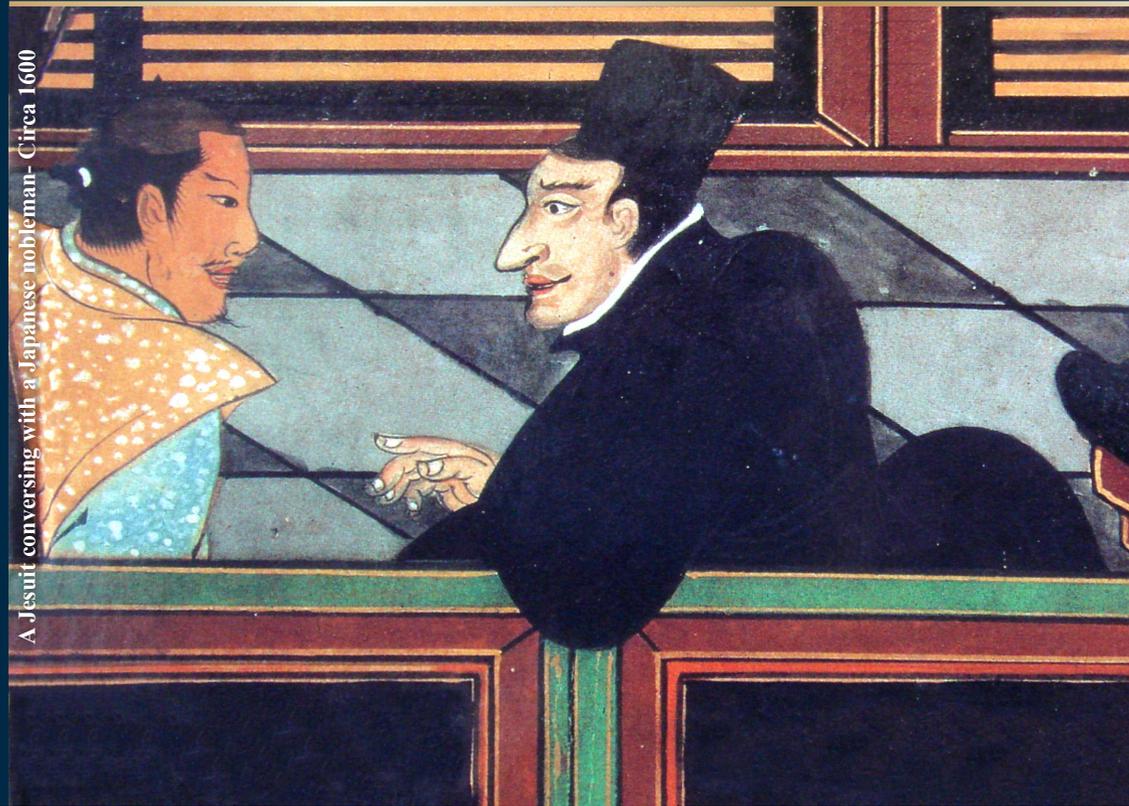




Center for the Study of Conversion & Inter-Religious Encounters



A Jesuit conversing with a Japanese nobleman - Circa 1600

studioR.com

Tel 972-8-6428377 | Fax 972-8-6428386 | in.bgu.ac.il/en/csoc | facebook.com/BGU.CSOC

Supported by the I-CORE Program of the Planning and Budgeting Committee and The Israel Science Foundation (grant No. 1754/12)



About us

Conversion from one religion to another is a significant moment, not only for the person converting, but also for the religious community abandoned and the one adopted. Historical materials contain records of thousands of inter-religious conversions (individual as well as mass conversions), which can shed light on religious, social, political and legal phenomena relevant for understanding how religious communities function, how they deal with questions of identity and how and why they erect boundaries. Conversion can also illuminate the internal politics and structures of a religious community, how they interact with those perceived as “others”, as well as the dynamics of minority-majority cultures living side by side. This Center of Research Excellence provides an analytical framework for examining political, social, religious and legal issues, communal and religious boundaries, the transfer of knowledge, and the ability to compare the process of conversion over long periods of time and between different geographical settings. The questions raised also shed light on the role of religion in the modern world as well as the interplay of belief systems and legal and social structures in an era of hybrid identities and multi-cultural societies.

