

Hasidism, Chabad, and Jewish Soul-Language

overview with attention to Hebrew language
for Tzedek Chicago's Hebrew Learning Community, from Virginia Avniel Spatz

This began as a few verses from the *Tanya* with some notes to explore Hebrew words for "soul" and ideas about who has one. It expanded to review translation issues and reflect a little historical context. Now it's a long, winding, highly idiosyncratic document -- complete with PSAs on supporting the kind of internet resources we want to see, plus links to a *Teshuvah* [answer, solution] on non-Jewish souls.

To help make sense of what's here, this is a list of contents:

- some verses from the *Tanya* -- תניא ["It is Taught"], part 1: *Likutei Amarim* -- לקוטי אגמרי"ם [Collected Teachings, lit: "Gleanings of Sayings"] -- **p. 9-15**;
- a bunch of stuff about a single word quoted early in the *Tanya* that is also the name of a movement within Judaism, which began in the 18th Century CE -- **p.1-2, 11**;
- scholarly material/*Teshuvah* on "status of non-Jews in Jewish Law and Lore Today" -- **p.15-16**;
- more stuff about recent Jewish history and choices in teachers, resources -- **p.2-8**.

This was created primarily for Hebrew Learning Community, so it starts out with Hebrew words.

Some Basic Words: *Chesed, Chasad, Chasid, G'milut Chasadim*

The Hebrew word **דָּחַ** -- *chet-samech-dalet* -- appears about 280 times in the Hebrew bible.

Usually (246-7 times) as *chesed* **דָּחַ**; twice as *chasad* **דָּחַ**; *chasid* **דָּחַ** is used 32 times **דָּחַ**, *chasidah* -- stork -- appears six times; BDB says it's named for being kindly to its young

***chesed* דָּחַ** is used 247 times in various forms in the Hebrew bible, according to Strong's Concordance; 246 listings in Evan Shoshan Concordance. Usual meanings, according to Brown-Driver-Briggs, are: kindness, grace, giving favors; charity, love. These appear in the Torah for acts and characteristics of people and of God. *Chesed* appears twice in the list of God's 13 attributes: YHVH is abundant in *chesed* and *emet* [truth]; God extends *chesed* to the thousandth generation (Exodus 34:6-7). Later, in Isaiah 57:1, for example, *anshei-chesed* is understood as "people of piety."

***chasad* דָּחַ** shares the same root letters but means "shame" or "reproach." It appears only in Lev 20:17 and Proverbs 14:34 -- which is quoted in the first chapter of the *Tanya*... so how we got here.

...I don't know if these meanings for *chet-samech-dalet* [דָּחַ] are two meanings for one word or two different words. Afraid I am not sure how to tell the difference....

***chasid* דָּחַ** is listed as an adjective but often appears in nominalized form, like "the pious one"

Both "kind" and "pious" meanings carry over into post-biblical usage of **דָּחַ**.

In Modern Hebrew the verb *l'hitchased* -- **לְהִחָדֵד** -- means both "to pretend to be pious (kind, good)" [first meaning] and "to do good." The noun *chasid* -- **דָּחַ** -- means:

Hassid (follower of a Hassidic sect) ; follower of, aficionado, "fan", devotee ; (literary) devout person, God-fearing person, religiously observant person ; righteous, pious, kind

-- from the website, DoItInHebrew.com

NOTE: DoItInHebrew is a handy, straightforward site without strange ads or Zionist content; phonetic and Israeli standard keyboards, plus other search options. Works for free; additional functions with subscription. Those who can afford, please consider subscribing to keep resources like this available to all

(cont. p.2)

(cont. from p.1) Further on חסד

The phrase *g'milut chasadim* -- גְּמִילוּת חֲסָדִים -- appears early in the Mishnah as foundational:

Avot 1:2

שְׁמַעוֹן הַצַּדִּיק הָיָה מְשִׁירֵי כְּנֶסֶת הַגְּדוּלָּה.
הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר,
עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד,
עַל הַתּוֹרָה וְעַל הָעֲבוֹדָה וְעַל גְּמִילוּת חֲסָדִים:

Shimon the Righteous was one of the last of the men of the great assembly. He used to say: the world stands upon three things: the Torah, the Temple service, and *g'milut chasadim*

This phrase is various translated as "acts of piety" and "acts of lovingkindness." It is often referenced in the Talmud and later Jewish writings. See, e.g. "[acts of loving-kindness](#)" at My Jewish Learning. (And do support My Jewish Learning through references, clicks, and, if able, financial contributions.)

Final vocabulary note:

chaser חָסַר, with a *reish* at the end, is unrelated to *chesed* but looks similar in print. (See Alter on Prov 14:34, below). It means "lack, want," and 17 of ~40 biblical appearances of *chaser* are in Proverbs.

Chasidut, CHaBaD, Mitnagid

Chasidut -- חֲסִידוּת -- ("Chasidism, Hasidism") -- as a particular form of piety/practice, emerged in Ashkenazi communities in the mid-18th Century CE. It began with Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, known as *Ba'al Shem Tov* [master of the Good Name], sometimes BeShT, of Ukraine (d. 1760).

Teachings of his great-grandson, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (1772–1810), are also formative; many were preserved by his disciple, Rabbi Nathan (Noson) of Breslov, who added his own teachings. This tradition is also called "Breslover."

Important elements of practice are *devekut* -- דְּבִקּוּת "clinging" or "attachment" to God -- intention in prayer and action; storytelling and music; and a close relationship with a rebbe [teacher, leader]. **Chasidut** is built on kabbalistic thought, based on the *Zohar* and other works -- these texts are beyond the scope here, except to point to this note: "The belief in the superiority of Jews (or Jewish souls) over non-Jews contradicts the basic laws or teachings of the *Torah* and of Rabbinic Judaism...and should not be considered part of accepted Jewish belief" -- see p.15 below.

Chabad -- not a Hebrew word but an acronym for **Chochmah, Binah, Da'at** [wisdom, understanding, knowledge] -- is a specific set of views within Hasidism. It was founded in 1775 by Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, Belarus (1745–1812). A Lubavitch, a Russian town associated with Chabad sometimes modifies or substitutes for "Chabad." "Lubavitcher" is another name for this tradition.

As Hasidism grew in popularity, **Mitnagid** [lit: those who oppose] also developed through the 18th and 19th Centuries, promoting law/study over emotional or mystical experience. Chabad, according to some scholars, emerged from an attempt to center Hasidism on text, law, and study, allowing *Chasidut* -- or at least Chabad -- to be seen as "authentic" Judaism. (See below.)

Sefaria.org offers a substantial library of Hasidic texts: Early Works, Breslov, Chabad, Ishbitz, etc. "Browse the Library" or directly opt for [Chasidut](https://www.sefaria.org/texts/Chasidut) -- <https://www.sefaria.org/texts/Chasidut>. In addition to sharing whole texts to explore, Sefaria links these with Tanakh study pages, so that "Chasidut" turns up in the sidebar for related bible verses.

