

V3507y Explorations in Hasidism

Where: 516 Hamilton

When: MW 1:10-2:25

Instructor: Prof. Jonathan Schorsch, Dept. of Religion

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This course seeks to introduce students to Hasidism, the pietist and in many respects mystical movement that arose in eastern Europe at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Hasidism stands as perhaps *the* most influential and significant movement within modern Judaism. Its teachings have inspired (and provoked) countless Jewish artists and thinkers, including Martin Buber, Abraham Joshua Heschel and the Jewish renewal movement. Hasidism marked an often radical re-envisioning of Judaism, to varying degrees populist, emotional, existential, anti-scholastic, even antinomian. Hasidism continues to challenge, despite its historical and conceptual harmonizations with “orthodoxy,” perhaps, indeed, precisely because it has come to represent the other, anti-modern extreme. We will trace some of this history through a look at the lives and work of a select few leading Hasidic rebbes and a close reading of Hasidic teachings and parables.

Classroom time will focus on the reading and discussion of primary texts (listed in bold), through the lens of our secondary readings. Students must prepare *both* sets of text.

Most of the readings will be available through electronic reserve. All readings will be on traditional reserve. The main books we will be using are available at Labyrinth Books.

Prerequisites:

None, but familiarity with the Bible and/or traditional Judaism will add to the experience.

Assignments:

- * write one’s own “Hasidic” commentary to a biblical passage or incident or a commentary to an existing Hasidic commentary (2 pp. min.)
- * a first-person “ethnographic” report of a Haredi/Hasidic event, ritual or the like (5 pp. min.)
- * research paper (10 pp. minimum)

Attendance policy

You need to attend class to be able to complete this course. More than three unexcused absences will result in a lower final grade.

Grading:

Participation and preparation for classes: 20%

Papers

“Hasidic” commentary: 20%; Field report: 20%; Research paper: 40%

SYLLABUS

WEEK 1: WED. JAN. 18 - INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

WEEK 2: MON. JAN. 23: THE BAAL SHEM TOV

***In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov [Shivhei ha-Besht]: The Earliest Collection of Legends about the Founder of Hasidism*, trans. and ed. Dan Ben-Amos and Jerome R. Mintz (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 1-151.**

MON. JAN. 25

***In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*, [cont.]**

Grözinger, Karl Erich, "The Source Value of the Basic Recensions of *Shivhei haBesht*," in *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert (London: Littman Library, 1997), 354-63.

WEEK 3: MON. JAN. 30:

Etkes, Immanuel, *The Besht: Magician, Mystic, and Leader* (Brandeis University Press, 2004).

WED. FEB. 1:

selected teachings of the Besht from unpublished translations by R. Dr. Menachem Kallus

***The testament of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov [Tzava'at HaRivash]*, English translation with introduction, notes and commentary by Jacob Immanuel Schochet (Brooklyn, N.Y. :Kehot Publication Society, 1998), secs. 33-35, 96-97, 118, 120.**

Etkes, *Besht* [cont.]

WEEK 4: MON. FEB. 6: OTHER EARLY HASIDIC LEADERS, ASPECTS

Heschel, Abraham J., "Rabbi Pinhas of Korzec," in Heschel, *The Circle of the Baal Shem Tov: Studies in Hasidism*, ed. Samuel H. Dresner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 1-43.

Krassen, Miles, *Uniter of Heaven and Earth: Rabbi Meshullam Feibush Heller of Zbarazh and the Rise of Hasidism in Eastern Galicia* (SUNY Press, 1999), 1-42, 203-16.

WED. FEB. 8:

Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, "Upright Practices," in *Upright Practices, The Light of the Eyes*, trans., Arthur Green (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 31-43.

Wolfson, Elliot R., "Walking as a Sacred Duty: Theological Transformation of Social Reality in Early Hasidism," in *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert (London: Littman Library, 1997), 180-207.

Ettinger, Shmuel, "Hasidism and the *Kahal* in Eastern Europe," in *Hasidism Reappraised*, 63-75.

WEEK 5: MON. FEB. 13: CONFLICTS

herem from Vilna against the Hasidim (1772), in Elijah Judah Schochet, *The Hasidic Movement and the Gaon of Vilna* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1994), ____

Wilensky, Mordecai L., "Hasidic-Mitnaggedic Polemics in the Jewish Communities of Eastern Europe: The Hostile Phase," in Hundert, *Essential Papers on Hasidism*, 244-71.

