

Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies

OXON-OVIS: Oxford Virtual International Symposium



Enterprise, Engagement, Integration: Jews of 17th Century Britain and the Empire

OXON-OVIS: Oxford Virtual International Symposium
Hilary Term, Week 8 March 5-8, 2024

Tuesday-Friday March 5-8, 2024

Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies
Clarendon Institute, Walton Street
Oxford, OX1 2HG

Convenor: Dr Emily Rose

Virtual conference streamed at the Catherine Lewis Lecture Theatre, Clarendon Institute (Walton Street, Oxford OX1 2HG) and online via Zoom. Please join us if you are in Oxford.

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Enterprise, Engagement, Integration: Jews of Seventeenth-Century Britain and the Empire

OXON-OVIS: Oxford Virtual International Symposium

Tuesday-Friday March 5-8, 2024

Tuesday March 5, 2024

Please register at this link in order access today's sessions:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAsdeuqrTwvHtxvsp17ONh8gNkLny3N3O9p>

2:00pm [9am EST]

Opening:

Judith Olszowy-Schlanger, President OCHJS, Welcome
E. M. Rose, OCHJS, Oxford, Introduction

2:30-3:45pm [9:30 EST]

The "Middle" Period (14th-17th Centuries)

Chair: Miri Rubin, Queen Mary, University of London

Dean Irwin, Visiting Fellow, University of Lincoln

"England Remembers, Jews Forget: Memory of Jews and England, 1290-1541"

This paper will explore memory of the Jews in the decades (and centuries) following the Expulsion. Drawing upon charter sources, chancery rolls, and rental accounts from the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, it considers the ways in which the mechanisms for the Expulsion served to embed the Jews in the urban landscapes that they had previously inhabited. It also considers the ways in which England remembered the Jews, while also considering that the reverse was not also the case, with England being written out of, or occupying a peripheral place to, Jewish Studies.

Rory MacLellan, British Library

"Converts at the Royal Court in the 14th and 15th centuries"

This paper will offer a survey of Jewish converts at the courts of England's kings from the reign of Edward II to that of Edward IV. It will discuss the origins and careers of these converts and how their treatment varied from ruler to ruler, with a particular focus on the cases of Isaac/Edward of St John, the rescuer of a captured crusading knight, and Edward Brampton, a knight and warship captain in the Wars of the Roses.

Lauren Fogle, College of Humanities, University of Massachusetts, Lowell

Funding Challenges for the House of Converts (Domus Conversorum) After the Expulsion of the Jews" [recorded]

This paper will discuss some of the royal and non-royal funding the House of Converts received in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and the issues and disputes that arose during this time. Special attention will be paid to funding coming from Londoners and London institutions.

4:00-5:15pm [11am EST]

Jews in 17th Century British Literature

Chair: Beatrice Groves, Faculty of English, Oxford

Lisa Lampert-Weissig, University of California, San Diego

“The Wandering Jew: The Legacy of Matthew Paris”

Matthew Paris’s thirteenth-century *Chronica majora* contains the most significant extant medieval written accounts of the Wandering Jew. This talk will briefly explore Matthew’s Wandering Jew within the larger context of representation of Jews in the *Chronica*, including English Jews, and then consider how his Wandering Jew may have influenced later works. These include English texts such as “The Wandering Jew’s Chronicle,” but also subsequent centuries of adaptation of the Wandering Jew legend in both Jewish and non-Jewish languages.

Giles Bergel, Digital Humanities, Oxford

“Print, circulation and lineage in the Wandering Jew’s Chronicle”

In 1634 a ballad entitled “The Wandering Jew’s Chronicle” was entered in the Stationers’ Company register, made out to the printer Thomas Lambert. It does not appear to survive, but subsequent editions do, including one entered in the readmission year of 1656, from which we learn that the text was authored by the well-known Royalist “ballad-monger” and pamphleteer Martin Parker. This paper will outline some of the entanglements, absences and displacements between English royal history and the Jews in England throughout the Chronicle’s long life in print.

