



Discussion Guide for *Goatwalking* a book by Jim Corbett

Note: Page numbers coincide with the paperback version, second edition. If using the eBook, key phrases with which to search for the passage are in bold.

From Jim's Preface:

Goatwalking is a book for saddlebag or backpack—to live with a while, casually. It is compact and multifaceted, but for unhurried reflection rather than study. It is woven from star-gazing and campfire talk, to open conversations rather than to lead the reader on a one-way track of entailment to necessary conclusions. I prove no points. This is no teaching.

— Jim Corbett

From the Editors (With Special Thanks to Elna Otter and Jim McPherson):

The work of preparing a new edition of *Goatwalking*, in the depths of the pandemic of 2020-2021, was accompanied and leavened by a series of biweekly Zoom conversations. In these we and some others, scattered across North America, gathered at the computer screen like a campfire, and talked our way through the book, chapter by chapter.

The discussion was rich, wandering, rarely lagged, and reached no conclusions, except that we hope to encourage other readers who are tempted to do something similar. This “guide” is a concrete encouragement. It brings together quotes from the book with questions that suggested themselves. There are no wrong answers,

and feel free to add or ignore questions in search of your own understandings while sharing, at your own pace.

From Chapter 11:

Chapter One — Going out

1. What do you think that “Hiding the world in the world” means? (*p.* 1)
2. Jim says of goatwalking that it is “**free and easy wandering**,” (*p.* 10) and “the Goatwalker **wanders but rarely hikes.**” (*p.* 6) What do we think that means?.
3. “**Simply do nothing**” (*p.* 5) or “**the uses of uselessness**” may “be a hell for you” (*p.* 5). How do you “unpack” these aspects of goatwalking? (*p.* 5).
4. Does Jim’s advice about “**Learning to go cimarron**” resonate with you? (*pp.* 4, 24).
5. What does Jim mean by saying life can be meaningful “**Only if we are active participants** in the Creation?” In your own life, have you found this to be true or false? (*p.* 11).
6. “**Out of the stillness** that I thought was death, love enlivened me—or something like love that doesn’t split the way love does, into loving and being loved.” Does that thought (or experience) resonate with you? (*p.* 2).
7. After his Berkeley experience, Jim writes that “**On the basis of quite limited information** and no familiarity, I guessed I must have turned Quaker. Finding myself in Los Angeles, I located a Quaker meeting, attended, and decided I had.” What do you think led him to decide that? (*p.* 2).
8. A “Cimarron” is defined in part as slaves that go free, **covenanted to become a free people**. How does Jim think that could apply to us? (*p.* 4) .
9. “**Pastoral nomadism is similar** to most hunter-gatherer cultures in its concentration on the present, in its reliance on and adaptation to the given aspects of nature, and in its emphasis on unrelenting observation and awareness.” How different is that outlook from our everyday lives?? (*p.* 7).
10. What is meant by the idea that “attachment is the **emotional analogue of delusion**”? (*p.* 9). Jim also writes that “In the absence of socially supported

identities we may discover ourselves possessed by naked demons who have the good manners to appear only in acceptable disguises when we are in polite society. During extended periods of isolation working as a shepherd and a cowboy, I discovered little of this kind of emotional conflict. After all, I was doing a job and earning a living. Each day had its work and objectives, and if I was separated from human society I was still of it. But in full solitude — **free and easy wandering** without purpose or schedule — the demons appear.” (p. 10). In that case, why would anyone want to experience the “full solitude” of goatwalking?

Chapter 2 - On Errantry

From Jim:

For “savages” survival means learning how to fit into an untamed habitat, but for the civilized it means learning how to use natural resources to make a tamed habitat. I therefore refer to primitive societies to illustrate differences between technocratic civilization and communion, but I recommend no regression to a pre-civilized condition. Life on this planet urgently needs to evolve beyond human possession, but regression would just lead to repetition, because pre-technocratic societies disintegrate when brought into contact with technocracy.

They disintegrate because technocratic civilization vastly extends the human ability to experience and do many things. (p. 21)

1. How do you think Jim hopes for life to “evolve beyond human possession”? (p. 21). How about you?
2. What is “**Errantry**” in the modern world? (Look it up if needed.) What have you done that might fit this definition? What have you *not* done because you were afraid it might be seen to fit this definition? (p. 13).
3. “The Conjurer” is “errantry’s **archenemy**,” and is an image Jim took from the Cervantes novel *Don Quixote*. Jim states that “conjuring” involves deluding people into believing errantry is fantasy, while arguing that “religions” are true or real. Do you agree or disagree? (p. 14).

