



Center for the Study of Conversion  
and Inter-Religious Encounters



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב  
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev  
جامعة بن-غوريون في النقب



מרכז אפריקה על שם תמר גולן  
The Tamar Golan Africa Centre



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון

# Religion and the Natural Environment – Multiple Perspectives

## International Conference

The Center for the Study of Conversion and Inter-Religious Encounters (CSoC)

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Marcus Family Campus, Be'er Sheva

Building 71 (Samuel & Milada Ayrton University Center), Room -136

**9-11 January 2023**

### Conference Program

#### Monday 9 January 2023

- 09:45-10:15 **Registration** and light refreshments
- 10:15-10:30 **Greetings:** Prof. Daniella Talmon-Heller, CSoC Director, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
- 10:30-11:45 **Panel 1: Premodern Perceptions of Animals and Plants**  
Chair: Uri Shachar, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
- David Shyovitz, Northwestern University  
Pious Animals in Medieval Jewish Culture: Narrative, Theological, and Polemical Dimensions
  - Yotam Tsal, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem  
When God was no Longer Natural: Contesting Visions for the Natural Environment in the Age of Enlightenment
- 11:45-12:15 **Break** and light refreshments
- 12:15-12:30 **Greetings:** Prof. Chaim Hames, Rector of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, and CSoC Founder
- 12:30-13:45 **Panel 2: Pre-modern State Control of the Natural Environment**  
Chair: Yana Tchekhanovets, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
- Jan Szemiński, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem  
The Inca Religion, Ecology and Politics before Spanish Conquest
  - Jonathan Brack, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev  
Sacred Kingship and the Environment between the Mongols and the Mughals
- 13:45-15:00 **Lunch** in Barkan Hall
- 15:00-16:45 **Panel 3: Deities in the Natural Environment**  
Chair: Nimrod Hurvitz, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
- Ariadne Konstantinou, Bar-Ilan University  
Gods and Nature (and the nature of gods) in Early Greek Epic Poetry
  - Marco Curatola Petrocchi, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú  
The Living Stones: Rocks and Water as Speaking Deities in Inca Ontology and Religion
  - Bat-ami Artzi, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev  
The Andean Earth Goddess and Her Six Days of Rest
- 16:45-17:15 **Break** and light refreshments
- 17:15-18:30 **Panel 4: Natural and Supernatural**  
Chair: Cana Werman, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
- Gal Sofer, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev  
"The Natural Forces of the Universe Will Obey This Soul": The Role of Nature in Ritual Magic
  - Samuel Glauber-Zimra, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev  
Are Miracles Natural or is Nature Miraculous? A Debate between a Rabbi and an Occultist in 1940's New York City
- 19:00-20:45 **Dinner** at Shufan restaurant



Inca Sanctuary of Chachabamba (photographed by Marco Curatola Petrocchi)

#### Tuesday 10 January 2023

- 10:15-12:00 **Panel 5: Ritual and Water**  
Chair: Ephriam (Effie) Shoham-Steiner, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
- Gideon Bohak, Tel Aviv University  
Jewish Magical Recipes for Quelling a Storm at Sea
  - Tzafir Barzilay, Bar-Ilan University  
Man-made Holy Nature: Fountains and the Religious Culture of Jews and Christians in High-medieval Europe
  - Neta Bodner, Open University of Israel  
"Rising Up from the Waters": Architectural Framing of Baptismal and Immersion Fonts in the Middle Ages
- 12:00-13:30 **Lunch** in Barkan Hall
- 13:30-15:15 **Panel 6: Faith-based Environmentalism**  
Chair: Nir Barak, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
- Hava Tirosh-Samuels, Arizona State University  
Jewish Environmentalism and the Dialectic of Post-Secularism: Israel vs. Diaspora
  - David Krantz, Arizona State University  
Green Galut: The Jewish-Environmental Movement in the United States
  - Ophir Weinshall Shachar, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and Itay Greenspan, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem  
Jewish Environmentalism in Israel: Organizational Characteristics, Practices and Entrepreneurs
- 15:15-15:45 **Break** and light refreshments
- 15:45-17:30 **Panel 7: The Environment in Contemporary Religious Practice and Thought**  
Chair: Peter Lehnardt, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
- Einat Kramer, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem  
The Development of a Stewardship Eco-Theology Discourse Around the Commandment (*mitzvah*) of *Shemita* in the Face of Climate Change
  - Oluwabunmi Bernard, University of Cambridge and Obafemi Awolowo University  
Sacred Trash: Paradox of Ritual Objectification in Yorùbá Orature
  - Yiftach Ashkenazi, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev  
Religion and Environmental Commitment in Southern Israeli Literature
- 17:30-18:00 **Break** and light refreshments
- 18:00-19:00 **Final Discussion:** Prof. Daniella Talmon-Heller, CSoC Director, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
- 19:15-21:00 **Dinner** at Little India Restaurant

#### Wednesday 11 January 2023

##### Jordan River and Dead Sea Tour:

Ecology, Religion and Environmental Peacebuilding through Regional Cooperation

Guided by Nadav Tal from EcoPeace



(photographed by Nadav Tal)

- 08:15 **Departure from BGU** (parking lot of Building #72)
- Arad - evaporation ponds viewpoint
  - Ein Bokek Gorge - short hike
  - Lunch (Picnic)
  - Qasr al-Yahud (Jordan River Baptism Site)
- 16:30 **Travel back to BGU via Jerusalem Train Station**