Hebrew Myths and Jewish Legends

Like any human society, the Jewish culture has its own myths and legends. However, several “anomalies” - social, geographic and temporal - led to unique developments of its myths and legends, which yet to be investigated in a comprehensive and interdisciplinary study, and has ramifications for the theoretical questions of myth’s research in general. From a social point of view, the customs of the Jewish society– some of them as ancient as the prohibition of the multiplicity of divinities, others later as the prohibition of god’s anthropomorphism–have produced various creative solutions. Geographically, the Jewish diaspora and the transition of the Jewish centers once in a while had both lead to a unique stratigraphy of myths and legends from very different locales and influences. In terms of time-span, the large textual corpus extended over a very long period enables us to follow the development of its ideas and their shifts. Under this framework, we wish to bring together scholars from various disciplines who deal with literary texts of different periods in order to investigate Jewish myths and legends in the light of their time and environment, with special attention to interconnections with the literature of the Jew’s neighbors. Our topic stretches from the biblical texts that were written alongside the great cultures of the ancient Near East, continues with the Second Temple and Rabbinic literature developed in relation to Greco-Roman and Babylonian centers, the Jewish folklore of the Middle Ages under the hegemony of the Muslim and Christian world, up to modern times and the contemporary world.