



Universität Hamburg
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ספקנות
Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies
JEWISH SCEPTICISM

Self-Questioning Her Own Membership: Doubts, Gender, and Religion in the Roman Ghetto (Sixteenth to Eighteenth Century)

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LECTURE SERIES
**FEMINISM AND
SCEPTICISM**

**Tuesday 21 June 2022
18:00**

Hybrid (MCAS/Online)

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The history of women in the ghettos of early modern Italy traditionally revolves around two axes: on the one hand, the exceptional biographies of educated and powerful women (Gracia Nasi, Deborah Ascarelli, Sara Copio Sullam, and so on); on the other, micro-historical analyses of social and economic history (dowry, marriage, work, conversion), which rarely explore the wider culture of “normal” women. This paper aims to test a research (and interpretative) methodology that could overcome this gap and to begin to address issues about the identity and religious tools available to ghetto women. Central to this is the case of the Roman ghetto and the production of documents in Hebrew by and concerning women. The internal registers of Jewish institutions and the dedications on *Judaica* that Jewish women donated to their synagogues will offer two key sources for this investigation. As is well known, they are mainly written in Hebrew and Italian, with frequent entries in Latin and sometimes in other languages. The decision to write a document in a particular language is not neutral and responds to precise juridical needs (and therefore to the validity of the document in cases of litigation) and also to identitary requirements. What was written in Hebrew and why? And in Italian? How were words and names translated from one language into another? What was always considered untranslatable? How important were the choices of the individual authors? What motivated them? How did this change in cases where women were concerned, and how did it affect them? And finally, what did women understand of such documentation, and how did they act on it?

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