



האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים  
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem



## **Jews and Slavs in the Middle Ages**

Research Workshop of Israel Science Foundation

Department of Russian and Slavic Studies

Tamara and Saveli Grinberg Chair in Russian Studies

### **Section 1. Jews and Slavs: Cultural Interaction: May 28-June 2**

Some of the panels will be streamed on Zoom:

<https://huji.zoom.us/j/84969518703?pwd=SDdXL3pvdmJGTTFQ1RnhYb3dIeDc3QT09>

#### **Sunday, May 28**

20:30-22:00 Opening Meeting

Moderator: Alexander Kulik and Anna Balestrieri

#### **Monday, May 29**

10:30-13:00

Moderator: Judith Kalik

Speaker 1: Moshe Taube, "The Rewards and Limits of Classical Erudition: on the Contributions of Scholars without Knowledge of Hebrew to the Study of the East Slavic Translations from Hebrew"

Respondent 1: Dan Shapira

Speaker 2: Alexander Kulik, "Old Rus' in Medieval Hebrew Sources"

Respondent 2: Constantin Zuckerman

14:00-16:30

Moderator: Moshe Taube

Speaker: Alexander Uchitel, "Jewish Presence in the Northern Pontic in Antiquity"

Respondent: Dan Shapira

20:00-22:00

Moderator: Alexander Uchitel

Speaker: Robert Romanchuk, "Digenis Akritis, the Septuagint, and Judaism"

Respondent: Constantin Zuckerman

#### **Tuesday, May 30**

10:30-13:00

Moderator: Constantin Zuckerman

Speaker 1: Cyril Aslanov, “Saka/Aškūza/Aškenāz/σκύθηζ/скиф (скуф): the Metamorphoses of a Wanderwort referring to Wandering Nations”

Respondent 1: Alexander Uchitel

Speaker 2: Dan Shapira, “The Turkic-Speaking Rabbanite Jews of *Jagolday tümen* in the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> Centuries and their Cultural World”

Respondent 2: Moshe Taube

14:00-16:30 Roundtable Discussion: “State-of-the-art in Handwritten Text Recognition (HTR) and Deep Learning for Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts: how this will help the research of uncatalogued and poorly accessible manuscripts collections” (key-speaker: Daria Vasyutinsky)

20:00-22:00

Moderator: Cyril Aslanov

Speaker: Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, “From the New Documents to a New Narrative: Integrating Jews in the Medieval and Early Modern East Europe within a Broader Historiographic Narrative”

Respondents: Judith Kalik and Alexander Kulik

### **Wednesday, May 31**

10:30-13:00

Moderator: Moshe Taube

Speaker 1: Judith Kalik, “Vodka, Jews and Peasants in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth”

Respondent 1: Daria Vasyutinsky

Speaker 2: Dan Shapira and Daria Vasyutinsky, “Hebrew Scripts Used in Firk. 1 143 and Firk. 1 144 and in the Fourteenth-Fifteenth Cent. Crimean Hebrew Inscriptions and What They Mean for Reconstructing Jewish History in Eastern and Southern Ukraine in the 14th-15th cent.”

Respondent 2: Cyril Aslanov

14:00-16:30

Moderator: Cyril Aslanov

Speaker: Constantin Zuckerman, “The Epistle to the Jewish People by Feodor the Jew (Moscow, 1450s)”

Respondent: Moshe Taube

19:00-22:00 *Dinner*

### **Thursday, June 1**

10:30-13:00

Moderator: Constantin Zuckerman

Speaker: Judith Kalik, “#MeToo Sex and Love between Jews and Slavs in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth”

Respondent: Daria Vasyutinsky

14:00-16:30 Roundtable Discussion

20:00-22:00

Moderator: Alexander Kulik

Speaker 1: Shaul Stampfer, “Technological Change and the Rise of the Ashkenazi Jewish Community of Eastern Europe – Economy, Demography and Politics”

Respondent 1: Dan Shapira

Speaker 2: Shalem Yahalom, “Masters and Female Slaves: The Origins of The Jewish People”

Respondent 2: Judith Kalik

## **Friday, June 2**

9:30-11:00 Concluding Discussion: Results and Perspectives

## **ABSTRACTS:**

### **Moshe Taube, “The Rewards and Limits of Classical Erudition: on the Contributions of Scholars without Knowledge of Hebrew to the Study of the East Slavic Translations from Hebrew”**

I will discuss mainly Vassilij Pavlovich Zubov's 2019 book *Логика Авиасафа* (actually written during the 1950s), with some comparisons to Thomas M. Seebohm's 1977 book *Ratio und Charisma*.

