



*International Conference*  
***Aesthetics of Scripture: Contemporary Approaches to the Bible and Art***

Dekanats-Sitzungszimmer der Katholisch-Theologischen Fakultät  
University of Vienna

**June 8-9, 2026**

organized by the

*Center for the Study of Bible, Culture, and Modernity and the  
Network for European Philosophy and the Jewish Tradition*

in cooperation with the research center at the University of Vienna  
*Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society*

This interdisciplinary conference aims to enter the millennia-long dialogue between biblical narrative and the visual arts. Exploring the practices, products, aesthetics and ethics that emerged in historically wide-ranging contacts between artmaking and Scripture, as artists interpreted and imagined biblical texts, we hope to sharpen our understanding of the Hebrew Bible's enduring influence on visual cultures and how visual cultures have affected biblical exegesis. Bringing together—in Vienna, with its world-renowned art museums and rare books libraries—international scholars of biblical, religious, and Jewish Studies, philosophers of aesthetics, literary critics and art historians, the two-day conference will combine historical and philosophical presentations with object-based discussion in the idea that the material matrices of visual communication profoundly affect the how and why of pictorial representation. Topics include Bible illustrations as foundational objects in the discipline of art history and aesthetics (e.g., Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte); the Bible and biblical exegesis in relation to an “ethics” of the Image, the challenge of modern “biblical” art, the medium-specificity of narrative, and the challenge placed on vision by an invisible God.

**Participants**

**Esther Heinrich:** Einführung

**Richard Cohen:** “Visual Politicization of the Bible in Contemporary Culture.”

**Arthur Cools:** “The Visible and the Invisible in Jacob's Struggle with the Stranger”

**Helmut Jakob Deibl:** “The Discourse of Noah's Ark”

**Amir Eshel:** “Writing the Human: Michal Rovner's WRITINGS (2020) and the Imago Dei.”

**Noam Gal:** “A (Pink) Kid In Its (Pink) Mother's (Pink) Milk”

**Moshe Halbertal:** “Idolatry, Representation and Aesthetics.”

**Joseph Koerner:** “Picturing Shame”

**Vivian Liska:** The Tower of Babel – Kafka and Brueghel

**Alexander Nemerov:** “Masaccio in Two”

**Ilana Pardes:** Caravaggio's *David with the Head of Goliath*: Repentant Kings and Artists

**Gal Ventura:** Vigilant Motherhood and the Afterlife of Biblical Imagery”

**Sigrid Weigel:** Walter Benjamin's reading of the *Viennese Genesis*. The Pathos formula of Guilt, Expressionism, and the Viennese School of Art History