

This course will examine the thought of R. Yehudah Loew of Prague through extensive readings in his writings. Topics covered will include: associative method, reasons for the commandments, creation, Divine attributes, miracles, determinism, anthropology, ethical system, and messianism. We will discuss the relationship of his thought to philosophy, kabbalah, and Renaissance thought. The course will conclude with an analysis of the influence of his writings on eighteenth and nineteenth century Jewish thought.

You may reach me by e-mail at abrill@ymail.yu.edu or Kavvanah@gmail.com

There will be a paper, and a final.

You will be responsible for handouts given in class, please be sure to receive copies.

The selections labeled as *Reading*: are mandatory for the final. All the required readings have numbers.

Those listed as *Suggested*: are optional.

We will adjust the reading list, as needed, based on class discussion.

Basics:

Please have available a set of Maharal's writings. You may use any edition.

For finding topics in Maharal, the following are helpful.

Avraham Kariv, [Kitvei Maharal miPrag: Mivhar](#) A useful topical arrangement but usually without citation to the source of the quote.

DBS CD-Rom has Maharal.

Moshe Yehiel Zuriel, [Otzrot Maharal: maftehot inyanim...](#) Bene Berak: 1985.

I. Background

A] **Ashkenaz**: Kupfer Thesis, Rationality, Polemics, and Kavod Theories

Suggested: Readings:

Frank Talmage "Sefer ha-Nissahon of R. Yom Tov Lipman Muehlhausen [Apples of Gold Settings of Silver](#) (1999) 319-356.

Frank Talmage, "Angels, Anthems, and Anathemas: Aspects of Popular Religion in Fourteenth-Century Bohemian Judaism" in [Talmage Volume II](#) (1992) 13-20.

Joseph Davis, "Philosophy, Dogma and Exegesis in Medieval Ashkenaz Judaism: The Evidence of "Sefer Hadrat Qodesh" [AJS Review](#) 18:2 (1993) 195-222.

H.H. Ben-Sasson, "Jews and Christian sectarians: existential similarity and dialectical tensions in 16th century Moravia and Poland –Lithuania" [Viator](#) 4 (1973) 369-385

B] Italy- Humanism, Averroism, Platonism, Kabbalah, and Hermeticism
Ovadyah Seforno, Azariah deRossi, Yehudah Abarbanel, and Yohanan Alemanno
Abraham de Balmas, Issac of Pisa, David ben Yehudah Messer Leon
Elijah Del Medigo - Yehudah Hayyat- Ibn Shraga (Rikanati, Maarekhet)

Moshe Idel, "Particularism and Universalism in Kabbalah 1480-1650"
in Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy ed. David Ruderman
Moshe Idel, "The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations of the Kabbalah in the Renaissance"
Moshe Idel, "Major Currents in Italian Kabbalah between 1560-1660"
both in Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy ed. David Ruderman

C] Poland

Required by the final

1] H.H. Ben-Sasson, Hagut VeHanhagah pages 11-65 read well, 69-129 skim
2] Jacob Elbaum, Petihut veHistagrut
Chapters 1, 2; pages 11-54 skim
Chapters 5, 9, 10; 154-182, 286-355 read well

Suggested:

H.Z. Dimotrovsky, "al Derekh ha-Pilpul" *Salon Baron Jubilee Volume*
Elhanan Reiner, "The Ashkenazi Elite at the Beginning of the Modern Era: Manuscript Versus
Printed Book" *Polin* 10 (1997) 85-98.

D] Hayyim Ben Betzalel and Yizhak Hayyot

Text:

Sefer HaHayyim sefer zekhiot 1-7; hayyim tovim 3; parnasah 6; selihah vemehilah 8, 9, 10; geulah
2 (Handout)
Yitzhak Hayyut

Suggested:

Zimmer, Eric. Rabbi Hayim b.R. Betzalel me-Fridberg: ahi ha-Maharal mi-Prague.
Yerushalayim: Mosad ha-Rav Kuk, c1987.

Heiko Augustinus Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology; Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval
Nominalism* (Grand Rapids, W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1967).

II. Introduction to Maharal

A] Life and Works

Suggested:

A. Gottesdiener, *Ha-Ari she- be-hakhmei Prauge* The basis for most discussions of his life
Aaron Mauskopf, *The Religious Philosophy of the Maharal of Prague* A basic overview of his
thought
Giuseppe Veltri, "Science and Religious Hermeneutics: The 'Philosophy' of Rabbi Loew of Prague"
in *Religious confessions and the sciences in the sixteenth century*. Ed. G. Veltri, Leiden; Boston:
Brill, 2001.

A. David, *A Hebrew Chronicle from Prague 1615*, 55-67

B] Education Theory

3] Aharon Kleinberger, The Educational Theory of the Maharal of Prague [Hebrew] (Magnes: 1962) chapters 6-9

Chapter 9 is available in English as "The Didactics of Rabbi Loew of Prague" in *Scripta Hierosolymitana*

Suggested:

Otto Dov Kulka, "The Historical Background of the National and Educational Teachings of the Maharal of Prague" [Hebrew] Zion 50 (1985) 277-320.

