

# AJS PERSPECTIVES

*The Magazine of the Association for Jewish Studies*



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**AJS 38th  
Annual  
Conference**  
December 17-19, 2006  
Manchester Grand Hyatt  
San Diego, California  
(see page 50-51 for details)

FALL 2006

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# FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Colleagues,

This issue of *Perspectives* is largely devoted to Jewish political studies. But what is that? There is no better place to look for an answer to this question than the writings of the late Daniel Elazar, the American-Israeli political scientist who has as much a claim as anyone to be considered the founder of the field. In 1989, in the inaugural issue of the *Jewish Political Studies Review*, he identified it as “the study of Jewish modes of self-government, political perceptions, and exercise of political responsibilities.” He pinpointed the moment of the field’s birth as the date, two decades earlier, when the first bibliographic essay on the subject had been published in the *American Jewish Yearbook*. After enumerating the growth areas in Jewish political studies during the twenty years following that essay’s publication, Elazar declared that the time had come to establish a journal devoted to “further stimulation and dissemination of scholarship in the field, whether empirical research, political thought, or systematic commentary on Jewish public affairs.”

Nearly two decades after Daniel Elazar made these comments in the *Jewish Political Studies Review*, it is curious to note the degree to which this journal, published in Jerusalem, has retained something of a monopoly on the rubric incorporated in its title. A Google search of “Jewish political studies” yields about one thousand hits, all but a few of which point back to it. But this should not be taken as evidence that activity in the field has

been narrowly confined. Jewish political studies is alive and well, however infrequently it goes by that name. Just how extensive a field it can be understood to be depends on how broadly the subjects listed by Elazar are defined. They can perhaps be carefully circumscribed, but they can also be construed in such a way as to encompass a very large percentage of Jewish studies.

In this issue we will not engage in what would undoubtedly prove to be a futile effort to demarcate the precise boundaries of Jewish political studies. We will instead mark out the terrain it covers in a very general way, beginning with a retrospective look at the pioneering project of Daniel Elazar and continuing with a variety of perspectives on some of the most recent ventures in the field. Without making any effort to be comprehensive, we will focus mostly on some of the more ambitious and innovative work being done in Jewish political studies.

The most important endeavors in this area combine empirical and historical research, theoretical inquiries, and an interest in the application of insights derived from the Jewish political tradition to present-day reality in very different ways. As Alan Mittleman observes, Daniel Elazar not only traced the “employments of covenantal ideas both in Jewish political tradition and in the West” but did so as a “political philosopher, concerned about the eternal quest for liberty and order, for power and justice, for Jews and non-Jews alike.” In his ongoing, multivolume collection entitled *The Jewish Political Tradition*, Michael Walzer aspires “to display the tradition in the style of the tradition,” that is, “argumentatively,” and he expresses the hope that the lively argument that he and his colleagues have engendered will “spill over into Israeli and diaspora political life.”

As Daniel Frank points out, some of the more noted contemporary Jewish political theorists “tease out normative considerations from traditional texts” in books that “could in principle be action-guiding.” And the editors of many of the publications sponsored by the Israel Democracy Institute and the Shalem Center (discussed later in this issue by Randy Friedman and myself) certainly intend their work to be of such use.

Today’s practitioners of Jewish political studies are not engaged in an unprecedented activity. But they cannot always obtain reassurance from looking back on their predecessors. A recent publication of the Israel Democracy Institute entitled *Religion and State in Twentieth-century Jewish Thought* (Aviezer Ravitzky, ed., 2005) includes an article by Daniel Marom on “Religion and State in the Thought and Praxis of Ben-Zion Dinur.” Marom’s study of this eminent Jewish historian and sometime Israeli politico discusses at some length his effort more than fifty years ago to integrate the “Jewish political thought” that took shape during the Jews’ centuries of life in exile into the process of drafting a constitution for the new State of Israel. Dinur’s ultimate lack of success in this area, Marom concludes, does not lessen the contemporary relevance of his thinking. But for those who wish to pick up where he left off, it must be discouraging.

Our purpose here, of course, is neither to encourage nor to disparage such people but simply to call attention to their scholarly efforts in a way that will be helpful to our readers, especially if they themselves are engaged in teaching or writing in the area of Jewish political studies. With that end in view, we have concluded this section of the current issue with a guide to pertinent internet



resources. Heidi Lerner's article on this subject includes material directly related to some of the people, institutions, and publications discussed in the previous articles as well as additional information relating to aspects of Jewish political studies that have not received detailed attention in this issue of *Perspectives*.

Not everything in this issue is political. Shiri Goren, Hannah Pressman, and Lara Rabinovitch's account of a graduate student

conference at New York University and Abe Socher's remarks concerning an unforgettable utterance have few political ramifications. The obituaries of three recently departed giants of Judaic studies with which we conclude are focused on their cultural contributions, not their political activities.

Our next issue will deal with questions relating to biography and autobiography. Beyond that, we have few concrete plans. We

welcome your ideas or proposals. So please don't hesitate to contact either Karin Kugel (kkugel@ajs.cjh.org) or me (aarkush@binghamton.edu). We'll listen to criticism, too, and do our best to eliminate any grounds for it.

**Allan Arkush**  
*Binghamton University*

# Make your visit historic.

## OUR MISSION | Preserve, Research, Educate

The Center for Jewish History is home to the American Jewish Historical Society, the American Sephardi Federation, the Leo Baeck Institute, Yeshiva University Museum, and YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. The Center is a venue for research, academic conferences, exhibitions and other cultural and educational events as well as a nexus for scholarly activity and public dialogue. The collections of the five partner organizations constitute one of the most important resources for documentation and exploration of the Jewish experience including scholarship, history, and art.

- The Center's **Lillian Goldman Reading Room** is staffed by librarians from each Partner organization, thus enabling researchers to access all the collections with relative ease.
- The Center's **Genealogical Institute** serves as a clearing-house for researchers seeking information on people and property throughout the Diaspora. Computer terminals and in-house expertise facilitate the searches for all levels of users.
- The **web sites** of the partners and of the Center, linked to one another, offer digitized images of a growing number of collections to a world wide audience.
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*The Association for Jewish Studies wishes to thank the Center for Jewish History and its constituent organizations—the American Jewish Historical Society, the American Sephardi Federation, the Leo Baeck Institute, the Yeshiva University Museum, and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research—for providing the AJS with office space at the Center for Jewish History.*



# FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Colleagues,

Recently I spoke with a rabbi from a mid-sized city who described an endowed lecture delivered by a Jewish studies scholar at a local university. Although the speaker had been informed that the audience would include large numbers of community members, the scholarly tone of the address left most of those present, including the donor and the rabbi, bemused rather than informed. The rabbi was concerned that this failure to communicate to a general audience would deter attendance at subsequent Jewish studies events at this campus and might discourage the donor from further contributions.

This episode touches on some of the ambiguities which many academics focusing on the Jewish experience face in their interactions with the Jewish community. The reality is that many lecture series, academic positions, and programs in Jewish studies are funded by external donors and are dependent in various ways on the good will of local Jewish leaders. Not infrequently, the dissonance between scholarly analysis and public expectations can result in misunderstandings and even rancor. We have not yet been completely successful in communicating that what we do in our classrooms and in our research is not a continuation of the various forms of religious education fostered within the Jewish community. Similarly, although Jewish studies professors frequently explain that there are neither ethnic nor religious prerequisites to study or to teach in our areas of expertise, the larger

Jewish community has been slow to understand that academic Jewish studies is not a wholly Jewish undertaking. Moreover, many North American Jews are hard pressed to differentiate between our academic endeavors and Jewish student service organizations like Hillel.

As AJS increasingly and usefully interacts with a variety of funding sources with a wide range of personal and collective goals, it is crucial that we maintain our identity as a learned society and enunciate our central mission “to promote, maintain, and improve teaching, research, and related endeavors in Jewish studies in colleges, universities, and other institutions of higher learning.” Certainly, Jewish studies courses at the university level can have a positive impact on the intellectual development and identity formation of many Jewish students. However, we must make clear that while this may be a happy by-product of our professional efforts, it is not our guiding objective.

In June 2005, the AJS Board of Directors established an International Cooperation Committee, which is chaired by Berel Lang. This committee is beginning to establish contacts with academic Jewish studies organizations, programs, and scholars abroad and is investigating how North American scholars can best support Jewish studies scholarship elsewhere. Since AJS already has close ties with the World Union for Jewish Studies, which is centered in Israel, the committee will focus on Eastern and Central Europe; it has also been in touch with programs in Australia and South America. One possible outcome of the committee’s ventures might be to encourage North American scholars on sabbatical and traveling through these regions to connect with Jewish studies colleagues and programs and

to lecture on a pro bono basis.

In a related development, AJS has been successful in establishing an Eastern European Travel Grant Fund through generous subsidies from the Lauder Foundation, the Forward Foundation, and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. These funds will subsidize travel expenses and conference attendance in San Diego for several Eastern European colleagues. Fourteen scholars applied for these grants. The four who were selected, all of whose paper proposals underwent the usual vetting process, are from Russia, Hungary, and Poland. I hope you will join me in welcoming these colleagues to our annual meeting and in supporting expansions of such funding in the years to come.

This is my final column as president. It has been a great privilege to serve as an officer of the Association for Jewish Studies for the past seven years. During my four years as vice president for program and my three years as president, I have been fortunate to work with two outstanding executive directors, Aaron Katchen and Rona Sheramy, and their able staffs. My dedicated fellow officers have included David Berger, Arnold Dashefsky, Sara R. Horowitz, Ephraim Kanarfogel, Frances Malino, Deborah Dash Moore, Lawrence H. Schiffman, and Steven J. Zipperstein. Together we have weathered many challenges as AJS moved to higher levels of professional identity and service while also making the transition from Waltham to New York. I offer thanks to all of them and to the many other AJS members who contribute so much to our success as an organization.

**Judith R. Baskin**  
*University of Oregon*

# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear AJS Member,

I am pleased to announce the launch of the new Resources section of the AJS Web site ([www.ajsnet.org/resources.htm](http://www.ajsnet.org/resources.htm)), with several features to support Jewish studies research, teaching, and program development:

## Directory of Programs in Jewish Studies

The directory lists institutions with Jewish studies programs and departments, as well as institutions in the process of developing programs. Information includes: degrees offered (from the certificate through the Ph.D.), a general program description, and contact information. The directory is searchable by state, institutional name, and degree. AJS has compiled a preliminary list of 150 institutions and encourages colleges and universities to add or update their data. This guide is meant to help students identify appropriate institutions for their research interests, as well as provide AJS members with links to programs in the field.

## Directory of Grants and Fellowships

A comprehensive guide to grants and fellowships of interest to Jewish studies scholars, this directory covers funding opportunities for graduate students as well as junior and senior faculty. The data focuses primarily on grants in support of Jewish studies research, although the directory also includes information about a select few general funding agencies (i.e., NEH, ACLS). Funding organizations are also invited to add information about their grants and fellowships.

## Registry of Dissertations in Progress

This registry offers data on the latest research being conducted by graduate students in Jewish studies. Doctoral degree candidates whose thesis proposals have been approved are invited to submit project abstracts and contact information. This registry is meant to keep scholars abreast of the latest research being conducted in the field, as well as to assist search committees in identifying appropriate candidates for academic positions.

## Registry of Visiting Scholars

Scholars who will be on leave for a semester or academic year are invited to submit their contact information and field of research to the Registry of Visiting Scholars. This registry is meant to help scholars remain in contact while on leave, as well as facilitate speaking opportunities for scholars in host communities.

## The Profession

This guide explores professional matters in the field of Jewish studies, with particular emphasis on issues facing advanced graduate students and pretenure scholars. The Profession includes articles on topics such as getting the first book published, non-academic careers for the Jewish studies scholar, and the job interview. Future articles will include the changing shape of Jewish studies, preparing grant and fellowship applications, and the conference abstract.

## Events/Announcements in Jewish Studies

A guide to conferences, seminars, lectures, calls for papers, exhibitions, and other events and announcements of interest to Jewish studies scholars. Institutions and organizations are invited to submit brief descriptions and contact information for events they are sponsoring. This resource aims to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date directory of scholarly meetings and opportunities.

AJS hopes these new Web site features will support our members' research and teaching activities. We appreciate feedback and suggestions for future additions to the Resources section.

## Rona Sheramy

*Association for Jewish Studies*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

The University of Michigan Frankel Center in Judaic Studies and History Department are pleased to announce the joint appointment of **Rachel Neis**, effective September 2007. Professor Neis is a Ph.D. candidate in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University with a specialization in the area of Jewish literature and culture in late antiquity.

**Thomas C. Hubka**, Professor of Architecture from the UW-Milwaukee School of Architecture & Urban Planning, has been recognized for lifetime achievement in the field of vernacular architecture studies. He was given the Henry Glassie Award at the annual Vernacular Architecture Forum meeting and awards banquet in New York City on June 17, 2006.

## **JEWISH AND OTHER IMPERIAL CULTURES IN LATE ANTIQUITY: LITERARY, SOCIAL, AND MATERIAL HISTORIES**

The study of Jewish culture and society in Late Antiquity (approx. 200–750 C.E.) has undergone profound shifts in recent decades. This fellowship year will enable scholars from a wide range of disciplinary and linguistic backgrounds (rabbinic literature, Patristics, Church history, classical literature, the various branches of late Roman history, archaeology and art history, legal studies, history of religions, liturgical and ritual studies, and rhetorical and cultural studies) to assess and explore the state of the field.

The dialogue among scholars in these neighboring fields, while ongoing, remains insufficiently realized. Narratives of late antique Jewish history and culture have not adequately addressed the Roman historical contexts. Conversely, the telling of Roman history has insufficiently mined Jewish evidence and its implications. If Late Antiquity is indeed Judaism's formative period, then a fuller appreciation of this era is of paramount importance.

Project proposals should address questions such as:

How might developments in ancient Mediterranean historiography contribute to our understanding of late antique Jewish society? And how might Jewish data alter longstanding assumptions that underlie late Roman and early Christian histories?

