



Trauma and Coping with Trauma in World Religions: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

Annual International Conference 26-27 May 2025

Center for the Study of Conversion and Inter-Religious Encounters

Room 301, Helen Diller Building #74

BGU Marcus Campus, Be'er Sheva, Israel

Monday 26.5.25

09:30-10:00 Conference Registration, Refreshments

10:00-10:15 Greetings and Opening Remarks

- Daniella Talmon-Heller (CSoC director, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)
- Yoni Mendel (Chair of Middle East Studies, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)

10:15-11:45 Session 1: Historiography of Medieval Traumas

Chair: Michal Bar-Asher Siegal (Vice President for Global Engagement, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)

- Nadia Zeldes (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev): **Commemoration, Justification, and Redemption in Post Expulsion Narratives**
- Oded Zinger (Hebrew University of Jerusalem): **Coping with Trauma: The Forgotten Arabian Chapter in Medieval Jewish Historiography**
- Michal Biran (Hebrew University of Jerusalem): **The Mongol Conquest of Baghdad (1258): A Reconstruction of Religious Trauma?**

11:45-12:15 Refreshments, Break



12:15-13:45 Session 2: Traumatic Experience and Religious Identity:

Chair: Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby (Dean of the Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)

- Nadia Beider (Hebrew University of Jerusalem): **Trauma and Identity: The Impact of Rising Antisemitism on Jewish School Choices in Europe**
- Nureet Dermer (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev): **Jews Facing the Trauma of Expulsions in Medieval Western Europe**
- Philip Slavin (University of Stirling): **Plague, Exile and Prejudice: Towards the Environmental History of the 1492 Expulsion**

13:45-15:00 Lunch

15:00-16:30 Session 3: Responses to Trauma

Chair: Chaim Hames (Rector, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)

- Mor Hajbi (Hebrew University of Jerusalem): **Coping with Trauma: Pastoral Responses to the Sack of Rome in CE410**
- Uri Jacob (Bar-Ilan University): **Songs in Response to Crusader Defeats: Words, Music, and Emotion**
- Hagar Shalev (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev): **Exploring Trauma in Pre-Modern Yogic Texts: Insights into Bodily Sensations and Beyond**

16:30-17:00 Refreshments, Break

17:00-18:00 Session 4: Trauma and Religious Nationalism

Chair: Effie Shoham-Steiner (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)

- Dror Zeevi (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev): **A Toxic Concoction: Religion, Nationalism and the Anatolian Horrors, 1894-1924**
- Sarina Chen (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev): **The Return of the Repressed: The Interplay Between the Jewish "Hurban" and Contemporary Third Temple Activism**

18:30 Dinner at "Little India" (walking distance from campus)



Tuesday 27.5.25

08:45-09:45 Session 5: Inflicting Trauma in the Name of Faith

Chair: Cana Werman (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)

- Jocelyne Cesari (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and Georgetown University):
War Rape, Religious Identity, and National Politics: The Bosnia Case
- Nimrod Hurvitz (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev): **Inflicting Trauma: Isis's Narratives, Strategies and Revenge**

09:45-10:00 Refreshments, break

10:00-11:45 Session 6: Means of Reconciliation and Healing

Chair: Jackie Feldman (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)

- Hanoch Ben Pazi (Bar-Ilan University): **Religious and Philosophical aspects of Forgiveness: From South Africa's TRC to the Challenges of Israeli Society**
- Dalia Marx (Hebrew Union College): **Prayers Following the October 7 Massacre**
- Elad Ben David (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev): **The COVID-19 Pandemic as an incentive of Healing the Faith: A Comparative Study of American Imams and Israeli Rabbis' Discourse on YouTube**

Respondent: David Lehmann (Cambridge University)

11:45-12:15 Concluding Remarks

Jocelyne Cesari (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and Georgetown University)

12:15-13:00 Lunch

13:00-18:00 Tour: Coping with October 7th and its Aftermath in Communities of the Western Negev

(Minibus back and forth from BGU included)

- Sheikh Hassan Abu-Aliyun – **Rahat**
- Avi Dabush (Rabbis for Human Rights, Kibbutz Nirim) – **Sderot & Nova Memorial**



