

Emanu-El Reads!



MAIMONIDES

“**O**ne should see the world,
and see himself as a
scale with an equal
balance of good and
evil. When he does one
good deed, the scale is tipped to
the good—he and the world is saved.
When he does one evil deed,
the scale is tipped to the bad—he
and the world is destroyed.”



1138 C.E.

Moses, son of Maimon, later known as Maimonides, is born on the 14th of the Hebrew month of Nisan, Passover eve (circa March 30 on the Gregorian calendar) in Cordoba; his mother dies in childbirth.

1148 C.E.

Following Almohads' invasion of Cordoba, the Maimon family flees to Almeria. It is here where Moses is thought to befriend Muslim philosopher ibn Rushd, known as Averroës. An interpreter of Aristotle and the medical adviser to the chief judge of Cordoba, Averroës—like Maimonides—later attempts to reconcile faith with Aristotelian philosophy.

“EMANU-EL READS...” is a community learning experience. The entire congregation spends the better part of a year reading one book, studying its meaning and significance. As part of our exploration of the themes of the book, we have organized a series of lectures, activities and study sessions that broaden our understanding of the book and bring its ideas into sharper focus. The journey concludes with a community-wide book discussion session, where each of us will have an opportunity to dialogue with fellow congregants about our impressions of the book and its meaning.

The book selected for this year's congregational read is *Maimonides* by Sherwin Nuland, a succinct, literary biography that is part of the Jewish Encounters project developed by Nextbook and Schocken. Dr. Nuland chronicles the life and works of the great medieval Jewish philosopher who shaped Jewish thought in his time and whose influence endures.

continued

1148–1158 C.E.

As the Maimon family wanders Spain, Maimonides composes works including *Millot Higayon*, an introduction to logic based on Aristotle, and *Ma'amar ha-Ibbur*, about the Hebrew calendar.

He researches the work of the Geonim (arbiters of Jewish law in the sixth through 10th centuries) and collects teachings of his father and of his teacher, Joseph ibn Migas.

1151 C.E.

The Maimon family flees Almeria following the advance of Almohads.

1158 C.E.

Maimonides begins writing the *Kitab al-Siraj*, *Commentary on the Mishnah*.

A prolific Torah scholar and a dedicated physician who served a sultan, Maimonides sought to harmonize rational, scientific knowledge with the demands of faith. His prodigious, wide-ranging writings dealt with medicine, ethics, God, faith, evil, the afterlife, the Messiah and the striving for intellectual perfection. What he had to say often sparked controversy and vigorous disagreement. Sherwin Nuland, himself a doctor, brings insight and humanity to the man and his ideas.

This program and the choice of book were inspired by Maxwell Moss and the Men's Club Reading Group, and the entire series was organized and coordinated by our Temple librarian Elizabeth Stabler, with the assistance of Elka Deitsch, senior curator, Bernard Museum of Judaica.

So don't be left out...buy the book...read it...and join your friends and fellow congregants in a stimulating and multifaceted exploration of the fascinating world of Maimonides.

“Anticipate charity by preventing poverty; assist the reduced fellow man, either by a considerable gift or a sum of money or by teaching him a trade or by putting him in the way of business so that he may earn an honest livelihood and not be forced to the dreadful alternative of holding out his hand for charity. This is the highest step and summit of charity's golden ladder.”

2006-2007 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

INAUGURAL
EVENT!

October 23, 2006 — 6:30 PM

Medieval Jewish Philosophy: A World No More

DR. DAVID M. POSNER

Senior Rabbi, Temple Emanu-El



1160 C.E.

The Maimon family moves to Fez. Rabbi Maimon writes *Letter of Consolation*, reassuring the Jews of Morocco that even if they must outwardly live as Muslims in order to survive, the God of Israel would still hear their prayers.



November 6, 2006 — 6:30 PM

Finding the Hidden Maimonides: Exploring the Cairo Genizah

DAVID WACHTEL is the research librarian for special collections at The Library of The Jewish Theological

Seminary. He holds advanced degrees in medieval history and Jewish studies from Columbia University.

