



Rothberg International School
בית הספר לתלמידים מחו"ל ע"ש רוטברג
THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM
האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים



Department of Summer Courses
and Special Programs

המחלקה לקורסי קיץ
ותוכניות מיוחדות

Jewish Spirituality and Mysticism in the 21st Century: Meetings with Remarkable People (48892)

Dr. Eliezer Shore

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June 30 – July 23, 2020

The Course will meet Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays for 3 hours a day

45 Academic Hours, 3 Academic Credits

Name of Lecturer:

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Course Description:

For centuries, the Jewish mystical tradition was a highly guarded, orally transmitted body of knowledge. Today, Kabbalah is everywhere, from the internet, to Hollywood, to popular charms and amulets. This course presents both an introduction to the basic principles of Jewish mysticism, as well as the way in which Kabbalah and Jewish spirituality has entered diverse forms of contemporary spirituality, new-age thought, religious cross-fertilization, art, cinema, and even politics.

The course will examine how thinkers across the entire range of Jewish experience have drawn upon Kabbalistic ideas to enrich the spirituality of their adherents. Primary texts will be read and discussed (Hebrew texts in translation) and guest speakers will be invited regularly, providing students with a unique opportunity to meet leading spirituality thinkers in Israel and around the world.

The course will be specifically geared to online study and will make use of advanced educational technologies to maximize student interest and involvement: pre-recorded videos, online quizzes and reviews, clickers, flipped-class learning, break-out rooms, Prezis, and more. Students will not only meet cutting-edge thinkers in the Jewish tradition but have a chance to meet and interact with searching and intelligent students from around the world.

Grading System:

- Online participation: Class participation is an integral part of this course: Both in-class participation and between-class preparation of texts count toward this. (40%)
- Final take-home exam: The final take-home exam is comprised of short essay questions, drawn from classroom discussion and reading, and one long essay question, based upon student's unique, independent research in the course of the semester.
Final paper option available for graduate students. (60%)

Course Outline:

[Reading list](#)

Class 1: Defining our Terms: What is Spirituality?

Reading:

- Brill, Alan. "Dwelling with Kabbalah: Meditation, Ritual and Study," in *Jewish Spirituality and Divine Law*, eds. Adam Mintz and Lawrence Schiffman (New York: Yeshiva University Press) p 127-162. **ERESERVE**
- Brill, Alan. "Spiritualities in the Classroom," in *Jewish Educational Leadership* (vol. 5:2, Winter 2007). **ERESERVE**
- Wuthnow, Robert, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s* (University of California Press; 2000). **Overseas library 200.973 W973; EBOOK**

Class 2: Religion and Spirituality – friends or foes

A look at the complimentary, yet often strained relationship between religion and spirituality in the history of Judaism, from the Bible, through Christianity, until the 21st century.

Reading:

- Buber, Martin. *On Judaism*, ed. Nahum Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1967). **Overseas library 296.19 B917**
- Schneiders, Sandra Marie "Religion vs. Spirituality: A Contemporary Conundrum." *Spiritus* 3, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 163-85. Reprinted in *St. Augustine Papers* 9, no. 1 (2008): 23-53. **E-Article**

Class 3: What is mysticism?

What is mystical experience? Is it personal, objective? Does it have characteristics and can it even be discussed?

Primary Sources (for classroom discussion):

- Collected sources on mystical experience.

Reading:

- David Stendel-Rast, "The Monk in Us," in *Epiphany* (Spring 1981) 15-30.
http://www.gratefulness.org/readings/dsr_Monk.htm
- Paul Oliver. "Chapter 1: The Concept of Mysticism," in *Mysticism: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London, England: Continuum, 2009) 7-18. **EBOOK**

Class 4: Perennialism vs. Constructivism

Two approaches to understanding mystical experience. Is it universal or contextualized? Can we ever be free from our preconceptions and perceptions of reality?

Reading

- Robert Forman. "Of Capsules and Carts." *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 1.1 (1994): 38-49. **ERESERVE**
- "Perennial Philosophy." *Perennial Philosophy*. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 Feb. 2014.

Optional

- SparkNotes Editors. "SparkNote on Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)." SparkNotes.com. SparkNotes LLC. 2005. Web. 28 Feb. 2017. **Search Google**

Class 5: What is Kabbalah?

