

THE JEWS UNDER ISLAM

(History 3950-001)

Instructor: Professor Stillman
Assistant: Mr. Tash Smith

Fall 2007

General Introduction

Until the middle of the 20th century, there were some one million Jews living in the Islamic countries stretching from Morocco to Pakistan. Some of these communities had roots going back into Antiquity. There were Jews in many of what we now identify as Arab countries, long before there were any Arabs there and in Turkey before it was inhabited by any Turks. And until the seventeenth century, the Muslim lands were home to the majority of world Jewry. Ever since the founding of the Islam in the seventh century, Jews have lived in the Muslim world, and have interacted with Muslims on many levels and in many ways. The conflicts of today which receive so much attention in the media between Israelis and Palestinians, between Islamic fundamentalism and the West, and the widespread anti-Semitism in many quarters of the Muslim world obscure the complexity and richness of the historical relationship between the two religions and the two peoples.

This course will provide a broad survey of the 1400-year history of the Jews living in the Islamic world. The title of the course reflects the fact that for much of this time, Islam was not only the religion of the ruling majority (Arabs, Persians, Turks), but also legal and social foundation of the polity. Just as theological beliefs shaped the relationships between Jewish and their neighbors in Christendom throughout much of history, so too, we shall see Islamic beliefs and religious law were of primary importance in shaping the nature of the Judeo-Muslim relations in significantly different ways from the Christian world.

Class Format

The course will meet Tuesdays and Thursdays in Gittinger 350 from 10:30-11:45. The format will combine lecture and discussion. Students should feel free to ask questions of the instructor. He will feel free to ask questions of them. Regular attendance is highly recommended on two counts: (1) it will greatly help in passing the exams, and (2) it will be taken into account where the exam grades average on the border between two grade levels. Keeping up with the reading assignments should make the lectures more relevant, the discussion more intelligent, and participation much easier. Please note that the lecture topics listed below do not necessarily equal a single class (although most do, approximately). Some topics may run for three or four classes.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Please note that: **It** is the policy of the University to excuse absences of students that result from religious observances and to provide without penalty for the rescheduling of examinations and additional required classwork that may fall on religious holidays. © (*Faculty Handbook*, ' 3.13.2)

There will be no class on Thursday, September 13 in observance of Rosh Hashana (Jewish New Year). Those students choosing not to observe the holiday may use the opportunity to get ahead in their readings for the class.

Grades

Grades will be determined upon the basis of a midterm on Tuesday, October 19, and a final given during the regular final examination week in December. They will be weighted equally (40% of the final grade). The tests will consist of identifications (four or five phrases or sentences each) and two broad, interpretive essays. The essays will be take-home and are to be brought to the classroom for the in-class part of the exam. They will be straightforward, be based upon lectures **and reading**, and with nothing tricky. There will also be a book report on the novel *Farewell, Bayblon* (approximately 5-6 typewritten pages) due on Tuesday, November 30 (20% of grade).

Incompletes

Incompletes will be granted to students only for extremely urgent reasons (mainly medical with a physician's letter of explanation). Furthermore, only a student who has taken and passed the midterm will be considered for an Incomplete. No midterm or failed midterm + no final = F.

Office Hours

Students are cordially invited to take advantage of office hours. It is an excellent way for us to get to know you individually. In addition to the regularly scheduled office hours, special appointments may be made. Professor Stillman's and Mr. Smith's office is DAHT 305.

Professor Stillman's office hours will be Tuesday 1-2 and Wednesday 11-12, or by appointment. Mr. Smith's office hours will be <FILL IN>, or by appointment.

Required Books

Shlomo Deshen and Walter P. Zenner (eds.), *Jews Among Muslims: Communities in the Precolonial Middle East*

Naim Kattan, *Farewell, Bayblon: Coming of Age in Jewish Baghdad*

Reeva Spector Simon, et al., *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times = Jews of the Middle East*

Norman A. Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book* = *Jews of Arab Lands I*

Norman A. Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times* = *Jews of Arab Lands II*

In addition to the assigned readings in the required books, there will be required readings in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, which may be found in the Library Reference Section and in the Judaic Studies Office, and in *Survey of Jewish Affairs 1989*, which will be on reserve. There is also a copy of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* available for your use in the Hillel Foundation Library (corner of Boyd and Elm).

