

ASPECTS AND MODALITIES OF GOD'S PRESENCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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Abstract

This work wishes to present aspects of Jahweh's presence as represented in Old Testament texts. It presents those aspects of immediate divine interventions such as some kind of "holy intrusion" (theophany), in relation to the permanent divine presence, as "in the midst" of God's people. The author wishes to emphasize the complementary nature, rather than the mutual exclusion of these two aspects of God's presence.

Key words: *theophany, context, aspect, modality, anthropomorphism, intervention, localization, noumen, nouminous, mysterium tremendum, Zion, temple*

ASPECTS AND MODALITIES

Text, Context and Experience

Text and context are in constant tandem and the *sine qua non* of biblical theology. There is no text without context. A competent and responsible student of the Bible can not and must not separate this tandem. To take a biblical text and not to set it within the *multilayered context* (historical, religious, social or literary) will leave it incomplete and represents a criminal act. But the pairing of text and context does not remain in tandem for long; they inevitably turn into a threesome by adopting a third "member". Each text has an author, or at least an editor, of the existing text; we have seen, however, that every text has a context. The text starts its real life when it is read as it is written for a certain reader (Ex. 17:14; Iz 8:16;

Isa. 29:11-12; Isa. 30:8; Hab. 2:2). This inevitable third, the reader, the consumer of the text, brings the text to life, but also inevitably adds to the text his or her own experience – *the experience* of the text read. It is true that some texts have lived their life even before the author wrote them or recorded his or her experience, the experience of the author of the text, but the reader of the same text through his or her experience actually turns the text into an *event* and *experience*.¹

God's active presence is recorded in the Old Testament, *written down and experienced*. In the interaction of this triad of text, context and the experience of the reader, this author primarily wants to examine and suggest a dialogue between the text and the experience of the reader without ignoring the multilayeredness of the context, that is the *encounter in the dialogue* between the text and the experience of the consumed text, primarily as regards the experience of the Old Testament and the context of Israel. It is also an attempt to contextualize the motif of God's active presence in relation to the Christian framework as a real, lasting eventuality (!).

But before embarking on this task, we must warn of possible dangers and methodological temptations in the exegesis and hermeneutics of the biblical text. The primary purpose of this warning is to truly situate the emphasis on the textual record and the experience of the reader relative to the "presence of God" in the relevant context. Further, there are additional questions, for example, the one about the human approach to God (Ex. 34:30; Hos. 3:5), or just God's presence irrespective of that. Another question is how to harmonize the duration of God's presence with the occasional theophanic self-manifestations of God. The danger lies in the conviction that we exercise the exegesis of a relevant biblical text while actually focusing on a word or phrase which has captured our attention for some reason, or has become our favorite hobby-horse. Any competent exegesis and relevant hermeneutics focus not only on the literary diversity of the text, but also on the multilayeredness of the context. From a literary point of view, a text has both the immediate *literary context* and *sectional context*. In addition to these two contextual "strata" and additional stratum, context may include the context of *the*

1 Adele Berlin elaborates on the text as an experience of the reader and a certain event in her text, *The Role of the Text in the Reading Process*. She also stresses multiple contexts, including the so-called "internal literary" context. It is a more complex process than a mere reading into the text that which produces the text which is experienced in a certain way. The reader is influenced by the choice of words and not only the chance choice of individual terms in a biblical text. The reader notices the choice of words (first step), and the careful reader then makes a selection of words and terms deemed significant for the interpretation of a biblical passage (second step). Finally, the reader decides how to integrate that which has been lexically sifted through or diagnosed as significant into a well-defined and meaningful interpretation.

*whole book of the Bible.*²

Further analysis of the actualization of God's presence in Old Testament texts will benefit from a preliminary definition of terminology and the clarification of the difference between *aspect* and *modality*. This will be followed by a brief definition of the notional pillar, i.e., the *identity* of the biblical God, and then a few comments on the religious-theological or religious-cultural elements which may characterize God's manifestations or presence even as blasphemous, scandalous or naive.

Aspects and Modalities

When we speak of aspects, we primarily think of manifestations of God's personality and presence (salvific and gracious, divine-providential, the relationship between God's righteousness and justice) which thus illustrate and point to *aspects* of God's character through his acts or presence. God's theophanic acts particularly point to providential, salvific deeds in situations of crisis; the same applies to the manifestation of God's power as a retributive aspect (Ps. 18).

The term *modality* applies to manifestations of God's presence (expected and unexpected), unavoidable anthropomorphisms in which God's presence draws near, as well as powerful theophanic manifestations such as natural phenomena (earthquake, fire, smoke), but also the apparently less dynamic aspect of God's presence or dwelling. Biblical texts often present many of these modalities of God's manifestation as almost opposite from those commonly expected, and thus often not immediately recognized, i.e., "a man" in the story of Jacob (Gen. 32) and the "three men" who visit Abraham (Gen. 18:2). On the other hand, the prophet Elijah expected God's theophanic intervention in the form of the powers of nature (1 Kings 19:11-12) while God manifested himself in "a gentle whisper" (1 Kings 19:12b) (קוֹל רִמְמִים).

THE IDENTITY OF THE BIBLICAL GOD AND OF YAHWEH'S PRESENCE

A fuller presentation of God's active presence in biblical texts and in the extratextual experience requires a word about the foundational element of the

- 2 W. Kaiser considers "selective context" to be a passage in which the author's thought or emphasis which permeate this "selective context" is clearly discernable (Kaiser, 1981, in the chapter "Contextual Analysis"). On the other hand, the "context of a book of the Bible" is defined by a certain authorial plan or intent visible in that book. In some cases, the author will, within the text or in the concluding remarks, declare his or her intent and, in this way, determine the contextual framework of his or her text. One such instance is the author of the book of Ecclesiastes who situates his book in its proper context in the concluding remarks (12:13).

identity of the biblical and Jewish God. This is primarily Jahweh as *mysterium tremendum*, or in the words of Rudolf Otto, it is God experienced in the *moments of the numinous*.³

Mysterium Tremendum

Discussing the etymology of the name for the Jewish God, Jahweh, in his *Introduction to Christianity*, J. Ratzinger states that the Jews made their “religio-historical choice. They ‘opted for’ the God who is religio-typologically defined as *numen personale* (personal God), and not *numen locale* (a local God)” (Ratzinger, 89-98). Since religious experience usually occurs in concrete locations and real events, these incidental localities take precedence over sacred places “where a human being for some unknown reason through their senses gains access to that which is completely different, divine” (Ratzinger, 95). One is then inclined to identify the location of that experience or event with the person of divinity.