### **Alexander Kulik, “Old Rus’ in Medieval Hebrew Sources”**

The study of Jewish presence in early Eastern Europe has been severely hindered by the ambiguity of medieval nomenclature for Old Rus'. Some scholars even went so far as to deny any connection between the medieval Hebrew term *Rusi(')a(h)* (in its graphic variations) and the principalities of Rus'. The present paper examines this term and others denoting Old Rus' in the medieval Jewish tradition and traces their historical development: from rendering the authentic East Slavic self-appellation (*Rus* and *Rusi*) and Bible-based ethnology, either Byzantine (*Ros/Rosh*) or original (*Tiras/Tiros*), featured in texts of the 10th century; to ethnic (*Canaan*, i.e., “Slavia,” 11th century), ethno-confessional (*Canaan of Yavan* “Greek Slavia,” 11th century), and purely confessional definitions (*Yavan* “Greece,” i.e. “the land of the Greek rite,” 12th century); and, finally, to the inflected term – *Rusi(')a(h)* or *Rosi(')a(h)* – which becomes universally dominant in the later Hebrew texts regardless of their provenance. The present study not only helps to resolve a cardinal problem of attribution for the earliest sources attesting to a Jewish presence in Eastern Europe, but also reconstructs the history of an important Hebrew ethnotoponym. The proffered solution takes account of the historical contexts, exegetic traditions, and political and confessional perceptions of Old Rus' on the part of medieval Jews from diverse communities spread across Europe and the Middle East.

### **Alexander Uchitel, “Jewish Presence in the Northern Pontic in Antiquity”**

Jews began to appear in the Northern Pontic Greek colonies under the Roman rule in the first century CE. The talk will examine the epigraphic evidence on the Jewish presence in this area, mainly the Jewish manumissions from Panticapaeum, Phanagoria, and Gorgippia.

**Cyril Aslanov, “Saka/Aškūza/Aškenāz/σκύθης/скиф (скуп): the Metamorphoses of a Wanderwort referring to Wandering Nations”**

The ethnonym Saka whereby the Scythians were known in Old Persian displays interesting avatars throughout the history. However, while Sakā seems to have been used as an exonym, the endonym whereby the Scythians seem to have referred to themselves was probably the form \*Skuḏa- reflected by Assyrian Aškūza; Hebrew Aškenaz and Greek Σκύθης. In spite of the divergence between the exonym Saka and the endonym \*Skuḏa, Saka was eventually continued by the names of two Pamir ethnicities: Xuṛnī, the endonymic way of referring to Shughnī, and Shkoshmī, the endonymic name of the nearby ethnicity of the Ishkashimīs.

On a semasiological level, the Greek adaptation of \*Skuḏa- as Σκύθης has received a wide referential extension as it was used in order to refer to various nations that appeared and developed in the Pontic-Caspian area once inhabited by Scythians (Bulgarians; Khazars) and even beyond: Germans or German Jews (Ashkenaz) and even Tataricized Russians if we go so far as the late symbolistic poeticization of the term скиф in Alexander Blok’s Скифы. This contribution aims at describing the onomasiological and semasiologic process involved in the semantic shifts that were responsible for the various denominations of the wandering nations of the Pontic-Caspian nations throughout the ages: onomasiological inasmuch as the same Scythians were referred to either by the endonym \*Skuḏa- or by the exonym Saka; semasiological inasmuch as the avatars of the Greek adaptation Σκύθης of the Scythian endonym \*Skuḏa- were recycled indiscriminately in order to refer to the most improbable nomadic nations of a given geographic space perceived independently of the specific nature of its inhabitants. This astonishingly plasticity of the terms raises the question of the relation between continuity and innovation in the perception of a space and its inhabitants.

