Providence University, 2007).\*
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- \_\_\_\_\_. *Ner Elohim: Candle of God*. Translated by Sharron Shatil (Belize City: Providence University, 2007).\*
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Ohr Ha-Shechel – The Light of the Intellect*. Integral edition in English and Hebrew, translated by Avi Solomon, Adam Shohom, and Sharron Shatil (Belize City: Providence University, 2008).\*
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- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Path of the Names* (Berkeley: Trigram/Tree, 1976).  
“From *Sha’eri Zedek*,” “The Question of Prophecy,” and selections from *Haye Olam ha-Ba*, and *Sefer ha-Ot*.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sefer Ha-Chesek* (or *Cheshek*) – *Book of Desire*, translated by Alexandru Munteanu (n.p.: David Smith, LLC, 2016).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sefer Ha-Ot*. Translated by Efrat Levy; integral edition in English, Hebrew, and Aramaic (Belize City: Providence University, 2006).\*
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sefer Ha-Tzeruf – The Book of Permutation* (n.p.: David Smith, LLC, 2016).  
While, it is apparent that this work reflects his teachings, Abulafia did not write this work, which is generally referred to as “the anonymous *Sefer ha-Tzeruf*” (e.g., by Moshe Idel, “TA’ANUG: Erotic Delights from Kabbalah to Hasidim,” in *Hidden Intercourse*, page 126—see below under “Idel”). Even so, Aryeh Kaplan writes,  
Abulafia wrote much about permutation and combination of letters, devoting his entire *Sefer HaTzeruf* (Book of Blendings) to the subject. There, however, he writes very little regarding the actual method in which one makes use of such permutations. There is, however, one place where Abulafia goes into this at length, and this is in his *Otzar Eden HaGanuz* (Treasury of the Hidden Light). (*Meditation and Kabbalah*, page 83)
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sheva Netivot Ha-Torah: The Seven Paths of Torah*. Integral edition in English and Hebrew – 04/2006 (Belize City: Providence University, 2006).\*

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\* For information, go to [www.everburninglight.org](http://www.everburninglight.org).

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sitrei Torah: Secrets of the Torah*, volumes 1 and 2, translated by Yaron Eden Hadani and Alexandru Munteanu (ENGLISH EDITION – Belize City: Providence University, 2009).\*
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- Albotini, Yehuda. *Sulam Aliyah: Ladder of Ascent*. Translated by Yodfat Glazer and Adam Shohom. Integral edition in English and Hebrew (Belize City: Providence University, 2007).\*
  - “In particular, Rabbi Albotini followed a system advanced by Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia that is generally referred to as ‘ecstatic’ or ‘prophetic’ Kabbalah, as outlined in Abulafia’s *Sefer ha-Ot* (Book of the Sign).” —PREFACE, page viii
  - On Albotini’s *Sulam Aliyah* (or *Sullam ha-‘Aliyah*), see David R. Blumenthal’s *Understanding Jewish Mysticism: A Source Reader*, Volume II (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1982), CHAPTER 4, “The Abulafian Transformation” (ref § THREE CHAPTERS FROM AL-BOTONI’S *SULLAM HA-‘ALIYAH*, text with commentary—pages 42-78).
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  - While Abraham Abulafia is not the only mystic discussed in this book, he figures most prominently throughout. See in particular, CHAPTER 3, “The One out There: Autoscopic Phenomena in Jewish Mysticism” (pages 35-84).
- Arzy, Shahar; Idel, Moshe; Landis, Theodor; and Blanke, Olaf. “Speaking with One’s Self: Autoscopic Phenomena in Writings from the Ecstatic Kabbalah,” in *Journal of Consciousness Studies: Controversies in Science & the Humanities*, Volume 12, Number 11 (Exeter: Imprint Academic, November 2005), pages 4-29.
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  2. *Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History*, edited by Marc Saperstein (New York: New York University Press, 1992).
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- Hames, Harvey J. “A Seal within a Seal: The Imprint of Sufism in Abraham Abulafia’s Teachings,” in *Medieval Encounters: Jewish, Christian and Muslim Culture in Confluence and Dialogue*, VOLUME 12, NUMBER 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2006).
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- \_\_\_\_\_. “Three in One or One that is Three: On the Dating of Abraham Abulafia’s *Sefer ha-Ot*,” in *Review des Études Juives* 165, Issue 1-2 (Paris: janv-juin 2006).
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- \_\_\_\_\_. “Abulafia’s Secrets of the *Guide*: A Linguistic Turn,” in *Perspectives on Jewish Thought and Mysticism*, edited by A. L. Ivry, E. Wolfson, and A. Arkush (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998).
- \_\_\_\_\_. “*Hitbodedut* as Concentration in Ecstatic Kabbalah,” in *Jewish Spirituality I: From the Bible through the Middle Ages*, edited by Arthur Green (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985).
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- \_\_\_\_\_. *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).
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- \_\_\_\_\_. “The Contribution of Abraham Abulafia’s Kabbalah to the Understanding of Jewish Mysticism,” in *Gershom Scholem’s MAJOR TRENDS IN JEWISH MYSTICISM 50 Years After* (1993).
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- Kiener, Ronald. “From *Ba’al ha-Zohar* to Prophet to Ecstatic: The Vicissitudes of Abulafia in Contemporary Scholarship,” in *Gershom Scholem’s MAJOR TRENDS IN JEWISH MYSTICISM 50 Years After* (1993).
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  - Scholem, Gershom. *Kabbalah*: pp. 53-9, 62-5, 180-3.
  - Shem Tov Sefardi [de Leon] (attr.) *Shaarei Tzedek: Gates of Righteousness*, translated by Yaron Ever Hadani (Belize City: Providence University, 2006).\*  
 “As Moshe Idel demonstrated, this book is incorrectly attributed to Rabbi Shem Tov de Leon. Its apparently true author is a direct disciple of Avraham Abulafia, Natan ben Saadyah Harar.” (Fabrizio Lanza’s PREFACE, page vi).
  - Stow, Sandra Debenedetti. “Abraham Abulafia’s Impact on Arts of Memory and European Culture,” in *How Jewish Mystical Thinking Shaped Early Modern Europe: Cabbalistic Influences on Shakespeare, Cervantes, Rabelais and Others*, edited by Yona Dureau (Lewiston – Queenston – Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2014), pages 83-120.
  - Wolfson, Elliot R. *Abraham Abulafia—Kabbalist and Prophet: Hermeneutics, Theosophy and Theurgy* [SOURCES AND STUDIES IN THE LITERATURE OF JEWISH MYSTICISM, 7] (Culver City: Cherub Press, 2000). This work incorporates the following articles:
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2. b. Moses ben Shem Tov de Leon: Listed here are items which fall distinctly outside the discussion of the *Zohar* and take up de Leon’s other works.
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- Margoliouth, George. “The Doctrine of Ether in the Kabbalah,” in *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. 20 (1908).
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 Wolfson prepared a critical edition of *Sefer ha Rimmon: The Book of the Pomegranate: Moses de Leon’s Sefer ha-Rimmon* [BROWN JUDAIC STUDIES, no. 144], Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988—a revised version of Wolfson’s Ph.D. dissertation (Waltham: Brandeis University, 1986). The text is given in Hebrew; the 69-page introduction is in English.

## 2. c. David ben Yehuda he-Hasid

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- Matt, Daniel Chanan. *The Book of Mirrors: Sefer Mar’ot ha Zove’ot* by R. David ben Yehudah he-Hasid [BROWN JUDAIC STUDIES, no. 30] (Chico: Scholars Press, 1982).

“An important feature of *The Book of Mirrors* is the large number of passages from the Zohar which Rabbi David translates into Hebrew from the original pseudo-Aramaic. His renderings represent the first lengthy translations of the Zohar. Through them we see how a contemporary Kabbalist read and understood (sometimes misunderstood) the seminal Work of Kabbalah” (—HUCA 51, p. 129).

The Scholars Press edition of *Book of Mirrors* is a slightly revised version of Matt’s Ph.D. dissertation, *SEFER MAR’OT HA-ZOVE’OT* by Rabbi David ben Yehudah he-Hasid: *Text and Study* (Waltham: Brandeis University, 1978), available from UMI at [www.il.proquest.com](http://www.il.proquest.com)—easier to obtain than the book.

