



Social World of Deuteronomy

a new feminist commentary

Don C. Benjamin

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From Nimrud (Iraq)
Ivory, 11x8.85 cm. Location: British Museum, London
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THE SOCIAL WORLD
OF DEUTERONOMY

A New Feminist Commentary



The Social World of
D E U T E R O N O M Y

A New Feminist Commentary



Don C. Benjamin



CASCADE Books • Eugene, Oregon



This one, at last, is for Patrice

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Cascade Books
An Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers
199 W. 8th Ave., Suite 3
Eugene, OR 97401

www.wipfandstock.com

Cataloging-in-Publication data:

Benjamin, Don C.

The social world of Deuteronomy : a new feminist commentary / Don C. Benjamin.

xvi + 281 ; 23 cm. Includes bibliographical references.

1. Bible. Deuteronomy—Commentaries. 2. Sociology, Biblical. 3. Bible. Old Testament—Feminist criticism. 4. Palestine—Social life and customs—To 70 A.D.
I. Title.

BS1275.3 B46 2015

Manufactured in the U.S.A.

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Acknowledgments

Writing is never a solitary task for me. My writing days are filled with quiet conversations with the writings of my colleagues, near and far away, and with the questions of students, past and present. The bibliography is an acknowledgment of my debt to so many who have contributed to the shape of this book. I continue to be grateful for their intellectual companionship.

I have dedicated *The Social World of Deuteronomy: A New Feminist Commentary* to Patrice Welsh-Benjamin, my wife, for including my intellectual life so wholeheartedly in our on-going journey together. Patrice heard me teach those *Ur*-classes on women in the Bible where this book was born. She gently encourages me to stay at my desk, to read aloud to her the sections I have drafted, and, when I am frustrated, she finds ways to give me hope.

Colleagues who take time from their own work to help me with mine are truly a gift. Bruce Wells, Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, Linda Day, Dianne Bergant, John L. McLaughlin, and John Kaltner are among those good people who talked with me, for a moment or at length, while I was thinking through one aspect or another of the commentary.

As I began my work as the dean of the Kino Institute of Theology in Phoenix, Joel Gereboff called to welcome me to Arizona. He drew our conversation to a close with an invitation: "If you ever get lonesome for undergrads to teach, I would enjoy having you teach in our department at ASU." Arizona State University has been my intellectual community now for some twenty years. I continue to be grateful for Joel's friendship and his willingness to read and comment on my work which are among the many inspiring aspects of his academic leadership.

Chelsea Ferguson brought an enriching intelligence, curiosity, and enthusiasm to her work with me first as a student, then as a teaching assistant, and finally as a research assistant on this commentary. She was my powerful one-person focus group. This is a better book because she continued to read my drafts and ask me questions about all the fascinating traditions in Deuteronomy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Finally, I want to thank K. C. Hanson and his team at Cascade Books and Wipf and Stock Publishers for adopting my book. He is truly an editor's editor, who makes the work of revising a manuscript rewarding. K. C. and I both studied Old Testament with Rolf P. Knierim at the Claremont Graduate University, and then went on to develop a post-graduate specialization in the social world of the Bible. He not only brings that familiarity with me and the kind of work I do to his work as my editor, but a masterful control of the bibliography available as well.

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
AJS	<i>American Journal of Sociology</i>
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ARM	Archives royales de Mari
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BibSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BT	<i>Bible Translator</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
EA	Tel el-Amarna tablets
<i>ExpT</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FCB	Feminist Companions to the Bible
HAR	<i>Hebrew Annual Review</i>
HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBQ</i>	<i>Jewish Bible Quarterly</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hebrew Scriptures</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JSTOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSTOTSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplements</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>LAI</i>	<i>Library of Ancient Israel</i>
<i>LHBOTS</i>	<i>Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies</i>
<i>NEA</i>	<i>Near Eastern Archaeology</i>
<i>OBT</i>	<i>Overtures to Biblical Theology</i>
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>SWBA</i>	<i>Social World of Biblical Antiquity</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>VTSup</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum Supplements</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

Contributors

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Betty Campbell, a Sister of Mercy and a nurse, and **Emilia Requeses Garcia**, a teacher, are members of Tabor House in Ciudad Juarez—a house of hospitality in the Catholic Worker tradition. Tabor stands in solidarity with the poor of Juarez. Besides workshops for women in the *colonias* about self-esteem and that women are not objects—but subjects—of their history, four times a year Betty also invites women to Tabor House for meetings and celebrations. **Graciela de la Rosa Cedillos** is a friend who joins them for prayer and reflection (see Introduction, 34:1–12).

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Road Gourmet, vol. 1, *Western and Southern Asia* and in “New Flavors for the Oldest Recipes.” She demonstrates the aesthetic aspect of food preparation in the world of the Bible which also guided the palate choices women made (see 14:3–21).

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Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902), like Susan B. Anthony and Lucretia Mott, was a pioneer in the woman’s rights movement. She inspired the *Declaration of Sentiments* drafted by the women attending the Seneca Falls Convention (1848) who demanded that women be granted the right to vote. With her daughter, Harriet Stanton Blatch, she published *The Woman’s Bible* (1895–1898) to demonstrate how men use the Bible to deny women their rights at home, in public, and in their churches.



Preface

My Approach to Feminist Criticism

Elijah curls up in a cave like a fetus tucked in its mother's womb and prays for a show of divine power to protect him from Ahab and Jezebel, the rulers of Israel. A powerful wind roars across the mountain, but YHWH was not in the wind. An earthquake shakes the mountain, but YHWH was not in the earthquake. Lightning strikes the mountain, but YHWH was not in the lightning. Instead YHWH comes as gentle breeze—a "still small voice" carrying the wailing of women searching battlefield below for their dead (1 Kgs 19:9–18).¹ YHWH comes not as a male warrior who puts the powerful to death but as a female mourner who laments those they have slain.

Elijah's image of YHWH as a still small voice continues to inspire marginalized people today. Advocates for the ordination of women, for infertility and reproductive healthcare and for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender rights often embrace Elijah's still small voice as a motto for their struggle.²

Most studies of Deuteronomy today—including the landmark studies of Jeffery H. Tigay—listen primarily to its powerful male voices.³ At least one commentary on Deuteronomy—the pioneering study by Andrea L. Weiss—listens to its female voices and what women of faith since have said about these ancient voices as well.⁴ My goal is to listen not only to the still small voices of women—daughters, mothers, wives, and widows—but also to those of children, the ill, the disabled, liminal people, slaves, prisoners, outsiders, livestock, and nature (1:9–18; 20:10–20) about whom the loud male voices in Deuteronomy are speaking. I want to position feminist criticism of the Bible within the larger concerns of liberation theology, which

1. **Further Reading (Still, Small Voice):** Lust, "Gentle Breeze or a Roaring Thunderous Sound"; Robinson, "Elijah at Horeb, 1 Kings 19:1–18."

2. Schmidt, *A Still Small Voice*; Lebacqz, "The Weeping Womb"; Loughlin, *Queer Theology*.

3. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*.

4. Weiss, "Deuteronomy."

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reads the Bible through the eyes, not only of women, but of all those who are poor. With the help of parallel traditions from the world of the Bible as well as archaeology and anthropology I want to better understand and appreciate not only how elite males portray the powerless in Deuteronomy, but also more about the daily lives of the poor themselves.

Reconstructing the daily lives of the powerless in the traditions of the powerful in Deuteronomy requires both a “reading against the grain” and “hermeneutics of suspicion”—strategies now central to feminist criticism of the Bible—but which developed and are also applied in other fields of study.

Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005) coined the phrase “hermeneutics of suspicion” to describe the shared genius of Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud.⁵ The method assumes that no written or any other cultural artifact is objective. All conceal undisclosed interests that the hermeneutics of suspicion work to identify. Marx suspected employers used religion to relieve the pain of the workers they exploited. Nietzsche suspected the wealthy used religion to idealize poverty so that the poor would not compete with them. Freud suspected believers used religion to fulfill their undisclosed need to have a divine parent care for them. Scholars in a variety of disciplines, like Juan Segundo and Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza in their work as liberation theologians and historians, use hermeneutics of suspicion.⁶

Literary critic Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) inspired the term “reading against the grain” in *Theses on the Concept of History*.⁷ He declared that history is the work of the powerful celebrating their massacre of the powerless: “There has never been a document of culture which is not simultaneously one of barbarism,” he writes. To listen to the voice of the victims, historians must . . . “brush history against the grain”—a subversive approach using the histories of elites to recover the worldviews of their victims that the powerful never intended to preserve. The powerful often inadvertently preserve the worldviews of their victims in the words they use to celebrate their own power. For example, powerful males tell the story of *Two Shrewd Midwives* (Exod 1:12–21) to shame Pharaoh as a fool gullible enough to believe the midwives’ shrewdly worded report that “Hebrew women are different from Egyptian women. They are strong enough to birth their children before we arrive” (Exod 1:19). The midwives know, even if Pharaoh does not, that unaided childbirth is not a normal practice in any culture, no

5. Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*.

6. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*; Segundo, *The Hidden Motives of Pastoral Action*.

7. Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History.”

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matter how strong its women may be. This strategy for reading against the grain listens for words of the powerless in the traditions of the powerful.

Cultural critic Natalie Zemon Davis, religious studies scholar Robert Orsi, and micro-historian Carlo Ginzberg are among those who read against the grain.⁸ In *The Cheese and the Worms*, Ginzberg reads Inquisition transcripts against the grain by pushing past the words of the inquisitors and listens for odd phrases, grammatically incorrect sentences, and unique explanations embedded in the transcripts, to recover the worldview of Domenico Scandella, a villager indicted for heresy.⁹

Reading against the grain has also inspired projects like StoryCorps, founded in 2003 by David Isay to listen to ordinary people.¹⁰ Inspired by oral histories collected by the Works Progress Administration (1935–1943) and Studs Terkel (1912–2008), StoryCorps records 40-minute conversations between two friends or family members who talk with each other about their life experiences and moments of joy and sorrow. When the StoryCorps recording booth in Grand Central Terminal opened in 2003, Studs Terkel remarked: “We know who the architect of Grand Central was. Who laid these floors? Who built these walls?” StoryCorps tells their stories.

Although reading against the grain and the hermeneutics of suspicion are important strategies for recovering the contributions of women and other minorities to theology and biblical studies, they are not a definitive solution to the complicated problem of religiously endorsed sexism. Both strategies focus only on institutional sexism, yet today even people affiliated with faith communities often have too little experience or understanding of their theology and understanding of the Bible.¹¹ Likewise religiously unaffiliated people—the *Nones*—consciously choose to ignore theology and biblical studies altogether. They do not shape their religious imagination or experience with either theology or the Bible.

My Intellectual Autobiography

Biblical scholars all bring their beliefs and personal journeys to their work. Their own assumptions influence the questions they ask and the way they ask them. Biblical studies developed in a cultural context that assumed the world view and values of Christian males in Western Europe and North America. Therefore, feminist criticism asks scholars like me to describe

8. Davis, *Women on the Margins*; Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*.

9. Ginzberg, *The Cheese and the Worms*.

10. Isay, “StoryCorps.” Isay and StoryCorps, *Listening is an Act of Love*, 284.

11. Soelle, *The Silent Cry*; Scholz, *Sacred Witness*, 1–26.

my world view and values—*location* or life experiences—so that readers can decide for themselves just how well or poorly I have avoided imposing Christian, male, Western European and North American worldviews and values on my interpretation of Deuteronomy.¹²

I did not come to feminist criticism from a conviction that women in the Bible and women biblical scholars were not getting their due, but because I found the work being done by feminist scholars like Letty Russell, Phyllis Trible, Renita J. Weems, J. Cheryl Exum, and Rosemary Radford Ruether to be groundbreaking.¹³ In *Old Testament Story: An Introduction*, I integrated the work of these pioneers in feminist criticism into a standard—not a feminist—introduction to the Bible.¹⁴

When I was teaching at Rice University, Toni Craven (Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University)—who would later co-edit *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books and the New Testament*—introduced me to feminist criticism.¹⁵ We were at a regional meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, and I asked her what she was reading. “Letty Russell!” She told me. “You need to get a copy of her *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*.”¹⁶

Carol Meyers (Duke University) has had the most influence on my own use of feminist criticism. I continue to find her on-going work on the principles of feminist biblical criticism, and her focused research on the lives of both ordinary women and female characters in the Bible to be truly innovative. For example, in her landmark study: *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context*—now thoroughly revised and updated as *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context*—she introduced me to her carefully nuanced distinction between “patriarchy”—a social structure, and “sexism”—an abuse of power. The terms are still often used as synonyms which they are not.

Throughout *The Social World of Deuteronomy: A New Feminist Commentary* I also include samples from others who have influenced my work.

12. **Further Reading (Contextual Interpretation):** Segovia and Tolbert, eds., *Reading from this Place*, 2 vols.; Hays, *From Every People and Nation*; Patte, ed., *Global Bible Commentary*; Vander Stichele and Penner, *Her Master’s Tools?*

13. **Further Reading (Feminist Biblical Scholarship):** Bellis, “Feminist Biblical Scholarship”; Russell, *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*; Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 206; C. L. Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve*; Fulkerson and Briggs, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theology*; Bird, *Faith, Feminism, and the Forum of Scripture*.

14. Benjamin, *The Old Testament Story*.

15. C. L. Meyers, ed., *Women in Scripture*.

16. Russell, *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*.

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Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a pioneering first-wave feminist, was one of the first to understand just how the Bible was misused to disenfranchise women. John W. Baker, M. Daniel Carroll R., Victor H. Matthews, Françoise Mirguet, Beth Alpert Nakhai, and Carolyn Pressler—and I—are all biblical scholars. Nakhai is also a field archaeologist. Their contributions expand on what I am doing in this commentary; some agree with my interpretation, others provide alternative readings. Florence Morgan Gillman is a New Testament scholar, but her contribution recalls a powerful moment of shared marginalization with the biblical women who are the focus of her life's work. Laura Kelley is a chef who brings the women in the world of the Bible to life by studying and then preparing the meals which they fed their households. Christie K. K. Leung is an artist who tells the story of artistic women in China who created *Nushu*—a finger-language to embroider their hopes and dreams into their handwork just as women in the Bible may have used their fingers to teach the women and children in their households the values reflected in the Ten Commandments. M. Daniel Carroll R., Gina Messina-Dysert, and Leah Sarat are—as I try to be—academic professionals with strong commitments to use their scholarship to bring about social change. Carroll and Sarat focus on immigrants from Latin America; Messina-Dysert focuses on women who have survived sexual violence, a concern also shared by Pressler. The reflections by Betty Campbell and Emilia Requeses Garcia of Tabor House are particularly dear to me because they demonstrate that Deuteronomy is not simply of interest to scholars, but also finds a place in the faith-based lives of those who serve the poor.

As a feminist critic I am particularly interested in what Deuteronomy reveals about power and authority in ancient Israel.¹⁷ *Power* is the ability to do something; *authority* is the permission to do something. It would be easy to assume that cultures would give authority only to those who have ability. Not so. For example, only women have the power to reproduce. Yet cultures repeatedly give men authority over reproduction. Men determine with whom women may have sexual intercourse; how often they may have intercourse and how many children they will bear. When the Federal Drug Administration approved the birth control pill of G. D. Searle & Company (May 11, 1960), authority over reproductive power in many sectors of western industrial cultures passed from men to women.

My interest in power and authority developed during the fifteen years I worked as a community organizer in Washington D.C. and South Central Los Angeles. The first step in bringing about change is to do a power analysis and find out who has the power to make a difference. Organizers never

17. Moore, "Divine Rights."

assume that those with authority have power. Just because it says *Supervisor* on the door does not mean that the person actually runs the organization. The person who actually has that power may be an administrative assistant down the hall.

The pill today is not the first time that women had authority over reproduction. Between 1550–1070 BCE Egyptian women used vaginal suppositories of acacia gum, dates, plant fiber, and honey to prevent pregnancy. Greek women used sap from *silphium* fennel as a seasoning and in syrups to prevent and terminate pregnancies. Fennel production was a major industry on Cyprus, which minted a four-drachma coin showing a woman touching the fennel plant with one hand and her reproductive organs with the other. Over-farming destroyed *silphium* fennel production by 500.

Focusing on power and authority rather than exclusively on gender allows me to acknowledge the critique which some anthropologists since 1990 have offered cross-cultural, feminist scholars for assuming that gender is a universal social status.¹⁸ Ancient or non-Western cultures do not always derive gender status from male and female biological characteristics. Although I view the world as a Westerner, I try not to assume that my Western categories are universal, or that the worldviews of biblically based Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities today are identical with the worldviews of the biblical Hebrews.¹⁹

The Hebrews in Deuteronomy lived in Syria-Palestine. A long-standing tradition of interpretation associates the Hebrews with the “people of Israel” in a *Hymn of Merneptah*, and calls them “Israelites”—members of the tribes or citizens of the state of Israel. “Hebrews” is a social-scientific label and better describes their social status as “displaced households.”²⁰ These Hebrews who founded the villages in the mountains west of the Jordan River Valley and north of Jerusalem were mostly displaced from the states along the coast.

The *el-Amarna Letters* of Egypt’s governors in Syria-Palestine describe the mercenaries hired by their fellow governors to raid their caravans, plunder their harvests and rustle their cattle as *‘apiru*. They also accuse fellow governors of being *‘apiru* because of their disloyalty to their pharaoh. Abraham as an *‘apiru* delivers Sodom from Elam (Gen 13:5–14:24). When Gilead expels Jephthah, he joins the *‘apiru* and supports himself raiding (Judg 11:1–40). Nabal accuses David of being an *‘apiru* because he extorts payments from households to protect their herds (1 Sam 25:2–43).

18. Oyewumi, *The Invention of Women*; Scholz, *Sacred Witness*, 1–26.

19. Kessler, *The Social History of Ancient Israel*.

20. **Further Reading (Hebrews):** Lemche, “Hebrew as a National Name for Israel.”

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Nonetheless, little linguistic or archaeological evidence identifies the *'apiru* in *el-Amarna Letters* with the Hebrews in the Bible. Still, the social unrest in Syria-Palestine during the reigns of Amenophis III (1398–1361 BCE) and Akhenaton (1352–1335 BCE), to whom the *el-Amarna Letters* were addressed, is equivalent to the social unrest in Syria-Palestine described in Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Judges.

What the ancestors of the biblical Hebrews had in common with one another was that they were social survivors who fled the famine, plague, and war that ended the Bronze Age. Most were not warriors; they were farmers and herders. They left their centralized, surplus states and created a decentralized, subsistence village federation called “Israel.”²¹

The fathers of households in ancient Israel have authority—high social status; most women, mothers, wives, widows, children, the ill, the disabled, liminal people, slaves, prisoners, outsiders, livestock, and nature do not. Yet in Deuteronomy high-status males teach one another how to manage the low-status members of households to protect their own authority. In the Middle Assyrian Palace Decrees elite males use a similar defensive strategy.²² They view competition for status between women in the royal household as a threat to their own authority, and issue the decrees to educate other elite males how to manage these women, who although technically powerless, have the ability to put the authority of the fathers of their households in jeopardy.

Therefore, I assume that women, mothers, wives, widows, children, the ill, the disabled, liminal people, slaves, prisoners, outsiders, livestock, and nature in Deuteronomy were not without power, and did present a real or perceived threat to the authority of the fathers of households. Otherwise, these fathers would not need to deal with them so carefully. In ancient Israel women did not overthrow dominant males; they learned how to manage them.

My practice of feminist criticism has been shaped by my graduate education in form criticism, and by my post-graduate specialization in social-scientific criticism. Rolf P. Knierim (Claremont Graduate University), my *Doktorvater*, was a form critic and, like Gerhard von Rad (1901–1971), his teacher at Heidelberg University, a biblical theologian. Form critics like folklorists study the word art of traditional cultures.²³

21. Faust, *Israel's Ethnogenesis*; Faust, *The Archaeology of Israelite Society in Iron Age II*.

22. Roth, “The Middle Assyrian Laws (2.132)”;
Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*; Tetlow, *Women, Crimes, and Punishment in Ancient Law and Society*, 1:142–46.

23. **Further Reading (Traditional/Tribal/Oral/Primitive/Savage Cultures):**

Enlightenment cultures are confident that the human mind, properly disciplined, can accurately understand and manage their worlds. Nothing is taken for granted; every decision is supported by evidence and experiment. In contrast traditional cultures have less confidence in the human mind. The mind uses the senses to collect data necessary for decision making and these senses are easily deceived. Therefore, decisions based on such faulty sensual data cannot be trusted.

Traditional cultures respect the world around them. Trees, rocks and water reveal the divine whom they acknowledge by daily rituals—repeated patterns of meaningful human behavior, often accompanied by words.²⁴ Significant investigations of behavior in traditional cultures were published in 1962 by Claude Lévi-Strauss who studied marriage and totemism. In 1966 Mary Douglas applied this structural anthropology to pollution and taboo rituals including ancient Israel, and in 1990 Howard Eilberg-Schwartz continued the study of ritual behavior in ancient Israel.²⁵

Traditional cultures also prefer to hand on their world views orally in performance, rather than silently in writing.²⁶ To better understand and appreciate these oral traditions form critics ask three questions. What is the form of the tradition? What is its social setting? What is its intention? My *Deuteronomy and City Life: A Form Criticism of Texts with the Word City in Deuteronomy 4:41—26:19* uses form criticism to study traditions in Deuteronomy, which I argue developed in cities of early Israel.²⁷

My work in social-scientific criticism began in the Social World of Ancient Israel sessions pioneered by Norman K. Gottwald (New York Theological Seminary) and Frank S. Frick (1938–2011) at the annual meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature. My collaboration with Victor H. Matthews (Missouri State University at Springfield) on *Social World of Ancient Israel, 1250–587 BCE* and my own *Stones & Stories: An Introduction to Archaeology & the Bible* use social-scientific criticism to reconstruct not only the social institutions where the Bible developed, but also the social institutions that appear in the Bible.²⁸ In *Social World of Deuteronomy: A New Feminist*

Vaughan, “Social and Political Organization in Traditional Societies”; Cruikshank, “The Potential of Traditional Societies and of Anthropology, Their Predator”; Turner, “State, Science and Economy in Traditional Societies”; Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 358; Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*.

24. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 162–213.

25. Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 188; Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism*.

26. R. D. Miller II, *Oral Tradition in Ancient Israel*.

27. Benjamin, *Deuteronomy and City Life*.

28. Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel, 1250–587 BCE*; Benjamin, *Stones & Stories*.

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Commentary I reconstruct not only the social institutions where Deuteronomy developed, but also the social institutions that appear in the traditions in Deuteronomy as well.

Some social institutions of traditional cultures—like *herem* war (see 7:1–26; 20:10–20), slavery (21:10–14) and caning (25:1–3)—shock people today. In *Leviathan* Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) canonized this negative reaction by describing traditional cultures—as “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish . . . where every man is Enemy to every man. There is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving, and removing such things as require much force; no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death.”

Others today idealize some social institutions of traditional cultures—like interest free loans (see 23:19–20; 24:17–18), feeding travelers and widows (23:24–25; 24:19–22) and charitable giving (26:1–15). Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) canonized this positive reaction to traditional cultures in his *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* and *Social Contract*. He argued that early humans possessed a natural and uncorrupted goodness. For Rousseau . . . “nothing is so gentle as man in his primitive state, when placed by nature at an equal distance from the stupidity of brutes and the fatal enlightenment of civil man.” For Rousseau traditional cultures did not have competitive social classes based on education, ability or wealth. He argued that Enlightenment cultures were destructive because they crushed the creative freedom of early human communities and replaced it with material progress that undermined human friendship, by sowing the seeds of jealousy, fear and suspicion.

Unlike Hobbes, I do not assume that Deuteronomy reflects barbaric practices, but also, unlike Rousseau, I do not assume the Hebrews were idealists who anticipated Renaissance humanism. I assume traditional cultures are neither better, nor worse, than Enlightenment cultures. They are simply different. To indict traditional cultures as barbaric is as inappropriate as it is to celebrate them as noble. To indict Enlightenment cultures as degenerate is as inappropriate as it is to celebrate them as technical and moral giants. I try to approach the Hebrews and their neighbors with respect, seeking to better understand and appreciate their ways of living. I assume that Deuteronomy reflects the desire to hand on experience that the Hebrews found valuable. I try to focus on the good that the Hebrews were trying to do in their own time, rather than on the harm that any given instruction may have, in fact, done—then or now. Religious studies scholar and author, Karen Armstrong,

describes the approach I try to take toward the dominant voices of fathers in Deuteronomy, and to the still small voices of the women, mothers, wives, widows, children, the ill, the disabled, liminal people, slaves, prisoners, outsiders, livestock, and nature of their households.

. . . from Karen Armstrong

Quite early in my career I was struck by a footnote in a book referring to the science of compassion that should characterize the work of a religious historian.²⁹ This was not science in the sense of physics or chemistry, but a method of acquiring knowledge (Latin: scientia) by entering in a scholarly, empathetic way into the historical period that is being researched. Some of the religious practices of the past may sound bizarre to modern ears, but the historian has to empty herself of her own post-Enlightenment presuppositions, leave her twentieth-century self behind, and enter wholeheartedly into the viewpoint of a world that is very different from her own. A religious historian must not substitute his own or his readers' conventions for the original, the author explained; rather, he should broaden his perspective so that it can make place for the other. He must not cease interrogating his material until he has driven his understanding to the point where he has an immediate human grasp of what a given position meant and, with this empathetic understanding of the context, could feel himself doing the same.³⁰

I assume that the world of the Bible was a real world. The Hebrews faced life challenges shared by all humans, and Deuteronomy reflects strategies for addressing them. The Hebrews explained their strategies using different language and different assumptions than are common today, but my intent is to treat them as both real and realistic. People today may fantasize about living in a world where choices could be made simply by summoning a prophet, but in reality that ancient institution may not have made the choices any simpler than seeking the advice of a life coach or a financial adviser today.

Biblical traditions explain and interpret human experience. Every biblical tradition is not necessarily a direct response to a specific problem in the community to which it is addressed. Chaos theory points out that

29. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 1:379.

30. Armstrong, *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*, 116–17.

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human creativity is not always rational, but sometimes whimsical or irrational. Nonetheless, the storytellers who developed these traditions were not simply trying to entertain or distract their audiences from the challenges they faced. Their traditions were focused on helping their audiences survive and make a difference in their worlds.

What audiences in the world of the Bible, and in the worlds after the Bible, did with biblical traditions was and is not always logical. Humans are not always rational, especially when it comes to their sacred values.³¹ Rituals based on biblical traditions can be both unhealthy and expensive, even though they contribute significantly to the cultural identity of those who practice them.

For observant Muslims the month-long fast at Ramadan—not eating or drinking water for up to twelve hours each day for a month—is a defining ritual that they practice with devotion. They are well aware that nutrition experts ~~who~~ recommend five small meals at regular intervals consider such fasting to be a health risk. Similarly, the research of Filipe Compante and David Yanagizawa-Drott revealed that the fast reduces gross domestic product in Muslim countries as much as 0.7 percent. Nonetheless, Muslims testified to the World Values Survey that the fast made them happy and satisfied with their lives.³² Therefore, I allow for the possibility that some behaviors in Deuteronomy do not logically respond to human needs, but do contribute to the general happiness of these ancient peoples.

I have lived my life not only studying the traditional cultures of the world of the Bible, but also surrounded by traditional cultures. As a child I lived in rural Japan immediately after World War II. There were no other Americans nearby, and the villagers who cared for me and who were my playmates lived as the Japanese had lived for centuries, almost unaffected by twentieth-century technology or worldviews. For ten years, at the beginning of my career, I lived and worked in South Central Los Angeles. Seven out of ten families were African American—some from Louisiana, where I was born, some from elsewhere in the Deep South. Two out of ten families were Hispanic—most from rural Mexico. During the last fifteen years, I have lived and worked in Arizona, home to some twenty-one federally recognized Native American tribes, and where students in just one school district speak more than sixty languages other than English. I continue to be inspired by my work on ancient Israel, and by the people from traditional

31. Baron, *Morality and Rational Choice*; Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock, *Reasoning and Choice*.

32. “World Values Survey”; Campante and Yanagizawa-Drott, “Does Religion Affect Economic Growth and Happiness?”

THE SOCIAL WORLD OF DEUTERONOMY

cultures around me, and continue to learn much from them to enrich my own Enlightenment lifestyle.

Early on during my time in South Central Los Angeles, the mother of one of my high-school students brought her children to meet me. She introduced each using a different family name! I did not understand why a mother would announce so publically that her children had different fathers. I said nothing at the moment, but, in time, she became a valued interpreter of Black culture in South Central for me.

When I finally came to a place where I could ask, I said: “Do you remember the day we first met, and you introduced me to your children? Of course, she did. Did you have any idea how shocked I was to hear you call each of your children by a different family name?”

She looked at me sympathetically: “Honey, that look was all over your face!” She patiently continued. “Each of my babies has a daddy. Their daddies may not be around, but they exist. I could not make them stay in their lives, but I could give them their daddy’s name. At least they can have that much of them to grow up with.”

I was absolutely inspired. What a remarkable—and courageous—ritual of childrearing. It was only one of many gifted moments when I learned to see and respect the world from the perspective of a culture other than my own.

Updates

When I finish a book like *The Social World of Deuteronomy: a new feminist commentary* (2015), I do not have a feeling of closure, but of commencement. The task is not completed, it is just beginning.

The following updates record my post-publication reading and thinking about Deuteronomy, and what I have written in my book. Sometimes these comments demonstrate how my mind has remained the same; sometimes how my mind has changed because of what I have read or thought about since the book was published.

At the top of the page in each section and on the left hand margin are the pages from the print edition being updated.

Beneath the page numbers, I have inserted the commentary as it appears in the print edition indented and in a smaller font. Sometimes I have highlighted, or emphasized in bold, sentences in the original to indicate the link between the updates and the original.

Following a horizontal line are fresh translations which I have made and the updating comments with supplemental bibliography.

Most studies of Deuteronomy today—including the landmark studies of Jeffery H. Tigay—listen primarily to its powerful male voices.¹ At least one commentary on Deuteronomy—the pioneering study by Andrea L. Weiss—listens to its female voices and what women of faith since have said about these ancient voices as well.⁴ My goal is to listen not only to the still small voices of women—daughters, mothers, wives, and widows—but also to those of children, the ill, the disabled, liminal people, slaves, prisoners, outsiders, livestock, and nature (1:9–18; 20:10–20) about whom the loud male voices in Deuteronomy are speaking. I want to position feminist criticism of the Bible within the larger concerns of liberation theology, which reads the Bible through the eyes, not only of women, but of all those who are poor. With the help of parallel traditions from the world of the Bible as well as archaeology and anthropology I want to better understand and appreciate not only how elite males portray the powerless in Deuteronomy, but also more about the daily lives of the poor themselves.

¹ **Supplemental Reading (Recent Commentaries):** Stephen L. Cook, *Reading Deuteronomy: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2015).; Deanna A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: A Theological Commentary* (Louisville KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2014).; Joel S. Baden, *Deuteronomy: An International Exegetical Commentary* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, forthcoming).; Johanna W H. Van Wijk-Bos, *Deuteronomy: A Feminist Commentary* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, forthcoming).; Daniel Berrigan, *Deuteronomy: No Gods but One* (Grand Rapids MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2009).; Peter Voigt, *A Commentary on Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, forthcoming).; Myrto Theocharous, *A Commentary on Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, forthcoming).

The rulers of Israel and Judah during the 150 year period from the invasions of Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria to the victory of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon struggled to preserve their independence. Traditions—like those that emphasized that YHWH alone was the divine patron of Israel (4:1–10; 6:4–25) and that this one divine patron was to be worshiped at only one sanctuary (12:2–28)—which would eventually find their final form in Deuteronomy, emerged from these struggles.

Hezekiah (726–697 BCE) declared Judah's independence from Assyria in 701 BCE. As part of his bid for independence, he closed regional sanctuaries of YHWH. Celebrations of harvests at Jerusalem inspired households to embrace the cause of independence. Logistically, centralization of worship put supplies of grain, wine, and olive oil brought to Jerusalem by households under direct royal supervision, and thus less vulnerable to confiscation by enemies. Assyria responded by invading Judah and laying siege to Jerusalem. Hezekiah ransomed Jerusalem by turning his war chest over to Assyria, and recommitted Judah as a loyal ally.



King Hezekiah in the Bible: Royal Seal of Hezekiah Comes to Light

Hezekiah in the Bible and on the ground

Robin Ngo • 12/03/2015²

² Robin Ngo, "Hezekiah in the Bible and on the Ground," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, no. 12.3.2015 (2015).



HEZEKIAH IN THE BIBLE.

The royal seal of Hezekiah, king of Judah, was discovered in the Ophel excavations under the direction of archaeologist Eilat Mazar.

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Eilat Mazar; photo by Ouvia Tadmor.

For the first time, the royal seal of King Hezekiah in the Bible has been found in an archaeological excavation. The stamped clay seal, also known as a bulla, was discovered in the Ophel excavations led by Dr. Eilat Mazar at the foot of the southern wall of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.³ The discovery was announced in a recent press release by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's Institute of Archaeology, under whose auspices the excavations were conducted. The bulla, which measures just over a centimeter in diameter, bears a seal impression depicting a two-winged sun disk flanked by ankh symbols and containing a Hebrew inscription that reads "Belonging to Hezekiah, (son of) Ahaz, king of Judah." The bulla was discovered along with 33 other stamped bullae during wet-sifting of dirt from a refuse dump located next to a 10th-century B.C.E. ophel building in the Ophel.

In the ancient Near East, clay bullae were used to secure the strings tied around rolled-up documents. The bullae were made by pressing a seal onto a wet lump of clay. The stamped bulla served as both a signature and as a means of ensuring the authenticity of the documents.

Hezekiah, son and successor of Ahaz and the 13th king of Judah (reigning c. 715–686 B.C.E.), was known for his religious reforms and attempts to gain independence from the Assyrians.

³ Eilat Mazar, *Discovering the Solomonic Wall in Jerusalem: A Remarkable Archaeological Adventure* (Jerusalem: Shoham Academic Research and Pub, 2011). describes her continuation of the excavations of her famous grandfather, Professor Benjamin Mazar, at the southern wall of Jerusalem's Temple Mount.



The Ophel excavation area at the foot of the southern wall of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.
Photo: Andrew Shiva.

In *Aspects of Monotheism: How God Is One* (Biblical Archaeology Society, 1997), Biblical scholar P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., summarizes Hezekiah's religious reforms:

According to 2 Chronicles 29–32, Hezekiah began his reform in the first year of his reign; motivated by the belief that the ancient religion was not being practiced scrupulously, he ordered that the Temple of Yahweh be repaired and cleansed of *niddâ* (impurity). After celebrating a truly national Passover for the first time since the reign of Solomon (2 Chronicles 30:26), Hezekiah's officials went into the countryside and dismantled the local shrines or "high places" (*bamot*) along with their altars, "standing stones" (*masseboth*) and "sacred poles" (*'aásûeurîm*). The account of Hezekiah's reform activities in 2 Kings 18:1–8 is much briefer. Although he is credited with removing the high places, the major reform is credited to Josiah (2 Kings 22:3–23:25).

Hezekiah's attempts to save Jerusalem from Assyrian king Sennacherib's invasion in 701 B.C.E. are chronicled in both the Bible and in Assyrian accounts. According to the Bible, Hezekiah, anticipating the attack, fortified and expanded the city's walls and built a tunnel, known today as Hezekiah's Tunnel, to ensure that the besieged city could still receive water (2 Chronicles 32:2–4; 2 Kings 20:20).



The Sennacherib Prism on display in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.
Photo: Hanay's image is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0/ Wikimedia Commons.

On the six-sided clay prism called the Sennacherib Prism as well as other annals of the Assyrian king, Sennacherib details in Akkadian his successful campaigns throughout Judah, bragging that he had Hezekiah trapped in Jerusalem “like a bird in a cage.” According to the Bible, however, Sennacherib ultimately failed to capture Jerusalem before his death (2 Kings 19:35–37).

Dr. Mazar broke the news of King Hezekiah’s bulla at a Jerusalem press conference on December 2, 2015. The bulla was first unearthed during the first phase of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem’s Ophel excavations in 2009.



Herbert W. Armstrong College alumnus Brent Nagtegaal sorts through sifted material from the Ophel excavation in 2009.

The tiny artifact, just over 1 centimeter in diameter, passed unnoticed by the excavator in the field. Thankfully, Dr. Mazar had chosen the time-consuming, money-draining exercise of wet sifting all the soil that came from this location.

Wet sifting is a fairly recent archaeological procedure where excavators take all the soil from a site, sift it and spray it with water. Much of the time, this is a fruitless endeavor. But occasionally, a tiny object with outsized significance such as this seal impression can be discovered by a keen eye.

Once discovered, this bulla was saved with other similar objects for closer examination. The first attempt to read its ancient Hebrew text proved inconclusive. But in the middle of 2015, Dr. Mazar's team was putting the finishing touches on the first volume of her final excavation report for the Ophel. In the process, she again looked at the minuscule seal, with its symbols and its ancient Hebrew lettering.

"We saw that there was a dot between the letters of the name 'Melkiyahu,' said Reut Ben-Aryeh, one of Dr. Mazar's colleagues, "so it's not the name of Melkiyahu. It was the word Melek [king] and Yehu, and the meaning is Yehuda [Judah]." If that dot hadn't been discerned in the final check before publication, Hezekiah's bulla would have remained obscure.

In the past two decades, other seal impressions with King Hezekiah's name etched on them have been discovered. However, they had all surfaced on the antiquities market and could not be proved authentic. This bulla appeared in a controlled scientific excavation in a layer belonging directly to the time of King Hezekiah.⁴

The bulla discovered in the Ophel excavations represents the first time the royal seal of Hezekiah has been found on an archaeological project.

"Although seal impressions bearing King Hezekiah's name have already been known from the antiquities market since the middle of the 1990s—some with a winged scarab (dung beetle) symbol and others with a winged sun—this is the first time that a seal impression of an Israelite or Judean king has ever come to light in a scientific archaeological excavation," Eilat Mazar said in the Hebrew University press release.

Bullae bearing the seal impressions of Hezekiah have been published in *Biblical Archaeology Review*. In the March/April 1999 issue, epigrapher Frank Moore Cross wrote about a bulla depicting a two-winged scarab. The bulla belonged to the private collection of antiquities collector Shlomo Moussaieff.⁵ In the July/August 2002 issue, epigrapher Robert Deutsch discussed a bulla stamped with the image of a two-winged sun disk flanked by ankh symbols—similar to the one uncovered in the Ophel excavations. Both bullae published by Cross and

⁴ "King Hezekiah Comes to Life." *The Philadelphia Trumpet* 27, no. 2 (2016).

⁵ Meir Lubetski, "King Hezekiah's Seal Revisited," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, no. July/August (2001).

Deutsch bear a Hebrew inscription reading “Belonging to Hezekiah, (son of) Ahaz, king of Judah.”⁶

The Hebrew University press release explains the iconography on the Ophel bulla and other seal impressions of Hezekiah:

The symbols on the seal impression from the Ophel suggest that they were made late in his life, when both the royal administrative authority and the king’s personal symbols changed from the winged scarab (dung beetle)—the symbol of power and rule that had been familiar throughout the ancient Near East, to that of the winged sun—a motif that proclaimed God’s protection, which gave the regime its legitimacy and power, also widespread throughout the ancient Near East and used by the Assyrian kings.



The prize find of the so-called Ophel treasure unearthed in the Ophel excavations is a gold medallion featuring a menorah, *shofar* (ram’s horn) and a Torah scroll.

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Eilat Mazar; photo by Ouria Tadmor.

The renewed excavation of the Ophel, the area between the City of David and the Temple Mount, occurred between 2009 and 2013. Under the direction of third-generation Israeli archaeologist Eilat Mazar, the excavation unearthed another extraordinary find: the so-called Ophel treasure, a cache of gold coins, gold and silver jewelry and a gold medallion featuring a menorah, *shofar* (ram’s horn) and a Torah scroll.

⁶ Robert Deutsch, "Lasting Impressions: New Bullae Reveal Egyptian-Style Emblems on Judah's Royal Seals," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 28, no. 4 (1/7, 2002), 43.

The audience for Deuteronomy is “all Israel,” an official designation for the fathers of the households (5:1, 11:6, 13:12, 18:6, 21:21, 27:9, 29:1, 31:1+7, 34:12). The fathers were to instruct their adult sons and the mothers of their households who then instructed the women and children.⁷

⁷ **Supplemental Reading (All Israel):** Jerry Hwang, *Rhetoric of Remembrance: an investigation of the fathers in Deuteronomy* (2012)

A Trial of the Desert Generation (1:19—2:1) indicts the desert generation for doubting YHWH could or would give them the land of the Amorites in the Seir Mountains near the Timnah mines north of the Gulf of Aqaba. When YHWH commissions the fathers to invade the land, they should invade the land. Instead, they send out reconnaissance and, even when scouts report that the land is fertile, they refuse to invade the land. Finally, they invade the land without YHWH. Consequently, they forfeit the land, which is given to the powerless in their households to emphasize that the land is a divine endowment, not a prize of war.

Reconnaissance determines the strength of the enemy to avoid going into battle against a stronger enemy. Military science requires reconnaissance; herem war forbids it. Reconnaissance characterizes warriors as petty (Num 13:1–14:15), cowardly (1:19–46), greedy (Judg 1:22–26), and faithless (Judg 18:1–31). Warriors are expected to go into battle at a disadvantage in order to highlight the victory is a divine not a human accomplishment (Deut 13:13–19; Judg 7:1–8:28). To prepare for herem war, chiefs may use prophets (1 Kgs 22:5), divination (2 Kgs 13:15), necromancy (1 Sam 28:6), and the ephod with its Urim and Thummim (1 Sam 30:7–8; 1 Sam 28:6) — rituals that Deuteronomy curiously warns fathers to avoid (18:9–22) — but not reconnaissance.

In *A Masque of Reason*, Robert Frost characterizes Deuteronomy as a theology of retribution -- humans suffer the consequences of their actions. The desert generation refuses to take possession of the land, and is, consequently, sentenced to wander landless for 40 years. The desert generation suffers the consequences of its own actions. Yet the reality of human experience is that the innocent often suffer and the guilty prosper.

In contrast, Stephen L. Cook describes Deuteronomy as a teaching on God's unexpected and undeserved forgiveness.

