

# REGIONAL SEMINAR IN ANCIENT JUDAISM NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

53 WASHINGTON SQUARE SOUTH

SUNDAY, MARCH 5, 2017

11:30 am – 12:30 pm	<b>Welcome and Brunch</b>
12:30 pm – 12:45 pm	<b>Opening Remarks</b>
12:45 pm – 2:45 pm	<b>Session 1</b> <b>Chair: Emanuel Fiano (Fordham University)</b> <b>Respondent: Annette Reed (University of Pennsylvania)</b> Matthew Goldstone - <i>Rethinking the Limits of Rabbinic Interpretation</i> Rachel Rosenthal - <i>Rebel with a Cause: The Functional Elimination of the Stubborn and Rebellious Son</i> Shlomo Zuckier - <i>Manipulating Minhah: Rabbinic Restructuring of the Interstitial Flour Offering</i>
2:45 pm – 3:00 pm	<b>Coffee Break</b>
3:00 pm – 5:00 pm	<b>Session 2</b> <b>Chair: Azzan Yadin-Israel (Rutgers University)</b> <b>Respondent: Adam Becker (New York University)</b> AJ Berkowitz - <i>Material Convention and Interpretation: The Divisibility of Psalms in Jewish and Christian Perspectives</i> M Tong - "This is the Foreskin of the Body": Circumcision and the Composition of the Body in Origen's Homilies on Genesis III and Genesis Rabbah Matthew Chalmers - <i>Rethinking the Samaritan-Jewish "Schism": or, Is Thinking about Partings the Only Way to Think about Difference in the Study of Ancient Jews</i>
5:00 pm – 5:15 pm	<b>Coffee Break</b>
5:15 pm – 6:30 pm	<b>Lightning Round</b> <b>Chair: Sarit Kattan-Gribetz (Fordham University)</b> <b>Respondent: Noah Bickart (Yale University)</b> Alex Weisberg - <i>The Parting of the Logos: Towards a Genealogy of Early Christian and Rabbinic Jewishness</i> Jillian Stinchcomb - <i>Foreign Queens in Biblical and Post-Biblical Literature</i> Robert Cook - <i>b. Qiddushin 70a-b – An Example of the Monodialogizing Talmud?</i>
7:00 pm – 8:00 pm	<b>Dinner</b>
8:00 pm	<b>Graduate Student Reception</b>

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NEW YORK UNIVERSITY'S  
CENTER FOR ANCIENT STUDIES, CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES,  
DEAN FOR THE HUMANITIES, GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES,  
AND SKIRBALL DEPARTMENT OF HEBREW AND JUDAIC STUDIES

# REGIONAL SEMINAR IN ANCIENT JUDAISM NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

53 WASHINGTON SQUARE SOUTH

MONDAY, MARCH 6, 2017

- 9:00 am – 10:30 am      **Breakfast & Professionalization Session on Publishing**  
Beth Berkowitz (Barnard College)  
Lawrence Schiffman (New York University)
- 10:30 am – 12:30 pm      **Session 3**  
**Chair:** Alex Jassen (New York University)  
**Respondent:** Moulie Vidas (Princeton University)  
Zachary Levine - *Neither 'New Israel' Supercessionists, Nor (Yet) Returnees from Exile: How the Damascus Document Deploys Leviticus 26 to Convey Its Particular Concept of Covenant Continuity*  
James Nati - *Textual Pluriformity and Scroll-Reading at Qumran*  
Krista Dalton - *Torah and Reciprocity in the Matrona's Tithes*
- 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm      **Lunch**
- 1:30 pm – 2:00 pm      **Closing Remarks/Planning for 2018**

## SESSION 1

### **Matthew Goldstone (New York University)**

This paper introduces the next major project I am considering which treats the question of the limits of interpretation within rabbinic literature (and primarily through the lens of technical terminology in the Bavli). This project will explore topics such as the factors which limit particular readings of texts, the different loci of meaning for traditions (text, implied author, and implied audience), rabbinic self-conscious limitations of the use of hermeneutic principles, and the relationship between rabbinic and other exegetical approaches in antiquity. Challenging the view of rabbinic interpretative as primarily focused on Scripture and invested in proliferating meaning, I argue that late rabbinic interpretation of earlier rabbinic traditions and the role that limitation plays in the rabbinic interpretative project reveal important new dimensions about the rabbis as readers in late antiquity.

### **Rachel Rosenthal (Jewish Theological Seminary)**

My dissertation is focused on the ways that three distinct approaches, represented by three rabbinic statements on Sanhedrin 71a, permeate the rabbinic analysis in the Bavli of the stubborn and rebellious son based on the difficulties raised by Deuteronomy 21:18-21. In addition to considering how each of these approaches is manifest throughout the eighth chapter of Sanhedrin, I also explore the idea of the rabbis as pedagogues. I argue that the rabbis have a number of specific and ideological pedagogical orientations, which serve to provide tools for learning and teaching difficult ethical texts. Finally, my dissertation will explore how to use these models to create a framework for moral education, in order to help modern educators encourage their students to engage with morally complicated text.

