

Religious Renewal in Times of Crisis

April 23-28, 2023

Tantur Ecumenical Institute, Jerusalem

Session hosts include – Shalom Hartman Institute, Pontifical Biblical Institute

Sunday, April 23, 2023 | Tantur Ecumenical Institute

Dinner and Introductions | 5:00-6:30 p.m.*

Curtis Hutt (University of Nebraska at Omaha)

Session 1 | 6:30-8:30 p.m.*

The Philosophy of Renewal

Crisis and Renewal: From Mt. Fuji to Mt. Zion, Curtis Hutt (University of Nebraska at Omaha)

Aging and Renewal, Nehama Verbin (Tel Aviv University)

Al-Ghazali on the Crisis of the Religious Sciences and the Need for Renewal, Sobhi Rayan (Al-Qasemi Academic College)

Monday, April 24, 2023 | Shalom Hartman Institute

Introductions | 10:00-10:15 a.m.

Curtis Hutt (University of Nebraska at Omaha), Tomer Persico (Shalom Hartman Institute and Reichman University)

Opening Keynote | 10:15-11:15 a.m.

Understanding the Jewish Renaissance: Survival, Revival, and Renewal, Rachel Werczberger (Hadassah Academic College)

Session 2 | 11:15 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Jewish Renewal in Times of Crisis

Shabbat According to Their Halacha: Worship Rituals and Secular Observance Amongst Jewish Israelis on the Weekend, Stav Shufan-Bitton (Bar Ilan University)

Renewal: Orthodox Jewish Women Changing the Face of Judaism, Peta Pellach (Elijah Interfaith Institute and Kiverstein Institute)

From Crisis to Renewal When Jewish Buddhists become Jewish Mindfulness teachers in the Global Jewish World, Mira Niculescu Weil (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Lunch | 1:00-1:30 p.m.

Special Session 3 | 1:30-3:00 p.m.

Religious Renewal in Times of Environmental Crisis

Jewish Environmentalism in Israel: A Shared Movement?, Itay Greenspan (Hebrew University)

Religiosity and Exposure to Natural Disasters: Coping and Identity, Shiri Noy (Denison University)

Session 4 | 3:15-4:45 p.m.*

Islamic Renewal in Times of Crisis

Facing Jihad: Contemporary Muslim Perspectives on Inter-Faith Dialogue, Itzchak Weismann (University of Haifa)

The Relationship between the Islamic Movement and the State of Israel, Sobhi Rayan (Al-Qasemi Academic College)

Special Keynote | 5:00-6:00 p.m.*

Introduction: Nohad Ali (Western Galilee College and Samuel Neaman Institute for National Policy at Technion University)

Directions of Partnership and the Exit From Political Marginalization, Mansour Abbas (Ra'am)

Dinner | 6:00-6:30 p.m.

Panel | 6:30-8:00 p.m.*

Moderator: Tomer Persico (Shalom Hartman Institute and Reichman University)

Panelists: Donniel Hartman (Shalom Hartman Institute), Gary Mason (ReThinking Conflict), Reza Aslan (University of California, Riverside)

Tuesday, April 25, 2023 | Shalom Hartman Institute

Morning Keynote | 10:00-11:00 a.m.

Religious Renewal as a Modern Phenomenon, Yaakov Ariel (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Session 5 | 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Christian Renewal in Times of Crisis

De-colonizing Interreligious Dialogue, John Munayer (Rossing Center for Education and Dialogue)

Evangelical Discontinuity and Liberation Theology: The Case of "Christ at the Checkpoint Young Adults," Marah Sarji (Princeton Theological Seminary)

Lunch | 1:00-1:30 p.m.

Keynote | 1:30-2:30 p.m.

"A Natural Act of Vengeance": The Crisis of the Liberal Order and the Rise of Fundamentalist Judaism in Israel, Tomer Persico (Shalom Hartman Institute and Reichman University)

Session 6 | 2:45-3:45 p.m.*

Interfaith in Times of Crisis

Theorizing the Abrahamic: From The Abraham Accords to the "Religion(s) of Abraham, Kurt Anders Richardson (University of Toronto and Abraham's Bridge)

Respondent: Alon Goshen-Gottstein (Elijah Interfaith Institute)

Rabbi Sidney H. and Jane Brooks Lecture on Religion and Social Justice | 4:00-4:45 p.m.*

Introduction: Wendy Goldberg (Tri-Faith Initiative), Paul A. Williams (University of Nebraska at Omaha and Tri-Faith Initiative)

A Conversation with Rabbi Aryeh Azriel (Tri-Faith Initiative)

Closing Address | 4:45-5:30 p.m.*

Introduction: Wendy Goldberg (Tri-Faith Initiative)

Judaism: A Religion in Crisis, Alon Goshen-Gottstein (Elijah Interfaith Institute)

Conference in Recess on Wednesday, April 26

Thursday, April 27, 2023 | Pontifical Biblical Institute

Introductions | 10:00-10:15 a.m.

