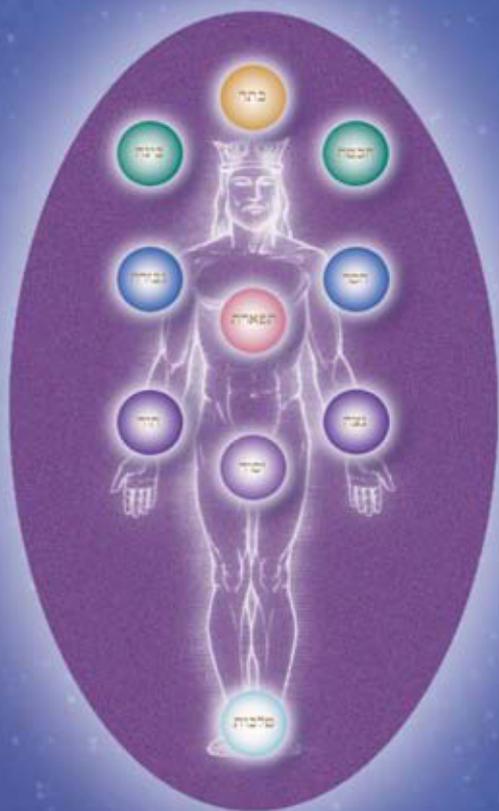


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—CAROLINE MYSS, Ph.D., author of *Why People Don't Heal and How They Can*

KABBALAH

Key to Your Inner Power



ELIZABETH
CLARE PROPHET

WITH PATRICIA R. SPADARO AND MURRAY L. STEINMAN

MYSTICAL PATHS OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

KABBALAH

Key to Your Inner Power



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CLARE PROPHET

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I dedicate this book to the
magnanimous hearts of East and West
who have come together in the joy of Kabbalah

KABBALAH: *Key to Your Inner Power*

by Elizabeth Clare Prophet with Patricia R. Spadaro and Murray L. Steinman
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INTRODUCTION

There was light in my heart like lightning . . . The world changed into purity around me, and my heart felt as if I had entered a new world.

MERKABAH SHELEMAH

If there is common ground among the world's religions, it is to be found in mysticism. Adventurers of the spirit, the mystics have dared to push beyond the boundaries of orthodox tradition to pursue a common goal: the direct experience of God. Mystics long to see God, to know God, to be one with God—not in the hereafter, but in the here and now. And they teach that while you may seek him in temple or mosque or church, you must ultimately find him in your own heart.

In *Kabbalah: Key to Your Inner Power*, I bring you a unique interpretation of the Jewish mystical tradition known as Kabbalah. Through the inspiration of mystics who have gone before, I would remind you of your birthright as a son or

The Whirlwind: Ezekiel's Vision of the Cherubim and the Eyed Wheels by *William Blake*, c. 1805.

daughter of God. That birthright, which is your unique portion of God himself, is right inside of you. Only you can unlock it.

What is Kabbalah? It is a subject so mysterious that for centuries only married men over the age of forty were allowed to study it.¹ That view is no longer universally held, and today both men and women of any age study the basic principles of Kabbalah. As one Kabbalist wrote, “From 1540 onward, the most important commandment will be for all to study [Kabbalah] in public, both old and young.”²

The term *Kabbalah* refers to the mystical tradition of Judaism. No one knows exactly when Kabbalah first began. As a body of knowledge it sprang from mysticism but was not a continuation of any known mystical tradition. Jewish mystical practices can be traced back to around the first century B.C., and the movement known as Kabbalah first emerged around 1200 in Provence, France. But some Kabbalists say the first Kabbalistic revelations dated back to the time of Adam.

Although the teachings of Kabbalah are highly mystical, they are also highly practical. Jewish mystics received revelations about the creation of the universe that are strikingly similar to modern science’s big bang theory. They came up with a language and a symbology to describe the qualities of God, our relationship to God, our spiritual purpose in life and the origins of evil.

Most importantly, Kabbalists developed an understanding of the mysteries of God that can help us unlock our spiritual power—the power that God endowed us with from the beginning. The power that launched the big bang.

How can we use the keys of Kabbalah to access that power? By becoming mystics ourselves. Yes, we have the right to become mystics in our own time, using the map that Kabbalists have left us.

The hallmark of Kabbalah is its diagram of the ten *sefirot* (divine emanations or aspects of God), which Kabbalists call

the Tree of Life. It is a blueprint not only for the inner workings of God but for the inner workings of the soul, for Kabbalah teaches that the Tree of Life is inside of you. It is the link between you and God.

You can reconnect with the Tree of Life of the *sefirot* through specific prayers, meditations and spiritual practices. This book outlines some of these techniques. It also shares the insights of the enlightened spiritual beings of East and West known as the ascended masters, especially the insights of the Ascended Master El Morya.

