

Gary A. Rendsburg

**Upcoming Programs in
January-February-March**

(1) "The Jews of Medieval England"

Kol Rina, South Orange, N.J. (via Zoom)

(2) "Egypt and the Bible"

Biblical Archaeology Society (via Zoom)

(3) "A Walk Through Oxford's Storied Past"

Washington Metro Oasis - Lifelong Adventure
(via Zoom)

Wednesday, January 8, 2025

Dear Friends,

We had plan to start this email with: First and foremost, Happy New Year to everyone, as we wish you all a healthy and prosperous 2025!

While we still extend those warm wishes, our thoughts are with our family, friends, and colleagues in the Los Angeles area.

We are writing this email while watching the devastating wildfires consuming homes and properties, including places we know all too well. This crisis strikes close to home for us, as Melissa grew up in this area of L.A., while Gary has held visiting positions over the years at UCLA and the Getty Villa.

If you are in Los Angeles, please know that you are in our thoughts, and we sincerely hope you are safe and sound.

Take good care, Gary & Melissa



Flames from the Palisades Fire reach the grounds of the Getty Villa Museum on the Pacific Coast Highway amid a powerful windstorm on Jan. 8, 2025, in Los Angeles, Calif. [Apu Gomes/Getty Images]

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In the months ahead, Gary will present two single lectures – this coming Sunday, January 12, and on Monday, March 10 – plus an entire month of learning in February via his 8-part mini-course offered by the Biblical Archaeology Society (BAS).

The mini-course is a new venture by BAS, based in Washington, D.C., and we are delighted to report that Gary was selected as the inaugural speaker in the program.

We hope to see you at these upcoming events!



(1)

“The Jews of Medieval England”

Kol Rina

South Orange, New Jersey

Sunday, January 12, 2025

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon (EST)

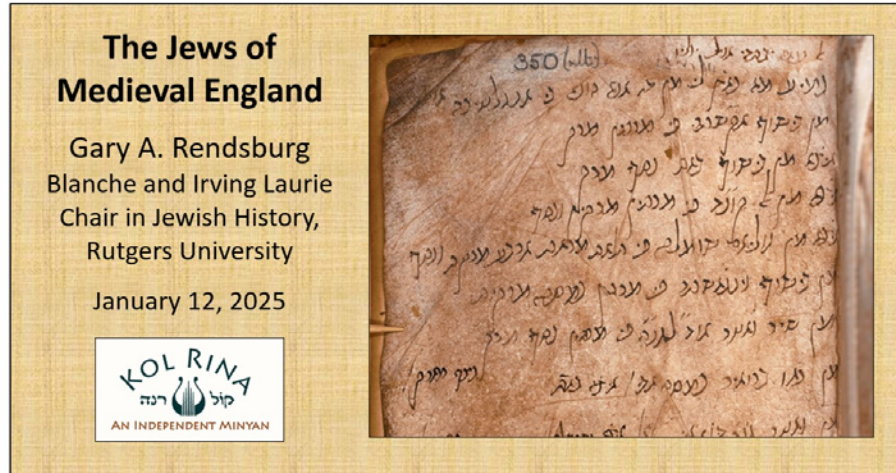
via Zoom

Registration here:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-jews-of-medieval-england-tickets-1130875622429>

Description:

Jews first arrived in England upon the invitation of William the Conqueror, soon after 1066. For the next 200-plus years, they both prospered and endured harsh treatment under the realm of Christendom. Among the highlights of these times is the flourishing Jewish community in Oxford. Among the lowlights are the first blood libel in Norwich in 1144, the massacre at York in 1190, and eventually, the expulsion of the Jews under Edward I in 1290. Join us as Professor Rendsburg weaves together this material, citing archaeological and textual evidence, to create an engaging historical narrative of the Jews of medieval England.



Opening image of the PowerPoint presentation, with an image of the list of English notables (counts, bishops, etc.) who owed money to an anonymous Jewish financier, on the blank pages at the back of an Ashkenazi siddur held at the Corpus Christi College (Oxford) library.

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(2)

“Egypt and the Bible”

Biblical Archaeology Society

February 2025: every Monday and Thursday evening

February 3, 6, 10, 13, 17, 20, 24, 27

7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. (EST)

via Zoom

Registration here:

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/travel-study/bas-course-with-gary-a-rendsburg/>

Description:

In February 2025, join our new online course with Professor Gary A. Rendsburg of Rutgers University, as he discusses the always fascinating topic of “Egypt and the Bible” over eight sessions.

Each class runs 1.5 hours, with plenty of time for Q&A during each session. You’ll attend every Monday and Thursday in February from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. (EST).

