

Jewish Spiritual Practices

Dr. James Jacobson Maisels

Course Number: 702.2271

Class Time: Wednesday 12:00-15:00

Class Location: Room 2002 Terrace Bldg.

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Practice can be seen as at the core of the spiritual or religious life. This course focuses on a variety of spiritual technologies in Judaism. Each week a different practice will be explored through primary sources in translation and will aim to introduce students to the breadth and depth of Jewish spiritual practices.

Methodological considerations of the nature of spiritual practice as a category, both religiously and academically, and its distinction from ritual and commandment, in both the history of Judaism and religious studies, will accompany our exploration of these practices. Texts and practices will range from the Hebrew Bible to twentieth century musar and Hasidic texts, though a particular emphasis is placed on Kabbalistic and Hasidic literature. Through this course students will be introduced to the necessary terminology, categories and context to understand the purpose, function and place of Jewish spiritual practices within the Jewish tradition.

Course Requirements:

- Weekly text-study of primary sources as well as selected secondary sources.
- Weekly one page reflection on the readings.
- Weekly practice homework and google group post on the weekly practice.
- Final Project

Final Grade:

Weekly writing assignments	25%
Weekly reading and class	25%
Weekly practice homework and	10%
Final project	40%

Course Outline and Reading List

1. Mindfulness Meditation and The Quieting Practice of the Piaseczner Rebbe

a. Formal Practice

Primary Sources

R. Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira, The Subject of Quieting, *Derekh HaMelekh*, p. 450-451

Secondary Sources:

Polen, Nehemia. *The Holy Fire: The Teachings of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, The Rebbe of the Warsaw Ghetto*. Chapt 1: Rabbi Shapira's Origins, Life, and Work.

b. Practice in Everyday Life

Primary Sources

R. Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira, *Derekh HaMelekh*, Breishit, p. 5,
R. Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira, *Haksharat HaAvreikhim*, Chapt. 9, Part 4

Secondary Sources:

Verman, Mark. *The History and Varieties of Jewish Meditation*. Introduction and selected chapters. Jason Aronson, 1977.

2. Fellowship, Love and Community as a Spiritual practice

a. Hasidic Co-counseling

Primary Sources

R. Moshe Cordovero, *Hanhagot*, #14
R. Moshe Cordovero, *Hanhagot*, #15
R. Abraham Kalisker, *Pri HaAretz*, Letters, Letter 30
R. Abraham Kalisker, *Pri HaAretz*, Letters, Letter 6
R. Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira, *Bnei Mahshavha Tovah*, Membership in the Community
R. Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira, *Bnei Mahshavha Tovah*, Group Commitments and Advice, 54- 58

Secondary Sources:

- Rapoport-Albert, Ada 1973. "Confession in the circle of R. Nahman of Braslav." *Bulletin of the Institute of Jewish Studies* 1 (1973): 65-96.
- Weiss, Joseph. "R. Abraham Kalisker's Concept of Communion with God and Men." *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism*. Ed. David Goldstein. Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, Oxford University Press, 1985 (155-169)
- Weiss, Joseph. "A Circle of Pneumatics in Pre-Hasidism." *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism*. Ed. David Goldstein. Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, Oxford University Press, 1985 (27-46).

b. Community as a Spiritual Practice