



Revolutionary Chasidic Ideas and Practices: Course Overview

Module	Chasidic Master	Practice of the Module	Subjects of Study
1	Ba'al Shem Tov c. 1700 – 1760 R' Yisroel ben Eliezer, also known as the Besht, founder of Chasidic Judaism.	Visualizing and vocalizing letters and words to enter deeply into the experience of prayer or study.	Pre-history of the Chasidic movement; factors that helped it appear and develop; the Besht's biography; his key ideas and teachings; non-duality; immanence; joy; the sacredness of the material world; cleaving to the Divine; prayer as coupling with the Shechinah (Divine Presence); praying in communion with all beings; praying for the Shechinah's needs; praying for our enemies; reading Torah as our autobiography; the importance of perseverance in spiritual practice.
2	Maggid of Mezritch 1704 – 1772 R' Dov Ber ben Avraham, the Besht's successor and architect of Chasidism as a mass-movement.	Eating mindfully with the kabbalistic intention and context of repairing the cosmos.	How the Maggid developed the Besht's ideas into a large and dynamic movement; how the movement spread and how it was opposed; similarities and differences between the Maggid and the Besht; the Maggid's key ideas of <i>tzimtzum</i> (contraction) and <i>tikkun olam</i> (cosmic) repair; Divine service through mundane or physical activities; our ongoing creative relationship with Torah; healing painful or distracting thoughts; healing or completing the Shechinah (Divine Presence).

3	<p>Chernobyler Rebbe 1730 – 1787 R' Menachem Nachum Twersky, student of the Ba'al Shem Tov and the Maggid of Mezritch, and founder of the Chernobyl dynasty. Often referred to by the name of his key work, the Me'or Einayim (Light of the Eyes).</p>	<p>Visualizing the splitting of the Red/Reed Sea to experience inner liberation and open to greater abundance in our lives.</p>	<p>The ebb and flow ('running and returning') of our spiritual lives; finding the Divine even in places where we usually struggle to do so; the Immanence of the Divine in all life, always; the purpose of exile; raising up lost sparks of Divinity through our conversations and interactions with other tribes and peoples; Divine service through everyday activities such as eating and work; finding and healing our own spiritual narratives through the Torah; liberating ourselves from constricted consciousness; the value of not-knowing; seeing others as mirrors for ourselves.</p>
4	<p>Degel Machaneh Ephraim 1748 – 1800 R' Moshe Chaim Ephraim of Sudilkov, grandson of the Ba'al Shem Tov.</p>	<p>Visualizing the four-letter Divine Name to increase concentration and work with challenging thoughts.</p>	<p>The life of this beloved and gifted teacher; our game of spiritual hide-and-seek with the Divine; purifying and healing troubling thoughts and inner wounds; finding Divine light in our inner darkness; seeking the right balance between unifying kindness (Chesed) and measured boundaries (Gevurah); synthesizing those qualities into harmonious beauty (Tiferet); the healing potential of utilizing money correctly; unifying the Shechinah (Divine Presence) with our everyday activities; finding the Shechinah inside our shameful or destructive tendencies; awakening ourselves from unhelpful behavior patterns; awareness of our connection to Nothingness (Ayin); the power of Torah and wisdom to heal our physical beings; radical inclusivity of non-Jews; the essential place of humility in our practice.</p>

5	<p>The schools of Peshischa and Izhbitz. Focusing mostly on: Reb Simchah Bunim 1767 – 1827 and R' Yosef Mordechai Leiner, 1801 – 1854 known as the Mei HaShiloach and founder of the Izhbitz-Radzyn dynasty.</p>	<p>Cultivating a healthy balance of humility and self-esteem</p>	<p>The birth and popularization of Polish Chasidism; the reactions and revolutions against its institutionalization and corruption; the lives and teachings of some of its key teachers (the Noam Elimelech, the Chozev of Lublin, the Holy Jew, and R' Menachem Mendel of Kotzk); the life and teachings of Reb Simchah Bunim and R' Yosef Mordechai Leiner, also known as the Mei HaShiloach; authority vs autonomy; self-awareness and authenticity; the necessity of growth and change; balancing humility and self-esteem; the limits of miracles; our relationship with time and the present moment; balancing joy and humility; radical doubt, uncertainty and humility; the tension between intuition and law or convention; the need to interpret Torah afresh in every generation; the impossibility of judging another's actions or intentions.</p>
6	<p>R' Nachman of Breslov 1772 – 1810 Great-grandson of the Ba'al Shem Tov and founder of the Breslov Chasidic movement.</p>	<p>Hitbodedut (speaking with the Divine in our own words).</p>	<p>The life and teachings of this revered, charismatic and troubled leader; our ability and responsibility to reshape ourselves, our thoughts and relationships; joy and depression; music and dancing; perseverance and determination; finding and appreciating the good in ourselves and others; praying with sincerity; praying in our own words; praying in nature; stories as a means of awakening; overcoming anger and pride; fixing our past mistakes and returning to our best selves (Teshuvah); maintaining resilience and equanimity throughout the challenges of life; the relationship between our internal world and the world around us.</p>