Through the centuries, El Morya has been illuminating the inner path to God. He is truly one of the world's spiritual giants. In one of his past lives he was the patriarch Abraham. According to Kabbalistic tradition, the priest Melchizedek revealed to Abraham the teachings recorded in the *Sefer Yetzirah*, an early mystical text that had enormous influence on Kabbalah. Abraham is the acclaimed father of Jew, Christian and Muslim, and he still guides students of Kabbalah today.

In 1875 El Morya, then a renowned Eastern mahatma, sponsored the Theosophical Society through Helena Blavatsky. In the 1920s and 1930s, as the Ascended Master El Morya, he worked with Nicholas and Helena Roerich and the Agni Yoga Society. He also played a role in the "I AM" Activity, which was founded in the 1930s. Since 1952 he has worked with my late husband, Mark L. Prophet, and myself to teach seekers how to apply the truths of the world's mystical traditions to their own spiritual journeys.

El Morya has seen to it that the tradition of Kabbalah has been preserved for all who have come to the place on their spiritual path where they are ready for it. And he has looked to the day when students of theosophy and mysticism would receive the full interpretation of its mysteries.

In exploring mystical Judaism with the help of El Morya, I discovered a core truth that I believe can help resolve the central conflict between Jew and Christian, which is their

disagreement about who and what is Jesus Christ. The key is to be found in Kabbalah's teaching on *Tiferet*, one of the ten *sefirot*.

Kabbalah is filled with many profound and liberating concepts. Like each of the mystical paths of the world's religions, it gives us a unique perspective on how to contact the presence of God within and how to sustain a strong connection with that inner source of power. This is a sacred adventure, personal to each one of us. Yet we can learn from the great mystics of all time who have gone before.

My goal in *Kabbalah: Key to Your Inner Power* is to bring to life the path of the Jewish mystics—to share with you their joys and ecstasies, their sacred visions and their practical techniques for experiencing the sacred in everyday life. Together, let us explore the quest of these mystics and find out how we can apply what they learned to our own adventures in self-discovery.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth Clare Prophet". The signature is written in a dark ink on a light background.

Note: Because gender-neutral language can be cumbersome and at times confusing, we have used the pronouns *he* and *him* to refer to God or to the individual and *man* or *mankind* to refer to people in general. We have used these terms for readability and consistency, and they are not intended to exclude women or the feminine aspect of the Godhead. God is both masculine and feminine. We do, however, use the pronouns *she* and *her* to refer to the soul because each soul, whether housed in a male or a female body, is the feminine counterpart of the masculine Spirit.

*How good it is to look upon
the face of the Divine Presence!*

THE ZOHAR



CHAPTER ONE



THE BIG BANG AND JEWISH MYSTICISM

The “Beginning” extended itself and made a palace for itself, for glory and praise. There it sowed the holy seed. . . .

As soon as [the seed] entered, the palace filled up with light. From that light are poured forth other lights, sparks flying through the gates and giving life to all.

THE ZOHAR

In the beginning, there was a seed of energy infinitely smaller than a proton, surrounded by nothingness. In a fraction of a second, that seed exploded into a blazing inferno of matter and energy that cooled and eventually formed galaxies, stars and planets.

That is the big bang theory—the creation myth of today’s cosmologists. Scientists first proposed the theory in the 1920s. It fell from favor for a time, but in 1965 scientists discovered microwave radiation that appeared to be from the big bang. With that discovery, they were close to proving the theory, but

The big bang theory of modern scientists is strikingly similar to the way some Jewish mystics described the Creation.

2 *The Big Bang and Jewish Mysticism*

they needed more evidence of ripples in the seemingly uniform microwaves that surround everything in space.

Then in 1989, NASA launched the Cosmic Background Explorer satellite (COBE) to look at the microwaves. The satellite enabled scientists to see how the universe was evolving when it was only 300,000 years old. What they saw were the imprints of tiny ripples in space that were caused by the big bang.

When the findings were announced on April 23, 1992, excitement in the scientific community could hardly have been higher. George Smoot, head of the research team that made the discovery, said that looking at radiation patterns just after the big bang was “like looking at God.”¹ Celebrated physicist Stephen Hawking called it “the discovery of the century—if not of all time.”²

These findings are a great breakthrough, not only for science but also for religion. For if the big bang theory is accurate, scientists may be confirming the creation myths of Jewish and Hindu mystics.

In the Beginning, There Was “Nothing”

Like modern scientists, Jewish mystics of the thirteenth century said that in the beginning there was nothing—nothing, that is, except the “divine nothingness,” the hidden, transcendent God. The God of Genesis who “created the heaven and the earth” was not even manifest. The term the mystics used to describe God before creation was *Ein Sof*.^{*} *Ein Sof* means “without end,” or “the Infinite.” *Ein Sof* is the First Cause. It is ultimate reality—unmanifest, incomprehensible and indescribable.

