

THE THEMES OF THE *JEWISH POLITICAL STUDIES REVIEW*

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The founding of the *Jewish Political Studies Review* marks yet another major step in the emergence of the field which can be said to have begun twenty years ago with the publication of the first bibliographic essay on the subject in the *American Jewish Yearbook*. In the intervening 22 years, courses in Jewish political studies have been introduced in over twenty universities around the world, a basic literature has been published, and some half a dozen conferences have been held to address issues in the field. Regular sessions are held at the World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, the annual meeting of the Association for Jewish Studies in Boston, and at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association. An annual Workshop in the Study and Teaching of the Jewish Political Tradition, that brings together scholars from throughout the world, is entering its seventh year. At least one systematic theory has been developed to frame the field and parts of it are already being challenged by younger scholars, a sure sign of having "arrived."

With all of the foregoing, the obvious next step is the establishment of a journal as a vehicle for further stimulation and dissemination of scholarship in the field, whether empirical research, political thought, or systematic commentary on Jewish public affairs. The *Jewish Political Studies Review* is designed to serve that purpose. The interests of this journal will be as broad as the field itself — in space, in time, and in subject matter.

The work that has been done in the field to date demonstrates that the Jews continued to exist as a polity throughout the years of exile and dispersion. Nevertheless, in terms of conscious perceptions of matters political, the field emerged because of the decision on the part of large numbers of Jews to become political as Jews, and not just as individuals, in their respective societies. The Zionist revolution, the establishment of the State of Israel and the carry-over in the diaspora, particularly the United States, some fifteen or twenty years after the establishment of the State of Israel, gave all this an additional impetus.

The study of Jewish modes of self-government, political perceptions, and exercise of political responsibilities is the subject of Jewish political studies and therefore of this journal. Our approach to the

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field rests upon certain understandings. The first is that the Jewish people is a corporate entity by definition, that it must find some way to function as a polity under any circumstances in order for it to pursue its interests and aspirations, whether these be defined as survivalism, as seems to be the case for much of contemporary Jewry, or whether they be defined in traditional theo-political terms as the pursuit of *malkhut shamayim* (the Kingdom of Heaven), or anything in between. Jews sooner or later — usually sooner rather than later — come to the conclusion that the Jewish people must function as a polity in order to pursue their normative ends. Therefore, the Jewish people will always seek ways to function as a polity.

Central to the Jewish political tradition is the idea of covenant (*brit* in Hebrew) and its application to the world of action. The constitution of the Jewish people as a whole reflects a mixture of kinship and consent. In other words, people born into a particular set of tribes consented through covenant to function as a community. One can read the Sinai Covenant from a political point of view as the establishment of Israel as both *am* (people) and *edah* (congregation or assembled community). In Jewish political terminology harking back to the Bible, an *am* is a nation (*goy*) with a God-given vocation. For the Jews, that vocation was established by covenant. The *am* becomes the kin consenting while the *edah* is the organized product of that consent — the polity.

The second understanding is that exploration of the Jewish polity can be undertaken with the tools of political science. We are not merely reviewing Jewish history, philosophy, or sociology under another “hat,” however much we draw upon these sister disciplines. Rather, we are bringing our own tools and perspectives, and, therefore, adding another dimension to understanding Jewish phenomena.

The third understanding is that Jews have continued to function as a polity throughout their history. One of the most intellectually interesting aspects of the discipline is the study of the continuing adaptation of what is, after all, the oldest extant polity in the Western world. Its closest rival in longevity is the Catholic Church, some 1,500 years younger at least. Interestingly, these two oldest polities of the Western world operate on diametrically different principles of organization with regard to the allocation of authority and the organization of power. The Catholic Church is hierarchical; the Jewish people, covenantal or federal (based on the Latin *foedus* = covenant). The intellectual opportunities for exploring the adaptation of two long-lasting political frameworks operating on such diametrically opposed principles is in itself a potential contribution to the study of political science.

In the very first essay on the subject, the subfields of Jewish political studies were delineated and listed. That list bears repeating as properly defining the scope of this journal:

Jewish Political Thought
 Religious Movements, Ideologies and Public Persuasions
 Defining the Boundaries of Jewish Society
 Jewish Political Culture
 Jewish Political Behavior
 Jewish Political Organization
 Jewish Public Law
 Jewish Political and Communal Institutions
 Jewish Organizations and Interest Groups
 Civic Education
 Public Personalities
 Israel
 Subdivisions of the Jewish People
 Country, Community and Area Studies
 Intercommunity Relations
 External Relations
 The Course of Jewish Public Affairs
 Contemporary Issues
 Research Approaches and Methods

As the foregoing list indicates, Jewish political studies is both a subfield of Jewish studies and an area within political science and will inevitably continue to point in both directions, draw from both sources, and provide a synthesis between the two. What is surprising is how politics has been in so many respects the cinderella of Jewish studies. It is perhaps less surprising that Jewish political affairs other than those relating to the State of Israel as a political system have escaped the attention of most political scientists. Nevertheless, in both cases the disciplines are the poorer as a result and a major area of Jewish, and therefore human, activity and thought ignored.

