



THE SHALEM CENTER

Hebraic Political Studies



Princeton University
Program in Judaic Studies

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ATHENS, ROME, JERUSALEM?

Political Hebraism Jewish Sources in the History of Political Thought

WALZER AND HALBERTAL TO KEYNOTE

A three-day interdisciplinary academic conference to examine the philosophers, scholars, statesmen and theologians who have historically drawn ideas with political import from the Hebrew Bible, Talmudic and Rabbinic writings

September 7 – 9, 2008

Hosted by Princeton University's Program in Judaic Studies
and The Shalem Center

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY: An eclectic multidisciplinary group of scholars will meet Sept. 7-9 at Princeton University for the third international conference on *Political Hebraism*. Noted philosopher Michael Walzer of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and Hebrew University professor of philosophy and Jewish thought Moshe Halbertal are slated to keynote.

The conference is not open to the general public but members of the press may register to attend individual panels and/or the keynote addresses. Conference events will take place 09.30 a.m. to 6.30 p.m. each day of the conference in the Frist Campus Center at Princeton.

Co-sponsored by the Shalem Center's *Hebraic Political Studies* and the Program in Judaic Studies at Princeton University, the conference, titled "Political Hebraism: Jewish Sources in the History of Political Thought," will explore a wide range of issues related to the scope and significance of early modern political Hebraism: the use of Hebrew and Jewish sources for politics and political thought at the founding moment of the modern West. Political Hebraism explores the ways early modern political thought looked to the Old Testament and Hebraic sources for paradigms, rationales and guidance. As the West seeks to grapple with concepts of nationhood, law and political legitimacy today, this

conference – and the scholarship that is developing around it, points to fertile new directions for scholarship and debate.

This new area of study brings some of the world's most renowned scholars to Princeton to shape the debate on the importance of Jewish sources in laying the foundations of western political philosophy from Machiavelli to Hobbes. It has become apparent that between the 16th and 18th centuries, European political philosophy felt intimately at home with the Hebrew Bible, enjoyed some familiarity with later Jewish texts and exegeses, and accommodated a small number of Jews within its political discourse. The period was characterized by a search for *Hebraica Veritas*, a view of *De Republica Hebraeorum* as the idealized polity, and biblical and Jewish ideas permeated the political imagination through art, literature, and legal codes.

The Program in Judaic Studies at Princeton has been awarded a \$4.5 million dollar grant from the Tikvah Fund, the same Fund that generously supports much of the work of the Shalem Center. The grant has been awarded to strengthen the study of Jewish thought at Princeton, creating a groundswell of academic opinion that asserts that the Jewish tradition has an important contribution to make to the humanities as a whole.

More than one hundred scholars and advanced students from around the world who had been independently exploring aspects of the topic at hand and who were for the most part unaware of one another's work will be in Princeton. Papers come from fields including political science, philosophy, theology, literature, history, Jewish thought, and law.

Confirmed panelists include:

- Michael Walzer, Professor Emeritus at the Institute for Advanced Study, American political philosopher and public intellectual.
- Moshe Halbertal, Professor of Jewish Thought and Philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Shalom Hartman Institute Fellow.
- Gordon Schochet, Professor of Political Science at Rutgers University.
- Arthur Eyffinger, researcher at the Huygens Institute in The Hague, former Grotius Institute fellow and founder of the Grotiana Foundation.
- Steven Grosby, Professor of Religion at the Clemson University.
- Yoram Hazony, Founder and former president of the Shalem Center, where he is currently Provost.
- Alan Mittleman, director of the Louis Finkelstein Institute for Religious and Social Studies and a professor of Jewish philosophy at The Jewish Theological Seminary.
- Shmuel Trigano, Professor of sociology at the University of Paris-Nanterre;
- Elia Benamozegh European Chair of Sephardic Studies in Livorno, Italy; and a fellow at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.
- Joseph Isaac Lifshitz, senior fellow at the Institute for Philosophy, Politics, and Religion at the Shalem Center.
- Guido Bartolucci, PhD the University of Bologna, former visiting fellow at the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies and at the Seminar für Judischen Studien at Martin-Luther University, Halle-Wittenberg, and the Shalem Center.
- Silvia Berti, Professor of History at the University of Rome.