4. Jim's preliminary epitaph for himself is: "I've **shared life's warmth** with a lamb. I've opened a desert spring." Do you think it important to have an epitaph? What would yours include, if written today? (pp. 12-13).
5. The character of Don Quixote is important throughout the book. Jim told strangers to look for him as resembling "**Quixote wearing glasses**". What do you gather are the connections for Jim between Cervantes' writings and Goatwalking? (p. 13) .
6. Francis of Assisi segued from being a man seeking knightly glory to the founder of a religious order dedicated to "**Lady Poverty**". In what ways does this parallel Jim's transition from formal, traditional education to goatwalking? (pp. 16-17).
7. "**Be Unprepared,**" Jim told would-be goatwalkers. (p. 18). Might that be the motto for all errantry? Or life? (Note: Yet in Chapter 4, Jim advised preparing very carefully for forays into the desert: "**Life on the desert** is always for real; little mistakes can be fatal.") (p. 49).
8. What is meant by "**Technocratic civilization** is itself irreplaceably good, in its time" and that social philosophers were right in claiming that what is called human civilization had to be founded on slavery and that war was (and still often is) the "natural" relation of one state to another? (pp. 22-23).
9. Jim argues that "**covenanting**" is the fundamental adaptive concern of anyone seeking to become fully human (,) because it empowers members to be cocreators of a social order." How so? What do you think "covenanting" means here, and have you found this to be true in your own life? (pp. 23-24).

Chapter 3 – Free & Easy Wandering

Jim Quotes from the book, *Goat Husbandry*:

When man began his first farming operations in the dawn of history, the goat was the kingpin of the pastoral life, making possible the conquest of desert and mountain and the occupation of the fertile land that lay beyond. The first of man's domestic animals to colonize the wilderness, the goat is the last to abandon the deserts that man leaves behind him. For, ever the friend of the pioneer and the last survivor,

the goat was never well-loved by farmers on fertile land. When agriculture produces crops that man, cow, and sheep can consume with more profit, the goat retreats to the mountain tops and the wilderness, rejected and despised — hated, too, as the emblem of anarchy.”(p. 28). Jim adds: “The goat is the natural emblem of anarchy. It is the most adaptable pastoral animal, and pastoral nomadism remains the only form of livelihood that permits subjugated communities to walk away from the state. Quick-witted, social, and educable. . . goats thrive on a wider range of plants and in more varied terrain than any other large herbivorous mammal. On range where other domesticated animals would starve, goats often provide both milk and meat for their human partners. Because goats will readily admit human beings into herd membership . . . with the goat as a partner, human beings can support themselves in most wildland environments. (pp. 26-27).

1. What makes goats the **most adaptable** pastoral animal, and why is this relevant to errantry? (p. 26)
2. After reading this chapter, can you imagine becoming a member and a leader of a herd of goats?
3. Would learning **goat milking technique** be difficult? Useful? (pp. 30-32).
4. Consider the difficulty of leading “**the black maggots**” (goats) in an incredibly fragile ecosystem such as the Sonoran desert. What could possibly go wrong? “(p. 33)
5. What advantages do **human beings find** in goats offer over other species (i.e. cows)? (p. 37).
6. Can we **slaughter animals, eat meat**, and still consider ourselves to be living non-violently? (p. 42).
7. Jim wrote: “to be at home in deserts, **a gentle, peaceful people** must also be ruthless. Sentimentalism is a luxury of the rich and violent.” Is it possible to reconcile being gentle, peaceful, and ruthless? “(p. 46).
8. Jim: “The **Hopi tell of ancient times** when they wandered throughout the North American continent in search of the right place — the place to practice a sacramental way of life that preserves the universe. From jungles lapped by both oceans, they walked north to the Arctic icefields, east to the shores where leafy forests meet the sea, and west to the shores where giant redwoods overlook crashing surfs. No place anywhere on the continent

equaled the high desert mesas where they finally settled. When explaining to outsiders, they sometimes observe that the home of a peaceful people must be in places that others consider wastelands.” (p. 46). Are there places in the world you consider wastelands and, if so, what makes them so? Would you be comfortable living in such a place? Would it be useful to do so?

9. What “wastelands” should we particularly be pondering today?

Chapter 4 – Survival Tips

1. Jim wrote:

*I have **a confession to make**. I want my grandchildren to learn how to goatwalk, even if they have no interest in errantry. I’m a survivalist where they’re concerned. Industrial civilization has destabilized the earth’s climate beyond the point of no-return. The fair-weather agriculture on which our civilization depends is doomed. In the course of the next century, much of North America will probably become desert. Even if it doesn’t, annual rainfalls and temperatures will fluctuate too wildly to sustain the agricultural systems on which we now depend. If humankind doesn’t self-destruct, my grandchildren will have to get along without industrial agriculture as it now exists. Maybe a more sustainable industrial adaptation will emerge, but I want them to know enough to survive the old-fashioned, nomad way, in case that’s the viable choice. (p. 47).*

Do Jim’s concerns from the 1980s relate to the 21st century? Would this form of survivalism really be useful for our grandchildren?

2. Jim wrote, “Before **going into unfamiliar arid country**, study maps that show the location of water. Grazing-permit maps for areas administered by the U.S. Forest Service or the Bureau of Land Management will indicate most waters, including temporary springs and seeps that are not on U.S. Geological Survey maps, but inaccuracies of one-quarter mile or more are common on the Forest Service and BLM maps, so don’t put all your faith in them — or in anything else. Life on the desert is always for real; little mistakes can be fatal.” Could this passage from (p. 49) be not only concretely important for people going out in the wilderness, but also more broadly metaphorical for others?

