

The Center for the Study of Conversion & Inter-Religious Encounters
Oxford-BGU Joint Workshop

Sacred Spaces in the Abrahamic Religions

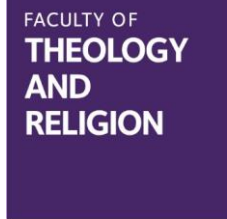


03-05
JUNE 2019



Barkan Hall, Zlotowski
Student Center and
Administration Building
(70), BGU Marcus Family
Campus, Be'er Sheva





"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin Who Dedicated His Life to Advance Interfaith Dialogue

Abstract Papers

Monday 3rd June 10:00-10:30

Opening Remarks:

Prof. Chaim (Harvey) Hames

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner

Dr. Anna Sapir Abulafia

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377



"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin,
who dedicated his life to advance interfaith dialogue.



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب

Jeana Ferguson

The Body, the Temple, and the Ekklēsia:

Sacred Space in 1 Corinthians

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul locates sacrality in three prominent spaces: the human body, the temple, and the ekklēsia (the gathering of a local Christian community). This paper addresses the question of what makes these spaces sacred for Paul. In his treatment of each of them, Paul focusses his attention and that of his audience on the concept of shared space—both whom the space is shared with, and what is shared within it. These two questions define the sacrality of space for Paul and underline his vision for the temple function of the ekklēsia as the communal body of Christ.

Monday 3rd June 10:30-12:30
Respondent CANA WARMAN
Session Chair CATALIN POPA

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377



"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin,
who dedicated his life to advance interfaith dialogue.



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب

Rachel Cresswell

'Stabilitas loci in medieval monasticism'

This paper examines the concept of the monastery as a sacred space in the Benedictine monastic literature of the medieval Latin west. The monastery's sanctity in monastic literature and liturgy was marked out by ritual separateness, the guarding of thresholds and the disciplinary inclusion or exclusion of individuals from the social and geographical precincts. The concept of *stabilitas*, however - the monk's promise to remain in the same monastery - entails a sense of sacred place which mirrors the interior firmness of purpose which the prospective monk is called to demonstrate. This paper explores both the exterior and interior elements of monastic *stabilitas*, arguing that the exterior sanctity of place served to foster the inner single-mindedness which was central to monastic spirituality.

Monday 3rd June 10:30-12:30
Respondent CANA WARMAN
Session Chair CATALIN POPA

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377



"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin,
who dedicated his life to advance interfaith dialogue.



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب

Steven Firmin

Political Space: Sacred or Profane?

A debate amongst three Christian theologians

Monday 3rd June 10:30-12:30
Respondent CANA WARMAN
Session Chair CATALIN POPA

This paper will compare three ways that Christians are explaining the relationship between church and society, 'sacred' and 'secular' space, when writing at the intersection of Christian-Muslim relations. These three approaches are distinguished by what each things that the sacred and the secular share with one another: the Mainline-Liberal approach typified by the "Common Word" initiative assumes that certain sacred dogmas must be shared for political cooperation to succeed. A Reformed Protestant approach which focuses on "Common Grace," given to Christians and non-Christians alike, and an Anglican-Augustinian approach with focuses on "common objects of love," given in a common creation. I will conclude with a brief defense of this last approach for theorizing the relationship between sacred and secular in Christian political theory.

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377



"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin,
who dedicated his life to advance interfaith dialogue.



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب

Lior Yaary Dolev

Religious Conversions as a Mental Journey to an Inner Sacred Place

Monday 3rd June 13:30-15:30
Respondent KAREN ABBOU HERSHKOVITS
Session Chair ERIKA TRITTE

There are numerous studies about the conversion of Jews during the late middle ages that examine this phenomenon from various literary perspectives. As a result, most scholars tend to overlook one interesting point of view that can shed new light on our understanding of the process of conversion, and they do not consider the role of the individual's self-awareness in this process. Therefore, in this paper, I wish to offer a new perspective for understanding and analyzing some of the textual sources of conversion from late medieval Europe, and examine them by using methods taken from cognitive study. By doing so, I intend to identify the internal journey and the internal motivations of the convertors as they are reflected in the texts. In this paper, I wish to present the conversion process, as reflected in the text, as an inner journey to a mental sacred place.

