

## WHO'S AFRAID OF HASIDISM & WHY DOES IT STILL MATTER? JOURNEYING THROUGH THE FOUNDATIONS OF HASIDISM TODAY

Rav Aubrey Glazer ([rav@bethabrahamdayton.org](mailto:rav@bethabrahamdayton.org))

Mondays @ 12-12:45 PM EST (BAS Zoom room)

**QUESTION:** Why does this idiosyncratic expression of Jewish pietistic living with an attitude of radical amazement and ecstatic exuberance for devotion still matter today? Why does Hasidism evoke both fear and joy? Why does Hasidism still attract and repel so strongly? Why is it that the vibrant and polyphonic set of Hasidic confrontations with the modern world continue to sing its joyful song? We will explore these questions and more as we journey through the foundations of devotion, community and life in Hasidism of the modern world and reflect on its ongoing inspiration and challenges to Jewish living.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Join us on an extended religio-cultural spiritual tour to explore why Hasidism has attracted, repelled and bewildered philosophers, historians and theologians since its inception in the 18th century until this moment. Our roadmap will start with the final chapter where we find ourselves now in Renewal and Reconstruction and then move back to the beginning chapters I-III from 1736-1945 as follows:

- I. Emergence, Challenge and Renewal (1736-1815)**
- II. Ascendancy and Dominance (1815-1881)**
- III. Decline, Renaissance, and Destruction (1881-1945)**
- IV. Renewal and Reconstruction (1945- Present)**

We will discover why the modern Hasid marks not only another example of a Jewish pietist, but someone who is committed to an ethos of seeking wisdom, joy and intimacy with the divine. We will journey through a pioneering English anthology focusing on Hasidism, wrestling with a core set of questions that permeate modern Jewish thought and religious thought more generally: *What is the relationship between God and the world? What is the relationship between God and the human being?* But Hasidic thought is cast with mystical, psychological and even magical accents, and offers radically different answers to core issues of modern concern. We will sample selections from an array of genres, including women's supplications; sermons and homilies; personal diaries and memoirs; correspondence; stories; polemics; legal codes; and rabbinic responsa. These selections consciously move between everyday lived experience and the most ineffable mystical secrets, reflecting the multidimensional nature of this unusual religious and social movement. We will explore canonical texts from the first generation of Hasidic leaders up through present-day ultra-orthodox, as well as neo-Hasidic voices and, in so doing, demonstrate the unfolding of a rich and complex phenomenon that continues to evolve today.

**REQUIRED BOOK:** Mayse, Ariel Evan, and Sam Berrin Shonkoff, eds. *Hasidism: Writings on Devotion, Community, and Life in the Modern World*. Brandeis University Press, 2020.

## **SYLLABUS:**

### **I. Renewal and Reconstruction (1945- Present)**

- [1] Ch. 31 | Hasidic Theology and the Holocaust, 245-249;
- [2] Ch. 32 | Zionist Hasidism, 250-252;
- [3] Ch. 33 | Satmar Hasidism, 253-259;
- [4] Ch. 34 | The Seventh Rebbe of Chabad, 260-269;
- [5] Ch. 35 | Zelda Schneersohn Mishkovsky, 270-273;
- [6] Ch. 36 | Slonim Hasidism in Jerusalem, 274-278;
- [7] Ch. 37 | Voices of Contemporary Hasidic Women, 279-290.

### **II. Emergence, Challenge and Renewal (1736-1815)**

- [8] Ch. 1 | The Ba'al Shem Tov: Disciples and Descendants, 3-16;
- [9] Ch. 2 | Yiddish supplications (*Tkhines*), 17-19;
- [10] Ch. 3 | Dov Ber of Mezritsh, 20-26;
- [11] Ch. 4 | The Brody Proclamation of 1772, 27-29;
- [12] Ch. 5 | The Maggid's Family, 30-36;
- [13] Ch. 6 | Chernobyl and Zhitomir, 37-47;
- [14] Ch. 7 | Shmuel and Pinchas Horwitz, Levi Yitshak of Barditshev and Uziel Meizels, 48-55;
- [15] Ch. 8 | Hasidism in Lithuania, White Russia and Tiberias, 56-71;
- [16] Ch. 9 | Nahman of Bratzlav, 72-82;
- [17] Ch. 10 | Beyond the Maggid's Circle, 83-87;
- [18] Ch. 11 | Early Hasidism in Poland, 88-98.

### **III. Ascendancy and Dominance (1815-1881)**

- [19] Ch. 12 | Avraham Yehoshua Heschel of Apt, 101-103;
- [20] Ch. 13 | The Dynasties of Ruzhin and Talna, 104-108;
- [21] Ch. 14 | Menachem Mendel Schneerson, 109-113;
- [22] Ch. 15 | Kalonymous Kalman Epstein of Krakow, 114-119;
- [23] Ch. 16 | Hayim Halberstam and Sandz Hasidism, 120-125;
- [24] Ch. 17 | Malkah Rokeah of Belz and Eydel Rubin of Brody, 126-129;
- [25] Ch. 18 | The Dynasties of Dinov, Zhidachov, and Komarno, 130-141;
- [26] Ch. 19 | The Dynasties of Pshiskhe, Kotzk, Izhbits, and Ger, 142-158.

### **IV. Decline, Renaissance, and Destruction (1881-1945)**

- [27] Ch. 20 | Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter, 163-170;
- [28] Ch. 21 | Sokhachev and Ger, 171-180;
- [29] Ch. 22 | Tsadok ha-Kohen of Lublin, 181-186;
- [30] Ch. 23 | Munkatsh Hasidism, 187-191;
- [31] Ch. 24 | Toldot Aharon, 192-200;
- [32] Ch. 25 | Sholom Dovber Schneersohn, 201-203;
- [33] Ch. 26 | The Hasidic Yeshivah, 204-205;
- [34] Ch. 27 | Sarah Schenirer, 206-212;
- [35] Ch. 28 | Three Hasidic Memoirs: Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn, Yitshak Nahum Twersky, and Malkah Shapira, 213-227;
- [36] Ch. 29 | The Belzer Rebbe's Sermon and Holocaust Testimonies, 228-231;
- [37] Ch. 30 | The Rebbe of Piaseczno, 232-243.