



# SCHOLION

SCHOLION - INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH CENTER  
IN THE HUMANITIES AND JEWISH STUDIES

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## Scholion's Academic Committee

## and the Mandel Postdoctoral Fellowship Lecture Marathon

### January 12, 2012

Due to the broadening of Scholion's mandate to the full range of the humanities, our academic committee took leave of several ex officio members and also of two members from abroad who faithfully served for a decade: Prof. David Ruderman of the University of Pennsylvania and Prof. Peter Schäfer of Princeton. In their stead we welcomed two new members from abroad – Prof. Peter N. Miller of Bard College, New York, and Prof. Judith Olszowy-Schlanger of the Sorbonne – and three from Hebrew University's Faculty of Humanities: Prof. Malka Rappaport Hovav (Linguistics), Prof. Edwin Seroussi (Musicology), and Prof. David Shulman (Comparative Religion and East Asian Studies). Our most sincere thanks to the former members, who saw Scholion through its early stages, and to the new members of the committee, who have agreed to accept the responsibility for the next stage.

Indeed, their task was onerous. Scholion's broadened mandate and our growing reputation, perhaps combined with the effect of the economic crunch on academic positions in Israel and abroad, pushed up the number of applicants for Mandel Fellowships by fifty percent, to one hundred and sixteen. If only we had more than two fellowships to offer! After preliminary screenings

narrowed that mass of files – each one of them a person, a family, a career – down to a medium-sized list, the academic committee met in December and chose eight candidates to lecture in the annual marathon.

The marathon is, traditionally, a nerve-racking experience for the finalists. At the recommendation of some of the current Mandel Fellows, veterans of that process, we introduced a few innovations to make it as humane as possible, and to underline that being a Mandel finalist is itself a great honor: current Fellows contacted them in advance to help guide them; the evening prior to the marathon we held a reception for the candidates together with members of the committee



Dr. Katelyn Mesler

and Mrs. Annette Hochstein, (former president of the Mandel Foundation-Israel and its main liaison with Scholion); and we also published a brochure – now on our website – with information about the finalists and abstracts of their lectures.

The marathon was well-attended (usually around sixty people in the audience), and each of the lectures was followed by several minutes of discussion and questions raised by members of the audience, whether innocently or provocatively.

After the marathon, the finalists met with the academic committee, which reconvened the next day to make its decisions. After a thorough discussion the eight

candidates were ranked, and Dr. Katelyn Mesler and Dr. Joseph Witztum were chosen to be Mandel Fellows for 2012-2015. Dr. Witztum studied Arabic language and literature at the Hebrew University and then pursued his doctorate at Princeton University; his research at Scholion will focus upon the impact of Syriac Christianity on the Quran, the comparison of intra-Quranic parallels, and the question of Islamic influence upon late Jewish midrashim. Dr. Mesler studied comparative religions at Arizona State University and at Northwestern University; her research at Scholion will focus upon Jewish magic and aspects of antisemitism in Christian Europe from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. After accepting

the fellowship Dr. Mesler was invited to join a 2012/13 research group at the University of Pennsylvania's Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, and for that reason gave up the first year of her Mandel Fellowship – which we then awarded to another of the finalists, Dr. Ayala Eliyahu. Dr. Eliyahu studied Arabic language and Jewish thought at the Hebrew University; her research at Scholion will focus upon the thought of Abu al-Barakat al-Baghdadi, a Jewish philosopher who converted to Islam in the twelfth century, and also upon the relationship between Kabbala and Islamic mysticism in medieval Spain. Dr. Mesler is expected to join us, for two years, in the summer of 2013.



