

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Few works of literature have evoked more wonder from its readers than has the biblical book of Job. Virtually all who turn its pages feel they have had an encounter with the profound. Theologians, literary critics, poets, politicians, novelists, musicians, dramatists, sociologists, and psychologists have all been engaged by its provocative story of a pious man afflicted by God. Witness to its universal appeal is supplied by the vast amount of literature it has inspired.

Interpreting Job is no easy task. Its unpredictable plot, its cacophony of competing voices, and its provocative challenges to conventional theology all conspire to leave the reader both puzzled and provoked. To complicate matters, the Hebrew of the book of Job is some of the most difficult of the Old Testament. It is not surprising then that Job's interpreters have proposed such a wide variety of approaches to understanding its meaning and purpose.

This commentary attempts to read the book of Job *canonically* and *theologically*. We read the book canonically because the biblical version of Job is the only book of Job we have. Though numerous attempts have been made to reconstruct an "original" or rearrange the book into a more "consistent" and "readable" form, there is no agreement on just what such a form should take. Further, there is no evidence from any extant manuscript that the book of Job ever existed in any version other than the one found in the Bible. We read the book theologically because the book of Job is a "God-book" from cover to cover. God is the subject or the subject-behind-the-subject of every page. Through its compelling plot and exalted speeches the book of Job explores the mystery of God's ways to a depth and with an intensity that is unsurpassed in all of ancient religious literature.

The Book of Job has the power to engage its readers on different levels. Intellectually, it forces the reader to rethink traditional

theories of divine justice by exposing the inadequacy of the simplistic, fatalistic doctrine of retribution. Emotionally, it stirs feelings of sympathy, anger, frustration, sorrow, and even laughter over its surprising plot and ironic language. Spiritually, it calls the believer to a new and higher kind of piety—a piety that trusts God in spite of life’s cruel absurdities and loves God simply for who he is. It invites the reader, like Job, on a journey of faith that ends with an unexpected and life-transforming encounter with the sovereign Lord of the universe. It is my hope that this study of the book of Job will serve to facilitate this journey to perfected faith for all who choose to read it.

I wish to thank my former students Chad and Deanna McDonald for their assistance in the preparation of this manuscript and my colleagues at Atlanta Christian College for many helpful suggestions. Finally, I wish to dedicate this book to Lois, Katherine, Stephanie, and Kurtis, each of whom has faithfully endured suffering and inspired my own spiritual pilgrimage.

Stephen M. Hooks

INTRODUCTION

Like other books of the Old Testament (e.g., Ruth, Esther) the Book of Job receives its name from its principal character. The Hebrew **יֹבֵב** (*ʾĪyôb*), rendered in Greek by (Ιωβ) *Iob*, came through Latin into English as Job. Though the precise meaning of the name is uncertain, it was widely used by tribal leaders in Palestine and the surrounding territories in the second millennium B.C.¹

The Book of Job is located in the third major division of the Hebrew Bible called the Writings (*Kethubim*). In some manuscripts Job follows Psalms and Proverbs, while in others it stands between them. In the Syriac Bible the book stands between Deuteronomy and Joshua, undoubtedly reflecting the early view that the book originated in the patriarchal age. The position of the book in our modern English Bibles (after the historical books and at the beginning of the poetic books) owes its origin to the Vulgate. Though the rabbis debated the canonicity of controversial books like the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes until a century after Christ, Job's inclusion in the official list of biblical books was never seriously questioned. Jews and Christians alike recognized the book as Holy Scripture in spite of its challenging subject matter and language. The Jewish sect of Qumran (Dead Sea Scrolls) also accepted the book and even made an Aramaic translation of it.²

¹Cf. discussion by M. Pope, *Job*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1965), p. 6; D. Clines, *Job 1-20*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), pp. 10-11.

²Cf. J. van der Ploeg and A. van der Woude, *Le Targum de Job de la grotte XI de Qumrân* (Leiden: Brill, 1960); C. Mangan, et al., *The Targum of Job* (London: T & T Clark, 1991); M. Sokoloff, *The Targum to Job from Qumran Cave XI* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1974); D. Stec, *The Text of the Targum of Job: An Introduction and Critical Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

AUTHORSHIP

One of the many ironies of this great literary masterpiece is that its author remains anonymous. We can only speculate over who he was and when he lived. Evidence from his book suggests that he was one of the ancient sages (*hochamim*), a group of scribes, court administrators, and teachers who were regarded, along with the prophets and priests (cf. Jer 18:18), as one of the three authoritative sources of spiritual truth in Israel. A learned man, he was skilled in forensic rhetoric, the use of proverbs and riddles, and displayed a wide awareness of the culture, geography, and literature of the ancient Near Eastern world.

The author was almost certainly an Israelite, judged by his familiarity with other portions of the Hebrew Bible.³ In places his writings echo the language and thought of the hymnic, prophetic, and wisdom literature of the Old Testament, especially the laments of the Psalms and Jeremiah. He was surely a strong monotheist and a devout servant of Yahweh. His portrayal of Yahweh as the uncontested Sovereign over his created world is one of the most exalted portraits of the one true God to be found in Scripture. The writer also valued the fear of the Lord as the foundation of true worship and the basis for all righteous behavior.

DATE

Suggested dates for the origin of Job span more than a millennium. The early rabbis dated the book to the time of the biblical patriarchs and its authorship to Moses.⁴ In support of this early tradition

³Because of numerous difficulties in the language of the Hebrew version of Job some scholars have speculated that it had a non-Hebrew origin and was perhaps written by a non-Israelite. Without compelling evidence, however, it is difficult to imagine a book entering the Hebrew canon that did not have an Israelite origin. Cf. R. Pfeiffer, "Edomite Wisdom," *ZAW* 44 (1926): 13-15; A. Guillaume, "The Arabic Background of the Book of Job," in *Promise and Fulfillment: Essays Presented to Professor S.H. Hooke*, ed. by F.F. Bruce (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), pp. 106-127.

