

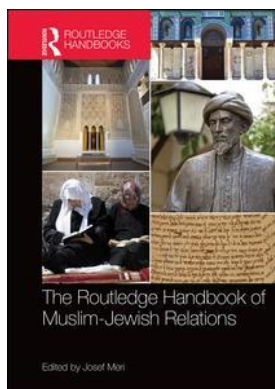
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Mysticism

The quest for transcendence

Aaron W. Hughes

Both Judaism and Islam possess ancient and articulate forms of mystical expression. The focus of this chapter is less on the history of these two movements than on how they intersected with one another since the rise of Islam in the seventh century. Within this context, focus will be on three particular instances of mutual cross-pollination. The first is a form of intellectual mysticism that culminates in a divine vision and is customarily associated with medieval Neoplatonism, the intellectual worldview that both Muslim and Jewish intellectuals shared. The second is the use of Sufi techniques of meditation and spiritual training by Jewish thinkers – especially the descendants of the great Maimonides (d. 1204) – in places such as Cairo. Such thinkers were inspired by Islamic mysticism to create a more pietistic and mystical understanding of the Torah and the divine commandments. The third and final example will be the controversial figure of Shabbetai Zevi (d. 1676) and his followers, the Dönme. Shabbetai was influenced by both Jewish and Islamic mystical traditions in Salonika, claimed to be the Messiah, and subsequently converted to Islam.

Mysticism, generally conceived, is the quest for spiritual transformation. This can be envisaged as the attempt to unite with or be absorbed into the divine world, which in monotheistic religions is tantamount to God. While mysticism is certainly a personal journey, historically it takes place in specific communities that have created and developed distinctive practices, discourses, texts, institutions, traditions, and experiences. While these groups certainly derive from and engage with the larger religious traditions of which they are a part, they also differ from them in the sense that they are often predicated on secrecy and initiation and culminate in a form of personal revelation and gnosis. The relationship of mysticism to religion is thus a complicated one. Whereas mystics claim to delve deeper into the religious teachings and practices than the average worshipper, religious authorities often mistrust mystics on account of their propensity for antinomian behavior.

Let me begin with a few theoretical cautions. While both Judaism and Islam possess lengthy traditions that involve such distinctive practices, institutions, and experiences, it is important not to assume, however, that there exists a normative mystical expression or experience in each tradition. The focus of scholarly study, then, is less the actual experience than the techniques that facilitate it and the textual accounts that attempt to describe it. In like

manner, we should not overlook the historical, intellectual, cultural, and even sociological contexts wherein these various expressions were articulated. Sometimes these practices and discourses overlapped on account of mutual influence, as we shall see later in this chapter, but oftentimes they did not. Although this chapter will focus solely on the former, it is nevertheless important to be aware that both Islamic and Jewish mysticisms often possessed distinctive concerns: Jewish mystics, for example, were concerned almost solely with the inner meaning of the Torah, the mystical and cosmological significance of the Hebrew alphabet, and the cosmic significance of performing the divine commandments. Since an Arabophone and Islamic inflected culture was the dominant one, it is often easier to show the influence that Islamic mysticism (Sufism; Arab. *taṣawwuf*) had on Jewish mystics. Beyond historical influences, however, it is certainly safe to say that both Jewish and Islamic mystics were interested in piercing the mundane order of things – reality, religious performance, scripture – in order to get at the true reality (Arab. *ḥaqīqa*) behind it. Once the veil of the exoteric world (Arab. *ẓāhir*) has been rent, the mystic is able to experience the hidden and esoteric world (Arab. *bāṭin*) that supports it.¹ One important difference to note between Islamic and Jewish mysticism is that if the former frequently represented a universal and inclusive message, Kabbalah, the most prominent form of Jewish mysticism, was highly exclusive, bordering on the xenophobic and racist.²

In Islam, many of these mystical forms, expressions, and traditions become solidified through the various schools or paths (*ṭuruq*; sing. *ṭarīqa*) associated with Sufism and, in Judaism, with the teachings and doctrines of the Kabbalah. Although by far the largest intersection between Jewish and Islamic forms of mysticism may be found in the medieval Jewish pietists – often referred to as Jewish Sufis – we must not overlook both earlier and later expressions. This chapter accordingly presents an overview of some of the intersections and cross-pollinations between Jewish and Muslim mystics: the intellectual mysticism associated with the cosmological and epistemological framework of medieval Neoplatonism that both Jews and Muslim shared; the Sufi-inspired pietism of later medieval Jews; and the later use of Sufi ideas by heterodox movements, particularly Shabbetai Zevi and the Dönme. Before proceeding, however, a brief digression into some of the major themes of both Sufism and Kabbalah is in order.

Jewish mysticism: an historical overview

The term *Kabbalah* is used to describe the Jewish mystical tradition that recounts the unfolding of God and His interrelationship with the world through the mediation of the divine pleroma (Heb. *sefirot*). It found its fullest expression in the *Sefer ha-Zohar* (*The Book of Radiancy*), attributed to Shimon bar Yochai (a second-century CE rabbinic sage) but apparently having been actually written, or at least given its final redaction, by Moses de Leon (1250–1305), who lived in what is today northern Spain. The origins of mysticism in Judaism are unclear, but most scholars date it to sometime in the Second Temple period, which carried through into the rabbinic period by means of elite rabbinic figures.³ There are several distinct phases that will concern us here: pre-Kabbalistic, Kabbalistic, and Lurianic.

The earliest iterations of pre-Kabbalistic mystical traditions often involve speculation about the *hekhalot* (divine “palaces” or “chambers”) or the *merkabah* (the divine “chariot,” in reference to Ezekiel, chapter 1). For this reason, it is often referred to as *hekhalot* or *merkabah* mysticism, and its teachings can be isolated in a group of texts that span from the first to the eleventh centuries CE. Initiates were said to ascend to the divine chariot through mystical practices, and the texts that describe the experiences are highly visual in orientation.