Dr. Joseph Witztum



Dr. Ayala Eliyahu



# Jews and Cities

This research group concluded its three years at Scholion (2009-2012) with a bang in the spring of 2012, first by taking the lead on the first leg of our annual field trip (see separate item elsewhere in this newsletter) and then by running two highly successful conferences. The first, “Why Jerusalem?” (April 16-17), began with two lectures on Jerusalem in literature: Robert Alter (visiting from Berkeley) spoke on Jerusalem in the Bible, and Sidra Dekoven Ezrahi examined Yehuda Amichai’s reading of the Bible in Jerusalem. These were followed by two studies of issues of identity in Jerusalem – Eli Lederhendler’s discussion of American Jews’ role in fashioning pluralistic social institutions in historic and contemporary Jerusalem, and Dvir Tzur’s analysis of a particular Jerusalem neighborhood as a crossroads of contested local identities. An overflow audience, including people crowding around the windows in the adjacent courtyard, testified to the great interest these lectures aroused. The next day Prof. Alter conducted a lively workshop, for graduate students and colleagues, on “The City as Labyrinth in Kafka’s Narratives,” analyzing several texts, from Kafka’s *Amerika* and other writings, that had been circulated in advance.

Two months later (June 10-12) the group held an international conference entitled “Jews and Cities: Modern Encounters and Solitudes.” The program opened with a keynote presentation by Steven J. Zipperstein (Stanford), who – using a wide array of sources from various collections – traced the events leading up to the Kishinev pogrom of 1903 as well as those that contributed to the transformation of Kishinev from a provincial town into a symbol of anti-Jewish violence. In line with Scholion’s emphasis on cross-disciplinary conversation, Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi responded to Zipperstein’s presentation with remarks and questions from the perspective of Jewish literature.

The following morning, Barbara E. Mann of the Jewish Theological Seminary conducted an intensive workshop on “Tel-Aviv: Holy City.” Mann led the workshop’s participants in close readings of selected Hebrew poems in which Tel-Aviv features as both the cradle of the new Jewish society in British Palestine and a pivotal center of Israeli culture today. That seminar laid the foundation for the next two panels, which addressed aspects of urban politics and culture in Israeli cities. The first, chaired by Louise Bethlehem of the Hebrew University, was devoted to “Jewish Sovereignty and Urban Space,” with papers by two members

of the “Jews and Cities” group (Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi and Yakir Englander) and one by another colleague from the Hebrew University, Hillel Cohen. DeKoven Ezrahi explored the shtetl of literary imagination; Englander examined the intersection of religious institutions, gender roles, and public space in contemporary Haredi society; and Cohen looked at competing Palestinian and Israeli chronologies of Jerusalem. The second panel, “The Production of Urban Culture in Israel,” was chaired by Shai Ginsburg of Duke University and included presentations by three members of the Jews and Cities group: Naama Meishar, Dvir Tzur, and Gali Drucker Bar-Am. Looking at Israeli cities through architectural, literary and linguistic lenses, respectively, the three delivered fascinating presentations that explored social and ethnic boundaries in these urban contexts.

The final day of the conference focused on the intersection between Jews and cities in American, European, and Middle Eastern centers. First, Lucette Valensi of the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (Paris) led a workshop discussion of the historical development of the Jewish community of Tunis. Valensi looked, in particular, at the location and character of the Jewish, Muslim, and French-Christian spaces in the city under French colonial rule. That discussion of Jews in a colonial city was followed by a panel chaired by Roni Ratzkovsky of Tel Aviv University that

was dedicated to the different ways that Jews defined their relationship to cities as varied as New York, Warsaw, and Baghdad. Two members of the group, Eli Lederhendler and Scott Ury, examined, respectively, narratives of “first Jews” in American cities and the historian Jacob Shatzky’s complicated relationship to his native Warsaw. They were joined by a former member of the group, Aziza Khazzoom, now at Indiana University, who undertook a comparison of Iraqi and Polish immigrants to Israel, exploring links between country of origin and immigrant experience.

The final substantive panel was dedicated to looking at Budapest as an “imperial city” and featured papers by group members Michael K. Silber and Sara Yanovsky, as well as one by a semester-long guest of the group – Michael L. Miller of Central European University, Budapest. Silber’s paper examined the inclusion and exclusion of Jews in and from the Hungarian National Guard during the euphoric days of the 1848 Revolution; Yanovsky dealt with the dilemmas that the Jewish community faced in establishing a specifically Jewish secondary school; and Miller addressed the key role played by Jews in the city’s stock exchange. All three looked at the strategies of Jewish emancipation and accommodation on the backdrop of Budapest, a national and imperial city.