⁴T.B., *Baba Bathra*, 14b. In the apocryphal appendix to the Septuagint, Job is identified with Jobab the king of Edom, grandson of Esau. Cf. The discussion in Pope, *Job*, pp. xxx-xxxvii.

it is noted that the story of Job has a patriarchal setting. Like the patriarchs Job's wealth is measured in terms of cattle and servants. As in the time of the patriarchs there is no priesthood or central sanctuary and Job himself offers sacrifice. The kind of money referred to in Job 42:11 is found elsewhere in the Bible only in Genesis 33:19 and Joshua 24:32. Job's longevity is also similar to that of the patriarchs. The names that Job and the friends use for God (Shaddai, El, Eloah) are identical to those used by the patriarchs. Further, as noted below, Job shares several literary features with ancient Near Eastern works that date to the early second millennium B.C., the time when we believe the biblical patriarchs lived.⁵

A careful reading of the book, however, suggests that while the events of the story of Job are set in patriarchal times, the actual writing of the book must have taken place at a later date. The author was clearly familiar with other portions of the Old Testament and his frequent citation of the Israelite prophetic, poetic, and wisdom literature provides strong evidence that the book originated much later than the patriarchal period.⁶ Noting this, modern scholars tend to assign the book to one of three eras: the seventh century B.C., during Hezekiah's reign;⁷ the sixth century B.C., after the fall of Jerusalem;⁸ and the fourth/third century B.C., during the time of the second temple.⁹ The arguments for each position take into consideration evidence from Job's language, style, and subject matter as well as the aforementioned relationship to other biblical books.¹⁰ The references to Job in Ezekiel 14:14,20 do establish that at least some version of the story of Job was known in Israel by the early sixth century B.C.

⁵Cf. N.M. Sarna, "Epic Substratum in the Prose of Job," *JBL* 76 (1957): 13-25; cf. also H.L. Ginsberg, "The Legend of King Keret," *BASORSupp.* 2-3 (1946) for a comparison with the story of Job.

⁶Cf. discussion, pp. 19-20; and n. 22 below.

⁷Cf. F.E. Andersen, *Job*, TOTC (London/Downers Grove, IL: Tyndale/InterVarsity, 1976).

⁸Cf. S. Terrien, "The Book of Job: Introduction and Exegesis," *IB* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1954), 3:885-888.

⁹Cf. G. Fohrer, *Das Buch Hiob*, KAT 16 (Gutersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1963), pp. 22-29.

¹⁰For discussion cf. J. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), pp. 17-20.

ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN PARALLELS

The book of Job is representative of a genre of literature attested throughout the ancient Near Eastern world. Philosophical and theological discussions of the meaning of suffering abound in the sacred writings of Egypt, Canaan, and Mesopotamia. Some of these works show striking affinities with the biblical Job.¹¹

Among the most important of these works for the study of Job are:

1. "I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom" – Akkadian¹²
2. "A Dialogue about Human Misery"—Akkadian¹³
3. "The Babylonian Theodicy"—Akkadian¹⁴
4. "Man and His God" – Sumerian¹⁵
5. "The Protests of the Eloquent Peasant" – Egyptian¹⁶
6. "A Dispute over Suicide" – Egyptian¹⁷

These and other ancient parallels¹⁸ to Job illustrate that interest in the meaning of suffering and the role of the gods in the human sphere was widespread in the world from which the biblical Job emerged. The extent to which these works may have influenced Job is uncertain, but it is likely that the author of Job was conversant with at least some of them. Wisdom literature was widely circulated

¹¹Cf. R. Albertson, "Job and Ancient Near East Wisdom Literature," in *Scripture in Context, II: More Essays on the Comparative Method*, ed. by W.H. Hallo, J.C. Moyer, and L.G. Perdue (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), pp. 213-230; G. Mattingly, "The Pious Sufferer: Mesopotamia's Traditional Theodicy and Job's Counselors," in *The Bible in the Light of Cuneiform Literature*, ed. by W. Hallo, B. Jones, and G. Mattingly (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990), pp. 305-348.

¹²Also known as "The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer" and "The Babylonian Job"; cf. *ANET*, pp. 434-437; W.G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960), pp. 21-62.

¹³*ANET*, pp. 438-440, also known as "The Babylonian Ecclesiastes."

¹⁴*ANET*, pp. 601-604; Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, pp. 63-91.

¹⁵*ANET*, pp. 589-591.

¹⁶*ANET*, pp. 407-410; cf. also W.K. Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, rev. ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 31-49.

¹⁷*ANET*, pp. 405-407; Simpson, *Literature of Ancient Egypt*, pp. 201-209.

¹⁸Cf. J. Nougayrol, "Une version ancienne du 'juste souffrant,'" *RB* 59 (1952): 239-250; S. Rao and M. Reddy, "Job and His Satan—Parallels in Indian Scripture," *ZAW* 82 (1970): 251-269; and Pope, *Job*, pp. l-xvi.

in the ancient Near Eastern world, and there is direct biblical evidence that the authors of Scripture were aware of it (cf., e.g., 1 Kgs 4:30-31).

The Book of Job, however, stands apart from the parallel literature in several ways. First, of course, is its unique theology. The monotheistic perspective of Job posed a special problem for the author's consideration of the role of God in human suffering. The book affirms faith in one true God, sovereign and just, maker of all things. Whence then the origin of undeserved suffering? No other ancient work goes as far as Job does in its search for an answer to the problem of theodicy. It's challenge to retributive justice as the sole model by which to understand how God governs his world is unapproached by any other ancient work.¹⁹ Second, the Book of Job stands out as literature. Its characterization and employment of its protagonists, its balancing of lament and substantive debate, its blending of religious tradition and wisdom, and its powerful use of lyrical poetry are all without peer in the ancient literature.²⁰ Finally, the book of Job surpasses its ancient parallels in the lasting influence it has had in human intellectual history, especially on the thinking of the Western world. Theologians, philosophers, novelists, poets, and even psychologists have pondered the book through the centuries and offered their own interpretations of its meaning.²¹

PARALLELS TO OTHER OLD TESTAMENT LITERATURE

As noted above, the author of Job was conversant with the Hebrew Scriptures. Numerous texts in the book of Job find parallels with the rest of the Old Testament. No less than fifty different texts in Job demonstrate interconnection with at least eleven other Old Testament books. The textual similarities of Job with Psalms, Prov-

¹⁹Cf. Andersen, *Job*, p. 32.

²⁰Cf. J. Roberts, "Job and the Israelite Religious Tradition," *ZAW* 89 (1977): 13.

