SPRINGS OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF HEBREW AND CLASSICAL CULTURES

JAMES A. ARIETI

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A Comparative Study of Hebrew and Classical Cultures

James A. Arieti

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For my grandchildren Josephine,
Clementine, and Elio

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Preface

A recent theory about the origin of life on earth says that for the first several billion years there were only two kinds of microbes in the global soup—bacteria and archaea, both single-celled organisms. Then, about 1.7 billion years ago, eukaryotes, complex cells with an internal structure and parts that act like organs, and with a genome far more complicated than those in bacteria and archaea, came into existence. What happened, as explained by science writer Ed Yong, is that at some moment a single bacterium entered one of the archaea and instead of being destroyed or consumed became a part of it.[1] The fusion allowed the new entity to grow, develop more genes, and thus take the course of evolution down its current path. Because it was exceedingly unlikely for a bacterium to merge with an archaeon, this event, the theory goes, occurred only once—but once was enough for the birth of eukaryotes.

That ancient prokaryotic forms should merge to form eukaryotes was galactically less likely than that highly developed structures—human cultures—should have come together, fused, and developed into something different from their original forms. But, as in the case of the ancient microbes and archaea, the merging need have happened only once. For *Springs of Western Civilization,* the initial coming together of Greek and Hebraic ways of interpreting the world also needs to have happened just once. The proclivity towards monotheism that seems a native part of Hebrew culture would have to have inspired one sole Israelite to draw connections with the similar monotheistic whispers of Xenophanes and Heraclitus, even if he, or she, heard them in an inchoate, muffled way. This person would have experienced a "eureka moment" of tremendous energy and intellectual fertility and have become the vehicle of what we might call "a cultural singularity." Though Pooh-Bah in *The Mikado* claims that *he* could trace his ancestry "back to a

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protoplasmal primordial atomic globule," the individual who had this flash of intercultural insight can no more be identified than the original eukaryote.

The several billion-year duration of microbial life before the emergence of the eukaryote was amazingly diverse, and, scientists say, many of these innumerable robust ancient entities continue to survive in some form. Yet it was *one* particular bacterium and *one* particular archaeum that fused to make the *one* progenitor eukaryote from which all more complicated life evolved. By analogy, from the myriad cultures of early times, many as small as a tribe or even a clan, it happened that the Greek and Hebraic came together in a significant way to form the West. Just what happened when a Hebraic and a Hellenic soul met in an actual conversation or even in a conversation merely overheard—how and why a wholly new effect came about—is as mysterious as what prompted the ancient bacterium and archaeon to fuse.

What matters most for us, of course, is the here and now, the life form that we are and the life forms we encounter. In the same way, what matters most to us are our present cultures, for it is with them that we must contend. Yet, just as knowledge about ancient microbes and archaea can help us understand health and disease (as many ancient bacteria contribute both to vital bodily processes such as immunocompetence and digestion as well as to mortal illnesses), so an understanding of ancient beliefs, many of which maintain their hold in some form, can help us understand ourselves.

Springs of Western Civilization is about Hebrew and Greek culture—two great sources from which flows much—though definitely not all—of Western culture. The method here will be to examine a number of common matters in the Hebrew Bible and Greek works, most appearing in narrative accounts, that illustrate common themes. These accounts are discussed as pairs. My hope is for this comparative method to discover whether the cultures contrast, and, if they do, how, as well as to discover where they may largely agree. One of the advantages of such comparative studies is that they can sharpen an understanding of each culture. One part of my work will affirm that our understanding of the biblical stories has been deeply influenced by the long tradition of rabbinic and other Jewish commentary, whose authors were themselves suffused with Hellenic culture, and that this tradition of commentary, exegesis, and embellishment has itself helped form our culture. Another part will attempt to show the naked, pre-influenced Hebraic ideas by removing the Hellenic philosophical synthesis that has shaped how we react to the stories.

An introductory chapter takes up the common Hebrew and classical quality of inviting reflection about and argument with written texts. It then shows how when Greek philosophy arose, with its new power of systematic thought and emphasis on logical argumentation, it transformed the intellectual environment wherever it spread. This development may have occurred earlier than usually thought, albeit slowly and imperfectly. From the fourth century

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BCE on, and perhaps even earlier, Hebraic intellectuals adopted the mélange of Platonism, Aristotelianism, and Stoicism that, in the three or four centuries on each side of the Common Era, produced consensus models of God—as perfectly good, powerful, and eternal—and of a human being—as ethical, caring, and warmhearted. There also developed in this blending the belief that the writings of Plato were literally true—a misunderstanding that arose from a failure to recognize his playful, metaphorical techniques of composition. Among the most influential extrapolations derived from this mistaken reading of Plato were beliefs in a stark separation of the spiritual and the corporeal, the existence of a mystical means of obtaining a glimpse into the world of the divine, and the attribution to Torah of a timeless, eternal authority analogous to that of the forms in the so-called Platonic "World of Being."

In the next five chapters, the book takes up, mostly through parallel *narratives*, a significant number of common topics in the Hebrew Bible and classical literature, an approach in part borrowed from Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*. Among these topics are rainbows, the lengthening of days and nights, the destruction of trees, talking animals, means of persuasion, human perfectibility, friendship, induced forgetting, distrust of motives, reconciliation, fratricide, mad curses, rash vows, adoption and suicide, revealed laws, resistance to wrongdoing, rescuing children, inherited guilt, and battles between deities. The book differs from Auerbach's work in that instead of examining particular texts for their style of literary *representation* of reality, it examines passages for insight into the diverse classical and biblical understandings of nature, ethics, religion, family issues, and politics. Distinct from other works on Judaism and Hellenism is the inclusion of matters that are not usually associated with ethnic and religious identity. Again, discussion of the parallel passages tries to tease out from them what is essentially Hebraic or Greek. The method is to discuss each passage apart from its pair, then in comparison with it, with the aim, finally, of drawing a conclusion.

A final chapter expands on the implications of the previous studies. It observes that the Bible, lacking classical literature's formal rules of composition and genre, was not constrained to identify motives and causes, nor to present a rigorously logical progression in its narratives. This freedom changes when the rabbis adopt, even against their conscious will, the Greek preoccupation for causes, the natural order, and genre. The conclusion also discusses the shared cultural values of education, memory, and self-knowledge—all essential for a good life. The last section of the chapter revisits Plato and the ancient world's response to his claim that literature corrupts—a response that classified the genres and formulated their rules, allegorized offensive parts of stories by discovering in them a hidden virtuous meaning, and developed the figure of the mentsh, glimpses of which had appeared in biblical and classical texts but which emerged full-scale and worthy of

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emulation when the philosophical model of God combined with its ethical human implications to create narratives of good people engaging in good actions. This was perhaps the most salutary effect of the Western ideal that formed from the merged outpouring of the separate springs.

NOTE

1. Yong explains the theory for laypersons very clearly in two online articles, "The Unique Merger That Made You (and Ewe, and Yew): All Sophisticated Life on the Planet Earth May Owe Its Existence to One Freakish Event," (http://nautil.us/issue/10/mergers—acquisitions/the-unique-merger-that-made-you-and-ewe-and-yew) and "A Break in the Search for the Origin of Complex Life: A Group of Newly Discovered Microbes, Named after Norse Gods, May Belong to The Lineage from Which We Evolved" (http://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2017/01/our-origins-in-asgard/512645/?utm_source=eb).

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Introduction

LOGOS AND *DAVAR*

The meanings of *logos* range from "word" and "reason" to "argument." For the Greeks, *logos* is the chief quality that separates human beings from the other animals. It is, Isocrates says, what we use to persuade ourselves and others. The Hebrew for "word," *davar,*[1] does not bear so glamorous a load of senses, though, as described below, it has acquired some of the glamor from its use as a translation of *logos*.[2] When Isaiah says, "Come let us reason together" (Isaiah 1:18), he does not say so in the Hebrew text but in the King James version. The Hebrew verb translated as "let us reason together" is unrelated to *davar*.[3] In other translations, the word is rendered as "Come, let us reach an understanding" (*The Jewish Study Bible*); "Come, let us talk about these things" (*New Century Version*); and "Come now, let us argue it out" (*New Revised Standard Version*).

Logos: From the Bones of Patroclus to Literature

The term *logos* was already fraught with complexity and ambiguity in classical times; its meaning became more complicated when it was linked with metaphysics in the Platonic tradition and still more when it was connected to theology in Philo and the Church Fathers. *Logos* covers a wide range of ideas for which there is no single consolidating term in modern languages. The Hebrew *davar* has received a great deal of attention and has enjoyed enormous prestige because it happens to be the word that, in some senses, is closest to the Greek *logos.* The term *logos*, rather late in its history, came to be infused by the disciples of Plato with a meaning that it could never shake off, and this phenomenon permanently altered the intellectual development of the

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West. We shall devote more attention to the Greek *logos* than to the Hebrew *davar* since the Hebrew word may be best understood in counterpoint to it.

Logos seems to be connected with a root *leg-*, as in the verb *lego,* normally translated as "to say." The verb first appears in this sense in Hesiod's *Theogony*, when the Muses tell Hesiod (*Theogony* 27): "We know how to say many false things similar to true things." Thus the very first surviving use of the root of *logos*, the word from which we derive "logic," expresses the idea of telling lies.[4]

Lego appears earlier than Hesiod, for we find it in Homer, but with a different sense, for it signifies something like our phrase "count off." There is a difference between *counting* and *counting off.* When we *count,* we have a finite number of objects and we assign a number to each. For example, I may ask, "How many students are in the room today?" To find out, I begin at some point, with one student, and assign him a number, the number one. Then, proceeding in accordance with the sequence of the natural numbers, I assign each student in turn one of the sequence of consecutive integers. When I have made a one-to-one correspondence for every student in the room, I stop, and the last number in the sequence is the number of students. When, however, I *count off*, I start with a finite number of things and then separate some smaller number of them. I may wish to count off the number of students wearing glasses, or the number with grade point averages higher than 3, or some other category. Thus we find Achilles saying (*Iliad* 23.239), "Let us *count off* the bones of Patroclus." Out of a finite number of bones of dead warriors, Achilles wishes to separate the bones of one particular warrior. So we can see that the root sense of *logos* is a *selection by enumeration.*

Let us now trace the development of this root sense to the term "literature," which is derived from the plural *logoi,*[5] to see how "saying false and true things" falls into the same genus as *selecting*. Let us start with the root sense of "selection by enumeration," that is, "counting off." Clearly we can count off many things. Let us linger on the one from the *Iliad,* counting off the bones of Patroclus, and, in that bare minimum of a man, his bones, seek clues to understanding literature.

After the battle outside Troy, the Greeks had many dead warriors, and in accordance with their custom, they cremated the bodies. After the cremation, Achilles wishes to give the bones of Patroclus special treatment. Hence he wishes to single out these bones, to pick them from among the rest. We can see implicit here one of the fundamental senses of *logos:* a selection of a picked part of a larger number of similar items for a special purpose.[6]

Any act of counting off presupposes a knowledge of both genus and species, and also of the individual substances that make up the species and the genus. In short, those who use *logos* must have a "principle of selection," and any principle of selection automatically implies a knowledge of genus

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and species. There was a genus of bones, then, of the Greek warriors. All these bones fell into certain natural species, that is, into the species of bones belonging to each individual warrior, one of whom was Patroclus.

Just as one can count off bones, so one can count off events. Any complex action will consist of many parts; and a large complex action, like a war, will consist of a large number of parts. What Achilles was to the bones of Patroclus, so an historian is to the set of events he is describing. Such, for example, was Herodotus to the events of the Persian Wars. First Herodotus collected those events, separating and counting off the events of the Wars from other kinds of events. Now the Persian Wars were an action, that is, they had a beginning, a middle, and an end, just as did the body of Patroclus. Each was a whole made of parts. But the act of counting off does not imply just enumeration: as we have seen, underlying the counting is a sense of genus and species, that is, a knowledge of *kind* and *quality* as well as *quantity.* Just as Achilles had to know one kind of bone from another, so Herodotus had to know one kind of event from another. And just as Achilles had to know Patroclus' bones from the bones of another warrior, so Herodotus had to know the events of the Persian Wars from the events of another war.

Once the process of selection is over, there can be a tallying, a telling—and those words are very close in meaning. "Tellers" in a bank are the persons who have "counted off" a sum of money. The persons who have "counted off" may choose to "recount," that is, to "tell over" what they have done. In doing so, they will not simply assign numbers to each of the parts; instead, since the parts differ, they will use words. Numbers are analogous to words: but where numbers tell us only the quantity, words tell us the quality. Numbers, of course, proceed in a natural consecutive system. By implication, words will do the same. But the order of presentation in numbers is fixed: one must begin with 1, then go to 2, 3, 4, and so forth. The order of words is more flexible than that of numbers; and in that flexibility lie what we call rhetoric and poetry. Furthermore, if one is enumerating, one cannot omit any number in the sequence of natural numbers. But, in language, one may choose to omit certain parts and to stress others. For example, the weight of Abraham Lincoln at birth is a fact, a part of his life; but though a biographer of Lincoln might include the fact of his weight at birth, we would not expect an historian to do so.

The selection of the parts to "recount," to "tell over," "to tell" ought to follow the order of importance. Abraham Lincoln had many qualities; but not all of them were equally important. The story about Lincoln nursing a drunkard and tending to him all night despite his companion's urging him to abandon the man reveals something about Lincoln's good heart, and a knowledge of that quality is essential in judging a person.[7] Lincoln may also have had—let us imagine—the habit of scratching his left ear when puzzled, but it would

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be difficult to argue that this habit was an important quality of the man. The historian, who (as Aristotle tells us) deals with what actually happened, can affect our judgment of a person by singling out for stress one quality over another. In *War and Peace,* Tolstoy seems to give inordinate importance to Napoleon's habit of tweaking the ear of an interlocutor at certain moments of a conversation. It would appear to be true that Napoleon did have this habit.[8] Tolstoy saw it as important and stressed the fact repeatedly. Aristotle perhaps would have thought Tolstoy silly, and it is true that if one read only Tolstoy on Napoleon, one would never know that Napoleon looms as large in the history of Europe as he does.

We can begin to see the connection between selection and lying: no historian gives, or can give, a complete enumeration of all the parts of a large action. Necessarily he must *choose* and *pick* and *select*—all actions at the root meaning of *logos.* And in the act of selecting, the historian necessarily stresses those actions that he picks and plays down those that he omits. Hence he can color our whole conception of a person or an action by his selection. We can see this problem in our everyday lives: if we have been to a party or a meeting or a class or a lecture, and if a friend has not attended, the friend may ask us what happened. Dependent on our liking or disliking the event we have been asked to describe, we will select parts to suit the effect that we wish to produce. That effect may be one of accuracy or it may be distorted. If we elect for distortion—and most of us do—that distortion will be essentially accurate, though exaggerated, like a caricature, or it will misrepresent. If it misrepresents, it will be a lie, at least to the degree that it intentionally misrepresents. And we may misrepresent either what the speaker said or the tone of voice and attitude with which he spoke, or both, that is, we may distort either the content or the style or both. When our distortions are good—that is, when they express the essential nature of the original—we call them artistic. And we measure the artistic success of the imitation by the way in which it corresponds to the original in its flow, its rhythm, its sequence, its development, its climax, and its conclusion.

From the root sense of *logos* as "counting off" come two primary fields, mathematics and language. In the phrase "rhyme or reason" or its more usual version in the negative, "neither rhyme nor reason," neither term means what is normally thought; but when the term is understood correctly the phrase illustrates the meaning of *logos.* "Rhyme" means "rhythm" or "meter"; and "reason" means "number." Hence what has neither rhyme nor reason has no rhythm, no number, no meter, no way of being measured. Rhythm is a necessary part of literature; it is that measurable and varied flow of sound that gives the sense charm; it is the beat to which our rational minds move when they are moved by emotion. And just as sound has rhythm and meter and measure, so does sense. In both we see *logos* at work. Although the mathematical sense of

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logos is most conspicuous in rhythm, that same mathematical sense operates in the content as well as in the style. Let me take one example—what is called metaphor. A metaphor is a proportion, and "proportion" is a mathematical term. Now a mathematical proportion consists of two ratios—and the Greek word for "ratio" is *logos,* just as the Greek word for proportion is *analogos*, or, in its noun-form, *analogia.* Thus 1:2 :: 2:4. Analogously, as a numerical proportion is to numbers, so a literary proportion is to literature: a metaphor is a literary proportion, a literary analogy. As evening is to day, so old age is to life. Aristotle says that to have a gift for metaphor is the greatest possession of a poet, for its possession cannot come from anybody else but is a sign of natural genius (*Poetics* 1459 a8). To make good metaphors, he concludes, is to behold similarities. The similarities are analogous similarities, between two ratios taken from different genera. Thus, in the example just cited, a day and a life are the two genera: each genus has parts, and as one of the parts of the day is evening, so—analogously—one of the parts of life is old age. A metaphor consists of transferring one of those parts of one genus into the other, so that we can speak of *the evening of life*, or *the old age of day.* This, of course, is a simple example. We can find very remote similarities, as when Donne compares two lovers to a compass ("A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" 25–28), or when Dryden says (grotesquely) of Lord Hastings' smallpox: "Each little Pimple had a Tear in it,/To wail the fault its rising did commit" ("Upon the Death of Lord Hastings" 59–60).

Perhaps it will be worthwhile here to offer as a tentative definition of *logos* this: *Logos is a rational understanding of a whole as manifested in speech.* We may picture Achilles as saying of Patroclus' bones, "Here's the thigh-bone, here's the shin-bone," and so forth, until he had made a complete enumeration of those parts to which he wishes to give special treatment. So, too, we may picture Herodotus saying, as he looks at the mass of data in and around the Persian Wars, "Here's the story of Croesus, here's the story of the Battle of Marathon," and so forth, until he has made a complete enumeration of the parts to which he wishes to give special treatment. Each intended the special treatment of the part to stand for, to express, the essence of the whole. As the special honor given to Patroclus was to stand for the honor given to all the dead, so the special honor of the Persian Wars was to stand for the special honor given to humankind, from whom have come so many great and wonderful works.

In a way, each man—Achilles and Herodotus—is a kind of illusionist, for each conveys a sense of the whole by means of a part. Thus we might say of a great quarterback in football, "What an arm!" and by means of the part, the arm, we wish to convey a sense of the whole.

I have said that *logos* is a rational understanding of a whole as manifested in speech. We need to see that we have here two parts—content and style.

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And we need to keep in mind also that speech may exist either in the form of a voice or of writing.

Now Aristotle distinguished history from poetry thus: history, he says, deals with what actually happened; poetry deals with the sort of thing that *might* happen. He uses this fact to argue that poetry is more philosophical than history, for history tells us what the actual Xerxes or Abraham Lincoln did; poetry tells us what a certain kind of man would do (Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451 b1–12). Thus the characters Orestes or Clytemnestra whom we see in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* are not the actual Orestes or Clytemnestra: they are, instead, certain kinds of people; and, insofar as they are a certain kind, a species or a genus, they are universal and hence more philosophical.[9]

Logos, then, deals with what might be the case as well as with what is actually the case. In each, it is *logos* at work; and it is on the basis of this common element of *logos* that history and poetry and political speeches fall into the same genus. A literary critic is primarily concerned with the effect produced by the principle of selection, whether the writer is dealing with what actually happened or with what might have happened, that is, whether the writer is writing history or poetry. Writers can produce many effects, and many of these are classifiable as "emotions" or "feelings" (*pathê*), and emotions can be brought about by what is actually the case or by what might be the case.

Literature, then, is the result of counting off. It is the construction of a whole, or the illusion of a whole, in words that are analogous either to what is the case or to what might be the case, to the actual or to the potential. Now "potential" has several senses: a thing might be probable or only possible. In general, literature, when it describes the potential rather than the actual, aims at the species that is the probable, or—if you will—the plausible. We must, of course, be convinced by our author that what he "counts off" and "tells" us is the sort of thing that might happen and probably would happen. Otherwise the author will be both unreal and untrue—a fatal double defect in any work of literature. We do not mind when a work of literature is unreal, provided that it is true to type or true to nature; but we do not like books that are neither. The creators of the comic strips *Spiderman* and *Superman* have constant problems here.

So a writer creates a whole that is analogous to what is real or probable, what is true to fact or true to type. He does so by selecting details from either the world of the real or the world of the probable and then assembling them into a verbal whole. The critic comes along and, as the writer analyzed either the world of the real or the world of the probable, so the critic analyzes the analogous world built by the writer. The critic separates that analogous world into its parts and studies the relationship of the parts to each other and to the whole. Just as a builder assembles his materials and then puts them together, so the buyer looks at the assembled materials—the house, for example—and

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sees that some parts are better than others. The bricks may have been first class but the lumber poor or vice versa. To the degree that some of the materials are inferior, the product as a whole will be inferior. One brick may be good, the next poor: when the builder connects them, the connection will be poor to the degree that the poor brick by its very nature does not allow for a good connection. In the same way, the critic studies the materials used by the writer and studies their connections. After doing so, he can pronounce judgment on the parts and on the whole.

Greek *Logos* and Hebrew *Davar*

In the Hellenic world from Homer on, a distinction was made between word and deed. The distinction comes up first in the *Iliad,* when Achilles' old tutor Phoenix explains that he was hired to educate Achilles to be both a speaker of words and a doer of deeds.[10] As time passed, the two aims were separated and developed into the polar lives of contemplation aloof from the world's problems and of practical engagement with them. To be adept at both seemed excessive, an unrealistic attempt "at having it all," and a person had to choose one or the other. Aristotle, through most of the *Nicomachaean Ethics,* seems undecided about whether a life of virtuous activity is best or a life of contemplation, though, in the end, true to the Platonic tradition, he decides that the contemplative is the more divine (*Nicomachaean Ethics* 1177 a11–1179 a32).

During the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, a number of complex philosophical questions seemed hopelessly mired in confusion. Two of the most significant concerned the nature of the world and the nature of knowledge. These questions were intimately connected. The Pre-Socratic Parmenides had persuasively shown by the power of his logic that motion was impossible—a notion that was self-evidently false since it was in violent contradiction of the world we experience at every moment. Heraclitus, with nearly equal force, had shown that everything is constantly in motion, that it is impossible to walk into the same river twice, or, as his disciple corrected, "even once" (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1010a15). If knowledge requires a fixed state and everything is in constant motion, how is it possible to know anything? If there are no fixed states, how can there be any knowledge?

When Plato entered the discussion, he proposed a solution so complete and so beautiful that it altered the course of the western tradition. What Plato saw was that the reality we observe with our senses and what we conceive in our minds are not the same. We can see the difference easily in geometry. When we draw triangles or circles on a tablet, our drawings are images of the shapes we have in our minds, but the shapes on the tablet are not so perfect as the ones in our minds. This disparity suggested to Plato that there were two realms, one of things apprehended by the mind—things like geometric shapes

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and abstract ideas—and one of things apprehended by the senses—things like drawings, water, people. For things of the physical world, which Plato called the "World of Becoming," everything is in a state of change, everything flows, just as Heraclitus had said. For things of the intelligible world of the mind, which Plato called the "World of Being," things are unchanging and universal, just as Parmenides had said. This, in brief, is Platonic dualism, one of the most influential ideas of intellectual history.

Just as Einstein's theory of relativity was found to have extended applications in many areas that it did not originally address, so too did Plato's dualism. Though Greeks were "officially" polytheistic, many had long been troubled by the way in which stories and paintings of mischievous and capricious gods seemed incompatible with the regal moral stature of divinity. Xenophanes spoke for these individuals when he complained about the representations and advanced a conception of a deity very much like the Hebrew God, "One god, greatest among gods and men, not the equal of mortals in form or mind" (Xenophanes, fr. 23). Plato's hypothesis of a World of Being seemed just the right habitat for such a deity: he could reside in the intelligible world of the permanent and unchanging.[11]

Human minds, like the divine mind, are capable of grasping a bit of the unchanging intelligible, as is clear from an ability to learn geometry. Among Plato's disciples, *metaphysics*, the branch of philosophy that sought an understanding of what was "beyond physics," became a quest for the divine, for the eternal. They took their cue from those dialogues in which Plato has a soul, if it belonged to a human who was good in life and undertook the proper preparations by studying philosophy, enter the World of Being after the death of its temporary body. In the third and later centuries BCE, seekers of eternal peace found in the schools of philosophy and the increasingly popular mystery religions a mechanism for entering this divine spiritual world.[12]

The word *logos* was first used in reference to a set of coherent thought by Heraclitus, who said, "Listening not to me but to the *logos,* it is wise to agree that all things are one" (fr. 22B50). Whether or not Plato himself suggests this sort of use for the fixed state of knowledge in the World of Being,[13] it was certainly used in this way by the Middle Platonists and the Stoics.[14]

Greek philosophy, with its use of the word *logos,* meets the Hebraic world in the person of Philo, a Jew living in Alexandria from about 30 BCE to 40 CE. Philo's "eureka moment" came when he noticed that there were passages in Plato and the Bible that seemed to be preternaturally compatible. This discovery became the guiding principle of his enormous creative output. Philo observes that when the Book of Genesis describes the creation of man, it does not say that "man is the image of God," but that "man was made *after* the image of God."[15] Thus God first made an image of himself—and Philo identifies this image as *logos*.[16] Because of this doctrine in Philo and its adoption

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by the writer of the Gospel of John, Philo received the highest acclaim from such fathers of the Church as Eusebius and Jerome.[17] According to Jerome, there was a witty Greek proverb about Philo: "Either Plato philonized, or Philo platonized" (Jerome, *On Illustrious Men* 11).

For Philo the Platonist, the contest for supremacy between the contemplative and active lives was unequivocally decided in favor of contemplation. Indeed, God himself contemplates what he has created and bids human beings to follow his example in contemplation—and what God contemplated was *logos*.[18] The next step, which took the original phrasing of Plato much further than he dreamed, came in the Gospel of John, when, with the incarnation of the son of God, "the word was made flesh."

This radical sense of "word" inspired scholars in modern times to find ancient antecedents for the notion of a hypostasized "word" in earlier Jewish thought, in early rabbinic literature, and in works included in the Apocrypha. Some of these efforts were undertaken by Jewish scholars who wished to enhance God's power by making his word equal to his deed: he need only speak of something for it to be brought into existence. Others were undertaken by Christian scholars who perhaps felt that their beliefs would be buttressed if they could identify Jewish antecedents.[19] In the early to middle part of the twentieth century there were attempts to show by linguistic analysis that the Hebrew word *davar* meant "a dynamic event in which [an] inner reality becomes manifest,"[20] or that in *davar* there is no distinction between the word and "the matter described,"[21] or that *davar* could be used for something as solidly tangible as a head of cattle.[22] James Barr showed that all these theories were based on linguistic errors, exaggerations, or other misstatements and rested on an interpretive framework that manipulates the etymological possibilities to arrive at the conclusions the authors want.[23] I should like to add that in these and in other cases as well, a look at the evidence shows that *davar* is used metaphorically.[24]

The "butterfly effect," the idea that a small change in initial conditions can result in large differences later, is, I suspect, what results in the very different cultural values placed on *logos* and *davar.* The critical initial condition here was the happenstance that as a young man Plato was inspired by Socrates. Plato's association with Socrates altered the ambition of the young man from becoming a playwright to becoming a philosopher.[25] As a philosopher Plato wrote dialogues through which he tried to create in readers the same inspiration he had felt, for dialogue was the genre most capable of recreating the *experience* of Socrates and of his way of life.[26] Plato succeeded. To read a Platonic dialogue for the first time is to fall in love with philosophical argumentation. Many of the dialogues are of such sublime beauty and allure, with so radiant a charisma, that they might appear a form of divine revelation. As a result, generations of disciples studied and re-studied them, probed every

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word for its deep meaning, and ended up allegorizing them, taking a metaphor, a hyperbole, a parable, and a comedic parody and assembling them into a system far from anything Plato himself could have intended. Later, Philo and other Jewish writers discerned a consonance between Plato's language and the Bible's, and their interpretations were assimilated into Christianity. These were the "butterfly effects" that defined the course of our history, and they account for how the words *davar* and *logos* became wedded to each other.

LOGOS, HUMAN NATURE, AND READING BIBLICAL TEXTS

Aristotle distinguishes two types of rationality: obedience to reason and independent thought (*Nicomachaean Ethics* 1098a3–6). Carrying out instructions—a recipe for beef bourguignon or the route to Chicago—is obedience to reason; figuring out something for oneself is independent thought. While both are good, independent thought, for Aristotle, is the higher good. When it comes to understanding texts, we may wonder with which form of rationality *we* are to confront them. Are we to trust or reject what is said, or are we to question it and argue with it? Is the text a diorama in an old-fashioned museum—a thing to be studied, admired, but not touched? Or is it like an object in a modern-day museum, which bears a sign crying out "Please touch!" and asserts unambiguously that people learn by engaging an object?

The Platonic dialogues wore such a sign inviting—nay, *insisting*—that readers tussle with them.[27] The postbiblical Jewish tradition is double-minded about its texts on the question of engagement. On the one hand, the Bible is venerated as something holy, a work not to be touched even when read in the synagogue (readers make use of a *yad*, a silver pointer for following their place in the scrolls). If a copyist makes a single error in a section of the Torah while transcribing it, the entire section must be re-done. When it is necessary to dispose of a Torah scroll, one must bury it ritually inside an earthen vessel in a cemetery.[28] Aside from the treatment of the physical Torah, there is the reverence toward its contents as a divine revelation, every word of which is true.[29] Hence, even in obscure or seemingly impossible cases, the devout have sought to validate its claims. This has occurred even when there have been apparent mathematical inaccuracies. Rabbi Nehemiah, a Jewish mathematician of the second century CE, was just such a devout reader when he reconciled the correct value of pi as (about) 3 1/7 with a biblical description of a circular bowl in the Temple which yielded a value of 3 for the ratio of its circumference to its diameter.[30]

On the other hand, for the past two thousand years or so, the Jewish people have made Talmud study a central focus of their religious lives. The Talmud

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is a compilation of arguments among over a thousand rabbis that took place over nearly seven centuries, from about 200 BCE to about 500 CE.[31] A great many of the arguments concern interpretation of passages from the Bible.[32] What is recorded are the *arguments* among rabbis. An analogy would be a trial transcript with a record of the opening and closing arguments of the opposing lawyers but with no record whatsoever of the jury's verdict or the judge's sentence. The Talmud provides no answers, just arguments. Argumentative motifs run throughout the various subjects, and readers can discern distinct personalities and approaches. After studying the Talmud, a person realizes that what is of the utmost importance is not what this or that rabbi said, but the dynamic process of argumentation. Engaging one's mind on the vast multitude of topics is the holy enterprise. During the Middle Ages, to be sure, summaries of the Talmud were made and commentaries on the commentaries that offered conclusions,[33] but they were more consistent with the medieval fashion of creating anthologies than with the argumentative principle of Talmudic study. Perhaps, too, they were an attempt in a generally Catholic world to offer a Jewish analogue to the authoritative framework of Catholic beliefs in the catechism. This sort of fixed dogma is just what one does not find in the Talmud.[34] Even arguments that appear to be refuted are part of the holiness of the Talmud because the holiness is the *process* of argument.[35]

Let us accept, at least for now, that what constitutes the core of human nature, *logos,* is a high-level ability to reason.[36] As mentioned above, this *logos* may manifest itself in obedience to someone else's thought or in one's independent thought. Let us set aside for now what it means to accept what someone else says about the Bible or any other holy text and instead take up what it is to think independently, to deliberate, alone or with others, about it. Deliberation is, of course, a form of argumentation—it is to engage in a dialectic of question and answer; it is to seek truth on the assumption that truth exists, that truth is consistent with reason, and that inconsistency, or contradiction, is the surest sign available that a conclusion is not true.

Reading independently often forces a judgment on the conduct of the holiest figures in the Bible. It means examining the Bible as one would any other text, a process that includes scrutinizing the human characters as *human beings* and making judgments about them. The Bible, by design or by the accidents of its transmission or both, demands such deliberative examination.[37]

There are stories in which the Bible's protagonists behave so abominably that one wonders why anyone would wish to name babies after them. Samson is violent, a drunk, and a womanizer. What parent would say, "Son, I want you to be just like Samson"? Jonah appears to be a selfish person who cares more about his status than about the lives of countless other human beings

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("and also much cattle," as God tells Jonah). Jephthah, a fine soldier, is a rash and superstitious man whose thoughtless vow destroys his daughter. David is a brave lad and a fine marksman with a slingshot, but he is also a negligent parent, an adulterer, and a murderer. Noah becomes a drunk and curses a child who, in the biblical account, seems to have done no wrong.[38] Abraham, to protect himself, tells his wife, with a blatant lack of chivalry, to pretend to be his sister, and thus enables others to have sexual intercourse with her.[39] Jacob cheats his brother and deceives his father. Jacob's sons sell their brother into slavery. How should we respond to these heroes?

Well, perhaps we should respond critically, and perhaps we are expected, even *required*, to do so. Instead of saying, "What these people did is right because God favored these people or because God allowed it," we should say, "The Bible shows the bad actions that its characters performed. But *we* are not to approve of these actions. We must think, 'Abraham did not behave well here. This is what he *should* have done. If God did not stop him from acting, it is because people have a choice of what to do, and the Bible shows people acting well or badly and what happens when they do." In other words, the Bible invites us to join the argument—the *logos*—and to engage our own *logos*, our faculty of reason. It asks us to enter into disputation with Samson and Jonah and with other readers to find meaning. If the meaning be elusive, it demands that we formulate hypotheses, and if the hypotheses be inconsistent, that we form alternative hypotheses. It prods us to argue with God, too, and, as if to validate this point, it offers us examples of those who do.

Though some parts of the Bible were surely composed for specific audiences, we need not even know *when* they were written to discern their authors' motives and to apply the lessons to ourselves. For example, in the Book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar orders three Jews in his government who have refused to bow down before his statue to be burned in a furnace. The furnace is so hot that the soldiers who throw them into the furnace are incinerated, but the three Jews themselves suffer no harm. When Nebuchadnezzar sees what has happened, he praises these men and declares that anyone who blasphemes the God of Israel will be torn limb from limb (Daniel 3:29). The lesson for readers is an *argumentum a fortiori*, "If even the despicable idol worshipper Nebuchadnezzar could recognize God, so can you."[40] In short, the lesson is for the reader, instructing him to reverence God.

Even when the lesson of a passage is not clear, there is a holy experience in deliberating about the passage. For example, the very brief story of the binding of Isaac has been phenomenally successful in stimulating interpretations. But it would be a reckless individual who said that his interpretation and his alone has hit the bull's-eye of truth. As in the case of the Talmud, it is the *process* of thinking intelligently about the story and its meaning that is significant, for doing so requires us to think about God and the kind of deity

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who would make such a request, and about promises and sacrifices and trust and obedience and inheritance and contracts.

The Bible's myriad imponderables compel us to enact our human capacity for thought. Classical literature holds puzzles, too, and the whole marvelous business of classical scholarship is akin to Talmud study: the theories about the Greek and Roman writings and the archaeological remains are secular Midrashim—attempts to make sense of the evidence by fitting it into a comprehensible scheme. In this way, by recognizing that what constitutes the holy and the intellectually resplendent is the *activity* of *logos*, we can perhaps see how the biblical and the Classical will blend to form the West.

In this book I shall not try to trace the ultimate possible sources for the topics taken up. I take as an axiom that people lived before the Bible was composed and that its authors lived and thought in a world where cultures had existed and been influenced by both friendly neighbors and hostile invaders. Locating the absolute origin of human culture, a culture that was itself influential but was not at all influenced by any other—the "Big Bang" of culture or the "uninfluenced influencer" of culture, as it were, is no more possible than it is to know absolutely whether the various subatomic particles, quarks like "charm" and "strange" and leptons like "muons" and "neutrinos," are themselves agglomerations of even smaller particles. I asked a colleague, a professor of physical chemistry, whether it is possible to write chemical formulas like that of sugar—$C_{12}H_{22}O_{11}$—using subatomic particles, instead of the chemical symbols for carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen. He replied that, yes, it is possible, but it would not help chemists do chemistry, for in our present world we cannot manipulate subatomic particles. By analogy—and *only* analogy—I would say that it is not necessary to trace the origin of every idea, how Plato came up with this idea, or how an Egyptian or Babylonian or Sumerian thinker did. For my project, I shall look at the larger elements as they chiefly informed the West, and leave to others the work of determining the precise particles that contributed to the grosser elements. A work on long-lived culture, I think Aristotle would agree, does not allow for a high degree of precision.

REINTERPRETING THE WORLD

When people began to ask questions about the world, they thought about causes in mythological terms. The first kind of cause that they could make sense of was, perhaps, that which originated in themselves, their own motivations. If *they* were moved to drink because they were thirsty, they came to understand that others could drink for the same reason too. At first, motives were the initiating cause that made most sense to people, for every individual

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was aware of his own motives. When people began wondering about non-animate things, why the winds blew or the rains fell, they seem to have attributed a will and motives to natural elements. Self-generated motion, prompted by a will, appears a characteristic of living things, and because forces of nature also appeared to be self-moving, they were understood as living things with a will.[41] Since people lived in separate communities, their precise views of the gods differed as much as their different words for "water" and "earth," and, in general, polytheistic people in the ancient world as much took for granted the existence of different divine schemata as they did different languages. Hebraic culture, with its monotheistic tendencies,[42] was an exception in terms of the number of deities. The Hebrew God, moreover, was not some talented Pooh-Bah, a wearer of many hats at the same time so that he was Zeus, Poseidon, Aphrodite, Apollo, Aeolus, and the other gods rolled into one. Those gods seem to have been made somehow from the heavens and earth, but the God of the Bible made the heavens and earth, and later also devised a single system of laws that defined the proper conduct for his chosen human beings among themselves and toward him. Though a Greek god may have dictated local laws and have been devoted to a local community, the differences in degree with the Hebrew deity were so great as to constitute what the world has recognized as a difference in kind. Still, in terms of some basic attributes, like deathlessness and powers far greater than those of human beings, the deities were similar.

What changed everything, at least in the West, was the confidence that commenced in the sixth century BCE in parts of the Greek world in the efficacy of logic both to explain the world and to direct human behavior. Earlier, in Greek epic poetry, particularly in Homer, men engaged in debate with one another and composed speeches that depended,[43] at least for their intended effect, on the persuasiveness of arguments that employed a quasi or rudimentary logic of rhetoric.[44] Later, with Greek thinkers like Parmenides and Xenophanes, logical arguments about the continuous division of matter and motion and sardonically cogent protests against the unethical behavior of the gods of poetry startled the world with their breathtaking potency,[45] a development parallel in the intellectual domain to the sudden awesome effects of the Industrial Revolution on manufacturing and agriculture. Then, in the fifth century, when Greeks saw the triumph of their small army and navy over the multitudinous Persian army and navy as resulting from their cleverness and their coherently planned strategy, in short, from their systematic *rationality*, the Greek intellectual community immediately applied this passionate embrace of reasoning and of what we now call formal logic to mathematics, medicine, politics, rhetoric, science, philosophy, city-planning, and religion. The hub of this remarkable historical change was Athens, which gloried in the luster of being the major agent of the victory over Persian by its

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intelligence. As Jonathan M. Hall has argued, the myriad Greek cities, until then each with its own culture and attached to one another only through common athletic competition and a few PanHellenic poets, were proud to accept the cultural authority of Athens.[46] In religion, resourceful readers who shared Xenophanes' and Plato's moral scruples yet wished to save the beautiful texts of antiquity from the damning charge that they taught immorality, began the long intellectual project of metamorphosing Zeus into a monotheistic deity and interpreting the scandalous behavior of the gods as metaphors, or allegories, or as caricatures of historical figures.[47]

The Greeks' electric discovery of the power of reasoning and of rationalizing the world, which took place in post- or late-biblical times, spread throughout the ancient Mediterranean world and, among intellectuals, resulted in a growing adoption of monotheism.[48] What was the effect of the Hellenic Enlightenment on Hebrew culture? Was it influenced by it? If so, was there a price to pay?[49]

INFLUENCE

Influence is not like pornography: you *don't* always know it when you see it. It appears to be a biological fact that we carry a genetic inheritance from common ancestors who lived hundreds of millions, even billions, of years ago, yet without biologists to inform us of our distant cousins, we would never know we had them. Nor is the influence of Albert Einstein apparent to most people who locate a pizzeria on a GPS. Intercultural influences *are* sometimes glaring, as when we find a MacDonald's in Istanbul; but sometimes they are subtle, as when our language changes by the gradual adoption of foreign words. Sometimes an alien cultural influence is welcome, as when we adopt a new fashion or cuisine. Sometimes it is decidedly unwelcome, so unwelcome as to create bitter hostility and contempt, as when in ancient times Romans like Cato convinced themselves and their fellow citizens that Greek ways were thoroughly pernicious and corrupt.[50]

Among scholars of the last century there was a good deal of discussion about the influence of classical and Hebrew cultures on one another. Most who have written on the subject agree with the cautionary note of Arnaldo Momigliano, even as they insisted on the correctness of their views: "The historians of Judaism, or for that matter Hellenism, are seldom prepared to admit the full extent of our ignorance, which is only partly due to the paucity and contradictions of the evidence." The problem, Momigliano explained, is "separating facts from legends, [and] grasping the meaning of the facts."[51] The principal battle lines consisted and still consist of those who find evidence of influence and those who discount or reject the evidence and insist

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that if there was influence, it was limited to matters of little consequence. Now as Aristotle reminds us, the same level of precision is not available in all subjects (*Nicomachaean Ethics* 194b 12–29). When it comes to tracing genetic links, biologists can point to the similar chemistry of kindred genes, and the degree of certainty can be very high. But when it comes to cultures, it is always possible that apparent similarities arose independently, a phenomenon known in biology as "convergent evolution"—what happens, for example, when hummingbirds (in the western hemisphere) and sunbirds (in Asia) look very much alike and to an amateur birdwatcher might seem related, though they are actually not the same species and are no more closely related than birds generally.

When cultures interact it would be astonishing if influences were evenly reciprocal. We would expect a more assertive, luxurious, or glamorous culture to exert a more dominant influence on the other. Responses to cultural invasions range from complete acceptance to complete rejection. Some individuals might envy invaders and try to be like them in every way; others might be willing to accept foreign influences they deem inconsequential; others, fearing "a slippery slope," might wish to reject the slightest hint of them altogether. These responses could apply to the introduction of foreign terms, foods, styles, systems of morality, music, religion, and so on. In some places, rulers have embraced or rejected the foreign ways or have established learned academies to decide such matters as which words are to be banned from the official languages.

When it comes to foreign influences on religious communities during the Hellenistic Era, and on the Jewish community in particular, the evidence, as Momigliano has pointed out, is scarce, and, I suspect, even careful scholars have often seen what they wanted to see. Some Jewish scholars, fearing for the integrity of their religion if influences be admitted, did not find any. They might admit some influences in mundane matters of daily life but adamantly deny any spiritual influence. Others have been ambivalent, and some have been open to the possibility, even likelihood, of influence.[52] Christian scholars have in general been more open to classical influence, perhaps because they begin with the fact that Christianity arose in the late Hellenistic period, that the gospels were written in Greek, and that Paul was immersed in Greek culture and communicated directly with Greeks.[53]

It is likely that there would have been more influence of classical culture on Judaism than of Judaic culture on classical culture. The reasons were the high degree of mobility of the Greeks and Romans, their curiosity about the world, and their activity in trade, conquest, and colonization. Jews lived away from the coast, did not generally engage in sailing voyages, and were not a significant military power. [54] At the same time, we should recall that it does not take much influence to establish a cultural beachhead, and so it would be

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imprudent to rule out influence in the other direction. One invasive fish or plant or virus can take over an entire environment, and the same could happen, if more slowly in a pre-internet era, with ideas.

An early Pagan reference to Hebrew thought is the comment by Aristotle's student Theophrastus that Jews are "a philosophical race."[55] Another occurs a generation later (i.e., two generations after Aristotle's death), in a dialogue by Clearchus of Soli, a member of the Peripatetic school living in Cyprus, in which he has his fictional Aristotle mention a Jew who was fluent in Greek and discussed philosophy with Aristotle and his friends. By this time, the expedition of Alexander was a half century in the past, when, as the accounts of Arrian, Dio Cassius, Plutarch, and Curtius attest, the Macedonian had made encounters with philosophical or quasi-philosophical thinkers outside of Greece a deliberate goal. As Alexander also brought along philosophers, among whom was Aristotle's nephew Callisthenes, it is quite likely that the non-Greek peoples, including Jews in Persia and Palestine, would have picked up recent developments in in the Hellenic schools. Werner Jaeger has shown that during the philosophical Hellenistic Age, various principles of Chaldean and Zoroastrian beliefs—because of their resemblance to Platonic dualism—aroused considerable attention.[56] He points out that the name of a Chaldean was found on a list of students at the Academy.[57] Given that there were a number Jews with Greek names (among them, Aristeas, Aristobulus, Demetrius the Chronicler, Eupolemos, Philo, Theodotus, etc.[58]), perhaps Jews also appeared on the list, but without a Hebraic name, their Judaism is occulted. In short, we cannot know whether Jews attended the Academy. Nevertheless, it is probable that as Greek philosophers were fascinated by the spiritual ideas of non-Greeks, so a similar excitement in the reflections of Greeks would have moved Zoroastrians, Chaldeans, and Jews—at least some of them. In the contagious way in which influence works, it would not have taken very many such individuals for well-articulated ideas to take hold.

In the third and second centuries BCE, the Septuagint translation (LXX) was produced as first the Pentateuch and then the rest of the Bible was rendered into Greek; the Book of Maccabees, dealing with resistance to Greek influence, was preserved in Greek, indicating the presence of Greek culture. And there is no doubt that there was a considerable Hellenistic influence on a number of Jewish thinkers who wrote in Greek and threw themselves deliberately and unreservedly into Greek culture. One of these was Ezekiel, a Jewish poet of the second or first century BCE,[59] who wrote the *Exagogé*, an episodic tragedy about the Exodus. Though this is the only surviving example of a Jewish tragedy, its existence suggests the possibility of others and an audience for such plays. Another author, about whom we know too little, is Aristobulus of Paneas, possibly a contemporary of Ezekiel.[60] His survival in fragments results principally from being quoted by Church fathers

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like Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius, who claim that Aristobulus was an Aristotelian. Both Eusebius and Clement preserve parts of a dialogue—a *Greek* genre—between Aristobulus and the king, in which the Jewish philosopher answers questions about Genesis and Exodus.[61] Aristobulus claims, as Maimonides will fourteen centuries later in his *Guide for the Perplexed*, that all references to God's human qualities must be understood as metaphorical anthropomorphisms. And, in an effort to give the credit for the philosophical accomplishments of Pythagoras and Plato to the Bible, Aristobulus claims that parts of the Pentateuch, which had been translated into Greek before the Septuagint, were the cornerstone of the Greeks' work. To support this notion, he cites parallels between Greek literature and the Bible.[62] In these ways, Aristobulus, if we dismiss the hypothesis that his existence was an ancient forgery,[63] anticipates the prolific and brilliant Philo of Alexandria, whose existence no one disputes. So it seems that by the middle of the Hellenistic period, from the time of Hillel and Shammai during the later era of the Second Temple (about the second half of the first century BCE) onwards there would have been a considerable overt mingling of Greek and Hebrew ideas. Erich Gruen has reported on other Jewish writers of the Hellenistic period who adapted biblical stories to the genres and literary conventions of the Pagans and has described how these stories were sanitized to ennoble Jewish heroes, like Joseph; or to justify moral outrages, like that perpetrated by the sons of Jacob on Shechem; or to show that the patriarchs invented astronomy; or were responsible for the monotheistic claims in Aeschylus and the other Greek tragedians.[64] In doing so, these Jewish writers were acting like the Pagan writers—treating their mythology and history (not wholly distinct categories in antiquity) as they would any natural resources: raw materials from which to make new artifacts. As marble and wood could be shaped and reshaped, so could the traditional stories. About this kind of broad cultural influence there would seem to be no doubt. The debate is about whether Jews succeeded in putting a hedge around their religion, an unbreachable barrier to protect the purity of their religious beliefs from the surrounding culture.

Now despite Aristobulus' claim of biblical inspiration for Plato and Pythagoras, and despite Philo's monumental efforts to reconcile Plato and the Bible, it seems unlikely that much influence moved from Jews to Greeks.[65] Except for Longinus' quotation of one verse from Genesis in *On the Sublime*, no surviving Pagan text quotes from the Bible.[66] Jews in antiquity do not refer to Aristobulus in any extant works; with the exception of Josephus, another thoroughly Hellenized Jew, they do not mention Philo either. These men, however, are discussed and commended by the fathers of the Church, for whom Philo's mixture of Platonism and the Bible was perfectly suited for proselytizing to a Hellenized population, and Church Fathers treat him like one of their own, referring to him hundreds, if not thousands, of times.

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JEWS IN ANCIENT TIMES

Jewish history, like so much in antiquity, is frustratingly obscure. The romance of an uninterrupted pious continuity from the departure from Egypt until the diaspora is a sentimental fiction to which no modern reader of Kings and Chronicles would give credence. In those books we learn of idol worship, temple prostitution, and other misdeeds that occurred until King Josiah presumably discovered a copy of the Torah and prohibited them in the late seventh century BCE.[67] In these books we learn also that Josiah restored the celebration of Passover,[68] a holiday specifically mandated by the God of the Torah to recall his signal benefaction to the Israelites.[69]

In the gentile world of the sixth, fifth, and fourth centuries, conquests by different powers expanded the interest in foreign peoples, including Jews. The remote tribes of Scythians, with their strange customs,[70] were introduced to the civilized world when Darius attacked but failed to conquer them. An attempt to circumnavigate Africa ended in failure when Captain Sataspes, sailing southward, concluded that the climate was too hot to support life and turned back[71]—an attempt that itself shows a desire to learn whether the world might be one entity.

Jews experienced great challenges in remaining a distinct people with customs that seemed exotic, even bizarre, to everyone else and sometimes even to themselves.[72] Surely the pressures to assimilate were great. An example of the pressure some men felt was their attempt to reverse the fundamental ritual of the covenant, circumcision, by restoring their foreskin with a surgical operation known as epispasm.[73] Jews who were more faithful to their traditions, fearing the loss of ethnic and religious identity (forms of identity not yet distinct), resolved to educate their sons in their traditions and, intuiting that "the essence of education is constant repetition,"[74] compelled them to repeat the lessons that had been orally transmitted. But this mild form of cultural preservation was not always sufficient to resist the animosity that their foreignness engendered, and tensions created by co-existence in a gentile setting broke out into the open during the Maccabean revolt in the mid-second century BCE—one of the ephemeral successes in holding back Pagan influences. Still, for the most part, it was education in Jewish texts and traditions that was the chief mode of Jewish cultural preservation within the gentile world.[75]

How or when the Talmud arose is obscure. The traditional account holds that when the Chaldeans conquered Jerusalem in 597 BCE and deported a portion of the Jewish population to Babylon, the phenomenon of increased ethnic identity in people uprooted from their homeland developed in the exiled Jews, and they made full-hearted attempts to preserve and systematize their religion.[76] What evolved into the Babylonian Talmud is traditionally said to have begun during this period of exile and to have accelerated in the

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period at or just before Cyrus the Great of Persia allowed the exiles to return to their ancestral home and with generosity, or political calculation, or both, subsidized the construction of the Second Temple.[77]

This period of the return, in the years surrounding 538 BCE, was the same general period in which Greek philosophy, with its emphasis on a logical approach to understanding the natural world, first arose in Miletus. It is impossible to know how much familiarity exiled Jews may have had of Milesian thought. But we should keep in mind that Aramaic was a common language in the Near East, from Egypt to India, and would have made possible the exchange of ideas as it facilitated trade in commercial products.[78]

During the next five centuries, through the myriad paths of cultural diffusion, Greek culture permeated the Mediterranean, relatively slowly during the sixth and fifth centuries, more quickly after Alexander's death in 323 BCE.[79] Some Jews were evidently fluent in both Hebrew and Greek. After the completion of the Septuagint in the third century, the process accelerated.[80] Jews suffused with "Greekness" would be the audience of Ezekiel, Aristobulus, and Philo: inhabiting this intellectual environment, they spoke Greek, were familiar with some Greek philosophy, and read or heard Greek poetry. Some, like the Maccabees, resisted, but even they were subject to their environment and breathed the same air as everyone else.[81] As today we might hear even from people who have a visceral and perhaps neurotic aversion to Freudian psychoanalysis terms like "Oedipus complex" or "Ego" or "anal retentiveness"—terms and a mode of thinking that have become acculturated—so in the third and second centuries BCE, Jews underwent this unconscious cultural colonization of their minds. It is not necessary to read a text to be influenced by it. As Daniel Boyarin observes, cultural influence occurs by oral and folkloric means.[82] And, as Richard Hidary shows, there is an extensive use of classical rhetoric in the Talmud. Hidary is quite clear that he is not claiming that the rabbis read the great orators or the rhetorical handbooks or their later summaries; they picked up the rhetorical patterns and commonplaces where influence usually spreads, in the public squares or in conversations with neighbors.[83]

HELLENISM AND THE TALMUD: THE NEW GOD

Though the Talmudic community aimed to preserve and transmit Jewish culture exclusively, it did not escape Greek influence, a circumstance that accounts for the decidedly Greek flavors of the surviving work: the distinction between written and oral law, reminiscent of the Greek distinction between written and unwritten laws; the pairing of opposed scholars like Hillel and Shammai, reminiscent of the eristic competitors in Greek sophistic

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debates; the division during the Late Temple period of the Mishnah into six orders with subdivisions into tractates, a job of classification characteristic of the encyclopedia-work of the schools and the Library in Alexandria; the initiation in the Jewish schools of Babylonia and Palestine of *gemara,* a form of question and answer reminiscent of the dialectic practiced in the Academy,[84] Lyceum, and Stoa, and a form very different from the exhortations of the prophets.[85] In addition, as Daniel Boyarin has convincingly argued, the "serious-play" found in the Talmud, like that in many of the Platonic dialogues, comes from their sharing the genre of Menippean satire.[86] And, if Charlotte E. Fonrobert is correct, there are echoes of Plato's metaphor of the cave in Talmudic writings, which, as she says, perhaps indicate the possibility of actual allusions.[87]

Perhaps most significant of all the furtive influences on the Talmud was the concept of the deity worked out in Greek philosophy from Xenophanes and Parmenides through Plato and Aristotle and their daughter schools. This conception was so persuasive that it supplanted other views among Pagan intellectuals.[88] In brief, this was of a god understood to be perfectly good—for a god not perfectly good would be less a god, and so not a god at all; a god unchanging—for a god that changed would necessarily be one that went from a worse to a better state or vice versa, an impossibility for a god who is perfectly good; a god all-powerful—for a god that in any respect lacked power would not be perfectly good; a god not physical—for a physical god would be subject to aging and decay, types of change, and change is not possible for a perfect deity; a god solitary—for if there were more than one god they would either agree or disagree, but agreement is ruled out because it would imply useless superfluity, and disagreement is ruled out since different views could not both be perfect; a god perfectly wise, compassionate, just, merciful, and so on—for a god without even one element of goodness would be less of a god; and, finally, a god so beyond human understanding that his qualities are not expressible in human language—an ineffable god that cannot be accurately spoken of or known except in outline. This god, worked out in three centuries of philosophical reasoning, became the "standard model" in the West,[89] the deity granted the high honor of being spelled with a capital letter.[90] This is the God shared in much Jewish, Christian, and Islamic theology.[91]

Two corollaries accompanied this model of a perfect and unchanging God, both introduced by Plato. One was that the creator of the world, whom in the *Timaeus* Plato calls the Demiurge, resides in eternity along with an eternal blueprint—his *logos* or plan for setting the cosmos in order. The *logos* contains all the eternal ideas or "forms," and its residence Plato called the "World of Being." In his writings,[92] human souls know the eternal plan before they are born. They spend their earthly lives in the "World of Becoming" imprisoned

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within human bodies. What we call "learning" is actually a process of recollecting truths known before birth.[93] Human souls, upon their earthly deaths, are reborn into "real" life in the "World of Being."[94] In this way, life is a preparation for death. This corollary, which, for the sake of convenience, we shall call "the Corollary of the Eternal Plan," became a philosophically respectable ancillary of the standard model.

Plato, whose influence is impossible to overestimate,[95] injected an additional element of irrationality into the pot in what developed into a second corollary to the standard model of the deity. Plato, whose poetic fancies allowed for the daimonic voice of Socrates, for magical glimpses into the World of Being, for imaginative tours of the afterlife, and for a supernatural demiurgic fabrication of the universe,[96] also gave, by virtue of his eloquent authority, what we may call "the Corollary of the Supernatural Link"—a means of flying across the gulf between the Worlds of Becoming and Being and glimpsing the eternal plan even while in this earthly life. These two corollaries, expressing Plato's apparent scorn for things of the physical world, resonated with a Hellenistic population tired of political life with its inescapable dissensions and of corporeal life with its constant anxieties about death from illness, famine, and human depredation—a population that wished nothing more than to escape into a world of spiritual peace. The mystery religions and Platonism offered what was wanted.

Philo, as discussed earlier,[97] had his signal moment of discovery when he reflected on Genesis 1:26. For Philo, God's divine plan (the *likeness*) and Plato's demiurgic *logos* were the same thing.[98] Martin Hengel has persuasively shown how this Philonic conjecture, what I have called "the Corollary of the Eternal Plan," became a central part of rabbinic Judaism,[99] and I can do no better here than to summarize his argument and evidence.

As Hengel points out, God's divine plan became identified with the Torah in *Baruch* 4.1: "She [i.e., the Torah] herself is the book of the commandments of God and the law which remains to eternity. … If wisdom, as the divine, pre-existent ordering of the world, was at the same time identical with the Torah of Israel entrusted to Moses on Sinai, a consequence arose that corresponded in an astonishing way with the Stoic idea of the unity of the word *nomos* and the moral law ordering the life of the individual."[100] Resourceful rabbis of the period could then interpret Proverbs 8:22 ("The Lord made me [i.e., Torah] as the beginning of his way, the first of his works of old") as a "pre-existent, first creature, standing next to God."[101] Hengel cites Rabbi Akiba and Rabbi Eliezer, who refer to the Torah as the "daughter of God." He accepts Kurt Schubert's claim that there is a "deep-rooted analogy" between the Torah and Philo's concept of God's *logos.* Hengel, however, along with virtually all scholars,[102] dismisses the idea that the rabbis are dependent on Philo and surmises that their views proceed from a common earlier source.

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I should like to suggest, however, that it is plausible for the rabbis to have derived their view from Philo, or perhaps even from Aristobulus or the *Wisdom of Solomon*.[103] For there to be such a source, only *one* rabbi would have had to read Philo (or Aristobulus) and have been convinced of the consonance between the Torah and Plato. He would have introduced into rabbinical conversations the notion that the Torah was another name for the divine plan. Ideas are often spread by a single messenger.[104]

Because "the whole Torah is from heaven," every word is sacrosanct and so, as observed earlier, no letter can be excluded or changed; any deviation from perfectly accurate transmission, no matter how slight, will render the Torah unfit for worship service.[105] As Barry Holtz says, "The key point, the point around which everything revolves, is the rabbis' conception of the Torah itself. Torah, to the rabbis, was an *eternally relevant book because it was written* (dictated, inspired—it doesn't matter) by a perfect Author, *an author who intended it to be eternal* [italics and capitalization Holtz's]."[106] All the commandments are significant and directly linked to the order of the cosmos, and so the omission of a single letter in copying the text "meant in principle an attack on the divine structure of the world, formed by the Torah, for 'the Torah is indivisible.'"[107]

The importance for the history of the West of this connection between Plato's eternal Idea and divine revelation can hardly be overestimated. It is responsible for the fundamentalist devotion to Scriptures that we find among many Jews, Christians, and Moslems. It accounts for the view that all knowledge is contained within the holy book, even if in secret, esoteric codes,[108] and that it must be read in a literal or even hyper-literal way.[109] It accounts also for the belief that God knows everything past, present, and future, including the precise place where every leaf will fall or mote of dust settle. Indirectly, it accounts for the attribution of authority in the phrase *ipse dixit* ("He himself has spoken"). This view would include all violators of the sanctity of the texts as objects of Rabbi Ishmael's admonition to a scribe: "If you leave out a single letter or write a single letter too much, you will be found as one who destroys the entire world."[110]

"The Corollary of the Supernatural Link" derives from Plato's imaginative story in the *Phaedrus* about a chariot ride to the World of Being. The ride appears in Socrates' attempt to show that he can produce a better speech on love extemporaneously than the famous Athenian orator Lysias had in a prepared speech. Socrates begins with a commonplace theme of fifth-century rhetoric: presenting a thesis that turns traditional wisdom upside down. Here, Socrates begins with the proposition that madness, usually understood as a horrific disorder of the human mind, is actually good, and not only good, but *divine* and given to us by the gods as our greatest benefit (*Phaedrus* 244a–245c). But the actual context of the *whole* speech in the dialogue is

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as inconsequential to its influence on western civilization as that of a single sparrow in the Grand Canyon.[111] Among Neoplatonists, this *section* of the speech was taken not as a rhetorical *tour de force* but as a profound work of theology.[112] It was the subject of major commentaries by Iamblichus, Proclus, and Hermeias in antiquity and by Marsilio Ficino in the fifteenth century.[113] Through them it became a continuing inspiration for the mystic union with God in Christian theology. The endorsement it seemed to grant to prophetic and poetic frenzy can perhaps be singled out as what is most responsible for the respect given by intellectuals in the West to mysticism.

Socrates, to defend his outrageous claim that madness is a blessing, says he must discuss the nature of the soul. Like the souls of all living things, the human soul is self-moving. He likens a human soul to the composite of a pair of winged horses and a charioteer. In the perfect souls of gods, both horses are good, but in the souls of human beings, one horse is good, the other troublesome. A perfect soul stays in the stars and wanders in the cosmos. The imperfect soul acquires a body and becomes what we call a "living thing." The feathers of the soul of a living thing are nourished by the beautiful, wise, and good but destroyed by shame and vice. The souls of the gods go easily to heaven, but human souls are slowed down by the troublesome horse. When a soul—the composite of chariot, charioteer, and a pair of good horses—at length reaches the place of Being, it looks with adoration on Justice, Knowledge,[114] and the other virtues—not on the knowledge of *Becoming*, but the knowledge of *Being*. A human soul, burdened with a bad horse as part of its team, can obtain only partial glimpses of the world of Being. Now, if a human soul sees something of the truth, it is free until the next cycle begins, but if a soul cannot see the truth and follow the right path, it sheds its feathers and falls to earth, and, in proportion to how much of Being the soul glimpsed, is implanted in the bodies of human beings, from lovers of wisdom at the top to tyrants at the bottom. In general, it takes a soul 10,000 years to restart the cycle of growing wings, but philosophical boy-lovers grow them more quickly.[115] In the rest of the speech we learn that a corrupted soul, having been excited by beauty, is eager for sex,[116] and we learn about the other ways a lover is affected. For the Corollary of the Supernatural Link, what matters is Socrates' description of the ascent from the lowly earth to the World of Being.[117]

In the late Hellenistic period and early centuries of the Common Era, Plato's story in the *Phaedrus* inspired a mystic strain in Jewish literature. This literature, which unfortunately has been transmitted in poorly preserved manuscripts, describes the Hekhaloth, ascents to God's palace in heaven, and the Merkabah, Ezekiel's chariot.[118] Gershom Scholem has described the low degree of certainty about the period when these were composed, a period when wafts of influences left trails as elusive as those of fleeing cats:

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> In turning our attention to this subject, we are at once made aware of the unfortunate fact that practically nothing is known about those who espoused the oldest organized movement of Jewish mysticism in late Talmudic and post-Talmudic times, i.e., the period from which the most illuminating documents have come down to us. Like the authors of the Biblical Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, they have generally followed the practice of concealing their identity behind the great names of the past. There is little hope that we shall ever learn the identity of the men who were the first to make an attempt, still recognizable and describable, to invest Judaism with the glory of mystical splendor.[119]

Those who do not subscribe to mysticism may take issue with Scholem's claim about "the glory of mystical splendor" and instead agree with the rabbis of the Second Temple, who thought the vision of Ezekiel's chariot, though a favorite subject in Pharisaic circles, "inadvisable to make public."[120] In my view, Plato's poetic description of the world of ideas and an ascent into it was taken out of the immediate context of the *Phaedrus* and applied to the Bible's mystic prophetic visions.[121] As a result, readers have ascribed a sacred holiness to texts of *human* composition, with the concomitant belief that a particular text, often one by Plato, is the key to unlocking secret truths about heaven and earth and a mode of spiritual translation into a divine realm.[122] These views and the problems they provoke arose in *readers* of Plato and the biblical authors. The authors themselves cannot of course be blamed because their *metaphors* were taken as literal truth and their eloquence was such that it seemed divine revelation.

We must take seriously Scholem's caution about our knowledge of the period and these works. There are, to be sure, other mystical chariot rides in ancient times, a circumstance that is not surprising, for chariots were the cutting edge of rapid personal transportation then, as automobiles are now. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Arjuna turns to his divine charioteer Krishna to ascend the contradictions of being and nonbeing; in the *Way of Truth*, Parmenides describes his ride in a chariot drawn by shrewd horses toward the light where a goddess will reveal to him "the convincing and infallible heart of Truth."[123] It is possible that the similarities in stories about Ezekiel's chariot ride and the ride described by Socrates are simply coincidental. Yet it would be shortsighted to dismiss the provocative attractiveness of Plato to those who encounter his works. Let us examine whether the same consonance between features of the Bible and Plato's thought that provided the impetus to Philo and other Hellenizing Jews was a cause of *Phaedrus'* influence on Hellenistic rabbis. While this possibility is not provable, there is circumstantial evidence to support it.

A few rabbis are reported in the Babylonian Talmud to have rejected the Book of Ezekiel because they thought that the description of the chariot ride

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would lead to mysticism, which they felt dangerous for people to engage in,[124] and so they protected the passage in Ezekiel even more cautiously than the story of creation.[125] *The HarperCollins Bible Commentary* cites Jerome as saying that some rabbis would not let the opening and closing parts of Ezekiel be read by anyone under thirty years old[126]—a statement that itself shows a possible influence from Plato's *Republic* (539a–c), in which dialectic is not to be taught to men before they are thirty. And, as Scholem reports, the rationalist editor of the Mishnah tried to exclude all references to mystical speculation, including the Merkabah and angelology.[127] According to Joseph Dan, the *Sefer ha-Razim* (*The Book of Mysteries*), an important work of Hekhaloth and Merkabah literature, contains many magical incantations, the Greek terms and symbols showing a Hellenistic Jewish syncretism.[128]

In short, the atmosphere of the Hellenistic world was replete with mystic penumbrae, and, despite the opposition of rationalists, study of the magical was allowed to take place within the stolid halls of philosophy, from which it spread to the rabbinical academies and other religious institutions of the West.[129] Astronomy (in antiquity not distinguished from astrology), too, as Alexander Toepel has shown, interested the rabbis, so long as it dealt with biblical matters and was attributed to Abraham.[130]

With the exception of a few parts of the Bible, like the sections of Isaiah so extraordinary that they are assigned to a second author known as Deutero-Isaiah, we could hardly describe the predominant view of the Hebrew God in terms of the standard model. The God of the *Bible* is not perfect—he destroys lives, like Uzzah's, with unjust strictness; he is not unchanging—he changes his mind about destroying Nineveh and always acts in a temporal sequence; he is not all-powerful—he cannot compel people to do his bidding; he is not incorporeal—he is often seen and heard; he is not the only deity—he sometimes refers to other gods and expresses jealousy, neither of which would happen in the absence of other gods; and he is not ineffable—there are countless passages that talk about him. To be sure, much theological brilliance has been expended in showing how all these discrepancies to the standard model of God are specious. A tool box of exegetical instruments was developed, by which potentially offending passages turn out to be metaphorical or symbolic or rich with esoteric meanings for readers with deep understanding or composed simplistically for the sake of naïve readers—all with the aim of showing that the texts maintain a proper, high, true God consistent with the standard model. But if we are forthright, we have to acknowledge that the God of the Bible, *as portrayed in the Bible*, before the cosmetic surgery performed with these instruments, is not so different from the other gods of the ancient world. The main difference lies in the claim, extravagantly preposterous to non-Israelites, that the local deity of Israel is the one God of the entire universe as well as its creator.

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Many, perhaps most, of the intellectuals of the Jewish community were rabbis. The God that emerges from their prodigious output is very nearly the God of the standard model, and this is true in the main also for the God of Christianity and Islam. How did this conformity come about? Was it an example of "convergent evolution"? Or was it the result of influence, even when the influence was silent, even when it was denied? [131]

The principal way in which the biblical deity and the Bible's main actors were rehabilitated was by modifying the stories to make them conform with the metaphysical and ethical principles established by Greek philosophy. What Jewish literary writers had attempted in their plays and epics, the rabbis did in their commentaries: with a mélange of Pre-Socratic, Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic philosophy, they ironed out, so to speak, the wrinkles in the biblical tales. They supplied missing background stories that legitimated the seemingly immoral actions of the patriarchs and seemingly capricious or cruel actions of God. They did for the Bible what Stoics had done or were doing for Homer, metamorphosing the texts with the disinfectant of exegesis. The western enterprise of reconciling the literature of the ancient world with the standard model of God was underway. In subsequent chapters I shall call attention to this phenomenon by explicitly referring to the rabbinic tradition.

Later, when the Church Fathers, trained in the central philosophical tradition, applied their minds to the basic beliefs of Christianity, they undertook the same project. Their challenge was to render doctrines based on faith compatible with, or at least not contradictory to, reason. Greek philosophy, with its emphasis on reasoning and knowledge, seems at first wholly opposed to faith—defined in the New Testament as "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). By this definition, faith does not appear as a requirement or even as a virtue in the Hebrew Bible. It achieves the status of a virtue in Christian times, when it joins hope and charity to supplant the Pagan virtues of courage, justice, wisdom, and self-restraint before rejoining them as three of the seven Christian virtues.[132]

Nevertheless, the Standard Model of God worked out by Greek philosophy is paradoxically responsible for faith's intellectual vitality. The deduction that the divinity must be perfect, unitary, all-knowing, all-good, and all-powerful meant that polytheism, in which different gods were violently, sometimes mortally, at odds with each other, was false. Any falling short of perfection would render a Pagan deity less divine and thus incompatible with the *definition* of God as highest, best, and perfect—not *most* perfect, but perfect without qualification. If what defines God is the agglomeration of these superlative qualities, it makes sense to put oneself in his hands (*pace* the anthropomorphism). If we cannot fully understand God's nature or its exceedingly difficult concomitant questions—how, for example, a perfect God acts in time without changing, or how a perfect and all-powerful God

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allows the apparent presence of evil, or how perfect divine knowledge co-exists with human free will—we assume that because God is perfect these paradoxes are somehow resolvable and that our failure to grasp how results from *our* limited knowledge, power, and goodness. With the tools of logic Christian thinkers made progress on some of the most formidable problems. For example, by positing a realm of eternity, a domain distinct from time, where God resides, the dilemma of human free will and God's foreknowledge could be resolved and an unchanging deity affirmed; by defining evil as nonbeing, Augustine could reconcile an all-good deity with the appearance (but not the reality) of evil in the world. Cautious hypotheses could effect solutions to other perplexities—that God sees the whole cosmos at once and knows precisely how each part, no matter how small or inconsequential to us, fits into the whole, so that something that appears ugly or unjust to *us*, with our limited vision, appears beautiful and just to God, who sees it in its proper context; and that whatever a perfect God does is right because he does it, for there is no distinction between the being, doing, and goodness of God. To put one's trust in this sort of deity is not irrational. And so faith in this perfect God, and in his revealed words,[133] is intellectually right and virtuous.

So after a period of turmoil and sometimes strident rejection,[134] by the fourth century, Christian writers openly acknowledged their debt to Greek philosophy and were making the requisite accommodations.[135] The Church sought to make Christianity *the* world religion, and the attempt benefitted from the intellectual respectability that compatibility with mainstream philosophy conferred. For Jews, official insularity was essential.[136] After the failure of the Bar Kochba revolt in 136 CE, and after the Romans imposed a ban on proselytizing, it became prudent for Jews to turn inwards and avoid references to Pagan ideas.[137] It was safer not to seem to be making overtures to outsiders by keeping everything within a Jewish context. But this circumstance did not of course ensure immunity to the cultural environment.

Rabbis applied their minds principally to interpreting the biblical laws. Though many of these appeared capricious and strange, the rabbis successfully showed that they were consistent, or at least not inconsistent, with reason. They also described God such that he appeared in harmony with the standard model, even while mystically retaining the qualities of a loving deity.

That God is perfectly good, said the rabbis, is affirmed by his creation, which, also perfectly good, contains nothing useless—not even snails, flies, or gnats. The snail is a cure for a wound, the fly for the sting of a wasp, the gnat for the bite of a serpent, and so on.[138] In support of the perfection of the world, Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai, emending the text of Deuteronomy from *tzur* ("rock") to *tzayyer* ("craftsman"),[139] renders the biblical text similar to Plato's *Timaeus*:

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> R. Simeon ben Yohai, quoting "The Craftsman, His work is Perfect" (Deuteronomy 32:4), said, The Craftsman who wrought the world man, His work is perfect. In the way of the world, when a king of flesh and blood builds a palace, mortals who enter it say: had the columns being taller, how much more beautiful it would have been! Had the walls been higher, how much more beautiful it would have been! Had the ceiling been loftier, how much more beautiful it would have been! But does any man come and say: if I had three eyes, three arms, three legs, how much better off I would be! If I walked on my head, or if my face were turned backward, how much better off I would be! I wonder. To assure that no one would say such a thing, the King of kings of kings, the holy one and his court had themselves, in a manner of speaking, polled concerning the placing of every part of your body and set you up in a way that is right for you.[140]

That God is unchanging is frequently asserted.[141] He can do everything simultaneously, obviating any need for him to change;[142] he knows everything, including the decisions that will be made by human beings, presumably from his unchanging place outside of time, and thus there is no problem of reconciling human free will and God's "foreknowledge."[143] Like the gods described by the Epicureans, he is not affected by what people do, not even by the sins of the Israelites.[144] God is all-powerful, even to the extent of doing contradictory things simultaneously, such as killing and bringing to life or wounding and healing.[145] He can satisfy every human wish.[146] God is one and the same everywhere, even if he appear in many guises.[147] He is perfectly just and merciful, as is shown by his making the world to have these attributes.[148]

God is invisible and his invisibility is related to his power. A popular Midrash, perhaps a paraphrase of Xenophon's *Memorabilia,*[149] reports a conversation between Joseph and his master Potiphar in which Joseph compares seeing God to seeing the sun.[150] Potiphar says, "I should like to see your God." Whereupon Joseph replied, "You cannot look straight at the sun. How can you expect to see God?"

Finally, the principle of the ineffability of God, applied in the Middle Ages to everything about God,[151] is applied in the Talmud particularly to his name.[152] Secrets concerning God's name and its many forms were carefully guarded by the rabbis.[153]

To further this aim of quietly adopting the standard model of God, the Talmudic authors devised the useful division between *aggadah*, the "poetical" parts of the Bible, and the *halakhah*, the parts dealing with the ritual and societal (criminal and civil) laws. The rabbis taught that it was permissible to interpret the aggadic part freely and imaginatively, so long as the interpretation aimed at promoting devotion to God. To a population influenced by the philosophical environment of the Hellenistic Age, these aggadic interpretations rendered God's actions consistent with wisdom and justice and other

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forms of moral goodness.[154] In the pursuit of this end, rabbis often invented characters, even angelic ones, or rewrote texts to fill gaps and to account for what would otherwise seem moral failings.[155] The rabbis who were at pains to make the God of the Hebrew Bible compatible with the deity of Greek *philosophy* (as emphatically distinct from the deity of Greek *Paganism*) were engaged in a project analogous to that of the Masoretes. As the Masoretes constructed a system of vocalization—vowels and other clues hovering on all sides of the consonants, stabilizing the words without violating the chastity of the text—so Talmudic rabbis regularized and "cleaned up" awkwardnesses of anthropomorphism and provided explanatory justifications for seemingly arbitrary actions or judgments on the part of God, thereby rendering the text intellectually respectable without altering it.[156]

This was the Jewish response to the tsunami of Greek philosophy that flooded Mediterranean minds in the period after Alexander. It may be possible that the influence began even earlier, entering the late books of the Bible. For example, Jeremiah's claim (Jeremiah 1:5) that God chose him before he was born, even before he was conceived, perhaps derives from a Pythagorean idea of the preexistence of the soul or from a source the Pythagoreans and Jeremiah may have shared directly or indirectly.[157] Given how culture spreads, it is no surprise that the Talmud is suffused with Greek ways of thinking, including ideas from Greek philosophy that percolated to the rabbis in their various communities. The influence is reflected in their attempts to reconcile the biblical text, especially its conceptions of God, with philosophy, a project that continues today with a prodigious industry devoted to reconciling the religions of the Bible with the modern world.[158]

THE SCHOLARSHIP OF INFLUENCE

In *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*, Louis H. Feldman surveys the entire period of antiquity and reaches the general conclusion that while there is evidence of some slight ties in cases of *material* culture, there was no significant *religious* influence on Jewish culture from the classical world. It is possible, he says, that remains of Greek pottery reveal commercial relationships; that Jews minted coins with an owl and so perhaps followed the Athenians in commercial affairs. Beyond these mercantile relations, he says, "we have no evidence, literary or archaeological, that the impact of the Athenians went beyond the matter of coinage."[159] Herodotus, Feldman avers, might make a reference to Jews, but he does not refer to any exchange of ideas.[160] For Feldman, Greek intellectual influence on Jews is not present in the fifth century BCE, nor does it occur later.[161] At times, he works hard to inflate differences between what *seem* to be areas of influence so as to deny its very

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possibility. An example would be his rejection in the Talmud of any echoes of Plato's "doctrine of recollection," in particular, the passage in *Niddah* 30b, where the rabbis say that while an embryo is in the womb of its mother, it is taught the entire Torah.[162] Even after Alexander, he says, Greek influence "is a pernicious myth, compounded of Christian evangelistic anachronism and Plutarch-inspired wishful thinking."[163] Feldman takes aim at the scholars who have sought to show Hellenic influence. For example, though Armand Kaminka and Martin Hengel drew many parallels between Stoic philosophy and rabbinical writings, Feldman rejects influence because the topics, the creation of the world and the fate of the soul after death, would have been of interest to the Jews anyway.[164] This kind of denial of influence—because parallel views will spontaneously arise on common subjects of interest—is very handy and can be used in any situation, and it is, of course, always *possible* in principle for such coincidental duplication to occur.[165] The numerous examples of Stoic influence brought forward by Fischel "could be formulated by any intelligent person raised in the teachings of the Hebrew Bible."[166] For Feldman, any parallels with Epicureans are the repetition of commonplaces or are insufficiently exact or are mere common sense, and the same applies to the anecdotes in Fischel's collection of parallels between the lives of philosophers and rabbis.[167]

Feldman does report the abundant evidence that Jews employed Greek weights, coins, and trade usages but stresses a lack of physical evidence about religion.[168] Yet one might wonder what physical evidence of intellectual or religious influence among the masses would be persuasive. How could one satisfactorily prove a philosophic conception of a purely spiritual deity by tangible evidence? There can be no statues, no paintings of incorporeal deities. Highly abstract conceptions of the deity have never won widespread acceptance. The learned might find comfort in such a deity, but in general people pray to effigies, who breathe and weep and respond to offerings.[169] A distinction must, of course, be made between the popular culture that made up the majority of the population and the intellectual elite that shaped the theological ideology of the West. For most people, the Standard Model of God would have been as alien as the Standard Model of physics is to people today. But just as physicists affect the broader world in a way disproportionate to their actual numbers, so did the rabbis, bishops, and imams—the persons most susceptible to classical influence—through their sermons, teaching, and conversations.

In "Plato in Hellenistic Fusion," Moses Hadas suggests that among non-Greek peoples, Greek influence was a matter of social class.[170] Greek ideas, which were pervasive and had proved successful, left upper class easterners believing that they would be considered uncivilized if they failed to adopt Greek knowledge, just as even today, countries that reject Western social

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and political practices nevertheless adopt western technology and the science upon which it is based. Alexander's founding of cities on the Greek model, with prominent central gymnasia, membership in which and an education from which were necessary for participation in the upper class, diffused Greek ways throughout whole communities. It seems not unlikely that the ideas of the philosophers were broadcast as well. To intellectual rabbis the conception represented by the standard model of God would have been attractive. Feldman agrees to this, though he denies Hellenic influence, attributing the parallel views to commonplaces or matters of common interest among the intelligent.[171] I would maintain that among the chief evidence of influence is a consensus about the traits attributed to God, traits not commonplaces except among the theologically literate in the West. Of course, once good ideas have been diffused, they seem self-evident and always to have been around.

RELEVANCE FOR THIS BOOK

My aim in this study will be to separate the anciently Hebraic stories from the sanitized, modified, bowdlerized versions that came later. Yet what directly formed the mixture that constitutes our West were not the original versions, as stimulating and profound as they may be, but the versions as filtered through the classical heritage. Given the likelihood, as the bulk of recent scholarship testifies,[172] of a deep Hellenic influence on Hebrew thought and attitudes, the task of starkly identifying as Hebraic those parts of the Bible that touch on subjects taken up also in classical culture, cannot rely on the readings by the Church fathers, the rabbinic sources of the Mishnah and Talmud, or any later authors. It would be prudent to remain always conscious that all commentaries, as well as parts of the Bible redacted in Hellenic times, are contaminated to a greater or lesser extent—for everything is filtered through an understanding influenced by Greek thought and the compound it made with the Bible.

Trying to isolate the exclusively biblically Hebraic elements in Midrashim or commentaries would be like trying to isolate the molecules of air breathed by Abraham and Sarah, Homer and Socrates. It is impossible. Even if a machine were built to allow time travel, it could not be done, for the time-traveller himself would contaminate the air. It would be a fool's errand, or, more accurately, a *dreamer's errand*, an exercise in vanity and self-delusion. We should follow the counsel of Marcus Aurelius: "To pursue the impossible is madness" (*Meditations* 5.17). Yet sometimes reading one story in the light of another results in a cross-fertilization that yields ideas that would otherwise remain dormant. Perhaps, in this way, though it might be impossible to obtain a *pellucid* notion of the purely Greek and purely Hebraic elements in our culture, a look at a number of features, some of which are remote from the

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grand questions of theology, may give us a *fuzzy* notion of the elements—and a fuzzy notion may be better than none at all. Fuzziness might lead us astray, as it did some Cornell ornithologists a few years ago when they saw blurry photographs of a bird and mistook it for the extinct ivory-billed woodpecker. But even such wanderings are not without value, for they remind us to be humble.

NOTES

1. It would be remiss not to mention that the most common word for "say" or "speak" in Hebrew is *amar.* In Genesis, when God calls things into being by saying "let there be," he uses *amar.* This verb, the basic meaning of which is "communicate," has not generally been weighed down by a philosophical or theological sense.

2. Cf. Thorlief Borman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1960) 64–71.

3. An online commentary transliterates the Hebrew as *wə·niw·wā·ḵə·ḥāh,* which seems rather cumbersome for וְנִוָּכְחָה. I would render it as *ve-nivach-cha*, which, if no easier to pronounce, at least avoids special characters. The LXX has διαλεχθῶμεν (from διαλέγω).

4. The notion is familiar to us, as we classify one branch of storytelling as "fiction."

5. The most accurate English for *logoi* would perhaps be "speeches and writings."

6. A Greek cognate of *logos, logas* (λογάς), means a "picked body of men," a special or elite corps. The larger mass is the genus; the elite corps is the species.

7. The anecdote appears in *Herndon's Informants: Letters, Interviews, and Statements about Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. David (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998) 122.

8. Frank J. McLynn, *Napoleon: A Biography* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1997) 279.

9. The ancient historians whom we most admire, like Herodotus and Thucydides, convert their histories into political philosophy by making their historical characters types as well as unique individuals and drawing paradigmatic lessons from their stories (see my *Discourses on The First Book of Herodotus* [Lanham, Md.: Littlefield Adams Books, 1995] 3). Of course, Aristotle had far more historical works available to him from his era than we, and his comments may accurately apply for the most part to those he has read.

10. In Homer, the word for "words" is *muthoi*, from we derive our word "myth." By the fifth century, the distinction between words and deeds is made using *logos.* On the absence of a discernible difference between *logos* and *mythos*, see James A. Arieti and Roger M. Barrus, *Plato, Gorgias* (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2007) 219–20.

11. Perhaps no one is more effusively laudatory of these features of Platonic philosophy than Augustine, who in the *City of God* (8.6–10) says that it very closely approximates Christianity (the highest praise he can give something of Pagan origin). It falls short, he says, because it does not condemn polytheism (8.12).

