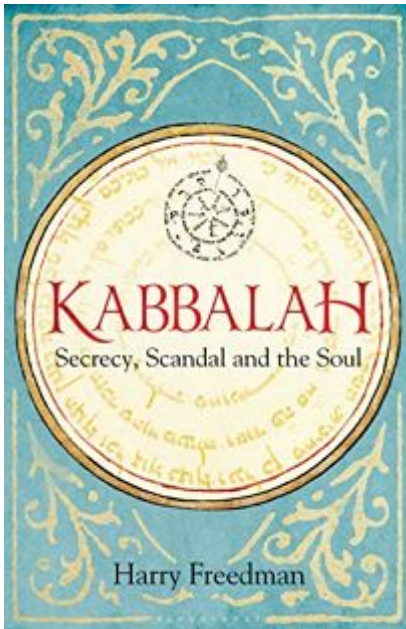




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Kabbalah: Secrecy, Scandal and the Soul

Harry Freedman. Bloomsbury Continuum, \$28 (304p) ISBN 978-1-4729-5098-7

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In this accessible, eminently readable survey, Aramaic scholar Freedman (*The Murderous History of Bible Translations*) provides a balanced look at a religious tradition whose reach has extended far beyond its original Jewish roots. Freedman explains that kabbalah, what was once the province only of “deeply mystical, otherworldly Jews, studying in closed, secretive groups in twelfth-century Provence,” has become part of the mainstream—with many celebrities now donning red string bracelets intended to ward off the evil eye. Freedman attributes its broad appeal to being “a rare example of a spiritual philosophy open to people of all creeds, yet one that does not detract from their faith.” Freedman begins with kabbalah’s origins in the first centuries CE, as ancient Jews sought to learn more about the nature of heaven, then explores how kabbalah study found a foothold in Europe in the Middle Ages, and ends in the present, when Jews and non-Jews alike make use of kabbalistic “meditations, incantations and body contortions” to experience the sublime. Freedman doesn’t shy from troubling developments around the faith, such as the fraud and sex scandals that plagued the Kabbalah Centre in Los Angeles over the past decade. In tracking kabbalah’s evolution and transformation through the centuries, this comprehensive guide to an important religious tradition will appeal to both readers of Jewish history and general readers of spirituality. (*June*)

DETAILS

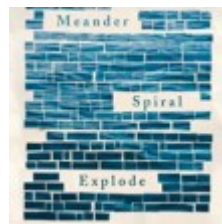
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