

CREATION IN THE BOOK OF JOB

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INTRODUCTION

A. Relevance of the Subject

The Book of Job read today at face value features a blameless character befallen with misfortune after misfortune. That he was vindicated in the end, his well-being restored, features relatively little in the entire story line, considering that the narrative telling of it is only part of one of the forty-two chapters comprising the book. Since Chapters 38 to 42 are speeches by God and Chapter 28 is a description of Wisdom, about thirty-five out of forty-two feature depressing moods.

An obvious characteristic of the book is the speaking back and forth¹ between Job and his three friends, with one more joining belatedly. These speeches, always groups of verses at a time, are expressive of deep hurt/pain, hopelessness, bewilderment, varying degrees of condemnation, and supplication. Many of these expressions are couched in a language presenting violent or heart-rending pictures to the mind. Thus it is a book of strong emotions on the negative side, a common theme among wisdom writings in the Bible.

Nevertheless, as attested by various comments, the Book of Job stands as among the best literary works in the world of all time. The author of the book has been referred to as the Shakespeare of the Old Testament in the superlative extent of his vocabulary as well as in his show of "vast resources of knowledge, a superb style of forceful expression, profundity of thought, excellent command of language, noble ideals, a high standard of ethics, and a genuine love for nature."² One other feature that makes this book persistently interesting is the difficulty of the literature itself.³

That the main character Job was thus vindicated in the end and restored to his former status has made the book redeemable after all to any reader sympathizing with him. Thus it is made clear that suffering borne with faith may have its rewards in the end – but, only but, to those who endure.

Personal and vicarious suffering in the world today makes the Book of Job enduringly relevant.

¹ It is not a real dialogue at all since the overwhelming impression is that the speakers don't seem to be addressing each other, their lines of thought not following the one previous to them. See also fn. 96 on page 20 following.

² S. J. Schultz, *Message of the Old Testament*, 1986, 126. Baker and Arnold have edited concise discussions on the ongoing development on Joban studies. For instance, see fn. 5, 11, and 24 on pages following.

³ See discussion on page 5 following.

B. Scope and Limitation of the Paper

For this Special Paper in a Master of Divinity course, the references are all English translations (such as, The Living Bible, The Anchor Bible, etc., each translation being indicated accompanying the passages), except for the texts of the MT of the Bible, which is in Hebrew. The Book of Job will be described, its features examined, so that a general description of it can be presented.

Without neglecting the other four speakers, specific attention will be directed to the speeches of Job, the sufferer, for it is his suffering that has mitigated the creation of this wisdom writing.¹ Job's theological concerns will be looked at, and out of them the concern on his direct personal suffering will be focused on. As solution for this concern we shall select the creation theology that is found within the book. To do so entails the looking at the entire book for creation passages, and then the connecting of these views with Job's suffering.

The focus on creation may be legitimized by the fact that the whole set of arguments in the book is wrapped up in the end by the speeches of Yahweh, all of which point to His might shown in His creation. One emphasis of the book seems to be pointing out that the answer to Job's struggles is mainly found in the looking at God's creation.

C. Objectives of the Paper

This paper will present a general description of the Book of Job. Then it will deal summarily with creation in wisdom literature. After doing so, it will pick out passages that have to do with creation in Job. It is hoped that, by looking at these specific passages, a meaning will be reached connecting Job's suffering and Yahweh's creation.

CHAPTER II. BACKGROUND

A. General Features

In the MT² the Book of Job consists of forty-two chapters. Chapters 1 and 2, the first five verses of the 32nd chapter, and the last eleven verses of the last chapter are in prose form. The rest is poetry.

The *Encyclopædia Britannica* starts off in its description of the Book of Job by saying that it is "among the greatest masterpieces of world literature," and it is

¹ The book of Job is a Hebrew wisdom literature. See discussion on page 4.

² The Masoretic Text (MT) is the [Palestinian] Hebrew Bible, the version followed by the Protestant Reformers. The Book of Job (*Iyob*) is the second book, next to *Tehilim* (Songs of Praise, or the Psalms), in the third division of the books, called *Kethubim* (Writings). The Old Greek Version (OG), a version that existed earlier than the Septuagint, while lacking several verses in the Book of Job compared to the MT, contains "some distinct, lengthy additions..." (Bruce K. Waltke and David Diewert, *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, in, 1999, 319.) *Hagiographa* (the Holy, or Sacred, Writings) in the Septuagint (LXX) is the Greek equivalent of *Kethubim*. *Masoretic Text* refers to the 'received' text of the Hebrew OT with vowel points by the Masoretes (or Masorites), the authoritative teachers of Scriptural tradition; it was developed between the 7th and 10th cent. A.D. and is the basis of all modern critical texts of the Hebrew OT. (Richard N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, 1976, 103.) Other Greek translations of the Old Testament are by Aquila, by Symmachus, and by Theodotion. Origen in c.212 compiled the *Hexapla*, "a synopsis of the Old Testament versions": the Hebrew, its transliteration, the Septuagint, the three Greek versions mentioned above, and two more translations for the Psalms. (Henry Chadwick, EB, in, 1965, Vol.16, 1094.)

also “the finest expression of Hebrew poetic literature.”¹ Documents from ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt show that writings similar to the Book of Job were not uncommon. Their similar characteristics were their “literary structures and lament language,” and their dealing with “the meaning of suffering.”²

Job is usually labeled as a ‘wisdom’ book, together with Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Wisdom of Ben Sira and Wisdom of Solomon of the Deuterocanonicals³, and some Psalms as wisdom literature. These books’ messages deal with ideas, skills, and insights that should help or guide a person so that he develops into a responsible part of his community, and also be successful in his undertakings. “The Wisdom Literature may be called the documents of Israel’s humanism ... because its general characteristic is the recognition of man’s moral responsibility, his religious individuality and of God’s interest in the individual life.”⁴

The *New Jerome Commentary* singles out Job as the most difficult to translate among the Old Testament books.⁵ This is because there are difficulties found within the literature. There are problems in grammar, syntax, and spelling.⁶ As such one solution would be that the literature is a Semitic dialect of Edomite origin.⁷

The prose parts enclosing, or framing, the entire work are rightfully called Prologue and Epilogue. The Prologue opens the story of a very rich and religious man called Job in the land of “Uz” (location unknown)⁸ who it seemed did consistently what’s proper in relation to God. A regular practice of his is to wake up early in the morning after his grown up children’s grand birthday parties and offer to God burnt offerings for each of them, with the corresponding summons and sanctifications, lest they “have sinned and turned away from God in their hearts” (1:5b, TLB).⁹

The character called *the satan*,¹⁰ who is among the beings in heaven with God, twice pointed out in the narrative the possible reasons why Job has

¹ Ronald James Williams, EB, in, 1965, Vol. 13, 8. David J. A. Clines says of it, “... belongs with the classics of world literature, with the *Iliad*, the *Divine Comedy*, and *Paradise Lost*”. (David J. A. Clines, OCB, in, Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, eds., 1993, 368.)

² These are presented in part II.D. on page 9.

³ John Drane, *Introducing the Old Testament*, 2000, 113.

⁴ O. S. Rankin, *Israel’s Wisdom Literature: Its Bearing on Theology and History of Religion*, 1954, 3. There is further discussion on “wisdom” in parts II.D. and E. on pp. 9ff. and 13ff. of this paper.

⁵ R. Brown, et. al., eds., NJBC, 1993, 466.

⁶ “Being a masterful literary creation, the Book of Job will continue to elicit commentary and readerly engagement on all kinds of fronts and by a variety of interpreters, from those wrestling with linguistic and textual difficulties to those who live and work with the suffering poor. Job is not an easy text from any standpoint.” (Walke and Diewert, *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, in, 1999, 327). Also, there are several words that occur only here and nowhere else in the Bible. Cf. fn. 71.

⁷ This is the conclusion reached seeing that in Job 1:3 the character Job is said to be “of the East,” and Edom was a center of wisdom; of help to the translation are languages cognate to that of the book, which are Arabic, Aramaic, Hebrew, Ugaritic, and Phoenician. Moreover, since no OT Arabic transcripts are extant, nor enough of Edomite or Ammonite to compare with, then the certainty is difficult. The Moabite Stone, which is in prose, does not help much either. Though, being of the longest and oldest documents from preexilic Transjordan, it is a basis for the possibility that, likewise, the Book of Job’s language could have been easily understood by the Hebrews. (Elmer B. Smick, EBC, in, Frank E. Gaebel, gen.ed., 1988, Vol.4, 845) Y. Kaufmann notes that certain poetic parts of the book “is classical Hebrew of the best. Contacts with Ugaritic, Aramaic, and Arabic are most naturally understood as arising out of the antique literary dialect that the author employed; it is this that makes the reading of the book so difficult”. (Y. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, 1960, 338).

⁸ See page 8, fn.27.

⁹ Numbers 23:1, 14, 29 speak likewise of a primitive cult where the priesthood is not yet, and as in Job’s case it is the clan’s patriarch who performs the sacrifices. Psalm 4:4 and Ecclesiastes 10:20 likewise speak of the possibility of sinning with the mind even while lying in bed. (Marvin H. Pope, *The Anchor Bible: Job*, 1965, Vol.15, 8 and 9.)

¹⁰ An excursus on *ha satan* is on page 16.

remained faithful to God. They were because God has maintained first Job's wealth and family well-being, and then his health. On each occasion God gave way to *the satan's* requests to take away each reason. Without fail Job ends up staying faithful to God in spite of the calamities.

The Epilogue sounds like a tribute to Job's faithfulness. His reputation among his friends is vindicated. Twice the wealth he had before was restored to him, he begat children again, and he lived until the good old age of 140.

If looked at closely though, it is not only the differing literary forms of the prose Prologue and Epilogue that distinguishes them from the more substantial poetic main body, generally called the Dialogue. It seems that the Job characters, personality-wise, are different as well. The first Job is "the traditional pious and patient saint who retained his composure and maintained his integrity through all the woes inflicted on him and refused to make any accusation of injustice against Yahweh, but rather continued to bless the god who had afflicted him," whereas the second sounded off "bitter complaints and charges of injustice against God."¹ This is among the reasons that led scholars to conclude that these two parts were not composed at the same time or place.

B. The Name *Job*

Findings from the Amarna Letters, the Egyptian Execration texts, the Mari, Alalakh and Ugaritic documents show that the name Ayyāb or 'Iyyōb² is "well attested" to be a Western Semitic name at about the second millennium.³ The original form seems to be Ayyab-um, which in turn was contracted from 'Ayya-'abu(m), meaning "Where is (My) Father?" Other similar names were Ay(y)a-'ahu, "Where is (My) Brother?", and Ay(y)a-hammu/halu, meaning "Where is the Paternal/Maternal Clan?" The author of the book may have used the name for its ordinariness, or maybe a character Job of similar circumstances did exist then.⁴ Nevertheless, it is also thought that the character Job was not an Israelite at all since he has not spoken of the covenant nor of parts of the history of the Hebrew people at all.⁵

C. Authorship and Date of Composition

The range-allowance given for the dating of the work is very wide, by a minimum of about 200 years to a maximum of about 900 years.⁶ Scholars seem to agree that the storyline of the Prologue-Epilogue is a much older material, but

¹ Pope, 1965, XXI-XXII. There are other 'incongruities' mentioned as well. In the Prologue-Epilogue the 'sacrificial cultus' seemed to be an important feature, the names of God used are Yahweh and Elohim, and the mood is rather one that is "detached and impersonal attitude toward the cruel experiment." In the Dialogue no concept of the sacrifice is mentioned, God is called El, Eloah, Elohim, and Shaddai (that is, Yahweh is hardly used, just as also in Ecclesiastes), and "is highly charged with emotion and the anguish of a tortured soul." (Anderson says the same in *Understanding the Old Testament* 2nd ed., 1966, 508)

² Pope, 1965, 6.

³ E. Smick, ZPEB, in, Merrill C. Tenney, gen.ed., 1976, Vol.3, 600.

⁴ Pope, 1965, 6. Jansen puts the Hebrew name Job to mean "where is the [divine] father?" or "hated/persecuted one", or a combination of both (J. Gerald Jansen, HBD, in, Paul J. Azhtemeier, gen.ed., 1985, 492).

⁵ Smick, EBC, in, 1988, Vol.4, 861.

⁶ W. P. Brown here gives 10th to 2nd century B.C.E. though most probably in the 6th or 5th, the exilic or early postexilic period (William P. Brown, EDB, in, David Noel Freedman, ed.-in-chief, 2000, 716). Jansen gives between 7th and 4th, most probably exilic (after 586 B.C.) (Jansen, HBD, in, 1985, 492). Clines gives between 7th and 2nd, "but hardly more precisely than that." (Clines, OCB, in, 1993, 369) Therefore, "On the whole, one can make no firm conclusions about setting in terms of the date." (Roland E. Murphy, *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther*, 1981, 20).

there are varied ideas as to the development of it as finally connected to the Dialogue part.

