Proclaim Liberty Throughout the Land
The Hebrew Bible in the United States: A Sourcebook

Yeshiva University
THE ZAHAVA AND MOSHAEL STRAUS
CENTER FOR TORAH AND WESTERN THOUGHT

PROCLAIM LIBERTY
THROUGHOUT THE LAND

THE HEBREW BIBLE IN THE UNITED STATES: A SOURCEBOOK

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Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought
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To Rob and Ellen Kapito,
lovers of American Jewish history and devoted friends of
the Zahava and Moshael Straus Center
for Torah and Western Thought
of Yeshiva University,
with profound gratitude

"We Americans are driven to a rejection of the maxims of the past, seeing that, ere long, the van of nations must, of right, belong to ourselves.... Escaped from the house of bondage, Israel of old did not follow after the ways of the Egyptians. To her was given an express dispensation; to her were given new things under the sun. And we Americans are the peculiar, chosen people – the Israel of our time; we bear the ark of the liberties of the world."

Herman Melville, *White Jacket, or, The World in a Man-of-War* (1850)

"Proclaim liberty throughout the land and to all the inhabitants thereof."

Leviticus 25:10

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Preface

It was on the immortal date of July 4, 1776, that the Continental Congress voted not only to declare independence, but also to create a symbol of the nascent nation: "Resolved, That Dr. Franklin, Mr. J. Adams and Mr. Jefferson, be a committee, to bring in a device for a seal for the United States of America." Two members of the committee drew directly on the Hebrew Bible in putting forward their proposals. Thomas Jefferson chose an image to which he would return in his second inaugural address: "The Children of Israel in the Wilderness, led by a Cloud by day, and Pillar of Fire by night." Benjamin Franklin's proposal was even more striking: Moses at the Red Sea raising his staff, "thereby causing the same to overwhelm Pharaoh who is sitting in an open Chariot, a Crown on his Head and a Sword in Hand. Rays from a Pillar of Fire in the Clouds reaching to Moses, to express that he acts by Command of the Deity." Franklin further suggested that this picture be joined with the following motto: "Rebellion to Tyrants is obedience to God." That these scenes from the book of Exodus loomed so large even in the minds of the men who were the most secular of the American founders is the ultimate indication that the imagery of the Hebrew Bible so dramatically impacted the thinking and language of America's statesmen. The events

of July 4 testify not only to the miracle of the American founding, but also to the extraordinary impact that the Jews had on the development of the West.

It is for the study of this impact that I first proposed the founding of what became Yeshiva University's Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought. Months later, in a conversation about the mission of the Straus Center, Dr. Matthew Holbreich first made the brilliant suggestion that the Straus Center produce a volume illustrating how the Bible inspired some of the most important documents in the history of the United States. Dr. Holbreich and our colleague Dr. Jonathan Silver deserve the lion's share of the credit for this volume, as it is they who tirelessly shepherded this project from its infancy to its glorious conclusion. I express my thanks as well as to Dr. Stuart W. Halpern, who has been so integral to all that takes place at the Straus Center, including the production of this book. Dr. Yael Hungerford, Rabbi Daniel Tabak, and Moshe Halbertal each read the manuscript with great care and attention, and it is was much improved by their comments and suggestions. As always, I express profound gratitude to Zahava and Moshael Straus, our partners in every single success achieved by the Straus Center. I also thank our partners at The Toby Press, especially Matthew Miller, Reuven Ziegler, Ita Olesker, Tomi Mager, and Tani Bayer.

Eight decades after America's founding, with the United States on the brink of war, Abraham Lincoln visited Independence Hall in Philadelphia before his inauguration. In emphasizing the sanctity of America's founding principles, Lincoln turned to the imagery and language of the Hebrew Bible. "All my political warfare," Lincoln said, "has been in favor of the teachings that come forth from these sacred walls. May my right hand forget its cunning, and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if ever I prove false to these teachings" (cf. Ps. 137:5–6). We offer this book as testimony to the Hebraic roots of the American founding, so that loyalty to its principles may be inspired for generations to come.

