

# The Role and Function of Material Forms and Objects in the Abrahamic Religions

Joint Workshop Between the University of Oxford and the Center for the Study of Conversion and Inter-Religious Encounters, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

27-29 June 2021

The workshop will take place over Zoom

For further details, please contact Antje Carrel ([antje.carrel@lincoln.ox.ac.uk](mailto:antje.carrel@lincoln.ox.ac.uk)), Helen Flatley ([helen.flatley@stx.ox.ac.uk](mailto:helen.flatley@stx.ox.ac.uk)), Roni Tzoreff ([ronitzoreff@gmail.com](mailto:ronitzoreff@gmail.com)), or Tamar Rotman ([tamarrot@post.bgu.ac.il](mailto:tamarrot@post.bgu.ac.il))



UNIVERSITY OF  
OXFORD

FACULTY OF  
**THEOLOGY  
AND  
RELIGION**



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



Center for the Study of Conversion  
and Inter-Religious Encounters

# Sunday 27 June

## 8pm-9pm IL: Virtual Drinks Reception

Please join us for an informal social gathering on Sunday evening

# Monday 28 June

## 9.45am-10am IL: Opening Remarks and Welcome

Professor Anna Sapir Abulafia (Oxford) & Professor Chaim Hames (BGU)

## 10am-11.30am IL – Panel One: Art as Discourse

Chair: *Helen Flatley, Oxford*

### Interpreting Purity in 15th-Century Castile: The Retable of the Conception of the Virgin at Burgos Cathedral

*Anna Espinola Lynn, Oxford*

### E.M. Lilien's Zionist Drawings in Their Collaborative Contexts

*Rose Stair, Oxford*

### *The Ladies Guild Collection* by Jacqueline Nicholls: Spinning the “Shiviti” Tablets Around

*Roni Tzoref, BGU*

## 11.30am-12pm IL: Coffee Break

## 12pm-1.30pm IL – Panel Two: Immateriality

Chair: *Antje Carrel, Oxford*

### Divine Enrichment in 2 Corinthians 8-9: ‘Poverty Overflowing into Wealth’

*LaRae Cherukara, Oxford*

### From Commodity Money to Credit Money: A Changing Christian Reflection on the Form of Money, and Why We Had it Right

*Jacob Imam, Oxford*

### Online Fieldwork During Covidtide: Critical Reflections

*Lauren Morry, Oxford*

## 1.30pm-3pm IL: Lunch Break

## 3pm-3.45pm IL: Respondents

Dr Martin Whittingham, Oxford

Professor Daniella Talmon-Heller, BGU

Dr Daniel M. Herskowitz, Oxford

## 4pm-5.30pm IL: Keynote Address

### *The Bodleian Judaica Collection: What They Meant to Their Collectors*

Dr César Merchán-Hamann, Oxford



# Tuesday 29 June

## 9.45am-10am IL: Introduction

Dr Martin Whittingham, Oxford

## 10am-11.30am IL – Panel Three: Mediating Objects

Chair: *Roni Tzoref, BGU*

**Miniature Paintings and Martyria: Representations of Martyrs and the Events of Martyrdom in the Material Culture in the Lake Van Region**

*Ani Shabinian, Oxford*

**Jewish Angels, Arab Letters: Jewish-Yemeni Amulets as Cultural Mediators**

*Tom Fogel, BGU*

**The Materiality of Biblical Exegesis: The Relationship Between Presentation and Meaning in a Few Medieval Christian Commentaries on Esther**

