

Meet The Meforshim

RABBI YEHUDAH HALEVI (c.1075-1141)

- I. Rabbi Yehudah (ben Shmuel) HaLevi
 - a) Born Tudela (or Toledo), Spain, before 1075, to family of high standing
 - b) Practiced as a physician, also business interests
 - c) He may have studied under Rif (R. Yizhak al-Fasi d. 1103) and was an associate of Ri Migash (R. Yosef ibn Migash, d. 1141) in Lucena, Andalucia
 - d) Daughter, grandson; question of son in law (Yizhak ben Avraham ibn Ezra?)
- II. Poet
 - a) Travels in Andalucia, sojourn in Granada with Moshe Ibn Ezra
 - b) Poems on friendship, love, wine, the good life
 - c) Religious awaking?
 - d) Religious poetry:
 1. *Yom Shabbaton (Zemirot Shabbat)*
 2. *Tzion Halo Tishali le-Shelom Asira'ikh?* (for 9 Av)
 3. Religious poems, found in liturgy throughout in the Jewish world, as far away as India.
 - e) Remembered as the greatest of the Hebrew poets of the Golden Age of Hispano-Jewish Culture
- III. Religious Philosopher: *Kuzari: In Defence of the Despised Faith*
 - a) Background (inspired by the story of Bulan, Khazar King [9th c])
 - b) General observations
 - c) Selections
 1. Truth of the Torah (Revelation experienced by millions) (1:80-89)
 2. Revealed Faith superior to Demonstrated Faith (2:26)
 3. Fast and Feast (2:50)
 4. Centrality of Eretz Yisrael (2:23-24)
- IV. End of his life: Journey to Eretz Yisrael
 - a) The evidence: Arrived Alexandria, Egypt, 8 September 1140; left for Israel 14 May 1141?
 - b) The legend
- V. Influence and legacy of Yehudah HaLevi