Meir Y. Soloveichik

Introduction

On August 10, 1774, John Adams left Boston dressed in a new red coat, in full view of the British, on his way to Philadelphia for the First Continental Congress.[1] In response to the Boston Tea Party, the British Parliament had passed the Coercive Acts, stripping Massachusetts of its ability to govern itself. With Massachusetts in near open revolt, the colonies called a Continental Congress to discuss a coordinated response. Along the post road from Boston to Philadelphia, the Massachusetts delegates were celebrated, church bells rang, and prayers were offered. Congress convened. At the opening, the delegates wondered whether a prayer should be said, and if so, by which Protestant denomination's minister. The room was filled with Quakers and Presbyterians and Anabaptists and Congregationalists. Would not a prayer be inherently sectarian, dividing the delegates before they were ever united? The great revolutionary Samuel Adams rose and said that he would hear a prayer from any

1. See the account of this episode in David McCullough, *John Adams* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), 41.

pious man, as he was no bigot. The next day Reverend Jacob Duché read Psalm 35, which begins:

> Plead my cause, O Lord, with those who strive with me;
> Fight against those who fight against me.
> Take hold of shield and buckler,
> And stand up for my help.
> Also draw out the spear,
> And stop those who pursue me.
> Say to my soul,
> I am your salvation.

The American Republic was born to the music of the Hebrew Bible. The men of the First Continental Congress, despite their religious diversity, were united by a shared heritage rooted in the text of the Hebrew Bible, stretching back to their Puritan forefathers who founded the Bay Colony more than one hundred years earlier. John Adams, who recorded that significant moment of American history, thought the Bible "the best book in the world."[2]

Turning to the Hebrew Bible for inspiration, solidarity, comfort, and purpose, as the men of the First Continental Congress did, is a common theme in American history. Three years later, when Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams were asked to design the new great seal of the United States, both Franklin and Jefferson chose a theme from Exodus. For both, the Israelites coming out of Egyptian bondage would be the emblem of the new country's freedom. The Israelites' story was the American story. The Bible, and especially the Hebrew Bible, was the single most cited book during the Revolutionary era – more than the French political philosopher Montesquieu and the Roman statesmen Cato and Plutarch.[3]

2. Adams to Jefferson, Dec. 25, 1813. L. J. Capon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 2:412.
3. Donald Lutz, "The Relative Influence of European Writers on Late Eighteenth-Century American Political Thought," *American Political Science Review* 78 (1984): 189–97.

In nineteenth-century America, clubs existed whose sole purpose was to put a Bible into the hands of every American.[4] During the last few months of the Civil War, Lincoln turned to the Hebrew Bible for inspiration when writing his second inaugural address. Two hundred and sixteen years after that prayer in the Continental Congress, President Bill Clinton gave voice to his vision of a revitalized United States with the hope of establishing a "New Covenant," the Hebraic term for a binding compact across generations.[5] From the Puritan fathers to the American Framers, from slavery to abolition, from the Liberty Bell to America's celebration of national Thanksgiving, the Hebrew Bible is one of America's formative books, reflecting in the new continent, in the new nation, in America's rebirth of freedom, the moral and narrative inspiration of ancient Israel.

The premise of this reader is that the Hebrew Bible is a foundational text in the American tradition. Its influence exists alongside *Cato's Letters*, the philosophy of John Locke, and Plutarch's exemplars of civic leadership and moral purpose.[6] It is a foundational text in the American literary canon. One cannot understand the American political tradition and its articulations through time without understanding America's relationship with the Hebrew Bible. This sourcebook contributes to such an understanding. Its purpose is to assemble the primary sources of American public history and allow the reader to hear the Hebraic echoes that have been particularly influential.

We employ the term "Hebraic" to describe the influence of the Hebrew Bible as opposed to the New Testament. The "Hebrew Bible" refers to the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Writings. This anthology is the story of the Jewish Bible, or the Christian Old Testament, and its

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4. Mark A. Noll, "The United States as a Biblical Nation," *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History*, eds. Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 40.
5. Clinton used the term in a series of speeches at Georgetown University at the start of his campaign for president and in his acceptance speech to the Democratic National Convention in 1992.
6. See Wilson Carey McWilliams, "The Bible in the American Political Tradition," in *Redeeming Democracy in America*, ed. Patrick Deneen (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 29–54.

power in American history. It is not a volume about the Jewish experience in America. For most of American history there were few Jews in America. Moreover, Jewish thought encompasses a wider spectrum, that while rooted in the Hebrew Bible, extends outward into talmudic debates, legal norms, philosophy, poetry, and the history and culture of the Jewish people. Much of Jewish thought is dedicated to religious jurisprudence and is framed by the religious debates of the Talmud. For the most part, the mainstream of the American public had little access to, and little interest in, post-biblical Jewish thought. The traditional American passion for the Hebrew Bible is distinct from the Jewish religion and the history of Jewish law and letters. We therefore also use the term "Hebraic" to crystallize the distinction between the Hebrew Bible and Jewish thought and history.