*Elizabeth Crabtree, Oxford*

## 11.30am-12pm IL: Coffee Break

## 12pm-1.30pm IL – Panel Four: Ritual/Practice

Chair: *Tom Fogel, BGU*

**The Ritual Production of the Ashes of the Red Heifer: Material, Interpretive and Polemical Aspects**

*David Sabato, BGU*

**Armchair Expert: The Materiality of Elijah's Chair**

*Chana Shacham-Rosby, BGU*

**Kissing Matter: Liturgical and Devotional Materiality in John Lydgate's Lyric on *Verbum Caro Factum Est***

*Antje Carrel, Oxford*

## 1.30pm-3pm IL: Lunch Break

## 3pm-4.30pm IL – Panel Five: Community

Chair: *Rose Stair, Oxford*

**Relics, Identities and Imagined Communities in the Hagiography of Gregory of Tours**

*Tamar Rotman, BGU*

**Things Left Behind: Life, Death and Legacy in Mozarabic Toledo**

*Helen Flatley, Oxford*

**How to Move a Holy Mountain Across the Atlantic Ocean? Constructing Sacred Spaces in the Andes**

*Yael Mabat, BGU*

## 4.30pm-5pm IL: Coffee Break

## 5pm-5.45pm IL: Respondents

Professor Anna Sapir Abulafia, Oxford

Professor Ephraim Shoham-Steiner, BGU

## 5.45pm-6pm IL: Closing Remarks

Professor Anna Sapir Abulafia, Oxford & Professor Ephraim Shoham-Steiner, BGU

# Participants and Abstracts

## Panel One: Art as Discourse

### **Interpreting Purity in Fifteenth-Century Castile: the Retable of the Conception of the Virgin at Burgos Cathedral**

Anna Espinola Lynn

I will present my ongoing work on a monumental retable of the Conception of the Virgin in Burgos cathedral. Made in the fifteenth century in the so-called 'Hispano-Flemish style,' the retable is iconographically unique in its contemporary context. Framing the Virgin Mary's Jewish ancestry as prefiguring her Immaculate Conception, the retable cross-pollinates contemporary discourses of purity surrounding the converso and Immaculacy problems in fifteenth-century Castile. Interpreting the retable relative to contemporary theological and popular texts, processions, and political events, I will suggest an iconological reading of the retable that illuminates how polysemous Immaculist images constructed concepts of embodied purity in late medieval Iberia.

*Anna Espinola Lynn is a DPhil student in the History of Art focusing on the visual cultures of the medieval and early modern Iberian world. Titled 'Tota Pulchra: purity, status, and the Immaculate Conception in Castile and Colonial Mexico (1450-1700)' her doctoral project evaluates how images of the Immaculate Conception participated in the construction, representation, and perception of purity. Beyond examining how purity was interpreted, this project questions why purity became indelible to status, exploring its role in the construction of race, ethnicity, and gender in the late medieval and early modern Iberian world.*

### **E. M. Lilien's Zionist Drawings in Their Collaborative Contexts**

Rose Stair

This paper discusses the Zionist drawings produced by the graphic artist E. M. Lilien in the early years of the 20th century. Though often reproduced and employed in new contexts, many of these drawings were first produced for a series of collaborative projects that Lilien undertook with poets or translators. I suggest that elements of Lilien's distinctive Zionist thought can be identified by examining his role in these creative partnerships, and the original context of his drawings within the resulting publications. I trace points of thematic agreement and disagreement between his drawings and the texts they accompany, and consider the significance of his artistic choices in designing book elements such as cover designs, border illustrations, and name plates. Through such non-verbal contributions, Lilien's voice emerges in his collaborative projects, variously reinforcing or subtly disagreeing with the more explicit claims of his collaborators.

*Rose Stair is a DPhil student in Theology and Religion at the University of Oxford. She previously studied at the University of Chicago Divinity School. Her doctoral research considers the intersections of gender, age and religion in early 20th-century German cultural Zionism.*