How did the emergence of “religion” as a primary discursive category in this period affect the various communities and movements in the Roman Empire? How does the literature of the period reflect and shape the religious ideologies and identities of these communities? What is the relationship among processes of Rabbinization, Christianization, and the persistence of traditional Graeco-Roman religions?

How did individuals and institutions negotiate their relationship with hegemonic forms of power and knowledge? What impact did specific manifestations of imperial power (both within the Roman world and the Sassanian east) have on late antique Jewish, Christian, or pagan social formations and cultural practices?

Where did authority reside within Jewish social and cultural life? Through which institutions and disciplinary practices was authority produced and reproduced? How does leadership, real and imagined, central and marginalized, take shape in relation to adjacent models?

How should scholars interpret the complex and often contradictory relationship between literary and material evidence for Jewish life from Late Antiquity to the rise of Islam?

The Center invites applications from scholars in the humanities and social sciences at all levels, as well as outstanding graduate students in the final stages of writing their dissertations. Stipend amounts are based on a fellow's academic standing and financial need with a maximum of \$40,000 for the academic year. A contribution also may be made toward travel expenses. The application deadline is **November 15, 2006**. Awards will be announced by February 1, 2007.

Applications are available on our website: [www.cajs.upenn.edu](http://www.cajs.upenn.edu); Or contact: Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, 420 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106. Tel: 215-238-1290; fax: 215-238-1540; email: [allenshe@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:allenshe@sas.upenn.edu)

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# Jewish Political Studies

## A FOUNDING FATHER

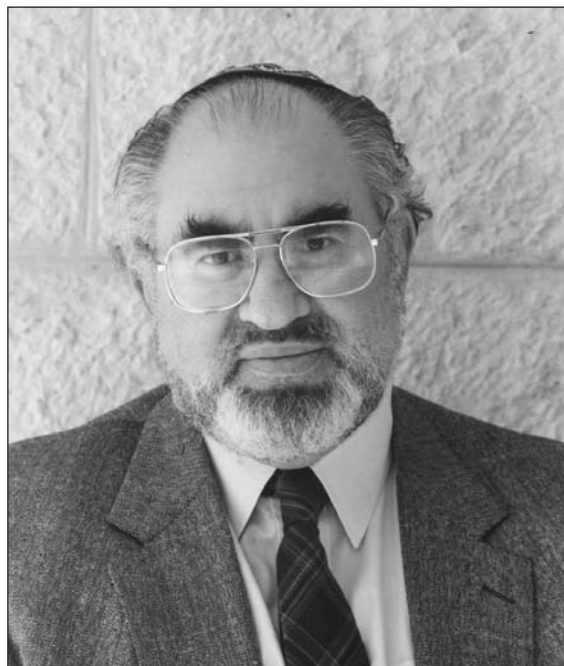
*Alan Mittleman*

Any consideration of Jewish political studies must attend to the work of Daniel J. Elazar (1934–1999). Elazar was a highly accomplished political scientist—one of the leading scholars of federalism in the world—who turned his attention to the political experience, thought, institutions, and culture of the Jewish people. Elazar’s range was immense. As an empirical political scientist, he could study contemporary intergovernmental relations in the cities of the American Midwest, in federal polities such as Switzerland, or in confederal arrangements such as the European Union. As a theorist, he reached back into the wellsprings of Western civilization and traced the career of political ideas and values, such as consent, across the centuries. The interplay of the empirical with the theoretical, of the ancient with the contemporary, typifies his work, especially his work on the Jewish political tradition.

There is another interplay in his work that must also be taken into account. As Jonathan Sarna and other historians have noted, American Jews have been fond of finding connections between the republican elements of the Bible and the constitutional design of the American polity. Elazar participated fully, for the best of scholarly reasons, in this so-called “cult of synthesis.” Elazar’s work on American federalism is closely connected to his reconstruction of

the Jewish political tradition. In both, he found an expression of what the historian of political thought, Quentin Skinner, has called “liberty before liberalism” or of what the Puritans called “federal liberty” and Madison called “republican liberty.” These terms refer to a political system of self-rule and limited government, often under the aegis of shared transcendent values, in which the common good weighs more heavily than ideas of individual good or rights. Rights there are, but rights are coordinated with political obligation and overriding concern for the commonweal. Elazar thought that republicanism was the ideal type of Jewish polity, as well as the ur-type of American government.

Elazar often cited Hamilton in *Federalist*, no. 1 as a key to how the American founders understood the formation of political communities and gauged the possibilities for liberty in a nutshell. “It has been frequently remarked that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force.” Elazar took this



Daniel J. Elazar. Courtesy of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.

text to indicate a threefold model whereby polities come into existence: “reflection and choice,” “accident,” and “force.” Accident here refers to the slow growth of organic institutions evolving and adapting through the vicissitudes of history. Think of the British constitution, as celebrated by Edmund Burke. Force refers to conquest, to the coercive absorption of one society by another. An accidental or natural political society typically has a powerful, historic aristocracy at its center, with real but diminishing power in the concentric rings of the periphery. The polity founded on force is typically a power pyramid, with a point of godlike power at the top and a descending hierarchy of bureaucratic and military castes to govern the masses at the bottom. Only a polity formed of “reflection and choice,” a political society composed of essentially free and

equal agents, is capable of liberty. Elazar saw in the ancient Jewish idea of covenant a profound political expression of federal (from Latin *foedus*, covenant) or republican liberty. He saw covenant as a “theo-political” concept, a way of thinking through the possibility of liberty ordered by transcendence, of freedom under divine law. He did not view covenant primarily as a theological notion or metaphor or symbol but as a form of organization.

Covenant, as a core political concept in biblical and rabbinic Judaism, as well as in Christian experience, had both vertical (“theo-”) and horizontal (“political”) dimensions. The social contract theories of early modern political thought were secularized, that is, purely “horizontal” versions, of Reformed Protestant covenantalism. The constitutional experience of the American colonies leading up to the Founding relied heavily on Reformed Protestant understandings of a proper covenantal political order. Biblically derived covenantalism remains alive to the present in American political ideals and institutions, as well as in Jewish ones. Elazar’s four volume magnum opus, *The Covenant Tradition in Politics*, traces in detail the employments of covenantal ideas both in Jewish political tradition and in the West up to the present day.

A key feature of covenanting is that the initial liberty of the covenanting agents is to be preserved by limited, republican or constitutional-monarchic government. Such government will be characterized by internal pluralism—by power divided against itself. There is no one political center but competing loci of power. A political society

organized along covenantal lines will have a diffusion of authority, as is clearly the case in the U.S., where local control competes with statewide control, which competes with national prerogatives in the complex negotiation of authority

ONE ALSO SEES, BEYOND THE DETAILS OF HIS ANALYSIS OF ANY GIVEN POLITICAL SYSTEM, THE WORK OF A POLITICAL PHILOSOPHER, CONCERNED ABOUT THE ETERNAL QUEST FOR LIBERTY AND ORDER, FOR POWER AND JUSTICE, FOR JEWS AND NON-JEWS ALIKE.

that is American federalism. Elazar contended that Jewish polities in every period, from biblical regime types to contemporary voluntary diaspora communities, exhibited the same mechanism of internal power pluralism. He called this feature of Jewish political culture the “three crowns” (*shalosh ketarim*) after the mishnah in Pirkei Avot, which he understood to be a metaphoric extension of an originally political usage. In his view, all of Jewish political history—which he outlined in his co-authored book, *The Jewish Polity*—could be analyzed in terms of the relative position of competing authorities within the Jewish tradition. The “Crown of Torah” was variously occupied by prophets, sages, and rabbis. The “Crown of Kingship” was held by actual kings, by ethnarchs and *roshei golah*, by medieval *parnasim* and by contemporary “civil servants” in federations, communal agencies, etc. The “Crown of Priesthood” became diminished after the destruction of the Second Temple, but religious functionaries, such as cantors and, in their purely ritual dimensions, rabbis, continue to represent this *keter*.

This feature of Elazar’s approach has been criticized as overly

mechanical. His postulation of an ongoing Jewish political tradition characterized by covenant and internal pluralism has also been attacked as insufficiently empirical and essentialist. Nonetheless, one must appreciate Elazar’s attempt to bring the tools of comparative political analysis to the Jewish experience. One also sees, beyond the details of his analysis of any given political system, the work of a political philosopher,

concerned about the eternal quest for liberty and order, for power and justice, for Jews and non-Jews alike.

*Alan Mittleman is Director of the Louis Finkelstein Institute for Religious and Social Studies and Professor of Jewish Philosophy at the Jewish Theological Seminary.*

## AJS 38th Annual Conference

December 17-19, 2006

Manchester Grand Hyatt  
San Diego, California

**Deadline for  
meal reservations,  
pre-conference reduced  
registration fee,  
and hotel reservations:  
November 15, 2006.**

*(see page 50-51 for details)*

# INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL WALZER

Michah Gottlieb

A member of the faculty at the Institute for Advanced Studies since 1980, Michael Walzer is one of the world's most distinguished political theorists. His publications include *Obligations: Essays on Disobedience, War and Citizenship* (1970), *Just and Unjust Wars* (1977), *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (1983), *Exodus and Revolution* (1985), *On Toleration* (1997), *Arguing about War* (2004), and *Politics and Passion* (2005). He is currently engaged, together with co-editors Menachem Lorberbaum, Noam Zohar, Yair Loberbaum, and Ari Ackerman, in the publication of a four-volume compendium of traditional texts and contemporary commentaries entitled, *The Jewish Political Tradition* (Yale University Press, 2000–).

*Is there a field of Jewish political studies and, if so, what is it?*

**Michael Walzer:** Well, yes, of course there is such a field, just as there is a field of Chinese politics or of French politics. It is also true that these fields could be broken up: you could study Chinese political history in a history department and, say, Confucian political theory in a political science or philosophy department. You could separate Jewish history from the political thought of Maimonides; you could study halakah in a law school. But interesting things happen when you bring people with these separable interests together. What are the central themes that might be addressed, that are in fact beginning to be addressed, in the field of Jewish politics?

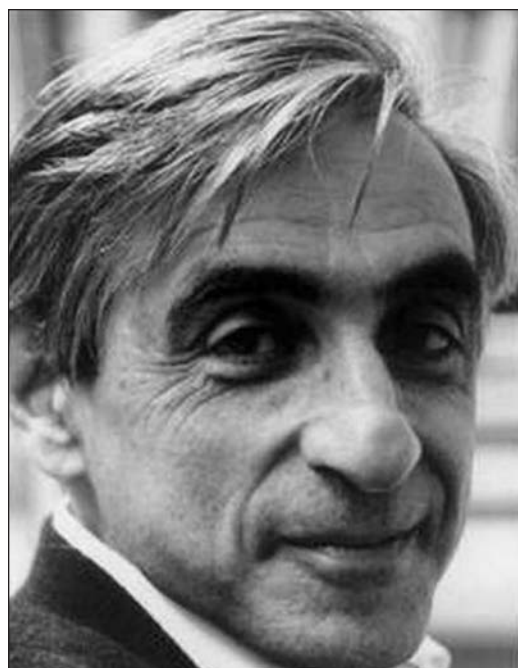
There is first the issue of religion and politics: how much room is

available in a religious civilization such as Judaism for political action? How much autonomy do

political actors have? Obviously, this is a question that arises also in Christian politics, but the Jewish answers are interestingly different from, as well as similar to, the Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox answers. A related question is the extent to which politics as a form of human coping can be valued in a religious context where God is “a man of war,” and a king, and a redeemer—and where men and women who act independently in the political world (as the Zionists did), without divine authorization, can be criticized as faithless, idolatrous, or heretical.

The second major issue is the meaning of exile—and its consequences: how did the Jews sustain a common life and a common legal system without sovereignty or territory? And how did they come to understand this achievement? Indeed, it may well be true that the exilic focus is what most specifically defines Jewish political studies. The first and second commonwealths can easily be treated within the comparative politics of the ancient world (although as Henri Frankfort long ago noted, the Jewish view of kingship was unique among the ancients), and the modern state can (more easily?) be treated within the comparative politics of the Middle East or of the modern state system. These polities are, perhaps, most interesting when we consider them as they were remembered or imagined in the years of statelessness.

*How does your work in Jewish political studies relate to your other research? Has your work in Jewish*



Michael Walzer. Courtesy of the Institute for Advanced Study.

*political studies impacted your thinking about more general issues in political science?*

**Walzer:** Sometimes I think that my work on the Jewish political tradition project is just an effort to escape from the seemingly endless business of studying John Locke's *Second Treatise* yet again, or reading another monograph on that undoubtedly important work, or teaching it or lecturing on it for the twenty-seventh time . . . Or on Rousseau, or on Mill . . . The canon can get tiresome, even though I am not particularly interested in subverting it. So, consider Jewish politics as a form of escapism for aging political theorists. On the other hand, I have always been engaged by the condition of the Jews: it is a form, after all, of self-knowledge. And all my writing about group attachment, cultural pluralism, and the different “regimes of toleration” is, whatever else it is, an effort to develop and defend a picture of the political world that makes room for us—specifically, for a stateless people. But when I first began writing about those questions, I took “us” for granted, without knowing much about the history of Jewish statelessness or about the arguments that have gone



on within the different Jewries of the exile. My work on the Jewish political tradition is an effort to understand the specific features of this people, which is my own people: who rules (and who has ruled) in the Jewish community? How were (and are) its boundaries determined? What was (and is) the character of its institutional life? How have we (how do we) understand our place in world history and in the society of nations?

