



# **CELAMA 07 God's Chosen People Krinis: Judah Halevi's 'Kuzari' and the Shi'i Imam Doctrine (Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages)**

*Ehud Krinis*

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The systematic formulation of the status of the People of Israel as the Chosen People of God stands at the heart of Judah Halevi's famous theological and polemical treatise - the Kuzari. The idea of the Chosen People is an ancient one and is deeply rooted in Judaism. Through a wide-ranging textual and phenomenological investigation, this book highlights the novel and systematic presentation of the Chosen People in the Kuzari and shows how Judah Halevi draws, in a creative manner, on terms, concepts, and themes borrowed from the Shi'i doctrine of the Imam as presented in Shi'i literature. This book presents a historical perspective for understanding the basis of Judah Halevi's attraction to Shi'i theology, with its unique category of God's Chosen. The polemical argument over the issue of the legitimate successor to leadership in early Islam, as well as the debate around the legitimate successor-group in medieval interreligious disputes, emerges as the historical background for the seemingly surprising link between the Shi'i Imam doctrine and the idea of the Chosen People in Judah Halevi's thought. This link on the one hand portrays Halevi as a bold, original thinker and, on the other, portrays the Shi'i Imam doctrine as exceedingly fruitful and reaching beyond the bounds of Islam.

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