



The Mystic Quest: An Introduction to Jewish Mysticism

David S. Ariel

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The Mystic Quest explains the major ideas and concepts of Jewish mystical thought in a way that the general reader can clearly understand. Drawing upon his own extensive research as well as on the growing body of scholarly material on the subject, Dr. David Ariel, president of the Cleveland College of Jewish Studies, presents the extremely difficult and complex elements of Jewish mysticism in language that makes it accessible to the layperson.

Jewish mysticism is as old as the Bible itself. It is a rich and subtle web of secret teachings and practices that has been part of Judaism since antiquity and has sought to keep the original spark of religious experience alive through the centuries. It is the relatively unknown, esoteric dimension of Judaism that has nourished a deep spiritual power within a tradition of law, ritual, and observance.

A central element in Judaism, the "mystic quest" has shaped both Judaism and Jews throughout history, generating the kabbalistic tradition and Hasidism, which continue to thrive today. As Ariel says, "This book is concerned primarily with the development and meaning of the Kabbalah, the principal tradition of mystical Jewish thought."

The Mystic Quest begins with an examination of the variety of phenomena known in different cultures as "mysticism." Ariel then located the Jewish mystical tradition within the context of Jewish history and traces its evolution throughout the ages. Jewish mystical theories about the hidden and revealed God, the feminine aspects of divinity, the mystical Torah, and the concepts of the soul and human destiny are then explored in detail. Finally, the author considers Hasidism and modern Jewish mystical thought, discussing the role of mysticism in contemporary Judaism.

In language accessible to the beginner, yet sophisticated enough to captivate the advanced student, *The Mystic Quest* fills an important gap in our knowledge of mysticism by bringing a comprehensive and fresh understanding of the subject to a new generation of

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