3. “When **bedding down among goats** in bear or lion country, I’ve sometimes wondered whether a bear or big lion or jaguar that happened by would consider me a goat among goats or would feel that the goats should be left alone because of my presence. Deer, for example, have a different attitude toward me when I’m sitting among the goats, often coming up close to puzzle over us. . . . I’ve never had a problem with predators during a goatwalk, although I’ve occasionally found lion tracks that showed we were scrutinized during the night.” (p. 56). Aside from predators, what are some other hazards of goatwalking? Would you be safe going goatwalking at your current level of knowledge?
4. What would you see as some features of the “**more sustainable industrial adaptation**” (p. 47) of our present system Jim calls for?

Chapter 5 -- The Cimarron Alternative

1. On page 70, Jim wrote, “Here are **two iconoclastic suggestions** about our fundamental educational needs: First, everyone should learn how to feed him- or herself. Second, everyone should live at least briefly as a member of a wildland band.” Perhaps this could be referred to as “going feral.” Then, on p. 76 he wrote, “When a person or group is faced with extermination or enslavement, going free may be a more responsible choice than attempting to resist. The black maroons who escaped slavery to form their own societies created both an example and a refuge for those who were still enslaved. If we’re lucky, few of us will ever face political conditions that would make escape necessary for survival, but knowing how to escape, should the need arise, can still strengthen one’s sense of independence. A slave who only **knows how to live by slavery** is in no position to struggle for freedom.” (p. 73).
2. Further, Jim writes, on Page 76,

“Life turns sour when it is dedicated entirely to resistance and is cut off from constructive social activity. During the sixties, war resisters therefore tried to drop out of the established system and create a peace-making counterculture. The result was little more than an assimilated subculture and new fashions. The counterculture was as self-absorbed as the kind of conscientious objection that is primarily concerned with conscience rather than objectionable violations.”

One's complicity can be reduced by limiting acquisition and consumption to necessities; failing to limit consumption means that other living beings are injured to make the difference. Nonetheless, any productive member of a society at war with man or nature can also be sure that he is one of its soldiers, no matter how considerately he lives. To serve life, technocracy's conscripts must go beyond simplicity and do more than desert; they must gather into basic communities that open an exodus."

Does “**nomadic pastoralism**” (p. 22) offer a model for such an “exodus”? How does it differ from as distinct from to “**go feral**”(p. 69)? How might doing either one be expressed in your life?

3. Why and how have people “**burned their bridges**” to life-support systems available prior to this century, as Jim talks about on p. 70?
4. Jim writes that most “**family farms**” are now occupied by families who work seventy-hour weeks at less than the minimum wage for a lending agency that owns both their land and their time. (p. 70). Is that true? What does it mean for the rest of us?
5. Did the 17th Century English “**Diggers**” really have the right to plant and harvest on the “commons” or “public” land? (p. 73). Since the movement survived only a couple of years, the establishment obviously didn't think so. How might the “catch me if you can” feature of nomadic pastoralism have changed their fate?
6. “Active and visible **conscientious objection to war**, to the destruction of the environment, to racism, to the exploitation of economic colonies . . . is often the most effective way to . . . stimulate change.” (p. 76). Do you believe this was true when Jim wrote *Goatwalking*? Is it more true or less true today?
7. Was **Moses** a cimarron? Does this mean that nomadic pastoralism dates back to the 12th century BC in a form similar to what Jim recommends for today? (p. 76).
8. On page 82, the **Peaceable Kingdom** is referred to as “non-violent alternative to the apocalyptic hopes of revolutionary Zealots.” Its biblical origin is Isaiah 11:6-9: “The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. 7 The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. 8 The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. 9 They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the

earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.” How might the Peaceable Kingdom be expressed in your life?

9. Jim writes, on page 80, “**Settled peoples** work relentlessly to remake and possess the earth because they can live only in man-made habitats where they are subjugated and used by whoever controls the land. In contrast, nomads take life sabbatically, as a gift from 'God's land.' . . . The cimarron's ability to be at home in wildlands distinguishes pastoral nomads from peasants and other settled folk, opening nomadic consciousness to insights unknown to peoples who worship owner-masters because they can live only within the man-made world's make-believe boundaries.” Is this a “real” possibility? Or more like what Jim calls “conjuring”?
10. Can “settled folk” learn anything useful from considering the cimarron way? Can you personally?

Chapter 6 -- The Civil Imperative

1. On page 83, Jim writes,

Slavery has been abolished, but Pharaoh still rules. Going cimarron, sabbatically, is a way to go free from Pharaoh. Having gone free from Pharaoh, a cimarron community must discover how to participate in civil society without being resubjugated. Civil but unsubjugged, the cimarron community insists on a free society based on equal rights of association and agency. Yet, as a matter of empirical fact about human behavior, civil association disintegrates in the absence of a governmental police force entitled to use violence to subjugate the populace. All of us sometimes and some of us most times must be coerced into civility. All of us in civil society need police protection from one another. And, for a nation-state to exist at all, governmental organization must maintain the natural borders by repelling attackers and excluding unauthorized aliens.

He continues, on page 84 with:

How can a cimarron community, which refuses to give fealty to any human ruler as its lord and master, live under a national government?”

