



International Conference on **Kabbalah and Time**

13–15 December 2026 / 3–5 Tevet 5787

The Matanel Chair for the Study of Kabbalah

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

“Whoever gives his mind to four things, it were better for him had he not come into the world: What is above? What is beneath? What was beforetime? And what will be hereafter?” This well-known warning in Tractate Hagigah places space and time among the most fraught topics in Jewish tradition. Despite this admonition, the Jewish mystical tradition deals extensively with questions of the beginning and the end, with time and eternity, and with the relations between human beings’ time-limited existence and the eternal divine cosmos. Starting with the account of the relationship between world, year, and soul in *Sefer Yezirah*, through the conception of time in the *Zohar* corpus, the doctrine of the sabbatical cosmic cycles (*Shmitot*) in the school of Nahmanides and *Sefer HaTemunah*, ideas of redemption and repair in the Lurianic Kabbalah and Sabbatean messianism, and on to modern calculations of the End of Days by Hassidic, Lithuanian, and Religious Zionist circles — the preoccupation with time has produced a vast harvest of ideas, images, interpretations, and practices.

In Kabbalah, time is not just a homogeneous and linear framework for events in the phenomenal world. It is also the arena of religious activity dependent upon specific days in the year and hours of the day, a continuous cycle in which certain moments are held to be propitious for action in the upper realms; and all of this while messianic time — when the boundary between the temporal and the eternal is breached — is a constant presence as a mythical or concrete horizon. At the same time, Kabbalah itself is a historical phenomenon that has evolved over the ages: kabbalistic traditions, texts, concepts, and images were created, modified, transposed, forgotten, and recreated in changing social, political, and cultural contexts.

The conference will provide a platform for examining the relations between Kabbalah and time along three key axes: concepts of time in Jewish mysticism in general and in the kabbalistic literature in particular; the development of kabbalistic thought over the ages, from a philological, historical, and conceptual perspective; and the place of Kabbalah in historical time — the ways in which it has been influenced by events, interpreted them, and functioned within them. On this basis we will inquire how time is perceived by kabbalists, seek to identify changes and transformations in kabbalistic thought and ideas, and try to understand how Kabbalah itself shapes historical and messianic time.

We invite scholars to submit proposals for conference lectures (in Hebrew or English). The proposals (up to 250 words, in Hebrew or English), accompanied by a CV, should be submitted by **10 September 2026**, to [this link](#). For further information, please contact ido@ybz.org.il.

The conference budget will cover a limited number of travel stipends. If you would like to apply for one, please indicate this in the comments to the submission form. Priority will be given to young scholars without a permanent academic position.

Academic committee: Prof. Avishai Bar-Asher, Dr. Ido Harari, Prof. Boaz Huss, Prof. Haviva Pedaya, Dr. Netta Schramm, Dr. Assaf Tamari.