

**Before 'the Pursuit of Happiness': Emotional Flourishing in Early Judaism, Christianity
and Islam**

A British Academy Conference

Tuesday 7th July – Wednesday 8th July 2026

The Aga Khan Centre, 10 Handyside Street, London, N1C 4DN

Conference Programme

Day One: Tuesday 7th July 2026

9:30 – 9:45 **Registration**

9:45 – 10:00 **Welcome** Karen Bauer, Daniel An, Francoise Mirguet

Panel 1 **From the Hebrew Bible to the Hellenistic World: Emotional
Flourishing among early Jews and Christians, c. 500 BCE - 100 CE**

10:00 – 10:30 *Desire in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography: A
Positive Factor for Human Growth and Flourishing*
Sara Kipfer, Professor of Protestant Theology with emphasis on Old
Testament, Dortmund University

10:30 – 11:00 *Human Flourishing and the Material Expanse of the Self in Ancient Israel*
David Lambert, Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies,
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

11:00 – 11:30 Q&A and Discussion

11:30 – 11:45 **Health Break**

11:45-12:15 *Bringing Back to the World Its Original Potential: Eudaimonia and
Idealised Jewish Identity in Flavius Josephus' Antiquities*
Françoise Mirguet, Associate Professor of Ancient Hebrew and the
History of Emotions, Arizona State University

12:15 – 12:45 *Emotional Flourishing in the Catholic Epistles of the New Testament*
Katherine Hockey, Lecturer, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy, and
Art History, University of Aberdeen

12:45 – 13:15 Q&A and Discussion

13:15 - 14:15 **Lunch**

Panel 2 **The Greco-Roman World: Emotional Flourishing and Ascetic Ideals in Christian communities, 100 CE - 500 CE**

14:15 – 14:45 *Rejoicing and Mourning: Peter's Account of His Daughter's Better Way in the Acts of Peter*

Kylie Crabbe, Head of College, Pilgrim Theological College, University of Divinity, Melbourne

14:45 – 15:15 *Communal Joy and Its Enemies in Early Christianity*

Andrew Crislip, Blake Chair in the History of Christianity, Virginia Commonwealth University

15:15 – 15:45 *Emotional Flourishing in Late Antique Christian Monasticism and Beyond*

Katharina Heyden, Professor for Ancient History of Christianity and Interreligious Encounters, University of Bern

15:45 – 16:15 Q&A and Discussion

16:15 – 16:30 **Health Break**

16:30 – 17:45 **Keynote**

Religion and Human Flourishing over the Longue-Durée

Darrin McMahon, David W. Little Class of 1944 Professor, Dept. of History, Dartmouth College.

17:45 – 19:00 **Reception, Sponsored by the Program in Jewish Studies, the Arizona State University**

Day Two: Wednesday 8th July 2026

Panel 3 **Late Antiquity and the Advent of Islam: Emotional Flourishing Among Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Levant, 500 CE - 1000 CE**

9:30 – 10:00 *Is the Destruction of the Temple Funny? Humor in Bavli Gittin 55b-57a and Flourishing in Exile*

Erez DeGolan, Assistant Professor, Classical Rabbinic Judaism, Fordham University

10:00 – 10:30 *From Fear of God to Love of God? Piety and Emotional Flourishing in Syriac Christian Authors From the Sixth to the Eighth Century*

Daniel An, Assistant Professor, Yonsei University, Seoul

10:30 – 11:00 Q&A and Discussion

11:00 – 11:15 Health Break

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| 11:15 – 11:45 | <i>Emotional Flourishing in the Qur’an: God’s Emotions and the Emotions of the Believing Community</i> Karen Bauer, Associate Professor, Qur'anic Studies, The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London |
| 11:45 – 12:15 | <i>Emotional Conflict and Fictional Resolution: Unsatisfied Spirits in Ibn Abī al-Dunyā’s Hawātif al-qubūr and Ṣabr in al-Tanūkhī’s al-Faraj ba‘d al-shidda</i> Julia Bray, Abdulaziz Saud AlBabtain Laudian Professor of Arabic (emerita) St John’s College, Oxford |
| 12:15 – 12:45 | Q&A and Discussion |
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| 12:45 – 13:45 | Lunch |
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| Panel 4 | Medieval Flourishing: Virtue and Pleasure among Medieval Jews and Muslims, 1000 CE - 1300 CE |
| 13:45 – 14:15 | <i>Royal Anger and Emotional Flourishing in Medieval Muslim Mirrors for Princes</i> Han Hsien Liew, Assistant Professor in the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies, Arizona State University |
| 14:15 – 14:45 | <i>Human Flourishing in Premodern Judaism: The Interplay of Reason and Emotions</i> Hava Tirosh-Samuels, Miriam Lowe Professor of Modern Judaism and Professor of History, Arizona State University |
| 14:45 - 15:15 | Q&A and Discussion |
| 15:15 - 15:30 | Health Break |
| 15:30 – 16:00 | <i>Happiness in the Hereafter: Desire for Reward and Fear of Punishment in Hadiths of Inspiration and Dissuasion (al-tarhīb wa-l-tarhīb)</i> Nancy Khalek, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Associate Professor of History, Brown University |
| 16:00 – 16:30 | <i>Emotions, Gestures, and Sound: Sufi Belonging between Communal Music and Meditation in Solitude</i> Eyad Abuali, Lecturer in Islamic Studies, Kings College London |
| 16:30 – 17:00 | Closing discussion |