



RUTGERS



Gary A. Rendsburg

November – December 2021

Wednesday, November 24, 2021

Dear Friends:

First and foremost, we wish you all a Happy Thanksgiving: may the true message of the festival continue to sustain us, even as the covid pandemic continues to swirl around us.

Related to our work, it is always worth noting (as Gary does for his students each year at this time) that the Thanksgiving celebration created by the Pilgrims is based on biblical roots.

There can be no doubt that the annual festival of Sukkot (also known as ‘Booths’ or ‘Tabernacles’), which marked the autumn harvest, served as the model for the Pilgrim feast.

See, for example, the following key passages:

Exodus 23:16 – And [you shall observe] the *Feast of Ingathering* at the end of the year,

when you gather [the fruit of] your labor from the field.

Exodus 34:22 – And you shall keep . . . the *Feast of Ingathering* at the turn of the year.

Deuteronomy 16:13–14 – You shall keep the *Feast of Booths* seven days, when you gather in from your threshing floor and from your wine press; and you shall rejoice in your feast.

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## Upcoming Public Lectures

**November 30<sup>th</sup>**


“Jewish Life in the Middle Ages: In the Shadow of Islam and Christendom”

Tuesday, November 30, 2021

6:30 p.m. (EST)


Presented by Smithsonian Associates – via Zoom

<https://smithsonianassociates.org/ticketing/tickets/252271>



**Jewish Life in the Middle Ages:  
In the Shadow of Islam and Christendom**

Gary A. Rendsburg  
Blanche and Irving Laurie  
Chair in Jewish History  
Rutgers University  
November 30, 2021

 Smithsonian

### **Description:**

Almost without exception, throughout the Middle Ages, the vast majority of Jews lived under either Islamic rule or Christian rule. Under caliphate rule across North Africa and the Middle East, Jews flourished in vibrant and cosmopolitan cities such as Cairo and

Baghdad. They established long-range trade routes as far east as India and China, bringing wealth and prestige to their communities.

In contrast, life in Christian Europe was fraught with challenges, as the Church's negative attitude towards the Jews prevented their full integration into society. They suffered accusations of ritual murder and host desecration, slaughter at the hands of the Crusaders, and expulsions from England, France, and Spain. Despite all this, some European Jews were able to establish relatively productive lives.

Historian Gary Rendsburg explores Jewish life within these two orbits. He focuses on how the Jews survived during the Middle Ages, the period that bridges their historical roots in the land of Israel and the dawn of modernity brought on by the Renaissance.

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## **Three-Part Series Upcoming in December**

**Sunday, December 5th**

**Sunday, December 12th**

**Sunday, December 19th**

“England as the Custodian of the Jewish Past”

3:00 p.m. (EST) = 12:00 noon (PST)

Presented by the Orange County (Calif.) Community Scholar

Program (<https://occsp.net/>)

– via Zoom

<https://mailchi.mp/ced0004cc5eb/csp-zoom-programs-week-of-april-5-592359>

## England as the Custodian of the Jewish Past

3-Part Lecture Series :: December 2021

Gary A. Rendsburg  
Blanche and Irving Laurie  
Chair in Jewish History  
Rutgers University



CSP Online Series  
with Prof. Gary A. Rendsburg, live on Zoom from New Jersey  
*Dedicated in honor of Donna Vann*

### England as the Custodian of the Jewish Past

3-Part Sunday Series, December 5/12 & 19  
12:00 - 1:00 PM PST / 3:00 - 4:00 PM EST  
22:00 - 23:00 Israel Time

### Description:

Most people are well aware of England's role as a center of antiquarianism, with so much of the ancient world preserved in institutions such as the British Library, the British Museum, and the libraries of Oxford and Cambridge. Most people are equally aware of England's abiding interest in all matters biblical: witness John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, the King James Version, and the major role played by the Bible generally in the Church of England.

Much less well known, however, is England's role as the custodian of the Jewish past. To put it plainly: No other country in the world possesses both the quality and the quantity of Hebrew manuscripts in its library collections. Why is this so? And how did it happen?

In this three-part series, historian and self-styled Anglophile Gary A. Rendsburg, who spends almost every summer conducting research in English museums and libraries, will survey all of this material and more, as we proceed through the centuries, from Tudor times to the Victorian age.

The three lectures are:

1. The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford
2. The Cairo Geniza: Discovery and Documents
3. The British Library and the John Rylands Library

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## **Special Study Tour: “England as the Custodian of the Jewish Past” (August 8-19, 2022)**



As announced in a previous email, Gary will lead a special study tour of Oxford, Cambridge, and London, with access to the Hebrew manuscript collections at the Bodleian Library (Oxford) and the Cambridge University Library (C.U.L.) in August 2022.

The tour is brought to you by Sababa Travel (Westfield, N.J.), with itinerary, pricing, and registration available here:

<https://traveljoy.com/bookings/gvCkvyWtCSaUqCxAswXLyyDr>

See here for the pdf file with all relevant information:

<https://jewishstudies.rutgers.edu/docman/rendsburg/902-england-as-the-custodian-of-the-jewish-past-august-2022-tour-itinerary>

And see here for the “flip book” version:

<https://www.flipsnack.com/garyarensburglectureseries/england-as-the-custodian-jewish-past-august-2022.html>

Naturally, feel free to be in touch with us with any questions, and also feel free to share with family, friends, interested parties, et al.

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**GARY'S CORNER**





Follow-up to the England tour announcement above:

**Did you know that the academic field of Jewish Studies was created by King Henry VIII?!?!?**

That's right, it's a little-known fact, but during his reign Henry VIII created the positions of Regius Professor of Hebrew at Cambridge (1540) and Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford (1546), thereby launching the academic field which we now recognize as Jewish Studies.

The first holders of these endowed chairs were paid £40 per annum, from the royal coffers (hence the word 'Regius' in the title), and they continue to exist down to the present day.

I have done extensive research on several of the early chair holders, namely, Robert Wakefield (Cambridge, 1540–1549), Thomas Neale (1559–1569, Oxford), and Antoine Rodolphe Chevallier (Cambridge, 1569–1572) – all of whom remain a fascination.

Fun fact: when he was younger, prior to his elevation to the position of Regius Professor

of Hebrew, Chevallier served as the tutor to the future Queen Elizabeth I. We know for sure that he taught her French and Latin, and most likely he taught her a modicum of Hebrew as well.

All this and more during the course of our days together on the England tour!

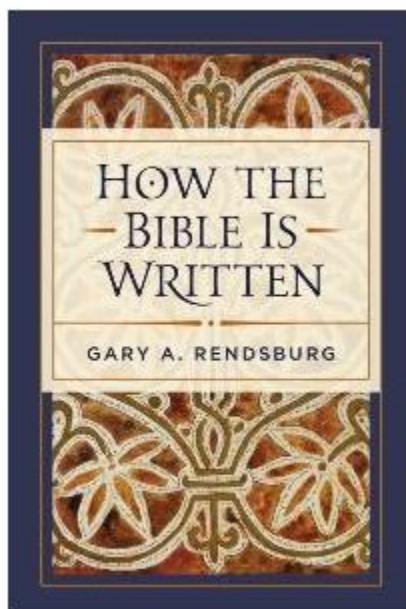
Cheers, Gary

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[Click here to contact Gary A. Rendsburg](#)

[Click here to contact Melissa A. Rendsburg, Managing Director](#)



## **MOST RECENT BOOK**

**(April 2019)**

How the Bible Is Written

(Hendrickson)

**Gary A. Rendsburg Lecture Series**

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<https://jewishstudies.rutgers.edu/people/core-faculty/gary-a-rendsburg>