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 10th century until its decline in the 20th 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.**


**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?**


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


**Further Reading:**


**Primary Sources:**

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

**Secondary Literature:**


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

**Primary Sources:**

1) Excerpts from midrashic compositions in Judeo-Persian.

**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).


**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 Zuleykhā”;
   - “Joseph Marrying Osnat”

2) Excerpts from Ṭinri’s *Fath-nāma*:

**Secondary Literature:**


Further Reading:


2) Eadem, pp. 29-158 (Section 2: Biblical Epics).


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*.


Secondary Literature:


Further Reading:


**Topic 10: Folk literature.**


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


**Additional Reference Material:**

1. **Encyclopedias:**

   1) *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (=EIr)  

   2) *Encyclopedia of Islam* (=E2)  
      [https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2](https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2)

   3) *Encyclopedia of Islam* (=E3)  
      [https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3](https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3)

   4) *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*  
2. Edited volumes, and general works on Iranian Jewry; anthologies:


