Jewish Spiritual Practices

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:

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly writing assignments</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>Weekly reading and class participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly practice homework and posts</td>
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<td>Final project</td>
<td>40%</td>
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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:*

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:*

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:*

b. Community as a Spiritual Practice

Primary Sources
Zohar II, 190b
R. Hayyim Vital, Shaar HaKavvanot, p. 2
R. Aaron/Arele Roth, Shomer Emunim, 5719, 237b
R. Hayyim Vital, Shaarei Kedushah, Part 1, Gate 5, Sec. 1
R. Moshe Cordovero, Tomer Devorah, Chapt. 2
Beit El Contract, 1754
R. Hanokh Henikh of Alesk, Seder Lev Sameh
R. Mordechai of Chernobil, Likutei Torah, 61c
R. Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira, Hovat ha-Talmidim, 147

Secondary Sources:

3. Avodah be-Gashmiyut (worship in corporeality) and Mindful Eating
   a. The Nature of Corporeality and Mindful Eating

Primary Sources
R. Zev Wolf of Zhitomer, Or ha-Meir. II, p. 313
R. Jacob Joseph of Polonne, Toldot Yaakov Yosef, BaMidbar, p. 440.
R. Jacob Joseph of Polonne, Toldot Yaakov Yosef, Bo, p. 150.
R. Jacob Joseph of Polonne, Toldot Yaakov Yosef, Naso, p. 474
R. Jacob Joseph of Polonne, Ketonet Passim, pp. 25b-26a
R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobil, Meor Einyaim, pp. 235-6
R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobil, Meor Einyaim, p. 327
Besht, brought in R. Abraham Issachar Baer Rabinowitz of Radomsk, Hesed le-Avraham, p. 104b
R. Dov Baer (Berl) Ehrman, Devarim Arevim, Part I, sec. 11

Secondary Sources:


b. The Body, the Commandments, and Sanctifying the Corporeal

*Primary Sources*

R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, Meor Einyayim, p. 240-1
R. Zev Wolf of Zhitomir, Or ha-Meir, p. 241
The Besht, brought in R. Yaakov Joseph of Polonne, Tzafnaat Paneah, p. 260
R. Dov Baer the Maggid of Mezhirech, Tzavaat ha-Rivash, sec. 68
R. Dov Baer the Maggid of Mezhirech, Maggid Devarav le-Yaakov, sec. 24

*Secondary Sources:*


4. Music and Song as a Spiritual Practice
   a. Music and Song I: Ecstatic Song

*Primary Sources*

2 Kings 3:11-16
1 Samuel 10:1-13
1 Chronicles 25:1
Pesachim 117a

Maimonides, Hilkhot Yesodei Torah, 7:4
R. Dov Baer of Lubavitch, Shaarei Teshuvah 2 p. 15a-b
R. Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, Bnei Mahshavah Tova, sec. 18

*Secondary Sources:*


### b. Music and Song II: Ecstatic and Aesthetic Song

**Primary Sources**

R. Abraham Abulafia, *Gan Naul*, Mbs, Cod. hebr. 58 (IMHM 23117), 324a-b

*Sod ha-Shalselet*, *Sodot*, Pn, Ms. heb. 790 (IMHM 12622), 141a-b

Hayyim Vital, *Shaarei Kedushah, Part 4*, Lbm, Ms. Add. 19,788 (IMHM 5003), 15b

**Secondary Sources**:


### 5. Generosity and Restraint

**a. Generosity and Spiritual Practice**

**Primary Sources**

Lev. 25

Exodus 35:5-35

Avot 2:8

Avot 3:7

Berakhot 5a

Rashi Berakhot 5a

Midrash Rabbah - Leviticus XXXIV:14

Rambam, Laws of Gifts to the Poor 7:5

Zohar III 113b

Hayyim Vital, *Sha’ar HaMitzvot, Parshat Re’eh*, p. 111

R. Abraham Berukhim, Hanhagot

R. Abraham Galante, Hanhagot, 27

*R. Aaron Berakhia of Modena, Maavar Yabok, Siftei Renanot, Chpt. 31, Vitamir, 5612, 148b*

R. Yaakov Zemah, *Nagid Mitzvah*, Amsterdam 5702, 24b

R. Nahman of Bratslav, *Sefer ha-Midot*, tzedaka, # 58
R. Benjamin Matatyah, Taharat Kodesh, Amsterdam, 5493, 44c

a. Generosity and Restraint and Spiritual Practice

Primary Sources
Hagiga 12a
R. Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira, Esh Kodesh, Parshat Zachor, 1942
Maimonides Mishne Torah, Laws of Vowed Property – Haramim and Arachin 8:13

6. Self-Acceptance, Radical acceptance and Distracting Thoughts in the Hasidic tradition
a. Welcoming in and Transforming Distracting Thoughts (Mahshavot Zarot)

