

The CEU Jewish Studies Program, while being obliged to discontinue its Public Lecture Series during the present health crisis, is pleased to offer to its students, members, and friends two online sessions with a distinguished guest lecturer.

For access information, please contact [wilkec@ceu.edu](mailto:wilkec@ceu.edu)

## ***Jewish Survival and Revival in Early Modern Times***

An online lecture and a reading session by

**David B. Ruderman**

(University of Pennsylvania)



**Thursday, May 14, 5 p.m., lecture**

***The Jews in the Renaissance: Humanists and Kabbalists***

In his lecture, David Ruderman will invite students to explore the Jewish thought of Renaissance Italy in its diversity. Jewish and Christian intellectuals interacted intensely and developed a multi-lingual learned culture. The mutual fascination with

each other will be exemplified by three colorful personalities: Pico della Mirandola, the Humanist who invented Christian Kabbalah; Judah Messer Leon, a rabbi, physician and writer who developed a personal form of Hebrew Humanism; and Abraham Yagel, a kabbalist who expressed himself in the style of Catholic catechisms and undertook, like Dante, a literary journey to the afterlife. Italian Jewish literature amazes by its readiness to switch codes and multiply cultural loyalties.

David B. Ruderman, "The Italian Renaissance and Jewish Thought," in Albert Rabil, Jr., ed., *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), 382-433.

Judah Messer Leon, *The Book of the Honeycomb's Flow*, ed. and tr. Isaac Rabinowitz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 143, 145, 147.

## **Tuesday, May 26, 5 p.m., reading session**

### ***Historical Thought and the Strategies of Jewish Survival***

Expelled from Spain in 1492, the historian Solomon Ibn Verga wrote a moving chronicle of Jewish history, in which he meditates on the reasons for the cataclysm of medieval Jewry. Rather than interrogating the decrees of divine providence, he surprisingly turns to questions of political power and social conflict. In 1638, a rabbi of the ghetto of Venice, Simone Luzzatto, proposed a philosophical and political reading of the Jewish condition within the republic. Reading original texts of both authors in English translations, we will discover two creative moments of skeptical lucidity in Jewish historical thought. David Ruderman and Carsten Wilke (CEU History/Medieval Studies) will present the authors and animate the discussion.

Solomon Ibn Verga, *Shevet Yehudah*, extracts in: *Ideas of Jewish History*, ed. Michael A. Meyer (New York: Behrman House, 1974), 112-114.

Simone Luzzatto, *Discourse on the State of the Jews*, ed. and trad. Giuseppe Veltri and Anna Lissa (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), chapter 16.

**David B. Ruderman** is the Joseph Meyerhoff Professor of Modern Jewish History at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. During twenty years, from 1994 to 2014, he directed at UPenn the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies and turned it into the most influential academic think tank in his discipline. As a historian of early modern Jewish culture, he is the author of numerous books, among which *The World of a Renaissance Jew* (1981) and *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (2010) both won the National Jewish Book Award in History. His latest monograph has just come off the press: *Missionaries, Converts, and Rabbis: The Evangelical Alexander McCaul and Jewish-Christian Debate in the Nineteenth Century* (2020).