The major text of the Jewish mystical tradition, the *Sefer ha-Zohar* (Book of Splendor), or Zohar, reveals a process of creation that started deep within the hidden recesses of the

^{*}Hebrew terms can be transliterated a number of different ways. Their spelling and style have been standardized throughout this book. For pronunciations of key terms, see p. 251–52.

formless *Ein Sof* and unfolded as a series of emanations. Central to this drama was a single point that gave forth light and sowed “the holy seed,” creating a cosmic conception that is depicted as an explosion of light. The Zohar says:

As the will of the King [*Ein Sof*] began to come forth, He engraved signs in the uppermost pure light. Within the most hidden recesses a flame of darkness issued from the mysterious *Ein Sof*, a mist within formlessness, ringed about, neither white nor black nor red nor green, of no color at all. Only when measured did it bring forth light-giving colors. From deep within the flame there flowed a spring, out of which the colors were drawn below, hidden in the mysterious concealment of *Ein Sof*.

It broke through and yet did not break through the ether surrounding it. It was not knowable at all until, by force of its breaking through, one hidden sublime point gave forth light. Beyond that point nothing is known. Therefore it is called “Beginning”—the first utterance of all.³ . . .

The “Beginning” extended itself and made a palace for itself, for glory and praise. There it sowed the holy seed in order to beget offspring for the benefit of the world.⁴ . . .

As soon as [the seed] entered, the palace filled up with light. From that light are poured forth other lights, sparks flying through the gates and giving life to all.⁵

The sixteenth-century Kabbalist Rabbi Isaac Luria came up with a different theory of the Creation. While other Kabbalists said the Creation began with an act of expansion, Luria started with the concept of contraction, or *tzimtzum*. According to Luria, *Ein Sof*, the Infinite, contracted itself to its centermost point and then withdrew to the sides of the circle surrounding that point in order to create a vacuum. The reason for *Ein Sof*'s contraction was this: For the creation of the finite world to occur, the Infinite needed to define an empty space where its finite creation could exist separately from itself.

From the edge of the vacuum, *Ein Sof* issued a ray of light

that launched all of creation. The sequence of events is complicated but, in essence, *Ein Sof's* light manifested ten divine emanations. Each emanation was to be preserved in a special vessel. Some of these vessels, however, were unable to hold that light and consequently shattered. As a result sparks of divine light, along with shards of the vessels, scattered, giving birth to the material world. You could say that what happened was Luria's own version of the big bang.

Like the cosmologies of scientists and Jewish mystics, one ancient Hindu creation myth begins with "nothing." The Creation Hymn of the Rig-Veda says:

The non-existent was not,
the existent was not:
there was no realm of air,
no sky beyond it. . . .
Death was not then,
nor was there aught immortal:
no sign was there,
the day's and night's divider.
That One Thing, breathless,
breathed by its own nature:
apart from it was nothing whatsoever.
Darkness there was:
at first concealed in darkness
this All was indiscriminated chaos.
All that existed then was void and formless:
by the great power of Warmth was born
that Unit.
Thereafter rose Desire in the beginning—
Desire, the primal seed and germ of Spirit.
Sages who searched with their heart's thought
discovered the existent's kinship
in the non-existent.⁶

The hymn sounds similar to the opening words of Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament. The Zohar, in fact,

teaches that these verses symbolically describe the mystery of emanation from *Ein Sof*.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

And God said, "Let there be light": and there was light.

And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.⁷

The dividing of the light from the darkness could also be compared to Luria's idea of contraction. At first, there was only darkness, nothingness. Then came the light, which launched the process of creation.

Just as science has confirmed the ideas behind Jewish and Hindu creation myths, so it has lent credibility to other statements Jewish mystics have made about the universe. Although scientists are still refining their calculations, they believe that the universe is somewhere between nine billion and sixteen billion years old. About seven hundred years ago, the mystic Rabbi Isaac of Acco reached the same conclusion. He said the universe was over fifteen billion years old, but he didn't base his conclusion on precise scientific measurement. In his book *The Treasury of Life*, he said he based it on the hidden oral tradition.⁸

If this mystical tradition can tell us something about the age of the universe, then perhaps it can solve other mysteries of the universe that scientists have not yet cracked.

Merkabah Mysticism: Visions of God's Throne-Chariot

Before we delve into the revelations of the Jewish mystical tradition known as Kabbalah, let us briefly explore the roots of Jewish mysticism that formed a prototype for the mystic quest.