Engaged with these questions, I have also become increasingly interested in what might be called “the Jewish question for Jews”—which has to do with the meaning of our membership in what is simultaneously a people or a nation and a religious community. Can we distinguish these two and choose only one of them? Certainly the Jewish world is defined primarily in religious terms—and yet disbelief and selective belief have played a major part in its history, and today a very large number of Jews are not believers at all. Is there a secular Jewishness? Well, secular Jews have been the major political actors in recent Jewish history, but it isn’t clear that they have succeeded in producing a sustainable culture. I identify strongly with their efforts, but at the same time I believe that a full-scale engagement with the Jewish tradition is necessary to any reconstruction of our common life. The Zionist project of negating the exile was both understandable and wrongheaded. I now think of my own work on the tradition as an effort to make the case for criticism and appropriation rather than negation. And I have begun to write about this as a general problem, which arises also in Hinduism and Islam, for example, where secular nationalists attacking the religious traditions of their own people have produced a militant religious revivalism, which has some similarities to messianic Zionism and religious nationalism in Israel.

*What drew you to work in this field?*

**Walzer:** I partly answered this question in responding to the second question above. But I would add a word about the importance of life cycle celebrations, especially the bar and bat mitzvah, and of teachers. My bar mitzvah portion, *Ki Tissa*, included the story of the golden calf, the smashing of the tablets, and the killing of the idol worshippers by Moses and the Levites. I studied the portion with a wonderful rabbi and teacher, Chaim Perelmutter, worried about it and argued about it with him. At first I did not want to read the section that began: “Take every man his sword . . .” I did read it, but never stopped arguing about it, and the eventual result was my first book on a Jewish theme: *Exodus and Revolution*. Given the academic division of fields and my place in it, this book was an act of trespass. But Moshe Greenberg, a great biblical scholar, read the first draft of the book and encouraged me to keep working on it; he sat with me in Jerusalem and continued the arguments that I began at age thirteen. And another extraordinary teacher, David Hartman, welcomed me into the intellectual community that he has created in Israel, where it is a cardinal principle that trespass is not a sin (so long as it is serious). Edmund Burke says somewhere that if people are to love their state, the state has to be lovely. The same thing is true of a field of study, and the crucial attraction can only be the people who are already there.

*How do descriptive and normative concerns fit together in your work in this field?*

**Walzer:** It is the glory of political theory as an academic field that these categories and all the arguments about facts and values are largely irrelevant to the work we do. Political theorists are not objective scholars; we are allowed to have and to express opinions; we just have to

be a little systematic (some of us are more so, some less) in defending our opinions and giving our reasons. The history of political theory is a descriptive discipline, though even this history is commonly written to advance a particular view of contemporary politics. But an actual theory, of distributive justice, say, is simply an argument about how social goods ought, and ought not, to be distributed: who should get what? It is normative from the beginning, and any descriptive elements that it includes serve the normative goals. So, by collecting texts and writing commentaries, we are in some sense describing the Jewish political tradition, but we are also constructing it in a certain way and then engaging with it in a certain way—a mix of appreciation and criticism. The mix is different for the different contributors to the project, but all of us share a commitment to this constructive work and to this mode of engagement.

*What impact do you see your work in this field as currently having, and what do you hope its impact will be in the future? Is Jewish political studies primarily an academic pursuit or is it also supposed to affect contemporary politics? If the latter, is it supposed to impact Jewish politics alone (in Israel? in the diaspora?) or it also to be of interest to other societies/communities?*

**Walzer:** The work I am now doing on Jewish politics is collaborative work; I could not do it myself. Still, I will answer these questions from my own perspective. My collaborators probably have somewhat different, though not entirely different, views about the impact they hope to have in the academy and the political arena. I hope that the four volumes of *The Jewish Political Tradition* (two are out, two more are in the works) will challenge the claim of orthodox Jews to have a monopoly on the

tradition—to be its true owners and authoritative expounders. I want all the texts that we have collected to become (what the Sinai story implies) a common possession. And then I want this possession, these texts, religious and secular, sacred and profane, to be recognized as objects of critical reflection, all of them subject to the same scrutiny, the same questioning. That's why in our volumes the texts are accompanied by commentaries—so that readers are shown how the scrutiny and the questioning should proceed. We are displaying the tradition in the style of the tradition, and that style is argumentative. We asked our commentators, and we ask our readers, to join the argument. The impact we hope for—here I can speak for all of us—is an open, lively, ongoing argument.

The more open and lively the argument is the more likely it is to spill over into Israeli and diaspora political life. Religion is a driving force in contemporary politics, and it is often a dogmatic, authoritarian,

and apocalyptic force. The state of mind that our volumes are (in my view) designed to encourage is a state of mind compatible with liberal, pluralist, and democratic politics. The texts themselves, obviously, don't all fit that model—most of them don't—and our commentators range across the political spectrum. But the argumentative style does fit the model. Jews who break with the tradition have long had an elective affinity with liberalism. I hope to find that affinity again in an engagement with the tradition.

Finally, all of us hope that these books will be of interest to political theorists and historians generally. Some of the writers that we include are already being studied outside the Jewish world—Maimonides, Spinoza, and Mendelssohn are the obvious examples. But there are also issues that arise and debates that have gone on within the Jewish world that should be of wider interest, and our volumes are organized to highlight some of these

and to make them available to people with no special Jewish knowledge. I will mention just one example. In an age when there is so much discussion (much of it premature in my view) about the end of sovereignty and the decline of the nation-state, the Jewish experience of statelessness takes on a new importance. We have a lot to tell non-Jews about the advantages and a lot more to tell them about the disadvantages of not having a state. There is also much to be learned from the institutions that we created and sustained without a territorial base and without sovereign power. Whether there will be people eager to learn—that I don't know, but if Jews engage with the tradition in a newly open and undogmatic way, other people may take notice.

*Michah Gottlieb is Assistant Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University.*

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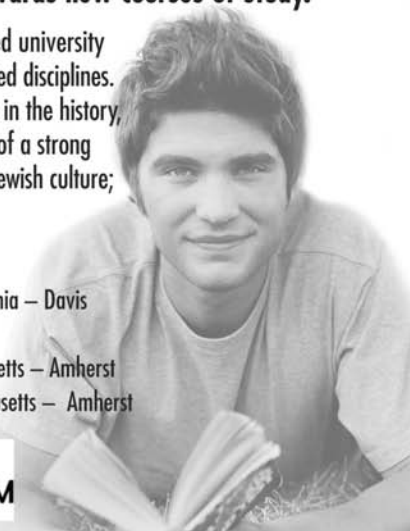
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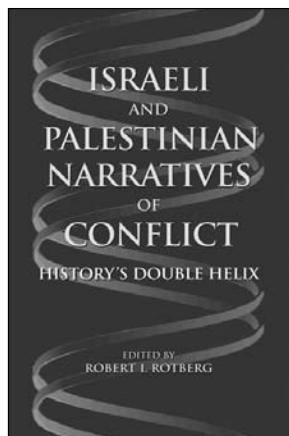


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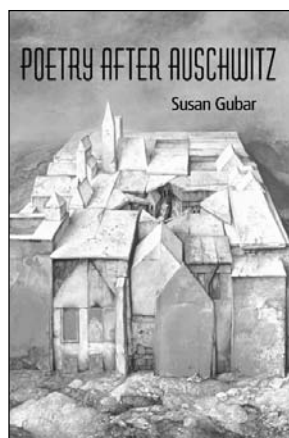
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# CONTEMPORARY JEWISH POLITICAL THEORY

Daniel Frank

Jewish political theorizing is hard to delineate, since whatever reflections are forthcoming about the Jewish community almost by definition fall under this rubric. Reflections about life and death (and communal practices of entering and exiting the community), intermarriage, and the rights of the *agunah* are certainly aspects of Jewish political theory. Yet such first-order policy oriented discussions are probably not the kind of musings that first come to mind in connection with a brief discussion of contemporary Jewish political theory. If one ascends, instead, to a more general, metatheoretical level, where debates focus on justice, rights, deserts, the aims of law, and the trajectories and intersections of the secular and the sacred, I suspect the student of Jewish political theory and political philosophy will find himself or herself on more familiar turf. There the student or practitioner of Jewish political theory joins hands with the tradition of political theorizing since Plato. Indeed, the issues debated by Jewish political theorists are part of general political theorizing.

Plato, on account of the medieval Islamic influence on Maimonides, was historically far more influential than Aristotle or Cicero on Jewish political philosophy, and the student of Jewish political philosophy will consequently note that normative issues relating to how things should or ought to be are often embedded in seemingly descriptive accounts. Plato's discussion of human nature is not "flat," but the grounds for a program of political reform. And the same is true for Rambam, and

for Spinoza as well. Political anthropology underwrites political reform, and it is most difficult to demarcate crisply between normative and descriptive studies in Jewish political

philosophy. Recent books by Lenn Goodman (*On Justice: An Essay in Jewish Philosophy*, 1991), Menachem Kellner (*Must a Jew Believe Anything?* 1999 [2nd edition, 2006]), David Hartman (*A Living Covenant: The Innovative Spirit in Traditional Judaism*, 1998), and David Novak (*Covenantal Rights*, 2000), however much they differ from each other, tease out normative considerations from traditional texts, and in this way these political philosophical texts could in principle be action-guiding. These books are among the most important contributions by contemporary theorists, reflecting in many ways the influence of recent Anglo-American political theory. John Rawls and Alasdair MacIntyre, as well as other thinkers writing out of the natural law tradition, are the interlocutors of thinkers who take their bearings from the Jewish political tradition in debates over justice and deserts, the nature of contractual obligation, relevant distinctions between contract and covenant, and the trajectory of positive law.

Contemporary Jewish political theory can also be understood to encompass recent work of a historical nature. I included chapters on medieval political philosophy in *History of Jewish Philosophy* (1997, 2003) and in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (2003), and their authors, Abraham Melamed and Menachem Lorberbaum, have written at greater length on historical subjects (Melamed, *Philosopher-King in Medieval and Renaissance Jewish Political Thought*, 2003;



Baruch Spinoza. Photograph by Sophus Williams of painting(?) by E. Hader, 1884. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, www.loc.gov.

Lorberbaum, *Politics and the Limits of Law: Secularizing the Political in Medieval Jewish Thought*, 2001). It should perhaps be noted that Lorberbaum, a coeditor of the multivolume *The Jewish Political Tradition* (2000–) discussed elsewhere in this issue, is connected with the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. Founded by David Hartman in 1976, this modern Orthodox think tank has been the engine of much innovative political policy in Israel and a catalyst for political theorizing of the highest order. The editors of *Hebraic Political Studies*, discussed in some detail elsewhere in this issue, are explicit about their journal's focus on "recovering the Hebraic political tradition and evaluating its place in the history of political thought." They view the Hebraic political tradition as "distinct" from others, and occluded on account of the secularizing tendencies of the Enlightenment. It remains to be seen how distinct the Hebraic political tradition really is from other so-called Western political traditions, and it should also be noted that the Enlightenment itself

is increasingly reconceived as abetting a religious vision of its own.

A signal moment in contemporary Jewish political theory is the plethora of recent work on Spinoza and his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (*TTP*). Published anonymously in 1670, it is a foundational text for political liberalism and the separation of Church and State. It is read as a strong critique of traditional Judaism and a vindication of the freedom of the individual to think as he or she wishes. Steven Smith in *Spinoza, Liberalism, and the Question of Jewish Identity* (1997) takes the *TTP* to be less a critique of a historical religion than a meditation on the identity of modern man, caught between tradition and history. Spinoza addressed the “Jewish Question” long before Marx’s *Zur Judenfrage*, and some of the most provocative work in contemporary Jewish political theory turns out to be work on issues put forth by Spinoza. Spinoza has been read as a proto-Zionist by those who see in his work a stinging negation of Diaspora history and its communal traditions and belief in divine redemption. Even a work such as J. Samuel Preus’s *Spinoza and the Irrelevance of Biblical Authority* (2001) is not without clear political implications arising from Spinoza’s radical biblical hermeneutics. Such political readings of Spinoza serve to redefine a whole host of traditional subjects such as messianism, prophecy, election, and even religion itself. Of late, important work has been done on Jewish themes in Spinoza by Zev Harvey

and Michael Rosenthal, and there is even a collection edited by Heidi Ravven and Lenn Goodman, *Jewish Themes in Spinoza’s Philosophy* (2002).

Spinoza’s arch-enemy is Maimonides, the greatest of the medieval Jewish thinkers. The late Lawrence Berman emphasized in many articles (for example, “Maimonides, the Disciple of Alfarabi,” *Israel Oriental Studies* [1974]) the Farabian political element in Rambam’s thought. One major point here is his indebtedness, via Farabi, to Plato and the latter’s notion of the

THE DEBATE BETWEEN MAIMONIDES AND SPINOZA CAN BE SEEN, THEN, AS NOT JUST ONE BETWEEN RELIGIOUS AND NON-RELIGIOUS THINKERS, BUT ALSO AS A POLITICAL DEBATE BETWEEN A GREEK-INSPIRED METAPHYSICALLY-GROUNDED POLITICS AND A HOBBSIAN-INSPIRED POLITICS GROUNDED IN A CONTRACT WITHOUT DIVINE (OR METAPHYSICAL) SANCTION.

philosopher-king for his very own understanding of prophecy. The prophet (Moses) is a philosopher-king, wedding metaphysical insight with political power. Abraham Melamed has contributed a learned treatise, mentioned previously, on the history of the notion of the philosopher-king in Jewish political thought. This turns out to be part of a longer story about the tension within Jewish political theorizing between democratic and non- (even anti-) democratic elements. The debate between Maimonides and Spinoza can be seen, then, as not just one between religious and non-religious thinkers, but also as a political debate between a Greek-inspired metaphysically-grounded politics and a Hobbesian-inspired politics grounded in a contract

without divine (or metaphysical) sanction.

What can be said in conclusion about the general state of contemporary Jewish political thought? It is alive and well at the beginning of the new millennium. Nonhistorical studies reflect a healthy awareness of general (non-Jewish) work in the field, and one hopes that this will remain the case. If I must hazard a guess, I would say that normative work in Jewish political thought will continue to refine a political theology that makes ample room for a principled pluralism. Recent work on “liberal”

versions of virtue theory and “perfectionist” accounts of political morality by, among others, William Galston, Joseph Raz, and George Sher, as well as innovative work on the republican tradition by Phillip Pettit and Quentin Skinner might be useful for Jewish political theorizing, for it

allows one to incorporate a healthy sense of community (and peoplehood) while also making room for notions of freedom and autonomy so prized in discussions of political liberalism. And finally, historical work is also showing signs of increasing awareness of external (non-Jewish) influences on Jewish political thinkers. This is not to be resisted, but welcomed as a sure sign that Jewish political thought and Jewish political thinkers, working on problems that define them as such, are part of a grand tradition of political theorizing.