Etkes, Immanuel, *The Gaon of Vilna: The Man and his Image* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 73-150.

WED. FEB. 15:

Maimon, Solomon, "On a Secret Society, and Therefore a Long Chapter," in Gershon David Hundert (ed.), *Essential Papers on Hasidism: Origins to Present* (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 11-24.

various contemporary reports about the Hasidim, Appendices 1-7, in Marcin Wodzináski, *Haskalah and Hasidism in the Kingdom of Poland: a History of Conflict*, trans. Sarah Cozens; asst. trans. Agnieszka Mirowska (Oxford: Littman Library, 2005), 259-74.

Wodzináski, *Haskalah and Hasidism in the Kingdom of Poland*, 9-115.

WEEK 6: MON. FEB. 20: NAHMAN OF BRATSLAV

***Likutei Moharan* (1808), teaching #63, trans. Simcha Bergman (Jerusalem/New York: Breslov Research Institute, 1986), vol. __:____.**

Green, Arthur, ch. 4: "Bratslav: Disciples and Master," in Green, *Tormented Master: The Life and Spiritual Quest of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav* (Woodstock: Jewish Lights, 1992), 135-81.

Magid, Shaul, "Associative Midrash: Reflections on a Hermeneutical Theory in Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav's *Likkutei MoHaRan*," in Magid (ed.), *God's Voice from the Void: Old and New Studies in Bratslav Hasidism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 15-66.

WED. FEB. 22:

Rabbi Nachman's Stories: the stories of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov = Sippurey ma'asioth, trans. with notes based on Breslover works by Aryeh Kaplan (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Breslov Research Institute, 1983), ____.

Green, Arthur, "Excursus II: The Tales," *Tormented Master*, 337-71.

WEEK 7: MON. FEB. 27: THE Z;ADDIK

“Two Epistles in Praise of the Hasidic Zaddikim,” in Jacobs, *Jewish Mystical Testimonies*, 240-64.

Jacobs, Louis, “A Pitka from a Hasid to his Rebbe,” in Jacobs, *Their Heads in Heaven: Unfamiliar Aspects of Hasidism* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2005), 100-20.

Green, Arthur, “The Zaddik as Axis Mundi in Later Judaism,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 45,3 (1977): 327-47.

Jacobs, Louis, “The Doctrine of the Zaddik in Elimelech of Lizansk,” in Jacobs, *Their Heads in Heaven*, 73-89.

_____, “The Zaddik as a Source of Danger,” in *ibid.*, 160-69.

WED. MAR. 1:

Rapoport-Albert, Ada, “God and the Zaddik as the Two Focal Points of Hasidic Worship,” in Hundert, *Essential Papers on Hasidism*, 299-329.

Sharot, Stephen, “Hasidism and the Routinization of Charisma,” in Sharot, *Messianism, Mysticism, and Magic: A Sociological Analysis of Jewish Religious Movements* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 155-88, notes 272-75.

Cala, Alina, “The Cult of Tzaddikim among non-Jews in Poland,” *Jewish Folklore and Ethnology Review* (New York) 17,1-2 (1995): 16-19.

WEEK 8: MON. MAR. 6: HASIDIC PRAYER/WORSHIP

teachings, Chapter 6: Worship, Service of God, in *The Religious Thought of Hasidism: Text and Commentary*, trans. and ed. Norman Lamm; with contributions by Allan Brill and Shalom Carmy (Hoboken, NJ: Yeshiva University Press, 1999), 185-218.

Louis Jacobs, *Hasidic Prayer* (Littman Library, 1993), 17-92, 121-53.

WED. MAR. 8:

teachings, Lamm, *Religious Thought of Hasidism* [cont.]

Loewenthal, Naftali, “Habad Approaches to Contemplative Prayer, 1790-1920,” in *Hasidism Reappraised*, 288-300.

MON. MAR. 13 - FRI. MAR. 17 - SPRING BREAK / NO CLASSES

WEEK 9: MON. MAR. 20: TORAH STUDY

teachings, Chapter 7: Torah Study, in Lamm, *Religious Thought of Hasidism*, 219-50.

Weiss, Joseph, "Torah Study in Early Hasidism," in Weiss, *Studies in Eastern European Mysticism*, ed. David Goldstein (Oxford: Littman Library, 1985), 56-68.

Goetschel, Roland, "Torah Lishmah as a Central Concept in the *Degel Mahjaneh Efrayim* of Moses Hayyim Ephraim of Sudylkow," in *Hasidism Reappraised*, 258-67.

