

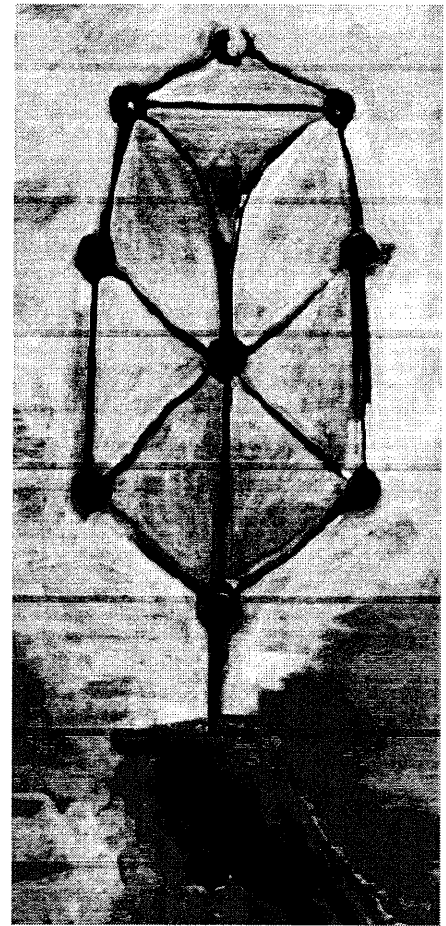
JEWISH MYSTICISM

RELIGION 23 / JEWISH
STUDIES 62

Professor Ehud Benor

MWF 11

Office 304 Thornton Hall
Tu. 12-2 or by appointment



The course examines the nature of claims to mystical experience and knowledge that appear in various aspects of the Jewish tradition with primary focus on linguistic mystical techniques and on the enchanted and demonic worlds of the Kabbala. Forms of ecstasy, theurgy and magic will be studied along with their theoretical and social backgrounds and their impact on elite and popular Jewish practice.

Objectives:

1. Secure a basic familiarity with “esoteric” aspects of Judaism.
2. Develop sympathetic-critical understanding of extreme forms of religion.
3. Learn to identify and assess possible grounds for validity or invalidity of mystical noetic claims.

Requirements:

Two 1000 word exegetical or analytical essays [35% each]

Take-home final examination. [30%]

Reading:

Laenen, J. H. *Jewish Mysticism: An Introduction*, Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

Schäfer, Peter. *The Hidden and Manifest God*, SUNY Press, 1992.

Green, Arthur. *A Guide to the Zohar*, Stanford University Press, 2004.

Handouts of primary and secondary literature



Schedule of Classes and Readings

1	3.25	Mysticism, Esoteric doctrines, Myth	Liebes, Yehuda. "De Natura Dei: On the Development of the Jewish Myth." (1993): 1–64.
2	3.27	Ineffability: object, experience, or insight?	Alston, William P. "Ineffability." <i>The Philosophical Review</i> 65, no. 4 (October 1, 1956): 506–522. online Zwicky, Jan. "What Is Ineffable?" <i>International Studies in the Philosophy of Science</i> 26, no. 2 (June 2012): 197–217.
3	3.29	God and/or Emptiness (No-thing-ness)	Dombrowski, Daniel A. "Rival Concepts of God and Rival Versions of Mysticism." <i>International Journal for Philosophy of Religion</i> 68, no. 1–3 (December 1, 2010): 153–165. online Forman, Robert KC. "Pure Consciousness Events and Mysticism." <i>Sophia</i> 25, no. 1 (1986): 49–58. online
4	4.1	Estrangement and Escape	"Hymn of the Pearl" Plotinus IV.8 "I have many times awakened into myself . . ." Jonas, Hans. <i>The Gnostic Religion</i> . Ch. 2 (f) & 5.
5	4.3	Cosmogonic Justice	"Zoroastrian Cosmology" Fox, Douglas A. "Darkness and Light: The Zoroastrian View." <i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i> 35, no. 2 (1967): 129–137. online
6	4.5	The Lord of Hosts of 7 Heavens	Laenen, II:1-6 (18-43) Schäfer, 11-36, 56-66, 77-86
7	4.8	Heavenly Journeys <i>Yordei Merkava</i>	Elior, Rachel. "The Merkavah Tradition and the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism." 11–19, 1996. online Arbel, Daphna. "'Understanding of the Heart.'" <i>Jewish Studies Quarterly</i> 6, no. 4 (January 1, 1999): 320–344. online [Boustani, Ra'anan. "Rabbinization and the Making of Early Jewish Mysticism." <i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i> 101, no. 4 (2011): 482–501. online]
8	4.10	Enoch is Metatron?	Arbel, Daphna. "'Seal of Resemblance, Full of Wisdom, and Perfect in Beauty': The Enoch/Metatron Narrative of 3 Enoch and Ezekiel 28" (2005). online
9	4.12	The name of God's nose and the size of his little finger	<i>Shi'ur Koma</i> Schäfer, 99-103 Arbel, Daphna. "Spirit and Soul: Transcendent Anthropomorphism in the Shi'ur Komah Traditions." <i>Studies in Spirituality</i> 12, 2002: 5–22. Swartz, Michael D. <i>Mystical Prayer in Ancient Judaism</i> .