### **The Ladies Guild Collection by Jacqueline Nicholls: Spinning the "Shiviti" Tablets Around**

Roni Tzoreff

My lecture will follow the way a traditional Jewish object functions in a contemporary artwork, in order to express a Jewish-feminist point of view. I will focus on The Ladies Guild Collection, an artwork by the British Jewish Orthodox artist Jacqueline Nicholls. Created in 2009–2013, the Ladies Guild includes thirteen elliptic doilies cut out of white paper, which underscore the marginal place of women in synagogues and in canonical Jewish literature. By choosing the technique of paper cuts, Nicholls connects her work to the "Shiviti" tablet, a visual object which stands in synagogues and offers a symbolic link to the place of the temple, while fostering the patriarchal structure of the prayer. I will read Nicholls' work as an expression of the binary division between man and women in synagogues: unlike the single and sanctioned tablet, the thirteen doilies are not to be found within a prayer hall, and they have a transitory and ephemeral function. The state of women in synagogues is analogous to that of a decoration, one without any noteworthy religious implications. I will follow the changes in the representation that took place during the work and argue that those changes represent modifications in gendered power, from male to female supremacy. In this manner I will show that the collection can be understood as a development of feminist consciousness and as a new kind of commentary – one of a visual, feminist interpretation. Thus, I will argue, Nicholls marks a path to resistance for religious Jewish women.

*Roni Tzoreff is a PhD student at the department of the Arts in Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, and a fellow at CSOC. Supervised by Dr. Ronit Milano and Prof. Sara Offenberger, she writes about the visual transformation of modern Jewish objects within the Zionist, Israeli and contemporary Jewish visual culture. Her recent article, which studied gender-related, religious and aesthetic aspects in the work of Jacqueline Nicholls, was published in 2018 in *Arts Judaica*.*

## Panel Two: Immateriality

### Divine Enrichment in 2 Corinthians 8-9: 'Poverty Overflowing into Wealth'

LaRae Cherukara

In 2 Corinthians 8-9, Paul's immediate goal is to encourage his addressees to respond generously to his collection for impoverished Christian communities in Jerusalem. To motivate that generosity, Paul proclaims lavish promises of divine provision for his addressees—promises that at first appear to contradict his own experience as an apostle, which he described to the Corinthians in a previous letter: 'We hunger and thirst, we are naked, beaten, and homeless'. By contrast, in 2 Corinthians 9.11, Paul promises the Corinthians that if they give generously to the Jerusalem collection, 'You will be enriched in every way for all generosity' (emphasis added). Interpreters have often struggled to make sense of the materiality of Paul's promises in these chapters. Is he employing rhetorical hyperbole? Are his descriptions of divine provision mere metaphors for spiritual sustenance and flourishing? Or is he actually promising lavish material blessing for those who give generously? Perhaps even more pressing, how are we to read these promises in a way that does not suggest divine engagement in some sort of quid pro quo ('if you give, God will give')? My paper seeks answers to these questions by tracing the dance of theology, relationality, and materiality in Paul's language of divine generosity and enrichment in 2 Corinthians 8-9. I argue that his chosen word to describe God's generosity, *charis*, grounds Paul's material promises in a divine-human relationship that transforms both poverty and wealth, without relativising materiality or turning it into mere metaphor.

*LaRae Cherukara is a fourth year DPhil student in the Classics Faculty at Oxford. Her dissertation contextualises Paul's language of 'grace' (charis) within contemporary Graeco-Roman and Hellenistic Jewish discussions of friendship, relationality, and divine generosity.*

### From Commodity Money to Credit Money: A Changing Christian Reflection on the Form of Money, and Why We Had it Right

Jacob Imam

Medieval Christians taught that the form of money, when possible, ought to be of a pure metal. Today, Christians are often found promoting the use of Bitcoin (or other such cryptocurrencies) for many of the same reasons their medieval counterparts argued for a material form of money. In this talk, I will make the case that Bitcoin will not suffice to uphold the goals that modern Christians hope that it will.

*Jacob Imam is a second year DPhil Student in Theology and Religion from the US working on a Catholic Theology of Money.*

### Online Fieldwork during Covidtide: Critical Reflections

Lauren Morry

This paper is a critical reflection on the process of conducting online fieldwork after my anthropological study of Christian-Muslim relations in Birmingham was reframed due to coronavirus. In lieu of undertaking the process of "deep hanging out" (Geertz) in churches and mosques, I instead spent time in front of my laptop in Canada and the UK attempting to connect with my subjects using Zoom. In this paper, I consider in particular the themes of 'time' and 'space' as they relate to my series of online interactions. I use the liturgically suggestive term 'Covidtide,' which has seen a recent uptick in internet usage, to highlight the particular effects of the pandemic on the notion of time in religious communities and how this in turn mediates the usage of virtual space to find new ways to connect.