A concluding roundtable discussion brought together many of the different ideas and topics raised by group members,

guests, and other conference participants as well as questions that group members have wrestled with over the past three years of collective readings, seminars, and conversations. In particular, they debated whether Jewish historians approach these topics from a different perspective than generalists and what scholars have to gain, and to lose, by embracing inter-disciplinary approaches to the study of the various tensions, contradictions, and symbioses that characterize the many connections between Jews and cities. Apart from its particular application to the study of Jews and cities, debates such as this are part of ongoing discussions of the more general questions relating to the work of research groups, and of centers such as Scholion, that seek to foster interdisciplinary work and broad perspectives.

While we look forward to its conference volume, we’ll miss the daily presence of the members of this dynamic and vibrant group. The senior members will go back to their regular positions, the juniors – to the continued building of their careers. Judging by the bevy of prizes they received this past summer – postdoctoral fellowships from the Fulbright and Guggenheim Foundations (Yakir Englander), the Cherrick Center for the Study of Zionism, the Yishuv and the State of Israel (Dvir Tzur), Yad Ben-Zvi and Hebrew University’s Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies (Gali Drucker Bar-Am), and Naama Meishar’s recent visiting fellowship at Dumbarton Oaks – they will all go far.





# A Series of Lectures and Movies

The “Eros, Family and Community” research group has decided to invest in projects contributing to the community over the course of its three years at Scholion. In its first year, the group offered, in association with the Jerusalem Cinematheque, a series of lectures on its theme as reflected in film. During 2012/13 the group will offer a similar series in conjunction with plays at Jerusalem’s Khan Theater, and in 2013/14, the group’s final year, it hopes to have an exhibition at the Israel Museum.

The films shown at the Cinematheque were chosen by the senior members of the group according to the members’ different fields of concentration, and on the basis of the films’ representational character. Each of the films encapsulates the complexity embedded in the tensions between Eros, family, and community.

In mid-December the series opened with “Dangerous Liaisons” (1988), directed by Stephen Frears. In his lecture preceding the film, Prof. Yoav Rinon focused on the centrality of Eros in eighteenth-century France as reflected both in the book by Choderlos de Laclos and in the film based upon it. The main focus of the lecture was the association between Eros and social context: while the French aristocracy had plenty of leisure, it often lacked the ability to direct it to meaningful ends and, therefore, tended to channel its barren energy toward Eros. Not surprisingly, this engendered catastrophic results.

In the second evening of the series, Prof. Ruth Fine discussed Cuba’s 1959 revolution, which brought radical political, social, and economic change to the country. Castro’s government also inaugurated an era of persecution and suffering for those who did not fit the regime’s ideology, even with regard to such matters as sexual behavior and erotic writing. Reinaldo Arenas (1943-1990), a remarkable writer who openly declared his homosexuality, was one of the most notable victims of this persecution. The film “Before Night Falls” (2001, directed by Julian Schnabel), which was shown after Prof. Fine’s lecture, is based upon Arenas’ posthumous book of the same name, which is a testimony to his struggle and a desperate cry for the individual’s freedom to love, and to write, according to his or her own desire.

The third evening opened with Dr. Shimrit Peled’s lecture on “Land as Andromeda: Eros, Land, and National Identity.” Nationalism has an intricate and conflicting relationship with eroticism. On the one hand, nationalism draws its notions of bonding from erotic conceptions of attraction, closeness, and protection of the private domain. On the other hand, however, when it comes to nationalism Eros is not totally free to choose its object. Rather, it is subject to national limitations: nationalism determines, to a large degree, the erotic objects with which the national individual may engage and the way in which that may be done. The relationship between nationalism and Eros in the Zionist context is related to Jewish identity, but also to the establishment of the Jewish subject as a universal individual. Zionism as a national movement stresses the individual’s private needs, but at the same time creates the peer group and the citizens, devaluing the family and the intimate relationship of individuals and sacrificing them for national needs. Conflicting considerations such as these served to introduce the Israeli film “Crossfire”, directed by Gideon Ganani (1988).

The series ended with Prof. Yosef Kaplan’s lecture about “The Girl with the Pearl Earring”. The novel by Tracy Chevalier (1999), and the film based on it and directed by Peter Weber (2003), were inspired by one of the most famous paintings of the Dutch artist, Johannes Vermeer (1665). Women appear, usually as isolated figures, in most of the thirty-four paintings that have been securely attributed to Vermeer. Kaplan’s lecture addressed the place of women in Vermeer’s work, against the background of his period and that of the city of Delft, where he lived and worked.