			(1992) 107-155
10	4.15	The Sound of Creation <i>Sefer Yetzira</i>	Meroz, Ronit. "Between Sefer Yezirah and Wisdom Literature: Three Binitarian Approaches in Sefer Yezirah." <i>Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies</i> 6, no. 18 (2010): 101-142. online
11	4.17	House of Wisdom <i>Sefer Yetzira</i>	Zweig, Janet. "Ars Combinatoria: Mystical Systems, Procedural Art, and the Computer." <i>Art Journal</i> (1997): 20-29. online
12	4.19	Magic & Revelation <i>Sefer Yetzira</i>	Idel, (1988) "Techniques for Attaining Ecstasy" (13-52).
13	4.22	<i>Ha-Bahir</i> Sophia—Fallen Wisdom The Fullness	Wolfson, Elliot R. "Hebraic and Hellenic Conceptions of Wisdom in Sefer ha-Bahir." <i>Poetics Today</i> (1998): 147-176. online
14	4.24	<i>Ha-Bahir</i> Light is Darkness The origin of the spring	Pirtea, Adrian. "Divine Light with Plotinus and in the Sefer ha-Bahir: A Comparative Study." <i>Studia Hebraica</i> no. 9-10 (2009): 294. online
15	4.26	<i>The Zohar</i> Primordial Adam: "Philosophers' Stone" Monotheism & Personality	Green. <i>Guide to the Zohar</i> . Ch. 2 & 3 (9-59)
16	4.29	<i>The Zohar</i> Grace & Limit Gender Relativity	_____. Ch. 4-7 (63-89)
17	5.1	<i>The Zohar</i> Spark of Darkness	_____. Ch. 8-9 (101-115)
18	5.3	<i>The Zohar</i> Hell emerged and descended Lilith & Azazel	_____. Ch. 10 (116-121)
19	5.6	<i>The Zohar</i> The Shehkina Cosmic Battle Religious Life	_____. Ch. 11-15 (122-156)
20	5.8	Lurianic Theogony Contraction of Divinity	Freedman, Daphne. <i>Man and the Theogony in the Lurianic Cabala</i> . 2006. Part 1 (13-66)
21	5.10	Lurianic Cosmogony Death of the Kings	_____. Part 2 (67-140)
22	5.13	Lurianic History Restoration	_____. Part 3 (141-206)
23	5.15	Theosophic Messianism	Laenan. Ch. V (189-214)
24	5.17	Hasidism The Ba'al Shem Tov	Etkes, I. <i>The Besht: Magician, Mystic, and Leader</i> . (2005): TBD.
25	5.20	Hasidism Contemplative & Ecstatic Prayer	Jacobs, <i>Hasidic Prayer</i> . Ch.7& 8 (70-103)
26	5.22	Hasidism Mystical Cosmology	Elior, Rachel. <i>The Mystical Origins of Hasidism</i> . Ch 4,8-10.
27	5.24	Buber's <i>I and Thou</i>	Benor. "On the Horizon of Unity: Ecstasy, "Dialogue," and Divinity."
28	5.29	Abraham Kook Historiosphy: Sacred Zionism	Shlomo, Yosef Ben. <i>Poetry of Being</i> .(1990): TBD