

Chapter Title: Judaism: Myth, Magic, and Transcendence

Book Title: Astrology and Cosmology in the Worlds Religions

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Published by: NYU Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qg5q5.15>

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Judaism

Myth, Magic, and Transcendence

The heavens declare the glory of God, the sky proclaims His handiwork.¹

Jewish religion emerged as a result of a remarkable combination of circumstances and events, most of which are focused on the first millennium BCE, and few of which, if any, are well understood. The only point we can make with any certainty is that the consequences have been utterly profound for the history of human thought over much of the world, both directly through the creative impact of Jewish thought down to the present day, and indirectly through its derivatives, Christianity and Islam. With the exception of physical cosmology—the flat earth envisaged in the Torah—the rest of scriptural cosmology remains current, transmitted to the modern world by the ancient sacred texts.

We shouldn't imagine that Jewish cosmology can be simply understood as single set of teachings. First, we have to consider the historical question. The orthodox model assumes the historicity of such epic narratives as Abraham's journey from Ur to the Holy Land and the Exodus. The ultra-revisionist view envisages Jewish religion and pre-history as a product of the exile in Babylon and the post-exilic reconstruction, even doubting the existence of David, Solomon, and the first temple.² The middle way accepts the reality of the Jewish kingdom from the turn of the first and second millennia, while acknowledging that pre-kingdom history (as well as history up to the Roman era) is heavily overlaid with mythic and cyclic themes of oppression and redemption, of a repetitive moving away from God's law, and a period of alienation and punishment, followed by regret, return, and forgiveness.³

In spite of the diversity that we find over the development of Jewish cosmology, there is a central consensus based on the once-only creation of a single cosmos by a patriarchal God. That the creation possesses an internal

order is evident in the repetitive cycles of the sun and the moon, and it was this concern with order that leads to an overwhelming emphasis on the repetition of themes in Jewish history (typically the alternation between alienation from God and oppression by foreign forces on the one hand, and reconciliation with God and political independence on the other) and the need to observe the Sabbath and the calendar festivals. Possibly more than any other culture, except that of the Chinese, Judaism stresses the observation of patterns in time as a prerequisite for divine favor.

The literary tradition represented in the scriptures, and commentaries on them, also presents us with other difficulties. First, although these texts exhibit certain attitudes to cosmology, they both evolved over time and are subject to competing interpretations. Second, we should pay attention to the lived tradition, the Jews' actual religious practice for much of the first millennium BCE, as opposed to the demands of the prophets, which have become the canonical version of Jewish history. The distinction between the prophetic and vernacular traditions is often forgotten, but it is made clear in the historical books of Kings and Chronicles, in which the prophets, for example, condemn planet worship, but large numbers of people, including most of the kings, were clearly practicing it.

The primary literary sources for Jewish cosmology are extensive. Obviously the foundational text is the Bible, the *Tanakh*, which is divided into three sections: the *Torah* (the first five books—*Pentateuch* in Greek—attributed to Moses and containing the Law, including the rules for the timing of the calendar festivals), the *Nevi'im* (the actions, sayings, and writings of the prophets), and the *Ketuvim* (the writings, such as Psalms and Proverbs).⁴ This was supplemented after the 1st century CE by the *Talmud* (interpretation of the Law) and *Midrash* (commentaries on selected passages). The authoritative English-language versions of the *Pseudepigrapha* and *Apocrypha*, texts excluded from the official versions, are by Charlesworth and Sparks, respectively, although neither is above criticism, and there are a number of translations of the Dead Sea Scrolls, including a recent volume by Martinez.⁵ The secondary literature on Hebrew cosmology and astrology is not extensive. Roger Beckwith's work on the calendar is reliable; Edward Wright's *The Early History of Heaven* is the best, comprehensive discussion; J. W. McKay's *Religion in Judah under the Assyrians* contains an account of astral religion in the first millennium; and Lester Ness's *Written in the Stars: Ancient Zodiac Mosaics* deals with a fascinating but little-known phenomenon, the construction of mosaic zodiacs in synagogues in the early Byzantine period, mainly the 4th to 6th centuries CE.⁶ The other unique Jewish system we need to consider is

Kabbalah. For primary sources for Kabbalah see Gershom Scholem's translation of the *Zohar* and Ariel Kaplan's version of the *Sefer Yetzirah*; for secondary sources, see Scholem's *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* and *Origins of the Kabbalah*.⁷ There is also now a growing interest in the divinatory and magical practices, and mythological narratives, in the ancient and medieval worlds, which constitute the vernacular practices of Jewish cosmology.⁸

