

The Reinvention of God:
Stories of an Exiled People

by

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For my mother, who is constantly finding new ways to believe.

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Abstract

My thesis argues that in the Biblical Apocrypha, the symbol of God is constantly being reinvented as a result of the social and religious instability induced by the Jewish Diaspora. This is illustrated through conflicting portrayals of the character of God in both conservative and radical revisions to existing cultural narratives. The texts examined in this thesis display written evidence of a then-unsettled religious climate and invoke questions about the fundamental nature of the Godhead. Each text works towards a different solution to the issues raised by Diaspora, which include questions of faith, covenant, and land, as well as anxiety about foreign cultures and belief systems.

I wish to argue that the sacred symbol of God is a social construction as well as a literary character. He is generated through a cultural narrative that requires a combined methodology of textual and historical analysis. It is therefore necessary to examine the apocryphal texts from a perspective that demonstrates the impact of social situations on the literary expression of God. As stories pass from generation to generation, they undergo minor changes as a result of circumstantial needs for updates and revisions. Similarly, as God's story progresses, the character symbol of God changes to suit the needs of the people who believe in Him.

I have structured the ways in which the Apocrypha responds to the events of Diaspora according to two symbols for God: the war God of the Torah, and the God of the law. Chapter One of this thesis explores the Book of Judith, whose narrative revives an ancient symbol of God to demonstrate its ability to succeed even in the present time, portraying a traditional relationship between man and God as the solution to Diaspora. The Book of Judith would return the war God of the Torah to the Jews in order to forcefully regain the land. Chapter Two counters this approach with two radical texts, the Book of Tobit and the Book of Susanna, which make substantial revisions to the existing belief system in order to accommodate Diaspora conditions. The Book of Tobit demonstrates that if one is proactive about their faith, they themselves can enact miracles; similarly, the Book of Susanna places emphasis on law as a method of worship and shifts focus from the land onto the chosen people themselves. These books seek to locate God within the law, but both demonstrate that following the ancient law does not promise reward. As a result, the Books of Tobit and Susanna advocate a new structure of worship that does not necessarily revise the original law itself, but the ways in which it can be upheld.

Ultimately, one solution does not preclude another. These narratives reveal the many ways in which people, through literature, have the capacity to constantly reinvent the sacred symbols that govern their lives. The power of literature is its ability to reshape society, strengthening favorable narratives and rewriting unfavorable ones. Therefore, literary study is necessary for a comprehensive analysis of the history of religion. The Apocrypha, though generated in a time of great strife for the Jewish people, projects hope for the future, not despair, and demonstrates the central role literature plays in the social structure of a people.

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INTRODUCTION

The literary history of God has ultimately been shaped by the way people have reinvented Him in response to historical events. Cultural narratives present many different faces of God, all of which perform specific functions within a society. In the Jewish tradition, examples of these functions include making covenant with man, promising inheritance of land, instituting kings and priests, and establishing law and bureaucracy. God, a sacred symbol within the Jewish belief system, is constantly changing, from Yahweh Sabaoth the Destroyer, the tribal war God of Abraham and Moses with a nomadic system of law, to the God of the kings David and Solomon rooted in the city of Jerusalem, to the mysterious God of the prophets. The tribal war God is violent and conquers the land for the Israelites with military force, whereas the God of the prophets waxes philosophical on issues of faith and spirituality. While the symbol of God has remained at its baseline still the representative symbol of faith that has united the Jewish people, it is highly variable and historically specific.

The Biblical Apocrypha depicts an era where the societal circumstances surrounding this reinvention process produced conflicting portrayals of the character of God. Because these texts were mostly generated during the Jewish Diaspora, they display written evidence of a then-unsettled religious climate and invoke questions about the fundamental nature of the Godhead. The Jewish Diaspora (721 BCE-present) began in the eighth century BCE and involved many forced expulsions of Israelites from what are now Israel, Jordan, and parts of Lebanon.¹ The Babylonian Exile occurred during this period, 586-539 BCE (deSilva 43). Diaspora Jews were facing the loss of their land, their covenant with the tribal God, and potentially, faith in their deity. The apocryphal texts represent the reinvention of God and associated sacred symbols

¹ David Arthur deSilva, Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context, And Significance, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002), 43. Hereafter cited in the text.

among a displaced people who seek to reestablish closeness with their deity despite several obstacles, including the threat of permanently losing the Promised Land that is the cornerstone of their covenant as God's chosen people. These texts question God's motives, legitimacy, relevance, and ability to uphold the Jews' religious contract of land for loyalty in the face of conquering enemies, foreign lands, and rival religions.

An example of an apocryphal narrative displaying these elements is *Bel and the Dragon*, an addition to the canonical Book of Daniel.² This story is brief and to the point in its message; it acts as propaganda addressing the threat of polytheism in the life of the Israelites and proving other gods and idols false in order to steer potentially wayward Jews back to their God. Karen Armstrong's *A History of God* maintains that the Jews chose their God among the many and made Him their "One God" (Armstrong 23). The Jews were scattered far and wide in Diaspora, and the allure of the more accessible surrounding Greek, Babylonian, and Egyptian mythic systems may have been tempting to those who were possibly questioning the validity of their God symbol. In the story, Daniel demonstrates the falsehood of Bel, a Babylonian god represented by a bronze idol, and a dragon "which the Babylonians revered" (*Bel and the Dragon* 1.23). The most important feature of this tale is the logical explanation for the apparent mystery of the Babylonian gods; Daniel reveals both gods and makes them knowable to the reader and to the people who worship them. The idol, Bel, does not consume the food laid out for him each night; instead, it is eaten by the temple priests and their families. The Babylonian's sacred dragon is in fact, mortal, and easily killed. That knowledge is fatal to the integrity of the gods and as a result, they are both destroyed: "Therefore, the king put them to death, and gave Bel

² The New Oxford Annotated Bible, Ed. Coogan, Michael D., Marc Z. Brettler, Carol A. Newsom, and Pheme Perkins, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), New Revised Standard Vers. Hereafter cited in the text. All analyses in this thesis are made using this version of the bound-book Bible, a Christian invention. The book form of the Christian Bible is arguably the most accessible form of the Scripture available to the public in modern times.

over to Daniel, who destroyed it and its temple... Then Daniel took pitch, fat, and hair, and boiled them together and made cakes, which he fed to the dragon. The dragon ate them, and burst open” (Bel and the Dragon 1.22). The inner workings of these false gods are laid open for the reader to see. The unknowable qualities of the Jewish God are implied in contrast to these gods who have been revealed totally to the reader.

The story of Bel and the Dragon introduces some of the themes that echo throughout the books discussed in the body of this thesis. It denounces false gods and idols, and does so in a way that recalls a story from the Tanakh³: the first Book of Kings, when Elijah challenges the priests of Baal at Mount Carmel to demonstrate that their god is real. There, Elijah is triumphant as God rains fire down from the sky, while the priests of Baal limp about an altar and cry out to their deity to no avail.⁴ Daniel’s revision of the Elijah story recalls a God able to demonstrate power to His people and to their enemies, and this reminder of a previously powerful God is one strategy that these texts use to reassure readers. The Apocrypha as a whole tends to express anxiety that God may all at once become as silent and incapacitated as the idols and false gods of the surrounding cultures, and if He is unable to prove Himself any different, then there is no reason why Jews should remain faithful. In Bel and the Dragon, Daniel shows that God *is* different, remaining mysterious while other gods are easily understood and shown to be false. Likewise, the other apocryphal texts strive to prove, revise, or otherwise change God so that the Jewish belief system can survive.

Religious belief has long been central to the workings of society, governing issues such as land ownership, social hierarchy, and human conflict. Clifford Geertz pioneers the idea of

³ The Hebrew Biblical canon, or what is considered the Christian Old Testament

⁴ 1 Kings 18:26-29

religion as a social construction in *The Interpretation of Cultures*. His definition of religion is central to the methodology of this thesis:

[Religion is] a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life. (Geertz 89)

People essentially use the creation of deities and religion to formulate a perception of the world at large. The words that men have written down over the ages constitute the “sacred symbols [that] function to synthesize a people’s ethos” (Geertz, 89). These symbols are passed on from generation to generation. The environment that people live in also has a significant impact on the formulation of this belief system, as religion “both [expresses] the world’s climate and [shapes] it” (Geertz, 95). A complementary relationship between the Diaspora and the texts that sprang forth from it is absolutely possible from the perspective of Geertz’s theory.

It is also the reason why the Diaspora could potentially be threatening and destabilizing for the Jewish people. Geertz proposes, “The thing we seem least able to tolerate is a threat to our powers of conception, a suggestion that our ability to create, grasp, and use symbols may fail us, for were this to happen, we would be more helpless” (99). The original covenant between God and the Israelites was built upon the promise that God would defend them and drive out enemies from their promised land. The very nature of displacement in Diaspora renders inadequate this God symbol, requiring some kind of revision or reinvention for the symbol to remain relevant and functional. The fact that these symbols are “inherited conceptions” makes it crucial for the symbol to remain recognizable, even when certain circumstances may call for radical changes. Geertz argues that “culture patterns have an intrinsic double aspect: they give

meaning, that is, objective conceptual form, to social and psychological reality both by shaping themselves to it and by shaping it to themselves” (Geertz 93). The story of a people, the historical context surrounding a society and its belief system, is deeply interwoven with the sacred symbols contained within that system, and often it is not just the symbols that are passed down from generation to generation. The tradition of the cultural narrative becomes the medium through which all changes to the sacred symbols are synthesized; if the changes to the symbols are made within a familiar narrative platform, historical connection from past revisions to current representations can be maintained. The stories that are told by word of mouth and written down over the ages often remain structurally and thematically very similar, but the nature of the symbols within the story changes to mirror the current ethos of the people.

One of the most important and oft-repeated cultural narratives in the Jewish biblical tradition is the Book of Job. This is a crucial moment in the Bible where the God symbol becomes extremely problematic for the people who invented it. The last of the history books in the Tanakh, the Book of Job is the first time that the fundamental nature of the Godhead is challenged. Job angrily questions God, who has punished him for seemingly no reason at all. While the book tries to resolve itself by its end, the reader is left largely unsatisfied with God’s supposed restoration of Job: “And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job...and...gave Job twice as much as he had before” (Job 42.10). Giving Job twice as many flocks, children, and crops as He had taken away does not truly lessen the sting of being unjustly punished to begin with. Karen Armstrong’s *A History of God* discusses the relationship between Job and the Diaspora Jews:

One of these distant heroes, venerated in Babylon as an example of patience in suffering, was Job. After the exile, one of the survivors used this old legend to ask fundamental questions about the nature of God and his responsibility for the sufferings of

humanity...Job had been tested by God; because he had borne his unmerited sufferings with patience, God had rewarded him by restoring his former prosperity...Job dares to question the divine decrees and engages in a fierce intellectual debate. For the first time in Jewish religious history, the religious imagination had turned to speculation of a more abstract nature...The prophets had claimed that God had allowed Israel to suffer because of its sins; the author of Job shows that some Israelites were no longer satisfied by the traditional answer...Job submits, but a modern reader, who is looking for a more coherent and philosophical answer to the problem of suffering, will not be satisfied with this solution. (Armstrong 65-66)

Job is a hero to Jews in Diaspora, for his suffering resonates with them. Armstrong contends that questions about the fundamental nature of God arose in the Diaspora because of the similarities between the suffering of Job and that of the Jewish people. Job's challenging of God and the inequality of his punishment and restoration leaves people wondering why God had purposely put them in this situation, and what they had done to deserve such suffering. Is it a punishment for their sins or possibly a malicious act? Is it something out of God's control, and if so, does that render the omnipotent deity somewhat lacking? What is potentially most terrifying to Diaspora Jews is the idea that God will not necessarily justify allowing invaders to conquer the Promised Land and expel the Jews on multiple occasions. In the Book of Job, there is no law or system of judgment when it comes to God; He is not governed by any rule saying that He must have reasons for His actions, and there is no reassurance that He will not commit such actions again. Job questions this institution and an indignant God replies, "Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Anyone who argues with God must respond" (Job 40.2). Job emphasizes the helplessness of the people by challenging, "See, I am of small account; what shall I answer

you?” (Job 40.4). Some Diaspora Jews, in the texts they generated during their absence from the land, would answer this challenge, while others would concede the ultimate unknowability of God. Some would interpret Job’s rebellion as a reason for a more radical reinvention of the God symbol, and yet others would denounce Job and return to a more traditional symbol.