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377



"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin,
who dedicated his life to advance interfaith dialogue.

Mari Ovsepyan



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب

'Sacred Spaces Are Never Empty': Cognitive Science of Religion and Migration of the Holy

And old Russian saying suggests that 'sacred spaces are never empty' - whenever religion disappears in one place, it is bound to 'migrate' elsewhere. Yet the 2015 Pew Forum report on global religious identity has shown that the religiously unaffiliated, called 'nones,' comprise the third-largest religious group in the world, with 1.1 billion, or 16% of the world population. The data collected the same year in the UK by Linda Woodhead, one of the world leading sociologists of religion, points to the same trend and shows that 'nones' represent 46% of the British population. Who are these 'nones'? And what do they (not) believe?

At first glance, their number alone - and 1.1 billion is a serious number - may seem to suggest that unbelief is thriving and that religion is indeed becoming a thing of the past. However, the same Pew Forum report shows that the matter of defining nonreligion and unbelief may be rather more complicated: while the number of the religiously unaffiliated is quite high, this group is far from being homogeneous. The surveys have shown that 7% of Chinese 'nones' report a belief in some higher power, while 44% report that they have worshiped at a graveside in the past year. In France, 30% of the same group report belief in God or some higher power, while among the 'nones' in the United States this number goes up to 68%.

How are we to treat the atheistic religiosity of some these humanists, philosophers and scientists? Or how should we approach those 'nones' who zealously worship their state? Or how are we to treat the 'unbelief' of those who maintain supernatural beliefs in God or gods, transcendence and spirituality, while abandoning the 'walls' of traditional religion? In this paper I will explore one of the most contemporary approaches to the study of unbelief, which treats it as a cognitive phenomenon. Cognitive Science of Religion is the multidisciplinary study of religious beliefs and practices, which incorporates evolutionary approaches with the findings from anthropology and psychology, among other fields. CSR continues the tradition of many philosophers, theologians, and scholars of religion who have sought to understand the 'religious nature' of man.

Many cognitive scientists of religion, such as Paul Bloom (2007) and Robert McCauley (2011) and Justin Barrett (2010), among others, referred to the religious belief and practices as 'natural' giving rise to the thesis that was coined as 'the naturalness of religion hypothesis.' In its current form, the naturalness of religion hypothesis is the cognitive scientists' attempt to answer the following questions: Why is religion a universal transhistorical and transcultural phenomenon found in every human society? Another question that may be inferred from this hypothesis, and which is particularly interesting for this project, is why, contrary to the aforementioned prophecies of the 20th-century secularisation theorists, religion has not disappeared even in highly industrial and educated modern societies, but rather has arguably changed its form? I will argue that are bodies are the sacred spaces that are never empty and in order to understand the phenomena of nonreligion and unbelief in the fulness of their complexity we need to start building a bridge between cognitive and social approaches to religion.

Monday 3rd June 13:30-15:30
Respondent KAREN ABBOU HERSHKOVITS
Session Chair ERIKA TRITILE

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377



"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin,
who dedicated his life to advance interfaith dialogue.



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب

Alexander van der Haven

The Madness of Sacred Space: Critical Reflections on the 'Jerusalem Syndrome'

The psychiatric hospitalization of foreigners with religious behavior in Israel has led to the birth of the term "Jerusalem Syndrome." The term is used to represent a pathological phenomenon in which the combination of a visit to Israel – in particular Jerusalem – and religious – in particular Christian – expectations prior to arrival either triggers or worsens mental illness. Against these assumptions, I will argue in my lecture that mental pathology is not the determining characteristic of the Jerusalem Syndrome, nor do religious expectations combined with an actual visit pose a risk to the mental health of foreign visitors.

