



האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים
الجامعة العبرية في القدس
THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM



The Departmental Colloquium

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The Difficulty of Unforgiving

There is a shared normative intuition that only transgressions that admit punishment can be repaired. Crimes against humanity are in legal terms imprescriptible: there is no time limit on punishment as long as perpetrators live. Yet there is no human-type contrition that could by itself expiate evil deeds even if they are punished, repented, and repaired. Both outcomes of imprescriptibility bring us to the threshold of forgiving the unforgivable. This is why there is nothing wholly secular about unforgiving. Forgetting the past requires no lifelong effort, while forgiving trauma needs an ongoing effort at remembering something as otherwise than it was. If I cannot forgive, why not rather forget the whole thing? Why would the secular age want to keep alive a postsecular excess of unforgiving? If I could induce amnesia, modify my brain proteins that record trauma, why would I want to live with my unforgiving self? Forgetting does not require my whole self for its work; unforgiving consumes the self that one has been. A new self, albeit recognizable in remembering, arises in coming to terms with traumatic past.

The lecture will be in English

November 13, 2018 | 12:30-14:00
Asia-Africa Studies seminar room (5318)