Curtis Hutt (University of Nebraska at Omaha), Alejandro González Cerna (Bethlehem University)

Session 7 | 10:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

Religious Renewal in Times of Crisis

Holy Sepulchers and Holy Nails: Journeying to Jerusalem in Medieval Milan, Martina Saltamacchia (University of Nebraska at Omaha)

Religion in Museums: Religious Objects between Disenchantment and Enchantment in Leningrad and Marburg, Konstanze Runge (Ikonenmuseum Frankfurt)

Counteracting Enemy Images, Kristian Steiner (Malmö University)

Lunch | 12:30-1:15 p.m.

Keynote | 1:15-2:15 p.m.

Using and Abusing Cultural Historical Narratives in the Context of Toxic Religion, Gary Mason (ReThinking Conflict)

Session 8 | 2:30-4:30 p.m.*

Islamic Renewal in Times of Crisis

Religious Revivalism and Political Power in the Muslim World: Is There a Democratic Alternative? Ramazan Kiliç (University of Nebraska at Omaha)

Renewing Islam in a Time of Crisis: Democracy and Tyranny in the Post-WWI Moment, Simon Wood (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)

Religious, Political or Public? What is the Legitimacy of Ra'am to Join the Coalition?, Nohad Ali (Western Galilee College and Samuel Neaman Institute for National Policy at Technion University)

Session 9 | 4:30-6:00 p.m.*

Christian Renewal in Times of Crisis

Restoration and Millennial Expectations in Barclay's Mission to Jerusalem (1851-1862), Paul A. Williams (University of Nebraska at Omaha and Tri-Faith Initiative)

On the Use and Abuse of Cultural Heritage-The Case of Evangelical Palestinians, Jack Munayer (World Council of Churches – Ecumenical Accompaniment Program In Palestine and Israel)

Dinner/Keynote | 6:00-7:00 p.m.*

Leonard and Shirley Goldstein Lecture on Human Rights

Introduction: Curtis Hutt (University of Nebraska at Omaha)

Cosmic Justice: Desacralizing Human Rights in the Holy Land, Reza Aslan (University of California, Riverside)

Optional Tours for Conference Participants

Wednesday, April 26 | 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Starting Location: Tantur Ecumenical Institute

Morning Presentation: Nine Quarters of Jerusalem, Matthew Teller (Journalist) (10:00 a.m.)

Travel to Mt. Zion (11:00 a.m.)

Late Lunch at Bulghourji Gardens (3:00 p.m.)

Friday, April 28 | 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Starting Location: Tantur Ecumenical Institute

Travel to Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem (9:00 a.m.)

The Iconography of Religious Renewal, Ibrahim Khair (Bethlehem Bible College)

Note: Due to construction at the Tantur Ecumenical Institute, sessions will be held at neighboring academic institutions; including the Shalom Hartman Institute and the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Jerusalem.

Steering Committee

Curtis Hutt, University of Nebraska at Omaha

Paul A. Williams, University of Nebraska at Omaha and Tri-Faith Initiative

Wendy Goldberg, Tri-Faith Initiative

Nohad Ali, Western Galilee College and Samuel Neaman Institute for National Policy at Technion University

Tomer Persico, Shalom Hartman Institute and Reichman University

Rachel Werczberger, Hadassah Academic College

Kurt Anders Richardson, University of Toronto and Abraham's Bridge

Conference Coordinator

Angela Brown, University of Nebraska at Omaha

Department of Religious Studies, University of Nebraska at Omaha

The UNO Department of Religious Studies is involved in some of the most exciting programs in the College of Arts and Sciences. Religious Studies has a long history of partnership with The Journal of Religion and Film, the Goldstein Center for Human Rights, SPHRs: Spirituality, Public Health, and Religious Studies, the Schwalb Center for Israel and Jewish Studies, and the Batchelder Conference on Biblical Archaeology. Our faculty play key roles academic programs like Native American Studies, Medical Humanities, Islamic Studies, and Ancient Mediterranean Studies. UNO Religious Studies alumni have enrolled in graduate programs across the USA, most recently at the University of Chicago and Harvard Divinity School. We have organized academic conferences and multi-year research projects not only in the United States but across the world in places like Turkey, the Netherlands, Japan, and Israel.

Tri-Faith Initiative

Tri-Faith Initiative is the world's first intentional co-location of a synagogue, church, mosque, and an interfaith center. These four autonomous organizations attract spiritual seekers, the religiously curious, and even those with no religious affiliation. As an interfaith non-profit, Tri-Faith counters the rise in hate crimes and religious hostility through educational and relational programs, advocacy actions, and thought leadership.

Additional support from: UNO College of Arts and Sciences, Goldstein Center for Human Rights, Goldstein Family Community Chair in Human Rights, Islamic Studies Program, Department of History

Many thanks to the Shalom Hartman Institute and the Pontifical Biblical Institute for hosting our sessions. And a big THANKS to the Tantur Ecumenical Institute for their gracious hospitality

* Livestreaming available on the conference website:

