

despair and learned helplessness when facing the world apart from Christian hope.

Kevin M. Antlitz
Princeton, NJ



The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture, Yoram Hazony, Cambridge University Press, 2012 (ISBN 978-0-521-17667-5), xi + 379 pp., pb \$24.99

It is hard to imagine a more ambitious book on the Old Testament than *The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture*. In it, Yoram Hazony proclaims that the edifice of biblical scholarship largely rests upon a fundamental mistake, that is, a false understanding of the purposes of scripture. He then suggests more appropriate methodologies for studying the Hebrew Bible and offers a number of exegetical investigations in keeping with his new hermeneutic (to recycle an old phrase).

Hazony's central claim is that the Hebrew Scriptures – especially the narrative beginning in the Pentateuch and continuing through Joshua, Judges, Samuel I-II and Kings I-II – should be read as texts of reason (philosophy) rather than revelation. The point of these stories and of the broader arc of Old Testament historiography is not to disclose theological dogmas in which we must believe; rather they use the literary form of narrative to make arguments concerning issues which are also central to the ancient Greek philosophical tradition, such as defining the good life for human beings and suggesting forms of society and governance which promote it. I should stress that Hazony claims to find *arguments* in the Old Testament narratives; these are supposed to be rational arguments which speak to all who possess human reason. Similarly, he reads the literary prophets such as Jeremiah as engaging in essentially rational discourse, expressed via the parables and metaphors of prophetic oratory. If, initially, we find it difficult to appreciate the philosophical nature of scripture, we should remember that the writings of the Greek Pre-Socratic philosophers also bear little resemblance to the discursive treatises typical of later Western philosophy.

How, then, did everyone become confused about how to read the Hebrew Scriptures? Hazony lays the blame at the door of Christian intellectual (or perhaps anti-intellectual) traditions best exemplified by the early Latin Christian thinker Tertullian and his artificial dichotomy of faith (scripture) and reason (philosophy). If Tertullian asks what the Jerusalem of faith has to do with philosophical Athens, Hazony retorts

that Tertullian's Jerusalem is actually a fideistic Carthage which has lost touch with Hebraic biblical reason. In the long run, Hazony hopes that his insistence on the primacy of biblical reason over biblical revelation will eventually lead to the dissolution of the reason/revelation split altogether.

After setting out his program, Hazony puts it to work by producing five exemplary studies of Old Testament philosophy. The first of these, 'The Ethics of a Shepherd', discovers in scripture a pair of opposing moral archetypes: the shepherd and the farmer. The shepherd (as represented by Abel, Abraham, Moses, and other biblical heroes), is generous, independent, a ready opponent of injustice, pious, and 'exceedingly concerned to safeguard his own interests and those of his family' (p. 112). The farmer is represented by figures such as Cain and Joseph, who obey their betters and are loyal to power structures. Thus Cain submits to God's curse of Adam by working the land, while Abel avoids the divine curse by inventing shepherding. Later it is Cain who initiates political life by founding the first town (Gen. 4:17). Joseph, for his part, becomes fully identified with the state power of Egypt and its farming-based economy. While Hazony clearly considers the shepherd model as the more prominent biblical ideal, he also finds that scripture does not lose sight of the farmer's virtues. After all, without Joseph and his Egyptian grain, Jacob's family would have perished in the famine.

In his second biblical study, 'The History of Israel, Genesis-Kings', the opposition between shepherd and farmer becomes more blatantly politicized into a dialectic of competing anarchist and statist political ideals. The anarchist (pure shepherd?) ideal is critiqued through the tales of increasing violence and social disruption that constitute the Book of Judges. The Book of Samuel proposes the institution of monarchy as a cure for anarchism's ills, while Kings describes the failures of overreaching monarchical and imperial state power. For Hazony, the scriptural historiography of ancient Israel becomes a long philosophical argument supporting a 'limited national state, in which the king will be chosen from among the people and be one of them in spirit' (p. 160) which lies midway between the statist and anarchist extremes.

The next two studies take a more abstractly philosophical tone. 'Jeremiah and the Problem of Knowing' tries to demonstrate that the Book of Jeremiah calls upon us to independently undertake a search for truth in a world which is law-governed and intelligible, even as we remain aware that certain aspects of human psychology tend to cloud our understanding. 'Truth and Being in the Hebrew Bible' argues that in biblical epistemology and metaphysics the word 'truth' finds application not only to propositions but also to entities in general. Thus, a true bird is a bird which continues to reliably behave in a manner

appropriate to a bird and a true statement is a statement which reliably continues to serve as a statement should, that is, it is not contradicted by further investigation. I find it impossible within the compass of this review to say much more about the sophisticated readings and arguments Hazony brings to bear on these issues. Read and learn. The final study, 'Jerusalem and Carthage', sets out Hazony's scripturally based arguments against the views he ascribes to Tertullian which I mentioned earlier in this review. The book ends with a concluding chapter and a short outline of Hazony's understanding of the notion 'reason' which, interestingly, revolves around a discussion of Isaac Newton's scientific method.

The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture does not hide behind technical jargon or an impenetrable academic style; it sets out arguments and conclusions in a clear and explicit fashion which facilitates their evaluation by the reader. While Hazony has taken on the mantle of an intellectual trail-blazer, he also carefully cites in endnotes those from whom he has learned. In fact, he claims allies whose books can be read as exemplary of his exegetical program.

Many readers will no doubt find faults in this book. Some academics will be unhappy with its reliance upon a hypothesized final editor whose success in integrating the sources of Genesis through Kings into a consistent text renders source-criticism largely irrelevant. Biblical theologians will insist that God must have a more central place in biblical thought. Philosophers may be unhappy with Hazony's demarcation of their subject. I would not be surprised, however, if all of these readers could learn much from this book and would, at least, find themselves intellectually reinvigorated by its challenges to the foundations of their disciplines. As for those convinced by Hazony's analysis, they must ask the most serious question: what, if anything, can the philosophy expressed in the Hebrew Scriptures contribute to today's philosophical debates?

Berel Dov Lerner
Western Galilee College, Israel



Paul's Visual Piety: The Metamorphosis of the Beholder, J. M. F. Heath, Oxford University Press, 2013 (ISBN 978-0-19-966414-6), xiv + 312 pp., hb £65

At the heart of this book is a new analysis of 2 Cor. 2.14–7.4, the key verse being 2 Cor. 3.18: 'We Christians all with unveiled face, beholding