

named Sally at Monticello and that she had sailed to France with him in the 1780s. Volume 38 reproduces this prolix essay in its entirety in a long footnote, which also summarizes some variations Callender added in subsequent publications, and observes that other writers subsequently took up the tale. The editors choose not to explain the differences between Callender's story and the actual position of Sally Hemings at Monticello, although they do cite the now standard work, *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family* by Annette Gordon-Reed (New York, 2008), in another connection. Many other scholars have contributed to this interesting story; it is reasonable, if not quite proven beyond the slightest doubt, that Jefferson, like many a patriarch of ancient and more recent times, had two families, one educated and appreciated for keeping up an elite position, and the other closer to him than the rest of his slaves and granted special privileges. His case appears to be similar, though not identical, to that of his father-in-law, John Wayles, and one of his sons-in-law, John Wayles Eppes. The Jefferson, Wayles, Eppes, and Hemings families all seem related to one another.

If some distorted glimpse of this situation injured the reputation of Thomas Jefferson, it is hard to tell, considering his landslide reelection in 1804 and the subsequent honors received during and beyond his life. In contrast, Callender was knocked in the head and successfully sued for libel by one of Jefferson's friends and, in July 1803, lost his life by drowning in the James River.

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American Zion: The Old Testament as a Political Text from the Revolution to the Civil War. By Eran Shalev. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013. Pp. [xii], 239. \$40.00, ISBN 978-0-300-18692-5.)

American Zion: The Old Testament as a Political Text from the Revolution to the Civil War by Eran Shalev is an invaluable study of the political uses of the Old Testament from the Revolution to the Civil War. The central thesis of the study and the original chapter theses highlight the centrality of biblical religiosity to the foundations of American politics and culture. The Old Testament narrative and its many historical parallels to the formation of the American republic served to legitimate the creation of the United States. Numerous politicians and ministers, as well as the public, connected the American republic to the biblical Israel, drawing on Old Testament examples to ground a radical revolution and republican experiment in the oldest of traditions. Historians have long noted the analogies the Founders made to classical Greece and Rome, but Shalev brilliantly elevates the Old Testament's political examples to a place of priority. In so doing, he demonstrates more broadly how America and its founders combined biblical and long-established Christian traditions with modernizing Enlightenment ideas, an amalgam that made America's revolution and transition to a modern republican state less threatening to the public and cemented the uniquely American accommodation to modernity and religion that endures today.

Shalev's central thesis is convincing and pays many dividends to the reader while allowing Shalev to explore several other novel analyses, chief

among which are his treatments of the Book of Mormon and the antebellum slavery debate. The early national period saw a surge in the popularity of pseudobiblical historical texts that used the language of the King James Bible and the conceit of a “rediscovered” ancient text to describe the miraculous triumph of the American experiment. This now largely ignored body of popular publications casts the Book of Mormon in a new light by showing it to be one of the last examples of this early national genre. This original insight is rooted in thorough research and is carefully and sensitively written—acknowledging that the genre was an important aspect of Joseph Smith’s revelation but did not define it.

Shalev touches on more familiar ground with his analysis of the slavery debate. Proslavery and antislavery propagandists drew heavily on biblical parallels and quotations but significantly downplayed the Old Testament in favor of the New Testament. A shift is apparent in the antebellum emphasis on Christian morality over the politics and history of the Old Testament that had been more central to the Founders’ worldview and that helped legitimate the Revolution and the founding of the republic. The slavery debate and the Civil War marked a decline in biblicism in American culture and particularly in the “Old Testamentism” that had previously been central to political rhetoric (p. 186). Americans still cast themselves as a chosen nation, but the language used to express it had lost the direct analogy to Old Israel that had dominated Puritan and early national discourse.

These are just some of the crucial contributions of this consistently enlightening and entertaining study. There can be little doubt that, as Shalev puts it, “political Hebraism has to date been insufficiently employed by early American historians” (p. 53).

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The Oracle and the Curse: A Poetics of Justice from the Revolution to the Civil War. By Caleb Smith. (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 2013. Pp. [xvi], 264. \$35.00, ISBN 978-0-674-07308-1.)

Judges and writers construct authority through sentences. In the early American republic, courts pronounced life and death verdicts in a way that authors and political activists could only imagine. Yet jurists understood that power became justice through the development of a language that made their sentences seem to be solely products of impersonal, law-derived logic rather than personal, class, or institutional interest. Based on that fiction, scholars and judges in the generations after independence sought to delegitimize appeals to sympathy, conscience, and God’s higher law. Such factors had no place in a public sphere where propertied white men ruled by wielding secular reason on behalf of the people. Literary scholar Caleb Smith argues that this cool vision of justice stimulated an array of critics, from novelists who exposed the ruse to radical activists who cursed a nation hiding behind secular laws to perpetuate grave injustices.

Smith’s reading of Nat Turner and John Brown indicates that slavery most damnably revealed the law’s moral infirmity. But his study engages a