

Lecture #6

the Second Exile: Rabbinic Judaism

[With the defeat of Israel in 70 C. E. and the destruction of the temple a new crises of meaning and order arose for Judaism.

This crises, a situation of dissullusionment and chaos, was overcome thru a communal reaffirmation of religious faith and a reconstruction of the religious foundations of the community.]

Jewish legend says that when it became obvious that Jerusalem was going to fall to the Romans, Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai had himself smuggled out of Jerusalem in a coffin.

he was carried to Vespasian and pleaded and received permission from the Roman commander to found an academy of rabbis at Jamnia.

Whether this legend is accurate or not, this academy of rabbis maintained stability and self-government after the defeat and exercised decisive leadership in reconstituting the Jewish people.

[the Pharisaic Party is that party which came to rule after the fall of Jerusalem. The Saducees existence was tied to the temple and with the destruction they no longer existed.

With the experience of the first reconstruction of Israel behind them, the Jewish people readily accepted both the rule of the rabbis and the traditional explanation of the latest disaster, which was they had not walked in the way of God but had become arrogant.

The ideas and institutions which emerged from the crisis of 70

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reeforced the religious structure and religious self-understanding which already existed and became the permanent foundation of Jewish religious and communal life until modern times.

The rabbis gathered at Jamnia were considered to be legitimate successors of the priests and scribes, empowered to interpret the word of the Lord.

The rabbis of the Pharisaic party claimed to be the next step in a continuous chain of tradition.

descendents of the great sage Hillel became heads of the Academy at Jamnia and held power from 85 C.E. to 425 when permission to appoint a successor was denied by the Byzantine emperor.

The Jamnia community produced the laws, judges and teachers necessary for the governance of a community whose life was within the structure of the Torah.

[The rabbi, from this time on, was the head of the Jewish community, rendering decisions in religious matters and wielding the authority which gave order to the life of that community.

Jews in the diaspora were organized the same way, governed by rabbis who issued decisions from their schools.

the largest diaspora community was at Babylon. The schools at Babylonia grew rapidly and renowned rabbis emerged there who would eventually become the chief authority of Jewry when the Palistinian schools declined.

in the first centuries C.E. all diaspora communities turned

C to palistine.

NO
The law was considered a gift of YHWH which established a permanent relationship between him and his chosen, and which provided a constant source of his presence to his people.

Judaism from the first concentrated upon the sphere of action, emphasizing fulfillment of God's commandments as the essential activity of the religious life.

one was a member of the covenant community upon obligating oneself to observing covenant law. Commitment to God's law was an expression of commitment to God Himself.

Every aspect of behaviour was seen as an opportunity in which the Jew asserted his commitment to the Lord by fulfilling the divine will.

It was this attitude which was responsible for the development within Judaism of the Oral Law and the neglect of intellectual definition in the form of theology.

here [The distinctive religious creation of Judaism is the Halakah, the law.

Halakah refers to a universal cosmic principle, which is contained in the Torah and its commentaries. It is really the way of the universe established by God for the governance of man. In rabbinic lit. one reads that the Torah pre-existed the world and that God fashioned his creation on the basis of the Torah. God himself is said to study Torah. It is claimed that the whole universe is maintained for the sake of Torah.

thus the most valued activity in Judaism is study and interpretation of the law.]

The Mishna was issued in 200 C.E. which was a practical code of law which set definite standards in civil and religious matters. traditionally Moses was handed the 10 commandments on stone tablets but God whispered in his ear the oral interpretation of those commandments and rabbi Judah wrote them down.

here [The Babylonian Talmud, finished in about 500 C. E. became the authoritative code of Jewish law and the primary text of study for all later periods.] 18

the talmud is made up of two parts. the Mishna, already mentioned, and the Gemara which was commentary on the mishna made up of the opinion of many rabbis over a long period of time. It was an effort to make the laws relevant to their own day.

here [The Council of Jamnia in 91 C. E. decided the canon of the Hebrew Bible once and for all. protestants have followed this rendering while the more liberal Greek and Roman Catholic churches take the septuagint text which included the intertestamental books, the apocrypha.

The underlying notion was that the total body of law could be reduced to the essential precept to love man and to love God.]

NO Rabbi Akiba (martyred in 135 C.E. believing that Bar-cochba was the messiah and participating in a revolt) stated "Thou shalt

here
[love thy neighbor as thyself, that is the greatest principle of the law. ~~he said~~ all of the commandments and all the commentaries could be leveled to this essential moral precept w/o which the entire elaborate structure was meaningless. *P2*

External observance of the law was to be based upon an inner intention. It was a yoke which brought freedom and purification to man. This was its true goal--spiritual perfection.

