



THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE
- SYDNEY
ק"ק בית ישראל



The Jewish Search for Wisdom: A History of Jewish Philosophy

An online undergraduate and postgraduate course in Semester 1 2026 at the Notre Dame Centre for the History of Philosophy
Featuring three evening sessions at The Great Synagogue, Sydney

The Jewish Search for Wisdom: A History of Jewish Philosophy

Discover the extraordinary tradition of Jewish philosophy through 3,000 years of intellectual inquiry, from ancient biblical wisdom to 20th century thought. This course explores how Jewish thinkers have grappled with life's deepest questions, ranging from Philo's Hellenistic synthesis to Maimonides' revolutionary rationalism, from Kabbalistic mysticism to modern responses to the Holocaust. Led by medieval Jewish philosophy expert Dr Raphael Dascalu, you'll discover how Jewish philosophers have shaped Western thought while maintaining their distinctive traditions. Perfect for students of philosophy, history or theology and anyone curious about this rich intellectual heritage.

- An online undergraduate and postgraduate course offered by the University of Notre Dame Australia through the Centre for the History of Philosophy
- Semester 1 2026
- Mondays 1:30–4:30 pm (Sydney time)
- Featuring three evening sessions at The Great Synagogue, Sydney (in-person or online), 5:30–8:30 pm (Sydney time)
- Enrolment options: open to students at Notre Dame, students at other universities and colleges via cross-institutional enrolment, and to the general public for audit (no assessments).

1	16 Feb	What is Jewish Philosophy? – Jewish thought before philosophy: Bible, rabbinic texts, "Greek wisdom," philosophy as tradition
2	23 Feb	Alexandria: Philo and Beyond – Hellenistic Judaism, Philo, Aristobulus, Paul, universalism (Simkovich)
3	2 Mar	The Eastern Islamic World (al-Mashriq) – Early Islamic conquests, Sefer Yetsirah, Kalam, Dawud al-Muqammas, Karaim, Saadia Gaon
4	9 Mar	The Western Islamic World (al-Maghrib) – Neoplatonism, Isaac Israeli, Ibn Gabirol, Joseph Ibn Saddiq, Judah ha-Levi, Abraham Ibn Ezra
5	16 Mar	Moses Maimonides (at TGS) – Rambam's life, ideas and legacy
6	23 Mar	Three Maimonideanisms – Reception and development in Occitania, Egypt/Levant, Yemen
7	30 Mar	Kabbalah – Mystical traditions, metaphysics, divine emanations
8	13 Apr	Rupture and Renaissance – Post-expulsion transition, new centres of thought, philosophy vs Kabbalah
9	20 Apr	Modernity East and West (at TGS) – Spinoza's challenge, Mendelssohn's modernism, Eastern Haskalah
10	27 Apr	The German-Jewish Milieu – Hermann Cohen, Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig
11	4 May	Meanwhile, Elsewhere... – Benamozegh (Italy), Rav Kook (Palestine), Zeitlin (Russia/US), Emmanuel Levinas (France)
12	11 May	C20 Orthodox Philosophy (at TGS) – Joseph Soloveitchik, Eliezer Berkovitz, Jonathan Sacks (with Rabbi Dr Benjamin Elton)
13	18 May	Contemporary Trends and Reflections – Jewish feminism, new directions, closing discussions

Meet the course coordinator

Dr Raphael Dascalu is Senior Research Fellow in the History of Jewish Philosophy at the Notre Dame Centre for the History of Philosophy. He specialises in the medieval Jewish philosophical tradition, particularly Judaeo-Arabic texts. He is the author of *A Philosopher of Scripture: The Exegesis and Thought of Tanhum ha-Yerushalmi* (Brill, 2019). He is currently working on a translation of *Abstract of Truths* by David b. Joshua Maimonides for Oxford University Press.



Find out more: notredame.edu.au/jphil26

Enquiries: chop@nd.edu.au

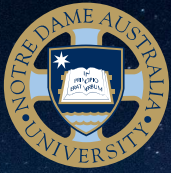
Open to students from all universities and to members of the public.



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THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE
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ק"מ בית ישראל

Faith Meets Reason A Journey in Jewish Philosophy from Maimonides to Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

A short course for Jewish and non-Jewish learners alike.

Explore timeless ideas, profound thinkers and some surprising Jewish perspectives on the meaning of life.

No expertise required – just curiosity and an open mind.

Presented by the
Notre Dame Centre for the History of Philosophy
and The Great Synagogue Sydney.

**MARCH
TO MAY
2026**

Find out more
notredame.edu.au/jphil26



Faith Meets Reason A Journey in Jewish Philosophy from Maimonides to Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

A three-session short course at
The Great Synagogue Sydney in 2026

Explore the wisdom of Judaism's greatest philosophical minds in this intimate three-session introduction to Jewish thought. Meet Maimonides, the medieval giant who reconciled faith with reason; encounter Spinoza's bold challenge to tradition; and discover how modern Orthodox thinkers like Rabbi Jonathan Sacks addressed contemporary dilemmas. This introductory course offers fascinating glimpses into towering intellectual figures who shaped both Jewish culture and Western philosophy. Hosted at Sydney's magnificent Great Synagogue and taught by leading scholars Dr Raphael Dascalu and Rabbi Dr Benjamin Elton, these evening sessions provide an accessible entry point into profound ideas. No prior knowledge needed – just bring your curiosity about life's big questions.

Session 1: Moses Maimonides (1138–1204): Rambam's life, ideas and legacy

Session 2: Modernity East and West: Spinoza's challenge, Mendelssohn's modernism, Eastern Haskalah

Session 3: 20th Century Orthodox Philosophy: Joseph Soloveitchik, Eliezer Berkovitz, Jonathan Sacks

WHERE

The Great Synagogue, Sydney
166 Castlereagh St, Sydney

WHEN

Three Monday evenings:
16 March, 20 April, 11 May 2026
5:30–8:30 pm, with refreshments

COST

\$50 | TGS members \$40 | students free

FIND OUT MORE

notredame.edu.au/jphil26

Meet the teachers

Dr Raphael Dascalu
Sessions 1 and 2



Dr Raphael Dascalu is Senior Research Fellow in the History of Jewish Philosophy at the Notre Dame Centre for the History of Philosophy. He specialises in the medieval Jewish philosophical tradition, particularly Judaeo-Arabic texts. He is the author of *A Philosopher of Scripture: The Exegesis and Thought of Tanhum ha-Yerushalmi* (Brill, 2019). He is currently working on a translation of *Abstract of Truths* by David b. Joshua Maimonides for Oxford University Press.

Rabbi Dr Benjamin Elton
Session 3



Dr Elton is Chief Minister of The Great Synagogue, Sydney. He holds an MA in History from Cambridge and a PhD in Jewish History from Birkbeck, University of London. He is the author of *Britain's Chief Rabbi and the Religious Character of Anglo-Jewry, 1880–1970* (2009). He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society of London and an Honorary Associate at the Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies at the University of Sydney.