Abstracts and Bios

Nadia Beider

The rise in antisemitic incidents in the past decade has had a profound impact on Jewish communities across Europe. I seek to examine the response to this trauma, by asking whether it leads people to downplay their Jewish identity or embrace it, through an analysis of data from the 2018 EU Fundamental Rights Agency survey of antisemitism in Europe and its effect on school choice. While some parents prioritize integration into broader society, others, particularly those who have directly experienced or witnessed antisemitism, are increasingly opting for Jewish day schools. This response suggests that traumatic encounters with antisemitism—whether experienced personally or observed—serve as a catalyst for a stronger identification with Jewish identity and a heightened sense of the need for community protection. While a small minority of Jewish parents may respond by distancing themselves from their Jewish identity in an attempt to avoid further marginalization, for the majority, the rise in antisemitism has led to a reinforced commitment to their faith and community. This shift highlights how trauma, in the form of increased antisemitism, directly influences educational choices, driving more families toward Jewish schooling and closer ties with the community.

BIO: Nadia Beider is a postdoctoral fellow at the Martin Buber Society of Fellows, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Her work focuses on religious change, its causes and implications.

Elad Ben David

My research project deals with the COVID-19 pandemic as a traumatic event, that was used by Muslim and Jewish preachers to boost piety and faith in God, as a chance for religious renewal and healing, which usually tends to increase in times of calamities. The impact of their online messages during the COVID-19 pandemic was highly effective due to the lockdowns on mosques and synagogues on the one hand, and the intensity of social media platforms on the other. As a case study to illustrate my argument, I explore the online discourse of influential American imams and Israeli Rabbis, manifesting how the COVID-19 calamity was used as an incentive to promote piety among their Muslim and Jewish followers. The project's methodology is a



qualitative-comparative analysis of primary sources of salient preachers from 2020 to 2021, which also aims to highlight similarities and differences between their context of preaching, deriving from an American and Israeli perspective. I examine essential comparative research questions highlighted in their discourse related to religious, social and political aspects. This paper contributes to the contemporary comparative study of Judaism and Islam, and the emphasis on influential preachers as religious agents who have become a salient religious authority, involved in current life's upheavals, by shaping the spiritual messages in times of traumatic events, such as the COVID 19.

BIO: Dr. Elad Ben David is a postdoc researcher at the Center for the Study of Conversion & Inter-Religious Encounters (CSoC) at Ben-Gurion University, and a peer in the program of "Intertwined Worlds," for the Study of Interfaith Dynamics at Haifa University. Ben David is also a research associate at the Forum of Regional Thinking, and a Board Member of the Israeli Association for the Study of Religions (IASR). His studies focus on contemporary Islam in the US.

Hanoch Ben Pazi

Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRC) operated in South Africa as part of the political and social transformation following the end of apartheid. This extraordinary project was spearheaded by two prominent figures: Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu. The role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions was to enable a divided and torn country to confront its difficult past, grapple with the tensions and accounts of severe violence it endured, and address the injustices of its oppressive political regime. The commissions aimed to acknowledge South Africa's past on one hand while opening a "new page" on the other hand. This crucial project involved several dimensions—legal, criminal, social, and historical—but also a religious one.

In this lecture, I will explore the concept of forgiveness, the central notion championed by Desmond Tutu, through which he envisioned the possibility of national reconciliation. The forgiveness Tutu spoke of was rooted in a religious framework derived from his Christian context. I consider the TRC model to be highly relevant for adoption by Israeli society as part of its willingness to confront its own past and as a

means of establishing new social covenants to ensure its future as a divided and challenged society. The perspective I seek to offer for reflecting on this religious challenge involves translating the concept of forgiveness into a philosophical framework, drawing on the writings of Vladimir Jankélévitch and Jacques Derrida.

BIO: Prof. Hanoch Ben Pazi, Dept. of Jewish Philosophy, Bar Ilan University. Head of Maayan Centre for Sustainability, Jewish Philosophy and Ethics. His research is dedicated to modern Jewish philosophy, with a focus on Emmanuel Levinas and Martin Buber. His last book, Hebrew Humanism, was published by Idra Publishers in 2023.

