

## **OXFORD SEMINAR IN ADVANCED JEWISH STUDIES**

(in consortium with Mandel Scholion Centre, Hebrew University of Jerusalem  
and Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg)

### **Towards the Study of Jewish-Buddhist Relations**

**January to June 2021**

#### **Project leaders:**

**Professor Dr Boaz Huss, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev**  
**Professor Lionel Obadia, National Agency of Research in France**  
**Dr Sebastian Musch, University of Osnabrück**

#### **Core members:**

**Professor Yaakov Ariel, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**  
**Professor Ruth Harris, University of Oxford**

### **CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR FELLOWSHIPS**

**CLOSING DATE: 10 January 2020**

The Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies invites applications for Fellowships for the 2020-2021 seminar in advanced Jewish Studies. The aim of the Oxford Seminar in Advanced Jewish Studies for 2020-2021 is to bring together scholars of Jewish-Buddhist relations and develop a framework for the future study of the field. To date, Jewish-Buddhist studies have received little scholarly attention, even though the historical basis for the study of the Jewish-Buddhist relationship is strong. Jewish communities have lived in India since ancient times, with the Bene Israel community claiming to have arrived there in 175 BCE. Jewish merchants started going to China during the first centuries of the Common Era, and the Kaifeng Jews were granted permission to build a synagogue in 1163. Small Jewish communities have mushroomed in other East and South Asian countries over the last few centuries. During the 1940s, China and especially Shanghai became safe havens for many European Jews. This development also worked the other way around. Buddhists from South and East Asia have increasingly migrated to North America, Israel, and Europe, where they came into contact with Jewish culture. Nowadays, Jews and Buddhists interact to an unprecedented degree. As a result of globalization, migration, and the subsequent increased circulation of ideas, Judaism and Buddhism are becoming more knowledgeable about one another. In particular, the West's enchantment with Buddhism since the 1960s has raised many questions about the relationship between Judaism and Buddhism. This Seminar aims to usher the field of Jewish-Buddhist Studies to the prominence it unquestionably deserves. This is also the first in a series of International Network Seminars in Advanced Jewish Studies organised by the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, Mandel Scholion Centre of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg.

The Seminar will bring together scholars working on Jewish-Buddhist relations (and other related Asian traditions, for example yoga), mostly from Jewish Studies or Religious Studies departments, who will collaborate to investigate the Jewish-Buddhist encounter throughout the ages and identify key aspects that deserve further scrutiny. We have identified twelve

preliminary research foci, with three fields of inquiry across the four relevant periods (ancient, medieval, modern, contemporary):

	Theological	Sociological	Cultural
Ancient	The Pali-Canon and the Hebrew Bible	Common roots	Intercultural contacts
Medieval	Buddhist and Jewish Philosophy	Non-Abrahamic Encounters	Travels and Fantasies
Modern	Holy texts and historical criticism	Colonial and Imperial subjects	Orientalist and Occidental Ideas
Contemporary	Interfaith efforts	Intermarriage and Personal Encounters	Syncretism in Theory and Praxis

One product of the Seminar will be the publication of an edited volume on the study of Jewish-Buddhist relations throughout the ages, the first volume of this kind. We will also explore opportunities to strengthen the research infrastructure of Jewish-Buddhist Studies, for example establishing a Jewish-Buddhist Studies network and forging a group of scholars who will collaborate in the future and pursue further projects that focus on individual aspects following the framework developed during the Seminar.

Each week, one member of the group will present an aspect of his or her research. In addition, weekly reading sessions will be held. Weekly seminars will be convened through the duration of two Oxford terms: 14 January to 12 March and 22 April to 18 June 2021. These will offer a forum for the Fellows to address central research topics related to the overall theme of the Seminar. The concluding conference will be held from 21 to 23 June 2021.

Visiting Fellows will receive an allowance of £2,515 (*pro rata*) per calendar month for the period of their tenure. Travelling expenses up to £550 pounds sterling will also be provided. Fellows will be expected to be in Oxford for at least one Oxford term. Applicants should indicate the specific research they would undertake in the course of Fellowship and how this research would contribute to the broader work of the project. The Centre welcomes applications from scholars working in any period. Applications both by senior scholars and by scholars at postdoctoral and advanced doctoral level are welcome.

**Closing date for applications: 10 January 2020**

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

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