A revision of Matt’s English introduction appears as “David ben Yehuda Hehasid and His *Book of Mirrors*” in *Hebrew Union College Annual*, vol. 51 (Cincinnati: 1980).

2. d. Joseph Gikatilla

- Abrams, Daniel. “R. Joseph Gikatilla’s ‘Secret of the Cherubs,’” in *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts*, Volume 36, edited by Daniel Abrams (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2017), pages 7-24.
- Blickstein, Schlomo. BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND MYSTICISM: A STUDY OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL-QABBALISTIC WRITINGS OF JOSEPH GIQATILA (1248-C[A].1322). Ph.D. dissertation, New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1983.  
Blickstein’s study focuses on Gikatilla’s *Ginnat ’Egoz*.
- Bokser, Ben Zion. *The Jewish Mystical Tradition*. § 10: “Joseph Gikatilla.”
- Gikatilla, Joseph ben Abraham. *Gates of Light* [SHA’ARE ORAH] translated by Avi Weinstein. San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994.
- Giqatilla, Yosef. *The Book of Punctuation: Flavius Mithridates’ Latin Translation, the Hebrew Text, and an English Version*, edited with introduction and notes by Annett Martini [THE KABBALISTIC LIBRARY OF GIOVANNI PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA 4, Giulio Busi, general editor]. Torino: Nino Aragno Editore, 2010.  
See my review of this book in ADDENDUM F of *The Study of Christian Cabala*, at <http://www.digital-brilliance.com/contributed/Karr/Biblios/ccineb.pdf>
- Hecker, Joel. *Mystical Bodies, Mystical Meals: Eating and Embodiment in Medieval Kabbalah* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005).
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- \_\_\_\_\_. *Kabbalistic Revolution: Reimagining Judaism in Medieval Spain* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014).
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- Mopsik, Charles. “The Secret of the Marriage of David and Batsheva” (Introduction, Text and Annotated Translation), in (*idem*) *Sex of the Soul: The Vicissitudes of Sexual Difference in Kabbalah*. Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2005.
- Morlok, Elke. *Rabbi Joseph Gikatilla’s Hermeneuticso* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Visual and Acoustic Symbols in Gikatilla, Neoplatonic and Pythagorean Thought,” in in *Lux in Tenebris: The Visual and the Symbolic in Western Esotericism*, edited by Peter Forshaw (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2016), pages 19-49.
- Scholem, Gershom. “Joseph Gikatilla,” in *Kabbalah*. pp. 409-11, *et passim*.

2. e. Menahem Recanati: “The first kabbalist to quote frequently and at length from the Zohar was Italian, Rabbi Menahem Recanati” (—Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1, pages 20-21). Recanati also drew on the Geronese kabbalists.

- Black, Crofton. *Pico’s HEPTAPLUS and Biblical Hermeneutics* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2006).  
A page-and-a-half excerpt from Recanati’s *Commentary on the Torah* (ff. 3<sup>r-v</sup>) is given in English (pages 217-8) and Hebrew (page 233), and “thematically summarized” (pages 218-9) in CHAPTER SEVEN, “The Beginning and End: *Bereshit* and the Sabbath.”
- Cordovero, Moses. *Pardes Rimmonim: Orchard of Pomegranates, Parts 1-4* (integral edition in English, Hebrew, and Aramaic, translated by Elyakim Getz, Belize City: Providence University, 2007).  
“This chapter is a transcription of Rabbi Mena’hem Recanati’s view on the nature of the *Sefirot*, whether they are co-substantial with God or only vessels”: thus begins Part 4, CHAPTER 1.

- Idel, Moshe. There are numerous references to Recanati in Idel's English works.\* See, in particular,
    - *Absorbing Perfections* (New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 2002), CHAPTER 4, § IV: GOD AS TORAH OR TORAH AS GOD and § V: SOME REFLECTIONS ON DECONSTRUCTION (pages 122-8)
    - *Kabbalah and Eros* (New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 2005), CHAPTER 3, § 5: MENAHEM RECANATI'S TREATMENT OF THE DIVINE CONCUBINE (pages 122-5).
    - *Kabbalah in Italy 1280-1510: A Survey* (New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 2011), chapters 7 through 10.
  - Ogren, Brian. *Renaissance and Rebirth: Reincarnation in Early Modern Italian Kabbalah* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2009):
 

Recanati is mentioned throughout Ogren's book. On Recanati as source for Elia Hayyim ben Binyamin of Genazzano, see CHAPTER FIVE, pages 181-184.
  - Recanati, Menahem. *Commentary on the Daily Prayers: Flavius Mithridates' Latin Translation, the Hebrew Text, and an English Version*, edited with introduction and notes by Giacomo Corazzol, two volumes. [THE KABBALISTIC LIBRARY OF GIOVANNI PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA 3, Giulio Busi, general editor] Torino: Nino Aragno Editore, 2008.
 

This two-volume set offers the only translation of a complete text by Recanati in English; the introduction contains the only substantial discussion of Recanati in English.

See my review of this book in ADDENDUM F of *The Study of Christian Cabala*, at <http://www.digital-brilliance.com/contributed/Karr/Biblios/ccineb.pdf>
  - Stow, Sandra DeBenedetti. "The Modality of Interaction between Jewish and Christian Thought in the Middle Ages: The Problem of Free Will and Divine Wisdom in Dante Alighieri and Menahem Recanti as a Case Study," in *Interaction between Judaism and Christianity in History, Religion, Art and Literature*, edited by M. Poorthuis, J. Schwartz, and J. Turner (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2009), pages 165-217.
  - Wirszubski, Chaim. *Pico della Mirandola's Encounter with Jewish Mysticism*. Cambridge – London: Harvard University Press, 1989.
 

In the process of identifying sources for points of Pico della Mirandola's *kabbalah*, Wirszubski quotes—in English—Recanati's *Commentary on the Torah* dozens of times. These translations, however, are not rendered from the Latin translation of Mithridates (Pico's translator), which is lost, but rather from Recanati's Hebrew text.
2. f. Isaac of Acre (or Acco): Isaac of Acre is of particular interest given that he drew from both the Abulafian ecstatic school and the Catalonian/Castilian theosophic school, which included Nahmanides and the *Zohar*.
- Afterman, Adam. "Language and Images of Mystical Union in the Kabbalah of R. Isaac of Acre," in *And They Shall Be One Flesh: On the Language of Mystical Union in Judaism* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2016), pages 171-188.
  - Fenton, Paul. "Solitary Meditation in Jewish and Islamic Mysticism in the Light of a Recent Archeological Discovery," in *Medieval Encounters*, Volume 1, Number 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1995)
  - Fishbane, Eitan P. "Authority, Tradition, and the Creation of Meaning in Medieval Kabbalah: Isaac of Acre's *Illumination of the Eyes*," in *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 72, issue 1 (Atlanta: Emory University/The American Academy of Religion, March 2004).
  - \_\_\_\_\_. *As Light before Dawn: The Inner World of a Medieval Kabbalist*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009, which is a reworking of CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE AND THE TRANSMISSION OF KABBALAH: A STUDY OF ISAAC OF ACRE'S ME'IRAT 'EINAYIM (Ph.D. dissertation, Waltham: Brandeis University, 2003).

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\* In Hebrew, there is Moshe Idel's *R. Menahem Rekanati, ha-mekubal* (Tel Aviv, Schocken, 1998), which is the first of an intended two-volume study.

- Huss, Boaz. “NISAN—The Wife of the Infinite: The Mystical Hermeneutics of Rabbi Isaac of Acre,” in *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts*, vol. 5, edited by D. Abrams and A. Elqayam (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2000).
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- \_\_\_\_\_. “Hitbodedut as Concentration in Ecstatic Kabbalah,” in *Jewish Spirituality I: From the Bible through the Middle Ages*, edited by Arthur Green (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Kabbalah and Eros* (New Haven – London: Yale University Books, 2005): CHAPTER 4. “Contemplating a Female: From Platonic Eros to Jewish Mysticism.”
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Messianic Mystics* (New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 1998): within CHAPTER THREE, § MESSIAH AND KETER; within APPENDIX ONE, § R. YITZHAQ OF ACRE ON MESSIAH AS METATRON; and numerous other references.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*. Numerous references to Isaac of Acre throughout.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, especially CHAPTER 7, “Hitbodedut as Concentration in Ecstatic Kabbalah.”
- Kaplan, Aryeh. *Meditation and Kabbalah*. “Rabbi Isaac of Acco,” pp. 137-154.
- Matt, Daniel C. *The Essential Kabbalah: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994).  
Matt includes excerpts from the writings of “Isaac of Akko.”

2. g. Bahya ben Asher of Sargossa

- Bachya Ben Asher. *Torah Commentary: Midrash Rabbeinu Bachya* (7 volumes), translated by Eliyahu Munk (Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2003).
- Brody, Seth. *Commentary on the Song of Songs [= Perush ‘al Shir ha-Shirim]* (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 1999). Includes R. Bahya ben Asher’s commentary on Genesis 1:1-2 (composed 1291).
- Hecker, Joel. *Mystical Bodies, Mystical Meals: Eating and Embodiment in Medieval Kabbalah* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005).
- Liebes, Yehuda. *Studies in the Zohar* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993). See especially, pp. 90-3.
- Millen, Herbert. BAHYA BEN ASHER: THE EXEGETICAL AND ETHICAL COMPONENTS OF HIS WRITINGS (Ph. D. dissertation, New York: Yeshiva University, 1974)
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“The *Commentary of the Sefirot* is a veritable treasury of Kabbalistic, pseudepigraphic, and literary works of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a few of which are not preserved elsewhere.” (—page 22)
- Avraham Ben Alexander of Cologne. *Kether Shem Tov: The Crown [sic] of the Good Name*. [Spain, 13<sup>th</sup> century]. Belize City: Providence University, 2006.  
For information, go to [www.everburninglight.org](http://www.everburninglight.org).
- Block, Tom. “The Question of Sufi Influence on the Early Kabbalah,” in *Sophia: The Journal of Traditional Studies*, Volume 13, Number 2 (Oakton [VA]: The Foundation for Traditional Studies, Winter 2007-2008); pages 68-86.
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- \_\_\_\_\_. *Jewish Mysticism and Ethics*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986; 2<sup>nd</sup> enlarged edition (Northvale: Jason Aronson, 1996): Chapter 2. “Philosophical Ethics and the Early Kabbalists.”

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- \_\_\_\_\_. *Enchanted Chains: Techniques and Rituals in Jewish Mysticism* [SOURCES AND STUDIES IN THE LITERATURE OF JEWISH MYSTICISM 16], with a forward by Harold Bloom (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2005).
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- Sagiv, Gadi. “Dazzling Blue: Color Symbolism, Kabbalistic Myth, and the Evil Eye in Judaism,” in *Numen* 64 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pages 183-208.
- Scholem, Gershom. “The Concept of Kavvanah in the Early Kabbalah,” in *Studies in Jewish Thought: An Anthology of German Jewish Scholarship*, edited by Alfred Jospe (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981).
- Willensky, Sara O. Heller. “The ‘First Created Being’ in Early Kabbalah: Philosophical and Isma’illan Sources,” in *Binah*, vol. 3 (ed. J. Dan; Westport: Praeger, 1994)
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Isaac Ibn Latif—Philosopher or Kabbalist?” in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, edited by Alexander Altmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967).
- Wolfson, Elliot R. “Beneath the Wings of the Great Eagle: Maimonides and Thirteenth-Century Kabbalah,” in *Moses Maimonides (1138-1204): His Religious, Scientific, and Philosophical Wirkungsgeschichte in Different Cultural Contexts*, edited by GÖRGE K Hasselhoff and Otfried Fraisse [EX ORIENTE LUX, band 4] (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2004), pages 207-237.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Beyond the Spoken Word: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Medieval Jewish Mysticism,” in *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality & Cultural Diffusion*, edited by Yaakov Elman and Israel Gershoni (New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 2000).
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Negative Theology and Positive Assertion,” in *Daat*, nos. 32-33 (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1994).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Through a Speculum That Shines. Vision and Imagination in Medieval Judaism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994): CHAPTER 6. “Visionary Gnosis and the Role of the Imagination in Theosophic Kabbalah.”
- Yisraeli, Oded. “Jewish Medieval Traditions concerning the Origins of the Kabbalah,” in *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 106, No. 1 (Philadelphia: Center for Advanced Judaic Studies / University of Pennsylvania Press, Winter 2016), pages 21-41.

## Addendum: Pre-Kabbalistic Streams of Jewish Mysticism<sup>\*</sup>

TO FILL THE SPAN between the close of the Old Testament and early Kabbalah, a much-simplified selection of streams representative of—or having influence upon—Jewish mysticism can be outlined thus:

1. Early beginnings
  - a. Apocalypses/Pseudepigrapha (ca. 200 BCE onward)
  - b. Philo (ca. 20 BCE to 50 CE)
  - c. Qumran (= Dead Sea Scrolls: 100 BCE onward)
  - d. Rabbinic and synagogue traditions (100 CE onward)
  - e. Miscellaneous magic texts and other “occult” works
2. *Merkabah* and *hekhalot* (200 CE onward)
3. *Sefer Yezirah* (between 200 and 900 CE)
4. Transition
  - a. Geonic period (600-1000)
  - b. Rishonic period (1000-1500)
  - c. Early commentaries on *Sefer Yezirah*
  - d. Religious philosophers
    - i. Solomon ibn Gabirol (1020-1070)
    - ii. Judah Halevi (1075-1141)
    - iii. Abraham ibn Ezra (1089-1164)
5. *Hasidei Ashkenaz* (German Hasidism: ca 1170-1240)

### I. Early beginnings

Since Jewish mysticism is ultimately based on the Hebrew Bible, the beginning, really, is the *Tanakh*, parts of which are more “mystical” than others. More important to our line of inquiry is that certain themes were developed more than others for a variety of mystical purposes. By Talmudic times, two branches of the mysteries were well known and defined: the *work of creation*, i.e. developments of the first chapters of Genesis, and the *work of the chariot*, developments of Ezekiel and, to a lesser extent, Isaiah.<sup>†</sup>

#### a. Apocalyptic, Wisdom Literature, Pseudepigrapha<sup>‡</sup>

Radicalizations of Bible themes appeared in the intertestamental apocalypses, which, when grouped together with a somewhat irregular splay of wisdom literature, psalms, testaments, prayers, and other material, are referred to as the *pseudepigrapha*.

Two fine introductions to apocalyptic are

1. Russell, D. S. *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964).

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<sup>\*</sup> Refer to my “Kabbalah Study: Jewish Mysticism in English” (1996-8), appended below, where there is a section offering suggestions for a survey of Jewish mysticism, one segment of which parallels the outline presented here. Alternative titles are discussed.

<sup>†</sup> Note Daniel M. Horowitz’ anthology, *A Kabbalah and Jewish Mysticism Reader* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2016) which commences not with *Sefer ha-Bahir* but with the Bible, the apocalypses, and the Talmud.

<sup>‡</sup> With his chapters on Ezekiel, Enoch literature and related material, Qumran, Philo, the rabbinic “Cycle of the Seven Stories,” *merkabah* passages in the Talmud(s), and the *merkabah* mystics, Peter Schäfer covers our §§ 1. a, b, c, d and § 2 in *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

2. Collins, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984; rpt. 1998).\*

Another strand begun in the Bible, including Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and certain of the Psalms, is *wisdom literature*, which traces its way through the standard extra-canonical set called The Apocrypha (Ecclesiasticus), through the Pseudepigrapha, and on into the Talmudic Sayings of the Fathers (*Pirke Aboth*). An enduring treatment of all this is O. S. Rankin's *Israel's Wisdom Literature* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark Ltd, 1936; rpt 1954 and 1964; rpt. New York: Schocken Books, 1969).<sup>†</sup>

A generous compendium of pseudepigrapha (which includes some material which does not really belong under this heading) is *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (OTP), edited by James H. Charlesworth: Volume 1: APOCALYPTIC AND TESTAMENTS; Volume 2: EXPANSIONS... LEGENDS, WISDOM... PRAYERS, ODES, PSALMS, FRAGMENTS (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1983 and 1985). It is a collection of utmost value and far more inclusive than the previous standard, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (APOT), edited by R. H. Charles (2 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913; rpt. 1973).<sup>‡</sup>

Supplementing Charlesworth is *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, Volume 1, edited by Richard Bauckham, James R. Davila, and Alexander Panayotov (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), which expands the scope of the pseudepigrapha even further.