Primary Sources
Besht, brought in R. Jacob Joseph of Polonne, Ben Porat Yosef, 94a
Besht, brought in R. Jacob Joseph of Polonne, Ben Porat Yosef, 339-40
Besht, Keter Shem Tov, 87c
Besht, Keter Shem Tov, 75
Besht, Keter Shem Tov, 172
Besht, Keter Shem Tov, 39
R. Dov Baer the Maggid of Mezhirech, Maggid Devarav Le-Yaakov, 29, p. 48
R. Ephraim of Sudylkow, Degel Mahaneh Efrayim, Noah, U-Petah
R. Dov Baer the Maggid of Mezhirech, Maggid Devarav Le-Yaakov, 161, pp. 258-9
R. Ephraim of Sudylkow, Degel Mahaneh Efrayim, 111

Secondary Sources:

b. Accepting and Cherishing Oneself

Primary Sources
Avot 2:13
R. Mordechai Joseph Leiner, Mei ha-Shiloah, Beshalah, ve-lo shamu
R. Nahman of Bratslav, Likutei Moharan I:282
Issachar Baer of Zloczow, Mevasser Zedeq, VaYigash, Lemberg 1863, p. 7b
Issachar Baer of Zloczow, Mevasser Zedeq, Lemberg 1863, Parshat Shemot, p. 8a-b

Secondary Sources:

7. **Stories and Masks as a Spiritual Practice**
   a. **Hasidic Stories**

*Primary Sources*

**Exodus 13:8**

Pesah Haggadah

Shivhei ha-Besht, 158, p. 256

R. Aaron of Karlin, Beit Karlin-Stolin, p. 208, 1981

R. Jacob Isaac the Seer of Lublin, Sippure Tzaddikim he-Hadash, p. 1, Jerusalem 5765-2005

Ish HaPele p. 195-6 (1987, Jerusalem)


R. Shlomo of Radomsk, Tiferet Shelomo, Hanukkah, p. 72, from Niflaot ha-Tiferet Shelomo, Yaffah Sihatan, p. 15, #45


Sefer ha-Dorot ha-Hadash p. 46 (1965 Jer.)


R. Joseph Isaac Schneerson of Lubavitch, Rebbe Rayatz, a volume of Sefer ha-Toldot, II, p. 138 (1987 Kehot, Brooklyn)

Zemah Zedek, brought in Rabbeinu ha-Kadosh of Shinov, p. 9

Geshuri, M, Song and Dance in Hasidism, p. 28 (1954 Tel Aviv)

R. Menahem Mendel of Kotsk, Emet ve-Emunah p. 111 (1972 Jer, ed. Orton)


*Secondary Sources:*


   b. **The Tales of R. Nahman of Bratslav**

*Primary Sources*
The Humble King
Likutei Moharan I 60:6
Likutei Moharan I 60:7
Likutei Moharan I 60:8
Sichot HaRan 109

Secondary Sources:

8. Death Meditation
   a. Death Contemplation

Primary Sources
Bavli Tamid 32a
Bavli Gittin 57b
Bavli Berakhot 5a
R. Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira, Bne Mahshavah Tova, Sec. 8
R. Isaiah Horowitz, Shne Luhot ha-berit, Amsterdam 5458, Masechet Pesachim, 145a-146a, (דהבת)
R. Elimelekh of Lzhensk, Hanhagot ha-Adam 3
R. Elimelekh of Lzhensk, Noam Elimelekh, Va-Yihi, d’h va-yikrevu yamei Yisrael
Ethical Will of R. Naftali ha-Kohen Katz, 5517, Bern, 18b
Bavli Berakhot 61b

Secondary Sources:

b. Spiritual Death

Primary Sources
R. Moshe De Leon, Book of the Pomegranate, 1988, pp. 225-6
Besht, Keter Shem Tov, #42
9. Prayer Techniques
   a. Conceptions of Prayer

Primary Sources
R. Moshe Hayyim Ephraim of Sudkylkow, Degel Mahaneh Ephraim, Toldot, Jer. 1963, p. 34
Besht, Keter Shem Tov, 1968, Jer., p. 17
R. Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook, Olay HaRa’aya, Jerusalem 1963, p. 11
R. Bahya ibn Pakuda, Duties of the Heart, Shaar Heshbon ha-Nefesh, chap. 3
R. Abraham Joshua Heschel, Between God and Man, New York, 1959, p. 201
Besht, Tzavat ha-Rivash, 68
Zohar II, 133b
R. Pinhas of Koretz, Midrash Pinchas, Sec. 1:52, pp. 37-8
R. Nahman of Bratslav, Sichot ha-Ran 52, p. 37
Besht, Keter Shem Tov, Jer. 1968, 95-6
R. Dov Baer the Maggid of Mezerich, Maggid Devarav Le-Yaakov 57, pp. 85-86
Maggid of Mezherich, Shemuah Tovah, 73b (Warsaw, 1938)

