

Inside the “Sanctuary of Silence”: The Moral/Ethical Demands of Suffering

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The invitation to present this paper came with a specific assignment: How does the Torah’s conceptualization of worship shape character and ethics? The primary custodians of the answer to this question are ancient Israel’s priests, whose contribution to the final form of the Torah bears witness to the centrality of the sanctuary -- and the ritual activity that takes place within it -- for shaping Israel’s identity. The sheer volume of material in the Pentateuch that deals with the sanctuary is a first indication of its importance in the priestly perspective. Nearly one-third of the Book of Exodus is given to detailed instructions for the building of the tabernacle (Exodus 25-31, 35-40); the whole of the Book of Leviticus -- twenty-seven chapters -- deals with the rituals performed within its holy precincts (Leviticus 1-16), which in turn seed the requirements for ethical behavior in the everyday world outside the sanctuary (Leviticus 17-27). In sum, when a band of refugees gather themselves at Sinai to hear God say, “You shall be to me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation” (Exod.19:6), the priests insist that worship is the principal means by which they become the Israel of God’s hopes and expectations.¹

This priestly preoccupation with worship begs a further question. What goes on in the complex of rituals inside the sanctuary that is so critically important for shaping the character and ethics of the people of God?

I. Inside the Sanctuary of Silence

In reflecting on this question, I have returned to an observation offered years ago by Y. Kaufmann. Inside the temple, Kaufmann argued, one enters a “sanctuary of silence.”² Outside the temple, both priests and laity engage in a variety of verbal activities, for example, confession, thanksgiving, praise, and blessing.³ Inside the sanctuary, however, everyone observes a strict code of silence. The priest executes his duties -- lighting the lamps, burning incense, dispersing the sacrificial blood, among other things -- and the people bring prescribed offerings, but no word is spoken. Kaufmann attributes this silence to “the priestly desire to fashion a non-pagan cult,”⁴ that is, one that deliberately breaks away from the magical incantations and mythological allusions that characterized cultic activity in Egypt and Mesopotamia.⁵

Kaufmann’s assertion has often been taken as axiomatic, although surprisingly little attention has been devoted to examining his explanation, still less to exploring its theological basis in priestly thinking.⁶ Israel Knohl has addressed this need in a number of recent publications by building upon Kaufmann’s seminal ideas in two important ways.⁷ First, Knohl argues that the silence required inside the sanctuary is an expression of the priests’ particular conception of the holiness of God.⁸ A holy God is beyond any form and personality, indeed, beyond any notion of morality that invites praise or petition. God’s holiness exceeds all human comprehension and thus cannot be reduced to such practical functions. If we cannot say anything about God, then “silence is praise,” as the psalmist puts it (Ps.65:2). If there is a dimension of God’s majesty that exceeds every expectation that God acts to meet human need, then prayers of lament and petition lose their significance. “The relationship [with God] that exists in the Temple,” Knohl says, “is not one of covenant or dependence. Rather, it is a unilateral pact.”⁹ Confronted with a holy God, humans become aware of their insignificance and necessarily yield to “feelings of guilt and the need for atonement.” In the “ideal cultic system,”

obedience and contrition are non-negotiable divine commands. As Knohl puts it, “There is no room for the slightest deviation ... even if it is done out of religious enthusiasm.”¹⁰

A second aspect of Knohl’s argument is still more intriguing. The requirement of silence inside the sanctuary reflects not only the priestly theology of God’s holiness, it also bears witness to a priestly-inspired “Copernican revolution” in Israel’s understanding of the faith God requires.¹¹ Within priestly thinking, Knohl argues, we can discern a “dynamic process” of maturation, a shift from the “elementary faith” that characterized the Genesis period to the “exalted faith consciousness” that Moses and Israel exemplify.¹² In the pre-Mosaic period, according to the priestly view in Genesis 1, faith consists in believing that God (Elohim) places human beings at the summit of creation, invests them with responsibility for creation’s potential to be “very good,” and then tunes the moral order of the world to human behavior. When human beings rightly exercise their God-given stewardship of creation’s resources, they may expect God to reward their efforts with abundance and prosperity. Alternatively, when human beings fail to be God’s worthy superintendents, not only they but also creation itself pay the price. In sum, the priests recognize that faith *begins* when human beings comprehend that God, “[human]like in his image and his actions,”¹³ is approachable. But such faith, while foundational and important, is not fully adequate for what God requires.

In the distinctive revelation that comes from God (YHWH) to Moses, the priests discern that faith must ascend to a higher level, for the Tetragrammaton reveals a numinous aspect of divinity that will not be defined by human behavior. A mature awareness of God’s centrality requires a recalibration of humanity’s place in creation, for God has not created everything in the world to serve the needs of human beings. An increased awareness of the mysterious, intangible, holiness of God requires a recalibration of the world’s moral order, for a holy God governs in

ways that exceed elementary notions of reward and punishment. In sum, elementary faith, which aspires to a close, personal, and reciprocal relationship with God, is authentic but insufficient and immodest. Inside the sanctuary, one must respond to a fuller revelation from God that requires a higher level of faith. Humility, not self-assertion, silence, not words, conveys the worship required by a holy God, who is essentially other and different from human beings.

Knohl's assessment of this dynamic process of faith refinement rests largely on close examination of literary details in two independent priestly sources within the Pentateuch, the Priestly Torah and the Holiness School. Although the details of this argument merit close scrutiny, I choose not to engage him at this point. I focus instead on another aspect of his argument. As if trying to put a human face on this literary analysis, Knohl directs us to the Book of Job and thus to a specific example of how one's faith can and should mature according to the priestly discernment.¹⁴ In his words, "The book of Job depicts a dynamic process -- the refinement of faith consciousness -- generally similar to the shift that occurs in PT [Priestly Torah]."¹⁵ The gist of his argument is that the beginning of the book (Job 1-2) echoes the priestly discernment of the faith consciousness depicted in Genesis 1. At the outset, Job believes there is a direct correlation between his behavior and the behavior of the Creator, who tunes the moral order of the whole world to reward his personal righteousness. However, when Job experiences suffering and loss "for no reason" (Job 2:3), this elementary faith leads him to question God's justice. Not until God (YHWH) invites his contemplation of the mysteries of creation does he come to understand his proper place in the world.¹⁶ Job ascends to "a higher level of faith"¹⁷ when he responds to this revelation first with silence (40:4-5: "I lay my hand on my mouth. I have spoken once ... but will proceed no further"), then with contrition: "I knew of you only by report, but now I see you with my own eyes. Therefore I yield, repenting in dust and ashes"