It has been thought that the storyline about an innocent sufferer was retold to fit the entire composition, since the Prologue-Epilogue cannot seem to stand alone as a legitimate story.¹ Perhaps the author just re-expressed the central part of the old prose story into a poetic form.² Perhaps, "Either the speeches were spliced into the preexisting narrative story, or the legend of Job was added to tone down the speeches."³ Or perhaps the Dialogue was itself an old literary work, one that was very similar to the ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian parallels.⁴

The Talmudic tradition was that it was written by Moses (*Baba Bathra* 14b, seq.).⁵ However for lack of evidences we have no idea at all who the author of the book was. Most probably he was an Israelite living in the vicinity of Edom, southeast of Judah, or of the north of Arabia.⁶

D. On the Universality of the Wisdom Movement and on Parallelisms of the Book of Job with Non-Biblical Ancient Literatures⁷

The wisdom movement, as reflected in the wisdom literatures, was an international movement.¹ Those responsible for these literatures spoke on societal problems, on the human existence.

¹ Clines, OCB, in, 1993, 369-70.

² H. L. Ellison, NBD, in, I. H. Marshall et. al., consulting eds., 1996, 589.

³ Walke and Diewert, *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, in, 1999, 325. But the discussion continues on to say, "Recent literary readings of the book, however, have carefully explored the linkage between the prologue and the initial speeches, and have viewed the disparate Job figures as a single unified character. ... suggests that the frame and the core have been masterfully composed as a coherent literary work." ; the references given in the footnote were published in the 1980's, though.

⁴ Brown, EDB, in, 2000, 716. The parallels mentioned here are: *Babylonian Theodicy*, *A Man and His God*, and *I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom*.

⁵ Ellison, NBD, in, 1996, 589.

⁶ Clines, OCB, in, 1993, 370. That is, if there was only one author. Murphy (1981, 20 and 45) doesn't place much emphasis on whether the book was either by a single author or by several authors. He seems open to the idea of the book having done by several authors when he writes, "Whatever may one think of the theories of its growth (by various additions), the work is a product of the sages who found the optimism of Proverbs to be an oversimplification. The doctrine of divine retribution, which Proverbs share with the deuteronomistic theology and the general Biblical tradition, needed to be confronted with the "difficult case," and this is Job. There is no proof that it was written out of a personal experience of suffering." Likewise, it does not seem to be a contradiction to him where it sounds like he attributes the authorship to a single person. "The author of Job clearly found it to his purpose ... , the author simply cannot just leave Job suffering in his agony ... The author does accept the doctrine on the goodness of the Lord and he now expresses this concretely in the case of Job." Moreover, Job 1:1 clearly says Job lived in Uz; just where this was in connection to the book is not clear either, though the best conjecture is that "Uz might have been the name of a wide region encompassing many tribes [east] of Pal[estine] from Edom to Aram"; in Lam. 4:21 Uz was Edom (Smick, ZPEB, in, 1976, Vol.3, 603.). Probably where Job lived was "essentially a part of the desert [based on Job 1:19 and also 1:15 and 17] yet comprising farming areas (v. 14) as well as towns of considerable size (29:7)." (B. D. Napier, IDB, in, 1962, Vol.4, 741.) Job might have lived in a rural area. It is also interesting to note that Job is "the greatest of all the people of the east." The phrase *bene kedem* בְּנֵי כֶּדֶם means "the children of the east country." Job 1:3 speaks of Job being the "greatest of all the people of the east." They may be identified as the Arabian-Edomite tribes to the southeast of the Dead Sea. (Samuel Terrien, contributor, IB, in, George Arthur Buttrick, commentary ed., 1958, Vol.3, 49). They may also be the nomadic tribes of the Syrian desert including Arameans and Kedar associated with Midian and Amalek, and were noted for their wisdom. Job may have been one of them. (Madeleine S. Miller and J. Lane Miller, HBD, 1961, 147) A similar phrase is found in Matthew 2:1, "wise men from the East" (οἱ σοφοὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀνατολῆς) or the Magi, which Herodotus thought were originally Medians who became priests under the Persian empire. (J. Stafford Wright, NIDNTT, in, 1986, Vol.2, 557) They were also thought to be "part of a stream of wisdom-seekers in the ancient Near East." (Miller and Miller, HBD, 1961, 819) Another view to take note of is that what was called Edom was later called Uz, which was probably in what is now Iraq. (William Saffire, *The First Dissident: The Book of Job in Today's Politics*, 1992, 33) Summarily, therefore, the phrase "of the East" connotes people who valued wisdom, whether of those near Israel or as far away as present-day Iran or Iraq.

⁷ The page references are of the 1969 edition of the ANET. Also, Hartley in NICOT, 1988, Vol.18, as well as Pope in *The Anchor Bible*, 1965, Vol. 15, talk lengthily of these parallels.

These discussions Anderson² categorizes into two: 1. "Practical advice to the young on how they may attain a successful and good life."; 2. "Probing into the depths of man's anguish about the meaning of life, often in a skeptical mood."

Rankin uses the term *humanism* for this focus on the human. He speaks on the characteristic of this literature type, "In both literatures (Israelite and Egyptian) there is the same ideal of moderation and prudence, the same utilitarian conception and quest of well-being, the same faith in divine justice and appeal to human justice. The pedagogical methods and respect for tradition are the same. There are the same literary forms and type rhetoric – often indeed the same formulae."³

Anderson adds that those who actively led this way of looking at the human condition, the sages, presented discussions abstracted from particular exclusive settings, such as, in the case of Israel, "Israel's election, the Day of Yahweh, the covenant and the Law, the priesthood and the Temple, prophecy and the messianic hope."⁴ As such the sage did not seem to be limited by time and culture, and that his discussions would apply to almost anyone anywhere.

Kaiser mentions shortly on the affinities between the wisdom literatures of Israel with those of the Ancient Near East, particularly of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Canaan.⁵ Von Rad suggests that the wisdom movement in Israel began to be active at about the end of the monarchy. The movement came about with the consciousness of a possible recognition that the individual can be considered apart from the sense of his being a member of the cultic community. Thus, the individual now begins to raise questions that have not before been considered in the teaching tradition about God, specifically, questions that seemed to be against God.⁶

Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament is the name of the monograph containing an "annotated selection of the historical and literary materials in seven languages from the Near East during more than two millennia."⁷ These are Egyptian, Sumerian, Akkadian, Hittite, Ugaritic, Mesopotamian, of Asia Minor, Babylonian, Assyrian, Palestinian, Canaanite, and Aramaic texts. These extra-Biblical materials are therefore of great help in studies on the Old Testament.

References refer to at least five literary works from the ancient world that have a high degree of similarity with the Book of Job. They are said to be parallels in content and style.

Said to be the "earliest treatment of the problem of suffering in Mesopotamia,"⁸ *A Sumerian Variation of the "Job" Motif* (ANET 589–591) or *The First Job*,⁹ is composed of parts of a work "having greater affinities with Job than any other Mesopotamian document previously known."¹⁰ Like the Book of Job it tells of a righteous man who became sick and suffered. He was restored after he confessed to his god that all men are sinners. ANET describes it as a *poetic*

¹ Anderson, 1966, 488; Otto Kaiser, *Introduction to the Old Testament: A Presentation of Its Results and Problems*, 1975, 367; Rankin, 1954, 8.

² Anderson, 1966, 488.

³ Rankin, 1954, 8.

⁴ Anderson, 1966, 490.

⁵ Kaiser, 1975, 370–371.

⁶ Gerhard Von Rad, *Wisdom In Israel*, 1972, 206 ff.

⁷ See ANET, 1969, bookjacket.

⁸ Pope, 1965, LV.

⁹ Smick, EBC, in, 1988, Vol.4, 843.

¹⁰ Pope, 1965, LIII.

essay “for the purpose of prescribing the proper attitude and conduct for a victim of cruel and seemingly undeserved misfortune.” The poem’s date of composition can be placed at 2nd millennium B.C. “after the overthrow of the Sumerian 3rd dynasty of Ur.”¹

Composed at about the same time also, the best-known parallel to *Job* is a thanksgiving hymn by a righteous man who, after his god Marduk as he thought allowed his suffering, has likewise allowed his healing. It is known by the names *Poem of the Righteous Sufferer*,² *The Babylonian Job*,³ and *I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom*⁴ (ANET 596–600).

*The Babylonian Theodicy*⁵ (ANET 601–604), also called *The Babylonian Ecclesiastes*,⁶ is an acrostic poem⁷ of almost 300 lines and composed slightly later than *The Babylonian Job*.⁸ It is a dialogue between a sufferer and a friend about human suffering and divine justice.⁹ It does not have any conclusion at all, no solution to the issue, no account of what finally happened to the sufferer. The 1955 edition of the ANET has the title *A Dialogue About Human Misery* (438–440) for it.

*A Dispute Over Suicide*¹⁰ is an Egyptian didactic tale, which, like the Book of Job, begins and ends with prose passages. Also, the middle part is “a poetic soliloquy by the wretched man.”¹¹ The man argues with his soul because he is already tired of living. He laments that, “times . . . are so bad that there is no more justice or love.”¹²

*The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant*¹³, also called *The Protests of the Eloquent Peasant*¹⁴, has a prologue and an epilogue that enclose “nine semipoetic appeals for justice on the part of the eloquent peasant.”¹⁵ It concerns social justice, where a peasant complains to a certain Chief Steward and not to the gods. He complains of maltreatment and robbery by a government official. Like Job, he would rather die than agree to injustice. He gets vindicated in the end.¹⁶

E. On the Wisdom in Israel and on the Book’s Uniqueness

The wisdom that is of Israel was based on, and addressed, to daily living. Its subject is right behavior, its concern is with the place of man in the divine ordering of the world.¹⁷ “It introduced the topic of the worth of life and emphasized the need of man’s interest in his own self, of man’s regard for man and the belief in

¹ Williams, EB, in, 1965, Vol. 13, 10.

² Williams, EB, in, 1965, Vol. 13, 10; Pope, 1965, LV.

³ Pope, 1965, LVI.

⁴ Brown, EDB, in, 2000, 717; Smick, EBC, in, 1988, Vol.4, 843; Pope, 1965, LV.

⁵ Brown, EDB, in, 2000, 716.

⁶ Pope, 1965, LIX.

⁷ A poem whose structure is guided by alphabetic considerations. Each unit begins with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. e.g., Psalm 119 (Murphy, 1981, 72)

⁸ Williams, EB, in, 1965, Vol.13, 10.

⁹ Pope, 1965, LIX.

¹⁰ ANET, 1969, 405.

¹¹ Pope, 1965, LII.

¹² Smick, EBC, in, 1988, Vol.4, 844.

¹³ Pope, 1965, LII.

¹⁴ ANET, 1969, 407.

¹⁵ Pope, 1965, LII.

¹⁶ Pope, 1965, LIII.

¹⁷ The phrases are from Kaiser, 1975, 368.

God's interest in the individual and in mankind."¹ It is a search for knowledge or the "rule" that is "supported by general evidence which can be controlled and confirmed by the mind."² And so, it was understood that though much can be known, much also remains unknown. The recognition of both is essential to acquiring wisdom.

Kaiser writes³ that beginning with the Davidic reign civil servants were needed. This was as well true with the Ancient Near East monarchies. These civil servants were trained by the schools of the scribes associated with either the temple or the court. As such the original secular perspectives of the "Oriental" wisdom have become to be considered with a religious Hebrew motive, while at the same time turning out to be applicable to all peoples regardless of race or nation.⁴

All in all, Rankin summarizes these to be the distinct features of the Hebrew wisdom teaching: "the individualism which is the inspiration of social justice and equity, the idea of reward and of lending to God as the motive of good or social conduct, and above all the application of the c r e a t i o n - i d e a to enforce the notion of the obligation man owes to his fellow-creatures."⁵

Furthermore, for Israel, this wisdom was like the priest's "torah" and the prophet's "word," given to the wise man by Yahweh.⁶ It is not something that is reached by a sort of an individual's psychological introspection. For instance, Solomon, the wise man per se of the Old Testament, asked God for a *bel* עִשׂוּר בֵּל (shomea), a *listening heart* (1Kings 3:9). Therefore God gave him a *leb hakem* וְלֵב חָכָם (leb hakem we-nabon), a *wise and discerning heart* (1Kings 3:12). The *listening heart* and the *wise heart* are synonymous. The wise of heart follows the commandments (Prov. 10:8; Eccles. 8:5).⁷

The heart corresponds to "the entire inner life of a person," referring to the center of human psychical and spiritual life,⁸ so that in the RSV לֵב שָׂמַח is rendered as *understanding mind*. The understanding mind "was not the authoritative reason ... of modern consciousness, but ... a feeling for the truth which emanates from the world and addresses man."⁹

The uniqueness of the book of Job is due to many reasons. It is said to be unique among the literatures of the world¹⁰ in the way it deals with suffering and divine justice.¹¹ Its theological and philosophical dealing with the matter is intense as well as pity provoking,¹² and none exists of the same kind from its era in history.¹³

It is not easy reading at all especially that no conclusions are given in the end. As such, the book can be interpreted in many ways.¹⁴

¹ Rankin, 1954, 9.