The *Jewish Political Studies Review* welcomes articles on historic and contemporary phenomena within its range of interests reflecting the results of empirical research, the analysis of political ideas, normative and empirical theory, political behavior and policy studies. On these pages we hope to explore the structure and functioning of Jewish political institutions, whether in contemporary Israel, previous Jewish states, or diaspora Jewish communities, past and present. We are interested in Jewish political behavior, both within the framework of Jewish politics and because of the unique character of the Jews as a diaspora people interacting with other civilizations on the latter's own territory in relation to their host countries. We are concerned with issues of Jewish public policy. In short, nothing that deals with the Jewish people or Jews, functioning in their political capacities, is necessarily foreign to us.

While we are particularly concerned with scholarship, we are also

planning to deal with the teaching of Jewish political studies, at first through a symposium on the subject and then in other ways as well. We also intend to reach out to those active in the field of Jewish public affairs to hear from them, whether via first-hand reports regarding policy issues or the functioning of institutions or in the form of commentary on same. From time to time we will publish important documents with appropriate commentary and/or annotation. We intend to keep track of the literature of Jewish political studies through an active and serious book review section which will give appropriate attention to books, public reports of significance, and, where appropriate, articles that deserve special attention because of their importance to the field.

Our first issue reflects something of the range of subjects encompassed by Jewish political studies: Jewish political thought, tradition, institutions and behavior, and includes material on the biblical, Second Commonwealth, Rabbinic, and contemporary periods. We begin with three articles setting forth elements of a conceptual framework for the field. Ella Belfer of Bar-Ilan University examines the classic question of Jewish politics, the nature of *malkhut shamayim* or theocracy in "The Jewish People and the Kingdom of Heaven: A Study of Jewish Theocracy." Dr. Belfer explores not only the ties between *malkhut* (rule) and *shamayim* (heaven), but more important, the tensions between them which lie at the basis of the classic Jewish political enterprise. Stuart A. Cohen, also of Bar-Ilan, explores the classic division of powers or, more accurately, domains in Jewish politics in "*Keter* as a Jewish Political Symbol: Origins and Implications." There he adds to his previous explorations of the division of authority and powers among the three *keterim*. Gordon Freeman addresses another classic theme in "The Language of Jewish Political Discourse." Dr. Freeman examines Jewish political expression through prayer. His article adds to those of Drs. Belfer and Cohen to advance our understanding of the vocabulary of Jewish politics.

We then turn to two studies of the Bible, the classic Jewish political text and the original source for the exploration of the Jewish political experience and the ideas which inform it. In a now classic piece first published fifteen years ago as a working paper by the Center for Jewish Community Studies/Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, "Interpretation of Genesis," the late Leo Strauss examines the biblical account of creation in light of the tension between philosophy and faith through revelation. In doing so he provides us with a methodology for reaching out to the political teachings of the Bible. This writer then examines "The Book of Joshua as a Political Classic" in an extensive and detailed analysis of the most empirically political of the Bible's political utopias. The Book of Joshua deals with a wide range of practical political issues in a realistic manner.

From the Bible we jump to contemporary Israel. In an article

particularly appropriate during the state's 40th anniversary year, Nathan Yanai of Haifa University examines "Ben-Gurion's Concept of *Mamlahutiut* and the Forming Reality of the State of Israel." Dr. Yanai explores Ben-Gurion's expectations from statehood, his efforts to translate those expectations into reality through his "*mamlahutiut*" policy, and how he had to adjust to the realities of the new state.

We are beginning as a semi-annual publication with the intention of becoming a quarterly as soon as possible. In both our present framework and subsequently, we plan to publish open issues dealing with a wide variety of subjects and special issues focusing in on particular topics. Our editorial board is drawn from a variety of subfields within Jewish political studies and academic institutions so as to give us the broadest possible scope in matters of approach and opinion.

While the *Jewish Political Studies Review* will normally publish articles of standard length, we have no formal length limitations. If a subject deserves more extensive treatment, we will publish articles of considerably greater length. If only a few pages are needed, we will publish short pieces as research notes, comments, or in some other appropriate format. We welcome submissions in all these various fields and formats. Our basic requirements are that manuscripts be sound in their scholarship and clear in their presentation so that our journal will be both academic and readable; a contribution to scholarship, yet lively; of interest not only to the academic community, but to those who thoughtfully engage in Jewish public affairs. We look forward to developing a continuing dialogue with you, our readers, many if not most of whom should also be our contributors.