



“There is a crack in everything, That’s how the light gets in” —One of Leonard Cohen’s most iconic lines—is explained as being based on a creation myth by Isaac Luria, a sixteenth century kabbalistic master. That is just one of the many descriptions offered by the author, who provides sources for Cohen’s lyrics.

One of the most popular singer-songwriters of modern times, Leonard Cohen has been the subject of innumerable books, articles and dissertations. While his music is viewed as secular, this book shows how religious ideas touched nearly all his major contributions. It examines the use of biblical and religious traditions and philosophies from both Christianity and Judaism.

While Freedman points out that Cohen was hesitant to attribute his music as having a spiritual purpose, sources of the lyrics provided in the book clearly demonstrate religious contexts. The musician/poet rarely talked about his own specific religious practices, but both Western religions and Zen Buddhism, (in which he became ordained as a Buddhist monk) played a role in his life. Rather, the author believes, Cohen saw religions as helping explain the human condition, and that reflected his outlook on life.

After a general introduction of influences in Cohen’s life, which is a sort of light biographical sketch, the book goes into various specific texts of songs. Song by song, he finds the origins of the words, explains connotations, background, philosophies and stories.

This book is for people who want to delve deeply into words of songs they may already know, admire and cherish.

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