It is not possible to understand the continuous devotion of the Jewish community and the determined will to survive in exile unless one understands this basic religious trust and positive faith. The law was a total way of life which segregated the Jew from the environment of the non-jew.]

The Halakah served to give structure legally to Jewish life and at the same time the Aggadah arose which was literature concerned with ideas and values which are the ground of that behaviour.

rash = your interpretation
The Midrash is folkloristic opinions of metaphysical and theological problems written at the same time as the legal matter contained in the Mishna.

in addition to these separate works, one third of the Babylonian Talmud and one half of the Palistinian Talmud consists of aggadic material.

Halakah and aggadah are mutually dependent since Judaism teaches there must be both objective obedience and subjective understanding.

because of the need for understanding education becomes an

[Basic Talmudic Principles

1. concept of world to come. asked "why do people die and the good suffer? The world to come is goal for good people, a resurrection of the dead in which good will rise--heaven on earth.

the goal was to worship God which meant obedience in this age and hope in the next age when all prophecies of Hebrew scriptures are fulfilled. Israel would be a priest to the rest of the nations. The purpose of Israel was to share God with the nations.

2. New structure of authority was the rabbi. it assumes a rabbi is a scholar of the law but he must be married and earn his living at something else.

the pharisees exalted study. one rabbi said "any pious person could go to heaven but standard of piety was study." every formation of the law had to be reasonable.

3. the three great sins were adultery, idolatry and bloodshed. Human beings are caught in sin and the solution was study of torah, worship of God and personal spiritual cleanliness.

God manifested himself in majority rule. felt the last revelation was about 400 B.C.E. with Malachai.

there is no atonement after the temple.

4. Messianism --belief that sustained Israel was that in God's appointed hour a messiah would come to deliver Israel and

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the world from travail.

Restoration of self-rule, of the ancient city of David, return of the exiles, and the return of God himself to Zion--these were the ardent desires

the messianic age would be filled with glories.

first. Israel would be gathered together and restored as a national entity to its homeland to enjoy there the bounties of political freedom and material wealth. then the world to come would dawn and conditions would be totally changed.

at this time a universal judgement would take place and the righteous of all nations would be rewarded with eternal bliss

5. the synagogue replaced the temple. and institution of the Pharasees. every community could have one or more. the leadership were scholars and teachers so it was a place of worship and study. the christians modled their churches on the synagogue.

there was no intermediary between God an human being. no priests necessary.] 19

Ul. Con.- living and birth in the age to come which will fulfill the scriptures. law go forth from Zion.

High. rel-God, who gives the law and reveals not only law but himself to His people.

Hum. Pred.-Sin-rebellion in particular. we are bound in sin of idolatry. want to set up ourselves as divine.

Solution- study the Torah, worship of God and repentence, cleanliness of spirit.

Religious tradition

The exile was viewed as a time of terrible suffering and penance which the Jews had to endure in order to atone for the sin of forgetting God's law.

Jews saw their own suffering as redemptive for mankind, in the image of the suffering servant of Isaiah. thus they must suffer in humility and patience

they saw the exile as a positive blessing since God offered an opportunity to realize this historic role for which they were chosen.

Rabbi Akiba believed sufferings were a gift of God. They served to bring man to a recognition of his own sins, to cause him to repent, and then to bring him to an unquestioning love of God. Akiba refused to challenge divine justice believing that whatever God did was for the good.

The notion that suffering ennobled and was hence a positive value penetrated the Jewish consciousness and brought consolation to the nation.

it is this view of suffering which led Jews to accept martyrdom willingly. During the crusades, which at times led to Christian attacks against the Jews, martyrdom became an ideal act of devotion to God.

the Jews live in a state of constant insecurity. thus, their historical world was that of the past, of the Bible and the Tradition, which was a spiritual world out of time but in the midst of time.

it was here that the messianic hope sustained Israel and was of primary significance in Judaism.

It was out of this also that the great schools of Jewish mysticism grew the Kabbalistic tradition. these will be discussed in a later lecture.