M. Lindsay Kaplan, Georgetown University

“Racializing Jews in George Sandys’ *Christus Patiens* (1640)”

While medieval Christian exegesis and law racialized Jews as cursed with figural servitude and exile resulting from their alleged crucifixion of Jesus, scholars have argued that early modern encounters with Jews resulted in a more positive, non-theological image. While George Sandys’ own travel narrative, *Relation of a Journey* (1615) includes empirical views of Jews, some of which are neutral or even positive, his English translation of Hugo Grotius’ Latin verse drama, *Christus patiens*, continues to perpetuate medieval notions of Jews as cursed, enslaved exiles, not only in the text of the play, but Sandys’ own explanatory notes, some of which replicate points in the *Relation*.

5:30-6:45pm [12:30pm EST]

Jews in British Thought

Chair: Chair: Joanna Weinberg, OCHJS, emerita

Esther Edwards, MPhil candidate OCHJS

“Professors of Hebrew, Jews, Jewish Learning and Converts in Britain”

This paper examines the professors of Hebrew at Oxford and Cambridge in the 16th century and their writings. It places their work within the context of the confessional debates of Europe and seeks to explore their participation in the distinctly reformed development of England’s theology and politics. Its specific focus is on the use of Biblical and post-Biblical sources in the teaching and publishing of various professors, highlighting an attitudinal shift towards Hebrew language and literature – no longer was knowledge of Hebrew and Jewish literature considered important purely as a polemical tool against Jews; it was now foundational to a sound theology.

Stephanie Shirilan, Syracuse University

“Sounding Jewish, Hearing Jewish”

When Shylock suggests that he loan the desperate Antonio three thousand ducats “in a bondman’s key/ With bated breath and whispering humbleness” what expectations of vocal (and respiratory) abjection does this performance corroborate and/or theatrically subvert? What notions of Jewish vocal, musical, and auditory difference does this script – and Shylock’s performance of it – rehearse or revise? Did Shylock *sound* Jewish to early modern audiences? If so, on what basis was such auditory identification perceived and communicated? Is this overdetermined moment in the history of Jewish vocal racialization exceptional or paradigmatic? What can it – and its legacies in performance – tell us about the ways that seventeenth-century writers and audiences imagined not just Jewish voices but what it meant to sound Jewish and hear Jewishness?

Avinoam Naeh, University of Haifa

“Jewish Antiquities, the Temple, and Early Modern Economy in 17th century England”

It has often been argued that modern economic thought and practices were born in the 17th century, as economic considerations diverged from theology and took on an independent life. In my talk I wish to offer a counterbalance to this narrative and shed light on an odd association that became prevalent among 17th century English writers – the association of the economic instrument of bills of exchange with ancient Jewish history, and specifically with the Temple. How did the Jewish Temple come to be involved in economic discussions and what meaning did it convey? These two questions will be the core of my discussion.

Wednesday March 6, 2024

Please register at this link in order access today’s sessions:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEsd-6vpzotGNPqCUzB-CWvP5CgB5LQ5Fuv>

2:00-3:15pm [9:00 EST]

Jews in the English Atlantic World

Chair: Jeremy Fradkin, PhD John Hopkins, Montreal

Jessica Roitman, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

“Caribbean Connections and Continuities: 17th c. Anglo-Jewry from a Colonial Perspective”

While Jewish settlement in Amsterdam began in earnest at the beginning of the 17th century and followed suit in England by the mid-point of the century with the so-called “readmission” of the Jews in 1656, it was some decades before (Portuguese) Jews established viable communities in the Americas. With these communities came a communal life centered around synagogues and religious life.

This presentation will focus on the multiple connections between (late) 17th century Caribbean Jewry, the continuities between practices of these communities and their “home” or “mother” congregations in Amsterdam and, to a lesser extent, London, as well as the sometimes-contentious relationships they had intra and inter communally.

Recentring 17th century Anglo-Jewry from a Caribbean perspective means challenging Eurocentric narratives of Jewish life in the early modern period, as well as calling into question empire-centered lenses for the study of diasporic groups such as Jews.

