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## Job's Justice

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## JOB'S JUSTICE

Arthur J. Jacobson<sup>†</sup>

The book of *Job* offers nothing less than the anticipation and critique of certain elements in the constitution of Athens, as we understand the constitution of Athens in the works of its principal philosophers. Or, if you decline to follow a rabbinic tradition assigning authorship of *Job* to Moses,<sup>1</sup> and cast your lot instead with those who assign authorship to someone who lived sometime between the sixth and fourth centuries B.C.E.,<sup>2</sup> then the book is not an anticipation of, but a meditation on, current events. That, at least, is what I shall argue and what *Job* leads us to understand. We must begin where *Job* begins, when its narrator introduces us to the scene.

*Job* begins: “There was a man in the land of Utz, Iyov was his name.”<sup>3</sup> How can it be that this narratively banal statement marks the beginning of an argument, no less the extraordinary argument to which I am laying claim? The answer lies in knowing where Utz was, and thus who Job must have been.

Rabbinic commentators disagree on the precise location of Utz and who precisely was the man after whom it was named. They all agree that Utz was related, one way or another, to a branch of the family of Abraham, a branch that did not descend into slavery in Egypt, and therefore did not receive the 613 commandments that God revealed to Moses at Mount Sinai and therefore did not eventually arrive in the land that God promised the descendents of Abraham, in Canaan. Either way—if you follow Rashi, it is because Utz was the son of Abraham’s brother Nahor and therefore the land of Utz was Aram, if you follow Ibn Ezra and Ramban (Nachmanides), it is because Utz was a descendent of Jacob’s brother, Esau, and therefore the land of Utz was

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<sup>1</sup> *Bava Basra* 15a–b.

<sup>2</sup> Katharine J. Dell, *Job*, in EERDMANS COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE 337, 337 (James D.G. Dunn & John W. Rogerson eds., 2003).

<sup>3</sup> IYOV 1:1, at 3 (Moshe Eisemann ed. & trans., Mesorah Publ'ns, Ltd. 1994). Note that this Article will refer to Job as “Iyov” throughout when appropriately cited within this particular source.

Edom<sup>4</sup>—Utz was not in Canaan proper. In the case of Aram, it was to the northeast of Canaan; in the case of Edom it was just south of the Dead Sea.

Why is the location of Utz outside Canaan important? The answer is that if Job was an Utzite, he was not an Israelite.<sup>5</sup> Yet that seems strange, because Job is clearly a follower of the God of the Israelites. Indeed, Job's profound and unswerving connection to the God of the Israelites is the mainspring of the entire story. So what is the significance of the fact that Job was an Utzite and not an Israelite? It is this: Job being an Utzite—an Utzite who is tight with the Hebrew God—means that Job must have been what in rabbinic tradition is called a “Noahide.”

A Noahide is a follower of the Seven Laws revealed by God to Noah directly after the Flood, when God made His rueful pact with Noah.<sup>6</sup> The pact had several elements: God would never again destroy the entire world; Noah and his descendants may now eat meat (Adam and his descendants were strict vegetarians); and so on. But the key to the pact was that the seven laws God revealed to Noah have bound Noah and his three sons and their wives and the descendants of his sons and their wives to this very day. (Indeed, there are self-declared Noahides scattered across the United States and even some Noahide communities.<sup>7</sup>) The Hebrew tribes descending from Abraham through Jacob were to be bound by 613 commandments, most of which God revealed to Moses at Mount Sinai.<sup>8</sup> But the rest of humanity need follow only the seven commandments revealed to Noah. Indeed, the obligation to follow these seven commandments defines and declares our common humanity in the teeth of the scattering of humanity after the disastrous project challenging the heavens at Babel.

Job being a Noahide is important for two reasons. First, he would have been living in a largely pagan environment, not surrounded by like-minded monotheists in Canaan. Second, his family would not have been among the families—the 603,550 men of fighting age, together with women and children—that were at Mount Sinai when Moses received the Ten Commandments<sup>9</sup> and, according to rabbinic tradition, heard for themselves God speaking the first two.<sup>10</sup> The families that

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<sup>4</sup> *Id.* (commenting on “There was a man”).

<sup>5</sup> Ramban takes this position. See *IYOV*, *supra* note 3, at 375 cmt. to 42:17. Others say that Job was an Israelite. See, e.g., *Bava Basra* 15a–b (statement of R' Yochanan).

<sup>6</sup> *Genesis* 8:21–9:17. See generally AARON LICHTENSTEIN, *THE SEVEN LAWS OF NOAH* (1981).

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Toby Tabachnick, *Noahides Establish Website for Interested Followers*, *THE JEWISH CHRONICLE* (July 22, 2010), [http://www.thejewishchronicle.net/view/full\\_story/8847286/article-Noahides-establish-website-for-interested-followers](http://www.thejewishchronicle.net/view/full_story/8847286/article-Noahides-establish-website-for-interested-followers).

<sup>8</sup> The standard compilation of these commandments is the *Mishneh Torah* of Rambam (Maimonides).

<sup>9</sup> See *Numbers* 1:46.

