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CHARACTERIZATION AND COHERENCE IN *JOB*

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Abstract

This study investigates the coherence of the combination of the prose and poetry of *Job*. The text contains numerous features that appear consistently throughout. At the same time, scholars have perceived discontinuity and contradiction in some central features, such as the characterization of Job and of YHWH and in the role of Job's wife and the *saṭan* in the plot. As a result, for several centuries the question of *Job*'s coherence has been an active point of debate.

Through a narrative and philological analysis of several key passages in *Job*, this study argues that the character of YHWH, Job, Job's friends, and the role of Job's wife and the *saṭan* are coherent. I argue that Job's character develops at several points of the narrative and that this does not create incoherence because any changes have clear causes in the story. I also argue that the most significant aspects of YHWH's characterization—his prioritization of his own reputation and his pursuit of speech that elevates it—are consistent throughout the text. In this light, YHWH's description of Job's friends is consistent with their characterization elsewhere in the text. In addition, I show that the *saṭan* and Job's wife fulfill their functions in the narrative of contributing to the characterization of YHWH and Job, respectively, and that therefore their absences do not create incoherence in the plot.

Ultimately, *Job* tells a coherent story in which YHWH's foremost priority is elevating his own reputation, particularly by compelling speech that demonstrates his place at the top of the hierarchy of creation. YHWH's pursuit of this objective leads Job to face undeserved affliction which results in several stages of character development before he is compelled to set aside his questions about the justice of his suffering and affirm YHWH's superiority. The story depicts a world in which speaking in a way that glorifies YHWH is more important than determining his divine designs, which are most often inaccessible to the human beings affected by them.

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary.* Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992
AcT	*Acta Theologica*
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
AJSR	*Association for Jewish Studies Review*
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BDB	Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
Bib	*Biblica*
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BibOr	Biblica et Orientalia
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BLS	Bible and Literature Series
BN	*Biblische Notizen*
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BZ	*Biblische Zeitschrift*
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
ConBOT	Coniectanea Biblica: Old Testament Series
CurBR	*Currents in Biblical Research*
DCH	*Dictionary of Classical Hebrew.* Edited by David J. A. Clines. 9 vols. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1993–2014
DCLS	Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies
DDD	*Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible.* Edited by Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst. Leiden: Brill, 1995. 2nd rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
DSD	*Dead Sea Discoveries*
EstBib	*Estudios biblicos*
ETL	*Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*
EvQ	*Evangelical Quarterly*
EvT	*Evangelische Theologie*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
Greg	*Gregorianum*
GKC	*Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar.* Edited by Emil Kautzsch. Translated by Arthur E. Cowley. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1910

HALOT	*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament.* Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stamm. Translated and edited under the supervision of Mervyn E. J. Richardson. 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994–1999
HAR	*Hebrew Annual Review*
HBAI	*Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel*
HKAT	Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IBHS	*An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Bruce K. Waltke and Michael O'Connor. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Int	*Interpretation*
ITQ	*Irish Theological Quarterly*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JDT	*Jahrbuch für deutsche Theologie*
JHebS	*Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
Joüon	Joüon, Paul. *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew.* Translated and revised by T. Muraoka. 2 vols. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1991
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*

JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KHC	Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LSAWS	Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic
NIB	*The New Interpreter's Bible.* Edited by Leander E. Keck. 12 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994–2004
NIBCOT	New International Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NRT	*Nouvelle revue théologique*
NedTT	*Nederlands theologisch tijdschrift*
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OTE	*Old Testament Essays*
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	Old Testament Studies
OtSt	Oudtestamentische Studiën
PzB	*Protokolle zur Bibel*
PSB	*Princeton Seminary Bulletin*
RB	*Revue Biblique*
RBL	*Review of Biblical Literature*
ResQ	*Restoration Quarterly*

RTR	*Reformed Theological Review*
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SJ	Studia Judaica
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Studies Monograph Series
Sound	*Soundings*
SSN	Studia Semitica Neerlandica
StBibLit	Studies in Biblical Literature
SubBi	Subsidia Biblica
TDOT	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament.* Edited by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren. Translated by John T. Willis et al. 8 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–2006
TThSt	Trierer Theologische Studien
TZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WAW	Writings from the Ancient World
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WO	*Die Welt des Orients*
ZAH	*Zeitschrift für Althebräistik*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZBK	*Zürcher Bibelkommentare*

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Chapter One

Evaluating the Coherence of *Job*

Lay and critical readers of the received text of *Job* have long praised it as a great literary work as well as a profound exploration of the meaning of human suffering. Critical scholars have studied *Job* both because its features testify of the aesthetic quality and literary artistry of ancient Hebrew literature and because its content regarding the divine administration of the world and the meaning of human suffering makes it a compelling source for the reconstruction of the history of ancient Hebrew religious thought. Both literary and historical analyses of *Job* depend on establishing the relationship of the textual material preserved in the received form of the text, particularly the relationship between the material in prose and that in poetic form.

All the manuscript evidence for *Job* represents a text with remarkably little variation. The received text tells the story of a dispute between YHWH and a divine subordinate referred to as the *saṭan* about the motivations for the piety of an extremely righteous human servant of the deity, the titular character Job. This dispute leads YHWH to allow the *saṭan* to reverse the fortunes of Job by destroying all his wealth, killing his ten children, and afflicting him with skin disease. In the middle of the story, Job and four interlocutors take turns delivering speeches in which they discuss how Job's situation relates to the deity's administration of the world and human prosperity and suffering. YHWH himself speaks to Job, describing the world and his power over it and its inhabitants, in contrast to the lack of power and knowledge of Job and all humanity. The story ends with a final exchange between Job and YHWH that leads Job to pray on behalf of three of his interlocutors and the deity to reverse Job's fortunes a second and final

time. Job comes to possess ten living children and twice the wealth he had before and lives a long and prosperous life. Notably, the beginning and end portions that tell of Job's first and second reversals of fortune are in prose, and the speeches in the middle are in poetic form.

This form of *Job* is the only one extant. There is no historical or manuscript evidence that the material in prose or the material in poetic form existed independently of one another or in any other form prior to their inclusion within *Job* itself.[1] In fact, there is no historical or manuscript evidence suggesting that any of the material included within the received text of *Job* existed in any other form than that of the received text. The variant readings that are extant suggest a complex history of the transmission of individual words and phrases. The variant readings attested in the Old Greek witnesses are the result of an exegetical and free translation of a Hebrew *Vorlage* that aligns with that of the Hebrew Masoretic text.[2] The Greek translator modified the source text to summarize difficult or potentially redundant passages and to soften rhetorical points that did not fit in with the theology of the translator's own milieu, with the

[1] The single ancient reference to the person of Job outside the text that bears his name appears in Ezekiel 14:14, in which he is simply described as one of several legendary figures of surpassing righteousness. This reference does not presuppose a knowledge of any of the material within *Job* either in whole or in part.

[2] Maria Gorea, "The Book of Job," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Septuagint*, ed. Alison G. Salvesen and Timothy Michael Law (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 369–83, here 379–80: "The Greek text of Job was reinterpreted by a translator influenced by a Judaism which was different from the religiosity that marked the Hebrew text. Sociological changes were also made….The translator's style is not as spontaneous as if he had written freely, but he seems torn between the duty of literality and the desire to free himself from his model. As he progresses with his translation the omissions multiply. Generally speaking, the OG translator produced a literary rendering for the sake of his co-religionists of Hellenistic times. The nature of the source text, written in a rather obscure Hebrew language, proved a challenge for the translator's need to adapt it to the Greek language and culture, so that the result could only be partially successful." See also Claude E. Cox, "Job," in *The T&T Clark Companion to the Septuagint*, ed. James K. Aitken (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 385–401, here 385 and 394.

result that the OG text is about one-sixth shorter than the MT.[3] The two notable plusses in the OG both represent exegetical expansions rather than evidence for a different Hebrew *Vorlage*.[4] Similarly, the fragments of four Hebrew manuscripts of *Job* recovered at Qumran "essentially corroborate MT."[5] All the manuscript evidence supports a single set of relationships between the material within the text, including both the prose and the poetic material. There is no direct physical evidence to support the existence of any of that material as part of a text that differs in structure, in arrangement, or including or excluding significant portions of textual material from that of the received text.

However, the internal evidence regarding the relationship between the textual material preserved in the received form of *Job* is not so homogeneous. On the one hand, numerous textual elements appear repeatedly throughout *Job* in most or all portions. These include especially the character Job, the presence of three interlocutors—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar—who engage Job in discussion, the character YHWH, a general focus on human suffering and the suffering of Job in particular, and a basic continuity in events and setting. Furthermore, there are not the same kind of narrative contradictions and doublets as scholars have identified in some biblical texts that have led to determinations of incoherence.

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[3] Gorea, "The Book of Job," 371–373. See also Jiseong J. Kwon, "Rewritten Theology in the Greek Book of Job," *Bib* 100 (2019): 339–52; and Marieke Dhont, *Style and Context of Old Greek Job*, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 183 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 29 and throughout.

[4] Tobias Häner, "The Exegetical Function of the Additions to Old Greek Job (42,17a-e)," *Bib* 100 (2019): 34–49; and Dhont, *Style and Context of Old Greek Job*, 28.

[5] C. L. Seow, *Job 1-21: Interpretation and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 5. There are also fragments of two Aramaic translations of *Job* from Qumran. Both appear to be translations of a Hebrew text "quite close to MT," see Michael Sokoloff, *The Targum to Job from Qumran Cave XI* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1974), 6. See also Carol A. Newsom, "The Reception of Job in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *"When the Morning Stars Sang": Essays in Honor of Choon Leong Seow on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Scott C. Jones and Christine Roy Yoder, BZAW 500 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 99–114, here 100–106.

On the other hand, scholars have perceived discontinuity and contradiction within the material in *Job*. The most superficially apparent disjunction is the juxtaposition of prose and poetry. In addition, scholars have argued that the ideology and rhetoric motivating some portions of the textual material contradict those of other portions. Many scholars described the prose material at the beginning and end as exhibiting an underlying theology of retribution, in which God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. This is perceived to contradict the poetic material in the middle, which rejects such an ideology. Scholars have argued that the central question investigated in the prose material is the nature of piety and whether it can be disinterested, while the poetic material functions to interrogate the meaning of the suffering of the righteous and the nature of divine justice. They have argued that some portions of material do not contribute to the rhetorical structure of the text as a whole.

Other perceived discontinuities are related to specific narrative features, and many deal specifically with inconsistent characterization. Characters are perceived to behave and speak incoherently. Interpreters said that Job is patient in the prose, yet impatient in the dialogues. They perceive YHWH to be anthropomorphic and engaged in the prose, yet bereft of human qualities and distant in the poetry and divine speeches. The *saṭan* and Job's wife play significant roles in the opening scenes, but they do not appear in any other part of the text and their absence is not acknowledged. In the concluding scenes, YHWH's final speech is perceived to condemn the words of the three friends and extol the words of Job. But praising Job, who in the poetic dialogues had questioned the justice of his suffering, while condemning the friends, who in the poetic dialogues had articulated orthodox views, appears to contradict depictions of the deity and his approach to speech elsewhere. Because of these apparent discontinuities and contradictions,

many scholars have argued that the received text of *Job*, particularly the combination of the prose and the poetic material, is incoherent.

The view that the text of *Job* is incoherent has had an enormous impact on its interpretation during the critical period. Many scholars have used the claim that *Job* is not coherent as justification for the reconstruction of a multi-stage process by which the text has formed. For these scholars, the incoherence of the prose and poetic material in *Job* was the result of the juxtaposition of textual material of disparate origins. They sought to identify precisely which textual material belongs to a given compositional layer and interpret that layer within its individual historical context. Other scholars agreed that the prose and poetry of *Job* is incoherent but claimed that incoherence is best understood as a literary technique. For these scholars, the ultimate goal of interpretation was discerning how the incoherence of the text affects its meaning, including its rhetorical or aesthetic function. Still others challenged the now-dominant view that *Job* is incoherent by disputing the extent of the discontinuities and contradictions that have been identified in the text. For these scholars, the demonstration of Job's coherence was part of the process of interpretation.[6]

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[6] For examples of those who set aside questions of the history of composition, see the influential studies of Matitiahu Tsevat, "The Meaning of the Book of Job," *HUCA* 37 (1966): 73–106; Seow, *Job 1-21*; and David J. A. Clines, *Job*, WBC 17, 18A-18B (Dallas: Word Books, 1989–2011), lvii; who says "there are a number of indications in the book that it was not all written at one time, but went through a history of composition" but pursues what he explicitly describes to be a reader-response interpretation, one that by definition takes as its starting point the form of a text that appears before a given reader no matter what the prehistory is. See also D. J. A. Clines, "Deconstructing the Book of Job," in *What Does Eve Do to Help? And Other Readerly Questions to the Old Testament*, JSOTSup 94 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 106–23; and D. J. A. Clines "Why Is There a Book of Job, and What Does It Do to You If You Read It?," in *The Book of Job*, ed. W.A.M. Beuken (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994), 1–20. He describes his reader-response approach in both.

There are several other recent scholarly works that demonstrate ways in which *Job* can be understood to be coherent without directly addressing the question of compositional unity. See for example James E. Patrick, "The Fourfold Structure of Job: Variations on a Theme," *VT* 55

Therefore, whether the text of *Job* is coherent or incoherent is crucial to its interpretation. But the lack of external historical or manuscript evidence restricts inquiry into the question to the evaluation of the text itself. This problem is challenging because there is evidence for both continuity and discontinuity throughout the textual material, both prose and poetic, included within *Job*. In addition, the criteria by which a text is determined to be coherent or incoherent is not universally agreed upon. For this reason, interpreters must address the question of whether the text of *Job*, including both the poetic material in the middle and the prose material at the beginning and end, is best understood as coherent, or whether the textual material contains discontinuities and contradictions sufficient to make the combination of poetic and prose material in *Job* incoherent.

The earliest critical claims that the combination of prose and poetry in *Job* is incoherent date back as far as the 16th century.[7] Many of the earliest arguments, such as oblique references to differences in style, have been discarded. In the past several decades, many of the most significant arguments supporting incoherence have been related to claims about the coherence of the story of *Job*, particularly the coherence of its characters. Because of this, answering questions about the coherence of *Job* requires investigating the nature of its story and how the characters are represented. How is Job characterized in the text? Is there a difference between his characterization in the prose and in the poetic material that creates an incoherent character? Does the appearance of Job's wife and the *saṭan* in the opening scenes and their absence from the

(2005): 185–206; Brian R. Doak, *Consider Leviathan: Narratives of Nature and the Self in Job* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014); David A. Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," *JBL* 134.3 (2015): 557–73; and Troy W. Martin, "Concluding the Book of Job and YHWH: Reading Job from the End to the Beginning," *JBL* 137.2 (2018): 299–318.

[7] Richard Simon, *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament*, 3 vols. (Rotterdam: Chez Reinier Leers, 1685), 1:30.

concluding events pose a problem for reading *Job* as a coherent text? How is YHWH characterized in the text? Is it within character for YHWH to respond to Job's inquiries and the other events that precede it with his speech from the whirlwind? How does YHWH's discourse in that speech relate to his character and the events that happen before and afterward, and why does he appear to diverge from the subject of the human dialogues? How do the interlocutors' speeches in the poetic material portray their character? How does YHWH's final statement that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar did not speak correctly like Job did impact the characterization of YHWH, Job, and the three friends? And how does that characterization relate to how those characters are depicted elsewhere in the text? Does YHWH's act of blessing Job in the end suggest an adoption of retribution theology? Complicating such questions is the issue of how the coherence of a biblical text is to be evaluated.

In this study, I address these questions and others related to them by investigating the representation of the characters of *Job*, with a particular focus on evaluating whether their characterization in the prose and poetic material is coherent. Since characters are created by and participate in the virtual world represented by the narrative text, I offer a narrative analysis of *Job* in which I argue for novel interpretations of key elements, including the nature, stakes, and outcome of the conflict between YHWH and the *saṭan*, YHWH's motivations for reversing Job's fortunes both in the beginning of the story and again at the end, the dynamic characterization of Job, the function of the dialogues between Job and his friends, the rhetoric of the divine speeches from the whirlwind, and both YHWH's and Job's final words. Because the evidence for coherence frequently depends upon questions of characterization, my evaluation is organized around analyses of the characterization of YHWH, Job, and the three friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar that are informed by contemporary models of narrative and of characterization and by

recent advances in understanding the evaluation of coherence. In doing so, I hope to offer a way forward from the current scholarly impasse regarding the coherence of *Job*, and, by extension, the history of its composition.

In the following chapters, I argue that the textual material in *Job*, including both the prose and poetic material, is best understood to be a coherent narrative. I demonstrate that the narrative of *Job* depicts a coherent story with coherent characters. In this story, YHWH consistently acts to maximize his own glory and aggrandizement, including manipulating human suffering and prosperity to demonstrate his own glory and have it acknowledged by others. Job is a coherent, dynamic character, for whom the loss of his family and fortune coupled with his friends' repeated assertions that in a just world the righteous would not suffer drives him to question the justice of God before he accepts the limitations of his human knowledge and returns to affirming divine superiority. Job's changing characterization is not an indicator of incoherence, but a case of character development with distinct causes, a phenomenon that appears in other biblical and other ancient Near Eastern narratives. Job's interlocutors are characterized as poor comforters whose insistence that Job must repent so that he can end his suffering and be blessed both drives Job to move from stoic acceptance to bitterly challenging YHWH and offends YHWH, who sees their theology as a threat to his reputation and aggrandizement.

In the story depicted by *Job*, attempts to make sense of human fortunes by reconciling them with human ideas of divine justice are doomed to failure and often lead to a diminishment of YHWH's glory. When the story of *Job* is understood in this way, the characters, events, and themes that appear throughout the various portions of the text are coherent. In addition to an improved understanding of how the narrative of *Job* functions, this study contributes new insights into the diversity of thought that is attested in the history of Israelite religion. Finally,

this study makes a methodological contribution by modeling how analyses that are informed by contemporary models of narrative and character as well as empirical research on the evaluation of coherence can overcome obstacles to interpretation and generate new insights into biblical narrative texts.

THE HISTORY OF SCHOLARSHIP ON THE COHERENCE OF JOB AND THE CURRENT STATE OF THE QUESTION

Previous Studies of the Coherence of *Job*

The question of the coherence of *Job* has occupied a central place in the study of the text since the beginning of the critical period. Scholarly positions on the coherence of the prose and poetic material within *Job* can be associated with one of three groups. Scholars in the first group argued that the combination of poetry and prose is incoherent and is evidence for a multi-stage history of composition. Scholars in the second group viewed the prose and poetry to be incoherent, but argued that this incoherence is best understood as an fundamental part of the text's meaning. In the third group are scholars who denied the presence of discontinuity or contradiction and argued that the prose and poetry of *Job* together are coherent.

Throughout its history, the investigation of the coherence of *Job* has been marked by an exceptional degree of disagreement, even within the contentious field of biblical studies. But within the diversity of claims there is unity in that the evaluations of almost all scholars address a common set of issues. First, interpreters have addressed the possibility of discontinuities or contradictions in the ideology or rhetorical function of the prose and poetry caused by:

1. The identification of two contradictory ideologies regarding human suffering. The poetic dialogues reject retribution theology and support the view that there is no consistent

relationship between righteousness and prosperity or sin and suffering. This contradicts the apparent endorsement of retribution theology within the prose tale, particularly in the implications of the blessing of the righteous Job in the end.

2. The prose and poetic material investigating two different questions. The poetic material investigates the suffering of the righteous and how it relates to the divine administration of the world while the prose material investigates the question of whether disinterested piety is possible and what it might look like.

Second, interpreters have addressed possible discontinuities or contradictions in the story of *Job*. Three of these are best understood as issues of discontinuous characterization, while the fourth is an issue of discontinuity in the plot related to the presence and absence of particular characters. Scholars have investigated the following claims related to incoherence:

3. The characterization of Job in the prose as patiently maintaining his piety despite his suffering contradicts the characterization of Job in the poetic dialogues as impatiently criticizing God and complaining about the injustice of his suffering.
4. The characterization of YHWH in the prose as active, intervening, anthropomorphic, or manipulable in the prose material contradicts the characterization of YHWH in the poetic material as indifferent, severe, abstract, absent, in control.
5. The implication of YHWH's final statement in Job 42:7–9 appears to contradict how Job and the interlocutors are characterized in the poetic dialogues. Job's bitter complaints against the deity and his apparent admission of guilt is seen to be incompatible with YHWH's description of Job as speaking correctly. At the same time, the depiction of the three interlocutors as well-intentioned if mistaken voices of commonly held wisdom is

not seen to be compatible with YHWH's reaction, in which he says their lack of correct speech will lead to their destruction if Job does not intervene.

6. The appearance of the *saṭan* and Job's wife in the opening scenes and their absence from any other portion of the text is perceived to be a discontinuity of plot. The plot requires that at some point YHWH and the *saṭan* discuss the final results of what they have done to Job and what it reveals about his piety. Similarly, the absence of any mention of Job's wife outside of her one comment in the opening scenes, despite her presumed importance in the remainder of his life and his acquisition of new children, is discontinuous.

The ongoing significance of these issues is the result of a long progression of arguments and claims made by scholars since the beginning of the critical period of biblical scholarship. In the midst of the reassessment of previously uncritical assumptions about the unified authorship and coherence of biblical texts that took place at the beginning of this period, scholars began to identify contradictions and discontinuities between the poetic and prose material included within *Job*. Others dismissed the presence or significance of such problems and reaffirmed the coherence of *Job*. Over the past centuries, a lively debate has ensued in which scholars have presented new arguments and continuously reevaluated those of their predecessors to argue for the coherence or the incoherence of the poetic and prose material.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, scholars identified discontinuities between the various portions of *Job* on the basis of variations in style, including the distinction in form between the prose at the beginning and end and the poetry in the middle, and in terminology. One of the earliest works to apply critical methods to the Hebrew Bible was that of Richard Simon in 1685, who suggested that "diversité du stile" indicated that the first two chapters of *Job* were a later addition placed at the head of the poem in the same way that titles were later additions placed at

the head of the psalms.[8] Simon did not explain what features indicate this diversity of style, but several of his successors described the poetry and prose as incompatible in form[9] and also identify discontinuity in the use of differing vocabulary, particularly divine names, in different sections.[10] Although these arguments became less significant and have now been definitively discredited as evidence for incoherence among the different portions of the text,[11] they were influential well into the 19th century and have been cited by scholars who identified additional instances of discontinuity that are accepted in the present.[12]

Writing in 1804, Matthias Stuhlmann argued that the material within the received form of *Job* is incoherent because it communicates differing ideologies regarding the source of human

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[8] Simon, *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament*, 1:30.

[9] Johann Gottlob Carpzov, *Introductio ad libros poeticos Bibliorum Veteris Testamenti: præcognita critica et historica, ac autoritatis vindicias exponens*, 3 vols., 2nd ed. (Lipsaei: apud Hæred, Frider, Lankisii, 1731), 2:57–59; A. Schultens, *Liber Iobi cum nova versione ad hebraeum fontem et commentario perpetuo* (Leiden: Luzac, 1737); Matthias H. Stuhlmann, *Hiob, ein religioses Gedicht aus dem Hebraischen neu ubersetzt, gepruft und erlautert* (Hamburg: Friedrich Perthes, 1804), 23–25, 36–38.

[10] J. G. Hasse, "Vermuthungen über das Buch Hiob," *Magazin für die biblisch-orientalische litteratur und gesammte Philologie* 1 (1789): 161–92; Stuhlmann, *Hiob*, 23–25; Samuel Lee, *The Book of the Patriarch Job* (London: James Duncan, 1837), 36.

[11] Although they are sometimes raised in more recent work, see for example Wolf-Dieter Syring, *Hiob und sein Anwalt*, BZAW 336 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 29.

[12] Seow provides the most definitive rejection of the claim that poetry and prose cannot both be included in a single coherent work by providing examples of this combination in other ancient Near Eastern texts: "the combination of a narrative framework and a versified middle is not unique in ancient Near Eastern literature. One finds a similar combination of prose and poetry in a number of Egyptian wisdom texts (*Eloquent Peasant, Admonitions of Ipuwer, Prophecies of Neferti,* and *Instructions of Ankhsheshonq*…as well as the Aramaic Proverbs of Aḥiqar from Elephantine…there are other texts from elsewhere in the ancient Near East that manifest such prose framing of poetry as we find in Job." See Seow, *Job 1-21*, 27–28.

For the most thorough rejections of the claim that distinctions of style and particularly divine names can be used as evidence of discontinuity among the different sections, see Samuel Rolles Driver and George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job*, 2 vols., ICC 10–11 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 1:xxxiv-xxxvii; and Eduard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, trans. Harold Knight (London: Nelson, 1967), lxv-lxxii, lxxxiii-lxxxv.

suffering. He claimed that the poetic material adopts the view that human experience shows that the righteous are not always blessed, yet this is contradicted when this is precisely what happens to Job in the concluding scenes.[13] This argument continues to be cited as evidence for the incoherence of *Job*.[14] Stuhlmann also argued that YHWH's statement in 42:7–9 was inconsistent with the poetic dialogues, in which Job is critical of YHWH and accuses him of injustice and Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar defend the glory of the deity in every imaginable way. Stuhlmann alleged that this could not reconciled with YHWH saying that Job had judged better than they: "Nur einer, der den Dichter gänzlich, missverstand, konnte so etwas schreiben."[15]

This claim continues to be cited as evidence of incoherence. Marvin Pope described the rebuke of the friends and not of Job as the "most striking" discrepancy between the epilogue and the rest of the text.[16] J. L. Ginsberg claimed that no one who believed that Job spoke correctly and the friends spoke incorrectly in the dialogues would ever compose 42:6b–9 unless it previously existed as part of a work that didn't include those dialogues.[17] In addition, J. van Oorschot said that this statement in 42:7 is in direct contradiction to Job's previous confession of

[13] See Stuhlmann, *Hiob*, 36–37. Stuhlmann also suggests that the dialogues suggest the true causes of human suffering are unknowable to human beings, and claims that it is improbable such a claim would be made in a work that also includes an explicit description of the causes of Job's suffering as appears in the opening scenes in prose.
[14] Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob: erklärt*, KHC 16 (Freiburg i.B.: Mohr, 1897), VIII. Marvin H. Pope, *Job*, AB 15 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973), XXIX; and Peter Machinist, "The Question of Job," in *Open-Mindedness in the Bible. A Volume of Studies in Honour of Bob Becking*, ed. Marjo C. A. Korpel and Lester L. Grabbe, LHBOTS 616 (London: T&T Clark, 2015), 165–78, here 168, refers to this as one of the "contradictions of viewpoint" in the text.
[15] Stuhlmann, *Hiob*, 36–37.
[16] Pope, *Job*, XXIX.
[17] "This view will impose itself on anybody who, though he can understand why a person who held the opinion which is now read into xlii 7b-9 would read it into xlii 7b-9 if the latter were already in existence, finds it most improbable that such a person would himself have composed xlii 7b-9. (After all, Eliphaz & Co. had…only misguidedly defended God; they had not spoken of him in an offensive manner.)" See Ginsberg, "Job the Patient and Job the Impatient," 89.

error in 42:1–6: "Am Ende setzt sich 42,7 mit seiner zustimmenden Bewertung des Redens Hiobs in einen direkten Gegensatz zur Selbstbeschreibung Hiobs in 42,1–6, der bekennt, ohne Einsicht geredet zu haben."[18] For many scholars, this can only be a contradiction that indicates incoherence.

Many scholars in the 19th century found these arguments persuasive and adopted them.[19] But others rejected them and interpreted *Job* as a coherent text.[20] In his commentary which first appeared in 1869, August Dillmann argued that there is no contradiction in the variation of the divine names, in YHWH's final speech and his rebuke of Job, or between the ideology of the prose and poetic material because neither promotes a wholesale rejection of the ideology of retribution.[21] Instead, Dillmann argued that both the prose and poetic material contribute to the work's primary function: "Ohne Frage hat der Dichter die bis dahin geltende Weise, das Leiden mit der göttlichen Gerechtigkeit in Übereinstimmung zu bringen, für ungenügend erkannt, und neue oder bisher zu wenig beachtete Gesichtspunkte zum Verständniss der Sache mitzutheilen gehabt, sonst hätte er sein Werk darüber nicht gedichtet."[22]

The view that the poetry and prose is incoherent was expressed in new form at the end of the 19th century in the works of D. Karl Budde and Bernhard Duhm. These two scholars argued

[18] J. van Oorschot, "Die Entstehung Des Hiobbuches," in *Das Buch Hiob Und Seine Interpetationen*, ed. T. Kruger, ATANT 88 (Zurich: TVZ, 2007), 165–84, here 167.
[19] Samuel Lee, *The Book of the Patriarch Job* (London: James Duncan, 1837), 36–42; Heinrich Ewald, *Das Buch Ijob übersetzt und erklärt*, Die Dichter des Alten Testaments III (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1854); Gottlieb Studer, *Das Buch Hiob* (Bremen: Verlag von M. Deinsius, 1881); Thomas Kelly Cheyne, *Job and Solomon, Or, the Wisdom of the Old Testament* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co., 1887), 66–70; Duncan B. MacDonald, "The Original Form of the Legend of Job," *JBL* 14.1/2 (1895): 63–71.
[20] See, for example the claim that *Job* was composed by a single author in the Solomonic period, by Franz Delitzsch, *Das Buch Iob* (Leipzig: Dörffling und Franke, 1864), 13–16, 19.
[21] August Dillmann, *Hiob*, (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1891), XXIV–XXV.
[22] Dillmann, *Hiob*, XI.

that the relationship between the poetic and prose material is beset by contradictions and discontinuities because the prose was an originally independent "Volksbuch" that was adopted in both content and form by a poetic author who inserted the dialogues into the middle of it.[23] Both Budde and Duhm founded their proposals upon the view that *Job* is incoherent and described a list of contradictions and discontinuities that create that incoherence. Budde's list contains several of the issues pointed out by his predecessors, but he also argued that the prose material focused on one question, while the poetic material focused on another. According to Budde, the main subject of the originally independent prose material was to answer the question articulated in the dispute between YHWH and the *saṭan*, of whether piety could be disinterested: "Ist der Egoismus die Wurzel der Frömmigkeit oder nicht? Gibt es eine uneigennützige Frömmigkeit?"[24] The material from the "Volksbuch" thus tells the story of the righteous sufferer Job, whose trials provide a testimony for YHWH against the doubts of the adversary.[25] Budde argued that the poetic material, however, has as its subject a very different question: "Kann der Gerechte leiden, und wenn ja, warum muss er leiden?"[26] Budde said that the poetic material shows how even the most righteous person, Job, can be purified of sin through suffering.

How Budde's claim has developed among scholars was capably described by one of its opponents, Moses Buttenwieser: "The Prologue, they maintain, is concerned with the question

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[23] D. Karl Budde, *Das Buch Hiob, übersetzt und erklärt*, HKAT 1 (Goẗtingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1896), especially VII–IX. Budde first used the term "volksbuch" to describe the independent, popular tale about the righteous man Job that was used by the author of the poetry to frame his work. But as early as 1871, in a review of the first edition of Dillman's commentary on 'Das Buch Hiob', Julius Wellhausen had proposed that the author of the poetry had utilized not only the content but the form of a "volkssage" about the figure of Job. See Julius Wellhausen, "Rezension [Zu A. Dillmann Das Buch Hiob Leipzig 1869]," *JDT* 16 (1871): 552–57.

[24] Budde, *Das Buch Hiob*, XXII.

[25] Budde, *Das Buch Hiob*, XXII.

[26] Budde, *Das Buch Hiob*, XXIII.

whether such a thing as disinterested piety or true virtue exists, while the Dialogues deal with the problem of suffering–why the righteous are afflicted, and how their affliction is to be reconciled with the justice of God."[27] More recently, Yair Hoffman described a contradiction in the "main problem" of the speeches and of the prologue: "There seems to be no connection between the simple, vulgar curiosity about who will win the contest, the Lord or Satan (or question in its loftier wording: does disinterested righteousness exist at all?) and the most cardinal problem about the management of the world by its Creator."[28] The perception of discontinuity in the primary theme or object of examination between different portions of *Job* continues into the present.[29]

Bernhard Duhm also argued that the prose material originated in a "Volksbuch" that was taken up and used as a frame by the author of the poetic material.[30] Like Budde, he began his argument by listing contradictions and discontinuities between the prose and poetic material. Duhm made several new arguments, but also showed that many of the most significant problems perceived in *Job* relate to issues in characterization, including the characterization of Job's interlocutors, Job himself, and YHWH. Duhm claimed that YHWH's statement in 42:7–9 is inconsistent with the way the interlocutors are portrayed in the poetic material, in which they appear as pious men who only represent an inadequate theology. Nothing about this characterization would lead to YHWH being so angry at the interlocutors that he decides to kill

[27] Moses Buttenwieser, *The Book of Job* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), 26.
[28] See Yair Hoffman, "The Relation between the Prologue and the Speech-Cycles in Job: A Reconsideration," *VT* 31.2 (1981): 160–70, here 163–64.
[29] See Machinist, "The Question of Job," 170–71, who describes it as one of three linked dichotomies present in *Job*, along with the portrayal of Job as patient and impatient and the appearance of prose and poetry.
[30] Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob*.

them unless Job intercedes.[31] While others had written on the issue of YHWH's speech in 42:7–9, it was Duhm who threw the spotlight on how the problem is one of characterization, including the characterization of Job's interlocutors, but also Job and YHWH.[32]

Duhm also identified a contradiction in how the character of Job is depicted in the text. He suggested that there is a significant difference in how Job's disposition and behavior is portrayed in the prose and in the poetry:

> Im Volksbuch unterwirft sich Hiob den Unglücksschlägen mit Geduld und Weisheit und empfängt am Schluss (Cap. 42 7 8) die Anerkennung, dass er korrekt über Gott geredet habe; beim Dichter ist Hiob nach eigenem Geständnis nichts weniger als geduldig, schleudert die schärfsten Invektiven gegen Gott und unterzieht das göttliche Weltregiment einer schneidenden Kritik, giebt endlich auch selbst zu, nicht korrekt über Gott geredet zu haben (Cap. 42 6).[33]

Duhm and scholars that followed him described the characterization of Job in the prose portions as "a model of piety and of silent resignation to the divine will"[34] and "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."[35] By contrast,

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[31] Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob*, VII–VIII.
[32] For an earlier version of this argument, see MacDonald, "The Original Form of the Legend of Job," 66: "Yet this Job is said in the epilogue to have spoken of God that which is right, and it is God that says this. Either there is here the most absolute contradiction or there is the most tremendous irony on the part of the author. There is no escape from this dilemma; either we have some structural confusion that annihilates sense, or the indictment of the rule of the universe is crowned by a plea of guilty from its Ruler. And the three friends that have toiled for God and upheld manfully the justice of His cause are told that they have not spoken of Him the thing that is right."
[33] Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob*, VII.
[34] Morris Jastrow, *The Book of Job: Its Origin, Growth and Interpretation: Together with a New Translation, Based on a Revised Text* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1920), 11–12.
[35] Pope, *Job*, XXIII.

they described Job's characterization in the poetic material as "quite a different Job whose bitter complaints and charges of injustice against God shock his pious friends"[36] and "a rebel, daring to criticize the ways of God bitterly."[37]

This position was most directly articulated in the work of H. L. Ginsberg, who posited a book of "Job the patient," including the prose portions of the text along with some now-lost bridging material in which Job is a model of piety, and the book of "Job the impatient," which consists of the majority of the poetic material and in which Job criticizes the deity for his unjust treatment.[38] The differences between these characterizations are seen to be so dramatic that they can not belong to a coherent individual in a coherent text: "The only connection between the two Jobs is the similarity in the name." [39] This argument continues to be cited by scholars arguing against the coherence of *Job* into the present.[40]

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[36] Pope, *Job*, XXIII.

[37] Hoffman, "The Relation between the Prologue and the Speech-Cycles in Job: A Reconsideration," 163. See also Budde's argument that Job must either model righteousness or complain against God, but cannot do both: "Im Verlauf des Redestreites versündigt Hiob sich schwer. Mag man dagegen einwenden, dass Hiob nichtsdestoweniger am Schlusse von Jahwe gerechtfertigt wird und sogar die drei Freunde durch seine Fürbitte rettet, so ist doch das Volk so feinen Unterscheidungen und Mischungen nicht gewachsen und kann eine solche missverständliche Gestalt nicht geschaffen oder überliefert haben. Vielmehr muss der Hiob der Volkssage sich allen Anfechtungen gegenüber restlos bewährt haben, der Satan mit Schimpf und Schande unterlegen sein." Budde, *Das Buch Hiob,* viii.

[38] H. L. Ginsberg, "Job the Patient and Job the Impatient," in *Congress Volume Rome 1968*, VTSup 17 (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 88–111.

[39] Jastrow, *The Book of Job*, 39.

[40] See for example, John Briggs Curtis, "On Job's Response to Yahweh," *JBL* 98 (1979): 497–511; Bruce Zuckerman, *Job the Silent: A Study in Historical Counterpoint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 14; Syring, *Hiob Und Sein Anwalt*, 169; Machinist, "The Question of Job"; J. Vermeylen, *Metamorphoses: les rédactions successives du livre de Job*, BETL 276 (Leuven: Peeters, 2015); Paul K. -K. Cho, "Job 2 and 42:7-10 as Narrative Bridge and Theological Pivot," *JBL* 136 (2017): 857–77; Zachary Margulies, "Oh That One Would Hear Me! The Dialogue of Job, Unanswered," *CBQ* 82 (2020): 582–604.

Duhm was also one of the earliest scholars to identify inconsistency in the characterization of YHWH. Duhm distinguished between how the prose material depicts the deity's direct intervention in mortal affairs and what he describes as the disappearance of the deity in the poetic portions: "dem Dichter droht Gott zu entschwinden und ist sein Walten nur in der Natur, nicht im Menschenleben erkennbar.[41]" Morris Jastrow perceived inconsistency between the depiction of YHWH in the prose, in which he displays pride and boasts about Job, and the "severe and forbidding picture we receive of the Deity in the philosophical poem" who is characterized as stern, indifferent, and a "cold tyrant."[42] Yair Hoffman saw a significant contrast between the "anthropomorphic, popular, earthly" deity of the prologue and the "transcendental, glorious, abstract" deity of the poetic speeches.[43] Simeon Chavel found inconsistency in how the deity is portrayed both as being in control but also manipulable and bringing manipulation upon himself, inconsistent in his logic for allowing the test of Job then complaining about it, and changing his mind on what is worthwhile suffering, making him a "contradictory character."[44] Like the characterization of Job, the perceived variation in the characterization of the deity is also seen as contributing to the fundamental incoherence of the text of *Job*.

Duhm was also one of the first to argue that the role of the *saṭan* was inconsistent. He said that the poet left no room for the *saṭan*, particularly as the cause of Job's suffering.[45] More recently, Bruce Zuckerman and others have argued that it is inconsistent for the *saṭan* to be completely absent from the dialogues and the concluding scenes after the character plays a

[41] Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob*, VIII.
[42] Jastrow, *The Book of Job*, 43–44.
[43] Hoffman, "The Relation between the Prologue and the Speech-Cycles in Job," 163–164.
[44] Simeon Chavel, "Knowledge of the Lord in the Hebrew Bible," *Know: A Journal on the Formation of Knowledge* 2.1 (2018): 47–82, here 66 and 73.
[45] Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob*, VII.

crucial and starring role in the opening scenes.[46] Wolf-Deiter Syring articulated the common view that, if the true cause of Job's suffering is revealed in the scenes with the *saṭan*, then the friends' conjectures recorded in the dialogues do not contribute to the narrative or its meaning: "Daher muß bezweifelt werden, das eine möglicherweise dem Hiobdichter vorliegende Erzählung die Satanszenen enthalten hat."[47] Simeon Chavel referred to the disappearance of the *saṭan* and Job's wife as one of several narrative gaps that makes the story both hold together and fall apart in "an exploration of the nature and limits of storytelling itself."[48] Although scholars like Hoffman have strongly rejected the disappearance of the *saṭan* as a contradiction by claiming that it is explained by the literary conventions of the book, others continue to cite it in their arguments for the incoherence of *Job*.[49]

The arguments first raised prior to the end of the 19th century have dominated the scholarly discussion of the coherence of *Job* since the beginning of the 20th century. The positions that scholars have taken in the past 125 years regarding the coherence of the prose and poetic material can be categorized into three groups.[50] The current state of the question reflects positions included within each of these three categories.

Many scholars claimed that the combination of the poetic and prose material within *Job* is incoherent and is the product of a multi-stage process of composition that juxtaposed material of diverse origin. Among the proponents of this view are: Barton, Jastrow, Alt, Fohrer, Tur-Sinai, Pope, Snaith, Leveque, Ginsberg, Maag, Mende, Zuckerman, Syring, Pinker, Oorschot,

[46] Zuckerman, *Job the Silent*, 25–28.
[47] Syring, "Hiob und sein Anwalt," 104.
[48] Note that Chavel also refers to the sudden appearance of Job's wife in the middle of the opening scenes as a similar discontinuity, see Chavel, "Knowledge of the Lord," 67, 73–76.
[49] Hoffman, "The Relation between the Prologue and the Speech-Cycles in Job," 162–63.
[50] Such a categorization by nature simplifies the variations among the scholars included in each.

Heckl, Vermeylen, Cho, and Margulies.[51] Within this group there is wide-ranging variety in how many compositional layers are identified, which material is of earlier origin, and the processes by which the material came to be included together within *Job*, even as there is significant unity in what contradictions and discontinuities they identify as evidence for incoherence.[52]

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[51] George Aaron Barton, *Commentary on the Book of Job* (New York: Macmillan, 1911), 2; Jastrow, *The Book of Job*, 25–52; A. Alt, "Zur Vorgeschichte des Buches Hiob," *ZAW* 55.3–4 (1937): 265–68, note that the primary thrust of Alt's article is to argue for multiple layers within the prose material, but he concludes by stating that the author of the poetry used the compiled version of the prose in composing the next layer of the text; G. Fohrer, "Zur Vorgeschichte und Komposition des Buches Hiob," *VT* 6.3 (1956): 249–67; Naphtali H. Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job: A New Commentary* (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher, 1957), LVII–LVIII; Pope, *Job*, XXIII–XXX; N. Snaith, *The Book of Job: Its Origin and Purpose*, SBT 2/11 (London: SCM, 1968), who identifies multiple compositional layers that are nevertheless all the work of a single author. He proposes that the author first rewrote an ancient folktale, creating the prose material, several of Job's protestations in the poetry, and the divine speeches, then added the prose material discussing the arrival and fate of the three interlocutors as well as their dialogues with Job, and finally completed the book with the speeches of Elihu; Jean Leveque, *Job et Son Dieu: Essai d'exégèse et de Théologie Biblique*, 2 vols. (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1970), 1:119, 128–130, and his discussion of the poetic material throughout; Ginsberg, "Job the Patient and Job the Impatient"; Victor Maag, *Hiob* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 13–19; Theresia Mende, *Durch Leiden zur Vollendung: Die Elihureden im Buch Ijob (Ijob 32–37)*, TThSt 49 (Trier: Paulinus, 1990), 275–276; Zuckerman, *Job the Silent*, especially 5–28; Syring, "Hiob und sein Anwalt," especially 169–173; Aron Pinker, "The Core Story in the Prologue-Epilogue of the Book of Job," *JHebS* 6 (2006), 1–27; Oorschot, "Die Entstehung Des Hiobbuches"; Raik Heckl, *Hiob – Vom Gottesfürchitigen zum Repräsentaten Israels: Studien zur Buchwerdung des Hiobbuches und zu seinen Quellen*, FAT 70 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), see throughout, but especially 473–474; Vermeylen, *Metamorphoses: les rédactions successives du livre de Job*, 55–182; Cho, "Job 2 and 42:7–10 as Narrative Bridge and Theological Pivot,"; "The Integrity of Job 1 and 42:11-17," *CBQ* 76 (2014): 230–51; Margulies, "Oh That One Would Hear Me! The Dialogue of Job, Unanswered."

[52] As an example of the wide-ranging variety among the proposals included within this category, consider the proposals of Tur-Sinai, Ginsberg, and Maag. All of them reconstruct multiple layers of compositional strata in the received text but do so in very different ways. Tur-Sinai argued for a long period of development in which the narrative framework was supplemented by a poet who incorporated poetic material that was the "product of a long development and, one may say, of a *tradition* and a school (see Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job*, LVII-LVIII). Ginsberg argued for two strata, an original work that tells the story of how Job was afflicted and passes the test by not cursing God and is rewarded that he called the "Book of Job the Patient" and that includes 1:1–2:8, 9:9–10, unpreserved material in which Job responds to his wife, 2:11–13, unpreserved material in which Job's friends urge him to curse God, chapters 27–28; unpreserved material in which YHWH assures Job of his reward; and 42:7b–17; and a second stratum including much of

Beginning in the second half of the 20th century, a smaller but significant number of scholars argued that *Job*'s incoherence is central to its meaning. For these scholars, the incoherence of the text contributes to the message that the human experience of suffering and its relationship to the divine are themselves incoherent. In a structural analysis that identifies contradiction in YHWH's rebuke of the friends as well as in the final good fortunes of Job, Robert Polzin concluded that the many inconsistencies are essential to the rhetoric and that "by removing the book's inconsistencies, some scholars have succeeded in removing its message."[53] Similarly, Yair Hoffman described as irresolvable contradictions between the opening scenes and dialogues "a definite difference between Job's personality in the prologue and the speeches," a differing depiction of God in prose and poetry, and that the "main problem of the speeches differs entirely from the subject of the prologue."[54] Hoffmann argued that these contradictions are an intentional literary device that functions both as a manifestation of the authors ambivalence on the subject of human suffering and creates alienation between the reader and the characters.[55]

Perhaps the most influential scholar in this group is Carol Newsom, who utilized tools from literary theory, genre studies, and the philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin to identify *Job* as a

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the rest of the poetic material that was inserted by a later writer who intended to "drive a wedge" into the doctrine of retribution by making Job protest against it (see Ginsberg, "Job the Patient and Job the Impatient"). Maag reconstructed three literary strata: the first consisting of the majority of the prose and telling the story of an Aramaic Job, a second consisting of the poetic material and the portions of the prose in 2:11–13 and 42:7–9 linking the prose and poetry and resituating Job as an Edomite; and a third stratum consisting of the Elihu chapters (see Maag, *Hiob*, 19). Underscoring the diversity of these proposals is the fact that all three identified divisions between the strata using similar considerations.

[53] Robert Polzin, "Framework of the Book of Job," *Int* 28.2 (1974): 182–200, here 183.

[54] Hoffman, "The Relation between the Prologue and the Speech-Cycles in Job," 162–163.

[55] Hoffman, "The Relation between the Prologue and the Speech-Cycles in Job." Note that Hoffman accepts the view that the prose is based on a popular legend, but argued that the prose material can only be understood in connection to the poetry.

polyphonic text. Newsom employed a heuristic reconstruction in which a single author intended to "write a work composed in large part by juxtaposing different genres and contrasting voices" because "the truth about piety, human suffering, the nature of God, and the moral order of the cosmos can be adequately addressed only by a plurality of unmerged consciousnesses engaging one another in open-ended dialogue."[56] She said the contradictions present in *Job*, especially the lack of closure caused by the incoherence of the ending, are elements of the rhetorical strategy intended to bring together a diversity of views so that the reader would be confronted by their differences and come closer to such a truth.[57]

More recently, Oeming and Schmid have suggested that the book is best understood as a compositional unity that deliberately engages in a sometimes confusing and unsettling discourse to lead the readers to the preferred conclusion: "Who or what God may be is outside of human grasp–this is the message of the book of Job."[58] Peter Machinist stated that the interweaving of oppositions creates a subversive irony in which the book is "constantly playing on and undermining itself."[59] Through its repeated ironic reversals and contradictions, including the complete breakdown when the dialogue loses its rational cogency in the third round and the problematic final prosperity of Job, the book demonstrates that "there are things in this world

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[56] Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 17, 24.
[57] Newsom, *Contest of Moral Imaginations*, 30. Similarly utilizing Bakhtinian concepts to identify multiple voices is Ham Isaïe Wonsic, "La polyphonie dans le livre de Job: une approche dialogique (I)," *EstBib* 76 (2018): 339–59; "La polyphonie dans le livre de Job: une approche dialogique (II)," *EstBib* 77 (2019): 7–35.
[58] Manfred Oeming and Konrad Schmid, *Job's Journey: Stations of Suffering,* Critical Studies in the Hebrew Bible 7 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 23. Note that this is a revised translation of the authors' earlier work in German: Manfred Oeming and Konrad Schmid, *Hiobs Weg: Stationen von Menschen im Lied*, Biblisch-theologische Studien 45 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001).
[59] Machinist, "The Question of Job," 169 and 171.

that we simply do not understand, let alone can create, and that these are the province of God, in Whom, if at all, they make sense."[60]

Another recent scholar who argued that the incoherence in *Job* is a fundamental part of what the text means was Simeon Chavel. Similarly to Hoffmann and Newsom, Chavel suggested that the different parts of the text are irrevocably connected by the connection of features and plot elements, yet they fail to form a coherent story because of issues such as the disappearance of Job's wife and the *saṭan* and the divine council, the contradictory characterization of YHWH at different points, and the paradox of a "shadowy outline" of restoration in which the innocent but still dead children and servants are not restored.[61] Chavel stated that these "fractures that threaten the coherence and integrity of the story as a whole" make *Job* a "a broken story with just enough threading between its parts to tempt the audience to insist on its coherence." This broken story, according to Chavel, illustrates the human ability to make sense when there is none because "the book of Job is not a story about how God runs the world. It is a story illustrating how human beings survive in it."[62] For these scholars, the incoherence of Job is a rhetorical feature of a unified text rather than a compositional accident.[63]

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[60] Machinist, "The Question of Job," 176.
[61] Chavel, "Knowledge of the Lord," 73–74.
[62] Chavel, "Knowledge of the Lord," at 74, 75, and 76, respectively.
[63] See also Athalya Brenner, "Job the Pious? The Characterization of Job in the Narrative Framework of the Book," *JSOT* 13 (1989): 37–52, who suggests that the dialogues undermine the prose tale by showing that it is unrealistic. Alan Cooper, "Reading and Misreading the Prologue to Job," *JSOT* 46 (1990): 67–79, here 74–75, argued that message of Job is "genuinely ambiguous" and its function "lures its readers into grappling with the most profound questions of religion and theology and, like the book as a whole, forces them to come up with their own answers." Edwin Good claims that *Job* is an "open text" that may "propose many meanings" and that the meanings of individual passages cannot be connected because the contradictions in the text require that any conclusions regarding suffering or the divine administration of the world be ringed with doubt and uncertainty. Edwin M. Good, *In Turns of Tempest: A Reading of Job, with a Translation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 179–80, 203, 386, 396–97. Katharine Dell states "the final form of the book as the author intended it is deliberately contradictory."

In the third group are scholars who have rejected the view that *Job* is incoherent. These scholars argued that *Job* is coherent by rejecting the existence of contradictions or discontinuity within the text and claiming that the identification of such issues is the result of interpretive error. Driver and Gray supported their view that *Job* is coherent by arguing that the evidence of the style and language "favour the common authorship" of the poetry and prose.[64] They argued that YHWH's final praise of Job and condemnation of the words of his interlocutors fit into the consistent purpose of the text: not to provide an answer to the problem of suffering but to demonstrate that the theology of retribution was an inaccurate reflection of how God operated.[65] Furthermore, they claimed that the final reversal of Job's fortunes do not contradict the rejection of retribution theology articulated in the dialogues because it was not brought about by repentance from sin but rather after Job had proven his righteousness was disinterested, thus maintaining the consistency of the characterization of YHWH.[66]

Similarly, Edouard Dhorme sought to demonstrate the coherence of the poetic and prose material within the text by making three arguments. He argued that the *saṭan* and Job's wife disappear because they have fulfilled their roles in the action. He also stated that there is no contradiction between Job's character in the prose and poetry. In addition, he argued that YHWH's final statement directly supports the aim of the text, "to put forward a new theory, that the cause of misfortune is not necessarily sin" by condemning the friends who had insisted the opposite and confirming Job's protestations of innocence which supported it.[67]

Katharine J. Dell, *The Book of Job as Sceptical Literature* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), 209.

[64] Driver and Gray, *Book of Job*, 1:xxv–xxxvii.

[65] Driver and Gray, *Book of Job*, 1:li, lx.

[66] Driver and Gray, *Book of Job*, 1:lx–lxii.

[67] Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, lxi–lxxxi, quotation on lxxxi.

Other scholars who argued that the combination of the prose and poetry in *Job* is coherent include Buttenwieser, Rowley, Gordis, Habel, Hartley, Whybray, Timmer, Fokkelman, Schmid, and Fox.[68] Scholars arguing for the coherence of *Job* also claimed that the prose and poetic material share common story-lines and themes and depend upon one another narratively or rhetorically,[69] or identify structural patterns that extend throughout the text,[70] but their arguments ultimately depend upon the refutation of the contradictions and inconsistencies that others have identified.

The current state of the question features a wide variety of approaches to the coherence of the poetic and prose material and a wide variety of positions that are articulated and defended.

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[68] Buttenwieser, *The Book of Job*, 3–35 (note that Buttenwieser argued that 42:10, 12–17 are indeed later additions); H. H. Rowley, ed., *Job*, The Century Bible (London: Nelson, 1970), 8–12; Robert Gordis, *The Book of God and Man: A Study of Job* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965); 13–15, 73–75; see also Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978), 577–581; Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 35; John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 21–24; R. N. Whybray, *Job* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 9–12; Daniel C. Timmer, "God's Speeches, Job's Responses, and the Problem of Coherence in the Book of Job: Sapiential Pedagogy Revisited," *CBQ* 71.2 (2009): 286–305; J. P. Fokkelman, *The Book of Job in Form: A Literary Translation with Commentary*, SSN 58 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 14–15; Konrad Schmid, "Theologie und Theologiekritik im Hiobbuch," *Glaube und Lernen* 28 (2013): 51–74, especially 53–55; Michael V. Fox, "Reading the Tale of Job (Job 1,1–2,13 + 42,7–17)," in *A Critical Engagement: Essays on the Hebrew Bible in Honour of J. Cheryl Exum*, ed. David J. A. Clines and Ellen van Wolde (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2012), 145–62; Michael V. Fox, "The Meanings of the Book of Job," *JBL* 137.1 (2018): 7–18. Fox does not discuss the issue in great detail, but his arguments for the meaning(s) of the book depend upon all the textual material, both poetic and prose, and on several issues his interpretation points directly against the issues related to incoherence discussed in this section.

[69] See those cited above, but especially Habel, who argued that in addition to "terminological, thematic, and literary" unity, the combination of prose and poetry in the received text contains three narrative movements which together build to the meaning: that suffering and prosperity are distributed according to a cosmic design beyond mortal comprehension and that meaning in life is gained by personal interaction with God. Habel, *Job*, 27–34, 35, 60–68.

[70] For example Andrew E. Steinmann, "The Structure and Message of the Book of Job," *VT* 46.1 (1996): 85–100.

As listed at the beginning of this section, the six issues that play the most significant role in the scholarly conversation at present are: (1) the existence of potentially contradictory ideologies underlying the poetry and the prose; (2) the investigation of two potentially different questions as the rhetorical focus of the poetry and the prose; (3) differing characterizations of Job in the poetry and the prose; (4) differing characterizations of YHWH in the poetry and the prose; (5) the inconsistency between the characterization of Job and his three primary interlocutors in YHWH's final statement in the prose and their characterization in the poetry; and (6) perceived inconsistency in the plot resulting from the appearance of the character of the *saṭan* and Job's wife in the opening scenes and their absence from the rest of the text.

Yet disagreement persists regarding each of these issues, with the scope of that disagreement ranging from the question of whether discontinuity or contradiction actually exists, to how the textual material relevant to that issue is best interpreted, to what the significance of a given issue is in relation to the question of the coherence of the prose and poetic material in *Job*. Many of these disagreements arise because of differences in how scholars interpret the text, while other disagreements are the result of differing methods and approaches. In the following section, I argue that the lack of consensus is the result of specific methodological limitations that limit the effectiveness of previous studies. I then describe the method employed in this study and how it overcomes these limitations in order to provide a more effective solution to the problem of the coherence of the prose and poetry of *Job*.

The Limitations of Previous Studies of the Coherence of *Job*

While the history of scholarship on *Job* has produced many valuable insights into the text, previous studies of the coherence of the prose and poetic material have been limited by several

methodological problems. Despite its refutation, some scholars continue to cite the linguistic and formal characteristics of the poetic and prose material as evidence of incoherence.[71] I follow and build upon the work of Driver and Gray, Dhorme, and Seow, who showed that these features cannot support determinations of incoherence.[72] More significantly, claims about the coherence of *Job* have generally not utilized significant theoretical and methodological insights from relevant scholarship regarding coherence, narrative, and characterization. In addition, many of the claims that scholars have employed in evaluating the coherence of *Job* depend on textual interpretations that I argue are erroneous. These limitations have hindered efforts to evaluate the coherence of the prose and poetic material in *Job*.

As significant a role as the concept of coherence plays in scholarship on *Job*, it has rarely been defined or its nuances explored.[73] Instead, scholars generally evaluate the coherence of *Job* using their own conceptions of what makes a text coherent, conceptions that are not always stated and are less often justified beyond the scholar's individual experience with and judgments

[71] See for example, Cho, "The Integrity of Job 1 and 42:11-17," here 230: "there are a number of inconcinnities between the two sections that support the idea that they were not originally conceived as a unity. Indeed, the very language in which the two sections are written—the prose in clear, classical Hebrew and the poetry in a difficult and uneven language that some have questioned is Hebrew—supports this hypothesis." See also the role of language and form in the preliminary considerations of Heckl, *Hiob – Vom Gottesfürchitigen zum Repräsentaten Israels*, 17–29.

[72] Driver and Gray, *Book of Job*, 1:xxxiv-xxxvii; and Dhorme, *Book of Job*, lxv-lxxii, lxxxiii-lxxxv; and Seow, *Job 1-21*, 27–28. For more on the refutation of formal and linguistic variation as evidence of the incoherence of the prose and poetic material, see notes in the previous section.

[73] This problem is hardly restricted to scholarship on *Job* but is present in much of biblical scholarship: "Coherence has become a significant concept within biblical studies in the last two decades….Unfortunately, despite the large number of studies claiming coherence of one kind or another, most studies do not offer a clear understanding of the term, assuming, instead, that it is transparent or understood." Marc Zvi Brettler, "The 'Coherence' of Ancient Texts," in *Gazing on the Deep: Ancient Near Eastern and Other Studies in Honor of Tzvi Abusch*, ed. Jeffrey Stackert, Barbara Nevling Porter, and David P. Wright (Bethesda: CDL, 2010), 411–19, here 412.

of texts.[74] This state of affairs reflects a trend in the evaluation of coherence in the larger field of biblical scholarship that has recently been described by Daniel C. Timmer:

> There is significant disagreement as to what coherence is, the relative importance of the different ways that texts cohere, and the degree to which they must cohere for them to be treated as essentially unified….The criteria used by interpreters of the HB/OT to measure a text's connectedness are as varied as they are open to interpretation: "Whether we see a whole text or a defective one involves a range of beliefs."[75] As a result, a significant fraction of scholarly publications, whether focused on a text's compositional history or its interpretation, identify and interpret evidence of apparent disparities using a wide variety of criteria defined and deployed in quite different ways.[76]

The utilization of ad hoc approaches contributes to the diversity of conclusions regarding whether *Job* is coherent. They also limit scholars' ability to evaluate the coherence of the text because the methods employed often conflict with the findings of empirical and theoretical investigations that have provided a more effective understanding of what textual coherence is and how it is to be evaluated.

Research in empirical fields including discourse analysis, cognitive psychology, and text linguistics has shown that coherence is not an inherent property of texts.[77] Instead, coherence is

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[74] For example, see the simplicity with which Duhm listed what appeared to him to be contradictions between the prose and the poetry so obvious that they require no further argument, introduced simply with the phrase: "Dass das Volksbuch nicht von dem Dichter der Reden Cap. 3 1–42 6 verfasst ist, geht aus folgendem hervor," Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob: erklärt*, VII.
[75] Here Timmer quoted Edward L. Greenstein, "Theory and Argument in Biblical Criticism," *HAR* 10 (1986): 77–93, here 90.
[76] Daniel C. Timmer, "Reconsidering Textual Coherence: Complexity, Unity, and the Historical-Critical Task," *VT* (forthcoming), this quotation appears on page 2 of the article.
[77] In this study, I follow the definition of text that is not restricted to written language texts, but can include all instances of language in the form of discourse: "The word TEXT is used in linguistics to refer to any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that does form a unified

something created by readers, and the processes that impact how readers perceive coherence are culturally determined.[78] When a reader reads a text, they construct a structured mental representation of the text, in which the various linguistic, semantic, and conceptual elements are associated with one another.[79] Readers construct their mental representations of a text by

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whole." Michael A. K. Haliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, *Cohesion in English*, English Language Series 9 (London: Longman, 1976), 1. The significant feature of a text is that it "is more than random set of utterances: it shows connectedness." See T. Sanders and J. Sanders, "Text and Text Analysis," *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, ed. K. Brown, 2nd ed., 14 vols. (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006), 13:597–607, here 598.

In these fields, texts and discourse are understood to include both oral and written media, and their claims apply to readers of written texts, hearers of oral texts, and anyone who receives a representation of linguistic discourse in any form. For the sake of simplicity, in my discussion I simply refer to written texts and their readers, although the definition of coherence would apply equally to a text (and to its receivers) of any linguistic media.

[78] See R. de Beaugrande and W. Dressler, *Introduction to Text Linguistics* (London: Longman, 1981), 6; Alden J. Moe, "Cohesion, Coherence, and the Comprehension of Text," *Journal of Reading* 23.1 (1979): 16–20, here 18; A. Sanford, "Cohesion and Coherence: Psycholinguistic Approach," in *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, ed. K. Brown, 2nd ed.; 14 vols. (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006), 2:585–91, here 585. For more bibliography see Michael A. Lyons, "Local Incoherence, Global Coherence? Allusion and the Readability of Ancient Israelite Literature," *OTE* 34.1 (2021), 141–64, here 143 note 5.

[79] "discourse processing, just like any other complex information processing, is a strategic process in which a mental representation is constructed of the discourse in memory, using both internal and external types of information, with the goal of interpreting (understanding) the discourse." Teun A. van Dijk and Walter Kintsch, *Strategies of Discourse Comprehension* (New York: Academic Press, 1983), 6. See also Walter Kintsch, "The Role of Knowledge in Discourse Comprehension: A Construction Integration Model," *Psychological Review* (1988): 163–82; Morton Ann Gernsbacher, *Language Comprehension as Structure Building* (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1990); Thomas Givón, "Coherence in Text, Coherence in Mind," *Pragmatics & Cognition* 1 (1993): 171–227, here 174–76; Caren M. Jones, "Construction of a Mental Model," in *Sources of Coherence in Reading*, ed. Robert F. Lorch, Jr. and Edward J. O'Brien (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995), 335–52; Paul van den Broek and Anne Helder, "Cognitive Processes in Discourse Comprehension: Passive Processes, Reader-Initiated Processes, and Evolving Mental Representations," *Discourse Processes* 54.5–6 (2017): 360–72, here 361, see also the supporting literature cited within.

Readers create mental representations of all texts, including those that are encountered in so-called "naturalistic" texts as well as those that are "non-naturalistic." See Paul van den Broek, Lisa Rohleder, and Darcia Narvaez, "Cognitive Processes in the Comprehension of Literary Texts," in *Naturalistic Text Comprehension*, ed. Rolf A. Zwaan and Herre van Oostendorp, Advances in Discourse Processes LIII (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1994), 229–46. This model of discourse and text comprehension draws upon the concept that "human beings understand the

decoding linguistic information and combining it with their own background knowledge to (1) interpret each element from the text, (2) discern the relationship between those elements, and then (3) assemble the elements they perceive into a connected model.[80] No text does or could provide all of the information necessary for the reader to create an adequate mental representation. Yet human beings are able to use texts to communicate, often effectively, because readers draw on their own background knowledge, external to the text, to make inferences that allow them to construct their mental model.[81] Readers make numerous inferences, both to complete their interpretation of the linguistic information and to make connections between the elements represented by that linguistic information to integrate them into a single mental representation which represents the text as a whole.[82]

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world by constructing working models of it in their minds." See P. N. Johnson-Laird, *Mental Models: Towards a Cognitive Science of Language, Inference, and Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983) in its entirety for a fuller discussion of this principle, with this quotation appearing on page 10.

[80] See for example van den Broek, Rohleder, and Narvaez, "Cognitive Processes in the Comprehension of Literary Texts"; Edward J. O'Brien, Anne E. Cook, and Robert F. Lorch Jr., eds., *Inferences during Reading* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). See also "We need to realize that coherence phenomena may be of a cognitive nature, but that their reconstruction is often based on linguistic signals in the text itself." T. Sanders and H. Pander Maat, "Cohesion and Coherence: Linguistic Approaches," in *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, ed. K. Brown; 2nd ed.; 14 vols. (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006), 2:591–95.

[81] Paul van den Broek, Katinka Beker, and Marja Oudega, "Inference Generation in Text Comprehension: Automatic and Strategic Processes in the Construction of a Mental Representation," in *Inferences during Reading*, ed. Edward J. O'Brien, Anne E. Cook, and Robert F. Lorch Jr. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 94–121. See also Givón, "Coherence in Text, Coherence in Mind," and Dieter Haenggi, Morton Ann Gernsbacher, and Caroline M. Bolliger, "Individual Differences in Situation-Based Inferencing* during Narrative Text Comprehension," in *Naturalistic Text Comprehension*, ed. Herre van Oostendorp and Rolf A. Zwaan, Advances in Discourse Processes LIII (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1994), 79–96.

[82] "Text understanding involves more than the construction and retrieval of a mental representation of the explicit text. Rather, understanding is achieved when readers are able to activate and apply their text-appropriate world knowledge in order to generate inferences regarding what the text is about. Furthermore, readers use their world knowledge in order to infer how elements of a text are related, and thus ensure that their mental representation of a text is coherent." Joseph P. Magliano, "Revealing Inference Processes During Text Comprehension," in

It is this mental representation that readers evaluate when determining whether a text is coherent.[83] As readers incorporate elements of the text and make inferences, they engage in activities intended to produce a single mental model of the text.[84] If the reader is able to create a single mental representation that includes all the elements from the text and the relationships between those elements, the reader perceives the text to be coherent.[85] Whether it is possible to produce a single mental model is determined by the reader's standards of coherence, which are "the implicit or explicit benchmarks against which the reader assesses if the established coherence at a particular point in reading is adequate."[86] These standards of coherence are not

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Narrative Comprehension, Causality, and Coherence, ed. Susan R. Goldman, Arthur C. Graesser, and Paul van den Broek (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1999), 55–75, here 55.

[83] "the dominant view has come to be that the connectedness of discourse is a characteristic of the mental representation of the text rather than of the text itself. The connectedness thus conceived is often called *coherence* …. Language users establish coherence by actively relating the different information units in the text." Sanders and Maat, "Cohesion and Coherence: Linguistic Approaches," 592.

[84] For example: if "the referent of a pronoun is unclear, a described event lacks a causal antecedent, or the activated concepts seem inconsistent with the content in the currently read segment, then strategic processes are initiated that may include accessing prior text or background knowledge in order to identify the missing referent or resolve the apparent inconsistency." Paul van den Broek et al., "When a Reader Meets a Text: The Role of Standards of Coherence in Reading Comprehension," in *Text Relevance and Learning from Text*, ed. Matthew T. McCrudden (Charlotte: Information Age, 2011), 123–39, here 127.

[85] A reader perceives a text to be coherent when "it is possible to construct a single mental model from it." Johnson-Laird, *Mental Models*, 370. A reader is most likely able to construct a single mental representation of a text that they interpret to display (1) co-reference and (2) continuity. Readers perceive a text to be co-referential when they can identify the common referents of the linguistic information in each portion and in each statement or clause. Readers perceive continuity within a text when they perceive the "properties and relations ascribed to referents" to be "compatible with one another and free from contradiction." Johnson-Laird, *Mental Models*, 370–71. Note that Johnson-Laird uses the term "consistency" where I use the term continuity, the latter in accord with other literary and cognitive scholarship on coherence. See also Givón's definition of coherence as continuity, "Coherence is the **continuity** or **recurrence** of some element(s) across a span (or spans) of text." Givón, "Coherence in Text vs. Coherence in Mind," 172–173. Also Sanders and Maat, "Cohesion and Coherence: Linguistic Approaches."

[86] van den Broek et al., "When a Reader Meets a Text: The Role of Standards of Coherence in Reading Comprehension," 127.

universal. Instead "they vary between individuals as well as within an individual from one reading situation to the next."[87] The same reader may employ different standards of coherence to different texts depending on their properties.[88] For example, readers often apply different standards of coherence to texts of different genres.[89]

Therefore, coherence is not an innate property of texts. Coherence is created by readers as they attempt to create a single mental model to represent a text. The outcome of these efforts depend upon both the inferences that readers make and what standards of coherence they employ, both of which are culturally conditioned. [90] As a result, the coherence of the text depends

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[87] van den Broek et al., "When a Reader Meets a Text: The Role of Standards of Coherence in Reading Comprehension," 125.

[88] See Arthur C. Graesser, Haiying Li, and Shi Feng, "Constructing Inferences in Naturalistic Reading Contexts," in *Inferences during Reading*, ed. Edward J. O'Brien, Anne E. Cook, and Robert F. Lorch Jr. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 290–320; van den Broek and Helder, "Cognitive Processes in Discourse Comprehension," 364.

[89] Graesser, Li, and Feng, "Constructing Inferences in Naturalistic Reading Contexts" and Richard M. Roberts et al., "Discourse Expectation and Perceived Coherence," in *Naturalistic Text Comprehension*, ed. Herre van Oostendorp and Rolf A. Zwaan, Advances in Discourse Processes LIII (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1994), 189–202. Also van den Broek et al., "When a Reader Meets a Text: The Role of Standards of Coherence in Reading Comprehension," 131: "Properties of a specific text, such as its content, structure, genre, and difficulty level, affect the pattern of processing….Likewise, the genre of the text may trigger certain standards. For instance, a narrative is likely to elicit standards of referential and causal coherence, whereas expository texts tend to elicit standards of logical coherence and of integration with background knowledge."

[90] "Because of the undetermined nature of the relations in a text, it generally is assumed that coherence is heavily dependent on inferential processes on the part of the reader." See Paul van den Broek, Kirsten Risden, and Elizabeth Husebye-Hartman, "The Role of Readers' Standards for Coherence in the Generation of Inferences During Reading," in *Sources of Coherence in Reading*, ed. Robert F. Lorch, Jr. and Edward J. O'Brien (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995), 353–72, here 353. This is articulated more directly by Gernsbacher and Givón, who define coherence as "a mental phenomenon" and as a "a property of what emerges during speech production and comprehension – the mentally represented text, and in particular the mental processes that partake in constructing that mental representation." Morton Ann Gernsbacher and T. Givón, "Introduction: Coherence as a Mental Entity," in *Coherence in Spontaneous Text*, ed. Morton Ann Gernsbacher and T. Givon, Typological Studies in Language 31 (Philadelphia: J. Benjamins, 1995), vi–x, vii.

upon the reader's background knowledge, reading practices, and determination of the text's genre. In other words, how coherence is evaluated and dealt with varies depending upon what Stanley Fish and reader-response critics would call the "interpretive community" to which the reader belongs, and readers applying different standards of coherence can perceive the coherence of the same text differently.[91]

The principles established by empirical research into coherence have necessary implications for how the coherence of a text must be evaluated. Evaluations of coherence should center on the mental model that is used to represent the text rather than simply upon the text itself, with special attention paid to the type of mental model used to represent texts of that particular type or genre. Moreover, that standards of coherence are not universal should be acknowledged and scholars should specify which standards they employ and justify why they are most effective for their analysis.[92] The scholarship addressing the coherence of *Job* is limited because it does not account for the cultural specificity of standards of coherence, instead often assuming that coherence is an innate property of texts that can be evaluated by universally shared standards. Those that do not make this assumption rarely indicate the standards they are employing or why their standards are the most effective. In this study, I utilize a methodological approach that illuminates the type of mental model readers use to represent *Job*. Moreover, I discuss which standards of coherence I employ and make an argument for their effectiveness.

Another problem that has limited previous scholarship is the lack of a theoretical foundation for the relationship between coherence and genre which has made it difficult to

[91] Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).
[92] See especially van den Broek et al., "When a Reader Meets a Text: The Role of Standards of Coherence in Reading Comprehension," 128.

identify the genre designation that is most effective for evaluating the coherence of *Job*. There has been no shortage of efforts to identify the genre of *Job*, and scholars such as Carol Newsom have recognized the importance of genre in evaluating the text's coherence.[93] But the common approach to genre employed in biblical studies, while valuable for other functions, does not always identify the genre that is most effective for evaluating coherence. The research discussed above shows that the coherence of a text is determined by whether it can be represented by a single mental model. Therefore, because different types of texts are represented by different types of mental models and because different standards of coherence are employed to evaluate texts of different types, the coherence of a text depends, in part, upon what type of text it is understood to be.[94] But the ability of scholars to identify the genre of *Job* that best reflects the mental model constructed by readers of the text has been limited by the entanglement of form and genre within biblical studies in the past several centuries.

In biblical studies, genre has often been equated with form or the intersection between form and theme:

> Since the beginning of the last century, biblical scholars have often instead treated generic issues as an aspect of form-critical study, to the extent, indeed, that many seem either to regard form criticism as a substitute for the study of genre, or at least to accept the use of concepts and vocabulary from form criticism where other scholars would speak of genre.[95]

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[93] For example, see the role of genre in Newsom, *Contest of Moral Imaginations.*
[94] Readers utilize different standards of coherence depending on "the type of discourse they believe a text to be." See Roberts et al., "Discourse Expectation and Perceived Coherence," 190.
[95] Weeks, "Wisdom, Form and Genre," 164. For more on how scholars of the ancient Near East adopt a view of genre as "the point of intersection between theme and form" and how this tendency was introduced by Gunkel, leading to "genre and form bec[oming] essentially synonymous in many standard works in the field" see Knapp, *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient*

In form criticism, scholars seek to identify characteristics appearing across multiple texts and then construct both the oral template from which all these texts were patterned and the social setting or *Sitz im Leben* in which such an oral text, or *Gattung* would have operated.[96] Because one of the goals of form criticism is the recovery of the hypothetical template and its social conditions, it is fundamentally essentialist, with form critics who "typically operated on the assumption 'that there is a single correct or 'natural' classification for literary texts' that can be determined based on a strong and inflexible network of relationships among form, mood, and *Sitz im Leben*."[97]

The influence of form criticism has led much study of the genre of biblical texts to depend on the compilation of lists of characteristics, identification of social contexts that hypothetically produced such characteristics, and the formation of rigid, monolithic genre categories, rather than thoroughly investigating how specific features and perceptions of texts contribute to textual communication, meaning, and interpretation.[98] In this form-critical

Near East, 31–33; and Markus Witte, "Literary Genres of Old Testament Wisdom," in *The Oxford Handbook of Wisdom and the Bible*, ed. Will Kynes (Oxford University Press, 2021), 353–72, here 356–57.

[96] This is what form criticism became and at times still is today, but whether these types of analyses are what Gunkel had in mind when he pioneered his methods is uncertain. Gunkel restricted the bulk of his analyses to a small set of texts in Genesis and the Psalms, and did not participate in operations of fragmentation at the same scale as his successors such as Gerhard von Rad and Martin Noth.

[97] Angela Roskop Erisman, "The Genres of the Pentateuch and Their Social Settings," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Pentateuch*, ed. Joel Baden and Jeffrey Stackert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 363–78, here 366–67.

[98] On the influence of form critical methods and ideas on genre study, see Roskop Erisman, "The Genres of the Pentateuch and Their Social Settings," 366–69; Barbara Green, "Genre Criticism and the Prophets," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Minor Prophets*, ed. Carolyn J. Sharp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 258–76, here 259–61; and Will Kynes, *An Obituary for "Wisdom Literature": The Birth, Death, and Intertextual Reintegration of a Biblical Corpus*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 108.

influenced view, genre is a logical class that is "defined by a set of features, possession of which is necessary and sufficient for membership."[99]

The classical conception of genre utilized in biblical studies has produced valuable interpretive insights into a wide range of texts, and I do not argue for discarding it or its fruits in their entirety. But this approach is not the most effective for evaluating coherence because it does not align with how human beings create mental categories and determine which entities belong to which category. Research on human cognition pioneered by Eleanor Rosch[100] and George Lakoff[101] has shown that when human beings categorize any kind of entities, be they objects, ideas, people, actions, or anything else, they create their mental categories "as elements of mental models that characterize prototypical or central subcategories and cases, and get extended to noncentral cases according to cognitive principles."[102] Some entities within a category are

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[99] Michael Sinding, "After Definitions: Genre, Categories, and Cognitive Science," *Genre* 35.2 (2002): 181–219, here 182. Sinding is summarizing Mark Turner.

[100] Eleanor H. Rosch, "Natural Categories," *Cognitive Psychology* 4.3 (1973): 328–50; "Cognitive Representations of Semantic Categories," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 104.3 (1975): 192–233; and Eleanor Rosch et al., "Basic Objects in Natural Categories," *Cognitive Psychology* 8.3 (1976): 382–439.