² Von Rad, 1972, 289.

³ Kaiser, 1975, 371.

⁴ Rankin, 1954, 9 and 11.

⁵ Rankin, 1954, 14.

⁶ Anderson, 1966, 493.

⁷ Alex Luc, NIDOTTE, in, 1996, Vol. 2, 753.

⁸ Luc, NIDOTTE, in, 1996, Vol. 2, 749.

⁹ Von Rad, 1972, 296-297. Also, speaking of the "good man" who heeds the creation in page 78 of the same work, "The good man is the one who knows about the constructive quality of good (and the destructive quality of evil) and who submits to this pattern which can be discerned in the world."

¹⁰ Smick, EBC, in, 1988, Vol. 4, 843-4.

¹¹ This is the concern of theodicy, which deals with God's goodness and sovereignty against the reality of evil.

¹² Brown, EDB, in, 2000, 716.

¹³ Smick, EBC, in, 1988, Vol. 4, 843-4.

¹⁴ Walkke and Diewert, *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, in, 1999, 327. Also Clines, OCB, 1993, 368.

The book is *sui generis* as well in biblical and Hebrew literature¹ because of its difficult language that has many *hapax legomena*.² It has been suggested that perhaps scribes and translators, as in the case of the earlier LXX form where 17–25% of the Hebrew was missing, found that this made their work difficult.³ Parallel to this situation is the awkward reading of Chapter 27 where verses 7 to 23 do not seem to follow verses 2 to 6. Similar puzzling juxtaposition of ideas can be found starting Chapter 24, which gives rise to the suspicion of deletions, interpolations, or rearrangements.⁴ Likewise looking at the larger area that is Chapters 21–31 it can be seen that it lacks Zophar's third speech, Bildad's is too short, and some of Job's do not harmonize with the sense flow of his previous speeches. Perhaps there has been some error in the editing, after all.⁵ It could also be that attempts were made at resolving the issues involved by rearranging the units. Nevertheless, it is best to deal with the book as we have it now in the MT.⁶

On the Subjects of *the Satan* in the Old Testament and of *the Heavenly Council* (An Excursus)

The term שָׂטָן (*satan*) appears with the article הַ (*ha*, the) always in the Book of Job. All renderings, basically שָׂטָן, are found within Chapters 1 and 2 only. In here, the character *satan* is a member of "God's council," or the "sons of God." Chapters 1 and 2, commonly called the Prologue of the book, is in prose form and opens the setting for the entire book. Job 1:6-12 and 2:1-7 present two settings where Yahweh and *the satan* converse having to do with the character Job. *The satan* is presented as one who has just come "from roaming through the earth and going to and fro in it." (verses 1:7 and 2:2) Twice in these narratives he points out to Yahweh the possible reasons why Job has remained faithful. First, that God has blessed Job with abundant possessions; and second, that God has blessed Job with good health. These statements by *the satan* are grounds for "suspicion" of the foundation of Job's faith. In this manner *the satan* is one who opposes Job. He accuses Job of a faith based on an abundance of possessions and health.

In Zech. 3:1 וְהָשָׁטָן (*and-the-satan*) is "standing at his right side," לְשֹׂטֵן (*to-accuse-him*). In Ps. 109:6) אֲשֹׁטֵן (*and accuser*) is almost always rendered as "(an) accuser" in the English translations; in here he is also one who "stand[s] at his right hand." This "standing at the right side" is a court setting taken up by the "accuser."⁷ Thus it seems fitting that *the satan* of the Book of Job belongs to a council, and that among its members there is one who has this function, a sort of a "public prosecutor."⁸

¹ That is, unique. Ellison, NBD, 1996, 589.

² *Hapax legomena* are words or terms occurring only once in the Bible; there are about 110 of these. See also fn. 11 on page 5.

³ Waltke and Diewert, *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, in, 1999, 319; Ellison, NBD, 1996, 589.

⁴ Smick, EBC, in, 1988, Vol. 4, 846.

⁵ Clines, OCB, 1993, 370.

⁶ C. Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books*, Revised and Expanded, 1988, 75.

⁷ Kenneth L. Barker, EBC, in, 1988, Vol.7, 623; Jeffrey B. Gibson, EDB, in, 2000, 1169; Von Rad, TDNT, in, 1964, Vol. 2, 73; Bruce Baloiian, NIDOTTE, in, 1996, Vol. 3, 1231.

⁸ Verlyn D. Verbrugge, ed., NIDNTT *Abridged ed.*, 2000, 133.

In the Old Testament *the satan* is Yahweh's agent, carrying out Yahweh's wishes. Thus by himself he has no authority at all.¹ Gradually, probably due to the influence of the dualism of Persian Zoroastrianism, *the satan* came to be identified as "the evil one" who is against God and God's people.²

Since *the satan* of Job 1 and 2 is only a member of the "sons of God," then basically any member of the "sons of God" can be *the satan*. The change from the common noun *the satan* to the proper name *Satan* may be seen in 1Chr. 21:1, where the article *ha* is not found with the term anymore.³

In the New Testament it is said in Revelation 12:10 that *Satan* fell from heaven. This implies that he has become a non-member of the "sons of God," and hence his function as accuser before Yahweh has ceased.

The אֱלֹהִים יְנַבְּרִים (*bene ha elohim*; sons of God) to which *the satan* of Job 1 and 2 belongs is suggested to be God's angels.⁴ These angels have to account to God for their activities.⁵ This idea is thought to have come from Jewish tradition, being connected eventually to the idea of fallen angels,⁶ to which the being called *Satan* is one of. Older is the idea of the heavenly king surrounded by his servants.

Synonymous to *bene elohim* is *bene ha elohim* of Genesis 6:2. Scholars have thought these to be either "divine beings," heroes, descendants of Seth, or gods. In Psalm 29:1 the rendition is *bene elim* (sons of the gods), and is thought to be of polytheistic origins.⁷ There is also *bene elyon* of Psalm 82:6 (sons of the Most High) who are neither human rulers nor judges. They are believed to be the gods of other nations.⁸ It may have been that differing interpretations were by the redactors in the course on translation, as for instance to the LXX.⁹

It is remarkable that the name YHWH is not used in these phrases.¹⁰ Perhaps because the idea of these phrases is of Near Eastern origin, speaking of an assembly of gods, which is polytheistic. YHWH as God is of Israelite origin, which eventually becomes strictly monotheistic.¹¹

F. The Book's Literary Structure and Outline

As was indicated, the Book of Job is mostly poetry and is enclosed by prose passages. The *Expositor's Bible Commentary*¹² counts off the chapters and the verses, puts them into classifications, and presents them in a manner as to show symmetry within the entire book, from beginning to end.

There is a Prologue (Chs. 1–2) counterbalanced by an Epilogue (Ch. 42:7–17). Job has an opening Lament (Ch. 3) counterbalanced by his Closing

¹ e.g., see in Gibson, EDB, in, 2000, 1170; also in NIDNTT *Abridged ed.*, 2000, 133.

² Von Rad, TDNT, in, 1964, Vol. 2, 75; NIDNTT *Abridged ed.*, 2000, 133.

³ Von Rad, TDNT, in, 1964, Vol. 2, 74; compare with Barker, EBC, in, 1988, Vol.7, 623.

⁴ Chrys C. Caragounis, NIDOTTE, in, 1996, Vol. 1. 676; H. Haag, TDOT, in, 1977, Vol. 2, 158 and 159.

⁵ Haag, TDOT, in, 1977, Vol. 2, 159.

⁶ Haag, TDOT, in, 1977, Vol. 2, 158.

⁷ Caragounis, NIDOTTE, in, 1996, Vol. 1. 676; Haag, TDOT, in, 1977, Vol. 2, 158.

⁸ Haag, TDOT, in, 1977, Vol. 2, 158.

⁹ Haag, TDOT, in, 1977, Vol. 2, 158.

¹⁰ Haag, TDOT, in, 1977, Vol. 2, 157.

¹¹ Various discussions consider Israel's faith to be originally monolatrous. *Monolatry* is almost the same as *henotheism*, which is "a momentary veneration of only one deity during a crisis, or a more persistent worship of one god without denying the existence of others." (Bill T. Arnold, *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, in, 1999, 405) For instance, H.W.F. Saggs thinks, "What began as monolatry in both Sumerian city-states and Israel developed on one side into polytheism and on the other into monotheism." (Arnold, *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, in, 1999, 408)

¹² Smick, EBC, in, 1988, Vol.4, 848.

Contrition (40:3–5; 42:1–6). The group of three cycles of Dialogues (Chs. 4–14; 15–21; and 22–27) is counterbalanced by the group of three series of Monologues (Chs. 29–31; 32–37; 38–42). The central mark is the Interlude on Wisdom (Ch. 28).

Each Dialogue cycle consists of three speeches by Job and one for each of the friends Eliphaz, Zophar, and Bildad. Job speaks after each friend does, with the exception that on the last cycle Bildad does not speak anymore.

The Monologues are, in order, by Job, Elihu, and God. God's speeches are shortly interrupted twice by responses from Job. Elihu is the fourth "friend" who comes in late and addresses his speeches not only to Job but also to the three friends who have finished speaking as well.

According to C. Westermann, the first three distinctive divisions are Prologue (Chapters 1 and 2), Job's Opening Lament (Chapter 3), and the Dialogues (Chapters 4 to 27). This implies that the dialogues are started off by the friends. Chapter 28, which is solely on Wisdom, comes next serving as a separator from the other three distinctive divisions. These are the Monologues (Chapters 29 to 41, except 40:1–5), Job's Closing Contrition (42:1–6), and the Epilogue (42:1–17).¹

As also mentioned earlier, the only prose parts are the Prologue, which is Chapters 1 and 2; the Epilogue, which is 42:7-17; and the introduction to the Elihu speeches in 32:1-5. According to Von Rad it was probably centuries after the prose existed when the poetic dialogues were inserted.² It is important that they be understood as conversations, however heated, and not as contentious debates. Consequently, as with friends, there is an exchange of complaints and advises.³

The way these conversational forms of speech were put, where each monologue is recognizable as a unit, was something new and unique to Israel's literary genre.⁴ Within each unit are abrupt "changes of thought,"⁵ something problematic for psychology but authentic to Job's setting. The friends were instruments in putting forth traditional concepts.⁶ That's why their speeches seem to be just rambling off and not strongly connected to respective preceding arguments.⁷

So, the "debate" is actually on "concepts, values, and meanings" owned by the whole community, where it was considered dangerous to be individualistic. The offensive questioning of God is considered "being resentful."

Von Rad likewise looks at the cycle of speeches as being started off by each of the three friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, with Job replying after each. The Dialogue has three of these cycles, except that in the last Zophar is not heard of anymore. The monologue of the fourth friend Elihu (32–37) is a later addition, an inserted transitory portion between Job's challenges to God and

¹ Claus Westermann, *The Structure of the Book of Job: A Form-Critical Analysis*, 1977, 6.

² See also earlier at II.C. on page 7.

³ "Pastoral words of comfort" were indeed expected, and these as well as the complaints "take on a very passionate form". (Von Rad, 1972, 209)

⁴ Although the style and the subject matter of the psalms of lament are used, what is new is "from the whole" there is seen "a shift of certain emphasis or of a radicalization of traditional forms of speech, especially, however, by means of the skilful manner of composition". (Von Rad, 1972, 209)

⁵ So that the result is not a "spiritual biography". (Von Rad, 1972, 209)

⁶ And, "Even Job is deeply rooted in the thought-forms of his day". (Von Rad, 1972, 210)

⁷ "As they listen to each other, both partners in the dialogue scarcely have more than very loose connections with individual, characteristic hypotheses... [they] move forward only in a circular fashion." (Von Rad, 1972, 210) See also fn.1 on page 1 earlier.

God's answer (38 ff.). On the issue of justice and injustice, there is no systematized argument. The speakers are heard, yet in the end a conclusion is lacking. The fact that Job answers to each person's speech provides a focus for the entire literature.