The Center for the Study of Conversion and Inter-Religious Encounters (CSOC) is working on the creation of a database that will attempt to record every known record of conversion from one religion to another. The data being collected by members of the Center with the active cooperation of an international group of scholars is then digitalized and translated into English, so that the database will be available for anyone interested. The accumulated data will provide the raw materials for further research, which will allow scholars to compare and relate to a wide range of issues dealing with conversion over a large geographical area and period and present new interpretative outcomes.

The group selected to establish this Center of Research Excellence is a group under the scientific management of *Prof. Chaim (Harvey) Hames* from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, consisting of researchers from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Bar-Ilan University, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Open University of Israel and the University of Haifa.

Who are we?

The Center is a collaborative interdisciplinary project made up of both established scholars and researchers at the early stages of their academic careers from different disciplines and universities in Israel who examine the issue of conversion from a great variety of perspectives.

Scientific Board

Prof. Chaim (Harvey) Hames, General History, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Prof. Ram Ben-Shalom, Jewish History, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Dr. Ephraim Shoham-Steiner, Jewish History, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Prof. Claude Stuczynski, General History, Bar-Ilan University

Dr. Nimrod Hurvitz, Middle Eastern Studies, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Senior I-CORE Members

Prof. Daniel J. Lasker, Jewish Thought, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Prof. Ora Limor, History, Philosophy and Judaic studies, The Open University of Israel

Prof. Yair Neuman, Education, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Prof. Avraham-Rami Reiner, Jewish Thought, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Dr. Uriel Simonsohn, Middle Eastern Studies, University of Haifa

Dr. Uri Zvi Shachar, General History, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Dr. Yaniv Fox, History, Philosophy and Judaic studies, Bar-Ilan University

Prof. Ronit Ricci, Comparative Religion and Asian Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

In addition, there are 13 post-doctoral fellows, 2 research fellows and 9 doctoral and M.A. students.

CSOC Website

<http://in.bgu.ac.il/en/csoc/Pages/default.aspx>

The Conversion Database

<http://in.bgu.ac.il/en/csoc/Pages/Conversion-Database.aspx>

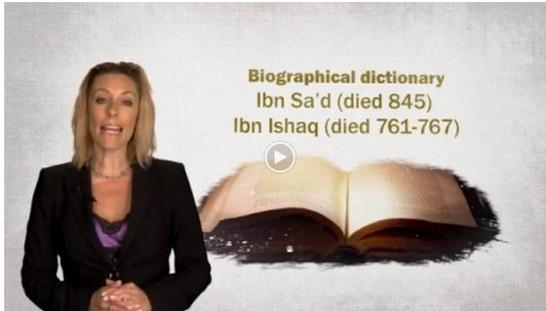
One of the main aims of our Center is the creation of a database that is attempting to record as many records of conversion from one religion to another during the Middle Ages and Early-Modern periods as possible. The database will provide as much biographical information available from the sources; list the place of conversion, date (or approximate date), age of convert, motives for conversion, describe the process as recorded in the sources, former and present religion, career and professional status before and after conversion, familial ties and connections with other converts, reaction to the conversion, list the works written by the convert and works that refer to the convert, languages used by the convert and provide a bibliography of all the available primary and secondary sources. These materials are in English as well, so that the database will be useful for those without the linguistic training necessary to read the primary sources.

The data collected by members of the Center, with the active cooperation of an international group of scholars, is being digitalized and made available for anyone interested. The final result will be a powerful fully searchable online reference tool which can then be used by scholars to compare and relate to a wide range of issues dealing with conversion. The immediate and major contribution of the database will be in allowing us to learn more about the socio-economic status of the converts, their professions, their educational and cultural background; to discover whether gender is a leading factor in conversion; patterns of individual conversion and the conversion of whole communities; whether more people convert in an urban setting or in the countryside; and the familial ties and relations between proselytes and their previous co-religionists. The accumulated data will provide the raw materials for further research which will allow scholars to compare and relate to a wide range of issues dealing with conversion and religious identity over a large geographical area and time period.

At present, there are over 100 users, who are working on and using the database. Currently, the database consists of thousands of entries of individual and mass conversion and primary sources dealing with conversion. These entries are edited and then uploaded for open access.

