



HAL
open science

Hiel

Thomas Römer

► **To cite this version:**

Thomas Römer. Hiel. Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception (Vol. 11), 2015, pp.1038-1040.
10.1515/ebr.hiel . hal-03821595

HAL Id: hal-03821595

<https://hal.science/hal-03821595>

Submitted on 20 Oct 2022

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

anything happen. Why should I be good when You aren't?" Malick's *To the Wonder* (2012, US) further develops this motif in Fr. Quintana, a Catholic priest who laments the absence of God and Christ in his life. Quintana's consistent service of a wide range of needy and vulnerable people illustrates how Bonhoeffer's understanding of a powerless God who is weak in the world (cf. Esther) can be a catalyst for people to implement justice themselves.

Several films feature "religious vigilantes" who provide divine justice that is otherwise absent: *The Boondock Saints* (dir. Troy Duffy, 1999, CA/US); *Frailty* (dir. Bill Paxton, 2001, US); *Count of Monte Cristo* (dir. Kevin Reynolds, 2002, UK/US/IE). Counterparts to these characters are the "vigilantes of evil" in *The Night of the Hunter* (dir. Charles Laughton, 1955, US) and *Cape Fear* (dir. J. Lee Thompson, 1962, US; dir. Martin Scorsese, 1991, US).

Three Woody Allen films depict divine absence through God's apparent failure to exact justice against murderers: *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989, US), *Match Point* (2005, UK/US/LU), and *Cassandra's Dream* (2007, US/UK/FR). Unpunished human injustice also raises questions about God's absence in *Au hasard Balthazar* (dir. Robert Bresson, 1966, FR/SE). In Ingmar Bergman's "God's Silence" trilogy, the idea of a just God is incompatible with human cruelty and suffering (*Såsom i en spegel*, 1961, SE, *Through a Glass Darkly*; *Nattvardsgästerna*, 1963, SE, *Winter Light*; *Tystnaden*, 1963, SE, *The Silence*).

Intimated in the sentiment in *Shadowlands* (dir. Richard Attenborough, 1993, UK), that one prays to change not God but oneself is a belief in God's inability to intervene in human affairs. And while prayer in *The Wrong Man* (dir. Alfred Hitchcock, 1956, US) might save the protagonist from prison, it fails to remove the psychic trauma resulting from his wrongful conviction. In the Jobian *A Serious Man* (dir. Ethan and Joel Coen, 2009, US), Larry Gopnik is unable to find a satisfactory answer for the injustices that plague the world.

Some films follow the pattern in Ps 88 and remain their lament throughout. Tyler Durden in *Fight Club* (dir. David Fincher, 1999, US/DE) associates God's absence with divine abandonment:

Our fathers were our models for God. If our fathers bailed, what does that tell you about God? You have to consider the possibility that God does not like you. He never wanted you. In all probability, he hates you. This is not the worst thing that can happen. We don't need him! Fuck damnation, man! Fuck redemption! We are God's unwanted children? So be it!

God's presence can be perceived as a threat. Maurice Bendrix in *The End of the Affair* (dir. Neil Jordan, 1999, US/UK) prefers a hidden God: "I hate you, God. I hate you as though you existed." Giving the title a dual meaning, the film ends with Bendrix's prayer: "Dear God, forget about me ... leave me

alone forever." In *God on Trial* (dir. Andy de Emmony, 2008, UK), a Jewish concentration camp prisoner concludes a long list of divine atrocities in the HB by concluding, "God is not good. He has simply been strong. He has simply been on our side.... He is still God, but not our God. He has become our enemy."

Many films depict God's presence hidden in unexpected (female) forms. In *Dogville* (dir. Lars von Trier, 2003, DK/SE/FR/NO/NL/FI), the divine hides in the frail and vulnerable Grace who is raped relentlessly. As in Matt 25:31–46, this divine figure exacts merciless judgment against those who failed to aid her. Von Trier explores other issues related to God's hiddenness in *Breaking the Waves* (1996, DK/SE/FR/NO/NL/IS) and *Antichrist* (2009, DK/DE/SE/FR/IT/PL). In *El laberinto del fauno* (dir. Guillermo del Toro, 2006, ES/MX, *Pan's Labyrinth*) the divine hides in eleven-year-old Ofelia. The film ends with a note about her hidden divine presence in this world being available only to those with eyes to see. God appears at the end of *Dogma* (dir. Kevin Smith, 1999, US) in the form of Alanis Morissette.

Films depict God's hiddenness in other (sacramental) forms: nature and animals (*Stromboli*; dir. Roberto Rossellini, 1949, IT); raining frogs that signal liberation from familial abuse (*Magnolia*; dir. Paul T. Anderson, 1999, US); joy in singing (*Så som i himmelen*; dir. Kay Pollack, 2004, SE, *As It Is in Heaven*) or running (*Chariots of Fire*; dir. Hugh Hudson, 1981, UK). Illustrating Victor Hugo's argument (*Preface to Cromwell*) that true art juxtaposes the sublime and grotesque, *American Beauty* (dir. Sam Mendes, 1999, US), depicts God's benevolence hiding in death and a floating plastic bag. *American Beauty* argues that film (what Jean Epstein called "profane revelation") is the primary mode for experiencing the divine. Reflections on God's hiddenness appear in *The Truman Show* (dir. Peter Weir, 1998, US) and *Stranger than Fiction* (dir. Marc Forster, 2006, US). Both films posit a Creator who manipulates peoples' lives and whose discovery is only possible at immense personal risk. In *Life of Pi* (dir. Ang Lee, 2012, US), belief in God is fictitious but preferable (and necessary as a coping mechanism) to life's haunting and traumatic reality.