## SESSION 1 CONTINUED

### **Shlomo Zuckier (Yale University)**

My dissertation considers the central themes of sacrifice in rabbinic literature and its comparative context. The dissertation will find that rabbinic discourse on sacrifice features a greater focus on atonement as compared to biblical literature, and that it reorients and minimizes the biblical theme of pleasing God through sweet smelling sacrifice. It will then consider the ramifications of these shifts on how the rabbis understand various sacrificial processes.

## SESSION 2

### **AJ Berkowitz (Princeton University)**

*The Life of Psalms in Late Antiquity* examines the varying ways in which Jews and Christians encountered the Psalms and negotiated its meaning. By focusing on materiality, textuality and reading practices, it paints a nuanced and vibrant portrait of everyday encounter with the most popular text of Late Antiquity. It advocates for a history of reading, one that recognizes reading as a performative activity whose outcomes are contextual. It seeks to understand the act of reading as well as its products. It additionally gives voice to non-elite Jews and Christians by investigating the social and cultural tensions surrounding liturgy, piety and magic. Ultimately, it redefines the terms under which Jews and Christians exchanged ideas, emphasizing the role of popular channels of transmission.

### **M Tong (Fordham University)**

The idea that circumcision is symbolic of ancient Jewish-Christian difference is so ingrained in the history of both Judaism and Christianity that it is often stated as a simple matter of fact. However, my dissertation demonstrates that although Jews and Christians may have disagreed about circumcision as a practice, when we look at how the Rabbis and Church Fathers deployed circumcision as a discourse, particularly as a means of exploring questions of theological anthropology, we discover a surprising amount of similarities in exactly those Jewish and Christian texts most invested in demonstrating difference.

### **Matthew Chalmers (University of Pennsylvania)**

My dissertation focuses on the representation of Samaritans in late antique Christian texts. For at least thirty years, scholars have examined the complex interactions with others by which Jews and Christians formed identities. Samaritans appear in many of the same texts used in this process, but scholars have paid them much less attention. Examining the Samaritans thus articulates pieces of the ancient historical archive that often go overlooked or unexplored. It also makes visible for critique and further discussion our own patterns of selectivity in identifying the parts of the past we take as relevant for the stories we tell about Jewish and Christian identity formation. This proposed paper experiments with one way to examine those acts of selection, taking the Samaritan "schism" as material for examination.

## LIGHTNING ROUND

### **Alex Weisberg (New York University)**

I am interested in the coinciding of ontological speculation, *halachic* development, reading practices, and group identity in Judea from the end of the Second Temple period through the redaction of the Jerusalem Talmud. I am particularly concerned with Jewish notions of world, land, and nature and how these notions are mediated in legal decision making. My project coincides with larger discussions within the field of normative vs. realist legal traditions; the status of the logos in Rabbinic reading practice; and definitions of Jewishness in late antiquity. My project incorporates previous scholarship on these topics while broadening the discussion to also include ontological speculations of both the divine realm and the world at large. I will engage with comparisons between Jewish, Christian and Hellenistic/Roman philosophical texts in order to delineate a particularly Jewish discourse of nature, world, and ontology.

### **Jillian Stinchcomb (University of Pennsylvania)**

My dissertation project is an exploration of the use of Queen of Sheba, as a symbol and as a character, from the Biblical through to the early medieval period. In 1992, Jacob Lassner wrote *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba*, a feminist critical history that traced the development of the Queen, alternately known as Bilquis or Makeda, in Jewish and Islamic literature. Lassner largely focuses on the gender performance presented in the relevant texts in his important study. My project will ask a different set of questions, focusing particularly about the role of race, religious markers, and magic in the various iterations of the Queen's story in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic texts.

### **Robert Cook (New York University)**

My presentation is an opening foray into a potential analysis of a group of Bavli narratives. This group would be defined as narratives that dramatize (or perhaps more prosaically, narrativize?) the Bavli's legal, non-narrative sections. Such dramatization takes place when certain formal elements of non-narrative, legal discourse become part of the plot line to longer stories. I am particularly interested in narratives in which attributed quotations of earlier sages are used to affirm one's side in a disputed point of law. In identifying and analyzing such stories, my hope is that further light can be shed on the relationship between narrative and non-narrative in the Bavli in general and the story makers' attitudes toward and conception of other material in the Talmud in particular.

