



God's Sacred Tongue: Hebrew and the American Imagination

Shalom L. Goldman

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In a comprehensive examination of how Christian scholars in the United States received, interpreted, and understood Hebrew texts and the Jewish experience, Shalom Goldman explores Hebraism's relationship to American society. By linking history, theology, and literature from the colonial period through the twentieth century, Goldman illuminates the religious and cultural roots of American interest in the Middle East.

God's Sacred Tongue is structured around a sequence of biographical and intellectual portraits of individuals including Jonathan Edwards, Isaac Nordheimer, Professor George Bush (an ancestor of President George W. Bush), and twentieth-century literary critic Edmund Wilson. Since the colonial period, America has been perceived as a western Promised Land with emotional, spiritual, and physical links to the Promised Land of biblical history. Goldman gives evidence from scholarship, diplomacy, journalism, the history of higher education, and the arts to show that this perception is linked to the role Hebrew and the Bible have played in American cultural history.

The book's final section takes up the story of American Christian Zionism, among whose Protestant adherents political Zionism found much of its strongest support. Religious and cultural figures such as William Rainey Harper and Reinhold Niebuhr are among those who exemplify the centuries-old ties between America, the Land of Promise, and Israel, the Promised Land.

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