"Authentic" Judaism and Authoritative Teaching

Chabad has long sought to appear as "authentic" Judaism -- perhaps, as noted above, originally in response to criticism of more text-centered opponents of *Chasidut*. They succeeded in recent decades through marketing and by engaging military and carceral settings, where few Jewish institutions worked. Instead of promoting wider Jewish study and practice, in at least some of its variety, they engage in cult-like exclusion of non-Chabad voices, seek to define who counts as a Jew, actively denigrate other movements within Judaism, and call non-Jews expendable when perceived as a threat. Two examples:

...[R' Yitzchak] Ginsburgh's...teachings hold that it is acceptable Jewish practice to kill non-Jews so long as "it is clear that they will grow up to harm us."

– Anton Goodman, Rabbis for Human Rights, *Haaretz*, Mar 1, 2023, opinion on settler violence

Note: Ginsburgh (b. 1944) is associated with Chabad, and his teachings appear on their website (as of Feb 21, 2024); Ginsburgh is among those who condoned the 1994 massacre by a settler of 29 Palestinians praying at the Ibrahim Mosque in Hebron. <https://tinyurl.com/GoodmanHaaretz>

My considered opinion, as I have reiterated it on several occasions privately and publicly, is based on the undisputable Halachic decision formulated by Rambam (Hilechot Teshuvah 3:8), according to which the doctrines and ideology of the Conservative and Reform movements can only be classed in the category of heretical movements which have plagued our people at one time or another, only to disappear again, having no basis in our everlasting Torah, Toras Emes, Toras Chaim. -- R' Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994), 7/21/1959.

Note: still on Chabad website (as of 2024/02/22); shows up when searching "interdenominational thought," e.g. -- <https://tinyurl.com/RebbeConsRef>

On-line and in-person, Chabad cites only other Chabad views. Where they are the only, most visible, or only sanctioned option -- as in prisons -- they are often seen as "**the** authentic Judaism." Meanwhile, they routinely limit engagement with those who don't fit their idea of Jewish, effectively controlling who counts as a Jew in some settings....Matir Asurim: The Jewish Care Network for Incarcerated People does some work to address this situation. But there is so much more to be done.

And while Chabad philosophy is not the only, or earliest, set of particularistic Jewish views, they are extremely visible proponents of Jewish supremacy and unusually well-positioned to promote that view as standard Judaism. This is dangerous to Jews everywhere and to the wider world.

In 2016, the Conservative movement issued a *Teshuvah* (see p.15-16, here) declaring any teaching that implies "**a distinction between Jewish souls and those of non-Jews...no longer authoritative. These statements are to be rejected, as are any beliefs in racial superiority or inferiority.**" The *Teshuvah* asks "Jewish leaders and educators to incorporate these findings in their preaching and teaching and to emphasize them in all their educational endeavors." In particular, they call for rejection of the *Tanya* (Chabad) and *Torat HaMelekh* (from an Israeli group) and any discriminatory civil laws.

With all this in mind, some general pleas:

- Many schools of Jewish thought tend to cite teachers trained in their own movement and to avoid -- by habit, network, or deliberate intention -- widely opposing viewpoints.
 - When using movement-centered sources, note the movement for yourself and in any citation;
 - Whenever possible, use pluralist Jewish sources for general Jewish research;
 - Do not use Chabad -- which has declared its boundaries so impermeable -- as a general Jewish reference source, **cite Chabad only on Chabad-specific matters**; and exercise caution in citing the *Tanya* or teaching Chabad ideas

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(cont. from p.3)

- **Support pluralist Jewish reference sources on-line**
 - through clicks, citations, links, and, if able, finances;
 - declare that you (and your organization) prioritize pluralist and non-racist reference material;
 - contribute writing, editing, etc., if possible, to pluralist and intentional sites;
 - **help reduce the size of Chabad's web-print by not linking to them or giving them clicks;** if inclined to explore Chabad-related text, do so via Sefaria or other non-proprietary sources.
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Some Statistics for Background

Demographics

The Torah says that counting people is dangerous. And there are many issues involved with how Jews are counted as well as what counts as affiliation, membership, participation, etc. Still, it's important to have some idea of the size of Jewish communities around the world and where Hasidism and Chabad fit within that.

The Jewish Agency (World Zionist Org branch) reported 15.7M Jews worldwide in 2023, with roughly 6M in the U.S. Various sources report the Hasidic population at between 5-10% of the total (~10% of Jews in NYC). Chabad "adherents" are roughly 13% of that or 0.6-1.2% of the world Jewish population -- in other words, ~100,000-180,000 Jews worldwide are Chabad adherents.

More -- approximately 1M US Jews, according to the 2020 Pew survey -- participate regularly or sometimes in Chabad activities. That number is heavily Orthodox and leans toward families that are not interfaith. Moreover, 3.5M U.S. Jews say they NEVER participate in Chabad activities.

Further Pew 2020 details -- U.S. Jewish population: 5.8 million. Of those, 62% say they never participate in Chabad activities, and 21% do so rarely; roughly 12% sometimes participate with Chabad, and 5% do so often. In addition: "Chabad participants are more likely than other Jews to have a Jewish spouse, and they have lower levels of education, on average, than Jews who do not participate in Chabad activities."

Chabad participation is more common among Orthodox Jews: 46% say they participate at least sometimes, compared with 25% of Conservatives, 12% of Reform, and 8% of those not identifying with a branch of Judaism.

There has been a lot of talk in recent years about how much Chabad is growing, how Jewish congregations should be learning their tricks, etc., Less frequent is talk about whom Chabad doesn't, cannot by design, reach; how Chabad does not speak for all Jews, or even for all Hasidim; or the harm inflicted by its texts and teachings....

Web Traffic

Chabad was an early and expert adopter of internet SEO marketing. I know very little on this, so glad to hear from anyone who knows more. But here's what my amateur investigation found:

One traffic site I visited that gave size estimates (lost the link!! sorry) listed Chabad.org and BibleHub.com as among the largest sites on the web. My Jewish Learning was larger than 92% and Sefaria was larger than 88% of sites.

Chabad.org's traffic, per the free Ahrefs checker, is larger than most other Jewish study sites. Chart next page. SemRush lists My Jewish Learning, Aish.com, and Jewish Virtual Library as competitors for Chabad -- but all seem far behind in their traffic numbers and "authority score."

For comparison (however apples to oranges), Svara's monthly traffic is 556, and Tzedek's is 56. Biblehub.com (Christian): 2.1M/month. (cont.p.5)

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from Ahrefs web traffic checker:

*Chabad.org: 1.3 million/month
My Jewish Learning: 863,500 (pluralist site)**
*ReformJudaism.org: 223,400 (a URJ site)
Mechon-Mamre: 204,400 (old text site)
Sefaria: 182,600 (general Jewish text sources)**
Aish.com: 159,000 (private, zionist education)
TheTorah.com: 35,300 (academic bible study)

*ou.org: 17,500 (Orthodox Union)
*jtsa.edu: 11,700 (Conservative)
929.il: 10,300 (Bible study "chapter a day")
opensiddur.org: 6,800 (open source Jewish stuff)
*ReconstructingJudaism.org: 5,200
Ritual Well: 5,100 (once feminist, now wider)
*movement-specific

**Note that My Jewish Learning + Sefaria traffic matches Chabad's. This combination provides a pluralist, diverse, inclusion-sensitive Jewish study platform that rivals Chabad's reach -- and, FWIW, both sites INCLUDE Chabad materials/perspectives (maybe too uncritically?) among its resources...