[101] George Lakoff, "Categories: An Essay in Cognitive Linguistics," in *Linguistics in the Morning Calm: Selected Papers from SICOL-1981*, ed. Linguistic Society of Korea (Seoul: Hanshin, 1982), 139–93; "Prototype Theory and Cognitive Models," in *The Intellectual and Ecological Bases of Concepts.*, ed. Ulrich Neisser (Cambridge University Press, 1987), 63–100; *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

[102] Sinding, "Genre, Categories, and Cognitive Science," 184–85. These principles were first demonstrated in Rosch's experiments, which began by studying how human beings conceptualized colors and birds before she and her successors showed that these findings applied to a broad range of domains of human cognition: objects, forms, event sequences, and more.

One example of the broad and enduring influence of this work is the concept of scripts as a set of categories by which human beings comprehend and interpret sequences of events. The concept has been so productive that the literature is too voluminous to cite even in survey, see as examples Roger C. Schank and Robert P. Abelson, *Scripts, Plans, Goals, and Understanding: An Inquiry into Human Knowledge Structures* (Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1977); Gordon Bower, John B. Black, and Terrence J. Turner, "Scripts in Memory for Text," *Cognitive Psychology* 11 (1979): 177–220; Susan T. Fiske and Patricia W. Linville, "What Does the Schema Concept Buy Us?," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 6.4 (1980): 543–57;

characterized as better representatives of the category than others, even as those less-representative entities are still included in the category. The entities that are most representative of the category are called "natural prototypes." For example, in Rosch's early experiments, she found that her subjects included parrots, chickens, and penguins within their category of 'bird,' but the parrot was a better example of bird than a chicken, and a chicken was a better example of a bird than a penguin. Her subjects found the robin to be the best example of the category, making the robin a "natural prototype" of the category "bird."[103]

Rosch and her successors also found that membership in a category was determined by "clusters of attributes that characterize the most representative members."[104] The category is defined by the attributes possessed by its natural prototypes, but no single attribute is necessary or sufficient for category membership. In other words, there is no single attribute that guarantees membership in a category, nor is there a single attribute that disqualifies an entity from membership in a category. Instead, those entities with a lower concentration of the relevant attributes may still be included in the category, even if they are perceived to be less prototypical than those with a higher concentration of the relevant attributes. But it is certain that human

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Raymond W. Gibbs and Yvette J. Tenney, "The Concept of Scripts in Understanding Stories," *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* 9.3 (1980): 275–84; James T. Austin and Jeffrey B. Vancouver, "Goal Constructs in Psychology: Structure, Process, and Content," *Psychological Bulletin* 120.3 (1996): 338–75; Joan M. Lucariello and Catherine Mindolovich, "The Best Laid Plans...: Beyond Scripts are Counterscripts," *Journal of Cognition and Development* 3.1 (2002): 91–115; J. M. Mandler, *Stories, Scripts, and Scenes: Aspects of Schema Theory* (Psychology Press, 2014); Christina E. Webb, Indira C. Turney, and Nancy A. Dennis, "What's the Gist? The Influence of Schemas on the Neural Correlates Underlying True and False Memories," *Neuropsychologia* 93 (2016): 61–75.

[103] Rosch, "Cognitive Representations of Semantic Categories," 198 and 232. Rosch also provided her respondents best and worst representatives of 'sport' (football and sunbathing); clothing (pants and cane); vegetable (pea and rice); and furniture (chair and telephone), among others.

[104] Lakoff, "Categories: An Essay in Cognitive Linguistics," 146.

beings can and do include entities that possess some but not all of a category's relevant attributes within that category.[105]

Lakoff showed that these effects are explained by the impact of "idealized cognitive models," cognitive structures that human beings create on the basis of their experience in the world to organize their knowledge and define meaningful concepts.[106] An idealized cognitive model or ICM organizes information related to a specific concept including various elements that are typically associated with that concept, its relationship to other concepts, and other significant information. Lakoff used the example of "week" to demonstrate what kind of information is structured in an ICM:

> Take the English word *Tuesday*. *Tuesday* can be defined only relative to an idealized model that includes the natural cycle of defined by the movement of the sun, the standard means of characterizing the end of one day and the beginning of the next, and a larger seven-day calendric cycle—the week. In the idealized model, the week is a whole with seven parts organized in a linear sequence; each part is called a *day*, and the third is *Tuesday*. Similarly, the concept *weekend* requires a notion of a *work week* of five days followed by a break of two days, superimposed on the seven day calendar.[107]

Lakoff's example shows that these idealized cognitive models can be quite complex, organizing large numbers of concepts and complex relationships. The ICM associated with "week" in Lakoff's example is of a relatively simple concept but includes multiple structures of information and the relationships between all the elements with each of these structures. It also shows why

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[105] Eleanor Rosch and Carolyn B. Mervis, "Family Resemblances: Studies in the Internal Structure of Categories," *Cognitive Psychology* 7.4 (1975): 573–605, here 580–82.
[106] First proposed in Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*.
[107] Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 68–69.

the term "idealized" is included in the label: Lakoff was careful to point out that this concept of a "week" does not correspond to any specific entity that exists in the real world but rather was an idealized, abstracted notion of the concept. This is true of all ICMs, be they associated with something abstract like "time" or "truth" or something that is more concrete, such as a "bird" or "chair." The ICM associated with a chair is not a representation of any single, actual chair, but is a simplified representation of the concept of chair that has been constructed as the human being has experienced the world.

These idealized cognitive models play a central role in how human beings categorize. When they encounter an object, idea, or any kind of entity, they construct a cognitive model of that entity and then compare it to the idealized prototype of a concept as defined by its idealized cognitive model. If there is little or no resemblance, then it is not included within that category. If there is limited resemblance, then the entity is included as a less-representative member of that category. If the resemblance is strong, then the entity is included as a prototypical member of that category.[108]

These findings about how human beings comprehend and populate conceptual categories show that the classical approach to genre in biblical studies is not effective in determining the genre of a text that is most effective for evaluating its coherence. The classical approach to genre differs significantly from how human beings comprehend and categorize texts and is therefore not effective in determining the mental category within which a text is included nor what type of mental model is used to represent the text. The classical approach to genre prioritizes formal

[108] For more on ICMs and their role in categorization, see Sinding, "Genre, Categories, and Cognitive Science," especially 193–98; George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 68–156; and Daniel Chandler, "Schema Theory and the Interpretation of Television Programmes," April 1997, http://www.visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/short/schematv.html.

characteristics and groups texts on the basis of a commonly occurring *Sitz-im-Leben*, while human beings do not. The classical approach defines a genre by lists of features which are necessary and sufficient for membership, while human beings define a genre by relationship to prototypical members.[109] The classical approach typically restricts a text to inclusion within one genre, while human beings include an entity within multiple conceptual classes if it bears sufficient similarity to their prototypes.[110]

As a result, previous studies of the coherence of *Job* have been limited because many of the claims arguing that the combination of poetry and prose are incoherent are influenced by genre designations that do not align with the mental categories that determine coherence.[111] For example, the common tendency to associate all of *Job* with wisdom or didactic literature has led many scholars to equate the concerns of the characters and speakers in the text as the issues that the text functions to address.[112] Because the opening scenes are centered upon YHWH and the *saṭan*'s attempt to answer the question of whether Job's righteousness is disinterested, scholars

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[109] "There are no strict defining features of the class; rather, certain prototypical members function as springboards for extension of the class according to certain prototypical themes." Sinding, "Genre, Categories, and Cognitive Science," 188.

[110] Some biblical scholars have recognized the limitations of the classical approach to genre and proposed alternatives. See for example Kynes, *An Obituary for "Wisdom Literature,"* and Roskop Erisman, "The Genres of the Pentateuch and Their Social Settings." See also Martin J. Buss, *Biblical Form Criticism in Its Context*, JSOTSup 274 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 255–56.

[111] For example, some of the earliest scholars to argue for the incoherence of *Job* viewed the text as scripture or theodicy. As the genre of *Job*, scripture is certainly anachronistic, but so is theodicy. The term 'theodicy' only originated in the early 18th century in the writings of G. W. Leibniz (*Essais de Théodicée Sur La Bonté de Dieu, La Liberté de l'homme et l'origine Du Mal* [Amsterdam: Isaac Troyel Libraire, 1710]) and its suitability as a literary category for ancient texts is fraught, at least. Even as it is clear that the question of suffering and how it relates to the divine administration appears in ancient Near Eastern texts, the existence of a specific generic category is far more dubious.

[112] See for example the quotations cited above in Budde, *Das Buch Hiob*, XXII; Buttenwieser, *The Book of Job*, 26; more recently Machinist, "The Question of Job," 170.

who identify *Job* as wisdom or didactic literature are motivated to identify the resolution of this question as the primary rhetorical function of the opening scenes.[113] Below, I argue that the categorical identification most effective for evaluating the coherence of *Job* is that of narrative.[114] This generic identification allows for alternative interpretations of the relationship between the subjects of character speech and the rhetorical focus or underlying ideology of the text itself. Similarly, just because Job and his interlocutors are debating questions of divine justice and how YHWH administers justice does not mean that the function of the dialogues is to provide an answer to that question. That could be the function of these narrative texts, but, as I argue in the chapters on the opening scenes and on the dialogues, there are alternatives better supported by the text.

Finally, previous scholarly evaluations of the coherence of *Job* are limited because some of their interpretations of the story and its features, especially its characters, are inaccurate. This limitation is in part due to the lack of a theoretical basis for defining what a character is and what would make a character coherent or not. Without such a basis, scholarly evaluations of the characters in *Job* often rely upon an assumption that coherent characters must be unchanging, monolithic, and one-dimensional. This assumption affects the perception of discontinuity of characterization of YHWH, Job, and the three interlocutors Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar, all of whom are perceived to be portrayed differently in different sections. Such variation could create incoherence, but other possible explanations for dynamic or varied characterization are not

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[113] For the arguments against the value of the genre of "wisdom literature" see Stuart Weeks, "Wisdom, Form and Genre," in *Was There a Wisdom Tradition? New Perspectives in Israelite Wisdom Studies*, ed. Mark Sneed, AIL 23 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 161–78; and Kynes, *An Obituary for "Wisdom Literature"* and the discussion of the genre of *Job* below. While the conversation about the reality of 'wisdom literature' continues, I demonstrate in the following that narrative is the genre designation best suited for evaluating *Job*'s coherence.

[114] This argument is developed in detail in following sections of this chapter.

adequately considered. Similarly, a robust understanding of coherence sheds new light on the questions associated with the continuity of the plot in relation to the absence of Job's wife and of the *saṭan* after the opening scenes. The characters of *Job* are not often treated as literary characters capable of individual change or dynamic function in the text, and many studies are limited in not considering other possibilities adequately or at all. In this study, I utilize insights from the study of narrative both generally and in the Hebrew Bible to inform my interpretation of the narrative and the characters of *Job* and to determine how to evaluate their coherence.

Similarly, many of the arguments regarding the coherence of *Job* have depended on claims about the underlying ideology of various portions of the text that are based on interpretations of the narrative *of* Job that I challenge in the following chapters of this dissertation. For example, I argue that the conclusion of *Job* does not support a theology of retribution in any way.[115] I argue that YHWH's motivation for reversing Job's fortunes the second time is not as a reward for faithfulness, but rather is consistent with the priorities motivating YHWH's behavior in the opening scenes and elsewhere in the narrative.[116] Similarly, I argue that the function of the dialogues is not to reject retribution theology, but to depict the changes in Job's behavior and speech and their various causes.

These problems prevent scholars from evaluating the coherence of *Job* in a manner that adequately deals with the evidence of the text itself. In this study, I utilize a method that is founded upon empirical and theoretical research on coherence, genre, narrative, and characterization. I articulate which standards of coherence I apply and make an argument for

[115] For an example of a scholar who argued for the aforementioned view, see Pope, *Job*, XXIX: "Job's rehabilitation, in which he receives a bonus for his pains, appears to confirm the very doctrine of retribution which Job had so effectively refuted in the Dialogue."
[116] See Chapter Four.

why they are the most effective. I demonstrate that for the purposes of evaluating coherence, *Job* is best understood as belonging to the genre of ancient Near Eastern narrative. I perform a narrative analysis constructing the elements of the story that are depicted in the text. I evaluate the coherence of the combination of prose and poetic material by evaluating its coherence as a narrative, especially the coherence of its characters and plot. By employing such a method this study is intended to move through the impasse faced by modern scholarship regarding the coherence of the poetic and prose material in *Job*.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The aim of this study is to determine whether the combination of the prose and poetic material in *Job* is best understood to be coherent or incoherent. In this section, I describe and justify the method I employ to do so. I begin by demonstrating that the most effective method for identifying the mental model that readers use to comprehend, categorize, and evaluate the coherence of texts is utilizing the cognitive approach to genre. Utilizing this approach, I argue that *Job* is best understood to be a narrative and that the coherence of narrative texts is determined by the coherence of the story world the narrative represents. Finally, I describe the standards of coherence I employ and why they are the most effective: because they are drawn from what the text itself suggests about what type of world is coherent.

The Cognitive Approach to Genre

I begin by building upon the work of Carol Newsom, who argued "for the recuperation of genre as a critical category for understanding the book of Job" and centered genre in her discussion of

the text's coherence.[117] Like Newsom, I argue that genre must occupy a central role in the evaluation of textual coherence, and I agree with her conclusion that in doing so "one must have a "more robust theory and a more thoroughgoing analysis of genre" than has previously been employed in the study of *Job*.[118] This is the conclusion required by the heretofore discussed results of empirical research that show that readers determine the coherence of a text by whether they are able to integrate all the elements of the text into a single mental model. In addition, the standards of coherence used to determine whether it is possible to make a single mental model differ depending on what type of text it is understood to be. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the type of mental model used to represent the text in order to evaluate that text's coherence. In this section, I demonstrate that the most effective method for identifying the type of mental model used to represent a text is to identify the genre using the cognitive approach.

Growing out of the work of Rosch, Lakoff, and their successors, the cognitive theory of genre is effective for analyses related to how readers evaluate texts because it reflects the processes by which human beings create mental categories and place entities within those categories.[119] According to the cognitive theory, a genre is a type of idealized cognitive model

[117] Newsom, *Contest of Moral Imaginations*, 11.
[118] Newsom, *Contest of Moral Imaginations*, 11. I part from Newsom, whose identification of genre depended in part upon form-critical considerations, because her method, while ingenious, is not able to illuminate the type of mental model that is necessary for evaluating coherence.
[119] For examples of cognitive genre theory in practice, see Barbara Simerka, "Cognitive Theories of Genre: The Prototype Effect and Early Modern Spanish Tragedy," *Bulletin of the Comediantes* 64.2 (2012): 153–70; Ralf Schneider and Marcus Hartner, "The Cognitive Theory of Literary Genres Revisited: Cues from Construction Grammar and Conceptual Integration," in *Linguistics and Literary Studies / Linguistik und Literaturwissenschaft: Interfaces, Encounters, Transfers / Begegnungen, Interferenzen und Kooperationen*, ed. Monika Fludernik and Daniel Jacob (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 385–404; and Don A. Monson, *Eros and Noesis: A Cognitive Approach to the Courtly Love Literature of Medieval France* (Leiden: Brill, 2022).

(ICM) that organizes "knowledge about related kinds of texts."[120] Similar to other ICMs in structure and function, a genre is a mental framework that organizes information about features that are typical to the texts within the particular category.[121] They can be described as "skeletal information structures" that define the category by these typical features and the relationship between them.[122] The mental framework of a genre does not represent any specific text, but is a "summary representation"[123] of the category as a whole that functions in the form of an abstracted "network of relationships among various elements that *typically* occur."[124] The cognitive framework of a genre is created as readers create and modify a category to organize information they encounter as they are exposed to texts, their media, and their function in the world.[125] Readers identify which genre or type a text belongs to by comparing the mental model of the text they have created to the prototypical model of the genre. If the model of the text is judged to be adequately similar to the prototype, then the text is included within the category associated with the genre.

Understanding that genres are mental frameworks—cognitive structures that exist in the mind rather than in patterns found in texts—has significant implications for how texts are categorized. A genre is fundamentally a *Gestalt* structure that is not defined by lists of features or by any individual feature but rather the whole.[126] As a result, no text can be definitively included

[120] Sinding, "Genre, Categories, and Cognitive Science," 195, citing Chandler, "Schema Theory and the Interpretation of Television Programmes."
[121] Roskop Erisman, "The Genres of the Pentateuch and Their Social Settings," 371.
[122] Schneider and Hartner, "The Cognitive Theory of Literary Genres Revisited," 387.
[123] Elizabeth E. Shively, "Recognizing Penguins: Audience Expectation, Cognitive Genre Theory, and the Ending of Mark's Gospel," *CBQ* 80 (2018): 273–92, here, 282.
[124] Roskop Erisman, "The Genres of the Pentateuch and Their Social Settings," 368–69.
[125] Robert Williamson, Jr., "Pesher: A Cognitive Model of the Genre," *DSD* 17 (2010): 307–31, here 316; also Roskop Erisman, "The Genres of the Pentateuch and Their Social Settings," 369.
[126] Sinding, "After Definitions: Genre, Categories, and Cognitive Science," 196. Carol A. Newsom, "Spying Out the Land: A Report from Genology," in *Seeking Out the Wisdom of the*

or excluded from inclusion within a genre because of the presence or absence of any single feature, no matter how typical that feature may be. Instead, the determination of whether a text belongs to a genre involves a comparison between the mental model used to represent the text to the abstracted prototype found in the mental framework of the genre. Sinding described the significance of members of the genre that are the most central or most prototypical in this process: "certain prototypical members function as spring boards for extension of the class according to certain prototypical themes."[127] Thus, a text can depart from the prototype of the genre in significant ways and yet still be included within the genre.[128]

The difference between the principles governing how human beings categorize texts into categories and the principles that shape form-influenced approaches to genre employed in biblical studies indicate that the latter is not suitable for evaluating textual coherence. On the other hand, there are two reasons why the cognitive genre is the most effective for the purpose of evaluating textual coherence. Both are related to the principles discussed above relating to coherence being fundamentally a property of how human beings understand and conceive of texts. The first is that the standards of coherence employed by human beings depend in part upon what type they perceive the text to be. The cognitive genre approach is the most effective

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Ancients: Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday, ed. R. L. Troxel, Kevin G. Friebel, and Dennis R. Magary (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 437–50, here 444.

[127] Sinding, 188. On pages 184–85, Sinding also articulated this principle for categories more generally, describing "categories as elements of mental models that characterize prototypical or central subcategories and cases, and get extended to noncentral cases according to cognitive principles."

[128] For a non-textual example, consider that birds typically fly and sing, yet human beings typically do not have a problem including the penguin, flightless and not a singer like other birds, among the category of birds. This is because their inclusion in the category is determined by comparison to the prototype as a whole.

approach for determining what category human beings would place a text in and therefore, by extension, what standards of coherence are applied to it.

The second reason is that the cognitive framework of the genre helps illuminate the characteristics of the mental model readers construct to represent the text. The mental framework that constitutes a cognitive genre is not simply a list of texts and typical features found within those texts. A cognitive genre is an information structure that represents the abstracted prototype of a text belonging to that genre.[129] As such, the mental framework of the cognitive genre to which a text belongs is similar in structure and nature to the mental model of texts included within that genre, even up to the point that the genre is described as a "skeletal information structure" that is filled in by information specific to the text in order to create the mental model of the text.[130] In other words, while the exact details of a mental model may be beyond the reach of empirical observation, the cognitive approach to genre does illuminate what type of mental framework is activated as a text is comprehended and categorized.[131] The cognitive approach to genre shows what knowledge is used, what cognitive models are activated, and gives the closest possible insight into the mental model of the text used to represent the text. As a result, the cognitive approach to genre is the most effective method for identifying the mental model of the text that determines coherence.[132]

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[129] Schneider and Hartner, "The Cognitive Theory of Literary Genres Revisited," 387; also Shively, "Recognizing Penguins," 282.
[130] Schneider and Hartner, "The Cognitive Theory of Literary Genres Revisited," 387; also Chandler, "Schema Theory and the Interpretation of Television Programmes."
[122] "We turn to knowledge stored in our idealized cognitive model when we want to write a saga or an itinerary or read a new text that contains elements of the genre (Lakoff 1987a; 1987b; Sinding 2002; 2005)." Roskop Erisman, "The Genres of the Pentateuch and Their Social Settings," 369.
[132] By contrast, the approach to genre commonly employed in biblical studies does not align with the mental processes by which human beings comprehend or categorize texts and as a result does not function to identify any kind of mental model. The varied approaches employed by the

In recent years, scholars such as Will Kynes, Angela Roskop Erisman, and Robert Williamson, Jr. have demonstrated the value of applying insights from cognitive genre theory to biblical texts.[133] However, the value of the cognitive approach to genre in the evaluation of the coherence of biblical texts has not been recognized. In the following, I apply the cognitive approach to genre to *Job* and argue that the genre category which best reflects the mental model by which the text is represented is that of narrative.

The Genre of *Job*

In this section, I argue that for the purpose of evaluating textual coherence the genre of *Job* is best designated as narrative. I begin by reviewing previous work on the question and identifying several methodological practices that have prevented the genre of *Job* from being recognized as narrative without further qualification. I then utilize the cognitive approach to genre and recent

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literary theorists of genre is not effective for evaluating textual coherence for the same reasons. For example, Mikhail Bakhtin's groundbreaking work on genre did not deal with mental processes for constructing models or categories and prioritizes the specific social context (including details about the speaker and the addressee and their relationship), which depends upon information not available for the vast majority of biblical texts. Tzvetan Todorov focused on the affectual properties of texts and genres, particularly what he called "the fantastic." Unsurprisingly, his emphasis on the structuralist aspects of a text precludes his approach from providing the necessary insight into mental models and categories. Gerard Genette sought to more clearly distinguish between genre and mode, defining genres as "properly aesthetic literary categories." The literary theorists of genre made enormous strides in recognizing that genre consisted or more than the intersection of form and theme, but did not stop relying upon formal characteristics and being affected by the problems associated with them, nor did they incorporate the findings on human categorization that are necessary for identifying genre in order to evaluate coherence. See M. M. Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986), 60–102; Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973); and Gerard Genette, *The Architext: An Introduction*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

[133] Williamson, Jr., "Pesher: A Cognitive Model of the Genre," Roskop Erisman, "The Genres of the Pentateuch and Their Social Settings," Kynes, *An Obituary for "Wisdom Literature."*

theoretical explorations of narrative to demonstrate the utility of narrative as a genre category for texts in the ancient Near East in the first millennium. Finally, I demonstrate that *Job* possesses a significant concentration of the features of the category of narrative and that therefore the mental model used to represent *Job* and by which its coherence is evaluated is that of a narrative text.

The genre of *Job* has long been a focus of scholarly discussion, with numerous proposals for the genre to which the text or to which certain of its parts belong.[134] While the narrative features within parts of *Job* have been recognized, scholars have not categorized the text, either in whole or in part, as belonging to the genre of narrative without further qualification. Those scholars who prioritized *Job*'s narrative features have identified its genre as a subset or more specific type of narrative, such as drama, comedy, epic, fable, parody, and didactic narrative.[135] Other scholars identified the prose material of *Job* as narrative or as a type of narrative, but resist describing the whole text, particularly the poetic dialogues, as narrative.[136] Instead, they

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[134] The candidates are numerous. For bibliography, see Seow, *Job 1-21*, 47–65; and Kynes, *An Obituary for "Wisdom Literature,"* 151–78.

[135] See respectively Luis Alonso Schökel, "Toward a Dramatic Reading of the Book of Job," *Semeia* 7 (1977): 45–61; William Whedbee, "The Comedy of Job" *Semeia* 7 (1977): 1–39; Abigail Pelham, "*Job* as Comedy, Revisited" *JSOT* 35 (2010): 89–112; Michael Cheney, *Dust, Wind and Agony: Character, Speech and Genre in Job*, ConBOT36 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1994); Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible & Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), 122; Robert Alter, "Sacred History and the Beginnings of Prose Fiction," *Poetics Today* 1.3 (1980): 143–62, here 150; Katharine J. Dell, *Job: Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?*, Phoenix Guides to the Old Testament 14 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013); Françoise Mies, "Le Genre Littéraire du Livre de Job," *RB* 110.3 (2003): 336–69; John Kuriakose, "The Book of Job: A Greco-Hebrew Rhetorical Drama," *English Language and Literature Studies* 6.2 (2016): 72–78; Hans-Peter Müller, "Die Weisheitliche Lehrerzählung im Alten Testament und seiner Umwelt," *WO* 9.1 (1977): 77–98; and Seow, *Job 1-21*, 49–50.

[136] Carol Newsom began her groundbreaking exploration of genres in *Job* by acknowledging that "The prose tale of Job may be compared to the larger set of all extant Hebrew narratives." Newsom, *Contest of Moral Imaginations*, 14–15. See also the argument that the prose tale of Job contains an "epic substratum" in Nahum M. Sarna, "Epic Substratum in the Prose of Job," *JBL* 76.1 (1957): 13–25. On the other hand, Wonsic identified five different genres within *Job* and argued that the diversity of genre is part of the polyphonic juxtaposition of multiple voices, see Wonsic, "La polyphonie dans le livre de Job: une approche dialogique (II)."

identified the middle portions of *Job* as belonging to non-narrative genres, including lament, lawsuit, and wisdom dialogue.[137] This has in turn led many scholars to describe *Job* as "consisting of many genres—a kind of 'supergenre'—in which all the parts are in dialogue with one another and where none rightly describes the whole."[138] In sum, while many scholars have

[137] Hartmut Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit der alten Weisheit: Studien zu den Sprüchen Salomos und zu dem Buche Hiob* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1958); Claus Westermann, *Der Aufbau des Buches Hiob* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1956), chapter 1; Heinz Richter, *Studien zu Hiob: Der Aufbau Der Hiobbuches, Dargestellt an Dem Gattungen Des Rechtslebens*, Theologische Arbeiten 11 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1959); Sylvia Huberman Scholnick, "Lawsuit Drama in the Book of Job" (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1975); M. B. Dick, "The Legal Metaphor in Job 31," *CBQ* 41 (1979): 37–50; Edward L. Greenstein, "A Forensic Understanding of the Speech from the Whirlwind," in *Texts, Temples, and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran*, ed. Michael V. Fox, Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, and Avi Hurvitz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 241–58; F. Rachel Magdalene, *On the Scales of Righteousness: Neo-Babylonian Trial Law and the Book of Job* (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2007); and Avi Shveka and Pierre van Hecke, "The Metaphor of Criminal Charge as a Paradigm for the Conflict between Job and His Friends," *ETL* 90.1 (2014): 99–119.

Wisdom dialogue is a broad designation developed primarily around similarities in form and subject observed around a group of Mesopotamian texts including the Sumerian *Man and His God*, the Old Babylonian *Dialogue between Man and His God*, *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, an Ugaritic text (RS 25.460) sometimes called a "A Sufferer's Salvation" the *Babylonian Theodicy,* and others, sometimes as a group referred to as "righteous-sufferer literature." For more on these texts in relation to *Job*, see Scott C. Jones, "Job," in *The Oxford Handbook of Wisdom and the Bible*, ed. Will Kynes (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 532–50, here 536–38; also P. J. Nel, "The Genres of Biblical Wisdom Literature," *JNSL* 9 (1981): 129–42, here 137; Gerald L. Mattingly, "The Pious Sufferer: Mesopotamia's Traditional Theodicy and Job's Counselors," in *The Bible in the Light of Cuneiform Literature*, ed. William W. Hallo, Bruce William Jones, and Gerald L. Mattingly, Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies 8 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 305–48; and Margulies, "Oh That One Would Hear Me! The Dialogue of Job, Unanswered."

Each of these texts contain speeches in which a sufferer cries out because of his suffering, and sometimes gets a response from an interlocutor, both features that align with the dialogues of *Job*. For more on the dialogue as a genre, see Karel van der Toorn, "The Ancient Near Eastern Literary Dialogue as a Vehicle of Critical Reflection," in *Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Mediaeval Near East: Forms and Types of Literary Debates in Semitic and Related Literatures*, ed. G. J. Reinink and H. L. J. Vanstiphout (Leuven: Department Orientalistiek, 1991), 59–75.

[138] Jones, "Job," 535. The juxtaposition of multiple genres plays a central role in the work of Carol Newsom, who read the text as a unified composition in which multiple incongruous genres are juxtaposed in order to "demonstrate that the idea of piety in all its 'contradictory complexity' cannot in principle 'be fitted within the bounds of a single consciousness.'" See Newsom, *A*

recognized that *Job* possesses many of the characteristics of narrative, the possibility that the genre of *Job*—in its entirety—should be classified as narrative without further qualification has not occupied a significant place in the discussion.[139]

There are three methodological practices common to the identification of genre in biblical studies that have contributed to the state of the question regarding *Job*'s genre, particularly the lack of consideration of narrative as that genre. The first is the practice of distinguishing between narrative on the one hand and poetry and long speeches on the other. Poetic texts such as those in Deuteronomy 32 and Jonah 2 are commonly viewed as distinct from the narratives in which they are found. Similarly, discussions of the genre of *Job* commonly treat the poetic dialogues as separate from the narrative framework, despite the clarity of their position within that narrative. The second practice, linked to a view of genre boundaries as exclusive and rigid, restricts texts from being included within one more genre. Because biblical scholars typically see a single text (or portion of a text) as definitively belonging to one genre, there is little consideration that a text could participate in multiple genres. In the case of *Job*, much of the material in the poetic dialogues has been identified as belonging to the genre of lawsuit or the wisdom dialogue. Scholars who include textual material within only one genre category cannot also include the poetic dialogues within the category of narrative. The third practice is the prioritization of genre categories that include more qualifications, and thus are more specific rather than more general. Few scholars have explicitly accepted the reality and utility of a genre category as unqualified or as broad as that of narrative.

Contest of Moral Imaginations, 24–30. See also Hartley, *Job*, 38: "The author has drawn on numerous genres in the composition of the speeches."

[139] Even those scholars who argued that analysis of the narrative is crucial to the interpretation of *Job* did not identify narrative as the genre with which the text as a whole should be identified, for example see Habel, *The Book of Job*, especially 25–27 and 42–46.

When utilizing the cognitive approach to genre, all three of these practices can and should be discarded. Because inclusion in a genre is not determined by a rigid set of necessary attributes or characteristics, but by relationship to "natural prototypes," then a text cannot be definitively excluded from a genre because of any individual formal characteristic.[140] Roskop Erisman has pointed out that the application of cognitive genre theory to biblical studies brings about the disentangling of form and genre:

> Understanding genre as a cognitive model can help us keep straight the distinction between form and genre, which has so often been blurred in form-critical studies of biblical literature. A genre is not a pattern in texts, even as it is learned from patterns in texts. A genre is a pattern, or network of relationships, carried in the brain. A genre is not a verbal artifact; it is knowledge we use to create and interpret verbal artifacts.[141]

Therefore, the poetic dialogues in *Job* cannot be excluded from the genre of ancient Near Eastern narrative solely because of the presence of poetic form or long speeches.

In fact, evidence from the ancient Near East supports a conception of narrative that includes a wide range of formal characteristics. Attested throughout the temporal and linguistic horizon of the ancient Near Eastern textual record are narratives written in poetic form and narratives containing long speeches, even to the point where the speeches constitute the majority of the text. Examples of the former include the Ugaritic epic texts and the epic of Gilgamesh in

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[140] It is extremely difficult, often impossible, for scholars to agree on the set of necessary and sufficient features that define a genre, even when they are able to agree on what texts are exemplars of that genre. See, for example, the discussion of this problem in Sinding, "Genre, Categories, and Cognitive Science," 182–84, particularly his discussion of how the concept of family resemblance has been deployed to resolve this problem, and how it has ultimately been unsuccessful.

[141] Roskop Erisman, "The Genres of the Pentateuch and Their Social Settings," 368–69.

its various versions.[142] Examples of the latter include even narratives where the speeches constitute the majority of the text, such as the Egyptian tale of the *Eloquent Peasant*; the Aramaic *Proverbs of Ahiqar* found at Elephantine; and independent Pentateuchal documents. These texts suggest that in the ancient Near East narrative texts often included significant proportions of poetry and speech.

A second implication of cognitive genre theory relates to the inclusion of a text or textual material within multiple genres. Research showing that an entity can be included in multiple mental categories indicates that a text can participate in several genres.[143] Texts and textual material may be identified as belonging to more than one genre if it shares attributes, motifs, or even language with more than one group or category of texts. For example, even as the traditionally-labeled "law codes" in the Pentateuch share specific language, formal characteristics, and content with one another and with other ancient Near Eastern texts with legal material, at the same time they are fundamentally a part of the narratives in which they are found.[144] Thus the poetic dialogues and other portions of *Job* can be included within the genre of narrative even while they participate in other genres such as the wisdom dialogue or lawsuit.

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[142] Ancient Near Eastern narratives written in poetic form have been recognized for some time, see for example Simon Parker, ed., *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, WAW 9 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997).

[143] This overcomes the contradiction between the conception of genre as a logical class, with firm and fixed boundaries, and the common identification of texts that appear to participate in more than one genre, mix genres, and the process by which genres appear to grow and change over time. See Kynes, *An Obituary for "Wisdom Literature,"* 109–11. Also Cohen, "Introduction," and the articles in the volume Cohen is introducing.

[144] See Simeon Chavel, "The Narrative Context of the Collections," in *The Cambridge Companion to Law in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Bruce Wells, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024), 95–114; and "הספרות המשפטית שבמקרא // Biblical Law," in *The Literature of the Hebrew Bible: Introductions and Studies*, ed. Z. Talshir (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2011), 227–72. For a specific treatment of the role of the priestly legal and ritual texts within the narrative of which they are a part, see Liane M. Feldman, *The Story of Sacrifice: Ritual and Narrative in the Priestly Source*, FAT 141 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck,

The third relevant practice is the avoidance of treating narrative as a useful genre category. While the prevalence of narrative within the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near Eastern textual record is undisputed, narrative without further qualification has not been utilized as a productive genre for the purposes of scholarly analysis.[145] Instead, scholars have identified narrative texts as belonging to a more specific genre category, including specific types of narrative, or to a genre defined by formal characteristics or other types of content.[146] For example, many scholars who acknowledged the significance of the narrative features of *Job* or of its narrative frame classified it within the specific types of narrative listed above, such as drama or didactic narrative. Other scholars categorized *Job* within a genre defined by content, including it within categories such as exemplary sufferer texts. And still others focused on generic classifications that apply to portions of the text, such as lawsuit or Streitgespräch, "controversy dialogue."[147]

However, utilizing the cognitive approach to genre in combination with recent theoretical work on narrative, I argue that narrative is a useful, even indispensable genre category for texts

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2020). For a specific treatment on Deuteronomy, including the question of its literary character and how that interacts with its features, including its legal content, see chapter 1 of Jeffrey Stackert, *Deuteronomy and the Pentateuch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022).

[145] See that narrative is not listed as a possibility worth discussing in the surveys of Mies, "Le Genre Littéraire Du Livre de Job" or Kynes, *An Obituary for "Wisdom Literature,"* 151–78. Exceptions are found in works intended for lay readers in which the category of narrative is contrasted with other broad categories such as poetry and prophecy, for example see John Barton, *The Bible: The Basics* (London: Routledge, 2010), 48–54. Nevertheless, scholars rarely if ever use narrative, without further qualification, as a genre category for the purposes of scholarly analysis of biblical texts.

[146] See the common identification of specific types of narrative such as the *sage,* legend, and royal court narrative, etc., as the genres of biblical narrative texts.

[147] For bibliography, see above section on the state of the conversation on the genre of *Job* and accompanying notes.

in the ancient Near East in the first millennium.[148] I begin by discussing the work of narrative theorists who have conceptualized narrative as a representation that prompts the construction of a mental representation of a virtual world. I then utilize the cognitive approach to genre to demonstrate that texts from the first millennium in the ancient Near East that fit this conception of narrative possess a concentration of shared attributes such that they make a meaningful mental category and would be represented by similar types of mental models.

While classical definitions of narrative have sometimes focused on formal and contextual characteristics, recent theoretical work has conceptualized narrative as the sum of two features. First, a narrative is a representation. Second, a narrative representation causes the receiver of the narrative to produce a mental representation of a virtual world.[149] This conceptualization draws upon the distinction made by the scholars who established the field of classical narratology[150]

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[148] The rise of narratology and the "narrative turn" that occurred in the second half of the 20th century led to a broad and sustained focus on narrative as narrative, including the definition of narrative and the exploration of what narrative does. While narratologists and theorists continue to debate the exact definitions and functions of narrative, this study will draw on several popularly accepted concepts in addition to the work of specific theorists, see citations in the following.

[149] Some of the earliest work building to this conception is that of Marie-Laure Ryan, "The Modes of Narrativity and Their Visual Metaphors," *Style* 26.3 (1992): 368–87 and Fotis Jannidis, "Narratology and the Narrative," in *What Is Narratology?*, ed. Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 35–54. See also citations below.

[150] Narratology as a term is derived from the French *narratologie*, first used by Tzvetan Todorov in his *Grammaire du Décaméron* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969), 10. The designation "classical narratology" refers to the collective efforts of scholars such as Barthes, Bremond, Genette, Greimas, and Todorov who applied the universalist and rule-based paradigms of structuralist linguistics in search of a generalizing theory or science of narrative, which they located in claiming that individual stories and narrative texts were the product of the combination of fundamental semiotic principles and basic structural units. The most influential classifications were articulated in the following decades, in the work of scholars such as Seymour Benjamin Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978); Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, trans. Christine van Boheemen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980); Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980); *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); Gerald

between what they referred to as the two basic components of a narrative text: the story as that which the narrative text represented, and the discourse as that which was the representation.[151] In structuralist terms, story is the signified, and discourse is the signifier. Or as Seymour Chatman described it: "In simple terms, the story is the what in a narrative that is depicted, discourse the how."[152] According to this theoretical work, what distinguishes narrative from other types of representation, such as non-narrative literary texts, most forms of visual still art, alphabets, or musical notation, is that a narrative is a representation of a particular type of entity: a story.[153]

This understanding puts story at the center of what narrative is and emphasizes the significance of what story is. One view that has been influential among narratologists is that narratives represent a set of events.[154] But a second view, one that is more useful for the purpose

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Prince, *Narratology* (Berlin: Mouton, 1982); *A Dictionary of Narratology*, (Lincoln; University of Nebraska Press, 1987); and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Methuen, 1983).

For summaries of narrative studies since the dawn of the 20th century, see David Herman, "Histories of Narrative Theory (I): A Genealogy of Early Developments," in *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, ed. James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture 33 (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 19–35; and Monika Fludernik, "Histories of Narrative Theory (II): From Structuralism to the Present," in *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, ed. James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture 33 (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 36–59.

[151] A wide variety of terms are employed to designate these two entities. I will be following Chatman in using the term "story" to refer to what Todorov and Genette labeled as *histoire*, Rimmon-Kenan labeled story, and Bal labeled *fabula*. I will be using the term "discourse" to refer to what Todorov labeled *discours*, Genette labeled *récit*, Rimmon-Kenan labeled text, and Bal labeled story(!). Note also that some made a further distinction, identifying the "signifying" or the "producing narrative action, and by extension, the whole of the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place", as a third primary concept that Genette referred to in French as *narration*, Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 27. Rimmon-Kenan referred to this in English as narration.

[152] Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 19.

[153] As opposed to an image, a scene, sounds, letters, language, musical notes, or other possible represented things.

[154] As articulated by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in her claim that the difference between narrative fiction and other literary texts is that "narrative fiction represents a *succession of events*." Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 2. The necessity for the representation of events is also

of understanding narrative as a cognitive genre, has been advanced by scholars such as Marie-Laure Ryan and Werner Wolf.[155] Ryan has argued that story is best understood to be a type of "cognitive construct" or "mental image" that exists in the mind of a cognizing subject.[156] The type of mental representation that is a story, as opposed to any other kind, represents a world or reality that will possess some of a particular set of features, including: that it is "populated by individuated existents," that it is "situated in time and undergoes significant transformations" that are caused by "physical events," and that it includes "intelligent agents who have a mental life and react" to the world they inhabit.[157] Because story, like all mental categories, is established by prototype effects and relation to cognitive mental models, a mental representation

central to the work of theorists who locate the unique quality of narrative in the dual temporality created by the distinction between the temporality of the discourse created by the telling of the story and the temporality of the story created by the succession of events in the story itself. See Meir Sternberg, "How Narrativity Makes a Difference," *Narrative* 9.2 (2001): 115–22; Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, "Concepts of Narrative," in *The Travelling Concept of Narrative*, ed. Matti Hyvärinen, Anu Korhonen, and Juri Mykkänen, Studies Across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences 1 (Helsinki: Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, 2006), 10–19.
This view, with some variation in details, remains influential. See for example the definition of Gerald Prince: "many people would agree that any representation of non-contradictory events such that at least one occurs at time t and another at a time t_1 following time t constitutes a narrative (however trivial)." Prince, *Narratology*, 145. Also as recently as H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 13: "narrative is the representation of events."

[155] Werner Wolf, "Narratology and Media(lity): The Transmedial Expansion of a Literary Discipline and Possible Consequences," in *Current Trends in Narratology: Conference in Freiburg, Breisgau in July 2007*, ed. Greta Olson, Narratologia 27 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 145–80; Marie-Laure Ryan, *Avatars of Story* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Klaus Speidel, "What Narrative Is: Reconsidering Definitions Based on Experiments with Pictorial Narrative. An Essay in Descriptive Narratology," *Frontiers of Narrative Studies* 4 (2018): s76–s104.

[156] Ryan, *Avatars of Story*, 7, 10–11. For an early emphasis upon story as something constructed by the receiver of a narrative, see Robert Scholes, *Semiotics and Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

[157] Marie-Laure Ryan, "Toward a Definition of Narrative," in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 28.

need not possess all of these features to be a story.[158] Instead, a mental representation can be identified as a story because it represents the "totality of events, characters, and regions" of a particular virtual world or virtual reality.[159]

Ryan's definition built upon the classical narratologists in seeing narrative as the representation of a story, but departed from the classical approach in seeing the story not as an abstracted set of events or a virtual world in which such events take place, but as the mental representation of those events and the world in which they take place that the narrative causes the receiver to create.[160] According to this conception, there are multiple levels of representation involved in a narrative text. The first is the text itself, which uses written signs to represent the narrative. The next is the narrative, which is the representation that prompts the reader to construct a story. The next level of representation is the story, which is the mental model that the reader creates as they comprehend the narrative text and that represents a virtual world conveyed by the narrative. The virtual world is not strictly a part of the text nor of the mental processing because it does not exist in any real way. The virtual world is simply the object of the representation of the mental model that is the story.[161]

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[158] Ryan, "Toward a Definition of Narrative," 28.
[159] Fotis Jannidis, "Narratology and the Narrative," in *What Is Narratology?*, eds. Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 35–54, here 43.
[160] Ryan describes narrative as a representation that conveys "the type of mental representation that we regard as a story." Ryan, "Toward a Definition of Narrative," 28. See also Gerald Prince, "Narrativehood, Narrativity, Narratability," in *Theorizing Narrativity*, ed. John Pier and José Angel García Landa (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 19–27; and Ryan's earlier comments in *Avatars of Story*, 10–11: "The definition proposed above presents narrative as a type of text able to evoke a certain type of image in the mind of a cognizing subject…. The property of "being a narrative" can be predicated of any semiotic object produced with the intent to evoke a story to the mind of the audience. To be more precise, it is the receiver's recognition of this intent that leads to the judgment: this text is a narrative, though we can never be sure that sender and receiver have the same story in mind."
[161] On this conception of narrative, I am indebted to the work of Benjamin Harshav, "Fictionality and Fields of Reference: Remarks on a Theoretical Framework," *Poetics Today* 5.2 (1984): 227–

Using Ryan's conception of narrative as an analytical category, it is clear at the very least that there are many ancient Near Eastern and biblical texts ranging across temporal and linguistic boundaries that should be included because they have in common that they are a representation that prompts the mental representation of a virtual world and its associated elements. The list of such texts includes historical, mythological, and individual narratives ranging from the Mesha Stele and the book of Chronicles to Gilgamesh, Kirta, Aqhat, Ruth, or Jonah to texts like Enuma Elish, the apology of Hattusili III, the Pentateuch and the Pentateuchal sources. All these texts represent sequences of events and prompt the construction of a representation of a virtual world populated by characters, objects, and other existents, in which events occur and time progresses, in the mind of the reader.

51; also collected essays in Benjamin Harshav, *Explorations in Poetics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007). Harshav's work provides a model not of narrative but of literature, a category that for him included texts which contained narrative as well as non-narrative material. Harshav claimed that the unique characteristic of a work of literature is that it projects its own reality by constructing a "multi-dimensional semiotic object" that is similar to story as defined by modern narrative theorists, but which is called by Harshav the *Internal Field of Reference* (*Explorations in Poetics*, 6–7, 12–13). Like the concept of story advanced by Ryan, Harshav's represented reality cannot be reduced to a single characteristic or set of features, because it is, as Harshav describes, a "bundle of heterogenous and co-textual patterns: events, characters, settings, ideas, time and space, social and political situations, etc., interacting with each other." (*Explorations in Poetics*, 13). Aside from Harshav treating literature while Ryan treats narrative, another difference is that Ryan and other modern narrative theorists are not hesitant to call the cognitive construct that is the story a "world" and describe it as such, a world that is populated by characters, existents, and in which events occur. See for example Marie-Laure Ryan, "The Modes of Narrativity and Their Visual Metaphors" *Style* 26.3 (1992): 368–87, here 371; Ryan, "Toward a Definition of Narrative," 28–30.

Harshav, on the other hand, pushed against terminology such as "world" in favor of his term, Internal Field of Reference (IFR), because he believed that the term IFR is more suggestive of a link between the entity and the language that refers to it and it doesn't suppose anything about the content of the IFR. See Harshav, *Explorations in Poetics*, 22. I diverge from Harshav because I am not dealing with non-narrative texts: whereas Harshav was interested in texts that led to the creation of an IFR that may take a wider variety of shapes, the definition of narrative offered by Ryan is dependent upon the story representing an entity that is best described as a virtual world because it represents a full virtual reality that resembles what human beings perceive as the reality or world in which they live.

What makes this conception of narrative so important, even crucial, for evaluating the coherence of *Job* is the evidence that narrative is the genre designation that readers use as they comprehend these texts. While neither Ryan nor the other narrative theorists upon whose work I have drawn built their work upon the cognitive approach to genre that I employ, by defining narrative as a representation that prompts the reader to create a certain type of mental model they suggested the relevance of their work for the investigation of the efficacy of narrative as a cognitive genre. Because genre is in part defined by the similarity of the mental models used to represent the texts within the category, that narrative texts prompt the construction of a mental model that represents a virtual world is striking evidence that texts that fall under Ryan's conception of narrative are included in a common genre. It is impossible to read the minds of ancient readers or ask them directly which texts they included within their mental categories, but the concentration of features that unite narrative texts is as strong of evidence for a category as is used to justify the identification of many genres. It is worth repeating that the cognitive theory of genre demonstrates that texts need not possess all the same characteristics in order to be included within a common genre, nor does a text's inclusion within one genre exclude it from being included in another. So neither the variation in form or other characteristics among these texts nor their participation in other genre categories disqualifies them from being included in the cognitive genre of narrative. That each of these texts are representations that prompt the creation of a mental model of a virtual world, including in common such narrative features as characters, places, events, time, and more, is a significant concentration of shared features that would lead to the formation of a mental category, or genre, in which they are all included.

The salience of narrative as a genre category is further supported by empirical research. As discussed above, readers comprehend texts by creating mental models of them. Empirical

research has shown the mental models that readers create when they comprehend narrative texts are of a similar type, even as they vary according to the particularities of the text. The mental models of narrative texts are all similar in that they represent the virtual world depicted by the narrative:

> When readers comprehend narrative text, they construct a referential *situation model* (or mental model) of what the text is about. A situation model is a cognitive representation of the people, setting, actions, and events that are explicitly mentioned or suggested by the text.[162]

In other words, when a human being reads a narrative text, they comprehend it by creating a mental representation of the virtual world the text represents, including characters, places, and events occurring through a progression of time. Not only do narrative texts possess a high concentration of shared attributes, but they are alike in the type of mental model used to represent them by readers. These similarities are significant and suggest that narrative is a valid genre category for modern and for ancient texts.

Job in its entirety can be identified as belonging to the genre of narrative because it possesses a high concentration of the features of narrative as defined by modern theorists and exemplified by ancient Near Eastern and biblical narrative texts. The whole of *Job*, including the prose and poetic material from start to finish, represents events in a virtual world. It begins by

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[162] Arthur C. Graesser, Eugenie L. Bertus, and Joseph P. Magliano, "Inference Generation during the Comprehension of Narrative Text," in *Sources of Coherence in Reading*, ed. Robert F. Lorch, Jr. and Edward J. O'Brien (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995), 295–320, here 295. See also the voluminous references cited therein, as well as Schank and Abelson, *Scripts, Plans, Goals, and Understanding*; Gordon H. Bower and Daniel G. Morrow, "Mental Models in Narrative Comprehension," *Science* 247.4938 (1990): 44–48; Michael Toolan, *Making Sense of Narrative Text: Situation, Repetition, and Picturing in the Reading of Short Stories* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

representing habitual and particular events: the repeated actions of Job and his children, the two conversations between the deity and the *saṭan*, and the catastrophic events that destroy Job's fortune, children, and health in the opening scenes. It continues with representations of events of speech: the dialogues between Job and his interlocutors, and the deity speaking from the whirlwind. *Job* concludes with both particular and summarized events: the deity's final comments to Job and Job's intercession on his interlocutors behalf, his accumulation of great wealth and seven children, and his long life and death. In its representation, *Job* prompts the construction of a virtual world, with settings, characters, actions, and events.

Even as some portions of *Job* appear to participate in other genres, the text should be understood as a narrative because it is a representation that prompts the construction of a mental model that represents a virtual world. Even though some of its formal and other features, such as its long speeches and poetic dialogue, are not common to all other biblical narratives, *Job* is categorized as a narrative on the basis of its association with prototypical narratives that also represent events within a virtual world.[163] Readers comprehend *Job* using similar means as they comprehend other narratives: by creating a mental representation of the virtual world that the text depicts, including characters, places, and events occurring through a progression of time.

I am not the first to recognize the salience of narrative in evaluating the coherence of *Job*. For instance, I follow Simeon Chavel, who based his interpretation of *Job* on its "broken story." Chavel argued that the incoherence of *Job*, with just enough cohesion "to tempt the audience to insist on its coherence" is the author's method of arguing that human beings stop at nothing to

[163] Prince describes the quality of being a narrative as "narrativity," and states that there is widespread agreement "that different narratives have different degrees of narrativity, that some are more narrative than others." See Prince, *Narratology*, 145.

make sense of incoherent realities by implying cause and effect.[164] I diverge from Chavel in my ultimate evaluation of whether *Job* is coherent, but I build upon and develop his idea that it is the coherence of the story that is most significant in evaluating the coherence of *Job* as a text.

Adena Rosmarin has argued that genre is inherently pragmatic, and that a specific genre designation should be understood to have been made by a critic for pragmatic reasons.[165] While the category of narrative is not as specific as other genres, nor is it particularly useful for identifying a generic *Sitz im Leben*, it is useful in illuminating the mental representation by which a particular text is represented. In the case of evaluating the coherence of *Job*, the genre designation of narrative is particularly useful because it the category of narrative illuminates the characteristics of the mental model by which the text is represented and that is the object of the evaluation of textual coherence.

Evaluating the Coherence of *Job* as an Ancient Near Eastern Narrative

Having established that the genre designation most effective for evaluating the coherence of *Job* is that of narrative, I turn to the question of how such an evaluation is most effectively carried out. In this section, I argue that this is best accomplished by a two-step process. First, I argue that the coherence of a narrative is best evaluated by determining the coherence of its story: the mental model readers use to comprehend the text and that represents the virtual world that the text conveys. Thus, the first step to evaluating the coherence of *Job* is interpreting the narrative elements represented by the text and reconstructing the elements of the virtual world that are represented by its story. The second step is determining whether it is possible to assemble all

[164] Chavel, "Knowledge of the Lord," here 64.
[165] See Adena Rosmarin, *The Power of Genre* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), especially 48–51.

these elements into a single, interconnected mental representation. I argue that the most effective method to identify the standards of coherence that determine whether integrating all the narrative elements into a single representation is possible is by identifying what the text itself suggests about what kind of features can exist within a single virtual world, using the concept of the implied author to represent these values of the text.

While the mental model used to represent a narrative text may contain additional elements, it has been established that readers construct a mental model of the virtual world represented by the narrative. I repeat here the description of the mental model constructed by readers of narrative:

> When readers comprehend narrative text, they construct a referential *situation model* (or mental model) of what the text is about. A situation model is a cognitive representation of the people, setting, actions, and events that are explicitly mentioned or suggested by the text.[166]

This situational model, prompted by the narrative and representing the virtual world, aligns with what Ryan describes as the narrative's story. Thus, a significant portion of the mental model used to represent a narrative text and that will be evaluated for coherence is the story, or virtual world conveyed by the text.

This places the story at the center of what must be evaluated when determining coherence.[167] Readers evaluate coherence by attempting to integrate all the elements of the text

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[166] As cited above, repeated here for clarity. See Graesser, Bertus, and Magliano, "Inference Generation during the Comprehension of Narrative Text," 295.

[167] See, similarly, on the subject of why the incoherence of the Pentateuch makes source-critical analysis necessary, Joel S. Baden, "Why Is the Pentateuch Unreadable? Or, Why Are We Doing This Anyway?," in *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America*, ed. Jan C. Gertz et al., FAT 111 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 243–51, here 249: "Diversity of language and style, of genre, theme, and theology – none

into a single model. Readers of narrative texts evaluate coherence by attempting to integrate all the narrative elements of the text into a single representation of the virtual world, including characters, places, and events occurring through a progression of time. Therefore, it is the coherence of the story that I prioritize in my evaluation of the coherence of *Job*.[168]

The mental model of the text can and does include other information. In particular, the mental model of a narrative text must include information about the narrative, including various elements of how the story is conveyed such as literary features, aspects of the relationship between time in the story and time in the narration, shifts in narration, etc. The mental model of a narrative text may also include extra-textual information, such as information about the author, the rhetorical situation in which the narrative was received, and other details. But in the case of *Job* and almost all other biblical texts, the evidence regarding extra-textual information is insufficient for understanding how readers would have incorporated such information into their models of the text, let alone how it would have impacted their evaluation of coherence.

This point is specifically relevant to the study of the coherence of *Job* because it calls into question whether two of the primary factors cited as evidence of incoherence can be reliably evaluated. The scholarly claim that the prose and poetic material of *Job* is incoherent because the two divisions investigate two separate questions should not factor into evaluations of coherence

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of these reach the tipping point, the moment when it is necessary to search for a literary-historical solution to the problems of the text. None of these render the text unreadable, either in our imaginary Pentateuch or in the real one."

[168] In doing so, I follow several aspects of the model employed by practitioners of the so-called "Neo-Documentarian" approach to the source criticism of the Pentateuch. These scholars have explicitly eschewed the use of style or other features traditionally used to identify differing sources and claimed that it is "narrative plot" that must be the first and foremost basis for identifying incoherence in Pentateuchal texts. See for example, Joel S. Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), especially 29–31.

because it is based on two underlying assumptions that are impossible to substantiate. The first assumption is that that readers of *Job* understand the text as a rhetorical treatise investigating such existential questions and therefore evaluate its coherence on the basis of these questions. Even if the first were to be accepted, the second assumption is untenable because it assumes that a text cannot investigate two separate, but clearly related, existential questions such as the cause of the suffering of the righteous and whether disinterested piety is possible. The assumption that a text cannot simultaneously address two separate questions flies in the face of the evidence for human motivations to create coherent models of texts and is based upon particular ideas about the simplicity of ancient texts that are not supported.

The lack of information on how extra-textual information affects the perception of coherence of *Job* also impacts a second primary factor in the scholarly discussions of the text. The idea that the poetic dialogues reject retribution theology and the prose material endorses retribution theology is founded upon extra-textual assumptions that the words of the characters and the depiction of reality in the story are rhetorical endorsements of particular theological positions. Such views are consonant with medieval and modern views of how scriptural texts are interpreted, but are not tenable foundations for the evaluation of the coherence of *Job* as a narrative in either its ancient or modern context.[169] There are many rhetorical functions which a narrative text can fulfill, and the presentation of an ideal or objectively correct depiction of theological reality is only one of them.

[169] On the roots of the interpretation of biblical texts as "scripture" and the development of particular interpretive methods, see James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), especially chapter 1.

The issue of theological consistency does relate to a question about the story that can be evaluated. Does the combination of prose and poetic material portray a consistent view of whether God blesses the righteous and afflicts the wicked or not? However, in this restated form the question relates back to the question of the virtual world which the text conveys and becomes a part of the story that must be evaluated.

As a result, the most effective basis for evaluating the coherence of *Job* is the virtual world which the text conveys and the most effective object of investigation is whether it is possible for readers to assemble the various elements of the narrative into a single, interconnected model of the story by which that virtual world is represented. Both the story and the mental representation focus on the virtual world, its events, and other constituents. It is the coherence of this virtual world, as understood by its readers, that determines the coherence of *Job*. Thus, the first step in my method is to interpret the narrative elements of *Job* and establish the features of the story it prompts readers to create to represent the virtual world it conveys.

The second step is determining whether it is possible to assemble all the narrative elements of *Job* into a single, interconnected mental representation. As discussed above, readers make this determination on the basis of benchmarks that are called standards of coherence. Because standards of coherence vary between individuals and even for the same individual depending on the situation, they are not universal. As a result, the determination of coherence depends on which standards of coherence are employed.

Scholars have not often explicitly considered which standards of coherence they employ in evaluating the coherence of *Job*, with many employing ad hoc standards based on their own personal sense of what makes a text coherent or not. Indeed, few biblical scholars have incorporated the findings of empirical research on the nature of coherence into their work

regarding the coherence of biblical texts, despite the issue of coherence being a productive area of investigation for almost all biblical texts. There are a small number of biblical scholars who have discussed the finding that coherence is the product of readers and how this applies to the evaluation of the coherence of biblical texts. Writing in 1998, Ellen van Wolde suggested that biblical scholars abandon the common "approach to coherence as a static feature of the text,"[170] adopt the distinction between cohesion and coherence, and define coherence as a "mental phenomenon in the mind of the reader."[171] In 2010, Mark Brettler agreed with van Wolde, stating "coherence is something that the *reader* creates in dialogue with the text."[172]

More recently, Jeffrey Stackert has described coherence as "properly an achievement of the reader, even as it is highly dependent upon a text's cohesive ties."[173] But even those scholars who recognize that coherence is created by readers have faced significant obstacles in determining which standards of coherence are to be applied to the evaluation of biblical texts. Scholars including D. Andrew Teeter and William A. Tooman, Michael Lyons, and Alexander Samely have reacted to this more accurate conception of coherence by exploring methods that could potentially reveal the standards of coherence employed by ancient readers and thus bring

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[170] Ellen van Wolde, "The Creation of Coherence," *Semeia* 81 (1998): 159–74, here 168. Van Wolde's criticism links this tendency in biblical exegesis to structuralism, which she sees as having an extensive influence on biblical studies in the final 30 years of the 20th century.
[171] Van Wolde, "The Creation of Coherence," 168. Van Wolde stresses the importance of the reader's construction: "Coherence refers to the linguistic quality which is created by the reader's interpretation of a text as a meaningful whole: the reader can interpret the text coherently, that is to say, not a text itself *is* coherent, but a reader's interpretation *makes* it coherent." Thus the textual property of cohesion influences coherence but does not singularly define it, according to van Wolde: "coherence is constructed by a reader who is guided by textual cohesive features" among other factors. See pages 168–71.
[172] Brettler, "The 'Coherence' of Ancient Texts," 414.
[173] Jeffrey Stackert, "Pentateuchal Coherence and the Science of Reading," in *The Formation of the Pentateuch Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America*, ed. Jan C. Gertz et al. FAT 111 (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 253–68, here 254.

their analyses closer to the way that the coherence of texts would have been perceived anciently.[174]

If the object of research is to determine whether texts would have been perceived to be coherent by their ancient readers, then some method of reconstructing the standards of coherence employed by readers in the time of the production and early circulation of *Job* would be the ideal. However, discerning ancient interpretive practices, including the standards of coherence ancient readers employed, is challenging because there is no possibility of collecting data from native informants. There is also no explicit commentary on the subject of textual interpretation of

[174] Andrew Teeter and William Tooman, "Standards of (In)Coherence in Ancient Jewish Literature," *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 9 (2020): 94–129, here 95–101; Michael A Lyons, "Local Incoherence, Global Coherence?" 143; Alexander Samely, "Jewish Studies and Reading," in *'Let the Wise Listen and Add to Their Learning': Festschrift for Günter Stemberger on the Occasion of His 75th Birthday*, ed. G. Langer and C. Cordoni, SJ 90 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 757–89. See also the discussion of this topic in Teeter and Tooman, "Standards of (In)Coherence in Ancient Jewish Literature," 106–115, especially their comment on page 107: "Some imply by their argumentation that standards are readily accessible, apparently on the basis of an assumption that standards of (in)coherence are "natural" or universal and remain constant across time – bound to conceptions of how human rationality and logic are supposed to function, and therefore available to critical thinking. These assumptions are often tacit and unacknowledged, but they form a fundamental premise of arguments that are put forward about the disunity or incoherence of works in the Hebrew Bible." Teeter and Tooman went on to point out that culturally-specific nature of standards of coherence have been discussed by scholars of numerous cultures and literatures of the pre-modern world, including Greece, Mesopotamia, later rabbinic Judaism, and Islamic tradition, providing as an example the work of Egyptologist Emma Brunner-Traut. See E. Brunner-Traut, *Frühformen des Erkennens am Beispiel Altägyptens* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990). See also Samely's comment that "The modern scholar has to reckon with the possibility that standards of coherence are historically contingent and that those embodied in the text under consideration are not yet known." Alexander Samely, *Profiling Jewish Literature in Antiquity: An Inventory, from Second Temple Texts to the Talmuds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 25 and inSamely, "How Coherence Works: Reading, Re-Reading and Inner-Biblical Exegesis," 131: "Does the present-day experience of incoherence in texts that originated in other times and places allow deductions on their text history? We cannot simply take for granted that this is so."

Hebrew texts that is dated earlier than the Hellenistic period.[175] The textual record of this period from which we might hope to draw evidence is beset with questions about coherence and editorial history.[176] As a result, there is little to no information on the reading practices and perceptions of coherence employed by ancient readers during the period of Job's composition and circulation in the first millennium BCE.[177] Thus Teeter, Tooman, Lyons, and Samely have largely restricted their efforts to later periods in which the nature of the evidence is different and potentially more fruitful, leaving open the question of what standards of coherence ought to be employed when evaluating texts from the periods in which biblical texts originated.[178]

I address this question by appealing to evidence within *Job* itself and from comparable ancient Near Eastern and biblical texts. To do so, I utilize the concept of the implied author as articulated by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan. In contrast to those who personify the implied author as a participant in narrative communication,[179] Rimmon-Kenan strongly asserted that "the notion of the implied author must be de-personified, and is best considered as a set of implicit norms."[180]

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[175] For more on efforts to identify ancient standards of coherence in biblical studies and related disciplines, see the discussion and bibliography in Teeter and Tooman, "Standards of (In)Coherence in Ancient Jewish Literature."

[176] Because autographs of biblical texts are not extant it is difficult to see how it would be possible to escape from the cloud of uncertainty regarding whether any of the extant texts are themselves not affected by later editing and thus their value as evidence for ancient standards of coherence is limited.

[177] On the dating of *Job*, see the excursus following this chapter.

[178] I build upon the work of these biblical scholars by basing my methodology upon the principles demonstrated by empirical research on textual coherence, although I take a different method because there is not the same type of evidence to reconstruct standards of coherence employed by the earliest readers *Job*.

[179] The personification of the implied author originated in Wayne Booth's initial conception of it, in which he described it as the author's "implied version of 'himself'" and referred repeatedly to the implied author in anthropomorphic terms, see Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 71–76. For a more recent discussion of the concept, see Maria Stefanescu, "Revisiting the Implied Author Yet Again: Why (Still) Bother?," *Style* 45.1 (2019): 48–66, especially 52–54.

[180] Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 89.

For my purposes, I am interested in the set of norms implicit in these texts regarding (1) what kind of world, characters, and other existents are in the world the story depicts; and (2) what features of a narrative can be assembled into a coherent story.

The norms of the implied author indicate a set of standards of coherence that can be used to evaluate the text. The first set of norms indicates the qualities of the world the narrative depicts, including the characters, events, and other features. These norms can inform the evaluation of coherence because if norms established in one portion of the text are violated in another, then the text is determined to be incoherent. For example, most contemporary residents of the United States reading a historical drama set in a realistic portrayal of Victorian England would find it discontinuous if at the climax of the narrative the protagonist were to pull out an iPhone because the text itself implies a set of norms about what kind of world the story takes place in, and the presence of technology that doesn't appear to exist in the virtual world causes readers to perceive incoherence.[181] Another example is that most narrative texts depict a world in which an individual can be in only one place at any given moment, and in which an individual must travel from one place to another using some established means of transportation. Notably, that travel must occur is a feature of worlds in which the details of travel need not be provided. But if an individual appears in two different places in a single moment or if an individual appears in a different place without having the ability to travel there, this will prompt readers to identify incoherence.

[181] This principle is demonstrated by the exceptions, in which period pieces or narratives set in particular historical circumstances that do deviate from the historical parallel must show that the world they convey is different or else they will be labeled as incoherent. For example, the book *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* consistently and directly implies a different set of norms (the existence of zombies) than those typically associated with Great Britian in the Georgian era. See Seth Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (Philadelphia: Quirk Books, 2009).

In the case of *Job*, I investigate whether the narrative depicts the world of the story, including the characters and other existents, consistently across different portions of the text, especially the portions in prose and those in poetic form. Because of their significance in discussions of the coherence of *Job*, I prioritize investigating the nature, qualities, and features of the characters Job and YHWH. For example, how do different portions of the text depict YHWH's actions blessing or afflicting human beings? Do different portions of the text depict YHWH to possess the same or different capabilities and priorities and other traits? If the traits of YHWH are shown to be consistent throughout the narrative, then the characterization of YHWH does not indicate the narrative is incoherent.

At the same time, not all variation in features of a story create incoherence. It is necessary to determine under what circumstances and to what extent it is possible for features of a story, especially characters, to change without creating incoherence. To investigate the veracity of the claim that there are changes in Job's characterization that create incoherence, it is necessary to first determine Job's characterization in different portions of the text and identify the extent and nature of continuity and discontinuity. But it is also necessary to determine what norms *Job* and other texts communicate about how and under what circumstances human beings can and cannot change. To this end, I identify what patterns in plot and characterization in both *Job* itself and comparable ancient Near Eastern and biblical texts indicate about the norms in these texts regarding the impact of character change upon incoherence. Using these norms as evidence regarding the standards of coherence appropriate for *Job*, I determine whether any changes in the characterization of *Job* create incoherence or are better understood as coherent character development.

Finally, I determine standards of coherence to use in this study by utilizing evidence of the norms implicit in biblical and ancient Near Eastern narrative texts regarding the impact of the presence and absence of characters upon coherence. This is rarely addressed explicitly—few texts include direct descriptions addressing the topic of what is or is not coherent—but narrative texts imply norms regarding how stories are told, making it possible to identify standards for evaluating whether the absence of Job's wife and the *saṭan* in portions of the text create incoherence or not.

In this study, I identify standards of coherence in the form on the basis of the implicit norms implied in *Job* and comparable texts. I evaluate the alleged contradictions, discontinuities, and other problems of the story of *Job* by investigating whether these standards allow the integration of all the narrative elements into a single mental model, the story by which the virtual world conveyed by the text is represented in the mind of the reader. If it is possible to construct the features of the story—especially the features of these characters—into a single coherent model, then the story is coherent.

Evaluating the Coherence of Story and of Characters

Readers of narrative texts evaluate coherence by constructing a mental representation of the virtual world that the text represents, including all the elements contained within that world, and then attempting to integrate those elements into a single interconnected representation. It is to that representation of the virtual world to which they apply their standards of coherence in order to determine if the text is coherent or incoherent. It is the mental representation of the virtual world that determines coherence and which is the subject of evaluation. Readers determine the coherence of the narrative by evaluating the coherence of its story.

In this study, I evaluate the coherence of *Job* in its ancient context by performing a narrative analysis of the prose and poetic material, with particular emphasis on the characterization of YHWH, Job, and Job's interlocutors. I interpret the virtual world represented by *Job*, including the setting, characters, other existents, actions, and events. Much of the work of narrative interpretation consists of philological investigation, ranging from the meaning of individual worlds to the syntactic relations between clauses. I also draw upon the wealth of scholarship concerning biblical narrative and its features in order to move from the interpretation of language to the representation of the virtual world. Utilizing these methods, I investigate whether the extent to which the narrative elements possess common referents and possess compatible properties and relations throughout the narrative enable their integration into a single textual model according to the standards of coherence communicated by the text itself. According to this approach, to determine the coherence of *Job* is to evaluate the coherence of its story.

Of particular importance for evaluating the coherence of *Job*'s story is the representation of its characters. Many of the scholars who have judged *Job* to be incoherent have supported their claims by identifying inconsistencies in its characters. A central object of inquiry of this study is evaluating the characterization of YHWH, Job, and Job's friends throughout the text and determining whether they are coherent or incoherent according to the text's own norms about what type of virtual world is represented.

In the conception of narrative utilized in this study, characters are entities that exist in the virtual world represented by the text.[182] Readers comprehend characters in a similar way as they

[182] Character has been conceived of in other ways, such as a functional actant, or as a narrative instance defined by their communicative properties. Uri Margolin described each of these options and argued for the superiority of the conception of characters as a "non-actual

comprehend the narrative text: "In understanding a character in a fictional world, the recipient builds a mental model of the character into which all characterizing information is integrated."[183] This mental model of the character is part of the model of the virtual reality of the narrative.

Readers integrate the information the text provides about a character into a mental representation of an individual with specific traits, often called characteristics.[184] Readers construct their mental representations of characters by utilizing textual information and drawing on background knowledge to make inferences about the character's traits be they physical, mental, or any other kind.[185] The process of constructing character, therefore, draws on information from multiple sources:

> (a) textually explicit ascription of properties to a character; (b) inferences that can be drawn from textual cues (e.g., "she smiled nervously"); (c) inferences based on information which is not associated with the character by the text itself but through reference to historically and culturally variable real-world conventions (e.g., the

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Individual" that is located in the world of the narrative and endowed with physical and mental attributes and relations, in Uri Margolin, "Individuals in Narrative Worlds: An Ontological Perspective," *Poetics Today* 11.4 (1990): 843–71, especially 844–48.

[183] Jens Eder, Fotis Jannidis, and Ralf Schneider, "Characters in Fictional Worlds: An Introduction," in *Characters in Fictional Worlds: Understanding Imaginary Beings in Literature, Films and Other Media*, ed. Jens Eder, Fotis Jannidis, and Ralf Schneider (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 3–64, here 35.

[184] Eder, Jannidis, and Schneider, "Characters in Fictional Worlds," 32.

[185] Richard J. Gerrig and David W. Allbritton, "The Construction of Literary Character: A View from Cognitive Psychology," *Style* 24.3 (1990): 380–91, here 380. See also Uri Margolin, "Character," in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 66–79, here 76: "Whether characters are considered artifacts or non-actual individuals, we must first form mental images of them in order to be able to make claims about them. The cognitive-psychological approach views characters as just that: text-based mental models of possible individuals, built up in the mind of the reader in the course of textual processing. More precisely, characters are conceptualized here as complex readerly mental representations (constructs, portraits, mental files)."

appearance of a room reveals something about the person living there or the weather expresses the feelings of the protagonist).[186]

The first category includes the description of a character, either by the narrator or another character in the story. It also includes the character's actions, although those too often require the reader to make inferences about what those actions reveal about the traits of the character.

But characters are also constructed by inference. The role of inferences is significant, because readers often draw quite a bit from their background knowledge about individuals from outside the text, including their knowledge of people in the real world.[187] In fact, Jonathan Culpeper has demonstrated that when constructing characters, readers utilize information from "top-down inference processes" that draw upon their prior knowledge of individuals and "bottom-up textual cues" that interprets the text in a process that draws upon both concurrently and cyclically.[188] This significantly affects whether the reader determines the character to be coherent.

Questions regarding characterization have played a significant role in the scholarship on biblical narrative, and I make use of a number of foundational works.[189] I determine the extent to

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[186] Fotis Jannidis, "Character," in *Handbook of Narratology*, ed. Peter Huhn (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 14–29, here 22.

[187] For a particularly emphatic statement of this claim, see Baruch Hochman, *Character in Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985).

[188] Jonathan Culpeper, *Language and Characterisation* (Harlow: Longman, 2001), especially as described in 1–37.

[189] For example, my understanding of character and characterization in biblical narrative is informed by Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, BLS 9 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983); Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); Jean Louis Ska, *"Our Fathers Have Told Us": Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives*, SubBi 13 (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1990); J. P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide*, trans. Ineke Smit (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999); Yairah Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press,

which the depictions of these characters show uniformity or change. I then investigate whether the nature and degree of change or inconsistency makes it possible to integrate all the elements of each character into a single model. In this, I compare the degree of uniformity or change of the characters in *Job* with the characters in other ancient Near Eastern narratives, to move away from modern assumptions about the requisite flatness of characters in ancient texts and illuminate the standards of coherence implied by the text itself.

This study is organized around the chronological progression of the narrative of *Job*, with emphasis upon the issues of characterization that are most prominent in the texts interpreted in each chapter. In Chapter Two, I analyze the narrative representation included within the opening scenes of *Job* (Job 1–2), with special attention to what the interactions between YHWH and the *saṭan* reveal about the deity's priorities and how they motivate his decision to bring suffering upon Job. In Chapter Three, I interpret the progression of the speeches made by Job, his interlocutors, and YHWH in the so-called poetic dialogues (Job 3:1–41:6). In this chapter, I investigate the dynamic characterization of *Job* both within the poetic dialogues and in relation to his characterization in the prose material in the beginning and end.

Finally, in Chapter Four I study the conclusion of *Job* (42:7–17). I analyze what YHWH's speech in 42:7–9 reveals about the characterization of Job's interlocutors, particularly in relation to their speeches in the dialogues. I also examine what the final words and actions of YHWH reveal about him, and discuss whether this is coherent with his characterization throughout the text. The final chapter of this dissertation discusses how the results of this study

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2001); Sara M. Koenig, *Isn't This Bathsheba?: A Study in Characterization*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series 177 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011); and Barbara Green, *David's Capacity for Compassion: A Literary-Hermeneutical Study of 1-2 Samuel*, LHBOTS 641 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017).

inform the study of *Job*, the evaluation of coherence of biblical texts, and the study of biblical narrative in general.

Excursus: The Dating of *Job*

The history of scholarship on the date of *Job*'s composition is diverse, with proposals that would make *Job* among the earliest of biblical texts and others that place it among the latest. In the following, I argue that efforts to determine a date within a window of a few centuries or fewer are not effective because there is not sufficient evidence. I argue that, for the purposes of this study, *Job* is best understood to originate in ancient Israel or Judah in the first millennium BCE, without further specification.

The most recent and effective treatment of the date of the text of *Job* is that of C. L. Seow. He shows that the book cannot be dated by such traditional means as linguistic characteristics (because of the issues faced by linguistic dating in general and the idiosyncratic language of *Job* in particular), the theological development of the *saṭan* (because there are no grounds for excluding any particular usage with certainty), or most of the purported intertextual connections (because they are superficial and of uncertain direction).[190]

Seow also argued that there are noteworthy parallels to Jeremiah, Lamentations, and Deutero-Isaiah, all of which he assigns to the sixth century. But attempts to establish the direction of dependence are unconvincing and thus ineffective for illuminating the dating of *Job*. Seow's claim that the reference to the Chaldeans and Sabeans as raiders could only date to the period of 550-540 BCE is merely suggestive. Even his claim that the reference to caravans from Tema and Shaba in Job 6:19 indicates that the text must be later than the middle of the eighth century depends on interpreting the reference to Saba as one of two known sites associated with

[190] Seow, *Job*, 39–46.

that name, and only appears in one portion that could be separated from the rest of the text by certain compositional theories.[191]

Other recent attempts to date *Job* depend on attempts to identify the motifs and ideas it employs and then locate a portion of Israelite history within which they appear most compatible. For example, JiSeong J. Kwon identified theological ideas in Job and Deutero-Isaiah that he associates with the "common scribal mindset" of the Persian-period. In combination with the absence of motifs found in Hellenistic texts, this evidence suggests to Kwon a Persian-period dating.[192] Another example of this method is the dating of Oeming and Schmid, who explicitly depended on broad assumptions about the function of the text and its elements that cannot be adequately proven.[193]

I do not employ such methods in this study for two reasons.[194] The first is that they depend upon historical generalizations about mindsets and ideas that existed only in one historical period that I find unconvincing. By necessity, such an argument discounts the possibility that the textual record preserves views or motifs that were idiosyncratic at the time of their origin, despite the reality that such literary diversity surely existed and there is no reason it

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[191] Seow, *Job*, 39–46.
[192] JiSeong J. Kwon "Shared Ideas in Job and Deutero-Isaiah," *ZAW* 129.1 (2017): 32–46.
[193] See for example the assumptions explicitly articulated here: "The terminus a quo cannot be earlier than the exile (especially when assuming that Job stands collectively for Israel as a whole, when noticing Assyrian influences, or considering the allusion in Ezek 14:14, 20). A postexilic date is even more plausible because the *saṭan* is a late Old Testament development. Neither should a full-blown reflection on theodicy be expected any earlier. Because of philosophical influences and many scriptural allusions, we might even assume the Hellenistic era as the best historical location for the book. The latest possible date is marked by Jesus Sirach (180 BCE) because it refers to the book of Job (Sir 49:9)." Oeming and Konrad Schmid, *Job's Journey: Stations of Suffering*, x.
[194] See criticism of this method by Benjamin D. Sommer, "Dating Pentateuchal Texts and the Perils of Pseudo-Historicism," in *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research.*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman, Konrad Schmid, and Baruch J. Schwartz, FAT 78 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 85–108.

could not have been preserved in the texts that have survived. For example, Oeming and Schmid explicitly base their dating upon a rhetorical interpretation that the figure of Job amidst his suffering stands collectively for Israel as a whole amidst their suffering in the exile. While in some ways a compelling interpretation, using this as a basis for dating the text requires assumptions about the rhetorical function of the text that are dubious. Similarly, many of the other attempts to locate the theology of the text within the history of Israelite theological thought are unconvincing.

