

Jews & Drugs: A Book in Progress

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Jews & Drugs (working title), which I have spent nearly five years researching and writing, explores the ancient relationship between the Jewish people and drug use, from the shamanic rites of the ancient Hebrews through the Israeli rave scene and beyond. The book seeks to communicate a cohesive understanding of the place of entheogens in Judaism and early Christianity, culminating in a proposal for the reintegration of entheogenic explorations into Jewish ritual practice for the modern era.

The book features interviews with noted Jewish scholars and scientists involved in the areas of radical Jewish thought, psychedelic research, and drug policy reform. These include Douglas Rushkoff, R.U. Sirius, Dr. Lester Grinspoon, Ethan Nadelmann, Rick Doblin, Mickey Hart, Ram Dass, and Reb Zalman Shachter-Shalomi. I explore a myriad of issues, including allusions to entheogenic substances in the Torah, psychedelic tales of Hasidic Judaism's founder, the Ba'al Shem Tov, Jewish participation in American counterculture, drug abuse in Brooklyn's Hasidic community, psychedelic use among religious settlers living in the Occupied Territories, and the Israeli ecstasy trade.

Jews & Drugs attempts to clearly delineate between acceptable religious exploration and drug abuse, relying upon rabbinic commentary and modern psychological research. The hope is to provide a counterpoint to the dominance of "zero tolerance" drug policy and the perpetuation of misinformation in the religious community by demonstrating the value of entheogens and the influence they have had on Judeo-Christian thought and practices.

I hope to complete the book by 2006. I invite anyone who has material to share relevant to these subjects to contact me via my website, OrthodoxAnarchist.com.

Daniel Sieradski is the founding editor of the popular Jewish weblog Jewschool.com. He currently lives in Jerusalem where he studies in yeshiva exploring Jewish texts and historical materials. He joined MAPS on our tour of Israel in March 2005.

Letter to the Editor

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I received the latest *Bulletin* recently and cruised through it, glancing at titles, pictures, and a few words. What I was most struck by was the number of M.D.'s and Ph.D's that are authoring the articles. Incredible.

Keep up the good work.

J. Cooke



Jaffa Gate, Jerusalem. Photo by René Ruiz.