What's your answer?

2. "**Anyone who sees** the difference between obeying the government and obeying the law can see how to remain free and faithful in civil society, but the way is hard, disreputable, and dangerous." (p. 84). Do you agree? Have you had any experiences when you were forced to choose between the two?
3. Jim says that civility is one side of a **human social order**. Religion is the other. Both sides are concerned with the law. How do they work together? (pp. 84-85).
4. How does Jim's decision to not wear a gun jibe with his view of the correctness of **Hobbes'** position, i.e., "unless there is a commonly accepted Power [read 'police'] people are in a state of war." (p. 89).
5. Jim:

*The **cimarron community** that tries to practice civility as nonviolence must concede that we are all participants in civil society and therefore the beneficiaries of the armed force that must be used to preserve it. If we are a peaceful people that refuses to take up arms to protect ourselves, someone else will do it for us.*

This is painful. . . (p. 93)

Is Jim right about this? If so, where does that leave "pacifists"?

6. German philosopher **Carl Schmitt's** work (p. 94) is probably the most famous recent example of espousal of a protection/obedience relationship as basic to social order. Does the fact that he became the premier Nazi ideologue totally negate that proposition?
7. **Thoreau**, on the other hand, advocates civil disobedience when statutes are unjust (p. 95). How does Jim's perspective differ from both Schmitt and Thoreau?
8. Jim writes, "When **governmental powers are used to destroy** the rule of law, civil obedience and civil disobedience both fail to institute, maintain, or extend civil association under the rule of law" (p. 97). If so, then what does maintain or extend "civil association"?
9. Jim writes: "**Civil initiative maintains** and extends the rule of law, unlike civil disobedience, which breaks it, and civil obedience, which lets the government break it" (p. 99). This sentence is often referred to as the core belief of the sanctuary movement as Jim saw it. Is it a real possibility? Does it still exist today?

10. The legendary organizer **Saul Alinsky**'s political jujitsu differs strongly from Jim's civil initiative. (p. 101). How?
11. Civil initiative "**extends the social** order's civility to enemies and other aliens as basic rights." (p. 104). This caused considerable friction between sanctuary as Jim's civil initiative and a politically-oriented faction of the sanctuary movement focused on civil disobedience. Why?
12. "**Even if national** governments remain necessary and world government remains unlikely, the nation-state, as the form into which civil society fits, is withering away." Jim wrote this on page 108. This is a strong statement about the future, from the late 1980s. Was Jim right?
13. Jim:

*I'm an **unlikely Quaker**. I learned to shoot rabbits when I was five, had my own shotgun at nine, and joined the National Rifle Association, had my own 30-06, and began hunting deer and antelope at thirteen. For my eighteenth birthday, my parents sent me a pistol, unaware that in New York State where I was going to school the police and university authorities would disapprove. I've quit using guns, except for humane slaughter, but I still dislike gun-control legislation. I don't think governmental coercion should be used to force others to take the Quaker way when police protection is unavailable or law enforcement turns to murder. (p. 90)*

Is he really that out of step?

14. If we saw Jim carrying a sign today, would it say, "Defund the Police," or "Back the Blue?" Or something else?
15. Jim quotes Thoreau: "**Must the citizen** ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislature?" (p. 95). Is he right? In what ways have you done this, or not?
16. Thoreau, quoted again: "...It **is not desirable** to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right" (p. 95). Is Thoreau right here too?
17. Jim comments:

Thoreau's contrast of respect for the law and respect for the right actually distinguishes between two meanings of the word "law," society-

forming right and government-made statutes. For the most part, the two basic meanings of “law” reflect the practical difference between a society’s constituting principles and a government organization’s policies, but they are most readily distinguished by the fact that the one usage, as in “the common law,” has no plural. “The law” as right is a single, intra-active, evolving order. ‘Laws’ or statutes are chronically in need of interpretation, testing, and adjudication to determine how and whether they fit into the law; a law is not the law, nor is it necessarily a part of the law (p. 95).

Is there more here than just a quibble over words?

18. Wait a minute: how did we get from milking goats in the desert to talking about Arizona gunslingers, a “Peaceable Kingdom” and the law as “what’s right” versus statutes? What kind of book is this?

Chapter 7 -- Discovering the Church

Jim’s first public letter about refugees, sent out in May 1981, was addressed to other Quakers, who were:

*. . . **the only faith community** I knew. I soon learned that full-time involvement with refugees meant full-time involvement with the church. A ‘new underground railroad’ formed almost immediately to protect Central American refugees, the foundation for which was the ecumenical church. Suddenly, I was spending much of my time in churches and was working closely with the vocationally religious, and my two closest friends were Catholic priests. I was even “Padre Jaime” — Father Jim — to the comandante and jailers at the penitentiary in Nogales, Sonora, where Central American refugees were held by the Mexican government for deportation to Guatemala. . . . (p. 111)*

***During recent weeks** I’ve been discovering this catholic church that is a people rather than creed or rite, a living church of many cultures that must be met to be known. Out of these meetings, a meaning has opened to me that I’d like to share. . . . (p. 112)*

