Over the course of more than two millennia, Jewish texts have transitioned from scroll to codex to book, and now to the digital age. Prof. Gary Rendsburg will survey the classical Jewish sources (Bible, Mishnah, Talmud, Siddur, Haggadah, etc.) from before the age of printing, now available on the internet for the public at large to view, read, and study. His lecture will bring this old new world of Hebrew Studies scholarship to the general community in an accessible manner. He will focus both on the contents of the manuscripts (especially when they differ from later printed editions) and the history of these documents, including their preservation in museums and libraries for centuries, along with the move to greater access in the current digital age. To present just one coming attraction: He will discuss various manuscripts of the Passover Haggadah with two, three, four, and even five questions!

Gary A. Rendsburg serves as the Blanche and Irving Laurie Professor of Jewish History in the Department of Jewish Studies at Rutgers University. His teaching and research focus on 'all things ancient Israel' primarily language and literature, though also history and archaeology. His secondary interests include post-biblical Judaism, the Hebrew manuscript tradition, and Jewish life in the Middle Ages. Prof. Rendsburg is the author of seven books and about 180 articles. In addition, he has produced two programs for the Great Courses program, one on “The Book of Genesis” and on “The Dead Sea Scrolls.”

Prof. Rendsburg has visited all the major archaeological sites in Israel, Egypt, and Jordan; plus he has excavated at Tel Dor and Caesarea. He previously taught at Cornell University; and he has served as visiting professor or visiting research fellow at UCLA, Colgate University, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Oxford, the University of Cambridge, the University of Sydney, and the Hebrew University. His most recent book is How the Bible Is Written (Hendrickson, 2019), which pays particular attention to the skilled use of the language to create literature.

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