Michal Biran

The devastating Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 1258 put an end to the Abbasid Caliphate that had led the Muslim world for more than half a century, subjugating the center of the Islamic world to infidel rule. This conquest also ended the Arab domination in the Islamic world, as since the Mongol conquest most future Islamic rulers were either Turks or Mongols. Even though the Caliphate's real power in the centuries before the conquest was limited to parts of Iraq, the event has acquired mythical dimensions becoming a collective trauma that came to symbolize the decline of Islamic civilization even though Islamic culture continued to flourish in Ilkhanid Baghdad, and a generation after the conquest the Mongol rulers of Iran and Iraq embraced Islam. Based on a variety of Islamic sources (mainly in Arabic and Persian) as well as European and Chinese compilations, the paper analyses various reactions- contemporary and later- to the conquest and the processes through which it was reconstructed as a religious and cultural trauma in various contexts between the 13th and 21st centuries, stressing the difference between the Arabic and the Persian-Turkic narratives

BIO: Prof. Michal Biran is a historian of Inner Asia and a member of the Israeli Academy of Science and Humanities. She is the Max and Sophie Mydans Foundation Professor in the Humanities, and teaches at the departments of Asian Studies and Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies. Since 2021, she has served as head of the Institute of Asian and African Study at HUJI. Prof. Biran is a historian of Inner Asia, imperial China and the medieval Islamic world, and has published extensively on the Mongol Empire, Mongol

and pre-Mongol Central Asia, cross-cultural contacts between China, nomadic empires and the Muslim world, comparative study of empires, nomadic culture, migrations and mobility, and Ilkhanid Baghdad. Prof. Biran has authored and edited many books and volumes and authored dozens of articles, one of them published in The Cambridge History of the Mongol Empire along with Hodong Kim.

Jocelyne Cesari

This presentation examines war rape as a weapon of religious and political violence, focusing on its profound impact on collective trauma, national identity, and political narratives. Through an analysis of the systematic sexual violence perpetrated against Muslim women during the Bosnian War (1992–1995), the discussion highlights the interplay between religious identity and the socio-political repercussions of such crimes.

The presentation explores war rape as an assault on sacred identity, emphasizing its far-reaching psychological, social, and political consequences. By analyzing religious interpretations of trauma, victimhood, and justice from an Islamic perspective, it reveals how these narratives have influenced national policies and international legal frameworks in the post-war reconstruction period. Central to this exploration are the religiously embedded concepts of honor, purity, and justice, which have played a pivotal role in shaping collective memory, fostering national resilience, and guiding reconciliation efforts.

BIO: Jocelyne Cesari holds the Chair of Religion and Politics at the University of Birmingham (UK) and is Senior Fellow at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University. From 2018 to 2024, she was the inaugural T. J. Dermot Dunphy Professor of Religion, Violence, and Peacebuilding at Harvard Divinity School. Her most recent book: *We God's Nations: Political Christianity, Islam and Hinduism in the World of Nations*, published by Cambridge University Press in 2022 (won the 2023 Book Award of the Scientific Society for the Study of Religion). She is the academic advisor of www.euro-islam.info.



Sarina Chen

The destruction of the First and Second Temples, known in Jewish tradition as the Hurban, has profoundly shaped Jewish cultural memory and identity. This historical trauma has been continuously commemorated through various rituals, prayers, and traditions, deeply embedding it into the cycles of Jewish life. Events such as Tisha B'Av, life-cycle ceremonies, and architectural symbolism all serve to ensure that the memory of the Hurban remains central to Jewish consciousness. As Alan Mintz demonstrated in his seminal work, pivotal moments in Jewish history have often been interpreted and reframed through the lens of the Hurban, reflecting a dynamic of repetition that underscores its enduring significance.

Psychoanalytic theories, particularly those of Sigmund Freud and Melanie Klein, offer insight into the mechanisms of memory and trauma. They claim that repetition, as an unconscious response to trauma, provides a framework for understanding the source of it. By adopting this concept to the Jewish response to the Hurban we might say that the destruction is re-enacted symbolically across generations, allowing the community to process and cope with its pain. This dynamic is counterbalanced by the pole of "Salvation" (*Geula*), a messianic hope expressed in the phrase "soon in our days" (*maherah b'yameinu*). The tension between the commemoration of destruction and the anticipation of redemption forms a cornerstone of Jewish spiritual life.

The establishment of the State of Israel and subsequent Israeli control over the Temple Mount cause some rabbis and figures within the National-Religious sector to think that the historical juncture represents a unique convergence of traditional Hurban commemoration and the eschatological vision of rebuilding the Temple. These developments have energized the movement of Temple activists who actively work toward constructing the Third Temple, viewing it as a necessary step in realizing messianic redemption.

