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# **Jews in the Muslim World**

**Yehoshua Ecker**

## **Course description**

A survey of the history of Jews in Muslim societies and under Muslim rule, from the conquests of the 7<sup>th</sup> century to the dispersions and transformations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Including: Social, political, economic and legal developments; Demographic trends; Interactions between communities; Impacts of Imperialism, Nationalism and modern State-Building.

The Arab-Muslim conquests brought most Jews in the world under one political entity and fundamentally affected Jewish history. As the early Muslim empire broke down to smaller states and gave rise to subsequent imperial structures, this history became much more complex. In the first millennium of the Muslim world, the vast majority of Jews still lived within its bounds. This reality has only began to change a few centuries ago, and has drastically altered in the past 100 years.

While this survey of about 1,400 years necessarily has to skip a few details here and there, it offers an overview of a crucial and central period in Jewish history. It uses the political history and chronology of the Muslim world as a scaffold for outlining and contextualizing the Jewish experience within this world, and the impact of this experience on Jews beyond it.

## **Preliminary list of readings**

### **Textbooks**

Bernard Lewis, The Jews of Islam, 1984.

Norman A. Stillman, The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979).

Norman Stillman, The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991).

Abdelwahab Meddeb and Benjamin Stora (eds.), A History of Jewish Muslim Relations: From the Origins to the Present Day (Princeton and Oxford, 2013).

## **Additional Readings**

(chapters, subchapters, excerpts)

The Cambridge History of Judaism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

Phillip I. Lieberman, ed. Vol. 5: Jews in the Medieval Islamic World, The Islamic World (2021)

Jonathan Karp, Adam Sutcliffe, eds. Vol. 7: The Early Modern World, 1500–1815 (2017)

Mitchell B. Hart, Tony Michels, eds. Vol. 8: The Modern World, 1815–2000 (2017)

Marina Rustow, “Jews and the Islamic World: Transitions from Rabbinic to Medieval Contexts”, in: Dean Phillip Bell, ed., The Bloomsbury Companion to Jewish Studies (Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 90-120.

Norman A. Stillman, "The Islamic Component of Jewish Studies", AJS Perspectives, The Muslim Issue (Spring 2012), pp. 6-8.

Also available online: <http://perspectives.ajsnet.org/the-muslim-issue-spring-2012/the-islamic-component-of-jewish-studies/>

Shelomo Dov Goitein, “The Jews Under Islam”, Part One: “6th–16th centuries”, in Elie Kedourie (Ed.), The Jewish World: History and Culture of the Jewish People (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1979), pp. 178-185.

Also online: <http://cojs.org/the-jews-under-islam-part-one-shelom-dov-goitein-the-jewish-world-history-and-culture-of-the-jewish-people/>

Walter P. Zenner and Shlomo Deshen, "Jews among Muslims in Precolonial Times: An Introductory Survey", in: Shlomo Deshen and Walter P. Zenner (eds.), Jews among Muslims: Communities in the Precolonial Middle East (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 3-24.

Michel Abitbol, "Jews of Muslim Lands in the Modern Period: History and Historiography", in: Peter Y. Medding, ed. Studies in Contemporary Jewry, Vol. XXII: Sephardic Jewry and Mizrahi Jews (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 44-65.

Raymond P. Scheindlin, A Short History of the Jewish People: From Legendary Times to Modern Statehood (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Avigdor Levy, “Ottoman Empire”, in: Judith Baskin, ed. Cambridge Dictionary of Judaism and Jewish Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 465-468.

Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrigue, Sephardi Jewry: A History of the Judeo-Spanish Community, 14th-20th Centuries (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

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

Zion Zohar (ed.), Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry: from the Golden Age of Spain to modern times (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

Abraham David, To Come to the Land: Immigration and Settlement in 16th-Century Eretz-Israel (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999), pp. 1-5,15-23,34.

Judah David Eisenstein, Moise Franco, (Gotthard Deutsch, ed.), "Pilgrimage"  
Jewish Encyclopedia, vol. 10 (1905), pp. 35-38.  
Online: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12149-pilgrimage>

Matthias B. Lehmann, Emissaries from the Holy Land: The Sephardic Diaspora and the Practice of Pan-Judaism in the Eighteenth Century (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014),  
"Introduction", pp. 1-14.

Nissim Rejwan, The Last Jews in Baghdad: remembering a lost homeland (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), Appendix A: "The Jews of Iraq: A Brief Historical Sketch", pp. 209-217.

Daniel J. Schroeter, "Jewish Communities of Morocco: History and Identity," in: Vivian B. Mann, ed., Morocco: Jews and Art in a Muslim Land (London: Merrell, in association with The Jewish Museum, New York, 2000), pp. 25-54.

H.Z. Hirschberg, A History of the Jews in North Africa, 2nd ed., English translation (Leiden: Brill, 1974).