Hilit Surowitz-Israel, Rutgers University

“Circuits and Routes: Reimagining the Limits of Empire”

Discussions of European colonialism in the Caribbean and its attendant capitalism are generally framed within the bounds of empire. The Portuguese Jews of the Caribbean Basin during the 17th and 18th centuries allow for an exploration of the porous nature of “empire” in the Caribbean. Utilizing a goodwill offering prayer from Curaçao, which attests to the border-crossing nature of the Caribbean’s Portuguese Jewish communities during the period, this paper will consider how religious communities are both bound by empire and redefine the limits of empire. Focusing on this community can reveal how centering religion can help us reimagine ideas of community and nation.

Marcus Roberts, JTrails: The National Anglo-Jewish Heritage Trail

“Joachim Gaunse - Industrial and Scientific Pioneer”

In 1581 Joachim Gaunse came to Keswick from Prague and Augsburg to work in the copper mining and smelting industry. He was also the first American Jew and the first American scientist, when he went on Sir Walter Raleigh’s expedition to America in 1585, leading attempts at Roanoke Island to establish mining. There he founded the first scientific laboratory in America (recently excavated). The talk explores this history and surveys surviving mining and industrial sites associated with Gaunse around Keswick in the Lake District.

3:30-4:45pm [10:30 EST, CST 9:30]

The Resettlement

Chair: Ronnie Perelis, Yeshiva University

Richard Cogley, Southern Methodist University, *emeritus*

“Menasseh ben Israel and the Dispersal of Judah: From *The Hope of Israel* to *Vindiciae Judaeorum*”

Menasseh's *Hope of Israel* (1650), *To His Highness the Lord Protector* (1655), and *Vindiciae Judaearum* (1656) maintained that the global dispersal of Judah was a precondition to the advent of the messiah. Menasseh went from a completed dispersal in *Hope of Israel* to an incomplete one in the latter two works. The global dispersal of the lost tribes of Israel was not a messianic precondition, not even in *Hope of Israel*, the work which contains his well-known argument that a portion of the lost Israel was in America.

Evan Haefeli, Texas A&M University

“The Re-Admission of the Jews to England before 1655: A Trans-Atlantic Affair”

Conventional accounts of the re-admission of Jews to England focus on Europe: the debates within England, the connection to the Dutch Jewish community, etc. However, by 1655 Jews were already working in the English American colonies, particularly Barbados. Jews' role as trans-Atlantic and circum-Caribbean merchants and agents facilitated their entry into the English world years before it became an issue in Europe.

Ariel Hessayon, Goldsmiths, University of London

“Antonio Carvajal (c.1596?-d.1659), Merchant, Crypto-Jew and Jew”

To date there has been only one lengthy study on Antonio Carvajal – that of a pioneering amateur, yet grounded on then fashionable “scientific” principles. Indeed, I would go further: Wolf's contributions to the field are emblematic of a traditional school of “optimists”. This older view stressed the exceptionalism of Jews' experiences in England following their tacit readmission. Unlike continental Europe there were no ghettos, pogroms or show trials, nor was Jew hatred an integral part of a successful political ideology. Accordingly Protestant England, with its idealised values of liberalism, religious toleration and fair play, was seen as a welcoming home to immigrants. Desiring acceptance within British society and the legitimation of their distinctive history, at pains to underline their patriotism and loyalty to the crown, these ‘optimists’ constructed a narrative of gradual social assimilation and communal unity, celebrating Jewish contributions to all walks of life as industrious model citizens.

By contrast, since the 1970s a new loose collection of professionally trained historians and literary experts have generally taken a more pessimistic view of the Jewish experience in Britain after the resettlement. Writing in the long dark shadow of the Holocaust, their accounts have emphasized religious and racial prejudice, exclusion, marginalization, tensions and conflicts, as well as the disturbing continuity of antisemitic tropes. Both these approaches have informed scholarly writing about the crypto-Jewish and Jewish experience in early modern England. So it seems opportune in the light of these important debates to re-examine Carvajal's eventful life and wider significance; especially with the discovery over the years of quite a few documents that supplement those published as appendices to Wolf's original article.