<sup>10</sup> See *Makkot* 24a.

were at Mount Sinai and heard for themselves and saw for themselves could be absolutely certain that Moses did receive the revelation and that the 613 commandments he handed over to them, including the first ten, were genuinely God's commandments. And descendants of the families at Mount Sinai would have had strong family traditions—the testimonies of father and son, mother and daughter, down to the end of time—that the revelations actually took place as advertised in the books Moses wrote, or more accurately, wrote down. Families of Noahides and their descendants, such as Job, would have had no such certainty. Did God really make a pact with Noah? Did He really reveal seven laws to Noah as part of the pact? Biblical text says that the rainbow, wherever it occurs, is a sign of God's pact with Noah.<sup>11</sup> But there is no natural evidentiary connection between rainbows and revelation.<sup>12</sup> To be sure, it was Moses who wrote down Noah's story, knowing it as he knew the 613 commandments, through divine revelation. But again, no Noahide family was present at the revelation of the Noah story to Moses (and neither, really, were the Israelite families—revelation of all the other materials in the *Five Books* Moses wrote down not having occurred in the same publicly verifiable manner as revelation of the Ten Commandments).

Job being a Noahide, and a Noahide in a land of pagans, would have been tinder for what I shall call Job's "pagan temptation." Neither Job nor his family would have experienced the direct presence of God that the Israelites experienced at Mount Sinai and for forty years after Mount Sinai—the cloud by day, the pillar of fire by night, the manna raining down from the sky—as they wandered the desert. And he would have been surrounded by a culture of idol-worshipping polytheists in either Aram or Edom.

What I mean by "pagan temptation" is this. When the going gets rough for a Noahide like Job, when God not only seems indifferent to his fate, but, as Job says in the course of his anguish, downright antagonistic,<sup>13</sup> then what keeps Job from saying: "You know, I've had it with this God, this God isn't working for me. This whole monotheism

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<sup>11</sup> See *Genesis* 9:12-:17.

<sup>12</sup> Rabbinic commentary does suggest many highly poetical and spiritual explanations for why God chose the rainbow: the rainbow symbolizes the Glory of God; the bow's inversion symbolizes the peaceful intent of the heavens, etc. See BEREISHIS 296 cmt. to 9:13 (Meir Zlotowitz ed. & trans., Mesorah Publ'ns, Ltd. 1977). The most direct explanation, however, is that one sees a rainbow only once rain has stopped. If God keeps a permanent rainbow in the heavens, it suggests that he has determined never to permit another Flood, and that He has effectively frozen the meteorological moment directly after the Flood. But it is then another step—a much larger step—to the proposition that God's determination never to permit another Flood is a sign for Noah's acceptance of the Seven Laws. There is no natural link to that proposition.

<sup>13</sup> "[H]e hates me," Job says of God. See *IYOV*, *supra* note 3, 16:9, at 167. This is only the most pointed of many utterances accusing God of antagonism.

thing has been a big mistake. Let me find myself a more powerful god who will improve my fortunes.” That is the pagan temptation.

Before I marshal the evidence for it, I want to notice a trace the temptation leaves in the *Five Books* of Moses. We find this trace in one of the prominent names that Moses employs for what we in English call “God.” The Hebrew language, remarkably, has no special word for the one God of Moses. Or rather, it has many words, many names for that God, but none of them “God.” The word we English speakers translate as “God” is the Hebrew word, “*Elohim*.” *Elohim* is a plural word. It means “Rulers.”<sup>14</sup> Use of this word for the one God of the text encodes an argument. It says that what appears as multiple sources of rule—the rule of princes, the rule of spirits, the rule of gods—is really only a single source. It says that all rule is the rule of a single ruler, the one God of the text. Or, to put it differently, that the entire universe is a coherent and cohesive unity, ruled by a single force with many only apparently disparate manifestations.

But this trace of the pagan temptation reaches even further, to another prominent name for the one God of the text, the name “*Yud-hay-vuv-hay*,” four Hebrew letters, hence the Tetragrammaton. Rabbinic tradition holds the Tetragrammaton to be the personal name of God.<sup>15</sup> It also holds that these four letters form a nonsense word, and that no one after the fall of the Second Temple knew how to pronounce that word because its pronunciation was kept secret by the High Priest and his successors, beginning with Moses’ brother Aaron. Rabbinic tradition maintains that the Tetragrammaton is a contraction of the four Hebrew tenses of the verb “to be”—the past, present, future, and causative tenses. Rambam (Maimonides) suggests that the word is best translated by the Greek word *ousia*, meaning “existence.”<sup>16</sup> Of course, when reading the Bible in English, God is never called by the name “existence.” Instead, translators use the term, “My Lord.” The reason they do so is that when observant Jews see the Tetragrammaton in prayer or when chanting from the Torah, they say *Adonai*,<sup>17</sup> the Hebrew for “my lord” or “monseigneur.” But this is not what the name means! The correct translation of the written name is “Existence.”

Rashi explains that Moses uses *Elohim* when he is referring to God in His attribute of justice: God as the relentless playing out of the single force that governs the entire universe,<sup>18</sup> and that Moses uses the

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<sup>14</sup> See BEREISHIS, *supra* note 12, at 32–33 cmt. to 1:1 (commenting on “God”).

