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## 42

## JEWISH POLITICS

## History and historiographical implications

Simon Rabinovitch

Once the primary focus of historical research and writing, the discussion and relevance of politics in history has evolved appreciably over the past several decades. Indeed, how we understand the nature of "politics" has changed dramatically. And political history itself has become increasingly multidisciplinary, even as other historical methodologies have explored what used to be its central issues and concerns. Social historians, for example, now regularly examine "social capital," political culture, the public sphere, hegemony and resistance, and ideology and discourse (see Chapters 37 and 40). Finally, theorizing about imperialism and "postcolonialism" has been taken up in critical literary theory as well as in "new cultural history" (see Chapter 45).<sup>1</sup> Although overarching or globalizing theories and grand narratives have fallen somewhat out of favor among historians, many approaches that were once mainstays of political history—such as Marxism (see Chapters 37 and 40)—have themselves been transformed in order to address contemporary concerns and new themes. Along with other trends, examining the politics of the masses, women, and marginalized people, and studying political discourse utilizing methods taken from literary studies, has helped to reframe political history for the past generation or so of scholars.<sup>2</sup>

In sum, the study of politics today is as much (or more) about the relationships of power, the dynamics of political interaction, and the nature of political ideology as it is about political protagonists. In what follows, therefore, I review what politics has meant in Judaism and Jewish history, with an eye toward identifying the ways in which Jews have understood themselves politically and in Jewish historiographical thinking. In the process, I consider how the constitutive elements of Jewish politics have evolved over the longue durée.

## Introduction: law and covenant

For a group with a break of nearly two thousand years between periods of state sovereignty, a rich textual source base for how the Jews have understood themselves as a political entity is available to scholars. We have the biblical texts, as well as other texts from the period of the ancient Jewish state that were not canonized into the

Hebrew Bible; we have the first-century scholars Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus; we have the scrolls and fragments from Qumran; we have the vast corpus of Talmudic law from both Palestine and Babylonia; we have philosophical texts, law codes, and communal records from Europe and North Africa, all of which spread and expanded dramatically with the invention of printing. Even though we possess many different kinds of sources, certain foundational political ideas about the structure of Jewish authority, justice, and law are intimately tied to Jewish theology and present in the biblical texts, as in fact it is from the biblical texts that Jews draw most of their political vocabulary (see Chapter 1). So law, for example, as articulated in the Hebrew Bible, is a divine teaching, given to the people of Israel—and only the people of Israel—and with it come many obligations (613, to be precise). These legal obligations are given a narrative structure in the Bible, based on the people of Israel having been chosen by God—the covenant with God being reenacted with each male circumcision—and reinforced through several structures of political authority and leadership including judges, prophets, priests, and kings. As Daniel Elazar and Stuart Cohen have pointed out, the numerous concepts of Jewish politics, such as expressions of covenant (*brit*), obligation (*hesed*), commonwealth (*edah*), authority (*keter*), and community (*kehilla*), that were first mentioned in the Bible have remained remarkably consistent in their literal meanings over millennia.<sup>3</sup> Elazar and Cohen, who were among the first to propose looking for a "Jewish political tradition" using methods taken from political science, see the Torah as a constitutional document and framework that Jews have altered and adapted to fit their political circumstances.

The Jews first lost sovereignty over their kingdom and Temple to the Babylonians (approximately sixth century BCE), but, in their understanding, Jerusalem was returned to them by God via the Persians (around 537 BCE). This narrative was reinforced by the success of the Maccabean revolt against the Seleucid Empire (second century BCE), when the Temple was rededicated after its desecration.<sup>4</sup> When successive revolts against the Romans led to the loss of a Jewish kingdom and the destruction of their Temple once again, Jews fully expected the pattern to repeat itself, and Jewish theology and politics adapted over time to the fact that it did not. The end of Jewish sovereignty in Judea and the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE did not mean the end of Jewish politics, if we are to understand politics to mean the internal governance of the group and how it related (and relates still) to other governing or political entities. In this, Jews remained organized politically and bound by covenants to each other and to God, as articulated in their legal and scriptural texts.<sup>5</sup> To understand the Jewish political tradition, we have to ask: why and how did Jews perpetuate being Jewish after their kingdom was soundly defeated? Their commonwealth, or community, was entirely portable and could be reconstituted anywhere with new covenants, in part because it already existed in a diaspora with several powerful scholarly and political centers (such as Alexandria, Rome, Damascus, Nehardea, and others) and because sovereignty over the Jews, in a theological and political sense, never lay with kings or judges, but rather with God (see Chapter 5).<sup>6</sup>