...Not sure what these demographics and/or web data imply in terms of action. But I believe Judaism as a whole will be better off when we reclaim the internet, the stamp of "Jewish authenticity," and associated fund-raising and political clout from any group seeking to stake out "the authentic Judaism."

***Chasidut* and Beyond in the 20th Century CE: Neo-Hasidism, Do-It-Yourself Judaism, and Jewish Renewal**

Neo-Hasidism

Two of the most popular teachers in what became "Neo-Hasidism," each started out as a *shaliach* -- "messenger" or campus outreach leader -- for the Lubavitcher movement and then left.

Zalman Schachter-Shalomi (1924 – 2014), known as Reb Zalman, was ordained through Chabad; sometime in the 1960s, he and the movement separated in large part over his interest in sacramental use of LSD.

Reb Zalman helped popularize the contemporary concept of "Jewish meditation" and learned and taught with meditation teachers of several traditions; helped launch the field of Spiritual Direction among Jews; and was instrumental in founding the Jewish Renewal movement and the [ALEPH alliance](#) --ALEPH.org. (NOT to be confused with Aleph Institute, Aleph-institute.org.)

Shlomo Carlebach (1925 – 1994), known as Reb Shlomo and as "the singing rabbi," was ordained through an orthodox yeshiva before joining Lubavitch. He left Chabad in 1954 but continued to influence "*ba'alei teshuvah*"

[singular: *ba'al*; lit: masters of return], Jews who (re-)adopt orthodox practice as adults], and to shape communal music and prayer for decades. He introduced many non-Hasidic Jews to the wordless *nigun* as a practice to enhance prayer and build community. Prayer services using his melodies and style (a "Carlebach minyan") are prevalent in otherwise "traditional" orthodox communities. Carlebach influenced many (More, including his legacy of sexual impropriety, at [Wikipedia page](#).)

One recent article includes these two teachers as examples of different approaches to neo-hasidism:

- One, as in Carlebach's teaching, is/was "a matter of emphasis rather than essence."
- Another, exemplified by Reb Zalman, "proudly embraced heterodox forms of Jewish practice that are at odds with the Orthodox understanding of obligation."

See "[*Neo-Hasidism and Its Discontents*](#)."

The anthology reviewed is *Contemporary Uses and Forms of Hasidut*. Shlomo Zuckier, ed. (NY: Yeshiva Univ. Press/Ktav, 2022). The (cont. p.6)

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review, plus several additional pieces on Neo-Hasidism from some years back, are available at The Lehrhaus....

...The Lehrhaus "is a forum to generate thoughtful and dynamic discourse among individuals within the Orthodox community and beyond who enjoy exploring the depth and diversity of Jewish ideas." They include women's scholarship and voices from time to time and include queer perspectives on occasion. They try to be transparent in their assumptions on many issues, but simply assume readers support the nation of Israel, e.g. Their scholarship and interests are broad, and there is good stuff to read with lots of references to follow, if so inclined....

Shaping the Neo-Hasidic Canon -- appeared a few years back at *Jewish Currents*. It reviews a set of earlier volumes on neo-hasidism and offers some also offers some valuable background....

...*Jewish Currents* is more of a political/current events site but also includes Jewish learning. "Founded in 1946, *Jewish Currents* is a magazine committed to the rich tradition of thought, activism, and culture on the Jewish left and the left more broadly.... Since relaunching in 2018 with a new staff and design, we have established ourselves as an essential voice in the contemporary conversation."....

Sad, crucial note: The *Jewish Currents* piece well predates Arthur Green's removal from the Hebrew College rabbinical program and community. The far more recent Lehrhaus piece mentions this.

Allegations of sexual misconduct, Green's resignation, and then removal from the community have been unfolding for several months and are just now (early 2024) becoming generally public. This is an active heartbreak for those who were directly harmed and for many who have been influenced by his teaching and leadership over the last 50 years. This Feb 5 JTA article explores some of the complex feelings for many in this evolving situation: "...[students and followers reckon with the fallout](#)." Among active questions noted in the article is **if/how to teach the Torah of someone who has harmed people still living**. This applies

also to Carlebach and others in- and outside hasidic-inspired communities.

Some stuff Jews need to consider, IMO: Sexual impropriety is, of course, not universal among (neo-)hasids or exclusive to them. But hasidism's focus on a close relationship between rebbe and disciples means that power dynamics are precarious to begin and that repercussions when things go wrong are enormous. In addition, from my experience: the Jewish world has barely begun to examine complicated power dynamics that emerged in the mid-20th Century in the wake of neo-hasidism, Do-It-Yourself Judaism, and the havurah and Renewal Movements.

Do-It-Yourself?

The idea in the *Jewish Catalogs* (the first marked 50 years in 2023) was to empower individual Jews and independent communities. But the images used to show engaged love of Judaism are almost exclusively of hasidic men -- just one way the catalogs and the havurah movement sought something new but remained inside romanticized, old patterns. DIY attempts easily fall back on experts to grant "authenticity," and, too often (in my experiences), drift toward unacknowledged rebbe-worship. Fifty years is not a long time, Jewishly, and we still have a lot to work out in terms of creating new forms of community. Quite apart from Chabad issues, hasidism -- like all of our traditions, I suppose -- is a complicated legacy.

Three Books of Note

Martin Buber. *Tales of the Hasidim* (1946, English 1947; Schocken 1975, 1991, etc.). Credited with increasing interest in hasidic Judaism, among English speakers particularly, from the mid-20th Century onward, also criticized as nostalgic. Not sure if same critique applies to the next listing:

Zalman Schachter-Shalomi. *Wrapped in a holy flame: teachings and tales of the Hasidic masters* (Jossey-Bass, 2003; Wiley & Sons, 2012).

Hasidism: A New History. Multiple authors. Princeton, 2017. See also this review [Susannah Heschel](#) and this one by [Heschel and Shaul Maggid](#).

Renewal

Two (of many) widely influential teachers in Jewish Renewal were both ordained by Reb Zalman, as well as in the Reconstructionism.

Rabbi Shefa Gold teaches Torah, chanting, and meditation. She composes and shares chants and meditation prompts based on a range of Jewish texts, including a series based on the portion of the week. Some of her chants are so ubiquitous -- across movements -- as to be thought "from Sinai" in some settings. She founded and co-directs C-DEEP: Center for Devotional, Energy and Ecstatic Practice, as well as other programming for ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal. She wrote a number of books and offers professional development. <https://www.rabbishefagold.com/>

Rabbi Marcia Prager is rabbi of P'nai Or Renewal Community, the Philadelphia congregation founded by Reb Zalman; long-time faculty of the Davvenen' Leadership Training Institute; and dean emerita of the ordination program at ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal. She is author of *The Path of Blessing: Experiencing the Energy and Abundance of the Divine* (Bell Tower, 1998; Jewish Lights, 2003) as well as prayerbooks. She is also a visual artist, storyteller, and therapist. P'nai Or's website is a little wonky, but her books and teaching links are at <http://marciaprager.com/>

I don't know if Gold or Prager considers herself a neo-hasid, but I do know that men take up most neo-hasid space. For example: Prager's testimonial is featured prominently on *New Hasidism: Roots and New Hasidism: Branches* (JPS, 2019), but she is not included inside the anthology, and most contributions are from men (ALL in the first volume are from men; also, 14 of 15 contributors to the 2022 *Hasidut* anthology are men.)

