Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies
&
Oxford School of Rare Jewish Languages

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OXFORD SCHOOL OF RARE JEWISH LANGUAGES LECTURE
Week 5

Professor Nathan Cohen
(Bar-Ilan University)

Not only days and dates: What can we learn from Yiddish calendars (1875–1914)?

Nati (Nathan) Cohen is an Associate Professor, at the Rena Costa Center for Yiddish Studies at the Department of Literature of the Jewish People at Bar-Ilan University. Since 1998 – associate editor of the bi-annual journal *Yad Vashem Studies*. His main fields of research and teaching are cultural history of the Jews of Eastern Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; book history and the history of reading (in Yiddish); modern Yiddish literature; the Jews of Poland between the two world wars; Yiddish literature and culture during the Holocaust. He is the author of: *Books, writers and Newspapers: The Jewish Cultural Center in Warsaw, 1918-1942*, Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2003, 363pp. (Hebrew) which has been translated into Polish and published by the Jewish historical Institute in 2021; and *Yiddish Transformed: Reading Habits in the Russian Empire, 1860-1914*, New York and Oxford: Berhahn 2023.

Abstract: From the end of the eighteenth century, Jewish calendars, originally a small and very focused publication, developed into a "cultural omnibus" that offered useful information regarding many aspects of everyday life. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century and until the First World War, alongside Hebrew calendars, the number of Yiddish calendars continually grew and their contents expanded far beyond basic calendrical information. The political, social, economic, and cultural changes that occurred during this period had significant implications for Jewish society. Publishers, editors, and authors, driven by Maskilic and utilitarian motives, and subsequently by new and challenging socio-cultural or political ideas, used the accessible and widespread calendar-form to impart to the Yiddish reading public new literary content and instructive insights in various fields of knowledge, transforming it into a condensed encyclopedic publication. Simultaneously, Yiddish itself was "evolving" from a ridiculed "zhargon" into a legitimate tool for composing belles lettres, scientific, and educational compositions. This paper will present and review some aspects of this fascinating genre, until now largely neglected by the scholarly literature.

Tuesday, 18 February 2025
6.00 pm (UK time)
Online via Zoom and in person at the
Catherine Lewis Lecture Theatre,
Clarendon Institute, Walton Street, Oxford OX1 2HG
Followed by a drinks' reception
In order to participate in this lecture via Zoom, please register at this link:
https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/ct-qnbMHSHqqrggVgdU4uw

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