



Muhammad receiving his first revelation from the angel Gabriel. From the manuscript *Jami' al-tawarikh* by Rashid-al-Din Hamadani, 1307, Ilkhanate period.

Jewish Reactions to the Prophet Muhammad

Thursday Feb 1st
4:00PM - 6:00 PM
Humanites 365

When Muhammad began his mission in Arabia in the early 7th century, he preached his new revelation not only to the pagan Arabs among whom he was raised but also to the Jewish (and Christian) community among whom he came to live. How did the Jews of Muhammad's day react? What did they think of his claims to have a new/old revelation of God, and his claims to be a prophet like their prophet Moses? In attempting to answer these questions, we will look at early Jewish polemics against Muhammad in the early Islamic era, polemics preserved only in the Islamic sources themselves. We will then compare these early Jewish responses to later medieval Jewish writings on Muhammad, as found in the writings of such luminaries as Maimonides, Daniel al-Qumisi, and Ibn Adret. Do these early and later reactions have anything in common? How much do the Jewish reactions to Muhammad change with time and place? And, what can the medieval Jewish reactions tell us about the historicity of the Muslim sources' presentation of the contemporaneous Jewish reaction?



Shari Lowin is Professor of Religious Studies and Program Director of Middle Eastern Studies at Stonehill College, Massachusetts. Her research centers on the interplay between Judaism and Islam in the early and early medieval Islamic periods, c. 800-1200 CE, focusing mainly on the development of Jewish and Muslim exegetical narratives. Of her most recent publications is *Arabic and Hebrew Love Poems of al-Andalus* (Routledge, 2013), which examines these narratives in Arabic and Hebrew eros poetry of Muslim and Jewish religious scholars in 10th-13th century Muslim Spain. Other works include comparative studies of Judaism and Islam focused on the narratives of Abraham and on accounts of enemies of God in the midrash aggadah and in the ḥadīth, including a monograph entitled *The Making of a Forefather: Abraham in Islamic and Jewish Exegetical Narratives* (Brill, 2006). Lowin is also the editor of the *Review of Qur'anic Research*.

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