



Engaging with a Legacy: Nehemia Levtzion (1935-2003)

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Engaging with a Legacy shows how Nehemia Levtzion shaped our understanding of Islam in Africa and influenced successive scholarly generations in their approach to Islamization, conversion and fundamentalism. The book illuminates his work, career and family life – including his own 'life vision' on the occasion of his 60th birthday. It speaks to his relationship with researchers at home and abroad as mentor, colleague and provocateur; in one section, several authors reflect on those dynamics in terms of personal and professional development. Levtzion's contemporaries also speak of interactions with him (and his life-long companion, wife Tirza) in the 1950s and 1960s; we see in these writings the birth of West African historical studies. Levtzion's arrival as Israeli graduate-student in Nkrumah's Egyptian-leaning Ghana, and the debate over what 'African Studies' should mean in an environment that included the personal intervention of W.E.B. Du Bois, are stories told for the first time. Most poignant is the account of Levtzion's commitment to building African Studies, complete with emphasis on Islam, in the heart of the Jewish state at The Hebrew University. His never-ending defence of the program reflected his determination to be both 'engaged historian' and 'engaged Israeli' – a legacy he chose for himself. Finally, an 'Epilogue' to the original publication shows how one aspect this legacy, Levtzion's growing preoccupation with the 'public sphere in Muslim societies', has become even more relevant in 'post-Arab Spring' Africa and the Middle East.

This book was published as a special issue of the Canadian Journal of African Studies.



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