

## JUS 435/535—SPRING 2012

### Jewish Mysticism: Its History and Principal Phenomena

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#### INSTRUCTOR

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#### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to the Jewish mystical tradition (called *Kabbalah* from the 12th century onward) in the context of Jewish history. We will survey major texts and concepts of that tradition in chronological order and interpret them by reference to three aspects:

- 1) The different times, places, and other historical conditions in which these texts and concepts were produced
- 2) The internal dynamics and momentum of Jewish mysticism itself
- 3) The social and psychological functions that mysticism fulfilled and fulfills for its practitioners

The material we will cover is highly complicated by its very nature. To succeed in this course, you must be patient and develop a familiarity with basic Jewish history as well as religious and mystical terminology. In addition, you will have to analyze historical documents that are decidedly esoteric. If you feel that you are not dealing well with the workload, are having trouble with the reading and writing assignments, or need any type of assistance in connection to the course, speak with me without delay. I urge you to meet with me at least once during the semester to discuss your experience in the class.

Beyond introducing you to main events and themes in the history of Jewish mysticism, the course has three principal objectives:

- 1) To help you develop and exercise the analytical skills that are required to attain an informed and sophisticated understanding of history.
- 2) To introduce you to—and allow you to practice—the empirical methods by which professional historians build and support hypotheses and conclusions as to the shape and meaning of history on the basis of historical documents (also known as “primary sources”).
- 3) To help you learn and sharpen the skills in oral and written communication that are required to convey your ideas correctly, persuasively, and in a disciplined way. Once mastered, these skills are not only essential to historical scholarship; they are the mark of an intellectually mature and sophisticated individual. Language is power, and as such it is a key to effective citizenship.

**COURSE WEBSITE** The webpage for this course is found in the D2L website: <http://d2l.arizona.edu/>.

#### COURSE FORMAT

- 1) Tuesdays: Lecture and discussion. Come prepared to ask questions on assigned material; bring it to class.
- 2) Thursdays: Discussion. Prepare responses to the assigned questions and bring assigned material to class.

#### REQUIRED BOOKS

- 1) Joseph Dan, *The Heart and The Fountain: An Anthology of Jewish Mystical Experiences* (New York: Oxford UP, 2003).
- 2) Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1995).
- 3) Additional material has been uploaded to the D2L website for the course, or is found in other websites.

NOTE: You may also wish to obtain Scholem's *Kabbalah* (New York: Meridian, 1978), but this is not required.

All required books for this course are on reserve at the JUS office.

## EXAMS

Three "take-home" exams based on class sessions and your weekly reading assignments.

- a. Format: At least three previously distributed essay questions per exam, of which you choose 2.
- b. Material covered: Each exam will cover the preceding 1/3 (or so) of the course.
- c. Length: Your responses to each exam should cover approximately 6-7.5 double-spaced pages.
- d. Preparation: You will receive review sheets to help you prepare for each exam.

e. **DUE DATES:**

**Exam #1: Mon., 2/13 no later than 11:00 PM by D2L.**

**Exam #2: Mon., 3/19 no later than 11:00 PM by D2L.**

**Exam #3 or Honors Paper: Tues., 5/8 no later than 1 PM by D2L**

## GRADING (See also under "Evaluations," below)

- A. Each of the exams will be graded on its own 100-point scale: 90-100 = A; 80-89 = B; 70-79 = C; 60-69 = D; 0-59 = E. However, I reserve the right to assign letter grades to the third and final exam(s) without calculating points on the basis of the 100-point scale.
- B. After your exams have been evaluated, the letter grades you receive on each of those assignments will be converted as described in the table below (adjustments to the percentages in cases where more than two quizzes are administered would be announced). Then, **final grades for the semester** will be calculated on a **100-point scale** as described in the last column of the table ("Grade for the course"):

First Exam +	Second Exam+	Third Exam/ + Honors Paper	Participation =	GRADE FOR THE COURSE
A = 20 pts.	A = 25	A = 35	A = 20	<b>A = 90-100</b>
B = 18	B = 22.5	B = 31.5	B = 18	<b>B = 80-89.99</b>
C = 16	C = 20	C = 28	C = 16	<b>C = 70-79.99</b>
D = 15	D = 17.5	D = 24.5	D = 15	<b>D = 60-69.99</b>
E = 0 or 5	E = 0 or 5	E = 0 or 5	E = 0-5	<b>E = 0-59.99</b>

- C. Students in the Honors section (if any) must meet with me individually before the eighth week of classes and complete a 10-13-page research paper instead of the Third Exam. The topic of the paper must be related to Units 11-16 of the course. Instructions are or will be posted to D2L. Students in the Honors section must consult the link as soon as possible and note the relevant deadlines.
- D. **Participating in the class** is not the same as being physically present, polite, and alert during class sessions. If you attend the class but do not speak up, or say very little, your participation grade will be "E" (zero points). In this course, "participation" means asking questions, issuing constructive comments, answering questions consistently throughout the semester, and "thinking out loud" about the subject of the course. To calculate your participation score, I will not tally oral contributions, but I will take your consistency and the quality of your contributions into account. To earn a "C" in Participation, assume that you must contribute to our discussions at least once per week on the average. The more substantive your contributions are, the higher your score will be.