A historical overview of various schools of Jewish mysticism, from the Bible until the 20th century.

Primary Sources:

- Collected Scriptural quotes
- Powerpoint presentation.

Reading:

- Greenspahn, Frederick E. *Jewish Mysticism and Kabbalah: New Insights and Scholarship*. New York: New York UP, 2011, pp. 33-48. **EBOOK ; Main library BM 526 G744 J4 2011**
- Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *The Wisdom of Kabbalah*, OneWorld Publications, pp. 66-91. **Overseas library 296.65 C678, ERESERVE**
- Kaplan, Aryeh, *Meditation and Kabbalah*, Weiser Books, 1982, chaps. 1, 3, 4. **Education library 296.65 K35; ERESERVE (chapters 1 and 3)**

Optional viewing:

- “Decoding the Past: Secrets of Kabbalah” (Youtube, 50 min.)
- “Treehouse of Horror XVII,” The Simpsons, episode 18:4. iTunes.

Class 6: Jewish Meditation:

Ancient and Modern Techniques, with guest speaker.

Reading:

- Aryeh Kaplan, *Jewish Meditation, A Practical Guide* (Schocken: 1995). Independent reading. **Overseas Library Y158.12 K17**

Class 7: Theosophic Kabbalah: Worlds, Creation, Macrocosm and Microcosm.

An examination of the profound worldview of Kabbalists, past and present, which places human beings at both the center and end of creation.

Primary Sources:

- Popular definitions of Kabbalah, excerpted from the Web.

Reading:

- Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and Kabbalah* (Maine; Weiser 1982) 1-3 **Education library 296.65 K35; ERESERVE**
- Hayyim Ben Isaac Volozhiner. *Nefesh Hachaim: Rav Chaim of Volozhin's Classic Exploration of the Fundamentals of Jewish Belief*. Brooklyn, NY: Judaica, 2009. pp. 29-41. **Overseas library 296.18 H427; ERESERVE**
- Yehuda Ashlag, “The Essence of the Wisdom of Kabbalah,” in *Kabbalah for the Student*, Laitman Pub. pp. 21-29 **E-book**

- Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, *The Way of G-d (Derech Hashem)*, Jerusalem: Feldheim, 1988, part 1:5; 2:5; 3:2. **Overseas library 296.657 L979; ERESERVE**
- Kerry Gordon. "Worlds within Worlds: Kabbalah and the New Scientific Paradigm." *Zygon?* 37.4 (2002): 963-83. **EJOURNAL**

Assignment:

- Research, online, the question: “What is Kabbalah,” and write and analyze your findings in your own words. Upload your findings to Google docs (link to be provided)

Class 8-9: The Way of the Sefirot.

Kabbalah constructs a vast metaphysics that bridges the space between the Infinite G-d and His finite creation. This is the world of the Sefirot. Understanding their function and structure provides Kabbalists – both ancient and contemporary – with a framework for understanding all of reality, even the most mundane.

Reading:

- Jacob Immanuel Schochet, *Mystical Concepts in Chassidism* (New York: Kehot Publications, 1968) 59-115. **Overseas Library 296.65 S363; <http://www.hebrewbooks.org/15600>**
- Adin Steinsaltz, *The Thirteen Petalled Rose*, trans. Yehuda Hanegbi (New York: Basic Books, 1980) 35-47. **Overseas Library 296.19 S823; ERESERVE**
- Lawrence Fine, “Kabbalistic Texts” from *Back to the Sources* (Simon & Schuster: 1986) 305-359. **Overseas Library 296.08 H758; ERESEVE**
- Dubov, Nissan Dovid. "The Sefirot." *Kabbalah, Chassidism and Jewish Mysticism*. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Mar. 2017.
<http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/361885/jewish/The-Sefirot.htm>.
- "Four Worlds." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 03 Jan. 2017. Web. 21 Mar. 2017.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_worlds
- David Blumenthal, “How to Decipher a Zoharic Text,” in *Understanding Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Ktav, 1978) 113-119. **Overseas Library 296.65 B658; ERESERVE**

Optional Reading:

- R. Moses Cordovero, *The Palm Tree of Deborah*, (tran. Louis Jacobs) (Sepher-Hermon) 70-121. **Overseas Library 296.653.11 C796; ERESERVE (Pages 70-101)**

Written Assignment:

- Research the Sefirah connected to your name and write about its various symbolic meanings.

