

Introduction

The High Stakes of a Hebraic Rereading of Locke

The influence of English philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) on Western political theory in general and the American founding in particular was dramatic, and one need not look further than the Declaration of Independence for proof. The wording of the Declaration is so similar to Locke's wording in his *Two Treatises of Government* that historians who claim that Thomas Jefferson copied Locke, and dubbed Locke the “American philosopher” and his *Two Treatises* the “gospel” of the American Revolution, appear more than convincing.¹ This means that a

¹ Historical research conducted between the 1920s and 1950s, such as the works of Carl Becker and Louis Hartz, granted Locke the status of an “American philosopher,” and credited him as the source of ideas that Thomas Jefferson incorporated into the Declaration of Independence. Both of their assessments are sweeping and determinate. Becker concludes that Locke was “political gospel” for the founding fathers and that in penning the Declaration of Independence, “Jefferson copied Locke.” Carl Becker, *The Declaration of Independence: A Study in the History of Political Ideas* (New York: Harcourt, 1922), pp. 27–28, and 79. The influential Hartz is no less emphatic when he writes that, “Locke dominates American political thought, as no thinker anywhere dominates the political thought of a nation.” Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (New York: Harcourt, 1955), pp. 11–13.

Locke's influence, though, went through a profound reassessment in the writing of J. G. A. Pocock. For Pocock it was not the notions of natural rights and individual liberty inherent in Lockean thought that won the day for enlightenment, but rather the *republican* ideas of civic responsibility and virtuous character of citizenship central to the writings of Niccolo Machiavelli and James Harrington and drawn from the wisdom of classical Roman greats such as Cicero, Livy, Plutarch, and Tacitus. Pocock's approach is not a syncretic one as he understands republicanism and liberalism to be mutually exclusive strands of thought, and the moment he put the focus on Rome, Machiavelli, and republicanism, Locke and his liberalism fell by the wayside. Indeed, central to Pocock's

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full and robust understanding of the American founding necessitates a proper reading of Locke's *Two Treatises*.

It has become a commonplace that the *Two Treatises* belongs to the genre of early modern political writings that shifted the focus of political power from the assumption of divine will to human agency. It is in this vein that staple ideas of the American founding as ensconced in its letters of incorporation are generally associated with the Enlightenment and its

"republican revisionism" is the attribution of a relatively minor historical role to Locke. "Among the revolutionary effects of the reevaluation of his historical role," he writes, "... has been a shattering demolition of his myth: not that he was other than a great and authoritative thinker, but that his greatness and authority have been wildly distorted by a habit of taking them unhistorically for granted." J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 424. See also Bernard Bailyn, *The Origins of American Politics* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 41; Gordon S. Wood, *Creation of the American Republic: 1776–1787* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1972); Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman: Studies in the Transmission, Development and Circumstance of English Liberal Thought from the Restoration of Charles II Until the War with the Thirteen Colonies* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2004); and Mark Goldie (ed.), *The Reception of Locke's Politics: From the 1690s to the 1830s*, vol. 1 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), p. liii.

A convincing counterargument to Pocock's *republican revisionism* has been made by Steven M. Dworetz. While dubbing Pocock's arguments "mystifying," he uses a plethora of primary textual sources, such as political pamphlets, state papers, newspapers, and correspondence, to prove that even though the first American edition of the *Second Treatise* was only printed in Boston in 1773, on crucial political matters Locke's ideas on government were the most frequently cited non-Biblical sources by the American Revolutionists both before and after the initial American printing. Steven M. Dworetz, *The Unvarnished Doctrine: Locke, Liberalism, and the American Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 35. Dworetz considers "the fall of liberalism and the rise of republicanism in the historiography of the American Revolution" to be "the most stunning reversal in the history of political thought." Ibid, p. 140. Dworetz was followed by Jerome Huyler who argues in his *Locke in America* that the fundamental error of the *republican revisionists* was to see republicanism and liberalism as contradictory concepts, whereas understanding their inherent complementarity would have allowed for the granting of an important place for Locke's *Second Treatise* in the American Revolution. Jerome Huyler, *Locke in America* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995). See also W. M. Spellman, who shares this opinion. Spellman states that Locke was the "party line" during the era of the American Revolution and supportively quotes Louis Hartz's assertion that "Lockean liberalism had defined not only revolutionary debate but all subsequent American thought and behavior." W. M. Spellman, *John Locke* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1997), pp. 135–139. For Locke's definitive influence see also Amanda Porterfield, *The Protestant Experience in America* (London: Greenwood Publishing, 2006), p. 208; Michael Foley, *American Credo: The Place of Ideas in US Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 38–39; and Yuhtaro Ohmori, 'The Artillery of Mr. Locke': *The Use of Locke's 'Second Treatise' in Pre-Revolutionary America, 1764–1776* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services, 1988), pp. 18–19.

