

53rd Annual Conference of the Israel Society for the Promotion of Classical Studies
June 11th-12th, 2025

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Mount Scopus

Maiersdorf Faculty Club, Mount Scopus, Jerusalem

DAY 1: JUNE 11, 2025

10:00-11:30 SESSION 1: ROME REIMAGINED: CULTURAL ENTANGLEMENTS IN ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN TEXTS

MARREN NIEHOFF

(ROMANA, *ERC project*, Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Presentation of the Project

The present panel suggests to present research currently carried out in the context of the ERC ROMANA project led by Prof. M. Niehoff at HUJI. It explores how intellectual traditions traditionally viewed as separate - Hellenistic Judaism, Greek philosophy and literature, as well as early Christianity - were fundamentally shaped through their complex interactions with Roman imperial power, culture and ideas. Papers will examine how provincial elites engaged with, resisted, and adapted Roman cultural forces while sometimes paradoxically claiming cultural independence. Starting from first-century authors like Philo and Josephus, who, as Prof. Niehoff has shown, combined/merged Hellenistic philosophy with/and Jewish culture/tradition with appeals to Roman audiences, the panel traces similar patterns of cultural negotiation/interaction in Second Sophistic texts, early Christian writings, and rabbinic literature. By analyzing philosophical, literary, and legal trajectories across Greek, Hebrew/Aramaic, and Latin sources, presenters will demonstrate how seemingly distinct intellectual traditions were deeply entangled both with each other and with the Roman imperial discourse. This approach challenges traditional center-periphery top-down models of the Roman Empire and reveals the sophisticated strategies through which provincial elites navigated their relationship with Rome and vice versa.

MAEVE MCMAHON

(Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

The Anabasis of Alexander and Stoic Philosophy

Arrian of Nicomedia was a Greek historian, philosopher, military commander, and politician, living in the Roman Empire. He was a stoic, a student of Epictetus, who in fact recorded

Epictetus' teachings in the Enchiridion. Among Arrian's literary corpus, there is the Anabasis of Alexander, a history of Alexander the Great's campaigns. I propose to explore the influence of Arrian's stoic ideology on his depiction of Alexander, and determine whether he has depicted this key figure from Greek history as an ideal Roman type of man. First, I will discuss Arrian's brand of stoicism, and whether it is best categorized as Greek stoicism, Roman stoicism, or a blend of both, since Arrian himself is a Greek writing in Greek but he is living and working in the height of the Roman Empire (ca. 80-160) and has an enviable career in both the Roman military and senate. Once the type of stoicism Arrian engages with has been determined, I will examine key scenes in his Anabasis wherein Alexander's personality is exhibited, and see whether Arrian's history of Alexander depicts the figure as embodying the ideals of this type. This exploration is interesting for a few reasons: first, the influence of Arrian's stoic philosophy on his depiction of Alexander is not a topic with any attention in scholarship; second, if it is found that Arrian has not depicted this key historical figure as an ideal of his philosophical school, this begs the question – why not? Once I determine whether or not Arrian's historical depictions are influenced by his philosophical study, I will propose some suggestions for why it may have been beneficial to depict Alexander in such a way (as a stoic, or, alternatively, as lacking those ideal qualities).

JOSHUA WERRETT

(Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Roman vs Biblical Exempla in Patristic Literature

As part of the Romana group's panel at the ISPCS conference, I propose a paper which discusses the representation of Numa Pompilius – the legendary second king of Rome – in Christian Patristic literature, particularly in light of the representation of Moses in the same corpus. This forms part of a wider project on which I am currently working which examines the juxtaposition of Roman and Biblical mythical exemplars in Patristic literature, including figures like Lucretia (compared with Mary) and Scaevola (compared with David). The majority of Patristic authors who discuss Roman exempla aim simply to discredit or diminish Roman culture in comparison to that of the nascent Christianity; as I shall discuss, however, their use of certain Classical figures – Numa among them – reveals a more nuanced engagement. Clement of Alexandria claims that Numa's laws were influenced by Moses, situating Numa within a framework of (albeit indirect) divine inspiration. Further, Eusebius praises Numa as an intermediary figure who connects the Roman world with Christianity, comparing him not only with Moses but also with figures like Constantine. By contrast,

Augustine, in his *City of God*, critiques Numa for fabricating his interactions with the divine, accusing him of a range of sacrilegious practices (including necromancy), but also claims that God in some sense admired Numa's initial attempts to establish religious laws. By analysing these portrayals of Numa across the Patristic tradition, I hope to demonstrate that notions of the Church Fathers' critical stance against pagan figures requires nuance. Numa's flawed religiosity, set against Moses' divine authority, reflects a broader strategy to redefine Classical figures within a Christian worldview, asserting the unique legitimacy of Christian traditions and bridging the divide between Roman and Christian tradition.

MATTHEW VAN ZILE

(Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

The Sanctity of Deposits in Philo and Josephus

In *Antiquities* 4.285-288, Josephus describes a deposit [παρακαταθήκη] as a sacred and divine object [ιερόν τι καὶ θεῖον χρῆμα] and also characterizes the wages of those who labor “with their bodies” [τῶν ἐπὶ σώμασι τοῖς αὐτῶν] as equivalent to a deposit. In several places in the *Jewish War* and *Antiquities*, he refers to persons being entrusted to others as deposits and later makes a similar case for the human soul as a divine deposit in *J.W.* 3.369-375. This terminology reflects what Philo states in *Special Laws* IV.30-38 where he describes the sacred nature of a deposit [ιερώτατον παρακαταθήκη] as something both inanimate [ἀψύχοις], such as money, and a living creature [ζῴοις]. This paper will address the sacred nature of deposits in these texts as they relate to the Roman legal convention of the *sacramentum* mentioned in the XII Tables, Cicero, Varro, and the *Institutes of Gaius*. In the ancient world, living bodies were considered a type of financial currency and the Roman legal system established special procedures to adjudicate disputes concerning their possession. As a result, I will argue that Josephus appeals to this convention both as a rhetorical metaphor and as a substantive legal principle in the ancient Roman world.

