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**Cultural Memory in Biblical
Exegesis**

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'HIS PLACE DOES NOT RECOGNIZE HIM' (JOB 7:10): REFLECTIONS OF NON-INSCRIBED MEMORY IN THE BOOK OF JOB

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The memory perspective has been important in humanist research of the last some two decades, and recently also in biblical studies. Studies of ancient Hebrew memory have had a tendency to emphasize its written forms—not unreasonably, since biblical literature is the main source of evidence. Writing at the time was confined to the scribal class 'who were part of the apparatus of state administration, economically and ideologically.' Therefore the memory promoted by biblical writings is seen as an elite phenomenon that 'fed and absorbed into the public memory, through public recitation, by word of mouth, and ultimately by formal instruction and by being adopted into popular liturgy.'¹ It is obvious that the identities enshrined in biblical writings would often be elitist. However, scribal literature would not have had a monopoly on the construction of collective memory in early Jewish societies.² Moreover, shared identities and collective memories were hardly invented *ex novo* at the scribal desk. If they were in fact absorbed in common culture, one

¹ Davies 2008, 113, who also makes a distinction between biblical stories and folk memory and compares the function of ancient Hebrew scribes to those of 'Orwell's famous Ministry of Truth.'

² Alcock 2002, 2, 18, 23–28, etc. addresses the problem in relying solely on surviving documentary evidence when recovering past collective memory.

would imagine that they had some public resonance at the outset and that they had gone through a process of negotiation and interpretation during its formation and its popularization.

Researchers should therefore try to form more precise ideas about exchange between collective memory in popular culture and that of scribes and other elites. The purpose of this essay is to start contributing to such research. For the occasion I would focus on a clearly elitist production: the Book of Job. This composition reflects the presence of, and scribal reflection upon, what Paul Connerton called non inscribed memory; that is, memory linked to bodily practices and topographic locations. Such memory is very unlikely to have been produced, transmitted, or maintained primarily in elitist circles.³

TOPOGRAPHY AND MEMORY IN THE BOOK OF JOB

Space and place have important functions for the formation of memory. The classical passage on the significance of place to memory is Cicero's narrative on Simon of Keos who remembered people through their associations to specific locations in a room.⁴ The use of place as means of remembering flourished in *ars memorandi* (Yates 1966). Recently notions of place have been transformed into prominent categories in the study of collective memory, for instance in Halbwachs' (1941) *la topographie*, Nora's (1984) *les lieux de mémoire*, or Aleida Assmann's (1999) *Erinnerungsraum*. On this basis a number of passages in the Book of Job attract attention. Several of these are philologically difficult, which is evident already in translations offered in Western bibles and exegetical commentaries. I limit myself to offering germane philological comments in the footnotes. Relevant exegetical matters will be treated in the text below:

³ Connerton 1989, 4f. In his first, much celebrated, book Connerton coined the concept non-inscribed memory and associated it primarily to bodily practices. In the sequel Connerton 2009, 5 etc. the perspective includes also places and topography.

⁴ Cicero, *De oratore* II, lxxxvi (paragraphs 351–54), see also the exposition in section lxxvii.

7:10	He returns no more to his home, his place does not recognize him.	לֹא-יָשׁוּב עוֹד לְבֵיתוֹ וְלֹא-יִכְיְרֵנוּ עוֹד מִקְמוֹ
8:18	If one destroys him ⁵ at his place, ⁶ it will deny him: 'I have never seen you!'	אִם-יִבְלַעְנוּ מִמְּקוֹמוֹ וְכִחַשׁ בּוֹ לֹא רְאִיתִיךָ
16:18	O earth, do not hide my blood, let there be no resting place for my cry!	אֶרֶץ אֲלֵ-תַכְסִּי דָּמִי וְאֲלֵ-יְהִי מְקוֹם לְזַעֲקִי
18:16–21 ⁷	Down below his root dries out, and up above his branches wither. The memory about him perishes in the land, he has no name in the streets. They are pushed from light to darkness, chased away from the world. He has no offspring, no posterity in his people, there is no survivor from his camp. ⁸ On account of his day people of the west shudder,	מִתַּחַת שָׁרְשָׁיו יִבֶּשׁ וּמִמַּעַל יִמָּלֵךְ קִצְירוֹ זְכָרוֹ-אָבֵד מִנִּי-אֶרֶץ וְלֹא-שֵׁם לוֹ עַל-פְּנֵי-חוּץ: יִהְיֶה מֵאוֹר אֶל-חֹשֶׁךְ וּמִתְּבַל יִגְדֹה: לֹא נֵץ לוֹ וְלֹא-נֶכֶד בְּעַמּוֹ וְאֵין שָׂרִיד בְּמִגְדָּוָיו: עַל-יוֹמוֹ נִשְׁמָו אַחֲרָנִים

⁵ In the context, the referent for the pronoun would be the tree. Given the convention to see humans as plants (below), I render the masculine pronoun. The verb means 'swallow' but is read as a general figure for destruction, cf. Clines 1989, 200.