Medieval Jewish thinkers

In the hellenistic period, Greek ideas and values penetrated the Jewish consciousness and had a marked influence upon several levels of Jewish society.

it was under the Muslim rule, however, during the Arab conquests of the 8th and 9th Cent. that they were most deeply affected by outside influences.

thru Arab writers and thinkers, the classical tradition of Greece and the traditions of the Hindus and Persians were presented to Jewish readers.

the centuries under Islam proved to be among the most creative in Jewish cultural and religious history, producing a vast literature of a religious and secular nature.

with the rise of Islam, Jews were spurred to justify the beliefs and practices of their tradition in the rational philosophic language which would be understood by exponents of challenging beliefs.

thus from the 9th cent to the 11th, Jewish philosophic activity flourished in the Arabic lands.

there was the primary question of the role of reason within the structure of revealed religion and the relationship of

philosophy and religious knowledg.

questions about the existence and nature of God, his relationship to man and the role of man in the world were most significant.

for the Jew in particular, proof of the eternal and absolute truth of the Torah, and validation of the election of Israel, were of great concern.

and understanding of the commandments, both ritual and ethical, was also demanded as part of the attempt to rationalize the entire traditional way of life.

Rabbi Saadia Gaon was the first great Jewish philosopher of the Islamic period who became head of the Academy at Sura in Babylonia in 928. His major work was The Book of Beliefs and Opinions

Saadia claimed that the truths of reason and revelation were completely harmonious. What God had revealed in the Torah could not be contradicted by knowledge which man would attain thru knowledge.

The specific value of revelation in contrast to reason was that revelation offered the truth to all men, many of whom could not otherwise attain it, and revelation, because of its final absolute nature, offered this truth in a form free of the inconclusiveness and uncertainty inherent in the process of reasoning.

Saadia believed that the exercise of reason in pursuiet of the same basic truths was also a necessary and indeed a

religious act.

the writings of Saadia enjoyed widespread circulation among Jews in the Islamic lands and encouraged the development of Aristotelian philosophic thinking.

Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) was by far the greatest of this philosophic movement.

born in Cordova, Spain he fled with his family from anti-Jewish attacks to Fez and finally settled in Fustat, outside Cairo, Egypt where he practiced medicine.

he devoted himself to bringing together Greek philosophy and biblical revelation.

Maimonides first book was a Commentary on the Mishnah in which he explained the concepts necessary for understanding the contents of each of the six volumes of the Mishnah, and prefaced the entire work with a chapter on the nature of Jewish tradition as it developed from the original Mosaic revelation into the halakic and aggadic writings of the rabbis.

He intended it to be a lucid, authoritative compilation of the law and its merits were soon recognized so it became a basic guide to practice and a subject of study for all later generations.

The Guide to the Perplexed (1190) was his most famous work. it was decisive in the development of Jewish thought and greatly influenced Christian Aristotelians, such as St. Albert the great and St. Thomas Aquinas.

it was apologetic in nature and was addressed to his student Joseph and intended for reading by those trained in traditional Jewish disciplines, mathematics, logic, and sciences who were prepared for the perils which philosophical speculation presented. Not all Jews could handle the doubts.

The first concern was the relation of faith and reason. Like Saadia he argued that natural knowledge and revelation were identical and thus there was a harmonious relation between religion and philosophy.

he considered the greatest good of man to be the attainment of knowledge, for through metaphysical knowledge of the divine reality and divine truths, man entered into a relationship of love with God and achieved communion with him.

therefore, contemplation, reflection and the pursuit of understanding were the highest values of the religious life.

this was a shift in emphasis from the traditional Jewish view which emphasized positive action based on loyal acceptance of the law.

Maimonides prescribed complete faithfulness to the ceremonial and ethical law of the Torah and assumed that philosophical study would be based upon mastery of the religious tradition but he emphasized intellectual activity and the internalization of divine knowledge as the most important.

by postulating that knowledge would lead men to imitate God and that this knowledge ought to underlie external conformity to religious imperatives, he changed the emphasis.

Maimonides postulated certain basic beliefs, which he felt were religious truths available to everyone and necessary for the salvation of every man. These thirteen creedal articles, listed in the commentary to the Mishnah included:

1. the existence of God; 2. the unity of God; 3. his incorporeal nature; 4. his eternity; 5. the obligation to worship God; 6. the existence of prophecy; 7. the recognition of Moses as the greatest of all prophets; 8. the acceptance of the Torah revealed to Moses as divine in origin; 9. the acceptance of the eternal validity of the Torah; 10. the notion that God is omniscient; 11. that he will reward and punish men on the basis of their actions; 12. that he will deliver men through his messiah; and finally 13. that he will resurrect the dead.

the ordinary Jew was required to affirm these beliefs and follow the commands of the Torah, whose purpose it was to lead men to an ordered moral and social life.

altogether, his rational explanation of Jewish beliefs and practices is the most thorough and complete in Jewish Literature.

the intellectualization of Judaism accomplished by Maimonides with the elevation of philosophical knowledge to the rank of the greatest perfection was not accepted in certain sectors and stirred protest.

it was felt by the anti-philosophical party that human rationality could not go beyond a certain point.

during the 13th and 14th cent. the controversy between the

advocates of philosophy and their opponents raged. It was the opponents that eventually won out, and Jewish philosophical development was largely stemmed.