*After **having been Quaker** for almost two decades, I decided to seek formal membership in my meeting, in order to join the church. . . . Until I began discovering the church, I had no intention of becoming*

a member because I thought of denominational membership as separative rather than unitive . . . Until I began to know the church, membership in meeting seemed separatively sectarian. When I began to know the church, formal membership in my meeting was clearly the way for me to join the church. Just as there's no generic form of marriage that transcends and precludes marriage to someone in particular, there's no generic form of membership in the church I'd come to know. (p. 115)

*I was **meeting the visible**, historically specific church formed by distinct traditions and particular people. Father Ricardo, Pat, and I would often banter about our Judeo-Quackolic Church, and in Mexico, where Catholics and Protestants rarely work together, Father Quiñones would introduce me to the archbishop and other priests as *un cuáquero muy católico* — a very Catholic Quaker. (p. 116)*

*In meeting the **visible, fully catholic** church, I saw that my universalism, which had seemed to stand in the way of formal membership in any specific congregation, was a chimera rather than an obstacle — a lifeless abstraction (p. 116)*

*Am I **converting to Catholicism**, then? Well, not in a sense that would make me less Quaker. . . . And my discovery is that the church is truly catholic, a people of peoples that incorporates not only a multiplicity of nations and cultures but also divergent beliefs, rites and perspectives. . . . (p. 123).*

1. In this letter sent to Friends, Jim compared the rounding up and deportation of refugees from the southwest U.S. to **Vichy France** (think Nazis and WWII). (p. 109). Was this a fair comparison? Is it fair today? If not, is a totally open border the answer?
2. During Sanctuary, Jim's initial outreach being to Quakers is obviously understandable. Its rapid evolution into an ecumenical church effort was unexpected, and radically reshaped Jim's thinking and the movement's direction. Would such an evolution be possible today? If so, would you be part of it?
3. The improbable combination of a charismatic Presbyterian minister (John Fife), a Redemptorist Catholic priest (Father Ricardo Elford), and a Quaker (Jim Corbett) made for surprisingly effective activism. Was this an example of, as Jim said, "Whatever our **creedal differences**, we meet as one people by virtue of our allegiance to one Kingdom. And my discovery is that the

church is truly catholic, a people of peoples that incorporates not only a multiplicity of nations and cultures but also divergent beliefs, rites and perspectives...”? (p. 123).

4. Why was it that churches were virtually the only organizations equipped to challenge the government actions over these issues? Do you think the same thing is happening these days?
5. Jim called these groups he encountered a **fully catholic church** in the “small c” sense (p. 116). How would Jim’s ideas be affected by encountering the many Christian nationalist churches that are so prominent on the American scene today? (p. 115)
6. What do you make of this passage from another letter by Jim from that time: “The **peoples of the cross** I was meeting turned the world as I’d known it inside out and upside down. Seeing the world’s principalities and powers politically, as the substance rather than the shadows of human empowerment, I’d thought there was no alternative to resistance, in reaction to the rule of violence. [But in] Meeting the church, I saw that political countermeasures are a shadow’s shadow; the powers could neither darken nor disempower the lovingkindness of the many . . . who are the redemptive flesh and blood of the church. . . . Whatever the truth may be about events reported from Jerusalem two thousand years ago, I learned the truth of the cross because I was there . . .” (pp. 113-114).

What was this “truth of the cross” that Jim felt he learned?

Chapter 8 -- Pilgrim’s Progress

Jim: page 127:

“The official government position [in 1981] was that the Salvadorans and Guatemalans arriving in the United States were ‘illegals’ rather than refugees, that they were just coming to the United States looking for jobs, that no refugee-causing violations of human rights in El Salvador and Guatemala were causing the influx. Anyone who assisted them in any way with food, shelter, transportation, communications, or concealment was therefore, according to federal officials, committing a felony punishable by up to five years’ imprisonment for each act of assistance — and up to ten years for conspiring to do so. The

United States had ratified a United Nations treaty and enacted a federal law committing itself never to return a refugee to a country where he or she had reason to fear persecution — that is, to provide safe haven for first-asylum refugees, regardless of their nationality, political opinion, social class, race, or religion — so when the U.S. government returned the Salvadorans and Guatemalans it claimed they were ‘illegals’ rather than refugees. By international declarations, customary international standards, ratified treaties, and federal law, if the returnees were genuine first-asylum refugees, they had a lawful right to be in the United States, regardless of the way they entered the country or whether they had visas or other documentation. If they were refugees, returning them would be a grave violation of international human-rights law, called refoulement.”

1. Consider Jim’s statement in Chapter 8 that he couldn’t have named **Archbishop Romero** before his almost accidental, yet turning-point involvement with the Salvadoran hitchhiker. What do we (especially Anglo readers) know of Oscar Romero today? (p. 132).
2. The **pastor of Southside** Presbyterian Church, John Fife, soon became the focal point for Sanctuary in Tucson and, for a time, in the nation. (p. 131). Other than strong personalities (Jim and John Fife) what threads pulled them and the many other religious groups together? (Note: churches as far away as New England housed refugees.)
3. For Jim, being dubbed “Padre Jaime” of the (imaginary) “**Sociedad de los Amigos**” (p. 133) was amusing but also had very real practical value in that time and place. Why? Do you think it also came to have religious value for Jim as well?
4. Jim wrote, “The **trouble with Jesus** is that he refuses to sacrifice enough to make room for hope.” (p. 148). Here Jim paints a picture of despair so deep that it shatters any sense of the future beyond total despair. What is your reaction to this? Does torture of the magnitude described here still occur? If so, what do we do? How can we cope?