Jane S. Gerber, Jewish Society in Fez 1450-1700: Studies in Communal and Economic Life (Leiden: Brill, 1980).

Norman A. Stillman and Yedida K. Stillman, "The Jewish Courtier Class in Late Eighteenth Century Morocco as Seen Through the Eyes of Samuel Romanelli," in: Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Charles Issawi, Roger Savory and Abraham L. Udovitch (eds.), The Islamic World, from Classical to Modern Times: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1989), pp. 845-854.

Daniel J. Schroeter, "From Dhimmis to Colonized Subjects: Moroccan Jews and the Sharifian and French Colonial State", Studies in Contemporary Jewry, 19 (2003), pp. 104-123.

Norman Stillman, "Muslims and Jews in Morocco: Perceptions, Images, Stereotypes," Proceedings of the Seminar on Muslim-Jewish Relations in North Africa (New York, 1975), pp. 13-27.

Woolf Institute, Jewish-Christian-Muslim Relations: A Timeline, Online:  
<http://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/uploads/timeline%20-%20jcm.pdf>

Avigdor Levy, ed. The Jews of the Ottoman Empire (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1994).

## Course outline

1	Introduction	Course outline	
		Empires and Jews	
		Periodizations, geographies, sources and challenges	
2	Pre-Islamic realities and the rise of the Arab-Muslim Empire	Arab and Muslim conquests	
		The lands and cultures that became the Muslim world	
		The Jewish world before Islam	
3	The foundations of coexistence: legal status, incorporation and separation (from Muhammad to the Umayyads)	Early Islamic encounters with Jews and Judaism	Adaptation, conversion, rivalry and rejection
		The development of attitudes towards Jews and the legal structures that bound them	The Pact of Umar and Dhimmi status
		Cultural exchanges and interactions	
4	The Abbasid “Golden Age”	The central role of Baghdad and the central lands of the Caliphate	
		Long range networks of trade	
		New patterns of migration and settlement	
5	Cities, regions and dynasties: the rise of regional centers, new states, and new “Golden Ages”	The creation of new centers and the fragmentation of the Muslim world	
		Al-Andalus	
		The Medieval Mediterranean and maritime trade	Kairouan, the Fatimids, the Ayyubids
6	Warriors of the faith	The Crusades and the Italian mediterranean trade	The decline of Jewish communities in the Holy Land and trading outposts
		The Almohads	The plight of Iberian and Maghrebi Jews
		The Reconquista	New Iberian realities
7	Mongols, plagues and conquests	The Mongol conquests and successor states	
		The “Black Death” and the waves of plague	

8	Power struggles in the post Mongol world	The religious shifts of the Ilkhanids	
		Timur's empire building	
		The disintegration of the Golden Horde	
9	Rise of the Islamic "Gunpowder Empires"	The rise of the Ottomans	
		The rise of the Safavids	
		The rise of the Mughals	
10	Out of Iberia	1391 to 1492	
		After expulsion	New diasporas
		Settlement in the Ottoman Balkans and Anatolia	The making of Sephardi Jews
11	The Mediterranean lands – from the Byzantine world and Iberia to the Ottoman domains	The making of Ottoman Jews	a. From Byzantine to Ottoman b. The impact of Iberian exiles and conversos c. Ottoman expansion to Mamluk domains and beyond d. Further waves of immigration
		The Centrality of Ottoman Jews	a. Central geographic location b. Large variegated urban centers c. Rabbinic training and interaction, Codification d. Eretz Israel (Safed & Jerusalem), Kabbalah, Messianism, Pilgrimage, Fundraising e. Stable, tolerant, centralized, accessible regime
12	East and West	Jews in Iran and their diasporas	Safavid pressures, New capitals and new communities, conversions and escapes
		The far west – Moroccan lands	a. The Realities of Maghrebi Jews b. Models of Interaction: Protected inferiors, Courtiers, Agents, Merchants, Foreigners, Citizens

		The expansion of Western empires	French and British global empires and inroads in the Muslim and Jewish worlds
13	Modernization, or the Impact of Accelerated Changes in Technology, Culture and Politics	a. Jews in a Modernizing World b. Education and Cultural Changes c. Nationalism and State-Building - New Options, New Threats	
14	Endings and New Beginnings – Dispersion and Restructuring	a. Waves of Migration b. New Forms of Discrimination, Persecution, and Destruction c. Restructuring and Adaptations to New Political Realities d. Remnants and Surviving Communities	
15	Post migration	New geography, new centers	Israel, France, The US
		Old regional diversity, its preservation and demise	Countries of origin, regional and urban identities, descent groups, language communities, local traditions
		Identity politics	Sephardi / Mizrahi Identities and Controversies
		Historiography	
16	Conclusion	A new global perspective: From Jews in the Muslim world to Jewish-Muslim relations	