Pre-modern Jewish history is divided into distinct phases. The two key events in the second millennium, Abraham's journey and the Exodus, whether we regard them as mythical or not, are usually dated to around 1700–1600 and 1400–1300 BCE respectively. A more reliable historical narrative runs from the rule of the Judges around 1200 BCE, through the kingdom of Saul, David, and Solomon, from c. 1020 to 922 BCE; the split into the two states of Israel (the north) and Judah (the south); and the conquest of the former by Assyria in 732–722 and the latter by Babylon in 586, initiating the “Babylonian captivity.” Persian occupation in 539 allowed the return to Jerusalem and the construction of the Second Temple, but Macedonian conquest in 322 was followed by Greek domination and incorporation into the Hellenistic world. A century of independence was won in the Maccabean revolt of 168–165 and came to an end when in 63 BCE Roman conquest converted the kingdom of Judaea into a client state under Herod the Great (37–34). The first rebellion against Rome in 66–70 CE culminated in defeat and destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, and the rupture between Judaism and Christianity. The failure of the second rebellion in 132–135 resulted in a bar on Jews entering Jerusalem more than once a year and the beginning of the diaspora. Priestly and scholarly endeavor then turned to the compilation of the Talmud and Midrash; and, around the year 1000 CE, the Kabbalah made its appearance in the sacred literature.

Each of these stages in Jewish history involved an exchange of ideas with surrounding cultures which means that identifying a “pure” cosmology is no more possible with the Jews than with any other culture, as Louis Jacobs so eloquently pointed out.⁹ The early phase tells of the direct relationship between a simple people who alternate between devout fidelity and corrupt failure and the need to live according to the laws of time revealed in celestial order and established by their sky-god. The royal phase continues the theme of devotion versus fall and particularizes it in the dispute between the kings and the many people who practice astral worship, and the prophets, who claim popular support and assert the sole dominance of God. Judicial astrology was introduced following the Babylonian conquest, and especially under Greek rule, and centuries of engagement with Neoplatonic thought

and magical traditions eventually resulted in the mystical and contemplative practices of medieval Judaism, mainly Kabbalah, which were intended to draw the individual into close contact with the divine.

The creation of the cosmos is set out in chapter 1 of Genesis, the first book of the Torah. The complexities of this passage are often overlooked, as are the questions arising from it: Did God create the universe *ex nihilo*; were there many gods rather than one; were there multiple creations; was there a goddess, or female form of God?¹⁰ In terms of later Jewish history, though, such problems of origin can be ignored, for what matters from the late centuries BCE onward is the consensus established in the Torah that there was only one supreme, all-powerful, masculine God who created the cosmos out of nothing. This single God was transcendent rather than immanent: outside of and above the creation rather than inside and part of it. God was the ultimate political authority: He was above the stars; as Isaiah 66.1 reports, “Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool,” and religious observation is a matter of paying respect to him and reflecting on the nature of his creation and humanity’s place within it.

There is no direct equivalent in the Bible for the Latin “universe” or the Greek “cosmos.” *Olam*, which means “world” or “universe” in Rabbinic literature, is better understood as “eternity” in the Tanakh. The cosmos is therefore all that there is, or can be, from the beginning of time to the end. By the Rabbinic period, up to c. 500 CE, God is spoken of as *melekh ha-olam*, “King of the Universe.” He may have been the creator, but he possessed human qualities—humanity having been made in his image: he could be violent, and to offend him was to court punishment, as Psalms 18:13–14 makes clear:

The Lord also thundered in the heavens,
And the Most High uttered his voice,
Hailstones and coals of fire.
And he sent out his arrows, and scattered them;
He flashed forth lightnings and routed them . . .

According to the clues we can glean from the Torah, physically the earth was flat, either a disc or, perhaps, square, resting on pillars. The sky, *shamayim* (“heaven”) or *rakia* (“firmament”), was solid, and the sun, moon, and stars are positioned in or just below it and move across it while, below the earth is *sheol*, the abode of the dead. There are waters above the firmament as well as below it, where they are connected to *Tehom*, the great deep. Above the waters and above the firmament is the “heaven of heavens,” the

abode of God; according to Amos 9.5–6, “The Lord, God of hosts . . . builds his upper chambers in the heavens.” God’s order is revealed to humanity via the regular cycles of the sun and moon, which then form the basis of the ritual calendar (Psalms 19.1: “The heavens declare the glory of God, the sky proclaims His handiwork”), and his intentions are revealed via omens, including celestial warnings.