(42:5-6 [NJPS]). At the end of Job's journey, according to Knohl's reading, he effectively arrives at the "sanctuary of silence," where priestly rituals of sin and atonement, not words of lament, provide the most authentic theodicy any person ever needs.¹⁸

II. Job as a "Test Case" for the Sanctuary of Silence

I find Knohl's discussion of the connections between Job and the Priestly Torah instructive, but I question whether his conclusions do them full justice. A number of clues within the book lead me in a different direction. Let me introduce the observations that follow with a question. If we imagine Job as among those addressed by the directives of priests, that is, if Job is the "test case" for their view of worship, is there sufficient evidence in the book that records his story to confirm that he in fact silences his complaints and rises to the higher level of faith -- obedience and contrition -- that Knohl believes the priests require?

(1). The Prologue uses four terms to establish Job's extraordinary piety. Two adjectives describe his character -- "blameless" (*tam*) and "upright" (*yasar*) -- and two verbal expressions describe his ethics -- "fearing God" (*yire' 'elohim*) and "turning away from evil" (*sar mera'*). Both Job's character and his ethics are further profiled by the report in the Prologue and Epilogue that he offers sacrifice. Job 1:5 describes his presentation of "burnt offerings" (*olot*) on behalf of his children as a preemptive propitiation for any inadvertent sins they may have committed. Job 42:8 reports that he receives the "burnt offering" (*olah*) presented by the friends, who require his prayer of intercession if God is to forgive their wrongdoings. While neither of these texts envision Job's sacrificial acts as occurring in a formal cultic setting, they invite us nonetheless to see him as one who "plays the part of the perfect priest" within his household.¹⁹ Moreover, instead of locating Job in a specific time and place in the post-exilic

period, which most agree is the likely historical setting for the book, the narrator retrojects this story into the patriarchal epoch, which invites us to consider how Job's priestly profile relates to the priestly conceptualization of pre-Mosaic worship.²⁰

(2). Whereas the prose Prologue-Epilogue frames the book as the story of a priest-like Job who extends the rituals of sacrifice to others, the poetic dialogues inside the frame turn the tables. Now it is Job who stands in need of the rituals of comfort that other ministrants may offer him. In short, the priest now requires a priest.²¹ The Prologue subtly anticipates this role reversal by reporting that Job has been afflicted with "loathsome sores" (2:7: *sehin*). The same word is used in Leviticus 13-14 to identify the skin diseases that make a person unclean and needful of priestly rituals (see 13:18-23). In the midst of two lengthy pericopes detailing the priestly diagnosis of skin diseases (13:1-44) and the requisite purification rituals (14:1-32), two brief verses describe what diseased persons (like Job) should do in the painful interim between affliction and restoration. Until the priest determines that they are "clean," they must live outside the camp, where they tear their clothes, dishevel their hair, cover their mouth, and cry out, "Unclean, unclean!" (13:45-46). The gesture of covering the mouth confirms that they know themselves to have become repugnant to their community. The words "Unclean, unclean!" warn others against coming too close, lest they inadvertently endanger themselves.

(3). The Prologue describes affliction as a test of Job's piety, which is to be judged in large part by what does or does not come from his mouth. The *satan* wagers that Job will curse God. God wagers that the *satan* is wrong. By all accounts, God has placed the better bet. Like the diseased person in Leviticus 13, Job responds to affliction with a ritual gesture: he tears his clothes, shaves his head, and falls on the ground. Despite his losses, Job speaks words of blessing and "does not charge God with any wrongdoing" (1:21-22). Despite temptations to

speak like foolish persons who question God and scorn the rewards of the righteous, Job remains steadfast. Even as he sits alone on his ash heap of suffering, presumably outside the city, where society consigns the rejected and the destitute, Job does not “sin with his lips” (2:10).²² When the curtain falls on the Prologue, Job’s world is submerged in silence (2:13). Whether this silence is sacred, hence comparable to what the priests require inside the sanctuary, is the question that prepares for the next scene in this drama.

(4). When the curtain rises on the next scene, Job “opens his mouth” (3:1) and moves beyond silence. He speaks seven curses -- three against the day of his birth (3:3-5), four against the night of his conception (3:6-9) -- that mount a rhetorical assault on the seven days of creation, and by implication, the Creator who pronounced the primordial design of the world “very good.” To these curses he couples a string of anguished laments, peppered with the question “Why?” (3:11, 12, 20; implied in vv.16, 23), which press the issues that every subsequent speaker in the book, including God, must address. From Job’s perspective, there is much at stake, for he contends that suffering like his calls the whole of the created order into question. If his questions cannot be satisfactorily addressed, then they will continue to rip and tear at the fabric of life until creation itself is undone.

One by one Job’s three friends rise to the challenge of providing the answers they believe he needs (Job 4-27). They are not priests, but they are clearly spokespersons for the religious establishment, and much of what they say is consonant with the priestly *torot* concerning sacrifice and repentance.²³ *If* Job confesses that he is a sinful mortal in the presence of a holy God, *then* God will restore him to his rightful place in the world (e.g., 8:5-6; 11:13-15; 22:23-27). Eliphaz speaks for all when he reduces the *torah* that applies to Job to one non-negotiable mandate: “Agree with God and be at peace; in this way good will come to you” (22:21).

