



**Call for Papers:  
Research Workshop, Tel Aviv University, May 3–4, 2020**

**Jewish Craftspeople in the Middle Ages: Objects, Sources and Materials**

The significant participation of Jews in medieval European daily life culture is common knowledge in modern Jewish Studies. We know that Jews used the same objects as Christians did – they wore the same clothes and the same jewelry, used the same dishes and lived in the same houses with the same furnishings and equipment. Scholars therefore are speaking of the shared culture of both groups. But in general it is assumed that most of these objects were made by Christian craftspeople, organized in guilds. However, the existence of Jewish craftspeople should be taken into consideration too. Yet, this field has not yet been adequately studied. Sources providing evidence of medieval Jewish craftspeople are rather scarce at first glance, especially in Northern Europe. In the Mediterranean, most regions with Jewish populations have a much broader base of sources.

We can find Jews in medieval Europe working as turners, dyers, window makers, weavers, goldsmiths, armourers, dicers, belt makers, glaziers, painters, playing card makers, bricklayers, needle makers, tailors, watchmakers and mouse trap makers – to mention only a few. Specialist activities are listed, such as engineers, sewerage experts, siege specialists, well builders or mining specialists. We also have evidence of Jewish women who worked as cheese makers, writers, copyists and playing card makers.

A number of questions arise from these simple references, for example: What were the professions that were most frequently chosen by Jews – and why? For whom were the goods produced? Did Jews only work for their own household, or at least for their own community, or did they have the opportunity to produce for the open market? How did Jewish and Christian craftspeople organize, especially regarding the dominant Christian guilds? Did Christian and Jewish craftspeople work together in workshops? How did Jewish craftspeople receive their apprenticeship? What about Jewish craftswomen? How did all these aspects differ, and how did they change from region to region and from period to period over the course of the Middle Ages?

In order to answer these questions, an interdisciplinary approach is necessary. Apart from classical sources such as charters, city books, court records and normative sources, rabbinic





legal opinions can also be consulted, as well as visual sources from illuminated Hebrew manuscripts, texts of Hebrew epitaphs and archaeological evidence. We are therefore organizing an international, interdisciplinary research workshop and welcome paper proposals from all fields that discuss Jewish craftspeople in the Middle Ages, their objects, sources, and materials.

The workshop will take place at Tel Aviv University. All lectures will be delivered in English, and a volume of the conference proceedings will subsequently be published in English.

Scholars who wish to present papers are invited to submit proposals to the steering committee (see address below) by **October 15, 2019**. Proposals should be written in English and include:

- Full name and academic title
- Academic affiliation
- Contact details
- Short CV
- Title and abstract of proposed lecture

We look forward to receiving your applications, and the steering committee will inform you of its decision in the weeks following the deadline.

Please send your submissions electronically to: [adip@tauex.tau.ac.il](mailto:adip@tauex.tau.ac.il)

#### Academic Steering Committee:

Simha Goldin, The Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center, Tel Aviv University  
Joseph Isaac Lifshitz, The Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center, Tel Aviv University  
Maria Stürzebecher, Jüdisches Leben Erfurt, UNESCO World Heritage Coordinator  
Andreas Lehnertz, ERC Project "Beyond the Elite – Jewish Daily Life in Medieval Europe",  
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