The agenda of the Jewish scriptures is both collective (right organization of society) and individual (the struggle for perfection). The Law, which allows the goals to be achieved, is partly tied to the flow of time, and extreme importance is attached to the celebration of the festivals of the Hebrew calendar at the specified times, measured by the sun–moon cycle from new moon to new moon, and the sun (the day begins at sunset). The fundamental rule of Hebrew cultic life is set out in the fourth commandment, in which observation of every seventh day, the Sabbath, became the supreme injunction, representing a reenactment of the day of rest following the six days of creation (Exodus 8.20). Indeed, the six days of labor during the week themselves represented the six days of creation, with man toiling for six days to manage what Yahweh had created in six. Each week, then, represented a complete cycle of experience from birth to maturity.

The calendar of twelve months was borrowed from Babylon, and, broadly, the names retained: Nisan (or Abib), Iyyar (or Ziv), Sivan, Tammuz, Ab, Elul, Tishri (or Ethanim), Marcheshvan (or Bul), Chislev, Tebeth, Shebat, Adar. Nisan, beginning at the new moon after the spring equinox, was fixed as the first month; Exodus 12.1 proclaimed that “This month shall be for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you.” The astronomical rules for the calendar festivals were precise and were clearly set out in Exodus 12 and Leviticus 23.¹¹ It was laid down that Pesach, or Passover, commenced as the full moon rose over the eastern horizon on the fourteenth day of the first month, corresponding to Nisan in the Babylonian calendar, and, if by any chance any believer was unable to observe Passover at the required time, he or she was obliged to begin the commemoration at the moment at which the full moon rose above the eastern horizon on the fourteenth of the second month.¹² The New Year, Rosh Hashanah, is celebrated on the first two days of Tishri, the seventh month, when the crescent moon rises in the Babylonian zodiac sign Libra. Each festival represented a ritual return to the beginning of time, a conscious and cyclical return to the primeval order, before history became disrupted by disorder.¹³ The re-creation of the cosmos is commemorated on a the short scale on the Sabbath, or Shabbat, the seventh day, following the six days of creation. While reverence for

God is the most apparent feature of these festivals, the key to their practical significance is active participation in the continued health of the earth.

In general, observation of the ritual calendar was the direct alternative to astral religion: “You shall make for yourselves no idols and erect no graven image or pillar, and you shall not set up a figured stone in your land, to bow down to them; for I am the Lord your God. You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord” (Leviticus 26 1–2). In the final centuries BCE the writers of the Dead Sea Scrolls were under no illusion as to the sacred power of the lunar and solar cycles. One scroll, the so-called Community Rule, records that blessings are due “at the entry of the (monthly) seasons on the days of the new moon, and also at the end when they succeed to one another. Their renewal is a great day for the Holy of Holies.”¹⁴

If the specified rituals were correctly observed, the survival of the state would be guaranteed for another year. Yahweh, it was hoped, would be encouraged to keep his promise to Noah that “While the earth remains, seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease” (Genesis 8.22). Jeremiah 31.35–36 makes the reason for emphasis on the calendar very clear: The alternative is political disintegration:

Thus says the Lord,
who gives the sun for light by day
and the fixed order of the moon
and the stars for light by night,
who stirs up the sea so its waves roar—
the Lord of hosts is his name:
“If this fixed order departs
from before me,” says the Lord,
“then shall the descendants of Israel cease
from being a nation for ever.”

Time is the means by which God controls his creation; according to Daniel 2.21, “He changes times and seasons, he removes kings and sets up kings.” The famous verses in Ecclesiastes 3.1–8 demonstrate that there is a right time for every action. Beginning, “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven, a time to be born, and a time to die”; the passage goes on to specify virtually every conceivable sphere of activity, although the way to determine what may or may not be an appropriate time is not specified.

The division of the land conquered by the Israelites after the Exodus into twelve sections, one for each tribe, was a means of organizing political geog-

raphy as a mirror of the celestial cosmic state and is directly adapted from the Israelites' camp outlined in Numbers, in which the twelve tribes were arranged in a square of four groups of three. The most important section, was, with the tabernacle and the "tent of meeting," aligned toward the sunrise.¹⁵ Ezekiel converted the Hebrew camp into a sacred city, arranged as a quadrangle aligned to the cardinal points with twelve gates named after the twelve sons of Jacob (Ezekiel 48. 30–35).