Maimonides was not lost, though and still showed his influence in later centuries.

a different trend in Jewish thought was contemporary with Maimonides which was related to neo-platonism.

Judah Halevi (1085-1141/42) one of the greatest poets and thinkers of the medieval period.

in The Kuzari he endeavored to prove the uniqueness and truth of Judaism in opposition to Christianity, Islam and philosophy.

the single proof for the truth of Judaism is a historical one, according to Halevi, namely, the historical facts of God's mighty acts, his public revelation to the Jewish people, and his providential care for them.

He wrote what amounts to a creedal statement which began: "I believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, who led the Israelites out of Egypt with signs and miracles; . . .

Halevi denied that the rational intellectual efforts of man could ever reach knowledge of God. such knowledge is available only when God discloses himself because he desires to communicate with men.

God has chosen and revealed himself to Israel, the object of his greatest affection

The knowledge of the prophet cannot be reached by the philosopher, and the latter can never enter into the relationship

of love and communion which the prophet has with God.

Since Israel has an essentially different relationship with God the ultimate redemption of the world is dependent upon the relationship of Israel to God

the pious Jew much cultivate his religious faculty since not only he but all men are drawn to salvation.

in the messianic age, what Israel alone possesses will become the property of all, and all men will enter into communion with God.

For common people, the more significant writings were pietistic literature such as Bahya Ibn Pakuda's Duties of the Heart which became the standard guide to the meditational, devotional and ethical life.

he attempted to direct man toward the most intimate relationship with God which the soul could attain

his stress on the life of devotion and meditation, his emphasis upon the sentiments of trust and love rather than knowledge and wisdom, responded to the needs and exercised lasting influence upon the Jewish religious spirit.

rabbinic learning, rabbinic values, and rabbinic definitions of practice always constituted the mainstream and were the base from which innovative ideas and forms emerged.

at the foundation of Jewish life was the original revelation to Moses and its interpretation by successive schools of rabbis.

every Jew knew the scripture and was acquainted with the most lucid and brilliant commentary upon it, that of the great french scholar Rabbi Solomon bar Isaac (1040-1105) known as Rashi

with a knowledge of the Bible and Rashi, the Jew was anchored in the sacred traditions of his people, and had absorbed the religious ideas which gave meaning to the life of the community in which he participated.

Rabbi Joseph Caro (1488-1573) was the leading legalist of his day and his legal writings have become classics in the rabbinic heritage.

He composed the Bet Joseph, four large volumes tracing the sources and development of the law and the

Shulhan Aruch a concise summary and codification of the law which became the most widely used legal guide throughout the Jewish communities of the exile.

Karo's rabbinic school was established in Safed. At the same time and in the same town, the greatest school of Jewish mysticism arose and thrived, the school of Rabbi Isaac Luria.

these two were in contact during the latter's years in Safed. Karo in fact, was involved in this mystical movement which was not uncommon for a rabbi to be both a sage and a mystic.

the great schools of mysticism will be discussed in another lecture.

worship and prayer in Judaism

the yeshivah or school became a vital institution for the maintenance of Jewish life in the exile and the rabbi, as teacher and exemplar of the tradition, their society's most honored man.

soon after the destruction of 70, the task of establishing a fixed order of prayers and rituals, which would be surrogate for the Temple worship, was completed with the daily time for the services--morning, afternoon and evening--substituting for the temple sacrifices which would have been offered at those times.

in addition to set prayers, scriptural readings were incorporated into the service on Mondays, thursdays, and the sabbath and festivals. p4

Prayer is an obligation upon every Jew, a duty to be performed at fixed times and according to a fixed ritual. more important than is one's intention (kavannah). "better is a little with kavannah than much without it"

prayer is not to be used as a magical technique to get what one wants, but is an act thru which man can establish contact with God. In prayer man opens his heart, trusting, that God does come near.

it is said that God longs for the prayers of man.] 1

Prayer has been the fundamental religious act of piety, both preceding and going beyond rational reflection and speculation. the psalms and many other prayers were added to the liturgy over the centuries. as the Jerusalem Talmud says: God is near in all kinds of nearness" and this is believed particularly true in prayer.

have sanctification is what the life of the religious man is devoted to, this is the act of making ordinary events and ordinary things holy.

the entire ritual order of Judaism serves to accomplish this act of santification in as many areas of man's life as possible.

