

## The Jews of Medieval Spain

The history of the Jews of Spain represents one of the most varied and remarkable chapters in the history of the Jewish people. This course will provide an overview of the history and culture of the Jews in the Iberian peninsula from late Antiquity to the expulsion of the Jews in 1492, concentrating on the interrelations between Sephardic Jews and the two religious cultures under which they lived in the medieval period: Christianity and Islam.

### Course Requirements:

Requirements for the course include readings and class participation, a midterm and final exam, and a research paper of approximately 10-15 typewritten pages that employs primary and secondary sources.

### Grading:

### Required Texts:

Jane Gerber, *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience*, New York: The Free Press, 1992.

#### 1. Introduction, Course Overview

#### 2. Roman and Visigothic Spain

Jane Gerber, "Volatile Origins: The Early History of Jewish Life in Spain," in *The Jews of Spain*, pp. 1-26.

Bernard S. Bachrach, *Early Medieval Jewish Policy in Western Europe*: 3-26

Early ecclesiastical legislation regarding the Jews, J. R. Marcus, *The Jew in the Medieval World*: 113-114; 124-126

Amnon Linder, *The Jews in the Legal Sources of the Early Middle Ages*: 279-281; 314-317

#### 3. al-Andalus: Beginning and Rise of an Independent Jewish Center

Mahmoud Makki, "The Political History of al-Andalus," in *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, pp. 3-60.

Jane Gerber, *The Jews of Spain*, pp. 27-57

Responsum of Amram Gaon

Jews and the Muslim Conquerors of Spain, in Norman Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*: 156

Judah ben Barzilai of Barcelona, selection of a communal leader, from A. Schrieber ed., *Jewish Law and Decision Making*: 298-99

#### 4. Legend and Identity

Abraham ibn Daud, *The Book of Tradition (Sefer ha-Qabbalah)*, G. Cohen ed. and trans.: 63-66

Ibn al-Sa'id al-Andalusi

**5. Jewish Leadership: the Courtier-Rabbi**

Ross Brann, *Power in the Portrayal: Representations of Jews and Muslims in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Islamic Spain*

Perspectives on Isma'il ibn Naghrila.

Poems of Samuel Hanagid (11th century): "Short Prayer in Time of Battle;" "The Master;" "Wine;" "Invitation;" "The Beautiful Boy;" and "The Fear of Death." T. Carmi, editor and translator, *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse*, New York: Penguin Books, 1981, pp. 288; 292; 297; 298-301.

**6. Daily Life in a Commercial Economy**

S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, excerpts

Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain* III, pp. 59-166

The Markets of Seville

Letters from the Geniza

Responsa literature

**7. The "Golden Age" of Andalusí Jewish Culture**

Jane Gerber, "The Golden Era: The Emergence of Sephardic Civilization," chapter 3, pp. 59-89.

Benjamin R. Gampel. "Jews, Christians and Muslims in Medieval Iberia: Convivencia Through the Eyes of Sephardic Jews," in *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain*, Vivian B. Mann et. al., eds., New York, 1992, pp. 11-20.

Joseph ibn Aqnin, "A Course Study, Moslem Lands, about 1180,"

S.D. Goitein, "The Cultural Development of the Jewish People Inside Arab Islam," in *Jews and Arabs: Their Contacts Through the Ages*, pp. 125-67.

**8. Poetry**

Raymond Scheindlin, "Hebrew Poetry in Medieval Iberia," in Mann, *Convivencia, Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain*: 39-59

Poems of Judah Halevi: "Zion Complains to God;" "To Israel, In Exile;" "My Heart is in the East;" and "Ode To Zion," from T. Carmi, editor and translator, *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse*, pp. 334-5; 347-349.