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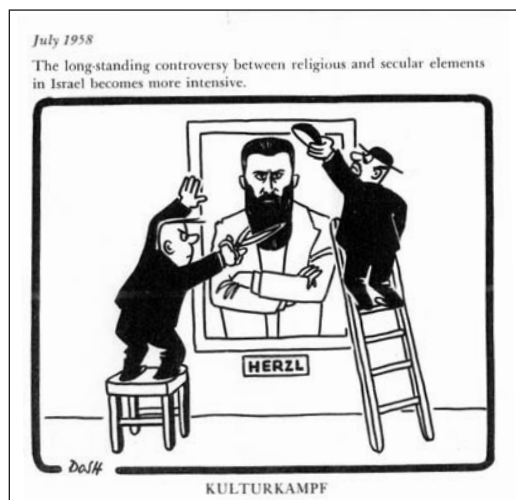
# THE ISRAEL DEMOCRACY INSTITUTE: PURSUING DEMOCRACY IN “THE JEWISH STATE”

Randy L. Friedman

In his review of *National Security and Democracy in Israel* (1992), a collection of essays mostly stemming from an Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) conference, Ira Sharkansky reminds us that “there is no obvious explanation for Israel’s democracy. Most of the population came from societies of central and eastern Europe or the Middle East where democracy was weakly established if it existed at all.” Add to this poor economic conditions and cycles of violence and war, and Israeli democracy is quite impressive, he concludes. It “says much of significance about the politics of a country that is often wracked by issues demanding immediate decisions that [it remains] sensitive both to the nuances of democracy and to the ugliness of violence.” The conflict between security and democracy is one of many issues pursued through research and conferences at IDI, or by politicians, academics, economists, diplomats, or religious figures affiliated in one way or another with the Institute. In fact, one would be hard-pressed to find a leading political scientist in Israel who has not or is not currently involved with IDI. The main goals of IDI, listed on the English version of its homepage, are: “to promote structural, political, and economic reforms; to be a source of information and comparative research for the Knesset and government authorities; to serve as an advisory body for decision-makers and the general public; and

to promote public discourse about issues on the national agenda.”

The range of books, papers, and studies published by IDI now covers almost every possible topic of concern in an emerging democracy, as well as issues specific to life and government in Israel (disengagement, creation of a constitution). Series include *The Army and Society* (such as *The*



Reprinted from *To Israel, with love*, by Dosh [pseud.]. New York, T. Yoseloff, c1960.

*Israel Defense Forces and The National Economy of Israel* [2004], *Morality, Ethics and Law in Wartime* [2003]; Policy Papers (such as *On the Role of Jewish Law in Matters of Religion and State* [2004], *Inequality and Poverty in Israel* [2002]); The Annual Economic Conference (such as *Economic Challenges Facing Israel in the New Millennium* [2000]); The Public Council (such as *Anchoring Civil Rights in the Constitution* [2003]); and many others. Books and papers appear mostly in Hebrew, though some titles (and

many abstracts) are available in English. IDI occasionally publishes Hebrew translations of relevant English texts (e.g., Robert A. Dahl’s *On Democracy* [2002]).

In a piece in *Israel Affairs* (7.4, 2001) on the history and function of IDI, founder and President Aryeh Carmon describes his participation in negotiations among six members each of Likud and Labor that produced the 1997 Beilin-Eitan “Document of the National Agreement on the Principles of the Permanent Settlement with the Palestinians.” He wonders whether his involvement was “natural.” Was there a line crossed that goes beyond an effort to provide the most reliable professional help to decision-makers? When does the work of policy think tanks cross the boundaries of professional research?” He asks a similar question of IDI’s involvement in a broad-based discussion of secular-religious relations including members of IDF, jurists, clergy, and academics. “Does involvement in a profound social-religious conflict as an active agent of change alter the role of a public policy think tank?”

Not surprisingly, Carmon concludes that active engagement in policy formulation (and reform) as well as outreach to the politically sophisticated Israeli public (through forums and publications) are responsible for IDI’s success. Two projects in particular represent the approach and interest of IDI: “constitution by consensus” and a secular-religious dialogue now known as “Gavison-Medan.”

One of the central objectives of IDI has been to foster the creation of a written constitution for the State of Israel. The project “Constitution by Consensus” (occasionally described as “constitution by broad consensus”) includes the development of an education curriculum entitled “Kids in Search



of Common Ground: the Education System Writes a Constitution” and the organization of numerous conferences to address the various aspects of constitution building. IDI lists a series of political-social problems that it hopes to address in and through the process of developing a constitution, including what it sees as a still unclear “collective identity, and the relationship between Judaism, nationalism, and democracy.” IDI has been concerned that ideological (and religious) rifts in Israeli society threaten to tear apart the country’s developing democratic culture, and, indeed, the democratic system itself. Corollary projects have included studies and reform of Israel’s electoral system, and the pursuit of structural changes in the legislative and executive branches of government.

Secular-religious relations are also the focus of the Gavison-Medan Covenant (“a comprehensive proposal for dealing with issues of religion and state in Israel”) worked out under the auspices of the Shalom Hartman Institute and the Rabin Center with support from IDI (which published the Covenant). The goal of the Covenant is “the creation of a public and educational climate, underlying which is the notion that our commonalities must prevail over our differences. Recognition of this fact will enable the creation of an operative framework for devising solutions, and discourage a particular side from forcing defeat on the other.” The main work involved a lengthy series of dialogues between Professor Ruth Gavison, the Haim Cohn Chair of Human Rights in the Law in the Law Faculty of the Hebrew University, and Rabbi Ya’acov Medan, who teaches at the Har Etzion Yeshiva and the Ya’acov Herzog College in Alon Shevut. The discussions required three categories of inquiry: “legal-civic, theoretical-universal,

and theological-halakhic.” The Covenant, written under the supervision of Gavison and Medan runs more than 100 pages, and covers, among other issues, the Law of Return, “personal status” (marriage and divorce), religious dietary laws, burial, and national service.



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IDI has received a certain amount of criticism. In an article entitled “Jewish and Democratic? The Price of a National Self-Deception” that appeared in the *Journal of Palestinian Studies* (Winter 2006), Nadim M. Rouhana specifically addresses the project of creating a constitution for Israel. She concludes that “to be effective, voices that reject the ‘Jewish and democratic’ campaign must be consistent and unwavering; they must be assertive in their demand for the state’s transformation from an ethno-religious Jewish state (whether it defines itself as democratic or not) to a genuinely, and therefore obviously, de-Zionized, state (whether with a Jewish majority or not).” Rouhana directly criticizes the approach of IDI, accusing it of defining “consensus” as “Jewish consensus,” since Israel’s Arab citizens, though comprising more than 16 percent of the population, have been left out of the constitutional debates. IDI, which has lately played a leading role

in the constitutional movement, embodies this exclusion. Though sometimes it does invite Arabs to its conferences and activities, Rouhana says, “they are essentially used to provide cover for the effort to consolidate a Jewish consensus on Israel’s ‘Jewish and democratic’ claim.” In a footnote to this claim,

Rouhana adds “this charge about the IDI cannot be made lightly. Obviously it requires some investigation into IDI’s constitutional activities and the role it assigns to Arab participants.” She points to her own “‘Constitution by Consensus’: By Whose Consensus?” *Adalah Newsletter* 7 (November 2004), and “The Jewish Institute for Ethnic Democracy: A Response to the Israel Democracy Institute (IDI),” *Adalah Newsletter* 9 (January 2005). Amir Avramovitz, the General Director of “Constitution by Consensus” at IDI, has responded to Rouhana (“Constitution by Consensus, Including, Certainly, the Consensus of the Arab Minority in Israel” in *Adalah Newsletter* 8 [December 2004]), by reiterating the broadly inclusive goals of the project and rejecting Rouhana’s claim that Arab participation in the process served as a “fig leaf” for the majority Jewish participants.

The challenges facing IDI are the same challenges that face Israel as a whole, a collective fraught with inter- and intraethnic and religious tensions and conflict. Through its many conferences, publications, and research, IDI engages these tensions, and continues to work at the development of Israeli democratic culture.

*Randy Friedman is Visiting Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Judaic Studies at Binghamton University.*



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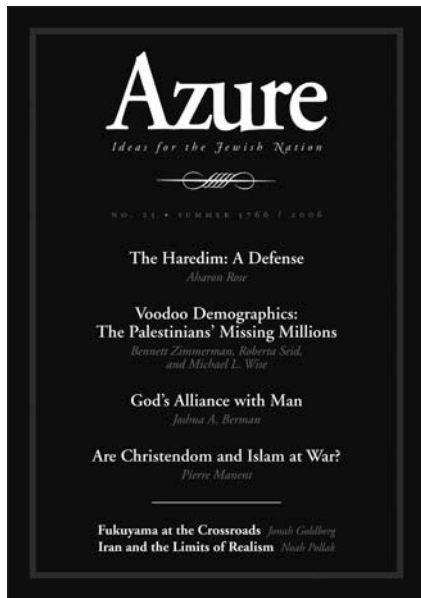
# FROM “AZURE” TO “HEBRAIC POLITICAL STUDIES”

Allan Arkush

The Jerusalem-based but by no means exclusively Israeli Shalem Center calls itself “a research institute dedicated to Jewish and Israeli social thought and policy.”

Outside observers commonly describe it as a “neoconservative think tank” funded by wealthy Americans and devoted to providing the Israeli right with more solid intellectual grounding. In carrying out its mission, the Center, however one chooses to characterize it,

has for ten years been publishing *Azure*, a quarterly that focuses on what its subtitle refers to as “Ideas for the Jewish Nation.” Since its inception this journal has been engaged in a “comprehensive attempt at understanding the basic concepts and values which have caused” what its editors perceive to be the current “crisis in Jewish nationalism.” It has been concerned not only with interpreting the world but with changing it as well. In their very first issue *Azure’s* editors announced their intention “to seek out and consolidate a new common denominator among Jews who still believe in the Jewish state.” They aimed “to form a new consensus capable of refashioning our national goals.”



Courtesy of the Shalem Center

“an international peer-reviewed journal.” This journal seeks above all to recover “the Hebraic political tradition” developed through the ages “by Jewish, Christian, and Islamic thinkers—rabbis, theologians, scholars, and statesmen—who drew ideas with political import from the Hebrew Bible, and who interacted with each other and with the philosophical traditions they

encountered.” The editors of *Hebraic Political Studies* articulate no broader aim than evaluating the place of this tradition in “political history and the history of political thought” in general.

A comparison of the very pronounced political goals of the older publication with the emphatically academic character of the newer one might seem to indicate that the latter is more deserving of attention in our survey of the field of Jewish political

studies. But the difference between these two journals is not as clear-cut as the manifestos of their (entirely different) editors might seem to suggest. *Hebraic Political Studies* has already published in its very short lifetime articles that resemble others that have appeared in *Azure*, including a piece by Shalem Center founder and frequent *Azure* contributor Yoram Hazony entitled “Does the Bible have a Political Teaching?” And *Azure* has published articles that could easily be imagined in the pages of *Hebraic Political Studies*, such as Joseph Dan’s “Jewish Sovereignty as a Theological Problem” and Yosef Yitzhak Lifshitz’s “Foundations of a Jewish Economic Theory.”

In fact, the article that seems to have served as the inspiration for the creation of *Hebraic Political Studies*, Fania Oz-Salzberger’s “The Jewish Roots of the Modern Republic,” originally appeared in

*Azure* in 2002. In this essay Oz-Salzberger, who teaches modern history at the University of Haifa, maintains that “the story of political Hebraism, the sustained effort to read the Bible politically during the seventeenth century, is one of the most exciting chapters in the history of political thought.” If it is now little known,

the fault basically lies with the influential Enlightenment *philosophes* who “no longer needed the Old Testament and the republic of the Hebrews” in order to formulate their political theories. Observing the manifest weaknesses of the “thin liberalism” to which these theories ultimately gave rise, however, Oz-Salzberger calls for a re-examination



Courtesy of the Shalem Center

of the texts rendered almost obsolete by the *philosophes*. Her point is “not to glory in whatever Jewish chromosomes may be found in the genome of Western political thought.” It is “to consider and reconsider which parts of these sources, and of the inspiration they offered to European theorists of liberty, might be of value to us today.”

By “us” Oz-Salzberger means not only Israelis or Jews but everyone who feels that the “gamble on the part of post-Enlightenment liberalism did not pay off . . .” She invites all such people to “return to the great laboratory of the seventeenth century” for reorientation. If “we look again,” she concludes, “to the ancient Hebrew republic for inspiration . . . we may yet restore the questions of human nature, communal responsibility, and the deliberate actions of the individual into the heart of our own political discourse.”

In her endnotes, Oz-Salzberger extends her gratitude to Yoram Hazony, the founder of the Shalem Center, for his “deep interest” in her work. And it is indeed easy to see how Hazony might regard it as a very promising tool for developing ideas for the Jewish nation that could help it to refashion its goals. Inspired by Oz-Salzberger, he brought together his dissertation adviser at Rutgers, Gordon Schochet, who is a specialist in seventeenth-century political thought, and the Dutch expert on Grotius, Arthur Eyffinger, to edit *Hebraic Political Studies*. The statement of their intentions in the journal’s first issue devotes a great deal of attention to the

seventeenth-century laboratory that is of such importance to Oz-Salzberger but, as we have already seen, it goes considerably beyond it, emphasizing the productive role of the Hebraic political tradition from antiquity to the present. In seeking an explanation for recent

DESPITE ITS ORIGINS, “HEBRAIC POLITICAL STUDIES”  
MAY TURN OUT TO BE A JOURNAL OF MORE INTEREST TO  
STUDENTS OF FORGOTTEN CORNERS OF MODERN  
INTELLECTUAL HISTORY THAN TO PEOPLE WHO ASPIRE TO  
REVITALIZE LIBERALISM IN ISRAEL IN PARTICULAR OR IN  
THE WESTERN WORLD IN GENERAL.

indifference to the Hebraic tradition in political thought, they do not identify specific culprits but are prepared only to assert that it is “perhaps due to a persistent and self-consciously secular Enlightenment heritage . . .” And they conclude their opening statement not with an expression of hope that contemporary political discourse can be transformed but with nothing more than a wish “that *Hebraic Political Studies* will help initiate a new field of scholarship . . .” In this connection it is worth noting that this journal appears only in English and not, like *Azure*, in a simultaneous and identical Hebrew version.

Not surprisingly, most of the articles in each of the first three issues of *Hebraic Political Studies* are devoted to seventeenth-century topics. One, Warren Zev Harvey’s “The Israelite Kingdom of God in Hobbes’ Political Thought,” is a translation of a piece that first appeared in *Iyyun* twenty-five years earlier. Many are expanded versions of papers initially given at a conference on “Political Hebraism: Judaic Sources in Early Modern Political Thought” held at the Shalem Center in 2004. These deal mostly with figures like

Hugo Grotius, Petrus Cunaeus, and John Locke, who were singled out by Oz-Salzberger in her article and Shochet and Eyffinger in their initial editorial statement. The Spring 2006 issue, for instance, includes an article by Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann entitled “Political

Theology in Renaissance Christian Kabbala: Petrus Galatinus and Guillaume Postel.” But each issue also contains at least one article that has an ancient or a very modern theme. The very first issue includes a piece by Steven Grosby on

“The Biblical ‘Nation’ as a Problem for Philosophy,” and the latest issue includes an article by Avinoam Rosenak on “Law, Halacha, and Education: New Directions in the Philosophy of Halacha.”

After the appearance of its first three issues, it is clear enough that *Hebraic Political Studies* will be as wide ranging as its editors have promised it would be. It also appears clear that the political vision that contributed to its founding will not necessarily find direct expression in its pages. Despite its origins, *Hebraic Political Studies* may turn out to be a journal of more interest to students of forgotten corners of modern intellectual history than to people who aspire to revitalize liberalism in Israel in particular or in the Western world in general. Time will tell.

*Allan Arkush is Professor of Judaic Studies and History at Binghamton University.*

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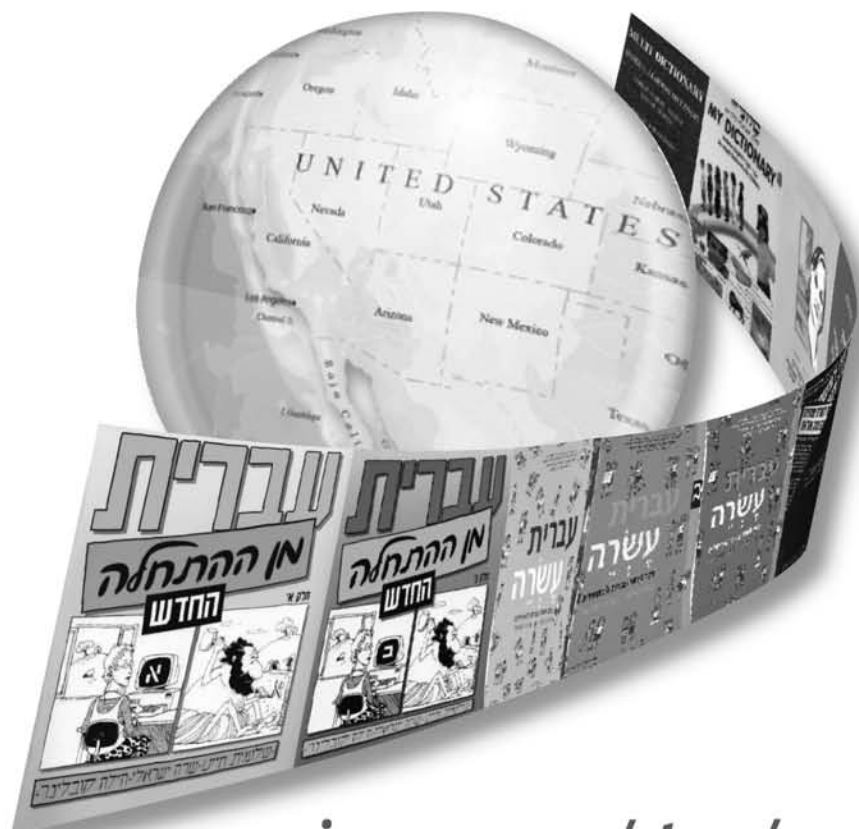


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## JEWISH POLITICAL STUDIES ON THE INTERNET

Heidi Lerner

This column reviews the most useful and reliable Internet-based resources available to scholars and researchers of Jewish political studies to supplement their teaching and assist them in their research. These include political science and Judaic information portals and subject directories, discussions lists, the Web sites for a variety of research centers and other organizational bodies, online indexes and catalogs, full-text books and journals, audiovisual materials and statistical data.

### Gateways

Subject directories (also known variously as gateways or portals) organize Internet sites into subject categories, provide links to the sites and sometimes offer reviews. The quality and currency of these directories are only as good as their creators. The subject directory "Politics: General Israel/Jewish Politics, Israel/Arab Relations" ([pages.videotron.com/jackross/jt-politics.htm](http://pages.videotron.com/jackross/jt-politics.htm)) offers a comprehensive list of Web resources relevant to Jewish Political Studies. It provides links to Web sites on general Israeli and Jewish politics, Israeli elections, and Israel-Arab relations. The Israel Government Gateway ([www.gov.il/firstgov/english](http://www.gov.il/firstgov/english)) provides easy-to-use and quick access to most government agencies and to an array of public affairs documents. (This and all subsequent Web sites were accessed

August 1, 2006, unless otherwise noted.)

### Listservs and Discussion Lists

Many scholarly and disciplinary communities sponsor online discussions groups called listservs. These are e-mail-based groups that academics use to discuss topics, look for help and exchange information,

monographic series, journals, and print and nonprint ephemera. Digital versions of many of these are posted at Web sites hosted by a particular center or organization. Scholars and researchers need to be very careful with this information, since unreliable, inaccurate, biased, and sometimes totally incorrect information is often posted on seemingly authoritative Web sites. Think tanks that appear to function as centers for research and analysis may be little more than public relation fronts for special-interest groups that are funded by private businesses and foundations.

THINK TANKS THAT APPEAR TO FUNCTION AS CENTERS FOR RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS MAY BE LITTLE MORE THAN PUBLIC RELATION FRONTS FOR SPECIAL-INTEREST GROUPS THAT ARE FUNDED BY PRIVATE BUSINESSES AND FOUNDATIONS.

Some of Israel's major universities host research centers that conduct policy-relevant research as it relates to Israel's

announce conferences, fellowships, and job opportunities, and review books and scholarly literature. The H-NET (Humanities and Social Sciences Online, [h-net.org](http://h-net.org)) discussion network sponsors two groups that scholars of Jewish political studies should be aware of: H-Judaic ([h-net.org/~judaic](http://h-net.org/~judaic)) which is the most active scholarly electronic discussion for Jewish studies and Judaica, and PSRT-L (Political Science Research and Teaching List, [h-net.org/~psrt](http://h-net.org/~psrt)).

### Think Tanks and Research Organizations

Jewish political studies scholars depend on university research centers and governmental and nongovernmental public policy institutes as resources for their research and teaching. These organizations and bodies study current policy issues and distribute their findings via working papers, reports, current and archived media summaries, conference proceedings,

national security and foreign policy. These include the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies at Bar-Ilan University (BESA, [www.biu.ac.il/SOC/besa](http://www.biu.ac.il/SOC/besa)); the Harry S. Truman Center for the Advancement of Peace at Hebrew University in Jerusalem ([truman.huji.ac.il](http://truman.huji.ac.il)); the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University ([www.tau.ac.il/jcss](http://www.tau.ac.il/jcss)); the Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, Hebrew University of Jerusalem ([atar.msc.huji.ac.il/~davis](http://atar.msc.huji.ac.il/~davis)); the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University ([www.tau.ac.il/dayancenter](http://www.tau.ac.il/dayancenter)); and the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University (TSC, [www.tau.ac.il/peace](http://www.tau.ac.il/peace)).

Several research institutes in Israel and the United States link the political and academic spheres. The Israel Democracy Institute ([idi.org.il](http://idi.org.il)), the Jerusalem Center for

Public Affairs (jcpa.org), the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute (vanleer.org.il), the Israel Policy Forum (israelpolicyforum.org), the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI, ipcri.org), and the Taub Center for Social Policy Studies (taubcenter.org.il) are independent and nonpartisan.

Scholars can go directly to the Web sites of the various institutes for the available content. But they benefit when access to these materials is improved. Web-based open access archives are not simply collections built for browsing but also serve as open data sources for powerful, automated independent services such as search, aggregation, and impact measurement. Political Research Online (PROL, allacademic.com/one/prol/prol01) is a repository for political science research. It includes conference papers, and emerging scholarship. It is also a “one-stop shopping place” for papers available through research and policy centers. Search options include subject, abstract, author, title, and full-text.

In addition to the usual array of materials, many of these institutes have unique collections. The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs has an extensive online library of the written works of Founder and President of the Center Daniel J. Elazar (1934–1999, jcpa.org/djeindex.htm). The Harry S Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace issues the results of a number of Israeli-Palestinian Public Opinion Polls at its Web site (truman.huji.ac.il/projects.asp).

**Multimedia (Sound and Visuals)**  
Many research centers sponsor forums, lectures, discussions, and

conferences. The traditional method for accessing presentations has been conference proceedings and audiotapes. However, these may have copyright and distribution issues. Many organizations, institutions, and government bodies



Screenshot of the Daniel Elazar On-Line Library, www.jcpa.org/djeindex.htm. Courtesy of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.

now use webcasts to distribute lectures and conference proceedings via Web servers. These “cyberlectures” enable distant viewers to “attend” a conference or forum. The Israel Democracy Institute often broadcasts its events live. The Web site offers a list of webcasts of forums, conferences, and lectures in Hebrew and in English. The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute has an online collection of unedited video recordings of conferences going back to 1993. The United Nations maintains a Web site of webcasts of UN events that relate to the Israeli-Palestine conflict (www.un.org/webcast/sc.html). “Live from the Knesset” (knesset.gov.il/broadcast/eng/screen\_eng.asp) broadcasts when the Knesset is in session.

The best way to locate archived webcasts is through the use of directories or searchable Web sites that point to well-indexed archives of available webcasts. The “Jewish Webcasting Guide” (jewishwebcasting.com) lists more than 350 webcasters and provides Web links and detailed descriptions

of the content. It also categorizes the webcasters by subject areas, offers a search capability, and includes information about how to use webcasting software.

The Online Speech Bank (americanrhetoric.com) has more than 5000 links to full text material, and audio and video files of speeches, sermons, debates, lectures, forums, and other recorded media events and is growing all the time. This site directs users to the Web site of the Prime Minister of Israel’s office.

Other types of sound and visual files are available that supplement textual material. Political science scholars should not ignore Web exhibits. The Jewish Women’s

Archive recently mounted Jewish Women and the Feminist Revolution (jwa.org/feminism). This online exhibit offers well-indexed and valuable primary source image, visual, and audio content to highlight the contributions of American Jewish women to the women’s movement.

The Israel Government Press Office (147.237.72.31) has made its national photo collection digitally available. Photos can be downloaded in a low resolution and are available for personal, non-commercial use only. It is possible to order quality high-resolution photographs from the collection for a fee.

The University of Texas Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collections (www.lib.utexas.edu/maps) holds an extensive collection of Middle East maps. Most of these were produced by the Central Intelligence Agency. The majority of the images are JPEG images within the 200K to 300K range, however, some of the images are quite large.



## Full-text Databases, Journals, and Books

Commercial and noncommercial suppliers provide subscription-based and open access to full-text journals, books, and working papers that are useful for scholars. Access to current and retrospective offerings is available via a variety of search options. Stanford University has partnered with ebrary<sup>TM</sup> to offer full-text searching and retrieval on electronic books. ebrary has a number of services that enable users to locate and use books relevant to their research. Search criteria include the Library of Congress (LC) Subject Headings, which is the main list of subject terms used for cataloging books in the United States. Library of Congress subject headings for Jewish political studies include “Judaism and politics” (with various subdivisions); “Jews— [Geographic subdivision option]— Politics and government;” “Political aspects” under individual Jewish sects (i.e. Orthodox Judaism— Political aspects); and “Israel— Politics and government.”

Some Jewish political studies-oriented, full-text electronic journals (e-journals) are available freely on the Web or via subscription. The Jewish Center for Public Affairs Web site has placed the entire run of *Jewish Political Studies Review* (free access) on its Web site. The Shalem Center (shalem.org.il), a research institute in Jerusalem plans on making all the issues of *Hebraica Political Studies* available full-text online. Currently, articles from volume 1 can be accessed at the journal’s Web site. *Azure*, the quarterly journal of the Shalem Center has created a free electronic archive of all of its current and retrospective issues.

Scholars also need to access broader scoped political science e-journals. The SAGE Full-Text Collection for Political Science (available by subscription, [www.csa.com/](http://www.csa.com/)

[factsheets/sagepol-set-c.php](http://factsheets/sagepol-set-c.php)) includes twenty-four peer-reviewed journals going back almost a quarter of a century. A search using the descriptor “Jews, Jewish people” retrieves seven journal articles.