When in relation to Jahweh as *numen personale*, Rudolf Otto speaks of the holy God or the God of holiness; he speaks of the *numinous*. God is thus *mysterium tremendum* (the sense of an awesome mystery). Such an experience, says Otto, is the *moment tremenduma* (a moment of awesomeness). Although the numinous is that which is awesome, the “awesomeness” implied is not normal human fear. It is not “the intuition of “ the mysterious, even if at first the raw form is unpleasant; he also calls it “numinous timidity” (Otto, 25). Beginning to speak about God, whom he essentially understands as “holiness”, Otto warns the readers of his work “Holy” (*Das Heilige*) in a somewhat unusual introduction in which he invites them “to prepare conceptually for the moment of intensive and possibly one-sided religious stimulation” (Otto:16-23).⁴

The Scandal of God’s Presence

The term “scandal” (or offense) in reference to the New Testament does not apply so much to the scandal of “God’s incarnation” in Christ, but to the cross of Christ as an affront to the Jews. An Old Testament parallel is found in the prophet Isaiah in “a stone that causes men to stumble” (אֲבֶן נִפְּלֵה) (Isa. 8:14). There where the Greek New Testament text (1 Cor. 1:23) reads σκάνδαλο, the Hebrew text of the New Testament renders “a stumbling stone” from Isaiah. This does not apply only to the cross of Christ, but also to any more immediate, non-mediating

3 Rudolf Otto elaborates the point in chapters 3-7 (Otto, 2006:16-63).

4 The basic sense of the Latin *noumen* is “hint” or “will” but also “determining power” or “majesty.” *Noumen* eventually designates a god as deity with all divine power, and it is probably derived from *nuo* (Divković, 707).

form of God's presence which could potentially constitute a theological-religious "scandal". Thus it is not only the crucifixion that is a blasphemy, but the very possibility of incarnation, devoid of any mystifying elements, or of such an immediate presence of God, which is an insult for some and a folly for others.⁵

Even "milder" forms of God's presence are occasionally considered a blasphemous form of enthusiastically questionable experiences typical of certain Christian groups, sects or communities.

The primary, historical context of God's incarnation, far removed from us, is also the scandal of incarnation.⁶ The Jews "demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:22). To claim that "a certain man is God, and that he is simultaneously God and man" is unheard of and scandalous (comp. Ratzinger, 204). Theologically-philosophically it is *unheard of*; religiously, as far as Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Islam) go, it is *scandalous*. However, the theology of incarnation would be an even heavier burden if this same incarnated God were to be salvifically active only *eschatologically*, without being actively present in the continuous and daily encounters between God and humans. That is why we will consider the actualization and the active presence of God through the kerygmatic theology of evangelization. That is the theology of God's activity.⁷

Interpretations and the Localization of God's Presence

So far we have identified the twofold manifestation and actualization of God's presence. In the Bible, but also throughout the history of religion, God's presence up to the point of incarnation was treated in two ways. One way can be termed *literalist*, i.e., God as *numen locale*, when God's presence is expected in some way to be tangible, "visible" and localized, and then mediated to the common man by the priestly elite.

The localization of a deity occurs most often as a result of the religious and spiritual experience of an individual. It often happens that an individual "identifies deity with the place where he or she experienced this deity" (Ratzinger, 1972:95). Such places of God's localizations become sacred places and places of pilgrimage. To localize God does not mean only to delimit God with a geographical location;

5 Comp. Baillie, 122-123.

6 Although, in the New Testament, the term "scandal" (σκάνδαλον) primarily refers to "the scandal of the cross," i.e., to the crucifixion of Christ (1 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 5:11), from the religious-historical perspective, it is clear that God's incarnation is also considered a scandal. In most Croatian translations σκάνδαλον is rendered "sablasan" and only B. Đaković (Rijeka, 2000) renders it as "spoticanje" [stumbling]. *Novi zavjet: suvremeni prijevod* (Zagreb, 2003) renders it "uvreda" [offense].

7 The theology of the cross is also certainly in the center of the theology of God's activity.

sometimes it takes the form of a divinization of a person (Acts 14:11), thing (Acts 19:12) or tree (Jer. 17:2). Trees have played a special place in the localization of God's presence in the history of religion. In all religions, the tree is one of the most common symbols of the divine and sacred since the tree "is the symbol of the connections of life, the mediator between the soil which it penetrates with its roots and the sky which it reaches and touches with its top" (Chevalier, 688).⁸ Except for the trees in paradise, trees played a significant role in the theophany and experience of God's presence in the beginning of Abraham's physical and spiritual wanderings. One of God's earliest appearances to Abraham occurred "near the great trees of Mamre" (Gen. 18:1). It is also interesting that Abraham, after making an alliance with Abimelech, the king of Gerar (Gen. 20:1-2), "planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba" (Gen. 21:32-34) and by the newly planted tree invoked the name of the Lord the Eternal God (אֱלֹהֵי עוֹלָם) (21:33). What did this mean? Did it only signify the establishment of a small, memorial center commemorating the successful covenant with Abimelech? The fact that Abraham planted this tree was perhaps only a mark and symbol of life and living because the person who trusts in God is blessed as "a tree planted by streams of water" (Ps 1:3; Jer 17:5-8). Was, then, this gesture of Abraham's tree planting an indicatory confirmation, as a symbol of life and living, in the presence of Abimelech's threat to Abraham's life (Gen 20,3)? Why did Abraham call upon the name (of the eternal God) by that tree? It may have been only to express his gratitude to God, but it is equally likely that it was an act which would in some way localize divine presence in the establishment of the cultus of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!⁹ In any case, the planting of the tree is more than the building of a memorial center or a place of gratitude to God; it is undubitably some kind of a localization of the eternal