The series was well-received. A recurring comment from those who attended was that, beyond enhancing their understanding and enjoyment of these particular films, the lectures also broadened their horizons in general, opening them to the issues this group is studying. The experience gained through this series will help the group design its evenings at the Khan Theater during the coming year.



# Lounge Seminars of the Mandel Fellows

As opposed to members of Scholion research groups, Mandel Postdoctoral Fellows pursue their own projects without any structured sounding-boards. This year we initiated a new series of lunchtime seminars in order to afford the Fellows a forum in which they could present their ideas and papers in an early stage of preparation, in the hope that the opportunity to present their projects, and the ensuing discussion, will help them complete their work. As it happened, the first two seminars dealt with antiquity and the last three – with issues of modern culture.

The first two sessions also dealt with rather similar issues concerning the Jews in antiquity – in the east and west respectively. First, in December, Dr. Shai Secunda presented a paper that theorizes a number of approaches to reading the Babylonian Talmud in its Iranian context. After considering methods adopted from history of religions and literary theory, he eventually focused upon how a version of one particular literary approach, intertextuality, can help scholars read the Talmud contextually and with sophistication. Then, in a seminar in January, Dr. Yair

Furstenberg turned westward and asked whether religious communities in the Graeco-Roman world had a common language. Focusing on notions and praxis concerning purity and impurity, he traced the parallel function of purity concepts as a defining factor for various groups: priests, philosophers, Jews, and Christians. Tentatively, he addressed the way these parallel concepts were expressed in the shaping of defined social frameworks that stood out from their political and social context.

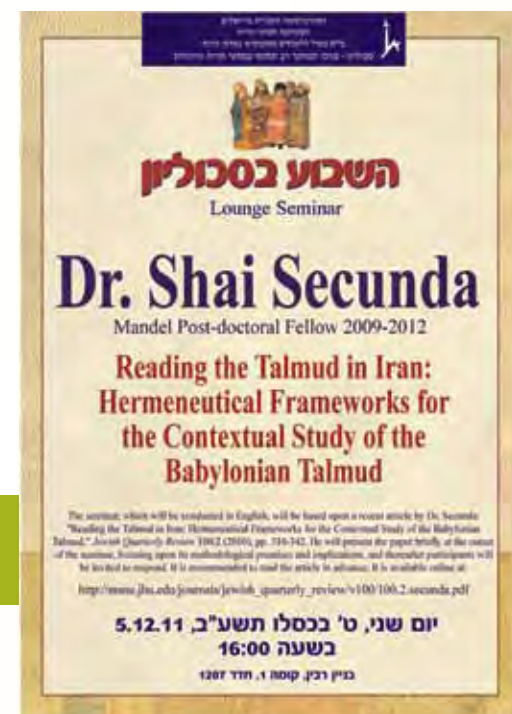
The three seminars held during the second semester were all devoted to more modern materials and issues. In March, Dr. Maoz Kahana argued that although Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534-1572) is usually known as a mystic thinker, the impact of his thought upon Jewish ritual praxis was much greater. In his presentation, Kahana focused upon the striking contrast between the widespread popular acceptance of Lurianic halachic practices, on the one hand, and the limited extent to which

sophisticated Lurianic theory became known and accepted among Jews at large, apart from small circles of “specialists,” on the other. The comparison of the medieval Ashkenazic custom of self-flagellation on the eve of Yom Kippur to the way it was redesigned in the context of Lurianic thought served to illustrate this contrast and to deepen the understanding of the specific qualities of the Lurianic ethos as a central factor in the creative halachic mechanisms that developed modern Jewish ritual.

Moving from self-flagellation to self-indulgence, Dr. Yair Lipshitz addressed, in his April seminar, a utopian work composed in 1918 by Boris Schatz, the founder of the Bezalel Academy of Arts. In particular, Lipshitz explored the ways the Song of Songs informs Schatz’s “Garden of Love,” where people go to experience sexual relations with no strings attached. The tensions between the two performances of the biblical text that Schatz describes in this work, one in the garden and one in the theater within the garden, illuminate

the complex dynamics of eroticism and space in early Zionist thought.

