



Like Angels on Jacob's Ladder: Abraham Abulafia, the Franciscans, and Joachimism

Harvey J. Hames

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Explores the career of Abraham Abulafia, thirteenth-century founder of the school of ecstatic Kabbalah.

This book explores the career of Abraham Abulafia (ca. 1240–1291), self-proclaimed Messiah and founder of the school of ecstatic Kabbalah. Active in southern Italy and Sicily where Franciscans had adopted the apocalyptic teachings of Joachim of Fiore, Abulafia believed the end of days was approaching and saw himself as chosen by God to reveal the Divine truth. He appropriated Joachite ideas, fusing them with his own revelations, to create an apocalyptic and messianic scenario that he was certain would attract his Jewish contemporaries and hoped would also convince Christians. From his focus on the centrality of the Tetragrammaton (the four letter ineffable Divine name) to the date of the expected redemption in 1290 and the coming together of Jews and Gentiles in the inclusiveness of the new age, Abulafia's engagement with the apocalyptic teachings of some of his Franciscan contemporaries enriched his own worldview. Though his messianic claims were a result of his revelatory experiences and hermeneutical reading of the Torah, they were, to no small extent, dependent on his historical circumstances and acculturation.

“This book is historical rather than phenomenological, making it both more convincing and more readable ... It is relevant to any serious reader interested in kabbalah, medieval history, Jewish-Christian relations, and the feasibility of serious inter-faith dialogue.” — Association of Jewish Libraries Newsletter

“Hames's important work has beautifully reinforced our sense of the interdependence linking the mystical traditions of medieval Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It should delight anyone interested in Abulafia or Joachim, in Kabbalah or mysticism, and most broadly, in the fascinating web of interactions, 'cross-fertilisations' and assertion of difference that constitutes the history of religion.” — Journal of Ecclesiastical History

“Like Angels on Jacob's Ladder provides an accessible and thoughtful presentation of a very interesting and significant figure in the Jewish mystical tradition. Of equal importance, it elegantly suggests a far more complex arena of Jewish-Christian relations and interaction in the medieval world than typically finds expression in the study of medieval history.” — Nina Caputo, University of Florida

“A fascinating story.” — Gordon D. Newby, Emory University

Harvey J. Hames is Senior Lecturer of Medieval History at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. He is the author of *The Art of Conversion: Christianity and Kabbalah in the Thirteenth Century*.

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