- 8 A tree is a particularly suitable localization of the divine because of the proverbial tree of life and death and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in Gen. 3. The tree is actually „*simbol neprestanog obnavljanja, dakle života u njegovu dinamičkom smislu. Ispunjeno je svetim snagama, jer je uspravno, raste, gubi lišće i ponovo ga dobiva; prema tome, preporađa se, umire i ponovo se rađa bezbroj puta*” (Eliade in Chevalier, 628; cf. ELIT, 235). Forests have always been places of anguish, of evil, but also sanctuaries. The Celtic culture in particular has known *nemeton*, the sacred forest. In Old Testament texts, trees and tree trunks are often identified with haughtiness, as in the story about Nebuchadnezzar. This is what Daniel saw in his vision: "I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous." (Dan. 4:10). In a similar vein, the arrogance of the Egyptian Pharaoh is compared with a tree "with beautiful branches overshadowing the forest, it towered on high, its top above the thick foliage" (Ez. 31:3).
- 9 The term "to call upon the name" (קָרָא שֵׁם) is also characteristic of the establishment of a cult. It is also believed that the planting of a tree in situations like this actually parallels, or is identical with, the building of an altar to God. As Abraham traveled away from his homeland of Haran "from one post to another" (Gen. 12:9), he would erect altars in those places (Gen. 12:8-9). They were all places of God's theophanies and presence.

God (comp. Wenham in his commentary on Gen. 21:33).

Second, in the history of Israel of the Bible, the localization of Jahweh hints at its darker side which proceeds from their inclination towards syncretism and the dangers of polytheism which threatened them when they were surrounded by other nations (comp. Jos. 23:7).

At the peak of their adultery, in the idolatrous pattern of syncretistic inclusiveness, the Israelites started identifying God with particular locations: "You say, 'We want to be like the nations, like the peoples of the world, who serve woods and stone.' But what you have in mind will never happen" (Ez. 20:32). It is likely that they did not say this aloud, but this way of thinking is clearly outlined in 1 Sam. 8 during the transition period from a loose confederal arrangement to the monarchic structure with a king at the head. The Israelites then demanded that Samuel give them a king and supported their demand with the wish: "When we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles" (1 Sam. 8:20).

It is interesting to note the ultimate aim of the God of the Bible to provide a location as presented in a New Testament theophanic text in which John observes the descent of the "Holy City" and "New Jerusalem." God is "localized" there in his people when he states: "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God" (Rev. 21:1-3). More will be said in the context of the modalities of God's presence.

On the other hand, theophanic events, the self-revelation of God, as a kind of precursor to divine localization, are a *spiritual* and personal internalization of God's presence. In this, God is not primarily a *locale* but is present very personally, and the events are subjective experiences of God. In a theophany, God is explicitly a *numen personale*. While the first is the case of an "objective" localization of the divine, and the connection with a genuine personal experience is often very tenuous, the second case often contains a degree of objectivity. However, in the context of biblical texts, we actually still have a false dilemma in the sense of a certain exclusivity of God's intervention (theophany) as a sudden, unexpected but short-term presence and God's lasting presence.

GOD'S PRESENCE OR INTERVENTIONISM

Theophany as Intervention

The actualization of God's presence in biblical texts as a theophanic event is an experience of God's *immediate* and *non-mediated* revelation. Such theophanic "incidents" occurred in times of crisis and ordinarily with Yahweh's protection in the presence of his emissaries – angels. This is testified by a series of Jacob's

theophanic experiences from Bethel to Haran (Gen. 28:10-15; Gen. 31:10-13).¹⁰ However attractive, such powerful and immediate events experienced by numerous individuals in the Bible are actually parts of Jahweh's script for deeper, more extensive changes and interventions which are larger than those individuals. One must mention God's self-revelation to Jacob (Gen. 32) on the way to Mahanaim (32:2) and to Penuel (32:31).¹¹ Further revelations include the one to Moses on Mount Horeb (Ex. 3:1-6), to Abraham on several occasions, at the establishment of the covenant and circumcision (Gen. 17:1), then at the announcement of the birth of Isaac (Gen. 18:1-15), and the dramatic theophany on Mount Moriah when God interrupts the sacrifice of Isaac in the last moment (Gen. 22:11). These theophanies, among many others mentioned in the Bible, demonstrate that they serve greater providential purposes related to the founding of the nation and its history.

Theophany is characterized by an immediate and sudden divine "intervention" into the human sphere of existence. Brueggemann calls it "holy intrusion" or "Yahweh's massive intrusion" (1997:568). We have already noted that this divine "intrusion" in the life of a biblical character does not primarily serve that individual, even though his or her destiny is also changed and marked as a result; as a rule, these events have far-reaching consequences for the nation and the future.

Theophany also points to the fact that Yahweh is not only all-embracing and almighty, but also "un-embraceable". Even though Yahweh is manifested with such a degree of immediacy, he cannot be "gauged" or measured. Deutero-Isaiah is most eloquent in his descriptions of theophanies, using a series of rhetorical questions to describe Yahweh's all-embracing nature as well as his "un-embraceableness" (comp. Isa. 40:10-28). God cannot be "grabbed".¹² The theophanic immediacy of God reveals God as frightening (אִתּוֹ) and mighty. Moses' hymn in honor of Yahweh concludes with the following words: "Who among gods is like you, o Lord? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?" (Ex.

10 Comp. "The Angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them" (Ps. 34:7); "For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways" (Ps. 91:11).

11 This story about Jacob is actually an introduction to Jacob's future frightening encounter with his brother Esau. It reveals a pattern for the creation of a new reality or for the fulfillment of God's promises. Jacob becomes Israel; Moses will reveal Jahweh to the newly established nation of Israel; Abraham will beget a son, the originator of the future people, etc. This story about Jacob contains several interesting parallels with similar events in which theophanic events are an overture into a certain greater and much more extensive change than the destinies of individual people. Such is the account of Joshua's entry into the promised land before the gates of Jericho where he is met by "a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword" (actually the Angel of Jahweh) (Jos. 5:13-15).