<sup>15</sup> See Arthur J. Jacobson, *The Idolatry of Rules: Writing Law According to Moses, with Reference to Other Jurisprudences*, 11 CARDOZO L. REV. 1079, 1081 n.12 (1990).

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

<sup>17</sup> See BEREISHIS, *supra* note 12, at 87–88 cmt. to 2:4 (commenting on “HASHEM God”).

<sup>18</sup> See ABRAHAM BEN ISIAH & BENJAMIN SHARFMAN, *THE PENTATEUCH AND RASHI’S COMMENTARY: A LINEAR TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH* 19–20 (1949) (commenting on “The Lord God,” in *Genesis* 2:5).

Tetragrammaton, the personal name of God, when he is referring to God in his attribute of mercy, a relaxation of or departure from the playing out of force.<sup>19</sup> Thus, God has two “attributes,” which are, at least apparently, in conflict. How does this single God with two antagonistic attributes differ from a pagan scheme or a Manichean scheme of two different gods? Like a pagan or a Manichean scheme, the multiple attributes evince a multiplicity in the godhead. Christianity, of course, is even more explicit about this multiplicity. But unlike a pagan or Manichean scheme, the multiple attributes are not accompanied by multiple personalities. The one God has a single personality, and that is a line that neither Judaism nor Christianity are prepared to cross.

Now we are in position to take the second step in the argument. The first step was Utz, and all that Utz implies about Job. Let us skip, for the moment, the descriptions that follow immediately after mention of Utz—the lists of Job’s family and possessions, the weekly round of Job’s life. They will figure in the argument, but not yet. We are in the heavenly court. The angels, we are told, came to stand before God (here, for the first time, the Tetragrammaton—the two references to God prior to this episode use the name *Elohim*), “and the Satan, too, came along with them.”<sup>20</sup> This meeting between God (understood in His attribute of mercy) and Satan sets in motion the entire apparatus of the rest of the book. God asks Satan, “From where do you come?” Satan tells Him, “From exploring the earth and wandering about there.”<sup>21</sup> God asks Satan whether he has taken note of his servant Job, a man who is “simple” (meaning undivided or whole) and also “straight” (meaning that he sees things aright) and “who fears [*Elohim*] [God understood in His attribute of justice] and eschews evil!”<sup>22</sup> Satan proceeds to do what he habitually does after he wanders about the world checking up on

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<sup>19</sup> See *id.* at 3 (commenting on “God Created” in *Genesis* 1:1); see also BEREISHIS, *supra* note 12, at 87 cmt. to 2:4 (commenting on “HASHEM God”).

<sup>20</sup> *IYOV*, *supra* note 3, 1:6, at 11.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.* 1:7, at 11–12.

<sup>22</sup> *Iyov* 1:8. I use my own translations for the description of Job and not Rabbi Eisemann’s translation, because I want to preserve the directness and simplicity of the Hebrew. The word I translate as “simple” is the Hebrew “*tam*,” which does, in fact, mean “simple.” The word I translate as “straight” is the Hebrew “*yashar*,” which does, in fact, mean “straight.” Rabbi Eisemann uses an amalgam of Rashi and Gra to translate “*tam*” as “of unquestioning integrity” and “*yashar*” as “with a probing mind.” One simply does not quarrel with Rashi, and I will not. I just want to trace the link in my text between the simplicity of the Hebrew and the Rashi/Gra approach, and that’s what I do in the parentheticals.

Interestingly, the word “*tam*” is the word used to describe one of the four sons who ask questions in the Passover Haggadah—the “*tam*” is the “simple” son. Generations of Jews in English-speaking lands have understood the son to be simple, in the sense of “a simpleton.” But that’s not what the Haggadah text means at all, and to read the text that way is to completely misunderstand it. The real meaning of “*tam*” there is the same as the meaning of “*tam*” here: the son who is undivided, whole, without parts. That is to say, the son of “unquestioning integrity.”

people: he badmouths Job. He tells God that Job is a good fellow only because God has given him worldly riches, “But stretch out Your hand and afflict all that he has, (and see) if he does not blaspheme You to Your face.”<sup>23</sup> Unlike the devil in the Christian tradition, the Satan in the Jewish tradition is a prosecutor; he’s not the devil, not the tempter into sin. Rather Satan is a devil’s advocate. If God, understood in His attribute of mercy, always wants to let people off the hook, Satan makes the case against them, makes the case that ought to have been made by God Himself, understood in His attribute of justice. But the text shows God only in His attribute of mercy, and externalizes the attribute of justice into a separate personality—into the Satan. That is a step over the line we had thought Judaism refuses to cross: from two attributes to two personalities.

Indeed, there may be more personalities present than just God and the Satan. The status of the “angels” is subject to some dispute amongst the commentators. Unlike the Satan, the text does not name them, and the text does not even use the proper Hebrew term for angels (*m’lachim*), but rather calls these other beings “children of *elohim*” (*b’nei elohim*).<sup>24</sup> And we know that the text is perfectly capable of using the proper term for angels, because it does so towards the end of the book.<sup>25</sup> It is only rabbinic tradition that conjures them as angels.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, we certainly have two personalities present, God and Satan.

