

# WHAT JEWS THINK

## A ZOOM SERIES

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Thurs., Feb. 29 @8:30 PM  
Rabbi Dr. Haim Rechnitzer

Hebrew Union College

“What is Judaism? –

## The Dispute between Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig”

In 1923 Rosenzweig wrote an open letter to Martin Buber titled “Die Bauleute” (The Builders), a letter that later became a central part of Rosenzweig’s Jewish theological legacy. In “The Builders – Concerning the Jewish Law” Rosenzweig accuses Buber that despite liberating “us” from the shackles of 19th century academic objective engagement with “Judaism” and opening our minds and hearts to seek the “inner power” of the Jewish tradition, he failed to answer the crucial existential question “what are we to do?” That is, Buber’s answer left the question of Jewish praxis, of Halakhah, outside of the realm of possible answers. Buber, of course, did not leave the question of action in this world unanswered. He provided a non-halakhic answer, arguing that the “truth” of Judaism lies in its religiosity, not its manifestation as a religion, or as Law. Our session will be dedicated to the exploration of these two opposing concepts of “Judaism” and in fact, of the ever-present existential question of “what are we (Jews) to do?”

*Rabbi Dr. Haim O. Rechnitzer is a Professor of Jewish Thought at HUC-JIR in Cincinnati, Ohio, and a poet. He earned his doctorate from the Department of Jewish Thought at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and his rabbinical ordination from HUC-JIR (Jerusalem) in 2003. Rechnitzer’s research is dedicated to themes of political theology, theological trends in Hebrew poetry, Israeli theology, and Jewish education. His recent books are Prophecy and the Perfect Political Order: The Political Theology of Leo Strauss (Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute 2012), Songs of the Third Exile (Jerusalem: Carmel Publishing House, 2014), Shibolet (Vortex) (Jerusalem: Carmel Publishing House, 2014), and Pictures / Reproductions (Jerusalem: Carmel & Yediot Aharonot, 2022). His forthcoming book is Ars-Prophetica: Theology in the Poetry of Twentieth-Century Israeli Poets Avraham Ĥalfi, Shin Shalom, Amir Gilboa, and T. Carmi (Cincinnati, HUC Press, 2023). He has published articles on the subject of political theology, philosophy of education, theology of Piyyut (religious hymns), and Hebrew poetry.*

## THE REST OF THE SERIES

- Thursday, March 14 @8:30 PM **Dr. Michah Gottlieb, New York University - “A Rabbinic Debate about Slavery on the Eve of the Civil War”**
- Thursday, April 11 @8:30 PM **Dr. Andrea Dara Cooper, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill - “Jewish Philosophy and Feminism”**
- Thursday, May 9 @8:30 PM **Dr. Shira Billet, Jewish Theological Seminary - “How Jewish Philosophers Think about Troubling Traditions”**