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replacement of revelation with reason. It is sure to come as a surprise then that Locke himself did not absent scriptural revelation from his modernizing concepts such as inalienable rights of individuals based on natural law, government through popular consent, the right to revolution, the right to private property, individual freedoms, natural equality, and the limitation of governmental powers. Actually, the very opposite is true.

Careful study of Locke's wording in the *Two Treatises* reveals a political theory wholly dependent on divine will as the yardstick of its moral legitimacy. It is in fact a text heavily laden with Biblical references, and while this has not been lost on some of the vast scholarship on Locke, the fact that these Biblical quotes are specifically and almost exclusively taken from the Hebrew Bible has indeed been ignored. This is shocking. *Why would the godfather of the American founding use the Hebrew Bible so copiously to establish his political theory while hardly referencing the New Testament at all? And why would Locke scholarship avoid any attempt to wrestle with this question?*

Indeed, of the more than five hundred scholarly works on Locke's political theory there is but one that asks the question, struggles to find a solution, yet leaves it unanswered. In his important book *God, Locke, and Equality: Christian Foundations of Locke's Political Thought*, preeminent scholar Jeremy Waldron tries to unravel Locke's intentions in quoting the Old Testament so copiously, but admits that "we have circled several times around the question of the absence of New Testament material from the *Two Treatises of Government* without really answering it."²

This book tries to resolve the question by arguing, for the first time, in favor of a Hebraic reading of Locke's classical political text. In doing so it formulates a new school of thought in Lockean political interpretation and challenges existing ones. But rather than merely add yet another dimension of theoretical wrangling over Lockean political theory, the book shows how appreciation of the Hebraic underpinnings of Locke's political theory actually solves many of the problems inherent in reading Locke and beats many of the crossed swords of academic debate over his intentions into ploughshares.

Because Locke was one of the most important forbearers of Western freedom, a more correct understanding of his political thinking is of critical import, particularly at this time in history when the need to

² Jeremy Waldron, *God, Locke, and Equality: Christian Foundations in Locke's Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 214.

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mediate a balance between modern secularism and resurgent religious identities is so palpable. Such a reading can perhaps serve to foster a more vigorous comprehension of freedom's contemporary relevance.

To be fair, Locke is a historical figure not easy to categorize or classify. Few major intellectual figures have been as enigmatic as Locke has been for students of political theory, and he continues to be the focus of intensive academic research and debate. His political theories have been interpreted as both radical and moderate, both capitalist and anti-capitalist, and both atheist and devoutly Christian. Some scholars have attributed to Locke a major role in the evolution of liberalism while others have cast his influence in a minor light. Similar debates rage over the degree of his influence on the English, French, and American revolutions. In fact, one would be hard-pressed to find anything that is universally agreed upon in Lockean scholarship with regard to his political theory. Well, almost. Barring some recent pathbreaking scholarship,³ there is general widespread agreement, at least by default, that Locke was *not* a political Hebraist.

My reading of Locke's political theories as specifically Hebraic belongs to the broader study of *political Hebraism*, a nascent academic endeavor that is chartering a new theoretical course for understanding classical political ideas, or is at least renewing intellectual appreciation for the Hebraic underpinnings of modern political theory that have often been overlooked or underrated.

The political, economic, judicial, social, and cultural ideas ensconced in the Hebrew Bible, as well as in the Talmud, and in later rabbinical literature through Maimonides and beyond, played a significant role in