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12. Plato himself was devoted to political philosophy, and many of his dialogues, including the longest ones, the *Laws,* the *Republic,* and the *Gorgias,* deal with improving our mortal world politically. When from the fourth century BCE on, the *polis* appeared totally extinct, perhaps those of the Platonic school, abandoning any hope to achieve a morally successful politics, focused their attention on metaphysics. In this way they could take wing and escape an increasingly cold and impersonal world.

13. In the *Epinomis* (986c), an appendix to Plato's *Laws,* the word *logos* is used for the order that governs astronomical bodies, but the authenticity of the *Epinomis* is uncertain. There may be a such a use of *logos* in the undisputedly authentic *Phaedrus,* according to Adam Kamesar ("The *Logos Endiathetos* and the *Logos Prophorikos* in Allegorical Interpretation: Philo and the D-Scholia to the *Iliad*," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 44 [2004] 165).

14. Kamesar 169–77. For how the Middle Platonists applied Plato's notions of ideas as universal, unchanging, and eternal to God, see Elizabeth A. Clark, *Clement's Use of Aristotle: The Aristotelian Contribution to Clement of Alexander's Refutation of Gnosticism* (New York and Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press, 1977) 70.

15. For Philo on Genesis 1:26 see my "Man and God in Philo: Philo's Interpretation of Genesis 1:26," *Lyceum* 4 (1992) 1–8. For the concept in Jewish and Christian theology generally, see Alexander Altmann, "*Homo Imago Dei* in Jewish and Christian Theology," *Journal of Religion* 48 (1968) 235–59. For Philo's view of God's image as the faculty of reason in human souls, see Harry A. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947) vol. 1, 390.

16. Philo, *Who Is the Heir* 231.

17. Jerome includes Philo on a list of Church Fathers (*On Illustrious Men* 11) and Eusebius, in a discussion of same passage from Genesis, goes so far as to suggest that Philo taught about the members of the Trinity (*Preparation of the Gospel* 7.3).

18. Philo, *On the Decalogue* 97–98. This view is essentially that of Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* (1072b14–31), which Philo has perhaps borrowed. For a discussion of this passage see Arieti and Wilson, *The Scientific & the Divine: Conflict and Reconciliation From Ancient Greece to the Present* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield: 2003) 102–03.

19. In similar way, Gospel accounts, especially the Gospel of Matthew, in which the Hebrew Bible's predictions of the messiah appeared fulfilled in Jesus, the correspondence of prediction with outcome would reinforce faith.

20. T. F. Torrance, "Israel and the Incarnation," *Judaica* 13 (1957) 1–18.

21. J. Pedersen, *Israel. Its Life and Culture* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926).

22. J. D. A. Macnicol, "Word and Deed in the New Testament," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 5 (1952) 237–48.

23. James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991) 130–38.

24. Isaac Rabinowitz ("Towards a Valid Theory of Biblical Hebrew Literature," in Luitpold Wallach, *The Classical Tradition: Literary and Historical Studies in Honor*

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of Harry Caplan [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966] 315–28), for example, claims that in the Bible *davar* has the sense of an "extra-communicative" power that depends on the particular soul that generates the words and that therefore the most extraordinary words would be those of God. But his examples (Jeremiah 15:16: "Your words were found, and I did eat them; and your words were to me a joy and the rejoicing of my heart"; and Hosea 6:5: "Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of my mouth; and your judgment goes forth as the light") are all explainable as metaphors. Rabinowitz also claims (*ibid.* 325) that in the Bible "word" has a magical power whereby a prayer of thanksgiving may be offered before the gift is given for which thanksgiving is offered, and he cites Jonah's prayer inside the big fish as an example. But, as God has provided the fish's belly as a safe sanctuary from the sea, Jonah's prayer of thanksgiving is actually offered *after* God has saved Jonah from drowning.

25. This story, found in Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 3.5, was probably invented by a biographer to account for the dramatic quality of many of the dialogues.

26. In my *Interpreting Plato: The Dialogues as Drama* (Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1991), I argue that it is the emotional effect of the dialogues, which inspires the practice of philosophy, rather than the specific arguments, that have been the source of Plato's appeal. That we should follow the example of a man pursuing virtue, even at the cost of our life, is the core lesson in Plato's portrayal of Socrates. Even when we wish to wring Socrates' neck because of some sleight of logic or dubious argument, we admire his persistence and courage.

27. Arieti, *Interpreting Plato.*

28. *BT Megillah* 26b.

29. See below, p. 23.

30. See Arieti and Wilson 9–10.

31. Though tradition holds that the Talmud was passed down *orally* from the time of the Babylonian Exile in the 6th century, the chronology, alas, is mired in mystery.

32. The Bible was by no means the only subject argued about. Among the countless other subjects was whether Greek or Hebrew is the most beautiful language (*Megillah* 9a)!

33. Among these Medieval codifiers were the eleventh century Isaac Alfasi and the thirteenth century Mordechai ben Hillel. But their summaries, which gave "conclusions," are contrary to the spirit of the Talmud.

34. Sergey Dolgopolski ("What Is the Sophist? What Is the Rabbi?," in *New Directions in Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Aaron W. Hughes, Elliot R. Wolfson [Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2010] 256) artfully shows how disagreement and the absence of dogma lie at the heart of the Talmud. Dolgopolski writes, "My principal argument is that any choice between being and nonbeing, dialogue and oration, philosophy and sophistry does not allow disagreement to be what it is in the Talmud—that is, a goal and not only a means." Of the ancient compilers and editors, he adds, "Producing multiple competing redactions of the teachings of earlier masters, the *amoraim*—whom the redactors would rather [find] in an unsolvable disagreement than allow one of them to be wrong—was a part of the redactors' modus operandi"

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(254). In *What Is Talmud? The Art of Disagreement* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), Dolgopolski puts this view more expansively.

35. The following Hasidic tale expresses the idea beautifully (*The Hasidic Anthology*, ed. Louis I. Newman [Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1987] 1):

> The Oheler Rabbi dreamed that he was in Paradise and was conducted to the Room of the Tannaim. He beheld a Tanna studying the Talmud."Is this, then, all there is to Paradise?" the Rabbi exclaimed.He heard a voice answer him: "Moses, you believe the Tannaim are in Paradise. You are wrong. Paradise is in the Tannaim."

On the beneficial effects of the process, see Chapter 6, "Glimpses of *Mentshlekhkeyt* in Rabbinic Literature."

36. The following argument will depend on this assumption. Those who reject the assumption should not read further. For a full account of reason and the impossibility of separating it from human nature even in cases of drunkenness and mental illness, see Arieti and Wilson 12–16.

37. This is the sort of reading advocated and practiced by Clark E. Cochran, "Joseph and the Politics of Memory," *The Review of Politics* 64 (2002), 429 and Robert Alter, *The World of Biblical Literature* (New York: Basic Books, 1992) 203–04.

38. One must look to evils imputed to Ham in the Midrashim to find justification for Noah's treatment of him (Margaret Bridges, "Of Myths and Maps: The Anglo-Saxon Cosmographer's Europe" in *Writing and Culture*, ed. Balz Engler [Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1992] 78–79). See also Chapter 3, "Mad Curses."

39. He has been defended as choosing the lesser of evils when he presented Sarah as his wife, since he feared for his life (Genesis 12:12) and for the extinction of the race. But later Jewish ethics, under the doctrine of *Pikuach Nefesh* (saving lives) permits lies to save a life but excludes them in cases that involve improper sexual relations—perhaps Abraham's situation—as well as murder and denying God (*Yoma* 82A).

40. The term *argumentum a fortiori* will appear often in this book, as it is a very popular form of argument in both Jewish and Greek literature. It refers to arguing from what is the "stronger" [*fortiori*]. In Pharisaic discussions it is called the argument *qal va-homer* [the argument "light and heavy"]. Aristotle says that the argument is derived from "the more and less," and he gives the following examples (*Rhetoric* 1397b12–26):

> If not even the gods know everything, hardly can men; for this amounts to saying that if a predicate, which is more probably affirmable of one thing, does not belong to it, it is clear that it does not belong to another of which it is less probably affirmable. And to say that a man who beats his father also beats his neighbors, is an instance of the rule that, if the less exists, the more also exists.

What Aristotle probably means in the example about sons beating their fathers is that people strike their fathers less often than they do their neighbors; that is, since it is more probably affirmable than men do not beat their fathers, it is less probably affirmable that they do not beat their neighbors.

An example cited by the rabbis is found in Numbers 12:14, when Miriam is punished with leprosy for her remarks about Moses' wife: "If her father had but spit in her face, should she not hide in shame seven days? Let her be shut up outside

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the camp seven days, and after that she shall be brought in again." In other words, if offending a mere human father (i.e., a "light" thing] is punished for seven days, it is clear that offending God (a "heavy" thing) deserves a severe punishment. For a discussion of the argument and its use in rabbinical writings, see Louis Jacobs, "The Qal Va-Homer Argument in the Old Testament," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 35 (1972) 221–27. Jacobs says that there is no parallel in Greek thought for the *qal va-homer,* but perhaps he overlooked the passage from the *Rhetoric.*

41. When Thales said, "Everything is full of gods," Aristotle took him to mean meant that everything contained its own principle of change within itself, change being one of the kinds of motion (Aristotle, *On the Soul* 411a7).

42. I say *tendencies*, because the Bible sometimes hints at other gods, and the Hebrew people sometimes worshipped other gods and needed to be brought back to one God.

43. In Hesiod, also, in his arguments with his brother Perseus over justice.

44. The defective logic used in rhetoric will be called *enthymemes* by Aristotle, and these are what I am referring to by my phrase "quasi logic."

45. This view of the "blasphemous" portrayal of the gods in poetry, put forth incisively by Xenophanes, was elaborated by Plato in the *Republic,* especially in Books 2 and 3.

46. This sentence reflects the thesis of Jonathan Hall, *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002). He also shows, alas, how the imprint of Athens on what he calls "Hellenicity," or Greekness, was sullied as Athens acted abandoned the selflessness heralded by Herodotus (*History* 8.144) and became corrupted by greed.

47. See Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium: The Historical Evolution of the Hellenistic Age* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990] 407). These metamorphoses of the Pagan gods into rationally plausible entities are respectively those of the elegiac poets (Gian Biagio Conte and Glenn W. Most, "Love without Elegy: The *Remedia amoris* and the Logic of a Genre," *Poetics Today* 10 [1989] 441–69), the Stoics (see, e.g., Philip DeLacy, "Stoic Views of Poetry, *American Journal of Philology* 69 [1948] 241–71), and Euhemerus (Truesdell S. Brown, "Euhemerus and the Historians," *The Harvard Theological Review* 39 [1946] 259–74. On responses to Plato as reflected in rabbinical writings, see Ch. 6, "Homer, Plato, and the Origin of *Mentshlekhkeyt.*"

48. M. L. West shows the early stirrings of Pagan monotheism in "Towards Monotheism" in *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity,* Ed. Polymnia Athanassiadi and Michael Frede (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 21–40. In the same volume, Michael Frede traces the idea only as far back as Aristotle's prime mover ("Monotheism and Pagan Philosophy in Later Antiquity," 48–51). For a more recent study of Pagan monotheism, see Stephen Mitchel and Peter van Nuffelen, *Monotheism between Pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity (Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Culture and Religion)* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2010).

49. According to Jan Assmann, the West has paid a high price for monotheism—the introduction into the world of a violent denunciation of other people's religions, as the generally benign toleration of polytheistic antiquity was replaced by disdain and

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hatred. For a sober summary of Assmann's provocative ideas on this subject, see Eliza Slavet, "A Matter of Distinction: On Recent Work by Jan Assmann," *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 34 (2010) 385–93.

50. Plutarch, *Life of Cato the Elder*, 20.6 and 23; see also Juvenal's *Satire* 3, 58–125.

51. Arnaldo Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975) 101. Similar to Momigliano's are the judicious comments of Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism* xiv: "The Process of 'Hellenization' is mysterious and obscure, not easily defined or demonstrated," and "The degree to which acculturation took place in Judaea itself and the time when it began in earnest elude any certainty." So too those of Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974) 310: "As is the rule in complex historical circumstances, our account of the first encounter between Judaism and Hellenism in Palestine has not produced a uniform, easily understandable, uncontradictory picture, which could be summed up in a schematic judgment." It will be clear in this book that I, like many others, owe an enormous debt to the insights and scholarship of Martin Hengel (for whose work see the overview by J. K. Aitken published in 2004, along with the review of Hengel's book from thirty years earlier by Kevin G. O'Connell, both in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123 [2004] 329–41). On the possibility of the influence of the Hellenistic practice of allegory upon the Palestinian rabbis, see Richard P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sourced and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1959) 35–36.

52. As will be apparent, I put Adam Becker and Louis Feldman in the first category; Saul Lieberman, Arnaldo Momigliano, and Daniel Boyarin in the second; and Louis Finkelstein, Moses Hadas, Martin Hengel, Erich Gruen in the third.

53. Daniel Boyarin describes the shared intellectual climate of Christians and Jews in *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), where he does a persuasive job of showing how at first Christians and Jews were barely distinguishable; in *Border Lines: The Partition of Judeao-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), he expands on the relationship, as each group tried to distinguish itself from the other, and argues that Christianity and Judaism became separate religions—and that the idea of "religion" as we now use it developed—principally through the development of what he calls "heresiology," or the "science of heresies." This "science" involved a good deal of high-level distinctions borrowed from Greek philosophy. Christian theologians, once they developed an appetite for arguing against heretics, would never abandon the project.

54. Yet there have been ingenious attempts to show that the Greeks acquired the keys to learning from the Jews. The attempts, especially those of Eupolemos, are preserved in Eusebius' *Preparation for the Gospel* 13.12. The Pythagorean Numenius went so far as to claim that "even the great Plato was but Moses speaking Attic Greek" and that Greek knowledge was plagiarized from the prophets or conveyed by angels to Greek women in their lovemaking (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.1, 1.15, 5.1, 5.15). According to Clement (*Stromata* 1.24), Moses' military strategy was responsible for the Athenian victory at Marathon! Origen (*Against Celsus*

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1.15) cites Hermippus as claiming that Pythagoras drew his philosophy from the Hebrews. Ambrose, too, claimed that Moses and David were the true sources of pagan philosophy (*de officiis ministrorum* 2.8.43). Since antiquity, there have been tales unsupported by credible evidence that Plato, like Herodotus, traveled extensively and acquired his theories from people in Asia. Moses Hadas ("Plato in Hellenistic Fusion," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19 [1958] 6–7) suggests that the stories were invented to allow native peoples to accept doctrines if they were claimed to have been "locally grown," as it were, and thus a part of their own traditions. Hadas points out that when Jonathan the Maccabee claimed that Jews and Spartans both issued from the seed of Abraham (1 Maccabees 12), Jonathan felt enabled to adopt for his own people methods that had been idealized by Plato, Spartan methods. For how stories that Aristotle and Plato were Jewish or converted to Judaism or were deeply influenced by Jewish books flourished as late as the Renaissance, see Abraham Melamed, "The Myth of the Jewish Origins of Philosophy in the Renaissance: From Aristotle to Plato," *Jewish History* 26 (2012) 41–59.

55. The comment was discovered in the middle of the nineteenth century by Jacob Bernays in a work of Theophrastus embedded in Porphyry's *de abstinentia*. If, as Werner Jaeger and others believe, the work borrows from Hecataeus of Abdera, the first reference to Jews in the Greek world would likely come, as M. Stern, has argued, between 320 and 315 but no later than 305 BCE (M. Stern and Oswyn Murray, "Hecataeus of Abdera and Theophrastus on Jews and Egyptians," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 59 [1973] 159–62). For a full discussion see Bezalel Bar-Kochva*, The Image of the Jews in Greek Literature: The Hellenistic Period* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2010) 4039.

56. *Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of His Development,* 2nd ed. tr. Richard Robinson, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948) 132–35. See also, more recently, Karl H. Dannenfeldt, *The Pseudo-Zoroastrian Oracles in the Renaissance* 4 (1957) 7–9; Anton-Hermann Chroust, "Aristotle and the 'Philosophies of the East'" *The Review of Metaphysics,* 18 (1965) 572–80, where he provides the ancient *testimonia;* and Bar-Kochva 40–89. The possibility of reciprocal influence of Zorastrian and Greek ideas or of a common source in Proto-Indo-European culture reaching as far back as Hesiod and earlier is discussed by Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) 90 ff., and more recently by Vicente Dobroruka, "Hesiodic Reminiscences in Zoroastrian-Hellenistic Apocalypses," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 75 (2012) 275–95.

57. For the fragment, preserved at Herculaneum, Jaeger cites Siegfried, Mekler *Academicorum Philosophorum. Index Herculanensis* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1902). col. iii., 13. Plato (or pseudo-Plato) brings up Zoroaster in *First Alcibiades* (122a), though it is possible that the reference has no more significance than the introduction of a touch of exoticism.

58. These and many more are among the authors in Carl R. Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors,* 4 vols. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1983–1996).

59. Ezekiel cannot be dated with any certainty. He appears to use the language of the Septuagint, which would probably put him after the beginning of the second century BCE (though the date of the Septuagint is itself not precisely known). He

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is mentioned by Alexander Polyhistor, a Greek scholar of the first half of the first century BCE, who, among his many writings, wrote a book entitled *About the Jews.* Alexander's date would put Ezekiel no later than the mid-first century BCE.

60. His chronology is also subject to debate. Clement dates him to the time of King Philometor (c. 181–145); Eusebius, praising him as "a most distinguished scholar," says that he was one the translators of the Septuagint (*Ecclesiastical History* 7.32). See Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism* 246–51.

61. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.22, 6.3; and Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 7.32.

62. Eusebius, *Evangelical Preparation* 13.12.

63. See "Aristobulus of Paneas," *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1901–6).

64. See Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism*: on genres and literary conventions, 111–112; on sanitizing, 75, 122–25; on patriarchs as inventors, 194; on monotheism in the tragedians, 295.

65. On other attempts, by people like Artapanus or the anonymous author of *Joseph and Aseneth*, or Josephus, to claim extravagant contributions by Joseph to world history, see Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism* 86–99.

66. The quotation of Genesis 1:3 is in *On the Sublime* 9.9. It is possible, however, that Longinus was a Hellenized Jew (see Arieti and Crossett, *Longinus' On the Sublime:* Introduction, Translation, Commentary, Appendices [New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1985]). Longinus' chronology does not go undisputed. He likely flourished in the middle of the first century CE, during the reign of Nero (see Arieti and Crossett, *The Dating of Longinus. Studia Classica* III, 1975).

67. 2 Kings 22–23 and 2 Chronicles 34–35. The accounts differ in details of the stages of the reforms, but the substance is the same.

68. 2 Chronicles 35:1–18.

69. Exodus 12. See Chapter 2, "Remembering: Glory, Gratitude, and Duty."

70. These are described in detail by Herodotus in *History*, Book 4.

71. Herodotus, *History* 4.43.

72. Roman satirists identify three especially peculiar habits: observance of the Sabbath, circumcision, and abstinence from pork. See Peter Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes Toward the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). In "'Why Do You Refuse to Eat Pork?' Jews, Food, and Identity in Roman Palestine," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 100 (2010), 96, Jordan D. Rosenblum reports, "By refusing to eat pig, Jews are never able to ingest Romanness and thus can never truly become Roman. On the other hand, according to some rabbinic sources, because Romans eat pig they are, as such, embodied as pigs." This sort of conceit is very much like the sort Plato has his speaker Timaeus make in the *Timaeus* (91d–92c)—perhaps another hint of Platonic influence in rabbinic writings. In the last decades, there has been quite a bit of discussion of Jewish sexual attitudes, and their differences with other peoples. See Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); David Winston, "Philo and the Rabbis on Sex and the Body," in *The Ancestral Philosophy, Hellenistic Philosophy in Second Temple Judaiam: Essays of David Winston* (Providence: Brown University Press, 2001) 199–219; and William Loader, *Philo, Josephus, and*

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the Testaments on Sexuality: Attitudes towards Sexuality in the Writings of Philo and Josephus and in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmanns, 2011).

73. See Robert G. Hall, "Epispasm and the Dating of Ancient Jewish Writing" (*Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha* 2 [1988] 71–86).

74. This was my teacher John M. Crossett's translation of the proverb *repetitio est mater studiorum.* Jews, understanding this truth, named their schools for Torah studies "Tannaite," after the Aramaic verb *tena* ("repeat"). Studies of the Talmud are usually divided into the Tannaite and pre-Tannaite periods.

75. Perhaps the injunction in Deuteronomy 6:8 to teach the commandments "diligently to thy children" was the inspiration. Nili Shupak concludes from evidence in the Bible (there is no external evidence of schools) that in the era of the First Temple, the learning of students, though it became more independent and creative as they progressed, nevertheless generally consisted of traditional material and the accompanying obligation to pass it down from generations to generation ("Learning Methods in Ancient Israel," *Vetus testamentum* 53 [2003] 416–26). Josephus (*Contra Apion* 2.173–75) and Philo (*Embassy to Gaius* 23.155–58) report that instruction in the Torah was given every Sabbath. According Pieter W. van der Horst, readings and instruction in the Torah took place long before regular Sabbath services, which, he says, were unlikely to have begun before the third century ("Was the Synagogue a Place of Sabbath Worship Before 70 CE?" in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue: Cultural Interaction during the Greco-Roman Period*, ed. Steven Fine [London: Routledge, 1999] 23–24). On the same topic, see also Heather McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue: The Question of Sabbath Worship in Ancient Judaism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994) 73–77. And it seems that Midrashim on the Torah were produced at Qumran in the first century BCE (Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin Classics, 2006).

76. According to the Wellhausen documentary hypothesis, the P Source of the Torah had been written about a century earlier; the D Source, about thirty years earlier, in the time of Josiah, who "rediscovered" it. If the Jews chosen for exile to Babylon were those most committed to their religion, it is plausible to suppose that they tried to preserve their religion and that doing so in concert inspired social cohesiveness. Finding others who spoke the language of Judea would also have fostered cohesion. While these speculations may be plausible, they, like most theories about this period, including those of Julius Wellhausen, are perforce only speculations. One thing only can be said with confidence: all statements about early Israel and about the original composition of the Torah and the Talmud are subject to fierce debate.

77. For the traditional date of the start of the Talmud, see Louis Jacobs, *We Have Reason to Believe: Some Aspects of Jewish Theology Examined in the Light of Modern Thought* (London: Vallentine Mitchel, 1965); Martin Goodman, ed., *Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 64. Others put the date as late as the second century CE (e.g., Shaye Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006] 174). Despite the absence of recognition of Greek and Roman authors in the Talmud, there seems a general consensus now that the borders between the cultures were a lot more porous than

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was believed to be the case. This has been shown by Joel T. Walker, "The Limits of Late Antiquity: Philosophy between Rome and Iran," *Ancient World* 33 (2002) 45–69; Daniel Boyarin, "Hellenism in Jewish Babylonia," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Tamud and Rabbinic Literature,* ed. Charlotte Fonrobert and Martin Jaffee (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 336–65; Adam H. Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and the Development of Acholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); and, for the comingling of influence in the field of magic, which seems to have spread easily and left tangible evidence in the form of amulets and bowls, Joshua Levinson, "Enchanting Rabbis: Contest Narratives between Rabbis and Magicians in Late Antiquity," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 100 (2010) 54–94.

78. On Aramaic as the *lingua franca* in this era, see Elias J. Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988) 14–15 and 51–65. See also Bradley J. Parker, "The Construction and Performance of Kingship in the Neo-Assyrian Empire," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 67 (2011) 360–61. Parker cites the earlier work of F. M. Fales, "The Use and Function of Aramaic Tablets," in *Essays on Syria in the Iron Age*, ed. G. Bunnens, 89–124. Ancient Near Eastern Studies Supplement 7 (Louvain: Peeters Press, 2000).

79. See Green, *Passim.*

80. In "The Vocabulary of Septuagint Amos," *Journal of Biblical Literatu*re 93 (1974): 338–47, I argued that the Septuagint itself, perhaps deliberately, does not use in the philosophical sense words that are simultaneously both part of the general Greek vocabulary and the technical Greek philosophical vocabulary. But a positive sentiment concerning Greek influence was reflected in the very question referred to earlier (n. 12 about Megillah 39a) of whether Hebrew or *Greek* was the most beautiful of all languages.

81. As Gruen points out, the Hasmonaeans, the dynasty established by Judas Maccabee's brother Simon in the century after the Maccabaean revolt, "engaged in diplomatic dealings with Greek kings, adopted Greek names, donned garb and paraded emblems redolent with Hellenic significance, erected monuments, stelai, and minted coinage inspired by Greek models, hired mercenaries, and even took on royal titulature" (*Heritage and Hellenism* 2).

82. *Socrates and the Fat Rabbis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009) 135–36. Adam H. Becker ("Positing a 'Cultural Relationship' between Plato and the Babylonian Talmud, *Jewish Quarterly Review* 101 [2011] 255–69) faults Boyarin for insisting on cultural exchanges that do not come from texts, but, I think, Becker is seeking a level of proof that is simply not derivable from extant materials: the evidence, as in the case of so much concerning the past, must perforce be circumstantial. Becker builds his case against Boyarin by claiming that the rabbis did not have texts of Plato, whom Boyarin claims (29–30) to have been the first to introduce the seriocomic. This claim of Plato's priority is mistaken—seriocomic writing is pervasive in Greek literature before Plato, in Homer, Herodotus, Xenophanes, Semonides, and Aristophanes. Perhaps it would be more to the mark to say that so highly regarded an intellectual as Plato made the seriocomic acceptable in the writing of later authors, including that of rabbis.

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83. Richard Hidary, "Classical Rhetorical Arrangement and Reasoning in the Talmud: The Case of Yerushalmi Berakhot 1:1," *Association of Jewish Studies Review* 34 (2010) 36–37.

84. For a discussion of the particularly Socratic character of rabbinical argument, see Jacob Howland, *Plato and the Talmud* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 11.

85. Moses Hadas, "Fusion" 11, shows that a feature of the dialectical method of Plato's Academy, the technique of *aporia* and *luseis*—perplexities and their resolutions—is regularly used in the Talmud.

86. Daniel Boyarin, *Socrates and the Fat Rabbis.* For contrasting opinions about the book, see on the predominantly positive side, Barry Scott Wimpheimer, "The Dialogical Talmud: Daniel Boyarin and Rabbinics," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 101 (2011) 245–54; and, on the negative side, Adam H. Becker 255–69.

87. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, "Rabbi Shimeon bar Yohai's Cave (B. Shabbat 33B–34A): The Talmudic Inversion of Plato's Politics of Philosophy," *Association of Jewish Studies Review* 31 (2007) 277–96. In the conclusion to her discussion of the withdrawal of Rabbis Rashbi and Eleazar from their community as an echo of *Republic* 514a–517d, she suggests that the Talmud is describing a model of community involvement "that sails between the Scylla of total withdrawal from the political life into the cave and the Charybdis of fantasies of ruling the political community" (294). This, I argue in *Interpreting Plato*, is exactly Plato's teaching in the *Gorgias*—that the model political life is a mean between the extremes of pure contemplation and a civic activity that rejects philosophy altogether.

88. The history of the new conception of the deity cannot be traced precisely, for the earliest philosophers seldom mention one another. Later writers, perhaps influenced by two passing characterizations of Xenophanes in Plato (*Sophist* 242c-d) and Aristotle (*Metaphysics* 986b18–27), are a little more forthcoming. One can read Plato's *Euthyphro* without finding a hint that Socrates' argument was anticipated by Xenophanes. In antiquity, influence and attribution come in on little cat feet, like the fog. For an extended discussion of this view of God, see Arieti and Wilson 92–124. Included among the daughter schools of Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum are the Stoics and Neoplatonists.

89. This description of the "standard model" did not and will not, of course, satisfy everyone. Eric Steinhard, "On the Number of Gods," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 72 (2012) 75–83, argues that polytheism has some attractive features that render it worthy of further study, especially if its adherents develop the kinds of arguments that led to the standard model as described above.

90. The ineffability is sometimes conveyed by writing "G-d."

91. This conception of God perhaps entered the Jewish tradition in the generation before Philo, in *The Wisdom of Solomon.* See, in particular, the edition of David Winston, *The Anchor Bible: The Wisdom of Solomon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1979) 38–46, for the qualities of wisdom, love, omnipotence, and so on. For the influence of Plato on the conception, see Hadas "Fusion" 9, and Michael Cover, *Lifting the Veil: 2 Corinthians 3:7–18 in the Light of Jewish Homiletic an Commentary Traditions* (Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 2015) 107.

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92. I wish to emphasize that I am saying Plato's *writing* as distinct from his thought, for, as I have explained elsewhere, Plato's metaphors were very often taken as his actual views, indeed, as a form of divine inspiration, and it is this literal reading of his metaphors that has profoundly shaped the history of the West.

93. Plato's "Doctrine of Recollection" is treated most fully in the *Meno.* While it is generally taken as a serious idea, I have argued that Socrates is using it as an ingenious way to throw his interlocutor off balance (*Interpreting Plato* 201–14). Whether or not Plato meant for the "Doctrine of Recollection" to be taken seriously, it may have influenced the Talmudic authors, as Boyarin argues (*Socrates and the Fat Rabbis* 11).

94. This was surely the source of Augustine's phrasing in the *Confessions* (1.6) about his "dying life or living death" (*vitam mortalem, an mortalem vitalem*). With stories of the judgment of souls in the *Phaedo, Republic,* and *Gorgias,* Plato gave philosophical authority to the tales of an afterlife that began in Homer's *Odyssey,* with its portrayal of individual immortality, an idea that appears in Jewish writing for the first time in *The Wisdom of Solomon* 3.1–4 and becomes a principal doctrine in Christianity. On this important development, see John J. Collins, *Seers, Sibyls, and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1997) 366–67.

95. Plato's importance was evident to many of the ancients, and this is one of the reasons he was claimed as the Greek Moses (see above, n. 54). For a more detailed discussion of Plato's reconciliation of the major strains of pre-Socratic philosophy, of his conception of *logos,* its adoption by Philo, and its modification in Christianity, see above, the section "Greek *Logos* and Hebrew *Davar.*"

96. These views are found in, among other places, the *Apology* and the *Symposium* (the voice); the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* (magical glimpses into the World of Being); the *Phaedo*, *Gorgias*, and *Republic* (the afterlife); and the *Timaeus* (the supernatural fabrication of the universe).

97. Above, pp. 8–9.

98. And for the Neoplatonists, too. On this application of Plato's notions of ideas as universal, unchanging, and eternal to God, see Elizabeth A. Clark, *Clement's Use of Aristotle*.

99. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* 170–74.

100. Hengel 170.

101. Hengel 171.

102. David Winston, "Philo and Rabbinnic Literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, ed. Adam Kamesar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 231, is typical: "Most scholars agree that there is a significant relationship between Philo and rabbinnic literature, yet one looks in vain for an explicit reference to him in the vast corpus of writings." Louis Finkelstein, is a rare exception. In "Is Philo Mentioned in Rabbinnic Literature?" (*JBL* 53[1934] 142–49) he found tantalizing, if inconclusive, evidence of two possible references to Philo.

103. On *The Wisdom of Solomon*, see above, notes 91 and 94.

104. To support the connection of these notions to Philo, I should like to point out another link. In *On the Contemplative Life* 78, 90, Philo paraphrases Plato's *Phaedrus* 264c, where Plato has compared a work of literature to a body, a "corpus" whose parts together form an "organic whole." Philo writes, with an echo of the *Jerusalem Targum*

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on Genesi*s* 1:27: "For the whole of the Law seems to these people to resemble a living being with the literal commandments for its body, and for its soul the invisible meaning stored away with words."

105. *Back to Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts,* ed. Barry W. Holtz, (New York: Summit Books, 1984) 21.

106. Holtz 185.

107. Hengel 172.

108. The view of the Torah "as written in a code language, a language in which every letter has mathematical and ideographic influence" is affirmed by Paul Eidelberg, *Jerusalem vs. Athens: In Quest of a General Theory of Existence* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983) xii.

109. By this I am thinking of such practices as that of Aquila, whose spiritual journey from Pagan to Christian to Jew is referred to in Jerome and in the Talmud (which says he became a disciple of Rabbi Akiba). Believing that every word must be translated, he rendered אֵת (*et*), an untranslatable marker of the direct object as the preposition *syn* ("with"), and thus made the translation incomprehensible. Aquila was dissatisfied with the Septuagint, which had put the Hebrew into intelligible Greek but at the sacrifice of an adherence to a one-to-one correspondence. Yet, as Jenny R. Labendz, writes in her article on the reception of Aquila ("Aquila's Bible Translation in Late Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Perspectives," *The Harvard Theological Review* 102 [2009] 374–75), Justinian, responding to a petition from Jews asking him to decide whether Greek might be used to read Scripture, permitted Aquila's translation to be used in lieu of the Septuagint.

110. *Erubin* 13a. The admonition was issued in the second century CE.

111. The speech and its metaphors affect theology, including the Judaic literature of Hekhaloth and Merkabah mysticism (i.e., the mysticism involving God's palace and throne and ascents to them by means of a flying chariot), Neoplatonism, and Christian theology. Marsilio Ficino's commentary on the *Phaedrus* during the Italian Renaissance is part of the long tradition of taking this dialogue seriously as virtually a form of divine revelation.

112. See Adrien Lecerf, "Iamblichus and Julian's 'Third Demiurge': A Proposition" in *Iamblichus and the Foundations of Late Platonism,* ed. Eugene Afonasin, John M. Dillon, John Finamore (Leiden: Brill, 2012) 188.

113. Because of its presumed attention to a mystic union between earthly humans and the divine, the *Phaedrus* was the inspiration and focus of the Neoplatonists Iamblichus, Proclus, and Hermeias. What survives of Iamblichus' commentary is available in Hohn H. Dillon, *Iamblichi Chalcidensis: In Platonis Dialogos Commentarium Fragmenta* (Leiden: Brill, 193). For Proclus there is the edition, in six volumes, of H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerlink, *Proclus: Théologie Platonicienne* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968–97), in which extensive passages are devoted to the Phaedrus. Hermeias, a fifth-century Neoplatonist from Alexandria, also produced a commentary in the only work of his that has survived; it has been published (*Hermiae Alexandrini in Platonis Phaedrum Scholia*, ed. P. Couvreur [Paris: Librairie Émile Boullon, 1901]). For Ficino, see *Commentaries on Plato, Volume 1: Phaedrus and Ion*, tr. Michael J. B. Allen (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

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114. My use of capital letters indicates the words' high status in the World of Being.

115. *Phaedrus* 246a–249a. The speech concludes at 251a.

116. In what seems to me a Platonic jest, the desire for sex and to procreate is called by Socrates "contrary to nature" (παρὰ φύσιν)—a continuation of the rhetorical conceit of saying things that defy expectation. For a joke on the term "winged" as slang for an erect phallus, see Stephen Scully, *Plato's* Phaedrus (Newburyport, MA: Focus, 2003) 32 n. 77. Unlike most readers of Plato, Scully is well-attuned to the humor. I would maintain that understanding Plato, like understanding Shakespeare, requires a sensitivity to the *double* (sometimes *triple*) *entendre*.

117. Plato has Socrates describe, rather less poetically, a similar ascent in the *Symposium* (210e–211d) and *Theaetetus* 176a–b. The passage from the *Theaetetus* is quoted and its context described by Philo in *On Flight and Finding* 62–63. As I have argued here, it would take only one rabbi to have read Philo and transferred his ideas to begin the process of influence.

118. See Gershom G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965) and, by the same author, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* 2nd ed. (New York: Schoken Books, 1954; repr. 1995), Chapter 2 (pp. 40–79).

119. *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* 40–41.

120. Scholem, *ibid*. 42. See 41 and n. 124.

121. On *Plato's* actual context—a playful competition between the Athenian orator Lysias and Socrates on who can deliver the better speech about sexual desire (*eros*)–see my *Interpreting Plato* 185–200.

122. Another notion that comes from misreading Plato is that physical matter, as farthest from the perfect and divine, is contemptible and ought to be treated as such. This view leads to a consequent denigration of things corporeal, with the particular result that sexual intercourse, as the most palpable manifestation of corporeality, ought to be disdained if it cannot avoided altogether. This particular misreading concerning matter was responsible for the transformation of *askesis*, originally an exercise of self-control and abstention from unhealthy earthly desires, into the self-inflicted torments of asceticism and physical abnegation.

123. Parmenides, Fragment B 1 in *Die Fragmente Der Vorsokratiker* ed. Hermann Diels (Berlin: Weidmannsche buchhandlung, 1903). On the translation "convincing and infallible heart of Truth," see Hermann Fränkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy* p. 352 n. 11. Given the possibility that the *Bhagavad Gita* was written sometime in the two centuries after Plato, it is not inconceivable that the author was influenced by Plato's works, some of which may have been communicated by Alexander's soldiers. Plato was certainly familiar with Parmenides, and portrays him, in a dialogue named for him, putting a young Socrates through his paces.

124. *B. Shabbat* 13b.

125. For example, there is the rule that the chapter on creation not be discussed in the presence of two people; but the chapters on the chariot may not be discussed in the presence of even one, with the exception of a sage (*B. Hagigah* 11b–13a). Augustine had passed on the joke (while denying that *he* would ever say such a thing) about the man who when asked what God was doing before he created the heavens and the earth

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replied that he was preparing hells for people who look into such matters (*scrutantibus gehennas parabat: Confessions* 11.xii [14]). The rabbis, in the same passage in *Hagigah*, said somewhat more charitably that it was better for a person speculating on this question never to have been born. For the dangers of such discussions, which might dishonor God, see David J. Halperin, *The Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1980) 19–63; also Annette Y. Reed, "From 'Pre-Emptive Exegesis' to 'Pre-Emptive Speculation?' *Ma'aseh Bereshit* in *Genesis Rabbah* and *Pirqei deRabbi Eliezer*," in *With Letters of Light: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish Apocalypticism, Magic, and Mysticism (Ekstasis: Religious Experience from Antiquity to the Middle Ages)* ed. Daphna V. Arbel and Andrei A. Orlov (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010) 115–32.

126. *The HarperCollins Bible Commentary*, James L. Mays, ed., Rev. ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2000) 583.

127. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* 42–43.

128. Joseph Dan, "The Religious Experience of the *Merkavah*" in *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible through the Middle Ages*, ed. Arthur Green (New York: Crossroads, 1987) 291.

129. Even the Stoics admitted astrology into their system (F. E. Peters, *The Harvest of Hellenism: A History of the Near East from Alexander the Great to the Triumph of Christianity* (New York; Barnes and Noble Books, repr. 1996) 69. On the popular desire for magic to be efficacious, see Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium* 596–601.

130. Alexander Toepel, "Yonton Revisited: A Case Study in the Reception of Hellenistic Science within Early Judaism," *The Harvard Theological Review* 99 (2006) 244–45.

131. The absence of citation does not signify lack of influence. Gershom Scholem shows that though the rabbis do not mention a single Greek "philosophic" term used by the Gnostics, they are very familiar with their writings (*Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* [New York, 1960] pp. 9 ff.).

132. Augustine's teacher Ambrose, in *de Officiis* (an imitation of Cicero's work of the same name), appears to be the first to welcome Pagan virtues into Christian orthodoxy. On the *de Officiis*, see Jordan, Mark D., "Cicero, Ambrose, and Aquinas 'On Duties' or the Limits of Genre in Morals," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 33 (2005) 485–502.

133. Of course, this conclusion passes over the difficulty of having a philosophically defined God as actually producing words.

134. As noted by Tertullian's famous question, "what has Athens to do with Jerusalem?"

135. In this regard, we might consider Basil's "Letter to Young Men," which showed how pagan literature could become part of Christian education.

136. Lieberman, in *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1950) 100–14, denies that there was a ban on Greek wisdom *qua* wisdom, or on the Greek language. Instead, he says, there was a *discouragement* since Greek learning would distract from attention to the Torah.

137. With the so-called edict of toleration of Antoninus Pius in 139 CE, proselytism by Jews was forbidden and circumcision permitted only to them (Jean Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'empire Romain, leur condition juridique, économique et sociale* [Paris: Librairie Paul Geuthner, 1914] vol. 1, 263–71).

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138. *B. Shabbath* 77b. Here and elsewhere, the titles are those in the *Soncino Babylonian Talmud* ed. Isidore Epstein. 18 volumes (London: Soncino Press, 1961).

139. On the change in the text, see Byron L Sherwin, *Jewish Ethics for the Twenty-First Century: Living in the Image of God* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003) 5.

140. Quoted in Bialik (14), where it is cited as *Sifre* Deuteronomy 307 and *Genesis Rabbah* 12:1. For Hellenic influence on the *Genesis Rabbah*, known also for its Greek loanwords, see Maren R. Niehoff, "Creatio ex Nihilo Theology in Genesis Rabbah in Light of Christian Exegesis," *The Harvard Theological Review* 99 (2006) 37–64.

141. *Mekilta Shirata*, Beshallach 4.

142. *Exodus Rabbah*, Yithro, 28, 4. ("Yithro" refers to the second, and distinctive word of the parashah—the weekly Torah portion [the first word is "heard," not sufficiently distinctive to identify the portion.)

143. *Genesis Rabbah*, Bereshit 9.3; *Aboth* 3.19. This reconciliation is like that in Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, with which it is roughly contemporary. Whether there is a derivation or borrowing in one direction or another, the consonance would show a mutually shared intellectual environment.

144. *Sifra* 86c.

145. *Exodus Rabbah* 28.4.

146. Midrash Abba Gorion on Esther 1:8.

147. *Yalkut Shimoni,* Parshat Yitro 286. The passage continues by explaining that the Torah was given in the desert, land that properly belongs to no one, so that there would be no dissension among the tribes as to its provenance.

148. *Genesis Rabbah* 12:15; *Yalkut*, Bereshit 19.

149. Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 4.3.14 (tr. E. C. Merchant): "Mark that even the sun, who seems to reveal himself to all, permits not man to behold him closely, but if any attempts to gaze recklessly upon him, blinds their eyes."

150. *Midrash Tanhuma* Vayeshev 8 ("vayeshev" is the identifier of the parashah Genesis 37:1–40:23); on the same point, also *Exodus Rabbah* 3:12.

151. For example, Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 1.3; Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, tr. S. Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963) 322–31.

152. *Petirat Mosheh* 121, *Yerushalmi Hagigah* 2.17.

153. The secrecy too may have been borrowed from the mystery religions. For the secrets of the Tetragrammaton (the four Hebrew letters used to substitute for God's name) entrusted to the disciples, see *Kiddushin* 71a. In addition to the Tetragrammaton, there are versions of God's name with twelve, forty-two (these are mentioned in *Kiddushin* 71a), and seventy-two letters (this is used in the Kabbala, which begins in the Middle Ages).

154. For a lovely discussion of aggadic expositions and their relation to what is now being called, in an application of Greek terminology, the "rhetoric" of the Talmud, see David Metzger and Steven B. Katz, "The 'Place' of Rhetoric in Aggadic Midrash," *College English* 72 (2010) 638–53.

155. The most widely dispersed example of aggadic interpretation is the Haggadah, which Jews throughout the world use during Passover at the Seder. Here is one example. In the retelling of the story of slavery and redemption, the Haggadah quotes Deuteronomy 26:7: "And we cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord

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heard our voice, and saw our affliction, and our toil, and our oppression." The Midrash explains the meaning of "and saw our affliction" by elaborating on the nature of the affliction: what God observed was "the marital separation of husband and wife, as it is written 'God saw the children of Israel and knew.'" This Midrash further explained that the Egyptians forced Hebrew men to work at night so that they could no longer be with their wives—a violation of the Jewish belief in the sanctity of the family. There is, to be sure, much creative interpretation involved in deriving all this from "affliction."

156. The rabbis applied to biblical materials the exegetical methods taken over from Alexandrian philology. These methods, which included allegory, helped them to eliminate contradictions. See, for example, Richard P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event* esp. 23–36. See also J. Z. Lauterbach, "The Ancient Jewish Allegorists in Talmud and Midrash" *Jewish Quarterly Review* 1 (1910–11): 291–333 and 503–31. On the tools for emending problematic texts, see Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1950) 35–37 and especially 47–82.

157. The idea makes its way into Plato's playful discussion of the transmigration of souls in the *Timaeus* and the *Phaedo.* Perhaps Paul, who does not hyperbolize so much as Jeremiah and claims (Galatians 1:15) only to have been chosen by God *before* birth (but presumably after he was conceived), reflects in his claim a Greek philosophical influence. As usual, claims were also made about influence in the other direction, from Israelites to Greeks. On Josephus' statement that Pythagoras introduced Essene ideas, including vegetarianism, into Greece, see Joan E. Taylor, "Philo of Alexandria on the Essenes: A Case Study on the Use of Classical Sources in Discussions of the Qumran-Essene Hypothesis," *Studia Philonica Annual* 19 (2007) 4.

158. Some of it is funded by the Templeton Foundation, from which, in the interests of disclosure, I acknowledge receiving in 1996 a Templeton Prize for Science and Religion. A history of ongoing attempts to reconcile religion with science and philosophy, from Pagan and postbiblical times until today, was the principal topic of Arieti and Wilson, *The Scientific and Divine.* A new and novel attempt at reconciliation appears in Yoram Hazony's *The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012), which rejects the distinction between reason and revelation and argues that the Hebrew Bible, properly understood, *is* philosophy. Hazony says that he has read "the Hebrew Scriptures as philosophical books, whose purpose was to assist individuals and nations looking to discover the true and the good in accordance with man's natural abilities" (260). Just as we do not reject Parmenides and Empedocles as philosophers despite their claims of receiving divine instruction, so, he says, we should not reject the Bible as philosophy (11). In this view he was anticipated in the early second century BCE by Aristobulus of Paneas, who said: "Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato, when they claim to hear 'the voice of God,' mean this creative power" (Eusebius, *Evangelical Preparation* 13.12), thus making divine revelation a factor in Greek philosophy. In any case, to call the prophets *philosophers,* as Hazony does, is to use a later Greek term to define persons, like Jeremiah, who could not possibly have thought of themselves in this way. Still, one may *be* a philosopher without knowing it, in the same way that Australia was the biggest island on the planet before anybody knew it. Hazony's is yet another entirely human way of shaping facts to fit a scheme,

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in his case, the scheme that philosophy can inform texts other than those that are generally classified as philosophical.

159. *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) 461 n. 4. Yet the rabbis' knowledge of the sexual practices of the Greeks extended to their intercrural intercourse, which was "acc. to some," the standard practice of Greek pederasty (Boyarin "Are There Any Jews in 'The History of Sexuality'?" *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5 [1995] 338). This knowledge on the part of the rabbis surely betokens an impact on them beyond coinage.

160. *Ibid.* p. 462, n. 9. One might assume that the art in synagogues would carry religious significance. Discussing a fresco at the synagogue at Dura-Europos, Warren G. Moon observes, "Moses' body is clearly heroically proportioned, entirely intellectualized and arranged, albeit by provincial artisans, according to Classical schemes" ("Nudity and Narrative: Observations on the Frescoes from the Dura Synagogue," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 60 [1992] 592). The adoption of the classical canon of proportions is surely evidence of Greek influence.

161. Yet, in his earlier article, "Josephus' Portrait of Noah and Its Parallels in Philo, Pseudo-Philo's 'Biblical Antiquities', and Rabbinic Midrashim," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 55 (1988) 39–40 n. 15, Feldman points out a large number of places where Josephus borrows from Plato—on theological matters from the *Timaeus*, on political matters, from other dialogues.

162. In Platonic terms, such learning would also be a preparation for death. In the late Hellenistic period, Neoplatonists were treating Odysseus's return to Ithaca as an allegory of the soul's return from exile, that is, as a return to the World of Being from the World of Becoming (Jean Pépin, *Mythe et allégorie: Les origines grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes* [Paris: Montaigne, 1958] 199–200). It would take only one rabbi familiar with these notions to introduce them to his community.

163. *Jew and Gentile* 6, where Feldman attributes these "convincing" conclusions to Peter Green's *Alexander to Actium* 312–25.

164. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile* 472, n. 149. His references are to Armand Kaminka, "Les rapports entre le rabbinisme et la philosophie stoicienne," *Revue des Études Juives* 82 (1926) 233–25 and to Hengel, "Der Alte und der Neue 'Schürer,'" *Journal of Semitic Studies* 35 (1990) 19–72.

165. See the analogy to convergent evolution above, p. 13.

166. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile* 33.

167. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile* 35–36. His references are to Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Patriarchs and Scholarchs," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 48 (1981), 57–85 and to Henry Fischel's article on Cynics in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*.

168. Yet synagogues and tombs, as is now well established, had Greek symbols (E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953) I, 4 ff.). These may not show influence of an "abstract" deity, but they show cultural influence.

169. We should contrast the angst-filled attempts of Augustine in the *Confessions* to understand an incorporeal God with the devotion of his Catholic brothers who placed statues of local saints at every intersection. In a fascinating argument between Rabban Gamliel and an unnamed philosopher recorded in the Mekhilta, a Midrash on

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Exodus attributed a Rabbi Ishmael, the philosopher, quoting Exodus 20:5 ("for the Lord your God is a jealous God"), asks Gamliel how "Gamliel's God" can feel jealousy, and the discussion proceeds in the context of the "standard Model" of God (i.e., one uncontaminated by human passions). For a close examination of the conversation, which shows the influence of Greek philosophy upon the author of this Midrash, see Azzan Yadin, "Rabban Gamliel, Aphrodite's Bath, and the Question of Pagan Monotheism," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 96 (2006) 149–79.

170. Hadas, "Fusion" 3–4. For a recent summary of Hellenization in Judaea, see Richard A. Horseley, *Scribes, Visionaries, and the Politics of Second Temple Judaea* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007) 47–48.

171. See above, n. 164.

172. The collection of essays in *Hellenism in the Land of Israel,* ed. John J. Collins and Gregory E. Sterling, reveals the widespread diffusion of Greek elements (e.g., P. W. Van der Horst, "Greek in Jewish Palestine in Light of Jewish Epigraphy"; J. C. VanderKam, "Greek at Qumran"; Sean Freyne, "Galileans, Phoenicians, and Itureans: A Study of Regional Contrasts in the Hellenistic Age"; Shaye Cohen, "Hellenism in Unexpected Places"; Tessa. Rajak, "Greeks and Barbarians in Josephus"; and Gregory E. Sterling, "Judaism between Jerusalem and Alexandria"). In addition, there is the work of Goodman (who wrote the epilogue in *Hellenism in the Land of Israel*), Goodenough, Fischel, Kiminka, Boyarin, and others mentioned earlier. Cf. also Philip R. Davies ("Judaism and the Hebrew Scriptures," in *The Blackwell Companion to Judaism* ed. Jacob Neusner and Alan J. Avery-Peck, [Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003] 37), who writes that the canon "almost certainly grew out of the professional activities of the Judaean scribal class and scribal communities under the Persians and Greeks (i.e., from the sixth century BCE and onwards)."

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Chapter 1

Nature

Most of us would agree that a beaver's dam is natural but that a human dam is not—that a human dam is *artificial*—and we would defend our agreement by saying that a beaver acts on instinct, a human on reason. Yet, if reason is instinctual in humans, and if it is natural to act on instinct, would it not be natural for a human, using reason, to build a dam? This argument would apply generally to all the behaviors that derive from reason. Social organization, along with structuring the most advantageous regimes and laws, would also derive from reason and hence be natural for human beings. If there be a main thrust of ancient philosophy, one of its principal tenets would be the capacity of human beings, *by nature*, to reason. So when the Stoics and also the other schools of philosophy spoke of humans acting in accordance with nature, they meant acting in accordance with reason; actions stirred by passions, emotions, fallacies, and other aberrations from reason they judged as unnatural for human beings.

The conception of nature in the Bible is much less explicit than that in Greek philosophy. In the story of creation God speaks and makes value judgments from the very beginning—both behaviors characteristic of human beings. From the Greek point of view, anything a divinity does is in the domain of the *supernatural*, an area above but not entirely distinct from that of the human world. Because the Greek gods are also gods of nature, there is not a clear distinction between the natural and the supernatural in the Hellenic world. Good deeds and truth are what humans have in common with the divine, says Longinus (*On the Sublime* 1.2), and his statement is in accord with most ancient thinking. The biblical deity, apart from the rather minor role of angels, is the only supernatural agent, and, of course, there is no word in the Bible for "supernatural."[1] When in the Bible God makes men and women in his image, a commonness of the human and the divine

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seems asserted. When Philo looked at the Bible in the context of his reading of Plato, that image became *logos*—reason—the defining characteristic of human nature. In the story in Genesis, God creates both human beings and animals on the sixth day, perhaps a suggestion that they share the same place in the world. So are human beings a part of the natural world alone or do they share in the supernatural, too? This chapter will examine several matters involving objects in nature, or, in the case of talking animals, aberrations from nature, and the classical and biblical responses to them.

RAINBOWS: COVENANT AND WONDER

There is still found in some siddurim a prayer for Jews to recite when they see a rainbow: "Blessed art thou, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe. Remembering thy covenant thou art true to it and faithful to thy promise."[2] When an ancient Greek saw a rainbow he exclaimed, "What is that rainbow in the sky? I *wonder* what it is."

Rainbows are a sign of God's covenant with Noah after the flood (Genesis 9:8–18). God promises not to destroy earth's animals by means of water. Nothing suggests that Noah looked up, saw the rainbow, and wondered what it was. God specifically says that the rainbow is a sign to help *himself* remember his promise—a point he highlights by repeating it. He establishes the rainbow as an automatic *mechanism*; it is to appear spontaneously after rain has fallen. The rainbow would not serve the purpose of reminding God of the covenant if *he* had to create a new rainbow each time it rained—for he would already have remembered the purpose of the rainbow. Does God's desire for a reminder suggest that he has a faulty memory? Does it indicate a need for what Yair Lorberbaum has called "an anger-management device" to calm him down when he is annoyed with human beings?[3] Would God forget his promise if there were no rainbows? None of these questions receive an answer, nor does the text prompt us to ask them. If we wonder about them now, it is because we are aware that the text is anthropomorphic—a Greek concept.[4] The anthropomorphism of the passage is an indication of its authenticity as an early part of the Torah, uninfluenced by the Standard Model of God.

The prayer at the beginning of this section enjoins Jews to remember the covenant whenever they see a rainbow. But the prayer is not biblical; it originates in the rabbinic period. As Lorberbaum observes,[5] while the rainbow can be comforting and a sign of God's benevolence, it also warns humans that God can be subject to fury—so it is both comforting and a warning. Lorberbaum draws an ominous conclusion: "… precisely because of the nature of the Divine emotion that has been uncovered in this narrative, there is no

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assurance that the promise will not be violated. For, as we said, God Himself fears that He will not be able to stand up to it and thus creates a mechanism of self-control."[6]

In classical mythology, Iris is the goddess of rainbows and a messenger of the gods. In Hesiod's myth, she is the daughter of Thaumas (*Theogony* 266), a name that means "wonder." Meteorologists and physicists who understand the optic mechanism of rainbows may respond with a clinician's sangfroid, but most of us marvel when we see an arc of rainbow after a storm. In a fine passage, Plato has Socrates exclaiming to a young man who has confessed wonder at a certain philosophical problem, "This sense of wonder is the mark of the philosopher. Philosophy indeed has no other origin, and he was a good genealogist who made Iris the daughter of Thaumas" (*Theaetetus* 155d). For *Iris*, a Greek would also have understood "rainbow," and for *Thaumas*, "wonder."

Aristotle agrees about the origin of philosophy in wonder but adds a few details: "… it is because of wondering that men began to philosophize and do so now. First, they wondered at the difficulties close at hand; then, advancing little by little, they discussed difficulties also about greater matters, for example, about the changing attributes of the Moon and of the Sun and of the stars, and about the generation of the universe. Now people who are perplexed and wonder consider themselves ignorant (whence a lover of myth, too, is in a sense a philosopher, for a myth is composed of wonders), so if they philosophized in order to avoid ignorance, it is evident that they pursued science in order to understand and not in order to use it for something else" (*Metaphysics* 982 b12–28).[7] There are many references to Iris in classical literature, but none that explain *why* or how she came to be the rainbow. Ovid, whose *Metamorphoses* tells numerous etiological stories, does not include one about rainbows.

There are, however, several scientific accounts of rainbows in classical literature. The longest and most complete is found in Aristotle's *Meteorology*, which spans many pages and includes a discussion of rare nocturnal lunar rainbows.[8] Aristotle recapitulates his views in *On the Universe*: "A rainbow is the reflection of a segment of the sun or of the moon, seen, as in a mirror, in a cloud that is moist, hollow, and continuous in appearance, and taking a circular form" (395a29–a37).[9]

The only substantial account of rainbows to survive from antiquity not by Aristotle is by Epicurus, one of the chief proponents of the philosophy of atomism, in a letter preserved by the biographer Diogenes Laertius (*Life of Epicurus* 10.109–10). It attempts to explain both the rainbow's colors and the shape by the blending of light and air (both made of atoms). For Aristotle and Epicurus the rainbow is a purely *physical* phenomenon that owes nothing to supernatural powers.

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There is one other significant discussion of rainbows in Aristotle's works, in which the philosopher investigates the claim that trees moistened by the rains accompanying a rainbow develop a sweet odor (*Problems* 906 a36–b34). Since Aristotle has already concluded that rainbows do not have a real substance but are produced in the eye by refraction, he reasons that the effect would have to be coincident with and not caused by the rainbow. After considering the variables, he decides that the phenomenon, which does not occur all the time in every tree, depends on the type of wood, the age of the tree, whether the tree grows among brambles and briars, the condition of the soil, and whether the tree has sweet-scented flowers. The rain that follows a rainbow must be light rain, for too much water would drench the wood so that it would not produce the sweet odor. Aristotle concludes that since the only unusual thing that people tend to notice is the rainbow, they fallaciously claim that the rainbow is the cause of the odor.

In both the biblical and classical traditions a rainbow is benign. In the Hebrew tradition it is a sign of God's new benevolence; in classical thought, it is an evocative stimulus to the inquiries about causality. It is easy to understand why rainbows would be so reckoned: they are beautiful (albeit tutti-frutti) structures in the sky—huge, consistent, and always safe.

Like light itself, the first thing that God creates, he makes the rainbow uncomplicatedly, without stages. The Book of Genesis describes the construction of Noah's ark, even if minimally; it presents the rainbow as a final product. Though everyone recognizes light and has some intuitive sense of what it is, no one really understands light in a satisfying way. Is it a wave? Is it a particle? Is it electromagnetic radiation? And even if is one of these things, how does such knowledge equal understanding? The seas, plants, and animals that God makes are much easier for us to grasp. Perhaps the Bible is making the point of the vast gulf between man and God—that light, the very first thing God makes, is beyond human comprehension. No one in the Bible ever asks what light is or what it is made of, nor does anyone ask about rainbows.

How different the Greeks! Wonder is a deity in *their* myths, wonder—which provokes a thousand questions *why* and the search for understanding causes. Scientifically minded Greeks concluded that the rainbow is an optical phenomenon somehow connected with water and light. Aristotle shows in his discussion that he knows the distinction between a complete and incomplete explanation, and his text leaves little doubt that *because* he offers various explanations, he knows that none is fully adequate, and so he gives readers a license to continue wondering. Indeed, he is willing to admit that some of the views people have, though mistaken, are plausible on the basis of what they have seen.

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In the culture of Greek philosophy, a rainbow is a physical phenomenon that comes about as a result of particular meteorological events. It is difficult to understand, and the difficulty itself prompts a desire to inquire into its causes. In the Bible we find an imaginative declaration of the rainbow's significance for the relationship between humans and God.

A LONGER DAY AND A LONGER NIGHT: A BATTLE AT GIBEON AND A NIGHT IN BED

After Joshua's victories over Jericho and Ai, five remaining Amorite kings in the area unite to fight against Israel. The inhabitants of Gibeon, however, fearing for their lives, resolve to make a peace treaty, though by trickery. They pretend that they are coming from a very great distance by donning tattered garments and carrying patched wineskins and dried up bread. They tell Joshua that they know what God did in Egypt and against the Amorites and so beg for peace, and Joshua promises to let them live (Joshua 9: 4–15). Three days later the Israelites learn the truth—the Gibeonites and their cities are actually nearby (Joshua 9: 16). Though the people of Israel are angry with their leaders, who had been duped, the leaders insist that they abide by their promise to let the Gibeonites live. Still, Joshua lets the Gibeonites know that he knows they have lied, and he curses them, telling them that their work will be to chop wood and carry water. The Gibeonites agree to this dictate, and the Bible affirms that even when the text was composed, the Gibeonites continued to perform these tasks (Joshua 9: 27).

The five Amorite kings were worried about Joshua's victories over Jericho and Ai and were angry with Gibeon, whose defection was a great loss, and decided to attack Gibeon, which turned to Joshua for help. In the battle, the Lord killed Joshua's enemies by casting down great stones on them from the sky. In fact, God killed more of the enemy by his hailstones than the Israelites killed with their swords. It is then that Joshua prayed that the sun stand still. The text concludes: "So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies, as it is written in the Book of Jashar. The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the Lord listened to a man" (Joshua 10: 12–15). The *text*, not God, calls attention to the spectacular occurrence. For God it is no big task—a manifestation of the great chasm between humans and God. Though some believe the Book of Jashar one of the lost books of the Bible,[10] I should like to suggest that since *Jashar* means "upright," the term may be a metaphor for the Israelites, who, despite having been defrauded by the Gibeonites, "stand upright" (i.e., adhere) to

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their covenant, thereby demonstrating their probity, and their actions have been written into the book of the just.[11]

The entire tale seems an example of what is called *aggadah*, a poetic or folkloric story that conveys a meaning about life and ethics in a way distinct from the Bible's *halakhic* parts—the legal injunctions. Here the teaching seems to be that God is willing to go to extraordinary, even miraculous, lengths to help those who have kept their commitments. That the Gibeonites were worthy of Joshua's keeping the covenant we learn from the statement that the Gibeonites continue "to this day" to serve as cutters of wood and bearers of water. The Gibeonites will keep their commitments; Israel does no less.

The lengthening of a day in the Book of Joshua has a nocturnal parallel in Homer's *Odyssey*, when Athena extends the first night that Penelope and Odysseus are reunited after two anxiety-ridden decades. After numerous adventures returning home, Odysseus finally proves his identity to his long-suffering wife, and she acknowledges him as her husband. The night is not long enough for them to complete their conversation, so Athena, Odysseus' kindred spirit, sees to it both that night is held back and that Dawn is late in coming (*Odyssey* 23.232–46). Odysseus and Penelope are thus able to talk about many things, including Tiresias' prophecy that the hero must again leave home. No carping scold has ever reproached Athena for upsetting the accuracy of the solar schedule, nor has any Galileo sought to prove Homer's tale more plausible under the Copernican than the Ptolemaic system.[12]

The two tales are similar. In each we find a poetic description of how a divine force performs a miracle to help a worthy mortal. Athena thinks of her miracle by herself; God responds to Joshua's prayer that the behavior of the celestial bodies be altered.[13] The biblical miracle is staged with a fanfare—the text exalts its uniqueness. Homer, by comparison, is all restraint: he tells of Athena's intervention so that the action seems almost natural, the sort of beneficent action one would expect from a goddess-friend, and only when one thinks non-metaphorically does it dawn on one how striking the intervention is. This is a method in epic poetry to bridge the gulf between the supernatural and the natural.

I do not think it is significant that in Judges the alteration of the cosmic order is for the sake of warfare and in the *Odyssey* for the sake of connubial conversation. In the *Iliad*, after all, Hera hastened the setting of the sun so that a battle might end quickly and her favorite Greeks be spared (*Iliad* 18.239–41). In the Hebrew text the emphasis is where it usually is, on God; in the Greek text, on human actions, with the gods on the periphery.

That the after-story of Joshua entered into the seventeenth century debate on whether the Bible should be taken literally on astronomical matters while the Homeric story was not considered at all reflects the recognition by the educated class that Pagan mythology springs from poetic imagination. Many

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of these same persons refused to accept anything but an absolutely literal interpretation of the Bible. Might they not have wondered, if God could create the heavens and the earth, whether he could not also have inserted figurative language into the sacred text?

DESTROYING TREES IN WARTIME: DEUTERONOMIC LAW AND CROESUS'S THREAT

Rabbi Judah said that when a person went outside during the days of spring and saw trees budding, he should pray thankfully, "Blessed be God, who has caused nothing lacking in the universe, and created in it beautiful creations and beautiful trees, from which people may derive pleasure."[14] When the Persians burned Athens during their invasion of Europe and destroyed the Temple of Athena on the Acropolis, including the sacred olive tree that grew just outside the Erechtheum, it is said that once they had departed, a new shoot of the tree two cubits high gave hope to the Athenians that their city would rise again.[15] To destroy trees, which provide building materials in peace and war, yield fruit,[16] and give shade, is to destroy one of the resources that make life comfortable and pleasant. It is no wonder, then, that both Hebrew and classical culture pay attention to the value of trees for their owners and as objects of conquest, as well as to their destruction.[17]

In chapter 20 of Deuteronomy, in the laws concerning warfare, a generous list of the men to be exempted from fighting includes persons who have planted vineyards, who have just become affianced, and who lack courage. Along with laws that concern establishing peace or destroying those cities with whom peace cannot be made comes the law about trees (Deuteronomy 20: 19–20).[18] Distinguishing between trees that provide food and trees that provide wood, it dictates that in war, Israel may cut down only the latter for the express purpose of making defensive walls to protect against an army laying siege. Trees, the Torah explains indignantly, are not human beings, and are not to be besieged.

In the *History*, Herodotus reports how Miltiades, an Athenian friend of Croesus of Lydia, was being held captive in the town of Lampsacus. When Croesus heard about the internment of his friend, he demanded that the Lampsacenes release him, issuing a fearsome threat that if they did not, Croesus would "cut them down like a pine tree" (*History* 6.37). Eventually a Lampsacene elder grasped the meaning of the threat: since the pine tree is the only tree that does not send out shoots, Croesus would obliterate their city. They immediately released Miltiades from their custody.

A half century later, when Athens attacked Syracuse, the major power in Sicily, the Syracusans chopped down their olive trees to obstruct a wall of

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circumvallation Athens was building around Syracuse—a sign of the desperate measures Syracuse was forced to take (Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* 6.99). Olive trees, which can live several hundred years,[19] were a major repository of a city's wealth. That such trees would be cut down voluntarily only *in extremis* is a sign of how desperate the Syracusans saw their plight.

Most commandments in the Bible are given without justification or explanation. The commandment about not cutting down fruit trees is a rare exception. The text asks rhetorically whether trees are proper military targets that should be besieged,[20] and strongly implies that they are not. One may cut down trees only for protective walls. Otherwise, to engage in such destruction is to render the human condition miserable, as the prophet Joel says (Joel 1: 12): "The vine is withered, and the fig-tree languishes; the pomegranate-tree, the palm-tree also, and the apple-tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered; for joy is withered away from the sons of men." The rabbinic tradition later interpreted the commandment as a metaphor for a prohibition against wanton destruction generally, that is, any destruction beyond what would serve the limited purpose of protecting life.[21]

The passage from Herodotus exhibits Croesus' arrogance. The king will not simply destroy the *soldiers* of Lampsacus in a battle but the mothers, wives, and children as well—they will not be spared even as slaves. All Lampsacene life will be obliterated without any surviving shoots, all as vengeance for one of Croesus' friends. The threat is palpable, for Croesus has acted with such imperious cruelty before.[22]

Though biblical and classical cultures valued trees, there is a difference. For the Greeks, the value of trees is their instrumentality for food or building materials; they have no value in themselves. For the Hebrews, too, trees of course have a practical value; at the end of the creation story in Genesis, God tells his creatures, "Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed—to you it shall be for food." But trees also have an *inherent* value. They are made on the third day of creation, even before the great lights in the sky that separate night from day. And the third day is the only day on which God twice pronounces his judgment "that it was good."[23] The unusual claim in Deuteronomy that trees, unlike people, do not deserve to suffer the indignities of a siege, means that they have a value, a worth, independent of humankind.

In the classical philosophical tradition, the notion is stressed that the things in nature exist for the sake of human beings and not for themselves. Cicero, explains that everything in nature exists *for the service of humankind*: "It remains for me to show that all the things that are in our world that humans use were made and prepared [for them]. In the beginning the world itself was made for gods and men, and all that is in it was prepared and found for the use of human beings."[24]

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ANIMALS THAT TALK: AN ASS AND A GNAT

Wherever animals and people are present together, people talk to the animals.[25] When the animals are pets or farm animals, people sometimes expect and often hope that the animals understand and obey; when the animals are wild, like flies or snakes, the speech is an expression of what the people would like the animals to do, as when one shouts at a fly, "Shoo!" Concerning conversations with animals, we might apply the comment about a newsworthy story—as it is news not when a dog bites a person but when a person bites a dog, so it is not the accounts of people addressing animals that are worthy of notice but those of *animals* addressing people. We find stories of animals that speak to people in both biblical and classical literature. In the Book of Numbers, Balaam's ass attempts to warn its master of a danger (Numbers 22–24); in Virgil's mock epic poem *Culex*, a gnat delivers a full oration to a shepherd.

King Balak of Moab, worried that the Israelites might pass through his land, sent messengers to hire Balaam, having complete confidence in the efficacy of his curses. When the messengers explained what their king wanted, Balaam told them that he would confer with God during the night and respond in the morning. God communicated that he must not go with the messengers to issue a curse, for Israel was blessed. Accordingly, in the morning Balaam sent the messengers away.

When Balak received this unsatisfactory report, he sent higher-ranking messengers to promise Balaam anything he wanted in exchange for a curse on Israel. This time Balaam made a noble speech, declaring that he would not go against God's word for all Balak's silver and gold. In the night God ordered Balaam to accompany the men but stipulated that he say only what God told him. One might ask why God, having already told Balaam that the Israelites were not to be cursed, then told Balaam to go to King Balak. The usual interpretation is that Balaam was conflicted. On the one hand, he wished to abide by God's will; on the other, he wanted Balak's material reward. In letting him go, God was allowing Balaam to act according to his own mind. I should like to suggest a different motive. As in Exodus, God hardened Pharaoh's heart *so that* he might perform more miracles and win the allegiance of the Israelites (Exodus 7: 3–4), so here God sends Balaam to Balak because he knows of Balaam's divided mind and wishes to remove the conflict by the miracle of the talking ass.

The next morning Balaam accompanied the royal messengers. Despite telling Balaam to go, God was angry with him because he was making this journey (Numbers 22: 22).[26] While he was on the way, an angel, sword in hand, stood in the way of the ass. The ass saw the angel and avoided him by moving off the road, but Balaam, to whom the angel was invisible, beat the ass and forced her to return to the roadway. On a narrow stretch of road walled in on both sides, the angel again blocked the way, and when the ass

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swerved, Balaam's foot was crushed against one of the walls. Balaam beat the ass again. A little farther on, at a narrow place where it was impossible to avoid the angel, the ass lay down and Balaam struck her again. At this point (Numbers 22: 28), God had the ass address Balaam, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?" When Balaam angrily replied that if he had his sword he would kill her, she asked, "Am I not your own ass, which you have always ridden to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?" At this point God opened Balaam's eyes so that he could see the angel. Seeing him, Balaam bowed and fell on his face (Numbers 22: 31).

The angel told Balaam to go to Balak and say only what he was instructed. When Balaam arrived, Balak performed various sacrifices and pointed out the Israelites encamped at a distance. When Balaam spoke, instead of cursing Israel, he praised it. Balak hoped a different location and more sacrifices might produce a better result. The effect was the same, however, and this time, Balaam uttered the famous words, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, thy dwellings, O Israel"—words repeated in synagogue services to this day—and concluded with a praise of Israel, completely thwarting Balak. The king expressed his displeasure at Balaam and dismissed him. Balaam departed after repeating his earlier statement about not acting contrary to God even for all of Balak's wealth.

Though it is remarkable that Balaam's ass was able to see an angel who blocked the way, we are familiar with the ability of animals to sense things that we cannot. Owls can see far-off mice, butterflies can respond to magnetic fields, for which humans need mechanical devices. But only human beings and divinities share the quality of speech.[27] This ass not only speaks, but speaks calmly, wisely, and in a way that shows that she can count and remember. "What have I done," she asked, "to deserve to be beaten three times by you?" When Balaam scolded her for making a fool of him and wished he could kill her, she pointed out that she was the same animal he had always ridden and that she had never treated him as he accused her of doing. Balaam lived in an odd world, where he does not note how peculiar it is for the ass to be speaking at all. Readers of the story ask, "Why has God opened the ass's mouth? Why is Balaam not so true to his noble declaration about not saying anything against God as the ass is to her job; after all, animals are no more capable of moral conduct than they are of speech, yet this ass is acting more nobly than is Balaam."[28]

The angel explains that he has come to oppose Balaam's reckless path, and that were it not for the ass's brave action, he would have killed Balaam but have spared the ass. The angel evidently does not believe that the sins of the master should be visited upon his beast of burden. The point, of course, is that Balaam should not endanger a people blessed by God. When the angel instructed him to visit King Balak and say only what the angel commanded,

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he was communicating God's wish that Balak hear from *Balaam*, whom he trusted as having the ability to communicate with the divine, that Israel is blessed. The point of the mission was to drive this message home to Balak. If Balaam would not do Balak's bidding despite the immense treasure he was offered, the indisputable authority of God's blessing upon Israel should be plain. The miracle of enabling an ass to speak is God's way of telling Balaam to carry forth his mission with vigor.[29]

The protagonist of Virgil's *Culex* is a talking gnat.[30] Virgil addresses the poem to Octavius, Julius Caesar's grandnephew, who will later defeat Antony and reign as Augustus, Rome's first emperor. In offering him this playful poem Virgil promises a greater work later.[31] After an opening rhetorical flourish, the *Culex* tells the story of an anonymous shepherd, whose pleasant life is extolled with swelling orotundity. The poem then follows the shepherd to a grove, the trees of which are also grandiloquently described.

We find a shepherd taking a nap amidst these glorious trees, when a snake returning to its cool spot is enraged by this violation of his territory. Just as the snake is about to give the shepherd a fatal bite, the gnat stings the shepherd, who awakens and swats the gnat. The shepherd sees the serpent and batters it to death with a branch, thus avoiding a fatal bite. After this alarming start to his day, he leads his sheep to various pastures before retiring to his own bed for the night.

While he is sleeping, the gnat's ghost arrives and delivers a long, passionate speech in which it scolds the shepherd for killing his savior and bids the shepherd have a grateful heart. The gnat follows the scolding with a detailed description of the underworld (210–383). The shepherd, overcome with remorse, builds the gnat a funeral mound and adorns it with stones of polished marble. The place is suitable for the flowers that are floridly described. The poem ends with the shepherd placing an epitaph of thanks on the gnat's tomb for saving his life.[32]

In modern times, we are accustomed, from babyhood on, to a menagerie of talking critters. Though not every animal has been turned into a storybook character, there are certainly more than enough to populate the Bronx Zoo. Greek literature makes common the process of anthropomorphizing animals, and so a Greek or Roman who was familiar with the talking horses in Homer, the loquacious crows and foxes in Aesop, and the choruses of frogs and birds in Aristophanes, would be at home, so to speak, with modern cartoons. We might not want a real mouse in our home, but we would be quite at ease with those created by Walt Disney.

In ancient Hebrew culture there was nothing innocuously magical or humorous about talking animals. The first talking creature in the Bible is a serpent, an animal our evolutionary biology seems to have prepared us to fear, and that animal's speech resulted in punishments of both the persuader

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and persuaded.[33] The only other talking animal, of course, is Balaam's donkey, who awakens his derelict master to his duty.

Ancient readers of the Bible, lacking a classical heritage to mediate their response to talking animals, might have trembled at them, seeing them more like vampires—a monstrous distortion of nature—than like cuddly pets. Humans, the creature made on the last day of creation, the creature made in the image of God, are the only animal with the capacity of speech and moral judgment. Inclusion of animals into this club is frighteningly incongruous.[34] When the Bible's animals speak, sin hovers nearby and an alarm sounds. In the case of Eve, the alarm does not work; in the case of Balaam, it does, and he is called back to serving God.

The gnat in the *Culex* carries no dread whatsoever. He is as rhetorically polished as Cicero, and no one suspends disbelief long enough to pity him.[35] No one, upon finishing the *Culex,* takes a pledge to spare the life of a gnat that should sting him. The gnat that saves the shepherd is never more than a creature of mirth and an excuse for a rhetorical exercise. Anyone who observed a shepherd preparing a gravesite for a gnat would wonder about his sanity.

Like the animals of modern cartoons, the gnat speaks on his own initiative. Balaam's ass speaks because *God* opens her mouth. When God interferes with the normal processes of nature and brings forth the torrential rain in Genesis, the plagues in Exodus, the shower of stones in Joshua, the whirlwind in Job—the effect on people is fear and trembling.

CONCLUSIONS

Heraclitus sang, "The sun will not transgress its boundaries; otherwise, the guardians of Justice, the Furies, will find it out" (Fragment 94). This sentence reflects a difference in the Greek conception of natural objects from the Hebrew. For Greeks, the job of deities is to keep every object behaving in accordance with its specific nature. For Hebrews, objects in the world[36] do not have boundaries apart from those granted by God—there is no conception of an independent nature. God may have created different things with different characteristics, but he does not lose control over them. In the story of Joshua, it was not the sun that transgressed its boundaries and stood still; it was God who stopped the sun. God had created the objects in the sky "to divide the day from the night and be signs for seasons, and for days and years" (Genesis 1:14); when he made the sun stand still, it remained a sign of daytime—God was merely adjusting, as it were, the duration of a traffic light. What made the halting of the sun a special marvel was its uniqueness. When Balaam's ass spoke, it was God who made her speak; she would not have done so on

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her own.[37] In the classical conception, objects on earth are for humans to understand and exploit. The anecdote about Thales studying nature, predicting the weather, and making a fortune with a timely purchase of olive presses, encapsulates the purpose of Hesiod's *Works and Days*, with its basic lesson that knowledge of nature will help farmers control it and thereby obtain wealth—*scientia pecunia est*.

In the Bible, God creates the rainbow to serve his interests—to remind him not to destroy the world by water. He did not make it to be an object for human beings to investigate or admire. In Greek thought, the rainbow's main function is to inspire wonder, spur investigation of nature, and encourage human beings to follow *their* nature by exercising reason.

Many violations of nature occur in Greek literature as metaphors, humor, and plot devices, with no expectation that educated readers take them literally. No Greek ever undertook to explain in astronomical terms the extended night Odysseus and Penelope spent together or Achilles' talkative horses or Virgil's speechifying gnat. When what would appear as violations of nature occur in the Bible, they are the work of God. Whether or not we are meant to take them literally, they produce dread, not jollity.

God sees value in what he has created apart from the uses that humans put them to, and so they should be not destroyed wantonly, but for strictly delimited purposes.

NOTES

1. From this distinction Harvey Cox (*The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in the Theological Perspective* (New York: Macmillan, 1965) drew the conclusion that because the biblical God is distinct from nature, nature is desacralized and that this desacralization was "an absolute precondition for modern science" (21). It has been argued that associating the Pagan gods with nature held back innovation, since attempting an improvement (e.g., on plows or looms, etc.) would be deemed an attempt to surpass a god—an offense warned of in many a myth (Fränkel, 333). This view of the old poets was one Xenophanes corrected, when he pointed out that men made advances over time by investigation (fr. B18). Worry about offending a deity did not stop philosophers from the fourth century BCE on from studying nature, despite occasional persecution. Similar to Cox in seeing the possibility of science in the disconnecting of God and nature are Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155 (1967) 1203–07, and Theodore Hiebert, *The Yahwist's Landscape: Nature and Religion in Early Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) 16, where nature is reduced to powerlessness. Hyun Chul Paul Kim, "Jonah Read Intertextually," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126 (2007) 504, points out that the God of the Bible is different from the other deities in the Near East, for they are the forces of nature whereas the God of Israel controls nature. On the other side

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is Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism* 1990, who observes that the Bible is replete with taboos concerning animals, disease, and menstruation—all of which testify to the independent power of nature (*passim*, but esp. 115–40). For a survey of views found in the Bible and rabbinic texts, as well as in Jewish philosophers and scientists into the modern period, see Noah J. Efron, *Judaism and Science: A Historical Introduction* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007).

2. See, for example, *Book of Prayer According to the Custom of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews* 2nd ed., Edited and translated by David de Sola Pool, (New York: Union of Sephardic Congregations, 1960), 446.

3. Yair Lorberbaum, "The Rainbow in the Cloud: An Anger-Management Device," *Journal of Religion* 89 (2009) 524.

4. Xenophanes is the first we know of to address the anthropomorphism of the gods, in his famous claim that if horses had hands and could sculpt gods, their gods would look like horses (fr. 15). On Xenophanes, see "Introduction," 8, 14.

5. Lorberbaum 534.

6. Lorberbaum 540.

7. Tr. Hippocrates G. Apostle (Grinnell, Iowa: The Peripatetic Press, 1979).

8. *Meteorology* 371 b26–375 b15. The discussion of lunar rainbows is at 372 a22–28.

9. Tr. E. S. Forster in the *Complete Works of Aristotle,* ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984).

10. For example, Stephen M. Miller, *The Bible: A History: The Making and Impact of the Bible* (Oxford: Lion Books, 2015) 66–67; and especially H. St J. Thackeray, "New Light on the Book of Jashar (A Study of 3 Regn. viii 53b LXX)," *Journal of Theological Studies* 11 (1910) 518–32.

11. Other such terms seem to be used idiomatically, for example, "book of life" in Psalm 69: 29.

12. See Galileo, "Letter to the Grand Duchess Cristina," in *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo.* Tr. Stillman Drake (New York: Doubleday, 1957) 211–15, for an attempt to show that the miracle in the battle with the Amorite coalition is more easily explained by the Copernican than the Ptolemaic model of the universe. In trying to reconcile a literal reading of the stories in Scripture with contemporary science, Galileo is participating in a long tradition that has not yet ended. On the attempts to reconcile this story of the sun's standing still from Augustine into the seventeenth century, see Eileen Reeves, "Augustine and Galileo on Reading the Heavens," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52 (1991) 563–79. For Galileo's witty use of story in the Book of Joshua, see Arieti and Wilson 222.

13. In Exodus 14:15, though Moses asks God for help, the idea of dividing the sea is God's.

14. *Berakot* 43b.

15. Herodotus, *Persian Wars* 8.55; Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 1.27.1.

16. On olives as a critical source of nutrition in ancient Mediterranean lands, see F. R. Riley, "Olive Oil Production on Bronze Age Crete: Nutritional Properties, Processing Methods, and Storage Life of Minoan Olive Oil," *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 21 (2002) 63–75.

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17. On fruit orchards and gardens as objects of prestige and dominion, see Jacob L. Wright, "Warfare and Wanton Destruction: A Reexamination of Deuteronomy 20: 19–20 in Relation to Ancient Siegecraft," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127 (2008) 435; as a persuasive motive for unprovoked conquest, see Herodotus 1.71.2–3, 7.5.3, and so on.

18. There has been a substantial scholarship about the law in Deuteronomy 20: 19–20 concerning the destruction of trees, most arguing that its appearance in the Bible constitutes a condemnation of the destructive wartime practices of principally the Assyrians (Eckart Otto, *Krieg und Frieden in der Hebräischen Bible und im Alten Orient* [Theologie und Frieden 18; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1999] 100, and Nili Wazana, "Are the Trees of the Field Human? A Biblical War Law [Deut. 20: 19–20] and Neo-Assyrian Propaganda," in *Treasures on Camels' Humps: Historical and Literary Studies from the Ancient Near East Presented to Israel Ephal* (ed. Mordechai Cogan and Dan'el Kahn, [Jerusalem: Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2008] 29). Sometimes the brutal warfare of other peoples, like Hittites and Egyptians, is added as the target (e.g., Ahmet Ünal, "Studien über das hethitische Kriegswesen, II, Verba Delendi *harnink/ harganu*—'vernichten, zugrunde richten,'" *Studi Miceni ed Egeo-Anatolica* 24 [1984] 71–85; and Michael G. Hasel, *Domination and Resistance: Egyptian Military Activity in the Southern Levant 1300–1185 B. C., Probleme der Ägyptologie* 11 [Leiden: Brill, 1998] 75–83). It is claimed also that the destruction of trees and the denuding of land were the deliberate Assyrian military aims, aims more important than capturing an enemy king (Bustenai Oded, "Cutting Down Orchards in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: The Historiographic Aspect," *Journal of Ancient Civilizations* 12 [1997] 93–98, and Steven W. Cole, "Destruction of Orchards in Assyrian Warfare," in *Assyria 1995*, ed. Parpola and Whiting, 29–40 [here 34–35]). Jacob Wright, however, in his article "Warfare and Wanton Destruction" referred to above (n. 17), has persuasively argued that the laws in Deuteronomy arise from debates within the Israelite community itself to establish a code of wartime conduct for commanders in the field. The absence of any textual hints that Assyria is intended as a target of denunciation and the evidence of parallel Deuteronomic laws condemning the destruction of the source of life with its fruit (e.g., Deut. 22: 6–7 and 14: 21) establish the lasting tradition in the Jewish tradition that precludes wanton destruction (see below, n. 21).