⁶ Habel 1985, 169, following Gordis deletes the first מ in ממקומו and renders the place as grammatical subject. Clines 1989, 198, rather translates 'torn from its place.' The pragmatic problem then is how the place and the tree should communicate in part b of the verse. I read a locative sense of the preposition מן. The grammatical subject for the third person masc. verb is not clear: is it God or some indefinite subject?

⁷ These verses cut across more than one unit. Clines 1989, 404, 407f. identifies these sections: vv. 15–17, 18–21. Fohrer 1963, 298f., 303–06 reads 14–16, 17–19, 20f. In any event the topos of the chapter is consistent throughout, which allows for reading these verses in light of each other.

⁸ The choice to translate 'camp (of tents)' resonates with the mention of Job's tent in v. 14.

	and those of the east hold on to terror.	וּמִדְמִיִּים אֲחֻזִּי
		שָׁעַר:
	Verily: such are the dwellings of the unjust,	אֲדִי-אֵלֶּה
		מִשְׁכְּנֹת עֹלָם
	the place of him who does not now El.	זֶה מְקוֹם
		לֹא-יָדַע-אֵל:
20:9–11	The eye that saw him, does so no more,	עֵינִי שֶׁזָּפְתִּי וְלֹא
		תֹּסִיף
	and his place no longer regards ⁹ him.	וְלֹא-עוֹד תִּשְׁוֹרְנִי
		מִקוֹמוֹ
	His children seek favors ¹⁰ of the poor,	בְּנָיו יִרְצוּ דָלִים
	while his hand surrenders his strength.	וְיָדֵיו תִּשְׁבֹּגְנָה אוֹנוֹ
	His bones, once full of his youth,	עַצְמוֹתָיו מְלֵאוּ עֲלֻמוֹ
	now rest with him in the dust.	וְעַמּוֹ עַל-עָפָר תִּשְׁכָּב
31:38–40	If my soil cries out against me	אִם-עָלִי אֶדְמָתִי תִּזְעַק
	and its furrows weep along with it,	וְיַחַד תִּלְמָיָהּ יִבְכִּיּוּ
	if I ate the soil's strength without payment,	אִם-כִּחְקָהּ
		אֶכְלָתִי בְלִי-כֶסֶף
	causing its masters' ¹¹ soul to breathe out:	וְנַפְשׁ בְּעָלֶיהָ

⁹ According to HALOT, the root 'שור' I has a sense 'to look at from a bent position.' If regarding the proponent metaphorically as a tree, the eye that regards in this fashion would be the eye of the soil in which the tree (i.e. the proponent) is rooted. Symbolic support for such a reading is the 'rising' pride in v. 6. The verb has a feminine form, but מקום sometimes is fem., see Clines 1989, 474.

¹⁰ Translating the verb and verse is difficult, see Clines 1989, 487. The translation here is close to the conventional sense of the Hebrew terms. I assume with Clines that when 'his hands' are forced to surrender his strength, his children become unprotected. An alternative interpretation is to read יד (hand) as euphemism for the sexual organ and take the sense to be that his children become weak and he is unable to beget further offspring.

¹¹ The referent for נַפְשׁ בְּעָלֶיהָ is not clear. The word בעל I means 'lord,' 'husband,' and the reference could go to someone with moral rights to the land, to the land's deceased owners, or to some divine figure associated ('married') to the land. Fohrer 1963, 426 and Clines 2003, 973 follow M. Dahood to read בעל as a by-form of פעל 'do.' Clines suggest further

	הַפְּחָתִי
instead of wheat will spring thorns,	תַּחַת חִטָּה יֵצֵא חוֹב
instead of barley, there is foul weed.	וְתַחַת-שְׁעֵרָה בְּאֵשָׁה

Perhaps a word is needed to justify my attempt below to read these passages in light of each others as if they could reflect a contiguous apprehension of the land as a memory agent. The utterances occur in different speakers' mouths (Job, Bildad, and Zophar). If the book relies on diverse material from various sources which now occur in the various speakers, why should the apprehension of a 'remembering place' be continuous across the material? A full justification cannot be offered here. Suffice it to say, first, that the apprehension of the land that emerges below seems to be non premeditated. These are reflections of everyday thought, not of scribal ideology. Second, this notion seems to be both fundamental and traditional to an ancient Hebrew 'worldview'. As such it could be shared across social and historical sections. Third, I do conceive of the Book of Job as a composition that tends to bring discrete positions together in a focused dialogue on particular topics (Stordalen 2006, 18–37). As I hope to demonstrate, the issue of human relations to the earth or place is one such topic in the book. If so, it would be in accordance with the 'readerly contract' implied in this work to see these passages together.

