

## SPEAKER ABSTRACTS

### WORKSHOP ON THE JEWISH RECEPTION OF JOSEPHUS IN THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES IN WESTERN EUROPE

The following individuals will be participating in this workshop, to be held in Oxford, at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies in Yarnton Manor, on June 17-18, 2013.

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**Jacob Abolafia, University of Cambridge**

*Josephus, Josephism, and Spinoza's Critique of the Hebrew Republic*

For a brief moment, in some circles in early modern Europe, Flavius Josephus was considered among the most important ancient authorities on politics. Selden, Grotius, Cunaeus, and an assortment of other theologians, lawyers, and antiquarian scholars turned to Josephus again and again as a crucial link between the Classical pagan world they so admired and monotheistic “sacred history”. These readers of Josephus have recently come to the fore as so-called “political Hebraists” and the interpretation of Josephus has been recognised as a crucial element in constructing theories of politics in the early modern era. This paper will begin by taking a closer look at Josephus' role in “Hebrew Republic” literature and asking whether the use of Josephus might be a marker of certain shared political and intellectual commitments. Much in the way that the study of Tacitus came to stand for certain republican arguments and ideas (Tacitism), this paper will suggest that the use of Josephus was a recognisable and important element in a certain strain of political thinking in the Netherlands in the 17th century, a strain that will be tentatively termed “Josephism”.

The second part of this paper will focus on Baruch Spinoza, and the place of Josephus and “Josephism” in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. It will be argued that Spinoza's novel use of historical and textual criticism to criticise and debunk the myth of the theocratic Israelite polity was paradoxically both a contribution to and destruction of the Dutch Christian “Hebrew Republic” tradition, and that the engagement with Josephus, the second most-frequently cited author in the TTP, is a pivotal point in Spinoza's argument. Spinoza performs a lengthy and subtle analysis of “theocracy”, a word and concept forever linked to its first appearance in Josephus (especially in the minds of the “Josephists”). The goal of Spinoza's analysis is to show how, whatever its supposed benefits, “theocracy” is ultimately far more flawed as a political regime than its supporters suppose. In making his point, Spinoza sets out a rigorous new method for thinking about the state, a method which leads to a more radically democratic positive political philosophy than that imagined by any of the “Josephists”.

Spinoza's political and philosophical vision would prove definitive for the subsequent history of the modern age, but his was a method that ultimately left little place for Josephus as an exemplary model for later thinkers. The way in which Spinoza's historico-critical analysis of Israelite political history sets itself up *against* Josephus may prove to be a rich moment for thinking not only about the differences between Spinoza's use of Josephus and the usages of his Christian contemporaries, but also an opportunity to look more closely at the political elements of Josephus' thought itself. For, after all, it was this potential for political thinking that the early moderns found most interesting in Josephus, and it may be precisely by viewing Josephus through these early-modern eyes that current scholars may find new promising avenues for their own research.

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**Jonathan Elukin, Trinity College**

*Josephus and the Miracle of Jewish History*

Academic and popular histories of the Jews multiplied dramatically, particularly in English, in the 18th and 19th centuries. They became fundamental sources for exploring the early history of the Jews as well as the background for debates about the origins of Christianity. They provided academic trappings for continuing discussions about the truth of Christianity in a post-Enlightenment world. Many of those works drew heavily upon translations, summaries or abridgments of Josephus' writings. However, the story of the transmission of Josephus is more complicated than simply tracking the appearance of modern editions of Josephus' collected works. Josephus became part of the popular discussion of Jewish history through the survival and use of Jacques Basnage's *History of the Jews*, which had presented itself as both a summary and a continuation of Josephus' narrative of Jewish history. Basnage's work itself was also abridged, plagiarized, summarized, and integrated into later works on Jewish history (often as supplements to editions of Josephus) providing another avenue for versions of Josephus to enter contemporary historical culture. Millman's *History of the Jews*, in particular, relied heavily on Basnage and thus on Josephus, to construct what became a standard narrative of Jewish history for the English-speaking world. This paper will: 1, survey the range of texts that brought Josephus into post-Enlightenment historical literature, 2, discuss the impact these versions had on the understanding of Josephus, and 3, explore how these reflections of Josephus shaped contemporary visions of Jewish history. The textual afterlife of Josephus was part of the larger project of domesticating Jewish history and employing it as a way to express internal Christian issues.

