12.11.2023

I am pleased to recommend Omer Shadmi for the AJS Dissertation Completion Fellowship. Omer is a very talented student, whose abilities surpass those of most other doctoral candidates. His work reveals both dedication and curiosity and he often has brilliant insights. These qualities mark his future as an excellent scholar.

Under my supervision at the Department of Jewish History at the University of Haifa, Omer is currently in the advanced stages of completing his doctoral dissertation entitled “The Imaginary Geography of the Babylonian Talmud and the Production of Babylonia.” In his thesis, Omer presents how Talmudic culture imagined and fashioned the Mesopotamian landscape. To this end, he employs an array of scholarly tools taken from the fields of philology, Rabbinics, Cultural Studies, literary theory, landscape theory, and geography. His work also includes comparative readings of sources from Late Antiquity. His rare ability to combine so many fields of expertise promises a groundbreaking contribution to the much-needed geographical background of the history of Mesopotamia in Late Antiquity and the cultural fashioning of landscape and space in general.

During his PhD studies, Omer has received several fellowships and awards and has presented at international conferences in Israel and abroad, including the AJS annual conference in Boston, and a conference held in Oxford, UK. He has organized conferences and workshops in Israel and abroad and participated in international programs. Omer has one publication under review in a world-class journal and was invited to write the encyclopedia entry, “Space and Place in Rabbinic Literature,” for the *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception*. Pursuing the challenge of interdisciplinary work, Omer has established relationships with leading scholars from around the world who advise and assist him in achieving a high standard of scholarship. Currently, Omer has a promising thesis outline and has completed drafts of two chapters.

Omer received his training in reading Late Antique sources, especially rabbinic literature, and in cultural theory at the Hebrew University (BA and MA), during which he wrote an MA thesis about the Babylonian Talmud’s portrayals of the local Euphrates River, providing interesting and innovative insights regarding rabbinic approaches to the Mesopotamian landscape. He is also a graduate of one of Israel’s leading programs Land of Israel Studies programs where he received initial training in archaeology. He then expanded his knowledge of archaeology at University College London during his MA studies. Omer has proven to have an extraordinary ability to gain expertise in new fields alongside establishing strong relationships with the leading scholars in these fields who aid him in these efforts.

I am confident that AJS funding will significantly aid Omer in completing his much-anticipated dissertation and that he would be an asset to any program.

Prof. Eyal Ben-Eliyahu

Department of Jewish History

University of Haifa