The second reason I do not employ such methods is that they are not necessary for the purposes of this study. I seek to interpret the text and especially the virtual world it conveys as it would be represented in the mental model created by readers. In the following, I describe how a broader range for the time of composition accomplishes this purpose.

On the most basic level, the language and content of *Job* indicate that it originated in a context occupied by Hebrew readers familiar with the literary traditions attested in ancient Israel and Judah.[195] The latest possible date for composition is established by the Old Greek translation of the text and two manuscripts at Qumran, a copy recorded on 4QpalaeoJob^{c} and a Targum, indicating that *Job* was in circulation by the end of the third century BCE.[196] Thus the date of the text of *Job* can only be confidently narrowed down to the period between the earliest evidence

[195] See Seow, *Job*, 44: "The anonymous composer is almost certainly an Israelite, as the numerous allusions to Hebrew traditions indicate." Seow cites Konrad Schmid, "Innerbiblische Schriftdiskussion Im Hiobbuch," in *Das Buch Hiob Und Seine Interpretationen : Beiträge Zum Hiob-Symposium Auf Dem Monte Verita Vom 14.-19. August 2005*, ed. Thomas Krüger et al., ATANT 88 (Zürich: TVZ, 2007), 241–61. Not every connection identified by Schmid is certain, but he is correct in pointing out that the language and motifs of *Job* frequently overlap with language and motifs attested in other Hebrew literature.

[196] For the likely date of 4QpalaeoJob^{c} as between 225 and 150 BCE, see Seow, *Job*, 44.

for Hebrew literary writing, in the first centuries of the first millennium BCE, and the end of the third century BCE, spanning the Iron Age through the Persian period.[197]

Placing the composition of *Job* within this admittedly broad temporal range provides insight into the virtual world conveyed by the text by allowing broad, general comparison to the ideas and motifs portrayed in other ancient Hebrew and Near Eastern texts. Much of the evidence for the cultural and intellectual milieu of ancient Israel and Judah is applicable to this temporal window. The vast majority of biblical texts took their received form within this period, meaning they can be used in this study even if more precise dating remains elusive. In addition, there is ample evidence that during this period scribes in Israel and Judah had access to a number of texts in languages other than Hebrew from the surrounding cultures and that these foreign texts impacted the texts these scribes produced in Hebrew.[198]

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[197] On the evidence for writing as early as the 10th century, in contradiction to the common view that writing in complex forms only originated in the late 8th century, see Matthieu Richelle, "Elusive Scrolls: Could Any Hebrew Literature Have Been Written Prior to the Eighth Century BCE?," *VT* 66.4 (2016): 556–94; and André Lemaire, "Levantine Literacy ca. 1000-750 BCE," in *Contextualizing Israel's Sacred Writings: Ancient Literacy, Orality, and Literary Production*, ed. Brian B. Schmidt, AIL 22 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 11–45.

[198] Aptly articulated by Job Jindo: "As comparative study has long demonstrated, biblical religion emerged within the literary and intellectual matrix of ancient Near Eastern civilizations. Biblical authors incorporated and appropriated the literary and cultural conventions they, or their culture, had inherited from their surrounding societies, and transformed those conventions according to their own value system; hence, resemblances between biblical and other ancient Near Eastern sources." See Job Jindo, *Biblical Metaphor Reconsidered: A Cognitive Approach to Poetic Prophecy in Jeremiah 1-24* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 74–75.

A brief overview of selected evidence for the influence of foreign texts upon Hebrew literature includes evidence for the impact of Assyrian royal inscriptions upon the first portion of Isaiah (Peter Machinist, "Assyria and Its Image in the First Isaiah," *JAOS* 103 (1983): 719–37); and upon several of the psalms (Jessie DeGrado, "Authoring Empire: Intellectual Engagement with the Neo-Assyrian Empire in the Bible" [PhD. diss., University of Chicago, 2018]); of the legend of the birth of Sargon upon the first chapters in Exodus (Colette Briffard, "Moïse versus Sargon," *VT* 60 [2010]: 479–82); of a narrative pattern in Levantine and Mesopotamian texts upon the biblical narratives of Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and David (Edward L. Greenstein, "The Fugitive Hero Narrative Pattern in Mesopotamia," in Worship, Women, and War: A Festschrift for Susan Niditch, ed. John J. Collins, Tracy T. Lemos, and Saul Olyan, BJS 357 [Atlanta: SBL,

Therefore, in reconstructing the virtual world conveyed by *Job* I utilize biblical texts as well as other ancient Near Eastern texts that were likely a part of the milieu of the scribes writing in Hebrew in the first millennium prior to end of the third century BCE. For the purposes of this study, it is better to draw upon a broader pool of evidence than to identify a more specific period on the basis of tenuous evidence and be limited to insufficient data. In chapters two, three, and four, I interpret the text and, when necessary, draw upon motifs and ideas that were present in the ancient Hebrew milieu to help reconstruct the virtual world conveyed by *Job*.

2015], 17–35); of the rhetorical mode associated with royal apologetic found in Hatti, Aram, Assyrian, and Babylonia on the biblical narratives about David and Solomon (Andrew Knapp, *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East* [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016]); of the Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon upon the material within Deuteronomy (most recently Carly L. Crouch, *Israel and the Assyrians: Deuteronomy, the Succession Treaty of Esarhaddon, and the Nature of Subversion*, Ancient Near East Monographs 8 [Atlanta: SBL, 2014]); and of the Laws of Eshnunna and the Laws of Hammurabi upon the Covenant Code (David P. Wright, *Inventing God's Law: How the Covenant Code of the Bible Used and Revised the Laws of Hammurabi* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009]; "The Laws of Hammurabi as a Source for the Covenant Collection [Exodus 20:23–23:19]," *Maarav* 10 [2003]: 11–87).

Chapter Two

Prioritizing the Divine Reputation:

The Characterization of YHWH and the Function of the *saṭan* in the Opening Scenes of *Job*

As scholars have attempted to interpret *Job* and evaluate its coherence, much attention has been paid to the opening scenes (Job 1–2) and how they depict YHWH's decisions and motivations and, ultimately, his characterization. Scholars have employed form-critical, source-critical, narratological, linguistic, theological, and historical methods of analysis as they have pursued varied interpretive objectives.[1] Many have argued that in the opening scenes, YHWH is depicted

[1] In addition to commentaries on *Job*, there are numerous studies that focus specifically either on the opening scenes (Job 1–2) individually or upon the prose material, including both the opening scenes and the conclusion (Job 42:7–17), including Karl Kautzsch, *Das sogenannte Volksbuch von Hiob und der Ursprung von Hiob cap. I. II. XLII, 7-17.: ein Beitrag zur Frage nach der Integrität des Buches Hiob* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1900); A. Alt, "Zur Vorgeschichte des Buches Hiob," *ZAW* 55.3–4 (1937): 265–68; Nahum M. Sarna, "Epic Substratum in the Prose of Job," *JBL* 76.1 (1957): 13–25; Matitiahu Tsevat, "The Meaning of the Book of Job," *HUCA* 37 (1966): 73–106 (Tsevat treats the entire book but his comments on how the opening scenes set the stakes regarding the definition and existence of true piety have been particularly influential); Yair Hoffman, "The Relation between the Prologue and the Speech-Cycles in Job: A Reconsideration," *VT* 31.2 (1981): 160–70; Rick D. Moore, "The Integrity of Job," *CBQ* 45.1 (1983): 17–31; Meir Weiss, *The Story of Job's Beginning* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1983); D. J. A. Clines, "False Naivety in the Prologue to Job," *HAR* 9 (1985): 127–36; Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger and Georg Steins, "Zur Entstehung, Gestalt und Bedeutung der Ijob-Erzählung (Ijob 1f, 42)," *BZ* 33.1 (1989): 1–24; Alan Cooper, "Reading and Misreading the Prologue to Job," *JSOT* 46 (1990): 67–79; Ulrich Berges, "Der Ijobrahmen (Ijob 1,1-2,10; 42,7-17): Theologische Versuche Angesichts Unschuldigen Leidens," *BZ* 39 (1995): 225–45; J. van Oorschot, "Die Entstehung des Hiobbuches," in *Das Buch Hiob Und Seine Interpetationen*, ed. T. Kruger, ATANT 88 (Zurich: TVZ, 2007), 165–84; Ian Young, "Is the Prose Tale of Job in Late Biblical Hebrew?," *VT* 59 (2009): 606–29; Fox, "Reading the Tale of Job (Job 1,1–2,13 + 42,7–17)," Andrew Davis and Tod Linafelt, "Translating חנם in Job 1:9 and 2:3: On the Relationship between Job's Piety and His Interiority," *VT* 63 (2013): 627–39; Patricia G. Kirkpatrick, "Curse God and Die–Job's Wife and the Struggle for Job's Transformation," in *Evil and Death: Conceptions of the Human in Biblical, Early Jewish, Greco-Roman and Egyptian Literature*, ed. Beate Ego and Ulrike Mittmann, DCLS 18 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), 43–55;

as some combination of active, anthropomorphic, boastful, or manipulable, and that these characteristics are irreconcilable with his depiction in the poetic material, where he is absent, abstract, or indifferent.[2] For example, Bernhard Duhm claimed that in the opening and concluding scenes YHWH is depicted as an active ruler who visibly intervenes in human affairs, and contrasted that with the poetic material in which he claimed that the deity threatens to disappear and his rule is only recognizable in nature.[3]

Yair Hoffman stated: "The Lord in the prologue seems to represent quite a different image from the Lord in the speeches. In the prologue he is very anthropomorphic, popular, earthly. Though living in heaven, he is tempted by Satan and prepared to take part in a kind of gambling…What a clear difference between such a God and the transcendental, glorious, abstract being of the poetic speeches!"[4] Often, scholars have asserted that the opening scenes depict YHWH as vulnerable to manipulation, unjust, or both. Simeon Chavel has described *Job* as a "broken story," in which the narrator depicts a "compromised, inconsistent Yahweh" who "seems a contradictory character" in part because in the opening scenes he is "manipulable and brings manipulation upon himself" and "does not think matters through."[5] Even some scholars

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Katharine J. Dell, "What Was Job's Malady?," *JSOT* 41.1 (2016): 61–77; Aron Pinker, "Job's Wife," *Journal for Semitics* 25 (2016): 127–64; Paul Kang-Kul Cho, "The Integrity of Job 1 and 42:11-17," *CBQ* 76 (2014): 230–51; "Job 2 and 42:7–10 as Narrative Bridge and Theological Pivot," *JBL* 136.4 (2017): 857–77; and Geoff John Aimers, "Theodicy in an Ironical Sense: The Joban Wager and the Portrait of Folly," *JSOT* 43.3 (2019): 359–70.

[2] For these attributes in particular, see the works cited below and Morris Jastrow, *The Book of Job: Its Origin, Growth and Interpretation: Together with a New Translation, Based on a Revised Text* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1920), 43–44; and Norman C. Habel, "In Defense of God the Sage," in *The Voice from the Whirlwind: Interpreting the Book of Job*, ed. Leo G. Perdue and W. Clark Gilpin (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), 21–38, here 26.

[3] Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob: erklärt*, KHC 16 (Freiburg i.B.: Mohr, 1897), VII.

[4] Hoffman, "The Relation between the Prologue and the Speech-Cycles in Job: A Reconsideration," 163–64.

[5] Simeon Chavel, "Knowledge of the Lord in the Hebrew Bible," *Know: A Journal on the Formation of Knowledge* 2.1 (2018): 47–82, here 64, 66, 73.

who treated *Job* as coherent have suggested that YHWH's characterization in the opening scenes raises questions and casts him in a negative light. For example, Norman Habel has stated:

> The way in which God agrees to test Job's integrity, however, raises serious doubts about God's own integrity. He is apparently vulnerable to incitement by the Satan in his heavenly council. He succumbs to a wager—twice (1:6–12; 2:1–6). He afflicts Job without cause or provocation by Job, and his capacity to rule justly is thrown into question.[6]

While this assessment did not lead Habel to argue for incoherence, scholars such as those cited above have suggested that the depiction of the deity of the opening scenes is inconsistent with the depiction of deity in the poetic materials or the theology that other parts of the text support.

This summary illustrates the significance of YHWH's characterization to the coherence of *Job*. It also highlights how evaluations of YHWH's characterization in the opening scenes depend almost entirely upon the stakes and outcomes of the conversations between YHWH and the *saṭan*. Yet there remain varying and contradictory views among scholars about the interpretation of these conversations, on issues ranging from the meanings of individual words, to the nature of the dispute and what YHWH seeks to accomplish, to the identity of the *saṭan*.[7] The question of the identity of the *saṭan* involves several disputed issues, including the meaning of the root שׂט"ן, the historical progression of the concept of a divine adversary referred to by the proper name Satan by the time of the New Testament, and the interpretation of several other biblical texts in which the term שָׂטָן appears.

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[6] Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 61.

[7] See discussion below.

These factors indicate that an interpretation of the conversations between YHWH and the *saṭan* in the opening scenes of *Job* (Job 1–2) is necessary to evaluate the coherence of *Job*. To this end, I investigate the textual, philological, and historical evidence regarding the identity of the *saṭan* in the opening scenes of *Job*. I argue that the *saṭan* is an unnamed divine being who is referred to as a member of the generic class of שָׂטָן, opponent, because he obstructs YHWH's attempts to compel him to acknowledge Job's righteousness.

In light of these findings, I interpret the conversations between the *saṭan* and YHWH, with particular attention to the characterization of YHWH. I argue that YHWH perceives the *saṭan*'s allegations that Job's righteousness is self-interested to be a threat to the deity's reputation. YHWH allows Job to be afflicted to disprove the allegations and compel the *saṭan* to acknowledge that Job is righteous because such an acknowledgement would elevate YHWH's reputation and glory. These events indicate that YHWH's highest priority is his own reputation and that he is willing to afflict human beings without concern for their behavior if doing so will improve it.

Finally, I investigate whether the absence of the *saṭan* after the opening scenes creates discontinuity in the plot. I assess how my findings regarding the identity and role of the *saṭan* and the conversations between the *saṭan* and YHWH illuminate this question. I argue that the *saṭan* 's function is to demonstrate YHWH's character and that his absence after the first portion of the opening scenes does not create discontinuity because that function is fulfilled in their two conversations. I conclude with a discussion of the relevance of these findings regarding the coherence of *Job* and the remaining chapters of this dissertation.

THE IDENTITY OF THE *SAṬAN*

The character referred to as the *saṭan* appears in two scenes, Job 1:6–12 and 2:1–7. In both he converses with YHWH. These two conversations play a crucial role in the narrative and in illuminating YHWH's character. The meaning and the significance of these conversations are obscured by several difficult interpretive issues, beginning with the question of who the *saṭan* is. To provide a foundation for my exploration of the characterization of YHWH, I evaluate the evidence for the characterization of the *saṭan*.

In both scenes, the *saṭan* is not described in detail by any of the other characters or by the narrator. He arrives among a group of divine beings and then YHWH engages him in a conversation that concludes with YHWH's decision to take all that the human being Job possesses or to afflict him. Because of the repetition between the two scenes, I include only the first one here:

Job 1:6–12

6ויהי היום ויבאו בני האלהים להתיצב	6One day divine beings came to stand before YHWH. The
על יהוה ויבוא גם השטן בתוכם	*saṭan* also came among them. 7YHWH said to the *saṭan:*
7ויאמר יהוה אל השטן מאין תבא ויען	"Where do you come from? The *saṭan* answered YHWH:
השטן את יהוה ויאמר משוט בארץ	"From going to and fro on the earth, walking back and forth
ומהתהלך בה 8ויאמר יהוה אל השטן	in it." 8YHWH said to the *saṭan*: "Have you directed your
השמת לבך על עבדי איוב כי אין כמהו	attention toward my servant Job, that there is none like him
בארץ איש תם וישר ירא אלהים וסר	on the earth, a man blameless and upright, who fears God
מרע 9ויען השטן את יהוה ויאמר החנם	and turns aside from evil?" 9The *saṭan* answered YHWH:
ירא איוב אלהים 10הלא את שכת בעדו	"Does Job fear God for free? 10Have you not fenced around
ובעד ביתו ובעד כל אשר לו מסביב	him and his house and all that surrounds him? You have

מעשה ידיו ברכת ומקנהו פרץ בארץ	blessed the work of his hands and his cattle are bursting out
ואולם שלח נא ידך וגע בכל אשר לו[11]	on the earth. [11]However, stretch out your hand and strike all
אם לא על פניך יברכך ויאמר יהוה[12]	he has. Will he not curse you to your face?"[8] [12]YHWH said
אל השטן הנה כל אשר לו בידך רק	to the *saṭan*: "Look, everything he has is in your hand, only
אליו אל תשלח ידך ויצא השטן מעם	against him do not stretch out your hand." The *saṭan* went
פני יהוה	out from before YHWH.

The description of the *saṭan* in the story is minimal. The explicit details are limited to the following: (1) The character is referred to by a common noun with the definite article: הַשָּׂטָן. (2) The character comes among a group of "divine beings" בני האלהים when they stand before YHWH. (3) The character is not given a detailed introduction. (4) YHWH reacts to the presence of the *saṭan* by initiating a conversation regarding what he knows about Job. Notably absent is any anger towards the *saṭan* or any suggestion that he does not belong at this gathering. (5) YHWH gives the *saṭan* permission to influence the fortunes of Job. How those fortunes are affected requires the inference that the *saṭan* has the ability to influence events on earth by means of supernatural power (when he has YHWH's permission).

On the basis of this evidence, scholars interpreting the *saṭan* in the opening scenes of *Job* have typically taken one of three views. I review the arguments made in support of these views and show that two, the view that the *saṭan* is YHWH's divine accuser or prosecutor and the view that the *saṭan* is the personification of some aspect of YHWH's personality, are not supported by the evidence. Peggy Day and Florian Kreuzer have argued for a third view: that the precise

[8] On the form and the elided apodosis of this oath, see Conklin's confirmation that conditionally formulated oaths "are true conditional protases of conditional sentences in which an apodosis that would have expressed a negative outcome has been elided." Blane Conklin, *Oath Formulas in Biblical Hebrew*, LSAWS 5 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 45.

identity of the *saṭan* is unimportant because the character is defined by his function in the narrative. I build upon the work of Day and Kreuzer and argue that the *saṭan* is an unnamed divine being who receives the designation השטן because he functions as an opponent to YHWH in the story of *Job*.

Previous Proposals

The dominant view is that the *saṭan* in Job 1–2 is a member of YHWH's "divine council," a gathering of divine beings presided over by YHWH and who function as a "godly government" similar to earthly royal courts by advising YHWH in matters of governance and functioning as a judicial court.[9] The majority of scholars understand the *saṭan* to be a member of that council to whom YHWH has assigned the specific responsibility to identify and advocate against improper or negative behavior among YHWH's subjects, making the *saṭan* YHWH's divine accuser or prosecutor.[10] Even as these scholars have described the *saṭan*'s position with a variety of

[9] On the divine council as "the government or royal court of the supreme deity" see most recently Ellen White, *Yahweh's Council: Its Council and Membership*, FAT 2/65 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 1, 13. On the divine council generally, see also H. W. Robinson, "The Council of Yahweh," *JTS* 45.179/180 (1945): 151–57; F. M. Cross, "The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah," *JNES* 12.4 (1953): 274–77; Edwin C. Kingsbury, "The Prophets and the Council of Yahweh," *JBL* 83.3 (1964): 279–86; Matitiahu Tsevat, "God and the Gods in Assembly: An Interpretation of Psalm 82," *HUCA* 40/41 (1969): 123–37; E. T. Mullen, Jr., *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature*, HSM 24 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1980); Lowell K. Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven: The Syro-Palestinian Pantheon as Bureaucracy* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994); Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Michael S. Heiser, "The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature" (University of Wisconsin - Madison, PhD diss., 2004); and Min Suc Kee, "The Heavenly Council and Its Type-Scene," *JSOT* 31 (2007): 259–73.

[10] "Most scholars accept a theory for a Satan tradition that sees the character in his earliest form as a functionary operating within the divine council who fulfils a distinct legal role, that of chief prosecutor of individual human beings before God (Zech 3; Job 1–2)." See Dominic Rudman, "Zechariah and the Satan Tradition in the Hebrew Bible," in *Tradition in Transition: Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 in the Trajectory of Hebrew Theology*, ed. Mark J. Boda and Michael H. Floyd,

terminology and individual nuances, they have agreed that השטן in Job 1–2 is a title referring to a member of YHWH's divine council with specific duties.[11]

LHBOTS 475 (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 191–209, here 192. See also Ryan Stokes' description of a scholarly consensus around the development of the concept of "Satan" that posited one stage of development in Job 1–2 and Zech 3 in which "the word *śāṭān* is used not simply as a common noun but as a title for an officer in God's court…. the Satan in this phase of the tradition was the divine "Accuser" or "Prosecutor" of the wicked in God's heavenly courtroom." Ryan E. Stokes, *The Satan: How God's Executioner Became the Enemy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019), 4.

[11] Scholars who agree that the *saṭan* is a member of YHWH's council have used varied terminology to describe the nature of the *saṭan*'s position. Albert Brock-Utne, "'Der Feind'. Die alttestamentliche Satansgestalt im Lichte der sozialen Verhältnisse des nahen Orients," *Klio* 28 (1935): 219–27, described the *saṭan* as the "verleumder" or "slanderer" at YHWH's court. Tur-Sinai influentially compared the *saṭan* to spies employed by the administrative state of the Persian empire. He said "The Satan is 'the king's eye', which runs to and fro through the land and then reports on the political loyalty of the king's subjects" to be compared to the secret police employed by the Persian administration to "tour the earth in order to report to the king on the behaviour of the subjects, his servants, and on their attitude towards him." See Naphtali H. Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job: A New Commentary* (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher, 1957), 38–45, here 40–41. See also A. L. Oppenheim, "The Eyes of the Lord," *JAOS* 88.1 (1968): 173–80, here 176, who describes the *saṭan* as one of "these ever observant demonic or celestial beings, the 'eyes' of the Lord."

According to those who adopt Tur-Sinai's view, the *saṭan*'s duty is to bring problematic behavior to YHWH's attention: "The purpose of the Satan's activity is to report disloyalty, what we usually call sin, for punishment." Fox, "Reading the Tale of Job (Job 1,1–2,13 + 42,7–17)," 148. See also White, *Yahweh's Council*, 109–19. Others, such as Dhorme and Habel, focused on the legal implications of the *saṭan*'s actions: "the Satan seems to hold the office of a prosecutor intent on establishing justice." Habel, *The Book of Job*, 89. See also E. Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, trans. Harold Knight (London: Nelson, 1967), cxvii, who describes the *saṭan* as "the supreme Accuser, the denouncer, the prosecutor" of YHWH, and John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988).

Christopher Rollston described the *saṭan* in Job 1–2 and Zech 3 as "a quality control figure, a member of the celestial court intending to ensure that those functioning as pious people were actually precisely that," making him a "a vigilant celestial prosecutor intending to discern the presence or absence of true purity and piety." Christopher Rollston, "An Ur-History of the New Testament Devil," in *Evil in Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Chris Keith and Loren T. Stuckenbruck (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 1–16, here 5–6. Another example is Davis Hankins, who also asserted that the term *saṭan* is a title that describes the duties performed: "The accuser is a position in the divine council that this character plays quite effectively by casting doubt on the typically reliable voices that announce and celebrate Job's piety." See Davis Hankins, "Job," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Wisdom Literature*, ed. Samuel L. Adams and Matthew Goff (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2020), 30–48, here 33.

While this view remains dominant, the evidence is insufficient to support it. There is no depiction of such an office among the biblical or non-biblical evidence. Peggy Day has shown that there is no evidence for a dedicated prosecutorial office in the legal practices of ancient Israel or the surrounding cultures.[12] In fact, the evidence does not support the existence of formally recognized prosecutors or other judicial offices at all.

> The ancient Near East, like most pre-modern societies, did not know or hardly knew of law-enforcement institutions. Apart from Egypt, we have no evidence for the existence of an institutionalized police-like force whose function it was to investigate crimes. Nor was

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Ryan Stokes put forth a new interpretation of the root from which the noun שָׂטָן is derived, suggesting that it always refers to physical violence and that therefore the office held by the *saṭan* in Job 1–2 is that of YHWH's executioner. Ryan E. Stokes, "Satan, YHWH's Executioner," *JBL* 133.2 (2014): 251–70. See also Stokes, *The Satan: How God's Executioner Became the Enemy*. Other recent expressions of this view can be found in Esther J. Hamori, "The Early History of Satan," in *Evil: A History*, ed. Andrew P. Chignell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 82–87, here 82 and 85: "In the prophet Zechariah's vision of God's heavenly court, the angel of the LORD is defending the high priest, and 'the opponent' (*ha-satan*) is 'standing at his right hand to oppose him' (using the cognate verb; Zech. 3:1). This image mirrors a human court scene, with the *saṭan* functioning as the divine prosecutor. The setting of Job 1– 2, in which God and the *satan* deliberate Job's piety, should be understood in the same light….The Israelite character works with God and for God as part of the heavenly court." Similarly, see Edward L. Greenstein, *Job: A New Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 5: "The Satan's role is to accuse and prosecute people for their transgressions.... The Satan seeks to trip up human beings and report on their missteps; but he is also the contrarian, who contradicts the opinions of God."

[12] Peggy L. Day, *An Adversary in Heaven: śāṭān in the Hebrew Bible*, HSM 43 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 34–43. More recent attempts to identify comparable offices in the administration of the Achaemenid Persian empire must remain only intriguing possibilities because of the limited and fragmentary nature of the relevant texts. See, for example, Jason M. Silverman, "Vetting the Priest in Zechariah 3: The Satan between Divine and Achaemenid Administrations," *JHS* 14 (2014): art. 6, pp. 1–27, especially 11–16. Silverman cites only one complete text that he suggests refers to individuals with a legal office comparable to an accuser, and within that text there is no description of such an office, merely a reference to people reading out a document specifying an accusation within a legal setting.

there an institution comparable to that of present-day state prosecutors. The accuser in the trial was the plaintiff.[13]

Texts that depict YHWH among his court or other divine beings do not depict a prosecutorial office, nor does שָׂטָן appear as a title in them. The putative evidence is limited to the depiction of a being referred to as השטן in Job 1–2 and Zechariah 3. However, the depiction of השטן in both texts does not support the view.

The depiction of השטן in Zech 3 is too obscure to support the view that the being holds any particular office or performs any particular duties.[14] The symbolic and undetermined nature of the visions of Zechariah pose significant obstacles to interpretations of such specificity.[15] Even when scholars agree upon the language and grammar of Zechariah 3,[16] there remains a

[13] Avi Shveka and Pierre Van Hecke, "The Metaphor of Criminal Charge as a Paradigm for the Conflict between Job and His Friends," *ETL* 90.1 (2014): 99–119, here 100–101.

[14] Contra those who do understand השטן in Zechariah 3 to be a title for a position on YHWH's council, see Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, AB 25B (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987), 184; Silverman, "Vetting the Priest in Zechariah 3;" Ryan E. Stokes, "Airing the High Priest's Dirty Laundry Understanding the Imagery and Message of Zechariah 3:1-7," in *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls: John Collins at Seventy*, ed. Joel Baden, Hindy Najman, and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 175 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 1247–64, here 1255–62, although note that Stokes argued that השטן is YHWH's executioner rather than his accuser or prosecuting attorney. See also the scholars cited above who refer to השטן in Job 1–2 and Zechariah 3 as a title for an office on the divine council.

[15] David Petersen highlighted this difficulty in his statement that "the visions remain highly symbolic, open to a variety of responses." See David L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 121. See also Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, "Through a Glass Darkly: Zechariah's Unprocessed Visionary Experience," *VT* 58 (2008): 573–94, here 581, who described the visions of Zechariah as "unprocessed" and undetermined due to the "lack of *understanding*, *description*, *identification* and *reflection*"—even by the standards of written Hebrew prophecy.

[16] While there are few linguistic cruces, there is some dispute regarding the compositional history of vv. 8–10, with some scholars (for example, James C. VanderKam, "Joshua the High Priest and the Interpretation of Zechariah 3," *CBQ* 53 (1991): 553–70, here 562) viewing them as the product of the same hand as the rest of the vision report, and others (for example, Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, "The Guilty Priesthood [Zech 3]," in *The Book of Zechariah and Its Influence*, ed. C. Tuckett (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003), 1–20) describing them as a late addition. For more bibliography on this issue, see Martin Hallaschka, "Clean Garments for Joshua: The Purification

diversity of views regarding the symbolism of the various elements and the meaning of the vision as a whole.[17] In addition, the depiction of השטן does not clearly indicate the being's actions, to whom he stands in opposition, or even whether the being is divine or human. The only direct depiction of השטן in Zech 3 indicates that he is standing to the right of someone for the purpose of opposing that individual: והשטן עמד על ימינו לשטנו "The *saṭan* stood at his right to oppose him" (Zech 3:1).[18] There is no depiction of what השטן did to elicit YHWH's response. YHWH's rebuke (ויגער) in the latter part of verse 2 suggests that YHWH disapproves of something the שטן had done, but there is not sufficient information to reconstruct what it was.[19] Some scholars have argued that the language of the scene indicates that the מלאך יהוה and השטן

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of the High Priest in Zech. 3," in *Clothing and Nudity in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Christoph Berner et al. (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 525–40, here 536, n. 79.

[17] Recent examples of widely differing interpretations of the vision include suggestions that Zechariah 3 depicts: (1) YHWH rejecting chaos by accepting Joshua and rejecting the Satan's attack on the legitimacy of the priesthood and the fundamental structure of Israelite society (Rudman, "Zechariah and the Satan Tradition in the Hebrew Bible," 192–97); (2) Joshua receiving royal favor from YHWH on the basis of his loyalty demonstrated by some sort of oath in a scene patterned after legal proceedings within the satrapies of the Achaemenid empire (Silverman, "Vetting the Priest in Zechariah 3"); and (3) Joshua as a symbol for the community, with YHWH's restoration of Joshua as a symbol of the transition from the time of judgment to the time of salvation for the community as they are saved from exile (Hallaschka, "Clean Garments for Joshua").

[18] The final word in this phrase, לשטנו, is a qal infinitive construct from the verbal root שׂט"נ with the preposition ל indicating purpose and the pronominal suffix indicating the object of the verbal action.

[19] Some commentators have attempted to draw a connection between YHWH's statement and the immediately following reference to Joshua's filthy garments and his subsequent reclothing to shed light on the nature of the opposition of the השטן, but the diversity of proposals reflects the challenge of doing so. Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 185–86, suggested there were two charges against Joshua, that Jerusalem has been permanently rejected by Yahweh and should not be restored and an accusation regarding the restoration of the priesthood or Joshua's fitness for the office of high priest. Tiemeyer, "The Guilty Priesthood (Zech 3)," 5–8, argued that Joshua, the priesthood, and all of Judah were guilty of participation in worship rites that were not directed to YHWH or were otherwise unorthodox. Boda, noting that there is "no record of the accuser's words," suggested that the deity may have emphasized his election of Jerusalem in response to השטן questioning "this fundamental tenet." See Mark J. Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 233.

are in a legal context.[20] But the evidence for this is dubious.[21] For example, scholars have claimed that the language used in Zech 3:1 to describe Joshua's posture before the מלאך יהוה indicates the scene is related to a legal court setting.[22] But while the verbal phrase עמד לפני does appear in some contexts associated with legal courtroom procedures, such as Num 5:16; 27:2; Deut 19:17; Josh 20:6, Mark J. Boda has shown that the phrase is not restricted to them, describing also the actions of an attendant in a royal court (1 Sam 16:21; 1 Kgs 1:2; Jer 52:12), of priests and Levites serving God (Deut 10:8; Ezek 44:11, 15; 2 Chr 29:11), and prophets interacting with God (1 Kgs 17:1; 2 Kgs 3:14; Jer 15:19).[23] YHWH does not directly explain or

[20] Some scholars have argued that the phrase עמד על ימינו is a legal term indicating that an accuser stands to the right of the defendant. See Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8*, 190–91; and Silverman, "Vetting the Priest in Zechariah 3," 8–9. Day stated that "the expression 'stand on the right hand' is (v 6) is also clearly forensic" and argued that the vision of Zechariah 3 depicts a fundamentally legal context so as to make השטן "the mythological medium through which the author of the passage expresses the conviction that the objections to Joshua's investiture had been voiced in the heavenly court." See Day, *An Adversary in Heaven*, 31 and 126.

[21] Commonly cited in support of this view is Psa 109:6, in which the poetic speaker, as part of his requests that the deity bring misfortune and suffering upon his opponents, uses the phrase הפקד עליו רשע ושטן יעמד על ימינו "Put a wicked person over him and let an opponent stand at his right hand." I translate הפקד as a hiphil imperative masculine singular verbal form of the root פקד, with the basic meaning of the root as "to assign a person or a thing to what the subject believes is its proper or appropriate status or position in an organizational order." See Stuart Creason, "PQD Revisited," in *Studies in Semitic and Afroasiatic Linguistics Presented to Gene B. Gragg.*, ed. Cynthia L. Miller, SAOC 60 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2007), 27–42, here 30. In this case, the poetic speaker is asking that a wicked person be assigned to his "proper or appropriate status," in a position of authority over his opponent. This phrase is followed by legal terminology, but the speaker also wishes other forms of misfortune and suffering upon his opponents, ranging from death (vv. 8a; 9), to condemnation (v. 7a), to ineffective prayer (v. 7b) to being under the power of a wicked person (v. 6). While the statements in verse 6 could be interpreted in a legal context, particularly if verse 7 is viewed as an extension of verse 6, there is no evidence of such an extension between the other verses, and the description of a שטן standing at the right may refer only to opposition of a more general sense, in line with the sentiment expressed in the first colon of verse 6.

[22] Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8*, 182; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 182–83; and Silverman, "Vetting the Priest in Zechariah 3," 8–9.

[23] Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, 218. Note that there are no instances of a שטן appearing in a mortal royal court, serving a deity like the priests and Levites, or interacting with a deity like the prophets in these examples of the verbal phrase עמד לפני.

contradict what השטן had said or done to elicit the rebuke, providing no clear indication of what the role of השטן is beyond acting as an opponent.

Adding to the underspecified depiction is the lack of indication regarding to whom השטן is standing in opposition and whether he is a divine or mortal being. Some commentators have asserted that השטן opposes Joshua, perhaps by accusing him of some wrongdoing related to his unclean clothing.[24] But the masculine noun מלאך יהוה is also in syntactic proximity, which means that the third person singular suffix in both ימינו and לשטנו could refer to either Joshua or the מלאך יהוה. Grammatically, it is possible that the description of השטן indicates that he stands to the right of and is opposing either Joshua or the מלאך יהוה. In addition, השטן is not described to be in possession of qualities that are associated with the divine, and there is no depiction of him engaging in any actions limited to divine entities. The presence and participation of Joshua and Zechariah (who gives instructions regarding the clothing of Joshua in v. 5[25]) indicate that mortal beings may appear in the depicted scene.[26] It must be considered that השטן here refers to a mortal opponent, as most of the entities referred to as a שטן are.[27] The identity and actions of השטן in

[24] Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 183–85; and VanderKam, "Joshua the High Priest and the Interpretation of Zechariah 3," 555.

[25] On the significance of Zechariah's participation in the events including divine beings, see N. L. A. Tidwell, "*wā'ōmar* (Zech 3:5) and the Genre of Zechariah's Fourth Vision," *JBL* 94.3 (1975): 343–55.

[26] While the mortal Joshua is identified by name while the מלאך יהוה and השטן are anonymous, this is likely a result of the characters' differing functions. That Joshua is identified by name is likely a reflection of his political significance in the vision and in the Israelite community. That the שטן is anonymous need not reflect that he was a known entity, and the use of the definite article may be similar to that described above: indicating that his function in the vision is as member of the class "opponent." For more on this claim, see below. As in other appearances of the term, the מלאך יהוה is anonymous. Zechariah, meanwhile, is not named either. He only refers to himself in the first person.

[27] On the usage of the noun שטן, see discussion below.

Zechariah 3 are too obscure for it to be used in support of a claim that השטן refers to a divine entity holding an office on YHWH's divine council.

Similarly, the depiction of the *saṭan* in Job 1–2 does not support the view that השטן is the title for the office of YHWH's divine prosecutor or accuser. There is no indication that the gatherings of divine beings, בני האלהים, described in Job 1:6 and 2:1 are gatherings of a legal nature. The description of the divine beings coming to stand before YHWH contains the hithpael verbal form of the root יצ"ב with a complement introduced by the preposition על, which is often used to describe individuals appearing before their superior but not participating in trials or other legal procedures.[28] For example, Zechariah sees spirits (רחות) going about the earth and is told they had previously assembled and "stood before the lord of all the earth" מהתיצב על אדון כל הארץ (Zech 6:5). Similarly, the phrase is used to describe the priests and Levites who had been disenfranchised in the northern kingdom when they came and were ordained by Rehoboam and given new responsibilities in Jerusalem (2 Chr 11:13). There are no instances of the hithpael verbal form of יצ"ב and a complement introduced by על describing participants in legal procedures.[29] Neither the *saṭan* nor YHWH utilize explicitly legal terminology. Furthermore, the claims made by the *saṭan* do not align with any form of accusation attested elsewhere in the

[28] The other usage describes individuals positioning themselves in some sort of fixed location, such as by a tower (Hab 2:1); on a road (Psa 36:5) or near the site of a burnt offering (Num 23:3, 15). In both usages, the context indicates that the individuals will remain standing in that position for some period of time.

[29] The verbal form of יצ"ב or נצ"ב does appear in the legal context of Psalm 82 to describe God taking his position among the divine council, נִצָּב בַּעֲדַת־אֵל, and then rebuking them for failure to uphold their duties. Samuel uses an imperative form of the hithpael of יצ"ב in 1 Sam 12:7 to command the Israelites to take their positions before he condemns their wickedness, but the Israelites would be the defendants, not the accuser. In neither passage is the preposition על used. While the verb can be used in contexts associated with legal accusation and administration, it can also be used to describe interactions that are not associated with jurisprudence, such as the appearance of subordinates before their superior. The verbal phrase cannot be used as evidence that the interactions between YHWH and the *saṭan* are related to those of a legal court.

scenes of the divine council in the Hebrew Bible. The *saṭan* does not indicate that Job has worshipped inappropriately or insufficiently, nor does he accuse Job of breaking any of YHWH's laws or commandments. The *saṭan* indicates that Job's worship of YHWH is self-interested.[30] Even if YHWH were to be troubled by this allegation, it would not appear to be a legal one of the type that a divine prosecutor would make. What law can Job be accused of breaking? Below, I explore why the *saṭan*'s claim elicits YHWH's extreme reaction, but here it suffices to say that it is difficult to describe this claim as an accusation of Job in line with the view that the *saṭan* is fulfilling his duties as a divine accuser.

Finally, the nature of the interactions between YHWH and the *saṭan* are those of adversaries rather than colleagues. In his discussion of השטן in Zechariah 3, Mark Boda has pointed out that in both Zechariah 3 and Job 1–2, the tone of YHWH's response is not what would be expected of a conversation between a superior and subordinate who are working together:

> While it may be appropriate for a heavenly figure to be commissioned as "an accuser" whose function in the court is to evaluate humanity critically and also (or subsequently) bring accusation to the heavenly court (much as a prosecuting attorney does today on behalf of the state/crown), it is the tone of Yahweh's response to these two figures that suggests that this figure is not a normative character in its OT context.[31]

In both Zechariah 3 and Job 1–2, YHWH treats the *saṭan* the way that he treats opponents. In Zechariah 3, YHWH responds to השטן with a rebuke (גע"ר). When YHWH is the subject, the verbal form of this root indicates action normally reserved for apostate nations, forces of nature

[30] For more, see below.
[31] Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, 230.

behaving outside of what YHWH wishes, and people behaving sinfully and inappropriately.[32] Hartley points out that in *Job* the *saṭan* does not uncover human sins and failures, but rather "he acts as a troublemaker, a disturber of the kingdom."[33] In Job 2:3, YHWH accuses השטן of inciting the deity to consume Job undeservedly.[34]

In both texts, the description suggests that the interactions between YHWH and השטן are adversarial rather than cooperative. This is incongruous with the view that השטן was acting in accordance with his position as a member of YHWH's divine council. If השטן was merely following YHWH's instructions and fulfilling the role YHWH assigned to him, why is he bedeviling YHWH in both texts in which he appears? This question aligns with the evidence discussed above to present a strong challenge to the interpretation of השטן in Job 1–2 (or Zechariah 3) as a title for a member of the divine council.

Some scholars have argued that the references to השטן in these texts preserve traces of early theological developments that culminated in the figure of Satan, God's supernatural enemy, that appears in later Jewish literature such as *Jubilees* and in Christian writings such as the New Testament.[35] In the reconstruction of this theological tradition, the term שטן evolved from a common noun used to describe mortal and divine beings acting as opponents, such as the messenger of YHWH in Numbers 22, to the title of YHWH's divine prosecutor, as in Job 1–2

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[32] See Isa 17:13; Psa 9:6; Nah 1:4; Isa 54:9; Gen 37:10; and Psa 119:21.

[33] John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 72, especially n. 8.

[34] On this meaning of חנם see below. Here it is sufficient to note that YHWH expresses that he views the actions of the השטן negatively.

[35] For example, see New Testament passages such as Matthew 4, Mark 4, Luke 22, John 12, Acts 5, and Revelation 2. For more discussion of the theological developments that led to the figure of Satan, see Elaine H. Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Random House, 1995), and Stokes, *The Satan: How God's Executioner Became the Enemy*. For more on the history of interpretation of the noun שָׂטָן in the Hebrew Bible, see Derek R. Brown, "The Devil in the Details: A Survey of Research on Satan in Biblical Studies," *CurBR* 9.2 (2011): 200–27.

and Zechariah 3, and later became the proper name, no longer with the definite article, of the being who incited David to take the census and consequently incur God's wrath in 1 Chron 21.[36]

However, these texts do not support the reconstruction of such a theological progression. In addition to the problems discussed above, there are several problems that undermine the view that שטן is the proper name of a divine enemy of YHWH or of humankind in 1 Chronicles 21.[37] Sara Japhet has shown that the Chronicler does not ascribe significance to divine beings or angels other than YHWH and in fact the Chronicler sees evil, like good, originating from God.[38] Thus the existence of a fully independent divine being named שטן that is the source of evil would be out of place in the theology of Chronicles. In addition, 1 Chronicles 21 does not depict the שטן to be a divine being or as a being acting in the divine realm: the only action of the שטן is inciting the mortal David.[39] Scholars have proposed that the שטן may be a human adversary such as a military opponent like those faced by Solomon in 1 Kings 11,[40] a false prophet,[41] or one of David's own courtiers or officials.[42] 1 Chronicles 21 does not attest to the use of שטן as a proper name for a divine adversary, a development that is not attested prior to the second century

[36] For summary of this view, see Rudman, "Zechariah and the Satan Tradition," 192; and Stokes, *The Satan*, 3–4. See as early as Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob*, 7.
[37] Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 114–16; *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 373–75. See also Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 21-36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 4 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 155, who stated that שטן as a proper noun is "a feature actually unattested in the Hebrew Bible;" and John Wesley Wright, "The Innocence of David in 1 Chronicles 21," *JSOT* 60 (1993): 87–105, here 92; and White, *Yahweh's Council*, 70, n. 48, and accompanying citations.
[38] Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 375. Note that Japhet also pointed out no שטן ever appears elsewhere in Chronicles.
[39] Japhet, *Ideology*, 115–16.
[40] Gary A. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 10-29: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 12A (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 751–52.
[41] Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job*, 44.
[42] Japhet, *Ideology*, 116.

BCE.[43] The claim that the *saṭan* in Job 1–2 holds the office of prosecutor on YHWH's divine council is not supported by the evidence of 1 Chronicles 21, Zechariah 3, or Job 1–2.

Several influential studies of *Job*, including those of Meir Weiss, Hermann Spieckermann, and more recently C. L. Seow, have taken the view that the *saṭan* is a personification of a particular aspect of YHWH's personality or character. Meir Weiss described the *saṭan* in Job 1–2 as "a hypostasis," in which one characteristic or attribute of the divinity is personified as a separate divine being.[44] Similarly, C. L. Seow described the *saṭan* as "a projection of divine doubt about human integrity that is held in tension with divine trust."[45] These scholars argued that the conversation between YHWH and the *saṭan* in Job 1–2 is best understood as an external representation of YHWH's internal conflict regarding the authenticity of Job's righteousness.[46] While YHWH's words confidently proclaiming that Job is righteous

[43] The earliest possible attestations of Hebrew שטן as a proper name appear in two texts that do not date earlier than the second century BCE. The first is in *Jubilees*, where it is used to refer to a being also called "the prince of Mastema" who leads evil spiritual forces against God's people, sometimes in opposition to God's. See Stokes, *The Satan*, 75–118. The second is a single attestation in a non-canonical psalm recorded in 11QPsalms[a], column XIX, line 15. See J. A. Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll of Qumrân Cave 11 (11QPs[a])*, DJD IV (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), 40, and James A. Sanders, ed., *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 119–21. For more bibliography, see Stokes, *The Satan*, 146–48.

[44] Weiss, *The Story of Job's Beginning*, 39.

[45] C. L. Seow, *Job 1-21: Interpretation and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 256. See also Victor Maag, *Hiob* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 73. He described the *saṭan* as an aspect of the essence or nature of YHWH: "Der Satan soll als nichts anderes gelten denn als eine Wesensseite des allmächtigen Schicksalsherren Jahwä."

[46] See also Spieckermann, who described the *saṭan* as "der Schatten Gottes," the shadow of God, and argued that because the *saṭan* and God work together "Hand in Hand" they are the same being and "weil es sich um dieselbe Hand handelt." Hermann Spieckermann, "Die Satanisierung Gottes: Zur Inneren Konkordanz von Novelle, Dialog, Und Gottesreden Im Hiobbuch," in *"Wer ist wie du, Herr, under den Göttern?" Studien zur Theologie und Religionsgeschichte Israels für Otto Kaiser zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Ingo Kottsieper et al. (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 431–44, here 435. This article reprinted in Hermann Spieckermann, *Lebenkunst und Gotteslob in Israel: Anregungen aus Psalter und Weisheit für die Theologie*, FAT 91 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), quotation found on page 73.

and upright represent one part of the deity, the *saṭan* is a representation of a part of the deity that is uncertain.[47] This view can be rejected because the text gives no indication that YHWH is having an inner conflict, nor that he is conjuring the *saṭan* as an extension of his own personality.

There is nothing about the depiction of YHWH and the *saṭan* that suggests they are a single entity.[48] Weiss argued that the conversation between the two displayed an intimacy that befits internal deliberations rather than those of a deity and a subordinate, but there are other depictions of YHWH agreeing to the recommendations of subordinates without argument, such as his acquiescence to Abraham's proposal to spare Sodom if a small number of righteous people can be found.[49] It is particularly difficult to see how these conversations could be understood to suggest that YHWH and the *saṭan* are merely extensions of a single being when they are followed, in both cases, by the plain statement that "the *saṭan* went out from before YHWH"

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[47] This view led Weiss to describe the conversation between YHWH and the *saṭan* as an expression of the deity's internal strife: "Does this not indicate that questioner and questioned, answered and answerer are in fact one and the same? That the 'dialogue' between God and Satan is in truth a monologue, a discussion between God and Himself, God's own internal conflict?" Weiss, *The Story of Job's Beginning*, 52.

[48] While there is language that minimizes the distinction between the actions of YHWH and the *saṭan*, this can be explained by (1) the ignorance of the human characters, who attribute Job's suffering to YHWH because they are unaware of the conversations among the divine beings; (2) the *saṭan* attributing Job's suffering to YHWH reflects the common practice of crediting a king or deity with an action they directed, making them the subject of the verb even if the action was performed by a subordinate. See for example Nathan's insistence that David killed Uriah, "You killed Uriah with the sword" את אוריה החתי הכית בחרב (2 Sam 12:9), when David only ordered the killing (2 Sam 11:14–17. Note that David is the subject of the verb while being removed from the direct action against Uriah by several degrees: he sent a messenger with instructions that ordered Joab to place Uriah in the place where he was killed by the Ammonites at Rabbah). See also the ascription of the building of the temple to Solomon (והבית אשר בנה המלך שלמה ליהוה; 1 Kgs 6:2) immediately following the list of personnel who were the ones who did the actual work (1 Kgs 5:16–18); and also YHWH's description of how he will bring the Israelites out of Egypt by working through his intermediary, Moses (Exod 3:8).

[49] Weiss, *The Story of Job's Beginning*, 42. In Gen 19, there is no ambiguity that the conversation is between a deity and his subordinate, even as Abraham renegotiates, and YHWH agrees to Abraham's terms six separate times.

ויצא השטן מעם פני יהוה (Job 1:12; also 2:7). The view that the *saṭan* is a metaphorical extension of YHWH is undermined by the inconsistency with which that metaphor is employed.[50] Like the view that the *saṭan* holds an office on YHWH's divine council, the view that the *saṭan* metaphorically represents some portion of YHWH's being is not supported.[51]

An alternative to the views discussed above is to understand the *saṭan* to be an anonymous divine being who is described by a salient characteristic but whose precise identity is not given. In this view, the term השטן does not indicate the being's name or title, but instead refers to his function in the narrative, as is common in both modern and biblical narrative.[52] Peggy Day argued that the term השטן in both Job 1–2 and Zechariah 3 does not refer to a specific individual or the occupant of a particular office, but rather a "certain, unspecified accuser."[53] Day argued that the precise identity of the *saṭan* was "unimportant" and that the term השטן

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[50] Weiss also supported his argument by referencing what he describes as the complex relationship between YHWH and the מלאך יהוה in the Hebrew Bible: "The interchanging of God and His angel reflects the idea that God's emotions, thoughts, will, speech, and action are made known to mankind not by God Himself but through His angel. The angel is nothing more than a manifestation of God Himself." Weiss, *The Story of Job's Beginning*, 38. The suggestion seems to be that there is precedent for the representation of a divine being that is actually an extension of YHWH. There are passages in which scholars have interpreted מלאך יהוה to refer to YHWH himself, leading to the view that "In some passages it is no longer possible to distinguish God from his *mal'āḵ* in his interactions with human beings." D. N. Freedman, B. E. Willoughby, H. Ringgren, H. -J. Fabry, "מַלְאָךְ *malʾāḵ*" *TDOT* 8:308–24, here 319. But none of these cases are uncontested, and there are no examples of the noun שטן being used in such a way. In Job, the *saṭan* is one of the בני האלהים, who are represented unambiguously to be independent from YHWH, as in Gen 6:1–4.

[51] Even David Clines, who explores the theological implications of the view of the *saṭan* as an extension of YHWH at some length, states "That is a theological reading of the story; it is not—we may suppose—the storyteller's intention. For him, there are two heavenly personalities in uneasy confrontation; two personalities who are not equals but able to converse freely, who are neither enemies nor conspirators, neither friends nor rivals." See David J. A. Clines, *Job*, WBC 17, 18A-18B (Dallas: Word Books, 1989–2011), 20–21.

[52] This type of description would be similar to describing someone merely as a thief (Exod 22:7, 8; Zech 5:4) or a servant (Gen 24:7, 9; 39:17) or a woman (Gen 3:1; Judg 13:3, 6, 9; 2 Sam 20:16, 17), for example.

[53] Day, *An Adversary in Heaven*, 43.

indicated only that "a certain divine being…who has the current and temporary status of accuser is being introduced into the narrative."[54] Like Day, Florian Kreuzer argued that the lack of specific information regarding the *saṭan* in both texts indicated that his precise identity was unimportant.[55] The significance of the *saṭan* in both texts, according to Kreuzer, is playing the adversarial role that is required for the action to move forward:

> Somit ließe sich zum Auftreten von השטן in Sach 3 und Ijob 1-2 sagen: Im Verlauf beider Erzählungen bedarf es des Moments der Opposition. Diese wird von einer Figur verkörpert, die von Anfang an so auftritt, dass sich Fragen über ihre Existenz gar nicht erst stellen sollen. Als Bezeichnung wird deshalb ein abstrakter Titel gewählt, der als eine Art "Platzhalter" lediglich die dramaturgische Rolle beschreibt: השטן = "der Antagonist".[56]

In this view, the character is defined by his function in the story and the term השטן is a "Platzhalter," an abstract title that defines the role of the character in terms of his role in the drama as an antagonist.[57] Notably, the proposals of Day and Kreuzer do not depend upon the reconstruction of a belief in a particular office on YHWH's divine council that is otherwise

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[54] C. Breytenbach and P. L. Day, "Satan שׂטן Σατάν, Σατανᾶς," *DDD*, 726–32, here 728.
[55] Kreuzer argued that in Job 1–2 and Zechariah 3 the term השטן does not refer to a figure that was known outside the text, but to an originally unique literary figure. Only in the history of interpretation did the השטן become the source for the tradition of the being that is called Satan. "Zuwenig wurde bisher bedacht, dass es sich bei השטן ebenso um eine literarische Figur handeln könnte, die erstmals in den alttestamentlichen Büchern auftaucht, zuvor aber unbekannt war." Florian Kreuzer, "Der Antagonist: Der Satan in der Hebräischen Bibel – eine bekannte Grösse?," *Bib* 86 (2005): 536–44, here 542.
[56] Kreuzer, "Der Antagonist," 543.
[57] Another scholar who adopted this view is Anne-Sarah Schmidt, "Die biblische Satansvorstellung – eine Entwicklungsgeschichte: Altes Testament und zwischentestamentliche Texte," *BN* 166 (2015): 109–41. See also Bruce C. Birch et al., *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 394, who stated "the character satan is a dramatic device to pose in a most poignant tone the way in which lived experience disputes against settled religious conviction."

unattested, nor do they conflict with the depiction of השטן in Zechariah 3 and Job 1–2 as discussed above.

In the following, I demonstrate that the view that the *saṭan* in Job 1–2 is an unnamed divine being who is defined by his role in the narrative as an opponent or adversary is supported by the textual evidence. I examine the meaning of the common noun שָׂטָן, challenge the understanding that it refers to an "accuser" or "executioner," and demonstrate that the noun refers to someone who engages in opposition or obstruction of any kind. I then revisit the function of the definite article within השטן in Job 1–2 and show that it is best understood as a non-specific generic, indicating that the character is simply a member of the kind "opponent." Drawing upon evidence for the depiction in the Hebrew Bible of divine beings other than YHWH, I argue that the *saṭan* is an autonomous being with his own thoughts and capable of his own actions, but who is ultimately subservient to YHWH. Finally, I build upon the work of Kreuzer to demonstrate that the brief introduction is evidence of the character's non-specificity, indicating that the narrative provides as much information about the character as is necessary.

The Meaning of שָׂטָן

There is some uncertainty regarding the precise meaning of the common noun שָׂטָן. Because its etymology does not provide evidence, the meaning must be determined on the basis of its usage in the Hebrew Bible.[58] While the major dictionaries describe the primary meaning of the root שׂט"נ to be acting as an adversary or opponent,[59] the view that the root also includes a connotation

[58] Nielsen and Day showed that the cognates that are attested appear only far later than the period in which the texts of the Hebrew Bible, including *Job*, were produced. See K. Nielsen, "שׂטן," *TDOT* 14:73 and Breytenbach and Day, "Satan שׂטן Σατάν, Σατανᾶς," 726.

[59] See BDB, s.v. "שׂטן," *HALOT*, s.vv. "שׂטן", "שָׂטָן"; *DCH* 8, s.vv. "שׂטן", "שָׂטָן"; K. Nielsen, "שׂטן," *TDOT* 14:73–78.

of accusation has impacted how scholars understand the *saṭan* in the opening scenes of *Job*.[60] Recently, Ryan Stokes has argued that the noun שָׂטָן and the verb שָׂטַן "denote physical attack" and that "the noun שָׂטָן should be translated 'attacker,' and in some legal contexts 'executioner.'"[61] However, both of these positions are undermined by the usage of the noun in the Hebrew Bible, which supports the definition described by Forsyth: "The Hebrew word *śṭn*, vocalized as *śāṭān*, means something close to the English word 'opponent' in its root sense of 'to place in the way,' 'to obstruct.'" [62] Thus, the noun שָׂטָן is used to refer to an opponent who actively stands in the way of his counterpart and counteracts him.[63]

Several attestations of the noun שָׂטָן refer to an entity that indisputably does not make accusations, either legal or informal. Most attestations do not specifically indicate accusation but only opposition in a more general sense. In several attestations, the noun שָׂטָן refers to an entity whose actions are explicitly described as military opposition, as in 1 Sam 29:4; 1 Kgs 5:18, 11:14, 23, and 25.[64] In others, such as 1 Chr 21:7, the exact nature of the שָׂטָן's opposition is not

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[60] Dictionaries include as possible translations of the qal verb שָׂטַן 'to indict, accuse, charge' (*HALOT*, s.v. "שׂטן"), 'accuse, denounce, slander' (*DCH* 8, s.v. "שׂטן"), 'accuse' (K. Nielsen, "שׂטן," *TDOT* 14:75); as possible translations of the common noun שָׂטָן 'accuser' (*HALOT*, s.v. "שָׂטָן"; *DCH* 8, s.v. "שָׂטָן"; K. Nielsen, "שׂטן," *TDOT* 14:75); and as the translation of שִׂטְנָה in Ezra 4:6 'accusation' (*DCH* 8, s.v. "שִׂטְנָה"). Outside of dictionaries the basic meaning of השטן is given as "the accuser/adversary/doubter" (Habel, *The Book of Job*, 89) and simply "adversary" or "accuser" (Breytenbach and Day, "Satan שׂטן Σατάν, Σατανᾶς," 726). Hartley, *Job*, 71, stated "The Hebrew root *śṭn* means 'to oppose at law.'" Several commentaries on Zechariah 3 translate that usage of השטן as "the Accuser" (Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 183) or "the accuser" (Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, 230).

[61] Stokes, "Satan, YHWH's Executioner," 252.

[62] Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 113.

[63] Schmidt, "Die biblische Satansvorstellung," 124. Note that this broader definition does not require dividing the attestations of שָׂטָן into two different usages. Nor does it require explaining why a particular nuance would apply only selectively.

[64] In 1 Sam 29:4, the Philistines explicitly state that David will be a שָׂטָן to them "during the battle" (במלחמה ולא יהיה לנו לשטן). Similarly, the attestations of שָׂטָן in the book of Kings, describing either the absence of a שָׂטָן (1 Kgs 5:18) or specific kings raised up by YHWH to be a

specified, but there is no clear interpretation in which it is accusatory.[65] While there are a few cases in which it is possible that a שָׂטָן is engaging in legal action or accusatory behavior, in none of these cases is it clear that it is the act of accusation that makes the entity a שָׂטָן because it is possible that they engage in other behavior that could be understood to be adversarial.[66] The noun שָׂטָן cannot include within its definition a connotation of "accuser." I demonstrate below that all attestations are best understood to describe someone who acts as an opponent without any more specific connotation of what kind of opposition is posed.

Ryan Stokes has argued that all attestations of both the nominal and verbal forms of the root שׂט"נ "denote physical attack" and that the noun שָׂטָן always refer to an "attacker" or "executioner."[67] However, Stokes's view is not supported by the usage of the noun in the Hebrew Bible. Most attestations indicate only that the שָׂטָן is acting in opposition or obstruction without specifying physical violence. More definitively, there is one case that indicates the object of the שָׂטָן's opposition is someone towards whom he is indisputably not engaging in physical violence.

שָׂטָן (1 Kgs 11:14, 23, 25), refer to military opposition. In 1 Kgs 5:16–18, Solomon explicitly contrasts the lack of a שָׂטָן that allows him to build the temple with the military opposition that prevented David from doing so (מפני המלחמה אשר סבבהו). The description of both Hadad and Rezon as a שָׂטָן to Solomon in 1 Kgs 11 cannot refer to them as accusers, but clearly as military or political opponents.

[65] The exact behavior of the שָׂטָן in 1 Chron 21 is unspecified. None of the possibilities include the שָׂטָן accusing David. It is this problem that likely has led to some scholars (many of whom see accusation as part of the core sense of the root שׂט"נ) to propose that this attestation of the noun represents an advanced stage of theological development.

[66] As discussed above, the שָׂטָן in Psa 109:6 can be definitively understood only as an opponent in the general sense. See above for discussion of how the context of Num 22, Zech 3 and Job 1–2 pose challenges to viewing the common or occasional meaning of שָׂטָן to be "accuser." For more on the problems that indicate שָׂטָן cannot be defined as 'accuser,' see Stokes, "Satan, YHWH's Executioner."

[67] Stokes, "Satan, YHWH's Executioner," 252.

The case in question appears in 2 Sam 19:23. After Shimei begs for David's forgiveness for cursing and throwing stones at the king during his flight from Jerusalem (see 2 Sam 16:5–8), Abishai proposes to put Shimei to death (2 Sam 19:17–22). The king responds to Abishai harshly: "David said 'What have I to do with you, O sons of Zeruiah, that today you should be to me a *saṭan*? Will anyone in Israel be killed today?" ויאמר דוד מה לי ולכם בני צרויה כי תהיו לי היום לשטן היום יומת איש בישראל (2 Sam 19:23). Because it is his proposal to engage in physical violence that leads to Abishai being called a שָׂטָן, Stokes referred to this as "a technical, legal usage of the noun שָׂטָן" and argued that "Given the context, in which Shimei's crime would justify his being put to death, 'executioner' would be an appropriate translation of שָׂטָן in this verse."[68] However, the syntax of David's statement contradicts Stokes's interpretation.

According to Stokes, David is using the prepositional phrase לי in the phrase תהיו לי היום לשטן to indicate possession. If Abishai followed through on the proposal to kill Shimei he would be an executioner who works for David, thus making him David's שָׂטָן. However, this interpretation does not align with any other attestation of the preposition ל as a complement to the noun שָׂטָן. In addition to 2 Sam 19:23, there are five cases of the noun שָׂטָן with a complement including the preposition ל. In each, the prepositional phrase indicates the object of the שָׂטָן's opposing actions, not the entity possessing or directing him:

1 Kgs 11:14

ויקם יהוה שטן **לשלמה** את הדד האדמי מזרע המלך הוא באדום

1 Kgs 11:23

ויקם אלהים **לו** שטן את רזון בן אליעדע אשר ברח מאת הדדעזר מלך צובה אדניו

1 Kgs 11:25

[68] Stokes, "Satan, YHWH's Executioner," 253–55, here 254.

ויהי שטן **לישראל** כל ימי שלמה ואת הרעה אשר הדד ויקץ בישראל וימלך על ארם

Num 22:22

ויתיצב מלאך יהוה בדרך לשטן **לו**

1 Sam 29:4

ויקצפו עליו שרי פלשתים ויאמרו לו שרי פלשתים השב את האיש וישב אל מקומו אשר הפקדתו שם ולא ירד עמנו במלחמה ולא יהיה **לנו** לשטן במלחמה ובמה יתרצה זה אל אדניו הלוא בראשי האנשים ההם

It is clear that both Hadad of Edom and Rezon of Damascus are operating because of YHWH and thus would be figuratively working at his behest.[69] But in all three cases, the prepositional phrase beginning with ל indicates the object of the opposing action of the שָׂטָן: Solomon, Solomon, and Israel, respectively.[70] The preposition ל functions to indicate the object of the opposition of the שָׂטָן in Num 22:22 as well. While there is no doubt that the מלאך יהוה is sent by YHWH, he is described as a שָׂטָן for Balaam, the object of YHWH's wrath and the one whose way the מלאך יהוה obstructs.[71] This is most clear in 1 Sam 29:4, in which the Philistines who worry about David's latent Israelite loyalties demand that he be excluded from the coming battle because he will betray and attack his Philistine allies in an attempt to secure an Israelite victory that will allow him to reconcile with "his lord," the king of Israel. These Philistines fear that David will work for the Israelite king in opposition to them, meaning that the prepositional

[69] YHWH "raises up" (ויקם) both of them.

[70] The referent of the third person singular pronominal suffix ו in 1 Kgs 11:23 is grammatically ambiguous because it could refer to either Solomon or YHWH. However, the continued description of Rezon in 1 Kgs 11:25 makes it clear that the referent is Solomon, or by extension, Israel.

[71] Again, the referent of the third person singular pronominal suffix ו is grammatically ambiguous, but the nearest noun both before and after the pronoun (הוא in both cases) refers to Balaam. Furthermore, the מלאך יהוה does not describe himself as working for YHWH, nor does the narrator make any such indication. I am not aware of any commentators who suggest that the referent of this pronominal suffix is YHWH.

phrase לנו "to us" must indicate the object of David's opposition, not the party for which the actions are carried out. In each of the five attestations of the noun שָׂטָן with a complement consisting of a prepositional phrase headed by ל, the function of that prepositional phrase is to indicate the object of the opposing actions that make that entity a שָׂטָן. It is never used to indicate the entity that the שָׂטָן works for or to whom it belongs.[72]

When 2 Sam 19:23 is understood in light of these syntactic principles, it becomes clear that David cannot be using the noun שָׂטָן to mean "executioner." Abishai is proposing to engage in physical violence towards Shimei, and it is this proposal that leads David to refer to Abishai as a שָׂטָן. But the prepositional phrase לי that appears as a complement to the noun שָׂטָן indicates that Abishai would be a שָׂטָן whose opposition is directed towards David, and Abishai is clearly not proposing to engage in physical violence towards his king.[73] Instead, he must be referring to the negative political consequences that he, a king attempting to consolidate support after a civil war, would face were he and his warriors to kill those who have opposed him but now seek to

[72] For the same reason, David cannot be using the term שטן to refer to Abishai as an accuser, contra Peggy L. Day, "Abishai the śāṭān in 2 Samuel 19:17-24," *CBQ* 49 (1987): 543–47. Day recognized that her argument that David is suggesting that Abishai is attempting to accuse Shimei on David's behalf relies upon the claim that the prepositional phrase לי indicates the person to whom the שטן works for, stating on page 545 "The preposition *l*-, therefore, must indicate the person on whose behalf the accusation is being made." Day used examples of other verbal phrases in which the preposition ל is "used to express the party on whose behalf the action is taking place" but this is less relevant than the evidence of the preposition ל being used in connection with the noun שטן which I survey in this section, which clearly indicates that the preposition ל always indicates the object of opposition.

[73] In 2 Sam 19:23, David employs the same syntactical formulation in referring to Abishai as a שָׂטָן, as the Philistines do to refer to him in 1 Sam 29:4. Both phrases include the following sequence: (1) a verbal form of the verb הי"י + (2) a prepositional phrase including ל and a pronominal suffix that indicates the object of the action of the שטן + (3) the noun שָׂטָן prefixed by the preposition ל indicating that the status of שָׂטָן is a change of state. The only syntactical difference is the placement of an additional prepositional phrase indicating time. In 2 Sam 19:23 היום appears between לשטן and the preceding prepositional complement. In 1 Sam 29:4 במלחמה appears at the end of the sequence.

reconcile.[74] This aligns with the evidence discussed above that a שָׂטָן is an opponent who is defined as such by engaging in actions that obstruct the object of their opposition from accomplishing a task or objective.

This view of the meaning of שָׂטָן is also supported by the other attestations of the noun in the Hebrew Bible. It is only in a minority of cases where the noun שָׂטָן is best understood to refer to the act or perpetrator of physical violence.[75] In every case, the noun שָׂטָן refers to an entity that engages in opposition that involves obstruction or prevention of a targeted entity from achieving something specific and is best rendered in English as "adversary" or "opponent."[76]As discussed above, in 1 Chron 21 there is no explicit mention of physical violence by the שָׂטָן and several

[74] Stokes, "Satan, YHWH's Executioner," 254, points out that David's response to Abishai includes two rhetorical questions: "Should anyone in Israel be put to death today? Because do I not know that today I am king over Israel?" היום יומת איש בישראל כי הלוא ידעתי כי היום אני מלך על ישראל (2 Sam 19:23). The answer to the first rhetorical question is clearly no, because David immediately swears to Shimei that he will not die (2 Sam 19:24). The answer to the second rhetorical question also appears to be no. David is stating that killing Shimei would suggest a weakness in his confidence in his position as king and, by extension, an actual weakness in his position as king. David is attempting to solidify his newly gained control over all the factions of the nation that have been fractured by Absalom's revolt, a revolt in which many parties fought against David. This scene begins with David attempting to reconcile with a number of these parties (see 2 Sam 19:9–16). In his second rhetorical question, David suggests that following Abishai's suggestion would jeopardize his efforts to reconsolidate his power over a unified Israel, weakening his position as king, and potentially contributing to another rebellion. Thus, even as Abishai is not physically attacking David, Abishai's actions threaten to prevent David from successfully carrying out his current actions and achieving his goals. This makes Abishai an adversary: one who stands in the way or obstructs David.

[75] There are several passages in which the noun שָׂטָן is used to refer to someone that engages in or intends to engage in physical violence, including 1 Sam 29:4; 1 Kgs 5:18; 11:14, 23, 25. In 1 Sam 29:4, the physical violence is hypothetical, as the Philistines fear that David will become a שָׂטָן to them. The Philistines do not say that David is not a שָׂטָן at the time of the statement, but may become one if he turns against them in the battle.

[76] This accounts for all 27 attestations of the noun שָׂטָן in the Hebrew Bible: Num 22:22, 32; 1 Sam 29:4; 2 Sam 19:23; 1 Kgs 5:18; 11:14, 23, 25; 1 Chron 21:1; Job 1:6, 7(2x), 8, 9, 12(2x); 2:1, 2(2x), 3, 4, 6, 7; Psa 109:6; Zech 3:1, 2(2x).

non-violent possibilities for what incited David.[77] What is certain is that the שָׂטָן acts in opposition to David's righteous and prosperous reign over Israel, actions which are best described as those of an adversary or opponent. Similarly, the vision in Zech 3 does not provide sufficient evidence for what the שָׂטָן did to provoke YHWH's rebuke, but the rebuke does suggest that the שָׂטָן was acting as an opponent to YHWH, his מלאך יהוה, Joshua, or some combination of these three, supporting the broader definition of the noun. While the threat of physical violence does appear in Numbers 32, the מלאך יהוה's status as a שָׂטָן is directly associated with the obstruction of Balaam's movement.[78] The description of YHWH sending the מלאך יהוה to act as a שָׂטָן directly associates the action and YHWH's anger with the prophet's movement: "God was angry because [Balaam] went and the מלאך יהוה positioned himself in the way as an opponent" ויחר אף אלהים כי הולך הוא ויתיצב מלאך יהוה בדרך לשטן (Num 22:22). The שָׂטָן only threatens to employ physical violence if it is necessary to fulfill its primary purpose: obstructing Balaam.

[77] The text indicates that the שָׂטָן provokes (ויסת) David and that the ultimate outcome of this action is the deity's displeasure and smiting of Israel (1 Chr 21:7). It is possible the provocation took the form of physical attack, but it is also possible that the שָׂטָן is a false prophet or one of David's officials simply urging him to prepare for war by taking a census. For more see above.

[78] Both attestations of שָׂטָן occur in clauses that are syntactically connected with descriptions of the מלאך יהוה standing in Balaam's way. The מלאך יהוה first appears when he "positioned himself in the way as a שָׂטָן to him, and he rode upon his donkey" ויתיצב מלאך יהוה בדרך לשטן לו והוא רכב על אתנו (Num 22:22). The immediate consequence of this action is the donkey's refusal to move forward. The מלאך יהוה literally prevents Balaam's forward progress. When the מלאך יהוה explains what happened to Balaam, his description as a שָׂטָן is again syntactically connected with the unsuitability of Balaam's movement: "Look, I went out as a שָׂטָן because the way is יָרַט to me." הנה אנכי יצאתי לשטן כי ירט הדרך לנגדי (Num 22:32). The verb יָרַט is left untranslated here because it is of uncertain meaning, appearing only here and in an unclear context in Job 16:11. The connection of the status of the מלאך יהוה as a שָׂטָן is present regardless of the exact meaning. Baruch Levine translates "for the mission was pressing upon me" but notes this is only a guess because of the difficulty of the verb. See Levine, *Numbers 21*-36, 159. Milgrom also notes the difficulty and translates the verb as "to be obnoxious." See Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 192.

The noun שָׂטָן appears 14 times in Job 1–2, in which it is used to refer to the individual who converses with YHWH and afflicts Job. The *saṭan* does coordinate physical attacks against Job's property and others and eventually, against Job himself. But there is no indication that YHWH anticipated such an outcome when he first questions the *saṭan*. The *saṭan* afflicts Job only after the conversation takes a turn that there is no indication that YHWH expected. Even then, YHWH puts significant restrictions on what the *saṭan* is allowed to do. First, YHWH gives the *saṭan* permission to affect Job's belongings and his children but explicitly instructs the *saṭan* not to do any physical harm to Job: רק אליו אל תשלח ידך (Job 1:12).[79] When YHWH does allow the *saṭan* to affect Job's health, he explicitly forbids killing him: הנו בידך אך את נפשו שמר (Job 2:6). YHWH's directions to the *saṭan* to first do no physical harm and then to not kill would be peculiar to extend to an executioner. On the other hand, the *saṭan*'s actions depict him as an opponent or adversary of YHWH.[80]

There is insufficient evidence to support the view that the definition of שָׂטָן includes the meaning of "accuser" or "attacker." However, the usage of the noun in the Hebrew Bible provides consistent support for the broader meaning of "opponent" or "adversary." In every attestation, the noun שָׂטָן refers to an entity that engages in opposition. While the form of that opposition is specific to the context and may vary, it always involves obstruction: preventing the targeted entity from achieving something specific.[81]

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[79] In isolation, this statement could be interpreted metaphorically or in other ways, but the *saṭan*'s actions, in which he causes Job to lose all his possessions and kills Job's children, combined with the following conversation in which the *saṭan* points out that Job retains his health, make it clear that YHWH's instructions in the first conversation restrict the *saṭan* from affecting Job's physical body.

[80] See below for more on this argument.

[81] This definition extends to all derived forms of the root שׂט"ן, including the six attestations of the verb שָׂטַן in Psa 38:21; 71:13; 109:4, 20, 29; Zech 3:1. Stokes makes an extended argument that all attestations of the root שׂט"ן could refer to physical violence, and I deal with several of the

This investigation also reveals another significant nuance of the usage of שָׂטָן. The noun refers to an entity that is defined by their function in relation to a particular person or group they are opposing, rather than by their nature. In other words, an entity is not called a שָׂטָן because they possess some intrinsic or innate characteristic of being an opponent. Instead, in every case where even basic information about the שָׂטָן is provided, the status of being a שָׂטָן is temporary and specific to a particular situation. David is not an opponent to the Philistines and Abishai is not an opponent to David by their very nature but they both could become opponents if they engage in particular actions. The מלאך יהוה is not permanently a שָׂטָן but is only playing that role in relation to Balaam in Numbers 22. In 1 Kgs 11, Rezin and Hadad are both defined as a שָׂטָן to Solomon and Israel, and only begin to fulfill that role when YHWH raises them up. Solomon explains to Hiram of Tyre that none of his neighbors were playing the role of adversary at that point of his reign. Therefore, a being called a שָׂטָן need not be a permanent adversary or an opponent by nature, but can be called a שָׂטָן because of their role opposing a particular entity in a particular situation.

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cases that he utilizes for that argument here. But even Stokes admits that in many cases there is no direct evidence that the derived form of the root שׂט"ן refers to physical attacks or attackers. He argued instead that, because there are references to physical injury, attacks, and those who seek the psalmist's life in each of these psalms, it is possible that the forms of the root שׂט"ן also refer to physical attacks and those who perpetrate them. Stokes, "Satan, YHWH's Executioner," 256–61.

There are also two obscure attestations of a form שִׂטְנָה. The first is the name given to a well in Gen 26:21. While such etiologies are of dubious value for root meaning, it can be observed that this well was one that was dug by Isaac's men after the conflict with the shepherds of Gerar in an episode that contains several attestations of the root ר"יב but no mention of actual physical violence. The second appears in Ezra 4:6, referring to some type of document or letter written by people opposing the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. This might be a technical term and cannot be used to define the root or other forms, although again it occurs in a clear context of opposition and obstructive acts.

The use of שָׂטָן to refer to the *saṭan* in Job 1–2 indicates that he functions in the story as an adversary or an opponent to a particular entity, hindering that entity from attaining something. Therefore, from this point forward I will refer to the entity referred to as השטן in Job 1–2 as the opponent.