Notice precisely what Satan says to God: that Job will “blaspheme You to Your face.” In the very moment we learn about the transformation of two attributes of God into two personalities, we also learn that God has a face. To be sure, the *Five Books* of Moses are filled with such statements about God—for example, that only Moses amongst all the patriarchs and prophets spoke to God “face to face.”<sup>27</sup> Still, Satan’s attribution of a face to God at this very moment, the moment when Satan’s very presence in the story courts a pagan challenge to the oneness of God, is almost shocking.

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<sup>23</sup> IYOV, *supra* note 3, 1:11, at 15.

<sup>24</sup> *Id.* 1:6, at 11.

<sup>25</sup> *Id.* 33:23, at 287.

<sup>26</sup> The two other occurrences of “*b’nei elohim*” in the Bible are in a highly esoteric passage sandwiched between the generations of Seth and the beginnings of the Noah story. *Genesis* 6:1–2, 6:4. Rashi translates these occurrences as “the sons of the rulers,” citing *Exodus* 22:7, where “*elohim*” certainly means “judges,” hence princes or judges, hence rulers. A *Midrash* translates the phrase as “godly beings,” referring to the good fortune enjoyed by aristocratic youth. Other commentators (Ibn Ezra, Radak, Rav Yehudah Halevy, and Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch) say that the *b’nei elohim* are the god-fearing descendents of Seth, while “the daughters of man,” which also occurs in the same passage, are the wicked descendents of Cain. BEREISHIS, *supra* note 12, at 180 cmt. to 6:2 (commenting on “the sons of the rulers”).

<sup>27</sup> *Exodus* 33:11.

The text underscores and ratifies the multiplicity of the godhead farther on in the story. The scene is Satan's return to the heavenly court after he has killed all Job's children and destroyed all his wealth. *Job* is a book filled with repetitions, and the telling of Satan's second session with God repeats word for word the telling of the first. Thus God, understood in His attribute of mercy, asks the Satan a second time whether he has seen Job and describes Job exactly as he described him the first time: "For there is no one like him on earth, a man [simple and straight], who fears [*Elohim*] and eschews evil."<sup>28</sup> But then the text departs dramatically. God says to Satan: "He still keeps his [simplicity]. And now you have incited Me against him, to destroy him for no good reason."<sup>29</sup> Notice first that God focuses his attention on Job's simplicity; He leaves out Job's straightness, when he has described Job as both "simple" and "straight" in exactly the same way twice already. Notice also that in the very moment He asserts Job's simplicity—his wholeness, his integrity—God angrily denounces the Satan for inciting Him against Job. But if God is truly one—and He is—God must be inciting himself against Job. God must be experiencing His own lack of simplicity, His own multiplicity, His own division into parts.

What is the consequence of the pagan temptation we find blazoned forth in the text? What does it say about Job that he is tempted? To what does this temptation lead? The answer begins by understanding a fact about paganism, about a polytheistic universe. In such a universe, the gods are at once immortal and irredeemably locked in struggle for control of the natural order and the spiritual life of men. Think Mount Olympus in contrast with Mount Sinai. The result of these incessant struggles is that one day one god is on top, and the next day another. The exact result of their struggles is temporary and accidental. In metaphysics the corresponding doctrine is that the universe is made of many substances, each of which inhabits its own space, indifferent to the space of all the others. In such a universe no one—certainly not even Zeus—is in charge. It is an agonistic universe. But because no one is in charge, no one can guarantee order. A bad man or woman can flourish if he or she wins the favor of a goddess or a god. That is all that is required: the favor of a god. How does one attract that favor? Principally by beauty and by heroic deeds. That is the Greek world. It is a world in which a just order is simply impossible. As a consequence, it is a world of obsession with justice. It is a world that has the metaphysics of an Aristotle<sup>30</sup> but the justice of a city in speech only and not in the world.<sup>31</sup> It is the world of Plato's *Republic*.

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<sup>28</sup> IYOV, *supra* note 3, 2:3, at 21.

<sup>29</sup> *Id.* 2:3, at 22.

<sup>30</sup> ARISTOTLE, METAPHYSICS (W.D. Ross trans., Univ. of Adelaide 2012), available at <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/metaphysics/>; see also S. Marc Cohen, *Aristotle's*

In Plato's case in particular, the character of paganism is manifest. In the *Republic*, the ultimate fantasy of a just and ordered universe comes only at the very end—only as a myth and not as what is real. The image in the fantasy is an image from music: justice, if we ever could achieve it, would be harmony, the harmonious working together of the universe in all its parts.<sup>32</sup> But the world as we have it has no harmony. It is a world of conflict through and through. Only in his last dialogue, the *Laws*, did Plato dispense with his obsession about justice and his longing for a harmonious universe. There, he saw his way to constructing order from conflict, by transforming conflict into contest, by constructing his city based on games.<sup>33</sup> The *Laws* contains no mention of justice whatsoever. Harmony no longer grips Plato's fantasies.