The idea of a political system deriving its authority from God is today commonly referred to as a theocracy. While Jews were certainly not the only ancient theocrats, Josephus may have in fact coined the term (in Greek *theokratia*), as a defense of

Jewish ritual against its critics. Josephus suggested that despite the fact that the Hasmonean ruling family had become priest-rulers, the priests did not rule the Jews because authority and sovereignty lay with God. As he wrote in *Contra Apion*:

There is endless variety in the details of the customs and laws which prevail in the world at large. To give but a summary enumeration: some peoples have entrusted the supreme political power to monarchies, others to oligarchies, yet others to the masses. Our lawgiver, however, was attracted by none of these forms of polity, but gave to his constitution the form of what—if a forced expression be permitted—may be termed a “theocracy,” placing all sovereignty and authority in the hands of God.<sup>7</sup>

Josephus wrote this passage in the wake of the Temple’s destruction, and as such he idealized the divinely sanctioned priestly rule, even in a situation absent priests or even a king.<sup>8</sup> But he also explained the idea that in the Jewish state, offenses against God were indistinguishable from offenses against the state, and were punished without distinction between secular and divine justice (or politics and theology), which is the essence of theocracy.<sup>9</sup>

The destruction of the Temple, the center of Jewish sacred space and ritual, was mourned by Jews as a cataclysmic disaster. Desire to rebuild the Temple and Jerusalem (respectively rededicated by the Romans to Jupiter, and renamed Aelia Capitolina) is evidenced in the Bar Kokhba Revolt of 132–6 CE, an uprising against Roman power that led to the further decimation of the Jewish population in what had become the Prefecture of Judea. But Jewish theology and sacred texts also provided an explanation for the Jews’ dispersion—the Jews’ sin—and a promise of messianic restoration. As Ruth Wisse puts it, “by situating their politics within a transcendent scheme of judgement, [Jews] did not have to accept the verdict of the battlefield.”<sup>10</sup> To the rabbis, the fact that the Jews no longer had a Temple did not abrogate them of their covenant with God, or their divine election. To the contrary, because God had chosen the Jews, God would restore them if they followed God’s oral and written law, and this passive messianism became the essence of rabbinic political theory.

The rabbis who wrote and compiled the Talmud shifted Jewish politics from the constitutional stage of covenant and commandment to open-ended discussion and legal interpretation of those laws’ proper application. The Jews’ constitutional laws and covenants were designed to keep Jews separate as a group, with the concept of the public good or well-being applying primarily to the Jews—an idea that served the principle of self-preservation. This was a process that was already well established, especially in Babylonia, during the periods between the Temple’s first and second destructions, and included a judicial system, applying specifically to Jews, for both Israel and the diaspora. Perhaps most importantly, *studying* that constitutional law became an ideal in and of itself for Jews in the diaspora. The biblical and rabbinic Jewish texts that together form the Jews’ legal and political constitution do not focus on an idea that Jews or others possess natural rights; rather, they consider that what makes being a Jew different from being something else are the specifically Jewish obligations, the *mitzvot*, commanded by God. And although the obligations could be

reinterpreted in new legal texts, as they were by the rabbis, the existence of those obligations bound Jews in political communities wherever they lived.<sup>11</sup>

### “The law of the kingdom is law,” autonomy, and *shadalmanut*

Since the composition of the Babylonian Talmud, the dictum that “the law of the kingdom is law” (*aitna de-malkhuta dina*) has served to facilitate the adaptations and compromises necessary to maintain the obligations of the Torah where Jews lived without holding the reins of power.<sup>12</sup> The principle was not a commandment to violate Jewish law if ordered to do so by gentile authorities. In fact, the principle was about paying taxes—Jews should pay them when ordered to do so. But what “the law of the kingdom is law” did was to grant a theocratic justification to exercise flexibility when necessary, and, since Jewish leadership and autonomy was always created through negotiation with non-Jewish authorities (see Chapter 30), the principle of “the law of the kingdom is law” only reinforced the authority of Jewish leaders over Jews. Jewish communities sought legal autonomy to be responsible for as much of Jewish legal affairs as possible, and adherence to “the law of the kingdom is law” set out a *modus vivendi* for preserving that autonomy.<sup>13</sup> In distinguishing between “the law of the kingdom” and the *law of the king*, the Talmudic principle and its medieval interpreters also established a theoretical basis for resisting the king, if his law was not in keeping with the established laws of the kingdom.<sup>14</sup> “The law of the kingdom is law” thereby established the basis upon which Jews negotiated the terms of their existence in communities around the world: in return for recognizing the authority of the state in key areas such as property and taxation, Jews would be able to preserve their judicial and societal autonomy in all other regards. Thus, Jews had a theory to which they could turn to justify submission and accommodation, when appropriate, and leaving, when necessary.