Based on both fieldwork conducted outside the psychiatric environment and on a critical reconsideration of psychiatric data used for previous analyses, I will argue, first, that the Jerusalem Syndrome is an eschatological religious subculture of Jewish and Christian foreigners who, on the basis of religious experiences, are convinced that they personally have been called to Jerusalem/Israel. Because of the religious topography of the Judeo-Christian scriptures, they attribute central religious significance to Israel (as the Holy Land) and in particular to the city of Jerusalem. Second, rather than the beginning or worsening of mental illnesses, the Jerusalem Syndrome is the site where religious expressions of mentally ill persons interact with similar religious behavior of others to the extent that distinguishing between mental illness and normalcy becomes difficult and for the political and religious contexts in which these people operate, irrelevant.

Monday 3rd June 13:30-15:30

Respondent **KEREN ABBOU HERSHKOVITS**

Session Chair **ERIKA TRITILE**

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377



"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin,
who dedicated his life to advance interfaith dialogue.



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب

Davidi Borabeck

"The Most Sacred Place in the State" – Mt. Zion 1948-1967

After the 1948 war and the division of Eretz Israel-Palestine between Israel and Jordan, some of the most significant Jewish sacred sites such as the Wailing Wall, Rachel's Tomb and the Cave of the Patriarchs, remained out of reach for Israeli Jews. Mt. Zion, a compound that is connected in Christian, Muslim and Jewish traditions with King David's Tomb, was the closest to the Wailing Wall and Temple Mount and thus, the most central and significant Jewish site in Israeli Jerusalem.

The authority over the mountain was given to the Office of Religious Affairs and its general manager Dr. S.Z Kahana. Right after the end of the 1948 war, Kahana started to reshape the sacred compound in Mount Zion by forming three expanses within it. He removed any Muslim aspect from the tomb's hall, decorated it with a Jewish curtain (Parochet) and painted the walls and grilles with blue and white. On the roof of the compound, observing the Temple Mount, Kahana established the **President's Room**, honoring the President of Israel by writing a Torah scroll for him which remains in this room. The roof became known as the **Temple Observatory** and was used as a synagogue for significant occasions. In front of the entrance to David's Tomb, Kahana established another important expanse - the **Chamber of the Holocaust**, which was the first Israeli commemoration site for the Holocaust and held a traditional form of commemoration, making it an exclusive "lieux de mémoire", to use Pierre Nora's term.

These three sites that comprise the compound, and the unique rituals performed within, have made Mount Zion into a central national site that promotes the notion of the State of Israel as a modern salvation for the Jewish nation. However, the location of this compound opposite the Temple Mount undermines the understanding of Israel as a nation state.

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377

Monday 3rd June 16:00-18:00
Respondent NONO RAZ KRAKOTZKIN
Session Chair HELEN FLATLEY



Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters

Gideon Elazar

"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin,
who dedicated his life to advance interfaith dialogue.



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب

Back to Earth:

Christian Zionism and Sacred Space in the Activity of "Hayovel"

This lecture is based on contemporary ethnographic fieldwork conducted with the volunteers of Hayovel, an Evangelical organization dedicated to offering assistance to Israeli farmers in Judea and Samaria, focusing primarily on work in the vineyards of Har Beracha, Shiloh and Psagot settlements. The organization was founded 16 years ago by Tommy and Sherry Waller from Missouri, and is run today by the Waller's and their children. Activity in Israel is conducted from Har Beracha where volunteer groups arrive twice a year under the patronage of Rabbi Eliezer Melamed. Much like other adherents to the ideology of Christian Zionism, the members of Hayovel view the Jewish restoration to the Land of Israel as an essential and necessary element in the unfolding of the redemption process.