Another important aspect of these traditions was speculation and reflection on the mystical and cosmographical aspects of the Hebrew alphabet, something on clear display in the writings of Abraham Abū'l-‘Afiya (also known as Abraham Abulafia; d. ca. 1291), which was thought to have magical properties.⁴ If one could master the secrets of the Hebrew Bible, it was assumed, one could ideally understand the mysteries of the universe. It is worth noting here that mysticism was not simply textual but cosmological. One of the most important works of hekhalot and merkabah mysticism was the *Sefer Yetzirah* (*Book of Creation*), which although made up of several distinct literary strands, was most likely redacted in the ninth century in an Islamic milieu.⁵

By far the fullest literary expression of Kabbalah was the *Sefer ha-Zohar*, a sprawling work that contains, among other things, an esoteric commentary to the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. As Jews and Muslims were forced out of the newly unified Spain in 1492, the main locus of Jewish mystical speculation now focused on several groups associated with Safed (today in northern Israel). Moses Cordovero (d. 1570) was one of the first to provide an integration of the previous differing schools in Kabbalistic interpretation. Isaac Luria (d. 1572) subsequently recast earlier Kabbalistic speculations in what is generally referred to as Lurianic Kabbalah, which puts the individual mystic at the center of an unfolding cosmic drama, one wherein he (they were always male) was responsible for restoring cosmic harmony through the proper performance of the divine commandments. Lurianic mythology was subsequently used to explain the actions of the self-proclaimed Messiah, Shabbetai Zvi (d. 1676), when he converted to Islam. Some of his followers, known as the *Dönme* (converts), also converted to Islam but were said to practice Judaism in secret. The idea of being a Muslim externally and a Jew internally formed another variation on the *ẓāhir/bāṭin* (exoteric/esoteric) dialectic that is a hallmark of mysticism. Finally, mystical speculation was particularly popular in Eastern Europe, among groups such as the Bratslav ḥasidim, who also emphasized piety and a personal relationship with God.

Islamic mysticism: an historical overview

The origins of the mystical current in Islam are equally difficult to ascertain with historical certainty.⁶ Later mystics would certainly ascribe their goals and attribute their practices to the Prophet, especially his *mi‘rāj* and *isrā’*, which taken together formed the constituent parts of his night flight or spiritual journey into the heavens. As in Judaism, distinct mystical teachings, practices, and institutions developed only later. Different teachings and ritualistic techniques (Arab. *dhikr*) became associated with distinct schools that were associated with a master (*shaykh*), who would trace his mystical credentials and lineage (Arab. *silsila*) directly back to the Prophet. Before the establishment of these schools, however, mysticism seems to have been embodied primarily in select individuals – such as Ḥasan al-Basrī (d. 728) and Rābi‘a al-‘Adawiyya (d. mid-eighth century) – who lived humbly and pietistically, providing an alternative to the wealth of the burgeoning empire. If mysticism had always played an important role in elite rabbinic circles in Judaism, the situation was much more complicated in Islam. This was most likely on account of more “drunken” expressions (Arab. *wajd*) found in the perceived antinomian sayings and teachings attributed to individuals such as al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 874) and especially al-Ḥallāj (d. 922). The latter was put to death for his teachings, which famously included uttering the phrase *anā al-ḥaqq* (i.e., “I am God”). The mystical union with God that the Sufī sought was thus considered to be at odds with more normative religious teachings.

This would change to some extent with the intersection of Shari‘a (law) and Sufi pietism as proposed by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) in his magnum opus *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* (*The*

Resurrection of the Religious Sciences). The most elaborate theosophical and creative mythological teachings may be found in the writings of Ibn 'Arabī (d. 1240), who lived only a generation before Moses de Leon, also in al-Andalus. There is, at least as of yet, no historical evidence that the former influenced the latter. Nor is there evidence, as Asfīn Palacios tried to argue years ago, that the Iberian Peninsula was home to a pseudo-Empedoclean school that influenced both Jewish and Islamic esoteric movements.⁷ Having said that, however, it is probably no coincidence that al-Andalus witnessed the most elaborate expressions of mysticism in both religions and that this area was home to numerous esoteric (*bāṭiniyya*) groups, many of whom were influenced by the general cosmological and mythological framework supplied by a late antique Neoplatonism that had been accommodated to a monotheistic framework. This framework included, among other things, an emanative cosmology that described how plurality derived from singularity, a psychological system that described human cognition through the relationship between the human and divine intellects, and it provided a myth of the human soul that sought respite from this world through the hope of reabsorption into the universal soul.

Neoplatonism

In medieval Judaism, it is often difficult to separate neatly what constitutes mysticism and what constitutes philosophy.⁸ This may well be on account of the fact that these two terms are ours, as opposed to the terms of those whom we are too easily willing to label as *philosophers* or *mystics*. Many philosophers, for example, were also astrologers and many, especially in the early modern period, engaged in Kabbalistic speculation. In the medieval period, the difficulty in taxonomy may very well be the result of the term *Neoplatonism*. The term is notoriously imprecise and anachronistic. It was originally coined in the nineteenth century and was used pejoratively to denote later commentators to Plato and Aristotle, none of whom were thought to be as original as the great masters. Indeed, it was assumed that the very genre of commentary was unoriginal. The result is that today we label as “Neoplatonic” thinkers who did not see themselves as such and, because of this, we group them under the rubric Neoplatonic despite the fact that their thought may well have had very little in common.⁹ While the term may well reveal something, it also conceals a great deal. Certainly the textual and literary dimensions of Neoplatonism are well defined in, for example, the various recensions of Plotinus in Arabic and Hebrew translations, and its doctrinal contours are also well-known (e.g., emanationist cosmogonies; metaphysical hierarchical categories; and the pathos of the soul's upward return).

Based on such texts and doctrines, we can perhaps identify a set of thinkers (e.g., al-Kindī, Isaac Israeli, the Ikhwān al-Safā', Ibn Gabirol, and Bar Ḥiyya) as Neoplatonic. Despite the fact that all of these thinkers are today considered to be philosophers, they all exhibited traits that we could define as mystical. In fact, the best term used to describe them is *intellectual mystics* since they all imagined a rationalist system but one that culminated in a quasi-mystical vision of the divine. Of central importance here is the imagination or the imaginative faculty, often referred to by the medieval Islamic and Jewish thinkers as the *inner eye* (Arab. *al-'ayn al-bāṭiniyya*).¹⁰ Within this context, virtually all philosophers – even those belonging to the more rationalist Aristotelian system – acknowledged that if the imagination is properly conditioned and works in tandem with the intellect, it could facilitate and permit access to the divine world. Since the noetic function of the imagination is to give form or corporeality to that which exists without form or body, it is able to move simultaneously between the celestial and mundane worlds, translating each into the other.¹¹ The imagination, if properly cultivated, had the potential to

enable the individual to experience and apprehend that which exists without form and matter by creating internal impressions of it. The imagination thus became the locus wherein the individual could experience the divine presence.¹² Even though many were overtly critical of the imagination, it is no coincidence, as I have argued elsewhere, that the telos of many of their systems is often an elaborate discussion of the philosopher's journey into the divine, which is often described in terms of rich and highly visual imagery.