12 Brueggemann uses the term "incommensurability" (Brueggemann, 568). Also comp. Ratzinger, 101.

15:11). This is precisely that *numen* from that awesome *mysterium tremendum*, as termed by Rudolf Otto. In order to convey the meaning of this *numen* as the portrait of the powerful and frightening Yahweh, the Hebrew of the Bible has a whole armory of terms.¹³

Another extremely significant category pertaining to the identity of Yahweh God should be mentioned at this point. In addition to Yahweh God being all-embracing and un-embraceable, he is also a *free God*. This has to be kept in mind particularly because the Yahweh God of Israel expressly wants to be present and to dwell, while the official and institutionalized religion always seeks to tie God down, even to “chain him down” within the context of cult and turn God as *numen personale* into God as *numen locale*.

JAHWEH'S DWELLING AND PRESENCE

Jahweh's Presence as Dwelling

The biblical theophanic event, as reflected in all examples mentioned, points to a God who is determined by the immediacy of the relationships between Yahweh who manifests himself and the person to whom he reveals himself. It can then be described as the “understanding of God on the level which is determined by the relationship between I and you” (Ratzinger, 97). In theophany, there is no distance between the divine and human partners in the event (i.e., Jacob wrestling with the angel, Abraham and the angels have a meal).¹⁴ In contrast to the immediate character of theophany, in the case of God's presence as a lasting category, and the clear desire on the part of Yahweh for a lasting dwelling *among* or *in the middle* of his people, whether only cultically (tabernacle, tent of meeting or temple) or also as *numen personale*, i.e. personally and individually, it is unquestionable that both aspects of God's presence are in mind. The biblical text also points to the absence of immediacy (“But do not have God speak to us or we will die.” Ex. 20:19). Mediation becomes a decisive aspect of God's lasting presence. The first mediator of God's presence was Moses (Ex. 19:3-8), followed by the prophets (“Son of man, go now to the house of Israel and speak my words to them.” Ez 3:4-

13 Hebrew vocabulary thus portrays Jahweh with a string of lexical terms such as: (גְּבוּרָה) (גְּדוּלָה) (יְרֵאָה). The biblical text often utilizes the verb (יָרָא), particularly the Niphal Participle (יֹרֵא) as a description of the Lord as “awesome.”

14 It is understandable that the theological element of God's holiness, and consequently certain inaccessibility, be present in the immediacy of theophanic events. Jacob asks, “Why do you ask my name?” (Gen. 32:30), Moses says, “Do not come any closer” (Ex. 3:5), Isaiah exclaims, “Woe to me! I am ruined!” (Isa. 6:5), “They will come trembling to the Lord” (Hos. 3:5).

7). The actualization of God's presence seeks to localize God, particularly in the period of the institutionalization of the national religion. This is especially manifest in the time of King Solomon who built the temple. The locations of erstwhile theophanies become theophanic toponyms (Penuel, Bethel) and these locations soon become sacred places at which the presence of Yahweh tends not only to be localized and *institutionalized* but also mediated by the priestly order.¹⁵

The Vocabulary of God's Presence

From among a long list of terms which indicate or allude to Yahweh's presence, several are used more often or appear jointly as a syntagm.

To be amongst (קָרַב). Yahweh is the one who already is "among" them. For example, during the rebellion and grumbling of the Israelites in the wilderness, the text states: "You have rejected the Lord, who is among you" (Num. 11:20). The peoples who surrounded Israel already knew that Yahweh, their God, was "with these people" (בְּקִרְבֵּי הָעָם) (Num. 14:14). The term קָרַב denotes the center of event, often the central area of an assembly (Ps. 82:1). The author of Deuteronomy uses the same term to describe Yahweh's nearness and favor towards his people: "What other nation is so great to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us" (Deut. 4:7) The noun קָרַב can denote the center of a human being or his or her intestines. In this sense, it is identified with the heart (Jer. 9:7). Thus, קָרַב describes the center itself, close intimacy.¹⁶

In the middle (תָּוֶךְ). Denoting the center, the term "taweh" is a near synonym for the already mentioned noun "kereb." In contrast to the previous term, this expression more precisely conveys a geographical location. When the Israelites traveled through the wilderness, and when they set up camp, it was required that the tent of meeting be "in the middle of the camps" (בְּתוֹכָם) (Num. 2:17), i.e., protected from military actions of warfare in the middle of all Israel's tribal camps.

The tent (אֹהֶל). To come into the presence of God meant for the Israelites to come into the tent where they could address Yahweh.

Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance

15 There is an interesting connection between Penuel and Bethel in Hos. 12:4 ("He struggled with the angel and overcame him; he wept and begged for his favor. He found him at Bethel and talked with him there."). It also appears that some of the sacred theophanic places (such as Penuel), for certain reasons, did not acquire the status of holy places. For instance, when the inhabitants of Penuel refuse to offer hospitality to Gideon and his exhausted army, Gideon warns them, "When I return in triumph, I will tear down this tower" (Judges 8:8).

16 In a certain way, 'kereb' is similar to the physical and physiological term, בִּטְחָן meaning intestines or womb. "The lamp of the Lord searches the soul of a man; it searches out his inmost being" (כָּל-חַדְרָיו־בִּטְחָן) (Prov. 20:27).

away, calling it 'the tent of meeting'. Anyone inquiring of the Lord would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp (Ex. 33:7).

Dwelling (שָׁכַן). One of the most common biblical terms for God's presence is the verb to dwell שָׁכַן with its derivative dwelling-place (מִשְׁכָּן). God's "dwelling" is a favorite and frequent term which seeks to localize the presentation of God's dwelling: "The Lord will roar from on high, he will thunder from his holy dwelling and roar mightily" (Jer. 25:30). Close in meaning to the term for "dwell" is a verb which means dwell, "sit" יָשַׁב and also live. The participle יֹשֵׁב denotes those who inhabit, therefore inhabitants. Jabal, for instance, was the forefather of all those who lived under the tents (יֹשֵׁב אֹהֶל) (Gen. 4:20).¹⁷ Yahweh is the one who inhabits (sits at, presides at יֹשֵׁב) Zion (יֹשֵׁב צִיּוֹן) (Ps. 9:12) and dwells (שָׁכַן) in Jerusalem (שָׁכַן יְרוּשָׁלַם) (Ps. 135:21).