Otto Dov Kulka, "Comenius and Maharal: The Historical Background of the Parallels in their Teachings" Judiaca Bohemiae 27 1-2, (1991) 17-30.

Marvin J. Heller :observations on a Little Known edition of Tractate Niddah (Prague c. 1608) and its relationship to the Talmudic Methodology of the Maharal of Prague *Torah Umadda Journal* 8 (1998-9) 134-150

III. A New era?

A] Is Maharal Medieval or Modern? Andre Neher versus Rifka Schatz

4] Andre Neher, Jewish Thought and the Scientific Revolution 1-2, 12-26, 51-58, 169-179, 187-215. [Use with caution!- see the critical review Yaakov Elbaum, *Tarbiz* 55:1 (1986)145-159]

5] Rifka Schatz, "Maharal's Conception of Law- Antithesis to Natural Law" Jewish Law Annual Vol. VI

B] Maharal as Early Modern

Ficino, Pico, and Calvin (handouts)

Readings:

6] P.O. Kristeller, The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino chapters 6, 7, 8 and pages 315-320, 263-269

7] Brian Vickers, "On the Function of Analogy in the Occult" in Hermeticism and the Renaissance: Intellectual History and the Occult in Early Modern Europe ed. Ingrid Merkel and Allen G. Debus, 265 - 292

[There are important critiques by C. S. Schmitt, Brian Coperhaven, Patrick Curry, and others]

8] Alan Brill, "A Separate World Order: Maharal as an Early Modern Thinker"

Highly Suggested:

John O'Mally, Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome (Duke U.P., 1979)
123-155

Charles Trinkaus, *In our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought* 2
vol. (London 1970) 3-7, 28-33, 131-137, 487-498, 505-513, 518-524, 633, 638

Suggested:

C. Butler, *Number Symbolism*

Vincent Hooper, *Medieval Number Symbolism*

William J. Bouwsma, *The Waning of the Renaissance*

R. J. W. Evens, *Rudolf II and His World* (Oxford: 1973)

IV. Mizvot: Symbolic, Structural, and Analog Thinking

Handout of Texts

9] Handout Package:

Alan Sinyor, "The Maharal on Creation" *L'Eylah* 28 (1989) 33-37

Avi Walfish, "Maharal's Symbolic System: Netiv Gemilut Hasadim" *Gesher*

Martin Buber, "The Beginning of the National Idea" *On Zion*

Suggested:

Moshe Zuriel "Numbers: Their meaning and Symbolism According to Maharal" [Hebrew]
HaMaayan 18:3 (1978) 14-23; 18:4 (1978) 30-41

V. Torah

Text:

Netivot Olam, Netiv Ha-Torah

Tiferet Israel, Introductions

VI. Hiddenness

Text:

Netivot Olam Netiv HaAvodah- 1-6

VII. Philosophy- Rationalist or Kabbalah? Medieval, Renaissance Platonic or Nominalism?

Tamar Ross, *The Miracle as an Added Dimension in the thought of the Maharal of Prague*
[Hebrew] Daat 17 (1986) 81-96

10] Byron Sherwin, Mystical Theology and Social Dissent chapters 6, 7 and 169- 172 on the
Nadler controversy [Use this book with caution!]

VIII. Anthropology: A Problematic Self, Returning to One's Original Self, Knowledge through Love and Humility

Text:

Netivot Olam halashon 1, 2, 4; zeniut 1, 4; perishut 1-3, tokhahah 1-3, lev tov 1, lezanut 1, 2; shem tov 1.

11] Yorem Jacobson, "The Image of God as the Source of Man's Evil, According to the Maharal of Prague" Binah vol. 3 ed. Joseph Dan 135-158.

12] Benny Gross, "Phenomenology of Shame" [Hebrew] Minhah leYehudah: Sefer Hayovel leRav Yehudah Cooperman

Suggested:

Benjamin Ish-Shalom, "Tannin, Leviathan, Nahash, -On the Meaning of A legendary Motif" in Daat (19) 79-101.

Benny Gross, "Faith and Trust in Maharal's Teaching" *Sinai* 101 (1988) 138-147

Idem, "The Problem of Sincerity" *Daat* 15 (1985) 103-116

Idem, "Commentary to the Netiv Haemet" *Sinai* 77 (1975) 157-167

Marvin Fox "The Moral Philosophy of Maharal" *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century* (1983) 167-185

Isaiah Strinberg, "Aesthetics in the teachings of Maharal of Prague" *Mahanayim* 10 (1995) 164-9.

