

The Face of God and the Etiquette of Eye-Contact: Visitation, Pilgrimage, and Prophetic Vision in Ancient Israelite and Early Jewish Imagination¹

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I. The trouble with God's face

Notoriously, the Hebrew Bible frequently associates looking upon the divine visage with danger and death. At Mount Sinai, Yahweh insists that Moses warn the Israelites, the new body politic, twice not to approach the holy mount, lest the proximity lure them to rush the mountain for a glimpse of him – and many perish (Exod 19:10–13, 20–25). He warns Aaron, father of the high priesthood, to raise a smoke-screen before the cherubic seat in the Holy of Holies during the Purgation Day ritual lest he die (Lev 16:2, 13).² Over Moses, the prophet of prophets, in

¹ This paper has long been in the making. It began as part of a lecture on the motif of Israel sinning at the climactic moment of revelation in each of the Pentateuchal sources (“Revelation and Sin at Sinai According to the Pentateuchal Sources,” *The Thirteenth World Congress of Jewish Studies, 12–17 August 2001*), developed through two public presentations (*Davar*, New Jersey, 15 June 2007; *Drisha*, New York, 5 November 2007), and enjoyed a fuller, critical working out at the Columbia University Hebrew Bible Seminar (31 January 2008), where I received insightful feedback. Sincere thanks to Isaac Chavel, F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, Shalom Holtz, Noam Mizrahi, Jon Pahl, and Deena Sigel, who graciously read drafts and offered productive remarks, and to my student Jessie DeGrado, who provided valuable research assistance. Thanks as well to Gary Anderson and Mark Smith for pointing me to Friedhelm Hartenstein, *Das Angesicht JHWHs: Studien zu seinem höfischen und kultischen Bedeutungshintergrund in den Psalmen und in Exodus 32–34* (FAT 55; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), which advances the same basic idea as this study, grounds it theoretically, draws on multiple disciplines, and includes relevant artwork. Hartenstein’s work has a narrower scope than this one, literarily, historically, and typologically; also, in its theoretical discourse, it does not succeed fully to relinquish a theological viewpoint (even when describing the thought-processes of biblical authors themselves) or to distinguish biblical literature from ritual as practiced historically. Translations in this study are my own, except where otherwise noted.

² On the Priestly prohibitions against touch, sight, and access with regard to the cultic furniture and appliances, see Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple Service in*

the cleft of the rock atop Mount Sinai, Yahweh will cup his hand to reveal only his back as he passes by: “You cannot look upon my face,” he declares, “for man cannot look upon me and live” – in a rhyming couplet: **וְחִי לֹא תוּכַל לִרְאוֹת אֶת פְּנֵי כִי לֹא יִרְאֵנִי הָאָדָם וְחִי** (Exod 33:20–23).

Looking at Yahweh’s abode and furniture can pose a similar danger. Yahweh charges Aaron and his sons to prevent those Levites who transport the holiest of Tabernacle furnishings from spying the Holy of Holies as it is packed up – and dying (Num 4:17–20). The people of Beth-Shemesh joyously welcoming the miraculous return of the ark from Philistine territory suffer a devastating blow for looking inside.³ Seventy locals die, while another fifty-thousand perish around the nation.⁴ Frighteningly no better off than the ravaged Philistine centers before them, they too must divert this forbidding presence to an alternate host (1 Sam 6:1–7:1).

So discomposing did biblical authors find the idea of apprehending divinity that in some episodes they color rather strikingly the reactions of those who encounter it.⁵ After pitching a Herculean effort to fend off a divine attacker, Jacob expresses his wonder at having survived the *sight* of him: He names the place “Divine Face,” **פְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים/פְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים**, explaining, “I looked at divinity face to face, yet my life was saved” (Gen 32:25–31).⁶

Ancient Israel (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995; orig. pub. 1978) 175–188. On the incense during the Purgation Day ritual as nothing more than a smoke-screen, see pp. 178, 244.

³ The expression **רָאָה בָּ** carries the nuance of looking consciously, watching, even with some attending emotion, for example, Gen 21:16; 34:1; Exod 2:11; Num 11:15; Judg 16:17; 1 Sam 1:11; Isa 66:24; Obad 1:12; Song 6:11; Esth 8:6. See *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar* (ed. E. Kautzsch, rev. A. E. Cowley; 2nd ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1910, repr. 1974) 398 §119h–k; F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* [=BDB] (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907, repr. with corrections, 1953, 1975) 907–908 **רָאָה** §8a; Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Study Edition* [=KBR] (trans. and ed. M. E. J. Richardson, 2 vols.; Leiden–New York–Köln: Brill, 2001) 2.1158b–1159a **רָאָה** §7.

⁴ See for now Mazal Eskin, “Seventy People Fifty-Thousand People” (Hebrew), *Megadim* 23 (2005) 109–114.

⁵ On the blurred lines or identities between Yahweh and his emissaries, see, for example, Moshe Greenberg, *Understanding Exodus* (New York: Berman House, 1969) 69–70; James A. Kugel, *The God of Old: Inside the Lost World of the Bible* (New York: Free Press, 2003) 5–36.

⁶ See the wonderful analysis of the passage in its immediate context by Steven Molen, “The Identity of Jacob’s Opponent: Wrestling with Ambiguity in Gen. 32:22–32,” *Shofar* 11/2 (1993) 16–29. For further comments in this direction on the basis of an original comparison with the wrestling match between Gilgamesh and Enkidu, see Esther Hamori, “*When Gods Were Men*”: *Biblical Theophany and Anthropomorphic Realism* (PhD diss., New York University, 2004) 103–128. To the name **פְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים**, “Face of God,” compare **שְׁמוֹת אֱלֹהִים**, “Name of God.”

In the brief note ominously preceding that encounter, Jacob has a brush with a band of angels.⁷ Here, too, the narrator has Jacob focused on what he sees. Startled by the *sight* of them, Jacob exclaims, “Why, it’s a divine encampment!” (ויאמר יעקב כאשר ראם: מחנה אלהים זה) and he names the place “Wondrous Encampment,” מַחְנֵיִם (32:2–3; compare 28:16–17).⁸

An angel of Yahweh catches the despondent fugitive Hagar and, after first instructing her to return to Saray, makes her several encouraging promises. Hagar, though, names the interlocutor “the God of Sight,” אֱלֹהֵי רְאִי, for her shock, relief, and gratitude that beholding divinity did not lead to her death (or blindness):⁹ “I still see even after looking, רְאִי.”¹⁰ She then names the spot something like “Well of the Vision-Sus-

⁷ In an overwhelming number of cases throughout biblical narrative, the expression פָּגַע״ב connotes physical harm, even death (Judg 8:21; 15:12; 18:25; 1 Sam 22:17, 18; 2 Sam 1:15; 1 Kgs 2:25, 29, 31, 32, 34, 46; Ruth 2:22; presumably Josh 2:16); so in law as well (Num 35:19, 21). Perhaps via “to push” it comes to mean “to insist, entreat” (Gen 23:8–9; Jer 7:16; 36:25; Job 21:15; Ruth 1:16). Simply “to meet, happen upon” always takes a direct object in the accusative (Exod 5:20; 23:4; 1 Sam 10:5; Amos 5:19; Isa 64:4). In geographical contexts, פָּגַע״ב signifies the place where two boundary lines touch (for example, Josh 16:7; relatedly, Gen 28:11). Jer 15:11b represents an interpretive crux: on the analogy with Isa 53:6 it should refer to physical harm, but the parallelism with the first half of the verse would indicate helpful entreaty similar to Gen 23:8–9. In this overall direction, see the discussion of פָּגַע״ב by Jonah ibn Janah, *The Book of Roots* (Hebrew; trans. J. ibn Tibbon; ed. W. Bacher; Berlin: Itzkowski, 1896; repr. Jerusalem, 1966) 394.

⁸ Literarily, in a kind of Janus parallelism, when one reads the phrase מחנה אלהים in the light of the expression פָּגַע״ב that precedes it, it means a divine encampment, but when one reads מחנה אלהים in the light of the dual ending of the place-name מַחְנֵיִם that follows it, it conveys the superlative sense – a massive or grand encampment. Tradition-historically, one might speculate that the dual name generated the superlative מחנה אלהים, which in turn generated the literal מחנה אלהים and פָּגַע״ב. (That in place-names the ending *-ayim* may not have carried the dual meaning need have no bearing on literary play and tradition-history, as name-derivations throughout the Hebrew Bible amply demonstrate; see Aaron Demsky, “Hebrew Names in the Dual Form and the Toponym *Yerushalayim*,” in *These Are the Names: Studies in Jewish Onomastics* [4 vols., Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1997–2003] 3.11–20; Yoel Elitzur, *Ancient Place Names in the Holy Land – Preservation and History* [Jerusalem: Magnes; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2004] 268–290 at 282–290, 335, esp. 285 n. 64; Moshe Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns* [rev. ed.; trans. P. Hackett; Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1991], but compare pp. 175–177, 241–242.)

⁹ As in Gen 19:11 and 2 Kgs 6:18 – on which see Ephraim A. Speiser, “The ‘Elative’ in West-Semitic and Akkadian,” *JCS* 6 (1952) 82–91, at 89 n. 52; id., *Genesis* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1964) 139–140.

¹⁰ Stressed penultimately as a pausal form, on the model of abstract III-y nouns like עָנִי (suffering, poverty), חָלִי (sickness), עָבִי (thickness) and יָפִי (beauty), רְאִי either means “appearance,” as in 1 Sam 16:12, and Hagar refers to a God who can be seen, or else it means “sight,” as suits her explicit musings, and she refers to his having sustained her ability to see. Compare Onkelos; Saadiyah Gaon; David Qimhi, *The Book of Roots* (ed. J. H. R. Biesenthal and F. Lebrecht; Berlin, 1847; repr. Jerusalem, 1967) 339;

tainer,” באר לחי ראִי. The very texture of the narrative ripples with the ocular. To locate Hagar when the angel of Yahweh finds her, the discourse uses the terms עֵין and שׁוֹר, which mean, respectively, not only “spring” and “wall” but also “the eye” and “to see” (Gen 16:7–14).¹¹

Similarly, Gideon receives the divine tidings that Yahweh has chosen him to save Israel and, moreover, that Yahweh will accompany him on this mission. Yet when Gideon discovers that he has had a bona fide visitation, he cries in horror, “Woe, Lord Yahweh, for I have actually looked at an angel of Yahweh face to face!” Yahweh has to declare him safe: “Peace upon you! Have no fear. You will not die.” But when Gideon then builds an altar, still, he names it not for Yahweh’s promised salvation of Israel, but rather for his own fear. Fixating on the first word Yahweh offered to allay his fright, that word of absolute security, “peace,” he stutters out an entreaty to Yahweh, a mantra for himself, naming the altar “Yahweh, peace!” (Judg 6:11–24).¹²

And again, an angel arrives before the wife of Manoah to announce her pregnancy and the special nature of the fetus, then returns to give Manoah joint responsibility for it. But Manoah bemoans their fate, “We are doomed to die for upon divinity have we looked.” Tongue firmly in cheek at this climactic moment in the episode, the author gives Manoah’s anonymous wife the last word in theology: “Had Yahweh wanted to kill us he would neither have accepted our offerings nor shown us all these things; nor has he announced such (i. e., our impending death) to us” (Judg 13:2–22).¹³

August Dillmann, *Die Genesis* (5th ed., Leipzig: Hirzel, 1886) 251–252. One need not accept the complex, unattested emendation הגם אלהים ראיתי ואחי אחרי ראִי suggested by Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (2nd ed., Berlin: Reimer, 1883; trans. J. S. Black and A. Menzies, repr. Ohio: Meridian, 1965) 326 n. 1. See the pointed criticism of it in Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (trans. M. E. Biddle; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1997) 188–189. On the pausal form and the possibility of discounting the interrogative ה as the result of dittography, see Arnold B. Ehrlich, *Scripture in Its Plain Sense* (Hebrew; 3 vols.; Berlin: Poppelauer, 1899–1901) 1.43; id., *Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel, textkritisches, sprachliches und sachliches* (7 vols., 1908–1913; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1968) 1.64–65.

¹¹ For additional word-play with these terms, see Gen 49:22; Deut 28:31.

¹² Rabbis David and Yehiel Hillel Altschuler, *Metzudat David* (18th century) in *Mikra’ot Gedolot “Haketer”*: *Joshua, Judges*, ed. M. Cohen (Hebrew; Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi, 1992, repr. 1997) ad loc.; see Ehrlich, *Randglossen* 3.92. Against all other commentaries, from LXX on down, the Masoretic cantillation, which in marking accentuation indicates syntax, has Yahweh name the altar “Peace,” as if Gideon went dumb with fear. See the discussion in Simcha Kogut, *Correlations Between Biblical Accentuation and Traditional Jewish Exegesis – Linguistic and Contextual Studies* (Hebrew; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1994) 165–167.

¹³ On original and secondary similarities between the stories of Gideon and Manoah, see Yair Zakovitch, “The Sacrifice of Gideon (Judg 6:11–24) and the Sacrifice of

What about looking at the divine visage should take such a heavy toll and cause such panic?¹⁴ How do the panicked come away unscathed? Nearly unanimously, scholars have explained it as a function of a physical quality of Yahweh's actual face, which has such a potent radiance that it will blind or even kill the mortal who with human eyes attempts to look at it, except – so the argument runs – for select individuals allowed by Yahweh to look on and survive.¹⁵ However, to survive looking at a lethal object requires something other than permission, other than willpower alone no matter how divine. It requires something likewise physical, an object that can filter the dangerous beams emanating from Yahweh's face. The Hebrew Bible never so much as hints at the use of such a device.¹⁶ In Exodus 33–34, Yahweh's own hand cannot provide

Manoah (Judg 13)” (Hebrew), *Shnaton – Annual for Bible and the Study of the Ancient Near East* 1 (1975) 151–154.

¹⁴ For examples of appropriate behavior, see the responses by Abra(ha)m in Gen 12:7; 17:1; 18:1; Isaac in Gen 26:2, 24, Moses in Exod 3:2–3, David and the elders in 1 Chr 21:16, and the Israelites in Exod 16:10–11; 32:7–10; Lev 9:23–24; 1 Kgs 18:39. The clipped, cryptic scene in Josh 5:13–15 depicts well Joshua's dignified transition from bravado to brave submissiveness when the officer of the divine legions reveals his identity. On the historical lateness of these verses, narratively, linguistically and conceptually, see Abraham Kuenen, *An Historico-Critical Inquiry into the Composition of the Hexateuch* (London: Macmillan, 1886) 159 (§8 n. 20), 248 (§13 n. 21); Ehrlich, *Scripture in Its Plain Sense*, 3.12. Regarding the case of Abraham in Genesis 18–19, critical analysis has identified it as a compound text, separable into a primary story and a secondary layer (see Gunkel, *Genesis*, 192–206; also Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12–36: A Commentary* [1981; trans. J. J. Scullion; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985] 272–93), and it is only the result of the editing process that has created the scenario in which Abraham sees Yahweh but does not fall in submission. In the primary story, three anonymous, nondescript “men” visit Abraham; despite their knowledge of Abraham's wife's name and barrenness, they give no indication of divinity and Abraham does not identify them as divine. The secondary layer, conceiving of Abraham as a prophet who should intercede to contest Yahweh's decision to destroy the cities of the plain (as in Gen 20:7, 17; see Exod 32:7–14, 30–35; 33:12–17; 34:9; Num 14:11–37; Amos 7:1–9; 8:1–3; Isa 6:9–11) or seeking to minimize the collective, indiscriminate nature of Yahweh's justice (see Num 16:22; 2 Sam 24:17 = 1 Chr 21:7; Jer 31:28–29), has Abraham speak to Yahweh and identify him with the visitors. Compare discussion and bibliography in Hamori, “*When Gods Were Men*,” 9–73.

¹⁵ The literature on the topic is vast. See James Barr, “Theophany and Anthropomorphism in the Old Testament,” in *Congress Volume, Oxford 1959* (SVT 7; Leiden: Brill, 1960) 31–38; Ronald S. Hendel, “Aniconism and Anthropomorphism in Ancient Israel,” in *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism and the Rise of Book Religion*, ed. K. van der Toorn (Leuven: Peeters, 1997) 205–228, esp. 220–224; Steven Weitzman, “New Light on God's Opacity,” *Shai le-Sara Japhet: Studies in the Bible, its Exegesis and its Language*, ed. M. Bar-Asher and others (Jerusalem: Bialik, 2007) 369*–380*, with discussion of, and literature on, related Greek, Egyptian and Mesopotamian phenomena.

¹⁶ The mask or cover Moses wears, according to the Priestly text in Exod 34:29–35, he dons only when *not* engaged in hearing or transmitting divine law; when speaking

such a filter; it can only block Moses' view of Yahweh's face *entirely*, until Yahweh passes by so far that he can no longer reach, and Moses can gain a glimpse of his twisting, receding back.¹⁷

Clearly, for the understanding of Yahweh's face as inherently dangerous, scholars take their cue chiefly from Yahweh's refusal of Moses in Exod 33:20. But one simply cannot take it at face value as the theological benchmark. First of all, that Yahweh and his divine emissaries find a way to appear face to face to so many lesser figures than Moses remains unexplained. Secondly, the refusal contradicts the opposite statement made no fewer than three times – once by Yahweh and twice by the omniscient narrator – that Moses spoke to Yahweh face to face (Exod 33:11; Num 12:3, 6–8; Deut 34:10).¹⁸ All these passages must modulate the absolute theological significance flatly granted to Exod 33:20: either the theologoumenon presupposes qualification or else it represents within the Hebrew Bible an alternate, fringe conception.

Using cross-cultural phenomena and discourse, this study will argue for an alternate understanding of the dynamics, or poetics, governing the encounter with the divine in the Hebrew Bible and the language used to express it (section II). The analysis will attempt to draw into its orbit, and apply its categories to, diverse sets of encounters in passages rarely conceived as sharing with each other or with those surveyed above the same essential ethos and complex of ideas, namely, pilgrimage

with Yahweh or relaying Yahweh's words to Israel, he *removes* the mask and his face remains *uncovered*. See Menahem Haran, "The Shining of Moses' Face: A Case Study in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography," in *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G. W. Ahlström*, ed. W. Boyd Barrick and J. R. Spencer (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984) 159–173. The additional Priestly statement, oddly placed in Num 7:89, that "when Moses would enter the Tent of Meeting to speak with him (Yahweh), he would hear a voice speaking (מְדַבֵּר) at him from above the cover (כַּפֶּרֶת) that is on the ark of the testimonial (עֵדוּת), from between the two cherubs, and he (Moses) would speak to him (Yahweh)," may draw on the Mesopotamian motif of the hero who overhears a god musing aloud to himself, in order to qualify – or re-describe entirely – Moses' meetings with Yahweh as exclusively aural. On the motif, in Rabbinic literature as well as Mesopotamian, and potential connections with prophecy, see Moshe Weinfeld, "'Partition, Partition; Wall, Wall, Listen' – 'Leaking' the Divine Secret to Someone Behind the Curtain," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 44–45 (1997–1998) 222–225 (orig. publ. in Hebrew in 1988).

¹⁷ On the gigantic size of Yahweh and other deities, see, for instance, Mark S. Smith, "Like Deities, Like Temples (Like People)," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, ed. J. Day (London and New York: Clark, 2005) 3–27, at 16–17.

¹⁸ On the way Yahweh and the narrator mutually reinforce each the authority and omniscience of the other in the prose narrative material of the Hebrew Bible, see Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Indianapolis and Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) 1–185.

(section II) and prophetic experiences (section IV).¹⁹ Along the way, it will treat the relationship between pilgrimage formulas and what real pilgrims may have really encountered at a temple (section III). The study will then grapple with several difficult passages – the nobles' encounter with Yahweh in Exodus 24, Moses' encounter with Yahweh in Exodus 33–34, and Moses' account of the people's encounter at the holy mount in Deuteronomy 5 (section V). Some of the conclusions drawn from that analysis will lead to a discussion of divergent, seemingly antithetical developments in ancient Judaism: on the hand, an increasingly restrictive approach to biblical expressiveness about looking at God in the textual transmission and translation traditions, and on the other hand, an embrace both of the idea itself of looking at God and of articulating it in daring fashion to evocative effect in Rabbinic lore, both legal and legendary (section VI).

II. The etiquette of eye-contact

In its capacity to throw into sharper relief the unique and salient aspects of the biblical passages, comparison with cross-cultural materials can prove illuminating. West of Canaan, one finds, for example, the face of the Greek Medusa and its ossifying effect on those who behold it. This face, often drawn frontally rather than in profile, transfixes whoever looks at it. It is the face of insanity or of death. To be in its gaze is to be in its grip – forever.²⁰ To the East, one finds the Mesopotamian

¹⁹ Those that do so employ a narrow form-critical lens that produces debatable results; see, for instance, J. Kenneth Kuntz, *The Self-Revelation of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967). It is important to emphasize that the various texts do not divide themselves ever-so-neatly by genre. For example, pilgrimage formulations appear in narrative, psalmody, and prophecy, as well as law; moreover, the pilgrimage laws themselves occur within narrative. Similarly, visual encounters of the divine by prophets appear in prophecy as well as narrative. Instead, one might categorize the texts by two overlapping sets of criteria, (a) distant vs. recent past and (b) third person omniscient narrator vs. first person report. George W. Savran treats many of the different texts, analyzing them as variations of a type-scene, but the approach levels them many different ways; see his *Encountering the Divine: Theophany in Biblical Narrative* (London and New York: Clark, 2005).