MEMORY, NAME, AND POSTERITY

The above passages from the Book of Job are rather implicit and often metaphorical, and the practices they might reflect are not all well documented in Jewish culture of the late Babylonian or early Persian periods. It will seem that we may identify different types of collective memory in the interplay between an ancestor, the descendants, and the place they inhabit.

i) Filial piety and remembrance: Perhaps the clearest case is Job 18, especially verses 17 and 19.¹² The passage opens with the image of

examples of a verb from the stem בעל II 'do, work.' The translation then is 'workers,' 'tenants.'

¹² The verse in between, with its unexpected 3p. plur. may have been an insertion or perhaps rather a citation of a traditional maxim. In any event the two verses 17 and 19 read well together.

a human as a withering tree, a metaphor that is conventional in biblical literature (Stordalen 2000b, 87–94). The precise figure from Job 18 is found also in Akkadian literature where it is offered by the king of Sidon as a curse for those who might wish to desecrate his grave: 'No fruits above and no roots below // No name with those living under the sun.'¹³ The image of the tree unites the living members of the family (those above) with the dead ones (those below).¹⁴ When both fall, it is the end of the presence of the family in the nation: no offspring survives and the ancestors are forgotten. This is explicit in Job 18 where the name of the proponent is forgotten in the land (ארץ) because he has no offspring in his nation (עם). Job 18:20 associates this forgetfulness to memorials when referring to 'his day' (יומו). As in Job 3:1.3–5, the day in question would be associated to defining moments of the protagonist's life—probably the day of birth (as in ch. 3), or possibly also the day of death, or of particular achievements: all these might be relevant for a memorial service. On such a memorial day the proponent is now remembered with horror and dismay (v. 20) instead of respect and love. Similar connections between the lack of memory and offspring to perform the ancestral veneration seem to be reflected in the forgetful places in Job 7:10; 8:18; 20:9–11. The latter describes offspring who would be unable to perform worthy memorial services. Job 8:18 is part of a pericope rather similar to 18:16–21, and with the proponent identified as a tree (8:16–17). Job 7:10 is less explicit, but it makes good sense if read in a similar setting.

The ancient Jewish habit of gathering and offering food to the dead at the burial place is fairly well documented. Explicit evidence comes from the denunciation of such practices in Deuteronomic and related literature.¹⁵ The biblical record also holds reflections of more positive engagement in memorials for the dead and more assertive descriptions of their world (Spronk 1986;

¹³ Translation in Jonker 1995, 195f. Source: TUAT II/4 591–3:11f.

¹⁴ The same image is found in Amos 2:9; Mal. 4:1 (cf. Ezek. 17:9), and in the inverse: 2 Kgs. 19:30/Isa. 37:31.

¹⁵ See conveniently Schmidt, 1994. Do note that for the present purpose it is not necessary to decide whether or not these instances indicate the presence of 'ancestor cult' or some less qualified kind of commemoration: both would certainly be relevant to the production of collective memory.

Tromp 1969). Ancient Jewish engagements with the deceased are documented in the archaeological record (Bloch-Smith 1992a; Bloch-Smith 1992b). It makes sense to assume that Job 16:18–21; 20:9–11 describe a situation where someone dies without anyone to perform proper care for the name and the memory of the deceased. This situation is called 'a perishing of memory in the land' (18:7 זָכַרְו־אָבֵד מִנִּי־אֶרֶץ), an epitome of 'the place of him who does not know El' (18:21, מְקוֹם לֹא־יָדַע־אֵל), a place that 'no longer regards him' (20:9: וְלֹא־עִיד תִּשְׁכַּח־נָּו מְקוֹמוֹ).