We further use "Hebraic" to distinguish the subject of this volume from Christianity. The use of the Hebrew Bible in America is bound up with Christian theology and doctrine, more so than with Judaism, especially in the early Puritan colonies and during the religious awakenings of the nineteenth century. But the metaphors, images, and narrative arcs that Americans have taken from the Hebrew Bible to describe their own experience are distinct from, and cannot be fully encompassed or captured by, Christian theology.

The influence of the Hebrew Bible can be understood in at least four ways.

First, the Hebrew Bible is a source for, and an element of, collective identity and self-identification. One way to gain access to how people think about themselves is to notice the names they give to places that surround them, to cities and rivers and valleys and colleges. The American countryside is filled with names of biblical places such as "Zion," "Canaan," "Shiloh," and "Salem."[7] Many American colleges, such as Yale and Dartmouth, were founded as seminaries with broader purposes, and chose Hebrew mottos to encapsulate their mission. Harvard College required its students to study Hebrew. As late as 1817 orations at Harvard were occasionally delivered in Hebrew.

7. Robert Alter, *Pen of Iron: American Prose and the King James Bible* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), prelude.

Political assemblies in America often open with prayers, and on great national occasions, presidents often turn to the Bible as America's unifying text. The national government has declared days of thanksgiving and repentance. When Revolutionary pastors read of the Persian court in the book of Esther they thought of Britain; when they preached about the depredations of British tyranny, they explained themselves in the language of Ahasuerus and Haman.[8] When Thomas Paine wanted to make a case to the colonies that monarchy was a primitive, outdated, and illegitimate form of government, he cited the book of Samuel. Washington was compared to Moses and to Gideon.[9] When Washington died, most houses of religious worship eulogized him with words from the Hebrew Bible.

From the colonial period to the Civil Rights movement, ministers and preachers were some of the most important figures in American political life, and Hebraic themes were brought into public discourse through them. During the Revolutionary War, biblical themes were used to cast aspersions on perceived enemies. Colonists who were not quick enough to come to the aid of their brethren were said to have suffered from the curse of Meroz (see Judg. 5:23).[10] Later, some of the largest reform movements in American history, including the movement for prohibition, took their inspiration from religious movements that were themselves but applications and interpretations of the Hebrew Bible. Its story has reflected Americans to themselves and endowed the people of the United States with an identity set apart from that of the other nations.

Second, the Hebrew Bible has been a source of political and cultural vocabulary. That is, the Hebrew Bible provided a series of narratives and themes that were powerful in the minds of the Puritan settlers, revolutionaries, African slaves, leaders of the Civil Rights movement, and the broader population.[11] To notice this is to already see that the

8. Eran Shalev, *American Zion: The Old Testament as Political Text from the Revolution to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 26–28.
9. See Timothy Dwight, *The Conquest of Canaan* (Hartford: Elisha Babcock, 1785).
10. For more on the curse of Meroz, see Noll, "United States," 42, and Shalev, 34–38.
11. Noll, "United States," commenting on this phenomenon, notes that "much more frequently, however, the Bible was not so much the truth above all truth as it was the story above all stories. On public occasions Scripture appeared regularly as the

Hebrew Bible is not just a source of private contemplation. It is a public book that has been felt in public debates and public social movements. The biblical vocabulary has taught Americans to speak and think about chosenness, exodus, and covenant. For Americans the Bible is, as Mark Noll puts it, "the story of all stories," containing a "storehouse of types" that they have grafted onto their collective life.[12] These big ideas have had different uses and have held different meanings, expressing aspiration and aspersion, collective longing and individual disappointment. But regardless of the sentiments expressed or the hopes shared, it was biblical vocabulary that Americans have been impelled to use.