³ Initial steps toward the examination of Locke's works through Hebraic lenses can be found in Fania Oz-Salzberger, "The Political Thought of John Locke and the Significance of Political Hebraism," *Hebraic Political Studies* 1, 5 (2006), pp. 568–592, a work that helped inspire this book. There are also a few articles dedicated to this subject that appear in *Jewish Political Studies Review* 9, 3–4, in a volume entitled "John Locke and the Bible, Leo Strauss as Jew and Philosopher" (1997), including: George Gross, "Notes for Reading the Bible with John Locke" and Richard Sherlock, "The Theology of Toleration: A Reading of Locke's The Reasonableness of Christianity." These articles have served to open the door to further more in-depth study of Locke's political Hebraism, the purpose of which this book comes to serve. Mention must also be made of Kim Ian Parker's *The Biblical Politics of John Locke* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2004). This is an especially important work that convincingly makes the case for a requisite grounding of Locke's *Two Treatises* in the Hebrew Bible. Yet the author, to my understanding, places his reading of Locke not in a Hebraic context, but in a Christological one, while glossing over the curious absence of New Testamentism in Locke's work.

shaping ways of thinking for many European theologians, philosophers, and statesmen, most of whom were not Jewish.⁴ Their reading of the original Biblical text as belonging to the historical and political experience of the Jewish people, while maintaining relevancy for all humankind, makes it more accurate to refer to the ancient Hebrew text as the Hebrew Bible, rather than as the Old Testament or as the old part of the Christian Bible, hence *Hebraism*. Connate to this new reading is an appreciation of the independent nature of the Hebrew teachings, which were outside the realm of Christological contextualization and, at times, markedly different or even in stark opposition to it.

The emergence of this field of study, or in essence, rediscovery of it, makes it possible to pursue new interpretive perspectives of historical and philosophical issues as well as the possible solutions to the intellectual quagmires they have presented. The Greek, Roman, and Christian contributions to modern Western politics are broadly established in historical research thanks to the works of numerous scholars, notably J. G. A. Pocock, Richard Tuck, and Quentin Skinner.⁵ But as for the question of the specifically Hebraic contribution to the evolution of political ideas and systems, historical research is still in relative infancy. Infancy perhaps, but the first words have been spoken, and with the publication of Eric Nelson's book *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought*,⁶ they are fast becoming whole and convincing sentences.

⁴ Pathbreaking works leading this new field of research include Daniel J. Elazar, *Covenant Tradition and Politics*, 4 volumes (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1996); the scholarly quarterly *Hebraic Political Studies*, published by the Shalem Center in Jerusalem; and the compendium *Political Hebraism: Judaic Sources in Early Modern Political Thought*. See in particular Yoram Hazony, "Does the Bible Have a Political Teaching?" in *Hebraic Political Studies* 1, 2 (Winter 2006), pp. 137–161. And most importantly Hazony's opus, *The Philosophy of the Hebrew Scriptures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), and Joshua Berman, *Created Equal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Other important works that deal with Christian Hebraism in a more general sense include: Frank Manuel, *The Broken Staff* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), and Aaron L. Katchen, *Christian Hebraists and Dutch Rabbis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

⁵ Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*. Richard Tuck, *Natural Rights Theories: Their Origin and Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁶ Eric Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

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Political Hebraism, Nelson argues, must not just take its hitherto ignored place among the other influences of modern political thought, but, in pointed contradistinction to what has been staple to the history of political philosophy, must in fact replace them, as the emergence of modern political theory was decidedly not secular (Greco-Roman) but religious in nature and predicated on the Hebrew Bible. Nelson's thesis is revolutionary but the evidence he provides is incontrovertible. It provides us not only with a new way with which to understand the great political thinkers of the seventeenth century, but with a contemporary way of understanding the basis of modern political thought that significantly differs from what has commonly been assumed.

Nelson shows that while a special focus on the Hebrew Bible existed throughout the ages, even during medieval times, the Reformation unleashed a Hebraic revival that included widespread study of the Hebrew Bible in its original language without the commentary and catechism of the Roman Catholic Church.⁷ The devaluation of the Christological interpretation along with a Hebraic resurgence is decidedly not what Luther had in mind, but as Diana Muir Appelbaum has

⁷ "Luther's conviction that the way of a true Christian was to seek salvation through the Bible – and only through the Bible – had, for the very first time, placed the study of the original Biblical languages at the heart of the Christian ministry. If one could no longer rely on commentaries, translations, or the authority of the institutional Church for guidance in the life of the spirit, then it became a matter of the utmost urgency to understand the Biblical text correctly, to read the Hebrew Bible in its original language." Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic*, pp. 7–8. Nelson goes on to explain that while there were "Catholic Hebraists of great distinction" both prior and subsequent to the Reformation, "Yet it is undeniable that, after the rupture of 1517, the story of Christian Hebraism becomes a disproportionately Protestant story, unfolding for the most part in the great centers of learning in the United Provinces, Northern Germany, and England." Ibid, pp. 12–13.