The goal of this lecture is to underline the uniqueness of the movement's attitude towards sacred space. Thus, traditional Evangelical groups tend to view religious attachments to space negatively, often conceptualizing Christianity as a turning towards abstract faith and away from the concrete and physical. In contrast, Hayovel activists attack Christian subjective and non-territorial nature opting instead to work towards constructing a connection with the land as a space of inherent and constant holiness. The construction of holy space is performed through extensive touring of Biblical sites in Judea and Samaria and through the physical work in the vineyards, viewed as a way of actively participating in the fulfillment of prophecies. Here I will attempt to explain Hayovel theology as part of an American counter-cultural movement and as a reaction to the growing detachment from space in the global era.

Monday 3rd June 16:00-18:00
Respondent NONO RAZ KRAKOTZKIN
Session Chair HELEN FLATLEY

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377



"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin,
who dedicated his life to advance interfaith dialogue.



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب

Rose Stair

A Homeland in the Home:

The Role of the Domestic Space in Cultural Zionism

This paper analyses the function of the home in German cultural Zionist thought at the turn of the 20th century. Considering sources from the cultural Zionist press that promoted the domestic space as a community sanctuary of security, intellectual exchange and Jewish culture, I will argue that the bounded space of the home offered Jews in exile a homeland experience. Suggesting that this notion of an irruption of homeland within exile has structural similarities to Mircea Eliade's theory of sacred space and time entering the profane realm, I will investigate how, despite the oft-claimed secularity of the movement, the ideal German cultural Zionist home was one that functioned as a sacred space.

Monday 3rd June 16:00-18:00
Respondent NONO RAZ KRAKOTZKIN
Session Chair HELEN FLATLEY

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377



"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin,
who dedicated his life to advance interfaith dialogue.

Azri Amram

Fifty Shades of Kosher:

Inter- Religious Encounters in Palestinian food spaces in Israel

Kashrut is a central feature of food in Israel (Avieli, 2018: 89). Surveys show that 70% of Israeli Jews observe Kashrut laws outside the home, many of those define themselves as secular. 20% of Israeli citizens are Palestinians, most of whom are Muslims that observe Halal laws. In many Israeli-Palestinian restaurants, bakeries and other food spaces, negotiations are held over the concept of Kashrut, especially where the customers are both Palestinians and Jews. The Palestinian owners serve foods of different shades of Kosher, both formally and declaratively.

In the proposed article, I would like to examine the perceptions of the Palestinian owners of food spaces in Israel that deal with the issue of Kashrut (in the broad sense). I argue that the negotiations over the issue of Kashrut reflect the question of the belonging of the Palestinian minority in Israel. I found that although the Palestinian business owners explain that the main reason is economic - expanding the clientele, there are other considerations for their actions such as the desire to integrate with the Israeli society alongside with criticism of the proper way to treat a minority.

This article aims to expand the discussion on distinct categories and their blurring, as expressed in everyday practices by the Palestinian owners, similar to the way that Michel De Certeau (1980) sees the daily tactics of the common man to challenge the socio-political order. I will illustrate my argument through examples of foods that have the difficulty to be classified as kosher but are presented and perceived as such. These anomalies can be seen as impure and therefore have the power to challenge the rigid boundaries of formal Kashrut (Douglas 1966). Historical studies show that inter-religious encounters may produce food traditions that have lasted for hundreds of years. Such as "Italian Jewish food" that was formed in Renaissance Italy due to the Jewish-Christian Relations (Cassen 2018) and food traditions that were formed in Iraq due to Jewish-Muslim relations (Berg 2018). I will also discuss whether these "Israeli-Palestinian" foods demonstrate another example of the "colonization of food" or act as bridges between cultures.

The discussion is based on fieldwork conducted between 2013 and 2018 in Israeli-Palestinian restaurants and food spaces and interviews with their owners.



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب

Tuesday 4th June 9:00-11:00
Respondent NIMROD HURVITZ
Session Chair ODED COHEN

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377



"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin,
who dedicated his life to advance interfaith dialogue.



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب

Lauren Morry

United in Prayer?