Dr. Dalit Assouline, on the verge of leaving us for an appointment as lecturer at the University of Haifa, concluded this series in late May with parts of her study of the way the Yiddish of Hasidim may reflect their gender and their membership in a particular Hasidic sect. Basing her analysis upon hundreds of hours of recorded texts, she showed how the dialects of Hasidim change according to their move from one sect to another, or as a result of marriage between members of different sects. She illustrated these phenomena especially on the basis of her study of the Yiddish of the Skverer Hasidim of New Square, New York. The group originated in the Ukraine, and its rebbe is a direct descendent of the founding Ukrainian dynasty, but in post-W.W. II America many Jews of Polish and Hungarian origin joined – and, in various ways, subtle and other, their Yiddish has come to be more similar to the rebbe’s.



Dr. Assouline analyzed the main changes in the contemporary Yiddish dialect used by Skverer Hasidim, and its sociolinguistic role as a communal dialect identifying the speakers as members of that particular group.

Apart from its original goal of affording our postdoctoral fellows a forum, in the course of the year another desideratum became apparent: the need for serious frameworks in which members of the different research groups can meet each other. Until now the annual study-tour has been the only structured context for such interaction among members of different groups. In light of this year’s experience, next year we will expand the experiment: every fourth Thursday we will hold, instead of the separate seminars of each group, a joint lunchtime seminar for all members of Scholion. Hopefully this will allow our scholars a fuller opportunity to get to know one another and to enrich their scholarship from more varied perspectives.



## Annual Research Field Trip:

# Tel-Aviv, Nitzan, and Rehovot-in-the-Negev

March 15-16, 2012

As part of the Scholion field trip this year, the “Jews and Cities” research group took us to Tel-Aviv and addressed, at several learning stations along the way that exemplify some of the “fault lines” urban societies reveal, questions about the variability of the human and physical landscape in cities. We started the day with a lecture by Prof. Eli Lederhendler at the Zionist Organization of America House on Ibn Gabirol Street, which today is a meeting place and cultural center serving the greater Tel-Aviv community (and beyond). Lederhendler reviewed the particular history of the building, in terms of its connection to the Zionist movement in the United States and its intention to make its presence felt in the city. In the first instance, that meant a social and cultural center for English-speakers living or visiting in Tel-Aviv – which drew upon earlier efforts of American Zionists to gain footholds in Palestine, including in nearby communities that have since become suburbs of greater Tel-Aviv. Nonetheless, the fact is that Tel-Aviv and its environs are not generally considered in terms of an American presence, and that made it possible to look at the human landscape of the city from a new angle, and thus to consider heterogeneity as a fundamental part of the city’s existence—a quality not transmitted by the old “Hebrew city” rhetoric.

The ZOA House also supplied Lederhendler an occasion to explore the sociology of public urban space. Public venues, such as this one, are meant to provide social encounters, in the context of urban life that puts a premium on individual privacy. Encounters with other city people therefore come to depend, to a large degree, on places that are set aside as public spaces – and are, therefore, structured events, taking place in zones set aside from the protected “inner” spaces of our homes.

At the next station, the sunken garden of the city-center Culture Square (Kikar Hatarbut), landscape architect Naama Meishar used several perspectives on urban public space to comment on the recently inaugurated square, which was designed by the artist Dani Karavan. Meishar showed how, apart from the traditional provisions for using the square for everyday leisure activities and to allow for non-motorized circulation, an element of spectacle was also integrated into the design of the square, as well as into other public spaces that are located in the city’s center. Spectacle landscapes in the city’s center and shores serve as an imagined and physical infrastructure for the municipality’s aspiration to turn Tel-Aviv-Jaffa into a “World City.” This ambition perpetuates an ongoing policy of concentrating intellectual, creative and financial capital in the landscape architecture of the city’s center and coastal areas, while investing less in the less prosperous neighborhoods. The social agendas – and aesthetics – of those other neighborhoods were forcefully introduced into the public spaces of the city’s center during the massive social justice protests in the summer of 2011. Meishar argued that the occupations, protest parades, and street discourses exposed the neglected but vital political role played by urban public spaces. These should hopefully encourage new thinking about public space’s distribution, programming, and design in the theory and practice of urban landscape architecture and planning.