- E. Writing assignments for “Reading Days” (if any) will be counted toward class participation.
- F. Grades are not negotiable. They will not be rounded upward to the next grade bracket. E.g., 79.5 =C, not B.

### DOING WELL IN THIS COURSE

“**Doing well**” in this course is not merely a matter of paying attention, working hard, and being respectful. It is a matter of understanding and skill. At this level, you either possess and use the thinking, reading, speaking, time-budgeting, social, and especially, *writing* skills that translate into success in the course, or you do not. Meeting with me will not magically produce those skills or make up for other deficiencies in your work. I offer no “extra credit.” The course will allow you to exercise and ultimately improve your academic skills, but is not designed *primarily* to teach you college-level reading, writing and related communication skills, much less to guarantee that you will achieve specific academic and/or career goals. You do not “get” grades in this course; you earn them.

This class assumes no prior knowledge of Jews and of Judaism whatsoever. You do not need to be Jewish to do well in the class. Students who have a background in Judaica may know a few germane terms and facts, but this does not mean that they will do better or worse in the course than those who do not possess such a background. Much of what this course covers is not part of a traditional, synagogue- or yeshiva-based education in any case. More importantly, the approach of this course is secular and empirical, not traditional and/or partisan. The course is not intended to argue for or against any aspect of Jews and Judaism. This means that all students have an equal opportunity to perform well in the course. Advice for optimizing your performance is or will be posted to the D2L site. Read that advice!

### POLICIES AND REQUIREMENTS

#### PREPARATION

1. **Complete all the reading and writing assignments** and come promptly to *each and every class* session prepared to discuss these assignments. There is no better near-guarantee of your basic success in the course than to do this. If you do not understand the assignments see me as early and as often as possible.
2. **Bring your reading assignments to class** every time, especially on Thursdays, as I will ask you to consult them. Print out all web-based material (including electronic reserves) and bring your printouts to class on the days that they will be discussed. Prepare to provide responses to my weekly questions. It is best if you briefly write your responses and bring them to class. Your notes will ideally serve as reminders of your ideas, but you do *not* have to turn your responses in. Print all electronic reserves early to avoid last-minute crises when you are trying to write your essays for the exams.
3. When preparing your essays for the exams of this course, you should read or at least consult the items that are listed as “**Recommended**” in the schedule of reading assignments (below). Reading only the required reading assignments may result in lower scores for your essays.

#### ATTENDANCE

4. Your attendance at each and every class session is **required**. I plan to check attendance by “roll-call” at the beginning of every class session. If you arrive late for class, it is your responsibility to let me know you were present during the class session at the end of that session and no other. In general, it is your responsibility to make sure that you are accounted for. I will not rely on my mere memory of your presence in class for purposes of keeping track your attendance, and neither should you. However, if I happen to recall that you arrived in class over 30 min. late I will consider you “absent” for purposes of calculating your overall attendance during the semester.
5. Students who are absent during either or both of the first two, scheduled class sessions will be administratively disenrolled (=“dropped”) from the course. It is ultimately your responsibility to manage your enrollment and financial aid status.
6. You may be absent from the class a maximum of three times throughout the semester, for any reason, except for the first two class sessions (if you are already enrolled by the first scheduled session) and on the day when Course Evaluation Forms are to be

filled out (henceforth, “TCE day”; see item 10 of this section, below). Any additional absences will not be excused except in cases of health and family-related emergencies, University-approved absences, and religious holidays, as explained below. The penalties for unexcused absences will be as follows:

- a. 3 unexcused absences (EXCEPTING the first two scheduled class sessions and TCE day): No penalty
  - b. 4-6 unexcused absences: a deduction of 10% from your final score for the course (for example: If your final score for the course is 80/100 points, corresponding to a semester grade of “B,” I will subtract 8 points from 80, which would leave you with 72/100, corresponding to a “C”)
  - c. 6-8 unexcused absences: a deduction of 25% of your final score for the course. I may also refer you to the Dean of Students’ Office for a review of your situation
  - d. Over 8 unexcused absences: A failing grade of “E” (zero points) for the semester, irrespective of any written or other work you submit
7. I will tally your absences (if any), both excused and unexcused, only at the end of the semester. Before that time, it is your responsibility to be aware of how many times you have been absent, and to make me aware of the reasons for any unexcused absences beyond your third one, if any. Before the last day of classes, do not ask me to tell you how many times you have been absent, and when, as it is your responsibility to know that.
  8. There will be no opportunities to make up missed work except in cases of family-related emergencies, medical emergencies, University-approved absences, and University-recognized religious holidays as described in various items of this section. If you know that you will be absent from the class because of an illness, family-related emergency, a religious holiday, or Dean-approved commitment, let me know this *before* your absence if at all possible. Otherwise, it may be impossible to grant you an excuse for any work you miss. Although cases vary, students who do not attend my classes regularly will rarely earn a course grade above a “C.” Often, they will not even earn a semester score above a “D”; many will fail the classes entirely.
  9. To account for any and all absences, it is best if you keep an email record of them. In case of an absence, you may wish to send me a note by email to let me know of your general circumstances (e.g., “I will not be in class today because I am ill.”). Typically, it is not necessary, neither is it required, for you to delve into fine details. It is never my intention to violate your privacy. When disclosing information about your status, just use common sense. If you wish to provide me with documentary proof that you were absent because of an illness, you may, for instance, provide a copy of a receipt of your visit to a physician; it is typically not necessary for the physician’s office to write a note for you, much less provide any but the most general details of your health.
  10. Your attendance on the date that Course Evaluation forms will be completed—TCE day—is absolutely mandatory, except in cases of medical and/or family emergencies, University-approved absences, and/or religious holidays. I will penalize unexcused absentees by downgrading their participation scores. On most semesters, I will announce the date that Course Evaluation forms are to be completed. If no announcement is made, assume that Course Evaluation forms are to be completed during the last scheduled class session before Finals’ Week.
  11. Absences pre-approved by the UofA Dean of Students (or the Dean’s designee) will be excused.
  12. Students who can conceivably demonstrate their affiliation with an organized religion will be excused if they are absent from the class owing to their observance of religious holidays (of the students’ respective religions) in which work is traditionally forbidden. Absences owing to travel to and from holiday observances that does not take place during the holidays themselves will not be excused if these absences exceed the 3-absence maximum, so plan your schedules accordingly.
  13. Students remain responsible for the material covered during their absence. If you miss a class meeting, do the reading assigned for that session, ask a classmate for his/her notes on the session, review the notes, and only then contact me if you have questions. I cannot replicate class lectures and discussions for absentees.
  14. Students who observe Judaism strictly are expected to attend all class sessions scheduled for *erev yom tov* and *erev chag*, but may be excused from the classroom before sundown on those days *if* sundown is expected to occur before the conclusion of the session(s).

#### REQUIREMENTS FOR HONORS AND GRADUATE STUDENTS

15. Honors Students are required to write a 10-13 page term paper instead of the Third Exam. The topic of each paper will be determined in and through at least one required consultation with me, the instructor if record. Honors students must schedule these consultations individually and should *not* expect to hold the first one later than the eighth week of classes, much less

during the last two weeks of the semester. The paper will amount to an exploration by each of the Honors students of such subjects as (1) research methodologies and theories in the field of Jewish Studies, (2) the use of primary historical documents for the reconstruction of Jewish history and Jewish culture, especially as regards Jewish mysticism, and (3) the nature and scope of current and past controversies among scholars of Jewish mysticism. In addition, the term paper will provide students with (1) experience in using critical, analytic skills unique to the subject matter of Jewish mysticism and (2) hands-on experience in the creative, scholarly process appropriate to the field. The paper will also allow the students to practice and critique their written and oral communication skills. Additional guidelines and instructions for the successful completion of this assignment are or will be posted to the course's D2L website. Consult these guidelines and instructions ASAP.

16. The deadline for having your research project approved by me, Prof. Graizbord, is the end of the eighth week of classes. *If you do not seek and earn my approval of your topic by week 8, I will not read your paper.* The deadline for submitting the approved, completed research paper is the same as for the Third (and final) exam. Honors Papers may be submitted via D2L.

#### USING D2L

17. To access reading material on electronic reserve, log on to the D2L website at: <http://www.D2L.arizona.edu> . You will need to enter your UA NetID and password to access the site's content. You may submit writing assignments electronically at designated **drop-boxes** within the website.
18. Since all materials can be found on-line, and/or in the main stacks of the Main Library, and/or at the JUS office (Marshall 420, M-F, 9-4), or sometimes at local libraries, not being able to access course reserves electronically is no excuse for not reading assignments. Make use of computer terminals on campus if your home's internet connection and/or your own computer and/or printer are unreliable or otherwise inadequate.
19. PLEASE NOTE: All UofA students are assigned Webmail accounts under their own NetID (e.g. "JoeStudent@email.arizona.edu"). However, D2L and WebMail are two separate systems. Students are responsible for checking their D2L email on-line to receive my messages, and/or having their D2L email forwarded to their WebMail in-boxes.

