

OXFORD SEMINAR IN ADVANCED JEWISH STUDIES

The Reception of Josephus in the Early Modern Period

**CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR FELLOWSHIPS:
CLOSING DATE: 15 JANUARY 2013**

January to June 2014

**Seminar Leaders: Professor Martin Goodman
and Dr Joanna Weinberg**

This Oxford Seminar in Advanced Jewish Studies will investigate the varied uses of the writings of Flavius Josephus in Jewish and Christian literature in the early modern period.

The survival of Josephus' writings from the first century CE to the early modern period was entirely due to the use of these texts by Christians. It is possible that Josephus' writings were known to the rabbis of late antiquity, but the surviving late-antique rabbinic texts, which survive in Hebrew and Aramaic, make no explicit reference to him or to his work. The re-entry of Josephus into the Jewish cultural milieu came about through a Hebrew reworking of a Latin translation of the first sixteen books of the *Antiquities* and a Hebrew paraphrase of the Latin version of the *Jewish War* attributed to Hegesippus. Produced by a South Italian Jew in the tenth century CE, this Hebrew rendering, known as Josippon, circulated in various versions in mediaeval rabbinic circles, and it remained for many centuries the prime source for Jews on the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. Josippon's description of the mass suicide on Masada inspired Jewish martyrs during the Crusades. By the time of Rashi, in the later eleventh century, Josippon was commonly ascribed to Josephus himself, thus acquiring a spurious authority which encouraged its translation into other languages, including Arabic. The real Josephus became known to Jews from the fifteenth century, but it was the sixteenth-century Azariah de' Rossi who rediscovered the significance of Hellenistic Jewish writers for Judaism, and who used Josephus as a fundamental source for analysing the authenticity of rabbinic tradition. From the early modern period the works of Josephus, in different forms, became a vital resource for Jews as much as Christians of all denominations in reconstructing their own histories.

The Seminar will proceed by asking experts in early modern Jewish and Christian history and literature to investigate the textual history of Josephus' works, including translations and paraphrases such as the popular Josippon, to contextualize and to assess the uses and status of Josephus' writings in this period. A feature of the Seminar will be that experts on Josephus will analyse the data provided by the early modernists in relation to the problems inherent in Josephus' writings and to earlier and later handling of those problems. The significance of choice of text, divergent readings, surprising construals and apparent misreadings will be investigated. Specialists who begin with the text of Josephus will combine with those who start with the reception texts in order to interpret the data and look for viable historical explanations.

Work on the reception history of Josephus is in its infancy. Few, if any, scholars have sufficient knowledge both of the source text and of the whole span of later Jewish and Christian intellectual history to tackle such reception history alone. This is precisely the kind of scholarship best undertaken through collaborative research between scholars with expertise in different areas.

Weekly seminars will be convened through the duration of two Oxford terms, 20 January to 14 March and 28 April to 27 June 2014. These will offer a forum for the fellows to address central research topics related to the overall theme of the Seminar.

Visiting Fellows will receive free accommodation on the Yarnton Manor Estate and a stipend of 750 pounds sterling (*pro rata*) per calendar month during the period of their tenure. Travelling expenses up to 500 pounds sterling will also be provided.

Applications by senior scholars, and by scholars at postdoctoral and advanced doctoral level, are all welcome.

Closing date for applications: 15 January 2013

For more detailed information see: <http://www.ochjs.ac.uk/home/academics/visiting-academics/visiting-fellows/>

Or contact:

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