November 12, 2006

Mitzvah Day Tzedakah Project

LYNDA DELOTT, *Mitzvah Day Chairman*

At Mitzvah Day—and throughout the “EMANU-EL READS...” program—congregants may take the opportunity to contribute to a special *tzedakah* project and thereby learn through action about Maimonides’ concept of giving charity. All the money collected will be sent anonymously, in the spirit of Maimonides, to the Schneider Children’s Medical Center of Israel.

1162 C.E.

Maimonides writes *Letter on Conversion*, in which he marshals the sources of Jewish law to show that outward conversion to Islam is permissible in dire circumstances, under which many Jews of the time were living.



December 12, 2006 — 10:30 AM

Women’s Auxiliary: Book Group

Temple librarian ELIZABETH STABLER will

lead a discussion about Sherwin Nuland’s *Maimonides*.

1165 C.E.

Maimonides is arrested for relapsing to Judaism after ostensibly converting to Islam; he is released on the testimony of his friend Abul Arab ibn Moisha.

The Maimon family escapes Fez; they hide in Ceuta en route to Palestine.

The Maimon family arrives in Palestine in May or June. After a brief stay, they move to Alexandria.

Rabbi Maimon dies; Maimonides assumes family leadership.

1168 C.E.

Commentary on the Mishnah is completed. Maimonides and his family move to Fustat.

January 16, 2007 — 6:30 PM

Making the Irrational Rational:

Maimonides' Advice for Living a Virtuous Life

RABBI KERRY M. OLITZKY, D.H.L., is executive director



of the Jewish Outreach Institute and a fellow at the Center for Jewish Studies, Graduate School and University Center, CUNY. He also is the author of commentaries on biblical texts and books on Jewish outreach and interfaith families.

January 31, 2007 — 6:30 PM

Maimonides and the Art of Giving

JULIE SALAMON is a culture writer and critic for

The New York Times. She also is the author of *Rambam's*

Ladder: A Meditation on Generosity and Why It Is Necessary to Give.



February 7, 2007 — 6:30 PM

Maimonides and His Image:

The Legacy of His Works and Their Interpreters

DR. BENJAMIN GAMPEL, the Dina and Eli Field Family



Chair in Jewish History at The Jewish Theological Seminary, teaches courses in medieval and early modern Jewish history—with a focus on the medieval Sephardim—and lectures widely on the range of Jewish history.

March 11, 2007 — 10 AM

Applying the Ethics of Maimonides

The Men's Club of Congregation Emanu-El

sponsors a panel of Temple members, moderated

by RICHARD VALCOURT, to discuss ethics in business, law and medicine.



THREE-PART
SERIES

March 6, 13, 20, 2007 — 6:30 PM

The Three Books of Moses: Maimonides' Attempts to Revolutionize Judaism — Commentary on the Mishnah, Mishneh Torah and The Guide of the Perplexed



RABBI DAVID GREENSTEIN is rabbinic dean of the Academy for Jewish Religion, where he teaches rabbinics, kabbalah and Jewish thought.

April 19, 2007 — 6:30 PM



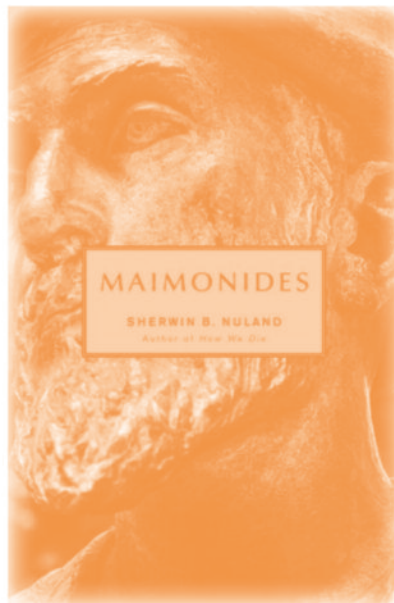
Maimonides: The Man and His Works

DR. SHERWIN B. NULAND is the author of *Lost in America*, *How We Live* and *Doctors*. His writing has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New Republic*, *The New York Times*, *The New York Review of Books*, *Time* and *The American Scholar*. He is a clinical professor of surgery at Yale, where he also teaches bioethics and medical history.