²⁰ See Stephen R. Wilk, *Medusa: Solving the Mystery of the Gorgon* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 145–191. For a succinct critical review of the ancient sources on Medusa, see Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek Myth: A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources, Volume 1* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) 19–22, 303–310, 428. On other, divine figures, see Deborah T. Steiner, *Images in Mind: Statues in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature and Thought* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001) 80–85, 168–181.

melammu, an irresistible, terrifying force, which artisans in the early Neo-Assyrian period came to symbolize by a cover of one kind or another and subsequently identified with radiance; it overwhelms the enemy, causing them to flee with abandon or to cower in paralysis.²¹ These phenomena illuminate the material in the literature of the Hebrew Bible by way of contrast.²² Exposure to the Greek Medusa or the Mesopotamian *melammu* has an immediate, automatic impact. In the Hebrew Bible, a person can converse with Yahweh, physically grapple with him and successfully overcome him, before learning his identity and then fearing the backlash. Never does this knowledge come about by the removal of a mask or disguise – only by self-declaration.²³ Evidently, Yahweh and his messengers may appear in an unthreatening, unremarkable, utterly mundane, human form,²⁴ and what triggers the panic of the

²¹ See I. J. Gelb and others, *Assyrian Dictionary* [=CAD] (Chicago: University of Chicago Oriental Institute, 1956–2011), M/II, 9–12; Moshe Weinfeld, “כְּבוֹד,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, H.-J. Fabry (2nd rev. ed.; trans. J. T. Willis and D. E. Green; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1977–2006) 7:22–38; Irene J. Winter, “Radiance as an Aesthetic Value in the Art of Mesopotamia,” in *Art, The Integral Vision: A Volume of Essay in Felicitation of Kapila Vatsyayan*, ed. B. Saraswati and others (New Delhi: D. K. Printworld, 1994) 123–132; Shawn Zelig Aster, *The Phenomenon of Divine and Human Radiance in the Hebrew Bible and in Northwest Semitic and Mesopotamian Literature: A Philological and Comparative Study* (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2006) 29–167.

²² One may triangulate further with suggestive Egyptian material; see Jan Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom: Re, Amun and the Crisis of Polytheism* (trans. A. Alcock; London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1995) 67–101, 133–155.

²³ It remains unclear precisely when and how Jacob grasps the divine nature of his attacker in Gen 32:27–30; compare Hamori, “*When Gods Were Men*,” 82–84.

²⁴ Aster makes a careful argument that, other than in Ezekiel, the expression כְּבוֹד ה' refers to no particular visible aspect of Yahweh, but rather to the fact of his presence; other passages, especially Exod 34:29–35, suggest the fiery character of the divine essence of Yahweh and his angels, unlike the Mesopotamian *melammu* (*Divine and Human Radiance*, 341–454; in this direction, see Caird, *Language and Imagery*, 76). Within such passages, one might distinguish between, on the one hand, association with fire and fiery manifestations, which suggest a controllable combustible element, and, on the other, an ever-present fiery essence. But one could bridge the gap by postulating a fiery essence that divine beings can intensify or diminish at will, rather than mask and reveal. One might also distinguish more determinedly along source-critical and generic lines. Only non-Priestly and non-Prophetic materials present a fiery element on low simmer that someone may not identify as divinity. In the Priestly literature, Yahweh often enshrouds in a cloud his fiery essence. In the Horeb tradition within Exodus 19–20 and Deuteronomy 5, the people fear that the natural phenomena attending unseen but heard Yahweh will rage out of control and engulf them. In the non-Priestly Sinai tradition within Exodus 19 and 24, Yahweh manifests himself to the people visibly and identifiably in fire and smoke. For source-critical guidance at these points, from the point of view of the documentary hypothesis, see for now Baruch J. Schwartz, “What Really Happened at Mount Sinai? Four Biblical Answers to One

beholder at the moment of divine self-disclosure is not something objective and physically overpowering, but rather subjective and ethically subjugating – knowledge, the awareness of having stood in the presence of Yahweh and “looked him in the eye.”²⁵ The biblical texts reviewed above, then, manifest an “etiquette of eye-contact,” a set of social norms drawn from the world of human interaction, of inter-viewing, and applied to the interface with the deity.

Such an etiquette exists in and defines the entire sphere of human hierarchical relations – paradigmatically so in the royal arena – where eye-contact ranges from intimacy to audacity, from sympathy to threat. In spatial terms, looking is a form of access, of crossing a boundary to enter a domain, either as invited guest or as intruder. On the basis of biblical and related texts one can begin to develop a range of types of looking.

In a biblical example of *violative looking*, the morning after a drinking binge in the nude, a sobered-up Noah recalls what Ham – originally Canaan it would seem – “had *done* to him” (את אשר עשה לו): he had *looked* at him (וירא...את ערות אביו) and, moreover, recounted to Shem and Japhet what he had seen. Fittingly, Noah curses him for his audacity, for his hubris, with perpetual subjugation, “Cursed be Canaan! The lowliest of slaves shall he be to his brothers” (Gen 9:20–27).²⁶ Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, to “reveal nakedness,” גל"ה ערוה, serves as the idiom of choice for prohibited sexual relations within the kin-group (Lev 18:6–19; 20:11, 18–21, esp. 20:17 “look at nakedness,” רא"ה ערוה).²⁷

Question,” *Bible Review* 13 (1997) 20–30, 46; id., “The Priestly Account of the Theophany and Lawgiving at Sinai,” in *Temples, Texts, and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran*, ed. M. V. Fox and others; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1996) 103–134; also Joel S. Baden, *J, E, and the Redaction of the Pentateuch* (FAT I; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2009) 99–195, at 153–172; but qualify these studies by Shimon Bar-On (Gesundheit), “The Festival Calendars in Exodus XXIII 14–19 and XXXIV 18–26,” *VT* 48 (1998) 161–195.

²⁵ For additional discussions, see Kugel, *The God of Old*, 5–36; Hamori, “*When Gods Were Men*,” 48–73, 82–86, 123–129, 134–155.

²⁶ Various clues indicate that the original form of the story had Canaan as Noah’s third son, and that the story underwent harmonizing revision as a result of its incorporation between the Flood and the Table of Nations. See Gunkel, *Genesis*, 79; compare already Rashi, at v. 22 (*Rashi’s Commentaries on the Torah*, ed. Charles B. Chavel [Hebrew; 3rd ed.; Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1982] 39).

²⁷ Rabbinic sources flesh out the Noah story by inferring that Canaan (or Ham) either castrated him or raped him; see Rashi, at v. 22 (*ibid.*), and the fuller discussion in *b. Sanh.* 70a. One 17th century commentator went so far as to suggest that the obscenity שג"ל derives from the root גל"ה (see Aron Pinker, “On the Meaning of *šgl*,” *JSIJ* 8 [2009] 167–182, who cites it at 171 n. 16, but offers an alternate, more convincing interpretation).

In a particularly rich example from Rabbinic law, the *Mishnah* prohibits a series of presumptuous actions vis-à-vis the king, the final, most presumptuous one, on account of the violation of intimacy, involving a view of him in a compromised position (*m. Sanh.* 2:8):

One may not ride on his horse, sit on his throne, wield his scepter, or see him naked, except while getting his hair cut, and in any case not in the bathhouse, as is said: “Set *upon yourself* a king” (Deut 17:15) – that his majesty be *upon you*.²⁸

Along with “visage,” the English term “visit” derives from the Latin root *vis* “to see, look,” but at the same time it also conveys the spatial and social dimensions of “turf.” One who so “visits” acknowledges the supremacy of the one visited and submission to him or her; the power of the visited to bestow upon the visitor, to grant requests and solve problems; the graciousness of the visited in bestowing; and even the magnetic beauty of their person and the grandeur their presence lends to their surroundings. In the biblical expression for such *acknowledging looking*, the lowly “looks upon the face of” or “visits” (רא"ה פנים) the lordly, and to be granted this privilege betokens favor and security, while the obligation to do so indicates submission.²⁹

Judah recounts several times how the Egyptian viceroy threatened that, without their youngest brother, the brothers will not “see his face” to make their request (Gen 43:3, 5; 44:23, 26). Pharaoh informs Moses, who to this point had enjoyed unfettered access to Pharaoh, that he has lost the right to “see his face” and a presumptuous attempt to do so will earn him his death, to which Moses responds by rejecting its desirability and value in any case (Exod 10:28–29). David will allow Ishbosheth to “see his face” only if he gives the clearest possible sign of total submission and implicit renunciation of any and all claims to the throne – handing over Saul’s daughter Michal for marriage (2 Sam 3:13).³⁰ Absalom, after an extended period of exile on account of fratri-

²⁸ The translation follows Budapest, Akademia, Kaufmann A 50: אלא כשהוא ולא כשהוא מסתפר ולא בבית המרחץ. Compare Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, 3173 (de Rossi 138): “and not when he is getting his hair cut and not in the bathhouse” (מסתפר ולא בבית המרחץ), and note the supralinear placement of the first “and,” which has text-historical implications. Both manuscripts are available at <http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/talmud/mishna/selectmi.asp>.

²⁹ Compare BDB, 816a פנה I §2b; Aubrey R. Johnson, “Aspects of the Use of the Term פנים in the Old Testament,” in *Festschrift Otto Eissfeldt zum 60. Geburtstag I. September 1947*, ed. J. Fück (Halle: Niemeyer, 1947) 155–159; see especially KBR, 2.940a א§3h: “the terminology of court etiquette”; also 2.1159a ראה §11.

³⁰ Indications suggest that the episode has undergone expansion and revision, and that, in the prior version, David had cut his deal with Abner only and his demand for

cide, gains permission to reenter Israel and Judah, but David prohibits him from coming to “look upon his face”; to force David’s hand, Absalom engages dangerously in political brinkmanship and announces he will come to David to “look upon his face,” knowing full well that should David deem him unworthy of it he will have to die (2 Sam 14:24, 32; compare Gen 4:1–16, esp. vv. 14, 16, and see further below). Distance and diplomatic correspondence can give a king the veneer of independence and geopolitical stature; loss on the battlefield, predicts Jeremiah, will strip Zedekiah of that veneer and he will have to come before Nebuchadrezzar to “speak to him mouth to mouth” and “look at him eye to eye” (Jer 32:1–5; 34:1–3). Intimacy and submission go hand in hand.³¹

In a rich example of the *hitpa’el*, when neither of two parties will admit to hierarchy and yield to the other – *obdurate looking* – the two “face off,” like kings Amaziah of Judah and Jehoash of Israel (לכה נתראה פנים...’ויתראו פנים), and go to war (2 Kgs 14:8–11; see further Gen 42:1; Ezek 20:35).³² In *petitionary looking*, one “seeks the face” (בק"ש פנים) of the wise for guidance (1 Kgs 10:24; compare 2 Chr 9:23) or of the powerful for justice (Prov 29:26). In *affective looking*, one “beseeches the face of” (חל"ה פנים) the wealthy for gain and goods (Ps 45:13; Prov 19:6; Job 11:19). The face of the visited, the seen, may shine (או"ר פנים) – *receptive looking* – and thereby guarantee for the visitor boon and bounty. A piece of biblical wisdom in Prov 16:15 propounds:

By the light of a king’s face (באור פני מלך) – life!
And his pleasure is like the cloud of the late rains.³³

Levantine and Mesopotamian sources over the course of a millennium show the kinds of circumstances in which the idiom “to look upon the

Michal’s hand marks not her return to him but rather, with no “backstory” whatsoever to speak of, his first ever dealings with her. See Isac Leo Seeligmann, “Hebrew Narrative and Biblical Historiography” (Hebrew) in *Studies in Biblical Literature*, ed. A. Hurvitz and others (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992) 46–61, at 57–58 = “Hebräische Erzählung und biblische Geschichtsschreibung,” in *Gesammelte Studien zur Hebräischen Bibel*, ed. E. Blum (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004) 120–136, at 132–133.

³¹ For a related study of Assyrian art, which frequently depicts the vanquished coming before the victorious king, see Megan Cifarelli, “Gesture and Alterity in the Art of Ashurnasirpal II of Assyria,” *Art Bulletin* 80 (1998) 210–228.

³² See Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley, 490 n. 1, §156c.

³³ Incidentally, 1 Sam 16:7, יראה לעינים וה' יראה ללבב, has no bearing whatsoever on the discussion, since עינים there means “appearance, surface” as in Exod 10:5; Lev 13:5, 37, 55; Num 11:7; Ezek 1:4, 7, 16, 22; Prov 23:31. See R. Joseph Kaspi (14th century) in *Mikra’ot Gedolot “Haketer”*: *Samuel*, ed. Menahem Cohen (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 1993) 83.

face” functioned and its expressive quality.³⁴ In 18th century BCE Mari, a princess married off by her father Zimri-Lim to seal a political deal suffers indignity and neglect at the hands of her husband; she writes more than one letter begging to return to the security and warmth of her father’s home where she can “look upon the face” of her father.³⁵ During the 16th to 13th centuries BCE, international treaties imposed by Hittite kings upon their allies or vassals require them to demonstrate subservience by seeking audience with, or coming to present themselves before, the king as all-powerful overlord or all-knowing adjudicator. Letters register the umbrage taken by Hittite overlords when their vassals fail to do so.³⁶ In one notable instance, Tudhaliya II utilizes the visit to strike a delicate balance between granting special, favored status to the king of the land of Kizzuwatna recently “liberated” from the Hurrians, on the one hand, and institutionalizing his subordination, on the other. He insists upon Sunashura’s duty to “look upon the face of His Majesty,” but Tudhaliya’s “noblemen” will rise from their seats for him when he does so.³⁷ In diplomatic correspondence from the 14th century BCE, Canaanite city-state kings seeking military and economic aid declare their desire to “see the face” of their Egyptian overlord, or his “two eyes,” and link the opportunity to peace and security, to regional calm:³⁸

Behold, I have said to the Sun-god, the father of the king, my lord, “When shall I see the face of the king, my lord?” But behold, I am guarding

³⁴ In Akkadian *pānī amāru* and *pānī dagālu*, Ugaritic *phy pnm*, Aramaic פָּנֵי אֱלֹהִים. See A. Leo Oppenheim, “Idiomatic Accadian (Lexicographical Researches),” *JAOS* 61 (1941) 251–271, at 256–260; CAD A/II, 21b–22a, *amāru* A§5 *panī* a–c; Wolfram von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* [= AHw] (3 vols.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1965–1981) 1.149 *dagālu* §8c; Gregorio del Olmo Lete and Joaquín Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition* (2 vols.; trans. W. G. E. Watson; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003) 2.667 *p-h-y* §3; Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press; Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002) 152, אִפְּא אִנְפָּא §4. See also Hartenstein, *Das Angesicht JHWHs*, 57–58.

³⁵ Shoshana Arbeli-Raveh, *The Princess and Diplomatic Marriage in the Ancient Period (with Emphasis on Mari and Israel)* (Hebrew; Tel-Aviv: Archaeological Center, 2000) 121–122, 132.

³⁶ Herbert B. Huffmon and Simon B. Parker, “A Further Note on the Treaty Background of Hebrew *Yāda*,” *BASOR* 184 (1966) 36–38.

³⁷ Gary Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, ed. Harry A. Hoffner, Jr. (Atlanta: Scholars, 1996) no. 2 §9 (p. 15).

³⁸ See the similar logic in biblical passages about visiting Yahweh and his monumental home: Exod 34:23–24; Deut 12:8–12; 2 Sam 7:1–2; 1 Kgs 5:16–18. See further below.

Tyre, the great city, for the king, my lord, until the mighty power of the king come out to me, to give water for me to drink, and wood to warm me.³⁹

I keep saying, “Let me enter into the presence of the king, my lord, and let me see the two eyes of the king, my lord.” But the hostility against me is strong, so I cannot enter into the presence of the king, my lord. So may it please the king to send me garrison troops in order that I may enter and see the two eyes of the king, my lord.⁴⁰

All the governors are at peace, but there is war against me. I have become like an ʿApiru and do not see the two eyes of the king, my lord, for there is war against me.⁴¹

A 9th century BCE stone monument testifying to the revenues gifted by a Babylonian king to his priest illustrates the material referent and value of such language:

The heart of Nabû-apla-iddina the king of Babylon rejoiced. His countenance became bright. He turned his attention on Nabû-nadin-sum, the priest of Sippar. With his bright gaze, shining countenance (and) sparkling eyes, he joyfully looked upon him ... and granted his servant (these revenues).⁴²

Internal correspondence of the 8th and 7th centuries BCE between the Assyrian monarch and sundry officers, advisors, informers, contractors and town representatives provides a rich array of scenarios in which looking upon the king’s face suggests individual safety and success. One subject told by the king to bide his time for a future visit writes with much pathos:

How (can I endure) not to appear before the king my lord? In the future to whom should our eyes be directed? For 4 months the king my lord has been away. How should I not be dejected? I cannot see the king my lord: wherefore? ... Why should I not find solace in looking again at the face of the king my lord?⁴³

³⁹ James R. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (3rd ed.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969) El-Amarna, no. 147 (p. 484). See J. A. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna Tafeln* (2 vols., Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1915) 1.611.

⁴⁰ Pritchard, *ibid.*, no. 286 (pp. 487–488); Knudtzon, *ibid.*, 1.863.

⁴¹ Pritchard, *ibid.*, no. 288 (pp. 488–489); Knudtzon, *ibid.*, 1.871.

⁴² See the important discussion in Yochanan Muffs, *Studies in the Legal Papyri from Elephantine* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003; orig. pub. 1969) 128–135, esp. 130ff., and see the alternative translation of the passage on p. 202. For a reappraisal of the location, function, and genre of *kudurrus*, see Kathryn E. Slanski, “Classification, Historiography and Monumental Authority: The Babylonian Entitlement *narûs* (*kudurrus*),” *JCS* 52 (2000) 95–114 (thanks to Seth Sanders for bringing this article to my attention).

⁴³ Robert H. Pfeiffer, *State Letters of Assyria: A Transliteration and Translation of 355 Official Assyrian Letters Dating from the Sargonid Period (722–625 B. C.)* (New Haven, Conn.: American Oriental Society, 1935), no. 159 (p. 117), similarly no. 183 (pp. 135–136); see also no. 46 (pp. 47–48).

Another expresses anxiety at not having received like others an invitation (or order) to bring his son to stand in the presence of the king. After listing the boons enjoyed by so many now that the gods have named the king, he pleads:

Why (then) as for me (and) Arad-Gula is our soul distressed in their midst, our mind depressed? Now the king my lord has shown to the people his love for Nineveh, saying to the chiefs, "Bring your sons that they may stand in my presence." Arad-Gula, my son, may he (likewise) stand with them in the presence of the king my lord. Then with all the people we shall dance for joy, we shall bless the king my lord. My eyes are fixed upon the king my lord.⁴⁴

After money suspiciously disappears, a contractor attempts to hold on to work contracts given to his family's firm by the crown prince. Among other arguments, he says: "I should die if the crown prince my lord were to turn away his countenance from me."⁴⁵ One petitioner likens a view of the king's face to sustenance: "I am as one dead, but I long to see the king my lord. When I look on the countenance of the king my lord I revive, and I, who am hungry, am filled."⁴⁶ In an effusive thank-you note by the king's exorcist, the king's countenance affords protection: "May your countenance flourish and make my shelter wide."⁴⁷ The king knows well the value of such an encounter to his subjects – and ultimately to himself. To one group of petitioners he says: "And concerning Rimutu, of whom you spoke, he may come and see my face. I will clothe him, I will place upon him his ... garment, I will raise his spirits, and I will appoint him over you."⁴⁸ To another, wounded group he apologizes defensively for the fact that only part of its embassy enjoyed audience with him, and blames it on bureaucracy:

It is the fault of the *sandabakku* official who is your governor, and secondly of the palace overseer, who did not admit you into my presence. By Ashur, my deity, I swear that I did not know that (only) half of your number had come into my presence and half had not. (How) should I know who was this one and who that? The kindness of all of you towards me is a single-hearted kindness.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Ibid., no. 160 (pp. 117–119).

⁴⁵ Ibid., no. 179 (pp. 133–134), likewise nos. 82, 138 (pp. 71–72, 105–106).

⁴⁶ Ibid., no. 154 (pp. 114–115), likewise no. 184 (p. 136). For Rabbinic play on this theme with regard to Exod 24:11, see below.

⁴⁷ Simo Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* (SAA 10; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1993) no. 227 (p. 179).

⁴⁸ Pfeiffer, *State Letters of Assyria*, no. 83 (p. 72).

