

Rosenzweig Jahrbuch / Rosenzweig Yearbook 12

Gebet, Praxis, Erlösung /

Prayer, Praxis, Redemption

## Rosenzweig Jahrbuch / Rosenzweig Yearbook

Im Auftrag des Vorstands der  
Internationalen Rosenzweig-Gesellschaft

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Gebet, Praxis,  
Erlösung

Prayer, Praxis,  
Redemption

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## Vorwort / Preface

On February 17–20, 2019, a Conference took place in Jerusalem, Israel, under the title »Back to Redemption: Rosenzweig's *Star* 1919–2019«.

On February 16, 1919, Franz Rosenzweig, after his return to his family in Kassel from the war front in the Balkans, completed his *opus magnum*, *Der Stern der Erlösung*. One hundred years later, there was an inspiring significance in celebrating this anniversary with a special event dedicated to the discussion of the main theme of his thinking, particularly in a city which is so suggestive for the history and memories enclosed in its buildings, walls, and landscapes, so evocative of the possibility of contact between the divine and the world that might liberate human beings from their finiteness, and a »holy city« for some religions.

The Conference was carefully organized by Benjamin Pollock (Franz Rosenzweig Minerva Research Center, Hebrew University) and Ynon Wygoda (Martin Buber Society of Fellows, Hebrew University) and it was attended by many old and young scholars and researchers from all over the world. The principal institution which supported the Conference was the Internationale Franz Rosenzweig Gesellschaft. But many other academic, cultural, and religious institutions and foundations cooperated in order to ensure the realization of this meeting: among them the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, the Franz Rosenzweig Minerva Research Center for German-Jewish Literature and Cultural History, the German-Israeli Minerva School, the Hebrew University Jerusalem, the Martin-Buber-Professur at the Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main, and the Evangelische Kirche in Hessen und Nassau.

The Conference confirmed the undying attractive force of

Rosenzweig's philosophy. Certainly it remains true today, as it was in the past – Rosenzweig himself recognized it – that *The Star of Redemption* is a very difficult book; but it also remains true that for every generation of readers the *Star* is an extremely intriguing text: the expression of a soul at a crucial moment in its existence, and at the same time an epochal work which, like a two-faced Janus, on one side is closely connected to the history of philosophy and theology, and on the other side opens towards a new perspective which could universally orient the life of mankind beyond the singularization of every nation and every individual, and give order to the world notwithstanding the incapacity of the human intellect to embrace the All.

The present volume 12 of the *Rosenzweig Jahrbuch* / *Rosenzweig Yearbook* collects some of the papers presented in the context of this Conference. Some authors are well-known scholars in the field of Rosenzweig studies, and some are young scholars following their own paths in interpreting the *Star*. They belong to different linguistic and cultural areas and were trained in philosophical work according to different traditions and styles, but all of them converge in finding the topic of redemption – redemption of the human being, of the world, of God – essential in any thinking which intends to abandon nihilism (i.e. the doctrine which divides life and meaning, being and sense, and therefore underlines the absurdity of existence), in the search for a well-grounded and convincingly argued humanism.

We decided to present this collection under the title *Gebet, Praxis, Erlösung* / *Prayer, Praxis, Redemption* because it seems to us that every essay which is here included deals with all three of these concepts: in fact – as is demonstrated through the subtle phenomenological analyses carried out in most of the writings – prayer is itself a praxis, an action, and in a sense it has already in itself redemption, just as the praxis directed to redemption, the action moved by love, disinterestedness, generosity, in personal relationships or in history, always implies theoretical or contemplative grounds, the attitude of prayer.

Each contributor emphasizes one of these concepts, shifting the other two a little bit into the background, though never can-

