

# **Jews in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Politics of Conquest under Crescent and Cross**

AS 100.XXX  
Fall 2016  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, X:XX-X:XX (1hr, 15 minutes)  
Room XXXX

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## **Course Description**

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What can Jewish sources tell us about how pre-modern peoples experienced conquest?

The Jews are a creation of exile. They have always relied on relations with non-Jews and non-Jewish governments for their survival. Medieval Jews recognized that regime change could affect the belief systems, communal institutions and economic wellbeing of conquered peoples. Jewish texts speak to the experience of conquest from a perspective outside the ruling group—a viewpoint too often lost in histories based on the chronicles of conquerors.

In this class, we will focus on medieval Jewish communities in Syria, Sicily and Spain. All three of these territories passed back and forth between Christian and Muslim hands. All three maintained large Jewish populations who left extensive records of periods when we would otherwise be bereft of sources. We will focus on Jewish communities residing in these regions in order to understand differences and similarities between how Islamic and Christian regimes treated Jews and other members of their conquered populations. We will ask why conquerors tolerated, expelled, embraced or slaughtered their conquered peoples. We will also consider why Jews responded to their conquerors with collusion, conversion, martyrdom or migration.

## **Course Schedule**

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### **Week 1**

Thursday, September 1

Introduction: Jews and Conquest

### UNIT I: THE HEBREW BIBLE

### **Week 2**

Tuesday, September 6

“Seek the Welfare of the City Where I Have Sent You into Exile”: The Politics of Diaspora

- Raymond Scheindlin, *A Short History of the Jewish People*, “Israelite Origins and Kingdom,” 1-24.
- Hebrew Bible: Jeremiah, 29; 40-41

Thursday, September 8

“Cyrus, God’s anointed”: Israelites and the Persian Restoration

- Raymond Scheindlin, *A Short History of the Jewish People*, “Judea and the Origins of Diaspora,” 25-33.
- Isaiah 40-55
- Cyrus Cylinder  
[http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/articles/c/cyrus\\_cylinder\\_-\\_translation.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/articles/c/cyrus_cylinder_-_translation.aspx)

**Week 3**

Tuesday, September 13

“The Wicked Offshoot”: Antiochus, the Hellenizers and the Hasmoneans

- Raymond Scheindlin, *A Short History of the Jewish People*, “Judea and the Origins of Diaspora,” 33-42
- Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society: 200 BCE-640 CE*, 32-49
- 1 Maccabees 1-2; 2 Maccabees 6-7

Thursday, September 15

Rebellion, Messianism and Quiescence: Israel, Rome and the Rabbis

- Raymond Scheindlin, *A Short History of the Jewish People*, “Judea and the Origins of Diaspora,” 43-49; 51-64
- “Siege of Masada” in Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 7:8 (online)
- Yochanan b. Zakkai and Vespasian, selections from the Babylonian Talmud Gittin 56a-b
- Shimon Bar Kokhba in Rabbinic Texts: Babylonian Talmud, Gittin 57a, 57b, 58a, available at [http://www.livius.org/ja-jn/jewish\\_wars/bk02.html](http://www.livius.org/ja-jn/jewish_wars/bk02.html); also Palestinian Talmud, *Ta’anit* 4.5; and Lamentations Rabbah 2.2 available at [http://www.livius.org/ja-jn/jewish\\_wars/bk01.html](http://www.livius.org/ja-jn/jewish_wars/bk01.html)

UNIT 2: JEWS, JESUS AND MUHAMMAD

**Week 4**

Tuesday, September 20

“The King of the Jews”? Early Jewish-Christian Relations

FIRST ESSAY DUE IN CLASS

- A.H. Becker, “The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages,” pp. 1-32
- Hippolytus of Rome, “Refutation of All Heresies,” 9:2, 6-7 (online)
- *Birkat ha-Minim* (Blessing against the heretics) (online)

Thursday, September 22

## Constantine's Cross in the Sky: Jews in Christian Rome

- Seth Schwartz, *The Ancient Jews from Alexander to Muhammad*, "Jews under Christian rule," pp. 124-152
- Theodosian Code (online)
- Justinian's Code (online)

