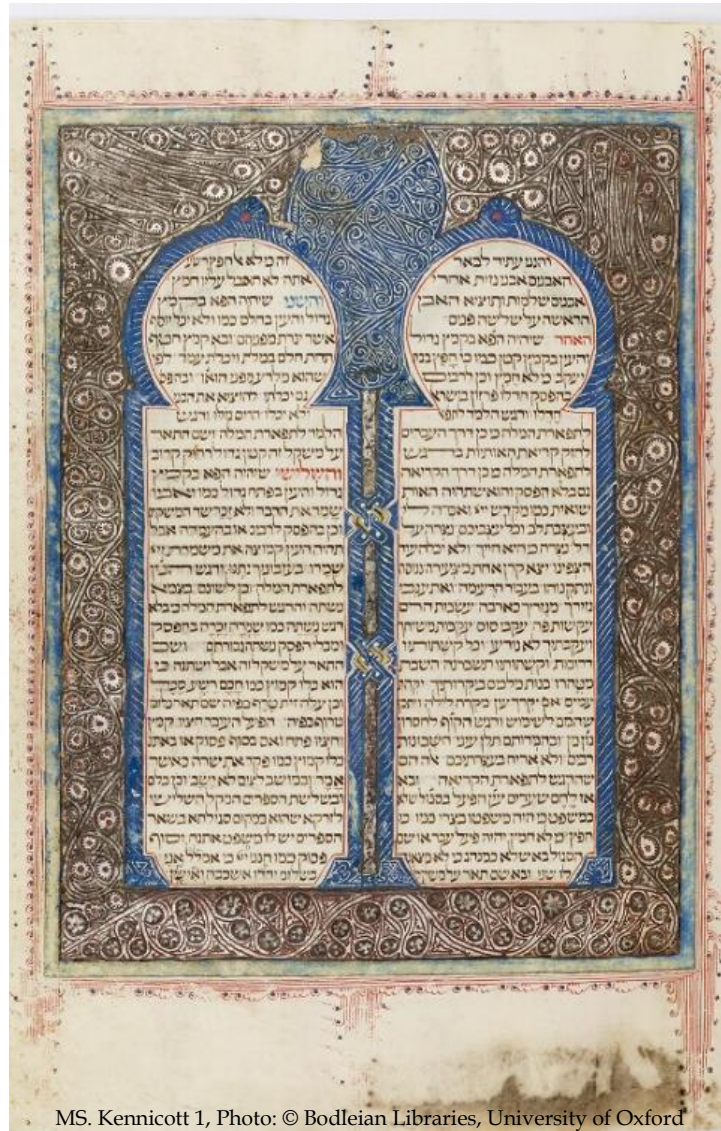


Final Conference  
of the

Oxford Seminar in Advanced Jewish Studies:  
*Philosophy in Scripture: Jewish Philosophical Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in the Late  
Medieval Period*



13-14 June 2022

Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies  
Clarendon Institute, Walton Street  
Oxford, OX1 2HG

Convenors: Raphael Dascalu and Paul B. Fenton

*Entrance free. No registration for in-person attendance necessary.  
Please click [here](#) to register to join via Zoom.*

## CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

*Entrance free. No registration for in-person attendance necessary.  
Please click [here](#) to register to join via Zoom.*

### Monday, 13 June 2022

9:30-9:45 – Introduction: Paul B. Fenton

9:45-11:15 – Panel 1: Post-Maimonideanism in the Islamic East (1)

**Chair: Raphael Dascalu**

**Y. Tzvi Langermann** – ‘The Philosophical Interpretation of Scripture among Yemenite Exegetes’

**Paul B. Fenton** – ‘Philosophical Elements in R. David II Maimonides’ Torah Commentary’

11:15-11:30 – Tea and Coffee Break

11:30-13:00 – Panel 2: Post-Maimonideanism in the Islamic East (2)

**Chair: Rachel Katz**

**Raphael Dascalu** – ‘Sa’id Ibn Dāwūd al-‘Adanī: Popularising Philosophy in 15<sup>th</sup>-Century Egypt and the Levant’

**Ilan Moradi** – ‘The “Vision of the Divine” (Ex. 33, 18 and 23) according to the 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Judaeo-Persian Philosopher Rabbi Judah ben Eleazar’

