



The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy

Robert Eisen

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Medieval Jewish philosophers have been studied extensively by modern scholars, but even though their philosophical thinking was often shaped by their interpretation of the Bible, relatively little attention has been paid to them as biblical interpreters. In this study, Robert Eisen breaks new ground by analyzing how six medieval Jewish philosophers approached the Book of Job. These thinkers covered are Saadiah Gaon, Moses Maimonides, Samuel ibn Tibbon, Zerahiah Hen, Gersonides, and Simon ben Zemah Duran. Eisen explores each philosopher's reading of Job on three levels: its relationship to interpretations of Job by previous Jewish philosophers, the way in which it grapples with the major difficulties in the text, and its interaction with the author's systematic philosophical thought. Eisen also examines the resonance between the readings of Job of medieval Jewish philosophers and those of modern biblical scholars. What emerges is a portrait of a school of Joban interpretation that was creative, original, and at times surprisingly radical. Eisen thus demonstrates that medieval Jewish philosophers were serious exegetes whom scholars cannot afford to ignore. By bringing a previously-overlooked aspect of these thinkers' work to light, Eisen adds new depth to our knowledge of both Jewish philosophy and biblical interpretation.

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