

NVHC Lifelong learning summer short course, July-August 2020

"The Golden Age of Hebrew Poetry in Medieval Spain, 950-1492"

Synopsis: Poetry has a prominent place in the Psalms, Jonah and other books of the Hebrew Bible, and is an integral part of the Jewish liturgy from rabbinical times through the middle ages (such as devotional prayers known as piyyutim) and to our own day, as well as secular poetry since the Hebrew renaissance that began in the early 19th century and continues in Israel. One of the high points of Hebrew poetry in Jewish history was from 10th to 15th century in Spain under both Muslim and Christian rule. This 5-part course will give a brief overview of what many scholars consider one of the richest parts of Jewish literature, focusing in particular on Samuel Ha-Nagid, Solomon Ibn Gabirol, Moses Ibn Ezra, Yehuda Halevi, and a few other figures. We will look at how religious and secular poetry developed and interacted with each other, as well as taking on aspects of the broader Arab and Christian cultures.

You may want to look at these works, most of which are in the NVHC library or are available on line:

ON HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF HEBREW LANGUAGE, TRANSLATIONS TO/FROM HEBREW

*Angel Saenz-Badillos, [*A History of the Hebrew Language*](#), (Cambridge University Press, 1993), especially chapter 7, "Medieval Hebrew," pp. 202-266.

*Nahum Glatzer, ed., *Language of Faith*, (Schocken, 1975).

*Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, (Jewish Publication Society, 1993).

*Reuven Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer*, (Schocken, 1994).

*Adina Hoffman and Peter Cole, [*Sacred Trash: The Lost and Found World of the Cairo Genizah*](#), (Schocken, 2011).

*article in the *Encyclopedia Judaica* (EJ), volume 8, "Hebrew Grammar," pp. 77-175.

*article in EJ, "Translations and Translators," volume 15, pp. 1318-1329.

*Lewis Glinert, [*The Story of Hebrew*](#), (Princeton University Press, 2018).

*Simon Glustrom, *The Language of Judaism*, (Aronson, 1988).

ON HEBREW POETRY GENERALLY, BIBLICAL ERA AND SUBSEQUENTLY

*article in EJ, "Poetry," volume 13, pp. 670-693.

*article, "Poetry," p. 538, in [*The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*](#) (Oxford University Press, 1997).

*Stanley Gevritz, *Patterns in the Early Poetry of Israel*, (Oriental Institute/University of Chicago Press, 1963).

ON HEBREW POETRY/POETS OF MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN SPAIN, 10th to 15th CENTURIES

*Peter Cole, [*The Dream of the Poem: Hebrew Poetry from Muslim and Christian Spain, 950-1492*](#), (Princeton University Press, 2007). See also the [supplemental material](#) from book, that includes the introduction, Hebrew title index of poems, and original Hebrew text of those in English translation in book.

*Peter Cole, [*Selected Poems of Solomon Ibn Gabirol*](#), (Princeton University Press, 2001).

*Peter Cole, [*Selected Poems of Shmuel Ha-Nagid*](#), (Princeton University Press, 1996).

* T. Carmi, [*The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse*](#), (Penguin Books, 1981/2006).

* Heinrich Brody, *Selected Poems of Jehudah Halevi*, (Jewish Publication Society, 1924/1974).

*Israel Davidson, *Selected Religious Poems of Solomon Ibn Gabirol*, (Jewish Publication Society, 1924/1974).

*Haim Brody, *Mivchar Ha-Shirah Ha-Ivrit /A Selection of Hebrew Poetry*, (Bibliotheca Mundi, 1922).

*Raphael Loewe, *Ibn Gabirol*, (Grove Press, 1989).

*Hillel Halkin, *Yehuda Halevi*, (Schocken, 2010).

ON SPANISH JEWISH HISTORY, THE SEPHARDIC DIASPORA

* Eli Barnavi, ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People* (Schocken, 1992), especially the following:

“The World of the Genizah, 10th-13th Centuries,” pp. 90-91.

“Between the Cross and the Crescent, 1085-1215,” pp. 94-95.