## b. Philo

Philo, who has a somewhat anticlimactic relationship with Jewish mysticism, was the most important Jewish philosopher of the first century. Thoroughly Hellenized, he begins for us the long, and rather strained, counterpoint between Neoplatonism and Judaism—and, indeed, Jewish mysticism—which simmers right on up to Spinoza and beyond. Of particular use in the present context are the following:

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\* See also Collins' more recent *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature* [Oxford Handbooks] (Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). Also of interest, Collin's *Seers, Sibyls & Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (Leiden – New York – Köln" Brill, 1997).

<sup>†</sup> There are more recent works, e.g., Stuart Weeks, *An Introduction to the Study of Wisdom Literature* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), and Robert Alter, *The Wisdom Books: Job Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2012).

<sup>‡</sup> Charles' APOT includes two items not in Charlesworth: "Pirke Aboth" and "The Fragments of a Zadokite Work." "[T]he former [is omitted from OTP] because it is rabbinic, the latter because it is now recognized to belong among the Dead Sea Scrolls" (Charlesworth, page xxv).

See "Pseudepigrapha as Antecedents of Kabbalah: A Selected Bibliography," by Andreas Lenhardt, in *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts*, vol. 2 (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 1997).

Refer also to the important but rarely cited article by Charlesworth, "In the Crucible: The Pseudepigrapha as Biblical Interpretation," in *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation*, edited by J. Charlesworth and C. Evans (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

- Bockmuehl, Markus N. A. CHAPTER FOUR: “Philo,” in *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* [WISSENSCHAFTLICHE UNTERSUCHUNGEN ZUM NEUEN TESTAMENT – 2. Reihe 36] (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1990)
- Borgen, Peder. “Heavenly Ascent in Philo: An Examination of Selected Passages,” in *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation*, edited by J. Charlesworth and C. Evans (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).
- Daniélou, Jean. *Philo of Alexandria*, translated by James G. Colbert (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014)—French original: *Philon d’Alexandrie* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1958).
- Lewy, Hans (ed). “Philo: Selections,” in *Three Jewish Philosophers* (New York/Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society/Meridian Books, 1960).
- Niehoff, Maren R. “What Is in a Name? Philo’s Mystical Philosophy of Language,” in *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, vol. 2, no. 3 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, [Paul Siebeck], 1995).
- Philo of Alexandria. *The Contemplative Life, The Giants and Selections*, translated by David Winston, preface by John Dillon (New York–Ramsey–Toronto: Paulist Press, 1981).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Works of Philo*, translated by Charles Duke Yonge (London: H. G. Bohn, 1854-1855; RPT Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993).
- Schäfer, Peter. CHAPTER 5: “Philo: The Ascent of the Soul,” in *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).
- Seland, Torrey. *Reading Philo: A Handbook to Philo of Alexandria* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014).
- Werblowsky, R.J. Zwi. “Philo and the Zohar” Parts 1 and 2, in *Journal of Jewish Studies*, vols. X and XI (Cambridge: 1959 and 1960).
- Winston, David. “Was Philo a Mystic?” in *Studies in Jewish Mysticism*, edited by Joseph Dan and Frank Talmage (Cambridge: Association for Jewish Studies, 1982).
- Yonge, C. D. (trans.) *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993).

#### On Neoplatonism:

- Goodman, Lenn E. (ed). *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

#### c. Qumran

Since so much has been written on the Dead Sea Scrolls, let me suggest just three books to make short work of getting a reliable impression of the Qumran material:\*

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\* Three other works on the Qumran materials are of interest in the present context, especially the third:

- Boccaccini, Gabriele. *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis. The Parting of Ways between Qumran and Enochic Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998).
- Davidson, Maxwell J. *Angels at Qumran: A Comparative Study of 1 Enoch 1-36, 72-108 and Sectarian Writings from Qumran* [JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY OF PSEUDEPIGRAPHA SERIES, 11] (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992).
- Schiffman, Lawrence H. *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls. The History of Judaism, the Background of Christianity, the Lost Library of Qumran* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1994).

- Garcia Martinez, Florentino. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated. The Qumran Texts in English* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994).
- Shanks, Hershel (ed). *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls. A Reader from the BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY REVIEW* (New York: Random House, 1992).
- VanderKam, James C. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994).

The most “mystical” of the Qumran texts—those having the most in common with subsequent *hekhalot* literature—are the *Berakhot* and the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*. On these, see James R. Davila, *Liturgical Works* (Grand Rapids – Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000); and Philip Alexander, *The Mystical Texts: Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and Related Manuscripts* [COMPANION TO THE QUMRAN SCROLLS, 7 / LIBRARY OF SECOND TEMPLE STUDIES, 61] (London – New York: T & T Clark International, 2006).

Studies on the relationship of Qumran to *merkabah/hekhalot* mysticism are treated in my paper at HERMETIC KABBALAH, “Notes on the Study of *Merkabah* Mysticism and *Hekhalot* Literature in English” (see #2 below): 2004 • Eior AND 2006 • Alexander, respectively. Refer also to

- Halperin, David. *The Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature* [AMERICAN ORIENTAL SERIES, vol. 62] (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1980).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Faces of the Chariot* [TEXTE UND STUDIEN ZUM ANTIKEN JUDENTUM, 16] (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1988).
- Patai. Raphael. *Gates to the Old City: A Book of Jewish Legends* (New York: Avon Books, 1980): the *midrash* sections.

#### d. Rabbinic and synagogue traditions\*

Bits and pieces of the “mystery” are scattered throughout the rabbinic writings following the themes mentioned (*creation* and *chariot*), along with others (angels and demons, mystical exegesis on various topics, etc.) Some material might be cast more into the category of “legend,” but here the allusions can often be suggestive and significant. It is difficult to pin down a few books to represent this phase of development; what with recent publications on *midrashim* and other rabbinic literature, a full list might have dozens of titles. Given our track, however, see the following:

- Urbach, Ephraim E. *The Sages. Their Concepts and Beliefs* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975; rpt. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1987); see especially Chapter VI. “Magic and Miracle”; Chapter VII. “The Power of the Divine Name”; Chapter VIII. “The Celestial Retinue”; Chapter IX. “He Who Spoke and the World Came into Being”; and pp. 578-80.
- Chernus, Ira. *Mysticism in Rabbinic Judaism* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1982). Chernus presents a series of essays on the relationship between *merkabah* mysticism and rabbinic *midrashim*.

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\* Noticeably absent here is reference to the Talmud. A good starting place would be Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, *The Talmud: The Steinsaltz Edition – A Reference Guide* (New York: Random House, 1989).

e. Miscellaneous magic texts and other “occult” works

For a detailed bibliography on Jewish magic, see the one maintained by Scott Noegel at <http://faculty.washington.edu/snoegel/JewishMagicBibliography.pdf> (University of Washington) or the appendix to my “Notes on the Study of *Merkabah* Mysticism and *Hekhalot* Literature in English.” For starters, refer to the following survey articles:

- Alexander, P. S. “Incantations and Books of Magic,” in Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.—A.D. 135)*, A New English Version revised and edited by G. Vermes, F. Millar, and M. Goodman (Edinburgh: T & T Clark Ltd, 1986): volume III, part 1, pp. 342-79.
- Idel, Moshe. “On Judaism, Jewish Mysticism and Magic,” in *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, edited by P. Schäfer and H. Kippenberg (Leiden: Brill, 1997).
- Schäfer, Peter. “Jewish Magic Literature in Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages,” in *Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. XLI, no. 1 (1990).
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Magic and Religion in Ancient Judaism,” in *Envisioning Magic*.

