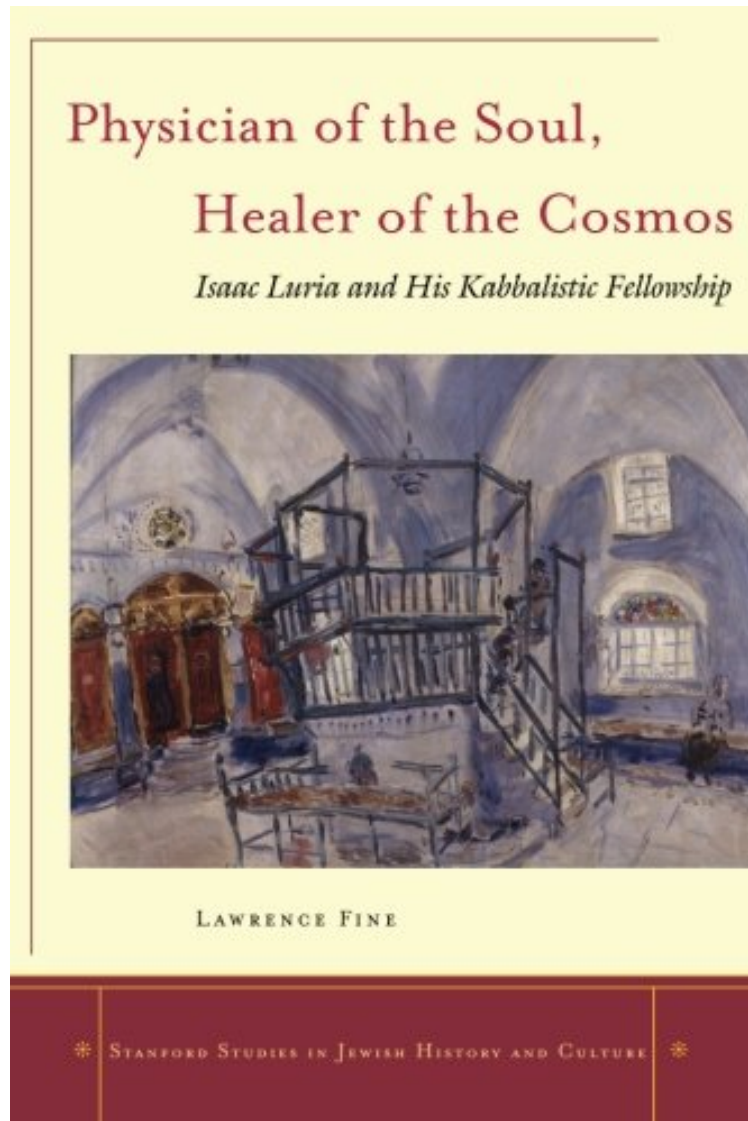


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Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and his Kabbalistic Fellowship (Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture)

Lawrence Fine

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Lawrence Fine : Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and his Kabbalistic Fellowship (Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and his Kabbalistic

Fellowship (Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Luria Lured Many Into Mysticism- In A Good WayBy thirdtwinFascinating study of a major figure in mysticism. His ideas still resonate today and are worthy of further study.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Dr. David Shlukersuperb68 of 79 people found the following review helpful. Rich, wide-reaching, but somewhat unsoundBy CustomerMostly sympathetic overview of Lurianic kabbalah, theory and early history, drawing from a wide range of sources. Fine blends philosophical and sociocultural analyses together to paint a richly textured picture of the Arizal (R. Yitzchak Luria) and his disciples. The Arizal was phenomenal thinker, integrating many different approaches into a compelling and beautiful mystical system. His chief disciple R. Chaim Vital, while brilliant in his own right, comes in for criticism in this book for his apparent narcissism and inability to get along with his peers. I'm not sure Fine's criticisms in that regard are entirely fair, however, because the dynamics of the situation R. Vital was in at that time are interpretable in other ways. Another point which appears to me to detract from this book is that Fine does not bring an impartial view with him to the material. Fine has bought Scholem's polemical thesis about an alleged opposition or incompatibility between kabbalah and halachic Judaism. Like Scholem, who was a self-confessed "religious anarchist," Fine brings highly selected quotations to support this thesis, while downplaying the some of the central tenets of kabbalah. Since the days of the Rabbis of the Talmud (and even prior to them), who were deeply immersed in Merkavah mysticism, almost all of the leading halachic authorities in Judaism have also been the leading kabbalists of their generations. Far from opposing halachah, kabbalists throughout history have been especially supportive of it and exacting in their observance. This is no coincidence, since kabbalah may be best understood as a sort of mystical commentary and apologetic for halachah, advanced to bolster and enrich halachic practice. Although Fine's support for Scholem's biased thesis renders his other conclusions somewhat unreliable as well, the good in this book still far outweighs the dubious in it. This said, the above points make me reluctant to recommend the book to those who are not already familiar with kabbalah.

Isaac Luria (1534-1572) is one of the most extraordinary and influential mystical figures in the history of Judaism, a visionary teacher who helped shape the course of nearly all subsequent Jewish mysticism. Given his importance, it is remarkable that this is the first scholarly work on him in English. Most studies of Lurianic Kabbalah focus on Lurias mythic and speculative ideas or on the ritual and contemplative practices he taught. The central premise of this book is that Lurianic Kabbalah was first and foremost a lived and living phenomenon in an actual social world. Thus the book focuses on Luria the person and on his relationship to his disciples. What attracted Lurias students to him? How did they react to his inspired and charismatic behavior? And what roles did Luria and his students see themselves playing in their collective quest for repair of the cosmos and messianic redemption?

"[Physician of the Soul] is the worthy capstone of a distinguished career spent studying the kabbalistic ideas of the sixteenth century and their importance for social and intellectual history." (Histoire Sociale/Social History)"We come away from this book awed by Fine's scholarship, and with a better understanding of how Rabbi Isaac Luria, who wanted his writings to be concealed after his death, nevertheless produced ideas so powerful that they transformed the nature of Judaism for centuries." (San Diego Jewish Journal)"Through masterly synthesis and organization, the author has produced the first accessible account of Luria and his kabbalah in Englishor any languagethat is also richly detailed and historiographically up to date." (American Historical)"Lawrence Fine has written extensively on Lurianic thought and practice and with this eminently readable and well-researched book has produced a welcome addition to the scholarship on Kabbalism in general and Luria in particular...This book is a necessary source for anyone who wants to know something about Kabbalah and its important representatives other than the travesty of this fascinating side of Judaism that is espoused by today's popular culture." (ARC)"...among the finest works of recent Judaic scholarship." (The Forward)From the Inside FlapIsaac Luria (1534-1572) is one of the most extraordinary and influential mystical figures in the history of Judaism, a visionary teacher who helped shape the course of nearly all subsequent Jewish mysticism. Given his importance, it is remarkable that this is the first scholarly work on him in English. Most studies of Lurianic Kabbalah focus on Lurias mythic and speculative ideas or on the ritual and contemplative practices he taught. The central premise of this book is that Lurianic Kabbalah was first and foremost a lived and living phenomenon in an actual social world. Thus the book focuses on Luria the person and on his relationship to his disciples. What attracted Lurias students to him? How did they react to his inspired and charismatic behavior? And what roles did Luria and his students see themselves playing in their collective quest for repair of the cosmos and messianic redemption?