

## ABSTRACTS

*Avi Sagi*

### PRIMARY IDENTITY: THE JEWISH CASE

This article presents a new conceptual framework for discussing identity in general and Jewish identity in particular. Prevalent current conceptions of identity focus on its cultural-historical-social contents. From a formal perspective, identity can be set upon two axes – one diachronic and one synchronic. Whereas the diachronic axis denotes the connection between the present configuration and its legacy in the past, the synchronic one denotes the wide range of contexts that affect identity.

My claim in this article is that each specific identity designates the intersection between its own two axes. The identity of individuals and of societies is built as the ongoing encounter in the present between the present and the past, an encounter that occurs through what Kierkegaard called “the third element” – the consciousness balancing present and past. Rather than being a pure, empty transcendental component, this element conveys the weight of existence, since individuals reflecting on their identity do not begin from a void. Identity invariably points to a horizon as a reference point, but without necessarily committing to specific contents. This claim is illustrated through the analysis of various Jewish sources that convey notions of identity and compel renewed discussion of extant conceptual frameworks.

*Ronny Miron*

FAITH AND INDIVIDUALISM -  
EDITH STEIN AND YESHAYAHU LEIBOWITZ

This article addresses a phenomenological observation to Edith Stein's Christian idea of faith and the Jewish one of Yeshayahu Leibowitz. The discussion begins with uncovering the common point of departure of the two thinkers that anchors religious faith in one's volitional decision. Yet this commonality appears to be violated by essential differences between their understandings of the religious experience. The author consolidates out of the differences between Stein's and Leibowitz's idea of faith two sorts of radicalism in regard to the religious experience: Stein's is typified as "Radicalism of Immanence" while Leibowitz's as "Radicalism of Transcendence'." The discussion culminates with reconsidering the meaning of the common point of departure of the two thinkers. In the face of the phenomenological principle of the recurring of the first datum within the final reflexive perception, the author argues that especially the radicalism that Stein and Leibowitz share together might enable them to take part in reciprocal teaching and thus reconfirm their common point of departure.

*'Adiel Kadari*

ON THE CONCEPTION OF EXEGESIS IN *SEDER ELIYAHU* -  
IDEOLOGY AND EXEGETICAL TECHNIQUE

*Seder Eliyahu* occupies a unique place in the midrashic landscape on account of its style, its structure, and to some extent also on account of its conceptual approaches. Studies of this text have focused primarily on the attempt to identify its time and place of composition; only a few have dealt with its conceptual outlook, and its exegetical dimension has received almost no scholarly attention at all. In this article I seek to cast light on the exegetical craft of *Seder Eliyahu*, and to try to ascertain the connection between its ideological stance and its exegetical techniques. I do so by examining Biblical commentaries included in this composition which focus on words and roots laden with exegetical significance, and by comparing these commentaries to parallel commentaries in midrashic compositions that predate *Seder Eliyahu*.

My findings highlight *Seder Eliyahu's* creative exegesis, which is related to various aspects of its ideological stance: the text regards new insights into Torah as having inherent religious value, and it views exegesis as a site of encounter between the student of Torah and God.

*Na'ama Ben-Shachar*

MS NUREMBERG, STADTBIBLIOTHEK CENT. V. APP. 5: A FRESH  
WINDOW ON MID-THIRTEENTH-CENTURY ASHKENAZI AND  
FRENCH MYSTICAL TRADITIONS

The Jewish mystical circles that were active in the late-twelfth/early-thirteenth centuries in Ashkenaz and France stand at the crossroads between the older esoteric doctrines and the new order of theosophical kabbalah. An eclectic collection of esoteric traditions, emphasizing the circles of the Kalonymus family, Rabbi Nehemiah ha-Navi, and the “unique cherub,” is at the center of this article. Found at the end of MS Nuremberg, Stadtbibliothek Cent. V. App. 5 (IMHM, no. 8781), a manuscript copied in the seventeenth century, this collection is unique in its synthesis of theological doctrines belonging to the three main mystical schools active in the Ashkenazi-French world.

