

# THE PALM TREE OF DEVORAH

One who studies this text on a daily, weekly or even monthly basis will earn a place in the World to Come.

--Rabbi Yishayahu Horowitz ("the Shela ha-Kodesh"),  
1565-1630



## What is *The Palm Tree of Devorah*?

Acclaimed as a classic of *mussar* and mysticism alike, *Tomer Devorah* was written in the 16th century by Rabbi Moshe Cordovero. He was part of the phenomenal explosion of Jewish spiritual and intellectual activity of 16th century Safed, which featured illustrious Rabbis such as Rabbi Yosef Karo, author of the *Shulhan Arukh* (and teacher of Rabbi Cordovero) and Rabbi Yitshak Luria (the *Arizal*, student of Rabbi Cordovero).

*The Palm Tree of Devorah* represents a fascinating application of kabbalistic thought to ethical behavior, indicating how a human must emulate the Divine *sefirot* to maximize the influx of holiness into the world. This bold new approach had widespread influence throughout the Jewish world, and *The Palm Tree of Devorah* is a text revered by the students of *musar* in the Yeshivah movement as well as Hasidic students of kabbalah.

This course will focus on the incomparable first chapter of the work, which describes the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy and how they may be applied in quotidian life.

## Online Resources for this Course

*This course is optimized for students who want a robust academic learning experience but need the flexibility of distance learning. The class will include a conventional weekly meeting, but all materials (including videos) will be presented online to allow students to complete the course online if they so choose.*

### Academic Requirements

There are no prerequisites for this course, although some facility with Hebrew will be helpful. All readings, videos, and other multimedia assignments will be provided online, so you don't even have to buy a textbook!

### Technology requirements

You'll need a reliable personal computer with a speedy internet connection. Headphones or speakers will be necessary for the audio, and if you choose to participate in the CyberOffice Hours, you will need a webcam as well.

To access the readings, you'll need an off-campus login for the Touro Library System (click [here](#) to apply).

### Time Commitment

Don't be fooled by cheap imitations--just because you can attend class in your pajamas, learning online can be a serious challenge! Plan on spending **at least five hours a week** working on this class, between watching the videos, working through the readings, and completing the assignments.

### Students in Miami

A portion of this class consists of seminars delivered on the Touro College South campus (see below for dates of individual lectures). Attendance at these seminars is not mandatory, since videos of the seminars will be made available online, but attendance will fulfill the Virtual Attendance requirement (see below for information on what that means).

## Learning Outcomes

Students will gain familiarity with the first chapter of *Tomer Devorah*, the history of the Safed Circle, the major elements of Cordoveran Kabbalah and its relationship to Lurianic Kabbalah. The integration of Kabbalistic thought into the canon of Mussar and Hasidic literature will be addressed as well.

## Format of the Course

This course will be conducted in a traditional classroom environment, with adaptations to allow for online participation. Students may elect the modality of learning that best suits their schedule and learning style, including a combination of both in-person and online learning.

## Grading

The grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

Assignment	Value
Meditations (13)	65%
Discussion Board commentary	25%
Participation	10%

## Meditations

Students will write thirteen brief (250-500 word) meditations on each one of the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, as described in the readings and in correspondence with the lectures. These



Dr. Henry (Hillel) Abramson  
Click here for a video introduction to this course.



Grave of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero in Safed, Israel

meditations will be posted on the Discussion Board and will be visible to the other members of the class. Grades will be based on comprehension of the reading material and sophistication of analysis.

## Discussion Board Commentary

Students will provide commentary on Meditations on the Discussion Board. Grades will be based on frequency and quality of commentary, conducted with collegial respect.

## About Your Instructor

Dean Henry (Hillel) Abramson holds a PhD in History from the University of Toronto. He has held visiting appointments and post-doctoral fellowships at Cornell, Oxford, Harvard and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and is the author of five books on Jewish History and Thought, and has received numerous awards for his teaching and research, including the Excellence in the Academy award from the National Education Association.

## Participation

The participation grade will be based on attendance at live classes, attendance at virtual office hours, and direct communication with the instructor.

## Textbook

“The Kabbalah of Forgiveness: A Reader’s Guide to Rabbi Moshe Cordovero’s *The Palm Tree of Devorah*,” MS by Henry Abramson. Texts will be provided on Blackboard in Hebrew and English translation.