ALEPH alliance supports "new creative efforts that draw upon the rich legacy of Jewish mystical/hasidic traditions and the deep wisdom of Jewish life and practice." It is also dedicated to diversity and egalitarianism. Maybe these goals don't overlap with neo-hasidism's development?? Surely, someone has written about this, but it's not something I've been following -- sorry!

More related resources

Haphazard sampling of ways to explore hasidic-inspired and/or Jewish Renewal teaching, practice

Reb Mimi Feigelson has done a lot of scholarly work on the Ishbitzer hasidim and regularly teaches from hasidic wisdom. She is an inspiring teacher with great depths to share. Sometimes she is speaking/writing in Hebrew, and sometimes she is addressing an audience she assumes is orthodox. This short piece, "[How do you know when you are home?](#)" is in an example of more widely applicable, English teaching. (She was close to Reb Shlomo and does reference his work.) <https://youtu.be/-ewXg8Mgiqq?si=uYUD-vyTTL-gNq83>

More on Reb Mimi here at the [Jewish Women's Archive](#) <https://jwa.org/rabbis/narrators/feigelson-mimi#>

I met Reb Mimi at **Drisha Institute** in NYC, the first program (est. 1979) of advanced Talmud study for women. Their offerings have expanded a great deal since then, and many are free. Not all of the material is easy, and some will assume zionist or particularistic views, but many lovely offerings, including whole classes relating to meditation, silence, music, and more. Check out their [YouTube channel](#) (website in reconstruction).

YIVO, the Yiddish culture research institute offers some thorough Europe-based history, including this [five-part article](#) with references. <https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Hasidism>

Mi Yodeya [Who knows?] on Stack Exchange is a font of a particular sort of learning/discussion, which can be enlightening -- in terms both of content and of how particular communities view certain topics, teachers, and authorities. Just a few related examples on Judaism.StackExchange.com:

"[Non-Jewish Godly Souls.](#)"

<https://judaism.stackexchange.com/questions/129612/non-jewish-g-dly-souls>

"[What do people mean when they say Kaballah?](#)"

<https://judaism.stackexchange.com/questions/6041/what-do-people-mean-when-they-say-kaballah/6051#6051>

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A Queer Nigun Project is just what it sounds like. There are recordings available as well as information about events and starting up a queer nigun circle. (Rena Branson, one of the co-founders, composes and sings amazing music focused on healing and similar Jewish themes-- see bandcamp or soundcloud etc.)

Rabbi Yael Levy's A Way In offers weekly Torah meditations, classes, retreats, and links to books and other writings. She was ordained through Reconstructionist movement and works with the Institute for Jewish Spirituality (below). <https://www.awayin.org/>

Jericho Vincent is the spiritual leader of The Temple of the Stranger (see Instagram). They work primarily in the areas of ancient wisdom for healing and queer Torah. I have been moved by their teachings, but I don't know them personally. Look for @thealef

Institute for Jewish Spirituality is another resource with many related offerings from a variety of teachers.

Rising Song Institute -- offerings on music and its relationship to prayer and community building, plus links to individual artists, songs, publications. Listings for events.

Open Siddur -- <https://opensiddur.org/> -- has many resources for prayer and study, from many perspectives. But its founders are active in Hasidic and neo-hasidic teaching and so regularly add resources specific to Hasidism, as do some other contributors.

Ayin Press has some great, related stuff on-line and in print. <https://ayinpress.org/>

Ben Yehuda Press Renewal collection

Return to the Place: The Magic, Meditation, and Mystery of Sefer Yetzirah. Jill Hammer.

(paper-saving measure)

End notes for "Status of Non-Jews in Jewish Law and Lore" excerpt (below, p.16)

22. Kuzari I:103. See Brill, 66.

23 See Isaac Husik, A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy, JPS 1948, 162ff- AlChazari I 99ff, 53ff.

24 3 Jewish Philosophers, Hans Lewy and Isaak Heinemann, JPS 1960, 35.

25 Ibid 45-47.

26 Daniel Matt The Zohar I 47a, 252

27 See Be-Shallah 2:45a-b, Matt edition, (Stanford University Press) II 210-213.

28 Katz ibid 140-1, 146. --- Jacob Katz, Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Studies in Jewish-Gentile Relations in Medieval and Modern Times, Behrman House, New York, 1961

29 See Brill ibid 164-5 --- Alan Brill, Judaism and Other Religions: Models of Understanding, 24. See Soncino Baba Mezia 651 note 7 for an unsuccessful apologetic interpretation of this statement -- "...only, of course, from the point of view of ritual defilement.....it is simply a Talmudic idiom denoting 'inhuman'... (!)."

30 The Tanya of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, Elucidated By Rabbi Yosef. Wineberg. Translated from Yiddish by Rabbi Levy Wineberg and Rabbi Sholom B. Wineberg. Edited

Tanya, Part 1. Likutei Amarim

Tanya, תניא ["It is Taught"] -- *Likutei Amarim*, לקוטי אַמְרִים ["Collected Teachings"]

This publication is offered on Sefaria by Kehot Publication Society, the publishing division of the Lubavitch movement. Kehot was established in 1942 by the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, and continued by the seventh, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson. The materials, therefore, are coming from one particular movement within Judaism.

Kehot provides an English translation as well as notes. What follows is a few verses from the beginning of the book -- chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, and 8 in Part 1 -- trying to capture some ideas about "soul."

In some cases, I thought Kehot notes might be obscure so added my own. These are marked as "[VS]." I thought the presentation that follows might help clarify a few things. But if it doesn't, and/or if you want to see more of the *Tanya*, you can find the whole book on Sefaria.

A few vocabulary words that are not explained in the Kehot notes:

kelipah -- shell, skin; containers for holiness, in the Zohar. Plural: *klippot*

sitra achara -- lit: other side; often "evil" or "unholy" side

nogah -- glorious

nefesh elokit -- Godly soul -- *nefesh* = soul. As an addition to the *nefesh beheima* [animal soul].

elokit ~ Godly. Substituting "k" for "h" in *elohim* and related words is a custom for avoiding saying any name of God by mistake or to accidentally destroying papers with God's name.

On the *Neshamah*, which is different than the *nefesh*, Chabad's Eliezer Shemtov writes:

After studying the matter for many years and having countless conversations with Jews of every degree of observance and belief, I think that the most convincing and coherent answer is that the distinguishing element of the Jew is the *Neshamah* (soul) that every Jew possesses. The soul of the Jew is different than the soul of the non-Jew. They have different characteristics, potentials and needs. Every Jew has essentially the same type of soul as any other Jew. This Jewish soul is inherited from his or her mother. It is the common denominator that connects the Russian Jew with the Syrian, Yemenite, Canadian or Uruguayan Jew, even though they do not speak the same language and may have different customs and habits. The only meaningful difference between one Jew and another is the level and intensity of expression of this common essence. In some, this essence manifests itself constantly, while in others, it expresses itself once a year and in others it may express itself once in their lifetime. -- from an article on Chabad.org about intermarriage

[NOTE: See also Conservative *Teshuvah* about this and related teachings -- page 15 here]

The text speaks of *klippot* that are "unclean," using the expression "*tamei*" -- which usually means "ritual impurity."