Why is such memory linked to the *land* and the *place*? At this point we encounter what archaeologist Susan Alcock, inspired by Maurice Halbwachs, termed 'the materiality of memory' (Alcock 2002:27). Memories are anchored in, kept alive through, and shaped by material phenomena to which they are associated. Obviously, the presence of a well kept grave monument would have been a marker in local topography—and not just for the kin of the deceased.¹⁶ Monuments have the potential to concentrate and disseminate particular memories (Cubitt 2007:182f., 192–97). They would help local people recall stories about the dead and inspire visitors to inquire about the deceased. Connerton (2009:27f.) points out that installations to assist remembering are usually erected because of the threat of forgetting. The grave marker and repeated graveyard habits are archetypal examples of this procedure, still functioning even in present-day Western societies.¹⁷ They certainly would have been so in ancient Israel.

In a biblical agricultural environment, the land would serve as a mnemonic device also in a more specific sense. As every farmer is aware, it is necessary to know specific characteristics of portions of one's arable land: whether it is dry or wet, what kind of seed it produces well, how to best till and harvest it, etc. Such matters are passed from father to son. After the father's death the son would associate different lessons and various insights to particular *topoi* on the ground. Such mechanics of memory and schooling in

¹⁶ Combine the many grave inscriptions documented in Renz 1995 with the awareness of 'foreign' graves reflected for instance in Gen 49:30; 2 Kgs. 23:16f.; Isa 22:16.

¹⁷ Cf. Hallam & Hockey 2001, 77–100, etc; Francis, Kellaher, & Neophytou 2002.

an agricultural society are evident. They are, nevertheless, usually absent from current scholarly discussion of ancient Jewish collective memory and identity—which perhaps illustrates the bias away from non-inscribed knowledge and memory in the European academic tradition.¹⁸

Paul Connerton identifies a type of place memory where ‘toponyms are mnemonics’: it is impossible to talk about places without encompassing biographies, events, social activities, etc. Connerton illustrates by referring to the Wamirans of Papua New Guinea for whom ‘each stone, each tree, each dip in the ground has a name and a story, and identity is claimed and rights acquired through association with specific places in the landscape’ (Connerton 2009:13, cf. 10–18). Stewart and Strathern (2003:6f.) confirm the importance of naming landscape in Papua New Guinea. Moreover, they claim this is a fairly universal phenomenon. One might well argue that the references to קומו (‘his place’) above do imply an association of a name with a place.

ii) Social values and remembrance: The spatial setting for instance in Job 18:16–21 is not confined to domestic premises, but extends to the public world as well. In Job 18 implied locations are the dwelling (משכן, which could include the grave), the space of daily life (מגור), and a phrase, על-פני-חוץ, that is conventionally rendered ‘the street’: This phrase could also be transcribed as ‘the outside,’ ‘fields,’ which would perhaps better suit the portrayal of Job as a chief (often called גבר) living in tents. In 20:9 the group ‘the poor’ (דלים) must also be outside the domestic sphere. Throughout the Book of Job the protagonist is concerned about his social standing. He repeatedly points to arenas where he has lost public respect (see 16:7–14; 30:1–15, etc.). Job 18 and 20 extend this portrayal of decline in public respect to include Job’s aftermath. He leaves no lasting impression on society and so his offspring have to live as if they were of inconsequential origin.

Paul Connerton (2009: 13, cf. 10–18) finds a kind of place memory that he calls a locus memory. The arrangement of, say,

¹⁸ In his magisterial book on Education Crenshaw, 1998 at one single point (p. viii) recognizes the presence of what he calls ‘vocational’ (i.e. habitual and non-inscribed) education in ancient Israel. His comments are limited to the effect of such learning on the guild of scribes only.

domestic space represents hierarchies and social values that encompass the people occupying that space. Such memory would include artifacts that embody personal relations or significant events. Veronica Strang (2003) documents that memorials have the capacity to symbolize beliefs and values of groups of people that associate with them, and these values become incorporated into habits and practices that support group identity. Connerton points out that the pre-modern world was ‘a handmade world, in which all things were made one by one.’ It was a ‘slow’ world, and one that allowed for continued experience of processes of becoming and for attaching memories to the production of objects (Connerton 2009:20, see 30–35). One might add that in such a world the readily fabricated objects also did not vanish very quickly. When a generation passed on, objects from their lives remained after them. Such objects expressed the social standing of their original owners and certain values associated with parts of their lives and productivity. This explains why locus memory in a pre-Modern world would have had great importance.

Now, the world of the Book of Job is gone. Therefore it is very difficult to form more precise ideas of how implied readers of the book would have imagined that a patron like Job should normally have been remembered in society. Nevertheless, in order to attempt to give an answer, let us for a moment consider comparative material. Harvesting the rich cultural remains from second-third millennium Mesopotamian sources, Gerdien Jonker (1995:68) identified acts of memory that could perhaps be heuristically relevant. The richest material is offered by texts reflecting the world of Mesopotamian rulers of the late third and early second millennium. Clearly, the cultural, technical, and economical conditions behind these texts were different from those of the reader of the Book of Job. Still, Job too is imagined to have exercised social influence, and it is the forgetting of such a socially significant character that is the topic in the above passages. Therefore we enter the imagined world of ‘chief Job’ wearing lenses provided by Jonker while keeping the relevant archaeological and biblical records in mind.

