Dear Friends,

We write to you from Rome, on the final stage of our six months of sabbatical travel (Israel / Provence / Italy). We have enjoyed every minute of our explorations of the Jewish past, from our visits to Qumran and Masada in October; to the medieval Jewish communities of Avignon, Carpentras, and Montepellier in January – February; and to the Jewish catacombs of Vigna Randanini earlier this month.
All the while, Gary has taught at Bar-Ilan University (“Egypt and the Bible,” Fall 2022) and the Pontifical Biblical Institute (P.B.I.) (“How the Bible Reached Us,” February – March 2023), training the next generation of biblical scholars, literally from around the world.

Pontifical Biblical Institute, Piazza della Pilotta, 35, Roma
[photo credit: Gary A. Rendsburg]

At the P.B.I., Gary’s students came from Angola, Brazil, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Korea, Lithuania, Mexico, Nigeria, Poland, and Spain (see class photo below, at “Gary’s Corner”).

We now look forward to returning home to New Jersey, from which Gary will deliver a series of upcoming lectures in April and May, all via Zoom (or similar platforms), as follows.

In addition, see below for information about the bespoke England Tour scheduled for Summer 2023.
Upcoming Lectures

(Lecture #1)

Two-page spread of the Birds Head Haggadah (Germany, c. 1300), with pictures of matzah making (bottom right) and matzah baking (bottom left).

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birds%27_Head_Haggadah#/media/File:Scribe-Menahem_-_The_Birds'_Head_Haggadah_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

"The Passover Haggadah through the Ages: Jewish Text, Christian Surprises"
Monday, April 3, 2023 (via Zoom)
1:00 p.m. (EDT) = 6:00 p.m. (BST)
"Manuscripts in Interfaith Contexts"
Free registration here:
Today, Jews read the Passover Haggadah from a printed book, with each person at the table holding his or her own copy. But how did that text reach us? And how did Jews observe the Seder before the age of printing?

This talk presents the evidence: from the most basic Haggadah texts found in the Cairo Genizah through the most lavishly produced illuminated Haggadah manuscripts from the Middle Ages.

Along the way, as we shall see, certain Christian influences are present: both in the artwork of the illuminated haggadot and, perhaps most surprisingly of all, in the so-called Monk’s Haggadah, replete with Latin commentary, housed for centuries at the Benedictine Monastery in Tegernsee, Bavaria.

Through it all, presented via PowerPoint, we will marvel at the work of dedicated scribes, who transmitted the text generation after generation, century after century – while also acknowledging the ongoing work of curators and librarians who serve as the custodians of these treasures, in London, Manchester, New York, Jerusalem, Munich, and Washington.
"Finding Home: The Jewish Diaspora Around the Globe"
Mondays at 1:00 p.m. (EDT) – April 17, April 24, May 1, May 8, 2023
(via Zoom)
92nd Street ‘Y’ (92Y) Roundtable, 4-part series
Registration ($140 for the series) here:
https://roundtable.org/class/course/finding-home-the-jewish-diaspora-around-the-globe
General Description:
The Diaspora of the Jews has sent this ancient people to lands near and far. Most of these are well known: Spain, Italy, Germany, Iraq, Morocco, and more. But Jews also flourished in the most unexpected places. Join Jewish historian Gary Rendsburg to explore Jews in Hellenistic Egypt, Arabian oases, Silk Road stations in Asia, and medieval England. These stories are less well known, but they provide for a full understanding of the expanse of Jewish history – from the Atlantic coast of Europe in the west to the desert regions of China in the east.

The Four Topics:
1. The Jews of Hellenistic Egypt: A Distant Mirror
2. Jews in Arabia: Before the Rise of Islam
3. The Year 1000: Jews along the Silk Road
4. The Jews of Medieval England
This is a live, virtual course hosted by Roundtable, which includes interactive opportunities and post-course recordings available for all course participants.

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(Lecture #3)

Princeton Adult School
Learning Never Ends

"Recovering the Past: The Cairo Geniza, the Oxyrhynchus Papyri, and the Dead Sea Scrolls"

Thursdays, at 7:00 p.m. (EDT) – April 20, April 27, May 4 (via Zoom)
Princeton Adult School, 3-part series
Registration ($60 for the series) here:
https://www.ssreg.com/princeton/classes/results.asp?string=rendsburg

Description:

The three groups of texts referenced in the title constitute the greatest manuscript discoveries from Israel and Egypt during the late 19th and 20th centuries. Most people have heard of the Dead Sea Scrolls (800+ documents), some people have heard of the Cairo Geniza (c. 300,000..."
documents), while very few people have heard of the Oxyrhynchus Papyri (c. 500,000 fragments). How were these texts discovered? What have scholars learned from these documents? Where are they housed today? And how does one begin to read, sort, and catalogue the latter two massive collections? Finally, what have we learned from all this material?

(Lecture #4)

**BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY SOCIETY**

“The Jews of Arabia: From the Great Revolt until the Rise of Islam”
Saturday–Sunday, April 22–23, 2023 (via Zoom)
BAS Bible Fest / April 2023
Sponsored by the Biblical Archaeology Society

Specific time slot to be determined:
“The Jews of Arabia: From the Great Revolt until the Rise of Islam”
Program, speakers, registration, etc. here:
Description:

Five centuries before the rise of Islam, we have evidence for Jews in the Arabian Peninsula, stretching from oasis sites in the north to Yemen in the south. In the latter, most remarkably, the king of Ḥimyar converted to Judaism and thus arose an ancient Jewish kingdom 2500 km (1600 miles) removed from the land of Israel.

Upcoming Travel-Study Tour
People continue to register for our bespoke tour, "England as the Custodian of the Jewish Past," to take place this coming summer, July 31 - August 11, 2023 – organized with Sababa Travel, Westfield, N.J.

Please consider joining us for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!

It truly is a special experience, to enter the Bodleian Library and the Cambridge University Library, to see the treasures of the Jewish past: illuminated Hebrew manuscripts, Cairo Geniza documents, etc. – including Maimonides's own handwritten copies of his works!

The highlights are Oxford, Cambridge, London, though with trips to other locales as well (Stonehenge, Salisbury Cathedral, Blenheim Palace, Bletchley Park, etc.).

Full itinerary here:
Pricing and booking information here:

https://traveljoy.com/bookings/jrtZqS35NnPw7xkDwoAnPuxV

We even produced two short videos to promote the tour, available at Gary’s YouTube channel:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEKAUsjp8jgRruf-eoCnNOA

The tour has been designed specifically with people such as yourselves in mind!

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GARY'S CORNER

It truly has been an honor and a privilege to teach the students at the Pontifical Biblical Institute and to be associated with this unique institution.
My students, from all over the world (see near the start of this email blast), arrived at each session with enthusiasm, a thirst for knowledge, and a passion for learning more about Hebrew manuscripts.

Most of the students are selected by their local bishops to pursue higher education at the P.B.I., with the hope and promise that one day they will return to their countries of origin to enlighten the next generation of students.

I know that I will remain in touch with all of them for years to come as I follow each one’s progress in graduate school and academic career beyond.
In addition to my teaching at the P.B.I., I also enjoyed the comfortable surrounds of the excellent library, with all the books that I needed for teaching and research within easy reach.

Left: the library. Upper right: my library desk. Lower right: my P.B.I. card
Arrivederci Roma!

– Gary & Melissa

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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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Department of Jewish Studies – Rutgers University
https://jewishstudies.rutgers.edu/people/core-faculty/gary-a-rendsburg

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