#### EVALUATIONS

20. **First and Second Exam papers that are submitted late** will be downgraded as follows: If I receive your exam after the deadline but before 4:30 PM on the same day as the paper is due: minus 6 points. If I receive the paper *after* 4:30 PM of the day the paper is due but verifiably before 9:00 AM of the following day: minus one full letter grade. If I receive the paper after 9:00 AM of the day following the due date: a failing grade of "E." Unfortunately, the deadlines for submitting semester grades to the University Registrar prevent me from accepting **Third Exams and Honors/graduate Term Papers that are submitted late**. If you foresee problems in meeting deadlines, contact me in advance.
21. If you submit one or more of the three major writing assignments for this course in a timely fashion, and the work is complete, but earn a failing score for that material, I will assign that exam, or exams, or Term Paper, 5 points each for purposes of determining your final grade for the course (incomplete work will garner fewer than 5 points, at my discretion). However, if you earn a failing score for any exam, exams, or Term Paper because you submitted it or them late, or because you failed to submit it or them, I will assess a score of 0 (zero) points for purposes of calculating your final grade for the course.
22. No resubmissions of exams or other assignments will be accepted without special permission. If you are willing to rewrite a first or second exam that you submitted in a timely fashion, and that was complete, but for which you earned a letter grade of "D" or below, see me to discuss this. You may then request special permission to rewrite your assignment and resubmit it. I will evaluate your request and let you know of my decision as soon as possible. Be aware, however, that in most cases I will deny such requests. Students may not resubmit more than one exam or term paper per semester.
23. No "extra credit" or "make up" work will be assigned.
24. Final grades for the semester, and grades for individual assignments, are not negotiable and will NOT be rounded upward to the nearest full number. For example, 91.5 = B, not A.

#### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

25. You must abide by all University regulations concerning academic honesty and plagiarism, as specified in the University's *Code of Academic Integrity*. Papers that read oddly alike will be treated as possible violations of the *Code*. See under "Code of Academic

Integrity” at: <http://dos.web.arizona.edu/uapolicies/>. Plagiarism is defined as using the ideas and words of others without indicating whose ideas and whose words they are. Do not plagiarize, even inadvertently. If you quote, use quotation marks and give the reference. If you use ideas only and not the actual words, give the reference but do not use quotation marks. The penalty for cheating or plagiarism in this course is zero credit for any assignment in which it occurs, and you may be reported to the Dean of Students.

#### COURSE POLICY ON COPYRIGHT AND THE USE OF CLASS NOTES:

26. I hold the copyright in my lectures and written course materials in the powerpoint presentations for this class. That copyright includes student notes and summaries that substantially reflect my lectures or materials. These materials are made available only for personal use by students and for purposes of this class only. *Students may not distribute or reproduce the materials for commercial purposes without my express written consent.* (This does not prevent students from sharing notes on an individual basis for personal use.) Violations of my copyright violate the Code of Academic integrity and may result in course sanctions.

#### BEHAVIOR IN THE CLASSROOM

27. I expect all students to turn off their cell phones, pagers and other non-essential beeping devices for the duration of all class sessions.
28. Students may not use laptop computers during class sessions unless the students document a disability or other special needs that require the use of such computers. The documentation should be through the Disability Resource Center and/or S.A.L.T. program (see item 30, below).
29. I expect students to refrain from socializing during the class sessions and to act courteously towards others at all times. No disruptions, such as socializing during class lectures and discussions, aggressively interrupting others’ speech, and engaging in threatening behavior, will be tolerated. A definition of and policies against threatening behavior at the University are accessible at: <http://policy.web.arizona.edu/threatening.pdf>. “Threatening behavior” means any statement, communication, conduct or gesture, including those in written form, directed toward any member of the University community that causes a reasonable apprehension of physical harm to a person or property. A student can be guilty of threatening behavior even if the person who is the object of the threat does not observe or receive it, so long as a reasonable person would interpret the maker’s statement, communication, conduct or gesture as a serious expression of intent to physically harm. Students who engage in disruptive and/or threatening behavior may be referred to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action.

#### SPECIAL NEEDS

30. Students with special needs who are registered with the S.A.L.T. and/or the Disability Resource Center must submit appropriate documentation to request and arrange for special accommodations.
31. DRC-authorized students who qualify for extended deadlines (e.g., “time and a half”) will receive grades of “I” (Incomplete) for the semester until their final exams are reviewed. At that point, I will request that the “I” grade be replaced with a regular letter grade.

#### CHANGES TO THE SYLLABUS

32. The information contained in this course syllabus, other than the information contained under the sections entitled “Grading,” “Evaluations” and “Attendance” above, may be subject to change with reasonable advance notice, as deemed appropriate by me (the instructor).

## **SCHEDULE OF READING ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMS**

### **UNIT 1. Introduction: Who are the Jews?**

Thurs. 1/12      Parts of the syllabus will be introduced and discussed.  
The lecture for Unit 1 will begin today.

Your assignment for this week is to print out and read the entire course syllabus.

## UNIT 2. What is Jewish Mysticism?

Tues. 1/17 Dan, 1-15.

Questions for Discussion:

1. According to J. Dan, why does rabbinic literature not acknowledge a single, definitive interpretation of the Holy Scriptures? (Does that mean that Judaism acknowledges no single truth?).
2. Briefly explain the term “Midrash” and indicate its relationship (or significance) to the Jewish Mystical Tradition (which I often abbreviate as “JMT”).

## UNIT 3. Biblical Sources of Jewish Mysticism: The Exilic Prophets

Thurs. 1/19 J. Neusner, “The First Crisis,” *From Testament to Torah* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1988), 1-3. (D2L)

Ezekiel 1-3:3, Isaiah 6. <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/e/et/et0.htm>

Questions for discussion:

1. What aspect or aspects of God do the authors of the books of Isaiah and Ezekiel seem to want to visualize most?
2. Why do you think that Ezekiel and Isaiah visualized God as they did, and not in some other way?
3. Looking at the Biblical text as a secular historian, what significance would you attach to the fact that Ezekiel eats a divine scroll in Chap. 3:1-3? How would you explain this bizarre image?

