



The Spinoza Center



מכון ון ליר בירושלים

THE VAN LEER JERUSALEM INSTITUTE

معهد فان لير في القدس

THE EVENING IS DEDICATED TO THE HEBREW TRANSLATION OF STEVEN NADLER'S BOOK
A Book Forged in Hell: Spinoza's Scandalous Treatise and the Birth of the Secular Age

ספר שחושל בגיהנום: שפינוזה והולדת העידן החילוני
(מאת סטיבן נדלר, בתרגום אביעד שטיר; ספרי עליית הגג וידיעות ספרים)

SPINOZA ON THE DIVINITY OF SCRIPTURE

Thursday November 9, 2017, 18:00

Lecture by: **Prof. Steven Nadler**, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Chair: **Dr. Noa Naaman Zauderer**, Tel Aviv University

The Bible is traditionally regarded as “divine.” But in what sense is the divinity of Scripture to be understood? Did God literally write (or at least dictate to Moses) the Torah, along with the historical and prophetic texts that compose the books of the Hebrew Bible? According to Spinoza, this would be metaphysically impossible, because God is nothing but Nature itself, and thus not a kind of person or agent who can do things like write or dictate or even command. The authors of the Bible, in his account, were ordinary human beings, and thus the Bible is nothing but a work of mundane literature. It is, in fact, an arbitrarily selected and “mutilated” set of writings that were copied time and again, handed down through generations, and finally edited into a single anthology sometime in the Second Temple period. They are not literally divine. However, Spinoza does want to say that there remains a meaningful sense in which the Biblical writings are special, even “divine.” What their divinity and sacredness consists of is their superior ability to inspire us to true piety and acts of justice and charity toward our fellow human beings. The prophets who were the authors of the Hebrew Bible were both morally superior individuals and gifted storytellers with particularly vivid imaginations. Thus, the narratives they have composed are especially good at motivating moral behavior in readers. In this lecture we will consider just how this is supposed to work and consider some puzzling questions raised by Spinoza’s account of the divinity of the Bible.

Steven Nadler is an American philosopher. He works mainly in early modern philosophy, especially 17th-century European philosophy (Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz). His research also involves medieval Jewish philosophy, especially rationalist thinkers such as Saadya ben Joseph, Maimonides, and Gersonides.

ADMISSION IS FREE

at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, 43 Jabotinsky St., Jerusalem

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Photographs taken at the event will be posted on the Institute’s website and on social networks.