

## PREFACE

For many years, the Judaica Collection of the Yale University Library in New Haven, Connecticut in the USA has been acquiring manuscripts and documents which were written in the four countries of the Maghreb (much of the material is from Morocco). Most of the documents are written in Hebrew or in the Maghrebian Judeo-Arabic dialects; a minority are in literary Arabic, Spanish or French. In the summer of 2008, I was asked by Dr. Nanette Stahl, curator of Yale's Judaica Collection, to appraise the collection's manuscripts and documents of North African provenance. After having expressed my opinion, I was approached by the heads of the Program in Judaic Studies at Yale University—initially by Prof. Christine Hayes and afterwards by Prof. Steven D. Fraade—who requested that I thoroughly examine the manuscripts and documents and classify them in order to catalogue these materials. I began working on this project in a series of visits to the library since May 2009.

After my first two visits, I recommended to Prof. Fraade that the materials be made available to researchers of North African Jewry. I suggested that a research workshop be held which would include scholars experienced in reading manuscripts. It was decided to arrange a workshop in which twelve scholars from Israel, the United States, Morocco and France would participate. One day of the workshop's eight days would be dedicated to a symposium.

The workshop, which was held on April 21–28, 2010, provided an exhilarating scientific experience of the highest order for the participants. The twelve researchers worked together on manuscripts from the Yale Judaica Collection. The participants held discussions while deciphering the manuscripts and learning their content. Some researchers focused on one specific manuscript—usually a large, comprehensive one. Others worked on a number of documents in order to be able to resume the

research after their return to their home countries. The symposium was held on April 25 and was opened by Prof. Fraade and myself with an introductory lecture. Afterwards, all of the participants in the workshop lectured on topics that had been researched before their arrival at Yale. The symposium was open to the public and the lectures were attended by many people, including people who came from afar in order to attend.

I wish to note with great satisfaction that Prof. Fraade agreed to my suggestion to publish the lectures delivered at the symposium, as well as the initial studies by the participants in the workshop based on their research at Yale. The English volume presents eleven studies and the Hebrew volume presents eight studies. The volumes were submitted for publication at the close of 2010. All of the funding was provided by the Program in Judaic Studies at Yale University. Yale has thus become the first institution in the United States to place research into Jewry in the Maghreb in an important position. The academic auspices for these volumes are provided by the Program in Judaic Studies at Yale University in cooperation with the Center for the Study of Jewish Languages and Literatures of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I had the pleasure of founding this center over twenty-six years ago and since my retirement the center has been headed by Dr. Ofra Tirosh-Becker.

I wish to express my gratitude to the Program in Judaic Studies at Yale University and to its chairman, my friend and colleague Prof. Steven Fraade. I thank him for being a true partner in editing these two volumes and especially for including research into North African Jewry in Yale University's program of study. I also wish to thank Dr. Nanette Stahl, curator of the Judaica Collection at the Yale University Library, and her assistant, Julie Cohen, who organized the workshop together with me, and who were both available to the participants during the course of the workshop and afterwards. Nanette also organized a special artistic evening à la Maghreb and hosted the participants in her home. Special thanks to Renee Reed, administrative coordinator of the Program in Judaic Studies at Yale University for her devotion in organizing the arrival of the participants to New Haven and for dealing with all of the technical aspects of the symposium. She also facilitated the production of

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these two volumes through her contact with all those who took part in them.

I wish to thank all of the scholars who participated in this workshop and in the symposium and to all who submitted articles for the two volumes, and for their cooperation with the copyeditors. Thanks to Ofra Tirosh-Becker for her assistance to me and to the copyeditors by coordinating the contacts between the researchers. I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to Dr. David Prebor, who wrote the English Indexes and to Ruth Stern, who wrote the Hebrew ones, and to Shirley Zauer, copyeditor of the English volume, and to Smadar Cohen, copyeditor of the Hebrew volume, for their excellent work and for their cooperation with the authors and with me. I wish to thank Liza Mohar and Sol Cohen of the Publishing Section of the Academy of the Hebrew Language for their devoted work on the production of both volumes. Thanks to Hai Sabar, the general manager of Magnes Press, for accepting the book for distribution.

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Moshe Bar-Asher

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