In Deuteronomy 1:37 we encounter Moses taking on and somehow absorbing the Lord's dangerous, numinous anger on account of the people's sins. His death on others' account is somehow a bridge to survival and new life for the Israelite people, particularly for the next generation (v. 39). This mysterious release of Israel from judgment is remarkable, and pushes readers to reconsider commonplace prejudices against Deuteronomy. There is no ironclad law of retaliation in Deuteronomy, but some mysterious grace of God!⁸

In his poem, Frost's *God* character explains that it was a monumental moment in human evolution to learn that there is no logic or reason to explain that human experience. Frost's *God* thanks the *Job* character for working on this important project. Curiously, despite the *God* character's satisfaction that humans now realize that their life experiences are not reasonable, neither the

⁸ Stephen L. Cook, *Reading Deuteronomy: a literary and theological commentary*. Macon GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2015:35-36.

Job character, nor Frost's character of *Job's Wife*, whose name here is *Thyatira* (Rev 2:18-29), do not. She wants *God* to explain why even women who do good -- like female prophets -- are punished, while male prophets are rewarded. The *Job* character wants *God* to explain why he had to suffer to explain that human experience lacks reason.

A Masque of Reason⁹

Robert Frost

A fair oasis in the purest desert. A man sits leaning back against a palm. His wife lies by him looking at the sky.

Man

You're not asleep?

Wife

No, I can hear you. Why?

Man

I said the incense tree's on fire again.

Wife

You mean the Burning Bush?

Man

The Christmas Tree.

Wife

I shouldn't be surprised.

Man

The strangest light!

Wife

There's a strange light on everything today.

Man

The myrrh tree gives it. Smell the rosin burning?

The ornaments the Greek artificers

Made for the Emperor Alexius,

The Star of Bethlehem, the pomegranates,

The birds, seem all on fire with Paradise.

And hark, the gold enameled nightingales

Are singing. Yes, and look, the Tree is troubled.

Someone's caught in the branches.

⁹ *A Masque of Reason* (1945) by Robert Frost (1874-1963) is similar in theme to *Waiting for Godot* (1953) by Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) and *J.B.* (1958) by Archibald McLeish (1892-1982).

Wife

So there is.
He can't get out.

Man

He's loose! He's out!

Wife

It's God.
I'd know Him by Blake's picture anywhere.¹⁰
Now what's He doing?

Man

Pitching throne, I guess,
Here by our atoll.

Wife

Something Byzantine.

(The throne's a plywood flat, prefabricated, That God pulls lightly upright on its hinges And stands beside, supporting it in place.)

Perhaps for an Olympic Tournament,
Or Court of Love.

Man

More likely Royal Court—
Or Court of Law, and this is Judgment Day.
I trust it is. Here's where I lay aside
My varying opinion of myself
And come to rest in an official verdict.
Suffer yourself to be admired, my love,
As Waller says.

Wife

Or not admired. Go over
And speak to Him before the others come.
Tell Him He may remember you: you're Job.

God

Oh, I remember well: you're Job, my Patient.
How are you now? I trust you're quite recovered,

¹⁰ *The Ancient of Days* by William Blake (1757-1827) is an old man, with pronounced muscles, a full head of long white hair, and a wizard-like beard. He is crouching in a circular cloud. His outstretched hand holds a compass over the dark waters of chaos. The picture first appeared opposite the title page of Blake's *Europe a Prophecy* (1794). *The Ancient of Days* is not God, but Urizen. For Blake God is not a father, but all life. Urizen creates the chaos from which God creates the cosmos.

And feel no ill effects from what I gave you.

Job

Gave me in truth: I like the frank admission.
I am a name for being put upon.
But, yes, I'm fine, except for now and then
A reminiscent twinge of rheumatism.
The let-up's heavenly. You perhaps will tell us
If that is all there is to be of Heaven,
Escape from so great pains of life on earth
It gives a sense of let-up calculated
To last a fellow to Eternity.

God

Yes, by and by. But first a larger matter.
I've had you on my mind a thousand years
To thank you someday for the way you helped me
Establish once for all the principle
There's no connection man can reason out
Between his just deserts and what he gets.
Virtue may fail and wickedness succeed.
'Twas a great demonstration we put on.
I should have spoken sooner had I found
The word I wanted. You would have supposed
One who in the beginning *was* the Word
Would be in a position to command it.
I have to wait for words like anyone.
Too long I've owed you this apology
For the apparently unmeaning sorrow
You were afflicted with in those old days.
But it was of the essence of the trial
You shouldn't understand it at the time.
It had to seem unmeaning to have meaning.
And it came out all right. I have no doubt
You realize by now the part you played
To stultify the Deuteronomist
And change the tenor of religious thought.
My thanks are to you for releasing me
From moral bondage to the human race.
The only free will there at first was man's,
Who could do good or evil as he chose.
I had no choice but I must follow him
With forfeits and rewards he understood—
Unless I liked to suffer loss of worship.
I had to prosper good and punish evil.
You changed all that. You set me free to reign.
You are the Emancipator of your God,
And as such I promote you to a saint.

Job

You hear him, Thyatira: we're a saint.
Salvation in our case is retroactive.
We're saved, we're saved, whatever else it means.

Job's Wife

Well, after all these years!

Job

This is my wife.

Job's Wife

If You're the deity I assume You are —
(I'd know You by Blake's picture anywhere) —

God

The best, I'm told, I ever have had taken.

Job's Wife

— I have a protest I would lodge with You.
I want to ask You if it stands to reason
That women prophets should be burned as witches
Whereas men prophets are received with honor.

Job

Except in their own country, Thyatira.

God

You're not a witch?

Job's Wife

No.

God

Have you ever been one?

Job

Sometimes she thinks she has and gets herself
Worked up about it. But she really hasn't—
Not in the sense of having to my knowledge
Predicted anything that came to pass.

Job's Wife

The witch of Endor was a friend of mine.

God

You wouldn't say she fared so very badly.
I noticed when she called up Samuel
His spirit had to come. Apparently
A witch was stronger than a prophet there.

Job's Wife

But she was burned for witchcraft.

God

That is not
Of record in my Note Book.

Job's Wife

Well, she was.
And I should like to know the reason why.

God

There you go asking for the very thing
We've just agreed I didn't have to give.

(The throne collapses. But He picks it up. And this time locks it up and leaves it.)

Where has she been the last half hour or so?
She wants to know why there is still injustice.
I answer flatly: That's the way it is,
And bid my will avouch it like Macbeth.
We may as well go back to the beginning
And look for justice in the case of Segub.¹¹

Job

Oh, Lord, let's not go back to anything.

God

Because your wife's past won't bear looking into?
In our great moment what did you do, Madam?
What did you try to make your husband say?

Job's Wife

No, let's not live things over. I don't care.
I stood by Job. I may have turned on You.
Job scratched his boils and tried to think what he
Had done or not done to or for the poor.
The test is always how we treat the poor.
It's time the poor were treated by the state
In some way not so penal as the poorhouse.
That's one thing more to put on Your agenda.
Job hadn't done a thing, poor innocent.
I told him not to scratch: it made it worse.
If I said once I said a thousand times,
Don't scratch! And when, as rotten as his skin,
Has tents blew all to pieces, I picked up
Enough to build him every night a pup tent
Around him so it wouldn't touch and hurt him.
I did my wifely duty. I should tremble!
All You can seem to do is lose Your temper
When reason-hungry mortals ask for reasons.
Of course, in the abstract high singular
There isn't any universal reason;
And no one but a man would think there was.
You don't catch women trying to be Plato.
Still there must be lots of unsystematic
Stray scraps of palliative reason
It wouldn't hurt You to vouchsafe the faithful.
You thought it was agreed You needn't give them.

¹¹ Segub's father sacrificed him as part of the ceremonies inaugurating his reconstruction of the ancient city of Jericho (Josh 6:26). Segub's death is unreasonable. He had done nothing to deserve his execution.

You thought to suit Yourself. I've not agreed
To anything with anyone.

Job

There, there,
You go to sleep. God must await events
As well as words.

Job's Wife

I'm serious. God's had
Aeons of time and still it's mostly women
Get burned for prophecy, men almost never.

Job

God needs time just as much as you or I
To get things done. Reformers fail to see that.
She'll go to sleep. Nothing keeps her awake
But physical activity, I find.
Try to read to her and she drops right off.

God

She's beautiful.

Job

Yes, she was just remarking
She now felt younger by a thousand years
Than the day she was born.

God

That's about right,
I should have said. You got your age reversed
When time was found to be a space dimension
That could, like any space, be turned around in?

Job

Yes, both of us: we saw to that at once.
But, God, I have a question too to raise.
(My wife gets in ahead of me with hers.)
I need some help about this reason problem
Before I am too late to be got right
As to what reasons I agree to waive.
I'm apt to string along with Thyatira.
God knows — or rather, You know (God forgive me)
I waived the reason for my ordeal — but —
I have a question even there to ask —
In confidence. There's no one here but her,
And she's a woman: she's not interested
In general ideas and principles.

God

What are her interests, Job?

Job

Witch-women's rights.
Humor her there or she will be confirmed

In her suspicion You're no feminist.
You have it in for women, she believes.
Kipling invokes You as Lord God of Hosts.
She'd like to know how You would take a prayer
That started off Lord God of Hostesses.

God

I'm charmed with her.

Job

Yes, I could see You were.
But to my question. I am much impressed
With what You say we have established.
Between us, You and I.

God

I make you see?
It would be too bad if Columbus-like
You failed to see the worth of your achievement.

Job

You call it mine.

God

We groped it out together.
Any originality it showed
I give you credit for. My forte is truth,
Or metaphysics, long the world's reproach
For standing still in one place true forever;
While science goes self-superseding on.
Look at how far we've left the current science
Of Genesis behind. The wisdom there though,
Is just as good as when I uttered it.
Still, novelty has doubtless an attraction.

Job

So it's important who first thinks of things?

God

I'm a great stickler for the author's name.
By proper names I find I do my thinking.

Job's Wife

God, who invented earth?

Job

What, still awake?

God

Any originality it showed
Was of the Devil. He invented Hell,
False premises that are the original
Of all originality, the sin
That felled the angels, Wolsey should have said.
As for the earth, we groped that out together,

Much as your husband Job and I together
Found out the discipline man needed most
Was to learn his submission to unreason;
And that for man's own sake as well as mine,
So he won't find it hard to take his orders
From his inferiors in intelligence
In peace and war—especially in war.

Job

So he won't find it hard to take his war.

God

You have the idea. There's not much I can tell you.

Job

All very splendid. I am flattered proud
To have been in on anything with You.
'Twas a great demonstration if You say so.
Though incidentally I sometimes wonder
Why it had had to be at my expense.

God

It had to be at somebody's expense.
Society can never think things out:
It has to see them acted out by actors,
Devoted actors at a sacrifice—
The ablest actors I can lay my hands on.
Is that your answer?

Job

No, for I have yet
To ask my question. We disparage reason.
But all the time it's what we're most concerned with.
There's will as motor and there's will as brakes.
Reason is, I suppose, the steering gear.
The will as brakes can't stop the will as motor
For very long. We're plainly made to go.
We're going anyway and may as well
Have some say as to where we're headed for;
Just as we will be talking anyway
And may as well throw in a little sense.
Let's do so now. Because I let You off
From telling me Your reason, don't assume
I thought You had none. Somewhere back
I knew You had one. But this isn't it
You're giving me. You say we groped this out.
But if You will forgive me the irreverence,
It sounds to me as if You thought it out,
And took Your time to it. It seems to me
An afterthought, a long long afterthought.
I'd give more for one least beforehand reason
Than all the justifying ex-post-facto
Excuses trumped up by You for theologians.
The front of being answerable to no one
I'm with You in maintaining to the public.

But Lord, we showed them what. The audience
Has all gone home to bed. The play's played out.
Come, after all these years — to satisfy me.
I'm curious. And I'm a grown-up man:
I'm not a child for You to put me off
And tantalize me with another "Oh, because."
You'd be the last to want me to believe
All Your effects were merely lucky blunders.
That would be unbelief and atheism.
The artist in me cries out for design.
Such devilish ingenuity of torture
Did seem unlike You, and I tried to think
The reason might have been some other person's.
But there is nothing You are not behind.
I did not ask then, but it seems as if
Now after all these years You might indulge me.
Why did You hurt me so? I am reduced
To asking flatly for a reason—outright.

God
I'd tell you, Job —

Job
All right, don't tell me then
If you don't want to. I don't want to know.
But what is all this secrecy about?
I fail to see what fun, what satisfaction
A God can find in laughing at how badly
Men fumble at the possibilities
When left to guess forever for themselves.
The chances are when there's so much pretense
Of metaphysical profundity
The obscurity's a fraud to cover nothing.
I've come to think no so-called hidden value's
Worth going after. Get down into things
It will be found there's no more given there
Than on the surface. If there ever was,
The crypt was long since rifled by the Greeks.
We don't know where we are, or who we are.
We don't know one another; don't know You;
Don't know what time it is. We don't know, don't we?
Who says we don't? Who got up these misgivings?
Oh, we know well enough to go ahead with.
I mean we seem to know enough to act on.
It comes down to a doubt about the wisdom
Of having children—after having had them,
So there is nothing we can do about it
But warn the children they perhaps should have none.
You could end this by simply coming out
And saying plainly and unequivocally
Whether there's any part of man immortal.
Yet You don't speak. Let fools bemuse themselves
By being baffled for the sake of being.
I'm sick of the whole artificial puzzle.

Job's Wife

You won't get any answers out of God.

God

My kingdom, what an outbreak!

Job's Wife

Job is right.

Your kingdom, yes, Your kingdom come on earth.

Pray tell me what does that mean. Anything?

Perhaps that earth is going to crack someday

Like a big egg and hatch a heaven out

Of all the dead and buried from their graves.

One simple little statement from the throne

Would put an end to such fantastic nonsense;

And, too, take care of twenty of the four

And twenty freedoms on the party docket.

Or is it only four? My extra twenty

Are freedoms from the need of asking questions.

(I hope You know the game called twenty questions.)

For instance, is there such a thing as Progress?

Job says there's no such thing as Earth's becoming

An easier place for man to save his soul in.

Except as a hard place to save his soul in,

A trial ground where he can try himself

And find out whether he is any good,

It would be meaningless. It might as well

Be Heaven at once and have it over with.

God

Two pitching on like this tend to confuse me.

One at a time, please. I will answer Job first.

I'm going to tell Job why I tortured him

And trust it won't be adding to the torture.

I was just showing off to the Devil, Job,

As is set forth in chapters One and Two.

(*Job takes a few steps pacing.*) Do you mind?

(*God eyes him anxiously.*)

Job

No. No, I musn't.

'Twas human of You. I expected more

Than I could understand and what I get

Is almost less than I can understand.

But I don't mind. Let's leave it as it stood.

The point was it was none of my concern.

I stick to that. But talk about confusion!

How is that for a mix-up, Thyatira?

Yet I suppose what seems to us confusion

Is not confusion, but the form of forms,

The serpent's tail stuck down the serpent's throat,

Which is the symbol of eternity

And also of the way all things come round,

Or of how rays return upon themselves,

To quote the greatest Western poem yet.

Though I hold rays deteriorate to nothing,
First white, then red, then ultra red, then out.

God

Job, you must understand my provocation.
The tempter comes to me and I am tempted.
I'd had about enough of his derision
Of what I valued most in human nature.
He thinks he's smart. He thinks he can convince me
It is no different with my followers
From what it is with his. Both serve for pay.
Disinterestedness never did exist
And if it did, it wouldn't be a virtue.
Neither would fairness. You have heard the doctrine.
It's on the increase. He could count on no one:
That was his look out. I could count on you.
I wanted him forced to acknowledge so much.
I gave you over to him, but with safeguards.
I took care of you. And before you died
I trust I made it clear I took your side
Against your comforters in their contention
You must be wicked to deserve such pain.
That's Browning and sheer Chapel Non-conformism.

Job

God, please, enough for now. I'm in no mood
For more excuses.

God

What I mean to say:
Your comforters were wrong.

Job

Oh, that committee!

God

I saw you had no fondness for committees.
Next time you find yourself pressed on to one
For the revision of the Book of Prayer
Put that in if it isn't in already:
Deliver us from committees. 'Twill remind me.
I would do anything for you in reason.

Job

Yes, yes.

God

You don't seem satisfied.

Job

I am.

God

You're pensive.

Job

Oh, I'm thinking of the Devil.
You must remember he was in on this.
We can't leave him out.

God

No. No, we don't need to.
We're too well off.

Job

Someday we three should have
A good old get-together celebration.

God

Why not right now?

Job

We can't without the Devil.

God

The Devil's never very far away.
He too is pretty circumambient.
He has but to appear. He'll come for me,
Precipitated from the desert air.
Show yourself, son. I'll get back on my throne
For this I think. I find it always best
To be upon my dignity with him.

The Devil enters like a sapphire wasp That flickers mica wings. He lifts a hand To brush away a disrespectful smile. Job's wife sits up.)

Job's Wife

Well, if we aren't all here,
Including me, the only Dramatis
Personae needed to enact the problem.

Job

We've waked her up.

Job's Wife

I haven't been asleep.
I've heard what you were saying — every word.

Job

What did we say?

Job's Wife

You said the Devil's in it.

Job

She always claims she hasn't been asleep.
And what else did we say?

Job's Wife

Well, what lead up —
Something about — (*The three men laugh.*) — The
Devil's being God's best inspiration.

Job

Good, pretty good.

Job's Wife

Wait till I get my Kodak.
Would you two please draw in a little closer?
No — no, that's not a smile there. That's a grin.
Satan, what ails you? Where's the famous tongue,
Thou onetime Prince of Conversationists?
This is polite society you're in
Where good and bad are mingled everywhichway,
And ears are lent to any sophistry
Just as if nothing mattered but our manners.
You look as if you either hoped or feared
You were more guilty of mischief than you are.
Nothing has been brought out that for my part
I'm not prepared for or that Job himself
Won't find a formula for taking care of.

Satan

Like the one Milton found to fool himself
About his blindness.

Job's Wife

Oh, he speaks! He *can* speak!
That strain again! Give me excess of it!
As dulcet as a pagan temple gong!
He's twitting us. Oh, by the way, you haven't
By any chance a Lady Apple on you?
I saw a boxful in the Christmas market.
How I should prize one personally from you.

God

Don't *you* twit. He's unhappy. Church neglect
And figurative use have pretty well
Reduced him to a shadow of himself.

Job's Wife

That explains why he's so diaphanous
And easy to see through. But where's he off to?
I thought there were to be festivities
Of some kind. We could have charades.

God

He has his business he must be about.
Job mentioned him and so I brought him in
More to give his reality its due
Than anything.

Job's Wife

He's very real to me
And always will be. Please don't go. Stay, stay
But to the evensong and having played
Together we will go with you along.
There are who won't have had enough of you
If you go now. Look how he takes no steps!
He isn't really going, yet he's leaving.

Job

(Who has been standing dazed with new ideas)

He's on that tendency that like the Gulf Stream,
Only of sand not water, runs through here.
It has a rate distinctly different
From the surrounding desert; just today
I stumbled over it and got tripped up.

Job's Wife

Oh, yes, that tendency! Oh, do come off it.
Don't let it carry you away. I hate
A tendency. The minute you get on one
It seems to start right off accelerating.
Here, take my hand.

(He takes it and alights In three quick steps as off an escalator. The tendency, a long, long narrow strip Of middle-aisle church carpet, sisal hemp, Is worked by hands invisible off stage.)

I want you in my group beside the throne—
Must have you. There, that's just the right arrangement.
Now someone can light up the Burning Bush
And turn the gold enameled artificial birds on.
I recognize them. Greek artificers
Devised them for Alexius Comnenus.
They won't show in the picture. That's too bad.
Neither will I show. That's too bad moreover.
Now if you three have settled anything
You'd as well smile as frown on the occasion.

(Here endeth chapter forty-three of Job.)

For Benjamin, Deuteronomy does not teach the Hebrews that YHWH will punish them for their sins like Frost, or forgive them for their sins like Cook, but rather that what draws the wide range of required and prohibited behaviors in Deuteronomy together is a belief that YHWH -- and only YHWH -- feeds and protects the Hebrews, and that their behavior must reflect gratitude for this generosity. Their land and people are not wages they have earned, but blessings which YHWH has given. The Hebrews must live like children in the arms of their divine patron, mindful of how powerless they were to feed and clothe themselves in the desert.

The intention of Deuteronomy is to describe behavior which reminds the Hebrews of what YHWH has done and continues to do for them. This lifestyle of gratitude does not plead for blessings wanted, but acknowledges blessings received. In Deuteronomy the unforgiveable sin is to forget — to become arrogant and self-reliant. A lifestyle of gratitude is a challenge for the Hebrews. They could have understandably considered their land conquered by Joshua to be a human accomplishment, but Deuteronomy reminds them that their ancestors were blessed with land not because of their sacrifice, but because of YHWH's generosity. Unless the Hebrews embrace a lifestyle reflecting their blessings as divine gifts, not human accomplishments, their enemies will permanently deprive them of their land and their identify as the people of YHWH.

079-080

An Inauguration of Moses (5:22—6:3) is framed by two titles (5:22, 6:1-3) to emphasize that YHWH taught these instructions to Moses, and that Moses taught them to the fathers of households.

Inaugurations document the calls of prophets to demonstrate that their exercise of authority was not a quest for power, but a response to divine vocation. This inauguration explains how Moses, and prophets like Moses, became intermediaries between YHWH and the Hebrews (18:9-22).