11:45-13:15 SESSION 2: STUDENT SESSION

GIDEON MANELIS

(Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Musical Metaphor and Anatomical Reality: Galen's Understanding of the glōttis in *De Usu Partium* Book VII

This paper examines Galen's innovative description and understanding of the glōttis (γλωττίς) in *De Usu Partium*, 7. 13, 407 – 412 Helmreich = 3.560 – 567 Kühn, focusing on

his use of musical instrument analogy to explain the complex anatomical structure in the larynx and its function. The discussion will center on how Galen's comparison of the *glōttis* to a pipe's mouthpiece reveals not only his anatomical comprehension but also his sophisticated approach to explaining physiological mechanisms through familiar cultural references. The analysis will first address Galen's broader anatomical understanding of the *glōttis* as encompassing what we now separately identify as the ventricular folds, ventricles, and vocal folds. This broader conceptualisation reflects the historical development of anatomical terminology, as Galen's *glōttis* represented a more comprehensive structural unit than our modern anatomical divisions suggest.

Special attention will be paid to Galen's explicit analogy between the *glōttis* and the mouthpiece of a double reed instrument (αὐλός). Evidence from the text suggests that Galen's initial understanding came through direct anatomical observation via dissection, which then led him to recognise striking parallels with the αὐλός mouthpiece. This sequence demonstrates how his anatomical discoveries prompted him to draw upon familiar cultural and technological references to explain his findings, rather than the reverse. His detailed knowledge of musical instruments thus served primarily as an explanatory tool rather than as the foundation for his anatomical insights. Galen discusses the process of how human skill (τέχνη), in this case creating musical instruments, mimics the work (ἔργον) of nature (φύσις). Through careful philological analysis, this study reveals how Galen's empirical observations shaped his use of cultural analogies, contributing to both anatomical understanding and medical communication in antiquity.

ASAF ROTH

(University of Pennsylvania)

Wordplay and Roleplay in the *Hippias Major*

In this paper, I analyze literary techniques used in the *Hippias Major*, a Socratic dialogue traditionally ascribed to Plato, showing how various kinds of wordplay are deployed to establish an analogy between dialectical debate and erotic encounter.

In the dialogue, Socrates meets Hippias, a renowned sophist, and asks him to define 'τὸ καλόν.' Trivigno (2016) suggests that the dialogue deploys motifs from Old Comedy: by introducing a fictitious anonymous questioner [ἔρωτῶν] who investigates Hippias, Socrates exposes him as a ridiculous imposter. Drawing on this link to Old Comedy, Gold (2021) examines the vocabulary used by Socrates when refuting Hippias' initial definition of τὸ καλόν as 'a beautiful girl.' She uncovers the lexical ambiguity and erotic flavor of other

terms used by Socrates, demonstrating their contribution to the playfully vulgar discourse Socrates ascribes to his anonymous questioner (139-147).

While Gold convincingly detects these instances of wordplay, her analysis focuses solely on one kind of wordplay: lexical ambiguity. By examining the *phonetic* wordplay in the text, chiefly those based on the phonetic resemblance between erotetic-dialectical questioning (ἔρομαι) and erotic exchange (ἐρώω), I go beyond merely recognizing the use of comedic devices in the dialogue, and argue for their philosophical implications, supporting Trivigno's view.

By drawing the parallel between the phonetically similar verbs, the text suggests that the dialectical contest over intellectual superiority functions as an erotic roleplay concerning sexual dominance, with Socrates implying that the dialectical process defines who assumes the role of the experienced ἐραστής versus the younger, inexperienced ἐρώμενος. This perspective unlocks a reading of the dialogue that integrates the erotic and philosophical dimensions of Socrates' wordplay, enhancing the comic effect of Hippias' portrayal, while gesturing towards the dialogue's philosophical lesson. Ultimately, equating erotetic and erotic exchange enables Socrates to playfully demonstrate the superiority of dialectical inquiry over sophistry.

SARAH YONA ZWEIG

(Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Ashoka University, Delhi)

Tales of Travels and Travels of Tales: The Graeco-Arabic Alexander

The dominant theory in Alexander studies is that the Arabic narratives stem from the so-called δ^* recension. According to this theory, the lost δ^* recension—preserved only in the Syriac text and Archipresbyter Leo's Latin translation—is the source for the Arabic, Ethiopic, and Persian *Alexander Romances*. In this paper, I discuss less-studied Arabic manuscripts that give us cause to revise the stemma of the *Alexander Romance*. This paper will offer insights on the transmission history of the Greek and Arabic Alexander traditions using the inclusion or elision of particular episodes as a stemmatic principle. This is a step towards a finer-grained understanding of the polyglot journeys of the Alexander Journeys.