Jews possessed collective corporate autonomy in most places where they lived, from antiquity until the rise of the modern state (and, arguably, well after) (see Chapters 8, 12, and 17).<sup>15</sup> Jews required such autonomy to be able to live according to their many religious laws and customs, and non-Jewish rulers, for the purposes of taxation and management of their economies, found it easier to deal with Jews—as they did with most groups—collectively. Jewish collective autonomy was an arrangement that was codified legally in the Greek, Persian, and Roman Empires, where Jews were entitled to self-government as a political unit where they lived in sufficient numbers. Jewish autonomy was also perfectly consistent with the legal framework of the Islamic world and Christian Europe. In each place, Jews negotiated the terms of their autonomy and the privileges granted to their communal self-government, the *kehillah*. When Jews moved to new territory, such as from the Italian peninsula into the Rhine valley, and later to Poland, they received written charters detailing their privileges and obligations (with similarities to those negotiated by Christian burghers). The lay and rabbinic communal authorities maintained their power of coercion through separate courts and the ultimate threat of excommunication (*herem*). The internal governing structure that regulated Jews’ lives became particularly complex in the early modern Holy Roman Empire and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (from approximately the mid-sixteenth to the late-eighteenth centuries), where

federative supra-*kehillah* organizations (called *medinot*, or states) developed, the most famous of which was Poland's Council of Four Lands (see Chapter 12).<sup>16</sup>

Jewish diaspora politics had lacked a central authority—by necessity, as Jews were dispersed across a wide territory and in many legal systems, but also because of the nature of rabbinic Judaism. Babylonia's Jewish exilarch (the *resh galuta*, or *rosh galut*) was preserved (with breaks) into the eleventh century, but exilarch, as titular head of the Jews, applied only to that particular community (see Chapter 9). What that position represented was one manifestation of the more general Jewish political tendency to have the collective's interests represented to the non-Jewish authorities by a prominent member of the community. This *shadlanut*, or intercession, by the communities' *shadlanim*, or intercessors (the wealthiest and most prominent Jews, often in advisory positions or working for or with the non-Jewish authorities), was prevalent everywhere from Iberia to Iran, from the first century to the nineteenth (see Chapter 13). These people (always men) tended to hold dual positions within the crown and the community, and contribute the most taxes to both. The term *shadlan* (petitioner or intercessor) was only coined in the fourteenth century, but can be used, even if anachronistically, to describe how Jewish politics and diplomacy were conducted from well before then and into the nineteenth century at least.<sup>17</sup> Examples include Jewish viziers and doctors of medieval Iberia, the so-called Court Jews of the early modern German states, the official *shadlanim* appointed by the Polish *kehilla*, and the wealthy magnates of western Europe, such as the Rothschilds, Montefiores, and Hirsches. The Jews of the Regency of Algiers were represented by a Jewish notable known as the *mogaddem* and the Jews of Yemen appointed a *nasi* during the Ottoman period and after. There are many examples of *shadlanim*, but, once again, the foundation for this political strategy can be found in the biblical canon itself, perhaps most clearly in the Book of Esther. In that book the Jews of Persia come close to suffering annihilation, and the figure of Mordecai serves precisely as an intercessor on their behalf. "For Mordecai the Jew ranked next to King Ahasuerus and was highly regarded by the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brethren; he sought the good of his people and interceded for the welfare of all his kindred."<sup>18</sup>

### Political integration or autoemancipation?

As European states began to modernize and centralize in the eighteenth century, the European state's legal construction shifted from the rights and duties of the group (especially in terms of taxation) to those of the individual (see Chapter 17). While Jews clung to certain corporate privileges, a debate emerged about the suitability and desirability of the Jews for legal equality with Christians. Under what conditions could Jewish civil equality be granted? What autonomy, if any, could Jews keep? With the integration of Jews into the Christian civil body politic, would Jewish politics end?