April 25, 2007 — 6:30 PM

Maimonides by Sherwin Nuland: The Congregation Studies and Discusses

The culmination of the “EMANU-EL READS...” program will give us the opportunity to discuss, synthesize and further probe the ideas of Maimonides and their relevance to our lives in partnership with fellow congregants.



Maimonides by Sherwin B. Nuland (Schocken Books, 2005, 234 pages)

A limited number of copies of *Maimonides* are available from the Temple office for \$12 per book—a 40 percent discount off the retail price. Call (212) 744-1400 for more information.

1170 C.E.

Maimonides completes *Sefer ha-Mitzvot*, an enumeration of the 613 commandments; he begins to compose *Mishneh Torah*, his great law code.

1172 C.E.

Maimonides writes *Letter to Yemen*, reassuring the Jews of Yemen that the Jewish people and their unique relationship to God will endure.

1175 C.E.

Maimonides marries the daughter of Rabbi Michael Halevi of Fustat; her name is unrecorded.

1176–1184 C.E.

A daughter is born to Maimonides and his wife; she dies in infancy.

1180 C.E.

Maimonides completes *Mishneh Torah*, a compendium of Jewish law.

1186 C.E.

A son, Abraham, is born to Maimonides and his wife.

1187 C.E.

Maimonides is appointed physician to Egyptian vizier el Fadil.

Maimonides is named *nagid*, chief rabbi, of all lands controlled by Saladin.

1190 C.E.

Maimonides completes *The Guide of the Perplexed*, an attempt to reconcile faith and reason.

OTHER MAIMONIDES-RELATED ACTIVITIES



RELIGIOUS SCHOOL (GRADES K–3)

In an effort to evoke the *Cairo Genizah* found in the Ibn Ezra Synagogue, RABBI AMY B. EHRLICH will guide children in creating a *genizah*. Students will be asked to bring for deposit gently used books they have outgrown or no longer wish to own. In the Jewish tradition of ultimate respect for the written word, the children also will be honoring Maimonides’ “Eight Levels of Charity” with a 21st century twist. Instead of being left for 1,000 years, these books then will be donated to a school.

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL (GRADES 4–7)

ELKA DEITSCH, senior curator of the

Bernard Museum of Judaica at Temple Emanu-El and educator MOHINI SHAPERO will weave Maimonides



into Religious School tours of the museum through the lens of the *Convivencia* that occurred among Jews, Christians and Muslims in medieval Spain. Using their personal insights and experiences, the students also will discuss ways in which New York City is a hub of multiculturalism, dynamic coexistence and shared aesthetics.

EMANU-EL LEAGUE

An Evening of Moroccan Food With Jennifer Abadi

Date to be announced



Enjoy some of the same foods Moses Maimonides might have eaten while he lived in Morocco. Jennifer Felicia Abadi is the author and illustrator of the cookbook-memoir *A Fistful of Lentils: Syrian-Jewish Recipes From Grandma Fritzie's Kitchen*. The Emanu-El League is a group for singles in their late 20s through early 40s.

The SKIRBALL CENTER FOR ADULT JEWISH LEARNING at Temple Emanu-El will offer an eight-week course in the spring related to Maimonides and his works. Additional programs by our YOUTH GROUPS, YOUNG FAMILIES group and the NURSERY SCHOOL will be announced during the course of the year.

“ In the beginning we must simplify the subject, thus unavoidably falsifying it, and later we must sophisticate away the falsely simple beginning.”

(All quotations from Maimonides)

1190–1204 C.E.

Maimonides publishes several medical treatises, including *The Medical Aphorisms of Moses*. Largely based on Galen and yet willing to challenge him, *The Aphorisms* are used in Muslim lands and in Europe for several centuries.

1204 C.E.

Samuel ibn Tibbon completes translation of *The Guide of the Perplexed*, called *Moreh Nevukhim* in Hebrew.

Moses Maimonides dies December 13, the 20th of the Hebrew month of Tevet.

Based on the chronology appearing in *Maimonides* by Sherwin B. Nuland, Schocken Books (Random House), New York, 2005; compiled by Rachel Lerner; used with permission of Nextbook.org.