The state was organized on cosmic principles embodied in space and time, but astral worship ("of the sun or the moon or any of the host of heaven") was absolutely forbidden in Deuteronomy 17.2: The punishment for conviction on the evidence of two witnesses was stoning (17.5–7). Yet there is evidence of the veneration of celestial deities, notably Solomon's adoration of Ashtor-eth, the goddess associated with Venus (I Kings 11.5, 33). In the 6th century BCE Josiah, king of Judah, prohibited worship of the sun, moon, and stars, fair evidence that the practice was widespread (2 Kings 23:5). Such efforts, though, probably had a limited impact, and Ezekiel (8.16–17) condemned the veneration of the rising sun from the Temple:

And he brought me into the inner court of the house of the Lord; and behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men, with their backs to the temple of the Lord and their faces to the east, worshipping the sun.

To this day, the Amidah, the central prayer of the Jewish liturgy, is recited either facing Jerusalem, or facing east. The distinction between the veneration of the sun, or the direction of the rising sun, in itself, or as a symbol of the divine, is not a clear one. Similar issues affect attitudes to the moon. The prophet Jeremiah (44:15–30) castigated Jewish women for burning offerings to the moon as "queen of heaven" and making cakes with her image. The boundary between such practices and the devout observation of the crescent moon as sign of God's unfolding order is not clear.

Prophetic intolerance generally extended to astrology, which was condemned as either foreign (Jeremiah 10.2–3) or useless when compared with God's power (Isaiah 47.13–14). The problem with such texts, though, is that it is foreign astrology, or its practice by non-Jews, which is condemned. There is no hint of censure when the prophet Daniel was made chief of the Babylonian astrologers (Daniel 5:11). In addition, God himself spoke to his people via celestial omens. Warning of the day when he will come to restore order and inaugurate the next phase of history, God declared, "And on that day . . .

I will make the sun go down at noon, and darken the earth in broad daylight” (Amos 8.9).

In spite of the prophetic condemnation of foreign practices, Jewish attitudes toward astrology in general are typically tolerant and are based on the assumption that its practice is acceptable as long as it does not challenge one’s devotion to God. In the Rabbinical texts scholars debated whether, for example, it was the *mazzal*—star—of the day or the hour that determined people’s fates.¹⁶ The conclusion was that fate could be negotiated by pious behavior, and one who followed the law would never be subject to the dictates of the planets. Above all, according to Rabbi Yohanan, *Ein mazal le’Israel* (there is no star for Israel); only God can directly determine the future of the children of Israel.

Claims were even made that astrology itself was a Jewish invention. According to the *Jewish Antiquities*, written by the 1st-century CE historian Josephus, the children of Seth, the son of Adam, “were the inventors of that peculiar sort of wisdom which is concerned with the heavenly bodies and their order.” It was Abraham, Josephus continued, who was the first to publish this idea. It was when he was still resident at Ur that Abraham wrestled with the idea that the irregular motions of the planets “contribute to the happiness of men”; his conclusion was that they do so, but only as agents of the one true God, an idea that he took with him to the Holy Land.¹⁷ Such stories are the origin of the tradition that Abraham himself was an astrologer: There could be no higher approval. Astrological symbolism was central to the core iconography of 1st-century Judaism; Josephus tells us that the menorah, the seven lamps of the sacred candelabra, indicated the seven planets, and the twelve loaves on the table represented the zodiac. The Platonic Jewish writer Philo of Alexandria, also in the 1st century, described the zodiacal imagery on the breastplate worn by the high priest, its purpose being that, when he entered the Holy of Holies, he might become the whole world, which could then enter the inner sanctum with him and share his prayers.¹⁸

Philo’s Jewish Platonism was indicative of the widespread acceptance of a cosmology in which monotheism and astrology were to survive and flourish in both a Jewish and a Christian context. His God was a God of reason, who can be approached through the thirst for knowledge. This thirst, in turn, can be inspired by the heavens, just as the constellation of the Bear enables mariners to discover new lands. But also, Philo claimed, the eye is to the body as the mind to the soul; as the mind receives God so the eye receives the light of the stars, and both can confer wisdom. He continues, in his treatise “On Providence,” that all things in heaven, including the stars, exist as a result of

Providence, God's plan, which is why eclipses, revealing divine intentions, are omens of the death of kings or of the destruction of cities.¹⁹