⁴⁹ Ibid., no. 84 (pp. 72–73). Though it does not refer to the king's face, a rich exchange of letters between King Shulgi and his Highest Emissary Arad-mu (twenty-first century BCE) illustrates dramatically the political significance of formal posturing

Several Late Babylonian letters not addressed to the king or involving him in any way contain the following greeting: “Daily I pray ... that the light of the king’s countenance may be favorable unto my lord.”⁵⁰

In the realm of human-divine relations, one may likewise see, seek and beseech the face of Yahweh for blessing, illumination or guidance.⁵¹ Pilgrimage enacts the obligation as well as the opportunity to visit Yahweh in his home, to put in an appearance, colloquially, to share some face time.⁵² According to one biblical author, the people speak of a

to establish hierarchy; see Piotr Michalowski, *Letters from Early Mesopotamia*, ed. Erica Reiner (Atlanta: Scholars, 1993) nos. 96–97 (pp. 63–66). Simo Parpola goes so far as to infer that those who visited the king usually had their face covered (“The Murderer of Sennacherib,” in *Death in Mesopotamia: Papers read at the XXVI^e Rencontre assyriologique internationale*, ed. B. Alster [Mesopotamia, 8; Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1980] 171–182, at 172 and 176 n. 12), but David Elgavish has rejected that conclusion (persuasively to my mind) as going beyond the available evidence and even contradicting it (*The Diplomatic Service in the Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Sources* [Hebrew; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1998] 180–181).

⁵⁰ R. Campbell Thompson, *Late Babylonian Letters* (London: Luzac, 1906), nos. 37, 53, 198 (pp. 34–35, 50–51, 156–157). For the “shining countenance” possibly indicating the divine ratification of a king, see L. Kataja and R. Whiting, *Grants, Decrees and Gifts of the Neo-Assyrian Period* (SAA 12; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1995) no. 19 (pp. 21–22).

⁵¹ See Friedhelm Hartenstein, “‘Brote’ und ‘Tisch des Angesichts’: Zur Logik symbolischer Kommunikation im Tempelritual,” in “*Einen Altar von Erde mache mir ...*.” *Festschrift für Diethelm Conrad zu seinem 70. Geburtstag*, ed. J. F. Diehl and others (Waltrop: Hartmut Spenner, 2003) 107–127, at 113–120; id., *Das Angesicht JHWHs*, 53–58; also Jeffrey H. Tigay, “On Some Aspects of Prayer in the Bible,” *AJS Review* 1 (1976) 363–379, esp. 363–372; Shlomo Bahar, *The Appearance of the King in Public in the Monarchies of Israel and Judah and its Communicative Character* (Hebrew; PhD diss.; Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1999) esp. 153–156; in this direction, Meir Malul, *Knowledge, Control and Sex: Studies in Biblical Thought, Culture and Worldview* (Tel Aviv-Jaffa: Archaeological Center Publication, 2002) 197–210, at 210, also 208 nn. 214 and 217; in comparative perspective, richly, Diana L. Eck, *Darshan: Seeing the Divine in India* (2nd ed., Chambersburg, Penna.: Anima Books, 1985) 9–10, 46–47, 70 (thanks to Judith Weisenfeld for pointing me to this work). Contrast Thomas W. Mann, *Divine Presence and Guidance in Israelite Traditions: The Typology of Exaltation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977) 257–258; C. L. Seow, “Face,” *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. K. van der Toorn and others (2nd ed., Leiden and Boston: Brill; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999) 322–325; also compare KBR, 2.940–941 פָּנִים C.

⁵² On pilgrimage in ancient Israel and Judah, specifically to Jerusalem, see Mark S. Smith, *The Pilgrimage Pattern in Exodus* (JSOTSup 239; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 52–80, 118–126. For parallel materials on seeing the divine and pilgrimage in ancient Egypt, but an alternate approach to their interpretation, see Jan Assmann, “Ocular Desire in a Time of Darkness: Urban Festivals and Divine Visibility in Ancient Egypt,” in *Ocular Desire = Sehnsucht des Auges*, ed. A. R. E. Agus and J. Assmann (Berlin: Akademie, 1994) 13–29; on Greece, briefly but significantly, Ian Rutherford, “Theoric Crisis: The Dangers of Pilgrimage in Greek Religion and Society,” in *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 61 (1995) 275–292, at 277, 283–

mountain in the land of Moriah “where Yahweh is seen, visited,” הַר יְרֵאָה ה' (Gen 22:14).⁵³ Of Zion a psalmist heralds, “The God of gods shall be seen in Zion,” ὁφθίσεται ὁ θεὸς τῶν θεῶν ἐν Ζιὼν (LXX Ps 83:8).⁵⁴ The poem in Psalm 24 celebrates the heroic Yahweh entering his mythic palace (vv. 1–3, 7–10), and likely accompanied his public procession into his temple.⁵⁵

286. For extremely close parallels to the materials and analysis in sections I and II, see Eck, *ibid.*

⁵³ On the omission of the relative pronoun אֲשֶׁר in Biblical Hebrew and on Gen 22:14 as an instance, see Heinrich Ewald, *Syntax of the Hebrew Language of the Old Testament* (trans. J. Kennedy; Edinburgh: Clark, 1879) 212–216 §332a–d, at 215 §332d; J. C. L. Gibson, ed., *Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar: Syntax* (4th ed., Edinburgh: Clark, 1994) 10–12 §§10–11; Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (2 vols., rev. and trans. T. Muraoka; 2nd ed.; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1993, 1996) 2.593–595 §158a–db. For two additional high-profile instances, see Takamitsu Muraoka, “A Syntactic Problem in Lev. XIX.18b,” *JSS* 23 (1978) 291–297, and Stefan Schorch, “A Young Goat in its Mother's Milk? Understanding an Ancient Prohibition,” *VT* 60 (2010) 116–130. On the reinterpretation of the popular expression in Gen 22:14 due to its context, see below, n. 144.

⁵⁴ LXX “God of gods” (ὁ θεὸς τῶν θεῶν), as if the Hebrew read אֵל הָאֱלֹהִים, likely renders the difficult phrase אֵל אֱלֹהִים vocalized in MT (Ps 84:8) יְרֵאָה אֵל אֱלֹהִים בְּצִיּוֹן. Given that in this formulation the passive verb יְרֵאָה lacks an antecedent subject, אֵל אֱלֹהִים either represents a double version, namely, אֵל and אֱלֹהִים, or came about through dittography of אֵל, and once read יְרֵאָה אֵל/אֱלֹהִים בְּצִיּוֹן.

⁵⁵ Scholars have long viewed Psalm 24 as composite, containing two (vv. 1–6 and 7–10) or three (vv. 1–2, 3–6, 7–10) originally separate and distinct hymns mechanically combined, for instance, Bernhard Duhm, *Die Psalmen* (Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament; Leipzig and Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1899) 75–77; Arnold B. Ehrlich, *Die Psalmen* (Berlin: Poppelauer, 1905) 50–51; C. A. Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: Clark, 1906, repr. 1952) 1.212–219, esp. 212–213; Hermann Gunkel, *Ausgewählte Psalmen* (3rd ed., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1911) 61–69; Frank M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973) 91–111, esp. 91–93; Alan Cooper, “Ps 24:7–10: Mythology and Exegesis,” *JBL* 102 (1983) 37–60. Even those critics who have resisted taking the different parts as originally independent texts generally continue to treat vv. 7–10 as a separate unit exegetically, for example, Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas; 2 vols.; repr. Grand Rapids, Mich.: 2004; orig. pub. 1962) 1.177–180 and *passim*. However, v. 3 poses a rhetorical question – “Who could ascend Yahweh's mountain and who could stand in his holy place?” – the proper answer to which appears in vv. 7–10: “no one” or “none but Yahweh” (see the germane comments on the question זֶה הוּא in vv. 7–10, in Cooper, *ibid.*, 50–52), and vv. 4–6, which depend on v. 3 but treat the question as a simple one, represent a supplement. Note the development from the rhetorical question in v. 3, to the indirectly answered question in v. 8, to the emphatically answered question in v. 10. The poem in vv. 1–3, 7–10 likely reflects the venerable motif of divine creation by vanquishing the sea, as do other Psalms and passages elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (e. g., Ps 74:12–17; 89:6–14; 93; Isa 51:9–11; Job 26:6–14). The insertion of vv. 4–6 reorients the poem from highlighting Yahweh's martial prowess that initially brought the world into existence to his love of the integrity that sustains it. Though not quite interpreting in this way, only Kissane connects v. 3 with vv. 1–2 and sees v. 7 as

Yahweh explicitly desires his subjects to look at him and establishes the Tabernacle for this very reason: “And you (sg.) shall make me a sanctuary, and I shall be seen among you (pl.),” καὶ ποιήσεις μοι ἄγίασμα καὶ ὁφθήσομαι ἐν ὑμῖν (LXX Exod 25:8).⁵⁶ A century and a half ago, two nineteenth-century Jewish scholars of clashing stripes, the Italian traditionalist Samuel David Luzzatto in 1855 and the German Reform rabbi and historian Abraham Geiger in 1857, argued that the quintessential formula for pilgrimage, traditionally transmitted such that one “appear (lit. be seen) before Yahweh,” לְרֹאוֹת (את) פְּנֵי ה', originally spoke of coming “to see the face of Yahweh,” לְרֹאוֹת (את) פְּנֵי ה': in legal pericopes, Yahweh demands it (Exod 23:15, 17; 34:23, 24; Deut 16:16; 31:10, 11); in narrative, the pilgrim pledges to do it (1 Sam 1:22); in prophecy, Yahweh decries its abuse (Isa 1:12); and in psalmody, the aspiring pilgrim longs for it (Ps 42:3; also 63:3).⁵⁷ One fortunate enough to do so does so to great fanfare, בְּתִרְעוּהָ (Job 33:26).

answering the question of v. 3 (specifically v. 3b); see Edward J. Kissane, *The Book of Psalms* (2 vols., Dublin: Browne and Nolan Ltd., 1953) 1.106–109.

⁵⁶ Notice the similar שכ"ן-ר"א interchange in LXX Deut 33:16.

⁵⁷ See Samuel D. Luzzatto, *Commentary to the Book of Jesaiah* (Hebrew; Padua: Bianchi, 1855–1867; ed. P. Shlezinger and M. Hovav; Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1970) 18–19; Abraham Geiger, *The Bible and Its Translations in Relation to the Inner Development of Judaism* (Hebrew; 2nd ed., 1928, trans. Y. L. Baruch; Jerusalem: Bialik, 1949, 1972) 218–221 = *Urschrift und Übersetzungen der Bibel in ihrer Abhängigkeit von der innern Entwicklung des Judentums* (2nd ed, 1928) 337–340. Luzzatto's argument comprises the following points: (1) In every single case, *nip'al* ר"א ה' has the complement 'את פני ה', never the otherwise anticipated one, 'לפני ה', except for Exod 23:17, which has אל פני ה', and there, too, some manuscripts and versions read את פני ה' (see further below). (2) In Exod 23:15 ולא יראו פני ריקם, the *nip'al* is original and the subject is “my face”: Yahweh's face is seen and it is seen by the pilgrim. It cannot mean, “they shall not appear before me,” because from Exod 21:2, where Yahweh begins to speak, he has consistently spoken to the Israelites, in second person address, not of them, in third person. (3) Wherever *nip'al* infinitive ר"א ה' is used to convey that a subject has appeared, it is formed unambiguously with the prefix ה' (Judg 13:21; 1 Sam 3:21; 2 Sam 17:17; 1 Kgs 18:2; Ezek 21:29), except those instances in which the pilgrim visits Yahweh; then the verb is always formed ambiguously without ה' (Exod 34:24; Deut 31:11; Isa 1:12). To these arguments one should add: (4) all other instances of ר"א ה' פנים and cognate expressions have an active verb, not passive, and the beholder is always the visitor or subordinate, never the host. It warrants emphasizing that, *correctly*, Luzzatto and Geiger did *not* argue that in MT the passive verb is impossible followed by the accusative marker את and the direct object in construct form פני ה' “face of.” The phrase את פני ה' constitutes a widely attested compound preposition meaning “before,” exactly like לפני ה'. See Eliezer Ben Yehuda, *A Complete Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Hebrew* (17 vols.; ed. H. Ben Yehuda and others; Tel Aviv, La'am, 1948–1959) [=EBY], 10.4991b; BDB, 816b פנים II §2; KBR, 2.941b פנה D§2; also Charles R. Krahmalkov, *A Phoenician–Punic Grammar* (Leiden-Boston-Köln: Brill, 2001) 231 't pn. One may debate the case in 1 Sam 2:11, 18 and Esth 1:10 (with the verb שר"ת). Even when פני follows passive ר"א ה' without את (Exod 23:15; Isa 1:12; Ps 42:3), the translations rendered it as the preposition “before,” and

Yahweh desires to have his face sought out, דר"ש/בק"ש פנים (Ps 24:6; 27:8, 13; 105:4; also 2 Sam 21:1; Hos 5:15). He will respond favorably to those who beseech him, חל"ה פנים (Exod 32:11–14; 1 Sam 13:12; 1 Kgs 13:6; 2 Kgs 13:4; Jer 26:19; Zech 7:1–3; 8:21–22; Mal 1:9; Ps 119:58; Dan 9:13; 2 Chr 33:12), a response often referred to with the verb חנ"ן, in which lordly Yahweh gives special consideration to lowly Israel (2 Kgs 13:23; Mal 1:9; Ps 25:16; 67:2; 86:16; 119:58, 132). His beaming face, אור פנים, brings (military) salvation, confidence, instruction and reconciliation (Ps 31:17; 80:4, 8, 20; 89:16; 119:135; Dan 9:17). But woe to those towards whom Yahweh will not raise his favoring face (Lam 4:16), from whom he would divert it, סת"ר פנים (individuals: Ps 27:9; 88:15; 102:3; 143:7; a group: Deut 31:17–18; 32:20; Isa 8:17; 54:8; 64:6; Jer 33:5; Ezek 39:23–24; Mic 3:4),⁵⁸ or against whom he would set it, שים/נת"ן פנים (individually: Lev 17:10; 20:3, 5, 6; Ezek 14:8; as a nation: Jer 21:10; 44:11; Ezek 15:7; all of creation: Ps 104:29).⁵⁹

The priestly blessing in Num 6:22–27, likewise focused on Yahweh's face, may express the fears and hopes of those who have made the trek to arrive at Yahweh's precincts.⁶⁰

May Yahweh bless you and keep you;

May Yahweh light up his face at you and favor you;⁶¹

May Yahweh lift his face to you and decree for you peace.

the decision should indicate that the translators analyzed the form פני as substantively related to the preposition לפני; compare Ewald, *Syntax of the Hebrew Language of the Old Testament*, 45 §279c(3). By contrast, Hartenstein frequently interprets the preposition etymologically to signify a deliberate reference to Yahweh's face, at least in passages anyway concerned with the visual encounter (*Das Angesicht JHWHs*, e. g., 268–269, 271, 278, but oddly the reverse, 274).

⁵⁸ Compare the useful discussion in Samuel E. Ballantine, *The Hidden God: The Hiding of the Face of God in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) 45–79, 115–176, but one should distinguish more sharply between the Psalms, in which Yahweh's diverted face indicates to the individual rejection and loss of blessing and protection, and the Prophetic materials, in which it signals hiddenness and withdrawal from the nation. For comparable usage in Akkadian, see Zimri-Lim's report to Ida the river god: "May my lord not neglect to protect my life, may my lord not turn his face elsewhere" ("A Letter to a God," in Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 627).

⁵⁹ Also – upon whom he would fix his eye, שים עין (as a nation: Amos 9:4).

⁶⁰ On the priestly blessing, its language, structure and poetics, its cultural and literary background, and its subsequent impact, see Michael Fishbane, "Form and Reformulation of the Biblical Priestly Blessing," *JAOS* 103 (1983) 115–121. Compare in particular the ninth century BCE *kudurru* discussed above.

⁶¹ The expression מצ"א הן בעיני, "to find favor in the eye of" someone, which highlights better the visual, physical element that triggers favor, has the reverse point of view, that of the favored one, but means the same thing (F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, personal communication). Hartenstein locates it specifically, or paradigmatically, in the royal sphere as indicating royal favor (*Das Angesicht JHWHs*, 273–274).

The three-part structure (of increasing line-length) would correspond to the three stages of the visit that the pilgrim hopes to survive and which should guarantee he thrive thereafter.⁶² The pilgrim standing in the doorway of Yahweh's domain hopes that when Yahweh sees him, he will bless and keep him, namely, greet him and invite him in (see Deut 28:6); that, the pilgrim having stepped inside and presented himself before Yahweh, Yahweh will take pleasure, his face lighting up, beaming at the pilgrim benevolently, namely, favor the pilgrim's petition;⁶³ and that, when it is time to leave, Yahweh will look upon the pilgrim and grant him peace, namely, safety and bounty (see Zech 8:10; 2 Chr 15:5).⁶⁴

⁶² Notwithstanding the shorter version and antithetical provenance of the blessing found etched in silver scrolls in a burial cave on the upper slopes of the Hinnom valley; see Gabriel Barkay and others, "The Amulets from Ketef Hinnom: A New Edition and Evaluation," *BASOR* 334 (2004) 41–71; Shmuel Ahituv, *Echoes from the Past: Hebrew and Cognate Inscriptions from the Biblical Period* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2008) 49–55 [Hebrew transcription]; ed. F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp and others, *Hebrew Inscriptions: Texts from the Biblical Period of the Monarchy with Concordance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005) 263–275 [transliteration]. – Though the Hebrew Bible presents non-specialist women as having participated in pilgrimage and engaged in legitimate religious activity at legitimate temples (1 Sam 1:1–2:10, 18–20, 22; 2 Sam 6:12–22; Deut 12:7, 12, 18; 14:16; 16:11, 14; 31:11–12; perhaps also Exod 35:21–36:6; 38:8 and Lev 1:2 אדם, "any person," covering the whole-burnt and peace offerings of chapters 1 and 3), normative, prescriptive language regarding pilgrimage addresses directly the single male and obligates him, as the head-of-family. Note especially the formula repeated in Exod 23:17; 34:23; Deut 16:16.

⁶³ See Mayer I. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1980) 554–571; Aster, *Divine and Human Radiance*, 248–251. Compare Mark S. Smith, "'Seeing God' in the Psalms: the Background to the Beatific Vision in the Hebrew Bible," *CBQ* 50 (1988) 171–183.

⁶⁴ See Mal 1:9 (מכם), partitively, "of any one of you," or causally, "an account of you," as in Ruth 1:12–13; see BDB, 580 מן §§3, 2f); also Ps 84:10; compare Lam 4:16a; 2 Kgs 3:14c. In the other direction, when the superior "raises the face" of the subordinate it indicates pleasure, satisfaction, favor, even the granting of a petition, as in Gen 19:21; 32:21; 1 Sam 25:35; 2 Kgs 3:14; 5:1; Mal 1:8; Job 42:8–9; Prov 18:5; Lam 4:16b, whence the usages for favored people in Isa 3:3; 9:14; Job 22:8, for misplaced favor in Lev 19:15; Deut 10:17; Ps 82:2; Job 13:10; 32:21; 34:19; Prov 6:35, and for currying favor in Job 13:8. To reject a petition, the superior "turns away the face," שׁוֹב פָּנָיִם (*hip'il*), of the petitioner, in 1 Kgs 2:20. Raising one's own face towards someone else carries the sense of innocently "looking them in the eye," in 2 Sam 2:22; Job 11:15; 22:6. The ambiguous formulation in Deut 28:50 leaves unclear whose face is raised. Indeed, the list above reveals a real paucity of analogous cases to the Priestly blessing in which the superior "raises his face" at the subordinate. Moreover, one would expect Yahweh to have raised his face *before* it lights up. Perhaps the third line originally had Yahweh raising the pilgrim's face, but assimilated to the second line. The existence of a shorter version of the blessing in one of the silver rolls found at Ketef Hinnom: יאר יהוה פניו אלך וישם לך שלם (Barkay, "The Amulets from Ketef Hinnom," 68) could indicate a more complex transmission history. Note also that the invocation of the blessing in Psalm 67 does not include this element; then again, Psalm 67 does not

How does one manage the delicate boundary between welcome and encroachment, audience and impertinence, fraternity and familiarity? As one Proverb states: “A man’s gift will clear the way for him; even before the high-and-mighty will it lead him” (Prov 18:16; see also Gen 43:11, 15, 25–26).⁶⁵ In Mesopotamian royal inscriptions, gifts presented to the king as part of audience protocol or visit etiquette include the *tāmartu*, a term derived from the verb *amāru* “to see.”⁶⁶ In the Hebrew Bible, the noun תשורה, derived similarly from the verb שור, “to see,” designates the interview gift for the prophet (1 Sam 9:7; see also 2 Kgs 8:8–9).⁶⁷ Regarding the visit to Yahweh’s abode, the Psalmist cries: “bring a gift (מנחה) and enter his courts” (96:8; also 1 Chr 16:29).⁶⁸ Baruch Levine defined the שלמים offered outside the sanctuary walls as the “gift of greeting” with which the deity was “greeted by his worshippers who, like those in attendance upon the lord in his manor-house, waited in the main courtyard before being admitted.”⁶⁹ Rooted in “seeing,” the terms used by the Rabbis to refer to the pilgrimage gift include ראיה (*m. Hag.* 1:1–2; *b. Hag.* 6b) and ראיון

represent the expression שו"ם שלום either and perhaps, together with the amulet, indicates the fluidity of the Priestly blessing when reused beyond the specific circumstances of Priestly pronouncement. But see on this expression Mayer I. Gruber, “The Many Faces of Hebrew *nāsā’ pānīm*,” in *The Motherhood of God and Other Studies* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992) 173–183.

⁶⁵ For stirring discourse on the nexus of blessing, greeting and gift-giving, see especially Johannes Pedersen, *Israel – Its Life and Culture* (2 vols.; London: Oxford University Press, 1926–1940, repr. with additions and corrections, 1959) 1.182–212, esp. 201–204, 296–304.

