

In the last two decades research on Jews in the Middle East has been transformed with the appearance of many groundbreaking studies that view Jewish communities as part of their respective societies, departing from the perception of Jewish history as insular. From rethinking Jewish participation in Middle Eastern political life to reexamining Jewish contributions to Middle Eastern culture, this interdisciplinary scholarship has offered new depth and richness to this field. As a result, now is an opportune time to offer new regional and global narratives that would take into consideration the internal diversity of the communities, cultures, literatures, and collective memories of Middle Eastern Jews, but also of the local Muslim and Christian societies where Jews no longer live.

We invite scholars to submit proposals to participate in a collaborative project that would offer an innovative perspective on the histories, memories, and narratives of—and about—Jews in the Middle East in the 20th and 21st centuries. This project is an attempt to counter the broad narratives that lament the end of Jewish existence in the Middle East and the Muslim World and promote a one-dimensional understanding of the Jewish experience in the recent century and a half. Drawing on innovative synthesis, original research, and new methods, our proposed project will offer additional perspectives on Jewish life in the Middle East. We seek to examine the Jewish experience in the Middle East in the 20<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> centuries from a variety of thematic perspectives in political, social, religious, and cultural history.

This collaborative effort will consist of two interconnected stages: first, we will hold two workshops where scholars will discuss and present on various aspects of their original research and/or new interpretation; and second, we will engage in collaborative writing of a monograph. First, we hope to convene a two-part workshop (the first tentatively, public health and travel conditions permitting, scheduled for February 2021 at Penn State, and the second at Ben Gurion University in June 2021). Participants will be invited to physically attend one of the two and to participate in the discussion via Zoom in the other meeting, based on their geography or thematic contribution.

Second, we envision the scholarly output to be somewhat experimental and innovative. Instead of an edited volume with sole-authored chapters, we propose to publish a co-authored book, modeled loosely after *The Modern Girl Around the World* and *Embodiment and Black Religion: Rethinking the Body in African-American Religious Experience* that were published by collective of authors and is a unique model that may suit a unique project such as the one proposed. To that end, Stanford University Press has expressed preliminary interest in this project, and the editor of the Middle East Studies list may join us and guide us on how to write such a book together. Our goal is to produce a final product that would contribute to the fields of Middle Eastern and Jewish Studies and be read by scholars, teachers, students, and the broader public.

Scholars interested in joining this collaborative project should send us a brief description of their proposal in terms of scope, theme, research question (formed as a 500-word abstract), by June 30, 2020. Generally,



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for budgetary reasons, US-based scholars will be invited to the Penn State workshop, and Israel-based scholars would be invited to the one at BGU. Scholars from Europe will be invited based on their proposal and the most suitable working group. However, there may be some exceptions according to thematic considerations. Thanks to the generous support of the Penn State Humanities Institute and the Chaim Herzog Center for Middle East Studies & Diplomacy at Ben Gurion University, we are able to offer funding for flights and accommodation for the workshop. Scholars who wish to attend both workshops are welcome to do this on their own budget. Collaborative writing will begin in the 2021-22 academic year.

We look forward to receiving your response. Meanwhile, we wish you all the best; stay safe and healthy.

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