*Lauren Morry is a third-year DPhil student in Oxford's Faculty of Theology and Religion with an academic background in Anthropology, Religious Studies, and the Great Books. She deeply regrets not investing in Zoom prior to 2020.*

## Panel Three: Mediating Objects

### Miniature Paintings and Martyria: Representations of Martyrs and the Events of Martyrdom in the Lake Van Region

Ani Shabinian

The role and function of material forms and objects in the history of the Lake Van region is an innovative approach and a thought experiment into the idea of how the events of martyrdom and the lives of the saints could be illustrated in Armenian Christianity. In my doctoral research, the access foci to the history of martyrs and the events of martyrdom have been written manuscripts – namely, the Yaysmawurk' [Menologium] and textual sources. But the Yaysmawurk' is not only a written manuscript. It is also an artifact of a material culture in its specific historical context. In addition to presenting this distinct perspective on the Yaysmawurk', the aim of this paper is to study the representations of martyrs and the events of martyrdom as depicted through miniature paintings found in manuscripts and archeological studies of martyria. The recognition of the presence and absence of an object contributes to a better understanding and imagination of how the local cultures in the late medieval Lake Van region perceived martyrdom. The presence or absence of miniature paintings, martyria, and pilgrimages to martyria shed light on the cultures that remembered and celebrated the lives of the martyrs. In Armenia, the transmission of the memory of martyrs as represented in art and script reflect a sense of continuity with Christ, the protomartyr St. Stephen, the Forty Martyrs of Sebastia, and the ancient martyrs. This investigation seeks to identify the presence and absence of miniature paintings and martyria in the Lake Van region to provide a fuller picture of the concept of martyrdom in its historical context.

*Ani Shabinian is a DPhil candidate at the Oriental and Theology Faculties at the University of Oxford. Her doctoral research examines how martyrdom was understood in late mediaeval Armenia, in the context of political, social, economic, and ecclesiastical history. Ms. Shabinian holds an M.A. degree in Near Eastern and Languages and Cultures from UCLA, and graduate certificates in Philosophy and Theology from the University of Oxford. She received her B.A. in Philosophy, Ethics, and Professional Writing from the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB). She has lectured and held seminars in several faculties at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), including courses on Philosophy of Mind, Political Philosophy, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, and International Relations.*

### Jewish Angels, Arab Letters: Jewish-Yemeni Amulets as Cultural Mediators

Tom Fogel

Inter-religious interactions between Muslims and Jews in Yemen were mediated by practices of magical healing, creating amulets and summoning of demons and angels, performed by Jews and Muslims alike. The making of amulets combined material and textual aspects. Jewish craftsmen created the silver necklace containing the amulet, while its content was based on interpretation of magical guide-books. These manuscripts offer a complex matrix of Muslim and Jewish sources, and contain a bewildering mosaic of languages, Arabic, Hebrew and Aramaic. Composing and using such books required an act of translation, interpretation and mediation of knowledge by Jewish-Yemeni scholars. By utilizing both ethnographic and textual methods, this lecture will examine the question of how magical objects mark religious boundaries, and what are the cultural expressions that cross these boundaries.