The Function of the Definite Article in השטן

Another significant aspect of the depiction of the opponent in Job 1–2 is that all 14 appearances of the noun שָׂטָן that refer to the character include the definite article. This has been interpreted in support of the view that השטן is a title referring to an office on YHWH's divine council.[82] For example, Christopher Rollston described the appellation השטן in both Job 1–2 and Zechariah 3 as a title: "since all occurrences of *śāṭān* in both Zechariah and Job had the prepositive article affixed (*ha-śāṭān*) it *is demonstrably not a personal name in these instances. Rather it is a title*, meaning something such as 'the accuser,' 'the prosecutor,' 'the litigant,' of 'the adversary.'"[83] However, I argue above that the existence of such an office is dubious, not least because of the lack of evidence for a prosecutorial office among biblical or non-biblical texts and because the depiction of the being referred to as השטן in both Job 1–2 and Zechariah 3 does not support it.

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[82] Referring to both Job 1–2 and Zechariah 3, Rudman stated: "The use of the definite article in these locations has generally been taken by scholars to indicate a function or office held by this being." Rudman, "Zechariah and the Satan Tradition in the Hebrew Bible," 191, with references in n. 1.

[83] Rollston, "An Ur-History of the New Testament Devil," 3. Brian Doak has interpreted the definite article in the same way: "The use of the definite article *ha-* before the character's title indicates, by Hebrew grammatical custom, that the word *satan* here is not a proper name but rather a title of some kind." Brian Doak, "Book of Job," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*. 26 May 2021; Accessed 25 Jan 2023. https://oxfordre.com/religion/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-654.

While the definite article in השטן in Job 1–2 cannot be functioning according to its most common usages, there is another possibility that has not been given adequate consideration.[84] Day argued that the definite article is being used for a different, less common function: "to deemphasize precise identity and focus on the status of the character as it is relevant to the narrative plot…leading us to understand that a certain divine being whose precise identity is unimportant and who has the current and temporary status of accuser is being introduced into the narrative."[85] While at the time Day was writing there was not a clear understanding of this function of the definite article, [86] Peter Bekins has since demonstrated that this function indicates that the substantive to which the definite article is attached refers to one member of a well-established kind, or in other words to an arbitrary member of a generic class.[87] Bekins referred to

[84] In Job 1–2 (and Zechariah 3), the noun השטן cannot refer to an entity that has already been mentioned because השטן with the definite article is used in the first reference to the being, nor can the noun השטן refer to a generic class because השטן acts and is interacted with as a distinct individual. This may be in part why scholars have interpreted the noun השטן as referring to a title referring to the holder of an exclusive office, as does המלך (Gen 39:20; 1 Sam 17:25; 19:4; 28:13; 29:8; 2 Kgs 21:23) and הכהן הדגל (Lev 21:10; Num 35:25, 28; Josh 20:6; 2 Kgs 12:11; 22:4, 8; 23:4; Hag 1:1, 12, 14; Zech 3:1, 8; 6:11; Neh 3:1, 20; 2 Chr 34:9).

[85] Day cited Joüon §137n. Breytenbach and Day, "Satan שָׂטָן Σατάν, Σατανᾶς," 728. Day applied this argument to השטן in both Job 1–2 and in Zechariah 3.

[86] For example, see Stokes's attempt to dismiss Day: "Day's argument that the article should be understood in this atypical fashion, however, is tenuous….there is no compelling reason to translate the definite article in *haśśāṭān* in any way other than its usual fashion." Stokes, *The Satan*, 13, n. 22. Stokes is incorrect both in referring to the use of the definite article to refer to "*a certain* satan" as atypical and in referring to the use of the definite article to designate an office as typical. Neither usage is more or less 'typical' than the other, and both occur far less frequently than the most common usages of the definite article that are listed above. Stokes's claim is representative of how the view of the *saṭan* as office has come to be assumed without sufficient justification. Note that Stokes also claims that the interpretation of *saṭan* as an office holder is more likely because he appears before God and reports that he has been "patrolling" the earth, even though the verb שוט does not possess a connotation of patrolling, but rather traversing territory or roaming, perhaps even in an aimless fashion. See *HALOT*, s.v. "I שוט"; also Dhorme, *Book of Job*, 6.

[87] Peter Bekins, "Non-Prototypical Uses of the Definite Article in Biblical Hebrew," *JSS* 58.2 (2013): 225–40, here 237.

this usage as the "generic use of the definite article for non-specific reference."[88] Differing from the generic use that refers to the kind or class as a whole,[89] this non-specific generic usage of the definite article refers to one member of the kind or class in the case when indicating which specific member of the class is unimportant.[90]

This usage of the definite article indicates that the associated noun refers to an entity that is a member of a specific class without specifying which member of that class. In other words, the identity of the entity is unspecified and the only aspect that is specified is that the entity is a member of the particular class. For example, in Numbers 11:27, the הנער "young man" that runs to tell Moses about Eldad and Medad "prophesying" in the camp was not previously introduced, nor is it likely that he was the only young man in the camp and was thus depicted to be unique. Instead, what the definite article conveys it that this was an arbitrary member of the generic class of נערים. In terms of meaning, the statement does not express which נער it was, only that it was some non-specific נער. In Judges 8:25, when Gideon asks for tribute the people "spread out a garment" ויפרשו את השמלה. The definite article attached to the noun שמלה used to gather the tribute indicates that it refers to an arbitrary member of the generic class because it doesn't matter which garment was used, just that it was a garment. In 1 Sam 19:13, the previously

[88] Bekins, "Non-Prototypical Uses," 235.
[89] Joüon §137f-k; *IBHS* 13.5.1a-d, f-g; *GKC* §126d-p.
[90] Though there are important differences, it is this usage that aligns with most of the examples given by Joüon and Muraoka under the usage of the definite article that they describe as a sub-category of "imperfect determination," including cases of "a person who is mentioned in the course of narration in circumstances which give him/her a particular determination," see Joüon §137 m-o. Similarly, Waltke and O'Connor describe the usage of the article to "mark *nouns definite in the imagination*, designating either a particular person or thing necessarily understood to be present or vividly portraying someone or something whose identity is not otherwise indicated." See *IBHS* 13.5.1e. Gesenius describes a usage of the definite article "to denote a single person or thing (primarily one which is as yet unknown, and therefore not capable of being defined) as being present to the mind under given circumstances." *GKC* §126q, see also *GKC* §126r-t.

unreferenced teraphim that Michal uses as a decoy for David is described with non-specific generic definite article: התרפים.

The definite article used in השטן in Job 1–2 is best understood as a non-specific generic, indicating that the character is simply a member of the kind "opponent." [91] This usage of the definite article along with the noun שָׂטָן indicates that what is important in the narrative is not the opponent's individual identity, but his role as an antagonist of another entity. In the following, I argue that the opponent in the opening scenes of *Job* is defined as an antagonist to YHWH because his claim that Job's righteousness is self-interested challenges YHWH's reputation. To pursue this argument, I turn to investigate several other aspects of the opponent's depiction.

The Opponent before YHWH

Three other details provide evidence about the identity of the opponent in the opening scenes of *Job* (Job 1–2). First, the opponent enters YHWH's presence alongside a group of בני האלהים:

[91] In recognizing and describing the non-specific generic function of the definite article, Bekins has made a major contribution to our understanding of the definite article, a contribution that creates better understanding of numerous texts. However, Bekins also claimed that this usage of the definite article is restricted. He claimed that "despite describing a particular episode, this use remains restricted to contexts associated with genericity such as repeated or habitual events." In other words, the definite article could only function as a non-specific generic in "certain repeated or stereotypical situations." See Bekins, "Non-Prototypical Uses," 234, 238.

While it is the case that some attested usages do refer to an entity that participates in actions that are taking place multiple times, even habitually, or in actions that could be seen to be a repetitive instance of a commonly performed or stereotypical action, there are also a significant number of attestations in which there is no indication of repetition or habit, as in the examples given in the main body of the previous paragraph. It is not clear how the young man in Numbers 11:27 could be understood to have been engaging in a typical or repeated activity. Nor is there any indication that the garment used to gather the tribute in Judges 8:25 was commonly used for such a purpose. The story of Michal's deception in 1 Sam 19:13 suggests that this was a unique behavior. This evidence, and that of other examples, suggests that Bekin's formulation of non-specific or arbitrary generic usage of the definite article should be revised to exclude the restriction and that there is no requirement that the entity being described must be involved in stereotypical or repeated action.

"One day[92] divine beings came to stand before YHWH. The opponent also came among them" ויהי היום ויבאו בני האלהים להתיצב על יהוה ויבוא גם השטן בתוכם (Job 1:6 and 2:1). Second, YHWH reacts to the presence of the opponent by initiating a conversation with him regarding where the opponent has been and what he knows about Job. Third, the opponent possesses supernatural power over the earth and its inhabitants. Taken together, these details indicate that the opponent is a divine being who is subordinate to YHWH while also possessing the independence necessary to speak and act independently of him.

The opponent's utilization of powers over the mortal world and its inhabitants illustrates both his divinity and his subservience. To resolve the dispute regarding the nature of Job's righteousness, YHWH gives the opponent permission to afflict Job (Job 1:12 and 2:6). What happens to Job requires the inference that opponent has the ability to incite humans to attack a particular target (Job 1:15, 17), direct fire that "falls from the sky" אש אלהים נפלה מן השמים (Job 1:16), and summon a wind that levels buildings (Job 1:19). That the opponent has the power to supernaturally influence human health is shown when he "went out from before YHWH and struck Job with bad skin disease, from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head" ויצא השטן מאת פני יהוה ויך את איוב בשחין רע מכף רגלו עד קדקדו (Job 2:7). As he exercises power over the mortal world and its inhabitants that is possessed only by divine beings, the opponent is constrained in the exercise of that power by limitations imposed by YHWH.

The importance of worship of YHWH alone that is attested prevalently in the biblical depiction of Israelite religious history should not be seen to undermine the characterization of the

[92] This construction is sometimes used to indicate multiple days on which repeated actions would occur (1 Sam 1:4), but also can be used to indicate that the following events occur on a specific day (see 1 Sam 14:1; 2 Kgs 4:8, 11, 18). Here it appears to refer to events that occur at a particular day at a single point in time.

opponent as a divine subordinate.[93] The depiction of the בני האלהים in the Hebrew Bible attests to the theological acceptability, in at least some traditions, of what Strawn described as "a conceptual world wherein a high deity supervises other, lesser deities who are tasked with oversight of certain people groups."[94] Utilizing the common semantic construction in which a form of the noun בן is in the construct state with a following substantive to refer to an entity that

[93] Smith and Heiser, among others, have demonstrated many of the biblical texts commonly labeled as "monotheistic" acknowledge the existence of other divine beings, and that they demanded the exclusive worship of YHWH in spite of these other divinities. See. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, especially 51; Heiser, "The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature."

[94] Brent A. Strawn, "The Poetics of Ps 82: Three Critical Notes along with a Plea for the Poetic," *RB* 121 (2014): 21–46, here 39. Note that Strawn was speaking specifically about the conceptual world shared by Psalm 82 and Deuteronomy 32, but in a note below I show how the other attestations of the term בני האלהים and its parallels also support such a conceptualization.

is characterized by "descent from or participation in the nature of" the substantive,[95] the phrase בני האלהים and its parallel phrases בני אלים and בני עליון are used to describe divine beings.[96]

In the Hebrew Bible, these divine beings are characterized both by subservience to YHWH and autonomy within the bounds of their subjection. This appears most clearly in Deuteronomy 32 and Psalm 82. In the Song of Moses in Deut 32:1–43, Moses teaches the

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[95] Simon B. Parker, "Sons of (the) God(s)," *DDD*, 794–800, here 795. The exact function of this semantic construction is commonly accepted, even as it resists a simple description. Haag and Berman-Ringgren state "*Ben* or *bar* is also used to classify men individually in different groups according to ethical and moral standards…" H. Haag, J. Bergman, and Helmer Ringgren, "בֵּן *bēn*," *TDOT* 2:145–59, here 153. Like Parker, Clines uses the language of participation in nature: "the term 'sons of' could also be used in Hebrew for members of a group belonging to or adhering to, or in some way participating in the nature of, their 'father.'" Clines, *Job*, 19.

The construction expresses a wide variety of relationships, including the possession of attributes (בן חיל describes men of power and competence in fighting in Deut 3:18; 1 Sam 14:52; 18:17; בני בליעל describes worthless people in Deut 13:14; Judg 19:22; 20:13; 1 Sam 10:27; and בני מרי describes rebellious people in Num 17:10); future states of being (בן מות refers to an individual who is doomed to die in 1 Sam 20:31; 1 Sam 26:16; 2 Sam 12:5); current states of being (בני עני refers to people who have experienced affliction in Prov 31:5); vocation (בני השערים refers to gatekeepers or door guards in Ezra 2:42; בן הרקחים refers to perfumers or people who work with scents; בן המשרר describes singers in Neh 12:28); deserved action (בני הכות describes someone deserving of a beating in Deut 25:2); and situational status (בני התערבות describes hostages, or people who are functioning as pledges in the parallel texts of 2 Kgs 14:14 and 2 Chr 25:24). The phrase בני נביאים is a subject of ongoing investigation but appears to describe individuals associated with prophets and prophetic groups without necessarily being prophets or engaging in prophecy themselves, as for example the men associated with Elisha who are referred to as בני נביאים in 2 Kgs 2:3, 5, 7, 15; 4:1, 38 (2x); 5:22; 6:1; 9:1 but engage in prophetic activity and act as servants more than anything else (for discussion and references to secondary literature see David B. Ridge, "On the Possible Interpretations of Amos 7:14" *VT* 68 (2018): 620–42, here 630–631; also Erasmus Gass, "'Kein Prophet bin ich und kein Prophetenschüler bin ich': Zum Selbstverständnis des Propheten Amos in Am 7,14," *TZ* 68 (2012): 1–24).

[96] "Probably, however, the expression was an idiomatic term for 'divine beings', as bĕnê (hā) ʾādām was for 'human beings.'" Parker, "Sons of (the) God(s)," 795. Note that Parker also discussed the Ugaritic term *bn ʾil*, which appears in literary texts describing the divine beings of the Ugaritic pantheon (for example see KTU 1.40:41–42) whom El refers to as "my children." (KTU 1.16 V:24) Because the term is used to refer to these divine beings in their status as participants in the divine assembly, Parker concluded that the "simplest solution is to assume that *bn ʾilm* was understood as an idiomatic periphrasis for 'the gods', i.e. 'the divine beings'" (Parker, "Sons of [the] God[s]," *DDD*, 794.) Duhm likewise contrasts the בני האלהים with the בני אדם, see Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob*, 6. See also Haag, Bergman, and Ringgren, "בֵּן bēn," 157–59.

Israelites a song that YHWH had composed and given to him. In one passage in the first part of the song, YHWH describes the nature and origins of the special relationship between YHWH and Israel:

Deuteronomy 32:8–9

בהנחל עליון גוים	When Elyon gave to the nations an inheritance,[98]
בהפרידו בני אדם	when he divided the sons of man,
יצב גבלת עמים	he set up the boundaries of the peoples
למספר בני אלוהים[97]	according to the number of the sons of god.
כי חלק יהוה עמו	Because the portion of YHWH is his people,
יעקב חבל נחלתו	Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.

[97] The MT reads למספר בני ישראל. The reading used here is found in column XII of 4QDeut[j], see Eugene Ulrich et al., *Qumran Cave 4 IX: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Kings*, DJD XIV (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 90. There are also variant readings in the LXX, with most manuscripts reading "angels of God": ἔστησεν ὅρια ἐθνῶν κατὰ ἀριθμὸν ἀγγέλων θεοῦ; while there are two manuscripts of the LXX that seem to align with reading "sons of God": ἔστησεν ὅρια ἐθνῶν κατὰ ἀριθμὸν υἱῶν θεοῦ. For more on these variant readings and their implications for the history of interpretation of Deuteronomy 32, see Mark S. Smith, *God in Translation*, FAT 57; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 139–43, 195–212; and Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 248–49.

I accept the reading of 4QDeut[j] as superior, positing that the MT text reflects a later, theologically driven alteration of an earlier reading that could too easily be read as an acknowledgement of multiple deities. I accept this reconstruction of the textual history because it is far easier to identify within the context of Israelite scribal transmission the motivation for changing בני אלהים to בני ישראל than the reverse. See Smith, *God in Translation*, 203, who argued that the original author never intended or this text to be anything but monotheistic. In this view, Elyon is a title of YHWH. For examples of theological changes and specifically of anti-polytheistic changes, see Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 243–49.

[98] The *tsere* in the final syllable of בהנחל suggests an infinitive absolute, but the prefixed preposition suggests an infinitive construct. The infinitive should be read as a construct, either in the usual form with a *hireq*, which is supported by a plene spelling with *yod* in the Dead Sea Scroll fragment 4QDeut[j], or as one of a small group of infinitive construct forms with *tsere*, see *GKC* §53k.

In these verses, YHWH invokes a Canaanite creation motif that describes the division of the people of the earth into individual people-groups, one for each of "the divine beings [lit. the sons of god,]" with Israel being the special and exclusive possession of YHWH.[99] YHWH describes a ruling deity, referred to as עליון, as superior to the other deities and thus with the power to distribute the nations and peoples. As a result of the division of peoples, the Israelites, called by the metonymic title 'Jacob,' become a possession of YHWH's, referred to as both his נחלה 'inheritance' and חלק 'portion' (v. 9). The term עליון is often used as an epithet for YHWH in the Hebrew Bible.[100] Smith and others have argued that in Deut 32:8 and elsewhere עליון is a title for YHWH, and thus he is the superior deity who kept Israel for himself rather than giving it to another divine being.[101] The acknowledgment of multiple divine beings—narratively situated in the mouth of YHWH no less—was found acceptable throughout the transmission of the Song of Moses as least up to the copying of 4QDeut^{j}, as long as it was clear that YHWH was the greatest of them.

Similarly, in Psalm 82 YHWH is described as one of many divine beings, all of whom have enough autonomy to act independently while being subject to YHWH's authority. The text utilizes the same motif as that found in Deut 32:8–9, even as it is rhetorically inverted.[102]

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[99] For a survey of the evidence for this motif, including Mesopotamian, Greek, and Ugaritic examples, see Smith, *God in Translation*, 197, also Paul Sanders, *The Provenance of Deuteronomy 32*, OTS (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 157–58. See also Deut 4:19–20.

[100] See Psa 7:18; 9:3; 47:3; 83:19; 91:1; 97:9;. "In the present form of the biblical text, the term is understood to be an epithet for Yahweh, the God of Israel." E. E. Elnes and P. D. Miller, "Elyon," *DDD*, 293–99. See also the reference to YHWH as אל אלהים in Psa 50:1.

[101] See also Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 302–303; and Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy* (Louisville, John Knox Press, 1990), 228–29; and references in White, *Yahweh's Council*, 36, although she argued that YHWH is one of the בני אלהים rather than the chief deity in this passage.

[102] I follow the interpretations of Tsevat, "God and the Gods in Assembly," and Strawn, "The Poetics of Ps 82."

Because this text is part of the "Elohistic psalter,"[103] the deity described as standing in the divine council and passing judgment among the gods is almost certainly YHWH, despite being referred to as אלהים.[104] After describing how they have failed in their duty to administer justice, YHWH announces that these beings, whom he calls both אלהים and בני עליון, will now "die like human beings" כאדם תמותון (Psa 82:6–7). This suggestion that they have lost their divine positions and are now mortal like humanity may or may not be a rhetorical flourish,[105] but there is no doubt that this primary deity has significant power over the others, even as they have been brought to this position by the ill-advised use of their autonomy. In the final line, the poet calls upon this primary deity, again called אלהים, to "Arise, judge the earth, because you are inheriting all the nations." (Psa 82:8) This is a call for the deity to take direct ownership over all the nations rather than delegating to these unfit, unjust deities referred to as בני עליון.[106] In both these texts, as well

[103] Referring to the group of psalms that contain significant evidence that יהוה was consistently and methodically replaced with אלהים at some point in their transmission. For summary of the evidence for and the procedure displayed in the Elohistic psalter see Laura Joffe, "The Elohistic Psalter: What, How and Why?," *SJOT* 15.1 (2001): 142–66; and Joel S. Burnett, "Forty-Two Songs for Elohim: An Ancient Near Eastern Organizing Principle in the Shaping of the Elohistic Psalter," *JSOT* 31 (2006): 81–101.

[104] See Tsevat, "God and the Gods in Assembly," 126, and more recently Daniel McClellan, "The Gods-Complaint: Psalm 82 as Psalm of Complaint," *JBL* 137 (2018): 833–51; and Michael S. Heiser, "Are Yahweh and El Distinct Deities in Deut 32:8-9 and Psalm 82?" *Hiphil* 3 [http://www.see-j.net/hiphil] (2006). Published October 3, 2006. Read March 20 2023. Also Simon B. Parker, "The Beginning of the Reign of God: Psalm 82 as Myth and Liturgy," *RB* 102 (1995): 532–59, here 533 n. 4, stated: "There is no question that the occurrences of *ʾlhym* in vv 1a, 8 refer (as usually in the Elohistic psalter) to Yahweh, the God of Israel." I disagree with Parker's contention that YHWH is not presiding over this council and is merely a regular member. For more on this point, see Heiser, "Are Yahweh and El Distinct Deities in Deut 32:8-9 and Psalm 82?," 5, who states: "It is more coherent to have Yahweh as the head of the council in Psalm 82 and performing all the roles in the divine court. The early part of the psalm places Yahweh in the role of accuser; midway he sentences the guilty; finally, the psalmist wants Yahweh to rise and act as the only one who can fix the mess described in the psalm."

[105] Another possibility is that the deity's speech is illocutionary in nature, see Strawn, "The Poetics of Ps 82," 31–38.

[106] Strawn, "The Poetics of Ps 82," 38–42.

as the other depictions of בני האלהים and its parallel terms, lesser deities are portrayed as subservient to YHWH even as they maintain some degree of autonomy.[107]

While the grammatical evidence is ambiguous,[108] the alignment between the characteristics of the opponent and those of the בני האלהים supports the view that the opponent is

[107] The other attestations of the phrase בני האלהים and its parallel phrases בני אלים and בני עליון in the Hebrew Bible also indicate that the term refers to divine beings who are inferior to YHWH. The parallel phrases appear nine times: in Gen 6:1–4 (2x); Deut 32:8 (reconstructed vorlage); Job 1:5; 2:1; 38:7; Psa 29:1; Psa 82:6; Psa 89:7. The psalmist compares בני אלים to those who dwell in the celestial realm when he asks "Who in the cloud can confront YHWH? Who among the בני אלים compares to YHWH?" מי בשחק יערך ליהוה ידמה ליהוה בבני אלים (Psa 89:7). These rhetorical questions indicate that the answer is: no one among the בני אלים compares to YHWH nor can stand up to him. For a similar set of rhetorical questions, see Exod 15:11. In Psalm 29:1–2, the psalmist calls upon the בני אלים to "ascribe to YHWH glory and strength," the "glory (due) his name" and to "bow down to YHWH" (Translations of Dennis Pardee, "On Psalm 29: Structure and Meaning," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, ed. Peter W. Flint and Patrick D. Miller Jr., VTSup 99 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 153–83, here 154–55. On the direct comparisons between this psalm and Ugaritic literature that depicts Baal as the highest of the gods, see Joanna Töyräänvuori, "Psalm 29 and Methodological Triangulation: What Can Ugaritic Parallels and Iconographic Motifs Add to the Interpretation of a Psalm?," *BN* 186 (2020): 51–73.) Even the Aramaic term בר אלהין in Dan 3:25 suggests a divine referent, as the king of Babylon uses it describe the fourth man who supernaturally appears in the furnace during the preservation of the three advisors. The most controversial attestations of the phrase are the descriptions of the בני האלהים who marry and reproduce with human women in Gen 6:1–4. While this passage is obscure, Parker ("Sons of (the) God(s)," *DDD*, 796) is correct in asserting that the most likely understanding is that divine beings are reproducing with human women in an illustration of the disorder that led to the flood. Also see recently Jonathan Grossman, "Who Are the Sons of God?–A New Solution," *Bib* 99 (2018): 1–18.

[108] The grammar of the statements introducing the opponent as coming "among" the divine beings, ויהי היום ויבאו בני האלהים להתיצב על יהוה ויבוא גם השטן בתוכם (Job 1:6), does not indicate that he is or is not one of them. The phrase בתוכם "among them" is sometimes used of individuals among a group of which they are members, such as Ephron the Hittite who sits among the Hittites in Gen 23:10 (also Gen 40:20 and 2 Kgs 4:13, both cited in Clines, *Job*, 19. See also Gen 42:5). The particle גם which accompanies the verbal phrase describing the opponent's entrance draws focus to the opponent but does not indicate that he must be viewed as distinct from the בני האלהים that were just mentioned. The particle גם is a "focus particle" that expresses "an explicit indication…that a specific something or someone must be added to something or someone referred to in the preceding context." (C. H. J. Van der Merwe, "Another Look at the Biblical Hebrew Focus Particle," *JSS* 54.2 (2009): 313–32, here 316 and 318. See also the discussion of גם in C. H. J. Van der Merwe, J. A. Naudé, and Jan Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (London; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 401–405.) There are cases where the particle גם expresses a focus on a specific member or members of a group in addition

not an interloper who sneaks in at the same time as the divine beings arrive to stand before YHWH, but is one of them.[109] In addition, YHWH's interactions with the opponent do not indicate that his presence was unexpected or unwelcome. YHWH does not ask the opponent why he has come to a gathering of divine beings, as might be expected if the opponent did not belong among the בני האלהים, but rather asks where he has come from (Job 1:7). YHWH asks about the opponent's perception of the human Job, apparently seeking his acknowledgment of Job's righteousness.[110] YHWH treats the opponent as if his presence were expected and even sought after. Such a reception would be inexplicable if the opponent were an interloper.

The opponent's reception by YHWH, along with the depiction of his supernatural abilities, indicates that he is one of the בני האלהים "divine beings" who come to stand before YHWH. In addition to being defined by his function as an opponent, the opponent is a divine

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to the group as a whole which is explicitly mentioned elsewhere. In such cases the particle may function to express an especially noteworthy role of the marked entities: "The specific inclusion of the entity or entities after גַּם usually reflects some special role that the inclusion has played" (van Der Merwe, "Another Look at the Biblical Hebrew Focus Particle," 316). For example, Saul's appointment of David over all the armed forces is described to be "good in the eyes of all the people and also in the eyes of the servants of Saul" וייטב בעיני כל העם וגם בעיני עבדי שׁאול (1 Sam 18:5). Similarly, both a human messenger and the narrator use the particle גם to direct focus to the death of Uriah the Hittite after describing the deaths of David's servants, a group within which Uriah was included: "Some of the king's servants died, and also your servant Uriah the Hittite died" וימותו מעבדי המלך וגם עבדך אוריה החתי מת (2 Sam 11:24; see the narrator in 11:17; also possibly 2 Sam 1:4 and 1 Sam 31:6 [in which the order is reversed]). The grammar leaves the question of the opponent's inclusion or exclusion from the בני האלהים open.

[109] Those who see the opponent as one of the בני האלהים include Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob*, 7; Samuel Rolles Driver and George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job*, 2 vols., *ICC* 10–11 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 1:11, Marvin H. Pope, *Job*, AB 15 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 9–10, and Schmidt, "Die biblische Satansvorstellung," 117, especially n. 18. Those who argue he is not include Dhorme, *Book of Job*, 5: "Among the sons of God Satan has insinuated himself"; James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 101: "the Hebrew *gam* (also) almost identifies *haśśāṭān* as an intruder"; Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 14 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 82: "It is because the Satan has no right to be there that he alone is asked his business."

[110] For my argument that this is YHWH's goal in speaking to the opponent, see below.

being who can speak and act independently of YHWH even as he is his subordinate to him. Below, I argue that the opponent's status as an autonomous being capable of expressing independent opinions is crucial to understanding his conversations with YHWH and what those conversations reveal about YHWH's motivations and character.

The Lack of Information Regarding the Opponent

The final explicit information provided regarding the character of the opponent is that the narrative provides few details about him. This feature of the narrative has led some scholars to suggest that the character must have already been known to the audience, lending support to proposals that the opponent that appears in the opening scenes of *Job* represented a figure from a well-established theological tradition.[111] But the proposals of Day and Kreuzer suggest the possibility that additional information about the opponent is omitted not because it is already known but because it is unimportant. The paucity of information regarding the opponent aligns with the depiction of other characters in biblical narrative and emphasizes the character information that is included. The depiction of the opponent, I argue, centers his characterization upon his role as an opponent of YHWH whose autonomy allows him to instigate events that (1) propel the plot forward and (2) illuminate the character of YHWH.

[111] Maag states that the author was not compelled to introduce the opponent to his readers and says this shows that they were already familiar with the concept: "'Der Satan' ist somit ein der Entstehungszeit der Novelle geläufiger weltanschaulicher bzw. religiöser Begriff." Maag, *Hiob*, 64. See also Hans Strauss, "השׂטן in den Traditionen des hebräischen Kanons," *ZAW* 111 (1999): 256–58, here 256: "Der in diesem Zusammenhang offensichtlich als bekannt vorausgesetzte השטן" and Raik Heckl, *Hiob – Vom Gottesfürchitigen zum Repräsentaten Israels: Studien zur Buchwerdung des Hiobbuches und zu seinen Quellen*, FAT 70 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 237.

Scholars who claim that the lack of information about the opponent poses a problem for the story or a potential audience for understanding the character argue against a large proportion of biblical evidence. Biblical narratives are filled with minor characters, often anonymous, that play significant roles in the story and in its telling.[112] Uriel Simon demonstrated that lack of character description is not a problem, but often a feature of biblical narrative: "Generally speaking, then, a minor character is described only when it is necessary to further the plot or to clarify another character."[113] Simon demonstrated that such narrowly described characters are common in biblical narrative and that it is rare for any scene in biblical narrative to depict more than three characters who are described in any detail.[114] As a result, these minor characters often play crucial roles.

Adele Reinhartz demonstrated the ubiquity of anonymous characters in biblical narratives, finding them in "virtually every corner of biblical narrative and in every social circle: among the ostracized lepers at the city gates, among the widowed and poor, in the households of Israel's founding families, in the courts and armies of the monarchs, and in the heavens themselves."[115] Examples of anonymous characters that play significant roles include the Levite and his concubine in the story of the civil war against Benjamin (Judges 19–20); the slave-girl in the story of Elisha's healing of Naaman's leprosy (2 Kings 5); the daughter of Pharoah in the birth and miraculous salvation of Moses (Exodus 2); the Pharoah and his sorcerers in the story of

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[112] Uriel Simon has argued that the frequent appearance of minor characters who are narrowly or barely described or characterized is part of the elliptical quality of biblical narrative, a quality that challenges the expectations of narrative held by modern readers just as it did the early interpreters of the Bible, such as the Septuagint translators and Josephus. Uriel Simon, "Minor Characters in Biblical Narrative," *JSOT* 15.46 (1990): 11–19, here 12–13.
[113] Simon, "Minor Characters in Biblical Narrative," 14.
[114] Simon, "Minor Characters in Biblical Narrative," 11.
[115] Adele Reinhartz, *"Why Ask My Name?": Anonymity and Identity in Biblical Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3.

the Exodus (Exodus 7–15)[116]; the wife of Manoah in the conception and birth of Samson (Judges 13) the nearer kinsman also referred to as the "redeemer" גאל or פלני אלמני in the story of Ruth (Ruth 4); Saul's servant in the anointing of Saul (1 Samuel 9–10); and others.[117] Many of these characters speak, sometimes on multiple occasions and at length. Many appear in multiple scenes across long stretches of texts. Several play crucial roles in the plot.

The lack of information and the anonymity of the opponent in the opening scenes of Job locates his character firmly within the typology of the minor and unnamed characters of Biblical narrative who play significant narrative roles.[118] This means that the sparse description of his character within the text does not indicate that his characterization drew upon information from outside the text. On the other hand, the paucity of information regarding the opponent directs the focus of his characterization to the information that is provided and how that information illuminates the character's function in the narrative.[119] The opponent's characterization is focused on his status as (1) a divine being, one whose actions, thoughts, and words display that he is a being that is independent of YHWH in nature and in personage, even as he is subservient to YHWH's authority, as well as (2) an "opponent" or "adversary" whose role in the narrative is defined by his opposition to another character. Because these are the two characteristics that are

[116] While there may well be multiple narrative strands that have been compiled within these chapters, it is accurate to state that in no part of the text is Pharaoh given a name nor is his background given in any level of detail.
[117] This list is for illustration only and could contain a multitude. See the thorough catalog and treatment in Reinhartz, *"Why Ask My Name?"* For a lengthy list of minor characters, some named and some unnamed, see Simon, "Minor Characters in Biblical Narrative."
[118] Geoffrey Aimers has astutely observed that "It is almost as if the satan was being treated as an anonymous secondary character." G. J. Aimers, "'Give the Devil His Due': The Satanic Agenda and Social Justice in the Book of Job," *JSOT* 37.1 (2012): 57–66, here 58.
[119] See citation of Uriel Simon above, as well as Reinhartz: "the principal effect of the absence of a proper name is to focus the reader's attention on the role designations that flood into the gap that anonymity denotes." Reinhartz, *"Why Ask My Name?"* 188, see also 81.

provided, they are the characteristics that illuminate the opponent's function in the narrative of Job 1–2.

Minor and anonymous characters commonly play major literary functions in the narratives in which they appear, even if they do as little as "carry out a single act and then disappear."[120] Such characters may function by advancing the plot, sometimes providing crucial links by which the action is propelled forward. They may also contribute to the characterization of major characters, often times indirectly and by contrast, but also in illuminating these other characters through their actions and interactions.[121] I argue below that the opponent fulfills these two functions by directly causing the instigating events that propel the plot of the opening scenes and the entirety of *Job* and by illuminating the character of YHWH by prompting the conversations that reveal his priorities. To more fully understand how the opponent illuminates the character of YHWH, I turn to their conversations, and particularly the question of what is at stake in that conversation that their dispute leads to such drastic consequences. As discussed above, it is crucial that YHWH does not treat the opponent as if he is unwelcome or does not belong in the deity's presence. To the contrary, YHWH's behavior indicates that he seeks out a certain type of interaction with the opponent from the very beginning.

[120] Reinhartz, *"Why Ask My Name?"*, 19.
[121] See Simon, "Minor Characters in Biblical Narrative," 16–18; Reinhartz, *"Why Ask My Name?"* 19–22; and Julian C. Chike, "Marginal Characters: A Strategy of Persuasion in 1–2 Samuel," *JSOT* 48.1 (2023): 69–83, especially 73.

THE CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN YHWH AND THE OPPONENT

At no point in *Job* does the narrator provide a direct description of YHWH.[122] YHWH's character in the opening scenes is established by his speech and actions including his two conversations with the opponent and the consequences of those conversations.[123] Scholars have investigated a wide variety of questions related to the conversations between YHWH and the opponent. In describing what these conversations reveal about YHWH's motivations, scholars largely fall into one of two groups. In one group are scholars who argued that YHWH's motivation is to acquire knowledge regarding the righteousness of Job.[124] As articulated by Cho:

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[122] The only direct descriptions of YHWH by a character in the story are the two proverbial statements made by the poorly informed Job (Job 1:21; 2:10).

[123] Aside from the assertions of Job and his interlocutors in the poetic dialogues, YHWH is not depicted again until his speeches from the whirlwind in Job 38:1–40:2 and 40:6–26. He is also depicted in his words to Job's interlocutors in 42:7–9 and the depiction of his actions in 42:10. The conversations between YHWH and the opponent are also crucial for understanding the relationship between the events of the opening scenes and the events described in the other portions of *Job*, as well as for evaluating the function of the opponent and whether his absence outside of the opening scenes creates plot discontinuity.

[124] See Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob*, 8–9 (note that Duhm raises another possibility as well, see below); Pope, *Job*, LXXIII-LXXIV: "The action is prompted by YHWH himself when he calls the Satan's attention to Job as a paragon of virtue and provokes him into questioning the basis and the genuineness of Jobs piety"; Weiss, *The Story of Job's Beginning*, 43–47; Clines, "False Naivety in the Prologue to Job," 133–34: "The prologue of the book appears to leave little room for doubt over the significance of Job's suffering. He suffers to prove to heaven that gratuitous piety does in fact exist on earth, that a pious man, robbed of all the prosperity that piety can bring, can remain pious, charging the God who steals that prosperity with no wrong"; and again in Clines, *Job*, 28–29: "The Yahweh of this tale is not the absolutely omniscient God of later systematic or speculative theology….He has confidence in Job, but not a confidence that would enable him to use Job as an object lesson to refute the Satan's aspersions. He too has taken it for granted that he will bless the pious man; but that benign reciprocity has obscured the true relation of piety and prosperity. The Satan has the right to ask the question, and Yahweh is in the right in having the problem probed"; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 89–91; Fox, "Reading the Tale of Job (Job 1,1–2,13 + 42,7–17)," 149: "Yahweh demands human loyalty and enforces the demand, often ferociously, often to his own pain. It is a matter of honor. He is not certain that he is getting it because he is not entirely omniscient"; Seow, *Job 1-21*, 257–258; Katharine J. Dell, "The Book of Job," in *The History of Evil in Antiquity: 2000 BCE-450 CE*, ed. P. S. Angier (London: Routledge, 2018), 24–33, here 26; Peter Machinist, "The Question of Job," in *Open-Mindedness in the Bible. A Volume of Studies in Honour of Bob Becking*, ed. Marjo C. A. Korpel and Lester

"the Satan stokes Yhwh's curiosity. Then, he goads Yhwh into action with an antidote…. Apparently, just as Job does not know what lies in his children's hearts, neither does Yhwh know what lies in the human heart. And the divine curiosity moves Yhwh to action."[125] In this view, the opponent points out that YHWH lacks certain knowledge about Job, and YHWH afflicts Job as a test or experiment intended to resolve doubts caused by that lack of knowledge.[126]

In a second group are scholars who argued that YHWH's motivation is to prove the opponent wrong.[127] In this view, the opponent challenges YHWH by disagreeing with his description of Job's righteousness, and YHWH afflicts Job to win the argument and "to salvage his dignity and reputation for omniscience."[128] Included within this group are several scholars

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L. Grabbe, LHBOTS 616 (London: T&T Clark, 2015), 165–78, here 166; Carol A. Newsom, "Evil in the Hebrew Bible: The Case of the Wisdom Literature," in *Evil: A History*, ed. Andrew P. Chignell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 60–81, here 68–69. Also Hankins, who argued that the question is whether Job fears God authentically, which means without any condition, Davis Hankins, *The Book of Job and the Immanent Genesis of Transcendence* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015), 40–44. David and Linafelt suggested that the knowledge that YHWH lacked was that of Job's inner thoughts, which he does not reveal until he begins to lament in Job 3, see Davis and Linafelt, "Translating חנם in Job 1:9 and 2:3: On the Relationship between Job's Piety and His Interiority."

[125] Cho, "The Integrity of Job 1 and 42:11-17," 236.

[126] Hankins refers to this as "the consensus" view: "the act of God in afflicting Job is supposed to make the test of Job's wisdom (authentic fear of God) possible because (i) it leaves Job with nothing on account of which he can be said to fear God, and (ii) it disconnects God from any predictable, causal condition on account of which Job could be said to fear God. Thus, if Job exhibits pious behavior after the affliction one can surmise that it is for naught, that Job has passed the test, and that God has truly been worshipped. See Hankins, *The Book of Job*, 50.

[127] Tsevat, "The Meaning of the Book of Job," 74 describes the opponent's statements as a challenge and YHWH as the proponent of the view that Job's righteousness is disinterested and therefore piety is possible. See also Dhorme, *Book of Job*, 8; Maag, *Hiob*, 25; Heckl, *Hiob – Vom Gottesfürchitigen zum Repräsentaten Israels*, 245–46. See also those who refer to this as "a heavenly wager," although not always with the same precise sense, for example those cited in Clines, *Job*, 27. See also Alan Cooper, "Reading and Misreading the Prologue to Job," *JSOT* 46 (1990): 67–79, here 70, who argued that God afflicts Job to show the error of the opponent's claims that piety and prosperity are inextricably bound together.

[128] Described as one of several possibilities in R. N. Whybray, "'Shall Not the Judge of All the Earth Do What Is Just?': God's Oppression of the Innocent in the Old Testament," in *Shall Not the Judge of All the Earth Do What Is Right?: Studies on the Nature of God in Tribute to James*

who argue that YHWH's motivation is to demonstrate something about the righteousness of Job to the opponent. In this view, the opponent's allegations reveal his own lack of knowledge about Job, and YHWH afflicts Job to demonstrate to the opponent the nature of Job's righteousness.[129]

My evaluation of the character of the opponent casts much of the evidence regarding the interpretation of these conversations and YHWH's motivations in a new light. This, combined with what these conversations reveal about YHWH's motivations, justifies a novel investigation of these conversations and how they contribute to the characterization of YHWH in the opening scenes of *Job*. I agree with those who argued that YHWH's motivation for afflicting Job was to demonstrate something to the opponent. I go beyond previous proposals by arguing that YHWH's objective in these conversations is to compel the opponent to acknowledge Job's righteousness. While YHWH is himself uninterested in Job's motivations, he perceives the opponent's allegation that Job's righteousness is self-interested to be a threat to his reputation. YHWH's motivation for afflicting Job is to disprove that allegation in order to compel the opponent to acknowledge Job's righteousness, thereby elevating YHWH's reputation and maximizing his glory.

YHWH Seeks the Opponent's Acknowledgment of Job's Righteousness

YHWH's objectives are clearer in light of the results of the investigation of the characterization of the opponent in Job 1–2 recorded above. If the conversations in Job 1–2 were between YHWH and his prosecuting attorney or even an anonymous accuser, then that would

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L. Crenshaw, ed. David Penchansky and Paul L. Redditt (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 1–19, here 15. On how I differ from Whybray, see below.

[129] See Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob*, 9–13; H. H. Rowley, *Job* (London: Nelson, 1970), 32–33; and Hartley, *Job*, 73–74.

immediately suggest the possibility that YHWH is bringing Job to the opponent's attention to resolve his own uncertainty. Because the opponent is a divine being who is defined by his role as an opponent, there is no such suggestion, and the investigation of what YHWH is trying to accomplish must begin with the conversations themselves. Throughout the opening scenes YHWH consistently seeks one thing: the opponent's acknowledgment of Job's righteousness.

The first indication of YHWH's objective is the direction in which he steers the conversation. When the opponent enters YHWH's presence during a gathering of divine beings who have come "to stand before YHWH," להתיצב על יהוה (Job 1:6; 2:3),[130] YHWH initiates and directs what they talk about.[131] The conversation begins with an exchange of pleasantries, but

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[130] The combination of the hithpael verb from the double root יצ"ב/נצ"ב and a verbal complement introduced by the preposition על appears nine times in the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible. In addition to appearing at the beginning of both of the scenes involving YHWH and the opponent in the opening scenes of Job (Job 1:6, 2:1 (2x)), the verb-complement combination appears in Zech 6:5, 2 Chr 11:13, Hab 2:1, Psa 36:5, and Num 23:3, 15. In each case, what is expressed is the action of assuming a standing position in proximity to the object or person specified within the prepositional phrase that includes על.

In other usages, the hithpael verb emphasizes the action of taking a standing a position, as for example in Num 22:22. The combination of the niphal verb derived from this double root and the prepositional complement על is used often to refer to people standing in proximity to an individual to whom they are directing attention either because of their relationship or because of the particular situation, as in Gen 45:1, Exod 18:14, 1 Sam 22:6, and 1 Sam 4:20 (note also Ruth 2:5 in which the man who supervises the agricultural laborers is described as standing over them). For more see J. Reindl, "יצב/נצב nṣb/yṣb," *TDOT* 9:519–29.

[131] The narrator singles out the opponent by mentioning first the entry of the whole group and then the opponent's presence among them. What the narrator does not explicitly indicate is whether YHWH spoke to any of the other divine beings or just spoke to the opponent. Only his conversation with the opponent is mentioned, but the elliptical character of biblical narrative, or what Meir Sternberg has called the "active role played by the reader in constructing the world of a literary work" by filling gaps in the discourse (Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985], 188; for more on ellipsis and gaps in biblical narrative see below), makes it impossible to definitively determine whether YHWH spoke only to the opponent or spoke to others and only inquired of the opponent in his turn.

This inherent ambiguity serves the rhetorical function of directing the focus of the scene upon the interaction between the two characters. Making the context ambiguous—who were the other divine beings? How many of them were there? Why were they gathered before YHWH?

YHWH quickly directs the conversation to the subject of Job's righteousness.[132] As long as YHWH is in control of the discussion, he indicates that he is interested in talking and hearing about Job and his righteousness.[133]

None of YHWH's words or actions suggest that he is seeking information about Job that he doesn't have. On the contrary, YHWH's words about Job are confident and give no indication that he has doubts about what he says. First, he describes Job as עבדי "my servant," an appellation commonly given to Moses, the patriarchs, and others who are recipients of divine promises and faithful to the tasks given by YHWH.[134] Then he declares, in four different ways, that Job is righteous and asserts that his righteousness is greater than that of any other earthly being: השמת לבך על עבדי איוב כי אין כמהו בארץ איש תם וישר ירא אלהים וסר מרע "Have you directed your attention toward my servant Job? That there is none like him on the earth, a man blameless

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What happened before or after? The narrator provides no answers—directs attention to the interaction alone and for its own sake. YHWH may have asked the same set of questions of every divine being and received satisfactory answers until speaking to the opponent, or the opponent may have already been known as a trouble-maker to YHWH who then sought him out alone. Either way, the omission of other details places the focus directly on this interaction by itself.

[132] YHWH begins by asking the opponent where has come from, to which the opponent replies that he has been "going to and fro on the earth, walking back and forth in it" משוט בארץ ומהתהלך בה (1:7). See the above discussion on the verb שוט, which does not possess a connotation of patrolling. Instead, the verb refers to the action of traversing territory or roaming, perhaps even in an aimless fashion. See *HALOT*, s.v. "I שׁוט." See also Dhorme, *Book of Job*, 6, who goes so far as to claim that YHWH brings up Job because he expects that the opponent has encountered him during his travels across the earth. Whether or not that is why YHWH asks about Job, the opponent's knowledge of Job's wealth indicates that he has learned of Job prior to this conversation.

[133] White notes that everything that happens, including the direction of the conversation and the decision to afflict Job, proceeds according to YHWH's direction: "It is Yahweh who initiates the conversation, and then it is Yahweh who brings the subject of Job into the conversation, and then it is Yahweh who ultimately decides what action will be taken against Job and what limitations that action will have (1:8, 12)." White, *Yahweh's Council*, 71.

[134] See Seow, *Job 1-21*, 275. Also Clines, *Job*, 24.

and upright, who fears God and turns aside from evil?" (Job 1:8, see also 2:3).[135] The description appears within a question, but YHWH is not asking for the opponent's confirmation that the description is accurate. The syntax of the question indicates that the inquiry is whether the opponent has perceived what YHWH is describing, namely, Job's unparalleled righteousness.[136]

The form of the question not only indicates that YHWH wants the opponent to speak about Job's righteousness, but also reveals what YHWH wants the opponent to say about it. By inserting his own description of Job's righteousness within the question, YHWH places the opponent in a position where he must accept the premises of YHWH's question and thus acknowledge Job's righteousness, directly contradict YHWH, or change the subject.[137] Marvin

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[135] When a verb from שי"מ takes the object לבב/לב it indicates that the subject of the verb directs attention, concern, thought, or regard in a particular direction or towards a particular object. See the contrast in Exod 9:19–21 between those who ירא the word of YHWH and follow his instructions by bringing their servants and cattle inside and those who do not שם their לב upon the word of YHWH and do not follow his instructions. See also Samuel telling Saul not to שם his לב upon his missing cattle because they have been found in 1 Samuel 9:20. For the לב as the seat of thought, will, and cognition see H. W. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, trans. M. Kohl (London: SCM, 1974), 44–54; H. -J. Fabry, "לֵב *lēḇ*; לֵבָב *lēḇāḇ*," *TDOT* 7:399–437, especially 414–25; Yael Avrahami, *The Senses of Scripture: Sensory Perception in the Hebrew Bible*, LHBOTS 545 (New York: T&T Clark, 2012), especially the examples on 129 and 158–59. See also Michael Carasik, *Theologies of the Mind in Biblical Israel*, StBibLit 85 (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 9: "It is possible that the word לב, 'heart,' is never used anywhere in the Bible to describe the actual bodily organ…yet it is the regular Biblical Hebrew word that designates what we call 'mind.'"

[136] The description appears in an object clause introduced by the particle כי that follows the verb of perception. Such clauses function to indicate the content of perception. When this type of object clause appears as part of a question, the subject of inquiry is whether the perception occurred, not whether the content described in the object clause is accurate. For example, in 1 Sam 10:24 Samuel asks the people: "Do you see the one whom YHWH has chosen, that there is none like him?" הראיתם אשר בחר בו יהוה כי אין כמהו. Samuel is asking whether the people have seen the one YHWH has chosen, not whether they agree that there is none like him (see also the object clauses following verbs of perception in questions in 1 Kgs 1:11 and 2 Kgs 6:32, although these are simple object clauses with only one complement).

[137] Leading questions are nearly universally recognized as intended to compel a certain type of answer, so much so that social scientists are trained that they must avoid them, and the rules of American jurisprudence forbid their use. If a lawyer in the 21st century in the state of Illinois were to ask a witness on the stand a question that was as leading as YHWH's questions in the

Pope described YHWH's action here as provocative: "There is something of taunt and provocation in Yahweh's query."[138] This leading question reveals that YHWH's objective is to compel the opponent to agree with him by declaring the incomparable greatness of Job's righteousness.

YHWH's objective is indicated by his own words but is partially obscured because the opponent responds by changing the subject to a related but different question. It is the opponent's question and his proposal for answering it that dictates the course of events in Job's life and in the rest of the narrative. The opponent asks: "Does Job fear God 'for free'?" החנם ירא איוב אלהים (Job 1:9) The word חִנָּם has two primary senses. It can refer to an action that is undertaken "for free" in the sense that the actor receives no compensation or benefit, or it can refer to a verbal action that is undeserved in the sense that the action is not justified by the object of the verbal action.[139] The context dictates that in the opponent's question in Job 1:9 he uses חִנָּם in the former sense.[140] By asking this rhetorical question, the opponent suggests that Job fears God because he receives compensation: a prosperous life that YHWH has brought about by blessing and protecting him and all that is his. Then the opponent makes the prediction that sets the events of

opening scenes, they would be in violation of the rules of the court. See "Rule 611. Mode and Order of Interrogation and Presentation." Illinois Rules of Evidence, Illinois Supreme Court, accessed April 1, 2023, https://casetext.com/rule/illinois-court-rules/illinois-rules-of-evidence/article-vi-witnesses/rule-611-mode-and-order-of-interrogation-and-presentation.

[138] Pope, *Job*, 11.

[139] For more on the two senses of חִנָּם, see discussion below.

[140] See for example the usage of the word in the following passages: Laban insisting that Jacob cannot serve him חִנָּם and asking what his reward should be (Gen 29:15); the Covenant Code prescription that in certain circumstances slaves be released חִנָּם and that their owners receive no compensation (Exod 21:2, 11; in one case the slave goes out "freely" לחפשי, and in the other there is no payment of money: אין כסף); David refusing Araunah's offer to provide materials for the king's sacrifice without cost and insisting that he pay for it with money rather than offer burnt offerings to YHWH חִנָּם (2 Sam 24:24). See also Gen 29:15; Exod 21:2, 11; Num 11:5; 2 Sam 24:24; Isa 52:3, 5; Jer 22:13, and 1 Chr 21:24.

the rest of the story in motion.[141] He predicts that under specific circumstances—if YHWH strikes all that Job has—Job will curse YHWH to his face (Job 1:11).[142] This prediction draws a clear line between Job's righteousness and the benefits he receives from YHWH: if Job no longer receives benefits from YHWH, he will no longer be righteous.

The opponent's allegations that Job's righteousness is self-interested dominate the remainder of the opening scenes, and indeed the narrative of the rest of *Job*. But it is significant that it is the opponent who raises the question of Job's motivations and that in doing so the opponent changes the subject of the discussion from what YHWH had originally raised. That the change is to a related subject makes this no less significant, and, for that matter, no less impressive. It is also significant that after the opponent changes the subject YHWH never expresses any concerns or curiosity about the opponent's allegations. Instead, he continues to pursue his original objective.

Even when the opponent confidently predicts, twice, that Job's righteousness is self-interested, YHWH does not voice his opinion on the accuracy of his predictions. He merely instructs the opponent to afflict Job and create the circumstances necessary to test his predictions. But his behavior does not suggest he is invested in the outcome for its own sake. After Job has been afflicted, YHWH does not indicate that he learned anything from the exercise. Nor does he express any form of relief. Instead, YHWH remains fixated on his original objective. He initiates the second conversation with the opponent by asking the same leading

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[141] On אם לא as an elliptical oath formula, see discussion above.

[142] The most common meaning of the root ב"רכ is "to bless." See *HALOT*, s.v. "II ברך", in which it is noted that it is sometimes used as a euphemism for ר"אר and the piel verbal form of ל"קל, for example see 1 Kings 21:10, 13; Psa 10:3 (in association with נאץ "despise"); Job 1:5, 11; 2:5, 9. Dhorme, *Book of Job*, 4, suggests the euphemism is used to "prevent contact between the divine name and a verb expressing affront" and points to a an example of this impulse in 1 Sam 3:13 where the word להם has been substituted for אלהים after the verb for cursing מקללים.

question that he asked in the first, again prompting the opponent to speak about Job's righteousness and making the easiest course of action to agree with YHWH's evaluation that Job's righteousness is unparalleled.

Throughout their interactions, the opponent repeatedly frustrates YHWH's attempts to compel an acknowledgement of Job's righteousness. While the opponent was labeled as an antagonist from his very introduction, it is through these conversations that it becomes clear that the object of his opposition is YHWH, and that the outcome he prevents YHWH from achieving is the acknowledgment of Job's righteousness.[143] The opponent pontificates on the motivation for Job's righteousness but YHWH single mindedly pursues his initial objective. That YHWH's objective does not change indicates that his decision to allow the opponent to afflict Job is motivated by that same objective. But how does afflicting Job contribute to YHWH's goal of compelling the opponent to acknowledge Job's righteousness? To that question I now turn.

YHWH Afflicts Job to Demonstrate His Righteousness to the Opponent

Part of the reason scholars have taken multiple positions on why YHWH chooses to afflict Job is because he does not explain his motivations. Both Hartley and Duhm suggested that YHWH is seeking to provide a demonstration. Hartley observed that it was YHWH who brought Job to the opponent's attention, claiming that "Yahweh's purpose was to demonstrate that a human being could live a blameless and upright life."[144] Hartley did not indicate precisely why YHWH would

[143] Contra scholars who suggest that he is Job's opponent, such as Clines, *Job*, 20: "First is he God's adversary or Job's? Later theological development of the figure of Satan preconditions the reader to say, 'God's'; but the story here makes it evident that the Satan is Yahweh's subordinate, presenting himself before him as one of his courtiers, responding to Yahweh's initiatives, and powerless to act without Yahweh's authorization.…So the Satan of this story is *Job*'s adversary."
[144] Hartley, *Job*, 74.

make such a demonstration. Duhm, on the other hand, suggested that YHWH was obliged by his justice and impartiality to provide proof of Job's piety to satisfy the questions raised by the opponent. Duhm suggested that the decision is an expression of YHWH's justice which requires him not to crush the opinions of subordinate beings, such as the opponent, with his superior knowledge but to provide objective proof to satisfy their concerns.[145] I diverge from Duhm because there is no indication that justice obligated YHWH to provide proof to satisfy the concerns of the opponent. But Hartley and Duhm are correct in claiming that the purpose of afflicting Job is to demonstrate to the opponent that Job's righteousness is disinterested. I argue that YHWH intends for this demonstration to cause the opponent to acknowledge Job's righteousness.

YHWH's statements in his second conversation with the opponent illuminate what he hoped to accomplish by afflicting Job. He continues to pursue the same objective as he did prior to the opponent's making his allegations, starting the conversation in the same way and then asking the exact same leading question: השמת לבך אל עבדי איוב כי אין כמהו בארץ איש תם וישר ירא אלהים וסר מרע "Have you directed your attention toward my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a man blameless and upright, who fears God and turns aside from evil?" (Job 2:3). While much in the story has changed since the first conversation, YHWH's desire to compel the opponent to acknowledge Job's righteousness and his strategy for doing so have not.

In addition to this repetition, YHWH makes one new statement. After asking the leading question, YHWH declares the results of Job's affliction: ועדנו מחזיק בתמתו ותסיתני בו לבלעו חנם "He still maintains his blamelessness even when you provoked me against him to destroy him undeservedly" (Job 2:3). By declaring that Job remains blameless even when the payment that

[145] Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob*, 9, see also 13.

the opponent alleged motivated his righteousness was no longer delivered, YHWH asserts that the opponent's prediction has been disproven.

Most interpreters have understood the use of the adverb חִנָּם in Job 2:3 to indicate that YHWH is suggesting that the affliction of Job was either "without cause" because the opponent's assertions about Job were baseless, or "without reason" because the afflictions were unnecessary, or "for nothing" because nothing was accomplished.[146] However, while dictionaries list "without cause" and "without reason" among the possible translations of חִנָּם,[147] its usage in the Hebrew Bible indicates that the English "without cause" does not adequately convey the more specific nuances of this usage of the adverb. When חִנָּם is used in a sense similar to "without cause," it does not mean "futile" or "for naught" or "without purpose." It expresses that the verbal action is not justified by the object of that verbal action, as expressed by Janzen: "the term refers to actions of one party against another that have no basis in the second party's character or behavior."[148] In other words, the second sense of חִנָּם indicates that a verbal action is "undeserved" according to the actions, words, or nature of the object of that action.[149]

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[146] See the following: "ohne Ursach zu Grunde" in Budde, *Hiob*, 4 and 7; "ohne Ursach" in Duhm, *Hiob*, 2–3; "ohne Grund" in Georg Fohrer, *Das Buch Hiob*, Kommentar zum Alten Testament 16 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1963), 79 and 96; "without reason/cause" in Dhorme, *Job*, 16; "without reason or purpose" in Weiss, *The Story of Job's Beginning*, 65; "all for nothing" in Habel, *The Book of Job*, 94; "without cause" or "for no purpose" in Hartley, *Job*, 79; "without cause" or "gratuitous" in the sense that Job did nothing to provoke it in Clines, *Job*, 5 and 42; and "for naught" in Seow, *Job 1–21*, 290.

[147] Dictionaries list several possible translations of חִנָּם, including "without compensation," "in vain," "without cause," (*HALOT*, s.v "חִנָּם") "needlessly, i.e. without purpose, for no good reason," "at no cost" and "without warrant, illegally, unjustly" (*DCH* 3, s.v. "חִנָּם").

[148] J. Gerald Janzen, "Blessing and Justice in Job: In/Commensurable?," in *"When the Morning Stars Sang": Essays in Honor of Choon Leong Seow on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Scott C. Jones and Christine Roy Yoder, BZAW 500 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 51–69, here 53–54.

[149] See 1 Sam 19:5; 25:31; 1 Kgs 2:31; Ezek 6:10; 14:23; Psa 35:7 (2x), 19; 69:5; 109:3; 119:161; Job 9:17; 22:6; Prov 1:11; 3:30; 23:29; 24:28; 26:2; and Lam 3:52. Note that "undeservedly" provides greater specificity than "without cause." The sense of "without cause"

Thus, after again attempting to compel the opponent to acknowledge Job's righteousness, YHWH declares that Job maintained his blamelessness even when Job was destroyed undeservedly.[150] The opponent had alleged that Job was righteous because he was blessed by

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either suggests a lack of causation more generally or focuses attention on the agent on the verbal action, emphasizing that the actor had little or no reason for the action. The sense of "undeservedly" firmly locates the lack of causation on the recipient of the verbal action. In this case, YHWH is not denying having any reason for afflicting Job. He is making the more specific point that his reasons for afflicting Job are not related to Job's own actions. In other words, Job did nothing to bring on the affliction. The cause of the action was fully external to the object of the action.

[150] When the opponent used the term חִנָּם in the first conversation, he used it in the economic sense, with the suitable translation "for free." Here, however, that sense does not align with the context. It is not clear what YHWH would be attempting to communicate in saying that Job was destroyed "for free" or without compensation to YHWH or the opponent. That is why it is necessary to translate חִנָּם with the other sense, "undeservedly."

Recently, Davis and Linafelt have challenged the status quo and argued that YHWH is saying he destroyed Job with no effect because it didn't achieve the stated end, see Davis and Linafelt, "Translating חנם in Job 1:9 and 2:3." They argued that the purpose of testing Job is to reveal the relationship between Job's actions and motivations, and that the first set of afflictions failed to produce a clear result because Job only recites formulaic, conventional expressions that do not reveal his inner motivations. For a similar view, see also Scott C. Jones, "Job," in *The Oxford Handbook of Wisdom and the Bible*, ed. Will Kynes (Oxford University Press, 2021), 532–50, here 539–40.

Davis and Linafelt are correct that חִנָּם, in addition to referring to absence of cost in economic contexts, is also used to refer to a verbal action that provides no benefit in a non-financial sense. In a passage in which he describes the Israelite's failed cultic practices, Malachi quotes YHWH's dismissal of their ineffective sacrifices. Just before declaring that he will not accept their offerings, he describes them as "kindling fire on my altar without benefit" תאירו מזבחי חנם (Mal 1:10). See Andrew E. Hill, *Malachi: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 25D (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 185: "The defiled sacrifices were meaningless and worthless for two reasons: they were unacceptable as offerings of worship to Yahweh, and they yielded no benefit (by way of divine blessing or 'profit,' 3:10–11, 14) to the worshiper." In Prov 1:8–19, the speaker implores his son to stay away from sinful men who seek to make their living by stealing from the innocent rather than making an honest living. The object of the undeserved (on this translation, see below) ambush is described as נקי "innocent." Describing the shortsightedness of such men, the speaker describes how traps set in the sight of birds are "without benefit" because even the birds are wise enough to avoid the traps they can see, and contrasts that to the folly of the wicked who fail to avoid the traps they set for themselves. He encourages his son to act with the same wisdom as the birds and avoid falling into the traps the wicked have set for themselves. See also Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 18A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 85–89.

YHWH. Now, Job has been afflicted by YHWH when he had done nothing to justify such affliction.[151] YHWH points out that the pattern of exchange that the opponent had alleged motivated his righteousness had been broken, but Job has maintained his blamelessness. He has continued to fear YHWH and behave righteously. The only time YHWH specifically addresses the substance of the opponent's allegations, he points out that they have been definitively disproven.

YHWH knows that Job does indeed fear God for free. That he continues to press the subject indicates that YHWH's objective is something other than his own acquisition of knowledge regarding Job's righteousness. So, what was YHWH's objective? His interest in announcing that the opponent's allegations had been disproven show that he was interested in resolving the questions that the opponent had raised. But if YHWH was not interested in resolving those questions for his own knowledge, his declaration that the question has been settled must be for the benefit of the opponent. YHWH afflicted Job in order to demonstrate to the opponent that Job's righteousness is disinterested.

However, if YHWH were to claim at this point that he had afflicted Job for no benefit, it would be either premature or contradictory. YHWH clearly states that the first part of his objective—disproving the opponent's allegations—has been successful. And YHWH is still attempting to obtain the second part of his objective by compelling the opponent to acknowledge Job's righteousness. Before he has given the opponent a chance to respond, declaring that he had achieved "no benefit" is premature. Note also that if YHWH had decided to afflict Job in order to learn for himself Job's motivations and assuage doubts caused by the opponent's allegations, then his description of Job maintaining his blamelessness would suggest he had received the confirmation he sought. This may be why many scholars interpret חִנָּם here to mean "without cause," in which YHWH is admitting that there was no good reason to afflict Job. But as discussed above, such a reading conflicts with the context, in which YHWH has given no indication that he is interested in that type of concern when it comes to afflicting Job. Other scholars have suggested that YHWH is asserting that the decision to afflict Job was without benefit because he didn't learn anything new, see for example Jones, "Job," 240. But if YHWH was indeed doubting Job, then he got confirmation, and if he wasn't doubting Job, then it seems that could not have been the point of afflicting him.

[151] It is this fact that will animate Job's speeches throughout the dialogues.

YHWH's reaction to the opponent's second prediction provides further support for this view. Undeterred by the failure of his first prediction, the opponent responds to YHWH with a proverbial cliché by which he suggests that Job's fear of YHWH is still economically motivated: עור בעד עור וכל אשר לאיש יתן בעד נפשו "Skin for skin! All that a person has he will give in exchange for his life" (Job 2:4).[152] When confronted with the proof that his prediction was wrong, the opponent doubles down by claiming that Job simply wasn't afflicted enough. He asserts that while he has lost his possessions, Job still receives the compensation he values most: the preservation of his life. He then predicts that if YHWH harms the person and body of Job himself, afflicting "his bone" עצמו and "his flesh" בשרו, then Job will indeed curse YHWH to his face (Job 2:5).

The opponent's intransigence and YHWH's reaction to it is particularly illuminating because it indicates that the point of afflicting Job is not to provide new knowledge. The outcome of the first affliction of Job had definitively disproven the opponent's first prediction and shown, at least, that Job's righteousness was not purchased by material blessings. But this knowledge does not prompt either the opponent or YHWH to do or say anything differently. The opponent does not acknowledge his error, nor does he account for Job's righteousness in the face of losing all his wealth and his ten children. Instead, he issues a new prediction that moves the goalposts: Job may not curse God when losing all his possessions—even though that was the original claim—but he will curse God if he loses his good health.

At the same time, the demonstration of Job's righteousness does not change what YHWH does when he talks to the opponent the second time. He repeats his leading questions from the first conversation nearly verbatim. And when the opponent issues his new prediction, YHWH

[152] On the economic connotations of this cliché, see Clines, *Job*, 43.

responds by allowing him to afflict Job's person. This supports the view that the affliction of Job was for the opponent's benefit all along. YHWH has made it clear that he has no doubts about Job's righteousness. He began this very conversation by declaring that the outcome of the first afflictions disproved the opponent's allegations. Allowing Job to be afflicted again will not provide any new information to YHWH. It is the opponent who has raised questions regarding Job's righteousness. It is the opponent who has described a means to demonstrate Job's righteousness. It is the opponent for whom the demonstration is conducted.

Why would YHWH be so determined to demonstrate Job's righteousness to the opponent that he is willing to afflict Job, in a reversal of his prior administration of Job's fortunes? Twice YHWH had prompted the opponent to acknowledge Job's righteousness. And twice, the opponent had avoided doing so by making allegations regarding the motivations for Job's righteousness. By allowing the opponent to afflict Job in a test that YHWH knew would disprove the allegations, YHWH sought to remove the opponent's ability to deflect and force him to answer the original question posed by YHWH, and, ultimately, to acknowledge Job's righteousness. In other words, YHWH was never particularly interested in the outcome of afflicting Job for its own sake. He was just trying to get the opponent to stop talking about Job's motivations.

The best explanation for YHWH's words and actions is that he afflicted Job to demonstrate that Job's righteousness was self-interested to the opponent so that he could no longer respond to questions about Job's righteousness by bringing up his motivations. By doing so, YHWH hoped that the opponent would be forced to respond to YHWH's attempts to compel him to acknowledge Job's righteousness. That this is important to YHWH is clear from the lengths to which he is willing to go. YHWH is willing to reverse the fortunes of the mortal Job in

order to demonstrate something to the opponent. When the opponent refuses to acknowledge that his allegations had been disproven and changes his claims, YHWH is willing to go even further, telling the opponent that he can afflict Job in any way except for taking his life. He does not hesitate to afflict Job either the first or the second time because he hopes that doing so will help secure the sought-after acknowledgment by demonstrating Job's righteousness to the opponent.

YHWH's behavior in the opening scenes of *Job* is just one of several examples in the Hebrew Bible in which the deity deviates from his previous decisions about blessing or afflicting specific human beings because he wants to demonstrate something to a third party. In Exodus 32, after the Israelites build and worship the golden calf at Horeb, YHWH announces to Moses that he intends to destroy the sinful Israelites. But when Moses points out to YHWH that this will damage his reputation among the Egyptians, YHWH relents and spares the people so that the Egyptians will know that he did not bring his people out from Egypt to kill them (Exod 32:1–14). In Numbers 14, after the scouts' negative report leads the people to plan to choose a new leader and return to Egypt, YHWH tells Moses that he will afflict and disinherit them. But again, Moses points out that this course of action will lead the Egyptians and the inhabitants of Canaan to believe that YHWH had insufficient power to bring his people into the land he promised them. When warned of the threat to his reputation, YHWH changes his plan and spares the people. (Num 14:1b, 4, 11–25).[153] And in the poem in Deuteronomy 32:1–43, YHWH declares that he would have destroyed his unfaithful people in their entirety but chose not to in order to prevent their adversaries from thinking that it was by their own power that they destroyed the Israelites.

[153] Each of these texts are discussed at greater length in David A. Glatt-Gilad, "Yahweh's Honor at Stake: A Divine Conundrum," *JSOT* 26.4 (2002): 63–74. Note also Joshua 7:7–12, in which Joshua employs a similar rationale, appealing to YHWH's concern for his reputation in an attempt to persuade YHWH to deliver victory to the Israelites in battle, albeit in this case YHWH requires the Israelites to go through a ritual of penitence before helping them.

He announces that he will change his treatment of his people when other people question the existence of their gods (Deut 32:26–27; 36–37). In all three cases, YHWH deviates from his original plan of action to demonstrate something about his power and care for his people to a third party, usually his people's enemies.

The Hebrew Bible contains several other references to YHWH sparing wicked individuals or groups of Israelites, in whole or in part, for the sake of his reputation or his glorification.[154] But YHWH does not only manipulate human fortunes positively. There are also references to YHWH working to improve his reputation by causing harm to individuals, even when those individuals have not done anything to cause such afflictions. In the priestly Exodus narrative, YHWH prolongs the captivity of his people and brings great suffering upon the Egyptians by repeatedly hardening Pharoah's heart so he will not let the Israelites go (see Exod 7:3; 9:12; 10:1; 10:20; 10:27; 11:10; and 14:8). This suffering is not related to sin, at least not directly, but rather is a result of YHWH's desire for the Egyptians to recognize his identity and power (Exod 7:4–5).[155] Another example is found in Ezekiel 24. YHWH announces to Ezekiel that he is going to kill his wife and forbids Ezekiel from mourning or expressing any sorrow. YHWH brings about the death of Ezekiel's wife as part of the enactment of a prophecy to the Israelites about the destruction of the temple and of Judah and a commandment for how the people are to react (Ezek 24:15–25). There is no indication that Ezekiel's wife was sinful or disobedient. Instead, YHWH brings about the death of an innocent person to communicate his

[154] See Isa 43:25; 48:9; and Ezek 14:21–23.

[155] See also Jeffrey Stackert, "Why Does the Plague of Darkness Last for Three Days? Source Ascription and Literary Motif in Exodus 10:21-23, 27," *VT* 61.4 (2011): 657–76, here 659; and Moshe Greenberg, "The Redaction of the Plague Narrative in Exodus," in *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. Hans Goedicke (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 243–52, here 248.

plans and his commandments to a third party, the Israelites.[156] In each case, YHWH changes the blessed or afflicted status of human beings with the intent of demonstrating some truth to a third party.[157]

The depiction of YHWH in the opening scenes of *Job* need not be identical to the depiction of YHWH in other biblical texts, particularly when these other texts are of varying provenance and display the interests of numerous authors and editors writing for disparate purposes. But these texts do show that such an idea was present in the literary milieu in which biblical texts, including *Job*, were produced. This is significant because, as discussed in the previous chapter, one of the tools used to construct characters is "inferences based on information which is not associated with the character by the text itself but through reference to historically and culturally variable real-world conventions."[158] This is the case even when readers are aware that a given narrative is not meant to coexist in the same narrative world as other works.[159] It is not possible to reconstruct the exact historical context in which ancient readers of *Job* existed, nor the exact content of the literary materials that influenced them. But the fact that there are numerous biblical texts in which YHWH deviates from his previous

[156] A less clear example is found in Micaiah's vision of the divine council that tells of YHWH plans to use false prophecies to entice Ahab to march to a battle that will result in disaster (1 Kgs 22:20–23). This is an example of YHWH actively bringing harm to human beings that is not labeled as a direct result of sin, but Ahab had been condemned for sinful behavior, so he cannot be said to be innocent in the same way as Ezekiel's wife or even Pharoah and the Egyptians. See also other cases of YHWH's deceit to bring about a particular outcome, such as Ezek 14:9.
[157] This phenomenon is presented as a hypothetical in Deut 13:2–6. Moses commands the people to react to a hypothetical situation in which YHWH fulfills the sign given by a prophet who directs the people to worship other gods in order to test the people.
[158] Fotis Jannidis, "Character," in *Handbook of Narratology*, ed. Peter Huhn (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 14–29, here 22.
[159] To give a modern example, someone viewing a recent film about Wonder Woman will draw upon the culturally-variable real world information that they have about Wonder Woman, which includes past depictions of the character, even if they are aware that this depiction of Wonder Woman is not directly related to past depictions.

decisions about whether to bless or afflict human beings in order to demonstrate something to a third party suggests that it is possible that readers of *Job* would interpret YHWH's decision to afflict Job to have similar motivations.

The evidence of the opening scenes supports the view that YHWH's motivation was to compel the opponent to acknowledge Job's righteousness. YHWH's actions and words show that he was focused on the opponent's perception of Job's righteousness. That was why he initiated the conversation and brought up Job, and that was why he agreed to establish the circumstances necessary to disprove the opponent's predictions about Job both times.

This interpretation also explains more elements of the text than the claim that YHWH sought knowledge about Job's motivations for himself, which leaves several questions unanswered. If YHWH was seeking information about Job for his own benefit, why did he initiate the conversation with the opponent and ask him about Job in the first place? The answer would perhaps be clearer if the opponent were a prosecuting attorney or had some role involving accusation, but since the text depicts the opponent only as a divine being who is characterized as an opponent, no such answer is apparent. Even more, if YHWH's doubts arose in response to the opponent's initial prediction that losing everything he had would cause Job to curse YHWH to his face, why had he already asked the opponent if he had directed his attention to Job in the first place? If YHWH was doubting Job's righteousness beforehand, why ask this anonymous divine being about it? On the other hand, the answers are clear in light of the understanding that YHWH was seeking to compel the opponent to acknowledge Job's righteousness. He started a conversation and brought up Job because that presented a clear path to his desired outcome.

If Job's reaction to his affliction had assuaged YHWH's doubts or provided the deity some desired information, then YHWH might have expressed satisfaction with Job's behavior

after the first or second affliction and Job's refusal to curse the deity to his face. Yet there is no trace of any approval or satisfaction by the deity in these scenes. This omission is explained if YHWH had not yet accomplished his objective: he is waiting to feel or express satisfaction until the opponent has acknowledged Job's righteousness. And because the function of these scenes and the character of the opponent is to illuminate YHWH's character, such a depiction is unnecessary. All that needs to be communicated is that YHWH seeks the acknowledgement.

If YHWH were to doubt Job, it is not clear how an anonymous divine being would either have such clear insight into YHWH's doubts such that he can articulate them, or to be able to create doubt in a previously untroubled YHWH such that he accepts the proposed test in hopes of resolving those doubts. This problem may be part of the motivation to see the opponent as an extension of YHWH, but above I argued why such a view is unsupported. This problem is eliminated when it is understood that YHWH is not doubting Job and the opponent's allegations are unfounded and irrelevant to what YHWH is most interested in.

In addition, this interpretation provides an explanation for the nearly verbatim repetition of the beginning of the first celestial scene in the beginning of the second and the lack of any reference to the first conversation by either the narrator or the characters. If YHWH were seeking information to resolve his doubts about Job, it is not clear why he would again ask the opponent from where he had come. But if the narrator is demonstrating the depth of YHWH's investment in his reputation by showing the deity solicit the opponent's acknowledgment of Job's righteousness, the lack of reference to the first conversation by character or narrator functions on two levels. First, the banal repetition of the opening pleasantries illustrates YHWH's lack of emotion and his steadfastness in pursuing his singular objective. That YHWH is not troubled by the fate of Job, his children, and the others caught up in the opponent's destruction demonstrate

the single-minded focus upon his reputation that is his defining character trait. Fixed on his attempt to elevate that reputation by compelling the opponent's acknowledgement of Job's righteousness, YHWH repeats himself because he is employing the same strategy and only refers to the results of Job's affliction to compel the opponent to relent and provide the desired answer. Similarly, the narrator does not refer to the first conversation when introducing the second because it would draw the focus of the narrative to the events and Job's fate, when the actual function of the scene is to deepen the characterization of YHWH.

Finally, if YHWH was seeking confirmation of his own doubts about Job, why would he be so fickle about what was necessary to provide that confirmation? After Job responds to the loss of his possessions and his children by blessing YHWH's name, YHWH tells the opponent that Job has maintained his blamelessness and repeats his characterization of Job as righteous beyond comparison. Why would he seemingly accept Job's response as confirmation that his righteousness was disinterested only to immediately abandon that position when the opponent moves the goalposts and claims that they just didn't afflict Job enough? This problem may be why some have seen the YHWH of the opening scenes as fickle and easily manipulated. On the other hand, YHWH's behavior makes better sense if his objective wasn't to change his own mind but that of the opponent. He was seeking to provide evidence that would compel the opponent to admit his allegations had been disproven.