Temple seekers strategically revive the trauma of the Hurban, using it as a rallying point to advocate for a new political and theological order. This activism is not merely symbolic; it involves concrete actions such as attempts to establish a Jewish presence on the Temple Mount, creating architectural plans for the Third Temple, and lobbying

for legal, religious and political revolution. By framing their mission as a fulfillment of historical and divine destiny, Temple activists aim to transform a foundational trauma into a catalyst for national and spiritual renewal. The actions of contemporary Temple seekers highlight a dynamic interplay between historical trauma, cultural memory, and political ambition. By drawing on the enduring legacy of the Hurban, they seek to reinterpret Jewish identity and history in a way that bridges the past with an eschatological vision of the future.

BIO: Dr. Sarina Chen's research explores the intersections of Jewish identity, religious activism, and national politics, with a particular focus on Temple Mount activists. Her book, *Soon in Our Days: The Temple Activists and the National-Religious Society in Israel*, was published by Ben-Gurion Institute Press. Dr. Chen has also made contributions to the study of religious conversion, curating and editing the online course of CSOC *Reading Religious Conversion*, which examines historical and cultural perspectives on conversion and highlights the complexities of religious identity and community boundaries. Her academic track includes teaching at Ben-Gurion University and the Open University in Israel, as well as at UCLA, Northeastern University, and Tulane University in United States.

Nureet Dermer

During the fourteenth century, Jews were repeatedly expelled from the French kingdom (in 1306, 1322, and 1394). While collective expulsions of Jews had occurred earlier in the Middle Ages, the fourteenth century marked the first time that such collective banishments were executed consecutively – three times in less than a century. Evidence shows how, between these expulsions, Jews returned to the kingdom and reconstructed their lives there, only to be expelled once again after several years. Beyond the existential concerns these banishments posed, they also severely disrupted Jews' capacity to maintain the economic and social ties they previously fostered, which were essential for their individual and communal lives both within and beyond France. Moreover, these expulsions forced Jews to migrate to new territories outside the French kingdom, often resulting in the fragmentation of families and communities. This new reality introduced significant challenges for northern



French Jews (Tzarfatim), who struggled to preserve their communal identity, customs, and distinct cultural heritage.

Drawing on Hebrew sources and archival records, my talk will trace the trajectories of expelled Jews as they resettled in new communities outside the French realm and examine the strategies they employed to contend with the trauma of recurring displacement. I will start by indicating evidence of expelled Jews' efforts to establish new social and economic relations with their Jewish and Christian neighbors in their new places of residency. Next, I will explore the complexities of northern French Jews' communal identities, focusing on the evolving dynamics of inclusion and exclusion within urban communities beyond the French kingdom. Finally, I will elucidate how these difficulties, tensions, and developments were perceived and expressed by expelled northern French Jews themselves.

BIO: Dermer is a postdoctoral fellow at CSOC, BGU, and holds a PhD from the Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Her research focuses on Jewish-Christian relations, local identities, foreignness and belonging, and the dynamics of exclusion and inclusion of Jews, among other marginalized groups, from Christian societies throughout the fourteenth century. Her postdoctoral project investigates the trajectories of expelled French Jewish families and individuals outside the French realm, aiming to cast light on the difficulties Jews faced, as well as the resilience and coping mechanisms they developed upon arriving in new communities and societies during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. She's published several articles, which can be found here:

<https://huji.academia.edu/NureetDermer>

Mor Hajbi

The Visigothic sack of Rome in CE410 was an extremely traumatic event with far-reaching political, economic, social, and pastoral consequences. For the first time in centuries, Rome, the "head of the world" (caput mundi) was taken, and this time by Christian barbarians adhering to the Arian 'heresy'. This pivotal moment prompted a wide range of responses by 'catholic' Christian intellectuals. Strikingly, despite resulting from the same catastrophe, these literary responses were very different from one

another. These disparities raise compelling questions about how, why and in what ways such varied perspectives evolved.