²¹Cf., e.g., N.A. Francisco, "Job in World Literature," *RevExp* 68 (1971): 521-533; M. Friedman, "The Modern Job: On Melville, Dostoyevsky, and Kafka," *Judaism* 12 (1963): 436-455.

erbs, and Isaiah are especially strong as are the parallels with Lamentations and Jeremiah.²²

Some of these similarities are explainable on the basis of shared genres like the hymns found in Job, Psalms, and Isaiah and the laments found in Job, Jeremiah, and Lamentations. Other intertextual connections reveal a shared theology. This is especially true of texts in Job and Isaiah 40–55. God’s transcendence (cp. Job 22:13-14 and Isaiah 40:22) and his sovereignty over nations (cp. Job 12:13-25 and Isaiah 40:15-17) and over nature (cp. Job 9:13; 41:1-34 and Isaiah 51:9-16) are described in very similar terms. But perhaps the most significant theme shared by these two great books is that of the righteous sufferer. The Suffering Servant songs of Isaiah 40–55 have several affinities with Job. Both the suffering servant and Job are innocent, having done no violence or spoken any deceit (Job 6:30; 16:17 and Isaiah 53:7,9); both plead their case to God (Isaiah 49:4; 50:8-10 and Job 13:15; 16:19); both are despised (Isaiah 53:2 and Job 19:18) and then deserted by their peers (Job 19:14 and Isaiah 53:3). One major difference between Isaiah and Job, however, must be noted. In Isaiah, the Servant’s suffering is vicarious. It atones for the sins of his people. This theme is absent from the book of Job.²³

The exact nature of the literary dependency or borrowing between Job and these other books is difficult to establish. Complicating the issue is the debate over the dating of Job and some of the other works in question. Suffice it to say that, with the exception of Job’s strong challenge to retributive justice as the model by which God governs His world, the book of Job is demonstrably similar in subject matter and style to significant portions of the Old Testament literature.

²²There are nine texts in Job that are identical to other biblical texts: Job 9:8a = Isaiah 44:24c; Job 9:8b = Amos 4:13d; Job 9:9a = Amos 5:8a; Job 9:18b = Lamentations 3:15a; Job 12:9b = Isaiah 41:20a; Job 12:21a = Psalm 104:40; Job 14:11 = Isaiah 19:5; Job 15:7b = Proverbs 8:25b; Job 15:35a = Isaiah 59:4d.

²³Cf. R. Pfeiffer, “The Dual Origins of Hebrew Monotheism,” *JBL* 46 (1927): 202-206; S. Terrien, “Quelques remarques sur les affinités de Job avec el Deutero-Esaie,” *Volume du Congrès*: Geneve 1965, VTSupp 15 (Leiden: Brill, 1966), pp. 295-310.

LITERARY CONSIDERATIONS

THE HEBREW TEXT

The Hebrew text (MT) of Job presents the reader with many philological and syntactical challenges.²⁴ There are, for example, more *hapax legomena* (words that occur only once) in Job than in any other book of the Old Testament. There are places in the book where the Hebrew text evidences heavy influence by Aramaic and Arabic, two related Northwest Semitic languages. So different is the language of Job from other Old Testament books that it has led some scholars to propose that the book is a translation of a non-Hebrew original.²⁵ Edomite,²⁶ Aramaic,²⁷ and Arabic²⁸ originals have all been suggested as the basis for the Hebrew version of Job. More recently, comparisons with Ugaritic, another Northwest Semitic language, have added to our understanding of the philology and syntax of biblical Job.²⁹

THE VERSIONS

The Greek version (LXX) of Job generally follows the Masoretic Text (MT), but in some places there are significant differences. Most notable is the fact that LXX is some 400 lines shorter than MT.³⁰

²⁴See D. Freedman, "Orthographic Peculiarities in the Book of Job," *ErIsr* 9 (1969): 35-44.

²⁵This was first suggested by Ibn Ezra in the twelfth century A.D.

²⁶R. Pfeiffer, "Edomite Wisdom," pp. 13-25.

²⁷N.H. Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job: A New Commentary* (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher, 1957), pp. xxx-xl.

²⁸A. Guillaume, "Arabic Background," pp. 106-127.

²⁹See, e.g., M. Dahood, "Northwest Semitic Philology and Job," in *The Bible in Current Catholic Thought*, ed. by J. McKenzie (New York: Herder & Herder, 1962), pp. 55-74; A. Blommerde, *Northwest Semitic Grammar and Job*, BibOr 22 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969); A. Ceresko, *Job 29-31 in the Light of Northwest Semitic*, BibOr 39 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1980); and M. Pope, *Job*, 1965.

³⁰Origen's Hexapla used Theodotion's Greek translation to restore the lines missing from LXX. On the Hexapla and Origen's use of Theodotion cf. J.M. Dines, *The Septuagint* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2004), pp. 97-103, esp. p. 100.

While it is possible that LXX had a different Hebrew text than MT as its basis, it is more likely that the Greek translators intentionally abridged certain parts of the book. This seems especially so in the speeches of Elihu (chs. 32–37) where many of the lines omitted in LXX are duplications and repetitions in the Hebrew. Though there is evidence that the Greek translators occasionally attempted to impose their theology on the Hebrew text,³¹ their general goal seems to have been a faithful translation of the text before them.³²

The early Aramaic translations and paraphrases known as Targums generally follow MT, only occasionally departing from the Hebrew, primarily on theological grounds. The oldest known Targum of Job comes from the Dead Sea Scrolls and is commonly dated in the second or first century B.C.³³ The early Christian-era Syriac version known as the Peshitta was translated directly from the Hebrew and sheds light on some of the more difficult language of the book.³⁴ Jerome's fourth-century Latin translation, though primarily from the Greek, employed insights from the Hebrew and the rabbinic traditions.

STRUCTURE³⁵

The book of Job consists of a series of poetic speeches placed between a prose prologue and epilogue that together form the story of Job. This format, found elsewhere in the literature of the Bible and the ancient Near East, is made the vehicle of an intense theological debate over the role of God in human suffering. Dominant

³¹Cf. H. Gehman, "The Theological Approach of the Greek Translator of the Book of Job 1–15," *JBL* 68 (1949): 231–240.