Expanded Academic ASAP (available by subscription) is a general periodical index offering some full-text content with varying coverage from 1980 through the present. A search string “(Jew\* or Judaism) and politic\*” and limited to refereed and full-text citations retrieved 663 hits. In Israel, RAMBI (free access, [jnul.huji.ac.il/rambi](http://jnul.huji.ac.il/rambi)) and Index to Hebrew Periodicals (available by subscription, [libnet1.ac.il/~libnet/ihp/ihp-eng.htm](http://libnet1.ac.il/~libnet/ihp/ihp-eng.htm)) both direct researchers to full-text articles in Jewish Political Studies: a simple keyword search in the Index to Hebrew Periodicals combining the terms “מקסט מלא” and “ופוליטיקה” brought 214 hits; combining the keyword “full text” and subject term “politics” yielded twenty-five results in RAMBI. (Search results above from July 10, 2006.)

### Statistical Data

Several social science data and statistical services maintain Web sites that offer online data files and documentation. The Mandell L Berman Institute–North American Jewish Data Bank (NAJDB, [jewishdatabank.org](http://jewishdatabank.org)) provides social and demographic data on the Jewish community in the United States. The Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA, [thearda.com](http://thearda.com)) offers datasets for the study of religion. The State of Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics Web site ([cbs.gov.il](http://cbs.gov.il)) makes available statistical information about the population, economy, and society of Israel.

### What’s New?

The newest form of Internet-based

resources has been the exponential emergence of weblogs (commonly referred as “blogs”). These cannot be ignored. Academics can find the creation of a blog tempting. Blogs offer political scientists an opportunity to put forth one’s own perspective on current events. They can be used as teaching tools and reach a far-ranging readership. But the medium is too new to permit one to say whether or not it will emerge as a serious academic tool.

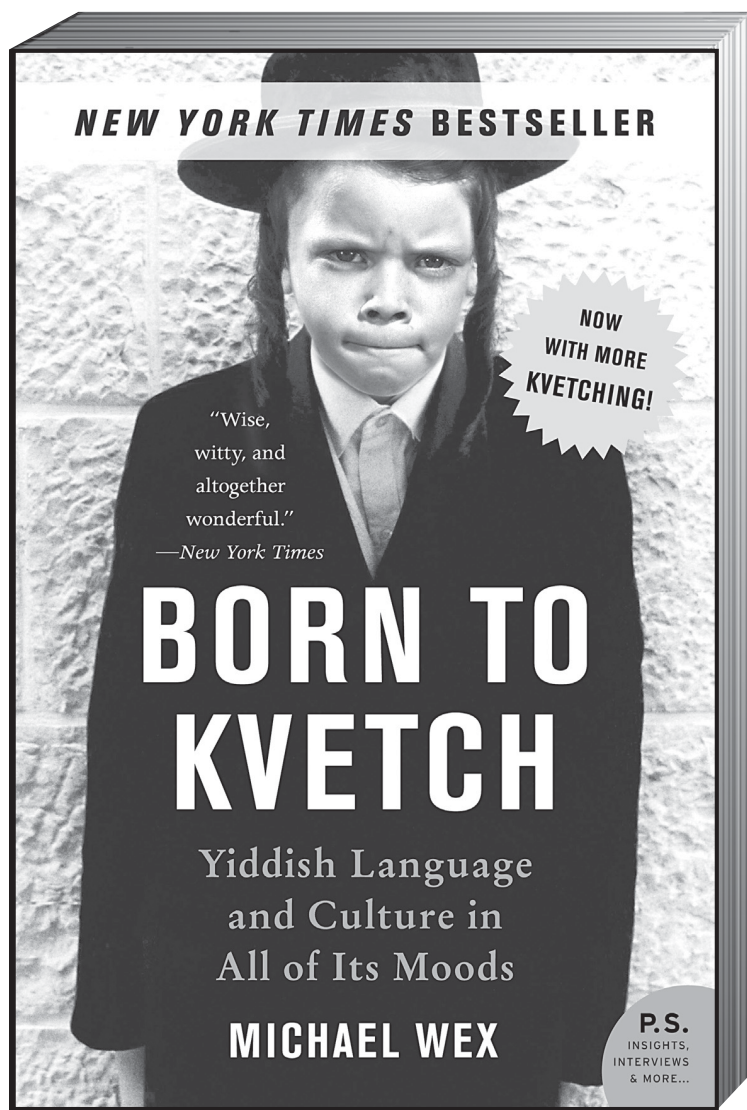
This article describes some of the online resources that are useful for Jewish political studies researchers and teachers. But digital technologies are evolving so quickly that scholars who are busy familiarizing themselves with what is out there now also need to utilize their knowledge and initiative to help plan for what lies ahead.

*Heidi Lerner is the Hebraica/Judaica Cataloger at Stanford University Libraries.*

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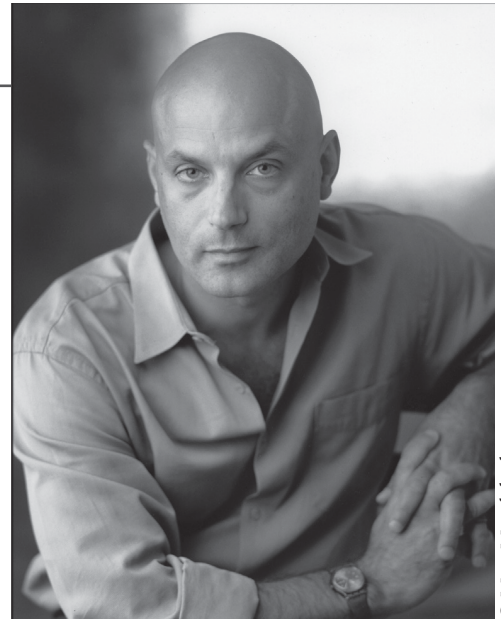
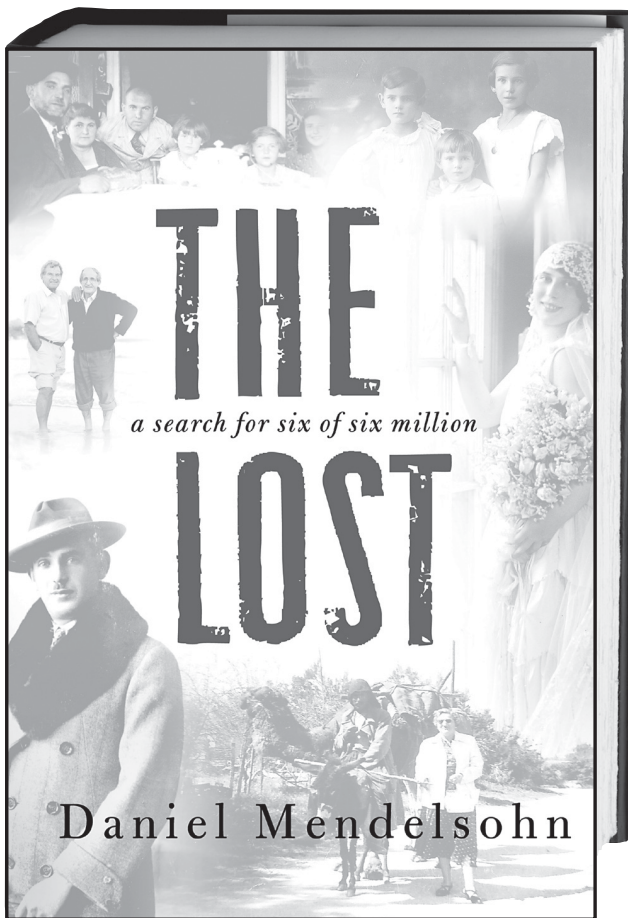
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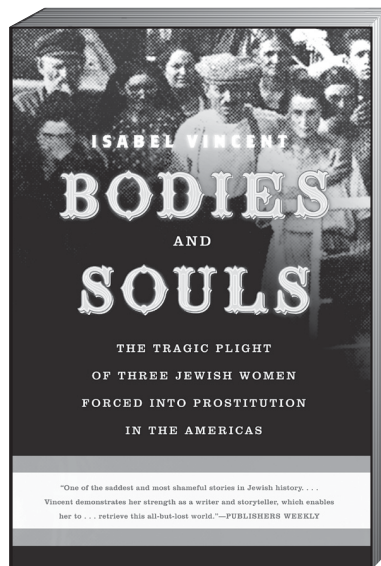
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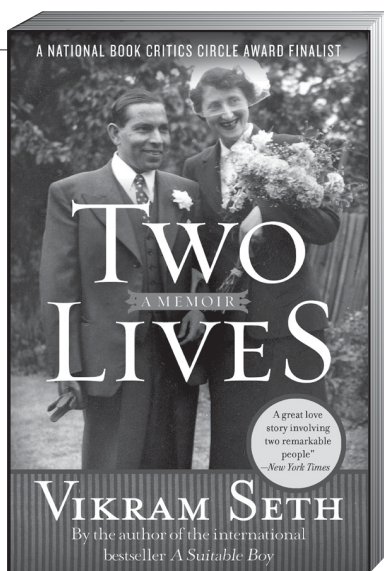


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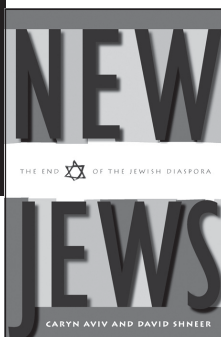
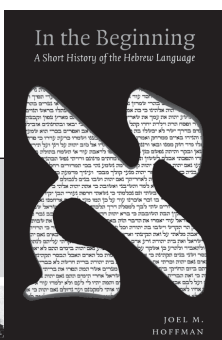
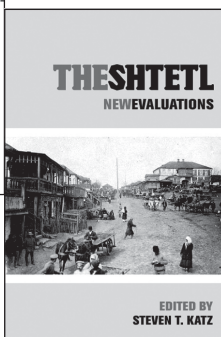
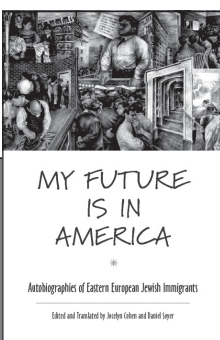
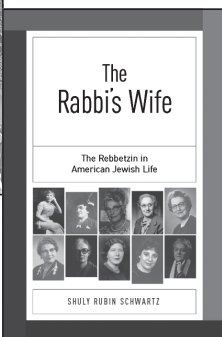
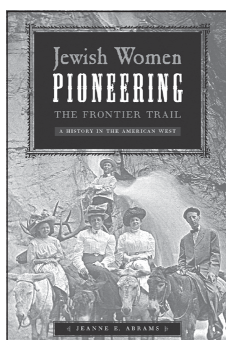
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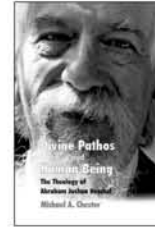
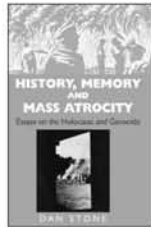
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# THE HISTORY OF NONSENSE

Abe Socher

In the spring of 1957 Saul Lieberman famously introduced Gershom Scholem's lectures on Merkabah Mysticism at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) by saying "Nonsense is nonsense, but the history of nonsense is a very important science." Lieberman's bon mot has been widely repeated, adapted, and occasionally mangled. It inspired—or perhaps provoked—is a better word—a disappointing novel by Chaim Potok and may have been appropriated by W. V. O. Quine as a curricular motto. It is certainly among the wittiest things ever said in academic Jewish studies, though wit is not, perhaps, our most competitive field.

Scholem, who thought that the Jewish mystical tradition preserved deep and only partially expressible symbolic truths, is unlikely to have been amused, but I know of no direct response on his part. In fact, Lieberman's remark, though often repeated, is itself not perfectly attested. According to the lore which often accompanies its retelling, Lieberman contributed an appendix to the published version of Scholem's lectures by way of apology for the public embarrassment he had caused his friend.

Lieberman's appendix to *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* is a brief and brilliant analysis of mystical rabbinic interpretations of the Song of Songs, but it bears no sign of having served as a means of

reconciliation. Lieberman and Scholem had been friends and rivals for a quarter of a century by then, and the appendix seems more like an act of friendly one-upmanship (that is to say academic collaboration) than a *kapparah*.

Scholem is invited to Lieberman's academic fiefdom, speaks about previously unrecognized gnostic developments in the heart of the Rabbinic period, and succeeds brilliantly. So Lieberman responds with another set of prooftexts which

IN THE SPRING OF 1957 SAUL LIEBERMAN FAMOUSLY INTRODUCED GERSHOM SCHOLEM'S LECTURES ON MERKABAH MYSTICISM AT THE JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY (JTS) BY SAYING "NONSENSE IS NONSENSE, BUT THE HISTORY OF NONSENSE IS A VERY IMPORTANT SCIENCE."

Scholem hadn't considered.

This rivalry is somewhat heightened in Chaim Potok's *Book of Lights*, where the Lieberman figure is called Kleinman and the Scholem figure is Keter: the "little man" of rationalism and the "crown" of supernal wisdom. Potok was not subtle in his preferences (though, to be fair, there is probably an allusion here to the Talmudic statement that the halakic disputes of Abbaye and Rava are a little thing compared to mysteries of the Divine Chariot). The thematic argument of the novel is that dry rationalism like Lieberman's leads to the atomic nightmare of Hiroshima, while mysticism has the power to heal. (It does not improve in the telling.)



Portrait of Gershom Scholem, 1962. Gershom Scholem Archive, Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem. Photo courtesy of the Leo Baeck Institute, New York.

Potok himself was probably not present for Lieberman's joke or Scholem's lectures. He had graduated from JTS several years earlier, served as a chaplain in Korea (the second setting of the novel) and was, at the time, running Camp Ramah in Ojai, California.

Indeed, I have not met anyone who actually attended the lectures, which are now approaching their fiftieth anniversary, and one might wonder

whether Lieberman's introduction is entirely apocryphal. Fortunately, there is a textual version of the witticism. Lieberman repeated the remark in another appendix, one to his classic essay "How Much Greek in Jewish Palestine." There is no reference to Scholem in the text here, but there is a literally subtextual one: the adjacent footnote cites Scholem's lectures on Merkabah Mysticism. So it seems probable that the oral tradition is correct and that Lieberman did say it, and later could not resist publishing it somewhere.