The seventeenth-century philosopher Baruch Spinoza (or Benedict de Spinoza) (see Chapter 14) and the eighteenth-century philosopher Moses Mendelssohn (see Chapters 16 and 44) may have been the first to argue against the prevailing Jewish political arrangement, in which the Jews had autonomy as a community and lay and political leaders could wield compulsion through the threat of excommunication

and with the imprimatur of the state. When Spinoza challenged the portability of Jewish sovereignty, and with it divine election, he found himself excommunicated. In the *Tractatus Theologic-Politicus*, Spinoza explained that God elected the Jews by giving them a law meant to rule a sovereign state, and would do so again, through human construction, only were the Jews to re-establish that sovereignty.<sup>19</sup> But his purpose was to demonstrate the lack of validity of Jewish political covenants in his own time, not to advocate a restitution of political sovereignty.<sup>20</sup> Mendelssohn weighed directly in on the debate over Jewish civil equality in Prussia, arguing that Jewish political autonomy should not be preserved, even (or especially) with Jewish civic equality. Mendelssohn argued that Jews cannot have true political equality in a state where the power of compulsion over the individual is given by the state to religious leaders. "I shall forbear speaking of the danger," said Mendelssohn, "there is in entrusting *any one* with the power of excommunication—with the abuse inseparable from the right of anathema, as indeed with every other form of church discipline, or ecclesiastical power."<sup>21</sup> As Allan Arkush writes:

Mendelssohn was the first Jewish thinker to declare it to be entirely up to the individual Jew, and not his rabbi or his communal leaders, to determine whether he would fulfill his duty in accordance with its demands. He thus showed, for the first time, how one could render the Jewish religion basically compatible with liberalism.<sup>22</sup>

As Arkush points out, however, Mendelssohn gave up on neither the messianic expectation of a future theocracy in Israel with a "Mosaic constitution," nor the duty of the individual to live by Jewish law.

Everywhere that Jews moved toward civil equality, such equality for Jewish individuals came at a cost of some degree of collective autonomy (though I would argue this process was never complete). As liberalism, with its freedom of conscience, became the bedrock of revolutionary states in France and the United States in the eighteenth century, followed by many others in the nineteenth century, the problem for Jews in Western states came to be how to reconcile the theocracy at the heart of Jewish political theology with the end of state-sanctioned religious coercion (see Chapter 17). Liberalism challenged the theology that had acted to preserve Judaism in the diaspora—that Jews everywhere pray for the same redemption to the same land, and behave according to laws intended to set them apart and that redemption (eventually) in motion. Nonetheless, Jews did adapt, and took advantage of opportunities offered by liberal and liberalizing states to gain education, join the professions, take up the language and culture of state, and where possible enter government.<sup>23</sup> What developed in the nineteenth century as states picked away at the legal basis for Jewish autonomy was a new politics of integration. Jews everywhere came to see a path to "emancipation" (to use the Marxian term that became prevalent) (see Chapter 17) and sought to participate in the politics of the states in which they lived, as citizens or equal subjects rather than as Jews. Nonetheless, as several scholars have pointed out, such integrationist impulses may also have paved the groundwork for modern transnational Jewish political organization. The efforts of prominent Jews to respond to the blood libel against the Jews in Damascus in 1840, the founding of the Alliance



Israélite Universelle in 1860; British-, German-, and American-Jewish efforts to solve the "Jewish Question" in Romania or respond to anti-Jewish violence in Russia—all might on the surface appear to be examples of *shiddlunt*, but can as easily be seen as the beginnings of a collectivist and international Jewish politics that would accelerate in the early twentieth century.<sup>24</sup>

Serious and concerted efforts at collectivist Jewish politics began at the turn of the twentieth century, in particular in Eastern Europe, and have continued to this day (too many to properly account for in a short article). Jewish nationalism developed in several overlapping but distinct political movements, including political Zionism, several forms of socialist Zionism, spiritual or cultural Zionism, and several forms of non-territorial and diaspora nationalism (see Chapters 16, 18, and 43).<sup>25</sup> What all of these forms of Jewish nationalism shared was a belief that the Jews are a national group entitled to the legal and political rights of other national groups, in a world transforming, especially between 1914 and 1948, into one where the nation-state became the dominant principle of political organization. Jewish nationalists also believed in the principle of "autoemancipation," first articulated by Leon Pinsker in 1882, which called for Jews to take their emancipation into their own hands rather than attempting to prove their qualifications for citizenship in the states in which they lived.<sup>26</sup> Sovereignty, in all of these forms of Jewish nationalism (with the notable exception of religious Zionism), transferred from God to the people, and ultimately, with the creation of Israel, to the Jewish state.