Lecture titles:

1. Egypt: A Trip Up the Nile

We begin with a tour of Egypt – from pylons to pyramids, from tombs to temples – as we gain a sense of the grandeur of this remarkable society, with stops at Giza, Luxor, Edfu, Aswan, the Valley of the Kings, the Valley of the Queens, and more. In the process, we will learn why there are more ancient Egyptian obelisks in Europe (eight in Rome alone!) than there are in Egypt today!

2. The Joseph Story

The biblical narrator infuses the Joseph Story with all manner of motifs known from Egyptian texts, including the central role of dream interpretation, the parading of a high ranking official through town on a chariot, the ideal lifespan of 110 years, and of course mummification (for both Jacob and Joseph in Genesis, ch. 50).

3. The Exodus Narrative

The biblical storyteller uses the same technique when writing the extended story of Exodus, chs. 1–15, with once again numerous Egyptian literary and artistic motifs incorporated into the narrative. Such elements include holding a snake by the tail, the river turning to blood, three days of darkness, the death of the first-born, and then most importantly the separation of the waters.

4. The Exodus in History and Archaeology

Everyone wants to know: did the Exodus happen? The answer is ‘yes’ and ‘no’, which is to say, we certainly have sufficient historical and archaeological evidence to posit the settlement of the Israelites in Egypt and their leaving the country, as long as we recognize that the biblical account is told in epic proportions, with literary embellishments augmenting the historical core.

5. The Decipherment of Hieroglyphic Egyptian

But how can we know anything about ancient Egypt and what its texts reveal? The answer is: we have been able to read the hieroglyphic texts ever since the great decipherment by Jean-François Champollion in 1822, based on earlier steps by his predecessors and with subsequent advances by his successors. This lecture presents the thrilling account of the discovery of the Rosetta Stone and why and how it provided the key to the decipherment.

6. Hebrew and Egyptian Cultural Contact

(with Special Attention to Loanwords in Both Directions)

Now that we know how to read hieroglyphics, we are primed to learn how Egyptian words reached Hebrew and are to be found in the Bible (especially words for the Nile, reeds, papyrus, linen, etc.) and also how various Hebrew (or better: Canaanite) words reached ancient Egyptian. These loanwords in both directions speak to the cultural exchange between the two countries.

7. The First Diaspora: Jews in Egypt, from the Delta to Elephantine

With the arrival of the Babylonians in the land of Canaan c. 600 B.C.E., many residents of Judah fled in the opposite direction to Egypt. In fact, even while living in the Delta, Jeremiah was able to receive the word of God (see Jeremiah 43:7–8). From a century later we learn of the remarkable Jewish community at Elephantine in the far south of Egypt, in service to the Persian emperor, protecting the southwestern border of the vast realm, and with their own temple replete with animal sacrifices, even as the Second Temple was operative in Jerusalem.

8. Septuagint, Synagogue, and Symbiosis: The Jews of Hellenistic Egypt

The conquests of Alexander the Great brought Hellenism to the entire Near East in the late 4th century B.C.E. No Jewish community reflects the symbiosis of Hellenism and Judaism better than the large and thriving community of Egypt – especially in Alexandria, though in other locales as well. They translated the Bible into Greek, they built synagogues dedicated to the Ptolemy kings and queens, they wrote Jewish literature in Greek, they were fully integrated into the society and the economy, and in one case they even constructed a temple in Egypt (to rival the one in Jerusalem).



KV-11 :: Tomb of Rameses III
(r. 1195 – 1164) (20th Dynasty)

The tomb of Rameses III (KV-11), the most likely pharaoh of the Exodus,
as will be explained during the course.

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(3)

“A Walk Through Oxford's Storied Past”

Washington Metro Oasis – Lifelong Adventure

Bethesda, Maryland

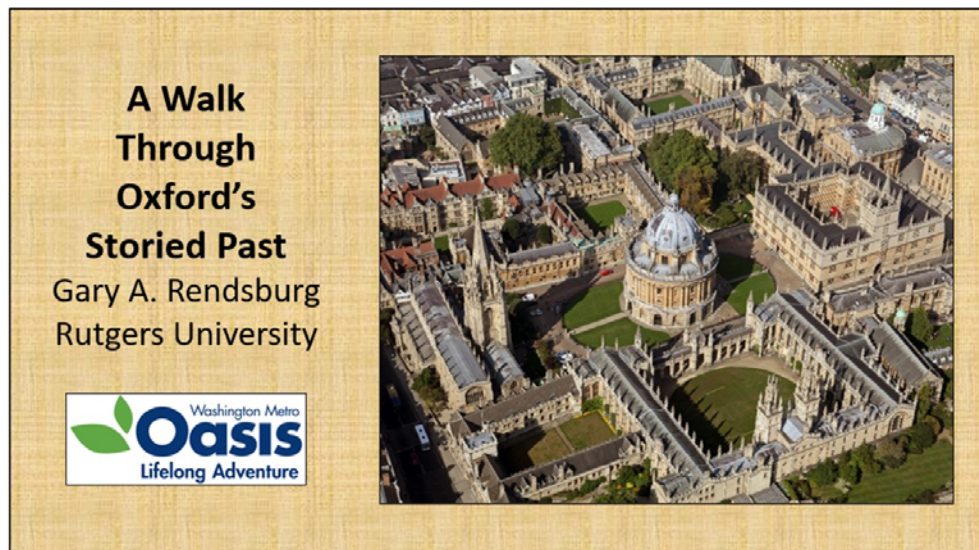
Monday, March 10, 2025
1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. (EST)
via Zoom