Through the year of religious holidays and the sacred calendar which recall the moments of divine revelation and sacred acts of God, the secular or profane cycle is raised to the dimension of the sacred.

the pious Jew lives in the secular world but constantly anticipates the moments when thru participation in religious holidays, he will enter into another world, the world of the eternal and of the holy.

The Jewish ritual year is founded upon the Sabbath. this is the weekly santification of the creation.

the sabbath provides a constant source of renewal and

sanctity to the pious person, who in some way is re-created him/herself as one celebrates the creation of the world.

the sabbath is thus a memorial to the work of God's creation. it is also a day of rest and time for prayer, celebration and reflection. this keeping the sabbath is of supreme importance.] p 5

no Rabbi Levi said: if the Jewish people would observe the Sabbath properly even once, the son of David (the messiah) would come. Why? because it is equal to all the other commandments in importance."

Festivals of the Jewish year

have [There are three festivals which are of agricultural origin, but which have been transformed into historical holidays.

pay sock
Passover or Pesach is the most important which recalls the miraculous redemption from Egypt. as the passover Haggadah states:

In every generation a person is obligated to see himself as though he personally came out of Egypt, as it is written, "You shall tell your son on that day saying: This is because of what the Lord did for me when I left Egypt." It was not our ancestors alone that the Holy One, praised by He, redeemed, but he redeemed us as well, along with them. . . therefore we are obliged to thank, praise, laud, glorify and exalt, to honor, bless, extol, and adore Him who performed all these wonders for our fathers and for us.

This is celebrated in the Seder, a ritual meal in the home preceded by the recitation of the Exodus narrative.

as long as anyone is enslaved we are all enslaved

Shavuot

The festival of Weeks (shavuot) occurs in late spring, 49 days after passover and celebrates the revelation of God at Sinai when the ten commandments were given to Moses.

The festival of booths (Sukkot) is an autumn harvest holiday and marks the historical incident of the 40 years wandering in the wilderness. the final day of this festival is a day of rejoicing in the Law because it is the end of the yearly cycle of Torah readings.

1st day of 7th month - Birthday of The World
Rosh Hashanah is the new year celebration and yom kippur, the day of atonement occur close together and are a most solemn period in the Jewish year for it at this time each Jew is judged by God and his destiny for the coming year determined.

judgement is thus not reserved for a final day at the end of life, but is kmeted out every year during these critical days.] p 6

here [from Rosh Hashannah thru yom kippur, the Jew has repented and sought mercy and confessed sins. After a full day of prayer, the worshipper, trusting in God's mercy and goodness, finally bursts out in joyous affirmation: "The Lord is God, this God of Love, He alone is God!"

this ends the most sacred day of the religious year and people reenter the cycle of life, purified and hopeful.] 7

throughout its religious history Israel has been certain of two

things:

1. that the transcendent God was present in history and shared the feelings of his creatures and

2. that he had singled out the Jews to participate with him in bringing redemption to the world.

Jewish tradition stated that God actually needs man and this is implied in the concept of Israel's election.

this sense of God's abiding presence and the particular fate of Israel is found in the statement:

"My torah is in your hands and the end is in my hands, so that the two of us need each other. As you need me to bring on the end, so I need you to keep my Torah and to hasten the rebuilding of my house in Jerusalem" (Pesikta Rabbati 31.144b)

it was this faith in their election and the role assigned to them which inspired Israel and gave purpose to their struggle in exile.

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in Kabalah

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The Kabbalah: Jewish mysticism

kabbalah means tradition and has several basic elements

1. it believes there are two sources of truth:

first is mystical experience- this is the source of revelation. In the Jewish understanding it is not just an intuitive experience as in India, but is intellectual as well

it is theistic. they are very careful not to say 'I am divine'.

the second source is the Hebrew Bible as given to Moses on Sinai. they believe as the pharisees did, that there are two laws: written and oral.

one of the key elements for the Jews is you must keep the laws--follow the Torah (written law) and the talmud (the oral law.)

mystics emphasize the experience first and reinterpret the Bible to explain their experience.

these two (experience and Sinai) cannot contradict each other.