5:00-6:15pm [Noon EST]

Book History

Chair: Shimon Iakerson, Visiting Scholar OCHJS, Israel Academy of Sciences

César Merchán-Hamann, Victor Blank Curator of Hebraica and Judaica, Bodleian
“Hebrew Books at Oxford”

The first catalogue of the university library (1605) lists 58 books with titles in Hebrew script. The library’s founder, Thomas Bodley, took a personal interest and added his own corrections in Latin of some misprints in Hebrew. After Bodley’s death, the library continued to enrich the Hebrew collections. In 1692 it purchased the collections of Dr Robert Huntingdon and Professor Edward Pococke, the Regius Professor of Hebrew. Among the 212 manuscripts in the Huntingdon collection is the Mishneh Torah of Maimonides (1155–1204) with the author’s signature (*MS. Huntingdon 80*), attesting that the text had been corrected against the original.

Scott Mandelbrote, Peterhouse, Cambridge
“The Jewish Book in Seventeenth-Century England”

The talk will consider evidence for the trade in Jewish books and for the involvement of Jews (as manufacturers, owners, sellers, buyers, and factors in books) in seventeenth-century England, particularly Cambridge. The evidence will be taken from the ongoing cataloguing project on early printed Hebraica in Cambridge libraries and will focus on books eventually owned by Christian readers. It will however suggest the scope of the market for Jewish books more generally in seventeenth-century England.

Gary Rendsburg, Rutgers University, New Jersey
“John Selden’s Bible”

John Selden was the leading Hebraist in England, indeed hailed by John Milton as “the chief of learned men reputed in this land.” Selden’s Bible (Bodleian MS Arch. Seld. A.47), written in Soria, Spain, in 1304, was obtained from Leon de Modena in 1628. The many features of this manuscript – including the English titles of the biblical books and the numeration of the verses in so-called Arabic numerals (10, 20, 30, etc.) – have never been fully studied. This is an excellent opportunity to bring this manuscript to the attention of 17th-century specialists.

Thursday March 7, 2024

Please register at this link in order access today’s sessions:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcoc-CppjsjH9drZD0mf6Twhyg8b4e82ywu>

2:00-3:15pm [9:00 EST, 8am CST]

On the Periphery

Chair: Kirsten Macfarlane, Theology, Oxford

Steven Pincus, University of Chicago
“British Tangier: Urban Affairs 1661 to 1684”

Carla Vieira, Center for the Humanities, FCSH, NOVA University Lisbon (CHAM)

“An Exceptional Case: Sephardic Settlement in British North America (Newport and New York)”

One of the main bedrocks of the Western Sephardic Diaspora was the notion of belonging to the *Nação* (Nation), a concept rooted in a common Iberian-Jewish background and sharing experiences of persecution and resistance that assured the unity of dispersed communities and their preservation in hosting environments whose levels of hostility/tolerance profoundly differ. In the first known *ascamot* of the Congregation Shearith Israel in New York (1728), the term “*Nação*” is absent, in contrast to the bylaws of other communities of the Sephardic Atlantic. This fact demonstrates the exceptional character of the origin and early settlement of Sephardim in North America in the 17th and early 18th centuries. In this paper, I will analyse the particular features of the Sephardic diaspora in British North America, based on the cases of New York and Newport, Rhode Island, and question if it is justifiable to approach this phenomenon as another diaspora type (in parallel to the Atlantic and Mediterranean Sephardic diasporas) within the Western Sephardic Diaspora.

Michael Hoberman, Fitchburg State University

“Boston’s Frazon brothers and the limits of Puritan zeal, 1695-1705”

“New England is seldom wholly without them,” wrote Massachusetts magistrate Samuel Sewall in 1697 on the subject of Jews. Sewall was referring in particular to two Boston-based Sephardic merchants whose acquaintance he had recently made. Samuel and Joseph Frazon’s presence in the City on a Hill instigated an unsuccessful but illuminating conversion effort.