Inaugurations open with theophanies drawn from the experiences of both women and men. At the Divine Mountain: YHWH is Old One on the Mountain (Exod 19:3-8), Cloud Mother (Exod 19:9-15), Thunder Roller, Lightning Thrower (Exod 19:16-17) and Volcano Stoker (Exod 19:18-25).

Old did not mean aged; it meant creative (Ps 44; 74; 77; 143). YHWH is the Old One who has blessed the Hebrews since their creation (33:1-29).

Old One and Cloud Mother are metaphors for YHWH as a divine couple like Sky Mother Nut and Earth Father Geb. The Egyptians portrayed this divine couple in an intercourse position with Nut arching over Geb. The mountain where the Hebrews encounter YHWH is a cosmic hinge where earth and sky connect. Thunder, lightning and erupting volcanos are metaphors for YHWH as a warrior. These male sights and sounds frighten the Hebrews into relinquishing their direct relationship with YHWH and requesting a prophet as YHWH's spokesperson.

On Mt. Horeb YHWH greets Moses by calling his name twice: "Moses! Moses!" Moses responds like a warrior answering roll call: "Here I am." Candidates sometimes accompany their words with gestures of radical dependence like removing their sandals or assuming the posture of a fetus in a mother's womb or a body in a Neolithic grave to demonstrate they are not seeking authority, but responding to a divine call.

Moses' request during his inauguration for YHWH's name as a talisman for carrying out his mission is inappropriate because knowing the names of others indicates having authority over them. YHWH's response: "I am, who am" is more a riddle to remind Moses that the Hebrews have no authority over their divine patron, than a key to divine nature as the source of all being. Deuteronomy reprises this name motif: ". . . the place that YHWH, your divine patron, will choose out of all your tribes as his dwelling to put his name there" (12:5). The question that Moses asked in the desert will be answered in the land.

The call or inauguration stories of prophets – an *Inauguration of Moses at Mt. Horeb* (Exod 2:23—4:23), an *Inauguration of Samuel at Shiloh* (1 Sam 16:1-13), the *Inauguration of Elijah at Jezreel* (1 Kgs 18:41-46), an *Inauguration of Elijah at the Great Mountain* (1 Kgs 19:9-18), an *Inauguration of Elisha at the Jordan River* (2 Kgs 2:1-18), an *Inauguration of Jeremiah in his Mother's Womb* (Jer 1:14-19), an *Inauguration of Isaiah at the Temple* (Isa 6:1-13), an *Inauguration of Joshua at Jericho* (Josh 5:13—6:27), an *Inauguration of Ezekiel*

at Tel Aviv (Ezek 1:4—3:15), an *Inauguration of a Servant of YHWH at Tel Aviv* (Isa 40:1-31) – describe rituals of passage. Despite the respect that the prophets of ancient Israel enjoy today, in their own time they were questioned and criticized. Their inauguration stories are *apologies* which defend the against their critics.

Apology is a literary technique that appears not only in eastern Mediterranean traditions like the Bible but in western Mediterranean traditions like the *Apology of Plato*, which defends Socrates against the criticisms that the people of Athens level against him. Apologies assume, but do not repeat, the criticisms to which they respond. An *Inauguration of Isaiah at the Jerusalem Temple* (Isa 6:1–13) assumes that the people of Judah accuse Isaiah of being ambitious, of being incompetent, of being a failure, and, therefore, of being a false prophet. Inauguration stories deny some criticisms outright, and allow some criticisms to stand, but reinterpret them (Benjamin 2004).

Most inauguration stories open with theophanies. Images of YHWH were forbidden in ancient Israel (Deut 5:8–10). Therefore, theophanies reveal the presence of YHWH without technically violating the prohibition. Candidates sense more than they actually see. When they do see something it is either the fire or lightning that is YHWH's weapon, or the cloud of dust churned up by his war chariot, or an angel or messenger (Exod 3:2; Judg 13:6). Here a messenger appears to Moses (Exod 3:2) before YHWH speaks (Exod 3:6).

Candidates respond to theophanies by investigating them. The burning bush attracts the attention of Moses, who then turns aside to look at the great sight (Exod 3:3). This first episode in the inauguration records YHWH's successful contact with the candidate. The relationship between YHWH and the candidate is like a game of tag. YHWH is *it*, and the candidate does not want to be caught. YHWH ambushes the candidate with a lure such as the burning bush, which seems harmless enough and attracts the curiosity of the candidate.

Once the candidate gets close enough, YHWH *tags* him with the greeting. YHWH usually addresses the candidate formally by calling his name twice. As Moses approaches the burning bush, YHWH greets him with *Moses! Moses!*

Once he hears his name, Moses realizes he is in the presence of YHWH, and responds to the greeting with the formula: *Here I am* (Exod 3:4). Like soldiers or students answering to their names in a roll call, candidates answer: *Present!*

The verbal responses of candidates to YHWH's greet are sometimes accompanied by a gesture of humility. Those who see YHWH must remain forever in the presence of YHWH by dying. Death here is not a punishment, but

a passage from the human plane to the divine plane. Humans pass from one plane to the other only in birth and death. Through the womb from which they are born, and the tomb where they are buried, humans leave and return to the divine plane. The position in which both the fetus and the cadaver begin their journeys is fetal. In its mother's womb, a fetus tucks its knees against its chest, and in the graves of many Neolithic period cultures the bodies of the dead are arranged in the same position. Therefore, candidates often prostrate themselves on the earth with their chests tight against their knees, ready to leave the human plane for the divine. The fetal position is an ancient human gesture of humility or *kenosis*, -- the Greek word for *emptying* -- and is a prayer posture for Muslims today. Whether coming into the world or going out of the world, the proper posture for the journey is the fetal position. The *kenosis* demonstrates candidates' complete lack of ambition, and argues that the exercise of power by prophets in their communities is not the result of a selfish quest for power, but a response to a call from YHWH. This prostration puts candidates in the fetal position like a child in its mother's womb or a dead body in its grave. It signifies that the candidate is dead to the old world, and in position to be raised to life in a new world. The candidate dies to the old world, and is commissioned to serve as a prophet in the new

With the formula *Fear not!* YHWH postpones candidates' deaths, so that they can carry out a divine mission. When candidates prostrate, their human lives come to an end. When they stand and return to the human community to carry out a divine mission, they do so, not simply as members of that community, but as prophets sent by the divine assembly.

Sometimes, instead of using the fear-not formula, YHWH simply teaches candidates how to act in the presence of the divine assembly. Here YHWH instructs Moses to remove his sandals (Exod 3:5). Members of the divine assembly were holy. Holiness in the world of the Bible is like radioactivity today. Both physically alter humans unless they take proper precautions, therefore, the community quarantines, ostracizes, or executes those whom, like Moses, the presence of YHWH transforms. If candidates follow the protocol in which YHWH instructs them, then they can return safely to the human community without threatening it with holiness.

When fathers of households entered a sanctuary, they covered their genitals (Exod 28:42) and they removed their sandals (Exod 3:5). Sandals were not only footwear, but also the uniform of landowners (1 Kgs 21:16-17). Buyers walked off their land in sandals, which then became the movable title to that land which were surrendered to creditors to secure their loans to households (Amos 2:6, 8:6). Sandals were a symbol of power over land. Genitals were a symbol of power over children. No symbols of reproduction or land ownership were displayed before YHWH, who alone blessed the Hebrews with land and children. Human parenthood and land ownership were only by proxy. Wearing

sandals onto the holy ground of a sanctuary would be tantamount to challenging YHWH.

Having greeted and briefed candidates, YHWH then commissions them to carry out a divine mission. A command (Exod 3:8–10), Decalogue (Deut 5:6–21), or covenant is the standard commission.

Candidates respond to their divine commissions by demurring. It would be arrogant for candidates to accept their commissions without first declining on the basis that they are not worthy to fulfill a divine task. Moses pleads that: *I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant; I am slow of speech and tongue* (Exod 4:10).

Isaiah demurs by saying: *I am a man of unclean lips* (Isa 6:5). In the Bible, being “unclean” has little, or nothing, to do with hygiene. It is a label applied to households that are politically and economically at risk, or on probation, and are no longer eligible to participate in the daily affairs of the village. To be *unclean* or *impure* is to be *shamed* or *foolish*. Isaiah affirms that, like a leper, his household has no standing.

Jeremiah, like Moses and Isaiah, also, demurs by pleading that he cannot speak for YHWH: *YHWH, my divine patron, I do not know how to speak, for I am only unborn child* (Jer 1:6). He does not simply mean that fetuses cannot physically speak, but that no human can responsibly speak for YHWH. YHWH reassures Jeremiah by touching his mouth, and customizing it for his work as a prophet. Jeremiah now has a mouth uniquely designed for speaking a divine word. YHWH also promises Jeremiah: “I am with you” (Jer 1:8). YHWH will not only train Jeremiah for his mission, but be right there to coach him through every confrontation with the rulers of Judah (Benjamin 2004).

Jeremy Schipper, using disability criticism, considers the traditions about Moses’ speech impediment (Exod 4:10, 6:12+30) reflect an actual physical disability. The significance of any disability in the Bible, however, is never medical, but always social. Throughout the traditions about Moses the Egyptians, the Hebrews and Moses himself are ambiguous about his social status. Born to a Hebrew mother, and adopted by an Egyptian mother, he a person of mixed cultural identity. Sometimes he is a Hebrew, sometimes an Egyptian. The physical disability labels Moses as a cultural outsider. The intention of Moses’ response to YHWH is that since neither the Egyptians, nor the Hebrews can understand him, he is unfit for his commission. (Junior and Schipper 2008, 428-441)

Moses’ experience in the opening chapters of Exodus reflects that of many people and characters who shift between two or more identity groups with a history of social, cultural, or political tensions. Other characters suspect his motives and question his loyalties. Their concerns allow the narrative to develop

its reflection on the complex nature of group identity in its constructions of Moses' character. ...Moses physical disability contributes to this larger discourse on his identity by putting the portrayal of his disability into conversation with the portrayal of his ethnicity. ...disability as a conceptual category may help one map out the Bible's ideological landscapes with greater nuance.(Junior and Schipper 2008: 441)

In the denouement, YHWH commissions the candidate as a prophet. Isaiah is outfitted by the seraphim for his new role with lips of iron. They manufacture this unique tool using the charcoal burner in the sanctuary as a forge. Ironworking played a significant role in the development of cultures in Syria-Palestine. It became a foundational metaphor for states that are economically sound. These new iron lips will prepare Isaiah to help the monarchs of Judah make economically sound decisions in their struggle with Assyria. The household of Isaiah is no longer unclean: *...guilt has departed and . . . sin is blotted out* (Isa 6:7).

YHWH responds to candidates' demurrals with a talisman. Talismans are offensive weapons. Amulets are defensive weapons that protect candidates from their enemies. This talisman serves as a passport certifying the validity of their mission, and as a weapon against their enemies. The talisman that YHWH gives Moses is the promise: *I will be with you* (Exod 3:12). The mission is a divine mission, and it will be accomplished not by means of the talents and skills of Moses, but only by YHWH.

Almost ignoring the talisman offered, Moses asks for a name. YHWH refuses (Exod 3:13–14). Although the response *I am, who am* has been an incentive for generations of reflections, it was not originally meant to be a key to the nature of God as the source of being or the cause of all being. The response tells Moses nothing. *I am, who am* is a nonsense riddle like *name-smame*.

Outside the Bible, the name *YHWH* appears on ostraca from Arad after 700–600 B.C.E. The place-name *Beth YHWH* appears in Egyptian lists dated to Amenophis III (1417–1379 B.C.E.) and Ramses II (1304–1237 B.C.E.). Archaeologists have identified Beth YHWH with Qurayyah, a site in Late Bronze period Midian, today found 45 miles northwest of Tabuk (Saudi Arabia); 15 miles west-southwest of Bir Ibn Hirmas; and 40 miles from Mudawwara (Jordan).

A name is power. Those who give names or call names have power over those who answer to their names. Owners name their animals. Parents name their children. Husbands name their wives. Moses' request is inappropriate because if he knows the divine name, then he can call or control YHWH. Thus, YHWH's response simply continues Moses' protocol lesson. No human, not even a prophet, should ask for power over YHWH (Benjamin 2004).

Instructions to Honor YHWH Alone (Deut 6:4–25 DCB) "Hear, O Israel! Yahweh, our divine patron, Yahweh alone! Therefore, you shall fulfill your covenant with Yahweh, your divine patron, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. Take to heart these words which I promulgate to you today."

⁷Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. ⁸Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, ⁹and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

¹⁰ When Yahweh, your divine patron, has brought you into the land that he swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you -- a land with fine, large cities that you did not build, ¹¹houses filled with all sorts of goods that you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant—and when you have eaten your fill, ¹²take care that you do not forget Yahweh, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. **¹³Yahweh, your divine patron, you shall fear; Yahweh you shall serve, and by the name of Yahweh alone you shall swear. ¹⁴Do not follow other divine patrons, any of the divine patrons of the peoples who are all around you, ¹⁵because Yahweh, your divine patron, who is present with you, is a jealous divine patron.** The anger of Yahweh, your divine patron, would be kindled against you and he would destroy you from the face of the earth.

¹⁶ Do not put Yahweh, your divine patron, to the test, as you tested him at Massah. ¹⁷You must diligently keep the commandments of Yahweh, your divine patron, and the decrees, and statutes that Yahweh has commanded you. ¹⁸Do what is right and good in the sight of Yahweh, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may go in and occupy the good land that Yahweh swore to your ancestors to give you, ¹⁹thrusting out all your enemies from before you, as Yahweh has promised.

²⁰ When your children ask you in time to come, 'What is the meaning of the decrees and the statutes and the ordinances that Yahweh, our divine patron, has commanded you?' ²¹then you shall say to your children, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, but Yahweh brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²²Yahweh displayed before our eyes great and awesome signs and wonders against Egypt, against Pharaoh and his entire household. ²³Yahweh brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land that he promised on oath to our ancestors. ²⁴ Yahweh commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear Yahweh, our divine patron, for our lasting good, so as to keep us alive, as is now the case. ²⁵If we diligently observe this entire commandment before Yahweh, our divine patron, as Yahweh has commanded us, we will be in the right.'

Instructions to Honor YHWH Alone (6:4–25) teach that YHWH alone is the divine patron of Hebrew households (Deut 4:1–40). Jews use the opening invocation as a profession of faith: "YHWH is our G-d, YHWH alone." The

connotation is that YHWH is the most *powerful*, not the *only*, divine patron. Christians preserve one line as a saying of Jesus: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matt 22:38–39; Mark 12:30). 26 The battle cry of Muhammad's warriors attacking the Jewish tribes of Heber in 629: "*Allahu akbar*—Allah is greater [than your divine patron]"—may represent a linguistic twist of the Jewish battle cry: *YHWH 'elohenu*, *YHWH 'ahad*.

To love is to fulfill your covenant responsibilities to YHWH. Likewise, . . . to hate is . . . to abrogate a covenant, a legal action dispensing both patrons and clients from their responsibilities to one another. *Love* here is not simply an emotional attachment; it is a binding contractual obligation.

The Bible uses emotional language to describe relationships between unmarried women and men (Song 8:1–4; 5:10–16), between fathers and mothers of households (Gen 24:67; 29:16–20; Judg 14:3; 1 Sam 1:5; 18:20; 25:44; 2 Sam 3:15; 11:27; 13:12) and between fathers of households and their secondary wives (Exod 21:7–11; Judges 19). English translations, however, often unnecessarily translate Hebrew words with legal connotations using English words with only emotional connotations. The *wife of your youth* (Prov 5:18–20) and the *good wife* (Prov 31:10–31) refer to the wise woman who teaches students to be disciplined, not to women with whom students are in love. Likewise, a *loose woman* (Prov 5:2–5) is a fool who teaches students that success can be achieved without discipline, not a woman with whom students are having an affair.

The *Temptation Stories* in the gospels according to Matthew (Matt 4:1–11) and Luke (Luke 4:1–13) portray Jesus citing the *Instructions on YHWH Alone* (Deut 6: 4–15) to prevent the Satan from doing harm – an *apotropaism*, rather than to drive the Satan out of the land – an *exorcism*.¹² The stories introduce the quotations -- *Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him*. (Luke 4:8) and *Do not put the Lord your God to the test* (Luke 4:12) -- with the formula: *it is written* indicating that, during the first century of the Common Era, Jews considered these instructions in Deuteronomy to be a verbal protection against evil. Deuteronomy is not simply a proof-text for a teaching of Jesus – applying Deuteronomy to a new situation. Jews and Christians in the time of Jesus assumed that the *Teachings on YHWH Alone* in Deuteronomy were literally teaching the Hebrews how to defend themselves against evil. The assumption was common in the writings preserved by the *yahad* community at Qumran and other Jewish traditions of spirituality as well.¹³

¹² Michael Morris, "Deuteronomy in the Matthean and Lucan Temptation in Light of Early Jewish Antidemonic Tradition," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 78, no. 2 (2016), 290–301.

¹³ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament," *New Testament Studies* 7 (1960–1961), 297–333.

Two early amulets, dated between 700-500 BCE, with apotropaisms were recovered by Gabriel Barkay and his team at Ketef Hinnom near Jerusalem.¹⁴ As Jesus does in the *Temptation Stories*, these amulets quote a blessing from Numbers (Num 6:24-26) to protect those who wear them from evil. One may also contain a paraphrase from Deuteronomy, which later Samaritan amulets, dated after 300, quote regularly to ward off evil. The *Damascus Document* also contains a parallel to Jesus' use of Deuteronomy to ward off evil: ...when the people of YHWH take an oath to follow the Teachings of Moses faithfully, the angel Mastema shall never threaten them, if they keep their word (CD-A 16:4-5 DCB). Here by following the instructions in Deuteronomy the Hebrews can protect themselves against the Satan, Mastema.¹⁵

¹⁴ Gabriel Barkay et al., "The Amulets from Ketef Hinnom: A New Edition and Evaluation," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 334 (/5, 2004), 41-71.; Gabriel Barkay, "The Riches of Ketef Hinnom: Jerusalem Tomb Yields Biblical Text Four Centuries Older than Dead Sea Scrolls," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 35, no. 4-5 (/7, 2009), 22.

¹⁵ David Lincicum, "Scripture and Apotropaism in the Second Temple Period," *Biblische Notizen* 138 (2008, 2008), 63-87.; Benjamin Wold, "Apotropaic Prayer and the Matthean Lord's Prayer," in *Das Böse, Der Teufel Und Dämonen -- Evil, the Devil, and Demons*, eds. Jan Doehorn, Susanne Rudnig-zelt and Benjamin Wold (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 101-112.; Ernest Best, *The Temptation and the Passion: The Markan Soteriology* Cambridge Univ Pr, 1990).

Instructions on Gratitude (Deut 8:1-20 DCB) You must faithfully follow all the instructions which I teaching you today, so that you may live and increase, and go in and occupy the land which YHWH promised under oath to your ancestors. ²Remember the long way that YHWH, your divine patron, has led you these 40 years in the desert, in order to make you grateful, training you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would follow these instructions.

³YHWH taught you gratitude by letting you go hungry, then by feeding you with *manna* bread, with which neither you nor your ancestors had ever seen, in order to make you understand that **one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of YHWH.**

⁴The clothes on your back did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these 40 years. ⁵Know then in your heart that, as parents train their children, so YHWH, your divine patron, trains you.

⁶Therefore keep these instructions of YHWH, your divine patron, by walking in the ways of YHWH and by respecting YHWH. ⁷For YHWH, your divine patron, is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, ⁸a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and date honey, ⁹a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose mountains you may mine copper. ¹⁰You shall eat your fill and praise YHWH, your divine patron, for the good land that he has given you.

¹¹ Take care that you do not forget YHWH, your divine patron, by failing to follow the commandments, ordinances, and statutes of YHWH, which I am teaching you today. ¹²When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, ¹³and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, ¹⁴then do not exalt yourself, forgetting YHWH, your divine patron, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, ¹⁵ who led you through the great and terrible desert, an arid waste-land with poisonous snakes and scorpions. YHWH made water flow for you from rock of flints, ¹⁶and fed you in the desert with *manna* bread which your ancestors had never seen, to teach you gratitude and to train you, and in the end to do you good.

¹⁷Do not say to yourself: *My power and the might of my own hand have gained me this wealth.* ¹⁸Remember YHWH, your divine patron, for it is YHWH who gives you power to gain wealth, in order to confirm the covenant that YHWH swore to your ancestors, as YHWH is doing today. ¹⁹If you do forget YHWH, your divine patron, and serve and worship other divine patrons, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. ²⁰Like the peoples that YHWH is destroying before you, so shall you perish, because you would not listen to the voice of YHWH, your divine patron.

Instructions on Gratitude (8:1-20) teach fathers that their land and people are not wages they have earned, but blessings which YHWH has given.

The Hebrews must live like children in the arms of their divine patron, mindful of how powerless they were to feed and clothe themselves in the desert. The instructions describe behavior which reminds the Hebrews of what YHWH has done and continues to do for them. This lifestyle of gratitude does not plead for blessings wanted, but acknowledges blessings received. The unforgiveable sin is to forget—to become arrogant and self-reliant.

Theologies of a God who tests humans are common enough today, and have produced long-standing interpretations of YHWH testing the Hebrews (33:8) or the Hebrews testing the patience of YHWH (6:16).

