



JEWISH MYSTICISM

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If the theology of the early Rabbinic schools of Palestine and Babylon errs, as its critics say, in the direction of making Judaism too much of a rigid discipline, too much of a law-compelling, outward obedience rather than inward feeling, the balance is redressed by the theology of the *Zohar* which, by making the soul, on the completion of its earthly work, so great a partaker in the Divine love, emphasises the deep spirituality inherent in Judaism, the emotional element which it calls forth in those who rightfully and adequately put its teachings into practice. It thus imports an added brightness into Jewish life. It inspires the Jew with the conviction that a high destiny awaits him in the hereafter. It makes him put a premium upon virtue, and encourages him to raise himself to the sublimest pitch of moral and religious worth. Judaism for the Jew can never be a mere soulless formalism so long as the *Zohar's* doctrine of Divine love is an integral part of Judaism. Such a consummation is well attested by such a passage from the *Zohar* as the following .

"When Adam our first father dwelt in the garden of Eden he was clothed, as men are in heaven, with the Divine light. When he was driven forth from Eden to do the ordinary work of earth, then Holy Writ tells us that 'the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife coats of skin and clothed them.' For, ere this, they wore coats of light, of that light which belongs to Eden.¹⁴ Man's good deeds upon earth bring down on him a portion of the higher light which lights up heaven. It is that light which covers him like a coat when he enters into the future world and appears before his Maker, the Holy One (blessed be He). It is by means of such a covering that he can taste of the enjoyments of the elect and look upon the face of the 'shining mirror.' And thus, the soul, in order to become perfect in all respects, must have a different covering for each of the two worlds which it has to inhabit, one for the terrestrial world and the other for the higher world" (ii. 229).

And this cheerful view of the soul is an incitement to nobler effort, not only for the Jew as an individual, but also for the Jew as a unit of a race which, according to Scriptural prescription, looks forward to its highest evolution in the arrival of a Messiah. The *Zohar*, truly enough, is comparatively silent upon this theme. But the famous Kabbalist and mystic Isaac Luria, who is the

¹⁴ In Hebrew there is a great similarity in sound between the word for 'skin' and the word for 'light.'