In addition to producing a critical, annotated edition of this text with commentary, through consulting additional sources, this article aims to identify the origins, synthesis, and transmission of these traditions, as well as to chart their path. MS Nuremberg demonstrates that, notwithstanding the differences between the circles, we find an attempt by certain individuals, perhaps a generation after the death of Rabbi Eleazar, to collect and compile the different traditions that existed in the Ashkenazi-French cultural world. Moreover, MS Nuremberg is unique not only in housing the different traditions in one text, but also in the merging of the thought of the different schools.

In addition, there will be a comparative study against other sources in which the unique cherub appears, with the aims, firstly, of systematically consolidating all the writings that mention its figure (except the renowned treatises from the first and second layer), and secondly, of exposing the reader to sources that have not yet been printed.

*Adam Afterman*

THE LANGUAGE OF CREATION IN THE EARLY WRITINGS OF  
R. JOSEPH GIKATILLA

This article examines the language of “creation” in the early writings of Joseph Gikatilla: in his book *Ginat Egoz*, his short published commentary to Maimonides’ *The Guide for the Perplexed*, and in two published poems. Gikatilla uses philosophical terminology while dealing with the matter of creation, and there is an ongoing dispute as to the nature of these early writings: is he writing as a philosopher? as a theosophical kabbalist disguising his esoteric doctrine with philosophical terms? or as a linguistic ecstatic kabbalist?

I argue the latter and try to present the meaning behind the conflicting ways he uses philosophical terms. It seems that he holds a sophisticated rabbinic and kabbalistic doctrine of emanation, yet he tends to use the philosophical terms of “creation *ex nihilo*.” I argue that this is done in light of Moses Maimonides’ famous criticism of the doctrine of the creation through the garment of light as articulated in rabbinic sources and expressed in the late midrash *Pirke De-Rabbi Eliezer*. The article argues further that Gikatilla employs the terms of creation *ex nihilo* to answer Maimonides’ criticism by stressing that the rabbinic theory is not a doctrine of “eternity.” Moreover, in his later writings, such as the *Gates of Light*, he uses the language of creation *ex nihilo* in yet a different way, as part of his theosophical kabbalah, where this term means not creation out of nothingness but rather creation out of God.

*Avishai Bar-Asher*

ANCIENT AS “EIN SOF”:

A COMMENTARY ON ‘ESER SEFIROT BY R. DAVID HAKOHEN,  
RASHBA’S DISCIPLE

This study discusses an anonymous tradition from early Kabbalah, attributed to a commentator on Nahmanides’ secrets in his commentary to the Torah. In this tradition, which in later generations gave rise to a kabbalistic polemic, the eternity of the first and highest *sefirah Keter* was identified

ontologically with the emanating *Ein Sof* (or The Endless One). Yet the emanated *Keter* was nevertheless distinguished from the *Ein Sof* in terms of causality, as part of a unique interpretation of the emanation of the ten *Sefirot*.

As proposed in this article, this tradition was documented in an unpublished commentary on the *Sefirot* attributed to R. David haKohen, one of R. Shlomo ben Aderet's (Rashba) disciples. Different possibilities for identifying this author are addressed in the article, and are followed by an edition of his short commentary, published here for the first time.

*Avi Elqayam*

THE WAYS IN WHICH THE MEDIEVAL HEBREW TRANSLATIONS  
OF ABŪ ḤĀMID AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S *MISHKĀT AL-ANWĀR* SHAPED  
JEWISH-ISLAMIC DIALOGUE

The aim of this discussion is to explore the relationship between the two medieval Hebrew translations of al-Ghazālī's influential *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, a major Sufi philosophical-mystical text that influenced Jewish medieval philosophy and mysticism. I outline the religious and cultural trends that characterize each translation, analyzing the philological, sociological and cultural dimensions of philosophical-mystical knowledge migration in the Middle Ages between religions and cultures, mediated by translations. To achieve this, I will study translators' self-determined mission as mediators between religions, cultures, and mystical systems. My main thesis is that the translations of *Mishkāt Al-Anwār* from Arabic to Hebrew in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, and their radically different translation strategies, reflect two different patterns of inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue between Judaism and Islam, and that these patterns helped shape Jewish mystical rationalism in the Middle Ages.