This lecture aims to examine a selection of these responses, analyzing both the commonalities and divergences among the authors. The central argument of this presentation is that the circumstances of each author—their audience, chronological proximity to the event, geographical location, and personal experiences—served as the lens through which the sack of Rome was understood and interpreted. Thus, some of the authors interpreted this event using apocalyptic tools and propagated that the world was coming to its end; others mourned for the beautiful Rome now laying in ruins and sold their properties in the city to save their fortune; and one, Augustine, spent thirteen years writing the set of books aimed at giving this event allegorical meaning - books that will forever change the political theology in the West. By exploring the interplay between personal, communal, and theological factors, the lecture will demonstrate how the responses to this traumatic event provide a window into the intellectual and social diversity of the late Roman world. At the same time, it will assess whether there are unifying themes or shared narratives that emerge across these differing accounts in the Western Christian context. Thus, the paper wishes to provide insight into how Christian communities grappled with historical crises and articulated hope amidst destruction.

BIO: Mor Hajbi is a Ph.D. candidate in the History Department at the Hebrew University, under the advisorship of Prof. Itzik Hen. Her field of research includes Christian intellectual networks in Late Antiquity, the reception of ideas and texts, and theological disputes. Her dissertation focuses on a handful of Latin authors who followed Augustine and aims to assess their literary, theological, and social contributions both to their congregations and to the intellectual discourse of the late Latin West. Hajbi is the recipient of the Rotenstreich fellowship and is currently a doctorate fellow at the center for the study of Christianity. And lastly, she co-founded the Jerusalem-based "Forum of Early Medieval Studies," an international platform where leading scholars in the field share their research.



Nimrod Hurvitz

One of the infamous features of Isis are their horrendous acts of killing: beheadings of their captives; assassination of grown men by children; burning of a Jordanian pilot and killing dozens of prayers in Shi'i mosques. What is more, Isis does not merely execute these acts, it also documents them in pictures and clips, and broadcasts them on various media platforms. What are the rationale and ideology behind purposefully presenting themselves and mass murderers and performers of gruesome killings? In a nutshell it is to inflict trauma.

This lecture will inquire about the ideological justifications, strategic thinking and emotional satisfaction that motivate Isis to perform such actions. It will attempt to combine the ideological foundations such as their dehumanizing thinking that underlies notions such as *al-wala' wa-'l-bara'* and the Manichean notions of good versus evil; the strategic assumption that the West is weak and can be scared out of the Middle East; and the need for taking revenge against the oppressive and cruel West. Methodologically, this lecture assumes that human behavior is often based on narratives whose purpose is self-justification, cold calculations meant to advance the groups' interests, and powerful, often uncontrollable passions. In the lecture I will try to make sense of how these three are intertwined in Isis's policy of publicly performed killings.

BIO: Prof. Nimrod Hurvitz graduated from Princeton University in 1994 and teaches at Ben Gurion University in the Department of Middle East Studies. His research focuses on medieval and modern Muslim religious movements and political thought. His publications include *The Formation of Hanbalism, Piety into Power* (Routledge Curzon, 2002; Arab translation, Arab Network for Research and Publishing, 2011); co-authored with Eli Alshech, *Making Sense of Muslim Fundamentalisms, The Clash Within Islam* (Routledge, 2020), and numerous articles.

Uri Jacob

Crusading-related songs are valuable historical sources, providing fresh insights into the medieval understanding of crusading as a religious and political endeavor. Moreover, there is enough evidence to suggest that in their own time, such songs functioned as

“active players” in crusader events, playing an important role in contemporary propaganda and thus asserting the fusion of musical-poetic expressions and the realities of medieval life.

An important case study demonstrating this phenomenon is the musical-poetic response to a highly traumatic event in the history of crusading: the fall of vast Middle Eastern territories, formerly occupied by crusaders, to Saladin’s forces on 1187. Those Latin and vernacular songs reflect the frustration, unrest, and grief facing the Latin failure to reconquer the Holy Land, and Jerusalem in particular, from the hands of the Muslims. In addition to grieving this loss, these songs often view a failure to join the crusader enterprise as a sign of a more general moral deterioration and offer crusading as the believers’ path towards salvation, a trope that was widespread well into the thirteenth century.

Most fundamentally, these songs display anger, a type of emotion around which medieval communities were formed, and audiences established. As put by Thomas Aquinas, anger is a product of the “flowing together of many passions,” and the core emotional sequence in which anger often participates according to him is injury—sorrow—anger—hope-for-revenge. My paper will demonstrate how this emotional sequence is encapsulated in several crusade-related songs that have been associated with different genres as well as cultural milieux and how these emotions are more freely intermingled in other songs from the same period. I will further demonstrate how the musical construction typical of a group of sacred songs coming from this repertory is based on melodic characteristics that were more often associated with the laity. We may look at the theme of crusading as a “justification” for such a generic importation, one which was culturally meaningful for the intended audience of these songs, whether it was mostly consisting of clerics called to support the crusader enterprise but not expected to actually embark eastward, or of actual would-be-crusaders.