Chapter 9 -- Weaving Sanctuary into the Social Fabric

Jim:

*In October 1990, **Congress halted** the deportation of the Salvadorans who were already in the United States and made them eligible for “Temporary Protected Status.” Then, on December 19, federal officials conceded virtually everything sought by sanctuary providers in a civil suit (American Baptist Churches v. Thornburgh — “the ABC agreement”) that had been filed in 1985 as a companion to the Arizona sanctuary trial. . . . In effect, we’d won. Adequate supervision and legal aid would still be needed, but the violation of Central American refugees’ right to safe haven within the United States had ceased to be an entrenched federal policy. At the same time, though, the U.S government intensified its antirefugee program in Mexico Even Iron Curtain ruthlessness couldn’t control the U.S.- Mexican border (or even give the market price of drugs a significant boost), but the political need to find a new Evil Empire and establish a reverse Iron Curtain is making the borderlands much more dangerous. (p. 173).*

Jim:

*To **find guidance** from the Bible, I first had to learn how to wrestle and argue with it. To take it seriously enough to wrestle with it, I also had to learn to honor it, listening attentively to what its ancient voices actually say in their own way. The faithful must argue for justice, as Abraham and Job did, even against God Himself. It’s certainly no breach of the prophetic faith to argue with the Bible, wherever it promotes what we see as injustice. Rather, anyone who fails to argue with the Bible on behalf of the covenant isn’t taking the Bible seriously. “It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear and do it?’ Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear and do it?’ But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it” (Deuteronomy 30:12-14) (p. 152-153).*

1. What does Jim mean “That’s the **kind of Jew** I am,” through membership in a Quaker Meeting? Clearly, he is a member of the Society of Friends, not a Jew. (p. 152)
2. Is “genuine prophecy” always as “disreputable” as Jim implies when he writes, “**Federal officials were** also eager to promote the politicized understanding of sanctuary, since they knew the movement would then quickly

self-destruct. There probably weren't ten congregations in the whole country that would prune their advocacy of human rights to fit the strategies of revolutionary warfare, but many thousands did want to respond charitably to refugees while conscientiously evading the prophetic side of sanctuary, which entails a public stand by the congregation that empowers refugees to speak truth to power. (Anyone who doesn't struggle to evade the prophetic side of covenant faithfulness isn't entirely sane. All genuine prophecy is disreputable, breaks ranks and undermines in-group solidarity, alienates friends, and jeopardizes family.)" (p. 154)

3. Was Jim correct to argue that covenant-based sanctuary differed from goal-directed sanctuary in some fundamentally important way? What were the key differences in the schism between the Chicago group (CRTF) and the covenant-based sanctuary movement centered in Tucson? How important was this division to the movement? (pp. 156-157).
4. What was "**Operation Sojourner**," and how did it affect the movement schism? (p. 158).
5. The trial of Jim and the others was characterized as a **contest between church and state** (p. 159). Why was this strategy probably a poor one for the government?
6. **Seven Principles** were agreed upon by the Tucson Refugee Support Group (Trsg). (p. 164). How do they mesh with covenanting?
7. Why was it difficult to mix *pro se* defense with a professional, paid defense, even beyond the adage that says "a defendant who represents himself has a fool for a lawyer"? (p. 165).
8. Why is it **federal officials conceded** virtually everything sought by the Sanctuary movement? (p. 176).
9. Jim Corbett and others stated after his arraignment on January 21, 1985: "**After the Second World War**, our government committed itself by law never again to expel or return refugees to any country where they would face persecution. At Nuremberg and Geneva, our government also established that everyone has both the right to protect refugees and the duty to obstruct the commission of state crimes. Consequently, providing sanctuary for refugees is not an act of civil disobedience. Rather, the need to provide sanctuary for refugees demonstrates that, in its violations of human rights both here and abroad, [it is] the present administration [which] lacks legitimacy." (p. 162).

10. Goatwalking has taken us from joining a goat herd, considering the best knots for a tether, finding edible desert plants, to playing cat-and-mouse with border patrol agents, talking theology with Catholics and Presbyterians, facing jail in federal court, and trying to enforce international law. Do all these parts fit together?

Chapter 10 -- Going up to Zion

Jim:

Any state, to maintain the enforced social order, will limit what can be done in the name of religion, but conscripting the church to act as the state's primary agent for enforcing government policy is a radically different matter, the fundamental issue for the separation of church and state. If the church can be conscripted to act as the government's agent, then church-state separation and first amendment guarantees of religious liberty are a sham. For sanctuary providers, the I-9 requirement is easily seen to be a complete breach of church-state separation, because it forces apostasy; to become the primary agent of the U.S. government's violation of refugee rights betrays the sanctuary covenant." (p. 184) Jim: "Quaker ways have long since evolved beyond the heroic age of the founders, when all Quakers willingly went to jail and forfeited their land rather than take the pledge of allegiance — and even beyond the conformist age of the followers, when any who failed to call their oaths 'affirmations' would be disowned. Nonetheless, some Quaker meetings that include many members who will sign the I-9 attestation are also reaching consensus that compliance would constitute a betrayal of the meeting's faith and practice. (p. 180).