⁶⁶ AHw, 3.1313 §1; J. Black and others, *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian* (2nd ed.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000) 396.

⁶⁷ Shalom M. Paul, “1 Samuel 9,7: An Interview Fee,” in *Divrei Shalom: Collected Studies of Shalom M. Paul on the Bible and the Ancient Near East, 1967–2005* (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 95–97 (orig. publ. *Biblica* 59 [1978] 542–544); also Harold R. (Chaim) Cohen, *Biblical Hapax Legomena in the Light of Akkadian and Ugaritic* (SBLDS 37; Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1978) 24.

⁶⁸ The term מנחה, too, enters the sacred sphere from human hierarchical settings, where it negotiates boundaries and pacifies the roiled; see Gen 32:14, 19, 21, 22; 33:10; 43:11, 15, 25, 26; Judg 3:15, 17, 18; 1 Sam 10:27; 2 Sam 8:2, 6; 1 Kgs 5:1; 10:25; 2 Kgs 17:3, 4; Hos 10:6; Ps 45:13; 2 Chr 17:5, 11; 26:8; Menahem Haran, “*minhā*,” in *Encyclopedia Miqra’it* (Hebrew; 9 vols., Jerusalem: Bialik, 1950–1988) 5.23–30, esp. 23–24; Heinz-Josef Fabry, “*minhā*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren and H.-J. Fabry (15 vols.; Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, Mich., and Cambridge, U. K., 1977–2006) 8.407–421, esp. 407–410, 415–417.

⁶⁹ Baruch Levine, “*Lpny YHWH* – Phenomenology of the Open-Air-Altar in Biblical Israel,” in *Biblical Archaeology Today, 1990: Proceedings of the Second International Congress on Biblical Archaeology, Jerusalem, June–July 1990*, ed. A. Biran and J. Aviram (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1993) 196–205, at 202.

(*m. Pe'ah* 1:1)⁷⁰ – “the visit offering” – and in the Hebrew Bible it may be ever so lavish as King Solomon’s thousands of valuable animals (1 Kgs 8:63) or ever so humble as a single bird or even a bit of coarse flour (Lev 1:14–18; 2:1–10).⁷¹

The pilgrimage law in Deut 16:16, set right before Israel crosses into Yahweh’s lands, his territory, gives clear expression to this core idea with its various facets (see also Exod 23:14–15; 34:18–20). As Luzzatto and Geiger would have it read:

Three times a year each of your males shall look upon the face of Yahweh your god at the place that he (Yahweh) will choose, on the festival of unleavened bread and on the festival of weeks and on the festival of tabernacles. And he shall not look upon Yahweh’s face empty-handed – (*but*) each as he can gift, according to the blessing of Yahweh your god that he gave you.

It is this full, hierarchical, reciprocal, visual pilgrimage – in which the human (a) beholds the face of the divine, as both required and desired, (b) presents a gift, and (c) thereby receives blessing – that lowly Jacob invokes to such ingratiating effect before Esau, lord of a host four-hundred strong. In his heart Jacob plans:

I will pacify his face (פניו) with this gift (במנחה) that goes before me (לפני),
And after that I will visit his face (אראה פניו),
Maybe (then) he will raise my face (ישא פני) (Gen 32:21).⁷²

To Esau he says:

If I find favor in your eyes, then, please, accept this gift (מנחתי) from me, for this is why I visit your face (ראיתי פניך) like I would visit the face of divinity (כראות פני אלהים): that you will have found pleasure by me (33:10).⁷³

⁷⁰ Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (2 vols.; London: Luzac/New York: Putnam, 1903) 2.1436b; EBY 13.6308b רָאִיָה ב, 6309a–b רָאִיִן ב; Paul, *ibid.*, (Hebrew) 97 n. 18.

⁷¹ In a separate notion, righteousness earns one the right to gaze upon Yahweh’s face; see Ps 17:15; also 15:1–5; 24:3–6; Isa 33:14–16. (Taken together, MT and LXX might indicate that Ps 11:7 originally read יִשְׂרָאֵל יִחַזֵּק פָּנָיו, but that reading does not really fit the flow of the poem.) See further below, n. 147.

⁷² Note Jacob’s use of the keyword “face” of the Priestly Blessing, here, though, in a four-fold series, which alternates between “his face” and “my face.” Likewise, note the three-part structure that resembles the Priestly Blessing, here, though, of decreasing, rather than increasing, line-length (five words-four words-three words as opposed to three-five-seven), in which each line ends with “face.”

⁷³ See Hartenstein, *Das Angesicht JHWHs*, 83–86. The Rabbis juxtaposed this passage with Exod 23:15, the command to see God’s face/appear before God; see *Gen. Rab.* §78, on 32:29 (J. Theodor and C. H. Albeck, eds., *Midrash Bereshit Rabba* [2nd ed.; 3 vols.; Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1965] 2.921). For the protocols of the diplomatic mission, with particular focus on the delicate position of the emissary himself, see

And in Mal 1:6–14, offended by the damaged goods Israel brings him as offerings, Yahweh makes the analogy himself: “Please, proffer it to your governor. Will he find pleasure by you or raise your face? ... I have no desire for you ... and a gift I will not accept from your hands ... For I am a great king ... my name is revered among the nations.”

Against the background of the etiquette of eye-contact as applied to the pilgrimage visit, the passages about the danger of looking at Yahweh surveyed above (section I) fall into two categories. In one group, contrasted with pilgrimage, Yahweh establishes norms in advance, warning against a rude rush by the masses to glimpse and gaze at his glory, or against vulgar voyeurism, when his holy abode, in a state of transition and undress, appears less than majestic.⁷⁴ In the second set of passages, after the fact of a surprise visit by Yahweh, characters fear for their lives for surely they have violated such norms. Here they stood in the presence of Yahweh or his divine emissaries without realizing, keeping appropriate distance and doing proper obeisance. Instead, they evenly looked on at Yahweh or the angel, impertinently collapsing the chasm that separates Yahweh from human subject. Such presumptuousness, they fear, deserves a fatal rebuke. The incident in Beth-Shemesh, at least in its current form, justifies such terror as well-founded. The ark that seemed to appear for a visit, gazed upon in a compromised position, visited upon the people and the nation death and devastation.

To reiterate, in all these passages, it is not blinding, overpowering radiance that necessitates shielding one’s eyes in self-defense, but rather majesty that demands lowering them in deference. No inherent danger

the reconstruction of all its stages and aspects in Elgavish, *The Diplomatic Service*; more briefly, J. M. Munn-Rankin, “Diplomacy in Western Asia in the Second Millennium B. C.,” *Iraq* 18 (1956) 68–110, at 99–108; Trevor Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings of the Ancient Near East: The Royal Correspondence of the Late Bronze Age* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003) 57–75.

⁷⁴ Compare the Sumerian *Cursing of Akkade*, ll. 127–131, about the destruction of Enlil’s temple: “Into its holy of holies, the house knowing not daylight, looked the nation; and upon the gods’ holy bath vessels looked (men of) Uri” (Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Harps That Once ... Sumerian Poetry in Translation* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987] 367). On the impropriety of unregulated seeing of God and, relatedly, of representing him, especially in subsequent Jewish tradition, Rabbinic and Medieval, see Moshe Halbertal, *Concealment and Revelation: Esotericism in Jewish Thought and Its Philosophical Implications* (trans. J. Feldman; Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007) 13–27; id. and Avishai Margalit, *Idolatry* (trans. N. Goldblum; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992) 37–66. On such concerns in first millennium BCE Assyria and Babylon, see Tallay Ornan, *The Triumph of the Symbol: Pictorial Representation of Deities in Mesopotamia and the Biblical Image Ban* (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005).

resides in the object, Yahweh's face; the sense of danger arises from a relational act, looking at it.

III. Israelite idols and the reality of affective discourse

On the basis of archaeological finds of varying kinds scholars debate whether Israelian and Judahite cultic sites included anthropomorphic representations of Yahweh.⁷⁵ The different camps have invoked the biblical material reviewed above, each in line with their overall thrust. Some of those claiming non-anthropomorphic representation have linked the issue with Yahweh's alleged invisibility or his allegedly dangerous form in biblical literature.⁷⁶ But the analysis above rejects that characterization as fundamentally at odds with the dynamics of divine visitation within the biblical narratives. In those stories, human characters see Yahweh's visible, uncovered face and, without any protective devices, continue to live. Among those who argue for the presence of anthropomorphic representation, some point to the language of direct visualization in the texts relating to pilgrimage surveyed above.⁷⁷ But the analysis above demonstrates that the language of direct visualization does not come from the physical realm of temple architecture and furnishings ("the cult"); it derives from the social sphere of human hierarchical interrelations, perhaps best illustrated by the royal court and its etiquette of manners.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ For example, Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1995); conveniently, the studies by Niehr, Uehlinger, Becking, Mettinger and Hendel, in van der Toorn, *The Image and the Book*; Nadav Na'aman, "No Anthropomorphic Graven Image: Notes on the Assumed Anthropomorphic Cult Statues in the Temples of YHWH in the Pre-Exilic Period," *Ugarit Forschungen* 31 (1999) 391–415. H. L. Ginsberg coined the useful term "Israelian" to designate the historical Iron Age kingdom and culture north of Judah, in his work, *The Israelian Heritage of Judaism* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1982) 1–2.

⁷⁶ Hendel, "Aniconism and Anthropomorphism in Ancient Israel," *The Image and the Book*, 220–224.

⁷⁷ Herbert Niehr, "In Search of YHWH's Cult Statue in the First Temple," *The Image and the Book*, 73–95, at 83–85, also 85–90.

⁷⁸ Friedrich Nötscher led the way in correlating language about the deity with royal audience, but, conceptualizing the correlation referentially, he required a cult with a statue to parallel the body and person of the king; hence the origins of the correlation, for him, in idolatrous Mesopotamia and thence to aniconic Israel as a frozen, fossilized metaphor ("*Das Angesicht Gottes schauen*" nach biblischer und babylonischer Auffassung [Würzburg: Becker, 1924]). Apart from his limited approach to the matter as one of a referential metaphor rather than a generative discourse – and a conceit really (see immediately below), his argument of cultural borrowing is both strained and unneces-

In any case, one should resist drawing a direct line from the objects housed in Israelian and Judahite temples to biblical text and idiom. The way biblical literature uses the idiom of sight need not reflect, respond to, or in any way correlate with what in practice real pilgrims encountered when they went to sacred cultic locations. On the contrary, if, as argued above, biblical authors employed phraseology that drew on the social poetics of looking to portray visit and visitation, then such usage reveals how the authors thought one should understand them. Regardless of the specific manner by which temple architecture, interior design, decoration and furniture (not to mention sound, motion and smell) made Yahweh present, *ideologically* one should experience it, value it, as gazing upon Yahweh's face, with all the favor, gracious immediacy, and blessed intimacy that one feels when granted such visual access. Put in the useful categorical terms employed by John J. Collins for the not unrelated study of Apocalyptic literature, rather than view the language as *referential*, pointing at facts, one should understand it as *expressive*, articulating feelings, attitudes and ideas, or as Irene Winter phrased it in the equally germane context of art, one should understand such discourse as *affective*, since it aims to induce such responses in the audience.⁷⁹

sary. The pervasiveness of the idiom throughout the Hebrew Bible makes the idea of its wholesale adoption and artificial application therein unlikely, and its repeated use in the mundane sphere makes it most likely an internal development that paralleled naturally and reasonably the same process that took place in Mesopotamia. E. Jan Wilson made a similarly structured argument to that of Nötscher from cultic investiture ("The Biblical Term *lir'ot 'et penei yhwh* in the Light of Akkadian Cultic Material," *Akkadica* 93 [1995] 21–25), but Klaas R. Veenhof rebutted it strongly on philological grounds ("Seeing the Face of God": The Use of Akkadian Parallels," *Akkadica* 94–95 [1995] 33–37). Ornan complicates the historical picture significantly, on both the factual and conceptual levels, noting that in Mesopotamia textual sources continue to describe the gods in anthropomorphic terms and temples continue to feature anthropomorphic depiction, while non-verbal art progressively restricts itself to non-anthropomorphic representation; see *The Triumph of the Symbol*, esp. 168–184, and the brief but important comments in the reviews by Joel S. Burnett, *RBL* 04/2006 n. p., www.bookreview-s.org/pdf/4865_5069.pdf, and Bernard F. Batto, *JHS* 8 (2008) n. p., www.arts.ualberta.ca/JHS/reviews/review294.htm. For cultic practices shaped by the human encounter and realizing the tension between their underlying humanity and their aspirations for divine otherness being then reapplied to royal figures and their representation, see Irene J. Winter, "Idols of the King": Royal Images as Recipients of Ritual Action in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 6 (1992) 13–42.

⁷⁹ John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (2nd ed., Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998) 17 (who draws upon G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980] 7–36, on which see the important review by Edward L. Greenstein, *JAOS* 102 [1982] 657–658); Winter, "Idols of the King," esp. 15; in detail, Hartenstein, *Das Angesicht JHWHs*, 10–62, esp. 34–52 (but note p. 51). Laying important groundwork in this direc-

Biblical literature supplies many examples of the way language and artistic motifs can overlay physical objects to shape experience and to direct significance, to posit or invoke a reality beyond what the naked eye sees – specifically so with regard to “looking upon Yahweh.” Gary Anderson has made the argument that, to those viewing them, furniture and architecture may partake of their divine owner, not merely representing him symbolically, but re-presenting him, making him physically present, to the point of identification.⁸⁰ His study brings out the explicit verbal and implicit visual media of communication that generate this identification and the experience that flows from it.

In the bit of martial liturgical lore adapted in Num 10:35–36, Moses addresses the ark as “Yahweh” as it heads out to battle and upon its triumphant return.⁸¹ Similarly – though in a story with a contrary plot-line arguing that the ark should stay put – the Philistines capture the ark and the Israelite priest’s widow laments, “The Presence has gone into exile from Israel”; she names her newborn son for the tragedy, “Icha-bod” (lit. “where is the Presence”), and announces, “The Presence has gone into exile from Israel for the ark of God has been taken” (1 Sam 4:21–22). When the ark returns with fatal consequences for the people of Beth-Shemesh, they wail, “Who can survive before this holy deity Yahweh, and for whom will he leave us?” (6:20).⁸²

This identification with the ark continued into a later period. The Samaritan Torah preserves an ancient variant in Exod 23:17 and 34:23 that specifies that the pilgrimage law commanding every Israelite male to come see Yahweh means to come see his ark: **שָׁלַשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה יִרְאֶה**

tion, M. C. A. Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1990) 35–87; Marc Z. Brettler, *God Is King: Understanding an Israelite Metaphor* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), esp. 160–168. A recent study of Mesopotamian oil divination raises suggestive points of comparison; see Abraham Winitzer, “The Divine Presence and Its Interpretation in Early Mesopotamian Divination,” in *Divination and Interpretation of Signs in the Ancient World*, ed. Amar Annus (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2010) 177–93.

⁸⁰ See the revised, expanded transcript of Gary A. Anderson, “Towards a Theology of the Tabernacle and Its Furniture” (<http://orion.msc.huji.ac.il/symposiums/9th/papers/AndersonPaper.pdf>), at 2–12; in abbreviated form: id., “Mary in the Old Testament,” *Pro Ecclesia* 16 (2007) 33–55, at 43–46. But with regard to the analogy to the Mesopotamian *melammu*, bear in mind Aster’s study (above, n. 21). See also Smith, “Like Deities, Like Temples,” 10–20. Compare Niehr, “In Search of YHWH’s Cult Statue in the First Temple,” 85–90.

⁸¹ See also 1 Sam 4:1–9, esp. v. 7.

⁸² See further 2 Samuel 6. Na’aman argues the same for calves in the Northern kingdom on the basis of parallel language and sentiments in Hos 10:5 as well as several other passages (“No Anthropomorphic Graven Image,” 413–414).

כל זכורך את פני הארון ה'.⁸³ However one understands the syntax⁸⁴ and whatever the original impulse behind the variant,⁸⁵ the editor perceived the ark as a sufficiently real manifestation of Yahweh for Yahweh originally to have named himself in the text when he meant the ark. In the eyes of the editor, it posed no problem to imagine looking at the ark as seeing Yahweh.⁸⁶ The identification of Yahweh's throne (or footstool) with Yahweh himself matches the way the Pharaoh refers to himself when he appoints Joseph viceroy; defining the extent of Joseph's powers, Pharaoh says: "Only the throne itself shall I keep greater than you" (Gen 41:40).⁸⁷

Likewise, on the basis of Roman coins, Anderson argues that, in a still later period, some two-dozen Bar Kochba coins that depict on one side the "Table of the Showbread" in the Temple entryway and on the other the palm branch and citrus fruit together signify God presenting himself, making himself visible, before pilgrims on the Feast of Tabernacles.⁸⁸ It is hard to resist adding that the artisan behind these coins may have selected the table to signify God's presence, rather than

⁸³ For the text of the Samaritan Torah, see August F. von Gall, *Der hebräische Pentateuch der Samaritaner* (Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1914–1918). The fact that the variant appears in both Exod 23:17 and 34:23 militates against scribal error and bespeaks intent, and such intent seems more warranted for a scribe reading *qal* יראה rather than *nip'al* יראה. Compare the explicitly marked *nip'al* להראות in Sam at 34:24. Some Samaritan manuscripts attest undetermined 'ה ארון at 23:17, but not at 34:23, which makes it appear as a (hyper-)correction of 'ה הארון. LXX has yet a third set of readings: it has no equivalent for הארון/הארון at either 23:17 or 34:23, renders ... יראה פני as passive *nip'al* followed by preposition "before," ὁφθῆσεται ... ἐνώπιον, and at 23:17 it reads κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ σου, similar to 34:23 κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ Ἰσραηλ.

⁸⁴ One could take it as apposition, in which case, strikingly, Yahweh qualifies the ark. Compare MT and LXX to Josh 3:11, 13. Alternatively, one could take it as an instance in which the bound noun in a construct phrase is determined. Compare 2 Kgs 7:13; 23:17 (2x); Isa 36:8, 16; Jer 38:6; Ezek 21:27; Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley § 127f-g (pp. 412–413).

⁸⁵ Possibilities include removing the anthropomorphism, excluding the presence of an anthropomorphic image, denying that common pilgrims had prophetic vision, and affirming a practice of revealing to pilgrims the Temple's holy vessels.

⁸⁶ For an important and insightful study of the ark in this direction, especially regarding the expression "before Yahweh," see N. Rabban, "Before YHWH" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 23 (1952–1953) 1–8.

⁸⁷ Relatedly, the word "pharaoh" itself means "great house" and becomes a term for the person of the king in the period of the New Kingdom; see, W. Helck and E. Otto, eds., *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* (6 vols., Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1972–1986) 4.1021. Thanks to Noam Mizrahi for pointing this out.

⁸⁸ Anderson, "Towards a Theology," 21–24. For a convenient view of almost two dozen such coins, see Ya'akov Meshorer, *A Treasury of Jewish Coins – From the Persian Period to Bar Kokhba* (trans. R. Amols; Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi; Nyack, N. Y.: Amphora, 2001; orig. publ. 1997) pls. 64–66, 69; for the argument that in the entrance stands the table of the showbread, not the ark, see Dan Barag, "The Shewbread Table

the ark so prominent in the Hebrew Bible or the candelabra in Zechariah 4 and favored by subsequent Jewish tradition, in no small measure because of the specific biblical terms for the table and the bread it holds: שלחן הפנים, “the table of the face” (Num 4:7) and לחם הפנים, “the bread of the face” (Exod 25:30; 35:13; 39:16; 1 Sam 21:7; 1 Kgs 7:48 = 2 Chr 4:19).⁸⁹

The conception applies not just to furniture, but to the temple building as a whole as well. The psalmist in Ps 27:4 has “but one request”: שבתִי בבֵּית ה' כִּל יְמֵי חַיִּי / לַחְזוֹת בְּנֶעַם ה' / וּלְבַקֵּר בַּהֵיכָל. From the way the psalmist sandwiched ה' נֶעַם between ה' בֵּית ה' and הֵיכָל, together with a Ugaritic parallelism between *n'm* and *qds*, Jonas Greenfield inferred that the psalmist yearned to gaze upon Yahweh's temple.⁹⁰ And in Psalm 48, the entire temple city bears the face of the divine. The psalmist urges the audience to take their children to visit Zion, circumambulate its perimeter, point out its towers and citadels, tell its tale and proclaim, “This is God our god” (vv. 13–15).⁹¹

and the Facade of the Temple on Coins of the Bar Kokhba War” (Hebrew), *Qadmoniot* 20 (1987) 22–25.

⁸⁹ On the terminology and phenomenology of the bread and the table, see Roy Gane, “‘Bread of the Presence’ and Creator-in-Residence,” *VT* 52 (1992) 179–203; Hartenstein, “‘Brote’ und ‘Tisch des Angesichts.’” On the lamp-stand, see Morton Smith, *Studies in the Cult of Yahweh*, ed. S. J. D. Cohen (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1996) 1.116–149, at 136–149; Carol L. Meyers, *The Tabernacle Menorah: A Synthetic Study of a Symbol from the Biblical Cult* (1976; repr. with new introduction, Piscataway, N. J.: Gorgias, 2003); Niehr, “In Search of YHWH's Cult Statue in the First Temple,” 89–90; Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B. C. E. to 640 C. E.* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001) 50 n. 3. For somewhat analogous remarks on another piece of cultic equipment, the altar, see Jeffrey H. Tigay, “The Presence of God and the Coherence of Exodus 20:22–26,” in *Sefer Moshe – The Moshe Weinfeld Jubilee Volume: Studies in the Bible and the Ancient Near East, Qumran, and Post-Biblical Judaism*, ed. C. Cohen and others (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2004) 195–211, esp. 205–207.