13:00-14:00 – Lunch Break (*lunch provided for speakers only*)

14:00-15:30 – Panel 3: Science in the Hebrew Bible: Between East and West

**Chair: Andrea Gondos**

**Tamás Visi** – ‘The Meteorological Interpretation of the Creation Narrative in the Late Middle Ages’

**Oded Horezky** – ‘Biblical Law in Medieval Provence: Science vs Politics’

16:00-16:15 – Closing Session

**Oded Horezky** – Presentation on Manuscript Database

19:00 – Dinner (*for presenters only*)

**Tuesday, 14 June 2022**

9:30-11:00 – Panel 4: The Confrontation between Kabbalah and Philosophy

**Chair: Israel Sandman**

**Nathan Wolski** – ‘‘It does not sit well in my heart’’: Allegorising the Eschatological Banquet in Midrash ha-Ne‘lam’

**Andrea Gondos** – ‘Biblical Narratives in a Kabbalistic Key: Sin, Heresy, and the Destruction of Divine Unity in *Ma’arekhet ha-Elohut*’

11:00-11:30 – Tea and Coffee Break

11:30-13:00 – Panel 5: Science and Scripture: Between Western Christendom and Western Islamdom

**Chair: Shira Weiss**

**David Wirmer** – ‘Philosophical Solitude and Spiritual Medicine: Reading Ibn Bāḡḡa’s *Tadbīr al-mutawahḥid*’

**Andrew Berns** – ‘Jewish Perspectives on Medicine in Scripture from Late Medieval Iberia and Italy’

13:00-14:00 – Lunch Break (*lunch provided for speakers only*)

14:00-16:15 – Panel 6: Continuity and Discontinuity in Post-Maimonidean Iberia

**Chair: Oded Horezky**

**Rachel Katz** – ‘Embodiment (?) in Isaac Arama’s Works’

**Shira Weiss** – ‘Scholastic Influences on Joseph Albo’s *Book of Principles*’

**Israel Sandman** – ‘Philosophy and Tradition: Appreciating the Paradox of Judah ha-Kohen’s Midrash ha-Ḥokhmah’

**ABSTRACTS AND BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**  
*(in alphabetical order)*

**Andrew Berns, University of South Carolina**

**‘Jewish Perspectives on Medicine in Scripture from Late Medieval Iberia and Italy’**

My paper focuses on Italian- and Iberian-Jewish analyses of the Garden of Eden story from Genesis 2. It presents Hebrew sources that assess the purported medical properties of the Tree of Life and other vegetation found in Eden and argues that Italian-Jewish scholars adopted naturalistic explanations, whereas Iberian-Jewish scholars favoured allegorical explanations of the healthfulness of Eden. This may be attributed to differences in contemporary medical culture, including the range of subjects embraced in fifteenth-century medical compositions, and the prevalence of vernacular texts. Jewish biblical commentary reflects these cultural distinctions.

**Andrew Berns** is Associate Professor of History at the University of South Carolina. His research investigates the intellectual and cultural history of Jews in the medieval and early modern Mediterranean, especially Italy and Spain. He has been the Melville J. Kahn Fellow at Villa I Tatti: the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies; the Viterbi Visiting Professor in Mediterranean Jewish Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles; and Rose and Henry Zifkin Teaching Fellow at the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, University of Pennsylvania. His first book, *The Bible and Natural Philosophy in Renaissance Italy: Jewish and Christian Physicians in Search of Truth*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2015 and won the 2016 Howard R. Marraro Prize from the American Catholic Historical Association. His second book, *The Land is Mine: Sephardi Jews and Bible Commentary in the Renaissance*, was published by the University of Pennsylvania Press in its Jewish Culture and Contexts series in April 2022.

**Raphael Dascalu, Monash University**

**‘Sa’īd Ibn Dāwūd al-‘Adanī: Popularising Philosophy in 15<sup>th</sup>-Century Egypt and the Levant’**

Active throughout the mid-late decades of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Sa’īd Ibn Dāwūd (Saadia b. David) al-‘Adanī was a prolific copyist and author, composing his works primarily in Judaeo-Arabic. He was a migrant, born and raised in southern Yemen, and spent extended periods in Egypt and Syria before finally settling in Safed. Al-‘Adanī authored two biblical commentaries, removed from one another by time and geography, that shed considerable light on his cultural and intellectual milieu. This paper will examine some of the questions around his authorship of these works, identify some of the fundamental sources and background to his commentaries, and aim to shed light on his program of promoting philosophical spirituality within the Jewish communities of Egypt and the Levant.