Westermann considers that insofar as the book has been traditionally classified as wisdom literature, this has affected the exegesis of it. The uniqueness of the book's literary form, however, should not be significant for exegesis, and indeed no disputation has arisen from it. What is important, though, is the recognition that the book deals with a "problem," albeit what exactly the problem is has not been agreed on unanimously. In this connection, the verbalization of this problem on suffering, called the lament, "dominates the book."¹

The whole book, Westermann further explains, is actually a drama, and not just a disputation or a dialogue. It is a drama in the sense that it depicts a narrative that is presented into the framework of a narrative in this manner: a lament is followed by a supposedly consolation, which actually develops into a disputation that lacks a resolution; thereby the lament resumes, up to a summoning of God, who answers, and which finally ends with Job's submission to God.²

R. E. Murphy, however, counters that "dramatization of a lament" is not a literary genre after all.³ He even comments that the more appropriate term is *complaint*, rather than *lament*. Indicated with their genres and subgenres, this is how Murphy looks at the structure of the Book of Job:⁴

- I. Prologue 1:1–2:13 Story
- II. Job's Soliloquy 3:1–26 Complaint. 3:3–10 is a curse

- III. Cycle of Speeches
 - A. First Cycle
 - Eliphaz 4:1–5:27 Disputation speech.
4:2 is a rhetorical question;
4:17 is a wisdom saying;
5:8–13 is a hymn;
5:27 is a summary-appraisal.
 - Job 6:1–7:21 Disputation speech.
 - Bildad 8:1–22 Disputation speech.
8:8–13 is an appeal to ancient tradition;
8:11 is a saying;
8:13 is a summary appraisal
 - Job 9:1–10:22 Disputation speech.
9:5–10 is a hymn;
9:29–31 is an avowal of innocence;
9:25–10:22 are complaints; 10:3–12 is a lament
 - Zophar 11:1–20 Disputation speech.
 - Job 12:1–14:22 Predominantly complaint.
13:15 is an avowal of innocence; 14:1–22 is a lament

¹ Westermann, 1977, 2.

² Westermann, 1977, 6.

³ Murphy, 1981, 17.

⁴ Murphy, 1981, 15-45. These genres and subgenres are defined in the book's glossary.

B. Second Cycle

Eliphaz	15:1–35 Disputation speech. 15:17ff. is an appeal to ancient tradition
Job	16:1–17:16 Disputation speech
Bildad	18:1–21 Disputation speech
Job	19:1–29 Disputation speech. 19:28–29 is a warning
Zophar	20:1–29 Disputation speech. 20:4–29 is an appeal to ancient tradition; 20:29 is a summary-appraisal
Job	21:1–34 Accusations; Warning.

C. Third Cycle

Eliphaz	22:1–30 Threat; Instruction. 22:15–16 is a warning, a wisdom saying transformed into question form
Job	23:1–24:25 Disputation speech. 23:10–12 is an avowal of innocence; 24:1–17 is a complaint
Bildad	25:1–6 Hymn; Rhetorical question.
Job	26:1–14 Disputation speech. 26:5–14 is a hymn
Job	27:1–23 Disputation speech. 27:2–4 is an oath

IV. Wisdom Poem 28:1–28 Genre elements from wisdom teaching.

V. Job's Soliloquy 29:1–31:37 Soliloquy.
30 is a complaint;
31 is purificatory oath

VI. Speeches of Elihu 32:1–37:24 Disputation.
34:31–37 is a complaint

VII. The Confrontation Between the Lord and Job
38:1–42:6 Disputation speech.

VIII. Epilogue 42:7–16 Narrative frame.

Thus, like Westermann and Von Rad, he also looks at the dialogues as being started off by the friends and followed by Job's replies. The literature is predominantly of disputation speeches that are in turn containing subgenres.¹

On the other hand, Pope starts the Dialogue with Job's first speech, Chapter 3. He divides the book into five parts: Prologue (Chs. 1–2); Dialogue or Symposium (Chs. 3–31); The Elihu Speeches (Chs. 32–37); Theophany (Chs. 38–42:6); and Epilogue (42:7–17).² In fact, Murphy also mentions that Fohrer, just

¹ A disputation speech is an *argument between two or more parties, in which differing points of view are held. The disputation is an overarching genre that can designate the discussions of wise men (cf. Job), or parties in court, or prophet and people (cf. Jer.2:23-28). In the disputation itself, a vast array of subgenres can be employed, drawn from judicial practice, worship, the world of wisdom, etc.* (Murphy, 1981, 175.)

² Pope, 1965, XII–XIV.

like Pope, lets Job speak first. That is, in contrast, Westermann, Richter, and Dhorme separates Chapter 3 and lets Eliphaz, the first friend-speaker, speak first.¹

Murphy further explains that “the text has been scrambled in Chs. 24–27... It is customary to divide the speeches of Job and the friends into three cycles (3/4–14; 15–21; 22–27), but since the third cycle is defective, not much is to be gained by this.” Therefore, to arrange the structure as to make either of Job and Eliphaz speak first does not disrupt the coherence of the book’s sense.² Whereas, reading the speeches without regard to division, Job’s are the starters and Elihu’s monologue serves as reply for Job’s last speech. The discourses seem to go like this:

- 1a1. Job curses his birth date.
- 1a2. Eliphaz says the innocent don’t suffer, though man has the propensity to sin. Job therefore must appeal to God who disciplines.
- 1b1. Job says he wishes to die, and he asks God to leave him alone.
- 1b2. Bildad declares that God is just.
- 1c1. Job agrees with Bildad, but then wonders how can man be blameless before God.
- 1c2. Zophar says though God is mysterious, it is still best to believe in what is already known.
- 2a1. Job mocks his friends. He says God does what He wills. Nevertheless, he wants to speak with God despite thinking that it must be preposterous for God to bother with man at all since he’s inconsequential anyway. Yet, Job has hope.
- 2a2. Eliphaz repeats his earlier idea, adding that Job’s words condemn him.
- 2b1. Job does not like his friends’ answers, and he seeks other answers.
- 2b2. Bildad challenges Job, asking why he thinks they’re stupid. He says Job is wicked.
- 2c1. Job says God has wronged him, and he asks for pity.
- 2c2. Zophar speaks of the fate of the wicked, and also repeats what he said earlier.
- 3a1. Job is still asking for answers.
- 3a2. Eliphaz again says what he has already said.
- 3b1. Job looks for God, and for justice.
- 3b2. Bildad almost repeats Eliphaz’s idea.
- 3c1. Job is now exasperated with his friends.
- 3c2. Elihu speaks once and for all; he says God speaks in various ways and does no wrong. He points out to Job that he has been rebellious, saying that God is unjust. He repeats the idea that it is the wicked who suffers, not the good.

CHAPTER III. INTERPRETATIONS OF THE BOOK OF JOB

For Von Rad the book has a prose narrative that, though divided into two parts with each placed at the beginning and at the end of the work, presents a cohesive idea. It speaks of a pious and prosperous man who was robbed of everything, whose children died, and who became sick. Nevertheless he remained faithful to God, accepting the bad now just as he had accepted the

¹ Murphy, 1981, 16.

² Murphy, 1981, 16.

good before.¹ This was due to one in the heavenly council² presenting to God the possibility that Job's piety was due to the security he felt with his wealth. So the calamities were allowed but to no avail, though Job had no idea about the reasons for the disasters. The accuser was wrong all throughout the two tests, and Job's prosperity was restored to him, afterward dying at a good old age amidst children and grandchildren.

This narrative was to teach³ that piety such as Job's exists. This is with the assumption that Job must not have known that God, even before he survived the difficulties, had already made sure to the accuser of Job's faithfulness. There are no deep probings in here, none that is new. Von Rad thinks it was not at all surprising that Job in the narrative, as was the ideal situation for a pious man, did not derail God for his sufferings despite his innocence. This was the ideal situation⁴ for a pious man, and the readers knew he may have to suffer even.

Job as well as his friends understands that his suffering is from Yahweh.⁵ This is the starting assumption of the entire set of speeches. The three friends follow ideas on the same theological line. They differ only in the suggestions on what Job should do next: one theoretically, another practically. They made it clear that no one, not even the angels, is sinless and pure before God. Furthermore, God punishes the sinner. Therefore Job must admit his sins since it is impossible for God to be unjust. He must accept this experience as punishment for them. What he must do, as they urged him, is to perform a sacral confession.⁶ This should result to God blessing him once again. This belief is echoed in the "Deuteronomistic prayer offered by Solomon at the dedication of the Temple (1Kings 8),⁷ though this concerned Israel as a community, and not individual personalities.⁸

Job, on the other hand, insists on his integrity⁹ before God and he demands an audience with God. Since God is his creator then surely God will have compassion on him. But in Job's point of view, as evidenced by his complaints and laments, it seems that God was unwilling to restore their relationship.

¹ Job's two confessions of faith are: If God gave, then He can take away (1:21); and that good as well as evil must be accepted from Him (2:10).

² That is, the *satan* of the *heavenly council* dealt with in the excursus, II. B. See above p. 16.

³ That is, it is a didactic narrative, a "highly cultivated literary prose". (Von Rad, 1972, 208)

⁴ So that in the narrative there is no "inner struggle" at all, no "theological tension". (Von Rad, 1972, 208)

⁵ That is, it is something not subjected to discussion anymore. (Von Rad, 1972, 211)

⁶ He must "admit that God is just" (Von Rad, 1972, 212.; Also, fn. 31 here indicates these passages: Job 5:8f.; 8:20f.; 11:13-15; 22:21-30; 36:8-11.)

⁷ This prayer follows a fixed pattern, and it has three elements. First is when to repent: your people Israel are defeated before the enemy because they have sinned against you (v.33); heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you (v.35); if they sin against you – for there is no man who does not sin – and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy (v.46). Second is how the repentance is done: if they turn again to you and praise your name (v.33); if they pray toward this place and praise your name (v.35); if they lay it to heart and repent of their sin (v.47). Third is of the forgiveness that has been prayed for: then hear in heaven and forgive their sin (v.34); then hear in heaven their prayer and their supplication (v.45).

⁸ (Reconstructing Von Rad's, 1972, sentences in page 196) The whole prophetic proclamation of disaster rests upon the awareness that disaster would return to the person who had committed it. The prophets extend this perception to the lives of the nations that, in their opinion, would have to perish because of their own guilt and pride. The insight into the act-consequence relationship [is behind Achan's public stoning when it was found that he disobeyed orders and took for himself battle spoils (Joshua 7:6ff.)]. Before this punishment was done to him, Achan said a 'judgment doxology', which is a confession of sin, as recorded in Joshua 7:19ff.]

⁹ Von Rad uses the word 'righteousness'. "The noun *תומא* *tummâ* is used exclusively in the book of Job (except for Prov.11:3) and describes the character and quality of a life that is guided by the fear of the Lord and by the ethical principles of uprightness, honesty, and loyalty; namely, integrity (Job 2:3, 9; 27:5), the results of which are perfection, peace and ultimate happiness." J. P. J. Olivier, NIDOTTE, in, 1996, Vol.4, 308.)

The friends were angry with Job for his reactions; Job's expressions vacillate between the extremes of submission and offense. His friends cannot provide answers because they knew of the "old" Yahweh and only he knows of this particular Yahweh now, a Yahweh whose "anger" is directed to an individual and not to a community. This is supposed to be the Yahweh who defends the downtrodden. It's as if Yahweh has shifted to one who was not known before, so that this Yahweh poses threat and elicits fear.

The friends could not understand Job. His experience is outside their scope of knowledge and experience.¹ The effect is that they cannot receive what he is saying, and they cannot react as well. The inadequacy of the responses to Job is limited by the literary form itself that the poet used. This was also because at the time of composition the issue presented by Job has not been discussed properly by the intellectuals yet.

Yahweh condescends and answers Job lengthily, which consisted mainly of counter-questions pointing to God's power reflected in creation.² He rejects Job while at the same time not addressing the issue on justice. God's answers can be put into two statements: that Job questions God's ability to plan out everything in his creation, as well as God's prerogative at doing anything at all. In Job's questioning and God's responding came out the affirmation that, indeed, the two statements above are valid and are important considerations. They are substitute enough answers for Job's query on justice, which went unanswered until the end.

While for others it is something else, suffering still is the obvious subject of the literature for many. With suffering as the subject, there are differing citations as to the object. In the sixth century A.D. Gregory stressed on "the importance of suffering as an opportunity for spiritual ascent," looking at the Book of Job from the consideration of morality and employing allegory in the reading of it.³ On the same thread of thought, it can be said that through suffering "human integrity is tested and refashioned, and moral vision is reshaped and broadened."⁴ Likewise, as Job's experience allowed him to experience first fear then hatred then trust, a "man of faith" should undergo such "pilgrimage."⁵

It can be said that God has a hidden purpose in letting people suffer, in this instance Job.⁶ So, yes, the innocent sufferer does exist.⁷ Job also shows two ways that this suffering can be handled. Either there is calm acceptance of the perplexing situation, or there is hostile questioning towards God. Still, as Job's friends argue, suffering most probably is the consequence of sin, a punishment.⁸

There are those that would argue that the book's focus is neither pain nor suffering, but a questioning of a theological world-picture that does not seem to be applicable anymore.⁹ Here the question of God's justice in the face of evil seemingly triumphant looms big.¹⁰ This is the issue on theodicy.¹ Consequently,

¹ Though parts of their answers to him are found in God's answers as well (the divine speech). Von Rad's fn. 47 (Von Rad, 1972, 225) enumerates these: Job 11:7-9; 36:22-30; 37:2-16.