Virtually every word of this *torah*, however, only adds to Job's burden. Given the plotline of the canonical story, *if* Job agrees with God, *then* he is innocent and thus cannot atone for a sin he has not committed (1:2, 8; 2:3). *If* religious orthodoxy requires the sacrifice of personal integrity as the price for peace with God, *then* Job must loathe the person God has created him to be, which means per force that he is ever at war with himself and with his Creator (e.g., 7:16; 9:20-21, 30-31; 10:1a). Given this conundrum, it is little wonder that Job remains defiant, that he insists his words be preserved for posterity (19:23-24), that the friends, and God, must listen to his words (6:25-26; 7:11-15; 10:1-2; 13:3, 13-17; 16:18; 21:1-5; 23:1-7; 27:1-6; 31:35-37). What do the rituals of the cult offer to one such as Job, whose suffering has been willingly inflicted on him by God? Wm. Scott Green states the matter bluntly,

[F]rom a cultic or halakhic perspective, there is nothing concrete Job can do to repair his relationship with God. Sacrifice, repentance, and any religious behaviors that develop from them are nugatory under these circumstances.... No offering, no change of heart, can appease divine caprice or undo an affliction that happens for no reason.²⁴

(5). When Job's words "are ended" (31:40), a fourth friend, Elihu, steps into the story as the "Answerer" Job seeks but has not yet found (Job 32-37). Drawing upon both forensic and cultic metaphors, Elihu seeks to persuade Job that God uses suffering to save his life, principally by turning him away from misplaced pride and towards a public confession of sin (33:15-28). By inviting Job into both the courtroom and the cult, Elihu seems intent on clarifying the distinctions between these two ways of addressing his issues with God. On closer inspection, Elihu seems only to blur the differences. The trial Job seeks is one in which the accused is presumed innocent, until a fair and impartial jury decides that the evidence requires a different verdict (e.g., Job 9-10). When Elihu invites Job into the courtroom, however, he announces before the first word is spoken that Job is in the wrong (33:12). Similarly, when Elihu summons

Job to prayer, he declares that the cult provides him only one option. He must speak the words his angelic counselor tells him. He must confess and say, “I have sinned and perverted the right” (33:27). Prayer, at least as Elihu defines it, is simply another word for legal language that presumes Job’s guilt and God’s innocence. In short, whether Job presents his case in the courtroom or the cult, the verdict will be the same.

(6). The ultimate answer to Job’s situation, once he attains the required humility before God, according to Elihu, is to yield to the Lord of creation, whose unfathomable justice (36:5-15) necessarily commands awe and praise (36:22-37:13). Embedded within Elihu’s summons to praise is a subtle but telling clue concerning his assessment of where human beings rank among the wonders of God’s creation. For all its attention to the intricate details of nature (note, for example, the multiple words for thunder, rain, lightening, and clouds throughout the speech), Elihu’s “Ode to Creation” provides almost no place for living creatures, animal or human. To find them in Elihu’s world, one must look for the places where they hide (37:7-8).²⁵ Retreating to their lairs and homes, both animals and humans cower before God, whose awesome display of power seems far more threatening than inviting. Perhaps, given Elihu’s reading of creation’s grammar, all creatures should be glad to have at least a place to hide. And perhaps in Elihu’s world, cowering praise is better than no praise at all. But we may wonder if Job can accept Elihu’s invitation into a world of coerced confession and cowered praise. Carol Newsom’s questions are mine as well: Can Elihu’s world be properly urged upon an innocent sufferer? Is such a world “adequate to the moral demands posed by the presence of Job in his pain”?²⁶

(7). Elihu’s hymn to creation segues to God’s dramatic revelation to Job from the whirlwind, which in turn brings us back to the nub of Knohl’s observations. In his view, once God invites reflection on the mysteries of creation, Job at last attains the exalted faith the priests

aim for. Knohl argues that Job rises to the level of the modesty required, for now he knows that human beings are not the “crowning glory of Creation. The crown is taken off the human head and placed upon that of a terrible sea monster [Leviathan; 41:25-26].”²⁷ And he rises to the level of faith consciousness that defines the priestly ideal. Having seen and understood more than before, he bows in silent contrition, for now he knows that the holiness of God comes with one non-negotiable commandment: obedience. I repeat words from Knohl I have already cited: “There is no room for the slightest deviation from the divine command ... even if it is done out of religious enthusiasm.”²⁸ Here too, however, other clues in God’s revelation to Job invite a different assessment.

(8). Unlike Elihu’s world, which has almost no place for creatures of any kind, God’s world is full of animals, which are described with such attentive detail they seem almost near enough to touch. But what is God’s objective? Creation imagery provides the beginning of an answer. God does not bring the *animals to Job* so that he can name them and thus define their existence in relation to himself, as in Gen.2:19-20. Instead, God brings *Job to the animals*, so that they may teach him something about his own creaturely existence in God’s world.²⁹ The lesson begins with five pairs of animals (38:39-39:30), all but one (the horse) numbered among the wild that frolic in the freedom of being exactly what God has created them to be.³⁰ When the lesson concludes, God invites Job to say what he has learned (40:1-2). Job responds with a concession, “I am small.” Placing his hand on his mouth, he retreats in silence. When he agrees to speak no further (40:3-5), Knohl -- along with most interpreters -- assumes that Job has arrived at the answer God desires. The logic of the revelation, however, suggests otherwise, for with a second speech God pushes past Job’s silence with still another request for his response (40:7). Silence, it seems, is not fully adequate.

God now singles out a *sixth* and final pair of animals, Behemoth (40:15-24) and Leviathan (41:1-34), which require Job's special attention. The structure of this part of the speech suggests that these two animals exemplify the intent of God's work on the *sixth* day of creation, when God made "wild animals" (*behemah*; NRSV), along with human beings (Gen.1:24-27). "Look at Behemoth," God says to Job, "which I made just as I made you" (40:15). Consider Leviathan, God continues, a creature "made without fear" (40:33 [MT: 41:25]). What is the lesson for Job? Most commentators argue that God singles out Behemoth and Leviathan, creatures conventionally regarded as wild and hostile to creation, in order to teach Job that God alone has the power to subjugate them. If Job persists in his own creaturely defiance of God, so this argument goes, then he can expect certain defeat. Once again, I believe the text invites a more nuanced reading.