Many also consider the *Inauguration of Abraham on Mt. Moriah* (Gen 21:1–14 + 22:1–19) a lesson in contemporary human relationships with God and with one another, especially when those relationships are difficult and painful. The interpretations portray Abraham as both protectively carrying the fire and the knife so that Isaac will not get hurt, and yet ready to sacrifice Isaac to please his divine patron. They portray Isaac as a completely trusting victim manipulated by both parental love and parental violence, and Sarah as a wife and mother resigned to the loss of both her husband and her son to their divine patron.

The inauguration, however, originally did not celebrate blind obedience to a divine patron who toys with the feelings of Abraham and Sarah by giving them a child and then by pretending to take the child away. Abraham conducts the ordeal not to resolve a faith crisis, but to determine whether Ishmael or Isaac should be his heir. It celebrates Abraham and Sarah as ancestors who were endowed with land and people of their own in a world where slavery seemed inevitable. YHWH was not an enemy, but a covenant partner.

YHWH here is not testing Abraham and Sarah to see if they will obey. YHWH is training or coaching them so that they can meet the challenges they will face in the land, just as YHWH trained Moses and Zipporah so that they could meet the challenges they would face in Egypt (Exod 4:20–26).

Supporting arguments for YHWH's generosity are drawn from traditions that, during their years in the desert, the Hebrews' clothes and sandals did not wear out. Early Jewish, Christian and Muslim commentators crafted ingenious interpretations for these traditions. Neither experience, however, results from magic, but from motherhood. Mothers made and repaired clothes and sandals. These are intimate acts of parenting. Like a good mother YHWH cares for even these small details. Mothers also spent many hours each day grinding grain and baking bread to feed their households. Like a good mother YHWH fed the Hebrews with *manna* bread in the desert. *Manna* is a desert praline created either when beetles bore through the bark of tamarisk trees allowing the sap to seep out and harden, or when secretions of sap waste from the grazing beetles themselves dry. Like a good mother, YHWH teaches the Hebrews to eat only what they need, and not to hoard. The instructions taught the Hebrews to trust that YHWH, who made the bread today, will make fresh bread tomorrow.

A lifestyle of gratitude is a challenge for the Hebrews. The fathers could have understandably considered their land conquered by Joshua to be a human accomplishment. The instructions remind them that their ancestors were blessed with land not because of their sacrifice, but because of YHWH's generosity. Unless the households embrace a lifestyle reflecting their blessings

as divine gifts, not human accomplishments, their enemies will permanently deprive them of their land and their identify as the people of YHWH.

Originally, the *Inauguration of Abraham on Mt. Moriah* (Gen 21:1–14+22:1–19) did not celebrate blind obedience to a divine patron who toys with the feelings of Abraham and Sarah by giving them a child and then by pretending to take the child away. Abraham conducts the ordeal not to resolve a faith crisis, but to determine whether Eliezer, his slave from Damascus (Gen 14:21–15:7), Ishmael, his son with Hagar (Gen 16:1–16; 21:35–22:19) or Isaac, his son with Sarah (Gen 17:1–27; 20:1–17; 21:1–21; 21:25–22:19) should be his heir. It celebrates Abraham and Sarah as ancestors who were endowed with land and people of their own in a world where slavery seemed inevitable. YHWH was not an enemy, but a covenant partner.

In Genesis Ishmael is the *other* son; in Qur'an Isaac is the *other*. The promise of a first son in the Qur'an follows Abraham's destruction of the sanctuary statues of his father (6:74–83; 19:41–49, 21:51–59; see also: *Midrash Genesis Rabbah*; Jerome, *Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim*; Severus, *Catena Severi*; Book of Jubilees) when he prays: *My Lord, give unto me from among the righteous. So we gave him glad tidings of a gentle son* (37:100–101). Most Muslim commentators identify Abraham's words as a prayer for a righteous son; some as a prayer for Abraham himself to be righteous. In this surah the unnamed son may be either Isaac or Ishmael.¹⁶

The Qur'an then describes a dream in which 'Allah commands Abraham to sacrifice his first son. Although the traditions in the Qur'an and Genesis are similar, they are not identical. Abraham in Qur'an does not act immediately on 'Allah's command to sacrifice his first son. Instead he asks his son for advice, just as Jephthah asks the daughter he vowed to sacrifice for her advice (Judg 11:1–40). In the Qur'an the son, like the daughter of Jephthah, becomes a willing participant in the sacrifice: *You will find me, God willing, among those who are patient*. The daughter of Jephthah asks her father for a stay of execution until she has *mourned her virginity*. Abraham's first son in Qur'an asks to be laid face down, so that he and his father will not have eye-contact at the moment of his death. Both the daughter of Jephthah and the first son of Abraham are free and active participants who are unconditionally obedient to their divine patrons even though it costs them their lives. In Genesis Isaac, in contrast, is completely unaware of YHWH's command that Abraham, his father, put him to death.

The Qur'an goes on to list Ishmael among the prophets, and other surahs clearly identify Ishmael as the son marked for sacrifice, since 'Allah promises

¹⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al., ed., *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York NY: HarperOne, 2015).1093–1094

Abraham his son Isaac only after the sacrifice. Curiously, once Qur'an describes Abraham and Ishmael building the *Ka'bah* sanctuary, Ishmael disappears from the Qur'an tradition.

The *Temptation Stories* in the gospels according to Matthew (Matt 4:1-11) and Luke (Luke 4:1-13) portray Jesus citing the *Instructions on Gratitude* (Deut 8:1-20) to prevent the Satan from doing harm – an *apotropaism*, rather than to drive the Satan out of the land – an *exorcism*.¹⁷ The stories introduce the quotation -- *One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God* (Matt 4: 4) -- with the formula: *it is written* indicating that, during the first century of the Common Era, Jews considered these instructions in Deuteronomy to be a verbal protection against evil. Deuteronomy is not simply a proof-text for a teaching of Jesus – applying Deuteronomy to a new situation. Jews and Christians in the time of Jesus assumed that the *Teachings on Gratitude* in Deuteronomy – like Jesus – were literally teaching the Hebrews how to defend themselves against evil. The assumption was common in the writings preserved by the *yahad* community at Qumran and other Jewish traditions of spirituality as well.¹⁸

In the social world of Deuteronomy the Hebrews' obedience to its teachings would prevent the evil of losing their divine giving land and people. The temptation stories assume that the evil is the loss of the land of Judah and its people to Rome. Jesus warns against collaborating with Rome – the Satan – which would imply that Rome, not YHWH give the people of Judah their land.

¹⁷ Michael Morris, "Deuteronomy in the Matthean and Lucan Temptation in Light of Early Jewish Antidemonic Tradition," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 78, no. 2 (2016), 290-301.

¹⁸ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament," *New Testament Studies* 7 (1960-1961), 297-333.

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Instructions on Mourning (14:1–2) teach fathers not to shave their heads or cut their bodies. Both practices were popular in Moab (Isa 15:2; Jer 48:37), Philistia (Jer 47:5) Tyre (Ezek 27:31) and even Israel (Isa 22:12; Jer 16:6, 41:5; Ezek 7:18; Amos 8:10; Mic 1:16).

The instructions address their audiences as *sons of YHWH*, a title which appears almost nowhere else in the Bible (Exod 4:22; Hos 11:1). Nonetheless, mourning was primarily women's work.³¹ Mourners were the midwives for the dead.³² Midwives escorted newborns into life; mourners escorted the dead into the afterlife.

Mourners shaved their heads to appear as scalped battlefield casualties (Isa. 22:12; Ezek. 27:31). Scalping was practiced in Asia, Europe and Africa.³³ Herodotus (*Histories* 1.64) describes Scythian peoples scalping their enemies, something Hebrews may have also done (see: 32:1–47; 2 Macc 7:7).

Mesopotamian and Persian women wore sackcloth (2 Sam 3:31; Esth 4:3; Jer 6:26), removed the veils reflecting their social status, did not bathe, comb their hair or eat full meals (Deut 26:14; Ps 35:13–14; 69:10–11; Joel 2:12).). Joshua and the elders rubbed dirt into their hair like mourning Egyptian women (Josh 7:6).

Traditional cultures like ancient Israel have a profound commitment to escort the dead to the grave even though they believed the journey put them at risk (see 34:1–12; Gen 50:10). Once death took one life, death could take another life from among the mourners. Therefore mourners scalped and cut themselves to look dead in order to survive the journey to the grave and back.

Zipporah uses the playing dead technique to protect Moses, their son and herself (Exod 4:24–26). When YHWH threatens her household, Zipporah tricks YHWH into thinking Moses and their son are dead by smearing them with blood. Zipporah demonstrates the creativity which Moses will need to succeed in Egypt. The Hebrew slaves also use this technique by smearing blood on their doorjambs to outwit YHWH's messenger during the final plague.

Self-inflicted wounds have been compared to physical disabilities that make Hebrews ineligible to enter the *maqom* sanctuary (see: 16:18–17:13).¹⁹

¹⁹ **Supplemental Reading (Disability Theory):** Saul M. Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: Interpreting Mental and Physical Differences* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge Univ Pr, 2008).; Saul M. Olyan, "The Ascription of Physical Disability as a Stigmatizing Strategy in Biblical Iconic Polemics," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 9 (01/01, 2009).; John M. Hull 1935-2015, "Blindness and the Face of God: Toward a Theology of Disability," in *The Human Image of God*, ed. Hans-Georg Ziebertz and others (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 215-229.; Saul M. Olyan, "The Exegetical Dimensions of Restrictions on the Blind and the Lame in Texts from Qumran," *Dead*

Generally, self-inflicted wounds like circumcision and tattooing were scars of survivors who had completed rituals of passage. The wounds of mourners would indicate that they have accompanied the dead to the threshold of the afterlife, and returned safely. The instructions prohibit them because mourners should have absolute confidence that YHWH will protect them from death en route to the grave and back.²⁰

Sea Discoveries 8, no. 1 (2001, 2001), 38-50.; Hector Avalos, Sarah J. Melcher, Jeremy Schipper, ed., this *Abled Body: Rethinking Disabilities in Biblical Studies* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007).

²⁰ **Supplemental Reading (Mourning):** Saul M. Olyan, *Biblical Mourning: Ritual and Social Dimensions*. Oxford: Oxford Univ Press (Oxford: Oxford University, 2004).; Saul M. Olyan, "The Biblical Prohibition of the Mourning Rites of Shaving and Laceration: Several Proposals," in (Providence, R.I.: Brown Judaic Studies, 2000), 181-189.

Instructions on Prophets (18:9–22) teach that only Moses and a prophet like Moses can speak for YHWH. The Hebrews are not to manipulate YHWH into revealing or changing their fate with human sacrifice, divination, soothsaying, augury, sorcery, casting spells or channeling spirits (Lev 19:26—20:27). Not all households could afford the sacrifices and other services provided by the priests and prophets of the official state religion, or their needs could not be delayed while their fathers travel to distant state sanctuaries. Therefore the fathers of these households asked nearby and more affordable, male and female shamans to mediate with Yahweh for them.

Even though the Bible reveres Moses, Miriam, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi as honorary prophets who lived when there were no monarchs in ancient Israel, prophets and monarchs were technically interdependent. There were no prophets without monarchs; no monarchs without prophets. Eventually, both prophets and monarchs were shamed. Amos rejects the title *prophet* (Amos 7:14) and Zechariah sentences prophets to death (Zech 13:1–6). Then a tradition developed that a prophet would introduce the messiah or monarch sent by YHWH. For Joel the prophet would be the people of Judah (Joel 2:28–32); for Malachi (Mal 4:5) and Sirach (Sir 48:1–11) the prophet would be Elijah.

The community at Qumran expected a prophet like Moses to announce the end time (*Testimonia* 4Q175), and the New Testament gospels celebrate Jesus as a prophet like Moses even though John as prophet introduces Jesus as messiah (Luke 7:28; John 1:19–34). Early rabbis do not identify the prophet; later rabbis identify the prophet with Joshua, Samuel, or Aaron. The Qur'an (Surahs 74, 96) describes Muhammad as the prophet like Moses but does not cite Deuteronomy (18:9–22) or Isaiah (29:11–13, 40:6). Subsequent Muslim teachers do.

Only five women hold the title *prophet*: Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Noadiah and the wife of Isaiah (Isa 8:3; Joel 2:28; Ezek 13:17–23). Nonetheless, women like a shaman from Endor (1 Sam 28:2–12), a wise woman from Tekoa (2 Sam 13:35—14:6), and others (Joel 2:28) function as prophets. These women channel the dead, provide counsel to their monarchs and enter trances to access the divine plane.

A Trial of Judah

(Mal 3:1—4:5)

Sentence

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me -- your divine patron will suddenly come to the Temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight is coming,

says YHWH, the commander of the divine warriors.²¹ ²But who can endure the Day of YHWH's coming, and who can stand when YHWH appears?

For my messenger is like a fire for refining precious metals and like lye for washing wool. ³My messenger will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the household of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to YHWH in righteousness. ⁴Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to YHWH as in the days of old and as in former years.

⁵ Then I will draw near to you for judgement; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow, and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the outsider, and do not live morally, says YHWH, commander of the divine warriors.

Indictment

⁶ For I YHWH do not change; therefore you, O households of Jacob, have not perished. ⁷Ever since the days of your ancestors you have turned aside from my teachings and have ignored them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says YHWH, commander of the divine warriors. But you say: *How shall we return?*

⁸ Do any other households steal from their divine patron? Yet you are stealing from me! But you say, 'How are we stealing from you?' By not paying the full tithes and offerings which you owe me! ⁹You are so cursed for stealing from me — every last household! ¹⁰Bring the full tithe into the Temple storehouse, so that there may be food in my house. Put me to the test, says YHWH, commander of the divine warriors. See if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing. ¹¹I will rebuke the locust for you, so that it will not destroy the produce of your soil; and your vines in the field shall not be barren, says YHWH, commander of the divine warriors. ¹²Then all peoples will count you happy, for you will be a land of delight, says YHWH, commander of the divine warriors.

¹³ *You have spoken harsh words against me*, says YHWH. Yet you say: *How have we spoken against you?* ¹⁴You have said: *It is of little value²² to serve our divine patron. What do we profit by keeping the teachings of YHWH²³ or by mourning before YHWH, commander of the divine warriors?* ¹⁵We watch the arrogant live happily ever after. Evildoers not only prosper, but when they put our divine patron to the test they escape unpunished.

Appeal and mitigation

¹⁶ Then those who revered YHWH spoke with one another. YHWH took note and listened, and a Book of Remembrance was written before him of those who revered YHWH and meditated on the name YHWH. ¹⁷*They shall be mine*, says YHWH, commander of the divine warriors, *my special possession on the day when I act, and I will spare them as parents spare their children who obey them.* ¹⁸*Then once more you shall see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve their divine patron and those who do not.*

²¹ NRSV: the Lord of hosts – who delivered the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt and protected them from their enemies in Syria-Palestine

²² NRSV: vain See: Qoheleth *vanity of vanities*. Not *worthless*, but *temporary*

²³ NRSV: his command

See, the Day is Coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the Day that Comes shall burn them up, says YHWH, commander of the divine warriors, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. ²But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. ³You shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the Day When I Act, says YHWH, commander of the divine warriors.

⁴Remember the *Teachings of My Servant Moses*, the statutes and ordinances that I commanded him at Mt. Horeb for all Israel.²⁴

⁵Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible Day of YHWH comes. ⁶He will turn the hearts of fathers and mothers to the members of their households and the minds of the members of every household to their fathers and mothers, so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse.²⁵

A *Trial of Judah* in the book of Malachi (Mal 3:1—4:5) describe how a *prophet like Moses* in *Instructions on Prophets* (Deut 18:9–22) would be sent by YHWH to prepare the people of YHWH for the Day of YHWH. This prophet does not condemn the people, but rather restores them to faithfulness to the teachings in Deuteronomy—here called *The Teachings of My Servant Moses* or *The Book of Remembrance*. The word *Remembrance* is comparable to the word *Deuteronomy*, a retelling or remembering of the events in Exodus, Numbers and Leviticus.

The prophet will turn the Hebrews' hearts – their *minds* in the anatomy of the world of the Bible – back to YHWH, and away from their own self-interest. This heart motif is common in Deuteronomy, which stresses trust YHWH completely: *You shall love YHWH, your divine patron, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might* (Deut 6:5).

The prophet like Moses – here called *the messenger* – indicts the people for stealing from YHWH. They are offering only partial or imperfect sacrifices at the Temple. Such behavior reflects their lack of faith that YHWH will feed and protect their households, so they must hold back some of their herds and harvests to do for themselves, what they do not believe that YHWH can or will do for them. They lack confidence that YHWH can protect their harvests from drought or from plagues of locusts.

The prophet also indicts them for trying to manipulate YHWH with sorcery, for adultery, for perjury, for defrauding their workers, and for their lack of hospitality to widows, orphans and outsiders.

²⁴ Deuteronomy

²⁵ The meaning of the teaching: *Honor your father and mother*.

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In *The 7 Laws of Magical Thinking: How Irrational Beliefs Keep Us Happy, Healthy, and Sane* Hutson studies shadow beliefs — those inklings of the numinous that most deny — and beliefs most do not even recognize as magical. These habits of mind guide people through their world every day. In very basic ways they provide a sense of control, of purpose, of connection, and of meaning, and without them most could not function (www.MagicalThinkingBook.com).

In *Objects Carry Essences* (chapter 1), Hutson explores how everyday items become emotionally significant by taking on the spirit of their previous owners or unique pasts. *Symbols Have Power* (chapter 2) describe how many often confuse symbolic associations for causal relationships in the world. *Actions Have Distant Consequences* (chapter 3) takes up superstitious rituals and the attempts people make to channel luck through physical acts. *The Mind Knows No Bounds* (chapter 4) covers belief in mind over matter and extrasensory perception, as well as transcendent experiences. *The Soul Lives On* (chapter 5) focuses on how hard it is to believe that the mind dies when the body does. *The World Is Alive* (chapter 6) describes how often people treat inanimate objects as conscious. *Everything Happens for a Reason* (chapter 7) analyzes the widespread insistence by many that higher powers guide natural events. Finally, an epilogue explores ways to find meaning in life by treating the world as sacred.

Hutson's work is just one demonstration that the peoples of rational Enlightenment cultures today are still dependent upon irrational strategies or magic for survival. Magic is not ignorance, but simply a companion of logic which humans use to navigate their environment. The social world of Deuteronomy is no exception. Some of the teachings of Deuteronomy are based on the rational strategies of logic; some on the irrational strategies of magic. Teachings on Prophets here does not prohibit all forms of magic, but simply those which are used to manipulate YHWH into revealing divine plans or changing them.

Evangelical Christian apologists like David Limbaugh comfortably identify Jesus as ...*a prophet like Moses*, and even, like the Epistle to the Hebrews, that Jesus supersedes Moses as a prophet.

³Yet Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. ⁴(For every house is built by

someone, but the builder of all things is God.) ⁵Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that would be spoken later. ⁶Christ, however, was faithful over God's house as a son, and we are his house if we hold firm the confidence and the pride that belong to hope (Heb 3:3-6).

Although such supersessionism has a long-standing history among some traditions of Christianity, it is now considered a form of anti-Semitism by many. Supersessionism is a replacement theology which teaches that Christianity is the heir to all the promises YHWH made to the Jews, who forfeited those blessings by failing to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. Because supersessionism has led to the persecution of Jews by Christians, many traditions of Christianity now reject it and teach that Jews and other non-Christians can find their way to God by faithfully practicing their own traditions without converting to Christianity.

Limbaugh does not explicitly indict Jews for not accepting Jesus. He is instead trying to persuade his Christian audience to embrace Deuteronomy as essential to understanding Jesus.

With more than eighty citations, Deuteronomy is one of the most frequently quoted books in the New Testament. Jesus quotes more from Deuteronomy than any other Old Testament book. He directly ties Deuteronomy to the New Testament when He proclaims that the essence of the entire Old Testament Law and prophets could be summed up by the commandment to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:37; Deut. 6:5, 10:19). Additionally each time He is tempted by Satan in the wilderness, He responds with Scripture from Deuteronomy (Matt 4:4, 7, 10; Luke 4-12; Deut 8:1-3, 6:1-13, 16).²⁶

Nonetheless, by fast forwarding from Iron Age Israel to early Christianity and then onward to the twenty-first century Evangelical Christian community, his approach assumes that the intention of the teachings in Deuteronomy is to describe Jesus and to explain the teachings of Jesus to Christians today. The intentions of the teachings in Deuteronomy were originally to avoid the destruction of Israel by the Assyrians, and then to avoid the destruction of Judah by the Babylonians, and ultimately to help Jews in the diasporas avoid assimilation into the non-Jewish cultures which overwhelmed them in antiquity and throughout their history.

Another important tradition in Limbaugh's emphasis that Christians need to positively embrace Deuteronomy is the traditions about Jesus and his followers on the road to Emmaus, for which he names his book -- *The Emmaus Code*.

²⁶ David Limbaugh, *The Emmaus Code* (Washington DC: Regnery Publishing, 2015), 219.

¹³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?'

They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?'

¹⁹He asked them, 'What things?'

They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth,* who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.* Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.'

²⁵Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah* should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. ²⁸As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on.

²⁹But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.'

So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.

³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us* while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

³⁶While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'*

³⁷They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost.

³⁸He said to them, 'Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.' ⁴⁰And

when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.* ⁴¹While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?'

⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish,

⁴³and he took it and ate in their presence.