In his excellent study on Reformed political theology, Glenn Moots strikes a similar chord with regard to Jean Calvin and his colleagues. "The study of Reformed political theology must begin with its Hebraic roots. While Reformed theologians pursued reforms of Roman Catholicism on points common to all Protestant traditions, the Reformed variant of Protestantism is marked by three important emphases. The first was an emphasis on Biblical languages, consistent with the humanist training of the founders of Reformed Protestantism. Reemphasizing Hebrew, sometimes even rabbinic sources, encouraged a new and independently minded study of the Hebrew Scriptures (the 'Old Testament'). This then led to a second innovation, Biblical covenants as a leitmotif of theology and Biblical interpretation. The third innovation was the construction of a theological garment that attempted to seamlessly integrate Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Scriptures—the 'Old' and 'New' Testaments." Glenn Moots, *Politics Reformed: The Anglo-American Legacy of Covenant Theology* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2010), p. 33.

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demonstrated, it was the inevitable result of his popularization and direct reading of the Hebrew Bible.⁸

This attitudinal sea change toward the Bible and its study resulted in a multi-denominational flowering of Hebraic Christian scholarship across Europe,⁹ reaching its zenith in the seventeenth-century writings of the great political philosophers of the age, and then waning in the eighteenth century when, as Fania Oz-Salzberger comments, “the Enlightenment threw out the political baby along with the theological bathwater.”¹⁰

In the context of his assault on Christian morality and the enervating of political traditions affected by it, Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), who Oz-Salzberger calls the “significant predecessor” of seventeenth-century Hebraism, turned to figures and events of the Hebrew Bible to support his political theory in both his major and minor works. In his search for contemporary political guidance Machiavelli placed great importance on ancient history, and the Hebrew Bible, even if it was not for him of divine origin, was one of those histories. As a secular political document it also projected an advocacy of the human strength (as opposed to Christian

⁸ In her important work on Biblical Nationalism and the emergence of sixteenth-century states, Diana Muir Appelbaum writes, “Luther himself continued to understand the Old Testament as Christological Narrative ... But when Luther told Christians to read the Bible for themselves, they did.” Earlier she strikes the same theme as Nelson, “the key to understanding the emergence of Biblical nationalism in the sixteenth-century Europe was the rediscovery of the Bible by a Latin Christian culture in which, prior to 1517, almost no one read the Bible. Before Luther, Roman Catholics rarely read complete Bibles; they preferred Bible substitutes: paraphrases, epitomes, and commentaries edited to emphasize Christological interpretations of the Hebrew Bible. The discourse of Biblical nationhood visible in the suddenly popular full-text Bibles therefore came as new revelation to a Western European public who had not encountered it before.” Diana Muir Appelbaum, “Biblical Nationalism and the Sixteenth-Century States,” *National Identities* 15, 4 (2013), pp. 317–332, DOI: 10.1080/14608944.2013.814624.

⁹ In 1694, a book printed in Rome by one Carlo Giuseppe Imbonati documents just how extensive Hebrew scholarship became in the Christian world. The book, entitled *Bibliotheca Latino-Hebraica* (Rome: 1694), lists no fewer than 1,300 works by Christian Hebraists of that period. See Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic*, p. 14.

¹⁰ “Political Hebraism flourished in European thought for about a century and a half, roughly between Bodin and Locke, with Machiavelli as a significant predecessor. The great tide of political and legal-minded Hebraism emerged in mid-seventeenth century England, when jurist John Selden built his excellent scholarly reputation upon it, and republican theorists John Milton and James Harrington endowed it with hands-on political significance. Its ebb began in the early eighteenth century, when the Enlightenment threw out the political baby along with the theological bathwater.” Oz-Salzberger, “The Political Thought of John Locke,” p. 232.

