

Prof. Warren Zev Harvey
Monday, 11.00am-12:50pm, 513 Fayerweather

Spring 2012
PHIL V3910

Maimonides and Spinoza

The Guide of the Perplexed, written in Arabic by Moses Maimonides (1138-1204), is the most influential book in medieval Jewish philosophy. It is a difficult but enchanting book, composed in the form of a puzzle. It had a formative influence on Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), whose early reading in philosophy was in Jewish texts and who read the *Guide* in Hebrew translation. We shall read Maimonides' *Guide* together with Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise* and his *Ethics*, both written in Latin. Our focus will be on Spinoza's use and criticism of Maimonidean themes. All texts will be read in English translation.

Requirements

Mini-essay (2pp.): assigned Feb. 20; due Mar. 5.

Term paper (15-20pp.) on topic chosen by student with approval of instructor: approval by Mar. 19; due May 7.

Three Required Books

1. Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. S. Pines, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963. This edition has excellent introductions by Pines and by Leo Strauss. There is an earlier translation by M. Friedlander: London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1904.
2. Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise*, trans. M.D. Yaffe, Newburyport, MA: Focus, 2004. This is an accurate, although sometimes curious translation, with excellent notes and indices. Other translations: R.H.M. Elwes, trans., London: Bell, 1883 and reprints; Samuel Shirley trans., Leiden: Brill, 1991, and Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998; Michael Silverthorne & Jonathan Israel, trans., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
3. Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. Edwin Curley, trans., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994; New York: Penguin Books, 1996. Other translations: R.H.M. Elwes, trans., London: Bell, 1883 and reprints; W.H. White & Amelia Hutchinson Stirling, trans. (1894), ed. J. Gutmann, New York: Hafner, 1949; Samuel Shirley, trans., Indianapolis: Hackett, 1882.

Topics and Dates (subject to change)

1. Jan. 23. Introduction.

2. **Jan. 30, Intellect & Imagination in the Garden of Eden.** *Guide*, I, 1-2, pp. 21-26; I, 73, "A Call," pp. 209-212; II, 30, pp. 355-358. *Ethics*, II, 17, scholium; II, 40, scholium 2; IV, 68.
3. **Feb. 6, God as Intellect.** *Guide*, I, 68, pp. 163-166; III, 9, pp. 436-437. *Ethics*, II, 7, scholium.
4. **Feb. 13, Critique of Teleology.** *Guide*, III, 13, pp. 448-456. *Ethics*, I, Appendix.
5. **Feb. 20, Love.** *Guide*, I, 39; III, 51. *Ethics*, V, 21-42.
6. **Feb. 27, Prophecy.** *Guide*, II, 32-48, pp. 360-412.. *TTP*, chs. 1-2.
7. **Mar. 5, Chosenness.** *Guide*, II, 48, pp. 409-412. *TTP*, ch. 3.
8. **Mar. 19, Law & Ethics.** *Guide*, II, 40, pp. 381-383; III, 27-28, pp. 510-514. *TTP*, chs. 4-5
9. **Mar. 26, Miracles.** *Guide*, II, 29, pp. 344-346; III, 15, pp. 459-461. *TTP*, ch.6.
10. **Apr. 2, Biblical Hermeneutics.** *Guide*, I, preface, pp. 5-20. *TTP*, chs. 7-11
11. **Apr. 9, Dogmas.** *Guide*, II, 33, pp. 363-366. *TTP*, chs. 13-14
12. **Apr. 16, Philosophy vs. Theology.** *Guide*, I, 71, pp. 175-184. *TTP*, ch.15
13. **Apr. 23, 30, Theocracy and Democracy.** *Guide*, III, 11, pp. 440-441. *TTP*, chs. 16-20.

Secondary Literature

1. Warren Zev Harvey, "Portrait of Spinoza as a Maimonidean," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 19 (1981), pp. 151-172.
2. Arthur Hyman, "Spinoza's Dogmas of Universal Faith in the Light of their Medieval Jewish Background," in A. Altmann, ed., *Biblical and Other Studies*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963, pp. 183-195
3. Leon Roth, *Spinoza, Descartes, and Maimonides*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924.
4. Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, Glenco, IL: The Free Press, 1952, pp. 142-201.
5. Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934.

Note. Further references to the secondary literature will be given during the semester.

Office hour: Monday, 3:00pm-4:00pm, 622 Kent Hall
 harvey@mscc.huji.ac.il