celling them. According to this last criterion, the reader of this *Rosenzweig Jahrbuch* / *Rosenzweig Yearbook* will find a first group of writings (whose authors are Ephraim Meir, Martin Fricke, Gesine Palmer, Hanoch Ben Pazi) that mostly discuss the question of prayer, in a traditional or secular form, connected with the problem of an interreligious dialogue aimed at achieving concord and peace; a second group of texts (written by Giacomo Petrarca, Gabriella Caponigro, Stephanie Brenzel, Elias Sacks, Naomi Tanaka) that mostly consider the paradoxes, the risks, and the oppositions between particularity and universality aroused by the idea of a human redemption in history; a third group of contributions (whose authors are Eveline Goodman-Thau, Sebastian Wogenstein, Josiah Simon, Ellen De Doncker) that mostly concern individual prayer and praxis for redemption in time, partly with reference to the poet's or artist's activity; and, last but not least, three texts that mostly deal with Rosenzweig's idea of redemption in relation to other philosophers: Francesco Valerio Tommasi compares the concept of the praying human being in the *Star* with Kant's idea of *homo noumenon*; Lucas Scott Wright interprets the tragic and redeemed human being described by Rosenzweig from the point of view of an anti-metaphysical and postmodern thought; and Jules Simon points out the affinity between the idea of truth as conceived by Rosenzweig and the idea of truth as a guide for human life maintained by some proponents of pragmatism. To pray, to act, to redeem are, for all these interpreters of Rosenzweig's thought, necessary forms of the human condition which are inter-related.

The author of the *Star*, in the third part of the book, when reflecting upon the hard work of the interpreter of the Jewish sources, observes that the interpreter necessarily links his/her own teaching or narratives to the past, and thus makes the revelation living again. Due to the fact that the *Star* itself today is a classic work among the classics of Jewish tradition – it is no accident that Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, Yehuda ha-Levi's *Kuzari*, and Hermann Cohen's *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism* are the models which inspired Rosenzweig, as proven by many pages of his work – it is perhaps possible to say

that every interpretation of the *Star* is a miraculous event: be it sympathetic or critical toward Rosenzweig, in any case the exegetical analysis and evaluation makes the spirit which animated the author present and actual again. Sharing this conviction about the connection between one generation of interpreters of Rosenzweig's masterpiece and another generation, we offer these essays on the *Star* to the reader. But what is true for the sources of Judaism, is true for every work which arises from human freedom notwithstanding human limits. As a system of philosophy too, and not only as a Jewish book, the *Star* gives us much to think about.

Turin and Rome, February 2021

Luca Bertolino (University of Turin)

Irene Kajon (Sapienza University of Rome)

## Inhaltsangaben / Abstracts

Ephraim Meir (Bar-Ilan University)

*Redeeming Religions*

In my presidential address, I answer a number of questions connected to redemption. First: can we redeem the non-Jewish and non-Christian religions in *The Star of Redemption* and give them a place in the process of redemption? Second: are religions able to redeem the world? Third: can religions be redeemed from their own sins? My lecture is therefore about liberating religions from a negative treatment, about restoring their practical soteriological dimension, and about freeing them from exclusivist tendencies.

Keywords: religions, exclusivism, practical soteriology

Martin Fricke (Düsseldorf)

*»Da hört man nichts mehr von Sache noch von Tat« (Rosenzweig) – Liturgie und Erlösung*

In the third part of *The Star of Redemption* Franz Rosenzweig develops his notion of the liturgical practice of Jews and Christians as manifestations of the »eternal life« resp. the »eternal path«. In his view, liturgy represents redemption in a twofold way: in formulating the expectation of the Messiah still to come in Judaism, in remembering life, death and resurrection of Christ already realized in Christianity. Yet, by exploring concrete liturgical examples of both religious communities this essay tries to show that elements of redemption, either as forward-looking hope or as remembrance rooted in the past, are to be found in Judaism as well

as in Christianity. The task of probing God's »eternal truth« therefore reveals itself as common task, uniting Jews and Christians in lighting a beacon of hope in a disillusioned world.

Keywords: liturgical practice, Judaism, Christianity, expectation, *Bewährung*

**Gesine Palmer (Berlin)**

*Redeeming Liturgy: A Eulogist's Perspective on Rosenzweig's Concept of Liturgy*

Beginning with a sketch of liturgy's decline in modern societies, the article discusses the function of liturgy as developed in *The Star of Redemption*. Other than common patterns of development and progress, which disregard liturgy, Rosenzweig's philosophy highly appreciates it. Explained alongside Rosenzweig's notions of »Nichts« and »Ichts«, liturgy turns out to have an important part in helping people to bare severe losses. Redeemed from prejudices that see liturgy only as a remnant of earlier stages in religious and spiritual development, liturgy can unfold its own redeeming qualities in Rosenzweig's book.