³²So concludes H. Orlinsky, "Studies in the Septuagint of the Book of Job," *HUCA* 28 (1957): 53–74; 29 (1958): 229–271; 30 (1959): 153–167; 32 (1961): 239–268; 33 (1962): 119–151; 35 (1964): 57–78.

³³11Q^tJob generally supports MT but at times seems not to understand it or to intentionally alter it for theological purposes. Cf. discussion in Pope, *Job*, pp. xlv–xlvii; Sokoloff, *Targum to Job*.

³⁴Cf., L. Rignell, "Notes on the Peshitta of the Book of Job," *ASTI* 9 (1973): 98–106.

³⁵Cf. R. Polzin, "The Framework of the Book of Job," *Int* 28 (1974): 182–200. Also P. Bowes, "The Structure of Job," *TBT* 20 (1982): 329–333; C.R. Seitz, "Job: Full Structure, Movement and Interpretation," *Int* 43 (1989): 5–17.

in the structure of Job is the literary feature of repetition.³⁶ This is not only true of repeated terms and themes, but of repeated patterns as well. The prologue, for example, features a repeated alternation between scene-in-heaven (1:6-12; 2:1-6) and scene-on-earth (1:7-22; 2:7-10). The speeches move forward through repeated cycles (4:1-14:22; 15:1-21:34; 22:1-26:14)³⁷ in which each of the friends speak and Job, in turn, responds. When Yahweh answers Job, he does so in a pair of related speeches (38:1-40:2; 40:6-41:34) to which Job, in turn, responds (40:3-5; 42:1-6). The prose epilogue (42:7-17) shows numerous connections with the prologue.³⁸ In addition, a wide variety of rhetorical and literary techniques are employed to develop the book's powerful plot. Wordplay, anticipation, irony, and parody are used masterfully to both build and resolve the tension of the story.³⁹ All of this suggests that the book of Job is a highly stylized and sophisticated piece of literature. Hardly a disparate collection of narrative and speech, as some have claimed, this masterful work displays significant internal cohesion and observable literary unity.

KINDS OF LITERATURE

There has been no shortage of suggestions concerning what kind of literature the book of Job represents. The following survey represents a sampling of suggested genres:

1. Job is *a lawsuit*. The רִיב (*rib*; legal disputation) was a favorite genre of the biblical writers, especially the prophets. A number of scholars understand Job to be written in this style. According to Richter's analysis, the various sections of the book represent different stages of a lawsuit between Job and God. After a pre-trial hearing (chs. 4-14) a formal trial follows (chs. 15-31). The absence of any reply by the friends to Job's oath of innocence

³⁶Cf. Habel, *Job*, pp. 49-51.

³⁷Most discussions of Job assign chs. 27-31 to the "dialogue" portion of the book. Our analysis understands the dialogue to end with chapter 26 and assigns chs. 27-31 (Job's final defense) to the "postdialogue."

³⁸Cf. Hartley, *Job*, pp. 21-24.

³⁹Cf. Habel, *Job*, pp. 49-60, 79-84.

(ch. 31) indicates that they concede the case to Job. The Elihu speeches (chs. 32–37) represent an appeal to this decision. Finally God appears to cross-examine Job (chs. 38–41). In response Job withdraws his complaint bringing about reconciliation between him and God (42:1-6).⁴⁰ In a similar treatment Gemser understands Job to be the plaintiff and prosecutor with God as defendant and then ultimately the judge. The friends are witnesses, as well as codefendants.⁴¹ While there are legal forms and terms in Job, the lawsuit genre is insufficient to account for the form and content of the book as a whole.

2. Job is *a wisdom discourse*. Comparing Job to its ancient Near Eastern counterparts several scholars have identified Job as a specific kind of wisdom discourse known as “complaint and reconciliation.” This genre is said to have the following components: account of human suffering; lamentation; divine intervention to heal the sufferer.⁴² This view, however, fails to account for the controversy with the friends – the very heart of the present form of the book.
3. Job is *a dramatized lament*. Westermann and others argue that Job is too personal and poignant to be merely a wisdom discourse. Citing numerous parallels with the individual laments in the Psalms, they suggest that this is the genre most like the book.⁴³ These laments are given a dramatic setting in which the friends respond to Job’s laments with disputations based upon orthodox theology. It is precisely on this point (the friends’ disputations), however, where Job differs from the laments of the Psalms. This view also fails to properly account for the story of Job in the prologue and epilogue.
4. Job is *a parable* (מָשָׁל, *māšāl*). In the second century A.D. Rabbi Simeon ben-Laqish argued that Job was a fictional story designed

⁴⁰H. Richter, *Studien zu Hiob: Der Aufbau des Hiobbuches dargestellt an den Gattungen des Rechtslebens* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1959).

⁴¹B. Gemser, “The Rib- or Controversy-Pattern in Hebrew Mentality,” *VTSupp* 3 (1955): 135.

⁴²H. Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit in der alten Weisheit* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1958); also N.H. Snaitch, *The Book of Job: Its Origin and Purpose* (Napierville, IL: A.R. Allenson, 1968).

⁴³C. Westermann, *The Structure of the Book of Job: A Form-Critical Analysis*, trans. by C.A. Muenchow (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981).

to convey a spiritual truth.⁴⁴ Some proponents of this theory understand the book to be a parable of Israel's struggle with the meaning of their national suffering under the Babylonians. It is true that Job's speeches are sometimes called *māšāl* (27:1–29:1) and that his great struggle is intended as spiritual instruction. However, the *māšāl* genre is never elsewhere applied to a work of such length and diversity in the Old Testament and, unlike most of the other parables of the Hebrew Bible, the "lesson" of Job is not explained.