Analyzing a Church-Mosque Partnership in Aberdeen, Scotland

In Aberdeen, Scotland, St. John's Church and the Crown Terrace Mosque share a building. Originally a standard Episcopal Church, St. John's now includes several rooms converted as Muslim prayer space. Based on ethnographic work amongst these two communities, the present paper makes use of spatial theory to illuminate the intertwined role of space and identity in the partnership.

Tuesday 4th June 9:00-11:00
Respondent NIMROD HURVITZ
Session Chair ODED COHEN

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377



"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin,
who dedicated his life to advance interfaith dialogue.



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب

Elazar Ben-Lulu

The Place of the Sacred or the Sacredness of the Place

The Reform movement, also known as Liberal Judaism or Progressive Judaism, seeks to integrate Jewish tradition with the realities of modern life. In contrast to American Jews' popular support of the Reform theology, in the State of Israel the response is opposite. The Israeli Reform movement suffers from religious discrimination by the Orthodox monopoly and is often perceived as a strange and intimidating Diasporic Jewish intrusion. The Israeli government also ideologically contests the recognition of Reform communities and their leaders' eligibility for financial support and official religious authority. As a result, some of the Reform congregations do not conduct their religious rituals in public synagogues, subsidized by government bodies, but in rented structures, urban spaces or even in private homes.

Based on descriptive-interpretive analysis of Shabbat services and holidays rituals, this lecture shows how the Reform rituals performances challenge the category of sacred place. This ethnographic discussion is based on multi-sited fieldwork that was performed between 2014-2017 at two congregations at the area of Tel-Aviv-Jaffa. Neither of them are located in formal synagogues, rather they conduct some of their practices in the public space. Therefore, I will clarify: how is the "secular" space transformed through "religious" performance? What are the changes in the ceremony's structure as a result of the space? How do the congregation members charge material objects and different spaces with religious-cosmological meanings?

I argue that the Reform performance at the Israeli public sphere, whether it is considered as a political discriminated outcome of local religious inequality or a creative marketing strategy promoting the Reform alternative, changes the traditional rituals' structure and the connection between sacred place to sacred performance. For example, the ritual in the public sphere doesn't include the use of sacred symbols or traditional objects. Also, I found that there is a connection between the rituals' place and the congregations' feelings and the prayer's atmosphere, especially under this excluded situation. Thus, the Israeli public space is constructed as a creative sacred space and is not only perceived as a landscape of local political circumstances. Paradoxically, the situation of socio-political exclusion has repositioned the congregants as political agents; thus, the meaning of the place has emerged by their creative epistemological "doing".

Tuesday 4th June 9:00-11:00

Respondent NIMROD HURVITZ

Session Chair ODED COHEN

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377



"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin,
who dedicated his life to advance interfaith dialogue.



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب

Yamit Rachman Schrire

Medieval imagination and the Stones of Jerusalem:

Place, Text, Image

During the middle ages, some of the central events in Christian salvation history - Christ's Prayer of Agony, Crucifixion, Unction and Ascension - were linked with specific natural stones and rocks found in the space of Jerusalem. Historians and art historians commonly consider such stones as 'merely' geographical relics, which commemorate the historical events *in situ*. Yet, a close reading of pilgrimage accounts suggests that these stones transform over time, in their setting and appearance, in the narratives associated with them, and in the practices of their veneration.

My paper contextualizes such transformations in the framework of late medieval devotional currents that were common in the pilgrims' different places of origin, and especially the emphasis on Christ's Humanity and Mary's Lamentation. By deciphering the interconnections between the figure of the 'stone' in late medieval textual and visual sources on the one hand, and the concrete sacred stones in Jerusalem, on the other hand, I will challenge the perception of the stones as merely geographical relics. By so doing, I will point to the myriad ways they constitute both "presentation" and "representation" of events, places and bodies.

Tuesday 4th June 11:30-13:30
Respondent JACKIE FELDMAN
Session Chair STEVEN FIRMIN

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377



"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin,
who dedicated his life to advance interfaith dialogue.