Jahweh does not Need a House

The final localization of Yahweh's presence would occur with the establishment of the temple. That certainly does not mean that this was Yahweh's original purpose for it. Even though God is permanently, although only partially, hidden as *deus absconditus*, Yahweh also wishes to dwell "in the midst of his people" not only as *numen locale* but also as *numen personale*. Therefore, where in the Old Testament do we find Yahweh's dwelling? Where does Yahweh abide? This question can be rephrased in this way: Where would Yahweh want to abide?

A more informed student of the Bible will identify two locations and take both as the *locus clasicus* of Yahweh's dwelling. One will certainly be Zion where Yahweh sits and from whence he extends the staff of his power (Ps. 110:2).¹⁸ More precisely, the location of his dwelling is the temple which is located on Zion. From this house of his (בְּהֵיכָלֵךָ), Yahweh listens to the needs of his servants (2 Sam. 22:7). The nearness of Yahweh and God's presence become for a Jew and Judaism the *sine qua non* of true welfare, bliss and peace, and the firmest pillar for this state of affairs is precisely the temple and the localization of God's presence. To be devoid of "the Law, homeland and the holy Temple" (2 Mac. 13:10) is the ultimate disaster for the Jewish nation: "The nations have invaded your inheritance, they have defiled your holy temple, they have reduced Jerusalem to rubble" (Ps. 79:1)

17 Jabal is a predecessor to the bedouin lifestyle of cattle growers who, in contrast to Abel, procured (קָנָה) cattle.

18 Zion is the "holy hill" (Ps. 2:6) because Yahweh is "enthroned in Zion" (יֹשֵׁב צִיּוֹן) (Ps. 9:11; 50:2). "His tent is in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion" (Ps. 76:2).

(Sir. 49:12).¹⁹

Yahweh's location is actually a *bi-location*. He dwells both in the temple and in heaven: "The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord is on his heavenly throne" (Ps. 11:4).²⁰ Just as Yahweh comes "from another place" (מִקוֹם אֲחֵר), it should be kept in mind that he "the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below" (Deut. 4:39). Mordechai thus sends a message to Esther that if she remains silent about her nation, the Jews will receive "relief and deliverance... from another place" (Est. 4:14).²¹

On the other hand, there is evidence of the solidification of the monarchical system which pushes Yahweh into the background; the strengthening of "the house of David" results in the nationalization and institutionalization of religion. The "state religion" develops; this project will be completed by David's son, King Solomon. This has brought about the urge to localize Yahweh through the building of the temple and, in this way, "restrict" Yahweh. One should not overlook the fact, though, that there were valid reasons for the centralization of the cult of Yahweh in order to prevent the Jews from religious wanderings (comp. Isa. 57:5-10). Yahweh personally chose the place as the dwelling for his name. He would be present only "at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name" (Deut. 16:11; comp. Deut. 12:5; 12:14).

However, at the peak of his reign, King David decided to build a temple for Yahweh to dwell in. He reasoned thus:

After the king was settled in his palace and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, he said to Nathan the prophet: "Here I am, living in a palace of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent" (2 Sam. 7:1-2).

Yahweh's response to this worthwhile initiative by the king comes through the prophet Nathan. The response brought surprise to David:

- 19 The reign of the Syrian Seleuk dynasty is certainly a period of one of the greatest temptations and persecutions of the Jews which gave rise to the Maccabean revolt. Seleucus founded Antioch and, almost as a rule, his successors adopted or added to the name "Antiochene" precious nicknames, sometimes with almost cynical overtones (Soter, Theos, Epiphanes, Eupator, Grypos, etc.). Antiochus V Eupator ("of the noble father?") spent his time considering means of harming the Jews: "turning around in his head were cruel schemes in order to harm the Jew even more cruelly than his father" (2 Mac. 13:9). And his noble father was Antiochus IV Epiphanus ("revealed by God") whom some have called "Epimachus" ("Madman").
- 20 "The highest heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth he has given to man" (Ps. 115:16). "But the Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth be silent before him" (Hab. 2:20).
- 21 "For if you remain silent in this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. But who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" (Est. 4:14)

Go and tell my servant David, “This is what the Lord says: Are you to build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, ‘Why have you not built me a house of cedar?’” (7:5-7)

Therefore, Yahweh actually does not need a “house”. He intends to remain “a free God,” not tied to this or any other location. He wishes to reside among (בְּקִרְבֵּנוֹ) and in the middle of (בְּתוֹכָם) his people. On the other hand, the building of the temple of Yahweh is not a novelty of the royal house. It appears that this text overlooks the existence of the house of Yahweh in Shiloh. Young Samuel grew up and was raised “lying down in the temple of the Lord” (1 Sam. 3:3). The prophet Jeremiah testifies to the remains of this temple: “Go now to the place of Shiloh where I first made a dwelling for my Name” (Jer. 7:12).²²

The presence and nearness of Yahweh are represented in various ways; through miscellaneous anthropomorphisms (*face, man*), his transcendence and omnipotence through expected manifestations in the world of creation and nature (*earthquakes, fire*), or through more mysterious manifestations (*cloud*). In the Psalms, we often come across the overlapping and complementary nature between these aspects of God’s imminence and his transcendence. The psalmist, who is in grave danger, receives the guarantee of God’s nearness and the immediacy of his help (*face*), but at the same time the assurance of God’s authority over nature, history and people (comp. Craigie, 133).

MODALITIES OF GOD’S PRESENCE

The Face of God, Ps 27:8

In his soliloquy, the psalmist exhorts himself with these words: “My heart says

22 There are various explanations of the tabernacle which indubitably existed in Shiloh. Some think that Shiloh actually did not have a temple but that it was just a temporary dwelling place of Yahweh (something akin to the temporary dwelling place for the tabernacle of God in the home of Obed-Edom’s family; 2 Sam. 6:10). Some even conclude that Shiloh was not a legitimate temple-sanctuary. It is obvious that two traditions existed about sanctuaries and/or the temple in Shiloh. One mentions “at Shiloh... the Tent of Meeting” (Jos. 18:1) and the other “the house of Gog ... in Shiloh” (Judges 18:31). It is certainly not excluded that the tabernacle at Shiloh grew into the temple in Shiloh (Rabe, CBQ:230).

of you: ‘Seek his face!’ Your face, Lord, I will seek” (Ps. 27:8).²³ One of the most common biblical depictions of God’s immediate presence is the anthropomorphic image of the *face of God*, meeting *face to face*.²⁴ Although the psalmist seeks “the face of God,” i.e., God’s immediate presence, he is aware of the potential risk. Burdened with uncertainty, he cries out: “Do not hide your face from me” (פְּנֵיךָ אֵל־תַּסְתֵּר). To see God or to look at “the face of God” in biblical vocabulary opens up only two opposing possibilities: *certain death* in the presence of God’s holiness, or the *path to life* in God’s lasting presence.