A mystic is someone who seeks the direct experience of God and union with God. The first identifiable Jewish mystics practiced what is called *Merkabah* mysticism. It was based on the prophet Ezekiel's vision of the *Merkabah*, or throne-chariot, of God. For centuries, mystics have tried to reproduce his experience, recorded in Ezekiel 1:

I looked and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof, as the colour of amber, . . . came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.⁹

Within the cloud Ezekiel saw the chariot of God, a glowing object with huge wheels that appeared to be made of a stone like topaz. Beside each wheel was one of the four-winged creatures. Above the creatures was a vault of the heavens that gleamed like crystal.¹⁰

Ezekiel 1:26–28 records:

And above [the vault of the heavens] that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness . . . of a man. . . .

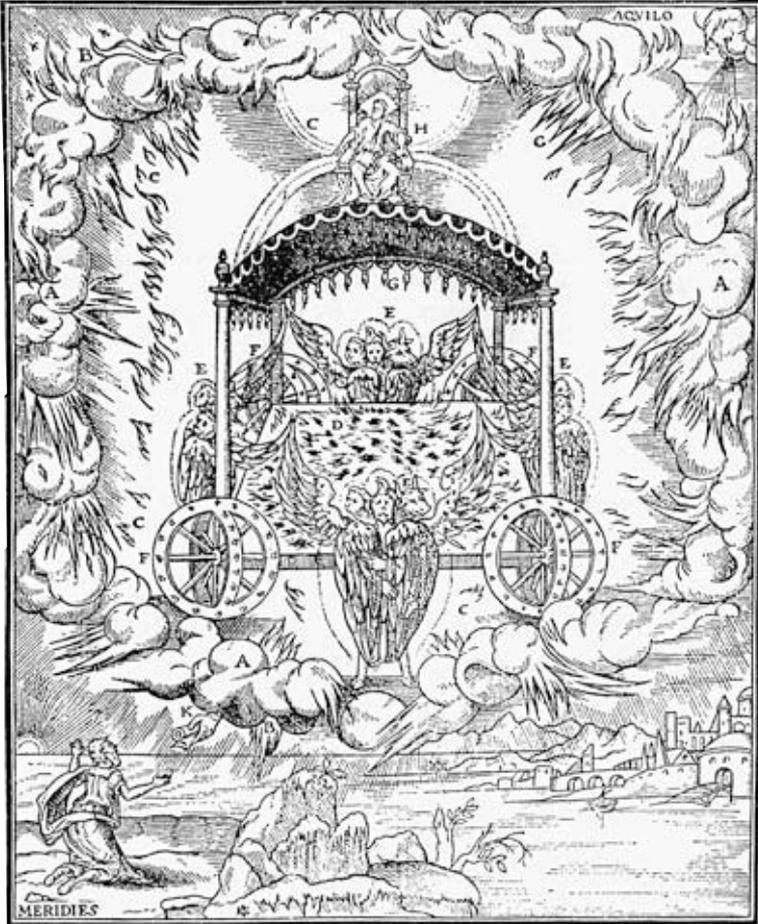
And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of [the man's] loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.

As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.

The vision of Ezekiel brings to mind Moses' encounter with the bush that burned but was not consumed.¹¹ For when Ezekiel looked up, he beheld a whirlwind that came out of the

north. He called it “a great cloud and a fire infolding itself.” He said that a brightness was about it and that out of the midst of it was the color of amber.

God uses his sacred fire, as he did with Moses and Ezekiel, to establish a rapprochement with his sons and daughters



The vision of the Merkabah (the divine throne-chariot) that Ezekiel saw by the river Chebar was the theme and goal of Merkabah mysticism, the earliest form of Jewish mysticism. (The vision of Ezekiel from the Bear Bible, 1569.)

whom he would call and anoint to fulfill his holy purposes. Through his inner walk with God, Ezekiel made himself ready, and the quality of his readiness was acceptable in the sight of the LORD. He was a mystic among mystics, a prophet to his people, one among a handful of those whom God called to be his messengers at critical junctures in history.

Imagine yourself as Ezekiel, a priest and captive in Babylon, settled with his fellow Judahites by the river Chebar. One day you look up and to your amazement the heavens are opened to you. The LORD allows you to see the seven planes of heaven and even himself. Imagine yourself in that exalted state before the LORD. The LORD speaks directly and expressly to you and he places his hand upon you.

This interchange happened to a son of man who walked the earth like you and me. What set him apart was the rightness of his heart, the integrity of his soul and the brilliance of his spirit. These are the qualities that all great mystics work to develop lifetime after lifetime.

Scholars are uncertain as to when *Merkabah* mysticism first emerged. Some say that the oldest evidence of this throne mysticism is in the First Book of Enoch, which may have been written as early as the third century B.C. It portrays Enoch's ascent to heaven and his vision of an exalted throne and the Glorious One who sat upon it.¹² A hymn-fragment in the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered at Qumran, dating back to about the first century B.C., describes cherubim blessing the "image of the throne-chariot."¹³ Some have deduced from this that the Qumran community embraced some kind of *Merkabah* mysticism.