2. the internal unity of God is one of Jewish mysticism's main concerns.

Greek philosophy taught God had to be simple--can't give God attributes. The Bible does talk about attributes of God such as love, goodness, power, etc.

mystic wanted to emphasize that God is a living organism so

His attributes (sefirot) are not just names of God or descriptions--they are a world or realm of divinity that underlie the sense data and are part of life of God Himself.

The World of the Sefirot solved the problem of the attributes of God--a progression of the differentiation that is in God. This doesn't happen in time or space--they are stages of divinity emanating out of God.

the mystical experience was seen as experiencing these world of the sefirot in stages but you could never reach the essence of God.

God known as En Sof meaning infinity, spoken of as "root of roots" and in impersonal terms.

3. Torah is basic text of mystic. seen as a living organism--living incarnation that has life itself. it sends out rays of illumination.

Hebrew is a holy tongue and mystics don't talk about their experience and there are no women mystics in Judaism.

4. Secrecy of Mystical knowledge esoteric and passed one to one. young are not to read Ezekial 1 and 2 (the chariot throne vision) as it is dangerous. also, Gen 1, the work of creation as many secrets found there.

5. reinterpretation of traditional concepts.

1. history was reinterpreted as event in the soul, as the coming out of Egypt was seen as the individuals growth.

2. the ten commandments were seen with a new meaning. they make another realm of existence transparent that can be grasped intuitively. by keeping the commandments it has an effect on this world and the heavenly domains (world of the sefirot) so the commandments are seen in a cosmic setting.

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stop here

Merkabah mysticism

the Merkabah was the chariot throne seen by Ezekial in chap 1 and 2 and also seen by Isaiah in chap. 6.

it developed in the first century and lasted till about the 10th cent and was called "those who go down to the chariot.

7 heavens were believed in and in each heaven is a palace (hekalot) and each palace has a gate keeper.

--in the 7th heaven are seven palaces and seven gatekeepers.

--when you get to the 7th palace of the 7th heaven you are in the presence of the chariot throne, the vision Ezekial had.

--mystical experience is working your way thru the heavens to this vision with the goal of seeing the Merkabah.

to get there one must 1. fulfill the commandments and 2. must have a teacher to teach you the secrets of getting there, including the secret words needed to get by the gatekeepers.

key concept is of God as king. radical difference between divine and human. when get there you don't see God, you see the throne.

--get a higher knowledge--seeing things as they are

--speak of God's body-Shir Komar-related to the song of songs
(chap. 5) had idea of measuring God's body and had demensions
that were very large. popular in medieval times.

Talmud tells of 4 rabbis who ascended to the 7th heaven and saw
the vision. one looked at chariot throne and died, another
looked and went crazy, another looked and began to tear up
plants, Rabbi Akiba looked and came out in peace.

Akiba warns people of danger of ascending there. there are
still elements of this present today.

The Zohar "The Book of Splendor" -

written in 1275 or 76 was the greatest production of Jewish
mystical religion. It is a mystical commentary on the Pentatuch
covering the creation, early stories, the patriarchs, exodus,
law, priesthood and the wilderness experience, etc.

written in Aramaic is was propoorted to be written by a first
century rabbi but this could not be.

it is not systematic and rarely cites the tradition but is
closely tied to the scriptures.

The Tree of the Sefirot is the main object of meditation.
This is the way God manifests himself. this doctrine believes
mystics can perceive and describe the living God.

almost every word in scripture can be tied to a sepirot. all
refer to the inner life of God

the name of Torah is one great and Holy name of God

the Sepirot are considered something within the non-differentiated divine life which breaks thru in creation.

there is a world also that is intelligible only to God and our finite world of phenomena.

when these two worlds are attached called the world of the Sepirot.. its on this 2nd world we can come to know God.

1. world of En sof
2. world of Sepirot
3. world of phenomena

The ten sefirot are thought of in order from most far removed from humans to the closest but they are all interconnected. these 10 in order are: 1)kether elyon-supreme crown; 2)hokmah-wisdom of God; 3)binah-intelligence; 4)hesod-steadfast love; 5)geburah-power as in severity; 6)rahamin -beauty or compassion; 7)hod-majesty; 8)yesod-foundation of all active forces in God; 9)Netsah-eternity, lasting endurance of God; and 10)malkut-kingdom of God, his presence in the community.