Let me cite several examples. In his commentary to Qohelet 7:3, Abraham ibn Ezra (d. 1167) divides, as was customary in Neoplatonic circles, the human soul into three: the lowest or vegetative soul (*ha-nefesh ha-šomehet*), the intermediate animal soul (*ha-nefesh ha-behema*), and the highest or rational soul (referred to as either *ha-neshamah* or *ha-lev*). The function of the animal soul is to act as an intermediary between the higher and lower souls, to interact with the sensual world through the five senses, and then to process the data associated with this. The animal soul is crucial, since it can either fall victim to the passions of the body or be used in the service of the intellect. Through a combination of theoretical and practical wisdom, one is able to perfect oneself in such a manner as to achieve a union (Heb. *devequt*; Arab. *ittiṣāl*) with the active intellect, the last of the celestial intellects and associated with the sphere of the moon. As he writes in his commentary to Psalm 16:8, “[W]isdom (*‘aṣa*) and ethics (*musar*) lead an individual to put God before him both day and night, and thus his *neshamah* cleaves to the Creator before separating from the body [i.e., at death].”¹³ In other passages, Ibn Ezra claims that it is the heart (*lev*) that cleaves to the upper world. The heart, as the essence of the individual, is the locus in which one loves God and experiences the divine presence. Since the heart exists within a corporeal body, it is unable to know the upper worlds without recourse to vision. It is at this juncture that the imagination, what he frequently calls the “eye of the heart” (*‘ein ha-lev*), which translates from the Arabic *al-‘ayn al-bāṭiniyya*, becomes important. It is this eye that allows the philosopher to see visions of the upper world by giving corporeal form to incorporeal phenomena. As he writes in his poem *bedat el edebeqa*,

By the life that You give to me, I cleave to Your Torah
 I expect my reward to be given from God.
 In his Garden of Eden my will indulges in luxuries
 But when I search for Him, he is my reviver.
 It is You that I see in my imagination (*‘ein ha-lev*) and later
 In Your Torah, You are majestic in your strength.
 By my comprehension of the precepts of the straight path
 I praise You – and You increase my splendor.
 If mountains and valleys cannot confine
 Your glory (*kavod*) – then how can my words.
 In You my soul seeks refuge.¹⁴

In this passage, we see a stunning example of the intersection of philosophical, mystical, and literary features that is one of the hallmarks of medieval Islamicate Neoplatonism. Mystical vision is here intimately connected to literary expression and intellectual cultivation. Yet, and this is the key to Neoplatonism, the telos, or the goal of the system, is not reducible to the intellect but is *supra*-rational. This is why Neoplatonism, as a form of medieval rationalism, must simultaneously be seen as a species of the genus Mysticism. Moreover, it is a system that both Muslim and Jewish thinkers shared, and it was one that would be used in subsequent mystical cosmology, especially that of the Kabbalah.

Even the great Aristotelian philosophers – such as al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), and Maimonides – used this conception of the imagination, and their respective systems culminate in a similar visual quest that is often described using the pietistic language of Sufism. Avicenna, for example, writes in his *Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa'l-Tanbihāt* (*The Book of Pointers and Reminders*) of the importance of vision in the philosophical quest. He even uses the technical Sufi term 'arīf (“knower,” in the sense of being a possessor of *ma'rifa* or 'irfān [i.e., mystical gnosis]) to denote the philosopher who must align his soul through music, poetry, and thoughtful worship. Through such stages one is able to conjoin – here he uses another technical term, *ittiṣāl* – with God.¹⁵ The reason one performs these spiritual exercises, according to Avicenna, is to harness the imaginative faculty to the rational soul.¹⁶ By means of such exercises, the 'arīf is able to transform his imagination into a faculty relevant for the philosophical enterprise. Like other Islamicate philosophers, Avicenna argues that the imaginative faculty makes contact with an external source that creates within the imagination “pictures of things that do not exist but that may be found in the future.”¹⁷ The imagination, then, does not simply recall or recombine past sense data, which is the standard Aristotelian paradigm, but actively creates symbols that translate the encounter with the spiritual, incorporeal world. In a telling chapter from the ninth section of the fourth part of his *Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa'l-Tanbihāt*, one entitled *fi maqamāt al-'arīfīn* (“On the Stations of the Knowers”), he writes,

If the sense perceptions are reduced and fewer preoccupations remain, it is not unlikely for the soul to have escapes that lead from the work of the imagination to the side of sanctity. Thus, apprehensions of the invisible world are imprinted on the soul, which then flow to the word of the imagination and are then imprinted in the common sense.¹⁸

Maimonides (d. 1204), the individual who is generally considered to be the arch-rationalist of pre-modern Jewish thought, also picks up these themes. We see them at work, for example, in what is sometimes referred to as his “Sufi” chapter in his philosophical magnum opus, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, on account of his employment of terms and phrases in vogue among Sufis. In this chapter, one that some believe he originally intended to conclude his *Guide*,¹⁹ Maimonides provides his famous parable of the palace.²⁰ Therein he writes,

The ruler is in his palace, and all his subjects are partly within the city and partly outside the city. Of those who are within the city, some have turned their backs upon the ruler's habitation, their faces being turned another way. Others seek to reach the ruler's habitation, turn toward it, and desire to enter it and to stand before him, but up to now they have not yet seen the wall of the habitation. Some of those who seek to reach it have come up to the habitation and walk around it searching for its gate. Some of them have entered the gate and walk about it in the antechambers. Some of them have entered the inner court of the habitation and have come to be with the king, in one and the same place as him, namely, in the ruler's habitation. But their having come into the inner part of the habitation, it is indispensable that they should make another effort; then they will be in the presence of the ruler, see him from afar or nearby, or hear the ruler's speech or speak to him.²¹

Notice the importance that Maimonides puts on the imaginative faculty of the reader both to imagine the palace and to translate the parable. After explaining the various people, Maimonides comes to those few individuals who possess the ability to comprehend – to

“see him from afar or nearby” – the divine. His description, with its emphasis on vision, is certainly more mystically inspired than it is philosophical:

And there may be a human individual who, through his apprehension of the true realities and his joy in what he has apprehended, achieves a state in which he talks with people and is occupied with his bodily necessities while his intellect is wholly turned toward Him, may He be exalted, so that in his heart he is always in His presence, may He be exalted, while outwardly he is with people.²²

It should be clear that, in invoking Sufi terminology and images, Maimonides is not suggesting to his Jewish readers that they become Muslims or Sufis. On the contrary, what he is doing is importing Sufi terminology and categories in order to push elite Jews such as himself to a deeper understanding of the commandments and, through them, of God. While Maimonides is often described as the arch-rationalist in Judaism, such a moniker, I would suggest, goes only so far. His intention, and this will become even clearer among his descendants, is to use the language of Islamic mysticism as a way to renew Jewish worship. Maimonides concludes the chapter by invoking Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, all of whom, according to rabbinic tradition, died by a kiss. The rabbis' purpose in using this phrase, according to Maimonides, “was to indicate that the three of them died in the pleasure of the apprehension due to the intensity of passionate love [*ishq*].”²³ *Ishq*, more akin to the Greek *erōs* than *agapē*, is used in certain Sufi circles to denote the passionate love that the individual has for God, the love the created has for its Creator.