5. Job is *a school lecture*. Job is seen by some to represent the instruction of a master teacher to his students concerning "God's supervision of the righteous and the wicked."⁴⁵ It is presumed that Israel's wisdom schools regularly discussed such issues as theodicy and the role of God in his world. The evidence concerning these schools, however, is scant, and we know virtually nothing about their curriculum. It should be further noted that, though the book of Job does teach, its genre is hardly didactic. For a didactic treatment of theodicy one would do better to consult a text like Psalm 37.
6. Job is *epic history*. Andersen compares Job to the stories of the patriarchs (Moses, David, Ruth) and identifies four characteristics that it shares with these "epics": economic presentation of events, objectivity in describing the actions of the major characters, restraint by the author in making moral judgments, and the use of speeches to reveal the struggle and faith of the characters.⁴⁶ None of these epics, however, come close to approaching Job when it comes to the length and intensity of its speeches. The proportion of speech to narrative is simply not comparable.
7. Job is *dramatic tragedy* in the pattern of the ancient Greeks.⁴⁷ While intriguing, this view is impossible to corroborate due to our lack of knowledge of dramatic presentation in ancient Israel

⁴⁴Midrash *Gen.Rab.* 67; Talmud *B. Bat.*15a.

⁴⁵M.B. Crook, *The Cruel God: Job's Search for the Meaning of Suffering* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), p. 5.

⁴⁶Andersen, *Job*, pp. 36-37.

⁴⁷H.M. Kallen, *The Book of Job as Greek Tragedy Restored* (New York: Moffat, Yard, and Co., 1918); also R.B. Sewall, *The Vision of Tragedy*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 9-24. Cf. also, S. Terrien, "Book of Job."

prior to the second century B.C. Further, there are vast differences in content between Job and the Greek tragedies with regard to the role of the fates as compared to Job's God, as well as the moral flaws of the Greek protagonists in contrast with Job's integrity.

8. Job is *comedy*. Focusing on irony in the book, a number of scholars have suggested that Job represents an ancient form of comedy.⁴⁸ As such it is said to expose life's many absurdities and incongruities and the inability of conventional wisdom to satisfactorily account for them. A supposed comedic plot line ends with the hero ultimately finding happiness. This view, like the dramatic one, is difficult to corroborate from the biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature. Further, as Aharoni has argued, the so-called comedic elements in Job – irony, incongruity, and paradox – are also found in biblical tragedy.⁴⁹

As this broad range of suggestions illustrates, attempts to assign Job to a specific genre have proven unsatisfactory. The book, in fact, employs a wide variety of literary forms. As Lasor eloquently argues:

(Job) must not be fit into any preconceived mold. It does weep with complaint, argue with disputation, teach with didactic authority, excite with comedy, sting with irony, and relate human experience with epic majesty. But above all, Job is unique – the literary gift of an inspired genius.⁵⁰

A careful analysis of Job reveals a diverse spectrum of literary devices employed by the author. The following list is merely representative of its multiple forms:

1. Lament: 6:2-27; 7:1-21; 9:17-28; 10:1-17; 13:13-28; 14:1-12,18-22; 16:2-17; 17:1-2,10-16; 19:2-20; 23:15-17; 26:2-4
2. Lawsuit: 9:2-4,14-16,19-20,29-33; 13:4-12,13-17,18-27; 23:3-7
3. Praise Hymn: 9:5-13; 10:8-12; 12:13-25; 23:8-9,13-14; 26:5-14; 28:1-28 (of wisdom)

⁴⁸J.W. Whedbee, "The Comedy of Job," *Semeia* 7 (1977): 1-39; also J.A. Holland, "On the Form of the Book of Job," *AJBA* 2 (1972): 160-177.

⁴⁹R. Aharoni, "An Examination of the Literary Genre of the Book of Job," *Tarbiz* 49 (1979): 1-13.

⁵⁰W. Lasor, D. Hubbard, F. Bush, *Old Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), p. 487.

4. Petition (prayer): 6:8-10; 7:11-21; 14:13-17; 17:3-4; 19:23-24; 27:7-10
5. Disputation: 21:2-33; 24:1-17; 33:1-33; 34:5-33
6. Wisdom Instruction: 4:7-11; 12:7-12; 15:7-16; 34:10-30
7. Protest of Innocence: 6:28-30; 23:10-12; 27:2-6; 31:1-40 (oath of innocence)
8. Affirmation of Trust in God: 16:19-22; 19:25-27; 23:6-7
9. Proverb: 5:2,6ff; 6:14,25a; 12:5ff.; 13:28; 17:5; 22:2,21ff.
10. Interrogation: 38:4-39:30
11. Epic Narrative: 1:1-2:13; 42:7-17
12. Apology: 32:6-22; 33:1-7
13. Exhortation: 5:8,27; 8:5-7; 11:13-20
14. Numerical Saying: 5:19; 33:14,29-30; 40:5
15. Extended Metaphor: 6:15-21
16. Rhetorical Question: 4:7; 6:5f.,11f.,22f.; 7:12; 8:3,11; 9:12; 11:2f.,7f.,10f.; 12:9; 13:7-9; 15:2f.,7-9,11-14; 34:13,17-19,31-33; 36:19,22f.; 38:4-5,17,34.

UNITY

Is the book of Job the work of a single author, or is it a collection of once independent pieces from different authors? Those who argue for the latter have questioned the unity of Job along the following lines.

Prologue–Epilogue Narrative and the Poetic Speeches

It has long been argued that the story of Job found in the epilogue–prologue and the speeches that constitute the central portion of the book were once independent pieces of literature joined together by some editor.⁵¹ Arguments for this distinction center first around differences in genre. The prologue–epilogue is narrative prose while the speeches are poetic dialogue. The joining of prose and poetry is not unique to Job in the Hebrew Bible, however, and

⁵¹Prevailing scholarly opinion treats the story of Job found in the prologue and epilogue to be an older legend about the hero; cf., e.g., Sarna, “Epic Substratum,” pp. 13-25.

it is also attested in other ancient Near Eastern literature.⁵² Further, the central position of dialogue in Hebrew narrative is a regular feature of this genre. It is also argued that the social setting of these two parts of the book conflict. In the story of Job he is portrayed as semi-nomadic, the owner of great herds, while in the speeches he is portrayed as a city dweller. This supposed tension disappears, however, when one considers that it was customary for many tribal chieftains to divide their time between the field and the city.⁵³ One should also remember that in the prologue all of Job's sons are said to have owned their own houses. Finally, it is argued that the Job of the prologue and the Job of the dialogue appear to be two entirely different persons with respect to their attitudes about God and life. The prologue ends with Job humbly submitting to the God who gives and takes away. But the speeches portray an angry and defiant Job who questions God's providence and curses the day of his birth.⁵⁴ The difference in Job's attitudes, however, can be accounted for on grounds other than different authors. As the rabbis first argued, the passage of time with its unrelenting suffering eventually took its toll on Job and resulted in his lashing out at God.

