

# FRIENDSHIP AND INTERFAITH ENGAGEMENT

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# FRIENDSHIP

**A powerful tool for forging connections, fostering receptiveness and nurturing understanding**



*Ambivalence*

**Friendship as a subtle snare when instrumentalized as a vehicle for enticing, attracting or propagating one's convictions, aiming at conversion or proselytism**

**Friendship as an effort to overcome difference by finding what we have in common**

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**Friendship as an effort to overcome difference by finding what we have in common**

***Friendship as the openness to the **DIFFERENCE** to acknowledge, respect and learn about differences***

# HOW CAN WE APPLY SUCH A CONCEPTION OF GENUINE FRIENDSHIP TO INTERFAITH ENGAGEMENT?

## Three Key Concepts

1. **Hebraism**
2. ***Convivencia***
3. **Encounters**

# ARISTOTLE, NICOMACHEAN ETHICS, VIII, 3, 1156A5-1157A1

There are therefore three kinds of friendship (...)

those who love each other for their utility do not love each other for themselves but in virtue of some good which they get from each other.

So too with those who love for the sake of pleasure; it is not for their character that men love ready-witted people, but because they find them pleasant. Therefore, those who love for the sake of utility love for the sake of what is good for themselves, and those who love for the sake of pleasure do so for the sake of what is pleasant to themselves, and not in so far as the other is the person loved but in so far as he is useful or pleasant. And thus, these friendships are only incidental; for it is not as being the man he is that the loved person is loved, but as providing some good or pleasure. Such friendships, then, are easily dissolved, if the parties do not remain like themselves; for if the one party is no longer pleasant or useful the other ceases to love him.

# ARISTOTLE, NICOMACHEAN ETHICS, VIII, 3, 1156A5-1157A1

Perfect friendship is the friendship of men who are good, and alike in virtue; for these wish well alike to each other good, and they are good themselves. Now those who wish well to their friends for their sake are most truly friends; for they do this by reason of own nature and not incidentally; therefore, their friendship lasts if they are good-and goodness is an enduring thing. (...) And, such a friendship is as might be expected permanent, since there meet in it all the qualities that friends should have.

↔ but to a friend we say we ought to wish what is good for **his sake**

# HEBRAISM

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Within the realm of interfaith engagement, embracing the concept of Friendship, as delineated by Aristotle, calls for a **profound receptivity to the Other through their unique linguistic and cultural expressions.**

- Actively seeking to understand and appreciate the religious and cultural language of the Other;
- Delving into their scriptures, rituals, and traditions with genuine curiosity and respect;
- Cultivating a sense of acquaintance that transcends mere tolerance, forging deeper and more meaningful connections across religious boundaries.



# HEBRAISM

- Case Study 1: The Victorine Christian Hebraism



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## Roger Bacon on Andrew of Saint-Victor:

“We should go back to the original Hebrew text, and if Andrew is right, we should believe the Hebrew, not him. But we have to commend him greatly for pointing us to many dubious spots in our translation (...), and he refers us to the Hebrew, so that we may search for explanations with greater certainty as the roots”.

# HEBRAISM

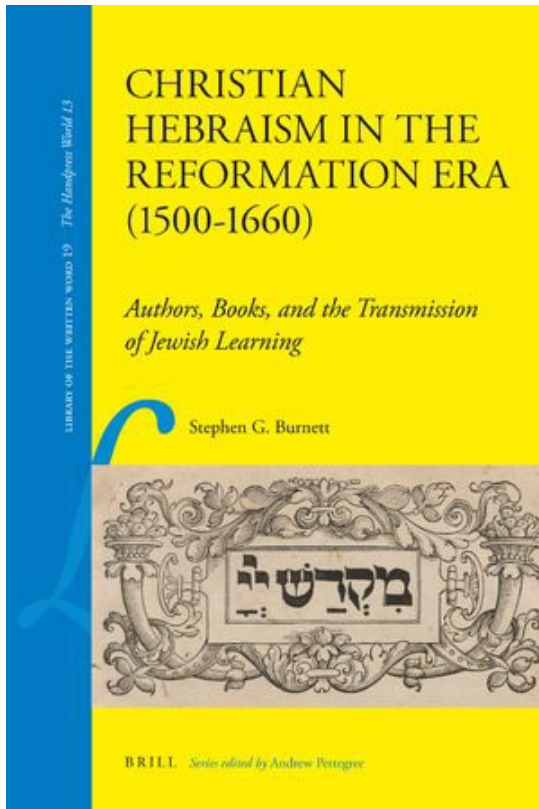
- Case Study 2: Nicholas of Lyra (1270-1349) and Polemicist Hebraism