## Contact information

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## Touro College South Student Code of Conduct

### Student Code of Conduct

Touro College South derives its Student Code of Conduct from the tradition of Rabbi Elazar ben Shamua (Avot 4:15), whose inspirational teaching on the respect due to students, colleagues and instructors is a moral standard for all classroom conduct, regardless of the subject or discipline. Mutual respect is the foundation of all productive academic discourse, and we consider this to be one of our most cherished values. Touro College South students are expected to uphold the concept of free intellectual discourse in an engaged learning environment by adhering to the standards of the Student Code of Conduct.

The TCS Code of Conduct is, in reality, a single concept: *חַדְרָא אִרְרָא*, basic respect for the human dignity of others. The following are examples of the expressions of the TCS Code of Conduct:

#### Cell Phone Use

Cell phones must be silenced during class and may not be used without advance permission from the instructor.

#### Portable Computer Use

Portable computers may be used for classroom-related activities only. Instructors may ask to review any notes taken during class or to have students move to seats where their computer activity is less distracting.

#### Attendance

Attendance will be recorded. Absences may result in failure, grade reduction, or other academic sanctions, and may affect financial aid. Missing over 50% of class meetings for any reason (excused or unexcused) will result in automatic failure. Students who must be absent should contact the instructor in advance.

#### Punctuality

Students are expected to arrive to class on time. Most instructors take attendance during the beginning of class, so students who arrive late may be marked absent.

#### Leaving Class

Leaving class during lectures disrupts the learning process. Students are expected to remain in class while it is in session.

## Touro College South Policy on Academic Integrity

Because intellectual integrity is the hallmark of educational institutions, academic dishonesty is one of the most serious offenses that a student can commit. Students are required to abide by the highest standards of academic honesty in study and preparation for, and presentation, of examinations, term papers and research reports.

### Plagiarism

To commit plagiarism means to present as one's own the ideas, writings, computer-generated material, etc., of others without proper acknowledgement of those sources by means of quotation marks and/or specific references (footnotes) to the original source from which the material was taken. Plagiarism also includes the submission of the work of a commercial writing service or of a "ghost write" as one's own work. Section 213-6 of the Florida State Education Law prohibits the sale of term papers, essays, and research reports to students enrolled in a college.

### Cheating and Other Irregularities

A. No student shall give or receive assistance in the preparation of any assignment or examination without the authorization of the instructor of the course. Common examples of cheating include: copying from another student's paper; using books, notes, calculators, when these are not authorized; obtaining tests before the scheduled date of the examination; copying laboratory work; and sending in a substitute for taking an examination.

B. Stealing, falsifying, or otherwise altering documents or records containing grades, examination materials, or anecdotal information is forbidden.

### Sanctions for Academic Integrity Violations

Students who violate Touro College's Standards of Academic Integrity are subject to disciplinary sanctions. An official report of the incident is submitted to the Dean of Academic Affairs and Student Services. The following disciplinary sanctions may be imposed:

The grade of "F" for a test, term paper or assignment;

The grade of "F" in the course;

Other sanctions deemed appropriate by the Dean of Academic Affairs and Student

Services, including suspension or dismissal from the college.

## Touro College South Honor Code Statement for Online Coursework

All students are required to complete the Touro College South Honor Code Statement for Online Coursework. This text must be written out by hand, signed and dated, and submitted to the instructor prior to beginning any online assessment. **Students outside Miami must mail this document to Dean Abramson, Touro College South, 1703 Washington Avenue, Miami Beach FL 33139. Alternatively, the handwritten text may be sent via Fax to (305) 535-1553 or scanned and emailed to [abramson@touro.edu](mailto:abramson@touro.edu).** The text of the Statement reads:

"I understand that learning in an asynchronous, online environment affords me both greater freedom and, at the same time, demands greater responsibility. I understand that all online assessments completed in this course must be the result of my own study, and that they represent my good-faith efforts to learn the material. I understand that representing another person's work as my own, whether through plagiarism or through unfair assistance during self-administered testing, is a violation of the standards of Torah behavior, and also constitutes an Academic Offense prohibited by the Touro College Code of Conduct."

Signed:

Date:

Please submit this document before attempting any online assessment.