BIO: Uri Jacob is a musicologist who specializes in medieval music and is currently an assistant professor in the Department of Music at Bar-Ilan University. Since the completion of his PhD at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2021, followed by a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Western Ontario, Canada, several of his

articles have been accepted for publication in peer-reviewed journals such as *Plainsong & Medieval Music*, *Journal of Musicology*, *Revue de Musicologie*, and *Al-Masāq*. Currently, he is writing a monograph on medieval song repertoires in the context of the crusading enterprise and working on a new research project on the written dissemination of music across large geographical areas during the high Middle Ages.

David Lehmann (discussant)

David Lehmann is Emeritus professor of Social Science at the University of Cambridge, where he has also been Director and continues to be an active member of the Centre of Latin American Studies. His main publications include *Democracy and Development in Latin America: Economics, Politics and Religion in the Post-war Period* (Polity Press, 1990) and *Struggle for the Spirit: Religious Transformation and Popular Culture in Brazil and Latin America* (Polity Press, 1996), and *Remaking Israeli Judaism* written with Batia Siebzeher (Hurst, 2006), a study of the Israeli Sephardi/Mizrachi movement of religious renewal, *Shas*. After 2005 he turned to the issue of multiculturalism in Latin America leading to an edited volume entitled *The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Latin America* (Palgrave, 2016), *The Prism of Race: the Politics and ideology of Affirmative Action in Brazil* (Michigan University Press, 2018) and *After the Decolonial: Ethnicity, Gender and Social Justice in Latin America* (Polity 2022). He has recently completed a manuscript on the Brazil-based worldwide neo-Pentecostal Universal Church of the Kingdom of God church, provisionally entitled *The Reconfiguration of Religion*.

Dalia Marx

Worship, in its broad sense, is the most natural Jewish locus for processing emotions and understanding reality. Throughout history, Jews have dealt with the challenges of their lives, with crises and disasters, through prayer and supplication. Echoes of Jewish experiences emerge from the pages of prayer books, and it is not without reason that some have called the siddur "the diary of the people of Israel." In periods of distress, uncertainty and anxiety, prayers and rituals are sources of creativity that ground people's actions and experiences in attitudes towards the past, help them cope with the present, and hope for a better future.

The October 7, 2023 massacre generated liturgical responses, which are unprecedented in terms of scale and variety. The proposed lecture will deal with liturgical texts written in the first three months after the massacre and during the war. These texts were published in various contexts, and reflect a wide range of beliefs and opinions, poetic and stylistic tastes, and degrees of exposure to the public. I will discuss the phenomenon, offer an initial typology of the various texts, and analyze them in the broader context of liturgy created in times of crisis.

BIO: Rabbi Dalia Marx, Ph.D., is the Rabbi Aaron D. Panken Professor of Liturgy and Midrash at HUC-JIR's Taube Family Campus in Jerusalem and teaches in various academic institutions in Israel and Europe. Marx earned her doctorate at the Hebrew University and her rabbinic ordination at HUC-JIR in Jerusalem and Cincinnati in 2002. She is involved in various research projects and is active in promoting liberal Judaism in Israel. Marx writes for academic and popular journals and publications and is the lead editor of the Israeli Reform siddur, *Tfillat HaAdam* (2020). She is the author of *When I Sleep and When I Wake: On Prayers between Dusk and Dawn* (Yediot Sfarim, 2010, in Hebrew), *A Feminist Commentary of the Babylonian Talmud* (Mohr Siebeck, 2013). She is currently working on the new Israeli Reform High Holidays Machzor, together with Rabbi Leora Ezrachi.

Hagar Shalev

Yoga originated among ascetics in the northern Indian subcontinent around the first millennium BCE, later becoming an integral part of various religious traditions across India by the first millennium CE. Today, yoga is widely recognized as a practice encompassing both physical and mental dimensions, with its modern forms rooted in Sanskrit texts on Haṭhayoga ("forceful yoga") and Rājayoga ("royal yoga") from the eleventh century onward. In the twenty-first century, Trauma-Sensitive Yoga (TSY) has emerged as a therapeutic modality designed to support individuals coping with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). TSY emphasizes introspection, breath awareness, and fostering regulated responses to bodily sensations, addressing the disconnection from inner experience that often accompanies trauma.

