27.08.2020

The Martin Buber Society of Fellows in the Humanities and Social Sciences

The Hebrew University

Jerusalem

To whom it may concern,

It is my great pleasure to write in support of Niran Garshtein’s candidacy for the Martin Buber Society of Fellows. Niran is an exceptional young scholar who has been writing his Ph.D. dissertation, “Astronomy and Astrology in the 13th-century Hebrew Encyclopedias,” under my supervision in the Department of Jewish Thought at Bar-Ilan University. Niran wrote his M.A. thesis under my guidance, participated in many of my academic seminars, and regularly consults with me on drafts of his Hebrew and English articles. These interactions have afforded me a thorough acquaintance with Niran’s outstanding academic capabilities, his high potential, and his friendly personality, all of which are detailed below.

Niran received his B.A. and M.A. degrees with highest honors, and I anticipate that he will complete his doctorate with highest honors as well. During his studies he has received several awards and scholarships, including the Nathan Rotenstreich Fellowship, the Bar-Ilan University President’s Scholarship, and the Rector’s award for excellence (three times), among other honors. It is not just these accomplishments that define Niran’s exceptional skills and great potential, but most notably his original research, which has already aroused interest among the scholarly community. For instance, in 2021 Niran will be hosted as a research fellow at Dag Nikolaus Hasse’s highly-esteemed *Ptolemaeus Arabus et Latins* in Munich. His excellent academic capabilities are also reflected in the fact that his forthcoming article, “The Mechanism of General Providence in the Astronomical-Astrological Section of Levi ben Abraham’s *Livyat Ḥen*,” has been accepted for publication in the prestigious journal *Aleph: Historical Studies in Science and Judaism*. Further evidence for his exceptional academic abilities is his outstanding dissertation, which presents many new discoveries and casts new light on the astronomical and astrological knowledge contained in five influential works written in the 13th-century. I can say with certainty that any future research dealing with the emergence of the medieval Hebrew encyclopedias of science will necessarily have to address Niran’s dissertation.

Niran proposes to produce a first complete critical edition of Gersonides’ *Astronomy*. The implementation of such a project will constitute a tremendous contribution to the scholarly world, and will undoubtedly advance our knowledge in various fields of study. Since, in the course of his research, Niran has acquired a variety of requisite tools for this kind of project, he is certainty the perfect candidate for this work. First, as demonstrated in his M.A. thesis on Abraham Bar Ḥiyya’s mathematical algorithms and astronomical tables, Niran is highly qualified in the fields of mathematical astronomy and spherical trigonometry, which are requisite knowledge for understanding and analyzing Gersonides’ complex models. Second, Niran is highly familiar with the astronomical and astrological literature of the 12th and 13th centuries, which were used as source material in Gersonides’ astronomical project. In addition, he has knowledge of Arabic and Latin. Finally, Niran has considerable prior experience editing medieval astronomical texts, as reflected in his dissertation and published articles (e.g., in his paper on the astronomical tables attributed to Abraham ibn Ezra).

In addition to his excellent professional skills, Niran is very pleasant and friendly as a colleague. He is intellectually independent, self-motivated, always curious, and highly diligent. He is open-minded and cooperative; he knows how to seek out advice from more experienced scholars and is open to feedback; he always respects others’ opinions, and he willingly shares his own thoughts and insights. His excellent interpersonal skills make him highly suitable for a program consisting of young researchers, with whom he would certainly engage in a fruitful exchange of ideas and insights. Particularly noteworthy is Niran’s devotion to the advancement of knowledge, as he always prefers working on materials that have the potential to advance the state of research.

Accordingly, I am completely confident that Niran is the ideal candidate for the prestigious Martin Buber Society of Fellows. I am certain that Niran will contribute significantly to the success of the program and the advancement of its fellows. I am similarly sure that the program will contribute greatly to his development as a young and promising scholar. Based on the foregoing information, I wholeheartedly and warmly recommend Niran Garshtein for acceptance to the Martin Buber Society of Fellows.

Sincerely,