

**The Hebrew University of Jerusalem**  
**Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies**

**Academic Year 2022/23**

**Judeo-Persian Literature in Translation (38876)**

Online Course

February 20, 2023 – May 29, 2023

Mondays 18:00-19:30

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**Course Description:**

The course explores the evolution of Judeo-Persian literature from its emergence in the 10<sup>th</sup> century until its decline in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We will discuss texts of diverse literary genres (biblical exegesis, poetry, midrashic literature, folk prose, and more) in English translation. We will contextualize the texts within their broader historical, cultural, and social perspectives to better grasp the various aspects of Jewish life throughout the centuries. The course can be of interest to students in the following fields: Middle Eastern Studies, Iranian Studies, Jewish Studies, Religious Studies, as well as Comparative Literature. The course does not require knowledge of Persian or Hebrew, although those students who possess knowledge of these languages will be given an opportunity to read original sources.

**Attendance requirements:** 100%

**Final Grade:** participation in tutorials – 20%  
final written assignment – 80%

## Syllabus

\*\* The topics and assigned readings are subject to minor changes \*\*

### Topic 1: Introduction. Jewish communities in the Iranian world from the pre-Islamic times to the modern period – a brief survey.

- 1) Vera Basch Moreen, "Judeo-Persian Communities iv. Medieval to Late 18th Century," *Encyclopædia Iranica* XV/1, pp. 103-108, available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/judeo-persian-communities-iv-medieval-to-late-18th-century>.
- 2) Daniel Tsadik, "Judeo-Persian Communities v. Qajar Period (1)," *Encyclopædia Iranica* XV/1, pp. 108-112 and XV/2, pp. 113-117, available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/judeo-persian-communities-v-qajar-period>.
- 3) Orly R. Rahimiyan, "Judeo-Persian Communities vi. The Pahlavi Era (1925-1979)," *Encyclopædia Iranica* XV/2, pp. 124-132, available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/judeo-persian-vi-the-pahlavi-era-1925-1979>.

### Topic 2: Iranian languages. Jewish languages under Islam. The Judeo-Persian language. The emergence of New-Persian. What can Judeo-Persian tell us about the nascent New Persian?

- 1) Habib Borjian, "Judeo-Iranian languages," in Lily Kahn and Aaron D. Rubin (eds.), *Handbook of Jewish Languages* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 235-254.

### Topic 3: The sources for the study of Judeo-Persian literature according to periods, genres, content.

- 1) Shaul Shaked, "Early Persian Documents from Khorasan," *Journal of Persianate Studies* 6 (2013), pp. 153-162.
- 2) Ofir Haim and Olga Yastrebova, "The Daniel Family Archive (First Half of the Eleventh Century)," in Anton Pritula (ed.), *Life in Medieval Khorasan. A Genizah from the National Library of Israel. Exhibition Catalogue* (St. Petersburg: The State Hermitage Publishers), pp. 27-53.
- 3) Ofir Haim et al., "Literary Reading in Medieval Khorasan (Eleventh-Thirteenth Centuries)," in Anton Pritula (ed.), *Life in Medieval Khorasan. A Genizah from the National Library of Israel. Exhibition Catalogue* (St. Petersburg: The State Hermitage Publishers), pp. 54-57, 72-77.

- 4) Vera B. Moreen, "Judeo-Persian Literature," in J.R. Perry (ed.), *Persian Literature from Outside Iran: The Indian Subcontinent, Anatolia, Central Asia, and in Judeo-Persian*. History of Persian Literature 9 (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018), pp. 390–409.

#### **Further Reading:**

- 1) Ofir Haim, "The Islamic East," in Peter Ackerman-Lieberman (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Volume 5, The Middle Ages: The Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 332-367.

### **Topic 4: Bible exegesis, Part I. The development of Bible exegesis among Iranian Jewry. Bible translations. Bible commentaries.**

#### **Primary Sources:**

- 1) Excerpts from Early Judeo-Persian Bible translations and commentaries (mainly from the pre-Mongol period; translated by Ofir Haim)

#### **Secondary Literature:**

- 1) Haggai Ben-Shammai, "Is 'The Cairo Genizah' a Proper Name or a Generic Noun? On the Relationship Between the 'Genizot' of the Ben Ezra and the Dar Simha Synagogues," in Ben Outhwaite and Siam Bhayro (eds.), *From a Sacred Source: Genizah Studies in Honour of Professor Stefan C. Reif* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 43-52.
- 2) Ofir Haim, "Polemical Aspects in an Early Judeo-Persian Bible Exegesis: The Commentary on the Story of Hannah (RNL Yevr.-Arab. I 4608)," *Entangled Religions: Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Religious Contact and Transfer* 6 (2018), pp. 162-200.