In that imaginary world a prominent man like Job freely performs cultic service at a local shrine (Job 1:5). It seems likely that people from his household would on some occasion assist or ac-

company him. If coming to such a sanctuary after the proponent's graceful death, the place would likely have evoked a respectful memory of his service, perhaps an involvement with his deity ('the god of my father') as seems conventional in biblical literature (Gen. 31:5.42; 32:10; Exod. 15:2, etc.). A more specific memory would occur if Job had followed the habit attested in the epigraphic material to print his name on cultic and other vessels used at the location.¹⁹ It is perhaps unlikely that a man like Job should have erected his statue in the shrine to have his descendants do libation service on his account after his death.²⁰ Still, he might have erected a *pitthos* or donated votive objects still used for cultic service (Renz 1995:272f; 56f; 127f.). Both would preserve Job's memory and invite new generations to inscribe their own practices onto them as palimpsests.

Secondly, if the implied reader is to assume that Job lived in a regular house and not a tent (cf. Job 1:19; 15:28) one could imagine that this rich man dedicated parts of his domestic walls to symbols or inscriptions, as was a documented practice (Renz 1995:249, etc.). One might then imagine that the reader expected that anyone from the 'outside world' (על-פני-חוץ) later visiting the house of Job's family, would be involved in the public memory of the ancestor.

Thirdly, perhaps the reader had the idea that Job was not only a magnificent rhetorician (as his speeches document) but also a great singer (as is implied in 29:13; 33:27, and perhaps in 30:9). If so, Job would again conform to expectations for Mesopotamian rulers (Jonker 1995:85–89), and the reader's impression would be formed accordingly. Perhaps the reader would find it reasonable that Job's descendants would have honored his memory by using and perhaps amending his songs. Obviously, there is no known psalm 'by Job.' But some of the many songs and psalms to David לְדָוִד are easily read as documentation for this kind of practice.

Another conceivable act of collective memory after a man like Job would have been public remembering his part in making

important decisions in the city assembly (29:7–25, etc.), or perhaps pondering his wise advice (4:3f; 16:4–6, etc.). The books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy document the habit of collecting legal decisions, although in their canonical forms these decisions are all associated with one man only: Moses. This may conceivably have been different at a time when people remembered who actually made new decisions. Similarly, the Book of Proverbs indicates a rich activity in collecting sayings (משלים): Prov. 10:1; 25:1; 30:1; 31:1. In Proverbs these are associated with the authors or the scribes responsible for collecting them. Still, it is perhaps not farfetched to suggest that a wise man like Job could also have been publicly remembered for his wisdom.

Any of these practices would have promoted a certain memory and disseminated values and identities inscribed in objects, habits, bodily practices and collective apprehensions in ways similar to those described by Connerton and Strang above. These, then, are the kinds of lost or lacking collective, non inscribed memories that are bemoaned in the Book of Job.

SACRED HOMELAND

Before leaving the world to be imagined by the reader of the Book of Job, let us consider a third kind of topographical remembrance, what Anthony D. Smith called 'sacred homelands' (2003:131–65). These come in many fashions. For the Book of Job the nationalist aspect of the phenomenon is of less importance. A sense of the sacred homeland reflects the landscape as 'the resting place of our immediate progenitors' [...] 'the place of home and work, family and burial, for the community and its members' (Smith 2003:147f.). Such homelands are places where 'nature is historicized' (Smith 2003:135f.). In biblical literature this movement is evident for instance for Sinai, Jerusalem, Shechem, and Shiloh. They are all written into the sacred story and become historical as much as topographical places. In sacred homelands one also finds the opposite movement: a 'naturalization of history' (Smith 2003:136f.). This phenomenon is prominent in Genesis, where cultural products like shrines, wells, etc., are described as parts of the natural topography, timelessly present, like the landscape itself.

¹⁹ A full range of examples of property markers are found in Renz 1995.

²⁰ This is what Mesopotamian rulers did, cf. Jonker 1995, 76–83. Fragments of a stela was found in Samaria, cf. Renz 1995, 135, see esp. 122–9.