Bibliography: ■ Bandy, M. L./A. Monda (eds.), *The Hidden God* (New York 2003).

Matthew Rindge

See also → Dissimulation; → God; → God (Names and Epithets)

Hiel

At the end of the story of the conquest of Jericho that ends with the total destruction of the city, Joshua utters an oath, saying: "Cursed before YHWH be the man who stands up to build this

city – this Jericho! At the cost of his firstborn he shall lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest he shall set up its gates!” (Josh 6:26). According to 1 Kgs 16:34 it in the days of the Israelite king Ahab “Hiel of Bethel built Jericho; he laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of YHWH, which he spoke by Joshua son of Nun.” Both verses are related to each other and most probably belong to the Deuteronomistic redaction of the Former Prophets. The redactors want to emphasize that YHWH’s words and curses are always fulfilled. For that reason 1 Kgs 16:34 transforms Joshua into a prophet. In the Greek Lucianic text of Kings this verse is missing, which could indicate a quite late insertion (Bieberstein: 266). The idea that vanquished cities are destroyed and should not be rebuilt any more is common to ANE war ideology. Nothing else is known about Hiel. His name (MT *חֵיל*; LXX *Ἀγιηλ*) means “brother of El” or “brother of God”. He is said to come from Beth-El, a name, which contains the same theophoric element “El.” It is therefore difficult to decide whether this notice contains any historical memory or whether it is an invention by the Deuteronomistic redactors in order to provide another reason for criticizing Beth-El, a sanctuary they abhorred. Some commentators think that Hiel was charged by the Omride king Ahab to rebuild Jericho and there is some evidence for a settlement of Jericho during the Iron Age (Niemann: 77–78). It is also unclear what happened to his sons. Did he offer them as foundation sacrifices, as suggested by the Targum? Or was the natural death of both sons understood as the consequence of the curse upon the builder of Jericho? Since the natural death of two sons at the same time is a difficult assumption, it seems more logical to think of human sacrifices for which exists some evidence in the Levant (Gray: 334). If the rebuilding of Jericho was connected with the threat of a war with Moab, then Hiel’s sacrifice would echo the Moabite king’s sacrifice of his son in 2 Kgs 3:27.

The story is told in Jewish sources that Hiel was hidden in the altar that the priests of Baal made on Mount Carmel, and that he was given fire and told to light the altar secretly on a signal from the priests; but God sent a snake who killed him (*Yalq-Shim* on 1 Kgs 18:26 and parallels). The incident also appears in the paintings of the Dura-Europos synagogue (Goodenough 10:151; 11: pl. 15 and fig. 341).

Bibliography: ■ Bieberstein, K., *Josua-Jordan-Jericho: Archäologie, Geschichte und Theologie der Landnahmeerzählungen Josua 1–6* (OBO 143; Freiburg i.Br./Göttingen 1995). ■ Goodenough, E. R., *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, 13 vols. (New York 1953–68). ■ Gray, J., *I & II Kings: A Commentary* (OTL; London 3 1977). ■ Niemann, H. M., *Herrschaft, Königtum und Staat: Skizzen zur soziokulturellen Entwicklung im monarchischen Israel* (FAT 6; Tübingen 1993). ■ Noth, M.,

1 Könige 1–16 (BKAT 9/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn 1968). ■ Würthwein, E., *Die Bücher der Könige: 1 Könige 1–16* (ATD 11/1; Göttingen 1977).

Thomas Römer

Hierapolis (in Phrygia)

1. History. Hierapolis, today Turkish Pamukkale, is located northeast of the Lycus river valley, in southwestern Anatolia. It is not clear whether the original name of the city stems from Hiera, the wife of Telephus, the mythical founder of the Pergamon, or simply because it was a “holy city” as its Greek name implies. The location of the site above the white cliffs, made of mineral deposits, is as striking today as it was in ancient times. The earliest clear date for the foundation of the city goes back to the first half of the 2nd century BCE. However, the city may have been founded already in the 4th–3rd centuries BCE. In 133 BCE it was bequeathed to the Romans. A severe earthquake struck the region and the city in 17 CE and again in 60 CE. Like the majority of cities, in the high days of the Roman Empire, it flourished in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE. Also, like other cities in its region, it prospered due to its wool and textile industry. Hierapolis was well known for its purple dye made of the roots of *rubia* plants. The hot springs around Hierapolis made it a desired place for bathing and healing. Hierapolis was also known for its *Plutonium*, the cave sanctuary of Pluto, the Roman god of the underworld. It was believed to be the entrance to the underworld.

Hierapolis was probably the birthplace of the famous Stoic philosopher, Epictetus. The city had a large Jewish community to which the various inscriptions and Jewish symbols attest. Hierapolis is mentioned in Col 4:12–13, where a certain Epaphras is praised for his hard work among Christians in Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea. In spite of some confusion, it seems most likely that the Philip associated with Hierapolis was Philip the Apostle, who was also martyred and buried there, rather than Philip the Evangelist (see Applod: 215–31). Papias, the apostolic father, was the bishop of Hierapolis at the turn of the 1st century CE, and is said to have been the companion of St. Polycarp. Apollinaris Claudius, an early Christian apologist, was also the bishop of Hierapolis in the 2nd century. Polycrates, the bishop of Ephesus in the 2nd century connects Philip the Apostle with Asia and declares that he died at Hierapolis. During the early Byzantine period (late 4th–early 7th cent.) the city was apparently an important holy city, and a site of pilgrimage to the tomb and shrine of Philip. A severe earthquake in the 7th century marks the beginning of a slow decline of Hierapolis and by the end of the 12th century it was abandoned.

2. Archaeology. The archaeological site at Hierapolis preserves many of its Roman and early Byzantine