⁴⁴Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah^z is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses* of these things. ⁴⁹And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.' ⁵⁰Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. ⁵¹While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven.

⁵²And they worshipped him, and* returned to Jerusalem with great joy; ⁵³and they were continually in the temple blessing God. (Luke 24:13-53)

Limbaugh assumes that what he is doing in *The Emmaus Code* is what Jesus did for his followers on the road to Emmaus – explain how Deuteronomy is a detailed description of the status and teachings of Jesus. The assumption ignores the crisis into which the torture and execution of Jesus by the Romans and their Jewish sympathizers plunged the followers of Jesus, who expected him to bring an end to Roman rule in Syria-Palestine, and inaugurate a ...*kingdom of heaven* (Matt 3:2, 4:17, 5:3). Instead, the Romans and their sympathizers executed Jesus and remained in power.

The followers of Jesus, like those on the road to Emmaus, did turn to the Bible in search of understanding the tragedy of Jesus' death. The most helpful biblical traditions for these early Christians were in Isaiah.²⁷ These traditions do not announce the restoration of the household of David as rulers of Judah. Instead, it redirects the promises from the household of David to all the people of Judah taken into exile by the Babylonians. They -- not the household of David -- are now *the Servant of YHWH*.

YHWH exiled the households of David from Judah to Babylon, not as a punishment, but rather as a time of preparation for a divine mission. Four traditions in Isaiah describe how this renewed Servant of YHWH will deliver all the peoples of the earth from their enemies (Isa 42:1-9; 49:1-6; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12). A long standing tradition of interpretation labels them: *Songs of a Suffering Servant*. YHWH uses the formula: *behold my servant, whom I*

²⁷ Don C. Benjamin, *The Old Testament Story: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 363-368.

uphold, my chosen in whom my soul delights to designate the exiles as a prophet, perhaps even a *prophet like Moses*.

A similar adoption formula appears in the hero stories in Judges: ...*the spirit of YHWH came upon him so that he became Israel's judge* (Judg 3:10). The words are patterned on those used by fathers of households when they adopted newborns into their households or designated heirs. The titles *judge, hero, chief, servant of YHWH, Son of Man* (Dan 7:13) and ...*a prophet like Moses* all empower candidates to create a new world.

In the last of the four *Servant of YHWH Traditions* (Isa 52:13–53:12), YHWH authorizes the servant to use the divine spirit (Isa 42:1). This divine spirit is the power that YHWH uses to create. It is the same spirit that hovers over the waters from which YHWH creates the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1). This spirit also drives back the Sea when Moses raises his staff (Exod 14:21), and it comes upon Othniel and the other chiefs to allow them to create a free people from slaves (Judg 3:10). It is the breath of YHWH.

Unlike standard hero stories in Judges that authorize a chief to deliver only the people of Judah from their enemies, the *Servant of YHWH traditions* the servant to deliver all peoples from their enemies.

The first *Servant of YHWH tradition* (Isa 42:1-9) uses stunning metaphors to describe how YHWH creates the new world of *Zion*. Some metaphors are drawn from the work of women; some from the work of men. Like the men in a village, YHWH built and farmed. Like the women in the village, YHWH pitched tents, bore children, and delivered newborns.

To create is to build a seawall. The *coastlines* are the islands and shores of the Mediterranean. They are the ends of the earth (Isa 42:4). These lands serve as seawalls protecting the earth from the waters above and the waters below it. YHWH builds this seawall, part of which is Mt. Ararat, where Noah's ark runs aground at the end of the flood, and which the book of Proverbs (Prov 8:29) refers to as the *limit*. Arabic-speaking cultures identify these mountains at the end of the earth as the *circle* (Job 26:10; 38:8–11). In the *Eridu Stories* from Mesopotamia, Marduk constructs this seawall to protect the earth.

To create is to pitch a tent: ...*who created the heavens and stretched them out* (Isa 42:5).

To create is to farm: ...*who spread forth the earth and what comes from it* (Isa 42:5).

To create is to deliver a child: ...*who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it* (Isa 42:5) and ...*taken you by the hand and*

kept you (Isa 42:6). Like a midwife, YHWH calls out the unborn child by announcing its name, while its mother is still in labor. Obediently the child responds: *...before they spring forth I tell you of them* (Isa 42:9). This Servant of YHWH tradition parallels *A Story of the Creation of the Heavens and the Earth* (Gen 1:1—2:4) which also celebrates YHWH's talent as a midwife who creates by announcing the names of the light, the sea, the dry land.

To create is to free prisoners: *....to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness* (Isa 42:7) also describes YHWH creating. These actions are parallel to those with which YHWH brings the Hebrews through the Red Sea and out of slavery in Egypt. *Blind eyes* are unfinished eyes. *Prisoners from the dungeon* are like statues still locked in the stone or clay from which the sculptor will release them. Priests dedicated statues of members of their divine assemblies by *opening their eyes*. The eyes and the nose were the most important parts of a sacred statue. Unlike humans, who consumed food by putting it into their mouths, YHWH and the members of the divine assembly consumed sacrifices by looking at them and smelling their aroma.

Injustice for Isaiah was not so much a breakdown in which a perfectly created cosmos deteriorated. Injustice was a cosmos in its unfinished condition. The Servant of YHWH will *...bring forth justice to the peoples* and finish creating the cosmos. The creative work of the Servant of YHWH is nonviolent, which contrasts with the way in which the Exodus traditions describe the actions of YHWH in delivering the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt, and the hero stories in Judges describe the actions of YHWH in delivering them from their enemies in Syria-Palestine. In Exodus and Judges, the actions of YHWH are violent, but in Isaiah they are not. The Servant of YHWH is to deliver the peoples by suffering, and not by conquest. This is the traditions on which the followers of Jesus built their theology of the redemptive suffering and death of Jesus. This is what Jesus explains to his followers on the road to Emmaus.

The celebration of suffering in the Servant of YHWH traditions is a significant development of Israel's understanding of itself as powerless. Unlike other peoples, the Hebrews did not brag that YHWH chose them because they were powerful. YHWH chose them because they were powerless. The Hebrews were slaves. Judah was a virgin (Isa 7:14). Jacob was a worm (Isa 41:14). The political and economic power of other peoples revealed nothing about their divine patrons. Great warriors and mighty rulers built empires that were simply the results of human ability. Gilgamesh, for example, boasts that he has built the walls of Uruk from fired, not just sun-dried, bricks, and shaded its houses with orchards and parks. The success of a powerless people like the Hebrews revealed a powerful divine patron, who alone was responsible for protecting and providing for this people and its land. When slaves who were

despised, rejected, stricken, smitten, and afflicted stood alongside the powerful, and divided the spoils of the strong, this was a divine and not a human work.

The Servant of YHWH traditions teach that it is YHWH, and YHWH alone, who protects and provides not only for Israel, but for all peoples – and this is also an important teaching in Ezekiel.²⁸ The book of Ezekiel opens with a description of the death of Judah and Jerusalem, ruled by the household of David. An *Inauguration of Ezekiel* (Ezek 1:4—3:15) who will play an important role in the decommissioning of this old world, introduces *A Creation of the City of Immanuel* (Ezek 1:1—48:35) just as an *Inauguration of Moses on Mt. Horeb* introduces the *Death of the Firstborn of Egypt* in Exodus.

The household of David regularly indicted prophets like Ezekiel as imposters. The length of this inauguration of Ezekiel indicates how many questions the monarchy raised about Ezekiel's legitimacy. Among the most serious indictments against him is his location in Babylon. No true prophet had ever been inaugurated by YHWH outside the lands of Israel and Judah. For the household of David, YHWH could not leave the Temple in Jerusalem. Therefore, Ezekiel could not encounter YHWH outside Jerusalem. The inauguration argues that YHWH is not confined to the Temple, but moves freely to all the lands where the peoples of Israel and Judah have been deported. The inauguration uses wings, wheels, and eyes to stress the mobility of YHWH, who comes and goes effortlessly.

The crisis episode (Ezek 1:4–28) in the inauguration assumes that Ezekiel is sitting amid the ruins of the village of Spring Hill (Hebrew: *tel Aviv*) near Babylon. Babylon is built on a plain that is subject to sudden and violent storms. A storm crosses the plain like an invisible hand pulling a dark curtain over a window. Ezekiel sits and watches the ominous cloud stalk the city.

Confronted with the new, the different, the unexpected, the impossible, the inauguration assumes the prophet prays: *Why are the people of Judah here, alone and without YHWH? Is Judah an orphan who has no divine patron? Has Babylon put YHWH to death?*

Israel prohibits images of YHWH. There are, however, two classic exceptions. YHWH is a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day. The cloud was a massive thunderhead churned up like dust by the wheels of the chariot of YHWH riding across the dome of the sky to do battle with the raging Sea of Chaos (Deut 33:26–29). Sometimes the Sea of Chaos is the Mediterranean Sea, sometimes the Red Sea. The pillar of fire was a bolt of lightning fired like an arrow from the chariot of YHWH to drive the sea back from the coast.

²⁸ Ibid., 384-390

As Ezekiel watches the storm crossing the plain, he expects to see YHWH ride out of the cloud like a divine warrior in order to attack Babylon and free the people of Judah. Instead, he sees a refugee's wagon, glowing with the static electricity created by St. Elmo's fire, rumble out of the storm (Ezek 1:5). This is the same wagon that Ezekiel sees leaving Jerusalem when YHWH evacuates the temple (Ezek 10:18–22). The same kind of wagon appears in the reliefs of Sennacherib's victory over Lachish. The image evokes the feelings of humility and identity with the poor evoked when the body of Martin Luther King Jr. was taken to his grave in a farm wagon, or when the family in *Grapes of Wrath*, the 1939 novel by John Steinbeck (1902–68), load their truck to leave Oklahoma. Marduk rides in a war chariot; YHWH in a refugee's wagon. YHWH does not process triumphantly like Marduk into Babylon, but enters the city humbly among all the other prisoners of war to share the suffering of the household of David in exile.

YHWH does not come to conquer Babylon or to set the exiles free. The wars that the rulers of Judah waged to protect the land and its people in fact destroyed the land and exiled the people. YHWH comes, not as a covenant partner to the rulers of Judah in order to continue the war, but as a companion to those who suffer the consequences of these ill-fated war policies of the monarchy.

The wagon is loaded with the furniture that most characterized YHWH. The cherubim (Ezek 1:5–13) are fearsome creatures who guard the Temple of YHWH. These composite creatures combine the most respected qualities of the most respected creatures: the intelligence of humans, the strength of oxen, the courage of lions, and the flight of eagles. Here, these former bodyguards are now harnessed together in two unmatched teams drawing YHWH's wagon (Exod 37:6–9; 2 Sam 22:8–20; Ps 18:11; 79:2; 99:1).

Like the cherubim, the seraphim are also part of the household of YHWH who evacuate Jerusalem with him. They carry the weapons of YHWH. Ezekiel does not see “torches” (Ezek 1:13), but rather bolts of lightning flashing like fire from the chariot.

The wheels and wings are also an important component of the theophany (Ezek 1:8–20). The inauguration presents YHWH as on the move. David and Solomon built the temple to be the House of YHWH, but in time it became a prison that the rulers of Judah believed that YHWH could not leave. According to Ezekiel, YHWH can leave the temple, Jerusalem, and Judah and move in any direction across the earth. The inauguration describes YHWH moving to Babylon. The *Dedication of the City of Immanuel* describes YHWH moving back to Judah (Ezek 40:1–48:35).

In the *Creation of the Heavens and the Earth* (Gen 1:6), YHWH designs a firmament or dome to create a habitat where creatures who breathe can

survive in a liquid universe. The dome is YHWH's patented design. This dome is also on the wagon (Ezek 1:22).

In the *Flood Stories*, YHWH unstrings the divine war bow and hangs it on the wall of the heavens (Gen 9:1–17). This disarmed weapon becomes a peace symbol. YHWH is no longer at war with the people of Noah's day. The flood is over. The rainbow is an amulet that no longer needs to be fired in anger, but simply hangs on the walls of the heavens to protect the earth.

The great storm out of which YHWH's wagon emerges onto the plains of Babylon lures Ezekiel into the divine presence. In contrast to the elaborate theophany in the inauguration, the report of his investigation is starkly simple. *I stared at this mirage* better translates the Hebrew than ...*such was the appearance of the splendor all around. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of YHWH* (Ezek 1:28). Only when he investigates the mirage, as Moses investigates the burning bush, does Ezekiel become aware that it is YHWH.

The glory of YHWH is a gloss on ...*appearance of the splendor all around* or *mirage*. It is an umbrella term for the theophany that the Bible uses to indicate the presence of YHWH. Here, the glory of YHWH is made up of furniture like the cherubim and seraphim who serve as temple guards, the dome, the throne or Ark of the Covenant, and the war bow.

YHWH greets Ezekiel as *Son of Man* (Ezek 1:28). In a standard inauguration, YHWH calls the name of the candidate twice: *Moses, Moses* (Exod 3:4). *Son of Man* means *mortal*, and contrasts Ezekiel with YHWH, who is immortal. This particular title stresses that a human being has no business asking what YHWH is doing in letting Babylon destroy Jerusalem. The book of Job provides the same answer to Job's demand for an explanation of his suffering. Human beings cannot understand what YHWH does, so they ought to stop asking.

Ezekiel's response to YHWH's greeting is a prostration: *I fell prostrate* (Ezek 1:28). Candidates take the fetal position with their knees and their foreheads pressed to the earth upon hearing YHWH call their names. *As I heard a voice say to me 'Son of Man,' I fell upon my face.* The greeting and the kenosis are simultaneous.

The standard stay of execution is the formula: *Fear not!* Here in the Inauguration of Ezekiel (Ezek 2:1), however, YHWH grants Ezekiel a stay by ordering him to stand up. The gesture of raising Ezekiel to an upright and standing position simulates raising him from the dead. As a human being, Ezekiel enters the presence of YHWH and takes the fetal position or dies.

YHWH then raises him up from the dead and he leaves the presence of YHWH as a prophet on a divine mission.

YHWH commissions Ezekiel not only to explain, but also to use pantomimes to set in motion the events that will bring the old world of Judah to an end (Ezek 2:2–3:11). Like all prophets, he is a master, not only wielding YHWH's creative words, but acting to set those words into motion as well.

The book of Ezekiel considers the loss of the land of Judah to be the first phase in the termination of the covenant between YHWH and Judah. The violation of the covenant between YHWH and Judah by the household of David, and not the armies of Babylon, drove YHWH from Jerusalem. By covenant YHWH agreed to feed Judah and to protect Judah from its enemies. Repeatedly the household of David made covenants with Egypt and other states to feed and protect itself. These negotiations demonstrated that the household of David had no faith in YHWH's willingness or YHWH's ability to feed and protect Judah. Since the household of David wanted to feed and protect Judah and its people, YHWH evacuated Jerusalem to allow the household of David to feed and protect the land and its people, which, of course, it was incapable of doing.

The taxes and soldiers and cities and slaves of monarchs are ultimately powerless to protect and provide for the people and their land. The Servant of YHWH traditions in Isaiah and the passion traditions in the New Testament gospels celebrate a YHWH who is the divine patron of slaves oppressed by the Egyptians and prisoners of war tortured by the Babylonians. In the worldview of these traditions, it is the last who will be first, the weak who will be strong, the exiles who will be freed, and the dead who will be raised.

A similar motif appears in the book of Deuteronomy. *A Trial of the Desert Generation* (Deut 1:19–2) indicts the desert generation for doubting YHWH could or would give them the land of the Amorites in the Seir Mountains near the Timnah mines north of the Gulf of Aqaba.²⁹

When YHWH commissions the desert generation to invade the land, they should invade the land. Instead, they send out reconnaissance and, even when scouts report that the land is fertile, they refuse to invade the land. Finally, they invade the land without YHWH. Consequently, they forfeit the land, which is given to the powerless in their households to emphasize that the land is a divine endowment, not a prize of war.

Reconnaissance determines the strength of the enemy to avoid going into battle against a stronger enemy. Military science requires reconnaissance;

²⁹ Don C. Benjamin, *The Social World of Deuteronomy: A New Feminist Commentary* (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 57-58.

herem war forbids it. Reconnaissance characterizes warriors as petty (Num 13:1–14:15), cowardly (1:19–46), greedy (Judg 1:22–26), and faithless (Judg 18:1–31). Warriors are expected to go into battle at a disadvantage in order to highlight the victory is a divine not a human accomplishment (Deut 13:13–19; Judg 7:1–8:28). To prepare for *herem* war, chiefs may use prophets (1 Kgs 22:5), divination (2 Kgs 13:15), necromancy (1 Sam 28:6), and the ephod with its Urim and Thummim (1 Sam 30:7–8; 1 Sam 28:6) — rituals that Deuteronomy curiously warns fathers to avoid (18:9–22) — but not reconnaissance.

Here YHWH does not lead the Hebrew warriors as a chief, but carries them like children as a parent. Childhood in traditional cultures is not a unique period which is the foundation for adult life, but a period of ultimate powerlessness. Children had no social status.

Similarly, *Instructions on Gratitude* (Deut 8:1–20) teach fathers that their land and people are not wages they have earned, but blessings which YHWH has given. The Hebrews must live like children in the arms of their divine patron, mindful of how powerless they were to feed and clothe themselves in the desert.³⁰

The instructions describe behavior which reminds the Hebrews of what YHWH has done and continues to do for them. This lifestyle of gratitude does not plead for blessings wanted, but acknowledges blessings received. The unforgivable sin is to forget—to become arrogant and self-reliant.

Theologies of a God who tests humans are common enough today, and have produced long-standing interpretations of YHWH testing the Hebrews (Deut 33:8) or the Hebrews testing the patience of YHWH (Deut 6:16).

Many also consider the *Inauguration of Abraham on Mt. Moriah* (Gen 21:1–14 + 22:1–19) a lesson in contemporary human relationships with God and with one another, especially when those relationships are difficult and painful. The interpretations portray Abraham as both protectively carrying the fire and the knife so that Isaac will not get hurt, and yet ready to sacrifice Isaac to please his divine patron. They portray Isaac as a completely trusting victim manipulated by both parental love and parental violence, and Sarah as a wife and mother resigned to the loss of both her husband and her son to their divine patron.

The inauguration, however, originally did not celebrate blind obedience to a divine patron who toys with the feelings of Abraham and Sarah by giving them a child and then by pretending to take the child away. Abraham conducts

³⁰ Ibid., 84–86

the ordeal not to resolve a faith crisis, but to determine whether Ishmael or Isaac should be his heir. It celebrates Abraham and Sarah as ancestors who were endowed with land and people of their own in a world where slavery seemed inevitable. YHWH was not an enemy, but a covenant partner.

YHWH here is not testing Abraham and Sarah to see if they will obey. YHWH is training or coaching them so that they can meet the challenges they will face in the land, just as YHWH trained Moses and Zipporah so that they could meet the challenges they would face in Egypt (Exod 4:20–26).

Supporting arguments for YHWH's generosity are drawn from traditions that, during their years in the desert, the Hebrews' clothes and sandals did not wear out. 35 Early Jewish, Christian and Muslim commentators crafted ingenious interpretations for these traditions. Neither experience, however, results from magic, but from motherhood. Mothers made and repaired clothes and sandals. These are intimate acts of parenting. Like a good mother YHWH cares for even these small details.

Mothers also spent many hours each day grinding grain and baking bread to feed their households. Like a good mother YHWH fed the Hebrews with *manna* bread in the desert. *Manna* is a desert praline created either when beetles bore through the bark of tamarisk trees allowing the sap to seep out and harden, or when secretions of sap waste from the grazing beetles themselves dry. Like a good mother, YHWH teaches the Hebrews to eat only what they need, and not to hoard. The instructions taught the Hebrews to trust that YHWH, who made the bread today, will make fresh bread tomorrow.

A lifestyle of gratitude is a challenge for the Hebrews. The fathers could have understandably considered their land conquered by Joshua to be a human accomplishment. The instructions remind them that their ancestors were blessed with land not because of their sacrifice, but because of YHWH's generosity. Unless the households embrace a lifestyle reflecting their blessings as divine gifts, not human accomplishments, their enemies will permanently deprive them of their land and they identify as the people of YHWH.

If there is a lesson in Isaiah, Ezekiel and Deuteronomy for both the Hebrews of old, and their Christian descendants today, it is a call to live a life of gratitude for blessings received. This was a message which Jesus embraced unconditionally even during his cruel torture and execution. It was a lifestyle which he modeled for his followers on the road to Emmaus then, and in Christian communities who listen to these ancient traditions now.

131-133

Instructions on Cities (20:10–20) explain that *faraway cities* are eligible for membership in ancient Israel; *cities here* are not (21:1–9; 30:1–20; Isa 50:4–11).³¹ Fathers may grant asylum to women and men of *faraway cities* that join Israel (Josh 9:1–27). In contrast, they are to confiscate the women, children and livestock of *faraway cities* that do not join Israel. The instructions mark all men of military age in *faraway cities* that do not join Israel and all men, women, children and livestock of *cities here* for sacrifice to YHWH.

Fathers are not to fear cities, as the desert generation had done, when the warriors who scouted the land for Moses reported that there were walled cities in the land ahead (Num 13:1–33). Despite archaeological evidence that the Hebrew households in early Israel had only modest military resources, the instructions teach that, with YHWH as their divine patron, they are capable of conquering cities just as David later conquered the walled city of Rabbath-ammon (2 Sam 10:1–12:31).

