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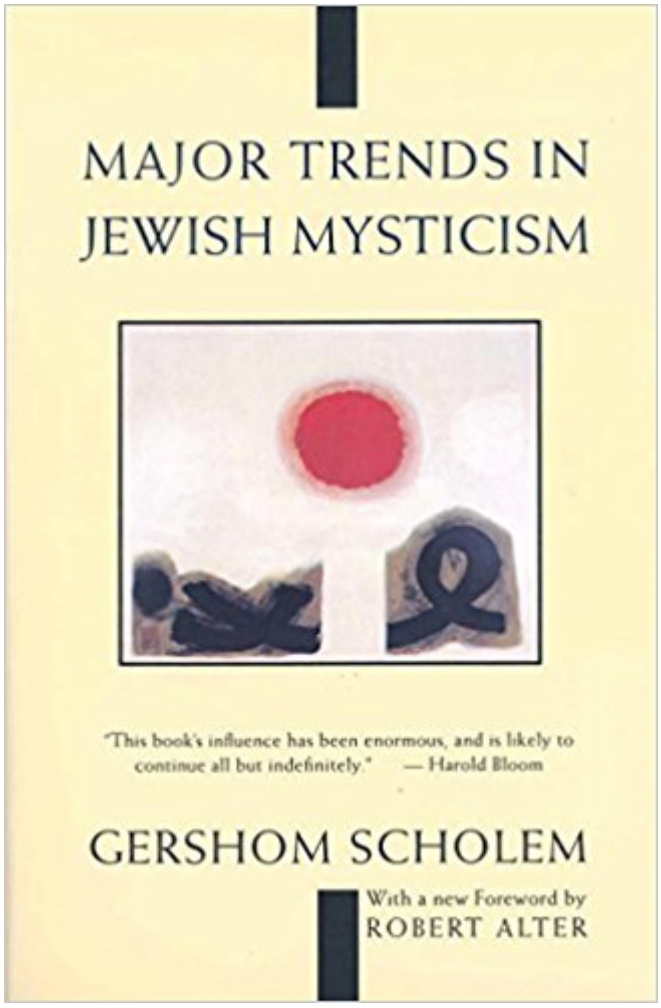

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Synopsis

A collection of lectures on the features of the movement of mysticism that began in antiquity and continues in Hasidism today.

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Customer Reviews

"A crucially vital work in the long history of Jewish esoteric spirituality. Aside from its intrinsic importance, the book's influence has been enormous, and is likely to continue all but indefinitely. As much as the stories and parables of Kafka, Scholem's work helped inaugurate Jewish gnosticism on our era."Ã¢â ¬â •Harold Bloom, Yale University"Over fifty years ago, Major Trends struck the scholarly world like a bombshell, marking the beginning of a new era. The book's unique combination of philological erudition, phenomenological penetration, and synthetic sweep not only wroughtÃ Â a revolution in Jewish studies but also established Jewish mysticism as a major phenomenon in the general history of religions."Ã¢â ¬â •R.J.Z. Weblowsky, Hebrew University"As the ZoharÃ Â is the canonical text of the Kabbalah, so, in a sense,Ã Â is Scholem'sÃ Â Major TrendsÃ Â the canonical modern work on the nature and history of Jewish mysticism. For a sophisticated understanding, not only of the dynamics of Jewish mysticism, but of the exquisite complexities of Jewish history and tradition, Major Trends is a major port of entry through which one must pass."Ã¢â ¬â •Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, Columbia University

A collection of lectures on the features of the movement of mysticism that began in antiquity and continues in Hasidism today.

If anyone could manage to give a clear exposition of the main ideas of Kabbalism, that person is Gershom Scholem. There were times, while reading this book, that I was swimming (I.e., near drowning), particularly in the second lecture on the Zohar, but I always eventually found my footing again, thanks to GS; and the book as a whole is a marvel of clarity, that is, a marvelously clear presentation of an extremely complex, dense, and knotty material. I am in awe. Amongst scholarly studies, a book like this one is one in a thousand, if not one in ten thousand, or more.

As an inquisitive Jew, I have always been mystified by Jewish mysticism. People are always telling me, "oh it’s so difficult" or "complex" or "you have to be over 40 years old to understand it". All I was looking for was a book that can intelligently explain the evolution of Jewish mysticism. This is the book. It was even written during the most troubling time for the Jewish people at the height of the Holocaust, though he does not mention this at all.This book is at an academic level as it explains each period about the development of Jewish mysticism up until the modern Hasidic movement. You truly get a clear understanding of how Kabbalah was formed and how it was brought into the modern times. The first part of the book explains ancient Jewish mysticism building up to the Zohar. There are two chapters about the Zohar and then the rest the book is the aftermath with my favorite chapter about Rabbi Luria. A lot of rich information and sources. Enjoy!!!

Scholem’s overview of the development of Jewish mysticism in general and Kabbalah in particular is magisterial. For those not familiar with Jewish history, some of the lectures may be dense, but this challenge can also be a springboard for exploring more in Jewish history and religious development. However, he provides a thorough introduction to this fascinating field of studies. Note that quite a few of his sources are Hebrew texts, so facility with Hebrew is helpful, but not requisite.

I knew most the facts but Sholem gives a clear understanding of the whole movement

Scholem is the pre-eminent scholar in the field of Jewish mysticism. His Major Trends is not easy reading, but it’s deeply engaging, and you can find new insights on re-reading.

I am satisfied and happy with my purchase

The Christian carryovers are astounding

very good though highly academic

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