- Seymour Feldman, Adjunct Professor, Jewish Theological Seminary.
- Abraham Melamed, director of the Center for the Study of Jewish Culture and holds the Wolfson Chair for Jewish Thought at the University of Haifa.

Hebraic Political Studies

Shalem Press' peer-reviewed quarterly, *Hebraic Political Studies*, attracts institutional subscriptions from places as diverse as the Alliance Israelite Universaille (Paris), HUC-Cincinnati, Columbia University, Senckenberg University (Frankfurt). Existing subscribers include Wellesley, Cambridge University, Ohio State, University of Vienna, The University of Ferrara, the University of Tennessee, JTS, Cornell, Louisiana State University and the University of Miami.

Forthcoming publications

CREATED EQUAL: How the Bible Broke with Ancient Political Thought (Oxford University Press, October 15, 2008, hard cover) by Joshua Berman, Associate Fellow at the Shalem Center, focuses on the political revolution the Hebrew Bible initiated.

Berman engages the text of the Hebrew Bible from a novel perspective -- as a document of social and political thought. He proposes that the Pentateuch can be read as the earliest prescription on record for the establishment of an egalitarian polity. The blueprint that emerges is that of a society that would stand in stark contrast to the social orders found in the surrounding cultures of the ancient Near East -- Egypt, Mesopotamia, Ugarit, and the Hittite Empire -- where the hierarchical structure of the polity was centered on the figure of the king and his retinue. Berman shows that the Pentateuch's egalitarian ideal is articulated in comprehensive fashion and is expressed in its theology, politics, economics, use of technologies of communication, and in its narrative literature. Throughout, he invokes parallels from the modern period as heuristic devices to illuminate the ancient developments under study. Thus, for example, the constitutional principles in the Book of Deuteronomy are examined in the light of principles espoused by Montesquieu, and the rise of the novel in 18th-century England serves to illuminate the advent of new modes of storytelling in biblical narrative.

POLITICAL HEBRAISM: Judaic Sources in Early Modern Political Thought (Shalem Press, September 7, 2008, soft cover) edited by Gordon Schochet, Fania OZ-Salzberger and Meirav Jones

ABOUT US

The Shalem Center was established in Jerusalem in 1994 with the goal of developing the ideas needed to guide and sustain the Jewish people in the decades to come. Founded by scholars and public figures from Israel and the Diaspora, the Center advances original research, publication, and teaching in the areas most crucial to the public life of the Jewish people, including Jewish moral and political thought, Zionist history and ideas, Biblical archaeology, democratic theory, and economic and social policy.

The work of the Institute for Philosophy, Politics, and Religion is based on the premise that the Bible, Talmud and rabbinic literature have yet to be brought into a full dialogue with the Western canon. By studying the Western tradition side-by-side with classical Jewish sources, the institute illustrates the central role that Jewish ideas have had in shaping Western civilization, and thereby, it is restoring Judaism to its rightful place as one of the great intellectual alternatives open to humanity. The Institute also sponsors Shalem's student programs, including the Undergraduate Program in Statecraft, Shalem's Graduate and Post-Graduate Fellowships, and the Shalem Summer Interns Program. Shalem Liberal Arts College, which will be open to outstanding students from Israel and from abroad, is the next natural development of the Shalem Center's primary goal – developing the ideas and leaders necessary to sustain the continued flourishing of the Jewish people.

Hebraic Political Studies is an international, peer-reviewed journal published in Jerusalem by Shalem Press and edited by Professors Gordon Schochet of Rutgers University and Arthur Eyffinger of the Huygens Institute in the Netherlands. The journal aims to evaluate the place of the Jewish textual tradition, along-side the traditions of Greece and Rome, in political history and the history of political thought. It attracts institutional subscriptions from places as diverse as the Alliance Israelite Universelle (Paris), HUC-Cincinnati, Columbia University, Senckenberg University (Frankfurt). Existing subscribers include Wellesley, Cambridge University, Ohio State, University of Vienna, The University of Ferrara, the University of Tennessee, JTS, Cornell, Louisiana State University and the University of Miami.

The Program in Judaic Studies at Princeton University provides students the opportunity to explore over three millennia of Jewish culture, history, and literature from the Bible to contemporary Jewish thought and society. Since its establishment in 1996, the program has offered a variety of courses, lectures, conferences, film series, and exhibitions taking advantage of Princeton's rich resources in Judaic studies in a range of disciplines and departments.

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