Merkabah mysticism began to flourish in the first century in Palestine. Some scholars claim that threads of *Merkabah* mysticism are even woven into Jesus' teachings and New Testament writings of the first century. They say, for instance, that Paul's account of being "caught up into paradise" in

II Corinthians 12 and John's vision recorded in Revelation 4 of the heavenly throne and him who sat upon it are *Merkabah* visions. Gnostic texts, which claim to record Jesus' secret teachings, also describe mystic ascents.¹⁴

Gershom Scholem (1897–1982), the leading modern authority on Jewish mysticism, says that the literary records of *Merkabah* mysticism can be traced through the tenth century. Scholem writes:

The *Merkabah* mystics occupy themselves with all the details of the upper world, which extends throughout the seven palaces in the firmament of *aravot* (the uppermost of the seven firmaments), with the angelic hosts which fill the palaces, the rivers of fire which flow down in front of the Chariot, and the bridges which cross them. . . . But the main purpose of the ascent is the vision of the One Who sits on the Throne, "a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above."¹⁵

Some *Merkabah* mystics who tried to replicate the vision and experience of Ezekiel had the sensation of going on a journey. Rabbi Akiba, a second-century sage and mystic, saw himself rising through the seven heavens and the seven palaces until he found himself standing before the throne of God. Hai Gaon, an eleventh-century Jewish religious leader, said the experience was a journey to the "innermost recesses of the heart."¹⁶ The mystical journey to the innermost recesses of the heart is the treasure in common of every mystic who has sought and found the God within.

Some mystics wrote poems called *Merkabah* hymns. In these, they try to express their inexpressible experience. One hymn reads:

O wreathed in splendor, crowned with crowns,
O chorister of Him on high,
Extol the Lord enthroned in flames
For in the presence of the Presence,
In the inmost glory

Of the inmost chambers
 You set up your posts.
 Your name He distinguished
 from His servant's name,
 From the Chariot's servants He set you apart.
 Him who the name of one of you mentions
 The flame surrounds, a leaping fire,
 Around him burning, glowing coals.¹⁷

The Jewish mystic who wrote this probed the presence of God and perhaps, like Ezekiel, was chosen to enter the higher walk with God step by step. Yet some in authority have tried, and still try, to prevent this intimate contact with God. They try to convince us that personal communication with him is not possible in the modern era.

Your Right to the Mystical Experience

Every religion has factions that are “antimystical,” and Judaism is no exception. “The rabbinic tradition was always superstitious and fearful of any mystical movement that arose in Judaism,” says Rabbi Devorah Jacobson. “From very early on, the rabbis went to extremes to put hedges and fences around mystical practice and belief.”¹⁸

The rabbis claimed that *Merkabah* mysticism was dangerous. Jewish law warned against trying to replicate Ezekiel's experience. The public reading of Ezekiel's vision was banned except on the festival of Shavuot. Scholem says the rabbis sought to conceal the Book of Ezekiel by withdrawing it from general circulation and from the biblical canon.¹⁹ But Jewish mystics kept practicing *Merkabah* mysticism, usually in secret, for a thousand years or so.

In the early rabbinic period (A.D. 70–200), the rabbis did acknowledge that in times past men had had direct, intimate contact with God. They believed that at the time of Adam and Eve, man communicated directly and easily with God and that

Abraham and Moses also had an intimate relationship with God. But the rabbis said that God had gradually stopped communicating directly with man and that an abyss now separated them, says David Ariel, an authority on Jewish mysticism.²⁰

This was the rabbis' explanation for the abyss: The Jewish nation had less need of direct intercourse with God because God had provided them with the laws and teachings necessary to guide them. Also, man's sin had increased the distance between him and God.

"By the time of the early rabbinic period, the Jewish people [had] no expectations of having a direct, unmediated relationship with God," says Ariel.²¹ Judaism became a legalistic religion that substituted the observance of the law, ritual and morality for direct mystical experience. Rabbinic Judaism, which developed into modern Judaism, has been suspicious of or even hostile to mysticism ever since.

Ariel notes that the rabbis did allow that in rare cases individuals could communicate directly with God. They believed in miracles and even recorded cases where people had mystical experiences. But the rabbis claimed that personal mystical experiences could not be used as a basis for legal decisions. "They rejected the legal admissibility of the individual religious experience, direct contact with God, or prophecy in favor of the indirect relationship with God that is possible through the fulfillment of the Torah,*" writes Ariel.²²

While rabbis of the first and second centuries were organizing against mysticism, the early Christian Church was attacking the Christian Gnostics and others for their mystical teachings. "Just as the . . . principle of continuous revelation posed a serious threat to the Christian establishment, so too the *Merkabah* mystics, by resorting to ecstatic experience,

*The literal translation of the word *Torah* is "teaching," but it refers to Jewish law. In the narrow sense Torah refers to the Written Law (the Pentateuch, or the first five books of the Bible). In the broader sense Torah encompasses all the teachings of Judaism, including its written and oral laws, doctrines, philosophy, ethics, customs and ceremonies.