Secondary Sources:

b. Prayer Techniques: Meditative and Linguistic Techniques

*Primary Sources*
R. Yehudah haHasid, *Sefer Hasidim*, sec. 158
R. Moshe Teitelbaum, *Hanhagot Tzaddikim, Hanhagot Yesharot* p. 47, 4:3
R. Alexander Ziskind, *Yesod v'Shoresh ha-Avodah*, Gate 5, chap. 1, p. 144, Bnei Barak,

*Secondary Sources:*

10. Bratslaver Hitbodedut

a. Hitbodedut I

*Primary Sources*
Likutei Moharan II, 25
Likutei Moharan II, 96
Sihot Moharan, 229
Sihot Moharan 227
Hayyei Moharahn I:4 (107), His Birth-place, Residence and Travels
Hayyei II:10 (241), His Awesome Attainments

b. Hitbodedut II

*Primary Sources*
Sihot Moharan 230
Secondary Sources:

11. Desire, Craving and Equanimity
   a. Equanimity and Non-Attachment

Primary Sources
R. Dov Baer the Maggid of Mezhirech, Tzava’at HaRivash, sec. 2-3
Rambam, Commentary on the Mishnah, Avot 4:4
R. Zadok of Lublin, Risisei Leila 28a-b, 55-6

Secondary Sources:

b. Desire, Passion and Spiritual Practice

Primary Sources
Isaac of Acre, in R. Elijah de Vidas, Reshit Hokhmah, Sha’ar ha-Ahavah, Chapt. 4, I:426, no. 31-2
R. Moshe Cordovero, Zohar, Or Yakar, vol. 10, p. 65-6
R. Dov Baer the Maggid of Mezhirech, Maggid Devarav L’Yaakov, Likutim Hadashim, pp. 389-90.
R. Dov Baer the Maggid of Mezhirech, Maggid Devarav le-Yaakov, 161, pp. 260-1
R. Dov Baer the Maggid of Mezhirech, Maggid Devarav le-Yaakov, 51
R. Zadok ha-Kohen, Zidkat ha-Zaddik, 181
R. Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira, Mavo ha-Shaarim, p. 23
Besht, brought in R. Abraham Issachar Baer Rabinowitz of Radomsk, Hesed l’Avraham, p. 104b

Secondary Sources:
12. Movement and Dance

a. Spontaneous Movement and Dance

Primary Sources
Exodus 15:20
Psalm 149:3
Psalm 150:4
2 Samuel 6:14-22
Metzudat David, on II Samuel 6:22
Keter Shem Tov, 215, p. 122-3, Kehot 2004
In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov 39, p. 53

Secondary Sources:

b. Hasidic Dance

Primary Sources
M. S. Geshurei, “the Besht as Renewer of Dance”, Ha-Tzofeh 14, Tishre 5712, p. 5
In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov 109, p. 134
In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov 61, p. 80
Jiri Langer, Nine Gates pp. 6-8
Hayyei Moharan #340, The Greatness of His Books and Teachings
R. Nahman of Bratslav, Likutei Moharan, I:32
R. Nahman of Bratslav, Likutei Moharan II:24

Secondary Sources:

13. Visualization and Guided Imagery

a. Visualizing God
Primary Sources
Ezekiel 1:1-28
Isaiah 6:1-3
Sanhedrin 22a
Tur, Orekh Hayyim, 98
Rashi, Yoma 53b, la-semol didakh
Rabbeinu Hananel b. Hushiel, Otzar ha-Geonim, vol. 1, Berakhot, appendix, p. 3
Chapter on the Kavvanah by the Early Kabbalists
R. Judah Albotini, Sulam Ha-Aliyah, 73, Jer. 5749
R. Eleazar Azikri, Milei de-Shamaya, Pachter ed., p. 103, §12-13
Hayyim Vital, Shaare Kedushah, pt. 3, chpt. 5, pp. 89-90
R. Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira, Bnei Mahshavah Tovah, sec. 7, pp. 19-20
Bnei Mahshavah Tovan, sec. 13, p. 32
Bnei Mahshavah Tova, sec. 13, p. 32

Secondary Sources:

b. Visualizing Torah, Mitzvot and the Heavens

Primary Sources
R. Elimelekh of Lizensh, Noam Elimelekh, Lekh Lekha, ve-hine davar hashem elav
R. Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira, Hakhsharat Avrekhim, p. 33 (79)
R. Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira, Hakhsharat Avrekhim, p. 85
R. Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira, Hakhsharat Avrekhim, p. 85
R. Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira, Hakhsharat Avrekhim, p. 37
Bnei Mahshavah Tovah, pp. 27-30