**Raphael Dascalu** completed his PhD in History of Judaism at the University of Chicago in 2016. His subsequent monograph, *A Philosopher of Scripture: The Exegesis and Thought of Tanḥum ha-Yerushalmi* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), was recipient of the David R. Blumenthal Prize in Medieval Jewish Studies. As its title suggests, it focuses on the works of Tanḥum b. Joseph ha-Yerushalmi (d. 1291)—a creative and eclectic Judaeo-Arabic lexicographer, exegete, philosopher, and mystic. Raphael’s current research continues to focus primarily on Judaeo-

Arabic thought and literature in the late medieval period, and seeks to situate Jewish thought and praxis within the broader context of Islamic intellectual and spiritual movements. He is currently based in Melbourne, Australia, where he is an Adjunct Research Associate at Monash University.

**Paul B. Fenton, Sorbonne Université, Paris**

### **‘Philosophical Elements in R. David II Maimonides’ Torah Commentary’**

Not only was David II b. Joshua (fl.1335-1415) the last scion of the illustrious Maimonides’ dynasty, but he was also one of the last great authors of the Judaeo-Arabic tradition. Indeed, he produced ethical manuals, philosophical treatises, and Bible commentaries in that idiom. He is also the author of a little-known commentary on the Pentateuch written in Hebrew, *Kelîl ha-Yôfi*, a substantial part of which was discovered some years ago by the speaker in the Saint Petersburg Genizah collection, while, hitherto, it was known only through sparse quotations. This significant work, which draws heavily on Maimonides’ *Guide* and his multiple commentators, represents a novel genre among the eastern exegetical tradition. It is somewhat similar in style to Jacob ha-Siqilli’s *Talmûd Torâh*, completed in Damascus in 1337, which it quotes abundantly. It is a mixture of philosophical and philological interpretations blended with popular homiletics. As such, the *Kelîl ha-Yôfi* could be a forerunner, and perhaps a literary model of the homiletic *Midrashîm* prevalent in later Yemenite literature. The present paper provides an introduction to the commentary, illustrated with a few excerpts.

**Paul B. Fenton**, both an Arabist and Hebraist, was Co-Director of the Department of Arabic and Hebrew Studies at the Sorbonne Université, Paris, where he had been Professor of Hebrew Language and Literature since 1996. He is also a statutory research member of the Laboratoire de l’étude des monothéismes (CNRS). After Rabbinical studies, he majored in Semitics at Strasbourg University and St Joseph University in Beirut. He went on to complete his PhD in Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy and Judaeo-Arabic Literature under Georges Vajda (Sorbonne, 1976). From 1978-1982, he was Research Assistant at the Cairo Genizah Unit at Cambridge University Library. Before his appointment at the Sorbonne, he had been Professor of Hebrew at Strasbourg University. His field of research covers various aspects of Jewish civilisation in the Muslim world, including comparative Jewish and Islamic philosophy, theology and mysticism. He is director of the E. J. Brill series « Études sur le judaïsme médiéval », and has published numerous studies and monographs in the field of Jewish culture in the Islamic context in several languages, notably his *Deux traités de mystique juive* (1987); *Moïse Ibn ‘Ezra, philosophe et poète andalou du XIIIe siècle* (1997); *Le Commentaire kairouanais sur le Livre de la Création* (2002); *Joseph Ibn Waqâr, The Principles of the Qabbalah* (2004); *Judah Ibn Malka, La Consolation de l’expatrié spirituel* (2007); *Juda al-Harizi, Kitâb al-Durar, The Book of Pearls* (2009); *Muhammad Ibn Zikri (17th c.), On the Eminence of Israelites and Arabs* (Madrid, CSIC, 2015); *Exile in the Maghreb: Jews under Islam* (2016); and *Samuel Romanelli, Voyage en pays arabe* (2019). His latest book, *Getzel Selikovitch, un aventurier juif au pays du Mahdi* (2021), is a translation from Yiddish of an Orientalist’s biography.