“Jewish Sufism”

Although the terms *Jewish Sufism* and *Jewish Sufi* are used with some frequency, they are not entirely accurate. What such terms try to convey is that certain Jews were attracted to certain teachings of certain Sufis and that they tried to adopt and adapt these teachings into a Jewish religious environment. While certainly there would have been contact between them, pietistic Jews inspired by Sufism were not actively telling their disciples they had to be Sufis, only that they should be more pietistic *like* the Sufis.

Since Maimonides saw the telos of the intellectual quest to be a quasi-mystical apprehension of the divine presence, it is perhaps no coincidence that his descendants were among the most articulate expositors on this intersection between Judaism and Islamic mysticism. Before I examine them, however, allow me to look briefly at the writings of Baḥya ibn Paqūda (b. 1050), whose *Kitāb al-Hidāya ilā Farā'īd al-Qulūb* (*The Book of Directions to the Duties of the Heart*) represents one of the earliest attempts to introduce Sufi terminology into Judaism. However, there is little evidence that the work gave rise to a brand of Jewish pietists, as, say, the work of Abraham or Obadya Maimonides would.²⁴

Baḥya, as Diana Lobel has shown, was a very synthetic thinker.²⁵ He absorbed many of the premises of *kalām* (see Chapter 4, this volume), such as arguments for the creation of this world out of nothing, in addition to adopting the general *kalām*ic method of argumentation. Baḥya is customarily identified as a Jewish philosopher in the sense that he employs philosophical arguments to clarify religious belief by eradicating misconceptions about God and the divine world, and philosophy also serves as a reminder to the pious one when he becomes distracted by the needs of the body. However, for Baḥya, philosophy and theology are but steps on the path, a path that he describes in the introduction to his magnum opus as ascertaining the duties of the body and those of the heart. Whereas the former are external

and concern the body, the latter are internal and involve “secret duties.” In the introduction to his *Kitāb al-Hidāya ilā Farā’iḍ al-Qulūb*, Baḥya writes,

Thus I have come to know for certain that the duties of the members are of no avail to us unless our hearts choose to do them and our soul desires their performance. Since, then our members cannot perform an act unless our souls have chosen it first, our members could free themselves from all duties and obligations if it should occur to us that our hearts were not obliged to choose obedience to God. Since it is clear that our Creator commanded the members to perform their duties, it is improbable that He overlooked our hearts and souls, our noblest parts, and did not command them to share in His worship, for they constitute the crown of obedience and the very perfection of worship.²⁶

Bodily actions, framed somewhat differently, are meaningless unless they are buttressed by the proper duties of the heart. It is only the latter, according to Baḥya, that make the former possible. Despite this, and here he foreshadows the comments of both Maimonides and his descendants, the majority of Jews simply perform their religion externally. True worship (Arab. *‘ibāda*; Heb. *‘avoda*), according to Baḥya, involves a wholehearted devotion (*al-ikhhlās*) to God, something that can only occur when the individual has purified oneself from spiritual blemish. The Sufi overtones of such a claim should be apparent, and indeed *ikhhlās* is a technical term (in addition to being a chapter of the Qur’an) that Baḥya has again introduced into Judaism. Indeed, the book translated into Hebrew by Judah Ibn Tibbon as *Hobot ha-Lebabot* would go on to become a timeless work of Jewish pietism, especially in eastern Europe in subsequent centuries.

Like many Sufi manuals, Baḥya’s *Kitāb al-Hidāya ilā Farā’iḍ al-Qulūb* is divided into gates, each of which describes a particular state of awareness that the seeker needs to embody. Baḥya does not, however, present the various stages that the mystic must go through in the way that systematic Sufis such as al-Qushayrī do. This may well be on account of the fact that Baḥya presents an intellectual journey as much as a spiritual one, and in fact does not see, as was typical in medieval Neoplatonism, the two modes as disconnected from one another. Since space does not permit a full-scale analysis of each gate, allow me to focus briefly on the final gate, that of the true love (*ṣidq fi’l-maḥabba*) of God. Baḥya ends this gate with an account of the signs of those who truly love God. This description, as Georges Vajda has shown, has parallels in Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣfahānī’s *Hilyat al-Awliyā’* (*The Adornment of the Saints*).²⁷ Vajda is quick to point out, however, that Baḥya never goes as far as the Sufis and declares that there is a union between the lover and God. Vajda here, like many commentators on Jewish thinkers inspired by Sufis, does not want to see a complete mystical union as there is in Sufism. I am not convinced by this argument that Jewish mystics denied such a union, as one can find numerous examples to the contrary.²⁸ At any rate, Baḥya here argues that the ultimate state of love culminates in reliance (*tawakkul*) on the divine. In part seven of the final gate, he writes,

This way of worship is included in the duties of the heart. This is the inner knowledge [*‘ilm al-bāṭin*] hidden in the hearts of those who know and contained in their inner being. When they speak of it, its truth becomes apparent to all, for every person of sound mind and intelligence will attest to its truthfulness and justice. This is the way they attain to the highest stage of God’s obedience and reach the noblest rank of devotion [*ikhhlās*] to God and truthfulness in love of him [*ṣidq fi’l-maḥabba*] in heart and soul, body and property, as stressed by the prophet, “And you shall love the Lord your God with

all your heart, soul, and might.” Those who have reached this stage are closest to the rank of the virtuous prophets [*al-anbiyā’ al-abrār*] and God’s chosen favorites [*al-aṣfiyā’ al-akhyār*]. The Scriptures describe them as “lovers of God” and “lovers of His name,” and it is said “That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance, and that I may fill their treasuries.”²⁹

Although Baḥya certainly carries on the intellectual program of the Neoplatonists as encountered in the previous section, it is also safe to say that his use of Sufi terminology and categories are much more sustained and systematic than anything found in these other thinkers. It may even be the case that Baḥya served as the conduit between the Sufis and Maimonides. This relationship, as we shall now see, would only increase among Maimonides’s descendants.