The story of Job, rather than conflicting with the speeches, is instead essential to our understanding of them. How can we fully appreciate the intensity of Job's suffering apart from knowing of his great loss? How can we understand his protest of innocence apart from God's evaluation of him as a good man? Indeed, who are these speakers and why have they come together to debate so intensely? Without the prologue we have difficulty even accounting for the rest of the book. The prologue not only introduces us to the speakers; it also lays the foundation for the very issue which they debate. Likewise, the verdict portion of the epilogue with its account of God's criticism of the friends and vindication of Job (42:7-9) confirms the

⁵²Cf., e.g., the Egyptian "The Protests of the Eloquent Peasant," datable to the 21st century B.C.; also cf. discussion by N. Snaith, *The Book of Job: Its Origin and Purpose*, SBT 2/11 (London: SCM, 1966), pp. 2, 21, 27; G. Fohrer, "Zur Vorgeschichte und Komposition des Buches Hiob," *VT* 6 (1956): 249-267.

⁵³Cf. M. Rowton, "Dimorphic Structure and the Tribal Elite," *Studia Instituti Anthropos* 28 (1976): 219-257.

⁵⁴Cf., e.g., E. König, *Das Buch Hiob* (Gutersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1929), pp. 3ff.

refutation of retributive justice established in the speeches and records the reconciliation of Job and the friends.

There are those who reject the final portion of the epilogue (42:10-17) as a later addition designed to make the book conform to more traditional theological models of divine justice. Its account of the restoration of Job is considered anticlimactic and is said to contradict the message of the speeches.⁵⁵ In large part this objection is the result of a misunderstanding of the basis for Job's restoration. Just as his initial suffering had nothing to do with any sin that he had committed, his restoration has nothing to do with any piety that he displayed. The divinely ordained suffering of the prologue was a "trial" of Job to determine if his piety was genuine. That trial is now ended and Job's piety has been proven true. The purpose of Job's affliction having been achieved, the epilogue appropriately concludes with an account of the end of Job's suffering and the restoration of his family and possessions. The epilogue closes the story of Job's epic struggle by bringing its hero full circle.⁵⁶ The Job of the prologue, righteous and blessed by God, is again the Job of the epilogue.⁵⁷ The importance of both the prologue and epilogue portions of the book is affirmed by the fact that both of the subsequent references to Job in the Bible emphasize information given about him in the narrative of the book. From the prologue we learn that Job is a righteous man (Ezek 14:14,20) and from the epilogue we learn that Job's patient endurance of his suffering resulted in God's gracious blessing of his life (Jas 5:11).

Hymn to Wisdom (Chapter 28)⁵⁸

The Hymn to Wisdom found in chapter twenty-eight is viewed by several scholars as either unoriginal to the book or out of place in

⁵⁵Cf., e.g., M. Bittenweiser, *Job* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), pp. 67ff.

⁵⁶Cf. discussion by Rowley, *Job* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), pp. 8-9, 266-267.

⁵⁷There are also obvious literary connections between the epilogue and prologue. Cf. discussion by N. Habel, *The Book of Job* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), pp. 34-35; Fohrer, "Zur Vorgeschichte," pp. 249-267.

⁵⁸The LXX version of the hymn is considerably shorter than the Hebrew version; cf. discussion of the potential reasons behind this by P. Zerafa, *The Wisdom of God in the Book of Job* (Rome: Herder, 1978), pp. 130-136.

its present location.⁵⁹ It differs from the speeches that precede and follow it in that it is not addressed to God or to the friends and seems to constitute an exalted, self-contained hymn in praise of wisdom. It is hard to see it coming from the lips of Job, for its contemplative nature seems a radical departure from Job's troubled laments or his very personal protests of innocence. It is likewise difficult to hear it on the lips of one of the friends whose speeches have to this point been rather terse and combative.

If, as the book seems to suggest, it was spoken by Job, then we may understand the hymn as Job's attempt to disqualify the friends as authoritative interpreters of God's designs by insisting that only God knows the way of wisdom. Alternatively, we could understand the hymn in its present location as a transitional poem attributable to the author, designed to bring formal closure to the debate by censuring the friends for their inability to comprehend God's management of his world. It is indeed this very point that is the focus of the poem. If, as many have argued, it is independent commentary offered by the author, it should be understood as a bridge connecting the dialogues (chs. 4–27) with the concluding speeches (29:1–42:6) by emphasizing the point which they will ultimately make: the eternal wisdom which lies behind the grand design of the cosmos simply cannot be comprehended by mortal men. The meaning of undeserved suffering or any other mystery of the universe can only be found in the God who gives wisdom and who “alone knows where it dwells” (28:23).

Speeches of Elihu (Chapters 32–37)

The speeches of Elihu (32:1–37:24) are rejected as interpolations by many critics who see them as having little literary value and contributing nothing to the book's message.⁶⁰ Evidence for Elihu as a late intruder is also adduced from the fact that he is not mentioned in either the prologue or the epilogue. It should be noted, however, that the prose introduction to his speeches (32:1-5) explains his

⁵⁹Cf., e.g., A. Robert and A. Feuillet, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Scribner's and Sons, 1968), pp. 425ff.; Rowley, *Job*, pp. 13ff.

⁶⁰Cf., e.g., J. Eichhorn, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1803), pp. 597ff.

omission from the prologue. When one considers his absence from the epilogue, it should be noted that Satan and Job's wife are likewise absent even though they too have played key roles in the drama. The fact that he does not receive censure like the other friends may be accounted for on the basis that he is presented as a more neutral figure criticizing both Job and the friends.

The Elihu speeches are also said to differ in language and style from those of the other friends. He prefers a different name for God, quotes from earlier portions of the book, and employs a number of Aramaic terms.⁶¹ As Snaith has argued, however, these stylistic differences are not significant enough to posit another author. In fact numerous parallels between the speeches of Elihu and the other speeches can also be found.⁶²

In their present location these speeches should be understood as preparation for the Yahweh speeches. After summarizing the arguments of Job and the friends and exposing their inability to adequately resolve the issue of God's role in Job's undeserved suffering, Elihu's speeches offer new perspectives on Job's dilemma that Yahweh himself will affirm. Further, through his use of the "storm" motif as a metaphor of how God "speaks," Elihu sets the stage for God to actually appear and speak in "the storm" (38:1) in what constitutes the climactic scene in this great drama.