NITAI BAR NIR

(Tel Aviv University)

Harmony of the Soul in the World of the Timaeus

In this presentation I would like to suggest a new reading of the construction of the world soul in Timaeus 34b10-36d6. In the midst of a particularly mysterious story, Timaeus tells his friends how the craftsman (the well-known $\delta\eta\mu\iota\upsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho\gamma\acute{o}\varsigma$) makes a strange dough out of Being, the Same, and the Other (35b-36b6), and how he cuts this dough into heaps of different sizes (35b-36b6). The relations between the resulting heaps turn out to be numerical ratios that align with the Pythagorean method of tuning: together, all the heaps create a musical scale. The world soul, therefore, the ruler of the familiar world of sense-perception, was created with a heavenly musical scale at its very core. This fact did not evade Plato's interpreters: from Crantor in the Platonic Academy to Plutarch, from Proclus to Ficino, and from him to contemporary researchers – all of them recognized the music inherent in the world soul. But regarding its nature, their opinions were many; indeed, the scale of world soul of the Timaeus lies at the heart of an exegetical disagreement spanning over 2000 years. I would like to join in this tradition; particularly, I would like to criticize a common interpretation of the text, according to which the exact nature of the Timaeus scale is arbitrary. I suggest otherwise – I argue that the precise characteristics of the scale of the world soul are of great importance to the text's interpretation, and besides have significant implications for the interpretation of Plato's ethics as a whole. This presentation will focus on one central question: what is the musical scale inherent in the structure of the world soul? I will attempt to show that the answer to this question is quite relevant to the rest of the dialogue, and indeed to the interpretation of Platonic corpus as a whole.

ZOHAR SLANEY

(University of Haifa)

The Palmette as Evidence of Change: Transforming Classical Forms in Galilean Oil Lamp Decoration

Clay oil lamps were an important element in the material and visual culture of antiquity. They were personal, everyday objects used to illuminate private homes and public buildings, as well as offerings in temples and burials.

Changes in their form and decoration reflect technological developments and artistic trends across cultures. The palmette is a vegetal motif that was both widely used and well-established in the ancient world, best known from Greek art.

It appears frequently in lamp decoration during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. In the Late Roman and Byzantine periods, however, it almost entirely disappears from oil lamps in Israel—except in a local group from the northern region.

This raises the question: why was this motif so prevalent specifically on these lamps? What stylistic changes did it undergo over time?

This lecture traces the evolution of the palmette throughout the classical periods in the region of ancient Israel and examines the transformation of classical forms in local art, focusing on lamp decoration as a case study. Using methods from art history and archaeology, and through stylistic and technological analysis of lamps and related media, the study reveals how classical motifs were reinterpreted and adapted by local artisans. A close look at the motif's development over time shows how these artisans adopted the classical visual language and reshaped it to suit their needs. The research offers insight into cultural processes in the Galilee during Late Antiquity and highlights the value of popular art in understanding the complexities of ancient society.

EITAN MEER (IN HEBREW)

(Ben-Gurion University of the Negev; Staff Officer of Archaeology)

Sailing Across the Dead Sea during the Hasmonean and Herodian Eras

In a series of excavations conducted in the northern Judean Desert, along the Dead Sea shoreline north of Ein Gedi, the remains of a shipshed that served as a maritime facility across various historical periods were uncovered. The excavations were carried out by archeologist Pesach Bar-Adon between 1971 and 1974, and were published only years later, posthumously.

A thorough examination of Bar-Adon's diaries, those published and of those unpublished, including his vast collection of archived artifacts, together with additional newly discovered raw material, has shed fresh light on our understanding of the site.

In antiquity, the Dead Sea was a vital hub within a state-managed network linking land routes and urban centers. Unlike today, it teemed with ships ferrying passengers, goods, and royalty across its waters. The villages along its shores were centers of production for valuable commodities such as balsam oil, asphalt, and dates. These sought-after goods, traded across vast distances, were transported by merchant ships that docked at numerous harbors scattered around the Dead Sea.

The site of Horvat Mazin served as a facility for the storage, maintenance, inspection, and repair of vessels in dry dock. Within this structure, luxury ships—designed for fast and safe sea crossings—underwent cleaning and preservation. To date, this shipshed remains the only one of its kind identified in the Dead Sea region.

Furthermore, contemporary studies on Hellenistic shipsheds offer new insights into the inspiration and design of this facility, as well as the possible identification of the vessels stored within it.

This lecture will delve into the comprehensive findings of Bar-Adon's excavations, contextualized by recent research and surveys conducted in the area. It will explore various modern perspectives on the shipshed at Horvat Mazin and its connections to other similar facilities prevalent in the region.

14:15-15:45 SESSION 3:

GIUSEPPE ZANETTO

(Università degli Studi di Milano)

“Telephus should not have done it?” Understanding the Enemy’s Point of View

In ancient Greece, demonizing the enemy was standard practice. Demosthenes’ portrait of Philip II is a telling example: he depicts the Macedonian king as a cynical and ruthless barbarian whom the Athenians must repel at all costs in order to preserve their freedom. Long before, the Persian wars had triggered a similar reaction, as Aeschylus’ *Persians* testifies: Xerxes is a perverse tyrant threatening the very order of the cosmos. Accordingly, his defeat and the destruction of his army result from divine intervention.

Against this backdrop, Euripides’ *Telephus* stands out as a remarkable exception. While the play is lost, the main point of Telephus’ speech to the Achaeans is by and large clear. Hatred for him, he argues, is misplaced. Granted, he has fought the Achaeans and killed many, but he had the absolute right to defend his country against an unprovoked attack. In a conflict, he explains, both opponents may have a point. The mature thing to do is to consider the counterpart’s arguments and look for a mutually beneficial solution.

In *Acharnians*, Aristophanes applies this approach to the Peloponnesian War. Disguised as Telephus, Dicaeopolis claims that the Spartans are not the devils the Athenians think they are and cannot be blamed for all of Athens’ troubles. Indeed, Sparta was almost forced to take action in the face the enemy’s provocations. In conclusion, halting the war and engaging in peace talks would be in the best interests of both sides.

How widespread was this more rational and conciliatory approach? After surveying the evidence available for classical Athens, I conclude that Dicaeopolis’ claim is virtually unparalleled, with one important, if partial, exception. In recognizing the legitimacy of the king’s claims on Amphipolis, (Pseudo?)-Speusippus’ *Letter to Philip* comes closest and provides a crucial point of comparison. My paper explores it in full.