Sacred homeland ideologies may develop 'popular beliefs in the sanctity of specific places and terrains' (Smith 2003:134). Such beliefs tend to invest the homeland with new characteristics. In biblical literature there is a widespread view that the temple and the temple mount are holy. This, clearly, has consequences for how one may enter these places and behave there. Also, there are manners of speech and habit that see the land as consecrated to the Lord. This view too has practical implications (cf. Lev. 25:10; 27:30; Num. 3:13; 8:17). Additionally, there are, in biblical literature, expressions concerning the holiness of the land that expand dramatically on these views. In some instances the land is portrayed so as to take active part in God's agency to bring about the fate of Israel. Some of the more obvious examples would be Gen. 1:11f. 24; Lev. 18:25.28; 20:22; Num. 16:34; Deut. 9:28. There are also passages that portray the earth or land as mother of humankind. While such passages are presently largely neglected in scholarship, this topic did receive some attention in earlier research.²¹ I have elsewhere argued that these two groups of passages are preferably interpreted in light of each other (Stordalen 2000a; Stordalen 2010). The homeland, which is also metaphorically identified as the mother of humankind, is in fact haunting those of her 'children' that violate cosmic law. The earth or land may also revenge her 'children' by keeping their memory alive and seeking to punish those who violate them.

These topics are richly attested in the Book of Job. Several instances indicate the earth as mother of humankind, a cosmological instance that seeks to preserve justice. The most famous passages discussed by Mowinckel, Vall, and others are of course Job 1:21, and 38:8–10. In addition, see for instance 5:23; 10:8–11; 31:15.18. As for the earth as a moral agent, see 20:27, cf. 24:6. In addition, hardly any other biblical book displays such awareness of an intimate relationship between humankind and land / earth / place (ארץ and מקום), see for instance Job 1:10.20; 2:13; 5:23; 12:8; 14:8; 15:29; 24:18. That awareness finds expression in instances referring to 'his/their place' (מקומו/מקומם) of particular human beings (Job 2:11; 6:17; 7:10; 8:18; 20:9; 27:21.23).

²¹ See for instance Mowinckel 1927, 130–41; Ohler 1969, 139f.; Fuchs 1993, 187; and in particular Vall 1995.

This seems to be an adequate context for reading Job 31:38–40 and 16:18. In the first, admittedly difficult passage, the point seems to be that the land would have recognized and punished any unjustifiable agricultural activity that Job should have done. In the second, earth is conjured to promote Job's cry of injustice much in the same way that it does for Abel in Gen. 4:10. Within this concept of sacred land, a successful forebear like Job would be imagined to have been morally approved by the very land that still 'watches over' his offspring—in a guarding as well as a haunting capacity. The land 'remembers' him by continuing to support his aftermath. The wise descendant would then naturally pay heed to the successful ways of Job.

Summing up, from within recent analyses of collective commemorative practices, it seems very apt indeed to say with the author of the Book of Job that 'places do remember.' It is of course not my point to suggest that the implied readers of the Book of Job must have imagined all or any of the acts of memory sketched above. I simply offer these as historically reasonable examples of what might have been practiced and hence also imagined. All examples have physical objects or bodily procedures as their media: grave monuments, farming procedures, ritual, singing, recitation, domestic discourse, embodied social heritage, embodied awareness of the 'agency of the land.' They all count as non-inscribed memory practices. These and similar memory practices would have been liable to fall into oblivion when the cultural world sustaining the Book of Job faded. The only memory remaining would be the *inscribed* memory of Job, i.e. the book. It is fortunate, therefore, that the inscribed memory of Job holds such rich reflections also of non-inscribed memory practices. This helps our reconstructing discourses of memory in the biblical world.

MEMORIES AND IDENTITIES IN THE BOOK OF JOB

So, how did, in fact, scribal and non scribal memory interact in ancient Israel? Providing an answer is not easy. Initially, it would seem that available sources do not offer clear indications. Indeed, it may turn out that the Book of Job with its reflections of popular, non-inscribed memory is untypical in biblical literature. Precisely

for this reason the Book of Job may be a good place to start an attempt at such research.

i) Inscribed and non-inscribed identities: The above examples of non-inscribed memory would have formed part of particular identities. Individuals and communities referring to this memory could, for instance, conceive of themselves as descendants of Job, as inhabitants of his domestic or ritual world, as his successors in the city council, as inheritors of his land and agricultural strategies, etc. These and similar apprehensions would contribute substantially to forming individual and collective identities. Such identities were not created by scribal activity. They related primarily to a world outside of the scribal universe and reflected separately existing systems of memories and identities. These memories were used, discussed, contested by the scribe(s) of this book (see below), but their initial formation took place outside of the scriptoria.