⁹⁰ Jonas C. Greenfield, “‘The Cluster’ in Biblical Poetry,” *Maarav* 5–6 (1990) 159–168, at 164–165; further Smith, “Like Deities, Like Temples,” 17–19. See also Psalm 84. But compare what amounts to an ambitious argument by Hartenstein for the traditional rendering, “beauty, grace” (*Das Angesicht JHWHs*, 100–119).

⁹¹ Anderson, above, n. 80. In a comparative vein, see H. S. Versnel, “What Did Ancient Man See When He Saw a God? Some Reflections on Greco-Roman Epiphany,” in *Effigies Dei: Essays on the History of Religions*, ed. D. van der Plas (Leiden: Brill, 1987) 42–55, esp. 51–53 §7. In the artwork of a 12th century BCE Middle Assyrian cylinder seal impression, Tiglath-Pileser I stands before a city wall with divine symbols inside it and points his finger at it (see Ornan, *The Triumph of the Symbol*, 239 no. 56; Hartenstein, *Das Angesicht JHWHs*, 300, pl. 6 no. 3). Finger-pointing is a widely attested motif in relief artwork, particularly Assyrian, in a suggestively limited number of types of scenes (see Ursula Magen, *Assyrische Königsdarstellungen – Aspekte der Herrschaft: Eine Typologie* [Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 1986] pls. 7–11, 14; Ornan, *ibid.*, 233–234, 238–239, 246, 249, 255–256, 261–262, 272–274; also James

Indeed, even if Israelian and Judahite temples did not contain statues of the deity for a pilgrim to view, scholars have synthesized both literary and material traditions to demonstrate the rich architectural symbolism of temple complexes and their contents in ways that bespeak deliberate attempts to encourage the viewing pilgrim to perceive the physical presence of the deity. An Iron IIa temple in Ain Dara – Ishtar’s apparently – provides a particularly dramatic example. Gigantic footprints leading from outside the temple to its threshold create a moving picture. First, Ishtar stands at a distance surveying her temple, then she begins to walk towards it, then with increasing momentum she strides into it. The effect conveys to the pilgrim that Ishtar stands just inside the temple and, moreover, has just entered it, the pilgrim having just missed glimpsing her. Namely, through the footprints, the pilgrim enjoys both physical and temporal proximity.⁹² Importantly, a statue big enough to fill those footprints would not fit inside the temple, making the footprints an experiential unit of their own, even if the temple housed an image of Ishtar.

Within the Israelian and Judahite context, Ziony Zevit’s survey of the material cultic remains sufficed to prompt him to remark by way of summary: “in ancient Israel, however the sacred may have been encountered by the individual alone or in collectives, the society as a whole esteemed the visual experience of seeing the sacred.”⁹³ Several scholars

B. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954] 153, 156, 180, 192). Magen links the motif to the idiom *ubāna tarāsu*, “finger-pointing,” used primarily, as far as kings and gods are concerned, in the context of blessing and cursing, and takes it to express a powerful relationship and sovereignty (ibid., 45–55, 64–65, 94–104, esp. 96–99). Regardless of the persuasiveness of her particular argument, the extended index finger is the indication *par excellence* of the visual encounter and of visualization. – Probably, in place of current “God,” אֱלֹהִים, in Ps 48:15 restore “Yahweh.” For additional infelicitous name strings suggesting changes to the original text, see, for example, Ps 43:3; 45:8; 48:15; 50:7; 51:16; 67:7; 68:9 (compare Judg 5:5); outside of Psalms, Ezra 6:22; 1 Chr 28:20; 2 Chr 34:32. On the so-called “Elohistic Psalter,” see L. Joffe, “The Elohistic Psalter: What, How and Why?” *SJOT* 15 (2001) 142–169; Jonathan Ben-Dov, “The Elohistic Psalter and the Writing of Divine Names at Qumran,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Contemporary Culture: Proceedings of the International Conference Held at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem (July 6–8, 2008)*, ed. A. D. Roitman and others (Leiden: Brill, 2011) 79–104.

⁹² Contrast Paul B. Thomas, “The Riddle of Ishtar’s Shoes: The Religious Significance of the Footprints at Ain Dara from a Comparative Perspective,” *Journal of Religious History* 32 (2008) 303–319. For an instructive set of pictures, see Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox, 2001) 334–336.

⁹³ Ziony Zevit, *Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallaxic Approaches* (New York: Continuum, 2000) 349.

have brought this perspective to bear specifically in the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible's Jerusalem Temple as a dynamic visual experience that fires up the imagination to evoke the shimmering, if elusive presence of the deity.⁹⁴ Othmar Keel called attention to a Persian period Hebrew name formed to express the idea of looking at God: אֱלֹהֵי עֵינַי (Ezra 8:4; 1 Chr 26:3), אֱלֹהֵי עֵינַי (Ezra 10:22, 27; Neh 12:41; 1 Chr 3:23; 4:36; 7:8) and אֱלֹהֵי עֵינַי (1 Chr 8:20).⁹⁵ Even Rabbinic legal lore, in second century CE Palestine, understands the obligation to bring a visit offering not to apply to the blind pilgrim (*m. Hag.* 1:1), which presupposes the essential role played by looking in pilgrimage. The Rabbis did not require the presence of a statue in the Temple to entertain and apply this notion. Moreover, follow-up discussion of the law shows some of them acutely aware of the notion as finding expression in the pilgrimage law passages themselves (*t. Hag.* 1:1; *b. Hag.* 2a). For instance, Rav Yehuda, in third century CE Babylonia, extends the principle to those blind in one eye, in a clever homily that affirms two possible readings of the biblical pilgrimage law in a single stroke: "Just as he (God) comes to look with two eyes, so does he come to be seen by two eyes" (*b. Hag.* 2a).⁹⁶

One study, by Mark Smith, establishes a rubric according to which, as in extra-biblical sources so in biblical ones, anxiety about physical vulnerabilities conditions how human beings imagine the physical qualities of the gods and their temples. The emphasis Smith identifies in both

⁹⁴ See, for example, Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, "'Who is the King of Glory?' Solomon's Temple and Its Symbolism," in *Scripture and Other Artifacts: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of Philip J. King*, ed. M. D. Coogan and others (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1994) 18–31; Smith, *The Pilgrimage Pattern*, 81–109, also 118–126; Avigdor Hurowitz, "Yahweh's Exalted House – Aspects of the Design and Symbolism of Solomon's Temple," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, 63–110; Lea Mazor, "The Reciprocal Relationship Between the Garden of Eden and the Temple" (Hebrew), *Shnaton – Annual for Bible and the Study of the Ancient Near East* 13 (2002) 5–42. Keep in mind, though, that all these analyses interpret texts, not a physical, standing structure. Compare the more explicit and deliberate interpretation of the description of the temple in Ezekiel 40–48 as a literary event, in Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place – Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987) 47–73.

⁹⁵ On this and related Akkadian names, see Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (1972; trans. T. J. Hallett; New York: Seabury, 1978) 316–317; Jeanne D. Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names in Ancient Hebrew – A Comparative Study* (JSOTSup 49; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988) 128, 175, 255.

⁹⁶ See especially the nuanced debate between Rashi and Rabbenu Tam at *b. Sanh.* 4b. See also Shlomo Na'eh, "Did the *Tannaim* Interpret the Script of the Torah Differently from the Authorized Reading?" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 61 (1991–1992) 401–448, at 413–419, for the argument that in fact the debate between the Rabbis centered precisely on whether to pronounce the verbs as *qal* or as *nip'al*.

biblical and extra-biblical literary descriptions of deities upon their sensual, specifically visual, allure throws into high relief how a self-aware ideology of looking shapes the human imagination of the divine and the encounter with it.⁹⁷ One might, at this point, think of those third-millennium Mesopotamian figurines in submissive pose, with cocked head and dilated, fascinated bright blue eyes; placed in temples, they manifest both the permanent presence of the worshipper there and the worshipper's quintessential act of adoration: captivated, enthralled looking at the beautiful gods.⁹⁸ No flash in the art-historical pan, the adoring effigies have a hoary pedigree and multitudinous ancestry stretching back to the fourth millennium in northern Mesopotamia, the "eye-idols," so named for the large, swirly stylized eyes topping a wafer-thin rectangular body.⁹⁹ All these sculptures, in turn, call to mind a much later Rabbinic

⁹⁷ Smith, "Like Deities, Like Temples," 16–20.

⁹⁸ For images and discussions, see Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East in Pictures*, 8–9; Leonard Woolley, *The Art of the Middle East, Including Persian, Mesopotamia and Palestine* (trans. A. E. Keep; New York: Crown, 1961) 59–74; Seton Lloyd, *The Art of the Ancient Near East* (New York: Praeger, 1961) 98–101; Carel J. du Ry (van Beest Holle), *Art of the Ancient Near and Middle East* (trans. A. Brown; New York: Abrams, 1969) 52, 62–65; above all Irene J. Winter, "The Eyes Have It: Votive Statuary, Gilgamesh's Axe, and Cathected Viewing in the Ancient Near East," in *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance*, ed. R. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 22–44. Possibly, the ever-staring eyes, conveying perpetual wakefulness, also afford the worshipper a measure of immortality. For sleep as an intimation of death and mortality, see the expressions in sources as disparate as Gilgamesh Tablet XI, lines 208–245 (Andrew George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh: The Babylonian Epic Poem and Other Texts in Akkadian and Sumerian* [London: Penguin, 2003] 95–97); 1 Enoch 39:12–13; and b. *Brachot* 57b. Thanks to Shalom Holtz for pointing me towards these statuettes. In a separate study Holtz draws a connection between them and the wish expressed to dwell permanently in Yahweh's precincts in Ps 27:4, and extends their function to affording their owners divine protection; see Shalom E. Holtz, "God as Refuge and Temple as Refuge in the Psalms," in *The Temple of Jerusalem: From Moses to the Messiah – in Honor of Louis H. Feldman*, ed. S. Fine (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011) 17–26, at 25–26.

⁹⁹ For the original description of these objects found almost exclusively at Tell Brak and their own even earlier, more widely distributed precursors, "spectacle idols," see M. E. L. Mallowan, "Excavations at Brak and Chagar Bazar," *Iraq* 9 (1947) 1–259, at 32–35, 150–159, 198–210, plates XXV, XXVI, LI. Additional examples turned up at Tell Hamoukar; see McGuire Gibson and others, "Hamoukar: A Summary of Three Seasons of Excavation," *Akkadica* 123 (2002) 11–34, at 20, 22. Mallowan debated mightily their significance and only fleetingly raised a confused possibility as to how they might represent the dedicator. Judith L. Homan, "A Stylistic and Iconographical Study of the Eye-Idols at Brak with Comparative Material from Other Neolithic Civilizations" (MFA thesis, Ohio University, 1970) provides a convenient synthesis of broader data and interpretations (and pictures, on pp. 91–92). Noting that the eye-idols recall the third millennium figurines, but describing both groups as staring off into some otherworldly space are Jeremy A. Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992) 7, 78–80 (photograph on p. 79). J. Maxwell Miller wrote the following blurb to

midrash, according to which Jacob's sculpted image permanently faces God.¹⁰⁰

Finally, a different study by Smith draws attention to the pilgrimage journey itself during which, or as an inherent part of which, one can perceive Yahweh's presence. So, at least, does one Psalmist express it (Ps 43:3):

Send out your steady light(beams),
they will guide me;
They will bring me to your holy mountain
and to your dwellings.

Smith explains:

Divine presence already meets and accompanies pilgrims en route to Jerusalem as an anticipation of the fuller experience of the divine that awaits them in the Temple ... This passage reflects the Israelite perception of divine accompaniment not only at the shrine, but already on the way ... The power of divine presence on the journey is perceived as proleptically related to the experience of presence in the shrine: the pilgrims not only journey to the shrine to meet Yahweh, but the divine power journeys out to meet pilgrims on their way to meet their deity at the shrine.¹⁰¹

When biblical authors speak of going on pilgrimage to "look upon the face of Yahweh," one need not imagine them referentially applying their knowledge of the specifics of divine representation in temples and formulating their texts as a verbal representation of that physical reality. Rather, just as they did in passages about looking upon the divine in situations other than pilgrimage, they could have employed expressive

a photograph of eye-idols: "[T]hey may have been intended to represent individuals worshipping a divinity. If so, they anticipate the human statuettes found in temples of later periods" ("Syria: Land of Civilizations," *NEA* 64 [2001] 122–131, at 125).

¹⁰⁰ *Gen. Rab.* §66, on 28:12; §78, on 32:29; §82, on 35:9 (Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba*, 2,788, 920–921, 978); *Tg. Ps.-Jon.*, at Gen 28:12 (David Rieder ed., *Pseudo-Jonathan: Targum Jonathan ben Uziel on the Pentateuch* [Jerusalem: Salomon, 1974] 42). Early Jewish mystical texts posit its effectiveness: God caresses this image; see Peter Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God: Some Major Themes in Early Jewish Mysticism* (trans. A. Pomerance; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992) 46. See further Elliot Wolfson, "The Image of Jacob Engraved on the Throne of Glory: Further Study of the Esoteric Teaching of German *Hassidut*" (Hebrew), in *Massu'ot: Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Philosophy in Memory of Prof. Ephraim Gottlieb*, ed. M. Oron and A. Goldreich (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1994) 131–185 (thanks to Noam Mizrahi for referring me to this study); Silviu Bunta, "The Likeness of the Image: Adamic Motifs and אֱלֹהִים Anthropology (*sic!*) in Rabbinic Traditions about Jacob's Image Enthroned in Heaven," *JSJ* 37 (2006) 55–84 (presumably, emend "anthropoly" to anthropology); Shamma Y. Friedman, "*šelem, dēmūt wētābnūt*" (Hebrew), *Sidra* 22 (2007) 89–152, at 115–130, esp. 117–120.

¹⁰¹ *Id.*, *The Pilgrimage Pattern*, 56–57.

language to help shape what the experience meant or felt like, or should mean or feel like, no matter what precisely stood before the pilgrim. And just as it does in texts about encountering the divine in circumstances other than pilgrimage, that language would have drawn upon the way in the social sphere – preeminently so in the royal one – eye-contact and its etiquette can mediate between hierarchy and distance, on the one hand, and intimacy, on the other. In short, the cult did not generate or precede the idiom; human society did. Had the biblical authors not been deliberate about articulating the experience as something visual, about indexing its meaning to the visual in social etiquette as an intimate encounter that can defy hierarchy and collapse distance, they could have employed any of many expressions other than “see the face” (רָא"ה אֶת פָּנָיו), such as “come before” (בֹּרֵא לִפְנֵי), “stand before” (עַמַּד לִפְנֵי) or “bow before” (חֹרֵה לִפְנֵי, *hištap'el*).¹⁰² No less than wrestling with Yahweh, just to arrive at his temple city can be to see him face to face.

IV. Looking prophets and their macabre messages

Seemingly in sharp contrast to the etiquette of eye-contact imagined to govern the visit and the visitation in the texts surveyed above – especially in the light of the dynamics of the story of the visual trespass by Ham/Canaan in Genesis 9 – the Hebrew Bible portrays a series of individuals who dare to gaze upon Yahweh, knowingly and without fear, who then report on it and record it for all to see: the prophets.¹⁰³ Set not mythically in the bygone days of Israel’s foundational past, presented rather as reports of recent events, these texts tend to eschew the relative direct-

¹⁰² See 1 Kgs 1:23, 28, 32; Ps 100:2; Esth 8:1; 1 Chr 16:29. On the root and stem of this verb, see Chaim Cohen, “The Saga of a Unique Verb in Biblical Hebrew and Ugaritic: הִשְׁתַּחוּהוּ, ‘To Bow Down’ – Usage and Etymology,” in *Textures and Meaning: Thirty Years of Judaic Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst*, ed. L. Ehrlich and others (Department of Judaic and Near Eastern Studies, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2004) 322–341 (www.umass.edu/judaic/anniversaryvolume).

¹⁰³ One should distinguish between what the author (or, more precisely, a character) states or conveys about the quality of the view afforded and the amount of detail actually provided to the reader. In this direction, see Barr, “Theophany and Anthropomorphism,” 32; compare Weitzman, “New Light on God’s Opacity.” On the significance of this distinction for analyzing Jewish mystical literature, see Peter Schäfer, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009) 339–342. On meaningful minimalism as a defining feature of narrative and narrators in the Hebrew Bible, see Gunkel, *Genesis*, xxiii–xlvi; Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (trans. W. R. Trask; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953) 1–20; Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1983) 114–130; Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 321–364.

ness and factuality of a third person omniscient narrator in favor of the complex, subjective first person voice, modulated by various distancing or mediating techniques both in content and in discourse.¹⁰⁴ However, these prophets do not go so far as to relegate the experience to mere mental imagery, for they interact fully in the experience and present it as, in every sense, real.¹⁰⁵

“I saw Yahweh,” declares Isaiah (Isa 6:1). He then describes Yahweh seated aloft, high upon a throne, surrounded by seraphs – themselves, like mortals other than Isaiah, afraid to look on (vv. 1–2). Their thunderous voices shake the pillars of the Temple with their echoing cry “Holy!” while the Temple fills with smoke (vv. 3–4). Isaiah does not fear for his life for having seen the King, Lord of Legions. He fears that his impure lips and those of the people among whom he lives will prevent him from talking about it (v. 5; compare Jer 1:4–10; Exod 4:10–11).¹⁰⁶ Like Isaiah, Ezekiel introduces the coming vision, **וַאֲרָאָה מֵרְאוֹת וַאֲרָא** ... **אֱלֹהִים**, “I saw” (Ezek 1:1–4). He then describes the mythic

¹⁰⁴ As emerges from Aster’s analytical survey, biblical tradition begins to incorporate and adapt different aspects of the *melammu*, especially the element of radiance, chiefly in the Exilic period – perceptibly so in the Prophetic tradition in Isaiah 40–66, Ezekiel, Zechariah and Daniel (*Divine and Human Radiance*). (In an incidental consequence, the absence of the *melammu* from P could suggest its priority to the Exile.)

¹⁰⁵ Compare, for example, Amos 7:1–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–14; 24:1–10; Zechariah 1–6, in which the prophet sees a symbolic mental image that he must (to varying degrees) contemplate, articulate, explicate and respond to, like a dream. In the cases of Amos 8:13 and Jer 1:11–14, note especially how, as in dream interpretation, the prophetic interpretation focuses heavily on the specific words selected to depict the image or scene, rather than on the envisioned object itself. (The fact that in these cases Yahweh provides the key likely serves to distinguish and distance the prophet from the dream interpreter). For some useful studies in this direction, see S. E. Loewenstamm, “*K^hub Qāyis* (Am. 8:1–3),” *From Babylon to Canaan: Studies in the Bible and Its Oriental Background* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992) 22–27 (Heb. orig., 1965); Susan Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision in Biblical Tradition* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1980, 1983); Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (2nd ed., Oxford: Clarendon, 1986, repr. 1989) 443–499, esp. 447–465; Scott B. Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers: The Allusive Language of Dreams in the Ancient Near East* (AOS 89; New Haven, Conn.: American Oriental Society, 2007), esp. 113–182.

¹⁰⁶ The connection between Isaiah’s living among sinners and his dying for what he sees is unclear. “If, following general belief, Isaiah had feared that he would die because he, as a mortal, saw Yahweh, he would have stated no more than ‘for the king etc.’ as the grounds of his fear” (Ehrlich, *Randglossen*, 4.26). The question of conveying the vision to his audience makes the issue of impure lips much more germane. From the literature of early Jewish Mysticism comes the following particularly instructive passage, which climaxes with Isa 6:3:

“A heavenly punishment [shall befall] you, you who descend to the Merkavah, if you do not report and say what you have heard, and if you do not testify what you have seen upon the countenance: countenance of majesty and might, of pride and eminence, which elevates itself, which raises itself, which rages [and] shows itself great.

“storm from the North” with its fiery eye (v. 4); the winged, wheeled, four-faced, many-eyed creature whooshing about in the storm (vv. 5–21); the brilliant crystal slab above (v. 22); on the slab, the sapphire throne (v. 23a); and seated upon the throne, the human form surrounded by a diamond-like radiance that sparkles with the refracted colors of the rainbow (vv. 23b–28a). So as to allow no doubts at all, Ezekiel states unequivocally: *הוא מראה דמות כבוד ה'*, “it is the appearance of the image of Yahweh’s presence” (v. 28b). After having managed enough composure to exercise an artist’s eye for sustained detail and drawn the Hebrew Bible’s most painstaking portrait of the divine – or of any figure, for that matter, save perhaps the lyrical lovers in the Song of Songs – Ezekiel has strength for a single last utterance, the very word with which he introduced his first person account, *ואראה*, “I saw!”, before collapsing, overwhelmed (v. 28c).¹⁰⁷

The countenance shows itself mighty and great three times daily in the heights, and no man perceives and knows it, so, as is written: Holy, holy, holy (Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God*, 17–18).”

Taking *נדמית* to mean “I have become silent” holds a prominent place among traditional authorities. For example, LXX renders *κατανένυγμα* (on which see Wilhelm Gesenius, *Philologisch-kritischer und historischer Commentar über den Jesaia* [3 vols.; Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1821] 1.261; Isac L. Seeligmann, *The Septuagint Version of Isaiah – A Discussion of Its Problems* [Leiden: Brill, 1948] 53, 54), and *א', ס', and ש'* use the less ambiguous *עסוּפּוּחַסָּא*. In Rabbinic sources, see *Pesiq. Rab.*, chap. 34 §3; among Medieval commentators, see R. Joseph Kara (11th century), R. Eliezer of Beaugency (12th century), and R. Joseph Kimhi (12th century, cited by his son R. David Kimhi [Radak] at Isa 6:5, all available in *Mikra'ot Gedolot “Haketer”: Isaiah*, ed. M. Cohen (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 1996). Gesenius comments that, to read *נדמית* with reference to silence, one must point it *נדמתי* (ibid.), but such minor re-pointing hardly stretches emendational credibility. In fact, the interpretation requires no emendation at all, since the various forms and by-forms of the verbal roots *דמ"ם* and *דמ"ה* – regardless of whether they are homonyms or belong to a single shared root – are so thoroughly intermingled or assimilated throughout the Hebrew Bible as to defy lexical ordering (compare, for instance, the changing entries for *דמ"ם* and *דמ"ה* within the different editions of the Gesenius or the Köhler-Baumgartner lexicons of the Hebrew Bible); therefore, one should interpret as the context seems to warrant. On *דמ"ם* in particular, see Josua Blau, “Über Homonyme und angeblich homonyme Wurzeln,” *VT* 6 (1956) 242–48, at 242–243, rev. and trans. in id., *Studies in Hebrew Linguistics* (Hebrew; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1996) 166–174, at 166–167.

¹⁰⁷ The fact that a spirit must enter Ezekiel and raise him to a standing position (2:2) indicates that he does not simply prostrate himself in deference (1:28). See the same structure of command implying volition, followed by forced fulfillment, with regard to eating the scroll (2:8–3:2). On the self-consciousness of Ezekiel as literary composition, see James L. Kugel and Rowan A. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986) 17–19; Ellen F. Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll: Textuality and the Dynamics of Discourse in Ezekiel's Prophecy* (Sheffield: Almond, 1989); Menahem Haran, “Observations on Ezekiel as a Book Prophet,” in *Seeking Out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005) 3–19; id., *The Biblical*

Whence this seemingly brazen determination to look at Yahweh, declare having done so, and render a vivid record? What of the etiquette of eye-contact? The pastiche-like visual experiences in Daniel may provide a clue.¹⁰⁸ Before an oncoming overwhelming divine figure not only does Daniel, as Ezekiel had done, remain standing long enough to absorb for posterity the human form clothed in linen and gold, with a torso of topaz or beryl, a head of blazing light, and arms and legs of bronze. Daniel also stresses that he alone is able to do so; the other people with him cannot see the approaching presence, and its force propels them into a frenzied hiding (10:1–8). This idea of Daniel as distinguished from those around him by his withstanding the divine presence suggests that visible visitations serve to authorize and legitimize the prophet.

No clearer example of such validation exists than the case of Micaiah son of Jimle (1 Kgs 22:1–28), also composed with heavy literary borrowing.¹⁰⁹ On the eve of a campaign against the Arameans to regain the

Collection (Hebrew; 3 vols. Jerusalem: Bialik, 1996–2008) 3.334–355 (for the difference between himself and Davis, see p. 344 n. 90).

¹⁰⁸ On the formal and conceptual indebtedness of Apocalyptic literature, including Daniel 7–12, to Prophetic literature, see Alexander Rofé, *Introduction to the Prophetic Literature* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 98–105, esp. 98–100. On the patterns set by Ezekiel in particular, see Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), esp. 9–20, 25–28; in the light of this relationship and of Ezekiel’s literary quality (see preceding note), see her argument on the Ascent Apocalypses as fundamentally literary works of fiction, pp. 95–114. For several additional observations and qualifications in this direction, see Haran, *The Biblical Collection*, 3.353–355. (Compare the de-emphasis on Prophetic influence and the argument for a broader, more complex set of background influences and factors in Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 1–42.) On the full range of continuities between the dynamics laid out here and early Jewish mystical literature, including God as king, the significance of his throne, the overwhelming beauty of his face and proportions of his body, the initiate as messenger or herald (see further below), and the nature of the texts as literary experiences in and of themselves rather than referential records of prior events, see Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God* (on the last element, compare *ibid.*, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism*, 337–339, 346–348); Raanan S. Boustán, “The Study of Heikhalot Literature: Between Mystical Experience and Textual Artifact,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 6 (2007) 130–160, at 143–145. See also the insightful phenomenological analyses in Haviva Pedaya, “Seeing, Falling, Singing: The Desire of Seeing God and the Spiritual Element in Early Jewish Mysticism” (Hebrew), *Asufot – An Annual for Jewish Studies* 9 (1995) 237–277.

¹⁰⁹ On the relationship of this story to Isaiah 6; Jeremiah 23; 28; 32; and Ezekiel 14, see Matitiahu Tsevat, “The Throne Vision of Isaiah,” *The Meaning of the Book of Job and Other Biblical Studies: Essays on the Literature and Religion of the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Ktav / Dallas: Institute for Jewish Studies, 1980) 155–176, esp. 161–167, 172–176; Alexander Rofé, *The Prophetic Stories: The Narratives About the Prophets in the Hebrew Bible, Their Literary Types and History* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1988) 149–150. Note that though Micaiah does not interact with what he sees, he has witnessed reality, events that have in fact transpired, not a symbolic image or scene, so he need

Gilead Heights across the Jordan, Ahab king of the northern kingdom of Israel consults some four-hundred “enthusiastic” or “inspired” prophets, who proclaim a successful outcome. Suspicious, Ahab’s ally, the Judahite king Jehosaphat, seeks another voice, one that speaks explicitly in the name of Yahweh. Enter Micaiah, who, after some prodding, relays that he has witnessed the heavenly council in session.¹¹⁰ Yahweh had expressed his desire to lure Ahab into battle to die, and deliberated how best to do so. After having heard and dismissed various suggestions, Yahweh accepted a “lying spirit” that had offered to enter into and mislead the four-hundred prophets. It is precisely the ability to see Yahweh and his court that distinguishes Micaiah from the rest of the prophets and outclasses their prophecy, for without the access to Yahweh’s precincts and what transpired there, one cannot know truth from falsehood, or real plan from deception.¹¹¹

This validating function of apprehending the divine does not provide a complete answer to the question, for the prophet appears to achieve legitimacy through impertinence and audacity. In a poignant essay, Yochanan Muffs defines the prophet by a twin set of missions, to chastise the people but also to champion their cause.¹¹² To serve as their representative, the prophet may need to demonstrate the willingness to confront Yahweh, to look Yahweh in the eye. The prophet does so by looking on in Yahweh’s presence. One should not mistake such poise for brazenness. In ordinary circumstances, uninvited, unwanted looking amounts to an act of self-assertion. By the same token, reticent looking, shame, enacts self-abnegation. Ultimately, both kinds of viewers focus on themselves, the one refusing to acknowledge inferiority, the other dutifully, painfully, even cripplingly aware of it. However, in certain circumstances, for the sake of aims other than – more important than – the

not interpret at all, only report – like Isaiah and Ezekiel and unlike the dreamlike, symbolic mental visions referred to above, n. 105.

¹¹⁰ Rofé differentiates phenomenologically between what he terms the “enthusiasts” (from ἐν θεός), whose group “inspiration” (רוח בַּי) induces wild activity, and Micaiah, who, with everyday faculties intact, sees and hears Yahweh and his council (*The Prophetic Stories*, 142–152); compare the cross-cultural discussion and alternate set of terms in Simon B. Parker, “Possession-Trance and Prophecy in Pre-Exilic Israel,” *VT* 28 (1978) 271–285.

¹¹¹ For an alternate view comparing Micaiah and Zedekiah, see Karel van der Toorn, “The Iconic Book: Analogies Between the Babylonian Cult of Images and the Veneration of the Torah,” in *The Image and the Book*, 229–248, at 240 n. 29.

¹¹² Yochanan Muffs, “Who Will Stand in the Breach? A Study of Prophetic Intercession,” *Love and Joy: Law, Language and Religion in Ancient Israel* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992) 9–48.

“inter-view” itself and the shape it should take, the lowly, along with the superior, must forget or supersede the sense of self altogether.

In the human sphere, a king has around him people whose job entails advising him, even contradicting him, people who in order to serve most effectively must be able to rise above the normal proprieties and decorum and strike a more complex balance, people referred to on rare occasion in the Hebrew Bible by the substantivized title **רֵאִי פְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ**, “seers of the king’s face” (2 Kgs 25:19 = Jer 52:25; Esth 1:14).¹¹³ In a perilously more public arena, the diplomatic emissary stands in an impossibly delicate position, balanced precariously between projecting the strength of his sender and asserting his interests, on the one hand, and demonstrating deference and subservience to his host, on the other.¹¹⁴ In a cultic setting, the priest – the **קָרֵב** with regular access to Yahweh (Lev 10:3; Ezek 42:13; 43:19; also 40:46)¹¹⁵ – must resist all temptation to deviate from prescribed protocol and procedure, no matter how great the glory gained by his embellishment. In a frightful illustration, at the very inauguration of the Tabernacle and its priesthood, Nadab and Abihu ignite Yahweh’s ire, draw divine fire, until Yahweh, stoked and incensed, incinerates them and Moses pronounces the dreadful comment about Yahweh’s holy, awesome unapproachability (Lev 10:1–3).¹¹⁶ In a much later period, the *Mishnah* describes the following declaration made to the high priest before he embarks on the Purgation Day rituals:

We are emissaries of the court and you are our emissary and the emissary of the court; we adjure you in the name of He Who en-dwelled His name in this house that you will not change one detail of all that we instructed you (*m. Yoma* 1:5).

It further remarks that upon concluding the day’s service with his health intact, the high priest would celebrate a personal day of thanksgiving with his family (*m. Yoma* 7:4).

¹¹³ See KBR 2.1159b **רֵאִי** §14b. In Akkadian, a term for a class of palace officials (not necessarily the highest), *erib ekalli*, derived from *erēbu*, “to come, enter,” conveys a qualitatively noteworthy level of access (CAD E, 259, 292). Compare Ehrlich, *Randglossen*, 1.403–404.

¹¹⁴ Feel the drama in Elgavish, *The Diplomatic Service*, 171–219; see also Munn-Rankin, “Diplomacy in Western Asia,” 99–108; Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings*, 63–75.

¹¹⁵ Akkadian *erib bīti* denotes a class of temple functionaries (CAD E, 290–292); see n. 113 above.

¹¹⁶ For two different approaches to and discussions of this text, see Edward L. Greenstein, “Deconstruction and Biblical Narrative,” *Prooftexts* 9 (1989) 43–71 at 56–64; Baruch J. Schwartz, “Leviticus,” in *The Jewish Study Bible*, ed. A. Berlin and M. Z. Brettler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 224–225, 227.

In the divine visitation, whereas the regular person facing the deity becomes stupefyingly aware of his or her lowly self, the prophet recognizes the larger significance of the moment and effectively puts aside the sense of self in order the more fully to engage that moment.¹¹⁷ In this spirit, the story about prophets and prophecy in Numbers 12 describes Moses as the most humble man ever to walk the earth, ranks him as the most steadfast servant in Yahweh's household, and depicts him as speaking with Yahweh face to face (vv. 3, 6–8; see also Exod 33:11; Deut 34:10). Contrast the case of Elijah. When told that Yahweh will pass before him, he buries his face in his cloak; Yahweh then does not pass by but rather instructs Elijah to set out and appoint replacements for himself (1 Kgs 19:9–18).¹¹⁸

An inherent part of encountering Yahweh, of this “selfless looking,”¹¹⁹ the burden of prophecy, consists of its compelling nature. The substantive, vibrant divine word cannot remain the preserve of the individual. It must serve others, and the prophet must articulate it and disseminate it. Heralding the showdown with Amaziah the Bethel temple priest in Amos 7:12–15, Amos declares in 3:8:

A lion roars: who would not be terrified?

Yahweh speaks: who would not be called?

Like the fear propelling the deer before the roaring lion, so the word of Yahweh beats inside the prophet, forcing him to speak it out.¹²⁰ Jeremiah, bemoaning how Yahweh's word has made him a laughingstock, admits bitterly:¹²¹

ואמרתי לא אזכרנו, ולא אדבר עוד בשמו
והיה בלבי כאש בערת, עָצַר בעצמתי
ונלאיתי כְּלָכֶל, ולא אוכל

¹¹⁷ For the prophet as messenger, see James F. Ross, “The Prophet as Yahweh's Messenger,” in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg*, ed. B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962) 98–107. For the prophet as herald in particular, see John S. Holladay, Jr., “Assyrian Statecraft and the Prophets of Israel,” *HTR* 63 (1970) 29–51 (but reconsider the historical dimension of his argument).

¹¹⁸ What looks like a resumptive repetition of vv. 9–10 in vv. 13–14 suggests that this scene entered the text secondarily. Without it, Yahweh's response in vv. 15–18 appears much less of a judgment against Elijah and more like an acceptance of the implications of what he had said; but it does raise the question of Elijah's failure, which the interpolation then dramatizes.

¹¹⁹ I thank Jon Pahl for this elegant expression.

¹²⁰ See the literary and rhetorical analysis of the pericope by Shalom M. Paul, “Amos 3:3–8: The Irresistible Sequence of Cause and Effect,” *HAR* 7 (1983) 203–220; reprinted in *id.*, *Divrei Shalom*, 439–455.

¹²¹ The rhetoric of the passage expresses at the performative or linguistic level Jeremiah's shift from willful resistance to exhaustion. The opening line declares Jeremiah's

So I said I will not mention it, and I will not speak in his name anymore,
 But it became like a smoldering fire in my heart, constrained in my bones,
 And I tired out trying to contain [it], and could not overcome (Jer 20:7–9).

Standing there in the Temple, viewing majestic Yahweh and his fiery retinue, Isaiah cries not in terror but in horror, “Woe is me, for I am silent! For a man of impure lips am I and in the midst of a people of impure lips do I sit! For the King, Lord of Legions, have my own eyes beheld!” (Isa 6:5). Isaiah’s impure lips prevent him from relaying the vision. He requires divine intervention to purge his lips of their impurity and unleash the fiery word within; this is done by scalding his lips with a smoldering coal so hot that the seraph bearing it must use tongs (vv. 6–7). Purified, Isaiah cannot resist volunteering himself for the job of Yahweh’s emissary: “I heard the voice of Yahweh asking, ‘Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?’ I replied, ‘Here I am! Send me!’” (v. 8).¹²²

At the same time, the prophetic texts do not appear to represent the original or general commissioning of the prophet or even the generic form of such (if ever such a form existed). Rather, they seem to explain a drastic and disturbing prophetic mood. Like Micaiah, both Isaiah and Ezekiel paint their respective scenes as the background to prophecies of doom. Eager to deliver Yahweh’s word, Isaiah likely assumed it to contain a message of hope, and feels shocked and dismayed when instructed to confuse the people and confound their sense lest they repent for Yahweh is bent on destroying them (Isa 6:9–13; compare Jer 4:10). Thinking he could change Yahweh’s mind or at least mitigate the plan (compare Amos 7:1–6), Isaiah speaks up, but, underscoring Yahweh’s determination and the prophet’s role as accomplice in Yahweh’s plan, Isaiah’s initiative backfires and his words have the opposite effect. Yahweh spells out the extensive devastation that will befall the nation (Isa 6:11–13a). Similarly, Ezekiel’s experience prefigures his mission. Propped up, spo-

determination with a classic, full-blown parallelism. In the next line, the parallelism collapses into simple apposition; the apposite clause cackles onomatopoeically like the fire in its antecedent, but the alliteration – the use of a limited choice of consonants – also demonstrates that Jeremiah’s strength has begun to wane. The last line contracts even further to a small cluster of repeated syllables, indicating that his resistance has completely given way.

¹²² Compare Avigdor V. Hurowitz, “Isaiah’s Impure Lips and Their Purification in Light of Akkadian Sources,” *HUCA* 60 (1989) 39–89. The presentation of Isaiah’s prophetic experience appears to draw extensively on the priestly Purgation Day ritual in Leviticus 16, only to turn it inside out. For the fiery and harsh, rather than the dreamy and rosy, character of real, Yahwistic prophecy, see especially Jer 23:16–40. Schäfer demonstrates and highlights the persistence (and varieties) of the idea of an intimate relationship between looking upon the deity and conveying a message (*The Origins of Jewish Mysticism*, 336, 343–345, also 348–350, 353–354).

ken at, involuntarily commissioned, Ezekiel has a scroll of lamentation and woe stuffed down his throat by Yahweh (compare Jer 1:9; 15:15–18; and Num 5:23–24); much to his surprise and chagrin, he finds it as sweet as honey – and as sticky, too, for no words will come out of his mouth. The bitter essence of Ezekiel’s message consists of ominous silence and a series of baroque pantomimes before those around him (Ezek 2:1–5:4; 6:11; 8:1 etc.; compare Jer 15:1–16:8).¹²³ Most of what Ezekiel does have to verbalize addresses faraway Jerusalem (Ezek 5:5; 6:1; 7:1–2; 8:2–3; 11:1–13 etc.).¹²⁴ The vision-scenes, then, may serve to authenticate and justify the awkward missions in which they issue. They argue that only viewing intimates like these could herald such gloomy tidings and perhaps even play a macabre role in carrying them out.¹²⁵

V. *The etiquette of looking at Sinai and Horeb*

This lens of the etiquette of eye-contact between human and divine, during visit and visitation, in pilgrimage and prophecy, may help illuminate two narratives, Moses’ view of Yahweh in Exodus 33–34 and the Israelite nobles’ view of Yahweh in Exodus 24, which have posed long-standing riddles. The analysis occasions a new look at the Mount Horeb encounter recounted in Deuteronomy 5 as well.

In Exod 33:12–34:9, Moses negotiates for Yahweh’s immediate presence in Israel’s midst as they journey to Canaan, and he leverages his

¹²³ The unit in 3:17–21, severs 3:22 from 3:16a and seems out of place in the context of chapters 1–3 generally. See Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Hermeneia; trans. R. E. Clements; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 143–144; Haran, *The Biblical Collection*, 3.326–327, 362–363.

¹²⁴ On the extent of Ezekiel’s dismal prophetic message, see Baruch J. Schwartz, “Ezekiel’s Dim View of Israel’s Restoration,” *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* (ed. M. S. Odell and J. T. Strong; Atlanta; Society of Biblical Literature, 2000) 43–67.

¹²⁵ More radically, the prophecy in Isaiah 6 may serve to explain years of rosy prophecies that failed, foiled, as one possibility might have it, by Sennacherib’s campaign of 701 BCE; compare Robert P. Carroll, “Ancient Israelite Prophecy and Dissonance Theory,” *Numen* 24 (1977) 135–151, at 144–145; id., *When Prophecy Failed: Cognitive Dissonance Theory in the Prophetic Traditions of the Old Testament* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979) 130–146, esp. 132–138. In any case, an 8th century BCE Deir ‘Alla inscription telling of the seer Balaam son of Beor known from biblical literature (Numbers 22–24) contains these very elements, including an image of a cherub/seraph drawn upon the plaster over the first line – divinities visit the prophet and announce impending doom, the prophet goes into mourning, the people inquire into his activities, and he relays the message. For the text, see Ahituv, *Echoes from the Past*, 433–465; for a description of the cherub (fragment 14), see J. Hoftijzer and G. van der Kooij, eds., *Aramaic Texts from Deir ‘Alla* (Leiden: Brill, 1976) 165–166.

good standing in Yahweh's court to request a view of that presence.¹²⁶ Famously, Yahweh denies him the view: "You cannot look upon my face, for man cannot look upon me and live." But Yahweh will substitute for it physical proximity. He will pass by close enough to place a hand over Moses' eyes, and once he will have gotten far enough away and can no longer reach Moses' face to cover it, Moses can gain a glimpse of his twisting, receding back (recall how the footprints outside the temple at Ain Dara arouse a feeling of physical proximity).¹²⁷ If the passage does not constitute the sole representative of a divergent conception according to which Yahweh's face has an objective lethality to it, how might it fit into the etiquette model developed above? By what logic would Yahweh deny Moses the view he requests, yet agree to grant him physical proximity (and a glimpse of his back)?

In the royal sphere, one may not approach the king without first being called, or speak without being asked. Intimates like Haman and Esther must wait in Ahasuerus' courtyard (Esth 4:10–11; 6:1–5). Foreign envoys must go through proper channels and carefully arrange permission to come before the king.¹²⁸ In the cultic sphere, the high priest in Yahweh's abode must ever indicate his location, gently announcing his movements to and fro with softly tinkling bells on the hem of his robe (Exod 28:31–35); to enter Yahweh's immediate presence, he must follow a predetermined set of protocols (Lev 16:2). In the prophetic sphere, one does not find prophets summoning Yahweh to appear before them;¹²⁹ rather, Yahweh descends upon the prophet when it suits him. The problem in the case of Moses may very well inhere in his having requested

¹²⁶ See the formulations in Muffs, "Who Will Stand in the Breach?" 14–16 (but compare below, n. 130), and in Shmuel Ahituv, "The Face of YHWH" (Hebrew), in *Tehillah le-Moshe: Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Moshe Greenberg*, ed. M. Cogan and others (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997) 3*–11*, at 4*–5*. Hartenstein likens Moses' intercession to that of an advisor before the king (*Das Angesicht JHWHs*, 273–274).