3:30-4:45pm [10:30 EST, CST 9:30]

Ritual, Rabbis, and Rabbinics

Chair: Joseph Skloot, Hebrew Union College

Abigail Hayton, DPhil candidate, OCHJS

“Was infant baptism an ancient Jewish ritual? Some perspectives from the Westminster Assembly (1643-1653)”

This paper assesses the role played by appeals to Jewish biblical commentaries and post-biblical Jewish legal texts in the Westminster Assembly's reconstruction of the baptismal rite. It reveals the surprising extent to which Jewish learning, alongside other forms of erudition, granted those who had pursued it tremendous authority to determine difficult questions both of scriptural interpretation and of ritual performance. This resulted in a conception of Christian baptism as an ancient Jewish rite with very deep Old Testament roots.

Rabbi Eli Brackman, Oxford Chabad

“Jews and coffee in the 17th century”

The first coffee shop in England was opened in Oxford by a Jewish merchant from the Levant in the 17th century, a few years before the formal readmission of the Jews to England. Called a “Jewish drink” (*mashke*

yisrael), two major disputes broke out: one involving the Earl of Danby who tried to close them down to suppress freedom of expression; another involving the intricate aspects of Jewish law on Shabbat. While the former has been resolved, the latter remains until today. Both disputes, however, reflect a Jewish culture of learning, disputation and freedom of expression.

Matt Goldish, Ohio State University

“Early Rabbis of the London Portuguese Congregation”

London, like Amsterdam and other Western Sephardi communities in their early years, imported its rabbis from established communities. This talk will briefly discuss the colorful figures who served London's Portuguese Jews from the 1660s until the 1720s: Jacob and Isaac Abendana, Jacob Sasportas, Joshua da Silva, Solomon Ayllon, and David Nieto. Several of these figures had noteworthy intellectual and religious profiles on which I will touch.

5:00-6:15pm [Noon EST]

Material Culture After Resettlement

Chair: Esther Robinson Wild, Foundation for Jewish Heritage

Kris Musikant, Bevis Marks, S&P Collections

“The Synagogue Before Bevis Marks”

In this paper, I shall focus on the period between the resettlement of Jews in London in 1656 and the opening of the Bevis Marks Synagogue in 1701. This was the first purpose-built synagogue after the resettlement and stands today almost unaltered from its original design. It is considered the “cathedral synagogue” and is a Grade I protected building. However, little is known about its important predecessor. So what happened in this intervening years?

Rabbi Shalom Morris, Bevis Marks Synagogue, and PhD candidate, King’s College, London

“Anglo-Jewish cultural integration as seen through synagogue names and architecture”

This paper will fill in gaps and expand on what has previously been written about the cultural integration and religious identity of Britain’s Sephardi diaspora in the 17th century and beyond as seen through their synagogue architecture and community names.

John Ward, SVP. Silver, Sotheby’s

“Anglo-Jewish Silver: Annual Gifts to the Lord Mayor”

For a century, beginning in 1679, the congregation of Bevis Marks presented a gift each year to the incoming Lord Mayor of London. At the time of the first gift, the atmosphere engendered by Monmouth’s rebellion and the Popish plot may have encouraged another minority religious community to stress its allegiance to official power. The gift was a purse of £50, or a piece of presentation silver accompanied by sweetmeats. A similar *douceur* was offered by the French and Dutch Protestant Churches. We do not know how many mayors opted for the cash rather than the silver object, but from the first fifty years of the tradition, only seven silver salvers are known to have survived to the present

day. This talk will discuss the development of the gift, look at preserved examples of the trays and how they start out being in the contemporary taste, then end up being quite old-fashioned by the mid-18th century.

Barry L. Stiefel, College of Charleston

“Remnants of Israel: Conservation of the Historic Built Environment (Surviving 17th Century English Imperial Jewry)”

Built in 1701, Bevis Marks Synagogue of London is the oldest extant Jewish house of worship in the British Isles, which is significant when we consider that this date is at the closing of the 17th century. This paper will identify and assess the current state of surviving seventeenth century material culture on the built environment today in the British Isles and other parts of the early modern British empire, such as the Americas and south Asia, including synagogues like Bevis Marks, *mikvaot* (such as in Barbados), cemeteries, and other objects and structures associated with English Jews. It will then evaluate how these surviving remnants of seventeenth century English Jewry are interpreted and appreciated by the public in the present (including the lack of appreciation) as well as their lasting influences in the places where they can be found.