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weakness) and the management of human passions that he was seeking, and that was not necessarily provided by other histories.¹¹

Jean Bodin (1530–1596) was a French Catholic who was fluent in Hebrew and insisted on the importance of the history of the ancient Hebrews. His Hebraism comes to the fore especially in his *Colloquium Heptaplomeres*,¹² and in his pursuit of the ultimate political design in his classic works *Methodus* and *Les Six livres de la Republique*, he saw the *Respublica Hebraeorum* as an exemplary model to be followed. Bodin's reading of the Hebrew texts led him to the conclusion that a statist centralized polity in which all powers belonged to a divinely ordained king at the top of the power pyramid was optimum, because it ensured indivisible state sovereignty.¹³

The same Hebrew texts led Bodin's philosophical nemesis Johannes Althusius (1563–1638), a Calvinist from Westphalia, to very different conclusions regarding the ideal polity. In his classic work *Politica Methodice Digesta*, Althusius wrote the first political philosophy that presented a comprehensive theory of federal republicanism, which derived from the Bible but was not dependent on a theological system. Where Bodin saw Biblical justification of absolute monarchy by divine right, Althusius saw a Biblically inspired covenantal view of human society predicated on consent rather than imposition.¹⁴

¹¹ Christopher Lynch makes the suggestion that the Old Testament might have been more important than other ancient histories for Machiavelli because of its emphasis on human strength and excellence. See Christopher Lynch, "Machiavelli on Reading the Bible," *Hebraic Political Studies* 1, 2 (2006), pp. 162–185. Lynch provides a concise overview of how Machiavelli used the Old Testament in his writing.

¹² This book, a dialogue between seven different kinds of believers, circulated clandestinely in high intellectual circles in the second half of the seventeenth century. Richard Popkin writes: "The Jew in the story is a most benign, reasonable character, who beats down all of the Christians claims. The work ends with a strong plea for universal toleration of all faiths. Bodin's picture of the Jew is of very moral, learned and reasonable person, more so than anyone else." Richard Popkin, "The Image of Judaism in Seventeenth Century Europe," in R. Crocker (ed.), *Religion, Reason and Nature in Early Modern Europe* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), p. 184. See also Anna Maria Lazzarino Del Grosso, "The Respublica Hebraeorum as a Scientific Political Model in Jean Bodin's 'Methodus,'" *Hebraic Political Studies* 1, 5 (2006), pp. 550–567.

¹³ For an analysis of Bodin's use of the *Respublica Hebraeorum* see Del Grosso, "The Respublica Hebraeorum as a Scientific Political Model," pp. 549–556.

¹⁴ Alan Mittleman, "Some Thoughts on the Covenantal Politics of Johannes Althusius," in *Political Hebraism: Judaic Sources in Early Modern Political Thought*, pp. 72–89. Daniel J. Elazar, "Althusius and Federalism as Grand Design," www.jcpa.org/dje/articles2/althus-fed.htm, and *Covenant & Commonwealth: The Covenant Tradition in Politics*, vol. II (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1996), esp. pp. 311–333.

Political crises in the early-seventeenth-century Dutch Republic coincided with heightened scholarly interest in Hebraic learning at Leiden University and an influx of Jews into the United Provinces. Two good friends, Petrus Cunaeus (1586–1638) and Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), both sought historical precedent that could be manifestly applied in order to prevent civil strife from tearing the fledgling Republic apart. Cunaeus was the foremost professor of political science at Leiden, a stronghold of Calvinist orthodoxy with an abundance of scholars of the Hebrew language and Hebraic texts. In his seminal political work *De Republica Hebraeorum* (*On the Republic of the Hebrews*¹⁵), he argued that the most salient point to be learned from the Hebrew Bible was that unity kept the Hebrew Republic (“the best and holiest of all Republics”) together, and it was disunity that spelled its doom.¹⁶ Cunaeus’s work is replete with quotes from Maimonides with which he intended to show how republican unity could be maintained. In one of his earliest works, *De Republica Emendanda* (*On How to Amend the Dutch Polity*), Grotius had also attempted a comparison between the Dutch and Hebrew constitutions, but it did not successfully garner public attention. Cunaeus’s opus, on the other hand, captured the limelight because it was printed at a time when Dutch civil tensions had peaked.

