



# **The Kuzari and the Shaping of Jewish Identity, 1167-1900**

*Adam Shear*

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Judah Halevi's Book of the Kuzari is a defense of Judaism that has enjoyed an almost continuous transmission since its composition in the twelfth century. By surveying the activities of readers, commentators, copyists, and printers for more than 700 years, Adam Shear examines the ways that the Kuzari became a classic of Jewish thought. Today, the Kuzari is usually understood as the major statement of an anti-rationalist and ethnocentric approach to Judaism and is often contrasted with the rationalism and universalism of Maimonides's Guide of the Perplexed. But this conception must be seen as a modern construction, and the reception history of the Kuzari demonstrates that many earlier readers of the work understood it as offering a way toward reconciling reason and faith and of negotiating between particularism and universalism.

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