Jewish socialists developed distinctly Jewish socialist movements that laid claim to Jewish workers' rights as equal members of the international proletariat, and therefore equal rights to a Jewish vernacular and proletarian culture.<sup>27</sup> Those who saw themselves as the defenders of Jewish tradition—the Orthodox—mimicked the Jewish politics of their day and developed their own political movements to secure their defenses against weakening religious ties, first in Europe, then in Israel and the United States.<sup>28</sup> And of course, the politics of integration did not end with the turn to nationalist, socialist, and religious politics; in post-World War II Europe, the Americas, and the Soviet Union, Jewish politics either co-existed with state politics, or came second to it.

What the emergence of liberalism, and indeed socialism and communism, really complicates is the question of whether Jewish engagement in the civic politics of the state is a form of Jewish politics. This question tends to be most acute in places where Jews had or still have the greatest opportunity to integrate politically and socially in the state, such as the United States, France, and the Soviet Union. For example, James Loeffler has recently argued that in viewing the American Jewish political experience as first integrative and then Zionist, historians have not taken sufficiently seriously the efforts by American Jews during both world wars to create Jewish national and representational institutions in the United States. Loeffler argues that these efforts to create a representative and representational body for American Jews—first the American Jewish Congress in 1918 and then the American Jewish Conference in 1943—at the time reflected broad-scale Jewish participation in an effort at distinctly American Jewish national politics.<sup>29</sup> In the years leading up to the creation of the State of Israel, the politics of the world's largest Jewish community shifted toward organizational advocacy for and coordination with the new state. If participation in

Jewish communal institutions or Jewish advocacy for Israel can, much of the time, take the form of Jewish politics, few would consider the politics of Jewish Democrats and Republicans in the United States to be explicitly Jewish, outside of the basic democratic norm of "identity politics." Jews who organized to defend Alfred Dreyfus were engaging in Jewish politics, but to see the election of French socialist prime minister Léon Blum as a triumph of Jewish politics would be to accept the argument of anti-Semites.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the success of Zionists in securing major diplomatic successes in the Balfour Declaration and then in international bodies such as the League of Nations and the United Nations must be fairly considered transformational for Jewish politics. But what about the *creation* of the bodies of international law in which Jewish lawyers played a significant part?<sup>31</sup> Perhaps most of all, what about Israeli politics? When, if ever, is the settling of Israel's political questions *Jewish*?

State sovereignty in Israel, a state that proclaimed itself to be founding a "Jewish state" (*medinat Yehudi*), had to contend with an entirely new Jewish political dynamic. On the one hand, much about running a state is not Jewish per se, and the ideological divisions within Israeli politics, for its first 20 years at the least, centered primarily on economic and security questions. But, on the other hand, Jewish questions within the state—over who is Jewish, how to regulate religion, and the role of Judaism within the state—inevitably became national political questions, and continue to be so today. A significant theocratic movement always existed in Zionism, among the Lovers of Zion who predated the political Zionist movement, the Mizrahi wing of political Zionism, and religious Zionists (known in Israel as the national religious), especially after 1967.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, a significant percentage of non-Zionist Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) Jews reconciled themselves to the permanence (and even necessity) of the Israeli state, and have participated politically in the state's electoral politics to represent their interests.

With statehood (or, in fact, before, during the British Mandate), rabbinic authorities also had to reconcile Jewish law to participation by non-Jews in a sovereign Jewish entity, when there was nothing within the Jewish legal or political tradition from which to draw a concept such as equality before the law. Of course, the easier solution may be to treat the State of Israel as a liberal democratic state that is not, in a religious sense, Jewish; however, this is difficult to do when the state itself proclaims itself to be the Jewish state, is located in Israel, appropriates Jewish symbols as state symbols, and was born with the support of religious traditionalists through the striking of a "status quo." The question of whether a reconstituted sovereign Jewish state should be a liberal state, a theocracy, or somehow both, suddenly became a practical question in 1948, and has not been resolved to this day (see Chapters 21 and 43).<sup>33</sup>