Keywords: liturgy, eulogy, death, *Nichts*, *Ichts*

**Hanoch Ben Pazi (Bar-Ilan University)**

*Linking Redemption to Prayer.*

*Rethinking Redemption from the Perspective of Jewish Prayers*

This essay suggests a close reading of the meaning of prayer in *The Star of Redemption*, that leads from revelation to redemption. The third part opens with an introduction with the heading »On the Possibility of Obtaining the Kingdom by Prayer«. Towards the end of the introduction, Rosenzweig adds two important directives: one relates to the structure of the book, and the second to the organizing principles of its various parts. My argument is that to understand the uniqueness of the idea of »prayer«, we have to give attention to the various prayers or religious practices dis-

cussed throughout the entire book. And that a close reading of the introduction to the third part will contribute to our observation of Rosenzweig's textual analyzing of the prayers. In a broad sense, I would like to identify a line of progression running through the *Star*, suggesting a transition from the mythological religions to religions of revelation, and toward the encounter between the father religion and the son religion, through studying the rituals of cultures and religions and through studying the prayers of the various religions. In keeping with this claim, it is possible to relocate the standard Jewish liturgy as an organizing element in the book as a whole. Therefore, this interpretation of the prayer should be regarded as one of the more important milestones in the *Star*. It provides a definition of the study of Judaism and of Christianity, of Jewish ritual and Christian ritual, as paths to truth and redemption.

Keywords: prayer, religious practices, mythological religions, religions of revelation

**Giacomo Petrarca** (Vita-Salute San Raffaele University of Milan)  
*Erbeten, Prayer and Action: Theological-Political Glimpses at Franz Rosenzweig*

This paper aims to investigate some implications of the theological-political problem in the third part of *The Star of Redemption*. In particular, it will focus on the problem of *tyranny* on the Kingdom and the tension between *waiting* and *anticipation* that the prayer produces. Starting from an etymological and philosophical analysis of the word *erbeten*, this paper aims to show its centrality in Rosenzweig's theological-political understanding; afterward, it will analyze the tyrannical risks of prayer and some implications of this temporal declination, in particular concerning Rosenzweig's interpretation of the *Sabbath day*.

Keywords: political theology, prayer, tyranny, temporality, Sabbath

**Gabriella Caponigro (University of Chieti-Pescara)**

*The Suffering of the Kingdom of Heaven.*

*Violence and Tyranny in The Star of Redemption*

The paper intends to explore Rosenzweig's idea of tyranny and to delve into the complex connection between violence and redemptive horizon, which comes to the fore right from the beginning of the third part of *The Star of Redemption*. The violence that the Kingdom of Heaven suffers in consequence of the tyrant's action is to be understood in the order of *temporality*: it takes the shape of a coercion that forces the redemption's time to be predictable, transforming the punctuality of the instant (*Augenblick*) into an unnatural duration. This dramatic eschatology sheds light on Rosenzweig's comprehension of *evil* as possibility arising in the disproportion between the temporality in which the Kingdom unfolds and the temporality in which man acts. Paradoxically, the fulfillment of redemption must emancipate itself from the tyrannical dimension of history and, at the same time, entertain a relation with it.

Keywords: temporality, instant, evil, *eschaton*, tyranny

**Stephanie Brenzel (University of Toronto)**

*The Gnostic Problem of Prayer*

This essay reevaluates Rosenzweig's philosophy of prayer. Drawing on Gershom Scholem's review of the 1930 edition of *The Star of Redemption*, I examine the ways in which prayer is a problematic category in Rosenzweig's thought. He uses it to drain mystical ideas of their gnostic impulses while at the same time describes it as a mechanism by which it is possible to radically subvert the created world order. Reflecting on the different ways Rosenzweig and Scholem conceive of the fruitfulness of gnostic ideas, this essay moves to diagnose the current fascination with the heretical ideal at this time of upheaval in American politics.

Keywords: prayer, liturgy, Scholem, heretical ideal, revolution



Elias Sacks (University of Colorado Boulder)

*Liturgical Counter-Symbols: Jacob Taubes, Franz Rosenzweig, and the Politics of Redemption*

This article explores Franz Rosenzweig's political legacy by turning to the notorious rabbi and philosopher Jacob Taubes, who famously insists that the sovereignty of God and the Messiah undermines the legitimacy of all earthly states. I argue that Taubes's political theology involves a covert appropriation and revision of Rosenzweig's account of redemption. Taubes illustrates his notion of theological delegitimation with the example of Jewish communities challenging the state of Israel by performing a liturgical »counter-symbol« – by marking Israeli Independence Day as a public fast. I show that this idea of a politically charged liturgical counter-symbol draws on, but also reimagines, a central element of Rosenzweig's account of redemption: the claim that the Jewish people, through its recurring liturgical cycle, experiences a form of eternity that challenges the aspirations of the nation state. My analysis has both historical and constructive implications, illuminating the possibilities – and the limits – of Rosenzweig's political legacy.