The monotheistic universe is otherwise. It has one God and one substance. It has one Ruler over that single substance, one Ruler manifesting itself as manifold rules—the laws of nature, the rules governing men. Justice is the very fabric, the woof and warp, of spirit and things. Justice must be, because God rules. No doubt the Fates represent a rough effort from within the pagan paradigm to imagine a fundamental ordering force in the universe.<sup>34</sup> What is striking about the Fates, however, is that the order they create has nothing to do with justice. It is the order of what is, the order of whatever happens to happen. The Fates represent, at most, and certainly not always, the *result* of whatever struggle is taking place on the plane of men and on the plane of the gods and in all the interactions between them.<sup>35</sup> In order to have any connection with justice, the fundamental ordering force must be able to condemn the results of the inferior struggles, and to inform the forces engaging in those struggles that the result is *wrong* and must be corrected. A fundamentally just ordering force must provide a vantage apart from the forces gripped in struggle, a vantage that must suffer and express disappointment, anger, pity, and regret that the inferior forces seek domination, not justice.

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*Metaphysics* §10, in STANFORD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PHILOSOPHY (Edward N. Zalta, ed., Summer 2008 ed.), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2009/entries/aristotle-metaphysics/>.

<sup>31</sup> PLATO, THE REPUBLIC 369a (c. 380 B.C.E.).

<sup>32</sup> *Id.* 616b–617c.

<sup>33</sup> Arthur J. Jacobson, *Origins of the Game Theory of Law and the Limits of Harmony in Plato's Laws*, 20 CARDOZO L. REV. 1335 (1999).

<sup>34</sup> During the conference, Andreas Kalyvas helpfully suggested to me that I must reckon with the Fates.

<sup>35</sup> All of this becomes much more complex when one examines the actual doctrines associated with the Fates. The result of such an examination would be somewhat less disposed against the capacity of the pagan paradigm for justice than I am arguing. An excellent starting point is ROBERT GRAVES, THE GREEK MYTHS 53–54 (1960). But, of course, Hellenes were as aware of Israelite culture as the Israelites were of Hellenic culture. See CYRUS H. GORDON, THE COMMON BACKGROUND OF GREEK AND HEBREW CIVILIZATIONS 22–46 (1965). My argument is that the pagan paradigm is inhospitable to justice in its very nature, not that it would be impossible to graft vestiges of justice onto it.

The challenge of the book of *Job*, what makes it so shocking, is the question it thrusts before the reader: If there is a God, and if that God is just, how can it be that a righteous man, Job, suffers the terrible fate he suffers, the apparent injustice? The book poses that dilemma to the reader, but it also makes the dilemma thematic for Job himself. Job, like pagan culture, is obsessed with justice. *I am a righteous man*, Job thinks and says. How can it be that God permits these horrible misfortunes? What do these misfortunes say about Him? How can He be unjust, as He seems to be?

That is the question on Job's mind as the book unfolds. But the reader knows something unbeknownst to Job, a fact that makes God's apparent injustice even more severe: Job's misfortunes are the result of a bet God made with Satan, the bet that Job would blaspheme God to His face if God permitted Satan to take all away from him. The storyteller gives the reader a reason for outrage that the story does not give Job. The narrative heightens the monstrosity of the story actually available to Job and those in the world beneath the heavenly court. But the monstrosity is even worse. The victims of the bet—the ones who die at the hands of Satan—have nothing whatsoever to do with the question whether Job is really a righteous man. They are, for the purposes of the story, perfect innocents. How can it be that all these people and animals die as the result of a bet? Where is the justice in this? Gloucester says in *King Lear*: "As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods; /They kill us for their sport."<sup>36</sup> But this isn't "the gods," this is God Himself killing for sport.

The answer to these questions about the death of the innocents begins quietly, and almost off-handedly:

His sons would go to revel, each on his special day in his own home; and they would send word to invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. When the days of revelry had made their rounds, Iyov would send word to summon them, would rise early in the morning, and sacrifice burnt offerings, one for each of them; for Iyov thought, "Perhaps my children have sinned and blasphemed [*Elohim*] in their hearts."<sup>37</sup>

One interpretation of these verses is that each of the seven sons had a feast once a week, so that revelry occupied the entire time of Job's children.<sup>38</sup> Job felt compelled to make a sacrifice on their behalf, once a week, because he believed that his children may have sinned, and blasphemed God in their hearts. Past is prologue. How can it be, the

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<sup>36</sup> WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *KING LEAR* act 4, sc. 1, at 173 (Barbara A. Mowat & Paul Werstine eds., Washington Square Press 2005).

<sup>37</sup> IYOV, *supra* note 3, 1:5, at 9.

<sup>38</sup> See IYOV, *supra* note 3, at 8 cmt. to 1:4 (commenting on "To revel").

commentators wonder, that a man so apparently righteous as Job would have such profligate children, children he himself suspected of sin?<sup>39</sup> Is Job's image of himself correct that he is righteous? Is *God's* image of Job correct that Job is righteous? These are questions we must ask.

