



American Zion

Eran Shalev

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The Bible has always been an integral part of American political culture. Yet in the years before the Civil War, it was the Old Testament, not the New Testament, that pervaded political rhetoric. From Revolutionary times through about 1830, numerous American politicians, commentators, ministers, and laymen depicted their young nation as a new, God-chosen Israel and relied on the Old Testament for political guidance.

In this original book, historian Eran Shalev closely examines how this powerful predilection for Old Testament narratives and rhetoric in early America shaped a wide range of debates and cultural discussions—from republican ideology, constitutional interpretation, southern slavery, and more generally the meaning of American nationalism to speculations on the origins of American Indians and to the emergence of Mormonism. Shalev argues that the effort to shape the United States as a biblical nation reflected conflicting attitudes within the culture—proudly boastful on the one hand but uncertain about its abilities and ultimate destiny on the other. With great nuance, *American Zion* explores for the first time the meaning and lasting effects of the idea of the United States as a new Israel and sheds new light on our understanding of the nation's origins and culture during the founding and antebellum decades.

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