JANEK KUCHARSKI

(Institute of Literary Studies, University of Silesia in Katowice)

Saving the Innocent: The Concept of Acquittal in the Athenian Orators

Long ago Louis Gernet (1917) has observed that in the Athenian forensic discourse ‘you do not even say that you condemn to death: you kill’. Although not entirely true, as there are many terms denoting conviction and condemnation in the Attic orators, Gernet’s remark does well in pinpointing a real problem: the forensic discourse of classical Athens never had a distinct technical vocabulary specific only to itself. Even the precise notions for conviction have several other meanings when used in different contexts and in different discursive formations. The same is true of its opposite, that is acquittal. Like many others, this concept too is seen to piggyback on several notions, each with its own set of connotations and presuppositions.

The most surprising and frequent (over 80 instances in the entire oratorical corpus) among them is the verb *sōizein* (‘to save’) along with its cognate *sōtēria* (‘deliverance’). Granted, in some cases it does not appear surprising at all: when we are told of corrupt supporters trying to ‘save’ their manifestly guilty friend from punishment (e.g., *Lys.* 14), the use of *sōizein* seems intuitively obvious. But when the defendants—who are never guilty, of course—ask the juries for *sōtēria* (e.g., *Andoc.* 1.31), or when speakers who were acquitted say that the court ‘saved’ them (e.g., *Hyp. Dem.* col. 29), our intuition begins to fail us.

Why would the innocent require ‘saving’? How does one reconcile this rhetorical idiosyncrasy with the principles of the rule of law? What does it tell us about the ancient Greek attitudes towards punishment? I will argue that this and the related patterns of the Athenian forensic discourse were shaped by cognitive models that were different than—and to some extent competing with—those organizing the conversations on law, justice, and the moral basis of its administration.

BENJAMIN WILCK

(Martin Buber Fellow, Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Aristotle on Definition by Addition

In this article, I highlight an overlooked method of definition in Aristotle’s logical and metaphysical writings.

While commentators have noted that Aristotle criticizes Plato’s method of division for being dichotomous, privative, redundant, and arbitrary, they have largely overlooked what is

perhaps Aristotle's most significant criticism: Plato's method of division is ontologically undifferentiated.

Indeed, Plato assumes that all definable objects—that is, those corresponding to Platonic Forms—can be defined through division (*dia tōn dihaireseōn*), meaning by reference to a genus-predicate of the definiendum. Specifically, he applies this method to both universal kinds, such as the human being and number, and to non-substantial attributes of these kinds, such as being male and female or being even and odd (see, for instance, Plato's *Politicus* 262c7–263a1). Plato confines definition to division because he fails to distinguish ontologically between substantial kinds and their non-substantial attributes, treating qualities as kinds.

To address this problematic issue, Aristotle introduces an alternative method of definition: definition-by-addition (*ek prostheseōs*, see *Metaphysics* Z.4-5; cf. also *Posterior Analytics* I.4). This approach defines qualities by referring to a genus-subject of the non-substantial definiendum-predicate, rather than to a genus-predicate of the substantial definiendum-subject. After outlining definition-by-addition and comparing it to definition-by-division,

I examine Aristotle's linguistic markers for these two methods and their distinct deductive applications in actual scientific practice.

16:00-17:30 SESSION 4:

PETER MARTIN

(Darwin College, University of Cambridge)

Greek Inscriptions on the Move

Unlike literary texts on papyri, Classical Greek and Hellenistic inscriptions did not often change location. They were grounded in a single physical space. The text of the inscription was viewed and interpreted in its specific context. But sometimes inscriptions moved – or at least copies of them moved. In the fourth century BCE, Demosthenes (20.36) noted that honorific *stelai* for the Bosporan king Leukon had been set up in the Piraeus, but also in the Bosphorus and the *hieron* (a sanctuary on the Asiatic side of the Thracian Bosphorus). Words enunciated for an Athenian audience were reframed in Bosporan settings. Another inscription, erected in Xanthos at the start of the second century BCE, honoured a rhetorician, Themistokles, and as part of these honours, proclaimed that the inscription was to be written up on two *stelai*, one in Xanthos' shrine of Leto, and the other 'sent to Ilion so that it be placed in the shrine of Athena Ilias' (*SEG* 33.1184). The implication is that the stone

was to be carried by boat hundreds of miles along the coast of Asia Minor. My paper will seek to address three questions: 1) when and in what contexts were public inscriptions (in the Classical Greek and Hellenistic periods) erected in more than one location?; 2) why were these inscriptions erected in multiple contexts?; 3) what effect might a change of location have had on the meaning of the epigraphic text? Public epigraphic texts in these time periods were often allusive and vague; the viewers would have had to supply external information to make sense of these texts. How did readers' responses change when the texts changed location?

KRYSTYNA STEBNICKA

(Department of Ancient History, University of Warsaw)

Image and Reality: A Commentary on the Fragments of Philo the Epic Poet

Philo the Epic is a rather enigmatic author, difficult to date - possibly from the 2nd century BCE - who most probably operated within the Jewish Alexandrian milieu of the Hellenistic period. Six fragments preserved in the *Praeparatio Evangelica* of Eusebius of Caesarea (taken from Polyhistor's *Peri Ioudaion*) most likely originate from a single poem, *On Jerusalem*. Philo's literary model undoubtedly drew inspiration from Greek poetry that praised cities or regions (e.g., Apollonius of Rhodes, Callimachus, Rhianus).

Several fragments concern biblical patriarchs, while others discuss the water pools of Jerusalem (Eus. *PE* IX 27.1–2 = *FGrHist* 729 F 2 = Lloyd-Jones & Parson, *Supp. Hellenist.* 1983, nos. 683 + 684 = Holladay, *Fragments...*, vol. 2, fr. 4–6). The poor quality of Greek and the awkward hexameter cannot prevent the reader from wondering whether Philo visited Jerusalem - or at least evokes a specific location on the city's map.

