

MAIMONIDES' BIBLICAL EXEGESIS

DESCRIPTION: Maimonides' philological, literary and historical interpretations of Scripture in light of his rabbinic and philosophical sources, as well as the medieval Babylonian-Iberian *peshat* school. Exegetical goals of the *Guide*; selections from other Maimonidean writings. Biblical texts and topics: Genesis 1-5 (Account of Creation), anthropomorphic depictions of God, prophecy, derivation of *halakhah*, Job, Song of Songs.

REQUIREMENTS. Lectures are based on sources and readings (see bibliography, pp. 3 ff.) indicated on the syllabus below and must be prepared *prior* to class meetings. A research paper is due at the end of the semester. Please consult me to choose a topic (my e-mail: cohenm@yu.edu).

BIBLIOGRAPHY. See p. 3 below. You should acquire *Maimonides: The Guide of the Perplexed*, [Hebrew] trans. Michael Schwarz (Tel Aviv, 2002), a superb new annotated edition with a comprehensive, up-to-date bibliography of Maimonidean scholarship.

SYLLABUS

UNIT 1: Portrait of Maimonides as Biblical Interpreter

Sources: *Guide*, introduction, pp. 9-11 (Schwarz ed.)

Readings: Twersky 1993; Klein-Braslavy 2000 *

UNIT 2: Maimonides' notions of *Peshat* and *Derash*

Sources:

רמב"ם, ספר המצוות, שרש ב, עם השגת רמב"ן

רמב"ם, הקדמה לפירוש המשנה, מהד' שילת, עמ' 36-43

Reading: Elbaum 2000:75-94, 107-131 (includes sources in Ibn Ezra and Maimonides)

UNIT 3: Halakhic Exegesis

Sources in *Mishneh Torah*:

הלכות אבל ב: א (עם פ"י רדב"ז), ושם הל' ז; השוה ויקרא כא א-ד עם פ"י רש"י, רשב"ם וראב"ע

הלכות מלוה ולוה ד: ב; השוה דברים כג כ, עם פירוש רש"י, רשב"ם וראב"ע

הלכות שבת כט: א; השוה שמות כ ח עם פירוש ראב"ע (הקצר לשמות) ורמב"ן

הלכות ייבום וחליצה ב: ו; השוה רש"י ורמב"ן דב' כה ו; בבלי יבמות כד ע"א

Reading: Weiss-Halivni 1991:79-88

UNIT 4: Exegetical Goals of the *Guide*: Reconciling Scripture and Reason

Sources: *Guide*, introduction (pp. 11-19 in Schwarz ed.), II:29, 47

Readings: Segal 1977:989-996

UNIT 5: Rationalist Interpretation of Scripture in the Babylonian-Iberian Tradition

Sources:

פירוש רס"ג לבראשית, מהד' צוקר, עמ' 17-18, 191
אגרות הרמב"ם, מהד' שילת, עמ' שנח-שסב; השוה פירוש ראב"ע לישעיהו יא א
ראב"ע, הקדמה לפירוש התורה (השיטה האחרת), הדרך הרביעית

Reading: Brody 2000

UNIT 6: Philological Exegesis

Source: *Guide* I:1, 43

Readings: Harvey 1988; Hyman 1991; Strauss 1963:xi-xxxii

UNIT 7: Literary Analysis

Sources: *Guide*, introduction, I:15

Readings: Klein-Braslavy 1988; Cohen 2003:118-136, 180-188

UNIT 8: Song of Songs

Reading: Rosenberg 1990 (includes sources in Maimonides)

UNIT 9: *Meshalim* in Prophecy

Sources: Nahmanides on Gen 18:1; compare Rashi, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra *ad loc.*

Reading: Cohen 2003:196-200

UNIT 10: Account of Creation

Sources: *Guide* II:25, 30

Readings: Klein-Braslavy 1987:9-46, 63-69; Cohen 2003:216-223

UNIT 11: Job – Philosophical Reading

Sources: *Guide* III:22-23

Readings: Levinger 1988; Greenberg 1992; Cohen 2003:188-196

UNIT 12: Job – Literary Reading

Reading: Cohen, forthcoming

UNIT 13: *Zahir an-Nass* (*Peshat?*) and Historical-Cultural Analysis of Torah Law