**Andrea Gondos, Free University, Berlin**

**'Biblical Narratives in a Kabbalistic Key: Sin, Heresy, and the Destruction of Divine Unity in *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut*'**

The *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut* (*The Divine Order*) was written anonymously at the beginning of the fourteenth century and exercised a lasting influence on the development of Kabbalah in the late medieval and early modern periods. Conceptually, the work presents a summa of the major ideas and theories of Catalan Kabbalah originating from the school of Nahmanides through his student R. Solomon ibn Adret, and his students.

My presentation will focus on Gate 9, called *Sha'ar ha-Harissa* (*Gate of Destruction*), where the author polemicizes against the dangers of incorrect beliefs concerning the sefirot and the relationship between the divine and lower worlds. By exposing a number of innovative exegeses that the *Ma'arekhet* offers on biblical characters and narratives, I will argue that the author wished to highlight the deep religious and ontological consequences of flawed intellectual speculations and conclusions. At a time when competing theories of the sefirot circulated in various parts of the Iberian Peninsula and beyond, the *Ma'arekhet* presented an unequivocal rejection of theories that suggested any separation of the last sefirah *Malkuth*—gendered feminine and associated with the Shekhinah or Divine presence—from the rest of the sefirot in the divine structure. As a staunch warning against religious heresy, the insertion of *Sha'ar ha-Harissa* into a largely theosophical Kabbalistic treatise gains particular religious urgency when considered against the background of Catholic Spain and the ubiquitous worship of the Virgin Mary.

**Andrea Gondos'** current work probes the genre of Jewish magical recipes as sites of knowledge production focusing on the interplay among diverse epistemic fields: material culture, medicine, gender, lived religion, and embodiment in early modern East-Central Europe. She is a Post-Doctoral Associate in the Emmy Noether Research Group, 'Patterns of Knowledge Circulation: The Transmission and Reception of Jewish Esoteric Knowledge in Early Modern East-Central Europe', funded by the DFG (German Research Council), in the Institute of Jewish Studies, Free University in Berlin. Her first monograph, titled *Kabbalah in Print: The Study and Popularization of Jewish Mysticism in Early Modernity* (New York: SUNY, 2020), examines the cultural impact of study guides to Kabbalah, and the role of secondary elites in East-Central Europe in the dissemination of Jewish mystical concepts and ideas in the period 1550 to 1650.

**Rachel Katz, University of Chicago**

**'Embodiment (?) in Isaac Arama's Works'**

In this talk, we will conduct something of an experiment and ask whether the modern, scholarly concept of embodiment works as an apt tool to tie together some major threads in the thought of late 15<sup>th</sup>-century Iberian thinker Isaac Arama. We will do this by looking at just a few representative selections from Arama's philosophical exegesis, mostly related to the commandments. If this idea of embodiment indeed seems to fit Arama, it would be useful on a few levels: It would not only help us to understand Arama better, more so in light of the themes that were important to him as distinct from the philosophical tradition in relation to which he has historically been (mis)understood, but it also would help us to complicate and refine some binaries that pervade Jewish historiography.

**Rachel Katz** is a PhD student at the University of Chicago. She studies the popularization of philosophy and science through traditional genres of literature among medieval Jewish communities in Spain and southern France, as well as the conservative reactions provoked by these popularizations of philosophy. Her dissertation focuses on a highly influential yet understudied collection of philosophical sermons from late 15<sup>th</sup>-century Spain, the *Aqedat Yizhaq* of Isaac Arama.

**Y. Tzvi Langermann, Bar Ilan University**

**'The Philosophical Interpretation of Scripture among Yemenite Exegetes'**

My talk will explore different aspects philosophical exegesis among the Jews of Yemen, mostly in connection with their ubiquitous recognition of Maimonides as their master. First, I will briefly touch upon the question of whether philosophical exegesis began with the reception of Maimonides in Yemen. Next, I will look at a theoretical statement on exegesis and its interpretation in one key text. Third, I will examine some key expansions upon Maimonides' philosophical exegesis. Fourth, I will bring a few examples of non-Maimonidean exegesis. Last, I will offer some brief remarks concerning philosophical exegesis of Hemdat Yamim, the last of the major midrashim produced by Yemenite Jewry.