Reading Conversion – an on-line course

The Center, in cooperation with the Open University of Israel, is creating a web based conversion course at postgraduate level in English, for lecturers and students around the world. The course material will include 24 units containing a 15 minutes podcast introducing the topic and an annotated original text (translated into English) which illustrates the subject being discussed. This course will be freely available on the web and can be studied individually or in a class setting.



International Conferences organized by the Center

The Center seeks to engage with scholars from around the world and to that end, arranges international conferences dealing with different aspects of conversion. These conferences are well attended and have increased the exposure of the Center as well as piqued interest in our work.

Debating Conversion in Different Historical Contexts

May 26th -29th, 2014

Conference Website:

<http://in.bgu.ac.il/en/csoc/Pages/dcdhc.aspx>

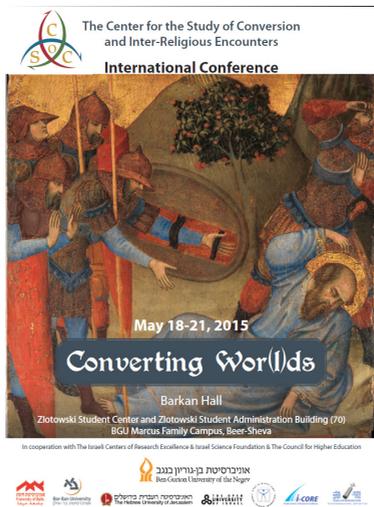


Converting Wor(l)ds

May 18th -21st ,2015

Conference Website:

[http://in.bgu.ac.il/en/csoc/Pages/Converting-Wor\(l\)ds.aspx](http://in.bgu.ac.il/en/csoc/Pages/Converting-Wor(l)ds.aspx)



Reading into Islamization

January 4th -7th, 2016

Conference Website:

<http://in.bgu.ac.il/en/csoc/Pages/Reading-into-Islamization.aspx>

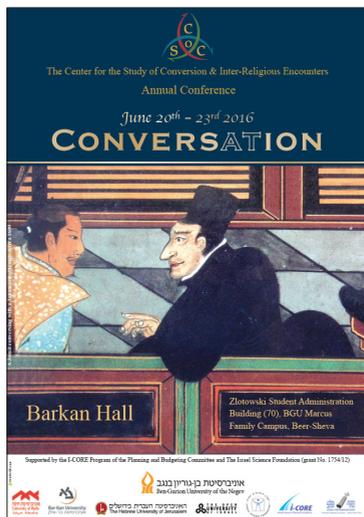


Conversation

June 20th – 23rd, 2016

Conference Website:

<http://in.bgu.ac.il/en/csoc/Pages/about-conversation.aspx>



Abraham Zacut - Science, Historiography, Talmud and Polemics

May 4th, 2015

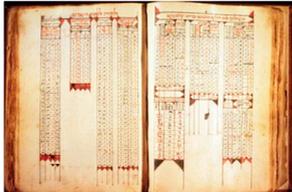

Center for the Study of Jewish Jewry

In Collaboration With:



Abraham Zacut
Science, Historiography, Talmud and Polemics

International Conference to Mark the
500th Anniversary of his Death



Monday, May 4th, 2015
Room 1002, Rabin Building, Mount Scopus Campus
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Western Esotericism between Religions: Conversions and Transformations (Annual Meeting)

June 8th, 2015

The Israel Network for Academic Study of Western Esotericism (INASWE)
5th annual meeting



**Western Esotericism between Religions:
Conversions and Transformations**

Monday 8 June 2015
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, Building 72, Room 538

10:00-10:30
Chair: Yossi Schwartz, Tel Aviv University
Opening: Rami Kessel, Head, The Goldstein-Goren International Center for Jewish Thought
Opening Lecture: Andreas Richter, Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH) Zurich, President of ESSWE
The Conversion of Esoterism

10:45-12:15
Chair: Ronit Chazan, University of Haifa
Alexia Bullock, Tel Aviv University
Ottavio Magnifico, The Jewish Tradition and the Neighboring Cultures
Gal Seder, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
Michal Shalev, How to Deal with Demons and Other Forms of Foreign Knowledge

13:30-15:00
Chair: Ronit Harel, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
Shoshana Meir, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
Rabbi Isaac and Hermeticism: The Strange Career of Isaac Blumenthal (Dr. Justus)
Rami Kessel, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
The Mysteries of Muhammad the Messenger

