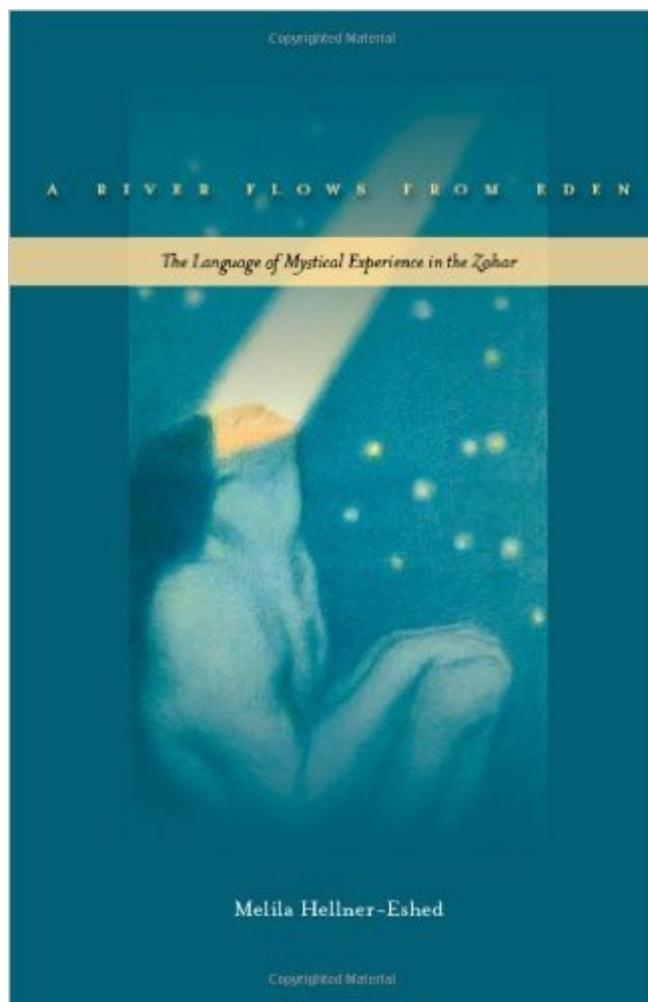


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A River Flows From Eden: The Language Of Mystical Experience In The Zohar



Synopsis

In the Zohar, the jewel in the crown of Jewish mystical literature, the verse "A river flows from Eden to water the garden" (Genesis 2:10) symbolizes the river of divine plenty that unceasingly flows from the depths of divinity into the garden of reality. Hellner-Eshed's book investigates the flow of this river in the world of the Zoharic heroes, Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai and his disciples, as they embark upon their wondrous spiritual adventures. By focusing on the Zohar's language of mystical experience and its unique features, the author is able to provide remarkable scholarly insight into the mystical dimensions of the Zohar, namely the human quest for an enhanced experience of the living presence of the divine and the Zohar's great call to awaken human consciousness.

Book Information

File Size: 3906 KB

Print Length: 488 pages

Publisher: Stanford University Press (June 29, 2009)

Publication Date: June 29, 2009

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B0053JRMK4

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Not Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Not Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #1,048,441 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #73 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > Sacred Writings > Zohar #299 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > Sacred Writings > Kabbalah #1023 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > Kabbalah & Mysticism

Customer Reviews

The initial reviewer was very succinct in describing this book, so I'll just state that I like this book so much I feel it is a necessary new tool for your studies of the Zohar. As well, surprisingly, for what seems to be another entry in the slowly expanding bookshelf of academic works on the kabbalah, its personages, ideas and canon, this book is a very entertaining read, even with what is obviously a primarily academic endeavor. This might sound puerile and sentimental, but I sense the author's

love for her subject and feel her joy in brightening up some of the dullness a reader encounters in the kabbalah's foundational work. To me there are now 3 basic books in English for the serious student who attempts to receive fruits from the magnum opus of the kabbalistic canon: they are Arthur Green's *A Guide to the Zohar*, Pinchas Giller's *Reading the Zohar: The Sacred Text of the Kabbalah*, and now this recently published work of Melila Hellner-Eshed. It is a rarity for me to go almost non-stop reading a newly acquired book whose primary subject is a sole kabbalistic work. More often than not they are as dense, convoluted and intense, sentence-structure-wise, as the subject to which they intend clarification.

The author provides a useful precis of the book in the Introduction: Excerpt: When I was twenty years old I received as a gift, in honor of my forthcoming overseas trip, a copy of Gershom Scholem's *Zohar, The Book of Splendor: Basic Readings from the Kabbalah*. Sitting in distant Norway, I read in English a passage from the *Zohar*'s opening to *Genesis*. I did not even know then in what language the *Zohar* had been composed. All I knew was that I wanted more. Since then--and now for many years, both within the gates of the Hebrew University and without--I have been blessed with the opportunity to study the *Zohar* with wonderful teachers and students alike. Like many other readers across the generations, I too have been seduced by the charm of this book. Indeed, as the years go by, I have become more and more at-tuned to the music of the wondrous world that emerges from its pages. The *Zohar* is the jewel in the crown of Jewish mystical literature. It is unparalleled in terms of its acceptance, sanctity, and influence on the consciousness of generations of Jews--and all this despite its apparently sudden appearance toward the end of the thirteenth century. Its mysterious style, and the unique mystical-religious dimension it offered Jewish life, quickly captured the hearts and minds of its readers. The mythical-erotic creativity that burst forth from its pages turned the *Zohar* into a world unto itself. Its surprising interpretations of biblical verses resonated in the souls of many, along with its deep insights into the human psyche--in both joy and grief. Yet perhaps above all else, it was the worldview of the *Zohar*--through its establishing a reciprocal relationship between the world of humanity and the world of divinity--that left an indelible impression on the hearts of its readers.

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