Job's Righteousness Demonstrates YHWH's Glory

One question that remains is why the opponent's acknowledgment of Job's righteousness is so important to YHWH. The text does not provide an explicit explanation. I argue that YHWH acts in the belief that Job's righteousness demonstrates YHWH's glory. The acknowledgment of

Job's righteousness by other beings elevates YHWH's reputation, further increasing his glory. In the opening scenes, it is in pursuit of the elevation of his reputation and glory that YHWH seeks to compel the opponent to acknowledge Job's righteousness.

The elevation of their reputation and aggrandizement is a motivation commonly attributed to deities throughout the ancient Near East. Various deities were characterized as being interested in their honor and the recognition of their status by others. Karel van der Toorn has discussed this in the case of the characterization of deities in Babylonian texts:

> Did the Babylonians really think the gods could be moved to compassion by such crude appeals to their sense of honour and self-interest? Indeed it would seem they did. ...It must be added that honour and prestige were vital concerns in the Babylonian civilization; the gods, inhabited by preoccupations much like those of their human worshippers, attached inordinate value to their public status and acted with a view to its promotion. When humans alluded to the divine concern for glory, they merely played upon feelings they considered universal.[160]

Numerous biblical texts depict YHWH to be concerned with honor, prestige, and reputation. As I state above, the depiction of other deities and even of YHWH in other biblical texts cannot be used to prove how he is depicted in *Job*, but such depictions can illuminate possible background knowledge that the earliest readers of *Job* might have drawn upon. It is for this purpose that I survey the depiction of YHWH as concerned about his reputation in the Hebrew Bible.

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[160] Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life*, Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 140. For a treatment of the importance of honor and shame in the covenantal formulations of the Hebrew Bible, see Saul M. Olyan, "Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and Its Environment," *JBL* 115.2 (1996): 201–18.

The idea that YHWH's actions are motivated by his desire for other beings to recognize and acknowledge his place at the top of the hierarchy of creation appears in a wide range of biblical texts.[161] Individuals appealing to YHWH for forgiveness, protection, or other blessings frequently attempt to persuade YHWH to help them by claiming that it will benefit his reputation and increase his honor.[162] Concern for his own reputation is regularly cited as the motivation for how YHWH treats his own people in texts including but not limited to Deuteronomy 28, 2 Samuel 7, various psalms, and Ezekiel.[163]

In biblical texts, YHWH is interested in his reputation not only among his covenant people. He is frequently shown to be interested in his reputation among the other peoples of the earth.[164] David Glatt-Gilad shows that many of the appeals to the deity as well as his own proclamations show interest in YHWH's reputation among his and Israel's adversaries.[165] In fact, several of the examples of YHWH's changing the fortunes of a person or group of people depict YHWH as motivated to demonstrate his greatness to and elevate his reputation in the eyes of that

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[161] See for example the articulation of this principle in 1 Sam 12:22; Psa 23:3; 31:4; 106:8; Isa 43:25. Note that the noun שֵׁם commonly refers not just to a proper name but to an individual's reputation, see *HALOT*, s.v. "שֵׁם." For an extended illustration of how normative worship practices demonstrate the hierarchy and the relative positions of the deity and the worshipper in that hierarchy, see David A. Lambert, *How Repentance Became Biblical* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[162] See Josh 7:9; 1 Kgs 8:60; Isa 43:25; Jer 14:7, 21; Psa 25:11; 40:4; 79:9; 143:11; and Dan 9:19. For an excellent overview and discussion of this issue, see Glatt-Gilad, "Yahweh's Honor at Stake: A Divine Conundrum."

[163] For Deuteronomy 28 and 2 Samuel 7, see James Nicholas Jumper, "Honor and Shame in the Deuteronomic Covenant and the Deuteronomistic Presentation of the Davidic Covenant" (Harvard University, PhD diss., 2013), For the psalms see Leonard P. Maré, "Honour and Shame in Psalm 44," *Scriptura: Journal for Biblical, Theological and Contextual Hermeneutics* 113 (2014): art. 1, pp. 1–12 and Jerry Hwang, "'How Long Will My Glory Be Reproach?' Honour and Shame in Old Testament Lament Traditions," *OTE* 30.3 (2017): 684–706. For Ezekiel see Ezek 20:9, 22, 44;36:22; 38:16; 39:7, and Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 48.

[164] See Deut 28:10; Psa 86:9; and 99:2–3.

[165] Glatt-Gilad, "Yahweh's Honor at Stake: A Divine Conundrum."

third party. In multiple texts, YHWH deviates from his previous decision about how to bless or afflict human beings because he wishes to elevate his reputation in the eyes of the Egyptians, or the Canaanites, or the enemies of the Israelites (Exod 32:1–14; Numbers 14:1b, 4, 11–25; Deut 32:26–27, 36–37; Exod 7:4–5). Psalm 29 attests to the idea that YHWH's interest in his reputation and praise extends beyond the mortal world to other divine beings.

Throughout these texts, YHWH cares about his reputation because of how it contributes to his primary concern: the maximization of his own glorification. When other beings accurately acknowledge his power, knowledge, and honor, they acknowledge his place at the top of the hierarchy and their relative inferiority. Several biblical passages depict a strong relationship between YHWH's reputation and his glory. In David's speech in 1 Chr 16, he commands the people to give to YHWH "the glory of his reputation" כבוד שמו (vv. 28–29). YHWH equates his reputation and his glory in an oracle in Isa 42:8. In another oracle in Isa 48:9–11, YHWH tells the sinful Israelites that he refrains from destroying them for the sake of his own reputation and his own glory, which appear in parallel.

YHWH wants the opponent to acknowledge Job's righteousness because righteous worshippers indicate the greatness of a deity. As Michael Fox has stated: "Yahweh radiates pride in his faithful. Indeed his own honor is at stake, for what kind of a king would he be without loyalists?"[166] Job's unparalleled devotion to YHWH is an indication of YHWH's unparalleled greatness. If the opponent were to acknowledge such righteousness, he would be acknowledging the greatness of YHWH, thereby elevating YHWH's reputation.

[166] Fox, "Reading the Tale of Job (Job 1,1–2,13 + 42,7–17)," 148. See also Habel's description of YHWH's pride and boasting about Job, Habel, *The Book of Job*, 84–85.

Here the fuller significance of the opponent's character as an anonymous divine being who is subservient yet autonomous becomes apparent. It is not particularly important to YHWH who the opponent is; it is important only that he is a being whose autonomy makes him capable of having an opinion that will contribute to or detract from YHWH's reputation. No matter the precise identity of the opponent in the story of *Job*, YHWH's interest in his reputation in the eyes of the opponent is a manifestation of his interest in his reputation in general.

YHWH is willing to afflict Job without justification because to him Job, like other human beings, is merely an instrument to be used for YHWH's own ends. In an oracle in Isaiah, YHWH states that he formed and created the people who are called by his name for his glory (Isa 43:6–7). The fortunes of human beings are only relevant insofar as they fit into YHWH's administration of the world intended to promote his glory. Furthermore, all the deity's actions are intended to elevate his glory. Since YHWH's reputation has a significant impact upon his glory, the deity's actions can be interpreted as efforts to elevate his reputation.[167]

This interpretation also illuminates why YHWH moves to discredit the opponent's allegations against Job so decisively despite giving no indication that he harbors his own doubts. When the opponent responds to YHWH's statements about Job's righteousness with this allegation he implies that self-interested righteousness contributes less to the greatness of YHWH.[168] This appears to be a matter of simple cause and effect. If the cause of Job's

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[167] Thus the statement in Ecclesiastes 3:14, that God has made it so that [human beings] fear him.

[168] This is a theological innovation that is unique to *Job*. The idea that YHWH cares about the internal motivations leading to righteous behavior is, as far as I can tell, not found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible or anywhere else in the ancient Near East. Yet *Job* introduces it briefly and neither YHWH nor the opponent expand upon it.

The concept of inner motivation and self-interest is certainly present in the Hebrew Bible. Some of the prophetic writings preserve accusations that some prophets only practice to earn money (see the confrontation between Amos and Amaziah in Amos 7:10–17 and Micah 3:5). There are a number of legal texts that draw upon the concept of intent in determining the nature

righteousness is the benefits he receives from YHWH, then whatever it indicates is about the greatness of those benefits. But if the sole cause of Job's righteousness is the greatness of YHWH, then it indicates that YHWH is very great indeed.[169] Habel described this allegation as one in which the opponent "strikes at the point where Yahweh is most vulnerable; do people only love and praise him because he rewards them with blessings?"[170] Habel suggested that YHWH is troubled by this possibility. But it appears that YHWH is more concerned about the negative impact that the opponent's belief that Job's righteousness is self-interested would have on his reputation and his glory. While YHWH himself is confident about Job's motivations, he takes the opponent's allegations seriously because he cares about the way the opponent's allegations might threaten his reputation, no matter that the allegations were false.

On a practical level, the opponent wielded the allegations as a weapon that allowed him to deflect YHWH's questions without doing what YHWH was trying to compel him to do. This raises the possibility that others might wield such allegations in a similar way.[171] On a second level, by raising the question of motivations and its implications, the opponent has created pressure for YHWH to demonstrate that Job is righteous without any economic exchange or benefit and that Job worships YHWH just because the deity is great. If YHWH can demonstrate

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of crimes and their punishment. But the idea that worship of a deity is enhanced or denigrated by the worshipper's motivation is not found in the Hebrew Bible outside of *Job*. The closest to it is the dismissal of sacrifices and other ritual practices found in some of the latter prophets but in those texts the concern is not the motivation for worship but rather incomplete obedience in the form of fulfilling some commandments but not others (i.e. Amos 5:21–25, Isa 1:11–14; Jeremiah 7:21–24; Micah 6:6–8).

[169] To illustrate, consider the difference in status conferred upon someone who must pay for social companionship compared to someone is able to secure such companionship—without any economic exchange—solely upon the basis of their personal attributes.

[170] Habel, *The Book of Job*, 84–85.

[171] I argue in the following chapters that YHWH comes to regard the claims of the three friends, all of whom explicitly advocate for a theology in which YHWH rewards the righteous and afflicts the wicked, as a threat to his reputation and takes steps to disprove that notion to them.

to the opponent that Job's righteousness is disinterested, the opponent would have to acknowledge that YHWH is indeed truly great, elevating YHWH's reputation and contributing to his glory. The view that YHWH seeks to compel the opponent to acknowledge Job's righteousness because doing so would elevate his reputation and glory provides the best explanation for this and the other elements of the opening scenes.[172]

THE FUNCTION OF THE OPPONENT AND THE CONTINUITY OF THE PLOT

The plot of the opening scenes (Job 1–2) is determined by the opponent and his allegations. Consequently, some scholars have argued that the complete absence of the opponent from the rest of *Job*, in which he does not appear nor is he mentioned, is a plot discontinuity that creates incoherence.[173] Chavel has noted that the opponent's absence leaves many questions unanswered: "Has the *saṭan* been banished, or is this a job well done? Does the *saṭan* feel ashamed; does he claim everyone is a winner; or does he scheme against Job in some other way? The narrator provides the backstory—the divine council and the system test—but does not return to it."[174] Chavel described this as the narrator gapping "boldly" and suggested that such fractures "threaten the coherence and integrity of the story as a whole."[175] In a related vein, Syring has

[172] Thus, while my claim is similar to the option articulated by Whybray (see above) that YHWH acts "to salvage his dignity and reputation for omniscience" in that YHWH is concerned about his reputation, I differ because I argue that it is not what others think about YHWH's knowledge that is of concern, it is how what others think about Job's motivations affects YHWH's glory. In other words, YHWH was not concerned about the substance of the opponent's allegations, but about their impacts.

[173] For the claim that it is inconsistent for a character of the opponent's significance not to appear outside the opening scenes, see Bruce Zuckerman, *Job the Silent: A Study in Historical Counterpoint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 25–28; and Katharine J. Dell, *Job: Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 6–7.

[174] Chavel, "Knowledge of the Lord," 73.

[175] Chavel, "Knowledge of the Lord," 73–74.

argued that the arguments of Job's interlocutors do not make sense in a story where the reason for Job's suffering has been revealed in the scenes in which the opponent appeared.[176]

Others have argued that the absence of the opponent does not create discontinuity. Andersen has said: "It is presumed that a third and final interview in the divine council is needed to round things off, and to prove that Yahweh was correct after all. But we have no right to tell the author how he should end his story."[177] Others, such as Pope, have argued that the opponent "completed his role in the Prologue."[178] Hartley argued that by declaring that the opponent provoked him against Job, "YHWH accepted full responsibility for Job's plight," thus making it clear that he is the only one who had power to afflict Job and the only one who will ultimately be able to deliver him. This, according to Hartley, "explains why the Satan does not reappear in the epilogue. Yahweh himself feels obliged to resolve the conflict for Job."[179]

This summary of the state of the question suggests that the resolution depends upon two issues: (1) under what circumstances the absence of a previously appearing character creates discontinuity, and (2) whether the function of the character is completed within the opening scenes. I argue that the absence of the opponent after his final appearance does not create plot discontinuity because he had fulfilled his function in the narrative: illustrating the character of YHWH.

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[176] Wolf-Dieter Syring, *Hiob und sein Anwalt*, BZAW 336 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 104. For another version of for the claim that it is inconsistent for the opening scenes to explicitly indicate that the opponent is the cause of Job's suffering when the poetry requires the cause to be unspecified, see Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob*, VII.
[177] Andersen, *Job*, 45–6. See also Driver and Gray, *Commentary on the Book of Job*, 1: liii.
[178] Pope, *Job*, XXVIII.
[179] Hartley, *Job*, 80.

Character and Plot Continuity in Hebrew Narratives

The first question relevant to whether the absence of opponent after the opening scenes creates plot discontinuity is: Does the absence of characters that have fulfilled their function in the narrative create discontinuity in *Job*? An examination of biblical texts suggests that there is no basis for arguing that the absence of minor characters that had previously appeared in a narrative creates plot discontinuity.[180]

Uriel Simon has provided several examples in his study of minor characters in biblical narrative. Simon observed that in the account of Michal's restoration to David in 2 Sam 3:15–16, she disappears from the narrative in the middle of the journey by which she is brought to the king: "the narrator abandons Michal at Bahurim near Jerusalem and leaves the reader to assume that she was brought to Hebron where she met David." Simon argued that the feelings of the woman (and those of David) are omitted because they "would only blur the focus of the story."[181] Simon also pointed out the absence of such minor but significant characters as the servant of Elijah when the prophet goes to Jezreel in 1 Kings 18 and Isaac when Abraham and the two young servants return home in Genesis 22.[182] Another example is Zipporah, who is absent after the narratorial note that Jethro brought her and her sons to Moses in Exodus 18. The narrative contains no mention of her reunion with Moses, nor is she mentioned afterwards. Bathsheba plays a crucial role in the plot of 2 Samuel 11–12, but after giving birth to Solomon she is completely absent from the narrative. She reappears in 1 Kings 1–2, where she again plays a crucial role in Solomon's succession and in the ultimate death of Adonijah, only to disappear

[180] Adele Reinhartz refers to these characters as "the bit players" and states that "many of them carry out a single act and then disappear." Reinhartz, *"Why Ask My Name?"* 19.
[181] Simon, "Minor Characters in Biblical Narrative," 12.
[182] Simon, "Minor Characters in Biblical Narrative," 12.

again. After Solomon responds to her request that Abishag be given to Adonijah, the narrative reveals nothing about her reaction, what Solomon thought or did about her involvement, or how she was affected. To this list can be added others who, as Reinhartz pointed out in her study of anonymous characters, often "carry out a single act and then disappear."[183]

The appearance and then disappearance of characters is an example of what Kaufmann called the elliptical character of the biblical narrative.[184] In a similar vein, Meir Sternberg has written on how the Hebrew Bible exemplifies how "the literary work consists of bits and fragments to be linked and pierced together in the process of reading: it establishes a system of gaps that must be filled in."[185] Simon described the elliptical quality as the "distinctive tendency of the biblical narrators to skip a stage in the plot and to let the reader fill in the gap" and said, "this elliptical quality is especially evident in the appearance and disappearance of minor characters from the narrative."[186] In short, the disappearance of a character does not in and of itself create discontinuity in the plot of a biblical narrative.

The Function of the Opponent in the narrative of *Job*

While the opponent's allegations dictate the action of the opening scenes and are the impetus for the action of the rest of *Job*, the centrality of YHWH as a character in the opening scenes of *Job,* in other biblical texts, and in the culture from which this text emerged, suggests that YHWH is the major character and the opponent is a minor character. In the opening scenes, the opponent's function is defined (in the literal sense of the word) by his opposition to YHWH. This indicates

[183] Reinhartz, *"Why Ask My Name?"*, 19.
[184] Yeḥezkel Kaufmann, *ספר יהושע* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1959), 74 [Hebrew].
[185] Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative,* 186. See especially chapter six, entitled "Gaps, Ambiguity, and the Reading Process."
[186] Simon, "Minor Characters in Biblical Narrative," 13.

that the function of the opponent in the narrative is not determined by his own interests and actions but by how he affects the actions and depiction of the major character.

The opponent's opposition to YHWH takes the form of refusing to acknowledge Job's righteousness and instead changing the subject from what YHWH originally raised by alleging that Job's righteousness is self-interested and predicting that Job would curse YHWH if afflicted. Meanwhile, the major character, YHWH, displays a lack of concern regarding their substance and only reacts to them as he continues to pursue his original objectives. This indicates that the function of the opponent is not related to the substance of the allegations that he makes, but in how they affect the actions and depiction of YHWH. In other words, the opponent's function is not to determine whether Job's righteousness is self-interested or disinterested, but to contribute to the advancement of the plot and the characterization of YHWH.[187]

The opponent completes both functions in the opening scenes. How he advances the plot is clear: his allegations result in YHWH's decision to afflict Job, the events of which drive the plot of the rest of the opening scenes, the poetic dialogues, and the conclusion. The opponent contributes to the characterization of YHWH by provoking him into action, revealing his priorities: the elevation of his reputation and aggrandizement. This function is completed within the opening scenes. Not in one but in multiple ways do YHWH's interactions with the opponent reveal that he seeks the elevation of his reputation.[188] Twice he asks the opponent a question that

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[187] This aligns with the two most common functions of minor characters in biblical narrative, see discussion above, including Simon, "Minor Characters in Biblical Narrative," 16–18; and Reinhartz, *"Why Ask My Name?"* 19–22, and Chike, "Marginal Characters: A Strategy of Persuasion in 1–2 Samuel," 73, who demonstrated how marginal characters in Samuel often "serve as reflections of the narrator's disposition toward and evaluation of the complex characters of Saul and David."

[188] The opponent's status as an anonymous divine opponent enables him to fulfill that narrative function: he is able to express an opinion that impacts YHWH's reputation and his opposition prompts YHWH's actions.

facilitates a response in which the opponent would acknowledge Job's righteousness. Twice he deviates from his previously determined administration of human fortunes in pursuit of the same goal. In determining the function of the character, the distinction between YHWH's motivations and what the narrative does is significant. While YHWH's objective was compelling the opponent's acknowledgment, an outcome that is not recorded, the function of the opponent within the narrative was illuminating how important that acknowledgment was to YHWH. That function is completed.

The opponent never reappears after Job disproves the opponent's allegations for the second time. It is not clear that a third appearance in which the opponent acknowledges his failed predictions and acknowledges Job's righteousness would be necessary for the continuity of the plot, a position that Driver and Gray described as "unreasonable."[189] While such a scene might be compelling, Andersen was correct that it is not the place of the scholar to complain that the story would be better in another telling. If the opponent's function was to give YHWH an

[189] See Driver and Gray, *Commentary on the Book of Job*, 1:liii: "Thus Job left at last only with bare life, without which he could be no subject of testing, and his character which had been called in question, but which he had maintained intact under the last test that the Satan could suggest, by these words proves his disinterested attachment to Yahweh, that he had not served Him for what He gave, and thus finally and completely puts the Satan in the wrong, and that so obviously that it is unreasonable, as some have done, to complain that the writer has not depicted Yahweh pressing home the Satan's discomfiture, whether by a third scene in heaven, or in the Epilogue."

Even if the function of the opponent was to demonstrate whether Job's righteousness was self-interested, that too would be fulfilled in the opening scenes because the narrator leaves no question that the opponent's predictions are definitively disproven. The opponent makes allegations about Job and then proposes creating circumstances in which Job will confirm those allegations by engaging in particular behaviors. YHWH allows the opponent to afflict Job in order to create those circumstances, but Job does not behave in accordance with the opponent's predictions. In fact, Job does the opposite, worshipping and blessing YHWH's name and calling his wife foolish when she encourages him to curse God (Job 1:21; 2:9). In both cases, the narrator even explicitly makes clear that Job does not fulfill the opponent's predictions, stating "In all this, Job did not sin and he did not give disrespect to God" and then again "In all this, Job did not sin with his lips." (Job 1:22; 2:10)

opportunity to gloat in triumph, this would create discontinuity. But there is no discontinuity because the function of the opponent in the opening scenes is to reveal YHWH's character. The opponent causes YHWH to reveal that he prioritizes the elevation of his reputation so highly that he is willing to afflict humans without justification in pursuit of that goal.

CONCLUSION

My interpretation of the opening scenes of *Job* demonstrates that YHWH is defined by his overwhelming concern for his reputation, so much so that he is willing to manipulate human fortunes and afflict Job in order to elevate that reputation. While the opponent questions whether blessings motivate Job's behavior, YHWH is consistently focused on compelling the opponent to acknowledge Job's righteousness, thereby elevating YHWH's reputation and glory. The opponent's allegations pose a threat to YHWH's reputation because the opponent uses them to deflect from acknowledging Job's righteousness. YHWH afflicts Job to remove this threat and continue his efforts to compel the opponent's acknowledgment. The opponent, who is best understood to be an unnamed divine being, is defined by his opposition to YHWH's attempts to compel such an acknowledgment. Through this opposition the opponent completes his function in the opening scenes: causing YHWH to act in a way that reveals his motivations and his character.

This narrative analysis complicates scholarly claims that *Job* is incoherent. Demonstrating that the function of the opponent is fulfilled in the opening scenes indicates that his absence does not create a discontinuity in the plot. Further, my analysis shows that previous claims about the incoherent characterization of YHWH are based on an inaccurate understanding of the opening scenes. In Chapters Three and Four, I demonstrate that concern for his reputation

and willingness to change how he affects human beings for the sake of his reputation are depicted as character traits of YHWH in both the poetic dialogues and the prose conclusion. The characterization of YHWH as overwhelmingly concerned about his reputation is consistent throughout *Job*.

Chapter Three

Lamenting, Accusing, and Affirming God's Superiority:

The Characterization of Job and of YHWH in the Poetic Dialogues

The portion of *Job* often referred to as the poetic dialogues—spanning 3:1 through 42:6—is distinguished by its poetic form, the multiple cycles of speeches by Job, his interlocutors, and ultimately YHWH, and the examinations of various theological issues surrounding human suffering. Scholarly analyses have investigated a wide variety of issues ranging from its literary and aesthetic features,[1] identifications of its genre both in relation to legal texts[2] and to other

[1] Selected bibliography includes Laura Quick, "Behemoth's Penis, Yahweh's Might: Competing Bodies in the Book of Job," *JSOT* 46.3 (2022): 339–57; Lance R. Hawley, *Metaphor Competition in the Book of Job*, Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements 26 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018); Edward L. Greenstein, "Metaphors of Illness and Wellness in Job," in *"When the Morning Stars Sang": Essays in Honor of Choon Leong Seow on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Scott C. Jones and Christine Roy Yoder (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 39–50; and John E. Course, *Speech and Response: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Introductions to the Speeches of the Book of Job (Chaps. 4-24)*, CBQMS 25 (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1994).

[2] Carol A. Newsom, "The Invention of the Divine Courtroom in the Book of Job," in *The Divine Courtroom in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Ari Mermelstein and Shalom E. Holtz, BibInt 132 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 246–59; Avi Shveka and Pierre Van Hecke, "The Metaphor of Criminal Charge as a Paradigm for the Conflict between Job and His Friends," *ETL* 90.1 (2014): 99–119; F. Rachel Magdalene, *On the Scales of Righteousness: Neo-Babylonian Trial Law and the Book of Job* (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2007); Dariusz Iwański, *The Dynamics of Job's Intercession*, AnBib 161 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 2006), 182–200; Carol A. Newsom, "Job and His Friends: A Conflict of Moral Imaginations," *Int* 53 (1999): 239–53; Edward L. Greenstein, "A Forensic Understanding of the Speech from the Whirlwind," in *Texts, Temples, and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran*, ed. Michael V. Fox, Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, and Avi Hurvitz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 241–58; Catherine M. Chin, "Job and the Injustice of God: Implicit Arguments in Job 13:17-14:12," *JSOT* 19 (1994): 91–101; Bruce Zuckerman, *Job the Silent: A Study in Historical Counterpoint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 104–17; Sylvia Huberman Scholnick, "Poetry in the Courtroom: Job 38-41," in *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, ed. E. R. Follis (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987); "The Meaning of *mišpaṭ* in the Book of Job," *JBL* 101 (1982): 521–29; M. B. Dick, "The Legal Metaphor in Job

ancient Near Eastern texts that depict the speeches of an ostensibly righteous sufferer,[3] ethics and theology suggested by the text,[4] and more.[5] Particular attention has been focused on the history of the composition of the poetic dialogues, including the originality of the speeches of YHWH, the speeches of Elihu, and the wisdom poem in Job 28, the variations in the pattern of speeches, especially in the third cycle, and to the relationship between the poetic dialogues and the opening scenes and the conclusion, often called the "prose frame."[6]

31," *CBQ* 41 (1979): 37–50; "Job 31: A Form-Critical Study" (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1977); Sylvia Huberman Scholnick, "Lawsuit Drama in the Book of Job" (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1975); and J. J. M. Roberts, "Job's Summons to Yahweh," *ResQ* 16 (1973): 159–65.

[3] For introductions to this topic, see C. L. Seow, *Job 1-21: Interpretation and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 51–56; Moshe Weinfeld, "Job and Its Mesopotamian Parallels," in *Text and Context: Old Testament and Semitic Studies for F. C. Fensham*, ed. W.T. Claassen, JSOTSup 48 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 217–26; and R. G. Albertson, "Job and Ancient Near Eastern Wisdom Literature," in *Scripture in Context II: More Essays on the Comparative Method*, ed. William W. Hallo, James C. Moyer, and Leo G. Perdue (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 215–30.

[4] Selected bibliography includes Patricia Vesely, *Friendship and Virtue Ethics in the Book of Job* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Kyle C. Dunham, *The Pious Sage in Job: Eliphaz in the Context of Wisdom Theodicy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016); Manfred Oeming and Konrad Schmid, *Job's Journey: Stations of Suffering,* Critical Studies in the Hebrew Bible 7 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), note that this is a revised translation of the authors' earlier work in German: Manfred Oeming and Konrad Schmid, *Hiobs Weg: Stationen von Menschen im Lied*, Biblisch-theologische Studien 45 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001); André LaCocque, "The Deconstruction of Job's Fundamentalism," *JBL* 126 (2007): 83–97; and Françoise Mies, *L'espérance de Job* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006).

[5] The volume of scholarship is immense. For bibliography see Seow, *Job 1-21*, 110–248; and David J. A. Clines, *Job*, WBC 17, 18A-18B (Dallas: Word Books, 1989–2011), 1258–1464.

[6] Among others, see Paul K. -K. Cho, "Job 2 and 42:7–10 as Narrative Bridge and Theological Pivot," *JBL* 136.4 (2017): 857–77; Michael V. Fox, "The Speaker in Job 28," in *"When the Morning Stars Sang": Essays in Honor of Choon Leong Seow on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Scott C. Jones and Christine Roy Yoder (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 21–38; Ragnar Andersen, "The Elihu Speeches: Their Place and Sense in the Book of Job," *Tyndale Bulletin* 66.1 (2015): 75–94; Ken Brown, *The Vision in Job 4 and Its Role in the Book*, FAT 2/75 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015); J. Vermeylen, *Metamorphoses: les rédactions successives du livre de Job*, BETL 276 (Leuven: Peeters, 2015); V. Philips Long, "On the Coherence of the Third Dialogic Cycle in the Book of Job," in *Studies on the Text and Versions of the Hebrew Bible in Honour of Robert Gordon*, ed. Geoffrey Khan and Diana Lipton, VTSup 149 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 113–25; Tanja Pilger, *Erziehung im Leiden: Komposition und Theologie der*

Scholars who have analyzed the poetic dialogues in relation to the coherence of *Job* have focused on three main issues. The first and most prominent is the perception that the characterization of Job differs between the poetic dialogues and the prose sections. The portrayal of Job's character in the poetic dialogues has been described to be impatient, bitter and angry, and critical of God. This is understood to be in stark contrast to Job's character in the prose sections, in which he appears to be patient, submissive and pious, and faithful to God.[7] Many scholars have argued that this contrast is too great for a single coherent character, concluding that

Elihureden in Hiob 32–37, FAT 2/49 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); Raik Heckl, *Hiob – Vom Gottesfürchitigen zum Repräsentaten Israels: Studien zur Buchwerdung des Hiobbuches und zu seinen Quellen*, FAT 70 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); Alison Lo, *Job 28 As Rhetoric: An Analysis of Job 28 in the Context of Job 22-31*, VTSup 97 (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Edward L. Greenstein, "The Poem of Wisdom in Job 28 in Its Conceptual and Literary Contexts," in *Job 28: Cognition in Context*, ed. Ellen van Wolde (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 253–80; Larry J. Waters, "The Authenticity of the Elihu Speeches in Job 32-37," *BSac* 156 (1999): 28–41; David Wolfers, *Deep Things out of Darkness: The Book of Job: Essays and a New English Translation* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995); Markus Witte, *Vom Leiden zur Lehre: Der dritte Redegang (Hiob 21-27) und die Redaktionsgeschichte der Hiobbuches*, BZAW 300 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994); Harald-Martin Wahl, *Der Gerechte Schöpfer: Eine Redaktions-und Theologiegeschichtliche Untersuchung der Elihureden, Hiob 32-37*, BZAW 207 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1993); Theresia Mende, *Durch Leiden zur Vollendung: Die Elihureden im Buch Ijob (Ijob 32-37)*, TThSt 49 (Trier: Paulinus, 1990).

[7] Among many others, see Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob: erklärt*, KHC 16 (Freiburg i.B.: Mohr, 1897), VII; D. Karl Budde, *Das Buch Hiob, übersetzt und erklärt*, HKAT 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1896), VIII; Marvin H. Pope, *Job*, AB 15 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), xxi; H. L. Ginsberg, "Job the Patient and Job the Impatient," in *Congress Volume Rome 1968*, VTSup 17 (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 88–111; Yair Hoffman, "The Relation between the Prologue and the Speech-Cycles in Job: A Reconsideration," *VT* 31.2 (1981): 160–70, here 163; Athalya Brenner, "Job the Pious? The Characterization of Job in the Narrative Framework of the Book," *JSOT* 13 (1989): 37–52; Zuckerman, *Job the Silent*, 14; Michael V. Fox, "Reading the Tale of Job (Job 1,1–2,13 + 42,7–17)," in *A Critical Engagement: Essays on the Hebrew Bible in Honour of J. Cheryl Exum*, ed. David J. A. Clines and Ellen van Wolde (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2012), 145–62, here 146–48; Peter Machinist, "The Question of Job," in *Open-Mindedness in the Bible. A Volume of Studies in Honour of Bob Becking*, ed. Marjo C. A. Korpel and Lester L. Grabbe, LHBOTS 616 (London: T&T Clark, 2015), 165–78, here 169; Zachary Margulies, "Oh That One Would Hear Me! The Dialogue of Job, Unanswered," *CBQ* 82 (2020): 582–604, here 586.

"the only connection between the two Jobs is the similarity in the name."[8] The contradictory characterization of Job remains the single greatest issue cited as evidence for the incoherence of the prose and poetry of *Job*.[9]

Scholars have also argued that the characterization of YHWH in the poetry contradicts his characterization in the prose.[10] Many have understood YHWH to be depicted in the dialogues as severe, distant, and so abstract that he is less a tangible, active personage and more a disappearing, disembodied force.[11] Scholars have argued that this is irreconcilable with the characterization of YHWH in the prose sections, in which his characterization as "anthropomorphic, popular, earthly" is indicated by his direct intervention in human affairs and his display of pride and boasting about Job.[12]

A final issue that has been raised is the absence of Job's wife. After appearing in the opening scenes and telling Job to "curse God and die" (Job 2:9), Job's wife does not appear again. Her absence is not explained or acknowledged. Some scholars have argued that this absence creates discontinuity, especially because the events that would have affected Job would

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[8] Morris Jastrow, *The Book of Job: Its Origin, Growth and Interpretation: Together with a New Translation, Based on a Revised Text* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1920), 39.

[9] In addition to many of those cited above, see also Robert Polzin, "Framework of the Book of Job," *Int* 28.2 (1974): 182–200; John Briggs Curtis, "On Job's Response to Yahweh," *JBL* 98 (1979): 497–511; Wolf-Dieter Syring, *Hiob und sein Anwalt: Die Prosatexte des Hiobbuches und ihre Rolle in seiner Redaktions- und Rezeptionsge- schichte*, BZAW 336 (New York: de Gruyter, 2004), 169; Vermeylen, *Metamorphoses: les rédactions successives du livre de Job*; Cho, "Job 2 and 42:7-10 as Narrative Bridge and Theological Pivot."

[10] See also discussion in Chapter Two.

[11] See Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob*, VIII; Jastrow, *The Book of Job*, 43–44; Hoffman, "The Relation between the Prologue and the Speech-Cycles in Job," 163–64. More recently, see Cho, "Job 2 and 42:7–10 as Narrative Bridge and Theological Pivot," here 857.

[12] See especially Hoffman, "The Relation between the Prologue and the Speech-Cycles in Job," 163–64; also Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob*, VIII; Jastrow, The Book of Job, 43–44.

have affected her as well.[13] While some scholars have dismissed this by claiming that the birth of ten children to Job in the conclusion implicitly depicts her continued presence, the lack of an explicit reference has been understood to be evidence of incoherence.[14] Even as interpretations of *Job* as a unified whole have increased in the past several decades,[15] these three issues continue to be cited as evidence of incoherence by scholarly analyses of *Job* that either take the incoherence of the poetic and prose material as their starting point or argue for it directly.[16]

As discussed in the introductory chapter, the coherence of a narrative text depends upon the possibility of creating a single, coherent mental model of the world of the story that the narrative represents. Therefore, the impact of each of the three issues upon the coherence of *Job* depends upon specific interpretations of the elements of the world depicted by *Job*. However,

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[13] Chavel refers to the disappearance of Job's wife as one of several "narrative gaps." See Chavel, "Knowledge of the Lord," 67, 73–76. See also Alan Cooper, "Reading and Misreading the Prologue to Job," *JSOT* 46 (1990): 67–79, here 67.

[14] For this explanation see Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 14 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 45–46; note that in addressing this issue Andersen acknowledged that some scholars point to the absence of Job's wife as a discontinuity that needs to be addressed.

[15] For example, Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary,* OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985); Clines, *Job*; Michael V. Fox, "The Meanings of the Book of Job," *JBL* 137.1 (2018): 7–18; and Seow, *Job 1-21*. While these scholars have understood *Job* as a unity, they have not made evaluating the coherence of the text or of the story as their primary objective. Their analyses of the coherence of Job, YHWH, and the other relevant issues do not go into the level of detail that I seek to attain in this study. I build upon (and sometimes diverge from) their work in making the extended case for coherence that is the main function of this dissertation.

[16] In the last twenty years, see for example J. van Oorschot, "Die Entstehung des Hiobbuches," in *Das Buch Hiob und seine Interpetationen*, ed. T. Kruger, ATANT 88 (Zurich: TVZ, 2007), 165–84; Heckl, *Hiob – Vom Gottesfürchitigen zum Repräsentaten Israels*, throughout but especially 2, 473–74; Paul Kang-Kul Cho, "The Integrity of Job 1 and 42:11-17," *CBQ* 76 (2014): 230–51; "Job 2 and 42:7–10 as Narrative Bridge and Theological Pivot," Vermeylen, *Metamorphoses: les rédactions successives du livre de Job*, 55–182; Michael Cernucan, "From Sorrow to Submission: Overlapping Narrative in Job's Journey from 2:8 to 2:10" (Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, PhD diss., 2016); Margulies, "Oh That One Would Hear Me! The Dialogue of Job, Unanswered." See also the overview of scholarship in Syring, *Hiob und sein Anwalt*, 25–49.

there are problems with the narrative interpretations that have formed the basis of the arguments outlined above.

The first problem is that coherence of character does not require uniformity of character. There is no doubt that Job's behavior and outlook varies throughout *Job*. But scholars have not adequately addressed the possibility that variation in the characterization of Job could be the result of character development rather than character incoherence. Is it possible for characters in biblical and ancient Near Eastern narrative to change throughout the course of a coherent narrative? If so, what kind of character change is acceptable, and what type of change creates incoherence? And what conditions in the plot or other aspects of the narrative can create change? Such questions need to be addressed in order to evaluate the coherence of Job.

The second problem is that the text cannot be neatly divided into two portions that have uniform and opposing characterization. There is significant continuity in the characterization of Job between the opening scenes and the first speech of the dialogues, as well as between Job's behavior in the prose and his final speech in the dialogues. At the same time, there is variation in how Job is characterized within the poetic dialogues themselves. The way that Job speaks in chapter 3 is very different from how he speaks in chapters 29–31, and both are quite different from how Job speaks in 42:1–6. In these three speeches Job expresses three very different attitudes towards God, differing attitudes that bear directly on the question of his depiction in the poetry and how it relates to his portrayal in the prose. It is not correct to say that the poetic dialogues present a single, uniform characterization of Job. Analyses of the characterization of Job must account for this variation.

Similarly, the claim that the characterization of YHWH is inconsistent is based on descriptions of the deity's character that are either too vague to be useful—such as Hoffman's

contrast of YHWH in the prose as "earthly" and in the poetry as "abstract"[17]—or are based on questionable interpretations of the passages by which YHWH is characterized. In the previous chapter I addressed the depiction of YHWH in the opening scenes and argued that the primary characteristic attributed to him is the prioritization of his reputation and glory above all else. Whether this is consistent with YHWH's characterization in the poetic dialogues depends upon the interpretation of the only passage that provides reliable information on the deity's character: his speech from the whirlwind.[18] But the obscure language and superficially enigmatic nature of YHWH's speech—in which he answers none of Job's questions directly—has led to varying interpretations of what YHWH said and the function of the speech. Many of the scholars who have argued for the incoherence of *Job* have not provided an interpretation of YHWH's words or why he speaks to Job at that point of the story that is sufficiently rigorous to support their arguments that YHWH's character is incoherent.

Finally, while the absence of Job's wife after the opening scenes is a feature of the plot that requires explanation, it does not on its own create incoherence. If Job were depicted in the poetic dialogues to be getting married for the first time, then the absence of Job's wife would create incoherence. But absence alone does not automatically create contradiction or inconsistency. As discussed in the previous chapter, the disappearance of a minor character does not create incoherence in the plot if that character's function has been fulfilled. Therefore, judging whether the absence of Job's wife in the dialogues and in the conclusion creates

[17] Hoffman, "The Relation between the Prologue and the Speech-Cycles in Job," 164.
[18] Job and his interlocutors describe the deity throughout, but the contradictions between their worldview and what the text relates about YHWH make it clear that their views are not useful for establishing his characterization.

incoherence or not first requires an assessment of the role she plays in the narrative that has not been given sufficient consideration.

These problems justify a novel evaluation of the characterization of Job and YHWH in the poetic dialogues, the role of Job's wife, and how each contributes to the coherence or incoherence of the text of *Job*. In this chapter, I analyze the meaning of YHWH's speech from the whirlwind and its significance within the text of *Job* to evaluate how it depicts YHWH. I argue that YHWH is depicted to be concerned first and foremost with affirming his place at the top of the hierarchy of existence. YHWH's concern with his reputation and glory in the poetic dialogues is consistent with his characterization in the opening scenes.

In addition, I interpret the portions of the opening scenes and the poetic dialogues that depict Job, identify the commonality and variation in how each portion of the text characterizes him, and then evaluate whether it is possible for the varying information about Job to be assembled into a single coherent character according to the standards set forth by the text. On the basis of this interpretation, I demonstrate that the variation in Job's character is far more complex than has been supposed. His attitudes and actions show continuity as well as difference between the prose and poetry, but also show significant variation within the poetry, in which Job's characterization vacillates from the lamenting Job to the accusing Job to the affirming Job. There is no single uniform characterization of Job in the dialogues that conflicts with his characterization in the opening scenes.

Further, I argue that the variation in Job's character does not create incoherence. I argue that Job reflects coherent character development because each change in his character is the direct result of a cause in the world of the story. I discuss evidence from *Job* and other Hebrew and ancient Near Eastern narrative literature and argue that such character development does not

create incoherence. I also discuss the function of Job's wife in the plot and its implications for her impact on the coherence of the text. I demonstrate that the function of Job's wife in the narrative is to contribute to the initial characterization of Job. Because that function is accomplished in the opening scenes, her absence from the rest of the narrative does not create incoherence.

LAMENTATION IN JOB'S FIRST SPEECH IN THE DIALOGUES: CONTINUITY WITH THE OPENING SCENES, DISCONTINUITY WITH THE REST OF THE DIALOGUES

Contrary to the scholarly tendency to describe Job's characterization as uniform throughout the poetic portion of the text, there is significant variety in how he is depicted throughout the dialogues. In addition, there is greater continuity between his characterization in the beginning of the dialogues and the opening scenes than has been previously recognized. These features of the narrative challenge the view that Job's characterization is dichotomous and that the division is between the prose and the poetry.

Accusatory and critical of God is an accurate description of the depiction of Job in the portion of the dialogues running from chapter 9 through chapter 31.[19] In these speeches, Job

[19] In analyzing Job's speeches, I do not include Job 24:18–24; 26:1–14; 27:13–23; and 28:1–28 because of the particular difficulties in determining the original form of the third cycle of speeches, regarding which I do not argue a position. The problem is so immense that it deserves much greater attention than I can give it in this dissertation. Importantly, the contents of the omitted passages do not impact the legal metaphors used by Job. For bibliography on the question, see Witte, *Vom Leiden zur Lehre*, 7–55, 239–47; Clines, *Job*, 1464–65; Brown, *The Vision in Job 4 and Its Role in the Book*, 195–214; Lo, *Job 28 as Rhetoric*, 1–15; Seow, *Job 1–21*, 29–38; Fox, "The Speaker in Job 28," and Kyle R. Greenwood, "'The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom'? A Consideration of Job 28 as a Sarcastic Response to the Wisdom Tradition," *HUCA* 94 (2023): 21–48.

"challenges God's justice towards him in particular and toward humanity in general."[20] Job challenges the deity by employing "legal language and juridical metaphors"[21] to make a case—in the form of a *rîb*[22]—accusing God of afflicting him unjustly on the grounds that he, Job, is innocent of wrongdoing that would merit such punishments.[23] In his suit, Job describes how the deity caused his state of intense pain and suffering (Job 10:18–22; 16:7–16; 19:7–20; and 30:1–

While it would be preferable to fully determine the history of these passages, I am confident in omitting them from my analysis because their contribution to Job's characterization would be minimal: aside from Chapter 28, the passages contain little information that would not be significantly influenced by context and thus be determined by Job's characterization in other passages. For example, Job 24:18–24 is identified as problematic because the speaker appears to suggest that the wicked suffer, but this is in such great conflict with Job's other statements that those who attribute it to him typically suggest it spoken as a quotation or to mock his interlocutors. On the other hand, Chapter 28 is so divergent in both content and topic from what is said elsewhere by any of the interlocutors, especially Job, that many commentators have regarded it "as an 'interlude,' an 'intermezzo,' or the like, as if the composer or a redactor could not help, even amid all the chaos of the third cycle and the persistent skepticism of Job, to break out in hymnic praise of wisdom's mysteries." Seow, *Job 1–21*, 30. See also bibliography above. For this reason, I follow those who have argued that Chapter 28 is a later addition, and do not include it in my analysis.

[20] Greenstein, "A Forensic Understanding of the Speech from the Whirlwind," 241–42. For more bibliography on the legal language and metaphors Job uses, see note 2 of this chapter, above.

[21] For this phrase see Karel van der Toorn, "The Ancient Near Eastern Literary Dialogue as a Vehicle of Critical Reflection," in *Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Mediaeval Near East: Forms and Types of Literary Debates in Semitic and Related Literatures*, ed. G.J. Reinink and H.L.J. Vanstiphout (Leuven: Department Orientalistiek, 1991), 59–75, here 63. He listed the following passages: Job 9:2–3, 14–16, 28–35; 13:3, 6–28; 16:19–21; 22:2–5; 23:2–7; and all of 31. The concentration of legal terminology is particularly prominent when Job first makes his case in chapter 13, see Chin, "Job and the Injustice of God," but is found throughout.

[22] On the form of the *rîb,* see as early as B. Gemser, "The *rîb*-* or Controversy Pattern in Hebrew Mentality," in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. M. Noth and Winton Thomas, VTSup 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1955), 120–37 and Julien Harvey, "Le '*RÎB*-Pattern', réquisitoire prophétique sur la rupture de l'alliance," *Bib* 43.2 (1962): 172–96. More recently see Lester Theophilus Whitelocke, "The *rîb*-Pattern and the Concept of Judgment in the Book of Psalms" (PhD diss., Boston University, 1986) and Pietro Bovati, *Re-Establishing Justice: Legal Terms, Concepts and Procedures in the Hebrew Bible*, JSOTSup 105 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1994), 30–31.

[23] On the *rîb* in Job's speeches, see as early as Gemser, "The *rîb*-* or Controversy Pattern in Hebrew Mentality," 134–35, Roberts, "Job's Summons to Yahweh," and Scholnick, "Lawsuit Drama in the Book of Job," in addition to the other bibliography cited above.

31) despite his righteousness and innocence of sin (Job 9:20–21, 25–31; 12:4; 16:17; 23:10–12; 27:2–6; and 31:1–34, 38–40). He accuses the deity of afflicting the righteous and allowing the wicked to prosper, effectively treating the righteous and the wicked the same (Job 9:22–24; 12:6; 21:6–34; and 24:1–18), which bring into question the deity's execution of justice.[24] Job considers and eventually seeks an opportunity to bring his case before the deity by asking why he suffers. He asks what sins he has committed to deserve such suffering or why he suffers in innocence (Job 10:1–17; 13:3, 6; 17–27; 19:23–29; 21:1–5; 23:1–9, 14–17; and 31:35–37), while acknowledging the difficulty of making such a case due to the power imbalance between him and the deity (Job 9:2–20; and 27:7–12).

The culmination of Job's suit is in his final speech. He describes his former state of righteousness and prosperity (Job 29:1–25), his current suffering at the hands of the deity (Job 30:1–31) and proclaims his innocence of a host of sins (Job 31:1–34, 38–40). At the conclusion, he even asks for a hearing in which he can argue has case against God: מי יתן לי שמע לי הן תוי שדי יענני וספר כתב איש ריבי "Would that I could get a hearing![25] Here is my signature. Let Shaddai answer me! For my opponent has written out an indictment!" (Job 31:35).[26] Job pleads for an

[24] "Job's astonishment and indignation…presuppose the nexus between human suffering and divine judgment." Dick, "The Legal Metaphor in Job 31," 40. See also Chin, "Job and the Injustice of God," here 94: "The issue at stake for the author of Job is God's justice, the question of whether God can be truly just when the innocent suffer…. The author of Job is effective precisely because he does not deny God's virtues, but transforms them into weaknesses through which he can implicitly defame the Deity and through which a powerful argument can be advanced for God's injustice."

[25] Literally "someone to hear me." For the use of the root שמע to refer to the activity of a judge in a hearing, see Dick, "The Legal Metaphor in Job 31," 47, especially n. 50. On the significance of this statement as summoning God to trial, see also Greenstein, "A Forensic Understanding of the Speech from the Whirlwind," 247; and Zuckerman, *Job the Silent*, 107.

[26] While some have interpreted כתב as a precative perfect (see Dick, "The Legal Metaphor in Job 31," 47, especially n. 48; also John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 423; and Edward L. Greenstein, *Job: A New Translation* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019], 132), it is not necessary to understand כתב to be performing such a

opportunity to argue that he is innocent of the crimes of which YHWH seems to have already found him guilty, causing his affliction. He is accusing God of injustice and seeking to challenge him using the language and ideas of a court of law.[27] By using this language, Job sets himself up in opposition to God.[28]

The claim that Job is depicted to be critical and accusatory is accurate for the portion of the dialogues from Job 9 through Job 31 in which he challenges and accuses God. However, in Job's speeches that appear in other portions of the dialogues, he is characterized quite differently. Specifically, Job's first speech of the poetic dialogues, the one that is introduced at the beginning of chapter three, does not show him to be accusatory or in any way opposed to God.

This is especially significant to the coherence of Job as a character because scholars who have claimed there are two irreconcilable characterizations of Job have placed the dividing line at the transition between the end of the prose opening scenes at the end of Job 2 and the beginning of the poetic dialogues at the beginning of Job 3. The lamentation and bitterness

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function, because Job understands himself to already be the defendant in a legal case: "Job, who, as was said, understands himself to be the defendant in God's case, as well as the initiator of a countersuit against God, supports his request for an independent hearing by an oath declaring his own innocence." Greenstein, "A Forensic Understanding of the Speech from the Whirlwind," 247. See also Dick, "The Legal Metaphor in Job 31," 40: "Job's lamentable state is evidence that God has initiated legal action against him." In this statement, Job is stating that he has been charged, found guilty, and punished, but now seeks an opportunity to have his day in court to prove his innocence.

[27] Even if it is not clear that the legal challenge is more than metaphorical. Greenstein argued that it was more than metaphorical, and described the function of the speeches: "The poetic speeches of Job are laced with legal rhetoric and shaped to express the hero's mounting desire to meet his God in a court of law." Greenstein, "A Forensic Understanding of the Speech from the Whirlwind," 242.

[28] Seow, *Job 1–21*, 61: "Unlike the accused in the letter from Meṣad-Ḥashavyahu, Job's judicial opponent is God." This is not an idle challenge or set of accusations. Job's challenge to God is serious. Greenstein even argued that there were levels of offensive threat in some of Job's language, which echoed terminology used to describe military assault and physical battle. See Greenstein, "A Forensic Understanding of the Speech from the Whirlwind," 249.

apparent in Job's first speech of the dialogues—which famously begins with Job having "opened his mouth and cursed his day" (Job 3:1) and continues with him wishing he had never been conceived or born—is described to be a sudden and complete break with the previous characterization of Job in the opening scenes.[29] Rick D. Moore went so far as to state that "The opening soliloquy of the poetic Job has been written to confute the opening soliloquy of the narrative Job."[30] The perception is that the shift in Job's behavior is too sudden and jarring to be coherent because "the shift from the Job who preaches patience to his wife to the Job who would rather be dead is abrupt and unprompted."[31] Scholars have understood Job's first speech to be the beginning of his challenge and criticism of God that become the centerpiece of his speeches in the dialogues. For example, Katharine Dell said: "In the opening chapter of the Dialogue, Job the pious becomes effectively Job the impious, as he rails against God concerning his plight, lamenting both the day of his birth and the night of his conception."[32] The lamentations and cursing of his own life in Job 3 are understood to be discontinuous with his actions in the opening scenes, and instead align with the challenge to God he mounts in the later portions of the dialogues.[33]

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[29] For example, Hoffman, "The Relation between the Prologue and the Speech-Cycles in Job," 164: "the fact still remains that the sharp change in Job's personality comes in ch. iii."
[30] Rick D. Moore, "The Integrity of Job," *CBQ* 45 (1983): 17–31, here 26.
[31] Margulies, "Oh That One Would Hear Me! The Dialogue of Job, Unanswered," 586, n. 13.
[32] Katharine J. Dell, "The Book of Job," in *The History of Evil in Antiquity: 2000 BCE-450 CE*, ed. P. S. Angier (London: Routledge, 2018), 24–33, here 25.
[33] See also Davis Hankins, "Job," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Wisdom Literature*, ed. Samuel L. Adams and Matthew Goff (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2020), 30–48, here 35: "If it remained possible to read Job's responses to the afflictions in the prose tale as expressions of traditional deferential piety – as many do – then I think that such a reading becomes implausible after this lament." Also Karl-Johan Illman, "Theodicy in Job," in *Theodicy in the World of the Bible*, ed. Antti Laato and Johannes C. de Moor (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 303–33, here 308–14.

However, such claims overlook the ways in which the characterization of Job in this opening speech is both continuous with that of the opening scenes and discontinuous with that of the rest of the dialogues. As a lament, and more specifically as a complaint, Job's first speech in the dialogues is a continuation of the actions of mourning that Job begins to perform in the opening scenes. Furthermore, Job does not in his first speech challenge or criticize God: the speech lacks the accusations of the *rîb*. This feature of Job's opening speech is discontinuous with the majority of his speeches in the dialogues and creates continuity with Job's characterization in the opening scenes, even in the midst of clear development in his character. These factors establish greater continuity between Job's characterization in the opening scenes and in his first speech of the dialogues, weakening the claim that there is a clear distinction between the Job of the poetry and the Job of the prose.

Job as Mourner in the Opening Scenes

Those who have argued for the discontinuity of Job's character between Job 2 and Job 3 have limited their description of Job's characterization in the opening scenes to his righteousness and patience. Righteousness and patience are indeed important elements of the characterization of Job in the opening scenes.[34] The well-known four-part description of Job's righteousness is repeated three times almost verbatim. It appears first in the mouth of the narrator, תם האיש ההוא וישר וירא אלהים וסר מרע "That man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned aside from evil" (Job 1:1). It appears twice more in the mouth of YHWH himself, השמת לבך על עבדי איוב כי אין כמהו בארץ איש תם וישר ירא אלהים וסר מרע "Have you directed your attention toward

[34] Habel captured this characterization well in his statement "Job is introduced as an ancient paragon of piety and wisdom." Habel, *The Book of Job*, 85.

my servant Job? That there is none like him on the earth, a man blameless and upright, who fears God and turns aside from evil?" (Job 1:8; see also 2:3).[35] Seow pointed out that YHWH's describing Job to be incomparable puts the mortal's righteousness on a plane normally reserved only for the attributes of the deity himself.[36]

Job is shown to persist in his righteousness even while he experiences immense and undeserved suffering. The conflict in the opening scenes centered upon YHWH's attempts to disprove the opponent's prediction that Job would respond to immense and undeserved suffering by forfeiting his righteousness and cursing God to his face (Job 1:11).[37] Job's response to his afflictions unambiguously demonstrates that YHWH was right and the opponent was wrong. After learning of the loss of his property and the deaths of his ten children, Job falls to the ground, worships, and then says ערם יצאתי מבטן אמי וערם אשוב שמה יהוה נתן ויהוה לקח יהי שם יהוה מברך מברך "Naked I have come from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. YHWH has given, and YHWH has taken. May the name of YHWH be blessed" (Job 1:20–21).[38] In direct contradiction of the opponent's prediction, Job responds to his afflictions by blessing God instead of cursing him. YHWH makes sure that the opponent knows that he was right about Job: ועדנו מחזיק בתמתו ותסיתני בו לבלעו חנם "He still maintains his blamelessness even when you provoked me against him to destroy him undeservedly" (Job 2:3). After his physical health is afflicted, Job refuses his wife's invitation to curse God and rebukes her, saying כדבר אחת הנבלות

[35] There has been much discussion of the precise nuances of these four descriptors, for discussion see Eduard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, trans. Harold Knight (London: Nelson, 1967), 2. But that they describe Job to be righteous and pious has not been a matter of dispute.
[36] Seow, *Job 1-21*, 256: "This compliment paid to Job is astounding, for it echoes traditional assertions of divine incomparability."
[37] See Chapter Two.
[38] The Ktiv reads יצתי but this appears to be a simple omission of the א from the accurate spelling of יצאתי which is preserved in the Qere and rendered here.

תדברי גם את הטוב נקבל מאת האלהים ואת הרע לא נקבל "You speak like a disgraceful person. Shall we receive good from God, and not receive evil?" (Job 2:9–10).[39] The narrator explicitly labels Job's responses positively, indicating that he did not sin (Job 1:22 and 2:10).

Notably, Job's two comments articulate a view of divine justice and its impact on human fate that is similar to the view held by YHWH. In both statements, Job shows no concern for whether or not his suffering is just. Instead, by blessing the deity in his first statement and asserting that it would be disgraceful to curse God for his suffering in the second, he indicates that the praiseworthiness of YHWH is unrelated to concerns about justice. In addition, in both statements Job draws an equivalence between the suffering he now endures and the prosperity he had previously experienced, suggesting that, like his suffering, his prosperity was undeserved.[40] That Job responds to his wife's recommendation that he curse God (Job 2:9) with the rhetorical question "shall we receive good from God, and not receive evil?" (Job 2:10) indicates that it would be "disgraceful" to complain about undeserved suffering if he hadn't already complained about his undeserved prosperity. In the opening scenes, YHWH made it clear that he does not

[39] There is some ambiguity about what Job's wife is saying, particularly regarding the meaning of her verbal imperative ברח, see Oeming and Schmid, *Job's Journey: Stations of Suffering*, 31–32; Seow, *Job 1-21*, 294–97. But the use of the verb ברח with the deity as the object in a clearly negative sense in the initial scenes (Job 1:5, 11; 2:5) and Job's clearly dismissive, even rebuking, response confirms that she urged some sort of negative action towards YHWH. Note also that in the LXX Job's wife gives a much longer speech, but this appears to be an expansion, in line with the LXX translator of Job's penchant for making adjustments to align the text with his circumstances (see notes in Chapter One). The LXX plus is also referred to as an expansion whose likely source is the *Testament of Job* by Choon-Leong Seow, "Job's Wife, with Due Respect," in *Das Buch Hiob und seine Interpretationen: Beiträge zum Hiob-Symposium auf Dem Monte Verita vom 14.-19. August 2005*, ed. T. Krüger et al., ATANT 88 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2007), 351–73, here 356.

[40] At no point does Job agree that his suffering was a punishment for sin. He insists upon his innocence throughout the dialogues, and there is no indication that he thought anything different at this point in the story.

manipulate human fortunes in alignment with any human conception of justice.[41] By suggesting that neither his prosperity nor afflictions should be judged by the standards of human justice, Job is the only character in the text who articulates a viewpoint similar to that of YHWH.

The evidence indicates that Job is depicted to be both righteous and willing to endure his suffering without challenging God.[42] But another important aspect of Job's character in the opening scenes is that being righteous and long-suffering does not prevent him from mourning that which he had lost. Job begins mourning as soon as he receives word about his afflictions. After the four messengers come to tell him about the loss of his property and the death of his children, he responds by tearing his clothing and shaving his head (Job 1:20). When he is afflicted with skin disease, Job responds by sitting in ashes and cutting himself with a potsherd (Job 2:8),[43] and lying on the ground for seven days and seven nights (Job 2:13). Tearing clothing,

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[41] See Chapter Two of this dissertation.

[42] Contra those who have questioned Job's righteousness, such as those who have viewed the perfection of Job's character to be so extreme as to be clearly unbelievable. For example, Athalya Brenner challenged the "virtual consensus that the Job of the prologue is presented as a piously righteous man" calling the interpretation "superficial" and arguing that the "the portrait of Job in the frame story is an ironic exaggeration of the concept of conventional piety." Brenner, "Job the Pious?" 37. More recently, Tobias Häner argued that intertextual connections to Abraham, Balaam, and Edom and other ambiguous features of the opening chapters leave open the possibility that Job behaved offensively, making his characterization more complex and ambiguous than has been recognized: "Hinter der scheinbar platten Ijobfigur wird eine mehrschichtige und vieldeutige Gestalt erkennbar." See Tobias Häner "Zur ambiguität der Ijobfigur in der Prologerzählung (Ijob 1–2)," *PzB* 28.1 (2019): 25–40, here 39. But even if Job's depiction is so extreme as to appear unrealistic, that does not mean that the best interpretation of his depiction in the world of the story is that his depiction is false. The other possibility is that this is a caricature, and that the extremity of Job's depiction is part of the point! There is no evidence that, within the world depicted by the story, there is any reason to see the depiction of Job's righteousness as anything less than accurate. Evaluations of the character's coherence will depend upon his depiction in the world of the story, in which he is presented to be righteous and patient. If, as Brenner argued, Job is a caricature, that does not detract from the way his depiction contributes to his characterization.

[43] On Job lacerating himself with the potshard as a common mourning practice, see Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," 559–60, and note 8. See also examples in Lev 19:28; Jer 16:6; and KTU 1.5 VI:17–22 and 1.6 I:2–5.

cutting hair, and lying on the ground and in ashes are all consistently depicted as ritual acts of mourning throughout the Hebrew Bible.[44] By enacting these ritual behaviors, Job "act[s] out physically and visibly the diminishment from which" he has suffered because of the loss of his children and wealth and status.[45]

Job's participation in these mourning rites is not an incidental or unimportant part of the story or his depiction as a character. Richard Medina argued that Job 1:20–21 is a "piece of ritual text" that depicts "the transformation of Job's ordinary identity into a ritual identity; at the same time, it marks his transition from day-to-day life to a liminal ritual condition as identification with the dead."[46] Such a transformation is clearly consequential for Job's character. David Lambert has argued that it is possible to understand Job's mourning as a framework for the whole of the text.[47] Lambert demonstrated that Job is propelled into a ritual state of mourning. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar recognize Job's ritual state and set out לנוד לו ולנחמו "to comfort and console him" (Job 2:11). Comforting Job refers not to making him feel better, but to participating "in a social transaction" that is "meant to constitute or provoke the transformation from a state of

[44] For secondary literature and analysis see Melanie Köhlmoos, "Tearing One's Clothes and Rites of Mourning," in *Clothing and Nudity in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Christoph Berner et al. (London & New York: T&T Clark, 2019), 303–13; Yael Shemesh, *Mourning in the Bible: Coping with Loss in Biblical Literature* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibbutz Ha-me'uḥad, 2015), 66–120; Saul M. Olyan, *Biblical Mourning: Ritual and Social Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), especially 28–34; and E. Kutsch, "'Trauerbräuche' und 'Selbstminderungsriten' im Alten Testament," in *Kleine Schriften zum Alten Testament*, ed. L. Schmidt and K. Eberlein, BZAW 168 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986), 78–95, especially the list of mourning behaviors in 78–79.
[45] David Lambert, review of *Biblical Mourning: Ritual and Social Dimensions*, by Saul Olyan, *AJS Review* 30.2 (2006): 440–42, here 441.
[46] Richard W. Medina, "Job's Entrée into a Ritual of Mourning as Seen in the Opening Prose of the Book of Job," *WO* 38.2 (2008): 194–210, here 195.
[47] David A. Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," *JBL* 134.3 (2015): 557–73, here 559.

mourning to a normal state of being."[48] Their failure to help Job transition out of his state of mourning at the end of seven days leads to their further efforts through multiple cycles of speeches "to force Job out of his ritual stance" until YHWH himself finally intervenes with the rhetorical power to compel Job to stop mourning, meaning that "the work as a whole…may be read, then, in its present ritual framework, as a sort of fable of failed consolation and its denouement."[49] Lambert's argument shows that Job's actions of mourning in the opening scenes are determinative for the subsequent events of the rest of the story.

That Job engages in rites of mourning has been commonly recognized by interpreters.[50] But how Job's mourning contributes to his characterization is underexamined, especially by those who argue for the character's incoherence. The opening scenes juxtapose the depiction of Job both as a paragon of piety who reacts patiently to his unjust suffering and as a deeply wounded person who expresses his grief in outward and recognizable actions. There is no incoherence created by this juxtaposition. The righteous Job can exist against the "backdrop of misery" created in the opening scenes without issue.[51] This indicates that the depiction of the righteous Job in the opening scenes cannot be deemed to be incoherent with the Job of the dialogues merely on the basis that the latter expresses sorrow and misery. In other words, the complexity of Job's characterization in the opening scenes demonstrates that there is room for complexity in Job's characterization throughout the text.

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[48] Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," 560–61.
[49] Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," 562–63. Lambert argued that the conflict is only resolved when God's speech "out of the tempest" has the rhetorical power to force Job out of his ritual stance and end his protests.
[50] For a broad sample see Hartley, *Job*, 78 and 83; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 93; Clines, *Job*, 34; Seow, *Job 1-21*, 261, 281.
[51] The phrase "backdrop of misery" is taken from Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," 560.

Job as Complainer—But Not Challenger—in the First Speech in the Dialogues

Job expresses great sorrow and misery in his opening speech in the dialogues. In this speech—which includes Job 3:1–26 and 4:12–21[52]—Job curses his existence, laments his suffering, and recounts a supernatural manifestation that has filled him with dread. The negativity of these elements has led some scholars to see continuity between this speech and Job's other speeches in the dialogues, in which he explicitly challenges God and accuses him of injustice. But what little continuity there is between Job's first speech in the dialogues and the later ones is superficial. At no point within his first speech does Job challenge God or criticize his administration of the world, as he does in the later speeches. In fact, by participating in the tradition of lament and complaint, Job acknowledges God's place at the top of the hierarchy and adds to his glory. At the same time, Job's lamentation and complaint are natural expressions of mourning, and their characterization of Job is continuous with his characterization as a righteous mourner established in the opening scenes.

Before evaluating the characterization of Job in this speech, it is necessary to examine its extent. All extant versions of *Job* identify Job as the speaker of the text in Job 3:3–26 and Eliphaz as the speaker of Job 4:1–21 and 5:1–27. However, Edward Greenstein and Ken Brown have marshalled significant evidence that the text has been rearranged, and that Job's first speech originally included 4:12–21 as its ending.[53] The statements in the description of the vision conflicts with Eliphaz's other statements, even those in the rest of this speech, both in its pessimistic tone and in attributing to the spirit several statements alleging that the righteous

[52] On the extent of Job's first speech, see discussion below.
[53] See Edward L. Greenstein, "דברי איוב הראשונים – מה היקפם," in *Studies in Bible and Exegesis, vol. VII: Presented to Menachem Cohen*, ed. Shmuel Vargon et al. (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2005), 245–62 and Brown, *The Vision in Job 4 and Its Role in the Book*, with summary of his thesis in 1–11.

suffer (see especially Job 4:17–21). Notably, Eliphaz never refers to the words of the spirit or to having such an experience again, and he actually rebukes Job for claiming to have overheard a divine being (Job 5:1; 15:4, 8). Job, on the other hand, repeats several of the ideas communicated in the vision (see Job 10:3; 9:2; 9:22–34; 9:28–31; 14:4 as repetitions of 4:17; and 10:9–11; 6:12, 11; 7:1, 7, 16; 9:25–26; 14:2 as repetitions of 4:18-20), and his comment that "the thing that I feared comes upon me" פחד פחדתי ויאתיני in Job 3:25 aligns with the statement פחד קרני "fear came upon me" in Job 4:14 and the general experience of fear that the person who has the vision experiences.[54] Finally, when Eliphaz in Job 15:14–16 refers to the language of the vision, he describes it as something said by Job.[55]

Naphtali Tur-Sinai and Ginsberg both argued that Job 4:12–21 had been dislocated and was originally part of a speech by Job.[56] Their claims were taken up by Edward Greenstein, who argued that the dislocation occurred when two sheets of a bound scroll were switched (noting that 4:12–21 is very nearly the same length as 4:1–11),[57] and Ken Brown, who argued that the dislocation was one change of several made in an intentional editorial effort to "mollify [Job's] most extreme criticisms of God's justice."[58] Without taking a position on the reason for the

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[54] Reading the Ktiv קָרָאַנִי as קָרָנִי, in accord with LXX, Targum, and Syriac, see also Hartley, *Job*, 109; and Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 50. For the relatively common confusion between III-ה and III-א verbs, see *GKC* §75rr; and for example 2 Sam 1:6.

[55] The evidence summarized in this paragraph comes from Greenstein and Brown, as cited above. See also G. V. Smith, "Job IV 12–21: Is it Eliphaz's Vision?" *VT* 40 (1990), 453–63, here 462, who argued that the passage "was Eliphaz's unmarked quotation of Job's visions of the night."

[56] See Tur-Sinai under the name Harry Torczyner, *Das Buch Hiob; eine kritische Analyse des überlieferten Hiobtextes* (Vienna: R. Löwit, 1920), 10–14, also 96–99; and Ginsberg, "Job the Patient and Job the Impatient," 102–7, here 105: "I have been convinced that iii 3-26 and iv 12-20 constitute, with some changes in the order of the verses, a single speech of Job." See Brown's description of the history of this proposal in Brown, *The Vision in Job 4 and Its Role in the Book*, 39–51.

[57] Greenstein, "דברי איוב הראשונים – מה היקפם," 260–61.

[58] Brown, *The Vision in Job 4 and Its Role in the Book*, especially 214–25, here 225.

dislocation, I accept the conclusion supported by both Greenstein and Brown that the vision "originally formed the shocking climax to Job's first speech."[59]

Nowhere in the speech occupying Job 3:1–26 and 4:12–21 does Job criticize or challenge God as he does in the later chapters. Rather, Job is participating in a long-standing Hebrew tradition: the articulation of the lament,[60] or, more specifically, the complaint.[61] As a sub-type of lament, the complaint "is an expression of protest and an appeal for relief from distress" made for the purpose of drawing "the deity's attention to a precarious situation in dire need of remedy."[62] Even as complaints by their very nature express sorrow, frustration, and even anger, any negativity is clearly directed at the distressful situation and its causes, not at the deity to whom the complaint is directed.

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[59] Brown, *The Vision in Job 4 and Its Role in the Book*, 226.

[60] Westermann, *The Structure of the Book of Job*, 61, n. 14, also 38, called it a "primordial individual lament" and also discussed how the form of the lament involved the description of Job's mourning. Also Nancy C. Lee, *Lyrics of Lament: From Tragedy to Transformation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), here 100, described it as an "extreme lament." Seow demonstrated that the malediction in vv. 3–10 is not out of place in ancient Near Eastern laments, see Seow, *Job 1–21*, 314. Clines referred to this speech as a complaint that draws upon the literary forms of the curse and the lament, see Clines, *Job*, 76. See also John E. Hartley, "From Lament to Oath: A Study of Progression in the Speeches of Job," in *The Book of Job*, ed. W. A. M. Beuken, BETL 114 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994), 79–100, here 80; T. Stordalen, "Dialogue and Dialogism in the Book of Job," *SJOT* 20.1 (2006): 18–37.

[61] On the complaint as a sub-type of lament, see Lee, *Lyrics of Lament*, 51, 65–100, note that Lee refers to them as "lament prayers"; also Edward L. Greenstein, "Lamentation and Lament in the Hebrew Bible," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Elegy*, ed. Karen Weisman (Oxford: Oxford, 2010), 67–84, here 67, 79–80; and Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 1: With an Introduction to Cultic Poetry*, FOTL 14 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 11–13. On Job's first speech as a complaint, see Roland Edmund Murphy, *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 22. Also William C. Pohl IV, "Arresting God's Attention: The Rhetorical Intent and Strategies of Job 3," *BBR* 28.1 (2018): 1–19.

[62] Greenstein, "Lamentation and Lament in the Hebrew Bible," 79–80.

In this first speech, Job curses, he laments, he complains, and he relates a harrowing encounter with a spirit.[63] The famous curse with which Job opens his speech (Job 3:3–10) combines two of the core elements of the complaint form: the "expression of suffering or need"[64] and the "imprecation against enemies."[65] In Job's case, the source of his suffering is not a mortal enemy, but his very existence. So he directs his curse toward the personified day of his birth and night of his conception, because the erasure of these entities from existence might spare Job the agony of his life, יאבד יום אולם בו והלילה שמר הרה גבר "Let the day I was born disappear, and the night that said 'a man is conceived'" (Job 3:3).[66] The curse language indicates that Job seriously "wishes that the day on which he was born did not exist (יאבד); he would like to blot it out."[67] As Job continues the curse, he is clear that the targets of his imprecation are the personified day of his birth and night of his conception because they did not prevent him from being born (Job 3:10).[68] Job's point is to say that his life is so painful that to avoid it he would rather have never existed at all, but none of the cursing is directed towards God.

Scholars who have claimed that Job curses God in this first speech suggested that cursing the day of his birth is by extension cursing the deity. Almost all of these commentators depended

[63] On the tri-partite structure of the speech in Job 3 (to which I add the fourth section of 4:12–21), see Gianni Barbiero, "The Structure of Job 3," *ZAW* 127 (2015): 43–62; building upon David Noel Freedman, "The Structure of Job 3," *Bib* 49.4 (1968): 503–8.
[64] Lee, *Lyrics of Lament*, 65.
[65] Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 1: With an Introduction to Cultic Poetry*, 12–13.
[66] The usage of the noun גבר, here translated as "man," is notable because it is most commonly confined to references to adult males, not children when they are born. Seow suggested that it is used here to emphasize Job's mortality, perhaps as a nod to his trials extending to all of mortal humanity, or perhaps to emphasize that he wishes that he had never experienced mortal life. See Seow, *Job 1–21*, 340.
[67] Barbiero, "The Structure of Job 3," 46. Note also that the qal intransitive verb אבד carries a connotation of "divinely willed destruction" see Otzen, "אָבַד *ʾābaḏ*" *TDOT* 1:19–24, here 22.
[68] Personification of natural elements and ideas commonly appear in laments, see Lee, *Lyrics of Lament*, 59–60.

upon the argument, first advanced by Michael Fishbane in 1971, that Job curses all of creation: "The whole thrust of the text in Job iii 1-13 is to provide a systematic *bouleversement*, or reversal, of the cosmicizing acts of creation described in Gen. i-ii4a. Job, in the process of cursing the day of his birth (v. 1), binds spell to spell in his articulation of an absolute and unrestrained death wish for himself and the entire creation."[69] Fishbane claimed that the language in Job 3:1–13 parallels "the archetypal cosmic pattern of Genesis" through the following linguistic and thematic parallels[70]:

Job		Genesis	
3:4a	**day** and **night** (חשך)	1:3 first day	creation of **light** and separation of **light** from **darkness** (חשך)
3:4b	God **above (ממעל)**	1:7 second day	the water which was **above (מעל)**
	Fishbane stated that the third day was not represented in Job 3		
3:6	**that night (הלילה)**…**days of the year (בימי שנה)**	1:14 fourth day	separate between **the night (הלילה)**…for seasons and **for days (ולימים)** and for **years (ולשנים)**
3:8	those who are ready to rouse ***leviathan* (לויתן)**	1:21 fifth day	God created the **great sea beasts (התנינם הגדולים)**
3:11	Why did I not die out of the womb?	1:26 sixth day	Let us make humanity
3:13	For now **I could have lain down (שכבתי)** and been still. Then **I would have slept (ישנתי) and been at rest (ינוח לי)**	2:2–3 seventh day	**He rested (וישבת)…because in it he rested (כי בו שבת)**

[69] Michael Fishbane, "Jeremiah IV 23–26 and Job III 3–13: A Recovered Use of the Creation Pattern," *VT* 21.2 (1971): 151–67, here 153. See also Leo G. Perdue, "Job's Assault on Creation," *HAR* 10 (1986): 295–315; and Andrea Beyer, "Hiobs Widerworte Die Querbezüge zwischen Ijob 3,3–9 und Gen 1,1–2,4a," *BZ* 55 (2011): 95–102; and most recently Tobias Häner, "Job's Dark View of Creation: On the Ironic Allusions to Genesis 1:1-2:4a in Job 3 and Their Echo in Job 38-39," *OTE* 33.2 (2020): 266–84. All of the interpretations following Fishbane depend on his arguments, and thus my response deals with him alone.

[70] Fishbane, "A Recovered Use of the Creation Pattern," 154.

On the basis of these parallels, Fishbane argued that the passage "utilizes cosmogonic patterns, as frequently found in ancient magical rituals, for a counter-cosmic incantation."[71]

Fishbane's interpretation continues to influence scholarship on Job 3.[72] His arguments have been particularly impactful on those who have argued that Job begins to attack God in his first speech of the dialogues. David Robertson argued that Job curses God "indirectly" because "he curses all creation by cursing what is for him its most significant part—the day of his birth—and to curse the creation is by implication to curse the creator."[73] Valerie Pettys described Job's curse as "his first offensive."[74] Karl-Johan Illman connected Job's curse with later comments in the dialogues and described them all as "critical toward [God's] creation and his management of it."[75] Such arguments are limited to arguing that Job's curse of God is only implied, or indirect, because it is clear that Job does not vocally articulate a curse against the deity.[76]

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[71] Fishbane, "A Recovered Use of the Creation Pattern," 165.
[72] Recently, see Lance Hawley, "The Rhetoric of Condemnation in the Book of Job," *JBL* 139.3 (2020): 459–78, especially 469, where he stated that "Job rhetorically aligns himself with chaos."
[73] David Robertson, "The Book of Job: A Literary Study," *Sound* 56 (1973): 446–69, here 449–50.
[74] Valerie Forstman Pettys, "Let There Be Darkness: Continuity and Discontinuity in the 'Curse' of Job 3," *JSOT* 26.4 (2002): 89–104, here 87.
[75] Illman, "Theodicy in Job," 315.
[76] Robertson was compelled to say that Job's curse "can only be taken, it seems to me, as an implied curse of the creator" see Robertson, "The Book of Job: A Literary Study," 450. Even Forrest, who argued that Job wants to curse God, recognized that the "curse is diverted into a relatively harmless denunciation of the day of his own birth" and that Job refuses to vocally curse God. See R. W. E. Forrest, "The Two Faces of Job: Imagery and Integrity in the Prologue," in *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie*, by Peter C. Craigie, ed. Lyle Eslinger and J. Glen Taylor, JSOTSup 67 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 385–98, here 388. Forrest claimed that Job's inner desire to curse God is apparent in intertextual connections among certain key words and phrases that link his speech in chapter 3 with "noteworthy antecedents" to his description and behavior in the prologue. However, Forrest's argument was based on metaphorical readings of the references to Job's skin and a speculative, unsupported interpretation that Job wanted to curse God all along, neither of which can be supported.