Next came Dr. Dvir Tzur’s presentation at the corner of Rothschild and Herzl Streets, the home of Tel-Aviv’s first kiosk and first streetlight. Tzur discussed literary representations of that corner, of the streetlight and the kiosk, focusing upon literary texts by Nachum Gutman and Yizhar Smilansky. Both texts create a connection between the theme of light and that of culture. In addition, both texts point up the strong connection between leisure and social fabric: for both writers, the streetlight and the kiosk are the starting points of culture and society, hence the starting point of urban Jewish life in Tel-Aviv. The upshot is that leisure culture and urban joie de vivre are no longer condemned as being at the opposite pole from the ideal of sober and laborious “Zionist” working of the land. Rather, they are praised in the context of a new Zionist-Jewish culture that combines ideals with everyday life.

We ended our half-day tour of Tel-Aviv at the Bund House on Kalischer Street, where Gali Drucker Bar-Am lectured about the history of the

Jewish Labor Bund organization, which was founded in the Russian Empire in the late nineteenth century. Drucker Bar-Am also spoke about the uniqueness of the Israeli branch of the Bund, which was founded after the Holocaust and was not only universalist (as the original Bund) but also Israeli-nationalist.

From Tel-Aviv we proceeded south to Nitzan (near Ashkelon), which houses many of the former occupants of the Gush Katif settlements and also a “Legacy Center” dedicated to the memory of those settlements, evacuated in the summer of 2005. Here Osnat Suued of the “Archaeologies of Memory” group, who is studying the development of the narrative of that evacuation, discussed recent research on “refugeeness” and its social construction. Our visit to the “Legacy Center” allowed us to examine the meanings attributed to displacement, especially the sophisticated cultural complex through which the former residents of Gush Katif seek to assert their centrality in Israeli society although they were exiled to its margins after they were uprooted; their construction of the event is also meant to produce a traumatization of the displacement in order to avoid future displacements. That cultural complex is not just “data” derived from demographic and economic reality. Rather, it is a social product that requires shaping and maintenance by many participants, especially the displaced themselves. The nature of this product, both as analyzed by Suued and as presented to us by the Legacy Center’s spokeswoman, occasioned lively debate in the bus following our visit, as well as a follow-up seminar by Suued a couple of weeks later.

In the evening, at the guest-house of Kibbutz Mashabei Sadeh (near the Egyptian border), we convened for a general discussion of Scholion’s goals and activities. One major outcome of this discussion is reported elsewhere in this newsletter, at the end of the article about the lounge seminars. Then, the next morning we packed ourselves into an oversized dune buggy and bumped our way through the Haluza sands to the ancient town known as “Rehovot-in-the-Negev.” Our visit there was led by Prof. Yoram Tsafrir of Hebrew University’s Institute of Archaeology, who conducted several excavations of the site during the 1970s. The surprising rain which escorted us throughout the tour did not intimidate Tsafrir from taking us across the town from its southern end to its most northern church. In contrast to other ancient Nabatean towns in the Negev, Rehovot did not suffer from reuse of its building blocks at later times, and it was an amazing view from the highest point in town to see the endless heaps of blocks extending over a very large area in the middle of the desert. The main issue raised by the finds was the debate whether the town suffered from a sudden collapse as a result of the Muslim conquest or whether there was, rather, a longer process of decline related or unrelated to the conquest. Several opinions were expressed and the question remains unanswered, even after a lively dialogue and an impromptu debate between Tsafrir and Prof. Ronnie Ellenblum, who passed the microphone back and forth between them on the bus on the way back to Jerusalem.





Scholion's embrace of the humanities at large influenced the choice of the new research group for the years 2012-2015: "Picture Power – Cultural Continuity in Changing Worlds – The Representation of Government in the Near East from the Late Fourth Millennium BCE to the Early Modern Period (ca. 3200 BCE – 1600 CE)". Since the dawn of urban civilization in the Near East, rulers and their retinues have

propagated ideological messages regarding their legitimacy, status, obligations, and rights. The visual expressions of royal ideology are the subject of the group's research.