### Interpreting Jewish politics

Separating Jewish political history from Jewish politics is a very difficult task. Jews only began to examine and write about their political history when their political future first became an open question. And it was not until the emergence of competing Jewish political ideologies at the end of the nineteenth century that some Jews came to take an interest in what it meant for them to constitute a political unit and the ideal form of Jewish political organization and representation. In that sense, most

writing about Jewish political history has tended to be formulated based on the concerns of present ideological or political needs.<sup>34</sup> Such presentist concerns stretch back to take in how one considers the two armed revolts against Roman rule that led to the end of Jewish sovereignty in Judea, which as events have come to form a dividing point in Jewish history. Did the destruction of the Temple mean the end of political sovereignty, and therefore the end of Jewish political history (the position of Spinoza and the historian Heinrich Graetz)? Was it the beginning of a kind of roving sovereignty, where a new kind of nation took form (the position of the historian and political theorist Simon Dubnov)? Or did "Jews" per se not exist until what we know as Judaism emerged, prefigured by the political Jewsans? The last question is of particular contemporary relevance, as Adele Reinhartz has argued that its intent is to "rupture the vital connection—the persistence of identity—between ancient and modern Jews."<sup>35</sup>

As much as historians do not agree about the continuity or rupture between Jewish politics in ancient Israel and what followed in the diaspora, historians also still do not agree on the root causes of Jewish political transformation at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Both before World War II and after, Jewish nationalist scholars of all varieties tended to see the development of Jewish nationalism as a reaction to a deep-seated European antisemitism that spilled into more modern and violent political forms (see Chapters 16 and 17). Zionist socialists saw the same problem, but with origins in Europe's economic transformation. Opponents of Zionism, especially Marxists (see Chapter 37), tended to see Jewish nationalism as reactionary, bourgeois, and regressive, as opposed to the universalist, internationalist, and progressive Jewish socialist movements. Scholars still have a difficult time separating their knowledge of the fate of the Jews of Europe in the Holocaust from their evaluation of the experience of Jews politically in Europe before that time. The perception of the Jews' long history of political passivity and powerlessness is not only a reflection of Zionist historiography (see Chapter 43), but is in fact a position held by Zionists and non-Zionists alike. After the decimation of European Jewry, the position that Europe was irredeemably antisemitic, and thus that all efforts of Jews to politically adapt to European liberalism (or, less discussed, North African and Middle Eastern liberalization) had been misguided, became the dominant viewpoint among both the American Jewish and Israeli public.<sup>36</sup> The problem with this viewpoint is that in failing to address the historical contingencies that resulted in both the Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel, it expects a certain political awareness bordering on clairvoyance on the part of not just most, but all, of European Jewry. Fortunately, more complex work assessing the full dimensions of the Jewish political experience historically is being developed by historians, political scientists, and legal scholars, though there is still much more work to be done.<sup>37</sup>

For a full appreciation of the factors at play in Jewish politics it is helpful to keep in mind that Jewish political power has always been derived from a combination of outside legitimization and internal authority. As David Biale has argued, Jewish sovereignty—whether in the ancient Jewish kingdom, the diaspora, or the State of Israel—must always be understood as tenuous and affected by its imperial context. This dynamic is present in the biblical texts themselves, no less than the political ideas

of covenant or theocracy. The northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians and the southern Kingdom of Judah was not, for the simple reason that Judah chose to continue to pay tribute and not (yet) revolt. As Biale suggests, Judah preserved its independence only by agreeing to limits on its sovereignty.<sup>38</sup> Jewish politics has thus been marked consistently, for close to 3,000 years, by negotiations with non-Jews to preserve various elements of Jewish sovereignty, autonomy, and self-rule, while economically integrating and socially acculturating into the societies in and among which Jews lived. Over the course of Jewish history, every element of the Jewish political tradition, from covenant to community, has been adapted in accordance with political circumstances, but the key elements of that political tradition are all present in the biblical texts.

## Notes

- 1 See, for example, Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 70–108.
- 2 Consider Susan Pedersen, "What Is Political History Now?" in *What Is History Now?* ed. David Cannadine (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 36–56.
- 3 Daniel Judah Elazar and Stuart Cohen, *The Jewish Polity: Jewish Political Organization from Biblical Times to the Present* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 7–20. Efforts to craft a political theory for the Jews, as a people and a polity, include David Novak, *The Jewish Social Contract: An Essay in Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), and Chaim Gans, *A Political Theory for the Jewish People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).
- 4 What actually happened during the Maccabean revolts is still hotly contested among historians, but the narrative of imperial oppression, Temple desecration, and Jewish victory and purification with help from God is how the events have been memorialized through the festival of Hanukkah. For a new historical interpretation see Jon Ma, "Re-Examining Hanukkah," in *The Marginalia Review of Books* (July 9, 2013). <http://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/re-examining-hanukkah/3/>.
- 5 See Michael Walzer et al., eds., *The Jewish Political Tradition*, vol. 1, *Authority* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), and idem et al., eds., *The Jewish Political Tradition*, vol. 2, *Membership* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).
- 6 On the canonization of the biblical texts and the formation of late-Temple and post-Temple Judaism, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014) and Michael L. Sadow, *How the Bible Became Holy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).
- 7 In Walzer et al., eds., *The Jewish Political Tradition*, vol. 1, 189–90.
- 8 See Clifford Orwin, "Commentary: Flavius Josephus on Priesthood," in *ibid.*, 191–95.
- 9 Moses Mendelssohn later made this point in his work *Jensalem*, stating: "In this original constitution, state and religion were not conjoined, but one, not connected, but identical." Moses Mendelssohn, *Jensalem, Or, On Religious Power and Judaism*, trans. Allan Arkush (Haver: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 1983), 128.
- 10 Ruth R. Wisse, *Jews and Power* (New York: Nextbook/Schocken, 2007), 13.
- 11 As Robert Cover observes, "to be one who acts out of obligation is the closest thing there is to a Jewish definition of completion as a person within the community." Robert M. Cover, "Obligation: A Jewish Jurisprudence of the Social Order," in *Law, Politics, and Morality*, ed. Michael Walzer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 5.

