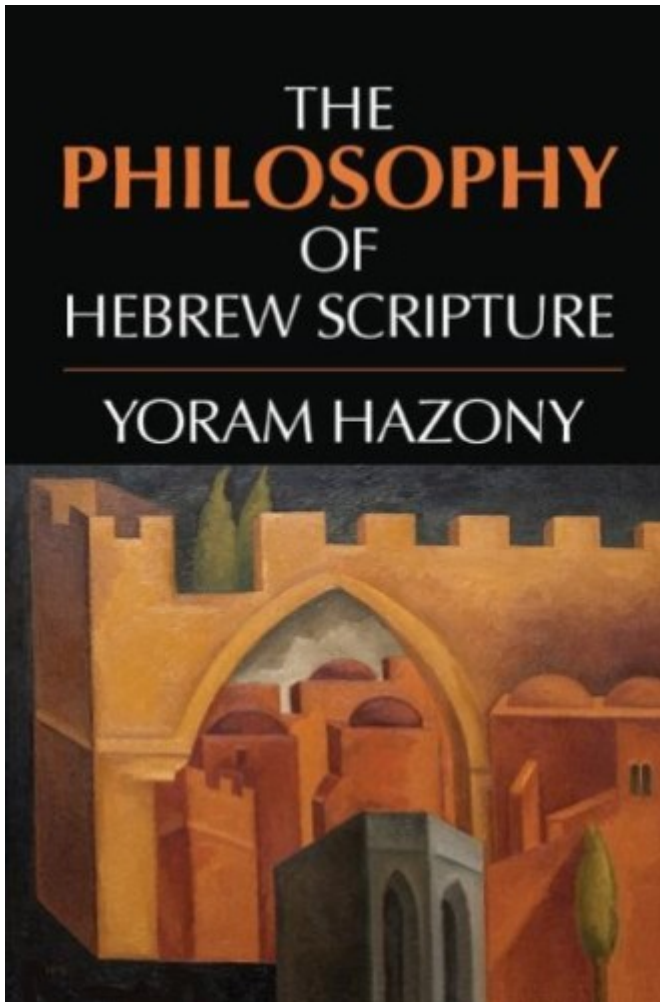


The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture, by Yoram Hazony

Books in the [November 14, 2012](#) issue

In Review



The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture

by Yoram Hazony

Cambridge University Press

Hazony argues that the classical divide between “Athens and Jerusalem”—or reason and revelation—comes from a misunderstanding of Hebrew scripture. According to Hazony, Hebrew scripture is philosophy in a narrative mode, and reading the Bible

through its stories illuminates the Bible's political and social ethics in new ways. Rather than focusing on obedience, he says, the biblical canon focuses on human freedom. Hazony sees in the story of Cain and Abel a fundamental conflict between the archetypes of shepherd and farmer, with a preference for the shepherd, who is compelled to find new pastures. "Here, as elsewhere in Scripture, God is not particularly impressed with piety, with sacrifices, with doing what you are told to do and what your fathers did before you. He is not even that impressed with doing what you believe has been decreed by God." Instead, God is intent on increasing human freedom and human wisdom.