



Call for Papers – International Academic Conference

Kabbalah and Modernity

2-4 December, 2025

The Matanel Chair for the Study of Kabbalah

The Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Communities in the East

Yad Ben-Zvi, Jerusalem

“In those days, Kabbalah and enthusiasm (Schwärmerei), riding on the wings of hallucination and imagination, fiercely gripped the people of the generation [...] The Galilee was the birthplace and origin of this hallucinatory doctrine [...] Just as the dawn was breaking for the nations of Western Europe, for the Jews began the dark night of the Middle Ages.” This well-known description by Heinrich Graetz of the rise of Kabbalah as an active force in Jewish history reflects a dominant perspective on the relationship between Kabbalah and modernity: Kabbalah is the antithesis of modernity, of Enlightenment, rationality, and the West. It is a regression at a time when the world is progressing. This stance—though significantly transformed over time—remains influential in public consciousness, both among those who critique Kabbalah and those who embrace it.

In recent decades, a growing body of scholarship has highlighted the complex dynamics between Kabbalah and modernity. This includes the ways in which Kabbalah participates in key features of modern consciousness; its direct and indirect influence on distinctly modern phenomena within and beyond the Jewish world; as well as its reverberations across diverse forms of modern thought. Simultaneously, and against the backdrop of S.N. Eisenstadt’s concept of “multiple modernities,” Kabbalah has emerged as a potential mirror to modernity itself—offering critical new perspectives, avenues for reinterpretation, and alternative understandings of what modernity can mean and what it may still become.

This conference seeks to revisit the relationship between these two major cultural signifiers. We invite scholars to propose papers that examine the place of Kabbalah within modern civilization, across a range of contexts, and in the spirit of a rethinking of the very concepts at stake.



Topics to be discussed may include (but are not limited to):

- Kabbalah and the Concept of Multiple Modernities
- Kabbalists on Modernity
- Modern Thinkers on Kabbalah
- Adaptations and Responses: From Within and Without
- Kabbalah and the Critique of Modernity
- Kabbalah and Nationalism
- Kabbalah and the New Science
- Kabbalah and Modern Literature
- Kabbalah and the beginnings of the Modern Period
- Kabbalah and Progress
- Kabbalah and "Tradition"
- Social Aspects of Kabbalah in Modernity
- Anthropologies of Kabbalah in the Modern Era

We welcome proposals for presentations in Hebrew or English. Proposals (up to 250 words), along with a CV, should be submitted by **September 10, 2025**, via the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/kabbalahmodernityeng>.

A limited number of travel stipends (up to \$300) are available. Priority will be given to early-career scholars without a permanent academic position. If you are interested, please state so in the comments section of the application form.

For further inquiries: assaf@ybz.org.il

Academic Committee: Prof. Boaz Huss, Prov. Vivian Liska, Dr. Zohar Maor, Prof, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, Dr. Assaf Tamari