WED. MAR. 22: *DEVEKUT* (CLEAVING TO GOD)

teachings, Chapter 5: Torah Study, in Lamm, *Religious Thought of Hasidism*, 133-72.

Krassen, Miles, "Sources of *Devequt* in Early Hasidism," *Uniter of Heaven and Earth*, 43-80.

Piekarz, Mendel, "Hasidism as a Socio-religious Movement on the Evidence of *Devekut*," in *Hasidism Reappraised*, 225-48.

WEEK 10: MON. MAR. 27: SOME RADICAL TRADITIONS

teachings from *Living Waters - The Mei Hashiloach: A Commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Mordechai Yosef of Izbica*, trans. and ed. Betsalel Philip Edwards (Hoboken: Jason Aronson, 2003), 168-70, 190-91, 294-97, 300-304, 384-87.

Faienstein, Morris M., *All Is in the Hands of Heaven: The Teachings of Rabbi Mordecai Joseph Leiner of Izbica* (Hoboken: KTAV, 1989), 1-26, 107-10.

Seeman, Don, "Martyrdom, Emotion and the Work of Ritual in R. Mordecai Joseph Leiner's 'Mei Ha-Shiloah'," *AJS Review* 27,2 (2003): 253-79.

WED. MAR. 29:

teachings from *Living Waters* [cont.]

Magid, Shaul, *Hasidism on the Margin: Reconciliation, Antinomianism, And Messianism In Izbica/ Radzin Hasidism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 205-55, notes on 350-66.

WEEK 11: MON. APR. 3: WOMEN?!

teachings, Chapter 18: Women, in Lamm, *Religious Thought of Hasidism*, 585-603.

Deutsch, Nathaniel, *The Maiden of Ludmir: A Jewish Holy Woman and Her World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 75-210.

WED. APR. 5:

teachings, in Lamm, *Religious Thought of Hasidism* [cont.]

Polen, Nehemia, "Miriam's Dance: Radical Egalitarianism in Hasidic Thought." *Modern Judaism* 12 (1992): 1-21.

Shapiro, Malkah, *The Rebbe's Daughter: Memoir of a Hasidic Childhood*, trans. Nehemia Polen (Jewish Publication Society of America, 2002), xv-xxvii, xlvii-xlviii, 29-52, 81-124.

WEEK 12: MON. APR. 10: MUSIC, DANCE AND WORSHIP THROUGH CORPOREALITY

recordings of selected Hasidic *niggunim* (wordless melodies)/music (from the collection of the instructor)

Pasternak, Velvel, "Hasidic Music and Modzitz: a Short Overview," *Journal of Synagogue Music* 18,2 (1988) 9-15.

Loewenthal, Naftali, "Spirituality, melody and modernity in Habad Hassidism," *Proceedings of the First International Conference on Jewish Music* [April 1994], ed. Steve Stanton (London: City University, Department of Music, 1997), 62-78.

Fishbane, Michael A., "To Jump for Joy: the Rites of Dance According to R. Nahman of Bratzlav," *Journal of Jewish Thought & Philosophy* (Amsterdam) 6,2 (1997): 371-87.

WED. APR. 12:

teachings, Chapter 9: Worship through Corporeality, in Lamm, *Religious Thought of Hasidism*, 323-36.

Nadler, Allan Lawrence, "Holy Kugel: the sanctification of Ashkenazic ethnic foods in Hasidism," *Studies in Jewish Civilization* (Omaha, NE) 15 (2005): 193-214.

Jacobs, Louis, "Tobacco and the Hasidim," *Polin* 11 (1998): 25-30.

WEEK 13: MON. APR. 17: NINETEENTH-CENTURY IMAGES

Ewen, Isaac, "The Golden Dynasty: Rebbe of Sadeger," in Lucy Dawidowicz (ed.), *The Golden Tradition: Jewish Life and Thought in Eastern Europe* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), 195-200.

selected teachings, Alter, Judah Aryeh Leib (1847-1905), *The Language of Truth: the Torah Commentary of the Sefat Emet, Rabbi Yehudah Leib Alter of Ger*, trans. and ed. Arthur Green (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1998), ____.

Idel, Moshe, "Rabbi Yisrael of Ryzhin Who Cries," in Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 239-44; notes 388-91.

Assaf, David, *The Regal Way: The Life and Times of Rabbi Israel of Ruzhin* (Stanford University Press, 2002), 212-43, 267-84, 327-37.

