

Monday, 20.06.2022; 4:15 - 6:00 pm CEST

Maren Niehoff, Hebrew University of Jerusalem:

**Between Metaphor and Reality: Philo of Alexandria on Slavery**

Abstract:

This lecture explores to what extent one can discern a concept of personal freedom as a basic right in the first century CE. Philo's tractate "On the Freedom of the Righteous" is of particular importance in this context, as it discusses specific cases of slavery and freedom, sometimes in a metaphorical and sometimes in a literal sense. Moreover, Philo reports that the Essenes, a group of Jewish philosophers in Roman-era Palestine, rejected the idea of slavery on principal grounds and refused to be served. Philo's testimony will be analyzed in detail and compared to the views of other first-century authors.

Bio:

Maren R. Niehoff is Max Cooper Professor of Jewish Thought at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a member of the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities. Trained in Jerusalem, Berlin, Oxford and Harvard, she focuses on various forms of ancient Judaism and their relations with Greco-Roman culture and early Christianity. Her most recent monograph, "Philo of Alexandria. An Intellectual Biography" (Yale 2018, Germ. tr. 2019), was awarded several prizes. Recently, she received the Leopold Lucas Prize of Tübingen University. She currently works on a commentary on Philo's *Probus* for the Brill series of Philo Commentaries, heads a research project funded by the Israel Science Foundation on Hellenistic Judaism in Late Antique Palestine (2021-4), and initiated a research group at Scholion, the Hebrew University, focusing on The Emergence of Elites: Between West and East (2022-5).