*Dr. Tom Fogel completed his PhD in the program for Folklore and Folk Culture Studies at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, his dissertation titled: "S. D. Goitein's Yemenite Research". He studies Yemenite Jewish Folklore, Culture and Language, and addresses issues regarding Identity, Heritage and Tradition. Fogel is currently a postdoc fellow at The Center for the Study of Conversion and Inter-Religious Encounters (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev), his research project examines occult knowledge transitions between Jews and Muslims in Yemen.*

### The Materiality of Biblical Exegesis: The Relationship Between Presentation and Meaning in a Few Medieval Christian Commentaries on Esther

Elizabeth Crabtree

This paper will examine how the material aspects of medieval Christian commentaries on the book of Esther relate to the content of the exegesis. The manner in which the exegetical texts were laid out in relation to the biblical text itself, the inclusion of images, and other features of presentation are a fruitful context in which to explore how the visibility and materiality of biblical commentaries might have been intended to affect the reading and understanding of the bible. I will examine and compare the design and layout of the Esther commentaries in the *Glossa Ordinaria* (Rusch), a Bible Moralisée (Oxford-Paris-London), and an edition of the *Postilla super totam bibliam* of Nicholas of Lyra (Strasbourg edition 1492), with the aim of illuminating how the material context relates to the interpretive content of these commentaries. The similarities and differences in these three case studies of medieval exegesis on Esther will provide helpful categories for comparison. This study will contribute more broadly to an understanding of the relationship between what is being communicated and how it is being communicated – the intersection of physical form and textual sense – and the possible impact this had on how the story of Esther was read and understood.

*Elizabeth Crabtree is a first year DPhil student in Theology and Religion at Blackfriars Hall, Oxford. She is studying Jewish-Christian Relations, specifically how Jewish exegesis influenced the content and methodology of Nicholas of Lyra's literal commentary on the book of Esther.*

## Panel Four: Ritual/Practice

### The Ritual Production of the Ashes of the Red Heifer: Material, Interpretive and Polemical Aspects

David Sabato

The ashes of a red heifer have a critical role in the ancient Jewish ritual. They are a prerequisite for purification from the ritual impurity contracted through contact with a corpse, and as such also for entry into the Temple and renewed participation in the sacrificial service. Thus, the production process of the ashes of a red heifer provides a unique encounter between detailed processes of material production and function with inter-religious theological-apocalyptic trends. These characteristics accompanied the ritual and its laws from its very beginnings in antiquity. This lecture will focus on the shaping of the ritual of ash production in Tannaitic literature (70-220 CE), after the destruction of the Second Temple. I will examine the Tannaitic ritual against the background of its biblical origins. My analysis centers on the combination of the material aspects with the interpretative and polemical aspects, and how they came together in the Tannaic formation. I will present comparisons to parallel rituals found in the surrounding cultures and religions, such as the Sadducees, the Qumran sect, pagans and Christians. These comparisons demonstrate the innovative shaping of the ritual in the Tannaitic literature, including several unexpected components. I will claim that the goal of reshaping of the ritual was to create a utopian fantasy of fundamental purity. The production of the purifying ashes was for them the establishment of purity itself.

*Dr. David Sabato recently completed his Phd in the Talmudic department at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His doctorate focused on the development of rabbinic law after the destruction of the Second Temple. Sabato teaches Bible and Rabbinic Literature at a variety of institutions in Israel.*

### Armchair Expert: The Materiality of Elijah's Chair

Chana Shacham-Rosby

Elijah's Chair is an iconic component of Jewish circumcision ceremonies, a visible metonymy of the ritual. Its chronologically and geographically expansive use throughout the Jewish diaspora makes it an ideal component of material culture for examining local traditions, shifts in practice and conceptualization, and exchanges between religious groups. Medieval and early modern sources attest to the use of a regular chair decorated with rich cloths and cushions. Sometimes, the designated seat was left standing in the synagogue for three days following the circumcision, to encourage the worshipers to pray for the health of the newborn and his mother. However, evidence of lavish thrones constructed specifically for this purpose begins to emerge in early modern sources, becoming increasingly common over time. During the modern period Elijah's Chair became quite ubiquitous in synagogues, and nowadays it is also found in event halls and even restaurants. In this paper, I will present preliminary findings of approaching Elijah's Chair as a material representation of the immaterial. I will discuss its relationship to other representation of immaterial concepts in Jewish visual culture, as well as the material context from which emerged the iconic form of the Chair, that lasts until today.

