



Universität Hamburg
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ספקנות
Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies
JEWISH SCEPTICISM

MAIMONIDES LECTURE ON SCEPTICISM

TUESDAY
23 JANUARY 2024
18:00

Judaism *Sola Scriptura*: Tolerance, Translation, and Salvation in Eighteenth-Century Amsterdam *Rebekka Voß (Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main)*

This lecture considers scepticism and intercultural exchange within the framework of the early modern Pietist mission to the Jews. In the first half of the eighteenth century, the Pietist mission prompted personal conversations between Christians and a significant number of Jews across Europe. Most Jews were surprisingly willing to speak with the missionaries, despite their evident agenda. Their meetings often resulted in intense dialogues, entailing an intriguing cultural entanglement. In Amsterdam, the missionaries eagerly approached a number of sceptical Jews, who rejected certain rabbinic teachings about the Messiah, hoping to find these “Karaites” receptive to the Gospel. This missionary context is key to understanding spiritual unrest and debates about biblicising heresies and heterodox beliefs in Judaism in eighteenth-century Amsterdam.

Here the focus is set on one of these scripturalists, the intellectual Eliezer Susman Rudelsum. He is known as the editor of Yiddish Bible translations and the author of two Dutch treatises on the study of the Hebrew language. Re-evaluating Susman’s oeuvre in light of his personal contacts with Pietist missionaries, Protestant Hebraists, and like-minded Jewish disbelievers sheds light on his worldview and reveals the full complexity of scepticism among Amsterdam Jewry in the eighteenth century. At a time when programmes for the unification of the monotheistic religions and universal peace were popular among Enlightenment thinkers, Eliezer Susman advanced a unique vision of coexistence. The basis of his envisioned brotherhood of Jews and Christians was a Judaism *sola scriptura* and the shared study of the Hebrew Bible.

VENUE

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