I cite but one of the clues.³¹ A critical part of God's discourse on Leviathan is the description of what *does* and *does not come forth* from its mouth. What does not come from this creature's mouth are "soft words" (41:3-4 [MT: 40:27-28]). In the unlikely event that anyone should ever successfully capture Leviathan and force it into service, even then it would not conform to any "covenantal" (*berit*) existence that requires it to do or say only what its master permits. Instead, when it opens its mouth (41:18-21 [MT: 41:10-13]) what comes out is fire and light, smoke and flames, phenomena typically associated with the strong and compelling appearance of God (e.g., Pss.18:7-8, 12-15; 29:7-9). Instinctively god-like, Leviathan announces its presence with an awesome fierceness that commands attention and defies coercion. Contrary to the conventional view, when God looks at Leviathan, God sees no cause for opposition. Instead, God celebrates its power, pride, and fierce resistance to domestication, for these virtues exemplify its God-given creaturely royalty (41:33-34 [MT: 41:25-26]): "on earth it has no equal

... it is king”). If Job’s piety is to be judged by what does and does not come forth from his mouth, then the lesson from Leviathan commends strong words, not soft or gentle ones, speech that demands respect, not silence.³²

(9). According to Knohl, Job rises to the level of faith consciousness God requires when he responds to this revelation not only with silent humility (40:3-5) but also with a verbalized confession of sin. Knohl finds this repentance (with a majority of commentators) in Job’s last words in book: “I yield, repenting in dust and ashes” (42:6). Most would agree that these words constitute the crux of the book, so perhaps I may be forgiven for not engaging the ongoing debate about the range of legitimate exegetical possibilities that must be considered. Let me simply invite consideration of one issue that all agree is critical. The words “repenting *in* dust and ashes” (*nihamti ‘al*) may be more properly translated “repent *concerning* dust and ashes.” Whereas the conventional translation suggests that Job retreats to the traditional ritual of gesturing forth sorrow for wrongdoing by sitting *in* dust and ashes,³³ the syntax may legitimately be taken to mean that Job “repents” or “changes his mind *about* “dust and ashes.” If we pursue this option, then we must be open to the possibility that what finally comes forth from Job’s mouth is not a confession of sin but instead a (re)affirmation of his creaturely stature before God. If God does not rebuke Abraham, another mere mortal of “dust and ashes” who dares to challenge God’s justice (Gen.18:27), then perhaps God will not rebuke Job when he dares to follow Abraham’s model of faith.³⁴

III. “Inside the House, an Archaic Rule; Outside, the Facts of Life”?

What, then, are we to make of the priests’ commendation of silence as *the* criterion for the highest expression of faith? On the one hand, Kaufmann and others are on solid ground

when they argue that the “outstanding characteristic of this [Priestly] sanctuary is the holy silence within it.”³⁵ On the other, there is ample evidence, both within and beyond Priestly texts, that worshippers created in “the image of God” are peculiarly empowered for speech. With mouths opened in the image of the Creator, human beings are birthed into created life with a capacity not only to receive God’s words but also to speak their own, words not only of praise and thanksgiving but also of complaint and protest.³⁶ Indeed, if the “priestly” Job is a reliable script for the words that seek a hearing inside the sanctuary, then we have reason to suspect that the latter was a prominent component of cultic speech, even if the priests provide no place for it within the sanctuary itself.³⁷ But this only accentuates a larger question, which has been lurking at the edges of my ruminations from the outset. If the priests were well aware of the legitimate role of all forms of human speech to God, why then did they insist that its proper place was outside the holy sanctuary, not *inside*? To return to Knohl’s observations, why do the priests insist that silence before God is “the most exalted level of faith”? Let me shape the question more specifically to the concerns of this session. How and why should silence before God be understood as the key to “character formation”?

I confess that I still falter when trying to formulate a persuasive answer to this question. My dis-ease is not unlike that of the narrator in Saul Bellow’s short story, “Something To Remember Me By.”³⁸ As a schoolboy brought up in an Orthodox Jewish home, he often felt trapped between high-minded religious commandments and the “grimly ordinary” (415) requirements of life on the Chicago streets.

At home, inside the house, an archaic rule; outside, the facts of life. The facts of life were having their turn. Their first effect was ridicule. (431)

I suspect that we do not need Job’s witness to convince us that the “grimly ordinary” facts of life too often ridicule “high-minded” affirmations of faith. We may, however, take real

comfort in thinking that, because of Job's witness, when we limp towards the sanctuary with bruises and wounds exceeding any sin we may have committed, no one will block our entrance by saying, "No protesters allowed beyond this point." By the same token, we likely feel more authentically human, more empowered to meet the moral and ethical demands of life, when we can cry aloud to the heavens-- inside the sanctuary -- for justice. Given the tragic sense that defines so much of life in this world, "The chiefest sanctity of a temple," as Unamuno says, "is that it is a place to which men go to weep in common. A *miserere* sung in common by a multitude tormented by destiny has as much value as a philosophy," or, I would add, as any *theology*.³⁹ Such are the moral demands of innocent suffering on the rituals of worship. The Jobs of this world cannot be fully human in the presence of God if religious authorities require them to stay outside the sanctuary yelling "Unclean, unclean!" Religious authorities who ignore or deny this truth only indict themselves. The charge they can expect to be leveled against them, as A. S. Park has discerned, will place them in the company of Job's friends: when challenged to offer comfort to the "sinned-against," they do not speak "what is right" about God:

The God of Job is angry at this simplistic sin-repentance formula the church has applied to the victims of sin It is overdue for us to provide a sensible theology of healing for the victims of sin and tragedy. Our present one-dimensional theology is under God's wrath. Theologians owe burnt offerings to God and our apology to the victims.⁴⁰

But surely Israel's priests knew that their rituals must be meaningful not only to sinners but also to the sinned-against. Even if the sanctuary represents only an idealized "island of silence in a sea of hymn and prayer,"⁴¹ as Knohl puts it, the priests' insistence on silence in the presence of God presses us to do more than simply probe for the weaknesses in their view of worship. Might it be that they have discerned a larger truth than we skeptics have been willing to see? Given the modern tendency to view ourselves as the center of the universe, surely there is virtue in a summons to worship that reorients us, in proper humility and contrition, to a God

whose fullness surpasses our needs. Private woes are important, indeed for those trapped in the clutches of affliction, they may be all we can feel, all we can say, all we can believe is real. To be invited -- no, according to the priests, to be *commanded* -- to silence our words and still our souls is to be reminded that there is a divine dimension to life. In the midst of all that is painfully real and constricting in this world, Israel's priests envision a sanctuary in which the "really real"⁴² becomes not only palpable but also freeing. On this point, Barbara Brown Taylor's reflections on God's de-centering revelation to Job are instructive. When she looks at the vastness of God's creation through the revelation vouchsafed to Job, two things happen to change her perspective:

First, my ego undergoes radical shrinkage. Even though I know better, I still work so hard to justify my existence on this earth. I teach classes, I write books, I give to good causes, I work out with weights ... but what does the night sky care? "You think you're so big, well take a look at *this!*" I am not even a flea on the back of this universe. I know some of those stars by name, but they do not know mine. They look the same when I am happy as they do when I am sad. As beautiful as they are, they ignore me. They remind me of my true size.