LECTURE TOPICS & READINGS

Part One: The Medieval Period

1. The Initial Encounter: The Rise of Islam; Muhammad and the Jews

Read: *Jews of Arab Lands I*, pp., 3-21 and 113-121

2. The Muslim Conquests and the New World Order: "The Rules of the Game."

Read: *Jews of Arab Lands I*, pp. 22-28 and 153-170

3. The Medieval Jewish Community: Structure & Organization (Internationally, Nationally and on the Local Level)

Read: *Jews of Arab Lands I*, pp. 29-39; 171-182; 195; 252-254

4. The Hellenistic Renaissance: Judaism meets Rationalism

Read: Stillman, pp. 226-228

5. Free Thinking, Sectarianism, Revolt and the Rise of Mainstream Jewish Theology: Hiwi ha-Balkhi, Abu Isa of Isfahan, The Karaites, Saadiah Gaon

Read: Handouts and *Encyclopaedia Judaica* under the appropriate entry for each

6. Islamic Spain: The Unique Culture, Convivencia, and So-Called "Golden Age"

Read: *Jews of Arab Lands I*, pp. 53-63 and 210-225 and handouts

7. The Almohad Trauma:

Read: "Almohads" in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*

8. Maimonides: The Last and Greatest Representative Medieval Judeo-Islamic Acculturation

Read: *Jews of Arab Lands I*, pp. 233-250 and *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, entries **A**Maimonidean controversy: and **A**Maimonides, Moses@

9. The Later Middle Ages: Under Mongols, Mamluks, and Middle Eastern Feudalism. Misery Loves Company: Marginalization and a Hardening of Attitudes

Read: *Jews of Arab Lands I*, pp. 64-87 and 262-287
Deshen & Zenner, *Jews Among Muslims*, pp. 50-63

Part Two: The Transition to Modern Times: Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed . . . Followed by "Future Shock"

10. Traditional Jewish Society in the Islamic World at the End of the Middle Ages

Read: Deshen & Zenner, *Jews Among Muslims*, pp. 1-49; 83-97

11. Enter the Sephardim: Infusion of New Blood, Partial Recovery Under the Ottomans, and a Last Great Fling with Messianism

Read: *Jews of Arab Lands I*, pp. 87-94; 289-302; Simon et al., *Jews of the Middle East*, pp. 13-15
In the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*: "Berab" EJ 4:582-584; "Caro," EJ 5:194-200; "Shabbetai Zevi," EJ 14:1219-1253; "Luria," EJ 11:572-578; "Nasi, Gracia," EJ 12:836-837; and "Nasi, Joseph," EJ 12:837-839

12. Middle East Meets West: The Initial Impact and European Intervention on Behalf of Non-Muslims: Idealism and Cynicism, or "The White Man's Burden and "The Terrible Turk"

Read: Simon et al., *Jews of the Middle East*, pp. 19-48
Jews of Arab Lands II, pp. 3-26; 183-198
Jews of Arab Lands I, pp. 95-101; 324-339; 347-367

13. The Alliance Israélite Universelle: Jewish Solidarity and "La Mission Civilisatrice"

Read: Simon et al., *Jews of the Middle East*, pp. 23-24; 43-44; 142-164 (with concentration on 148-152); 244-246
Jews of Arab Lands II, pp. 23-35; 30-35; 199-200; 202-205; 241-242
"Alliance Israélite Universelle" in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 2:648-653

14. Social, Economic, and Cultural Transformations

Reading: Simon et al., *Jews of the Middle East*, pp. 29-48; 65-84
Deshen & Zenner, *Jews Among Muslims*, pp. 64-80; 187-196
Jews of Arab Lands II, pp. 27-46

15. Those Least Touched by Modernity (Yemen, Kurdistan, the Island of Jerba, and the Atlas Region of Morocco)

Read: Deshen & Zenner, *Jews Among Muslims*, pp. 109-120; 197-214; 217-243