Commentators on these passages (e.g., Mras, editor of Eus. *PE*; Lloyd-Jones & Parson; N. Walter, *Fragmente jüdisch-hellenistischer Epik*, 1983; and finally, C. R. Holladay) have attempted to identify specific water installations (Siloam, Bethesda, or an unknown pool on the Temple Mount). However, as Lloyd-Jones & Parson cautiously state, *sed in materia incertissima nihil adfirmamus* ("in a highly uncertain matter, we assert nothing").

Nevertheless, I would like to point to specific references in literature (the *Septuagint*, the *Letter of Aristeas*, possibly the *Schoinometresis Syriae*, and Timochares's *History of Antioch*), which may have served as the basis for Philo the Epic's descriptions.

BALBINA BÄBLER

(University of Göttingen)

Reading, Teaching, and Preserving: Late Antique Libraries between Classical Tradition and the Beginnings of the Christian Middle Ages

My paper presents a research project that explores how the connection of reading and education with the discourse of religion is reflected by important libraries in the period of early Christianity and the transition to the Christian Middle Ages. These libraries usually also included a scriptorium and some kind of school (often comparable to contemporary pagan philosophical circles).

Two case studies from two different places will be presented here:

1. The institution of the church father Origen in Caesarea, founded in 231/2, which is sometimes presented as a ‘Christian university’ at a time when Christianity was still *religio illicita*. Origen taught a curriculum in which the pagan sciences formed the basis for analysing the Holy Scriptures.
2. At the very end of antiquity (when Christianity had long since become the state religion), the Vivarium of Cassiodorus, founded in 540, was one of the few places in the known world at the end of the 6th century that preserved the Greek and Latin educational tradition and passed it on to the Middle Ages.

In both institutions classical Greco-Roman and Christian-religious education and culture engage with each other. In both places, the interaction with pupils and the general public as well as the material, architectural and topographical context play a decisive role.

A comparison (making use of both archaeological and literary sources) between them can shed new light on various questions, such as: Where are the continuities with the ancient public libraries? Are fundamental changes in the library system associated with the new religion, and if so, which ones? What about the role of teachers, but also of donors and patrons? Did the emergence of church and monastery libraries mean a ‘retreat’ of libraries into these religious institutions and was this accompanied by a retreat of education to the Bible and theological texts?

17:45-19:15 SESSION 5:

BRIEN GARNAND

(IIAS Research Group, Recovering Phoenician Oral Poetry, University of Leiden)

Poetic Display on Greek and Phoenician Commemorative Inscriptions

Although Greek oral poetry was first written on papyrus in the eighth and seventh centuries BCE, these early editions are now lost. Nevertheless, early verse inscriptions can still provide roughly contemporary evidence about the transition from oral to written epic. In a similar

vein, our IAS Research Group is sifting through Phoenician epigraphic texts to find traces of lost poetry. We can observe how each Phoenician monument and dedication functioned in ways similar to early Greek examples, serving both as an adornment (*agalma*) and as a memorial (*mnēma*). Just as Greeks borrowed the *forms* of alphabetic script from the Phoenicians, we propose that they borrowed these *functions*. Furthermore, as Greek epigrams engaged the attention of the literate passer-by, we propose that Phoenician inscriptions likewise preserve engaging poetic elements—repetition, alliteration, figurative speech, parallelism, etc. To test our theories, we will survey one bilingual funerary inscription from Athens, bearing a poetic epigram that commemorates a Phoenician *metic* from Ashkelon (*KAI* 54). Although the date of the text is late (4th-3rd BCE), we can extrapolate persistent common features of Phoenician and Greek epigraphic poetry by setting this text alongside much earlier monuments.

ANDREA ROTSTEIN

(Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

“Vergil’s Eclogue 4 as a Levantine Poem”

The interpretation of *Eclogue* 4 has been an hermeneutic minefield for generations. Even though pre-modern notions about the poem messianic message has long been discarded, the question whether Jewish or near Eastern texts could have influenced Vergil still divides interpreters into “Westerners” and “Easterners” (Nisbet 1978). After succinctly reviewing the scholarly agendas behind the interpretation of the poem and the possible ways by which Vergil may have become acquainted with texts outside the Classical canon, this paper will focus on two matters of style: floral imagery (*colocasia*, l. 20; *Assyrium... amomum*, l. 25) and *parallelismus membrorum* (lines 2, 6, 15-16, 21-22, 24-25, 26-27, 38-45, 49-50, 55-56, 63). Close reading of the poem will disclose Vergil’s use of a variation of *parallelismus membrorum* (synonymous and antithetical). It will be argued that, not less than the well-known thematic motifs, the style of Vergil’s *Eclogue* 4 reflects a poetic realm that goes beyond the Greek and Roman cultural boundaries.

MARCO VESPA

(Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Classics, ERC Atlomy)

Faces in the ... Clouds. Defining Humanity through Anatomy: The Significance of a Joke in Aristophanes’ Comedy (Ar. Nub., 340-344)

In the extant version of Aristophanes' *Clouds*, first performed in 423 B.C., the chorus is composed of the Clouds, atmospheric entities introduced by Socrates as the supreme deities who govern and dominate the world of mortals. Accompanying the entrance of these celestial figures onto the stage (*parodos*), Socrates delivers a solemn invocation, adhering to the traditional formulaic patterns used to address divinities. He then urges the old peasant Strepsiades, who accompanies him, to fully recognise the epiphany of these manifesting deities.