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب

Helen Flatley

Shared Spaces in Medieval Toledo

Medieval Toledo is remembered as a site in which diverse groups of Christians, Muslims and Jews lived alongside one another for centuries under Muslim, and later Christian, rule. Still known today as ‘the city of three cultures’, medieval Toledo operated as a shared space in which the day-to-day business of coexistence often elided confessional differences, even in supposedly ‘sacred’ spaces. One particularly distinctive feature of life in the medieval city was the way in which Christians, Muslims and Jews shared common facilities, such as bathhouses, ovens and wells. However, the inter-confessional dynamics of such shared spaces are more complex than the binary debates surrounding convivencia and toleration might first suggest. These shared spaces often operated as sites for boundary-making and inter-confessional differentiation, as well as expressions of coexistence and tolerance. Notably, the proliferation of laws concerning the communal use of these facilities in the late 12th and 13th centuries reflects the anxieties of religious leaders concerning inter-confessional mixing. Yet, their continued use in Toledo well into the 13th and 14th centuries demonstrates the reality of pragmatic coexistence between the diverse inhabitants of the city. The complexities, ambiguities and tensions of inter-communal life in medieval Toledo were played out in the day-to-day sharing of these spaces.

Tuesday 4th June 11:30-13:30
Respondent JACKIE FELDMAN
Session Chair STEVEN FIRMIN

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377



"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin,
who dedicated his life to advance interfaith dialogue.



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب

Dr. Matan Orian

The Purpose of the Balustrade in the Herodian Temple

Within the Herodian *temenos* in Jerusalem, well outside the area of the Temple proper, stood a low stone balustrade that bore a warning inscription, prohibiting non-Jews, under the threat of death, to proceed any further inward. Contrary to several speculations, this balustrade is not attested in the pre-Herodian Temple.

Two explanations have been offered by research of the fact that the balustrade encircled an area larger than the actual holy ground. This article rejects both and suggests, instead, that the balustrade resulted from a literal reading of the Pentateuchal law underlying the Temple warning inscription: הָזֹרֶה הַקָּרֵב יוּמָת: "The unauthorized encroacher shall be put to death." This reading, however, is factitive on two accounts. First, it permits the killing of a Gentile who קרב, 'draws near', rather than actually trespasses, into sacred territory. In comparison, in the biblical sense, קרב implied contact. Second, in the biblical context, זר is a non-priest, not a non-Jew.

The conclusion is that while Herod enlarged the Jerusalem *temenos*, to include an outer court, open to non-Jews, the Temple balustrade represents a counter Jewish move of pushing Gentiles, within that *temenos*, further back from the actual holy ground. The factitive exegesis explored was the means, as expected in a scripture-based religion, to anchor this move in an alleged biblical commandment.

Tuesday 4th June 11:30-13:30
Respondent JACKIE FELDMAN
Session Chair STEVEN FIRMIN

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377



"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin,
who dedicated his life to advance interfaith dialogue.



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب

Dr. Mirjam Lücking

The Mount of Olives as a Site of Sacred Separation?

Experiences of Tourists and Residents

Jerusalem's Mount of Olives is a sacred space for Jews, Christians and Muslims, a favoured panorama viewpoint for tourists, and a geopolitically important part of Jerusalem for Palestinians and Israelis. Being located outside the walls of the Old City, overlooking the Temple Mount and marking the border to the West Bank, its geographical location at the edge of the heart of Jerusalem coincides with human boundary making.

While various actors' relations to the Mount of Olives geographically overlap, the lifeworlds of adherents of different religions, denominations, ethnic and national groups are often marked by separation. Against the backdrop of the 'spatial turn' in the Social Sciences, this paper examines the Mount of Olives as a 'relational space' (Löw 2001), studying the relation between spatial structures and social actions. Considering that the Mount of Olives is an area where micro spaces of everyday life, national space(s) and global spaces overlap and conflict, the paper juxtaposes how Indonesian tourists and Palestinian residents relate to the Mount of Olives through their actions and narratives.