Though challenges to the authenticity of the third cycle of speeches (chs. 22–27)⁶³ and the second Yahweh speech (40:15–41:34 [MT 26])⁶⁴ have also been made, the tendency of more recent scholarship is to take the book on its own terms and seek to understand it in its full and final form.⁶⁵

⁶¹Cf., e.g., G. Fohrer, "Die Weisheit des Elihu (Hi 32–37)," *AfO* 19 (1959–60): 83–94.

⁶²Snaith, *Job*, pp. 72–91.

⁶³Cf., e.g., G. Barton, "The Composition of Job 24–30," *JBL* 30 (1911): 66–67.

⁶⁴Cf., e.g., Westermann, *Structure*, pp. 105–123.

⁶⁵Cf., e.g., Carol Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003). Habel (*Job*, pp. 25–35) has argued convincingly from literary grounds that the structure and flow of the book suggest it was fashioned as a coherent unity with each part of the book advancing a common plot:

Movement I: God Afflicts the Hero – the Hidden Conflict (1:2–2:20)

Movement II: The Hero Challenges God – The Conflict Explored
(2:11–31:40)

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

Located outside of Israel in the land of Uz, the story of Job opens with a portrait of the hero as the most righteous and most wealthy man of his times. Blessed with flocks, herds, servants, and an ideal family, Job is in every way the pious man on whom God's blessing rests. The scene then shifts to a heavenly tribunal where an accuser appears before the Lord. In response to the Lord's approval of Job's righteousness the accuser challenges not Job's pious deeds but the motivation behind them. "Does Job fear God for nothing?" he impugns. The implication of his challenge is obvious. Job serves God only because it brings him personal benefit. "But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face." God accepts the challenge as proposed by the accuser, and this acceptance determines the plot of the book. God allows the accuser to afflict Job with great suffering in order to test the genuineness of his piety. On a single day Job loses all of his possession and his ten children. But instead of cursing God he falls to the ground in worship and praises the name of the Lord. Not dissuaded, the accuser approaches the Lord a second time, insisting that the test needed to be intensified. "Stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face." Again God agrees and allows the accuser to afflict Job with painful sores. Though chided by his wife, Job does not disavow his God but instead defends him.

But when three friends of Job – Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar – approach him to offer comfort, they are met by a man with a different temperament. From his opening speech Job is resentful of his dire situation and begins to question the propriety of God's actions toward him. Protesting his innocence he accuses God of being unjust, even cruel. Struck by Job's impious spirit the friends confront Job, relentlessly defending the appropriateness of God's

Movement III: God Challenges the Hero – The Conflict Resolved (32:1–42:17)

In this model the Elihu speeches are seen as a deliberate anticlimax intended to heighten the final, unexpected impact of the Yahweh speeches. As such they are consistent with the style, plot, and thematic progression of the rest of the book.

actions. “God sees to it that men get what they deserve,” they argue. “If you suffer, it is because you have sinned. Repent and you will be restored.” There follows an intense debate over the justice of God which, though long and protracted, produces no meeting of the minds. When Job and the friends have run out of words, a young man, Elihu, speaks up with some observations of his own. But when he finishes speaking, the dilemma created by Job’s suffering remains unsolved. Finally the Lord himself appears in a great storm. Not directly addressing the issue of Job’s suffering or God’s role in it, he instead bombards Job with a series of questions about the world God has created and now rules. Unable to answer God, Job finally confesses his ignorance, affirms God’s limitless power, and repents in dust and ashes.

After condemning the friends for misrepresenting him and commanding Job to pray for their forgiveness, God vindicates Job by restoring his health and family, giving him twice as many possessions as he had before. The story ends with Job living out the rest of his long life in happiness, dying “old and full of years.”

THEOLOGICAL THEMES

The book of Job makes important contributions to our understanding of the faith of ancient Israel. The story of Job’s undeserved suffering and his search for the meaning of God’s role in it gives rise to a theological discussion that is as provocative as it is profound. Some of the issues explored by the book, though addressed elsewhere in the Old Testament, are discussed more fully and with greater intensity in Job than any other book of the Bible.

JOB AND THEODICY

Whether it be Yahweh’s dialogue with Abraham over the impending destruction of Sodom (Gen 18:16-33) or the prophets explaining the reasons behind God’s impending destruction of Jerusalem (cf., e.g., Jer 7:1-34; Ezek 8:1-18), the Old Testament abounds with efforts to explain or defend the justice of God. The book of Job likewise addresses this important subject. It does so by debating one of

ancient Israel's most widely held models of divine justice — retribution. The Hebrew Scriptures claim that there is often a direct correlation between sin and suffering as the judgment of a righteous God against human sin (cf., e.g., Deut 11:13-17; 28; Hos 8:7; 10:12,13; Psalm 37; Prov 12:21; 22:8). Job's friends went so far as to argue that there are no exceptions to this rule and insisted that retributive justice was the exclusive moral principle by which God ruled his world.⁶⁶ By confronting us with the story of a good man who yet suffers, the book of Job takes exception to this teaching. It suggests that suffering is not always related to sin and that God does not always see to it that every human behavior is met by reward or punishment.⁶⁷

This does not mean, however, that the book teaches that there is no such thing as divine justice or a moral order by which God governs the universe.⁶⁸ A careful reading of the entire book of Job simply does not support such a conclusion. In the prologue, for example, the author goes out of his way to explain the divinely sanctioned affliction of Job. While, from a retributive perspective, Job's suffering was not "deserved" as punishment for some sin (cf. 1:1,8; 2:3), neither was it purposeless or malevolent. It was specifically designed to "test" the genuineness of Job's piety (cf. 1:8-11; 2:3-6). Further, when Yahweh finally appears to "answer" Job, he repeatedly challenges Job's impugning of his just rule (40:2,8). Thus, while the book does indeed rebut the friends' extreme model of retribution, it also defends the propriety of God's presiding over Job's affliction. By portraying the suffering of Job as a divinely sanctioned test of Job's piety it offers an explanation of God's afflicting of the saints that is not contradictory to the Old Testament's larger definition of divine justice.⁶⁹

⁶⁶The Old Testament, however, is full of examples of exceptions to this rule. On the one hand it acknowledges that innocent people do suffer. Abel and Naboth committed no sins, yet God permitted them to suffer at the hands of others. On the other hand the Old Testament acknowledges that God does not always punish the guilty. Again and again he forgives wayward Israel and provides redemption for human sin through the ritual of animal sacrifice.