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**Louise Hecht, Centrum Judaistických Studií**

*The Rediscovery of Josephus in the Bohemian Lands*

In 1802, a group of young Prague maskilim set out to publish the first modern German-language journal issued by and for Jews, the *Jüdisch-deutsche Monatschrift*. The articles of this monthly covered a wide range of subjects, which reflected the agenda of general and Jewish Enlightenment. Although the *Monatschrift* was written in flawless high-German (printed in Hebrew letters), it was clearly modeled on the Hebrew-language *Ha-Meassef*. Like its Hebrew model, it contained a historical section. The title 'Biographies of illustrious men of our nation' points towards a continuation of the *Meassef*-project. In spite of the similar title, the authors of the *Monatschrift* definitely exceeded the narrow boundaries of *Meassef*-historiography and revealed their original attitude to history.

The second and the fourth issue of the periodical (Adar<sup>2</sup>, Nissan) contained the 'Life story of the Jewish historiographer Josephus Flavius', by a certain Dr. Lessing. It was the first modern biography of Josephus by a Jew. What then was Lessing's interest in turning Josephus into the subject of biographical writing? A possible answer might be the high esteem in which non-Jewish scholars held Josephus' writings, especially since the Renaissance.

Whereas Jews had virtually ignored Josephus' texts, which were written in a non-Jewish language, Christians had exploited them as an important source for the history of the second Temple period and started editing them carefully. By adopting Josephus as the subject of his biography, Lessing stimulated the interest in Josephus' historiographic writings amongst his Jewish readers. In an act of double re-appropriation, Lessing succeeded in retrieving Jewish history from the hands of non-Jews and popularizing Josephus as a respected historian amongst his compatriots.

The paper will trace the first attempts of several Bohemian maskilim to (re-) appropriate Josephus's writings for Jewish readers and to integrate the author in the 'enlightened Jewish pantheon', at the

beginning of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, it will explore the role of Josephus in modern Jewish historiography.

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**Oswyn Murray, University of Oxford**

*Josephus and the History of the Jews from Whiston to Graetz*

The secular study of ‘ancient history’ in western Europe has always been connected with the classical tradition and the influence of Greece and Rome on the formation of European culture. The critical study of other ancient civilizations (Israel, Egypt, the Near East, India, China, Japan) arrived late and has remained peripheral to the study of the origins of western culture.

The outlook of Ancient History is therefore limited, and has centred around two separate concepts, imperialism and liberty. The first interest explains the fundamental importance of Roman history with its exemplification of the fate of empires to rise, decline and fall. The second interest includes the history of political liberty and democratic forms of government, together with personal liberty and the rise of the individual: this is seen in terms of a continuing process of development from antiquity to the present, and as exemplified in the history of ancient Greece. These two ideas explain both the weaknesses and the strengths of western attitudes to the past.

The role of Jewish history in this conception of ‘ancient history’ is of course problematic, and points to a number of weaknesses in the western tradition. I shall explore this question through the tradition of Josephus translations in Britain, the first attempt to adapt Jewish history to the western tradition in H.H. Milman’s highly controversial *History of the Jews* (1830), and the first serious Jewish attempt to characterise what is unique about Jewish History in the work of Heinrich Graetz.

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**Sarah Pearce, University of Southampton**

*Josephus in the Jewish Chronicle*

Founded by Isaac Vallentine in 1841, the *Jewish Chronicle* is acknowledged to be a treasure-trove for evidence about the history and culture of British Jews in the nineteenth century. What is less well known (indeed, probably not known at all) is that the *Chronicle*, together with its arch-rival *The Voice of Jacob* (1841–1848), has much to tell us about Jewish knowledge of, and attitudes towards the Jewish historian Josephus. Through this figure, key issues in domestic and international politics are debated and utilised in constructing new forms of Jewish identity. In the course of the nineteenth century, Josephus makes more than five hundred appearances in the *Chronicle*. Of these, more than one hundred examples are concentrated in the first major period of the newspaper’s evolution (1841–55), and the wider context of crucial developments affecting Britain’s Jewish community: the founding of the first Reform Congregation (West London Synagogue); the struggle for Jewish emancipation; major efforts, linked to the goals of emancipation and defence against Christian missions to the Jews, to improve the education and culture of British Jews and strengthen their identification with Jewish history and religious culture; and the heightening of consciousness on international Jewish issues, including the ‘Damascus Affair’.

