

**"באמשטרדם הגיתי את מדינת הלאום היהודית..."
שפינוזה והזהות היהודית הלאומית**

אליעזר שביד

**"In Amsterdam I Created the Idea of a Jewish State...":
Spinoza and National Jewish Identity**

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Spinoza was the first philosopher to classify Judaism as nationalism according to the modern secular understanding of the term, and not as religion. He showed that the original laws of the Torah of Moses were as a state constitution directed exclusively toward down-to-earth objectives. God was the king, but the world was not theocratic because the kingdom of God was not established as a church; that is, Moses did not consider himself, nor did he appoint beneath him, a leader that presumed to personify the authority of God, who acts and supervises directly (or through the laws of nature).

Therefore, according to this understanding, the original constitution of Moses was the constitution of a democratic state, although incomplete. Because of the basic problem it contained (the lack of an institution for the overall sovereign authority), it led twice to the destruction of the state of the Jews, and afterwards to the development of a theocracy by diaspora rabbinic leaders, on the one hand, and by the Christian Church, on the other hand. Spinoza fought against the theocratic rule of the rabbis of his era in the Amsterdam community and against the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, he expressed his opinion that when proper democratic states would arise in Europe, the Jews would be able to return to their land and prepare for their third state.

This essay explores Spinoza's views on Judaism and his influence as a source preceding the rise of secular Zionism. It points to two aspects of influence in this direction: the aspect of thought that pointed out the positive social foundations that existed, according to Spinoza, in the laws of Moses and the words of the prophets (Moses Hess); and the aspect of thought that expressed the criticism directed at rabbinic diaspora Judaism (thinkers of the secular, radical Enlightenment in Eastern Europe). These two directions of influence came together in Ben-Gurion's statement that Spinoza was the first prophet of secular Zionism.

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