This division of thought is generated in part by Job’s statement, “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted” (Job 42.1). Even if God is unknowable, is it acceptable that even His potentially evil purposes cannot be thwarted? Is it satisfactory that Job merely admits, “I have uttered what I did not understand” and subscribes to blind faith (Job 42.3)? Geertz contends that “The problem of suffering passes easily into the problem of evil, for if suffering is severe enough it usually, though not always, seems morally undeserved as well, at least to the sufferer” (Geertz 105). Job’s undeserved suffering can be easily interpreted by the people as an evil act by God, which becomes very problematic for those seeking a philosophical answer to suffering. What kind of protection or reassurance do the people have in their belief system if evil is inevitable and may even stem from God? If the symbol of God was created to help people understand the workings of the world, then what happens to that symbol when it violates the system of ethics people have come to believe in? Geertz answers this question: “What is involved in the problem of evil is not the adequacy of our symbolic resources to govern our affective life, but the adequacy of those resources to provide a workable set of ethical criteria, normative guides to govern our action. The vexation here is the gap between things as they are and as they ought to be if our conceptions of right and wrong make sense” (106). The story of Job challenges the belief of the people so fundamentally because it demonstrates that the world, suffering included, does not always follow the symbolic system in place. Therefore, that

system needs to change to alleviate the tension that arises from the incongruence between belief and reality.

An example of this revision is the appearance of Satan. The symbol of Satan is fully synthesized in the Book of Job and is a part of the reinvention of God, and Job is the first to question the degree of separation between God and Satan.⁵ He criticizes God's collaboration with Satan: "He has torn me in his wrath and hated me...God gives me up to the ungodly, and casts me into the hands of the wicked...he rushes at me like a warrior" (Job 16.9-14). Satan becomes a problem for the God symbol as it poses a question of agency: is it God or Satan who is testing or punishing Job, and on a larger scale, the Jews in Diaspora? If the answer is in fact Satan, then he becomes a reinvention of the Destroyer God, doling punishment and death to the Jewish people and turning their war God against them. If the symbol of God doing evil is unacceptable within the current cultural structure, then the existence of Satan rectifies this incongruence. God provides an explanation for all events, good or evil, and Satan becomes projected out of or divided from the original God symbol as a representation of evil.⁶ Job's suffering is then not understood as an act from God, but becomes justified as an evil act of Satan,

⁵ Henry Ansgar Kelly addresses the inevitable connection between Satan and God in *Satan: A Biography*, suggesting that the former has authority and validation bestowed upon him by the latter. He argues that Satan may not, in fact, be a dissenter against God but instead, is an indispensable servant of God's machine. Satan has many different faces, and different names. It is not until the Book of Job that the reader meets what Kelly thinks is possibly the first named Satan, or *Ha-Satan*. Kelly emphasizes that the first named appearance of Satan coincides with a complicating of the God symbol. Satan introduces a new authority that challenges the weakening relationship between God and His people; at this point, God shows great vulnerability in unjustly punishing Job, and questionable motives when collaborating with Satan to achieve His objectives; Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Satan: A Biography*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 21-28.

⁶ In *God: A Biography*, Jack Miles' criticism of God culminates with his analysis of the Book of Job, where God notoriously falters and seemingly cooperates with Satan. Miles considers the Book of Job a turning point in God's character journey and a realization of evil within Himself and in the world. Miles argues, "the Lord can never seem quite the same to himself. The devil is now a permanent part of his reality; and though...he has broken free...he has done so through a deeper humiliation at the hands of a terrestrial adversary, Job himself" (327). Miles emphasizes that this is the first time that God has realized that not only does He possess a potentially evil side but also that "the never-absent demonic side of the Lord God has suddenly a demonic ally" (309). This demonic ally is symbolized in Satan, who provides a source of evil for those who do not wish to include an evil-doing God within their ethos; Jack Miles, *God: A Biography*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 308-328.

taking responsibility away from the worshipped deity. As synthesized within the Job story, the characters of God and Satan are closely connected within the Godhead symbol, and attempts to revise the story and eliminate Satan from the God symbol or at least put greater separation between the two entities is an endeavor routed throughout the Apocrypha.

These modifications, however, do not result in a universal change in the God symbol, and there are many different symbols that arise from Diaspora challenges. For example, Job criticizes those who would defend God for his seemingly evil actions: “Will you speak falsely for God, and speak deceitfully for him? Will you show partiality toward him, will you plead the case for God?” (Job 13.7-8). This is a line that becomes problematic for Jews in Diaspora; those who wish to continue and encourage faith in the God symbol must find a way to justify or even pardon God for His unjust treatment of Job or stay firm in the concept that God is unknowable, unable to be justified or judged in any way. Another question that arises out of this, then, is if restoration is a required action of God. Does restoration come as a reward for Job’s faith or out of God’s guilt for collaborating with Satan? God is clearly not governed by any external body and does not need to restore Job. One way this can be looked at is that God restores Job because Job sought Him out and took control of his relationship with God: “I will take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in my hand” (Job 13.14). This makes the story of Job important in the lives of Diaspora Jews; scattered across the continent, they must forge relationships with God that are very different from the system of covenant that has been passed down for generations. Diaspora Jews must do as Job has done, taking their faith into their own hands, to maintain a relationship that has been made difficult by both distance from the Promised Land and surrounding temptation, even in the face of seemingly undeserved suffering. However, the nature of this

relationship is highly variable among Diaspora Jews; some view it as a renewed faith in a familiar God symbol, while others revise the symbol to work in the context of exile.

The Book of Job challenges the legitimacy of God; why would God need to test Job if He is omniscient? He would already know if Job is faithful. However, God accuses Job of questioning Him: “Will you condemn me that you may be justified?” (Job 40.8). By questioning the legitimacy of His authority, Job denies that he deserves punishment, exemplifying Geertz’s statement that suffering becomes an issue of morality. There is no clear-cut explanation for the source of Job’s punishment and testing; because of the way Job’s character is presented, it is unlikely that it arises from sin. Instead, it seems that Job’s suffering stems from the misgivings of God. The philosophical questions that the Book of Job poses are overly anxious and produce polarized responses; this is made clear in the literary texts generated in Diaspora. This thesis will examine texts that use Job as a launching point, that rewrite, criticize, or support many of story’s elements and themes in order to demonstrate that it is not only sacred symbols that undergo revision to reflect the ethos of a society. In fact, the narrative tradition of a culture is part and parcel of these sacred symbols and must also be revised and updated periodically.

The Book of Job explores what it means to be godly and is the first realization of a potentially imperfect God. In Diaspora, God becomes imperfect as certain facets of the original symbol become either impossible or very difficult, mostly due to physical logistics. The covenant between God and his people is fundamentally symbolized by the land of Israel. The land is proof that the Jews are God’s chosen, and through it He demonstrates love, benevolence, and care for the people. The fruit of the land provides them with necessary resources to live and flourish. God first promises Abraham the land in exchange for his worship and flesh covenant,

expressed through circumcision.⁷ Without a land of their own, the Jews have no tangible connection with God, because they cannot build temples, go to priests, or perform public worship. They cannot protect themselves because they have no capacity for a military. When in a foreign land, even observing basic Jewish dietary laws becomes difficult, as the Gentiles freely consume prohibited foods.

It is not only the God symbol that becomes challenged, but all associated signs of worship as well, such as temples, priests, and the rituals that are performed. These signs are also intrinsically tied to the land. In the times before the land became the possession of the Israelites, the priests became associated with temple only after the building of the Ark of the Covenant, a kind of portable temple containing the Ten Commandments that the priests carried around to symbolize their covenant with God. Because they had no land it was impossible for the priests to worship at a stationary altar or temple. Moses' brother, Aaron, was one of the first priests, ordained as they returned from exile in Egypt.⁸ God establishes that the priesthood also symbolizes the land covenant, for He says to Moses, "Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant...the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation" (Exodus 19.5-6). These symbols are ultimately tied to the concept of public worship; the concept of the ritual is central to this religious society. Therefore, the entire set of sacred signs and symbols requires some kind of revision under Diaspora circumstances.

The ritual is a symbolic performance of belief, an enactment of the ethos detailed in a cultural narrative. Geertz claims that "any religious ritual" that "involves this symbolic fusion of ethos and world view" is what "shape[s] the spiritual consciousness of a people" (113). "In a ritual," Geertz writes, "the world as lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a

⁷ Genesis 17

⁸ Exodus 28

single set of symbolic forms, turn out to be the same world” (112). The symbols of the priest, the temple, worship, and the Godhead are all wound together within this theory; this symbol set translates the written commands from God into the reality of the Jewish people and makes their belief system tangible. The sacred symbols represent the ethos of a people, and they are severely threatened in a Diaspora setting, leading to the “disquiet” that results from a compromised system (Geertz 100). Questions arise, such as if priests are necessary or even legitimate when there is no temple, altar, nor Ark of the Covenant. In exile, no temple can be constructed and no sacrifice can be performed, undermining the connection between the physical symbols of faith and men of God. It is difficult to initiate public worship in a foreign land that does not accept their religion; priests face logistic difficulties in remaining the means of communication between God and the people. Therefore, the recalling of the strong God symbol from the Torah⁹, where the associated symbols were established, provides hope that He would return the Jews to the land and temples that ultimately symbolize their faith. In other words, the God symbol in exile acts to keep the Jewish people united despite physical separation and external influences that would otherwise cause a fracturing of the religion.

One of the most significant turning points in the symbolic relationship between man and God is the disappearance of theophany, or personal appearances of God. The symbol of God becomes very remote in the books following the Book of Job; the text then only addresses God, talks about God, or presents the Word of God as channeled through an oracle or prophet. God ceases to make personal appearances to man; the prophetic books paint a picture of a God who spoke to the prophets long ago, but does not any more. The Book of Jeremiah states, “The words of Jeremiah...to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of King Josiah” (Jeremiah 1.1-2). Similarly, the Book of Zechariah reads, “In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the

⁹ The Books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy

word of the Lord came to the prophet Zechariah” (Zechariah 1.1). The way in which the word comes to the prophets is not explicitly stated, but it is clear that God Himself does not come personally to speak with them. Karen Armstrong discusses how prophets render a then-silent God in their own image, emphasizing the growing remoteness of the deity; the people come to know the Word as generated from and attributed to the prophet instead of directly from God. This alienation does not bode well for the future success of a symbol that has previously acted to unite and shape a people. Ultimately, the Book of Job is potentially generative not only because God is questioned and silenced; the silencing of God that results from the problematic nature of Job’s story allows for a reinvention of God by the people who may have begun to lose faith in that sacred symbol. The questions raised in the Book of Job provide a framework within which later texts can explore a new and very different relationship with God in the face of Diaspora tensions.

The reinvention of God has been necessary throughout the course of the Bible and subsequent Jewish history. Clifford Geertz would argue that as a society changes, its ethos changes as well and requires revised symbols and meanings in order to effectively represent present thought. There are two primary methodologies in the analysis of this reinvention: historical and literary, spearheaded by Karen Armstrong and Jack Miles, respectively. Armstrong addresses how the changing character of God has influenced or been influenced by His people. She establishes the image of the early tribal god, or Yahweh Sabaoth, God of Armies, who follows the pagan tradition of being a syncretic deity comprised of several gods from surrounding areas such as Canaan and Midian. The Israelites did not recognize God as the only God, just the one that they chose to worship. Armstrong contends that God is not even “One God,” as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob each have different perceptions of God. She also points out

that God refuses to name Himself, maintaining “a deliberate vagueness” (Armstrong 21). God “simply promised that he would participate of the history of his people,” implying capacity for change as the historical context requires (Armstrong 22).

An analysis of God symbols within these cultural narratives leads to the conclusion that He is, in simplest terms, a literary character written at the hands of human authors. In *God: A Biography*, Jack Miles also contends that God is multifaceted as a result of constant reinvention, but uses a very different methodology to reach his conclusion. He addresses the growing remoteness of God’s character at the end of the Tanakh, following a sudden emphasis on self-governance and law in the Book of Esther and ultimately, the compromising of God’s perfection in the Book of Job. God speaks only through the prophets in the concluding Prophetic Books, continuing to fade until He is almost silent in the New Testament. Miles asserts the notion of a syncretic God, establishing a God who is ever changing and, in keeping with the idea of man being made in His image, displays decidedly human errors in judgment and action. He critically examines God’s interaction with prophets, kings, angels, and even Satan in order to support his idea of God as a literary character and not as a theologically unified figure.