### **Topic 5: Bible exegesis, part II. Midrashic literature in Judeo-Persian.**

#### **Primary Sources:**

- 1) Excerpts from midrashic compositions in Judeo-Persian.
- 2) Amnon Netzer, "A Midrash on the Ascension of Moses in Judeo-Persian," in Shaul Shaked and Amnon Netzer (eds.), *Irano-Judaica: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages II* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1990), pp. 105-143.

## **Topic 6: Lexicography.**

### **Primary Sources:**

- 1) Excerpts from several Hebrew-JP dictionaries

## **Topic 7: Poetry, Part I. The early Judeo-Persian poetry.**

### **Primary Sources:**

- 1) Early Judeo-Persian dirge in memory of a notable member of the Jewish community in medieval Afghanistan (translated by Shaul Shaked).
- 2) Olga Yastrebova, "A Panegyric Poem Dedicated to Abū al-Ḥasan Siman-Tov," in Anton Pritula (ed.), *Life in Medieval Khorasan. A Genizah from the National Library of Israel. Exhibition Catalogue* (St. Petersburg: The State Hermitage Publishers), pp. 41-47, 132-135.

## **Topic 8: Poetry, Part II. Judeo-Persian poetry in the post-Mongol period.**

### **Primary Sources:**

- 1) Excerpts from Shāhīn's *Bereshit-nāma* (translated by Julia Rubanovich):
  - "Judah and Tamar";
  - "Joseph Marrying Zulaykhā";
  - "Joseph Marrying Osnat"
- 2) Excerpts from 'Imrānī's *Faṭḥ-nāma*:
  - "The Israelites Fight the Enemies of the Gibeonites," in Vera Basch Moreen with Orit Carmeli, *The Bible as a Judeo-Persian Epic: An Illustrated Manuscript of 'Imrānī's Faṭḥ-Nāma* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2016), pp. 88-114.

### **Secondary Literature:**

- 1) Julia Rubanovich, "Joseph and His Two Wives: Patterns of Cultural Accommodation in the Judeo-Persian Tale of Yusof and Zoleykhā," *Journal of Persianate Studies* 13,2 (2020), pp. 146-95.
- 2) Vera B. Moreen, "The Heroic Mold in 'Imrānī's *Faṭḥ-nāmah* ['The Book of Conquests'], 15<sup>th</sup> Century," *Studia Iranica* 42 (2013), pp. 71-90.

### Further Reading:

- 1) Vera Basch Moreen, *Queen Esther's Garden. An Anthology of Judeo-Persian Literature* (Piscataway, NJ.: Gorgias Press, 2013), pp. 176-183 (section 4: Didactic Poetry).
- 2) Eadem, pp. 29-158 (Section 2: Biblical Epics).
- 3) Dalia Yasharpour, *The Prince and the Sufi: The Judeo-Persian Rendition of the Buddha Biographies* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

### Topic 9: Judeo-Persian literature as a historical source – *Kitāb-i anūsī* and *Kitāb-i sargudhasht-i Kāshān*.

**Primary sources:** Excerpts from *Kitāb-i anūsī* and *Kitāb-i sargudhasht-i Kāshān*.

- 1) Vera Basch Moreen, *Iranian Jewry's Hour of Peril and Heroism. A Study of Bābāi ibn Luṭf's Chronicle (1617-1662)* (New York, Jerusalem: The American Academy for Jewish Research, 1987), pp. 171-175, 181-188, 189-191.
- 2) Vera Basch Moreen, *Iranian Jewry During the Afghan Invasion. The Kitāb-i Sar Guzasht-i Kāshān of Bābāi b. Farhād/ Text Edition and Commentary* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1990), pp. 26-29, 33-40, 53-67.

### Secondary Literature:

- 1) Amnon Netzer, "Bābā'ī ben Luṭf," *Encyclopædia Iranica* III/3, pp. 297-298, available online at <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/babai-ben-lutf>
- 2) Amnon Netzer, "Bābā'ī ben Farhād," *Encyclopædia Iranica* III/3, pp. 297, available online at <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/babai-ben-farhad>
- 3) Vera B. Moreen, "The *Kitab-i Anusi* of Babai ibn Lutf (Seventeenth Century) and the *Kitab-i Sar Guzasht* of Babai ibn Farhad (Eighteenth Century): A Comparison of Two Judaeo-Persian Chronicles," in Michel M. Mazzaoui and Vera B. Moreen (eds.), *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson, Professor of Persian Studies, Princeton University* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), pp. 41-48.
- 4) Vera B. Moreen, "The Problems of Conversion among Iranian Jews in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Iranian Studies* 19/3-4 (1986), pp. 215-228.