The esoteric interpretation of the written Torah, or Law, reveals the meaning of the hidden mysteries of God, according to Kabbalah. (Chinese Torah scroll from the seventeenth century.)

could have threatened the stability of rabbinic Judaism with its commitment to the sufficiency of Torah,” writes scholar Philip Alexander.²³

Direct and ongoing communion with God is what Abraham, Moses, the prophets, Jesus Christ, Gautama Buddha and all mystics were—and are—all about. Many were persecuted for the gifts and graces that God had bestowed upon them, but they persevered.

They showed us that God’s revelations did not stop with the parting advice of the Buddha, with the last book of the Old Testament or with the final words of the New Testament. If our hearts and our spirits are receptive, we can discern the spiritual keys that will lead us to the direct experience of God.

One key is to follow in the footsteps of the adepts of every religion. We can touch the heart and soul of Judaism by learning from the patriarchs, the prophets and the Jewish mystics. They talked with God or his emissaries face to face. By using them as guides, we can unlock the door to the Tree of Life that is Kabbalah and access the power that is ours to use today as modern mystics.

The Origins of Kabbalah

The mystical movement known as Kabbalah emerged in about 1200 in Provence, France. Until the fourteenth century, Kabbalists used a variety of names for themselves and Kabbalah. The Kabbalists of Spain and Provence called Kabbalah “inner wisdom” and Kabbalists “the understanding ones.”

Others called Kabbalists “the masters of knowledge,” “those who know grace” and “masters of service,” meaning those who know the true, inner way to the service of God. By the fourteenth century, Kabbalists called their teaching and movement almost exclusively Kabbalah.

Kabbalah means literally “tradition.” It can also be translated as “receiving” or “transmitted teachings,” for the Jewish mystics insisted that their doctrines had been transmitted orally, from generation to generation, for millennia.

The question of exactly when Kabbalah originated, writes Scholem, is “indisputably one of the most difficult in the history of the Jewish religion.”²⁴ Jewish mystics have asserted that Kabbalah dates back to Adam. Scholem writes:

Many Kabbalists denied the existence of any kind of historical development in the Kabbalah. They saw it as a kind of primordial revelation that was accorded to Adam or the early generations and that endured, although new revelations were made from time to time, particularly when the tradition had been either forgotten or interrupted. . . . It became widely accepted that the Kabbalah was the esoteric part of the Oral Law given to Moses at Sinai.²⁵

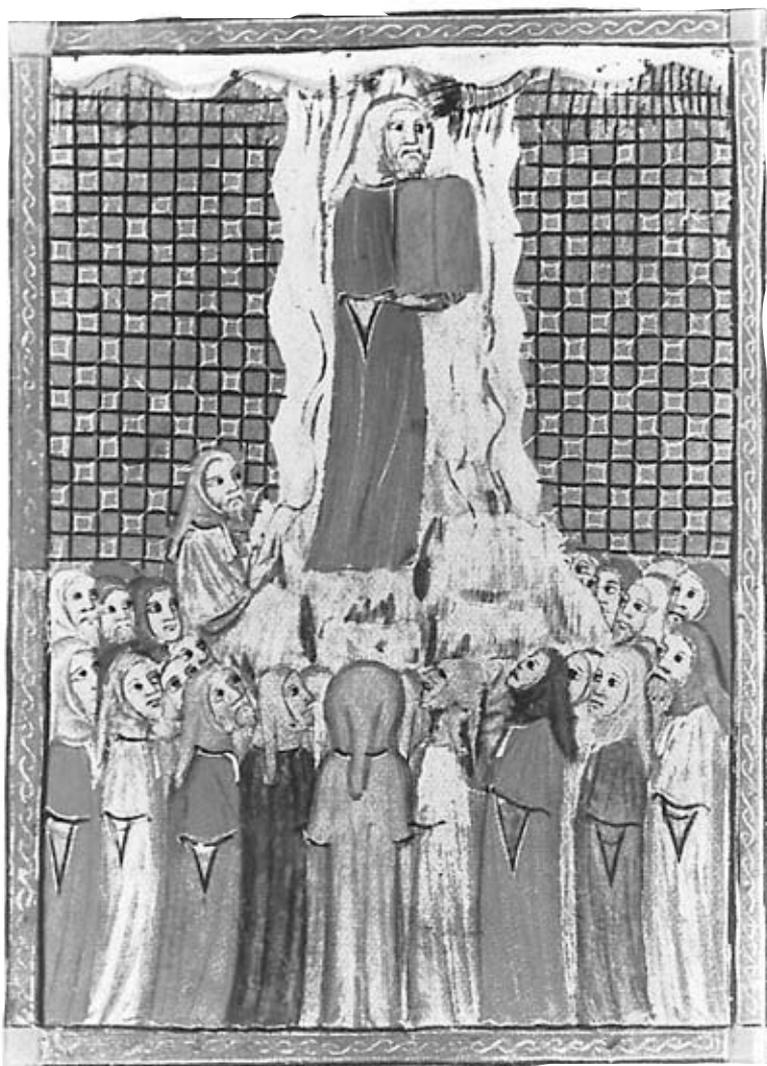
Some scholars have rejected this point of view and have come up with two alternate theories. One holds that Kabbalah is a new creation of the twelfth or thirteenth century that emerged in reaction to the rationalism of Jewish philosophy. The other says that Kabbalah probably originated centuries earlier in the Greco-Roman world; it was passed on orally but it did not surface in Jewish literature until the Middle Ages.