15:15-16:45
Chair: Ronit Harel, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
Julie Chazan, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
Rabbi Isaac and Hermeticism: A Mathematical and Medicine in late-nineteenth-century Appropriations of Jewish Mysticism
Hananan Tamar, Zoharim at Nahla University
Speaking of the Self: Contemporary Conversations on Jewish Spirituality

17:00-18:30
Chair and Moderator: Chaim Ben-David, Director, Center for the Study of Conversion and Inter-faith Encounters, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
Michal Harel, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
Conversion between Spirituality and Anti-spirituality
Andreas Richter, Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH) Zurich
Conversion as Story Telling



תחנתו ללימודי חלקי
אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Christians, Converts and Images of Jews

January 12th, 2016

Prof. Elisheva Carlibach

The Center for the Study of Conversion and Inter-Religious Encounters

The I-CORE Center for the Study of Conversion and Inter-Religious Encounters is honored to invite you to a seminar, to be held on Tuesday, January 12th 2016, at 10:00am Room 301, Helen Diller Family Center (Bldg 74), Ben Gurion University of the Negev

Elisheva Carlibach
Salo Wittmayer Baron Professor of Jewish History, Culture and Society
Columbia University

**Christians, Converts and Images of Jews
in the Early Age of Print**

In cooperation with the Israel Centers of Research Excellence, the Israel Science Foundation, and the Council for Higher Education

Logos of funding organizations: Ministry of Education, Ministry of Science and Technology, I-CORE, etc.

The Issue of Forced Conversion in Gratian's Decretum

March 28th, 2016

Prof. Anna Sapir – Abulafia

The Center for the Study of Conversion & Inter-Religious Encounters (I-CORE), The General History Department and The Jewish History Department are honored to invite you to seminars given by

Anna Sapir Abulafia
University of Oxford

Annual David Berg and Family Chair in European History Lecture

"Gratian and the Jews"
Monday March 28th 2016 at 16:00

"The Issue of Forced Conversion in Gratian's Decretum"
Tuesday March 29th 2016 at 10:00am

Room 301, Helen Diller Family Center (Bldg 74), Ben Gurion University of the Negev

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

In cooperation with the Israel Centers of Research Excellence, the Israel Science Foundation, and the Council for Higher Education

Logos of funding organizations: Ministry of Education, Ministry of Science and Technology, I-CORE, etc.

Community Outreach

Converts & Apostates: Inter-Religious Encounters and the Crossing of Religious Boundaries

A course on conversion, open to the general public. Hosted by the Zalman Shazar Center in Jerusalem, the lectures were given by all the members of the Center and by additional invited lecturers during the academic year (2015-2016).

The lectures (in Hebrew) were filmed and are available to the wider public on YouTube:

<http://in.bgu.ac.il/en/csoc/Pages/Converts-and-Proselytes.aspx>

ממרים ונרים:
מפגשים דתיים וחציית גבולות

אירועים אקדמיים: פרוזודורה לזמן, פרוזודורה סטטיסטיקה, ידע אפריס שנים-שיסוד

המרכז לחקר המרת דת וחסות בין-דתיים

אנליטיקת בן מרוץ בנגב

הקורס יטקס חלופות של המרת דת על פניה המגוונת חן המעט חזקו אל שלוש הדתות האברהמיות המאפיינים כיום – כגון התנ"ך והחוקים על-פי אלה, על פי מרחבים נאכריים שונים במרחב ובמערב. עקב הקורס יתה למרת דתו ויכינו ידוע סוגית של וחת דתית ותרבותית לצד אמות של כבנות ומלכות (יחסים) מסוימים וחסות מסוימת) בענין יסודיים של קשרים בין דתים נודעים המרת דת המרת ונד.

הקורס יעמוד על חשיבות ההיסטורית והדתית של חופשת המרת בראשית העולם – אשור, והקולות, והאנאלים והמפגשים, בעקבות המעשים למרת דתו בנשים המעשים המרת ביחס של החברה העובדת אל המאמין וחסות של החברה הקולות כלומר, במסגרת החברתית של המאמין לפי המרתו וחסות: המאמין החיית וחסות השות של המרת.