Keywords: Rosenzweig, Taubes, political theology, liturgy, Paul

Naomi Tanaka (Minami Kyushu University)

*Die Bedeutung von »Erlösung« in sozialer Dimension.  
Zur Akzeptanz des Rosenzweig-Gedankens in nichtjüdischen  
Kulturbereichen*

In my paper, I will define the significance of the »anticipation of redemption« in the social dimension, especially in non-Jewish cultural spheres. First, I will confirm that not only Jewish people but also we non-Jewish people can anticipate the »redemption« potentially. Second, I will show that God can be recognized as a »truth« particularly in Jewish prayer; and in this prayer, because each individual calls to God by vocative, and a relation between oneself and »only one God« comes out, it is created a »We«

among the individuals. Third, I will find that we must not only receive but also verify (*bewähren*) the truth, because the truth is given to us as a gift through the dialogue between God and human. The Jewish prayer would be a role model of the anticipation of redemption for us, non-Jewish people, comparing the dialogue between God and human to the dialogue between Human and human.

Keywords: non-Jewish cultural sphere, anticipation, prayer, dialogue

**Eveline Goodman-Thau (Jerusalem)**

*In Search of Life – Franz Rosenzweig and the Deconstruction of Historical Dialectics as the Birth of Self*

Franz Rosenzweig's journey in search of self is an attempt to step out of the system of Western philosophy in order to emancipate the individual from the constraints of history towards a point of decision (*Entscheidung*). In this way, past and future, time and eternity are pressed into a present: in Rosenzweig's words, a *Mitte der Zeit*, which breaks the axis of time and continuity, opening historical reality to the possibility of redemption as an existential category. This touches the core of the Jewish contribution to Western thought: the Messiah has not come, the world is yet to be redeemed. Time and reality of history are a constant reminder of the unredeemed state of the world and the self. The coming of the Kingdom of God on earth is therefore experienced as a mode of *Erwartung*, a critique of Hegelian dialectics in the age of secularization.

Keywords: messianism, eschatology, system, self, history

**Sebastian Wogenstein (University of Connecticut)**

*Rosenzweig's Silences: Tragedy and Life in The Star of Redemption*

Taking Rosenzweig's praise of the spoken word as a point of departure, this essay considers how defiant gestures and related re-

flections on language in *The Star of Redemption* parallel the aesthetic evolution traced by the book overall. The essay focuses largely on Rosenzweig's understanding of tragedy as a key element of his thinking. In this context, the essay explores the origins of Rosenzweig's claims regarding the tragic hero's silence and discusses parallels in Hans Ehrenberg's *Cross and Tragedy*. The essay concludes with a midrashic reading of the *Star's* last words, which follows Rosenzweig's turn from the figure of the saint and the uninhabitable space of the physical sanctuary to the ways in which the sanctification and invocation of life are embedded in everyday Jewish practice, specifically in the context of *kiddush*.

Keywords: language, tragedy, silence, life, *kiddush*

**Josiah Simon (Valparaiso University, IN)**

*The New Pygmalion: On Aesthetics and Redemption in the Work of Franz Rosenzweig and Hans Ehrenberg*

This essay explores the performative function of Rosenzweig's aesthetics through a critical reading of Hans Ehrenberg's still unpublished manuscript *Der Neue Pygmalion*. Ehrenberg wrote and revised his »philosophical drama« between the years of 1921–1925 and dedicated the final scene to Rosenzweig. In the work, Ehrenberg presents a dialogical retelling of the Pygmalion myth, culminating in a meditation on philosophy, art and death. By aligning key concepts from Ehrenberg's drama with Rosenzweig's own aesthetics in *The Star of Redemption*, it is shown how for both thinkers the tragic tension between the artist and the work of art, as manifested in the image of Pygmalion, reveals the limitations and personal underpinnings of a redemptive aesthetics.

