

OXFORD SEMINAR IN ADVANCED JEWISH STUDIES

Hosted by the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies in consortium with
Mandel Scholion Centre, Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Hochschule für
Jüdische Studien Heidelberg

Books in Judeo-Languages: Popular Reading and Scholarship

9 October to 3 December 2022

Project Leader:

Dr Jean Baumgarten

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[CNRS, France])**

**CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR VISITING FELLOWSHIPS CLOSING DATE:
11 March 2022 at 12pm UK Time**

The Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies (OCHJS) invites applications for Visiting Fellowships for the 2022 Michaelmas Term Oxford Seminar in Advanced Jewish Studies. This is the fourth in a series of International Network Seminars in Advanced Jewish Studies organised by the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, Mandel Scholion Centre of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg. We thank the foundations which generously have supported this project, including the David Berg Foundation and the Kensington Charitable Organisation.

The aim of the 2022 OSAJS is to shed new light on the diversified production of books in several Judeo-languages, written about a myriad of topics, and their role in shaping generations of readers, crossing the boundaries between “popular” and “elite” writings. The objects of study will include manuscripts and printed books from the 10th to the end of the 18th centuries – the earliest, Judeo-Arabic and Judeo-Persian books preserved in fragments in the Cairo Genizah and the latest, fruits of the dynamic printing presses in Western (Amsterdam, Italy, Germany), Central (Prague), and Eastern Europe as well as Turkey. The focus of the study will be manuscripts and early prints available in the Oxford collections, which boast such famous books as Judeo-Arabic autographs of Moses Maimonides or the scholars working on Yiddish, Judeo-Arabic, Ladino, Judeo-French, Judeo-Persian and other languages. The programme will assess the role of books in Judeo-languages in Jewish religious and secular education, devotion and reading for pleasure, as well as their contribution to general Jewish literacy and its social setting. In addition to the texts they transmit, these books will be also studied from the point of view of their materiality: writing materials, page layouts and decoration. Their bookmaking techniques and aesthetics will be compared on the one hand with manuscripts and printed books in the Hebrew language and on the other hand with contemporaneous non-Jewish book in Latin or Arabic scripts.

The Seminar will host a group of leading specialists working on the history of Jewish-language books from the medieval and early modern periods for one Oxford term. A comparative perspective will guide scholars working on the bookmaking and readership facets of those manuscripts and books written in Jewish languages (Judeo-Arabic, Ladino, Yiddish, Judeo-Persian, Judeo-French, or Judeo-Italian) recorded during the periods under consideration. The Seminars and activities of the group will be coordinated with the newly created Oxford School of Rare Jewish Languages (OSRJL).

Each week, one member of the group will present an aspect of her or his research. In addition, weekly reading sessions will be held. Weekly seminars will be convened through the duration of Oxford's Michaelmas Term (9 October-3 December) 2022. These will offer a forum for the Visiting Fellows to address central research topics related to the overall theme of the Seminar. A concluding conference will be held at the end of the term. Some of the Seminar's lectures, held in person on the premises of the OCHJS, will be made accessible online. In addition to weekly meetings, public lectures and their own personal research publications, the Visiting Fellows participating in this group will produce a collective volume of articles, including short illustrated open edition articles on specific books, documents and writings.

Visiting Fellows will receive an allowance of £2,515 (pro rata) per calendar month for the period of their tenure. Travelling expenses up to £550 pounds sterling will also be provided. Fellows will be expected to be in Oxford for the full Oxford term. Applicants should indicate the specific research they would undertake in the course of Visiting Fellowship and how this research would contribute to the broader work of the project. The Centre welcomes applications from scholars working in any period. Applications both by senior scholars and by scholars at postdoctoral level are welcome.

For more detailed information, contact Dr Jean Baumgarten (jean.baumgarten@orange.fr). For any other queries, contact the Academic Registrar of OCHJS, Ms Madeleine Trivasse (registrar@ochjs.ac.uk).