These narrative themes are perhaps the most powerful and enduring cultural resonances of the Hebrew Bible in America. It is worth going through each briefly. "Chosenness" is the idea that God selected a people for a special mission to advance His ultimate plan. The Protestant Reformation and Calvinism placed "election," another word for chosenness, at the center of Protestant theology, which migrated north to Amsterdam and west to the New World.[13] The Puritan settlers conceived of themselves as a "New Israel," chosen by God to plant a vine in the wilderness; the Mormons, on their long march to the West, also thought they were a latter-day chosen people heading toward a new Zion; and the United States as a whole saw itself as a chosen nation.

Chosenness is not a singular concept. Rather, it oscillates in American history between two different modes. On the one hand the rhetoric of chosenness sanctifies the present, providing it with divine sanction. This variation allies with a form of American nationalism in which the current national form and its current projects are identified with God's ultimate plan. Josiah Strong's writings on Manifest Destiny exemplify this nationalist triumphalism. The notion of "the chosen nation" is also, on the other hand, a way to critique the present generation for not living up to the divine mission for which they were elected.

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typical narrative imparting significance to the antitypical events, people, and situations of United States history" (43).

12. Noll, "United States," 43.
13. Gordon Schochet, "Introduction: Hebraic Roots, Calvinist Plantings, American Branches," *Hebraic Political Studies* 4:2 (Spring 2009): 99–103.

This latter interpretation divorces or puts distance between any given national project and divine intent.

These divergent postures prompt two different cultural moods: one of triumphalism and one of aspirationalism. Each cultural mood has its own specific form of rhetoric. In the case of triumphalism there is bombast, a feature that is readily seen when the United States interpreted chosenness as a justification of imperialism. The other rhetorical mood associated with aspirational critique tends toward the form of the jeremiad. The jeremiad is a rhetorical critique rooted in a shared aspiration to achieve a common goal that the community has failed to attain. It chastens the community for its failures, reminds them that divine judgment will be visited upon the people for failing to live up to their covenantal promise, and recalls their purpose to them, giving them renewed confidence that redemption is possible through rededication and sacrifice.[14] The jeremiad is the form of rhetoric adopted by Jonathan Edwards and by Abraham Lincoln in his second inaugural address, for example.

The narrative of Exodus is another central element of the American political vocabulary. The book of Exodus recounts the journey of the Hebrew people into Egyptian bondage and their miraculous liberation from it. The American people have used the Exodus narrative in identifying tyranny, expressing the longing for freedom, and describing the journey out of enslavement and the jubilation of liberation. To the Puritans, England was Egypt, the house of bondage, and their voyage across the Atlantic was their exodus, their parting of the seas. For the enslaved population, the North was Zion, and their songs and hymns reverberated with some of the greatest melodies of collective longings for freedom in the American tradition, with such songs as "Go Down Moses" and "Didn't Ol' Pharaoh Get Lost." Washington and Lincoln were both called Moses. In fact, Washington was compared to Jacob

14. Andrew Murphy, *Prodigal Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). See also idem, "New Israel in New England: The American Jeremiad and the Hebrew Scriptures," *Hebraic Political Studies* 4:2 (Spring 2009): 128–56.

and Joshua, Samuel and Elijah, David and Daniel.[15] Finally, to speak of Exodus is also to speak of Egypt, of Pharaoh, of plagues, and of judgment. It was used to brand the English and the Southern slave owners as the tyrants who would meet with divine wrath. Lincoln, perhaps the single greatest employer of Hebraic tropes in American history, warned that if America became Egypt and did not redeem itself, it would meet with the same fate.

Another element in the American Hebraic vocabulary is "covenant." A covenant is different from a contract. A contract entails rights of voluntary exit and is premised on the joining together for mutual self-interest. A covenant, on the other hand, is an intergenerational commitment to a higher cause that transcends the individual and to which the individual dedicates himself. Both are very much present in the American tradition. The Declaration of Independence is an example. It is on the one hand an expression of classic liberal Enlightenment social contract theory. The individual, who is morally prior to the state and who is endowed with natural rights, voluntarily circumscribes his natural rights to enter into a mutually convenient compact with others to form a limited government. When government is destructive of those rights, then the people can form a new government based on new principles. But conjoined with the contractarianism of the Declaration are the mutual pledges of the delegates, as representatives of the people of the colonies, of their lives, property, and sacred honor, for the cause that temporally transcends their lives, property, and sacred honor. This mutual binding that combines contract and covenant also characterizes the Mayflower Compact. A contract is not automatically self-enforcing; it requires sacrifice and dedication, the words that resonate most strongly in Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