But the claim that Job's speech parallels the language of each day of creation is more tenuous than Fishbane and his followers acknowledged. Fishbane himself admitted that the third day of creation is in no way represented in Job 3, an omission which he described to be "unaccountabl[e]."[77] He did not explain the connection between the sixth day and Job 3:11, but it is difficult to see parallelism between the divine creation of humanity, which surely did not involve a womb, and Job's description of the beginning of his mortal life when he exited the womb. There is no basis to equate the primordial beast described as לויתן—which in most traditions was subdued by the deity, as described by YHWH himself in his speech in Job 41—with the great beasts of the sea that God created on the fifth day, and the "rest Job longs for in the grave in v 13 is no kind of parallel to God's rest on the seventh day."[78] Even the parallel to the second day is only in the repetition of the common preposition על, which does not even appear in the same form.[79]

This leaves only the parallelism between the passages that mention day and night, which occur only in two out of the seven days of creation. The small number of clear parallels makes it difficult to understand Job's curse to extend to all of creation: "A aucun moment Job ne prétend dérythmer la création ni ramener le cosmos à l'état nocturne qui est présentement celui de son

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[77] Fishbane, "A Recovered Use of the Creation Pattern," 154, n. 2: "Every day is represented except the third, unaccountably."
[78] Clines, *Job*, 81.
[79] Even Häner, who ultimately agreed with Fishbane that Job 3 conspicuously parallels Genesis 1, admitted that the lexical correspondences are limited to the references to day and night and the first day of creation, see Häner, "Job's Dark View of Creation," 271–72. Konrad Schmid described the majority of the textual correspondences as too weak to support Fishbane's interpretation. Konrad Schmid, "Innerbiblische Schriftdiskussion Im Hiobbuch," in *Das Buch Hiob und Seine Interpretationen: Beiträge zum Hiob-Symposium auf dem Monte Verita vom 14.-19. August 2005*, ed. Thomas Krüger et al., ATANT 88 (Zürich: TVZ, 2007), 241–61, here 244–45. Similarly, David Clines pointed out that "there are few other genuine correspondences" between Job 3 and the account of creation in Genesis 1:1–2:4a besides the mention of day and night. Clines, *Job*, 81.

âme; la malédiction ne porte, il faut le souligner, que sur *un* jour et *une* nuit bien précis, les seuls qui soient liés au destin de Job et qui aient lié ce destin au malheur."[80] It is the single day and single night that are the repeated objects of Job's cursing, and that must form the basis of its interpretation.

The curse is best understood to be an extreme rhetorical expression of the sentiment that Job wishes he had never existed rather than endure the pain he currently suffers.[81] Every statement in Job 3:3–10 is directed to cursing the day of his birth and night of his conception because if they cease to exist, then he will also cease to exist: "Job's concern is not with the created order as a whole but with those elements of it that have brought about his own personal existence."[82] The outburst is "a violent cry of protest, expressed in the literary form of a curse."[83] Curses against days where tragedy struck can be found in well-known Mesopotamian literature, such as the Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur, Atra-Hasis, and others.[84] If there is any target for Job's cursing other than the metaphorical day and night, then it is Job himself that is accursed, not God.[85]

Thus, even if the connection to all of creation could be maintained and Job were indeed cursing all of existence, the rhetorical function of his speech would suggest that such a curse

[80] Jean Lévêque, *Job et Son Dieu: Essai d'exégèse et de Théologie Biblique*, 2 vols. (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1970), 1:336.
[81] Pope, *Job*, 28: "The curse is not simply against his birthday as such, but against a life so embittered that he wishes it had never begun." See also Hanne Løland Levinson, *The Death Wish in the Hebrew Bible: Rhetorical Strategies for Survival*, SOTSMS (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 102–113.
[82] Clines, *Job*, 81.
[83] Barbiero, "The Structure of Job 3," 46.
[84] Seow, *Job 1–21*, 314.
[85] Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 22–23.

should not be interpreted as an attack on God, the creator.[86] Instead, Job's curse is better understood to be an extreme expression of pain and suffering by someone wishing for non-existence: he would be willing to undo any part of the created order if it would release him from his suffering. Job's cursing the circumstances that brought about his existence is no more an attack on God than Jeremiah's cursing of the day of his birth in the oft-cited parallel passage in Jeremiah 20:14–18.[87]

In fact, commentators have noted that the narrative structure functions to emphasize that Job does not curse God. Job's trials were intended to disprove the opponent's prediction that Job would curse God to his face. In the aftermath of those trials, the appearance of the verb ויקלל and the final position of the object of that verb in the introduction of Job's speech creates suspense as to whether the opponent's prediction might turn out to be true after all אחרי כן פתח איוב את פיהו ויקלל את יומו "After this, Job opened his mouth and cursed his day" (Job 3:1).[88] Simeon Chavel described this as a twist: "When the narrator introduces Job's speech he does so slyly, as if the

[86] Even some who see Job's speech as discontinuous with his behavior in the opening scenes admit that Job does not curse God. See Moore, "The Integrity of Job," 24–25.
[87] On the similarities between the two passages, see Levinson, *The Death Wish in the Hebrew Bible: Rhetorical Strategies for Survival*, 89–118; Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 21A (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 869–70; and Jeffery M. Leonard, "Let the Day Perish : The Nexus of Personification and Mythology in Job 3," *JSOT* 43.2 (2018): 247–70. Note that many commentators do not consider the possibility that Jeremiah is cursing God. For example, Clines and Gunn described Jeremiah 20:14–18 to be " a conventional utterance of distress accompanying a judgment-speech or woe-oracle." See D. J. A. Clines and D. M. Gunn, "Form, Occasion and Redaction in Jeremiah 20" *ZAW* 88.3 (1976): 390–409, here 407. More recently on this passage, see Jeno Kiss, "Die Letzte Konfession: Jer 20,7-19," *ZAW* 124 (2012): 369–84.
[88] See Seow, *Job 1–21*, 318: "precisely in the place where one expects the third test, the verb "curse" appears…It is to the relief of the reader, therefore, that at the very last moment, at the very end of the sentence, the direct object of the curse is spelled out." See also Moore, "The Integrity of Job," 22–23: "When the poet begins, 'After this Job opened his mouth,' the reader cannot help but lean forward to hear what will come forth from these, until now, sinless lips. Anticipation turns into surprise when we hear that Job has 'cursed the day of his birth.'"

aspersions are finally about to pass through his lips and he will curse God, but then he presents what feels like a twelfth-hour twist."[89] The dramatic tension produced by this twist emphasizes that Job does not fulfill the opponent's prediction. God is never cursed by Job.[90]

This interpretation of Job's curse is further supported by the rest of the speech. Everything he says is a lamentation of his individual suffering but does not accuse or challenge God. He asks a series of rhetorical questions explicitly lamenting that he did not die before or at his birth: "Why did I not die out of the womb? [Why did I not] come out from the womb and expire? Why did the knees receive me? And why did the breasts allow me to suck?" (Job 3:11–12).[91] He observes that the dead do not suffer like he does (Job 3:13–19). He speaks in general terms, asking why the burdened and bitter of soul who would rejoice in death instead live (Job 3:20–23).[92] He describes his individual state of suffering, including his פחד "fear" and רגז

[89] Chavel, "Knowledge of the Lord," 69. Chavel described this twist as the culmination of a developing situation: "The narrator carefully lays tracks for Job's transition from accepting to challenging. After the first round of attack, the narrator says, 'Through all of this, Job did not sin or cast aspersions on God' (1:22), but after the second, 'Through all this, Job did not sin with his lips' (2:10); the contrast suggests a rising tide, a dam readying to break, which builds over a week of pregnant silence between Job and his friends, and finally bursts (3:1). Moreover, when the narrator introduces Job's speech he does so slyly, as if the aspersions are finally about to pass through his lips and he will curse God, but then he presents what feels like a twelfth-hour twist: 'After that'—a week of miserable, possibly accusatory silence before his friends—'Job opened his mouth and cursed' not God but 'his day' (3:1), namely, the day of his birth: would that he never had lived (3:3– 22)." I agree with Chavel on the literary impact of the introduction to Job's speech in Job 3:1, while disagreeing with the view that Job progresses toward challenging God in the opening scenes, as I argue above.

[90] Seow, *Job 1–21*, 336–37.

[91] The reference to knees is explicitly to his birth, see Juliane Eckstein, "'Why Did Knees Meet Me?' Giving Birth on One's Knees in Job 3:12," *CBQ* 81 (2019): 381–404.

[92] Job's questions are of the same type as those commonly found in laments, which Claus Westermann categorized as "Why?" and "How long?" See Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), 169–181.

"agitation" (Job 3:24–26).[93] Finally, he describes a particular experience in which he saw a spirit and heard a voice speaking about how all beings under the power of God are subject to sorrow and suffering (Job 4:12–21). By describing the vision and how it added to his fear and quaking and general discomfort, Job includes another example of the trials and suffering that leads him to engage in complaint.[94] As Murphy described it: "This is the Complaint of a person who is suffering grievously."[95]

Every feature of Job's first speech shows that he is participating in the biblical tradition of lament and complaint. Nowhere in this robust tradition is lament or complaint understood to enact a challenge to God or an attack on him or otherwise lead the complainer afoul of God's good will: "The complaint itself is, in traditional terms, legitimate, and similar complaints in Jeremiah and the Complaint Psalms are never renounced or repented of."[96] This is the case even when the suffering is directly credited to God as in Psalms 44, 88, and 89 and throughout Lamentations, or when the complainer wishes for death as in the case of Elijah in 1 Kings 19:4, Jonah in Jonah 4:3, or Jeremiah in Jeremiah 20:14–18, or when the complainer alleges that their suffering is undeserved, as in the case of Moses in Numbers 11:11–15. Such cases can include what appears to be accusation or disparagement of the deity. This pushing of the boundaries may

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[93] Westermann described this along with verses 11–19 as Job's expression of his suffering in terms of "why me?" See Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 183.

[94] Although most commentators interpreted the vision as part of Eliphaz's speech, a few who correctly attributed it to Job noted this role. Brown, *The Vision in Job 4 and Its Role in the Book*, 231, said that Job is "deeply troubled both by its content and by his very reception of it." Greenstein, "דברי איוב הראשונים – מה היקפם," 261, described the vision as traumatic and "physically chilling and spiritually distressing" (my translation). See also Mayer I. Gruber, "Human and Divine Wisdom in the Book of Job," in *Boundaries of the Ancient Near East: A Tribute to Cyrus H. Gordon*, ed. Meir Lubetski, Claire Gottlieb, and Sharon Keller, JSOTSup 273 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 88–102.

[95] Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 23.

[96] See Fox, "Reading the Tale of Job (Job 1,1–2,13 + 42,7–17)," 152. Also Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," 563.

help account for the way that complaints such as that of Job in chapter three are sometimes misread. But the tradition indicates that within the context of lament or complaint such behaviors remain in bounds and are not unfaithful.

It is the case that Job's mourning escalates dramatically in intensity between the opening scenes and his first speech in the dialogues.[97] While Job's complaint is undoubtedly intense, his wish for death or non-existence is best understood as an expression of the depth of his suffering and sorrow.[98] Whether the complaint is directed to a human being or to God, the longing for death is never addressed as some sort of offense or attack on the one receiving it.[99] Instead, it is simply an accepted component of the form of lament and complaint, which are themselves expressions of grief and rituals of mourning that are delivered following a disaster.[100]

The characterization of Job in his opening speech in Job 3:1–26 and 4:12–21 does not support the view that the prose and poetic portions of Job depict two contradictory but internally consistent characterizations of Job. This is because the characterization of Job in this opening speech aligns more closely with his depiction in the opening scenes than is commonly

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[97] I address this change more fully later in this chapter.

[98] Some see this element of the complaint as a means for convincing God to intervene on the complainer's behalf. Greenstein described "some argument to move the deity to act" as the third key element of complaint. See Greenstein "Lamentation and Lament in the Hebrew Bible," 80. See also Pohl IV, "Arresting God's Attention: The Rhetorical Intent and Strategies of Job 3," 8: "The complaint form fits within the exigency just identified (that is, suffering) because complaints are employed with the aim of persuading God to act on behalf of the sufferer. This indicates that the audience, even if not explicitly noted, is God. Thus, Job's complaint is directed toward God and has persuasive intent as it relates to Job's suffering." For examples of wishing for death as a tactic in complaints to God and to human beings, see Levinson, *The Death Wish in the Hebrew Bible: Rhetorical Strategies for Survival*, 57–88.

[99] Margulies noted that Job does not blame God until chapter 9: "He began timidly in chap. 3 by merely cursing the day of his birth, without assigning blame. Chapter 9 witnesses the beginning of Job's full-fledged accusation of God." See Margulies, "Oh That One Would Hear Me! The Dialogue of Job, Unanswered" 599–600.

[100] Greenstein, "Lamentation and Lament in the Hebrew Bible," 67, 71, 79.

recognized. Lament is a common expression of mourning, and often appears as the climax of mourning rites.[101] Job's lamentations in chapter 3 do not indicate a reversal from his behavior in the opening scenes, but rather a foreseeable, even expected, extension of them. At the same time, Job does not challenge or criticize God when lamenting his plight in the speech. It is not clear how the Job who delivers this speech could be described as a "rebel, criticizing the ways of God bitterly"[102] or that in this speech he is "critical towards [God's] creation and his management of it."[103] The challenges and accusations that will ultimately escalate into the suit he makes against the deity do not appear in this speech, with the result that Job's characterization in this speech differs greatly from his characterization later in the poetic dialogues.

Both the continuity between Job's characterization in the opening scenes and in his first speech in the dialogues and the discontinuity between his characterization in the opening scenes and the later speeches in the dialogues weaken the argument that there are two distinct, incoherent characterizations of Job in the prose and poetry. In fact, Job's characterization takes another dramatic turn with his final speech of the dialogues, recorded in Job 42:1–6. In order to understand what Job says in that speech and why he says it, it is necessary to investigate what he is responding to: YHWH's speeches from the whirlwind in Job 38–41.[104]

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[101] Olyan listed lament as one of the actions associated with mourning, pointing to the prophetic speaker in Micah 1:8; David in 2 Sam 1:11–12, and El in the Baal Cycle, CTU 1.5 VI 11–25: "El's descent from his throne in the Ugaritic Baal Cycle, followed by easily recognizable mourning rites, reaches a climax with his lament over Baal…." See Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 41 also 49–52.

[102] See Hoffman's description of the characterization of Job in the poetic speeches, see Hoffman, "The Relation between the Prologue and the Speech-Cycles in Job," 163.

[103] See Illman, "Theodicy in Job," 315.

[104] The character Elihu appears and gives a series of speeches in Job 32–37 immediately after Job's climactic speech in Job 29–31 and before YHWH's speeches and Job's responses in Job 38:1–42:6. There is no indication that the Elihu speeches impact the other characters or the actions in the plot in any way: no other characters respond to or mention Elihu's arguments and Elihu is never mentioned or alluded to outside of his own speeches, including in the conclusion

THE FUNCTION OF JOB'S WIFE

Before turning to the divine speeches, I address the impact of the character of Job's wife upon the coherence of the prose and poetic portions of the text. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, some have argued that the single appearance of Job's wife in Job 2:9 followed by her absence from the rest of the text creates discontinuity in the plot. In this view, because Job's wife lost her children and wealth, just as Job did, she would have experienced comparable suffering, raising questions about her and her experience that the narrative does not answer or even acknowledge.[105] According to the standards of narrative coherence that many modern interpreters are most familiar with, such omissions creates confusion that casts doubt on the narrative's coherence.

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when YHWH rebukes Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar by name. In addition, when YHWH speaks out of the whirlwind, the narrator states in Job 38:1 that YHWH answers Job but does not acknowledge Elihu.

This isolation, in combination with other factors, has led numerous scholars to argue that Job 32–37 are a later addition. See, for example, Driver and Gray, *Book of Job*, xl-xli; Pope, *Job*, XXVI; Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, xcvii; Michael V. Fox, "Job 38 and God's Rhetoric," *Semeia* 18 (1981): 53–61, here 56–57; Mende, *Durch Leiden zur Vollendung: Die Elihureden im Buch Ijob (Ijob 32-37)*; Wahl, *Der Gerechte Schöpfer: Eine redaktions- und theologiegeschichtliche Untersuchung der Elihureden - Hiob 32-37*; Syring, *Hiob und sein Anwalt*; Oorschot, "Die Entstehung des Hiobbuches," Heckl, *Hiob – Vom Gottesfürchitigen zum Repräsentaten Israels*; Pilger, *Komposition und Theologie der Elihureden in Hiob 32–37*. For scholars who argued for their unity with the rest of *Job*, see Habel, *The Book of Job*, 36–37; Waters, "The Authenticity of the Elihu Speeches in Job 32-37," Seow, *Job 1-21*, 33; and Andersen, "The Elihu Speeches: Their Place and Sense in the Book of Job."

I do not take a position on the originality of the Elihu speeches. However, I do not include them in my analysis of Job or of YHWH because they do not influence the other characters or the plot, and thus they are not necessary for the evaluation of characterization.

[105] Simeon Chavel stated of the narrator: "Through the description of all that Job had and lost, how could he have left out mentioning her, and now that he does, how so tangentially? Why not describe her circumstances, pain, questions, and accusations?" See Chavel, "Knowledge of the Lord," 67.

However, the claim that her absence creates incoherence is challenged by the status of Job's wife as a minor character in a biblical narrative.[106] In the previous chapter, I utilized analyses of such characters and argued that their absence only creates plot discontinuity if their function in the narrative is never fulfilled. Here, I argue that Job's wife functions to emphasize Job's righteousness by definitively demonstrating that he will not curse God under any circumstances, contrary to the opponent's prediction. Because this function is fulfilled in the scene in which she appears, her absence from the remainder of the narrative does not create discontinuity in the story.

The narrative provides very little information about the character of Job's wife, less even than is provided for the opponent. Included are her status as married to Job, her action in speaking to Job, and Job's response to her. The narrative does not tell where Job's wife came from or what she was doing prior to her appearance. She simply appears—described only as Job's wife—speaks, and then Job responds (Job 2:9–10). This not only marks her definitively as a minor character; it also indicates that her role is fundamentally external.[107] Details concerning the impact of the loss of her children or her internal state are not included because they are not important to her function in the story: "one cannot consider her character or the emotional context of her words without exceeding the bounds of scholarship. The narrator did not reveal his opinion of Job's wife, for he had no interest in her—she is not even given a name—although her

[106] Her appearance in two verses and her one brief statement, alongside her anonymity, indicate she is a minor character. See also Seow, *Job 1–21*, 292 and Emily O. Gravett, "Biblical Responses: Past and Present Retellings of the Enigmatic Mrs. Job," *Bib Int* 20 (2012): 97–125, here 104.

[107] "Job's wife is not a major character in the *dramatis personae.* The book is not a drama about Job's wife." Victor Sasson, "The Literary and Theological Function of Job's Wife in the Book of Job," *Bib* 79 (1998): 86–90, here 87.

torment was doubtless equal to Job's."[108] Her function must be found in her impact upon the plot or her contribution to the depiction of other characters, two functions common for minor characters.[109]

Interpreters have long recognized that the character's significance is bound up in her relationship and interaction with Job.[110] As early as Augustine and Calvin, some have noted that her urging Job to curse God aligned her with the opponent and stated this made her *diaboli adiutrix*, an accomplice of "the devil" or an "instrument of Satan."[111] Some have seized upon the ambiguity of her brief statement—created because the verb ברך employed by both Job's wife and the opponent has both a literal and euphemistic usage[112]—to argue that she may have been urging Job to bless God until his death or at least offering him a choice of what to do.[113] But

[108] Meir Weiss, *The Story of Job's Beginning* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1983), 70.
[109] See Uriel Simon, "Minor Characters in Biblical Narrative," *JSOT* 15.46 (1990): 11–19; and Adele Reinhartz, *"Why Ask My Name?": Anonymity and Identity in Biblical Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 19–22.
[110] For a history of reception of Job's wife, see Pinker, "Job's Wife," especially 131–43; and Seow, "Job's Wife, with Due Respect," 351–73.
[111] Both are quoted in Seow, *Job 1-21*, 305. See also David Penchansky, "Job's Wife: The Satan's Handmaid," in *Shall Not the Judge of All the Earth Do What Is Right?: Studies on the Nature of God in Tribute to James L. Crenshaw*, ed. David Penchansky and Paul L. Redditt (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 223–28, especially n. 2 and n. 5. More recently see Habel, *The Book of Job*, 96.
[112] The most common usage of the root בר"כ refers to blessing, see *HALOT*, s.v. "ברך," 159–160. *HALOT* also notes that the verb is sometimes used as a euphemism for אר"ר and the *piel* of קל"ל, see 1 Kings 21:10, 13; Psa 10:3 (in association with נאץ "despise"); Job 1:5, 11; 2:5, 9. For a recent discussion of the dual meaning, see G. E. Lier, "Translating ברך in Job 2:9-A Functionalist Approach," *AcT* 38.2 (2018): 105–22.
[113] On the multiple syntactic possibilities, see Edwin M. Good, *In Turns of Tempest: A Reading of Job, with a Translation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 200. For the argument that Job's wife is offering him a choice between blessing and cursing God, see Ellen van Wolde "The Development of Job: Mrs. Job as Catalyst," in *A Feminist Companion to Wisdom Literature*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 201–21; also Cho, "Job 2 and 42:7–10 as Narrative Bridge and Theological Pivot," 873.

Job's negative response indicates definitively that, whatever the character's intention could have been, Job understood her to be encouraging him to abandon his pious stance.[114]

Others have argued that Job's wife moves the plot forward because she "invites Job to resist the violence of God's law in a radical manner" and starts Job on the path of resistance that culminates in his outright challenge of God in the later portions of the poetic dialogues.[115] These arguments are based on the interpretation that Job's response to his wife was somehow less pious than his first response to suffering and that the narrator's comment that "Job did not sin with his lips" לא חטא איוב בשפתיו (Job 2:10) suggests there is a difference between what Job says and what he thinks, indicating that Job had internally begun to question God. However, it is not clear how Job's second response—in which he declares that all good and evil is received from God—could be understood to be insufficiently pious.

In fact, the addition of "with his lips" emphasizes that Job showed that the opponent's prediction was false. To YHWH, the opponent had alleged that if Job were to experience suffering instead of blessing, he would verbally curse YHWH "Will he not curse you to your face?" אם לא אל פניך יברכך (Job 1:11, 2:5).[116] The phrase "to your face" indicates that the

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[114] Edward L. Greenstein, "אשת-איוב האמנם צדקה?" *Beit Mikra* 49.3 (2004): 19–31, here 20–21.
[115] See especially F. Rachel Magdalene, "Job's Wife as Hero: A Feminist-Forensic Reading of the Book of Job," *Bib Int* 14.3 (2006): 209–58, especially 232 and 257; Ellen van Wolde, *Mr and Mrs Job*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1997), 24–26; and Penchansky, "Job's Wife: The Satan's Handmaid."
[116] In contrast with Job's fear that "Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts" אולי חטאו בני וברכו אלהים בלבבם (Job 1:5; note the usage of the verb ברכו to refer to cursing, as in the words of Job's wife and in 1 Kings 21:10, 13; Psa 10:3 [the last in association with נאץ "despise"]; Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 4, suggested this usage of the verb ברך is to "prevent contact between the divine name and a verb expressing affront" and pointed to an example of this impulse in 1 Sam 3:13 where the word להם has been substituted for אלהים after the word referring to cursing מקללים). Although it is not clear what Job means precisely by "in their hearts" the contrast between that phrasing and "to your face" emphasizes that the latter refers to external speech and observable action.

prediction refers to cursing that is spoken out loud and directly to YHWH. The narrator editorializes after the first set of calamities to spell out that Job did not act as the opponent predicted by emphasizing that Job did not sin or offend YHWH "In all this, Job did not sin or give offense to YHWH" בכל זאת לא חטא איוב ולא נתן תפלה לאלהים (Job 1:22).[117] In the second editorial comment after Job's health is afflicted, the narrator repeats his statement that Job did not sin and adds the detail that Job did not sin "with his lips" to emphasize that there is no problem with Job's verbal pronouncements. By spelling out that Job did not sin or offend YHWH through his speech, the narrator emphasizes that Job vindicated YHWH by disproving the opponents prediction according to the exact terms in which that prediction was made.

That this line does not suggest that Job committed sin internally is further supported by YHWH's complete lack of interest in interiority[118] and by the development of Job's speeches in the poetic dialogues. When Job does begin to question the justice of his suffering, he displays no hesitation in articulating his accusations out loud and to God himself. This willingness to speak his mind to his friends and to God later on weakens the case that Job is concealing his inner thoughts when speaking to his wife here. In sum, this evidence indicates that Job's wife does not move the plot forward by compelling him to move closer to challenging God.

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[117] תפלה is normally a form of the noun meaning prayer but appears to represent a different root here, in Jer 23:13 (in which YHWH says he saw תפלה among the prophets of Samaria and then says that they prophesied by Baal and caused his people to err) and in adjectival form in Lam 2:14 (used alongside שוא to describe the works of prophets that are certainly being described negatively) and in Job 6:6 (where context suggests it is used in a literal sense to refer to something that is tasteless). Seow argued persuasively that the root refers to things that taste bad and are therefore repulsive or unsavory and that Lam 2:14 and Jer 23:13 shows a metaphorical extension of this core meaning to refer to something that is "unsavory or offensive." It is noteworthy that in both these usages, the thing being described is "offensive" to YHWH, just as is indicated here in Job 1:22. See Seow, *Job 1-21*, 283: "So the reference is to something repulsive, an offense." See also Clines, *Job*, 4 for more bibliography.

[118] See discussion of how YHWH never expresses such an interest, even when the opponent brings it up, in Chapter Two.

Instead, in the narrative Job's wife contributes to his characterization by showing that Job lives up to YHWH's expectation and disproves the opponent's prediction. Job's wife functions to demonstrate the righteousness of Job: "Ihre Funktion in der Erzählung reicht jedoch weiter: Durch ihren Vorstos bietet sie Hiob die Gelegenheit, seine Rechtschaffenheit und seine Gottesfurcht eindrucksvoll zu unterstreichen."[119] On the most basic level, her interaction with Job "functions as the means of drawing from Job a verbal response to his affliction" in which he proves his piety.[120] Her statement to Job incorporates language from both YHWH's assertion that Job ועדנו מחזיק בתמתו "still maintains his integrity" (Job 2:3) and the opponents' prediction that Job would curse the deity (Job 2:5).[121] The choice of language means nothing to Job, who is unaware of the celestial conversations, but in the narrative it emphasizes how Job's choice not to curse God proves his piety and righteousness.[122]

In urging Job to curse God, Job's wife inhabits a type found elsewhere in biblical literature: that of the opposing wife whose will is contrary to that of her husband.[123] By functioning as "a foolish and negative foil to her husband in his total trust in God,"[124] Job's wife emphasizes his righteous behavior and the complete disproval of the opponent's prediction. The

[119] Syring, *Hiob und sein Anwalt*, 91.
[120] Clines, *Job*, 50.
[121] Weiss, *The Story of Job's Beginning*, 70; also Greenstein, "אשת-איוב האמנם צדקה?" 20.
[122] Hartley, *Job*, 83: "Her role is to show how unusual was Job's silent acceptance of his bodily affliction."
[123] Greenstein, "אשת-איוב האמנם צדקה?" 23.
[124] Athalya Brenner, "Some Observations on the Figurations of Woman in Wisdom Literature," in *Of Prophets' Visions and the Wisdom of Sages: Essays in Honour of R. Norman Whybray on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Heather A. McKay and David J. A. Clines, JSOTSup 162 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 192–208, here 199.

narrative provides no additional information about Job's wife because her function is to contribute to Job's characterization by making as clear as possible his righteousness.[125]

In the previous chapter, I argue that the demonstration of Job's character to the opponent is the motivation for YHWH to allow Job to be afflicted. The function of Job's wife is to demonstrate in the narrative that Job behaved precisely as YHWH intended, proving his righteousness even in the face of extreme affliction. As a minor character, the absence of Job's wife after having fulfilled her narrative function does not create plot discontinuity any more than the absence of the opponent does, and for the same reason: "The part they play is finished."[126]

It is possible to argue that the lack of additional information about Job's wife indicates something about the narrator and the tone of the narrative. Simeon Chavel correctly pointed out that "Not taking this wife and mother seriously as a character undercuts the narrator's pathos and earnestness, how real the calamity is to him."[127] But this is an issue related to tone and how seriously the narrative is to be taken as a depiction of reality. Such questions are worthy of investigation, but are separate from the evaluation of the coherence of the plot of the story.

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[125] Weiss, *The Story of Job's Beginning*, 70: "As is customary with the biblical storyteller, he relates only those details that can shed light on the matter at hand. Of Job's wife we are told only what is necessary for our proper understanding of how Job faced his trial."
[126] Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, lxxix.
[127] Chavel, "Knowledge of the Lord," 67. Aron Pinker described the impact of this omission in terms of effect upon the reader: "The fact that Job's wife is not mentioned in the Epilogue is annoying to the modern reader." Aron Pinker, "Job's Wife," *Journal for Semitics* 25 (2016): 127–64, here 159.

YHWH'S SPEECHES IN JOB 38–41:

COMPELLING AFFIRMATION OF DIVINE SUPERIORITY

The poetic dialogues end with two long speeches by YHWH and two much shorter responses from Job (Job 38:1–42:6). The position of the divine speeches near the end of the dialogues and their status as the apparent response to Job's summons to the deity in Job 31:35 have led a large number of interpreters to describe the speeches as the climax of the poetic speeches or the whole of *Job*.[128] In addition, YHWH's two speeches to Job from the whirlwind in 38:1–40:2 and 40:6–41:26 are crucial to understanding his characterization because they are his only appearance in the poetic dialogues and neither the narrator nor the other characters provide reliable information about him.

But while their importance is apparent, the meaning of the divine speeches—and, consequently, their contribution to YHWH's characterization—is less clear. This is in large part because YHWH's speeches appear to be a non-sequitur without an obvious connection to what

[128] The volume of interpreters who have articulated this view in one form or another is remarkable. A partial list includes Seow, *Job 1-21*, 101; William P. Brown, *Character in Crisis: A Fresh Approach to the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 89–90; Jean Leveque, "L'interprétation des discours de YHWH (Job 38,1-42,6)," in *The Book of Job*, ed. W. A. M. Beuken, BETL 114 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994), 203–22, here 203; Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom in Revolt: Metaphorical Theology in the Book of Job*, JSOTSup 112 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 196; Hartley, *Job*, 30; Henry Rowold, "Yahweh's Challenge to Rival: The Form and Function of the Yahweh-Speech in Job 38-39," *CBQ* 47.2 (1985): 199–211, here 199; Robert Gordis, "Job and Ecology (And the Significance of Job 40:15)," *HAR* 9 (1985): 189–202, here 189; Athalya Brenner, "God's Answer to Job," *VT* 31 (1981): 129–37, here 129; Claus Westermann, *The Structure of the Book of Job: A Form-Critical Analysis*, trans. Charles A. Muenchow (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 105; James G. Williams, "Deciphering the Unspoken: The Theophany of Job," *HUCA* 49 (1978): 59–72, here 60; Matitiahu Tsevat, "The Meaning of the Book of Job," *HUCA* 37 (1966): 73–106, here 80–81; Pope, *Job*, LXXX; Gerhard von Rad, *Die Theologie der geschichtlichen Überlieferungen Israels*, vol. 1 of *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (München: Kaiser Verlag, 1957), 213; Samuel Rolles Driver and George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job*, 2 vols., ICC 10–11 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 1:xlviii; Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob*, IX; and the works cited in Oeming and Schmid, *Job's Journey: Stations of Suffering*, 17, n. 58.

comes before them in the text: "All commentators find the divine speech highly scandalous, in so far as it bypasses completely Job's particular concerns, and because in it Yahweh in no way condescends to any kind of self interpretation."[129] YHWH does not answer any of Job's questions, nor does he provide a direct explanation of his justice or address the issues related to the suffering of the righteous that were raised in the opening scenes and have occupied the focus of the human characters throughout the poetic dialogues. The majority of his utterances in the speeches appear to be rhetorical questions that he does not explicitly explain. In addition, YHWH does not explicitly indicate how the different parts of his speeches are meant to function, either independently or together. These issues have posed challenges to interpreters and obscured how these speeches contribute to the story of *Job* and the characterization of YHWH.[130]

In this section of the chapter I analyze what YHWH says in Job 38:1–40:2 and 40:6–41:26 and what these speeches reveal about his characterization. I begin by analyzing the function of the rhetorical questions in the divine speeches. While previous interpreters have identified how these rhetorical questions and related statements function to make several

[129] Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, trans. James D. Martin (London: SCM Press, 1972), 225. Put even more simply: "Curieusement, le premier discours de Yhwh semble passer tres loin des préoccupations de Job." Leveque, "L'interprétation des discours de YHWH (Job 38,1-42,6)," 209.

[130] Some scholars have attempted to make the divine speeches better fit their interpretation of *Job* by rearranging them, sometimes cutting out the second speech as a whole or the portions about *behemot* and *leviathan*, combining the two by removing or moving Job's first speech in 40:3–5, or hypothesizing some other sort of dislocation by which they justify significant manipulation of the received text. I find none of the arguments for such large-scale emendation persuasive, because there are no problems in the received text that justify such emendation. For more discussion on the topic, see Seow, *Job 1-21*, 38–39. For bibliography cited by those who have favored emendation, see Tsevat, "The Meaning of the Book of Job," 84; Jürgen van Oorschot, *Gott als Grenze: eine literar- und redaktionsgeschichtliche Studie zu den Gottesreden des Hiobbuches*, BZAW 170 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1987); Syring, *Hiob und sein Anwalt*; and Ferdinand Ahuis, "Behemot, Leviatan und der Mensch in Hiob 38-42," *ZAW* 123 (2011): 72–91, here 81.

assertions—including Job's ignorance and YHWH's superiority to Job—I argue that the questions also function to compel Job to respond verbally to YHWH. I argue that previous interpretations do not fully account for some features of the speeches, such as YHWH's willingness to address Job and Job's responses and YHWH's reactions to them. However, the interpretation that best accounts for all the features of the speeches is that YHWH's objective is to compel Job to verbally acknowledge the superiority of the deity in relation to the inferiority of humanity and Job himself, affirming YHWH's place at the top of the hierarchy of existence. I conclude that, just as in the opening scenes, in the divine speeches YHWH is concerned first and foremost with his reputation and glorification, and with maintaining them by compelling others to affirm his superiority.

The Function of the Rhetorical Questions in YHWH's Speeches

Part of the challenge of interpreting the divine speeches is that YHWH makes fewer declarative statements than he asks questions. There are more than fifty grammatical markers of a question, and many of those appear to influence multiple clauses.[131] In addition, a number of clauses without markers can be understood as questions on the basis of context. The volume and nature of these questions indicate that they do not function as genuine requests for information that YHWH does not possess, but as rhetorical questions that are "used to indirectly express an assertion" by implying "assertions that the speaker considers to be obvious."[132] To understand the divine speeches requires understanding what assertions YHWH uses these questions to make.

[131] In YHWH's speeches in Job 38:1–40:2 and 40:6–41:26, מי appears 19 times, איפה appears once, מה appears once, the interrogative particle ה appears 23 times, אי appears three times, and אם appears marking a question five times.
[132] Adina Moshavi, "What Can I Say? Implications and Communicative Functions of Rhetorical 'WH' Questions in Classical Biblical Hebrew Prose," *VT* 64.1 (2014): 93–108, here 94. For more

However, rhetorical questions are not only used to make assertions. Rhetorical questions often also expect a specific response from the addressee, not to the exact question that was asked, but to the assertion that the rhetorical question expresses: "RQs [rhetorical questions] do in fact expect a response and specifically addressers expect and inferentially elicit a mental assent to obvious and exclusive answers that can lead to or request particular behavioral changes and/or actions."[133] This feature can be observed in examples of rhetorical questions in biblical narrative. In some cases, the expected response is explicit. In Exod 4:11, YHWH asks Moses a series of rhetorical questions implying that YHWH has power over human powers of speech. In this case, the assertion is that YHWH has the power to help Moses fulfill his calling as a prophet and the expected response is for Moses to stop saying he is incapable and go do what YHWH instructed him. YHWH makes this expected response explicit when he includes with his rhetorical question the direct command to go and fulfill his directions in Exod 4:12.[134]

discussion and analysis of rhetorical questions in the Hebrew Bible, see Lénart de Regt, "Discourse Implications of Rhetorical Questions in Job, Deuteronomy and the Minor Prophets," in *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. L. J. de Regt, J. de Waard, and J. P. Fokkelman (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1996), 51–78; J. Kenneth Kuntz, "The Form, Location, and Function of Rhetorical Questions in Deutero-Isaiah," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition*, ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 123–41; and A. Moshavi, "Two Types of Argumentation Involving Rhetorical Questions," *Bib* 90 (2009): 32–46.

[133] Jim W. Adams, *The Performative Dimensions of Rhetorical Questions in the Hebrew Bible*, LHBOTS 622 (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 7–8. Adams was building upon research on rhetorical questions in the field of general linguistics, including Anna-Brita Stenström, *Questions and Responses in English Conversation*, Lund Studies in English 68 (Malmö, Sweden: CWK Gleerup, 1984), 55–56: "Rhetorical Qs behave very much like conducive Qs in general in that they are very often responded to, and the statement that R [a response] is not expected is not correct in actual discourse where I have found that rhetorical Qs, exclamatory Qs, and suggestions generally receive an R."

[134] See also Exod 14:15, in which YHWH asks Moses a rhetorical question implying that Moses and the Israelites should stop questioning him and carry out his instructions, then explicitly commands Moses to tell the people of Israel to move forward.

In other cases, the expected response is not explicit but still clearly implied. For example, Cain's response to YHWH's inquiry about Abel in Gen 4:9, השמר אחי אנכי "Am I my brother's keeper?" clearly implies an assertion: Cain is not Abel's keeper. But Cain also must feel that this assertion demands a response: because I am not in charge of him, you should not hold me accountable for Abel's whereabouts or well-being. Because rhetorical questions may expect a specific behavioral response, understanding the divine speeches in *Job* requires not only identifying the assertions YHWH makes but also considering whether YHWH also expects a specific behavioral response from Job.[135] In the following, I argue that YHWH does indeed expect Job to respond to the divine speeches in a particular way.

At least part of the reason that scholars have argued for such a great number and variety of interpretations of what YHWH is doing in the divine speeches is because they have understood the rhetorical questions to perform different functions. One of the most widely held views is that YHWH asserts that he does not rule the world according to the principles of retributive justice as Job and his friends understand them.[136] Others have found in the speeches

[135] For another example, see YHWH's question to Jonah: "Is it good for you to be angry?" ההיטב חרה לך (Jon 4:4, 9). In this case, YHWH is not only asserting that it is not good for Jonah to be angry, he is trying to get Jonah to respond by ending his anger.

[136] This view was most influentially articulated by Tsevat, "The Meaning of the Book of Job," 100: "God says: 'No retribution is provided for in the blueprint of the world, nor does it exist anywhere in it. None is planned for the non human world and none for the human world. Divine justice is not an element of reality. It is a figment existing only in the misguided philosophy with which you have been inculcated. The world in which you and the friends are spun is a dream. Wake up, Job!'" See also Habel, *The Book of Job*, 64–66; Leveque, "L'interprétation des discours de YHWH (Job 38,1-42,6)," and Clines, *Job*, 1089–92. See also Seow, *Job 1-21*, 104: "The God one encounters in these speeches is one who refuses to conform to any human expectation of demand for order or right. There is no claim of divine righteousness, no hint of resistance to cosmic chaos and disorder—as if these things are entirely beside the point. Rather, God is simply God, and the world—with all that is in it that is disorderly, strange, dangerous, and tragic—is ruled not according to the demands of human "right" (the demand for justice), but according to the right of God alone. This is an utterly free God." See also Melanie Köhlmoos'

an admission that injustice exists because it is caused by chaotic, sometimes malevolent forces that YHWH is able to restrain but are beyond even his ability to completely eliminate.[137] Another group of scholars understood the speeches to depict YHWH's justice as manifested in his divine sovereignty over the universe rather than in juridical matters of fairness and punishment.[138] And yet another group has argued that YHWH is countering Job's allegations by demonstrating that the world YHWH has created and maintains is orderly and contains good because of divine providence.[139] While this order is often incomprehensible to humanity because of their limited

description of God as the "(moralisch nicht qualifizierten) Allmächtigen," *Das Auge Gottes: Textstrategie im Hiobbuch*, FAT 25 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 352.

[137] See Othmar Keel, *Jahwes Entgegnung an Ijob: Eine Deutung von Ijob 38-41 vor dem Hindergrund der zeitgenössischen Bildkunst*, FRLANT 121 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1978); Brenner, "God's Answer to Job," and Leo G. Perdue, *The Sword and the Stylus: An Introduction to Wisdom in the Age of Empires* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 136–37.

[138] See Sylvia Huberman Scholnick, "The Meaning of *mišpaṭ* in the Book of Job," *JBL* 101 (1982): 521–29, particularly 527–29. More recently, Konrad Schmid, "Gott als Angeklagter, Anwalt, und Richter: Zur Religionsgeschichte und Theologie juridischer Interpretation Gottes im Hiobbuch," in *Die Anfechtung Gottes: exegetische und systematisch-theologische Beiträge zur Theologie des Hiobbuches*, ed. Leonie Ratschow and Hartmut von Sass (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2016), 105–35, here 130, made a similar claim, arguing that the divine speeches depict God's justice to be found in his ability to provide a world to live in through his maintenance of the order of the cosmos: "Gottes Gerechtigkeit ist also ganz anderer Natur als diejenige, die Hiob einfordert: Gottes Gerechtigkeit hat kosmische Dimension, ist weltbegründender und welterhaltender Natur, aber nicht auf kurzfristigen Schadensausgleich und Opferrestitution ausgerichtet. Das ist zwar nicht ausgeschlossen, wie die doppelte Wiederherstellung Hiobs in Hi 42 zeigt, aber nicht das zentrale Kennzeichen von Gottes Gerechtigkeit."

[139] Clines, *Job*, 1089: "Above all, the divine speeches are to be read as Yahweh's statement of his strategy for cosmic order." One version of this view has been argued for consistently by Michael V. Fox, who stated that YHWH shows Job that "God has created and governs a world that is good" (Fox, "Reading the Tale of Job [Job 1,1–2,13 + 42,7–17]," 15) and teaches him how to use the wisdom he does have to recognize God's divine design: "there is much that Job does not know, but there is also much within his grasp: potential knowledge he can activate by looking at the world around him and seeing evidence of God's power and providence." Michael V. Fox, "God's Answer and Job's Response," *Bib* 94.1 (2013): 1–23, here 14. See also Fox, "The Meanings of the Book of Job," 12: "He speaks in a tone of didactic persuasiveness and paints a picture of a well-tended world"; "Behemoth and Leviathan," *Bib* 93.2 (2012): 261–67;

perception, the descriptions of the creation, the animals, *behemot* and *leviathan*, or some combination of them in the speeches show that YHWH pays attention to even the smallest details of his divine design and has power to keep chaos at bay.[140]

These scholars have correctly identified several important features of the divine speeches. YHWH's description of a wide variety of features of his creation, ranging from meteorological phenomena to diverse fauna, does indeed showcase his knowledge of the world. Similarly, YHWH's description of the world does not in any way support the ideas related to retribution that have been repeated by Job and his interlocutors. However, there is nothing in the speeches themselves that suggests that they address human suffering or divine justice. At no point does YHWH refer, even in passing, to the suffering of human beings. There is little to no concern for justice in the speeches, either expressed by YHWH directly or depicted in the picture of the world he sketches. In his description of the world, he never speaks about righteousness. In only one passage does YHWH mention the wicked or the possibility of them suffering, and he does not explicitly state that he administers consequences to them (Job 38:12–15).

Similarly, the view that YHWH is defending the order and goodness within the world lacks explicit support. It is difficult to see in YHWH's description of the world evidence of the

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and "Job 38 and God's Rhetoric." For a similar view, see also Leveque, "L'interprétation des discours de YHWH (Job 38,1-42,6)," especially 217.

[140] See Robert Gordis, *The Book of God and Man: A Study of Job* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), especially 133; Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, "The God of Job: Avenger, Tyrant, or Victor?," in *The Voice From the Whirlwind: Interpreting the Book of Job*, ed. Leo G. Perdue and W. Clark Gilpin (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), 39–49, here 44–47; and Oeming and Schmid, *Job's Journey: Stations of Suffering*, 18–19, 78–81. David Robertson also said that "God is trying to convince Job and us of his innocence, that is, of the fact that he is a wise and just ruler of his world" but argued that God's rhetoric is unsuccessful because Job had already predicted every one of his moves so instead the effect is to expose the deity as "a charlatan god, one who has the power and skill of a god but is a fake at the truly divine task of governing with justice and love." Robertson, "The Book of Job: A Literary Study," 462–64.

quality of the design or divine benevolence. YHWH does not boast or speak about evidence for his fine craftsmanship or the high quality of the world. His description of the animal kingdom does not include descriptions of his providing for its members.[141] He does speak at length about precipitation, which in other contexts is tied to divine providence for humanity. But not in this speech: he never speaks about precipitation as a gift he generously bestows on his creations. Instead, the one time he talks about rain promoting growth he makes sure to say that this occurs where there is no human (Job 38:25–27). YHWH does not take the opportunity to describe himself opposing chaos." Even if *behemot* and *leviathan* are understood to be embodiments of chaos, his description of them focuses far more on Job's inability to exert control than divinely preserved order.

Some scholars have argued that YHWH's speeches from the whirlwind must provide explanations of human suffering or divine justice because these issues are prominent elsewhere in the text. For example, Tsevat introduced his interpretation of the divine speeches by appealing to the "problem of the book" and stating "by elimination we are directed to the final chapters of the poetry…God's long speech and Job's short response. We assume that the answer is found in either or both of their components, and it will be our task to demonstrate that this assumption is correct."[142] But it is not clear that Tsevat or others who take a similar approach were correct in identifying the "problem of the book" as providing an explanation for suffering. While Job and his friends certainly care about the explanation for suffering and the justice of God, the concerns of these human characters do not dictate the function of the text as a whole. The evidence within

[141] He asks Job whether he can hunt for the lion or provide for the raven (Job 38:39–41), but YHWH does not claim that he provides for them. It is the animals themselves or their parents that do that. The point of these questions is to point out that Job cannot do what the animals can do for themselves.
[142] Tsevat, "The Meaning of the Book of Job," 79–80.

the divine speeches themselves does not indicate that YHWH is interested in providing explanations of divine justice or human suffering.

Other scholars have argued that YHWH's questions and other statements in the divine speeches assert Job's ignorance to compel him to respond by ceasing some action that YHWH find objectionable. Some, such as Marvin Pope, said YHWH showcases Job's ignorance in order to demonstrate "his folly in impugning God's wisdom and justice."[143] By showing Job that neither he nor any other human being is capable of understanding the deity or his actions, YHWH seeks to compel Job to stop accusing God or complaining about the injustice of his suffering, "The words of Yahweh have no other aim but to show how vain and futile it is to presume to speak about the nature of God and His works."[144] Edward Greenstein said the demonstration of Job's ignorance is YHWH's response to the suit Job brought against the deity in Job 29–31. Rather than answer the charges, YHWH demonstrates that Job cannot serve as his own witness because his knowledge is insufficient, allowing him to throw "Job's case out of court for cause" because without Job's testimony, there is no evidence against the deity.[145] David Lambert argued that YHWH asserts Job's ignorance because "God must bring Job's mourning to an end…which God does by establishing a discourse around human ignorance itself: Job does

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[143] In full: "God declines to submit to questioning. However, instead of levying charges and specifications, as Job had challenged him to do (xiii 23, xxxi 35), God assails Job with questions he cannot answer about the wonders of nature and the control of the world. The purpose is to bring home to Job his ignorance and his folly in impugning God's wisdom and justice." Pope, *Job*, 291, see also LXXX–LXXXI.

[144] Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, lviii, lxxxvii. See also Horst Dietrich Preuss, "Jahwes Antwort an Hiob und die sogenannte Hiobliteratur des alten Vorderen Orients," in *Beiträge zur Alttestmantlichen Theologie: Festschrift für Walther Zimmerli zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Herbert Donner, Robert Hanhart, and Rudolf Smend (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 323–43; and Williams, "Deciphering the Unspoken: The Theophany of Job," 69.

[145] Greenstein, "A Forensic Understanding of the Speech from the Whirlwind," here 251–53. See also Habel, *The Book of Job*, 528–35; Hartley, *Job*, 487–89; also, although with a differing conclusion, Zuckerman, *Job the Silent*, 114–17.

not have the last understanding of God's deeds."[146] In Lambert's view, the assertion of Job's ignorance finally succeeds in forcing Job out of the ritual stance of mourning that he has maintained since the beginning of his suffering.[147]

Each of these views persuasively identifies a part of the response that YHWH seeks from Job. YHWH is, indeed, trying to compel Job to stop accusing him of injustice, to end his suit, and to exit his state of mourning. But there are elements of the divine speeches that suggest that YHWH has additional objectives. It is not clear how the portions of YHWH's speeches that assert that the deity has much greater power contribute to ending Job's mourning or his lamentation or accusations. There are portions of the speeches in which YHWH asks rhetorical questions or makes statements that assert Job's lack of power over various entities in the created world, such as his assertions that Job is unable to exert control over animals (Job 39:5–12) or can

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[146] Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," 563.

[147] Lambert argued that it was possible to see the entirety of *Job* within this ritual framework, with Job's friends failing to comfort him and YHWH succeeding: "What we encounter in God's speech 'out of the tempest' (38:1) is, finally, an instance of effective 'consolation.' God exercises a rhetorical power that exceeds that of Job, forcing him out of his ritual stance and, at long last, silencing his protest." Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," 563.
Note the contrast between the view of Lambert and others who have also argued that the divine speeches are to console Job by different means. For example T. C. Ham, "The Gentle Voice of God in Job," *JBL* 132 (2013): 527–41, here 527, argued that the divine speeches express compassion and comfort through which "God speaks with Job as a powerful being who intimately comforts Job in his suffering." Another view is that the direct encounter with YHWH provides relief to Job in his suffering. In this view, the content of Job's speeches are unimportant: "Die Lösung des Hiobbuches besteht darin, dass Hiob diesen fernab thronenden Gott als den kommenden erfährt, der sich zu ihm als dem Einzelnen herabneigt und ihm antwortet. Der Inhalt dieser Antwort ist nicht wichtig. Wesentlich ist nur, dass er Hiob in einer Theophanie begegnet und sich ihm zuwendet als einer, der auch den einzelnen Menschen hört und auf ihn eingeht." Eberhard Ruprecht, "Das Nilpferd im Hiobbuch: Beobachtungen zu der Sogenannten Zweiten Gottesrede," *VT* 21.2 (1971): 209–31, here 231. See also Franz Hesse, *Hiob*, ZBK AT 14 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1978), 11–12. Note that Hesse argued that the text originally ended only with the report that a theophany occurred, and that the content of the speeches were added later. More recently, see Oeming and Schmid, *Job's Journey: Stations of Suffering*, 72, 82.

not do things that animals can do (Job 38:39–41 and 39:26–30). In particular, his description of *behemot* and *leviathan* goes far beyond pointing out Job's ignorance and emphasizes Job's weakness in comparison to YHWH's strength (see Job 40:15–41:26).[148] These additional portions of the divine speeches suggest that YHWH's purpose goes beyond only asserting Job's ignorance for any of the purposes listed above.

Several scholars who observed that YHWH's rhetorical questions do not address justice or suffering but rather emphasize YHWH's power have argued that YHWH is explaining why he doesn't have to answer Job. J. B. Curtis said that YHWH acts "like the neighborhood bully," justifying the lack of explanation of Job's concerns with the assertion "'Job, I am bigger than you; so I don't have to answer to you.'"[149] According to such a view, YHWH views humans and their concerns as insignificant and trivial, meaning that Job's concerns don't merit an explanation.[150] Walter Brueggemann added that YHWH seeks not to engage with Job's speeches but to overwhelm the human with his power.[151]

It is correct that in the divine speeches YHWH emphasizes his power and contrasts his strength and greatness with that of Job. But the view that YHWH means solely to bully or overwhelm Job is hard to reconcile with the lack of explicit anger, threat, or condemnation found in the divine speeches. Doing any one of those things would have helped cow Job into silent

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[148] See below for more discussion on these passages and the theme of YHWH's strength compared to Job's weakness.
[149] Curtis, "On Job's Response to Yahweh," 508.
[150] See for example Walter Brueggeman, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 391: "This is a God in whose presence the issues of moral calculus of Job and his friends appear unworthy and trivial." See also David Wolfers, *Deep Things out of Darkness: The Book of Job: Essays and a New English Translation* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995), 209: "The Lord in a welter of sarcasm and abuse, sets out to diminish Job from His first words."
[151] Brueggeman, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*, 390.

submission or get him to stop asking questions YHWH doesn't want to answer. But they are absent from the divine speeches. YHWH is not hesitant to utilize such rhetorical tools when he speaks to Job's friends: in Job 42:7–9 he condemns their offensive actions, expresses a great deal of anger, and threatens dire consequences if they do not do what he wants. That he does none of these things in his speech to Job makes it more difficult to see that he is only interested in overwhelming Job with power or explaining that he is too great to answer Job's questions.

In addition, neither the approach of Curtis nor that of Brueggemann addresses what would motivate the character YHWH to respond to Job's concerns if both he and his questions are so unworthy of his attention. They stated that the speeches expose YHWH "as an ironic caricature of the god who is too big to care about the petty affairs of men"[152] or as a "haughty, condescending, dismissive, reprimanding" "God beyond God"[153] who has no problem denying Job answers. But if YHWH is so powerful and callous, he is certainly under no obligation or compulsion to speak to Job at all. If YHWH does not care about Job or his concerns, it is not clear why he would go to the trouble of speaking to Job and justifying his decision to deny him explanations.[154] From a narrative perspective, YHWH's intervention brings an end to the debate between Job and his friends that has been going on throughout the dialogues. But from a story perspective, YHWH has shown no interest in the conversations between Job and his friends or in the issues at stake. If the character of YHWH is prioritized, then he is more likely to change the subject and pursue goals that he does care about than to show up and give a long speech about

[152] Curtis, "On Job's Response to Yahweh," 508.
[153] Brueggeman, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*, 390–91. Robert Polzin, *Biblical Structuralism: Method and Subjectivity in the Study of Ancient Texts* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 106, added that "God appears insensitive and also cruel."
[154] There is some incongruence in YHWH going out of his way to answer Job to tell him, as Curtis put it, "I don't have to answer to you."

why he isn't responding to Job. That the speeches change the subject away from explaining suffering or justice is supported by the fact that Job recognizes this change of subject and follows suit. In both of his short responses to YHWH, Job does not bring up justice or suffering at all.[155]

In addition, while YHWH certainly does assert Job's inferiority to him, YHWH's interest in Job, as shown in time and attention beginning in the opening scenes and appearing again here, does not align with a view that the human is insignificant to YHWH. Even though YHWH is not interested in addressing Job's concerns, he is certainly interested in Job and what Job does. This makes it difficult to accept the view that YHWH responds simply to inform Job that he is unimportant without seeking anything else from him.

Furthermore, many of these interpretations do not account for Job's two responses in Job 40:3–5 and 42:1–6 and YHWH's reactions to them. It is significant that Job is able to respond at all: that YHWH allows Job to speak suggests that the deity wants more than to explain something and that he is more invested in Job and his actions then he would be if he found everything about Job and his concerns insignificant. Furthermore, if YHWH only wanted Job to stop making accusations or pursuing his suit against YHWH, Job's declaration that he will not speak any more in his first response (Job 40:4–5) would represent a successful achievement of that goal. That YHWH speaks again after Job's first response but appears to be satisfied after Job's second supports the idea that there is a specific response that he is trying to compel, one that Job's first speech did not fulfill but that his second speech did.

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[155] Some of the scholars cited in this paragraph understood Job's responses as denunciations or rejections of YHWH because of his injustice and callousness, see especially Curtis, "On Job's Response to Yahweh," also Greenstein, *Job: A New Translation*, xix–xxi, 184–85 and Robertson, "The Book of Job: A Literary Study," 466. For more bibliography and my argument that language of Job's final speech does not support such a view, see the following section of this chapter in which I discuss Job 42:1–6.

These considerations justify further investigation of YHWH's speeches from the whirlwind. In particular, it is necessary to identify what response YHWH expected to his rhetorical questions, one that explains the emphases upon Job's ignorance and YHWH's power and his superiority to Job and the relationship of the divine speeches to Job's responses. One possibility is articulated in the divine speeches, not once but three times, by YHWH himself.

"So that I may ask you and you shall inform me." ואשאלך והודיעני (Job 38:3)

One reason that scholars have proposed so many different possibilities is that many agreed that YHWH does not state what he is doing or what response he wants and so they have sought to identify the solution by inference. But YHWH does explicitly command Job to respond to him in a particular way. In the beginning and end of the first divine speech and then again at the beginning of the second, YHWH commands that Job respond to the divine speeches verbally.

Job 38:3

אזר נא כגבר חלציך ואשאלך והודיעני	Gird up your loins like a man so that I may ask you and you may inform me!

Job 40:2

הרב עם שדי יסור מוכיח אלוה יעננה	Will the instructor[156] argue with Shaddai? Let the one who rebukes God answer it![157]

Job 40:7

[156] This descriptor uses the same root יס"ר as appears in Eliphaz description in Job 4:3 of Job's previous righteousness in which he says that Job instructed many people. On YHWH's contention that Job is trying to position himself as an equal or above YHWH, see below.

[157] The pronominal suffix on יעננה "answer *it*" refers to the general verbal ideas expressed in the previous sentences, see for example in Gen 24:14; 42:36; Num 23:19; 1 Kgs 11:12; Isa 30:8 and Amos 8:10. Also, *GKC* §135p and *IBHS*, 16.4f. For this verse in particular, see Clines, *Job*, 1085, and also Kemper Fullerton, "On the Text and Significance of Job 40:2," *AJSL* 49 (1933): 197–211, here 197, who says it "probably refers to all the questions which Jahweh has put to Job in chapters 38 and 39[1] rather than to the question in the first clause of verse 2."

אזר נא כגבר חלציך אשאלך והודיעני Gird up your loins like a man so that I may ask you and you may inform me![158]

Twice, YHWH uses the verb שאל to state that he is going to ask Job questions[159] and then uses the hiphil imperative form to command Job הודיעני "inform me!" YHWH also uses the jussive form יעננה to state that he wants Job to respond verbally to the divine speeches.[160] Even the phrase colloquially translated "gird up your loins" suggests that YHWH wants Job to respond to the divine speeches with some form of action.[161] If these clauses are functioning according to

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[158] The only difference between 38:3 and 40:7 is that in 38:3 the conjunction ו appears before אשאלך explicitly marking that verbal action as a result of the first, the imperative אזר. I translate 40:7 the same as 38:3 because the exact similarity in every other respect suggests that the conjunction is merely elided, not that there is a substantive difference in meaning between the two.

[159] Throughout the corpus of Biblical Hebrew, the verb שאל is used to refer to a request for which a response is expected, whether that response is a direct answer, the giving of an object, or performing a particular action, and even in cases where the speaker expects the response to be negative. This is true even when the verb appears in poetic, rhetorical, or metaphorical discourse. For example, in Job 12:7, Job tells Zophar to "ask the beasts" שאל נא בהמות and "the bird of the sky" עוף השמים and states that they will respond verbally: "they will instruct you" ותרך and "it will tell you" ויגד לך. See also Job 8:8; 21:29; and 31:30. For more, see H. F. Fuhs, "שָׁאַל *šā'al*" *TDOT* 13:249–64.

[160] Verbal forms of the root ענ"ה appear in *Job* no fewer than 30 times. It frequently appears in the indicative, describing when a speaker directly and literally responds to the speech of another (see Job 4:1; 6:1; 8:1; 9:1; 11:1; 12:1; 15:1; 16:1; 18:1; 19:1; 20:1; 21:1; 22:1; 23:1; 25:1; 26:1; 38:1 [also 40:1]; 40:3; 40:6; and 42:1) or in Job's declaring that he cannot answer God (Job 9:3, 15 [2x], 32); that God does not answer him (Job 30:20); that he would answer God if he spoke (Job 13:22; 14:15) or imagining or calling upon God to answer him (Job 9:16; 23:4; 31:35). The verbs all refer to the action of responding verbally. Similarly, elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, speakers only use imperative, jussive, and volitive forms of ענ"ה to refer to actual, verbal answers and responses: no one is ever commanded to ענ"ה "answer" when the speaker does not actually want the addressee to respond.

[161] The act of "girding up" ones loins (commonly utilizing some combination of the verbs אזר and חגר and the objects חלצים and מתנים) represents the act of arranging ones clothing in a particular way as preparation for physically strenuous activities such as fighting (see 2 Sam 20:8; 1 Kgs 2:5; Isa 5:27) or running (1 Kgs 18:46; 2 Kgs 4:29; 9:1) or traveling (Exod 12:11). See Clines, *Job*, 1096. It is also used to refer to preparation for labor that is strenuous in forms that are not necessarily physical, including domestic labors (Prov 31:17), mourning (1 Kgs 20:32; Isa 32:11), and relaying divine messages (Jer 1:17). On the girding of the loins, see also Katherine Low, "Implications Surrounding Girding the Loins in Light of Gender, Body, and Power," *JSOT* 36.1 (2011): 3–30.

their most common usage, as direct commands, then YHWH is commanding Job to respond to his rhetorical questions and other statements by speaking back to him.[162]

These commands have perhaps not been interpreted according to their face value because they appear alongside so many interrogative statements that are functioning rhetorically. But, as I discuss above, it is possible for a speaker to ask rhetorical questions that expect a certain response and also explicitly indicate what that response is expected to be.[163] This indicates that it is possible that these statements are not rhetorical and that YHWH is trying to compel Job to speak to him. In this view, YHWH uses both rhetorical and non-rhetorical statements. The non-rhetorical commands compel Job to speak and the rhetorical questions make assertions that are meant to influence what Job says.[164] When the possibility that YHWH is trying to compel Job to speak in a certain way is considered alongside the previously identified features of the divine speeches, the explicit emphases on Job's ignorance and YHWH's power, for example, it opens up the possibility that YHWH is trying to compel Job to speak in a way that affirms the deity's greatness and superiority over humanity.

This interpretation explains why YHWH continues speaking after Job's first response but is satisfied by Job's second. If YHWH wants Job to speak a certain way, then it would make sense for him to allow Job to respond verbally and also for him to give a second speech if Job's

[162] Note that YHWH also tells Job to respond to specific questions in Job 38:4 and 18.
[163] In fact, there are no examples that I can find in which a speaker includes with their rhetorical questions a direct command for the addressee to provide an answer that is not meant to be taken seriously. Rhetorical questions often appear in a discourse alone (Gen 30:2 Jon 4:4) or in a series (Isa 40:21; Gen 18:13–14); in a short conversation (Gen 4:6–7) or as part of an extended set of utterances (Isa 40:25; Psa 71:19); and alongside declarative (Gen 50:19) or interrogative statements (1 Sam 1:8).
[164] Note also that when YHWH has spoken elsewhere in *Job* he has expected a direct, verbal response, see Job 1:7, 8; and 2:2, 3.

first response did not align with what he wanted.[165] This view also aligns with the findings of scholars who demonstrated that YHWH is trying to compel Job to stop mourning or accusing God. YHWH wants Job to end his lawsuit so that he can begin again to speak properly. In addition, YHWH wants Job to stop mourning because that is preventing him from speaking in the proper manner. David Lambert has shown that mourning and consolation do not merely relate to an individual's emotional state but to the transformation of an individual's ritual stance out of and then back into normal functioning within society.[166] YHWH ends Job's mourning because it is preventing him from speaking in the way that YHWH wants.

Furthermore, such a view of the divine speeches reveals their alignment with the emphasis on speech that is found throughout *Job*, from the opponent's prediction that Job would sin by cursing YHWH in the opening scenes (Job 1:11; 2:5), throughout Job's friends consistent attention to words and their significance throughout the poetic dialogues,[167] and with YHWH's evaluation of the speech of Job and his friends in the conclusion (Job 42:7–9). This consistent emphasis led Edward Greenstein to state: "I am increasingly convinced that the book, even more than being about issues and themes, is about the ways that we talk about them."[168]

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[165] Below, I argue for why Job's second speech does align with the type of speech YHWH wants.
[166] Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective."
[167] See throughout, including Job 4:2–5 (Eliphaz); 6:24–26 (Job); 8:2 (Bildad); 11:2–4 (Tsofar); 13:4–5 (Job); 15:2–3 (Eliphaz); 16:2–6 (Job); 18:2 (Bildad); 19:2 (Job); 20:3 (Tsofar); 21:2–3, 34; 26:3–4; 27:12 (Job). See also Ilse Müllner, "Erkenntnis im Gespräch: Zur Bedeutung der (verbalen) Begegnung im Ijobbuch," in *Auf den Spuren der schriftgelehrten Weisen: Festschrift für Johannes Marböck anlässlich seiner Emeritierung*, ed. Irmtraud Fischer, Ursula Rapp, and Johannes Schiller, BZAW 331 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 167–80, here 177: "Allen Konstellationen ist es gemeinsam, dass in vielen direkten Anredepassagen das Sprechen selbst zum Thema gemacht wird."
[168] Edward L. Greenstein, "Truth or Theodicy? Speaking Truth to Power in the Book of Job," *PSB* 27.3 (2006): 238–58, here 239. Also Müllner, "Erkenntnis im Gespräch: Zur Bedeutung der (verbalen) Begegnung im Ijobbuch," especially 172–80; and also Seow, *Job 1-21*, 108: "By framing the theological conversation in the book in this way, the narrator conveys that the justice

On the basis of this evidence, I argue that YHWH speaks from the whirlwind to elicit from Job a verbal response in which he affirms YHWH's greatness and superiority to humanity, thus affirming his reputation. He asks several sets of rhetorical questions and makes a number of declarative statements that assert YHWH's superiority to Job and human inferiority, as well as pointing out how Job's previous speech represents a challenge to YHWH's greatness. He also explicitly specifies that he wants Job to answer these questions. He does not want direct answers to every rhetorical question. Instead, he wants Job to respond by speaking in a way that acknowledges YHWH's place at the top of the hierarchy of existence, thus affirming his reputation.

Claus Westermann advanced a similar view when he said: "What actually happens here is that God pushes Job to the spot where Job must acknowledge God to be creator and Lord—which is also the only spot where Job can experience and receive the assurance of God."[169] Westermann thought that Job's acknowledgment of God was itself a means to the end of Job's receiving of comfort in his suffering. Although there is little evidence that YHWH prioritizes Job's comfort, Westermann was correct in seeing that YHWH's objective was to compel Job to acknowledge the deity's elevated status. Robert Polzin said that the divine speeches are about YHWH's power, and added that YHWH "brings Job to his knees" and "demands recognition of His power."[170] I also agree with Polzin's insight that YHWH seeks to compel Job to recognize

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of God is not its primary concern. The book is ultimately not about theodicy...The book is rather about theology, or more specifically, how one speaks of God in the face of chaos."

[169] Westermann, *The Structure of the Book of Job*, 106–07. See also Daniel C. Timmer, "God's Speeches, Job's Responses, and the Problem of Coherence in the Book of Job: Sapiential Pedagogy Revisited," *CBQ* 71.2 (2009): 286–305, especially 298–300, who argued that the objective of the divine speeches is to change Job into the man who in his last speech is aware of the difference between him and God and is willing to repent of his mistake in challenging God's governance.

[170] Polzin, *Biblical Structuralism*, 106.

his power, although I don't agree that the evidence supports the idea that he is trying to bring Job to his knees literally or metaphorically.

Leo G. Perdue interpreted the speeches as YHWH's attempt to compel Job to utter a "hymnic confession" extolling the wonders of God's creation: "The questions in the divine speeches have the purpose of demonstrating to Job that only Yahweh, not an ordinary mortal, has the knowledge and power to rule the cosmos. Their purpose is to humble Job into uttering words of contrite doxology, that is, to praise the justice and goodness of the creator and provider of heaven and earth, and to admit his own guilt in questioning God."[171] Perdue correctly recognized that YHWH wanted Job to speak positively about him. In the following, I show that while YHWH is not interested in Job's speaking about the quality of divine justice or providence, YHWH does want Job to glorify him by affirming his power and wisdom and how these qualities place the deity at the top of the hierarchy of creation.

"Who is this who darkens a design with words without knowledge?"

מי זה מחשיך עצה במלין בלי דעת (Job 38:2)

"Do you raise your voice to the clouds so that a mass of water will cover you?

Do you send lightnings so that they go and say to you: here we are?"

התרים לעב קולך ושפעת מים תכסך התשלח ברקים וילכו ויאמרו לך הננו (Job 38:34–35)

Throughout the speeches from the whirlwind, YHWH asserts that Job lacks knowledge of and power over the natural world. The point is not merely to belittle Job. Just as much as he asserts what Job does not possess, YHWH emphasizes both explicitly and through rhetorical assertion

[171] Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom Literature: A Theological History* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 117–25, here 119. See also Perdue, *Wisdom in Revolt*, 196–232, especially 217.

that his knowledge and power is greatly superior to that of Job. In connection with YHWH's command for Job to speak, this feature of the divine speeches indicates that YHWH wants Job to verbally acknowledge God's superior knowledge and power.

YHWH introduces his first speech with a rhetorical question that immediately indicates that Job literally does not know what he has been talking about: "Who is this who darkens a design with words without knowledge?" מי זה מחשיך עצה במלין בלי דעת (Job 38:2).[172] To describe what Job had been "darkening," YHWH uses the noun עצה, a noun that generally describes "deliberation."[173] Job had used this same word עצה in one of his initial criticisms of the design by which God administers the world and its inhabitants in Job 12:14–25.[174] Using it here, YHWH refers to his "grand design for how the universe should be structured and managed."[175] Throughout the later part of the dialogues, Job had "darkened" YHWH's עצה by criticizing it as unjust,[176] arguing that "his undeserved suffering is microcosm of a larger theological problem:

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[172] The OG reading of this passage demonstrates the relatively more free technique of the translator. The OG includes a plus specifying that the hiding is from the speaker, YHWH: ὁ κρύπτων με βουλήν. This is most likely an addition of the Greek translator, made necessary because of the translation of the hiphil verb החשיך as the Greek 'to hide,' which is harder to understand within the context and thus motivated the insertion of an object to clarify its relevance. This adjustment also explains the second plus ἐμὲ δὲ οἴεται κρύπτειν, which further develops the image of hiding words and thoughts from the deity. See Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 574–75; and Pope, *Job*, 250.

[173] "*ʿeṣah* is essentially *deliberation*: careful thinking and planning (Prov 20:18), the resolution arrived at by such thinking (1 Chr 12:20), and the capacity for such thought (Isa 11:2; Jer 32:19; Job 12:13; 38:2; 42:3; Isa 19:3; and Jer 49:7). Michael V. Fox, "Words for Wisdom," *ZAH* 6.2 (1993):149–69, here 160.

[174] "What he highlights in that parody, however, is God's unreliable governance of a world turned upside down." Seow, *Job 1–21*, 102.

[175] "The divine Design (עצה) that Job's words have been obscuring must be Yahweh's principles for running the creation." Clines, *Job*, 1096. See also citations below.

[176] This combination of החשיך and עצה is unique in the Hebrew Bible, but it is best understood to describe obscuring or criticizing the design. Expressions in which the noun עצה is used in physical, tangible metaphors are common, for example the עצה of the holy one of Israel draws near (קרב) and comes (בוא) in Isa 5:19; God's עצה stands in Isa 46:10 and Psa 33:11; various kinds of עצה are destroyed, perish, or broken in Jer 18:18; 19:7; 49:7; Ezek 7:26; and the עצת

God's poor management of the world evident in the presence of chaos….For Job, the suffering of the innocent is a manifestation of disorder in the cosmos and the triumph of chaos."[177]

YHWH follows his initial declaration of Job's ignorance by asking the human a long list of rhetorical questions regarding the details of the creation of the world (Job 38:4–11), of the geographical and meteorological extent and features of the natural world (Job 38:16–24), and of the animal inhabitants of the world (Job 38:39–39:12). In their rhetorical function, these questions assert that Job does not know any these details. YHWH asks them to highlight Job's lack of knowledge and to demonstrate that Job's criticisms of YHWH's administration of the world and maintenance of justice are a product of his ignorance.

Throughout these points, Job is compelled to acknowledge that he is ignorant of much that YHWH knows. "Although technically Job knows the answer to every question in the speeches from the whirlwind, that answer would invariably be spoken to God as 'I don't know, only you do,' 'I can't, only you can,' or the like."[178] YHWH knows the measurements and arrangement and distribution of labor for the creation of the world, because, as he does not

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רשעים is far (רחק) from Job in Job 21:16; 22:18; and Bildad states that the wicked is thrown by his own עצה (Job 18:7). There are two other cases where the metaphor involves light. In Isa 29:15, YHWH describes those who bury (העמיק) their counsel to hide it from him and equates this to their works being in the darkness (במחשך). This metaphor suggests that an עצה that is in the dark is hard to see or comprehend. Also relevant to Job 38:2 is an earlier passage in Job 10:3, in which Job asks God if it is good for the deity to oppress Job but to "shine upon the design of the wicked" ועל עצת רשעים הופעת. The verb יפע involves illumination (see Job 3:4) and Job makes it clear that illuminating the design of the wicked has a positive effect, in contrast with the way God has treated him. This evidence suggests that YHWH in Job 38:2 uses the darkening metaphor to indicate that Job's speaking had either obscured or criticized his design.

[177] Seow, *Job 1–21*, 101–102. See also Habel, *The Book of Job*, 536.

[178] Timmer, "God's Speeches, Job's Responses, and the Problem of Coherence in the Book of Job," 292. See also Kathryn Schifferdecker, *Out of the Whirlwind: Creation Theology in the Book of Job*, HTR 61 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 64: who stated that the assertions of these questions can be articulated as: "'Who are you to question God?'; Do you know *x* that God knows?'; and 'Are you able to do, or have you done, what God has done?'"

hesitate to remind Job, he is the creator (Job 38:4–6). Scattered amidst these questions are reminders about YHWH's governance of his creation that indicate that his knowledge is not restricted to its genesis but extends to its ongoing existence (see Job 38:23, 29, 41; and 39:6). YHWH knows the width and the boundaries of the world (Job 38:16–18), the source of light and darkness (Job 38:19–20), the origins of weather and meteorological phenomena (Job 38:22–24, 28–30), and the reproductive habits of animals (Job 39:1–4). By asking these questions after unambiguously describing himself as the creator, YHWH makes clear that the implied assertion of these rhetorical questions is not merely "Job doesn't know" but instead "Job doesn't know but God definitely does." They highlight the difference in knowledge between Job and YHWH. YHWH is not content with Job's silence. Nor is he content with Job's speaking about his own ignorance. YHWH wants Job to acknowledge that YHWH's knowledge is superior to that of Job, affirming the deity's place in the hierarchy of creation.

YHWH also demonstrates his superiority over Job by describing his ability to exercise control over the world and its inhabitants. As in his discourse on knowledge, YHWH's description of his power is in explicit contrast with that of Job. YHWH's description of his creation of the world depicts his exercising of strength and power far beyond what Job ever could: laying its massive foundation stones (Job 38:4, 6) and placing limits on the otherwise unrestrainable sea (Job 38:8–11). Similarly, he asks rhetorical questions asserting his superhuman ability to control geography, weather, and celestial bodies (Job 38:25–33). YHWH contrasts his power over the very foundations of the earth and forces of nature with the weakness of Job, who is unable to control or even accomplish the same feats that several members of the animal kingdom can. Job is unable to exert control over animals sufficient to domesticate them

(Job 39:5–12), not is he able to hunt or gather food like a lion or a bird (Job 38:39–41) or fly and see like birds of prey (Job 39:26–30).[179]

The point of all these assertions and questions is not merely to put Job down, but to compel him to acknowledge his place relative to YHWH. Michael V. Fox used one verse as an example of YHWH's interest in maintaining a hierarchy: "God asks Job if he ever commanded the morning or informed the dawn star of its place (38,12). The answer is obvious: 'Of course not; but you, God, have'. The rhetorical question is a way of underscoring the fact that YHWH does manage the world, and Job knows it."[180] Thus, the speeches are not merely about Job's weakness, nor are they only about God's greatness, but about the contrast between the two.