To begin an answer we must turn to an event immediately following Job's calamities: to a visit paid Job by three Noahide friends—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Tzophar the Naamathite. The text suggests that they came from afar. When they arrived, seeing Job's condition, they wept and tore their garments and threw dust into the air over their heads. They stayed with Job for seven days and nights, sitting with him to comfort him. Only then did Job begin to speak and cursed the day of his birth, only after his friends, in a show of devotion and loyalty, made an extraordinary effort to ally themselves with his pain.<sup>40</sup> Just before the arrival of the friends, Job's wife had said to him: "Are you still maintaining your [simplicity]! Blaspheme God and die!"<sup>41</sup> Job refused to do that. Job stuck with God and with his lot in face of an outrageous lack of sympathy, a lovelessness, on the part of the one person in the world who absolutely should have stuck with him. (The text sets up an opposition between Job's loyalty to God and his wife's disloyalty to him.) But only once his three friends visit to comfort him, only once he is the beneficiary of a sustained expression of love, does Job start his cascade of laments and cries of bewilderment and rage. What is the meaning of his refusal to be comforted, his abandonment of God in the face of love?

By forcing us to face this question, the text allows us to conclude that Job, at least at this point in the story, is a man without a penchant for love. He is a righteous man, to be sure, but he is not a man who loves.<sup>42</sup> We see this in the apparent deal he has with his wife: So long as he had wealth, so long as their children were alive, she was loyal. But lose the wealth, lose the children, well then, loyalty is out the window. Die. Theirs is not a relationship of love. Furthermore, we notice something very interesting in the text. The three friends have names—the text names them. But Job's wife does not have a name, nor do any of their children. What does this say about Job's relationship to these people, to these people without names? Are these people just possessions to him, just as if they were livestock? This is a possibility the

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<sup>39</sup> *Id.*

<sup>40</sup> *IYOV*, *supra* note 3, 2:11–:14, at 27–29.

<sup>41</sup> *Id.* 2:9, at 25.

<sup>42</sup> In their overview to *Iyov*, Rabbis Eisemann and Scherman describe Job's unresponsiveness to the love his friends bring him. Moshe Eisemann & Nosson Scherman, *Overview to IYOV*, *supra* note 3, at xxiii. But they don't draw as strong a conclusion from the unresponsiveness as I am doing here: that Job himself was a loveless man. They do, however, make reference to Ramban's opinion that, at the beginning of the story, Job's relationship to God was one of fear and became a relationship of love only at the end of the story. *Id.*

text forces us to consider, that for Job his wealth and his children and his wife were all just possessions to him, the adornments of a wealthy man, a proof of righteousness to all the world. They were not the locus of his love. He was, the text is telling us, a loveless man who prized justice and only justice as the singular virtue in human existence. He had succumbed to the pagan temptation.

We become certain of this at the very end. After all the arguments between Job and his friends, after they respond angrily to his loveless response to their loyalty, arguing fruitlessly that perhaps he wasn't as righteous as he had imagined, the three friends fall silent, "for," as the text says, "in his own eyes he was righteous."<sup>43</sup> Then a fourth man speaks up. He is much younger than the others, and not described as a friend. He is Elihu, son of Barachel the Buzzite.<sup>44</sup> "Elihu noticed," says the text, "that the three men had no appropriate answer, and so his anger flared."<sup>45</sup> Elihu silences Job by telling him and the friends: "There are not many who are truly wise, oldsters do not necessarily understand justice."<sup>46</sup> He attacks Job for presuming to know God's justice, for presuming to understand that the misfortunes that seem calamities to him necessarily also constitute a tear in the fabric of the universe, for suggesting that his own position in the universe is the only position God must contend with, that there are no other significant positions, no overall framework within which God must juggle myriads of fates. Using yet a third name for God in the text, a name meaning "enough" or "sufficient," Elihu ends his tirade by saying: "As for Shaddai we have not found His force beyond tolerance. There is due measure, there is much charity. He does not torment. Therefore men stand in awe of Him, and as for Him—He does not even glance upon the wise."<sup>47</sup> Job has no answer. He knows he does not know. He knows that if God rules over the entire universe in justice, he cannot know what it is, because his fate is only one fate out of myriads, and his knowledge only a whisper in the mind of God.

And then he is ready to hear God. Now it is the Tetragrammaton, God in His attribute of mercy, that speaks to him.<sup>48</sup> Job has a direct

<sup>43</sup> IYOV, *supra* note 3, 32:1, at 273.

<sup>44</sup> The text says that Barachel the Buzzite, Elihu's father, was from the Ram family. Ramban says that Ram is Abraham. Thus, Elihu is an Israelite. So the man who, in Ramban's view, has the right answer to Job's misfortunes, was, unsurprisingly, an Israelite. See IYOV, *supra* note 3, at 274 cmt. to 32:2 (commenting on "The anger of Elihu son of Barachel the Buzzite, from the Ram family, flared up. It flared up [against Iyov] because he considered himself to be more in the right than God.").

<sup>45</sup> IYOV, *supra* note 3, 32:5, at 275.

<sup>46</sup> *Id.* 32:9, at 276.

<sup>47</sup> *Id.* 37:23–:24, at 319.

