

Department of Jewish Studies Faculty Seminar

Co-sponsored by the Bildner Center for Jewish Life, the History Department,
the Program in Comparative Literature, and the Program for Global Medieval Studies

CARNIVAL AS CANON:

*What can premodern Jewish parodies teach us about the
history of carnivals?*



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The premodern European carnival was an occasion when boundaries between good and bad, and between holy and profane, were temporarily broken. Scholars have long noticed similarities between premodern carnival rituals and premodern parodic literature. Until now, however, actual historical links between the two had not been identified. In this seminar, Dr. Roni Cohen will present the first known examples of premodern parodic literature composed specifically for carnivals: fourteenth-century Jewish parodies on biblical and talmudic texts that were written in southern France and Rome for the Jewish carnival holiday of Purim. This seminar will consider whether or not these texts truly challenged traditional values, fostering an anarchic atmosphere and establishing a new set of rituals for Purim. More broadly, it will explore the complex cultural environments of premodern European Jews, premodern Jewish popular culture, and the relationship between text and custom.

Tuesday, February 6 at 10:30am

Miller Hall room 115 (14 College Ave.)

Please RSVP to info@jewishstudies.rutgers.edu

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