- 12 Babylonian Talmud Bava Kama 113a–b, in Walzer et al., eds., *The Jewish Political Tradition*, vol. 1, 435–36. The principle appears in three other instances in the Babylonian Talmud: Nedarim 28a, Gittin 10b, Baba Kama 113a–b, and Baba Batra 54b–55a.
- 13 See David Biale, “Autonomy and Modernity” in *Law, Politics, and Modernity in Judaism*, ed. Michael Walzer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 52–54.
- 14 David Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 54–57.
- 15 The most comprehensive treatment of the subject is the three-volume collection of essays on Jewish self-rule from the ancient period to the modern: *Kehol Yisrael: ha-shilton ha-'atsmi ha-Yehudi le-dorotav*, vol. 1 (the ancient period), ed. Isaiah Gafni (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 2001); vol. 2 (the Middle Ages and early modern period), ed. Avraham Grossman and Yosef Kaplan (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 2004); vol. 3 (modern period), ed. Israel Bartal (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 2004).
- 16 See Louis Finkelstein, *Jewish Self-Government in the Middle Ages* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1924); Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*, trans. Bernard Dov Cooperman (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 63–112; Robert Chazan, “Medieval Jewish Political Institutions: The Foundation of Their Authority,” in *The Quest for Utopia: Jewish Political Ideas and Institutions through the Ages*, ed. Zvi Y. Giteelman (Ammonk: M.E. Shapiro, 1992), 67–79; Antony Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, vol. 1, 1350–1881 (Oxford: Portland: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010), 40–58; David B. Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 57–98; Gershon David Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 79–98.
- 17 Eli Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics: Political Tradition and Political Reconstruction in the Jewish Community of Tanis Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 20.
- 18 Esther 10:3, from *Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985), 1468.
- 19 Benedictus de Spinoza (Baruch Spinoza), *Theological-Political Treatise*, trans. Samuel Shirley, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 2001).
- 20 See Julie E. Cooper, “The Turn to Tradition in the Study of Jewish Politics,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 19:1 (2016): 67–87, here 83.
- 21 Moses Mendelssohn, “On the Curtailment of Jewish Juridical Autonomy (1782),” in *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, 3rd ed., eds. Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 95.
- 22 Allan Arkush, “Theocracy, Liberalism, and Modern Judaism,” *The Review of Politics* 71:4 (2009): 637–58, here 645.
- 23 For comparisons of how this process took place in different political contexts, see Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson, eds., *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Jonathan Frankel and Steven J. Zipperstein, eds., *Assimilation and Community: The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and the important essays by Maud Mandel, “Assimilation and Cultural Exchange in Modern Jewish History,” in *Rethinking European Jewish History*, ed. Jeremy Cohen and Moshe Rosman (Oxford: Portland: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2009): 72–92, and Jonathan Frankel, “Modern Jewish Politics East and West (1840–1939),” and Paula Hymman, “Was there a ‘Jewish Politics’ in Western and Central Europe?” in *The Quest for Utopia: Jewish Political Ideas and Institutions through the Ages*, 81–117.
- 24 See, respectively, on these topics, Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair: “Ritual Murder,” Politics, and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge: New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997);