*Chana Shacham-Rosby received her PhD from the Department of Jewish History at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in 2019 for her dissertation: "Elijah the Prophet in Medieval Franco-German (Ashkenazi) Jewish Culture". Her article "Elijah the Prophet: The Guard Dog of Israel" (Jewish History 30 (2016), 165-182) was awarded best student paper by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Ben-Gurion University in 2016. Shacham-Rosby is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for the Study of Conversion and Inter-Religious Encounters. She has presented at conferences in Israel and Europe.*

### Kissing Matter: Liturgical and Devotional Materiality in John Lydgate's Lyric on *Verbum Caro Factum Est*

Antje Carrel

The tradition of passion meditations, with its Hours of the Cross, *imago pietatis* and meditations on Jesus' five wounds, was extremely popular in fourteenth and fifteenth-century England. The growing translation into Middle English of such texts feeding the greater 'devotional literacy' (Aston 1984) of English people meant that Christ's crucified body was the locus classicus for what Vincent Gillespie calls a 'lectio domini' (Gillespie 1984; 1987), a non-verbal mode of rumination on an image. Known to have modelled a literary practice 'that inscribes the objects and practices of contemporary devotion within an increasing textual culture' (Gayk 2010), John Lydgate (1370-1451) encapsulated the role of materiality (Cooper & Denny-Brown 2008) in the forming, reforming and transforming of Christian liturgy and devotion in the first half of the fifteenth century. Going beyond the use of *lectio divina* and *lectio domini* to encounter Christ, Lydgate, through kissing matter, develops a *communio domini*, where a poetic layering of words, images and practice embodies the union of God and humanity, of the spiritual and the physical, as well as of the imaginative and the performative. This paper argues thus that Lydgate's *communio domini* was not only didactic and mnemonic in nature, but that it also promoted an experiential understanding of the truth of the doctrine of the Incarnation.

*Antje Carrel is a DPhil candidate in English at Lincoln College, Oxford. She works on medieval Christology in England, as expounded in religious literature such as sermons, catechetical and devotional texts, lyrics and drama. She is interested in the intersection of intellectual and religious mentalities in the literature of the first half of the fifteenth century in England.*



## Panel Five: Community

### Relics, Identities and Imagined Communities in the Hagiography of Gregory of Tours

Tamar Rotman

The fifth and sixth centuries were a period of transformation. As the Roman Empire slowly disintegrated, the people living in its territories had to find new ways to define themselves and their communities. This need is evident in the written works that survived from that time, among them are the writing of the Merovingian bishop, Gregory of Tours (d. 597). Gregory is best known for his extensive *Ten Books of Histories*, but he also authored several hagiographical collections; among them is the *Glory of the Confessors*. This collection records miracle stories that were associated, mostly, with saints from the Merovingian kingdom and the Gallic sphere, among them accounts of local heroes, heretics, bishops and kings, and many of them include relics and tomb sites. In this paper, I shall argue that Gregory used this collection to construct a Gallo-Christian identity for his audience. Gregory recorded stories from various places of the Frankish kingdom, and by placing these places on a map and reading the collection as a complete whole. This should indicate that Gregory used this method to draw the geographical, historical, and religious boundaries of his community. I shall also demonstrate how Gregory of Tours used relics and stories about them to create sense of belonging between people from various geographical places and social ranks. By using relics that were the materialistic expression of the saints and their cults and which played an important role in this vision of community, I argue that Gregory constructed an imagined community, a Gallo-Christian one.