The group aims to explore the continuity and survival of visual aspects of Near Eastern royal presentations within the ever-changing religious, cultural, ideological, and political frameworks of the region. Despite the use of an array of languages

rooted in different, and at times conflicting, religions, fluctuating demographic components, and unending transformations of governing ideologies and political agendas, ancient imagery resurfaces again and again in the Middle East. Indeed, remote concepts and visual symbolism of the kingly past never totally

vanished from this area, but were treasured throughout six millennia of Near Eastern civilization.

The issue of cultural continuity lies at the core of this group's research; it will compare royal imagery of different periods, explore its social, political, and religious meaning, and examine the dynamics of its survival throughout Near Eastern history.

Through the analysis of royal visual representations and pictorial metaphors, and the comparison of pictures with texts, the members of "Picture Power" will study the unique role of pictorial expression and its divergence from textual presentation; the two models of presentation do not necessarily accord with or complement one another. This tension between words and pictures reveals hidden, often ambivalent and unsolved cultural tropes in a given period or civilization.

The group's members are: Dana Brostowski Gilboa and Prof. Rachel Milstein of the Dept. of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies; Dr. Arlette David, Liat Naeh, and Prof. Tallay Ornan (Archaeology); Raanan Eichler (Bible); Anna Gutgarts-Weinberger (History); and Dr. Galit Noga-Banai (History of Art).

From left: Dana Brostowski Gilboa, Dr. Arlette David, Dr. Galit Noga-Banai, Anna Gutgarts-Weinberger, Prof. Rachel Milstein



## “Archaeologies of Memory”

### Tours in the Footsteps of King Herod the Great

The “Archaeologies of Memory” group addresses the historical and social processes of development and destruction, the remembrance of destruction, and the processing of it in historical and contemporary context. It devoted 2011/12 to issues concerning historical memory and with the way it is fashioned, and, in that context, devoted two field trips, in January, to the way King Herod (d. 4 BCE) very consciously, and with enormous efforts, attempted to fashion the way he was to be remembered. These trips focused on Herodium, a hill near Bethlehem which Herod designed to be his memorial.

First the group visited the site itself. Guided by Roi Porat, a member of the Hebrew University's excavation team at Herodium, it was allowed to see the many points of interest at the site (some of which are usually closed to the public), including the theater, the reception room with frescoes behind it, and the ruins of the mausoleum. Porat also gave us some insight into Herod's considerations, and the processes that had to be completed, in turning the palace into a massive site of commemoration. The group was accompanied by several members of Scholion, including its academic head, Daniel Schwartz, who supplied details about the king and his times.

Somewhat later the group visited the Israel Museum as guests of Dudi Mevorah, curator of the Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine Periods. Together with Dr. Sylvia Rozenberg, senior curator of classical archaeology at the museum, and others, Mevorah is currently preparing an exhibition about Herod's last days that will include findings from Herodian sites in Israel, including the mausoleum, the sarcophagus, and the frescoes from Herodium. He shared with the group, in talks both at the model of Jerusalem in the late Second Temple Period (formerly at the Holyland Hotel) and in the Museum's storage rooms, which gave us a look at the conservation and reconstruction work in preparation for the exhibition, something of the Museum's goals and considerations in preparing the exhibition, and of the way they impact upon the selection and presentation of materials.

Given the fact that Herod himself was very aware of the question how he was to be remembered, and took such an active role in fashioning it, but given also the stark contrast between the magnificence of his building projects, on the one hand, and his generally terrible image in literary sources on the other (as set out by Prof. Schwartz in a brief lecture during the Museum visit), these two fieldtrips made a major contribution to this group's efforts to conceptualize the processes to which its research is devoted.