As we witnessed in the previous section, a certain strand of Islamic mystical piety influenced Maimonides. This certainly does not mean that Maimonides was a mystic or a Sufi, but it does point to the fact that he – like so many of the medieval Jewish philosophers – saw reason and the rational faculty as only taking the individual so far.³⁰ Beyond the corporeal world, there existed the world without matter, and the only way to access this other world was through the imaginative faculty, working in close harmony with the intellect. It has also been demonstrated that the medieval Neoplatonists were influenced by the writings of various groups that used esotericism (*al-bāḥīn*) and initiation, such as the Ismā’īlīs.³¹ If the influence of Islamic mysticism and esotericism is evident in Maimonides, it would find even further articulation and expression in the work of his son Abraham Maimonides (d. 1237). Abraham succeeded his father as the *naḡīd* of the Jewish community of Egypt, which meant that he was the highest legal authority in the country. He was also an accomplished physician, philosopher, and halakhist. In addition to all of this, he was fascinated with the Sufis and their pietistic expressions, and he sought to bring some of their teachings into Judaism.³²

Abraham so admired the Islamic mystics that he called them the direct descendants of the prophets, and regretted that his contemporary Jews did not follow their example.³³ To try to rectify this, he took many of their practices and surrounded himself with disciples with the aim of creating a path (*ṭarīqa*) toward spiritual perfection. As they did to many Sufis, his enemies criticized him for holding heretical beliefs and doctrines. For Abraham, however, the path to God – and here he invokes the technical discussion of Sufi stations (*maqāmāt*) – involved mercy, gentleness, humility, trust in God, contentedness, abstinence, fighting against one’s nature, the control of faculties to serve spiritual ends, and solitude.³⁴ Travel in and through these stations must take place, according to him, by means of the scrupulous fulfillment of the law. As for Baḥya, this fulfillment cannot occur simply through external or esoteric performance but only through the “duties of the heart.” The novice needs a teacher and the end can only be reached once the individual has passed all the stages and attained perfection in each.

In his *Kifāyat al-‘Ābidīn* (*The Guide for the Pious*), Abraham Maimonides distinguishes between two types of fulfilling the law: a common way and a special way. He describes them as follows:

As for the common way it is a way of [consisting] in the performance of the explicit commandments – i.e., the carrying out of what is commanded to be done and the avoidance of what is commanded not to be done – by every person in Israel according to his requirements thereof...as for the special way it is the way [that takes account] of the purposes of the commandments and their secrets and of what can be understood of

the intentions of the Law and the lives of the prophets and the saints and their ilk...the best name for him is a *ḥasīd* because it is derived from *ḥesed*, the meaning of which is benevolence for he goes beyond what is required of him according to the explicit sense of the Law.³⁵

Here, Abraham, in typical mystical fashion, distinguishes between two modalities of fulfilling the commandments. In a distinction that goes back in Jewish pietism at least to Baḥya, but in Sufism back much earlier, he argues that those who go over and above the mere performance of religious duties and obligations are the true people of faith, but it is a path that is open only to the initiated: “The reason we say it is a special way is because it is not explicitly obligatory, and therefore no secular punishment by human hands applies to him who is remiss in it.”³⁶ The *ḥasīd*, then, is the one who engages in supererogatory acts of faith and is someone, to use the language of Sufism, who tries to understand the *ṭarīqa* (order or path) behind the *Shari’a* (the law), or the *bāṭin* (esoteric) behind the *ẓāhir* (exoteric).

This movement from the revealed to concealed and from the manifest to the hidden represents the essence of Sufism and the teachings of those Jews who sought to introduce it into Jewish thought and practice. It was not, to reiterate, the adoption of Islam at the expense of Judaism; it was, on the contrary, the adaptation of a certain mystically inspired language to mine the deeper truths of Judaism. We see this at work in Abraham’s son Obadya Maimonides and his *al-Maqāla al-Ḥawḍiyya* (*Treatise of the Pool*). In this treatise, we see again the uses to which the language and categories of the Islamic mystical tradition were put not only in the family of Maimonides but in a certain elite cross-section of the Jewish community of Cairo. Obadya, like his father and like other Jewish pietists, is extremely critical of what passes for contemporary belief. He writes, for example, that

[i]t has been repeatedly said that true devotion [*al-‘ibāda al-ḥaqīqiyya*] stems from the heart. As it is said, “And to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul” (Deuteronomy 10:10). This is indeed the goal of the exoteric law. If an individual turns toward Him, it needs to be with the totality of his heart. Few, however, accomplish such a thing, whether it be in prayer or in studying and listening to the reading of the Torah. Indeed, they occupy themselves with serving that which distracts them from proper worship and with knowing that which distracts them from this knowledge. Even the sole concern of those renowned for their science is to hear the interpretation of a biblical verse or a pleasant expression, such as a line of poetry, with which they can embellish their prayers, in short, something that will charm their listeners.³⁷

Once again we see the intersection of Sufi-inspired language, the medieval Neoplatonic tradition to which Obadya was an heir, and a deep-seated criticism of contemporary Jewish practice. Many of these Jewish pietists were critical of prevailing forms of religious worship that, as we have already seen, they considered to be too exoteric and too focused on the body at the expense of the heart. As a result, they sought to create new forms of worship that they borrowed from the Sufis but that they often claimed had previously existed in Judaism. In this, they certainly prefigure what later Kabbalists would do. Such practices included ablution before prayer, prostration during prayer, and kneeling in parts of the daily ritual. All of these practices were certainly inspired by Islamic worship.³⁸ Abraham Maimonides, Obadya’s father, also recommended weeping as a part of prayer.