*Tamar Rotman holds a PhD in medieval history earned in the Department of General History in Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. Her research focuses on hagiography, identity and the transformation of the Mediterranean after the disintegration of the Roman Empire. In 2019 a book she co-edited, *The Merovingian Kingdoms and the Mediterranean: Revisiting the Sources* was published with Bloomsbury, including a chapter she authored on *Vulfilaic the Stylite of Trier*. Currently, Rotman is working on a monograph based on her doctoral dissertation and an article about the auto-hagiography of Gregory of Tours.*

### Things Left Behind: Life, Death and Legacy in Mozarabic Toledo

Helen Flatley

The Mozarabs of Toledo are typically defined as a unique group of Iberian Christians: an Arabic-speaking community with lineal roots in al-Andalus, who retained their 'Arabicised' identity under Christian rule and flourished in the 12th and 13th centuries. In the aftermath of the Castilian conquest of Toledo by Alfonso VI in 1085, the Mozarabs emerged as an important economic and cultural force in the city, sustaining the use of Arabic up to two centuries after the transition from Muslim to Christian rule. The Mozarabs left behind a rich documentary legacy, comprising over 1200 records of sales, loans, donations, land transfers, manumissions, wills and other private economic contracts relating to land transfer in and around the city. This rich resource has the potential to tell us a great deal about the Mozarabs themselves, their relations with other communities of the post-conquest city (including Castilians, Franks, Muslims and Jews), and day-to-day life in the pluralistic city of Toledo in the 12th and 13th centuries. In this paper, I examine a selection of wills from the collection, detailing the property and bequests left behind by men and women from the Mozarabic community after their deaths. These material legacies tell us a great deal about the fortunes of key Mozarabic families and individuals, and allow us to build a picture of the interconnections between Mozarabs, Castilians, Franks, Muslims and Jews in post-conquest Toledo.

*Helen Flatley is a DPhil candidate in History at St Cross College, Oxford, with a background in both medieval (European) history and Islamic Studies. Her research interests lie in the cultural and religious history of medieval Iberia, particularly focusing on interactions between Muslims, Christians and Jews in both al-Andalus and Christian Iberia.*

### How to Move a Holy Mountain Across the Atlantic Ocean? Constructing Sacred Spaces in the Andes

Yael Mabat

In the last 50 years, Latin America's religious landscape has profoundly changed. What was known to be a Catholic stronghold for close to 500 years is now a budding platform for Evangelicals. Scholars have studied this phenomenon from various angles, examining, for example, the relationship between Evangelical doctrines and Neoliberalism or resemblance between the Pentecostalism and indigenous spirituality. Nevertheless, Evangelicalism brought with it more than new ideas about the holy spirit or rebirth, it also changed the way converts think about the sacred, what they believe to be a sacred space, and the mechanisms through which they construct these spaces. This paper discusses the construction of sacred spaces in several Andean Evangelical Churches. Specifically, it looks at the case of an idiosyncratic church called "The Evangelical Association of the Israelites Mission of the New Universal Pact." This church was established in the 1960s by a Quechua-speaking peasant named Ezequiel Ataucusi Gamonal. Gamonal developed a hybrid form of Christianity that included the reconfiguration of the geographical landscape to fit his theological ideas and eschatological expectations. Moreover, this church is known for its "Hebraic" material culture. For example, followers dress as they believe the ancient Israelites used to dress and their houses and the objects inside them supposedly resemble the material conditions of ancient Judea. Interestingly, the formation of this material culture is related to the diffusion cinema, and especially movies such as *Ben-Hur*, in the rural Andes. Hence, this paper sheds light on the way on the relationship between religious geographies, material culture, and visual technologies.

*Yael is a social and cultural historian of modern Christianity in the Americas with a particular interest in 19th and 20th-century fundamentalist and restorationist movements. She has written and published about the Seventh-day Adventist Church's early initiatives among the indigenous people of the Andes and more recently has been examining the use of "Hebraic" and Jewish symbols and artifacts in Churches across the Americas. Theoretically, Yael often implements, and critically examines, theories and concepts from the fields of microhistory, material religion, and lived religion.*



## Cover Images

Miniature Qur'an manuscript (1851-52), Turkey. Met Museum.

Book cover with Byzantine icon of the Crucifixion, with sapphire seal inscribed in Arabic with four of the names of God (11th century), Convent of Santa Cruz de la Seros, Jaca. Met Museum.

Pair of silver Torah finials with Ottoman motifs and Hebrew inscriptions (1896), Georgia. Met Museum.