

OXFORD SEMINAR IN ADVANCED JEWISH STUDIES

Hosted by the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies in consortium with
Mandel Scholion Centre, Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Hochschule für
Jüdische Studien Heidelberg

*“Philosophy in Scripture”: Jewish Philosophical Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible
in the Late Medieval Period*

24 April to 18 June 2022

Project Leaders:

Professor Paul B. Fenton, Sorbonne Université
Dr Raphael Dascalu, Monash University

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR VISITING FELLOWSHIPS

CLOSING DATE: 15 June 2021 at 5pm UK time

The Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies (OCHJS) invites applications for Visiting Fellowships for the 2022 Trinity Term Oxford Seminar in Advanced Jewish Studies. This is the third in a series of International Network Seminars in Advanced Jewish Studies organised by the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, Mandel Scholion Centre of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg.

Jewish intellectual history in the late medieval period has been insufficiently studied. Post-Maimonidean exegesis in Hebrew from Spain and North Africa has been a subject of sporadic research, whereas the fragmentary remains of its Judaeo-Arabic counterpart have only been recovered relatively recently, after having been largely lost in the sands of time. This workshop intends to remedy this situation by (a) bridging disparate geographical and linguistic traditions that have yet to be studied comparatively or brought into direct dialogue; (b) promoting the study of this inadequately understood period of Jewish intellectual history among an emerging generation of scholars, thereby addressing a considerable gap in existing scholarship; and (c) combining the efforts of a promising and vibrant team of researchers to articulate a focused yet interdisciplinary assessment of the interplay between late medieval Jewish philosophy and scriptural interpretation. Situating itself at the nexus of several essential disciplines of classical Judaic studies, such as Hebrew philology and palaeography, biblical hermeneutics and philosophy, our workshop will touch upon issues of fundamental importance to Jewish studies as a whole. In sum, the workshop promises to open up new vistas in a minimally studied chapter of Jewish thought and exegesis, while generating a clear program for future research.

This workshop is inspired by recent scholarship on philosophical exegesis and Arabic translations of the Hebrew Bible among the Jewish cultures of the Islamic world in the post-Maimonidean period by young researchers worldwide—most prominently in the USA, Israel, and Germany. Its aim is to shed new light on Jewish philosophical and mystical exegesis of the Hebrew Bible from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries.

We will do this by:

- (a) viewing the development of Jewish philosophical and mystical exegesis within its broader historical (diachronic) context;
- (b) situating the various trends of Maimonideanism within their broader contemporaneous cultural contexts; and
- (c) bringing the various streams of post-Maimonidean philosophical and mystical exegesis into direct conversation with one another.

Participants will present their research carried out during one Oxford term at a concluding conference, to be held at the end of Trinity Term to enable the participation of colleagues from abroad. The final research outputs will be collected, edited, and published in a volume that will present a *global* treatment of post-Maimonidean philosophical exegesis through the late medieval period to a broad readership for the first time. The volume, to be tentatively entitled *In Search of Philosophy in Scripture*, edited by Paul Fenton and Raphael Dascalu, will fill a range of lacunae in current scholarship, and provide detailed discussions of Jewish intellectual cultures that have, to date, received limited attention. Along with the specific findings of each researcher, the volume will articulate a broad assessment of how the philosophical tradition has shaped Jewish exegesis directly and indirectly in the wake of the Maimonides' teachings.

The presence of specialists in a range of disciplines within medieval Jewish and Islamic studies, including social history, history of philosophy, Hebrew and Arabic philology, and material culture (e.g., palaeography and codicology), will provide a rare opportunity for innovative research and productive collaboration. Furthermore, through its temporal and geographical scope, the seminar will establish bridges not only within medieval Jewish Studies, but also, through the desired participation of Islamic scholars, with an adjacent field with which it was deeply enmeshed, enabling mutual scholarly enrichment. Participants will thus be enabled to situate their research within a truly interdisciplinary framework, creating a collaborative dynamic that will hopefully endure well beyond the term of the workshop.

Each week, one member of the group will present an aspect of his or her research. In addition, weekly reading sessions will be held. Weekly seminars will be convened through the duration of Oxford's Trinity Term (24 April-18 June) 2022. These will offer a forum for the Fellows to address central research topics related to the overall theme of the Seminar. The concluding conference will be held at the end of the term.

Visiting Fellows will receive an allowance of £2,515 (*pro rata*) per calendar month for the period of their tenure. Travelling expenses up to £550 pounds sterling will also be provided. Fellows will be expected to be in Oxford for at least one Oxford term. Applicants should indicate the specific research they would undertake in the course of Fellowship and how this research would contribute to the broader work of the project. The Centre welcomes applications from scholars working in any period. Applications both by senior scholars and by scholars at postdoctoral and advanced doctoral level are welcome.

For more detailed information, contact Professor Paul Fenton (paul.fenton@sorbonne-universite.fr) or Dr Raphael Dascalu (raphael.dascalu@monash.edu). For any other queries, contact Academic Registrar of OCHJS, Ms Madeleine Trivasse (registrar@ochjs.ac.uk).