This presentation explores the concept of "trauma" as reflected in pre-modern Sanskrit texts on Haṭhayoga and Rājayoga, particularly from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, and investigates its potential connections to contemporary TSY practices. In contrast to the view of modern yoga scholars who argue that mental relaxation is a globally modern element in yoga, this presentation will demonstrate that the yogic techniques described in the texts, which bear significant similarities to those of TSY, certainly lead, among other things, to a state of tranquility, relaxation, and equanimity. Like TSY, they conceptualize the body, emotions, and the mind as interdependent, with a mutual feedback between these levels.

A notable divergence lies in how these practices are understood: while TSY approaches techniques like breath awareness and body scanning as tools for emotional healing, early-modern Sanskrit texts interpret them through a soteriological lens. Their primary aim is spiritual liberation, with mental tranquility regarded as a secondary outcome of pursuing higher existential goals. Given the current prominence of yoga, particularly its integration of physical practice and mental well-being, this presentation explores the historical role of somatic and embodied practices—such as attunement to bodily sensations, breath regulation, and relaxation—and their relationship to emotional resilience, shedding new light on their historical and contemporary significance.

BIO: Hagar Shalev is an Indologist specializing in the languages, religions, history, and philosophy of South Asia, with a particular focus on yoga and meditation within Hindu traditions. She is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for the Study of Conversion and Inter-Religious Encounters (CSoC) at Ben-Gurion University, where her research focuses on trauma conceptualization in pre-modern yogic Sanskrit texts. In addition, she serves as a research fellow at The Haifa Laboratory for Religious Studies (HLRS) at the University of Haifa, where she examines the intersections between pre-modern yoga and religion. She combines philological and ethnographic research with an intimate understanding of Hindu culture to explore themes such as embodiment, the structure of the mind, health, immortality, philosophical-theological syncretism, and the evolving interplay between traditional yoga practices and their modern, globalized manifestations.



Philip Slavin

The proposed paper looks at the hitherto neglected episode during the 1492 Girush Sepharad. Following the devastating Alhambra Decree (March 1492), large number of Spanish Jews – anywhere between 40 and 100 thousand – chose to remain steadfast in their faith and get expelled from the kingdom. Unfortunately, the timing of the decree was rather unfortunate: it coincided with the spread of plague in the peninsula, and the mass human migration, caused by the edict, only facilitated the spread of the disease, in the direction that the expelled Jews were moving – both within the peninsula and outside (Maghreb, parts of Italy and the Ottoman Empire).

The proposed paper reconstructs the spatio-temporal contours of the plague spread in conjunction with the movement of the Jews in 1492-3, and argues that the unfortunate association of the Jews with plague spread increased anti-Jewish animosity and violence from the side of Christian Gentiles, whereas in the Ottoman Empire, which had already experienced a plague wave in 1491-2 (a year before the arrival of the Jews), there was no such response.

BIO: Prof. Philip Slavin is a PhD graduate from the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Toronto. Slavin is a historian working on the global history of infectious diseases and environmental disasters; currently, he is engaging in several interdisciplinary projects dealing with 'big questions' of the history of evolution and ecology of plague, on a global scale and in a *longue durée* perspective – in collaboration with aDNA scientists and palaeo-climatologists. Slavin has published two books and 55 articles on various topics of economics, environmental history, and the history of diseases.

Dror Ze'evi

As monotheistic religions go, Islam was relatively tolerant, and rarely more so than in the heyday of the Ottoman Empire. Offering shelter to Jews exiled from the Iberian Peninsula, or to Unitarians fleeing from eastern Europe, are well-documented and need no elaboration. This broad-minded attitude continued – albeit with some exceptions – well into the modern era. One such example is the tolerance exhibited towards the Dönme, a group of converts that, though outwardly Muslim, adhered to many of their

former Jewish beliefs and rites. This stood in stark contrast to crypto-Jews in Europe who were persecuted, interrogated by the Inquisition to find if they were 'judaizing' in secret, and even burned at the stake. Another, later instance, is the autonomy that non-Muslim millets enjoyed during the Tanzimat era, culminating in separate governing bodies and constitutions for religious groups inside the Empire.

