

The Bill and Carol Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry

Emory University

2015-2016 Great Works Seminar



FOUR WHO WENT INTO THE ORCHARD

or REVELATION, RETRIBUTION, PERDITION, ECSTASY AND BLISS: AN EPIC CANVAS

(begins February 2, 2016)

This seminar will take an in-depth look at the Talmudic tale (from Tractate Chagigah 14B) in which Rabbi Akiva and three companions mystically ascend into the Supernal Orchard with disastrous consequences: ben Azzai dies, ben Zoma goes mad, and Aher becomes an apostate. Only Rabbi Akiva enters and departs in peace. We'll examine the history of each man through other stories in the Talmudic and Midrashic literatures about them as a way of understanding the deeper implications of this strange tale.

The seminar will be moderated by Joseph Skibell, Winship Distinguished Research Professor in the Humanities and Professor of English and Creative Writing, and the author of the forthcoming *Six Memos From The Last Millennium: A Novelist Reads The Talmud*. The seminar will meet at **The Fox Center** from **6:30pm to 8:30pm** for **four consecutive Tuesday evening** sessions during the **2016 spring semester: February 2, 9, 16, & 23**. Everyone from the Atlanta community is welcome and invited to join us for this free seminar. For further information and to reserve seating on a "first-come basis," email the Fox Center at foxcenter@emory.edu, or call 404.727.6424.

We are grateful to the National Endowment for the Humanities for its support of this program. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in these seminars do not necessarily reflect those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.