Malkut is most important tho lowest as is heavenly model of community of Israel. Idea that what happens to Israel as a community affects heaven.

the world is thought of in terms of an organism God and Man. all would be inter-connected with everything else like the sap of En Sof flowing thru everything

in Malkut the Shekinah or uncreated light is present

God speaks three pronouns:

He>when God has just decided to manifest himself but hasn't done it yet. most deeply hidden

You >has completely unfolded himself down to # 6.

I> completely to # 10-supreme manifestation.

the divine I is most profound-God has completely manifested Himself. the human can penetrate to You and He. Human learns about himself as well as God> can penetrate God's very speech.

Creation in our world is an external aspect of something which already happened in God. So creation of world is really life of LGod (externally) everything is external image of God> soul is in the image and likeness of God. Not quite pantheism but close.

Genesis is really actual creation of another world in life of God on which the creation of this world is based. that other world is the world of the Sefirot upon which our world is modeled.

the second creation allows separation and differentiation since God also was without form before creation.

why does the Bible start with the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet?

because it is creation of 2 worlds

Mystics interested in uniting with God, not necessarily the world.

the Zohar tells us what we will see in experiencing God but doesn't tell us of the feeling

Divine Life the living God is known in the 10 sefirot. Not in En Sof. En Sof is the God that can't be known--not the living God.

spheres #4-10 make up the seven days of creation. with 10, malkut, which is the sabbath, blessing all the other days. these 7 sefirot are a model for our world.

they felt it was only the mystic who was getting through to the soul of the Torah. they judged all Jews who don't have mystical experience. ~ *70 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000*

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Abulafia Mysticism (1240-after 1272)

this was an opposing school to the mysticism of the Zohar.

emphasis is on ecstatic experience

aim was to "unseal the soul" or "to untie the binds".--means mystical experience is attempt to regain an original unity with God.

the soul is bound, sealed, tied down so must find ways to help the soul perceive the spiritual

if we can contemplate on abstract spiritual matters then the soul will not be bound but freed.

He determined that meditating on the Hebrew alphabet and studying them one could free the soul since the alphabet has no relation to the world.

things like angels, death, etc. were not appropriate since they are not abstract

one must meditate on things that are both abstract and not an

object --the Hebrew alphabet is that thing since the letters themselves are letters of God's name .

calls it "mystical logic"

Dve kut meaning "adhesion" is the experience one will have of God.

this is agreement of the will of man with the will of God

1. when your will agrees with God's will then one is perpetually with God.

"I do anything I want because I am changed and do whatever God wants."

2.the mystic and God can't be seperated. the mystic is elevated with rank while God has it naturally. the mystic is elevated to the rank of God. in the mystic state, the human being and Torah are one. God is wholly in it.

3.dve kut is the state that the prophets were in when in the Hebrew Bible they decalared the word of God.

it is being "one with the world of light."

Path to dve kut

1. scholarship--must know the law, keep torah and know the science of the combination of letters since they contain God's name.

God's word--he spoke and it was so. since the Hebrew alphabet is neither an object and are abstract and things exist only in the degree they are in the name of God, then contemplation of the letters is breaking the key to creation.

there is harmonious movement of pure thought--the world is the manifestation of God's word.

every letter and word are significant, and every letter also has a number so one gets into numerology also.

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Lurianic mysticism

Isaac Luria (1534-1572) lived at Safed in Israel, the center of much mystical speculation as well as scholarship after the Jews were forced from Spain in 1492.

at this time messianic expectation ran high and the Zohar was running out of steam at this time so the time was right for a new approach.

This was neo platonic in its views. Creation came out of nothing and emanated from God. These two things had to be reconciled.

The Lurianic school of mystics, engaged in an inner process of soul searching, and developed a doctrine of redemption which both offered an explanation of the external reality of intensified suffering in exile and presented a new path for internal spiritual salvation.

The doctrine of tsin tsum or contraction was the basis for their mysticism. This was the notion that God, in order to create the world, had to impose limits upon himself. He had to retreat into himself in order to make space for the creation of the universe, so that in the very first act of creation a negative element was present.

He had to go into exile himself so the creation could take place.

the second thing involved was that when God created the world he sent out his divine light, which was contained within form-giving vessels or spheres. this is his primal light, not sun and moon.

this means that there is something divine in every being and every being has its own reality.

Evil came into the world because when God contracted his power and judgement became clearly defined.

before God creates, the Sefirot are all in view. but with creation Geburah or power (severity) brings evil.

Doctrine of the Breaking of the vessels

When God's light shot out, the first being was created--primordial Adam--a giant man who stands behind the world. From his eyes ears and nose, the sefirot shine forth. Thus the differentiation of the sefirot begin and each must be contained in a vessel.

the three highest sefirot go into their own vessel but next six broke when light entered them.