YHWH's superiority is on full display in his discussion of *behemot* and *leviathan* in his second speech (Job 40:15–41:26). Some have understood these creatures to be sensationalized depictions of real animals: *behemot* is the hippopotamus, and *leviathan* is the crocodile.[181] Others have understood them to be mythical creatures.[182] In either case, these descriptions are really

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[179] Othmar Keel argued that the specific combination of animals included in YHWH's speeches are also present in many images and art from the ancient Near East that include the motif dubbed "the Lord of the Animals." In this motif, according to Keel, a deity or king either tames, or even protects, but always exerts control over one or several animals by grappling with them, binding them, or otherwise physically dominating, sometimes even killing them. Keel interpreted the animals in these scenes as symbols of chaos, with the deity or king who is depicted as "lord of the animals" is the lord of chaos who keeps it at bay. Thus, according to Keel, YHWH is saying that he keeps the forces of chaos at bay, but because he is not able to eliminate them completely there is chaos and unjust suffering that exists in the world. Keel, *Jahwes Entgegnung an Ijob*. For a compelling argument that this motif does not align with the divine speeches in *Job*, see Oeming and Schmid, *Job's Journey: Stations of Suffering*, 74–80.

[180] Fox, "God's Answer and Job's Response," 5.

[181] Fox, "Behemoth and Leviathan," argued that *behemot* is the hippopotamus and *leviathan* is based on the whale; Ahuis, "Behemot, Leviatan und der Mensch in Hiob 38-42," Timmer, "God's Speeches, Job's Responses, and the Problem of Coherence in the Book of Job;" Gordis, "Job and Ecology," 196–97. See also bibliography in Quick, "Behemoth's Penis, Yahweh's Might," 340, n. 6.

[182] Seow, *Job 1–21*, 103; J. C. L. Gibson, "A New Look at Job 41.1-4 (English 41.9-12)," in *Text as Pretext: Essays in Honour of Robert Davidson*, ed. Robert P. Carroll, JSOTSup 138

about the difference between YHWH and Job: they show YHWH has power over these creatures and Job does not.[183]

While the relevance of a lengthy description of a creature that is seemingly passive and undangerous is not immediately apparent, the description of *behemot* makes sense as an example of a creature that human beings cannot hope to control, but God can. Alongside the sensational description of *behemot*'s great size and strength—for example, "his bones are like bars of iron" גרמיו כמטיל ברזל (Job 40:18)—YHWH is sure to mention that he is *behemot*'s creator (see Job 40:15, 19) and that therefore he alone has power to contend with it: "Let its maker bring near his sword!" העשו יגש חרבו (Job 40:19).[184] Humans like Job, by contrast, have no means to exert control over the creature: "Will one take it by means of the eyes? Will one pierce its nose with barbs?" בעיניו יקחנו קמושים ינקב אף (Job 40:24).[185] These two rhetorical questions assert that

(Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 129–39; John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament*, University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 35 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 75–83; Pope, *Job*, 320–23, 329–33. Recently, Quick, "Behemoth's Penis, Yahweh's Might," argued that *behemot* is a mythical creature.

[183] "These two beasts are paraded before Job and constitute arguments to the effect that Job cannot deny, much less abandon, his creaturely weakness and mortality." Timmer, "God's Speeches, Job's Responses, and the Problem of Coherence in the Book of Job," 297. For additional bibliography, see Keel, *Jahwes Entgegnung an Ijob*, 127–56 and Brian R. Doak, *Consider Leviathan: Narratives of Nature and the Self in Job* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2014), 218, n. 75. Note that Doak argued that the two creatures are best categorized as "'monsters,' a type of non-human animal in many cultures both ancient and modern." See Brian Doak, "Monster Violence in the Book of Job," *Journal of Religion and Violence* 3.2 (2015): 269–88, here 279.

[184] For the idea that it is only the maker who can overcome the *behemot*, see also Clines, *Job*, 1152: "The simplest explanation is that the hippopotamus is so fearsome a creature that only God, who made it, can dare to approach it; only is supplied in the *Translation* to make this sense clear." See also Greenstein, *Job: A New Translation*, 179: "Only his Maker can prod him with a sword." The most unusual part of this clause is the otherwise unattested combination of the definite article and pronominal suffix on the participle האשו, a problem that could easily be solved by reconstructing a scribal error transforming an earlier reading of האשה.

[185] Understanding "by means of the eyes" to refer to attacks on the eyes as the perceived weak point of such a powerful creature. Reading בקמושים "with barbs" in place of MT במוקשים "with

neither Job nor other humans could overpower the creature even if they resort to strategic attacks on its perceived weak points. Again, the point is that Job has little chance of overpowering such a creature, while YHWH, as its creator, can.

YHWH's description of *leviathan* (Job 40:25–41:26) also emphasizes Job's lack of power, and that of all human beings. He begins with a series of rhetorical questions that assert that Job does not have the power to overpower or compel obedience from *leviathan*, including "Will you drag *leviathan* with a fishhook? Or will you pull down its tongue with a rope?" תמשך לויתן בחכה ובחבל תשקיע לשנו (Job 40:25); "Will it make a covenant with you? Will you take it as a servant forever?" היכרת ברית עמך תקחנו לעבד עולם (Job 40:28); "Will merchants barter over it? Will they divide it among Canaanites?" יכרו עליו חברים יחצוהו בין כנענים (Job 40:30).[186] YHWH then declares that any human attempt to contend with *leviathan* will be unsuccessful: "Put your hands upon him! Remember the battle—you will not repeat it! See that his expectations are proven false. Is he not thrown down even at the sight of it? No one is fierce so that he will rouse it!"[187] שים עליו כפך זכר מלחמה אל תוסף הן תחלתו נכזבה הגם אל מראיו יטל לא אכזר כי יעורנו (Job 40:32–41:2a). He concludes with a long list of descriptive statements extolling the creature's physical attributes and strength that are so much greater than those of Job (Job 41:4–26).[188]

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snares" because it is not clear how snares might pierce the nose of any real or mythological creature, and this change could easily occur due to scribal error. See bibliography on this text critical reading in Clines, *Job*, 1157, who cited Dhorme, Driver, Terrien, and Pope and stated the reading goes as far back as Ehrlich. More recently, see Greenstein, *Job: A New Translation*, 179: "Can his nose be pierced by barbs?"

[186] The implication of the last question being that only the meat and other products of a successfully hunted creature will ever be the object of commerce.

[187] Reading יעורנו on the basis of the pronominal suffix as a transitive verb, either as a revocalized hiphil verb or taking the qal to have a transitive sense in this case. It is not clear how this form could possibly be read as the intransitive "to rouse oneself, be awake" because of the pronominal suffix.

[188] YHWH goes so far as to state "אלים are afraid of his exaltation" משתו יגורו אלים (Job 41:17). Orthographically, אלים could refer to other divine beings (see Greenstein, *Job: A New*

YHWH reveals the purpose of his extended description of *leviathan* in a short but significant passage in the middle of his second speech. In this passage, YHWH explicitly connects Job's inferiority to *leviathan* to Job's inferiority to the deity. "No one is fierce so that he will rouse it! So who is the one who will stand before me? Who has confronted me and I have made restitution? That which is under all the heavens belongs to me!" לא אכזר כי יעורנו ומי הוא לפני יתיצב מי הקדימני ואשלם תחת כל השמים לי הוא (Job 41:2–3).[189] In the midst of demonstrating that neither Job nor any other human being can overcome *leviathan*, YHWH asks how they could possibly hope to stand before him. The last rhetorical question is particularly relevant to Job. YHWH asserts that no one has successfully compelled YHWH to make restitution to them. Why would Job think he should be the first? After all, YHWH reminds Job, everyone on earth is a possession of the deity. No human is in a position to make demands of YHWH because they are inferior to him.[190] Thus, YHWH's descriptions of *behemot* and *leviathan* emphasize the difference between YHWH and Job, just as the description of the natural world, his power over

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Translation, 182; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 572; Pope, *Job*, 344,), or it could refer to high-status human beings, as the word is used in Ezek 31:11 and 32:21 (see Clines, *Job*, 1198; Hartley, *Job*, 529). In either case, this statement emphasizes that even the mighty cower before the power of *leviathan*. If YHWH is saying that some gods are intimidated by the power of the *leviathan*, he certainly is not included among them. Rather, this statement brings to mind scenes that distinguish between those lesser gods who cower before a threat and the greater deity who does not. Recall, for example, the scenes in the Ugaritic Ba'al Epic of the approach of Yamm's messengers causing panic among the gathered gods, except for Ba'al who is not disturbed at all, KTU 1.2 i:19–29. See other examples cited in Pope, *Job*, 344.

[189] Taking the prepositional phrase as an asyndetic relative clause modifying הוא, 41:3b is more literally rendered "He that is under all of the heavens belongs to me." My English translation represents the implicit meaning: because literally everyone is under all the heavens, YHWH is saying that all people on earth belong to him.

[190] A number of commentators have dealt with the challenges of these verses by emending the text. Many have altered pronouns and verbal subjects in order to facilitate an interpretation in which *leviathan* is the central figure. For a sympathetic discussion, see Clines, *Job*, 1161–62. But doing so obscures the explicit connection between *leviathan* and Job's relationship to YHWH that is made here. For more discussion and an argument against emendation, see Gibson, "A New Look at Job 41.1-4," especially 135–37.

it, and Job's relative helplessness that he articulates throughout the speeches from the whirlwind do. It is the difference between them that YHWH seeks to compel Job to acknowledge in his verbal reply.

"Do you really invalidate my judgment?

Do you declare me guilty so that you will be right?"

האף תפר משפטי תרשיעני למען תצדק (Job 40:8)

The difference between YHWH and Job is highlighted in the beginning of his second speech. In this passage, YHWH says that by making accusations and bringing suit against the deity, Job has tried to make himself equal to God. YHWH responds by pointing out Job's challenge and issuing challenges of his own. The purpose of all this, and the decentering of humanity in the speeches, is to compel Job to acknowledge his status below God in the hierarchy of existence.

Job 40:7–14

אזר נא כגבר חלציך אשאלך[7]	[7]Gird up your loins like a man so that I may ask you and you
והודיעני[8] האף תפר משפטי	shall inform me! [8]Do you really invalidate[191] my
תרשיעני למען תצדק[9] ואם זרוע	judgment?[192] Do you declare me guilty so that you will be

[191] Generally the hiphil verb הפר communicates a verbal meaning like "break," "stop," or "foil." I translate as "invalidate" to capture YHWH's declaration that Job is seeking to show that the decision YHWH has made regarding Job's suffering is unjust and incorrect, rendering it inefficacious, just as the verb is used to describe those who break and therefore render inefficacious their covenants (Gen 17:14; Deut 31:16; Ezek 16:59), and YHWH making inefficacious the omens of diviners (Isa 44:25) and other schemes (Job 5:12).

[192] The noun משפט is in many senses associated with the idea of justice and legal administration. While it is sometimes used to describe justice in the abstract sense or has a clear positive valence, describing a decision that is correct in opposition to one that is wrong, it is also sometimes used to refer to a verdict or decision relating to justice or determining right that is made by a judge, a king acting as judge, a group of people, or, in this case, a deity. For example, see the usage of the term twice to describe Solomon's wise decision regarding the child of disputed parentage in 1 Kgs 3:28. See also Deut 17:11; 2 Kgs 25:6; Psa 105:5; Zeph 3:15; and

כאל לך ובקול כמהו תרעם	right? [9]Is your arm like God's? Do you thunder with a voice
[10]עדה נא גאון וגבה והוד והדר	like his? [10]Don pride and elevation. May you wear glory and
תלבש	majesty!
[11]הפץ עברות אפך וראה כל גאה	[11]Make the outbursts of your anger overflow! See every proud
והשפילהו [12]ראה כל גאה	one and bring him low! [12] See every proud one and humble him!
הכניעהו והדך רשעים תחתם	Crush the wicked[193] where they stand! [13]Hide them together in the
[13]טמנם בעפר יחד פניהם חבש	dust! Bind their faces in a hidden place! [14]Then even I will praise
בטמון [14]וגם אני אודך כי תושע	you! Because your right hand will save you!
לך ימינך	

After commanding Job to respond verbally for the third time, YHWH indicates that Job's criticisms, especially his legal suit, amount to attacks upon the deity because they imply that his decision making and righteousness is insufficient (v. 8).

This is immediately followed by two rhetorical questions that assert that Job thinks he is God's equal (v. 9). YHWH commands Job to clothe himself in majesty and glory (v. 10). These commands are not about mere ornamentation. The words that appear in these commands denote literal elevation and metaphorical pride—גבה refers to the literal high

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Isa 58:2. Also B. Johnson, "מִשְׁפָּט *mišpāṭ*," *TDOT* 9:86–98, here 90: "That *mišpāt* sometimes has only the formal sense of 'decision, verdict' is also clear from texts where it is qualified by other terms, positive or negative: *mišpāt-māweṯ* 'sentence of death' (Dt. 19:6: 21:22: Jer. 26:11.16); *mišpāt dāmîm*, 'blood-guilt' (Ezk. 7:23); *mišpāt-ṣeḏeq*, 'just decision' (Dt. 16:18); *mišpāt ʾemeṯ*, 'true decision' (Ezk. 18:8; Zee. 7:9); *mišpāt šālôm*, 'decision making for peace' (Zec. 8:16)."

There are two other passages that depict YHWH using this precise construction—the noun with first person pronominal suffix משפטי—to refer to the decisions he has made about how to administer the world and its inhabitants: Zeph 3:8 and Jer 1:16. Here, YHWH utilizes the same usage to refer to his decision, or, in this judicial context that Job has initiated, his judgment regarding Job's fate. He points out how Job's repeated decrees that his suffering is unjust serves to undermine and invalidate YHWH's judgment.

[193] On this meaning of the *hapax* הדך, see Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 618, drawing on post-biblical Hebrew sources.

place of God and also frequently refers to pride[194]—and in addition several are commonly used to describe the glory and grandeur that YHWH himself possesses: גאון,[195] הוד,[196] and הדר.[197] In fact, an expression almost identical to the second line appears in the praise of the deity in Psalm 104:1: הוד והדר לבשת.[198]

YHWH is asserting that by criticizing the deity Job has attempted to elevate himself onto the same footing as God himself: "Yahweh rebukes Job for the audacity of thinking that he could dispute with God as an equal."[199] At the beginning of the poetic dialogues, there was no such problem. Job's mourning and lamentation in Job 3 did not threaten the hierarchy of status but reified it. The rhetoric of lamentation and complaint implicitly and explicitly lessen the status of the complainer and elevate the status of the deity to whom the complaint is addressed, and the "transactional" nature of the appeal only adds to the deity's glorification: "The supplicant receives deliverance; the deity receives praise and an enhanced divine reputation (Pss 22:22–23; 30:10)."[200]

But when Job's lamentation turns into a suit, the situation changes. YHWH's comments here reflect the reality that legal proceedings bring both parties into a relationship of equal status. Newsom described how the making of the suit poses a threat to the hierarchy that YHWH is so invested in:

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[194] See Job 22:12. For pride, see 2 Chr 32:26; Psa 10:4; and Prov 16:18.
[195] Exod 15:7; Isa 24:14; and Isa 2:10, 19, 21; and Mic 5:3.
[196] Psa 8:1; 148:13; Hab 3:3; and 1 Chr 29:11.
[197] Psa 29:4; 90:16; 149:9; Isa 2:10, 19, 21; 35:2; Ezek 16:14; and Mic 2:9.
[198] These two nouns are also used together to describe the deity in 1 Chr 16:27; Psa 96:6; 111:3; and Psa 145:5, 12.
[199] Hartley, *Job*, 488.
[200] Newsom, "The Invention of the Divine Courtroom in the Book of Job," 254.

> By envisioning a trial procedure, Job reconfigures the basic social relationship that governs the two parties. As noted above, Israelite law acknowledged that the parties to a dispute often might not be social equals. But for the purposes of the law, such differences were to be set aside (e.g., Exod 23:2). Thus in thinking in terms of a trial, Job is not claiming actual equality with God but simply a stipulated, provisional, "as if" equality.[201]

Thus, even as Job was not actually alleging that he was God's literal equal, bringing suit threatened to reduce the difference in status that was necessary for the hierarchy to be preserved.[202] YHWH viewed Job's suit as an attack that lessened his reputation and glory. "Beneath the veneer of Job's searching questions and affirmations of his own integrity has unavoidably been a challenge directed at the integrity of Yahweh."[203] Thus it requires the response that comes in the speeches from the whirlwind.

This is why YHWH asserts his superiority and Job's inferiority repeatedly and with force throughout the divine speeches. He does it in this passage: asserting repeatedly that

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[201] Newsom, "The Invention of the Divine Courtroom in the Book of Job," 254. Newsom also stated that the relationship between the human and divine is a persistent issue throughout *Job*: "As pointed out in the discussion of chapters 29-31, Job's rhetoric repeatedly inscribes God into his speech as warrant and model for his conduct and his moral world (31:2-4, 6, 14-15, 23, 28). Divine and human beings occupy the same familiar territory. By contrast, the rhetorical questions addressed to Job by God (Where were you? Do you know"?) eliminate him from presence, participation, or knowledge of the foundation and maintenance of the cosmos even as they address him. The issue that lurks in the contrasting rhetorics is that of the fundamental continuity or alterity of the divine and the human, an issue that has an almost obsessive persistence in the different voice-ideas of the book of Job." Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 239–40.

[202] On Job's self-aggrandizement in his complaints to God in the dialogues, see Paul K. K. Cho, "Job the Penitent: Whether and Why Job Repents (Job 42:6)," in *Landscapes of Korean and Korean American Biblical Interpretation*, ed. John Ahn, International Voices in Biblical Studies 10 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019), 145–74, especially 166–172.

[203] Charles Muenchow, "Dust and Dirt in Job 42:6," *JBL* 108 (1989): 597–611, here 607.

Job is incapable of ruling with justice or punishing the wicked because he is less than God. He challenges Job to exert power to change the status of the proud and the wicked and says that if Job is successful, then he will acknowledge the human's power. Of course, the point is that both YHWH and Job know the human could never do so.

In fact, by their very nature the questions all throughout the divine speeches function not just to make assertions about YHWH, but to challenge Job. Henry Rowold described them as "challenge-questions" and asserted that this was part of a textual genre that he referred to as "the challenge to rival" genre:

> The challenge-question functions not to gain information but to challenge the one to whom it is directed. The verbs and objects form an indirect asseveration of Yahweh's creative and governing deeds, but the appearance in question form makes them also a challenge to Job, viz., whether Job has done or can do similar deeds. Implicit in the questions is a denial of Job's ability and an affirmation of Yahweh's. Any other answer would be to claim a rivalry to Yahweh's lordship. At its simplest, then, the challenge-question of the Yahweh-speeches is a question by Yahweh in which, citing his own creative and governing ways, Yahweh challenges Job's right to assume a posture of rivalry.[204]

Whether this is a marker of a specific formal genre is not certain, but Rowold was correct to identify these questions as a counter to the challenge Job made against YHWH by bringing his suit. When Job responds, he is compelled to articulate his inferiority and exalt YHWH.

[204] Rowold, "Yahweh's Challenge to Rival: The Form and Function of the Yahweh-Speech in Job 38-39," 207.

YHWH's desire for Job to understand and consequently articulate the difference in his status and that of God explains another feature of the divine speeches: the striking omission of any mention of humanity.[205] This omission demonstrates that humanity is not the only part of YHWH's creation, nor even its most important part.[206] Thus the wisdom that underlies Job's complaints about the injustice of his suffering is flawed: "the divine speeches constitute an equally radical criticism of the anthropocentric presupposition of ancient sages. Human hybris bursts before this rapturous celebration of a universe in which women and men play no role other than that of awestruck witness to grandeur and terror."[207] Not only does this render Job's complaints invalid, according to the rhetoric of the speeches from the whirlwind, but it drives home the difference between YHWH and Job in status. This difference in status is a crucial part of what YHWH is trying to compel Job to verbally articulate.

Consistency in the Characterization of YHWH in the Prose and Poetry: Compelling Affirmation of the Hierarchy

Each element of the divine speeches from the whirlwind contribute to YHWH's objective to compel Job to affirm the deity's elevated and superior position in the hierarchy of existence. Such an interest is not unique to the depiction of YHWH in *Job*. Several biblical texts valorize

[205] See, for example, Seow, *Job 1–21*, 102; Oeming and Schmid, *Job's Journey: Stations of Suffering,* 80–81; Gordis, "Job and Ecology," and those cited below.
[206] Fox, "Behemoth and Leviathan," 267: "As Yahweh describes the world, man is not the focus of divine energy, not even as an object of enmity." See also D. J. A. Clines, "False Naivety in the Prologue to Job," *HAR* 9 (1985): 127–36, here 133 n. 11: "As I read [the divine speeches], their concern is to affirm that the created order exists for God's purposes and benefit, not humankind's, and that therefore, implicitly and by analogy, so does the moral order."
[207] James L. Crenshaw, "When Form and Content Clash: The Theology of Job 38:1-40:5," in *Creation in the Biblical Traditions*, ed. R. J. Clifford and J. J. Collins, CBQMS 24 (Washington: Catholic Biblical Association, 1992), 70–84, here 80.

verbal praise of YHWH, especially proclaiming his greatness to others. This is found in texts like Psalm 145, in which the poetic speaker declares YHWH's greatness and speaks about informing others as well: "generation will praise your works to generation and they will declare your mighty deeds" דור לדור ישבח מעשיך וגבורתיך יגידו; "I will recount your greatness" וגדולתיך אספרנה; "they will gush about the memory of your abundant goodness and sing of your righteousness" זכר רב טובך יביעו וצדקתך ירננו; "they will speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your mighty deeds to inform humanity of your[208] mighty deeds and the glory and grandeur of your kingdom" כבוד מלכותך יאמרו וגבורתך ידברו להודיע לבני האדם גבורתיו וכבוד הדר מלכותו (Psa 145:1–12).[209] In Deut 31:16–22 and 30, YHWH instructs Moses to teach the Israelites a song of praise that they will sing when they face tribulations for breaking the covenant with the deity. Any performer of the Song of Moses (Deut 32:1–43) verbally proclaims YHWH's greatness. This is a case of YHWH himself arranging for the people to praise him verbally.

Several texts indicate that verbally proclaiming YHWH's greatness is good because it helps others to know of his glory and praise and worship him. Often, the beneficiary of such transmission is a later generation (see Psa 78:4 and Exod 10:2). Other texts indicate that YHWH wants all nations to know of his greatness. In one tradition of the Exodus, YHWH reveals that this is his explicit motivation for his conflict with the king of Egypt "Because of this I caused you to stand, so that you see my power in order that my name be told in all the earth" בעבור זאת העמדתיך בעבור הראתך את כחי ולמען ספר שמי בכל הארץ (Exod 9:16). In Malachi, YHWH articulates his desire that he be worshipped among all nations "From the rising of the sun to its setting, my name will be great among the nations. In every place incense and a clean offering will be offered

[208] Reading the 3ms pronominal suffix in MT as a 2ms pronominal suffix on the basis of comparison to the other attestations of גבורה in vv. 4 and 11.
[209] Similarly, see Isa 12:4–5.

in my name because my name will be great among the nations, says YHWH of hosts" ממזרח שמש ועד מבואו גדול שמי בגוים ובכל מקום מקטר מגש לשמי ומנחה טהורה כי גדול שמי בגוים אמר יהוה צבאות (Mal 1:11, see also 1:15).[210] So it is not surprising that YHWH is depicted to want people to declare his greatness among the nations "Recount his glory among the nations, his wonderful acts among all peoples" ספרו בגוים כבודו בכל העמים נפלאותיו (Psa 96:3).[211] These texts show that YHWH wants his worshippers not only to believe in but also to speak about his greatness so that others know of his greatness and worship him as well.

Throughout the course of the poetic dialogues in *Job*, the model supplicant who YHWH had used to demonstrate his greatness to the opponent in the opening scenes had been led away from speaking properly—not by his suffering, but by his friends' insistence on a particular view of justice—to challenge the deity. Job's challenges threatened YHWH's reputation in several ways. First, by bringing suit, Job positioned himself as equal to God, and any individual presenting themselves as anything but below God in the hierarchy is bad for his reputation. Second, Job's repeated assertions that God's administration of the world was unjust negatively affected the deity's reputation. In addition to the obvious harm they have done by challenging the deity's judgment, Job's accusations imply that the relationship between humanity and the deity is dependent upon the alignment of divine rule with human conceptions of justice. This assumption brings God's status down, closer to that of humans. God's superiority is reinforced by the view that the foundation of the divine-human relationship is God's significantly greater wisdom and power. Job's words were a threat because they had loudly and repeatedly challenged this foundation.

[210] See also Psa 22:27.
[211] See also Psa 105:1–2.

YHWH responds to the threat by intervening and putting a stop to Job's improper speaking and compelling him to verbally glorify the deity. That is why he does not respond to Job's questions or explain the meaning of suffering: neither is relevant to his objective. To take the first step towards this goal, YHWH brings an end both to Job's lawsuit and his mourning and lamentation.[212] As long as Job pursued his legal suit, his questions and complaints were not affirming YHWH's position nor elevating his reputation. Job's adoption of a ritual stance of mourning had drifted into an obsessive focus on the justice of his suffering that prevented Job from praising the deity and led him to make the legal suit.

Thus, Lambert was undoubtedly correct to argue that YHWH seeks to force Job out of that ritual stance of mourning and end his lamentation. To explain why, Lambert used the example of God bringing an end to the mourning of Joshua after the defeat at Ai in Joshua 7 to show that "mourning is bound up in protest; protest, however, which is inappropriate in this situation, denigrates God….To defend God's honor, God must bring Job's mourning to an end."[213] Lambert demonstrated that YHWH's act of consolation was a means to an end: he needed to console Job in order to prevent him from continuing to speak in a way that harmed his reputation and glory.

However, ending Job's inappropriate speech is not YHWH's sole objective. His thrice-repeated command that Job respond verbally indicates that he also intends to compel Job to begin speaking in a more appropriate manner. The above analysis demonstrated that YHWH

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[212] See Hartley, *Job*, 489: "The Yahweh speeches thus relate to the two dominant elements in Job's speeches, lament and lawsuit. By addressing Job directly, Yahweh fulfills his demand for a hearing, and by employing a barrage of rhetorical questions, Yahweh puts Job in his place, showing him that he is no match for God in a dispute. As a result Yahweh wins the lawsuit by reducing Job to silence."

[213] Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," 563.

wants Job to speak in a way that affirms YHWH's superiority in the hierarchy of existence by acknowledging YHWH's superior power and knowledge and Job's relative inferiority. Thus YHWH consoles Job because exiting his ritual state of mourning is necessary to compel Job to speak in a way that affirms YHWH's superiority in the hierarchy.

This view of YHWH's intention is supported by the fact that Job's first response does not placate YHWH, even though in that short speech he explicitly states that he will not speak any further.

Job 40:3–5

ויען איוב את יהוה ויאמר [4]הן	[3]Then Job answered YHWH and said [8]"Look, I am insignificant.
קלתי מה אשיבך ידי שמתי למו	How shall I answer you? I put my hand over my mouth. [5]I have
פי [5]אחת דברתי ולא אענה ושתים	spoken once, but I will not respond. Twice, but I will not do it
ולא אוסיף	again.[214]

In v. 4, Job uses the metaphor of placing his hand over his mouth to indicate that he intends to be silent. He explicitly declares that he will not speak any further in v. 5. He even says he is insignificant. If YHWH's only objective was for Job to cease what he had been doing, then this response gives every indication that he has been successful and need not speak to Job again.

At the same time, however, in v. 5 Job explicitly refuses to obey YHWH's command to respond to the divine speeches. He even articulates his refusal to comply by using a negated construction using the exact verb, ענה, that YHWH had just used when he commanded Job to respond in Job 40:2. This is not the action of a man who seeks to affirm God's place at the top of the hierarchy.

[214] The negative particle לא + finite verbal form of יס"פ without a complement expresses the cessation of previously described verbal action, see Num 11:25 and in *Job* in particular: Job 20:9; 38:11; and 40:32.

In fact, there are multiple indications that Job's silence seems to be a case of passive-aggressiveness rather than explicit deference.[215] His self-description קלתי "I am insignificant" utilizes the root קל"ל which references smallness in the perception of observers rather than true humility, as in the piel verb describing Job cursing the day of his birth (Job 3:1).[216] Because of the connotations of this verb, Job's statement could be deferring to YHWH but could also be a complaint that he is not respected by those who converse with him, his friends, or even by YHWH himself. Job's follow-up statement, "I put my hand over my mouth" ידי שמתי למו פי, does not necessarily refer to acquiescent silence. Job once uses a similar phrase to refer to silence borne of deference (Job 29:9),[217] but in another case Job uses similar terminology to describe silence resulting from astonishment rather than agreement (Job 21:5).[218] Instead of outright deference, it is Job's feeling of being overwhelmed by YHWH's appearance that motivates his silence. He does not repeat his complaints, but neither does he withdraw them.[219] Most importantly, he does not praise God or speak in a way that affirms his position in the hierarchy or

[215] See Fullerton, "On the Text and Significance of Job 40:2," here 209–10, who says "There is no repentance in it."

[216] See especially the use of verb in the qal stem as in Gen 16:4,5; 1 Sam 2:30 and Nah 1:14. Even in the references to subsiding flood waters in Gen 8:8 and 11, the emphasis of the phrase is on the observer's perception of the water. Note also that this usage is reminiscent of Job's statement in Job 3:1.

[217] See Job 29:9, where the similar phrase וכף ישימו לפיהם appears in a passage which describes Job's place of esteem in his community and refers to those who stopped talking when Job entered the area of the city gate. See also the phrase as a reference to the cessation of speech so the object can listen to the speaker (שים ידך על פיך; Judg 18:19).

[218] In Job 21:5, the phrase ושימו יד על פה appears in a phrase parallel to the verb השמו. The root שמ"מ does not suggest deference but devastation suggesting the silence is the result of astonishment rather than agreement. Astonishment or fear is also the connotation of the phrase ישימו יד על פה in Mic 7.16.

[219] "Job, in response to the divine discourse, may not be suppressing his protestations at all. He may be indicating that he is stunned, or he may be suggesting that he wants to hear more." See E. Greenstein, "The Problem of Evil in the Book of Job," in *Mishneh Todah: Studies in Deuteronomy and Its Cultural Environment in Honor of Jeffrey H. Tigay*, ed. Nili Sacher Fox, David A. Glatt-Gilad, and Michael J. Williams (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 357–358.

elevates his reputation. This does not fulfill YHWH's goals in speaking to Job, and that is why YHWH speaks again.[220]

This analysis of the divine speeches provides a foundation for the evaluation of YHWH's character in the poetic dialogues of *Job*. It challenges the view that YHWH's character traits in the poetic dialogues conflict with his character in the prose. The idea that YHWH threatens to disappear from human affairs is contradicted by his direct intervention in the life of Job by speaking out of the whirlwind. While YHWH surely rebukes Job, it is not clear how much more stern or indifferent he appears than in the prose opening scenes, in which he allows Job to be afflicted without fault, or in the conclusion in which he threatens Job's friends with dire consequences for failing to speak properly.

Neither does it appear that the depiction of YHWH in the divine speeches can be properly described as transcendental or abstract. YHWH speaks to Job directly, using plain Hebrew (so to speak), and talks about a number of tangible aspects of the world. The tone of YHWH's speech from the whirlwind differs from his conversations with the opponent in Job 1–2, but this far more likely reflects the differences in the context and in speaking with a member of the divine assembly and a human being than some irrevocable difference in YHWH's character. While it is the case that his speech does not explicitly address what Job and his friends had spoken of before, in the world of the story it is not clear how this makes him any less anthropomorphic or real than his depiction in the opening scenes or the conclusion.

[220] By contrast, YHWH's silence, and his approving description of Job's speaking in Job 42:7–9, indicate that Job's final speech indicated success: "Since there is no third divine speech to Job, we may infer that Job's response in chap. 42 was the goal toward which God's speeches were driving." Timmer, "God's Speeches, Job's Responses, and the Problem of Coherence in the Book of Job: Sapiential Pedagogy Revisited," 301.

On the other hand, there are several clear instances of continuity between the characterization of YHWH in the prose and the poetic dialogues. First and foremost, in both prose and poetry YHWH acts to elevate his reputation and his glory. In both prose and poetry YHWH is willing to intervene in the lives of human beings if it would contribute to his aggrandizement. In addition, YHWH concern with the impact of speech upon his reputation is consistent throughout the opening scenes, the poetic dialogues, and the conclusion.[221] YHWH's interest in speech can be observed in his particular attention to the speech of Job and its impact on his reputation in both prose and poetry. Notably, in both the opening scenes and in the speeches from the whirlwind YHWH shows little to no interest in hearing or expounding theological justifications for suffering or for the questions regarding the relationship between righteousness and blessing that so capture the attention of Job and his interlocutors and have captured the attention of many of the readers of *Job* for millennia.

In short, the most significant aspects of YHWH's characterization are consistent across the prose and poetic portions of *Job*. His motivations and modes of pursuing his goals show great consistency, even as he adapts to differing circumstances as might be expected of any character in a narrative world. In the following chapter, I demonstrate that YHWH's interest in human speech remains consistent as he again intervenes to mitigate the threat that the speech of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar poses to his reputation. In fact, I argue that concern is the key to understanding the events of the conclusion, including Job's second and final reversal of fortunes. However, before turning to the conclusion, I utilize this analysis of the divine speeches to help understand Job's final speech in 42:1–6 and the relationship of his characterization in the different portions of *Job*.

[221] See also Chapter Two and Chapter Four.

JOB'S FINAL SPEECH IN JOB 42:1–6:

AFFIRMING GOD'S SUPERIORITY IN THE HIERARCHY

Job's final words of the poetic dialogues appear in Job 42:1–6. This is the final direct quotation of Job's speech in the entirety of *Job*. This speech has been described as the conclusion, climax, or as an otherwise defining component of the text: "More often than not these six verses are seen as the one passage that defines the reading of the entire book."[222] However, philological difficulties and challenges in determining its relationship to the textual context have led to widely varying interpretations of Job's speech that offer a broad range of possibilities for how it contributes to the meaning of *Job* and its impact upon Job's characterization.

In what follows, I evaluate several interpretations and argue that the philological and textual evidence best supports the view that in this speech Job declares that his time of mourning is over. In addition, the evidence indicates that in this speech Job also affirms YHWH's superiority, just as YHWH commanded him to do in the divine speeches.[223] In light of these

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[222] Terje Stordalen, "The Canonical Taming of Job (Job 42.1-6)," in *Perspectives on Israelite Wisdom: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Jarick, LHBOTS 618 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 187–207, here 187. See also Troy W. Martin, "Concluding the Book of Job and YHWH: Reading Job from the End to the Beginning," *JBL* 137.2 (2018): 299–318, here 299: "Job's interpreters generally agree that Job 42:2–6 represents the conclusion of the book." Some point to verse 6 in particular, as in Cho, "Job the Penitent," 145: "The verse is understood as the crux for the entire book—having to do with the character of Job, the relationship between the poetic core and the prose frame, and the ethical and moral landscape of the book" and Pieter van der Lugt, "Who Changes His Mind about Dust and Ashes? The Rhetorical Structure of Job 42:2-6," *VT* 64.4 (2014): 623–39, here 626. See also Clines, *Job*, 1212; and J. Leveque, "L'épilogue du livre de Job. Essai d'interprétation," in *Toute la sagesse du monde. Hommage à Maurice Gilbert, s.j. pour le 65e anniversaire de l'exégète et du recteur*, ed. F. Mies, Le livre et le rouleau 7 (Bruxelles: Presses Universitaires de Namur, 1999), 37–55, here 37.

[223] Job had attempted in his first response simply to stop speaking, but that wasn't enough, and so YHWH spoke again. Whether or not the content of YHWH's second speech was more persuasive, YHWH's second speech indicated to Job that silence was insufficient and showed that YHWH was not going to give up until Job affirmed his greatness. See discussion in this section.

findings, it is clear that Job's final speech depicts him differently than the rest of the poetic dialogues, with his characterization in this final speech most closely resembling his characterization in the opening scenes. Finally, I evaluate the variation in Job's characterization throughout *Job* and show that this variation does not create incoherence because each of the shifts in Job's character have a clear cause, indicating that Job's character goes through development similar to that apparent in other ancient Near Eastern and biblical texts.

Job's Final Speech in the Dialogues: Affirmation in Job 42:1–6

Scholars have advanced a wide variety of interpretations of Job's final speech.[224] An influential view is that Job's speech is a defiant denunciation in which Job declares that his criticisms of God were right all along. One oft-cited proponent of this view, John Briggs Curtis, argued that in this speech Job "totally and unequivocally rejects YHWH" and expresses sorrow that humanity is under the power of a deity who cares so little for them: "Therefore, I feel loathing, contempt and revulsion [toward you, O God], and I am sorry for frail man."[225] More recently, Edward Greenstein translated the end of Job's final speech to express disdain and pity: "That is why I am fed up;/ I take pity on 'dust and ashes!' (=humanity)."[226] Greenstein argued that this speech indicates that "Job understands the deity to be exactly as he had feared: a purveyor of power who

[224] Job 42:1–6, and verse 6 in particular, is possibly the most analyzed portion of *Job*. For recent bibliography, see Cho, "Job the Penitent," Martin, "Concluding the Book of Job and YHWH: Reading Job from the End to the Beginning," Clines, *Job*, 1204; and E. J. van Wolde, "Job 42:1–6: The Reversal of Job," in *The Book of Job*, ed. W. A. M. Beuken, BETL 114 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994), 223–50.

[225] Curtis said that Job responds to YHWH's expression of power in the divine speeches by "renouncing the deity who would be so contemptuous of his most faithful devotee" in a bitterly sarcastic renunciation that is "consistent with his sharpest denunciations of God in the rest of the dialogue." Curtis, "On Job's Response to Yahweh," here 497, 498, and 505.

[226] Greenstein, *Job: A New Translation*, xix–xxi.

cares little for people. Parodying the divine discourse through mimicry, Job expresses disdain toward the deity and pity toward humankind."[227] The view that in the final speech an angry and defiant Job rejects God has become increasingly influential in the past several decades.[228]

However, there are several philological problems with this interpretation. Both Curtis and Greenstein understood אמאס in verse 6 to express emotion: "I feel loathing" and "I am fed up." But David Lambert has demonstrated that such psychological terminology does not align with the usage of the verb מאס, which describes a relationship and therefore "functionally indicates repudiation."[229] Lambert provided a number of examples in which it is preferable to understand the verb to express rejection rather than an emotional or psychological meaning: "Is it 'the stone that the builders abhorred has become the cornerstone' (Ps 118:22) or the stone that they 'rejected'? Israel 'rejects' God's commands (e.g., Amos 2:4); that is, they don't do them. Likewise, someday 'everyone will reject his idols of silver and idols of gold' (Isa 31:7)."[230] Throughout the Hebrew Bible, the verb מאס consistently functions to express an action where a subject dismisses or otherwise ends a relationship with an object.[231] While such a rejection might

[227] Greenstein, *Job: A New Translation*, 184–85.
[228] Two of the earliest to adopt this view, James G. Williams and David Robertson, suggested that the interactions between Job and YHWH were fundamentally ironic in that Job exposed God as a "chaotic, capricious, jealous tyrant" whose mismanagement of the universe is "radically wrong or deficient." Job's final speech gives the appearance of repentance, but his confession is only "tongue-in-cheek" because he has no other choice than but to appear to repent before such a deity. Robertson, "The Book of Job: A Literary Study," 466; and James G. Williams, "You Have Not Spoken Truth of Me: Mystery and Irony in Job," *ZAW* 83.2 (1971): 231–55, here 238 and 247. See also Perdue, *Wisdom Literature*, 125–27 and *Sword and Stylus*, 138–39.
[229] Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," 565.
[230] Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," 565. Lambert's examples also include Amos 5:21; Jer 7:29; Isa 7:15; and Prov 15:32.
[231] The verb often appears to describe the real or hypothetical severing of the relationship between YHWH and the Israelites, either because the Israelites reject YHWH's leadership, kingship, or his statutes (Lev 26:15, 43; Num 11:20; 1 Sam 8:6; 10:19; 2 Kgs 17:15; Isa 30:12; Jer 6:19; 8:29; Ezek 5:5; 20:13; 16; 24; Amos 2:4); or because YHWH rejects and puts an end to

be accompanied by negative emotions, in a significant number of attestations it is clear that the verb must communicate active rejection and not merely emotion. In some cases, it does not communicate emotion at all. YHWH did not have negative feelings towards David's brother; he had rejected him as a candidate for the kingship (1 Sam 16:7). YHWH states that because his people rejected knowledge, he rejects them from being priests to him (Hos 4:6). Saul rejected the word of YHWH, so YHWH rejected Saul from being king over Israel (1 Sam 15:22, 26). YHWH's rejection of his chosen people results in far more than an emotional response: it is the termination of the covenant between them (Psa 89:39–40).

Similarly, the attestations of the verb מאס in *Job* express active rejection. Lambert pointed out that when Job uses the verb in one of his earlier speeches, he is not just indicating a negative feeling towards his life but indicates that his life is now or soon will be ending: "'I have repudiated [life]; I shall not keep on living [lit., I shall not live forever]. Cease from me, for my days are but a breath' (Job 7:16). This is not just a negative valuation of life; it is a decision to abandon it."[232] Similarly, Job uses this verb in a later speech to describe his reckless jeopardizing of his life by summoning God to answer him. After asserting that, were God to answer, the deity would crush and wound him in a contest that Job could not win (Job 9:13–19), Job says that he accepts those consequences as long as he can declare his righteousness: אם אצדק פיו[233] ירשיעני תם

his relationship with his people (Lev 26:44; 2 Kgs 17:20; 23:27; Isa 5:24; 41:9; Jer 6:30; 7:29; 14:29; 31:37; 33:24, 26; Hos 9:17; Psalm 78:59; Lam 5:22).

[232] Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," 566.

[233] Following Greenstein, *Job: A New Translation*, 41: "Read *piw* for *pi* "my mouth." The virtually synonymous parallel line makes this certain. That Job incriminates himself is Eliphaz's later contention (15:5–6), not Job's. An ancient scribe surely sanitized the reading here; but the point is elaborated by Job in verses 30–31 below." See also those cited by Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 138. Dhorme's argument that Job is not sure if he will accidentally implicate himself does not align with Job's steadfast assertation of his righteousness throughout the dialogues. A theologically-motivated scribal change is more likely.

אני ויעקשני תם אני לא אדע נפשי אמאס חיי אחת היא על כן אמרתי תם ורשע הוא מכלה "Even if I were righteous, his mouth would condemn me. Even if I am blameless, he would make me wicked. I care[234] not for myself. I reject my life. It is the same. Therefore I say: 'He destroys the blameless and the wicked'" (Job 9:20–22). Here, Job states that he accepts the risk that that will come from an encounter with God and uses the verb אמאס to declare that he rejects his life if that is necessary to summon the deity. There is no suggestion in this speech that Job loathes his life.

Similarly, the verb מאס is used by Eliphaz in his admonition that Job not reject the discipline of God (Job 5:17); by Bildad as part of his assurance to Job that God does not reject the blameless nor help those who do evil (Job 8:20); and by Job to describe the young children who actively speak against him alongside his former friends who turn against him (Job 19:18). Job says he would like to say to God: "Do not declare me guilty. Tell me why you contend against me. Is it good for you that you oppress, that you reject the work of your hands and that you cause the design of the wicked to shine?" אל תרשיעני הודיעני על מה תריבני הטוב לך כי תעשק כי תמאס יגיע כפיך ועל עצת רשעים הופעת (Job 10:2–3). The action communicated by תמאס is equated with contending against someone and contrasted with favoring the wicked: this rejection is far more than emotion. Finally, Job defends his righteousness by declaring that he would accept punishment if he ever unjustly rejected the משפט of one of his servants (Job 31:13). In each of these attestations, it is clear that the verb מאס expresses rejection.[235] This does not support the interpretation of Curtis and Greenstein that Job is using the verb to express loathing or disdain for YHWH.

[234] For this sense of the verb ידע, see Gen 39:6. This translation is preferred also by Greenstein, *Job: A New Translation*, 41 and Clines, *Job*, 214.

[235] I do not include in this analysis two attestations of the verb in the speeches of Elihu, nor one attestation in Job 30:1 which is the most obscure.

Another philological problem involves the phrase עפר ואפר. The interpretations of Curtis and Greenstein depend upon these two nouns functioning as a hendiadys that refers figuratively to "the wretched human condition" or "man in his utter frailty before the divine."[236] They, like many others, cited as support for this analysis two other attestations of the nouns appearing consecutively in Gen 18:27 and Job 30:19.[237] In both of these passages the phrase is used by a human to refer to their lowly status before God. However, it is difficult to identify a hendiadys that communicates such a specific, specialized meaning on the basis of two attestations.

This is all the more so because it is not necessary to posit a specialized meaning in order to interpret both Abraham's and Job's use of the phrase as an expression of their lowly status. Dust and ashes frequently appear in the Hebrew Bible as symbols of lowliness and humility, both individually and together. The noun אפר is associated with the fate of the wicked being ash when YHWH acts against them (Mal 3:21), with those who cower in ashes (Lam 3:16), and with lowliness associated with a need for repentance (Dan 9:3). The noun עפר is associated with the lowliness of Jehu before YHWH raised him to the kingship (1 Kings 16:2), with YHWH raising up the poor from the dust and the needy from refuse (1 Sam 2:8; also Psa 113:7), with Zion being told to leave behind the lowliness of captivity and arise from the dust (Isa 52:2), and with kings being trampled and made like dust by the sword of YHWH (Isa 41:2). In addition, both dust and ashes frequently appear in association with the lowliness of mourning.[238]

Both Abraham and Job draw upon these associations to express their lowly status. Abraham uses them to express his inferiority so that his attempt to negotiate with YHWH is not

[236] Greenstein, *Job: A New Translation*, xx. Curtis, "On Job's Response to Yahweh," 500.
[237] Also Cho, "Job the Penitent," 153–54; and Timmer, "God's Speeches, Job's Responses, and the Problem of Coherence in the Book of Job: Sapiential Pedagogy Revisited," 300.
[238] See below.

perceived as inappropriate pride. Job uses them to express the depths of affliction that he is experiencing as part of his challenge to YHWH's justice. It is preferable to understand the use of אפר and עפר in both Gen 18:27 and Job 30:19 as expressions of lowliness without positing a hendiadys with a specific, specialized meaning on the basis of these two attestations alone. Because עפר ואפר is not a hendiadys with a specialized meaning, it is not possible to understand Job's final phrase to be an expression of pity for humanity.

These philological issues work against the interpretation of Job's final speech as defiant. A final problem with this view is that it cannot be reconciled with YHWH's positive evaluation of Job's speech in the deity's speech to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar in Job 42:7–9. Those who espouse it have to argue either that YHWH praises Job for courage in speaking truth to power with integrity[239] or that this is simply a contradiction caused by the combination of originally disparate materials,[240] sometimes adding that the contradiction is a deliberate attempt by the second writer to mislead or make ironic what Job actually says and YHWH's evaluation of it.[241] The problem with the first argument is that it requires that YHWH stops pursuing his previous goals and instead prioritizes speaking truth even when it is criticism of God, a value that he has nowhere else articulated or even hinted at. The problem with the second is that it depends on a reconstruction of the composition of the text of *Job* that is not certain. The problem with both

[239] Greenstein, "Truth or Theodicy? Speaking Truth to Power in the Book of Job," here 257–58. Others who have understood YHWH to affirm some other aspect of Job's speech, such as courage, or truthfulness about his own character, or effort to establish a relationship with the deity, include Andersen, *Job*, 97–98, 221; Schifferdecker, *Out of the Whirlwind: Creation Theology in the Book of Job*, 107; and Elaine A. Phillips "Speaking Truthfully: Job's Friends and Job," *BBR* 18 (2008): 40. These proposals face the same problem: YHWH has not elsewhere expressed an interest in any of these things.

[240] Williams, "You Have Not Spoken Truth of Me: Mystery and Irony in Job," 233–37.

[241] Curtis, "On Job's Response to Yahweh," 510; Robertson, "The Book of Job: A Literary Study," 468.

arguments is that the philological evidence discussed above does not support them, indicating that it is necessary to investigate whether there is an interpretation of Job's final speech that is better supported by the philological and contextual evidence.

Another common view is that Job is expressing penitence for previous actions which he now acknowledges are sinful. Proponents of this view understood Job's repentance to include expressing regret, shame, contrition, and even "disgust" at his sinful behavior.[242] Some described Job to experience an "emotional turning" his back on his sin and to undergo an "internal transformation."[243] Among these scholars, there were varied positions on what exactly Job is repenting of. Some said that Job repents of having spoken and argued from what he now realizes is a fallacious belief that justice is tied to an ideology of retributive justice.[244] Others argued that Job admits he was wrong and now repents of having spoken in ignorance because he attempted to discuss things which are beyond the human capacity of understanding.[245] Still others identified as Job's sin some particular behavior that put him in opposition to God, either his challenging and speaking negatively about God and his governance,[246] his demanding a resolution to the

[242] Michael V. Fox, "Job the Pious," *ZAW* 117 (2005): 351–66, 364: "Job, sitting on dust and ashes, feels disgust (at his earlier words) and repents." Also Cho, "Job the Penitent," 147, 153; André LaCocque, "Justice for the Innocent Job!," *BibInt* 19.1 (2011): 19–32, here 29; Timmer, "God's Speeches, Job's Responses, and the Problem of Coherence in the Book of Job: Sapiential Pedagogy Revisited," 299.
[243] Machinist, "The Question of Job," 174; and Cho, "Job the Penitent," 147, especially n. 12.
[244] LaCocque, "Justice for the Innocent Job!" and Lester J. Kuyper, "The Repentance of Job," *VT* 9 (1959): 91–94. See also Tsevat, "The Meaning of the Book of Job," 90–91.
[245] Fox, "God's Answer and Job's Response," 19, 21; also "Job the Pious," 364–66; Leveque, "L'épilogue du livre de Job. Essai d'interprétation," 221; Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, lix, 646–47.
[246] Timmer, "God's Speeches, Job's Responses, and the Problem of Coherence in the Book of Job: Sapiential Pedagogy Revisited," 298–300; Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978), 573. See also Machinist, "The Question of Job," 173.

injustice he had suffered,[247] or simply his general attitude and speech.[248] Cho recently argued that Job repents specifically of what he said to YHWH in chapters 29–31 because in these speeches he declared his righteousness so vociferously that he implicitly asserted his own superiority over God. Thus, in this last speech Job repents of the "pride of humanity" that he committed in Job 29–31.[249]

These interpreters were correct to point out that in his final speech Job announces that he will no longer engage in specific actions, particularly speech that God does not like. However, to view Job's declaration of a change in his action as related to sin and penitence is complicated by the absence of accusations of sin by YHWH: "YHWH never accuses Job of sin, nor does Job confess it."[250] Even more importantly, the view that Job's final speech is first and foremost an articulation of repentance that is defined by interior change or psychological or emotional expression conflicts with the philological evidence for the meaning of the phrase נחמתי על עפר ואפר in v. 6.

This is because verbal forms of the root נח"מ do not indicate the subject's emotional state or any form of the subject's interiority. While some interpreters and lexica include among the meanings of the verbal forms of the root נח"מ "repent," "regret," or "be sorry,"[251] more focused

[247] Thomas F. Dailey, "And Yet He Repents – On Job 42,6," *ZAW* 105.2 (1993): 205–9.
[248] Pope, *Job*, 347–48.
[249] Cho, "Job the Penitent."
[250] Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," 558.
[251] *BDB*, s.v. "נחם" lists for the niphal "be sorry, moved to pity, have compassion, rue, suffer, comfort oneself, be comforted, ease oneself," for the piel "comfort, console," for the pual "be comforted, consoled" and for the hithpael "be sorry, have compassion, rue, repent of, comfort oneself, be comforted, ease oneself, by taking vengeance." *HALOT*, s.v. "נחם," lists for the niphal "to become remorseful, to regret something, to repent, to be sorry, to find consolation, to gain one's satisfaction, gratify oneself against, to observe a time of mourning, termination of mourning rituals," for the piel "to comfort," for the pual "to become consoled" and for the hithpael " to plot revenge against, to obtain vengeance, to be grieved by, to change one's mind, to allow oneself to be comforted." *DCH* 5, s.v. "נחם," lists for the niphal "regret, be sorry, repent

analyses have challenged some or all of these possibilities.[252] The most recent and most effective analysis is that of David Lambert, who argued that the root נח"מ "does not address interiority at all" but instead indicates "a compelled change in the state of relationships between a subject and an object, one of release, of letting go or disengagement."[253] Lambert's description is supported by the other attestations of verbs from the root נח"מ that describe release or disengagement when a person or YHWH turns away from a previous decision or a planned course of action. For example, YHWH uses the verb to declare that he is renouncing his decision to make Saul king: "I retract that I made Saul king" נחמתי כי המלכתי את שאול למלך (1 Sam 15:11, see also 15:35). Sometimes the verb נחם is used when the subject ceases to continue a particular action, as when YHWH abandons (וינחם) the spreading of the plague he sent upon Israel and orders the divine messenger to stay his hand (2 Sam 24:16).[254] The narrator states that God steered the Israelites

(of), relent, be moved to pity, have compassion, comfort oneself, be comforted, be consoled, gain satisfaction (for oneself), avenge oneself," for the piel "comfort, console, vindicate," for the pual "be comforted" for the hithpael "(allow oneself to) be comforted, comfort oneself, repent, have compassion." The large number and diversity of translations offered in these lexica suggests that the standard view that they represent does not accurately represent the complete sense of the root's meaning.

[252] Focusing on the niphal, Curtis, "On Job's Response to Yahweh," 499–500 argued that the verb נחם never means "repent." Dale Patrick, "The Translation of Job xlii 6," *VT* 26.3 (1976): 369–71, here 370, pointed out most instances of the niphal verb נחם are about changing a course of action, and added "since God is the subject of the most of these, there is no suggestion of guilt or remorse." See also the analysis of H. Van Dyke Parunak, "Semantic Survey of NḤM," *Bib* 56 (1975): 512–32, although the evidence discussed below complicates several features of his analysis.

[253] Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," 566.

[254] This disassociation with a previously undertaken or determined action is a frequent usage of verbal forms of the root נח"מ, especially when YHWH is the subject. YHWH states in Jeremiah 18 that if he intends to destroy a wicked nation but they turn from evil, he will abandon (נחמתי) his previously intended course of action and they will not be destroyed (Jer 18:8). Then, he states that if he intends to help build up a nation and they do evil, then he will abandon (נחמתי) his previously intended course of action and will not do good for them (Jer 18:10). Moses attempts to dissuade YHWH from his declared intent to destroy all the Israelites "Turn from your burning anger and relent from this evil for your people" שוב מהרון אפך והנחם על הרעה לעמך (Exod 32:12; the verb is used again to describe YHWH abandoning his plan in Exod 32:14); when YHWH

away from Philistine territory to prevent them from abandoning the Exodus: "Lest the people disengage [from their journey] when they see battle and turn back to Egypt" פן ינחם העם בראתם מלחמה ושבו מצרימה (Exod 13:17).[255]

In cases where the verb does indicate turning from sin and to YHWH, it is better understood to refer to a material disassociation rather than internal remorse, as in the middle of a lengthy complaint against the unrepentant wicked people in Jeremiah: "No one gives up their evil" (Jer 8:6). YHWH sent the flood after he disassociated from (וינחם) his previous action to create man on the earth (Gen 6:6). This action transcends feeling regret or sorrow. It is better understood as YHWH releasing from his previous work as creator of humanity: he decides to wipe them out because he is abandoning that decision and its effects (Gen 6:7).[256] This evidence indicates that verbs from the root נח"מ are best understood to indicate the change in relationship between a subject and object, not as expressions of sorrow, regret, or penitence.

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abandons (וינחם) his plan to destroy Nineveh after the people repent (Jon 3:10), Jonah complains that he knew this would happen because YHWH is merciful, slow to anger and "one who relents from evil" ונחם על הרעה (Jon 4:2). See also Jer 26:3, 13, 19; 42:10; and Amos 7:3, and 6. See the verb being used to describe YHWH disassociating from his previous positive treatment of his people and turning to destruction in Ezek 5:13.

[255] Even cases of verbs from the root נח"מ that have previously been understood to express emotion or be primarily psychological are best understood to refer to the change in relationship characterized by disassociation or release. After bringing the tribe of Benajmin to the brink of extinction, the other Israelites changed their relationship to Benjamin (וינחמו בני ישראל אל בנימן; Judg 21:6) and began working to preserve the tribe's continued existence. This shift was not merely an emotional one. After this change, the Israelites immediately ask one another what they can do to find wives for the remaining men of the tribe, enact a plan to acquire them, and make peace with the Benjaminites. The story ends with another description of the people changing their relationship to the people of Benjamin (והעם נחם לבנימן; Judg 21:15). At this point, it is not clear why the people would continue to feel compassion. Instead, the verb is describing the end of the change in relationship that began in Judg 21:6.

[256] That the verb נחם deals with a material change in relationship rather than psychology or emotion is reflected in its usage in an oracle in Ezekiel 24:14 in which YHWH declares that he will not abandon his judgment of the Israelites: "I am YHWH. I have spoken. It comes. I will act. I will not let go. I will not spare. I will not relent. According to your wars and your actions you will be judged, says Lord YHWH."

An additional problem for interpreting Job's final speech as an emotional expression of penitence is the complement to the verb עפר ואפר על. Some who have understood Job to be declaring his repentance have interpreted this phrase as locative, indicating that Job is repenting on top of dust and ashes.[257] While this is possible—Job has been sitting among ashes since the affliction of his skin (see Job 2:8), and he could be referring in general to his position above the dust of the earth—it is not clear what the significance of this locative information would be.

More significantly, in every other attestation of a verbal form of נח"מ with a complement introduced by על, the preposition על indicates the object of the action of release or disengagement.[258] For example, the preposition על introduces the noun הרעה or a similar referent in ten attestations that refer to YHWH's deviation from intended destruction (or blessing).[259] It is far more likely that עפר ואפר refers to the object with which Job's relationship has changed than that this attestation of נחם + על is unique. This has led some to take the view that עפר ואפר is a hendiadys and that Job either repents of his "human frailty" that caused him to speak negatively about God or that he repents by acknowledging his lowly status in relation to God.[260] I argued above that the evidence for such a hendiadys is weak, indicating that this position is not supported either. In sum, the weight of the evidence does not support the view that Job is expressing penitence.

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[257] Machinist, "The Question of Job,"174; Fox, "God's Answer and Job's Response," 19; Pope, *Job*, 347; Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 646; Kuyper, "The Repentance of Job," 94; Tsevat, "The Meaning of the Book of Job," 90–91; Gordis, *The Book of Job,* 573.
[258] See Exod 32:12, 14; Deut 32:36; 2 Sam 13:39; Isa 22:4; Isa 57:6; Jer 8:6; 16:7; 18:8, 10; 31:15; Ezek 14:22; 32:31; Joel 2:13; Amos 7:3, 6; Jon 3:10; 4:2; Psa 90:13; 135:14; Job 42:11; 1 Chr 19:2 and 21:15.
[259] See Exod 32:12, 14; Jer 18:8, 10; Joel 2:13; Amos 7:3, 6; Jon 3:10; 4:2; and 1 Chr 21:15.
[260] For the first, see Timmer, "God's Speeches, Job's Responses, and the Problem of Coherence in the Book of Job: Sapiential Pedagogy Revisited," 300. For the second, see Cho, "Job the Penitent," 173–74.

Another view is that in Job 42:1–6 Job is announcing that he is consoled and will end his mourning and lamentation.[261] Job is now exiting the ritual stance of mourning that he entered into after he learned of the deaths of his children and loss of his possessions back in the opening scenes and that defined his actions throughout the poetic dialogues. While mourning is characterized by "a determined fixation on past loss and self-definition on its basis,"[262] by accepting consolation Job indicates his willingness to let go of the past and turn "toward a new future."[263] During the period he is in his ritual stance of mourning, Job enacts his own diminishment—the narrative first reports him engaging in ritual acts of mourning in Job 1:20 and 2:8—and engages in lamentation that ultimately escalated into his challenge of God. By announcing that he is consoled, Job indicates that he ends his complaints, ceases his lament, and even "recants his stance of protest."[264] Several proponents have pointed out that consolation is not merely about experiencing emotional comfort in response to distress, but is an action: "a decision one makes for oneself, that one will accept comfort and thus cease the period of mourning and resume a normal life."[265] Thus, by announcing that he is exiting his stance of mourning, Job is choosing to transition back "to a normal state, rejoining society."[266]

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[261] See Patrick, "The Translation of Job xlii 6;" P. A. H. de Boer, "Haalt Job Bakzeil? (Job Xlii 6)," *NedTT* 31 (1977): 181–94 [translated into English in P. A. H. de Boer, "Does Job Retract?," in *Selected Studies in Old Testament Exegesis*, ed. C. van Duin, OtSt 27 (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 179–95]; Habel, *Job*, 583; Illman, "Theodicy in Job," 331; Thomas Krüger, "Did Job Repent?," in *Das Buch Hiob und seine Interpretationen: zum Hiob-Symposium auf dem Monte Verita vom 14.-19. August 2005*, ed. T. Krüger et al., ATANT 88 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2007), 217–30, here 223–26; van Wolde, "Job 42:1–6: The Reversal of Job," especially 240–250; Clines, *Job*, 1218–24; and Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective." According to L. J. Kaplan, a similar view was held as far back as Maimonides, see L. J. Kaplan, "Maimonides, Dale Patrick, and Job XLII 6," *VT* 28.3 (1978): 356–58.
[262] Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," 566.
[263] van Wolde, "Job 42:1–6: The Reversal of Job," 250.
[264] Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," 564.
[265] Clines, *Job*, 1221.
[266] Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," 560.

The view that Job's final speech includes an announcement of his consolation and the end of his mourning is supported by the philological evidence. While verbal forms of the root נח"מ can describe any change in state defined by release or disengagement, one of the most common usages is to describe the consolation that occurs when an individual releases the ritual stance of mourning that they had previously held.[267] In addition, both עפר "dust" and אפר "ashes" are commonly used in association with mourning practices. For example, in Ezek 27:30 mourning sailors perform rituals in which they use both עפר and אפר.[268]

The clear and close association of both dust and ashes with mourning led Patrick to suggest that in Job 42:6 "perhaps 'dust and ashes' can be taken as a concrete image standing for an action, lamenting or mourning….When Job says that he forswears dust and ashes, he means that he will remove himself from the physical setting associated with mourning and lamentation and cease what he has been doing from [2:8]."[269] Further supporting this interpretation of על עפר ואפר is the fact that ash and dust appear as visible markers of Job's mourning in particular: Job sits on ash at the beginning of his state of mourning (Job 2:8), and Job's friends throw dust upon themselves when they arrive and mourn with him in silence for seven days (Job 2:12).[270] Habel

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[267] This is a clear manifestation of the description of נח"מ adopted above: consolation occurs when the subject releases, lets, go, abandons, disassociates from their stance of mourning. See, for example, Gen 24:67; 37:35; 38:12; 2 Sam 12:24; 13:39; Isa 22:4; 51:3; Jer 31:13, 15; and Zech 1:17.

[268] עפר is explicitly involved in connection with mourning rituals in Josh 7:6; Job 16:14; and Lam 2:10. אפר is explicitly involved in connection with mourning rituals in 2 Sam 13:19; Isa 58:4; 61:2; Jer 6:26; Jon 3:6; Esth 4:1, 3; and Dan 9:3.

[269] Patrick, "The Translation of Job xlii 6," 370. See also de Boer, "Does Job Retract?," 191–93: "Job abandons 'dust and ashes', i.e. he closes the period of mourning for the disasters that struck him;" van Wolde, "Job 42:1–6: The Reversal of Job," 249; Clines, *Job*, 1210; and Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," 567.

[270] Fox argued that this conflicts with the usage of the preposition על as a complement to verbs from the root נח"מ, stating that "When נחם על means 'be comforted for', the indirect object is not the mourning itself but a deceased person…or a personified city…or…the misfortune itself." Thus he argued, "one would not 'be consoled' for mourning or its symbols, but only for the loss

argued that this connection indicates that the reference in Job 42:6 specifically points back to the tokens of his mourning that he now puts away.[271] All this evidence supports the view that "dust and ashes are the hallmarks of mourning and would thus seem to serve as a metonym for the stance that Job now casts away."[272]

This interpretation of נחמתי על עפר ואפר as a declaration meaning "I am consoled regarding my mourning"[273] has further contextual support because it aligns with the theme of mourning and consolation throughout *Job*. Thomas Krüger said that in this view "42:6 fits very well in the thematic thread of desired, failed and successful consolation in the Book of Job: Job in his distress looks for consolation; his three friends cannot comfort him; but finally he finds consolation with God and with his relatives and acquaintances."[274] This may go beyond being a theme. As discussed above, David Lambert has shown how it is possible to understand the whole of the story of *Job* "as a fable of failed consolation and its denouement."[275] The significance of

itself." Fox, "God's Answer and Job's Response," 20. However, this argument is not as strong as it appears at first glance. There are only eight cases in which a verbal form of נח"מ and the complement introduced by על indicates the "loss" for which the mourner is consoled (2 Sam 13:39; Isa 22:4; Jer 16:7; 31:15; Ezek 14:22; 32:31; Job 42:11; and 1 Chr 19:2). This is not enough evidence to conclude that the construction can not take a less rigidly defined type of object, particularly in light of the other evidence for the view that Job uses עפר ואפר to refer to his mourning. In addition, there are fifteen other attestations of this construction that refer generally to the object which the subject is releasing (for example, in Jer 18:8, 10). A more expansive understanding of the possible object of this construction would align with this majority of the attestations.

[271] Habel, *Job*, 583.

[272] Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," 567.

[273] Not all who held this view translated this exact way, for example Patrick, "The Translation of Job xlii 6," 370, translated "'I *repent* of dust and ashes,' that is, cease wallowing in dust and ashes…this last bistich expresses Job's intention of abandoning the posture of mourning." Note that Patrick used the English verb "repent" even as his explanation made it clear his view was in opposition to those who understood Job to be penitent.

[274] Krüger, "Did Job Repent?," 224.

[275] Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," 562.

this topic throughout *Job* provides a clear reason why Job's consolation would occupy such a significant place within his final speech.

Both philological and contextual evidence indicate that, in the story, YHWH efforts to console Job were successful. In his final speech, Job declares that his period of mourning is over.[276] In the remainder of this portion of this chapter, I show that, at the same time as he exits his state of mourning in Job 42:1–6, Job also complies with YHWH's instructions to respond verbally by affirming YHWH's superiority over him in knowledge and power.

It is not surprising that the end of Job's mourning would be accompanied by active compliance with YHWH's instructions to speak. In the example that Lambert cited of YHWH compelling Joshua to end his mourning, the state of mourning was preventing Joshua from doing something YHWH considered important: eliminating the source of sin that caused the Israelites'

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[276] This evidence also opposes two other interpretations of Job 42:1–6. That the verbs and forms in v. 6 cannot be interpreted as penitential or defiant contradicts the view that the speech is deliberately ambiguous, such as in William S. Morrow, "Consolation, Rejection, and Repentance in Job 42:6," *JBL* 105 (1986): 211–25, here 212 and 223: "these varying interpretations can be best explained by positing an ambiguity that has been deliberately structured into 42:6 by the Joban author…. Job 42:6 is a polysemous construction, which even its original readers would have heard differently, depending on their evaluation of the meaning of Yahweh's address to Job." See also Carol A. Newsom, "The Book of Job," in *NIB* 4:629; and Yitzhak Berger, "On the Restoration of Job: Poetics and Meaning in Job 42," *VT* 74 (2024): 19–20.

Two other scholars argued that the end of Job 42:1–6 is spoken by YHWH and that he repents of his actions against Job. See Martin, "Concluding the Book of Job and YHWH: Reading Job from the End to the Beginning," and van der Lugt, "Who Changes His Mind about Dust and Ashes? The Rhetorical Structure of Job 42:2-6." But neither provided a persuasive explanation for why there is no indication of the change in speaker in the middle of Job 42:1–6. Martin argued that Job's "prosecutorial declaration in v. 4 "I shall ask the questions, and you will answer me" is sufficient to indicate a change in speaker: "These words, however, also signal a transition between Job's speech in verse 2–4 and YHWH's speaking in verse 5–6 and obviate the need for an introductory formula for YHWH's reply." Martin, "Concluding the Book of Job and YHWH: Reading Job from the End to the Beginning," 310. But Martin did not identify any comparable examples in Hebrew narrative of a transition from one speaker to another without any intervening indication whatsoever. Nor did he provide any further justification, and this view cannot be sustained without it.

military defeat (Josh 7:4–5). YHWH not only commands Joshua to stop mourning but also to gather the people and go through a process of selection that identifies the responsible party and removes them from the camp (Josh 7:10–15). Joshua obeys by not only ending his mourning but also carrying out YHWH's instructions, identifying the guilty party, and executing him and his family (Josh 7:16–26).

Similarly, when Job ends his mourning, he also complies with YHWH's instructions in the divine speeches to affirm the deity's supremacy to him in power and wisdom. This affirmation appears in several parts of Job's final speech.

Job 42:1–6

ויען איוב את יהוה ויאמר[1]	Job answered YHWH, saying:
ידעתי[277] כי כל תוכל[2]	"I know that you are capable of anything
ולא יבצר ממך מזמה	and no plan is impossible[278] for you.[279]
מי זה מעלים עצה בלי דעת[3]	'Who is this who blackens a design without knowledge?'
לכן הגדתי	I spoke.[280]

[277] Reading with the Qere as a first-person common singular. The consonantal text in the Ktiv could be read as a defective spelling of the first common singular as well (see Isa 140:13; 1 Kgs 8:48; and discussion in *GKC* §44i; contra Stordalen, "The Canonical Taming of Job (Job 42.1-6)," 190–93. Stordalen demonstrated that a defective spelling of the verb ידע would be very uncommon, but the examples above show that such variations in spelling do occur, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Thus the nature of orthographical variants does not suggest that such a possibility can be ruled out).

[278] For examples of a feminine singular noun functioning as the subject of a third person masculine singular verb, see Isa 14:11; 1 Sam 25:27 and Jer 51:46. See also discussion in *GKC* §145o: "Variations from the fundamental rule…very frequently occur *when the predicate precedes the subject* (denoting animals or things)."

[279] For this construction referring to unbounded capacity, see Gen 11:6.

[280] לכן is often translated "therefore," but here it more likely introduces the following statement as a reaction to a previous action, or a direct response to preceding speech: "Dans quelques passages *lākēn* introduit la réaction a des paroles d'une autre personne… La traduction usitée 'c'est pourquoi' ne convient pas ici. Nous préférons comprendre *lākēn* comme 's'il en est ainsi, puisqu'il en est ainsi, étant donné cette situation, clans ce cas' ou quelque chose de semblable."

ולא אבין נפלאות ממני	But I do not understand things more wonderful than I.
ולא אדע	I do not know.
שמע נא ואנכי אדבר[4]	Listen! I am speaking!
אשאלך והודיעני	‘I will ask you, and you will inform me.’
לשמע אזן שמעתיך[5]	By the hearing of the ear I had heard about[281] you,
ועתה עיני ראתך	and now my eye has seen you.
על כן אמאס ונמתי על עפר ואפר[6]	As a consequence, I reject and I end my mourning.”

Job’s declaration in v. 2—that there is nothing that YHWH cannot do—affirms YHWH’s greatness and superior capabilities.[282] The greatness of YHWH’s power, and Job’s relative weakness, was a consistent theme in the speeches from the whirlwind. Here, Job affirms YHWH’s greatness, and, by implication, his own inferiority, just as YHWH wanted.[283] Similarly, in v. 3, Job affirms the inferiority of his own knowledge just as YHWH had. Job identifies things that are too wonderful for him and declares he cannot understand them. Then he plainly asserts the limited extent—and clear inferiority—of his own knowledge: “I do not know.” These statements of praise indicate the difference between Job and YHWH that the deity was trying to

B. Jongeling, “*Lākēn* dans l’Ancien Testament,” in *Remembering All the Way: A Collection of Old Testament Studies Published on the Occasion of the Fortieth Anniversary of the Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland*, ed. A. S. van der Woude, OtSt 21 (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 190–200, here 193. See, for example, in Gen 4:15; 30:15; Num 16:11; Judg 8:7; 11:8; Jer 2:33; and 1 Sam 27:6; 28:2. See also description of לכן in *IBHS* 39.3.4e “usually introduces a proposed or anticipated response after a statement of certain conditions.” Here, it is not directly represented in the English translation.

[281] For the direct object of the verb שמע indicating that which is “heard about,” see Exod 18:1; 1 Kgs 5:14; 2 Kgs 19:11; and Psa 132:6.

[282] If the second person form preserved in the consonants of the Ktiv is favored, Job’s statement still declares the greatness of divine power. Whether Job says “I know” or “you know,” either way Job knows and is declaring YHWH’s unbounded capability to do anything.

[283] See Westermann’s comment that “God pushes Job to the spot where Job must acknowledge God to be creator and Lord.” Westermann, *The Structure of the Book of Job*, 106–07.

compel Job to acknowledge verbally: "Verse 2 is a straightforward acknowledgment on Job's part of the power of Yahweh, and v. 3b is a confession of Job's inability to match Yahweh in the realm of wisdom. In the contest for honor, Job is here acknowledging Yahweh's precedence."[284] In contrast to Job's first, unresponsive and therefore unsatisfactory speech, here Job makes explicit declarations about YHWH and himself.[285] By making them, Job affirms YHWH's superiority over him, just as YHWH wanted him to do.

Several other features of Job's final speech are best understood as part of Job's compliance with YHWH's instruction to affirm divine superiority. Job twice incorporates a quotation from YHWH's speech into his response.[286] The framing of these quotations within his own speech indicates his rejection of his former, non-affirming speech and his compliance with YHWH's instructions to affirms God's superiority. In verse 3, Job admits that his previous speech challenging YHWH was in error. He repeats one of the rhetorical questions that YHWH had asked in Job 38:2, with minor modification: "'Who is this who blackens a design without knowledge?'"[287] In addition to signaling the connection to YHWH's speech, the character Job

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[284] Muenchow, "Dust and Dirt in Job 42:6," 608. See also Timmer, "God's Speeches, Job's Responses, and the Problem of Coherence in the Book of Job: Sapiential Pedagogy Revisited," especially 298–300, who saw in this last speech Job's acknowledgement of the difference between him and God. See also Perdue's description of these speeches as a "hymnic confession" after he has understood "that only Yahweh, not an ordinary mortal, has the knowledge and power to rule the cosmos." Perdue, *Wisdom Literature*, 119. Note that Patrick, "The Translation of Job xlii 6," 370 was among the first to describe Job's final speech as praise.

[285] "The first is Job's recognition of God's omnipotence (xlii 2). The second part of vs 3 is also best understood as a recognition and even as a praising of God's miracles, which are beyond Job's grasp." de Boer, "Does Job Retract?," 188.

[286] Those who have understood the first part of 42:3 and the second part of 42:4 as quotations include Pope, *Job*, 289; Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 646; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 576; Schifferdecker, *Out of the Whirlwind: Creation Theology in the Book of Job*, 185; Clines, *Job*, 1214–16, and those cited below.

[287] The extreme similarity between Job's statement and that of YHWH indicates that this is an unmarked quotation. The only difference is the abbreviation of במלין בלי דעת to בלי דעת, and the use of מעלים in place of מחשיך, two verbs that both express darkening with slightly different

positions this question in his own speech so that he can admit that his own speech was ignorant: after the quote, Job responds, "I spoke." With this, Job acknowledges that his previous speech was improper, and he "concedes Yahweh's superior wisdom and confesses that he spoke out of ignorance."[288] By acknowledging that his previous speech was woefully uninformed, Job indicates that his present and future speech will be different, and so will align with YHWH's instructions.

The framing of the second quotation has a similar effect. In the beginning of v. 4, Job verbalizes that he is complying with YHWH's commands that he speak: "Listen! I am speaking!" שמע נא ואנכי אדבר.[289] Elsewhere, Job and his interlocutors had used the imperative of

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nuance. The differences mean that the quotation is a minor paraphrase. On the common appearance of unmarked quotations in Proverbs, Qohelet, and *Job*, see Robert Gordis, "Quotations in Wisdom Literature," *JQR* 30.2 (1939): 123–47; on unmarked quotations in biblical and ancient Near Eastern and Rabbinic literature see Robert Gordis, "Quotations as a Literary Usage in Biblical, Oriental and Rabbinic Literature," *HUCA* 22 (1949): 157–219; and "Virtual Quotations in Job, Sumer and Qumran," *VT* 31.4 (1981): 410–27. See also Michael V Fox, "The Identification of Quotations in Biblical Literature," *ZAW* 92.3 (1980): 416–31, who argued for some controls on the identification of quotations. Fox acknowledged that Job 42:3 and 4 lack many of the markers he identified, yet were most probably quotations of YHWH on the basis of their similarity to YHWH's words. Greenstein has also studied the use of quotations in Job, see especially Greenstein, "דברי איוב הראשונים – מה היקפם," especially 251–57; and "Truth or Theodicy? Speaking Truth to Power in the Book of Job," 247, and understood Job to quote YHWH. Edward Ho, "In the Eyes of the Beholder: Unmarked Attributed Quotations in Job," *JBL* 128.4 (2009): 703–15; argued that Job's final speech cannot include any unattributed quotations because there are no other such quotations in *Job*, a claim made on the basis of his analysis of many of the purported quotations. But Ho does not provide a compelling alternative understanding of Job 42:3 and 4, and even if his other arguments were accepted, the lack of other unattributed quotations in *Job* would not make convincing evidence that Job could not be using such quotations here. It is also of note that even as Job is clearly quoting YHWH, the function of the statement is to present a question that Job then answers. Even a reader who missed that it is a quotation would still be able to follow the logic of Job's speech.

[288] Habel, *The Book of Job*, 579. See also van Wolde, "Job 42:1–6: The Reversal of Job," 250: "he discovers that most things are beyond his scope, that he does not have insight, nor could have, in the masterplan of creation."

