

ETYMOLOGICAL REFERENCE: Zech. 2.13 would seem to be an exception, but the silence is fearful awe in God's Presence: "hush up" (Heb. & Eng., same root). In 1K.19.12, the n. *dammah* means "whisper," the only meaning BDB (Heb. lexicon) will allow; but it's from a vb. meaning be struck "dumb" (same root as Eng., as is also "deaf"). "Still," same root as "stand" (and Gk. *stellō*). "Stand still, and see" (Ex. 14.13).

As one of three on an NYU doctoral committee, I've just finished reading a thesis without biblical understanding, on the life of a Protestant minister without biblical understanding. The latter, world-famous for "success" in the pastorate, had an eminent PhD but never went to seminary and never exposed himself, formally or informally, to biblical science (i.e., to the scientific study of Scripture either with or without studying the biblical languages). Ditto for the former, the NYU PhD candidate.

This thinksheet illustrates the appalling effect of that neglect. The illustration: "still," in and from KJV, is misunderstood to be a reference to sound rather than to motion. Even the most readily available biblical tools could have disabused of this error. But the sources depended on were extrabiblical--e.g., Goldsmith's THE THUNDER OF SILENCE, p.190: One thing along concerns us, "the ability to be still and let God manifest and express Himself as the still small Voice within us" (an obvious ref. to 1K.19.12).

1. First, note the East distorting the West. The essence of India's (i.e., Hindu and Buddhist and offshoots) religious action at its upper reaches is the achievement of the "ability" to meditate yourself out of your cotton-pickin' head, to zombiize yourself into the mystical blur and then irration- alize the blur into philosophical monism (atma is brahma, nibbana-nirvana, etc.). I use pejorative language because I believe that this religious praxis moves humanity not toward but away from reality: it is the creation and promotion of illusion as anodyne against the pain of the world in both relationships and thought....In contrast to this "ability," Elijah (in our verse) is passive: something is done to him, by the divine initiative. He does not still himself down into silence: he *is silenced*, as is nature around him.

2. Silence is a notion alien to biblical religion except in the sense of something done to us (we are dounbfounded, or destroyed): the notion is God-centered (not "soul"-centered) and negative. So one is not surprised to find no article on it (or on "still" or "quiet") in the 5-vol. INTERPRETER'S DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE. Simon and Garfunkel's "Sounds of Silence," though redolent of Elijah's cave, reflects a religion alien to the Bible, whose dominant peoples (the Jews and the Greeks) are the least silent on earth! Silence is feared: God may be silent. But here, in our vs., God is not silent to Elijah; in fact, silence must be eisegeted if our is to exegete it here: there is no silence in the story.

3. Silence got into 1K.19.12 by misreading KJV and RSV's "still small voice." As OED makes clear, in referring to the vs., "still" does not mean silent but "subdued, soft, not loud. Now archaic, and chiefly" as influenced by this vs.! As the OED article makes clear by putting soundless as the last section of the article, the basic meaning of "still" is motionless. Thus, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46.10) has nothing to do with silence. Even so old a work as Young's Concordance translates "Let go, and" Yet the Bible continues to be ripped off for the purposes of an alien religious experience and tradition by Middle English wording, now archaic! These Easternizers wouldn't think of promoting KJV for any other purpose! They might note that none of the great modern translation allow silence in our vs.: "a low murmuring sound" (NEB), "the sound of a gentle breeze" (JB: fn., God as Spirit), "a tiny whispering sound" (NAB), "a gentle whisper" (NIV), "a sound of gentle blowing" (NASB), "a voice, a small whisper" (Green Interlinear). There is silence in Eliphaz's phony religion (Job 4.16), and the Babylonians are cursed with silence (Is.47.5, parallels "darkness"); but biblical believers are to abstain from silence, to praise God (Psalm 30.12).