Class 10: The Hasidic Movement

The Hasidic movement brought new insights and interpretations to the teachings of Kabbalah, making it personal and relevant. Its principles laid the groundwork for most modern expressions of Jewish spirituality.

Reading

- Lamm, Norman. *The Religious Thought of Hasidism: Text and Commentary*. New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1999: 1-9. **Overseas Library 296.67 L232; ERESERVE**
- Green, Arthur, *Your Word is Fire: the Hasidic Masters on Contemplative Prayer*. Jewish Lights Publishing, 2017, Introduction. **Overseas Library 296.671 G795 (1987 ed.); ERESERVE**

Class 11: The use of the Sefirot in contemporary Kabbalah

The teachings of R. Yitzchak Ginsburgh and others.

Reading:

- Jonathan Garb, *The Chosen Will Become Herds: Studies in Twentieth-century Kabbalah*, trans. Y. Berkovits-Murciano (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2009) 11-20. **Main library BM 526 G27 Y41 2009; EBOOK**

Research & Writing Assignment:

- Explore the website: <http://www.inner.org>. Read several articles and/or watch videos, and write up your thoughts on one of them. 1-2 pages.

Class 12: The Sefirot in Art and Architecture:

Powerpoint presentation & guest speaker

Reading:

- J. Zohara Meyerhoff Hieronimus. *Sanctuary of the Divine Presence: Hebraic Teachings on Initiation and Illumination* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2012) 36-67. **Overseas Library 296.65 H633; ERESERVE**
- Gorlin, Alexander. *Kabbalah in Art and Architecture*. Thames & Hudson, 2013. **Overseas Library Y704.948 G679**

Class 13: Kabbalah and Healing

Aligning the body with the Infinite. Guest speaker

Reading:

- Kramer, Chaim, et al. *Anatomy of the Soul*. Breslov Research Institute, 1998. **Overseas library 296.673 K894**
- Sarah Yehudit Schneider, "The Golden Thread: A Kabbalistic Remedy," 1-24
http://www.thegoldenthread.org/kabbalah_homeopathy/HomeopathyAndKabbalah.pdf
- Shulman, Jason. *Kabbalistic Healing: a Path to an Awakened Soul*. Inner Traditions, 2004.

Class 14: Kabbalah and Psychology

The therapeutic use of Lurianic Kabbalah.

Reading:

- Mordechai Rothenberg, "Contraction (*Tzimtzum*) as the Key to Jewish Psychology,"
<http://www.jewishpsychology.org/archive/publications/psycholo.doc>
- Ginsburgh, Y. *Transforming Darkness Into Light: Kabbalah and Psychology* (Jerusalem; Gal Einai, 2002) **National Library**

Class 14: Kabbalah and Environmentalism

With guest speaker

Reading:

- Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis, *Science*, New Series, Vol. 155, No. 3767 (Mar. 10, 1967), pp. 1203-1207 **E-journal**
<http://www.uvm.edu/~gflomenh/ENV-NGO-PA395/articles/Lynn-White.pdf>
- Sarah Schneider, "Eating as Tikun" (Jerusalem: A Still Small Voice) 7-15. **Overseas library 296.563 S358; ERESERVE**
- Jerome Gellman, "Early Hasidism and the Natural World," in *Judaism and Ecology: Created World and Revealed Word*, ed. Hava Tirosh-Samuelson (Cambridge, Mass: Distributed by Harvard UP for the Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School, 2002) 369-388. **Education library 296.137 T57; ERESERVE 001896366**
- David Seidenberg, "Kabbalah and Ecology" in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, vol. 2 (Continuum Press, 2005) 945-950 **Free by Google**
<http://users.clas.ufl.edu/bron/ern/K.pdf>
- Ohad Ezrahi, "Mystical Jewish Eco-Feminism" (Thesis proposal)

Class 15: Tikkun Olam

Kabbalah and political activism, for good or for bad.

Reading:

- Lerner, Michael. *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation* (New York: Putnam, 1994). **Main library BM 195 L475 J48**
- Waskow, Arthur. *Godwrestling Round 2: Ancient Wisdom, Future Paths* (Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights, 1996). **Education library 296.193 W371**
- Ginzburg, Yitshak. *Rectifying the State of Israel: a Political Platform Based on Kabbalah*. Gal Einai Publications, 2003. **Overseas library E041 G493**

Class 16: Kabbalah and Feminism

Radical interpretations of Kabbalah and the world, from a feminist perspective. With guest speaker.

