

Nature and the Supernatural in Medieval Jewish Culture

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Mon., 2-5
302 Van Pelt

Through close reading of non-kabbalistic texts, the course will explore medieval Jewish interpretations of nature's marvels, and its techniques for manipulating nature in order to improve living conditions, to maintain health, and to stimulate changes in the realm of the supernatural. Primary source readings in Hebrew and Aramaic. Undergraduates require instructor's permission.

Class will not be held on Monday, Sept. 28th, which is Yom Kippur. A make-up class will be scheduled.

All class readings will be accessible on the class Blackboard site. Please print out the readings and bring them to class.

Robust participation is anticipated. All students will write 20-25 page papers for this class.

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1) Mon., Sept. 14th: Hai's Responsum

Hai Gaon, Responsum #115, in Simha Imanuel, *Teshuvot Ha-Geonim Ha-Hadashot*, (Mekhon Ofek, 1995), pp. 124-146.

2) Mon., Sept. 21st: Karaite & Christian Critics of Rabbanite Superstition

Jacob Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, (Phila, 1935) 2:55-57; 74-94

Salmon ben Yeroham, *Sefer Milhamot HaShem*, Israel Davidson, ed., (NY, 1934), chaps. 14-15.

Yosef Shlomo Delmedigo, selection from the Intro. to *Ma'ayan Ganim*

Daniel Lasker, "Karaites Attitudes Towards Religion and Science", in *From Judah Hadassi to Elijah Bashyatchi*, (Leiden, 2008), pp.15-28.

Leon Nemoy, "Al-Qirqisani on the Occult Sciences", *JQR* 76 (1986), 329-367.

Judah al-Barceloni, *Perush 'al Sefer Yezira*, pp. 20-22.

R. Bonfil, "'Eduto shel Agobard mi-Lyon 'al 'olamam ha-ruhani shel yehudei 'iro ba-maeah ha-9".

3) Mon, Oct. 5th: Megilat Ahima'az

Ahima'az ben Paltiel, *Megilat Ahima'az*

R. Bonfil, "Mitos, Retorika, Historia: 'Iyyun be-megilat Ahima'az", *Tarbut ve-Hevra be-toldot Yisrael be-yeme ha-benayyim*, (1989), 99 - 135.

4) Mon., Oct. 12th: Paraphrase of Sa'adya's Kitab al-Amanat & Hasidei Ashkenaz

Ron Kiener, "The Hebrew Paraphrase of Sa'adia Gaon's *Kitab al-Amanat wa'l-Itiqadat*" (PhD, U of Pennsylvania, 1984), pp. vi-lxi.

Sa'adia Gaon, *Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, S. Rosenblatt, trans., chapter 5.

Hebrew Paraphrase of Sa'adya's *Kitab al-Amanat*, chapter 5.

Shir HaYihud, in A. Haberman, *Shirei ha-Yihud ve-haKavod*, (Jerusalem, 1948).

5) DATE? Science in Medieval Ashkenaz? Framing the Question

"*Quntres Zekher Asah le-Niflaotav*", published by Y. Ta Shma in *Qovets 'al Yad* 12, (1994), 121-146.

Jacques Le Goff, "The Marvelous in the Medieval West", in *The Medieval Imagination*, (Chicago, 1988), pp. 27-44.

Lynn White, "Cultural Climates and Technological Advance in the Middle Ages", *Viator* 2 (1972), 171-201.

Gad Freudenthal, Prospectus of 2006 Colloquium on *Science in Ashkenaz*

6) Mon., Oct. 26th: Jewish Astrologers: Ibn Ezra and Gersonides

Abraham Ibn Ezra, *Commentary on Torah*, Ex. 28:6, "*Ha-Efod*".

Ex. 32: 21, "*amar Avraham ha-mehabber*"

Ex. 33: 21

Lev. 16:8

Lev. 17:7

Dt. 31:16

Levi ben Gershon, *Commentary on I Sam.* 15:23, "*ve-'inyan ha-mashal ba-zeh*"

Levi ben Gershon, *Milhamot HaShem*, II.1.

Ron Barkai, "*Hebetim Teoretiyyim u-ma'asiyyim be-Astrologia HaYehudit*", *Madda', Magia u-Metodologia be-Yeme HaBeinayyim*, (1987), pp. 7-35.

Tzvi Langermann, "Some Astrological Themes in the Thought of R. Abraham Ibn Ezra", in Twersky & Harris, eds., *R. Abraham Ibn Ezra: Studies in the Writings of a Twelfth C. Polymath*, (Cambridge, 1993).

Bernard Goldstein, "Levi Ben Gerson's Astrology in Historical Perspective", *Gersonide et sons Temps*, G. Dahan, ed., (Louvain/Paris, 1991), 287-300.