ימי השישי, חול בתאריך: 22 באוקטובר 2015, 11:00-12:30 / 28 הראשון

מספר מלא: 1,200 ₪ / **לאחר התמכה:** 1,000 ש"ח



Mount Zion: Inter-religious Cooperation or Conversion of Space?

A tour and discussion of how holy spaces can be shared and converted in relation to the ongoing inter-religious conflicts on Mount Zion (26th June, 2015).



מרכז לחקר המרת דת ומפגשים בין-דתיים מתכבד להזמין אתכם ליום סיום וסימפוזיון בנושא:





הר ציון והאפשרות לשותפות בין-דתית במרחבים קדושים
Mount Zion: Inter-religious Cooperation or Conversion of Space?
 בתאריך 26 יוני 2015 (יום ו') בשעה 10:00

11:30-10:00 סיום בהדרכת הגב' יסכה הרני (נקודת מפגש: שער ציון בשעה 9:45) מסלול: קבר דוד, 'חדר תהלים', חדר הסעודה האחרונה, גג המבנה (מרת + חדר הנשיא + תצפית בית קברות דג'אני) כבוד קל

12:00-11:30 שולחן עגול בבית הספר האמריקאי (י"ב: חיים היימן, זכרבים: אורה לימור, הרב מיכאל מליאור ועוד)

13:00-12:00

11:30-10:00

12:00-11:30

13:00-12:00

• נא אשרו השתתפות במייל hirk@bgu.ac.il עד לתאריך 23 יוני 2015

A series of lectures, open to the public, given by our members (in Hebrew), at The Museum of Islamic and Near Eastern Cultures in Beersheba.



מאיזניק לירושלים

קרמיקה בממשל בירתרבותי

לרגל התערוכה

מחזן לתרבות האסלאם ועמי המזרח בבאר שבע
 בשיתוף עם המרכז לחקר המזרח דוד ומפגשים בין-דתיים, אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנוב
 ממזין את הציבור לסדרת הרצאות בנושא:

<p>יום רביעי 17:30 מרבדגו ארטו מוסלמים בפקין או סינים מוסלמים</p> <p>יום רביעי 17:30 ד"ר מונה אדן / אורן זשורניץ מפת נופי ארץ ישראל מאז ימי הביניים</p> <p>יום רביעי 17:30 מרבדגו ארטו רמי רבי (תמו: סיפורים משותפים</p> <p>יום רביעי 17:30 דוד טרוסקין בין ח'ליפות לארצות: יהדות, נצרות ואסלאם</p> <p>יום רביעי 17:30 דוד טרוסקין האסלאם ואתיקה</p> <p>יום רביעי 17:30 דוד טרוסקין שילוב מסורת בקרמיקה חוכמית ממזרח</p>	<p>27.1.16</p> <p>24.2.16</p> <p>30.3.16</p> <p>13.4.16</p> <p>18.5.16</p> <p>22.6.16</p>
--	---



לאחר כל הרצאה יתקן סיור בתערוכה בליווי מאגדת ד"ר שרון לוד-ידיד בנוש על נושא ההרצאה.
 הכניסה לסדחון כניסה בחינם לתורגרות ללא תשלום נוסף.
 מחזן לתרבות והיסטוריה בעיר העתיקה, רחוב המגן 26, העיר החדשה, באר שבע. טל: 07-7664216 | www.museum.org.il





A series of lectures, open to the public, given by our members (in Hebrew), at “Ashan Hazman”, a local pub in Beersheba.



עשן הדמן

ב"ר יש מקומות נדירים יותר



המרכז לחקר המזרח דוד ומפגשים בין-דתיים, אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנוש בשיתוף עם עשן הדמן, באר שבע
 מזמינים את הציבור לסדרת מפגשים:

ד"ר אביטל דודוביץ-אשד

על נבחרות ונבחרות, תהליך הגיון המבטולי כמחזורי רחוק ונבחרת מנצח בין דתות
 ההרצאה תציג את מרכזיות של רעיון הכנסים בחברות העתיקות והחדות-נבחרת נטלה
 חתך העמקה ועל קווי הכניסה ואת מופעי התרבותיים העכשוויים (כספרות, אקטיות,
 מושגים וביאולוגיה). נמקוד בייחוד באיטליה החוליים, שהתפתח מוגדרת התרבות
 היהודית ובאופנים בהם שישט רעיון זה בכוללות היהוד-נוצר בארצות בניו הכניסה.