19. Wright (434 n. 48) reports that an olive tree in Bar, Montenegro, is over two thousand years old and that olive trees over a thousand years old are not uncommon in lands around the Mediterranean.

20. The text is not entirely clear. Some modern translators read, "for the tree of the field is man's [life]," making *man's* possessive and supplying life to fill out the thought. Ancient versions, including the Septuagint, Masoretic text, and the Targum read the text as an interrogative: "for is the tree of the field a man?"

21. For example, Midrash Aggadah, *Shofetim*; Midrash *Kohelet Rabbah* 7: 13.

22. In his quest to expand his power, Croesus has justified his attacks with slight pretexts. Where he could not find even these, he invented them (Herodotus 1.23).

23. This was the inspiration for a tradition that difficult or important projects be started on Tuesday, the third day.

24. Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 2.154. For how the pig and the prohibition of eating pork enters the discussion, see Chapter 5, "Pork and Prohibited Foods."

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25. For an excellent overview of animals in the ancient world, see Ingvild Saelid Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans: Changing Attitudes to Animals in Greek, Roman, and Early Christian Ideas* (New York: Routledge, 2006). See also Deborah Levine Gera, *Ancient Greek Ideas on Speech, Language and Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 207–11.

26. It was perhaps to protect God from the charge of inconsistency that the interpretation was developed that takes the tale as showing Balaam's divided mind.

27. On the two occasions when animals speak in the Bible, they do so in private, with only one human being present. Perhaps the phenomenon is a way of showing the mental or moral condition of the human being having the conversation with the animal. The humans are forgetting their moral status as creatures who have a duty to obey God—a status that animals do not have—and are forgetting that neither they nor the talking animals are acting appropriately.

28. When animals talk (as here or in Genesis) or are made to go through ritual mourning (as in the case of the animals in Nineveh in the Book of Jonah), the Bible is prompting us to compare the morality we would expect in human beings with the conduct of the animals.

29. B. Embry ("The Endangerment of Moses: Towards a New Reading of Exodus 4:24–26," *Vetus Testamentum* 60 [2010] 177–96) offers a narrative motive for the story: it is a mirror-image of the earlier journey of Moses (Exodus 4: 24–26) and has many structural parallels to it. Unfortunately Embry leaves unanswered the actual purpose of the contrasting stories.

30. Since ancient times the poem was believed to be a juvenile composition. In the first half of the twentieth century there was a lot of scholarly discussion about this poem, none concerning its literary merits, which no one was eager to promote, but concerning whether the poem was by Virgil. On the many similarities to passages in Virgil's works, see for example, J. W. Duff, *A Literary History of Rome from the Origins to the Close of the Golden Age* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1909) 491.

31. He fulfills this promise with the *Aeneid.* The promise is either a youthful boast or the artifice of a later writer inserted to make the young Virgil seem prophetic.

32. Composition of an epitaph by a *shepherd*, an occupation in antiquity of illiterate people, would be nearly as miraculous as a talking gnat.

33. Thus the very first conversation that takes place shows the power of speech to thwart God.

34. The exclusiveness of the club is confirmed by modern science. See Thomas Suddendorf, *The Gap: The Science of What Separates Us from Other Animals* (New York: Basic Books, 2013) 185–213.

35. Among other eloquent animals are those that Plato describes as living in the Age of Kronus—a happy time when children were not born from sexual intercourse but were sprung out of the ground (*Statesman* 272a)—and speaking with children. There too the tale presents friendly, comical animals (see J. Dillon, "Plato and the Golden Age," *Hermathena* 153 [1992] 29–32, and Mary Margaret McCabe, "Chaos and Control: Reading Plato's *Politicus*," *Phronesis* 42 [1997] 105–08). Philo (*de Confusione Linguarum* 7) also tells of a time when all the animals of the world, of the sea, air, and land, spoke the same language and got along harmoniously with one another,

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but, when they began to enjoy too many good things, they began to make demands, one of which was for immortality. As a result they were punished by having their common language broken up so that they could no longer communicate.

36. I am refraining from calling fish, birds, trees, and so on, "objects in *nature*" in the discussion of the Bible, for "nature" is a *Greek*, not Hebraic, concept. Calling them "objects in nature" implies fixed characteristics, prejudicing the analysis.

37. Given the paucity of evidence on the provenance of the Book of Genesis, one might wonder whether the story of the conversation between Eve and the talking serpent in chapter 3 is a later addition, added after the standard model of God had been developed to free God from blame for the too often hapless human condition. That a serpent would speak on its own initiative does not strike me as a Hebraic notion. If God were causing the serpent to speak as a test of Eve, then the punishment of the serpent would seem unjust. This very speculation reflects the difficulty in trying to explain a poetical myth in a way consistent with philosophy, and it might hint at the origin of a concept of an evil agency or devil: it would not be *God* who made the serpent speak, but something else.

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Chapter 2

Human Phenomena

HUMAN SPEECH

The Many and the Oldest Tongues

Nothing distinguishes humans from the other animals so profoundly as the capacity for speech characterized by complex syntax and wide-ranging vocabulary. Biblical, Greek, and Christian writers pay attention to it. In this section we shall not take up so much what people in the cultures assert about language as explore the sorts of issues to which they devote their attention. My motive may be explained by an analogy: if the parents of several children returned from a party and one child asked, "What music was played?" and another, "What food was served?" and still another, "What topics of controversy were brought up?" we might learn something about each of the children. In the same way, by looking at the sort of linguistic issues significant to each culture, we can draw some tentative conclusions about them. For the sake of clarity, *language* here will be used to refer to the faculty that separates human beings from the other animals; *tongue*, to refer to a specific language, that is, Hebrew, Greek, and French.

We shall first discuss topics addressed by one culture but not by the other. The biblical topic will be why people speak different tongues. The Greek topic will be an ancient experiment to determine which tongue is the oldest.[1] The discussion will then turn to the question of the origin of words, a topic that at first glance appears common to both cultures.

Immediately after God creates human beings, he issues commands. We may dismiss the command in Chapter One of Genesis, "to be fruitful and multiply," because it is buried in a blessing and lacks the unambiguous clarity of an imperative; moreover, God issues the same command to the

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animals, also within a blessing, and it is not at all clear that God expects *them* to understand his words. Let us also set aside the exhortation about dominion over the animals. The passage may be taken as the culmination of the creation narrative, when God, having made a creature in his image, delegates to it a portion of his authority. In Genesis 2, a more detailed and subtler account of the creation of human beings is provided. Here, the created adult man is presented as fully equipped with language, able to understand what is said and to speak. Which tongue he speaks never arises. Perhaps the Bible subsumes Jim's linguistic theory in Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*—that if someone is a human being, he will speak the tongue of human beings, in the same way that animals, wherever they live, communicate (or seem to) using the same sounds for the same effects, mating, warding off intruders, and so on. There are very few words in the Bible for the sounds animals make. The word *kol* ("voice") is used for the songs of birds; *nahaq* ("bray") for the noise of donkeys; *tsahal* ("neigh") for that of horses; *shag* ("roar) for that of lions; and *gah* ("low") for oxen.[2] English has well over a hundred such words. There is no hint in the Bible that if these animals were scattered throughout the world their sounds would differ.[3] People, on the other hand, speak lots of different tongues, and one of our principal ways of differentiating peoples is by tongue.

The Book of Genesis concerns the coming into being of the Hebrew people, and for there to be a *Hebrew* people, they must be distinguished from all the other peoples of the earth. So the author of Genesis feels it necessary to explain how this particular people came into being. In Chapter 10, we learn about the descendants emanating from Noah, and in Chapter 11, after the account of the Tower of Babel, we learn of the line of Shem, which culminates in Abram. But how can Shem's descendants be a distinct people? Why does the human race not remain a unity?

The "whole earth"—the descendants of Noah, whose offspring will become the different peoples of the world—were of "one tongue and one speech" (Genesis 11:1). The double phrasing perhaps conveys that not only is their tongue the same but also their sentiments, their culture, and their understanding of God. Settling in Shinar, perhaps a fertile area in Mesopotamia,[4] they exhort one another to make bricks and then a city with a high tower. The top of the tower is to be in the heavens. The purpose of the city, which presumably will have walls as well as the tower, is protection. The city will give the builders a reputation that will intimidate potential enemies and keep the occupants safe from invasions by marauding bands.[5] This would be a reasonable motive in ancient times, when a community without walls would have been in peril. The advantage of a tower, especially on a plain, is that enemies can be seen approaching while they are still a long way off.

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God sees the tower and says, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one tongue; and this is what they begin to do; and now nothing will be withheld from them, which they purpose to do. Come, let us go down, and there confound their tongue, that they may not understand one another's speech" (Genesis 11:6–7). He then scatters the people all over the earth.

The usual interpretation of God's confounding the unitary tongue and scattering the people is as punishment for arrogance.[6] There are a number of reasons, however, to question this interpretation.[7] A hearer of the story might ask how, if the "whole earth" were of one speech and of one culture, there could be enemies to attack the city in Shinar. The answer would be the same as the answer to the question about who could have threatened Cain as he wandered the earth after killing Abel. But this is not a serious worry. Dangers are not logically possible if there is nobody around except the characters named in the account. The author is using here a feature of the archaic style of mythology, in which even mutually exclusive accounts can co-exist to build to a single meaning.[8]

What is significant for the Book of Genesis is that if the city had flourished in safety, and if all the descendants of Noah had lived together in the same city, with the same one culture, then the chosen *separate* Abrahamic people would never have come into existence. God realizes that if the people build Shinar, they will achieve their objective: "Nothing will be withheld from them, which they purpose to do." Before they complete the city, with its wall and tower, God confounds their tongue so that no one will understand his neighbor and they will scatter into different peoples.

There is no act of arrogance by the people. They do not challenge God; all they are seeking is to make a secure home for themselves. God has shown earlier that he was willing to destroy the entire human race (except for Noah and his family) for their (unidentified) evil, and he will soon destroy Sodom and Gomorrah for theirs. If the people building the city were truly evil, one might expect destruction to be the appropriate punishment.[9] The confounding of languages and the separation of the descendants of Noah are not punishments but a beginning to the process of making the Hebrews a distinct people.

We may suppose that God, if he had wished, might have created only one species of animal—humans. Or, if he had wished to diversify the animals, to have created, say, only one kind of bird, one kind of fish, one kind of vegetable, and so on. So too with people. He might have made everyone look alike and speak a single language. The Bible does not address a motive for bio-diversity.[10]

The story of the scattering suggests that when people speak different tongues they will go their separate ways and remain with those who speak the same tongues. The Bible does not clarify whether the tongues were confounded such that each individual or each nuclear family spoke a distinct one,

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so that like a multitude of separate Adams and Eves the couples departed from their Shinarian Eden to establish the peoples of the earth. Nor is there any hint that the tongues were similar and then developed along different lines, as historical linguists teach us happened within the Indo-European and Semitic families of tongues. The variety of tongues arose in the same way as the different species of animals, all of a sudden in a single flash.

Herodotus includes in the *History* the story of the experiment of the Egyptian Pharaoh Psammetichus to ascertain whether Egyptian was the oldest language, and if it was not, which was. His experiment led him to "discover" that Phrygian was the oldest. Psammetichus placed two infants from a lower class with one of his herders to take care of in isolation. The herder was to watch them attentively, listening for the first word they spoke. After two years of living in human silence, the children ran to him shouting "becos." When they repeated this word during his subsequent visits, he informed the king. The king discovered that *becos* was the Phrygian word for bread and concluded that the Phrygians were the oldest people.

The story has been analyzed for its value *qua* investigation.[11] It has been analyzed also for the quaint notion that if children could be brought up in isolation, even at the cost of ruining their lives, it would shed light on the original condition of humankind.[12] My interest here is what the experiment shows about classical *culture*. Though Herodotus attributes the question about the oldest language and people to King Psammetichus, to wonder about this subject is so characteristic of the Hellenic temper that the consensus view among classicists is that it is a Greek fabrication.[13] That Herodotus would choose to tell this story is, in any case, sufficient evidence of its *appeal* to a Greek audience. Perhaps the surprise ending—that Egyptians, generally assumed to be the oldest people (Herodotus 2.15),[14] are younger than Phrygians, generally reckoned a *recent* people (Herodotus 7.73)—was a source of amusement to Herodotus and his audience. After the conclusion of Book 1, with the horrific death of Cyrus the Great, it would have brought a welcome comic relief. That the antiquity of Egypt is of importance to Herodotus is indicated by his return to the subject later, when he says that King Psammetichus did not need to perform the experiment with the children to determine Egypt's age—Egypt is older than the Nile Delta, he says, as old as the human race itself (Herodotus 2.15).

Humorous or not, the question of the oldest and youngest of human peoples *was* a matter that interested the Greeks. Aristotle twice refers to the Egyptians as the most ancient of peoples,[15] and in Book 4 of the *History,* Herodotus takes up the claim by Scythians to be the youngest of all peoples (Herodotus 4.4). Herodotus' interest in extremes is not limited to oldest and youngest. He is forever pointing out the best or the first or the most of this or that quality: Arion is the best harper, the bowl made by Glaucus of Chios the best gift to

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Delphi, the deaths of Cleobis and Bito the best gift of the gods to humans, Tellus the happiest of men, Adrastus the most unfortunate, the Egyptians the first to discover the solar year, Homer and Hesiod the first to compose songs about the gods, the Egyptians the first to prohibit sexual intercourse in holy places, and so on.

The Origin of Words

In Hebrew there is a system of tri-consonantal roots, from which nouns and their cognate verbs are generated, and so the formation of most words is generally clear to those familiar with the roots. As we would not in general ask how the noun "recording" comes from the verb "record," so speakers of Hebrew would not in general ask about their words, most of which arise by applying different inflections to the roots. Why a particular set of three consonants forms a constellation of meanings—why *d-v-r* generates the words for "speak" or "word" and why the number of root consonants is three instead of four or five or some other number—these questions are not asked.[16]

The Bible credits Adam with naming the animals[17] but suggests no mechanism (Genesis 2:19–20). The naming-scene in Genesis is not a linguistic foray into the origin of words. The biblical author is endeavoring to offer an explanation of why the first man found no suitable companion, and the answer is found in the fact that no animal other than a human being speaks. The magic of language apparent to the ancient mind, moreover, validated the man's choice of companion. The word for "man" in Hebrew is *ish*, for "woman," *isha.* When Adam named the animals, he did not bestow on any of them the name *isha*, and so he knew that none was the suitable mate—for the suitable mate would be indicated by a name that fit with *ish.* When God creates the woman from Adam's rib, Adam says, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called *woman* (*isha*), because she was taken out of man (*ish*)" (Genesis 2:23). What the Bible presents is a poetical explanation of why the man knew he had a suitable mate.[18]

The longest treatment of etymology among ancient Pagan thinkers is Plato's *Cratylus*, a curious mélange of farce, seriousness, parody, and long-windedness. In the dialogue, one of Socrates' interlocutors asserts that an understanding of etymologies is a shortcut to knowledge of the gods and everything else. The dialogue has a double-sided character: on the one hand, it is immensely provocative and takes up inquiries into the nature of language that will not be taken up again until the birth of modern linguistics in the late eighteenth century; on the other hand, it is full of silly notions professed with specious seriousness. For example, Socrates avows that the name *Agamemnon* is appropriate for the Greek general because he was "admirable [*aga*] for remaining [*memnon*]" since he stayed for ten years at Troy (Plato, *Cratylus*

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395a). The joke lies in the absurdity that his parents gave him the name at his birth, before they knew that he would engage in a long war as an adult. Even more absurd is Socrates' claim that Tantalus was appropriately named *at birth* by his parents for the punishments he would suffer in the underworld *after his death* (Plato, *Cratylus* 395a).[19] Much of the *Cratylus* is a discussion of why particular sounds convey certain meanings, with Socrates mischievously offering one fantastic derivation after another as his interlocutors gape in stupefied agreement.[20] In the dialogue, Socrates also makes the claim that words were composed by "legislators," who gave names to things such that the sound would imitate the meaning.[21] Plato may be making serious points about education and knowledge in the *Cratylus*; he is not serious when it comes to etymology.[22] For a somewhat more sober Pagan examination of the origin of words, it is better to look to the Epicurean poetry of Lucretius.[23]

Lucretius specifically rejects the view in the *Cratylus* that a legislator once gave things their names (*On the Nature of Things* 5.1041–61). Lucretius' refutation of this "one legislator" argument is persuasive: why would *one* person have this faculty while the rest were powerless? How, moreover, could he induce others to use his words or even to understand that his sounds had meanings? Lucretius' explanation, that language arose by analogy with the cries of fear or pain or joy of animals, solves this problem but omits the leap to syntax and abstraction.

Galileo, in his "Letter to the Grand Duchess Cristina," quotes the witticism of an Italian cleric on the Bible's relationship with the science of astronomy: "The Bible is about how to go to Heaven, not about how the Heavens go."[24] Perhaps we should apply the same sentiment (without the witty inversion) to linguistics and say that the Bible is not about the origin of language.

An interest in extreme cases is a reflection of the Greek preoccupation with classification and ordering, among the most famous examples of which are the seven sages, the nine muses, the three fates, the twelve labors of Heracles, the seven wonders of the world, the five rivers and three judges of Hades, the ten winds, the three furies, the three basic kinds of regime (and their ranking), and so on. The American propensity for record keeping, especially in sports, reflects a similar cast of mind.

In the Bible, on the other hand, we do not find a fixation for such record keeping, with the exception, perhaps, of the genealogical lists. Yet these biblical lists are not a matter of simple categorization and record keeping; behind the lists lies a narrative or historical motive, as, for example, in the list of Noah's descendants, a preparation for the line of Abraham, or, in the list of Ruth's descendants, the future birth of King David. There are only two instances in Genesis where individuals are singled out as originators or inventors, both through the metaphor of calling them "fathers" of their innovations—Jabal, the father of those who live in tents and have cattle; and

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Jubal, the father of those who handle the pipe and the harp. Later, no doubt influenced by the Greek habit of classifying, people noted that Adam was the *first* man and Cain the *first* murderer and the *first* to build a city, and Noah the *first* to build an ark and to plant a vineyard. In these cases, they are the first mentioned in Genesis and so, in accordance with the conceit of *genesis* (the process of coming into being), would of course be the first.

We may observe the different questions asked in each culture. The Greek tendency is to look for historical firsts, lasts, mosts, and leasts. As a rule, the peoples of classical culture venerated the old. Such veneration was the norm, and an actual attraction to the new stirred suspicion. The Athenians, for example, were accused of addiction to novelty—and they were guilty (Thucydides, 1.70.2). They were not alone, however: the success throughout the Greek-speaking world of such innovators as Gorgias in rhetoric and in music Arion (who, Herodotus says, invented the dithyramb), and Protagoras in education and sophistry, showed that glory could be won by originality.[25] For the Greeks, the story of the oldest language was a *tour de force intelletuelle*. The Bible's account of Babel, a marvelous poetic fancy, does not actually indicate an interest on the part of the author of the tale in how the variety of languages came into being. The story is the mechanism for separating the ancestors of God's chosen people, Israel.

The attempt to wrench linguistic accounts from the Bible shows a Hellenic cast of mind that finds what it is looking for. Without intending to, it also promotes the pietistic belief that the Bible is the source of all knowledge, even about the origin of tongues and words. The views about language that can be observed in the Bible are that what defines the separateness of peoples are their tongues and that only an animal that speaks is human and a suitable companion for a human. The classical stories, however, show a genuine interest in linguistic issues, along with a concession that understanding has not been achieved.

PERSUASION: THE KING OF NINEVEH AND THEMISTOCLES

As Aristotle observes, there are several ways of inducing a person to do what you want (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1355b). You can use bribery. Blackmail and extortion also work. Torture is sometimes effective. Aristotle terms these methods *atechnoi*, "lacking art." Persuasion is *entechnoi*, "employing art" and works through speech. Aristotle distinguishes three kinds of verbal persuasion: that which utilizes the character of the speaker; that which stirs up the listeners' emotions; and argument. The challenge is the same: to move someone to your view (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1356a).

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To highlight the difference between Hebrew and Greek cultures, I shall take up two extraordinary acts of persuasion: the success described in the Book of Jonah of an unnamed king of Nineveh in turning his subjects from their moral evil (*raä-tam*) to sincere repentance and the success of Themistocles in convincing his fellow Athenians to devote a surprise windfall from silver at Laurium to a common purpose instead of distributing the jackpot among the citizenry. These triumphs of persuasion will, I hope, reveal something of how the two cultures look at humankind's remarkable ability to affect the souls of their fellow human beings through speech.

The Bible tells the story of Jonah, whom God orders to go to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, "to cry against it," for its evil has come before him. In a calculated act of disobedience, Jonah rushes to the harbor of Joppa, where he contracts with non-Hebrew sailors for passage to Tarshish, a city on the Atlantic coast, the opposite end of the world to Nineveh. Biblical scholars have attributed diverse bad motives to Jonah, though they are not equally bad: a desire not to save Nineveh, an enemy of Israel; a fear that God will *not* carry out the threatened judgment—that he will *not* destroy Nineveh—and that, as a consequence, Jonah will appear a false prophet; a worry that Israel will be put to shame if Nineveh repents at a word from a single prophet whereas Israel has not repented of its sins after many messages from many prophets; and a reluctance to make the one true God known to heathens. Whatever Jonah's motive, it seems not to have won over God, for he sends a wind strong enough to sink Jonah's ship. The mariners on the ship respond with spiritual and practical measures: they pray to their various gods, and they throw their cargo overboard. There is no hint that they ever contemplate throwing their Hebrew passenger overboard to lessen the ship's weight—one of several indications that they are honorably pious men. When the captain finds Jonah asleep in his cabin, the surprised captain asks Jonah why he is not calling on his deity for help. The sailors urge a casting of lots to determine who is to blame for the storm, and the lot falls to Jonah. The sailors do not ask him what he has done, but they do ask who his deity is. He tells them about God and explains that he is fleeing from God's presence. He enjoins the mariners to throw him into the sea.[26] The mariners row as hard as they can, but when the effort produces no result, they throw Jonah overboard. The sea calms at once. The mariners sacrifice to God, an indication that they believe in the power of Jonah's God. This belief is not irrational—they have just witnessed persuasive evidence of his reality and authority. Seeing is believing.[27]

A fish sent by God swallows Jonah, thus saving him from drowning. He knows that God has saved him. After reflecting on his situation for three days, he prays to God, who commands the fish to vomit up Jonah. The fish

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obediently does what God orders. When the word of God commands Jonah a second time, he complies:

> Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he cried out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" And the people of Nineveh believed God. They cried out for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. Word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish." When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the evil that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

What persuaded the people? A complete stranger has arrived in Nineveh and proclaimed the city's destruction in forty days. He offered no reason for the destruction, nor any evidence of God's ability to do anything, let alone destroy a huge and powerful city. The Ninevites nevertheless assume that they must put on a show of mourning and humility. What were they doing? Were they already mourning their destruction? Were they making a wager à la Pascal, betting that that they might ward off the disaster if they appeared penitent? Why did the king issue this proclamation?

It is in the king's proclamation that we find our prodigious act of persuasion. It comes in the strange order that, along with the realm's human beings, *the animals, beasts, herds and flocks* neither eat nor drink, be covered with sackcloth, and call out to God. One can understand why people might be ordered to show signs of repentance, but why should the king order these ritual signs from animals? Animals are capable of neither repentance nor sinfulness, for they lack the capacity of reason responsible for all moral and immoral conduct. The king's order must be intended to have an effect on the humans of Nineveh. Once the people receive the proclamation from the king, they will think, "This order from the king is absurd! My donkeys and cows and sheep cannot repent; only we humans can!" In consequence of the absurd order they will contrast their own prior evil behavior with what they know are the standards of right conduct. The king of Nineveh, by his demand that his subjects engage in a nonsensical action—putting the animals through human mourning procedures—forces them to engage in moral reasoning.[28] The king hopes that this moral reflection will evoke a true change in his subjects—an internal spiritual change that would obviate the need for moral cleansing through destruction. The king realized that the response we call

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"going through the motions" would not fool God; only a sincere change of heart could have a chance of saving the city.

So the king's problem was how to persuade his subjects to change internally—no easy matter. Parents sometimes demand that one child apologize to another for some wrong. The offending child, intimidated by a stern voice or a threat of punishment, complies and goes through a formal but often insincere apology. There usually has been no actual stirring of conscience; there has been no inner sorrow, only an outward show, the kind of pretense rebuked again and again by the prophets of Israel. Unlike our parents, the king of Nineveh has succeeded: he brought about an internal moral change in his people.

The Book of Jonah is traditionally read by Jews during the afternoon service on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. The entire day is devoted to moral reflection and to asking God for forgiveness for sins committed against him. Human beings cannot ask God to forgive sins they have committed to other human beings; only those who have been sinned against can forgive those sinners. The Book of Jonah induces us to think of the people who have wronged us but have sincerely repented, and it teaches us to forgive them. Inspiring an internal moral change is the most difficult of all forms of persuasion, and in the example of the king of Nineveh we have an exemplary model for how it can be accomplished.

In 490 BCE, at the Battle of Marathon, the Athenians, led by Miltiades, defeated a Persian expeditionary force intent on expanding Persian power into Europe. According to Herodotus, King Darius of Persia ordered his servants to remind him of Athens several times a day to keep his fury from abating (Herodotus, 5.105). When Darius died before accomplishing his vengeance, his son Xerxes took up the job. The Athenians, Plutarch writes (*Life of Themistocles* 3), thought their victory at Marathon meant the end of war with Persia. But young Themistocles, who longed for fame from shaping great events, foresaw that Marathon was merely the initial foray of a more formidable struggle and resolved to put himself forward as the champion not just of Athens but also of all Greece (*Life of Themistocles* 3).

Athens' chief rival then was the island Aegina, with which Athens had been engaged in hostilities for decades and against which Athens had fought from 488 to 486.[29] A large fleet made Aegina the premier maritime power in Greece. When a vein of silver was discovered in the mines at Laurium, probably in 483, a proposal was brought before the Athenian Assembly to distribute ten drachmae to every citizen, about the wages of a skilled worker for ten days. As John Moore writes, the proposal for the distribution "arose from the idea that the property of the state was … the corporate property of the individual citizens, which in turn sprang from the equation of the city with the body of citizens."[30]

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In 1968, when Atlantic Richfield discovered and then mined oil in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, the question arose of what to do with the windfall income. The state legislature voted to distribute an identical share of royalties to each citizen, including children, who had been a resident for at least one year. It might have been possible for Alaska, instead of distributing the money, to pool the royalties for a common project—a great university, say, or an arts complex, or a medical research center, or even a fleet of naval vessels to defend against the Soviet Union, but the state rejected such uses in favor of a general distribution, their goal, to protect "the permanent fund from possible raids by legislators."[31] This was a normal reaction to sudden wealth.[32]

In contrast, Themistocles persuaded the Athenian Assembly to forego dividing up the windfall and to use the money to construct triremes for defense against Aegina. Themistocles was accused during the debate of degrading Athenians from hoplites—infantrymen fighting with spears—into sailors sitting on benches and plying oars.[33] How did Themistocles accomplish what Alaskans who favored collective projects could not? How did he overcome the general tendency of human beings to give primacy to their private benefit and the usual Hellenic omission of economic planning—the normal procedure being to worry about funding an expenditure only after its need had arisen.[34] How did Themistocles persuade his fellow citizens? Plutarch explains that the menace from Aegina (Plutarch, *Life of Themistocles* 4) meant Themistocles did not have to frighten the Athenians with the vaguer threat from Persia. "He had only to play upon the enmity and jealousy the people felt towards the Aeginetans to make them agree to the outlay. The result was that the Athenians built a hundred triremes with the money, and these ships actually fought at Salamis against Xerxes."

Plutarch has very little to say about *how* Themistocles brought about his act of persuasion, aside from stirring the Athenians' passions against Aegina. Herodotus omits even this appeal to emotion (Herodotus 7.144): "Then Themistocles persuaded (*anegnose*) the Athenians to discontinue the distribution of money and to build with it two hundred ships for the war, meaning the war against the Aeginetans." It is perhaps telling that Herodotus does not use *peitho*, the usual word for "persuade," but *anagignosko*, a more intellectual verb, the prefix intensifying the epistemologically rich *gignosko*, so that the compound means something like "acknowledge by rational assent and understanding," as distinct from the less ruminative *peitho*, a persuasion that can be achieved by emotional appeals, enthymemes, and fallacies. Herodotus, writing two generations after the speech, is likely reporting a traditional account. Plutarch, perhaps embellishing what he had read in Herodotus, attributes to Themistocles the sort of speech that in *Plutarch*'s imagination would have persuaded the Athenians. In so doing, Plutarch used the practice of the rhetorical schools whereby students and professors composed speeches they

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presumed historical characters might have given. Fictitious speeches from the life of this famous Athenian were a favorite exercise.[35] In one by Himerius of Prusa, Themistocles spoke against a peace treaty with Persia; in one by Libanius, Themistocles replied to his father's exhortation to abandon a life of licentiousness; in others, Themistocles persuaded the Athenians to leave Athens or to burn their city to prevent its falling into Persian hands. What is noteworthy is that there is no record of anyone's making up the speech by which Themistocles persuaded the Athenians to devote the money from Laurium to a fleet. Perhaps this was too difficult a task for even the most skillful rhetoricians.

The only other source for Themistocles' speech is Aristotle's *Constitution of Athens* (22.7), where we learn that instead of a distribution to all the citizens, Themistocles proposed that the new wealth be lent to the hundred richest Athenians to do with as they pleased, with the provision that if their spending were approved, the city would convert the loan to a gift. The money was granted, and Themistocles had each build one trireme. In his commentary on Plutarch's *Life of Themistocles,* Frank Frost argues that it *is* plausible that construction of the triremes was granted to private citizens; but, he avers, it *is not* plausible that the Assembly would turn over money to private citizens for undisclosed purposes—and this instead of a universal distribution—when military secrecy was not required.[36]

Plutarch's reconstruction of the speech of Themistocles is consistent with what Herodotus and Thucydides report about the man's genius. Whether or not Themistocles anticipated that ships built with the money from Laurium might be useful in a war with Persia, he surely felt that they would be useful for establishing Athenian supremacy on the sea. And they would provide either a deterrent from war with Aegina or protection in such a war. He could appeal persuasively to the short-term self-interests of the Athenians—if not their absolutely shortest-term interest of the ten drachmae, at least their *foreseeable* short-term interests. If Athenians were like other peoples throughout history, the most persuasive elements would have been the same: defense and profit, defense ranking somewhat higher before an imminent threat. For Alaska, defense was never an issue.

The different persuasions recounted in the Book of Jonah and the accounts of Themistocles suggest a difference in the character of the cultures. The Hebrew treats the *psychological* transformation that comes from inward brooding. The Ninevites reflect on morality, an issue exploded for them by the ridiculous but provocative order from their king. The Athenians, as far as we, along with Plutarch, can reconstruct, are asked to calculate what is in their practical interest. The calculation involves a cost–benefit analysis, but no actual profound awakening or transformation of their soul—this, when it comes, will be the Socratic project.[37] It is, of course, in the earthly interests

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of the Ninevites not to be destroyed, but for them the matter is not one of seeming to have reformed and seeming to have given up their evil ways—for God is not to be fooled by mere appearances. They must actually reform; they must reform in their hearts and alter their hearts' desire. Only a sincere rejection of evil will change God's plan to destroy them. And the king, in his profoundly daring order, inspired this change.

HUMAN PERFECTIBILITY: JOB AND THE SAGE

Perhaps few notions about people seem more self-evidently false than that they can be perfect. A perfect man or woman? Impossible! We might be willing to admit that someone might be perfect in some small, limited way—perfectly dressed or possessing perfect vision—and even *then* we would probably be speaking rhetorically and not scientifically. We would not wish compare our friend's vision to that of the mythological Lynceus, who could see fish and pearls at the bottom of the sea.[38] But we would *never* agree that a person could be morally or ethically perfect. We are all imperfect; we all sin. Jews speak of a *yetzer hara* or "evil inclination" that leads them to make evil choices.[39] Christians speak of *peccatum originale* or "original sin," a collective guilt on all humanity inherited from Adam and Eve by their disobedience to the commandment not to eat the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden.[40] But raise the possibility of human perfection even among those of no religion whatsoever, and the response is the same: "Impossible!"

Someone who makes a mistake may claim in defense, "I'm only human," and most of us tend to feel an empathy. After all, since we are only human, too, we hope our errors will enjoy the same clemency. If we suddenly learned that human beings could in fact be perfect, we would no longer be able to extricate ourselves from blame with the excuse of being "only human," and this would be a great loss indeed. Still, despite *our* common view, we find in both the Bible and in classical literature an affirmation of the possibility of human perfection, in the biblical figure of Job and in the classical figure of the Stoic sage.[41]

Now the question of perfection can be examined either logically or empirically, and perhaps it does matter how it be addressed. It is probably the case that no one would assert that *perfection* and *human being* are *logically* contradictory in the same way that "having four sides" and "triangle" are. Whether we apply the definition of human beings as "animals capable of reason" or some definition like "rational bipeds," there is nothing that would *ex vi termini* preclude perfection. Moreover, if any moral error or morally wrong action proceeds from a morally wrong *choice*, and if any individual wrong choice could have been avoided (and since, if there *were* a choice, the morally

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right alternative *could have been chosen*), and if our lives consist of a series of moral choices in each of which the right choice *could* be made, then it follows that it is possible always to choose correctly. So it would appear to be *logically* possible, at least, to be morally perfect.

But logical possibility does not ensure actual possibility. There may be nothing self-contradictory in the concepts of a unicorn and Big Foot, but the absence of logical impossibility does not by any means indicate that there actually are such creatures. What we require is empirical evidence. One unicorn will be sufficient to persuade us of the possibility of its existence. In other matters where perfection is very difficult to attain, such as a perfect score on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, people occasionally *do* achieve perfect scores—a fact that proves empirically that it is possible.[42] It takes only one non-white swan to disprove the claim that *all* swans are white. Similarly, it will take only one perfect person to demonstrate empirically that a perfect person is not *impossible* and thus to deny us the convenient excuse that we are not perfect "because it is *impossible* for a person to be perfect."[43]

There are several references to human perfection in the Hebrew Bible. The first appears in God's injunction to Abram in Genesis 17:1: "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be perfect." The word translated as "perfect" (*tamim*) is sometimes rendered "entire," "whole," "upright," or "complete." In Ezekiel 28:15, God instructs the prophet to say to the King of Tyre, "You were perfect (*tamim*) in your ways from the day that you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you." In Psalm 101:2, the psalmist addresses God, "I will study the way of perfection (*tamim*); oh when will you come to me? I will walk within my house in the perfection of my heart." And in 2 Samuel 22:22–24, Samuel declares, "For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his judgments were before me: and as for his statutes, I did not depart from them. I was also perfect (*tamim*) before him, and have kept myself from mine iniquity." None of these passages is sufficiently assertive or illustrative of the actuality of perfection. In the first passage, God is using the imperatives "*walk, be*," and there is no indication that the perfection was ever achieved as a permanent condition. The passage from Ezekiel acknowledges the perfection up to a certain moment but gives little specific elaboration of the nature of the perfection. Samuel's claim to perfection may be dismissed as potentially self-serving and as uncorroborated. And the psalmist is not maintaining that he *has been* perfect, only that he aspires to be. Aspirational perfection is not empirical evidence. If it were, most every student would be an "A" student!

The example in the Bible of a perfect person is Job. The Book of Job opens quite unremarkably *and* quite remarkably: "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect (*tam*) and upright

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(*yashar*), and one that feared God, and shunned evil." What is unremarkable about the opening is the commonplace, formulaic "There was a man … ." Ah, we suppose, we are about to read another story of a man, Job, with a beautiful daughter and handsome sons. But then follows a remarkable characteristic: the man is perfect and upright. I have used the singular *characteristic* as distinct from the plural *characteristics* because the phrase is a hendiadys, the rhetorical device by which a singly notion is expressed by two words. The double expression emphasizes Job's perfection, and the gloss—that he fears God *and* eschews evil—lends detail to the qualities of perfection. We do not learn that he is strong and handsome or fleet of foot or that has a good head of hair or possesses a musical voice and keen eyesight. His is exclusively a moral perfection.[44] What makes him a remarkable character in terms of both the classical and biblical literature is this very perfection. Protagonists abound, but they are always imperfect. Noah becomes a drunkard and curses his son unjustifiably;[45] Abraham conceals Sarah's identity and is complaisant when Sarah acts with unjustified cruelty toward Hagar and Ishmael; Jacob steals his brother's birthright; Joseph behaves imperiously toward his brothers and inspires their resentment; Moses impulsively slays the Egyptian who is beating a Hebrew; the kings of Israel are all awash in moral turpitude. The heroes of the classical epics and dramas all bring about their own suffering through failures of self-restraint. The poems show how these individuals sometimes achieve greatness because of their defective characters and decisions (we may think here of Achilles and Oedipus) or in spite of them (we may think of Ajax and Heracles); no one would ever think any of them as perfect and upright.

We quickly learn about Job's external goods—his wealth and his family. But in case we had not been paying attention, the author tells us that on feast days, Job would offer sacrifices just in case any of his children might have sinned and "blasphemed God in their hearts." This information is vital for understanding Job. First, it startles readers into an immediate recognition that we are not so good as this Job, for none of us (at least, none I know) engages in precautionary atonement *just in case* our children might have sinned. And it is not that we have neglected to do this because such atonement would be inordinately difficult. Either we have not considered doing it, or we have felt that if our children have sinned, they should see to their own atonement. Next is the prominence in Job's motivation for the extra sacrifice—the possibility that his children might have blasphemed God *in their hearts*. One of the notable differences between the Hebrew and Christian scriptures is the addition by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount of sinning "in the heart." Where the Hebrew commandment is not to commit adultery, Jesus pointedly (by the priamel, "You have heard it said, but *I* say …") adds that simply to look at a woman lustfully is to have committed adultery in one's heart. Job,

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like Jesus, adds this far more difficult requirement; for Job, too, self-restraint is not limited to actions but is extended to internal sentiments.

The author calls yet more attention to the remarkable part of his opening, even if the opening, as well as the epilogue are sometimes rejected by scholars as not integral to the work.[46] For the only time in the Hebrew Bible we have a scene featuring God and "his sons" (*benei haElohim*). God himself calls to one of them, Satan, and says (Job 1:8): "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a perfect (*tam*) and an upright man, one that fears God, and shuns evil?" If we have been thinking that Job's perfection had been the brash, eccentric judgment of the narrator, we now learn that this is God's opinion as well. God is not by any means saying that the condition of perfection is widespread—indeed, he points out Job's uniqueness: "there is none like him in the earth"—but the presence of even one precludes the absolute impossibility of human perfection. And if it is possible for one, it is possible for others.

Satan responds by claiming that Job has been bribed into perfection. He has it too easy; his life is devoid of stress. Give Job a little stress, and it will become apparent that he is not truly perfect. "Touch his property," says Satan, "and he will blaspheme you to your face." Satan's words here remind us of the extra measure of moral goodness asserted by the narrator when he mentioned Job's anxiety that his children may have blasphemed God in their hearts. Here it seems that neither Satan nor God nor anyone else might be able to detect someone's inner feelings.[47] For social morality what goes on exclusively inside one's mind does not matter; in any case, here Satan's test is confined to information that is externally assessable.

Satan performs the test, destroying Job's property and causing Job's children to die, but Job does not respond as Satan had predicted. "He arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped … For all this Job sinned not, nor ascribed aught unseemly to God" (Job 1:20–22). Job does not lash out at God or at anyone else; he engages in acts of ritual mourning and does not ask God to change what has happened or to explain why it has happened. In short, Job controls his outward response. We do not learn what, if anything, he is thinking or feeling. In his observable response he is perfect.

When the sons of God present themselves again, God greets Satan with the same question, pointing out how well Job has held up (Job 2:2–5), but Satan is not convinced and replies, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man has will he give for his life. But put forth your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, surely he will blaspheme you to your face." The test, Satan complains, has been like an easy SAT with only elementary school-level questions. A perfect score has been too easy to achieve. God seems to admit that the first test of Job's perfection was inadequate as he gives permission to Satan to perform a harder test. The only restriction is that Job not die.

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The second test presents the reader with a dilemma of whom to support. On the one hand, we know that Job does not deserve to suffer. God has acknowledged this in his words to Satan, for he has said that Satan has "moved against him *without cause*." And we readers would not wish anyone to suffer without cause, for to do so would, by our cruelty, diminish our own goodness. We would not wish to be like the Athenians in the anecdote about Aristides the Just, who voted to ostracize him *because* they were tired of hearing him called "the Just." On the other hand, it would be very discomforting for us to see Job actually pass this test, for we would have to admit that human perfection *is* possible—an admission that would prevent our "being only human" as an excuse for our failures.

Satan smites Job with painful sores all over his body, which he scrapes with a potsherd. His wife, perhaps from the kindly wish that he be free from pain, or perhaps in scorn, says (Job 2:9), "Do you still hold fast to your perfection (*betumatecha*)? Blaspheme [or 'bless' (*barech*)] God, and die." She uses the very same word that the author and God used of Job—*perfection*. Juxtaposed to this word is *barech*, which is usually rendered in this context as "curse" or "blaspheme," as in Satan's speech in Job 2:5, but it is the same word as "bless." Perhaps the meaning depends on the intonation. Job responds to her with some testiness (Job 2:10): "As one of the foolish women speaks, you speak; yea, the good we receive from God, and the evil we do not receive?" The text adds, "In all this Job had not sinned with his lips." Commentators have taken their cue from Job's rebuke of his wife and rendered *barech* as "blaspheme." But the potential ambiguity itself is provocative. In order to know for sure what Job's wife intended, whether she meant "curse" or "bless," we would have to be able to read her mind. Even Job, with his familiarity of his spouse, could not know for sure. In his state of extreme physical pain, he may have misinterpreted her tone; in her anxiety over the condition of her husband, she may not have expressed herself clearly. The point, perhaps, is that we human beings cannot read someone else's intentions and that this inability to read intentions does not diminish one's perfection *as a human being:* reading minds is not part of what it means to be a human being.[48] The perfection of a thing, whether a human being or a toaster, is related to what the thing is. An inability to freeze foods does not diminish the perfection of a toaster: freezing foods is not part of what it means to be a toaster any more than reading minds is a part of human perfection.

Then again, Job's response may not have anything to do with whether she meant "curse" or "bless." Even if she meant only kindness and intended for him to bless God and die in order to be freed from pain, Job may have disagreed with her recommendation. The choice of dying, even if it be euthanasia—dying to obtain release from suffering—is not, in the Bible, one for humans to make.[49] Job's use of the word "foolish" (sometimes the word is

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rendered "godless") might be simply a scolding of his wife for wanting *him* to assume a decision that belongs to God.

The text tells us that Job did nothing sinful, including his response to his wife. The observation that "He did not sin with his lips" emphasizes that his *words* did not constitute a sin. Of course, in his miserable condition no other varieties of sinful action are available to him, but the test, of course, had been over whether Job would blaspheme or curse God.

The reader coming to Job for the first time might expect that after his stern injunction to his wife, Job will quiet down and submit to his condition. We are told that three friends, having heard of Job's situation, came from their countries to comfort him. By the time they have arrived, Job has been suffering for a while in chronic pain. The friends sit with him for seven days and seven nights without speaking. When at last the silence is broken, it is not they but Job who speaks. What he says will awaken any dozing reader (Job 3:3–16): "Let the day on which I was born perish, and the night that said, 'A man has been conceived!' That day—let it be darkness; let not God on high regard it, nor let light shine on it! ... Why did I not die at birth, and why did I not expire as I came out of the womb … Or why was I not buried like a stillborn infant, like infants who have never seen the light?" Job, it appears, may be morally perfect, but in other respects he is just like us! He feels pain; he complains; he wishes that he had never been born.[50] What he does not do is attribute bad motives to others or accuse anyone of wrongdoing, not even God.

This section, which investigates biblical and classical views of human perfectibility, is not a commentary on Job, and so only a few additional comments about the narrative need be made.[51] Throughout the Book of Job, Job never sins; he never says anything about God that is not right. In the final chapter, after speaking to Job, God addresses Eliphaz the Temanite, "My anger is stirred up against you and your two friends, because you have not spoken about me what is right, as my servant Job has" (Job 42:7). Happily, God's anger is not lethal in this instance, and Job's friends, with Job's help, are able to set things right with a sacrifice of seven bulls and seven rams. Their incorrect statements had been a result of folly (Job 42:8), not malice. To compensate Job as much as possible for having endured this test—a test brought about because of a refusal to believe that human beings could be morally perfect—(Job 42:12–17) God gives Job more than he had lost. The story ends as it began, in the fashion of a folk-tale, with more sons, daughters more beautiful than any other daughters, more wealth than was lost, and 140 more years of life.

In Pagan literature we find a few tales that illustrate an extraordinary goodness in a few individuals. There are Baucis and Philemon, whose virtue is exemplified by the hospitality they offer to Jupiter and Mercury, who come

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to their house disguised as beggars, and Tellus of Athens, whom Solon points out as the happiest of men.[52] But the story of Baucis and Philemon offers a single act of goodness; and the happiness of Tellus is the pre-Socratic, pre-Aristotelian sort that does not equate happiness with moral goodness, but with a lucky exemption from misfortunes in life and the acquisition of a number of tangible goods. When classical authors extol the accomplishments of some outstandingly heroic individuals, they always include as a counterweight their duplicity, selfishness, or even mental instability.[53]

In the Hebrew Bible the only exploration of the possibility of a perfect human being is the Book of Job. Among the classical philosophers, however, notably the Stoics, deliberation concerning human perfection is an *idée fixe*. The deliberation coalesces around the concept of the "Sage," a *man* (we are, of course—and alas—speaking from the ancient view) of complete integrity and wisdom. The sage—the one rightly called rich, king, master of the people, beautiful, free, unconquerable, and happy, as Cicero's Cato sums up his nature—alone possesses philosophy and virtue (Cicero, *de Finibus* 3.75).

To arrive at this description, the Stoics drew on a distillate of Plato and Aristotle. These philosophers had distinguished three classes of goods—goods of the soul, goods of the body, and external goods. Though giving pride of place to the goods of the soul in the definition of human happiness as "an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue" (*Nicomachaean Ethics* 1098a3–21), Aristotle had included all three classes of goods in his description, arguing that we would be reluctant to award the palm of happiness to someone, even if virtuous, who was crippled or ugly or impoverished or had horrible children or lacked friends (*Nicomachaean Ethics* 1100a10–1b9). Aristotle's theory had a problem, for in the argument leading up the definition of happiness as "the highest good," he had argued for happiness' self-sufficiency and independence from luck and external things. But possessions can be destroyed or lost; health can deteriorate suddenly despite a person's exercise and good diet; and children, having an independent will, can make bad choices despite their parents' scrupulous attention to their education—all these classes of goods are perishable and outside of one's control and thus in conflict with the self-sufficiency of the highest good. Stoics took the essence of Aristotle's argument and denied that goods of the body had anything at all to do with human excellence. Such goods, they insisted, cannot count as truly good because they are outside of human control (Epictetus, *Enchiridion* 1). Nor can the condition of one's city or state, for it depends on circumstances outside of one's control. Nor can wealth be relevant, for it can be taken away—and a good that can be taken away is not so good as a good that cannot be taken away. As a result of this battle royal waged by the classes of goods, the last one standing is virtue. Virtue depends solely on oneself: it cannot be taken away; it does not grow old; it does not depend on physical

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strength, health, or beauty. In Stoicism, virtue is not the highest good; it is the *only* good.

This view disdained the less severe opinions of the other ancients. In Herodotus' story, Solon awarded the prize of happiest man to Tellus of Athens, who lived in a flourishing country, had children beautiful and good, lived to see his grandchildren married, was financially well off by the standards of his community, died gloriously, died quickly, and was given a public funeral at state expense. For the Stoics, none of these features of Tellus' life has anything whatsoever to do with happiness or perfection, for the only thing that matters is moral excellence.

A number of apparent paradoxes appear as a consequence of these views. One is that a good man can be happy even while tortured on the rack, for his soul remains unruffled and aloof from the body's pain, while the good man himself wills nothing except virtue. The Stoics agree with Aristotle that an ordinary beggar is not happy, but, according to the Stoic Zeno "a *wise* beggar is not only happy but *wealthy*." Some Stoics do grant that a country is a good, as are also health, children, and eyesight, but, according to Zeno, the virtuous sage will be happy, even *supremely* happy, though blind, infirm, in exile, afflicted by disease, destitute, and tortured on the rack.[54]

There was a question of whether the perfect Stoic Sage could exist at all or whether he was simply "rarer than an Ethiopian phoenix."[55] No surviving Stoic describes himself as the ideal sage, and most do not claim to have known even one,[56] though Seneca may have suggested Cato as an example.[57] Since they believed that all human beings were either sages (of which there were virtually none or actually none) or fools, their general view of the world's population was rather glum.[58]

The reason human perfection is rarely taken up is that it seems self-evidently impossible. And the reason so many people find comfort in the Book of Job is that they do not pay attention to this topic and to the dramatic lesson that indeed a person *can* be perfect. As a result, they are unaware of its advice to quit using our own imperfection to support the claim that it is not possible for a human being to be perfect.

Cicero's account of the sage draws from a long tradition of philosophy that begins with the discovery of rationality as the distinguishing characteristic and special glory of the human species. When Socrates and Plato first replaced fighting prowess and courage with mental acuity as the particular excellence of a human being and then refined it into a life of habitual virtue, they replaced the warrior with the philosopher, and not just any philosopher, but a philosopher who sought good and eschewed evil. The Stoics further burnished this irreproachable figure into the Stoic Sage, the perfect man.

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Both cultures share a profound doubt about whether a perfect man is possible. In the Bible this doubt is represented by Satan's scoffing at the notion and by the challenge to God to test his claim about Job's perfection. God's willingness to accept the challenge and allow the experiment on Job is a response to this doubt. For the Stoics, the matter is more complicated. While the logical argument about the *possibility* of a perfect person is quite strong, their hardnosed critical acumen forces them to acknowledge that they do not know even one person whom they could call perfect. Seneca, who proposed Cato as an example of a perfect man, was grasping for a person who had already been long dead before his grandfather was born. The Stoics had to hang their belief on a logical possibility and not on any empirical evidence. Perhaps the Stoic lack of unanimity on the question of whether the perfect Sage existed in reality reflects the doubts that the Skeptic school propagated in the postclassical phase of later antiquity.[59]

In the texts of both cultures the perfect man is exceedingly rare. By God's tally there is only Job: "There is none like him in the earth," he tells Satan. In the mystic tradition of Judaism there is the idea of th*e Tzadikim Nistarim*, or the thirty-six righteous people in every generation, without any of whom the world would come to an end. The idea of these thirty-six is suggested in the Talmud but is greatly amplified in folklore.[60] In the Bible itself we might recall that Abraham bargains down to saving Sodom if *ten* righteous people can be counted, a number apparently not realized; and when God floods the world, he saves only Noah and his family. According to the Stoics, the perfect man is rare, if he exists at all. The corollary for both cultures, of course, is that the morally imperfect and foolish are members of a group that includes almost everyone.

The Stoic Sage and Job share an acceptance of what qualifies as knowledge and a rejection of what does not. Job repeatedly rejects the claims of his comforters that he must deserve his suffering, for a good God would not allow an innocent Job to suffer. In denying that he has sinned, he gives his own experience, so to speak, priority over the argument of his friends. He neither assents to their argument nor denies the goodness of God. For the Stoic Sage, a knowledge of when to assent and not to assent manifests itself as the Stoic virtue called "non-precipitancy."[61] Job and the sage share this ability even when suffering intense pain. Of Job we know that he was speaking to his friends while covered completely with boils; of the Sage we hear that he will be happy, that is, manifesting virtue, the only good, even while on the rack.

But one significant difference between the Stoic notion of perfection and that exemplified by Job is the matter of calmness. Job expresses his emotions very energetically. He wails, curses the day he was born, burns and raves and rages against his suffering: he does not go gently into that ash heap. The Stoic sage, in contrast, follows the advice of Marcus Aurelius, who counsels: "Be

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like a rock against which the waves of the sea break unceasingly. It stands unmoved, and the feverish waters around it are stilled," and "Pain is either an evil for the body—then let the body prove it—or for the soul. The soul, however, can preserve its own fair weather and calm, and not accept it as an evil. For every judgment, impulse, desire, and aversion is within the soul, and no evil can penetrate there."[62]

When, at the end of the Book of Job, God has finished talking from out of the whirlwind in a speech that offered no satisfactory explanation of why Job has undergone so much undeserved suffering but instead has offered a catalogue of bewildering rhetorical questions demonstrating divine power, Job replies (42:2–6), "I know that you can do every thing, and that no purpose can be withheld from you. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not… Wherefore I abhor my words, and repent, seeing I am dust and ashes."

From Job's response, we learn that the Bible does not include perfect knowledge as a part of human perfection, at least not knowledge in the sense of an encyclopedic grasp of the world's facts. What Job is aware of after his encounter with God is his place in creation and how very small it is. He knows that he knows neither how the world operates nor about its causes. He has that Socratic wisdom that knows when it does not know. This is quite a remarkable difference from the Stoic Sage, who does have a perfect knowledge, of causality, physics, and everything else.[63]

Though Job expressed his emotions too forcibly ever to qualify as a Stoic Sage perhaps, if he had found one, in the shared pith of their moral goodness, the two could have been friends.

WISDOM: JOB AND SOCRATES

All classical philosophers agree that the preeminent quality of human beings is reason. While proper reasoning may be defined as moving from premises to conclusions using the tool of logic, one may apply powers of reasoning to bad ends. How it is possible to choose bad ends and yet be a rational or clever individual is a problem that, though consequential, I shall set aside here.[64] Not all mental operations requiring acuity are identical, even if they are sometimes difficult to distinguish. Wiliness, resourcefulness, craftiness, wisdom, intelligence, astuteness, cunning, slyness, subtlety, shrewdness, cleverness, sharpness, and canniness are some of the terms that denote dexterity and proficiency in mental faculties. Some of these—wisdom, intelligence, resourcefulness, and astuteness—are generally positive; others—cunning, slyness, craftiness, and shrewdness, usually negative; and still others—subtlety,

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sharpness, and cleverness—rely on context for whether they are positive or negative.

The ability to solve a riddle requires a high level of intelligence, for the most puzzling riddles at first seem to defy understanding: they make statements or ask questions that *appear* to make no sense whatsoever. They seem to be contradictions or nonsense. A solver of such riddles, by keen insight into the equivocations, is able to detect the metaphor or pun or sleight of tongue to find the meaning. Consider, for example, this conundrum, from *The Pirates of Penzance* of Gilbert and Sullivan: "Frederick has lived twenty-one years but has had only five birthdays." Now consider this one asked by the Queen of Sheba of Solomon, from the *Midrash Mishle*, an eleventh-century midrash to Proverbs: "What is it? Seven depart and nine enter, two give drink but one partakes."[65] It will be plain that the two riddles are not of comparable difficulty, yet both require an ability to see through the fog to a resolution that makes sense.[66] The ability to memorize a large number of facts and recall them upon demand serves one well in television quiz shows and on the rare occasions where one must exhibit such learning. An ability to perform calculations with lightning speed also shows a prodigious mental acuity. But no one would confuse any of these remarkable intellectual talents—riddle-solving, a photographic memory, or computational fleetness—with the sort of intelligence we hope to find in statesmen or spouses. When the Thebans chose Oedipus as their king because he solved the riddle of the Sphinx, they were little better than the people Herodotus records as choosing the tallest man for their king (Herodotus, *History* 3.20). If Englishmen chose Mr. Memory from *The Thirty-Nine Steps* to be the prime minister of England or Americans chose an idiot savant to head the National Science Foundation because, in the blink of an eye, they could tell with unerring accuracy the day of the week on which a date two hundred and fifty-two years in the future will fall, we would be equally amiss. These sorts of intelligence may serve some purposes, but they do not qualify individuals to run organizations or to lead nations.

One of the Greek heroes most famous for intelligence is Odysseus. Throughout the *Odyssey* we observe the effects of his quick and resourceful mind, which extricates him from many dangerous situations. Most famous is the escape from the Cyclops, whose cave Odysseus has entered and whose food and drink he has stolen. After the Cyclops has gulped down some of Odysseus' companions and is preparing to eat the rest, Odysseus contrives to make the Cyclops drunk and then blind him while he is sleeping. Odysseus and his men are thus able to escape from the cave by clinging to the underbellies of sheep. Finally, by identifying himself as "No Man," he makes a laughing stock of the Cyclops as he cries in alarm, "No Man has wounded me!" This is the paradigmatic example of Odysseus' cleverness because it shows wit and an ability to defeat a more physically powerful foe who has

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him cornered. But resourcefulness is not wisdom. Wisdom is not exhibited by recklessness and thrill-seeking. Odysseus may be intelligent and quick-witted in overcoming the Cyclops, but he does not exhibit wisdom.

In a similar way, Jezebel—who contrives to steal the vineyard of Naboth by forgery, suborning of witnesses, and the execution of her victim—exhibits craftiness and a talent for scheming, not wisdom.

How then *shall* we define wisdom? Though it may be helpful to place wisdom in the same genus as the various terms denoting intellectual acuity, we should seek a precise definition. If we adopt Aristotle's formulation and consider wisdom a virtue, then, like all virtues in human beings, it will refer to the application of rational mental faculties in the performance of an *activity*. While the general principle of the virtues is the same—the application of mental faculties appropriate to a context—contexts differ. Thus *justice* is the application of mental faculties in giving things their due; medical virtue is the application of mental faculties in practicing medicine, and so on. Wisdom is the application of mental faculties in distinguishing and then choosing the good.

So our discussion of wisdom will not concern those adept at calculating or remembering or solving riddles—for these are not the skills that we, along with the ancient Hebrews and Pagans, consider the province of the wise. For a snapshot of how the cultures consider wisdom we shall examine the Bible's Job and Plato's Socrates.

The opening of the Book of Job identifies its main human character and describes his goodness thus (Job 1:1): "There was a man in the land of Uz; Job was his name; and that man was whole-hearted (*tam*) and upright (*yashar*), and he held God in reverential awe,[67] and turned away from evil."

Four messengers arrive in overlapping succession at Job's house. Even as the first is speaking, a second, then a third, then a fourth arrive to inform Job of ever more brutal news: a raid has taken his oxen and asses; a fire has burned the sheep and servants; three bands of Chaldeans have taken the camels and killed the servants; and a wind has caused the house of his eldest son in which his children were feasting to collapse, killing all of them. At the news, "Job rose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord according to the text'" (Job 1:20–21). Despite these misfortunes, the text adds, "Job did not revile God" (Job 1:22).

When God allows Satan to afflict Job with painful boils from head to foot, he spends his time scraping the sores with a potsherd as he sits in ashes. His suffering is compounded by mental anguish. First, his wife, instead of comforting him, tells him to curse God and die.[68] Then his friends, ironically

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known in English as his "comforters," come to put forth the credible argument that that Job *must* be guilty, *must* have sinned, for God is just and would not make an innocent man suffer. The position of comforter Eliphaz is typical (Job 4:7): "Who that was innocent ever perished?" When Job maintains his innocence and integrity in the face of this charge, Bildad tells him that if he repents for his sins he will be restored (Job 8). Job, not wishing to "plea bargain," says that if he had sinned, he would deserve punishment. Zophar tells him that he should not be insisting that his conduct is pure and adds that Job is not suffering as much as he deserves (Job 11:4–6). In the ensuing conversation, Job continues to assert both God's goodness and his own innocence. To be sure, he curses the day he was born (Job 3); declares that he loathes his life (Job 10:1); questions why he was born; points out that poor orphans suffer (Job 24:9–12); and bewails his misery. Yet through all these plaints he steadfastly affirms his probity (Job 31).

Though in his physical condition, covered with boils and sitting in a heap of ashes, he cannot sin bodily, he could perform the sins of speech. He could curse God for causing or allowing his suffering. To be sure, Job does complain, but complaining is not a sin. Not to complain, not to recognize his misery would be either a lie or obliviousness to reality. Biblical virtue does not require a stiff upper lip. If Job had agreed with his friends in order to silence them so that they would leave him in peace, he would have been lying. But believing that he had committed no sin, he held fast to his conviction. He continued, moreover, to ask *why* he was suffering—a question he asked because, like Socrates, he *knew that he did not know* the answer—he did not simply assume that God was unjust.

When God finally speaks (Job 38–40:2), he shows his power and his resemblance to a parent.[69] His first speech is a long series of rhetorical questions about the created world, the implicit answer of which can only be "I do not know." Job says only that he is of small account and will not answer (Job 40:4–5). God's second speech asks rhetorically about the strange monsters Behemoth and Leviathan, again with the obvious implication that Job cannot deal with them but God can. Job answers that he knows that God can do all things and that he, Job, is only dust and ashes.

During God's entire conversation with Job it would appear that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar are present, for God scolds them for not having spoken correctly about God as Job had done. They will need to sanctify themselves by sacrifices and be grateful to Job, who will pray on their behalf.

By our definition of wisdom as the application of mental faculties to questions concerning good and evil, Job has consistently acted wisely: he has held God in reverential awe and has turned away from evil. His challenge—from the loss of his children and wealth, the berating by his wife, and the plausible but false accusations of his friends—was to maintain his knowledge of good

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and evil by adhering to a correct sense of his innocence and not blaming God or other human beings for his suffering. Wisdom does not require an insensibility to the unfairness of one's situation or suffering in silence. It does require thinking and acting and speaking correctly in matters of good and evil.

The story ends with God's replacing the external goods Job lost with twice as much as before. Rubies are the Bible's signal metaphor for things signifying wealth. Wisdom is worth more: "The price of wisdom is above rubies" (Job 28:18); "Wisdom is better than rubies" (Proverbs 8:11). Though his "rubies," so to speak, are restored and doubled, no reader looks at the restoration as anything but a flourish, a pralltriller in Job's life, the preeminent quality of which is steadfast wisdom.

Attempts to find "the historical Socrates," like the attempts to find the historical Jesus or the historical Homer, have not yielded any certainty. Plato's portrait, too, is at most only partly accurate. But since it is the one that has seared the world's consciousness, it will be used as portraying the classical example of a wise man.

Plato's Socrates is a thinker who pursues definitions of such words as *justice*, *love*, *friendship*, *courage*, and *piety*, and the dialogues about these words are among the most accessible and stimulating. Everyone thinks he knows the meaning of these words, but a few Socratic questions expose the complex difficulties of finding satisfying definitions. The young men who watched Socrates argue found the experience amusing, as Socrates, with a few seemingly simple questions, quickly deflated people supremely confident of their knowledge (*Apology* 23c).

The most inspiring quality of the Socrates in Plato's dialogues is his courage to pursue truth no matter the cost. His decision to die rather than abandon his post as philosopher of Athens continues to make his life glorious. If he had accepted banishment after his conviction on the inconsistent charges of atheism, creating new gods, and corrupting the young men of Athens,[70] he would not serve as the consummate martyr to philosophy—the upright thinker who valued truth and justice above everything else. Plato portrays Socrates standing up to bullies such as Thrasymachus and Callicles and Meno, who praise a tyrannical over a virtuous life and threaten Socrates personally. And Plato shows him completely unfazed by such famous luminaries as Protagoras, Parmenides, Gorgias, and Aristophanes, with whom he more than holds his own.

Socrates does not yield even when it would seem to be in his practical interest to do so. At his trial, after the jury has found him guilty of the charges, he has the opportunity to propose a penalty—a fine or banishment, and the terms of either. But, as he says, to suggest a penalty as though he had actually done something wrong would be a travesty of justice, and he refuses to do so (*Apology* 36d). Instead, he proposes that he deserves a reward of free meals; in the

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end, at the urging of friends, he proposes a paltry fine. Despite the pressure of his conviction and the prospect of execution, he will not admit wrongdoing.

Plato's Socrates often shocks with conclusions that seem antithetical to human life and then rubs a conclusion in the face of an interlocutor with the effect of making him feel the full humiliating pain of self-contradiction and of being stripped naked, as it were, before an attentive crowd of critics eager to espy warts and other imperfections. Plato often presents his Socrates as antagonistic, slippery at escaping from traps, ironic, and rude, even contumeliously so. And sometimes Socrates' lack of sympathy or emotional connection with his interlocutors drives them away, even when they seem just on the brink of a breakthrough and, as a result, he seems to make them worse people.[71] In other words, Plato portrays Socrates as lacking what has recently been termed "emotional intelligence," the ability to understand one's effect on others by emotional interaction.[72] As a result of this lack, many of Socrates' contemporaries and some modern readers find Socrates off-putting, obnoxious, even vile, while for others Socrates seldom fails to inspire. These latter readers are deeply moved by his persistence in tracking down an argument, his invulnerability to intimidation by the most aggressive assaults upon his person and his positions, and by his tenacious devotion to justice. Portraits, even loving ones, have their limits, and honest portrait artists will not ignore their subjects' problematic blemishes. As wisdom, in the sense we are using it, does not preclude complaining (as in the case of Job), so it does not preclude personality disorders (as here, in the case of Socrates).

Plato's Socrates explains that he was not drawn to his civic duties. Declaring that until his own trial he has never been in court (*Apology* 17d), he admits that he never served on a jury. Elsewhere (*Apology* 31d–e), he describes how he stayed away from virtually all political engagement. This dereliction of civic responsibility arose from the sagacious judgment that by involvement in politics he would expose himself to almost certain death. His real duty, assigned him by the gods, he believed, was to serve as a gadfly to wake the sleeping horse of his fellow citizens by rousing them to put moral virtue ahead of all other goods (*Apology* 36c). That he should undertake this task was implied by the oracle at Delphi, which told his friend Chaerephon that no man was wiser. Eventually Socrates understood the cryptic oracular pronouncement to mean that he was wiser than others because he *knew* that he knew nothing while others thought they knew what they did not know, and so he took it upon himself to question others and reveal to them that they did not know what they claimed to know (*Apology* 21c–e).

While one might question Socrates' prudence in letting people know how ignorant they were, one must admire him when he was threatened by dangers to his well-being. In those moments Socrates chose the morally appropriate actions and acted with wisdom—first when he risked prison or death by alone voting

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against bringing to a common trial the commanders who had failed to rescue the corpses of soldiers after the Athenian victory at Arginusae in 407 BCE (*Apology* 32b) and then when he refused to carry out the illegal assignment from the Thirty Tyrants of Athens to arrest and convey Leon of Salamis for execution (*Apology* 32c). In Plato's work we find the dramatization of a man who is basically wise and good. Socrates' defects complicate his case, but none of his defects is so grave as to disqualify him from being the classical exemplar of wisdom.

Because wisdom is a distinctly general human quality, defined here as the application of mental faculties to choosing the good, it is no surprise that Job and Socrates, our two examples, have many features in common.[73] Both manifest a self-knowledge that tells them what they do and do not know. Both refuse to admit to wrongdoing—in Socrates' case, to mitigate his punishment, in Job's, to quiet his friends' insistence on the necessity of his having sinned to explain his suffering.

But there are some significant differences. Job's wisdom, on the one hand, consists of holding God in reverential awe—a recognition of God's majesty and power over the cosmos—and of turning away from evil. In addition, he engages in preemptive parental penance, performing sacrifices just in case his children have somehow sinned. Socrates' wisdom, on the other hand, is manifold. He actively attempts to turn others toward lives of virtue. He is self-consciously aware that the Delphic Oracle has declared no one wiser. He refuses to follow orders that are legally and morally wrong. Where Job took no evident notice of the destruction of his wealth, Socrates is famously poor. His only prayer in the entire Platonic corpus is to Pan (*Phaedrus* 263d):

> Dear Pan, and the other gods of this place,
> Grant that I may be beautiful within
> And that my external things be friends of the things inside me.
> May I consider the wise man rich,
> And may I have only as much gold as a prudent man might carry.

Here we see that for both cultures wisdom is a conscious embrace of the goods over which one has control and an indifference to those over which one does not.

REMEMBERING: GLORY, GRATITUDE, AND DUTY

Humans are not the only animal that can remember. Birds remember where their nests and feeding stations are, even after long journeys of migration; elephants remember their burial grounds; dogs, their masters after prolonged

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absences. Aristotle says that animals that possess a memory are more intelligent than those lacking one.[74] Plato has Socrates require a good memory in the philosopher, the highest type of human being.[75] In this section, however, we shall examine not the merits of a good memory, but the importance attached to the act of *remembering*. The value attached to memory will illuminate moral standards in their cultures.

Injunctions to remember occur frequently in the Bible. In the Book of Genesis, God is the first to use the word *remember* (*zakar*) as he concludes his covenant with Noah (Genesis 9:1–16). In the covenant, God commands Noah to be fruitful and multiply; then he tells Noah that in addition to vegetables he may eat all the creatures that move, though he may not eat a part of one that is still living (9:3–4). In addition, God forbids the killing of any human beings, a prohibition that presumably includes self-killing.[76] After again commanding Noah to be fruitful and multiply, God sets a rainbow in the sky to remind himself of his part of the covenant—his promise not to destroy the world again by water (9:14–16). God's promise to remember his part of the covenant suggests, even if it does not explicitly proclaim it, that Noah is to remember *his*.

In the Book of Exodus, when the Israelites are finally leaving Egypt, Moses gives them an order (Exodus 13:3): "Remember this day,[77] in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place; there shall no leavened bread be eaten." Here, for the first time, the Hebrew people are commanded to remember something that God has done for them. Later, when God introduces the laws at Sinai (Exodus 20:2), his claim to their obligation to obey them lies in remembrance: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Later (Deuteronomy 8:2), he tells the people that the forty years of wandering in the desert were a test of whether they would keep the commandments. He enjoins them to remember the Sabbath day (Exodus 20:8, Deuteronomy 4:10). He instructs them to wear fringes, the twisted threads to serve as a mnemonic to help remember the commandments, for a failure to remember leads to sin.

The story of the Exodus begins when "there arose in Egypt a king who did not know Joseph" and so felt no obligation to the Hebrews, whom Joseph and his pharaoh had welcomed (Exodus 1:8). "Did not know" is a synonym for "failed to remember," an indication of ignorance. An obligation to remember and to express gratitude is extended to human beings besides the Hebrews.

In the *Odyssey,* after Odysseus has spent seven monotonous years alone with Calypso on her island, he finally lands on Phaeacia, where he is protected by Nausicaa, hosted by King Alcinous, and entertained with tales from the bard Demodocus. When Odysseus is on his way to Alcinous' palace, he passes

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Nausicaa, who, bidding him farewell, fondly asks him to remember her. He promises to remember her and to pray to her for the rest of his days, for, he declares, she saved his life (*Odyssey* 8.461–68). In the palace, as Demodocus sings the tale of the sack of Troy, Odysseus begins to weep. The courteous Alcinous asks Demodocus to stop singing and begs Odysseus to tell his story (8.572–80), telling him that the gods have spun miseries and ruin for men "*that there might be a song for those yet to be born*." Men like Odysseus will be remembered because of their deeds in the conflict at Troy, deeds already celebrated in bardic song. Nausicaa's humble act of giving Odysseus sanctuary and of introducing him to her family would not, in the normal course of things, constitute an event to be recorded. For Nausicaa, what will give meaning to her action is for Odysseus to remember it—an opinion Homer fully validates in his poem, as he extends the boundaries of acts worthy of song. For King Alcinous, what gives meaning to the suffering of human beings is that those sufferings become the stuff of song. It would be as though World War II, with its sweeping miseries, took place *so that* there could be novels and movies about it. In the archaic world of Homer's warriors what mitigates the death mortals face is the promise of being remembered, and glorious deeds are the kind that are remembered.[78] But Homer himself extends the scope of epic to include the ancillary deeds that help his heroes—the loyalty of Eumaeus, the hospitality of Nestor, the tenderness of Andromache.

Herodotus lays out the value of memory in the opening sentence of his *History*, when he defines as his purpose "that the things arisen from men *not* become extinct and that the great and wonderful works shown by the Greeks and barbarians *not* be without fame, especially why they waged war with one another." This is more than a modest refinement of the purpose of remembering expressed by Homer's characters, for it makes remembering an end in itself.

For classical culture, remembering is the mental act of looking backward at what deserves respect. Remembering the great and wonderful deeds of those who have come before, recalling the people who have performed deeds of valor or nobility, is what gives meaning to their adversity. In being remembered and becoming the subjects of song and history, humans achieve a form of immortality. Thus Mnemosyne ("Memory") is the mother of the Muses. As Pindar sings (*Nemean* 7.11–16):

> If a man chanced to flourish in his actions, he tossed a delightful cause for song
> into the poetic streams of the Muses: you see, great feats
> that lack hymns suffer great obscurity;
> as for lovely deeds, we know of only one way of gazing on them:
> if the goddess Mnemosyne, wearing her brilliant ribbon,
> should find a reward for labors in glorious songs of poetry.

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In biblical culture, human glory is not a value; in fact, the biblical text undermines it.[79] Moses, with whom "God spoke face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" (Exodus 33:11) and about whom it is written, "And there arose not a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Deuteronomy 34:10), was not granted a known burial site, the rabbinical tradition asserts, lest it become a place of hero-worship.[80] The purpose of remembering, for Hebrews, is to keep in mind the obligation to observe the commandments.[81] Instead of looking backwards toward past accomplishments, it seeks present righteousness. Memory is not, as in Greek culture, an act of gratitude for services rendered; it is a call to duty.

FRIENDSHIP: JOB'S COMFORTERS AND SOCRATES' CRITO

There are many friendships in the classical world, the most famous of which are those of Achilles and Patroclus, Nisus and Euryalus, Orestes and Pylades, and Damon and Phintias. Except for the friendship of Damon and Phintias, disciples of the mathematician and spiritual teacher Pythagoras,[82] both members of each pair are comrades in arms willing to die to save the other. After Patroclus is killed, the rest of the *Iliad* concerns Achilles' unrestrained grief and psychic confusion.[83] Nisus and Euryalus are killed during a night raid after they have brutally butchered enemy soldiers asleep in their camp.[84] When Euryalus, the younger of the two, is captured, Nisus launches into a suicidal mission to kill the captors. In the pairs of Pylades and Orestes and Damon and Phintias, one proposes to die for the other, but the outcomes of their stories will have proved the offers unnecessary. None of these famous stories, however, provides much understanding of the nature of friendship. Homer and Virgil tell of Achilles and Patroclus and Nisus and Euryalus, pairs of military "buddies" whose friendships were established before we encounter them in the epics. Before the fatal battle of Patroclus, we see a few of his interactions with Achilles and we sense their intimacy.[85] After Patroclus' death, Achilles suffers what we now recognize as "post-traumatic stress disorder."[86] Homer beautifully portrays the depth of Achilles' loss, but in the poem, the interaction between the friends consists of Achilles giving orders that Patroclus obeys. In Virgil's account of Nisus and Euryalus, we observe devoted comrades who die for each other. To be sure, Virgil beautifully evokes Nisus' grief at his comrade's death, but the friendship includes nothing beyond the bond that unite men on dangerous combat missions—long proximity and mutual reliance in circumstances of grave danger.[87] In the classical world, there are important philosophical analyses of friendship, but these lack the vigor of dramatic enactment of persons who illustrate breathing friendships.[88]

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In the Bible, perhaps the most renowned friendship is that of David, future king of Israel, and Jonathan, son of King Saul. The only biblical friendship between women is that of Naomi and Ruth. But these friendships too, like the celebrated classical ones cited above, provide very little insight into friendship. The love that Jonathan has for David arises all of a sudden when David returns victorious from single combat against Goliath and is more like the affection of a groupie for a rock star than anything else. Who would not have a spontaneous fondness for a heroic lad who overcame great odds to defeat a terrifying enemy? Jonathan's sister Michal also loves David (1 Samuel 18:20), with a fondness that seems to have the same basis as Jonathan's. The women dancing to celebrate the victory of David and praising him as the slayer of tens of thousands also are similarly smitten with David (1 Samuel 18:7). David reciprocates Jonathan's fondness—who would *not* love a charming prince of the kingdom? Still, we never learn of any common activities except in their response to Saul's antagonism against David. In short, the glory afforded this friendship is not justified by our knowledge of it.[89] Nor, alas, do we have enough details about the relationship of Ruth and Naomi to comprehend their friendship. They are bonded by shared poverty and a common affection for one of Naomi's two sons (we cannot be sure for which, since his identity, evidently of no significance to the author, is not specified). Though Ruth's loyalty to her mother-in-law is moving, their only cooperative activity is the conversation in which Naomi gives Ruth shrewd advice about arousing a sexual interest in Boaz (Ruth 2:19–3:6). In short, this relationship, though based on a much longer acquaintance and familiarity than that of Jonathan and David, is not described with a richness sufficient to qualify as representative of *friendship*. For this reason, and not because of the possibility raised by some scholars that these relationships were homoerotic, a different biblical friendship will be the focus here.[90]

Before moving to our examples, allow me one final observation. There are no substantial friendships recorded between men and women in either the Bible or classical literature, and, except for a few scenes in the *Odyssey*, there are few scenes in ancient literature of friendly conversations between men and women. In tragedy there are numerous scenes of confrontation and betrayal, and in comedy, of flirtation and seduction, but none of non-sexual friendship. Socrates, of whom we have high expectations, jokes (with a nice twist of an *a fortiori* argument) in Xenophon's *Symposium* of having chosen Xanthippe as his wife for the same reason that people choose high-spirited horses, that if they can cope with the most hard-to-manage, they will be able to deal with everyone (Xenophon, *Symposium* 2.10). But Socrates is not speaking about *friendship*.

As our example from the Bible, then, we shall examine the friendship between Job and the three men who visit him when he has lost his wealth and

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his children and is covered from head to toe with boils. These men, whom the text explicitly calls his friends (Job 2:11),[91] talk with him until Chapter 32, when Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, a younger man *not* called a friend (perhaps because he is younger than the others and so perhaps a suggestion that friends must be of roughly the same age), speaks in anger both toward Job and toward the friends. As our example from Greek literature, we shall consider the friendship between Socrates and Crito. Crito appears in a speaking role in just three dialogues, most especially in *Crito,* where he tries to persuade Socrates to escape from prison and so avoid execution.

After Job is beset by catastrophes, we are informed that three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, have arranged to come together to visit him (Job 2:11–13). They sit with him for seven days and seven nights without speaking to him, because, the text says, "they saw that his grief was very great."

Where the friends come from is not known, but the rabbinic tradition holds that their homes are three hundred miles from each other. That these men are identified by their location rather than by their father's names probably accounts for the tradition,[92] for what is significant is that they have come a long way—the travel itself a sign of friendship. None of them calculated, "Now that Job has fallen on hard times, he is of no value to me and so I'll spend my time among more useful people." They made an effort to communicate with one another so that they might be present in their friend's hour of emotional need, when Job was bereft of his possessions and his children, whom he loved so much that he performed preemptive atonement on their behalf.[93] And these men are in stark contrast to all the people who come to see Job later, once his fortunes have been restored (Job 42:11).

When Job finally speaks, he expresses pain and anguish. His friends, with increasing intensity, try to make sense of his suffering by explaining that he must somehow have offended God. The innocent do not suffer, they say; Job's sons must have sinned; Job is being punished even less than he deserves. Many readers, aware that at the end of the book God is angry with Job's friends, "who have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has" (Job 42:7), have faulted the friends. But what would these critics have done differently? How would *they* have explained Job's sufferings? What would *they* have said instead? The entire history of theodicy, of "justifying God's ways to man," as Milton puts it, brings forth arguments that equally fail to make Job's situation intelligible. These arguments claim that God brings a greater good out of evil; or sees the big picture so that what *seems* to be evil is actually a good when understood in its proper relation to the whole, to the big picture; or knows that if the person lives he will commit great sins, irremediable sins, in a future time, so that the untimely death that appears to

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be a disaster is actually a sparing of a much worse future fate (say, eternal punishment in Hell). To some readers, Job's friends seem naïve because they do not put forth any of these arguments from later times. But the ancient text itself teaches that none of these arguments would have explained Job's suffering. When the friends offer an explanation in terms of a simple set of alternatives—either God is unjust or Job has sinned—they choose the more plausible, and more pious, alternative that Job is at fault. To blame Job's friends for not coming up with a better argument to account for Job's present condition is like blaming a physician for not curing a sick patient by a treatment that has not yet been discovered, a treatment, moreover, that will not work. In short, it is not fair to blame Job's friends.[94] In doing their best to make sense of the situation, they are giving Job what we nowadays call "tough love." *We readers* know, because we are privy to God's conversation with Satan, with its doubting challenge to Job's goodness, that tough love is unwarranted, but the friends do not and cannot.

An Italian expression for "love"—*ti voglio bene*—"I want the good for you"—goes to the heart of what it is to love another person. In the case of Job, the friends are powerless to bring back his children, health, or wealth. All they can do is try to help him understand the world in which he lives, an understanding that would involve agreeing that he had sinned. They have been as frank and as honest as they could be—forthright in expressing their views and not holding anything back. Insofar as understanding is a good, they are expressing true love and true friendship for Job.

Even after God speaks to Job out of the whirlwind, in God's longest continuous personal address to anyone in the Bible, Job still does not understand why he has suffered—*he* never finds out about Satan's challenge. God tells the three old men who are Job's friends that his wrath has been kindled against them, and he tells them to make a burnt offering (Job 42:7–8). God also tells them that Job will pray for them and that he, God, will accept Job's prayer. In other words, though they have not spoken correctly, God will "not do anything unseemly to them" (Job 42:8). The last we hear about the friends is that Job did pray for them (Job 42:10) and that after he did so, God gave Job twice as much as he had had before.

In telling us about the prayer for the friends, the text uses the same word for "friends" as it had earlier. Job does not blame them, and he is right not to. No one understood his situation, including Job himself, who says (Job 42:3), "I uttered that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not." At the end of the Book, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar and Job remain friends.

We find in classical literature the richly portrayed friendship of Crito and Socrates. The friendship spills over several dialogues, with brief but significant appearances in the *Apology* and *Phaedo,* and full conversations in the

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Euthydemus and *Crito.* In the *Apology*, Socrates tells the jury that Crito is his contemporary and near neighbor (*Apology* 33e) and, when Socrates offers a penalty for himself, reports that Crito has offered to guarantee payment for a fine of thirty minas (*Apology* 38b). In the *Phaedo*, it is Crito who responds to the request of Socrates that his wife Xanthippe, who is crying uncontrollably, be escorted from the prison (*Phaedo* 60a). Before the long conversation about the soul commences, Crito reports the counsel of the prison official who is to administer the poison that talking will prolong the agony and require additional doses. It is Crito who asks Socrates whether he has instructions for the care of his family and whether he has any requests for the care of his corpse (*Phaedo* 115b–c). And at the very end of the *Phaedo*, it is Crito to whom Socrates addresses the last words he utters (*Phaedo* 118a). In the *Euthydemus,* Socrates chats at length with Crito about who will educate Crito's son Critobulus and also jokes that he and Crito should themselves become schoolboys together.[95] The friendship of the two men appears in its fullest extent in the dialogue *Crito,* in Plato's portrayal of Crito's jailhouse visit to Socrates as he awaits execution.

The dialogue begins just before dawn, as Socrates is waking up (*Crito* 43). Crito has come to persuade Socrates to escape from prison. We learn at once that Crito has been so regular a visitor that the guard, recognizing him, has accepted his usual bribe to let him in. Though his especially early arrival bodes some significant development, Crito has sat quietly while the condemned man continued to sleep peacefully. Crito opines that the usual happy disposition of his friend has never been more in evidence than now, since he bears his imminent execution with such equanimity.

It is clear that Crito has rehearsed his arguments so that he will succeed. It is easy to bribe the guards, he maintains (as he has already shown on this day); Socrates will be welcomed by Crito's friends in Thessaly; it would be wrong for Socrates to abandon his wife and children; not escaping would be choosing the easy path of death rather than the hard path of life; people will think Crito and Socrates' other friends too parsimonious or too cowardly to help; and, if Socrates delays, it will be too late to change his mind (*Crito* 45a–46a). Crito appeals to Socrates in the one way he hopes will be effective, a battery of arguments. For his part, Socrates will not let the stressful situation of an imminent unjust execution prevent him from analyzing the arguments, and without much trouble he prevails on Crito to examine the question of escape dialectically. By the end of their conversation the best argument they have is that Socrates should submit to the legally pronounced execution.

These two old men have spent this critical day in argument over the right course of conduct. Each has wished the good for the other, according to his understanding of the good, and they have agreed to respect the conclusion arrived at by argument.[96]

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In Plato's view, Socrates was unique: alone of the men of his generation Socrates dealt meaningfully with the moral arguments of how people should live. Others used rhetorical skills to undermine the traditional rules of morality by clever verbal tricks and other abuses of reason, showing that might makes right, that it is good to be immoderate, that the laws of animal conduct apply to human beings,[97] that it is better to gratify someone sexually who does not love you rather than someone who does,[98] and many other repulsive principles. In Plato's view, Socrates used his reason to defend traditional morality and affirm square dealing. A man like Socrates could have a genuine heartfelt friendship with Crito, who in some ways was unlike him—superior in wealth and inferior in intelligence—but who, in the most important way—acquiescence to the best argument, was Socrates' kindred spirit.