- Lisa Moses Left, *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity: The Rise of Jewish Internationalism in Nineteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878–1938* (Cambridge: New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Jonathan Frankel, “The Jewish Socialists and the American Jewish Congress Movement,” *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 16 (1976): 202–341; Arthur A. Goren, *The Politics and Public Culture of American Jews*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).
- 25 The literature on the varieties and manifestations of Jewish nationalism is immense. A small selection includes Ezra Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917* (Cambridge: New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin-de-Siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Yisrael Bartal, *Kozak le-Beduy: “am” ve-“eret” ba-le-umiyut Ha-Yehudi* (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 2007); idem., *Le-Taken ‘am: ne’orot ve-le-umiyut be-mizrah elyotro* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2013); Gideon Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 1995); Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); Simon Rabinovitch, ed., *Jews and Diaspora Nationalism: Writings on Jewish Peoplehood in Europe and the United States* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2012). Comprehensive and up-to-date annotated bibliographies can be found at *Oxford Bibliographies in Jewish Studies*, ed. Naomi Seidman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015–present), [www.oxfordbibliographies.com/obo/page/jewish-studies](http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/obo/page/jewish-studies), including James Loeffler, “Modern Jewish Politics,” Derek Penslar, “Zionism from Its Inception to 1948,” and David Sorkin, “Emancipation.” The bibliography to my book *Jewish Rights, National Rites: Nationalism and Autonomy in Late Imperial and Revolutionary Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014) is available at <https://sites.google.com/site/jewishrightsnationalism/bibliography>.
- 26 For “Autoemancipation” in English see Arthur Hertzberg, ed., *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997).
- 27 See Ezra Mendelsohn, ed., *Essential Papers on Jews and the Left* (New York: New York University Press, 1997); Yon Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Henry Jack Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia from Its Origins to 1905* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972); Tony Michaels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Tony Michaels, ed., *Jewish Radicals: A Documentary History* (New York: New York University Press, 2012); David E. Fishman, *The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005); Zvi Y. Giteelman, *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics: The Jewish Sections of the CPSU, 1917–1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972); Jack Jacobs, *On Socialists and “the Jewish Question” after Marx* (New York: New York University Press, 1992).
- 28 See Gershon C. Bacon, *The Politics of Tradition: Agudat Yisrael in Poland, 1916–1939* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, the Hebrew University, 1996).
- 29 See James Loeffler, *Rooted Cosmopolitans: Jews and Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).
- 30 James Loeffler, “Nationalism without a Nation? On the Invisibility of American Jewish Politics,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 105:3 (2015): 367–98.
- 31 Among other works, the Dreyfus Affair is treated at length in Hannah Arendt’s enormously influential work *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), 89–120.

- 32 See Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), and Yehudah Mirsky, *Rav Kook: Mystic in a Time of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).
  - 33 For a sample of the enormous literature on this topic see Gideon Sapir, "Religion and State in Israel," *Oxford Bibliographies in Jewish Studies*.
  - 34 See Michael Brenner, *Prophets of the Past: Interpreters of Jewish History*, trans. Steven Rendall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).
  - 35 Adele Reinhartz, "The Vanishing Jews of Antiquity," *The Marginalia Review of Books* (June 24, 2014): <http://marginaliareviewbooks.org/vanishing-jews-antiquity-adele-reinhartz/>, and "Jew and Judean: A Forum on Politics and Historiography in the Translation of Ancient Texts," *The Marginalia Review of Books* (August 26, 2014): <http://marginaliareviewbooks.org/jew-judean-forum/>.
  - 36 Perhaps the best example of a recent scholarly work with this perspective is David Vital, *A People Apart: A Political History of the Jews in Europe, 1789–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Vital articulated this position directly (in an exchange with me) in the *Times Literary Supplement* in the following words: "the great mass of the old, long gone Eastern and Central European Jewry was marked in its day by systemic failure to take clear and serious measure of its condition—to see, before all else, that where endemic penury is upheld by humiliating and legally impenetrable structures of ghettoization and by enforced impotence when under violent attack, the results cannot be other than soul-destroying. Worse, still were the long-term consequences of ordinary Jewish men and women's reluctance to look hard at leaders whose timidity, habits of mind, lack of imagination and (honourable exceptions aside) personal self-seeking, too, had compounded general failure and inherent vulnerability." See <http://blogs.bu.edu/srabinov/2013/11/12/vital-vs-rabinovitch/>.
  - 37 See Cooper, "The Turn to Tradition in the Study of Jewish Politics"; David N. Myers, "Rethinking Sovereignty and Autonomy: New Currents in the History of Jewish Nationalism," *Transversal* 13:1 (2015): 44–51, doi:10.1515/tra-2015-0006; Loeffler, "Modern Jewish Politics."
  - 38 Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History*, 13, 16.
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