

# MAIMONIDES LECTURE ON SCEPTICISM

FEBRUARY 4, 2020  
18:00

**“HAD IT NOT BEEN A WRITTEN VERSE, IT  
WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY IT”:  
HUMOUR AND SCEPTICISM IN NARRATIVES IN THE  
BABYLONIAN TALMUD**

*Dr. Reuven Kiperwasser*

The focus of this presentation is the critique of religious values from within the rabbinic tradition in the various forms of expressing doubts, or scepticism, about its passed-down religious narratives, practices, and authoritative structures. Reading rabbinic narratives, the lecture aims to identify narrators who looked for other theological options and answers and who were sceptical and critical towards the common acceptance of theological norms. The paper will also be dedicated to the role of humour in expressing theological ideas in the Babylonian Talmud. These narrators quite often used laughter and the comic to express their doubts and to reinforce their intra-group connections. Analysing appearances of mockery in theological debates, it will be shown that laughter opens a moment of potential rupture in the continuity of interactions. Such moments produce some re-organisation in order to reorientate the action towards continuity rather than turbulence. The lecture will analyse a specific case study, the rabbinic narrative from the Babylonian Talmud, and will discuss its possible meanings.

VENUE

**MAIMONIDES CENTRE  
FOR ADVANCED STUDIES**

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