WHY? because the light of the last six sefirot was already mixed with forces of evil.

when vessels broke some of the light flowed back to God, some in world, and some was imprisoned in matter.

our world then is these sparks of light and that which is enclosed in matter.

the world is good which is the light but matter (neo-platonically) is evil.

each person has a spark of divinity in them so goal is to free the light from matter, return it to God and restore to the whole, in other words, reverse the process.

Tikkun is the process by which one liberates the sparks.

Human must do certain things :

first. prayer leads the soul back thru the creation. prayer is the symbol of the process of creation. true prayer is modled on mystical experience.

second. keeping the commandments

third. mystical study of the torah.

all must be done iwth honesty and openness--when tikkun is complete then the messiah will come asd a representation of the mystical redemption that has taken place.

all acts must be done with appropriate intention.

reincarnation Luria believed in this--all souls were sparks of divne light and eventually will rejoin Adam's soul.

If ones soul is reborn as a human soul it may be because of punishment or another life.

one can also be reincarnated as a non-human, either higer or lower.

it takes a long time to return to ones maker but can shorten the time by pennence, prayer and study.

he believed the end of the world was coming in the 16th cent. and looked for the messiah

this was seen by many Jews as being fulfilled in the mid-seventeenth century when Sabbetai Zevi, was seen as the messiah.

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Hasidism

had earlier roots but came to full blossom in the 18th century in Eastern Europe.

The hope of the messiah coming was running so high that many came claiming to be the messiah before the middle of the 18th century.

hasidism was the result of the various failures of the messiah to appear.

it centered on the community of Israel--what happens to Israel affects the Godhead.

emphasis

1. community--was the place of the experience of the divine
2. Ideal man--before this it was study that was ideal but in mysticism, it is the one who knows the higher truth.

the ideal man is the charismatic figure who is the center of a community of followers, who has been illuminated and in contact with the divine.

he does symbolic acts, all acts of the leader are symbolic.

Zaddik is the name given to this leader. he is the one who is righteous, the embodiment of virtues and righteousness.

zaddiks do strange things. talk about God in familiar terms,

like Chung Tzu spoke of the Tao as the "Great Clod. and even curse God."

belief was that the zaddik has to descent to help us. helps the whole person, not just the spiritual part

dve kut comes to man to be in constant union with God...conscience that your will is the same as God's will.

Kavanah means having the right intention--emotion is important in this

goal is the redemption of souls. they did not believe you could hurry the end of time and bring the messiah. rather, their goal was to convert whole communities and make mysticism available to all. tried to find more value in everyday life.

thus, there was less emphasis on mystical practices and more on everyday life.

Baal Shem Toy (1760-1810) from Poland was the founder. name meant "master of the good name."

he knew the name of God and somehow had correctly related to Him.

he was an unlearned enthusiast and wonder-worker but he capture the hearts of thousands among the simple pious folk and among the educated.

joy was emphasized. service was given in joy and the

experience of God is a joyful experience--emotional experience and is fun!

this joy can be found in:

1. service of the community,
2. appreciation of nature
3. taking one virtue and trying to embody it perfectly
4. prayer and keeping the commandments and meditation

shekinah is found in the community of Israel since this is the place where God is present. thus one looks for this experience of God in the community. this is the embodiment of the 10th sefirot and is the closest thing to God on earth.

Zaddik is the model of what the mystic is--spiritual leader. He is approached by members to decide on problems. He is not necessarily a scholar but he gives the community its direction and also relies on the community to help him in his work.

they are such strong leaders that they seldom could get along with each other.

key was that he who as attained the highest degree of spiritual solitude and can be alone with God can then be the center of the community.

they believe there are 36 hidden saints to help the world. without them God would destroy the world.

there is the necessity of a teacher. their doctrine is passed on

in various tales about the teachers. One who understands the tales sees deeper meanings in the torah and in life.

goal was to see life in the way God would want us to see life. our wil become God's wil. must give up ones own desires and change them to God's desires.

Hasidic mystical activities regenerated a religious life which had become alien and ossified for many.

Hasidic leaders were also rabbis and the rabbinic tradition was integrated with hasidic ideas and practices in the formation of new vital religious communities.

The Hasidic movement occurrrred within the structure of rabbinic Judaism, demonstrating the continuing ability of the traditional ideas and forms to develop and accommodate the multiples needs of the religious spirit.