In the early phases of the *JC* (including its temporary merger with *The Voice*, 27/5/42–18/10/44), Josephus is rarely mentioned: nevertheless, the evidence of this period illustrates the diverse backgrounds of those referring to Josephus and the varied ends to which they engage Josephus. Several articles by opponents of the Reform Movement appeal to Josephus as a witness to the antiquity and binding character of Talmudic tradition and custom. From a Reform perspective, Philip Abraham’s ‘A Discourse on the History and Morality of the Jewish Faith’ aims to counter the indifference of Jewish youth to their own history, and appeals for a renaissance in the teaching of

Jewish history, following the model of Josephus whose *Antiquities of the Jews* begins with Creation. We get a greater sense of both personal and communal engagement with Josephus in an extract from a private letter by 'S.S.' (Sampson Samuel?), published as 'Reflections on the Late Fast' (15th of Ab: *VJ* 22/7/42): having just read Josephus on the destruction of Jerusalem (was this usual reading matter for the 9th of Ab?), the author reflects not only on the partiality of Josephus towards Rome, but also on the necessity to continue to commemorate 'this awful event', to raise consciousness of contemporary persecutions of Jews abroad (the 'Damascus Affair'), and, in the British context, to inspire efforts towards emancipation.

Far more abundant evidence of engagement with Josephus, of many different kinds, follows the *JC*'s relaunch (18/10/44), under Joseph Mitchell and his erudite maskil collaborator, Marcus Bresslau, as *The Jewish Chronicle (New Series) and Working Man's Friend*. Under the Mitchell/Bresslau regime, the *JC*'s identification with addressing contemporary challenges and promoting Jewish education, emancipation and anti-conversionist efforts continued and intensified. This emphasis is reflected in the reception of Josephus in the pages of the *Chronicle*, from erudite contributions on the interpretation of Josephus; calls for a new generation of historians, a new Josephus for the present generation; the work of Jewish women in rewriting Josephus for the Jewish working classes; the promotion of Whiston's "Josephus" in prizes and advertisements; and Josephus in defence of tradition and response to Reform.

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**Marcus Pyka, Franklin College Switzerland**

*Josephus, Graetz, and the Seductions of Gendered Respectability*

Josephus plays a major role in Heinrich Graetz' argumentation, and in particular for the idea of gendered respectability, which, in my view, forms the core of his programme. In Graetz's History, the already somewhat "moralizing" narrative (e.g. on Herod or the Benjaminite Affair of the Concubine) receives a specific and strongly "moralistic" twist. This paper will examine to what extent Josephus' account serves as an inspiration for Graetz' narrative, as it helped the 19th-century historian to develop his own agenda-in-the-making in the context of the emerging historiographical, religious, and moral positions of the German-Jewish world of the 1850s.

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**Oded Steinberg, University of Oxford**

*Alfred Edersheim - Another 19th century 'Jewish' observation of Josephus?*

In this article I will discuss the perception of Josephus through the lens of the theologian-historian Alfred Edersheim (1825-1889). Edersheim, a Christian Presbyterian and a convert from Judaism, wrote several books, especially on Jewish and Christian 1st Century history. Edersheim's view of Josephus can be defined as negative and throughout his writings he labels Josephus as a traitor. This view converges with the perception of the most prominent Jewish historian of the 19th century, Heinrich (צבי) Graetz. The views of both historians meet in their animosity towards Josephus. As will be argued, it is not because Edersheim cherished some elements of his previous Jewish faith, but mainly since they shared a mutual antagonism towards Roman domination. In their eyes, the Empire was responsible for the havocs that were wrought upon Judea in the first century AD. For Graetz, Josephus's betrayal assisted the Romans in destroying Judea and the temple. For Edersheim, the betrayal was twofold – by commission and omission: against the Jews but as well against Christianity, against the first by commission and against the latter by omission. The former betrayal can be seen in the Jewish War as portrayed by Josephus. The latter is observed in the fact that Josephus hardly described the most significant development of the first century AD, the rise of Christianity, and by that he "betrayed" his role as an objective historian.