**“Despite his knowledge of Hebrew, undoubtedly impressive, he too required the assistance of persons with a Jewish background. Only in modern times would there be Christian Hebraists who, with their easier access to a broad variety of Jewish texts, would develop an independent ability to read and understand them.”**

*-Ari Geiger*

# HEBRAISM

- Case Study: Renaissance Hebraism



AVTORE SEBAST. MVNST.		
Saltabo	אֶחָדָּבֶר	אֵיךְ ווִיל שְׁפִירִיגֵן
Pustula	בַּעֲבֵחַ	וויג בלוטרן
Habitatio	דִּירָח	וואנונג
Siccasti	הוֹבֶשֶׁת	דו הוישט גטרוקנט
Et fremuit	וַיִּנְחֹם	אונר ער ברומט
Silex	חֶצֶץ	קויל שטיין
Oblinierunt	טוּחוּ	זי חון ורקלויבט
Cogitatio ei	יָצְרוּ	זיין גראנקן
Proiecit	יָרָח	ער חוט גווארפֿן
Cantabit	יִשִּׁיר	ער ווירט זינגן
Amicitia	יְרִידוֹת	ורונטשאפט
Combussit	בָּחַ	ער הוט ורברנט
Camera	לִשְׁבָּח	קאמור
Rectificat	מוֹשִׁיר	גרעבט ווירטיגט
Illuminavit	נָגַח	ער חוט ערלויבט
Percussus est	הִכָּה	ער אישט גשלאגן
Auxit	פָּשַׁח	ער חוט גמירט
Innodat est	קָשׁוּר	אישט גקנופפט
Dñatus es	רָוּחַ	דו הוישט גווילטיגט ררוח
Captiuauit	שְׁבִיתִי	איר חון גבאנגן
Hæc causa exempli sufficient.		

# HEBRAISM

Hebraism aimed to promote learning while preserving the Hebrew language **but** did not **extend such preservation to the Jews themselves.**

# *CONVIVENCIA*

- **Sharing friendship through harmonious coexistence.**
- **It refers to the historical epoch in medieval Spain when Christians, Muslims, and Jews coexisted, occasionally harmoniously, fostering a rich cultural and intellectual exchange.**

# ENCOUNTERS

- Effort to engage with the *Other*
- There has been an increasing emphasis on terms like “confluence”, “dialogue”, “encounter” “interaction” and “interchange” to underline the more positive aspects of Jewish-Christian relationships. This shift aims to correct the overly bleak perception of Europe as a persecuting society.

# ENCOUNTERS

Look what happens when a congregation [of Jews] gathers to hear words of Torah from a sage. Slumber weighs upon the eyes of the officers, others converse about trivial affairs. The preacher is dumbfounded by the talking of men and the chattering of women standing behind the synagogue. If he should reproach them because of their behavior, they continue to sin, behaving corruptly, abominably. This is the opposite of the Christians. When their men and women gather to hear a preacher, they stand together in absolute silence, marveling at his rebuke; not one of them dozes. As he pours out his words upon them. They await him as they do the rain, eager for the waters of his counsel. **We have not learned properly from those around us.**

Schlomo Alami, **אגרת מוסר**, ed. Habermann  
(*Iggeret Musar*, c. 1415)



# CONCLUSION

Considering “Disinterested Friendship”  
in Interfaith Engagement