

SHE is Power



Starting in the 1970s, with the rise of the Jewish Renewal movement and second-wave feminism in America, the mythic feminine entity known as Shekhinah was recovered as a living symbol of Jewish women's empowerment.

Although Shekhinah figured in the Talmud, She remained a mystery in early Judaism, flickering on and off like a remote light.

With the flowering of Kabbalah – mystical Judaism – Shekhinah came to the fore, understood as the exiled lover of God, whom we must recover to enable a union of feminine and masculine godheads.

With the coming of age of leading Jewish feminists, Shekhinah received renewed attention and empowered the pursuit of an egalitarian Judaism in which women would change the face of Jewish religious practice. In the 1970s and '80s, a sea change occurred in many segments of Jewish America: women were accepted into seminaries and became rabbis, theologians, cantors, and ritualists.

For the first time in Jewish history, women were counted in prayer quorums; Jewish rituals expanded to include female life cycles; Jewish prayer books began to reflect a Shekhinah-inspired worldview, including the Hebrew matriarchs, feminine God-language, and non-hierarchical translations. In these and other ways, Shekhinah altered the religious, theological, and social landscape for women in late twentieth-century American Judaism.