In several places, the Hebrew lists four words "פְּשָׁט־רְמֵז־דְּרוֹשׁ־שִׁסּוּד" while the English uses the single word "*Pardes*." The Kehot notes include an explanation, but not always where the expression appears. *Pardes* = "orchard," but it's also an acronym for four methods of Torah interpretation:

P'shat [plain sense], *Remez* [hinted, allegorical], *Derash* [sermon, exploration], *Sod* [hidden, mystical]

*Tanya, part 1,
Likutei Amarim, 1:15-18*

English is from Kehot Society translation, via Sefaria

Notes from Kehot trans., unless marked "VS"

אך ביאור הענין, על פי מה שכתב הרב חיים ויטאל זכרוננו לברכה ... דלכל איש ישראל, אחד צדיק ואחד רשע, יש שתי נשמות, דכתיב: [26] "וּנְשָׁמוֹת אֲנִי עֲשִׂיתִי" [27] שְׁהֵן שְׁתֵּי נַפְשׁוֹת - נַפֵּשׁ אַחַת מִצַּד הַקְּלִיפָה וְסוֹטְרָא אַחֲרָא, וְהִיא הַמִּתְלַבֶּשֶׁת בְּדָם הָאָדָם לְהַחִיּוֹת הַגּוּף, וְכִדְכָתִיב: "כִּי נַפֵּשׁ הַבָּשָׂר בְּדָם הִיא", [28] וּמִמֶּנָּה בָּאוֹת כָּל הַמַּדּוֹת רְעוֹת, מְאַרְבַּע יְסוּדוֹת רְעִים שְׂבָה, דְּהֵיִינוּ: כַּעַס וְגֵאוּהָ - מִיְסוּד הָאִשׁ שֶׁנִּגְבְּהָ לְמַעְלָה, וְתַאֲוֹת הַתַּעֲנוּגִים - מִיְסוּד הַמַּיִם, כִּי הַמַּיִם מְצַמִּיחִים כָּל מִיְנֵי תַעֲנוּג, וְהוֹלִלוֹת וְלִיצְנוּת וְהִתְפָּאָרוֹת וְדַבָּרִים בְּטָלִים - מִיְסוּד הָרוּחַ, וְעֲצָלוֹת וְעֲצָבוֹת - מִיְסוּד הָעֶפֶר.

וגם מדות טובות שבטבע כל ישראל בתולדותם, כמו רחמנות וגמילות חסדים - באות ממנה.

כי בישראל נפש זו דקליפה, היא מקליפת נוגה, שיש בה גם כן טוב, והיא מסוד "עץ הדעת טוב ורע": [29]

מה שאין כן נפשות אומות העולם, הן משאר קליפות טמאות, שאין בהן טוב כלל כמו שכתוב... ** וכל טיבו דעבדין האומות לגרמיהו עבדין, וכדאיתא בגמרא [30] על פסוק: "וְחֶסֶד לְאוֹמִים חֲטָאת" -- שְׁכָל צְדָקָה וְחֶסֶד שְׂאוֹמוֹת הָעוֹלָם עוֹשִׂין, אֵינָן אֶלָּא לְהִתְיַהֵר כּו':

1:15) The explanation [of the questions raised above] is to be found in the light of what Rabbi Chaim Vital, z"l, wrote* that in every Jew, whether righteous or wicked, are two souls, as it is written [26], "The *neshamot* (souls) which I have made," [27] [alluding to] two souls.† There is one soul‡ which originates in the *kelipah* and *sitra achara*, [and] which is clothed in the blood of a human being, giving life to the body, as is written, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood." [28] From it stem all the evil characteristics deriving from the four evil elements which are contained in it.

1:16) And also the good characteristics which are to be found in the innate nature of all Israel, such as mercy and benevolence.

1:17) For in the case of Israel, this soul of the *kelipah* is derived from *kelipat nogah*, which also contains good, as it originates in the esoteric "tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil." [29]

1:18) The souls of the nations of the world, however, emanate from the other, unclean *kelipot* which contain no good whatsoever, as is written* that all the good that the nations do is done from selfish motives. So the Gemara [30] comments on the verse, "The kindness of the nations is sin" (Proverbs 14:34)** -- that all the charity and kindness done by the nations of the world is only for their own self-glorification, and so on.

*[VS] Note: these citations appear within the Kehot translation; separated here for space, maybe easier reading.

**Shaar HaKedushah* [and in *Etz Chaim*, Portal 50, ch. 2]

26) Hebrew text should read וּכְדָכֵיב instead of דְּכָתִיב as amended (see *Luach HaTikkun*), because the Biblical text is here only loosely interpreted, for the word "souls" refers to the collective noun, not to two souls.

† [VS] "amended text" in (26) seems to mean the simpler "as it is written," vs. the longer expression with "כ" = like," i.e., "similar to such as it's written." Thus, the "loosely interpreted"?

The cited words --

וּנְשָׁמוֹת אֲנִי עֲשִׂיתִי
v'n'shamot ani asiti

-- use the plural "*n'shamot*," apparently collective rather than indicating two souls. The same verse (Isaiah 57:16) also uses the singular *ruach*:

כִּי לֹא לְעוֹלָם אָרִיב וְלֹא לְנֶצַח אֶקְצוֹף כִּי-רוּחַ מִלְּפָנַי יִעֲטוֹף וּנְשָׁמוֹת אֲנִי עֲשִׂיתִי:

27) Isaiah 57:16

28) Leviticus 17:11

29) Cf. *Zohar* I:12b**

*in *Etz Chaim*, Portal 49, ch.3

30) B. Baba Batra 10b

**[VS] -- see next page (11) on Prov 14:34, See p.15 on *Zohar* I:12b

Hasidism, Chabad, and Jewish soul-language: TANYA, p.11

Verse 1:18 quotes Proverbs 14:34. Most contemporary translations do not match the sense of what the *Tanya*, and the Talmud before it, are reading. So, here is a lot of detail, exploring the difference.

Proverbs 14:34:

[*tzedek t'romeim goy*] צְדָקָה תְרוֹמֵם גּוֹי
[*v'chesed l'umim chatat*] וְחֶסֶד לְאֻמִּים חַטָּאת

Tzedek = “righteousness” or “justice.” *Goy* = “nation” [singular].

Umim = “peoples” [plural]. *Chatat* = “sin offering” or just “sin.”

"*T'romeim*" is related to the title of the recent Torah portion, *Terumah*, that idea of lifting up.

As noted on page 1 above, "*Chesed*" in the Hebrew Bible almost always means “kindness” or “goodness, affection,” sometimes “purity.” And this shows up in the cited Talmud:

It is taught: Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai said to his students: My sons, what is the meaning of that which the verse states: “Righteousness exalts a nation, but the kindness of the peoples is sin” (Proverbs 14:34)? Rabbi Eliezer answered and said: “Righteousness exalts a nation”; these are the people of Israel, as it is written: “And who is like your people Israel, one nation on the earth?” (I Chronicles 17:21). “But the kindness of the peoples is sin,” meaning that all the acts of charity and kindness that the nations of the world perform is counted as a sin for them, since they perform them only to elevate themselves in prestige... [the passage continues with other students suggesting ways the nations of the world use "kindness" deceptively; there is **no conclusion**, just drashing on the confusing Proverbs verse, and **nothing about souls**]

-- B. Baba Batra 10b (Sefaria's Davidson/Steinsaltz translation)

Rashi says: “They are the heathens, who rob one to give another.” That commentary, in turn, influences the translation in Rashi Ketuvim by Rabbi Shraga Silverstein (one of the Sefaria translation options):

...the lovingkindness of the peoples, [(who steal from one and give to another)] is a sin.