I have also heard the remark attributed verbatim to the great philosopher and logician W. V. O. Quine, meaning here: "Continental philosophy is nonsense, but the

history of Continental philosophy is a very important science,” or at least not further nonsense. So, if forced to include Heidegger among its course offerings, the department should hire a historian.



From a photo of Saul Lieberman with Louis Finkelstein, in Seminary courtyard, 1960s. Courtesy of the Ratner Center for the Study of Conservative Jewish, Jewish Theological Seminary.

This raises two questions, one shallow, the other deep. Let’s take care of the shallow one first. Did Quine say it? And if so, did he say it first? Sort of and no. It was certainly his curricular policy to prefer the history of philosophical nonsense to the unmediated stuff. In his philosophical dictionary *Quiddities*, under “Tolerance,” he wrote “Scholarship is a matter on which an objective and essentially scientific consensus can prevail, however disreputable its subject matter.” But I know of nothing closer than this in print. However his close Harvard

colleague Burton Dreben was widely quoted as saying, “Garbage is garbage but the history of garbage . . .” which is very close indeed.

Dreben was said to be the only person who knew more about Quine than the great philosopher himself, so it is difficult to distinguish between their respective epigrams. “That is what I said, isn’t it Burt?” Quine is supposed to have said when quoting or clarifying himself in his final years. Dreben, however, had been married to the daughter of Lieberman’s JTS colleague Shalom Spiegel and was familiar with the infamous witticism. So it seems likely to suppose that Quine did indeed make the remark, or something very close to it, though he was not first or even second.

This leaves us, finally, with the deep question. Can one spend a lifetime studying what one believes in the

end to be nonsense? Scholem certainly did not think Kabbalah was nonsense, nor, for that matter did Lieberman think that of midrash halakah, though neither of them was quite willing to affirm straightforwardly the propositions of their textual subjects either. This question abides.

Wit, I can imagine a reader wearily replying to all this, is wit, but the history of wit, is pedantry. Nonsense. Every student of past texts and ideas must contend with the worry that lurks beneath Lieberman’s witticism, and we are also obliged to honor our predecessors, our mighty dead, not least by retelling their jokes.

*Abe Socher is Associate Professor of Religion at Oberlin College.*

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##### **JEWS AT HOME: THE DOMESTICATION OF IDENTITY**

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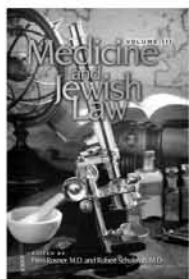
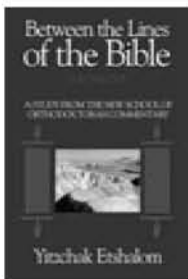
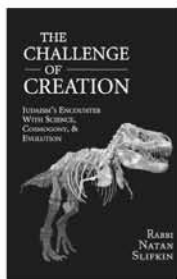
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*Shiri Goren, Hannah Pressman, and Lara Rabinovitch*

What's in a name? As organizers of a Yiddish studies conference-in-the-making, our first thorny question was how best to name the gathering. We wanted to emphasize the focus on Yiddish, but not to the exclusion of other terrains of Jewish studies; we sought papers on modern Jewish culture and history, but struggled with the geographical and chronological boundaries of those terms. To encapsulate the fascinating multiplicity of the field, we decided upon the title, *Yiddish / Jewish Cultures: Literature, History, Thought in Eastern European Diasporas*.



The three graduate student organizers of Yiddish/Jewish Cultures: Shiri Goren, Hannah Pressman, and Lara Rabinovitch, all Ph.D. students at NYU's Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies.

As signified by the slash in our title, the complicated nexus between “Yiddish” and “Jewish” became an issue at the heart of the conference, hosted by the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University on February 26–27, 2006. Our graduate student and postdoctoral colleagues

presented on topics as varied as poetry, education, cabaret, film, and the Holocaust. Their research spanned much of the globe, ranging from Vilna to Paris, Warsaw to Tel Aviv, and Helsinki to New York. These diasporas represent the varied points of origin of the presenters themselves: nearly half of our thirty-two participants came from outside the United States, defying our modest expectations that the conference would draw mainly Northeast-based students. The conference thus provided an opportunity to showcase the interdisciplinary methodologies that a new generation of scholars is using to research Yiddish-related

topics not only in North America, but all over the world as well.

Diaspora was therefore a common theme throughout the paper presentations. The creative scheduling of the conference sessions allowed participants to make intellectual links between the Yiddish communities of

Montreal and Johannesburg, among other diverse geographical areas. The range of academic topics and themes presented was wide, including the Yiddish press; Yiddish science books and other models of education; African Americans in Yiddish literature; iconographic images of the violin in Yiddish visual

culture; culinary language hybridization; Yiddish theatre; theories of Yiddish culture; Yiddish conferences of the early twentieth century; Yiddish film melodrama; and studies of Yiddish literature, including *Der Nister*, Deborah Vogel, Israel Aksenfeld, David Fogel, and Kadya Molodovsky.

The rigorous level of scholarship and breadth of topics reflect the new approaches these emerging scholars are bringing to the field of Yiddish studies as they dialogue with other academic disciplines. Themes of gender, performativity, and transnationalism inform their work, which is often based on multimedia sources and multidisciplinary interactions.

Besides diverse conference sessions, the conference featured a keynote address by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblet entitled “Yiddish Studies: Towards a 21st Century Mandate.” The Israeli group Sala-Manca (discussed by Jeffrey Shandler in the Spring 2006 issue of *AJS Perspectives*) presented a unique digital art performance on the Yiddish poet Avrom Sutzkever. The second day of the conference featured a lively roundtable discussion moderated by Hasia Diner on the question, “What does the field of Yiddish Studies mean in the 21st century?” The faculty participants included Jeremy Dauber, Gennady Estraiikh, Kathryn Hellerstein, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblet, David Roskies, and Jeffrey Shandler. While providing a stimulating and often humorous coda to the conference sessions, their comments also emphasized the challenging reality of teaching (about) Yiddish in contemporary university settings. The conference concluded with a book party celebrating recent scholarly publications in the field.

We see our conference on Yiddish / Jewish Cultures as a model for the way in which departmental support

can provide graduate students important leadership opportunities. Thanks to the mentorship we received, we ran a successful interdisciplinary event that among

conference sponsors demonstrates how different branches of Jewish studies within and outside of our academic institution came together in creating this special event. The

**YIDDISH / JEWISH CULTURES WAS A MEETING OF MINDS, A GATHERING THAT ENABLED A DYNAMIC GROUP OF EMERGING SCHOLARS TO ENGAGE WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH SEVERAL FACULTY MEMBERS. IT WAS ALSO A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO GRAPPLE WITH THE “METAQUESTIONS” CONCERNING THE FIELD OF YIDDISH STUDIES.**

other things taught us the meaning of academic collaboration. In planning the conference we worked

conference was principally sponsored by New York University’s Skirball Department of Hebrew and



Panel on Yiddish Text and Context:  
Itay Zutra (JTS), Dara Horn (Harvard), Beverly Bailis (JTS).

primarily with Gennady Estraiikh, the Rauch Associate Professor of Yiddish Studies at NYU, but we also benefited from the input and encouragement of such faculty as Hasia Diner, David Engel, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, and Lawrence Schiffman. We would also like to thank the incredible departmental administrative team of Shayne Figueroa and Diane Leon-Ferdico.

Planning the conference also exposed us to the delicate art of seeking and securing funding for academic gatherings. The variety of

Judaic Studies with the support of the Melvin Rauch Foundation, Inc. The NYU Graduate School of Arts and Science, the Goldstein-Goren Center for American Jewish History, and the Taub Center for Israel Studies at NYU also provided generous support. In addition, the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research

and the Yiddish Forward partially sponsored the conference. The assistance of all of these institutions, in addition to their generous financial support, enabled us to think “outside the box” regarding the scope of the conference, its programming, and publicity.

Yiddish / Jewish Cultures was a meeting of minds, a gathering that enabled a dynamic group of emerging scholars to engage with each other and with several faculty members. It was also a unique opportunity to grapple with the “metaquestions” concerning the

field of Yiddish studies. In two significant ways, the conference attests to the fascinating politics of choosing Yiddish. Many of the papers explored the personal politics and public consequences of choosing Yiddish as a means of cultural expression in various places and times in Jewish history. However, the conference also demonstrated the contemporary politics of choosing Yiddish as an academic field of study, at a time when the borderlines between Yiddish and other disciplines are particularly fluid. Therefore, this conference was not just a milestone for the graduate students who participated in it; it was also an important moment for Yiddish studies, and hence Jewish studies as well.

*Hannah Pressman and Shiri Goren are Ph.D. candidates in modern Hebrew literature at NYU. Lara Rabinovitch is a Ph.D. candidate in modern Jewish history at NYU. Following the success of the conference, they were awarded the 2006 NYU President’s Service Award for Programming.*

*The full Yiddish / Jewish Cultures conference schedule may be accessed at: <http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/hebrew/YiddishConf.html>*

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with an interpretive essay by Hanina Ben-Menahem

edited by Hanina Ben-Menahem, Neil S. Hecht, Shai Wosner

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# REMEMBERING OUR COLLEAGUES

## ISAAC EINSTEIN BARZILAY (1915–2006)

Stanley Nash

Professor Isaac Einstein Barzilay, who died on April 15 of this year, was a scholar of enormous breadth and a teacher of engaging warmth and dynamism. The son of a Lithuanian rabbi, Barzilay received a traditional Jewish education in Bialystok, Poland; an M.A. from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, where he studied Jewish thought, literature, and history; and a Ph.D in Jewish history under Salo Baron at Columbia University. Barzilay taught at the Bialik Gymnasium in Haifa until 1941 and then served as an interpreter with the British Intelligence Corps from 1942 to 1944. In the United States he taught at the Herzliyah Hebrew Teachers Institute for twelve years. After receiving his doctorate, Barzilay taught at Wayne State University in Detroit for two years before assuming the position of Professor of Hebrew Language and Culture at Columbia in 1960. During his twenty-five years at Columbia he also held many executive posts at the American Academy for Jewish Research, including its presidency.

Isaac Barzilay's range of interests in many ways reflected the legendary scope of his prodigious teachers, Joseph Klausner and Salo Baron. His own ambitious drive to embrace formidably vast and esoteric subjects helps to explain why he chose to study and write book-length studies of such early modern polymaths as Joseph Solomon Delmedigo, Shlomo Yehudah Rapaport, and Menasseh of Ilya. Barzilay's initial immersion in what he termed the

"Italian Haskalah" and his pathbreaking book on this subject (*Between Reason and Faith: Antirationalism in Italian Jewish Thought 1250–1650* [1967]) likewise emerged from his conviction that detailed knowledge of this earlier phase of Jewish Enlightenment was essential for understanding his primary objective, the Berlin Haskalah. Some of his articles on the Berlin Haskalah, which he treated at length only in his unpublished dissertation, are still widely cited as seminal studies in this area. As a product himself of the Lithuanian Haskalah, Barzilay combined the fearless passion of the ingenious and epoch-making autodidacts he studied so voraciously with the discipline of the academy, which he absorbed at the Hebrew University and at Columbia.

For his students Isaac Barzilay radiated a love of history, philosophy, and literature that was infectious. Only rarely teaching the specific areas in which he had done important research, Barzilay sought to impart what was, in a manner of speaking, his striking equality of infatuation with such diverse fields as Maimonidean philosophy, medieval Hebrew poetry and historiography, the literature of the Haskalah and the modern Hebrew Renaissance periods, and modern Hebrew literature. In this last area he focused not only on the classic works of Agnon and Hazaz, and great numbers of Hebrew historical novels by Kabbak, Aricha, Shamir, and others, but also on the works of Yizhar, Tammuz, Appelfeld, and



Oz, and even the output of more modern authors (such as Meir Shalev) of whom he always kept abreast and about whom he continued to publish articles well after his retirement. Loving history as he did, Barzilay gravitated towards the historical novel, and in this subgenre he had total mastery. He also brought a combined historical and literary flair to bear particularly on his reading of Agnon. To be a student of Professor Barzilay meant always striving to catch up, to encompass and to delve into hidden corners and influences in the work of the author or subject under scrutiny. His published articles on Agnon, Shofman, Sadeh, Appelfeld, Yizhar, Tammuz, and Oz indicate just how thorough, probing, and inventive at drawing connections his mind could be.

Barzilay also had a flair for the dramatic and could eloquently discuss a wide variety of subjects. His reputation as a spellbinding teacher at Herzliyah Teacher's College and Wayne State preceded him when he came to Columbia in 1960, and his lecture classes there were always full. In the early years at Columbia, Barzilay taught elementary Hebrew as well, and here, too, he excelled. His postgraduate seminars attracted a

variegated group of individuals, many of whom were captivated by his personality and brilliance. Barzilay cultivated more than a few doctoral students, who wrote on topics ranging from medieval poetry to the work of the early critical Talmud scholar, Tzvi Hirsch Hayyut, the generation of Ahad Haam, the works of the American Yiddish and Hebrew poet Gabriel Preil, and of course, modern Israeli literature. But he also had a profound influence on students who received doctorates in other areas such as Arabic law, Bible and the

ancient Near East, Italian Jewish history, medieval historiography and history of science, comparative literature, Jewish philosophy, and American Jewish history, to name just the sample I encountered during my years of residency at Columbia. For some years Barzilay taught history at the Jewish Theological Seminary, which granted him an honorary doctorate, and his students there spoke of him with much enthusiasm.

Barzilay's associations with scholars in Israel and the United States

through the American Academy for Jewish Research were extensive, and a representative number of articles by these colleagues and students appear in the Barzilay Jubilee Volume, *Bein Historiyyah le-Sifrut* (Israel: Hakibbutz Hame'uchad, 1997). This volume contains a bibliography of Professor Barzilay's writings as well.

