

**Professor Solomon Schimmel**  
**Sifrut HaMusar - JTHT 544**  
**Spring 2009 - Tuesdays 2:15 – 4:15**  
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*Sifrut HaMusar*, ethical-devotional literature, integrates theology, religious spirituality, psychology and ethics, for the purpose of instructing its audience to advance along the path of piety, devotion, and ethical behavior. We will be studying selections from some of the classics of this literature, such as *Hovot HaLevavot* (Bahya Ibn Pakuda), *Tomer Devorah* (Moses Cordovero), *Mesillat Yesharim* (Moses Haim Luzzatto), *Orot HaTeshuva* (Abraham Isaac Kook) and the writings of Israel Salanter and his disciples.

Class time will be spent on careful reading and study of these texts in Hebrew. The goals of the course include mastery of concepts and improvement of linguistic skill in reading and understanding this genre of literature.

In addition to the primary sources, there will be assigned readings from the scholarly literature on *Sifrut HaMusar*.

Assignments:

1. Prepare assigned Hebrew texts in advance of class meetings. I will inform you a week or two in advance of each class session which specific pages of which *musar* work you should prepare. (Hebrew originals and English translations of all texts will be placed on Reserve in the library). The pace, and the amount of material which we will study, will depend on the level of Hebraic competence of the students.
2. Maintain a weekly journal or a daily diary on your ongoing experience with one or more of the sins/traits/vices/virtues that we will be discussing.
3. Write a research paper or do a creative project on a trait, vice, or virtue of interest.
4. Record as audio files selections from some of the Hebrew texts we will be studying.

Please purchase the following two books:

1. Luzzatto, Moshe Chayim. *Path of the Just- Mesillat Yesharim* ( **MY**).

(You will need a version that has both the *vocalized* Hebrew text and an English translation, e.g. the edition with Shraga Silverstein's translation).

2. Schimmel, Solomon. *The Seven Deadly Sins: Jewish, Christian, and Classical Reflections on Human Psychology* (Oxford U Press, 1997, softcover). (**SDS**)

All other primary and secondary readings will be placed on Reserve in the library.

*Always bring to class a copy of the Tanakh.*

We will spend more than one session on some of the listed topics.

## TOPICS AND READINGS

### 1. *Musar Literature*

*Encyclopedia Judaica*. Ethical Literature. (article by Joseph Dan).

Luzzatto, Moshe Haim. *Mesillat Yesharim* (**MY**). Author's Introduction

Schimmel, Solomon. *The Seven Deadly Sins: Jewish, Christian, and Classical Reflections on Human Nature (Psychology)* (**SDS**). The Free Press, 1992 (Oxford U Press softcover, 1997) Chapter 1, The Persistence of Sin (pgs. 1 – 26).

### 2. *Yetzer HaRa veYetzer HaTov; Behira Hofshit*

Rambam (Maimonides). *Mishneh Torah, Sefer Mada*, Hilkhhot Teshuva, Chapter 5.

Luzzatto. **MY**. Chapter 1, On Man's Obligations in the World.

Rabbi Israel Salanter. Excerpts from *Iggeret HaMusar*. (English translation is in Z. Fendel. *The Ethical Personality*. Hashkafah Publications, New York, 1986, pgs. 264-303).

Schimmel. **SDS** Chapter 9, Sin and Responsibility (pgs. 217 – 244).

### 3. *Middot (Vice and Virtue)*

Rambam. *Mishneh Torah, Sefer Mada*, Hilkhhot Deot, Chapters 1, 2, 3.

Daniel H. Frank. Humility as a virtue: A Maimonidean critique of Aristotle's Ethics. *In Moses Maimonides and His Time: Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy*, V. 19, Edited by Eric L. Ormsby, pgs. 89-99.

### 4. *Sexual Desire and Behavior*

Luzzatto. **MY**, excerpts from Chapter 11 (*Nekiyut*)

Excerpts from *Iggeret HaKodesh*.

Schimmel. **SDS** – Chapter 5 (Lust)

## **5. *Rahamim, Mehila, Hesed***

Cordovero, Moshe. Excerpts from *Tomer Devorah*, (*Palm Tree of Deborah*).