² In Von Rad's fn. 43 (Von Rad, 1972, 223) it is pointed out that since the divine speech is in two parts, each with an opening passage (v.38:1 and v.40: 6), and that since Job's submission is in two forms (40:3-5) and (42:1-6), then it was certain that it underwent 'secondary expansion'.

³ Walke and Diewert, *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, in, 1999, 322. This is Calvin's view.

⁴ Brown, EDB, in, 2000, 710.

⁵ Pope, 1965, LXXVII.

⁶ Williams, EB, in, 1965, Vol.13, 10.

⁷ Clines, OCB, in, 1993, 369. Also Bullock, 1988, 69.

⁸ Clines, OCB, 1993, 369.

⁹ Ellison, NBD, in, 1996, 590.

¹⁰ Bullock, 1988, 69.

the “traditional theory of retribution,” the one that the friends espouse, has been found out to be not absolute. God, after all, is free to do whatever He wants.² In spite of this hiddenness of God, when He cannot be understood at all, the book clearly shows that He can be trusted still³, is still worth serving. As such, the book is a “probing into the character of God”⁴.

Again according to Von Rad, the friends’ actuation towards Job and towards Job’s topic of lamentation was not something new. They responded to him according to what has been generally experienced. What was highly unusual was Job’s expressed belief that Yahweh, whom he thought to be just, was being a violent personal enemy to him when he did nothing to deserve it. This way of thinking was not heard of in Israel before, this new way of thinking about God that no new pattern can fit into. Hence, Job’s friends’ speeches did not seem to have an effect on him.

It is important to know how the poet intended for the reader to understand the sense of the dialogues and the speeches, especially on justice. Scholars have no unanimous opinion on this.⁵ Nevertheless, it seems that the author intended to point out the limitations to each way of thinking by constantly posing opposing views --- for the friends the old way; they see the situation as an act-consequence example, an order in life that the society accepts as the order of things. They, along with the ancient world, believed that “No man is righteous before God, therefore all must suffer.”⁶ Righteousness, acceptability before God, can be had by the confession of sins first. For Job, though, knowing that he was not absolutely sinless, he believed that it was not him but God who broke their relationship, as evidenced by his suffering to which he could not see a reason for. The Yahweh that he used to know is now attacking him, and he expresses his anguish as in the “psalms of lamentation,”⁷ which he intensifies according to his grief. What he wanted was for God to give him an assurance of the constancy of their relationship, the ‘justificatory verdict of God.’ It could be seen though that Job was still strongly guided by the old principles, because he believed that by his forcing God to answer him God may exact retribution. Yet he had no choice but to stick to his dealings with God, since only God can provide the answers that he needs. Job wanted to be sure that He is still the same God whom he believed in,

¹ Smick, ZPEB, in, 1976, Vol.3, 603.

² Murphy, 1981, 20.

³ Waltke and Diewert, *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, in, 1999, 322.

⁴ Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology*, 1998, 425-38.; Smick, EBC, in, 1988, Vol. 4, 861.

⁵ “Westermann maintains that Job is a dramatized lament with disputational speeches. Others view Job as a dramatic tragedy or comedy. Still others consider the book as a whole to be sui generis, a unique literary creation of the wisdom tradition that made use of a variety of literary forms: didactic narrative, lament, disputation, legal forms, and so on. Cheney has argued that the present arrangement of Job formally constitutes a type of frame tale (the wisdom *tension*) that has ancient Near Eastern parallels... Katherine Dell has argued that the entire book is best understood as a parody that expresses skepticism (suspending of belief) toward traditional wisdom categories... Bruce Zuckerman also perceives the significance of parody in the “original” core of Job, but the ironic voice of protest was silenced by the addition of contrapuntal material... Clines attempts a deconstructive reading of Job to show how it undermines the philosophy it asserts, in terms of the notions of retribution and suffering. David Penchansky reads Job in a sociological vein, arguing that the literary tensions in the book reflect ideological struggles within a cultural context... A fine reading of Job “from below” is that of Gustavo Gutierrez, who sees in Job the struggle of the poor of Latin America who, in the midst of innocent suffering, must learn to speak to and about God.” (Waltke and Diewert, *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, in, 1999, 325–327)

⁶ Von Rad, 1972, 218.

⁷ Examples are Pss. 3, 6, 13, 22, 28, 31, 51, 88, and 102. These are individual laments. That is, they are having these elements: address to Yahweh, complaint describing the situation (often employing the language of sickness metaphorically), request for help, affirmation of confidence, assertion of innocence or confession of sin, and hymnic elements. (F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, EDB, in, 2000, 785)

a God most probably his friends don't even know about.¹ Job therefore has introduced the idea of the questioning of whether this Yahweh, as experienced by Job, is still the Yahweh of Israel.² Thus the issue is on the identity of God, and not primarily on the suffering of Job.

CHAPTER IV. CREATION IN THE BOOK OF JOB

A. On the Subject of Creation as Dealt With in the Pentateuch and in the Wisdom Literatures (and Psalms)

The traditional documentary hypothesis puts forth³ that there are two strains of the creation account in the book of Genesis. The Priestly (P) account comes first in the narration, which is Genesis 1:1 –2:4a. The Yahwist (J) account comes next, in Gen. 2:4b –3:24.⁴ The P shows rhythm reminiscent of recitations in the Temple worship services.⁵ Thus though the transcribing and compiling was exilic, the origins of the storyline goes back generations earlier.⁶

The J account does not emphasize much the creation of heaven or the cosmic scene as much as P does. J is more interested with man's situation here on earth, like the forming of man from dust and the assigning of the garden for him to take care of (Gen. 2:7 and 2:15 respectively).

The Yahwist most probably started writing about David's time in the 10th century B.C.⁷ Both P and J accounts placed at the beginning of the Bible indicates the significance of the creation story. It is the beginning of Israel's history, "the stage for the unfolding of the divine purpose."⁸

Ancient Israel's creation account is not surprisingly based on a similar cosmology with her neighbors' – the Babylonians, Egyptians, and Canaanites. As in Exodus 20:4, basically there are three layers to the universe's structure: heaven, earth, and underworld. Covering the flat earth is a dome holding back the heavenly ocean (Gen. 1:8, Ps. 148:4). The earth is supported by pillars around which are waters (Ps. 24:2 and 104:5–9). The difference, though, between Israel's creation story and those of her neighbors' is that Israel confesses that it is

¹ "...they always presuppose a Yahweh who is beyond dispute." (Von Rad, 1972, 221)

² "While Job's involvement in 'wisdom' questions is unmistakable, it nevertheless recedes in view of the fact that Job introduces into the debate theological points of view of a quite different type. The picture of God which destroys that involvement does not arise from the experience of orders, nor does the image of God for which he struggles for himself." (Von Rad, 1972, 220-1)

³ Popularized by Kuenen, Wellhausen and Driver in the late 1800's, the documentary hypothesis explains that the Pentateuch is derived from four sources available in written form at varying periods, and were one after the other incorporated into the literature. The Yahwist (J) of 850 B.C. and the Elohist (E) of 750 B.C. became a single material c.650 B.C. The Deuteronomistic Source (D) of 621 B.C. was redacted into them c.550 B.C., and finally the Priestly (P) by 400 B.C. (Soulén, 1976, article: "Documentary Hypothesis"/ "Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis", 69). This theory has been accepted until about 1970, when since then it has been challenged by scholars. There are now alternative explanations as to, for instance, the way the sources were determined, or the dating of these sources, and even the archeological parallels by way of basis are being questioned of their validity. Thus, perhaps, the J-E-D-P order is not at all correct, or that even the P, J, and E sources do not even exist at all as continuously running sources through the Pentateuch. The resolution of the Pentateuchal development is still a developing issue. (Gordon J. Wenham, *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, in, 1999, 116-144)

⁴ Anderson, 1966, 170 and 383.

⁵ In fact there were eight creative acts originally, but the six-day pattern follows the Israelite calendar scheme. (Anderson, 1966, 384 fn.17)

⁶ Anderson, 1966, 384.

⁷ Barbara Green, EDB, in, 2000, 1402.

⁸ Anderson, IDB, in, 1962, Vol. 1, 727.

Yahweh who created all.¹ In contrast her neighbors' creation stories were about creation produced by struggles between gods. For instance, the god of order, the city god of Babylon Marduk and the goddess of chaos Tiamat fought. It resulted to Marduk dividing Tiamat's body, whereby eventually forming the three-storied universe.²

Israel's wisdom is "directed at creation."³ Its teachings are strengthened by pointing to God as the Creator of heaven, earth, and man.⁴ This is because creation speaks of God's order, and is therefore trustworthy. Unlike the surrounding cultures of the Old Testament world, Israel did not believe in myriads of gods who control events in the environment. Instead, in her radical way, she confessed that it is Yahweh who created and sustains everything. In this sense, creation points to Yahweh. Moreover, Job 38-41 is natural or nature-wisdom, the speeches of God pointing to His might seen as creation.⁵

Two characteristics of the *חכמה* *wisdom*, feminine in Hebrew, can be understood within Proverbs 8. Verses 22 to 29 speak of Wisdom as being there already, before God created the universe. Verses 30 to 36 speak of Wisdom's status as God's favorite and as man's way to finding life. It is in this sense that Wisdom is a sort of a mediatrix in the work of creation. "Both texts speak of a reality which is surrounded by the most profound mystery. In the cult, it was an object of praise; in the school, an object of contemplation."⁶

B. Creation Passages in the Book of Job

The idea of creation in the Bible encompasses two considerations. These are concerned with cosmogony, the origins, and preservation, *creatio continua*.⁷ Many contexts show that when the Hebrews speak of Yahweh as Creator, they simultaneously tackle Yahweh's activity of preserving what He Himself has made.⁸

For instance, Psalm 104, a psalm under the influence of the wisdom movement (*In wisdom you made them all*, v.24), in verse 29 says of God, "When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to dust." This passage relates the idea that creation did not stop after the act of creation was done, but continues in the preservation of creation as well. Gilkey puts it this way, "Thus without the continuing power of God each creature [including man] would lapse back into the non-being whence it came."⁹ Also, "Their being has come to them, not from their own nature, but from beyond themselves in God, whose creative act brought them into being. They *are*, then, only so long as God's creative act continues to give them being, for they do not generate their own power to be from themselves, but as the moments of their existence pass, they receive it continually from beyond themselves."¹⁰

¹ The more popular view is the *ex nihilo*, the "out-of-nothing" creation by God. There can be found arguments saying that it was not so. Since chaos was there in the beginning, then God created from out of that. (See Pfeiffer, 1948, 704)

² Anderson, IDB, in, 1962, Vol. 1, 726. More on this can be found on page 40 of this paper.

³ Von Rad, 1972, 298.

⁴ Rankin, 1954, 10.

⁵ Kaiser, 1975, 373.

⁶ Von Rad, 1972, 157.

⁷ Willem A. VanGemeren, EBC, in, 1988, Vol. 5, 664, speaks of this as Bernard W. Anderson's term for the concept.

⁸ That is, "No idea of creation can now be taken as complete which does not include, besides the world as at first constituted, all that to this day is in and of creation. For God creates not being that can exist independently of Him, His preserving agency being inseparably connected with His creative power." (James Lindsay, ISBE, in, 1956, Vol.2, 738)

⁹ Langdon Gilkey, *Maker of Heaven and Earth: A Study of the Christian Doctrine of Creation*, 1959, 95.

¹⁰ Gilkey, 1959, 95.

In the book of Job, the verses 36:27 until 37:18, twenty-five verses in all, provide pictures of how God constantly provides for the needs of His creatures. To speak generally of creation in the book of Job necessarily deals with not just a few passages anymore. In fact, it is not at all difficult to point out preservation of creation passages in the Book of Job. The following can also be mentioned: 8:7; 28:25– 26; and finally 38:12–39:30 and 40:9–41:34, which constitute the bulk of God's reply to Job, at least *o n e h u n d r e d t h i r t y – e i g h t* verses all in all! Moreover, there are those passages that mention God having made Job or man (or creatures), such as: 4:17; 10:8; 10:10–12; 12:9; 14:3; 14:15; 28:21; 31:15; 32:22; 33:4; 34:19; 35:10; and 36:3.