Cities like those from which many of the early Hebrews fled remained a challenge the Hebrews' identity as the people of YHWH. Although many still read the traditions about Jericho and Ai (Josh 1–9) as battle reports, they may well be describing an interdict ritual setting the ruins off-limits, as a reminder that only in a land without cities can they remain free. The ruins of great cities prompted the Hebrews ask why Yahweh allowed them to be destroyed, and whether they should rebuild them. Rebuilding the cities would be an act of stewardship, caring for the land that YHWH had granted them, and would also allow the Hebrews to enjoy the economic prosperity of their predecessors on the sites.

Traditions about the cities of Babel and Jericho as well as the instructions here reflect the idealism of early Israel. The Hebrews who built their villages in the hills above Jericho were survivors of great slave empires whose hallmark was the city. The Hebrews considered cities to be monuments to slavery. Therefore, they created a village culture and prohibited not only slavery, but also cities, monarchs, taxes, and soldiers as well. Life in early Israel would be city-less so that it could be slave-free.

³¹ Utnapishtim (Akkadian: *he who found eternal life*) is heir of the household of Ubara-Tutu, who becomes the wise high priest of Shurruk. Ea/Enki is the divine patron of his household (Akkadian: *the seed of all living creatures*). In the *Stories of Atrahasis* Utnapishtim is *Atrahasis* (Akkadian: *wise*); in Sumerian traditions he is *Ziusudra*. In the *Stories of Gilgamesh* (Tablet 11) -- because they survived the flood which all mortals were sentenced to death by the divine assembly -- Enlil, father of the divine assembly, makes Utnapishtim and his wife immortal and exiles them to a *faraway city* at the end of the earth, the source of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers where the sun rises. Gilgamesh travels to this *faraway city* to ask Utnapishtim to make him immortal.

A companion instruction teaches warriors to harvest the orchards of cities during siege only for their fruit. They may only harvest the timber of trees that do not bear fruit to build their siege engines (2 Kgs 3; 2 Sam 11:1).¹²⁵ Egyptian and Mesopotamian rulers boast about destroying the trees of their enemies. Tuthmosis III (1479–1425 BCE) fells both the lumber and fruit trees of his enemies. Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BCE) harvests timber in the Amanus Mountains. A painting at Medinet Habu portrays Egyptians using wooden ladders to scale the walls of Tunip, while others cut down the city's trees.

Trees are not a human resource, they are a divine gift. Orchards and forests are not the enemies of Israel. Trees are living and life-giving gifts planted by YHWH, which, like trees of Eden may be used, but not destroyed. The motif that humans who eat from divine trees, or cut them down, are seeking the immortality of their divine patrons appears not only in the *Stories of Adam and Eve*, but also in the *Stories of Gilgamesh* as well.

The man and woman eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil seeking to become immortal, and Gilgamesh and Enkidu raid the Cedar Forest. The man and the woman are banished. Enkidu is sentenced to death and Gilgamesh to a life of wandering.

The *Instructions on Cities* include references to both *faraway cities* and *trees* placed under divine protection. Both motifs appear in the *Stories of Adam and Eve* and the *Stories of Gilgamesh*.

Are the semantic roots of the *faraway city* where the household of Utnapishtim lives and the *faraway cities* here in Deuteronomy related? If the motifs are related, how would that relationship affect the interpretation of the instructions?

...from Victor H. Matthews

I presume you are talking about the word “far” in Deut 20:15 -- *rāḥôq*. It is equivalent to *rûku* in Akkadian. I do not have the “R” volume of the CAD in my office and I cannot get into the library until it reopens next Monday. I will recheck for you then and try to provide some parallels texts. I will also check the critical edition of Gilgamesh for you at that time.

With regard to your idea of far away places, you might have a look at Isa 13:5 in the oracle against Babylon. It mentions their doom coming from kingdoms “from a distant land (*merḥāq*), from the end of the heavens.”

The cities – Eden (Gen), Jericho (Josh), Faraway (Gilg) and the faraway cities (Deut) -- and the trees – Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Gen 2:17), Tree in the Middle of the Garden (Gen 3:2), Tree of Life (Gen 3:22), the Cedar (Gilg Tablet 3), the Miracle plant (Gilg Tablet 11) -- are all under divine protection, and therefore out of reach of humans.

Instructions on Hostile Takeovers (22:22–30) contain *Instructions on the Rape of a Married Woman* (22:22, 30), *Instructions on the Rape of an Engaged Woman* (22:23–27) and *Instructions on the Rape of a Marriageable Woman* (22:28–29). **Instructions on virginity, marriage, divorce, infidelity, adultery, promiscuity, and rape in Deuteronomy are more concerned with the social and economic relationships between households than with gender and genital contact. These instructions are not interested simply in regulating physical or emotional relationships between men and women, and they do not focus on the physical or emotional harm done to the women, but on the harm done to their defining men. These women are taboo because their status is already defined by another male (Exod 22:15–16; Middle Assyrian Laws, art. 55). Like a man’s widowed mother, his father’s wife, his sister or half-sister, his granddaughter, his paternal or maternal aunt, his daughter-in-law, or his sister-in-law these women are set off limits to protect the fathers of their households from economic aggression Lev 18:6–18).**

Rape appears in many biblical traditions: slave women are raped (2 Sam 3:6–11; 15–19), marriageable women are raped (Gen 34; 2 Sam 13; 1 Kgs 1:1–4; Dan 13:1–64), and married women are raped (Hos 2:4–25; 2 Sam 11; Judg 19–21).¹⁵⁶ Traditions involving rape are not describing how men and women feel for each other or explaining why they hurt each other, but are providing an assessment of the status of the households to which these men and women belong. Two examples of rape as hostile takeovers appear in *Stories of David’s Successor* (2 Sam 9:1–20:26 + 1 Kgs 1:1–11:43).

A *Trial of Amnon* (2 Sam 13:1–14:33) describes Tamar as *beautiful* not only because of her pleasing physical appearance, but also because of her economic potential. She can endow Amnon with the resources of the household of Absalom, guaranteeing that he will be the heir of the household of David.

When Amnon falls in love with Tamar, and is . . . *so tormented that he made himself ill*, Amnon is not just dealing with unrequited love, but with political ambition. He is a man who would be king. Their actions do not just reflect personal passion or pain, but political strategies.

Amnon finds Tamar inspiring to admire, but difficult to possess. He is like the pharaoh, who cannot have intercourse with Sarah (Gen 12:9–13:1), Abimelech, who cannot have intercourse with Rebekah (Gen 26:6–11), and David, who cannot have intercourse with Abishag (1 Kgs 1:2–4). Voyeurs are impotent; they cannot be kings.

Tamar tells Amnon that if he wants to marry her, he needs to negotiate a marriage covenant with the household of Absalom. Amnon is a fool who acts on impulse (Prov 15:5). Tamar is wise, because she is patient. The wise know when to talk and when to listen. Fools are hot-tempered because they let passion run or ruin their lives. Tamar’s words shame Amnon, just as Michal shames David (2 Sam 6:20–23). Three times Tamar appeals to Amnon, assuring him that if he can be patient and negotiate with David, their marriage could ratify a covenant between their households. Amnon ignores Tamar and rapes her to lay claim to the resources she represents, and to issue a political challenge to Absalom.

In a *Trial of Absalom* (2 Sam 15:1—20:23) David plans to uncover Absalom's plot against him by evacuating Jerusalem.³² Only those loyal to David will follow him into exile, and then the people will recognize that Absalom is a rebel and not an heir. David leaves ten secondary wives and the Ark of the Covenant behind. His marriages to these women ratify the covenants on which David built his state. The Ark of the Covenant is David's legal claim to the land of Israel; the wives are his claim to its people. When Absalom enters the city, he publicly rapes David's wives to demonstrate that he has replaced David as ruler of Israel.

Ancient Israel was an *agonistic* culture driven by social competition. Some political theories assume that social organizations can overcome divisions of class, culture, gender or ideology. Agonism is a political theory which assumes that no social organization can overcome deep rooted differences, and that the goal of any society is to deal openly with these differences. Agonists argue that allowing outsiders and insiders to engage one another leads to a greater distribution of justice than societies based on more idealistic theories. Agonism allows people to express their disagreements.

Conflict cannot be eliminated, but it can provide an arena where differences can be confronted. Permitting conflict to exist does not destabilize society; it recognizes that conflict has a positive contribution to make to the stability of any society. Agonism implies a deep respect and concern for the other. The goal is not victory or defeat, but the struggle itself. Authentic agonistic contests like rape are marked not merely by conflict but, just as importantly, by mutual admiration.

Households in ancient Israel used rape to challenge one another and determine who should control their resources. By raping Dinah, the household of Shechem lays claim to the household of Jacob. Shechem is not just infatuated with Dinah when he says: *whatever you ask of me I will give you* (Gen 34:12). The household of Shechem wants control over the livestock that the household of Jacob herds (Gen 34:23), and the household of Jacob wants land to settle and graze (Gen 34:10).

Sexual relationships were a measure of the honor and shame of the households to which these men and women belonged. To test the stability of a household, a man from another household raped one of its marriageable or married women. The challenge itself was an acknowledgment that the household being pressed was honorable, and therefore worthy of the challenge. If a household could not protect its women, then it was declared shamed—unable to fulfill its responsibilities to its village and tribe.

Rape was a violent social process for redistributing the limited resources of villages so that they would not be put at risk by the weakness of a single household. Not every wanton act of sexual violence by any man against any woman qualified as a challenge to the honor of a household.

³² **Supplemental Reading (Absalom):** Keith Bodner, *The Rebellion of Absalom*. (London: Routledge, 2014).

The man needed to be a recognized representative of his household. The woman in the household targeted for takeover must either be married or marriageable.

To qualify as a hostile takeover, and not just an act of sexual violence, the rape must take place in the context of some activity connected with fertility such as harvesting (Gen 34:1-2; Judg 21:17-23), sheep-shearing (2 Sam 13:23-28), eating (2 Sam 13:5-6) or menstruating (2 Sam 11:4). Otherwise, rape was treated like any other crime. The household of the rapist became the legal guardian for the shamed household, while negotiations to realign its resources took place (Gen 34:4-24; Sam 11:6-26; 13:15-22).

Some monarchs like David played no direct roles in the competition between households. Their inaction was not weakness. They remained neutral in power struggles between households to guarantee that only the fittest would survive.

A shamed household followed a parallel ritual of violence to reestablish its honor. A designated representative of the shamed household assassinated the heir of the rapist's household. The assassin had to carry out his revenge while the heir was exercising the authority which he had seized.

For Diana Lipton *Instructions on the Rape of an Engaged Woman* (22:23-27) contain the only example of legal analogy in the Bible.³³ Today, when there is no clear, direct precedent for cases, lawyers cite cases on different subjects, but demonstrating the same general, legal principles. Here the instructions draw an analogy between the rape of an engaged woman outside a village and the killing of one man by another outside a village (Deut 19:1-13). Lipton considers the analogy between both instructions to be based on the same general principles in *Stories of Cain and Abel* (Gen:41-16) and *A Trial of David* (2 Sam 14:1-20).

Narrative analogies link two or more narratives by the use of parallels.... The narrator does not call explicit attention to these analogies. Instead, they must be detected by readers.... ...laws too may recall other laws in this allusive way.... No reader of Deut 22.26 can doubt the legislator's intention to link rape and murder.³⁴

³³ Diana Lipton, "Legal Analogy in Deuteronomy and Fratricide in the Field," in *Studies on the Text and Versions of the Hebrew Bible in Honour of Robert Gordon*, eds. Geoffrey Khan and Diana Lipton (Boston: Brill, 2012), 21-38.; Bernard S. Jackson, "The Nature of Analogical Argument in Early Jewish Law," *The Jewish Law Annual* 11 (1993), 137-168.

³⁴ Lipton, *Legal Analogy in Deuteronomy and Fratricide in the Field*, eds. Geoffrey Khan and Diana Lipton (Boston: Brill, 2012), 25

At least eleven instructions in Deuteronomy prescribe the death penalty for anti-social behavior (Deut 13:6, 13:10, 17:5, 17:12, 18:20, 19:11, 21:10, 22:21, 22:22, 22:24,22:25). According to Lipton the death penalty is never mandatory. Each instruction gives legal assemblies the authority to impose alternative penalties. The analogy in this *Instructions on the Rape of an Engaged Woman* authorizes assemblies to sentence convicts to exile rather than to death, just as YHWH exiles Cain and David exiles Absalom, both convicted of murdering their brothers.

Lipton also emphasizes that cry in the instructions is not a call for help before being raped, but a call for justice after the crime has been committed. The victim raped in the city is guilty of obstruction of justice because after being raped she did not report the crime to the legal assembly which had jurisdiction to prosecute the perpetrator, but could not do so without a witness. The victim raped outside the city is not guilty of obstruction of justice, because she was raped outside the jurisdiction of the city assembly, which could not pursue her complaint, even if she initiated a cause of action before the assembly.

23 If there is a marriageable woman, a virgin already engaged to be married, and the father of a household meets her in the city and has intercourse with her, ²⁴you shall bring both of them to the gate of that city and stone them to death: the young woman **because she did not cry out for justice at the city gate** and the father of the household because he violated his neighbor's wife.

So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

25 But if the father of a household meets an engaged woman in the open countryside and rapes her, then only the man who raped her shall be executed. ²⁶You shall do nothing to the marriageable woman; she has not committed an offence punishable by death, because this case is like that of someone who attacks and murders a neighbor. ²⁷Since he found her in the open countryside, **and even if the engaged woman cried out for justice at the city gate, the assault occurred outside the assembly's jurisdiction and there were no witnesses to the assault.**

153-154

Instructions on Military Camps (23:9–14) teach warriors to leave their camps in the morning if they have had a nocturnal emission or if they need to have a bowel movement (*Temple Scroll*, Col. 46:13–16; *Jewish War 2*, 147–49).³⁵ Warriors who had either controlled or uncontrolled emissions isolated themselves from their tribes to allow their bodies to resynchronize with the cosmos.³⁶

In traditional cultures managing bodily emissions like blood, urine, saliva, mucus, semen, tears and menstrual fluid had little to do with hygiene. Openings in the human body are fragile channels synchronizing the individual with the cosmos.³⁷ Mismanaged emissions which leave individuals out of place

³⁵ Don C. Benjamin, *The Social World of Deuteronomy: A New Feminist Commentary* (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015).153-154

³⁶ Although the *Instructions on Military Camps* (Deut 23: 9-14) and the teachings of the *Yahad* community at Qumran focus on how bodily emissions affect the social status of the members of their communities, latrine practices can have an impact on the physical ability of soldiers during wartime. During WWII British latrine regulations prevented dysentery epidemics because they buried their excrement limiting the number of flies carrying dysentery in their camps. German soldiers left their excrement exposed creating an epidemic of dysentery carrying flies which caused a high level of casualties and which directly contributed to their defeat by the British during the North Africa campaign in WWII. See: Jonathan Fennell, *Combat and Morale in the North African Campaign: The Eighth Army and the Path to El Alamein*, Jonathan Fennell (New York NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

³⁷ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger; an Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Praeger, 1966).188; T. M. Lemos, "Where there is Dirt, is there System?: Revisiting Biblical Purity Constructions," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament (Online)* 37, no. 3 (/3, 2013), 265-294.; Eve Levavi Feinstein, *Sexual Pollution in the Hebrew Bible* (New York NY: Oxford University Press, 2014).

create a threat to the unity which warriors need to face their enemies effectively.³⁸

Some emissions were more likely to upset cosmic balance than others. Controlled emissions like urination or bowel movements were more dangerous than uncontrolled emissions like menstruation or nocturnal emissions. Uniquely female emissions from menstruation and childbirth were more dangerous than uniquely male emissions like bleeding from circumcision. Emissions during menstruation or masturbation which were infertile were more dangerous than emissions during sexual intercourse which could father children were fertile, and strengthened households.³⁹

The household of Hasmoneas led a successful revolt against Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.E.), the Greek ruler of Syria-Palestine.⁴⁰ Subsequently, the household established a state that governed Judah until the Roman general Pompey (106-48 B.C.E.) occupied Judah in 63 B.C.E. When the household of Hasmoneas (170-63 B.C.E.) and then Herod (63-4 B.C.E.) ruled Judah, there was an economic renaissance in the communities along the shores of the Dead Sea. Jericho, Qumran, En Gedi, Masada and En Boqeq on

³⁸ For Mark K. George, "Watch Your Step! Excrement and Self-Regulation in Deuteronomy" (SBL Annual Meeting, Atlanta GA, 23 November 2015). ...in *Deuteronomy as a political treatise ... the apparatus of suzerainty is not simply focused on macro-level changes that create Israel as a vassal. It also is focused on extending its reach into the everyday lives and practices of individual Israelites.... Where and how a soldier defecates — this personal, intimate, natural biological function — becomes part of a much larger governmental process and rationality. The procedure is a governmental exercise: it shapes the conduct of conduct. In this way each soldier becomes a particular type of subject — a loyal and docile vassal. A procedure for defecating might be part of life in the army, but that procedure is appropriated and transformed by Deuteronomy's apparatus of suzerainty into an event having national consequences. If the deity as suzerain sees an uncovered pile of poop, the deity departs, abandoning Israel to its fate.*

³⁹ Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, "Menstrual Blood, Semen, and Discharge: The Fluid Symbolism of the Human Body," in *The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 177-194.177-194

⁴⁰ Don C. Benjamin, *Stones & Stories: An Introduction to Archaeology & the Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010).

the west; Callirrhoe and Macherus on the east were all centers for the production of farm products and the mining of salt and bitumen tar.⁴¹

One community opposed to the household of Hasmoneas made an exodus from Jerusalem about 100 B.C.E. They traveled down the Jericho road and into the desert along the eastern shore of the Dead Sea. On the site of an earlier fortress (630-580 B.C.E.) along the Wadi Qumran they built a settlement. The ruins today are seven miles south of Jericho and 20 miles north of Ein Gedi. The settlement was built on a marl clay terrace more than 1100 feet below sea level at the foot of cliffs where caves containing the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. The Dead Sea Scrolls include biblical traditions, biblical commentaries (Hebrew: *peshirim*) as well teachings of the Qumran community which scholars labeled: the *Damascus Document*, the *Community Rule* or *Manual of Discipline*, the *War Scroll* and the *Miqsat Ma'aseh HaTorah*.

The first excavations at Qumran (1951-1958) were directed by Roland De Vaux (1903-1971). Two important assumptions guided De Vaux's interpretation of the site. First, he assumed that the scrolls recovered from 11 caves in area around the ruins were stored there by the members of the Qumran community. Second, he assumed that the Qumran community was a Jewish guild similar to the Essenes described by Flavius Josephus (38-93) in his *Wars of the Jews* (2:119-161), by Pliny the Elder (23-79) in his *Natural History* (5-73) and by Philo (30 B.C.E.-45) in his *Every Good Man is Free* (75-91). De Vaux established this parallel between the Essenes and the community at Qumran despite the fact that none of these ancient writings mention Qumran by name, nor attribute to the Essenes the unorthodox use of a solar calendar to date religious feast days, nor a belief in predestination – all of which characterize the community in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The scrolls simply refer to *The Community* (Hebrew: *yahad*). The founder of the Community was *The Teacher of Righteousness* and its leaders were the *Heirs of Zadok*, a high priest during the reigns of David and Solomon (1000-925 B.C.E.).

Among the installations at the site uncovered by archaeologists is a toilet. The toilet was a terracotta pipe set into a conical, mud-lined pit that was filled with thin layers of coarse dirty earth embedded in the floor.⁴² Private toilets with a seat over a pit from the Late Bronze period and the Iron Age have been excavated in both Egypt and Syria-Palestine.

⁴¹ Yizhar Hirschfeld, *Qumran in Context* (Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004).11-12

⁴² Jodi Magness, "Two Notes on the Archaeology of Qumran," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 312 (11/01, 1998), 37-44.; Jodi Magness, "Communal Meals, a Toilet, and Sacred Space at Qumran," in *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Jodi Magness (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 105-130.

Perhaps the best-known examples of ancient toilets were in public Roman bath houses. These toilets were equipped with wooden or stone seats with holes. They lined three sides of the room. The seats were mounted above a constantly running stream of water which came from the bath house and which carried off the sewage. A small gutter on the floor in front of the seats carried water for washing the hands and cleaned up any spillage.

Toilets of this type have been found at a number of sites including Caesarea (Israel) and Khirbet el-Mefjer (Palestine). Since these toilets relied on a constant supply of fresh water brought by aqueduct, they are rarely found outside public establishments. Roman toilets appear only after the year 100; the toilet at Qumran is much older.

Toilets and toilet etiquette varied greatly in the world of the Bible. Many private Roman houses and apartments did not have toilets. Residents either used broken pots inside the house, or went out-doors, to relieve themselves.

Some inside Roman toilets were simply wood or stone seats built over a pit. When the pit was full, the contents was hauled away and sold as fertilizer. Other inside toilets were connected by a terracotta pipe to a pit outside the house. After use the waste was flushed through the pipe by a bucket of water.

Iron Age toilets have been excavated at several sites in Syria-Palestine. Two stone toilet seats from 700-500 B.C.E. were discovered in the excavations in the City of David in Jerusalem. Both were made of large, square blocks of limestone pierced with a hole in the center of the concave top. One of the seats was found in a small cubicle at the back of the House of Ahiel, still sitting in its original position over a cesspit. Similar toilets have been excavated at Buseirah (Jordan) and Tell es-Sacidiyeh (Jordan).