<sup>48</sup> With one exception, the text confines use of the Tetragrammaton to the two scenes in God's heavenly court: at the very beginning and at the very end, God starts speaking to Job. In the first scene, the Tetragrammaton appears seven times. It also appears seven times in the last

experience of God. Indeed, God had conversations with only two other human beings in all of history after the Patriarchs; they were Moses and Balaam. (Balaam was the prophet whom Balak, king of Moab, hired to curse Israel.<sup>49</sup> It is the Tetragrammaton—but not just the Tetragrammaton<sup>50</sup>—that speaks to Balaam as well, ordering him to say only what God tells him to say and nothing more.<sup>51</sup> God orders Balaam to bless Israel, which is just what he does.<sup>52</sup> The Israelites eventually kill Balaam during the conquest of Canaan.<sup>53</sup>)<sup>54</sup> All the other prophets saw God only in visions, in trances, in dreams.<sup>55</sup> Only Job and Balaam and Moses hear and speak directly to God. Job and Balaam, each in their way, play the role Moses played for all of humanity other than Israel.<sup>56</sup>

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scene. The sole exception is when Job refers to the Tetragrammaton in his first speech after all three friends have had a chance to speak, and Job answers all three collectively. The Tetragrammaton appears here, and nine times in the second heavenly court scene. Note the pattern: 7-10-7. Job bitterly rebukes his friends for presuming that they alone possess wisdom and that he has none. He says:

A butt for his friend's banter, I will call out to God, and He will grant—laughter to him who is whole in his righteousness. A debasing torch for those who live in a dream-world of security—they are destined to be among those whose feet flounder. The tents of the robbers are at ease, there is tranquility for those who anger God, to whomever God grants by His hand. However, I beg you, ask the beasts—and they will instruct you, the birds of the sky—and they will tell you. Or, speak to the earth—it will teach you, the fish of the sea will recount it to you. Who does not know through all these—that it is the hand of [the Tetragrammaton] which wrought all this. In Whose hand is the life-force of all living creatures, the spirit within all of mankind.

IYOV, *supra* note 3, 12:4-:10, at 127-31.

In a text of the endless carefulness of *Job*, the use of the Tetragrammaton at this precise point must have vast significance. And it does. It reflects the sense of Job's response to his friends: we depend on God's mercy for our fortunes and our lives. More importantly, it is Job's rebuke to what he regards as his friends' presumption. He is asserting that he, not they, has an intimacy with God. It is probably not the case that he is hinting at prior conversations with God, though that is certainly possible. But he certainly is referring to God by His intimate name. Note that the text refers to God by five different names: God, Shaddai (It Suffices), Kadosh (Holy), the Tetragrammaton, and Almighty.

<sup>49</sup> *Bamidbar* 22:2-:21.

<sup>50</sup> See *infra* note 54.

<sup>51</sup> *Bamidbar* 22:20.

<sup>52</sup> *Bamidbar* 23:5-24:25.

<sup>53</sup> *Joshua* 13:22.

<sup>54</sup> Balaam first converses with an angel of the Tetragrammaton. *Bamidbar* 22:31-:35. He later says a single sentence, now to *Elohim*, in his attribute of justice, not to the Tetragrammaton. *Bamidbar* 23:4. But it is the Tetragrammaton that immediately responds to Balaam. *Bamidbar* 23:5. Needless to say, it is the Tetragrammaton alone that engages Job in conversation. Unlike Balaam, Job's only connection to God is the Tetragrammaton. It has none of the static of Balaam's connection; it is purer and more exalted than Balaam's, understandably enough.

<sup>55</sup> RAMBAM, MISHNEH TORAH, HILCHOT YESODEI HATORAH, ch. 7, Halachah 6, at 254.

<sup>56</sup> The Zohar imagines that Pharaoh had three advisers whom he consulted, in particular on suppressing the Hebrew slaves. The three were Jethro, Job, and Balaam. (Jethro was Moses' father-in-law and a Midianite priest.) A *Midrash* comments:

That is undoubtedly the reason rabbinic tradition assigns authorship of the book of *Job* to Moses.<sup>57</sup> God elaborates on the argument begun by Elihu: “Where were you when I laid the foundations for the earth? Pray tell—if you are so wise!”<sup>58</sup> Yes, there must be justice if a single God rules the entire universe as one substance, but we are ignorant of it and cannot know what it is. The problem for the pagan is quite the opposite: He *can* know justice, but the justice he knows is unachievable, or achievable only in speech.

Now Job is ready to speak: “Truly I am of little worth. What can I answer you?”<sup>59</sup> God returns to the theme. Job answers again: “I have known all along that You are all-able, that no aspect of wisdom is beyond You.”<sup>60</sup> Then God, as the Tetragrammaton, whips around to speak to Eliphaz, the Temanite. He says, “My anger is seething against you and against your two friends, because in your defense of Me you did not speak as appropriately as had My servant Iyov.”<sup>61</sup> Ramban says that the friends were too sure of their positions; Job’s confession of ignorance was the appropriate stance.<sup>62</sup> Notice, by the way, that God speaks to Eliphaz, but Eliphaz doesn’t answer. He doesn’t have a conversation with God, unlike Moses, Balaam, and Job. He is in an exalted position—like Israel he hears God speak—but he isn’t able to talk back.

God then tells Eliphaz to take seven bullocks and seven rams to Job for Job to sacrifice for Eliphaz (or perhaps for all three friends). Then, God says, Job will pray for Eliphaz, and God will listen to Job with goodwill “in order,” says God, “that I not be forced to deal with you

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Rabbi Chiya said in the name of Rabbi Simon: “Three were present during the consultation (with Pharaoh), Balaam, Job, and Jethro. Balaam, who advised (to kill the Jews) was killed, Job who was silent, was judged to suffer great pain, and Jethro who ran away was worthy to have (great) descendants . . . .”

