Yale
DIVINITY SCHOOL
Yale Bible Study

Women in the Bible
The Whore of Babylon

Interpreting the Text:

1. Would Revelation 17–18 be or feel different if the city were personified as masculine? Why or why not?

2. An angel speaks directly to Babylon in Revelation 18:21-24. How does the text feel different when it speaks in second person to "you," the "great whore," rather than in third person about her?
3. Due to the brand on her forehead, the "whore" may be an enslaved person, Dr. Lin suggests. How would the power shift in her story if her sinfulness was imposed upon her rather than chosen by her?

4. We again see the intersection between violence, sex, and femininity. How do these three themes work together in Revelation? How does this woman compare to other ideas personified as women?

5. Think about the many examples of feminine power and oppression we have examined in earlier lessons. How are any of these at play in Revelation 17–18, if at all?

Applying the Text:

1. What is your reaction when reading violent passages of the Bible (defensiveness, anger, indifference)? How might it be helpful? And how might it be harmful?

2. Regarding the violent passages of the Bible such as Revelation 17–18, what responsibilities do biblical scholars have to the text? How is this different, or not, from the responsibilities a pastor or any person of faith has to the text?

3. Dr. Vayntrub recommends that the best we can do with the violent passages of Scripture is to "bear witness" to the darker parts of a text. What does this look like for you? Are there other stories from the Bible that are best encountered this way?