NOTE, PLEASE: Both Baba Batra and Rashi accuse "the nations" of bad intentions and behavior.

In contrast, the *Tanya* gives "the nations" an inherently bad nature

-- and attributes that reading to a Talmud passage which does not say that.

More on דָּוָן and its translation:

Most English translations – 9 of 10 on Sefaria (all but that Rashi one) and 35 of 37 on BibleHub* – take a tack similar to JPS 1985: “Righteousness exalts a nation. **Sin is a reproach** to any people.”

"**Reproach**" here matches the second, far rarer definition of "*chesed*" in Brown-Driver-Briggs:

II. דָּוָן noun masculine shame, reproach, only absolute: ח' וְהָיָה Leviticus 20:17 (H) it is a shame (shameful thing); ח' חַטָּאת לְאֻמִּים Proverbs 14:34 sin is a reproach to peoples.

*The two BibleHub exceptions to "*chesed* = reproach" -- 1896 and current "Literal" -- use the more common definition **I** for *chesed* (p.1 here), but neither matches the *Tanya* or Talmud passages.

Another exception is Robert Alter's assumption of a scribal error. He translates Prov 14:34 as “Righteousness raises a nation, but offense leads to want among peoples” and add this note:

Want. Following scholarly consensus and the Septuagint, this translation replaces the Masoretic *chesed* [ends in *dalet*], “kindness,” with *cheser* [ends in *reish*], “want.” The difference between the Hebrew graphemes for *d* and *r* is quite small.

VS: Alter rarely cites sources and doesn't here. So his claim of scholarly consensus is difficult to check. Moreover, at Lev 20:17 -- the only other place in the whole bible that BDB uses that second, rarer definition -- Alter uses "*chesed* = vileness,” with no explanation and no claim of scribal error.

Tanya, part 1,
Likutei Amarim, 2:1-4

English is from Kehot Society
translation, via Sefaria

Notes from Kehot trans.,
unless marked "VS"

וְנֶפֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִיית בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, הִיא חֵלֶק
אֵלּוֹהַּ מִמַּעַל מִמָּשׁ [1], כְּמוֹ
שֶׁכָּתוּב: "וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו נִשְׁמַת
חַיִּים" [2], וְ"אַתָּה נִפְחָת בִּי" [3],
וְכִמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב בְּזֵהָר, מֵאֵן דְּנִפַּח
מִתּוֹכִיהַ נְפֹחַ, פִּירוּשׁ, מִתּוֹכִיּוֹתָו
וּמִפְּנִימִיּוֹתָו, שֶׁתּוֹכִיּוֹתָו וּפְנִימִיּוֹתָו
הַחַיּוֹת שֶׁבְּאָדָם מוֹצִיא בְּנִפְיַחְתּוֹ
בְּכַח:

2:1) The second soul [*nefesh*] of a Jew is truly a part of G–d above [1], as it is written, “He breathed into his nostrils a soul of life” [2], and “You have breathed it [the soul] into me” [3]. And it is written in the *Zohar*, “He who blows, blows from within him,” that is to say, from his inwardness and his innermost, for it is something of his internal and innermost vitality that man emits through exhaling with force.

- 1) Job 31:2; cf. also Psalms 16:5; 73:26; Jeremiah 10:16.
- 2) Gen 2:7, comp. Nachmanides' Commentary ad loc.
- 3) Morning Liturgy, B. Berachot 60b.

כֹּה, עַל דְּרָגָה מְשָׁל, נִשְׁמוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל
עָלוּ בְּמַחְשְׁבָהּ [4], כְּדָכְתִּיב: "בְּנֵי
בְכוֹרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל" [5], "בְּנִים אַתֶּם
לֵה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם" [6] פִּירוּשׁ, כְּמוֹ
שֶׁהֵבֵן נִמְשָׁךְ מִמוֹחַ הָאָב, כֹּה
כְּבִיכּוֹל נִשְׁמַת כָּל אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל
נִמְשָׁכָה מִמַּחְשְׁבָתּוֹ וְחֻקְמָתּוֹ
יִתְבַּרְרֶה, דְּאִיהוּ חִפִּים וְלֹא בְּחֻקְמָה
[7], יְדִיעָא, אֵלּוֹהַּ הוּא וְחֻקְמָתּוֹ
אֶחָד, וְכִמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב הֶרְמֵב"ם,

2:2) So, allegorically speaking, have the souls of Jews risen in the [Divine] thought [4], as it is written, “My firstborn son is Israel” [5] and “You are the children of the L–rd your G–d” [6] That is to say, just as a child is derived from his father’s brain, so--to use an anthropomorphism*] the soul of each Israelite is derived from His thought and wisdom, blessed be He. For He is wise—but not through a knowable wisdom [7], because He and His wisdom are one; and as Maimonides says...

- 4) Cf. Breishit Rabbah 1:4
- 5) Exodus 4:22
- 6) Deuteronomy 14:1

כֹּךְ כְּבִיכּוֹל * [VS:]
kakh kib'yachol, is literally: "thus you could say." Klein dictionary says it's used "elliptically in anthropomorphic expressions"

7) *Tikkunei Zohar*, Introduction 12b
[VS:] This work is a separate commentary on the *Zohar*.

**

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שֶׁהוּא הַמַּדְעַ וְהוּא הַיּוֹדֵעַ כּו',
וְדָבָר זֶה אֵין בִּיכּוֹלֵת הָאָדָם
לְהִבִּינּוּ עַל בּוֹרְיוֹ כּו' [15],
כְּדָכְתִּיב: "הֲחִקֵּר אֵלּוֹהַּ תִּמְצָא"
[16], וְכָתִיב: "כִּי לֹא מַחְשְׁבוֹתַי
מַחְשְׁבוֹתֶיכֶם וְגו'" [17].

2:4) that “He is the Knowledge and Knower...and this is not within the power of any man to comprehend clearly...” [15] as it is written, “Can you find G–d by searching?” [16] And it is also written, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts....” [17]

** [VS:] All of Kehot's verse 2:3 is a footnote-ish insert, explaining that Maimonides does not oppose the Jewish-souls-born-of-God's-thought idea. This has been, is still, a point of contention between Chabad and other Jews.

- 15) *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* 2:10
- 16) Job 11:7
- 17) Isaiah 55:8

Tanya, Part 1,
Likutei Amarim, Misc.

English is from Kehot Society
translation, via Sefaria

Notes from Kehot trans.,
unless marked "VS"

השכל כולל: חכמה בינה ודעת,
והמדות הן: אהבת ה' ופחדו
ויראתו וזלזולו כו'.

