

Presenter: Liran Yadgar, Yale University

Title: “Jews and Judaism in the Writings of Ibn Taymiyya”

Panel: Islam and Anti-Semitism

The Ḥanbalī jurist and theologian Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya (b. 1263, Ḥarran – d. 1328, Damascus) was a prolific writer, and in terms of polemical writings, might be considered the polemicist *par excellence* in medieval Islamic history. His polemics address the Mongols – the greatest threat to Islam in his age – Shi’ites, Christians, Nuṣayrīs (Alawaites), and unlawful practices among Sunnīs of his age. A man of letters, Ibn Taymiyya nonetheless took part in raids against the Mongols and the Nuṣayrīs. These actions, along with his invectives against the “enemies” of Islam, contributed to his portrayal in modern Western scholarship as the “dernier grand théoricien du *jihād* medieval” (Alfred Morabia), or as the intellectual forerunner of Islamic fundamentalism (Emmanuel Sivan).

Jews relatively occupy only a small part of Ibn Taymiyya’s polemical writings. It is my intention to investigate the role of Jews and Judaism in his writings, relying mainly on *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ* (The Correct Answer), *Minḥāj al-sunnah al-nabawiyya* (The Path to the Prophetic Tradition), and select number of his responsa (*fatwā*-s). In my paper, I will pay attention to Ibn Taymiyya’s usage of biblical materials, and to the association between Jews and heresies within and outside Islam. As we will see, Ibn Taymiyya did not develop a coherent view of Judaism, and Jews were used in multiple ways in his writings in order to attack his rivals, and in presenting Islam as the “middle path” between Judaism and Christianity.

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