**Yiddish ‘Historical Songs’ from the Czech Lands**

The genre of historical songs in Old Yiddish literature is one of a functional-informative nature, namely to report and spread the knowledge about extraordinary or otherwise noteworthy occurrences. These songs were composed soon after the events they described and circulated throughout Yiddish-speaking Europe. The extant corpus includes some fifty songs from the 17th and 18th centuries, all printed, but it is believed that many more have not reached us. Many, if not all, historical songs exhibit poetic traits and other indications that they were intended for musical or prosodic performance, such as the mention of a specific melody, the use of a stanzaic structure, and more.

The presentation will provide an overview of the genre, highlighting its historical credibility, intended audience, and mode of transmission.

More specifically, we will present two case-studies from the Czech Lands: 1) the story of two Jews from Prostějov who in 1684 were convicted of theft and offered a pardon in return for converting to Christianity; 2) the Jewish boy Simon Abeles from Prague, who in 1694 allegedly sought to convert and was killed by his father. Both dramatic stories share similar features and reveal characteristics and values of the early modern Jewish community – especially resistance to conversion and fidelity in faith.