

## Jewish Philosophy (GSE512)

Lecturer: Mr. Eli Haitov

School year: 2024-2025 Semester: Spring	Email: Eli.Haitov@biblecollege.co.il
Day and time of course: Wednesday	

**Course Description:** This course explores Jewish philosophy from ancient to modern times, focusing on key texts, thinkers, and ideas. Topics include the nature of God, the problem of evil, ethics, law, faith, and reason. A key component is the interaction between Jewish and Christian philosophy, examining Jewish critiques of Christian ideas and possible Christian responses. Students will study foundational figures such as Philo, Saadia Gaon, Maimonides, Spinoza, along with contemporary Jewish philosophers. Through readings, discussions, and critical analyses, participants will be equipped to articulate and analyze the central themes and debates within Jewish philosophy, appreciate its relevance to broader philosophical and theological discussions, and understand the dynamic relationship between Jewish and Christian philosophical traditions.

### **Course Objectives:**

1. To familiarize students with the major figures and texts in Jewish philosophy from ancient to modern times.
2. To provide a framework for understanding the historical context and development of Jewish philosophical thought.
3. To facilitate a comparative analysis of Jewish and Christian philosophical traditions, highlighting key points of interaction and divergence.
4. To encourage critical thinking and discussion on the major themes in Jewish philosophy, such as the nature of God, ethics, and the problem of evil.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students will learn to analyze and interpret key philosophical texts within the Jewish tradition, gaining insights into the development of Jewish thought.
2. Students will learn to critically engage with the interactions between Jewish and Christian philosophy, understanding Jewish critiques of Christian ideas and possible responses from Christian philosophy. \*
3. Students will learn to articulate and debate fundamental questions of existence, morality, and spirituality, developing skills in philosophical analysis and dialogue.

### **Course Structure:**

1. Classes will be lectures combined with discussion. Each student should prepare for class by reading the material assigned and doing the weekly assignments.
2. An open discussion during lessons according to the learned material.
3. Each student has to read and accomplish his reading assignment

### **Required Readings**

Frank, D., & Leaman, O. (Eds.). (2005). *History of Jewish philosophy*. Routledge.

Frank, D. H., & Leaman, O. (Eds.). (2006). *Cambridge Companions to Philosophy: The Cambridge Companion to medieval Jewish philosophy*. Cambridge University Press.

Frank, D., & Segal, A. L. (Eds.). (2016). *Jewish philosophy past and present: Contemporary responses to classical sources*. Routledge.

Guttmann, J. (1973). *Philosophies of Judaism: The history of Jewish philosophy from biblical times to Franz Rosenzweig* (D. W. Silverman, Trans.). Schocken Books.

Lebens S. Is God a person? Maimonides, Crescas, and beyond. *Religious Studies* 58 (2022): S34-S60.  
doi:10.1017/S0034412521000299

Morgan, M. L., & Gordon, P. E. (Eds.). (2012). *Cambridge companions to religion: The Cambridge Companion to Modern Jewish philosophy*. Cambridge University Press.

Rudavsky, T.M. (2018). *Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages: Science, Rationalism, and Religion*. Oxford University Press.

Spinoza, Baruch. (1670). *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. London: Trübner and Co., 1862.

**Topics:**

An Introduction to Jewish Philosophy

The Historical Background of Jewish Philosophy

Jewish Philosophical views on God

Jewish Philosophical Views on Creation.

Jewish Philosophical Views on the Problem of Evil and God’s Sovereignty and Free Will.

Jewish Philosophical Objections to the Christian faith

**Class Dates, Topics and Reading Assignments:**

Date	Topic	Reading Assignments/Assignments Due
Feb 12, 2025	An Introduction to Jewish Philosophy	Frank & Leaman, <i>History of Jewish Philosophy</i> , Chapter 1.
Feb 19, 2025	Hellenistic Jewish Philosophy	Guttman, <i>Philosophies of Judaism</i> , chapter 2.
Feb 26, 2025	Medieval Jewish Philosophy	Frank and Leaman, <i>The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy</i> , chapter 1.
<i>Mar 5, 2025</i>	Jewish Neoplatonism	Guttman, <i>Philosophies of Judaism</i> , chapter 3.
Mar 12, 2025	Jewish Philosophical Theology	Frank & Segal, <i>Jewish philosophy Past and Present</i> , chapter 7.  Lebens, “Is God a person? Maimonides, Crescas, and beyond”
Mar 19, 2025	<b>(Dallas Spring Break)- no class</b>	No Reading
Mar 26, 2025	Jewish Philosophy of Religion	Rudavsky, <i>Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages: Science, Rationalism, and Religion</i> , chapters 4-5.

Apr 2, 2025	Creation, Time and Eternity in Jewish Thought	Rudavsky, <i>Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages: Science, Rationalism, and Religion</i> , chapter 6.
Apr 9, 2025	Jewish-Christian Philosophical dialogue	Frank and Leaman, <i>The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy</i> , chapter 16.
Apr 16, 2025	<b>(Passover)- no class</b>	No Reading
Apr 23, 2025	Modern Jewish Philosophy	Frank & Leaman, <i>History of Jewish Philosophy</i> , chapter 21.
Apr 30, 2025	<b>(Independence Day Eve)- no class</b>	No Reading
May 7, 2025	Spinoza and his Philosophy	Morgan & Gordon, <i>Modern Jewish Philosophy</i> , Chapter 2. Spinoza, <i>Tractatus Theologico-Politicus</i> , chapter 6.

### Bibliography

Frank, D. H. and O. Leaman (eds.), *History of Jewish Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

Frank, D. H., O. Leaman, and C. H. Manekin (eds.), *The Jewish Philosophy Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

Husik, I. *A History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy* (New York: Atheneum, 1976) [originally published 1916].

Hyman, A. and J. J. Walsh (eds.), *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1973).

Lerner, R. and M. Mahdi (eds.), *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Source Reader* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963).

Sirat, C. *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).