Biblical Mourning
Saul M. Olyan

This book offers an analysis of the ritual dimensions of biblical mourning rites. It also seeks to illuminate mourning's social dimensions through engagement with anthropological discussion of mourning, from Hertz and van Gennep to contemporaries such as Metcalf and Huntington and Bloch and Parry. The book identifies four types of biblical mourning, and argues that mourning the dead is paradigmatic. It investigates why mourning can occur among petitioners in a sanctuary setting even given mourning's death associations; why certain texts proscribe some mourning rites (laceration and shaving) but not others; and why the mixing of the rites of mourning and rejoicing, normally incompatible, occurs in the same ritual in several biblical texts.

The Constraints on Mourning Rites
Saul M. Olyan

This chapter gives an analysis of the texts that constrain mourning behaviour by proscribing rites of laceration and shaving for priests and for Israelites in general. Using Holiness and Deuteronomic texts, it investigates what distinguishes shaving and laceration from other mourning rites. The discussion explains that they differ from other mourning rites in two ways. First, shaving and laceration are not easily reversible, unlike the majority of mourning practices that may be abandoned at will. Second, in contrast to other mourning rites, laceration and shaving outlast the commonly attested seven-day mourning period for the dead. It follows that these two practices may leave visible tokens
of mourning on the bodies of people who have abandoned the mourning ritual stance and shifted to a posture of rejoicing. The mixing of mourning and rejoicing practices may pose a threat to the continuity of the ritual order.

From Image to Text: Photography, Writing, and Communication in Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History

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This chapter focuses on Bataille's mystical models to show how writing replaces or supplements practices of meditation in his wartime work. Bataille attempts to affect his own and the reader's psychic laceration through writing. Shattered subjects then recognize themselves and each other in their contingent existences, enabling the ecstatic anguish that is, for Bataille, communication. Bataille's move from visionary imagination to writing enables him to communicate the ecstatic anguish of inner experience without the dangers of sadistic voyeurism or masochistic literalization of the suffering body. Only ecstatic attention to the real and its catastrophes can serve as the basis for contestation and change, and that change will always be incomplete, unfinished, and without limit.