Letting God In To The Public Sphere: On the Politics of Covenant

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7:30 pm

Weatherspoon Auditorium
Parking behind Weatherspoon
Reception to Follow

Judaism in the United States is frequently described as a religious tradition centered on the notion of covenant, the relationship between God and the people of Israel in which God will bless the people in history if the people act in accordance with divine commands. But what is the function of this description? What are the desires of scholars and theologians who have invoked it? In these remarks, Prof. Kavka will show that covenant-talk arose in the US as a way to highlight the unique way in which Jews could participate in American politics -- the esteemed theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote in 1954 that "God will return to us when we let Him in -- into our banks and factories, into our Congress and clubs, into our courts and investigating committees" -- and will ask whether this language is still appropriate for an age in which the enemies of the West are no longer godless Communists, but godly zealots.