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**Tessa Rajak, University of Oxford**

*Josephus Travels with the Montefiores (or not?)*

During 1827-8, Judith and Moses Montefiore visited the Holy Land for the first time. In her travel journal, privately published in 1836 as a gift to her husband, Judith cites Josephus at some length as she mourns the destruction of the Temple. A recent article that draws upon this journal suggests that a reading of 'the historian' (as Judith calls him) assisted in the formation of a response to the site, formulated in terms of Jewish memory that was entirely new and individual, all the more so for a Jewish woman traveller. It has not been noted, however, that Josephus, surprisingly, makes no appearance in the 'Notes from a Private Journal' that record the Montefiore's second visit of 1838-9 (also privately published, in 1844, 2nd edition 1885), either in connection with Jerusalem or anywhere else. Nor does Josephus figure in the extensive, and similar account contained in Louis Loewe's biographical compilation taken from the now largely destroyed diaries of Sir Moses and Lady Montefiore (created after the former's death and published in 1890). This surprising absence cannot be explained by the different character of the trip, for the second journey had still much of the pilgrimage about it. But there was indeed one significant change. For the first journey, as well as local hosts and guides, the Montefiores evidently drew on the travel literature of the day, which they are known to have read and valued. Among the volumes about the Holy Land in the Yarnton Montefiore collection is a guide of 1825 that contains much the same Josephan material as Judith drew upon, and it seems to follow that her use of Josephus was indirect, deriving therefore from non-Jewish reflection on the desolation of Jerusalem. For the second trip, by contrast, the couple had the remarkable services of Louis Loewe as guide, interpreter, aide, and visibly, too, as mentor and educator. They did not need travel guides. Loewe's agenda was very different: he is presented as directing the couple to sites of rabbinic interest; he weaves names and little quotations into his discourse; he even takes the opportunity to tell them about the Mishnah of Yehudah Ha-Nasi. We may surmise that he was further consulted by Judith when this newly-acquired information was written into the Notes. Loewe continued to be the shaper of the Montefiores' evolving Jewish identity. And Josephus will not have greatly appealed to this erstwhile student of the Hatam Sofer, the great scourge of reform Judaism. Loewe does not seem to have connected with maskilic circles; he remained a religious conservative, for all his education in the Universities of Berlin and Hamburg, and his astonishing prowess as oriental linguist and numismatist. The requisite Josephus is present in the catalogue of his well-stocked scholar's library; and interesting volumes came the way of the Montefiores' collection and thence to the Ramsgate Judith College, (where they seem to have been added to). But one suspects that the Jewish historian who could have represented a welcome bridge with Christian readers, and who, after all, had in common with Sir Moses a successful dual patriotism and an unusually comfortable familiarity with power, did not resonate, as he did with so many others. Should we ever recover the list of writers, biblical, classical, general, that Moses and Judith chose to read to one another for self-improvement, we are unlikely, I believe, to find Josephus among them.

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**Bart Wallet, University of Amsterdam**

*Historiography, Ideology and Religious Controversies: Jacques Basnage and Menahem Amelander Continuing Josephus in the Eighteenth Century Dutch Republic*

In 1743 the Amsterdam Ashkenazi intellectual Menahem Man ben Shlomo ha-Levi – who later became known as Amelander – published a voluminous Yiddish history book, *Sheyris Yisroel*. It was presented as the second volume to the Hebrew classic *Sefer Yosippon* and aimed to describe Jewish history from the *hurban ha-bayit* in 70 CE until contemporary times. *Sefer Yosippon* and its assumed author Yosef ben Gorion ha-Kohen, the Hebrew name for Flavius Josephus, was not only referred to out of marketing purposes, but no less as a model for writing history. By doing so, Amelander demonstrated a traditional understanding of Jewish historiography as a chain of

continuing histories encompassing the entire Jewish history.

