

MAIMONIDES LECTURE ON SCEPTICISM

TUESDAY
11 JULY 2023
18:00

“Is There Jewish Historiography? Is There Jewish History? Are There Jews?”

Michael Brenner (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München/
American University, Washington DC)

In the nineteenth century, Jewish historiography took shape as a discipline, growing out of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement. Historians such as Isaac Marcus Jost, Heinrich Graetz, and Simon Dubnov had their different interpretations of Jewish history, but they all shared the belief in a single coherent story of the Jews. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, every major university in the United States, along with many in Europe, had its own positions in Jewish history. However, there is also a growing relativisation when it comes to national histories and area studies in general. Can we still talk about a Jewish people and a Jewish culture? What does it mean to be Jewish in the twenty-first century and how will the constant changing of the definition of what Jews are influence the writing of Jewish history in the generations to come?

The first major account of Jewish history for the twenty-first century, David Biale's *Cultures of the Jews*, stands for a new approach that tells the story of the Jews by many authors and as that of many cultures. What will be the next steps in writing Jewish history? Can we even still speak of a Jewish history? And how should we teach such a multi-layered history to the next generation of students? This lecture does not provide an answer to this question, but wishes to open the discussion into these and related issues overshadowing our field today.

VENUE

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further information
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