A third way that the Hebrew Bible has influenced American public life is seen by looking at rhetorical tools employed in cultural and political debates. Beyond providing a common language in which debates could be expressed, key Hebraic references became actual authorities,

15. Noll, "United States," 44. See also Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

on whose merit audiences were more likely to be persuaded. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* is an example of relying on the Hebrew Bible as a source of rhetorical authority. Paine argues, based on the book of Samuel, that the Bible is anti-monarchical and thus provides a justification for a break with England. Whatever the intrinsic merits of the argument, Paine understood that appealing to the Bible as a source of authority would resonate with his biblically literate audience.

Moreover, because the Hebrew Bible has been a rhetorical authority, it is often found on multiple sides of American debates. The fact that orators and writers employed the Bible in polemics does not necessarily mar the book. Rather, it indicates just how exalted a status it had in American public life. An argument that was based on the Hebrew Bible, they believed, would confer unique authority on their views. So there have been arguments for both republicanism and monarchy, for and against revolution, and for and against the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution – all with the Hebrew Bible serving as a proof text. It was used to denounce slavery, and it was used to justify slavery. But both parties to a debate thought it necessary to demonstrate that the Hebrew Bible was on their side.

It is important to distinguish between the way the Americans used the Hebrew Bible in political debates and the Bible's own teaching about politics. Exploring the Hebraic teaching on politics (one should probably say biblical *teachings* in the plural) is a rich exegetical enterprise.[16] The Hebrew Bible is filled with stories that are open to multiple interpretations. There are stories of the founding of cities and of their destruction, the rise and fall of kings and of political institutions. The

16. For a larger discussion of the political teaching of the Hebrew Bible, see Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution*, and idem, *In God's Shadow: Politics in the Hebrew Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012); Yoram Hazony, *The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Leon Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Daniel Elazar, *The Covenant Tradition in Politics*, 4 vols. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1994–1998); Joshua Berman, *Created Equal: How the Bible Broke with Ancient Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); and Eric Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and The Transformation of European Political Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

Hebrew Bible is a story of the creation of the universe, the origins of human society, the rise of a family into a clan and nation in exile, the return of the nation to its ancestral homeland, and its political and military rise and fall. The book of Samuel alone, for instance, offers a complex interplay of secular and divine power: the emergence of the political out of the shadow of divine exclusivity and the negotiation of the relationship of political to priestly power. The political lessons in the Bible are also tightly bound to the complex psychologies of individuals like Samuel, Saul, David, and Jonathan, which take on heightened importance in dynastic successions. One should resist the temptation to conclude that the Hebrew Bible has a single political teaching. One should also resist thinking that its teaching neatly overlaps with the commitments of our early Republic or the liberal democracy we have become. While Americans have often enlisted the Bible as proof and guarantor of their political views, the biblical text resists any single authoritative interpretation.

A fourth way that the Hebrew Bible has influenced America is through the powerful and eloquent language of the King James Bible. It influenced American novelists such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and William Faulkner, and statesmen like Presidents Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson. In fact, in the nineteenth century there was an entire genre of writing that mimicked the Bible.[17] The way a nation writes is the product of, and influences, the way a nation thinks about itself. Noted biblical scholar and translator Robert Alter remarked that "style is not merely a constellation of aesthetic properties but is the vehicle of a particular vision of reality."[18] To hear the resonant and powerful words of Lincoln's second inaugural address without reference to the moral world of the Hebrew Bible is to truncate the text and excise worlds of meaning.

The Hebraic worldview, which runs deeper than language and cultural conversation, articulates a vision of human life that is redemptive, endowed with sacred meaning, and which seeks to combine righteousness and freedom. It is this worldview that has contributed to the

17. Shalev, 1–14.

18. Alter, 4.

American moral language of liberty.[19] Throughout history, Americans saw their own lives through Hebraic stories and took moral meaning from their reenactment of biblical episodes. Puritans, American slaves, and Civil Rights leaders understood their suffering and struggle through a Hebraic lens. They believed their suffering had meaning in light of their final objectives, that their struggles were not their struggles alone but were part of a longer story stretching back to the enslavement and exodus from Egypt, and that their trials would not only redeem themselves but an entire nation. America is not a purely secular regime founded on purely secular principles.

