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

*Dr. Eliezer Shore*

July 3 – July 26, 2023

45 Academic Hours, 3 Academic Credits

Tentative syllabus

**Course Description**

* Understand the nature of mystical experience and the unique approach of Kabbalah and Hasidism.
* Study Jewish texts, both ancient and modern, that seek to understand the nature of spirituality.
* Meet living teachers of the Jewish esoteric tradition, who are developing new philosophies and practices.

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.

**Course Requirements:**

* Class participation
* Several short assignments
* Final exam (final paper option available for graduate students).

**Earning graduate credits for this course**

o Graduate students are expected to inform the Rothberg International School at rissummer@savion,huji.ac.il of their interest in earning graduate credits for their summer course(s).

o Graduate students must complete a 25-page, double-spaced, seminar paper with a bibliography, instead of the course's standard final assessment. The students will discuss this paper in class. The topic and bibliography for these papers must be chosen in agreement with each course instructor. Students must approach course instructors by the end of the first week of the course and arrange a time to meet and define their paper topic and bibliography.

o The seminar paper must make use of at least five scholarly sources (books or academic articles), in addition to Internet resources.

o The graduate seminar papers must be submitted within 2 months following the course completion.

**Required Text**

* ***Sparknotes*** on Kabbalah **-** Available online, or in pdf format, from instructor

Several films with Kabbalistic content will be assigned for viewing during the semester. These can be viewed on Youtube, or iTunes.

Students should also download the following apps (as well as bookmark the corresponding sites on their computers): Nearpod; Socrative.

**Syllabus:**

**Part I – Experiential Kabbalah**

**Class 1 & 2:** What is mysticism?

**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**
* 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.

**Watch**:

* *The Matrix*, The Wachowski Brothers (1999). iTunes. (Suggested viewing)

**Class 3**: Mysticism in the Bible? Is prophecy a mystical experience? How do later Kabbalists read earlier texts?

**Primary Sources**

* Collected sources from the Torah
* Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed, Part I: Chap. LIX.

**Reading:**

* John Sawyer. *Prophecy and the Biblical Prophets*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993, pp. 1-25. **Ebook**
* Isidor Thorner, “Prophetic and Mystic Experience: Comparison and Consequences,” Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, vol. 5, No. 1 (Autumn, 1965), pp. 82-96 **E-Journal**
* Veselin Kesich, “Via Negativa.” *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 14York & London, Macmillan. 1987, 252-254.

**Class 4**: Beginnings and endings: How Kabbalists view history and the world.

**Primary Sources:**

Collected Scriptural quotes.

**Reading:**

* Afterman, Allen B, *Kabbalah and Consciousness* (Riverdale-on-Hudson, NY: Sheep Meadow, 2005) 5-15, 35-44. **Overseas library ‎296.65 A258; Ereserve**
* Morrow, Jeff, “Creation as Temple-Building and Work as Liturgy in Genesis 1-3,” Seton Hall University. <http://www.wisdomintorah.com/wp-content/uploads/Creation-as-Temple-Building-and-Work-as-Liturgy-in-Genesis-1-31.pdf>
* “The Return of Prophecy” Temple Institute
* Sundaram, Mark. “Linear and Cyclical Time: Time's Arrow or Boomerang?” The Endless Knot. N.p., 11 June 2013. Web. 22 June 2014. <http://endlessround.wordpress.com/2013/06/11/cyclical-and-linear-time/>.

**Optional**:

* Eliade, Mircea. “Misfortune and History,” chapter in Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return (New York: Harper, 1959) 95-137 (particularly 102-112). **Overseas library 907 E42; Ereserve**

**Class 6**: A brief overview of early Mystical schools.

**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**
* 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. **Overseas library 296.65 K17; Ereserve (ch. 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 7: Abraham Abulafia**

**Reading:**

* Orit Sen Gupta, *Abraham Abulafia – A Jewish Yogi*, <https://www.academia.edu/31841362/Abraham_Abulafia_A_Jewish_Yogi>
* Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and Kabbalah*, pp. 55-114. **Ereserve**
* Scholem, Gershom. *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. New York: Schocken, 1941, pp. 119-155. **Overseas library 296.65 S368; Ereserve**

Watch: Trailer to the movie *Bee Season*

**Class 8: The Hasidic Movement (part 1)**

**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; Ereserve**

**Class 9: 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**

**Part II – Theosophic Kabbalah**

**Class 12**: **Worlds, Creation, Macrocosm and Microcosm**.

**Primary Sources:**

* Popular definitions of Kabbalah, excerpted from the Web.

