

Jewish Faith and Modern Science: On the Death and Rebirth of Jewish Philosophy. By Norbert M. Samuelson. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009. 291 pages. \$80.00.

Norbert Samuelson, whose scholarship and participation in Jewish philosophy spans more than forty years, provides us with a sweeping overview of his work, interests, and deepest concerns for his discipline in *Jewish Faith and Modern Science*. It is a significant work that will not be overlooked among either Samuelson's colleagues or the new generations of Jewish scholars, especially philosophers.

Samuelson has long been interested in the intersection between philosophy and science. His previous work provides an important trilogy: *The First Seven Days, Judaism and the Doctrine of Creation*, and *Revelation and the God of Israel*. Now he brings us more than his scholarship; his personal concern for the gap between philosophy and science motivates his subtitle, *On the Death and Rebirth of Jewish Philosophy*.

I always learn from Samuelson's scholarship, but I was distracted by his motivation in this text. The most provocative and valuable part of this project are the constructive chapters 6, 7, and 8, which use the classic rabbinic rubric of God's intersections with humans: creation, redemption, and revelation. Samuelson writes regarding creation and the nature of God, "What the classical Jewish philosophers did was use a now obsolete system of physics to interpret what scripture can mean by calling God a creator. What they said is now irrelevant, not because of a justified loss of confidence in scripture, but because of a justified loss of confidence in a philosophy whose source of explanation is a kind of science that we know is not true" (p. 127). This is one of those distracting passages. I certainly understand that the current *Zeitgeist* continues to provide extreme points of view about religion and science, and arguing for a Jewish philosophy that offers a mediating bridge is valid. I am disappointed that Samuelson's motivation flattens his own historical perspective. Surely, "classic Jewish philosophers" cannot be dismissed as "irrelevant" because their understanding of science lacks string theory, black holes, and the affirmation of Einstein's theory of relativity.

Samuelson dares readers, specifically those who share his passion for Jewish philosophy, to approach today's questions with a multidisciplinary commitment of thought. "I would suggest that if physics deals with creation and biology deals with redemption, then the disciplines to which we turn for solutions to problems of distributive justice—certainly economics and sociology but also history and law—deal with revelation" (p. 206).

His Conclusion leaves us with a "charge" to revive the discipline of Jewish philosophy in a world now anchored in science. "Jewish thinkers at this present time are notably lacking in any degree of scientific sophistication" (p. 236). Whether or not one agrees with Samuelson's (distracting) subtitle, his challenge to the next generation of Jewish thinkers cannot be dismissed.

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