A Shazar Center Research Fellow Program – 2027

Maritime Connections: New Perspectives on Jews across the Indian Ocean

Israel, January 11-14, 2027

As part of Zalman Shazar Center's continuing support of scholarship on Jewish history, and following the successful international conference in New Delhi (in cooperation with the E'ele BeTamar Association and the Centre for Israel Studies at O.P. Jindal Global University), we have initiated an international workshop in Israel to support young scholars who are researching these topics.

Background & Research Topics

The "Oceanic Turn" in global historiography has fundamentally redefined how we understand historical networks, moving away from land-centric boundaries to view oceans as dynamic channels of communication, commerce, and cultural exchange. While the Indian Ocean world has long been recognized as a vibrant crossroads linking East Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, mainstream Jewish historical narratives have traditionally favored a Eurocentric focus. This workshop deliberately shifts the analytical lens eastward to address this gap in maritime Asian Jewish historiography.

Building on the pioneering research presented at the international conference in New Delhi, this concentrated workshop serves as an intensive incubator for up to ten selected early-career scholars who are either completing their doctoral dissertations or pursuing postdoctoral research. The program is structured to transition these scholars into focused high-quality research and ultimately publications.

Rather than viewing these far-flung communities as isolated outposts, the workshop approaches them as interconnected nodes within a vast maritime web. Over the course of four intensive days, the cohort will critically examine the operational logistics, religious authority, and social dynamics of these communities through four core thematic pillars:

- **Historical Evolution and Movement:** Tracing the shifting migration patterns, settlements, and cross-cultural adaptations along the littoral zones from Medieval Times to the modern era.

- **Trade and Commerce:** Evaluating the tangible economic contributions of Jewish merchants, their strategic utilization of port geography, and their integration into global commodity markets.
- **Cultural and Religious Interactions:** Analyzing how Jewish traditions were simultaneously preserved and synthetically blended with local cultures, as reflected in regional literature, art, and synagogue architecture.
- **Diasporic Networks & Knowledge Exchanges:** Mapping the intellectual, legal, and spiritual ties—such as the transmission of *responsa, trade letters* and printing networks—that connected Indian Ocean communities to the broader hubs of the Middle East, Europe, and Central Asia.

Through a rigorous combination of thematic lectures with leading researchers in the field, peer-reviewed participant presentations, primary source text workshops, and material culture field studies, this program provides the interdisciplinary collaboration necessary to provide the scholars with a jumpstart to their future careers focusing on Jewish history.

Program Objectives:

- **Building a Research Community:** The primary goal of the program is to create a dynamic and supportive international community for early-career researchers focusing on the study of the history of Jewish connections in the Indian Occean. The program places a special emphasis on interdisciplinary discourse, mutual fertilization, and juxtaposing theories with empirical case studies from the field.
- **Deepening Knowledge and Advancing the Study** of Jewish communities around the Indian Ocean.
- **An Academic Contribution** to the Oceanic Turn calling for the examination of history through the lens of the non-European historical communities, and to illuminate their contribution to their environment and the Jewish historical story.
- **Encouraging the Writing** of academic articles addressing the research questions that will be discussed in the workshop.

Program Details: The program will consist of A 4-Day Concentrated Research Workshop for up to 10 international Fellows at the Sde Boker Campus in Israel's Negev desert. The sessions will serve to present leading research in the field through

guest lectures and workshops, discussions, presentations of the fellows' own research and field trips.

- Workshop dates: **January 11-14, 2027**.

- All accommodation and meals during the workshop are covered by the Shazar Center.
- Workshop language: English
- Participating fellows will receive a $1000 stipend.
- International flights and any additional stay in Israel are the responsibility of the fellows, as well as health insurance.

Program requirements

• Full participation in the workshop, including lectures, discussions and field trips.
• Active participation in discussions and presentation of one research topic during the workshop meetings.
• Additional scholarships will be awarded to the group's participants who will publish academic articles in peer-reviewed journals.

Application

Doctoral students (with an approved research proposal) and postdoctoral fellows from all academic institutions may apply. We encourage the submission of research topics from various disciplines (history, archaeology, historical geography, sociology, culture, etc.), provided that there is an affinity between the researchers, their work, and the themes addressed by the research group. Candidates will be selected by a professional committee that will examine their suitability for the program.

Candidates must submit:

1. Summary of your current research and academic interests (one page)

2. A cover letter explaining the connection of your research to the workshop topics (one page).

3. A resume.

4. Rrecommendation letters (optional).

Proposals should be sent **here** by **01.11.2026**.

Questions can be sent to: aaron@shazar.org.il

Workshop moderators: Dr. Menashe Anzi & Dr. Khinvraj Jangid.