For full studies, see Gideon Bohak’s *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), and Yuval Harari’s *Jewish Magic before the Rise of Kabbalah* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 20127).

2. Merkabah and hekhalot literature & 3. Sefer Yezirah

Refer to my “Notes on the Study of *Merkabah* Mysticism and *Hekhalot* Literature in English” and “Notes on Editions *Sefer Yezirah* in English” at <http://www.digital-brilliance.com/contributed/Karr/Biblios/index.php>

4. Transition

a. Geonic period

It is generally thought that the Geonic period left little by way of evidence of theosophical development. Apocalyptic, *merkabah*, and rabbinic writings continued to exercise authority, this material being compiled and redacted with little being added to the existing traditions. In this period, however, magical works circulated and grew. Joseph Dan writes, “The Geonic period, from the sixth to tenth centuries, is a period which seems to be outside the realm of the history of Jewish thought. ... [I]t still retains the image of being a half-millennium almost completely devoid of any Hebrew works on theology or ethics. This image is not completely true.”\*

Refer to Scholem’s *Kabbalah*, pp. 30-5: “Mysticism in the Geonic Period.” See also Klaus Herrmann, “Jewish Mysticism in the Geonic Period: The Prayer of Rav Hamnuna Sava,” in *Jewish Studies between the Disciplines: Papers in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2003).

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\* *The ‘Unique Cherub’ Circle* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), page 17.

An example of a work from this period is *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* (CHAPTERS OF RABBI ELIEZER), which has been translated and annotated by Gerald Friedlander (London: 1916; rpt. New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1981 [4<sup>th</sup> ed]).

b. Rishonic period

Among the *Rishonim* were the *Tosafists*, rabbis who developed “additions” to the Talmud, *i.e.*, additions to Rashi. For our purposes, see “Peering through the Lattices”: *Mystical, Magical, and Pietistic Dimensions in the Tosafist Period* by Ephraim Kanarfogel (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000).

c. Commentaries on Sefer Yezirah

For a review of English sources on these commentaries, see my “Notes on Editions *Sefer Yezirah* in English,” PART 3, at <http://www.digital-brilliance.com/contributed/Karr/Biblios/syie.pdf>

d. Religious philosophers\*

*A History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy* by Isaac Husik (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1916; rpt. 1941) is considered a classic, but Husik grants only perfunctory mention to *kabbalah* in the opening strains of his conclusion. *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages* by Colette Sirat (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) serves our purpose better, for it pays some attention to how *kabbalah* fits in. See also Elliot R. Wolfson, “Jewish Mysticism: A Philosophical Overview,” in *History of Jewish Philosophy*, edited by Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman (London – New York: Routledge, 1997), and Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, “Philosophy and Kabbalah: 1200-1600,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Ernst Müller, in *History of Jewish Mysticism* (Oxford: East and West Library, 1946; rpt. New York: Yesod Publishers, n.d.), writes (pp. 73-74):

In Spain the Cabbalah assumed a more philosophical form, due to the influence of the religious philosophy which was already fully developed in that country. There are numerous points of contact between it and the work of the three great thinkers Jehudah Halevi, Solomon Ibn Gabirol, and Abraham Ibn Ezra. The first-named devoted some space to the *Sefer Yezirah* in his great work *Cuzari*.

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\* According to Abraham Abulafia, *Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed* is a profound mystical text. Be that as it may, Maimonides is not generally ranked among those who contributed to the development of the *kabbalah*. Nonetheless, he is considered *esoteric*—a euphemism perhaps for *elite* or *elitist*. See James Arthur Diamond's *Maimonides and the Hermeneutics of Concealment, Deciphering Scripture and Midrash in THE GUIDE OF THE PERPLEXED* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), and Marvin Fox's excellent *Interpreting Maimonides* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

Further see Moshe Idel, “Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* and the Kabbalah,” in *Jewish History*, volume 18, nos. 2-3 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004)—an issue “Commemorating the Eight-Hundredth Anniversary of Maimonides' Death”; and Menachem Kellner, *Maimonides' Confrontation with Mysticism* (Oxford – Portland: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007).

In his brief foreword to *Six Treatises Attributed to Maimonides*, translated and annotated from the Hebrew editions by Fred Rosner, MD (Northvale – London: Jason Aronson Inc., 1991), Rabbi Moshe Greenes argues that Maimonides was “steeped in Kabbalah.”

Gabirol as a neo-Platonist has many resemblances with the Cabbalah. ... Finally Abraham Ibn Ezra made mystical numerical and literal analyses of the Name of God, particularly in his writing *Yesod Mora*...

i. On ibn Gabirol, refer to

- *The Improvement of the Moral Qualities: AN ETHICAL TREATISE OF THE ELEVENTH CENTURY BY SOLOMON IBN GABIROL...WITH A TRANSLATION...* by Stephen S. Wise. New York: Columbia University Press, 1902; rpt. Palala Press, 2015)
- Loewe, Raphael. *Ibn Gabirol* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), an analysis of ibn Gabirol's life and writings. Included is a full translation of *Keter Malkut* (ROYAL CROWN), which Müller calls Gabirol's great "cosmological hymn."
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Ibn Gabirol's Treatment of Sources in *Kether Malkuth*," in *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History Presented to Alexander Altmann on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, edited by Siegfried Stein and Raphael Loewe ([Tuscaloosa]: University of Alabama Press, 1979).
- *Selected Poems of Solomon Ibn Gabirol*, translated by Peter Cole (Princeton - Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).
- Pessin, Sarah. *Ibn Gabirol's Theology of Desire: Matter and Method in Jewish Medieval Neoplatonism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Solomon Ibn Gabirol," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ibn-gabirol/> (published 2010)

Also see

- Idel, Moshe. "Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah in Spain," in *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry: From the Golden Age of Spain to Modern Times* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).
- *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, edited by Lenn E. Goodman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992):
  - Dillon, John M. "Solomon Ibn Gabirol's Doctrine of Intelligible Matter"
  - Mathis, C. K. "Parallel Structures in the Metaphysics of Iamblichus and Ibn Gabirol"
  - McGinn, Bernard. "Ibn Gabirol: The Sage among Schoolmen"

ii. Judah Halevi's principal work, *Kuzari* (or *Cuzari*), has been put into English a few times, but not all versions include the commentary on *Sefer Yezirah*. Two that do are

- Hirschfeld, Hartwig. *The Book of Kuzari* (New York: Pardes Publishing House, 1905; rpt 1946; rpt New York: Schocken Books 1964). The commentary on *Sefer Yezirah* is in § 4:25.
- Korobkin, N. Daniel. *The Kuzari: In Defense of the Despised Faith* (Northvale - Jerusalem: Jason Aronson Inc., 1998): pp. 232-248.

Also see

- Baneth, David Hartwig (Zwi). "Judah Halevi and Al-Ghazali," in *Studies in Jewish Thought*, edited by Alfred Jospe (1981)



- Efros, Israel. *Studies in Medieval Jewish Philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1974: Part II. “Some Aspects of Yehuda Halevi’s Mysticism” and “Some Textual Notes on Yehuda Halevi’s *Kuzari*.”
- Lobel, Diana. *Between Mysticism and Philosophy: Sufi Language of the Religious Experience in Judah Halevi’s KUZARI* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).
- Schwartz, Dov. “Judah Halevi and Abraham Ibn Ezra” (= CHAPTER ONE) in *Studies on Astral Magic in Medieval Jewish Thought*, translated by David Louvish and Batya Stein [THE BRILL REFERENCE LIBRARY OF JUDAISM, VOL. 20] (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2005).
- Silman, Yochanan. *Philosopher and Prophet: Judah Halevi, the KUZARI, and the Evolution of His Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).
- Sirat, Colette. *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*: Chapter 4.
- Strauss, Leo. “The Law of Reason in the *Kuzari*,” in *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, vol. XIII (New York: 1943).

iii. Some works by Abraham ibn Ezra have been translated into English:

- RESHITH HOKHMAH:
  1. *The Beginning of Wisdom: An Astrological Treatise by Abraham ibn Ezra*, edited by Raphael Levy and Francisco Cantera (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press/London: H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1939).
  2. *The Beginning of Wisdom / Reshith Hochma*, translated and annotated by Meira B. Epstein; edited with additional annotations by Robert Hand ([Bel Air?]: A[rchive for the] R[etrieval] of H[istorical] A[strological] T[exts], 1998).
  3. *Abraham Ibn Ezra’s Introduction to Astrology*, ed., trans., annot. by Shlomo Sela (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2017).
- *Commentary of Abraham Ibn Ezra on the Pentateuch*, translated by Jay F. Shachter (Hoboken: Ktav Publishing House, 1986).
- *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, translated & annotated by Norman Strickland and Arthur M. Silver (New York: Menorah Publishing Company, 1988).
- *The Commentary of Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra on Hosea*, translated by Abe Lipshitz. New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1988.
- *The Secret of the Torah (Sefer Yesod Mora ve-Sod ha-Torah)* translated by Norman Strickman (Northvale – Jerusalem: Jason Aronson Inc., 1995).
- *Rabbi ibn Ezra’s Commentary on the Creation (Perush ha-Torah: Bereshit, Perek 1-6)* translated by Michael Linetsky (Northvale - Jerusalem: Jason Aronson, 1998).
- *Deconstructing the Bible: Abraham ibn Ezra’s Introduction to the Torah*, translated by Irene Lancaster (Abingdon – New York: Routledge, 2003; rpt 2007).

Also see

- del Valle, Carlos. “Abraham Ibn Ezra’s Mathematical Speculations on the Divine Name,” in *Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics and Typologies*, edited by R. A. Herrera (New York: Peter Lang, 1993).
- Friedländer, M. *Essays on the Writings of Abraham ibn Ezra* (London: The Society of Hebrew Literature / Trübner and Co., 1877; rpt Yerushalayim, [Mitshuf], 1964).
- Halbertal, Moshe. *Concealment and Revelation: Esotericism in Jewish Thought and Its Philosophical Implications*, translated by Jackie Feldman (Princeton –

- Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007): CHAPTER 5, “Esotericism and Commentary: Ibn Ezra and the Exegetical Layer,” and CHAPTER 6, “Concealment and Heresy: Astrology and the Secret of the Torah.”
- Langermann, Tzvi. “Abraham Ibn Ezra,” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ibn-ezra/> (published 2006; revised 2014).
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## 5. Hasidei Ashkenaz

The *Hasidei Ashkenaz* (≈ GERMAN PIETISTS) were active in the Jewish communities of the Rhineland (major city, Regensburg) in the years 1170-1230. Leaders of this group were from the Kalonymus family.

Key figures include (1) Samuel ben Kalonymus the Pious of Speyer, his son (2) Judah the Pious (or Yehuda he-Hasid, 1150-1217), who wrote the best-known tract of this school, *Sefer Hasidim* (BOOK OF THE PIOUS), and (3) Eleazar ben Judah of Worms (1176-1238), Judah's main student, known for several works, foremost among these *Sefer ha-Roqeah* (BOOK OF THE PERFUMER).

The fundamental unit for the transmission of esoteric oral knowledge is the family. According to the testimony of Rabbi Eleazar of Worms, the termination of his family line, as a result of the early death of his son and combined with the diminution of his students, moved him to commit the secrets of the Torah to writing. The fear of the loss of the secret as a result of the diminution of the line of transmission justified the writing down of the secret; thus, the knowledge could be passed on without relying on the continuous chain of oral tradition.\*

While not considered part of the early *kabbalah* in the strictest sense, the *Hasidei Ashkenaz* must be seen as a bridge between the earlier *merkabah/hekhalot* mysticism and important aspects of the *kabbalah* which was to follow.

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Dan distinguishes four major mystical circles from this period (12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries): (i) the Iyyun circle, (ii) the Kalonymus family (i.e. what we generally think of as the *Hasidei Ashkenaz*), (iii) *Sefer ha-Bahir*, and (iv) the ‘Unique Cherub’ Circle. The Iyyun and ‘Cherub’ circles, Dan insists, cannot be identified with the *Hasidei Ashkenaz*.

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- Baskin, Judith R. "Women and Sexual Ambivalence in *Sefer Hasidim*"
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### Eleazar of Worms

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"This paper will investigate the nature of R. Eleazar's attitude toward the transcription of esoteric matters and his departure from the expressed view of his teacher R. Judah the Pious." (page 71)

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Dan traces scientific and mystical ideas starting with the *Sefer Yezirah*, elaborations of tenth-century commentaries on it, especially that of Shabbatai Donnolo, and developments of the Hasidei Ashkenaz, in particular Eleazar of Worms. Dan shows how these commentaries "contributed to the establishment of the concept of *harmonia mundi* as a dominant world-view in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, mainly in the context of the variegated phenomena which are sometimes united under the general title 'Christian kabbalah.'"

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**Kabbalah Study**  
Jewish Mysticism in English  
by Don Karr

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A.

In an article reviewing the then-current (1970s) state of scholarship on the history of early rabbinic Judaism,<sup>1</sup> Jacob Neusner complained, in particular, about E. E. Urbach's study<sup>2</sup> concerning "*the sages, their concepts and beliefs*" (Neusner's italics) as revealing "remarkably little variation, development or even movement," where "[d]ifferentiation among the stages" and "among schools and circles within a given period" was all but neglected.

More recently, similar complaints have been leveled against "establishment" historians of Jewish mysticism and Kabbalah: In the last fifteen-or-so years, the neat linear history offered by Gershom Scholem<sup>3</sup> and those following his lead has been seriously challenged.

In the proceedings of a conference marking the fiftieth year since the publication of Scholem's landmark book, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (1941),<sup>4</sup> Ithamar Gruenwald argues<sup>5</sup> that this work (i.e., *Major Trends...*) "appears to be too limited in its conceptual framework, as well as in its actual treatment of the subject matter." Scholem saw certain developments in antique Judaism as a mystical *phase* which followed well after the writing of the Hebrew Bible; he also saw expressions of mysticism, once present, as separate and distinct not just from the scriptural phase but from normal (common or popular) expressions of religion. Gruenwald makes a case for tracing "mystical, or quasi-mystical, elements in Scripture itself." Further, he states that there are mystical elements in rabbinic literature to which Scholem did not give due attention.

Critical analyses focusing on Scholem's treatment of ancient Jewish mysticism (i.e. *merkabah* mysticism and *hekhalot* literature) have also been offered in recent years.<sup>6</sup> For the moment, our concern is with those developments which, by one rationale or another, claim the title "Kabbalah," conventionally agreed to be a phenomenon begun in medieval times (though traditionally thought to be from antiquity). Our approach may at first appear

to be at cross purposes, for, while there is a case supporting a definition for Kabbalah which is more inclusive (as in Gruenwald's comments noted above or in the suggestions in Moshe Idel's article noted below), there are those of us who would like to see Kabbalah circumscribed sufficiently to salvage it from the excessive, near-generic use of the term, primarily in Christian and occult circles, to refer to mysticism and magic of all sorts. (The term *kabbalah* is itself a coinage<sup>7</sup> with problems not unlike those of such related words as "mysticism," "magic," "myth," and "gnosis/gnosticism.")<sup>8</sup>

The issue of defining—or redefining—Kabbalah has been addressed by Moshe Idel.<sup>9</sup> He critiques the "prevailing assumption in the academic field" that Kabbalah is "a relatively homogeneous mystical phenomenon, more theoretical than practical." Idel's primary target is, of course, Scholem and his notion that Kabbalah is defined, and thus unified, by a certain "core question," namely, the mystery of the Godhead—which question is "answered" by the doctrine of the *sefirot*. Idel discusses the various mystical uses of divine names as an alternative kabbalistic channel.