Opponents to the Maimonides family frequently criticized such practices on both political and religious grounds. In terms of the former, it is important to remember that the Maimonides family was among the most important in Cairo and had many critics who desired their power and, as a result, tried to undermine them on account of their adoption of Sufi religious expressions. Pietists were accused of innovation (Arab. *bid'a*) and of introducing heterodox views into the liturgy. The opponents of Abraham Maimonides, for example, accused him of this to the Muslim authorities of Cairo, who did not take lightly to the charge of innovation either among Muslims or non-Muslims.³⁹ Abraham responded that the practices were confined to his own private synagogue and were not meant to be an imposition on other Jews.⁴⁰ In his conclusion to *al-Maqāla al-Ḥawḍiyya*, Obadya writes,

In the presence [of the elect] exercise humility, modesty, and submission, both externally and internally. Clasp your head and let your tears fall, allow purity to follow in your wake and spend your days by fasting. Delight not in the joys of the vulgar and the sorrow that grieves them. Do not be sad with their sadness and do not rejoice in what they rejoice. Despise frivolity and laughter, rather observe silence and speak only when necessary. Do not eat unless you must or sleep unless absolutely exhausted. All the while your heart should contemplate its true pursuit and your thoughts should be preoccupied by it, as it is said, "I am asleep, but my heart is awake" (Song 5:2)...Know that the discipline that you undertake is boundless and requires much spiritual predisposition and preparation, as it is said, "And let the priests also that come near to the Lord, sanctify themselves" (Exodus 19:22).⁴¹

When we recall one of the final chapters of Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed*, which was discussed earlier, we see just how remarkably similar the grandson's ideas are when it comes to what constitutes proper worship. In this passage, we also see the full extent of the Sufi-inspired pietism created by Jews in the medieval period.

The fifth and final Maimonidean *naḡīd* of the Jewish community in Egypt was David ben Joshua Maimonides (d. 1415).⁴² Like his predecessors, he was greatly influenced by Sufism. Like many other Jews influenced by Sufi ideas, he translated Arabic technical terms designating mystics with the more autochthonous-sounding *ḥasīd*, and in passages lifted directly from Sufi manuals he replaced Qur'anic verses with biblical ones. This presumably had the effect of making his ideas seem less radical to a Jewish readership. The very title of his *al-Murshid ilā al-Taḡarrud* (*The Guide to Detachment*), for example, clearly reveals his Sufi sympathies. Fenton notes that each stage of the spiritual journey equates with a station (*maqām*) on the Sufi path.⁴³ Fenton also notes that numerous extracts of *Kalimāt al-Taṣawwuf* (*Sayings of Sufism*) by Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (d. 1191) are found in this treatise.

Shabbetai Zevi and the Dönme

The influence of Islamic mysticism on Jewish thought was not confined to al-Andalus and the Western Mediterranean basin, however. After the Jews' expulsion from Spain in 1492, the development of Jewish mysticism took place virtually exclusively in Islamic lands. Despite this, there has not been nearly enough research devoted to the possible influence of Islamic mystical ideas and practices on Jewish mysticism and vice versa. The pioneering scholar of Jewish mysticism, Gershom Scholem, for example, largely downplayed the relationship between Lurianic Kabbalah and Sufis.⁴⁴ In recent years, however, Paul Fenton has encouraged us to rethink this thesis.⁴⁵ He has demonstrated how Safed, the epicenter of

Lurianic Kabbalah in the fifteenth century, was also an important place of Islamic mysticism and the home to a number of Sufi masters.⁴⁶ There was even a *zāwiya* (a Sufi lodge) there, and Fenton goes so far as to suggest that certain ritual activities in Lurianic Kabbalah, such as the visitation to saints' tombs and silent contemplation (Heb. *hitbodedūt*; Arab. *khalwa*), was influenced by the similar rituals practiced among Sufis in the area.⁴⁷ Such visits were meant to help the mystic both to commune with the soul of the deceased saint and to visualize him or her. Further study of the interaction between Sufism and Kabbalah will undoubtedly reveal the mutual influences between these two traditions in general and specific individuals in particular.

One such individual is one of the most controversial figures in later Lurianic mysticism – the self-declared Messiah, Shabbetai Zvi (d. 1676). This individual spent some of his formative years in Salonika (now in northeastern Greece), a city that was renowned for its Sufis, the majority of whom were Mevlevi, the school associated with Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, in addition to being a major center of Kabbalah and of rabbinic scholarship. After the rabbis of the city banished Shabbetai from Salonika, he moved around the Eastern Mediterranean before he finally ended up in Constantinople in 1666. Although he claimed to be the Messiah, he was arrested there and given the option of death or conversion to Islam. It seems that before he converted to Islam and even afterward he was familiar with Sufi theosophy, some of which he adopted and adapted into his teachings. He and his followers, for example, adopted eighteen commandments – the number eighteen, as Baer notes, being a significant number for both Jews and Mevlevi Sufis – and he told his followers to “be scrupulous in their observance of some of the precepts of the Muslims,” which included going on the *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) and fasting during the month of Ramadan.⁴⁸ Shabbetai also seems to have befriended a number of well-known Sufis in the region of Constantinople, most notably Muhammad al-Niyāzī (b. 1617).⁴⁹

After Shabbetai Zevi converted to Islam, his not insignificant followers – from as far away as Yemen in the south and Amsterdam in the north – had three options. The majority realized that he was not the Messiah and returned to their previous lives and professions, where they now presumably practiced normative Judaism. Another group remained Jews but still referred to him as the Messiah. These individuals became known as Sabbateans, and a small number converted to Islam along with their Messiah. These individuals became known as the Dönme, a group that was – using the categories of the *ẓāhir/bāṭin* used previously – externally Muslim but internally Jewish. These “crypto-Jews,” while presumably having nothing to do with normative Jews, remained open to Muslim influence, especially that of Sufism.⁵⁰ The Dönme practiced endogamy, had their own cemeteries, and developed a religion that thrived on secrecy. Using the Sufi notion of *taqiyya* (pious dissimulation), the Dönme cultivated secret initiation, rites, and rituals that permitted them to have their own inner religious life while appearing to be orthodox Muslim to the outside world.

Conclusions

Elite Jews seem to have used Islamic mysticism as a way to critique contemporaneous forms of Judaism. This could take the form, as we have seen, of trying to strengthen Judaism through the adoption and adaptation of Islamic mystical pietism in the ways that the descendants of Maimonides did, or it could involve the wholesale rejection of traditional Judaism, as witnessed by Shabbetai Zevi and the Dönme. In both cases, however, it is important to note how Sufism provided some Jews with both a language and a path to create new forms of religious expression by emphasizing the internal and esoteric nature of reality. While it is

fairly easy to show the influence of Sufism on Judaism, the influence of Kabbalah, in any of its iterations, on Islam is much more difficult to ascertain. This may well be the result of the many legal strictures put on who could study Kabbalah and the fact that much Kabbalistic teaching was geared specifically at Jews. The latter was to such an extent that non-Jews were even seen as less than human. The universal and inclusive message of Islamic mysticism must thus be put in counterpoint with the particular and exclusive one of Jewish mysticism.