This juxtaposition highlights the simultaneity of two contrasting relations to space: The predominantly Muslim-Palestinian residents experience their neighbourhood as being a contested space that is under Israeli authority and where two Jewish settlements fly the Israeli flag. This conflictive everyday reality remains unseen by thousands of tourists and pilgrims who are carried up and down the steep slopes in tourist coaches. They see the Mount of Olives through the windows of these coaches, through biblical and Qur'anic lenses and through the screens of their smartphones.

A focus on (non-)encounters between Indonesian tourists and Palestinian residents shows how different perceptions and experiences affect the overall character of the Mount of Olives as a sacred space and as a site of separation. The data stems from ethnographic research with Indonesian travel groups and from residence in the Palestinian neighbourhood Al-Tur on the Mount of Olives.

Tuesday 4th June 14:30-16:30
Respondent ORA LIMOR
Session Chair URI SHACHAR

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377



"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin,
who dedicated his life to advance interfaith dialogue.



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب

Dr. Catalin-Stefan Popa

To go or not to go to Jerusalem?

The 1st mēm̄rā of Bar Hebraeus's *Ethicon* as a literary case from the Syriac Renaissance

In chapter 9 of the 1st memra of Bar Hebraeus's *Ethicon*, the author devotes his discourse to the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He presents two different opinions: people ardent to see the Holy City, and another category of solitaries for whom Heavenly Jerusalem was much more important. What kind of arguments does Bar Hebraeus give to support both sides? What does Jerusalem on Earth mean, and respectively, On High, and how representative are both for the Syriac monastic spirituality of the 13th century?

What does the author tell us about the residence in Jerusalem? Bar Hebraeus offers again two opposed perspectives: one group considers the stay in the Holy City as honorable and the other - harmful. What are the arguments for each group?

Demonstrating that during those times the phenomenon of Syriac pilgrimage represented a normal case, Bar Hebraeus also presents 9 canons to be observed by the pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem, and another 6 during their stay in the Holy City. These canons portray a ritual of the pilgrims to the holy places in which the meditation had an important role for achieving spiritual benefits. This aspect should be evaluated together with the question of how essential was the biblical knowledge when the pilgrims stood in front of the holy places and meditated? Did they understand better the biblical stories by touching the real sites?

Tuesday 4th June 14:30-16:30
Respondent ORA LIMOR
Session Chair URI SHACHAR

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377



"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin,
who dedicated his life to advance interfaith dialogue.



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
University of the Negev
جامعة بن غ

Dr. Oded Cohen

Describing the Holy Places in a New Era:

Yihus ha-Avot and the Ottoman Conquest of the land of Israel

Yihus ha-Avot (Ancestral Genealogy) is a list of holy places in the land of Israel, from Hebron in the south to Kafr Bir'im in the north. The list represents a guide for pilgrims. The most famous edition of this list is the one written in 1537 and copied by Uri of Biala (or Biella) in 1564. On the basis of this edition, Johann Heinrich Hottinger, the Swiss Hebraist, created a bilingual, Latin-Hebrew, edition under the title 'Cippi Hebraici' that was first published in 1659.

Another list, under the title *Yihus ha-Tzadikim ve ha-Hasidim* (The genealogy of the righteous and pious persons) which is very similar to *Yihus ha-Avot* in the order and descriptions of the holy places, is dated to the year 1489. The main difference between these two lists is their date of conception. While *Yihus ha-Tzadikim ve ha-Hasidim* was written before the Ottoman conquest of the land of Israel, *Yihus ha-Avot* was written after.

In the proposed lecture I will discuss the influence of the Ottoman conquest on the way of description of the holy places in aspects of implicit anti-Christian polemics and eschatological allusions.

For some Jewish groups, the Ottoman conquest of the Land of Israel, and its victories in other areas, heralded the fall of the 'kingdom of Edom' and the beginning of the ultimate redemption. The existence of two such similar lists on both sides of the Ottoman period in the land of Israel offers a comparison between descriptions of the Holy places in different eras and in light of a changing geopolitical reality.