In the introduction to *Essential Papers on Kabbalah*, Lawrence Fine attempts to set up a working definition for *kabbalah* starting with a rejection of the "popular, noncritical use of the term" as referring to all "esoteric and occult phenomena, past and present."<sup>10</sup> Fine prefers to limit Kabbalah to "a discrete body of literature that became clearly identifiable beginning in Provence in the late twelfth century and northern Spain in the thirteenth." However, in a book which has heated up the discussion on the origins of Kabbalah (and other topics), Moshe Idel has argued that there is not such a definite separation between rabbinic literature and the conventionally circumscribed Kabbalah. Idel's view suggests a more continuous, less neat development which gradually coalesced into a proto-Kabbalah.<sup>11</sup> The medieval Jewish mystics referred to as "Kabbalists" did not abandon the mysticism—or any other part of the vast rabbinic literature—which came before them. The *hekhalot* writings, German *hasidic* material, *Sefer Yezirah* and the various commentaries on it, etc., along with the Talmud, *midrashim*, and the rest of the rabbinic writings, were all considered authoritative—all part of the same chain of tradition (*kabbalah*) of which the medieval and later Kabbalists considered themselves links.<sup>12</sup>

Kabbalah did not spring up *ex nihilo*. It seems prudent to open channels for the origins and growth of Kabbalah back into the depths of ancient Judaism. Determining a starting line at *Sefer ha-Bahir* and the mystic circles at Languedoc does not match the facts. To begin with, the *Bahir* is itself a compilation, with sources in and references to earlier material, which immediately begins our search into the time before its appearance.<sup>13</sup>

## B.

To investigate Jewish mysticism, how is one to begin at the beginning? The documentary evidence is sprawling, yet incomplete. We cannot commence with Genesis 1:1 and travel a nice straight line to *Kabbalah today*. However, to set a broad stage for subsequent mystical endeavor, a fine first book is *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith*, by Norman Cohn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), the

second part of which charts the primal swirlings of the path which eventually leads to Jewish (and Christian) mysticism, beginning with Zoroastrian concepts, tracing their development in Jewish apocalyptic, finally landing in the Book of Revelation. This last turn may seem to veer off track unless one keeps in mind the fundamentally Jewish character of this mystical apocalypse.

For grounding in the theme (i.e., the ascension to heaven) taken up by the ancient Jewish mystics associated with the *merkabah* and *hekhalot*, a most informative source is Martha Himmelfarb's *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York/ Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). On a somewhat different tack, though holding onto the thread begun with the last two selections, is Markus N. A. Bockmuehl's *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* [WISSENSCHAFTLICHE UNTERSUCHUNGEN ZUM NEUEN TESTAMENT – 2. Reihe 36] (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1990)<sup>14</sup>

Assuming that the reader is reasonably familiar with the Hebrew Bible, the next step would be to acquire some knowledge of early rabbinic thought and method. *The Sages* by E. E. Urbach (see note 2) is an excellent start. Three anthologies serve as introductions to their respective texts:

1. *The Classical Midrash: Tannaitic Commentaries on the Bible*, translated and introduced with commentary by Reuven Hammer (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1995).
2. *The Mishnah: Oral Traditions of Judaism*, selected and translated by Eugene Lipman (New York: Schocken Books, 1974).<sup>15</sup>
3. *The Talmud: Selected Writings*, translated by Ben Zion Bokser (Paulist Press, 1989).
4. *The Talmud: The Steinsaltz Edition – A Reference Guide* (New York: Random House, 1989).

As a first approach to Jewish mysticism proper, an indispensable source is *The Ancient Jewish Mysticism* by Joseph Dan (Tel Aviv: MOD [Ministry of Defense] Books, 1993).

At this juncture, it would be a good idea to read some of the more general books on Jewish mysticism in order to get an impression of its history and concepts. My recommendation is to study the following books—in the order in which they are listed:

1. Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (see note 3), some comments on which have already been noted<sup>16</sup>
2. Moshe Idel's *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).
3. Elliot R. Wolfson's *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

A weakness of *Major Trends* is the absence of a chapter on the early Kabbalah. Two books nicely fill this void:

1. Scholem's *Origins of the Kabbalah* (Jewish Publication Society and Princeton University Press, 1987).
2. Joseph Dan and Ronald C. Kiener. *The Early Kabbalah* (Paulist Press, 1986).

Paulist Press has provided two more titles which help round out our short list:

1. Daniel C. Matt. *Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment* (1983)
2. Lawrence Fine. *Safed Spirituality: Rules of Mystical Piety, The Beginning of Wisdom* (1984).

The final development of Jewish mysticism covered in Scholem's *Major Trends* is Hasidism, on which I have not developed an extended bibliography.\* However, I can suggest three works to provide a foundation:

1. Rachel Elijor. *The Paradoxical Ascent to God: The Kabbalistic Theosophy of Habad Hasidism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).
2. Moshe Idel. *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* (State University of New York Press, 1995).
3. Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer. *Hasidism as Mysticism. Quietistic Elements in Eighteenth-Century Hasidic Thought* (Princeton/ Jerusalem: Princeton University Press and Magnes Press, 1983).

Three of the books listed above (Dan and Kiener's *Early Kabbalah*, Matt's *Zohar*, and Fine's *Safed Spirituality*) offer texts as well as introductions. There are some other anthologies:

1. Daniel C. Matt. *The Essential Kabbalah* (see note 3).
2. Dan Cohn-Sherbock. *Jewish Mysticism: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1995).
3. Ben Zion Bokser. *The Jewish Mystical Tradition* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1981).
4. David Meltzer (ed). *The Secret Garden. An Anthology in the Kabbalah* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976).<sup>18</sup>

There is a bit of redundancy among these titles; fortunately, all are available in low-cost paperback editions.

There are some collections of articles which can be recommended:

1. Lawrence Fine (ed). *Essential Papers on Kabbalah* (New York University Press, 1995).
2. Arthur Green (ed). *Jewish Spirituality: volume 1: FROM THE BIBLE THROUGH THE MIDDLE AGES, 1986; volume 2: FROM THE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY REVIVAL TO THE PRESENT* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1987).

*Haredi* students of the Kabbalah might sneer at many of the works suggested here. For an overview, they would instead urge Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan's *Inner Space: Introduction to Kabbalah, Meditation and Prophecy* (Brooklyn: Moznaim Publishing Corporation, 1990) or Rabbi Yechiel Bar-Lev's *Song of the Soul* (Petach Tikva, 1994). Both, especially the latter, are serviceable introductions to Lurianic Kabbalah, which is somewhat thinly handled in our entry on Safed Kabbalah, though covered well in Scholem's *Major Trends*.

For further advice on readings in Judaism, see *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts*, edited by Barry Holtz (New York: Summit Books, 1984). There, one is

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\* This has been remedied to some extent; see above, [Pre-Kabbalistic Streams of Jewish Mysticism](#), § 5 *Hasidei Ashkenaz*. [2016]

guided by specialists through the issues and literature of the Bible, Talmud, Midrash, medieval commentaries and philosophy, kabbalistic texts, hasidic teachings and prayer books.

Another good overview of the literature of Judaism is *The Sacred Books of the Jews* by Harry Gersh (New York: Stein and Day, 1968).

One of the best general anthologies is Philip S. Alexander's *Textual Sources for the Study of Judaism* (Totowa: Manchester University Books/Barnes and Noble Books, 1984; rpt. University of Chicago Press, 1990). Alexander's introductions are particularly helpful.

A very instructive set of anthologies (if you can get past the lame illustrations) is Louis Jacobs' CHAIN OF TRADITION SERIES published by Behrman House (New York):

1. *Jewish Law* (1968)
2. *Jewish Ethics, Philosophy and Mysticism* (1969)
3. *Jewish Thought Today* (1970)

To these could be added Jacobs' *Jewish Mystical Testimonies* (New York: Schocken Books, 1977).

Notes (updated 2003):

For full bibliographic information on various stages of Jewish mysticism, refer to my series on sources in English:

- “Notes on the Study of *Merkabah* Mysticism and *Hekhalot* Literature in English”—with an appendix on Jewish magic
- “*Sefer Yezirah* in English”
- “Notes on the Study of Early Kabbalah in English” [the current paper]
- “Notes on the *Zohar* in English”
- “Notes on the Study of Later Kabbalah in English: The Safed Period and Lurianic Kabbalah”
- “The Study of Christian Cabala in English”

These papers can be accessed on-line at

<http://www.digital-brilliance.com/contributed/Karr/Biblios/index.php>.