ii) The moral vision of remembering places: In her brilliant discussion of the Book of Job, Carol Newsom describes the contesting moral visions of characters in the book. A 'moral vision' in her view is something that emerges in the claim on the reader generated by the interrelation between the aesthetic form of the text and the values it endorses or embodies (Newsom 2003:34, cf. 32–36). 'Moral vision' is a suitable designation also for the aesthetics and pragmatics inherent in that non-inscribed memory reflected above. That memory envisions that it should be good for a human being to have recognition from the place and to recognize one's ties to the earth. It is a good thing when people inhabiting a place acknowledge and cherish the memory of those whose place this used to be, when one's memory is honored through installations and practices. Correspondingly, it is a bad thing if the land should rise against its inhabitant, visit his iniquities upon his descendants, deny its produce and its recognition to his posterity. In such cases, one will be forgotten. The people living at the place do not prolong one's memory—except, perhaps, for ironic purposes.

iii) Moral vision of non-inscribed memory and the Book of Job: How do the implied author or readers of the Book of Job relate to that moral vision? Let me try to sketch some presuppositions for my answering this complicated question and then briefly indicate an answer. The Book of Job seems like a choir of voices uttering in

part conflicting views. The literary mechanics used to generate this choir has similarities with what the early Bakhtin called the poetics of Dostoyevsky (Stordalen 2006:24–35). However, while in Dostoyevsky each dramatic person tends to represent one voice, one idea; in the Book of Job several characters seem able to represent more than one voice each. The composition of the book does not leave unambiguous traces to decide which voices speak truthfully and which do not. Contrary to convention in biblical narrative, even the narrator of the Book of Job cannot safely be trusted: the book is void of any objective voice to referee the discussion. Every matter is seen through the eyes of the current speaker. The reader must decide whether or not that particular view is adequate, and if so: how it might relate to other views that perhaps also could not be dismissed altogether. In each character's utterances there is typically 'a sideward glance'—an awareness of, and (mostly not explicit) reference to the positions of other speakers. This renders the opinion of the others present even in the serial monologues of the book. This presence is enhanced by the compositional strategy to focus a number of *topoi* and let the different voices speak to these topics in sequence (Stordalen 2006:33f.). As a result, a number of voices speak to a number of themes rather than to each other, and in a non-hierarchical presentation.

Given this understanding: how does the Book of Job seem to relate to moral vision of remembering places? All voices seem to have similar 'default' positions. There is no apparent difference in views of human relations to the earth between Job (7:10) and Bildad (8:18). Job in 31:38–40 seems to be no less impressed by the agency of the remembering earth than Bildad is in 18:16–21, or Zophar in 20:9–11. All confirm the desirability of the idyllic moral vision of the remembering land or place.

Beneath the surface, however, there are differences and these occur in a pattern that is consistent with larger conflict lines in the book. Bildad in 8:18 applies the forgetful land as proof of the morally adequate punishment that falls upon him who forgets El (v. 13). The proponents in Bildad's speech in 18:16–21 are the wicked (רשעים). The moral agency of the earth has the same direction and character as in the previous speech. The case is similar in Zophar's

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exposition in 20:9–11, referring again to the fate of the wicked (רשעים) and the godless (תנאי) (v. 5).

Job, on the other hand, applies the vision of the forgetful place to display the loss that death brings—and in his view, unjustly so (7:10). In 16:18 he addresses the land in order to confront precisely such injustice. Job fears that justice will not prevail (v. 17) and attempts to summon earth and heaven to offer testimony as witnesses (vv. 18–19). The implication is that whoever it is that violates Job's justice, does not pay due attention to the witness of earth and heaven. In this passage the remembering earth is clearly much less influential upon the administration of cosmic justice than in 8:18. Job's address in 31:38–40 appears in what should still be regarded an oath of innocence. On that level the passage evokes the calamities that would befall Job if he were to violate the land. However, in the larger rhetoric of the book, the oath is offered as Job's last chance to prove his innocence. The implication is that since Job is innocent, the earth would *not* do to him what is conjured in his section. Nevertheless, something *did* happen to Job, something that could be seen as an act of punishment from the land / place: Job 7:10; 8:18; 18:16–21; 20:9–11. It seems reasonable, therefore, to interpret the rhetoric of 31:38–40 in light of 16:18 and take it as a protest to the voices that praise the remembering earth that punishes iniquity. The protest says that the land / place does not always fulfill its function in the expected manner.