## UNIT 4. Cultural Matrices of Jewish Mysticism: Historical Crises, Diaspora, and Rabbinic Judaism

Tues. 1/24 Michael A. Fishbane, “Rabbinic Judaism in Formation...,” in *Judaism: Revelations and Tradition* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987), 36-49. (D2L)

Recommended: Jacob Neusner, “The Second Crisis...,” in *From Testament to Torah* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1988), 41-53. (D2L)

Thurs. 1/26 Robert M. Seltzer, “Rabbinic Theology,” in *Jewish People, Jewish Thought: The Jewish Experience in History* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1980), 281-314. (D2L)

Questions for Discussion:

1. What does the term *kivvahal* mean, and what purpose does it serve in rabbinic literature?  
According to rabbinic theology,
2. Why was the world created?
3. Why was (the nation of) Israel created?
4. What does fulfilling the Torah consist of?
5. What effect does that fulfillment have upon God?
6. How can Jews be “saved”? (And how does that differ from the Christian concept of salvation?).
7. What are the ultimate parameters of acceptable and unacceptable behavior? (What are these parameters called?).
8. Is God ultimately good, given the existence and prevalence of evil? Why or why not?
9. What should the attitude of the righteous be given that prevalence?

## UNIT 5. Mysticism in Classical Rabbinic Judaism

Tues. 1/31 Dan, 15-23.

Scholem, 40-79.

Thurs. 2/2 Segal, ed., "Mysticism during the Rabbinic Era: Excerpts from Primary Sources." (D2L)

Dan, 49-54 ("The Revelation of the Secret of the World").

Recommended: Dan, 55-73 ("The Visions of Rabbi Akibah and Rabbi Ishmael" and "The Deification of Enoch.")

Questions for discussion:

1. Why do you think the sages of the Mishnah and Talmud placed so many obstacles and warnings in the way of those who wished to study secret teachings?
2. According to the Mishnah, Talmuds, and Tosefta, what are the dangers for those who study secret wisdom?
3. Do the stories included in the Mishnah, Talmuds, and Tosefta concern themselves with divine immanence (note: "immanence" is not to be confused with the word "imminence")? How do you know this?
4. How would you characterize the attitude and sentiments of the rabbinic mystics towards God?
5. Who wrote the text "The Revelation of the Secret of the World," where, and when? What is its original title?
6. Look up ***Shi'ur Komah*** in the course's on-line glossary. Does the term apply to this document? Why?
7. Are there recurring themes or motifs in the imagery that seem to be crucial to the author? Why might the visionary have chosen these themes or motifs in particular? (Another way to ask this would be to say, "What aspect(s) of God does the mystic seem most interested in and impressed with?").
8. What is the "Secret of the World" that is revealed by (or through) the mystical ascent depicted here?
9. Is ascent to the Seventh Palace possible? Why or why not?

#### **UNIT 6. The Hasidei Ashkenaz** ("The Pious Ones of Germany")

Tues. 2/7 Robert M. Seltzer, "The Rise of Ashkenazic Jewry," in *Jewish People, Jewish Thought: The Jewish Experience in History* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1980), 351-364. (D2L)

Dan, 23-27.

Scholem, first full paragraph of 80-118.

Recommended: Jacob Katz, "The Hasid," in *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, (West Orange: Behrman House, 1961), 93-105. (D2L)

Thurs. 2/9 Dan, 101-105 ("The Voice of God Over the Water"), 107-113 ("The Rokeah").

Questions for discussion:

1. On pp.101-102, Joseph Dan describes a method for deriving "secret" names of God. What specific mystical-exegetical technique (or techniques) that you have learned about in this week's lecture does the method described by Dan appear to "fit"? (Hint: the Pious of Germany mastered 3 core techniques).
2. Who wrote the primary source that starts on p. 104, when and where? What is its original title?
3. To whom is the text addressed?
4. For what main purpose or purposes was the text written? (What is this text for?)  
(Note: On p. 112 the author of the primary source makes a reference to "ETBS." Elsewhere the acronym is rendered *etbash*. This refers to a form of the exegetical technique called *Temurah*. See my on-line glossary).
5. Who wrote the primary source excerpted on pp. 110-113, when and where? What is its original title?
6. Would you call the Hasidic ideal "quasi-monastic"? Discuss per Dan's analysis on pp. 107-109.
7. What would you say is the chief theological question or issue on which the author concentrates?
8. To whom does the author attribute the Book of Creation (*Sefer Yetzirah*)?
9. What do you think the author thinks about *Shi'ur Komah* and the imagery in Chariot mysticism? (Note: His opinion is largely implicit).



10. According to the author, through *what* aspect of his does God reveal his will and his desires to mere mortals such as Moses and the Prophets?