### Week 5

Tuesday, September 27

#### Muhammad and the Jews: Allies, Defectors and Enemies

- Berkey, *The Formation of Islam*, 55-76; 91-101
- "Muhammad's Ordinance for Medina," 115-118; "Muhammad's Jewish Adversaries in Medina," 119-120; "The Extermination of the Banū Qurayza," 137-144; "The Koran on the Treatment of the People of the Book," 149; "Some Koranic Pronouncements on the Jews," 150-151 in Norman Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*

Thursday, September 29

#### "Protected Peoples": Jews in the Early Islamic State

- Michael Cook and Patricia Crone, *Hagarism, The Making of the Islamic World*, "Judeo-Hagarism," 3-10
- Marina Rustow, "Jews and Muslims in the Eastern Islamic World," in *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations*, pp. 75-88
- "The Pact of 'Umar," in Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands*, 157-158 (also, review the selections from the Theodosian and Justinian codes for comparative purposes)

## UNIT 3: SPAIN

### Week 6

Tuesday, October 4

#### Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy and the Other: Jews and the State in Visigoth Iberia

#### SECOND ESSAY DUE IN CLASS ON 10/4

- Norman Roth, *Jews, Visigoths and Muslims in Medieval Spain: Cooperation and Conflict*, 7-38
- "History of the Goths," #1, pp. 3-4; "Visigothic Legislation Concerning the Jews," #4, pp. 21-26, in Constable, *Medieval Iberia*

Thursday, October 6

## Iberian Jews and Muslim Invaders: Coconspirators or Casualties?

- Norman Roth, "The Jews and the Muslim Conquest of Spain," *Jewish Social Studies*, 38.2, 145-158
- Marina Rustow, "Jews and Muslims in the Eastern Islamic World," in *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations*, pp. 88-97
- "Jews aid the Muslim Conquest of Spain," 156 in Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands*
- "Accounts of the Muslim Conquest," #6, 33-36; 41-42 (A+C); "A Muslim-Christian Treaty," #8, 45-46 in Constable, *Medieval Iberia*

## Week 7

Tuesday, October 11

### Political Fragmentation and Cultural Efflorescence: The Party Kings

- Gerber, *The Jews of Spain*, 52-57
- Fletcher, *Moorish Spain*, 95-103
- "A Jewish Vizier Describes the Battle of Alfuentes," #20, 110-116; "Two Jewish Viziers in Granada," #21, 122-125; 127-130 (B+D) in Constable, *Medieval Iberia*.
- "From a Spanish Merchant in Fez, Morocco, to his Father in Almeria, Spain," in S.D Goitein, *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders*, 51-56

Thursday, October 13

### Political Unity and Exile: The Almohads

- Fletcher, *Moorish Spain*, 118-124
- Joel Kramer, *Maimonides: The Life and World of One of Civilization's Greatest Minds*, 83-116
- "Ibn Tumart and the Rise of the Almohads," in Constable, #43 239-243 and #44 "The Doctrine of Unity," 244-251; and #45 "Jewish Lament in the Wake of Almohad Persecutions," 265-266
- "Epistle on Martyrdom" (Iggeret ha-Shmad), Moshe b. Maimon (Maimonides), translated in *Epistles of Maimonides, Crisis and Leadership*, 13-16; 31-34

## Week 8

Tuesday, October 18

### The Christian State as Liberator? The Reconquista

- Gerber, *The Jews of Spain*, 92-106
- "Three Charters from the Kingdom of Valencia," #49, 280-282 (B); "The Christian Conquest of Seville," #51 290-292 (B); "The Legal Status of Jews and Muslims in Castile," #66, 399-405 in Constable, *Medieval Iberia*

Thursday, October 20

NO CLASS: MONDAY SCHEDULE

UNIT 4: SICILY

**Week 9**

Tuesday, October 25

Jews in Sicily before the Islamic Invasions

THIRD ESSAY DUE IN CLASS

- Shelomo Shimonson, *Between Scylla and Charybdis*, 1-4; 8-14; 53-54
- Amnon Linder, “The Legal Status of Jews in the Byzantine Empire,” in *Jews in Byzantium*, 149-150; 207-217
- “Edict of Conversion, Basil I” in Starr, *Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 127
- Documents from Byzantine Sicily in Simonsohn, *Jews in Sicily, vol. 1*, doc. #21-23, pp. 13-15; (note: only read the brief English paragraphs introducing the Latin texts).