### Further Reading:

- 1) Vera Basch Moreen, *Iranian Jewry's Hour of Peril and Heroism. A Study of Bābāi ibn Luṭf's Chronicle (1617-1662)* (New York, Jerusalem: The American Academy for Jewish Research, 1987), pp. 55-117 (Chapter III: "The Historicity of the *Kitāb-i Anusī*"); pp. 149-164 (Chapter V: "Contributions of the *Kitāb-i Anusī* to the History of Iranian Jews").
- 2) Vera B. Moreen, "The *Kitāb-i Sar Guzasht-i Kāshān* of Bābāi ibn Farhād," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 52 (1985), pp. 141-157.

### Topic 10: Folk literature.

- 1) David Yeroushalmi, *The Jews of Iran: Chapters in their History and Cultural Heritage* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2016), pp. 182-210.

### Topic 11: The reception of non-Jewish literature among Iranian Jews.

- 1) Vera B. Moreen, "Reflections on a Judaeo-Persian Manuscript of Rūmī's *Mathnavī*\*, " in Julia Rubanovich and Geoffrey Herman (eds.), *Irano-Judaica: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages*, vol. VII, Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2019, pp. 579-595.
- 2) Shervin Farridnejad, "The Jewish Ḥāfeẓ: Classical New Persian Literature in the Judeo-Persian Garšūni Literary Tradition," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 31/3 (July 2021), pp. 515-534.

### Additional Reference Material:

#### 1. Encyclopedias:

- 1) *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (=EI<sup>1</sup>) <http://www.iranicaonline.org/>
- 2) *Encyclopedia of Islam*<sup>2</sup> (=EI<sup>2</sup>) <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2>
- 3) *Encyclopedia of Islam*<sup>3</sup> (=EI<sup>3</sup>) <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3>
- 4) *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/encyclopedia-of-jews-in-the-islamic-world>

- 5) *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd Edition  
<https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?u=huji&p=GVRL&it=etoc&id=GALE%7C9780028660974&v=2.1&sw=W>

## 2. Edited volumes, and general works on Iranian Jewry; anthologies:

- 1) Levy, Habib (ed. Hooshang Ebrami; trans. George W. Maschke). *Comprehensive History of the Jews of Iran*. Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers in association with the Cultural Foundation of Habib Levy, 1999.
- 2) Moreen, Vera Basch. *Queen Esther's Garden. An Anthology of Judeo-Persian Literature*. Piscataway, NJ.: Gorgias Press, 2013.
- 3) Pirnazar, Nahid, ed. *Judeo-Persian Writings: A Manifestation of Intellectual and Literary Life*. London and New York: Routledge, 2021.
- 4) Rubanovich, Julia and Geoffrey Herman, ed. *Irano-Judaica: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages VII*. Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2019.
- 5) Sarshar, Houman, ed. *Esther's Children: A Portrait of Iranian Jews*. Los Angeles: Center for Iranian Jewish Oral History, 2002.
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_, ed. *The Jews of Iran: The History, Religion, and Culture of a Community in the Islamic World*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2004.
- 7) \_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Jewish Communities of Iran: Entries on Judeo-Persian Communities Published by the Encyclopedia Iranica*. New York: Encyclopedia Iranica Foundation, 2011.
- 8) Shaked, Shaked and Amnon Netzer, ed. *Irano-Judaica: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages*. Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1982-2008, 6 vols.
- 9) Soroudi, Sarah Sorour. *Persian Literature and Judeo-Persian Culture: Collected Writings of Sorour S. Soroudi*. Ed. by H.E. Chehabi. Boston: Ilex Foundation, 2010.
- 10) Yeroushalmi, David. *The Jews of Iran: Chapters in their History and Cultural Heritage*. Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2016.

- (1) نتصر، آمنون. منتخب اشعار فارسی از آثار یهود ایران. تهران، 1352/1973.
- (2) نتصر، آمنون. "سیری در ادبیات یهود ایران: بخش یکم". یادیاوند. لوس آنجلس، 1996، جلد 1، صص. 41-114.
- (1) לוין, זאב (עורך). מרכז אסיה: קהילות ישראל במזרח במאות התשע-עשרה והעשרים: בוכרה ואפגניסטן. ירושלים: משרד החינוך, 2018.
- (2) נצר, אמנון (עורך). יהודי איראן: עברם, מורשתם וזיקתם לארץ-ישראל. חולון: בית כורש – המרכז העולמי של יהודי איראן בישראל, 1988.
- (3) סעדון, חיים (עורך). קהילות ישראל במזרח במאות התשע-עשרה והעשרים: איראן. ירושלים: משרד החינוך, 2005.