The examples of friendship from the two cultures are harmonious. In both, we observe affection and respect. In both, the situations make clear that these are not what Aristotle would classify as "friendships of utility," wherein each party derives obvious benefits. Job and Socrates have absolutely nothing to offer their friends, for both are presumably in their lives' final act, impoverished and without power. The author of Job renders the genuineness of Job's friends sharper by the sardonic contrast with the flood of visitors and their *ex post facto* sympathy after Job's fortune has been restored. In both examples, though the friends argue vigorously, no one explodes into wrath or exits in a huff. In both cases the friends aim at understanding and at the right response, be it religious or ethical. Both texts leave readers in a state of uneasy frustration. Job, his friends, and the reader never obtain a satisfying answer to why Job suffers. None of us, even if we know about God's conversation with Satan, would want the same experiment tried on us—no one would volunteer for such an experiment, and no ethics board would allow it, even in the unlikely event that someone were to volunteer. And though we might not find an argument to defeat the one Socrates makes for remaining in prison to await execution, we cannot fail to be uncomfortable. Who would comfortably say, "You have convinced me, Socrates, that you are entirely right to stay in prison, even though the verdict was unjust and you are a good person. So go ahead and drink the hemlock." We may admire Socrates for acting rationally, that is, on the basis of the best argument he has at the moment when he must make a decision, but we also feel Crito's helplessness at not being able to make a better case. Indeed, in both instances we see that friendship can go only so far in helping us cope with our distress. In the end, Job is left alone with God, whom he cannot understand. Socrates is left with reason, his quasi-deity, leaving open the possibility of a different outcome: if

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only Socrates had had another week or two, perhaps he could have developed a better argument.

In the *Phaedo,* a dialogue portraying Socrates' last few hours, Socrates talks with a number of friends about whether the soul is immortal. The discussion is of immediate significance for Socrates, as the day has arrived when he will drink the poison hemlock and die. If he can prove the immortality of the soul, death will lose its sting; if, however, he proves that the soul perishes with the body, then his death will be a total annihilation, the extinguishing of a flame, the loss of attunement in a lyre; if he is unable to prove either the immortality or mortality of the soul, this man of reason will go to his death in perplexity and, most would assume, also in a high state of anxiety. At the beginning of the conversation, just after Cebes objected to Socrates' arguments against suicide, Crito warned of the prison official's advice not to talk too much. Socrates dismissed the advice flamboyantly: "Let him give me two or three doses," he declared (*Phaedo* 63e). In the middle of the conversation, when he noticed his two most articulate interlocutors Simmias and Cebes whispering to each other, he bluntly asked whether they had found his argument insufficient. Simmias admitted that they had but were reluctant to bother him in this moment of misfortune. Socrates laughed and encouraged them to throw their best arguments at him. What we witness in the *Phaedo*, as in the *Crito*, and also in the Book of Job, is a crisis in which friends discuss profound subjects of urgent relevance. They do not conceal views that would cause sorrow and disheartenment. Their behavior *seems* to be in accord with the statement attributed to Aristotle, "I love Plato, but I love truth more."[99] They are treating their friends in the most loving way possible, to ascertain and share the truth as far as it is within their power.[100] The stories show that in both cultures friends honor friends when they tell them the truth.

So long as human nature remains the same, tales of friendship will seldom thrill an audience as keenly as those of romance and military adventure. Explosions of passion, moments of risk, and peril in battle will amuse a wider public than the encounters of old friends, the joys of which are, for the most part, verbal. There are crises in friendship, but, thankfully, they generally occur in situations far less wretched than those of Job and Socrates. The joys of friendship are found in repartee, reminiscing, advising, comforting, arguing, and combinations of these. They can be dramatized, but they will not excite the senses or thrill the emotions in the same way as the sighs of lovers or the derring-do of commandos. Biblical culture and classical culture, in offering very few examples of friendship, perhaps agree implicitly with this conclusion. This fact does not diminish the value of friendship; it simply recognizes that friendship does not offer the same narrative opportunities.

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ABILITY AND AGE: WISDOM AND SEXUAL VIGOR

"Golden days in the sunshine of a happy youth," sing old professor Dr. Engel and young Prince Karl in Sigmund Romberg's *The Student Prince*. In the last word of the refrain, we learn that what most interests the young man is love.[101] The prince strays from seriousness when he has a fling with a pretty waitress in a Heidelberg beer garden but returns to sobriety at the end of the operetta, when royal duties summon him to his palace. The operetta portrays the hormonal fecklessness of youth with wistfulness and melody. The elders—the prince's royal grandfather, who rules the kingdom, and Dr. Engel, the prince's tutor—embody the stereotypes of the old: wise and sedate. Both biblical and classical literature confirm these stereotypes in order to point out exceptions.

The Book of Jeremiah opens as Jeremiah reports that when he received a divine summons to be a prophet, he replied that he did not know how to speak, for he was only a youth. He expected this incapacity to be self-evident to God and that no further explanation for demurring would be required. God accepted the opinion about youthfulness, but said he could overcome it: "I am with you to deliver you." In the Book of Job, when Zophar declared that Job was suffering less than his iniquity deserved (Job 12:12–15), Job responded with a rhetorical question: "Is wisdom with aged men, and understanding in length of days?" Job was implying that the elderly, in this case, his friends, were expected to possess wisdom from their years. But, he implied, *they* did not; it is *God* who has wisdom and might. In both examples we find stereotypes of old and young used to draw contrasts.

As for sexual vigor, it is self-evident that it thrives among the young.[102] That it might also be present in old people is affirmed in two passages in the Bible. The first concerns Abraham, after he has buried Sarah (Genesis 23:19) and, as the text reminds us, is "advanced in years" (Genesis 24:1). Soon after Sarah's death, their son Isaac weds Rebekah, loves her, "and is comforted for his mother" (24:67).[103] In the very next verse, Abraham takes a new wife, Keturah, and with a narrative swiftness that, as it were, surpasses the speed of light, she bears "for him" six sons (Genesis 25:1). As a younger man Abraham had to wait decades for a single son from Sarah, now sons fall like manna. It is as though there were a competition between the aged Abraham and the much younger Isaac for siring children, a competition that Abraham decisively wins, for a few verses on, we learn that for Rebekah to conceive, Isaac must offer a special prayer to God.[104]

A second passage, from Psalms, expounds how righteousness can contribute to a sexually vital old age (Psalm 92:13–15):

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> The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; they
> shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
> Planted in the house of the Lord, they shall flourish in the courts of our God.
> They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be full of sap and richness.
> To declare that the Lord is upright, my Rock, in
> whom there is no unrighteousness.

Here reproductive potency is expressed poetically through images of the palm and cedar trees. To be like a palm is to be, like the boys and girls on Keats' Grecian urn, "forever panting and forever young." Growing from above, the palm tree remains always slender, perhaps becoming even more slender as it ages. A thriving palm is a metaphor for a sexually alluring woman (Song of Songs 7:7), a withering palm, for a devastated land (Joel 1:12). The cedar is a rugged tree, used for the masts of sailing vessels (Ezekiel 27:5). King Joash, boasting of his masculine strength and casting a slur on the puniness of his enemy Amaziah, compares himself to a cedar and Amaziah to a thistle (2 Kings 14:9). Even in old age, the psalmist sings, the cedar will be full of sap, perhaps a metaphor for seminal fluid. The feminine palm and the masculine cedar will bring forth fruit in old age. The poem teaches that righteous people will be like these palms and cedars, their happy reward, children even in old age.

The passages from the Bible about wisdom and sexuality share a common theme. As the positive quality of the stereotype, wisdom, does not apply to all old people, neither does the negative stereotype of infertility and impotence. And conversely, bad qualities may preclude the virtues that accompany old age, while good qualities may prolong the benefits of youth.

Aristotle, in accordance with his general theory of virtue as a mean between two extremes, presents the character of a person in his prime as a happy mean between the excesses and deficiencies of persons in youth or old age (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1389b12–1390a26). As a result, he focuses on the qualities of old age and youth that are at the extremes of the spectrum and hence bad. A lyric poet like Mimnermus, who celebrates youth's vigor and laments how the old age renders him erotically loathsome, also directs our attention to handicaps of old age. Yet men and women who lived to old age are often admired in the classical world for their wisdom and experience. Cicero replies to the negative charges against old age in *On Old Age* and then offers a vigorous defense of it in the rest of the dialogue. Cicero sets the dialogue in the century before his own, when Cato the Elder, who lived into his mid-eighties, was chatting with two younger men, Laelius and Laelius' friend Scipio Africanus the Younger, who sacked Carthage in the Third Punic War. Cato, after listening to praise for how well he was bearing his years, responded to a question about why so many others find old age burdensome.

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Human beings, he observed, are a complicated lot: they all want to become old yet grumble when they have gotten their wish. He alludes to the Stoic metaphor of life as a stage play, of which Nature is the playwright. Nature, he says, would not be a very accomplished author if she did not write a good last act. The foremost complaints about old age, he says, are loss of sensual pleasure and neglect from people who should show care. But, he argues, the loss of sensual pleasure is actually a boon, for erotic desires are an enslaving passion from which it is good to be liberated.[105] If some old people are treated poorly, as the second complaint asserts, the cause is their churlishness, not old age itself, and the cause of churlishness is a bad character. Many old people, Cato attests, are sweet, esteemed, and cherished, while many young people are repellent despite their bloom.

That the same stereotypes apply in both biblical and classical cultures and that among reflective peoples the same caveats and exceptions come up, is not surprising, for human beings everywhere follow the same course of development. The descriptions nevertheless present distinctive features. A youth's lack of rhetorical ability, as lamented by Jeremiah, can be redeemed by God.[106] While there are precocious individuals in Greek literature (a one-day-old Hermes is adept at stealing), no *humans* lack the handicaps of youth. We can think of a precociously gifted warrior like Alexander or an unusually brilliant mathematician like young Theaetetus, or a sharp-tongued Alcibiades, but not of a young person who escapes the passions of youth or possesses the wisdom of old age.[107]

The cultures seem to differ when it comes to sexual activity and reproduction. Cicero's spokesman reflects the strain in the classical world that focuses on the harm in sexual desire. Hesiod points out that Aphrodite, the goddess of sex, gave Pandora grace but also cruel longing and limb-weakening cares (*Works and Days* 65–66). The chorus in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* sings (1225–1238):

> Not to be born is, beyond all estimation, best; but when a man has seen the light of day, this is next best by far, that with utmost speed he should go back from where he came. For when he has seen youth go by, with its easy merry-making, what hard affliction is foreign to him, what suffering does he not know? Envy, factions, strife, battles, and murders. Last of all falls to his lot old age, blamed, weak, unsociable, friendless, wherein dwells every misery among miseries.[108]

Of course, what the chorus lament here is the loss not of youth's sexual activity but of its breezy spontaneity (*kouphas aphrosunas*), translated by Jebb here as "easy merry-making," and what they bemoan are the substantial woes of late years.

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Very different is biblical culture. God no sooner creates human beings than he blesses them and commands them to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28), just as he had the animals (Genesis 1:22). And, as we have seen, when he grants fertility to old people, it is given as a blessing, as it is also to young people like Rebekah and Hannah.

Both cultures credit goodness with warding off the adverse features of age. In classical culture, good *character*—a permanent possession—will prevent churlishness and ensure that a person be loved and treated well. In biblical culture it is righteousness that can furnish a person with a glad old age enriched by sexual activity and fertility.

INDUCED FORGETTING: ZEUS' MAGIC AND A NAME

It would seem that to understand forgetting we should simply apply the opposite of whatever is true about remembering. If it is good to remember, then it is bad to forget, or vice versa. But this technique will not work, for the terms are generally used in different senses. *Remember* includes an assumption that the content of a memory is valuable and ought to be kept in mind. Such content could, in classical culture, be the great and wonderful deeds—for which one should be grateful—or, in biblical culture, the duties and commandments one must attend to. Thus, in a Greek way, one remembers *who* killed Hector and how Odysseus tricked the Cyclops; and in a Hebrew way, one remembers *to keep* the Sabbath and *to honor* father and mother. *Forget* implies a loss of control, an inadvertence, an involuntariness. One forgets, for example, a friend's birthday or where one left car keys—things one would like to have remembered but that somehow slipped away from consciousness. Sometimes the boundary of *forgot* and *did not remember* is nebulous. If a person forgets a wedding anniversary, for example, the forgetful one might explain the blunder as an involuntary inadvertence—a forgivable human weakness; the spouse might see it as the failure to keep an important obligation. What shall we say of the cupbearer who did not remember Joseph but forgot him (Genesis 40:23)? He had promised to remember Joseph, but in the joy of his restoration to his master he inadvertently forgot Joseph. When a prompt arose, however, he *did* remember Joseph. In this section a rare, special kind of forgetting will be explored, what we might denominate "induced forgetting"—occasions where forgetting is deliberately stimulated.[109]

By the middle of the story of Joseph, Joseph has successfully interpreted the Pharaoh's dreams that warn of years of famine, and Pharaoh has appointed him vizier in charge of storing grain. To celebrate this appointment, Pharaoh has given Joseph the honorific Egyptian name of "Food-man" (Zaphenath-paneah).[110] He has also given Joseph a wife, Asenath, the daughter of an

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Egyptian priest. Asenath bore two sons to Joseph, and Joseph named the elder Manasseh, for, says Joseph, "God made me forget my trouble[111] and all my father's house." Joseph is creating the name Manasseh from a form of the verb *nasha* that means "the one who causes to forget." He named his younger son Ephraim, from the verb *para*, "to bear fruit."[112]

Joseph's life has been one of great reversals of fortune.[113] After enjoying the privileged position of favored son, he was sold as a slave by his brothers. Then, after achieving a prominent position in the house of Potiphar, he was imprisoned on a fraudulent charge of sexual assault. Later, he rose to become the second most powerful man in Egypt. In the naming of his children we see the psychological toll his suffering has taken. Though married to the daughter of a priest of sun worship,[114] Joseph credits *God* (Elohim) with having induced in him a forgetfulness of his troubles. Perhaps in trying to enable Joseph to put his suffering out of his mind, God has made it possible for him to function as a successful vizier. But has Joseph forgotten?

In the *Odyssey,* when Odysseus (whom virtually everyone assumed was dead) has returned to Ithaca from Troy, he finds his house occupied by men courting his wife Penelope. The suitors have behaved shamelessly, taking advantage of the hospitality offered them and going so far as to try to kill Telemachus, Odysseus' son, in order to clear away impediments to their marriage. In an organized attack, Odysseus and a few companions killed all 108 (!) suitors, barely distinguishing their different degrees of odiousness.[115] In the last book of the poem, the people in Ithaca learn that Odysseus has in fact returned and has slain the suitors, many of whom are their relatives. Despite opposition from prudent men like Medon and Halitherses, many march in arms toward Odysseus' house to confront Odysseus, his father, and his son to avenge their slain sons. Athena stirs Zeus to intervene to make peace, by letting the parties swear oaths and by placing upon the suitors' families a forgetting (*eklesis*) of the slaying of their sons and brothers so that they can again be friends (*Odyssey* 24.478–86). After a small skirmish, in which Odysseus' father Laertes kills the leader of the angry Ithacans, this arrangement is carried out, and the poem ends when "for all time Athena establishes oaths of peace between the two sides" (*Odyssey* 24.545–47).

When we think of the history of blood feuds, we find that outside the realm of fantasy grievances appear immortal. In Greek literature, we need look no further than the multigenerational conflict in the House of Atreus. In Western history generally, we may note the battles still being fought around the world about issues centuries old. By a single supernatural act of induced forgetting Zeus has forestalled anguish and heartbreak in Ithaca. Of course, in establishing this civil peace, Zeus has denied to the families of the slain suitors the opportunity to achieve the *kleos* from obtaining vengeance and the ability to mourn their sons, whose slaying they will not remember.[116] Forgetting is not

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the same as *forgiving*. Forgiving—which involves a transformation of the heart—is without doubt *morally* better; forgetting, however, is *practically* better, for it is irreversible. Whether forgetting is actually possible in the absence of drugs or of mental debility, however, is a serious question.[117]

There is one other instance in Greek literature of divinely induced forgetting, an instance that will shed some light on the question of whether such forgetting is possible. In Book 2 of the *Iliad*, in the section known as the "Catalogue of Ships," Homer briefly tells the tale of a certain Thamyris, a Thracian with Nestor's forces (*Iliad* 2.594–600). Once a singer, he boasted that he could out-sing the Muses if they should compete with him. Angered, the Muses "placed a maiming upon him,[118] deprived him of his divinely sweet song, and *made him forget* how to play the lyre. In short, they took away from him the essence of his life. It also deprived him of the ability to bestow immortality on others, an activity that would be exclusively in the hands of the Muses, whom he had offended. This sort of punishment, which to moderns might seem a form of dementia, would be appropriate for Apollo to inflict, for he is the companion and leader of the Muses and the deity whose province is intellectual activity. Again, apart from a mental debility, it is difficult to see how in the *natural* world an induced forgetfulness can occur.[119] In the *Odyssey* forgetfulness is imposed on an entire island by supernatural means.[120]

Our word *amnesty* comes from the Greek and signifies, literally, a privation of memory. In law, it refers to the "forgetting" of some offense such that the offense will no longer carry the consequence of punishment.[121] But any "forgetting" in legal amnesty is strictly metaphorical;[122] what is actually meant is that the legal consequences of an action are placed aside.

In the context of the *Odyssey,* in which magic and realism mingle, we see the induced forgetting of the suitors' families as falling into the magical part of the poem. A listener or reader of Homer, reflecting on Zeus' settlement of peace, would murmur to himself, "If only it were so!"

The example of induced forgetting in the case of Joseph carries a similar lesson. Joseph names his son "A-making-to-forget." But, of course, one cannot simply forget, one must forget *something*. Like a remembering, a forgetting must have *a content*. Every time Joseph addresses Manasseh, Joseph will remember what he wishes he could put out of his mind.[123] When his brothers come to Egypt to obtain food, we observe that there has been no forgetting at all, not by anyone. Joseph recognizes them at once and remembers everything. Even if they do not recognize Joseph until he identifies himself, they remember all their horrific deeds, all the pain they caused. In the end, when Joseph and his brothers reconcile, the memories abide—and so do the fears arising from those memories. In the real world, recognized in both Homer and the Bible, for people *to forget* requires a miracle.

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DISTRUSTING GOOD MOTIVES: KING NAHASH AND SPARTA

Motives are of course invisible. It sometimes happens that when someone, for entirely altruistic or friendly feelings, offers help to another, the helper's motives are misinterpreted and the help rejected or even spurned. The person with good motives in such instances may respond to the rejection with an unbalanced fury, which itself sometimes brings about a national calamity.

The Bible tells the story of King David's wish to send condolences to King Hanun of Ammon on the death of his father Nahash.[124] Sending an embassy to convey sympathy, David says that he wishes to repay a kindness he had received from Nahash (2 Samuel 10:1–2). What Nahash's kindness was is not stated in the Bible.[125] All we know about Nahash is that he had been a threat to Israel before the kingship of Saul: Samuel had cited this threat as Israel's motive for desiring a king (1 Samuel 12:12).

The princes of Ammon suspect David's motives and claim that the members of the embassy are spies come to overthrow the kingdom. Hanun finds this attribution of bad motives entirely credible and orders half the beards shaved off David's ambassadors and their clothes cut in the middle down to their buttocks (2 Samuel 10:3–4).[126] When David learns of this insult, he is enraged and sends a general and an army to fight the Ammonites. It is while this war is going on that David commits adultery with Bathsheba.

In the latter part of the 460's BCE, in 465 or 464, Thasos, an island off the Thracian coast, rebelled against Athens, which held it as a forced ally in the Delian League. Thasos was defeated in a land battle, and Athens laid siege to the city. The Thasians asked Sparta for help in breaking the siege, a request kept secret from the Athenians, who were then under the general alliance with Sparta in place since the Persian Wars had ended about a decade and a half earlier. As the Spartans were preparing to sail to aid Thasos, an earthquake struck the Peloponnese. When a number of peoples who had been enslaved by Sparta since the Messenian War about 160 years earlier used the earthquake as an opportunity to revolt, Sparta gave up its plan to help Thasos, and Thasos, unable to defeat Athens on its own, took down its walls and surrendered, giving in to the demands of Athens for ships and tribute.

When the Spartans determined that the revolt of their slaves was going to be difficult to suppress, Sparta asked the aid of her allies, including Athens, which was still ignorant of Sparta's intention to help Thasos. Sparta had asked for the aid of Athens with special earnestness because Athens was skilled in siege warfare, a branch of combat in which the Spartans then lacked

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expertise. Athens sent a substantial force under Cimon, her most celebrated commander. But by the time the Athenians arrived, the Spartans had grown apprehensive of the resourcefulness of the Athenians and begun to fear that they might stir up political changes in the Peloponnese. Sparta then singled out the Athenians, telling them that their help was no longer needed. The Athenians, understanding that they were being rejected because of Spartan distrust, and reminding themselves that they had come with good intentions to help Sparta, reacted to their dismissal with rage, breaking off their alliance and forming an alliance with Argos, Sparta's enemy. According to Thucydides (*Peloponnesian Wars* 1.101.3), this was the first open quarrel between Sparta and Athens.

To a disinterested reader, everyone in the story appears in a bad light. Athens is lording over Thasos with the heavy-handedness that made her hated in the years after the Persian Wars, as she gradually transformed the Delian Alliance into the Athenian Empire. In attacking Thasos, she was subduing an island that wished to preserve its autonomy—the very goal of the Persian Wars and the Delian Alliance. Sparta, even while it was preparing to undermine Athens by helping Thasos, asked Athens for help in keeping a large number of her own subjects suppressed.

When God repented of having made Saul king of Israel (1 Samuel 16), he told Samuel that he would choose one of the sons of Jesse as the next king. God advised Samuel to invite Jesse and his sons for the purpose of a sacrifice. When they arrived, Samuel assumed that God had chosen Eliab, David's older brother. But God said, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). God's words distinguish between the outer and inner person. Motives, residing in the heart, are not visible to human beings. But because people interpret the world as they have experienced it, without exact knowledge of another person's motives, they often attribute motives that would be true of themselves but may not be true of the other person. This happens in the cases of both the Spartans, who think that the Athenians are coming into their land to subvert, and of Hanun's courtiers, who suspect David of sending spies, not messengers of condolence. This is an example of how people understand things in the light of their previously established paradigm.

Hearing these stories, we note a lack of moral sympathy in everyone. The Spartans read into the Athenian motives the same lack of loyalty of which they are guilty. The Athenians, who have trampled on the rights of their allies by forcing them to become tributary states, cannot imagine why the Spartans suspect that they would do the same to them. Both Athenians and Spartans care only about their own freedom, oblivious to the aspirations of

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others. Why is King Hanun suspicious of David? When we recall that it was the Ammonite threat that had inspired the kingship in Israel, it appears possible that Hanun, observing that David is now king, would assume that he had decided to carry on the enmity between their peoples. But to accept the suspicions of his young courtiers simply on their say-so and act without investigating further reveals him as a careless ruler. That David would respond with such wrath bespeaks a hot-tempered personality, one who acts forcefully and decisively perhaps, but also imprudently. Would it not have been a sign of wisdom to negotiate with Hanun? If we recall how David behaved when he saw the naked Bathsheba and lost all self-control to the extent of choreographing the murder of Bathsheba's noble husband Uriah, we may conclude that impulsiveness is a part of both his public and private lives—not a quality of a good king. Thus do both cultures similarly see the attribution of bad motives to be a reflection of bad character and a cause of terrible consequences.

RECONCILIATION: JOSEPH AND ACHILLES

After a serious break that pours forth a sea of troubles, is it ever possible for the parties to reconcile? If a reconciliation is simply a return to the *status quo ante litem*, will not the same set of conditions abide that led to the fracture? The prefix *re-* in "reconciliation" does in fact suggest a return to the previous situation, as if the turmoil that has occurred will have effected no change in the basic relationship, no devolution into a more strained and cautious association or evolution into one finer and more stable. If a new relationship is possible, instead of inventing a new word for it, perhaps we should invest "reconciliation" with richer meaning.

The two instances of reconciliation to be examined here are those following the heinous sale of Joseph by the sons of Jacob and Leah into slavery, as recounted in Genesis, and Agamemnon's hubristic stripping Achilles of his battle prize, as described in Homer's *Iliad.* Both of these actions have profound consequences: the first, through a meandering set of circumstances, results in Joseph's becoming vizier of Egypt, the migration of Joseph's family to Egypt during a famine, and the later enslavement and exodus of Israel. The second results in the needless deaths of numerous Greeks and the inward-looking mental turmoil of Achilles that results in a new moral awareness on his part. At the end of Genesis, Joseph is reconciled with his brothers; toward the end of the *Iliad,* Achilles is reconciled with Agamemnon.

Joseph is Jacob's favorite son, the child of Laban's daughter Rachel, whose sister Leah Jacob had been compelled to marry first. Joseph's half-brothers resented this favoritism. As the text says (Genesis 37:4), "And when his

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brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him and could not speak peaceably unto him." Joseph was a nasty sibling: besides tattling on his brothers, he told them his dreams that implied they would eventually bow down before him. One day, when Jacob sends Joseph to report on the work of his brothers in the fields, the brothers conspire first to kill Joseph but then decide to sell him as a slave to a caravan on its way to Egypt.

In time, Joseph serves as a slave to Potiphar, languishes in prison on a false charge of assaulting Potiphar's wife, interprets the dreams of a baker and butler in prison, interprets Pharaoh's dream as a premonition of years of plenty and famine, and serves as vizier of Egypt in charge of storing and distributing grain. When the predicted famine reaches Canaan, Jacob sends his sons, except for Joseph's younger full brother Benjamin, to fetch supplies from Egypt. Joseph recognizes his brothers, frames them for stealing, pretends to believe that they are spies (implying that he would kill them all), and declares that he will hold one of them until their youngest brother Benjamin is delivered to him (Genesis 42:14–24). When the brothers discuss this turn of events, they conclude that it is somehow related to what they did many years earlier to Joseph. Joseph, present but pretending not to understand their tongue, turns away and weeps, then chooses Simeon as the hostage.

On their way home, the brothers find money mixed in with the grain they are carrying to Canaan and worry why the money is there. When they report to Jacob all that happened, Reuben offers to take Benjamin with him to Egypt and to bring him back. As part of the offer, Reuben gives Jacob the right to kill his two sons if Reuben does not succeed in the mission (Genesis 42:37–38). Jacob rejects the offer. But later, when the situation becomes more dire, Jacob does accept Judah's offer of Judah himself if he does not succeed in bringing Benjamin back (Genesis 43:8–13).

The brothers return to Egypt and are surprisingly well received by Joseph. On their departure, Joseph has a silver cup planted in Benjamin's luggage. On the road to Canaan the brothers are stopped and searched, and the cup is found in Benjamin's gear. Brought before Joseph, all the brothers offer to become Joseph's slaves, but, with apparent judicial restraint, Joseph claims that he will punish only the thief.

Now comes the first of two scenes of reconciliation. Judah delivers a speech, lengthy by biblical standards (Genesis 44:18–34), in which he reviews what has taken place and expatiates in moving detail how his father Jacob, already having lost Benjamin's beloved brother and having been profoundly reluctant to send Benjamin, would die of a broken heart if Benjamin did not return home. Joseph, overcome by emotion, sends his entourage out of the room; when he is alone with his brothers, he identifies himself as their brother, whom they sold into Egypt (Genesis 45:3–15). But they are not to

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blame themselves, he says, for God sent him to preserve life. He tells them to go home and then return with their families, where they will live in Goshen, a fertile area in the northeast of the Nile Delta. He then kisses Benjamin and his other brothers.

Jacob and his sons and their families do move to Egypt, where the Pharaoh receives them with great kindness and generosity.

In the fullness of time, Jacob, on the point of dying, gathers his sons, reviews his opinions about them, blesses them, and gives predictions about their progeny. When Jacob dies, Pharaoh allows Joseph to bury him with considerable fanfare in Canaan. After this pious act, Joseph returns to Egypt, where his brothers, not convinced that his protestations of love were sincere, fret about what he will do to them now that there is no paternal presence to restrain him.

The text reports the second scene of reconciliation (Genesis 50:15–21). The brothers send a message to Joseph in which they say that Jacob has commanded him to forgive the sin his brothers had committed. When they see Joseph, they fall down before him and say they will be his slaves. But Joseph says (Genesis 50:19–21), "Fear not; for am I in the place of God? And as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear not; I will sustain you, and your little ones."

With these words, the story ends. In a coda, we learn that Jacob lived to be one hundred and ten, then was embalmed and buried in Egypt. Before dying, he told his brothers that God would remember them and restore them to their land, where they would one day bury Joseph's bones.

Because King Agamemnon of Mycenae, commander-in-chief of the expeditionary force sent to Troy to retrieve Helen, refused to ransom the daughter of Apollo's priest Chryses, wishing instead to take her home as his concubine, the god sent a plague on the Greek army. Prince Achilles, the most capable soldier in the army, called the Greek army together, where the seer Calchas, after assurances for his safety from Achilles, explained that the daughter must be returned to Chryses for the plague to end. Agamemnon expressed a willingness to return the girl only if some other Greek warrior would give up his prize to make up the loss. In the ensuing quarrel, both Achilles and Agamemnon lost their temper, and in angry speeches they brought out into the open latent, festering resentments—Achilles, of having to follow the orders of a man who did less fighting; Agamemnon, of resenting Achilles as a hateful and querulous man who is brave only because of a gift from the gods. Achilles withdraws from battle and prays to Zeus that the Greeks lose to the Trojans until only he, Achilles, stands between the Greeks and destruction, at which point he will return to battle and glory.

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Seventeen books of verse lie between Book 1 and Book 19, when the two men finally reconcile. Many soldiers on both sides have died, and all the Greek generals have been wounded because Achilles has stayed out of the battle. For Achilles, the most painful outcome of all is that Hector has killed Patroclus, Achilles' cousin and beloved friend. Achilles comes to the realization that he himself is responsible for Patroclus' death and for the deaths of countless others, and he feels guilt—the sense that he has violated a standard of rightful conduct to which he himself subscribes. He has come to reject the standard of external honor that his compatriots subscribe to—that what counts as the highest human value is the esteem of others as measured in prizes. *That* honor, he now understands, is not worth the lives of human beings. He is suicidal, for he feels that only by his own destruction can he expiate his guilt. To accomplish his suicide, he must slay Hector, for his goddess mother has told him that his death will come on the heels of Hector's. But in order to fight, he must first rejoin the Greek army, and to rejoin the army, he must make peace with Agamemnon.[127]

Achilles convenes a meeting of the leaders, to which they all arrive limping. Achilles begins by saying that better Artemis should have slain the girl with an arrow than that they should have allowed rage to overcome them. He says that he has put aside his wrath and urges Agamemnon to sound the call to arms. For his part, Agamemnon says that though many Achaeans have chided him for his actions, he was not at fault. It was the fault of Zeus, and of Fate, and of the Fury, and also of Zeus' daughter Ruin, who blinded him and robbed him of his wits. He renews his pledge of the gifts he offered during the Embassy. Achilles, impatient to return to the war, replies that Agamemnon can give the gifts if he wishes, or not give them. What Achilles wants to do is fight at once (*Iliad* 19.54–153).

There are other speeches, including a long one by Odysseus on the virtues of eating. Achilles does not want to listen to speeches or to eat; all he wants is to slay Hector. The formal reconciliation complete, Achilles fights the Trojans on the next day.

There is a second episode in the process of reconciliation between Achilles and Agamemnon, and this occurs after Hector has been slain, when Achilles buries Patroclus and hosts a set of funeral games in his honor. Achilles asks Agamemnon to gather timber for a funeral pyre, an order to which the king complies immediately (*Iliad* 23.48–53). Then, when the pyre has been built and Achilles wishes to prepare the body for burning, he asks Agamemnon to assemble the Greeks for the ritual, and again Agamemnon does exactly what Achilles asks (*Iliad* 23.156–60). After the pyre has burned, when Achilles awakens, he asks Agamemnon to put out the embers so that Achilles might gather the bones of Patroclus (*Iliad* 23.236–38), and again Agamemnon complies.

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Following the funeral of Patroclus come the games, in which Achilles awards prizes to the victors with great liberality. The last of the contests is to be the throwing of a spear. The two competitors, Agamemnon and Meriones, move forward, but Achilles gives prizes to both without their competing (*Iliad* 23.890–97). In this, Agamemnon's last appearance in the poem, Agamemnon again accepts Achilles' words. He who had feverishly guarded his status at the beginning of the epic, who insisted on affirming it by an act of contumely, now accepts an uncontested prize that means nothing.

Joseph was deeply moved by Judah's speech describing how Jacob would perish if Benjamin did not return to Canaan. Perhaps for the first time in his own life he could look on Judah not as a hated rival semi-sibling but as a human being who is also a son who loves his father. Judah had spoken with deep emotion of how their father suffered and would suffer further. Judah had quoted what Jacob said to him (Genesis 44:27–29), "You know that my wife bore me two sons; and the one went out from me, and I said: Surely he is torn in pieces; and I have not seen him since; and if you take this one also from me, and harm befall him, you will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave"—words that revealed how intensely Jacob felt Joseph's loss. More significantly, perhaps, they made Joseph grasp how profoundly Judah himself acknowledged the pain he had caused. What had been a spontaneous crime of youths fed-up and exasperated with their privileged, tattling brother has stirred years of doubt and remorse. The crime had been traumatic for its perpetrators as well as its victim.[128] Judah's remarks, which were all about Jacob, and the scene, in which Judah believed he was speaking to a stranger, made it unmistakable that Judah was no longer the person he had been.

With Achilles, the change toward Agamemnon comes not because of anything Agamemnon has said but because Achilles has discovered that the cause of his suffering lay within himself. As Stoic philosophers would observe centuries later, though we human beings lack the power to control what others say or do, we *do* have power to control our own responses. When explaining to his mother why he continued to stay out of battle while his fellow Greeks were fighting and dying, Achilles says (*Iliad* 18.101–10):

> But now, since I am not going to the cherished land of my fathers,
> And, no, I was no lighthouse at all to Patroclus or my other comrades,
> Who—oh, so many!—fell to brilliant Hector,
> But I am lying here by the ships a useless burden on the earth…
> Oh, if only strife vanished from both gods and men—
> And vitriolic rage too, which makes a prudent man go wild,
> a rage that is sweeter than honey that drips
> in men's breasts and spreads there like smoke. (My translation.)

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In the midst of his grief over Patroclus' death, for which he feels utterly responsible, Achilles comes to the realization that it was his response to Agamemnon's outrageous conduct—his own indulging in the sweetness of self-expanding anger—that was the proximate cause of all the suffering. Here was the impetus for his choice to give up anger toward Agamemnon. It is a choice entirely within his power.

We should recall that earlier, Agamemnon had been persuaded by Nestor, the wisest and canniest of the Greeks at Troy, to send a delegation to Achilles to negotiate a return to battle. This had been a serious attempt to lure Achilles back into the army. It had been occasioned by the desperate circumstances of the Greeks. Then Agamemnon had acknowledged that he had been blind to dishonor Achilles, a man Zeus loved, but was willing to make amends (*Iliad* 9.115–20). He laid out a long list of dazzling prizes he would give to Achilles for rejoining the army. When the delegation arrived at Achilles' tent, Odysseus, who delivered the formal offer of reconciliation, omitted the exceedingly brief admission of stupidity on Agamemnon's part and spoke only of the Greeks' hardship and the proffered prizes. Achilles, unmoved by the embassy, reiterated his anger.

In response to Judah, Joseph revealed that he was their brother, whom *they sold into Egypt*. Upon hearing these words, the brothers must have been in a state of panic. Benjamin was perhaps learning for the very first time what his brothers had done. The brothers worried what this justly aggrieved person would do to them. But then came Joseph's comforting words (Genesis 45:5): "Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life." Joseph transfers the responsibility for what he has suffered from his half-brothers to God. *God* contrived the events so that Joseph could save his family. *God* made Joseph "*a father to Pharaoh.*" In a sense, the words diminish the brothers, for it turns them into instruments instead of agents acting from their own will. But this potential slight is beside the point. What matters is that Joseph appears not to blame them for his suffering, for selling him into slavery, for his subsequent indictment on the false charge of assaulting Potiphar's wife, and for his years of unwarranted imprisonment.[129]

Achilles, speaking to Agamemnon, seems to do a similar thing, transfer the blame to another party, in this case, the girl. But unlike Joseph's transference, Achilles' rings hollow. The girl in question, Briseis, was not the real cause of the altercation, and everyone knows it. Agamemnon and Achilles had quarreled over status and honor. In confiscating Briseis, Agamemnon was asserting his authority over Achilles, not for the sake of gain or even for the sake of honor but solely for the sake of letting Achilles know that he was subordinate and that Agamemnon superior in status.[130] By trivializing the dispute into a tiff over an insignificant slave-girl—a point he stresses by wishing

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that *she* had died—Achilles is saying that both men had behaved immaturely. In urging that the anger they felt toward one another be considered a thing of the past, Achilles has established the framework for the formal reconciliation.

For his part, Agamemnon admits that he had acted arrogantly, but insists that he was not responsible, since his behavior was not his fault: Zeus and Fate and Erinys had cast folly (*atê*) onto his soul that awful day of the dispute. To authenticate this absolution from blame, he told a convoluted myth about how Zeus himself was deluded. The claim was pure *argumentum a fortiori:* if even the king of all the gods can fall victim to folly, how can *he,* Agamemnon, a mere mortal, be blamed? Agamemnon concludes his formal acceptance of the reconciliation by renewing his offer of gifts. This time Achilles does not reject the gifts but expresses indifference about them. All he wants is to return to battle.

So long as Jacob was alive, Joseph's half-brothers could feel some sense of security, for they knew that Joseph would not injure them lest he grieve their father. But once Jacob has died the brothers are fretful and send Joseph a message that presumably comes from their father, asking Joseph to forgive them for their transgressions. The text suggests that when Joseph receives the message and calls them into his presence, they are indeed terrified, for they fall down before him and declare themselves his slaves. This action shows that they were not convinced that Joseph's prior reconciliation had been sincere. But now, without his father's living presence, Joseph repeats what he had said earlier. They are not to fear, God meant their evil against Joseph to be a good, and Joseph had been able to save many thousands of people only because of the events that transpired. He promises to sustain them and their children, then comforts them and speaks with them further. We should note that Joseph does not attribute good motives to the brothers, now or ever. But he does remove the onus of blame, for if they had not done what they did, many innocent people would have died from hunger.[131]

We can conclude that a genuine reconciliation *has* in fact taken place. The brothers' fear comes from knowing that they have wronged a powerful person who could lightly command their deaths. But they are no longer the hooligans who sold their brother. They have acknowledged their sin and asked for forgiveness. Joseph too has changed. Once he had been an arrogant youth; now he attributes the working out of destiny to God.

At the end of the *Iliad*, after Hector has died, both Achilles and Agamemnon also seem to undergo a change of heart. Achilles, whose major transformation occurred earlier on in the action, when he was overcome with guilt and accepted responsibility for his folly, acknowledges Agamemnon's superior station and addresses him with deference and submission. Agamemnon, by his humble compliance with Achilles' every request, acknowledges that Achilles is a great man too. In the final contest of the funeral games,

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Agamemnon does not complain when awarded a prize without having to compete. He accepts Achilles' judgment. How different he is from the temperamental, touchy firebrand at the beginning!

In both the biblical and the Greek scenes certain transformations were necessary for the reconciliations to be genuine. Joseph's brothers had to mature and acknowledge that they had not acted rightly. They had to repent for their crime and shift their sentiments from hatred and envy of a half-brother to love of a father. They also had to acknowledge their responsibility for so much suffering. Joseph had to mature into a person different from the privileged brat of his youth. In Egypt, he became a man who reflected on the curious plot of his life and arrived at the conclusion that God was its author.

Achilles was able to rejoin the Greek army under Agamemnon because doing so was the means by which he could expiate his guilt. Agamemnon was able to welcome Achilles because it was the only way to ward off the destruction of his army. After Hector's death on the battlefield, the reconciliation holds: Achilles shows respect to his commander-in-chief, and Agamemnon does all that Achilles asks. If the biblical changes are internal and the Greek changes formally ceremonial, the common result is peace.[132]

CONCLUSIONS

Biblical culture reflects on itself. It is not unaware of the rest of the world but takes account of it in relation to itself. The importance in the Bible of the origin of different tongues lies in how the people descended from Abraham became distinct from the other peoples of the world. Classical culture is concerned with firsts, lasts, bests, and worsts for their own sakes, even when the items filling these categories are arguable.

Persuasion for the Hebrews is an all-at-once change of mental attitude, not, as generally for classical culture, a dialectical analysis of costs and benefits.[133] Both cultures find human perfection possible. In Hebrew culture it is a unified thing—a piety that comes from reverential awe of God. In classical culture, the perfect human is an earthly version of the Standard Model of God—a catalogue of abstract ideals. Wisdom, in the Bible an all-a-once reverential awe of God, in classical culture is a thing to be parsed. Even in Socrates' paradoxical variant of it—the knowledge of knowing nothing—wisdom comes only after long trials and calculations. The obligation to remember, common in both cultures, is a simple duty in Hebrew culture; in classical culture, it involves a computation of the debts owed to the deeds and artifacts ascertained as great, wonderful, and responsible for some benefit. Classical culture classifies and ranks the kinds of friendship and teaches what to expect from each; biblical culture simply recognizes friends. Job never says to his visitors, "This is what you should say, since

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you are supposed to be my friend." His friends behave with wholehearted love for him, and, though they have irritated him and God, Job prays for them.

Reconciliation, heartfelt and deeply internal in the case of Joseph, is all formality in Achilles and Agamemnon. Both stories of both offer models of how to get on in the world; but the difference in them anticipates the debate in Western Culture between the championing of either sentiment and intuition or objective externality and phlegmatic logic, and the cultural challenge will be to reconcile the two. One method will be the figure of the mentsh, a subject to be taken up in the last chapter.

NOTES

1. From Homer on, the Greeks show their awareness of the many languages spoken in the world (e.g., in the Trojan army, *Iliad* 2.804; or on Crete, *Odyssey* 19.175). It appears to be a brute fact, about which no inquiry is made (Gera 2).

2. E.g., Ecclesiastes 12:4 and Song of Songs 2:12 for *kol*; Jeremiah 50:11 and (metaphorically) Jeremiah 5:8 for *tsahal*; Isaiah 5:29 for *shag;* and 1 Samuel 6:12 and Job 6:5 for *gah.*

3. Scientists have recently challenged the assumption of Jim and others that animal species "speak the same language" without locally cultural differences. For example, the small north island saddleback of New Zealand has songs that vary culturally as they are transmitted across generations (see the work of P. F. Jenkins, cited in Allan J. Baker, "New Zealand Ornithology: A Review" in *Current Ornithology,* vol. 8 ed. D. M. Power [New York: Plenum Press, 1991] 60–61). My colleague Alexander Werth has called to my attention a survey of recent work on this topic by Kendra Sewell, "Vocal Matching in Animals: Imitating the Calls of Group Members and Mates Is A Reliable Signal of Social Bonds in Some Animal Species," *American Scientist* 100 (2012) 306.

4. I say "perhaps" because although much of the story seems to take place in Mesopotamia, there is no way of knowing for sure, and the name does not appear to be an Akkadian or Sumerian version of the name in Hebrew (see Ran Zadok, "The Origin of the Name Shinar," *Zeitschrift für Assyriolie* 74 [1984] 240–44). I suspect that the name *Shinar* is a poetic fiction intended to locate the tower in a place whose name ceased to exist after the dispersion.

5. There is perhaps another reason that the story is told as it is. The leader of the tower-builders has said, "Let us make us a name," that is, "let *us* make a name for ourselves." A few chapters later God tells Abram, "Neither shall your name any more be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for the father of a multitude of nations have *I* made you" (Genesis 17:5). In both cases, having a name spread abroad is a thing to be desired. The difference lies in *who* is making the name famous, God or people by themselves. The author is making it clear that with Abraham, *God* is the agent, and his agency is made still more emphatic in *God*'s changing Abram's name.

6. I have used the word *arrogance* instead of the usual *hubris* since the Greek word, in its strict meaning is inappropriate. Aristotle defines the word for us in

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Rhetoric 1378b21–30 as a humiliation of another person done not for the sake of gain but simply for the pleasure of showing one's superiority over someone else, a definition that reflects its use in Greek literature.

7. For an interpretation somewhat similar to mine, that the languages are multiplied for the sake of introducing different cultures, see Theodore Hiebert, "The Tower of Babel and the Origin of the World's Cultures," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126 (2007) 42. In a response to Hiebert, John T. Strong, concludes that the scattering of the peoples is a punishment, because the tale is fundamentally about humans "scratching the name of Yahweh off his boundary stele and writing their own name instead" ("Shattering the Image of God: A Response to Theodore Hiebert's Interpretation of the Tower of Babel," *Journal of Biblical Literature,* 127 [2008] 633). I shall agree with Hiebert that the story is not for the sake of portraying a punishment of humans and shall argue below that the author of Genesis uses it as a narrative device for establishing the family of Abraham as a separate people.

8. Hermann Fränkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975) 119, observes how the archaic language of Hesiod, which juxtaposes various myths, in which the plots and chains of causality are incompatible, nevertheless makes his ideas clear. The same principle applies, I think, to myths in the Bible.

9. Even if not by water (Genesis 9:11), there are plenty of other means.

10. Perhaps, to offer a Plato-inspired teleological Midrash, God has created other animals so that we might learn from them. In Proverbs and Job, we find that some of the animals can teach lessons (Proverbs 30:24–28; Job 12:7–10). Later in the rabbinic tradition, Judah ben Tema enjoins, "Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer, and strong as a lion, to do the will of your Father who is in heaven" (*Pirkot Avot* 23).

11. Discussions of the Herodotean tale focus on the *science* of the experiment. See Antoni Sułek, "The Experiment of Psammetichus: Fact, Fiction, and Model to Follow," *Journal of the History of Ideas,* 50 (1989) 645–51 and Deborah Levine Gera, "Two Thought Experiments in the *Dissoi Logoi," American Journal of Philology,* 121 (2000) 21–45. For a wide-ranging discussion of the story, including the reaction to the experiment in antiquity and afterwards, see Gera, *Ancient Greek Ideas on Speech* 68–111. According to W. W. How and J. Wells, *A Commentary on Herodotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1912) 156, Frederick II in the thirteenth century of Germany and James IV in the early sixteenth repeated Psamettichus' experiment and thus "proved" that Hebrew was the language of Paradise. The experiment was repeated on a larger group of infants in India in the late 1570's by the Mughal emperor Akbar, who wished to discover not only what language they would speak but also what creed they would have. The experiment failed when after a few years all turned out dumb and some died (Ebba Koch, "Jahangir as Francis Bacon's Ideal of the King as an Observer and Investigator of Nature" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 19 (2009) 327).

12. This was a matter of keen interest during the Enlightenment. See Adriana S. Benzaquén, "Childhood, Identity and Human Science in the Enlightenment," *History Workshop Journal* 57 (2004) 50–52.

13. This has long been the orthodox view (cf. How and Wells, ad loc. [p. 156]) and W. A. Heidel, "Hecataeus and the Egyptian Priests in Herodotus, Book II," *Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, New Series, 18 [1935] 58–59.

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14. Aristotle, *Politics* 1329b and Diodorus 1.101 (both cited by How and Wells).

15. Aristotle, *Meteorology* 352 b 20, *Politics* 1329 b 32.

16. But this very sort of question *will* be asked by Socrates in Plato's *Cratylus*, as will be discussed below.

17. John Milton, in *Paradise Lost* (9.277), credits Eve with naming the flowers.

18. The derivation is an example of what linguists call a "folk" or "popular" etymology (so Koehler-Baumgartner for the entry *isha*). Folk etymologies were ubiquitous in the ancient world, and remain so today, influencing our ordinary way of thinking about things. For a rich investigation of this subject, see David L. Gold, *Studies in Etymology and Etiology: With Emphasis on Germanic, Jewish, Romance and Slavic Languages* (San Vicente del Raspeig, Spain: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Alicante, 2009). We may wonder about the talking snake in the next chapter of Genesis. May we suggest, in the provocative spirit of Socrates, that it is possible that the story of a talking serpent is more a misogynistic jest than a serious account of the origin of evil? Can the author be joking that a vexatious but talking snake would have made as suitable a companion for the man as the woman?

19. *Cratylus* 395d. For all of its silliness, the notion is closely echoed by Dante, who, in *Vita nuova* (13.4) writes *nomina sunt consequentia rerum* ("names are the consequences of things") and in the *Purgatory* (13.109) plays on the same notion with the name of Sapía.

20. Plato shows the absurdity of the idea, as his character Socrates arbitrarily asserts that certain sounds convey specific notions (*Cratylus* 434b–c).

21. The notion, first presented in *Cratylus* 389a, recurs throughout the dialogue.

22. Plato signals the lack of seriousness at *Cratylus* 393b and 401e, and 426a–b.

23. For a recent discussion, see Tobias Reinhardt, "Epicurus and Lucretius on the Origins of Language," *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series 58 (2008) 127–40. Reinhardt does not place his protagonists Epicurus and Lucretius in the context of their pointed rejection of the Platonic discussion about whether meanings were imposed, but examines their idea that language arose principle from primitive people pointing.

24. Galileo, "Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina" 186.

25. We might include among innovators a certain Orsippus of Megara, who, as Pausanias reports (1.44.1), first dropped his loincloth and ran naked in the Olympic Games.

26. We should note here perhaps that although the danger is very great and the destruction immanent, Jonah fails completely to persuade the mariners to throw him overboard. His failure to persuade these few sailors shipboard will contrast with the successful persuasion of the king of Nineveh over his entire people. Perhaps we might note also God's failure to persuade Jonah to do his bidding. If my interpretation of the book be correct, when God speaks about Jonah's pity for the gourd, perhaps learning from the king's example, he is attempting to move Jonah by a means analogous to the king's decree.

27. This will not be the case with the people of Nineveh. They will believe in Jonah's warning without seeing and be persuaded by the king's decree.

28. Perhaps the fourth commandment, to remember the Sabbath and to keep it holy, in the prohibition of work by cattle, has a similar purpose. Part of keeping the day holy will be to reflect on the moral differences between cattle and human beings.

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Hyun Chul Paul Kim, showing parallels between the destruction of the world in the flood story in Genesis and the destruction of Nineveh, points out (among many other resemblances, some ironic, some contrasting, and some reinforcing) that the animals boarding the ark and God's remembering them is like the animals putting on sack-cloth and God's extending his mercy to them (501). I would suggest that we include the ark-passage in Genesis concerning animals with those the aim of which may be to cause human beings to reflect *a fortiori* on their relationships. If animals deserve mercy, how much the more do our neighbors!

29. On the war, see L. H. Jeffery, "The Campaign between Athens and Aegina in the Years before Salamis (Herodotus, VI, 87–93)," *American Journal of Philology* 83(1962) 44–54; and Thomas Figueira, "Herodotus on the Early Hostilities between Aegina and Athens," *American Journal of Philology* 106(1985) 49–74.

30. John Michael Moore Aristotle and Xenophon on Democracy and Oligarchy (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1986) 245.

31. Claus-M. Naske, Alaska: A History of the 49th State (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987) 283–84.

32. For data on how windfalls are spent, see the article from the Guadian October 22, 2012, at https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2012/oct/22/national-lottery-winners-spend-money.

33. Plutarch, *Life of Themistocles* 4.

34. Moore, Aristotle and Xenophon, 246.

35. The examples of fictitious speeches in this paragraph are drawn from A. J. Podlecki, *The Life of Themistocles* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975) 124–26; George Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963) 270; and from Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972) 615–20.

36. Frank J. Frost, *Plutarch's Themistocles: A Historical Commentary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, (1980) 80–81.

37. In Themistocles' speech, as Plutarch portrays it, are all the Aristotelian methods—utilizing the character of the speaker; stirring up the listeners' emotions; and argument. None of these figure at all in the King's persuasion.

38. One might think of real people, too. Louis Pasteur discovered the existence of chiral crystals when he noticed (in 1848) that sodium ammonium salts of tartaric acid crystallize into right and left forms, and he was able to separate these with his naked eyes.

39. The phrase seems to be inspired by Genesis 6:5: "And the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination (*yetzer*) of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all his days." Here the use of "every" (*qal*) is rhetorical and not scientific. In the Talmud (*Avot de-Rabbi Natan* 16) there is the suggestion that this evil inclination is not acquired until the age of maturity. In any case, the *yetzer* is only an *inclination*, not an imperative, and free will is preserved.

40. For a discussion of the history of original sin, see Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (Random House, 1988). Because of the focus of this book, I omit discussion of other religions, like Islam, which has its conception of Iblis, a disobedient angel who puts evil thoughts into people's hearts, thoughts that they are free,

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however, to reject (John L. Esposito, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004] 279).

41. We also find claims of perfection made for the Buddha, Siddhārtha Gautama. Claims about perfection are fairly frequent in the New Testament, though sometimes the concept is expressed in different ways, with words like "blameless" (*amemptoi*) in Luke (1:5); or perfect (*teleios*) in Matthew 5:4; blameless (*amomous*) and "without reproach" (*anegkletis*) in Colossians 1:22. Jerome renders the Greek word *katertismenos* as *perfectus* in his translation of Luke 6:40: *non est discipulus super magistrum perfectus autem omnis erit sicut magister eius* ("The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master").

42. Of the one million who take the SAT, about twenty achieve a perfect score (http://businessmajors.about.com/od/satgmatpreparation/a/averageSATscore.htm).

43. In a review in *The New Yorker* of Andre Vauchez, *Francis of Assisi: The Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint* (January14, 2013, 77), Joan Acocella quotes Ernest Renan as saying that St. Francis of Assisi "constitutes proof that Christianity, at least once, has been lived by a human being in all its radicalness within the context of a historical life: this allows us to sustain the hope that this great movement, taken and distorted by the Church, might be able one day to resume its influence." This would seem to support a hypothesis of the possibility of human perfection, though one might perhaps object that if Francis was a saint, he was something more than human.

44. When we speak of *human* perfection we always mean *moral* perfection. No one, or at least no one thoughtful, thinks that a crooked nose or weak knees diminish the excellence of a human being. And no one would make as an excuse for being short or bald or grey or for having a birthmark, "I'm only human."

45. For Noah's curse, see the Chapter 3, "Mad Curses."

46. For a review of the scholarship on whether the prologue and epilogue are additions by a different author, see Aron Pinker, "The Core Story in the Prologue-Epilogue of the Book of Job," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 6 (2006) 2–4. In a pair of dueling articles with titles reminiscent of those used by Al-Ghazali and Averroes, André Lacocque ("The Deconstruction of Job's Fundamentalism," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126 [2007] 83–97), and Philippe Guillaume ("Dismantling the Deconstruction of Job," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127 [2008] 491–99) both take stock of the prologue and epilogue. According to LaCocque, the price to God for creating the world is a reduction of omnipotence. God is not responsible for Job's suffering because he is not omnipotent, "as Job is now invited to realize that God is not the omnipotent *cosmocrator* [italics LaCocoque's] who manipulates the fate of creation as whole" (84). According to Guillaume, the prologue establishes God as looking down on the world to make sure all statutes are being observed. God, by his reading, engages in a "bout of divine folly" that allows Job to suffer for nothing. The purpose of the Book of Job is to destroy the fearful religion of Deuteronomy. Humans will suffer because of divine folly (497, 499), not because they have violated original sin or any commandments. Both readings violate the "standard model of God," one by denying the omnipotence of God, the other by denying his perfect goodness. Both authors are thus showing an acceptance of the canon by which the west has interpreted divinity.

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47. After Satan has suggested to his fellow fallen angels his plan about corrupting humankind, Milton writes (*Paradise Lost* 3.681–84):

So spake the false dissembler unperceiv'd;
For neither Man nor Angel can discern
Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks
Invisible, except to God alone.

48. Later on in the Book of Job the comforters will assert that God is punishing Job because he has sinned, and in making this assertion they will be presuming to know what no one can know, the intentions of another person. Job will claim that he has not sinned—a claim he can make because he (at least more than anyone else) can know his own intentions. When his friends interpret Job's words as sinful, they are making an assumption about what he says because they, like Satan and we the readers, do not believe that it belongs to a human being to be perfect. Job will not make this assumption about God's actions; to be sure, he will cry out about his bewilderment—but crying out in bewilderment, even complaining, are not sins. (In the list of 613 commandments there will not be found "You shall not complain.")

49. There are five self-inflicted deaths in the Hebrew Bible, two the result of military failures (Abimelech [Judges 9:54] and Saul [1 Samuel 31:3–6]); two the result of failed coups d'état (Ahithophel [2 Samuel 17:23] and Zimri [1 Kings 16:18]); and Samson's [Judges 16:26–31]), which defies classification. For more on suicide, see Chapter 3, "Adoption and Suicide."

50. Job is not the only person in the Bible who expresses a wish not to have been born. So do Jeremiah (Jeremiah 20:14–18), Jonah (Jonah 4:3), and Elijah (1 Kings 19:4). On the possibility that these individuals suffered from depression, see Paul A. Kruger, "Depression in the Hebrew Bible: An Update," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 64 (2005) 192.

51. There are very many fine commentaries on Job that treat the question of suffering. Two recent ones, from Jewish and Christian perspectives are those of Harold S. Kushner (*The Book of Job: When Bad Things Happen to a Good Person* [New York: Schocken Books, 2012]) and Eleonore Stump (*Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010]).

52. The story of Philemon and Baucis is found in Ovid, *Metamorphosis* 8.611–724; that of Tellus in Herodotus, *History* 1.30.

53. Here we may think of Themistocles, who saved Greece from Persia but accepted bribes, lied to his allies, and looked for his own safety before all else; Alcibiades, who betrayed his country and contorted his betrayal into a form of patriotism; or Socrates, whose hallucinatory voice worried even his great admirers. This list of historical personages leaves out the people of heroic literature, like Achilles, Odysseus, Jason, and Theseus, whose acts of wrongdoing are quite as notable as their good ones.

54. Cicero, *de Finibus* 5.28. This is a variation of the Platonic Socrates' insistence that all virtue is knowledge. A variant of this all-embracing nature of a single virtue occurs in a traditional Jewish witticism, which satirically makes *money* the all-inclusive virtue: "If you have money, everyone thinks you are wise, handsome, and able to sing like a bird."

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55. The comparison is that of Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Fate* 28 (cited in R. W. Sharples, *Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics: An Introduction to Hellenistic Philosophy* [New York: Routledge, 1996] 107).

56. Cf. René Brouwer, *The Stoic Sage: The Early Stoics on Wisdom, Sagehood and Socrates.* Cambridge University Press, 2014. 115–35, who concludes that the Stoics did not declare themselves or other Stoics to be sages (164).

57. Seneca, *On the Firmness of the Wise Man* 7.1. John Sellars discusses Seneca's excessive optimism on the matter (*The Art of Living: The Stoics on the Nature and Function of Philosophy* [Burlington, VT: 2003] 61 n. 26).

58. On the difference between a fool and a sage, see Irene Liu, "Nature and Knowledge in Stoicism: On the Ordinariness of the Stoic Sage," *Apeiron* 99 (2008) 247–48.

59. By "post-classical" I mean the time from the mid-third century BCE on, in other words, the time after Aristotle's work had made its mark.

60. *Sanhedrin* 97b and *Sukkah* 45b.

61. The virtue is *aproptosia* in Greek (Diogenes Laertius 7.46). For a discussion of this remarkable virtue, see Christoph Jedan, *Stoic Virtues: Chrysippus and the Religious Character of Stoic Ethics* (London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009) 86–87.

62. *The Meditations* 4. 49 and 8.28, respectively. Tr. G. M. A. Grube (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963).

63. On the incredible claims of perfect knowledge of the Stoic sage, see Liu 248–49.

64. How human beings can do wrong is a major problem to the ancient philosophers. The Platonic Socrates frequently argues that no one does wrong willingly. Later, in the third century CE, Rabbi Simeon, agreed, saying (among many other things) that anyone who sins is suffering from a momentary insanity (Sotah 4). For those who believe that there is a coherence between truth and reason and that true premises will, with a correct application of logic, lead to both true and valid conclusions, wrongdoing will always result from bad premises, bad logic or a combination of the two. But for our purposes we shall assume that while perhaps perfect rationality (i.e., the combination of true premises and faultless logic) does not apply to manipulative swindlers or skillfully adept computer hackers, these activities do require highly developed mental acuity.

65. The Queen's riddle is found in Jacob Lassner, *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba: Boundaries of Gender and Culture in Postbiblical Judaism and Medieval Islam. Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993) 12.

66. The first resolves by Frederick's having been born on leap year. Solomon's answer to the second riddle is this: "Seven are the days of the menstrual period, nine are the months of pregnancy, two the breasts of succor, and one to the child who drinks from them."

67. This is usually rendered "he feared God." On the difference between fear, reverential fear, and awe, see Vernon Pratt, "Feeling Awed by God," *Mind* 79 (1970) 610.

68. On the possibility that she tells Job not to *curse* but *bless* God, see Chapter 2, "Human Perfectibility."

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69. For a luminous discussion of the parental imagery in God's first speech to Job, see Stump 187–89. For a rather Freudian analysis of the book of Job, in which the "triangular relationship of God, Job, and Satan, is … taken to encode father/parents, son, and envious sibling" see Anthony F. Badalamenti, "Job's Story and Family Health," *Journal of Religion and Health* 48 (2009) 16.

70. In refusing to accept exile, he behaved very differently from Protagoras and Anaxagoras, who did accept it, or from Aristotle later, who fled, declining to "allow Athens to sin twice against philosophy" (Aelian, *Historical Miscellany* 3.36; also Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Aristotle* 5.9).

71. Thrasymachus in Book One of the *Republic* and Callicles in the *Gorgias* are examples of persons who become less moderate and more hostile from their conversations with Socrates.

72. G. Matthews, M. Zeidner, and R. D. Roberts, *Emotional intelligence: Science and Myth* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).

73. Though some scholars, discussing the concept of wisdom in the Book of Job, do not refer to Socrates, it is clear that they would agree that the wisdom described there is akin to Socratic wisdom, that is, to a recognition of one's own ignorance. Immanuel Kant says that Job is better than his friends because while *they* presume to know God's intentions, Job frankly admits that he does not know (Alan Mittleman, "The Job of Judaism and the Job of Kant," *The Harvard Theological Review* 102 (2009) 40); Davis Hankins writes that "the true sage is the fearer who … who resists the futile quest for wisdom as a transcendent ideal ("Wisdom as an Immanent Event in Job 28, Not a Transcendent Ideal," *Vetus Testamentum* 2013 63 [2013] 211); and Shimon Bakon that "Divine wisdom is incomprehensible to mere man: *It is hidden from the eyes of the living*" ("Two Hymns To Wisdom Proverbs 8 and Job 28," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 36 [2008] 228). In both Socrates and Job we find the imperative to avoid wrongdoing (cf. Job 28:28: "Fear of the Lord is wisdom/To shun evil is understanding" with Socrates' claims of avoiding wrongdoing [*Apology* 29a–b, *Gorgias* 480b–d, and *passim* in the dialogues]). And in both we find a refusal to admit to wrongdoing falsely (Job's repeated declarations that he has not sinned, e.g., and Socrates' refusal to advocate a disagreeable punishment for himself during the sentencing phase of his trial [*Apology* 37a–b]).

74. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 980b21. Such animals, he adds, are more prudent and more teachable than those that do not remember.

75. *Republic* 486c, 487a, 490c, 494b, 535c.

76. It was upon the literal meaning of the words "your life blood" that the rabbinical tradition based the prohibition of suicide (J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs: Hebrew Text, English Translation and Commentary* [London: Soncino Press, 1956] 32).

77. In the context of the following lines, which specify some of the rituals of the holiday of Passover (like the requirement to eat unleavened bread for seven days), it is clear that the remembering is to take place very year. Rashi expands the order, saying that the day of departure from Egypt is to be remembered *every day.*

78. It was of course possible to achieve fame for an evil deed. Erostratus, for the sake of fame, is said to have burned down (on the natal day of Alexander the Great in 336 BCE) the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus, one of the wonders of the ancient world.

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79. Nor does the Bible seem to make seeing the glory of God a goal. In a discussion of Moses' request to see God's glory, Arnold Eisen explains that what God means in his reply that no one who sees his face will live (Exodus 33:18–20) is that as God's goodness passes by Moses, Moses will be filled with the will of God and transformed by his glory ("Abraham Joshua Heschel and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism," *Modern Judaism* 29 [2009] 9 and 13). Perhaps the difference between the Greek conception of glory and the Hebrew would be analogous to the difference between a spotlight focused on a finite *object* of glory and the brilliance of the sun, a *source* of glory, radiating outwards.

80. Hertz writes (*The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*) 916: "He has been hidden from human ken, say the Rabbis, so that [the burial place] might not become a place of pilgrimage for those who deify national heroes. He lies in an unknown sepulcher and unvisited tomb. It is the seal of his self-effacement."

81. Cf. the discussion by Jay T. Rock of John Pawlikowski, whom he quotes as saying that by the act of remembering we bring God's presence in the past into the present, so that the past becomes a "starting point to the present"—a view that Rock adopts and applies to the effect for Christians of reliving Jesus' life through memory ("The Ongoing Creation of Loving Community: Christian Ritual and Ethics," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 20 [2000] 91).

82. The most common sources for the story of Damon and his friend are Cicero (*On Moral Duties* 3.45) and Diodorus Siculus (*Library of History* 10.4), where the friend is named "Phintias." I suspect that the name he is commonly given is "Pythias" because, along with Damon, he was a follower of Pythagoras, and a later copyist, not having paid scrupulous attention, wrote *Pythias,* combining the name Phintias with the name of his teacher. Nothing except this story is known from ancient times about these individuals.

83. In this respect he is like Gilgamesh, who loses his friend Enkidu in the *Epic of Gilgamesh,* a work that falls outside the scope of this book.

84. Virgil compares Nisus and Euryalus to an unfed lion running wild in the sheepfolds. For insights into the brutality, see Lee Fratantuono, *Madness Unchained: A Reading of Virgil's Aeneid,"* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007) 270–75.

85. Achilles compares Patroclus to a little girl weeping (*Iliad* 16.6–11), a comparison that might excite irritation if their relationship were not close.

86. This syndrome has been admirably described by Jonathan Shay in *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York: Scribner, 1994). For Achilles' reaction to his own actions that led to the death of Patroclus and countless others, see my "Achilles' Guilt," *The Classical Journal* 80 (1985):193–203.

87. I do not wish to discount the feelings of such soldiers, which are assuredly intense to the extreme. But these feelings, like those of erotic fervor, are distinct from what we generally term "friendship," or are a special case of it.

88. Plato's short dialogue dealing with friendship, *Lysis*, shows that twelve- or thirteen-year-old boys are too young to have thought seriously about friendship. Aristotle's analysis of friendship in the *Nicomachaean Ethics* (Books 8 and 9) classifies and ranks the various categories of friendships but offers no living examples.

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Cicero's treatise cites a number of examples, but, as in the case of Damon and Phintias described above, describes them too briefly, as if they were stock examples.

89. Though I am writing this as an old man, I can nevertheless still remember that the affection of young people is intense such that they are convinced no one else has ever felt the same way as they. If we changed the sex of Jonathan, we would have the stuff of a thousand romance novels about star-crossed lovers.

90. Perhaps the surprising scarcity of friendship in the Bible arises from a fear of homoerotic entanglements on the part of those who established the canon. Jonathan and David and Naomi and Ruth have not escaped this suspicion in modern critics, perhaps because little other basis is established for the friendships. For example, on Ruth and Naomi, see Rebecca Alpert, "Finding Our Past: A Lesbian Interpretation of the Book of Ruth," in *Reading Ruth: Contemporary Women Reclaim a Sacred Story,* ed. Judith A. Kates and Gail Twersky (New York, Ballantine Books, 1994); on David and Jonathan, the discussion in James Neill, *The Origin and Role of Same-Sex Relations in Human Societies* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2009) 105; John Boswell, *Same Sex Unions in Pre-Modern Europe* (New York: Villard, 1994) 130 n. 95, 135–37, 182; and Jonathan Kirsch, *King David: The Real Life of the Man Who Ruled Israel* (New York, Ballantine, 2000) 129–35; and the interesting book by Susan Ackerman, *When Heroes Love: The Ambiguity of Eros in the Stories of Gilgamesh and David* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), where the author concludes that despite the impossibility of any definitive verdict about a sexual relation between David and Jonathan, the text has the purpose of making Jonathan seem very womanlike and therefore, by the standards of the day, unfit to be king. As suggested in the text, most people have some familiarity with instantaneously or almost instantaneously induced sexual feelings and so in the absence of any other motives are ready to assume these. The most famous friendships in the Bible, because of their insubstantial basis, have not escaped these suspicions. Talmudic scholars have endeavored strenuously from ancient times to refute suspicions of homosexuality (e.g., Avot 5:16, where the love of David and Jonathan, "which is not dependent on anything" is contrasted with the fleeting love of Amnon and Tamar, which is presumably dependent on Tamar's physical beauty). Classical friendships have been subjected to the same interpretations. The relationship between Orestes and Pylades was suspected in antiquity of being homoerotic (in Lucian's *Erotes*), as was that between Achilles and Patroclus (in Plato's *Symposium*). I suspect that homosexuality would also have been attributed to Damon and Phintias if anything more remained about their story and if they had not been Pythagoreans, who permitted sexual intercourse only for the purpose of procreation (on this, see Kathy L. Gaca, *The Making of Fornication: Eros, Ethics, and Political Reform in Greek Philosophy and Early Christianity* [Hellenistic Culture and Society] Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003] 99–107). In the case of Damon and Phintias, we do not even know which one offered his life for the other. I should like to offer as hypotheses for the relatively greater number of stories in the classical world of friendships with homosexual potential (a) the much larger corpus from which to find such stories; (b) the acceptance of homosexuality and bi-sexuality by aristocrats in the Pagan world, perhaps because, having slaves to do the work, they were under less pressure to procreate; and (c) an attempt by the

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redactors of the Bible, wishing to distinguish Hebrew from gentile culture, to exclude stories that might hint of homoeroticism. The stories of David and Jonathan and of Ruth and Naomi, however, were perhaps too important to be omitted altogether and so were included, even if was possible to find suggestions of homoeroticism. If there was an attempt among the compilers of the Bible to hide any possible homosexuality in biblical characters, there was among some aristocratic Pagans an effort to find it in classical literature. There are no homosexual relationships in Homer; yet in Plato's *Symposium* (179d–180a), we find Phaedrus talking as though the homosexual relations of Achilles and Patroclus were taken for granted. For other examples, see Kenneth Dover, *Plato: Symposium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) 94–95. Philosophical arguments for the superiority of homosexuality over heterosexuality can be found in the second book of Achilles Tatius' *Adventures of Leucippe and Cleitophon* (2.36–38) and in Lucian's, or pseudo-Lucian's, *Amores* (51). These arguments are of course tinged with the ancient attitude that women are morally and intellectually inferior—a view shaped in large part by fears aroused by menstruation, its mysterious regularity and its connection to blood; by the equally mysterious occurrences of pregnancy and childbirth (see Gil Anidjar, *Blood: A Critique of Christianity* [New York: Columbia University Press, 2014]); by the subservient position of women that was the only condition people witnessed in their lives and so *seemed* completely in accordance with nature; and by the "scientific" view (e.g., Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals* 765a34–b35, 766b16–26; and Galen, *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* 14.6]), based on body temperature, that men are superior because they had more corporeal heat than women. In the later Jewish tradition, attempts to discover God's motive for the prohibition of homosexuality were perhaps inspired by Greek philosophy. These arguments, however, could go two ways: on the one hand, according to Aristotle (*Ethics* 1094a7–19; 1157a–35), actions for the sake of themselves are superior to those done for a product; in heterosexual activity there is a product—an offspring; since homosexual activity is for the sake of pleasure, an end in itself, it would be superior to heterosexuality. This seems to be the argument of Lucian (*Amores* 33). The argument against homosexuality (adopted later by the Catholic Church, e.g., Aquinas, *Summa theologica* II-II, 153 and II-II, a. 2 and q. 154, a. 11; Augustine, *Confessions,* 3.8) also has a basis in Aristotle, namely that actions have natural ends (e.g., *On the Parts of Animals* 640b 30–642a 2), and since the natural end of sexual activity is an offspring, a result not possible from homosexual activity, homosexuality is contrary to nature. To those seeking *arguments* to justify a biblical prohibition that might otherwise seem an arbitrary matter of taste, the argument that homosexuality is contrary to nature would appear very attractive. This particular argument, however, is perhaps an example of *petitio principii* ("begging the question") since it assumes as a premise that the *only* end of sexual activity is procreation.

91. The word is רֵעַי.

92. According to the Talmudic tractate *Baba Bathra* 16a, they lived three hundred parasangs (about 1500 kilometers) from each other and communicated either by magical crowns which had changing images or by special trees that withered to transmit a message. The estimate comes from the imagination of Rab Judah and is probably a metaphor for a great distance. To a person in biblical times, perhaps the

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names would be mysterious, with a touch of foreign glamor—a way of showing both Job's importance and the depth of his friendships.

93. Job 1:5. See also Chapter 2, "Human Perfectibility."

94. Mittleman, 32, points out that according to the medieval Saadia Gaon, Job's friends did not commit any theological mistakes; they misrepresented only the man Job. According to Saadia, suffering is the means God uses for the righteous to obtain a higher blessedness and reward, and this use by God is not something Job's friends could possibly have known.

95. The bond of an "old school friend" is celebrated as far back as in Homer—see my "Achilles' Inquiry about Machaon: The Critical Moment in the *Iliad,*" *The Classical Journal* 79 (1983–1984): 125–30.

96. Kieran Bonner, "Principles, Dialectic and the Common World of Friendship: Socrates and Crito in Conversation," *History of the Human Sciences* 20 (2014) 1–23, correctly argues that the conversation between Crito and Socrates must be understood in relation to their friendship (6). Crito, Bonner writes (8), tries to persuade Socrates to flee in accordance with the Athenian view, which Crito accepts, that money should not be valued more than friendship, while Socrates is worried lest he endanger his friend—and both agree on not allowing one's friends to suffer unjustly. My view of the dialogue is somewhat different—that Plato's teaching is that one must make a decision, even in moments of great stress, on the basis of the best argument one has when the decision must be made. That Socrates and Crito both accept this principle shows that they respect reason—the common value that infuses their friendship with deep purpose. Similarly, R. Michael Olson ("Doing Some Good to Friends: Socrates' Just Treatment of Polemarchus," *Journal of Philosophical Research* 36 [2011] 149–72) shows that when talking to Polemarchus in *Republic* 1, Socrates, with gentle dialectic, leads the young man to understand that a friend aims not at what is useful but at virtue, and so, in the course of the friendly conversation, has done good to his friend.

97. These are the views of Gorgias in the *Gorgias* and of Thrasymachus in *Republic* 1.

98. This is the view of Lysias as represented in the *Phaedrus.*

99. *Amicus Plato sed magis amica veritas:* "Plato is a friend but truth more a friend." As for having truth as a friend, Aristotle is surely speaking metaphorically. The use of "friend" literally here would present the same difficulties as the command "to love God" in the *Shema*. On the difficulties, see Arieti and Wilson 103 and 144. For the Latin quotation (perhaps a concise adaption of Aristotle' *Nicomachaean Ethics* 1096 a13–17), and its history in later thought, see Henry Guerlac, "Amicus Plato and Other Friends," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 39 (1978) 627–33.

100. I think we have an example of the same value in the story of Joseph. When Joseph is in prison falsely charged of assault by Potiphar's wife, he befriends a butler and a baker. When the baker asks for an interpretation of his dream, Joseph does not prevaricate but explains the dream as he understands it (Genesis 40:16–19).

101. To be sure, he pays lip service to "days full of innocence and full of truth," but the climactic words are "youth and love," when they "laughed with a gaiety that had no sting."

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102. The terms "old" and "young" are, of course, relative terms, depending on the historical conditions. As Douglas A Knight reports ("Perspectives on Aging and the Elderly in the Hebrew Bible," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible & Theology* 68 [2014]), skeletons at burial sites indicate that the onset of arthritis from bone fractures and deteriorating bones and teeth was common in biblical times among people in their 30s and 40s. He also gives the evidence that in Judaea and the ancient Middle East generally, old age began between the ages of 40 and 45 for both men and women, who were subject to the infirmities that in the West today begin at about age 70. He notes especially (6) a person unearthed at Qumran who was in his 60's but resembled a person today between 95 and 100.

103. These are the only words in the Bible that describe the feelings of a particular child for a mother. Perhaps the circumstance of bearing a natural child only in old age made Sarah extraordinarily protective of Isaac, and so Isaac missed her the more. While the text does not explicitly *use* the word "love" of Isaac's feelings, it does suggest the emotion. In this I disagree with Susan Ackerman, who says that "no child in the narrative tradition—or, indeed, anywhere in the Bible—is described as loving his or her parents" ("The Personal Is Political: Covenantal and Affectionate Love ['āheēb, 'ahăbâ] in the Hebrew Bible," *Vetus Testamentum* 52 [2002, 441]). It is not clear whether Rebekah became a consoling substitute mother to Isaac and used words to assuage his grief, or whether Isaac's erotic passion for her distracted him from mourning (the verb *nacham* ["console"] is vague on precisely how the consolation occurred). Given that in 2 Samuel 12:24, David "comforted Bath-sheba his wife [for the loss of their child], and went in unto her, and lay with her; and she bore a son, and called his name Solomon," I rather suspect that the comfort was sexual in the case of Rebekah as well. For a discussion of the trauma of Sarah's death for Isaac, along with a discussion of Rashi's commentary, see Steven Frosh, *Hauntings: Psychoanalysis and Ghostly Transmissions* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) 66–69.

104. Of course, readers know that for fulfillment of God's promise of Abraham's becoming the father of many nations through Isaac, it is necessary for Isaac to have children. If Keturah bore a hundred children, the marvel would have no relevance to the promise.

105. Taking his cue from Plato's *Republic* 1 (329a–d), Cato brings up the favorite chestnut about Sophocles, in which the playwright expresses great gladness to have finally escaped from erotic passion.

106. Jeremiah's lack of oratorical skill is reminiscent of the same lack lamented by Moses, an old man when God speaks to him from the burning bush, and Moses' lack too is able to be redeemed by God (Exodus 4:12).

107. This is not to say of course that wisdom is universal in old people, just that maturity is a necessary condition for the virtue.

108. Sophocles, *The Oedipus at Colonus of Sophocles.* Tr. Richard Jebb Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1889.

109. We shall not consider the self-generated failures of the Hebrew people to remember the deeds God performed for them, which reflect a failure to observe the commandments (e.g., Judges 8:34 and Nehemiah 9:17). In Hebrew, a distinction between the negation of *zachar,* "remember," and *shalach*, "forget," is not always maintained, as *shalach* sometimes seems to mean "not remember" (e.g., Judges 3:7).

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110. At the beginning of the Book of Exodus, we learn (Exodus 1:8) that there “arose a new king who did not know Joseph.” Perhaps, if Joseph had continued to be known as Zaphenath-paneah (“Food-man”), the Pharaoh would not have been in such ignorance. My point is that names are often significant, especially in the Bible, and especially when attention is explicitly called to them and they have a power to influence others. Cochran, 433, blames Joseph for the future suffering of the Israelites because he forgot the connection between land and identity, both the connection of his own family to Canaan and that of the Egyptians displaced when Jacob and Joseph’s brothers move to Egypt.

111. The word that I have translated as “trouble” (*amal*) is often rendered “toil.” In Deuteronomy 26:7, it is placed between the words for affliction and oppression, and some of the weight of the adjoining words is included: “And we cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice, and saw our affliction, and our toil, and our oppression.”

112. Later, when Jacob is dying and calls his sons and grandchildren to his side to bless them (Genesis 48:17–20), he places his right hand on Ephraim’s head, thus eliciting a protest from Joseph, who reminds his father that Manasseh was the firstborn and therefore entitled to the higher blessing. But Jacob defends his actions, saying that Manasseh’s “younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.” One can only wonder whether the more optimistic name of Ephraim influenced Jacob.

113. In the *Poetics,* Aristotle (*passim*) stresses that the most important parts of a plot are reversal and recognition, both salient features of the story of Joseph. Is it any wonder, then, that the story figures prominently in Hellenistic Judaism (see Gruen’s chapter “The Hellenistic Images of Joseph” in *Heritage and Hellenism* [73–109])?

114. This surmise arises from the statement in Genesis 41:45 that the priest is in the city of On (later called by the Greek name *Heliopolis*), a center of sun worship.

115. Telemachus tallies their number in *Odyssey* 16.245–52.

116. It does not appear to me that Homer prods us to consider the many problems that would arise from the forgetting, and he may simply be seeking a convenient solution to ending his epic. In *Odyssey* 24.473–76, Athena asks Zeus whether he plans more war on Ithaca or intends to impose a friendship on both sides. The question, as J. Marks, suggests, is Homer’s way of acknowledging “that Zeus is the figure charged with resolving the *Odyssey*’s internal contradictions so that the story may achieve dramatic closure” (*Zeus in the Odyssey,* Center for Hellenic Studies [Washington D.C.: Harvard University Press, 2008] 75).

117. In *Odyssey* 4.220–226, Helen puts a drug into wine to induce a forgetting of the sorrows of the Trojan War, but, as Homer points out (4.223) the forgetting lasts only one day, unlike the perpetual forgetting caused by the magical lotus (9.94–97). In a lighter vein, we may recall the haunting song of Lorenz Hardt and Richard Rogers, “It’s Easy to Remember But So Hard to Forget.”

118. Homer does not specify the exact maiming, but Apollordorus (*Library* 1.3.3) says that the Muses blinded Thamyris in addition to making him forget his craft. The attribution of blindness to a poet may refer to the sense of “blind” in our “blind alley,” used of a road that goes to a place unknown. In this way a blind poet is one who is anonymous, and it has been suggested that Homer was called “blind” because no one

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knew who he was. de Jong, 190, agrees with the suggestion that Homer deliberately refrains from identifying himself in order to avoid the punishment that befell Thamyris.

119. I exclude of course such *unnatural* mechanisms as surgically or pharmaceutically induced forgetfulness.

120. According to Peter Digeser, "Forgiveness and Politics: Dirty Hands and Imperfect Procedures," *Political Theory* 26 (1998) 705, Friedrich Nietzsche said it was better to forget than to forgive. But in his fine, nuanced analysis, Digeser discusses how "forgetting," if it were possible, would be morally questionable since it would forestall justice (712–13).

121. An amnesty differs legally from a "pardon" in that a pardon is granted those who have been found guilty of a crime or offence. I am grateful to Professor David Marion for clarification of this point.

122. As Kathleen Moore writes (*Pardons, Justice, Mercy, and the Public Interest* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1989] 5), when governments engage in amnesty, it is an "official forgetting" of the transgressions of citizens.

123. In his stimulating article on memory and forgetting in the story of Joseph, Cochran (430), says that when Joseph names his son Manasseh, he is acknowledging what God has made him forget, as though Joseph were actually forgetting it. He writes, "Hardship (hatred of his brothers, prison) produces a certain bitterness, and prosperity ([i.e., being] Pharaoh's right-hand man) engenders forgetfulness." My argument is that the name Joseph gives his son shows a wish to forget, and the wish itself shows his inability to forget—one does not wish for what one has already achieved.

124. Such delegations were customary among Near Eastern Kingdoms. King Hiram of Tyre, for example, sent a delegation of condolence to Solomon following the death of King David (Isaac Kalimi, "Reexamining 2 Samuel 10–12: Redaction History versus Compositional Unity," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 78 [2016] 37 n. 49). Kalimi, looks at the story as a unity beginning with David's consoling Hanun and ending with David's consoling of Bathsheba.

125. The rabbinic tradition supplies possible motives. When David had put his family under the protection of the king of Moab (1 Samuel 12:3–4), the Talmud says (*Tanhuma, Wayera,* 25) that the king of Moab slew all of David's family except for one brother, who found asylum with King Nahash. Jerome "Quæstiones Hebraicæ," on 2 Chronicles 19:2, says that David's sympathy arose because both David and Nahash were enemies of Saul.

126. Hanun's insult has been variously interpreted. For D. D. Luckenbill, this behavior was simply the "rude horseplay characteristic of the East" ("A Difficult Passage in an Amarna Letter," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 35 [1919] 159). But according to Charles B. Chavel, shaving off the beard was a ritual to the Ammonite God Chemosh and hence an act of such extreme sacrilege that it justified David's violent response ("David's War against the Ammonites: A Note in Biblical Exegesis," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 30 [1940] 257–61). I rather think that the unsavory war initiates the sequence that leads to David's adultery with Bathsheba and murder of her husband, and the rabbinic discussion of Chemosh, upon which Chavel relies, is an attempt to sanitize David's disproportionate response.