**Y. Tzvi Langermann** received his PhD in History of Science from Harvard, where he studied under A. I. Sabra and John Murdoch. For fifteen years, he catalogued Hebrew and Judaeo-Arabic texts in philosophy and science at the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts in Jerusalem before joining the Department of Arabic at Bar Ilan, from which he recently retired. His most recent books are a translation and study of a treatise by Ibn Kammūna, *Subtle Insights Concerning Knowledge and Practice* (Yale University Press, 2019), and *In and Around Maimonides: Original Essays* (Gorgias Press, 2021).

**Ilan Moradi, Beijing Normal University**

**'The "Vision of the Divine" (Ex. 33, 18 and 23) according to the 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Judaeo-Persian Philosopher Rabbi Judah ben Eleazar'**

This lecture presents the interpretation of Rabbi Yehuda Ben Eleazar, a Jewish Persian philosopher of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (CE), concerning God's revelation to Moses (Exodus, xxxiii, 18 (הראני נא את כבודך) & 23 (וראית את אחרי)). In his treatise *The Duties of Yehuda*, Ben Eleazar rationally treats the Jewish faith. He suggests four principles of faith following Aristotle's Four Causes Doctrine. In the second chapter, which is dedicated to the prophecy as the formal principle of faith, he philosophically interprets Moses' demand to see God's glory and God's reply. This lecture points out the unique interpretation of Ben Eleazar: although it follows the interpretation of Jewish thinkers, it reveals itself as unique due to the fact that the discussion integrates the interpretation of Muslim thinkers.

**Ilan Moradi** is Lecturer of Philosophy at the Beijing Normal University. Born in Jerusalem to a Persian family, he was first educated at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, where he studied philosophy and Classical Studies (BA). He completed his Master's studies in philosophy at the University Paris-Sorbonne (Paris IV) under the supervision of Professor Jonathan Barnes (FBA), and a second Master's in Hebrew and Jewish Studies at the University Paris VIII (France). His PhD dissertation on Aristotle's theory of substance in the *Metaphysics* and in the *Categories* was written under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Holmer Steinfath at the

University of Göttingen (Germany). He taught Jewish philosophy at the University Paris VIII and French philosophy at the University Paris-Nanterre. His monograph *Die Evolution der aristotelischen Substanztheorie. Von der Kategorienschrift zur Metaphysik* (2011) was praised by the scientific community. His research in Jewish philosophy concerns the aristotelization of Judaism by the Jewish philosophers since the Middle Ages, Aristotelian rationalization of Judaism and the rise of the Jewish rational faith, and the evolution of the Jewish faith and its principles due to rationalization as well as an irrationalization. During his time as a Visiting Scholar at the OCHJS, he is exploring Jewish Persian philosophy in the 17<sup>th</sup> century CE. The research focuses on Rabbi Yehuda Ben El'azar's book *The Duties of Yehuda* and on his interpretation of the principles of the Jewish faith according to Aristotle's Four Causes Doctrine. It is the first step towards a comprehensive understanding of the influence of Aristotle's philosophy on Ben El'azar's book. His research will help to clarify the purpose of the integration of Aristotle's philosophy as well as the place of Ben El'azar's interpretation within the evolution of the principles of the Jewish faith whose proponents are Maimonides, Hasdai Crescas, Joseph Albo, and David Messer Leon.

**Oded Horezky, University of Cologne**

### **'Biblical Law in Medieval Provence: Science vs Politics'**

My lecture examines the interpretation of biblical law among fourteenth-century Jewish philosophers in southern France and focuses on the interpretations that were given to the ritual part of the law – the *huqqim* – such as the Jerusalem temple, the tabernacle, and the sacrifices. The lecture offers a distinction between two approaches: the philosophical-scientific allegory (that will be represented by Gersonides) and the political-historical approach (represented by Joseph Ibn Kaspi). The two distinct approaches will be analysed from several perspectives and within various contexts: Maimonides' theory, Averroes's 'dialectical' works, Abraham Ibn Ezra's thought, astrology, the controversy over the study of philosophy, the Kabbalistic approach, and Spinoza's Theological-Political Treatise.

