Proposal for PEHSAT-Conference 2022:

Jewish Scholarship, Arabic Heritage and Christian Culture: The Study of Philosophy and Science among Jews in 14th- and Early 15th-Century Provence and the Development of the Hebrew Language

The Astronomical Vocabulary of\in *Sha‘ar ha-Shamayim*: An Eclectic Composition and the Distinct\Varied Hebrew Terminologies of its Sources

by

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The Provençal Jewish scholar, Gershom ben Solomon, is responsible for the composition of one of the most popular Hebrew encyclopedias written in the Middle Ages, *Sha‘ar ha-Shamayim*. In its introduction, Gershom states that in compiling his work he drew not only on Hebrew literary sources, but also on knowledge he gained through conversations with Jewish and non-Jewish scholars. Gershom’s extensive usage of Judeo-Provençal words indicates that he, indeed, purchased knowledge through oral communication. However, the astronomical section of his work is completely based upon\on literary sources, which are all Hebrew.

My lecture will focus on the astronomical section of *Sha‘ar ha-Shamayim* and its Hebrew astronomical vocabulary. As I will show, this eclectic section consists of literally quotations from ten different sources, which do not always use the same technical vocabulary. How did Gershom deal with the varied Hebrew terminologies found in his sources? Did he seek to create a terminological standardization in his work, i.e., to attribute one specific *significant* to one *signifié* and *vice versa*? I will show that in most cases Gershom adopted the terms [he] found in his sources, [and by doing so,] engendering terminological inconsistency. However, in some specific cases, Gershom did replace the terms found in his sources with alternative ones. I will explain what triggered Gershom to be so active only in specific passages, and what did he try to achieve in altering one term with\into another?

Concluding my lecture, I will highlight the importance of examining works written by Jews who exclusively derived their knowledge from the material produced by the Hebrew translation movement. I will argue that these examinations provide us with the opportunity to see how the scientific knowledge comprising that corpus was received, interpreted, used, and disseminated by their first readers.