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127. See my "Achilles Guilt," 193–203.

128. Samuel J. Mann ("Joseph and His Brothers: A Biblical Paradigm for the Optimal Handling of Traumatic Stress," *Journal of Religion and Health*, 40 [2001] 335–42) has discussed the story of Joseph as an example of post-traumatic stress syndrome. Mann looks at the emotionless responses of Joseph to his sorrows as a defense against the pain he suffered. His psychological breakthrough occurs only when he finally bursts into loud, uncontrollable wailing. With this catharsis, he acknowledges his love for his father. The understanding of post-traumatic stress in the Greek warrior at Troy is the subject of two splendid books by Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam* and *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming* (New York: Scribner, 2002).

129. Michael V. Fox, "Wisdom in the Joseph Story," *Vetus Testamentum*, 51 (2001) 26–41, sees Joseph as acknowledging the timeless truth that all that happened was caused by God—the point Fox has been making throughout his article, as he has attributed the successes of Joseph not to his own wisdom but to God. Yet, responding to Claus Westermann (*Genesis 37–50*, Tr. J. J. Scullion [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002] 251), who analyzes Joseph's words in the context of his meeting with his brothers, Fox says that Joseph's present statement *both* expresses the timeless wisdom and has contextual meaning. Westermann particularly denies the timeless wisdom and says that the good Joseph has in mind is "leading the brothers along the path to repentance and reconciliation" (251).

130. See n. 6 above on hubris.

131. Cochran (430) appears to blame Joseph for not foreseeing the future slavery of the Israelites; but to expect Joseph to guess the future is rather too much to ask of a human being. Joseph saves all Egypt and his family; it is unfair to blame him for not knowing that a king will arise in Egypt who will be ignorant of what Joseph did for the land.

132. Achilles, of course, *has* undergone an internal change with respect to his feeling of guilt. It is in the ritual of the *official* reconciliation among the Greek commanders that he seems to be going through the motions.

133. Philosophers like Polemon and Zeno, who make an instantaneous change to a different way of life, are exceptions and perhaps show the influence of foreign stories on their authors.

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Chapter 3

Family Matters

FRATRICIDE: CAIN AND ROMULUS

Tacitus reports that when Nero killed his stepbrother Britannicus most people were inclined to forgive him, for they recalled the ancient rivalries of brothers and reasoned that reigns are not easily shared.[1] But Tacitus himself explains that the crime was especially heinous, for a few days earlier Nero had attempted a sexual violation of Britannicus and afterwards went on to a succession of murders that included his wife, his mother, and his teacher, not to mention a great many Romans of all classes. The most famous ancient fratricide that the indulgent Romans would have recalled was Romulus' of Remus. In biblical literature, though we cannot speak of a *rivalry*—for we have insufficient data—the murder by Cain of his brother Abel will serve as our example of fratricide.[2] Both killers, Cain and Romulus, found cities.

The first event the Bible reports after the expulsion from Eden is that Eve gave birth to Cain. The next is that she bore *his brother* Abel. The spare text introduces Abel not as a second son but as Cain's brother, perhaps because Abel has no existence separate from being Cain's brother: we learn absolutely nothing of what he does or says except in its relation to Cain, and, since we learn nothing of the brothers' childhood, we have nothing upon which to base a psychological understanding. When they have grown up, Cain brings God fruit from the ground as an offering, and Abel brings animals from his flock. We learn that God had respect for Abel's offering but not for Cain's and that Cain was very angry (Genesis 4:4–7). The text does not say why God "has respect" for Abel's offering, nor how he shows that respect. The anger of Cain is not explained, but if he is angry, he somehow feels that he has been treated unjustly. Whether he feels unjustly treated by God or Abel

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the text does not say. There is no evidence that *Abel* has treated Cain unjustly; perhaps he feels God has been capricious in preferring Abel's gift. God's words do not comfort or encourage Cain or set him at ease. Cain then spoke to Abel, but we do not learn the content of the conversation.[3] Later, when they were in the field, Cain slew him (Genesis 4:8). We do not learn Cain's motive. We may wonder whether Cain is trying to punish *God* by killing the person for whose offerings God has respect, but the text does not guide this or any other thought.

The narrative concludes, as God poetically tells Cain that he has heard the voice of Abel's blood crying from the ground and then punishes Cain. Part of the punishment is magical: the ground, polluted by the blood of Abel, will no longer yield its strength. In addition, Cain must flee his home and wander. As his parents were separated from their home in the garden, so he will be separated farther from his roots there. When Cain worries about the possibility that he may be slain, God protects him with a sign, but we do not learn what sort of sign. Cain founds a city, appropriately perhaps, since, as a city dweller and removed from the soil, there is little opportunity for planting crops. Cain does not root his own identity in this city, for he names the city for his son.

For modern readers, what is striking is the incomplete way in which this, the world's first murder case, is described. It lacks motive, murder weapon, human witnesses, a description of a crime scene, and any reaction from the family except an acknowledgment of Abel's death in the form of a new son Seth to take the place of Abel (Genesis 4:25). We do learn of the knowledge of the sole eyewitness—God—who is also the judge and jury. His response is severe, yet rather devoid of emotion.

Romulus and Remus are the twin sons of the vestal virgin Rhea Sylvia—on this ancient sources agree. The sources disagree on whether she was raped—either by her corrupt uncle Amulius or by the god Mars—or was herself guilty of violating her sacred virginity. The account here of the fratricide will draw from Livy.[4]

After being abandoned by their great-uncle on the banks of the Tiber to starve to death or be eaten by wild animals, Romulus and Remus are fortuitously nursed by a she-wolf, then discovered and reared by a shepherd and his wife. The brothers eventually overthrow their tyrannical great-uncle, who had tried to destroy all rivals to the throne after he had usurped power from Numitor, the rightful heir. They restore the power of Alba Longa to Numitor and then set out to establish their own city. In Livy's account (*Ab urbe condita* 1.6–7), a spontaneous desire to found a city *seized* the twin brothers. This desire, which is presented without an etiology, is in sharp contrast to the *greed for kingly power*, apparently an inherited ancestral trait, that also takes hold of the young men. In an ostensible act of piety, they decide to leave to

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the gods the decision of which is to rule and determine their will by augury, the flight of birds.[5] Remus sees a sign first, and he and his supporters claim the kingship because of this priority; Romulus sees twice as many birds and claims it because of the greater number. Though the gods *may* be communicating, the irony is that they do not make their choice of king clear, and each side is able to make a plausible claim.[6]

Livy offers two accounts of the fratricide. In the less iniquitous account, Romulus and Remus scuffle, and Remus happens to be killed. In the more common story—which renders the fratricide more reprehensible—Remus leaps over the walls after Romulus has declared a curse on anyone who would do so, and Romulus, *in great anger,* slays him and becomes the sole ruler.[7] Livy's account stresses that the fratricide arises from simple greed for power.

The biblical story of fratricide is hidden in fog: we are left to infer a rivalry between the brothers, that Cain envies Abel, and that they had some sort of confrontation while they were talking in the field. The curt nature of the story and the propensity of the tradition to fill the gaps have provoked innumerable explanatory backstories. Midrashim explain Cain's motives and later repentance. Disquisitions are written on the differences between agriculture and herding and why God may have favored one over the other.[8] In addition, commentators have struggled to explain other mysteries generated by the text: Who are the possible killers of Cain? Where can Cain find a wife? Who will live in the city he founds? It is hard for us to imagine that readers from ancient times to the present would *not* wonder about these matters, but then we have grown up with Western literary canons, mostly classical ones, which may be quite different from those that informed ancient Hebrew responses.

Livy's text is sunlight in comparison. If an impulse has generated a desire to establish a city, so be it. Who of us cannot identify at all with some action we have performed on impulse?[9] If there is a dispute in which there is no palpable resolution and each party favors the evidence that support his advantage, so be it. Who has not preferred the arguments that favor one's own advantage to those that favor an opponent's? If the argument between the hotheaded brothers exploded into a murderous conflict, so be it. Who has not ever erupted into fury? In short, for the Romans, whose history established civil strife as routine, the confrontation of Romulus and Remus was ordinary behavior, and, like so many internecine conflicts in Rome, it ended in a good—namely, uncontested, stable rule. The lesson was clear: political stability is worth a fratricide. Virgil himself seems to have suggested this value. In the *Georgics* (4.90), he advises beekeepers to kill the worse of two "king" (what we call "queen") bees so that the better might rule the hive. Like so much of Virgil's poetry, a passage about beekeeping or another subject may also be taken as political commentary. The gods themselves are not portrayed

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by any authors as troubled by the slaying, and so Tacitus' indulgent Romans might be drawing their apathy from the divine role models.[10]

Let us conjecture that the central fact in Cain's slaying of Abel is its enigmatic nature. The correct question to ask, then—if it not be wrong to ask *any* question—is the purpose of the mystery. I should like to suggest that the traditional practice of supplying motives to Cain and God and of locating the potential killers of Cain or his potential wives arises because the text is portraying the capriciousness, motivelessness, and cruelty in a world without the protective Garden of Eden. The world is full of violence, even between brothers; an arbitrary God rules without accounting for his arbitrariness. It is a place where words do not comfort and advice goes ignored, where fear and misery abound, where work is not rewarded, either because it is too hard to force a crop out of a resistant soil or because those who receive the harvest are unappreciative. The story describes a forbidding world.[11]

Later we shall learn of Cain's great-great-great grandson Lamach, who boasts to his wives of killing one man who wounded him and another who merely bruised him; of a human race so bad God that decided to drown it; later, of the evil of Sodom. In Exodus, we shall read about the cruelty of the Egyptians and the waywardness of the Israelites. Though a few individuals shine like stars on a cloudy night, the biblical stories mostly tell of moral corruption and grief.

Philo wrote that the stories in Genesis should be considered a drum roll for or preamble to the law (*On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses* 1.1–3). I should like to suggest that the authors of the Bible wished to present the early world as filled with chaos and uncertainty, where what constituted right conduct was a mad tangle until God established the Law at Mount Sinai. Until the rules concerning offerings were laid out, until those about envy and murder and marriage were codified, there were no guidelines, and mayhem was the order of the day.[12]

The murder of Abel, then, is neither an example of "motiveless malignancy" nor of sibling rivalry; it is one in a series of events that the Bible describes enigmatically. Its purpose is to contribute to a crescendo of dread about the human condition until the promulgation of the Law. The murder of Remus in classical literature is understandable psychologically—in terms of familiar human passions—and politically—in terms of the ubiquitous lust for power; the murder of Abel is not.[13]

MAD CURSES: NOAH AND THESEUS

In the *Art of Poetry*, Horace gives excellent advice to poets—that they keep their compositions secreted in a cupboard for nine years, so that they can

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"blot out what they have not made public: a word once sent abroad can never return."[14] Metius Tarpa was one of a panel of five critics who previewed plays submitted for public performance. He was so exacting that his name became a metaphor in Horace of the careful scrutiny that *ought* to precede a public utterance. The purpose of such a long wait was to prevent an author from saying something embarrassing to himself or harmful to the audience. How the history of the world might have been improved if this sage advice had been universally followed! As dangerous as an ordinary written word might be, so much more dangerous is a *curse* uttered with the voice! If a deity hears a curse as he hears a prayer, is he obligated to carry it out? Do the circumstances of the curse matter? Can the author of a curse withdraw it?

In this section, we shall examine, from the Bible, Noah's curse of Ham and his son Canaan (Genesis 9:20–27), in which Noah damns Canaan's descendants to lives of servitude to the descendants of Shem and Japheth, Noah's other sons. This was the curse used in the American South to justify the enslavement of Africans.[15] From classical literature, we shall examine Theseus' curse of his son Hippolytus, an imprecation that brought the innocent youth an excruciatingly painful death. What makes these events parallel is not simply that individuals are asking a deity to cast a pernicious curse upon a son or grandson, but that the persons importuning the curse are not in lucid, sober minds when they do so.

After the flood wiped out the human race except for Noah and his family, "God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 9:1).[16] God then revealed two of the Noahide laws—that human beings not eat the flesh of animals still living and that they not murder one another, for, God reminds them, human beings are made in his image (Genesis 9:2–7).[17] God then told Noah *and his sons* that he made this covenant with them and that the bow in the sky was the sign of the covenant.

One day, some time after the flood subsided and Noah has planted a vineyard (Genesis 9:18–29), he became drunk and was idling in his tent naked. Ham, whom the text notes as the father of Canaan, entered and saw Noah naked and drunk—"nakedness" an all-inclusive term to show that Noah was out of control, for he was not suffering from the kind of drunkenness that would cause him merely to doze off but the more serious kind that results in obnoxious behavior.[18] As this is the very first mention of wine in the Bible, it is perhaps fair to assume that drunkenness was just being discovered. Later, when Shem and Japheth arrive, Noah "awakened from his wine" and "knew what his youngest son had done to him." Noah issued his curse: "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren."

As usual, the Bible does not supply the full circumstances or motives. These are left for readers to deduce, and they may supply either good or bad

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motives, according to their dispositions. In general, it would appear that the rabbinic tradition has sought to justify Noah's curse by attributing bad intentions to Ham in his discovery of Noah naked in his tent.[19] But the text itself does not suggest malevolence on Ham's part. Ham, the youngest son, has unexpectedly come upon his drunk father. He is at a loss of what to do and reports to his older brothers what he has seen, probably to solicit their help. Knowing their father's condition and not wishing to discomfit him further, they enter the tent backwards to cover him. Noah awakens, realizes that Ham has seen him in a disgraceful condition, issues blessings upon Shem and Japheth and a curse upon Ham. The text does not make clear whether we are to understand "awakens" (*yatsa*) metaphorically, as meaning that Noah has become sober, or literally, that he has awakened from sleeping. It seems likely that when he issues the curse he is either still drunk and acting under the influence of his inebriation or is suffering from a hangover and subject to an eruption of rage. That he lays his curse on Canaan, a person uninvolved, is an additional sign of Noah's impaired mental state (indeed, perhaps he is mistaking their identities). In either case, what we observe is a man acting poorly, a man whose prior moral excellence had saved the human race from extinction.

Euripides' *Hippolytus* concerns a young man, Hippolytus, a son of Theseus by a prior marriage, whose stepmother Phaedra, the often-married Theseus' new wife, develops an erotic fixation on him. Hippolytus himself is not at all interested in "the things of Aphrodite" (i.e., sex) but is devoted to Artemis, the virgin goddess of hunting. When Phaedra is disconsolate from her inability even to speak about her lustful desires for the unsuspecting Hippolytus, let alone carry them out, her nurse, fearing for her charge's health, persuades Phaedra to allow her—the nurse—to speak to Hippolytus on Phaedra's behalf. After the nurse has done so and has been harshly chastised by Hippolytus, the nurse exacts from Hippolytus a promise to keep the indiscretion secret.

Phaedra, however, overhears Hippolytus' angry response, doubly angry because Phaedra is his father's wife and because Hippolytus, having rejected the goddess of sex and everything sexual, prides himself on his celibacy. Phaedra hangs herself. When Theseus returns home, he finds his household in mourning and joins in the wailing for his wife. He then notices that she is holding a tablet, from which he reads the shocking (and of course false) news that Hippolytus has raped Phaedra. He turns toward the sea, to Poseidon, and delivers his curse (*Hippolytus* 884–90): "Father Poseidon, with one of the three curses you once promised me, kill my son, and may he not live out this day, if indeed you have granted me curses I may rely on." The tradition is silent on why Poseidon gave Theseus this set of three curses, which appear again only in Seneca's *Phaedra*.[20] The chorus, who know that Hippolytus

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is innocent, beseech Theseus to call back his curse, but Theseus refuses. Instead, he elaborates it (894–98), declaring that even if Poseidon will not fulfill it, Theseus will do so by banishing him to a wandering life in foreign lands (894–98).

When Hippolytus learns of the false accusation, he protests his innocence, but Theseus refuses to believe his living, speaking son over the written testimony of his dead wife. The subsequent conversation of father and son resembles a debate in an Athenian court. Theseus argues for Hippolytus' exile, since whether the curse will be carried out is in the hands of the god alone.

In the traditional accounts of Poseidon's gift of three curses and Theseus' curse of Hippolytus, it is usually the *third* and final curse that is used on the innocent lad. In Euripides' version, it is the *first* of the curses, when Theseus has not yet had confirmation of their efficacy and thus can argue for exile should the curse prove vain, and because of this uncertainty he issues the backup punishment of exile.[21] Theseus' calculated analysis of the curses seems perhaps incongruous with his maddened state of mind, and yet how classically Greek, and how rhetorically configured to give the *impression* of being in control! A man like Theseus can still machinate even when overcome by impetuous passion.

Theseus soon learns that his curse has been carried out. While Hippolytus was voluntarily going into exile, Poseidon caused an earthquake that overturned Hippolytus' chariot and fatally injured the young man. Hippolytus is carried in, lamenting his imminent death despite his piety to Artemis. Artemis too enters, promises revenge on Aphrodite, whom she blames for Phaedra's erotic frenzy, and pays homage to Hippolytus. The play ends as Hippolytus absolves his father from blame and Theseus responds by praising his son for his gracious nobility.

Poseidon, the god of earthquakes, has effectively carried out Theseus' curse, uttered at the very moment when Theseus was so overcome by impetuous rage that he refused to pause to consider the curse. Theseus repents too late when he learns from Artemis herself that he has believed lies.

The play shows that an epistolary communication that lies is not very different from a curse itself. Both use words to bring about a result that cannot be undone. We do not need to believe in the supernatural efficacy of curses to understand the power of mendacious words.

When the floodwaters receded, God blessed Noah and his sons, not once, but twice. Readers would have no reason to think about the sons apart from Noah, for up to this point in the story they have had no individual roles. They have been sharers of Noah's righteousness and as such have participated in building the ark and living on it during the one hundred and fifty days of flood. It is highly significant that *God* blessed these people, for a blessing from God himself is what truly counts.

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Theseus must have done some favor for Poseidon for which he received the reward of three curses—such reciprocation would be in accord with the contractual relation of gods and human beings, where one good turn receives another. The parallel reciprocation would be both aesthetically and morally appropriate. The principle of reciprocation seems to have applied in the biblical account too. Noah and his sons helped sustain animal and human life by building the ark; God conferred his blessing on Noah and his sons to be fruitful and multiply. If a reciprocal parallel extended further, it would apply to God's conferring on Noah an ability to *bless*, not to curse. What Noah did to help God was *save*, not destroy. In fact, when Noah awakened from his drunkenness, he *did* confer a blessing, but it was not upon his sons, but upon God (Genesis 9:26). The parallel language in the consecutive verses makes emphatic the contrast between the curse and the blessing.

When Noah "saw what Ham had done" and cursed Ham, the text does not blatantly invite readers to ask what Ham *has* done, for their impulse is to trust Noah—the man whom God singled out as finding favor in his eyes (Genesis 6:8)—and to assume that he is acting rightly and cursing rightly. This impulse is surely the source of the Midrashim that speculate on the sin that Ham must have committed toward Noah or his wife.[22] But what if there had been no such sin on Ham's part? What if Noah, unaware of the effects of wine, were simply behaving like an intoxicated person? The curse would be a manifestation of inebriation—an exhibition of a drunken arrogance, in which Noah purported an ability to confer curses, as God had when he flooded the world. If we apply this hypothesis, the curse is nothing other than the mad eruption of a person not in control of himself, a fulmination showing the dangerous power of wine.

When Theseus curses his son, he acts from a passion that overwhelms any sense of fair dealing. His response to the letter from his dead wife is total belief in the veracity of her claims. He utters his curse *before* Hippolytus joins him on the stage and has a chance to defend himself. It is an unwritten rule in Greek literature that curses are irrevocable, so whether Theseus' curse is his first or his third does not matter: *nescit vox emissa reverti*: once uttered, a word cannot be withdrawn.

If today one of us, in a fit of anger, curses someone, we understand the curse to be a rhetorical expression of displeasure, and we are not worried that the curse will be carried out. Indeed, we generally would be appalled if it were! But what if we actually *did* possess immense power, say, political power, and if the words we spoke in hasty emotion, overheard by our henchmen, *were* carried out immediately? Such is what nearly happened in the case of the town of Mytilene, when the Assembly in Athens voted to destroy its population. It was only because Athens had sober second thoughts the next day and sent out a ship with an incentive of extra wages that the town was just

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barely spared a total massacre. In the account of the debate about destroying Mytilene, Thucydides reports that Cleon, in his peroration, appealed to his compatriots to re-live their initial moment of anger (*History of the Peloponnesian Wars* 3.40):

> Do not become traitors of your very own selves, but becoming most near to your judgment made from your suffering and recalling how before everything else you valued reducing them, pay the Mytilenians back now, not softened towards the present immediate situation nor forgetful of the terrible danger that once hung over you.

The lesson of both the biblical and classical stories is the same: irrationality, whether caused by wine or rage, can result in atrocious actions.

There are differences, however. The story in Genesis quietly portrays Noah's actions but makes no overt judgment about it. We learn the reactions of neither humans nor God to the curse. That the tale of Noah has come to this sorrowful outcome suggests that as with so many other protagonists in the Bible, there is no "living happily ever after." We are left to speculate about the dysfunction in the family of Noah and about additional vicious actions he might perform in his several hundred remaining years of life. His is a *human* curse; it carries no divine force. As Proverbs says (Proverbs 26:2): "As the wandering sparrow, as the flying swallow, so the curse that is causeless shall come home." Like a bird that does not arrive at its destination, the unjustified curse will flutter through the air and return to its source, its destination *not* reached. Such a curse reveals the state of mind of the person cursing; it tells us nothing about its fulfillment. The Bible says nothing about God's conferring on mortals an ability to carry out efficacious curses. In fact, the words of a curse may be punished by God upon the *curser himself*, as God tells Abraham (Genesis 13:3) about anyone who would curse him.[23]

In Greek stories, the gods *can* and do grant to mortal men the power of cursing, with curses that will be fulfilled. The gift is a bane, however, for it confers on fallible human beings a divine prerogative. One might think that if the gods were truly friends to the individuals upon whom they bestow the power of cursing, they would intervene to abort curses form being carried out when uttered in haste or in ignorance of the true facts, as is Theseus' curse on Hippolytus. But the gods do not intervene. It does not appear to be their job to protect people from themselves.

The Greek writers of epics and tragedies depict the gods in their poems to be as fallible and as careless about protecting goodness as humans. The *Hippolytus* may represent Euripides' participation in the development of a deity that was incapable of anything except perfect goodness: he is offering a dramatic criticism of the traditional mythology, in which gods grant curses to

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highly flawed individuals who use them without discretion. Allegiance to the Standard Model of God accounts for the attempts in the rabbinic tradition to modify the biblical stories to render God's favorites as virtuous and worthy of his devotion. Without this bowdlerizing, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, David, Solomon, Sarah, Miriam, and many other leading figures would appear in rabbinic works as flawed as the heroes of Greek poetry and God's affection for them as capricious as that of the Pagan deities for their favorites. In the Bible, when humans issue bad curses, it is not clear that they actually have any force. It may be lamented that this latter lesson was not learned by those who used the story of Noah's curse on Ham as a justification for slavery.

RASH VOWS AND DEAD DAUGHTERS: JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER AND IPHIGENEIA

In the fifth canto of the *Paradiso*, Beatrice explains to Dante that vows may be broken under certain circumstances (*Paradiso*, 1–84). God's greatest gift is free will, she explains, and vows freely made involve a contract between God and intelligent creatures (i.e., humans and angels) employing this gift. What confers significance on a vow is the surrender of will that comes in binding oneself to carry out a commitment that cannot be abrogated by a subsequent act of will. But there is a way, Beatrice continues, by which one might piously *not* carry out the terms of the vow—a way that requires a distinction between a *vow* and the *content* of the vow. Though one must abide by a formal act of vowing, one may substitute a different content of greater value for the vow. A distinction is thus made between the vow as a sort of container and the contents of the container—the actual terms of the commitment. For example, let us say that for some reason I vow to give one hundred dollars to a charity next Monday. Come Monday I find that I do not have a hundred dollars. Rather than violate the vow, I may substitute a *content* of greater value, say, two hundred dollars payable on Thursday, for the original content of the vow.

Beatrice concludes her discussion with two examples of individuals who made rash vows in haste or carelessness, without a full consideration of their import.[24] The first is Jephthah, who vowed that if God delivered Ammon into his hands, he would sacrifice as a burnt offering whatever first came outside the doors of his house upon his return (Judges 11:30–31). The second was Agamemnon, who promised Artemis that he would sacrifice to her the most beautiful creature born in his realm that year.[25] In each case, the vowed victim turned out to be a daughter—an only child in the case of Jephthah, who consequently left no bloodline—and the eldest of four children in the case of Agamemnon—a victim that provided the first link in a causal chain that

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resulted in the murders of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra and of her by their son Orestes.

In this section we shall examine the responses of the daughters to learning that they were to be sacrificed. In both cases the daughters agree to their deaths, and the rashness of the fathers' vows does not play a part in *their* decisions. But the rashness of the vows, especially in the light of the daughters' willingness to be sacrificed, raises questions about the validity of such impulsive promises.

Jephthah was the son of Gilead and an unnamed harlot (Judges 11:1). Since "Gilead" was an entire district, a hilly area east of the Jordan River, the expression "son of Gilead" may mean that the father could have been any of the men of the district. The text adds that Gilead had a wife who bore him three legitimate sons, and, though they grew up together with Jephthah, when the sons were grown, they drove Jephthah away, declaring that he would not inherit his father's possessions because he was the son of another woman. Jephthah went to the land of Tob, where "vain fellows" gathered around him. Later, when King Ammon (the chief of the tribe also named Ammon) made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead asked Jephthah to help them. He agreed to help on the condition that he be named the head of Gilead.

Jephthah entered into a negotiation with King Ammon, during which he asked why Ammon had invaded Gilead. The king replied that when the Israelites were leaving Egypt, they took Ammonite land, which he now wanted back. Jephthah in turn said that when the Israelites had asked for passage through Moab and Ammon, they were denied it and then attacked. With God's help, Jephthah explained, the Israelites had defeated their enemies and come into possession of the land. Jephthah thus claimed possession from God. "Would not Ammon consider its own that which her deity Chemosh had given her?" he asked (Judges 11:24). He observed, moreover, that three hundred years had passed since Israel took possession of Heshbon and the other land, during which time Ammon did not seek them back (11:26). Jephthah's conclusion was that Israel had not sinned against Ammon but that Ammon sinned against Israel. He invoked God to judge between them. The king of Ammon did not reply, and the two states went to war.

"The spirit of the Lord came to Jephthah," and he went to "the children of Ammon" to fight.[26] Just before the battle, he "vowed a vow" [*vayidar neder*] to the Lord—that if God put the Ammonites in his hands, he would sacrifice as a burnt offering whatever first came out of his house to greet him upon his return (Judges 11:30–31). He conquered twenty cities in a great slaughter. When he returned home to Mizpah, his unnamed daughter joyfully ran to greet him, dancing with tambourines in the customary celebration of welcome for returning soldiers. Seeing her, he tore his clothes

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as a sign of mourning and revealed his vow, one, he explained, he could not take back.

The daughter absorbed this shocking news with sublime calm. She told her father to fulfill his promise since God granted the wish. She asked only for two months to roam the hills with her friends and weep because she would never marry.[27] Jephthah agreed, and two months later fulfilled his vow (Judges 11:36–39). In a coda, we learn that afterwards it was the custom for the daughters of Israel to lament Jephthah's daughter four days a year.

The details of Jephthah's past figure into what happens. The daughter surely had hopes for her own marriage and for legitimate children of her own, hopes that would never be realized for no wrong of her own, and so she was not asking for very much when she requested a two months' postponement of her father's vow. Her voluntary withdrawal from her family is a reversal of the earlier generation's banishment of her father. Jephthah might be enjoying a heroic stature for defeating the Ammonites, but the heroism comes at the cost of his active self-induced estrangement from his current family, a reversal of the passive estrangement he had experienced from the family in which he had grown up. Jephthah's emotional response at seeing his daughter and realizing that he must kill her was a sharp contrast with his calm negotiation with the Ammonite king. The daughter's calm acceptance of the importance of her father's vow was in sharp contrast to her celebratory welcome of her hero-father. Though the questions of whether rash vows can be retracted and whether God wishes for them actually to be carried out are taken up later in the rabbinic tradition,[28] there is no explicit hint of these questions in Judges.

The story of Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigeneia does not appear in Homer, but once composed, it exercised a strong hold on the Greek imagination. As with many Greek myths, there was no canonical version, so that some versions, even by the same author, conclude differently. For example, Euripides wrote two plays with the same *Iphigeneia* in the title: in one, the title character is sacrificed; in the other, she is whisked away to Tauris to serve as a priestess of Artemis, a deer sacrificed in her place. In what we might consider the consensus version, she *is* slaughtered, and her death becomes the cause of an irreparable estrangement between Agamemnon and his wife Clytemnestra, who then has an affair with Aegisthus, with whom she contrives to murder Agamemnon—the subject of the first play of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. For the Epicurean Lucretius, the sacrifice of Iphigeneia is the *exemplum par excellence* to show that religion, for Lucretius indistinguishable from superstition, must be abolished by the science of atomism (*On the Nature of Things* 1.82–94). In this section, we shall consider primarily the version of the tale found in Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, in which the hapless girl is indeed sacrificed.

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When the Greek fleet was mustering at Aulis for the expedition to Troy to win back Helen, Artemis contrived that there be no winds to convey the fleet, and the men became restive. It fell to the commander-in-chief Agamemnon to solve the problem. In a grand gesture, he consulted the seer Chalcas, who explained that Agamemnon had offended Artemis by failing to fulfill his promise to sacrifice to her the most beautiful creature born in a certain year. Now, to secure the necessary winds, he was obligated to sacrifice his daughter Iphigeneia, the most beautiful creature born in that year.[29] As Iphigeneia was of marriageable age, and much time had passed, perhaps Agamemnon hoped that Artemis had forgotten the vow. Instead, Artemis had waited to demand fulfillment for the moment when she had the greatest leverage over Agamemnon.

In *Iphigeneia at Aulis,* Agamemnon tries hard to exempt himself from his promise but is persuaded by Menelaus of the obligation to attack Troy so that Helen can be brought home. All the Greeks, he says, are looking to their commander to fulfill his responsibility and do what he must to obtain the winds. By these arguments Agamemnon is prevailed upon to put duty to the army before duty to his family. Clytemnestra begs her husband not to slay their daughter. When Iphigeneia appears, she also begs for her life, using a variety of emotional appeals, but her father explains to her why she must die—to keep barbarians from raping Greek wives, this noble aim the urgent call from all Greece (Euripides, *Iphigeneia at Aulis* 1244–76).

In the next scene we meet Achilles, who has come to announce that he will save Iphigeneia from death, even though this action will stir up the anger of the Greek army. As soon as the suicidally chivalric purport of Achilles' pronouncement is clear to Iphigeneia, she changes her mind and announces her willingness to die so that her father might fulfill his vow to Artemis. In contrast to her earlier wailing lamentation, she then delivers a speech worthy of Joan of Arc. She rejects her earlier wailing as weak and ignoble and expresses her determination to die *well* and *gloriously*. Both adverbs are significant. Greeks often declare that what conduces to a happy life is to die well, and the chief elements of a good death are that it occur at a moment of triumph and that it be swift. Both swiftness and triumph will obtain if she is sacrificed. Next, she wants to die with good fame. The specific term she uses (*kleos*) signifies the fame that comes from a heroic deed, the memory of which makes a person live on in song. For the Greeks, since becoming an actual god, ageless and deathless, is impossible, glory is the greatest boon a person could aspire to. Now she commands the attention of all Greece, for success in the war with Troy depends on her. And the war, Iphigeneia maintains, is a just one, for it is a *defensive* war—it will end the raiding parties of barbarians upon Greece to steal Greek women; it is also a war for retributive justice, for its aim is punishment of the offense against her uncle Menelaus' marriage. Her death by

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itself will set Greece free, and the fame for Greek freedom will be hers. Given the premise that fighting courageously in a just war and dying nobly are blessings for *everyone,* how, she asks, could she, a mere lone person, by a selfish refusal to be sacrificed, deny others a chance to die nobly? Finally, she says that for Achilles to die for her sake at the hands of Argives would be a terrible wrong, for better that one man should live than a thousand women. The hierarchy of male and female is not the only one that her death will honor: she will honor also the hierarchy of god and human by not frustrating Artemis. By sacrificing her body, she will achieve, in ascending order, the goals of a female human being—marriage, motherhood, and, rarest of all, fame. She concludes that the course of nature will be maintained by her action: Greeks, by nature free, will rule over barbarians, slavish by nature.

The entire speech shows Iphigeneia as a consummate orator, hitting all the rhetorical commonplaces a fifth-century BCE audience would appreciate. She will achieve preeminence in speech and deed; she will obtain the highest honor by bringing Greece freedom, and so on. Her cleverness is shown particularly in casting the war as defensive and for freedom. For her audience she would be transforming the Trojan War—as stupid a war as ever was fought—into the Persian Wars—in the Greek estimation, as fine a war as ever was fought. In making a plausible case for what would generally seem a self-evidently false proposition, Iphigeneia is showing herself a skilled lawyer and an adept in rhetoric.[30] Whether Iphigeneia has accepted in her mind her claims as true or whether she has spoken them as a lawyer for whom truth is beside the point and persuasiveness is all that matters, is a question that Euripides leaves with the audience as it exits the theater.[31]

Though in later tradition, the *rashness* of Jephthah and Agamemnon in their vows became a matter of great interest, for the Hebrews and the Greeks, what seems essential is the fact of the vows themselves, and the circumstances of the *rashness* neither matter much nor invalidate their sanctity. In the Greek story, Iphigeneia, Clytemnestra, and Achilles do not claim that a vow should be put aside because it is *rash;* they claim it should be put aside because it was *wrong*. In the biblical story, it never seems to occur to either Jephthah or his daughter that the vow should not be carried out.

Jephthah was under considerable stress when he made his vow. The elders of Gilead had come to ask, of all people, *him*—the very man who had been spurned and banished—to save them from destruction by the Ammonites. When his attempt at diplomacy with King Ammon was rejected, Jephthah was filled with the spirit of God and invaded enemy territory. Victory would show his kinfolk their earlier error, would confirm his status as a judge of Israel, and would validate the justice of his claims to Ammon. If he lost the battle, his life would have no meaning; his illegitimacy and rejection by his

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family would be confirmed. For a reader of Judges it might appear that a truly pious man would find being filled with God's spirit sufficiently encouraging and any additional contract with God supererogatory. Indeed, Jephthah's vow seems to show a lack of confidence in God, though modern readers might explain the lack of confidence as arising from anxiety and stress. As is the style of biblical narrative, the text allows us to note Jephthah' psychological state, even if it does not explore it or seek to justify it.

Ancient sources allow us to surmise the stress that led to Agamemnon's vow. It is likely that in the original myth Agamemnon killed a stag in Artemis' sacred grove, that Artemis was angered and demanded retribution, and that, as a consequence, Agamemnon promised to sacrifice the fairest thing born that year in his kingdom. This, he reckoned, would be a just payment for having killed the creature fairest to Artemis. No doubt Agamemnon little imagined that of all the animals and humans born in his realm, the fairest would be his daughter. Indeed, since the word for "fairest thing" was neuter and not masculine or feminine, he could hardly be blamed for this assumption. A millennium after the fictive date of the Trojan War, Cicero used Agamemnon's vow as an example of the sort of promise that is wrong to carry out—a promise made in ignorance of the crime required.[32] In the case of Agamemnon, the stress of overcoming the doldrums is what impelled him to carry out the sacrifice, his chief motive identical to that which induced Jephthah—a military imperative.

For the daughter of Jephthah, her father's vow was a valid contract requiring fulfillment. God carried out his part of the contract; Jephthah must carry out his. In the negotiation with King Ammon we noted Jephthah's reverence for legality, a value that Jephthah evidently also taught his daughter. What mattered to her personally was that she be allowed two months to wander in the countryside because she would never marry.[33] Jephthah's parting words to her were, "You may go." After two months, she returned and he carried out his vow—as the text reminds us—upon his *virgin* daughter. It became a rite for Hebrew girls to lament four days a year for Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11:39–40). In this way, perhaps, she achieved a kind of immortality, not in her own name but as Jephthah's daughter—for she herself remains anonymous.[34] Unlike Iphigeneia, Jephthah's daughter did not aggrandize herself. It remains for readers to reflect on her sacrifice and her father's folly.

Iphigeneia, as presented in Euripides' *Iphigeneia at Aulis,* is all artifice, all calculation, all weighing-in-the-balance. Perhaps she has been swayed to act in this way by an infatuation for the handsome Achilles, to whom she had been duplicitously promised. As all viewers of the play would know from the *Iliad*, the gods gave *Achilles* a choice of lives, either a long and undistinguished life or a short and glorious one. Achilles had enlisted in the army to Troy because he had chosen the short and glorious life, a choice that would

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have been in peril if he clashed with the Greeks over Iphigeneia. Iphigeneia, in allowing herself to die, permitted Achilles to pursue his choice, and when she claimed in her great speech how her death would allow countless Greeks to fight courageously and win glory, she undoubtedly had Achilles foremost in mind. But, as Euripides has contrived his play, it is *Iphigeneia* herself who chooses and achieves the short and glorious life.

Again, as in other parallels that we have discussed, the Hebrew text reveals a choice that is unitary and replete with reverence toward God, devoid of personal calculation, of weighing the expedient against the good, and of complexly ingenious rationalization. The Greek portrays an individual who carefully calculates what she is doing, measures the costs and benefits to herself and to society, and makes what economists would call "a rational choice."

ADOPTION AND SUICIDE

The topics of this section may seem strangely paired. They are connected in that both involve an exercise of a *human* will over birth and death—matters traditionally understood as under the authority of either nature or divinity. In adoption, a human chooses to be the parent of a child not of one's own body; in suicide, one chooses for oneself the moment of death.

Adoption

There is almost no mention of adoption in the Bible, perhaps because it was completely ordinary for relatives to take in a child who was left uncared for. Only two individuals are named as being adopted,[35] neither by legal procedures. One is Moses, whose sister puts him in a basket and places it in the Nile, from which a princess rescues him, gives it to a Hebrew woman—Moses' mother—to nurse, and, when the baby is grown, receives it from her in the palace, where "he became her son" (Exodus 2:10). The princess never appears again, and by the very next verse, Moses, already grown into manhood, engages in the action that precipitates his departure from Egypt. The term *adoption* to describe what the narrative reports as "he became her son" is rather imprecise. A more literal translation would read, "The child grew big, and she [the wet nurse] brought him to the daughter of Pharaoh, *and he was to her for a son*."[36] The construction of the italicized words indicates that Pharaoh's daughter simply regarded the child as her son. It gives us no indication of what this meant in terms of care or law. What is suggested, however, is that the lad grew up in a royal household and not as a slave.[37]

The other biblical "adoptee" is Esther. Before her appearance in the book that bears her name, we learn that the ruler of Persia is King Ahasuerus,

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perhaps Xerxes or his son Artaxerxes,[38] or perhaps an entirely made-up king. The king and Queen Vashti are hosting separate banquets, with wine in abundance, for their male and female guests. On the seventh day of the banquet, the king has a group of individually named eunuchs go to the women's party of the queen to instruct her to come wearing her crown to the males' party so that his guests can look upon her beauty (Esther 1:10–11).[39] When she refuses, the outraged king asks his princes for advice, and one of them, Memucan, tells the king that Vashti, by not following the order, has dishonored not only the king but also all the princes, whose own women may follow her example of disobedience.[40] He concludes with the suggestion that the king look for a new wife. The King agrees and sends out a proclamation asking for beautiful virgins to be collected so that the king can choose one as his new queen.[41] It is in this context that we read of the "adoption of Esther," that when her parents died her cousin Mordecai "took her for" his daughter—the same idiom used in Exodus of the Pharaoh's daughter "adopting" Moses (Esther 2:5–8).

In neither of these biblical "adoptions" is there an issue of inheritance. The princess of Egypt, as a female, would inherit nothing and have nothing to bequeath. The only queen of Egypt actually named in the Bible is Tahpenes, the wife of a Pharaoh in the time of King David, and she is mentioned only because of her sister, whom the Pharaoh gives as wife to Hadad, a member of the royal house of Edom who had escaped destruction by Joab and had sought asylum in Egypt (1 Kings 11:19). My point is that to the authors of the Bible women in Egypt are of no consequence. To be taken as a son to the Egyptian princess would not have entitled Moses to an inheritance or any power. The same applies to Esther, a Hebrew in exile during the Babylonian captivity. As Mordecai's daughter, she could expect food and shelter and perhaps a dowry to help her obtain a husband.

There are many adoptions known from the ancient Greek world,[42] none of these persons so celebrated as Moses and Esther or Augustus and Marcus Aurelius. Because these occur without narrative contexts, a few conclusions concerning adoption in Greek and Roman culture will be drawn from the laws themselves and the very fact that there were laws.

The earliest surviving Greek laws of adoption are in the law code of Gortyn, a city in central Crete, famous now principally for the laws inscribed on its stone walls, probably in the middle of fifth century BCE.[43] Mature males, but not women or young males, were permitted to adopt anyone. If legitimate biological children were also present, the adopted children inherited less than those who were biological. Adopters made a public announcement of the adoption and paid a sum to their tribe.

In Athens, as in Gortyn, only males were able to adopt, and under Solon's law, only if of sound mind.[44] In general, persons legally adopted were adults.

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There are found in Greek and Latin literature a number of infants who were left to die but were saved and brought up by benevolent individuals—Oedipus, Cyrus, Romulus and Remus, Ion, *both* Daphnis and Chloe, Antiphila, and Casina.[45] But this sort of adoption, akin to finding money in the street and taking possession of it, was not subject to official regulations. Perhaps enough children were adopted in this extra-legal way, however, that the stories were plausible to their audiences.[46]

In Greece, adoption was an interest of the polis for preserving the stability of property and for seeing that plots of land not lie vacant. A system of adoption of adult males by childless adult males or by males who had children physically infirm or mentally debilitated provided a reasonable assurance to the polis that property fell into capable hands upon its owner's death.

In ancient Rome, the two most famous official adoptions, those of Octavian (the future Augustus) by his great-uncle Julius Caesar—a testamentary adoption, since he was named as Julius' son in a will—and of Marcus Aurelius by Antoninus Pius—an example of adoption among the living (*inter vivos*)—both show the salient feature of Roman adoptions: the absence of a legal distinction between a natural child and a person adopted. An adoptee assumed the family name of the adopter and attained status as a member of his family. A consequence of this practice was the prohibition of marriage between *biologically* unrelated adoptees and members of their adopted families as though incest might nevertheless be a worry. By means of adoption, bachelors and intestate wealthy men could find heirs. A side-effect was the development of the tribe of legacy-seekers—men who went to great lengths to endear themselves to childless rich men so that they could be adopted and named as heirs—a practice (known as *captatio* in Latin) much mocked as parasitical by Roman satirists.[47]

The two adoptions in the Bible are the sort that in the classical world exists outside the legal system—the taking in of an exposed or abandoned infant. There is no obvious explanation for the absence of such laws in the Torah.[48] Perhaps the administrative system of the Hebrews lacked the bureaucratic infrastructure to facilitate adoption, or perhaps the absence of a legal system reflects the dominance of biological lineage, a situation in which living relatives cared for orphans as a matter of course.[49]

The classical world seems to have interpreted the part of nature that includes human behavior as stunningly variable: each city could have its own constitution and its own calendar. Perhaps this was a corollary of polytheism: as each polis worshipped its own idiosyncratic deity, so it might employ its own idiosyncratic regulations. Some cities promulgated laws ordaining matters that others did not. Some cities regulated adoption; others did not. If there were no laws concerning adoption in the Torah, perhaps the cause was that God did not see a need for them.

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The two brief accounts of rearing a non-biological child in the Bible are perhaps best understood as devices to further a plot or a theme. In the one case, Moses can be born into slavery yet be reared with a temperamentally free spirit so that he will be ready to fight against injustice. A non-servile upbringing in the royal palace would allow him to grow up without a servile psychological dependency. In the case of Esther, we may speculate that the role of an adoptive cousin in the place of a biological parent is, in the manner of P. G. Wodehouse's uncles, a mechanism for dramatizing a more comradely relationship than would be the case with fathers (or mothers) and daughters. Again, the author of the Book of Esther might have sensed that a devoted brother would have been too protective to offer a beautiful sister as a potential member of the king's harem; a cousin, far enough removed so as not to be intensely scrupulous, might see practical advantages for finding the king's ear. What is clear is that inheritance plays no part in either the adoption of Moses or Esther.

For Pagans, adoption, at least official adoption, is *all* about inheritance, and the complicated laws, involving many distinctions, exceptions, and permissions, are intended to protect the state and to assure a tranquil distribution of property. The literary and mythological rescues from abandonment in classical literature illustrate a humane compassion for infants who would otherwise perish. This acknowledgment of the cruelty in exposure[50] shows that Pagans were not unaware of the miserable death they were inflicting.

To be sure, the Bible speaks of behaving justly toward the orphan and the widow and of caring for them,[51] but adoption itself is not offered as a remedy for their suffering. Nor, in fact, aside from the rules about gleaning, does the Bible offer much guidance on the mechanisms of how the justice and care were to take place.[52]

Suicide

Suicide, like adoption, is rare in the Bible and, like adoption, is never discussed for its moral correctness. In classical literature, suicide occurs frequently and is often discussed.

In the covenant with Noah, God gives human beings animals and plants to eat, the only exception being an animal with blood still in it (Genesis 9:2–4).[53] God then elaborates, saying that he will require a punishment from an animal or a human being that sheds human blood.[54] If a human sheds blood, "by man shall his blood be shed; for God did make man in his image" (Genesis 9:5–6). The passage so vehemently prohibits killing human beings that there will be a reckoning even when the deaths are by animals. The Bible does not specify how animals that shed human blood are to be dealt with. The absoluteness of the prohibition of shedding blood seems to be a rhetorical device for God

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emphatically to prohibit humans from doing what he has just done by means of the flood.

Later commentators interpreted these verses as also prohibiting suicide.[55] But it is hard to see how this could be the intention of the *biblical* author, for who *could* shed the suicide's blood? Since he is dead, what would "shedding his blood" mean? Those like Augustine,[56] who consider suicide a type of murder, might infer a law against suicide from the commandment not to murder (Exodus 20:13). But this is to violate the normal meaning of "murder," in which a victim dies involuntarily. In addition, as Aristotle argues, one cannot commit an injustice toward oneself.[57] Those, like Abimelech (Judges 9:55) or Saul (1 Samuel 31:4), who ask their armor-bearers to kill them, are not asking their servants to commit murder. They are asking them to be instruments of their masters' voluntary deaths. According to Aristotle, if those who kill themselves commit any injustice, it is not toward themselves but toward the state (*Nicomachaean Ethics* 1138a14). What Aristotle means is that a state has an interest in maintaining a population of soldiers, taxpayers, mothers, workers, etc., without whom it could not function. In the *Summa Theologica,* Aquinas agrees that killing oneself is an injustice not toward oneself but toward one's community and toward God (*Summa Theologica* IIaIIae.65). None of these distinctions or qualifications concerning suicide is found in the Bible.

Of the biblical suicides, one is Abimelech, Gideon's son by a concubine. Having become king by killing seventy of his half-brothers, he ruled for three years (Judges 8:33–9:6). Then, while battling Thebez, a city that had revolted, he was struck in the head by a stone thrown by a woman. Realizing that the wound was fatal, he ordered his armor-bearer to slay him (Judges 9:54). Saul, also in dire military straits, ordered his armor-bearer to slay him "lest these uncircumcised [enemy] come and thrust [him] through, and mistreat [him]" (1 Samuel 31:5). When his armor-bearer disobeyed the order, Saul fell on his sword and died. In the very next verse, the armor-bearer too fell on *his* sword.[58]

Samson perished at a festival of three thousand Philistines who assembled to mock him in their temple. Disgraced and blinded, but with his hair regrown after several months in prison, he killed himself along with more Philistines than he had killed in all his battles (Judges 16:28–31). Before pushing the pillars of the temple apart and bringing it down, Samson offered a two-part prayer to God, first that he might take vengeance on the Philistines for his two eyes, and, second, that he die. Since it would be nearly impossible for the first part of the prayer to be granted without the second, and as Samson's principal motive is the destruction of the Philistines, we may consider the self-destruction a collateral expenditure. In the Jewish tradition, Samson's action is generally considered a *kiddush ha-Shem*, "a sanctification of the

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name" of God, and hence an action of great excellence.[59] The Book of Judges concludes the story of Samson, saying that he was buried in the burial place of his father—a dignified and respectful epitaph (Judges 16:31).[60]

The suicide of Ahithophel, like his life, is mysterious, and the little we do learn about him comes incompletely and by indirection. We learn of him first as David's counselor in 2 Samuel 15:12, when Absalom, conspiring against King David, asks him to serve as an accomplice. When David learns that his counselor has joined Absalom's conspiracy, he prays to God to render any counsel that Ahithophel may give appear foolish (2 Samuel 15:31).[61] As a result, when Ahithophel does give advice, even though his advice in the past had always seemed to come from God (2 Samuel 16:23), it is completely undermined by another counselor, Hushai, whose artful rhetoric results in a rejection of Ahithophel's strategic plan. The text pointedly observes that David's prayer is thus answered, as Absalom accepts Hushai's advice. But Hushai, David's double agent, betrays Absalom and sends a secret message with this information to David (2 Samuel 17:15–16), who, in accordance with Hushai's plan, crosses the Jordan River with his army. When Ahithophel saw that his advice was not followed, he went to his home, strangled himself and died, and was buried in the tomb of his father (2 Samuel 17:23).

Several chapters after the report of how Ahithophel strangled himself, [62] his name appears in the long list of David's warriors as the father of one of them, a certain Eliam (2 Samuel 23:34). And it is now, in this final mention, in which he is named as the father of a hero, that the various data fall together. For we remember that when David gazed upon Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:3), she was identified by the name of her father *Eliam*—a rare method of identification since women are generally identified through their husbands—as well as through the name of her husband Uriah, who is now named at the conspicuous end of the list of glorious warriors. Thus Ahithophel, one of the conspirators against David, turns out to be the grandfather of Bathsheba. In the tragedy of Ahithophel we see the heartache of his family. Ahithophel had a heroic son Eliam and, by marriage of his granddaughter Bathsheba to Uriah, a heroic grandson-in-law. But David's seduction of Bathsheba disgraced her father and destroyed her husband, events that apparently brought Ahithophel to despair.

Now that his advice to Absalom has failed, knowing that he would be killed by a victorious David and probably left as carrion on the battlefield, Ahithophel rushed to his own city to die. He was an old man with great-grandchildren, one of whom died in infancy, another of whom is Prince Solomon. The emphasis the text places on Ahithophel's burial in the tomb of his father closes his story with a peace he did not find in life.

The last self-destruction is that of Zimri, commander of the royal cavalry, who murdered King Elah along with Elah's family.[63] Zimri made himself

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king and ruled in the capital Tirzah for seven days when the army decided it preferred to be ruled by Omri. The army laid siege to Tirzah, and when Zimri realized that all was lost, he went into the palace and burned it down on top of himself and died (1 Kings 16). Zimri apparently felt that if he could not have the palace, no one else would either. He is another in the dismal sequence of the northern kingdom's despicable rulers. His voluntary death prevents a more painful one at the hands of Omri. The Bible's final word on him describes how he burned his royal palace down over himself, dying because he sinned and caused Israel to sin, following the evil ways of Jeroboam (1 Kings 16:18–19). His death is made to seem the consequence of his sins; no supplementary disdain is appended because of the self-destruction. Indeed, the ignoble death is presented as befitting his ignoble life.

Pagan philosophers held a variety of opinions about soul, the "life-stuff" of living things. Chrysippus described the soul of pigs as a preservative to keep the animals fresh until they were needed as food.[64] According to Aristotle, plants, animals, and human beings all partake in the "stuff of souls," of which there are three kinds—nutritive, sentient, and rational (*Nicomachaean Ethics* 1098a1–7). Plants have only the nutritive soul; animals, both the nutritive and the sentient; human beings, the nutritive, sentient, and rational. The particular excellence of a human soul lies in its possession of rationality, the capacity shared with gods that induced Stoics to maintain that every human being possesses a spark of divine fire. For Epicureans, souls are made of atoms, though of more rarefied atoms than visible matter, but atoms nevertheless. Like all atoms, these will eventually detach from one another and join with other atoms to make new things. Whether the soul be incorporeal or material, everyone agreed that the presence of soul in a bit of matter made the matter alive.

The ancients did deliberate about longevity. When Thetis told Achilles of his choice of either a long and undistinguished life or a short and glorious one, for him the choice was simple, for in Homer's world the value of a human life, like that of a novel for us, lay not in its length but its excellence. Perhaps, though, people do agree that *ceteris paribus* more of a good thing is better than less. If as Diotima proves to Socrates in Plato's *Symposium,* life itself is a good—a view that nature has implanted in all human beings—then a desire for immortality, for having this good forever, is a part of our nature (*Symposium* 206e–207e). For Achilles and others of heroic mold, the immortality of being remembered for excellence was a greater good than physical life, and so they sought to escape death by being the subject of song and story. Philosophers depreciated the immortality of glory through song and of the body through biological children, in part because both of these were outside of one's own control and so were insubstantial goods. For philosophers

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the only good is the rational part of the soul. By arguing that this part of the soul—unlike the nutritive and sentient parts—was removed from the body and immune to its vulnerabilities, they convinced themselves that it could survive corporeal death. For them, the body is the soul's prison, for it is an obstacle to the soul's pursuit of truth. Philosophy, said the Platonic Socrates, is the process of freeing the soul from the body even during life.

So this question about suicide arose: If philosophy is a freeing of the soul from the body, why not skip the tedium and pain of life and free the soul at once by suicide? Socrates' *ex tempore* answer to Cebes, who asked this very question in the *Phaedo*, was that we are the possessions of the gods, and it would be wrong for a mere possession to choose self-destruction. It was not a very satisfying answer, for it did not say of which gods we are the possessions, and in polytheism, with no sturdy theological scaffolding, it was possible to be the possession of a very bad god, whom it might be more righteous not to serve.[65] To be the possession of, say, Pandemian Aphrodite would relegate a person to a debauched sexual passion very much enslaved to the body. In the generally sounder Stoic theology there is nevertheless a deep and confusing paradox. On the one hand, human beings live out a life scripted by a perfect divine playwright as actors playing roles. On the other, Stoics put their emphasis on freedom, on what is subject to human will—desires, aversions, actions. But an actor is not free to write his own character or to change the plot.[66]

How then did suicide fit into the classical scheme? Certainly, the ancients esteemed those who showed contempt for "mere" life.[67] In the *Iliad,* for example, both Hector and Achilles deliberately choose death over life. Hector rejects the plea of his wife to stay within the walls to keep the city safe. "Your courage will destroy you" and destroy Troy, too, says Andromache, and we know that she is right, and so does Hector. But his honor means more to him than Andromache, more than Troy, more than his life, and even though we shake our heads in sadness at his senseless waste of spirit, we somehow nevertheless admire him. Later in the poem, Patroclus is slain by three individuals on the battlefield, but because the last was Hector, and because Hector has become the symbolic focus of Achilles' confused anger, Achilles wants to kill him, as though killing Hector would set the world aright. Thetis tells her son Achilles that he is destined to die immediately upon Hector's death, but he does not care; life means nothing to him in his present state. He acts like a madman as he returns to battle, rejecting the chivalrous warrior he was in the past as he tries frantically to kill Hector in order to bring on his own death. So both Hector and Achilles are suicidal. So, too, in a way is Odysseus, who rejects Calypso's offer of everlasting life and youth,[68] and chooses instead to go home to his aged wife and mete and dole unequal laws unto a savage race. Odysseus' deliberate rejection of immortality is also an act of suicide.

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There are many non-metaphorical suicides in classical literature, of tragic figures like Ajax and Phaedra, of historical figures like Krinippos of Syracuse and Andromachos of Elis,[69] philosophers like Empedocles and Zeno, unsuccessful lovers like Thisbe and Dido, and scores of others to avoid punishment or shame or the caprices of a cruel ruler, or to expiate the guilt from a terrible action, or to avoid living under a tyrant. In general, despite occasional objections to suicide, like Socrates' that human beings are the possessions of the gods and therefore lack a right to destroy themselves, the sentiment of Sophocles' Ajax was the rule: "A well-born man must either live well or die well" (*Ajax*, 479–80). The Stoic Seneca wrote several essays on suicide, in which he argues for Ajax's view, adding that suicide is how a person can exert freedom. In a letter to his friend Lucilius, Seneca begins with a metaphor of life's safe harbor after a hazardous journey. As a person intent on a destination does not wish to prolong the journey, Seneca writes, so one should not wish to prolong one's life.[70] What counts is the quality of life, and if a person's fortune turns ill, it is time for him to think about whether he should end it.[71] Seneca emphasizes that it does not matter whether a life's end be natural or self-inflicted. Better to die well than live ill. Though a person should try to live in a way that is acceptable to the community, how one dies is solely one's own business. By way of illustration, Seneca tells the story of a gladiator who killed himself in a disgusting fashion but in doing so acted freely. Seneca can scarce contain his admiration for this man whom the world would consider the lowliest of individuals.

How brief the biblical cast of characters who kill themselves! It includes no sighing lovers or dutiful philosophers. Those who perish by their own actions are about to perish anyway at the hand of their enemies. Except for Samson's, their suicides spare them dishonor and pain while shortening their lives by only a moment. Samson's death is the fulfillment of his prayer asking God to be with him. Abimelech's and Saul's suicides follow on their cruel actions; Zimri's is followed by the grim verdict on his evil;[72] Ahithophel has been forsaken by God, but perhaps in recognition of being more sinned against than sinning, finds peace in the sepulcher of his father. In short, it appears that the suicides, if not part of a divine plan, are at least not in conflict with it. In the Bible there is no sense that people who kill themselves are violating the sanctity of life or that they are acting unjustly toward God or their communities or that they are deliberately destroying a possession that does not belong to them.[73]

In the Classical world, there is a sense that suicide is a dignified, even noble way to depart from life. Longinus observed that nothing is great that it is great to despise (Longinus, *On the Sublime* 7.1), among which are wealth,

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reputation, and the external trappings we usually find in persons of high station. Those who cling to life because of these transient and insubstantial goods, who think that prolonging their possession is a real boon, deserve to be scorned. A life of slavery, of slaying others in the arena, of bowing before tyrants is unworthy of a free soul. A free soul may exist in anyone, be he emperor or gladiator. Classical culture rejects the view that life in itself is an unqualified good and that death therefore is to be avoided at all costs. As Seneca says, the basest death is preferable to the most elegant slavery.[74]

Given that classical culture, with its different cities in different places, is many times more varied than biblical culture, it is unsurprising that there would be a greater variety of laws and attitudes about suicide in the classical world than in the biblical world. But what we find in the case of suicide, like that of adoption, is that there are *no laws at all* about it in the Bible nor an examination of or judgment on its moral probity.

CONCLUSIONS

Compared to the opacity of Cain's slaying Abel, Absalom's slaying Amnon is all transparency. We are not lost in a cloud of motiveless incomprehensibility. If the biblical authors can be said to make a collective point, perhaps it is to show how different the world is before God gave either the Noahide or Mosaic laws from the world afterwards. Romulus' slaying of Remus, by contrast, is narrated with a smorgasbord of plausible motives, from which we may take our choice, depending on whether personal envy, greed for power, or the public good seems the most satisfactory.

The tale of Noah's drunken curse, with its self-important presumptuousness, shows how Noah, despite being the most righteous of his generation, was nevertheless a deeply imperfect individual. The curse of Theseus reveals that despite his calculating Hellenic temperament he cannot depart from his impulsive credulity. Both cultures depict the impropriety of human curses.

The rash vows of Jephthah and Agamemnon did not prevent their blameless daughters from accepting their deaths. Jephthah's daughter accepted her father's vow immediately, though we grieve for her heartbreak. Iphigeneia, in welcoming her death, showed her analytical perspicacity. Even if we suspect that she was overcome by infatuation with Achilles, we marvel at her rhetorically persuasive catalogue of why *she* would benefit by acting in the "public good." As in many dark actions of classical figures, Romulus' fratricide, the rape of Lucretia, the wild behavior of Achilles, a concurrent public good takes place—an effect somewhat akin to the principle of "good out of evil" that will later explain some apparent difficulties with the Standard Model of God.

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Adoption, a matter of course in the Hebraic world, is, like everything else in the classical world, subjected to analysis, introspective classification, and regulations.

NOTES

1. Tacitus, *Annals* 13.17.

2. Despite the old quip about Cain's killing one-fourth of the world's population, Cain actually kills only one person. Abimelech holds the dismal record for fratricide, for he kills seventy of his brothers, only Jotham surviving (Judges 9:5), though it is not clear how many were half-brothers. Of the other fratricides in the Bible, all except the first occur in royal families, and all for the sake of the throne, except Absalom's ordering the death of his half-brother Amnon as revenge for the rape of Tamar (2 Samuel 13:28). Solomon orders the death of his half-brother Adonijah after Adonijah makes a second attempt at kingship (1 Kings 2:13–25), having received a pardon for his first attempt from Solomon (1 Kings 1:52). Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, killed his six brothers to avoid having rivals for the throne (2 Chronicles 21:4).

3. For rabbinical exegesis of the biblical conversations, see Joshua Levinson, *The Twice-Told Tale: A Poetics of the Exegetical Narrative in Rabbinic Midrash*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2005, and Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, "The Exegetical Narrative: New Directions" *Jewish Quarterly Review* 99 (2009) 97–98. For a discussion of Jewish and Christian allegorical exegeses in Philo and Didymus, whereby Cain is all vice and wickedness and Abel all virtue, see A. C. Geljon, "Philonic Elements in Didymus the Blind's Exegesis of the Story of Cain and Abel," *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007) 290.

4. This is, I hope, a fair decision. Here and throughout the book, when, as often, there are various versions of a story, my method is to relate those that are typically biblical or typically classical.

5. On the invisible operation of God in both biblical and classical cultures see Arieti and Wilson 128–29.

6. Rex Stem, "The Exemplary Lessons of Livy's Romulus," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 137 (2007) 444–49, is at pains to fit the fratricide of Remus into his thesis of Romulus as exemplary and makes much of Romulus' righteous anger at Remus for mocking the walls of Rome. Ultimately, he nevertheless comes down decisively on the indeterminacy of Livy's account: "This incompleteness in Livy's account, which appears deliberate, provides one of the most significant indicators that Livy is not simply whitewashing Romulus's legacy, and yet he is not condemning it, either. Since one cannot tell for sure what happened, all one can do is continue with the story."

7. Ovid (*Fasti,* 4.827–56) tells the story differently, acquitting Romulus of the slaying. In his version, Romulus' lieutenant slays Remus, when in ignorance of the prohibition he has leapt over the walls.

8. Leon R. Kass, in his excellent *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* (New York: The Free Press, 2003) devotes over thirty pages to these discussions. As I shall argue, the text is intentionally obscure.

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9. For the ancient historians, starting with Herodotus, an impulse is an unmoved mover and so obviates a need for further explanation. For a discussion of this, see my *Discourses* 17–18. More than half a millennium later, Arrian is still using sudden impulses (*pothoi*) to explain the caprices of Alexander the Great (e.g., 3.1.5, 3.31, 5.25.2, 7.2.2, etc.).

10. Despite Tacitus' sardonic comment that Romans accepted fratricide, writers like Virgil who had enjoyed a liberal education, which included the moral philosophy of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, were only too aware of the problem that Romulus presented as a role model for Rome. See Julia Hejduk, "Jupiter's *Aeneid*: *Fama* and *Imperium*," *Classical Antiquity* 28 (2009) (esp. pp. 285–88).

11. In the Book of Job, God himself affirms that the world is mysterious to human beings, even to the best of them. See Chapter 2, "Human Perfectibility."

12. This would seem to be also the interpretation of Rabbi Aibu, *Numbers Rabba,* Naso, XIII, 2.

13. For recent work on the continuing debate in the West over Romulus, see John M. Warner and John T. Scott, "Sin City: Augustine and Machiavelli's Reordering of Rome," *Journal of Politics* 73 (2011) 857–71 and Mark Jurdjevic, "Machiavelli's Hybrid Republicanism," *The English Historical Review* 122 (2007) 1228–57. John Milbank, speaking of Cain's "primal crime" and Romulus' "founding status," wittily summarizes the contrast ("An Essay Against Secular Order," *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 15 [1987] 208–09).

14. Horace, *Ars Poetica* 385–90. The last four words are the crux: *nescit vox missa reverti.*

15. Sylvester Johnson**,** *The Myth of Ham in Nineteenth-Century American Christianity: Race, Heathens, and the People of God* (New York: Macmillan, 2004) 32–44. See also Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 1996) 102; Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); David M. Goldenberg *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); and David M. Whitford, *The Curse of Ham in the Early Modern Era: The Bible and the Justifications for Slavery.* St Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009). For a discussion of the debates on the curse and its relation to Darwin's principle of natural selection, see Robert Kenny, "From the Curse of Ham to the Curse of Nature: The Influence of Natural Selection on the Debate on Human Unity before the Publication of 'The Descent of Man,'" *British Journal for the History of Science* 40 (2007) 367–88.

16. H. Hirsch Cohen, arguing that wine is a sexual stimulant in the Near East in ancient times, finds Noah's drunkenness praiseworthy as a part of an attempt to re-populate the world (*The Drunkenness of Noah*, Judaic Studies 4 [University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1974] 8).

17. As far as I can tell, this is the only explicit cross reference in the Hebrew Bible to the creation of human beings in Genesis 1:26. The passage, however, is referred to relatively often in the New Testament (Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 11:7, 15:49; 2 Corinthians 3:18, 4:4; Colossians 1:15, 3:10). It is referred to twice in the Book of Wisdom (2:23, 7:26), and once in the Wisdom of Sirach (17:3), which, though written

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in Hebrew, was probably composed in Alexandria in the early second century BCE and is not part of the Hebrew canon.

18. Later, the rabbinic tradition will articulate the degrees of drunkenness that wine causes and the degrees of disgrace that attach to each (Tanhuma, *Noah* §13). In *cataloguing* the degrees of drunkenness, the rabbis, I think, are showing the influence of Greek culture.

19. For example, Ham is said to have copulated in the ark and thus brought disgrace upon himself (*Bavli, Sanhedrin* 108b). Rashi, the famous commentator, refers to Ham's possible castration or sodomizing of his father. After surveying various theories to explain the validity of Noah's curse, John Sietze Bergsma and Scott Walker Hahn settle on their own "elegant theory"—that Ham's incest with his mother is the motive for the curse ("nakedness" being a euphemism for sexual intercourse and "Noah's nakedness" being a euphemism for the nakedness of Noah's wife" [34]), a theory they claim ties up all the loose ends ("Noah's Nakedness and the Curse on Canaan (Genesis 9:20-27)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124 [2005] 25–40). I shall argue that it is more elegant, and more just, to blame the drunken Noah and to exonerate Ham.

20. Thomas D. Kohn ("The Wishes of Theseus," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 138 [2008] 379–92) surveys the literature and agrees with the bulk of it that Euripides made up the conceit.

21. This is the argument of W. S. Barrett (*Euripides: Hippolytus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964) 334–35.

22. See n. 19 above.

23. In Leviticus the penalty for cursing one's mother and father is death (Leviticus 20:9).

24. In his Medieval Christian culture, Dante used the story of Jephtha's daughter to introduce a theological discourse on vows. For a discussion of the daughter in Medieval Jewish culture across Ashkenazic Jewry and Jewry in Spain, see Elisheva Baumgarten, "'Remember That Glorious Girl': Jephthah's Daughter in Medieval Jewish Culture," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 97 (2007) 180-209. In the Eighteenth Century, the story was used by Deists like Matthew Tindale and Protestant theologians like William Law to show either the barbarity or validity of religion. For this theological treatment in the story, as well as for Handel's adoption of the story for an oratorio, see Susan Staves, "Jephtha's vow Reconsidered," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 71 (2008) 651–59.

25. Dante probably learned this version of the Iphigeneia story from Cicero's *De officiis* (3.95), and Cicero probably read it in Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Tauris* (20–21).

26. Can the mention of the *children* of Ammon be an anticipation of the devastation Jephthah will wreak on his own child?

27. For a comparison of the lament of Jephthah's daughter with those of other classical personages, including Iphigeneia, see Margaret Alexiou and Peter Dronke, "The Lament of Jephthah's Daughter: Themes, Traditions, Originality," *Studi medievali* 12 (1971) 819–63 (esp. 824–49).

28. In the rabbinic tradition, God disapproves of those who make rash vows *and* of those who do not stop them from being carried out. It was possible, the rabbis claim,

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for the high priest Phineas to have annulled Jephthah's vow, for he had the authority to do so (*Targum to Jonathan* on Judges 11:39; Rashi on 11:39). The *Midrash on Ecclesiastes Rabbah* (10:15) suggests that arrogance on the part of both Phineas and Jephthah kept the vow from being abrogated. According to this Midrash, Jephthah refused to go to the priest because he—*Jephthah*—was the ruler, and so the priest should have come to *him.* But Phineas would not go to Jephthah because as a high priest and *the son* of a high priest (perhaps an allusion to Jephthah's illegitimacy), it would have been beneath his dignity to go to an ignorant person. Both men were punished. Phineas' lost the spirit of God and Jephthah lost his limbs, which were buried in the different cities where they dropped. The references are in David M. Gunn, *Judges* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005) 135. But in a sensitive essay, Alice Logan argues that a biblical audience would have read the story of Jephthah with an understanding hardly recoverable by modern readers. They would have seen the references to David and Abraham and particularly to Achor—whom Joshua executed for breaking the Jericho treaty with God (Joshua 7:24–26)—and have concluded that legally the responsibility for the sacrifice rested with God ("Rehabilitating Jephthah," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 128 [2009] 665–85).

29. In other versions, Artemis demands punishment because Agamemnon killed her favorite stag or boasted of being a better hunter than she.

30. There was a tradition of ingenious speeches on absurd themes to show one's rhetorical skills. Gorgias, perhaps the most famous professor of rhetoric in the fifth century, wrote a defense of Helen. Plato satirizes the practice when he portrays Socrates deliver a speech (in the *Phaedrus*) in which he claims that one should yield sexually to a person whom one does not love rather than to one whom one does love and again in the *Symposium* in which he claims outrageously that sexual desire *is* philosophy.

31. On this question and on how it comes to pass that Iphigeneia appears to change her mind, a question asked since Aristotle first brought it up in the *Poetics* (1454 a33), see Dana L. Burgess, "Lies and Convictions at Aulis," *Hermes* 132 (2004) 37–55.

32. Cicero, *De officiis* 3.95. Another example of such a promise would be Herod's offer to grant Salome any wish, which she used to ask for the head of John the Baptist.

33. In some Christian interpretations of the story that try to find value in the daughter's sacrifice, she is made to be a Christ-figure who accepts the sacrifice of her person for the sake of mankind (Ambrose, *Duties of the Clergy* 3.12; Augustine *Questions on the Heptateuch*, Question 49.419).

34. On the name of the daughter, proposed as *She'ula,* see Yael S. Feldman, "On the Cusp of Christianity: Virgin Sacrifice in Pseudo-Philo and Amos Oz," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 97 (2007) 379–415.

35. The Talmud adds to the number, however. Though at one point the Bible says that David's wife Michal was childless her whole life (2 Samuel 6:23), at another place she is described as the mother of five sons (2 Samuel 21:8). The rabbis, for whom there was no possibility that the author of Scriptures ever nodded, explain that Michal's sister Merab bore the children but Michal raised them (*Sanhedrin* 19b). In the same Talmudic passage, sounding rather like Hippias' joke in Plato's *Protagoras* (337c–d)—that those who share the same intellectual interests are kin *by nature*—it is

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written that "Whoever raises an orphan in his home and teaches him Torah, it is as if he gave birth to the child."

36. Yitzchak Etshalom, *Between the Lines of the Bible: Exodus* (New York: Yashar Books, 2006, 37–38) offers the suggestion that the name *Moshe* does not come from the Hebrew meaning to "draw from water" but from the consonantal string MSS found in hieroglyphics meaning "child" in Egyptian, and so in the present context means "son." If the conjecture be true, the Egyptian princess would be recognizing her *de facto* adoption of the boy.

37. And this fact is of great consequence, for it would mean that Moses was not burdened by the psychological handicap of having been a slave. Moses is not slavish, despite being born into a family that had been slaves for generations.

38. There are other possibilities. Josephus identifies the king as Artaxerxes, who lived after the dramatic date of the events (*Jewish Antiquities* 11.6.1).

39. The details are important. According to Herodotus (*History* 1.33), one of the customs of the Persians is that they decide matters both drunk and sober or vice versa (in terms of which occurs first and second) and then act only if the two decisions agree. But here the king is acting *only* while drunk. He wants to show his wife to other men, perhaps while she is naked. (If so, he would be like Candaules, who loses his life and sovereignty when he wishes to show his naked wife to his bodyguard Gyges.) Even clothed, given the segregation of the sexes in Persian culture, being displayed before a crowd of men would have been a grave indignity. The segregation is emphasized by the mention of the eunuchs, individuals who have been surgically rendered safe to be in the company of the king's harem.

40. Memucan's argument is *a fortiori:* if the wife of a *king* can display disobedience to her husband, how much more will the wives of lesser men! It is worth recalling from Herodotus that when King Cambyses of Persia, who was also too fond of wine (*History* 3.34.4), wants to marry his sister, he is told by his counselors (who, fearing for their lives, have come up with this ingenious sanction) that there is a law that a king may do whatever he wishes (3.31.4). There are so many echoes of Herodotus in the introduction to the Book of Esther that the story may well be the invented amalgam by a Jewish reader of Herodotus. Clinton J. Moyer argues that the use of the literary device that the author calls a "compound topos" in both the Book of Esther and Chariton's Hellenistic novel *Chaereas and Callirhoe* hints at the possibility that the book of Esther may have circulated in Greek circles in Hellenistic times ("The Beautiful Outsider Replaces the Queen: A 'Compound Topos' in Esther 1–2 and Books 5 and 6 of Chariton's 'Chaereas and Callirhoe,'" *Vetus Testamentum* 60 [2010] 619—20). And if Carey A Moore is correct that it "is most likely" that Esther reached its final form in the late Persian or early Hellenistic period, it would be quite possible that Herodotus was known to the author of Esther (*The Anchor Bible: Esther* [Garden City: Doubleday, 1971] lix).

41. The gathering of marriageable women to be chosen on the basis of looks appears also in Herodotus, when he is describing the best and worst customs of the Babylonians. Their best custom he says (1.196) is the auctioning off of wives. The best looking women command the highest prices, and the profits from them are used to pay dowries for the women who are ugly or deformed. I suspect that the author of Esther had read this story also.

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42. A catalogue of those in Athens can be found in Lene Rubinstein, *Adoption in IV. Century Athens* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1993) 117–25. This fascinating study details three basic forms of adoption—that done during the adopter's life, that done by a will, and that done posthumously by the family of the deceased. It also discusses the private and public obligations that were entailed, and provides the sources. Most of the information in this section is drawn from this book.

43. These have been edited with a facing English translation, *The Law Code of Gortyn,* ed. and tr. Ronald F. Willetts (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1967). Many of the laws deal with property, inheritance, mortgages, adoption, and compensatory payments for improper sexual relations.

44. Sound mind means that the adopters were "not deranged by madness, old age, drugs, illness, a woman's persuasion, or compelled by force or imprisonment" (Rubinstein, 16–17).

45. In Sophocles (Oedipus), Herodotus (Cyrus), Livy (Romulus and Remus), Longus (Daphnis and Chloe), Terence (Antiphila), and Plautus (Casina). Exposure was ubiquitous. Juvenal (*Satire* 6.602–06) mentions infants who were abandoned in the filthy places where people went in the morning to fetch water. In a commentary on the passage, John Ferguson cites a fragment of a papyrus "from a soldier named Hilarion to his wife Alis, full of love, [in which he] tells her, when the baby is born, to keep it if a boy, expose it if a girl." "Exposure," Ferguson adds, "did not lay the taint of homicide on the parents" (*Juvenal: The Satires* [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979] 212). On the Pagan practice of exposure, see Larry S. Milner, *Hardness of Heart/Hardness of Life: The Stain of Human Infanticide* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000) 183–93.

46. I do not wish to put too much stock in this hypothesis. A person growing up in late twentieth century America would have read enough tales and seen enough movies about ghosts and zombies, space aliens from distant galaxies, and long extinct dinosaurs terrorizing cities in California and Japan to have a substantial vocabulary of specialized terms dealing with them. Commonplaces in storytelling have no necessary referents in the actual world.

47. Horace, *Sermones* 2.5 and Juvenal, *Satire* 12, illustrate this potentially lucrative craft with great wit.

48. Not only is there no discussion of official adoption in the Bible, there is no term for adoption in Hebrew until modern times (Ophir Yarden, "Adoption in Judaism," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 51 [2012] 276–83).

49. There are rules concerning adoption in the rabbinic tradition, some perhaps borrowed from Greek and Roman usages. In fact, the Greek term *apotropos* is used for the legal guardianship of children in Jewish legal sources (Michael Gold, *And Hannah Wept: Infertility, Adoption, and the Jewish Couple* [Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society,1988] 160).

50. Jews' refusal to expose infants, perhaps because they understood the commandment against murdering to apply, was held in contempt by Pagans. Tacitus attributes the absence of infanticide to a desire by Jews to increase their population—since they refuse to marry foreign women, they must be especially scrupulous about their numbers (*Histories* 5.5). The absence of infanticide is rigorously defended by Philo (*On the Special Laws* 3.110), who attacks the inhumanity of the gentiles and claims that their practice of infanticide proves they have sexual intercourse for pleasure alone

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and not for procreation. Tertullian, a Christian, describes the Pagan practice of infanticide vividly in *Apology* (32).

51. Deuteronomy 24:17 and Isaiah 1:17. Taking care of them is left to God, however, in Psalms 27:10, and 68:5.

52. In Deuteronomy 26:12, widows are included with the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless in a list of those to be given a share of the tithe every third year. Job recalls with gladness helping the fatherless and widows (Job 29:12–13). But the fact that the prophets rail against people who do not help them is evidence that there must have been many lapses (e.g., Isaiah 1:23, Jeremiah 7:6); at the same time, the prophets do not specify the kind of help that should be given. Gleanings are taken up often in the Torah in reference to the poor; and with specific reference to widows and orphans in Deuteronomy 24:19.

53. The phrase "with blood in it" is a circumlocution for an animal still alive. Along with Leviticus 7:26 ("You will eat no manner of blood"), the prohibition is interpreted in the laws of kashrut as meaning meat with blood still in it—hence the practice of salting meat to draw off its blood.

54. Perhaps this application of moral laws to animals has a parallel in the Book of Jonah, when the King of Nineveh proclaims that the *animals* too must repent. See Chapter 2, "Persuasion."

55. Genesis Rabba 34:13.The extension of the law about shedding blood may be another indication of a Hellenizing Platonic influence on the rabbis. Socrates argued against suicide in the *Phaedo* and had used a theological argument—that humans are the possessions of the divine. Such a moral and philosophical argument would have had a profound influence on the rabbis. Philosophers who did not classify suicide as murder, like Aristotle and the Stoics, would have been less favored by the rabbis on this point.

56. *City of God* 1.16–20.

57. In *Nicomachaean Ethics* 1138a4–28, Aristotle offers as parallel examples that no one commits adultery with his own spouse or steals his own possessions.

58. For a discussion of the differences between the portrayals of Saul's suicide in 1 Samuel and 1 Chronicles, where the latter places a greater agency on God, the former on human beings, see J. H. Price, "The Conceptual Transfer of Human Agency to the Divine in the Second Temple Period: The Case of Saul's Suicide," *Shofar* 34 (2015) 107–30.

59. I shall set aside the ethical imbalance between the loss of one person's eyes and the destruction of three thousand people. In the context of the narrative, the Philistines are devoid of redeeming features.

60. The epitaph is so even where the life memorialized was not above reproach, as in the cases of Saul (2 Samuel 21:14) and Asa (1 Kings 15:24).

61. David's wish is rather similar to the curse on Cassandra not to be believed, pronounced on her by Apollo when she refused his amorous advances.

62. Aristotle, in the *Problem*s (954b35) says that hanging is the form of suicide most characteristic of young people, though he says it sometimes occurs in older men. That the philosopher would observe or have heard of this distinction shows the

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attention paid to collecting data on suicide, as well as a high enough incidence for there to be a noteworthy difference.

63. Elah was himself descended from a line of regicides.

64. For Chrysippos' comment on life as preserving the pig for food, see p. 162.

65. For other problems with Socrates' argument in the *Phaedo,* see Murray Miles, "Plato on Suicide ('Phaedo' 60C–63C)" *Phoenix* 55 (2001) 244–58, who says they arise because Plato is trying, unsuccessfully, to reconcile various unstated doctrines of the Pythagoreans with those of his own school. But for a defense of Socrates' position as consistent with his generally positive view of the gods, see James Warren, "Socratic Suicide," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 212 (2001) 91–106. In the *Laws,* Plato has his Athenian lawgiver censure suicide as a frustration of destiny, and, except for the persons who kill themselves in cases of calamity or disgrace, he considers suicides to be cowards (*Laws* 9.873c–d). But the lawgiver offers no argument for his views, not even a hint of what Aristotle is to develop (see above, p. 160).

66. For a survey of ancient Pagan views of suicide with emphasis on those of the Stoics, see John M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) 233–55, and for the intra-Stoic debate on freedom and suicide, especially, pp. 248–51; John Sellers, *Stoicism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006) 108–12; Willy Evenepoel, "The Philosopher Seneca on Suicide," *Ancient Society* 34 (2004) 217–43; and Timothy Hill, *Ambitiosa Mors: Suicide and Self in Roman Thought and Literature* (New York: Routledge).

67. For a general survey of conventional Greek views, which attached "little odium or repulsion" to suicide, see Elise P. Garrison, "Attitudes toward Suicide in Ancient Greece," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 121 (1991) 1–34.

68. *Odyssey* 5.208–09. See the discussion of this passage in Grace M. Jantzen, F*oundations of Violence* vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 2004) 77.

69. We read of these in Xenophon's *Hellenika* at 6.2.36 and 7.4.19, respectively.

70. *Letter* 70. Seneca, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, volume 2. Tr. Richard M. Gummere (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1925).

71. As is so often the case, the rival schools of Stoics and Epicureans came up with the same practical conclusions, albeit by different routes. Compare Epicurus, "Letter to Menoecus" (Diogenes Laertius 10.126).

72. Zimri is so evil that Jezebel, herself one of the most abhorrent persons in the Bible, uses *his* name as a metaphor for an evil traitor: "As Jehu entered in at the gate, [Jezebel] said: 'Is it peace, thou Zimri, thy master's murderer?" (2 Kings 9:31).

73. See, for a similar conclusion, H. J. Koch, "Suicides and Suicide Ideation in the Bible: An Empirical Survey," *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica* 112 (2005) 167–72. Yael Shemesh reports, however, that in the rabbinic tracts Semahote and *Shulhan* there are sanctions against persons who commit suicide as well as limits on the rite of mourning them ("Suicide in the Bible," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 37 [2009] 157–68).

74. This is in *Letter* 70.21: *hoc constet: praeferendam esse spurcissimam mortem sevituti mundissimae.*

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Chapter 4

Political Matters

DIVINELY CHOSEN PEOPLES: HEBREWS, GREEKS, AND TROJANS

When men and women reach a certain age, they usually think about choosing a mate. It is of course impossible for them to go back or forward in time to choose someone. People must choose from the candidates currently available. This limitation applies to none of the choices of the Hebrew God or the Pagan gods, for they are in no rush and can bide their time. Cicero's question, "Why did the gods suddenly wake up to create the world," can be modified to "Why did they wait until a certain moment to choose a particular people for special status?"

In Deuteronomy 7:1–8, Moses explains that God has instructed the Israelites not to marry individuals who belong to the seven non-Hebrew peoples in the promised lands but to destroy them and their graven images and altars. It is for *the purpose* of performing these actions that God has chosen them. The seven nations (the Hittite, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites) the Israelites are to destroy are militarily more powerful than Israel. God makes clear that the Israelites are not to seek peace with these nations nor show them mercy. The traditional way of making peace—intermarriage—is expressly forbidden. Any compromise whatsoever will result in the destruction of Israel. Though the nations are polytheistic, God mentions only the worship Astarte, whose religious instruments, the Asherim,[1] he singles out for destruction. God chose the Israelites, he says, not because they are mighty,[2] but because he loves them; and because he loves them, he will keep the promise he swore to their fathers.