Dessler, Eliyahu. Excerpts from *Mikhtav Me'Eliyahu*. (*Strive for Truth*). "Giving" generates love.

Schimmel, Solomon. *Wounds Not Healed by Time: The Power of Repentance and Forgiveness*. Oxford University Press, 2002, pages 85 – 100 and 237 – 238 (endnotes).

## **6. *Ahavat HaShem***

Rambam. *Mishneh Torah, Sefer Mada*, Hilkhoh Yesodey Hatorah, Chapter 2: 1, 2.

Rambam. *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoh Teshuva*, Chapter 10

Bahya Ibn Pakuda. *Hovot HaLevavot*. Excerpts from Shaar Ahavat HaShem.

## **7. *Anger and Forbearance***

Luzzatto. **MY**. Excerpts from Perek 11 (Nekiyut).

De Vidas, Elijah. *Reshit Hokhmah*. Excerpts from Shaar HaAnavah on Anger.

Schimmel, Solomon. Education of the emotions in Jewish devotional literature: Anger and its control. *Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol. 8/2, Fall 1980, pgs. 269- 276.

Schimmel. **SDS**, Chapter 4 (Anger)

## **8. *Pride and Humility***

Luzzatto. **MY**. Excerpts from Perek 11 (Nekiyut).

Schimmel. **SDS**, Chapter 2 (Pride)

## **9. *Envy and Contentment***

Luzzatto. **MY**, Excerpts from Perek 11 (Nekiyut).

Schimmel, Solomon. Envy in Jewish Thought and Literature. In *Envy: Theory and Research*. Edited by Richard H. Smith. Oxford University Press, 2008, pps. 17 – 38.

Schimmel. **SDS**. Chapter 3 (Envy).

## **10. Repentance**

Kook, Avraham Yitzhak HaCohen. *Orot HaTeshuva.*, Chapters 1,2,3.

Ehud Luz (1987). Repentance. In *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, (Edited by Cohen and Mendes-Flohr. The Free Press, 1987, pages 785-793.

## **11. Temperance, Asceticism, and Gluttony**

Ramban. *Commentary on the Torah* to Leviticus 19:1.

Schimmel. **SDS**, Chapter 6 (Gluttony).

Jacobs, Louis (1979). Eating and drinking as an act of worship in Hasidic thought. In *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History*. Edited by Siegfried Stein and Raphael Loewe. University of Alabama Press.

Schimmel, Solomon. *The Spiritualization of Eating in Jewish Mystical Literature* (unpublished manuscript).

## A Few Additional Resources

Borowitz, Eugene B. and Schwartz, Frances Weinman. *The Jewish Moral Virtues*, JPS, 1999 (also has a useful bibliography).

*Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*. Edited by Cohen and Mendes-Flohr. The Free Press, 1987.

Etkes, Immanuel. *Rabbi Israel Salanter and the Mussar Movement*. JPS, 1993 (especially pages 289-324).

Pliskin, Zelig. *Gateway to Happiness*. Aish HaTorah Publications, 1983.

Schimmel, Solomon. *Wounds Not Healed by Time: The Power of Repentance and Forgiveness*. Oxford University Press, 2002.

Telushkin, Joseph. *A Code of Jewish Ethics: You Shall be Holy*. Volume 1. Bell-Tower (Random House), 2006.,

<http://www.mussarinstitute.org/index.htm>

### Fiction:

Grade, Haim. *The Yeshiva* (Tzemah Atlas).

Singer, I.B. *The Penitent*.

*Sample questions for your midot journal or diary*

Some questions to ask yourself about *Envy* in your life

1. Is there any one whom you know reasonably well (e.g. a relative, friend, professional colleague or co-worker), whom you envy?
2. What do you envy about him or her?
3. How emotionally painful is your envy for you? Try to describe the thoughts and feelings you experience when you are “feeling envious”.
4. Do you feel that your envy is justified? If so, why?
5. Do you act maliciously as a result of your envy? If so, in what ways?
6. Do you use any strategies to help you cope with or overcome your envy? If so, try to describe them. Are they successful?