**Note: The first take-home exam will be distributed today.**

**UNIT 7. Emerging Kabbalah in Provence** (Please note the unusual schedule of discussions).

Mon. 2/13

**The first exam is due today by 11PM via D2L.**

Tues. 2/14

Robert M. Seltzer, "The Rise of Jewish Philosophy..." and "From Mutazilite Theology...", in *Jewish People, Jewish Thought: The Jewish Experience in History* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1980), 373-376, 382-386. (D2L)

Segal, section entitled "Provençal Kabbalah" in "from the Bahir to the Zohar," at:

<http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/Rels463/Bahir-Zohar.html>

Dan, 27-31.

Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: Meridian, 1978), 42-48, 312-316, 105-116. **(D2L)**

Scholem, 119-123.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What would you say was the theosophical focus (the main theosophical problem or question) addressed by the Kabbalah of Provence and Spain?
2. What would you say is the chief innovation, or the chief new myth, that emerged from the speculation of the Jewish mystics of Provence, and upon which Jewish mystics in Spain elaborated?
3. What are some principal ways in which early Kabbalah reflects Neoplatonic concerns and ideas?
4. What would you say are the principal theosophical contributions of the work called the *Sefer ha-Bahir* (~"Book of Clarity")?

Thurs. 2/16

Dan, 115-120 ("Divine Will Clothed in Human Will: The Intention of Prayer in Early Kabbalah.").

Graizbord, ed., "A Kabbalistic Interpretation of Genesis 1:1." (D2L)

Questions for discussion:

1. Who wrote the primary (bottom of p. 117 to 120), where and when? What is its original title?
2. Despite Joseph Dan's caveat on p.117 that the author did not use Kabbalistic terminology extensively, the selection does include various Neoplatonic motifs, words, phrases, and concepts. Identify at least 4 of these.
3. What motifs/concepts/phrases/words can you find here that derive from *other* parts of the Jewish mystical tradition, for instance Creation Mysticism, Ashkenazic Pietism (*Hasidut*), or Chariot/Palaces Mysticism?
4. How would you prove that the selection is an example of "Kabbalah" and not of another form of Jewish mysticism or esotericism? (What makes this text an example of *Kabbalistic* thought per se?)
5. What does the author mean by the word *Kavvanah*?
6. According to the author, on *what* thing or idea should the person praying focus his (her?) concentration?
7. According to the author, what is the proper and ultimate purpose of praying?

**UNIT 8. Maturing Kabbalah in Catalonia and Castile: PART I**

Tues. 2/21

Jane Gerber, "The Reconquista," in *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 92-114. (D2L)

Dan, from second paragraph in 30 to the end of section B in 31.

Scholem, bottom of 123-155.

Thurs. 2/23 Daniel Chanan Matt, "Introduction," in id., ed. and trans., *Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1983), 3-22. (D2L)

Questions for discussion:

1. How did Moses de Leon regard the Jewish rationalists of Spain? Why? (See Matt, pp.1-10).
2. How did he regard traditional exegetes? Why? (See Matt, 1-10).
3. Why did Spanish Jews have a strong sense of *Galut*? (See Matt, pp. 11-22).

## **UNIT 9. Maturing Kabbalah in Catalonia and Castile: PART II: The Zohar and its Context**

Tues. 2/28 Anna Foa, "The Jews of Spain," in *The Jews of Europe after the Black Death* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2000), 74-102. (D2L).

Daniel Chanan Matt, "Introduction," in id., ed. and trans., *Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1983), 22-39. (D2L).

Scholem, 156-163, 172-176, 205-211, 229-243.

Recommended: Scholem, 211-229.

Questions for discussion:

On Matt, "Introduction" (continued from Unit 8):

4. What was the *Zohar's* view of poverty? (See Matt, pp. 11-22)
5. List a few ways in which the *Zohar* responded to or was influenced by Christian theology and Christian religious polemics.
6. What was Moses de Leon's attitude towards Philosophy? (See Matt, pp. 23-27)
7. How does the *Zohar* "fit" or address the religious outlook of ordinary, traditional Jews? (See Matt, pp.23-27)
8. How did the *Zohar's* author legitimate his writing? (Do you "buy" this legitimation or think the work is a forgery?). (See Matt, pp. 23-27).
9. How does Moses de Leon use the concept of "hiddenness" or "concealment"? (See Matt, pp. 28-32).

Thurs. 3/1 "Exile and Redemption," in Gershom Scholem, ed. and trans., *Zohar: The Book of Splendor: Basic Readings from the Kabbalah*, (New York: Schocken, 1977), 83-85. (D2L)

Dan, 149-159 ("Rabbi Simeon Bar Yohai and His Society of Mystics"), 161-173.

Scholem, 213-235 (skim or skip the highly technical sections in 226-232).

Questions for discussion:

On Scholem, ed. "Exile and Redemption" (From *Zohar* III 6.a):

1. How is Israel's last exile unlike its previous ones? So what?
2. What do you think is the use of depicting the *Shekhinah* as a "fallen virgin" here?

On Dan, ed., "Rabbi Simeon Bar Yohai and His Society of Mystics," pp. 149-159.