The structure at Qumran is a pit for a toilet. The pipe set into the pit was flushed with water to clear the waste. A stone block with a hole in it, excavated in an adjoining square, may be the missing toilet seat. Neither the toilets, nor the adjoining *mikveh* bath, were used after the earthquake of 31 B.C.E.

The toilet at Qumran provides additional material evidence for community's practices for bowel movements described in the *Temple Scroll* (11QT), the *War Scroll* (1QM) and the writings of Flavius Josephus.

In *Menstrual Blood, Semen, and Discharge: the fluid symbolism of the human body*, Howard Eilberg-Schwartz proposes that the Hebrews used three criteria to classify clean and unclean emissions from the human body.⁴³

⁴³ Eilberg-Schwartz, *Menstrual Blood, Semen, and Discharge: The Fluid Symbolism of the Human Body*, 177-194

Unclean emissions threw humans out of sync with the cosmos; *clean* emissions did not.

- First, emissions which can be controlled – bowel movements -- are clean; emissions which are spontaneous – a nocturnal emission -- are unclean.
- Second, emissions which are unique to males – bleeding from circumcision – are clean; emissions which are unique to females – menstrual flow – are unclean.
- Third, emissions which are fertile – ejaculation during intercourse – are clean; emissions which are infertile – ejaculation during masturbation – are unclean.

The *Temple Scroll* uses the Hebrew euphemism ...*the hand* or ...*a place for a hand* instead of the word: *toilet*. *You shall make them a place for a hand outside the city, to which they shall go out, to the north-west of the city-roofed houses with pits within them, into which the excrement will descend, so that it will not be visible at any distance from the city, three thousand cubits [a little less than a mile] (Temple Scroll Col. 46:13-16)*. This tradition is parallel to *Instructions on Military Camps* in Deuteronomy (Deut 23:12-14).

The *War Scroll* mandates the placement of toilets at a distance of about one-half mile (Hebrew: *2000 cubits*) from the camps, which is about one-quarter mile (Hebrew: *1000 cubits*) less than the distance from the city prescribed by the *Temple Scroll*: *There shall be about one-half mile (Hebrew: 2000 cubits) between their camps and the place of the hand, and nothing unclean shall be seen in the vicinity of their camps*.

Josephus describes the rituals for bowel movements in Essene communities. *On the Sabbath they do not have bowel movements. On other days they dig a pit a foot deep with a trowel – a tool which they give to each novice -- and wrapping their robe about them, that they may not offend the eyes of God, sit above it. They then replace the excavated soil in the pit. For this purpose they select more remote spots. Although bowel movements are a natural function, they make it a rule to wash themselves after it, as if bowel movements made them unclean (Jewish War 2, 147-49 DCB)*.

Although the *Temple Scroll*, the *War Scroll* and the *Jewish Wars* all agree that bowel movements take place in private, they describe the privacy differently. The *Temple Scroll* and *War Scroll* describe permanent, roofed toilets; Josephus describes Essenes digging a new pit in an open, remote spot each time they had a bowel movement.

The textual evidence and the presence of the toilet at Qumran indicate that members of the *Yahad* had bowel movements in different ways. When they

did not have access to permanent toilets, they dug pits in an open, but remote locations. The location of the permanent toilet at Qumran on the eastern edge of the settlement suggests that the *Instructions for Military Camps* in the *War Scroll* and for Jerusalem in the *Temple Scroll* did not apply to Qumran. These traditions single out specific instances in which special rituals are followed.

Roman law says nothing about the location and construction of toilets or where to have bowel movements.⁴⁴ Therefore, Josephus was surprised that the members of the *Yahad* had such detailed regulations about where to have bowel movements, and that they had bowel movements in private since the usual Roman practice was to have bowel movements in public. Not one Roman writer expresses surprise that as many as 60 or more men and women, sitting on stone or wooden seats in public Roman toilets (Latin: *forica*), had bowel movements in full view of each other.

The *Temple Scroll* describes the type of toilet found at Qumran and undoubtedly in other permanent settlements, but it, and the *War Scroll*, specify the distance required between a toilet or latrine and a sanctuary city or a military camp during *herem* war. Similarly, the distances for toilets mandated by the *Temple Scroll* and *War Scroll* would have placed them beyond the limit which Jews could travel on the Sabbath. This explains why Josephus observes that the Essenes did not have bowel movements on the Sabbath. If this regulation was observed at Qumran, the members of the *yahad* Community may not have used the toilet on the Sabbath.

The *yahad* Community considered bowel movements made them unclean; their Jewish and non-Jewish neighbors did not. This difference which led to the practices described by Josephus and the instructions in the *Temple Scroll* and *War Scroll*. Similarly, the Sabbath prohibition is mentioned in these sources because it differs from the way other Jews observed the Sabbath.

De Vaux's description of the toilet at Qumran corresponds with the physical description of toilets in the *Temple Scroll* as *...roofed houses with pits within them, into which the excrement will descend*. The remains of collapsed burnt reeds and marly soil used to seal roofs indicate that toilet was covered by a roof. The only doorway into the toilet opened into a *mikveh* bath house, which recalls Josephus' description of the Essene custom of washing themselves as if defiled after a bowel movement. This is another instance where Josephus singled out a practice that differed from contemporary norms. Similarly, he was

⁴⁴ Magness, *Communal Meals, a Toilet, and Sacred Space at Qumran*, 105-130; Rachel Neis, "Their Backs Toward the Temple, and their Faces Toward the East': The Temple and Toilet Practices in Rabbinic Palestine and Babylonia," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 43, no. 3 (2012, 2012), 328-368.

struck by the fact that novices were given a trowel for digging a pit each time they had a bowel movement. De Vaux suggested that an iron tool found in Cave 11 may represent this kind of trenching tool.

Therefore, the members of the *yahad* Community at Qumran had more than one ritual for bowel movements. Obsession today with toilet privacy and hygiene has obscured the fact that the concerns for privacy in their ancient communities were the exception rather than the rule. Thus, the literary sources discussed here only describe rituals for bowel movements which are unusual and reflect a belief in the *yahad* Community that bowel movements made its members unclean. Therefore, they washed themselves after each bowel movement, did not have bowel movements on the Sabbath, chose isolated spots when having bowel movements in the open, and required the building of toilets at a certain distance from Jerusalem, the Holy City, and from military camps during a holy war.

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Similarly, a trial in Ezekiel (Ezek 18:1–32) indicts both the households remaining in Judah and the royal households that the Babylonians began deporting in 597 BCE²²³. Neither was ready to accept responsibility for the loss of the land and people of Judah to Babylon. Neither was ready to take the initiative to recover them. The households remaining in Judah argued that the Babylonian invasion was the consequence, not of their actions, but of the actions of their ancestral households. The royal households in exile argued that they were cut off from their land and their people, and so were helpless to initiate change. Ezekiel charges both with breach of covenant, and holds them responsible for Judah’s loss of YHWH’s gifts of people and land. He seeks to empower the household of David to regain the people and the land of Judah. What the monarchy lost by its lack of responsibility, it can regain by its conversion and repentance. The trial demonstrates how strongly Ezekiel campaigned to overcome the apathy of the royal household and those who supported it.

The exile is a sentence imposed using the principle of proportionality. The royal households of Israel and Judah abused powerless widows, orphans and outsiders, and consequently were sentenced to become widows, orphans and outsiders themselves.

A fantasy in the book of Jeremiah (Jer 31:1-26) of the repatriation of the households of David envisions the end of the exile, and the restoration of these households to their status as full members of honorable households. They are no longer widows with sons, orphans without fathers and mothers and outsiders without status.

In everyday speech, “fantasy” carries the connotation of something unreal or imaginary. Here fantasy describes a real experience of the divine like a vision, theophany, or epiphany. Fantasies, however, are more than visions. Seers experience the divine with all their senses, not just sight. They see, hear, touch, taste, or smell the presence of Yahweh. In the first fantasy in the book of Daniel, there are two epiphanies. In one, Daniel sees Yahweh and the divine assembly conducting a trial (Dan 7:9–10*), and in the other he sees Yahweh as the Ancient of Days ordaining a “Son of Man” to be a messiah. Here in Jeremiah, the trance is described as sleep from which the prophet awakes -- Thereupon I awoke and looked, and my sleep was pleasant to me – once the vision ends.

A Fantasy of the Repatriation of the Households of David

(Jer 31:1-26)

31At that time, I YHWH will be the Divine patron of all the households of Israel, and they shall be my people.

² (Word of YHWH):

The people who survived the sword
found grace in the wilderness;
when Israel sought for rest,
³ YHWH appeared to him from far away.
I have loved you with an everlasting love;
therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.
⁴ Again I will build you, and you shall be built,
O virgin Israel!
Again you shall take your tambourines,
and go forth in the dance of the merrymakers.
⁵ Again you shall plant vineyards
on the mountains of Samaria;
the planters shall plant,
and shall enjoy the fruit.
⁶ For there shall be a day when sentinels will call
in the hill country of Ephraim:
'Come, let us go up to Zion,
to YHWH our Divine patron.'

⁷ For (Word of YHWH):

Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,
and raise shouts for the chief of the peoples;
proclaim, give praise, and say,
'Save, O LORD, your people,
the remnant of Israel.'
⁸ See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north,
and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,
among them the blind and the lame,
those with child and those in labor, together;
a great company, they shall return here.
⁹ With weeping they shall come,
and with consolations I will lead them back,
I will let them walk by brooks of water,
in a straight path in which they shall not stumble;
for I have become a father to Israel,
and Ephraim is my firstborn.
¹⁰ Hear the word of YHWH, O peoples,
and declare it in the coastlands far away;
say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him,
and will keep him as a shepherd a flock.'
¹¹ For YHWH has ransomed Jacob,
and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.
¹² They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,
and they shall be radiant over the goodness of YHWH,
over the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and over the young of the flock and the herd;
their life shall become like a watered garden,
and they shall never languish again.
¹³ Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,
and the young men and the old shall be merry.

I will turn their mourning into joy,
I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.
¹⁴ I will give the priests their fill of fatness,
and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty,

(Word of YHWH).

¹⁵ (Word of YHWH):

A voice is heard in Ramah,
lamentation and bitter weeping.
Rachel is weeping for her children;
she refuses to be comforted for her children,
because they are no more.

¹⁶ (Word of YHWH):

Keep your voice from weeping,
and your eyes from tears;
for there is a reward for your work,

(Word of YHWH):

they shall come back from the land of the enemy;
¹⁷ there is hope for your future,

(Word of YHWH):

your children shall come back to their own country.

¹⁸ Indeed I heard Ephraim pleading:
You disciplined me, and I took the discipline;
I was like a calf untrained.

Bring me back, let me come back,
for you are YHWH my Divine patron.

¹⁹ For after I had turned away I repented;
and after I was discovered, I struck my thigh;
I was ashamed, and I was dismayed
because I bore the disgrace of my youth.'

²⁰ Is Ephraim my dear son?

Is he the child I delight in?
As often as I speak against him,
I still remember him.

Therefore I am deeply moved for him;
I will surely have mercy on him,

(Word of YHWH).

²¹ Set up road markers for yourself,
make yourself signposts;
consider well the highway,
the road by which you went.

Return, O virgin Israel,
return to these your cities.

²² How long will you waver,
O faithless daughter?

For YHWH has created a new thing on the earth:
a woman encompasses a man.

23 (Word of YHWH of hosts, the Divine patron of Israel)

Once more they shall use these words in the land of Judah and in its villages when I restore their fortunes:

YHWH bless you, O abode of righteousness,
O holy hill!

²⁴And Judah and all its villages shall live there together, and the farmers and those who wander with their flocks.

²⁵I will satisfy the weary,
and all who are faint I will replenish.

26 Thereupon I awoke and looked, and my sleep was pleasant to me.

Traditions about Moses which open Deuteronomy now draw Deuteronomy to a close with a *Hymn of Moses* (32:1–44), a *Blessing by Moses for Israel* (33:1–29) and an *Obituary for Moses* (34:1–12).

A *Hymn of Moses* (32:1–4 + 6–15 + 43) describes YHWH as a divine patron who faithfully feeds and protects the Hebrews while a *Trial of the Desert Generation* (32:5–6+15–42) and a *Trial of Moses* (32:48–52) nested in the hymn describe the Hebrews as a people who demonstrate their unfaithfulness to YHWH by trying to feed and protect themselves (see: 8:1–20).

To survive, households must live lives of gratitude to YHWH, not lives of self-preservation. The hymn describes YHWH accepting the role of the unique divine patron of ancient Israel. Among all the 70 peoples of the earth, only Israel is the people of YHWH.

Problem solving by assembly was such a cherished **social institution** in ancient Israel that the Hebrews used it as a metaphor to describe how YHWH managed the cosmos. YHWH taught the Hebrews to care for their villages and cities by an assembly, just as YHWH cared for the cosmos by an assembly.

Assemblies of fathers—and sometimes mothers of households—were responsible for creating and maintaining ancient Israel; the divine assembly—the *Most High* (32:8)—was responsible for the creating and maintaining the cosmos.

The hymn elaborates the *Creation of the Heavens and the Earth* (Gen 1:1—2:4) and the *Stories of Adam and Eve* (Gen 2:4—4:2) which describe the creation of humanity as the creation of a single man and woman. Here the divine assembly creates as many peoples as there were households in Israel (32:8–9) or members of the divine assembly (LXX, 4QDeutj).

Most hymns have two components. There is a call to worship and a creation story. Calls to worship challenge audiences to acknowledge YHWH as their divine patron who delivered them from slavery and endowed them with land and people. Seven verbs make up this call to worship: *give ear, speak, hear, drop, condense, proclaim* and *ascribe!* The creation story (32:6–15) contains touching metaphors for YHWH drawn from the experience of both animal and human females.

“As a mother eagle flies above its nest, Hovers over its young; As she spreads her wings, Takes them up, Carries them aloft on her feathered back” (32:11) celebrates YHWH as nurturing the Hebrews with the same patience as a mother eagle teaching her chicks to fly.

“YHWH nursed him with honey from date palms on the cliffs” (32:13) celebrates YHWH for feeding the Hebrews like a human mother nursing her newborn.

“You did not remember your divine midwife, the rock who delivered you; you forgot the divine patron who birthed you” (32:18) celebrates YHWH as a midwife—the *Rock*—who birthed the Hebrews (2 Sam 22:1–51; Ps 95:1–11).

In traditional cultures mothers deliver kneeling, squatting or sitting. Their midwives use birthing stools to support their hips and adjust their posture. Paleolithic and Neolithic rock drawings portray pregnant women giving birth sitting. A godmother statue at Horvat Minha portrays her seated. Her breasts are full, her abdomen is distended, her hips and legs are heavy. Her left hand lifts her breast to nurse. A godmother statue at Catal Hayuk portrays her giving birth seated on a chair using two leopards as armrests to support herself. Her hips are wide; her breasts are full.

Birthing stools were often simply two rocks or bricks. The *Stories of Atrahasis* describe Nintu-Mami, the divine midwife, constructing a birthing stool. She lays down a brick, just as the *Two Shrewd Midwives* (Exod 1:12–21) use rocks to support their birthmothers. At Abydos archaeologists recovered a birth brick decorated with a mother giving birth with the help of her midwives.

Because birth rocks were characteristic of midwives, a midwife may have been called the *Rock*. Therefore, the sense of the indictment in the trial is: “Jacob abandoned the divine patron, who made him; forgot his midwife, the rock of his salvation” (32:15–18).

Nested in the *Hymn of Moses* (32:1–4+6–15+43) is a *Trial of the Desert Generation* (32:5–6 + 15–42), a *Colophon* (32:44–47) and a *Trial of Moses* (32:48–52).⁹ The trial assumes an indictment, but preserves only the maximum sentence possible for Moses’ conviction.

Trials have two basic components: an indictment (32:5–6+15–18) and a sentence (32:19–35). A *Trial of the Desert Generation* also includes a mitigation (32:36–42). The indictment describes the charges against the defendant; the sentence describes the maximum punishment which can be imposed. The mitigation is an appeal to the divine assembly to impose a more lenient punishment.

Severe drought is among the maximum sentences possible for the crimes of the desert generation. The drought will make the earth as lifeless as *Sheol* (32:22). The Hebrew word *Sheol* and the Greek words *Hades*, *Tartarus*, and *Gehenna* have all been translated *hell*. The Hebrews, however, had little interest in the afterlife; their focus was on this life where they expected YHWH to bless good people and curse bad people. At death everyone—good and bad—went to Sheol (Gen 44:29–31; Job 3:11–21; Ps 89:49; Prov 30:16; Isa 14:15; Ezek 31:15–18; 32:27).

Sheol was a *pit* or *vast pool* covered with dark clouds like the chaos before creation (Gen 1:2; 2 Sam 22:5–6; Job 10:21–22; 11:8; 26:5–6; Ps 88:4–7; Ezek 28:8; Jonah 2:3–7). The dead in Sheol were exiled from YHWH (Ps 6:6; 30:10; 88:6, 11–13; Isa 38:18), but they were not tortured like the characters in the *Divine Comedy* of Dante Alighieri (1265–1321). The Hebrews also associated the Valley of Hinnom—Jerusalem’s smoldering garbage dump—with human sacrifice and the worship of divine patrons other than YHWH (2 Kgs 23:10; Jer 32:35).

In granting a mitigation to the desert generation YHWH invokes an authority common to pharaohs—celebrated as the mothers and fathers of Egypt in diplomatic letters (EA 169). “See now that I, and only I, am your divine patron. There is no divine patron besides me. I can take life and give life. I can

wound and I can heal. No one can deliver you from my hand”(32:39). 10 YHWH is both father and mother of the desert generation.

The hymn concludes with a colophon (32:44–47), which identifies Moses and Joshua as the singers of the hymn, the Hebrews in Moab as their audience and a dedication encouraging the Hebrews to be faithful to the instructions in Deuteronomy. When such information appears at the beginning of a manuscript it is a *title* (1:1–5; 4:44–49; 6:1–3); when it appears at the end it is a *colophon*.

A *Hymn of Moses* (32:1–4 + 6–15 + 43) describes YHWH as a divine patron who faithfully feeds and protects the Hebrews while a *Trial of the Desert Generation* (32:5–6+15–42) and a *Trial of Moses* (32:48–52) nested in the hymn describe the Hebrews as a people who demonstrate their unfaithfulness to YHWH by trying to feed and protect themselves (see: 8:1–20). Jan van Eyck, born in the Netherlands, Maaseik Bruges ca. 1390–1441 and his workshop Assistant inscribed *Deut 32:23-24* on the original gilt frames of *The Crucifixion and the Last Judgement*.

(Deut 32:23-24)

²³ I will heap disasters upon them,
spend my arrows against them:
²⁴ wasting hunger,
burning consumption,
bitter pestilence.
The teeth of beasts I will send against them,
with venom of things crawling in the dust.

The Crucifixion; The Last Judgment (ca. 1440–41)

Oil on canvas, transferred from wood (Each 22 1/4 x 7 2/3 in // 56.5 x 19.7 cm)

Philip, Duke of Burgundy, wrote in 1435 that Van Eyck, his court painter, was unequalled in his art and science. Modern critics have praised Van Eyck for his ability to combine observations seemingly viewed through a microscope and a telescope. In the *Crucifixion*, he evokes a remarkable range of emotions among the crowds against a landscape depicting Jerusalem and western European architecture, and his portrayal of nature likely reflects first-hand experience of the Alps, gained on a diplomatic mission in 1426 to Italy and the Holy Lands. His vision appears no less acute in conveying palpable messages of inevitable judgment and hopeful salvation in the *Last Judgment*. The paintings were meant to be experienced simultaneously with the excerpts from Isaiah, Revelations, and Deuteronomy found on the original frames.



Inscriptions:

- on cross, in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin:
IHC·NAZAR[ENVS]·REX·IVDE[ORVM];
- twice, below Christ's hands: *Venite benedi[ct]i p[at]ris mei / Come, ye blessed of my Father (Matt 25:34)*;

- on St Michael's shield and armor: illegible twice, below St Michael's wings: . . . *vos maledi[ct]i i[n]ignem [aeternum?]/. . . ye cursed, into everlasting fire* (Matt 25:41);
- on Death's wings: *CHAOS MAGNV[M]/VMBRA MORTIS//great chaos/shadow of death*;
- on the original gilt frames:

Deut 32:23-24

²³ I will heap disasters upon them,
 spend my arrows against them:
²⁴ wasting hunger,
 burning consumption,
 bitter pestilence.
 The teeth of beasts I will send against them,
 with venom of things crawling in the dust.

Isa 53:6-9, 12

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray;
 we have all turned to our own way,
 and the LORD has laid on him
 the iniquity of us all.
⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
 yet he did not open his mouth;
 like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
 and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
 so he did not open his mouth.
⁸ By a perversion of justice he was taken away.
 Who could have imagined his future?
 For he was cut off from the land of the living,
 stricken for the transgression of my people.
⁹ They made his grave with the wicked
 and his tomb with the rich,
 although he had done no violence,
 and there was no deceit in his mouth.
¹² Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great,
 and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;
 because he poured out himself to death,
 and was numbered with the transgressors;
 yet he bore the sin of many,
 and made intercession for the transgressors.

Rev 20:13

¹³And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged according to what they had done.

Rev 21:3-4

³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
 'See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them;
 they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
 ⁴ he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
 mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away.'