Keywords: Rosenzweig, Hans Ehrenberg, aesthetics, Pygmalion

Ellen De Doncker (Catholic University of Louvain)

*Rosenzweig and Chaliel on Teshuva: Repentance and Redemption*

This article studies the concept of *teshuva* within the thinking of Franz Rosenzweig and Catherine Chaliel, who both consider *teshuva* as a special kind of repentance. Re-reading Rosenzweig's *The Star of Redemption* through the lens of *teshuva* shows the importance of anticipatory acts in the present as an impatient awaiting of the redemption that is always yet to come (*à-venir*). First, the concept of *teshuva* is explored. Next, Rosenzweig's and Chaliel's interpretation of *teshuva* are analyzed. Finally, two challenges to *teshuva* (complacency and despair) are examined. Through this analysis, *teshuva* appears as a part of the messianic anticipation as a *Liebestat* which, by acts of redemption in the present in response to the omnipresent love of God, anticipates and prepares the future redemption, without determining it as would be the case with a *Zwecktat*. In doing so, *teshuva* radically breaks with the notion of evil as fatalistic, while acknowledging the irreversible character of evil.

Keywords: redemption, *teshuva*, messianism, repentance

Francesco Valerio Tommasi (Sapienza University of Rome)

*Redemption and the Commandment to Love the Neighbour.*

*Rosenzweig's Critique to Kantian Ethics*

Rosenzweig shares two Kantian theoretical moves: ethics should be detached from metaphysics. But ethics is also able, for its part, to ground a new metaphysics, rooted in the idea of man as a finite being. Despite this general affinity with Kant, in the pages of the third book of the second part of *The Star of Redemption* Rosenzweig introduces a critique to Kantian ethics and especially to its formalistic character. To avoid ambiguity, ethics must have a content. This content is love for the neighbour. Rosenzweig's critique can be seen as one that focuses the decisive point in Kantian moral philosophy: its formalism. However, an interpretation of Kant is possible that permits him to be brought closer to Rosenzweig,

even on this point of apparent distance and contrast. It is actually possible to read the Kantian categorical imperative as grounded on the principle of intersubjectivity. This intersubjectivity would consequently allow love of neighbour to be taken as an adequate formulation of the categorical imperative.

Keywords: Kant, categorical imperative, ethics, love, intersubjectivity

**Lucas Scott Wright (University of California, Irvine)**

Das All ist nur virtuell: *Paganism, Fiction, and the Concepts of Redemption, Truth, and God in Der Stern der Erlösung*

In this article, I attempt to make clear the pluralistic impulse of Rosenzweig's thought by explicating how Rosenzweig distinguishes between redemption, truth, and God in *The Star of Redemption*. Following the approach of Elliot R. Wolfson, I argue that Rosenzweig's description of all three rests upon an approach to narrating history that confounds fiction and non-fiction. As an example, I highlight Rosenzweig's critique of paganism contra the monotheism of Judaism and Christianity. I argue that despite this critique, wherein Rosenzweig maintains the truth of paganism, the pluralistic impulse of his thinking lies in his claim that were somebody other than he to write in accord with his idea of a *neues Denken*, the elements and narrative would look rather different.

Keywords: Elliot R. Wolfson, redemption, truth, fiction, paganism

**Jules Simon (University of Texas, El Paso)**

*Truth and Bewährung – Imparted by Rosenzweig*

Franz Rosenzweig pairs truth with *Bewährung* as the penultimate moment of his midrashic response to the question that he sets for his readers in the opening act of *The Star of Redemption*, when he asks: what happens when we deconstruct the truth that the world – by which he means the world of philosophy – has given us? An

essential starting point for that deconstruction is Rosenzweig's challenge to Hegel's conception of truth, the verification of which I interpret by initially evaluating Martin Kavka's recent attempt to more closely align Rosenzweig's concept of »verification«, and his ideas about martyrdom in the *Star*, with Hegel's philosophy of recognition. I argue that Kavka's work misdirects Rosenzweig's readers from the more obvious interpretation of Rosenzweig's attempt to establish an ethical orientation that is grounded in a kind of existential pragmatics when he weds his speech-act philosophy with a Jewish messianic aesthetic that he develops throughout the text. That crystalizes in how truth is actualized in the world *not* through acts of negation and death but through ampliative illuminating affirmative acts of life and love.

Keywords: *Bewährung*, truth, speech-acts, messianic aesthetic, love