**Religion and Material Culture**

The [Center for the Study of Conversion and Inter-Religious Encounters](https://in.bgu.ac.il/en/csoc/Pages/default.aspx) (CSoC)

CSoC was founded by Prof. Haim Hames in 2012 as an inter-university research center, supported by the Israeli Science Foundation (ISF) as an I-CORE project. The Center brought together scholars from different disciplines, and most of its work revolved around the study of religious conversion and the interactions between members of the Abrahamic faiths during the middle ages and the early modern period. In 2018, CSoC became a university center in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and has since been led by Prof. Effie Shoham. Each academic year, the Center focuses on a particular theme, and ends with an international workshop or conference. In the summer of 2021 the CSoC group will host The Center for Abrahamic Religions from Oxford University in a workshop onmateriality and material culture in the three Abrahamic religions.

For more details on CSoC and its activities: <https://www.facebook.com/BGU.CSOC/>

**Religion and Material Culture – Theme for 2020-2021**

In recent decades, scholars from different disciplines, including historians of religion, have realized that focusing on texts and rituals is insufficient, as religious identity, experience, community and worship are deeply embedded in the material world as well. In Judaism, Christianity and Islam, materials and objects are used during prayer and commemoration, to symbolize holiness, to mark hierarchies and power relations, transfer blessing, to edify and more. They play a major role in religious life, especially for believers from groups who left no written evidence. For the historian, ritual objects may indicate continuity or change in a way that complements or challenges the narratives based on written texts.

CSoC's Seminars for 2020-2021 will be devoted to examining a wide range of issues related to materiality in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, in different historical periods. We welcome the application of researchers who focus on the usage, history and theological status of sacred objects; on the development of ritual items and/or their manufacturers, production processes and patterns of consumption; on the role of materials and objects in pilgrimage, ceremonies, magic and indoctrination; and on artistic, theoretical and methodological aspects of materiality. Scholars who do comparative work and those that emphasize transitions, connections and polemics between religions are especially encouraged to apply.