

small utensils and portions, and took place in the boys' homes on the Thursday night before the Sabbath of *Parashat Yitro*. These festivities were based on one of two main models, which are described and analyzed here. The holiday's origins are unknown, but several standard narratives suggest that it arose in the 19th century. Through a combination of ethnographic interviews and historical exploration, the authors suggest how the festival arose and interpret the meanings it accrued. As it spread to various places in Tunisia, different emphases appeared. In Jerba, it became common to celebrate it in the synagogue while elements of literacy and textual understanding were underlined. The analysis of the evolution of the festival is followed by a case-study of the interaction of popular and text-based Jewish culture.

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This article reveals the criticism of Muslim culture and its conventions, and discusses the modes of expression as another aspect of this book's satirical modus.

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Ibn Gabirol's poem "*Be-shuri ha-aliyya*" describes in the first-person an erotic-mystical experience of love-making with a figure called "*ha-aliyya*". This experience is followed by a fall from sheer bliss into the abyss of depression. The article explores the various meanings of "*aliyya*" (e.g. Divine Wisdom; the philosophical effort to ascend thereof; heaven) via poetic and philosophical texts by Ibn Gabirol (*The Kingly Crown*, *The Fountain of Life*), as well as by other intertexts which might have been present in the poet's imagination and part of his scholarly knowledge. Such possible intertexts are: biblical topoi (the beloved from Canticles, 'the strange woman' and *Hokhma* from Proverbs); Wisdom in post-biblical literature and in Jewish mysticism (as well as Sophia in Christian gnostics); the talmudic passages about the "four who entered the *pardes*", as well as the *Theology of Aristotle*.

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Seudat Yitro was a festival celebrated by Jews in Tunisia, particularly in the city of Tunis. It entailed a festive meal for young boys beginning their Torah study, with a special aesthetic featuring

In This Issue

This issue of Peamin deals mainly with Medieval Hebrew poetry. The first article is by Uriah Kfir who discusses the rise of the cultural and literary center of Spanish Jewry. This center emerged in the mid 10th century from the Babylonian center, but also in reaction to it. This paper focuses on the role of the poetry of Samuel Hanagid and Solomon Ibn Gabirol in the 11th century in defining the local identity of the Spanish Jewish collective and establishing its predominance in the medieval Jewish world.

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Based on the identification of a marginal note in a liturgical manuscript from Corfu, Peter Lehnardt's article presents the developments in the representations of the concluding procession of the High Priest on Yom Kippur from the earliest sources up until Shelomo Ibn Verga's *Shevet Yehuda*. This discussion demonstrates the growing importance of the people of Israel's aspiration for honor in Jewish sources from Christian Europe, especially the Iberian Peninsula.

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In *The Book of Tahkemoni* al-Harizi criticised representative values of the Arabic ethos, condemned Muslims' attitudes towards Jews, and even pronounced the superiority of Judaism over Islam. These nationalistic themes were unconventional in medieval Hebrew literature being written in the Muslim world at the time.

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Poetry

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