Thursday, October 27

Wooden Calves and Wealthy Merchants: Jews and the Muslim Rulers of Sicily

- Simonsohn, *Between Scylla and Charybdis*, 15-28; 77-78; 83-87
- Marin Rustow, “Nota Bene: Cairo Geniza,” in *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations*, 99-105
- Geniza Merchants’ Letters in Simonsohn, *Jews in Sicily, vol. 1*

**Week 10**

Tuesday, November 1

The Enemy is Here, There and Everywhere: The Norman Invasion of Sicily

- Simonsohn, *Between Scylla and Charybdis*, 28-36
- Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*, “The Norman Conquest of Sicily,” 88-108
- Geniza Merchants’ Letters in Simonsohn, *Jews in Sicily, vol. 1*

Thursday, November 3

A Christian State? Arabic-Speaking Jews in Latin Sicily

- Jeremy Johns, *Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily*, 1-11
- S.D. Goitein, “Sicily and Southern Italy in the Geniza Documents” (Please note: this article includes the primary source readings for today’s class. Read these texts closely!).

UNIT 5: SYRIA

## **Week 11**

Tuesday, November 8

‘Umar, Savior of the Jews? Palestine Between Arab and Byzantine

### FOURTH ESSAY DUE IN CLASS

- Moshe Gil, *A History of Palestine*, 51-74
- “Jews aid the Arabs in the Conquest of Hebron,” 152; “Umar Permits the Jews to Return to Jerusalem,” 154-155 in Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands*

Thursday, November 10

Jews and the Fatimid State in Palestine

- Marina Rustow, “The Legal Status of Dhimmīs in the Fatimid East: A View from the Palace in Cairo,” in *The Legal Status of Dhimmīs in the Islamic West*, 307-332
- “A Fatimid Caliph Steps into a Dispute between Rabbanites and Karaites in the Holy Land,” 198-199; “Christian and Jewish Officials in the Fatimid Empire, 200; “A petition to a court Jew in Fatimid Egypt,” 204 in Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands*

## **Week 12**

Tuesday, November 15:

The Crusader States and the Not-Dead Jews of Syria

- Yehoshua Frenkel, “Jews and Muslims in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem,” in *Jewish-Muslim Relations*, 156-161.
- Joshua Prawer, *Jews in the Latin Kingdom*, 46-64.
- Geniza letters: T-S 18J3.5; T-S 18J2.10 (trans. Brendan Goldman)
- Lament on the Destruction of the Jewish Community of Crusader Acre (trans. Brendan Goldman)

Thursday, November 17

NO CLASS: SCHEDULE MEETING TO DISCUSS FINAL PAPER

FIFTH ESSAY DUE AT MEETING

Tuesday, November 22 – Thursday, November 24

NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING BREAK

## **Week 13**

Tuesday, November 29

Kicking out the Crusaders: Jews in Mamluk Palestine

- Norman Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, 64-76
- Bosworth, "Christian and Jewish Religious Dignitaries in Mamluk Egypt and Syria: Qalqashandi's Information on Their Hierarchy, Titulature, and Appointment," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 59–74
- “Jews Oath,” 267-268 in Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands*

## CONCLUSIONS

Thursday, December 1

Beyond “Islamic” or “Christian”: A Royal Alliance?

FIFTH ESSAY DUE IN CLASS

- Funkenstein, “The Image of the Ruler in Jewish Sources,” in *Perceptions of Jewish History*, 155-168.
- Yerushalmi, “Servants of the King, not Servants of Servants”

## **Week 14**

Tuesday, December 6

Jews under Christian and Islamic Regimes: The Comparative Approach and its Discontents

- Mark Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, 3-30
- Norman Stillman, “Myth, Counter-Myth and Distortion,” *Tikkun* 6.3, 1991, 60-64

Thursday, December 8

Final Class—Wrapping it Up

Thursday, December 22

FINAL PAPER DUE