In a comic reversal built on misunderstanding, Aristophanes has Strepsiades remark that, despite having gazed at clouds countless times in the sky, he had never recognized them as resembling the figures in the orchestra of the Theatre of Dionysus during the performance. Strepsiades humorously adds that these supposed deities do not resemble clouds at all but rather appear to have young female features, citing the presence of a nose as incontrovertible evidence of their humanity ('... and these clouds have nose!', ...*αὐται δὲ ῥίνας / ἔχουσιν*)

What lies behind this joke by Aristophanes? Many critics, including those within the ancient scholia exegetical tradition, have debated the significance of Strepsiades' jest about the nose.

In our presentation, we aim to demonstrate how the nose held a particularly important role in ancient Greek culture as an anatomical feature central to defining the visual identity of the human being in contrast to other living creatures. By analysing selected passages from Aristotle's zoological corpus, we will reconsider the heuristic relevance of medical and anatomical knowledge traditions in better understanding specific cultural representations in Greek texts of the classical period.

DAY 2: JUNE 12, 2025

9:00-10:30 SESSION 6 (IN HEBREW)

BAR LESHEM

(University of Haifa)

Intersex Across Interstellar: The Andromeda Constellation's Reception in Medieval and Early Modern Celestial Texts

This paper explores classical reception through a distinctive case study of the Andromeda constellation, examining an intriguing reinterpretation of classical catasterism (the transformation into celestial objects) in medieval and early modern astronomical and astrological texts. While the Perseus constellation group retained its mythological identity from antiquity, the medieval reception of Andromeda's story took an unexpected turn in

Michael Scotus' 12th century *Liber Introductorius*. In this influential work, Scotus depicted the constellation with male genitalia, allegedly resulting from Andromeda's desire for Perseus – an interpretation that significantly influenced later works and persisted into the first printed edition of Hyginus' *De Astronomia* (1482).

This transformation of classical mythology demonstrates how medieval and early modern scholars actively engaged with and reinterpreted ancient traditions. The study traces how classical astronomical knowledge, transmitted through authors like Aratus, Eratosthenes, Hyginus, and Ptolemy, was transformed through the intersection with medieval and early modern medicine, natural philosophy, and theology. Through examination of Scotus' work and its influence, the research reveals how Arabic and Latin scholars preserved yet reinterpreted classical catasteristic traditions, demonstrating how astronomical knowledge evolved across cultures and periods. Through analysis of both textual and visual sources, this research illuminates how classical mythology was adapted to address medieval and early modern philosophical and theological concerns about gender and celestial influence.

By examining the transmission and transformation of classical reception through both textual sources and celestial illustrations in medieval and early modern manuscripts, printed books, and celestial maps and globes, this study reveals how astronomical and astrological traditions were not merely preserved but actively reinterpreted through changing intellectual frameworks. This case study of the Andromeda constellation demonstrates the complex convergence between classical mythology, medieval and early modern scientific thought, and visual representations, showing how astronomical knowledge was communicated and transformed through both text and image.

FAYA HAUSSKER

(Tel Aviv University; The Open University of Israel)

Protecting Tombs and Navigating Cultural Transition: Epigraphic Practices and Gregory of Nazianzus

The present paper examines the interplay between standardized prohibitions and curses, *arai epitymbioi* (ἀραι ἐπιτύμβιοι), engraved on private epitaphs in Roman-era Asia Minor, and their literary adaptations in Gregory of Nazianzus's epigrams on tomb desecration, the *tymborychia* (τυμβωρυχία), collected in Book 8 of the *Palatine Anthology*. The use of maledictions and legal threats in Greek epitaphs was a common practice in Asia Minor across various religious groups, primarily among pagans and, to a lesser extent, Christians, to protect tombs from alienation, desecration, physical damage, and the reuse of burial sites and

materials. The largest corpus of these funerary provisions and interdictions originates from Anatolia, dating primarily to the imperial period (especially 2nd–4th centuries AD).

Gregory of Nazianzus, a 4th-century theologian and one of the Cappadocian Fathers, transformed the juridical language and curse elements of the discussed epitaphs into a poetic medium for moral and theological reflection. Despite differences in purpose and context, both epigraphic and literary sources confirm that *tymborychia* was a widespread phenomenon in Anatolia, posing significant societal challenges that required preventive measures. Scholars hypothesize—more as conjecture than through extensive research—that the prominence of this practice in Anatolia, compared to other regions, may be linked to religious beliefs, economic conditions, and local epigraphic habits.

This paper juxtaposes the epigraphic record with Gregory's literary compositions, revealing not only the inscriptional influence on his poetry but also insights into the social, religious, and moral context of tomb violators. This comparative analysis highlights the widespread nature of this phenomenon in Asia Minor and situates it within the broader cultural tensions between the declining pagan world and the rising Christian religion, where Gregory played a transitional and bridging role.

YANA TCHEKHANOVETS, DORON BEN-AMI

(Ben-Gurion University of the Negev), (Israel Antiquities Authority)

Oscilla in Late Roman Jerusalem?

The proposed paper focuses on an assemblage of terracotta masks discovered in Late Roman domestic context in Jerusalem, in a mansion that was exposed during excavations at the Givati Parking Lot, whose use is dated from the late third-early fourth centuries CE to 363 CE – when the city was destroyed by an earthquake.

It seems that the Jerusalem masks are the first to be found in a domestic context. Till now, well-dated locally produced Roman masks from the region were discovered mainly in funerary contexts, such as at Castra and Tyre, and in a workshop at Gerasa.

They comprise masks of various types and have been associated with assorted facets of Roman culture, primarily funerary, ancestral, military, and theatrical. Consequently, the domestic context of the Late Roman masks from Jerusalem is unique, and it both renders the evaluation of their function a difficult task and provides an opportunity to re-open the question of the practical, decorative or apotropaic usage of such artifacts.

The spatial distribution of mask fragments found in the archaeologically sealed and well dated context of the Late Roman mansion in Jerusalem may indicate their original function.