Friday March 8, 2024

Please register at this link in order access today's sessions:

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwrfuivrD4sGNN_d6mV0X9_UoVIM_I_aSOW

2:00–3:30pm [3pm CET, 9am EST]

Lineage and Servitude

Chair: Dexnell Peters, Caribbean and Atlantic History, University of the West Indies

Jonathan Schorsch, University of Potsdam

“Jews and the Atlantic World Slave System”

This talk will survey the role played by Conversos and Jews (overwhelmingly of Sephardic origin) in the growing Atlantic world slave system. Hardly a marginal phenomenon, slavery comprised a central feature of the period's Portuguese Jewish society, economy, and even culture, particularly in the colonial sphere, of course, but also surprisingly back in Europe.

Amalia S. Levi, PhD Candidate University of Bonn, Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies

“Record-Keeping Dependencies in the Caribbean: Locating the Enslaved in the 17th Century archives

Jewish communities establishing themselves in the Caribbean by the mid-17th century became part of imperial formations that aimed to govern and subjugate disparate people over vast swathes of the globe. In British colonies, Jews arriving mainly from Dutch Brazil, descendants of conversos, brought with them distinct identities strongly inflected by their emotional attachment to the *Nação*, a conceptual

understanding of a Portuguese Hebrew nation. At the same time, to establish themselves at a communal and individual level, Jews had to adapt to British colonial rule and its record-keeping infrastructure. For scholars conducting archival research, understanding various aspects of this duality is important both as additional context to extant information, as well as for 'stretching' out extant material to locate information that often remains invisible. In my presentation, I will discuss issues that hinge upon what I tentatively call record-keeping dependencies to explore aspects of the Sephardic community of Barbados in early modern times, and the enslaved people in their households.

Julia Pohlmann, DPhil Candidate, University of Aberdeen

"The Jew as a Token of Otherness in Political Literature from 1665 to 1689 in England and the North American Colonies"

This paper explores how the topoi of the imagined Jew influenced the understanding of the proto-racial Other (e.g. Native Americans) and the British Other (e.g. Irish and Scots) within England and its Atlantic Empire. By closely analyzing newspaper articles, it seeks to reframe the role of the imagined Jew in shaping notions of proto-racial and proto-national Othering during periods of imperial and national crisis. This reframing provides insight into the accommodation of Otherness within emerging civic urban landscapes, such as New York and London, by those eligible to influence public opinion.

3:40-4:00pm

17th C Anglo-Jewish Family Histories

Chair: Rebecca Abrams, The Oxford Centre for Life-Writing, Wolfson College, University of Oxford

Anthony Rabin, DPhil

"The Mendes da Costa Family in Seventeenth Century England"

One of the most prominent Jewish immigrants was the Mendes da Costa family who, from 1662, increasingly became integrated in English upper-class society. Benefitting initially from their connections with Charles II's queen, Catherine of Braganza, members of the family included a shareholder in the Bank of England, a physician to Charles II and his queen, England's first Jewish painter, a major funder of William of Orange's invasion of England in 1688 and, later in the 18th century, a noted composer, the subject of a notorious breach of promise case and the first Jewish Clerk of the Royal Society. This paper looks at the family and its relationship to society, both Jewish and non-Jewish.

4:00-4:20pm [10am EST]

Looking Back

Chair: Zoe Waxman, OCHJS

Peter Bergamin, OCHJS, Oxford

"The 250th Anniversary of the Whitehall Conference: The Generation Gap in Early 20th Century Anglo-Jewry"

4:30-5:15pm [11:30 EST]

Roundtable: Looking Forward

Chair: David Rechter, Professor of Modern Jewish History, Oxford

Laura Leibman, Reed College

Dana Rabin, University of Illinois

5:15-5:30pm - Concluding Session, Final Q&A [Sunset Oxford 5:58]

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