ד"ר דוד טרוסקין

מהי סטודנטית? ומהו הילוף?
 בתי המדרש והרבות השעשועיים בעידן המודרני לוכה הדתות המונותאיסטיות
 נטווה על הרבות העונג והשעשועיים בחוקות כבושה של הנעת האזרות ולאחריו,
 לוכה הכנות המודרניות של תחנות התרבות. ענפה מפתח שאלות בניו אקטיות של
 המודרניות והחלקי. מהם התרגומים העכשוויים אהבה, וכוכר ענכבה ועודנה עמקבת.
 הכללה של חיה הנפש, הגוף והאישיות בעידן המודרני.

ד"ר עפרה אילני

נבחרות, יהדות, ישראלים - מהיינרף היינו ועוד הישראלים בכללן
 מאז ראשית העידן המודרני, יהודים נבחרים נבחרים מוכרבת יחסי מסוכת, נטכב
 הנושא והמגששיות הנבחרת סיטנו מן מוחין לחיטום אלה, אך יש לכובר
 שמונרף יתר מטאה שנת, המרוב הרעיוני היה חזרה העקרת לציירוף של יהדות
 יהודיות מודרנית - התשכלה, המרובות, המטאליים יהודיות והנבחרות בורגנות נבחר
 על יחסי מוכרבת אלה, מן המנקדות מוכבות של המטורה היררף היינו.

20.4
18:00-19:00

18.5
18:00-19:00

9.6
18:00-19:00

עשן הדמן | רחוב אילניץ 17/2 באר שבע טל 077-7664216 | ashanhazman@gmail.com
 הכניסה חופשית!

Our Newsletter

We send a quarterly newsletter to our distribution list with information regarding all our activities during the relevant period (including information regarding the participation of our members at conferences and new publications). The newsletter also includes a column dedicated to the “convert of the month”, an interesting account of a conversion presented by one of the Center’s scholars.

You may find all our newsletters in the link below:

<http://in.bgu.ac.il/en/csoc/Pages/newsletter.aspx>

St. Pelagia – A Transvestite Convert

Pelagia was a beautiful harlot who lived in Antioch probably at the end of the fourth century. Her story, one of the most fascinating in Christian hagiography, originated in the early fifth century and was extremely popular throughout the Middle Ages in all of Christendom. She converted after hearing a sermon by the bishop-monk Nonnos, who portrayed the judgment awaiting those who do evil and the hope reserved for the pious. Her conversion was sudden and dramatic. She distributed her great wealth among the poor and on the eighth day after her baptism left the city for Jerusalem, dressed in coarse masculine garb that she received from Bishop Nonnos. There she lived for three years as the eunuch hermit «Pelagius» in a doorless cell on the Mount of Olives. Only after her death did it become known that “Pelagius” had actually been a woman, the repentant Pelagia. She was buried in the small cell where she lived. Her tomb on the Mount of Olives, known to this day, is first recorded by an anonymous Italian pilgrim around 570: “On the summit of the mountain we saw many remarkable things, including the cell where Saint Pelagia lived the enclosed life, and lies buried.” Pelagia’s tale was well known in both East and West. Her saint’s day was celebrated on October 8. The strength of the story lies in the radical transition it presented from the depths of sin to the peak of grace and mercy. This transition changed her body, previously vulnerable to sin, into an impregnable fortress. Cross-dressing is represented as an external manifestation of repentance and conversion, and is interpreted as rebirth in a new identity. Pelagia adopted an androgynous ideal, thus defusing the threat of female temptation prevalent in the ascetic environment of early monasticism. Her pilgrimage to Jerusalem is portrayed as a stage in her overall transformation and as its symbolic representation. Pelagia’s true identity is revealed only after her death, and only then, as a woman rediscovered, does she become a saint.

Ora Limor

Some practical details

Our Center is located at Ben-Gurion University in Beersheba, Israel.

The Center is an open space with six workstations for researchers, who sit facing each other encouraging collaboration and discussion.

The Center has a growing library reflecting the interests and concerns of the members.

The Center is equipped with full office equipment and devices (copy & scan machine, microfilm computer, fax, Computers Screens for laptop connectivity, etc.).