The following speak of creation that is of making something entirely new:

*9:8 He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea.
9:9 He is the Maker of the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the constellations of the south.
10:8 Your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me?
10:9 Remember that you molded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again?
26:7 He spreads out the northern [skies] over empty space; he suspends the earth over nothing.
26:8 He wraps up the waters in his clouds, yet the clouds do not burst under their weight.
26:9 He covers the face of the full moon, spreading his clouds over it.
26:10 He marks out the horizon on the face of the waters for a boundary between light and darkness.
26:11 The pillars of the heavens quake, aghast at his rebuke.
26:12 By his power he churned up the sea; by his wisdom he cut Rahab to pieces.
26:13 By his breath the skies became fair; his hand pierced the gliding serpent.
33:6 I am just like you before God; I too have been taken from clay.
38:4 Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me if you understand.
38:5 Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it?
38:6 On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone –
38:7 while the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?
38:8 Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb,
38:9 when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness,
38:10 when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place,
38:11 when I said, "This is far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt"? NIV.*

9:8,9 and 10:8,9 are parts of hymns of praise, within Job's third speech. Bildad has just spoken on the concept of double retribution – that the blameless prosper and the wicked suffer – so that if Job was really blameless, then he'll be vindicated.

9:8,9 is within a legal language, where Job is considering challenging God for a debate so that the problem of God's hostility against him be resolved. It's as if God is unjust because although no trial has happened, Job is already

experiencing the punishment for the guilt. Job then realized that God's power and wisdom are evident, and that God does what He wants.

10:8–9 is within a lament. Job confronts God with the contradiction where God has become careless toward something He has created.

9:5–10 are describing God's acts of power in the creation and the maintenance of the universe. 9:5–7 speak of God's power over natural events, both on earth and over the skies. 9:8–10 speak of God's creative and preserving acts in the universe. These accounts of creation are preceded by the declaration, "For God is so wise and so mighty. Who has ever challenged him successfully?"v.4.NLT. Thus, they are accounts in support of the idea that God is wise and mighty.

9:8 He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea. *The heavens and the waves of the sea* is a parallelism, a poetic way of speaking of the universe. *Alone* or *by himself* (לברו) of verse 8 emphasize monotheism (or monolatry at least). When God *stretches out* (נמה) *the heavens* (verse 8), like a desert sheik spreading out his tent, God is preparing the sky, creating it in the sense of Isaiah 44:24 (I am the LORD, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by himself). See also the explanation for 26:7 below. God *treading on the waves of the sea* (ים יתמב ילע רודו) recall Asherah the goddess in the Canaanite texts who walks on the sea-god Yam to subdue him. Deut.33:29 uses the same expression.¹

9:9 He is the Maker of the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the constellations of the south. NICOT renders the Bear as Aldebaran, which could be the brightest star in the constellation Hyades. Pleiades and Orion are constellations, or part of a constellation (Pleiades is a group of seven stars, part of the constellation Taurus). The terms *Bear*, *Orion*, *Pleiades*, and *constellations* are mentioned again in Job 38:31–32, and the last two again in Amos 5:8. Aldebaran, Pleiades, Hyades, and Orion are markers of seasons according to classical writers. Hyades is not mentioned here. Instead, *the constellations of the south*, *deredner* (ידרהו, *the Chambers of the South* in NICOT and The Anchor Bible) is mentioned, which could be a star, a group of stars, or a constellation in the southern sky. Pope connects this with the place where the south wind is stored according to ancient peoples, as in the sense of Job 37:9, hence the translation *chambers*.

Stars and constellations were objects of worship. Thus, their movements were studied since it was believed that messages could be gleaned from them as to events in the future. On the other hand, Israel claims that these stars and constellations are merely creatures of God, and so they are not worthy of worship. Here, the author of Job shows his "wisdom" through his knowledge of astronomy. In 1Kings 4:33 as well, Solomon's international reputation is due to his knowledge of many things including of plants, animals, birds, reptiles, and fish. The international wisdom movement deals with advice as with knowledge of things as intellectual pursuits.²

The following two verses are preceded by the statement, "Although you know I am not guilty, no one can rescue me from your power."v.7.NLT. Job laments his helplessness as a mere man before the capability of God to do anything with him.

¹ See also the explanation for 26:7 below on page 40.

² Drane, 2000, 118.

10:8 Your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me? 10:9 Remember that you molded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again? 10:8 and 10:9 is a parallelism. The parallels are 10:8a and 10:9a; and 10:8b and 10:9b. Job seems to remind God that God has made him, and yet it is God Himself who seems to be destroying him. Like a potter God has shaped and made him.¹ He expresses his confusion at God who's seemingly destroying what He Himself spent effort on. As he says in 10:3a, "Why do you reject me, the work of your own hands...?".NLT. It is also said in Job 4:19, Job 33:6, Psalm 103:14, and Isaiah 45:9 that man is of clay or dust. In Gen.2:7 we can read the account of God forming man out of dust, אָדָמָה *adamah*.

On the other hand, Psalm 25:6,7 and Psalm 74:2 are like verse 9 above, asking God "to remember" the goodness that He has shown in the past, implying that on that basis it should be improbable that God will not show also goodness now. Job complains that God, in His uncaring treatment of him, seems to be turning him back to dust where he came from. The passages seem to imply that it is Job's belief that since he is a creation of God then God will consequently take care of him, and not to undo what He has done already, which is a reversal of creation.

26:7–13 is spoken by Job praising God's majestic power. It is part of a hymn, of 26:5–14. It is a creation account of the imagery of the ancient Near East mythological accounts. The wisdom movement of Israel "emphasized the creation-faith and reinterpreted the old chaos mythology... not only to magnify God's power by extolling his first and most marvelous work but also to reflect upon the wonderful order and regularity in the universe."² Bildad has just finished speaking, which will be the last of Job's three friends' speeches. He reemphasized earlier (18:1–21) the certainty of retribution, implying that Job believed wrongly that there are wicked people who go unpunished. And since all man is prone to wrongdoing, then none deserve the "court hearing" as asked by Job of God.

At the start of this last reply of Job to his three friends, he bewails that they have not helped him at all (26:1–4). They are convinced that he's wrong about his innocence and that he must repent to attain God's forgiveness, and be restored once more to God's goodwill. Bildad before this (that is, in 25:1-6) spoke of the power and the glory of God. Part of Job's response is in agreement with Bildad's statements. In fact he uses creation accounts to emphasize his concurring point.

26:7 He spreads out the northern [skies] over empty space; he suspends the earth over nothing. **26:7a is like 9:8a where God does as the desert dwellers do, pitching a tent, which is the north, or the northern skies.** נוֹפֵץ *sapon*, literally north, is not speaking of direction here but is a term for the heavens, where God's throne is.³ Comparing with Job 9:8 and Isaiah 40:22, the phrases used for both are "stretches out the heavens", נוֹטֵה שָׁמַיִם *noteh shamayim* and "He stretches out the heavens like a canopy", מִיֵּט קַדֵּךְ *hanoteh kadok shamayim* respectively.

Moreover, here *north* is parallel with *earth*. Usually, *heavens* is parallel with *earth*, as in Gen.1:1, Isa.44:23,24. Pope mentions that Mt. Zaphon is "Jebel el 'Aqra, Bald Mountain, on the Syrian coast opposite the finger of Cyprus, some

¹ Likewise in Jeremiah 18:1-10 is an account of God's message delivered to Jeremiah through the picture of a potter forming clay on the wheel. God speaks of Himself as like the potter who shapes Israel according to His wish and purpose.

² Anderson, *Creation Versus Chaos*, 1967, 71.

³ John E. Hartley, NICOT, in, 1988, Vol.18, 366.

thirty miles north of Ras Shamra, ancient Ugarit.”¹ It is directly to the north of Palestine. Mt. Zaphon is the sacred mountain of Baal, who is the Syrian god of weather. This is as well seen in Isa.14:13 “and you said in your heart, “I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; and I will sit on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Zaphon (the sacred mountain).

So in 26:7a God “spreads out the northern skies over” תהו, which is nothingness, void, or emptiness.² The same idea of “nothing” is in Job 6:18; 1Sam.12:21; Isa.40:23; 41:29; 44:9; 49:4 and 59:4. In 26:7b He “suspends the earth” over ממה ילארעילב (yllaretil) לֹב *not what*), or *nothing*.

NICOT translates *tohu* as *watery chaos*, and *b^eli mah* as *ocean depths*. So that the sky is over the waters, and the earth is as well above the waters. Found commonly in creation accounts, *tohu* indicates chaos, as opposite to the order in creation.³

The origin of this expression is the Babylonian myth known as the *Enuma elish*. There was a “primeval, watery chaos (cf. Gen.1:2) consisting of the male and female precreation powers: the primordial father, Apsu (the fresh-water lakes, marshes, and subsoil waters) ... -and the primordial mother, Tiamat (the salty marine waters).” Out of their union came gods who caused disorder, causing Apsu’s death and Tiamat left waging wars. One god, Marduk, eventually established order by dividing Tiamat’s body, whom he killed, into two. So that chaos, which is Tiamat, is conceived as a dragon or a fishlike monster. “Half of her he set up and ceiled it as sky, ... The other half became the “waters below,” the watery abyss upon which the earth rests and which encircles it (cf. Gen 8:2).”⁴

This does not mean that this was how it was with Israel also. In Gen.1:2 chaos is not a monster but an emptiness.⁵ The mythological creation language, anywhere that it appears in the Old Testament, is just a “creative application of the concept of an uninhabitable empty wilderness to the disordered state before creation. Creation begins with the waters that are then conquered and divided”.⁶

Take note, though, that the earth in 38:4 has a foundation. These verses, in the intuitive sense, sound contradictory. But taking into consideration the meaning of *nothing* as chaos, as briefly commented on above, then the confusion is somewhat cleared.

26:8 He wraps up the waters in his clouds, yet the clouds do not burst under their weight. God *sorer* דניב ,seit, סררצ, or shuts in the waters *in its clouds*, בעבו (b’abaw). *sorer* is used in the sense of binding wineskins, as in Joshua 9:4. The above sense of binding clouds is also found in Prov. 30:4b. ‘ab is a distant cloud, that is, a rain cloud or a thundercloud. The other cloud noun, *anan* אַנַּי, *dense cloud cover*, a cloud mass, or a fog or mist.⁷ The waters bound within *b’abaw* does not burst out of the *anan*, like wine bursting out of wineskins.

This water is still part of the chaos, the waters, which have been put by God above the heavens. Binding these waters is a process in creation, preventing it from flooding the dry land and have chaos dominion once again.

¹ Pope, 1965, 165.

² A. H. Konkel, NIDOTTE, in, 1996, Vol.1, 607.

³ Konkel, NIDOTTE, in, 1996, Vol.1, 607.

⁴ Anderson, 1967, 18-21.

⁵ Konkel, NIDOTTE, in, 1996, Vol.1, 607, “In Genesis precreation chaos is not a sea monster but is a desolation of waters; the expression *tohu wabohu* in Gen.1:2 is a hendiadys meaning an unearthly or indescribable emptiness.” See also Henricus Renckens, *Israel’s Concept of the Beginning: The Theology of Genesis I-III*, 1964, 86.

⁶ Konkel, NIDOTTE, in, 1996, Vol.1, 608.

⁷ See Hartley, NICOT, in, 1988, Vol.18, 366 fn.16.

26:9 He covers the face of the full moon, spreading his clouds over it.

To protect creation, God covers His throne with clouds so that its glory will not overwhelm them and kill them. Job 22:14 and 2Samuel 22:10 likewise speak of clouds covering God against people's eyes.

26:10 He marks out the horizon on the face of the waters for a boundary between light and darkness. The boundary is the line of the horizon, separating light from darkness. The light is of the heavens, and the darkness is of the watery chaos. In Gen. 1:3–8 creation is a separation of light from darkness, and a separation of the waters above from the waters below by the sky, the firmament.¹

26:11 The pillars of the heavens quake, aghast at his rebuke. The pillars of the heavens could be the mountains that support the sky. These mountains shake violently in God's anger; the passage seems to be speaking of an earthquake. Very similar passages appear at 2Samuel 22:8 and Psalm 18:7. In Ps.104:7 God also rebukes the chaotic waters. Ps.104:6-9 speaks of the waters clearing off the dry land at God's command, an idea of creation by word.

26:12 By his power he churned up the sea; by his wisdom he cut Rahab to pieces. *Churning up the sea* is a manifestation of God's power. The same idea is found in Isaiah 51:15 and Jer.31:35. For these two verses God's control over nature is spoken of. In the passage given above, the churning up of the sea is parallel to cutting of Rahab to pieces.

Rahab is identified as the Canaanite name for the mythological monster of chaos. The name appears also in Job 9:13, Isaiah 51:9, and Psalm 89:10. This creature is among those whose name is mentioned with the idea of God subduing the forces of chaos during creation. Leviathan² and Tiamat are as well associated with it (see Ps. 74:12–17).

26:13 By his breath the skies became fair; his hand pierced the gliding serpent. This passage is a parallel to the previous one, thus, also a creation account. In Isaiah 27:1 the *gliding serpent* is referred to as Leviathan.