Moshe Wasserstein-Verant, "The Doctrine of Man... the Development of Creativity in Education" *Hagut be-Hinukh ha-Yehudi* 2 (2000) 153-172

Ioan Couliano, Eros and Magic in the Renaissance

John Martin, "Inventing Sincerity, Refashioning Prudence: The Discovery of the individual in the Renaissance" AHR vol 102 (1997) 1308-1342

IX. History and Determinism

13] Rifka Schatz, "Existence and Eschatology in the Teachings of the Maharal" Immanuel 14 (Spring 1982) 66-97; Immanuel 15 (Winter 1982-3) 62-72.

Suggested:

Gross, Benjamin, 1925-Yehi or: al Ner mitsvah le-Maharal mi-Prag.

Yerushalayim: Reuven Mass, 1995.

Gross, Benjamin, 1925- Netsah Yisrael: hashkafato ha-meshihit shel ha-Maharal mi-Prag al ha - galat ve-ha-geulah. Tel Aviv: Devir, 1974.

X. Hermeneutics and Polemics

14] Jacob Elbaum, "Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague and his Attitude to the Aggadah" in Scripta Hierosolymitana Studies in Aggadah and Folk Literature vol 22 ed. Joseph Heinemann. 28-47

Suggested:

Jacob Elbaum, *Le-Havin Divre Hakhamim* (Jerusalem: Bialek Press, 2000).

Moshe Kline, "The Art of Writing the Oral Tradition: Leo Strauss, The Maharal of Prague, and Rabbi Judah the Prince" www.chaver.com/articles/TheArt-H.htm

[and look at his home page www.chaver.com/articles/Intro.htm]

Mordechai Breuer, "The Maharal of Prague's Disputation with Christians: A reappraisal of Be'er Ha-Golah" in Tarbiz (1986) 253-260.

Joseph M. Davis, "The "Ten Questions" of Eliezer Eilburg and the problem of Jewish unbelief in the 16th century" *Jewish Quarterly Review* 91,3-4 (2001) 293-336.

Suggested Background on 16th century Religious Debates

Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, "The Reformation in Contemporary Jewish Eyes," Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, vol. 4 (1969-1970) 239-326.

Idem, "Jewish-Christian Disputation in the Setting of Humanism and Reformation in the German Empire," *Harvard Theological Review* 59 (1966), 369-390.

Robert Bonfil, "Gli ebrei d'Italia e la Riforma: una questione da riconsiderare", *Nouvelles de la Republique des Lettres* 2 (1996) 47-60.

Abraham David The Lutheran Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Jewish Historiography" *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 2002.

XI. Fellow Travelers R. Moshe Isserles, R. Mordekhai Jaffe, R. Matityahu Delikrut, R. Yom Tov Lipmann Heller, R. Ephraim Luntshitz, and David Ganz

Texts:

Torat HaOlah (selections)

Maaseh Hashem (selections)

Suggested:

Jonah Ben-Sasson, *The Philosophical System of R. Moses Isserles* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1984)

Alan Cooper, "An Extraordinary Sixteenth-Century Biblical Commentary: Eliezer Ashkenazi on the Song of Moses" Talmage I (1993) 129-150

XII. The ~130 year gap - The Baroque Era

XIII. Maharal In Belorussia and Volhynia

Texts:

R. Shneur Zalman, *Tanya* (selections)

R. Menahem Mendel, *Derekh Mizvotekha* (selections)
R. Shalom Dov Baer, *Yom Tov Shel Rosh Hashanah 5666* (selections)
R. Levi of Berdichev, *Kedushat Levi* (check back)
R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk (selections)

15] Bezalel Safran, "Maharal and Early Hasidism" in Hasidism: Continuity or Innovation ed. Bezalel Safran. 47-91.

XIV. Maharal in Poland

Texts:

R. Israel Hopstein of Koznitz (selections)
R. Yehudah Aryeh Leib of Gur (selections from Sefat Emet)
R. Zadok HaKohen of Lublin
R. Avraham Borenstein and R. Shmuel Borenstein (selections from Avnei Nezer and Shem Mishemuel)
Yudel Rosenberg

Suggested:

Shnayer Z. Leiman "Adventure of the Maharal of Prague in London: R. Yudel Rosenberg and the Golem of Prague." Fourth annual lecture of the Victor J.Selmanowitz Chair of Jewish History. New York: Graduate School of Jewish Studies, Touro College, 2000.

Meir Bar-Ilan "Niflaot R. Yehudah Yudel Rosenberg" *Alei Sefer* 19 (2001) 173-184
Avraham Benedict "Hagadat Maharal o Aggadat Maharal" *Moriah* 14 3-4 (1985) 102-113

XV. Maharal in Lita

A] Circle of the Vilna Gaon
B] End of the Nineteenth Century

16] Avi Sagi, *Elu veElu* 126-171

XVI. Epilogue

A] Rav Hutner, *Pahad Yitzhak*
B] Rav Eliyahu Dessler, *Miktav MeEliyahu*
C] Rav Zvi Yehudah Kook
D] Abraham Joshua Heschel
E] Rabbi Shmuel Alexandrov

Suggested:

Moshe Zvi Neriah, Mishnat HaMaharal be-Netivot Olamanu *Barkai* 3 (1986) 200-222