One of the earliest dramatic and potentially dangerous “face to face” encounters of human beings with God is the encounter between Hagar and “the angel of the Lord” at a well in the wilderness. “She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: ‘You are the God who sees me,’ for she said, ‘I have now seen the One who sees me’” (Gen. 16:9-14).²⁵ The words spoken during the encounter in the wilderness could only have meant her certain death.²⁶ When the angel asks her, “Where are you going,” she has no answer. In this situation, the angel will take over her past and her future as well as the future of her son and progeny. Although walking along the path of death, Hagar is actually meeting with the God who cares also for the rejected. In this text, we also find the theological context which clearly indicates that God did not focus only on Abraham and Sarah as the paradigm of salvation, but he reveals himself as Yahweh who also cares for the downtrodden like Hagar who stood outside of the “geneological line of the promise.”

Jacob also had a face-off with the presence of God. He summarizes his experience with these words: “I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared” (Gen. 32:30). In this case, Penuel becomes the toponymical designation of Jacob’s theophanic experience.²⁷ The sudden supernatural meeting and the appearance

23 There are several textual dilemmas. One is whether (לִּי אָמַר לְבִי בִקְשׁוּ פָנַי) should be translated as “my heart tells me” (soliloquy) (“seeks his face”) or “you told me” (Jahweh) “seek my face”). In the original, the term for “seek” (בִּקְשׁוּ) is in plural.

24 We encounter the Hebrew syntagm אֵל־פְּנֵים פְּנֵים in the experience of Jacob (Gen. 32:31; “I saw God face to face”); Moses (Ex. 33:11; “The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend,” Deut. 34:10; Moses. . . “the Lord knew face to face”); Gideon (Judges 6:22, “When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the Lord, he exclaimed, ‘Ah, Sovereign Lord! I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face!’”); and Ezekiel (Eze. 20:35 “I will bring you into the desert of the nations and there, face to face, I will execute judgment upon you.”).

25 Vulgate: “Tu Deus qui vidisti me dixit enim profecto hic vidi Gen.eriora videntis me.”

26 In the Old Testament, wilderness is an image and place of death in any case, the place of God’s judgment (Eze 20:35). However, wilderness is also the place of theophanic encounters; comp. Hos. 2:14: “Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her.”

27 This is an example of another significant Biblical genre, *etymological etiology*.

of the angel of God is followed by the same language: “Ah, Sovereign Lord! I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face!” (Judges 6:22). Such an immediate and close encounter of the divine with a human inevitably causes “sparking” in which the human being expects “to draw the shorter straw” which will result in the annihilation of the human in the immediate and non-mediated presence of God.

However, the face of God, i.e., the non-mediated and immediate presence of God, is not just the way to certain death, but also the presence of God's favor which is decisive for one's life (Ps. 80:86). In that sense, *to live in the presence of God* means to live, and to be removed from the face of God means not only to lose his favor, but also to tread the way to one's death. This biblical anthropomorphism in such a context does not imply certain death. On the contrary, it means to dwell in the shadow of the God on High. In some theophanic manifestations recorded in the Bible, certain individuals were frightened for their lives because they had seen the face of God. Others, however, get afraid for their lives “when you hid your face” (Ps. 30:8). The hidden face of God would have deadly consequences. The psalmist cries out on several occasions: “Do not hide your face from your servant” (Ps. 69:17). “The face of God” which now denotes God's closeness, his favor and help, is of decisive importance for survival. God's face revealed, now means life, and hidden means death.²⁸ “I will see your face” (Ps. 17:15) is an anthropomorphism and a metaphor of the mystical experience of God's nearness which marks God's favor. The author of Psalm 86 beseeches God, writing: “Give me a sign of your goodness” (86:17).

God's face also reflects his attitude towards his community. For this reason, the psalmist says: “Restore us, Lord God Almighty; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved” (Ps. 80:19). The face communicates the inwardness of the human (and also of God's) being. It is the outward mirror of the inward state. In the social stratification, king's subjects were not allowed to be in a bad mood because this facial expression would possibly reflect some kind of hidden agenda which could socially and politically be interpreted as a threat to the king. Thus when Nehemiah approaches the Persian King Artaxerxes with a sad face, the king asks him: “Why does your face look so sad?” (נִזְדַּעַת פְּנֵיךָ רָעִים) (Neh. 2:2) or “Why are you angry?” Nehemiah then rightly becomes worried: “I was very much afraid.”

The nearness and presence of God in the sense of “God's face” is a truly real experience to the biblical writer; it is not but a dream or a fantasy. The psalmist still declares: “when I awake” from this nightmare and unrest “in my righteousness I will see your face... I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness” (Ps. 17:15).

28 Ps. 88:14; 13:11; Deut. 32:20: “I will hide my face from them,” he said, ‘and see what their end will be’; “Do not hide your face from me or I will be like those who go down to the pit” (Ps. 143:7).

A Man, Gen. 32, Judges 13

Many biblical texts report how the divine presence was not always or immediately recognized. In addition to other frequent anthropomorphisms such as “the face of God” which appear in theophanic “incidents,” one of the more frequent designations for God’s presence is “a certain man,” either as the designation for God’s (in)direct presence, often as the angelic emissary of God in the form of a man, and thus the mark of God’s indirect presence (Gen. 18; Gen. 32, Jos 5:13).²⁹ In the New Testament, Mary encounters the risen Jesus “thinking he was the gardener” (Jn. 20:15). In the Old Testament, there are texts which contain anthropomorphic elements of God’s presence. A frequent actor in such reports is “a man” either as a mysterious visitor or simply “a man” who will find himself in the right place at the right time (1 Kings 13:1; 2 Kings 1:6). In the biblical apocalyptic literature such a “creature” is described as one who only looks like a man, someone who is “as a man” (מִרְאֵה אָדָם) (Ez. 8:2; Dan. 8:15).

