

Presenter: Paula Fredriksen, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Title: **“The Invention of ‘Religion’ in the *Codex Theodosianus* Book 16”**

Panel: Ancient History

In the long period from Alexander the Great (d. 323 BCE) to the emperor Decius (d. 251 CE), relations between heaven and earth were configured as a family inheritance. Gods ran in the blood; and protocols for keeping god(s) happy were configured as “ancestral custom:” *paradoseis tōn paterōn, ta patria ethē, mos maiorum, hoi patrioi nomoi*. In this sense and for this reason, cult was an ethnic designation, and ethnicity was a cult designation. Jews, in this regard, were just like everyone else: each people had its own customs and divinities, while accommodating other peoples and *their* divinities with practical pluralism. Beginning with the emperor Decius and continuing through Diocletian, however, the state began to regulate relations between heaven and earth until, with the consolidation of the Codex, we have the state defining the legal limits of religious diversity and difference. In consequence, Jews – along with heretics and pagans – become targets for religious coercion. Relations between heaven and earth are no longer (simply) an ethnic patrimony, but also a political choice.