*Stanley Nash is Professor of Hebrew Literature at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York.*

## ARTHUR HERTZBERG (1921–2006)

David Starr

Many of the obituaries of Arthur Hertzberg that appeared in *The New York Times*, *Ha'aretz*, and a host of other publications in the aftermath of his death on April 17 charted in considerable detail the path that he traveled from his Orthodox home to the Conservative rabbinate, moral and communal leadership, and great scholarly achievement. Rather than survey once again all of Hertzberg's multifarious activities, I would like to focus on one of the less commonly emphasized dimensions of his career, his accomplishments as an adult educator, the kind of adult educator the likes of which we rarely see. And I would like to reflect a little on the way in which Hertzberg melded in his life and career ideals that are now all too rarely bound together in the same person.

I write these words in June as I prepare to embark on a *Me'ah* study tour in Israel, leading fifteen adults on a two-week exploration of the history of the Zionism and contemporary Israel. In

preparation for this trip, I have asked the participants to read, or re-read, Hertzberg's introduction to *The Zionist Idea* (1959). I have also asked them to bring this book with them. It will be our constant companion as we explore the land of Israel. That we have found Hertzberg's anthology indispensable will surprise no one. But few people remember today that he put it together in the first place, in the 1950s, at the behest of Hadassah, as part of that organization's commitment to adult Jewish education.

A great anthology, like a great performer, makes the difficult look easy. To assemble the material that made up *The Zionist Idea* Hertzberg had to search through the collected works of the key figures in the Zionist movement as well as the ideological writings of innumerable other thinkers and political activists. He had to select from their respective works the essays he judged to be both central to each author's message and accessible to the general reading public. And in many if not most cases he had to translate the essays



himself, typically from Hebrew or German. Like Nahum Glatzer's roughly simultaneous pioneering editorial efforts to bring the work of Franz Rosenzweig to the attention of the English-speaking public, Hertzberg's *The Zionist Idea* reminds us how few of these precious primary sources were available fifty years ago to those who could not read them in the languages in which they were originally written.

As with any anthology, one may take issue with the finished product and the assumptions that drove it. Hertzberg violated the historian's commandment of avoiding anachronism. His very designation of certain early thinkers as "precursors" itself suggests some degree of anachronistic thinking in



his approach to them. A self-confessed “cultural Zionist,” Hertzberg prominently features Ahad Ha’am as a man who represents love of tradition, a modern openness to rebellion against it, the need to make Jewish nationalism as much about Jewish identity and culture as about politics, and at the same time a resolute avoidance of anything that smacked of messianism. He paid relatively little attention to religious Zionism, and barely any to Jabotinsky or Revisionism, which he reviled. But his short shrifting of these two trends reminds us of how relatively unimportant they were in Jewish life, certainly prior to the Six Day War or Begin’s election in 1977.

All of Hertzberg’s books on European Jewish history, American Jewry, and Zionism and Israel covered big topics and themes, drawing a wide and diverse readership into a conversation about the intersection of modernity and Jewish existence, challenging assumptions and theses as he went. *The Zionist Idea* situated Zionist thinkers within the context of European social thought, insisting that Zionism represented a profound break with Jewish history and thought even as it sought to renew Jewish life politically and culturally. Hertzberg’s first scholarly monograph, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (1968), took on what was for most modern Jews the sacred cow of the Enlightenment, arguing that its seamy side—anti-Semitism—cast doubt on secularism as the solution to the Jewish problem. Scholars continue to debate this point, with many suggesting that Hertzberg’s instincts were right in questioning the benevolence of the Enlightenment from a philosophical and historical perspective. His most heavily criticized scholarly effort, *The Jews*

*in America* (1989), also flirted with normative questions as it wrestled with the question of who came to America, what they built here, and what became of Jewish culture in the realm of acculturation and assimilation. This cut against the grain of scholarship that insisted on the creativity and transformative character of Judaism in America, even as it skirted questions of decline in the level of Jewish culture.

Hertzberg was both a scholar and a rabbi. Though traditionally these roles were often combined in one person, they have become largely separate and distinct professions. Nowadays scholars and rabbis stand for educational visions and methods that are often far apart, and they play different roles in public life.

This separation has come upon us rather abruptly. One has only to look at back volumes of *HUCA* or the *CCAR Journal* or the *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly* or *Conservative Judaism* or especially *Judaism* to see how recently they boasted of the contributions of rabbis who were scholars, scholars who were rabbis. A half-century ago such rabbi-scholars were prominent if not predominant in the rabbinate. Such men chose the rabbinate partly because Jewish studies had not yet found a place in the American academy, partly because the pulpit still seemed a place hospitable to scholarship, a place requiring learning as well as pastoral care.

In this sense, Arthur Hertzberg’s passing reminds us of that now largely bygone era, when scholars and rabbis were often one and same. Y. L. Gordon’s dictum, “Be a man on the street and a Jew in your tent” called upon the Jew to be a humanist and the humanist to be a Jew, creating a new sort of synthesis between the world and

the Jew. Hertzberg’s life represented such a synthesis—however much he himself may have lamented that he failed to live up either to his rabbinic ideals like his father or his scholarly ideals like Levi Ginsberg or Salo Baron. His rabbinate informed and elevated the scholarly choices he made about what to write and what to argue; his scholarship affected his vision for Jewish public affairs, as is evidenced by his famous jeremiad insisting that communal leaders should actually know something about the Jewish culture and civilization they professed to want to preserve for the next generation.

My own personal experience with the *Me’ah* adult education program and with my colleagues from academia who teach in it points to the truth of Hertzberg’s synthesis of learning and leadership. Nothing other than education will save serious Jewishness. Most of my colleagues grasp this simple truth. Indeed, I think that many would acknowledge that inside every devoted scholar there lurks “*a pintele rav*.” Such a person cares passionately for Jews and Judaism and sees his or her knowledge as a tool for serving others and making the world a bit more civilized. Such a person could set himself or herself no higher goal than to live up to the standards set by Arthur Hertzberg.

*David Starr is the Dean of Me’ah at Hebrew College, where he is also the Assistant Professor of Jewish History.*

# DAVID PATTERSON (1922–2005)

*S. Ilan Troen*

David Patterson was a pioneer in the reemergence of Jewish studies in postwar Europe and one of the preeminent figures in the field. In 1945, Jewish studies in the universities of Great Britain scarcely ranged beyond the study of Hebrew and the Bible, and was for the most part little more than a handmaiden to theology and philology. At Oxford, Cambridge, and Manchester scholarly attention was focused almost exclusively on ancient texts and rabbinic literature. Only at the School for Oriental and African Studies in London was it possible to receive a diploma (but not a degree) in modern Hebrew. In 1945 Manchester initiated an Honours Degree in which modern Hebrew played a significant part. David Patterson was the first to enroll and the first to graduate. He recalled “the thrill of excitement when the first books of modern Hebrew literature, about two dozen in all, arrived at the Manchester University Library early in 1946.” It was in this field that Patterson established his scholarly reputation with studies of Abraham Mapu and of the Hebrew novel in Czarist Russia. Fascinated by the challenges facing a translator, he both wrote about this issue and provided readers of English with extraordinary examples of the genre, including translations of Bialik, Brenner, and Moshe Shamir.

Europe’s decline as a setting for Jewish scholarship was of course a consequence of the Holocaust. In fact, as Patterson himself wrote, “At the end of the World War II in 1945, Jewish Studies in Europe had ceased to exist.” It was therefore inevitable that scholarship in Britain and the continent would be outpaced by the surge in Jewish studies in Israel and

America in the 1960s and thereafter. David Patterson consciously undertook the often lonely responsibility of fostering a renaissance of Jewish learning in Europe. Indeed, he sometimes described the endeavor in which he was engaged as an attempt to raise a phoenix out of the ashes of destruction. The prime locale for this project was Oxford University, to which he came in 1956 as the Cowley Lecturer in Post Biblical Hebrew. Starting with but one room in the Oriental Institute of Oxford University in 1972, he imagined and realized the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies (originally the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies) with facilities in Oxford as well as a splendid campus at the Yarnton Manor Estate. These venues constituted a wonderfully vital setting for a renewal of Jewish scholarship. Under Patterson’s leadership as many as fourteen fellows taught at Oxford a variety of subjects from classic to modern Jewish studies; diploma programs were authorized; an impressive library and archives were established; and seminars and conferences were organized. Yarnton became one of the most important venues in the world for scholars of Jewish studies, with more than 350 senior scholars spending extensive periods of time there.

Israel Studies was an area of great personal interest for David Patterson. Active as a youth in Habonim, he lived in Israel on a kibbutz and in Haifa, and delighted in presenting his Israeli passport on his frequent returns to the country. During his presidency the Centre probably hosted more scholars of the literature, culture and history of Israel than any academic institution outside



of Israel. By 1990 it had four specialists in different areas of Israel studies, a number larger than that found at perhaps any other university outside of Israel. His own literary interests led to the establishment of a visiting Hebrew authors program that attracted a galaxy of the best-known and most creative writers of modern Israel, including Amos Oz, A. B. Yehoshua, and Aharon Appelfeld. Not a few contemporary classics took shape in the environment he created. A natural consequence of his interests was the sponsorship of lectures, seminars, and conferences on topics germane to the diverse interests of students of Israel. Indeed, the journal *Israel Studies* was spawned at one of the international workshops at Yarnton Manor. He was a visionary who understood the academic validity of the subject and the need for it, and consistently nurtured it. It was for this and for his encouragement to Jewish studies generally that in the Queen’s Honours List of 2003 he was awarded the CBE “for services to Jewish Studies,” the only individual ever to be so recognized.

David Patterson passed away on December 10, 2005.

*S. Ilan Troen is the Sam and Anna Lopin Professor of Modern at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and the Karl, Harry, and Helen Stoll Family Chair in Israel Studies at Brandeis University.*

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Exploring Jewish Learning and Culture



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The Institute will concern itself with traditional texts and movements, but especially as they throw light on such ideas and issues as have recently emerged in a variety of contemporary disciplines. Its faculty will be trained Jewish Studies professionals, but they will be engaged in the most contemporary problems of their neighboring departments. The Institute will provide a home for Biblical scholars who see in rabbinic methods of interpretation important new modes of literary criticism, as well as for Talmudists concerned with questions of general jurisprudence. It will be a place where students of Jewish culture will be able to offer critical alternatives to the practices of modern historiography and where scholars of medieval theology will contribute to the most current problems of post-modern philosophy.

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#### **HOW TO APPLY**

For information prospective students should consult the websites of UVA’s Department of Religious Studies ([www.virginia.edu/religiousstudies/programs/graduate/](http://www.virginia.edu/religiousstudies/programs/graduate/)) and Jewish Studies Program ([www.virginia.edu/jewishstudies/](http://www.virginia.edu/jewishstudies/)).

Interested students are encouraged to contact the program conveners, Professors Peter Ochs ([Pochs@virginia.edu](mailto:Pochs@virginia.edu)) and Asher Biemann ([ab5j@virginia.edu](mailto:ab5j@virginia.edu)), and to visit the faculty.

All graduate applications to the University of Virginia Graduate School of Arts and Sciences are handled by the Admissions Office of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. For information about the application process, consult the website of UVA’s Office of Graduate Admissions: [www.virginia.edu/artsandsciences/admissions/apply.html](http://www.virginia.edu/artsandsciences/admissions/apply.html)

The deadline for graduate applications is December 15, 2006.

#### **FELLOWSHIPS**

Prestigious fellowships and scholarships are available in both graduate programs for exceptionally qualified doctoral students. They may include tuition, a living stipend, and opportunities to serve as teaching assistants.



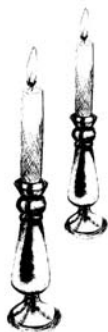
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Prof. Jim Ross  
102 Lake Hall  
Northeastern University  
Boston, MA 02115

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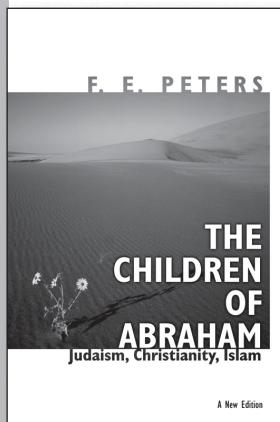
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The deadline for receipt of applications is 31st December 2006.

Application forms and additional information may be obtained by writing to:

Yad Hanadiv/Beracha Foundation Fellowships  
16 Ibn Gvirol St., Jerusalem 92430 ISRAEL  
or e-mail: [LLavie@yadhanadiv.org.il](mailto:LLavie@yadhanadiv.org.il) or [msgafni@huji.ac.il](mailto:msgafni@huji.ac.il)



# 38th Annual Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies

**December 17-19, 2006  
Manchester Grand Hyatt  
San Diego, CA**

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- registering for conference at the reduced rate (\$90/regular/associate member; \$50/student member; \$125/non-member) after November 15, conference registration will take place at the Hyatt at the regular rate (\$115/regular/associate member; \$65/student member; \$150 non-member)
- reserving a hotel room at the Manchester Grand Hyatt (1-800-233-1234) at the reduced rate (\$119/regular; \$99/student) after November 15, reduced rate room reservations will be based on availability

For further information about sessions, meals, hotel reservations, visiting San Diego and special conference events, please refer to the AJS website at [www.ajsnet.org](http://www.ajsnet.org) or contact the AJS office at [ajs@ajs.cjh.org](mailto:ajs@ajs.cjh.org) or 917.606.8249)

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at the 38th Annual Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies

6:15 – 6:45 p.m. reception sponsored by NEXTBOOK ([www.nextbook.org](http://www.nextbook.org))

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\*Those who purchased banquet tickets for \$57.00 will receive a refund for the difference between the full price and the new, reduced price.



"The Jew and His [Political] Parties," *Di Bin*, Warsaw, March 22, 1906. The Jews are represented as a skeleton, implying an unsteady, weak polity about to be pulled apart by the wide variety of new political parties that are dragging it in different directions. Courtesy of Edward Portnoy.

(Cover Photo)

From "This year's hakofes in the radical shul," *Der groyser kundes*, New York, October 21, 1921. Courtesy of Edward Portnoy.

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