Even the early Kabbalists were ambiguous about the source of their tradition. Rabbi Arthur Green writes: “The early Kabbalists in fact made a dual truth-claim for their esoteric readings of Scripture and their boldly new speculative ideas: they claimed both that they were ancient, the secret wisdom passed down by countless generations, only now given to public reading, and also that they were new, freshly revealed by heavenly voices to the sages of immediately preceding generations.”²⁶ Some rabbis of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, including the first identifiable Kabbalistic author, Isaac the Blind, even claimed that Elijah had revealed mystical secrets to them.

Kabbalah built on *Merkabah* mysticism and other forms of Jewish and non-Jewish mysticism, but it was not a mere continuation of these traditions. Certain of their ideas were quite novel. For example, Kabbalists adopted a new way of looking at God, creation, man and the purpose of life. One of the most important Kabbalistic innovations was to give the Torah an esoteric interpretation.

Kabbalists believe that it is through the words of the Torah that God reveals truths about himself and the universe. Green says:

Because the majority of people would not be able to bear the great light that comes with knowing God, . . . divinity is revealed in the Torah in hidden form. Scripture is strewn with hints as to the true nature of “that which is above” and the mysterious process within divinity that led to the creation of this



Kabbalists teach that God revealed Kabbalah to Moses on Mount Sinai. Some claim that Kabbalah dates back even further, to the time of Adam, and that it has been transmitted orally for thousands of years. (Moses delivering the tablets of the Law to the Israelites, from a fourteenth-century Spanish Haggadah. National Museum, Sarajevo.)

world. Only in the exoteric, public sense is revelation primarily a matter of divine *will*, teaching the commandments man is to follow in order to lead the good life. The inner, esoteric revelation is rather one of divine *truth*, a network of secrets about the innermost workings of God's universe.²⁷

The orthodox rabbis concentrated on man's relationship with God and how man could fulfill the commandments set forth in scripture. They did not attempt to explore the nature of the Godhead or the divine realm—the very mysteries that Kabbalists sought to penetrate through an active and practical mysticism.

“The Zohar knows no bounds in its extravagant praise of mysticism; at every opportunity it reverts to an expression of its great worth,” writes Isaiah Tishby in his definitive anthology *The Wisdom of the Zohar*. Kabbalists believe that the goal of the soul living in this world is to realize “that supreme perception which it enjoyed when it resided in the heights of Heaven.” To the Kabbalist, says Tishby, “knowledge of the science of mysticism is the main bridge leading to the attachment of the soul to God.”²⁸

Let us, then, meet the masters who codified the secrets of Kabbalah.

Moses de León and Isaac Luria: Mystic Geniuses of Kabbalah

It gives me great pleasure to introduce you to Rabbi Moses de León (1240–1305), of León, Spain. He is the mystic genius who wrote the Zohar, the first book to clearly delineate Kabbalistic thought. Scholars agree that de León was one of the most important figures in the development of Kabbalah.

Rabbi Moses de León, wherever you are, I bow to the light of *Ein Sof* within your heart!

“The Zohar must be viewed as a great compendium of all the kabbalistic thought that had come before it, reworked and integrated into the author's own all-embracing poetic

imagination,” writes Green. “Ideas contained in bare hints or clumsy expressions in the generations before him now spring forth, full-blown as it were, as a part of the ancient wisdom.”²⁹

Many traditional Kabbalists attribute the Zohar to Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai, a second-century mystic. But through painstaking literary investigation, Gershom Scholem showed that the Zohar was written by Moses de León in the thirteenth century. While scholars are almost certain that de León wrote the Zohar, many of them have pondered whether he had help from higher and more ancient sources.