## SESSION 3

### **Zachary Levine (New York University)**

I am writing my dissertation in the field of Ancient Judaism, history of early Jewish biblical interpretation. The dissertation is a "reception history" of Leviticus 26, which enumerates the blessings and the curses for obeying or disobeying the covenant commandments. I trace purposeful allusions to this text in different Jewish literatures (which are later than, and interpret Leviticus 26) over time. Each chapter focuses on a different text and how and to what end it alludes to Leviticus 26. My main interest and takeaway is how these references are used to give shape and meaning to history (historical theodicy issues like why did the Jewish exile happen, etc.) and the significance of the present moment for the insider-group or intended audience of each text.

## SESSION 3 CONTINUED

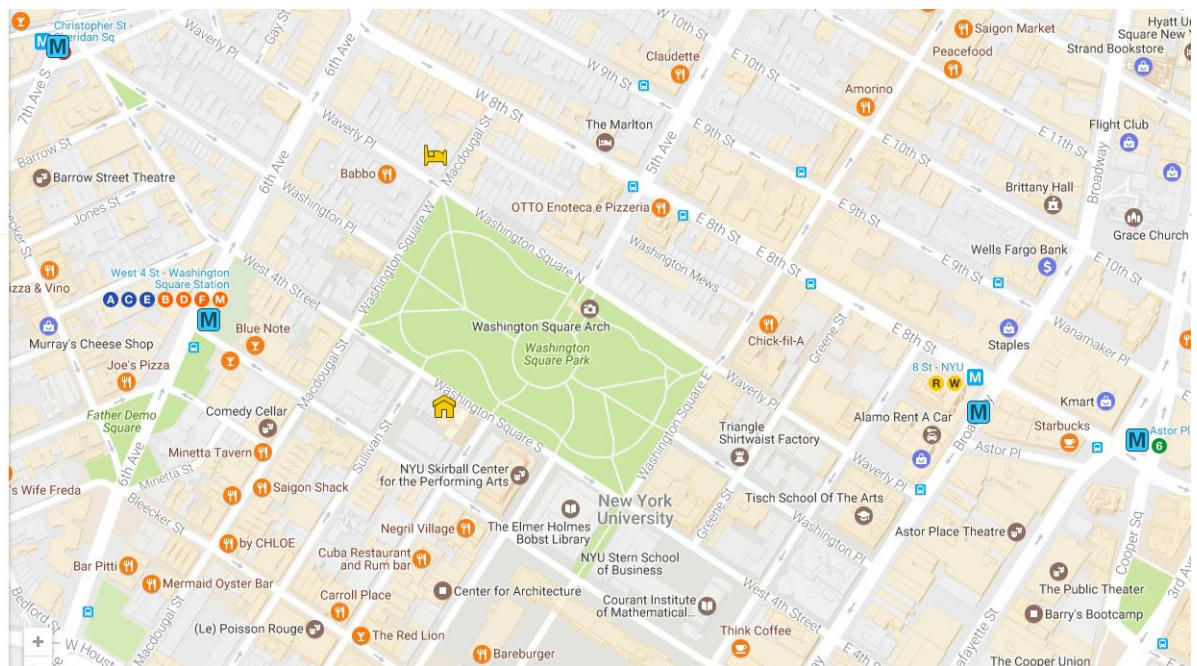
### James Nati (Yale University)

The title of my dissertation is “Textual Pluriformity in Biblical and Second Temple Literature.” It addresses the issue of textual pluriformity not solely as a result of corruption during the process of transmission, but seeks to evaluate pluriformity as an integral aspect of early Jewish literature. It focuses on the Rule traditions from Qumran as test cases for examining this phenomenon before turning to two biblical examples that may be better understood in light of the Rule traditions. Central to the project are the following lines of inquiry: How has textual criticism in biblical studies been informed by modernist notions of composition, authorship, and literary integrity? How was textual pluriformity in biblical and early Jewish literature understood within the context of its composition? How can textual pluriformity, as an integral part of biblical literature, inform the way we think about the state of that literature as revelation, canon, Law, prophecy, etc.? Finally, if this corpus is truly pluriform, how might textual critics and editors best represent that pluriformity?

### Krista Dalton (Columbia University)

This paper is part of a larger chapter devoted to the subject of tithing. My dissertation entitled “Rabbis & Money: The Logics of Giving in Palestinian Rabbinic Literature” examines different examples of monetary exchange and gifting that resists or blurs traditional categorization. By thinking of giving as an idiom, I resist thinking of gifts, tithes, patronage, commodities as “real entities” in terms of stable essences. Instead, I focus both on the forms of exchange and the constraints these forms impose on contingent performances of transaction. In particular, I am interested in the binary between reciprocity and solidarity and the ways particular texts fall differently along their spectrum of socially-informed giving.

## MAP



### Directions:

From 34th St Penn Station: Take the A,C, or E Train to W 4th Street or the 1 Train to Christopher Street and walk East.