Announcement of a conference on the topic:

The Question of God’s Perfection

The Herzl Institute, Jerusalem
December 20-23, 2015

Philosophers often describe theism as the belief in the existence of a “perfect being” — a being that is said to possess all possible perfections, so that it is all-powerful, all-knowing, immutable, perfectly good, absolutely simple, and necessarily existent, among other qualities. However, there are reasons to question whether this conception of God’s nature is appropriate as a basis for Jewish theology, and indeed, for religious belief more generally. This conference seeks to bring together philosophers, theologians, scholars of Bible and scholars of rabbinic literature to take a fresh look at this notion of God as perfect being, asking whether it is consistent with Judaism’s foundational texts, or whether it needs to be revised or replaced by a theology that is better suited to Jewish thought.

Please consult the draft working paper on “The Question of God’s Perfection” by Yoram Hazony available online here: http://bibleandphilosophy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/hazony-question-of-gods-perfection.pdf. This paper maps central issues that this conference aims to address.

Along these lines, papers submitted for presentation at the conference should address, but need not be limited to, questions such as:

What are the sources of the claim that God is “perfect being”? What philosophical purposes have been served by making this claim, and are they still relevant? Does the view of God as perfect being express the theological standpoint of the Jewish Bible? Of the Talmud and Midrash? If not, can it be modified so as to reflect genuine biblical or classical rabbinic views? Or do the Bible and Talmud just offer a very different view of God’s nature? If the latter, is a philosophically coherent account of this alternative biblical or rabbinic theology possible? Do later developments in philosophy, theology and science — whether Jewish, Christian, or other — provide resources for recognizing a distinctive Hebrew Bible or classical rabbinic view of God’s nature? Do such views have any advantages or disadvantages over “perfect being” theology as contributions to a compelling contemporary account of God and his relationship to the world?
The conference invites papers and active participation by Jews, Christians, and individuals of other backgrounds.

Conference participants will include:

**Conference Directors:**

- Yoram Hazony (The Herzl Institute)
- Dru Johnson (The King’s College)
- Joshua Weinstein (The Herzl Institute)

**Invited Speakers:**

- Oliver Crisp (Fuller Theological Seminary)
- James Diamond (University of Waterloo)
- Jerome Gellman (Ben Gurion University)
- Lenn E. Goodman (Vanderbilt University)
- Moshe Halbertal (Hebrew University and NYU)
- Brian Leftow (Oxford University)
- Berel Dov Lerner (Western Galilee College)
- Alan Mittleman (Jewish Theological Seminary)
- Eleonore Stump (Saint Louis University)
- Alan Torrance (University of St. Andrews)
- Shmuel Trigano (University of Paris X – Nanterre)
- Howard Wettstein (UC-Riverside)

**General Respondent:** David Shatz (Yeshiva University)

Scholars wishing to present papers at the conference should submit abstracts of 500-1,000 words together with a current CV.

Priority will be given to papers that engage directly with texts from the Hebrew Bible and/or classical rabbinic sources such as the Talmud and Midrash; and which bring these texts to bear on questions of concern for philosophical theology.

**The submission deadline is March 15, 2015.**

Please keep in mind that full-length draft papers will need to be circulated to participants a month prior to the conference date. Presentations will be 40 minutes + 20 minutes Q&A.
A limited travel fund will be available to assist scholars and students wishing to attend the conference. Conference papers will be considered for inclusion in a forthcoming anthology of papers on this subject. Submission of a paper will be considered submission to the conference volume as well.

Graduate students and recent PhDs should also consider applying to the Bible and Philosophy Young Scholars Workshop to be conducted by the Herzl Institute during the week prior to the conference. Workshop participants will be eligible to apply for student funding to offset costs of travel and accommodations. For more information about the workshop, follow this link: www.bibleandphilosophy.org/workshops/ys2015.

For a general overview of the “Jewish Philosophical Theology” project at Herzl Institute, follow this link: http://bibleandphilosophy.org/

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