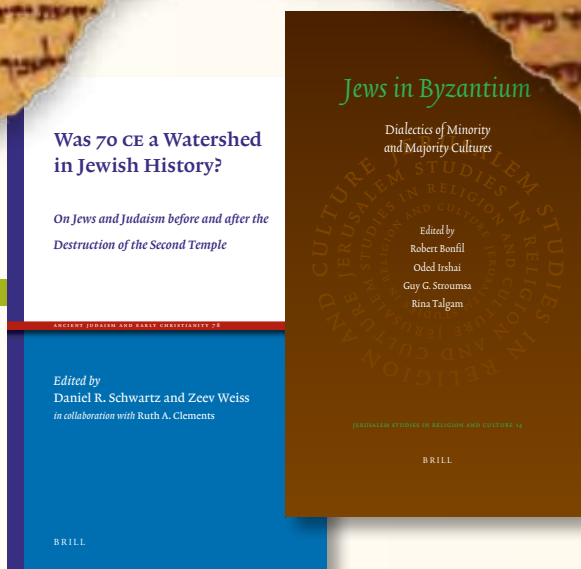


# Scholion Library

The three first volumes in this series, which are in Hebrew, have now been joined by two in English, both published by Brill in 2012. *Jews in Byzantium: Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures* was produced by the 2003-2006 “Jews in Byzantium” group and edited by its four senior members: Robert Bonfil, Oded Irshai, Guy G. Stroumsa, and Rina Talgam. The volume attempts to fill a void in Byzantine studies – the history and culture of Byzantine Jewry and its impact on the surrounding and convoluted Byzantine world, from Late Antiquity to the fall of Byzantium (1453). The thirty-five articles assembled in this hefty volume, by leading scholars in the field, present bird’s-eye views of the cultural history of the Byzantine Jewry, alongside an array of surveys and in-depth studies of the dialectics of the religious, literary, economic, and visual-representational world of this alien minority within the surrounding Byzantine hegemonic world.

*Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History? On Jews and Judaism before and after the Destruction of the Second Temple*, edited by Daniel R. Schwartz and Zeev Weiss in collaboration with Ruth A. Clements, is based on the 2009 conference of our “From Religion of Place to Religion of Community”

research group. The group’s work focused on evaluating the extent to which the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple, and the concomitant end of sacrificial worship, had broader implications. What really changed due to the events of 70? What, in contrast, was already changing before 70, and what remained basically – or “virtually” – unchanged despite it? How do the Diaspora, which was long used to Temple-less Judaism, and early Christianity, which was born around the same time, fit in? The volume presents the papers of twenty scholars who discussed these questions from the points of view of their respective fields of specialization.



## SHORT UPDATES >>

>> New appointees: Our two 2009-2012 Mandel Fellows will be moving on – Dr. Dalit Assouline was appointed to a lectureship at the University of Haifa, and Dr. Shai Secunda was selected to join the Martin Buber Society of Fellows at the Hebrew University. Dr. Yair Furstenberg (Mandel Fellow, 2011-2013) was appointed to a lectureship at Ben-Gurion University (Beersheba), but will stay on at Scholion for another year before taking up that position.

>> Precedent-setters: Dr. Yakir Englander and Dr. Dvir Tzur, junior members of the 2009-2012 “Jews and Cities” group, completed their PhDs during their stay in Scholion – thus creating a laudable precedent and challenge for their successors.

>> Local Boy Makes Good: Prof. Yosef Kaplan, of our 2011-2014 “Eros, Family, and Community” group, received an Advanced Grant of the European Research Council (ERC) for his research project on the western Sephardic communities in the early modern period.



Dr. Dalit Assouline



Dr. Shai Secunda



Dr. Yair Furstenberg



Dr. Yakir Englander



Dr. Dvir Tzur



Prof. Yosef Kaplan



Prof. Kenneth Moss



Prof. Michael Miller

>> During the summer months of 2012 the “Jews and Cities” group hosted Prof. Kenneth Moss, Director of the Jewish Studies Program at Johns Hopkins University. Prof. Moss’ work on a forthcoming study of Jewish concepts of the nation in interwar Poland focuses on the cultural and political environments that developed in specific urban centers such as Warsaw, Vilna, and Krakow, and how those particular environments influenced conceptualizations and practices of the Jewish nation in the interwar era.

>> The “Jews and Cities” group also hosted Prof. Michael Miller of Central European University (Budapest). A recurrent guest of the group, during this year’s stay he pursued his research on relations between Jews and Gentiles in various parts of the Habsburg Empire, especially in the public sphere. Prof. Miller also took part in the group’s concluding conference, with a lecture on Jews in the Budapest stock exchange and Hungary’s financial elite, 1864-1944.

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