all others. The eternal happiness is the most common or necessarily shared of all goods (145). This is my favorite insight in the book.

There is more to say than space allows about the last parts of Walsh's account. But in sum, this is a provocative account of Kierkegaard's mature conception of character that clarifies many important topics. While it may remain controversial, Walsh's persistence in questioning "virtue" interpretations has put new issues on the agenda in Kierkegaard scholarship.

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James A. Diamond, *Jewish Theology Unbound*. Oxford: OUP 2018, 304 pp.

In the interest of full disclosure, let me say two things. First, I am a long-time friend of James Diamond and greatly admire his work. Second, I am a proponent of doctrines that he firmly rejects, e.g. negative theology and creation ex nihilo. So it is with a good measure of objectivity that I say that *Jewish Theology Unbound* is a highly learned and intricately researched effort to construct a workable theology on a wide range of questions including love, death, freedom, and evil as well as metaphysical issues like the names and nature of God. Diamond's passion for his subject matter, close reading of biblical passages, and thorough knowledge of rabbinic sources are apparent on every page of the book.

Broadly speaking, the book takes on the Christian prejudice that originated with Paul at Galatians 3.13 ("Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law.") and carried through to such "enlightened" figures as Kant and Hegel. Against this, Diamond argues that Judaism places heavy emphasis on, even demands, freedom, more specifically freedom from God. In his words (p. 5): "The title of this book, Jewish Theology Unbound, captures a fierce opposition to these theological and philosophical corruptions of Judaism. Jewish 'unbound' theology conveys a sense of vitality and creativity that is anything but passive, slavish, and legalistic."

Freedom from God? Diamond is on solid ground in showing that biblical characters like Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and Job feel perfectly free to question God, and in Jacob's case, even wrestle with God. Their questions are philosophical in nature, and in many instances, cause God to relent in the face of human

protest. Again from Diamond (p. 14): "God reacts, defers, experiences defeat, demonstrates emotion, and projects himself as a parent …" But rather than follow Aristotle in holding that philosophy begins in wonder, Diamond maintains that for these characters, it begins in pain, despair, anxiety, and frustration.

He is also on firm ground when he shows how the rabbis gave themselves considerable freedom when they proclaimed that the age of prophecy is over. If there are no more prophets, then there is no way for God to instruct humanity on how to interpret or apply the law. Put otherwise, the interpretation and application of the law are entirely in human hands, even when it goes well beyond what might seem like the plain sense of the original text. Accordingly (p. 186): "Their [the rabbis] role is shot through with a hermeneutical freedom that is the flip side of the political freedom God originally obtained for Israel."

To take an obvious example, the Bible permits capital punishment; but in the hands of the rabbis, the conditions needed to apply the law became so formidable that capital punishment is all but impossible. To take another example, the Bible allows slavery, but close readings by generations of commentators either eliminate it or point in the direction of its elimination. To take yet another, as Diamond sees it, Judaism greatly restricts the circumstances in which one can martyr himself and looks much more kindly on dying for the sake of other people than dying for the sake of God. Even something as basic as lighting candles on Friday night derives from rabbinic enactment rather than biblical legislation.

Needless to say, a God who relents in the face of human protest is not the omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent God championed by rationalist philosophers. Here (p. 64) Diamond distinguishes between a constant, stable, fixed God unaffected by anything external to himself and a God who is vulnerable, growing, learning, influenced, and subsisting in a reciprocal relationship to what is external to him. Rejecting the austerity of Maimonides' rationalism in favor of the more traditionally minded theology of Nachmanides, Diamond finds support for an evolving God in the Bible, rabbinic midrashim, kabbalah, and a distinguished list of modern scholars and theologians, including Buber, Heschel, Fackenheim, Levenson, and Fishbane. The God of Maimonides is immutable, devoid of emotion, and while he is the object of our love, he does not return that love in any obvious or direct way. Diamond is right to say that this conception of God is out of step with what one might term the mainstream of Jewish self-understanding. How, for example, could one pray to such a God?

It is to Diamond's credit that he does not avoid the subject of the Holocaust and follows Job in rejecting simplistic theodicies that belittle the unspeakable horror of the event. He asks (p. 211): "Is there really an essential difference between a theism that rationalizes a God that abandoned humanity (or consciously ignored it) and atheism?" Instead of a rationalization, Diamond opts for (p. 213) protest, outrage, anxiety, and distress with the way things are." His Tenth Chapter is therefore a moving tribute to Rabbi Kalonymous Kalman Shapira (1889–1943), a Hasidic master commonly known as the Warsaw Ghetto Rabbi.

Shapira's sermons were written down and hidden in a canister. They were uncovered after the war and published in 1960. In these sermons, we see a spiritual leader who is no longer able to offer comfort to his follower and lapses into silence. Citing Elie Wiesel, who also speaks of a "nocturnal silence," Diamond echoes his teacher Fackenheim in saying that (p. 222): "Discursive thought, theological or philosophical, finds no air to breathe in the vacuum of this silence.

Yet through all of this, Shapira exemplified what Diamond (p. 227) terms "the Mosaic paradigm of speaking and writing to redirect the course of divine governance." This is another way of saying that Shapira attempted to (p. 323) "cajole God out of His internal mode of confidence in the ultimate outcome of His original plan and into an interventionist mode to abort that plan in the face of the horrors He himself has unleashed." Although he did not succeed, Shapira's sermons constitute (p. 233) "an unparalleled sustained act of supreme resistance to the evil that engulfed him." By any estimation, he died a hero.

Diamond has done an excellent job in presenting Shapira as one in a long tradition of biblical characters, rabbis, and theologians who fought for and achieved human freedom from God. Though devout, Shapira was anything but a mindless follower trapped in a strict, legalistic conception of religion. This still leaves open the question of God's silence even indifference to the awful suffering and near destruction of his people. As Diamond admits, slavery under Pharaoh pales in comparison with death at Auschwitz. Where was the God who evolves over time, is influenced by his people, and engages in a reciprocal relationship with them? Diamond does not say. To his credit, neither does anyone else because in the way I have posed it, the question is unanswerable.

Instead of turning to theodicy ("Why did God not get involved?"), Diamond follows Fackenheim in shifting to focus of the discussion to from a theoretical level to a practical one

("What is an authentic human response?"). The precedent for this move was set as early as the Book of Job, when the voice from the whirlwind refuses to say why an innocent man has been brought to the limit of human endurance for no apparent reason. But here, if I may push back ever so slightly against the mainstream tradition, we open the door to negative theology. Let us not forget that while the Bible has God freeing Israel from Egyptian bondage, it also has God giving a highly enigmatic answer when asked his name, telling Moses that no mortal can see his face and live, and telling Job that we should not assume that God is there to do our bidding or even to answer our questions. These passages show that even in ancient times, there were people who sought to demythologize religion.

At bottom, negative theology puts serious limits on what we can say about God and suggests that the only authentic response is to follow Job by admitting humility in the face of something too great for us to comprehend. Diamond makes a convincing case that negative theology is an outlier in Jewish tradition. Anyone who is interested in Jewish theology will benefit from reading this book. Certainly I have benefitted and intend to go back to it again as I work through my own position. But outlier or not, negative theology has a way of making its presence felt whenever the question of divine involvement or non-involvement is raised.