¹²⁷ On the gigantic size of Yahweh's body, see Smith, "Like Deities, Like Temples," 16–17.

¹²⁸ See Elgavish, *The Diplomatic Service*, 176–177, 179.

¹²⁹ This general rule of the protocols of the prophetic encounter excludes oracular justice, a different scenario that requires a different set of protocols. In one conception, Yahweh lives in the heavens, and when Moses sets out to the Tent of Meeting seeking judicial resolution, Yahweh responds and descends to it for the occasion (Exod 33:7–11; see 18:13–26). In an alternate conception, Yahweh has descended from the heavens permanently to dwell in the Tabernacle set up for him (Exod 25:1–22; 29:42–46; 40:17–38), and Moses visits him there for legal instruction (Exod 34:29–35; Num 7:89; and Lev 24:10–23; Num 9:1–14; 15:32–36; 27:1–11; 36:1–12). For a suggestive anthropological treatment of the two different conceptions of the tent, see Israel Knohl, "Two Aspects of the Tent of Meeting," in *Tehillah le-Moshe*, 73–79.

the view. To initiate a request retains, indeed, presupposes a sense of self. It admits some hint of audacity, an over-stepping of bounds, the kind of trespass for which one could die (recall Exod 10:28). The view meant for public recitation to support the prophet and the divine word he brings must be initiated by Yahweh. One might render Yahweh's statement in Exod 33:20 in this spirit: "You cannot *simply* look upon my face, for man cannot *simply* look upon me and live." At the same time, Moses did bind up his request with his intercession for the people, seeking fully privileged audience as their ambassador. Therefore, Yahweh will allow Moses to feel his presence and to glimpse it. So read, the exchange exemplifies the way Yahweh will accompany the people on their journey to Canaan. His "face" will not go with them, they will not see his face in their midst, but he will remain close enough for them to sense his presence.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ When, in Exod 33:14a, Yahweh says, "My face will go," פני ילכו, it means, "My face will go from you, i. e., leave." Otherwise, Moses would not reply as he does in v. 15, "If your face *does not come* (with us), אם אין פניך הלכתי, do not bother to take us out of here." The continuation of Yahweh's words in v. 14b, "and I will leave you alone," likewise only makes sense on this understanding. For הלך with the sense "come," see Jer 36:14. The cognate verb in Akkadian also means both to go and to come; see CAD A/I, 302b–305b, 306b–308b, *alāku* §§1a, c, 2a–c. Biblical Hebrew has additional verbs of motion that do not inherently indicate a particular perspective or direction, for instance – with the same playful change in meaning – לק"ח in Exod 25:2: "Speak to the Israelites, let them *bring* (ויקחו) me a contribution; from every person whose heart so moves him shall you *receive* (תקחו) my contribution." See too שלח, "pulled," in Song 5:4; ברה, "run hither," in Song 8:14 (Shalom Paul, personal communication); בא אל פרעה, "Go to Pharaoh" in Exod 10:1; תבוא, "you will go" in Jer 20:6; לא, "I cannot go ... you go" in Jer 36:5–6; סק"ל (*piel*) means to throw stones both towards (2 Sam 16:6, 13) and away from (Isa 5:2; also 62:10). In any case, note how the Septuagint translates פנים in Exod 33:14–15 by αὐτός, and see Exod 33:20a and b; Deut 4:37; Isa 63:9 (compare MT and LXX). Compare, e. g., E. A. Speiser, "The Biblical Idiom *pānīm hōlekīm*," *JQR* 57 (1967) 515–517; Hartenstein, *Das Angesicht JHWHs*, 274–275. – The scene as a whole has long puzzled source-critics. Current documentary hypothesizers attribute the main part of it to J (Exod 33:12–23; 34:2–3, 4aβ, 5aβ–9); see Baden, *J, E, and the Redaction of the Pentateuch*, 167–171. For an argument that like E, which narrates the golden calf crisis at the climax of divine legislation at Mount Horeb, and P, which narrates priestly infraction at the climax of the Tabernacle inauguration at the foot of Mount Sinai, so too J told of a fundamental failure at the climactic moment of theophany at Mount Sinai and that it consisted of the people at large having rioted for a closer view of Yahweh, see for now Simeon Chavel, *Law and Narrative in Four Oracular Novellae in the Pentateuch: Lev 24:10–23; Num 9:1–14; 15:32–36; 27:1–11* (Hebrew; PhD diss., Hebrew University, 2006) 63–77, esp. 64–65, also v–vi (Engl. abstract). Compare Hartenstein (*Das Angesicht JHWHs*, 265–283), who analyzes Exodus 32–34 as a core text overlaid by successive additions – including 33:20 – which together debate the question of legitimate representation of Yahweh. In documentary terms, Hartenstein's analysis confuses J's story about how close the people may come to Yahweh himself to look upon him (not very) with E's story about the proper way to represent Yahweh in formal worship (without the plastic arts). From the point of view of the etiquette of eye-contact, Hartenstein's

The scene in Exod 24:1–2, 9–11b,¹³¹ in which Yahweh grants Moses and the Israelite nobles at Mount Sinai a special view of himself, probes the limits of these categories as well, fusing somewhat the prophetic and the pilgrimage, but not fully conforming to either. It could mean to prefigure and authorize both. Note how the expectation for a fatal reaction drives the rhetoric (vv. 10–11b):

ויראו את אלהי ישראל, ותחת רגליו כמעשה לבנת הספיר וכעצם השמים
לטהר, ואל אצילי בני ישראל לא שלח ידו, ויחזו את האלהים

They saw the God of Israel – and at his feet¹³² was like a work of sapphire, brilliant as the cast of the heavens¹³³ – but at the nobles of Israel he did *not* strike out; indeed, they beheld the Divine!

The narration works hard to convey and elicit a sense of wonder that the nobles looked at God and survived.¹³⁴ It begins this work in v. 10a by stating ever so baldly, “They looked at the God of Israel.” It inverts clause order within v. 11a to throw emphasis on the negation, which highlights the opening *waw* in ואל as disjunctive: “They looked at the

approach separates and reifies the subtleties and dynamics of different visit scenarios into conflicting theological tenets. Hartenstein does liken Moses’ role to that of royal advisor (ibid., 273–274), note the martial connotations of the expression פנים הלכים (ibid., 275–277), link the cluster of terms פנים, טוב, and כבוד in Exod 33:18–23 to throne-room language in the Psalms and elsewhere (ibid., 278–281), and point out the ironic inversion at the heart of that scene, in which Yahweh will present himself, as it were, before Moses’ face (ibid., 278).

¹³¹ Exod 24:1–2, 9–11, a vision scene, makes up a narrative thread separate and different from vv. 3–8, a covenant ceremony; see Kuenen, *The Composition of the Hexateuch*, 152–153, 259–262; Samuel R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (6th ed., 1897; repr. Cleveland and New York: Meridian, 1956, 1963) 31–33; Julius Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* (3rd ed.; Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1899, 1963) 86–89; J. Estlin Carpenter and G. Harford-Battersby, *The Hexateuch* (2 vols.; London: Longmans, Green, 1900) 2.118–119. August Dillmann adds that v. 11c, “they ate and they drank,” refers to the sacrifices offered in v. 5 as part of the covenant ceremony in vv. 3–8 and therefore belongs to that thread (*Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus* [3rd ed., ed. V. Ryssel; Leipzig: Hirzel, 1897] 288–289). Indications suggest that v. 2 joined vv. 1, 9–11 secondarily. Fleshed out along documentary lines, the vision scene takes place at Mount Sinai and belongs to J, whereas the covenant ceremony concludes the aural law-giving located at Mount Horeb, which belongs to E; see Schwartz and Baden (above, n. 24).

¹³² On תחת רגליו meaning “at his feet,” not *under* them, see Ehrlich, *Randglossen*, 1.363.

¹³³ In an unpublished paper, “Sapphire, Lapis, and Brightness,” graciously shared, Shawn Zelig Aster argues that the phrase לבנת הספיר means sapphire (plain ספיר referring to lapis), and for לטהר he establishes the sense of “clarity” (he uses “clearness” as in the King James Authorized and Revised versions) as the link between purity and brightness found in Ugaritic, Akkadian, Aramaic and Mishnaic Hebrew. Aster notes the expression “sparkling clean.” See also Winter, “Radiance”; Smith, “Like Deities, Like Temples,” 12.

¹³⁴ Compare Gesenius, *Jesaia*, 1.261.

God of Israel ... *and yet* at the nobles of Israel he did *not* strike out.” The continuation in v. 11b, ויחזו את האלהים, closes the encounter by repeating the statement in v. 10a that opened it, ויראו את אלהי ישראל, which has the effect of an exclamation point: “indeed, they beheld God!”¹³⁵

Striking a balance between looking and surviving, mediating the encounter, v. 10b fills in that the people did not gaze at God, but only glanced, then they averted their eyes towards the dazzling sapphire work. The base of Yahweh’s throne, according to Ezek 1:22–28; 10:1,¹³⁶ this sapphire work may have been so conceived to have just this effect, either to draw the onlookers’ glance down by its beauty or to blind them with its brilliance (or both). One way or the other, these good visitors kept their eyes downwards cast before their divine host, while he, so the implication goes, looked upon them.

And yet, to the degree that the clause in v. 10b explains why the nobles survived, it stands at cross-purposes with the sense of surprised wonder the passage works so methodically to achieve. Indeed, in the context of Exodus 19–24, the sapphire shows up “out of the blue.” The idea together with its formulation as a simile bear striking similarities to the conception, imagery and language of Ezek 1:22–28; 10:1, where they seem much more at home.¹³⁷ And the non-committal, uninformative *waw* joining it to the preceding statement that the Israelite nobles saw their deity looks like so much patch-work in an otherwise finely and tightly woven text.¹³⁸ Taken together, all these elements signal the presence of an interpolation.¹³⁹ If correctly identified as such, it indicates that one early reader found Israelites drinking in God’s visage too much to bear. Propriety called for correcting readers’ perception of the Israelite nobles’ experience: In accordance with God’s command back in v. 1 “you will bow from afar,” they did not gaze at God and

¹³⁵ A midrash by R. Phineas in *Peskita de Rav Kahana* (chap. 26 §9) captures the essence: “but at the nobles of Israel he did not strike out”: ergo – they were worthy of striking”; see Bernard Mandelbaum, ed., *Peskita de Rav Kahana* (2 vols., New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962) 2.396.

¹³⁶ Aster makes the case, on the basis of Mesopotamian parallels, that מעשה לבנת הספיר does not refer to a pavement, but rather a throne, more specifically, its base (“Sapphire, Lapis, and Brightness”).

¹³⁷ Compare Dillmann, *Exodus und Leviticus*, 288; Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs*, 89. On a possibly ancient Ugaritic relationship between sapphire and clarity, see Umberto Cassuto, “The Palace of Baal in Tablet II AB of Ras Shamra,” *Biblical and Oriental Studies* (2 vols., trans. I. Abrams, Jerusalem: Magnes, 1973–1975) 2.132.

¹³⁸ On the grammatical and logical relationships between v. 10a and b, see Ehrlich, *Randglossen*, 1.363.

¹³⁹ On the use of particles as a formal means to interpolate text, see Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*; Yair Zakovitch, *An Introduction to Inner-Biblical Interpretation* (Hebrew; Even-Yehuda: Reches, 1992).

by his grace live. They looked quickly down; there was nothing to forgive.¹⁴⁰

An earlier, more pointed re-imagining of the experience in Exod 24:1–2, 9–11b may exist in the retelling of the law-giving in Deuteronomy 5.¹⁴¹ Moses reviews the events that had taken place at Mount Horeb, and emphasizes that Yahweh had spoken to the Israelites **פנים בפנים** (v. 4). The phrase does not mean “face to face,” since further on in the same speech Moses recalls and reaffirms the reaction of the people, which had laid particular stress on the fact that they did *not* see Yahweh but rather heard his voice emanating from the midst of a fire (vv. 18–23; see also 4:9–15, 32–36; 9:9–10; 10:1–5; 18:9–17). Use of the formulation elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (Num 14:14; Isa 52:8; also Exod 30:34) indicates that it means here “each and every face (equally),” which continues well the line of thought impressed in v. 3: “Not with our ancestors did Yahweh make this covenant, but with us, we who are all alive here today.”¹⁴² The expression **פנים בפנים**, then, discounts the kind of face-to-face encounter, **פנים אל פנים**, described in Exod 24:1–2, 9–11b. Neither the people at large nor a select, representative group saw Yahweh at all.

However, the formulation **פנים בפנים**, “each and every face (equally),” appears to have left one early reader of this version of the events feeling uncomfortable, in all likelihood precisely because of its similarity to the expression **פנים אל פנים**, “face to face.” Misconstrued as such, v. 4 would contradict the rest of the passage, which, as said, stresses the chiefly aural nature of the experience. Moreover, to a later reader who knew the other traditions in the Torah it would negate the exceptional quality of Moses’ prophecy, singled out as having consisted of seeing Yahweh “face to face,” **פנים אל פנים** (Exod 33:11; Deut 34:10), and speaking with him “mouth to mouth,” **פה אל פה**, while looking directly at his visage, **ה' יביט תמנת** (Num 12:5–8, contrasted with

¹⁴⁰ Similarly, perhaps, in Isa 49:2; 51:16, Isaiah II draws on Exod 33:21–22, but puts respectful distance between Yahweh’s hand and the messenger he shields with it; compare Ahituv, “The Face of YHWH,” *6 n. 8.

¹⁴¹ Along documentary lines, Baden demonstrates the heavy dependence of the Deuteronomic text on the Elohistic history in this episode and more broadly, but he argues well that D also draws on the Yahwistic history – as a separate document (see above, n. 24). Hartenstein notes the deliberate echo of Exod 33:20 in Deut 5:24 (*Das Angesicht JHWHs*, 281 n. 36).

¹⁴² On Exod 30:34, see Rashi; Ibn Ezra (the short commentary) and Bekhor Shor (M. Cohen, ed., *Mikra’ot Gedolot ‘Haketer’: Exodus, part II* [Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 2007] 130–131); Dillmann, *Exodus und Leviticus*, 362–363; Bruno Baentsch, *Exodus-Leviticus-Numeri* (Handkommentar zum Alten Testament; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1903) 264.

Amos 7:1–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–16; Zech 1:8–2:9; 4:1–6:8). Also, the idea of Yahweh’s face publicly exposed for the masses to glimpse and gawk at could seem cheap and undignified (explicitly – and dangerously – so in Exod 19:10–13, 20–25). Such reasoning likely led the reader – formally identifiable by the signature exegetical hook “at that time,” *בעת ההוא* – to insert Moses into the text and into the encounter as the intermediary between the Israelites and Yahweh, with the following sense in mind: “Face to face did Yahweh speak with you at the mountain from within the fire – *i. e.*, with me standing between Yahweh and you at that time to tell you Yahweh’s word because you were afraid of the fire and did not ascend the mountain – saying ...” (v. 5). The Israelites did not hear Yahweh’s ten commandments directly from Yahweh, but through Moses. In establishing this mediation, the interpolator has qualified the expression *פנים בפנים* and by extension *פנים אל פנים* merely to signal in a general, idiomatic way Yahweh’s closeness to Israel.¹⁴³

VI. Descriptions of looking in a text-centered culture

The stricter etiquette of eye-contact that led to the interpolation of Exod 24:10–11 and Deut 5:4–5 informed the way over the centuries that followed many additional transmitters of biblical text understood the text and reshaped it.¹⁴⁴ The translation of Exod 24:10–11 in the Septuagint, prepared not that long after the interpolations discussed, provides an instructive example.¹⁴⁵ It demonstrates the extent to which bald formulations troubled readers, and displays the various specific techniques they employed to re-dress them:

¹⁴³ Compare especially August Dillmann, *Numeri, Deuteronomium und Josua* (2nd ed., Leipzig: Hirzel, 1886) 265–266; Samuel E. Loewenstamm, “The Formula ‘At That Time’ in the Opening Speeches of the Book of Deuteronomy” (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 38 (1969) 99–104.

¹⁴⁴ In this vein, note that the story of the binding of Isaac in Genesis 22 has incorporated in v. 14 the popular saying, “at the mountain where Yahweh is seen,” but the force of having Abraham state immediately beforehand, “Yahweh will see,” namely, the truth about Abraham’s faith in Yahweh, preemptively reinterprets the popular idiom as “at the mountain of Yahweh, it (*i. e.*, the truth) will be seen” (hence the Masoretic syntax). Indeed, Yahweh in this story does not appear to Abraham but rather calls to him from the heavens (v. 11).

¹⁴⁵ Scholars generally agree on the 3rd century BCE as the date of the Greek translation of the “Five Books of Moses”; see Emanuel Tov, “The Septuagint,” *Mikra*, ed. M. J. Mulder (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988) 161–188, at 162; further, Jennifer M. Dines, *The Septuagint* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2004) 27–62, also 136–138.

Exod 24	MT		LXX	
v. 10a	ויראו את אלהי ישראל	They saw the God of Israel	They saw the <i>place where there had stood the</i> God of Israel	καὶ εἶδον τὸν τόπον οὗ εἰστήκει ἕκει ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραηλ
v. 10b	ותחת רגליו כמעשה לבנת הספיר וכעצם השמים לטהר	and at his feet was like a work of sapphire, brilliant as the cast of the heavens	and under his feet (was) like a work of sapphire, brilliant as the appearance of the firmament of the heavens	καὶ τὰ ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ ὡσεὶ ἔργον πλίνθου σαυφείρου καὶ ὡσπερ εἶδος στερεώματος τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τῆ καθαριότητι
v. 11a	ואל אצילי בני ישראל לא שלח ידו	but at the nobles of Israel he did not strike out	and of the chosen of Israel <i>not even one was missing</i>	καὶ τῶν ἐπιλέκτων τοῦ Ἰσραηλ οὐ διεφώνησεν οὐδὲ εἶς
v. 11b	ויחזו את האלהים	they beheld God	they <i>were</i> beheld <i>in the place of</i> God	καὶ ὤφθησαν ἐν τῷ τόπῳ τοῦ θεοῦ

The translator cloaked the naked statement in v. 10a, “they saw the God of Israel” (ויראו את אלהי ישראל), with the many-layered gloss, “they saw the *place where there had stood the* God of Israel” (καὶ εἶδον τὸν τόπον οὗ εἰστήκει ἕκει ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραηλ). Troping “the God of Israel” by a fixed point, “the place” (ὁ τόπος), the translator distances God temporally with the pluperfect “had stood” (εἰστήκει) and spatially with the demonstrative “there” (ἕκει). They saw not the God of Israel, but the place under his feet; not where he stands now, but where he once had stood; and not here but there – footprints in the distant sand. In v. 11b, the translator introduced a passive construction, inverting the nobles from observers to observed, and again glossed “the God of Israel” as his location. The nobles did not behold God; rather, “they *were beheld in the place of* God” (καὶ ὤφθησαν ἐν τῇ τόπῳ τοῦ θεοῦ). Like the beloved who reaches for the latch to let her lover in only to grasp a handful of dripping myrrh (Song 5:5–6), the Septuagint’s nobles arrive in time only to see God’s footprints, the place where he has just stood. He may have been there, but now he is gone; the only one to be seen at all is the one left behind (recall again the footprints outside the temple at Ain Dara).¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ For brief but useful comments on the emotive value of representative traces of

Given the piety that so clearly moves the Greek translator's idea of what must have happened, what literary feature triggered his version of the text? What linguistic hook caught his exegetical eye? Most likely, the clause about the brilliant sapphire work at God's feet in v. 10b, specifically, the non-committal, uninformative *waw* that links it to the rest of the passage. As the weak link in an otherwise strong rhetorical chain, the conjunctive *waw* may have drawn the translator to grasp it as the explicative *waw*: "They saw the God of Israel, *that is*, at his feet (was) like a work of sapphire." In this reading, the sapphire work they looked at *substitutes* for looking at God – not one and *then* the other, but one and *not* the other. The Septuagint translator reasoned further that, if in fact they looked only at the sapphire work, then they must not have seen God's feet either, for that would count as seeing God, so the phrase "at his feet" must refer to where he had stood. God was not there for them to see. By the same logic, it would make no sense for the narrative to state even idiomatically that God did not raise his hand against them. Therefore, the translator rendered the verse: "not one of them died."¹⁴⁷

The passive-plus-preposition rendering of this passage recurs in comparable passages throughout the Septuagint.¹⁴⁸ Awareness of its existence, development, and role leads to the recognition of additional examples in the Masoretic and Samaritan manuscript traditions. These examples – in the *consonants* of the text, not its vowel pointing – must likewise come from the Hellenistic period, if not earlier.

(1) At both Exod 34:24 and Deut 31:11, MT has the potentially ambiguous consonantal text לְרִאיוֹת אֵת פְּנֵי ה', but the Samaritan Torah

the absent beloved in this context, even shadows and footprints, see Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 3–5, esp. 4 and n. 4.