“Popular” books on Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism are numerous and quite varied in their quality and purpose. For readable, well-researched accounts, see

- Laenen, J. H. *Jewish Mysticism: An Introduction* [= JOODSE MYSTIEK. EEN INLEIDING] translated from the Dutch by David E. Orton (Louisville: Westminster Knox Press, 2001).
  - Silberman, Neil Asher. *Heavenly Powers: Unraveling the Secret History of the Kabbalah* (New York: Grosset/Putnam, 1998).
1. Jacob Neusner, “The History of Earlier Rabbinic Judaism: Some New Approaches,” in *History of Religions*, vol. 16, no. 3 (University of Chicago, February 1977).
  2. Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* [original Hebrew: HAZAL, PIRKE EMUNOT VE-DE’OT, Jerusalem: Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1975], English translation by Israel Abrahams (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).
  3. See Scholem’s *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (Jerusalem: Schocken Publishing House, 1941; frequently reprinted by Schocken Books, New York). A similar flaw plagues the recent anthology by Daniel C. Matt, *The Essential Kabbalah: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1994). As nicely done as it is, Matt’s book gives the erroneous impression that the Kabbalah can be summarized and distilled into a single, comprehensive volume. This problem of homogenization burdens other areas of Jewish studies. See Barry Holtz’s comments regarding *midrashim* in *Back to the Sources* (New York: Summit Books, 1984), pp. 177-9.
  4. *Gershom Scholem’s MAJOR TRENDS IN JEWISH MYSTICISM 50 Years After: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on the History of Jewish Mysticism*, edited by Peter Schäfer and Joseph Dan (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1993).
  5. “Reflections on the Nature and Origins of Jewish Mysticism,” in *Gershom Scholem’s MAJOR TRENDS...* (see note 4).
  6. In particular see Peter Schäfer, *Gershom Scholem Reconsidered: The Aim and Purpose of Early Jewish Mysticism* [THE TWELFTH SACKS LECTURE DELIVERED ON 29<sup>TH</sup> MAY 1985] (Oxford: Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, 1986) and Nathaniel Deutsch, *The Gnostic Imagination: Gnosticism, Mandaeism, and Merkabah Mysticism* [BRILL’S SERIES IN JEWISH STUDIES, vol. XIII] (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995).

An essay which takes a critical look at contemporary “Kabbalah Studies” in general, but with a rather different approach from that of the present discussion, is Gil Anidjar’s “Jewish Mysticism Alterable and Unalterable: On *Orienting* Kabbalah Studies and the ‘Zohar of Christian Spain,’” in *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, Fall 1996). Regarding Anidjar’s central theme, namely Moslem influence on Kabbalah, see Moshe Idel’s leveling response, “Orienting, Orientalizing or Disorienting the Study of Kabbalah: ‘An Almost Absolutely Unique’



Case of Occidentalism,” in *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 2 (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 1997).

In several of Schäfer’s discussions (*Gershom Scholem Reconsidered* for one) and in David Halperin’s *The Faces of the Chariot* (Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck] 1988), questions are raised about the titles and contents of *hekhlat* texts. The notion of fixed bodies of content forming a canon of “books” representing a coherent school of *hekhlat* mysticism appears unsupportable. A similar problem exists with the very term *kabbalah* (see note 7). A partial solution is suggested in such subheadings as the *early* Kabbalah of the Provence and Gerona circles, the *’Iyyun* school, *prophetic* Kabbalah (of Abraham Abulafia), or *Lurianic* Kabbalah. However, should the German *Hasidism* be excluded so definitely from Kabbalah?

7. Until the thirteenth century, *kabbalah* referred to the whole body of oral religious teachings: the Talmud, the *midrashim*, etc. Indeed, anyone who picked up a copy of *Sefer ha-Kabbalah* (BOOK OF TRADITION) expecting it to expound upon *kabbalistic* mysteries would be sorely disappointed. See *The Book of Tradition*, translated by Gerson D. Cohen (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1968).
8. On the terms “mysticism,” “symbol,” and “myth,” see Gil Anidjar’s article, mentioned in note 6. Words causing particular difficulty in the field of Jewish mysticism are “gnostic” and “gnosticism”; examples of discussions on these terms are
  - P. S. Alexander. “Comparing Merkavah Mysticism and Gnosticism: An Essay in Method,” in *Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. 35, no. 1 (1984)
  - Joseph Dan. “Jewish Gnosticism?” in *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, vol. 2, no. 4 (1995)
  - Ithamar Gruenwald. “Jewish Merkavah Mysticism and Gnosticism,” in *Studies in Jewish Mysticism*, edited by J. Dan and F. Talmage (Cambridge: Association for Jewish Studies, 1982).
9. “Defining Kabbalah: The Kabbalah of the Divine Names,” in *the Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics, and Typologies*, edited by R. A. Herrera (New York: Peter Lang, 1993).
10. If one were to pick up any of a number of popular books on Kabbalah, one might come away with the impression that Kabbalah was primarily, if not solely, the doctrine of the *sefirot*, or divine emanations. In fact, Kabbalah involves a rich array of concepts and techniques, not the least of which are various types of letter and name mysticism (though many of the hermeneutic conventions concerning words and letters, such as *gematria*, are more accurately considered rabbinic, not kabbalistic). Topics are diverse: the progression of cosmic cycles, mystical explanations of the *mitzvot*, the interplay of humankind with the ultimate God, the source of and reason behind evil, creation and the end, the mystical significance of the holidays, angels and demons, the transmigration of souls—indeed, a ranging literature full of unpredictable interpretations of scripture.
11. Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988). See in particular Chapters 6, 7, and 8.
12. On considering the German *Hasidim* as an important source for non-*sefirotic* Kabbalah, see Daniel Abrams, “From Germany to Spain: Numerology as a Mystical Technique,” in *Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. XLVI, no. 1 (Spring 1996).
13. See the various discussions of the *Bahir*:
  - Gershom Scholem. *Origins of the Kabbalah*.
  - Joseph Dan. *The Early Kabbalah*.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ . “Midrash and the Dawn of Kabbalah,” in *Midrash and Literature*, edited by G. Hartman and S. Budick (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); and in Dan’s *Jewish Mysticism*, Volume II: THE MIDDLE AGES (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc., 1998). See especially the introduction to *Jewish Mysticism* II, where Dan argues against Scholem’s description of the history of Jewish mysticism as having a “linear development from its beginnings” (“Introduction: § III”).

- Elliot R. Wolfson. “The Tree That Is All: Jewish-Christian Roots of a Kabbalistic Symbol in *Sefer ha-Bahir*,” in Wolfson’s *Along the Path: Studies in Kabbalistic Myth, Symbolism, and Hermeneutics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).
14. To pursue the development of Christian mysticism, see *The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century*, by Bernard McGinn (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1991—paperback edition, 1995)—the best work on this topic which I have seen. *Foundations...* is the first of a four-volume series. An interesting supplement to McGinn is Guy G. Stroumsa’s *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism* [STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS (NUMEN BOOK SERIES), Volume LXX] (Leiden – New York – Köln, E. J. Brill, 1996).  
Following mystical trends inevitably leads through apocryphal Christianity into Gnosticism. For an overview of this complex subject, see *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, by Kurt Rudolph (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1984; New York: Harper and Row, 1987). For texts, see (forgive the “pop” titles) *The Gnostic Scriptures: Ancient Wisdom for the New Age*, translated, annotated, and introduced by Bentley Layton (New York: Doubleday, 1987), and *The Gnostic Bible*, edited by Wallis Barnstone and Marvin Meyer (Boston & London: Shambhala, 2003).
  15. The more comprehensive English edition of the *Mishnah* by Herbert Danby (1933) is still available from Oxford University Press.
  16. A possible alternative to *Major Trends* is Scholem’s *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1974, reprinted frequently).
  17. In *Essential Papers*, Arthur Green’s article, “The Zohar: Jewish Mysticism in Medieval Spain,” is a gem; it’s worth getting the book just for this. This fine article also appears in *An Introduction to the Mystics of Medieval Europe*, edited by Paul Szarmach (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), which also contains David Biale’s article on the Safed Period, “Jewish Mysticism in the Sixteenth Century.”
  18. Be careful with the Meltzer. It is full of sloppy mistakes.