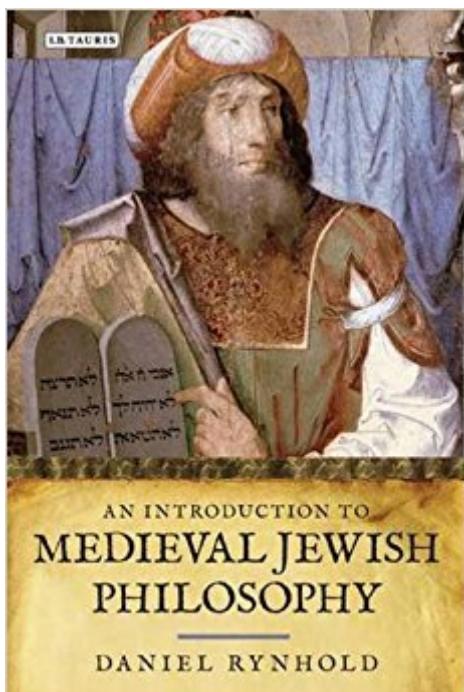


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# An Introduction To Medieval Jewish Philosophy (Introductions To Religion)



## Synopsis

Human civilization will be forever indebted to the great thinkers of Jewish philosophy's golden age. Moses Maimonides, Levi Gersonides, Judah Halevi, Saadia Gaon, Hasdai Crescas and their like grappled with some of the most challenging metaphysical issues, while the profundity of their solutions continue to engage philosophers today. Did God create the world? Can human freedom be reconciled with divine foreknowledge? What is the nature of the good life? Focusing on the central philosophical questions of the Middle Ages, Daniel Rynhold offers a concise introduction to topics such as God and creation, human freewill, biblical prophecy, the Commandments, the divine attributes and immortality. Structured around themes that form the common ""syllabus"" of medieval Jewish philosophy, each chapter builds a debate around a particular topic and in so doing utilizes the arguments of the chief philosophical figures of the medieval era. Explaining all concepts in a clear, non-technical fashion, the book also provides suggestions for further reading at the end of each chapter. The first dedicated textbook to introduce the great richness of medieval Jewish philosophy as a whole, this lively and comprehensive survey is the ideal introduction for undergraduate students of the subject as well as the interested general reader.

## Book Information

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""For some twelve centuries, Jewish religious thinkers, like their Christian and Muslim counterparts, have been wrestling with the challenge that rational enquiry presents to traditional beliefs and practices. Can the existence of God be proven? Was the world created by divine fiat? How may

reflective individuals logically describe God's attributes? Is prophetic power a natural or supernatural attribute? Does humankind truly have a choice over good and evil and does the suffering of the righteous call into question the notion of divine justice? Daniel Rynhold's fine volume offers a readable, informative and reliable summary of the leading figures and the major ideas relating to such topics. The author explains--with a light touch and an occasional dash of humour--a variety of philosophical problems, as seen by modern and well as medieval thinkers with either religious or non-religious commitments. He clarifies the resolutions proposed for each problem by Saadia, Maimonides, Judah Halevi, Gersonides and Crescas, and reconstructs the discussions that might have taken place had they lived in the same periods and places. All credit to the author for producing a textbook that will be found clear and useful by lay readers, as well as students and scholars of religion, Jewish studies and medieval philosophy."--Stefan C Reif, Emeritus Professor of Medieval Hebrew Studies, University of Cambridge "Rynhold strings the pearls of logical, medieval, complex Jewish argument together in a beautiful, systematic, expertly classified manner. He shows introductory readers the eloquence and depth of some of the medieval modes of understanding complex ideas within their Jewish medieval historical context, and traces the reception history of the seminal works of medieval Jewish thought... This volume is a welcome addition to courses in medieval culture, the history of philosophy, and Jewish studies." -D.B. Levy, Touro College, Lander College for Women "The first thing to be said is that this is a very good book, and thoroughly to be recommended, both to the general reader and to the person studying religion and/or philosophy: advanced as well as introductory students will all find something of value...The great merit of the book is that it is a work of philosophy, not merely of the history of ideas" --A.H. Lesser, *Journal of Semitic Studies*

Daniel Rynhold is Assistant Professor of Modern Jewish Philosophy at Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies at Yeshiva University in New York. He serves on the editorial boards of *Le'ela* and the *Journal of the London School of Jewish Studies*, and is the author a previous book entitled *Two Models of Jewish Philosophy: Justifying One's Practices* (2005).

An excellent overview of the subject. The chapters are divided into topics: The Existence of God; God and Creation; Divine Attributes; Prophecy; Rationalizing the Commandments; Freewill and Omnipotence; The Good Life; The Bad Life. Unsurprisingly, Maimonides features most prominently (at least to the point I've read to, and no reason to think that won't continue). Yehudah Ha'Levi is often presented as the counterpoint to Maimonides' Greco-Islamic 'rationalism'. The other figures

that make appearances include Saadia Gaon, Gersonides, and Hasdai Crescas. The book is well-written and quite readable, especially considering its subject matter. It is meant as an introduction, and a neophyte will probably gain much from it, but I think it will be much more accessible to those with at least a basic knowledge of Judaism and Aristotlean and neo-Platonic philosophy. Recommended.

Amazing overview of the subject matter. Clear, concise and not written in an overly academic of a style.

Short, but very thorough survey of the Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages.

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