In other words as its initial position the book confirms the desirability of the vision of the remembering earth. However, the composition invites its readers into a discourse on whether or not this moral vision can in fact be trusted. And, if it could be trusted at least on some occasions, why does it not apply consistently? But if indeed this vision applies inconsistently, should it simply be discarded? Or does it still name relations between land / place, individual, and family that need to be expressed and understood? Different readers might answer differently depending i.e. upon their sense of human-earth relations. I, for one, think that the vision of the remembering earth does not lose all its relevance through the discourse of this book.

iv) Scribal and non-inscribed memory: It now seems possible to speak more specifically about the interchange between scribal

THIS PLACE DOES NOT RECOGNIZE HIM 47
and non-inscribed memory and identity formation in the book of Job. The friends in the Book of Job represent conventional wisdom ideology, although perhaps in a simplified and schematic version.²² Their theology too must be seen as scribal and in some sense elitist. The indication from the above analysis is that this elite ideology incorporated a vision of the remembering earth that had originated as non-inscribed memory and therefore had public resonance prior to its inclusion in the universe of traditional sapiential theology.

The character of Job protests against aspects of this ideology, and the composition as a whole attempts to provoke a reader's refusal of simplistic apprehensions of the remembering place. This is done by confronting that scribal ideology with the original non-inscribed memory itself and the social processes that embodied it. For instance the prayer that the land would revenge any unjustified death (Job 16:18) is easily imagined as a folk memory practice executed at graves or memorial monuments (cf. Gen. 4:10). In the Book of Job such a popular vision of the not-yet-acting earth serves to destabilize elitist views like those of the remembering and forgetting earth in Job 20:9–11. In this case, therefore, one elitist author appears to discard the vision of another by re-interpreting a popular memory that is used by the other scribe but primarily known through its original, non-inscribed media.

I have elsewhere argued that the one voice that is most conspicuously present in the 'sideward glances' of the Book of Job, is the voice of tradition (Stordalen 2006:29f.). The composition engages various kinds of tradition: social convention, literary convention, Yahwistic and folk religious tradition, sapiential, liturgical, prophetic traditions, etc. In that bulk of traditional material there must have been considerable amounts of memory that were not created by the scribes. Other memories that had been created by the scribes, still became popular because the scribes connected to them to popular memory. All this should come as no surprise: based on a common sense apprehension of how thinking and identity develop historically, something like this would be the typical

²² One must consider the possibility that the author of Book of Job has schematised traditional wisdom theology and its apprehension of iconic suffering almost *in absurdum* in order to be able to launch a sustained argument against it.

case. The complex confirms something that could be formulated also for different reasons: the role of scribes was not to invent the canonical tradition, but to interpret and to mend it (Stordalen 2007:17f.).

v) This article was an attempt to start formulating more specific views of ancient Hebrew memory formation as reflected in the Book of Job. Evidently, one could not deny that much memory and identity in this book is of an elitist nature. However, the rather cursory investigation indicates that not all collective memory in ancient Israel was inscribed by the elite and 'fed and absorbed into the public memory.' Indeed, the exchange could also go in the opposite direction. And in any event, scribal memory was not alone: it would have been part of a much richer web of largely non-inscribed memory. This insight should affect the way we design future investigations of collective memory in biblical literature.

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CULTURAL MEMORY AND THE INVENTION OF BIBLICAL ISRAEL

JOHN VAN SETERS

1 INTRODUCTION

The subject of *cultural memory* is currently experiencing a great deal of popularity in many circles these days, and not least within biblical studies as well. The term *cultural memory* is one among many terms that are often used synonymously, such as *collective memory* or *social memory*, but the notion of cultural memory, in comparison with the others, may be a little misleading or less useful for a discussion of biblical historiography, and this for two reasons. First, it is so broad in scope that it could encompass everything that is inherited from the past, and when applied to the Hebrew Bible, this would include the whole canon and much more. Second, the term also implies a certain degree of passivity, the end result of a long and complex process of cultural accumulation. For some psychologists of cultural memory this could include Jung's great 'collective unconsciousness' or Freud's primeval myth. And for archaeologists even an ancient garbage dump becomes a place of cultural memory. By contrast, *collective memory* suggests the conscious effort of *remembering*, and some scholars even prefer to use the term 'collective remembering' to avoid any ambiguity in this way.¹ Furthermore, collective or social memory limits the focus of this activity of remembering to a particular social group or community. It is in this sense that we will use the term *collective memory* in its relationship to the Hebrew Bible, and to its historical traditions in particular.

¹ See in particular J. V. Wertsch, 2002, 10–66. This gives a very useful discussion both of the history of cultural and collective memory and current state of the discussion.