It seems that the clay masks can be regarded as part of the Roman “corpus of suspended objects”, possibly a variant of *oscilla* – most commonly masks or faces which were typically placed in Roman gardens. It had been previously suggested that *oscilla* represented the souls of restless dead, ghosts, or shadows, and therefore had a mimetic function. Alternatively, *oscilla* may have served as apotropaic objects for protection against evil spirits. Based on the study of the objects from Jerusalem, we propose that locally produced clay masks became popular in the region as a symbol of Dionysian cult, and that they fulfilled the function of *oscilla* decorating the courtyards of the private houses.

10:45-12:15 SESSION 7 (IN HEBREW)

ORY AMITAY

(University of Haifa)

The Case for the Ptolemaic Origins of the Alexander Romance

It is universally agreed that the earliest recension of the *Alexander Romance* (AR), so-called alpha, is a product of the late third or early fourth centuries CE. It is also generally recognized that alpha contains much earlier material, some of it going back to the Ptolemaic period. In this paper I propose to argue that alpha not only contains Ptolemaic material, but rather that it is based on a Ptolemaic original AR, which already displayed many of the literary characteristics of the later tradition.

On the whole, putative Ptolemaic material has been recognized through the richness of material on Alexander’s stay in Egypt, in particular the foundation of Alexandria. Another telltale sign is the importance in the work of Ptolemy, Alexander’s general and later founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty. These episodes are widely interpreted as means of bolstering the Ptolemaic dynasty in its early days. In a recent paper I date a key episode in AR (Alexander’s relations to Carthage and Rome) to the reign of Ptolemy III Euergetes. In this paper I shall claim that this dating agrees with yet more episodes in AR. I shall compare Alexander’s AR campaign (which distorts historical geography and presents him as a warring Pharaoh) with Ptolemy’s own much-exaggerated claims in the Adoulis inscription (*OGIS* 54); address the role of the god Serapis in the AR as reflecting the efforts of Euergetes to promote the deity’s worship; and reflect on the AR role of semi-legendary Pharaoh Sesonchosis.

Bringing these (and some more) considerations together, I argue that the putative Ptolemaic AR was put together as a piece of propaganda, reflecting Ptolemaic self-confidence and power at their zenith. As such, it stood as the primary source of present day alpha.

ITAMAR LEVIN

(Brown University)

Nothing to Do with Democracy: The Rise of Theseus beyond Athenocentrism

This paper argues that the rise in Theseus' popularity in Athens since the late Archaic period stemmed not from the local political upheaval but from a pan-Mediterranean movement towards localizing Heracles. By 500, Theseus had eclipsed Heracles as the central figure in Attic art, appropriating many of the latter's attributes. This shift is traditionally attributed to Cleisthenic reforms, positing that the advent of democracy necessitated the replacement of Heracles—an emblem of aristocratic power—with a civic hero better aligned with democratic ideals. This interpretation, however, grapples with two major problems: first, recent studies demonstrate that the Athenian engagement with the figure of Theseus predates the democratic reforms. Second, Theseus, as a mythological king of Athens, is an unfit symbol of democracy.

Having problematized the *opinio communis*, the paper will take a system-level analysis approach to recontextualize the rise of Theseus in Athens within a broader Mediterranean milieu. It will be shown that other civic communities similarly introduced new heroes at the time as local equivalents of Heracles. One example is the *Hērōon* of Poseidonia (Paestum), a cenotaphic hero-tomb that included a single terracotta vase depicting the apotheosis of Heracles, implying that the hero enjoyed a similar fate. Other groups of heroes who started to receive cults at the time are founders and athletes, both of which were commonly analogized with Heracles.

The movement towards localizing Heracles reflects the burgeoning of civic consciousness across the Mediterranean. In addition, it originates from shifts in the ancient Greek system of beliefs, with Heracles, who had formerly been conceived as a mortal man, started to be perceived as a god since ca. 700. The rise of Theseus, therefore, is the product not of local politics, but of a far-reaching reconfiguration of political and religious thoughts.

SABRINA INOWLOCKI, MOSHE BLIDSTEIN, DMITRY KOLOTILENKO

(University of Haifa)

From Herod to Holy Men: Josephus's Hidden Afterlife in Monastic Literature

It is well-known that Josephus was preserved almost exclusively through Christian channels and was thoroughly appropriated by Christian authors, both for his alleged testimony about Jesus (in the famous *Testimonium Flavianum*) and for his valuable information on Judaism's history and Christianity's origins. His role in supporting supersessionist theology, initiated by

Origen and fully developed by Eusebius, and his importance as an exegetical, historical, and geographical source have been thoroughly documented in modern scholarship.

Less studied, however, are cases where Josephus is not explicitly named and where his text is reused in contexts entirely different from the original. These cases have been neglected because they might not contribute to establishing Josephus's text, or because they lie outside the primary concerns of Josephan specialists. However, as we shall argue, such cases are crucial not only because they attest to the depth of Josephus's penetration into Christian culture but also because they can illuminate how these authors concretely and materially used his works.

One such instance is the Greek monastic reuse of Josephus. While certain Christian writers like Jerome have drawn on Josephus's description of Jewish sects, particularly the Essenes, to shape their vision of asceticism and monasticism in the *Epistle to Eustochium*, others have reused Josephus in entirely different contexts: such is the case of Palladius's *Dialogue on the Life of Chrysostom*, where Josephus's description of Herod's death was repurposed to describe the violent death of John Chrysostom's enemies during the first Origenist controversy.

Using innovative text reuse detection methods developed for the Josephus Christianus ISF project, we hope to reveal other, previously unidentified patterns of Josephan influence in monastic literature of late antiquity. Our computational analysis, combined with close philological reading, will demonstrate how monastic authors creatively adapted Josephus's narratives of Jewish history to construct their own accounts of ascetic heroism. This investigation will not only illuminate new aspects of Josephus's Christian reception but also reveal how monastic authors positioned their communities within larger historical and theological frameworks.