The most substantial Jewish discussion of astrology remains that of Moses Maimonides (1135–1204), one of the most influential of all medieval Jewish philosophers. He was born in Cordoba, Spain, but seems to have spent most of the latter part of his life in Cairo, where he was head of the Jewish community and physician to the vizier of Saladin.²⁰ His position on astrology illustrated well the dilemma of the Aristotelian, who both advocated a naturalistic approach to understanding the world and held to a religious faith, whether Islamic, Christian, or, as in his case, Jewish. Maimonides was also profoundly influenced by Platonic notions of the emanation of the material world out of God, rather than its creation by him as an external agent, and hence the interdependence of humanity, the divine, and the celestial spheres. Such problems are no less vital for religious believers now as they were then. Maimonides was a keen advocate of the broad cosmology in which all events on earth were generally related to the celestial spheres, but he rejected any notion whatsoever that this might justify judicial astrology—the casting of horoscopes. In a famous letter to the rabbis of southern France, written in 1194, he set out his objections, beginning with the core question: “It occurred to some of us to ask you about the saying of the old rabbis that ‘Israel is not governed by the stars,’ and the answer that was given by Rabbi Shrir and Rabbi Haii regarding this matter.”²¹ What Maimonides clearly objected to in matters of faith was the suggestion that God's power was in any way limited, and he raged against what he saw as the astrologers' stupidity and lies and their “thousands of books of nonsense,” which he blamed for the destruction of the Jewish state and the diaspora.²²

The creative flowering of that introspective strand in medieval Judaism, which responded to the loss of the external space represented in the Jewish kingdom by turning to inner space, was to find its greatest expression in Kabbalah, the traditional or, more important, “received” lore.²³ Kabbalah was, at least in part, an attempt to codify the spontaneous and ecstatic encounters with the celestial realms, such as were recorded in Jacob's dream of the ladder to heaven, or Elijah's ascent to heaven.²⁴ In the form we know it from the origins of the literary tradition in the 10th century CE, it devised ten points of spiritual power and knowledge, known as *sephirot*, which were placed in ascending order on the three pillars of the tree of life—itsself a likely reference to Jacob's ladder. In some accounts the creation of the world begins not with God's movement over the waters but with light, which then permeates and animates the whole of existence.²⁵ The *sephirot* are the substance of all things,

not unlike Platonic archetypes; they are the principles that mediate between God and his creation. Like the archetypes, they emanated, along with the entire material cosmos, out of God. The classic and profoundly enigmatic description of them is found in the *Sefer Yetzirah*, the core text of Kabbalah:

Ten Sefirot of Nothingness:
Their measure is ten
Which have no end
A depth of beginning
A depth of end
A depth of good
A depth of evil
A depth of above
A depth of below
A depth of east
A depth of west
A depth of north
A depth of south
The singular Master
God faithful King
dominates over them all from his holy dwelling
until eternity of eternities.²⁶

The heart of Kabbalah was an attempt to come closer to God by living a life of spiritual purity, and here the comparison with Platonic, Islam, and Christianity is clear, through using reason as well as faith; scripture was to be interpreted allegorically and metaphorically, drawing out the hidden meaning, and to believe in literal truth was to completely fail to grasp God's true message to humanity. Study, though, was to lead to practice and, as an experiential art, Kabbalah developed a participatory, magical approach to the cosmos. It requires an extensive use of divine names, letter permutations, and similar methods to reach higher states of consciousness in order to influence or alter the natural world. It was absolutely necessary to read the signs God had sent, precisely because his very first act was to engrave the constellations as signs on the heavenly vault.²⁷ The *Sefer Yetzirah* recorded that, as the creation proceeded, God

made the letter Heh king over speech
and He bound a crown to it

And He combined one with another
And with them he formed
Aries in the Universe
Nissan in the Year
And the right foot in the Soul
male and female.²⁸

The Kabbalistic cosmos was structured along lines that bear comparison with the Gnostic system, in which a remote creator plays little or no part in the material world, which is presided over by a more immediate power.²⁹ Kabbalah, though, unlike Gnosticism, which generally assumed that the physical cosmos was inherently evil, tended to take the Platonic view of the cosmos as essentially good, and this lower power is definitely benign. God was too exalted for mortals, and even for angels, to comprehend, so in order to be visible he created a “majesty” or representative, out of the divine fire, which itself is visible to the angels. This power is both God as divine mind envisaged by Plato and Maimonides, and the transcendent anthropomorphic God of scriptural imagery. The Kabbalistic cosmos contains in total four worlds, arranged in a vertical hierarchy: those of the glory (the visible God), the angels, the intellectual soul, and the lowest, the animal soul. It was up to the Kabbalist to control the animal soul, live through the intellectual soul, and so attempt to contact the highest level, the visible God. Closely associated with Kabbalah was the concept of the soul’s journey through the seven heavens, the *Hekhalot*—palaces—inhabited by the planetary powers, an enterprise which could result in profound insight into the nature of the cosmos, and that required personal purity, great discipline, and a detailed knowledge of the correct magical procedures.