**Reading**:

* Aryeh Kaplan, Meditation and Kabbalah (Maine; Weiser 1982) 1-3. **ERESERVE**
* Yehuda Ashlag, “The Essence of the Wisdom of Kabbalah,” in *Kabbalah for the Student*, Laitman Pub. pp. 21-29. **Ebook**
* Kerry Gordon. "Worlds within Worlds: Kabbalah and the New Scientific Paradigm." *Zygon?* 37.4 (2002): 963-83. **Ejournal**
* Ḥayyim 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**
* 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**

**Assignment:**

* There are five steps to this assignment:
  + Write down, in a file, your own definition of Kabbalah, based upon our discussions until now. One or two lines is enough.
  + Research, online, the question: “What is Kabbalah,” and find an interesting site. Don’t just jump to the first answer that Google gives you.
  + Copy the answer (or paraphrase it, if it is too long).
  + Compare that definition to you own. Are they similar? Different? How so?
  + Upload your findings to Google docs and send me the link.

**Class 13: the Way of the Sefirot.**

**Reading**:

* Jacob Immanuel Schochet, *Mystical Concepts in Chassidism* (New York: Kehot Publications, 1968) 59-115 **Overseas Library,** also **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; Ereserve**
* 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>

**Written Assignment:**

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

**Class 14: The Zohar and the Biblical Interpretation**

**Reading**

* 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 Devorah, (tran. Louis Jacobs) (Sepher-Hermon) 70-121. **Overseas Library 296.653.11 C796; Ereserve (70-101)**

**Class 15: The use of the Sefirot in contemporary Kabbalah: the teachings of R. Yitzchak Ginsburg.**

**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. **Ebook**
* R. Yitzchak Ginsburgh, *Rectifying the State of Israel*, (Jerusalem: Gal Einai) 21-124. **Overseas library E041 G493; Ereserve (pp. 21-63)**

**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 16: Further uses of the Sefirot: Art, Architecture and Healing**

**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 On Order**
* Sarah Yehudit Schneider, “The Golden Thread: A Kabbalistic Remedy,” 1-24 <http://www.thegoldenthread.org/kabbalah_homeopathy/HomeopathyAndKabbalah.pdf>

**Class 17: The Hasidic Movement (part 2)**

* Moshe Idel, “Psycholozation of Theosophy in Kabbalah and Hasidism,” in *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic*, Albany: State U of New York, 1995. pp. 227-238. **Overseas library 296.67 I19; Ebook**

**Class 18: Kabbalah and Environmentalism**

**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**

David Seidenberg, “Kabbalah and Ecology” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, vol. 2 (Continuum Press, 2005) 945-950 **Free by Google** <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/bron/ern/K.pdf>

* Ohad Ezrahi, “Mystical Jewish Eco-Feminism” (Thesis proposal)

**Class 19: The Kabbalah of Eros, 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. **E-BOOK; Y301.417 B576**

**Explore** the website: <http://www.kabalove.com>

**Watch**

* Ohad Ezrahi video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DAUyQaoGiWA&list=UU0AOOkLGPjEyZq8V4vaf1KA

**Class 20: In Class Film & Discussion:**

* *Pi*, by Darren Aronofsky (1998)

**Reading**:

* William Stoddart, “Mysticism,” *The Underlying Religion: An Introduction to the Perennial Philosophy*, ed. M. Lings & C. Minnaar (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2007) 230-242. **Free by Google** <http://www.sacredweb.com/online_articles/sw2_stoddart.pdf>
* Yaakov Hillel. *Ascending Jacob’s Ladder*, (Ahavat Shalom-Artscroll: Jerusalem, 2007) 213-240**. Overseas library 296.65 H651; Ereserve**
* Ursula Le Guin. *The Wind’s Twelve Quarters: Short Stories*. New York: Harper & Row, 1975. “Field of Vision” pp. 305-334. **Overseas Library 813 L521; ERESERVE**

(A movie version of the story can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3noUznJ4-8)

**Class 21: Kabbalah and Feminism**

**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. **E-journal**

**Class 22: Field trip – Mystical sites and teachers around Jerusalem**

The above is a general outline of the course. Classes are highly interactive, and not all topics may be fully covered. Time might be devoted more or less to specific topics, depending upon student interest and how the course unfolds.

**July 20**

Final exam

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*Reference works for basic Jewish knowledge:*

Blech, Benjamin. *Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Judaism*. Indianapolis, IN: Alpha, 2003. Print. **Overseas library 296.19 B646**

Blech, Benjamin. *Understanding Judaism: The Basics of Deed and Creed*. Northvale, NJ: J. Aronson, 1991. Print. **Overseas library 296.02 B646**

Falcon, Ted, and David Blatner. *Judaism for Dummies*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2013. Print. **Overseas library 296.19 F178** ‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬‬

Robinson, George. *Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Customs, and Rituals*. New York: Pocket, 2000. Print. **Overseas library 296.02 R655**

Steinberg, Milton. *Basic Judaism*. Northvale, NJ U.a.: Aronson, 1987. Print.

**Overseas library 296.12 S820**

Wouk, Herman. *This Is My God: A Guidebook to Judaism*. New York: Walker, 1991. Print. **Overseas library 296.02 W938**

Wylen, Stephen M. *Settings of Silver: An Introduction to Judaism*. New York: Paulist, 1989. Print. **Overseas library ‎296.02 W983**

Judaism 101 : <http://www.jewfaq.org/index.shtml>

Robinson’s book, *Essential Judaism*, is particularly recommended.

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