**9. Neoplatonism and Neoplatonic Piety**

Colette Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*

Solomon ibn Gabirol & Moses ibn Ezra, selected poems

Raymond Scheindlin, *The Gazelle*

**10. Sufism**

Bahya ibn Pakuda, *Duties of the Heart*, preface and book 9

Paul Fenton, "Judaism and Sufism,"

**11. Aristotelianism**

Judah ibn Tibbon, in Israel Abrahams ed., *Hebrew Ethical Wills*: 59-69; 78-9.  
Isadore Twersky, *A Maimonides Reader*, pp. 1-29.  
Judah Halevi, *Kuzari*, in H. Lewy et al. eds., *Three Jewish Philosophers*: 27-49.  
Abraham ibn Daud, *The Exalted Faith*

**12. Social Tensions during the “Golden Age”**

Abu Ishaq of Elvira, polemic against Joseph ibn Naghrela, in O. Constable ed., *Medieval Iberia*: 97-99  
Judah al-Harizi, *Tahkemoni*, Gate 22, O. Constable ed., *Medieval Iberia*: 198-202

**13. Conversion in the Muslim world**

Sarah Stroumsa, “On Jewish Intellectuals who Converted,”  
From the Autobiography of a Jewish Apostate  
Maimonides, Epistle on Martyrdom

**14. The Transition From Muslim to Christian Rule**

Jane Gerber, "The Reconquista: Jews and the New Realities of Christian Spain," chapter 4  
in, *The Jews of Spain*, pp. 91-114.  
Judah the Nasi's rescue of Jewish refugees, from *The Book of Tradition (Sefer ha-Qabbalah)*:  
97-99  
The *fuero* [charter] of Tudela, in R. Chazan, *Church, State and Jew in the Middle Ages*: 69-70  
Yom Tov Assis, *The Golden Age of Aragonese Jewry*, pp. 9-63

**15. Representations of the Jew in Iberian Art**

Louise Mirrer, “The Jew’s Body in Medieval Literary Portraits and Miniatures: Examples  
from the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* and the *Cantar de mio Cid*,” *Shofar* 12 (1994): 17-30

**16. Jewish “Mudejar” Architecture?**

Jerrilynn Dodds, “Mudejar Tradition and the Synagogues of Medieval Spain,” in V. Mann  
et al. eds., *Convivencia*: 113-131

**17. Legal Status and Sexual Interaction**

David Nirenberg, “Religious and Sexual Boundaries in the Medieval Crown of Aragon,” in  
M. Meyerson and E. English eds., *Christians Muslims and Jews in Medieval and Early Modern  
Spain*: 141-60  
Alfonso X of Castile, *Las Siete Partidas*, 7.24.9; 7.24.11

**18. Christian Attitudes and Jewish Response**

Edna Aizenberg, “The Jewess as Sex object in Medieval Spanish Literature and Lore,” in *La  
Coronica* 12 (1984): 187-194  
Rabbi Asher ben Yehiel, *Responsa*, XVIII: 13

## 19. Mysticism

Arthur Green, "The Zohar: Jewish Mysticism in Medieval Spain," in *Essential Papers on Kabbalah*, Lawrence Fine ed.: 27-66

Moshe Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 1-33.

## 20. Poetry and Fiction

### 21. Christian Mission to the Jews

Robert Chazan, "The Barcelona 'disputation' of 1263," *Speculum*, 52 (1977): 824-842

Moses ben Nahman, "The Disputation at Barcelona" in Ch. Chavel, ed., *Ramban. Writings and Discourses*, vol. 2: 656-696

Alfonso X, *Las Siete Partidas*, in J. R. Marcus, *Jew in the Medieval World*, ch. 7

### 22. The Riots of 1391 and the Tortosa Disputation

Philippe Wolf, "The 1391 pogrom in Spain: Social crisis or not?," in *Past and Present*, 50 (1971): 4-18

Jane Gerber, end of chapter 4, pp.113-114, and chapter 5, "Path to Expulsion: The Decline and Destruction of Spanish Jewry" in, *The Jews of Spain*, pp. 115-144.

### 23. Converso Society

Haim Beinart, "The Converso Community in 15th century Spain" in R. Barnett ed., *The Sephardi Heritage*: 425-56

Letter from Yehoshua Halorki to Solomon Halevi, B. Gampel, trans.

### 24. The Spanish Inquisition

Angus MacKay, "Popular Movements and Pogroms in Fifteenth-Century Castile," *Past and Present* 55 (1972): 33-67

Inquisitorial Trial of Inés López, in Constable, *Medieval Iberia*: 333-337

### 25. The "Marranos" of Portugal

M. J. Ferro Tavares, "Expulsion or Integration: The Portuguese Jewish Problem," in B. Gampel, *Crisis and Creativity*: 95-103