*CAN TWO WALK TOGETHER, EXCEPT THAT THEY AGREE?*

R. ISAAC LURIA'S KABBALISTIC INITIATION OF R. HAYYIM VITAL

Hagiographic literature tells us that in addition to R. Isaac Luria's messianic and theurgical activities, he embraced two further missions as a "rectifier of souls": generally, to rectify the souls of the Jewish people, and particularly, to rectify and perfect the soul of R. Hayyim Vital, his chief disciple. The current article examines the complex relationship between these two men, and suggests that it can best be understood within the framework of a master-disciple process of initiation.

The article identifies the underlying goals of the fascinating encounter between Luria and Vital, by focusing specifically upon the karmic nature of their relationship, which was considered to have been the latest in a series of shared incarnations from the Mishnaic and Talmudic periods, and in which, over time, the two men alternated in their roles as teacher and disciple. This relationship reflects and embodies Luria's theory of soul rectification, as well as some of the principles related to his theory of the soul, his theory of reincarnation and his theory of karma.

The processes, stages, elements and topics related to Vital's initiation, in terms of the goals set forth for him by Luria and the avenues through which the latter sought to educate him, are discussed at length. The article examines the unique dynamics of their relationship; the steps that R. Vital took toward spiritual enlightenment; the various *tikunim* assigned to Vital by Luria; Luria's ambivalence toward the concealment or disclosure of secrets in the process of Vital's education, and the dynamics of time and pacing in Vital's initiation. Drawing upon Vital's own writings and testimonies, as well as hagiographic literature, the article presents the unique perspective and self-awareness of Vital himself.

RENEWAL OF JUDAISM AS THE RELIGION OF SOCIALISM:  
NACHMAN SYRKIN AND HIS DIALOGUE WITH MOSES HESS  
AND HERMANN COHEN

Nachman Syrkin is little known to scholars in Israel, and even less so to those abroad. Only few realize that he may have been the most important thinker in socialist Zionism, the movement that shaped Israeli society. Even fewer notice that his vision was not as secular as his followers interpreted it to be. In this article I present his concept of the renewal of Judaism as the religion of future socialist Zionism, based on his dialogue with Moses Hess and Hermann Cohen.

Syrkin was familiar with the philosophy of Hess from an early stage. At that stage of his thought (from approximately 1888 to 1907), he accepted Hess's idea of renewing Judaism as the religion of socialism. However, he objected to the diaspora and to Jewish and religious tradition so strongly that he practically strove to put an end to Jewish culture and religion. But then in 1907 he emigrated from Russia to the U.S., and from then on we can see a change in his approach.

In 1916 he wrote an article on Hess's philosophy in which there was a significant change: his essential attitude toward Judaism became positive. During these years he wrote a book (which was not published) in which Jewish tradition in the diaspora is described in positive terms, as a continuation of the prophetic striving for social justice. Yet Syrkin did not embrace Hess's philosophy completely, because he did not accept its Spinozistic base. Consequently, Syrkin turned to Hermann Cohen's philosophy, in which he discovered an idealistic base for socialistic renewal of Judaism. Not Spinoza but Kant with the Jewish interpretation of Hermann Cohen became the basis for renewal of Judaism as the socialistic religion.

Syrkin, however, did not accept Cohen's philosophy as a whole. Cohen's vision was that the Jewish religion would be the future religion for all mankind. At this point, Syrkin held the less presumptuous vision of his former teacher, Hess. Judaism should be the religion of the Jewish nation only, in a limited nationalistic project. It should not assimilate into a cosmopolitan vision, but should concentrate in one country, in Israel, and from there – to be again a “light for all nations.”

SPIRITUAL RELIGIOUS ZIONISM

Rabbi Shmuel Alexandrov is a fascinating yet neglected thinker. In this paper I examine the earlier stage of his thought, which should serve as the basis for researching his later thought, by analyzing the discourse “Religious Fire and National Spirit [*esh dat ve'ruch leumi*].” Alexandrov is referring to the polemic between Ahad Ha'am (Asher Zvi Hirsch Ginsberg) and Moshe Leib Lilienblum which stirred up the Jewish national movement at the time. He takes the side of Ahad Ha'am, and calls upon him and his fellows to join in a new national-interpretive initiative. In Alexandrov's opinion the contradiction between religious life and the sciences and enlightenment finds its dialectic culmination in Nationalism, which embodies authenticity, morality and rationality. National life will replace religious life, which hinges solely upon reward and punishment. Like Ahad Ha'am, Alexandrov combines a striving to modernize Judaism with a call to return to the traditional sources which carry its national values. For this purpose, he wishes to establish a Religious-Academic institution in Jerusalem, which will engage in reinterpreting traditional sources in such a way as to remold Judaism.