God's desire for Israel to destroy the peoples springs from their idolatry. Can it be that God is angry at the existence of false gods but cannot himself

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destroy them, since doing so would perhaps be to acknowledge them? What he can do is order their destruction by the Israelites. Or perhaps we should understand the passage as a warning to Israel not to engage idolatry. The warning that idolaters must be killed would be an explicit message not to do the same.

God's choice is not a reward based on any action that the Israelites have yet performed. They have not been particularly virtuous nor have they distinguished themselves in spiritual goods or in earthly power. In fact, soon after hearing God's message, the Hebrews build the golden calf and engage in just the kind of licentious sexual behavior associated with Astarte, a goddess of sex.[3] The reason God has given is that he loves them, and the only rationale for the love that can be adduced is that God has made a promise to their ancestors. God's underlying motive is mysterious. If we acknowledge fulfilling an oath to the ancestors, the question is simply pushed back to them—why did God make the oath to *those* ancestors—why were *they* chosen?

Because only the faintest motives for the partiality of the Greek gods to their chosen peoples are recorded in Homer,[4] it is necessary to look elsewhere for explanations. Classical literature fortunately supplies the gaps. We learn that Aphrodite's preference for Troy originated when Prince Paris chose Aphrodite over Hera and Athena as the fairest of goddesses. In Euripides' *The Trojan Women*, Helen describes the episode known as the "Judgment of Paris," when the Trojan prince was asked to select the fairest of the goddesses. As Helen explains, each goddess offered him a bribe. The judge in this beauty contest could just as well have been blindfolded, since Paris' judgment had nothing to do with actual physical beauty but was rendered on the basis of the most appealing bribe. Randy young Paris Alexander chose the bribe of Helen and awarded the crown to Aphrodite.[5] In the war that resulted, she bestowed her favor on Troy, Hera and Athena, theirs on the Greeks (*The Trojan Women* 923–31).

Aphrodite's choice of the Trojans and Athena's and Hera's of the Greeks were not based on any merit in Trojans or Greeks. Paris' choice of sex, even with a married woman, is all that mattered to the goddess of sex. In accounts of divinities before philosophy converted them to the gods of the Standard Model, they are concerned only with the execution of their spheres of activity. Ares, the god of violence and destruction, does not fuss over the probity of violence; his sole interest is that there be violence. Dionysus, the god of drunkenness, does not fret about drinking in the right amount or with the appropriate glassware; his exclusive interest is that drunkenness thrive. And Aphrodite, of course, cares not a jot whether sexual intercourse occurs within the constraints of propriety; she cares only that there be sex.[6] In Pagan literature, when a god feels that she has been ignored by a mortal, she may swear

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a terrible revenge. Euripides' *Hippolytus*, for example, shows the revenge Aphrodite takes on a man who has passionately embraced celibacy.

Neither God of the Bible nor the Pagan gods choose a people on any self-evident ethical principle. When God asserts a connection to the ancestors of the Israelites, one may wonder, in the case of Abraham, whether virtue and distinction were already in him or whether what made him virtuous and distinctive was being called by God. When God decided to save Noah, God explained that he was recognizing Noah's righteousness (Genesis 7:1). But when God chose to make his covenant with Abraham, the Bible offers no explanation for the selection (Genesis 12:1–3). God simply says that in Abram he will bless all the families of the earth. Rabbinic tradition fills in the back-story, portraying Abraham as having been a precocious monotheist who as a child questioned the divinity of the idols his father Terah had manufactured.[7] The same lack of clarity occurs in the chosenness of the Jewish people. Isaiah suggests that they were chosen because of their duty to convey ethical monotheism to the world, to be "a light unto the nations" (Isaiah 42:6); but Amos proclaims that they were singled out to be chastised for their shortcomings (Amos 3:2).

An analogous commentary was created for the Greeks and Trojans at Troy. On the Trojan side, the Midrash is, as it were, the after-story found in Virgil's *Aeneid.* Troy had to fall so that out of her ruins Rome could rise and give the world the law of nations. On the Greek side, there was an attribution of many good motives for the war, some of which Euripides, with a considerable display of sardonic wit, provided in his plays. For example, in *The Trojan Women* (861–63), Menelaus declares that he and the Greeks fought the Trojan War, not for Helen, but to make the world safe for hospitality (861–64)—to show that no one might violate the laws of hospitality with impunity. *In the Iphigeneia at Aulis* (1262–67), Agamemnon declares that the Greeks were fighting to make the world safe for marriage. Three millennia later, in *Faust,* Goethe etherealized Helen into a spiritual beauty well worth a war.

But after-stories are, well, *after*-stories. The originals do not provide such political "spin." As in so many cases in the Bible, the account of God's choice is told with the most fragmentary of details. The text gives us tantalizing hints, but never the whole story. *Why* has God chosen the Israelites? *Why* did he not require that the entire human race be a race of priests? Does *God's* choice demand a willing acceptance on the part of the chosen? When someone is drafted into the army, perhaps there exists a choice of running away. Is running away a possibility where God is concerned? Could Israel have chosen not to remain chosen? In Exodus 19:6 God says that if the children of Israel keep God's covenant, they will be a kingdom of priests. Is the condition of being chosen thus contingent? Men and women chosen for the Nobel Peace Prize do not choose themselves. And yet, once they have been chosen,

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some feel a *responsibility* to live up to their honor. Elie Wiesel, for example, spoke about his sense of such responsibility, and the very many letters jointly signed by Nobel laureates indicates a commitment to carry out what they understood as the moral imperatives of their prize.

The Pagan gods' choice of peoples in the story of the Trojan War is wholly different from God's choice of the Israelites. There is no question of the Greeks or Trojans being a kingdom of priests or of following any covenantal rules. There is no question of a covenant at all, except perhaps the implied contract of returning favors, of hand washing hand, of reciprocal back-scratching. There is no claim whatsoever of any ethical imperatives. If Paris had preferred one of the other bribes and had selected one of the other deities as fairest, his choice would have been as meaningless as choosing a different flavor at the ice cream parlor. In Euripides' *Trojan Women*, Helen suggests that it turned out well for Greece that Paris, acting out of lust, chose *her* as the bribe, for had he chosen military supremacy and Troy fought a war with Greece, Troy would have won (*Trojan Women* 932–37). Euripides is mocking the ability of sophists to draw any plausible conclusion from the data at hand. No one in the audience would have given credence to such a claim.

In the Bible, then, the choice of a people is wholly God's, for reasons that are not explained. In the Greek story, the gods' choice of which people to favor seems dependent on the prior choice of a human being. In the Hebrew case, the situation human beings find themselves in is immersed in mystery and incomprehensibility—the distance between man and God, vast. In the Pagan case, misery arises from the delusion and folly ever-present in people and gods. The Pagan distance between man and divinity is relatively small, and the behavior of one is a reflection of the behavior of the other, though of course with the exception that the gods are not limited by human physical frailty and mortality. Nay, for the Greeks, the cosmos is ruled by a race of supernatural beings with the morality of Mafia dons.

REVEALED LAWS: MOSES AND NUMA

According to Aristotle, human beings are "political animals," that is, animals that live in a *polis,* a community made up of citizens with a common culture and with a population small enough for easy communication among all its members. United by a unique dialect, the culture consists also of a uniquely distinct religion of local deities and locally discrete literary, culinary, architectural, recreational, and legal structures, weights and measures, units of time, and so on. When a person left his *polis*, he entered into a fearsome, alien world where he would have been noticed as a foreigner as soon as he uttered his first syllable.

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For the Greeks, as for moderns, there were two basic principles of society. According to one, a society was a "super-organism," a complex creature like a hive of bees, in which all the castes are parts of a single whole. This ideal was celebrated in the poems of Tyrtaeus, in which an individual Spartan led a meaningful life as he served the good of his community. According to the other principle, the goal was to achieve the maximum freedom for individuals within the rule of law. This ideal, celebrated in Pericles' "Funeral Oration," took place in a democracy, a regime in which an individual was subservient to the majority so that the majority could find happiness as individuals. For Greeks—as they expressed their *ideals*—executing the collective will of the *society* as expressed in law, not the private will of a *monarch,* was the dominant moral purpose of a *polis*, as Demaratus described Sparta's reverence for law to Xerxes before the Battle of Thermopylae (Herodotus, 7.104).

For Hebrews, the Law—the Torah[8]—given at Sinai, was the foundation of society. Though there might be debates in the postbiblical era on whether the stories in Genesis and Exodus that were not part of the law should be taken literally or poetically, the literal authority of the *law* proper was not to be questioned,[9] even if the laws were not scrupulously followed. The law and its interpretation, the commentaries on its interpretation, and the commentaries on the commentaries are the subject of the Talmud, a study of which is central to traditional Jewish education—and the study itself is a holy activity.[10] While for Jews the divine origin of the Law was generally a given, its subsequent development was in human hands, as illustrated by the story of Rabbi Yehoshua's outburst that "The Torah is not in heaven!"[11] The story epitomizes the complexities of laws, even those of divine origin. Once laws have been passed into the keeping of mere human beings, even rabbinical sages, what becomes of God's unchanging will? Does God's acquiescence with Rabbi Yehoshua's opponent Rabbi Eliezer matter? It does not, if, indeed, the Torah is not in heaven.[12]

As the ancients observed, every community, no matter how miniscule, had its own distinct set of laws. How might one assert the value of one's own system when a neighboring town followed a different legal code? How might *any* system devised by fallible human beings be authoritative? A solution was to have the laws come from an unimpeachable source, a deity, a claim that both cultures make.

In the third month after leading the Israelites from Egypt, God summoned Moses and declared that if the children of Israel would keep his covenant, they would be a treasure to him, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. God's declaration must have been quite a shock to Moses. He had just spent three months leading these people out of Egypt and slavery; they had repeatedly protested the harsh conditions of the desert and expressed doubts

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about God. Time and again God rescued them, parting the waters of the Red Sea, providing water and food in the desert, and each time their renewed confidence lasted only until the next crisis arrived. Now God has said that he wanted Israel to be a kingdom of priests (*mamleket kohanim*) and a holy nation (*goy kadosh*). And when Moses communicated God's promise to the people, they answered, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:3–8).

What were Moses and his people to understand by these terms? "Kingdom of priests" might refer to a nation in which *all* the citizens are priests. In an era when all nations were kingdoms, the term *kingdom* might be used loosely, referring not to a specific type of regime but standing as a synonym for any organized state. A kingdom of priests would mark a break from the world's other nations, which had a small priestly class separate from the general population. The term might also refer to a community in which all the *rulers* are priests, that is, where the primary concern of kings is service to the deity, not to their human subjects. This too would delineate a profound difference from other states, where the chief tasks of a king were war-making and taxation. Or the term might refer to a junta of priests who jointly rule. Whatever the precise meaning, the Torah's "kingdom of *priests*" seemed to require a special obligation to act in accordance with the divine will by adhering to the covenant.

The phrase "holy nation" is also imprecise.[13] Perhaps some sense of the word *holy* can be discerned from God's instructions in Leviticus (19:2), "Be holy, for I, the Lord your God am holy." The basic meaning would be that God intends for his Israel to be devoted to the things that God is devoted to and to act as he sets forth in the Torah.

The covenant will somehow transform the Israelites into a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. When the people left Egypt, it was quite clear that they were fleeing oppression at the hands of taskmasters. Not clear was what they were going toward, what their future was to be. Now they are given a hint of what they are to become. I should like to suggest that the terms "kingdom of priests" and "holy nation," like much of the Bible, are obscure, perhaps deliberately so.[14] After torturous oppression in Egypt and three months in the wilderness, the Israelites require an inducement to continue their journey. A mysteriously promising announcement might entice the people to assemble.

After performing the required preparations, the Israelites convene to hear from God. Thunder and lightning, thick clouds, the sound of a horn, and the mountain smoking precede the commandments. Then, as the Torah says, "God spoke *all these words"* (*qal hadavarim ha-eleh*)—the Ten Commandments. At the repetition of these phenomena, the people tremble and stand apart as Moses "goes into the thick darkness where God was" (20:17) and begins (21:1) to tell Moses his rules (*mishpatim*).

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When he is near the end of his life and his people near the end of their wandering in the wilderness, Moses reiterates the Commandments given forty years earlier (Deuteronomy 5:6–18) and reminds his people of the circumstances then, that the Commandments had been given "out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness with a great voice" (Deuteronomy 5:19). Perhaps the four decades between the liberation from Egypt and the recapitulation in Deuteronomy have rendered the Israelites in need of a more practical instruction than what had been indicated by the promise of becoming a "kingdom of priests" and a "holy nation." Perhaps for this reason God now offers a revised pledge—that if the Israelites obey his rules, they will live well in a land flowing with milk and honey (Deuteronomy 6:3). Perhaps the forty years have toughened the people to face the prospects of war and to cast off the slavish sentiments they had groaned before Moses when they declared that they would prefer to have died in Egypt beside the pots full of meat (the "fleshpots") than starve in the wilderness (Exodus 16:3). But perhaps, also, the forty years made them yearn for the comforts of a settled life. From a moralistic point of view, perhaps the offer of a land flowing with milk and honey in comparison to the lofty promise of becoming a holy nation appears a materialist bribe necessary to motivate a weary people.

In both Exodus and Deuteronomy, the Israelites receive the first set of laws—the Ten Commandments—in the awe-inspiring spectacle of a great epiphany. Moses delivers the many additional laws in a period of relatively greater calm.

Livy recounts how King Numa, the king after Romulus, received the laws for Rome from the goddess Egeria (Livy, *History of Rome* 1.19–20).[15] Numa is turning his attention to domestic matters after Romulus has made the new city safe from external enemies. What concerns Numa is the moral well-being of his people, for he worries that without the discipline imposed by warfare, the Romans will be wasted by a luxury born of idleness.[16] Numa's solution to the threat is to create a fear of the gods, and to create this fear he resorts to a fiction—that the goddess Egeria visits him at night to offer instruction on rituals and priesthoods.[17] Numa's motive for the claim of divine instruction is his conviction that laws would lack sufficient authority for his uncivilized and barbarous people (*multitudo imperita et rudis*) unless they are believed to have been given by a god. Numa's intention, then, is to create "a noble lie," a deliberate falsehood for the sake of a civic good: Rome would be distracted from licentiousness and luxury by careful attention to religious ritual.

From whom did this idea of humans attributing laws to divine revelation originate? A fragment from the play *Sisyphus,*[18] reputedly by Critias, Plato's uncle and leader of the notorious Thirty Tyrants, portrays the title character punished in Hades, having been condemned for impiety. The passage

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survived to show that the playwright was an atheist. If Critias really was an atheist, he would have been one of the few in antiquity, holding a place alongside Epicurus in the Mt. Rushmore of ancient atheists.[19] The speaker in the fragment explains that the way to form good human beings is by frightening them with fear of eternal punishment. The idea was to fabricate a whole army of deities who watch over the actions and thoughts of human beings. As the ubiquitous modern highway police keep drivers obeying the speed limit, so invisible deities, always at the ready to swoop down on wrongdoers with lightning and thunder, would keep them compliant. And if by chance the wrongdoers escaped punishment in life, they would receive their due in Hades.

Plato, in his accounts of punishment in the afterlife, wherein the good are rewarded and the evil punished, fills his underworld with torments. In doing so he seems to have abandoned the project proposed by Glaucon at the beginning of the *Republic* (358d–61d) of providing a purely reasoned argument for being good even if one could avoid detection for crimes. Plato composes a story in which the Phoenicians invented a myth to persuade their people that they are born into different classes by nature (415 a–b); in his longest work, *Laws,* he has his characters attribute the laws of Crete and Sparta to the gods (*Laws* 630b). The passage begins with a jest. To the question by the unnamed Athenian, the Cretan Clinias says that he and the other Cretans call Zeus their lawgiver. Since, as the ancient saying goes, "all Cretans are liars," the claim is perhaps a warning that the attribution is a lie. This conjecture is confirmed a moment later, when the Athenian refers to the conversations every nine years between the Cretan king Minos and Zeus. The verse, from Homer's *Odyssey*, is spoken by Odysseus, who is fibbing about being a homeless Cretan (*Odyssey* 19.178–79). Plato seems to think that such beliefs in the divine origin of laws and in the punishments of the underworld, even if founded on a falsehood, might do for people what Socrates and arguments cannot—explain why people should live virtuously even if they could escape unpunished for their crimes heinous or minor (*Republic* 358d-61d). Socrates' answer—that the reward of goodness is being a good person—has never persuaded many people, especially those who desire an abundance of wealth or power. This is the same view about the noble lie that motivates Critias' speaker in the *Sisyphus*.[20]

About a half millennium later, Polybius, a Greek historian of the second century BCE, issues what appears to be a ringing endorsement of Rome's use of the noble lie. We should recall that after his deportation to Rome, Polybius became a tutor in the house of Lucius Aemilius Paulus, befriended the Scipio who destroyed Carthage in the Third Punic War, and ultimately chose not to return to his native land because of the superior opportunities in Rome. As a foreign observer of Rome, he might look down on the unlearned and

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uncouth Roman populace but show respect for their clever rulers, who told lies to keep the credulous, fickle, irrational, hot-tempered bumpkins in check. For intelligent and educated people to be superstitious is a reproach, Polybius says, but superstition is good—for the Romans (*Histories* 6.56.6–15). Everything *they* do in their public and private lives is imbued with religion—and the whole purpose is control of the common people. What chiefly keeps the vulgar throng from acting badly is fear of the invisible (i.e., nonexistent) terrors of hell. Polybius criticizes the sophisticates of his day as foolish for trying to eradicate such false beliefs. Peoples other than the Romans cannot be trusted even when there are multiple copies of legal contracts, but *Roman* magistrates—Polybius includes them also among the superstitious—can be trusted solely upon their oath. As a result, monetary crimes are rare among the Romans. A reader might well wonder whether Polybius' last comment is tongue in cheek, as Rome was beset by financial scandals not only throughout the increasingly rapacious second century but also had been during the so-called morally pure times of the Second Punic War.[21]

In a broad survey of the idea of claims of revealed civic laws, Mark Silk shows that the idea that human beings attributed their laws to deities, though condemned by *ancient* Christians, was widely praised by later ones—John of Salsbury, Albert the Great, Bartolomé de Las Casas, and Machiavelli—and the esteem from this validation helped to establish civic religion in the West.[22] Because of the influence of Livy in establishing the importance in political theory of Rome as a successful state, Livy's Numa, Silk argues, is the individual most responsible for the acceptance of the practice. The most influential Christian opponent of the noble lie was Augustine, whose attack on Numa in *The City of God* Silk summarizes thus: "The complete subordination of civil theology to sociopolitical purposes was, for Augustine, the key to what was wrong with it: it had nothing whatever to do with life eternal."[23]

Augustine's complaint echoed the ancient philosophers' worry of whether all people should have an equal claim to truth or whether those with intellectual deficiencies should be required to submit to philosophical authority. To this question Plato's Socrates offers different opinions in different dialogues.[24] If there is no clarity achievable by reasoning on this fundamental issue, it would seem that there could be no clarity on a universal set of laws coming from *human* legislators, even if philosophically brilliant.

Prior to philosophers, Herodotus did examine whether universal laws could be deduced without divine help. After all, he seems to have been thinking, if laws are the conscience of society, the better the conscience, the better the society. A perfect society would have a perfect conscience and perfect laws, laws that apply in all places and on all occasions. A problem, of course, is that places are different and occasions are infinitely variable. He tells the famous story (3.38) of the Persian King Darius, who summoned a group of Greeks

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(who cremate their dead) to ask how much money they would accept *to eat* their dead fathers. They replied that they would not eat them for all the money in the world. Darius then asked a group of Collatian Indians (who *do* eat their dead fathers) how much they would take *to cremate* them. They reacted with horrified shock at the mere suggestion. Herodotus concludes the story with a quotation from Pindar, "Custom is king of all."[25]

At a certain point, philosophers, having recognized the problems inherent in polytheism, saw the need for a single law for the entire human species. As Plutarch says (*Alexander's Great Fortune or Virtue* 1.5), Plato tried in his *Laws* to establish a common set of laws for all peoples but could not persuade anyone to adopt it. In contrast, Plutarch continues, "hundreds of thousands have made use of Alexander's laws, and continue to use them." In attempting to unify the world's laws, Alexander was putting into effect the later views of Zeno, the founder of Stoicism. For Stoics, the world was ruled by Zeus, and the belief of Alexander that he was heaven-sent would have been consistent with Zeno's belief in a single world government. Zeno's endorsement of a world government in part underlay the fantasy-concept of Alexander. The *historical* Alexander, as far as we can tell, was an egocentric psychopath who grew more violently aberrant as he grew older, and his universal law code died with him.

Alexander's boyhood tutor Aristotle, perhaps realizing the difficulty of preparing a universal law code from abstract reasoning, is said to have collected 158 constitutions, all from a small corner of the Hellenic world.[26] The sheer variability of separate places all aiming at perfection shows the difficulty.

A Platonic-Stoic solution to the dilemma posed by separate human legal systems was to profess that there is a natural law that applies to the cosmos and that human law should imitate it. But this solution was imperfect for two basic reasons. The first was that there is (or seems to be) a fundamental difference between things human and things in the natural world.[27] Human beings have free will; the things of nature do not. Humans can violate their own laws and commit incest; rocks cannot violate the law of gravity and fall upwards. The second is that it is not clear *just how* to translate the laws of nature into human form.

The truth, then, is that human law is an uncertain, defective business. Laws by themselves are not able to induce moral goodness any more than the closely reasoned philosophy of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. A few intellectually ambitious people might read Aristotle's ethics; some might follow the argument that happiness is an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue; they might think the arguments valid and, in this glow of understanding and agreement, even try, for a while, to act consistently with the conclusions. But, except for the few who achieve the status of the Stoic sage, they soon forget the arguments, their glow dissipates like the puff of a spent candle, and life

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resumes its normal course of chasing the specious goods of pleasure, wealth, and honor.

And so, the Pagan thinkers maintained, ingenious lawgivers plotted to improve the morality of their citizens by the fictions of punishments in the afterlife and laws prescribed by the gods.[28]

Perhaps, to an observer from another planet, looking with disinterest on Jews and gentiles, the difference between the legislation of Lycurgus and Minos and that of Moses might seem to devolve into a distinction between legislators who *know* that they are perpetrating well-meaning frauds upon an ignorant, superstitious, evilly inclined multitude and either a Moses who sincerely believes that he is telling the truth or the author of the Bible, who does. Josephus alludes to persons who include Moses as one of the charlatan legislators; Philo is aware of *Pagan* charlatans, but for him the laws of Moses genuinely come from God.[29] And Augustine appears fervently sincere about the fraud at the heart of Paganism and the truth of his own religion.

Rabbinic Judaism seems to have decided that the Torah must be understood as God revealed it to Moses, but they seem to have agreed that exactly what God meant is uncertain and so have sometimes offered interpretations with opposite conclusions, as exemplified in the story, referred to earlier, about whether a certain oven was ritually clean.[30] For the rabbis, however, the arguments themselves are important, and, as repeated earlier, studying the debate is itself a holy endeavor. For Pagans, perfect human law remained an elusive ideal. American culture shows both tendencies. On the one hand, some looking at the United States Constitution consider it akin to divine revelation, and for them the Constitution is a perfect thing, the original intent of which must not be challenged. Nevertheless, as we can observe in the arguments that continually arise in our appellate courts, interpreters, like the rabbis on hundreds, perhaps thousands of issues, have reached contrary conclusions. In matters of jurisprudence, we tend to act as though there is a true answer, one in conformity with absolute right, yet we accept the decisions of our jurists for the sake of civil peace.

KINGSHIP: SAUL AND DARIUS

The Greeks are the first people we know of to have thought *systematically* about the nature of political regimes, and they are thus credited as the inventors of political science.[31] They examined the basic forms of government—rule by one person, rule by a few, and rule by many—and then speculated on mixed constitutions, in which the basic types are variously combined. Polybius built on earlier political thinkers to develop his theory of *anacyclosis*, a quasi-natural pattern of regular cyclical progression and degeneration

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of the types of regime. He explained that the cycle starts with one-man rule, first with a strong man and then with a *monarch*, a man genuinely motivated by the good for his society—a "true king," who establishes order during a time riven by chaos. Unfortunately, this excellent monarch is succeeded by his selfish son, who, habituated to a life of princely privilege, develops into a *tyrant*.[32] A group of men—*aristocrats*—who have the best interests of society at heart, then overthrow the tyrant and establish an *aristocracy*, a regime of the best men. But when the sons of the aristocrats assume power, motivated, like the son of the monarch, by selfishness and a sense of entitlement, they rule for their own benefit as *oligarchs*, ignoring the best interests of the state. Well-intentioned citizens, stirred to action by this corrupt behavior, organize to overthrow the oligarchs and establish a *democracy,* or rule by the people. But, alas, the children of the first generation of democrats behave selfishly too, and the society deteriorates into rule by a *mob*. Confusion abounds until a strongman emerges as a monarch, and the cycle begins anew.[33] Philosophers and historians like Aristotle and Polybius discussed this pattern systematically. Others, like Herodotus and the tragedians, illustrate the cycle or parts of it by means of narrative and drama.

The Bible, of course, is not a work of political science, and yet it too discusses monarchy. In this section, we shall look at the argument between Samuel and the people of Israel concerning establishing a monarchy—a conversation that leads to the establishment of the Kingdom of Israel. We shall also look at the debate among several leading Persians about what kind of regime to establish when, after their insane King Cambyses was dead and his usurpers killed, the moment was pregnant with opportunity. Both discussions end with the appointment of kings—Saul in Israel, Darius in Persia.

Samuel, the judge who inspired the Israelites to repent of their sins and to follow God, was also the leader who brought them victory over the Philistines. When he was old, he appointed his sons as judges after him (1 Samuel 8:1), but, motivated by gain, they took bribes and perverted justice. The elders of Israel complained to Samuel that his sons were not good like him. Then they concluded, "Appoint for us a king to govern us like all the nations" (1 Samuel 8:5). This was the very desire that God had warned of in Deuteronomy 17:14, when he introduced laws concerning kingship. Surely cognizant of the rules and of God's warning, Samuel was displeased with the request and prayed.

God explained to him that the people were rejecting not Samuel but God himself and that, in fact, they had been rejecting God ever since he took them out of Egypt. He told Samuel to abide by their request but first warn them that kings engage in risky wars and recklessly endanger the soldiers whom he conscripts. They demean their people's daughters with lowly tasks. And—the caution given most attention—kings seize the possessions of their

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subjects—fields, slaves, and flocks—and make their free subjects his slaves.[34] Samuel repeats these cautions to the people (1 Samuel 8:11–17) and then concludes with a prediction that if the people do have kings, they will eventually beg God for relief from them (1 Samuel 8:18).

Samuel may have been able to persuade the people to serve God (1 Samuel 7:3) and to repent, but he is not able to persuade them to give up their desire for a king. They respond to his detailed warning by reasserting their desire to be like other nations in having a king (1 Samuel 8:19–20). Now one of the reasons cited for many of the laws that God assigned Israel is to distinguish his chosen people from the rest of the nations. Israel and only Israel celebrated a Sabbath, legislated against commit infanticide,[35] and observed a specific set of dietary laws. To wish to be like all the other nations would be to reject this principle of distinctiveness.[36]

God instructs Samuel to anoint Saul as the king of Israel (1 Samuel 9:15–17). What kind of man does Saul turn out to be? At first shy and uncertain, he has doubters among the people but becomes popular after a victory over the Philistines. The popularity does not last, as he comes to behave more and more bizarrely. At one point, before commencing a battle, he forbids his troops from eating until the day is done (1 Samuel 14:24), a proclamation that nearly costs the life of his son Jonathan, who did not know of the prohibition, and whom Saul wants to execute for disobedience.[37] The troops mutiny to prevent the execution (1 Samuel 14:45). Later, Saul becomes so fearful of David that he tries repeatedly to kill him, and, later still, in a plot to have David killed, demands of David a dowry of the foreskins from one hundred Philistines. Saul ends his days terrified of everyone and, when he is wounded in battle, after a slave refuses to finish him off, commits suicide by falling on his own sword.

David succeeds Saul, and Solomon, David. When David is dying, he explains to Solomon why he, David himself, could not build the temple. David quotes God (1 Chronicles 8:22): "You have shed much blood and have fought many wars. You are not to build a house for my name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight." God did not approve of David's fondness for killing, a fondness actuated not simply in wars but also in raids,[38] envies, murders of witnesses, and the destruction of husbands who might hinder his adulteries.

David's son Solomon, the man who in his youth "loved God" (1 Kings 3:3) and asked God for "an understanding heart to judge [God's] people and to distinguish good from evil" (1 Kings 3:9), abandoned God as he grew older, becoming a follower of Ashtoreth and Milcom, gods of the Phoenicians and Ammonites (1 Kings 11:4–5). He became a lover of gold and silver artifacts, drinking only from gold cups (1 Kings 10:21). He acquired multitudes of horses and chariots. He took numerous foreign wives—in

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short, he violated all the commandments concerning kings that God had established in Deuteronomy (17:16–17). He also made his citizens slaves, forcing tens of thousands to work in Lebanon and in Israel on the Temple and other projects. God, who had been delighted with young Solomon's desire for wisdom, became angry with him (1 Kings 11:9–13) and warned that he would take away the kingdom from his son. Later, Isaiah (Isaiah 11:1–10) will describe a vision of the perfect king—one who treats the poor well and administers just punishments upon the wicked. This vision, however, will come to fulfillment only in the messianic age, a future as gossamery as the promise made to Abraham. In the Bible, real-world kings are all of them bad.

After the death of Cyrus, who had established the Persian Empire, his son Cambyses became king. For the greater part of his reign, Cyrus was a successful and moderately humane ruler, but as his reign wore on, he began to show more and more signs of insanity. For example, when a favorite horse drowned in the river Gyndes, Cyrus took it as a personal insult from the river and diverted it into three hundred and sixty channels, so that "even a woman might cross it without wetting her knees" (Herodotus, *History* 1.189). He died in a battle against the Massagetae, a tribe he attacked because of a deluded belief in his own invincibility (Herodotus, *History* 1.207–14).[39]

Cyrus' son Cambyses was a lunatic right from the start. He violated his own customs by marrying his sister (Herodotus, *History* 3.31), insulted and injured a deity of the Egyptians (3.29), and killed his brother in an impetuous cowardly attempt to protect his throne from usurpation (3.30). But he lost his throne anyway, not by his brother, but by a pair of Magi. Only when Cambyses was about to die from an accidental wound he inflicted on himself did he come to his senses, realize his mistakes, and recognize the actual usurpers (3.64). Although his warnings and instructions to prominent Persians were ignored as the ranting of a madman (3.66), the plot of the Magi brothers was nevertheless independently uncovered by a group of seven Persian nobles, and the guilty parties were slain along with all other Magi that could be rounded up. Herodotus tells us, however, that the rule of the Magi brothers was much respected by all the Asians under their dominion except the Persians, for the Magi had exempted everyone from both military service and taxation for a period of three years (3.67.3).

After the seven Persian nobles recover the regime, they discuss how to set up the Empire. The hereditary line of Cyrus now gone, the world was all before them, where to choose. According to Herodotus, who insists on the veracity of his account—intimating that his contemporaries doubted it[40]—the conspirators debate the best form of government, whether democracy, oligarchy, or monarchy (3.80–83). Darius argues that a monarchy is the type

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of regime that the corrupt forms devolve into, and is, moreover, the type of regime by which they were governed under Cyrus. Herodotus does not report the ensuing discussion, but he records the vote. The opinion of Darius received four of the seven votes (3.83).

As for choosing who will be king, this is the method they agreed upon: "He whose horse, when the sun was coming up, first neighed, while they were riding just outside the city, this man would have the kingship" (3.84.3).[41] We should recall that for the ancients, as often for some moderns, the deity is believed to reveal his will by some mechanism not normally subject to interference by human beings. The direction or number of birds, the drawing of a lot, the markings on the liver of a sacrificial animal, the settling of tea leaves at the bottom of a tea pot, the selection of tarot cards—all are held to be occurrences beyond the reach of human intervention and manipulation and so able to communicate a divine intention. That the sun and the horse are sacred to the Persians would confirm a corroboration of the divine will.

Still, we must recall that Herodotus is presenting the selection of the new monarch in the context of a *debate* on the best form of government. Darius is portrayed as having persuaded his fellow conspirators that monarchy is best by the argument that political disturbances and faction bring about a situation wherein a monarchy naturally arises—the one best man rising to the top. There is, thus, a farcical incongruity in the juxtaposition of argument and procedure.

Despite the agreement to let the *gods* determine the proper king, Darius contrives with his groomsman to cheat. He orders his groomsman to arrange for his master's horse to neigh first. Herodotus offers two accounts of how the groomsman accomplishes this feat (*History* 3.85–87); for readers of Herodotus, what is significant is the fact that these are *two* accounts of the cheating. This is Herodotus' way of saying that although he is unsure of the exact details, the general point of the story is valid: Darius duped his allies to become king.

As king, Darius proves impulsive, unable to distinguish good arguments from bad, greedy for land, and deluded into believing himself all-powerful. He wages unjust wars, and, when he is on the point of dying, hands over the kingdom to his arrogant, incompetent, and iniquitous son Xerxes, who, among other follies, invades Greece and is defeated on both sea and land.

The Israelites, disappointed with the judgeship of Samuel's corrupt sons, decide they want a king so that they can be like everyone else—a motive that is stated more than once. Samuel warns them of the dangers of a king, but they do not listen. They entertain no discussion on the character of government.

God makes clear that in desiring a king, the people are rejecting him. But it is not God's way to force people to believe what he believes. He can

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perform actions to generate a reflection that might lead people to his views, but he cannot force his views on them. In the Book of Exodus, for example, God performs spectacular miracles—the ten plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, manna descending from heaven, and so on. Yet every time the Israelites encounter a difficulty, they wish they were back in Egypt as slaves. No number of dazzling miracles is sufficient to induce confidence of being under God's protection.

God provides a succession of kings, each of whom illustrates some or all the dangers of kingship. Saul, after a promising start, proves mentally unstable. David, for all his personal charisma, lacks self-control: he is sexually dissolute and violent, more violent—even in justifiable battles—than he needs to be. Solomon is a heartbreaking case of growing more foolish as he ages. He becomes an idol worshipper, despite building the Temple, and, by bankrupting the kingdom and allowing idolatry, prepares for the division of the kingdom under his son Rehoboam.

What perhaps is clear is that God allows Israel to learn experientially what she will not believe from his verbal teaching—that kings are not a solution to a society's problems. But Israel does not learn the lesson. She prefers bad kings to a theocratic rule by judges who communicate with God.[42] The problems that Israel had had with judges, with the corrupt sons of Samuel and the corrupt sons of Samuel's predecessor Eli, rendered the Hebrews unwilling to try their luck with them again. Perhaps kings were less risky: they might be resisted *without* provoking God's anger, for kings were not the agents of God.

Otanes, the one of the seven Persian conspirators who offered a number of arguments against monarchy before speaking in favor of rule by a majority, detailed how kingship wreaks havoc on a king's soul: kingship intensifies the normal grudging nature of a man. A surfeit of good things fills him with contumely. He becomes suspicious, kills people without trial, and violates women. Unlike Samuel, Otanes speaks from experience of both the "legitimate" but insane Cambyses and the unlawful but competent Magi usurpers. Subsequent kings of Persia will practice all the evils that Otanes has described.

When Darius advocates monarchy, he claims that when the three types of regime are compared at their best, it is self-evident the one best man will guard the multitude most effectively, for he will be able to keep secret his plans against hostile men. In an anticipation of Polybius' theory of *anacyclosis*, he suggests that whether a rule be by the few or by the many, factions will arise, and factions will lead to murder and mayhem; then, with not fully articulated steps in the process, he says that a monarch will arise, presumably to re-establish law and order—and this phenomenon shows how monarchy is best. Darius concludes by claiming that since one man freed Persia (i.e., Cyrus, who made himself king instead of his Median grandfather Astyages), rule by one man should be maintained. Herodotus presents Darius' reasoning

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as flawed by numerous non sequiturs, perhaps to show the Persians' folly in accepting so defective an argument.

Herodotus portrayed an *argument* about the choice of regime. The participants listened to three speeches and decided whose argument was best. But he reveals the Persians to have engaged in a *sham* act of rationality, for they accepted the incoherent position of the weakest speaker and then chose a king by a glaringly fraudulent method.

Classical literature contains many other discussions of monarchy and the other regimes. Isocrates writes a speech in praise of monarchy.[43] Aristotle praises monarchy as the best form of government in the *Politics*, even as he affirms that its degenerate form is the worst. Plato, Polybius, Livy, and Cicero all have discussions about the nature of regimes, of pure and mixed constitutions. What makes the parallels here intriguing is that they occurred at pivotal moments when a choice was possible. What makes them woeful is that both groups suffered similar misfortunes from their decisions. Kingship is like a disease that affects humans because they are human, and, like the suffering from malaria or dysentery, the devastation is not linked to culture. To the ancients, to paraphrase Churchill, *monarchy* was the worst form of government—except for all the others.

RESISTANCE TO WRONGDOING: REUBEN, JUDAH, AND GYGES

Every time a person chooses to do the right thing rather than the wrong thing he has successfully resisted wrongdoing. This section will focus on what a person says to the someone who has urged him to do wrong, for how the resistance is phrased reveals the values of the speaker and, insofar as the speaker is representative of a culture, may shed light on it as well. Literature and history mostly tell—alas—of the occasions when wrongdoing is done despite resistance; this section will focus on the exceptions.

When Jacob sends Joseph to learn what his brothers are up to in Dothan, the young men recognize him as he approaches. Remembering the dream Joseph had described in which they bowed down to him, they encourage each another to kill this "dreamer" (Genesis 37:19–20). They at first agree on a plan to make the fratricide look like an accidental death from an animal after Joseph has fallen into a pit. Reuben, in an act of resistance to the conspiracy, urges his brothers not to pollute their hands with Joseph's blood—a benevolent deception, for he plans to rescue Joseph secretly from the pit and restore him to his home (Genesis 37:22). The brothers accede to Reuben's suggestion. The text does not supply their motive; perhaps they think the

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outcome will be the same, or, perhaps cruelly, they take additional pleasure from imagining a slow and miserable death by starvation. Thus Joseph is saved from immediate death. When Judah sees a caravan, he proposes an alternative plan. He explains that they can be rid of Joseph, avoid the onus of killing him by starvation, and profit at the same time. The brothers agree to this new plan. Reuben's plan to restore Joseph to his home is thereby aborted by a substitute plan to save Joseph from death. Whether Judah's plan is more benevolent depends on whether a life of slavery is superior to death by starvation. Without a narrative description of motives, Judah could be thinking either of how solely to benefit from the crime or of some new way to save Joseph's life. Either way, Judah's plan seems the more carefully reasoned of the two. Reuben's would present Joseph and the brothers with a dangerous situation if Joseph were back home in Jacob's house. Judah's plan puts Joseph, as it were, in a witness protection program, safely far away with a new identity (Genesis 37:19–28).

Here, then, the text suggests two ways in which wrongdoing is to be avoided. In the first, one brother employs trickery to postpone a murder so that he can rescue the victim. In the other, a man unwilling to kill his brother directly or indirectly proposes an alternative but effective means to save his life, get rid of him, and profit.

In Herodotus' *History*, we learn that Candaules, king of Lydia, has been seized by a strange fixation. He has the uxorious opinion that his wife is the most beautiful of all women but also the bizarre notion that his close advisor Gyges must see her naked and assent to her beauty. What makes the idea particularly bizarre is that in Lydian culture, to be seen naked is a shame, "even for a man," as Herodotus puts it (*History* 1.8–9). To Candaules' command that Gyges contrive somehow to see the queen naked, Gyges protests in a vigorous speech magnificent for its brevity and completeness. He first appeals to the principle of hierarchy—that Candaules' wife is his queen—and urges Candaules to remember the proper order of things. He next appeals to nature (*physis*) and explains that a woman *by nature* sheds her modesty with her clothes. He then appeals to custom (*nomos*), thus covering himself on both sides of the *nomos-physis* controversy, current in Herodotus' time, as he urges obedience to the maxims handed down by the men of old. Finally, he concedes that the Queen is the most beautiful of women and thus there is no need for him to see her naked. The argument is thorough and compelling. If Candaules were rational, and if he could not refute the argument, he ought to abandon his demand. But Candaules simply replies, "Cheer up, Gyges, and do not fear that I am testing you." Candaules neither refutes nor addresses the arguments. Instead, he orders Gyges to hide behind a door and watch the queen undress, one article of clothing at a time.

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The queen catches sight of Gyges, comprehends at once that the plan was Candaules,' and offers Gyges the choice of suicide or regicide. He chooses regicide, and the dynasty falls into his hands, initiating the events that in a few generations will lead to the Persian Wars.

The brothers' motive for killing Joseph is stated only by implication. He is a dreamer. "*Therefore*, let us slay him." The Bible sometimes offers a logical term like "therefore" as a substitute for a full explanation.[44] But since we know of Jacob's dreams, we can recognize the brothers' irritation with Joseph, who has told them that one day they would bow down to him. Irritation, however, is hardly a sufficient justification for fratricide.

Candaules' motive springs from a strange impulse to prove his wife's beauty to his advisor. The impulse comes out of the blue. His dynasty had been very long, passing from father to son for twenty-two generations—505 years. We never learn of a motive other than the impulse.

Reuben's plan for saving Joseph depends on distracting the brothers while seeming to go along with them. Why does Reuben not try to persuade his brothers not to do wrong? Perhaps he suspects he would fail and that as a lone person would be unable to save him. Yet his plan would be only a temporary expedient and would result in a calamitous situation for the family later on. What could Reuben have supposed would happen when Joseph was restored to his father? Surely Joseph would reveal the brothers' plot against him; Jacob would be appalled and angry, and the family would fracture. But Reuben, under the stress of the situation, thinks only of saving Joseph from death and restoring him to their father.

Gyges' argument to avoid carrying out Candaules' wishes is powerful. It omits nothing that might strengthen it. If Herodotus' story had ended with Gyges' speech, the advisor would stand as an example of moral rectitude. But Herodotus includes the lieutenant's regicide. Gyges begs the queen not to make him choose between killing the king and himself, but she is as impervious to his pleas to avoid wrongdoing as had been Candaules, and by being compliant to both, Gyges twice transgresses the laws of Lydia.

The Bible does not treat us to Judah's motives beyond the stated one that if they are going to engage in wrongdoing, they should profit and diminish their guilt, "for he is our brother, our flesh." Where, *we* might ask, is Reuben now? Does he plan to pursue the caravan to buy Joseph back? His assumption must be that Joseph will be lost forever somewhere across the desert. If Judah and Reuben had acted in concert, perhaps their combined effort might have had a beneficent result. But they acted independently, oblivious to the secret good intentions of the other.

In both the biblical and classical cases, the proposed wrong actions occur despite attempts to avert them. Reuben and Judah do prevent the ultimate

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wrongdoing of fratricide by invoking the Noahide law against murder, but they do not prevent the sale of their brother into slavery. Gyges is unable to persuade his monarch despite an excellent argument; against an irrational autocratic ruler reason is ineffective.

RESCUERS OF CHILDREN ORDERED TO BE KILLED: MIDWIVES AND HARPAGUS

Fear and arrogance prompt psychopathic rulers to order the deaths of harmless persons who they imagine will pose a threat to their rule. Though these proscriptions are reprehensible, they recur so often in history as to appear almost routine. What is more unusual and retains a greater power to disgust are official orders to kill infants, guilty of nothing other than being born to the wrong individuals or groups. Classical literature recounts a number of orders to kill infants feared because they are predicted to overthrow the rule of their fathers, grandfathers, or other relatives some day in the future.[45] In the Bible, the Pharaoh demands the murder of all Hebrew male children, without any reference to specific individuals. Though it is always a delicate exercise to rank crimes by their degree of evil, perhaps it can be said that crimes against individuals produce less suffering in the aggregate than crimes against entire groups, that the killings of Abel, Jesus, Socrates, or Boethius are less evil than genocide.[46]

In this section I wish to explore the stories in which slaves whom tyrants ordered to murder infants did not follow orders. The infants saved are Hebrew males in Egypt, including Moses, as described in the Book of Exodus, and Cyrus, future king of Persia, whose escape from death Herodotus reports in the *History*.

The Book of Exodus begins with an account of the upsurge in the population of Hebrews in Egypt that followed the immigration of Joseph's brothers and their families. An unnamed king, ignorant of Joseph's rescue of Egypt from famine, has ascended the throne of Egypt. From motives that arise solely from his disturbed psyche, he contrives to enslave the Hebrews. After some time, perhaps generations, either this king or some other—for the text merely says "the king" without differentiating any—decides to kill off all the Hebrew boys (Exodus 1:15–16). That he knows the slaying to be wrong is clear from his attempt to disguise the crime. He demands that the midwives ascertain the sex of the children before carrying out the murders so that they can claim, if the children be male, that the boys died during the birth process. The Pharaoh is foolish to presume that the conspiracy would go undetected, since eventually it would become clear that no Hebrew males were being born. Perhaps the king stupidly assumed that no one would notice or that the

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enslaved population would reckon that some curse had been cast. Or, if the Hebrews had only a few midwives—the two names in the text being not a sample but an inclusive list—perhaps he calculated that these women would be blamed.

The midwives, in an act of defiance, disobey the king, their motivation, that "they feared God"—an expression that perhaps signifies that they observe an ethical standard transcending any local allegiance, a standard that applies to all humankind.[47] When Pharaoh asks them why they have not carried out his orders, they lie, claiming that the "lively" Hebrew women had already delivered the children before they arrived to assist. The word the midwives used to call the Hebrew women "lively" is *chayoth*, a word that also means "animals," in which case the midwives might be comparing the women to animals, who would not need midwives. As A. S. Yahuda has observed,[48] the use of this derogatory term would induce the Pharaoh to believe that they shared his prejudice against the Hebrews and so forestall blame for undermining his will. The story ends with the Pharaoh's decision to drop any sort of public relations duplicity and to order Hebrew baby boys openly cast into the Nile. The family of Moses also defied the orders, first by hiding him for three months and then by putting him in a chest of papyrus that they had waterproofed with bitumen and pitch and placing it in the river, where the Pharaoh's daughter found him. To save a life, she, like the midwives, defied the royal command.

The midwives, whose names mean "beauty" (Shiphrah) and "girl" (Puah), successfully avoid wrongdoing. They lie to the king, and God, in praising and rewarding the midwives, does not appear to worry about bothering Immanuel Kant, who argues that *all* lies are wrong, since they violate a categorical imperative.[49]

One feature of the story that is significant is that these midwives save male babies indiscriminately. Confronted by their king, though surely in terror of him, they lie to his face, for "they fear *God*." Perhaps the expression is a circumlocution for the internal standard that we call "conscience"—shown here as an unwillingness to participate in a wrong action. Perhaps it shows a dread of a righteous deity who prohibits murder, a dread more dreadful than their fear of Pharaoh.

Herodotus tells the story of Astyages, king of the Medes, who dreamt that his daughter Mandane urinated so profusely that she flooded Ecbatana and all Asia (*History* 1.107–129). When the king told the dream to his Magian interpreters, he responded to their interpretation (which Herodotus does not reveal) by arranging for Mandane to marry a man beneath her rank. He then had a second dream, in which a vine from Mandane's genital organs grew and shaded all of Asia. This time the Magi explained that the pair of dreams was predicting that Mandane would bear a son who would rule in Astyages' place.

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Astyages sent for Harpagus, his relative and servant and "the trustiest of all the Medes," and ordered him to kill Mandane's infant son and bury him as he saw fit. Harpagus meekly promised to carry out the order as well as do anything else that pleased the king (*History* 1.108). Harpagus carried the child to his house, where he tearfully told the king's orders to his wife. He then explained why he would *not* obey the king: first, the child was a relation; and second, since Astyages had no male heir, should Mandane somehow ascend to the throne, he would be in a very great danger for having killed her son. Though these all sound like compelling reasons to *save* the child, Harpagus reached a different conclusion: the child must be murdered, but *someone else* must murder him.

So Harpagus sent for one of Astyages' slaves, Mitridates, a herdsman who lived with his wife Cyno outside the city. Harpagus instructed Mitridates to expose the child on a desolate hill, warning him that if he failed to carry out this task, he would perish miserably. Cyno, who had happened to be pregnant, delivered a stillborn child just while her husband Mitridates was with Harpagus. When he returned home, Mitridates explained the instructions to her, revealing also the details that he had learned from other servants about the child's parentage. When he showed her the baby, she wept profusely and begged him not to expose it. At first she could not convince him, for he was fearful of Harpagus' threats. At length she revealed that their own child had been born dead. She urged Mitridates to take their dead baby, expose it, and keep the royal child as their own to bring up. In this way, their child would have a royal funeral and the other not lose his life. The herdsman followed his wife's suggestion in every particular. He left one of his subordinates to guard the child while he went to tell Harpagus that the baby was prepared for burial. Thus the royal baby received a new name and was brought up in the herdsman's family.

The story immediately skips to ten years later and describes how the original identity of the baby, Cyrus, became known. The details involve the youth's arousing suspicions in the king by his royal nature. Following up on his suspicions, Astyages demanded to see Cyrus' presumed father—the herdsman—who broke down and revealed the truth after being threatened. The king then summoned Harpagus, who, upon seeing the cowherd in the king's presence, also broke down and told his story, including the threats he had made to the cowherd if he did not witness the baby die. Though actually furious at the failure of his orders to be carried out, Astyages pretended joy at the turn of events and invited Harpagus and his son to join the newly discovered Cyrus as guests at a dinner of thanksgiving for the happy rescue of his grandson. When Harpagus' son arrived, Astyages had him chopped up and cooked, some parts roasted and some stewed; at dinner Harpagus was unknowingly served his son for supper. When Harpagus had finished eating, Astyages asked him how he liked the food and ordered a basket brought in with the dismembered head and feet of the son and shown to the "trustiest of

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all the Medes." In answer to the question of whether he knew what he had just eaten, Harpagus, hid his distress and calmly answered, "Yes, and whatever the king does is pleasing." He gathered what remained of his son's flesh and carried it home for burial.

The story does not end with Harpagus' apparent submission. Harpagus bided his time until Cyrus grew up and then conspired with him to overthrow Astyages (*History* 1.123–29). At the conclusion of the coup d'état, Astyages chided Harpagus for securing the kingship for Cyrus when he could have secured it for himself. But Harpagus had his revenge, as he foiled the very outcome Astyages had worked so hard to avert, and as all Astyages' anxieties were fully realized.

Part of the essence of what we normally think of as the Greek *ethos* is a love for rational investigation, for *logos*. Socrates' most quoted words consist of the claim that "an unexamined life is not worth living"—an inspiring injunction to think through one's actions to make sure they are justified. Socrates saw his mission as that of a gadfly waking a lazy horse. As the horse puttered through life grazing and sleeping and engaging in other unreflective activities, so Socrates' fellow Athenians ate and slept and fed and knew not what their lives meant. Socrates wished to wake them up to morally serious actions that could be defended because they had been thoughtfully considered.

Greek literature recounts several acts of what we recognize as "civil disobedience." One appears in Sophocles' *Antigone*, in which the princess, Oedipus' daughter Antigone, violates a royal order to leave her brother Polyneices unburied after he and his brother Eteocles were killed in a struggle for supremacy. Polyneices had been declared a traitor, and Creon, the new king, forbade him burial. The corpse was to lie on the ground as carrion for scavengers. Denial of burial for the ancient Greeks was a horrible pollution that denied a dead person's soul the peaceful repose of death. Hence Homer's invocation in the *Iliad* cites as a terrible consequence of Achilles' anger that the bodies of dead heroes were left on the beach as food for dogs and birds. Defying Creon's proclamation, Antigone buries her brother. Caught and dragged before the king and his retinue, she apostrophized her brother with an explanation of why she buried *him* but would not have buried a husband or a child (Sophocles, *Antigone* 905–15). Her reasoning represents an extraordinary degree of calculation. Because Antigone could obtain a new husband or another child, she *would not* have buried a husband or child in violation of Creon's order, but since, her parents dead, a new brother is unobtainable, she *would* bury a brother. What would at first appear as a boldly defiant act of noncompliance with a decree objectionable to humans and gods alike turns out instead to be the result of a cost–benefit computation of her own good.

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Two other such instances of civil disobedience are described in Plato's *Apology,* in Socrates' defense to the Athenian jury. In the first, Socrates explains why he refused to carry out an order by the democratic government (*Apology* 32a–d).[50] The Athenians, in a moment of sudden passion during the Peloponnesian War, were enraged at certain of their commanders who had participated in a battle against the Spartans, and it was proposed in council to try the generals in a body and put them all to death if they should be found guilty—a likely outcome given the fevered feelings. The proposal was illegal, since the generals were entitled to individual trials. Socrates, then the council's presiding officer, refused to put the motion to a vote. His second act of civil disobedience occurred later, when an oligarchic regime was in power and Socrates was ordered to travel to Salamis to arrest an innocent man named Leon, whom the rulers wished to put to death so that they could involve as many as possible (including Socrates) in their crimes; Socrates refused, for, as he explained, he believed wrongdoing worse than his own death.[51]

What marks the cases of disobedience in the Greek stories is careful calculation. Harpagus added up the reasons it would be wrong for *him* to kill Mandane's infant and so assigned the task to his herdsman servant. Cyno, who lost her own child but wanted another, calculated the intricate pathways by which all the elements could come together to spare the royal infant and provide her with a son. Antigone weighed why she should defy Creon's decree about not burying a *brother* but would obey in the case of a son or husband. Socrates, putting death and wrongdoing on scales of a balance, calculated that wrongdoing was worse.

What marks the disobedience of the midwives in Exodus, however, is an uncalculating "reverential fear of God." This "reverential fear" is a unitary thing. It is a self-evidently right intuition that needs no analysis or parsing. The midwives did not deliberate about their self-interest. Doing so would in fact have suggested a lack of "reverential fear of God," for reverential fear operates wholly, all at once, without a fretting over legal niceties. Fear of God is in itself justification, complete and fully satisfying in itself.

The Greek mind gives pride of place to rational justification, of which the ideal is the geometric or mathematical proof, whose persuasiveness has set the standard in the West. The biblical mind does not require minute, methodical, analytical reckoning. What is right is "God," and a reverential fear of God is all that is required for right action.

FORCED LABOR: DAVID, SOLOMON, AND TARQUIN

In this section, "forced labor" refers to the imposition of involuntary hard labor upon the permanent non-slave population of a state—be they subjects

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or citizens.[52] It is distinguished from military conscription because it is not imposed for the sake of fighting a common enemy; from penal conscription because laborers are not being punished for a crime; from civic duty because it is done at the pleasure of the ruler for ends not consented to by the population; and from slavery because those upon whom the labor is forced are not legal chattel, but the non-servile population of the state.

In the historical accounts of King David and King Solomon, levies of forced laborers were issued. In David's case, the levies were upon resident aliens (*gerim*) to provide masons to cut stones for the Temple (1 Chronicle 22:2). In the case of Solomon, the forced labor arose when Solomon asked King Hiram of Tyre and Sidon to supply Lebanese cedars (1 Kings 5:20) and offered to pay the wages of his skilled lumberjacks (1 Kings 5:20). Though Solomon paid the Tyrians and Sidonians, he forced labor on his own people, compelling them to work alongside Hiram's skilled men (1 Kings 5:27–28). Under his officer Adoniram,[53] Solomon sent a levy of thirty thousand men of Israel to spend one month in Lebanon and two months at home by turns. Solomon also raised a levy of those ethnic groups that the Israelites had not completely destroyed (Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites) to work on an assortment of building projects in addition to the Temple (1 Kings 9:20–21). When Solomon died and was succeeded by Rehoboam (1 Kings 11:43), the assembly of Israel immediately asked Rehoboam to lighten the forced labor. Solomon's elderly advisers urged Rehoboam to accede to the request, promising that if he did, "they would be his servants forever" (1 Kings 12:7). Instead, Rehoboam listened to the advice of the young people around him, who urged him to speak disrespectfully to the assembly—to tell them that his "small thingy was fatter than his father's rear end" (1 Kings 12:11)[54] and that if his father had flogged them with whips, he "would do so with scorpions" (1 Kings 12:11–12). Rehoboam followed this bad advice, with a wholly unfavorable result (1 Kings 12:16–19): Israel stoned Rehoboam's lieutenant, and Rehoboam himself fled to Jerusalem, thus dividing the united kingdom between Judah in the south, ruled by the house of David, and Israel in the north, ruled by Jeroboam. Jeroboam had been appointed by Solomon to be in charge of the forced labor of "the House of Joseph" (1 Kings 11:28.) Earlier, he had been named as the initiator of the rebellion, the man "who lifted his hand against the king" (1 Kings 11:26).

When forced labor is mentioned in relation to David, the text points out that it was imposed only upon resident aliens, or "strangers," and not upon the Hebrew people. This fact might have put David in better standing with his people than if he had forced *them* to work, but it would not, perhaps, have put him in better standing with God, any more than would the levies of Solomon forced on resident aliens and the remnants of peoples living in Canaan,

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for in Exodus 22:20, God had commanded, “And a stranger (*ger*) shall you not wrong, neither shall you oppress him; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” This sentiment had been often repeated (Exodus 23:9, Leviticus 19:34) and was amplified in Deuteronomy: “You will *love* the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” Servitude in Egypt and God’s freeing the Israelites from that bondage are their pivotal experiences, the memory of which God expects to render his people sympathetic to the suffering of others.

What, we might ask, would induce a follower of God to enslave his people? The project David intends and the one Solomon carries out is the temple in Jerusalem. As is probable from the text cited above (from 1 Kings 5:27–28), Solomon, though willing to *pay* for the labor of King Hiram’s workers, imposed labor on his own people for this project. Let us not mistake the sort of labor this was. It was not a pleasant autumn afternoon’s job of picking up litter on the side of a road that friends and neighbors have adopted. This was the hard, back-breaking drudgery of quarrying stones and transporting them and other heavy materials by porterage under the supervision of taskmasters who would scourge the slow-moving, a cruel even if somewhat milder form of torture than the scorpions threatened by Rehoboam.

Now one might assume that if the temple were perceived as being of material or spiritual advantage to the Hebrew people, they would have acquiesced in the labor and have freely enlisted for it, obviating the need for force. The imposition of forced labor on non-Hebrews to build a temple for the Hebrew God, however, would be a servitude without any redeeming sense of benefit for themselves or their own gods. If the Hebrew people felt a need for the temple, they had a disagreeable choice: either to enslave the strangers in their land—an evil explicitly repudiated in the Torah—or to assume the personal physical torment of the grueling work. The Bible does not provide more than hints of the historical situation, and it is not clear whether Solomon’s corvée was actually imposed. What is clear is that the situation concerning the forced labor led to the breakup of the kingdom when King Rehoboam determined that his royal prerogatives gave him the right to be a Pharaoh over his people.

A Roman parallel for the imposition of labor on one’s own people is found in Livy’s *History of Rome*. King Tarquin was eager to complete a temple to Jupiter that his father had vowed, “to stand as a memorial of his reign and of his name, testifying that of the two Tarquinii, both kings, the father had made the vow and the son had fulfilled it” (Livy (1.55.1). The king used state funds and laborers drawn from the commons. The new forced labor was in addition to military service, the chief and least protested form of unpaid service, especially in times of crisis—for, by universal agreement, a common defense is the primary function of organized communities. Tarquin forced still more labor on

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the commons—construction of the Very Great Sewer (the *Cloaca Maxima*) and rows of seating in the Circus. Livy reports that the people felt "less weighed down [*gravabatur*]" by the work on the temple than by the less glamorous and more onerous work on the Sewer and the seats. These projects would all have been arduous, with a need for much quarrying, dragging, and fashioning of building materials, constructing drainage trenches and a stone conduit to the Tiber, and cutting and setting stones for the seats in the Circus. When the plebeians finished all these tasks, Tarquin sent them out as settlers. His motives, says Livy, were to promote his own security and aggrandizement—to prevent an idle populace from being a threat to his regime and to increase his dominions.

The rape of Lucretia with its immediate consequence of the overthrow of the Kingdom is Livy's very next story. The news of the rape having been bruited about the kingdom, the people gathered in the Forum, where Lucius Junius Brutus gave his fiery speech, igniting the revolt that expelled the Tarquins and established the Republic. The speech concluded with a litany of atrocities performed by the Tarquin family toward the commons. The outrage upon a royal wife would not have been enough to rouse the fury of the common people. It was their own figurative rape, their deprivation of the right to own their work, that stirred them to the pitch of rebellion. The humiliation of digging sewers was bitterer than the assault on Lucretia. Livy's own piety and patriotism caused him to downplay the people's distaste for building the Temple to Jupiter (the people were "less weighed down" by *that* labor), and he had Brutus minimize it in his speech. The Tarquins, Brutus said, were responsible for the shameful decline in the Romans from conquerors to artisans and stone-cutters. When Tarquin came to suppress the rebellion, he found the city gates closed and himself in exile.

The parallels are stunning. In both cases the implementation of forced labor is used as an emblem of the abusive power that destroys the popular support underpinning a regime. The author of 1 Chronicles spares King David the villainy of forced labor upon his subjects[55] but fails to exempt him from the ignominy of forgetting the lesson of the slavery of the Israelites in Egypt not to impose on others the cruel and unjust bondage that had been imposed on them. The imposition of forced labor on his own subjects is a discredit also to Solomon's reign; the threat from Rehoboam to magnify the shame justifies the observation of the Roman historian Polybius that the sons of kings are worse than their fathers. The lack of insight of Rehoboam into his people's sufferings, if historically accurate, shows him to be undeserving of power. Perhaps the account was written for an ideological purpose, as a proof of the argument against monarchy made in 1 Samuel 8:17 that a king will make his people slaves.

In both the biblical and classical cases, the imposition of forced labor is not the only *casus seditionis*. There are, in addition, moral problems, mostly

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in terms of the rulers' excesses. Subjects willingly vouchsafe their rulers a certain degree of ceremonial extravagance, but lavish excesses—on the scale of Solomon's—particularly in the normal appetites shared by everyone, arouse antipathy.[56] In this way, the imposition of excessive forced labor would be the ostensible immediate occasion of the rebellion, but the underlying cause was the general disdain provoked by chronic wasteful spending.[57]

Livy binds together the tales of the rape of Lucretia and the forced labor of the Roman people such that we see the royal abusiveness extending through the ranks of society, sparing neither plebeian nor noble. The Tarquins are the common enemy of all, and the way is cleared for a republican form of government that would empower the castes of society to work together. Of the two references in Livy to forced labor, the second, in Brutus' speech, is the more telling. A despicable rape of a virtuous woman was insufficient to stir up the animus needed to overthrow the king; a reminder of the odium evoked by forced labor was also needed. Both cultures experienced the catastrophic effects on regimes from forced labor. People are generally willing to tolerate a ruler's privileges of wealth and power with equanimity. Let the king live in a marble palace decorated with gold filigree and let him eat white truffles! But impose forced labor, and subjects will resent the burden. Residing at the heart of the classical tradition is the idea that a human being must take responsibility for his actions and not blame fate or the gods—a revolution in moral sentiment dramatized by Homer in the *Iliad.* Underlying this sense of responsibility is the consciousness of living as a free, autonomous human being. Slavery robs a man of half his excellence, says Eumaios, Homer's most loyal of slaves (*Odyssey* 17.322)—a sentiment that, in the Greek mind, distinguished Greek from barbarian.[58] A respect for freedom is the same sentiment that God repeatedly tries to evoke in calling on his people for loyalty, when he reminds them that he took them out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. A consciousness of freedom and its accompanying responsibilities is the common reactant, the common ingredient that enabled the epoxy of Western Culture to strengthen.

CONCLUSIONS

To be divinely chosen would seem to be a splendid prize, even when, as in the case of the descendants of Abraham, it was conferred without justification, or, as in the case of Troy, as a bribe to a dishonest judge. The afterstories of both cultures attempted to explain the choices in accordance with the Standard Model of a non-capricious God: the rabbinic tradition described a theologically precocious Abraham, who rejected idols; the classical poets found in Troy's fall the groundwork for Rome, the polity that would bring universal law to the world.

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Laws originating from a divine source solved the problem of relativity in law codes. A plethora of revealed local codes made sense in pre-classical Paganism when localities had their own special deities; but when political philosophy arose, historians rationalized the stories as noble lies. In Bible times, coeval with the pre-rationalizing age in the classical world, we find no hint that the laws revealed to Moses were suspected as fabrications, and, in rabbinic times, the entire superstructure of Judaism would have collapsed if there had been doubts about the authenticity of Mosaic law. A happy medium occurred as the rabbis accepted Mosaic Law as a given but allowed a human contribution since the Torah was "no longer in Heaven."

The principle of hierarchy is so much a part of our animal nature that the dominance of a single individual over a community is perhaps our default assumption. When the classical world discovered the power of reason, thinkers applied their intellects to the organization of society and the characteristics of different regimes. The Israelites in Samuel's era still retained "judges" ("priest-kings" in the terminology of anthropologists), a royal alternative to warrior-kings. But desiring to be like the other peoples, Israel wished to replace their judges with kings. They disregarded God, who advised against adopting kings, and soon suffered the problems of royal corruption and social disintegration. Classical culture, after analyzing kingship and other regimes, decided that kingship was potentially the best and worst of regimes—best on the extremely rare occasions when a good king sat on the throne, worst when, as much more commonly occurred, it devolved into a tyranny.

Wrongdoing is difficult for individuals in both cultures to resist. An unassailable argument could not save Gyges from an impassioned king's command that he do wrong. And passionate resentment impelled Jacob's sons to injure Joseph, though they did obey the Noahide injunction against shedding his blood once Reuben reminded them of it. As for rescuing babies, the classical story shows a meticulous calculation of costs and benefits to the actors, the Hebrew story, an unassuming all-at-once reverential awe of God.

Forcing labor from citizens was customary for tyrants in the classical world, but they had to worry lest it provoke resentment and revolution, as it did against the Tarquins. For the Hebrews, whose existence as a nation depended on God's freeing them from slavery, the labor exacted by the kings of Israel was particularly odious, and it is not surprising that it led to the downfall of Solomon's son Rehoboam and the breakup of the Kingdom.

NOTES

1. These are any trees that are planted and worshipped or wooden statues made from them (John Day, "Asherah in the Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic Literature," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105 (1986) 397–98.

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2. Perhaps by choosing Israel—a militarily weaker people—it will become clear that victory came about because of *God.*

3. The verb in the account of the golden calf (Exodus 32:6), often translated as "make merry," is *tsachaq,* the same verb used by Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39:14, 17) when she made her charge of sexual assault against Joseph. Rashi says the verb "to sport" connotes adultery (*arayos*), the most serious form of sexual sin. According to Hertz (*ad loc.* Exodus commentary 450), it includes, in addition to adultery, incest and relations with a *niddah* (a woman menstruating).

4. The sole reference in Homer to the Judgment of Paris (in lines rejected by the second-century BCE scholar Aristarchus of Samothrace) is in *Iliad* (24.28–30). In the passage, one of the gods whom Homer mentions as hostile to the Trojans (and to the rescue of Hector's corpse) is Poseidon, whose anger Homer had explained in more detail in *Iliad* 21.443–60.

5. One might be inclined to think that Aphrodite, the goddess of sex, deserved the prize since sexual allurement is her province—and surely sexual allurement may have been the prevailing consideration for the adolescent Paris. But feminine beauty is reflected in other ways besides sexual vitality. In Christian art, for example, many representations of the Madonna portray the beauty in maternity; in representations of saints, in spiritual devotion. All the goddesses are enticing in ancient art; without the help of identifying names, it is impossible to tell whether we are witnessing Actaeon gazing on the chaste Artemis or a citizen of Knidos gazing on a brazen Venus.

6. As the ancient world became more educated in the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle and the schools that derived their principles from them, the gods underwent rehabilitation. Virgil, for example, in the *Aeneid*, continues the transformation of Venus (i.e., Aphrodite) begun by Plato in the *Symposium* and developed by Lucretius from an amoral power of lust, responsible for the Trojan War and countless other woes, into a force for civilization, a creative power responsible for Rome and the law of nations (*ius gentium*). For how this transformation occurred, see John M. Crossett, "Love in the Western Hierarchy" in Paul G. Kuntz, *The Concept of Order* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968) 219–36.

7. Genesis Rabbah 38:8 and 38:13.

8. In Greek, Torah is rendered as *nomoi,* best translated as "Rules."

9. At the Barcelona Debate in 1263, Nachmanides, reflecting the Hebrew tradition, distinguished between the *aggadah,* the stories and legends found in the Talmud and the Bible, and the *halacha*, the laws. He said that while there is an obligation upon all Jews to follow the laws, when it comes to the *aggadot* [the plural of *aggadah*], they may believe whatever their own minds decide. For the debate at Barcelona, see Robert Chazan, *Barcelona and Beyond: The Disputation of 1263 and its Aftermath* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1992); also Hyam Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial: Jewish-Christian Disputations in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1993); for a treat, see *The Disputation 1263,* the PBS production of Maccoby's witty dramatic rendering of the debate. See also Metzger and Katz, "The 'Place' of Rhetoric in Aggadic Midrash."

10. *Pirkei Avot* 5.17. See also Introduction, 10–12 and 35–36.

11. Rabbi Yehoshua is referring to Deuteronomy 30:11–12 For the story of Yehoshua's outburst, see E. Frankel, *The Classic Tales: 4,000 Years of Jewish Lore*

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(Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1993), 305–6, as well as the cautions of Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999) 34–63. According to Rubenstein, the most important lesson in the tale concerns how people ought to conduct themselves in argument, even when they disagree profoundly. The rabbis who "defeat" God, in their subsequent treatment of Rabbi Eleazar, are not examples of good conduct.

12. A parallel complexity is depicted in the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus, where adjudication of blood crimes against kin is taken from the authority of the Furies and placed in human juries. This seems to be Aeschylus' way of withdrawing the responsibility for justice from the gods and putting it in human beings, despite their imperfection—a Pagan parallel to putting the divine Torah into human jurisdiction.

13. One of the difficulties in understanding words from another language, and especially an ancient language, is that our equivalents are mediated through languages that have their own etymologies and histories. The English *holy* is derived from Old English, which itself is partly a descendent of old Germanic, while *profane* is from Latin. Terms in Hebrew are often obscure, and help from ancient cognate languages is often elusive, as the surviving literature in those languages, with what could be illustrative examples, is even scarcer than what survives in Hebrew.

14. See, for example, Chapter 3, "Fratricide."

15. A farmer discovered some books purportedly by Numa in about 185 BCE and brought them to a praetor who informed the Senate, which then had them burned in the Forum—an incident reported by Varro (*Curio de cultu deorum* fr. 3). Augustine, discussing the incident with considerable passion (*City of God* 7.34–35), claims that the contents, lost forever after burning, revealed the falsity of the Roman gods. For a discussion of the incident, see Duncan MacRae, *Legible Religion: Books, Gods, and Rituals in Roman Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016) 1–6.

16. That a people without military preoccupations will either cause mischief by rebelling or decay from inactivity appears also elsewhere—Herodotus, 3.134, Zonaras, *Epitome,* and Sallust, *Jurgurtha* 41.2–10.

17. Egeria is a goddess of a spring about fifteen miles south of Rome. Not very much is known about her, apart from an association with Diana, the goddess of the hunt. She is mentioned by Virgil in a passage that does not elaborate her significance (*Aeneid* 7.763, 775). Perhaps her obscurity is itself the reason she is named by Numa. A goddess that is not known does not carry much negative baggage with her, the way an adulterous Jupiter or Venus might.

18. The passage from Critias is preserved because it was quoted by Sextus Empiricus, the most prominent extant ancient skeptic.

19. There are debates over whether Critias (and not, say, Euripides) was the author of the passage, whether it is Critias himself who is the atheist or his *character* Sisyphus, and whether the drama is a tragedy or a satyr play. Dana Sutton, "Critias and Atheism," *The Classical Quarterly* 31 (1981) 33–38, examines the other surviving fragments of Critias and finds no evidence in them to support atheism, and argues, quite rightly, that the words are expressed by a character in a play and so serve a dramatic purpose. I myself am not persuaded that it is impossible for one both to believe in gods and at the same time invent supernatural myths for the sake of inspiring

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goodness. If inventing myths was a proof of atheism, it would be impossible to find committed Christians who, trying to engender good behavior in their children, told them stories about Santa Claus. As Charles H. Kahn ("Greek Religion and Philosophy in the Sisyphus Fragment," *Phronesis* 42 [1977] 260) argues, Democratus' claim (Fr. A75) that the founders of religion relied on the fear of celestial phenomena by no means suggests that their theology is false.

20. Of course, as Edward Gibbon wittily observed, the clearest evidence that the most famous leaders of Rome, including all the Caesars, did not believe in divine punishment either in this life or in the next was the litany of brazen crimes they committed (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.* Ed. J. B. Bury. London: Methuen & Co., 1914, Volume 2, 22).

21. See Livy 25.3–4 for a discussion of tax and insurance scams perpetrated on the nation even when Rome was most at risk during the war with Hannibal. Despite Polybius' specious praise for Roman probity, Rome had a shameful record of breaking treaties—the Senate's seizure of Sardinia after the First Punic War (in 237 BCE), Galba's murderous violation of his oath to the Lusitanians (in 150), and the senate's betrayal of Tiberius' treaty with Numantia in Spain (in 153) being a few particularly egregious examples. Polybius' praise of Roman probity is his own noble lie.

22. Mark Silk, "Numa Pompilius and the Idea of Civic Religion in the West," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 72 (2004) 863–96.

23. Ibid. 871–72.

24. For an interesting discussion of this matter, see Jeffrey A. Barash, "Myth in History, Philosophy of History as Myth: On the Ambivalence of Hans Blumenberg's Interpretation of Ernst Cassirer's Theory of Myth," *History and Theory* 50 (2011) 336–37.

25. Herodotus' word for custom is *nomos.* For a discussion of the word, see Arieti and Barrus, *Plato's Protagoras* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010) 131. For a recent examination of the verse from Pindar, see Mark Payne, "On Being Vatic: Pindar, Pragmatism, and Historicism," *American Journal of Philology* 127 (2006) 159–84. I should like to disagree with Payne's comment that "for Herodotus, *nomos* here means tradition, norm, custom (τὰ νόμαια), a concept that relates exclusively to the human world" (179). I think that Herodotus is saying that just as different *people* have different, *nomoi*, so do different *gods* and that an obligation to comply with one's own *nomoi* is an *agraphos nomos*, an unwritten law shared by gods and humans. In this I disagree also with Rosaria Munson, who states clearly her view that *nomoi* are not supernatural, "Ananke in Herodotus," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 121 (2001) 43. In the broad scheme of polytheism, the various gods, like humans, are subject to the norms of their local cultures.

26. Only the *Constitution of Athens* survives. For some views of Aristotle's project, see Philip Kreager, "Aristotle and Open Population Thinking," *Population and Development Review* 34 (2008) 599–629.

27. This formulation is itself vexed. Human beings are, in one sense, a part of the natural world, and, in another, not part of the natural world. The difficulty, as discussed earlier (p. 53), is exemplified by the agreement by virtually everyone that a beaver dam is natural while Hoover Dam is artificial, even though the artificial dam is constructed in accordance with reason, which is natural in human beings.

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28. The idea was not confined to Pagans. In the fourth century CE, Lactantius endeavored to persuade a hesitant Constantine that if he and the empire converted to Christianity, the world would *immediately* become an earthly paradise. See, for example, Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* (5.8) The Roman world did convert, but the promised effects did not occur.

29. Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.17; Philo, *On Creation* 1.

30. See n. 11 in this chapter.

31. In the Book of Samuel, there is a discussion of *kingship*, but the discussion is not systematic and does not mention other types of regime.

32. The notion that spoiled children begin a train of misery begins with the oldest Greek myths, perhaps even with the story about Tantalus, a Phrygian king recklessly proud in his wealth who called down the vengeance of the Furies by stealing the nectar of the gods and giving divine food to his son Pelops—spoiling him with the newly acquired wealth.

33. As Matthew P. Fitzpatrick argues, Polybius' purpose may have been to show how the constitution of Rome allowed her to break out of the pattern ("Carneades and The Conceit of Rome: Transhistorical Approaches to Imperialism," *Greece & Rome* 57 [2010] 11).

34. See below, the section, "Forced Labor."

35. There are a number of passages that challenge the rejection of infanticide or infanticidal intentions. In Deuteronomy 2:34, 3:6, 20:16–18, and 1 Samuel 15:2–3, the Israelites are commanded by God to kill all the men, women, children, and infants (as though these were different from children), cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys. In Numbers 31:17–18, Moses orders his officers to kill, among others, the male children of Midian whom they have taken captive. Moral consistency is not to be found in the Bible's characters. In the passages just cited, it is either Moses or Samuel who relays the purported orders from God to slay everyone. Is it possible that, as in Greek narratives, the reports are composed with the onus for the savagery placed on God in order to characterize the *speakers*? When Moses or Samuel says that *God* commands the murder of innocents, the intention of the author would be to show that these venerated individuals have themselves become unhinged.

36. Bernard M. Levinson outlines the six characteristics of Near Eastern kings to show how the elders are asking Samuel to destroy all that is distinctive about Israel's political nature, thus becoming no different from the other nations ("The Reconceptualization of Kingship in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History's Transformation of Torah," *Vetus Testamentum* 51 [2001] 512–19).

37. The Romans admired men who executed their sons for the sake of obedience, but they seemed to have made little distinction between those who behaved with atrocious motives, like the son of Lucius Junius Brutus, and those who acted in error, like the son of Titus Manlius Torquatus (Livy, *From the Founding of the City*, 2.3–5; 7.5–10). As David Jobling, points out ("Saul's Fall and Jonathan's Rise: Tradition and Redaction in 1 Sam 14:1–46," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95 [1976] 367–76), the redactor has told this tale so as to diminish Saul's triumph and to elevate Jonathan. Jobling adds that the reduction of Saul served also reduce the dynastic claim of his son (375–76).

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38. The raids may have been against nomads harassing the Israelites, but the Bible suggests that David was crueler than necessary, for it repeats the claim that he left neither man nor woman alive (1 Samuel 27:9; 11).

39. For a detailed account of Cyrus' degeneration, see my *Discourses* 188–95.

40. For a summary of the various modern arguments on the veracity of the debate, see Donald Lateiner, *The Historical Method of Herodotus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989) 272, notes 12, 13, and 14.

41. How and Wells comment (279): "Darius succeeded in right of birth; but the coloring of the story is correct: the Persians, as sun-worshippers, honored the sunrise, and the horse was sacred among them."

42. Jewish tradition itself rejects direct rule from God, for the Torah is no longer in heaven once it has passed to human beings. In the rabbinic period, a vote by rabbis takes the place of royal decree. One might wonder whether a group of rabbis sitting in council would be a type of oligarchy.

43. Isocrates, *Nicocles.* Among the arguments Isocrates uses is that kingship is the regime of the gods.

44. For example, at Genesis 2:24, where it is left to the reader to work out the logic.

45. In classical literature we might think of such characters as Oedipus, Romulus and Remus, Pisistratus, and Cypselus who as infants were feared for this reason.

46. Some tyrants defend themselves by claiming that, although they too are murderers, they are less evil than others. See, for example, Octavian's self-defense in Appian, *Civil Wars* 4.5–20.

47. Cf. Genesis 42:18 and Deuteronomy 25:18 on fearing God as a motive for ethical conduct (suggested by J. H. Hertz, 160 and 208).

48. A. S. Yahuda, *The Language of the Pentateuch in its Relation to Egyptian* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933) 54–55.

49. For a sympathetic reading of Kant, however, see Helga Varden, "Kant and Lying to the Murderer at the Door ... One More Time: Kant's Legal Philosophy and Lies to Murderers and Nazis," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 41 (2010): 403–21.

50. Xenophon describes the circumstances in *Hellenica* 1.7.

51. Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.3.39, testifies to the innocence of Leon.

52. In societies where governments require the *participation* of the people under the ruling authority as distinct from mere obedience to the regime's commands, we may speak of the people as *citizens* as distinct from *subjects*. The topic is complex because under certain regimes, the population is divided into king and everybody else, and "everybody else" is in some degree of servitude. In Persia, even nobles were the king's "slaves" (Amélie Kuhrt, *Persian Empire: A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid Period* [New York: Routledge, 2007], 620).

53. Adoniram is named in a list of Solomon's royal officials (1 Kings 4:6) as the officer in charge of forced labor. It is possible that he is the same man as David's officer in the post under the similar name of Adoram (2 Samuel 20:24). What this suggests is that under kingship, forced labor was so regularized a part of the administration as to have a permanent officer in charge. Later, as described in 2 Chronicles

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10:18, King Rehoboam's officer in charge of forced labor is named Hadoram, perhaps yet another spelling of the same name.

54. This translation borrows from Mordechai Cogan (*The Anchor Bible: 1 Kings* [New York: Doubleday, 2000]). The rendering "thingy" for "penis" is defended persuasively in Cogan's note (348–49). Rehoboam appears not only vulgar but also disrespectful to his late father. His words are intended to be threatening: he will be much tougher in requiring forced labor than his father Solomon.

55. The omission is consistent with the practice of the author of Chronicles to leave out anything that places David in a bad light. See Sara Japhet, *Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009) 364–65; for the disparagement of Solomon in favor of David, see 377–78.

56. An account of what was needed to maintain Solomon's household for just one day may be found in 1 Kings 5:2: "Solomon's daily provision consisted of 30 *kors* of semolina, and 60 *kors* [ordinary] flour; 10 fattened oxen, and 20 pasture-fed oxen, and 100 sheep and goats besides deer and gazelles, roebucks, and fatted geese."

57. Cf. Suetonius' account of the excesses and concomitant sadism of the emperor Vitellius (*Vitellius* 13).

58. H.D.F. Kitto, *The Greek* (London: Penguin, 1950) 9–10. I suspect that Kitto is excluding the Hebrews from the category "barbarian."

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Chapter 5

Religious Matters

ABUSE OF RELIGION: CIRCUMCISION AND A WOODEN HORSE

God's covenant with Abraham—that in return for circumcising himself, his family, his servants, and his descendants, he would become the father of many nations (Genesis 17:4–16)—was the core obligation of Israel a half millennium before the revision of the covenant at Sinai. For Pagans, the heart of the sacred relation with their gods was the ritual of dedicatory offerings and sacrifices, in return for which the gods would bestow benefits.[1] Despite or perhaps *because* of the profound sanctity of these religious practices—circumcision and dedication—abuses involving them to dupe an enemy would be so heinous an affront to the relationship of humans and gods that no one would suspect them, but, should they occur, would provoke passionate responses. In this section we shall examine, on the Hebrew side, the response to the rape of Dinah by her brothers when they abused the rite of circumcision. On the Greek side, we shall look at the abuse of a votive offering at Troy, when the Greeks pretended to dedicate a great wooden horse to Athena.

Dinah, the daughter of Leah and Jacob, went to visit the women of the land of Shechem. A young man, Shechem (named for the land), son of Hamor, the ruler of the land, "saw her, took her, forced intercourse on her, and dishonored her" (Genesis 34:2). In its rhetorical brevity, the language is evocative of Caesar's famous "I came, I saw, I conquered." By the parallel construction lacking conjunctions (the device known as *asyndeton*), Caesar claimed that for him, arriving, seeing, and conquering were equally easy. The Bible implies a similar effortlessness in Shechem, suggesting the actions of a brute animal and not those of a decent human being. Following this savage sentence, however, the text reveals a sudden change in Shechem: his soul

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became attached (it "cleaved") to Dinah (the verb for "cleave"—*tabak*—is the same verb used in Genesis 2:24: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall *cleave* unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh"). Shechem asks Hamor to arrange a marriage for him to Dinah. Hamor negotiates with Jacob, and then with Jacob's sons, explaining with tenderness how his son's soul longs for Dinah. He also proposes that the tribes intermarry and engage in mutual trade (Genesis 34:8–10). Though Jacob's sons are very angry because of Shechem's rape of Dinah, they hide their feeling under a show of friendship. Shechem also makes a plea, offering a great dowry if only he can find favor in their sight (Genesis 34:13–17). Jacob's sons[2] reply guilefully that they will consent to the marriage and also marry the women of the land of Shechem, but only if the males of the land are circumcised.

Hamor and Shechem report to the men of their city that Jacob's sons are peaceful and discuss the offers of trade and intermarriage contingent on their circumcision. The men all agree to be circumcised. In the days before anesthetics and antibiotics, the removal of the foreskin from adult penises must have been not only extremely painful but dangerous. Still, the men agree, persuaded by the promise of peace, Shechem's longing for Dinah, and the opportunities for trade and marriage. It is not actually clear *whom* the men of Shechem would marry, for we are not told of any other daughters of Jacob.[3] The men of Shechem do not know, as readers do, that the sons of Jacob have made their offer *with guile*.