**Oded Horezky** is a research associate at the Thomas-Institute of the University of Cologne. His research interests include medieval Jewish philosophy, history of science, medieval biblical exegesis, critical editions of medieval Hebrew texts, medieval Hebrew manuscripts, and digital humanities. Since 2017, Oded works as the lead Hebrew editor at the 'Averroes-Edition' Project – 'Averroes (Ibn Rušd) and the Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception of Aristotle's Natural Philosophy' – a long-term, trilingual edition project comprising commentaries and writings on the Aristotelian corpus by Ibn Bāğğa and Ibn Rušd, conducted by The North-Rhine Westphalian Academy of Sciences, Humanities and the Arts (<https://averroes.uni-koeln.de/>). He is currently preparing a critical edition of the Hebrew translation of Averroes's *Long Commentary* on Aristotle's *Physics*. In 2014-2016, Oded was a research associate in the DARE Project (Digital Averroes Research Environment) of the Thomas-Institute (<http://dare.uni-koeln.de/>), and in 2013 a 'Tikvah Fellow' at the Tikvah Fund in New York. His doctoral dissertation on Maimonides and Gersonides was completed in 2017 at the University of Haifa under the supervision of Professor Menachem Kellner and Professor Daniel Statman. His publications deal with the reception of Gersonides by Isaac Abravanel, Ṭodros Ṭodrosi's philosophical-scientific anthology and the reception of Averroes's commentaries on the *Corpus Aristotelicum*, the history of medieval Hebrew scientific terminology, and a forthcoming study on Gersonides' astrophysics and epistemological optimism. His research project at the OCHJS is focused on the philosophical interpretations of the biblical law among Provençal Jewish scholars in the fourteenth century.



**Israel Sandman, British Library**

**‘Philosophy and Tradition: Appreciating the Paradox of Judah ha-Kohen’s Midrash ha-Hokhmah’**

Judah ha-Kohen’s Midrash ha-Hokhma is rife with paradox. He loves philosophy (in the full medieval sense, including mathematical and natural sciences) and provides cutting-edge epitomes of the major philosophical works, yet he points out the philosophers’ inconsistencies and questions the validity of the entire philosophical enterprise. He respects Aristotle, but frequently uses Aristotelian principles to undermine Aristotle and philosophy. He admires Maimonides, yet pays him ambiguous compliments. He asserts that all wisdom is encapsulated in the Bible and Tradition, yet he needs to lean on philosophy to explicate the meanings of these religious texts. Furthermore, confronting philosophical challenges to theology, Judah standardly offers two solutions, one of which works within the parameters of philosophy, and the other which challenges those parameters. Therefore, it seems that dialectic and paradox are integral to Judah’s quest for truth: philosophy contains truths and goodness, but imperfectly and limitedly; Scripture and Tradition contain absolute truth, but in a form that is only partially articulate. In the dialectical confrontation of these two approaches, one serves as a corrective to the other, and truth is uncovered. This will be illustrated via a close reading of part of Judah’s introduction to his epitome of the astrological sciences.

**Dr Israel M. Sandman** researches Hebrew manuscripts, medieval Jewish thought, and the integration of medieval thought into Kabbalah and Hasidism. He has taught Jewish Studies at the University of Wisconsin/Madison, Loyola University Chicago, and University College London, where he held a long-term research position. Currently, he is at the British Library, where he is cataloguing and researching the century-old archive of Chief Rabbi Ezra Dangoor of Baghdad.

**Tamás Visi, Palacký University of Olomouc, Czech Republic**

**‘The Meteorological Interpretation of the Creation Narrative in the Late Middle Ages’**

The ‘meteorological’ interpretation of the creation narrative, which we encounter in the commentaries of Abraham Ibn Ezra and in Maimonides’ *The Guide for the Perplexed* (II, 30), can be traced back to Saadiah Gaon (and ultimately, to Philoponus). In other words, an exegetical theme that acquired central importance in Jewish philosophical exegesis during the High Middle Ages turns out to be a cultural import from Late Antique Christian biblical exegesis. Late medieval exegetes received this tradition chiefly from Ibn Ezra and Maimonides, and combined it with ideas taken from Averroes’ natural philosophy and Neoplatonic theories.

**Tamás Visi** is tenured Associate Professor of Jewish Studies at the Palacký University of Olomouc in the Czech Republic. He completed his PhD in Medieval Studies at the Central European University in Budapest (2006) and was a recipient of the Marie Curie Scholarship (2007-2009 and 2010-2013) as well as a fellow of The Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (2012). He is also a collaborator of the Averroes Edition project at the Thomas Institute, University of Cologne, since 2016. He has authored several scholarly publications in the field of medieval Jewish intellectual history. During his time at the OCHJS, he is undertaking a comparative analysis of Jewish and Christian philosophical-scientific exegesis of the creation narrative.

