

Ninth Annual Joseph and Rebecca Meyerhoff Lecture

Defining the Karaites: Between Self-Perception and Scholarly Evaluation

A Textual Seminar with

Prof. Haggai Ben-Shammai

Department of Arabic, Hebrew University

January 24, 2007

5:00 PM

College Hall 209, University of Pennsylvania

Many scholars identify the Karaites as the "oldest Jewish sect still existing." However, this description does not necessarily reflect the Karaites' own understanding of their position within the wider Jewish community. In this program, Prof. Ben-Shammai will read and analyze a Karaite document from 12th century Byzantium to show how Karaite self-perception compares with widely accepted notions in modern scholarship about their relationship with Judaism at large.

Please join us for this unique opportunity to engage in the study of a fascinating text with one of the world's most prominent scholars of Karaite literature and culture. **If you plan to attend the program, please read the study text beforehand. It is available through the CAJS website at www.cajs.upenn.edu.**

Prof. Ben-Shammai is one of the world's leading scholars of Karaism and Judeo-Arabic culture. He has published critical editions, commentaries, and articles on works by the most important Judeo-Arabic and Karaite thinkers including Saadia Gaon, Judah ha-Levi, Yefet ben Eli and Maimonides and has trained a generation of scholars working in the field of Judeo-Arabic studies. Prof. Ben Shammai serves as director of the Center for Judaean-Arabic Studies and the Karaite Project at the Ben Zvi Institute. He is also co-director of the Center for Biblical and Judaic Studies at the State University in St. Petersburg (Russia). He has been a visiting scholar at Harvard University, Yeshiva University and Clare Hall, Cambridge University where he is a life member. Prof. Ben-Shammai is currently the Ellie and Herbert D. Katz Distinguished Fellow at Penn's Center for Advanced Judaic Studies.

This lecture series was established by the Joseph Meyerhoff Memorial Trusts to honor the generosity and service of Herbert D. and Eleanor Meyerhoff Katz to Penn's History Program and Center for Advanced Judaic Studies.

The program is sponsored by the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, the History Department, the Middle East Center and the Jewish Studies Program.