Registration here:

<https://washington-metro.oasiseverywhere.org/product/a-walk-through-oxfords-storied-past/>

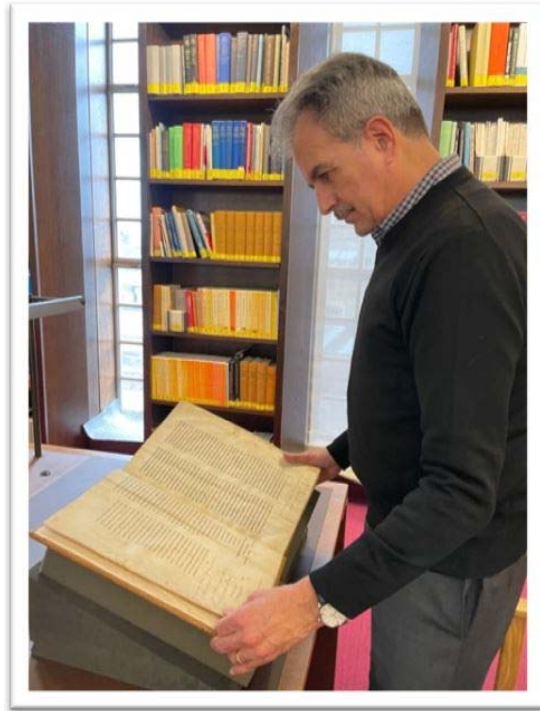
Description:

The history of the city of Oxford and its great University dates back to the 12th century. So many famous people have studied and taught there, including two current U.S. Supreme Court justices. The college libraries allow one to step back into the Middle Ages; there is an abundance of physical and natural beauty; and the preservation of so many manuscripts and other material continues to attract scholars. Gary Rendsburg has lived and conducted academic research at the University of Oxford throughout his career. Join us as he brings the great University to life.



Opening image of the PowerPoint presentation, with an aerial photograph of the Radcliffe Camera, the Bodleian Library, and St. Mary's University Church, which together form the epicenter of the University.

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GARY'S CORNER



We completed another academic semester in December, during which I taught two courses, “Readings in Biblical Hebrew Prose” and “Touching History: The World of Medieval Manuscripts.”

In addition, throughout this academic year, I am supervising a senior honors thesis, “Portuguese Hebrew Manuscripts,” plus I have organized a small research group into a medieval Torah scroll in the Vatican Library (Vat. ebr. 1). My students and I make discoveries every day, such is the path of research.

One of the highlights of the semester was our class visit to the Morgan Library in New York City, with the largest collection of medieval manuscripts assembled by a single individual in the U.S. We were able to go behind the scenes, where Roger Wieck, curator of medieval and Renaissance manuscripts, generously shared his time and expertise with our group.

I invite you to peruse my Facebook page to learn more about the Morgan Library visit (see the October 31 posting), along with other events which transpired during the Fall 2024 semester.

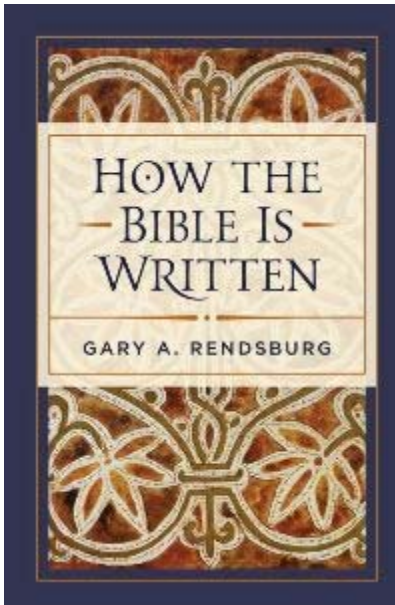
<https://www.facebook.com/grendsburg>



The Morgan Library, New York City
(stock photo from the internet)

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

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



How the Bible Is Written

(April 2019)

(Hendrickson)

Gary A. Rendsburg Lecture Series

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

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