

## JUDAISM AND THE IDEA OF LIBERTY

Rabbi Mitchell Rocklin, Ph.D.

1. Free Creatures: The Bible's View of Freedom as Fundamental
  - a. There is no true creation narrative in the Bible, only covenant
  - b. Man is a free being; freedom is our mode of existence
  - c. Evil: the use of freedom to rebel against the source of freedom
  
2. Free Nations: The Bible's Influence on Nationalism and Liberalism
  - a. The Bible's opposition to empire
  - b. Athens, Rome and Jerusalem: The Jews against the polis
  
3. Free Men: The Poetics of Personal Liberty
  - a. Jewish opposition to slavery lays the foundation for its abolition
    - i. The Torah and the extension of liberty to the individual
    - ii. Jeremiah and slavery as the basis of the exile
    - iii. Judeo-Christian opposition to slavery
  - b. The free man and the free woman – how the West was unique
  
4. Free Individuals: From Medieval mysticism to Modernity
  - a. Jewish Midrash on the free condition of man before God
  - b. Judeo-Christian medieval mystics elevate man
    - i. The Holy Letter
    - ii. Hugh of St. Victor and Meister Eckhart
  - c. The Renaissance and the realization of human potential
    - i. Nicholas of Cusa and Pico della Mirandola
    - ii. Jewish Kabbalah and the elevation of the individual
  - d. Modernity and the Intellectual Justification of Personal Liberty
  
5. Free Aristocrats as the New Free Men: Jewish answers for our times
  - a. How to maintain freedom in an age after aristocracy
  - b. Judaism and the understanding of universal aristocracy
  - c. "Freedom on the tablets" –commandedness as a solution