⁶⁷Some interpreters go so far as to insist that the book was written for the specific purpose of refuting the doctrine of retribution and that it teaches that God is not "just"; cf., e.g., M. Tsevat, "The Meaning of the Book of Job," *HUCA* 37 (1966): 73-108.

⁶⁸Contra Tsevat and many others.

⁶⁹The portrayal of God in Genesis, for example, is likewise a portrait of a deity who is both just and a tester of the saints (Gen 22:1ff).

JOB AND PIETY

The theme of religious devotion to God is given a great deal of attention in the book of Job. Job is introduced as a pious man in the prologue (1:1,4-6), and God himself twice praises his righteousness (1:8; 2:3). Job's initial responses to his undeserved suffering are likewise noted to be free of any "sin" (1:22b; 2:10b). Throughout the speeches, Job vigorously defends his integrity (cf., e.g., 9:21; 13:17-24; 19:6-7) and even challenges God to show Job his sin in his final oath of innocence (31:1-40; esp. vv. 35-36). Though Yahweh takes exception to Job's ignorant and presumptuous challenges against his just rule (40:2,8), he nonetheless affirms Job's integrity in his final verdict (42:7-9) and, by restoring Job (42:10-17), vindicates him as a good man blessed by God.

Even more important for the book's discussion of religious devotion is its exploration of exactly what true piety is. In the event which sets the book's plot in motion, an "accuser" impugns Job's piety as self-serving and insincere. Satan charged that Job's devotion to God was driven purely by the desire for reward. He then proposed that God deprive Job of every tangible blessing as a means of exposing Job's religious self-interest (1:9-11). Yahweh's acceptance of this challenge affirms the legitimacy of the accuser's contention that if Job is pious only because it pays, he is not pious at all. The devastating suffering that follows is permitted by Yahweh to test this very issue. Job, of course, passes this test. Bewildered and even angered by his suffering, he questions God and even challenges God. But he never forsakes his faith in God (cf. 13:15; 19:23-27). In the end, without reward or rationale, he humbly resubmits himself to his Maker (42:1-6). In so doing he personifies what the book defines as true piety – to love and serve God simply for who he is regardless of what blessing or reward he might choose to offer the believer (cf. 1:20-21; 2:9-10).

JOB AND THE LIMITS OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE

One of the major teachings of the book of Job is that the ways of God are beyond the capacity of humans to know and fully understand. According to the prologue the challenge which precipitated Job's suffering occurred in heaven, and neither Job nor the friends

were aware of it. Nonetheless, in their speeches both the friends and Job boldly claimed to “know” the cause of Job’s suffering. The friends “know” that Job is being punished for some sin (cf., e.g., 4:8; 11:6; 22:4-5). Job “knows” that God is unjustly afflicting him (cf., e.g., 9:21-22; 19:6-7). As Yahweh’s speeches (cf. 38:2ff) and Yahweh’s verdict (42:7-9) make clear, however, Job and the friends do not know the reason for Job’s suffering, or, for that matter, virtually anything else about how God runs his world. The Hymn to Wisdom (ch. 28) proclaims that God alone “understands” the meaning behind his ways and he alone “knows” where wisdom “dwells” (28:23; cf. vv. 12,13). Elihu adds, “God does great things beyond our understanding” (37:5). Job finally acknowledges his ignorance of God’s ways confessing, “I spoke of things which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know” (42:3). The friends, by their obedient response to Yahweh’s verdict, likewise acknowledge the erroneous presumption of their claims to know what God was doing in Job’s life (42:9). The emphasis given to the inscrutability of God’s ways in the book suggests that believers should exercise great caution in their theological assumptions, especially when they apply them to the lives of others. Theology is an inexact science that should be practiced with the kind of humility that acknowledges that God’s ways are beyond humankind.

JOB AND THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF GOD

The book of Job is arguably the most theological book of the Old Testament. Whatever else it is about, it is about God. The book’s portrait of God focuses on two different aspects of his nature. First and foremost, the God of Job is sovereign. He rules over the world he has made, and before him everyone and everything bows. In the prologue he is pictured as the king of a heavenly court to whom the “sons of God” (angels) report and give account (1:6; 2:1a). The “accuser,” too, answers to God (2:1b) and can only do what God permits him to do (1:12b; 2:6b). In the speeches, both Job and the friends acknowledge God’s uncontested power to rule his world (cf., e.g., Eliphaz, 4:18-19; Job, 12:13-25; Bildad, 25:2-4; cf. also Elihu, 36:22-26). When Yahweh speaks he draws a contrast between his omnipotence and Job’s impotence (40:9ff), insisting that it is he who

presides over any encounter that he has with humans (38:3; 40:7). As Maker of heaven and earth and Lord of his creation he is not answerable to humans, obligated to explain his behavior to any mortal, or required to behave in accordance with anyone's systematic theology or self-righteous expectations (cf., e.g., 40:2,8; 41:11). Job, who in defense of his integrity presumed to challenge God and demand vindication from him (cf., e.g., 31:35-37), is finally reconciled to his Maker by acknowledging God's sovereignty and bowing before him in humble submission (40:3-5; 42:1-6).

This God who sits enthroned above the heavens is also intimately involved in the lives of his creatures. The transcendent God is also immanent. He is a God of providence. Though he will not be obligated by any mortal, he is, nonetheless, attentive to their world. He acknowledges Job's piety (1:8; 2:3), takes the "accuser's" challenge to that piety seriously, and personally presides over Job's "trials." He patiently endures Job's impugning of his ways, and in the end does appear to "answer" Job (38:1). He then goes on to vindicate Job (42:7-9) and restore his health and wealth (42:10-17). Job's belief that God had abandoned him was proved wrong, and, in the light of Yahweh's appearance, his understanding of God is transformed (42:5).