

VISUALITY IN JEWISH GREEK LITERATURE

• A SEMINAR •



14-15 July 2022

University of Cambridge

In-Person and Online



Interactions between Greek and Jewish Visual Cultures beyond Idolatry

The encounter between Judaism and Hellenism in antiquity has often been framed in agonistic terms. A perennial and paradigmatic case of this cross-cultural conflict has been idolatry: the Hellenistic world was full of figurative art, while the Jewish tradition eschews images and representations of things. Yet since the work of Goodenough, this polarity has been untenable, as scholars have elucidated the rich archaeological evidence for Jewish art and its relation to Hellenistic forms. Conversely, scholars such as Milette Gaifman have been unpacking the rich tradition of aniconism in Greek art. The binary is being challenged within scholarship on both cultures. Still, a focus on artistic representation is only one aspect of how a culture sees. Cultures may also have their own epistemologies of vision, ethics of viewing and theologies of ritual material, presentation and decoration. All these aspects together can be termed a culture's *visuality*.

In this two-day seminar it is our aim to move beyond the traditional debates around idolatry which have so influenced the historiography of early Jewish-Greek interactions. By widening our remit to focus on the range of visualities inscribed in Jewish texts written in Greek we seek to inaugurate the exploration of Jewish Greek *visuality*. This in turn will allow us to gain a more nuanced perspective on the cultural dialogue between Judaism and Hellenism.

PROGRAMME

[Click here to view the abstracts](#)

Thursday, 14 July

- 12.00PM *Coffee and Tea Available*
- 12.45PM **Introduction and Welcome**
Max Leventhal and Logan Williams
- 1.00PM **The Politics of Iconicity: Material Epiphany, Human-Divine Reciprocity, and Social Power**
Alexander Chantziantoniou, Cambridge
- 2.00PM **Honour and Shame in Josephus' Clothing Imagery**
Katie Turner, independent/KCL
- 3.00PM *Break*
- 3.15PM **The Jewish Sibyl Narrates Star Wars**
Helen Van Noorden, Cambridge
- 4.15PM **Looking through Moses: Seeing the Dream in Ezekiel's Exagoge**
Elizabeth Stell, Oxford
- 5.15PM *Break*
- 5.30PM **The Procession and Praise of the Righteous in Ben Sira 44-50**
Crispin Fletcher-Louis, Gloucestershire
- 6.30PM *Break*
- 7.00PM *Dinner*

Friday, 15 July

- 9.00AM *Coffee and Tea Available*
- 9.30AM **Defeating Death by the Visual Logos: The High Priest in *Wisdom of Solomon***
Logan Williams, Durham
- 10.30AM **Visual Descriptions in the Hebrew and Greek Texts of Esther and their Artistic Afterlives**
Joshua Alfaro, Salzburg
- 11.30AM *Break*
- 12:00PM **God Gazing: Reflections on the Relationship between God's (In)visibility and (In)corporeality**
Deborah Forger, Dartmouth
- 1.00PM **Philo on the Visible Cosmos and the Invisible God**
Matthew Sharp, St Andrews
- 2.00PM **Closing Remarks**
Max Leventhal and Logan Williams

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For any further inquiries, please contact the convenors, Max Leventhal (ml649@cam.ac.uk) and Logan Williams (logan.a.williams@durham.ac.uk)