3:3) The intellect includes
chochmah, binah, and daat
(*chabad*), while the *middot* are love
of G-d, dread and awe of Him,
glorification of Him, and so forth.

chochmah, binah, and daat =
wisdom, understanding, and
knowledge

middot = values

ועוד [1] יש לכל נפש אלהית
שלשה לבושים, שהם מחשבה
דבור ומעשה של תרי"ג * מצות
התורה; ששקשה אדם מקיים
במעשה כל מצות מעשיות,
ובדבור הוא עוסק בפירושו כל
תרי"ג מצות והלכותיהן,
ובמחשבה הוא משיג כל מה
שאפשר לו להשיג
בפשט רמז דרוש טו [4]
התורה - הרי כללות תרי"ג אברי
נפשו [5] מלובשים בתרי"ג מצות
התורה.

4:1) In addition [1]. every divine
soul (*nefesh elokit*) possesses three
garments, viz., thought, speech, and
action, [expressing themselves] in
the 613* commandments of the
Torah. For, when a person *actively*
fulfills all the precepts which require
physical action, and with his power
of *speech* he occupies himself in
expounding all the 613 command-
ments and their practical application,
and with his power of *thought* he
comprehends all that is compre-
hensible to him in the *Pardes* [4] of
the Torah—then the totality of the
613 “organs” of his soul [5] are
clothed in the 613 commandments
of the Torah.

1) Having outlined in ch. 3
the intrinsic faculties of the
soul, the author goes on to
explain how they express
themselves through the three
outer “garments,” or
instruments.

*[VS:] The Hebrew uses
תרי"ג [*Taryag*], which is
shorthand for:

400 = ת +
200 = ר +
10 = י +
3 = ג
613

[2-3] notes about italics]

4) Literally meaning
“orchard,” it is taken as an
acronym of the four Hebrew
words סוד, דרוש, רמז, פשט,
[*P'shat-Remez-Drush-Sod*]
meaning: plain sense,
intimation, homiletical
exposition, and esoteric
meaning, respectively, the
four levels of Scriptural
interpretation.

5) The physical organism of
the human body consists of
248 members and 365 blood
vessels, corresponding to the
248 positive and 365
prohibitive commands
(*Tanchuma Hakadum, Teitzei*;
Makkot 24a). The soul
contains the spiritual
counterparts of these 613
“organs.” (See below, ch. 51.)

ובפרטות, בחינות
חכמה בינה דעת שבנפשו,
מלובשות בהשגת התורה שהוא
משיג בפשט רמז דרוש טו***
כפי יכולת השגתו ושרש נפשו
למעלה; והמדות, שהן יראה ואהבה
וענפיהן ותולדותיהן - מלובשות
בקיום המצות במעשה ובדבור,
שהוא תלמוד תורה שפנגד כולן. [6]

4:2) Specifically: the faculties of
chabad in his soul are clothed in the
comprehension of the Torah, which
he comprehends in *Pardes*, to the
extent of his mental capacity and the
supernal root of his soul. And the
middot, namely fear and love,
together with their offshoots and
ramifications, are clothed in the
fulfillment of the commandments in
deed and in word, namely, in the
study of Torah which is “equivalent
to them all.” [6]

6) Mishnah Peah 1:1

Tanya, Part 1,
Likutei Amarim, Misc.

English is from Kehot Society
translation, via Sefaria

Notes from Kehot trans.,
unless marked "VS"

וְלִכְּנֹן, גַּם הַיֵּצֶר הָרָע וְכֵחַ הַמִּתְאַוֶּה
לְדַבְּרִים הָאֲסוּרִים, הוּא שֵׁד
מִשְׁדֵּי נֹכְרָאִין*, שֶׁהוּא יֵצֵר הָרָע
שֶׁל אוֹמוֹת** הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁנִּפְּשׁוּתֵיהֶם
מִשְׁלֵשׁ קְלִיפּוֹת הַטְּמֵאוֹת.

8:2) Therefore, also the evil impulse
(*yetzer hara*) and the force that
strains after forbidden things is a
demon of non-Jewish* demons,
which is the evil impulse of the
nations** whose souls are derived
from the three unclean *kelipot*.

*[VS:] "non-Jewish" here is
"nochrin," which usually
means, more specifically,
"Christian."

**[VS:] "nations" is "*umot*"
(plural of "*am*") as in the
Proverbs verse.

מֵה שְׂאִין כֵּן הַיֵּצֶר הָרָע וְכֵחַ
הַמִּתְאַוֶּה לְדַבְּרִים הַמוֹתְרִים
לְמִלְאֵת תְּאוֹתוֹ, הוּא שֵׁד מִשְׁדֵּי
יְהוּדָאִין [2], לְפִי שֶׁיְכוּל לְחַזֵּר
לְקַדוּשָׁה כְּדִלְעִיל [3]. אַךְ מִכֵּל
מְקוֹם, קוֹדֵם שֶׁחֲזַר לְקַדוּשָׁה, הוּא
סֹטְרָא אַחֲרָא וְקְלִיפָה. וְגַם אַחַר
כֵּן, הַרְשִׁימוּ מִמֶּנּוּ נִשְׂאָר דְּבוּק
בְּגוּף, לְהֵיוֹת כִּי מִכֵּל מֵאֲכֹל
וּמִשְׁקָה נַעֲשֶׂה תִיכְף דָּם וּבָשָׂר
מִבְּשָׂר.

8:3) On the other hand, the evil
impulse and the craving force after
permissible things to satisfy an
appetite is a demon of the Jewish
demons [2], for it can be reverted to
holiness. as is explained above. [3]
Nevertheless, before it has reverted
to holiness it is *sitra achara* and
kelipah, and even afterward a trace
of it remains attached to the body,
since from each item of food and
drink are immediately formed blood
and flesh of his flesh.

2) Cf. *Zohar* III:253a; 277a f.

3) Chapter 7

[VS:] Chapter 7 is about lust,
ejaculation, and elevating
semen toward godliness. I'm
not wading through it further,
but approaches to food and
sexual desire seem similar.

[VS:] *Zohar*, I:12b is cited at Tanya 1:17 above. This translation -- not sure what's up with CAPITALS -- appears on [WikiSource as 12b](#). A similar translation on Sefaria (*Zohar* >> 12b) yields text labeled as "Introduction, Chapter 24-25." (No information on the numbering systems -- and no *Zohar* expert.)

The citation is supposed to support the idea that Jews have an extra, elevated soul deriving from the glorious covering [*kelipat nogah*] and something to do with the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. But I don't see anything about Jews or anything obviously about the Tree. (Plenty of stuff that is opaque to me, but nothing that seems to match what the citation is meant to support.) Instead, there is the idea that studying Torah gives a person "*nishmata achara kadisha*," Aramaic for "additional holy soul." This is somehow based on Gen 2:7 -- moving creatures have *nefesh chayah* [living soul, life]:

And this is the white cloud by day and the cloud of fire by night, WHICH ALLUDES TO the attribute of day, WHICH IS ZEIR ANPIN, and the attribute of night, WHICH IS MALCHUT, as they should be established by each other into ONE UNIFIED WHOLE, to illuminate. As it is written, "to give light upon the earth." ...

This is the sin of the primeval serpent, who unites down below but separates above. Because of this, he caused what he caused to the world. Because what is below should be separated, and what is above should be united. So the black light, WHICH IS MALCHUT, should be united above WITH ZEIR ANPIN into one unified whole. And then she should become united together with her own legions and be separated from the evil side. Nevertheless, it is necessary to know that Elohim and Yud Hei Vav Hei are one without separation. Yud Hei Vav Hei He is Elohim. So when a person acknowledges that both are one and does not cause any separation between them, THEN even the 'Other Side' will disappear from the world and not be drawn downward.