The technical astrology that emerged from Kabbalah was partly derived from lunar time. There was considerable attention to the twenty-eight times listed in *Ecclesiastes*—“a time to be born, a time to plant,” and so on.³⁰ Twenty-eight, of course, is approximately the number of days in the lunar month. These times corresponded to the twenty-eight camps of the divine presence and the zodiacal constellations that, in turn, could refer to the names of God.³¹ A true Kabbalistic astrology was therefore concerned less with the use of horoscopes to analyze worldly affairs than with ritual intended to take the initiate on a path to the divine source and transcend the cosmos of celestial influences and planetary diktat. Such ideas found their full expression in the *Sefer HaZohar* (The Book of Splendor). Usually known simply as the *Zohar* (translated as “splendor” or “radiance”),³² the *Zohar* argued that the

act itself of studying the Torah provides divine protection from the heavenly laws of nature, including celestial influences. The milieu, though, in which Kabbalah flourished, encouraged a wide range of astrological practices. The following colophon was found on a 16th-century manuscript: "On the night of Hoshana Rabbah, 53115 am [1556 C.E.], I saw the shadow of my head in the moonlight; praised be to God, for now I am assured that I shall not die this year."³³ Again, the signs were sent to anyone with the wisdom to understand.

Before the Torah was given to the Jews, all the people in the world were dependent on *mazal*, a word that may be understood as stars, or stellar influence, or destiny. But, after the Torah was given to Moses, the Jews were, potentially, released from the rule of the stars. This is true, though, only for one who studies the Torah. Study, though, needs to be combined with practice, and there were seven stages of initiation on the ascending path, each of which might produce an ecstatic experience. This was an imaginal cosmos in which the soul traveled through inner space, rather than embarking on a literal journey through the seven material spheres. The individual who takes this path will be united with God and shares His existence above the world of celestial influence and natural law. The ignorant, on the other hand, are still subject to the stars, even if they are Jews.

Jewish cosmology remains of vital political importance through the strict adherence of many Jews to the notion of a covenant between God and his people that is located in a specific place, in the state of Israel. On the wider level, modern Judaism parallels its Middle Eastern cousins, Christianity and Islam, in that its adherents can choose whether to treat the scriptures as a set of literal rules to be followed or as a series of analogies to be interpreted. At the heart of it, though, little noticed, lies the discreet, contemplative, quietist practice of Kabbalah, which takes us back to a different form of ancient cosmology, one in which physical space matters far less than the imaginal union of humanity, divinity, and the cosmos.

Jewish cosmogony presents us with the very model of a "cosmic" origin of the world in a deliberate, once-only, purposeful creation. At the margins of Jewish thought we find other ideas such as notions of female deities, multiple gods, and many creations, but the image of the parental, patriarchal sky-god was overwhelmingly dominant as the major sacred texts were composed in the first millennium B.C.E. A number of interlocking themes run through Jewish cosmology. One is the concept of an order in time, which it is the duty of every individual to observe. Even morality could be considered to be in part a function of time, in that the sacred calendar was absolutely tied to exact moments, as revealed in the cycles of the sun and the moon. Another

is the notion of a universe imbued with morality. A third is the belief in obedience to God. A fourth, though, is the understanding that this God can be approached through reason. This last consideration underpins attitudes to astrology, from the use of horoscopes as a source of self-understanding to the practice of Kabbalah as a form of celestial ascent to divine love and wisdom. The prophetic literature is unequivocally hostile to the worship of celestial deities and shows indications of hostility to Babylonian astrology as an alien practice. However, astrology in the form of celestial omens is absolutely central to God's communication with his people via the natural environment. The complex codes of Greek judicial astrology, though, required the same range of responses as we find in Christianity and Islam, chiefly because of the need to preserve God's role as source of all knowledge and the individual's freedom to choose to obey his edicts. The more astrology was seen to ascribe agency to the stars, impinge on God's authority, or deny free will, the more it was likely to be challenged, but if it permitted free choice and acknowledged God's exclusive right to know and plan the future, it could be acceptable.