

Dr. Yochai Makbili

Dr. Yochai Makbili has dedicated his educational and public career to disseminating the Rambam's writings and making them accessible in an up-to-date manner for serious students and novices. Dr. Makbili is a Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Haifa who devoted his doctoral thesis to the topic: "Heritage and Society in the Rambam's Perception of Impurity and Purity." His graduate academic studies prior to his doctorate were in computer engineering which he completed summa cum laude in the Faculty of Computer Science at the Technion.

At the Technion, he also lectured many years on the subject of the Rambam's key philosophical insights. Dr. Makbili is a multi-faceted researcher who developed solutions for pacemaker malfunctioning at the Biosense company. At the same time that he was advancing with his formal studies, Dr. Makbili studied Jewish thought, and particularly the writings of the Rambam, with Rabbi Yosef Kapach, the great annotator and expert on Medieval Jewish thought and the Rambam's works.

From 2005 onwards, Dr. Yochai Makbili has written and lectured and held scientific conferences on the Maimonides' Mishnah in leading academic institutions in Israel and abroad. He has published innovative, ground-breaking articles that reach wide and diverse swathes of the public.

Since that time, Dr. Makbili has been editing the Rambam's books and explaining them out of an express vision to make the Rambam's perspective of Jewish law and philosophy accessible to those interested as well as to make them relevant to our times.

Dr. Makbili published a new edition of the Rambam's Mishnah Torah in one volume. The edition was accompanied by many indices, for which he developed smart advanced software technologies. Dr. Makbili was the annotator and chief editor of a short and complete commentary on all fourteen parts of the Mishnah Torah. This work was a rare collaboration between experts in various fields, including those who came from the world of Torah such as Machon Mishpatei Eretz, researchers of Jewish Law (including the Machon haTorah v'haAretz), and colleagues from the academic world (including Dr. Yechiel Kara from the Hebrew Language Academy, Prof. Zohar Amar from Bar Ilan University, and others).

This edition of the Mishnah Torah is highly regarded. Reviewers define the book as revolutionary and point out that it makes the Rambam's teachings accessible for self-study and comprehensible to the general public. No wonder that this edition has been widely distributed. So far there have been five printings with over 18,000 volumes and more than 200,000 references. Many conferences throughout the country were held upon the publication of the book.

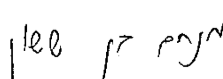
Dr. Makbili combines the teachings of Rabbi Yosef Kapach and Rabbi Rabinovitch in his commentaries. He offers an explanation of each Jewish law within its broad halachic and philosophic context, so the student gets an expansive picture of the law's meaning and its underlying philosophy.

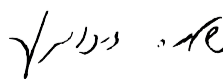
Dr. Makbili followed this with the exegesis and editing of the Rambam's Guide for the Perplexed, that included a new translation and commentary. His first work published was "An Invitation to the Guide for the Perplexed - First Encounter. Three Select Chapters from the Rambam's Philosophy".

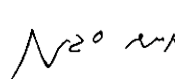
The work itself was afterwards published in three parts. In the hundreds of pages of this book, he provides a meticulous analysis of the complex laws of impurity and purity. He offers a new interpretation inspired by the Rambam of impurity as a polemical approach to idolatrous ideas, while dealing with the existential concepts that also occupy man in our times: death and life, fertility and sex, and suffering.

The up-to-date discussion in this essay has brought learners and dilettantes from wide circles to familiarize themselves with the Guide to the Perplexed's teachings for his times and ours.

The 2023 Katz Prize is awarded to Dr. Yochai Makbili for his impressive work, for his in-depth research, and for successfully disseminating and making the Rambam accessible to the general public.


Prof. Menahem Ben-Sasson


Rabbi Shlomo Dichovski


Rabbi Haim Sabato