One of the most famous theophanic accounts in the Bible is the story about Jacob and “a man [who] wrestled with him” (Gen. 32:25). The reader easily identifies the divine person in this “man” as Jacob demands of him to bless him: “I will not let you go unless you bless me” (32:27). It is indicative for this text that this account presents a man (Jacob) who holds fast to God’s robe which is one of the basic human reactions in an encounter with God (von Rad, 321).

In the story about the announcement of the birth of Samson (Judges 13), we see another account of the partial and gradual recognition of God’s presence. Manoah, Samson’s father, and his wife will gradually come to the realization of Yahweh’s presence. In their initial confusion they will first see him as “a man of God” (13:6; 13:8), then as “an angel” (13:3; 13:13), and eventually Manoah’s wife concludes: “We are doomed to die!... We have seen God!” (13:22).³⁰

The motif of mysterious visitors who announce the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah is another example of God’s theophanic visitation to human beings. The interpretation and the identification of the “three men” (Gen. 18:2) who visit Abraham is extensively treated by von Rad in his commentary of Genesis (von Rad, 203-209). His treatment is useful also for the wider discussion.

29 In several places in the book of Daniel, it is “a man dressed in linen” (Dan 10:5; 12:6-7). In the tomb of Jesus, it is “a young man dressed in a white robe” (Mk. 16:5); in Luke’s gospel, “two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning” approached the women (Lk. 24:4).

30 The encounter between Gideon and the angel follows a similar scenario: “An angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak in Orah.” Although an angel appeared to Gideon, it is not altogether clear when Gideon recognized God’s presence in the angel. Gideon replies to the angel, “If the Lord is with us, why has all this happened with us?”, but immediately after that follows an explanation: “The Lord turned to him and said, ‘Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?’” (Judges 6,13-14).

Emmanuel, Isa. 7:1-14

God in us, amongst us or with us -

The church calendar and liturgy ascribe the name Emmanuel (Isa 7:14; 8:8) to the Christmas season, God-with-us or God is amongst us.

The overall context of Isa. 7, historically and theologically, relies on two foundational ideas: (i) the active and salvific intervention of the Lord (7:2-8), “It will not take place, it will not happen” (לֹא תִקְרֹם וְלֹא תִהְיֶה) (7:7), and (ii) the trust in God’s active presence; “If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all” (7:9). Despite difficult historical circumstances, King Ahaz and all the people of Judea were “shaken” (7:2).³¹ This trust is often found in the Bible as a kind of a trigger of God’s active presence.

The Whisper of a Gentle Breeze, 1 Kings 19:12

In some situations, the manifestation of God and his presence clash with expectations, so that they appear not only unexpected but, evidently, also somewhat disappointing. After great anguish and many temptations, completely exhausted, the prophet Elijah clearly expects a powerful manifestation of his God which will benefit and strengthen him. But instead of powerful theophanic manifestations (strong wind, earthquake, fire), God makes himself present in the form of a “gentle breeze” (קוֹל רֵמֶמֶה). Is it not religiously justified to expect the all-powerful ruler instead of a gentle breeze? What good is it for Elijah to experience God’s gentleness when he needs God’s might and his frightening power? On this same mountain where Elijah now stands, Moses and the Israelites once witnessed the heavenly-divine spectacle of God’s ultimate power. But now the same God manifests his presence to Elijah in a very different manner. Even though Elijah is at the end of his strength and contemplating suicide (“take my soul”), he receives a vague signal through the “gentle breeze” instead of the God above all armies. Only in the events that follow (1 Kings 19:15-21) does Elijah appear as an encouraged, bold “new man,” indubitably owing to the experience of the presence of God.

31 For Judea, this was a time of extremely difficult pressures and threats. Ahaz, the king of Judea, is surrounded and in the midst of international political tensions and turmoil. After the death of the Israelite King Jeroboam II, the Assyrian King Tiglat Pileser conquered Israel and Babylon. Israel’s King Menahem attempted to stay in power by paying tribute to Tiglat Pileser: “Then Pul king of Assyria invaded the land, and Menahem gave him a thousand talents of silver to gain his support and strengthen his own hold on the kingdom” (2 Kings 15:19). Pekah the son of Remaliah, the courtier of King Pekahje, the son of Menahem, plotted against Pekahje, dethroned him and killed him. This is followed by a period of various pacts with Assyria with which Ahaz did not agree nor join. As a result, Rason of Damascus, the Philistines and Israelites all decided to attack Judea.

Jahweh in the Cloud, Num. 14:14

The cloud is yet another manifestation of Yahweh's presence. Yahweh's presence will be revealed and disclosed, but also hidden, in the cloud.

While some modalities, such as the anthropomorphous "face of God," will reveal immediacy and closeness, the cloud is by its very nature the symbol of certain mysteriousness. It is also the part of Yahweh which reflects "the glory of the Lord" (Ex. 16:10).

It was essential that the Israelites were always and in every way conscious of Yahweh's presence, whether in the bread or in the cloud. This is precisely how God's presence was manifested to the Israelites: bread and cloud complemented each other in their immanence and transcendence. In this very context, Yahweh thus instructs Moses through an auto kerygmatic formula: "Then you will know that I am the Lord, your God" (Ex. 16:12).