Sources: *Guide* III:29, 41

Readings: Twersky 1980:387-391, 430-447; Levinger 1989:56-66; Kamin 1991:12*-26*

UNIT 14: Overview of Maimonides' Biblical Exegesis

* Bacher 1896; Rosenberg 1981 *

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bacher, Wilhelm. 1896. *Die Bibelexegese Moses Maimûni's*. Budapest. Hebrew translation: הרמב"ם פרשן המקרא, trans. A.Z. Rabinowitz, Tel Aviv, 1932.
- Brody, Robert. 2000. "The Geonim of Babylonia as Biblical Exegetes." Chapter 25.3 of Magne Sæbø, Menahem Haran and Chris Brekelmans (eds.), *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*. Göttingen. I/2:74-88.
- Cohen, Mordechai Z. 2003. *Three Approaches to Biblical Metaphor: From Abraham Ibn Ezra and Maimonides to David Kimhi*. Leiden.
- . Forthcoming. "The *Peshaṭ* Exegesis of a Philosopher: Maimonides' Literary Approach to the Book of Job and Its Place in Jewish Biblical Interpretation" [Hebrew]. *Shnaton 15: An Annual for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies*, ed. S. Japhet. Jerusalem.
- Elbaum, Jacob. 2000. *Medieval Perspectives on Aggadah and Midrash* [Hebrew]. Jerusalem.
- Harvey, Ze'ev. 1988. "How to Begin to Study the *Guide of the Perplexed* I,1" [Hebrew]. *Da'at* 21:5-24.
- Hyman, Arthur. 1991 "Maimonides on Religious Language." *Perspectives on Maimonides*, ed. J. Kraemer. New York, pp. 175-91.
- Kamin, Sarah. 1991. *Jews and Christians Interpret the Bible*. Jerusalem.
- Klein-Braslavy, Sara. 1987. *Maimonides' Interpretation of the Story of Creation* [Hebrew], 2d ed. Jerusalem. Orig. publ. Jerusalem 1978.
- . 1988. "Maimonides' Commentary on Jacob's Dream of the Ladder" [Hebrew]. *Bar-Ilan Annual* 22-23:329-349.
- . 2000. "The Philosophical Exegesis." Chapter 31.3 of Magne Sæbø, Menahem Haran and Chris Brekelmans (eds.), *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, Göttingen. I/2:302-320
- Greenberg, Moshe. 1992. 'איוב היה או לא היה: סוגיה בפרשנות ימי הביניים'. *Sha'arei Talmon: Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon*, ed. M. Fishbane and E. Tov. Winnona Lake, pp. 3*-11* (Hebrew section).

Levinger, Jacob S. 1988. "Maimonides' Exegesis of the Book of Job." *Creative Biblical Exegesis*, ed. B. Uffenheimer and H. Graf Reventlow. Sheffield, pp. 81-88.

-----, 1989. *Maimonides as Philosopher and Codifier* [Hebrew]. Jerusalem.

Rosenberg, Shalom. 1981. 'על פרשנות המקרא בספר מורה נבוכים'. *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 1:85-157.

-----, 1990. "Philosophical Hermeneutics on the Song of Songs, Introductory Remarks" [Hebrew]. *Tarbiz* 59:133-141.

Twersky, Isadore. 1980. *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides*. New Haven.

-----, 1993. "Did R. Abraham Ibn Ezra Influence Maimonides?" [Hebrew]. *Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra: Studies in the Writings of a Twelfth Century Jewish Polymath*, ed. I. Twersky and J. Harris. Cambridge, MA, pp. 21-48 [Hebrew Section].

Segal, M.Z. 1977. מבוא המקרא. Jerusalem.

Strauss, Leo. 1963. "How to Begin to Study the *Guide of the Perplexed*." Introduction to *Moses Maimonides: The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines. Chicago.

Weiss-Halivni, David. 1991. *Peshat and Derash: Plain and Applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis*. New York.

מהדורות מיוחדות:

ר' משה בן מיימון (רמב"ם):

איגרות הרמב"ם, ההדיר ותרגם יצחק שילת, ירושלים תשמ"ז (כרך א)

הקדמות הרמב"ם למשנה, ההדיר ותרגם יצחק שילת, ירושלים תשנ"ב

מורה נבוכים לרבנו משה בן מיימון, תרגם מיכאל שורץ, תל-אביב תשס"ג

ספר המצוות להרמב"ם עם השגות הרמב"ן, ההדיר ח"ד שעוועל, ירושלים תשמ"א

ר' סעדיה גאון, פירושי רב סעדיה גאון לבראשית, ההדיר ותרגם משה צוקר, ניו-יורק תשמ"ד