

GREAT JEWISH BOOKS COURSE

THE MAHARAL OF PRAGUE

RABBI YECHAZKEL FREUNDLICH

- A. R' Yehudah ben Betzalel Loew (~1512-1609)
- a. Believed to have been born in Poland, to a Rabbinic and scholarly family
 - b. "Maharal" is from **Moreinu HaRav Loew** (מורינו הרב ליוואי)
 - i. Loew is from the German word for lion, often used to refer to a Yehudi, as Yakov blessed Yehuda as a Gur Aryeh (גור אריה), a young lion cub
 - c. Rav in Moravia (Nikolsburg) about 35 years from 1553-1588, then retired to Prague but quickly became the Rav there. 4 years later, in 1592, he moved to Poznań, where he had been elected as Chief Rabbi of Poland, and eventually moved back to Prague where he was buried in the old Jewish cemetery.
 - d. Wife Pearl (family has a tradition she was quite a scholar as well), 6 daughters and a son. Also believed he was descended from King David
- B. Scholar, Philosopher, Kabbalist and unabashed Defender of the Faith
- a. Unprecedented impact on Jewish study - what Rashi did to the text of Tanach, allowing it to be accessed by the masses, the Maharal does for Aggadata, the perplexing and enigmatic statements of the Sages found primarily in the midrash and sprinkled throughout the Talmud.
 - b. Most of the Talmud is halachik in nature, expounding the text of the Torah. But Aggadata refers to all of their statements expounding on the stories of the Torah, on life, on philosophy, often couched in riddles or fanciful tales or apparent exaggerations

"The earth was commanded to bring forth trees that tasted itself the same as the fruit. But it did not do so, instead bringing forth trees that produced fruit, but were not fruit themselves. Therefore, when Man was later cursed for his sin, the earth itself was included in his punishment for its sin. (Rashi, Berieshis 1:11)

"The sun and the moon were created equal in size, but the moon was diminished after it complained, saying, 'Is it possible two kings can share only one crown?'" (Rashi, Bereishis 1:16)

"Noach emerged wounded from the Ark. One time he tarried (was lazy) in feeding the lion and it bit him" (Rashi, Bereishis 7:23)

c.

Maharal

Yitro being forced to accept th e torah. Medrash I sreal

https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4117874/jewish/10-Facts-About-the-Maharal-Every-Jew-Should-Know.htm

Exile, redemption, yisreIm Torah