The second thing that happens when I look at them is that I feel deeply reassured. Thank God they ignore me. Can you imagine how awful it would be, if you got into a rage one night and knocked nine or ten stars out of the sky with your wrath? Or if you walked into your back yard for a good cry and toppled your favorite shade tree with grief? Some of us dream of being that powerful, but it is a great mercy that such dreams do not come true.⁴³

Further, we may take it as truth that silence in the presence of God can be not only freeing but also cleansing. Every speech act is in some sense an interference of thought and a corruption of vision. In her essay on "The Aesthetics of Silence," Susan Sontag suggests an analogy that may be useful. "A landscape doesn't demand from the spectator his `understanding,' his imputations of significance, his anxieties and his sympathies; it demands, rather ... that he does not add anything to it."⁴⁴ Just so, when we stand in the presence of the

ineffable God, words are not only inadequate and unnecessary, they also betray the transcendence of the ordinary we so desperately seek. God does not need our words in order to be fully God, and we, perhaps, only counterfeit the moment of revelation by speaking instead of listening. Silence has the salutary effect of cleansing our world of noise and redeeming us from what Sontag calls the “treachery of words”⁴⁵ that encumber, compromise, and often adulterate our proximity to the sacred.

Still, rituals that demand silence in the face of innocent suffering and gross injustice may be guilty of the worst kind of evasion. If the highest level of faith requires that we subtract our voices from this world in order to add to God’s heavenly chorus, then can the sanctuary of worship be anything more than a retreat from the ethical mandate not only “to walk humbly” with God but also to “do justice” (Mic.6:8)? The question is of course one frequently addressed to the priests by Israel’s prophets. I believe we can be confident that the priests heard it and responded, though perhaps in ways unexpected. Even within Leviticus, Israel’s “book of worship,” the priests understand that silence inside the sanctuary (Leviticus 1-15) is not the sum total of what is required of the faithful. It is but the first and necessary step toward moral and ethical engagement with the world that lies outside (Leviticus 17-27). If one is to “be holy” in creaturely ways that image God’s holiness (19:2), then silence is merely the preparation for the action that must follow, not the action itself. Just as narrowing the gauge heightens the compression and increases the velocity, so worship that narrows faith to obedience increases the likelihood that we may go out into the world with a passion for ministry that will not be thwarted. We may be confident that what we do and say outside the sanctuary matters, both to God and to the world. *And* we may take comfort in the truth that our efforts are not all that

matters. Relieved of the burden of being God, we are freed to live as God's faithful stewards. In this world, God does not require and we cannot aspire to do more.

I cannot end without acknowledging one further matter that continues to nag at my best efforts to accept the priests' invitation to lay aside all reservations and enter fully into the sanctuary of silence. Even accepting the notion that silent obedience is the better route toward the person God wants us to become, we cling to the hope that when we submit ourselves to the rituals of faith, the priest knows our story, that unspoken doubts and worries are not lost in the required silence that we may need but often instinctively resist. Here, I take some comfort in a rabbinic clue about the lingering importance of Job for Israel's priests. The Mishnah stipulates a seven-day preparation period for the High Priest before administering the rituals for the Day of Atonement, which includes required readings from the books of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Job (*Yoma* 1:6). The rabbis do not explain their selection of this lectionary. Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah may have been thought appropriate because each contains models of the penitential prayer that the Day of Atonement requires (e.g., Daniel 9; Ezra 9; and Nehemiah 9). Job may well have been included for the same reason, given the widespread assumption that he too repents, in the end. But in the absence of evidence to the contrary, we may be permitted to wonder if rereading Job's story, the whole of his story and not just selected excerpts, might have sensitized the High Priest to the presence of authentically dissonant voices among those he would soon summon to silence.⁴⁶

If so, then I offer one last contemporary reflection on the issue before us. In *Father Melancholy's Daughter*, Gail Godwin describes a scene in which Father Gower, Rector of St. Cuthbert's, a small parish in rural Virginia, struggles with the ministry of the sacraments. "The thing about a ritual," he always said, "is that it brings containment and acceptance to people.

The sacramental life is a sort of sanity filter against the onslaughts of existence.” Father Adrian, his friend and colleague, recognizes the wisdom in this theology and confirms it with a personal anecdote:

There was a Jesuit studying with me in Zurich, at the Institute. I once asked him, “What if you as a priest stopped believing? What would you do then?” “Make a fist in my pocket,” he said, “and go on with the ritual.”⁴⁷

I think the Jobs of this world may well take comfort from the thought that the priest who summons them to submit in silence to the rituals of faith does so with a clinched fist. Might that fist be clinched in anger or protest, as if to say, “I don’t really want to do this”? I concede that I would like to believe this is so. Might it be clinched as a deep expression of will and determination, maybe even, as Israel’s priests might say, of faith? I am not sure, but I suspect there is always something more to be learned from any priest, ancient or contemporary, who resolves, clinched fists and all, to “go on with the ritual.”⁴⁸

As language always points to its own transcendence in silence, silence always points to its own transcendence -- to a speech beyond silence.

-- S. Sontag, “The Aesthetics of Silence” (18)

¹ On the theological importance of the Pentateuch's seemingly disproportionate attention to matters relating to worship, see S. E. Balentine, *The Torah's Vision of Worship* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999).

² Y. Kaufmann, *The History of Israelite Religion*. 4 vols. (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1937-1956; Hebrew), 2:476-477. The first three volumes were abridged and translated by M. Greenberg as *The Religion of Israel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960). The fourth volume was translated in its entirety by C. W. Efraymson as *The History of the Religion of Israel: From the Babylonian Captivity to the End of Prophecy* (New York: Ktav, 1977). All citations in this article are from the English translation.