14:30-15:30 KEYNOTE SPEAKER

WALTER AMELING

(University of Köln)

Persecutions of Christians in the Roman Empire: rare or regular?

Rome persecuted Christians - and we have an enormous amount of texts to prove this. Unfortunately, these texts (martyr acts, church histories etc. etc.) are the product of Christian authors - and since the 17th c. they are thought to be suspect - and in the mind of most scholars persecutions have become rare events. Since Christian sources are tainted, is there another way to determine whether persecutions were actually rare. I shall try to look at pagan

sources to produce an argument that persecutions were more frequent than the *communis opinio* suggests.

15:45-17:15 SESSION 8: SLAVES, STATUS AND LEGAL HYBRIDITY IN THE ROMAN WORLD
YAIR FURSTENBERG

(Local Law Under Rome, ERC project, Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Introduction to the research project

HANAN BIRENZWEIG

(Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

The Offspring of a Maidservant and the Offspring of an Animal: The Rabbis and Roman Juristic Discourse

The influence of Roman law on Talmudic law is recognized on several levels. One of these is the full or partial adoption of a Roman legal institution. In such cases, it can be assumed that the influence occurred from the bottom up, meaning that an institution prevalent among the public was granted legal validity by the sages. Conversely, recent scholarship has demonstrated that the sages were also familiar with Roman juristic discourse and subsequently Roman legal concepts found their way into Talmudic literature. In this lecture, I aim to illustrate this familiarity through the issue of the offspring of a maid servant and the offspring of an animal.

The Rabbis dispute the legal status of these offsprings whose mothers were given as part of a dowry to the husband. The principle under discussion is whether the offspring of such assets are considered produce and therefore belong to the beneficiary of the produce, or whether they are not considered produce and thus remain the property of the owner. While the rabbinic source does not provide an explanation for the dispute in question, it is argued that Roman legal discourse shed light on the rabbinic discussion.

This issue was already debated among Roman jurists in the second century BCE, and discussed extensively in the writings of classical jurists such as Gaius and Ulpian. Among Roman jurists, the prevailing view was that the offspring of a maidservant was not considered produce. This decision aligned with the broader tendency of jurists during the Imperial period to improve the legal status of slaves, which according to Gaius were considered as Humans, and cannot function as produce. The close textual resemblance with the rabbinic source, discloses their latter's familiarity with Roman Juristic conceptions and considerations.

RAFAIL ZOULIS

(Yale University)

Caveat Emptor: Aedilitian Defects in Slave Sales During the Roman Empire

In the past twenty years, historians have underscored the structural pluralism of provincial legal landscapes in the Roman Empire. A recurrent but largely overlooked locus of such entanglement between imperial and local legal regimes is the disclosure of defects in slave sales. Tracing the spread and the impact of provisions from the Aedilitian Edict to Greek, Syriac, and Jewish law, the present paper underscores the dynamic appropriation of Roman legislation by various provincial actors.

Reviewing the *Edict of the Curule Aediles*, the first section briefly summarizes the canonical rules regarding the sale of slaves: requirement of seller to disclose defects to the buyer, list of potential defects, provisions of damages in case of non-compliance. Latin contracts from Campania and Alburnus Maius demonstrate both the application of Aedilitian provisions in Italy and their spread in the Latin-speaking provinces respectively. The second section focuses on provincial appropriations in the Roman East. Drawing from papyrological evidence in Asia Minor, Judea, Egypt, and Mesopotamia, the second section maps the dynamic inclusion of Aedilitian defect clauses in Greek and Syriac contracts. The selective coverage of defects alongside explicit exclusions of others from protection showcase the dynamic engagement of scribes with Roman legislation in the formation of provincial legal pluralisms. Similarly, the rabbinical discussions in *Tosefta Bava Batra 4* and *Babylonian Talmud Gittin 86a* echo and supplement Roman legislation by expanding the list of defects to mirror provincial circumstances and even by proscribing harsher punishments. Turning from legal formalism to anthropology, the third and final section attributes the proliferation and adoption of Aedilitian provisions to easier recourse to imperial fora of arbitration as well as the need to reduce information gaps in an ever-expanding imperial economy.

ANTONIO LEO DE PETRIS, JAN TROSIEN, SOFIA ANDREEVA

(Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Freeing the Threptoi – Not at all Manumissions

This paper focuses on a group of inscriptions from the Bosphorus region dating to the first centuries of the common era (CIRB 70, 73, 985, 1021, 1124). Since the first critical edition, it is the scholarly consensus to identify these as manumissions, mostly based upon superficial similarities with Greco-Roman manumissions in epigraphical sources. However, it is the aim

of this paper to demonstrate the importance of the term *threptos* for the interpretation of these sources, which has hereto not been focused upon by the scholarly debate: The term itself is most unusual for the context of manumission and additionally opens a route to a new contextualization of these inscriptions through Plinius. The official inquiry of Plinius to Trajanus (10.65) does include the very vocabulary, *threptos*, asking for instructions on how to deal with a specific case concerning legal status of individuals in the province of Bythinia and Pontos. Trajanus answer (10.66) provides us with a definition of the term, which not only fits various technicalities referenced in our inscriptions but is also directly linked to the here presented cases by spatial and temporal proximity. The hypotheses thus put forth and presented in this paper is that the *threptoi* in Plinius and Trajanus correspondence are in fact the very same type of *threptoi* in the presented inscriptions and the interpretation of these does therefore not lead to manumission, but to a phenomenon hereto not identified in epigraphical sources, that of the *restitutio in civitatem* of the *threptoi* (i.e., reintegration into the status of citizen of the *threptoi*).