“Men of Letters in Medieval Spain, 10th-15th Centuries,” pp. 100-101.

“The Art of the Hebrew Manuscript, 2d Century BC-15th Century AD,” pp. 112-113.

“Marranos, Conversos, New Christians, 1391-1481,” pp. 114-115.

“The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain, 1492,” pp. 120-121.

“Hebrew: A Sacred and Secular Language, 13th Century BC-20th Century AD,” pp. 200-201.

On line sources:

<http://www.medievalhebrewpoetry.org/>

Jefim Shirmann, “The Function of the Hebrew Poet in Medieval Spain,” *Jewish Social Studies* (Vol. 16, No. 3, July 1954), pp. 235-252 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4465248>

*Jane Gerber, *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience* (Free Press, 1992), particularly chapter 3, “The Golden Era: The Emergence of Sephardic Civilization,” pp. 59-90.

*Eliyahu Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain*, 3 volumes, (Jewish Publication Society, 1992), especially, -vol. 1, chapters 4, 6, “Religious Life in the Ninth Century,” and “The Efflorescence of Jewish Culture.” -vol. 2, chapter 2, “Samuel Ha-Nagid and his Son,” and vol. 3, chapter 1, “The Golden Age of Hebrew Literature.”

*Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, 2 volumes, (Jewish Publication Society, 1983), especially, vol. 1, chapters 1-2 and 5, "The Early Reconquest," "The Intermediate Phase of the Reconquest (1150-1230)," and "The Inner Life of Spanish Jewry during the Thirteenth Century."

* Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry: A History of the Judeo-Spanish Community, 14th-20th Centuries* (University of California Press, 2000), chapters 1 and 2, "Community and Society," and "Economy and Culture."

*Mair Jose Bernadete, *Hispanic Culture and the Character of the Sephardic Jews*, (Sefer-Hermon Press/Sephardic House, 1992), especially chapters 2, 4, and 8, "The Sephardic Diaspora 1391-1950," "Sepharad Ha Ghedola," and "Spain and the Sephardic Jews."

*Paloma Diaz-Mas, *Sephardim: The Jews from Spain*, (University of Chicago Press, 1992), particularly chapters 3-4, "Language," and "Literature."

*Isidoro G. Bango, *Remembering Sepharad: Jewish Culture in Medieval Spain*, (State Corporation for Spanish Cultural Action Abroad, 2003).

*John H. Elliott, ed., *The Spanish World: Civilization and Empire, Europe and Americas Past and Present*, (Harry Abrams, 1991), especially following chapters:
Angus MacKay, "A Pluralist Society: Medieval Spain," pp. 17-40.
Antonio Dominguez Ortiz, "Andalusia," pp. 254-256.

*William D. Phillips, Jr., and Carla Rahn Phillips, *A Concise History of Spain*, (Cambridge University Press, 2016, 2nd edition), especially chapter 3, "Diversity in Medieval Spain," pp. 61-106.

*Stanley G. Payne, *Spain: A Unique History*, (University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), especially chapters 1 and 3, "Visigoths and Asturians: Spaniards?," and "Spain and Islam: The Myth of Al-Andalus," pp. 43-71.

ON JEWISH CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC VARIETY IN DIASPORA

*Steven M. Lowenstein, *The Jewish Cultural Tapestry and International Jewish Folk Traditions*, (Oxford University Press, 2000).

Topics in course:

Week 1. Overview of Hebrew poetry in Bible, rabbinical times, and Middle Ages; why Spain became birthplace of a new cultural synthesis, different from ancient Palestine, Babylonia, elsewhere

Week 2. Similarities and differences in Spain under Islam (950-1140) and Christianity (1140-1492)

Week 3. The poems, life of Shmuel Ha-Nagid (993-1056) and Moses Ibn Ezra (c. 1055-c.1138)

Week 4. The poems, life of Solomon Ibn Gabirol (c. 1021/22-c.1057/58) and Yehuda Halevi (c.1045-1141)

Week 5. The poetry of the Abraham Ibn Ezra (c. 1093-1167), unrelated to Moses Ibn Ezra