Miles catalogs the journey of God as if he were the hero in a *bildungsroman*. Like a young man at the beginning of his journey, God begins as an uncontrollable being that wreaks havoc and destruction upon His creations as He sees fit. God is a Creator, and yet He is also a Destroyer. God makes covenants with the people He deems worthy and encourages the massacre of those who are not. This is the wild, young God of the Tanakh that Miles follows in development, and the evolution of God is what this thesis seeks to follow in chronologically later texts. Essentially, a marriage of Armstrong’s and Miles’ methods is necessary to engage texts that are in liminal spaces both chronologically and philosophically. These texts should be defined

as liminal because they sit in the gap between the Promised Land and a global Diaspora in time and space. Armstrong contends that God is a social construction created to explain worldly phenomena, while Miles establishes God as a literary character. Ultimately, the God of the Diaspora is both a textual and historical product. It is therefore necessary to examine the apocryphal texts from a perspective that demonstrates the impact of social situations on the literary expression of God.

The common denominator of the three Apocryphal texts to be discussed in this thesis is an evident conversation with the Book of Job. There are two categories of apocryphal texts that respond directly to Job, all written after its estimated composition date of the seventh to fourth century BCE (*The New Oxford Annotated Bible* 726). The first category responds to Job by recalling the war God of the Torah, addressing Diaspora problems and issues raised by Job by rewriting earlier texts into exile conditions. The text to be examined in this category is the Book of Judith, where the minimal revision of the cultural narrative is a means to legitimize and encourage the belief in the sacred symbols. The God symbol is largely affirmed in this book through the reproduction of older versions of God and the reiteration of some of the original reasons why the Israelites chose to worship this particular God among the many. It acts as a direct defense against changing attitudes among the Jewish people and the desire to integrate. One such change occurred during the Hellenization crisis of the Jews (175-161 BCE), where Jews in Greek lands sought to combine Greek culture with Hebrew religion (deSilva 48-52).

The second category of texts demonstrates radical revisions to the sacred symbols, with a focus on finding God within the law. The Books of Tobit and Susanna challenge the validity of the God symbol under Diaspora conditions, heavily criticize the ancient laws of the Torah, and amplify the issues raised by Job. These texts explore evil and suffering with regards to God, and

challenge the capacity of the people to maintain a relationship with God. This is where the structure of the society begins to break down, and the instability that the Diaspora induces within the cultural and religious narrative becomes very apparent. The sacred symbols no longer function to create order and to make the world rational. The authors of the second category texts suggest solutions to Diaspora problems that are revolutionary, and that sometimes violate the existing precepts of the religion. This multi-branched splitting from the original belief set causes a fracturing of the Jewish religion into subsets that worship slightly different God symbols.

Chapter One will discuss the first category text, the Book of Judith. This conservative narrative was written sometime during 165-37 BCE, during the Hasmonean Dynasty and following the Maccabean Revolt (*The New Oxford Annotated Bible* 32). During this time, Jewish rebels seized land back from occupant enemies (deSilva 91-92). The book tells the story of Judith, a young Jewish woman who leads the Israelite army to defeat King Nebuchadnezzar and the Assyrians. Judith berates the Israelites for questioning God, reflecting a negative attitude about Job's rebellion. She summons Yahweh Sabaoth, the tribal war God of the Torah, in the fight against King Nebuchadnezzar, who fancies himself as a false god with equal power. The Book of Judith bears several similarities to the narrative in the Book of Judges, comparing the two moments in history. Judges illustrates a time before settlement in the land, when Jewish society was unstable and nomadic. This scenario resonates with a Diaspora audience, who are facing many of the same problems. The Book of Judith takes the God symbol from Judges and gives Him new glory against a Diaspora-relevant foe, demonstrating the legitimate success of the sacred symbol even in the current circumstances. The Book of Judith uses an existing cultural narrative rewritten for Diaspora conditions to show that a complete revision of the God symbol is unnecessary, for returning to an already proven symbol will overcome new challenges.

Chapter Two will concern the second category of texts mentioned above. The Book of Tobit is the first to introduce more radical ideas about the God symbol and was written between 250-175 BCE. It explores how one can engage with God after the land is lost. At this point in time, Jews are still in Diaspora and have not yet begun to take back land or become Hellenized (deSilva, 69). Tobit is a righteous man who is suddenly blinded and questions why he has been punished when he has been good. Unable to work, Tobit sends his son Tobias on an errand to retrieve his trust fund, where he encounters the angel Raphael and the demon Asmodeus. One of the major revisions this book makes to the Job story is the happy ending, a typical comedic marriage, as Tobias rescues a woman, Sarah, from the clutches of Asmodeus and gets a wife in the bargain. Tobit's sight is restored, which seems more appropriate than the random replacement of dead family members in Job. The Book of Tobit is essentially a humorous rewriting of Job that removes Satan as a proxy of God and replaces him with an angel, Raphael. This solves the degree of separation problem mentioned earlier between God and Satan, as all evil is then pinned on a peripheral demon figure, Asmodeus. The character of Asmodeus eliminates God's collaborative relationship with Satan and replaces Satan with a lesser representation of evil. In the face of a less maleficent adversary, the separation between God and man through a proxy becomes a less threatening prospect. The book portrays Jews becoming more independent of God's direct intervention, relying on their faith to give them strength to act for themselves.

The Book of Susanna demonstrates the most reduced version of the God symbol, with focus shifting towards community dynamic instead of temple worship. It is an addition to the Book of Daniel, along with Bel and the Dragon, and was probably written during the Persian and Hellenistic periods (539-161 BCE), although scholars have difficulty pinpointing a date as the

story is based on Hebrew folklore (deSilva 233). The village elders lust after pious Susanna, and because she chastely denies them, they falsely accuse her of adultery. Daniel calls for a proper trial and cross-examination to determine Susanna's innocence and the corruption of the religious leaders. The book pushes self-reliance and the elimination of God's mortal proxies into the development of a Jewish government. Evil is manifested within the priestly order and is used to question the potential for corruption in the practice of law and the role of God within that system. God utilizes Daniel as a medium through which he encourages the Jews to establish their own legal system, essentially handing off His authority of judgment to the people. This totally reinvents crime and punishment with respect to divine rule for Diaspora people, for crime is then defined as people offending other people, and the members of the society decide what the appropriate punishment is. This revision to the legal system reflects the need for self-sufficiency under Diaspora conditions and recognizes the shortcomings of ancient law in a more modern practice. This book reinvents God in a way most congruent with the idea that for a sacred symbol to continue functioning within a society, it must be shaped and adapted to the society's current circumstances.

The apocryphal texts create a taxonomy of God, as a people who were once comforted by a God who could explain all things, good or bad, are experiencing uncertainties about the workings of the universe. During this period, God is depicted in several different roles: Yahweh Sabaoth, God of Armies; the unknowable God of Job; the philosophical God of Tobit; Daniel's God of the law. It is difficult when God's followers are so spread about the world without any means of fast, reliable communication, to invent a unified God. In many ways, the apocryphal texts solve problems posed by previous texts, but they also create their own problems. The impact of the Diaspora is seen in the variability of the depictions of God. As Clifford Geertz

posits, people in different situations will adjust their belief systems to explain whatever current phenomena they are experiencing. God is a prime example of Geertz's symbol of a cultural system, and as that system is forced to change, so must its invented symbol.

The Biblical Apocrypha is a telling chronicle of an overhaul in the depiction of God. The Book of Job works with the Apocrypha to develop this highly anxious moment in Jewish history, where a new relationship with God is being established. The apocryphal books are trying to negotiate and reshape symbols of the past, such as temples and the law, into a working system for a very different present. God is not a static symbol, and He can only survive if constantly reinvented. The apocryphal texts humanize, justify, validate, and otherwise champion God in periods of history where the practice of faith is seriously challenged, explicitly or not. Literary analysis reveals what the theology does not address; theology aims to unify people in doubtless belief, while a close literary analysis aims to find historical specificity of the character of God in conflicting views, disunity, and change.

Examining the ever-changing face of God can help modern readers of the Bible understand an evolution of the human condition through a potentially unsettled religious climate at the time of the text's composition. This is a phenomenon happening even today, as people continue to demand a belief and symbol set to suit new attitudes and lifestyles. The non-canonical status of the apocryphal books suggests discomfort surrounding the uncertainty of religious thought, as if it is a moment in history to be hidden and forgotten. However, it is important for modern readers of the Bible not to forget that society undergoes, oftentimes, monumental change, and to understand the ways in which ancient people adapted to and reinvented a sacred symbol that still survives to be relevant in the here and now.

CHAPTER ONE *Recalling the War God*

At the time of the Diaspora, God no longer appears personally to the Jews as He once did to Abraham when He gave them the land of Israel. The displacement of the Israelites during Diaspora forces them to reinvent a relationship with God that may no longer include theophany and involves the current separation from the land over which the original covenant was made. As made evident by the text through recurring themes and storylines from the Tanakh, the crises of God's people in times of displacement brings about the desire to bring back the tribal, warrior God of Exodus, Numbers, Judges and Kings, a God who was successful in helping His people conquer the land and drive out their enemies. In Diaspora, scattered and persecuted, Jewish society cannot maintain a military. While in a land possessed by their enemies, the Jews have no ability to form a capable army. Additionally, there is no way to practice rituals that necessitate priests, temples, and public worship, the importance of which was discussed in the introduction of this thesis. This inability to practice the religion as it was while in a foreign land necessitates some kind of reinvention of the belief system in order for it to survive.

The easiest path to reinvention involves using old material that has been proven successful before and slightly modifying it to make it relevant for the present day. This traditionalist approach to symbol revision is addressed in this chapter, with the Book of Judith. Judith's story responds with reassurance and affirmation to many questions that became important in the Diaspora: How did the Jews choose their God from among the many? Why should the Jews continue to worship this God? Why does God test and punish? Why does God engage with evil? Why is God still relevant? The Book of Judith acts as a reminder from history, recalling the triumphant war God and the demonstrated might of the prophets' God from the Tanakh. It creates symbols that allow Jews to continue to conceptualize God and their ethos in a

particular way, while they may be discouraged by several external factors, such as the removal from the land and temptation of assimilation into other cultures and religions. The Book of Judith expresses continuity with the symbol of God that the Jews have passed down through many generations, which somewhat contradicts Clifford Geertz's theory of religious systems. Geertz discusses the cultural trauma of having to reinvent a symbol because it has failed in its role within the culture: "Any chronic failure of one's explanatory apparatus...to explain things which cry out for explanation tends to lead to a deep disquiet" (Geertz 100). Obviously, chronic failure could potentially lead to reconsideration of faith, especially in the case of the Jews in Diaspora. Returning to a familiar symbol is a more conservative solution to Diaspora problems than completely reinventing the Godhead, and this is the way in which the Book of Judith tries to revise the symbol of God.

The Book of Judith recalls the violent God of the Torah in a story of tribal war and the conquering of land. It centers on a conflict between the Israelites and Nebuchadnezzar, a king who wishes to conquer the land of Israel and establish himself as the one and only god. Pitting the power of God against false gods and idols is reminiscent of previous conflicts between the Israelites and their neighboring enemies such as the Canaanites, who worshiped false gods such as Baal. In this story, Nebuchadnezzar is depicted as the leader of an ancient enemy, the Assyrians. However, the actual King Nebuchadnezzar is the Neo-Babylonian king who conquered Judah and Jerusalem in 586 BCE and sent the Jews into exile. The Assyrians had long been defeated by this time, for its capital, Nineveh, fell to the Medes and the Babylonians in 612 BCE. The fictional depiction of Nebuchadnezzar as the leader of the Assyrians projects the victory of the Israelites clearly from the very beginning of the book, as he is an amalgam of previously defeated foes. This creates a built-in reassurance for the outcome of the story from the

successes of an earlier relationship between God and the Jews, as the victory demonstrates the might of the war God who the Jews also believe to have brought about the demise of the Assyrian and eventually, the Babylonian empire (*The New Oxford Annotated Bible* 1336). The Book of Judith is propaganda aimed at Diaspora Jews who were far from their homeland to help them reaffirm a faith that may be challenged because of their physical separation from the land that is closely connected to the symbols of their faith. The success of the God symbol in overcoming the enemy threat implies the temporary nature of the exile and that the Jews will indeed be as triumphant in reality. A complete reinvention of a Diaspora God is not necessary. The return to an earlier, successful God symbol is demonstrated as sufficient to overcome these new obstacles.