**Shira Weiss, Yeshiva University**

**'Scholastic Influences on Joseph Albo's *Book of Principles*'**

Heightened animosity between Christianity and Judaism in the late Middle Ages did not impede the influence of Christian philosophy on Judaism, but rather, the intensified tension and polemics between Jews and Christians motivated Jewish thinkers to enhance their understanding of Christian theological doctrines and led them to an appreciation of the intellectual merits of Christian Scholasticism. As typical of fifteenth-century Jewish philosophical works, Christian sources were not cited explicitly, yet their influence was reflected in the analyses of Jewish philosophers. Late-medieval Jewish philosophy dealt with the same arguments as Christian Scholasticism and had similar motivations to oppose radical rationalism without adopting anti-rationalism. The concepts of natural law and free choice were both explored in medieval Jewish philosophical texts in parallel discussions to their Christian scholastic counterparts. This paper examines discussions of these two concepts in late-medieval Jewish thought in its broader historical context and uncovers their Scholastic influences. Christian expositions contributed to fifteenth-century Jewish philosophers' efforts to not only use such philosophic teachings to counteract Christian polemics, but to advance Jewish philosophy at the conclusion of the Middle Ages, the most prolific period of Jewish thought.

**Shira Weiss** is Assistant Director of the Sacks-Herenstein Center for Values and Leadership of Yeshiva University and teaches Jewish Philosophy at Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies. She holds a PhD in medieval Jewish Philosophy, and has been awarded fellowships from the National Endowment of Humanities, The Templeton Foundation and Ben Gurion University. Shira is the author of *Joseph Albo on Free Choice* (Oxford, 2017), *Ethical Ambiguity in the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, 2018) and co-author of *The Protests of Job: An Interfaith Dialogue* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2022), as well as articles in academic journal and anthologies.

**David Wirmer, University of Cologne**

**'Philosophical Solitude and Spiritual Medicine: Reading Ibn Bāḡḡa's *Tadbīr al-mutawahhīd*'**

Ibn Bāḡḡa's *Regime of the Solitary* has often been read in opposition to the political philosophy of al-Fārābī, which apparently assigns to the philosopher the task of founding or administering a virtuous community. By questioning this assumption and, hence, the supposed opposition between al-Fārābī and Ibn Bāḡḡa, the peculiar perspective of the *Regime* can be brought to light. It can thus be shown that the 'solitude' of the philosopher consists neither in a life of social isolation nor in a spiritual path leading toward some kind of intellectual mysticism. The *Regime* rather turns out to be a guide to living the philosophical life in the midst of society. It will further be asked how far some of Ibn Bāḡḡa's Jewish readers captured his intention.

**David Wirmer** is Professor of Arabic and Jewish Philosophy in the Philosophy Department at the University of Cologne. His publications include *Averroes: Über den Intellekt* (2008) and *Vom Denken der Natur zur Natur des Denkens: Ibn Bāḡḡas Theorie der Potenz als Grundlegung der Psychologie* (2014).

**Nathan Wolski, Monash University**

**“It does not sit well in my heart’: Allegorising the Eschatological Banquet in Midrash ha-Ne’lam’**

Midrash ha-Ne’lam is universally agreed to be the oldest layer of the Zoharic corpus. In contrast to the main body of the Zohar, its style combines philosophical allegory and proto-Kabbalistic midrash. Indeed, its extended allegorical interpretation of the patriarchal narratives (recounting the descent of the soul, its adventures on earth, and its wandering journey after death, finally culminating in its reunion with the perfected body following resurrection) is perhaps the most sustained allegorical reading among all medieval Jewish literature. Here we consider MhN’s treatment of the eschatological banquet awaiting the righteous described in the Talmud. The allegorical strategies of MhN are simultaneously ‘radical’ and conservative.

**Nathan Wolski** is the Liberman Family Lecturer in Jewish Studies at the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, Monash University, in Melbourne, Australia. He is the translator of *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vols. 10 and 12 (with Joel Hecker), Stanford University Press, and author of *A Journey Into the Zohar*, SUNY Press, as well as many studies on diverse aspects of the Zohar.