

*From Persian Empire to Ptolemaic Hegemony:  
Egypt and the Southern Levant during the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BCE*

International Conference of the ERC Project DEMBIB

(<https://www.theologie.hu-berlin.de/en/dembib>)

The DEMBIB project (*From Texts to Literature: Demotic Egyptian Papyri and the Formation of the Hebrew Bible*) places the literary history of the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament in a new context. The discovery of numerous papyri in the Demotic Egyptian script over the past 20 years has provided a body of texts that originated in the immediate historical and geographical vicinity of the literature of ancient "Israel", but which has been largely ignored by Old Testament scholars.

The Berlin-based DEMBIB research team, consisting of demoticists and Old Testament scholars, is the first to combine insights into the origins and literary form of Demotic literature with theories of Old Testament literary history. The comparative approach of the project is based on the observation that both Hebrew and Demotic texts were produced under comparable socio-historical conditions: From the late 6th to the 3rd century BCE, Egypt and ancient "Israel" – the Southern Levant – were equally dominated by foreign rule and international influences, which had a direct impact on the literary elites of the time.

The research project provides new insights into the literary techniques of ancient scribes, who developed their own writing traditions into larger historical works, complex prophecies, and artfully composed wisdom books. This will provide new answers to questions that have been identified as particularly pressing in the study of the literary history of the Old Testament, such as a better understanding of the editing of the books of the Old Testament, clarification of the relationship between literary sources and later versions of texts, and the significance of scriptural scholarship and (temple) schools.

The DEMBIB project, funded by the European Research Council with 2.5 million euros since January 1, 2022, has held several international conferences, including in the fall of 2022 at the Collège de France in Paris on the bicentennial of Jean-François Champollion's decipherment of hieroglyphs, in the fall of 2023 at University College, Oxford, and in the fall of 2024 at Humboldt University, Berlin.

An international conference is planned for May 20-23, 2026, to address one of the fundamental questions of the project: What historical and socio-cultural factors led to the creation of major literary works by literate circles in Egypt and the former Judah, now called "Yehud" or "Judea," in the late Persian and early Ptolemaic periods?

The conference will bring together internationally renowned specialists from eleven countries to discuss the above research question together with the Advisory Board of the ERC project and the project staff. The conference takes place at the *Carl Friedrich von Siemens Foundation*, Munich, close to the historic *Schloss Nymphenburg*.

### Program

#### Thursday, May 21<sup>st</sup>

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|-------------|---|
| 9-9.30 am   | Words of Welcome: Ferdinand Deanini, Munich (C.F. von Siemens Foundation)<br>Introduction: Bernd U. Schipper, Berlin  |
| 9.30-11 am  | Unit 1: <i>Egypt and the Southern Levant under the Persians – Political and Administrative Aspects</i><br>Paper 1: <b>Damien Agut-Larbordère</b> , Paris – einmal am 12.01.2026, auf spätere Mails keine Reaktion<br>Paper 2: <b>Jonathan Böhm</b> , Erlangen |
| 11-11.30 am | Coffee break  |

11.30 am-1 pm	Unit 2: <i>Ptolemaic Rule in Egypt and the Southern Levant – High Priests and Temple Administration</i> Paper 3: Marie-Pierre Chaufray, Paris Paper 4: Christophe Nihan, Münster
1 pm	On-site Lunch
2.30 – 4 pm	Unit 3: <i>The Southern Levant under Ptolemaic Rule – The Zenon Papyri</i> Paper 5: Zsuzsanna Szántó, Debrecen – Nachfrage zum Buchen des Flugtickets am 16.02.2026 Paper 6: Lena Tambs, Helsinki
4 pm	Coffee break
4.30 – 6 pm	Unit 4: <i>Live in a Multicultural Society – Jebud and Egypt under the Ptolemies and Seleucids</i> Paper 7: Csaba La'da, Kent Paper 8: Sylvie Honigman, Tel Aviv
6.30– 8 pm	Dinner (offsite)

### Friday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>

9.30-11 am	Unit 5: <i>Greek Influence in the Southern Levant and Egypt – Archaeological Perspectives</i> Paper 9: Yuval Gadot, Tel Aviv Paper 10: Aneta Scalec, Warsaw
11 – 11.30 am	Coffee break
11.30am –1 pm	Unit 6: <i>Greek Influence and Demotic Literature</i> Paper 11: Friedhelm Hoffmann, Munich Paper 12: Kim Ryholt, Copenhagen
1 pm	On-site Lunch
2.30 – 4 pm	Unit 7: <i>Greek Influence in the Hebrew Bible</i> Paper 13: Konrad Schmid, Zurich Paper 14: Response: Harald Samuel, Tuebingen
4 pm	Coffee break
4.30 – 6 pm	Unit 8: <i>Hellenism – New Perspectives on a Traditional Paradigm</i> Paper 15: Benedikt Eckhardt, Edinburgh Final Discussion
6.30 –8 pm	Dinner (offsite)

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