Tuesday 4th June 14:30-16:30
Respondent ORA LIMOR
Session Chair URI SHACHAR

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377



"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin,
who dedicated his life to advance interfaith dialogue.



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب

Yishai Gesundheit

The "Holy Man" in the Babylonian Talmud

In this lecture, we shall examine a sequence of short stories and anecdotes in the *Talmud Bavli*, tractate *Taanit*. These tales reflect a hesitant attitude of the Babylonian sages to "The Holy Man". According to Peter Brown, one of the functions of the "Holy Man" in late antiquity, was to protect his town or village, and this very theme recurs in the Talmudic texts.

The same passage encourages a discussion about additional roles of the Holy Man, such as direct communication with divine beings, bringing peace by settling disputes, and mediation between the authorities and the people. In our conclusion, we will point to a connection between the discussion of the Holy Man and the attitude of the Babylonian sages to holy places and their sanctity.

Tuesday 4th June 17:00-19:00

Respondent MICHAL BAR-ASHER SIEGAL
Session Chair MATAN ORIAN

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377



"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin,
who dedicated his life to advance interfaith dialogue.



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب

Stephan Hecht

Thinking as Sacred Space:

The Metaphorization of the Jerusalem Temple in Philo of Alexandria

Charles Taylor describes modern identity as „buffered“. Modern man finds himself in an impersonal order. There is a feeling of absolute self-determination and unrestrained freedom. However, Taylor diagnoses a Malaise of Modernity, the sense of being „cut off“ from something. In my paper, I want to focus on „Thinking as Sacred Space“ in Philo of Alexandria. Central is the application of the Jerusalem Temple to the Human soul. In the first part, I will draw attention to his interpretation of the creational accounts and its anthropological consequences. How does Philo see Human existence? In the second part, I will show how Philo frames the relationship between the heavenly and the earthly man in temple imagery. My paper will be a systematic contribution leading to four questions as a starting point for further discussions. What would Philo tell the „buffered“-self of modernity? Is there any hope?

Tuesday 4th June 17:00-19:00
Respondent MICHAL BAR-ASHER SIEGAL
Session Chair MATAN ORIAN

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377



"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin,
who dedicated his life to advance interfaith dialogue.



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب

Antje Carrel

‘Union with Christ as Embodiment of Sacred Space in Religious Writings from the Early Fifteenth Century in England’

Tuesday 4th June 17:00-19:00
Respondent MICHAL BAR-ASHER SIEGAL
Session Chair MATAN ORIAN

The process of becoming one with God is translated into Middle English as ‘onyng’ or else to be ‘fastened’, to be ‘knyt’ or ‘couplid’ with Christ. The believer is united with the person of Jesus Christ in a union of wills, love or else in an ontological union, which replicates the union of the divine and human natures in the Incarnation of the second person of the Trinity. Based upon the Middle English translation of St Catherine of Siena’s Dialogo, this paper examines how the early fifteenth-century Orchard of Syon presents union with Christ in the vernacular language as an embodied reality which defines the entire spiritual journey of the believer, investing each spiritual stage of the Christian life with the divine.

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377



"Sacred Spaces" Oxford-BGU Workshop 3-5 June 2019

In Memory of Michel Halperin,
who dedicated his life to advance interfaith dialogue.



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب

Tuesday 4th June 19:00-19:20

Closing Remarks:

Dr. Martin Whittingham

Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner

Dr. Anna Sapir Abulafia

The Center for the Study of Conversion & Inter-Religious Encounters
Oxford-BGU Joint Workshop

Sacred Spaces in the Abrahamic Religions

03-05 JUNE 2019



Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner
Senior Lecturer | Jewish History Department
Director, Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
shohamst@bgu.ac.il | Tel: +972-8-6472510

Raya Even-David
Administrative Manager,
Center for the Study of Conversion
and Inter-Religious Encounters
rayaED@bgu.ac.il +972-8-6428377