¹⁴⁷ For διαφωνέω, "be missing, lost" as referring to death, see J. A. L. Lee, *A Lexical Study of the Septuagint Version of the Pentateuch* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars, 1983) 82; cited – with greater certainty than expressed by Lee himself – in *La Bible d'Alexandrie: l'Exode*, ed. A. le Boulluec and P. Sandevour (Paris: Cerf, 1989) 247; less certain again is John W. Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1990) 385–386. Possibly, the notion created by the passive reading, that all the chosen ones appeared or showed up, helped determine the precise trajectory of the associations: of those selected to appear, every single one of them did so. Such an interpretation would establish their worthiness to appear and lend the narrative normative force for the future: like these invitees, every male will have to show up as commanded, and none must give God reason to prevent him from doing so. As the editor of Psalm 24 put it: "Who can ascend the mount of Yahweh, and who can stand in his holy place? The clean of hands and clear of heart" (vv. 3–4), on which see further above, n. 71.

¹⁴⁸ In addition to all the pilgrimage passages revocalized in MT, see the deliberate translation of Ps 63:3 כִּן בְּקִדְשׁ חַיִּיתִיךָ in LXX 62:3 as οὕτως ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ ὤφθην σοι. On the validity of equating the phrase אֵת פְּנֵי with the preposition לְפָנַי, see above, n. 57.

reads להראות, which delimits the infinitive as *nip'al* “to be seen” and the clause that follows it, את פני ה', as the prepositional clause “before Yahweh.”¹⁴⁹

(2) According to 1 Sam 1:22, Hannah says to Elkanah that when Samuel has been weaned she will accompany Elkanah on his annual visit to the temple at Shiloh and, fulfilling her vow, deposit Samuel there: עולם עד יגמל הנער והבאתיו ונראָה את פני ה' ויָשב שם עד. As discussed in Section II, Luzzatto and Geiger recommend repointing MT's passive verb in the clause ונראָה את פני ה' (“he will be seen, appear before Yahweh”) to read ונראָה את פני ה' (“we will see, visit the face of Yahweh”). The grammatical acumen of one scholar has led him to notice the long-overlooked (and ironic) problem that the verb reconstructed has the form *waw* + prefixed pattern (“imperfect”); however, between the verbs ויָשב and והבאתיו – both of the form *waw* + non-prefixed pattern (“perfect”) – must come similarly וראינו.¹⁵⁰ Though this scholar did not consider it, his comment implies that originally the text did have a verb with the correct form – וראה את פני ה' (“I will bring him [the boy Samuel], he will see, visit the face of Yahweh, and he will stay there in perpetuity”) – and a scribe added the prefix *nun* of *nip'al* to make it passive, ונראָה את פני ה' (“he will be seen, appear before Yahweh”).

(3) A slightly different kind of revision changed the object clause rather than the verb, but with the same aim and effect. Out of all the pilgrimage passages, MT Exod 23:17 contains the sole Hebrew instance of the prepositional clause אל פני rather than the potentially ambiguous direct object clause את פני that appears in the rest. Moreover, the Samaritan Torah at 23:17 reads את פני; so does the parallel verse in MT 34:23, although 34:18–26 as a whole effects a systematic revision of 23:15–19.¹⁵¹ The preposition אל in MT 23:17 emerges, then, as a secondary touch-up, the force of which necessitates reading the preceding verb as a *nip'al* with passive sense.

Taken all together, the changes in all these texts attest the pervasiveness in the Hellenistic period of a stricter etiquette of eye-contact – and

¹⁴⁹ So in most of the manuscripts at Exod 34:24 and in all at Deut 31:11. On להראות as infinitive passive and את פני as preposition “with,” see the discussions in Ze'ev Ben-Hayyim, *A Grammar of Samaritan Hebrew – Based on the Recitation of the Law in Comparison with the Tiberian and Other Jewish Traditions* (Jerusalem: Magnes; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000) §§2.14.16, 2.14.18, 7.3.2 (pp. 217–218, 327). See further above, n. 83.

¹⁵⁰ See Na'eh, “Did the *Tannaim*,” 415; compare Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley, 344–345, 347–348, 353, §112a, c, p, oo.

¹⁵¹ See Bar-On (Gesundheit), “The Festival Calendars in Exodus XXIII 14–19 and XXXIV 18–26.”

its hermeneutic vitality.¹⁵² Subsequent centuries saw this etiquette grow even more restrictive. The Aramaic translations employed a plethora of circumlocutions, and deployed them far beyond passages about pilgrimage, essentially, wherever Yahweh acts or so much as speaks. As Luzzatto argued regarding Onkelos, and Michael Klein amplified a century later regarding the so-called Palestinian Targums of the Torah, the impulse behind the formulations does not anticipate the philosophical monotheism championed by Maimonides; rather, it seeks to protect the dignity of the divine.¹⁵³ Indeed, one may recognize just this kind of roundabout language from the Hebrew Bible itself, with reference to all-too-human kings. Not only does it characterize speech by, to, or about kings in the Aramaic portions of Ezra and Daniel, but the author of the book of Esther made deliberate use of it to satiric effect, drawing the caricature of an extravagantly exalted king and his grotesque etiquette of access in a parody of Persian manners.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Compare Luzzatto and Geiger (above, n. 57); Charles T. Fritsch, *The Anti-Anthropomorphisms of the Greek Pentateuch* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943), esp. 14, 45–46; id., “A Study of the Greek Translation of the Hebrew Verbs ‘To See’, with Deity as Subject or Object,” *Eretz Israel* 16 (1982) 51*–56*; Staffan Olofsson, *God is My Rock: A Study of Translation Technique and Theological Exegesis in the Pentateuch* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1990) 17–19; Jan Joosten, “To See God: Conflicting Exegetical Tendencies in the Septuagint,” in *Die Septuaginta – Texte, Kontexte, Lebenswelten: Internationale Fachtagung veranstaltet von Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D). Wuppertal 20.–23. Juli 2006*, ed. M. Karrer and W. Kraus (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) 287–299.

¹⁵³ Samuel D. Luzzatto, *Oheb Ger* (Hebrew; 2nd ed.; Cracow: Joseph Fischer, 1895) §§ 19–20, pp. 11–14; Michael L. Klein, *Anthropomorphisms and Anthropopathisms in the Targum of the Pentateuch with Parallel Citations from the Septuagint* (Hebrew; Jerusalem: Makor, 1982); also id., “The Translation of Anthropomorphisms and Anthropopathisms in the Targumim,” in *Congress Volume: Vienna 1980*, ed. J. A. Emerton (SVT 32; Leiden, Brill, 1981) 162–177 (repr. in *ibid.*); before them, Nachmanides, at Gen 46:1; but see especially Friedman, “*šēlem, dēmūt wetabnūt*,” 89–152, along with its strong qualification of Klein’s work (p. 109 n. 108). Also relevant are Louis Jacobs, *Principles of the Jewish Faith: An Analytical Study* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1964) 121–123; Marc B. Shapiro, “Maimonides’ Thirteen Principles: The Last Word in Jewish Theology?” *The Torah U’Madda Journal* 4 (1993) 187–242, at 191–194; David Stern, “*Imitatio Hominis*: Anthropomorphism and the Character(s) of God in Rabbinic Literature,” *Prooftexts* 12 (1992) 151–174; Alon Goshen-Gottstein, “The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature,” *HTR* 87 (1994) 171–195; and above all Yair Lorberbaum, *Image of God – Halakhah and Aggadah* (Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Schocken, 2004), which has rich discussions of multitudinous Rabbinic passages and extensive bibliography together demonstrating the live Rabbinic anthropomorphic imagination of God (its main thesis – a fully worked out theurgic conceptualization in rabbinic thought – is, to my mind, not quite convincing).

¹⁵⁴ On Aramaic in the royal sphere as the provenance of this distancing language, see Michael Klein, “The Preposition 𐤒𐤓𐤑 (‘Before’) A Pseudo-Anti-Anthropomorphism in the Targums,” *JTS* 30 (1979) 502–507. On the narrative of Esther, especially its

At the very same time, though, as made manifest by the material cited throughout this study, early Jewish discourse continues to esteem and utilize visualization – looking upon the embodied divine – as a means and medium of religious expression in general and an essential component of pilgrimage in particular.¹⁵⁵ Two coins from 4th century BCE Yehud illustrate the point. One has on one side nothing but an ear, and a surprising consensus holds it represents Yahweh listening to the pleas and prayers of his supplicants.¹⁵⁶ The second coin has a figure seated on a winged wheel, facing right, with its hand outstretched as the perch for some bird (of prey?). In the lower right corner, the profile of a male figure's head faces left towards the feet of the seated figure. Recalling imagery both from the biblical books Ezekiel and Daniel and from coins of Zeus from this period, scholars find it likely that the seated figure represents Yahweh; in the large face in the lower right corner they perceive a graphic play on the name Peniel, expressing the presence of divinity.¹⁵⁷ In the Jacob story Peniel marks the site where a human looked at God, so the face might depict a human being, a man of Yehud, looking at God, and, like the nobles of Exod 24:10–11, he looks at God's feet.¹⁵⁸

Several Jewish writings in and around 1st century CE Alexandria indicate the development of a tradition that gave national significance to Jacob's renaming as Israel. This tradition, tapped by the author of *The Prayer of Joseph* and by Philo, understood both national names *ישראל* and *יִשְׂרָאֵל* to refer to looking at God, either as contractions of *איש ראה אל*, "the man who looks at God," or as derivations of the verb *שׁוּר*, "to see, look."¹⁵⁹ The tradition may combine the name given to

style, as a parody of Persian literature and culture, see Harold Fisch, *Poetry with a Purpose: Biblical Poetics and Interpretation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988) 8–14.

¹⁵⁵ See, for example, Daniel Boyarin, "The Eye in the Torah: Ocular Desire in Mid-rashic Hermeneutic," *Critical Inquiry* 16 (1990) 532–550; Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God*; Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) 74–124; Pedaya, "Seeing, Falling, Singing;" Halbertal, *Concealment and Revelation*, 13–27; Anderson, "Towards a Theology," 8–24.

¹⁵⁶ Meshorer, *A Treasury of Jewish Coins*, 11–13, pl. 3. no. 18. For the connection with Zeus, see Arthur B. Cook, *Zeus – A Study in Ancient Religion* (repr. 2 vols., New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1964–1965) 1.232–237. The coin, though, does not bear the legend "Yahu," but "Yehud"; see E. L. Sukenik, "Paralipomena Palaestina," *JPOS* 14 (1934) 178–184, pls. I–III.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 2–4, pl. 1 no. 1.

¹⁵⁸ Thanks to Froma Zeitlin for inspiring this suggestion.

¹⁵⁹ See Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Prayer of Joseph," *Map Is Not Territory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978; orig. publ. 1968) 24–66, at 37–40; *Old Testament*

Jacob by the divine figure he bested, “Israel,” with Jacob’s explanation of the name Peniel that he gives to the site: “for I have seen God face to face” (Gen 32:29, 31). Alternately, though scholars seem not to have considered it, behind the tradition may stand the other passage in which Jacob receives his new name “Israel,” Gen 35:1–10. In its canonical, composite form, this text hints at a causal link between “the God who appeared to” Jacob (vv. 1, 6–7) and the new name God now gives Jacob, “Israel” (v. 10).¹⁶⁰

A Rabbinic midrash in a much later collection gives fullest expression to the idea of Israel as a nation of lookers, to the social etiquette and significance of looking – to the allure of access and to its intimacy. According to the midrash, the Queen of Sheba devises a series of tests for Solomon to demonstrate his wisdom, specifically, his powers of discernment. In one such test, Solomon must distinguish between Israelites and non-Israelites in a homogeneous-looking group. To do so, he rolls back the curtains of the Holy of Holies to reveal before their eyes the ark of God. The non-Israelites prostrate themselves face-down entirely, but the Israelites bow at the waist so they can crane their necks and see.¹⁶¹

In *b. Yoma* 54a, R. Qetina gives graphic shape to the significant intimacy of the ancient mythic moment: To the Israelites on pilgrimage the priests would expose the Temple, right down to the two cherubim entwined in that most loving of embraces, whereupon the priests would

Pseudepigrapha, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1985) 2.699–714, at 703, 705–710, 713; also Gerhard Dellling, “The ‘One Who Sees God’ in Philo,” in *Nourished with Peace: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism in Memory of Samuel Sandmel* (Chico, California: Scholars, 1984) 27–41; C. T. R. Hayward, *Interpretations of the Name Israel in Ancient Judaism and Some Early Christian Writings: From Victorious Athlete to Heavenly Champion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 69, 156–219 (sincere thanks to John Gager for setting me on the trail of these sources and their significance). For יִשְׂרָאֵל as another name for Jacob-Israel, see especially Isa 44:2. For שר = שר, see also *Gen. Rab.* §78, on 32:29, where the lemma כִּי שָׁרִיתָ עִם אֱלֹהִים triggers the motif that Jacob’s face has been sculpted up above, i. e., before God, so that God and Jacob may look at each other (Theodore and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba*, 2.921); but compare Friedman’s attractive suggestion that שָׁרִיתָ sounds like שר, which means חֶק, the term used in the midrash (“*šélem, dēmūt wetabnūt*,” 126).

¹⁶⁰ Compare, e. g., Simcha Kogut, “Midrashic Derivations regarding the Transformation of the Names Jacob and Israel according to Traditional Jewish Exegesis: Semantic and Syntactic Aspects,” in *Tehillah le-Moshe*, 219*–233*, esp. 219*, 226*–233*.

¹⁶¹ Baruch Visotzky, ed., *Midrash Mishle* (Hebrew; New York; Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1990) 6–7; Engl. trans., Burton L. Visotzky, *The Midrash on Proverbs* (New York and London: Yale University Press, 1992) 19. The series of tests posed by the Queen of Sheba builds upon and furthers the linguistic and conceptual play between physical cutting, juridical deciding and intellectual discerning that sits at the heart of the original tale of Solomon’s wisdom in 1 Kgs 3:16–28.

pronounce, “so does the Omnipresent love you.”¹⁶² Some scholars have worked to build a case that, historically, priests of the early Jewish period really did reveal to pilgrims the inside of the Temple, either throwing back its curtains or moving its furniture outside, and that competing factions criticized and resisted the practice.¹⁶³ One might counter that R. Qetina, smitten by the palpable absence of the divine, imagined elegiacally an intimate past of direct gazing.¹⁶⁴ Whichever the case, contrary to the conservative vocalization traditions and translation techniques, the midrash exemplifies deep Rabbinic comfort with the notion of visiting as viewing and with rendering it in highly charged terms.

Consistent with this mode of thought and discourse, several midrashim dramatize the violation of the “etiquette of eye-contact.” One explains the death of Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu at the investiture of the Tabernacle in Lev 10:1–2 by linking it to the prototypical pilgrimage viewing described in Exod 24:1–11. In the current, conflated text of the canonical Torah, the scene closes with the Israelite nobles looking upon God and eating and drinking, which suggests that they behaved in vulgar, cavalier fashion, insufficiently impressed and deferential:

R. Hoshaya said: Maybe they brought cake with them on their way up (Mount) Sinai that it should say “they beheld God, and they ate and they drank”!? Rather, it indicates that they feasted their eyes on the Shekinah like a person staring at his friend while eating and drinking.

R. Tanhuma said: It indicates that they fed their hearts and stood on their legs and feasted their eyes upon the Shekinah.¹⁶⁵

By implication, the remark in the narrative that God did not kill them does not express joyous wonder. It means to suggest that God has not done so *yet*, but he will repay their insolence in the future when they warrant it (just as he says about the golden calf sinners, in Exod 32:34).

¹⁶² See also *b. Ber.* 7a. On Rabbinic eroticism in looking, see Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 37 n. 71. On the eroticism in the Mystical vision of enthronement, see *ibid.*, 98–105. See also Moshe Weinfeld, “Feminine Features in the Imagery of God in Israel: The Sacred Marriage and the Sacred Tree,” *VT* 46 (1996) 515–529.

¹⁶³ Israel Knohl, “Post-Biblical Sectarianism and the Priestly Schools of the Pentateuch: The Issue of Popular Participation in the Temple Cult on Festivals,” in *The Madrid Qumran Congress: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Madrid, 18–21 March, 1991*, ed. J. Trebolle Barrera and L. V. Montaner (2 vols.; Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill; Madrid: Editorial Complutense, 1992) 2.601–609; Na’eh, “Did the *Tannaim*,” 417 n. 1; Anderson, “Towards a Theology,” 12–24.

¹⁶⁴ For such a characterization of midrash generally, see Boyarin, “The Eye in the Torah,” esp. 541–550. On late-antique Christianity, see Georgia Frank, “The Pilgrim’s Gaze in the Age Before Icons,” in *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. R. S. Nelson (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 98–115.

¹⁶⁵ Mandelbaum, *Pesikta de Rav Kahana*, chap. 26 §9 (2.396).

Another midrash contrasted the two priests with their uncle, the prophet and law-giver Moses:

R. Joshua of Siknin in the name of R. Levi:

Moses did not feast his eyes on the Shekinah and (so later) benefited from the Shekinah

Nadab and Abihu feasted their eyes on the Shekinah, and (so later) did not benefit from the Shekinah.¹⁶⁶

In a third, triggered by an extra word referring to “seeing,” Isaac earned the blindness that beset him late in life (Gen 27:1) way back upon the altar (22:1–19). With Abraham’s arm raised high, poised to slaughter him, Isaac peered into the heavens and looked at God. Compared to one who spies the king on an aimless stroll, he looked at God, the midrash seems to say, askance.¹⁶⁷

How might one explain this bifurcation in approach, the simultaneous development of seemingly antithetical positions, in which some authorities dull the bluntness of looking language while others vivify and extend it? One may perhaps understand it as a function of the different circumstances of the rendering, specifically so in an age of increased and ever-increasing “text-centeredness.”¹⁶⁸ From the Persian

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 396–397. The midrash contains an expansion specifying when Moses in private humbly did not feast his eyes and when he later benefited from it in public recognition of his stature:

Did not feast (as it says): “Moses hid his face” (Exod 3:6). *Benefited* (as it says): “Moses did not know that the skin of his face was glowing” (34:29). Moreover: “Moses hid his face because *he was afraid* ...” (3:6), (therefore) “*They were afraid* to approach him” (34:30); “... *to look*” (3:6), (therefore) “and upon the very image of God *does he look*” (Num 12:8).

¹⁶⁷ *Gen. Rab.* §65, on 27:1 (Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba*, 2.719–720). Recall that such an unfeeling stroll unleashes a devastating chain of events in 2 Sam 11:1–2.

¹⁶⁸ On “text-centeredness” and a useful set of related terms and concepts, see Moshe Halbertal, *The People of the Book: Canon, Meaning and Authority* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1997) 1–10. For some manifestations of growing “text-centeredness” in early Judaism, see Alexander Rofé, “The Piety of the Torah-Disciples at the Winding-Up of the Hebrew Bible: Josh 1:8; Ps 1:2; Isa 59:21,” in *Bibel in jüdischer und christlicher Tradition*, ed. H. Merklein and others (Frankfurt: Hain, 1993) 78–85; Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, 49–99; Steven Fraade, “Interpretive Authority in the Studying Community at Qumran,” *JJS* 44 (1993) 46–69; Albert I. Baumgarten, *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 1997) 114–151; Tom Thatcher, “Literacy, Textual Communities and Josephus’ *Jewish War*,” *JSJ* 29 (1998) 123–142. On the question of the synagogue in this period and the impact of the Torah text on its activities, see Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue – The First Thousand Years* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005) 146–162, 398–405; compare Schwartz, *ibid.*, 215–225. On the roots of Jewish “text-centeredness” in the Judahite Deuteronomistic revolution, see Haran, *The Biblical Collection*, 2.170–184; 1.95–96; also Bernard M. Levinson, “The First Constitution:

period on in Yehud's single-temple society, the main medium of regular religious experience underwent a shift from the encounter with three-dimensional cult objects to the written and performed word. For those public activities focused primarily on the text and its contents *per se*, the people engaged in transmitting the text and in preparing copies for public recitation and consumption would have been more likely to have developed a heightened concern that the text not express itself too directly and, moreover, not encourage unchecked, undignified envisaging of God. By contrast, public preachers, who sought to inspire their audience and bring a sense of God's sanctifying, blessed presence into their midst, and engaged in shared contemplation of bits of text in order to do so, would have been more likely willingly and deliberately to conjure up redolent imagery of God and to activate that old locus of communal identity and meaning, formerly the hallmark of temples and the like, the intimacy between God and Israel expressed in mutual looking.¹⁶⁹

Rethinking the Origins of Rule of Law and Separation of Powers in Light of Deuteronomy," *Cardozo Law Review* 27 (2006) 1853–1888; id., "The Reconceptualization of Kingship in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History's Transformation of Torah," *VT* 51 (2001) 511–534; and the thought-provoking argument by Steven Weitzman, "Sensory Reform in Deuteronomy," in *Religion and the Self in Antiquity*, ed. D. Brakke and others (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2005) 123–139. See also van der Toorn, "The Iconic Book." At the same time, on the continued ideological significance of the Temple, see Martin Goodman, "The Temple in First Century CE Judaism," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, 459–468. From the perspective of Egyptian Jewry, see Allen Kerkeslager, *Jewish Pilgrimage and Jewish Identity in Hellenistic and Early Roman Egypt* (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1997) esp. 8–30.

¹⁶⁹ Compare Boyarin, "The Eye in the Torah," 532–534.