[Eve rearranges the letters of the Torah so that the word for "death" appears.]

(cont. p.14)

(Zohar I:12b, cont. from p.14) ...The fifth precept: The Study of the Torah. The Zohar expounds on the supreme importance of Torah study. Learning brings about profound spiritual purification, and draws spiritual Light and blessing into our lives.

The fifth precept is found in the verse, "Let the waters swarm abundantly with moving creatures that have life" (Genesis 1:20). This verse contains three precepts. The first is to study the Torah; the second is to beget children: and the third is to circumcise a male child on the eighth day of life and remove the foreskin. It is necessary to study the Torah with great effort at all times, in order to better one's spirit and soul.

As a person labors in the study of the Torah, he is endowed with

an additional holy soul [אֲחַרָּהּ קְדוּשָׁה בְּנִשְׁמַתָּא *b'nishmata achara kadisha*],

as it is written, "moving creatures (lit. 'soul') that have life." [נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה *nefesh chayah*]

THIS REFERS to the holy living creature, WHICH IS MALCHUT. If a person does not delve in the study of the Torah, he does not receive this holy soul, and the holiness of above does not rest upon him. However, when he does study the Torah, he merits that living soul by his mouthing the words of the Torah. Thus he becomes like the angels of above. As it is written, "Bless Hashem, you angels of His" (Psalms 103:20). This refers to those who study the Torah and are called "His angels" on earth....

My inclination, based on this use of Zohar I:12b and the Baba Batra citation above, was that the *Tanya* was twisting older texts to fit supremacist ideas. HOWEVER, R' Reuven Hammer, z"l, explains differently in a 2016 paper. I am still not sure citations in the verses explored here work, as advertised, so to speak, to support the *Tanya's* point of view (or I just don't understand how they work); R' Hammer writes, however, that the *Zohar* contains teachings that support discriminatory and supremacist views.

Below is an excerpt from that paper: "**The Status of Non-Jews in Jewish Law and Lore Today.**"

It was issued -- as a "*Teshuvah*" [here used in the sense of a formal response, solution] by the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly of the Conservative (Masorti) Movement, 21 April 2016. Written by R' Reuven Hammer (1933-2019).

This teshuvah was unanimously approved on April 21, 2016 (19-0-0). Voting in Favor: Rabbis Kassel Abelson, Pamela Barmash, Miriam Berkowitz, Noah Bickart, David Booth, Elliot Dorff, Baruch Frydman-Kohl, Reuven Hammer, Joshua Heller, Jeremy Kalmanofsky, Jane Kanarek, Gail Labovitz, Amy Levin, Jonathan Lubliner, Daniel Nevins, Micah Peltz, Paul Plotkin, Elie Spitz, and Jay Stein.

In 2016, this committee shared this paper, and the Conservative movement released this statement:

The paper calls upon Jewish leaders and educators to incorporate these findings in their preaching and teaching and to emphasize them in all their educational endeavors. We must deal honestly with the sources, admit that different attitudes have existed over the course of the development of Judaism, and candidly criticize and reject certain parts of the tradition while embracing others as representing the Judaism we wish to promulgate and which we believe represents the true core of Jewish belief beginning with the Torah itself. In view of the terrible suffering brought upon our people and others in the 20th century by doctrines of racial superiority, any teachings that espouse that in any way must be thoroughly rejected.

[STATEMENT](https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/story/status-non-jews-jewish-law-and-lore-today) -- <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/story/status-non-jews-jewish-law-and-lore-today> --

[WHOLE PAPER](https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/public/halakhah/teshuvot/2011-2020/hammer-non-jews-law-lore.pdf) -- <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/public/halakhah/teshuvot/2011-2020/hammer-non-jews-law-lore.pdf>

Hasidism, Chabad, and Jewish soul-language: TANYA, p.16

EXCERPT from

The Status of Non-Jews in Jewish Law and Lore Today --

written in 2016 by Reuven Hammer, z"l; approved by the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly of the Conservative (Masorti) Movement:

...HaLevi [Yehuda HaLevi (c.1075-1140)] in his popular work *Kuzari* speaks of Adam as having had a perfect soul, which was then passed on through a remarkable series of individuals – including Shem and then Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all of his 12 sons and then to all Israel. They were different from ordinary men and some even attained to prophecy, which is yet a higher degree of soul. “The sons of Jacob were, however, distinguished from other people by godly qualities, which made them, so to speak, an angelic caste.” [22] ... HaLevi believed that the entire people of Israel received the soul of Adam. No other humans did. [25] The *Zohar* (Beshallah, 168a, Mishpatim 95b) subsequently taught that if a Gentile became a proselyte, he received a new soul from heaven, but even that soul was not equal to that of the born Jew. The *Zohar* became a primary source of these concepts of Jewish inherent superiority over other humans. In the *Zohar* Rabbi Elazar teaches that “the soul of other nations ... comes from those impure aspects of the left, defiling them and anyone approaching them.” [26] It taught that Israel was the most beloved of all the nations and also popularized the idea that the sin of the golden calf was caused not by the Israelites but by the “mixed multitude” that left Egypt with them.... A later philosopher, Rabbi Judah Loeb of Prague, the Maharal (1525-1609), followed that trend, believed that Jews were of a superior religious and moral capacity, the only ones to be called ‘man.’ There was an innate difference between Jews and all others, an inborn racial quality which made Jews superior to others. [28] This concept of chosenness, radically different from the Torah’s view, was influential in many circles, including mystics and Hassidut. As Alan Brill demonstrates, Isaac Luria (d.1572) developed a much more elaborate theory concerning souls in which Gentiles “are the same stuff as the evil and rupture at the beginning of creation.” [29] Much later all of this became a basic teaching of some Hassidic sects in the 18th century, especially through the teachings of the Tanya, the writings of Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of the Lubavitch sect:

We have learned (Niddah, end of ch. 3) “An oath is administered to him: ‘Be righteous and be not wicked; and even if the whole world judging you by your actions tells you that you are righteous, regard yourself as wicked.’” For in the [case of the] Jew, this soul of kelipah is derived from the kelipah called “nogah”, which also contains good; [This kelipah] is from the esoteric “Tree of Knowledge” [which is comprised] of good and evil.... {passage continues with same as discussed above from Chapter 1}

The second, uniquely Jewish, soul is truly “a part of God above,” as it is written “And He blew into his nostrils a soul of life”; “You blew it into me.” It is written in the *Zohar*, “He who blows, blows from within him,” that is to say, from his inwardness and his innermost being. For it is of his inward and innermost vitality that a man emits through blowing with force. So, too, allegorically speaking, have Jewish souls risen in the [Divine] thought.

-- p.175-6, "The Status of Non-Jews in Jewish Law and Lore Today"

End notes appear here on page 8 (just saving paper, in case of printing)

Closing: My friend and teacher Max Ticktin (1922-2016), z"l, would often say that Judaism is not meant to be a closed system, in terms of thought or who belongs. He steered students and other fellow Jews away from sources that promote a single reading of any Jewish idea. I am grateful and think of him as this *Teshuvah* points out that rabbinic Judaism, beginning with the Talmud, contains variety of opinion without conclusion unless actual law was required. Baba Batra cited above is just one tiny example.