1. What was the **I-9 attestation** and what was its effect on sanctuary? (pp. 176-180)
2. Consider the statement "It (I-9) **is the way that** the violation of the right to safe haven is now being woven into the social order." (p. 176). Is the I-9 employer reporting requirement still in force?
3. "**The church ceases** to be church if it places the practice of its faith under state management." (p. 177). Is Jim right about this? Is there any wiggle room?

4. Did the personal decision to **detour the barrier** posed by the I-9, by Jim and Pat, put them “outside” this new “catholic church” Jim had discovered? (p. 185).
5. Did **Pima Meeting**’s consensus not to sign the I-9 create risks for individual members? Is the I-9 still in force today? (p. 178)
6. Who were “the **Diggers**” and what was their premise? Even though they were in existence only for a short period of time, does their premise and message have any power in our time? (p. 181-185).
7. Naturalist **Aldo Leopold** maintained that a proper land ethic requires that we be not conquerors of the land, but, as a community, a “plain member and citizen of it.” How did Jim expand this concept into a sanctuary for all life? (Note: Sanctuary for All Life is the title of Jim’s second and final book.) Do Leopold’s concepts match your own? (p. 182-183).

Chapter 11 -- Betrothal

On Page 189, Jim states,

Turning to errantry solves no problems and heals no wounds. It is no substitute for medical care, mind-altering drugs, or massage. It’s more like a rodeo cowboy’s deciding to switch from saddle broncs to bulls. You can ride out the broncs, if you’re good at it. No one rides out the bulls. The best bull riders just know how to last a little longer and hit the ground dodging.

Unlike formal religion, errantry is wanderings and openings, uncertainties and beginnings. From the time I turned Quaker, I’ve never reached a destination. I know nothing of personal salvation.

I haven’t even been cured of chronic ills — just crippled with new ones.

1. What else have you found in the pages of Goatwalking, besides “uncertainties and openings”?
2. “Turning to errantry solves no problems and helps no wounds.” Is Jim saying here that the entire premise of his book is useless?
3. Jim uses **Koheleth** (from the biblical book of Ecclesiastes) to represent a logical positivist philosophical position, which argues the proposition that

“As unfalsifiable beliefs, religious faiths are less than false; they are meaningless.” (p. 192) What does this “mean” in the 21st century? Does this mean anything to you?

4. On Page 198, Jim writes, “**Historically, the Shema** [the Jewish declaration of belief] is the form the community betrothal to the One Presence has taken,” and “beyond that, the highest wisdom is silence.” (p. 203) How does this statement, for Jim, involve a dedication of one’s life to co-creative unification? Do you feel called forth as well?
5. What is your understanding of Sancho Panza’s last advice to Don Quixote in the Postscript, “Maybe, behind some bush, we’ll find the Lady Dulcinea, disenchanted, if we’ll just go look”? (p. 200).
6. Jim says,

“I don’t say the Jewish prayers because I believe in a God who wants praise or answers petitions. I don’t say them as a personal inspiration or leadings that I feel moved to share with others. I say them to renew the covenant — to betroth myself in the exact words, insofar as I can know them, of my adopted ancestors who bequeathed the prophetic faith as an inheritance open to all peoples. I say them because the Peaceable Kingdom exists and is established only insofar as a people accepts its sole sovereignty, and in pledging this allegiance I, as a Quaker, am inseparably one with the House of Israel, much as the gospel of steadfast love proclaimed by Jesus of Nazareth is inseparable from the prophetic faith of the Hebrew Bible. I say them, too, because I’ve seen the fulfillment of the Isaian prophecy of the gathering of the covenant peoples — decisively, as a breakthrough, even if still far from being completed.” (p. 196).

There’s a lot here. What value do you find in all this talk of prophecy, a Peaceable Kingdom, and a gospel of steadfast love?

7. Jim suggests that freely-pursued errantry can lead to personal and social breakthroughs. How, from your perspective, did the adventures, the errantry he recounted and reflected on in Goatwalking point to any kind of breakthrough, for you or anyone else?

Appendix A – The Saguaro Juniper Covenant

1. In the Preamble, “attentive stillness” is described as essential to knowing the land as an “active presence.” What, other than not making noise, is entailed in this? What has been your experience with this sort of stillness?
2. Taken individually, the five items in the “bill of rights for the land,” are pretty standard tenets of conservation-minded people. Collectively, do they form a more powerful statement? If so, how? In what ways have you practiced something of this sort?
3. Jim seems to have felt that limits on land use should go beyond prohibiting permanent alterations and protecting wildlife; they should also honor the rights of the land to exist, the **evolution of the land**, and its interaction with humans as an integral part of the system. (*pp.* 207-208). How does this fit your own sense of appropriate land use?
4. What is your reaction to learning that the issue of **unleashed dogs** was among the most contentious in developing the Saguaro Juniper Covenant? (Consensus was ultimately reached to require enclosures or leashes; but the subject of unleashed city-raised children remained somewhat unresolved.) (*p.* 202).
5. The manner in which the state of Arizona handles grazing leases is Byzantine and arcane, but **Saguaro-Juniper** has still been able to exercise some degree of control over a large tract of land without having to own it. (*pp.* 201-208).
6. From your perspective, does the formulation of the covenant offer a pioneering example that can be applied in other environments and circumstances?