Grotius was an Arminian, a recognized scholar of the Hebrew language and Hebrew literature who advocated the granting of rights to the Jews in Holland comparable to those rights granted to Catholics. He corresponded with rabbinic scholar/activist Menasseh ben Israel,

¹⁵ The Italian humanist Carlo Sigonio (1524–1584) had already written a book with the same title in the context of his histories on ancient republics. For an analysis of Sigonio’s work, see Guido Bartolucci, “Carlo Sigonio and the ‘Respublica Hebraeorum’: A Re-evaluation,” *Hebraic Political Studies* 3, 1 (Winter 2008), pp. 19–59. See also Guido Bartolucci, “The Influence of Carlo Sigonio’s ‘De Republica Hebraeorum’ on Hugo Grotius’ ‘De Republica Emendanda,’” *Hebraic Political Studies* 2, 2 (Spring 2007), pp. 193–210. Three important additional works of the era that deal paradigmatically with the Biblical Hebrew polity include: Cornelius Bonaventure Bertram’s *De politia judaica tam civili quam ecclesiastica* (Geneva: 1574), Wilhelm Zepper’s *Legum Mosicarum forensium explanation* (Herborn: 1604), and William Schikard’s *Mishpat Ha-Melek, Jus Regium Habraeorum, e Tenebris Rabbiniis erustum & luci donatum* (Leipzig: 1674). For a thorough assessment of these works see Kalman Neuman, *The Literature of the Respublica Judaica: Descriptions of the Ancient Israelite Polity in the Antiquarian Writing for the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, PhD Thesis, Hebrew University, 2002.

¹⁶ In his discussion of “Seventeenth-Century Uses of Historical Judaism,” Frank Manuel writes that Cunaeus’s theme was commonly shared. “If there is one theme that runs through much of Christian historiography of the ancient Hebrew commonwealth, it is the proposition that discord brought about its downfall.” Manuel, *The Broken Staff*, p. 121.

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and was an admitted great admirer of Maimonides, whom he quotes with frequency in his classic opus *De Jure Belli ac Pacis* (*The Rights of War and Peace*) as well as in his other works. In his *Mare Liberum* (1609) Grotius presents a legal argument for the notion of an open sea that intended to defend Dutch maritime superiority. Grotius taps Talmudic references to bolster his argument in favor of a borderless sea, as does the work of his nemesis English Hebraist John Selden (a figure to be discussed momentarily), *Mare Clausum* (1635), which argues for a closed sea. It was Cunaeus who was later drafted by the States of Holland to respond to Selden and defend the Grotian position. Though a Hebraist of the first order, Grotius did not usually quote Hebraic sources in the original, relying instead on Latin translations, which led to mistaken understandings of important texts.¹⁷

Across the English Channel political Hebraism was represented by some of the century's greatest thinkers, all of Protestant background, including: John Selden (1584–1654), Robert Filmer (1590–1653), Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), John Milton (1608–1674), James Harrington (1611–1677), Algernon Sidney (1623–1683), and John Locke.

Selden, a parliamentarian and civil servant, was dubbed “Rabbi and Revered Teacher” by a contemporary as the depth and breadth of his knowledge of Hebraic texts, both Biblical and rabbinic, was as well-known as it was unsurpassed.¹⁸ He mastered Hebrew and Aramaic texts

¹⁷ Regarding Grotius's secondhand reading of Hebraic sources, see Phyllis S. Lachs, “Hugo Grotius' Use of Jewish Sources in *On the Law of War and Peace*,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 30, 2 (Summer 1977), pp. 181–200. For a more updated assessment see Neuman, *The Literature of the Respublica Judaica*, pp. 138–142, especially ft. 13. For an overview of Grotian Hebraism see Arthur Eyffinger, “How Wondrously Moses Goes Along with the House of Orange! Hugo Grotius' ‘De Republica Emendanda’ in the Context of the Dutch Revolt,” in *Political Hebraism: Judaic Sources in Early Modern Political Thought*, pp. 107–147. As for the Hebraism of Petrus Cunaeus, see Arthur Eyffinger, “Introduction,” in *Petrus Cunaeus: The Hebrew Republic* (Jerusalem: Shalem Press, 2006), pp. ix–lxx. For Grotius's influence on John Milton, see Fania Oz-Salzberger, “Social Justice and the Right of the People: The Seventeenth Century Reads the Hebrew Bible,” paper presented at the Princeton Conference on Political Hebraism, September 7–9, 2008, p. 9.

¹⁸ Jason P. Rosenblatt, *Renaissance England's Chief Rabbi: John Selden* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 4. For a more concise assessment of Selden's Hebraism, see Jason P. Rosenblatt, “Rabbinic Ideas in the Political Thought of John Selden,” in *Political Hebraism: Judaic Sources in Early Modern Political Thought*, pp. 191–206. For the latest, most exhaustive study of Selden, see Ofir Haivry, *John Selden and the Western Political Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). I am indebted to Dr. Haivry for privileging me with review of one of his early drafts.