Fred Astren is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Jewish Studies at San Francisco State University. He holds a Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies from the University of California at Berkeley. His current work encompasses Jewish history—both East and West—in the years 500–950. Forthcoming is a journal article on the failure of Visigothic anti-Jewish legislation in Spain, and a book chapter on the impact of ninth-century Muslim Arabic book culture on Jewish sectarianism. He is currently working on a book chapter on Iranian contexts of the eighth-century Jewish messianic figure, Abū 'Īsā al-Isfahānī to be included in the second volume of Diversity and Rabbinization: Jewish Texts and Societies between 400 and 1000 CE. Recent publications include a journal article that examines ways that minority and majority groups "co-produce" historical narratives in medieval Islam and a chapter in the Cambridge History of Judaism on medieval non-rabbinic Judaisms other than Karaism. Astren is the author of Karaite Judaism and Historical Understanding (University of South Carolina Press, 2004), and co-editor of Judaism and Islam: Boundaries, Interaction, and Communication (Brill, 2000). Astren serves on the Advisory Board of the Mediterranean Seminar, and in 2021 coordinated a roundtable sponsored by the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at UC Berkeley, entitled "Umayyads, Early 'Abbāsids, and Historical Periodization."