**Dan Shapira, “The Turkic-Speaking Rabbanite Jews of *Jagoldaytūmen* in the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> Centuries and their Cultural World”** See the full text sent separately.

**Roundtable Discussion: “State-of-the-art in Handwritten Text Recognition (HTR) and Deep Learning for Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts: how this will help the research of uncatalogued and poorly accessible manuscripts collections” (key-speaker: Daria Vasyutinsky)**

During the last few years, several software systems have been developed to access and analyze digitized manuscripts. Most of the development has been geared toward Latin scripts, and some platforms are intended for left-to-right scripts only. Some projects aim to provide access to manuscripts in different libraries. Others invite researchers to transcribe and describe manuscripts and then allow searches on the transcriptions. Some provide (and invite developers to contribute) semi-automatic HTR (Handwritten Text Recognition) algorithms that are fine-tuned for every manuscript. Finally, there are projects that seek fully automatic solutions based on Deep Machine learning algorithms. On the Computer Sciences (CS) side, numerous algorithms have already been developed for various tasks, such as document layout analysis and segmentation, word spotting, writer identification, verification and retrieval, paleography analysis, and HTR. However, most of these algorithms address moderate-quality document images, are published as research papers, and rarely provide working prototypes. Currently, CS and DH research in digital paleography is developed in parallel and rarely contributes to each other. We will discuss the DH and CS collaboration experiences in digital paleography and how they promise to contribute to Humanities research.

**Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, “From the New Documents to a New Narrative: Integrating Jews in the Medieval and Early Modern East Europe within a Broader Historiographic Narrative”**

### **Judith Kalik, “Vodka, Jews and Peasants in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth”**

The talk will examine the problem of the time and place of the invention of commercial vodka, the central role of vodka in the economic system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the central role of the Jews in its production and sale, and an impact of this role of the Jews on the Jewish-Slavic relations. The problem of the origins of commercial vodka is very complicated especially because of competing national priority claims in Poland and Russia. The question will be raised whether the introduction of the propination system in 1496 in Crown Poland was connected to the termination of the North Pontic grain trade in 1475-1484? The second question will concern the reasons of the massive entrance of the Jews into the propination system.

### **Dan Shapira and Daria Vasiutinsky, “Hebrew Scripts Used in Firk. 1 143 and Firk. 1 144 and in the Fourteenth-Fifteenth Cent. Crimean Hebrew Inscriptions and What They Mean for Reconstructing Jewish History in Eastern and Southern Ukraine in the 14th-15th cent.”**

Evr I Firk 143 and Evr I Firk 144 are supposed to belong to (almost) the same Rabbanite Community; the time span between these two Turkic translations of the Pentateuch is almost three hundred years. However, no similarity is found so far between the scripts found in both. On the contrary, Evr I Firk 144 seems to be no different in any aspect from the *Karaite* Turkic translations of the Pentateuch from the same period. This is interesting, in light of the Italian, Spanish, Ashkenazi, Persian etc. origins of the Crimean Rabbanite community. It seems that culturally, the Crimean Rabbanite community, despite its so different origins and despite its preservation of the Rabbanism, became assimilated among the Crimean Karaite majority. We will dwell as well on the scripts used in Crimea prior to introduction of printed books, as well as on the strange case of Ezekiel Turkic translation which became part of Ginzburg collections held in Moscow.