Judith's God is violent and tribal: "may the Lord God go before you, to take vengeance on our enemies...you are the Lord who crushes wars...Break their strength by your might, and bring down their power in your anger...send your wrath upon their heads" (Judith 8.35, 9.7-9). Here, God is making up for the inability of the people to amass a military force while in exile; this God does not have mercy for the enemies of His people. This depiction of God reflects a people seeking the dependable and ever-present tribal deity that once protected the Promised Land and assisted the Israelites in combating and driving out potential conquerors. This kind of merciless deity is what Nebuchadnezzar also aspires to become. When Nebuchadnezzar first speaks to his chief general, Holofernes, he calls himself the "Great King, the lord of the whole earth" (Judith 2.5). Nebuchadnezzar's language is very reminiscent of Judith's in describing God: "I am coming against them in my anger...you shall hold them for me until the day of their punishment...take care not to transgress any of your lord's commands, but carry them out exactly as I have ordered you" (Judith 2.7-13). Judith must summon the ancient war God because

Nebuchadnezzar means to meet Him with equal force. Like Yahweh Sabaoth, he wants to punish the Jews for disobeying his order to rally and submit to him: “Thus you [Holofernes] will pay them back with evil, because they rebelled and did not receive you peacefully” (Judith 7.15). Nebuchadnezzar presents a real problem for the Jews, because he possesses the appropriate military power as well as the ruthless nature of the ancient war God.

This is a God not seen since the Book of Judges, which historically recounts the triumphs of the Israelites over oppressive foreign warlords. In Judges, the Israelites are in the process of procuring the land from its current inhabitants: “The Lord gave the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hands...the people of Judah fought against Jerusalem and took it” (Judges 1.4-8). Although the God of Abraham promised the land, it is the God of Judges that actually gives the people the land: “I...brought you into the land that I had promised to your ancestors. I said, ‘I will never break my covenant with you. For your part, do not make a covenant with the inhabitants of this land; tear down their altars’” (Judges 2.1-2). When the Israelites did not keep the covenant, God refused to drive out their enemies and the “anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel” (Judges 2.20). The God of the Book of Judges symbolizes care through military might and the ability to both protect His people from enemies and to forcefully secure the land through which the covenant was made; essentially, the covenant as it is portrayed in this book is not that God will just hand over the land to the Jews, but instead, will give them the brute strength to take it from its current inhabitants. By allowing the people to take the land for themselves, God does not promise anything but the hope that the land will provide enough for all. This God that sends the Jews into battle symbolizes great divine power that is channeled through the chosen people.

It is most important to note that the Book of Judges depicts a very unstable time in the history of the Jewish religion; it is a time when the land is being obtained and the people have yet to develop centralized leadership. The repetition of this God symbol in the Book of Judith reveals the similar instability in the Diaspora situation; the God of the Book of Judges is not just one among a series of gods from other religions, but also one among a variety of God symbols within the Jewish belief. In Judges and Judith, it is clear that the God symbol needed by the people at that moment is one that helps them to defeat their enemies. This is congruent with Geertz's theory, which states that "culture patterns have an intrinsic double aspect: they give meaning, that is, objective conceptual form, to social and psychological reality both by shaping themselves to it and by shaping it to themselves" (Geertz 93). The symbol set of a society determines the behaviors, actions, and lifestyles of the people who believe in it. Simultaneously, the symbol set is inherently influenced by the culture that surrounds it, and the God symbol becomes reinvented to fit within the current circumstances. At both these moments in history, the Jewish culture is in transition, and there is not one God symbol that can provide for every need. Consequently, Judaism develops several God symbols in an attempt to respond to all Diaspora conditions, which is evident in the variable depiction of God within the different apocryphal texts.

Of course, the presence of other gods does challenge the God symbol within both Judges and Judith. Both books depict a people in the midst of many gods, and the struggle is not so much focused on keeping temple or the order of law as it is resisting the temptation of other religions and belief sets. Judith says, "For never in our generation, nor in these present days, has there been any tribe...of ours that worships gods made by hands, as was done in days gone by. That was why our ancestors were handed over to the sword and to pillage...But we know no

other god but him, and so we hope that he will not disdain us” (Judith 8.18-20). The tone of her speech is tentative because of the uncertainty of their decision; although they have chosen this God symbol, they can only hope that He has chosen them in return. Their struggle in a foreign land undermines their status as God’s chosen people, a benefit tied to the possession of Israel, and Judith’s lack of confidence echoes the fear of the people that their God symbol is no longer working for them. Judith claims that the Jews fell to the Babylonians because of wavering Jewish faith, and that the Jews’ return to their Promised Land depends upon their continued worship of the One God and shunning of other gods. Consequently, the Book of Judith tries to adapt the symbolic system to what is possible for the people in exile; it reaches back to an earlier scenario and the symbols associated with that scenario. As in the Book of Judges, the God of the Diaspora is among multiple gods; the armies of the judges of Israel fought and conquered those who believed in different deities. This conquering war God makes sense in the present context, in Diaspora, because the scenario is the same; cast out of Israel, the Jews are once again in a world with multiple gods. The Book of Judith demonstrates the use of this God symbol through the Israelites’ struggle against Nebuchadnezzar, who combines these two foes into one plot device.

The lack of a centralized Jewish leadership, a part of this unstable scenario, explains the ability of Judith, a woman, to assume power over the Jewish military forces. The substitution of a woman into a male role is seen also in the Book of Judges, where Deborah, a prophetess, is portrayed as the only female judge of Israel. Judith most closely retells the story of Jael, a woman who successfully kills an enemy leader, Sisera of the Canaanites, through cunning and womanly wiles, while under the judgment of Deborah. Sisera asks her for hospitality, and when he is asleep, Jael kills him with a tent peg, ensuring the victory of the Israelites. Judith as God’s proxy in place of the usual patriarchal figure (i.e. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David) points to the

failure of male leadership in times of social instability. Instead of God anointing a young man to represent Israel in Diaspora, He will “crush [their enemies’] arrogance by the hand of a woman” (Judith 9.10). This almost directly quotes the Book of Judges, when Deborah prophesies the triumph of Jael over Sisera: “the Lord will sell Sisera [the commander of the opposing army] into the hand of a woman” (Judges 4.9). Deborah and Jael rise to the forefront of Jewish society before the time of kings and the capital city, Jerusalem, because there is no structure in place preventing women from doing so. Karen Armstrong claims, “in more primitive societies, women were sometimes held in higher esteem than men ... The rise of the cities, however, meant that the more masculine qualities of martial, physical strength were exalted over female characteristics... [Yahweh’s] religion would be managed almost entirely by men” (Armstrong 50). As a religion grows, it becomes more patriarchal; the unsettled nature of this early point in history allows women to have power over men.

The idea of crushing “arrogance by the hand of a woman” does not just refer to the vanquishing of the enemy, but also the tempering of the arrogance seen in the priests and elders, men of God (Judith 9.10). Judith criticizes the male elders of her people. When Nebuchadnezzar’s chief general, Holofernes, besieges their land, they wish to wait for a divine intervention; if God does not come to save them, they will surrender the people to their enemies. The Israelites are afraid of the invading enemies and would much rather surrender than face potential bloodshed: “For it would be better for us to be captured by them. We shall indeed become slaves, but our lives will be spared” (Judith 7.27). They have just returned from exile, and now they are willing to give up their land once again, although they clearly worry about the symbols of their faith, threatened once again: “they were alarmed both for Jerusalem and for the temple of the Lord their God. For they had only recently returned from exile” (Judith 4.2-3). The

magistrate of the people, Uzziah, decides that they will “hold out for five days more; by that time the Lord our God will turn his mercy to us again, for he will not forsake us utterly” (Judith 7.29). If God does not come to their aid, Uzziah will surrender to Holofernes. Uzziah is unable to work with the God symbol necessary for the situation his people are faced with. They need the God symbol that would send them into battle, while Uzziah is waiting for the God who will simply deliver them from the hands of their enemies: the God who once sent the plagues to free the Israelites from Egypt in Exodus. He is unwilling to accept that their situation calls for war, and since it is his responsibility to encourage his people to worship the God symbol that best suits their needs, this incongruence causes the failure of his leadership and allows Judith to assume leadership in his stead.

The current state of society makes it difficult for Judith to encourage the people’s faith in the tribal war God necessary to defeat Nebuchadnezzar, despite the fact that as before the exile, their land and very relationship with God are at stake. The book even makes a point to iterate the military prowess of the Israelites in times past; Achior the Ammonite, when counseling Holofernes, warns that “[The Israelites] drove out all the people of the desert, and took up residence in [their] land...they took possession of all the hill country” (Judith 5.14-15). The formidable power of the Israelite army can only be recalled through faith in the war God that had enabled them to be conquerors before. Judith warns the people that their noncompliance will cost them their covenant, and God will punish them as he once did in the Book of Judges: “For our slavery will not bring us into favor, but the Lord our God will turn it into dishonor” (Judith 8.23). In Judges, when the people defied the covenant with the war God, “the anger of the Lord was kindled” and he punished them, selling them into the hands of their enemies (Judges 3.8). This is

also illustrated in Achior's warning to Holofernes; he cites the "Return to Zion" from the Babylonian Exile as recounted in the Book of Ezra:

As long as they did not sin against God they prospered, for the God who hates iniquity is with them. But when they departed from the way he had prescribed for them, they were utterly defeated in many battles and were led away captive to a foreign land. The temple of their God was razed to the ground, and their towns occupied by their enemies. But now they have returned to their God, and have come back from the places where they were scattered, and have occupied Jerusalem. (Judith 5.17-19)

The people need to shape themselves to this God symbol in order to regain the land, and failure of the Israelites in exile largely stems from the Jews' lack of belief in their covenant. There is no king or prophet to herald God's Word and fight off enemies; the people are cowardly and refuse to mobilize. Holofernes and his counsel perceive the Jewish forces as nonthreatening: "We are not afraid of the Israelites; they are a people with no strength or power for making war" (Judith 5.23). This is another example of the failure of the male role in the Book of Judith, as it is the traditional responsibility of men to project the military capability of the people. The Jewish male leaders have all become priests and are unfit to lead the Israelites to victory; as their civilization grew, they became specialized for performing rituals and enacting worship in the temples, not for fighting wars. Judith is able to assume leadership over the male leaders of her people because the social roles of priest and warrior typically do not overlap, leaving the Jews lacking in military power.

The inadequacy of the male-dominated system becomes obvious during this time of social instability, whether in exile or transitioning back from exile, as is the case with Judith's

people. Judith looks to examples from history to encourage the people back to what is traditional, or familiar. Judith lectures the men of her tribe while also criticizing their Job-like rebellion:

What you have said to the people today is not right...promising to surrender the town to our enemies unless the Lord turns and helps us within so many days. Who are you to put God to the test today, and to set yourselves up in the place of God in human affairs?...how do you expect to search out God, who made all these things, and find out his mind or comprehend his thought?...if he does not choose to help us...he has power to protect us within any time he pleases, or even to destroy us in the presence of our enemies. (Judith 8.11-15)

This speech rewrites the Book of Job for the Diaspora audience because instead of God accusing Job of questioning His authority, it is a member of the Israelites, relaying a very similar criticism of the people. God asks Job, “Have you an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like his?” (Job 40.9). Here, Judith asks the people if they themselves can fulfill the role of God in their culture or if they can assume His many duties of conquering enemies and false gods, securing the land, and laying down the law. She emphasizes that their belief in this symbol will ensure their protection, as this has proven effective before.

Her words are essentially a denunciation of the relationship between the men of the tribe, leaders and holy men alike, and God; Judith suggests that priests, as part of a male-dominated system, may no longer have as prominent of a role in Jewish society during this time. The high priest Joakim’s encouragement of the people to pray fails to produce the desired response, yet he does not suggest that one of the men lead the Israelites into battle with faith in the Lord. The depiction of largely irrelevant holy men in the Book of Judith reflects a problem with the logistics of priest-mediated worship in Diaspora. Evidently, while God in Diaspora is being

reinvented to reflect a symbol already proven successful in times of environmental and religious instability, the depiction of religious leadership and method of worship in this book is being modified. Male priests yield to the leadership of Judith, and face becoming obsolete should Nebuchadnezzar conquer their lands. If Nebuchadnezzar is successful, the temple and the rituals enacted within it, stationary for many years, must become mobile once again like the Ark of the Covenant or risk becoming obsolete.

Louise Schottroff, in *Feminist Interpretation: The Bible in Women's Perspective*, gives historical context for the other ways in which Judith subverts the patriarchal social structure. Attitudes towards women were changing during the Diaspora as a result of the weakening of male-dominated society. Schottroff identifies goddess-centered religion, rampant in the areas of the Jews' exile (Egypt, Babylonia, and particularly, Judah), as a threat to the patriarchal structure of Judaism. The possibility of worshipping a female deity in these parts of the world generates unease about the role of Jewish women within the power hierarchy in their society. She claims, "In all these controversies [about Israel's religious identity], a central role is played by women...and the question of goddess worship...the collapse of the monarchy and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem shook profoundly the well-fortified orders of patriarchy, giving new chances to women, since the traditional role models or faith structures were no longer automatically valid" (Schottroff 132). Women in the foreign places Jews settled in had greater privilege than Jewish women; they were almost equal to their male counterparts in many cases. The Jews in the Elephantine Island, a part of Egypt, worshipped both God and a female divine consort. Many hesitated to leave behind worship of the Goddess even after exile, for "the traditions of the homeland are cultivated in a special manner in the midst of the strangeness the Exile has imposed" (134). Because of the changing privileges of women, the priestly school

began to show great hostility towards women, who were challenging their relevance and authority.

Reflecting these historical notions, Judith challenges the patriarchal hierarchy by ordering the people and the elders to listen to her. As a woman under the normal structure of society, she would not have had the authority to relay God's Word or dictate to armies. However, she assumes military leadership and commands the people, "Listen to me. I am about to do something that will go down through all generations of our descendants. Stand at the town gate tonight so I may go out...do not try to find out what I am doing; for I will not tell you until I have finished what I am about to do" (Judith 8.32-34). Judith mirrors the war God here, as her mysterious instructions establish a level of unknowability about the workings of her actions. The elders yield to her leadership and make the war God their working symbol: "Go in peace, and may the Lord God go before you, to take vengeance on our enemies" (Judith 8.35). Here, Uzziah and the elders profess faith in the God who previously went before the armies of Israel to drive their enemies from the land. After Judith has killed Holofernes, she orders the army to face the Assyrians: "Listen to me, my friends...each of you take up your weapons" (Judith 14.1-2). By accepting the symbol appropriate for their reality, the people are rewarded; God protects the Israelites, for the army does not even have to fight the Assyrians, who flee upon discovery of their slain leader.

Despite the subversion of the priestly role, the Book of Judith emphasizes the importance of faith and worship in times of uncertainty. Even though temples and priests become marginal due to the current circumstances, the text demonstrates that the faithful do what they can to uphold their belief in God. Judith is very pious, praying to God to guide her: "Then Judith prostrated herself, put ashes on her head, and...cried out to the Lord" (Judith 9.1). When she is

triumphant, she also offers a song of praise: “Raise to him a new psalm, exalt him, and call upon his name” (Judith 16.1). This song is reminiscent of the judge Deborah, who has a featured song of praise in the Book of Judges as well.¹ Even when Judith is behind enemy lines, she is careful to observe the dietary laws of her people: “I cannot partake of them, or it will be an offense” (Judith 12.2). Diet is an important way of keeping the law in Diaspora, for it requires no temple sacrifice; in a way, observing Jewish law in such a way makes temple ritual more marginal because it displaces its centrality to the keeping of the law. Judith demonstrates that even though priests and temples are challenged symbols of Judaism in Diaspora, the circumstances do not completely eliminate Jewish law or long-held traditions; these traditions, like the God symbol itself, must be selected for observance according to what is actually feasible under Diaspora conditions.

In response to the people questioning God’s motivation, Judith emphasizes that God has unknowable qualities, which is highly reminiscent of the Joban God and the God who once told Moses, “I am that I am” (Exodus 3.14). There is an element of testing here as well, although it is not by the same mechanism of the Book of Job. Judith explains to her people that their captivity is merely another test by God, and although they are suffering, it is not their place to question Him: “let us give thanks to the Lord our God, who is putting us to the test as he did with our ancestors” (Judith 8.24). The God of Israel’s ancestors was also largely unknowable. Why did God choose who he chose to lead His people? Surely there were others besides Noah who were good people at the time of the flood, and surely there were other capable men besides Abraham and Moses to uphold the covenant. There are no explanations given, short of the benevolence of the chosen one, as to why he was chosen. Throughout the Bible, God’s motivation has been little known and not largely speculated at.

¹ Judges 5

This unknowable God is no more reassuring than that of Job, but Judith strongly denounces a Job-like rebellion and questioning of God: “Who are you to put God to the test today...how do you expect to search out God, who made all these things, and find out his mind or comprehend his thought” (Judith 8.12-14). The Book of Judith encourages blind faith and touts the rewards of doing so: “No one ever again spread terror among the Israelites during the lifetime of Judith, or for a long time after her death” (Judith 16.25). This implies that while faith could prevent catastrophe such as exile for the time being, its effects are not permanent. Like Job, the Israelites are restored to their land and in peace for now, but there is no promise that testing would not occur again. Unlike Job, however, Judith does not see this as problematic, but as a phenomenon that is part and parcel of the belief system that the Jews have subscribed to. The testing of Job becomes normative in Judith’s idea of Judaism; her assertions of God’s unknowability and the fact that she actually thanks God for testing them indicates that she believes testing to be, like protection and the providing of land, a way God shows the Jews that they are His chosen people. Judith notes that the testing is “as he did with our ancestors,” an affirmation of the covenant made with their ancestors (Judith 8.24). Her speech infers the idea that the people must continue to demonstrate their solidarity with God and prove their worth as His chosen people in order to maintain the good fortune they have experienced in the past.

Job’s rebellion then becomes the anomaly, and Judaism as depicted in the Book of Judith moves towards congruency with Geertz’s theory. Religion accepts suffering with the absence of reward, and this God symbol makes rational a very precarious existence, where one does not know for sure that God will grant favor or deal punishment. The ethos of Jewish thought here in Judith is very different than that of Job; our lot is suffering, and the God symbol is used in a way to make suffering understandable. Geertz writes, “The problem of suffering passes easily into the

problem of evil, for if suffering is severe enough it usually, though not always, seems morally undeserved as well, at least to the sufferer” (Geertz 105). This echoes Job’s justification for his rebellion, a thought process overturned by Judith. Her view of the human condition is much bleaker than the comic ending of Job because God will not necessarily reward the good for having done good, nor punish those who deserve it. Geertz contends that suffering is tolerable if it has meaning and purpose with which people make sense of it; in situations where the meaning is obscured, God encompasses all things that people do not have the capacity to understand. The role of God as a sacred symbol is a way to defer questions about the mysteries of life, such as the divine motivation for the Diaspora itself.

Individuals must then attempt to act faithfully without the assurance of reward. Judith’s rousing lectures reaffirm the fact that the Jews are still God’s chosen people, and that He will uphold His part of the covenant by restoring the Promised Land. However, there is no reassurance that God will not test man for no foreseeable reason; this sentiment hearkens back to Job in that he may have been compensated for his suffering, but not truly restored. Instead, Judith emphasizes that they should not question him, for “God’s purposes are sovereign and mortals do best to yield themselves to God’s providence, whether that be for their destruction or their deliverance” (DeSilva, 2002). Because people are limited by the God symbol in their understanding of suffering, they cannot know why they suffer, or the end result of their suffering. They must fully subscribe themselves to these symbol sets that explain all aspects of the human condition; God reserves the right to allow or even perform evil, or can even be absent. Judith answers the question posed in Job, “See, I am of small account; what shall I answer you?” and maintains that God does not have to explain His actions and can help or destroy man at will (Job 40.4).

Judith's God will challenge His people but ultimately protect them if they are threatened: "For he has not tried us with fire, as he did them, to search their hearts, nor has he taken vengeance on us; but the Lord scourges those who are close to him in order to admonish them" (Judith 8.27). Judith emphasizes that God's testing and punishment is how He affirms the status of His chosen people. This revised symbol of God is not only a military supporter who sends the Jews into battle, but also a God of love and care, who protects and provides for His people not just through giving them the land, but also through teaching them how to be better followers. Judith insists that He does not punish them as He does their enemies, but instead "admonish[es]" the people "who are close to him" (Judith 8.27). To "admonish" has a connotation of goodwill, and shows that God still cares about the Jews and that they are still His chosen people; tests and punishments are ways in which God encourages the Jews to be better followers and to live holier lives.

The triumph of the Israelites over the Assyrians reestablishes the might of the Yahweh Sabaoth symbol and allows Judith to proclaim, "Let your whole nation and every tribe know and understand that you are God, the God of all power and might, and that there is no other who protects the people of Israel but you alone!" (Judith 9.14). A reinvention of God is not necessary because Judith has demonstrated that an ancient symbol is sufficient if Jews uphold their faith. In response to Diaspora Jews facing potential conversion, the Book of Judith illustrates an Assyrian who converts to Judaism: "When Achior saw all that the God of Israel had done, he believed firmly in God. So he was circumcised, and joined the house of Israel" (Judith 14.10). This demonstrates that the religious other could also be of the opinion that the One God is superior, showing a role reversal for Diaspora Jews. In Diaspora, Jews are the outsiders who convert to the religions of their newfound land, whether it be adopting an entirely new belief system or

integrating other deities or rituals into the Jewish religion. The legitimacy of their own God is affirmed if He is shown to be a desirable sacred symbol for outsiders to Judaism.

The faith-challenging nature of the Diaspora produced two very different kinds of textual responses. The Book of Judith is a part of the Apocrypha that represents a more traditionalist approach to the issues presented by the Diaspora. It reaffirms both the legitimacy and the power of the God symbol and attempts to 'undo' some of the damage done by the questioning epitomized in the Book of Job. In order to uphold the continued legitimacy of the Jewish God in the face of potentially wavering faith, the Book of Judith resurrects ancient God symbols that were once highly successful. Ultimately, whatever revisions that are made to the God symbol must make sense in terms of Jewish history; here, Judith resembles the story of Jael in the Book of Judges, an account of a tumultuous period of war in the Tanakh, which recalls the earlier military might of the Israelite army. The traditionalist strategy of the Book of Judith works within the circumstances of this particular tale, but it is not the be-all end-all solution to Diaspora problems. When this scenario of a dangerous nomadic life threatens the Jews once again, they must make a decision: to continue with what has worked before, or to make radical changes to the fundamental symbolic structure of Judaism.

CHAPTER TWO

The God Within Law

The nature of Diaspora causes great difficulties in the traditional practice of the Jewish faith. Forced expulsion compromises God's land covenant with Abraham, affecting the dynamic of both the social structure of the people and its authority, the priesthood. This unstable period in history invites questions about God's true power and agency with regards to evil and corruption: Why are the Jewish people being punished? What did they do to deserve that punishment? Is punishment deserved, and therefore a means to deliver justice, or is punishment potentially a product of malice? Although all of the apocryphal texts examined give answers to the many questions posed by the Book of Job, not all of them are as optimistic and encouraging as the Book of Judith. Judith and Bel and the Dragon champion a return to ancient faith as a way to solve the problems of the present; they respond to Job from a traditionalist perspective and with minimal criticism of the current Jewish practices. The Books of Tobit and Susanna respond to Job and the Diaspora experience on far more radical terms. Instead of giving reassurance, they provide controversial, faith-altering solutions to the Diaspora. These solutions include a reduction of priestly authority and a shift in the communication between man and God that reflects the limitations of the Diaspora environment.

Tobit and Susanna have integrated Job's fundamental questions of God's authority, legitimacy, and agency into scenarios familiar to a Diaspora audience. The Book of Tobit, a retelling of the Joban story, questions God's methods of testing and punishment. Asmodeus, the lesser demon stand-in for Satan, reinvents God's collaboration with an agent of evil. He is portrayed as obviously subordinate to God, never challenging His actions, and therefore can be seen as clarifying the complications that the Book of Job caused in the relationship between God and Satan. The fundamental issues for Job arise because God colludes with Satan; the Book of

Tobit uses several metaphors that involve human bodies, land, and power that explore the possibility that evil could be proper to God's nature. Simultaneously, the book attempts to provide hope for Diaspora Jews struggling with faith by encouraging them to rely less on God and more on themselves. The Book of Susanna explores corruption within the priesthood, using similar metaphors to suggest divine association with evil. It champions the Jewish people's right to a legal system.

The Book of Tobit criticizes the Book of Job by retelling the Joban story in an exaggerated, oftentimes comical manner. It revises parts of the story it wishes to denounce, such as the collusion between God and Satan, and emphasizes new ideas of faith for the Diaspora audience as exemplified by Tobias' novel and self-sufficient forms of worship and belief. In the Christian invention of the bound-book Bible, the Book of Tobit is traditionally the first book of the Apocrypha, placed directly after the prophetic books at the conclusion of the Tanakh. Jack Miles considers the end of the Tanakh the moment where God largely recedes from the picture. In the introduction to his analysis of the final books of the Tanakh, he writes,

The Book of Job is the climax of the Tanakh and the climactic moment in the biography of God...The biography of God, as we saw earlier, has several beginnings...In the books to which we now turn, the Tanakh, with its several beginnings, comes to several endings. In each of these endings, God's life comes to a close, but in none of them does he die.
(Miles 354-55)

Essentially, God is a recluse by the conclusion of the Tanakh, and the Book of Tobit is the first glimpse of the Godhead after His figurative demise. This gives Tobit the ability to make significant commentary on the waning presence of God after His encounter with Job. Tobit actively rewrites the symbol of God through the scope of the Joban story to both apologize for

and radically change the God that unjustly punishes Job. The God who was once too heavy-handed with Job becomes peripheral, almost absent in the Book of Tobit. He is not directly involved with the destruction of evil, but nor is He directly involved in the generation of it. The Book of Tobit skirts around the possibility of God having failed in His responsibility to mankind, as seen in His treatment of Job, by removing agency from God and bestowing it upon man.

The first notable difference is the fact that the Joban figure, Tobit, is actually not the main character of the story. Tobit, a man who “walked in the ways of truth and righteousness all the days of [his] life,” is the father of the protagonist, Tobias (Tobit 1.3). God tests Tobit, blinding him and preventing him from working. The aging, mostly useless father figure of Tobit reflects the outdated nature of the Job story; he may be suffering in a Job-like fashion but he and his resemblance to Job is not the focus of the story. The active protagonist is his son, Tobias, whose radical revision of the Job story represents a new Jewish ideal. Tobit sends Tobias on an errand to retrieve money from his trust fund kept with a man in Media, and along the way, he rises to God’s challenge and comes out triumphant. Tobias is portrayed as mobile and proactive, the model for the Diaspora Jew, while Tobit is a stationary character, waiting at home for Tobias’ return. Tobit is the Job figure, but his son Tobias acts as his foil, making a case for a new, different strategy of seeking justice from God.

Tobit and Tobias are easily relatable to the Diaspora audience because they too, are in exile, residing in “Nineveh in the land of the Assyrians” (Tobit 1.3). Tobit acknowledges that Israel is his home, and explains that his tribe actually rebelled against the Davidic house long before exile:

When I was in my own country, in the land of Israel...the whole tribe of my ancestor Naphtali deserted the house of David and Jerusalem...I alone went often to

Jerusalem...[giving alms] to the priests, the sons of Aaron...the sons of Levi who ministered at Jerusalem. (Tobit 1.4-7)

Although Tobit's tribe denounces the traditional worship practiced in Jerusalem, Tobit demonstrates that he is an anomaly, continuing to subscribe to the festivals and sacrificial rites of the priestly school in David's capital.

In this narration, Tobit shows that he is a dedicated Jew, refusing to integrate with Gentile culture even in exile: "After I was carried away captive to Assyria and came as a captive to Nineveh, everyone of my kindred and my people ate the food of the Gentiles, but I kept myself from eating the food of the Gentiles...I was mindful of God with all my heart" (Tobit 1.10-12). Tobit's primary mark of righteousness is the fact that he buries the dead of his people as a civil service, even those who have been slaughtered and disposed of unceremoniously by King Sennacherib, the ruler of Assyria. He is acting in accordance with a law stated in the Book of Deuteronomy: "When someone is...executed, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse must not remain all night upon the tree; you shall bury him that same day, for anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not defile the land that the Lord your God is giving you for possession" (Deuteronomy 21.22-23). It is sacrilege to allow that corpse to become carrion. Notably, this law is specific only to the Promised Land; even in exile, Tobit upholds the law of his people above the civil law of the land he currently resides in. Tobit's staunch observance of his religion even with the threat of death from Assyria's secular establishment would make him a model Jew, not unlike the "blameless and upright" nature of Job (Job 1.1). While this may seem to mark him for divine favor, the book portrays him as a Joban character with a clearly undeserved punishment.

Despite the charity he consistently displays to his kindred and his close attention to Mosaic Law¹, Tobit is reprimanded; King Sennacherib confiscates all of his property except for his wife and son, angry that Tobit gives a final resting place to those of whom he would make an example. Tobit undergoes a kind of mini-exile, fleeing Nineveh under the oppression of the current leader and returning after Sennacherib's murder to the restoration of his family. This initial punishment, although not directly from God, reveals the incongruity between upholding the law and being rewarded for it. When Tobit once again begins burying the disrespected bodies of the dead, he is blinded by the "fresh droppings [of sparrows that] fell into [his] eyes and produced white films" (Tobit 2.10). Tobit becomes "completely blind" and unable to work (Tobit 2.10).

The constant punishment of Tobit in response to his observance of Mosaic Law makes it apparent to the reader that performing good deeds does not ensure reward or a good life in return. This is the main issue that many Diaspora Jews are dealing with at this point in history; what is the point of living a life by Mosaic Law if there is essentially no incentive to do so? It was difficult to perform good deeds with such an altruistic mindset when the living situation of many Jews at this time was so miserable. Like Job, Tobit requests death, but his words resonate more with the Diaspora audience: "For it is better for me to die than to see so much distress in my life and listen to insults" (Tobit 3.6). He demonstrates that Jews in Diaspora had essentially the choice between assimilation and misery, the latter potentially leading to death.

Tobit's impending death causes him to tell his son about the trust fund he had kept with a man in Media for emergencies, and to impart words of wisdom that largely reiterate Mosaic Law. This emphasizes the traditional idea of passing down law from father to son; along his journey to Media to retrieve the trust fund, Tobias ends up reinventing these laws to be less

¹ Law of the Torah, particularly according to Moses in Deuteronomy

deity-centric and more concerned with his own abilities. This reinvention becomes necessary, as God is so distinctly unobtrusive that Tobias is largely unable to rely on Him throughout his journey. Unlike the Joban God, who readers can see directly influence Job's fate, the God in Tobit is notoriously quiet and communicates with Tobias only through the use of a proxy.

The need for a proxy clearly marks the growing remoteness of God that began after His silencing in the Book of Job. The angel Raphael is sent to represent God, bridging the distance between God and man: "...the prayers...were heard in the glorious presence of God. So Raphael was sent to heal...them" (Tobit 3.16). Satan once acted as God's proxy as an agent of evil; here in the Book of Tobit, the proxy is angelic and without negative association. This is a significant revision in the Job story, which establishes God as a distant-growing figure, yet does not compromise His beneficence. There is no reason for readers to sympathize with a God who once unjustly tested Job's faith and collaborated with Satan, and to make matters worse, it is difficult for a Diaspora audience to understand the justification of a God who did not prevent or amend their exile.

The associations of the God symbol with other, peripheral symbols change the people's perspective of God. The proxy or vessel through which God communicates is what defines the relationship between God and man. If His power is channeled through an agent that embodies evil, such as Satan, it attributes malignance to God. Likewise, if interaction with man is through a benevolent angel like Raphael, God's power is good and for the benefit of His people. The use of Raphael in Satan's stead removes malignance from the God symbol, because the biggest issue raised in the Book of Job is, simply, is evil proper to God? Is God responsible for acts of evil, and does He maintain ownership of malignancies that He may have endorsed or even caused? How do Satan, Raphael, and even Asmodeus define the God symbol? Ultimately, the presence of

evil in the Book of Tobit does not critique God's responsibility. It is a way in which the authors of the text can point out the remoteness and even absence of God in people's lives, and the increasing need for Jews in Diaspora to essentially handle their own fate despite this.

It is important to note that in the Book of Tobit, the acts of testing are not attributed to any specific force. The text merely states that Tobit becomes blind. Instead of detailing whose responsibility it had been to punish him, the text focuses on healing and restoration. Neither God nor Raphael is explicitly associated with the punishment, but God sent "Raphael... to heal...them" (Tobit 3.17). Most notably, Tobit *admits* to having sinned, although the book staunchly insists that he is righteous: "Do not punish me for my sins and for my unwitting offenses and those that my ancestors committed before you" (Tobit 3.3). Essentially, this book contradicts Job by stating that even the most righteous are not completely without sin, suggesting that ultimately, evil resides within the people and is projected onto their symbolic belief system. Sin that originates from man is necessarily caused by the blanket term "evil," which according to the system has an agent in Satan. Therefore, God does not necessary directly cause or act evil.

Satan is substituted for in a couple of different ways in the Book of Tobit, in order to both minimize and trivialize the implications of evil. Raphael is as different from Satan as possible; he is clearly a servant of God and is incapable of acting on his own accord. All of his actions are verbalized as orders from God: "I was sent to you to test you...God sent me to heal you" (Tobit 12.14). The other divine being that necessitates comparison to Satan is Asmodeus. The side story in the Book of Tobit concerns Sarah, the daughter of a wealthy man whose seven previous husbands have been killed in succession by a demon named Asmodeus in the night. Asmodeus' motives are unclear, for he is not acting on a bet or some kind of larger-scale motive like Satan's desire to defy God and implement evil; he appears to be the "stand-in" of sorts for Satan,

representing the adversary of man. God's ownership of evil is especially muddled in the case of Asmodeus because He does not explicitly consort with or even acknowledge the presence of the demon; the question lies in why God allows Asmodeus to kill Sarah's husbands and eventually act as a test for Tobias' faith. Asmodeus is not Satan. He is classified as a lesser demon by most Jewish folklore and does not hold center stage in this story; he is portrayed as fully subordinate to the might of God and is never shown to converse with, argue with, or otherwise establish himself as equal to God in any way (*The New Oxford Annotated Bible* 16). Asmodeus makes the idea of evil more manageable, as he is not as powerful as Satan, nor is he presented on equal ground with God. The idea of a "softer" evil prepares Jews to handle their own crises.

Unlike Job, who relied on God's direct involvement to amend his misfortunes, Raphael encourages Tobias to engage tribulation directly and to take matters into his own hands. At the very beginning of his journey, he is attacked by a great fish: "Suddenly a large fish leaped up from the water and tried to swallow the young man's foot, and he cried out. But the angel said to the young man, 'Catch hold of the fish and hang on to it!' So the young man grasped the fish and drew it up on the land" (Tobit 6.3-4). Raphael advises Tobias to save the fish's entrails, and when the time is right, instructs his human charge to burn the entrails like incense, for burning smoke "in the presence of a man or woman afflicted by a demon or evil spirit...[causes] every affliction [to] flee away and never remain with the person any longer" (Tobit 6.8). He continues to explain that the gall of the fish will heal eyes with white films like Tobit's: "Smear the gall of the fish on his eyes...your father will regain his sight" (Tobit 11.8). Not coincidentally, when Tobias confronts Asmodeus, the demon is vanquished without a struggle: "When you enter the bridal chamber, take some of the fish's liver...put...on the embers of the incense...the demon will smell it and flee...The odor of the fish so repelled the demon that he fled to the remotest

parts of Egypt. But Raphael followed him, and at once bound him there hand and foot” (Tobit 6.17-18, 8.3). The proxy of God gives Tobias every tool he needs to minimize dependence on divine presence in the future. Why would Tobias, and by association, all Diaspora people still need a God symbol if they are being taught all of the mysteries of the world? If they know how to heal and how to drive out evil spirits themselves, then the heavy-handed nature of the ancient tribal God becomes outdated. This situation resembles the well-known quote, “Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day; teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime.” God is still necessary because He is the one who makes these mysteries known and teaches the people how to be self-sufficient; however, this new system enables the Jews to flourish with only God’s counsel, and not the direct intervention seen in earlier books.

Raphael was sent to Tobias because God cannot heal directly as He once did with Job. Now, the actions of God must be channeled through Raphael; God does appear to be more remote in this book, but not absent. Raphael is not only subbing in for the role of Satan, but also for the role of priests in Diaspora. The appearance of Raphael signals a shift in the system of prayer and worship, as well as divine response, in a Diaspora environment. No longer are priests and temples required because the angelic medium needs no earthly base. Raphael performs all necessary priestly duties, including prayer relay, communication of divine counsel, and instructions on how to live a good life and conduct one’s own healing. Through this change of management, methods of worship that would otherwise require a priest and temple become more accessible, as angels can perform their jobs anywhere; it also encourages Diaspora Jews to learn how to be self-sufficient in times when divine intervention may not be readily available, even with the presence of angels.

Women play a very important role in the social changes taking place in the Book of Tobit, both explicitly and symbolically. During the Diaspora, women took on different responsibilities than were normally practiced in Israel. For example, Tobit mentions his grandmother, Deborah, as the progenitor of his religious education: “according to the instructions of Deborah, the mother of my father Tobiel, for my father had died and left me an orphan” (Tobit 1.8). Religious education was formerly attributed to those in the priesthood or elders within the community. Tobit’s emphasis that his father had died and that he no longer had a male authority to teach him largely reflects the difficulty of priests in Diaspora society to continue their usual role; the Jews essentially have lost their “fathers” in religious study and education. Without the male leadership of his father, Tobit’s grandmother steps in the same way Diaspora women are fulfilling roles formerly assumed by men. This echoes the main sentiment of the Book of Judith, where Judith assumes military leadership of a cowardly tribe because the men have either proved inadequate or unwilling to serve.

Tobit’s people fight assimilation with other racial groups while in exile, first reflected in Tobit’s worry over marrying women within their tribe: “I married a woman, a member of our own family” (Tobit 1.9). Even in Diaspora, women hold such a central role in society that the introduction of a foreign woman in the context of marriage is more threatening than merely coexisting with the other. It threatens the integrity of the Israelite race, a social group already greatly compromised by the exposure to alien cultures that may influence them and the separation from the land that is inherent in Diaspora. This sentiment occurs again when Tobit expresses concern over the alien status of Raphael: “Call the man in, my son, so that I may learn about his family and to what tribe he belongs, and whether he is trustworthy enough to go with you” (Tobit 5.9).

Tobias' endogamous marriage with Sarah is a metaphor for a reunion with the land that his people once had to give up. In the very beginning of the text when Sarah's character is first introduced, her maids say to her, "See, you have already been married to seven husbands and not borne the name of a single one of them" (Tobit 3.8). Sarah has had many husbands but does not carry any of their names, just as Israel has had many inhabitants but is not permanently owned by any of them. The land of Israel has been inhabited by many different conquerors, from the time of Abraham to the current exile, and all of these conquerors have eventually been removed from the land for one reason or another. The Jews have no reason to believe that their exile is permanent because they have returned at least once before, in the time of Moses.² Israel, by name and by covenant, belongs to the Israelites; similarly, Sarah belongs to Tobias, "for Tobias was entitled to have her before all other who had desired to marry her" (Tobit 3.17). It is as much God's plan to give Sarah to Tobias over all of her previous husbands as it is for Him to return the land of Israel to the Israelites. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that Sarah's body, plagued by Asmodeus, represents the land that the Jews had been forced to leave by an incorrigible evil, the Babylonians; the evil is removed from her spirit just as God once drove enemies from the land. The biggest difference, however, is that it is Tobias, not God, who drives the evil spirit from Sarah's body in order to make his claim to her. This idea of self-dependence and action is reflected in the 'take-away' lessons of the text and creates a formula by which the Israelites can regain their land.

There is a final reassurance in Tobit that is nonexistent in Job, and the conclusion of Tobit is highly contingent upon the actions of the doer. Raphael reassures everyone that "Do good and evil will not overtake you" (Tobit 12.7). Being a good person does not equate with *doing* good; meaning that prayer and worship are not enough to ward away evil. This statement

² See the Book of Exodus

supports being proactive about one's life. Because Tobias does good, he is rewarded with the fall of Nineveh and the restoration of his homeland. His father, Tobit, lives long enough to witness the fall of Nineveh, a hopeful prophecy for the future: "not a single word of the prophecies will fail. All of our kindred...will be scattered and taken as captives from the good land...But God will again have mercy on them, and God will bring them back to the land of Israel" (Tobit 14.4-14.5). This prophecy reaffirms the original covenant with Abraham because the circumstances surrounding them are very similar: God promises the land to Abraham, but the Israelites never obtain the land during Abraham's lifetime. The covenant is only a promise that God will eventually give them the land, and Tobit's prophecy is the same for Diaspora Jews. Not occupying the land that they have been promised is not a new concept in Jewish history.

This reinvention of the God symbol make Him less involved but more universally accessible, because while He cannot be there to fend off evil or cause miracles, the people can learn and practice teachings that travel with them. At the end of the book, God does not just restore their former glory, but also follows them on a journey not unlike Tobias', far from home. As Raphael advised Tobias on the way to Media, God can continue counsel to the Jews wherever they are, whether in Egypt, Babylon, or Greece, for the new system of angelic mediation can function even in places where Jews cannot build temples for worship. Losing the land does not equal losing faith, and the Book of Tobit's real 'take-away' message is that all will certainly be well in the end—after a few revisions to the structure of the Jewish system of belief and social thought.

The Book of Susanna continues the radical reinvention of the God symbol that begins in the Book of Tobit, taking the idea of self-reliance and the elimination of God's mortal proxies one step further and into the development of a Jewish government that is autonomous in

execution, but follows a divinely given ethical system of order. The Jewish people can pass judgment on their own according to the guidelines established by God. It continues to explore the idea of God's agents embodying evil; instead of a demon like Asmodeus, however, the evil lies within the priestly order. These questions arise: What kind of corruption is the practice of law susceptible to in this period? How does God remain present in the Jewish legal system during the Diaspora? How has the Book of Job and the events of the Diaspora influenced the ways in which Jews engage in a legal relationship with God? As with Tobias in the Book of Tobit, God encourages action from those who worship Him; instead of direct divine intervention, He stirs Daniel's spirit to use logic and rhetoric to bring criminals to justice. As a result, wrongdoers are dealt with through the legal system as established by the people instead of through divine punishment or testing. This completely revolutionizes the idea of crime and punishment as they have been previously experienced by Diaspora society. Crime is now defined by the ways that people wrong each other and punishment is decided upon by the members of society who are affected, as opposed to the previous order where everything was God-centric. Previously, punishment was dealt to those who violated divine law and offended God in the process, and God dealt with wrongdoers Himself. The new order acknowledges the necessity of self-sufficiency in exile and shifts the focus to a community dynamic.

The Book of Susanna demonstrates a focus on the legal system very early on in the text: "There was a man living in Babylon whose name was Joakim. He married...Susanna...Her parents were righteous, and had trained their daughter according to the law of Moses" (Susanna 1.1-3). The idea of following Mosaic Law was also featured in the Book of Tobit; both of these books serve to make an example of a character taught in the ancient law that would soon be proven outdated. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the Mosaic Law fails for both Tobias and

for Susanna, demanding revision and essentially, reinvention of the God symbol that once established it. Susanna is educated in the law of Moses, and knows the punishment that would await her if she were to lie with the lustful elders who approach her in her garden: “I am completely trapped. For if I do this, it will mean death for me; if I do not, I cannot escape your hands...Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice” (Susanna 1.22-24). She understands the death penalty and cries out when she is threatened with rape, and yet she goes unrewarded for his knowledge and fidelity to the Mosaic Law.³ Because the elders speak untruths against her, the community presumes her guilty despite her otherwise virtuous reputation: “for nothing like this had ever been said about Susanna” (Susanna 1.27).

Previously, prophets, priests, and kings were the usual medium of communication for laws, decrees, punishment and testing. Raphael introduces a different kind of proxy: a divine vessel immune to human temptation or fallacy. As established earlier in this chapter, the relationship between God and the Jewish people is heavily modified by the proxies God uses to communicate. In the Book of Tobit, the agent of evil is Asmodeus, who echoes the modifications that Satan had made to the God-man relationship in the Book of Job. Here, in the Book of Susanna, the corruption of the elders-turned-judges presents a different agent of evil. While previous men of God have displayed corruption from time to time, they are generally beneficent and obedient to the will of God. The elders in the story of Susanna are neither beneficent nor God-fearing, as clearly exemplified in their behavior.

As a result, the Book of Susanna echoes some of the criticisms in the Book of Judith about the priestly order. The system of Mosaic Law becomes largely irrelevant; Susanna is made vulnerable to the corruption of the male elders of her village and is subjected to the blatant violation of the laws of Moses she had grown up with. The law was meant to have protected her

³ Deuteronomy 22:24

from the abuse of men; crying out her rape in accordance with the law was supposed to have summoned people to help her and incriminate the elders who were trying to rape her. Instead, the elders take advantage of their status to oppress Susanna and manipulate their own knowledge of the law to exact revenge against her when she denies them. The law meant to protect women in the case of rape actually then condemns Susanna when the elders testify against her.

Even before the reader witnesses the wicked acts of the elders, it is stated in the text: “That year two elders from the people were appointed as judges. Concerning them, the Lord had said: ‘Wickedness came forth from Babylon, from elders who were judges, who were supposed to govern the people’” (Susanna 1.5). This recalls the question of God’s responsibility in such situations of potential wrongdoing: was it God who appointed these “men of God” or are these chosen representatives of the people? The Book of Susanna proposes that even elders, supposed men of God, are not governed by God. If this is the case, what is the role of the current God symbol in the society, and how should such a corrupted system be rectified? God is present symbolically in law, but where is God when law gets corrupted? God remains a symbol of moral fortitude and the system of ethics with the society, but the symbol depends on the strength of the law. The God symbol becomes compromised when the law is corrupted, but is also restored when the law is upheld.

These judges are the holders of the divine law, as it is the only kind of law that exists among this tribe: “These men were frequently at Joakim’s house, and all who had a case to be tried came to them there” (Susanna 1.6). Their role in society requires others to come to them in a designated place, and their judgment is final and uncontested; this creates an extremely narrow scope for the legal system to work in. The elders’ manipulation of Mosaic Law ultimately condemns Susanna: “Then the two elders stood up before the people, and laid their hands on her

head” (Susanna 1.34). By placing their hands on her head, they are declaring themselves witnesses to her misconduct; Mosaic Law necessitates two witnesses for the trial to be legitimate.⁴ However, the law also calls for a cross-examination, which the elders neglect to perform.⁵ Susanna is immediately condemned “because they were elders of the people and judges, the assembly believed them” (Susanna 1.41). This condemnation violates Mosaic Law; even the divine law cannot save Susanna because it is both manipulated and conveniently ignored. God is notably absent throughout this part of the book, in part to symbolize the shortcomings of the ancient law He once mandated. The reinvention lies within God’s appearance in Daniel, who eventually addresses the corruption of the elders by refocusing the emphasis from absolute divine law onto tangible human laws with direct consequences that people can easily understand and follow.

Susanna’s position as a woman in Jewish society plays an important role in this book, in the same vein as women in other apocryphal texts. In the Book of Tobit, Sarah’s demon-plagued body represents the compromised land of Israel; this motif returns in Susanna’s own body. She is subjected to the male gaze of the elders, who “suppressed their consciences and turned away their eyes from looking to Heaven or remembering their duty to administer justice” (Susanna 1.9). Susanna is plagued by the wicked intentions of the elders as much as Sarah is at the mercy of the demon Asmodeus; they both demonstrate the vulnerability of women’s physical bodies, metaphorically representing Israel, to the different agents of evil that may be associated with but not necessarily encompassed by the Diaspora God symbol. Examples of these agents could be as abstract as Satan or another demonic figure, or as concrete and immediately threatening as the Babylonian invaders. The threat of evil could come from people as familiar and trusted as priests

⁴ *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* 196. Reference to Numbers 35:30, Deuteronomy 17:6 and 19:15

⁵ Deuteronomy 19:15-21

or elders. Women are equally helpless to the consequences of the evil they encounter as the Promised Land. It may be because of this helplessness that women in Diaspora are more willing to directly call upon God for assistance. Susanna follows in the tradition of Judith and Sarah by offering a personal prayer⁶: “Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice, and said, “O eternal God, you know what is secret and are aware of all things before they come to be...I have done none of the wicked things that they have charged against me” (Susanna 1.42-43). Susanna cries out, summoning the image of her attempted rape and her compliance with the Mosaic Law. In this moment, her observation of Deuteronomy brings about a form of divine intervention, but notably, a reinvented response.

Daniel echoes Tobias’ do-it-yourself exorcism of Sarah in his divinely sanctioned rescue of Susanna. He is merely a bystander throughout most of this story, mirroring the actions of the near-absent God. Daniel is used as a vessel to demonstrate a legal system counseled but not dictated by a divine presence, a reinvention of both the God symbol and the priestly order that serves under Him. Mosaic Law is ignored by human authorities too often to be reliable. Therefore, a change is necessary for the continuation of the society. God empowers Daniel in a similar gesture to that of His interaction with Tobias, and although the reader does not witness a physical manifestation and verbal instruction as with Raphael, God sends “holy spirit,” a similarly beneficent divine proxy: “The Lord heard her cry...God stirred up the holy spirit of a young lad named Daniel, and he shouted with a loud voice, ‘I want no part in shedding this woman’s blood!’” (Susanna 1.44-45). Daniel shouts loudly, echoing Susanna’s obedience to divine law while demanding that the people return to the law of cross-examination that was previously ignored: “Are you such fools, O Israelites, as to condemn a daughter of Israel without examination...?” (Susanna 1.48). Law is restored, because God intervenes through Daniel. In

⁶ *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* 196. Reference to Judith 9:2-14 and Tobit 2:10-15

this way, God becomes law, manifested through the holy spirit, which encourages the people to once again uphold the law.