³ Priestly and other texts both within and beyond the Pentateuch refer, albeit obliquely and often negatively, to the use of the spoken or sung word alongside the ritual acts of Israel's worship. Within Priestly texts, see Lev.5:5; 16:21; Num.5:21-22; 6:22-26. Elsewhere, see, for example, Deut.21:1-9; 26:2-10; I Sam. 1:3, 10-15; I Kngs. 8:5, 12-64; Amos 5:21-23; Isa.1:13-15; 38:20; 56:7. Special mention should be made of the various psalms ascribed to Levitical families (cf. I Chr.6:16-34; 15:16-24; 16:4-43), especially the Korahites (Psalms 42, 44-49, 84-85, 87-88) and the Asaphites (Psalms 50, 73-83). The conventional assessment is that such examples attest the use of music and psalmody in the temple courtyards, outside the priestly areas. In other words, the "sanctuary of silence" is strictly limited to the priestly rituals of sacrifice at the altar; cf. J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16* (AB; New York: 1991), 60-61.

⁴ Kaufmann, *The History of Israel*, 303.

⁵ On the division of the central temple personnel in Mesopotamia into cult priests, incantation priests, and diviners, see J. Renger, "Untersuchungen zum Priestertum in der altbabylonischen Zeit," ZA 58 (1966), 112-114. Of particular interest here is the role of the so-called "lamentation priest" (*kalu*) in voicing the congregational and individual responses to a variety of crises that threaten status quo affirmations of divine justice and punishment. For a convenient summary of the texts and their relevance for assessing biblical literature, see W. W. Hallo, "Lamentations and Prayers in Sumer and Akkad," *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. J. M. Sasson (New York: Simon & Schuster and Prentice Hall International, 1995), Vol. III, 1871-1882.

⁶ Note, for example, J. Milgrom's extension of Kaufmann's argument to the priestly polemic against anthropomorphism, which he judges to be an essential plank in the rejection of all forms of idolatry; *Leviticus 1-16*; 58-61; *Leviticus 17-22* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 1426-1428. Idolatry not only seeks to conform God to human thought, it also seduces human beings into believing that they can influence or control God with human speech, on the assumption that the deity's will is pliable, just like any other human being. The paradigm for the priestly polemic against human speech in the presence of God, Milgrom argues, is Moses, the putative father of the cult, who is typically silent when performing the signs and wonders God commands, and whose verbalized prayers are typically private, never public (e.g., Exod.5:22; 8:8, 25-26; 9:29,33; 10:18; 32:11-13; 33:7-11), lest it be thought that his words, not divine prerogative, are the reason for God's response.

⁷ I. Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), especially 124-164; "Between Voice and Silence: The Relationship Between Prayer and the Temple Cult," JBL 115 (1996), 17-30; *The Divine Symphony: The Bible's Many Voices* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2003), 71-85.

⁸ Knohl, *The Divine Symphony*, 73-74; *The Sanctuary of Silence*, 148-152.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 73. Knohl calls attention to the selective use of the terms *berit*, "covenant," and '*edut*, "commandments, orders" in the Priestly Torah (see *The Sanctuary of Silence*, 137-148). The priests typically use the word "covenant," he contends, with reference to the bilateral promises and obligations of God to Noah, Abraham, and their descendants (Gen.6:18; 9:9-17; 17:2, 4, 9-13, 19, 21; Exod.2:24). A change takes place with the revelation of the Tetragrammaton (YHWH) to Moses, after which the term *berit* "disappears" from the Priestly Torah and is replaced by the term '*edut*. The "pact" between YHWH and Israel consists solely of the unilateral demands God imposes on Israel, irrespective of any promise or obligation on God's part that invites the notion of "reciprocal utilitarian relations" (*The Sanctuary of Silence*, 149 n.103) between God and human beings.

¹⁰ Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*, 150-151.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 146.

¹² *Ibid.*, 164; cf. *The Divine Symphony*, 19-23, 71-74.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 146.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 165-167; *The Divine Symphony*, 115-122. See also M. Douglas, who notes without discussion that “Leviticus’ general reflection on God’s justice reaches forward to the Book of Job;” *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 252; cf. 212.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁶ A critical component in Knohl’s thesis is the distinction between divine revelations from Elohim, El Shaddai, or Eloah, and those from YHWH. The former correlates with Genesis and a first stage in faith consciousness, the latter with the exalted faith of Moses and Israel. The Book of Job depicts a dynamic process from the elementary to the mature in a way comparable to the Priestly Torah, with one important difference. According to the priests, an exalted faith consciousness is available only through the complex of rituals inside the sanctuary; it is the legacy of Israel alone. According to the Book of Job, an exalted faith consciousness is neither limited to observance of temple rituals nor restricted to Israel. Job, a non-Israelite, gains access to this revelation through reflection on creation, not through the execution of sacrificial worship, which is mentioned “only at the stage of Job’s early faith level” (Job 1:4-5); *The Sanctuary of Silence*, 165-166; *The Divine Symphony*, 120-122.

¹⁷ Knohl, *The Divine Symphony*, 118.

¹⁸ On cultic rituals, especially the sacrifices for sin prescribed in Lev.4:1-35, as “the priestly theodicy,” see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 260-261. His explication of the priestly advocacy of collective responsibility for sin merits citation, for it seems to be a response to the questions one might hear from the Jobs of the world: “[The priests] knew full well that the prophet was justified in protesting ‘why does the way of the wicked prosper?’ (Jer.12:1 [cf. Job 21:7, 17-19]), and they provided their answer: the sinner may be unscarred by his evil, but the sanctuary bears the scars, and, with its destruction, he too will meet his doom.... That the righteous were engulfed in disaster (i.e. God’s retribution) may have been protested by a few biblical voices (e.g., Gen.18:23; Ezek.18:1-32), but existential reality and the monotheistic premise make it impossible to conceive God otherwise.... The ‘good’ people who perish with the evildoers are not innocent. For allowing the evildoers to flourish, to pollute the sanctuary beyond repair, they share the blame. Indeed, they are the inadvertent sinners who contribute to the pollution of the sanctuary. Let a modern -- hence, more vivid -- example illustrate the point. World War II would have presented no theological quandary for Israel’s priests of old. They would have rejected with scorn our contemporary theologians who have proclaimed that ‘God is dead.’ Instead of bewailing the silence of God, they would have pointed the accusing finger at the human culprits, the inadvertent sinners, the ‘silent majority’ -- the German people who voted the Nazis into power and the peoples of the free world who acquiesced to the annexation of the Saar, Austria, and Sudetenland while barring their own doors to the refugees who managed to escape. A worldwide cataclysm was thus inevitable. Indeed, Israel’s priests would have asked: How long under the circumstances could God have been willing to abide in his earthy sanctuary?”

