

The David Patterson Lectures Week 5

Professor Tzahi Weiss
(The Open University of Israel)

‘The Emergence of the Sefirotic Literature’

Tzahi Weiss is a Professor of Jewish Mysticism and Hebrew Literature at the Open University of Israel and the former Dean of Research at the university. He is the author of numerous studies including four books: *Sefer Yesirah and its Contexts: Other Jewish Voices* (Penn Press 2018); *Cutting the Shoots: The Worship of The Shekhinah in the World of Early Kabbalistic Literature* (The Hebrew University Magnes Press: Jerusalem 2015); *Letters by which Heaven and Earth were Created: The Origins and the Meanings of the Perceptions of Alphabetic Letters as Independent Units in Jewish Sources of Late Antiquity* (Bialik Press 2014); and *The Death of the Shekhinah in S.Y. Agnon’s Oeuvre* (Bar Ilan University Press 2009). He is the head of the ‘Commentaries to the Ten Sefirot’ research project, funded by the Israeli Science Foundation. His coming book will be dedicated to the historical contexts of the emergence of the Sefirotic Literature (Kabbalah) in the early 13th century.

Abstract: One of the most fundamental questions in the history of Jewish thought concerns the cause for the sudden appearance of the so-called ‘Kabbalah’, the Jewish trend which formed and developed the system of the ten divine sefirot during the early thirteenth century. This question has fascinated scholarship since the nineteenth century and was directly and indirectly examined in many studies. The main goal of this lecture is to ‘demythologize’ both the question itself, as well as many presumed aspects of the nature of the sefirotic literature. Based on an examination of sefirotic treatises from this period, as well as testimonies of thirteenth century sefirotic and non-sefirotic authors, I will show, first, that during this period the character of the sefirotic system was not mythical and second, that sefirotic literature owes its reception and development to the fact that it was able to provide theological solutions to acute difficulties with which its followers struggled.

Thursday, 16 February 2023
6-7pm (UK time)

**This lecture will be a hybrid session which will be accessible both online
(see below) and in person in the Catherine Lewis Lecture Room
(refreshments to follow)**

No need to register if attending in person.

In order to participate in this lecture online, please register at this link:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEldOCsrjIpGN311P2xVqFwUQ-IpSNYdkkl>

ALL LECTURES ARE OPEN TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Refreshments to follow