Since both Sufism and Kabbalah represent two ancient esoteric traditions, it is perhaps not surprising that both have been co-opted by the “New Age” spirituality movement. In this movement, esoteric traditions are watered down, separated from particular religious traditions, and offered as an antidote to today’s spiritual malaise. To think of these two mystical traditions in such a way would most certainly be a mistake. Others think that the current problems between Muslims and Jews could be partially mitigated by a return to such synthetic traditions as those offered by the Maimonides family and their followers. Michael Barnes, for example, has suggested that mysticism might serve as an important “spiritual dialogue” between the three great monotheistic religions at a time when they seem to be so antagonistic to one another.⁵¹ At the root of these religions, he argues, is the desire to love God, especially that which comes from Him.⁵² Such a spiritual dialogue, based as it is on mutual respect for pietistic devotion and the intrinsic unity of phenomena, may well serve as a catalyst for engaging in such a dialogue. I leave it for others to decide.

Notes

- 1 For one of the most articulate expressions of this, see Elliot R. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), pp. 190–260.
- 2 See, for example, Elliot R. Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond: Law and Morality in Kabbalistic Mysticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
- 3 For example, Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition*, second ed. (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary Press, 1965), pp. 9–19; and Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, trans. Allan Arkush (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 3–48; Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Judaism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 13–51; and Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 1–34.
- 4 See Moshe Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988); also Elliot R. Wolfson *Abraham Abulafia, Kabbalist and Prophet: Hermeneutics, Theosophy and Theurgy* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2000).
- 5 See Steven M. Wasserstrom, “Sefer Yesira and early Islam: a reappraisal,” *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 3:1 (1993): 1–30; and Wasserstrom, “Further thoughts on the origins of *Sefer yesirah*,” *Aleph: Historical Studies in Science and Judaism* 2 (2002): 201–221.
- 6 For attempts, see Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), pp. 3–7; and Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Quran, Mi'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1996), pp. 11–28.
- 7 Miguel Asín Palacios, *The Mystical Philosophy of Ibn Masarra and His School*, trans. Elmer H. Douglas and H. W. Yoder (Leiden: Brill, 1978 [1914]). See the discussion in Michael Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus: Ibn Masarra, Ibn al-'Arabi and the Isma'ili Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 8–13.
- 8 See, for example, the classic work by Georges Vajda, *L'Amour de Dieu dans la théologie juive du Moyen Âge* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1957).
- 9 On the history of this term, see Maria Luisa Gatti, “Plotinus: The Platonic Tradition and the Foundation of Neoplatonism,” in Lloyd P. Gerson, *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 22–27.

- 10 See the important studies in Henri Corbin mentioned in the following note; Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*; and Aaron W. Hughes, *Texture of the Divine: Imagination in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Thought* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), pp. 82–114.
- 11 Henry Corbin called this the *mundus imaginalis*. See, for example, Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969); idem, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960).
- 12 This, perhaps, explains why Plato and Aristotle were so mistrustful of the imagination. See, in this regard, Richard Kearney, *The Wake of the Imagination: Ideas of Creativity in Western Culture* (London: Hutchinson, 1988), pp. 30–35; Eva T. H. Brann, *The World of the Imagination: Sum and Substance* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1991), pp. 35–45.
- 13 I use the standard *miqra'ot gedolot*, or traditional rabbinic Bible.
- 14 *Religious Poems of Ibn Ezra*, ed. Israel Levin (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1975), vol. 1, p. 26.
- 15 Avicenna, *Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa'l-Tanbihāt*, ed. S. Dunya (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif bi-Miṣr, 1960), vol. 3, p. 229.
- 16 Avicenna, *Kitāb al-Ishārāt*, vol. 3, p. 242.
- 17 This comes from a treatise that Avicenna wrote on dream interpretation. See M. 'A. Khan, "Kitābu Ta'bi-ir-ruya of Abu 'Ali b. Sina," *Indo-Iranica* 9:4 (1956): 43–77, at 44.
- 18 Avicenna, *Kitāb al-Ishārāt*, vol. 3, pp. 246–247.
- 19 See, for example, Shlomo Pines, "Maimonides' Halakhic Works and the *Guide of the Perplexed*," in *Maimonides and Philosophy*, eds. S. Pines and Y. Yovel (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986), pp. 9–11.
- 20 Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 2 vols., trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1963), III. 51 (vol. 2, pp. 618–628).
- 21 *Guide* III. 51 (p. 618).
- 22 *Guide* III. 51 (p. 623).
- 23 *Guide* III. 51 (p. 628).
- 24 See Paul Fenton's introductory comments to Obadyāh Maimonides, *The Treatise of the Pool*, trans. P. Fenton (London: Octagon Press, 1981), p. 3.
- 25 Diana Lobel, *A Jewish-Sufi Dialogue: Philosophy and Mysticism in Bahya Ibn Paqūda's Duties of the Heart* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).
- 26 Bahya ibn Paqūda, *The Book of Directions to the Duties of the Heart*, trans. Menahem Mansoor (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 89.
- 27 Georges Vajda, *La Théologie ascétique de Bahya ibn Paqūda* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1947), pp. 131–137.
- 28 See the comments in Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 59–73.
- 29 Bahya, *The Book of Directions to the Duties of the Heart*, pp. 443–444.
- 30 On Maimonides's influence on Kabbalah, see Elliot R. Wolfson, "Beneath the Wings of the Great Eagle: Maimonides and Thirteenth-Century Kabbalah," in *Moses Maimonides (1138–1204) – His Religious, Scientific, and Philosophical Wirkungsgeschichte in Different Cultural Contexts*, eds. G. K. Hasselhoff and Otfried Fraisse (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2004), pp. 209–237. See also his "Via Negativa in Maimonides and Its Impact on Thirteenth-Century Kabbalah," *Maimonidean Studies* 5 (2008): 363–412.
- 31 For example, Alfred Ivry, "Neoplatonic Currents in Maimonides' Thought," in *Perspectives on Maimonides: Philosophical and Historical Studies*, ed. Joel L. Kraemer (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the Littman Library, 1991), pp. 115–140.
- 32 For biographical details, see Samuel Rosenblatt, *The High Ways to Perfection of Abraham Maimonides* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927), pp. 40–58; Shlomo Dov Goitein, "Abraham Maimonides and His Pietist Circle," in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 145–164.
- 33 Rosenblatt, *The High Ways to Perfection of Abraham Maimonides*, p. 50.
- 34 Rosenblatt, *The High Ways to Perfection of Abraham Maimonides*, p. 51.
- 35 Rosenblatt, *The High Ways to Perfection of Abraham Maimonides*, pp. 134–135.
- 36 Rosenblatt, *The High Ways to Perfection of Abraham Maimonides*, pp. 138–139.
- 37 Fenton, *The Treatise of the Pool*, p. 115. I modify Fenton's translation somewhat here.
- 38 Fenton, *The Treatise of the Pool*, p. 13.

