

[Obituary: Prof. Gérard Nahon](#)

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H-Judaic is greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Prof. Gérard Nahon (1931-2018), one of France's premier scholars of Judaica, and an internationally known expert on Medieval Jewish Studies and Sephardic history. Prof. Nahon singlehandedly raised the status of Jewish Studies in France, edited *Revue des études juives*, and published myriad works, listed in the French Wikipedia article concerning his life (https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/G%C3%A9rard_Nahon). The Encyclopedia Judaica (2nd ed) article concerning Nahon and his immense contribution reads as follows:

NAHON, GERARD (1931-), Jewish scholar and historian. Nahon was born in Paris to a family that came from Algeria in the 1920s and took refuge in Pau during the war. He studied philosophy, history, and Hebrew at the Sorbonne, the Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales (INALCO), and the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (EPHE). After working as an educator for the Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants, and as a high school history teacher, he was appointed in 1965 to the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, where he developed a research unit devoted to French Jewish history, "Nouvelle Gallia Judaica," which he directed until 1992. In 1977 he becomes directeur d'études at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, section des Sciences religieuses, where he held the chair of medieval and modern Jewish history until 2000. He also taught Jewish history at the Séminaire israélite de France, at the INALCO, and at the University of Brussels. A former curator of the Archives of the Consistoire de Paris and president of the Société des études juives, he served from 1980 to 1996 as editor of the *Revue des études juives*. A student of [Georges Vajda](#) and [I.S. Revah](#), and an indefatigable archive researcher, he devoted a large part of his studies to the scholarly edition of sources and documents and trained numerous students in this rigorous craft.

Chronologically, his research and publications cover extensive ground with a clear focus on two distinct areas, French medieval Jewry and early modern Sephardi history, and revolve around a few recurrent themes. He did research on the history of rabbinical literature, institutions, and personae. Through the study and publication of wills and epitaphs Nahon contributed to the historiographical emergence of the issue of death in Jewish studies. The bulk of his work focuses on the Sephardi Diaspora, particularly on the Portuguese nations of southwestern France, Bayonne, Bordeaux as well as the lesser communities. Through works on the relations between the Portuguese nations of Western Europe and their links to the Holy Land, he promoted the investigation of intercommunal links within the early modern Jewish world. Finally, he devoted several studies to the history of the Jews in Erez Israel and translated Joshua Prawer's works.

As well as numerous articles in the aforementioned areas, his works and publications include: "Communautés judéo-portugaises du Sud-Ouest de la France (Bayonne et sa région) (1684-1791)," unpubl. diss., 1969; Menasseh ben Israël, *The Hope of Israel*, with Henry Mechoulan, (1987); *Les "Nations" juives portugaises du Sud-Ouest de la France (1684-1791) Documents* (1981); *Inscriptions hébraïques et juives de France médiévale* (1986); *Métropoles et périphéries sefarades d'Occident. Kairouan, Amsterdam, Bayonne, Bordeaux, Jérusalem* (1993); *La Terre sainte au temps des Kabbalistes 1492-1592*, (1997); *Juifs et judaïsme à Bordeaux* (2003).

[Evelyne Oliel-Grausz (2nd ed.)]

We extend deepest condolences to Prof. Nahon's family and to the world-wide community of scholars who benefited from his work.