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The Bahir



Synopsis

The first book in any language ever to reveal the methodology of the ancient Kabbalists, this is one of the oldest and most important of all ancient Kabbalistic texts. All references, both to manuscripts and printed material are carefully cited, and the complete Hebrew text of The Bahir is included.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As far as the study of Kabbalah is concerned, this book is necessary and the only English version I'm aware of. This is certainly not light reading and very esoteric in nature. Without the commentary of Mr. Kaplan, this text would be incomprehensible to all but the very elite of the Kabbalistic scholars, which I'm not. Extreme patience and focus is required when reading and I highly recommend that one read the commentary for each of the 200 points as you go. Of course this makes for lots of page turning, but much easier comprehension. With that said, one can find many gemstones within the pages of this book that are largely allegorical in nature. Although I find the gematria a bit of a stretch at times, I certainly can't definitively discount the exegesis either. The work along the sefirot and the meditative implications I thought were the most useful of the teachings in these pages, but not intended for the beginner. The commentary on the levels of the soul and universes I also thought were particularly interesting and useful for understanding some of the Hebraic connotations of the Bible.

Before his tragic death, Rabbi Kaplan was a practicing Kabbalist who wrote several ground-breaking

books on Kabbalah. Notably, he wrote 3 books on Jewish Meditation and commentaries on both the Sefer Yetzirah and the Book Bahir. His "Bahir" provides considerable commentary and explanation of the text, though much of it is still a mystery--so don't expect a complete exposition of a definitive sort. None exists at least in English as far as I can determine. But, this one is a terrific start. The origins of the 3 greatest Kabbalah books (Yetzirah, Bahir, and Zohar) are shrouded in mystery. They are attributed to ancient Masters (pseudepigraphic) which is actually not unusual in medieval times. Gershom Scholem popularized Kabbalah through his academic studies (though he may not have meant to do this at all) though he was not a Kabbalist. He was an historian-great historical data but absurd personal opinions. Not so for Aryeh Kaplan who is obviously a practitioner not just an academic. Nevertheless, "Bahir" is replete with esoteric symbolism. Symbols (as opposed to signs) do not have a definitive meaning. They aren't supposed to. They have many "meanings." Thus, this text, though obviously very heavy duty metaphysically, is very difficult to understand today. It's relationships to the other 2 main texts in Kabbalah is highly relevant and interesting. So, along with the Sefer Yetzirah, this is a book for the serious student of Kabbalah to ponder and meditate upon for a long, long...time.

Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, of blessed memory, has accomplished much in the field of Judaic studies during his lifetime. By far the most amazing are his Kabbalistic works, like this, the Bahir. The Bahir is one of the oldest texts of the Kabbalah. Tradition assigns it to Rabbi Nehuniah Ben Ha-Kana of the first century CE. This fantastic book not only presents an accurate translation of the text, but also an interpretation which relates it to modern Judaism and as a supplement, the original Hebrew text. The Bahir is a revolutionary book; the Zohar and subsequent Kabbalah is literally based on its foundation. It is the oldest known book that actually presents the array of the Sefirot (Divine Emanations) and it deals largely with interpretations of the Bible.

Aryeh Kaplan Z"L, is the only kabbalist I've been able to understand. He uses every text in Jewish literature available to explain such mystical teachings. He is not afraid of showing some of the deepest secrets of G-d. The best of it is that you get the hebrew text, then the translation and finally his commentary, followed by many notes. He follows the kabbalistic teaching regarding: "Reveal one cubit, buy always hiding two".

Two things to keep in mind about this book; 1) it is ancient and 2) there were more than one sect of jewish Qabbalists running around at the time. This may not have some of the principle beliefs that

most modern Qabbalists have via the Golden Dawn, but it is this growth that lets us learn about ourselves and the universe. Keep in mind that some correspondences may not be the same as the ones you have been studying, thus it is open for experimentation. About the book itself...It is an astounding work that many early Qabbalists used as a reference before the Zohar became translated (only 35% of it). If you read and thought upon the things said on each page or section for one week, you may understand it, because it goes back and forth. What was not revealed before is later, so thus you must backtrack and make the connection yourself. This is a definite study book. You must STUDY this book to truly glean the maximum amount of knowledge from it. This is not an easy read and it has no spells or magickal workings in it. It is a discussion between rabbis about the Bible, Qabbalah, and other modes of Jewish thought and religion. This pertains mostly to the dogmatic Qabbalah that so many of us hear about, but really don't see or study. It is well worth the money to buy this book if you are at all interested in the Qabbalah, the Bible, or Jewish teachings. It will reveal things for you if you have the patience and the tenacity. Seek and ye shall find.

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