Pope³ presents an interpretation of the passage in the sense of the sea-struggle creation story. He says 26:13a can be rendered as *by his wind he bagged the Sea*. He explains that *shiprah* (sa detalsnart שפרא) is similar to the Akkadian word for *net* (*saparu*). Furthermore, considering that Marduk defeated Tiamat by a mighty wind as well as by a net, then 26:13a is an allusion to God's defeat of the chaotic forces. This way, 26:13a and 26:13b are parallels.

Another explanation is that "clearing the skies" is as after the storm, with God's breath being a manifestation of His power to be able to do this. The clearing of the skies, the restoration of light, is the result of slaying the gliding serpent of 26:13b who is responsible for swallowing the sun, hence the gloom. Thus, the piercing or the slaying of the serpent in 26:13b, as well as the cutting of Rahab into pieces of 26:13a, are here creation acts different from that of Gen. 1 and 2.

33:6 I am just like you before God; I too have been taken from clay.

This verse properly belongs to the introduction to the main disputation part, 33:8–30, which is Elihu's reply to all the speeches that have gone before. Elihu was not

¹ More on this has appeared in page 39ff. above in the explanation for 26:7.

² Leviathan in Job 41 could be a crocodile; *The only other interpretation of any significance regards Leviathan as a mythical monster, perhaps to be identified with Bab. mother goddess Tiamat (father Apsu), who in the Creation Epic, even in battle against Marduk "recites charms and casts spells". The word is cognate with Ugaritic ltn, the seven-headed monster whose description as "the fleeing serpent, ... the tortuous serpent" smitten by Baal is so reminiscent of the language of Is 27:1.*(D. G. Stradling, IBD, in, 1980, Part 2, 896) In Ps.104:26 the leviathan is mentioned as playing on God's seas. See also page 40 above.

³ Pope, 1965, 166.

among Job's friends who have come to comfort him. He was just a bystander (32:11), and as one who is young among the elders, had to be respectfully silent (32:6).

He was angry with Job for "justifying himself rather than God" (32:2b NIV). He was also angry with the three friends "because they had found no way to refute Job, and yet had condemned him" (32:3b NIV).

He claims to be speaking "from an upright heart" (33:3a) and so he is ready to be challenged (33:5). He presented himself as someone truthful, because he believes God's Spirit is with him. This challenge as among equals is possible since he and those he is speaking to are alike "before God" (33:6) as having come from, taken from (.rettop a yb demrof gnieb dna yalc ,יִרְקָה The creation from clay makes all men equal in a relatively lowly status before God the Potter. The same idea is found in the passages 10:8,9 above.¹

38:7–13 belong to God's first of two speeches (38:1–40:2 and 40:6–41:26 [Eng.34] respectively). Elihu has just spoken, (Chs. 32–37), saying that God's justice and power can be seen in creation. God does no wrong, so that if ever Job is suffering despite his not sinning, then most probably there is another reason for this. Perhaps God is teaching him something, and this is what Job must find out. Job's insistence on his innocence might also be angering God, so Elihu tells him to stop it.

All the speakers are through speaking at this point. The friends have insisted on the principle of double retribution, thereby implying that Job must repent. Of what, they were not clear. In view of Job's insistence on his innocence, he had been seeking God's response to this.

Now, indeed, God responds. This response is an expression of God's "merciful goodness to his suffering servant."² He engages Job in rhetorical questioning intended to make Job see the unfathomability of His wisdom, as clearly shown in the wonders of creation. Not once did He point a fault to Job. On the contrary, it is the friends who have spoken wrongly of Job (42:7–9).

In 38:4–38, which are all rhetorical questions, God's non-living creation that He has made and is continuing to govern is being spoken of. The presentation of these vast and complex natural phenomena to Job points out the infinite gap between him and God.

God in 38:4–11 is asking Job for information that can be known only if one were present at the beginning of creation. Of course Job could not answer since Job was not there at all. It is Wisdom that was there at the start of creation. As was mentioned earlier, *הַחֵמָה* *hokma* (wisdom) is being spoken of in Pr.8:22–29 as present during creation.³ Likewise Chapter 28 of the Book of Job affirms the superiority of Wisdom, which God only knows where to find (vv.23,24).

The following group of creation passages is an answer to the challenges issued by those who question God's wisdom. 38:4–7 speak of the creation of dry land, where God is pictured as a builder, a craftsman; 38:8–11 speak of the separation of the bodies of water, one in the heavens and the other the seas.

38:4 Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me if you understand. ***Wisdom was God's companion (Prov.8:22-31) at the creation of the world. Since Job was not there, how was he supposed to know about the earth's foundations? 1Samuel 2:8b, Psalm 102:25a, Proverbs 8:29b and***

¹ See page 37 above.

² Hartley, NICOT, in, 1988, Vol.18, 487.

³ See page 33 above.

Isaiah 48:13a likewise speak of the earth's foundations. As with Ps.104:5, setting the earth on its foundations guarantees that God has made earth reliably stable.

38:5 Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? ***It is God who determines the extent and the dimension of creation. As reflected in Isa.40:12, the preparations echo those done for the building up of manmade structures, such as in Jer.31:39 (city), Zech.1:16 (house), and Zech.4:9-11 (temple).***

38:6 On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone – 38:6a speaks of the mountains being settled in place. The idea is clearer in Pr.8:25 where הרים הטבנו , *the mountains were settled.*) הטבעו (, means “to sink into something”. The only other passage where הטבעו appears is Jer.38:22, where Jeremiah sinks into the mud of his cistern prison. The sinking of the mountains is “the lowering of their roots over the nether ocean, to prevent its waters from rising and flooding the earth.”¹ The cornerstone in 38:6b could be “one of the large stones near the foundations of a building which by their sheer size bind together two or more rows of stones”.²

38:7 while the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? ***Psalm 136:9 says stars help the moon govern the night. This is the same as Gen.1:26,28 where God assigns governance roles to his creatures. The sons of God are the bene elohim, already dealt with in the Excursus above. As in 1Kings 22:19, it is here in the sense of the heavenly council standing in the presence of God. In Isaiah 6:3 the seraphim call out “glory” three times around God’s throne.***

To shout and sing in praise of God by His creation is common among the Psalms. Examples are 29; 89:12; 96:11-13; 98:8-9; 103:22; 145:10; 148:3-4,7-10. Also, in Isaiah 44:23; 49:13; and 55:12. Some of these passages refer to God’s coming for judgment.

38:8–11 speak of God creating the sea as if it were an infant human being. This theme is different from the violent creation of the seas, the result of splitting Tiamat into two as explained for the passage 26:7 above. Indeed Pope writes, “The present allusion presents an otherwise unknown motif, the birth of the sea god and the use of swaddling bands to restrain the violent infant.”³ Creation and birth are not contradicting each other. Instead, the forming of the child within the mother’s womb is a creative act focused on the individual human being. God is creating a person within his mother’s womb.⁴

38:8 Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, The idea here of the sea being shut up behind doors intuitively seems to tie up with the idea of God having put a limit to its extent in the verses 10 and 11 that follow. NICOT and The Expositor’s Bible Commentary⁵ agree that 38:8 is a pre-birth scene whereas vv.10 and 11 are after-birth situations.

בַּיָּם מִיַּתְּלָדָה and he shut up the sea behind doors means God formed the sea within the womb that is mentioned here. The root כָּסַח or כָּסַח means to shut up, and also to join together or entwine. Put together with the word of the root דָּלַת meaning a two-leaved door, something swinging, or the valve of a door, then

¹ Theodor Gaster, IDB, in, 1962, Vol.1, 705.

² J. B. Taylor, IBD, in, 1980, Vol.1, 319.

³ Pope, 1965, 251.

⁴ There is also a short discussion on this for the passage 31:15 on page 51.

⁵ Smick, EBC, in, 1988, Vol.4, 1040.

there is the sense of the fetus being formed within the womb and then eventually *bursting forth* from it through the labia. Implying that it was God who formed the sea, and He was also there when it was given birth to.

38:9 when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, Now that the sea has been born God clothes it with clouds, as a baby is wrapped in swaddling clothes. The thick darkness seems to be as that in Gen. 1:2, which in reality are heavy dark clouds sometimes hovering over the sea.

38:10 when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, 38:11 when I said, "This is far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt"? *These two verses are a synonymous parallel. Like the putting in place of the gate's beams, doors, bolts, and bars in Nehemiah 3:3, God has determined the limit of the sea's extent. He has control over it. The idea is similar in Ps.33:7 and 104:9; Isa.40:12; Job 7:12, 26:10, and 28:25; and in Jeremiah 5:22. God controlling the seas is an act of creatio continua.*

Likewise, God has command over the sea. As in Ps.104:7–9, the sea follows God's orders, going down to the place assigned for it and disabling it from flooding the land, causing destruction. God can even still its unruly characteristic, as in Ps.65:7 and 89:9.

The word ברא *bara*, meaning *create*, does not occur in the Book of Job (and to a great extent in the Wisdom literature¹). Instead, terms of the root עשה *asah*, meaning to *do* or *make*, appear. In the sense of creation they are found in 4:17b; 28:25; 31:15; 32:22; and 35:10.

4:17b – *Can a man be more pure than his Maker (מעשהו)?* NIV.

Can a man be pure before his Maker? The Anchor Bible.

Can a mortal be blameless against his Maker?

The New American Bible.

Connecting 4:17b with the sense of 15:14 to 16, all of Eliphaz's speeches, we feel the weight of Eliphaz's argument, which is, that it is impossible for Job to be innocent after all. Bildad speaks the same thoughts in 25:4-6. Both are saying that none of God's creations can come up to God's perfection, and so implying that none can hold him for accountability to anything at all. Therefore it is futile for Job to demand anything from God at all, even answers to his questions.

That is, this creation passage spoken by Eliphaz is a point to speak of the difference between the creature and its creator. Because the creature, here man, is just the work of his maker then he cannot acquire an integrity apart from his maker. If Job claims he is innocent then that could not be the end of the argument since he could not know everything about himself at all. Someone else, his maker, knows more, in fact everything, about him, and so he may not be at all as innocent as he thinks he is.

28:25 – *When he established (שעל) the force of the wind and measured out the waters.* NIV. The instance of this verse's appearance is within a discourse on wisdom, which is the whole Chapter 28. This material is inserted between speeches by Job. In the chapter before it, Chapter 27, two ideas were predominant. First, Job is found to be insisting on his innocence. Second, the dismal fate of the wicked is described. In the two chapters after it, Chapters 29 and 30, Job laments his present misfortune, comparing it with the previous days

¹ Karl-Heinz Bernhardt, TDOT, in, 1975, Vol.2, 245.

of his well-being and respectability. The chapter following it, Chapter 31, is taken up by Job's introspection as to what sins against man, and against God, has he possibly committed.

In this wisdom chapter, Chapter 28, man is pictured as able to go even into the hidden parts of the earth and acquire precious metals and stones. Yet he does not have the ability to find a way to wisdom. Man simply cannot know the means to wisdom. Only God knows where it can be found. Therefore the mystery that Job is in – he is innocent yet he suffers the fate of the wicked – can only be explained by God.

This creation passage reinforces the idea that God can see everywhere (v.24), by virtue of the wind being known to blow to any direction at all. It is therefore in support of the chapter's idea that though man has the skill to look into hidden places underground, yet he does not have the skill to discover where wisdom can be taken, and so acquire it.

31:15 – *Did not he who made (עשׂו) me in the womb make (עשה) them? Did not the same one form us both within our mothers?*.NIV. This is part of a soliloquy (Chs.29-31), also a part of an avowal of innocence (Ch.31), which is of the same motif as Pss.5, 7, 17, and 26. Specifically, Ch.31 is primarily of the genre purificatory oath of the if-then (the deed – the punishment) style, like of Ps.7:3-5 (liturgy) and Exod.22:7, 9-10 (judicial process).

Job here is enumerating misdeeds he would have possibly committed (if's), and side by side he names what he believes are corresponding measures for them (then's). In 31:15 Job gives the point that he has violated in possibly denying justice to his maid and menservants on grievances against him (v.13) – that he and them were made by God in the womb, and so he really is not superior to them in the absolute sense.

By the mention of the above passage, the reader is being reminded by the common origin of humankind, dust. In the same way is every human being formed—carefully by God, inside the mother's womb. Therefore, put side by side with God, all humanity is the same regardless of the status in society at present. This idea is like that of 33:6 as well as of 10:8,9 as explained above.

32:22 – *for if I were skilled in flattery, my Maker (עשׂו) would soon take me away.*NIV. Again, as in 31:15 above, Elihu now points to the reason why he believes that what he is about to tell Job and his friends is truth without the motive of flattery. That is, that his Maker will mete out corresponding punishment on him were he to utter falsehood on anyone at anytime.

By Elihu's mentioning of the consequence were he to speak falsehood, it is shown that he has the consciousness of a high moral or ethical standard expected of him by virtue of his being the creation of such a Maker. That is, the significance of this consequence is mentioned several verses before it, in verse 8. It says there that man's capability of understanding is given to him by God's spirit. Hence by implication Elihu believes that it is through the spirit that he speaks now, and hence truthfully.