3. Whom does Rabbi Simeon criticize and why?
4. To whom do you think the critique is *actually* directed? Discuss.
5. What function or role in the universe does the author bestow upon mystics?
6. What evidence is found here of the notion that sin is like a husk under which the soul is tapped?

## **UNIT 10.** Practical Kabbalah and Messianism in the Early Modern Period

Tues. 3/6 Stephen Sharot, "The New Christians," in *Messianism, Mysticism, and Magic: A Sociological Analysis of Jewish Religious Movements* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 1982), 76-85. (D2L).

Harris Lenowitz, ed., "The Messiahs of the Inquisition: David Reuveni and Shlomo Molho," in *The Jewish Messiahs: From the Galilee to Crown Heights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 93-99, 103-108, 117-123. (D2L)

Thurs. 3/8 PURIM. TODAY IS A READING DAY. THE CLASS WILL NOT CONVENE. Check your D2L email and the "contents" section of the D2L website for instructions.

Dan, 181-194 ("Joseph della Reina: From Experience to Legend").

Scholem, *Kabbalah*, (New York: Meridian, 1978), 182-189.

Questions for discussion:

1. What is the purpose of Rabbi Joseph della Reina's quest?
2. Itemize the methods he uses to gain access to (and master) heavenly power.
3. What is the use of the text of the Bible here?
4. Would you agree that Joseph and his disciples wielded magic?
5. Is the tale gnostically-influenced and/or neoplatonically-influenced? How do you know?
6. Beyond the notion that practical Kabbalah is dangerous, what is the (deeper) moral of this story?
7. Why do you think this is the case?

**Note: The second take-home exam will be distributed at the end of the session today.**

SPRING BREAK: SAT. 3/10 – SUN. 3/18

## **UNIT 11.** Kabbalah in Sixteenth-Century Safed

Mon. 3/19 **Note: The second exam is due today by 11PM via D2L.**

Tues. 3/20 Dan, 31-36.

Scholem, 244-286. (Focus on identifying the main ideas, characteristic and contributions of the Lurianic school, not on theosophic details per se).

Lawrence Fine, "The Kabbalah in Sixteenth-Century Safed," in id., "Kabbalistic Texts," in *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts*, ed. Barry W. Holtz (New York: Summit Books, 1984), 340-347. (D2L)

Thurs. 3/22 Dan, 195-201 ("Walking with the Shekhinah").

Lawrence Fine, "Pietistic Customs from Safed," in *Judaism in Practice*, ed. Lawrence Fine (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001), 375-385. (D2L).

Recommended: Dan, 203-212 ("The Messianic Dreams of Rabbi Hayyim Vital").

Questions for discussion:

1. In what ways is the narrative “Walking with the Shekhinah” characteristic of sixteenth-century Safed mysticism (and different from classical Kabbalah of the 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries)?
2. To whom is Cordovero’s narrative addressed? How do you know? So what?
3. What are *hanhagot* and how are they different from mystical treatises?
4. What are *tikkunim*? Can you find an example of one in the primary texts?
5. To whom are Abraham Galante’s *hanhagot* addressed, and how do you know this?
6. What are *yihudim*? Describe at least one found in these primary texts.
7. What emotions are Berukhim’s ascetic practices meant to summon? Discuss.
8. What do you think is the ideological and/or theosophical point of summoning these emotions? How do you know?
9. What earthly benefit was there, if any, in the asceticism described here?

## **UNIT 12. The Sabbatean Explosion**

Tues. 3/27 Dan, 36-38.

Hayim Hillel Ben-Sasson, “The Messianic Leadership,” in *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988), 701-707. (D2L)

Matt Goldish, “From Mystical Vision to Prophetic Eruption,” in *The Sabbatean Prophets* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2004), 89-129. (D2L)

Scholem, 287-324. (Highly Recommended: Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 244-272 [D2L].)

Thurs. 3/29 Matt Goldish, “The Early Messianic Career of Shabbatai Zvi,” in *Judaism in Practice*, ed. Lawrence Fine (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001), 470-482 (D2L)

Dan, 213-216 (“A Prophetic Vision of Nathan of Gaza”).

Questions for discussion:

1. What is the significance of dreams in the account of Zvi’s life written by Gershon of Arezzo?
2. According to Gershon’s account, in what ways can Shabbatai Zvi’s messiahship be called “antinomian”?
3. In what ways could the movement be called “traditional”?
4. Nathan’s pseudepigraphic “prophecy” strives to explain the behavior of Shabbatai Zvi in ways that will be impressive to his Jewish readers. Identify three motifs in the “prophecy” that would especially resonate with Jewish readers (or listeners), and explain why you think these motifs would be especially effective.
5. Itemize three important aspects of Shabbatai’s strange and paradoxical behavior and personality that the prophecy seems to be designed to explain or justify.
6. Itemize three elements of the “prophecy” (concepts, sentences, allusions, etc.) that strike you as possibly having derived from earlier strands or schools in Jewish mysticism—for instance, Lurianic Kabbalah, Chariot Mysticism, Ashkenazic Pietism, etc.
7. What kind of Messiah does Nathan envision, and why do you think he envisions the Messiah in the way that he does? (Think of Nathan’s historical context and the bases of Sabbateanism’s appeal among the Jewish masses).

