

## Liberalism and Republicanism in Early Modern Europe: Concepts of Citizenship as a Usable Past for Today's Israeli-European Dialogue.

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This GIF project, conducted jointly with Professor Thomas Maissen of Heidelberg University and a dedicated team of young researchers from Germany and Israel (both Jewish and Arab), opens a new vista for the uses of history as a positive and inspiring element in the current dialogue between Israelis and Europeans, and especially between Israelis and Germans.

History has recently been a dark dimension in Israeli-German, indeed in Israeli-European relations. The Holocaust attaches a black prism to every attempt to look back at the European origins of our complex polity. The brief and terrible moment of genocide 'swallows up' the past. This is fully understandable, but it is also tragic. A full millenium of Jewish European existence is at present obscure, even non-existent, to young Israelis and Europeans. That millenium included dismal eras of persecution and exclusion, but it had many great moments in which Jews acted as promoters, transmitters, inspirers and participants in the rise and modernization of European culture, thought, science and arts. Spain in the late Middle Ages, the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century, Berlin from the late eighteenth century, the German universities in their scholarly heyday, the Weimar Republic - all of these historical moments, and many more, constitute a powerful and relevant legacy for today.

Our project centers on early modern Europe (16th-18th centuries), and focuses on political thought. We look at the relevancy of Jewish and non-Jewish thinkers and movements who were either conversant with Hebraic texts or involved with Jewish-European existence. We look at Spinoza, Locke, Kant, alongside other early modern republican or liberal thinkers. We attempt to map the complex relationship and differentials between republicanism and liberalism in their attitudes to polity, citizenship and liberty.

Lastly - and this is a point of novelty compared to similar historical research - we attempt to examine modes of relevancy and application of the early modern ideas to current affairs in Israel and in Europe, including concepts of citizenship and belonging, freedom and exclusion, minority and plurality. In the international conference that will sum up our three-year project (in 2009/10), and the ensuing volume, we shall aim to draw out the usable elements of the shared historical legacies, and propose a positive understanding of history, of the Jewish European Millenium, as a vehicle for dialogue and encounter, critique and self-critique, of Europeans and Israelis today.

On a personal note, visiting Heidelberg in this capacity is very moving for me. I am the great-niece of Professor Joseph Klausner, founding father of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who wrote his doctoral thesis in Heidelberg (1904) and loved this town. His thesis was annulled by the Nazis, reinstated after the war, but he refused to set foot in Germany again. I am proud to be here, and feel that my work follows the true footsteps of Klausner and the best legacy of his scholarly generation, Jewish and German.