When the men are still painfully recovering from their circumcisions, Dinah's brothers Simeon and Levi slip into the city and slay all the men, including Hamor and Shechem, and retrieve Dinah. They despoil the city and take possession of the animals, those in the city and those in the field. Upon their return home, Jacob rebukes Simeon and Levi for the danger they have put him in, but not for the violence of their actions: "You have troubled me, to make me odious unto the inhabitants of the land, even unto the Canaanites and the Perizzites;[4] and, I being few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and smite me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house." In response, Simeon and Levi simply ask, "Should one deal with our sister as with a harlot?"

The entire episode is set aside until the very end of the Joseph story in Genesis, when Jacob speaks about his children, making predictions about their descendants, and conferring blessings and curses upon them. Simeon and Levi he singles out and curses for their violence, for slaying men and crippling oxen, and says he will divide and scatter them (Genesis 49:5–7).[5] Since we have learned of no action specifically by Simeon and Levi other than their revenge of the rape of Dinah decades earlier, a plausible inference is that Jacob is referring to their vengeance upon Shechem and his city. At the summing up time of Jacob's life we realize that Jacob had long brooded over the retaliation for the assault upon Dinah.

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Though a sketchy account of the ruse of the Trojan Horse appears in Homer's *Odyssey*, when Odysseus, washed ashore on Phaeacia and still incognito, slyly asks the bard Demodokos to tell about the Greeks' trick of the horse (*Odyssey* 8.493–516), it is fully explained in Virgil's *Aeneid*, where a Greek soldier, Sinon, pretending to have been abandoned at Troy, declares that although a miserable wretch, he will tell the truth and not be proved a liar. He claims that he once defended Palamedes, who, because he argued against the Trojan War, became Odysseus' enemy such that Odysseus persuaded the Greeks to kill him. Because Sinon had sworn to avenge Palamedes, Odysseus has always hated him too. When the Greeks were planning to sail home and were putting the finishing touches on the horse, Sinon continued, Odysseus conspired to circulate the false prophecy that for the Greeks to depart from Troy, they must sacrifice a man, just as they had had to sacrifice Iphigeneia in order to sail to Troy. The selection was rigged to fall on Sinon. He tells the Trojans that to avoid being killed he escaped and lay hidden until the Greeks had sailed away. This counterfeit history wins Sinon the full confidence of the Trojans. When they ask about the giant horse on their beach, he explains that if they take the horse inside their walls, an Asian army will conquer Greece (*Aeneid* 154–94). The Trojans, completely duped, tear down their walls and drag the horse into their citadel. During the night, when they are inebriated from their wild celebrations, Sinon looses the bolts that keep the Greeks inside the horse. They emerge and lay waste to Troy. Thus did religious duplicity accomplish what ten years of siege could not.[6]

Shechem's brutal rape was seemingly committed with no more forethought than one might have in plucking a peach from a tree and gobbling it. But Shechem underwent a transformation into an ardent lover who earnestly wished to make amends, even to the extent of undergoing the ritual act that would unite him and his people to the covenant struck by God and Abraham. The Trojans' crime was to become an "accomplice after the fact" to Paris' abduction of Helen by refusing to restore her to Menelaus. Unlike Shechem, the Trojans seem never to have repented of their actions. When the Greeks pretended to have departed, the Trojans believed they had won the long war.

When Shechem and Hamor asked for marriage, Jacob's sons (perhaps only Simeon and Levi) responded with guile (Genesis 34:13). The guile consisted of asking that the men of Shechem be circumcised so that sons of Jacob could rescue Dinah with the battle stacked in their favor, their enemy weakened from their still unhealed circumcisions. The Greek plan to capture Troy by trickery involved a sham sacrifice to Athena. Given the special devotion of Odysseus to Athena, one might suppose that the goddess might take offense at this misapplication of her rites.[7] Aeneas, Virgil's hero, calls the ploy of the horse and Sinon's fiction a *crime*, though the fraud is hardly different, *qua*

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fraud, from one he perpetrates during the battle for the city, when he and his men don the armor of dead Greeks and pretend to be Greeks so that they can kill more of the Greek enemy. Aeneas' friend Coroebus excuses that duplicity, asking, "Guile or valor, who seeks to know it in an enemy?" (*Aeneid* 2.390). In later tales about Troy, no opprobrium seems to be attached to either Greek or Trojan fraudulent behavior; instead, it is praised for its success.

Not so later Jewish consideration of behavior of the sons of Jacob toward the repentant Shechem. The rabbinic tradition introduces Shechem in an analysis of the three types of proselytes, where he appears in the middle group of an ascending scale, and about whom God says, "My children, as this one [Shechem] sought the security [of your congregation from you], so you must give security to him, as is said (Exodus 22:20), 'A proselyte shalt thou not wrong, neither shalt thou oppress him.'"[8] The rabbis who composed this Midrash agreed with Jacob in the condemnation of Simeon and Levi.

The retaliation against Shechem and his town occurs before the sale of Joseph to Egyptians, the famine in Egypt and Canaan, the discord in the house of Jacob, the eventual reconciliation, and the migration to Egypt. During the decades that passed after the destruction of the town of Shechem, Jacob agonized over his sons' crime—especially heinous because of the abuse of religion.

For the Greeks, the Horse is a triumphant adventure in wiliness; for Jacob and for later Jewish tradition, the ruse of circumcision is an affront to decency.

INHERITED GUILT: KORAH AND CROESUS

Even the most iron-fisted parents who believe that wisdom and good character come from suffering, that "tough love" is the best love and painful discipline the most authentic teacher, do not want their own child to suffer for someone else's crimes or sins, especially for those of the parents themselves. The literature of the West, however, from Genesis to Ibsen and Faulkner, is replete with the lesson that children *do* in fact suffer for what their parents have done. When children have cruel and abusive parents as models, they pass along the bad practices they have grown up with into future generations. Thus criminal enterprises are handed down in the same way as respectable family businesses.

The iniquity of parents, says the Book of Exodus (34:7), "is visited upon their children even to the third and fourth generation"[9]; compared to Greek literature, the limitation to so small a number of generations seems mild. The principle of American jurisprudence, at least in the ideal, that justice should be swift, was not an ancient way of thinking about it.[10] Both biblical and Greek cultures recognized that the suffering in future generations for

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earlier wrongdoing was not a vengeance from a spiteful deity, but a brute fact of existence, one of the conditions of human life: delayed punishment is a feature of how the world operates. Injustice once let loose into the world produces consequences that cannot be controlled by or limited to it originator.

It is inevitable, perhaps, if a person commits a crime, and it is known that he has committed it, that a certain amount of opprobrium will extend to his relatives. This extended opprobrium will be proportional to the crime's wickedness. Let us say that a person brutally murders a number of innocents. In general, people shun the murderer's children, somehow feeling, even when they know that the feeling is unjustified, that the children are infected by the evil. Into a future generation people might whisper as the murderer's grandson passed by, "There goes the grandson of the notorious murderer." If people are moved by compassion for the grandchild and urge one another not to discriminate against the lad on account of his grandfather's deeds, the urging itself casts a shadow of guilty association over the descendant. It is, alas, routine that children and, in cases of exceptional wrongdoing, grandchildren suffer for the crimes of their forebears. It is the way things are.

To observe a fact of life is not to approve of it. The prophet Ezekiel says (18:2–3), "What do you mean, that you use this proverb in the land of Israel, saying: The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, says the Lord God, you shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel." And a little later (18:20) he adds, "The soul that sins, it shall die; the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father with him, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son with him; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon *him*."

Together with Dathan, Abiram, and On, Korah assembles two hundred and fifty men to protest against Moses. Korah tells Moses and Aaron (Numbers 16:3), "You are doing too much. Everyone is holy. Why are you raising yourselves above the others?" In response, Moses challenges Korah to a trial of censers in which they will contest to see whom God chooses (Numbers 16:6–17). Moses also scolds Korah for demanding that the sons of Levi be priests and not merely ministers of the tabernacle. When Moses summons Datham and Abiram, they accuse Moses of taking the people out of Egypt, "a land flowing with milk and honey," to kill them in the desert. On the next day all bring their censers and put incense in them. God tells Moses and Aaron to separate themselves and the congregation from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Moses declares that if these men and their families die a normal death, God is not with Moses, but if they are swallowed by the earth, their deaths will mean that God has despised them. The earth does open and fire

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come forth, and the two hundred and fifty men who offered incense against Moses all are destroyed (Numbers 16:31–35).

When the next day the congregation grumbles against Moses for having killed so many people, God again tells Moses and Aaron to separate themselves from the crowd so that God can destroy them. Moses urges Aaron to take a censer and spread incense among the people in order to save them. Thus Moses manages to reduce the severity of the plague God sends, but fourteen thousand seven hundred people die from it nevertheless (Numbers 16:47–49).

At this point it might look as though Korah and his bloodline have been blotted from the face of the earth. But in a census taken later (Numbers 26:9–11) we find the names of the sons of Datham and of Abiram, Korah's comrades in the rebellion against Moses. And the text lets it be known that their inclusion is no mistake. It declares, in identifying them (Numbers 26:9–10): "And the sons of Eliab: Nemuel, and Dathan, and Abiram. These are that Dathan and Abiram, the elect of the congregation, *who strove against Moses and against Aaron in the company of Korah,* when they strove against the Lord." Following these fairly long sentences comes a prose flourish, powerful in its brevity (26:11): "And the sons of Korah did not die."

In the context of events many years later, we find a list of the descendants of the sons of Korah (1 Chronicles 6:18 ff.), among whom is Samuel. A number of the psalms are attributed to the sons of Korah (2, 44–49, 84, 85, 87, and 88).[11]

For the Greeks, human beings are capable of injecting evil into the world at any moment. Once let loose, the evil produces consequences that cannot be controlled by the originator of the evil act. This is the theme of tragedies, like Aeschylus' *Oresteia,* and of historians who follow this same worldview, most notably Herodotus.

Herodotus tells the amusing if lurid tale of how Gyges became king of Lydia.[12] In the twenty-second generation of rule by the family of the Heraclidae, King Candaules wished that his wife be seen naked by his bodyguard and confidant Gyges. Though vigorously opposed to this desire, Gyges carried out the king's plan for him to gaze on the queen naked. She espied him and gave him the choice of dying or of killing Candaules and becoming king himself. He chose the latter. When protests arose in Lydia and the Oracle at Delphi was consulted, the Oracle directed a transfer of rule to Gyges' family, the Mermnadae, but asserted that Candaules' family, the Heraclidae, would have vengeance on Gyges' posterity in the fifth generation afterwards. The man holding the doomed throne at that later time was Croesus, whose kingdom fell to Cyrus of Persia.[13]

Why did Gyges himself not suffer for his regicide? While it is of course impossible to know the answer to this question, it is possible to hazard a guess. His guilt was perhaps somewhat diminished by a reluctance to go along with Candaules' bizarre wish, a bizarrerie stressed in Herodotus' telling.[14] Gyges'

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resistance to gazing on the queen and the regicide was overcome because of the duress his king and queen placed upon him. Later when we learn of the two-year postponement of Croesus' doom, it becomes clear that the theology of the Greeks, as mediated through Herodotus, allowed a postponement of a penalty, even if it did not allow its abrogation. When Croesus learned from Apollo that he lost this empire as the penalty of Gyges, Croesus ended his lament and accepted his fate as valid.

What matters in these Greek stories is a concept of cosmic justice, wherein the amount of justice in the universe is a zero sum game. To maintain the balance of the universe, every evil action must be met with a punishment. Summary punishment is perfectly satisfactory, but when it does not take place, the gods see to it that a punishment takes place later. As the chorus sings in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (140), "Sing, sorrow, sorrow: but good win out in the end."[15] That the specific individual who committed a crime be punished is not what is critical; what matters is the cosmic balance of justice.[16]

Perhaps it would be useful to distinguish *guilty* from *responsible*. Guilty is the state one is in for having violated a code or law; the person who *is* guilty is the cause of a wrongful action.[17] To *feel* guilty is not the same as *being* guilty, for one might feel that one has violated a rule when one has not, and one may actually have violated a rule without any feeling at all. An example of the former would be the guilt Oedipus felt for his presumed father Polybus' death because of the possibility that Polybus had died from longing for Oedipus—where the feeling is unfounded: Polybus died from other causes (Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex* 969–70). An example of the latter would be a speeding motorist, who in fact exceeded the limit and has broken the traffic laws but feels no compunction or is unaware that he was speeding.

To be *responsible,* however, is to "answer for" something that has been done, whether or not the cause. For example, if a twelve-year-old child, playing baseball in his backyard, breaks a neighbor's window, even though the parents may have been in a different city at the time, they must answer to the neighbors for the child's action by paying for the window. As parents, they are responsible for the damage the child has wrought. The absence of direct causality does not vitiate this responsibility.

The phrase "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children" first occurs in Chapter 20 of Exodus, in the second commandment, which forbade the worship of idols. The commandment concludes, "For I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children into the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy to the thousandth generation of them that love me and keep my commandments" (Exodus 20:3–5). The previous commandment had declared, "You shall have no other gods before me," and the three commandments directly following concern

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taking the name of God in vain, keeping the Sabbath, and honoring father and mother. In short, the first five commandments deal with matters that children learn primarily in their home from their parents as they are growing up.

As the opening of the Decalogue indicates, God's claim to the love of his people is based on taking them out of slavery in Egypt. In freeing them and sustaining them in the desert he has been like a protective parent. The iniquity of the parents spoken of in the second commandment is that of parents generally, who *hate* God—and hating God means not being grateful for having been rescued from Egypt and for having been sheltered and fed. It means hating the whole idea of a parental deity who acts with compassion and justice. To be God-hating parents—iniquitous parents—is to communicate these bad values to their children. To be God-loving parents means the opposite.

The third commandment also refers to matters a child learns in the home as he grows up. If parents take God's name in vain as a matter of course, children learn to do the same, for it is natural for children to learn to behave in conformity with parental models. The fourth commandment has two parts. The first part commands that the Sabbath be kept *holy*, free from working and devoted to reflection; the second part commands that people work for six days: "Six days shall you work." Children who grow up in a family in which the parents model this ethic—six days of work and one day of holy reflection—will behave similarly in their lives and themselves exhibit goodness—for what is most likely to bring about goodness in people is an intellectual engagement with the subject matter of goodness, which is what reflection on holiness entails.

If, then, one's parents have observed the first four commandments, the fifth, honoring one's parents, is almost superfluous. Such parents will have earned honor and will naturally receive it.

By this interpretation, then, as the context makes clear, "*inherited* guilt" is not the issue. The Hebrew verb "visited" in the phrase "the iniquity *is visited*," is *paquad*, which means "is called on to account for" or "to pay the price for." The meaning of the sentence in English would perhaps more accurately be rendered, "The children in up to the third and fourth generation *will pay the price* for the iniquity of their parents." The matter is not one of vengeance, but, as in the case of the person whose grandfather committed a horrible crime, a statement of a fact of human life.[18] Those who bear the misfortune of having morally reprehensible parents will themselves be broken individuals. The implication is that the evil wrought by a bad parent will diminish until by the third or fourth generation it may have lost its effect. What this also means is that as the generations pass, one has less of a claim to the mitigating excuse of a bad ancestor and hence more and more responsibility for one's own action. What, more happily, is also suggested is that the wounds caused by bad parents can be healed by the "tincture of time."

Bearing in mind this interpretation of the phrase "iniquity of the fathers," let us consider Korah's rebellion. The rebellion will have been motivated

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by envy on the part of the Levites of Aaron and his family, upon whom the priestly functions had devolved. Datham and Abiram, from the tribe of Reuben, were distressed over their loss of privileges, for, they seem to have felt, their tribe was entitled to this honor. Feeling deprived, they spoke against Moses. But their insubordination was born of hurt and resentment, not of a deep-rooted hatred of God. Their rebellion did not arise from a settled disposition to wrongdoing, a disposition that would have provided a poor environment for the rearing of children. And so the children of Korah were not infected by their father's rebelliousness. Korah's action was like that of a basically good man who feels a sudden uncontrolled rage that takes over his soul. The fact that he and his similarly infected associates are swallowed by the earth is perhaps a mercy, for the swallowing keeps them from doing more harm and infecting others, especially their children.

That guilt is *not* inherited is suggested by other stories in the Bible. For sordidness, the story of Lot's daughters has few rivals (Genesis 19:30–38). After the destruction of Sodom and the transformation of their mother into a pillar of salt, the daughters contrived to intoxicate their father with wine on successive nights so that he copulate with them and thus "preserve his seed." Lot was so drunk that concerning each daughter "He knew not when she lay down nor when she arose" (Genesis 19:33, 35). Each became pregnant, one giving birth to the line of Moabites, the other to the line of Ammonites. Among the later Moabites is Ruth, the great grandmother of David. That she is a Moabite is stressed (Ruth 2:2, 6, 21; 4:5, 10) and that she is the great grandmother of David is also stressed (Ruth 4:17, 22). The disgraceful seduction of her distant ancestors confers no lasting opprobrium.[19] From Rehab, the prostitute who helped Joshua (Joshua: 2, 6), are descended, according to the rabbinical tradition, no fewer than ten prophets, among them Jeremiah and Ezekiel.[20]

In the Greek stories, by contrast, there is not a sense that it is the influence of a bad *upbringing* that causes the future suffering. And unlike "the iniquity of the parents" that causes an unbroken line of pain from generation to generation, the consequences of the evil-doing may skip generations, only to come back to bite some oblivious descendant. What is remarkable is that in the Greek stories, the persons upon whom the suffering falls generations later, when they learn of the fated doom, accept their fate calmly, as though it were fitting and proper for them to suffer.[21]

BATTLES OF CHAMPIONS AMONG DIVINITIES: GOD VS. BAAL; ATHENA VS. ARES

Probably nothing excites our imaginations more than a clash of great powers, and for this reason colossal battles will always command more attention than cattle raids. Since there are no greater powers than divinities, tales of

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their clashes *should* be spellbinding. And one might suppose that storytellers would try to prolong the narratives of such conflicts by means of every plot device. But biblical and classical accounts of duels between deities are concise. Brevity is their chief similarity. Here our biblical example of divine clashes will be the contest (perhaps "no-contest" would be a more fitting description) between God and Baal in 1 Kings; from classical literature, the battle between Athena and Ares in *Iliad* 21.

Elijah, in his first speech in the Bible, predicts a drought in Israel so absolute that there will not even be dew (1 Kings 17:1). The drought will punish the kingdom of Ahab because his wife Jezebel has successfully spread the worship of Baal among the people. After three years, God instructs Elijah to go before Ahab and announce that God will send rain (1 Kings 18:1). Elijah meets Ahab and challenges him and, through him, Baal, to a competition between four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal against just Elijah (1 Kings 18:18–24). Baal's four hundred and fifty priests have the first turn. They make an altar on which they put a young bull. They then call on Baal from morning until noon to put a fire under the bull, but there is no fire. Next they perform a dance on the altar. When nothing works, Elijah mocks them and their deity (1 Kings 18:27): "Call more loudly," he suggests. "Maybe Baal is chatting with other gods or is on his way over or is sleeping." The prophets call more loudly and gash themselves until they are covered with blood, but still there is no response (1 Kings 18:28). Next is Elijah's turn. He builds an altar with twelve stones, one for each tribe. He places wood on the altar and puts a bull on top. He gives instructions that four jars of water be poured on the bull and on the wood, and he repeats this order until a total of twelve jars have been poured. With so much water on bull and wood, it will be spectacularly difficult to ignite the fire. When Elijah prays to God, a fire immediately descends, burning not only the bull and the wood but also the stones. The people watching fall on the faces and confess that Elijah's God is God. Elijah orders the people to seize the prophets of Baal and slaughter them, which they do. Soon after, a heavy rain falls. The God of Elijah has shown his power by fire and water, the antithetical elements that figure prominently in the worship of Pagan gods.

The victory of the God of Israel is absolute. On a scale of 100, the scoreboard would read: God, 100; Baal, 0.

In Book 21 of the *Iliad,* the various gods, supporters either of the Greeks or Trojans, fight with one another. We observe here the essence of polytheism: the passions in the divine breasts are blown in diverse ways; there is no single-mindedness about them. They may be gods, but each is his own person, so to speak.[22] Of course, if all the gods were in agreement, there would be no battle for Homer to describe.

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As Zeus watches the gods fight, he laughs joyfully. He is not a peacemaker. The fact that he takes pleasure in the fighting shows not cruel callousness, but how inconsequential the battle is. Since the gods are deathless, nothing can destroy them. They are like Wily Coyote in the *Looney Tunes*. They can fall off a cliff, brush themselves off, and resume the action. Zeus is like a parent who watches her children dueling with water pistols at Jones Beach. The contest does not count; it is an "exhibition game."

Homer's battle is crafted in the image of the battles of men. It begins with verbal dueling,[23] as Ares, the god of violence and destruction, calls Athena "dog-fly," combining two lowly animals not usually associated with the goddess of wisdom and intelligence. He strikes her on her aegis, an object the poet says not even Zeus can defeat—omnipotence is not a quality of the Pagan gods, not even of the king of gods and men. Athena seizes a heavy boundary stone and drops it on Ares, boasting to be much mightier than he. Centuries later, when Homer became the grist for the grindstone of allegory,[24] one could read into Athena's remarks the idea that wisdom can defeat brawn, but Homer himself does not drive us to such. Athena mentions that Ares' mother Hera is plotting against her son Ares because he helped the Trojans, and we recall that the reason Hera hates the Trojans is that the prince of Troy, Paris, had chosen Aphrodite as the fairest of the goddesses instead of her.

In the middle of Achilles' battle scenes, when we see the warrior fight with savage irrationality and inflict hideous deaths on men whom he had once treated with chivalrous restraint, the poet provides heartrending vignettes of the men as they die. But the descriptions of the clashes between the gods show them as ludicrous and meaningless. Their battles provide amusement to Zeus, king of gods and men, in the same way that a youngster watches his friends play a videogame. There are lots of noisy pyrotechnics, but nothing of consequence happens. So too in the *Iliad*: once the battle between Ares and Athena is over, Homer returns to the fight among humans.

The God of Elijah is all business; Baal fails even to show up. The weakness of Baal is not portrayed by stumbling or by succumbing to a wound. It is revealed by his total absence. To show Elijah's authority, God had sent a drought. After his demonstration of power by igniting the altar fires, God sent a heavy rain. The effect on the people is immediate—they affirm that God is God. But there is an after-story to the duel between God and Baal. After God destroys the priests of Baal, Elijah flees from Jezebel's threats and travels a day into the wilderness. He sits under a broom-tree and begs God to let him die: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." Perhaps Elijah repented of his part in the slaughter of the priests of Baal, of not giving them a chance to accept God, whose miracles they had just observed. Alternatively, perhaps Elijah realized that though Israel fell to

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the ground in acceptance that God is God, their trust would be as short-lived as it had been in the time of Elijah's predecessors. Either way, there is no gaiety in the Bible's battle of deities. Unlike the Homeric duel, it is full of disquietude.

VOWING A TEMPLE: KING DAVID AND JULIUS CAESAR

The Pagan world abounded in temples, with many for the same deities; the Hebrews had only one temple (at a time) for their one God. A temple separates a holy space—distinguished by reverence toward the divine—from the workaday world.[25] Though the *space* demarcated by a temple is sacred, the less spiritual *motives* of competition, envy, and aggrandizement were often involved in the construction of ancient temples, just as they were in the construction of medieval cathedrals and modern synagogues.

In this section we shall explore the circumstances that surround the Temple to God that David offered and a temple to Venus promised by Julius Caesar.

In Exodus there is a lengthy description (chapters 35–31 and 35–40) of how the ark to enclose the tablets of the Ten Commandments was to be built. Though the description itself is not especially clear, it is plain that the size of the ark made transporting it a wearisome business. Once David had defeated the Philistines and recovered the ark from them, he decided to transfer it to Jerusalem from Kiriath-jearim in a festive celebration "with songs, and with harps, and with lutes, and with drums, and with cymbals, and with pipes" (2 Samuel 6:5). The ark was en route in a wagon when the oxen shook the load and Uzzah, trying to steady it, was struck dead (2 Samuel 6:7). Because David was angry at God for killing Uzzah, he delayed going on to Jerusalem for three months.

Once back in his palace and relaxing after his exertions, David reflected on the discrepancy between his luxurious surroundings and those of God's ark, and he conveyed his thoughts to Nathan (2 Samuel 7:2–3). In the night, the word of God told Nathan that a temple would be built by David's son, not by David himself (2 Samuel 7:12–13). When David died, his son Solomon did build the temple. When it was completed and the ark installed, the elders of Israel, heads of the tribes, and men of the army attended the dedication (1 Kings 8:1–2). Solomon offered a prayer to God and blessed the people as everyone enjoyed a feast that included the sacrifice of twenty-two thousand oxen and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep (1 Kings 8:63).

During the last year of his successful campaigns in Gaul, as Caesar contemplated a return to Rome, he began designing a new forum to glorify his name.

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He hired Cicero as his agent to acquire land by the Capitoline and Quirinal Hills. While Caesar was engaged in fighting Pompey at Pharsalus in 48 BCE, he vowed that if he defeated Pompey, he would dedicate a temple in his new forum to Venus Victrix ("Conqueress"). Since Caesar believed that he was descended from Venus, the temple would show that she had helped one of her own family and that he had expressed appropriate gratitude (Appian, *The Civil Wars* 2.68–69).[26] On the night before the battle, a number of omens in Pompey's camp set off a panic among the troops, which Pompey at length quieted. During the night, Pompey dreamed of also dedicating a temple to Venus Victrix and, as a result, entered the battle as if he had already won. In Appian's account, it seems as though Venus herself gave the dream to Pompey to induce this wildly deleterious overconfidence. Caesar won the battle and kept his promise. In September, 46, at the conclusion of his extraordinary quadruple triumph, he dedicated the new temple in his forum.[27]

In a moment of repose after the task of moving the ark with the misfortunes that it entailed—Uzzah's death (2 Samuel 6:7) and David's humiliating offense toward and marital rupture with Michal (2 Samuel 6:20–23)—David contrasted the solid walls of his palace with the flimsy curtains that protected the ark. He did not actually mention the construction of a temple to Nathan, but the prophet intuited what was in David's mind and advised the king to do as he desired. A night vision came to Nathan saying (2 Samuel 7:4–9): "Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Shall *you* build me a house for *me* to dwell in? ... In all places where I have walked among all the children of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying: Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" The message the prophet was to deliver is quite a surprise. I have put the words *you* and *me* in italics to try to catch the tone of indignation God had for David's presumptuousness in wanting to build a temple. God reminded the human king of his preeminent action on behalf of the Hebrew people, taking them out of Egypt, from which time he has neither had nor needed a house. A tent and tabernacle have been sufficient. Nor, the vision continued, did God ever suggest to any leader of Israel that such a house (i.e., temple) be constructed. God then told David what he did for him personally—lifted him from a lowly shepherd, defeated his enemies, and made him famous. In short, David's plan for a temple received a stern rebuff from God, who unequivocally reminded David that God, not David was responsible for David's rise to glory.

While Julius Caesar's promise of a temple to Venus also arose from a sense of self-importance, in some ways the offer showed an element of humility not found in the Hebrew king. This is of course ironic, since Julius Caesar may have believed himself a god. (Whether he did or not, he was later declared

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one by his heir Octavian and by the Roman senate.)[28] Unlike David's offer, Caesar's did not spring from a sense of living more comfortably than a deity but came from a sense of dependence. Caesar's promise to build a temple was contingent on the god's granting him success in battle. It was a contract that offered a proposed payment for a service. Thus the vow fit into the pattern of Pagan petitionary prayers, with their promises of new offerings or reminders of previous ones. A temple, because of its expense and complexity, is a spectacular offering able to be conferred only by a spectacular individual. Temples in Rome were not anonymous gifts but customarily bore inscriptions[29] that gave those making the dedications great glory. In offering a temple in return for victory, Caesar was like his ancestor Romulus, who, within the earshot of his soldiers, once had vowed a temple to Jupiter in exchange for victory (Livy, *History of Rome* 1.12). Immediately, "as if the prayer were heard," reports Livy, the Romans fought with renewed courage.[30]

Just before King David died, he addressed his people to announce the wealth he would provide for the construction of the temple. He also asked who else would contribute (1 Chronicles 29:1–9). The princes of the tribes of Israel responded with enthusiasm and lavish gifts. The people and their king rejoiced at the generous offers.

The reaction of the *God* of Israel to David's proposal of a temple was in unique contrast to that of the Pagan gods, who never demurred when a temple was suggested.[31] But the sameness of the Hebrew *people* to everyone else was shown by their desire for a temple. When the people of Israel learned about the plans for a temple, they responded with enthusiasm, just as the Athenians did to the scheme of the Sicilian Expedition: they were carried away by the cost and flamboyance of the project. Herein perhaps, a difference with the Pagans is intimated. For Israel, the building of the temple, though principally the work of Solomon, was a *corporate* project, not the dedication of a single individual, as it was for Caesar and Romulus. But the underlying motive in both the Pagan and biblical cases was a desire for glory.

PORK AND PROHIBITED FOODS: GOD AND CYBELE

Like most people ever, ancient peoples knew almost nothing or absolutely nothing about religions other than their own. In the middle to late Hellenistic period, when gentiles became acquainted with Jews, the features of Judaism that they learned about were the ones that seemed most bizarre—the observation of the Sabbath, circumcision, and the prohibition against eating pork. Here we shall examine the dietary prohibition against pork. Though other foods are prohibited in Judaism, the meat of porcine breeds is the most famous, the most observed, and the most emblematic of all Jewish dietary

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prohibitions. The journalist Shmarya Rosenberg tells about some of his orthodox Jewish friends who regularly eat non-Kosher Chinese food that includes shrimp (a non-Kosher food) but excludes pork. "We would *never* eat pork," he quotes his friends saying.[32]

The pig, in western culture, has for the most part been an animal of humor and scorn. There is nothing positive about pigs in Glaucon's rejection of the ascetic city proposed by Socrates in the *Republic* (372d) as a "city of pigs" or the scene in Aristophanes' *Acharnians* (729–835) in which a starving Megarian disguises his daughters as pigs and tries to sell them to the comic hero Dikaiopolis to sacrifice at the Mysteries, a scene filled with obscene double entendres.[33]

In classical literature we find biological discussions of pigs that concern their habits, anatomy, and reproduction, along with a few metaphysical discussions of their place in the world. Perhaps the most significant of these is Cicero's in *On the Nature of the Gods* (2.160). Cicero's speaker Balbus has been giving a teleological account of the cosmos and is now discussing animals. Sheep, he says, serve the purpose of providing wool; dogs, of guarding us from strangers and employing olfactory keenness in helping us hunt; oxen, of being fastened to yokes and pulling our plows, and so on. When he comes to the pig, Balbus exclaims, "What purpose does it have except that I should eat it?" He quotes the Stoic philosopher Chrysippus as pointing out that what salt does for preserving other meats, *life* does for the pig—keeps it from going rancid (*On the Nature of the Gods* 2.160). Balbus ends his discussion with the conclusion that nature has provided the pig as the most prolific of animals *so that* human beings might have food. Plato, in a different context, suggests a similar view concerning the pig's plenitude. When in Book 2 of the *Republic* Socrates suggests that indecent tales like Zeus' castration of Cronus be suppressed, he adds that if the tales *must* be told, the hearers must be sworn to secrecy. He then appends the recommendation that the sacrifice at their gatherings should not be a pig but some very big and rare animal *so that as few people as possible will hear the story* (*Republic* 2.378a). From this statement, we can infer that, as suggested by the passage in *The Acharnians,* pigs were cheaply obtained and used as sacrificial, comestible, animals.[34]

What is not commonly known is that Judaism was not the only ancient religion to prohibit the eating of pork. In this section, in addition to the commandments in the Bible that prohibit pork, we shall look at the prohibition against eating it during the rites of the goddess Cybele as described by Julian in his *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods*. Though Julian was inspired by Plato, his prohibition is wholly different from Socrates' in the *Republic*.

In the laws granted to Noah after the flood, God had given all moving creatures (i.e., all animals) to humans to eat but had enjoined them from eating

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animals that were still alive (Genesis 9:3–4). In the Torah, God imposed on his people a limitation that excludes more than half the animal kingdom. The first injunction against eating pork occurs in Leviticus, among the rules to the Israelites concerning holiness, part of God's plan to make his nation a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6).[35]

The key term in this set of instructions is usually rendered as "unclean" (*tamé*), an English word that is perhaps a source of misinterpretation. *Tamé* does not have to do with an unsanitary, unhygienic, unwashed quality of the animals but with their lack of religious purity. Human beings can be rendered *tamé* because of what happens to them. For example, Jacob's sons tell Shechem and his father Hamor that the violation of the virginity of their sister Dinah has rendered her *tamé*, and they use this as the justification for their vengeance.[36] Some things can be *tamé* simply because God declares them so, and most uses of this term designate animals that are impure, either because like pigs they do not chew the cud (Leviticus 11:7) or, like the rock-badger, they do not have cloven hooves (Leviticus 11:5). In other words, God declares that these deficiencies indicate "uncleanness." In some circumstances, people become unclean for not having properly completed a ritual or just for being in the wrong place at the wrong time, as in the case of a Nazirite who happens to be near someone who suddenly drops dead (Numbers 6:7–11). Leviticus is completely silent about why certain features are *tamé*. In the postbiblical period, the rabbinic tradition and academic thinkers have offered numerous explanations.[37]

A second account of the prohibition (Deuteronomy 14:1–8) commences with an explicit reminder that the Israelites are special to God, that they are his children and therefore holy. The list of prohibited foods is introduced by a reminder of purity concerning *the dead*. In Leviticus, the rules separating men from the dead had applied only to priests; here the rules extend to all Israelites. The Israelites are to be unlike other nations in numerous ways, and these include their rites of mourning: they are prohibited from the ritual of shaving to honor the dead. Concerning dietary prohibitions, Deuteronomy now uses a term not in Leviticus: "abomination" (*towevah*). The meaning is clear—what makes the *action* of eating something impure is the animal itself: "You shall not eat any abominable thing."

Towevah is rare in the Bible, occurring only sixteen times, half in the Prophets, where it is a rhetorically strong expression for a "really bad thing." Outside the Prophets, its first use is in Genesis, when Joseph's Hebrew brothers eat by themselves in Joseph's palace because it is "an abominable thing" for the Egyptians to eat with Hebrews (Genesis 43:32). For Hebrew readers, the Egyptian feeling would be offensive or inexplicable or, at the very least, odd. Their reaction would, I think, invest the word in its context with a culturally localized, relativistic meaning—that what is "abominable" for Egyptians is not truly, not

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absolutely abominable. When *towevah* is used in Leviticus of a man lying with a man as with a woman (18:22 and 20:13), this word is perhaps chosen because it reveals what the author took to be God's feeling toward it. Perhaps the author of the text—familiar with the surrounding cultures, in which men lay with each other in the manner prohibited here—was using a term to enjoin the Hebrews to be different from others. The two uses of *towevah* in Deuteronomy (7:26 and 24:4) seem also to separate Israelite customs from those of others, one referring to the taking home of graven images and the other to a man's re-marrying his first wife whom he had divorced for some unspecified indecency after her second husband has died. In both cases the rules that apply to Hebrews would make them different from others, though why they should be different is not explained. Why something is abominable remains mysterious; the governing principle is God's categorical declaration.[38]

In the first part of the fourth century of the Christian era it was not yet certain, even after the deathbed conversion of Emperor Constantine, that Christianity would become the dominant religion of the Roman Empire. One member of the imperial family who acceded to the throne, the bearded Julian—vilified by Christians as "the Apostate" but lauded by others, as "Julian the Philosopher"—rejected Christianity and embraced Paganism, despite his Christian education, and when he became emperor attempted to restore Paganism as the religion of the empire. In his *Hymn to the Magna Mater*, Julian tries to show the interconnectedness of the rites of Cybele and Neoplatonism. His work and that of Philo earlier and of Augustine and Aquinas later are analogous—endeavoring to show that the thought of their favorite philosophers Plato and Aristotle is consistent with their faiths.

Cybele, a goddess originally from Phrygia, was introduced into Rome toward the end of the Second Punic War (Livy, *History of Rome* 19.10). In the crisis of that war, the Romans consulted the Sibylline Books, a collection of oracular utterances in Greek hexameters assiduously preserved in Rome, and found a prophecy declaring that a foreign enemy that invaded Italy could be driven away if the goddess Cybele were brought from Phrygia to Rome. This goddess of earth and nature was worshipped in wild and emotional rituals, at times involving castration.[39] In Plato's *Crito*, when Socrates concludes that he should not escape from his prison cell as his friend has advocated, he says that the arguments he has just put forth seem to him so loud, like the noise made by the worshippers of Cybele, that he cannot hear anything else (*Crito* 54d). This is Socrates' affirmation that the arguments against escaping from Athens have reached deep into his entire being, including his emotions, and have taken complete hold of him.

Julian seems to have developed a deep antipathy toward Christianity and to have become a zealous Pagan, worshipping the Sun and Cybele, to both

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of whom he composed speeches (which despite being in prose are known as "hymns"). In the *Hymn to the Magna Mater*, Julian allegorizes features of Cybele in the manner of Neoplatonism, the philosophical school to which he belonged.[40]

At a certain point, Julian analyzes the foods that may be ritually consumed at the festival of Cybele (*Hymn to the Magna Mater* 174 ff.). Before taking up the animals that may and may not be eaten, he offers a general defense of the sacred ordinances about dietary regulations in response to anonymous objectors. One ordinance allows the eating of some meats but prohibits grains and fruits. The regulation is laughable, object Julian's opponents, who argue that grains and fruits are pure, not full of blood and noises (like bellowing or mewing animals), and, unlike animals, do not have ugly parts or feel pain. (This argument about pain is a remarkable—and rare—ancient expression of a moral consideration based on an animal's sensitivity to suffering.[41]) Julian's opponents find even more laughable the rule that vegetables that grow upwards may be eaten, but roots that grow downwards (like turnips) may not.

In defending these rules, Julian first reviews the Neoplatonic conception of the universe, in which the earth is the lowest of things, the farthest away from the divine.[42] "Evil," he quotes Plato as saying, "is exiled from the gods and moves on the earth." Cybele does not allow her worshippers to eat foods growing under the earth,[43] he explains, because she wants human beings to turn their eyes toward the heavens. Fruit that does grow upwards, like some varieties of figs, may be eaten because by growing upwards they are pure (since they are moving away from the earth). In the same way, he adds, it is permissible to eat the part of a turnip that grows upward, just not the part below the earth. Fish should not be eaten, and especially not during the sacred rites. The reason is twofold: first, fish are not commonly sacrificed because they do not require breeding and care, as do sheep and cattle, and hence have much less value; and second, like plants that grow under the earth, they belong to the lower depths, and people who long for the higher realms of the cosmos should avoid this lower kind of food.

Julian now arrives at his views on eating pigs at the rites of Cybele (*Hymn to the Magna Mater* 177b–d).[44] The pig's flesh is coarse and impure, he says, because it belongs to the earth—a very Neoplatonic notion, in which things sublunary are evil. And like the plants prohibited during sacred rites, the pig is earthbound, never, by its own volition, looking at the sky during its life. Julian adds that it not only lacks a desire to see the sky but cannot see it because its anatomy prevents it from so doing.[45] For these reasons Cybele has prohibited its consumption during her rites.

In the paragraph that follows, Julian summarizes the justification for all dietary prohibitions. In general, he says, we may eat whatever nature has made available for us to obtain;[46] but when it comes to eating during sacred rites, we

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need to choose only those foods that will contribute to the salvation of our souls (*Hymn to the Magna Mater* 177d–178b). Since foods eaten all year would have the same nutritional value during the sacred season, the consciousness of the prohibition and its motives would turn people's attention to things spiritual.

Prohibitions of foods by certain groups were common in antiquity as they are now, and the range of prohibited items was similarly vast. The passages in Leviticus and Deuteronomy enumerate the provisions by which certain animals are pure or impure but offer no explanations of why the combination of cloven hooves and chewing the cud is pure and why a deficiency in either of these, impure. The declaration that animals without these characteristics are abominable or loathsome is possibly an emphatic way of asserting the edict. That God finds such animals abominable is no doubt significant, but the assertion is not an exegesis. If we revise the question of Plato's *Euthyphro* and instead of asking whether something is pious because the gods love it or whether they love it because it is pious (*Euthyphro* 10 a-b) to ask whether something is abominable because God finds it so or whether God finds it so because it is abominable, we come no closer to an answer. Still, the Bible does not give the impression that God judges the consumption of pork to reach the same level of depravity as idol worship, for he does not punish or command warfare upon non-Hebrews who do not follow the dietary laws; these laws are for his people alone.

When Julian offers an explanation of why certain foods are prohibited during the rites of Cybele, he analyzes the rules in accordance with what he takes to be the intrinsic values of the plant or animal and how these values affect the nature of man. It is a commonplace in classical thought that human beings stand upright in order to look toward the heavens and in the regular celestial motions find a pattern for their lives.[47] The derision that Julian expresses for foods that grow beneath the surface or for pigs that never look at the sky except in terror when they are forced on their backs for slaughter offers an ethical justification for the prohibition: the foods are unworthy of being eaten in the worship of so important a deity as Cybele.

For Julian, *why* pigs should not be eaten is an essential part of the prohibition, perhaps because knowing will motivate people to aim at the intelligible spheres. For the author of the Bible there is no need for people to understand the motive; the command, to paraphrase Keats, "is all they know on earth and all they need to know."

CONCLUSIONS

Jacob, the grandson of the man with whom God had made the covenant requiring circumcision, never seems to have forgiven his sons for abusing

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the ritual in their vengeance against Shechem. David's collection of 100 foreskins at King' Saul's order, though a military exploit, may have retained some of the stigma of the earlier abuse. In classical culture, the wooden horse was remembered as a triumph of deft enterprise, akin to throwing a curveball or stealing home plate in baseball, not as a duplicitous misuse of ritual.

In the Hebrew Bible, what is inherited from parents is not guilt or responsibility, but iniquity. The iniquity visited upon children comes from a bad upbringing by bad parents, who, because they do not observe the first five commandments, do not exemplify them to their children. Thus the children, from their nurture, inherit their parents' iniquity.[48] In the Greek system, cosmic justice is a zero sum game. If someone commits a crime, a penalty must be paid, even generations later. Moreover, *any* debt owed to a divinity must be made good. When in Euripides' *Alcestis*, the Fates decreed that it was time for Admetus to die, he could offer his wife or a parent as a substitute—*someone* had to balance the scale of justice with a death. The metaphor of the gods' scale in Homer and Aeschylus is emblematic of this calculating feature of Greek culture.[49]

The biblical God, like the Stoic Sage, was wholly aloof from the lower goods of glory, great houses, and gifts, and so people who prayed to him emphasized their observance of the commandments. Pagans who prayed to their gods in the classical period stressed the benefits the gods had derived or would derive from offerings. The postclassical prayer of Lucius in Apuleius' *Golden Ass* (*Metamorphosis* 11.2) aimed at a Cybele who was much like the Standard Model of God and probably very unlike the gods in the prayers of everyday folk. The people of the Bible expected God to hear the personal prayers they directed to him.

Julian, in his justification of the prohibition against pork described a Cybele who was just like the abstract, remote, Neoplatonic version to whom Lucius had prayed. The God of the Bible is not a philosopher, and the prohibition of pork there, like so much else, is mysterious and, to minds Hellenized to examining all things, provocative of creative exegesis.

NOTES

1. This is the principle of *do ut des*—"I give so that you may give."

2. The Jewish Publication Society version translates *vayaanu benei yakov* as "The sons of Jacob answered," but the Hebrew is simply "Sons of Jacob answered." The difference is significant. If the text had used the article, the implication would be that *all* the sons had spoken with guilt. The absence of an article would suggest that only some had answered in this way. Given Jacob's dying condemnation of only Simeon and Levi, it is possible that they are the ones responding with guile.

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3. Louis Feldman ("Philo, Pseudo-Philo, Josephus, and Theodotus on the Rape of Dinah," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 94 [2004]) says that Josephus emphasizes some elements in order to create more sympathy for Jacob's family (262) and to make Shechem look worse (263). Like Josephus, later interpreters re-make the story in terms of their own ages and concerns. For a good survey of Christian interpretations from 150–1600 CE of this and other stories of violence in the Hebrew Bible, see Joy A. Schroeder, *Dinah's Lament: The Biblical Legacy of Sexual Violence in Christian Interpretation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.

4. Robert L. Cohn observes that Jacob judges his sons to have drawn a line in the sand by their actions. Cohn acknowledges the "overkill" of the vengeance upon Shechem but is sympathetic to what he describes as the underlying motive—a resistance to marrying outside the clan ("Negotiating [with] the Natives: Ancestors and Identity in Genesis," *The Harvard Theological Review* 96 [2003] 157–58). Any ambiguity about exogamy raised by the marriages of Simeon and Judah to outsiders is settled by the deaths of the children from those unions, Cohn says, and he sums up his interpretation with the pithy comment that "ethics cannot trump ethnicity." Like Cohn, Helena Zlotnick Sivan sees the episode as a rejection of intermarriage; but, perhaps more significantly, she sees it as a way of eliminating the possibility of a thirteenth patriarch, and it is for this reason, not for treating Dinah like a harlot, she says, that Shechem and his clan are murdered ("The Rape of Cozbi [Numbers XXV]," *Vetus Testamentum* 51 [2001] 73–74).

5. Chaya Greenberger, "Gerotranscendence Through Jewish Eyes," *Journal of Religion and Health* 51 (2012) 289, suggests that by dispersing the descendants of Simeon and Levi Jacob is trying "to dilute" the zealousness of their tribes.

6. The Horse, according to Virgil, is simply the final, most successful successful duplicity. As Sophia Papaioannou shows, the Iliadic murals in Dido's Carthage portray the entire Trojan War, epitomized in the Trojan Horse, as a series of "deceits" ("Vergilian Diomedes Revisited: The Re-Evaluation of the *Iliad*," *Mnemosyne* 53 (2000) 200.

7. This is not the only sacrilege (as distinct from an abuse of a ritual) reported about the last days of the war. There is a story by Dictys of Cnossos *(Journal of the Trojan War* 4.11) that Paris and his brother Deiphobos murdered Achilles in the Temple of Apollo, where he had come to finalize certain arrangements to marry Polyxena, the daughter of Priam and Hecuba.

8. H. N. Bialik and Y. H. Ravnitzky, *Book of Legends/Sefer Ha-Aggadah: Legends from the Talmud and Midrash* (New York: Schoken Books, 1992) 349.

9. For a correction of the word *visited*, see below, 218.

10. This slowness of justice is pointed out by Solon in Poem 13.

11. There had been a foreshadowing of Samuel's relationship in Exodus 6:21, when Korah's birth was noted.

12. For the historiographical implications of the story, see *Discourses* 16–30.

13. On Cyrus, see Chapter 4, "Rescuers of the Children."

14. For Gyges' attempt to avoid wrongdoing, see above, Chapter 4, "Resistance to Wrongdoing." The historian emphasizes by an *argumentum a fortiori* the shame that attached to being seen naked: it was a disgrace *even* for a man (*History* 1.10).

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15. Tr. Richmond Lattimore, Aeschylus. *Oresteia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947).

16. Another example of inherited punishment occurs in the sequence of stories about Egyptian kings in Book 2 of Herodotus that deals with Rhampsinitus to Mycerinus. For a discussion of the tale and its odd twist see Chapter 6, "Incremental Learning."

17. Perhaps it goes without saying that the guilty party is the *efficient* cause of the crime—that is, he has voluntarily committed it. If a strong man dropped an unwilling captive from a tenth floor balcony onto a pedestrian in the street, the dropped person would be the material cause of the pedestrian's death. But he would not be *guilty* of a crime. The guilt would fall on the strong man who dropped the individual.

18. For Rodney K. Duke, the issue is not one of vengeance but of purging. Defending the biblical statement, he absolves God in part because the Israelites of the Hebrew Bible themselves did not blame God and because one can find even today examples of collective, multi-generational responsibility. We should not blame God either, he says, because God's acts of "community disciplinary purging do not indicate the final status of the individuals involved in terms of eternal life or ultimate destruction" ("'Visiting the Guilt of the Fathers on the Children': Is God Immoral?" *Evangelical Quarterly* 87 [2015] 363).

19. There is a tradition in the Talmud (*Yebamoth* 76b, 77a) that a certain Doeg claimed that David could not be king because he was descended from a Moabite. Doeg was overruled by the intervention of Samuel.

20. Judith Baskin, "The Rabbinic Transformations of Rahab the Harlot," *Notre Dame English Journal* 11 (1979) 141–57; David J. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision* (Tübingen : J. C. B. Mohr, 1988) 528–29, note h.

21. Cf. Herodotus 1.91 and 7.137. Perhaps the reason for the acceptance is that the concept of postponed punishment had been in circulation for so long that it was accepted as the way the world worked. Renaud Gagné argues, against earlier scholars, that the concept is found as early as in Homer, though there only in oaths ("The Poetics of *exôleia* in Homer," *Mnemosyne* 63 [2010] 353–80). When in 1 Kings Ahab repents, God tells Elijah the Tishbite that because Ahab has repented, he will bring evil not in Ahab's days but in the days of Ahab's son. While there is in this biblical text a parallel in a postponement of evil, the details are in accord with what has been described here. Ahab has been a poor father and has brought up his son in an environment where he would not have learned goodness. In this way Ahab's iniquity is visited upon his son.

22. No ancient work shows the inconsistencies of polytheism better than Plato's *Euthyphro,* which discusses how what is pleasing to one deity may be displeasing to another, and so the same action might be both pious and impious. Christian saints, like the Pagan gods, had a local jurisdiction. In Dante's *Paradiso*, the question of saints differing in their opinions or envying another's closer position to God in the Empyrean is avoided by assuming that they all occupy the same place (*Paradiso* 4, especially 4.27–39) and conform to the will of God (*Paradiso* 3. 79–87).

23. The specialized name for such verbal contests, once reserved for the contests among Scottish poets, is *flyting,* a subject much discussed among Homer scholars

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(see, for example, Hilary Susan Mackie, *Talking Trojan: Speech and Community in the Iliad* [Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996] 55; also Richard P. Martin, *The Language of Heroes: Speech and Performance in the* Iliad [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989] 68–75).

24. For a full treatment, see Robert Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) 21 ff. (on the Stoics), 45 (on Philo), *passim* on the Neoplatonists, and 260 on Augustine. The subject is also exceptionally well treated in I. Ramelli and G. Lucchetta, *Allegoria.* Volume 1: *L'età classica* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2004). On the first century CE Heraclitus, who claimed that Homer's stories about the gods "stress edifying concealed messages," see, also by Lamberton, "Homer in Antiquity," in *A New Companion to Homer* ed. Ian Morris and Barry Powell [Leiden: Brill, 1997] 52. On the practice of rendering Greek poetry philosophically correct, see, J. Tate, "The Beginnings of Greek Allegory," *Classical Review* 41 (1927) 214–15, and, also by Tate, "Plato and Allegorical Interpretation [Part1]," *Classical Quarterly* 23 (1929) 142–54 and for [Part 2], 24 (1930) 1–10.

25. That rules were instituted against urination and defecation in Pagan temple precincts (Apostolos N. Athanassakis, *Hesiod, Theogony, Works and Days, Shield* second edition [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004] 105) suggests that such bodily functions were at one time not considered irreverent or that what was considered respectful treatment underwent a change or that some individuals flouted the conventions. It is a principle of legislation that corrective rules (as distinct from ritual laws) are generally not implemented unless a need arises. If this principle be true, it would suggest behaviors that the Noahide laws aimed at correcting as well as those that the Mosaic law was to correct or forestall.

26. Caesar changes the name to Venus *Genetrix* ("Bearer of Offspring") to stress his family's descent from the goddess.

27. Dio Cassius, 43.22.1–3. For a description of the temple and a photograph of a model of the Forum Iulium with the temple in the center, see John W. Stamper, *The Architecture of Roman Temples: The Republic to the Middle Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 94.

28. On how Octavian used the appearance of a comet to bolster the notion that Caesar was a god—a maneuver that enabled him to be declared the "Son of the Divine Julius," see Josiah Osgood, *Caesar's Legacy: Civil War and the Emergence of the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 239–40.

29. Katherine E. Welch, *The Roman Amphitheatre: From Its Origins to the Colosseum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 323 n. 40.

30. Not all such petitionary prayers are successful. When in the *Odyssey* (12.345–47) Odysseus' men eat the cattle of the Helios, god of the sun, they promise to build the god a temple upon their return to Ithaca. This prayer fails, all Odysseus' crew perish, and we can surmise that the temple was never built.

31. Perhaps the *locus classicus* in the Bible of God's uniqueness is Jeremiah 10:6 and the verses that follow (10–16).

32. *Tablet,* 10, 2012 (http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/87719/forbidden-food). Rosenberg adds that his friends use special dishes and silverware when eating the Chinese food to preserve the Kosher status of their regular table

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service. We find here an ironic inversion in the concept of *holiness*, a term that refers to the specialness afforded things sacred: the "special" items are used for the non-Kosher food.

33. The scene is analyzed in depth by Ionnis Konstantakos, "'My Kids for Sale': The Megarian's scene in Aristophanes' *Acharnians* (729–835) and Megarian Comedy," *Logeion: Journal of Ancient Theatre* 2 (2012) 121–66. For the obscene double entendres, see Jeffrey Henderson, *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975) 132.

34. This Socratic recommendation, with its implication about the pig's low-cost has prompted me to suggest a possible motive of why pigs are not kosher. By permitting the consumption of expensive animals like cows, goats, and so on, but prohibiting low-cost ones like pigs, God, by the invisible hand of economic law, sees to it that fewer animals will be eaten and the goal of vegetarianism (as implied in Genesis 1:29–30) more nearly approached. This hypothesis is corroborated by Rashi's observation that "impure [i.e., non kosher], animals and beasts outnumber the pure ones, for in all places, [Scripture] made individual mention of the fewer" (*Rashi: The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*, vol. Devarim/Deuteronomy, ed. Yisrael Herczeg [Brooklyn, NY: Meshorah Publications 2001] 151). Rashi supports the idea that the goal of the prohibition is to reduce the animals available for consumption. According to Maimonides (*Mishneh Torah* Book 5, The Book of Holiness, *Sefer Kedushah*; Treatise 2 on Forbidden Foods, Ma'achalot Assurot; Chapter 1, sec 8), only ten animals are permitted for eating: three domesticated animals—the ox, the sheep and the goat—and seven wild animals—the hart, the gazelle, the roebuck, the wild goat, the pygarg [an animal of uncertain identity], the antelope, and the mountain sheep.

35. See the discussion of "kingdom of priests" in Chapter 4, "Divinely Chosen Peoples."

36. See above, "Abuse of Religion."

37. Suggestions range from the hygienic to the philosophical. As Mary Douglas observes (*Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966] 43–49), interpreters tend to fall into two groups, one that sees the rules as arbitrary in themselves but asserts that by requiring self-control they serve an ethical purpose, and the other that sees the rules as symbolic. As an example of the latter Douglas cites the first century Christian Barnabus, who saw clean and unclean animals as different types of human beings. Douglas also points out a third, less common group, which believes that since the basic meaning of "holy" is "separate," by giving these rules to his chosen people, God is making his people distinct. Philo (*On the Special Laws* 4.100) combines the moral and the medical when he praises pigs as among the animals whose flesh is tastiest and fattest and thus produces gluttony, which causes all sorts of illnesses. Of those who claim that the purpose of the laws is to separate Jews from foreign influences, Douglas points out that they do not have an architectonic principle to explain why some heathen practices, like sacrifices, are permitted, while others are not (48). Douglas' preferred principle depends on a categorical purity, a taxonomic clarity: the various animals must be distinct. Hybrids are not permitted. Cloven-hoofed and cud-chewing animals are the proper food for pastoralists (54). Animals that do not meet these criteria are

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impure. Clean animals are those that conform to the pattern of their class and those that do not are unclean. Lizards and moles, whose forefeet are hand-like, are ambiguous in their class and so are unclean. What Douglas is attempting, like others before her and assuredly after her (including me in n. 34 above), is to find a plausible principle when none is obvious. The text seems to invite readers to do so: perhaps the Bible promotes this sort of reflection as a fundamental part of the process of being holy. To paraphrase Socrates, we might say that an unexamined holiness, at least in the later Jewish tradition, is not holiness at all.

38. There have been many recent developments of Douglas' theory (discussed in the previous note) that mixing things from different categories—combining wool and linen, plowing with an ox and a donkey, sowing different seeds in the same field, lying with a man as with a woman, wearing the clothing or using the tools of the other sex—renders something an abomination. On this subject generally see, Joan E. Taylor, *The Body in Biblical, Christian and Jewish Texts* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014) 30–35; on mixing things of human males and females, Harry A. Hoffner, "Symbols for Masculinity and Femininity: Their Use in Ancient near Eastern Sympathetic Magic Rituals," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 85 (1966) 326-34; Daniel Boyarin, "Are there Any Jews in 'The History of Sexuality'?" *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5 (1995) 342–43. Would this principle have applied to adding herbal spice to meats? Can the written alphabet, which consists of only *consonants* be a way of distinguishing the phonemes? It seems to me impossible that *all* mixing of things different could have been prohibited, and so the meaning of *towevah* (תּוֹעֵבָה) perhaps originally might have conveyed a less judgmental meaning like "not acceptable mixture" or, as in Ezekiel, "offensive act," instead of the exceedingly judgmental "abomination." For a discussion of the concept, and the word, especially in separating foreigners from entering the sanctuary of the Temple, see Mark A Awabdy, "Yhwh Exegetes Torah: How Ezekiel 44:7–9 Bars Foreigners from the Sanctuary," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131 (2012) 685–703.

39. Romans knew little about Cybele and her rituals when they allowed the religion into Rome and were entirely ignorant about the castration of the Cybelene priests, a mutilation not permitted to Roman citizens (Robert Turcan, *The Cults of the Roman Empire* [Oxford: Blackwell: 1996] 37). Two and a half centuries later, under Claudius, when restrictions were placed on Jewish worship (Dio Cassius, *History*, 60.6), the worship of Cybele was encouraged, even to the extent of allowing Romans as eunuch priests (John Ferguson, *The Religions of the Roman Empire* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 1970] 28). For a full discussion of the rite of self-castration and of the reception of the cult in Rome (including stories that the Roman priests threw their excised genitals into a shaft), see Lynn E. Roller, *In Search of God the Mother: The Cult of Anatolian Cybele* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

40. In the fourth century, Neoplatonism was a major intellectual force, not always a positive one, affecting Pagans and Christians both. See my *Philosophy in the Ancient World: An Introduction* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005) 332–53.

41. There are a few implicit expressions of sympathy toward animals in the literature. The poor treatment of Odysseus' dog Argos evokes pity in modern readers and perhaps did so in ancient ones also, though the mistreatment of Odysseus' dog may be a poetic way for Homer to portray the disrespect afforded his master. The sorrow

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of Catullus' lover Lesbia for her deceased sparrow may show a genuine grief for a pet, or it may be Catullus' way of characterizing his mistress' delicacy or the poet's own sexual difficulties (on the latter, see Erich Segal, *The Death of Comedy* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001] 87). In general, antiquity shows very little concern for animals as sentient creatures whose pain need be taken seriously. See, on this topic, Richard Ryder, *Animal Revolution: Changing Attitudes Towards Speciesism* (London: Berg Publishers, 2000); Gary Steiner, *Anthropocentrism and its Discontents: The Moral Status of Animals in the History of Western Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005); and Angus Taylor, *Animals and Ethics* (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 3rd ed. 2009).

42. On Julian's Neoplatonism, see Gilhus, 146–47.

43. According to the food writer Bill Buford, interviewed about a famous chef in Lyons for a podcast on *The New Yorker Out Loud,* some cooks in France do not use a cutting board to slice onions and garlics for reasons that are very much like the one described by Julian ("Bill Buford and John Bennet on French Cooking," *The New Yorker Out Loud*. The New Yorker, July 24, 2013. web. August 17, 2013, at 00:17:30–00:18:12).

44. Peter Schäfer (*Judeophobia* 239 n. 34) suggests that Julian is borrowing from Plutarch's essay in *Table Talk,* "Whether the Jews Abstained From Swine's Flesh Because They Worshipped that Creature, or Because They Had an Antipathy Against It" (*Table Talk* 4.5), in which Plutarch has two people debate the possible motives for the Jewish prohibition of pork. Lamprias, the philosopher who argues for a Jewish antipathy, explains that the flesh of the pig causes leprosy and scabs, that the animal eats in a filthy way, wallowing in dung, and that because of its anatomy the pig cannot see the sky, its eyes fixed on the ground. He adds that when a pig is being taken to slaughter it stops squealing when it is placed on its back, for this is the moment when it sees the sky for the first time and, as a result, it is stricken with terror. He also adds that in story Adonis was slain by a boar. This last addition seems to have nothing to do with Judaism and may result from a corruption of the text. I should like to suggest that it comes from a confusion by Lamprias (or Plutarch) of Adonis, the object of Aphrodite's lust, and *Adonai,* the word Jews use to call on God instead of pronouncing the tetragrammaton. Since *Adonis* may be a borrowing from a Semitic word for "lord," the confusion would not be surprising.

45. As an example of the ancient practice of finding moral reasons for anatomy, see Plato, *Timaeus passim* but especially 75a–c, and for a lesson from a medical writer, Galen, *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body,* tr. Margaret Tallmadge May (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968) 1.241. I suspect that we can find this Hellenic strain of thought in the authors of the Targum, the paraphrase in Aramaic for Jewish congregants when Aramaic was replacing Hebrew as the common language, and it may well be another form of submerged influence. According to the *Jerusalem Targum* on Genesis 1:27, a man was made up of 248 members and 365 veins, corresponding to the 248 commandments and 365 prohibitions in the Torah [the citation is in Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* 173]. This would be, I think, a Jewish version of "the Vitruvian Man" as drawn later by Leonardo, in which a set of geometric circles

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and squares show how the cosmic order (as well as the proportions of ideal architecture) is reflected in human anatomy—a notion derived from Plato.

46. Perhaps Julian is borrowing from Aristotle, *Politics* 1258a37.

47. A lovely teleological expression of human upright posture is found in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, where the poet describes the creation of human beings (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.76–78).

48. I once joked with a Darwinian biologist that I had discovered how acquired characteristics are inherited. When he reacted with indignation, I explained that John D. Rockefeller had acquired an immense amount of wealth, which was then inherited by his descendants into the third and fourth generation. It is in this *non-biological* sense that iniquity is inherited.

49. We may think of *Iliad* 8.68–77 or *Persians* 345–47.

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Chapter 6

Conclusions

As Aristotle observed, human subjects admit much less precision than mathematical ones. Though we can comprehend abstractly the limits of particular qualities, in breathing individuals we observe a spectrum of degrees, with virtually all people falling between the extremes. The extremes, striking and pure, we leave isolated as platonic ideas, as abstractions not found in the actual world. So the foggy, fluid, faltering conclusions here will not offer the ineluctability of plain geometry, and they will bear the ungainly encumbrance of a good many qualifying "perhapses." Here follow, with artless straightforwardness, some of the conclusions from the studies in this book.

MYSTERIOUSNESS

Though the word *mystery* is of Greek origin, it is biblical literature that everywhere evokes mysteriousness, for its most gripping stories often lack clear and apparent causes. It also lacks the harmonizing of discordant narrative threads into tidy codas—the artistic closures we have been trained to look for in traditional western literature.

Greek art is marked by a sense of a "whole," which Aristotle defines in the *Poetics* as that which has a beginning, middle, and end, none of which should be obscure. The beginning of a story should lack nothing that is essential to the plot. It is often exceedingly difficult to ascertain just what that beginning is, and one of the signs of genius is to locate the beginning convincingly. Thus Homer begins the *Iliad* with the conditions relevant to his theme of anger; he begins the *Odyssey,* a poem about the return home after a war, with the situation in the protagonist's palace. In addition to the beginnings of stories, there are the beginnings of *actions*, and these too are often

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very difficult to find, perhaps more difficult in epics and histories that come from a long oral tradition than in original stories created by a single mind, for mythological and historical actions come enveloped in a very expansive context. Homer identifies the "beginning of the evil" for Patroclus at Troy; Herodotus, the "beginning of the evil" for the Greeks and the barbarians in the Persian War; Thucydides the "beginning of the evil" for the Greeks in the Peloponnesian War—all beginnings that require acumen to identify.[1] The beginning of a work of art, to be a beginning, must not start at the origin of the universe but at the first of a sequence of actions. In discussing a host's peach pie for next Tuesday's supper, one should not reach back to a history of flour, but one might mention a particular guest's fondness for this sort of pie. The "middle" must also be clear. The events before it must lead to it plausibly, and it must plausibly introduce what follows. The "end," the most important part of a whole, follows coherently from what has preceded and has nothing that *necessarily* comes next, not, of course, because the world comes to an end, but because the story's action has concluded—a marriage has been arranged, a murderer apprehended, the understudy of a suddenly indisposed actor successfully having performed a role. Classical literature, which implicitly obeyed these strictures before they were formalized, passed them along to the literature of the West. Motive, sequence, plot, character, reversal—all the features so carefully catalogued and elucidated by the critics from the fourth century BCE on—informed how authors wrote and how their audiences read.

The Bible was not constrained by such considerations, and, as far as we know, produced no Aristotle of its own to formalize its composition. Indeed, it seems almost to disdain such formalizing strictures. The very opening of Genesis—the word "in the beginning" (*bereshit*)—is bathed in difficulty, as is its translation.[2] Just as a parent cannot exist absolutely but must be the parent *of something*, so there cannot be a *beginning* by itself; it must be the beginning of *something*. Of what is the beginning in Genesis a beginning—of time, of matter, of human history, of what? The Bible does not seem to require that we worry over the issue, any more than we are to worry over the term "light," discussed earlier in this book, but it lies quiescent to puzzle readers alert to it. The story zips on with numerous unexplained matters, as both ingenuous children and learned commentators have observed.[3] A terrible crime is committed, but we never learn the motive. *Our* desire for a motive, to know why Cain murdered his brother, is itself perhaps a function of classical influence. Aristotle puts the final cause, the purpose of an action at the heart of his theory of human behavior. To judge an action, we must know what the behavior aimed at. Western jurisprudence is based on motive, as is literary criticism: when we evaluate a novel, we do so largely on the basis of whether the motives of the characters are true to nature and to their circumstances. The Bible, however, often hides its characters' motives. We never learn why Cain did what he did. More importantly, we seldom learn the motives of *God*

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himself. Why does he destroy the people and other animals that he has created? Why does he confound the languages of Shinar? Why does he choose Abraham? Why does he choose the children of Abraham as his people? What, exactly, does he intend to find out or to teach by testing Abraham? We never find out, and *we* cannot be sure whether we are even supposed to ask or whether we do ask because of our classical orientation—because we are trained to look for motives and to assume that all human beings, by their genetical instincts, look for causes.

Biblical mysteriousness extends to prohibitions. Why is there a prohibition of pork? In the religion of Cybele, pork is also prohibited, and reasons are adduced to explain the prohibition—that the pig is an earthbound animal, its eyes always focused downwards, and so an animal unworthy of ingestion by a noble creature. With our limited knowledge of the ancient world, it is not possible to know for sure whether this explanation for the prohibition in the cult of Cybele is a later hypothesis by an apologist (as I suspect) or a rationale by the first to issue the prohibition. Since it is likely that most adherents of Cybele did not know the explanation brought forward by Julian, for *them* the ban was probably embedded in mystery. And indeed, in many Pagan practices, from the enigmatic oracular pronouncements to the religions of late antiquity, mysteries and secret initiation rites were de rigueur. But classical mysteriousness is different from that in biblical culture. In classical culture, the intentions of the gods may be discovered through the mediation of a priestess and oracular pronouncements; the rituals of mystery religions *were revealed* to initiates. Those wishing an explanation of apparently capricious divine actions can go to oracles and ask for one, as did Croesus and Mycerinus.[4] The biblical prophets—who serve as mediators between human beings and God—do not assume this job on their own initiative; they are chosen by God, without explanation for why they in particular are chosen; they are usually reluctant, sometimes even resistant, to assume this responsibility; and when they report what God tells them, they do not explain God's motives, as though God need not justify his will. The Bible does not lay out a divine program; it never tells us what is in the back of God's mind, as it were, and perhaps the pre-Talmudic audience did not seek this information. Perhaps the quest to understand the mind of God began when the Holy Land joined the intellectual world of the Mediterranean and echoed Democritus, who said, "I would rather show one cause than rule over the Persian Empire" (Democritus, frag. 118).

ANALYTICAL CALCULATION VS. PRECIPITATE INTUITION

"Analytical calculation" refers to a judgment made after dividing a question of how or whether to act into as many constituent parts as are relevant,

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weighing the consequences of proceeding or not, and making a judgment in accordance with the assessment. "Precipitate intuition" refers to thinking a matter "self-evident" and thus in need of no argument or deliberation. For example, a person who acts with analytical calculation may enter a department store, see an item that is on sale, experience an impulse to buy the item, but then remember the adage, "It's not a bargain if you don't need it," and review the month's budget. Then she recalls that she was looking for just such an item the other day but found the cost too high. So she weighs the arguments for the purchase pro and contra and makes a decision. The person of precipitate intuition looks at the same item and, oblivious to the pro and contra, decides either to forego or to acquire the item. In ethical matters, the issue might be whether to take a risky action, to go to war, to punish, to embrace, or to criticize someone.

A nexus of determinations hovers around this subject. When we listen to people trying to persuade us, should we be satisfied with a general impression—an emergent property from accidental qualities in the speaker, the demeanor, gestures, tone, looks, social class, etc.? Or should we analyze the arguments closely? Most of us know that when we react to a provocation, our emotions are sometimes so affected that we respond with an immediate sympathy or wrath. People tend to be double-minded on this subject. On the one hand, they admire rational, calm deliberation. On the other, they often respect decisiveness and passion. A hot-blooded lover does not yearn for a minute examination of his virtues from his beloved; he craves a full, immediate, wholehearted passionate embrace. We applaud the spontaneously courageous person who does not cautiously calculate risks but instinctually rushes into a burning building. At the same time we advise our children to be cautious and avoid unnecessary risks. In these matters, there is of course the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean, even if that mean is not clearly discernible. The mean will not be the same for the ardent lover and the firefighter.

The difference between analytical calculation and precipitate intuition in the two cultures appears in the stories of rescuing children from death decreed by rulers. The Book of Exodus describes the midwives who do not kill Hebrew children in the process of delivering them as acting because they "fear God"—a biblical expression for having a sense of right and wrong. They do not calculate their risk with the Pharaoh or tot up the benefits to themselves; the Pagan rescuers of children, on the contrary, do enter into extensive calculations of self-interest.[5]

Another example of the difference between calculation and intuition is evident in the depictions of persuasion. In the Book of Jonah, the Ninevites come to the instantaneous insight that they differ from their farm animals because unlike the animals *they* are capable of moral judgments. As soon as they have this insight, elicited by the King's absurd decree that even the animals should

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fast and put on sackcloth, a true change of heart occurs and they become genuinely repentant. In contrast, the Athenians need to be persuaded by arguments that calculate the particular advantages and disadvantages of using the silver from Laurium for a common project.

Yet another form of all-at-once intuition appears in the matter of feminine beauty. In Hellenic culture we note a standard set of proportions,[6] and the standard is the same whether gods or humans are depicted, and because they share the identical proportions it is often difficult to tell whether a statue or painting depicts a god or a mortal. The Bible does not parse physical beauty; it does not describe the specific features of particular individuals.[7] A reader of the Bible can apply his own conception of beauty to a person described as beautiful. The passage in the Song of Songs where the poet details the beauty of a beloved is so metaphorical as to give no sense whatsoever of how the person appeared. It is ironic perhaps that with the revival of classical learning in the Renaissance, there was nevertheless an abandonment of the classical canon of feminine beauty. The embodiment of such beauty—Venus—is represented with many different sorts of face and figure.[8]

A propensity toward calculation shows up even in desperate circumstances. We observe a labored analytical reasoning in Sophocles' character Antigone, in the notorious passage in which she explains why she is willing to die for the sake of her brother's burial but would not be for the sake of a child's or husband's.[9] It is perhaps because we modern Westerners live in a society reared in Hebraic gentility that we respond to Antigone's clinical computation with icy chill. In Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, Iphigeneia considers the costs and benefits in acquiescing to her father's sacrifice of her, and she dies with equanimity, having computed that she has made a rational choice.[10] A similar stressful circumstance occurs in the *Hippolytus*, when Theseus is overcome with rage toward his son Hippolytus, whom he falsely believes to have raped Phaedra. Using Poseidon's gift of curses, he invokes a dreadful one on his son, calculating the wish's efficacy and ensuring it with a backup plan.[11] In the behavior of the daughter of Jephthah in response to her father's horrid vow and that of Noah in cursing Ham, the texts do not point to any calculation at all, as though what matters is the instinctive spontaneity of the responses.[12]

There does, then, seem to be a significant gulf in the way the literatures of the two cultures portray people making decisions. In classical culture there is a tendency to itemization, to cataloguing the elements of a situation and ordering them according to some kind of principle, as though the correctness of a decision will be ratified by dissection and analysis. Biblical literature portrays an all-at-once submission to the circumstances. Our educational system teaches that analysis, breaking a thing into its constituent parts in order to understand the whole, is generally the best procedure for arriving at good

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results. But the examples do not consistently affirm this. Our sympathies lie with the midwives, who do *not* calculate their own benefits and risks but embrace the right thing because it is self-evidently right. We find people like Antigone and Harpagus selfish and callous, on the other hand, who calculate the advantages that may lie in their emotionally detached choices.[13]

FATE

A persistent theme in classical literature is an apparent tension between fate and human action. The challenge for the classical authors can be illustrated concisely by noting how Homer and Sophocles wrestled with the difficulties and resolved them. The first occurs in the *Iliad*, where we learn that Achilles, alone of the warriors, has a choice of destinies. The challenge for Homer is to create a plot in which Achilles makes his choice of destiny and for that choice to be fulfilled, but it must be fulfilled in a way that Achilles does not anticipate. Achilles, moreover, must do everything to block the fulfillment of his destiny and yet the chosen destiny must come about in a way both plausible and profound. Before coming to Troy, Achilles chose a short and glorious life over a long and undistinguished life. But then, in the tenth year of the tedious war, in which his glory has not yet risen to the promised level, he becomes angry at Agamemnon and goes about performing actions that will prevent his obtaining the glory he desires.[14] The second, in Sophocles' *Oedipus*, portrays a man who, learning that he is fated to kill his father and have sexual intercourse with his mother, strives to avoid this prediction, but his attempts actually bring it about. In the end, both masterpieces affirm the underlying order of the universe, the divine scheme, and the role of the gods in preserving that order. Aristotle's purging the soul of apprehension is achieved as a fear of chaos dissipates.

The Bible also presents a calming view of the world, but with a difference. Its world is less under the control of the divine—a claim that seems paradoxical since in the Bible God is the single creator of the cosmos and of humankind.[15] In the Greek scheme, human beings do terrible things and suffer greatly, and try though they might, they cannot avoid doing them, and yet, as the writers portray their stories, their will is always free, and their terrible actions never contradict their freedom. What accounts for this seeming mismatch is the unpredictability of events and the tendency of human actions to have unforeseen and unwanted consequences. In the Bible, the bad things that human beings do are not preordained by threads spun by Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos. Human beings do bad things and bring sorrows on themselves, as Proverbs says (22:8: "He that sows iniquity shall reap vanity"), but they are not acting out a script that has been written in heaven. When someone does

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evil, the responsibility lies wholly in human hands; there is no divine script in which God has plotted evil for people to carry out.

When King David's son Amnon rapes Tamar, God does not figure in the story at all. The brutality of the crime, the inability of Tamar to dissuade her brother, the pitiable inadequacy with which David responds, the vigilante justice obtained by Absalom and its repercussions all arise from human wickedness and ineptitude. When Sextus Tarquinius rapes Lucretia, however, the assault, as Livy describes it, is part of the cosmic plan for Rome, for the rape hypostatizes Rome's ancestral creator and destroyer gods Venus and Mars. This cosmic plan gives human villainy an essential role in its unfolding.[16] The classical *philosophical* concept of a perfect deity is part of Livy's concept. The job of the gods is to ensure that whatever happens accords with the course of nature. Given Livy's philosophical model, in which patterns of creation and destruction follow each other in periods of mingling and separation, rape, as an act of violent destruction and sexual creation, is the dynamic formula that animates Rome.

Both classical and biblical cultures seem to have a concept of inherited responsibility for sins. But how different is the responsibility! In Greek culture, there is a meticulous bookkeeping. Someone commits a crime and thereby establishes a debt that requires punishment. If the perpetrator of the debt, like Gyges of Lydia, somehow manages to escape paying that debt during his lifetime, the gods see to it that a descendent will pay it for him. Thus the gods carry out the punishment, for this is their job, and the hapless descendent, with apparent freedom, makes the choices that will destroy him. It is part of the Greek view of nature that people suffer for sins, and if somehow the suffering does not take place, interest will accrue, and greater suffering will visit the descendants—who will also participate in their own doom. Sometimes, as in the case of Mycerinus, because of their very innocence and because they were trying with all their force to be good, their suffering will be greater still.[17]

In the Ten Commandments, sins of parents are visited upon their children even into the third generation. But it is not *God* who visits the suffering on the later generations; it is the bad parenting itself that is responsible. Bad parenting will, in general, produce bad children—and God does not have anything to do with this result.[18] If people follow the commandments that prescribe goodness, they will exemplify good conduct to their children, and their children will likely be good too.[19]

This conclusion seems paradoxical, namely that the biblical God, so powerful as to create the universe, so monumentally more formidable than the lowly humans he has made, has less control over human beings than Pagan gods, who are so much like human beings. In the Bible, God can undo his ordained outcomes, as is clear from the occasions when he changes his mind

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or leaves a promise unfulfilled—when, for example, he does not destroy Nineveh and when he leaves his promise to Abraham awaiting fulfillment. Later, when Judaism, as well as Christianity and Islam, adopt the Standard Model of God, with its Greek-like plan for the world and concept of fate, God is not permitted to change his mind. [20] The difference between the God of the Bible and that of the Standard Model is analogous to the difference between a prediction by an honest sports commentator, based on analysis or hope (e.g., that the Chicago Cubs will win a pennant) and one by a mountebank based on the knowledge that a fix is on. The God of the Hebrew Bible does not "fix the game" for human beings.

METAPHOR AND GENRE

The ancient Greeks wondered about nature's causes and effects. Their poets expressed their thinking in myths; their philosophers developed hypotheses about the materials and forces of the physical world. The philosophers lacked a precise technical vocabulary and so employed metaphors to express their meaning. When, for example, Thales spoke of "everything as full of gods," he was probably using a metaphor to express the self-movement found in observed things, winds, waters, stars,[21] and when he said all things were made of water, he was using a metaphor for the solid, liquid and gaseous states we recognize in H_2O.

The Pagan explanations of scientific phenomena are generally unsatisfying to us, nor do they appear to have been persuasive when they were proposed. The inadequacy of the physical hypotheses from the pre-Socratics is evident from the fact that they were continually superseded by alternative hypotheses that addressed one difficulty even while creating further ones. The biblical authors of Genesis and of Joshua found a way to cut the Gordian knot of faulty hypotheses–not that they were aware of such a knot—by adducing the non-falsifiable hypothesis that God was the sole cause of things.

Yet the very propensity of Pagans toward causal investigation makes it evident that when some decidedly unnatural or nature-defying occurrence appears in their literature in a matter-of-fact way with no attempt to explain the miraculous event, we are unmistakably in the land of supernatural make-believe. When Athena prolongs the night in the *Odyssey* so that Odysseus and Penelope can have more time together before the anticipated confrontation with the slaughtered suitors' families, no reader would take it for anything other than a poetic conceit. Similarly, when we see the talking horses of Achilles in Homer's *Iliad* or the grandiloquent gnat in Virgil's *Culex* or the numerous chatterbox animals of the fables, they are creatures of mirth,

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and the audience is conscious that they have entered fantasy. But when God puts a rainbow in the sky and says (Genesis 9:17): "When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth," *the narrative* describes the event with the same neutral tone as it does mundane events. We have not shifted our intellectual gears into a world of myth-making, for we have never left it. We do not leave it throughout Genesis and Exodus, nor when in the Book of Joshua God extends the day so that Joshua can complete the Battle with the Amorite kings before the sun sets. We remain in the realm of myth that the rabbis called *aggadah*.

What then is the difference between the classical and the Hebraic? Both mingle the miraculous and the naturalistic; neither explicitly calls attention to the mingling. Pagan texts do sometimes suggest implicitly that they are in the *genre* of poetry. The signaling of similes is one way; depictions of conversation among divinities, of conferences on Olympus, of selective invisibility, and of magical transformations are others. The Hebraic text, with no apparent self-conscious sense of genre, seamlessly blends the mythic and the real without any markers.[22]

In classical literature, when animals talk, the poets are engaging in a conscious conceit. When animals talk in the Bible—a very rare phenomenon—the talking may be a metaphor for mental conflict. When the serpent talks to Eve or the ass to Balaam, it is perhaps reflective of an internal struggle, as when Jacob wrestles with the angel. Eve and Balaam are so riven with battling desires that they engage in inner argument. Eve imagines the serpent making a good case, and she accepts his assertions that conflict with the commandment. Balaam confronts his conscience, which speaks with the voice of the ass. On the other hand, with the author of Genesis, the narratives may be his way of coping with a reality too grim to accept. He cannot bring himself to place the full blame for the human condition on the human beings whom God has created, and so he projects a measure of the guilt onto the talking serpent, who has beguiled Eve. In this way he exempts human beings from full blame.

That talking animals evoke a smile in the classical audience and a shudder in a biblical one is a substantial cultural difference. It arises from the circumstance that the two cultures do not break down the world into the same categories. It is not clear that the authors of the Bible made a sharp distinction between poetry and prose. If they did, perhaps it was a difference of degree in the use of unusual word order, phonological repetition, and the use or non-use of certain particles, pronouns, and articles.[23]

Without a sense of genre a reader or listener would not have been able to make the necessary psychological adjustment to the literature he was experiencing. And if the genres did not make their way into peoples' consciousness,

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their reactions would have sprung from what they were culturally prepared to accept. It would be like walking into a library where all the books were mixed together, all stripped of covers and titles, all presented on the page in the same font and same size typeface, with no hint whatsoever of whether the material was breezy Wodehouse or lugubrious Heidegger. Perhaps substituting for the preparedness that a knowledge of genre gives were discussions about the text that many in the audience would have had on earlier occasions. Present at the communal recitations, those discussions, perhaps led by *logioi* would have guided an understanding of the text.[24] The result would have been less independent, and less chaotic, thinking.

Those who assembled the psalms and the proverbs into collections and then divided the books into the Torah, Prophets, Writings, and their subcategories do appear to have had a sense of genre, though on this matter too there is plenty of uncertainty. The assembling the Bible into a canon and organizing it into sections was a late development, probably from the mid-Hellenistic period,[25] and was probably a result of Greek influence.

One striking absence from the Bible appears to be humor.[26] This, perhaps, results from the Bible's status as a sacred text: since, as Aristotle says, humor originates in ugliness, its presence would be inappropriate (*Poetics* 1449 a32–34). But I should also like to add that for a mind to create or even to appreciate humor, it must have an openness and accessibility to the metaphorical. Take this example of a puerile riddle: "Why did the moron tiptoe past the medicine cabinet?" The answer: "Because he did not want to awaken the sleeping pills." A literal-minded person will not understand the pun. Or take the riddle asked in Thebes by the Sphinx about the animal that walks on four legs in the morning, two in the afternoon, and three in the evening. There are no riddles like this in the Bible. The one riddle found in the Bible reveals a cultural difference.[27] In it, Samson challenges the people of Timnah to answer a riddle he has invented based on his own experience when he came to their town and killed a lion and found honey in the lion's carcass the next year (Judges 14). The riddle is like the riddle a young child might pose ("What kind of chewing gum do I have in my pocket?") which cannot possibly be solved by another person without access to more information.[28] In other words, unlike the riddle posed by the Sphinx, which depends on an ability to read a metaphor applicable to all human beings, Samson's riddle requires an ability to understand an apparent paradox that dissolves when the necessary specific information is applied. There may be no riddles in the Bible for the same reason that there is essentially no humor: they are both precluded by an assumption that the Bible is free of metaphorical language. The few places where metaphors abound, the book of Psalms and the Song of Songs, are quite unlike the main body of biblical writings.

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GRATITUDE

Polybius explains that morality, and the possibility of civilized life, began when people noticed that there were some individuals who, having received benefits from others, often their own parents, responded with ingratitude. At the moment when these disinterested witnesses noted the ingratitude and spontaneously reacted with disgust, they had begun the process of developing a sense of justice. Their discernment and outrage that benefactors were not being given their due was the origin of morality. Morality arose, Polybius says, because human beings innately feel an obligation to be grateful, to return a favor, or at least thanks, for a favor rendered (Polybius, *Histories* 6.6).

