Podium Presentation  
Carving God’s Body from Ashes and Exaltation  
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The Hebrew Bible is a debate about meaning and suffering that is addressed in its evolving picture of God’s body and its interactions with humans. As Benjamin D. Sommer demonstrates in his book, the *Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel*, the question is not if God has a body, but what is “the effect that body has on humans nearby.” For the ancient Israelite, God’s presence could bring terror and death or it could be a radiant fortress of protection. These opposing images both accuse and praise a God who wields power over all creation. The canvas of the Hebrew Bible is covered with atrocity and horror, but also splendor and victory. This paper analyzes these texts and imagines the creative impulses that would have lead these authors to portray their God in such ways. One central argument is that these texts are artistic compositions with intentional paradoxes. Just as Pablo Picasso’s, Guernica draws in an audience with its devastation and beauty, it also calls humanity to account for its brutality. Similarly, the Hebrew authors are creatively presenting God in the midst of suffering and asking for an explanation. In either forms of art, to give a definitive answer would be disingenuous and rob the audience of meaningful discovery. Instead, one is left with a starting point, and an array images. This strategy invites the individual to respond in a similarly creative and meaningful exploration.