## **UNIT 13. Sabbatean Denouement, Aftermath, and Offshoots.**

Tues. 4/3 Scholem, “The Crypto-Jewish Sect of the Dönme (Sabbatians) in Turkey,” in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken, 1971), 142-166. (D2L)

Thurs. 4/5 Dan, 217-222 (“Nathan of Gaza Facing the Monsters of Evil”).

Questions for discussion:

1. What would you say is/are the main purpose(s) of the writing excerpted here? Discuss. (“Translate” this account into non-mystical terms. What is the author trying to achieve? What are his readers supposed to do/think/feel, etc.?).
2. What aspects (if any) of this excerpt reveal a link to earlier and/or mainstream Kabbalah? Discuss.
3. What aspects of this excerpt (if any) reveal a dissenting or sectarian form of mysticism, one distinct from mainstream forms of Kabbalah—in this case, the ideology of the Doenmeh?

#### **UNIT 14. The Rise of Beshtian Hasidism.**

Tues. 4/10 Stephen Sharot, “Millenarianism and Mysticism in Eighteenth-Century Poland,” in *Messianism, Mysticism, and Magic: A Sociological Analysis of Jewish Religious Movements* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 1982), 130-154. (D2L)

Scholem, 325-350.

Thurs. 4/12 Dan, 38-41, and 231-237 (“The Mystical Prayer of Rabbi Israel Ba’al Shem Tov”), 239-249 (“Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav”).

Recommended: Arthur Green, “Rabbi Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl: Personal Practices of a Hasidic Master,” in *Judaism in Practice*, ed. Lawrence Fine (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001), 399-409. (D2L)

Questions for discussion:

1. According to Dan, what was the Besht’s main message (in your own words)?
2. What does the narrative reveal to be the Besht’s understanding of his role as a Tzaddik? (What is a Tzaddik *for*? What is he supposed to do and why?).
3. Explain the significance to the Besht of the standard liturgical phrase “Open the Gates of Heaven.” (Consider: According to the Besht’s interpretation of his “ascent to heaven,” why did the prayers on that Yom Kippur ultimately ascend to their intended place in God’s realm?).
4. According to the narrator, what *earthly* problems affecting the Jews did the Besht’s action address?
5. Describe the nature of the relationship between (a) the Besht and the Messiah, and (b) the Besht and God, as these relationships are described in the narrative.
6. What does this narrative tell you about the Hasidic approach to the Sabbateans’ defection, and by extension towards the nature and fate of the Jewish people as a whole?
7. Explain the term *Yihuddim* (singular: *Yihud*) and their use by Hasidim.
8. Dan points out the strong Kabbalistic subtext of Nachman’s tale of the beggars (pp.242-244), but what is distinctly “Hasidic” about the story—its motifs, style, didactic message, etc.? Discuss.
9. How is the story of the third beggar “Zoharic” rather than “Lurianic”?
10. What do you think Rabbi Nachman’s dream (pp.247-249) reveals about his self-concept?

#### **15. Contemporary Hasidic Mysticism, Cont.**

Tues. 4/17 Aaron Wertheim, “Traditions and Customs in Hasidism,” in *Essential Papers on Hasidism: Origins to Present*, ed. Gershon David Hundert (New York: New York UP, 1991), 363-388. (D2L)

Harris Lenowitz, ed., “The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menahem Mendel Schneerson,” in *The Jewish Messiahs: From the Galilee to Crown Heights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 215-223. (D2L)

Questions for discussion (if there is time):

1. Regarding the story told in pp. 219-220: In what ways is this tale distinctly “Hasidic” and not simply mystical?
2. In what ways is it “Lurianic”—if at all?
3. How are Schneerson’s personality and functions as a Tzaddik linked by him and his followers to Sefirotic doctrine?

4. In p. 215, Lenowitz states, “Schneerson had made it clear that he was the Messiah.” Yet later on, Lenowitz explains that “ambivalence typifies Hasidic messianism” (p.222). What do you make of this? Was Schneerson clear, ambiguous (or neither) about his possible messianic identity? Answer this in light of the story in pp. 220-221.

Thurs. 4/19 TBA

**16. *Kabbalah* and Modern Jewish Culture.**

Tues. 4/24 Scholem, 190-196.

“With Gershom Scholem: An Interview,” in Gershom Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays*, ed. Werner J. Dannhauser (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 1-7, 17-20, 25-26, 45-48, 31-33 (D2L).

Recommended: Dan, 251-261 (“Bialik: Mystical Poetry and Mystical Language”).

Thurs. 4/26 Catch-up session (if necessary) and Review for third exam.

Tues. 5/1 Review for Third Exam (cont.)/TCE DAY

Today is “TCE day” and attendance is mandatory unless a change has been announced.

**Note: The final exam will be distributed today. Your responses are due *Tues., 5/8 no later than 1 PM by D2L.***