*Shmot Rabah* 1:9; *Sotah* 11a; see also *Overview* to *IYOV*, *supra* note 3, at xiv (quoting *Sotah* 11a).

<sup>57</sup> *IYOV*, *supra* note 3, at 2 n.2, 3 n.3.

<sup>58</sup> *Id.* 38:4, at 331.

<sup>59</sup> *Id.* 40:4, at 347.

<sup>60</sup> *Id.* 42:2, at 361.

<sup>61</sup> *Id.* 42:7, at 365.

<sup>62</sup> “After Hashem had spoken these words to Iyov, Hashem said to Eliphaz the Temanite, ‘My anger is seething against you and against your two friends, because in your defense of Me you did not speak as appropriately as had My servant Iyov.’ Why, after Hashem had spoken these words to Iyov?” See *IYOV*, *supra* note 3, at 365 cmt. to 42:7.

Rashi has a different explanation. The friends did not speak as appropriately as Job because they were insensitive and cruel in their arguments; in responding to Job’s cries of anguish, they told him that he must not have been as righteous as he thought, when they should have responded “appropriately,” when they should have comforted Job in his anguish. Job, in contrast, accused God of destroying the constant with the wicked only because of the dreadfulness of his anguish. The friends, says Rashi, should have comforted Job as Elihu did. Nosson Scherman, *Introduction* to *IYOV*, *supra* note 3, at xli–xlii.

improperly,”<sup>63</sup> suggesting, of course, that God wasn’t really angry with the friends, but was just providing Job with an occasion to demonstrate who he had become. And Job had become a man who was capable of praying for friends. He had become a man capable of love.

And in reward for his newfound loveliness, God blesses Job with vastly greater wealth than he started with, and with twice seven sons—but still three daughters! And here is the jackpot of this long argument: The text names all the daughters. The daughters have names. This is an extraordinary reversal from the opening scene of the book. None of the children then had names. The daughters are now people, humans valuable to Job and loved by Job in their own right. They are not mere possessions. Of course, the sons still have no names, just as Bildad and Tzophar aren’t named in the last scene before God, and don’t receive any communication from God. There is some suggestion that Job still values the sons as possessions—twice as many sons, half as many sons, more wealth, less wealth—sons are sons. One wants more of them rather than less of them. But daughters are precious. Their number stays fixed. They have names. The narrator does say that Job granted his daughters an inheritance among their brothers. The book elevates the status of the daughters to at least that of equals with their brothers. One can speculate about the significance of the omissions of names—both God’s and Job’s omissions—and in a book of *Job’s* intricate precision, one must. But not here, not now.

For here, for now, let us notice one further stroke. “Throughout the land,” says the narrator, “no women could be found as beautiful as Iyov’s daughters.”<sup>64</sup> Why this reference to beauty at the very end of the book? References to beauty in the Bible are few and far between. There is Sarah; there is Rachel; there is Jonathan; there is Bathsheba. There may be one or two others, but that is all. Beauty is not the highest value. But it is the highest value in Greek culture, or at least so thought the ancient Israelites. Noah’s three sons were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Shem became the progenitor of the Semites, the bearers of God’s spiritual calling. Japheth, according to rabbinic tradition, was the progenitor of Greek culture,<sup>65</sup> and Greek culture was to them the culture of beauty.<sup>66</sup> Making beauty the most prominent feature of the very end of Job’s story is the text asking us to reflect on the possibility that Job’s story reveals a truth that Greek culture, a pagan culture, helps Israel understand.

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<sup>63</sup> IYOV, *supra* note 3, 43:8, at 367.

<sup>64</sup> *Id.* 42:15, at 375.

<sup>65</sup> BEREISHIS, *supra* note 12, at 305 cmt. to 9:27 (commenting on “May God extend Japheth”).

<sup>66</sup> *Id.* at 224–25 cmt. to 6:10 (commenting on “Shem, Ham and Japheth”).

And it is this. Because Job at the beginning of his book was incapable of love, because he effectively erased his children's identities, God did justice to Job by erasing the children. He did Job's justice. Not God's justice, not a universal and timeless justice, but the playing out, the realization of who Job really was, in the world. The children were nothing in and of themselves because they were nothing, in and of themselves, to Job. They received the justice they would have received had Job been God, had God's justice been Job's justice. But then, in the end, when Job learns to love, when he learns to value people—or at least his daughters—not as possessions, but in and of themselves, when at least the daughters have names, then they survive. Then they are beautiful. Then Job truly flourishes.

Paganism knows justice but maintains that justice is impossible. Judaism says justice is inevitable but we can't know what it is. The book of *Job* teaches that justice of a sort is at once necessary and knowable. Jewish and Greek all at once, *Job* is a reworking of the concept of justice from a timeless universal to the playing out in history of each and every one of our points of view. That is its critique of the Athenian constitution, and also its critique of the intellectual modesty of the Israelite constitution. The truth of the book of *Job* is an Israelite culture deeply aware of Hellenic culture, if not already grappling with the consequences of its conquest by the Macedonian king. That was its milieu. That is its message now.