There is a curious dynamic here of a young man challenging the authority of elders but yet encouraging people to at least partially uphold an ancient law; the metaphor largely represents the process of symbol reinvention. According to Geertz, symbols are “historically transmitted” and “inherited conceptions” that must be continually developed; nonetheless, the symbol must stay fundamentally recognizable as changes are made (Geertz 89). Considering the subject matter of other books of the Apocrypha, this is potentially a commentary on Jews who yearned for the tribal God of the Torah; there are aspects of the affiliated cultural system that should be upheld and practiced, such as guidelines for the legal system, while others, such as violence and corruption, are considered undesirable. Daniel is given “the standing of an elder” by God and then criticizes the elders:

You old relic of wicked days, your sins have now come home, which you have committed in the past, pronouncing unjust judgments, condemning the innocent and acquitting the guilty, though the Lord said, ‘You shall not put an innocent and righteous person to death.’ (Susanna 1.50-53)

Daniel directly accuses the elders of being an outdated part of the Judaic system, for they have been a source of injustice and sin within the community. Instead of being men of God, they have gone against God’s wishes and enacted evil when they should have been devout followers of the Jewish law. The tone of Daniel’s speech indicates that the system in which the elders are the authority is coming to an end, and a new system focused on a more objective law is emerging. The elders represent a system where God’s commands are easily ignored as irrelevant, while

Daniel represents a reinvention of God that incorporates previous laws into a system that makes sense in the present.

Ultimately, the elders are proven guilty and are punished for their sins “in accordance with the law of Moses” (Susanna 1.62). Mosaic Law is effective once again because it is no longer associated with the elders, who corrupt its decrees and make no effort to uphold the actual law. Daniel, as a younger “elder” and leader of his people, represents the new revolutionary ideal that will correct the evildoing of the generation before it. It is a cleansing of ancient wrongs and essentially, a restructuring of Judaism. The law that he upholds is an ethical imperative for the Jews to rule themselves and each other, and it is so radically different from the system of Mosaic Law that it requires a new kind of leadership. Daniel’s replacement of the corrupted elders changes the dynamic of the traditional system, as authority now hinges upon the observance of and faithfulness to law, not something as arbitrary as age.

In a way, Daniel resembles Raphael in the Book of Tobit. Both are proxies of God that displace the role of priests in Diaspora society. The more accurate comparison, however, is between Daniel and Tobias; Daniel is the self-sufficient, empowered character of Tobias placed in a more socially significant situation. Tobias is taught by Raphael to perform his own miracles in order to benefit himself and his family. Daniel is similarly instructed by the holy spirit to intervene and encourage the Jewish people to pass judgment on the corrupt elders. Together, the Books of Tobit and Susanna deconstruct the priestly order. Even judges are ultimately judged, although unlike previous conceptions of the Day of the Lord, these judgments are by the people and not by God.⁷ The God symbol acts as a standard of moral and ethic fiber against which people can measure their leaders. Daniel is a novel kind of priest figure; instead of relying

⁷ The day when God comes to pass final judgment and serve divine justice to both the righteous and the wicked. See the Book of Malachi.

heavily on temple ritual and formality, which basically forces others into a lower status than his to ask and pray for help, he receives divine aid and willingly shares it with the people. This new system encourages equality and cooperation among a people who cannot afford to have conflict between them due to the great external tribulation they face together. In it, God becomes accessible to all.

The vessel through which God enacts the punishment is an unnamed angel: “the angel of God is waiting with his sword to split you in two, so as to destroy you both” (Susanna 1.59). This continues the angelic mediation featured in the Book of Tobit, indicating a shift from punishment stemming from agents of evil, such as Satan, to the supposedly beneficent, the angels. The role of punisher that Satan originally played in the Book of Job is displaced onto a figure without negative connotation, especially in this situation where they are smiting the obviously wicked and benefitting the good. This comments on the nature of Satan and the angels as well as whether or not evil is proper to God. Punishment is not inherently evil, and human perception of it relies heavily on the proxy through which it is dealt. The presentation of the angels here in the Book of Susanna differs significantly from that of the Book of Tobit; previously, Raphael was only responsible for mediating healing, not punishment. This unnamed angel demonstrates that the presence of angels eliminates the need for a figure that is an exclusive punisher. All of these revisions to the belief system are in the name of universalizing the God symbol for any situation. Ultimately, Satan and the angels are equalized in terms of service to God; God Himself is neither good nor evil, and the nature of the God symbol varies with the Jewish people’s interpretations of the external forces with which He is associated. The idea of evil becomes based on punishment without clear reason, and the introduction of the people’s legal system eliminates this phenomenon and assures logical judgment followed by a just punishment. As previously

mentioned, bestowing the responsibility of judgment unto the people as opposed to a single person decreases the possibility of a corrupt or unfair punishment. The reinvention of the God symbol in the Book of Susanna makes it difficult to attribute evil to God because judgment and punishment has been transferred to the people. Law then becomes a proxy of God, an aspect of the religion that is essentially human in nature like priests or prophets, but is divinely counseled. Since its responsibility has been assigned to humankind and its process is entirely knowable, no penalty can be considered evil provided that there was a fair trial.

Another form of proxy used in this book is the holy spirit that God rouses in Daniel. It is portrayed as belonging to Daniel: “God stirred up the holy spirit of a young lad named Daniel” (Susanna 1.44-45). Though the holy spirit is of Daniel, it is controlled by God, making it a unique kind of divine proxy. This leads to the question of who owns the holy spirit, man or God, or it is a shared quality between them? There is no clear distinction between man and God if a quality of God is located within the body of man. If the holy spirit is indeed a shared quality, then it brings man on a more equal level with God. In order to determine the relationship between God and the holy spirit, it is important to explore the places in the Tanakh where the holy spirit also appears. The holy spirit of God appears first in Genesis 1.2, during the Creation; the holy spirit is as old as the deity symbol itself. In the Book of Judges, the “Spirit of the Lord” appears quite frequently, as a means to choose judges and prophets among the people. Similarly, God will stir it up in the chosen one; however, it is never referred to as the holy spirit of that person. The spirit appears in a very similar way throughout the prophetic books as well, again under God’s exclusive ownership. The holy spirit is a crucial part of the belief system, as stressed in Psalms: “Do not cast me from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me...and sustain in me a willing spirit” (Psalms 51.11-12). The key to understanding the

strikingly different role of the holy spirit in the Book of Susanna and in the Diaspora society lies in a passage from Numbers, where Moses says, “Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit on them!” (Numbers 11.29). Moses’ wish is somewhat granted in Diaspora, when the holy spirit becomes a way in which God can encourage observance of the law in His people. God stirs up Daniel’s holy spirit in order to rectify the ignorance of the Jewish law. Because the new system of belief makes it so that God does not directly intervene in the affairs of His people, the holy spirit contained within those people becomes a proxy through which God can correct His followers when they stray from the path He sets.

Susanna, like Tobit and Judith, is reassured that “God...saves those who hope in him” (Susanna 1.60). This follows the tradition of other apocryphal texts in encouraging faith despite the radical changes to the religious system. The events of this book demonstrate how Jews in Diaspora are reinventing the character of God by explicitly contrasting a system that relies heavily on the leadership of elders and priests with one that locates God within the law. The new system does not need the intervention of elders or priests to pass judgment on the people; instead, the people can govern themselves according to the guidelines set by God, thus eliminating the potential corruption of the middleman. They no longer have to worry about being punished by a subjective system that leaves them susceptible to the human fallibility of elders; their new God symbol encourages the people to uphold law themselves within their social system. Upholding the law becomes a new way of worship and therefore, a new structure for the society as a whole.

The radical revisions discussed in this chapter glimpse at a rapidly evolving, yet fundamentally recognizable, face of Judaism. The Jews still believe in God, but what God

symbolizes for them is constantly changing. When Daniel accuses the elders of being an “old relic of wicked days,” he could easily be addressing the ancient God of the Tanakh as well, whose character has been shown throughout the Bible to be guilty of these accusations (Susanna 1.50). In Exodus 23.7, God commands these words to the people, and yet in the Tanakh, God most notably smites people for nonspecific reasons, such as in Numbers 11 when the Israelites in the desert have low morale and God puts many to death by fire for it. Similarly, in Numbers 21 when these same Israelites are despairing and complaining about the quality of the food available to them, God sends fiery serpents to bite and kill them. These instances make it easy to see how the God who enacted these punishments may be regarded as random or unfair, for his justification seems nonexistent, as with the undeserved punishment of Job and the deaths of his entire family.

When punishment seems unjustified, it is difficult for people to find meaning in suffering, which is the basis of Geertz’s theory of why religion is practiced in the first place. This is a reason why the reinvention became necessary in the Books of Susanna and Tobit; these texts describe the shift from Judith and Job’s seemingly ungoverned, arbitrary God to an ethical system that the Jewish people adhere to. God becomes a God of law not only because He provides a set of rules for the Jews to live by, but because those laws also bind God to His people. This provides hope for the Jews past the promise of the land, hope for a benevolent relationship with God no matter where they have gone in Diaspora.

CONCLUSION

The Diaspora is a fundamentally challenging time in Jewish history, and presents many problems and complications when it comes to faith and worship. However, the ways in which the Jewish people handled this crisis is reflected within the texts generated during this time period. The original model for unexplained suffering is found in the Book of Job, and this is the cultural narrative to which many apocryphal texts respond, criticize, and rewrite. The introduction of this thesis discussed how the Book of Job soured the relationship between man and God, and the chapters illuminated how the texts of the Apocrypha either reaffirm the existing symbol of God or work to radically change it. The reinvention of God through the narrative medium creates the kind of taxonomy of God pioneered by Jack Miles in *God: A Biography*, portraits of the different ways the God symbol functions within a society.

The God symbol changes based upon the needs of the people; for some, God should establish law, and for others, God should triumph over false gods. For Judith, reclaiming the land that was lost is the way to resolve the problems of Diaspora; it would preserve the temple structure, enable methods of worship as prescribed in the ancient books, and reaffirm the military might of the Israelites and their God. For Susanna and Daniel, inventing a legal system that is upheld by the people is an ethical solution to the rising tensions in Diaspora society. God remains a standard of moral rectitude but is mostly a symbolic presence to the laws made and upheld by man. Tobias would champion self-sufficiency and the ability to determine one's own fate as the solution to the helplessness and detachment from God many Jews may have felt in exile. Regardless of the answer detailed within the story, one solution does not preclude another; instead it reveals the ways in which the God symbol that sustains Jewish society's prominent cultural narratives can be reinvented. A problematic symbol can be refigured until it once again

functions normally, whether that function is to explain the mysteries of the world, or to unite a people against a common enemy.

Ultimately, the Apocrypha is a hopeful collection of texts. It demonstrates the ability of people to create symbols that make meaning out of the materials of life, and what's more, to reinvent those symbols when they are no longer sufficient for their intended purpose. The very first definition I gave in the introduction from Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures* is that of religion: "a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbol...of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life" (Geertz 89). Geertz's definition of religion paints it as an inherently fluid thing, changing and developing as people learn more about the ways of the universe. It means that religion will always have a function in society, and people will always have some kind of system to explain what they do not understand. The variation across belief systems despite their fundamentally identical function in society indicates that people are highly adaptable, their ideas heavily influenced by the world around them. In this period of history, people were constantly reinventing symbols; this bodes well for the future of humankind, for as we continue to progress and advance, our capacity for symbol generation can only increase.

Most importantly, though, we must consider the Apocrypha's emphasis on the function of literature in the cultural narrative of a society. The medium through which all reinventions to the Jewish belief system, to perceptions of God, priests, prophets, and evil, are made, is literature. God is rewritten and refigured as a literary character that grows as His story progresses, that has motives and goals, failures and successes. Uncertainties about the fundamental nature of God are illustrated in the Book of Job, a cultural narrative that has become one of the most pervasive in Jewish biblical tradition. It is also an emotionally revealing piece of literature. At its most basic

nature, the books of the Apocrypha are written documents that communicate the history of people and its laws, rules, instructions, and hopes for the future. The power of literature is its ability to reshape society, strengthening favorable narratives and rewriting unfavorable ones. As such, literary study is necessary to a comprehensive analysis of the history of religion; the humanist value of literature is that it creates meaning for the events that occur in the life of humankind. Literature adds the intangibles to the study of history; a historical account can only tell you where and when something happened, but the story of it tells the emotions, the depth of human suffering and triumph, and the unexplainable root of miracles. The Apocrypha is a place where the past, present, and future of the Jewish people blur together in perhaps the most truly real depiction of the suffering and uncertainties part and parcel of the human condition, and the ways in which people have taken control of their own fates.

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