7) Mon., Nov. 2nd: Maimonides on Astrology

"Letter of the Rabbis of Southern France", and "Maimonides' *Letter on Astrology*", published by A. Marx, in *HUCA* 3 (1926), pp. 343-358.

Gad Freudenthal, "Maimonides' Stance on Astrology in Context: Cosmology, Physics, Medicine and Providence", in *Moses Maimonides: Physican, Scientists and Philosopher*, (Northvale, NJ., 1993), 77-90 and footnotes.

8) Mon., Nov. 9th: Rambam:, Linguistic Magic & Divine Body

Commentary on Mishna, AZ 4:7, comment *zayyin*, "*mi-ma she-attah tzarikh la-da'at*".
Commentary on Mishna, Hul. 1:1, "*vi-da' ki shehitat ha-nokhri nevela*"

MT, *Hil Akum*, chap 11
Hil. Tefilin, *Mezuza* 5:4

Sefer HaMitzvot, Neg. 31-32

Guide III:37
Guide III. 29
Guide I: 61-63;

Jewish Critiques of Rambam's Defn. of Superstition

Mahzor Vitry #515, pp. 647-649

Sefer Yereim, # 239; #400.

Meshulam da Piera, #12, in Hayim Brody, ed., "*Shirei Meshullam ben Shlomo da Piera*", *Yedi'ot Ha-Makhon le-Heqer ha-Shira ha-'Ivrit be-Yerushalayim* 4 (Berlin/Jerusalem, 1938), pp. 32-34.

Raabad, on *MT*, *Hil. Teshuva* 3:7

Gaon R. Eliyahu of Vilna, *Beur le-Shulhan 'Arukh*, YD 179:13

Marc Shapiro, "Maimonidean Halakha and Superstition", *Maimonidean Studies* 2 (1990), 61- 108.

9) Mon., Nov. 16th: medicine?

BT, Shab. 63a: "*kol she-yesh bo mi-shum refuah, eyn bo mi-shum darkhei ha-Emori*".

SH (Parma) #153-154; 810; 1352; 1468-1470, 1551-1552
SH, Margaliyot ed., # 205.

Rambam, *Commentary on Mishna*, Pes. 4:10, "*halakha zo hi Tosefta*"

Rambam, *MT*, *Hil. Shab.* 19:14

Menahem HaMeiri, *Bet HaBehira*, Shabbat 53a, "*vi-lo ba-qame'a*"

Menahem HaMeiri, *Bet HaBehira*, Shabbat 61a, "*kvar be-arnu ba-Mishna*"

Shlomo ben Adret, *Shut ha-Rashba*, #413, p. 149, "*Ve-'od yesh li*" through first two lines of p. 150.

Elinor Lieber, "Asaf's *Book of Medicines*: A Hebrew Encyclopedia of Greek and Jewish Medicine, Possibly Compiled in Byzantium on an Uindian Model", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 38 (1983), 233-249.

Mark Zier, "The Healing Power of the Hebrew Tongue: An Example From Late 13th C. England", in *Health, Disease and Healing in Medieval Culture*, (1992), 103-118

Ron Barkai, "The Rise of Hebrew Medical Literature", *A History of Jewish Gynecological Texts in the Middle Ages*, (Leiden, 1998), pp. 6-37.

Jewish Perspectives on Physical Disability:

Tosefta, Ber. 6:5; Lieberman, *Tosefta KeFeshuta*, *Zera'im* I (J-m, 1993), 106-7.
Tos., BK 87a, "*vi-khen haya Rabi Yehuda*"

Ephraim Shoham Steiner, *Harigim be-al Korham*, pp. 200-206.

Maharam Schick, Shut, EH 79

Simha Bunem, Shevet Sofer, II. 21.

10) Mon., Nov. 23rd: Ramban

Readings from Ramban TBA.

Josef Stern, "Maimonides and Nahmanides on the Huqqim, Astrology and Idolatry", *Problems and Parables of Law*, chp. 6.

Dov Schwartz, "From Theurgy to Magic: the Evolution of the Magical-Talismanic Justification of Sacrifice in the Circle of Nahmanides and His Interpreters", *Aleph* 1 (2001), 165-213.

11) Mon., Nov. 30th: Ma'aseh Efod

passages TBA

12) Mon., Dec. 7th: Ma'aseh Efod

passages TBA

Boaz Huss, "*Ha-mistifikatzia shel ha-kabbalah vi-ha-mitos shel ha-mistika ha-yeshudit*", *Pe'amim* 110 (2007), 9-30.

Shaul Magid, "Is Kabbalah Mysticism?", *Zeek*, March '08