Achsah Guibbory, *Christian Identity, Jews, and Israel in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). 360 pages + bibliography and index. ISBN # 978-019957165. Hardcover $110.00

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The "linguistic turn' of the last thirty years towards a 'new' cultural history has deepened the relationship between the study of history and literature in seventeenth-century England. Among other things, this had led to a growing amount of historical scholarship on the subject of the cultural significance of the English Bible in this period. In 1993, Christopher Hill, still formidable as he reached eighty years old, made the case for a ubiquitous 'biblical culture' in mid-seventeenth-century England. He argued that the English Bible was the "foundation of all aspects of English culture," central to all forms of political, legal, social and intellectual life.[1] The paramount importance of the language of the English Bible in early modern English life has more recently been explored by other historians, including David S. Katz and Naomi Tadmor.[2]

This growing interest in the historical significance of the English Bible has not been confined to historians.[3] A recent collection of essays has demonstrated the potential for collaboration between literary critics and intellectual historians of this period.[4] Nevertheless, it is surprising to see that Oxford University Press has been promoting the literary scholar Achsah Guibbory's latest book as a 'cultural history.' The work examines the omnipresence of the Hebrew Bible and of the idea of ancient Israel in seventeenth-

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[1] Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution*, (London: Penguin, 1993).
[2] David S. Katz, *God's Last Words: Reading the English Bible from the Reformation to Fundamentalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); Naomi Tadmor, *The Social Universe of the English Bible: Scripture, Society and Culture in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[3] See, for example, Debora K. Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), or Kevin Sharpe. "Reading revelations: prophecy, hermeneutics and politics in early modern Britain," in *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England,* edited by Kevin Sharpe and Stephen Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 122-163.
[4] Ariel Hessayon and Nicholas Keene (eds.), *Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007).

century English writing, looking across the social, political and religious spectrum. It also investigates the implications of this omnipresence for English Protestant attitudes towards contemporary Jews. This is a specialized work, not a subject of general interest, but it is meant to appeal to scholars across disciplinary boundaries. In the preface, Guibbory explains that the project tries to bring together a variety of her seventeenth-century interests: literature, history, religion and 'interfaith relations.'

"[Early modern] English Christians," Guibbory writes, "understood contemporary experience and defined their religious identities in relation to biblical Israel, Jewish history and Judaism" (p.1). While the book ostensibly treats the whole of the seventeenth century, the Restoration period is only briefly treated in the book's final chapter, and the focus there is largely on John Milton and John Dryden. The book's introduction provides a very brief historical overview of Christian views of Judaism, focusing on the letters of Paul, the Protestant Reformation and John Calvin. The first two chapters generally look at the period from 1603-1640, first treating the Solomonic pretensions and imperial ambitions of James I, then investigating the Laudian church's desire for a strong, centralized national church based upon the ancient Israelite model, with a worship based upon the ancient Jewish Temple.

The next four chapters treat the Civil War and Interregnum periods of the 1640s and 1650s, revisiting many of the figures and subjects that previously captivated Christopher Hill: the Puritan 'fast sermons' of the 1640s, the political programs of republicans, Levellers and Diggers, the proposals for the establishment of the Mosaic Law Code in England, and the radical prophesying of Quakers, Fifth Monarchists and Ranters. However, while Hill was generally interested only in radicals and revolutionaries, Guibbory devotes one particularly good chapter to the works of Royalists and 'Anglicans' in this tumultuous period, reminding us that the embattled King (like Parliament) also ordered fast days during the Civil War, and that Royalist soldiers were expected to pray diligently before battle. She demonstrates that Royalists (like Puritans) often

wrote using the language of exile in Babylon, invoked the Book of Lamentations, published collections of psalms, and held an interest in elaborate descriptions of the Jewish Temple. "Too often," Guibbory argues, "modern readers have uncritically embraced Puritan assumptions about Royalists" as ungodly hedonists (p.122). This chapter provides an important corrective to an imbalance in the historiography, and shows that the Royalist use of Biblical tropes, metaphors and analogies often mirrored those of the 'Puritan' or Parliamentary side.

Just as the mid-seventeenth-century probably represents the historical peak of mainstream English Christian engagement with the Old Testament, this engagement coincides with the rise of a fascination with Jews and Judaism, and also with the readmission of the Jews to England and her colonies.[5] Guibbory wants us to see these as connected developments. She argues that most scholars who have previously treated the English Bible in this period, including Hill, have tended to "collapse the Hebrew Bible into the Christian, submerging the Jewish into what is generally 'biblical' (i.e., Christian)" (p.8). This, of course, raises the age-old question of who 'owns' the text of the Hebrew Bible and, with it, the promises of the Israelite prophets. Christians, from Paul, consider themselves the spiritual sons of Abraham, and thus the 'true' Israel of the Spirit, unlike the Jews, whose 'fleshy' status as Israel has been superseded. This essentially Pauline form of universalism has long nurtured a tension in Christian attitudes towards Jews, those 'carnal' sons of Abraham, that is neither uniquely English nor uniquely Protestant.

Nonetheless, the particularly widespread fascination with the Hebrew Bible in seventeenth-century England probably did contribute to an increasing interest in contemporary Jews and Judaism, although this interest led to a wide range of different attitudes about Jews, as Guibbory shows. She rejects James Shapiro's view that English Christians in this period viewed Jews negatively as

[5] David S. Katz's *Philo-semitism and the readmission of the Jews to England, 1603-1655* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982) remains a seminal work on these two subjects.

the 'Other,'[6] claiming that this approach "collapses the range of English attitudes towards Jews" (p. 2). For example, Guibbory shows that some millenarians maintained that there would be a special place in the coming millennial age for contemporary Jews, thus challenging the very identification of England with biblical Israel. If the Jews were still God's chosen nation, then the English could not inherit all of the messianic promises made to Israel (pp. 188-89).

Even where there was agreement that the Jews had lost their chosen status, Guibbory shows that the concept of a new English Protestant Israel remained divisive and uncertain. While representations of James I as King Solomon held imperial and messianic implications, heralding a new Davidic dynasty in England, some feared that this vision could easily slide into sinfulness, idolatry, and apostasy, repeating the fate of Israel under the biblical kings. The ornate majesty, ceremony, and enforced uniformity of the Church of England under Archbishop Laud in the 1630s exacerbated this tension between competing visions of the English Protestant Israel. As Guibbory explains, 'Israel' was a mixed concept: it could speak to nation-building and imperial aspirations, console an exiled and suffering group hoping for deliverance, or describe a sinful nation which did not deserve God's blessings (pp. 295-96).Thus, while the ancient Israel of the Hebrew Bible provided English Protestants with prophecies to be fulfilled, types to be re-imagined (e.g. James I as Solomon, Oliver Cromwell as Gideon), and stories to be re-enacted (e.g. building the Temple, sliding into apostasy, exile) there was little agreement on how exactly these corresponded to seventeenth-century political realities.

Guibbory's analysis of the Israelite pretensions of the early Stuarts and the Laudian church is one of the stronger and most original parts of her book, but also one of the more problematic. The reader is left with lingering concerns about Anglocentrism, longing for her to place English events in a European context. For example, she argues that historians have not adequately recognized the

[6] James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

importance of the idea of Israel for the Laudian project. Historians have often restated Puritan criticisms and regarded the Laudian innovations as crypto-Catholic, where in Guibbory's view they were inspired by the worship of ancient Israel – certainly inclining towards absolutism, but not crypto-Catholic (p.70). But surely the Laudians were not oblivious to the ways in which their innovations resembled the continental Tridentine Catholicism of this period. While she points out that two theologians highly regarded by Laudians, Richard Hooker and Lancelot Andrewes, argued for continuity between the Church of England and ancient Jewish worship, she glosses over Hooker's argument for continuity between the Church of England and the Church of Rome. Hooker's close associate and pupil, Sir Edwin Sandys, wrote approvingly of the ornate beauty of the Catholic churches he had seen in his travels on the continent. Andrewes wished to revive the necessity of private confession to a member of the clergy in order to help ensure absolution, and some Laudian divines argued that the remission of sins could not occur without confession to a priest.[7] It is likely that while some Laudians did draw inspiration from Roman Catholic worship, they found it much more suitable to cite biblical precedent than 'Papist' example. After all, as Guibbory points out, the Church of Rome also claimed continuity with Jewish Temple worship (p. 75).

Elsewhere, Guibbory argues that "it is in the context of England's deepening identification with biblical Israel, both during her flourishing under Solomon and as she was imagined in her glorious future restoration, that we should see the creation of the British East India Company," adding that "increased trade with Europe, Africa and the East could seem positively biblical for people well versed in the Hebrew Bible" (p. 47). While this is certainly true,

[7] Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 156-57; James Ellison, *George Sandys: Travel, Colonialism and Tolerance in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2002), 34; Peter Lake, "Lancelot Andrewes and the Myth of Anglicanism," in *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560-1660*, edited by Peter Lake and Michael Questier (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 2000), 16-17, 23-24; Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thoughts, 1600-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 69-70, 72-75, 472.

the East India Company was also created in the context of the increasing efforts of English and Dutch privateers after 1588 to disrupt Spanish and Portuguese trade with India. As the chief European players in the East Indian sea trade, the combined Iberian crowns oversaw the world's first global trade network.[8] The defeat of the Spanish Armada emboldened the upstart English in their attacks on Iberian naval supremacy, and also helped to fashion a sense of English Protestant destiny to surpass their powerful Catholic advarsaries. This imperial destiny found expression partly in analogies to ancient Israel, and as Guibbory points out, was reiterated in the Restoration period by Dryden (pp. 274-75). But Guibbory does not ask whether other early modern European imperial and nation-building visions were articulated in the similar terms.

Guibbory's book is the work of an experienced scholar with much experience in the field. It is a fine contribution to at least two areas of research in the study of seventeenth-century England; the cultural significance of the English Bible, and the complexity of English Christian attitudes towards Jews and Judaism. For historians of early modern England and her colonies, her work on the Davidic and Solomonic pretensions of the early Stuarts is particularly useful, as is her attention to the use of Hebrew Bible tropes in the writings of Civil War Royalists. The middle chapters on fast sermons, political platforms, radical prophets and millenarians, while ably-written, offer little that has not been covered well elsewhere by Hill and others, with the exception of her discussion of Robert Maton, a much-neglected millenarian. Each individual chapter is self-contained and could be of use to a researcher who does not need to read the entire book. As a general study, the book's primary value is probably as a historical resource for literary critics, particularly those who wish to put the works of Milton, Dryden, John Donne, Ben Jonson, or other seventeenth-century English figures in their cultural context.

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[8] James C. Boyajian, *Portuguese Trade in Asia under the Habsburgs, 1580-1640* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 14-25.