Alexandrov concurs with Ahad Ha'am in saying that authentic-national life would render the Halachic system superfluous. Furthermore, the transition into national life carries with it an evolution in religious perception, from an image of a rewarding and punishing transcendental god to an image of immanence, which identifies god with the inner authenticity of the individual and the nation. However, as opposed to Ahad Ha'am, Alexandrov does not strive for the elimination of religious life at the present.

This paper discusses the radical interpretation given to the discourse in question and shows that a more moderate interpretation should be adopted, one in which Alexandrov calls for a more gradual process, one which would not threaten the religious element of the Jewish people and could enlist their cooperation. Once the national consciousness would spread amongst the people there would no longer be a need for a normative system, since they would then acknowledge the moral significance of the religious commandments and keep most of them out of free will.

Due to its significance, the discourse “Religious Fire and National Spirit” is appended in full, for the first time since its segmented publication in

the summer of 1981. The appended discourse is accompanied by notes and references which demonstrate a close reading of Alexandrov's texts, which are rich in allegories and allusions that may be lost upon contemporary readers.

*Hagay Shtamler*

*HIS THOUGHTS DRAW SOLELY FROM TRADITIONAL JEWISH SOURCES:  
THE SOURCES OF R. ABRAHAM I. KOOK'S THOUGHTS  
AS REFLECTED IN HIS CONTROVERSY WITH R.  
DR. AARON KAMINKA*

This paper illuminates the controversy that developed following Aaron Kaminka's statement that Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook's teachings resemble the thought of Henri Bergson. Rabbi Kook wrote him that his thoughts derive solely from traditional Jewish sources. In a little known reply, Kaminka posits that not only Rabbi Kook, but also Jewish Sages throughout the generations absorbed the thinking of non-Jewish philosophers. My paper analyzes conceptions of Rabbi Kook and Kaminka regarding the People of Israel versus the other nations, the Wisdom of Israel versus that of other nations, and Judaism versus Christianity.

*Yossi Katz*

*YAVNE'EL, BRESLOV CITY:  
R. ELIEZER SHLOMO SCHICK (MOHOROSH) AND THE  
SANCTIFICATION OF YAVNE'EL IN THE GALILEE*

Rabbi Schick's choosing Yavne'el as the place to build his community in Israel was followed by his endowing it with deep, extensive aspects of sanctity. This attribution is unique among the centers and institutions that Rabbi Schick established, in New York and elsewhere.

For Rabbi Schick, Yavne'el had been sanctified long before in history; his contribution was only to reveal its hidden holiness to his followers. He strengthened the appreciation of this sanctity by emphasizing its diverse sacred elements, rooting them in Jewish tradition and linking them to

Breslov characteristics of holiness. As a result, Yavne'el was granted a unique new identity.

By choosing Yavne'el as his second home and his future burial place, he further enhanced its sanctity. It became the place where the Tsaddik – the holy man – dwelled during his life and remained after his death.

In consideration of the strong link between the holiness of holy men and holy places, he called on his followers to visit his grave, as Rabbi Nachman had done. In this manner, Rabbi Nachman “got” Uman, and Rabbi Schick “got” Yavne'el. However, as opposed to the traditional pilgrimage to Rabbi Nachman's burial site on Rosh Hashanah, Rabbi Schick did not specify a particular date for visiting his grave. In this manner, he gained the benefits of both place and time.

The sanctification of Yavne'el by Rabbi Schick's followers has had far-reaching implications, both immediate as well as in the long term. Today, Yavne'el is considered a Breslov city, in disregard of the rest of its population and its history. Thus, Yavne'el has joined a long line of places whose sanctification, in one way or another, led to a dramatic change in their nature.