¹⁹ N. Habel, *The Book of Job* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 88; cf. J. Hartley, *The Book of Job* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 69-70. I believe this assessment holds, despite D. J. A. Clines’ important caution: “the story’s setting in time and place lies beyond the horizon of priestly law;” *Job 1-20* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1989), 16.

²⁰ However we assess the historical accuracy of this profile, it is instructive to note that Job has often been depicted as a priest in both ancient Near Eastern and Christian iconography. See S. Terrien, who notes that more than forty statutes of “Saint Job the Priest” have been preserved in Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands (*The*

Iconography of Job Through the Centuries: Artists as Biblical Interpreters (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 149-158.

²¹ For a preliminary exploration of these matters, see S. E. Balentine, "Job as Priest to the Priests," *Ex Auditu* 18 (2002), 29-52.

²² The text does not identify Job's location in 2:8. Commentators widely assume that he sits in a place of shame outside the city walls, a judgment that LXX seems to support by translating "ashes" as "the dung heap outside the city."

²³ The instructions in Leviticus 1-15 consist of ten *torot* or "commandments." Five *torot* deal with sacrifice: burnt offering (6:2-6); cereal offering (6:7-16); purification offering (6:17-23); reparation offering (7:1-7); and well-being offering (7:11-21). Five *torot* concern impurity: animal carcasses (11:1-23, 41-42); childbirth (12:1-8); skin disease (13:1-59); purification from skin disease (14:1-57); and genital discharges (15:1-32). See further, Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 2.

²⁴ Wm. Scott Green, "Stretching the Covenant: Job and Judaism," *Review and Expositor* 99 (2002), 574.

²⁵ Elihu's last speech contains but three oblique references to living creatures, two to human beings (37:7) and one to animals (37:8). Textual difficulties obscure the meaning in verse 7; about all that is clear is that God uses nature to "seal" or "close up" (*hatam*) human beings. NIV's translation is relatively close to the Hebrew: "he [God] stops every man from his labor." Verse 8, likely a parallel statement with respect to animals, provides some clarification. Just as animals seek shelter in their dens when the winter storms arrive, so human beings retreat to the sanctuary of their homes when the weather becomes too severe to carry on with their normal labors.

²⁶ C. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford: University Press, 2003), 232.

²⁷ Knohl, *The Divine Symphony*, 118.

²⁸ Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*, 150.

²⁹ Cf. W. P. Brown, *The Ethos of the Cosmos: The Genesis of Moral Imagination in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 365.

³⁰ Note especially the wild ass, ostrich, and the horse, each of which "laugh" (39:7, 18, 22) in the face of potential danger. The horse is especially instructive, because its fearlessness, described as "might" (39:19; cf. 12:13), "terror" (39:20b; cf. 9:34; 13:21), "majesty" (39:20b; cf. 37:22), and "thunder" (39:25; cf. 40:5) is God-like.

³¹ I have explored these matters further in "'What Are Human Beings, That You Make So Much of Them?' Divine Disclosure From the Whirlwind: 'Look at Behemoth,'" *God In the Fray: A Tribute to Walter Brueggemann*, eds. T. Linafelt, T. K. Beal (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 259-278, and *Job*. Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys; forthcoming).

³² J. G. Gammie also notes that what comes from Leviathan's mouth is a major emphasis in the poem. He suggests that the poet uses this emphasis both to caricature Job's verbal defenses and at the same time to affirm his protests; "Behemoth and Leviathan: On the Didactic and Theological Significance of Job 40:15-41:26," *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien*, eds. J. G. Gammie, et al (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978), 223, 225.

³³ For references and discussion, see, for example, S. Olyan, *Biblical Mourning: Ritual and Social Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 111-123.

³⁴ The phrase "dust and ashes" (*'apar wa'eper*) occurs only three times in the Old Testament: Gen. 18:27; Job 30:19; and Job 42:6. In each case it signifies something about the human condition in relation to God. In Job 30:19,

Job laments that God has thrown him into the “mire” (*homer*; cf. Job 4:19; 10:9; 33:6) of human mortality, where human existence is defined as “dust and ashes.” In the context of his suffering, Job understands this to mean that he exemplifies the way afflicted human beings are banished from society (30:1-8), then scorned and terrorized by their peers (30:9-15) and by God (30:16-23). His experience leads him to conclude that as “dust and ashes” he has been consigned to live in a world where he cries out to a cruel God who does not answer (30:20-21). In Gen.18:27, the phrase “dust and ashes” applies to Abraham. In the context of arguing with God about matters of justice, Abraham acknowledges that he is a mere creature of “dust and ashes” who has entered into dangerous territory. Abraham’s recognition of his status before God is similar to Job’s in 30:19, with one important exception: Abraham persists with his questions, and God answers. Indeed, the Hebrew text of Gen.18:22 -- “YHWH remained standing before Abraham.” -- suggests that God, the “Judge of all the earth” (Gen.18:25), stands waiting to hear what “dust and ashes” will say on the subject of divine justice. As E. Ben Zvi has discerned, this picture of Creator and creature locked in dialogue over matters of mutual concern provides a glimpse of how the creaturely pursuit of justice enacts what it means to be made in the image of God: “The text underscores the notion that when the ideal teacher defends the universal order and confronts God with the standards by which God ought to judge the world, *he is in fact fulfilling the role God has chosen for him to fulfill*,” “The Dialogue Between Abraham and Yhwh in Gen.18:23-32: A Historical-Critical Critical Analysis,” JSOT 53 (1992), 39 (emphasis added).