### **Robert Romanchuk, “Digenis Akritis, the Septuagint, and Judaism”**

In 1951 and 1955, André Vaillant discussed an unusual lexical item in the Old Slavic version of the Byzantine “romantic epic” *Digenis Akritis* that derived from a pericope of Habakkuk; together with one or two other possible citations from the “Old Testament,” it is not present in any of the Greek versions. In his 1956 edition of the Greek Grottaferrata version of *Digenis*, John Mavrogordato remarked the “large number of words from the Septuagint,” ranging from individual lexical items to longer reminiscences and citations; some, at least, he attributed to the lost original. And Paolo Odorico in 1989 analyzed the gnomic comments and biblical citations (many from the Septuagint) in *Digenis*; most of these, it appears, were added during the production of the Grottaferrata version, but again some seem to belong to the original. My paper will consider: can the three categories be resolved to any one stage (or perhaps two stages) of the text’s development? If not, why did editors return to the Septuagint, or its liturgical pericopes, in their work on *Digenis*? Primarily as a framing device, but possibly for more heuristic reasons as well, my paper will also consider the place of Jews, Judaism, and Jerusalem in the post-medieval Greek and Slavic epic song traditions that relate to the figure of *Digenis*.

**Constantin Zuckerman, “The Epistle to the Jewish People by Feodor the Jew (Moscow, 1450s)”** See the texts sent separately.

### **Judith Kalik, “Sex and Love between Jews and Slavs in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth”**

The proposed roundtable discussion will present several cases of sexual harassment and abuse found in rabbinical responsa, as well as some cases of sexual relations and love between Jews and Slavs found in non-Jewish court records from the early modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This subject raises the most deeply hidden feelings and fears both inside the Jewish society and in its interaction with the outside world. The discussion will

consider the current scholarly controversy regarding whether sexual abuse and rape are universal and existential phenomena of human behavior and should be regarded as ahistorical, or attitudes toward them (both judicial and psychological) changed considerably over time. The question will be raised why the rabbinic responsa are remarkably “modern” in their outlook – they often discuss matters that are not expected to be discussed in pre-modern societies. All relevant Jewish and non-Jewish sources will be presented for discussion with Judith Kalik’s moderation.



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### **Section 2: Jewish Pseudepigrapha in Slavonic Transmission: June 4-9**

Some of the panels will be streamed on Zoom:

<https://huji.zoom.us/j/84969518703?pwd=SDdXL3pvdmJGTFQ1RnhYb3dIeDc3QT09>

#### **Sunday, June 4**

20:00-22:00 Opening Meeting

Moderators: Alexander Kulik and Anna Balestrieri

Speaker: Moshe Idel, "The Apotheosis of the Fallen Angels"

Respondent: Andrei Orlov

#### **Monday, June 5**

10:30-13:00

Moderator: Moshe Idel

Speaker 1: Michael Stone, "At a Cross-Roads – Which direction shall I go next? and why?"

Respondent 1: Florentina Badalanova Geller

Speaker 2: Andrei Orlov, "Transmission of Divine Knowledge in Early Enochic Traditions and Especially in 2 Enoch"

Respondent 2: Michael Stone

14:00-16:30

Moderator: Serge Ruzer

Speaker: David Hamidovich, "Jewish Inscriptions in Slavic Contexts"

Respondent: Mark Geller

20:00-22:00

Moderator: Alexander Kulik

Speaker: Serge Ruzer, "2 Enoch and the Epistle to the Hebrews on Melchizedek: Links Reconsidered"

#### **Tuesday, June 6**

10:30-13:00

Moderator: Michael Stone

Speaker: Alexander Kulik, "*Nomina Sacra* between Jewish and Christian Traditions"

Respondent: Andrei Orlov

14:00-16:30

Moderator: Andrei Orlov

Speaker: Michael Tuval, "Jewish Messianic Typology: from Nazareth to Lubavich"

Respondent: Serge Ruzer

20:00-22:00

Moderator: Alexander Kulik

Speaker: Yuri Stoyanov, "Early Judaism, the Old Slavonic Pseudepigrapha and the Problem of Medieval Christian Dualist Apocalypticism"

### **Wednesday, June 7**

9:00 *Excursion*

20:00-22:00 Roundtable Discussion

### **Thursday, June 8**

10:30-13:00

Moderator: Alexander Kulik

Speaker 1: Andrei Orlov, "The Axis Mundi Tradition in the Apocalypse of Abraham"

