

Prof. Meir Michael Bar-Asher – A short bio – June 2024

Meir Michael Bar-Asher is a professor in the Department of Arabic Language and Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He is an incumbent of the Max Schloessinger Chair for the Study of Islam and three years ago was appointed as the incumbent of the Chair for Baha'i Studies at the Hebrew University.

Meir was born in 1955 in al-Rashida in south-eastern Morocco. He went to the P. Himmelfarb high school in Jerusalem, did his military service in the years 1973-1976 and served in the Reserves for about thirty years.

He began his academic studies at the Hebrew University in 1976, studying for his first degree in the Department of Arabic Language and Literature and the Department of Jewish Thought; he did his graduate studies in the department of Arabic language and literature specializing in Muslim philosophy. His MA thesis, under the supervision of Prof. Shlomo Pines, dealt with the ethical writings of the renowned philosopher and physician Abu Bakr al-Razi. In preparation for his doctoral studies he enrolled in 1982 in the postgraduate programme at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris. His doctoral thesis in the field of Shi'i Qur'an exegesis was carried out under the supervision of Prof. Etan Kohlberg, and was awarded *summa cum laude*.

Meir's research focuses on three main areas: the Qur'an and its exegesis, mainly within Shi'i Islam; heterodox Shi'ism (particularly the Nusayri-Alawi religion); the mutual relations between Islam and Judaism. In the field of Qur'an exegesis, he published the monograph *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imami Shiism*, which is considered a pathbreaking study in the field, as well as numerous articles in scholarly journals and entries in encyclopaedias. In the field of the Nusayri-Alawi religion, he published three books and a series of articles (some jointly with his colleague Prof. Aryeh Kofsky). As for the third area – the interrelationship between Islam and Judaism – his book *Les juifs dans le Coran* was published in 2019. The book received extensive scholarly and media coverage in France and other countries and has since been translated into English and Italian.

In 2001, 2012 and 2018, Meir was invited as a visiting professor at the École Pratique des Hautes Études. In 1995 and 2003 he was a research fellow at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies and began working on the relationship between Islam and Judaism. Over the years, he has been invited to lecture on this topic in seminars at many universities and other institutions, mainly in Europe.

Meir is co-editor of the journal *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*. He previously served as the editor of the journal *Sefunot (Studies and Sources on the History of Jewish Communities in the East)* and is a member of the editorial boards of several journals in Israel and abroad.

For his book *Jews and the Qur'an*, Meir won in 2022 the outstanding book award for the year on behalf of the Association of American Publishers in the Theology and Religious Studies category

In June 2022, the University of Lausanne in Switzerland awarded Prof. Bar-Asher a doctorate honoris causa for his contribution to Qur'anic studies.