³⁵ Knohl, *The Divine Symphony*, 71. The argument for a silent sanctuary is surely apt when considering Leviticus, which records no direct response, no specific verbal reply, to God from either Moses or Israel. Moreover, as G. Auld has noted, Leviticus depicts the sanctuary as both a structural and theological sanctuary in the midst of the wilderness, which is a prominent theme in Exodus and Numbers. The “wilderness theme” occurs 12x in Exodus (*bemidbar*: 3:18; 5:1, 3; 7:16; 8:23, 24; 14:11, 12; 15:22; 16:2, 32; 19:2) and 30x in Numbers (1:1, 19; 3:4, 14; 9:1, 5; 10:12, 31; 12:16; 14:2, 16, 29, 32, 33, 35; 15:2; 16:13; 21:5, 11, 13; 26:64, 65; 27:3, 14; 32:13, 15; 33:8, 11, 13, 15, 36). By contrast, the wilderness is mentioned but twice in Leviticus (7:38; 16:22); “Leviticus: After Exodus and Before Numbers,” *The Book of Leviticus: Composition and Reception*, eds. R. Rendtorff, R. Kugler (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 43. Both before and after Leviticus, that is, in the wilderness, the discourse between God and Israel frequently includes complaint and protest (e.g., in the “murmuring traditions preserved in Exodus 15-18 and Numbers 11-25). Inside the sanctuary, however, the tabernacle is an oasis of obedience; those who might address God differently in other places now with respond with reverent silence.

³⁶ Space limitations permit no more than a footnote reference to ancient Near Eastern texts describing the ritual of “washing” (*mis pi*) or “opening” the mouth (*pit mi*) of cultic images for the deity, which appear to have been in existence throughout Mesopotamia from at least the eighth to the first centuries B.C.E. Although no extant text preserves the complete *mis pi* or *pit mi* ritual, it seems to involve two essential acts. First, the ritual specialist performs a symbolic act by which the deity opens the mouth of the statue, thereby indicating that it is able to breathe, that is, it has been ritually birthed into the world of created life. Then the ritualist adds incantations, which empower the image to speak and to be spoken to by human beings with whom it now shares its existence. For translation and assessment of the extant texts, see C. Walker, M. B. Dick, “The Introduction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian *mis pi* Ritual,” *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth: The Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient Near East*, ed. M. B. Dick (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 55-121.

The existence of such precedent rituals in the ancient Near East begs an important question of the priestly insistence that human beings are created “in the image of God” (Gen.1:26). Despite the polemic against both cultic images and the anthropomorphism they typically conveyed in so-called pagan cults, could Israel’s priests have been completely unaware of the implication that human beings, created in the image of the God, whose mouth is open, not closed, are peculiarly shaped for communication both *from* and *to* God? On this question, see further the insightful comments of my colleague Andreas Schüle, “Made in the ‘Image of God’: The Concept of Divine Images in Gen 1-3,” ZAW 117 (2005), 1-20. Pondering the question, the words of George Steiner may help us to bridge from ancient texts to contemporary discernments: “It is the Hebrew intuition that God is capable of all speech-acts except that of monologue which has generated our arts of reply, of questioning and counter-creation. After the Book of Job ... there *had* to be, if man was to bear his being, the means of dialogue with God, which are spelt out in our poetics, music, art,” *Real Presences* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 225.

³⁷ For all his attention to Job as a model for “exalted faith consciousness,” Knohl never quite succeeds in getting him completely inside the sanctuary of silence. Job’s role, according to Knohl, remains that of the outsider who speaks truth to truth. As Knohl says, “we can recognize that there is a place for, and significance to, the kind of

debate in which the *other* view may also be a reflection of divine truth” (*The Divine Symphony*, 146). Moreover, Knohl affirms that the tension between Job’s cacophonous words outside the sanctuary and the sublime silence that characterizes the liturgy inside the sanctuary is necessary and should not be blurred. “Inevitably, there was a tension between the silent inner circle and the outer circles, a tension between the Priestly theology concentrated upon the sanctity of God and the popular religion that cared for the satisfaction of everyday human needs. At the same time, the different beliefs gave rise to a single, unified, holy system, where sound and silence found their place in harmony” (Ibid., 74).

³⁸ S. Bellow, “Something To Remember Me By,” *Saul Bellow: Collected Stories. Introduction by James Wood, Preface by Janis Bellow* (New York: Viking, 2001), 414-437.

³⁹ M. de Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life* (New York: Dover, 1954), 17.

⁴⁰ A. S. Park, “The Bible and Han,” *The Other Side of Sin: Woundedness from the Perspective of the Sinned-Against*, eds. A. S. Park, S. L. Nelson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 51.

⁴¹ Knohl, *The Divine Symphony*, 73.

⁴² On the capacity of religion’s sacred symbols to distinguish between the “real” (the realities of everyday life) and the “really real” (wider realities that correct and complete), see C. Geertz, “Religion as A Cultural System,” *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 110-112.

⁴³ B. Brown Taylor, “On Not Being God,” *Review and Expositor* 99 (2002), 613.

⁴⁴ S. Sontag, “The Aesthetics of Silence,” *Styles of Radical Will* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1966), 16.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 5, 15.

⁴⁶ The comment in *Yoma* is frustratingly oblique. Similar references to the reading of Job in connection with Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah occur in Tosefta Kippurim (4:4) and in relevant discussions of the Talmud to Yoma 1:6, but none provide an explanation. I am grateful to Jack Neusner, who graciously responded to my inquiries concerning the rabbinic treatment of Job by pointing out that in reading Job, the rabbis deemed his story kosher, that is, “proper” or “suitable for use according to Jewish law” (see *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period 450 B.C.E. to 600 C.E.* J. Neusner, Editor in Chief, W. S. Green, Editor [New York: Macmillan Library Reference, USA, 1996], 374).

⁴⁷ G. Godwin, *Father Melancholy’s Daughter* (New York: Avon Books, 1991), 274.

⁴⁸ With deep gratitude, I acknowledge that the shaping of this last paragraph owes much to the comments of Bill Green, one of my most valued conversation partners, who helped me to think deeply about what the image of the priest’s “clinchd fist” might convey.