- 39 Fenton, *The Treatise of the Pool*, p. 12.
- 40 See Shlomo Dov Goitein, “New Documents from the Cairo Geniza,” in *Homenaje a Millas-Valllicrosa* (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1954), vol. 1, pp. 707–720.
- 41 Fenton, *The Treatise of the Pool*, p. 115. Again, I modify Fenton’s translation somewhat here.
- 42 See Shlomo Dov Goitein, “A Jewish Addict to Sufism in the time of Nagid David II Maimonides,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 44 (1953–1954): 37–49; Paul Fenton, “The Literary Legacy of David ben Joshua, Last of the Maimonidean Nēgīdim,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 75:1 (1984): 1–56.
- 43 Paul Fenton, “Judeo-Arabic Mystical Writings of the XIIIth–XIVth Centuries,” in *Judeo-Arabic Studies: Proceedings of the Founding Conference of the Study of Judeo Arabic*, ed. Norman Golb (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1997), pp. 87–102.
- 44 See, for example, the sparse references to Sufism in his massive biography of Shabbetai Zvi: Gersohn Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah*, trans. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973).
- 45 One exception is the work of Paul Fenton. See, for example, his “Shabbatay Sebi and the Muslim Mystic Muhammad an-Niyazi,” in *Approaches to Judaism in Medieval Times*, vol. 3, ed. David R. Blumenthal (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988), pp. 81–88; idem, “A New Collection of Sabbatian Hymns,” in *The Sabbatian Movement and Its Aftermath: Messianism, Sabbatianism and Frankism*, vol. 1, ed. Rachel Elior (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2001), pp. 329–351 (in Hebrew); and idem, “Influences soufies sur le développement de la Qabbale à Safed: l’exemple de la visitation des tombes,” in *Etudes sur les terres saintes et les pèlerinages dans les religions monothéistes*, ed. D. Tollet (Paris: L’Éditions Honoré Champion, 2012), pp. 201–230.
- 46 Fenton, “Influences soufies sur le développement de la Qabbale à Safed,” pp. 203–204.
- 47 Fenton, “Influences soufies sur le développement de la Qabbale à Safed,” pp. 207–210 ; also Fenton, “Solitary Meditation in Jewish and Islamic Mysticism in the Light of a Recent Archeological Discovery,” *Medieval Encounters* 2 (1995): 271–296.
- 48 Gershom Scholem, “Sprouting of the Horn of the Son of David: A New Source from the Beginnings of the Doenme Sect in Salonica,” in *In the Time of Harvest: Essays in Honor of Abba Hillel Silver*, ed. Daniel Jeremy Silver (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 385.
- 49 Fenton, “Shabbatay Sebi and the Muslim Mystic Muhammad an-Niyazi,” pp. 82–83.
- 50 See, for example, Marc David Baer, *The Dönme: Jewish Converts, Muslim Revolutionaries, and Secular Turks* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), pp. 5–12.
- 51 Michael Barnes, “Between Task and Gift: Jews, Christians, Muslims, and a Spirituality of Dialogue,” in *Jewish Christian, and Islamic Mystical Perspectives on the Love of God*, ed. Sheelah Treflé Hidden (New York: Palgrave, 2015), pp. 11–42.
- 52 Barnes, “Between Task and Gift,” pp. 12–13.

Further reading

- Baer, Marc David, *The Dönme: Jewish Converts, Muslim Revolutionaries, and Secular Turks* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010). This work shows how the Dönme promoted morality, ethics, and spirituality by creating a syncretistic religion based on their origins at the intersection of Jewish Kabbalah and Islamic Sufism. It tells their story from their origins to their near total dissolution as they became secular Turks in the mid-twentieth century.
- Corbin, Henry, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960). This is based on the author’s discovery (in Istanbul) of a manuscript that offered a Persian translation and commentary on Avicenna’s *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*. Using this as his point of departure, Corbin analyzes three of Avicenna’s mystical “recitals” that, for him, provide an initiatory cycle leading the adept along the path of spiritual progress.
- Fenton, Paul (trans.), *The Treatise of the Pool by Obadyah b. Abraham b. Moses Maimonides* (London: Octagon Press, 1981). In addition to providing a good overview of the Sufi-inspired pietism created by the Maimonides family in Cairo, Fenton also translates an important treatise by Moses Maimonides’s grandson, Obadya.
- Hughes, Aaron W., *The Texture of the Divine: Imagination in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Thought* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004). Provides a historical and philosophical

- analysis of medieval Islamicate Neoplatonism, showing the intersection among philosophy, literature, and mysticism.
- Lobel, Diana, *A Jewish-Sufi Dialogue: Philosophy and Mysticism in Bahya Ibn Paqūda's Duties of the Heart* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007). This work examines Bahya's use of Sufi terminology in his magnum opus, *Kitāb al-Hidāya ilā Fara'id al-Qulūb*.
- Meri, Josef, *The Cult of the Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Offers a critical investigation of the cult of saints among Muslims and Jews in medieval Syria and the Near East. It provides case studies of the saints and their devotees, discusses the architecture of monuments, in addition to examining devotional objects.
- Scholem, Gershom, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah*, trans. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973). Provides a massive biography of Shabbetai Zvi, who, in the seventeenth century, declared himself to be the Messiah.
- Wasserstrom, Steven M., *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis Under Early Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995). Provides a theoretical and conceptual investigation of the milieu in which Jews and Muslims interacted, and illumines their shared religious imaginings. Of particular relevance to Jewish and Islamic mysticisms is his discussion of the reception of Enoch/Metatron.
- Wolfson, Elliot R., *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005). Offers a deep philosophical and literary analysis of mysticism not only in Judaism but also in Islam and other Eastern religions. Wolfson avoids facile comparisons in favor of an examination of the deep structures that make the works of the imagination possible. Wolfson also represents one of the most serious engagements with the thought of Corbin (see earlier listing), taking it in new and interesting directions.