As this anthology demonstrates, the influence of the Hebrew Bible is not uniform across American time and space. The early Puritan colonies were more devout than were those founded in Virginia, which were dedicated to more pecuniary speculation. There are periods in American history, such as those of the early Puritan colonies and the Great Awakenings, where fervor for the Bible was at a high pitch. And there are other points, especially in the late twentieth century, when large segments of the population did not see the Bible as a moral authority or its narrative as inspirational. Regions and subgroups in America differed in devotional intensity. The Bible of the slave taught freedom, the Bible of the slave master, obedience. Presidents, congressional orators, and American public figures also differ in their relation to the Bible. Some, like Washington, Adams, and Lincoln, incorporated Hebraic language to a far greater degree than did others, like Madison and Jefferson. The Hebrew Bible is a part of the American tapestry, though its color and place change over time.

While scholars of American political institutions disagree about the historical and intellectual inspirations that underpin America, this book shows that the Hebrew Bible has played an integral role in the American past, alongside Roman republicanism, the English Common Law tradition, and the political doctrines of John Locke, Cato, and Montesquieu. Some authors did turn to the *respublicum hebraeorum*

19. Shalev, 1–14. See also Michael Novak, *On Two Wings: Humble Faith and Common Sense at the American Founding* (New York: Encounter Books, 2003).

for a constitutional model for the new American regime.[20] And even if the institutions of the American government differ from those of the ancient Israelites, we should resist the temptation to fetishize political institutions and identify America with its government. Our political institutions give American politics their form, but they do not provide the essence. Republican government is designed for a free people – free in the classical understanding as capable of self-rule. A self-ruling citizenry requires a moral character, and for most of American history it was thought that moral character of any stripe would have to be inculcated, at least to some extent, by religious practice. That practice was not primarily to be the end of government, or at least the federal government. But just because there was to be no establishment of religion – that is, no national church – and a guarantee of the free exercise of religion, does not mean the founders or later statesmen thought religion unimportant. Moreover, some of the moral energy that prompts political reform and legal change in American history, especially in the nineteenth century, grew out of cultural practices in the bosom of American society that were influenced by religious revivals. America's grand social movements, from abolition to prohibition to Civil Rights, were infused with the urgency and passion of religious mission. That mission was one of freedom and renewal, and was expressed in what became the particularly American lexicon of promised lands, chosen peoples, exile and return to Zion, sin and redemption. Figures such as Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. employed these uniquely Hebraic tropes to express something deep in the American psyche, something that involves free and equal participation in public life, but goes much beyond it. If Thomas Jefferson could explain the Declaration of Independence as an expression of the common American mind,[21] President Lincoln and Reverend King gave voice to the common American heart.

We also believe the Hebrew Bible should remain an integral component of the American future. National continuity entails that change take place within the framework of a national tradition. That tradition

20. See Shalev, 50–82.
21. Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Henry Lee, May 8, 1825. Available at https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/98-01-02-5212.

is, of course, flexible. America is a nation that cares about equality and freedom, for instance, but what equality and freedom mean may change over time. However, it is our commitment to those concepts that provides the framework in which debate and change can take place. So too the Hebrew Bible. It provides a part of the framework in which we understand and debate our national destiny, our place in world history, and our understanding of our own past. The American story integrates Hebraic insights, and this volume hopes to make it easier to uncover a fuller and more accurate version of the American past, and therewith, the American prospect.

Note on the Hebraic sources: Following many of the primary sources of American history, the relevant citations from the Hebrew Bible have been provided, along with the King James translation commonly used during that era. In some instances, additional verses have been added for further context. On occasion, rabbinic sources have been provided as well. Due to space considerations, not all biblical citations mentioned in the American sources are provided. When the American sources cite extensively from the Hebrew Bible, a separate biblical companion text is not provided, as additional context was not deemed necessary. When there is a discrepancy between the Jewish and Christian textual traditions, the Jewish chapter and verses are added in brackets. The reader is encouraged to study the wider context of the Hebraic works in their original language, or in translation, for enhanced understanding of the passages in which the citations originally appear, and for a fuller appreciation of how they are echoed in the American sources.