Reading:

- Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State UP, 1990, pp. 96-111, 155-173. **Overseas library 221.82(291.214) P294; ERESERVE**
- Chava Weissler, "Meanings of the Shekhinah in the 'Jewish Renewal' Movement" in *Nashim*, 2005, 53-83. **EJOURNAL**
- Sarah Yehudit Schneider, The Evolving Feminine: And Enlightened View from Kabbala," *B'Or HaTorah: Science, the Arts and Problems of Modern life in the Light of Torah*: #18, 2008 (Shamir: Jerusalem, Israel). p. 135-146. **search Google**

Class 17: The Kabbalah of the Body

Eros, Sex, Enlightenment and the Body.

Reading:

- Lawrence Fine, "Purifying the Body in the Name of the Soul: The Problem of the Body in Sixteenth-Century Kabbalah," in *People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective*, ed. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, New York, State University of New York, 1992. p. 117-142. **Overseas Library 296.72 E34; ERESERVE**

- David Biale. *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America*. (New York, NY: Basic, 1992) 121-148. **Overseas library Y301.417 B576; E-BOOK**

Explore the website: <https://kabalove.org/>

Watch

- Ohad Ezrahi video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DAUyQaoGiWA&list=UU0A0OkLGPjEyZq8V4va f1KA>

Class 18: Kabbalah and Jewish Renewal

R. Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, Arthur Green and Divine Immanence

- Green, Arthur, *Seek My Face: A Jewish Mystical Theology* (Jewish Lights Publishing; 2003). **Overseas library 296.19 G795**
- Maggid, Shaul. "Jewish Renewal: Toward an 'New' American Spirituality" in *Tikkun*, May/June 2006. **EJOURNAL**
- Schachter, Zalman., *Paradigm Shift: From the Jewish Renewal Teachings of Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi* (Northvale, NJ; Aronson, 2000). **Overseas library 296.68 S291**
- Schachter, Zalman, *Integral Halachah* (Victoria, Canada: Trafford Pub., 2007)

Classes 19-20: Universal Kabbalah.

The Ashlag School, Philip Berg (the Kabbalah Center) and Michael Leitman (Bnei Baruch)

Reading:

- R. Yehudah Ashlag, *In the Shadow of the Ladder*, trans. Mark and Yedidah Cohen (Safed, Israel: Nehora Press, 2002). **Overseas library 296.652 A826**
- Berg, Michael. *The Way* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2002). **National library**
- Myers, Jody. *Kabbalah and the Spiritual Quest: The Kabbalah Centre in America* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007) . **Overseas library 296.65(08) M996**
- *Kabbalah Today* (Bnei Baruch)
- Huss, Boaz. "The New Age of Kabbalah: Contemporary Kabbalah, the New Age and postmodern spirituality" in *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 6:2, 107-125. **EJOURNAL**
- Rob Eshman, "Maybe it's not so Weird After All"
<https://jewishjournal.com/news/united-states/15791/>.

- Daphne Merkin, “In Search of the Skeptical, Hopeful, Mystical Jew That Could Be Me” New York Times April 13, 2008:
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/13/magazine/13kabbalah-t.html?scp=1&sq=kabbalah%20center&st=cse>

Assignment:

Summarize and critique video from one of the following sites: www.kabbalah.com and www.kabbalah.info.

Watch:

Madonna, “Die Another Day” video.

Class 21. Conclusions and a Comparative Analysis

Spirituality in the Major Jewish Denominations.

- Kushner, Harold. *God was in this place and I, i did not know it* (Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights, 1991). **Education library 296.121 K86**
- Rubin, Howard Jay. “Judaism’s Mystical Heart: An interview with Dovid Din,” in *The Sun* (Issue 103, 1994). **Search Google**
- Shore, Eliezer. *The Face of the Waters: Hasidism for the 21st Century* (Jerusalem: 2008). **EBOOK**
- Slater, Jonathan. *Mindful Jewish Living: Compassionate Practice* (New York: Aviv Press, 2007).

Virtual Tour: Mystical Israel

Depending on the situation in Israel at the time, there is a chance that I will do a live, virtual tour of Kabbalistic sites around Jerusalem.