

THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY
JEWISH STUDIES PROGRAM

cordially invites you to a lecture by

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Johns Hopkins University

Mendelssohn, Maimon, and Spinoza on Ex-Communication and Toleration: Dispelling Three Enlightenment Fairytales

Moses Mendelssohn is commonly described by his friends and admirers as a paradigm of a tolerant person. It is likely that some of these tales are hagiographic, but, as far as I can tell, the historical evidence we have portray him as a decent, non-arrogant, person, who was open to critique and willing to engage in an attentive dialogue with his opponents. Though it is hard to distinguish Mendelssohn, the man, from his views, my attempt here will be to scrutinize Mendelssohn's notion of tolerance, and particularly his objection to the use of herem/Ex-Communication against dissenters within the Jewish community. The common Maskilic narrative of this story runs roughly along these lines. Mendelssohn had an 'unrestricted commitment' to tolerance. He was opposed to the use of this forceful communal tool on grounds that this use would display intolerance toward a member of the community. In this context, Mendelssohn's objection to ex-communication is frequently discussed in the context of another event, perhaps even as a lesson from that event - the ex-communication of Spinoza. In this paper I will argue that this self-flattering narrative is based on several myths.

Tuesday, November 27 at 6 p.m.
Gellner Room
Budapest, 1051 Nádor utca 9.

Yitzhak Melamed is an Associate Professor in the Philosophy Department and the Jewish Studies Program at Johns Hopkins University. He works on Early Modern Philosophy, German Idealism, Medieval Philosophy, and some issues in contemporary metaphysics (time, mereology, and identity). Recently he won the ACLS Burkhardt (2011), NEH (2010), and Humboldt (2011) fellowships for his next major book project: *Spinoza and German Idealism: A Metaphysical Dialogue*.



A reception will follow