



Like Angels on Jacob's Ladder: Abraham Abulafia, the Franciscans, and Joachimism

Harvey J. Hames

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This book explores the career of Abraham Abulafia (ca. 1240-1291), self-proclaimed Messiah and founder of the school of ecstatic Kabbalah. Active in southern Italy and Sicily where Franciscans had adopted the apocalyptic teachings of Joachim of Fiore, Abulafia believed the end of days was approaching and saw himself as chosen by God to reveal the Divine truth. He appropriated Joachite ideas, fusing them with his own revelations, to create an apocalyptic and messianic scenario that he was certain would attract his Jewish contemporaries and hoped would also convince Christians. From his focus on the centrality of the Tetragrammaton (the four letter ineffable Divine name) to the date of the expected redemption in 1290 and the coming together of Jews and Gentiles in the inclusiveness of the new age, Abulafia's engagement with the apocalyptic teachings of some of his Franciscan contemporaries enriched his own worldview. Though his messianic claims were a result of his revelatory experiences and hermeneutical reading of the Torah, they were, to no small extent, dependent on his historical circumstances and acculturation."

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