Pointing to God's transcendence, the cloud reveals God's glory but it also hides God. God reveals his glory in the cloud (Ex. 16:10) but he is also *deus absconditus*, or as Isaiah said: "Truly you are a God who hides himself" (מִסְתַּתֵּר אֱלֹהִים) (Isa. 45:15). Is not the whole Old Testament book of Job actually an experience of the disclosed and hidden God? The experience outlined in Psalm 22 sounds so emphatic: "When you hid your face, I was dismayed" (Ps. 30:7).³² Living creatures lose their breath of life (Ps. 104:29). In this vein, the divine activity is not only initial in the sense of creation; it is active in sustaining life and survival. The nearness and presence of Yahweh mean life, and distance and hiddenness mean death. Yahweh can also deliberately cover himself with a cloud in anger. "You have covered yourself with a cloud so that no prayer can get through" (Lam. 3:44). Here Yahweh has "fenced" (פָּסַח) himself in from them because they "have sinned and rebelled" (Lam. 3:42). But this hiddenness of God is not just playing hide and seek. Yahweh is angrily active from within his hiddenness: "You have covered yourself with anger and pursued us, you have slain without pity" (3:43).³³

Our Daily Bread, Num. 11:18-20

To the Israelites in the wilderness, manna was their "daily bread," and this text

32 The context of this Psalm points to the dangers in which the psalmist found himself. At the height of his happiness, he fortified his self-confidence based on success and joy which he considered the results of his own accomplishments (30,7) and forgot that even his accomplishments are a gift of God. Comp. Deut. 8:17-18: "You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.'" This put the psalmist in grave danger in which Yahweh hid his face from him. As soon as God turns away his face or hides in the cloud (wrath), the result is trouble possibly with fatal consequences.

33 Šarić translates: "Obavio si se gnjevom" [You enveloped yourself with wrath] (Lam. 3:43).

(Num. 11) indirectly claims that manna was actually God's presence among them. It appears as if manna here assumes a certain sacramental value of God's salvific and real presence.

Thus the meat which they asked for (11:13) subsequently proved to be the temptation by the Lord who supplied them with manna. In this wider context, the presence of the Lord also manifests itself as his concern for their "daily bread." The sentence in Num. 11:20, "*because you have rejected the Lord who is among you*" (11:20), clearly refers to the "daily bread" and thus the divine care, God's presence and their life sustainance, and a lack of appreciation for this mode of God's presence provoked a somewhat cynical divine reaction. They will now have plenty of meat, until it comes out of their nostrils (11:19-20).

Kingdom, Lk 17:20-23

For the same reason, the Pharisees asked Jesus from Nazareth "when the kingdom of God would come" (πότε ἔρχεται) (Lk. 17:20). The reply was that the kingdom "does not come visibly" (17:20b). However, Jesus continues and says that "the kingdom of God is within you" (ἐντὸς ὑμῶν ἐστίν). It has been extensively debated whether ἐντὸς ὑμῶν ἐστίν should be rendered "within you" or "among you." If it is translated as "in you," it is a *spiritual translation* and the meaning conveyed is that the kingdom of God is primarily or exclusively an internal spiritual reality. In this case, it excludes the expectation of a location and a phenomenological manifestation of that kingdom here or there since "men will tell you: 'There he is!' or 'Here he is!'" (17:23). Further, it would not refer to the physical presence of Jesus among them then and there nor to an announcement of an imminent eschatological realization of the kingdom of God.

The messianic connotations of the question raised by the disciples of Jesus: "Lord are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (ἐν τῷ χρόνῳ τούτῳ ἀποκαθιστάνεις τὴν βασιλείαν) (Acts 1:6), even though containing political overtones, seeks for the ultimate eschatological and active presence of the Lord. For this reason, they constitute an unavoidable association about the localized manifestation of the kingdom of God, i.e., the tradition which relates it to Jerusalem, or more precisely, the mount of *Zion* as the location of eschatological expectations.

IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION

In a religio-historical and eschatological sense, the expectation of God's final, complete and sovereign, active presence in the Judeo-Christian heritage is common to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Each of these religious traditions

speaks of a mystical experience of God's *presence* (cloud; Ex. 34:5), an aspect of the final and universal sovereign *reign* (kingdom) of God and a (re)cognition of God's lasting *dwelling place* (tabernacle, temple, Zion). Yahweh's presence in the Old Testament is certainly one of the premiere marks and characteristics of the life of biblical Israel (Brueggemann, 1997:568). This presence of God (such as in a cloud) is presented in his immanence as well as in part of the hiddenness of God's transcendence.

Therefore, aspects of God's manifestation, theophany and dwelling, his active lasting presence or a theophanic "incident," are equally represented in the Bible. I consider this distinction in the actualization of God's presence important for the interpretation of biblical texts but also in the fact that they (texts and their interpretation) will outline the past as well as the future historical destiny of Israel.

The New Testament contains typological implications of the divine presence which are utilized by Jesus. He uses the Old Testament typologically. In Matthew 12, for instance, the text indicates a provocative lack of favor towards Jesus and his activities. As a reply and a comment on these circumstances, Jesus repeatedly and rather clearly assumes the place of the "prototypes" of Jonah and Solomon, and points to himself and his divine nature saying, "here is one greater than" (καὶ ἰδοὺ πλεῖον) Jonah, Solomon or even the temple which, for the Jews, is Yahweh's ultimate location (Mt. 12:6; 12:41-42) (cf. France, 77-78).³⁴

Finally, whether we speak of biblical times or our own times, in the middle of the actualization of God's presence stands the *encounter*, an experience of a personal meeting. This implies that the actualization of God's presence has always been, and has remained, a dynamic and dialogical category. The purpose has been to demonstrate that for both the biblical text and the contemporary practical Christian, theological or ecclesial perspectives point to aspects of God and his presence – as *noumen locale* and *noumen personale*. There remains one question of practical nature: What is the relation between these two interpretations of, and perspectives on, God's presence – literal and spiritual?

34 With regard to the typological archetype of Jonah, this text should be interpreted as the "sign of Jonah" in the sense that Jesus will go through the same experience as Jonah did as described in Jonah, chapter two (France: 222).

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Translated by Davorin Peterlin

Sažetak

Ovaj rad želi prikazati aspekte Jahvine prisutnosti, kako ih nalazimo zapisanima u starozavjetnim tekstovima. Ponajprije aspekt nenadane i snažne manifestacije Božje prisutnosti, intervencije (teofanija) i onog aspekta Božje djelatne prisutnosti koji ukazuje na Božju trajnu prisutnost (prebivalište, stanovanje). Uz prikaze i analizu ovih dvaju pojavnih oblika Božje prisutnosti (modaliteti), autor želi naglasiti njihovu komplementarnost, a ne isključivost.

