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The Book Of Letters: A Mystical Hebrew Alphabet (Kushner)



Synopsis

In calligraphy by the author. Folktales about and exploration of the mystical meanings of the Hebrew Alphabet. Open the old prayerbook-like pages of The Book of Letters and you will enter a special world of sacred tradition and religious feeling. More than just symbols, all twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet overflow with meanings and personalities of their own. Rabbi Kushner draws from ancient Judaic sources, weaving Talmudic commentary, Hasidic folktales and Kabbalistic mysteries around the letters.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This very popular book about Hebrew letters was first published in 1975. This is the fifteenth anniversary second edition that contains a new forward in which the rabbi reveals the serendipitous situations that prompted the writing and unique style of the book. Rabbi Kushner is very interested in Jewish mysticism and some mysticism, but not too much, flavors his presentation. Ignoring the fact that most scholars agree that the shape of the letters that we have today were introduced into Judaism around 500 BCE and the Torah, if composed before that date as tradition states, was written with a different script, he tells readers in his introduction the delightful rabbinical tales that the Hebrew letters have an existence separate than the words that contain them, and tells us why. He says that the letters were even around before the world was created and were mysteriously linked with the creative process. Bezalel used the Hebrew letters to help build the wilderness tabernacle during the days of Moses. God created the form of the letters just before he rested on the seventh

day. God also placed crowns on certain letters. (The dating of the letters is not significant in regard to these stories because the rabbis who invented them didn't mean that they should be accepted literally.) Kushner describes the nature of each of the twenty two Hebrew letters and tells interesting information about them. For instance, a tradition arose to place three crowns upon seven letters when they appear in the Torah scroll. Each of these seven letters is formed in part with the seventh letter zayin. Another example of the usage of letters in the Torah scroll is the letter chet, which has an uncut line at its top in regular script, but the line is cut in the Torah.

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