



Essential Papers on Kabbalah (Essential Papers on Jewish Studies)

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As recently as 1915, when the legendary scholar of Jewish mysticism Gershom Scholem sought to find someone—anyone—to teach him Kabbalah, the study of Jewish mysticism and Kabbalah was largely neglected and treated with disdain. Today, this field has ripened to the point that it occupies a central place in the agenda of contemporary Judaic studies.

While there are many definitions of Kabbalah, this volume focuses on the discrete body of literature which developed between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries. The basis for most of this kabbalistic literature is the concept of the ten sefirot, the complex schema depicting the divine persona, and speculation about the inner life of God. It maintains the conviction that all human action reverberates in the world of the sefirot, and thus influences the life of divinity. Proper action helps to restore harmony and unity to the world of God, while improper action reinforces the breach within God brought about originally through human transgression.

Collected here in one volume are some of the most central essays published on the subject. The selections provide the reader with a sense of the historical range of Kabbalah, as well as examples of various kinds of approaches, including those of intellectual and social history, history and phenomenology of religions, motif studies, ritual studies, and women's studies. Sections discuss mystical motifs and theological ideas, mystical leadership and personalities, and devotional practices and mystical experiences.



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