Classical literature is full of examples of gratitude, a virtue celebrated in poetry and prose and built into the Pagan framework of values. The structure of prayer is based on reciprocal obligations: an individual has given a god sacrifices; the god owes a favor in return. When Apollo seems to lack the gratitude due Croesus, the king indignantly rebukes the god, and the god defends his behavior (Herodotus, *History* 1.90). In fundamental social relations, a person is hospitable to guests and can expect a grateful hospitality when he travels. This is the basis of the guest-friendship (*xenia*) celebrated in antiquity. It is also the basis of the practice of purification, wherein a man who has been exiled from his community because of some impure act, say, the accidental slaying of a brother, is "purified" by a ritual in a new locale. The man who has been purified owes favors to his purifier, which he performs out of gratitude for the purification. In the story that Herodotus tells of Adrastus, whom King Croesus has purified, we observe the deep gratitude Adrastus feels when he agrees, against his better judgment, to protect Croesus' son on a hunting expedition.

In classical culture we find gratitude to be the motive for remembering the past. One purpose Herodotus offers for his *History* is to preserve the great and wonderful deeds of Greeks and non-Greeks from being erased by time so that they may receive their due glory. His principle is that we—Herodotus' readers—owe glory to the doer of a great deed or the builders of great structures because *we* have benefited from them. If the doers have died many years before we were born, the only means by which we can express our gratitude is remembering. A failure to remember is to be an ingrate, grievously dishonorable condition. When Odysseus encounters Nausicaa for the last time, she asks him to remember her every now and then. He replies that he will pray to her as to a goddess all the days of his life. With this grateful promise he bestows the most beautiful reward for her kindheartedness that he can (Homer, *Odyssey* 8.457–68).

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We are also often called to remember in the Bible, and it, too, speaks of thankfulness and memory, though the obligation is framed somewhat differently. The Bible calls us to remember what God has done and what God has commanded. God introduces his law on Mt. Sinai with a call to remember that he has taken his people from bondage in Egypt.[29] Throughout the Torah, he adds instructions to remember the commandments and to keep them. In the Bible, people sometimes make promises to those who have been their benefactors. The butler in Genesis, for example, promises to remember Joseph for his interpretation of a dream. But he then forgets to do so until a moment of exigency, when the Pharaoh's own dream interpreters fail and he remembers his dream-reader. Still, the Bible does record a few happy occasions when gratitude is shown. The Pharaoh in the Joseph story shows warm gratitude when he welcomes Joseph's family into Egypt during the famine. Expressions of gratitude like the Pharaoh's are, however, quite rare. We see no sign of gratitude from Joseph's brothers for anything. We see none from Miriam, when Moses, despite Miriam's cruelty to his wife Zipporah, intercedes before God on Miriam's behalf. We see none from the Israelites to Moses for leading them out from Egypt. Military men like Joshua, Samson, Saul, and David may bring victory, and they may win the adulation of women and glory (though these usually bring nothing but trouble), but they do not receive gratitude. Human benefactors, whether Moses, judges, prophets, or kings, generally go without gratitude. Gratitude from the Israelites is to God alone, as we see most conspicuously in Exodus 15, in the hymn following the parting of the waters of the Red Sea. As Psalm 107:1 enjoins, "Give thanks to the Lord."[30] Perhaps the withholding of gratitude from all human beings brings a certain equalizing: no one in society, no matter his status, is treated with thanks; we are all dust except for God. The difference between God and humans is not, as in Paganism, that the divine possess enhanced human powers and immortality. The gulf between God and humankind is so wide as to make our responses to what he has done for us and what a fellow human being has done wholly different. One way that parallel passages makes this gulf clear is in the matter of trees. When it comes to trees and, by extension, other natural resources, the classical view is that these items have as their sole purpose service to humankind. They have no value as ends. In the Bible, however, they are treated as creatures of God, and they are not to be destroyed simply so that people might vanquish their enemy.[31]

In Polybius, it is gratitude that led to kingship and ordered life. In the Bible's treatment of *kingship* we can see why gratitude toward other people is not a major virtue. Kingship is a mechanism for ensuring the rule of a single law so that people are not laws unto themselves, where what is "right" is what would benefit the doer. In substituting the law of one person, order takes the

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place of the chaos that would result from each person's doing what pleased himself. But, as is apparent in virtually all accounts of kingship, what actually happens is that *one* person does what *he* wants, and the rest of the population must go along. People can try to carve out private spheres of free activity, but their freedom is ultimately constrained by the will of the king. People accept this arrangement because the alternative is the law of the jungle, which in its human social context we term "anarchy." Now when it comes to gratitude, it is not clear whether there are any to whom our gratitude belongs without qualification, for there are many contenders for it—our parents for our birth, our siblings and friends for their help, our rulers for civil order, nature for our food and warmth, and God for bringing about what we needed in the form of all the prior recipients. By settling on God as the single recipient of gratitude, the Bible cuts through the confusion created by multiple recipients, in the same way that it eliminates the relativizing of behavior where goodness is dependent on an individual's private judgment. Like so many other things biblical, gratitude becomes an all-at-once phenomenon: the moral imperative that Polybius notes is easy for the people of the Bible to satisfy because there is never any doubt of to whom thanks are due.

COMMONALITIES

I should like to draw some conclusions from two sets of poetic conceptions of divine activity—the alterations in the length of a day in the Book of Joshua and of a night in the *Odyssey* and the attempts to cause intentional forgetting, unsuccessfully by Joseph in Genesis and successfully by Zeus in the *Odyssey.*

In both passages, a cosmically grand event is produced for the sake of a narrow, finite goal. To readers of the Book of Joshua, the battle of Gibeon, like the Battle of Saratoga to Americans, must have seemed very remote, and, as with all human events, the passage of time will have diminished the significance it had in its immediacy. The world will have moved on. To Homer's audience, the chatting of Odysseus and Penelope in their bedroom must also have seemed a minor, limited event. When a poet takes an event of normal proportions and magnifies it galactically, the contrast highlights the actual size of each. When we read these stories and suspend our disbelief, we are naturally curious to see how the characters will respond to the extraordinary occurrences. Will Joshua, pumped up by this aggrandizement of his battle, exclaim, "How important I am and how important my situation—God has made the sun stand still for me"? Will Odysseus boast, "Athena loves me so much that she has altered the celestial motions"? However the *characters* might respond, *readers* will recognize that these are poetic conceits that will never actually happen in *their* battles or in *their* bedrooms. And they will

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recognize their humble status as ordinary mortals and view this sort of magic as the stuff of story.

When it comes to induced forgetting, as when Zeus spreads a forgetfulness over Ithaca about the slaughter of the suitors or when Joseph names his son *Manasseh* in order to forget his sorrows, we know that ordinary mortals cannot bring about the forgetting they desire. Accounts of both these forgettings, as we have seen, abound in complications and paradoxes.

Homer shows throughout the *Odyssey* that if Odysseus had achieved the Pagan goal of actual immortality, if, after the destruction of his ships and crew, he had remained forever on the island of Calypso and become ageless and deathless, the stories of his men returning from Troy, of his resourcefulness in defeating the Cyclops and escaping the dangers of the Sirens and Scylla, of the calamitous releasing the winds of Aeolus, and of all his other adventures would have been lost. Odysseus' culminating act in the *Odyssey* was the slaying of the suitors. If Zeus brings forgetfulness and the blessings of peace, how must Odysseus' deeds be remembered? If they are known as epic tales by everyone *other than* Ithacans because of the Muses' inspiration of Homer, will Odysseus have achieved his goal—to become a character of mimetic art and to be remembered by everyone *except* those he most cares about? We are told again and again that the chief goal of heroic endeavor and suffering was to be remembered in song.[32] If Odysseus', or anyone's, goal is to be remembered by people yet to be born, does the remembrance affect the meaning of heroic actions? Does it strip the significance of the heroes' lives away from the here and now and hand it over to the ages? Can Homer be suggesting that epic values and those of domestic peace are not complementary and may not even be compatible—for if Odysseus is remembered in Ithaca, there can be no peace in Ithaca.

The story of Joseph also shows the impossibility of willful forgetting. Joseph recognizes his brothers the moment he sees them, and the brothers are shown roiling from the guilty memory of what they did. The whole story shows the power of memory. After Jacob has died and anxiety for a father's wishes is no longer an issue, the brothers continue to fear that Joseph remembers what they did to him when he was a boy, as in fact he does. The peace he makes with his brothers, despite his painful memories, is more realistic and more moving than the peace of Odysseus with the suitors' families in Homer and much more optimistic of a redemptive goodness in human beings.

The texts of both cultures show that in the actual world, human beings are unable to forget, even by a conscious act of will. Remembering, however, *can* occur by the power of the will, and it is often a duty to remember—in the Pagan world, for the sake of the gratitude shown by granting glory to the people who have benefited us; in the biblical world, for the sake of remembering what God has done.

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SELF-KNOWLEDGE

"Self-knowledge" here is limited to an awareness of one's own psychic phenomena—responsibility, guilt, motivation, self-control, love, hate, and so on. In general, both cultures admire people who are aware of their mental states and disapprove of those who are not.

In the stories of Joseph in Genesis and of Achilles in the *Iliad*, we find scenes of reconciliation between individuals who have experienced a life-shattering rift because of an assertion of superiority by someone of a rank that is officially superior but in some unofficial way inferior (e.g., priority in birth order but less favor from a father in the case of Joseph's brothers, a higher standing as a general but inferiority in fighting skill in the case of Agamemnon). The protagonists cannot flourish apart from their communities—Jacob's family, in Joseph's case, the Greek army, in Achilles' case. Intellectual brilliance and martial prowess may endow them with a superiority over their fellows, but this superiority is not enough for a meaningful life. After the selling of Joseph to the Egyptians and after the death of Patroclus, opportunities arise for Joseph and Achilles to effect a reconciliation with those from whom they have been estranged. These texts show that there have in fact been psychic changes without which the reconciliations could not have taken place. When Joseph first recognized his brothers during their mission to secure grain, he underwent a maelstrom of emotions. Even if in the intervening years he had imagined an eventual encounter with his brothers, the reality of their presence was confusing. Though testing them was perhaps yet another exertion of superiority, this time a secret one, when Joseph heard Judah's speech describing their father's sorrow and saw genuine tears of contrition in his brother's eyes, he apprehended that they had all suffered deeply, and he was filled with heartache. Joseph was of course aware of the tortuous chain of events that brought him to power in the most powerful realm in the world, and, as described above, remembered his suffering every day, the loss of his family in Canaan, especially of his loving father who, with ill-considered favoritism, had ostentatiously manifested his love and helped bring about the disaffection of Leah's sons. With a wisdom from years of reflection, Joseph recognized his own arrogance along with the guilt of Judah and his other brothers. The conversation enabled Joseph to accept that they were not the cold-hearted youths of long before but had become men repentant of their wrongdoing. Because Judah does not know that he is addressing his brother, we apprehend the sincerity of the scene.[33]

In the reconciliation of Achilles and Agamemnon we grasp the compelling urgency that catalyzed the meeting. Homer portrays the formal niceties. He stresses Achilles' impatience to return to battle as Achilles claims that he was foolish to have had this quarrel "over a girl," as if that were what the quarrel

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were about, and says that it is now time for them all to return to battle, though the generals who have limped to the meeting might have welcomed more of a respite from the tumult. Homer also depicts in character-revealing detail how Agamemnon declines to take responsibility for his actions. He was influenced, he claims, by Ruin, Zeus' daughter, whose power he could not resist. Like a person who blames lust or drunkenness or violent rage to mitigate his misconduct, so Agamemnon says that not the gods, not even Zeus and Hera, are immune to Ruin's power (*Iliad* 19.95–96). In his brief response, Achilles acknowledges Agamemnon's authority as king and repeats his desire to renew the fighting (*Iliad* 19.145–53). But if there had not been an internal change in Achilles, if he had not developed a guilt so penetrating that its only expiation could be returning to battle and perishing there, if he had limited his concern to Patroclus and remained aloof from his other dead companions, for whose needless deaths he feels responsible, he could not have come to the meeting. The contrast of Achilles with Agamemnon could not be greater. The great king may have fought in the battle and may have been wounded, but he stands aloof from the suffering of others. He frets about his position and is anxious about the outcome of the war, but he has not been deeply affected by what has happened to his men.

Agamemnon claimed that the blame for his outrageous behavior lay with Ruin, Zeus, Destiny, and Erinys. Joseph makes a similar claim—that *God* arranged the events so that they could be saved. Joseph repeats this extraordinary claim three times and also affirms that it was *God*—not Pharaoh—who made him Lord of Egypt (Genesis 45:5–9). In contrast to Agamemnon, Joseph shows himself a man driven by kindness and sympathy, in other words, by *Mentshlekhkeyt*. Where Agamemnon lingers on his own lack of culpability, Joseph reiterates a pardon to his brothers for their wrongdoing. He unambiguously declares that he does not blame his suffering on them, that in fact his path had been prepared by a beneficent deity for the sake of life. Achilles, in developing a standard of conscience, in accepting that his uncontrolled rage brought about the deaths of men he loved, establishes the moral code of the West, with its sense of responsibility. The moral stature of Joseph transcends that of our culture: he absolves those who are guilty from responsibility, and he does so for the sake of reconciliation and love. He acts as Jews seek to do on Yom Kippur, what Jesus includes at the heart of the Lord's Prayer—to forgive with humility and to set aside one's own glory by assigning it to God. Joseph's humility mends the arrogance of his youthful dreams.

To know oneself to be guilty, for persons with a conscience, is *to feel* guilty; but to feel guilty when one knows that one is not guilty would be out of place. When Job protests to his friends that he has not sinned, *we* know that Job is correct because God, an unimpeachable witness, has confirmed the fact. When Socrates says that he acted from conscience in his refusal to obey

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an illegal order from illegitimate rulers, we are confident that he has acted rightly. The self-knowledge of Job and Socrates lay in knowing that they were not guilty. Noah does not act with self-knowledge when he becomes drunk and curses his son. Perhaps because he has survived the flood he has arrogantly forgotten that he is a mere human being, a creature not endowed with the power to curse. He who was once the one righteous person whose family God saved from destruction has changed. The Bible's lesson is that regardless of how good a person is, he can change for the worse and commit grave wrongs. The story of Joseph teaches us the happy obverse of the same lesson: that even if one's actions have been bad, a change for the morally better is possible.

POLITICAL POINTS OF RESEMBLANCE

Biblical and classical literature share some views about law and politics. Both assert a belief in revealed laws; both assert a belief that a people has been chosen by a deity; both, in general, desire rule by a king; and both believe that labor forced on citizens is an abuse of monarchical authority.

Laws revealed by a perfect deity stave off relativism by providing a perfect template for behavior. Such laws, even if the premise of a divine, perfect legislator be granted, present questions: Will different circumstances require changes in the laws? Are the revealed laws geographically universal, that is, for all human beings, no matter where they live on the planet, or do they apply only to the people upon whom they were originally imposed? How can people have confidence that the laws were actually made by the deity and not by a human imposter, even one with good intentions?[34]

We find skepticism about divine laws in the earliest written works from classical culture. Herodotus tells the story of Aristeas, a poet who pretended to be dead by hiding for a year and then reemerged to his people, whom he commanded to build a statue of him to be set up beside an altar to Apollo (*History* 4.14). Livy has Numa pretend to have received laws from Egeria, a divinity, so that the Romans will accept them (*History of Rome* 1.19–20). Livy clearly endorses the principle of the "noble lie" when he says in the Preface to the entire work that if any nation was entitled to believe in their divine origins, it was Rome. The Bible never presents a narrative hint that Moses' laws are invented, though the narrative proximity of the episode of the Golden Calf, which occurs after all Israel has received the Ten Commandments even while Moses is receiving additional laws at Sinai, perhaps indicates that the Israelites themselves were not convinced of their provenance.

Whatever their belief in a divine origin of their laws, ancient Pagans certainly do not seem to have embraced the view that whatever was in the

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original legislators' minds could not or must not ever be changed. Rome's laws went from the brief Twelve Tables to the interminable Code of Justinian. With the destruction of the Temple and the diffusion of Jews from the Holy Land, the flexibility of legal interpretation enabled the Jewish people to survive as a distinct people. The Torah was certainly "no longer in Heaven" by the time the Hebrew people ceased to be Israelites and became a diaspora.[35]

Both Hebrew and classical peoples shared a sense of being specially chosen by a divinity. Exceptional merit in neither people was a motive for the divine choice. The choice seems capricious, based on the deity's mood at the moment. Both cultures offered rich after-stories to explain the underlying wisdom of the choice, stories that reveal the virtues that the cultures would like to think they had, as though wishing to possess certain virtues meant having them. Both cultures also shared a common disparagement of their most notable figures. In the Bible, Noah, Jacob, Miriam, all the kings, many of the judges and very many of their children are revealed in the narratives as prone to immoral conduct. In Pagan literature, too, we would have to look very hard to find a hero of epic or tragedy or history less sinning than sinned against. A Pagan Dante would have had no trouble at all filling thirty-three cantos of a *Hades* with figures from the classical world.

The kings of Israel are no less loathsome than the tyrants of the classical world. Paranoid, vain, murderous, self-satisfied, they show that kingship does not ennoble or expose latent excellences; it only corrupts. Kings who begin well end poorly. Their people's love for them fades, and readers, who learn more about them than their subjects ever do, are given more reasons to despise them. Except for the brief attempt at dissuading Israel from its desire for kings, the Bible presents its case against kingship only by narrative. The classical writings, from Homer's stories to the prose debates in Herodotus, the Platonic and Aristotelian analyses of regimes, the analyses in Polybius and the Roman historians, present a picture of kingship akin to that in the Bible—as always degenerating into tyranny. Yet, despite a repeated experience of this transformation, people are like incurable drug addicts who cannot resist returning again and again to the very thing that has shattered their lives.

INCREMENTAL TEACHING

In the middle of Book 2 of *The History of the Persian Wars,* Herodotus tells the strange tale of Mycerinus, king of Egypt, who tried with all his heart to be good. His uncle Cheops, who reigned as pharaoh for fifty years, had been very wicked. He closed temples, forbade sacrifice, and forced his subjects to labor on his pyramid. To acquire more treasure, he forced his daughter to prostitute herself (Herodotus, *History* 2.124). Mycerinus' father Chrephren,

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who was just as bad as Cheops, reigned for fifty-seven years. Mycerinus, disapproving of the conduct of his uncle and father, opened the temples, allowed people to return to their own occupations instead of working under compulsion on the king's pyramid, and allowed sacrifice to the gods. He so aimed at peace in his kingdom that when he adjudicated cases, if someone were dissatisfied with his judgment, he would offer a gift from his own wealth. Despite his goodness, an oracle declared that he would live only six more years and die in the seventh.

The befuddling story makes sense when viewed in the light of Herodotus' method of composition.[36] The relevant context begins with Pheros, king of Egypt after the empire reached its peak under Sesostrus. Pheros offended the Nile and was punished by the gods with a blindness that could be cured only by washing his eyes with the urine of a woman who was faithful to her husband. The punishment is appropriate, for as Pheros had polluted the sacred water of the Nile by throwing a spear into it, so should his punishment consist of foul water, urine. In the next tale, we learn that Helen was not actually in Troy during the Trojan War, as Homer reported, but in Egypt, ruled then by King Proteus. Though the Trojans truthfully insisted that she was not in Troy, Herodotus writes that "the Greeks would not believe what the Trojans said—the *daimon* seeing to it, I think, that by their utter destruction it might be made evident to all men that when great wrongs are done, the gods will surely visit the wrongdoers with great punishments" (*History* 2.120). In the next generation, the pharaoh Rhampsinitus rewarded a clever but immoral thief by pardoning him, honoring him as the most knowing of men, and giving him his daughter's hand in marriage.

When Mycerinus complains about the oracle concerning his short life, the god reveals that Egypt was under a curse to suffer 150 years of affliction. Mycerinus' uncle and father understood this curse and by their evil deeds had behaved piously (because they were acting in compliance with the curse), but he had not.

Herodotus employs a method of "incremental teaching" to help us understand the history. From the story of Pheros we learned of the appropriateness of punishments from the gods; from the story of Helen in Proteus' reign, that when great wrongs are done, the gods visit great punishments. The lynchpin of the sequence was the behavior of Rhampsinitus, who, when he rewarded what he should have punished, completely inverted moral values. And so the gods visited upon him and Egypt an appropriate punishment, a corresponding inversion: impiety became piety, and piety, impiety. Herodotus concludes the narrative sequence with a fitting conclusion. Mycerinus passed the rest of his days in revelry, ordering lamps to be lit every night. In this way, by turning nights into days, he doubled his fated six years to twelve—a suitable reward perhaps, for by becoming a negligent king, he was now compliant with the curse.

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In Herodotus' method of storytelling, a lesson from one story sets up the lessons that follow. With the confidence of a virtuoso, he need not spell out his intentions. Except for specifying the lesson from the story about Helen (i.e., that great consequences are visited for great wrongdoing) he lets his readers discover the meanings. The lesson in the story of Helen is necessary for us to understand the fate visited upon Mycerinus, and its narrative irrelevance to the *History* serves to highlight its thematic relevance.

This method of incremental teaching, relatively easy to observe in Herodotus, can, perhaps, help us to interpret the puzzling sequence of stories that we find in Genesis. In what follows I shall try to surmise what an audience in biblical times would have taken as the lesson in the sequence of tales. This was of course an audience that lived before the "Standard Model" of God had been developed.

As described in the section on fratricide,[37] we learn very little to help us understand the predicament of the first two children of Adam and Eve. When the brothers make offerings to God, God favors Abel's gift but not Cain's, but we never learn why. Abel and Cain meet in a field and converse, but we do not learn what they talk about. Cain kills his brother, and we are left to speculate on his motive, whether there was one, and about the circumstances. The religions that trace their origin to the Bible have offered many speculations, but the biblical text itself does not. When God reproves Cain we infer only that God is not pleased. In short, the story immerses its characters, including God, in a morass of secrecy. Perhaps the author's purpose is in fact a lesson about secrecy and its consequences. Cain does not know how to distinguish right from wrong because up to this point the only moral code human beings have is the obsolete one concerning the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden.[38] Expelled from the Garden, people lack a replacement code. As for the offerings, how could Cain know what would be pleasing to God? How could Abel? Before God gives instructions at Sinai, he has not identified the rituals or sacrifices he wants.

Later, when God destroys the animals and people for the evil that human beings have done, all we learn is that "the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," that the earth was corrupt and full of violence (Genesis 6:5–11). People are evil in their thoughts, emotions, and actions, but the Bible is mute concerning the precise nature of their internal and external evil. How might a biblical audience have responded to this story? They might perhaps have defended the earth's people by arguing that without any rules, it was not clear how they were to behave. From this sequence of stories, the postbiblical deity of "the standard model"—complete and perfect and unchanging—would have nothing to learn, for he already knows everything. But a deity *not* subject to the constraints of the "standard

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model" might himself learn lessons about secrecy and about how to treat the creatures he had made in his image, namely, that in the absence of guiding rules, it is not fair to punish, let alone destroy people. In the Bible, God does seem to learn this lesson. When the floodwaters have withdrawn, God draws up his covenant with Noah and presents him with universal rules, the so-called "Noahide laws" (Genesis 9:4–6). The biblical audience would rejoice in the justice of God's promise not to destroy the world again by a flood. *Some* people might act badly, but the *whole* human species would not, for all would now have basic laws to follow and most would follow them. A notion of personal responsibility has entered the human moral system: only the guilty will be punished, and they will know why they are guilty.

When an audience of Abraham's descendants learned of God's choice, they might be inclined to take pride in their ancestry. "God," they might say, "chose our ancestor Abraham as his favorite." When they see Abraham haggling with God about the destruction of Sodom and apparently pleasing him by urging him to spare the good people, they might rejoice and continue to admire the wisdom of God's choice. What then are these descendants to expect from God's so-called test of Abraham? Perhaps they would look to him to argue with God about his proposed default on their covenant, and perhaps they would be disappointed when Abraham failed to utter a syllable of protest as he prepared to sacrifice Isaac. Perhaps they would then doubt the wisdom of God's choice and think, "Abraham is not my role model here. *I* would act differently. I would argue for justice and resist slaying an innocent lad, even as an offering to God." Perhaps the lesson to draw from the sequence of stories is not to be intimidated by power, even God's, but demand justice and adherence to covenants. When the biblical audience of descendants of Abraham then consider that God's promise to him was not yet fulfilled—that they had not yet become the kings of multitudes and the everlasting possessors of Canaan—they might wonder whether their ancestor had failed the test and that God had therefore postponed or reneged on his promise.

When the audience read of the antepartum discomfort of Rebekah as her twin offspring struggled with each other in her womb and of God's new prediction of divided peoples, they learn of a radical redefinition of the promise to Abraham (Genesis 25:21–26). God already had explicitly excluded the offspring of Hagar from the promise and restricted it to the son of Sarah. Since Sarah gave birth only to Isaac, the promise proceeded in a straightforward linear descent. But as soon as Isaac and Rebekah have two sons—and the circumstance of their being *twins* accentuates this fact—the promise was clarified, even modified. The line was to be perpetuated through the son who emerged second, through Jacob, not through the first, Esau, who was born covered with hair. We immediately learn of parental preferences: Isaac favors

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Esau because Esau likes venison; Rebekah favored Jacob, no reason given (Genesis 25:28). Since the text has told us only one thing about Esau—that he was born hirsute—we are invited to conclude that Rebekah's preference of Isaac was based on his lack of hair. We learn nothing of the boys' childhood. Then, one day, when they are grown, Esau returns exhausted and hungry from hunting. He asks his brother for some lentil soup and receives it only after exchanging his birthright for it. Though apologists later claim that Esau was not desperate for food and so is culpable for having acted rashly,[39] the text does not validate this interpretation or even point us toward it.[40] Jacob compels Esau to swear to this exchange, and Jacob, taking advantage of Esau's debilitating hunger, obtains the birthright. The tale concludes with the words, "So Esau despised his birthright" (Genesis 25:34).[41] What is the audience to conclude? Having read of the elder Cain's slaying of his younger brother, will they not already have observed that birth order is no indication of relative worth? As in the case of Hagar's son Ishmael, so in the case of Rebekah's Esau: a promise is made about becoming the father of a nation.[42] The implication in each of these cases is that the peoples born from these sons will not be the privileged one from Abraham's seed. Yet the audience have not obtained any evidence that Isaac has qualities superior to those of Ishmael nor, in the case of Jacob and Esau, that the birthright has devolved upon the son of superior excellence. There is no basis for deciding that a rash agreement made in the throes of hunger is somehow more culpable than a cavalier taking advantage of a twin brother. Nay, the audience might be stirred to reflect on the emptiness of claims of ancestry and birth order and conclude that they are essentially meaningless.

After Shechem raped Dinah, despite his apparently heartfelt repentance, her brothers perpetrate a duplicitous massive retaliation on his entire tribe, abusing the rite of circumcision. Jacob was distressed at his sons' action for the rest of his life.[43] From the brutal, disproportionate response of Dinah's brothers the audience learns a threefold lesson: that sacred rituals should not be abused; that a genuine change of heart, a true repentance, should be accepted, or, at least, should moderate the anger of the aggrieved parties; and that massive retaliation upon a whole class of people is unjust, especially when a crime of passion has clarified that only the perpetrator is guilty.[44] As the Book of Genesis comes to an end, the audience understand that if Joseph had acted as his brothers had, instead of making peace, he would have imprisoned or enslaved them and their innocent families in a massive retaliation. Joseph, a man who suffered much, the victim of much trauma, nevertheless acted with grace. The Book of Genesis ends with a hopeful beauty greater than that of the ending of the Book of Job. The latter closes with a supernatural restoration of Job's earthly losses; Genesis closes with a humane reconciliation that comes from a good heart. If the whole Book of

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Genesis is about the process of coming into being, as its Greek name would reflect, and especially about the process of *human beings* coming into being, then the process is complete when Joseph proves himself a *mentsh* and model of *Mentshlekhkeyt*.

A terror at the heart of Greek culture was the pattern of ever-increasing outrage met with ever-increasing retaliation. This was the subject of Aeschylus' *Oresteia,* one of the profoundest works of European drama. That masterpiece ended with the *supernatural* transformation of the Furies (*Erinyes*) into the Kindly Spirits (*Eumenides*). The Bible shows a *natural* transformation in Joseph's soul. In its story of reconciliation, the Bible presents a hope for humanity absent in the classical tales, which rely on supernatural means to bring genuine peace to human beings.

MENTSH: JOSEPH, JOB, AXYLUS, AND PATROCLUS

Homer, Plato, and the Origin of *Mentshlekhkeyt*

The first word of the greatest and most influential poem of the West is *rage*. This particular rage hurled the souls of thousands of heroes to the underworld and left their bodies for birds and dogs to eat. This was the rage of Achilles, whose emotional responses were consistently hotheaded. With Athena's intervention, Achilles overcame his impulse to kill his commander, Agamemnon, who had dishonored him; Achilles then withdrew from battle, abandoning his friends in a childish scheme to achieve his desire for glory. Only when his beloved Patroclus was slain did Achilles redirect his rage toward himself and toward Hector and his brothers, whom he slaughtered with merciless savagery; and even later, when he returned Hector's body to grieving Priam, Achilles could hardly control his emotions; he warned Priam to leave the tent lest he too become a victim of the Achaean's turbulent temper *(Iliad* 24.560–70). In the *Iliad,* Homer crafted a story that teaches about the dangers of unrestrained emotions, how a frenzied quest for honor can destroy the fabric of human life, individually and for one's society. At its core, the *Iliad* teaches to reject the preeminent Bronze Age value of honor. But because Homer's medium is a thrilling poem and because the actual moral heroism that is its subject is understated, the lessons become salient only after long reflection.

A few centuries after Homer, the powerful intellectual provocateur Plato achieved a triumph with the *Republic*, when his Socrates objected to Homer and banned *him* and other poets from his idealized state, essentially on a charge of corrupting the youth. If Plato intended to arouse thought (as I believe he did), he succeeded brilliantly. Defenders of Homer and of poetry in general have been busy ever since.[45]

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Plato's objections to poetry in the *Republic* were threefold.[46] The first was that a poet appears to have knowledge without actually possessing it. He writes about seafaring and medicine when he has nothing beyond a superficial common knowledge about them (Plato, *Ion passim*). To know that a captain pilots a ship through calm and stormy seas is not to know seamanship. Though writers usually lack expertise when writing about technical matters, they have tended to avoid very specialized pronouncements, and when they slip up, their mistakes have not usually done irremediable damage to their works, as when in a cowboy movie, the film is not a failure because the sheriff shoots seven or eight bullets from a six-shooter before reloading. In the West, a deficiency in technical accuracy has not been Plato's most compelling criticism about literature.

Another of Plato's criticisms, the most characteristically "Platonic" in the traditional sense of *Platonic*, and perhaps the criticism dearest to his Academy because of its glove-like fit with his metaphysics, was that poems are imitations of imitations several times removed from truth (*Republic* 595c–599b): truth itself is the Form in the World of Being; nature imitates the Form; a poet imitates nature. Despite the importance of this concept, especially in giving eternal status to revelation, as discussed in the section on "the Corollary of the Eternal Plan,"[47] it has not resulted in any kind of *literary* response and has been the least significant for the West.

Plato's most influential objection was that poetry corrupts its listeners and readers by stirring up their emotions, inducing them to take pleasure, even inordinate pleasure, in the disgraceful actions and emotions in which the protagonists indulge, emotions that the audience would be ashamed to exhibit themselves. This pleasure corrupts. As bad as Homer is, drama, especially tragedy, is worse, for the emotions are acted out more realistically than in bardic recitations. The more realistic a portrayal, the more an actor seems actually to be enraged, or lustful, or mournful, or overcome by joy, the more he is applauded. The effect on the souls of the audience grows increasingly pernicious as the dramatic emotional dose is repeated and, to overcome the progressive dulling of shock value, is made more extreme (*Republic* 606a–c). This critique has been very persuasive, especially among the morally fervent.[48] Thus Augustine in *The Confessions* bemoans his juvenile infatuation with the theater, which damaged his soul, and offers profuse thanks to God for having freed him from it (*Confessions* 3.3). Censors from time immemorial, persuaded by this critique, have endeavored to keep young men and women and the uninformed "many" (i.e., *hoi polloi*) from these evil influences.[49]

To this objection there have been a number of defenses. The first to take up the challenge directly was Aristotle, who addressed Plato's charge that poetry, and especially tragedy, stirs up the emotions, moving people away (such is the Latin meaning of *emotion*) from a state of calm, the Greek ideal.[50]

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In the surviving part of the *Poetics*, Aristotle puts forth his theory of *catharsis,* the process of purging the emotions, particularly those of pity (the feeling we have for someone suffering unjustly) and fear (the expectation of harm).[51] Aristotle does not give any illustrative examples of exactly what he means, but perhaps we may understand what he intends from Sophocles' *Oedipus,* his favorite tragedy. There, our pity is stirred up for Thebans when we observe their city reeling from a plague, apparently for no reason. And this is no ordinary plague, for it destroys animals *and* crops and causes women to deliver their babies stillborn. The relentless devastation threatens the total annihilation of the city. Fear is also stirred up, for ourselves and for King Oedipus, when we confront the possibility that the universe is a place of randomness or divine caprice, where oracles from even most sacred Delphi may prove false. But in the play's action we learn that Thebes is not deserving of our pity, for when the previous ruler, King Laius, was killed at a crossroads, the city, preoccupied with a new crisis, failed to pursue an investigation into the circumstances of his death and failed to follow through on clues, including an eyewitness account. When the crisis of the Sphinx had passed, the Thebans failed to inform the new ruler, Oedipus, of what had happened to Laius and neglected to investigate. Since the duty to learn what had happened and to assign responsibility lay at the door of the city as a whole, the whole city was guilty and was punished. Since Thebes turns out not to be suffering unjustly, it does not merit our pity, and we are purged of this painful emotion. Nor are our fears warranted of living in an unordered universe and of receiving untrue oracles from Delphi. Everything the oracle predicted turned out to be true: Oedipus did kill his father and did wed his mother, improbable as the actions seemed and despite Oedipus' and his parents' monumental efforts to avoid these fates—and thus we are purged of fear, too.[52] By Aristotle's argument, dramatic poetry healthily frees its audience from these painful emotions of pity and fear, and the audience is thus restored to calm.

The defense of drama by Aristotle—alas—is not compelling. All interpretations of his theory of catharsis, including the one here, result from a lack of certainty about what the philosopher actually meant. We give him the benefit of every doubt because he wrote insightfully on a vast range of subjects, so if he is insufficiently expansive here, we assume there was more he would have said, if only… Another problem is that for a *catharsis* of pity and fear to be effected, members of the audience must have an intellectual understanding of the plays such that it brings about the realization that the universe is not truly unjust or without order or that an apparent harm or injustice is merely specious—and there is no evidence that audiences of the *Oedipus*, for example, shared this understanding. Another problem is that Aristotle's theory does not address catharses of anger—antiquity's chief enemy of calm[53]—or lust, or grief, or the gamut of the other harmful emotions.[54] Another is that it is

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difficult, or impossible, to find in most of the surviving tragedies any sort of purgation parallel to that which I have described for the *Oedipus.* And finally, it is not clear at all how such a purgation would take place in the other mimetic arts.

One philosophical method of responding to Plato's critique of Homer and other poets was to interpret the texts as allegory.[55] In this way, truth could be discovered in the confused language of myth.[56] Plato was aware of this way of sanitizing Homer but thinks it inadequate, for, he had his Socrates declare, young people are not able to understand an allegorical method of writing (*Republic* 378d–e). Despite Plato's warning, allegory was applied by Stoics, Cicero, Philo, and Neoplatonists like Augustine and Boethius. But, as with the allegorizing work of the American transcendentalists, there is a chasm between the narratives and the abstractions of the ideas. As a consequence, the interpretations that convert the earthly into the ethereal satisfy only their authors and their few learned companions.[57]

Another philosophical response to Plato was the composition of didactic poetry, the finest surviving example of which is Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things.* With apparent sincerity, Lucretius advocates understanding the nature of the world through the atomism of Epicurus. Though Lucretius himself occasionally falls into flamboyant raptures over his hero Epicurus, readers are more likely to admire the poet's ingenuity and poetical grace than share in his fanatical devotion. For all its brilliance, the poem attracted few readers, both in antiquity and afterwards. It appears that human beings have not yet reached the evolutionary level of *Star Trek*'s Spock—we need an emotional connection. Most of us, when we crave intellectual stimulation, are glad to receive it clad in narrative stories, even stories as brief as anecdotes. In general, if we have any affinity at all for philosophy, we want it to arise from genuine dramatic situations. The most beloved dialogues of Plato are the dramatic ones—the *Crito, Euthyphro, Phaedo, Symposium, Gorgias, Phaedrus, Protagoras, Republic* 1—in which we find a powerful emotional element, where Socrates, for all his irritating qualities, shines as a hero of philosophy.

Yet another response to Plato's criticism of poetry is found in *On the Sublime* of Longinus, a remarkable work of literary criticism from the first century CE. Longinus suggests that great writing can provide a spiritual exaltation by the power of its beauty and by its ability to arouse wonder with a few lines or words said at the exactly right moment and in the exactly right way. The result is a stunning experience akin (but only akin) to the erotic experience described by Sappho when she gazes on her beloved.[58] The problem with Longinus' theory lies in the magical, perhaps even mystical, quality inherent in the passages that inspire this afflatus—it seems beyond the capacity of art to teach—and only comparatively a few passages in all literature evoke it.

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Perhaps the best and most restrained response to Plato is Horace's sagacious description of poetry in the epistle to Piso, often given the status of a distinct work as *Ars Poetica.* Horace addresses a number of the objections made by the Platonic Socrates. A poet, says Horace, addressing the first of Plato's criticisms, ought to write about what he knows and is capable of writing about (*Ars Poetica* 38–41). Plays, he says, must deal with emotions, and the emotions ought to be consonant with the characters in their situations. We can grieve with Telephus and Peleus if the situations in which they grieve are realistically presented (*Ars Poetica* 103–5). In this way, watching plays will train our emotions to respond correctly. Far from rejecting philosophy, and especially the Socratic conversations, Horace emphatically calls them and the wisdom in them the principle and fount of writing correctly (*Ars Poetica* 309–11). In what may be a summary of the whole work, he says that the job of the poet is either to benefit his audience or to please it (*Ars Poetica* 333–34). For the most part, the West's attitude toward poetry has been Horace's, with exceptions only at the extremes—a libertine license for anything that pleases anyone and a denunciatory censorship of anything not squeaky clean and morally uplifting.

In addition to these philosophical, or at least objectively intellectual responses to Plato, are the self-conscious responses of poets themselves. What I mean can be illustrated with a few examples from Virgil's *Aeneid.* Virgil, of course, was the most celebrated poet of ancient Rome, Rome's entry in the competition with Homer for supreme epic poet. He was so skilled a poet that he could turn a work of political propaganda into a great national epic. He is admired for combining Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* into one seamless whole and for endowing his epic with the excitement of Homer along with a philosophical significance that Homer lacks.[59] Most academic discussions of Virgil treat his borrowing from Homer, his rivalry with Homer, and all his differences from Homer and how these compare to those of other poets. And many include references to Virgil's use of Platonic or Neoplatonic philosophy, particularly in discussing the scene in the Underworld. It is therefore probable that Virgil is deliberately trying to exempt his *Aeneid* from Plato's critiques of Homer. For example, in the opening book of the *Aeneid*, when Aeneas and his men have landed shipwrecked on the coast of Libya, Aeneas gives a rousing speech to lift the spirits of his crew, recalling the trials they have overcome, suggesting that one day it will be a joy to remember the current tribulations, and urging them to envisage a happy reborn Troy (*Aeneid* 1.198–207). Virgil concludes the scene: "Thus he spoke with his voice, and sick with huge anxieties pretends hope by his countenance and constrains the deep pain in his heart" (*Aeneid* 1. 208–09). Virgil here is teaching his readers how to be leaders. He is training them—not schoolboys but the chief men of Rome—how to

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conduct themselves with their followers. Though they themselves may suffer emotional pain, they are duty-bound to hide it. That Aeneas experiences profound internal anxiety we know from our first glimpse of him in the poem. His ship beset by a horrific storm, he falls limp from fear and worry; he expresses envy for the men who died at Troy, who, he claims with classical precision, were three and four times more fortunate than he (*Aeneid* 1.92–101). A leader, despite what he himself may feel, does not show anxiety to his men. Throughout the poem, we observe the struggle of Aeneas to control his emotions, and though he sometimes succeeds, he often fails.[60] A reader, putting the *Aeneid* back on the bookshelf, is unlikely to exclaim, "I want to be *just like* Aeneas."

Through the first half of the classical period, the century or so before Plato came into his maturity (i.e., until about 400 BCE), reflective people might regard the heroes of epics as models of courage and cleverness and other useful military qualities. But after the Peloponnesian Wars, for political philosophers, such warriors could no longer stand as models of civilized conduct, especially in communities managed not by fear of an autocratic authority but by consent. Justice, wisdom, and self-restraint would now demand a place alongside courage in the panoply of societal virtues. Cities, it was discovered, needed leaders not only during wartime, but also before—to determine whether a war was necessary, or justified, or desirable—and after wartime—to lead the polity properly and make it better by creating good laws and policies to carry them out.

Who were to serve as such civic models? The Greek historians Herodotus and Thucydides were all too aware of their protagonists' failings. Such figures as Themistocles and Pausanias or Pericles and Nicias, though brilliant in many respects, were also corrupt, self-centered, vain, and superstitious. Plato showed by compelling argument how even the most celebrated political figures had failed to improve their fellow citizens but instead left them and their cities in worse shape.[61] Tragedians portrayed the main characters in their dramas as subject to impulsive excesses of rage, lust, hope, jealousy, and the rest of the psychopathological emotions. Rhetoricians, who for money or power would say anything to please their audience, were never seriously considered worthy of emulation, even by those who aspired to pursue the same profession.[62]

Now it has commonly been observed that evil is ceaselessly fascinating while goodness is dull. The portrayal of evil does indeed hold a reader's attention but, at least in classical literature, offers no morally useful role models. Heroes like Heracles and Theseus are grossly defective in their psychic and moral qualities and fully justify Plato's objection about the arousal of disgraceful emotions: in dramatic productions we see them howling and cursing, and we take delight in their excesses.[63]

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So the question for artists who wished to please *and* instruct became how to render absorbing the portrayal of a realistically good human acting in good ways. Plato, as has been observed, offers as his solution the Socratic conversations, in which we have a good man, Socrates, arguing with various men about virtue and other subjects. But, as the history of our culture has shown, only a relatively few are excited by the dialogues and very few try to model their conduct on him.[64] Still, Plato shows the power of the Socratic example to inspire imitators. In the *Symposium,* Aristodemus imitates Socrates in external accouterments: he goes barefoot and unwashed. In the *Gorgias*, Chaerephon, another Socratic enthusiast, makes an attempt at dialectic though he fails to be effective. Plato's dramatic point in these imitators perhaps is that Socrates is inimitable.

Three quarters of a millennium later, in the third century CE, Diogenes Laertius, in *Lives of the Philosophers,* shows a handful of imitators of Socrates who were somewhat more successful. Antisthenes, who had been a student of Gorgias, one day heard Socrates in the marketplace and instantly became a "Socratic," sitting at Socrates' feet. When Socrates died, Antisthenes decided to teach in Socratic fashion and chose as his site the gymnasium named Cynosarges (in Greek, "white [*argos*] dog [*cynos*"). It is probably from the name of this gymnasium that his school, known as Cynic, took its name. Antisthenes tried to outdo Socrates. Where Socrates had gone barefooted, Antisthenes went in a ragged cloak as well. Socrates had taken no money at all for teaching; Antisthenes would not even admit rich men into his presence. When asked what good he derived from his study of philosophy, Antisthenes replied, "The ability to converse with myself" (Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Antisthenes* 6.6). His most celebrated pupil was Diogenes of Sinope (404–323), who groused that Plato's talks were a waste of time, the tragedies in the Theatre of Dionysus peep-shows for morons, and politicians the lap-dogs of the mob (Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Diogenes* 6.24). Yet Alexander the Great is reported to have said, "If I were not Alexander, I would be Diogenes."

Diogenes Laertius also describes Zeno of Citium, the founder of Stoicism. According to Diogenes' tale, when Zeno was thirty years old, he was shipwrecked while transporting a rich cargo of purple dye from Phoenicia to the Piraeus. He survived the wreck and wandered five miles to Athens, where he decided to pass some time in a bookshop. He was browsing in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* about the life of Socrates and was already well into the second book, when he looked up and sighed, "Where are men like Socrates today?" The bookseller, at that precise moment just happening to see the Cynic Crates down the street, bid Zeno, "Follow that man!" Whether the bookseller was trying to rid himself of an idler who was reading books for free, or whether, as the Stoics might aver, he was the instrument of Providence, is impossible

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to say. But from that moment, Zeno became the Cynic's pupil (Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Zeno* 7.2–3). The story links Zeno's philosophical school with Socrates. In addition, it shows how Zeno, by adopting a philosophy appropriate for poverty, was able to console himself for his financial loss.[65]

The major difficulty in considering these stories from Diogenes Laertius is that all of them are postclassical and are themselves reflective of the process of a developing Mentshlekhkeyt as discussed later in this section. They represent an attempt, like that of the rabbis, to meld the standard model of God and its corollary qualities of human goodness with the Platonic-Aristotelian-Stoic blend of ethics that had evolved in the philosophical schools.

When Plato decided to write dialogues instead of devoting himself à la Socrates to one-on-one dialectic with ornery students and dangerous politicians, he was surely thinking strategically. By this I mean that he was seeking to inspire a relatively large number of people with Socratic moral and intellectual fervor rather than experience the tedious frustrations of wrestling with truculent, willful, obstreperous, stubborn, petulant pupils. As himself a youthful devotee of Socrates, he most likely had encountered his own Thrasymachuses and Poluses and Callicleses. Like Augustine later, who describes his failures with individual students, Plato decided to forego individualized instruction and instead write dialogues, trusting to unknown *future* readers the influence he could not achieve or lacked the patience to achieve in person. The successful imitators of Socrates like Antisthenes and Zeno (if we can trust Diogenes Laertius) cannot be the general sort of success that Plato wished for the human race. Despite Woody Allen's witty syllogism, all men are not and are not inclined to become Socrates.

Glimpses of *Mentshlekhkeyt* in the Bible

When Joseph, as vizier of Egypt, revealed his identity to his brothers, he began with the most crucial facts: he was their brother Joseph, whom they had sold into slavery in Egypt. At these words, the brothers must have thought their lives were over. But immediately they learn that Joseph has imagined himself in their place and recognized their consternation. He tells his brothers not to be angry with themselves "for selling him into Egypt—that they sold him hither," thus acknowledging the sorrow that Judah has just expressed. By reiterating their crime of selling him but adding the word *hither*, he does not simply repeat "into Egypt," but specifies the palace, where they are having the conversation. He is suggesting that they had in fact sold him into his present position as vizier of Egypt. This would of course be a preposterous claim without his additional explanation that it was actually *God* who had sent him hither, for the purpose of saving life. *They* were not responsible for what happened to Joseph; God was.

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Up to this point, the narrator of the Joseph story, quite remarkably for the Bible, has left out any mention of God. In Joseph's speech we have the motive. When Joseph explains that God was operating *through* the evil actions of the brothers, Joseph is describing all his misery through his own interpretive filter of optimism and nobility. He is metamorphosing what is certainly one the most evil things human beings can do to one another into one of the best—preserve life. Joseph attributes the responsibility for what had occurred to God—an attribution that amounts to an exoneration of the brothers, one he repeats several times in the next few verses. By assigning the credit to God, Joseph forestalls any inclination to envy that the brothers might have for his exalted position. *God* sent him; *God* made him father to Pharaoh; *God* made him the lord of Egypt. Joseph seals his words with the most loving of all behaviors as he embraces and kisses his brothers—first Benjamin, his full brother, whose terror has been surpassingly great, and then the rest. They weep and talk together. At the end of the novella, after Jacob has died, Joseph again assures his brothers of his good will toward them. The exoneration, coming from his heart with full warmth, represents the exemplary behavior of a *mentsh*.

A second example is Job, toward the end of his story, when he has every reason to be annoyed with his friends, who refused over and over again to believe that he had deserved his suffering. What Job does instead is pray for them (Job 42:10):

> And the Lord changed the fortune of Job, when he prayed for his friends; and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.

Although the friends had denied what meant most to Job, his probity, and had done so with considerable zeal, he nevertheless prayed for them, asking God to let go of his anger toward them. We can assume that their warm friendship resumed.

Glimpses of *Mentshlekhkeyt* in Rabbinnic Literature

There is little need to discuss the wonderful stories of the early rabbis, since there have been many accounts of them for millennia, including those in the oft-reprinted *The Rabbinic Anthology*, edited by C. G. Montefiore and H. M. J. Loewe, the elegant sketches by Elie Wiesel, and abundant scholarship.[66] And, of course, when the rabbis added Midrashim to the biblical stories, they imbued the protagonists with Mentshlekhkeyt. Thus, for example, both Abraham and Job are like Axylus in their hospitality: Job has a house at a crossroads with doors in each cardinal direction so that the poor should not have to walk around to enter.[67]

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Here, I should like to follow up a suggestion made by Richard Hidary that many of the Talmudic arguments employ classical rhetoric.[68] He asks the logical question of how this could be possible for holy men, since rhetoric aims at persuasion, not truth, at the plausible, not the certain. In the classical world, he says, the user of rhetoric at trials was the *lawyer* aiming to persuade judges. But in the Talmudic world, it was the judges themselves who used it. Now the job of a lawyer is to seek the outcome desired by his client, but the job of a rabbi, Hidary says, is not to twist arguments in order to reach a verdict that someone might like, but to reach the justest possible verdict. This is why judges must not let procedure get in the way of justice.[69] As he says, the Talmud does not care about the best *case* regardless of the truth; it aims to see through false arguments to the truth. Rabbinical judges need great caution in deciding whether to sentence someone to death, for the evidence of wrongdoing is almost always *a posteriori* and hence not absolutely conclusive.

This sense of compassion, this desire to treat every person within one's authority with the greatest justice possible and to give priority in uncertain cases to an assumption of innocence in order to value a defendant's life is the exact opposite of Roman law, where exemplary justice was an ideal. Tacitus records a slave's murder of his master Lucius Pedanius Secundus in a crime of passion when either the master refused to sell the slave his freedom at an agreed upon price or when the slave, infatuated with the same man as his master, found the competition intolerable. The law required all the slaves in a house to be killed if the master had been killed, but because there were 400 slaves in the house and the crime was so obviously a spontaneous crime of passion in which no one else was involved, public feeling was opposed to killing the slaves. The senator Gaius Cassius Longinus argued that the crime of killing the 400 innocent slaves was outweighed by the example of preserving the exemplary punishment. After all, he asked, if 400 slaves could not protect their master Pedanius, who would be safe? The argument prevailed in the senate, and all the slaves were killed (Tacitus, *Annals* 14.42–45). The rabbis of the Talmudic period would not have listened to Longinus' argument, nor, I think would Tacitus, who tells the story to characterize the values in the age of Nero.

Glimpses of *Mentshlekhkeyt* in Classical Literature

For straightforward *Mentshlekhkeyt* we search classical literature with frustration. Accounts that at first seem to glow with warmth and compassion reveal, upon scrutiny, crass self-interest. For example, Herodotus tells the story about the sentimental inability of some Corinthians to slay an infant who has smiled sweetly at them (*History* 5.92). At first we assume that these men are moved by kindness. But the failure is cast in a bad light—for against

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the advice of an oracle they spare a child whose grandson will become the cruel tyrant Periander. Other stories of saving babies, of the infants Cyrus and Oedipus, for example, are motivated by fear (of offending the maniacal King Astyages in the case of Cyrus' savior Harpagus); or by desire (for a child to replace a stillborn in the case of Cyrus' savior Spako); or by opportunism (in the case of the messenger from Corinth in Sophocles' *Oedipus*); or by a pity mistakenly thought to be risk-free and then regretted (in the case of the herdsman who saved Oedipus).[70] Or we might think of Croesus' granting sanctuary to Adrastus, though Croesus makes clear that he is acting in a strictly diplomatic way, as he reaffirms when he requires his beneficiary to repay him (*History* 1.41–42).

And yet the depiction and promulgation of sweet character begins, like much else, in Homer. Homer hints of it in the obscure Axylus, who lives by the side of a road in Arisbe and is a friend to all who pass by (*Iliad* 6.12–19):

> Axylus did Diomedes good at shouting strike—
> Axylus, Teuthras' son, who used to live in well-built Arisbe.
> Wealthy in his living, he was a friend to the human race.
> He showed affection to all, you see, living as he did in a house by a road.
> But for him no one of these people protected him now from a sad death,
> coming forward to help him. Nay, from both he took their life,
> from Axylus himself and from his servant Kalesios,
> who then was the driver of his horses. And both sank into the ground.

In this brief passage, so home-spun, so full of sentiment as almost to be sentimental, so warm and generous, is contained the essence of a *mentsh*. Axylus has a fixed residence, a home. He has long passed the stage of wanderlust, of nomadic caravanning, of being "on the road." His house is located by a road, and the existence of a road implies the existence of at least two worthwhile places—the one from which you come and the one toward which you go. In addition, the existence of a road implies the existence of travelers, who—insofar as they are travelers—are away from home. Hence the generous function of Axylus, a completely voluntary one: he befriends travelers who are on the road. In general, people are more interested in travelers than in those who stay at home, for every traveller worth his salt gets into adventures where he needs help; and that help can come only from those who have fixed abodes, as Odysseus, one of the first celebrity-travelers, discovers over and over again.

Now why should Axylus, or any person, befriend all people, both strangers and those whom he knows? We can understand his befriending those whom he knows; but why all? We cannot explain his conduct by saying that he has debts or obligations; we cannot explain it by saying that he likes the strangers, for he has never met them. We must, I think, look for something in human nature. It is a characteristic of many animals to travel in groups, just

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as it is also that those groups fight with one another. But I know of no social animals, from ants to zebras, who befriend all others of their species.[71] Now although we may not be familiar with many people who act in this way, we do not, when we hear of somebody like Axylus, respond by saying, "Why, he isn't human!" Instead, we accept his conduct as being uniquely and especially human, and we are grateful for the existence of such people. For even if they are rare, we somehow think of them as more typical and more representative than we do those tribes who are hostile and suspicious of everyone, even of each other.[72]

Axylus, for all his philanthropy, is one of the first to die in the course of the *Iliad*. Are his qualities such as to prevent his being a competent warrior? Should he have stayed in Arisbe rather than have enlisted to fight? Is the value of his philanthropy foolish?[73] Homer, in this exquisite vignette, evokes in his audience a sorrow for a man whose death is just another tick on Diomedes' toll of victories.

We find another hint of Mentshlekhkeyt in Patroclus, first when, despite his haste to return to Achilles, he stops to help a wounded soldier (*Iliad* 11.808–47), and later, when Homer describes the reaction of Briseis as she gazes on Patroclus' corpse of after the reconciliation between Achilles and Agamemnon (*Iliad* 19.282–300). Her words give fuller substance to an earlier mention of Patroclus' gentleness and kindness to all people.[74] In genuine sorrow, Briseis recalls how he had treated her with compassion for her traumatic reversal of fortune. His promise to restore her to her former status by making her Achilles' wedded wife comforted her, but now that Patroclus is dead, she has no advocate. If she had overheard Achilles' dismissive reference to her in his speech of reconciliation with Agamemnon, she would have scant reason to look forward to marriage to Achilles. Unlike Axylus, Patroclus could be a warrior when it was necessary, and his motive for fighting was his devotion to friends, for he was trying to stave off death and defeat from his Greek comrades.

We find warm human beings in the *Odyssey,* too, though their motives may be somewhat suspect. Nestor and Pisistratus treat Telemachus with great kindness—but the prince of Ithaca, as the son of their famous friend, is a privileged guest. Eumaius and Philoetius treat Odysseus with decency when he is disguised as a beggar, and *if* they are unaware of the beggar's true identity (a question with which Homer teases his audience), they would be unequivocally good people, loyal to the principle of hospitality—in short, examples of Mentshlekhkeyt. But as subordinate characters in the epic, it is unlikely that they served as role models for the poem's aristocratic audience.

Until the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, there does not seem to have been organized reflection in the Pagan world about what it meant to be a warm,

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compassionate human being. If there had been such reflection, perhaps poets might have elaborated, in the language of myth, stories about Axylus, the wealthy man of Arisbe who offered hospitality to all, or about the sweetness of Patroclus, or the loyalty of Odysseus' good servants. I do not mean, of course, that people did not recognize individual acts of kindness, charity, generosity, and forgiveness, but that the process of systematic reasoning, which came to be applied to military tactics, city-planning, medicine, and ethics was not yet being applied in either philosophy or poetry to the analysis of good character.

The absence of systematic thinking did not preclude *non-systematic* thinking. In the fragments of lyric poetry, we find literary attempts to fathom the human soul. The earliest Greek lyric poets flourished in the middle years of the seventh century BCE, when the polis was the form of cooperative living, with shared social, religious, civic, and professional lives. To know that Tellus was an Athenian or Lichas a Spartan was to know the most consequential circumstance of their lives. But, in spite of their identification with the poleis, the lyric poets were able to express their idiosyncratic feelings. They were not simply interchangeable parts of a super-organism, but unique individuals.

In a polis, what matters is the hurly-burly of the moment, the crisis of the *here and now.* All attention is placed on an ephemeron: some immediate political event affecting war or peace or some exigent dispute between neighbors. In a monarchical society, the only people worthy of song and remembrance are royal scions and their paramours. But in a *political* society—that is, the society of a *polis*—the passions of even, say, a slave-woman's son, Archilochus of Paros—our first extant lyric poet—can be memorialized in verse. Archilochus, sometimes called the "originator of individualism," is said to occupy a "cardinal position in Greek literature as the earliest surviving poet to find the material for his poetry in his own emotions."[75] In this fragment Archilochus sneers at the heroic mentality:

> Some Thracian delights in my shield—it was a blameless one—which I left behind a bush; but I saved myself. Why should I care about that spear? Let it go! I'll soon buy a new one, no worse.

Zeus' son Sarpedon had exhorted Glaucus to enter battle to win glory or grant it to another; Spartan mothers exhorted their sons to return with their shield or on it. A *Spartan* would not throw away his shield; he would rather die. Archilochus deliberately evokes an epic flavor in his verse by his use of "blameless" (*amoton*). What he wishes is to contrast his standard with Homer's—the value of his life against a misguided sense of honor. He reckons up the benefit of honor and draws a conclusion: it is not worth throwing his life away for. He boldly ridicules the Homeric morality that values a shield—something

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that can be bought—more highly than a unique and irreplaceable life. But what is perhaps even more significant for the development of our culture, he is proclaiming his private decision to the whole world; he is publishing his inner feelings. As readers of Archilochus we ask ourselves whether we would have done the same thing as he—and whether we would boast about it. In revealing to the world what perhaps were the inner thoughts of many young soldiers, he has enabled those feelings to gain currency and has given us the freedom to imagine acting in the same way: if Archilochus can thumb his nose at Homer, perhaps we can too! In the existential mocking of Archilochus' last line—"I'll buy a better shield!"—this son of a slave-woman asserts that he is more honorable in being free from stupid conventions than the great heroes at Ilium, who were enslaved by them; *they* were in the thrall to a morality that valued a piece of oxhide more than a man's life!

The audience of lyric poetry, whether of the anti-Homeric verses of Archilochus, the lamentations of Mimnermus about growing old and sexually unattractive, or the lovelorn pangs of Sappho, saw themselves reflected in the lyric verses and came to the realization that despite the momentary specificity of these expressions, they disclosed a broadly common attitude that validated Aristotle's claim that poetry is more philosophical than history.

When philosophers turned their attention to human nature, they came to understand that what distinguishes human beings from other animals and unites them in a bond with the divine is the faculty of reason. This was a revolutionary discovery, for it extended group-identity beyond the familial and tribal to a universal brotherhood. It required another two and a half millennia to expand the franchise to women—a confirmation of how difficult it has been for imperfect humans to separate what is culturally traditional—the relegation of women to subordinate status—from what is natural—the distinctly human faculty of reason.[76] Once the basic theory of the human good as virtuous activity was formulated, perhaps in Socrates' actual conversations, certainly in those of Plato and Aristotle, it became, with some variations, the general tenet of western philosophy. Epicureans, Cynics and Stoics might argue whether virtue—the application of reasoning to the activities of life—was only the fundamental part of human happiness and there did exist other goods, or whether virtue alone was *all* of human happiness—so that a human being could be entirely happy even when tortured on the rack; but the schools agreed on the accessibility of virtue to all human beings. This galvanizing view revolutionized fifth-century Athenian politics and was gradually diffused throughout the Mediterranean world.

When did this understanding of a common human nature infiltrate stories? By what means did it do so? In whose stories did homely accounts of householders, of common folk—with their everyday problems—come largely to supplant the bone-rattling tales of epic wars, with their colossal virtues of

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courage and martial prowess? And why did it happen? None of these questions allow for very much scientific precision for the reason laid out at the beginning of this book—the accidental and fragmentary data that have come down to us from ancient times. For why such stories of ordinary life became a major staple of literature I shall try here to offer a plausible account.

When stories about mentshen came into being can, perhaps, be bounded with some certainty. The archaic and classical periods had offered only hints of such individuals in their literature. As Arnaldo Momigliano has noted, the ancients did not write what we would call "biography," an "account of the life of a man from birth to death"; instead they wrote *bioi,* "lives,"[77] accounts that distill the essence of an individual's character. The anecdotes in Philostratus, Diogenes Laertius, Plutarch, and Suetonius are wholly untrustworthy as fact. Even when they tell of true events, they are unreliable, for everything they describe is drawn, with embellishment, from the works of the subjects themselves or those of their flatterers.[78] The fundamental problem with these ancient "lives" is the paucity of information. In general, the accounts have a single authorial source; the source himself is writing long after the event, when an assessment of the subject has already become fixed. And, of course, the source has his own motives for the account. The "lives" follow a consistent formula, as Richard Burridge has shown in his comparison of classical accounts to the gospels.[79] In the late Hellenistic period, in the hagiographical accounts of Early Christianity and in Rabbinical writings,[80] the stories begin to include narratives of Mentshlekhkeyt.

I suspect that the development of New Comedy in the fourth century BCE was a reaction to the philosophical formulations of character as well as a spur to reflection on the qualities, worthy and unworthy, of ordinary human beings.[81] Classical and archaic literature had dealt with heroes and kings, but by the fourth century the unworthiness of these people to serve as models of human excellence was plain everywhere. With the vast Hellenistic kingdoms, moreover, the *polis* ceased to engage the attention of most people, who turned their attention to private local circumstances. This change was reflected in New Comedy, a type of theatre mostly independent of time and place that portrayed the entanglements of humbler social classes. Its grumpy old men, randy young men, henpecking wives, clever slaves, strict fathers, benevolent uncles, boastful soldiers, and rich fools were recognizable to the audience and provided an arena in which they could see the range of humanity's actions, some of which involved Mentshlekhkeyt.

Perhaps people began to think abstractly about human qualities in the fourth century because Greek philosophy had percolated into the thought of educated popular writers. The authors of New Comedy studied the writings of Theophrastus, who in his *Characters* laid out the analyses conducted in the Lyceum of the various human types. Composition of the "lives" of famous

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people was still in its early stage,[82] and, as mentioned above, consisted in the collection of anecdotes, a method that was to have an enduring effect.[83] Plutarch and the authors of the Gospels collected anecdotes to inspire a "way of life," an *agogé.* The tales about rabbis, with their devotion to virtue and learning, often depict them as mentshen. If, as Hyam Maccoby has argued,[84] Jesus was himself a Pharisee, stories about him would fit into this category.

Stories of humane individuals would be a rebuttal of the banishment of literature by Plato. Such stories would overcome all his objections: they would not presume a knowledge that was not truly possessed; they would not induce pleasure in the shameful emotions we would blush to exhibit; and they would not inspire vice. Instead, they would stimulate a self-knowledge that keeps us humble and aspiring to be good. They would provide models of self-restraint and the pursuit of wisdom. In short, they would represent a cross-flourishing of the biblical and classical worlds as both were transformed by the sagacity of Greek philosophy with its models of God and ethics. The glory of epic honor, which first Homer and then the philosophers had shown to be an empty phantom, was now to be superseded by kindness and a heart aglow with love. Who, benevolently nurtured in this new mélange, would *not* choose to be Axylus over Achilles? Who would not choose to be Joseph over King David?

NOTES

1. Homer, *Iliad* 11.603, Herodotus, *History of the Persian Wars* 1.5.3 and 5.97.3; and Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian Wars* 2.12.3. Aristotle weighs in later with his beginning of the Persian Wars in *Posterior Analytics* 94a 37.

2. Should the text be rendered "In the beginning, God created" (KJV) or "In the beginning, when God created" (NRSVACE) or "In the beginning of God's preparing" (YLT) or "In the beginning God made of nought heaven and earth" (WYC) or "When God began creating" (TLB)?

3. Has any Sunday school teacher's students not asked where Cain and Seth found wives?

4. Herodotus, 1.90–91, 2.129–34.

5. An interesting case of wild passion in Alexander the Great is revealing. After he kills his friend Cleitus in a fit of wrath, Alexander's companions try, by varied *arguments* to tell him how he should respond rationally to what he has done. The story is recounted by all the historians of Alexander, but it is Plutarch who most starkly describes the contrasting arguments (*Life of Alexander* 50–51).

6. The standard is modified from the classical to the Hellenistic period. For Polycleitus, the head was 1/7 the length of the body; for Vitruvius, 1/8. This is less significant than the existence of a canon altogether. For a discussion of proportion in art, see Erwin Panofsky, "The History of the Theory of Human Proportions as a Reflection of the History of Styles," *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) 55–107.

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7. There are a few references to the art in the Temple (1 Kings 7:25, 29), where there were depictions of oxen, lions, and cherubim, but nothing to indicate that beautiful women or men were rendered.

8. Compare the images in John Brophy, *The Face of the Nude: A Study in Beauty* (New York: Tudor Publishing, 1968).

9. Sophocles, *Antigone* 904–15. Antigone's explanation is strikingly like that of Intaphernes' wife (Herodotus 3.119). It is possible that Sophocles is borrowing from Herodotus; if so, perhaps the playwright expected that the audience would remember the Herodotean passage and so would consider Antigone's comments to be Persian, that is, "non-Greek," *barbarian* with its embellished connotations. It is just as likely, however, that the passages share a common source. What is highly unlikely it that they independently present this idiosyncratic argument.

10. Euripides, *Iphigeneia in Aulus.* The passage is discussed, pp. 152–54.

11. Euripides, *Hippolytus* (884–890). See the discussion above, pp. 146–50.

12. For Jephthah, see Judges 11:30–31 and above, pp. 151–55; for Noah, Genesis 9:18–29 and above, pp. 145–46.

13. See above, pp. 194–98.

14. For how Homer achieves this miracle, see my "Achilles' Choice" McKibben Lecture, Grinnell College, 2006.

15. In Greek literature, in Hesiod's myth of Pandora, a committee of gods contribute qualities to the woman; in Protagoras' myth in Plato's dialogue *Protagoras,* man, too is the recipient of gifts from several deities.

16. See my "Empedocles in Rome" 5–20.

17. See Chapter 5, n. 16 and the section "Incremental Teaching."

18. For the argument, see above, Chapter 5, the section "Inherited Guilt."

19. We can see this in the biblical account of the theft of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 17:21–29). Jezebel's son Jehorum is killed on the field that Jezebel had stolen—a son who had been brought up in the evil ways of his parents, and whose bad upbringing is visited upon him.

20. For theologians who have adopted what I have called the "standard model" of God, the notion that God could change his mind is self-evidently false, and so any scriptural suggestions of any alteration must be corrected by exegesis. For an example of one such treatment of the problem, which concludes with the qualification that everything depends on just what is meant by "changing one's mind," see Robert B Chisholm, Jr., "Does God Change His Mind," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152 (1995) 387–99.

21. Self-movement is evident in locomotion, change of physical place. Perhaps Thales has some notion of "movement forward in time" for things, like rocks, which lack evident locomotion.

22. The easy blend of myth and reality is a feature of the literature of Africa and Latin America. See for example, Antonio D. Tillis, *Perspectives on Afro-Latin American Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

23. David N. Freedman, "Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy: An Essay on Biblical Poetry" *JBL* 96 (197) 6–7.

24. I am using Nino Luraghi's interpretation of this word in "The Importance of Being "λόγιος" *The Classical World* 102 (2009) 439–56; it indicates a wise interpreter who cultivates memory.

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25. Joel Rosenberg, "Biblical Narrative" in Holtze, *Back to Sources* 32, gives as the traditional view that the canon was established by rabbis at a meeting at Yavneh. But the matter has been highly debated. For a recent controversial look at the subject, see Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders, eds. *The Canon Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002).

26. This view is, strangely, attached to Jewish literary texts generally, including those outside the Bible, in Martin Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations* (New York: Knopf, 2007): "No Jewish literary text announces itself as humorous, and nothing like a public performance of comedy or mime is known" (298–99).

27. In the Talmud's attempt to endow Solomon with wisdom, it shows him answering riddles posed to him by the Queen of Sheba. See p. 93 and p. 130 n. 65. An ability to solve actual riddles is a sign of intelligence throughout classical literature.

28. One person with greater knowledge who has interpreted the riddle is Fredrik Sjöberg (*The Fly Trap,* tr. Thomas Teal [New York: Pantheon, 2015] 112–15), who suggests that the carcass was filled with drone hoverflies, a bee mimic.

29. The generation born after Joshua *does not remember* what God did for Israel and forsakes God, worshipping Baal and other deities of the lands they have entered, and so God sends an angel to announce the withdrawal of military help. Instead of driving out their enemies, the people of Israel will be oppressed and subjugated by them (Judges 2:1–16). This pattern is repeated often in the time of the Judges.

30. Also Psalm 116:12: "How can I repay the Lord for all his bountiful dealings toward me?" Many Jews begin their day with the prayer *Modeh ani,* thanking God for a restoration of their souls.

31. See Chapter 1, the section "Destroying Trees."

32. And not only heroic actions. Helen tells Hector that Zeus has designed her dishonor and Paris' disgraceful behavior to be the subjects of future songs (*Iliad* 6.356–58).

33. This perhaps is in contrast to the narrative in Homer's *Odyssey*, where the poet is constantly teasing the audience about whether Eumaios and Penelope say what they say and do what they do because they have an intuition that the disguised beggar is really Odysseus. If Eumaios has such a suspicion, then his apparent devoted loyalty might be a cunning act. Readers of Homer can find plausible evidence to support various hypotheses on these points. Readers of Genesis would have to exercise ingenuity to find duplicity in Joseph.

34. See the discussion of the "noble lie" in Chapter 4, 181–83.

35. The laws of the Bible and the Hebrews also increase, from the one law given to the first man to the seven "Noahide" laws to the 613 given to Moses at Sinai. There followed the non-Halachic laws promulgated by kings, including those concerning forced labor. After the destruction of the Second Temple, when changes became necessary, the rabbis modified the laws pertaining to temple rituals and elaborated others in the Torah.

36. See *Discourses on the First Book of Herodotus* 203–09.

37. See Chapter 3, "Fratricide," 141–44.

38. The Bible does not support the idea that human beings are born with an innate sense of morality and without any need for formulated rules.

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39. See Hertz, *Pentateuch and Haftorahs,* 94.

40. The *Jewish Study Bible* translates Esau's request for the soup thus: "Give me some of that red stuff to gulp down, for I am famished." Robert Alter (*The Art of Biblical Narrative* revised edition (New York: Basic Books: 2011) 51, translates it, "Let me cram my maw with this red-red stuff." Boorishness, however, would not justify the theft.

41. Much depends on the meaning of "and despised" (*va-yivez:* וַיִּבֶז). Does the word mean that Esau did not see any value in a birthright that depended on the accident of emerging first from Rebekah's womb? Does it mean that he rejected the whole principle of birthright as senselessly arbitrary? To those of modern liberal sensibilities, this view would be laudable. Or does the word "despised" suggest that Esau rejected his parents, their traditions, and what was then perceived to be an organizing principle of human life—birth order? J. H. Hertz, in his commentary, is representative of those who censure Esau (*The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* ad loc.), finding deep moral flaws in him, calling him a "fickle and impulsive hunter [who] readily sacrifices to the gratification of the moment that which to a man of nobler build would be of transcendent worth." Traditionalists might consider an attribution to the Bible of doubts about the importance of birth order as anachronistic sentimentalism. Yet we find many examples in the Bible of younger offspring who have more prominent roles than their older brothers: in addition to Jacob, we might think of Joseph, David, Solomon, and Abijah. Abraham (according to both *Smith's Bible Dictionary* and *Easton's Bible Dictionary*) was himself younger than his brother Nahor (Genesis 11:22–25).

42. Among Esau's descendants is Amelek (Genesis 36:12), founder of the Amelekites, the people who try to destroy the Israelites at Rephidim while they are on their way to the promised land (Exodus 17:8–10) and whom Saul and David later try to destroy (1 Samuel 15 and 1 Samuel 30). The beginning of the mutual animosity is placed very far back in history.

43. See Chapter 5, "Abuse of Religion," pp. 211–14.

44. The first principle is discussed in Chapter 5, "Abuse of Religion"; the second, in Chapter 2, "Reconciliation"; and the third, in Chapter 5, "Inherited Guilt."

45. Ancient defenses are taken up in the following pages. Among the most famous postclassical ones are those by Philip Sidney, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Matthew Arnold. Diana Rhoads developed a defense for Shakespeare in *Shakespeare's Defense of Poetry: A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Tempest* (Lanham, London, and New York: University Press of America, 1985), and Jeannine Johnson has written on the defenses by modern poets in *Why Write Poetry? Modern Poets Defend Their Art* (Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007).

46. Plato keeps his distance from these views by putting them into the mouth of Socrates. The reason they are here referred to as *Plato*'s views is that they have been passed into the tradition attributed to Plato. Such attribution is fairer than attributing the view to Socrates. But that Plato meant them as "thought experiments," and not as his actual beliefs, is, as I have argued (*Interpreting Plato*), what the tradition has misunderstood.

47. See pp. 21–22.

48. *Republic* 606a–c. For philosophy's treatment of sex in poetry, see Kathy L. Gaca, *The Making of Fornication: Eros, Ethics, and Political Reform in Greek Philosophy and Early Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2003) 73–75.

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49. See, for example, the chapter on music in Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987] 68–81.

50. Of course, people usually do not live up to their ideals. My late teacher, friend, and colleague John M. Crossett, who had studied with Moses Hadas at Columbia University in the 1940s, attributed to him the witty observation that if you want to know what a people *really* was like, look to their ideals—the people were the opposite.

51. Catharsis (*Poetics* 1449b24–29), pity (*Rhetoric* 1385b13), and fear (*Rhetoric* 1382a21).

52. This is my interpretation of how an Aristotelian catharsis would operate. For other views, see, Leon Golden, *Aristotle on Tragic and Comic Mimesis* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992); Richard Janko, "From Catharsis to the Aristotelian Mean" in A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays in Aristotle's Poetics*, 341–58 (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992); Elizabeth Belfiore, "Pleasure, Tragedy, and Aristotelian Psychology," *Classical Quarterly* 35(1985) 349–61; and Jonathan Lear, "Katharsis," *Phronesis* 33(1988) 297–36.

53. For anger, see William Harris, *Restraining Rage: The Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

54. For a thinker like Cicero in his most Stoic moments, a wise person should expunge even *pleasant* emotions, like joy at celebrations (*Tusculan Disputations* 4.65–66).

55. See p. 233, n. 24.

56. This is the formulation of Ramelli and Lucchetta, 40.

57. On the Stoic Chrysippus' startling allegorical interpretation of Zeus' relationship with Hera, see Pau Gilabert Barerà, "Eros in the Physics of Ancient Stoicism: Why did Chrysippus Think of a Cosmogonal *Fellatio," Itaca, Quaderns Catalans de Cultura Clàssica.* Vol. I, Barcelona, 1985, 81–106. I found an English translation at http://diposit.ub.edu/dspace/bitstream/2445/12092/8/Eros%20fis%20eng%2012092.pdf. For the philosophical justification of allegorizing the gods, see Ramelli and Lucchetta, 36–40. For an example of such criticism of modern author Herman Melville, see Charles Feidelson, *Moby Dick* (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964) 530, n. 7 (or many other notes). And for the defense by Hart Crane of his own symbolic inventiveness in his poem "Melville's Tomb," see his letter to Harriet Monro (repr. in Richard Ellman and Charles Feidelson, *The Modern Tradition: Backgrounds of Modern Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965) 158–62.

58. See Longinus 10.2. The poem was preserved only here.

59. For a contemporary observation on the rivalry of Virgil and Homer, with the philosophical palm going to Virgil, see Albrecht Dihle, *Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire: From Augustus to Justinian* (New York: Routledge, 1994) 32–33. Alexander Pope, in the preface to his translation of the *Iliad,* puts the matter succinctly in his splendid comparative judgment of the two authors. An echo of Pope's evaluation, concerning the shield of Aeneas, with Virgil "the superior in sentiment," may be found in Joab Goldsmith Cooper's edition, *Publii Virgilii Maronis opera,* or, *The works of Virgil* (New York: Robinson, Pratt, and Company, 1841) n. on 8.370 [445 in the 1841 ed.]. Of arguments in support of Virgil's purported superiority in eloquence, Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle's 1688 essay "A Digression

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on the Ancients and Moderns" contains a good example. The essay can be found, translated into English, in *Continental Model: Selected French Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century in English Translation,* ed. Scott Elledge and Donald Schier [Minneapolis: Carleton College and the University of Minnesota Press, 1960] 364. As I argue ("Achilles' Guilt"), in establishing the concept of conscience through the complex suffering of Achilles, Homer is quite significant historically and philosophically. In working out the concept of guilt with narrative tools only—philosophical modes of thinking not yet having been invented—he is perhaps as profound a thinker as ever lived.

60. A rank failure occurs at the very end of the poem, when Aeneas' rival Turnus has been defeated and begs for mercy, Aeneas is enflamed with rage when he sees the belt of his friend Pallas, whom Turnus has killed, and kills Turnus. Virgil closes his poem with the exact same words with which we first met Aeneas now applied to Turnus (1.92 and 12.951: *solvuntur frigore membra*)—words that indicate a disengagement from self-control. The verb *solvo* indicates a release from fetters, a slackening, a dissolving. Aeneas' fear at the beginning of the poem is verbally linked with Turnus' death. The poem ends with Aeneas as a negative example, as a man who violates the mission that his father Anchises had revealed to him in the underworld (6.853)—to spare people who have been conquered and " to demilitarize" ("to de-war") the haughty (*parere subiectis et debellare superbos*).

61. For Themistocles, see Herodotus 8.4–5, 8.112 and Thucydides 1.135–38; for Pausanias, see Thucydides 1.95 and 1.128–35. For Nicias, see Thucydides 7.50. For the citizens as worse after Pericles, see Plato, *Gorgias* 515d–516d, 519a.

62. The depiction of Protagoras' young admirer Hippocrates, who blushes at the thought of becoming like his idol, would be an example (Plato, *Protagoras* 311d–312a).

63. We might think of the wails of Heracles in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* and of Theseus in Euripides' *Hippolytus.*

64. Woody Allen, in *Love and Death,* has his hero Boris assert this syllogism: "A. Socrates is a man. B. All men are mortal. C. All men are Socrates." Alas, all men are *not* Socrates. Surely one obstacle to imitating Socrates has been the memory of his hemlock.

65. Perhaps it is worth noting how similar the story is to the one in the Gospel, when Jesus tells the fishermen Peter and Andrew and then James and John to drop their nets and follow him, that he will make them fishers of men. All at once they *do* drop their nets and follow Jesus (Matthew 4.19–21). In the same way, the bookseller says, "Follow that man," and Zeno does.

66. For an excellent bibliography of work on the lives of rabbis, see Richard Kalmin,"Saints or Sinners, Scholars or Ignoramuses? Stories about the Rabbis as Evidence for the Composite Nature of the Babylonian Talmud," *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 15 (1990) 203–05. In the article Kalmin discusses variant tales of various rabbis and shows how the disciples of one often tried to portray another in a less flattering light.

67. Avot 1:5. For Axylus, See below. pp. 271–72.

68. Hidary 62.

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69. Hidary 63.

70. Harpagus and Spako, Herodotus, *History* 1.109–113; the Corinthian messenger, Sophocles, *Oedipus* 1005; the herdsman, *Oedipus* 1157.

71. When I asked my colleague Alexander Werth, who teaches biology, about whether there are any animals who behave like Axylus, this was his reply: "There have been a lot of studies of animal behavior/evolutionary ecology that deal with this sort of situation (with various evolutionarily stable strategies called, for obvious reasons, 'hawk' and 'dove,' etc.); it's rarely if ever a good thing to befriend all other individuals, even conspecifics. That's virtually always a losing strategy because you can be taken advantage of. Maybe this Axylus knew something we don't, or maybe Homer was trying to make a point by moralizing."

72. There is, however, a genetically caused neurodevelopmental condition, "Williams Syndrome," considered a handicap, in which human beings, often children, show extraordinary friendliness and trust toward others, including all strangers. Parents are afraid their offspring who have this condition will be stolen. Can it be that what Homer is describing is an ancient case of this syndrome? Would we actually be pleased to learn that generous, kind behavior is a rare biological dysfunction?

73. But for a view of Axylus different from mine—as a hopelessly naïve simpleton—see Mark Buchan, *Perfidy and Passion: Reintroducing the Iliad* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012) 136–37.

74. *Iliad* 17.669–72. In the passage, Menelaus had called Patroclus *meilichos* ("soothing," "calming") to all men.

75. D. A. Campbell, *Greek Lyric Poetry: A Selection of Early Greek Lyric, Elegiac, and Iambic Poetry* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1982) 136.

76. There is, however, a continuing debate on this subject. For an affirmation of the traditional differences between the sexes, see Steven E. Rhoads, *Taking Sex Differences Seriously* (San Francisco: Encounter Books) 2004. There has been a long tradition of misogyny in the West, some for the sake of wit (e.g., William Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* and H. L. Mencken's *In Defense of Women*), some genuinely felt (e.g., Arthur Schopenhauer's "On Women" and Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*—though these are not without doubters), and some deliberately inflammatory (e.g., Grace Walker, *Women Are Defective Males, The Calculated Denigration of Women by the Catholic Church and its Disastrous Consequences Today* (Sandy, UT: Aardvark Global Publishing, 2010).

77. Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993) 11–12.

78. And this circumstance leads, as Elizabeth Irwin observes, to the paradox that scholars warn that biographical accounts cannot be trusted and at the same time wish that the works contained more events from the poets' lives so that more could be included in biographies about them ("The Biography of Poets: The Case of Solon" in McGing and Judith Mossman, *The Limits of Ancient Biography* [Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2006] 13–14).

79. Richard A. Burridge, "Biography as The Gospels' Literary Genre," *Revista Catalana de Teologia* 38/1 (2013) 17.

80. R. A. Burridge finds the origins of biography in fourth century BCE rhetorical encomia ("Reading the Gospels as Biography" in *The Limits of Ancient Biography*,

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edited by Brian McGing and Mossman [Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2006] 32). He also suggests that the stories of Jesus in the gospels are intended to inspire imitations of his life. As will be evident from the following discussion, I think this is entirely the right track to take, and I shall argue that stories of Jesus in the gospels are a variant of the stories of the rabbis.

81. On the resemblance of Theophrastus' *The Characters* to comedy, see A. Rostagni, "Sui *'Caratteri' di Teofrasto," Revista di filologia e d'istruzione classica* 48 (1920) 417–43 and R. G. Ussher, "Old Comedy and Character," *Greece & Rome* 24 (1977) 71–79.

82. McGing and Mossman, *The Limits of Ancient Biography* [Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2006] ix–xx. We need to remember that before the availability of paper and pencils, it was no easy matter to maintain a diary, to write letters, or to keep files of records. Anecdotes passed down orally would fulfill the obligation to remember.

83. On the difficulty presented by anecdotes and our reliance on them nevertheless for knowledge about ancient individuals, see Alexei V. Zadorojnyi, "Lords of the Files: Literacy and Tyranny in Imperial Biography," in *The Limits of Ancient Biography*, edited by Brian McGing and Mossman (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2006) 377–78. The anthologies of the first two centuries of the Common Era, by such men as Favorinus and Athenaeus, unlike Plutarch, seem to have been organized by subject rather than by an individual's life (Bezalel Bar-Kochva 86). The Gospels seem to be similar works of composition—anecdotes collected to portray a life.

84. In *Jesus the Pharisee* (London: SCM, 2003), Maccoby shows that Hillel and Jesus were both Pharisees with identical religious and ethical views, the main differences between them that Hillel did not put himself forth as a prophet or possess charismatic and political qualities (*Jesus the Pharisee*, 180–95, esp. 190).

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