Respondent 1: Michael Stone

Speaker 2: Florentina Badalanova Geller, "Verbal Qualities of Jewishness in Slavonic Parabiblical Tradition"

Respondent 2: Alexander Kulik

14:00-16:30

Moderator: Michael Stone

Speaker: Mark Geller, "Slavonic Pseudepigraphic Evidence for an Aramaic Vorlage of the Gospels"

Respondent: Alexander Kulik

20:00-22:00 Roundtable Discussion

### **Friday, June 9**

9:30-11:00 Concluding Discussion: Results and Perspectives

### **ABSTRACTS:**



### **Michael Stone, “The Functioning of Parabiblical Literature in Comparative Perspective: Mediaeval Armenia”**

The aim of this paper is to commence seeking an answer to the following question: What function did the developed parabiblical (pseudepigraphical) literature play in medieval Armenian culture? The question is approached by the examination of markers in the texts that might show the use to which they were put and reveal the contexts in which the various types of literature were composed, or preserved, or developed. The issues of folk tales and oral transmission are raised. The use of iconographic sources and their relationship to literary documents, oral or written, are investigated.

### **Florentina Badalanova Geller, “On Some Parabiblical Narrative Templates Attested among Jews and Slavs”**

While preparing the final editions of his Motif-Index of Folk-Literature (1955-1958), complemented by the expanded version of his English translation of Antti Aarne’s *Verzeichnis der Märchentypen*, Stith Thompson integrated into the corpus of his basic empirical data the results of the doctoral thesis of his outstanding student, the Polish-born Israeli scholar Dov Noy. At the time he was known as Dov Neuman, and his research was focused on the challenging task of preparing a comprehensive Motif-Index of Talmudic-Midrashic Literature. The manuscript was submitted in 1954 to the Department of Folklore at Indiana University (Bloomington), and the dissertation was successfully defended shortly afterwards; unfortunately, it was never published. Nevertheless, it impacted the explorations of the next generation of scholars working in the field of Jewish parabiblical written and oral traditions. Applying Thompson’s methodology, Noy produced a remarkable adaptation of his supervisor’s classification scheme by adding rich empirical material which he extracted from Talmudic-Midrashic sources. The impeccable knowledge of this corpus in its original (Hebrew and Aramaic) language, along with the excellent command of secondary literature on the topic, allowed Noy to systematise the material in an innovative way, by expanding and enriching Thompson’s Motif-Index with supplementary entries with reference to Jewish parabiblical literature (including apocryphal writings attested in Old Church Slavonic). However, Noy did not include within his classification scheme material drawn from Slavonic folklore, since at the time it was outside the scope of his research agenda. For this reason, a comprehensive study in this direction is needed, in order to identify certain common motifs which are employed in both Talmudic-Midrashic literature and Slavonic oral sources. This will add important details to our knowledge concerning the intellectual landscape against the background of which these specific narrative templates were employed in their respective Jewish and Slavonic contexts. Besides, the parallel attestations of such text-units are indicative of certain undercurrent cross-cultural and inter-confessional encounters between Jews and Slavs. In fact, the interface between their respective narrative traditions will be the focal point of our current research. Our analysis concentrates on a cluster of selected cases illustrating these types of phenomena, with a special emphasis on data presented in Dov Noy’s *Motif-Index*, and in particular on some Talmudic-Midrashic micro-fables that have surprising counterparts in Slavonic parabiblical folklore.

### **Serge Ruzer, “2 Enoch and the Epistle to the Hebrews on Melchizedek: Links Reconsidered”**

The first-century CE Epistle to the Hebrews aims at presenting Jesus as the eternal heavenly high priest. To achieve his goal, the author argues for Jesus’ superiority over other outstanding priestly characters, starting with angels and finishing with the priests in the Jerusalem Temple. In between, he appeals to the figure of Melchizedek, which, as it seems, was perceived in the period as linked to both heavenly and earthly realm. Previous research highlighted the function of Melchizedek in the epistle as a prototype for Jesus, indicating both the possibility of a non-Levitical priestly vocation (with ref. to Gen 14:17-20) and the eternal character of the ultimate priesthood

