

Leo Strauss and Emmanuel Levinas

Philosophy and the Politics of Revelation

LEORA BATNITZKY

Princeton University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	page xi
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xiii
<i>Preface</i>	xvii

PART ONE: PHILOSOPHY

1. Strauss and Levinas between Athens and Jerusalem	3
1.1. Jewish Philosophy between Athens and Jerusalem	5
1.2. After Heidegger: Maimonides between Athens and Jerusalem	8
1.3. The Scope of Philosophy	15
1.4. Back to Nature?	19
1.5. The Philosophical Return to Religion or the Religious Turn to Philosophy?	22
1.6. Philosophy and the Problem of Evil	24
2. Levinas's Defense of Modern Philosophy: How Strauss Might Respond	28
2.1. The Argument of <i>Totality and Infinity</i>	30
2.2. Heidegger and Husserl	33
2.3. Levinas and Descartes	35
2.4. The Separable Self and Ethics or Descartes Once Again	38
2.5. How to Understand Levinas's Use of Descartes: What Strauss Might Say	42
2.6. The Difference between Levinas and Strauss or on Descartes Yet Again	47
2.7. Levinas and the Messianic Aspirations of Philosophy	52

PART TWO: REVELATION

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 3. 'Freedom Depends Upon Its Bondage': The Shared Debt to Franz Rosenzweig | 57 |
| 3.1. Levinas's Reading: Rosenzweig's Opposition to Totality | 59 |
| 3.2. Strauss's Reading: God as Wholly Other | 62 |
| 3.3. What to Make of this Difference: Levinas as Post-Christian Philosopher | 67 |
| 3.4. Modern Philosophy and the Legacy of Christianity | 73 |
| 4. An Irrationalist Rationalism: Levinas's Transformation of Hermann Cohen | 75 |
| 4.1. Future and Past, Inside and Out | 77 |
| 4.2. The Shared Criticism of Spinoza: A Case Study | 80 |
| 4.3. The Difference between Cohen and Levinas: Reason vs. Sensibility | 85 |
| 4.4. Cohen, Levinas, and the Legacy of Kant | 90 |
| 5. The Possibility of Premodern Rationalism: Strauss's Transformation of Hermann Cohen | 94 |
| 5.1. History and Truth, Outside and In | 95 |
| 5.2. Reading Spinoza or on the Necessity of Historicizing Philosophy | 99 |
| 5.3. Maimonides and the Possibility of Premodern Rationalism | 104 |
| 5.4. Beyond Cohen? | 112 |

PART THREE: POLITICS

- | | |
|---|------------|
| 6. Against Utopia: Law and Its Limits | 117 |
| 6.1. Philosophy, Law, and the Difference between Judaism and Christianity | 118 |
| 6.2. The Question of Natural Right | 123 |
| 6.3. Skepticism and Antiutopianism | 129 |
| 6.4. Skepticism and Religion | 132 |
| 6.5. Religion and Society, or Religion in America | 136 |
| 7. Zionism and the Discovery of Prophetic Politics | 140 |
| 7.1. The Early Strauss: Zionism and Law | 141 |
| 7.2. Strauss's Prophetic Politics out of the Sources of Zionism | 148 |
| 7.3. Levinas's Zionism: From Politics to Religion | 151 |
| 7.4. Religion and Politics | 159 |

8. Politics and Hermeneutics: Strauss's and Levinas's Retrieval of Classical Jewish Sources	163
8.1. Strauss's Hermeneutics: Esotericism, Exile, and Elitism	164
8.2. Levinas's Hermeneutics: From Law to Ethics	172
8.3. Politics and Reading	177
9. Revelation and Commandment: Strauss, Levinas, and the Theologico-Political Predicament	181
9.1. Strauss and Modern Jewish Thought: The Guttman Debate	182
9.2. On Not Acknowledging the Modern Break with the Jewish Past	186
9.3. Jewish Law in America	193
9.4. The Challenge of Contemporary Jewish Thought	201
10. Concluding Thoughts: Progress or Return?	204
10.1. Strauss's Philosophical Legacy	205
10.2. Against Contemporary Appropriations of Strauss	210
10.3. Is Modernity Worth Defending?	212
<i>Notes</i>	217
<i>References</i>	259
<i>Index</i>	267