But from the late 1870s this was no longer the case. There are many reasons for the genocidal persecution of the Christian minorities – mainly the Armenians, Greeks and Assyrians – that took place between the 1890s and the 1920s. They include European governments' meddling in Ottoman internal affairs and demands to protect their coreligionists; A continuous threat to the Empire's survival posed mainly by the Russian and the Austro-Hungarian empires; and centrifugal nationalist tendencies among some Christian minorities.

My contribution will focus on the amalgamation of Islam and nationalism in both the Empire's governing elite and the public at large. Nationalist ideas crept into the empire during the 19th century in many garbs and manifested themselves in a series of ideologies, including Ottomanism, Turanism (or pan-Turkism), and even the first glimmers of an Anatolian-Turkish national movement. But whether based on history, territory, ethnicity or language, Islam was seen as an essential part of any nationalist ideology. This, of course, had an impact on the way the national community was imagined, but it also transformed Islam. While in previous times Christians and Jews were part and parcel of the internal makeup of the empire, now they were perceived as outsiders: hostile aliens, rebellious infidels, and people who did not belong in the nation by dint of being non-Muslims. The atrocities that took place in the three decades from 1894 to 1924 (and dragged on even until the 1960s) were in large part a consequence of that fateful shift.

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2025 by Palgrave Macmillan. Zeevi is a founding member of the Forum for Regional Thinking, and a frequent contributor to the daily press in Israel.

Nadia Zeldes

In the aftermath of the expulsion of 1492 from the lands of Malkhut Sefarad there was an unprecedented “explosion” of Jewish historical narratives. Modern scholarship refers to the proliferation of these writings as “The Golden Age” of Jewish historiography, but these works also reflect attempts at the reworking, accounting for, and explaining the trauma of uprooting, individual suffering, and the necessity of rebuilding Jewish identity. The sources I intend to discuss are: Ibn Verga’s *Shevet Yehudah*, The Elijah Capsali’s *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, Samuel Usque’s *Consolação às Tribulações de Israel* (Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel), and Joseph ha-Cohen *Emeq ha-Bakha* all written by exiled Jews in an attempt to give an account of Jewish history, starting in some cases with the biblical period, but always reaching up to their own times.

As opposed to mere pastoral admonitions or calls to repent, these narratives place the events in their historical context, and even the sins that led to punishment and exile are interpreted in rational terms of cause and effect. These features reflect Renaissance humanistic ideals, inasmuch as they are expressed in the style, reasoning, and attention to historical detail that characterize contemporary historiography, but they should also be understood as apologetic works intended to provide an account of the trauma suffered by the expellees, tales of heroism and martyrdom, ultimately offering consolation and redemption.

BIO: Dr. Nadia Zeldes is the author of *The Former Jews of This Kingdom - Sicilian Converts after the Expulsion (1492-1516)*, Brill Leiden, 2003; *Reading Jewish History in the Renaissance: Christians, Jews, and the Hebrew Sefer Josippon*, Lexington Books, 2020, and *From Mass Conversion to Expulsion: Jews and New Christians in the Kingdom of Naples (1492–1541)*, Routledge, 2024. She has also published numerous articles on Jewish - Christian encounters, with a focus on Southern Italy and Spain in the Late Middle-Ages and the Early Modern Period. Nadia Zeldes is currently affiliated with the

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Oded Zinger

Muhammad's encounter and subsequent conflict with the Jews of the Hijāz are a central plot in the prophet's biography. However, while these events are told in substantial detail in the Islamic historiographic tradition, medieval Jewish historiographic tradition is almost completely silent about them. This talk will examine this silence as a historical problem and argue that when we come to the 10th-12th centuries this silence is deliberate. Instead, traditional Jewish historical narratives are invested in portraying the first encounter with Islam in peaceful and cooperation mode. The second (and larger) part of the talk will explore several medieval Jewish sources that were not preserved along traditional lines of preservation and are only known through their survival in the 'sacred trash' of the Cairo Geniza. These sources attest to a variety of ways in which medieval Jews coped with the traumatic events at the Hijāz, including parody, subversion and appropriation.

BIO: Dr. Oded Zinger teaches at the Department of Jewish History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His research focuses on issues of gender and law among the Jews of the Medieval Islamic World. His first book, *Living With the Law: Gender and Community Among the Jews of Medieval Egypt*, came out last year with University of Pennsylvania Press.