35:10 – *But no-one says, "Where is God my Maker (עשׂו), who gives songs in the night.*NIV. In this verse Elihu says that the righteous, when oppressed, do not cry out like this. Even to the oppressed innocent, the assumption still holds that God continues to preserve their existence (said in verses 13 and 14). That is, this creation passage echoes the given assumption by Israel that God continuously supports and preserves His creation, especially man.

Pope translates 35:10b as "Who gives strength in the night." Though *תַּרְמוֹת* is usually rendered as *songs*, Pope explains that the sense of this Hebrew word

in Exod.15:2 ; 2Sam.23:1 ; Isa.12:2 and 25:5 ; and Ps.118:14 is that of *strength or protection*.¹ Pope also explains here that critics suggest that “songs of joy and praise” is the expression of gratitude of those whom God has helped “in the night of distress”.

This verse is part of Elihu’s third speech, part of his argument against Job’s claims that he thinks he is in the right (35:2), yet he is treated as a sinner (implication of 35:3). So Elihu consequently says that even if the innocent do this, God still may not answer because of their pride (v.12).

Three lengthy ascriptions to God’s activity in looking after creation can be cited: 36:27–37:18 (twenty-five verses); 38:12 –39:30 (sixty verses); and 40:9 –41:34 (forty-nine verses).

36:27–37:18 belongs to the end part of Elihu’s last speech. After he has said everything, the final surge of his impassioned arguments, and perhaps the most weighty, features God’s might over the condition of the skies—over what seems to be autumn (36:27-33), winter (37:1-13), and summer (37:14-18).²

Elihu says that it is at God’s command that marvelous things happen in the weather. It is God himself who personally looks over and accomplishes these complicated and powerful meteorological phenomena. He then concludes his speeches by pointing to God’s transcendence (*Now no-one can look at the sun v.21a. NIV*), and so to man’s incapacity to exact anything from Him (37:19-24, especially verse 23 *The Almighty is beyond our reach and exalted in power; in his justice and great righteousness, he does not oppress.NIV*).

These creation passages therefore serve as a point of emphasis pointing to God’s power. Pictures from nature are presented to lead to the conclusion that these phenomena are beyond a mere man’s capability to handle. Man does have the power to successfully and harmoniously control such large-scale events, and only God can.

38:12–39:30 belongs to God’s first speech. In 38:4-11 He spoke of how He created the earth and the sea (brief discussions on this have been above). In these verses now He speaks of how He continues to govern and look after everything that He has created, specifically here the weather and the wild animals. As in Psalm 104, what is being pointed at is God’s matchless capacity for bringing things and events into being. He does things in order and does not fail to support the existence of all these. Mentioning therefore several of these *creatio continua* instances point to the characteristic of God’s, being accomplished in the looking after all the details for the perpetuation of the living and non-living things that He Himself has created.

40:9–41:34 belong to God’s second speech. 40:9-14 finds God intensely questioning Job as to his capability to bring down the proud. These are rhetorical questions, as it does not seem to be expected of Job to be able to answer at all. Next, in 40:15–41:34, God points out to Job that He alone is able to do this. As a picture of how capable God is at this, God points out that He is able to subdue the unruliness of two of His awesome creatures, the leviathan and the behemoth.

Both could simply be interpreted as the crocodile and the hippopotamus respectively but Pope says more about them in his commentary.³ According to Pope the behemoth could be the Ugaritic mythological bulls that Baal was to hunt but which struck him down instead. Likewise the leviathan could be the seven-

¹ Pope, 1965, 229.

² Buttrick, commentary ed., IB, 1958, Vol.3, 905.

³ Pope, 1965, 268ff.

headed monster *lotan (ltn)* still of the Ugaritic myths.¹ Again Baal and the goddess 'Anat were supposed to have slain it. Nevertheless, the book of Job ascribes the taming of these two creatures, whatever they have been, to God alone.

Compared to all of God's living creations, the behemoth and the leviathan are the most fearful to man. By bringing out the picture of God's capability to handle them, God makes it clear to Job, and as the book's reader might as well understand, that God does not look at any of His creation with fear. In contrast, man does that sometimes. For God, each of His objects of creation has its own place that He has determined, and none is a threat to Him.

CHAPTER V. SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

The Book of Job is a way of answering the situation where an upright man is experiencing what is for a wicked man. The man knows he is upright. The friends know this, too. Only that, by the evidence that they see in Job now, they have begun to think otherwise. But in the attempt to help Job, the friends point out to him the only solution they know: that God is never wrong, and that somehow Job must have done something wrong. Because the rule as they know it – the good prosper and the wicked suffer (double retribution) – is now at work in his situation. Despite the attacks Job receives against his expressions of conviction, Job holds on to his arguments. In the end, it is God Himself who eases him of his deep questions.

The literature explores how a man who is aware of his humility before God can speak about his experiences, which he himself describes as unjust. Job is seen to be using several genres for these expressions. He curses first. Then he avows his innocence, complaints, and laments, the series of which he does at least four times all throughout the book. He expressed a warning (19:28–29), that is, “an address, often accompanied by an indication of a danger or threat, pressing an individual or a group to accept a point of view or to do an action.”² He also pronounced an oath. Whereas, his friends keep on saying almost the same things, always centering on the idea of double retribution.

What's remarkable among the speeches of Job is the presence of praises to God. It is remarkable that the God whom Job is having a problem with is the same God whom he gave unwavering faith to. Job praises God in His majesty (9:4,10,11 ; 12:10,13); as the Creator of the world (7:12 ; 9:5–13); as the Creator of mankind (7:12 ; 10:8–12); and as the Lord of history (7:12 ; 12:14–25). Indeed, underlined among these praises is the belief that God is Creator.

The book of Job then, when seen from Job's perspective, is an attempt at encapsulating the found-out situation of the innocent that suffers. In the final application, I think it is immaterial whether the book was written by single or several authors, or by an Israelite or a non-Israelite. It is even immaterial from which ancient Near Eastern mythological motif the creation pictures have had influence. What is more important is that an answer to the age-long puzzle of unfulfilled double-retribution has been found. That is, that sometimes the wicked prospers and the innocent suffers. The answer simply is what can be seen in creation.

¹ There is also a brief discussion on pages 42 and 43; see fn. 162 above.

² See fn.96 above on page 20.

In creation Job perceives a God whom he thinks to be the cause of his laments, as well as the object of and the answer to the same. Whenever the awesomeness of nature is mentioned, it is invariably used as evidence to God's power, His capability to accomplish anything He wishes. Whenever the origin of man is mentioned, the direction of the focus is that he was made by God. That is, the mention of God forming the baby within the mother's womb does not distract from God's preeminent role in the forming of a new human being. Thus, for the author of the book of Job, each person has been especially created by God. Precisely of this reason therefore that Job, at least, believes that God should also be taking care of him (10:8,9); that Eliphaz (4:17) and Bildad (25:4-6) believe that man cannot exact accountability from God; and that Elihu believes it is God's Spirit that should guide man's thoughts (32:8).

Job laments because he knows in his heart that he has been faithful to God and yet it appears to the world as if he was otherwise. The society around him sees that he is suffering, and hence the conclusion that he has sinned against God. What is amazing in this character Job is that through all the strong emotions he expressed to God only one fervent wish can be summarized from it—that God somehow made Himself known to Job *again*.

Again because Job is puzzled by this experience God has allowed to happen to him; it is something that is new, something he had not known of God before. This wish by Job is expressed elaborately in four requests, as can be understood from a compound of two requests: v.20. *"Only grant me this t w o things, O God, and then I will not hide from you: v.21. Withdraw your hand far from me, and stop frightening me with your terrors. v.22. Then summon me and I will answer, or let me speak, and you reply.* 13:20-22. NIV. Verse 21 is simply a quest to God, to whom Job has remained faithful and unquestioning. This is the circumstance evident as well in 2:9-10.

In these requests Job clearly shows that for him God is sovereign and that God is still for him. What's radical about Job is his insistence on two contradictory beliefs—that God gives blessings to the godly and likewise misfortune to the wicked, and that God has permitted him to suffer despite his innocence. Because this is what he could see now, something quite puzzling not only to him but to his friends as well, all he wanted from God, it seems, is that God somehow respond so that Job can accept that such a thing he is experiencing now is indeed possible.

God responds finally. Despite beliefs that God is beyond man's capacity to influence (at least in 37:19-24), God graciously responds to Job. Alas, God does not point out Job's transgressions to him. Instead God convicts Job of inadequacy by pointing out to Job His power, wisdom, and loving-kindness as seen at and experienced by creation—God commands the elements of weather and seasons 36:27–37:18. He appoints when daytime and nighttime should take their turns (38:12-15). He provides food for all living creatures, as well as water for them and for plants and trees (38:34ff.). He assigns the positions of stars in the sky (38:31-33).

Creation can verify the existence and the being of God. He is sovereign God because He is Creator and Upholder of all. The cosmogony accounts in the Book of Job, as dealt with in the previous chapter, speak of God as the only origin of everything. The mythological motifs have been used to give emphasis to the accomplished spontaneity of God's acts of creation. For instance, God simply "spread out the skies" (9:8 and 26:7). Also there appears the unique narrative instance of God giving form to the sea in as delicate a manner as God forming

and seeing to the birth of a human baby.¹ The victory-over-chaos motifs speak as well of God's capability of accomplishing the creation deeds all by Himself.

Likewise, seeing that creation is continuously upheld by God even with an impartial abundance (38:26,27) should be enough reason for Job to trust in God's wisdom to take all details into consideration. Thus, Job's puzzling situation in contention should not be a problem. Zophar in 11:7-9 and Elihu in 36:22-30 also use this characteristic of God, His incomprehensibility as at times seen also in creation, as arguments against Job.

As thus, creation reveals God as well as announces the characteristic of mystery that remains in Him. For instance, He alone knows the answers to the rhetorical questions He asked Job (Ch.38ff.). Creation speaks of God but not enough to speak of the whole of Him. For the author of the Book of Job, nature speaks of a God whom they already are certain exists and nowhere in the literature is there a demand for the proof of His existence.

In contrast, natural theology as proposed by Thomas Aquinas (1255-74) touches on the idea that proof for the existence of God is important, as knowledge of God is gained by reason alone through what we can experience by our senses.² Not everyone has accepted this theology. There is a similarity though between Aquinas' idea with the author of the Book of Job in that "God leads us to know him, therefore, by helping us to think straight about what encounters us" from creation.³

Nevertheless, Job is more than satisfied by this response he got from God. Moreover, he became overwhelmed to the point of seeing his own inadequacy before God's majesty, and thus confessing so (42:1-6).

The author/s or editor/s of the Book of Job, nevertheless, has to keep his/their readers' sense of order intact. Thus, he/they show(s) Job to be restored into good fortune after all his suffering. In this, the order of and by God that man sees in creation is harmonized with the order that they experience in their everyday living with the community. That is, that the act of believing that God does not turn away from His creation is part of God's order, even if this truth at times is not at all evident to man.

Although there is a concentrated chapter on the virtues of wisdom, still it can be found among the arguments ascriptions of wisdom to God, such as in 9:4; 11:6; 12:13; 38:36,37. Wisdom is not even spoken of so much as being there before God created everything, as in Proverbs 8. Nevertheless, the Book of Job Chapter 28 affirms that wisdom is essential for correct living and likewise only with God is the key to acquiring it.

Accounts of cosmogony within the book are not as particular about details as they are there to give weight to the descriptions on the majesty and the power of God. Creation accounts in the Book of Job, both as of something new and as *creatio continua*, serve as evidences or as exhibits to the supremacy, wisdom, authority, and the faithfulness of God to the entire world of creation.

The latter characteristic of God is among the strongest reasons why Job insists to stand by his reasoning—that he could not understand why God has seemingly turned His back on him for no reason at all. Wherein, God should have been unailing in the way He deals with Job. Only that, this is according to how Job understands *the* assumption – that is, Job and his friends as well as the

¹ Also at the discussion for Job 38:8,9 above at page 47ff.

² James Packer, EHCB, in, 1982, 146.

³ Packer, EHCB, in, 1982, 146.

community where they belong understand that God repays good with good, and evil with evil (double retribution).

Moreover, the issue on evil in the book of Job is not dealt with separately, as if it's a phenomenon in contradiction to God's will. This concept is not at all present in the book. Rather, the misfortune of the wicked is simply the consequence to his acts. It is God who allows these consequences. In the same way, it was God who gave *the satan* permission to bring calamities to Job. Thus, the book is clear in its declaration that it is God alone who has control of everything.

This omnipotence of God is reflected likewise in the creation accounts, where all powers and phenomena are subject to His will and command. As thus, the issue on Job's experienced injustice becomes a spectacular background against which the wisdom and the power of God, as can be verified from creation, remain trustworthy.