(with ref. to Psalm 110 and its reflections, e.g., in 11QMelchizedek). The question of possible links to the Melchizedek legend in 2 Enoch have been also discussed – with Harold Attridge suggesting that some elements of the legend, such as the wondrous circumstances of Melchizedek’s birth, came into being as a (polemical) reaction to the Christian narrative reflected in Hebrews. The present paper emphasizes that, in fact, important elements of Melchizedek’s portrait in the epistle are not used to foreshadow Jesus, and thus are to be viewed as witnesses for an existing broader tradition, from where they were borrowed – like that in 2 Enoch. It is further argued that the longer recension of 2 Enoch may plausibly account for the epistles attempt to solve the conundrum of the relationship between two eternal priests, Melchizedek and Jesus. Therefore, in contradistinction to Attridge, the epistle’s dependence on a tradition reflected in 2 Enoch is posited and possible consequences for the dating of the latter are addressed.

#### **Alexander Kulik, “*Nomina Sacra* between Jewish and Christian Traditions”**

This study reconstructs the numerological considerations behind a Judeo-Greek linguo-theological revolution while focusing on its key element – Hellenization of the Hebrew name of God and its consequences for later Christian traditions, including the Slavic one. Translators of the Tetragram made an effort to convey all of its various aspects, including its presumed verbal meaning (ὁ ὄν), its quality as a proper name (by eliminating the article), and its phonetic (Ιαω) and graphic values (ΙΙΙΙΙ). As we shall show, they additionally intended to and succeeded in translating its numeric value as well. We will discuss the multiple implications of this observation for clarification of the provenance and relative chronology of the introduction of κύριος and *nomina sacra*, as well as for understanding the wider phenomenon of “names-numbers” (names isomorphic with numbers) vis-à-vis other related topics, such as the appearance of Greek and Hebrew alphabetic numerals, early Jewish and Christian numeric symbolism and the history of Hebrew and Hebrew-Greek isopsephy.

#### **Mark Geller, “Slavonic Pseudepigraphic Evidence for an Aramaic Vorlage of the Gospels”**

My paper is responding to a single reference in a fifteenth century Russian erotapocritic compilation reportedly rendering a discussion between the three saints (Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus and John the Theologian). The text was found by N. Tikhonravov’s in MS No. 682 from the Library of the Holy Synod, Moscow (fols 325v-328v). It was published by him in 1863, in the second volume of his important work, *Pamiatniki Otrechennoï Russkoï Literatury*. According to this text, when St Basil the Great asks the question, “Where were the four Gospels written?” St Gregory of Nazianzus answers that the Gospel of Matthew was written in the East, in a 'Jewish script', which we can only assume to be Hebrew or Aramaic.

How would this information have been known to the medieval Slavonic scribe at the time? Coincidentally, this text was published only a few years after, in 1855, a palimpsest containing Christian Palestinian Aramaic was brought from the Sinai Santa Catherina Monastery, catalogued as St. Petersburg Syr. n. 16. Putting this information together, this paper will explore whether some part of the Gospels may have been translated into Greek from Christian Palestinian Aramaic, rather than the other way around, as is usually thought to be the case.

#### **Yuri Stoyanov, “Early Judaism, the Old Slavonic Pseudepigrapha and the Problem of Medieval Christian Dualist Apocalypticism.”** See the texts sent separately.

#### **Michael Tuval, “Jewish Messianic Typology: from Nazareth to Lubavich.”** See the texts sent separately.

#### **Andrei Orlov, “The Axis Mundi Tradition in the Apocalypse of Abraham”**

This paper offers a close investigation of the Leviathan tradition in the Apocalypse of Abraham by paying

special attention to Leviathan's role as the foundation of the world, or the axis mundi, in chapter 21. The chapter demonstrates that the motif of Leviathan as the foundation of the world in the Apocalypse of Abraham can be seen as an important precursor for the later rabbinic and Zoharic understandings of cosmological monsters as a foundation of the universe.