But while Amelander credited Yosippon extensively, his main source of reference was nearly completely hidden in *Sheyris Yisroel*: the Dutch edition of the Huguenot pastor Jacques Basnage's *Histoire des Juifs* (1716). Only once Basnage's *opus magnum* was explicitly cited, but behind the formula 'hahamei ha-umot' his continuation to Josephus was used all through *Sheyris Yisroel*. Also in a more structural way, in the presentation and arrangement of the material, Basnage's influence can be clearly detected.

In this paper I want to demonstrate how Josephus functioned in the eighteenth century Dutch Republic as a common yet contested space for Jews and Christians. Both Basnage and Amelander continued Josephus in a parallel effort, but had different images of Josephus. For Amelander Yosippon was the real Josephus, while Basnage discredited *Sefer Yosippon* as a non-authentic, medieval compilation of the real Josephus. What was at stake for both authors in this debate on Josephus/Yosippon? Which ideologies and historiographical traditions led to these different conclusions? The parallel history books of Basnage and Amelander studied the same historical period, yet aimed at radically different audiences, thus resulting in two competing narratives of Jewish history.

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**Alexandra Zirkle, University of Chicago**

*Modeling a Jewish Exegetical Imagination: Nineteenth-Century Peshat and Heinrich Graetz's Commentaries on Kohelet and Song of Songs*

The vast and rich genre of biblical commentary has been neglected in the study of modern Jewish thought, to the detriment of contemporary discussions about modern Jewish scriptural hermeneutics and the complex interrelations between Reform, Positive Historical and Neo-Orthodox engagements with historicism, Hegelian historiosophy and biblical criticism. In the nineteenth century, German Jewish biblical exegetes developed innovative hermeneutic approaches by reading contemporary scholarship together with traditional religious texts (pairing Heinrich Ewald with Song of Songs Rabbah), selectively citing sources (omitting Ibn Ezra's astrological hints about that ta'am of sacrifice but citing his philological exegesis), and considering "old-new" sources (ancient sources that had not been traditionally considered authoritative, such as the writings of Josephus). Through these hermeneutic choices, old and new sources spoke afresh as elements of wholly original texts that reflected and influenced nineteenth-century German Jewish discourse. This paper presents an intellectual historical sketch of the various ways in which Josephus is cited as a source in the biblical commentaries of Dr. Heinrich Graetz (1817-1891) and Rabbi Dr. David Zvi Hoffman (1843-1921).

More specifically, this paper focuses on the ways in which Graetz and Hoffmann invoke Josephus to critique or perpetuate contemporary arguments about the historical and contemporary significance of the Sanctuary and sacrificial forms of worship. Jewish and non-Jewish popular and scholarly communities hotly debated the historical dating and details of the Temple and sacrifice, and consequent historiographical, theological, cultural and political implications.

In his translation of and commentary to the Psalms (1882), Graetz is concerned with the dual purposes of constructing an evolutionary history of Judaism that functioned as a counter-narrative to challenge prevailing contemporary schemas as well as correcting and explicating scripture on the philological level. This paper examines the various ways in which Graetz uses Josephus as a source for dating materials and supplying historical details which Graetz weaves into his historiosophical account of the Jews.

Hoffmann published his commentary to Leviticus in 1905 and intended his commentary to be a thorough rebuttal of the Graf-Wellhausen documentary hypothesis. In his commentary, Hoffmann rejects Wellhausen's late dating of priestly materials and his characterization of the sacrificial cult as evidence of Judaism's degeneration from the ethical monotheism of the prophets. Hoffmann also argued through his commentary on Leviticus for the unity of the written and oral laws, and cites a wealth of sources, including contemporary thinkers, rabbinic sources, and the subject of this paper, Josephus, to argue for the fundamental unity of the Torah sh'bichtav and the Torah sh'be'al pe. This paper examines the ways in which Hoffmann incorporates Josephus as a source in his critique of Wellhausen and his argument for the unity of the written and oral Torah.

By examining the various ways in which Graetz and Hoffmann weave Josephus into their hermeneutic approaches to the Temple and sacrifice and by exploring the various reasons and ramifications attending their exegetical choices, this paper complements existing intellectual history of nineteenth-century German Jewry and scholarship on modern Jewish scriptural hermeneutics.