“One could reasonably believe the author had felt himself possessed by a spirit other than his own as he was writing it,” writes Green. “Could de León have felt that Rabbi Simeon was speaking *through* him, that he was the mere vessel the ancient sage had chosen for the revelation of his secrets?”³⁰ Green also wonders whether de León saw himself as the reincarnation of Rabbi Simeon. Daniel Matt, professor of Jewish studies at the Graduate Theological Union, says, “Parts of the Zohar may have been composed by automatic writing. . . . Certain passages in the Zohar are anonymous and appear as utterances of a heavenly voice.”³¹

The Zohar was once accepted in the canon of orthodox texts. The Zohar “succeeded in establishing itself for three centuries, from about 1500 to 1800, as a source of doctrine and revelation equal in authority to the Bible and Talmud,*” says Scholem. “This is a prerogative that can be claimed by no other work of Jewish literature.”³²

It also gives me great pleasure to introduce you to the second mystic genius of Kabbalah, Rabbi Isaac Luria. He was born in Jerusalem in 1534. Luria was known as the *Ari*, an acronym that stands for “the divine Rabbi Isaac.”

Rabbi Luria, wherever you are, I bow to the light of *Ein Sof* within your heart!

According to legend, the prophet Elijah appeared to

*The Talmud is the authoritative body of written Jewish tradition.

Luria's father and prophesied the birth of a son who would reveal the teaching of Kabbalah. Luria was just eight when his father died, and the boy moved to Cairo with his mother. He was quickly recognized as a prodigy in the study of the Talmud.

While he was a young man, Luria began an eight-year study of the Zohar. In order to penetrate its deepest mysteries, he became an ascetic, living in seclusion in a small cottage near the Nile. There he meditated and continued to study the Zohar five days a week, returning to the city to see his family only for the Sabbath. Legend has it that after Luria spent two years in study, prayer and fasting, Elijah appeared to him and initiated him.

Elijah commanded Luria to go to the Holy Land, and Luria arrived in the Palestinian city of Safed in 1570. At that time Safed was the home of a thriving spiritual community. Author Perle Epstein writes, "Safed is a natural mystic's retreat, . . . an ethereal town that could just as well have been a tiny Tibetan enclave or the setting for an isolated monastery in the Himalayan foothills, a Jewish Shangri-La."³³

The leading Kabbalists of the time were living in Safed. They quickly recognized Luria as their teacher. He taught in Safed for a little less than two years and then died suddenly in 1572 at the age of thirty-eight. He wrote down little of his own teachings, but the writings of his disciples that summarize his work consist of thousands of pages.

Aside from his intricate teachings on Kabbalistic theology, prayer and meditation, Luria taught a pragmatic mysticism. He instructed his followers that it was essential for them to cultivate specific spiritual qualities, especially joy. He also admonished his students to avoid the sin of anger. Luria said that while other sins harm the "limbs" of the soul, the sin of anger harms the entire soul. Anger, he said, also causes the highest level of the soul to leave a person, and an angry person is filled with a "strange god."³⁴

The consequences of anger in anyone are indeed grave. Those who unleash unbridled anger can actually lose a fragment or fragments of their soul on the spot.

If day upon day you do not allow vortices of anger to erupt from within and overtake the citadel of your being, you can become a vessel of Divine Love. And when you are able to emerge from encounters with your karma or your psychology without erupting in waves of anger, you will be ready for the ultimate encounter, the one all mystics seek: the encounter with your Higher Self.

"A clear and eloquent presentation of the Kabbalah, at once spiritual and practical." —DANIEL C. MATT, author of *The Essential Kabbalah* and *God and the Big Bang*.

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Mystics are adventurers of the spirit. They dare to push beyond the boundaries of orthodox tradition to pursue a common goal—the direct experience of God. And they teach that while you may seek him in temple or mosque or church, you must ultimately find him in your heart. *Kabbalah: Key to Your Inner Power* explores the once-secret Jewish mystical tradition known as Kabbalah. With intriguing new perspectives, Elizabeth Clare Prophet shows how we can use Kabbalah's extraordinary revelations about the creation of the universe, our relationship to God and our purpose in life to unlock our own spiritual power.

"My goal is to bring to life the path of the Jewish mystics—to share with you their joys and ecstasies, their sacred visions and their practical techniques for experiencing the sacred in everyday life."

—FROM THE INTRODUCTION



ELIZABETH CLARE PROPHET is the author of many books, including the best-selling *Reincarnation: The Missing Link in Christianity*, *Fallen Angels and the Origins of Evil* and *The Lost Years of Jesus*. She has been writing and lecturing worldwide on spirituality since the 1960s.

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