WED. APR. 19:

Wodzináski, *Haskalah and Hasidism in the Kingdom of Poland*, Appendices, 259-99.

Mahler, Raphael, "The Sociopolitical Foundations of Hasidism in Galicia in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," in *Essential Papers on Hasidism*, 401-429; notes 477-84.

Wodzinski, Marcin, "Hasidism, "Shtadlanut", and Jewish Politics in Nineteenth-century Poland: the Case of Isaac of Warka," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 95,2 (2005) 290-320.

_____, "Neither Hatred nor Solidarity: Integrationists and Hasidim in Congress Poland in Light of 'Jutrzenka' and its Circles (1861-1863)," *Journal of Jewish Studies* LVI,1 (Spring, 2005): ____.

Goldstein, Joseph, "The Beginnings of the Zionist Movement in Congress Poland: the Victory of the 'Hasidim' over the Zionists?," *Polin* 5 (1990): 114-30.

WEEK 14: MON. APR. 24: EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY IMAGES

Orenshtayn, Binyomin, "The Kozhenitser Rebe," in *From a Ruined Garden: The Memorial Books of Polish Jewry*, ed. and trans. Jack Kugelmass and Jonathan Boyarin, 2nd. ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 113-16.

Gersht, Dovid ben Zelig, "Khayim-Yisroel Melamed and the Kozhenitser Magid," in *From a Ruined Garden*, 175-79.

Sharvit, A., "The Death of the Bukovsker Rebe, Dovid Shapiro," in *From a Ruined Garden*, 131-32.

_____, excerpts from *Memorial Book of Sanok and Vicinity (Poland)*, ed. A. Sharvit (Jerusalem, 1970), trans. William Leibner, 579-86
(<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/sanok/Sanok.html#TOC>).

Raykhntal, Volf, "Concerning the Opponents of Hasidism in Lizensk," in *From a Ruined Garden*, 132-33.

Litman, Avrom, "A Hasidic Demonstration," in *From a Ruined Garden*, 152-54.

Bacon, Gershon C., "The politics of tradition: Agudat Israel in Polish politics, 1916-1930," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 2 (1986): 144-163.

Ravitzky, Aviezer, "Munkács and Jerusalem: Ultra-Orthodox opposition to Zionism and Agudaism," in *Zionism and Religion*, ed. Shmuel Almog, Jehuda Reinharz, and Anita Shapira (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press in association with the Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History; University Press of New England, 1998), 67-89.

WED. APR. 26:

Bornstein, Shmuel (1856-1926), *Shem MiShmuel* (Targum Press, 1998), 267-69, 285-89, 302-304.

Shapira, Kalonymous Kalman, *Conscious Community: A Guide to Inner Work*, trans. and Intro. by Andrea Cohen-Kiener (Jason Aronson, 1999), 3-37, 91-100.

___, *A Student's Obligation: Advice from the Rebbe of the Warsaw Ghetto*, trans. Micha Odenheimer (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1991), ch. 12, "Some Thoughts on Chasidism and How to Connect to Torah Through it," 97-109.

Robinson, Ira, "The Tarler *Rebbe* of Łódź and his Medical Practice: Towards a History of Hasidic Life in Pre-First World War Poland," *Polin* 11 (1998): 53-64.

Stampfer, Shaul, "Hasidic Yeshivot in Inter-war Poland," *Polin* 11 (1998): 3-24.

WEEK 15: MON. MAY 1: AND TODAY?

Ravitzky, Aviezer, "The Lubavitch Hasidic Movement: Between Conservatism and Messianism," in Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 181-206.

Mitsuharu, Akao, "Hasidic pilgrimage to Uman, past and present: the ambiguous centrality of a Jewish sacred place in Ukraine," *Jews and Slavs. Vol. 11: Jewish-Polish and Jewish-Russian Contacts*, ed. by Wolf Moskovich and Irena Fijalkowska-Janiak (Jerusalem/Gdansk: Hebrew University/Gdansk University, 2003): 121-51.

Schachter-Shalomi, Zalman, *First Steps: A Guide for the New Jewish Spirit* (Bantam Books, 1983), 1-16.

Schachter-Shalmo, Zalman Meshullam, *Spiritual Intimacy: A Study of Counseling in Hasidism* (Jason Aronson/Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), ch. 4, "How a Rebbe is Groomed," 75-110.

Magid, Shaul, "Rainbow Hasidism in America - the maturation of Jewish renewal," *The Reconstructionist* 68,2 (2004): 34-60.