

Faith, Reason and Dogma in Jewish Philosophy

Dr. Avi Kadish

Course Number: 702.2190

Class Time: TBA

Class Location: TBA

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Course Description:

Can God be proven? Can ideas ever be commanded? How did Judaism, Jewish philosophy and general philosophy change between the Middle Ages and that of the modern world? Can the Jewish tradition be read in a rational way? The axis of Jewish philosophy is in the tension between universal human reason and the unique experience of individuals or groups, and we will deal with that tension from many different angles throughout this course.

In this course we will study the philosophy and dogmatics of Moses Maimonides (1135-1204). We will contrast his rationalistic approach towards understanding the Torah and Jewish tradition to that of his critics (in the centuries between his own lifetime and the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492).

Course Requirements:

- Weekly reading assignments: These include questions to answer (via Moodle) about secondary texts from the bibliography, followed by discussion of them in class.
- Oral Presentation and Short Term Paper: The student is to choose a primary text on any issue in Jewish philosophy, which s/he will teach and analyze together with the rest of the class. Following this, a short written paper on the topic will be submitted.
- Final Examination

Final Grade:

Weekly Reading Assignments (online written summaries and feedback): 30%

Oral Presentation and Short Term Paper (both on the same topic): 30%

Final Examination: 40%

Course Outline and Reading List

Week 1: The Illuminated Palace: An Introduction to Jewish Philosophy

Online essay in two parts <<http://thetorah.com/discovering-god-rationalistic-1/>> (read both parts)

*Collected Excerpts from Primary Sources

Week 2: The Illuminated Palace: An Introduction to Jewish Philosophy (continued)

Raphael Jospe, "What is Jewish Philosophy" in *Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, pp. 3-44.

*Collected Excerpts from Primary Sources

Week 3: "A Share in the World to Come": From Rabbinic Thought to Maimonides

Menachem Kellner, *Must a Jew Believe Anything?*, pp. 26-43 (chapter 2).

*Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1

Week 4: Maimonides' Introduction to *Helek*: The Goal of Study and Action

Kenneth Seeskin, *Maimonides: A Guide for Today's Perplexed*, pp. 3-15; 83-96.

*Primary Text for weeks 4-8: "Maimonides' Introduction to Helek" in Isadore Twersky, *A Maimonides Reader*, pp. 401-423.

Week 5: Maimonides' Introduction to *Helek*: Allegorical Interpretation of the Jewish Tradition

Kenneth Seeskin, *Maimonides: A Guide for Today's Perplexed*, pp. 19-39.

*Primary Text for weeks 4-8: "Maimonides' Introduction to Helek" in Isadore Twersky, *A Maimonides Reader*, pp. 401-423.

Week 6: Maimonides' Introduction to *Helek*: Philosophical Eschatology

Kenneth Seeskin, *Maimonides: A Guide for Today's Perplexed*, pp. 97-111.

*Primary Text for weeks 4-8: "Maimonides' Introduction to Helek" in Isadore Twersky, *A Maimonides Reader*, pp. 401-423.

Week 7: Maimonides' Introduction to *Helek*: The Philosophical Triangle and the First Jewish System of Dogma

Shalom Rosenberg, *In the Footsteps of the Kuzari*, pp. 49-64.

*Primary Text for weeks 4-8: "Maimonides' Introduction to Helek" in Isadore Twersky, *A Maimonides Reader*, pp. 401-423.

Week 8: Maimonides' Introduction to *Helek*: The Thirteen Foundations of the Torah

Menachem Kellner, *Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought*, pp. 10-65 (chapter one).

*Primary Text for weeks 4-8: "Maimonides' Introduction to Helek" in Isadore Twersky, *A Maimonides Reader*, pp. 401-423.

Week 9: Creation and the First Critique of Maimonidean Dogma (Nissim Gerondi)

Seth (Avi) Kadish, *Rabbi Shimon ben Zemah Duran and the School of Rabbenu Nissim Gerondi*, chapter 3 <<https://sites.google.com/site/kadish67/avraham-avinu>>.

*Collected Excerpts from Primary Sources (some included in Kellner)

Week 10: Creation and the First Critique of Maimonidean Dogma (Duran)

Menachem Kellner, *Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought*, pp. 83-107 (chapter three).

*Collected Excerpts from Primary Sources (some included in Kellner)

Week 11: The Foundations of Relationship (Hasdai Crescas)

Menachem Kellner, *Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought*, pp. 108-139 (chapter four).

*Collected Excerpts from Primary Sources

Week 12: The Foundations of Law (Joseph Albo)

Menachem Kellner, *Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought*, pp. 140-164 (chapter five).

*Collected Excerpts from Primary Sources

Week 13: The Fate of Maimonides' Thirteen Principles

Marc Shapiro, *The Limits of Orthodox Theology: Maimonides' Thirteen Principles Reappraised* (Littman, 2004), pp. 1-37.

Menachem Kellner, trans. *Principles of Faith: Rosh Amanah* (Oxford, 1985; republished Littman, 2004), translator's Introduction.

Week 14: Final Examination