Appendix B -- Covenant Wisdom

This Appendix brings together several biblical reflections. The first and most extensive is Jim’s treatment of the biblical Book of Job, which in Chapter One he described as the “the **capstone** of the Greek as well as the Hebrew books of the Bible.” (*p.* 3).

1. Jim starts with the classic question: “Does God **hear the cry** of the poor and those who suffer without cause?” This is followed by the statement “Poverty, oppression, sickness, old age, death—all suffering—must be merited punishment, if the all-governing God of the psalmist is just.” (*p.* 209).

2. In Chapter 9, Jim wrote (p. 156) of learning:

To find guidance from the Bible [but to do so] I first had to learn how to wrestle and argue with it. To take it seriously enough to wrestle with it, I also had to learn to honor it, listening attentively to what its ancient voices actually say in their own way. The faithful must argue for justice, as Abraham and Job did, even against God Himself. “ He added that “The faithful must argue for justice, as Abraham and Job did, even against God Himself. It’s certainly no breach of the prophetic faith to argue with the Bible, wherever it promotes what we see as injustice. Rather, anyone who fails to argue with the Bible, wherever it promotes what we see as injustice. Rather, anyone who fails to argue with the Bible on behalf of the covenant isn’t taking the Bible seriously.”

Query: Given Jim’s extensive reliance on the Bible, is it possible for “**unbelievers**,” atheists or members of the many non-Abrahamic faiths to relate to Goatwalking? Did Jim think so? (pp. 151-152)

3. Does the Book of Job involve “arguing for justice” against God about the suffering of the innocent or the just? And is this “argument” germane in a book titled Goatwalking?

In his book, Job is a man of faultless virtue and great prosperity, who is made to lose everything and suffer horribly for no just cause. He defiantly demands to know from God why this happened to him. God finally speaks to Job but does not give a clear answer.

4. How are readers apt to benefit from grappling with this Appendix? They could look to one subsection, headed "SOME AFTERTHOUGHTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF ELIPHAZ THE TEMANITE" (p. 213); Eliphaz was one of three “false comforters” who insisted to Job that God was always just, so Job must have deserved his suffering as punishment for unspecified, invisible sins. This fits with much biblical theology, yet God rebukes Eliphaz and the other like-minded “comforters”, and praises Job’s defiance.
5. Could it be that this meditation was sparked by the intense and so often pointless suffering and death Jim Corbett witnessed during his sanctuary journeys? In those “wildlands,” Jim saw that torture, murder and starvation fell on the just and the unjust, while many of the elite perpetrators prospered. As he traveled through these killing fields, did it make real to Jim the archetypal struggle of Job to learn to live in a world where virtue dies as easily at the torturer’s hands as that of the sinner?

Another subsection (p. 218) deals with "THE MAMMALIAN WISDOM OF THE SONG OF SONGS" (The Song of Songs is a biblical anomaly: a short, intense collection of — probably secular -- passionate love lyrics).

What place for it can you find in this book? Is it only a kind of afterthought?

6. Do you have a sense of why Rabbi Akiba praised the Song of Songs so highly? (p. 218)
7. Jim works his way from the Song of Songs back to Job and his ordeal: Jim: **“One’s awareness of one’s own presence takes time seriously; mortal life’s time is always unrecoverable. Even if Job’s second three daughters had been perfect copies of the first, they wouldn’t have been the first, who were irreplaceably lost. Compare any mortal’s relation, first, to the set of innumerable copies projected by the philosopher’s speculation about eternal recurrence; and then, to Eternal Presence. It is precisely in this, my irreplaceably singular mortality (which the theory of eternal recurrence obscures), that I enter into a living relation with Eternal Presence. She is the Mate--the Sabbath Bride--who makes me whole and my mortal life a delight, even in tragedy; but the relation is reciprocal. I am Her complement. Without me, the Creation would be irreparably flawed, and the Eternal would also cease to be whole. She needs my mortality. (p. 223).**
8. Does comparing “God” to Eternal Presence” and to a “Sabbath Bride” make any sense?
9. What is the usefulness of a book that takes us from reopening a dried-up mountain spring, to caring for goat udders, to Don Quixote and Francis of Assisi, to dodging guerrillas and cops in Central America, to mashing up Catholic, Protestant and Jewish theologies with Quaker peculiarities and traditions, to challenging presidents, the Border Patrol, and the biblical God, to seeking a “peaceable kingdom” in places like the Sonora Desert and other wildlands, to reach the conclusion that, “The **highest praise is silence**”? (p. 224).



Ultimately, what is Goatwalking about?