[289] I do not understand this part of Job's speech to be a quotation of anything. This is simply a declarative, sincere statement.

שמע to draw others' attention to their speeches (Job 5:27; 13:6, 17; 15:17; and 21:2). In Job 42:4, Job uses it to draw YHWH's attention to himself as he complies with the deity's instructions. The framing of the following quotation makes it, in Job's mouth, an expression of submission: "I will ask you, and you will inform me."[290] This further distances Job from his improper speech challenging YHWH. In addition, submission is the expression of the proper relationship between an inferior human being and the superior deity. By putting the two statements in v. 4 together, Job communicates that, while his past speech was improper due to his ignorance, moving forward he is going to speak properly as YHWH commanded.

Job ends this speech by again expressing his inferior knowledge at the same time as he declares that his newly improved understanding of God will prevent him from speaking in a way that challenges YHWH's superiority in the future. First, he contrasts the limited knowledge about God that motivated his previous actions with his present, more complete understanding: לשמע אזן שמעתיך ועתה עיני ראתך "By the hearing of the ear I had heard about you, and now my eye has seen you" (Job 42:5). Twice in his earlier speeches, Job had used the combined images of the hearing of the ear and the seeing of the eye to refer to complete understanding, first to communicate that he understood the fortunes of human beings in the world just as well as his interlocutors, הן כל ראתה עיני שמעה אזני ותבן לה כדעתכם ידעתי גם אני לא נפל אנכי מכם "Look, my eye has seen all. My ear has heard and understood it. What you know, I also know. I am not lower than you all" (Job 13:1), and also to describe how others had known with surety that he judged with righteousness כי אזן שמעה ותאשרני ועין ראתה ותעידני "When ear heard it called me happy, when eye saw, it testified for me" (Job 29:1). Here in Job 42:5, Job uses this same language to contrast

[290] Quoting YHWH from Job 38:3 and 40:7. This quotation links Job's response to YHWH's speech, even as Job utilizes the statement differently.

the lesser knowledge of God he had previously, when he had spoken improperly, with the greater knowledge of God he has now.[291] The conjunction phrase על כן identifies this greater knowledge as the reason that Job discontinues and disavows his previous, improper speech, as he declares in v. 6.[292]

Job's final speech is best understood in light of this dual function: Job exits his state of mourning and affirms YHWH's superiority over him. Job complies with both actions that YHWH sought to compel by speaking from the whirlwind. This is why YHWH does not need to continue speaking to Job, and why he can without hesitation describe Job's speech positively when he turns his attention to Job's friends, whose speeches have caused problems of their own (see Job 42:7–9).[293] The characterization of Job in Job 42:1–6 is in stark contrast to his depiction in the middle portion of the poetic dialogues. Whereas before YHWH's speeches, Job had repeatedly criticized and challenged God, in this final speech Job is submissive and compliant. He speaks positively about God and acts in accordance with his proper understanding of his

[291] It is possible that Job is contrasting the incomplete knowledge that comes from hearing about God "by hearsay" from others and the better knowledge that comes from God himself. See Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 646. In a related vein, Muenchow, "Dust and Dirt in Job 42:6," 210, argued "this verse juxtaposes two types of understanding: that acquired by traditional learning, and that which results from immediate insight."

[292] Job uses two verbs to describe these actions: אמאס and נחמתי. While it is clear that על עפר ואפר is the object of נחמתי (see discussion above), there is less certainty about the relationship of this prepositional phrase and אמאס. My translation above understands על עפר ואפר to function as the object of both verbs. For this interpretation, see Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," 566–67; van Wolde, "Job 42:1–6: The Reversal of Job," 249; and de Boer, "Does Job Retract?," 193. Others have understood the implied object of אמאס to be the lawsuit Job earlier made against God. See Scholnick, "The Meaning of *mišpaṭ* in the Book of Job," 528; Habel, *Job*, 576; also Clines, *Job*, 1219, 1222, although via different interpretation: אמאס from the homonym meaning "to flow, melt," with Job using it here to refer metaphorically to submission. This interpretation understands Job to explicitly withdraw that suit and declare "that his role as a lamenting litigant among the ashes has terminated" (Habel, *Job*, 579). While it is difficult to prove either view, in both cases Job is clearly rejecting his previous improper speech.

[293] See Chapter Four.

relationship to the deity. This is but one element of a characterization that is far more complex and dynamic than many interpreters have accounted for. It is to the dynamics of Job's characterization and their significance for the coherence of *Job* that I now turn.

Development in the Characterization of Job in the Prose and Poetry

This analysis of Job's characterization provides evidence necessary for evaluating whether the character is coherent or incoherent. To begin, these findings refute the view that there are two contradictory but internally consistent Jobs, one in the prose and one in the poetry. Instead, there is significant continuity between Job's characterization in the opening scenes and the beginning of the poetic dialogues. At the same time, Job is not a flat, unchanging character. In fact, there is greater variation in Job's characterization in the poetic dialogues—in which Job progresses from lamenting to challenging God to affirming divine superiority—than has often been recognized.[294]

In this section, I argue that the variation in Job's characterization throughout *Job* does not create incoherence. This variation is better understood as character development. I support this claim by demonstrating that, in the narrative, the changes in Job's character are the result of factors that can be identified as sufficient cause for character change by comparison to other ancient Near Eastern and biblical texts that depict variation in characterization without creating incoherence.

If variation in the depiction of Job's actions and traits were used as a basis for dividing the text, then it would be possible to identify five distinct parts of the narrative, with Job

[294] A few scholars have observed a complexity greater than the traditional binary, including Timmer, "God's Speeches, Job's Responses, and the Problem of Coherence in the Book of Job: Sapiential Pedagogy Revisited," especially 303–4; and Linda Jean Sheldon, "The Book of Job as Hebrew Theodicy: An Ancient Near Eastern Intertextual Conflict between Law and Cosmology" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2002), especially 49–50.

displaying significantly different behaviors and characteristics in each, even as there are also similarities. At the beginning of the opening scenes (Job 1:1–6), Job is characterized as extremely faithful and righteous to such an extreme that he sacrifices just in case his children have sinned without anyone being aware of it. In the latter portions of the opening scenes (Job 1:20–22; 2:8–10), Job is similarly depicted as righteous by his praise and worship of God, with the narrator noting he does not sin even as he deals with immense suffering. There is also a new element of his depiction: he has responded to this suffering by entering a state of mourning and engaging in several mourning rituals. The development of Job's mourning is a definite case of variation in characterization, even as it has rightly not been seen as a source of incoherence.

I demonstrated above that Job's first speech in the poetic dialogues (Job 3:1–26 and 4:12–21) shows significant continuity with the opening scenes, even as there is a clear change in behavior. While Job's mourning in this speech is not a new aspect of his characterization, the escalation to cursing his own life is a significant development. Job is depicted as distraught, and there is no praise or worship of God, even if there is also no cursing or challenging. The challenging of God only appears in Job's later speeches (spanning Job 9–31). It is in these speeches that Job is characterized as confrontational, angry, and critical of God, a stark contrast to his depiction in his first speech of the dialogues, even as the continuation of mourning and lamentation creates some continuity. Finally, in his final speech of the poetic dialogues (Job 42:1–6), Job is depicted as compliant to God's instructions as he praises YHWH and ends his mourning so that he can affirm his inferiority and God's superiority in the divinely appointed hierarchy.[295]

[295] I do not include the conclusion (Job 42:7–17) in this analysis because this portion of the text does not expand upon his characterization. His prayer and sacrifices on behalf of his friends extends the depiction of his compliance and worshipping God that is found in the final speech of

From this summary, it can be observed that Job's characterization is complex and varies significantly. While this complexity could be analyzed in a number of ways, what is certain is that there is significant variation in Job's characterization and that there are multiple points at which his character changes. But this variation does not conclusively determine that Job is an incoherent character. A number of interpreters have understood features of change in Job's characterization as manifestations of character development rather than incoherence.[296] For example, speaking specifically about the variation in the depiction of Job in the opening scenes and in the middle of the dialogues, Konrad Schmid described it as a dramatic change in character: "The change of Job from a passive sufferer to a rebel, a fact that has been seen as a weighty argument for diachronic separation, is part of a dramatic development that in and of itself does not call the coherence of the text into question."[297] Schmid raised the possibility that variation in characterization in biblical narrative could play a significant role in dramatizing character development. This would not be very surprising, because character development so commonly plays such a meaningful role in modern narrative, where it can and often does form one of the central features of modern narrative works.

While every convention of modern narrative is not universal, there are several reasons that character development should be taken seriously as a feature of biblical narrative. First, there

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the poetic dialogues. The only other action is the naming of his daughters, and the precise significance of these names and the naming is not clear.

[296] For examples see Hartley, "From Lament to Oath," who identified developments in Job's form and content of his argument; Timmer, "God's Speeches, Job's Responses, and the Problem of Coherence in the Book of Job: Sapiential Pedagogy Revisited," especially 303–4 in which he described "a coherent but diachronic Job who changes across the span of the book in response to his unprecedented experiences;" Dermot Cox, "A Rational Inquiry into God: Chapters 4-27 of the Book of Job," *Greg* 67.4 (1986): 621–58; and Alexander W. Breitkopf, *Job: From Lament to Penitence*, Hebrew Bible Monographs 92 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2020).

[297] Oeming and Schmid, *Job's Journey: Stations of Suffering*, 10.

are instances of significant character development that are uncontroversial. The characterization of Noami changes dramatically between her bitter return to Bethlehem in Ruth 1:19–22 and her joyous, twofold blessing of Boaz in Ruth 2:19–20. A dramatic example of character development from Mesopotamian literature is Enkidu in the Epic of Gilgamesh: his encounter with the woman Šamḫat in the first part of the narrative results in an extreme transformation of his character.[298] If all variation in characterization created incoherence, the list of characters in biblical and ancient Near Eastern narrative that could be described as coherent would be short.

Meir Weiss provided a persuasive explanation for why character development should be expected to play some role even in ancient literature whose form and genre entail different standards of verisimilitude than modern conventions. Speaking specifically about the development of Job's character within the short span of the opening scenes, Weiss said:

> The commonly held view that the Job of our story is a man whose righteousness remains static from beginning to end is not consistent with the story itself. Although the didactic aim of the story might require the existence and collapse of a philosophy that is based on imagination and speculation to be concretized in purely legendary figures and motifs, nonetheless, in order to make the conclusion not merely theoretical but also, and

[298] One of the more significant examples of variation in characterization in ancient Near Eastern literature is the contrast between the characterization of Enkidu at different points of the Epic of Gilgamesh. While this is found in all extant versions of the text, in my discussion I cite the Standard Babylonian (SB) version as reconstructed by George unless otherwise indicated (see citation below). In the Epic of Gilgamesh, Enkidu is first characterized as an uncivilized, wild being who lives like an animal among the beasts of the wilderness (SB I 103–112). Later he is characterized as a weaker but wiser person who is rejected by animals but can speak and eat like other human beings and live among them (SB I 197–214). Note citations of the Gilgamesh Epic follow the protocol in Andrew R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Text*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), see especially 2:545 and 551.

> primarily, of practical value in life, the characterization of the protagonist and his reaction to the world must be built upon real human nature.[299]

Thus, while variation in characterization certainly can create incoherence, the possibility that variation is a manifestation of the development of coherent characters must also be considered.

There is additional reason to consider this possibility for the case of Job. The significant continuity in Job's characterization throughout multiple stages of the narrative, including even the continuity between the final depictions of Job in his last speech and his earliest portrayal in the opening scenes, creates a level of consistency that contributes to coherence. In determining whether Job is a coherent character that underdoes development or not, the operative questions are what type and degree of variation creates incoherence, and under what circumstances character change can be understood as development of a coherent character.

As discussed in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, standards by which coherence are evaluated are culturally specific. On the basis of examples of character change in Hebrew and ancient Near Eastern narratives, I propose that variation in characterization can be understood as development when the narrative depicts a cause for the change in characterization that is proximate, clear, and logical. For example, Job's transition from non-mourner to mourner does not appear incoherent because the change occurs in close proximity to loss of his children, possessions, and good health, which is a logical cause to enter a state of mourning, and the connection between the change and cause is quite clear: Job begins mourning when he learns of his losses. Similarly, the cause of the change in Noami's characterization is clear: she begins behaving differently when she sees the abundance of Ruth's gatherings and learns about the graciousness of Boaz (Ruth 2:18–20). This cause is in close proximity to the change in the time

[299] Weiss, *The Story of Job's Beginning*, 74.

of the story, and it is logical why Noami would feel less bitter in light of the immediate improvement to her food supply and the prospect of greater prosperity for her and Ruth.

In a final example, both characters and narrator explicitly indicate that Enkidu's "transition from protohuman savage in the uplands to socialized human being in the city of Uruk" was caused by his interactions and sexual relationship with the woman Šamḫat.[300] The cause is clear, proximate, and draws upon a belief found in many human cultures that "sexual knowledge brings the end of innocence."[301] While this reasoning may be opaque to many modern readers, it is logical within the narrative.

In the remainder of this section, I identify causes for each of the major points of change in Job's characterization and show that in each case there is a proximate, clear, and logical cause for the change. This analysis shows that the variation of Job's characterization is the manifestation of character development. As a result, Job should be understood to be a coherent character throughout the text of *Job*.

The first major transition in Job's character occurs when he begins mourning, a change for which the cause is well-understood. The second major transition occurs when Job's mourning transforms into the full-throated, lengthy lament in his first speech in the poetic dialogues. The mourning is not novel, but the lack of accompanying statements of praise and the extremity of Job's lament have caused some scholars to argue that this change is so drastic that it creates

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[300] The quotation is of A. R. George, "Enkidu and the Harlot: Another Fragment of Old Babylonian Gilgameš," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 108.1 (2018): 10–21, 10. The seduction and first sexual encounter is narrated in SB I 188–196. That this encounter is the cause of Enkidu's transformation is articulated by several characters, including Gilgamesh in I 134–45; 161–66; 187 and by the narrator themselves in SB I 197–206. See George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 547–51.

[301] George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 451. See further discussion of Enkidu's transformation and how it entails an integration into human society in George, "Enkidu and the Harlot: Another Fragment of Old Babylonian Gilgameš," 19–20.

incoherence. However, this change has a direct cause: the passage of time. Seven days and seven nights pass between Job's actions in the opening scenes and his first speech of the dialogues (Job 2:13, 3:1). This cause is proximate and clearly associated with the change in Job's characterization. The description of Job's friends sitting with him for seven days immediately precedes the beginning of Job's speech, which is directly linked to that passage of time by the opening prepositional phrase: אחרי כן פתח איוב את פיהו ויקלל את יומו "After this Job opened his mouth and cursed his day" (Job 3:1).

The passage of time is a logical cause for the manifestation of Job's mourning to become more extreme because grief and its expressions can progress over time.[302] Weiss associated the transformation with the prolonging of Job's pain: "from the terrible silence of seven days and seven nights that weighed upon the spirits of the mourners, it was inevitable that bitterness, resentment, and even rebellion should accumulate within Job's heart, so that when his distress reaches its pinnacle…it is impossible for him to hold back his outburst any longer."[303] While a more subtle cause, the passage of time is a logical reason for the development in his characterization between the opening scenes and the poetic dialogues.

The next shift in Job's characterization is caused by his friend's speeches, particularly their dogmatic insistence that because God is just he only blesses the righteous and afflicts the wicked. Before Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar speak, Job reacts to his suffering by engaging in rites of mourning and lamentation, none of which are objectionable to the deity. Then the friends

[302] Fox, "The Meanings of the Book of Job," 10: "This is the same man as the patient Job of the prologue but at a different stage of grieving."
[303] Weiss, *The Story of Job's* Beginning, 78. See also "Reading the Tale of Job (Job 1,1–2,13 + 42,7–17)," 151: "No more need to be said to explain Job's outburst than to consider what he has been through….Perhaps we are to picture his friends' silent presence as allowing him at last to open up and pour out his pent up grief and anger."

condemn his words as problematic (Job 4:2–5; 8:2; 11:2–3) and repeatedly accuse him of sin and tell him his suffering will end if he turns back to God (Job 5:17; 8:5–6; 10:5–6; 11:14–15; 15:4–6; 22:4–9).[304] They insist that Job must have sinned because the deity determines human fortune (Job 5:11–18, 18; 20:23, 29; 25:2–3), and justice requires that God preserve the righteous (Job 4:7; 8:20; 11:13–19; 22:15–30) and cause the wicked to suffer (Job 4:8–11; Job 8:3–4, 11–20; 11:20; 15:20–35; 18:5–21; 20:4–28; 22:4–11). These beliefs lead Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar to perceive that God is afflicting Job because he is wicked, and thus they wrongly "set up the juridical controversy between God and Job."[305]

The friends cause Job to change his behavior because their efforts to persuade are half successful. Job had not in the opening scenes or the first speech of the dialogues expressed any interest in questions of justice or reasons for his suffering.[306] As Job responds to their increasingly hostile accusations and lectures on how God administers justice, he becomes persuaded that they are right about what justice demands.[307] But because he knows that he is

[304] They continually insist Job has sinned even though they are not able to identify the sinful behavior. They go to ridiculous lengths to explain this inability, asserting that all human beings are sinful by nature (Job 4:12–21; 15:15–16; 25:4–6); accusing Job's children of sin (8:4); claiming the deity could identify Job's sins even if they can't (Job 11:3–6); and even lying outright by fabricating sinful behavior on Job's part (Job 22:5–11).

[305] Iwański, *The Dynamics of Job's Intercession*, 198. Iwański pointed out that they arrive at this wrong conclusion "due rather to their stiff theology and not to the real circumstances."

[306] Even as his first speech in the dialogues engaged in extreme lamentation, he did not mention the deity or question the legitimacy of his suffering. His only "why" questions are in regard to why he was born and now continues to live.

[307] In arguing for this position, the friends take the same position as the opponent and thus "unconsciously become Satan's advocates" see Iwański, *The Dynamics of Job's Intercession*, 199. See also Andrew E. Steinmann, "The Structure and Message of the Book of Job," *VT* 46.1 (1996): 85–100, here 97 and 99; and Vogels, "Job a parlé correctement. Une approche structurale du livre de Job," 841.

innocent of sin, he concludes that God's treatment of him is unjust.[308] In other words, Job comes to agree with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar that God should distribute suffering and blessing on the basis of what is deserved because of righteousness or wickedness. But he disagrees with them about whether God is ruling justly because Job knows his own suffering is undeserved.[309]

As a result, Job begins to challenge God, asking the deity to account for Job's suffering and ultimately using legal terminology to accuse God of injustice. Hartley stated that the result is that "More than failing to comfort Job, they have tempted him to take the wrong course out of his affliction."[310] Job had always been sure of his innocence, but this change in his speech occurs because his friends caused him to adopt a false understanding of justice and how it manifests in the world:

> Job did not begin with that misconstruction of the world (there is no trace of it in chs. 1–2), but he was seduced to it first by Eliphaz and then by the other friends. He let himself be snookered into thinking that the problem of evil has something to do with sin and human (or divine) moral deserving. The entire discussion of Job and the friends, resting on the supposition that the god punishes by suffering and that the sufferer is the sinner, turns out to have been a tangent, a wrong turn that led nowhere but to more suffering.[311]

The speeches of Job's friends alternate with Job's speeches, so it is possible to see the gradual development of Job's reaction in proximity to its cause. By impacting Job's view of the world

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[308] This is why the shift is gradual: as Job becomes more persuaded his suffering is unjust, he escalates his challenges to God: "Job becomes increasingly emotional and angry with the explanation of his friends concerning his suffering." Machinist, "The Question of Job," 166.
[309] Ham, "The Gentle Voice of God in Job," 536: "Job and his friends agree on the theology of retribution but disagree only in regard to Job's innocence or guilt."
[310] Hartley, *Job*, 539.
[311] Edwin M. Good, "The Problem of Evil in the Book of Job," in *The Voice From the Whirlwind: Interpreting the Book of Job*, ed. Leo G. Perdue and W. Clark Gilpin (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), 50–69, here 67.

and what justice requires, Job's friends provide a proximate, clear, and logical cause for this development in Job's characterization.

The final change in Job's character is caused by YHWH's speeches from the whirlwind. I argued above that there is a clear causal relationship between YHWH's speeches and Job's final speech. In the speeches from the whirlwind YHWH successfully consoles Job and compels him, in his final speech, to praise God's power and confess his inferiority. Because YHWH is successful in compelling Job to resume "normal functioning,"[312] Job's character changes again. He no longer makes accusations or challenges God, but once again speaks positively about God. Job in this final speech is similar to who he was before his friends led him astray: he praises God even in the midst of suffering.[313]

This analysis shows that each of the multiple transitions in which Job's characterization changes is associated with an event or set of actions that caused the change. The existence of a proximate, clear, and logical cause for each change indicates that the variation in Job's character is the result of development.[314] This, in combination with the continuity in Job's character that connects his depiction across different portions of the text, indicates that Job is best understood as a coherent character. As a result, the characterization of Job contributes to the coherence of the text of *Job*.

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[312] Lambert, "The Book of Job in Ritual Perspective," 561.

[313] There is similarity but difference, as Job in his final speech has a greater knowledge of his place relative to God in the hierarchy of existence. See Timmer, "God's Speeches, Job's Responses, and the Problem of Coherence in the Book of Job: Sapiential Pedagogy Revisited," 303–04: "God's speeches cause him to change yet again, so that at the book's end Job is identical neither to the Job of the prologue nor to the Job of the speeches.

[314] Daniel Timmer described this by saying that *Job* presented "a coherent but diachronic Job who changes across the span of the book in response to his unprecedented experiences." Timmer, "God's Speeches, Job's Responses, and the Problem of Coherence in the Book of Job: Sapiential Pedagogy Revisited," 303.

CONCLUSION

The analysis in this chapter illuminates several features of the story told in *Job* and the impact of those features upon the evaluation of *Job*'s coherence. First, far from being a one-dimensional character—or two one-dimensional characters in different parts of the text—Job is a complex and dynamic character whose development is an example of the sophistication and literary artistry of biblical narrative. Because this complexity is a manifestation of character development, Job's characterization contributes to rather than challenges the coherence of *Job*.

In addition, this analysis provides a better understanding of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar's significance to the plot, as well as their contribution to the rhetorical function of the work. The story depicts their insistence upon a theology of retribution as the primary reason Job goes from unproblematic lamentation to active accusation against God. Their speeches demonstrate what impact false beliefs have upon the righteous sufferer, Job. This does more than just repudiate retribution theology; it suggests that its dissemination promotes an antagonistic relationship between one-time worshippers and the deity.

Similarly, understanding the function of Job's wife in the narrative illuminates both the narrative and its coherence. Because Job's wife's is a minor character who fulfills the entirety of her narrative function in the opening scenes by illustrating Job's character, her absence does not create incoherence. And the limited nature of this function explains the narrative's lack of attention to the impact of the disasters upon her.

Finally, this analysis shows that the divine speeches depict YHWH as a deity who is concerned more about how the actions and speech of his worshippers impact his reputation than he is about communicating details about justice or how he distributes blessing or affliction to human beings. This has interesting implications for what *Job* suggests about the importance of

theology, particularly in relation to the negative depiction of Job's friends' attempts to explain who God is and what he does. In addition, this characterization does not support the view that these speeches present a picture of the deity that contradicts what is found in the prose portions of the text. Instead, YHWH's objectives and values are consistent throughout the opening scenes and the poetic dialogues, contributing to the coherence of his character. In the following chapter, I show that interest in speech and its impact on his reputation defines YHWH's character in the conclusion, making his character consistent throughout the entirety of *Job*.

Chapter Four

Speaking Properly:

The Characterization of YHWH, Job, and Job's Interlocutors in the Conclusion to *Job*

Though often referred to as the "prose conclusion," the last portion of *Job* in 42:7–17 is distinguished as much by the significance of its story as by the contrast of its prose form to the long poetic dialogues that precede it. In just four verses, YHWH addresses Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar and reverses the fortunes of Job. Then the remainder of Job's prosperous life is described. Scholarly investigation of the conclusion to *Job* has focused on a wide range of issues, including the meaning of YHWH's final speech, YHWH's motivations for granting Job prosperity and children, whether the ending of Job illuminates YHWH's justice, the theological significance of the final speech and events, the depiction of YHWH, Job, and Job's interlocutors, and the function of the material as a conclusion to the text.[1]

[1] In addition to the commentaries, see Yitzhak Berger, "On the Restoration of Job: Poetics and Meaning in Job 42," *VT* 74 (2024): 1–27; Lance Hawley, "The Rhetoric of Condemnation in the Book of Job," *JBL* 139 (2020): 459–78; Troy W. Martin, "Concluding the Book of Job and YHWH: Reading Job from the End to the Beginning," *JBL* 137 (2018): 299–318; Karl G. Wilcox, "Job, His Daughters and His Wife," *JSOT* 42 (2018): 303–15; Thomas Kruger, "Job Spoke the Truth about God (Job 42:7-8)," in *"When the Morning Stars Sang": Essays in Honor of Choon Leong Seow on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Scott C. Jones and Christine Roy Yoder, BZAW 500 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 71–80; Paul K. -K. Cho, "Job 2 and 42:7–10 as Narrative Bridge and Theological Pivot," *JBL* 136 (2017): 857–77; "The Integrity of Job 1 and 42:11-17," *CBQ* 76 (2014): 230–51; Ingo Kottsieper, "»Thema verfehlt!«. Zur Kritik Gottes an den drei Freunden in Hiob 42,7–9," in *Gott und Mensch im Dialog: Festschrift für Otto Kaiser zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. Markus Witte, BZAW 345 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005), 775–85; Andrew Prideaux, "Job 42:7-17 and the God of the Happy Ending," *RTR* 71.3 (2012): 170–84; Michael V. Fox, "Reading the Tale of Job (Job 1,1–2,13 + 42,7–17)," in *A Critical Engagement: Essays on the Hebrew Bible in Honour of J. Cheryl Exum*, ed. David J. A. Clines and Ellen van Wolde (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2012), 145–62; André LaCocque, "Justice for the Innocent Job!," *BibInt* 19 (2011): 19–32; David Daniel Frankel, "The

Many of these issues relate to questions regarding *Job*'s coherence. Some scholars have argued that YHWH's statements in Job 42:7–8—in which he says that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar had failed to speak correctly and that Job had spoken correctly—are inconsistent with Job's complaints against the deity in the dialogues and his apparent admission of guilt recorded just verses earlier. Some have also argued that the positive description of Job's speech is

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Speech about God in Job 42:7-8: A Contribution to the Coherence of the Book of Job," *HUCA* 82–83 (2011): 1–36; Ian Young, "Is the Prose Tale of Job in Late Biblical Hebrew?," *VT* 59 (2009): 606–29; Elaine A. Phillips, "Speaking Truthfully: Job's Friends and Job," *BBR* 18 (2008): 31–43; Philippe Guillaume, "Dismantling the Deconstruction of Job," *JBL* 127 (2008): 491–99; Michael Schunk and Philippe Guillaume, "Job's Intercession : Antidote to Divine Folly," *Bib* 88 (2007): 457–72; J. van Oorschot, "Die Entstehung des Hiobbuches," in *Das Buch Hiob und seine Interpetationen*, ed. T. Kruger, ATANT 88 (Zurich: TVZ, 2007), 165–84; Dariusz Iwański, *The Dynamics of Job's Intercession*, AnBib 161 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 2006); Edward L. Greenstein, "Truth or Theodicy? Speaking Truth to Power in the Book of Job," *PSB* 27.3 (2006): 238–58; Kenneth Numfor Ngwa, *The Hermeneutics of the "Happy" Ending in Job 42:7-17*, BZAW 345 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005); David J. A. Clines, "Does the Book of Job Suggest That Suffering Is Not a Problem?," in *Weisheit in Israel: Beiträge des Symposiums "Das Alte Testament und die Kultur der Moderne" anlässlich des 100. Geburtstags Gerhard von Rads (1901–1971), Heidelberg, 18.-21. Oktober 2001*, ed. Hermann Lichtenberger, Hans-Peter Müller, and David J. A. Clines, Altes Testament und Moderne 12 (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2003), 93–110; D.-W. Nam, *Talking About God: Job 42:7-9 and the Nature of God in the Book of Job*, StBibLit 49 (New York: Peter Lang, 2003); J. Leveque, "L' Épilogue du Livre de Job. Essai d'interprétation," in *Toute la Sagesse du Monde. Hommage à Maurice Gilbert, s.j. Pour Le 65e Anniversaire de l'exegete et Du Recteur*, ed. F. Mies, Le livre et le rouleau 7 (Bruxelles: Presses Universitaires de Namur, 1999), 37–55; Ulrich Berges, "Der Ijobrahmen (Ijob 1,1-2,10; 42,7-17): Theologische Versuche angesichts unschuldigen Leidens," *BZ* 39 (1995): 225–45; Siegfried Wagner, "Theologischer Versuch über Ijob 42,7-9 (10a)," in *Alttestamentlicher Glaube und Biblische Theologie: Festschrift für Horst Dietrich Preuss zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Jutta Hausmann and H. J. Zobel (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1992), 216–24; Edwin M. Good, "The Problem of Evil in the Book of Job," in *The Voice From the Whirlwind: Interpreting the Book of Job*, ed. Leo G. Perdue and W. Clark Gilpin (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), 39–49; Donal J. O'Connor, "The Cunning Hand: Repetitions in Job 42:7,8," *ITQ* 57 (1991): 14–25; S. E. Porter, "The Message of the Book of Job: Job 42:7 as Key to Interpretation," *EvQ* 63 (1991): 291–304; Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger and Georg Steins, "Zur Entstehung, Gestalt und Bedeutung Der Ijob-Erzählung (Ijob 1f, 42)," *BZ N.F.* 33 (1989): 1–24; Athalya Brenner, "Job the Pious? The Characterization of Job in the Narrative Framework of the Book," *JSOT* 13 (1989): 37–52; Walter Vogels, "Job a parlé correctement. Une approche structurale du livre de Job," *NRT* 102 (1980): 835–52; James G. Williams, "You Have Not Spoken Truth of Me: Mystery and Irony in Job," *ZAW* 83 (1971): 231–55.

inconsistent with YHWH's statements in the speeches from the whirlwind that casts Job's speech in a negative light.[2] For example, Marvin Pope described YHWH's rebuke of the interlocutors and praise of Job as the "most striking" discrepancy between this passage and the rest of the text, and Oorschot said that YHWH's praise of Job in 42:7 contradicts Job's confession of error in the immediately preceding verses.[3]

In addition, scholars have argued that YHWH's condemnation of the speech of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar and his intention to afflict them unless they follow his instructions is an incommensurate reaction to their articulation of commonly held if mistaken views. Duhm argued that Job's interlocutors are depicted in the poetic material as pious men and that there is nothing about their characterization that would cause YHWH to become so angry that he entertains the possibility of destroying them simply because they express an inadequate theology.[4] On the contrary, some have understood Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar to have "toiled for God and upheld manfully the justice of his cause."[5] These problems led Ginsberg to claim that no one who believed that Job spoke correctly and the interlocutors spoke incorrectly in the dialogues would ever compose 42:6b–9 unless it previously existed as part of a work that didn't include those dialogues.[6] Crenshaw stated "The negative judgment on Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar must arise from another story that has not survived, since we cannot imagine that what they said in the

[2] See for example Job 38:2 and 40:8.
[3] Marvin H. Pope, *Job*, AB 15 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), XXVII–XXIX; Oorschot, "Die Entstehung Des Hiobbuches," 167. See also Matthias H. Stuhlmann, *Hiob, ein religioses Gedicht aus dem Hebraischen neu ubersetzt, gepruft und erlautert* (Hamburg: Friedrich Perthes, 1804), 36–37.
[4] Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob: erklärt*, KHC 16 (Freiburg i.B.: Mohr, 1897), VII–VIII.
[5] Duncan B. Macdonald, "The Original Form of the Legend of Job," *JBL* 14 (1895): 63–71, here 66.
[6] H. L. Ginsberg, "Job the Patient and Job the Impatient," in *Congress Volume Rome 1968*, ed. G. W. Anderson et al., VTSup 17 (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 88–111, here 89.

poetry would have been dismissed as lies."[7] The significance of YHWH's speech for the characterization of Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar, and for YHWH himself makes it a significant element of *Job*'s coherence.

Scholars have also argued that YHWH's reversal of Job's fortunes—causing Job to acquire ten new children and twice the material wealth he had at the beginning of the story and to receive the comfort and support of his friends and family for the remainder of his long life—creates incoherence. As early as Matthias Stuhlmann (1804) and as recently as Peter Machinist (2015), scholars have taken the view that this action suggests a connection between righteousness and blessing that is inconsistent with the rejection of retribution theology that they perceive in the poetic dialogues.[8] Marvin Pope referred to this a problem for the text's coherence: "Job's rehabilitation, in which he receives a bonus for his pains, appears to confirm the very doctrine of retribution which Job had so effectively refuted in the Dialogue."[9] For these and many other scholars, the poetic dialogues and the conclusion are incoherent because they support contradictory theological positions.[10] The perceived contradiction in theology relates

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[7] James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 103.

[8] Stuhlmann, *Hiob*, 36–37. Peter Machinist, "The Question of Job," in *Open-Mindedness in the Bible. A Volume of Studies in Honour of Bob Becking*, ed. Marjo C. A. Korpel and Lester L. Grabbe, LHBOTS 616 (London: T&T Clark, 2015), 165–78, here 168.

[9] Pope, *Job*, XXIX.

[10] Newsom said this discontinuity of theology "egregiously" disrupts the coherence of the text, which was itself part of the text's polyphonic juxtaposition of differing voices of which none triumph over one another. See Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 20–21, 257–61. See also Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978), 574; David J. A. Clines, "Deconstructing the Book of Job," reprinted in *What Does Eve Do to Help? and Other Readerly Questions to the Old Testament*, JSOTSup 94 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 106–23, here 113; (originally published in *The Bible as Rhetoric: Studies in Biblical Persuasion and Credibility*, ed. Martin Warner; [London: Routledge, 1990], 65–80); Katharine J. Dell, *The Book of Job as Sceptical Literature* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), 208–9; and Loren R. Fisher, *The Many Voices of Job* (Eugene,

specifically to the motivations that govern how YHWH interacts with, blesses, and afflicts human beings. As such, they are also relevant to the consistency of YHWH's characterization, which some scholars have called into question when investigating the coherence of *Job*.[11]

The conclusion to *Job* in 42:7–17 describes YHWH's final speech and his second reversal of Job's fortunes and bears directly on the evaluation of the coherence of the text. However, scholars have advanced competing interpretations of the conclusion and particularly of the meaning of YHWH's speech and his motivations for reversing Job's fortunes. Almost every aspect of YHWH's final speech remains unresolved: what YHWH refers to when he evaluates the speech of Job and of his interlocutors as נכונה or not, why he is so angry that he threatens to destroy Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar, and why their sacrifice and Job's prayer shields them from punishment. There also is dispute regarding YHWH's motivations for his decision to reverse Job's fortunes and give him wealth that is twice what he had in the beginning and the relationship of this reversal to the conclusion and the rest of *Job*.

The state of research indicates that a novel study of the conclusion in Job 42:7–17 is necessary to evaluate the coherence of the text. In this chapter, I conduct a philological and narratological analysis to construct the events and characters of the story represented by the text with particular attention to the characterization of Job, YHWH, and Job's interlocutors. I begin by investigating the grammatical and contextual evidence for the meaning of YHWH's final

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OR: Cascade Books, 2009), xii–xvi. Bruce Zuckerman argued that this obvious contradiction exists because the dialogues were an angry parodic response to the simplistic and unsatisfying message of the original prose tale. See Bruce Zuckerman, *Job the Silent: A Study in Historical Counterpoint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 104–17.

[11] Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob*, VIII; Morris Jastrow, *The Book of Job: Its Origin, Growth and Interpretation* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1920), 43–44. Yair Hoffman, "The Relation between the Prologue and the Speech-Cycles in Job: A Reconsideration," *VT* 31 (1981): 160–70, here 163–64; and Simeon Chavel, "Knowledge of the Lord in the Hebrew Bible," *Know: A Journal on the Formation of Knowledge* 2 (2018): 47–82, here 66 and 73.

speech in 42:7–8. I argue that YHWH evaluates speech to be correct or proper because of its impact rather than its content or its direction. YHWH is angry with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar because they failed to speak in a way that elevated his reputation and glory and instead hurt his reputation in the dialogues by causing Job to move from simply bemoaning his fate to challenging God. YHWH speaks to the interlocutors at this point in the story because he wants to compel them to begin speaking properly and prevent them from causing a threat to his reputation with their speech in the future.

I then analyze the evidence for YHWH's motivations for reversing Job's fortunes a second time. I show that the reversal of fortunes is directly grammatically associated with Job's intercessory prayer. I argue that this relationship and the other features of the story are best explained by the view that YHWH gave Job wealth and children to demonstrate to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar that they were wrong to suggest that God distributes prosperity and affliction to human beings according to the principle of just retribution. YHWH disproves this ideology to the interlocutors as a continuation of his efforts to prevent them from speaking in a way that threatens his reputation and to compel them to speak properly instead.

I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the conclusion's consistency with the opening scenes and the dialogues in terms of plot and characterization. I discuss in particular how the conclusion aligns with the opening scenes and the poetic dialogues in depicting YHWH as manipulating the fortunes of human beings in whatever way necessary to elevate his reputation and glorification and how this disproves the view that the deity rules the world in accordance with the ideology of just retribution. In all these aspects, the conclusion contributes to the coherence of *Job*.

YHWH'S FINAL SPEECH IN 42:7–8

Immediately following Job's final response to YHWH's speech from the whirlwind, YHWH addresses Job's interlocutors. This speech is crucial to the plot because it sets in motion the sequence of events that occupies the entirety of the conclusion. This speech is also crucial to the interpretation of the conclusion because it supplies information for the characterization of YHWH, Job, and Job's interlocutors.

Job 42:7–8

7ויהי אחר דבר יהוה את הדברים האלה	After YHWH said these things to Job, YHWH said to
אל איוב ויאמר יהוה אל אליפז התימני	Eliphaz the Teymanite:
חרה אפי בך ובשני רעיך כי לא דברתם	"My anger is kindled against you and against your two
אלי נכונה כעבדי איוב	friends, because you all did not speak properly with respect to[12] me, like my servant Job did.
8ועתה קחו לכם שבעה פרים ושבעה	Now, take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my
אילים ולכו אל עבדי איוב והעליתם	servant Job. Then you will offer a sacrifice for your own
עולה בעדכם ואיוב עבדי יתפלל עליכם	sake, and my servant Job will pray on your behalf, because
כי את[13] פניו אשא לבלתי עשות עמכם	I will grant him favor by not treating you disgracefully

[12] The usage of both attestations of אלי in 42:7 and 8 is ambiguous. See discussion below, where I argue that what is really at stake is how the speech has impacted the reputation of YHWH. Here the task of translation forces a definite rendering and so I translate as "with respect to" because it is certain that the speech in question has something to do with YHWH, either to or about him, and this phrase in English expresses that. In addition, the word "respect," even though used in a different sense in my translation, can also invoke the connotation of reputation or esteem.

[13] Following the emendation to כי את פניו proposed by Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob*, 205; see also, among others, Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job*, 580; David J. A. Clines, *Job*, WBC 17, 18A-18B (Dallas: Word Books, 1989–2011), 1226–27; seemingly Greenstein, *Job: A New Translation*, 187. Efforts to interpret the reading preserved in the textual witnesses of Job 42:8, כי אם, have been unsuccessful. On the awkwardness or unsuitability of כי אם here, see Chavel, "Knowledge of the Lord in the Hebrew Bible," 72; and Dhorme, *Job*, 648, who emends to כִּי-אָז. Though some have understood כי אם to be functioning as an asseverative particle (*HALOT*, s.v. "כִּי-אִם," 471;

נבלה כי לא דברתם אלי נכונה כעבדי איוב because you all did not speak properly with respect to me like my servant Job did."

Some aspects of YHWH's final speech are clear. YHWH addresses Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar and tells them he is angry because of their failure to speak נכונה—a failure which he contrasts to Job speaking נכונה—and gives them instructions to sacrifice and secure Job's intercession to prevent YHWH from treating them in a negative way. But many important aspects of YHWH's final speech have challenged interpreters. These aspects include the precise meaning of נכונה, the two usages of the prepositional phrase אלי, and the significance of YHWH's instructions for avoiding the threatened penalty through sacrifice by the interlocutors and intercession by Job. The most significant point of dispute is the meaning of YHWH's statement

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Driver and Gray, *Book of Job*, 2:349), research over the past decades has shown that neither כי nor כי אם function as asseverative particles (as early as Joüon §164g; see also Barry Louis Bandstra, "The Syntax of Particle *KY* in Biblical Hebrew and Ugaritic" [PhD diss., Yale University, 1982], especially 25–49; Blane Conklin, *Oath Formulas in Biblical Hebrew*, LSAWS 5 [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011], 66–75; Christian Locatell, "Grammatical Polysemy in the Hebrew Bible: A Cognitive Linguistic Approach to כי" [University of Stellenbosch, PhD diss., 2017], 275–76; and Grace J. Park, *Focus Construction with* kî ʾim *in Biblical Hebrew*, LSAWS 17 [University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2023]).

Some scholars have interpreted כי אם to be a form of the exceptive, suggesting that YHWH will not show favor to anyone but Job, and translating with some variation of "only" (Iwański, *The Dynamics of Job's Intercession*, 144; Conklin, *Oath Formulas in Biblical Hebrew*, 70; Gordis, *The Book of Job*, 494). But the only texts in which כי אם could be understood to be functioning to indicate exception are accompanied by a clause describing the situation to which that indicated by the כי אם is the exception, and that clause contains an indication of negation, either explicitly (for example with לא, אל, or אין) or implicitly (as part of an imprecation, a rhetorical question, or the negative clause is elided as part of an oath). YHWH's statement in Job 42:8 neither describes the condition to which showing favor to Job is an exception, nor is there an attached negated clause. For similar reasons כי אם cannot be functioning adversatively. Grace J. Park (*Focus Construction with* kî ʾim *in Biblical Hebrew*, for Job 42:8 see especially 184–85) has proposed a new model for understanding כי אם, including an analysis of all 158 attestations, but the model supposes the widespread and extended elision of words and phrases in כי אם clauses, and would require further demonstration to be accepted. For these reasons, the syntax and context of YHWH's statement in Job 42:8 do not align with any of the recognized usages of כי אם, and emendation is preferable.

that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar have failed to speak properly and the contrast with Job who had spoken properly. Because both Job and his interlocutors speak at length and on multiple occasions, it is not immediately clear what speech YHWH is describing. This point of interpretation is recognized to carry great significance, so much so that it has been described as a crux for interpreting all of *Job*.[14]

Differing positions on each point of interpretation have led scholars to advance a wide variety of proposals regarding the meaning and significance of YHWH's speech.[15] But amidst this diversity, there is a common tendency to prioritize the contrast between the speech of Job and that of his interlocutors as the primary or even only key to interpreting YHWH's statement. This often leads to attempts to interpret 42:7–8 by listing differences in what Job and his interlocutors have said in *Job*, identifying what Job said that YHWH would designate to be correct and what the interlocutors said that YHWH would designate to be incorrect, and then

[14] Articulated in the title of Manfred Oeming, "'Ihr habt nicht recht von mir geredet wie mein Knecht Hiob': Gottes Schlusswort als Schlussel zur Interpretation des Hiobbuchs und als kritische Anfrage an die moderne Theologie," *EvT* 60 (2000): 103–16. Note that this article is repr. in M. Oeming and K. Schmid, *Hiobs Weg* (Neukirchen-Vluyn; Neukirchner Verlag, 2001), 125–47; which was itself translated into English as Manfred Oeming and Konrad Schmid, *Job's Journey: Stations of Suffering*, Critical Studies in the Hebrew Bible 7 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015). Relatedly, Paul K. -K. Cho has described "the sharp transitions between the prose frame (Job 1–2, 42:7–17) and the poetic core (3:1–42:6) of the book of Job…to be an interpretive crux." See Cho, "Job 2 and 42:7–10 as Narrative Bridge and Theological Pivot," 857.

[15] The proposals have become so numerous that categorizing and analyzing them has become its own kind of sub-genre. See Oeming, "'Ihr habt nicht recht von mir geredet wie mein Knecht Hiob,'" 104–12; Clines, "Does the Book of Job Suggest That Suffering Is Not a Problem?," 106–7; Edward L. Greenstein, "Truth or Theodicy? Speaking Truth to Power in the Book of Job," *PSB* 27 (2006): 238–58, here 257–58; Frankel, "The Speech about God in Job 42:7-8," 5–19; and Kruger, "Job Spoke the Truth about God (Job 42:7-8)," 72–73. My summary groups similar but not identical proposals and by necessity simplifies important distinctions.

arguing that the key to the interpretation of the passage lies in the difference that the scholar understands to be the most salient to the work as a whole.[16]

Such approaches have produced valuable insights into the text that I utilize in my analysis. However, I argue that the best interpretation of Job 42:7–9 must account for other features of YHWH's speech and how it relates to the portions of the story that precede and follow it. For example, focusing only on the contrast between the speech of Job and his friends does not account for the degree of anger that YHWH expresses towards Job's friends, or that fact that he requires Job's intercession for the friends to avoid the consequences of that anger.[17] In addition, the timing of YHWH's speech is an important feature that should be considered in interpretation. While it is possible to explain features such as the timing of the speech in relation to the narrative, that is, in relation to choices about the story is told, the research on textual coherence discussed in Chapter One supported a method of interpretation that prioritizes

[16] Another approach is that taken by scholars who have concluded that *Job* must be the product of multiple stages of composition have argued that YHWH's evaluations of the speech of Job and his interlocutors make the most sense in a non-extant version of the text without the poetic dialogues. Many of these scholars proposed that YHWH's positive evaluation refers to Job's comments in the opening scenes and YHWH's negative evaluation refers to speech of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar that appeared in now-lost text in which they criticized the deity or encouraged Job to rebel. See, among others, MacDonald, "The Original Form of the Legend of Job," 66–67; Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob*, 1 and 180; Naphtali H. Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job: A New Commentary* (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher, 1957), 579; Ginsberg, "Job the Patient and Job the Impatient," 93; John Briggs Curtis, "On Job's Response to Yahweh," *JBL* 98 (1979): 497–511, here 510. Carol A. Newsom, "The Book of Job: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," *NIB* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 4:317–637, here 634–35. Also among those who have understood the correct speech of Job to be his comments in the opening scenes are Ernst Würthwein, "Gott und Mensch in Dialog und Gottesreden des Buches Hiob," in *Wort und Existenz: Studien zum Alten Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970) 217–95, here 225; and Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, trans. James D. Martin (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 226; trans. of *Weisheit in Israel*, (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1970). In accordance with the methodology of this project described in the introduction, I begin my analysis by determining if coherence is possible in the text that is extant.

[17] In my discussion below, I argue that the details discussed in this paragraph are significant and show how they undermine some aspects of other interpretations.

explanations that relate to features of the story over features of how the story is told.[18] So in this analysis, I identify an interpretation that accounts for the character YHWH's decision to give this speech now, at this point of the events, and not earlier or later. In the following, I identify points of agreement with previous scholarship and point out aspects of the speech and its context that require further consideration.

One group of scholars have argued that YHWH's description of Job's speech refers to his honest attempts to find and express the truth regarding his painful situation, which is correct or at least more correct than what Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar had been saying. For example, Snaith said that YHWH is recognizing Job's "courage to look the facts of human life in the face," and Edward Greenstein has claimed that in 42:7–8 the deity praises Job's willingness to speak "the truth no matter what the risk and the cost" and that this fits into the central theme of the whole text, honesty when talking about God.[19] In this interpretation, YHWH is making a distinction between honest speech and the interlocutors' dogmatic and unthinking repetition of facile orthodoxies, which angers him.[20]

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[18] Even as the two are in some sense inextricable. But the distinction between story and narrative is well-founded. See discussion of narrative theory in Chapter One.

[19] N. Snaith, *The Book of Job: Its Origin and Purpose*, SBT 2/11 (London: SCM, 1968), 5 and Greenstein, "Truth or Theodicy? Speaking Truth to Power in the Book of Job," 258, stated more recently in Edward L. Greenstein, *Job: A New Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), xxv–xxvii. See also Hawley, "The Rhetoric of Condemnation in the Book of Job," 476–77; Porter, "The Message of the Book of Job," 302: "Job is said to be right to question the God and universe that seem to visit evil upon those who act morally and justly….But Job is also right to repent because of his lack of understanding….He comes to realize that this philosophical probing has interfered with his theological understanding, or rather his philosophical questioning has outstripped his theological reflection"; Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 583, who described YHWH's positive evaluation to be directed to Job's "blunt and forthright accusations" and John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 539, who said that YHWH sees that "Job has been genuinely groping for the truth."

[20] Pope, *Job*, 350: "If this verse refers to the arguments of the Dialogue, it is as magnificent a vindication as Job could have hoped for, proving that God values the integrity of the impatient

It is correct that YHWH rejects the theology articulated by Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar throughout the dialogues, a point which I explore further below.[21] However, the view that the evaluation of speech in Job 42:7–9 is founded upon some form of honesty requires that YHWH at the end of the story introduces for the first time a priority that neither he nor any other character previously mentioned. No where else in *Job* does anyone speak about the importance of honesty or speaking truth even when doing so puts the speaker at risk. In addition, the view that honesty is what is at stake does not explain the depth of YHWH's anger or why Job's intercession is required. It is not even clear whether it is accurate to label the friends' speech as lacking in honesty. Greenstein said only that they "have rejected any new thinking in favor of traditional norms."[22] Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar had been mistaken as to the source of Job's suffering, but there is no indication that their expressions are insincere. And in any case, it is not clear why YHWH would react so strongly to their being mistaken.

Some scholars have proposed that YHWH is rebuking Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar because they incorrectly insisted that Job's suffering was the result of sin. Scholars such as Michael V. Fox, Max Rogland, and David Frankel argued that YHWH was angry because the interlocutors gave false testimony against Job in accusing him of sin or harmed him with their disloyalty.[23] Another group of scholars proposed that Job's speech is correct because he

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protestor and abhors pious hypocrites who would heap accusations on a tormented soul to uphold their theological position." Note that Pope acknowledged this possibility but argued that the book was composite for many additional reasons.

[21] The story told in *Job* depicts a world in which YHWH does not distribute blessings or affliction solely on the basis of individual righteousness or sin. But while the story depicts this as the reality of the story, the dissemination of this truth is not YHWH's priority at any point.

[22] Greenstein, "Truth or Theodicy? Speaking Truth to Power in the Book of Job," 258.

[23] Fox, "Reading the Tale of Job (Job 1,1–2,13 + 42,7–17)," 156; also Michael V. Fox, "The Meanings of the Book of Job," *JBL* 137 (2018): 7–18, here 16–17; Max Rogland, "»Speaking of Job«: A Philological and Exegetical Proposal on Job 42:7–8," *ZAW* 136.4 (2024): 590–96; and Frankel, "The Speech about God in Job 42:7-8," especially 22. Frankel argued for a text-critical

repeatedly refuted the idea that the deity administered the world according to the principles of retributive justice, while Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar spoke incorrectly by repeatedly claiming that God blessed the righteous and afflicted the wicked.

This claim appears in the commentary of Driver and Gray, who described Job's statements as refuting views that were common at the time of the text's production: "If he could not positively justify God, he could at least vindicate Him against the ways attributed to Him by the current opinion of his time, represented in the poem by the friends."[24] It has also appeared in more recent scholarship, such as E. W. Nicholson's statement that YHWH credited Job for exposing "the yawning chasm between the harsh reality of life and what orthodox piety, as represented by his companions, declared to be the automatic harvest of the righteous."[25] There is variation among the proposals in this group, but all of them interpret YHWH's evaluation of

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reading of בעבדי איוב instead of the MT כעבדי איוב. Frankel argued that this indicates that YHWH tells Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar that they "have spoken falsely, or have offered false testimony, *against* Job." Frankel justified this reading by claiming that it is "following several MT manuscripts, the LXX to verse 8, Testament of Job 42.4, and Saadia Gaon." While the later rewritings of *Job* are intriguing, they do not provide evidence for a text-critical emendation. Frankel's reference to this reading in "several MT manuscripts" cited C. D. Ginsburg, *The Old Testament: Diligently Revised According to the Massorah and the Early Editions with the Various Readings* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1926), 5:565, which cited two manuscripts that were both dated to the 13th century BCE or later, and are therefore not determinative of the earliest reading of the text.

[24] Samuel Rolles Driver and George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job*, 2 vols., ICC 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 1:374. See also Karl Kautzsch, *Das sogenannte Volksbuch von Hiob und der Ursprung von Hiob cap. I. II. XLII, 7-17.: ein Beitrag zur Frage nach der Integrität des Buches Hiob* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1900), 85.

[25] E. W. Nicholson, "The Limits of Theodicy as a Theme of the Book of Job," in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of J. A. Emerton*, ed. W. G. Lambert et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 71–82, here 81–82.

speech to refer to accuracy regarding YHWH's adherence to retributive justice, crediting Job for being correct and faulting the interlocutors for being incorrect.[26]

As I argue in Chapter Three and discuss further below, YHWH does seek to discourage the repeated assertion of any theology of retribution. However, this criterion does not allow for such a strong distinction between the speech of Job and his friends as appears in Job 42:7–9. Through the course of the dialogues Job had joined the friends in saying that a just God should operate according to the principles of retribution, even while his own experience led him to accuse God of injustice for not following such principles in his own case.[27] It is not clear why YHWH would use Job as a contrast when his speech is somewhat ambiguous on whether retribution theology is what justice demands.

In addition, this view does not explain why YHWH intervenes and speak to Job's interlocutors at this point of the story and not earlier. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar have been preaching that justice requires God to bless the righteous and afflict the wicked since the beginning of the poetic dialogues. There is not an explicit description of how much time has passed, but it is not clear why YHWH would wait to respond until after all three repeat the same inaccurate views multiple times if he had any preference about the issue, let alone that is indicated to be so strong as in Job 42:7–9. In addition, Frankel noted that it would be exceptional for *Job* to portray YHWH as being particularly invested in the theological accuracy of Job or of his interlocutors.[28] As I argued in Chapter Three, YHWH does not in the speeches from the

[26] See also Clines, who noted that while earlier YHWH rebuked Job because he was dissatisfied with Job's focusing exclusively on justice instead of "appreciating the whole scope of Yahweh's creative intentions," YHWH's reference to correct speech in 42:7–8 refers to Job's "perception of the underlying truth" that the deity "does not undertake to execute retribution for all the acts of humans." Clines, *Job*, 1231.
[27] This discrepancy is the entire basis of his accusations and suit against God.
[28] Frankel, "The Speech about God in Job 42:7-8," 19–22.

whirlwind or elsewhere attempt to provide a clear description of how he administers the created world. I argue below that YHWH does seek to dissuade Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar from continuing to preach retribution theology, but only because he has come to recognize that such theologies pose a threat to his reputation. This makes it unlikely that this is the basis for YHWH's evaluation of speech.

The majority of proposals discussed above rely upon the premise that the prepositional phrase אלי that appears in both statements in 42:7 and 8 refers to speech about YHWH. But another group of scholars have argued that the prepositional phrase indicates that YHWH is referring to speech that is addressed to him. Manfred Oeming argued that YHWH was less concerned with the content of the speech as much as its direction and how it contributed or failed to contribute to their relationship with YHWH. Thus, even though Job erred in speaking against God, YHWH praised Job for speaking to him:

> Gott lobt nicht irgendeine einzelne Äußerung Hiobs, weder den geduldigen Leider des Anfangs, noch den wütend aufbegehrenden Rebellen des Mittelteils, noch den, der sich am Schluss besonnen hat und sich revoziert. Nicht eine bestimmte *Lehre von* Gott wird ins Recht gesetzt. Gott lobt vielmehr die Sprech*richtung* Hiobs, die innere Haltung, das Wissen darum, wohin und woher er zu denken hat: eine *Rede zu Gott*.[29]

Oeming suggested that the contrast with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar was that they spoke only about God and did not attempt to speak to him, thus failing to speak correctly like Job.[30] Elaine

[29] Oeming, "Ihr habt nicht recht von mir geredet wie mein Knecht Hiob," 114; also Oeming and Schmid, *Job's Journey*, 25 and 96–97.

[30] This possibility was anticipated by several scholars before Oeming. See Alfred Jepsen, *Das Buch hiob und seine Deuteung*, Aufsätze und Vorträge zur Theologie und Religionswissenschaft 28 (Evangelische Verlagsanstalt: Berlin, 1963), 24; Fridolin Stier, *Das Buch Ijjob: Hebräisch und Deutsch* (Kösel-Verlag: München, 1954), 253; even as early as D. Karl Budde, *Das Buch*

Phillips made a similar argument and further emphasized YHWH's desire that people speak to him in a way that builds and confirms their relationship.[31] In these views, YHWH is expressing that he cares about speech to him or speech that contributes to a relationship with him.[32]

Like other views discussed above, accepting this interpretation requires that YHWH here introduces for the first time in the story the idea that he is invested in compelling human beings to speak to him. This is difficult to accept when YHWH has not elsewhere spoken of or acted in a way to prioritize such a value. But the greatest difficulty of accepting this view is that YHWH does not do anything that would make it likely that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar would respond to his speech by speaking to him.[33] In fact, his instructions explicitly tell them to ask Job to pray on their behalf. He does not provide any indication that he wants them to also pray to God, either immediately or in the future. While YHWH does at other points utilize rhetorical questions and indirect assertions, there is nothing in Job 42:7–9 that suggests he wants the friends to speak to him. As stated above, while it is possible that there could be explanations related to the telling of the story, in terms of evaluating textual coherence, it is best to identify an interpretation that

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Hiob, übersetzt und erklärt, HKAT 1 (Goٌttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1896), 254, who translated as "weil ihr nicht aufrichtig zu mir geredet habt wie mein Knecht Hiob."

[31] Phillips, "Speaking Truthfully: Job's Friends and Job," especially 39–40.

[32] See also Hawley, "The Rhetoric of Condemnation in the Book of Job," 476–77; Avi Shveka and Pierre Van Hecke, "The Metaphor of Criminal Charge as a Paradigm for the Conflict between Job and His Friends," *ETL* 90.1 (2014): 99–119; also P. Van Hecke, "From Conversation about God to Conversation with God: The Case of Job," in *Theology and Conversation: Towards a Relational Theology*, ed. J. Haers and P. De Mey, BETL 172 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 115–24, especially n. 62; Seow, *Job 1-21*, 92; J. P. Fokkelman, *The Book of Job in Form: A Literary Translation with Commentary*, SSN 58 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 318–20; Leslie S. Wilson, *The Book of Job: Judaism in the 2nd Century BCE: An Intertextual Reading* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2006), 203; and Kathryn Schifferdecker, *Out of the Whirlwind: Creation Theology in the Book of Job* (HTS 61; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 107.

[33] In contrast to the speeches from the whirlwind, in which he explicitly commands Job to respond verbally. See Chapter Three.

accounts for the greatest number of aspects of the story, including the characters and their actions.

Some scholars have argued that YHWH's statement refers not to Job's speeches throughout the dialogues, but specifically to Job's final speech in 42:1–6. These scholars interpret Job's final words to communicate submission or penitence and suggested that this type of speech is what YHWH deems to be correct.[34] Several scholars argued that YHWH was contrasting Job's admission in his final speech that he didn't understand God's ways, of which YHWH approved, with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar's confident proclamations that they knew what God did and why he did it, of which YHWH did not approve.[35] Whybray suggested that YHWH condemns Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar's confident and inaccurate exclamations that God

[34] For example, while Georg Fohrer argued that there was an earlier edition of the text in which 42:7–8 referred to a no-longer extant version of the dialogue between Job and his interlocutors, he argued that in the present edition it is Job's responses to the divine speech from the whirlwind that are correct about YHWH. See Georg Fohrer, *Das Buch Hiob*, KAT 16 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1963), 539. See also Michael V. Fox, "Job the Pious," *ZAW* 117 (2005): 351–66, here 360 n. 16, in which he argued that YHWH approves of Job's submission expressed in 42:2–6. James Williams made an influential argument that the ending of Job is ironic and that YHWH was fooled into thinking that Job was submitting when really Job was speaking ironically, but that the deceived deity's comments about Job's correct speech point to what he thought was Job's submission in 42:1–6. Williams, "You Have Not Spoken Truth of Me," 247. More recently, see Daniel C. Timmer, "God's Speeches, Job's Responses, and the Problem of Coherence in the Book of Job: Sapiential Pedagogy Revisited," *CBQ* 71.2 (2009): 286–305, here 301–3.

[35] For example, see E. Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, trans. Harold Knight (London: Nelson, 1967), lviii-lx. See also C. L. Seow, *Job 1-21: Interpretation and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 73 and 92, although Seow spoke only of Job and not about the interlocutors. See also Oorschot, "Die Entstehung des Hiobbuches," 179, although Oorschot argued this passage is but one of many compositional strata. A more specific version of this claim is that of Peter Machinist, who argued that YHWH refers to Job's struggle to find the limits of his knowledge and eventual resignation and submission to God: "We are taught, in other words, that in the end we must be Job the patient: that we can do only so much. But before that, there must be Job the impatient: that if we can do only so much, we must do at least that; we must struggle to assert all that we can, struggle to find our limits before we submit to God's unlimited knowledge and power." See Machinist, "The Question of Job," 176–77.

governed the world according to retribution theology, and contrasts their unearned confidence with Job's "final moment of truth" in 42:3 and 42:5 in which he expresses that God's works are incomprehensible and that Job himself is insignificant and ignorant.[36]

Such views correctly identify Job 42:1–6 as a premier example of speech that YHWH seeks to promote. I agree that YHWH's evaluation of proper speech in Job 42:7–9 includes Job's words in Job 42:1–6. But I argue that the other features of Job's speech, particularly what occurs before and after it, are best explained when YHWH's evaluation of speech is understood to refer not only to the content of speech but to its impact. I argue that this interpretation is the best explanation for the following features of the story, which are incompletely or sporadically utilized in previous analyses:

(1) In this speech, YHWH states that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar have failed to speak properly either about or to him;

(2) The statement evaluating proper speech and the lack thereof is part of a larger speech from YHWH addressed to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar;

(3) This speech occurs after YHWH's speech to Job from the whirlwind and after Job's response in his own final speech in Job 42:1–6;

[36] R. N. Whybray, *Job*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 172–73. Whybray argues that the emphasis is on the error of the interlocutors: "The author has already expressed his own theology through the mouth of Yahweh in chs. 38–41; this was totally contrary to that of the friends, who had constantly maintained that God always and without fail favours the righteous and punishes the wicked, and had even drawn the further conclusion that a person who had to endure misfortune and suffering was *ipso facto* a wicked person. To the author of the book this was not only untrue; it was blasphemy. It was those who held and taught this view were *ipso facto* the real sinners." Arriving at a similar conclusion from a radically different direction, Vogels suggested that it was the silence inherent in Job's words in 42:1–6 that earned YHWH's approval. Vogels, "Job a parlé correctement. Une approche structurale du livre de Job," 841. For my argument that there is no possibility that YHWH was seeking Job's silence, see Chapter Three.

(4) YHWH expresses a level of anger towards Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar that is unprecedented, indicating that whatever they did or did not do, it impacted YHWH's highest priorities.

(5) YHWH instructs the interlocutors that to avoid the consequences of his wrath they must perform sacrifices and Job must pray on their behalf.

In this portion of the chapter, I undertake a novel grammatical and narratological analysis of the text that seeks for an interpretation that best accounts for these features. I argue that YHWH is making a distinction between speaking in a way that glorifies YHWH and failing to do so. In other words, YHWH's evaluation of the propriety of speech depends not on content or addressee but rather on the impact of the speech upon YHWH's reputation and glory. YHWH is saying that Job has spoken properly because Job has spoken in a way that elevated YHWH's reputation and glorified him, while Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar had not spoken in way that elevated his reputation or glory. The statement, in combination with YHWH's instructions for the interlocutors to sacrifice and to ask Job to pray on their behalf, is part of YHWH's attempt to demonstrate proper speech to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar so that they are more likely to speak properly in the future and avoid threatening his reputation with more speech like they engaged in throughout the dialogues.

A New Proposal: "Speaking Properly"

Several features of YHWH's speech and the story within which it is made are best explained if YHWH's evaluation is based upon the effect or impact of the speech upon his reputation and glory. The grammar, the context, and YHWH's characterization support the interpretation that YHWH is angry at Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar for failing to speak in a way that elevates his

reputation and glory. The interlocutors have taken turns speaking at length about God and his administration of the universe. But at no point does their speech contribute positively to YHWH's reputation. They do not properly praise YHWH or acknowledge their inferiority or his superiority in the hierarchy. They do not recognize Job's righteousness, and thus by extension, YHWH's glory. In fact, everything they say is shown to be objectionable to YHWH.

While some interpreters have understood the interlocutors' speech to be harmless or even positive, YHWH does not. To the contrary, YHWH sees their speech promoting a theology of retribution to be a threat to his reputation, particularly because of the impact their speech has on Job. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar consistently speak as if they know without question how YHWH determines his administration of the fortunes of human beings, something that YHWH rebukes Job for doing in his speeches from the whirlwind.[37] In their full-throated embrace of retribution theology, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar unwittingly align themselves with the opponent referred to as השטן in the opening scenes, whose articulation of this ideology prompted corrective action from YHWH.[38]

Even the degree of their confidence about how YHWH operates represents a lack of respect for the deity because it prevents them from properly acknowledging their inferiority to YHWH, something that the divine speeches from the whirlwind made clear YHWH cares about. In the opening scenes and in his final speech, Job demonstrates speech that acknowledges his inferiority to God in power and in knowledge, and thus properly elevates YHWH's reputation.[39]

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[37] See Chapter Three.
[38] See Chapter Two. On how taking this position makes the interlocutors "unconsciously become Satan's advocates" see Iwański, *The Dynamics of Job's Intercession*, 199; Andrew E. Steinmann, "The Structure and Message of the Book of Job," *VT* 46.1 (1996): 85–100, here 97 and 99; and Vogels, "Job a parlé correctement. Une approche structurale du livre de Job," 841.
[39] See Chapter Three.

For the interlocutors, there is no humility, no accurate acknowledgment of their place below YHWH in the hierarchy of creation.

Most importantly, the speeches of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar were improper because of how they impacted Job and his speech. As discussed in the previous chapters, Job responded to the loss of his children, wealth, and good health by praising God (Job 1:20–21; 2:10) and mourning his fate without criticizing the deity (Job 3:1–26; 4:12–21).[40] Nothing in these initial responses could be construed as cursing God, thus definitively disproving the opponent's predictions. But midway through the poetic dialogues—beginning in Job 13 and continuing through Job 29–31—Job shifts and begins challenging YHWH. This is the point of the text in which Job could be accused of speaking improperly. This is what prompted YHWH to intervene first in his speech to Job from the whirlwind and then in his speech to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar.[41]

The speeches of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar are the direct cause of Job's improper speech in the latter half of the dialogues. The interlocutors' dogmatic insistence that the only possible cause of his suffering was affliction from God in response to sin impacted Job, although not in the way that they expected. Dariusz Iwański described how their speeches set up a false conflict between YHWH and Job:

> We have seen that they are first of all responsible for having set up the *rîb* between God and Job. It was, actually, a virtual controversy, not a real one. They assigned the roles of plaintiff (God) and defendant (Job), usurping the right to speak on behalf of God and urging Job to plead guilty…. In so doing, they have spoken concerning God words far

[40] On the attribution of Job 4:12–21 to Job, see Chapter Three.
[41] For argumentation of the claims in this paragraph, see Chapter Three.

from the truth, since God had never been in a quarrel with His servant Job and had never punished (corrected) him for misbehavior.[42]

While the content of the interlocutors' claims was false, their inaccuracy was not what caused the problem. It was the impact these false claims had on Job and his speech. Ironically, Job could weather the worst afflictions that the opponent could dream up and continue speaking properly about and to God, but he could not endure the "comfort" of his three so-called friends without incorrectly accusing God of injustice.[43] It is this problem that YHWH seeks to resolve by speaking to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar and threatening them with affliction unless they follow his instructions, instructions that YHWH designed to compel them to speak properly.

When YHWH refers to Job speaking properly, YHWH is referring to the cumulative aggregation of Job's statements that positively impacted YHWH's reputation. Unlike Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar, Job had repeatedly paid homage to YHWH by declaring his obeisance and acknowledging YHWH's superior position in the hierarchy, particularly in the opening scenes and in his final speech in 42:1–6. In the opening scenes, Job responds to his immense suffering first by acknowledging that YHWH controls his fate and blessing the deity's name (Job 1:21) and then by criticizing his wife's recommendation to curse God and again by acknowledging YHWH's control over the good and evil he experiences (Job 2:10). In both statements, Job acknowledges YHWH's power over the world and its inhabitants, expressions that elevate YHWH's reputation. He refuses to curse God as the opponent had predicted he would and his wife urged him to do. By disproving the opponent's predictions, Job did what he needed to contribute to YHWH's goal to compel the opponent to acknowledge Job's righteousness and

[42] Iwański, *The Dynamics of Job's Intercession*, 245–46.
[43] See also Hartley, *Job*, 539: "More than failing to comfort Job, they have tempted him to take the wrong course out of his affliction."

YHWH's glory. The narrator's two comments that Job did not sin refer to how he did not speak in a way that negatively impacted YHWH's reputation.

Similarly, in his final speech Job acknowledges YHWH's power and recognizes the limitations of his own power and knowledge in comparison to YHWH. He recognizes the error of his confident assertions about YHWH's behaviors in his previous speeches, he ceases making such statements, and retracts his complaint. In this last speech, everything Job says glorifies YHWH by elevating him in the hierarchy.[44] That is what makes his speech proper.[45]

Not everything that Job says in the dialogues has a positive impact upon YHWH's reputation. The suit against God that he makes in the second part of the dialogues is clearly not beneficial. But this lapse is short-lived and resolved before the dialogues end.[46] In addition, there is no reason to think that YHWH's evaluation must refer to every statement Job made.[47] It is

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[44] See my discussion of Job 42:1–6 in Chapter Three. I build upon those who have argued that YHWH's description of correct speech refers to Job's final speech but diverge in the significance. YHWH is not merely acknowledging that the content of what Job said in 42:1–6 is proper. The deity is suggesting that Job's final speech is the kind of speech that elevates his reputation. In addition, his evaluation of Job's speech as proper is not limited only to Job's final words, as significant as they are, but includes the impact of Job's speech more generally. In addition to explaining the timing of YHWH's comment, my proposal explains why this information is directed to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar and why YHWH reacts so strongly to their failure to speak properly.

[45] That YHWH does not continue his speech to Job from the whirlwind but shifts his attention to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar suggests that Job's declaring his ignorance and withdrawing his complaint resolves the problem that prompted the deity to speak to him. The narrative does not indicate whether Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar heard Job's final speech to YHWH. If they did not, they might be confused to hear YHWH speak positively of a man who most recently was accusing God of injustice. It is possible the friends did overhear both YHWH's divine speech and Job's responses. Note that there is no record of them going away or out of earshot. But even if they did not, YHWH's instructions for them to sacrifice and Job to pray on their behalf serve to highlight the difference between the speech that YHWH wants and does not want. For more on YHWH's instructions creating examples of proper speech, see below.

[46] See Chapter Three.

[47] In support of this position, see Thomas Kruger, "Did Job Repent?," in *Das Buch Hiob und seine Interpretationen: Beiträge zum Hiob-Symposium auf dem Monte Verita vom 14.-19. August 2005*, ed. T. Kruger et al., ATANT 88 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2007), 217–30,

unlikely that YHWH is saying that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar have never said even one thing that is correct or proper. Instead, it is more likely that YHWH is referring to the impact of their speech and that of Job in more comprehensive terms. Therefore, the contrast between Job and his interlocutors is that Job had spoken on several occasions throughout the text in a way that elevated YHWH's reputation while Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar had failed to do so. In the remainder of this section, I demonstrate that this interpretation of YHWH's evaluation of speech is supported by the grammatical and lexical evidence, the context, and YHWH's characterization throughout the text.

"You Did Not Speak Properly אלי Like My Servant Job"

Part of the reason that scholars have struggled to interpret the meaning of YHWH's speech is because several semantic issues have been either overlooked or not properly understood. In this section, I analyze the meaning of נכונה, the nature of the contrast between the speech of Job and

here 227: "it is clear that Job in 42:3 does not revoke *everything* he has said, and in 42:7 God in turn obviously does not approve *everything* Job has said about him" and Paul K. K. Cho, "Job the Penitent: Whether and Why Job Repents (Job 42:6)," in *Landscapes of Korean and Korean American Biblical Interpretation*, ed. John Ahn, International Voices in Biblical Studies 10 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019), 145–74, here 163: "That God affirms Job for having spoken what is right does not mean that God affirms all that Job said in the poetry." Both Kruger and Cho take this observation in a different direction than I argue here. This view is contra Frankel: "It is not legitimate to pick and choose which God statements made by Job are referred to as correct and which ones made by the friends are referred to as incorrect. The text compares and contrasts the statements about God of Job and of his friends as a whole and without any limitation or specification." See Frankel, "The Speech about God in Job 42:7-8," 11–12, n. 32. Frankel's claim—that the lack of explicit specification indicates no limitation—is contrary to the pragmatics of speech and the elliptical nature of biblical narrative, in which neither YHWH nor other speakers are required to explicitly indicate every limitation when they articulate their propositions. For example, God makes no qualification when he tells Noah that he will do violence to כל בשר "all flesh" in Gen 6:13, yet his instruction to build the Ark indicates that Noah, his family, and the animals on the Ark were exceptions to "all flesh" in the preceding statement. Neither Noah nor God register any confusion.

his interlocutors, and the ambiguity of the prepositional phrase אלי. I show that YHWH's description of speech as נכונה may refer to speech that he deems proper in manner and that the contrast he makes between the speech of Job and the interlocutors is more complex than contrasting content. I also show that YHWH may be referring to speech either about or to him. Each element supports my claim that YHWH's description of proper speech refers to how Job had spoken in a way that elevated his reputation while the interlocutors had failed to do so.

First, the usage of the modifier נכונה indicates that YHWH could be referring to speech that is proper in a moral sense in addition to the more common interpretation that he is referring to speech that is correct factually. YHWH's speech begins with his declaration that he is angry with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar followed by a dependent clause indicating that the cause of his anger is related to a deficiency in their speech, which he contrasts with the speech of Job. The dependent clause begins with the causal particle כי followed by the verbal phrase לא דברתם אלי נכונה (Job 42:7, 8). The complement to the negated verb includes both the prepositional phrase אלי, which is discussed below, and נכונה, a feminine singular niphal participle form of the root כו"נ. The majority of scholars have understood נכונה in YHWH's statement in Job 42:7 and 8 to

refer to that which is factually correct[48] or right[49] and therefore translated it as "true things" or "truth,"[50] or, if taken adverbially, "trustworthily" or "truthfully"[51] or "in honesty."[52]

However, it is also possible that YHWH is stating that Job's speech is morally proper. The usage of נכונה shows that its basic meaning, "that which is established or determined,"[53] can be extended in several different directions.[54] It can be used to refer to things that are correct in the sense of being factually accurate.[55] It is also applied to things or actions that are correct in

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[48] Habel, *Job,* 583, "correct and consistent with the facts."
[49] Hartley, *Job*, 538; Cho, "Job 2 and 42:7–10 as Narrative Bridge and Theological Pivot," 875; Driver and Gray, *Book of Job*, 1:373; Clines, *Job*, 1227.
[50] See Gordis, *The Book of Job*, 575: "The word *n^{e}khōnāh*, 'right, correct, true' (Gen 41:30; Ps 51:12; 57:8; 78:37; 108:2; and esp. Deut 13:15; 17:14), is a synonym of *ʾemet*, 'true.'" Also Dhorme, *Job*, 648; Iwański, *The Dynamics of Job's Intercession*, 176; Kruger, "Job Spoke the Truth about God (Job 42:7-8)," 73: "truth"; "what is true"; See also Gianantonio Borgonovo, *La Notte e Il Suo Sole: Luce e Tenebre Nel Libro Di Giobbe Analisi Simbolica*, AnBib 135 (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1995), 53, note 32, who translates with the Italian noun "veridicità."
[51] K. Koch, "כּוּן kûn," *TDOT* 7:95. Also Hawley, "The Rhetoric of Condemnation in the Book of Job," 476–77.
[52] Greenstein, *Job: A New Translation*, 187.
[53] Verbal forms of the root כו"נ appear in the niphal stem 67 times in the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible. The root כו"נ never appears in the qal stem. *BDB*, s.v. "כּוּן," 465–67 gives for the base meaning of כו"נ "prob. be firm" and for the niphal feminine singular participle "certainly, firmly established, stable." See also *HALOT*, s.v. "כון," 464–65, which gives for the meaning of the niphal "to be established; to be steadfast, be sure; to be completed, be arranged; to be permanent, endure; to be ready." And in *DCH* 4, s.v. "כון," 373 the niphal verb is defined as "be firm, be secure, be sure, be ready, be lasting, be established, stand firm."
[54] The word נכונה is used literally to describe a house or similar structures that are physically established upon some sort of foundation (see Judg 16:26, 29; 2 Chr 8:16); and how the earth is firmly established and will never be moved (see Psa 93:1; 96:10; 1 Chr 16:30). It is also used metaphorically, describing how a person's heart is steadfast in the face of persecution (see Psa 57:8 [2x]). At its simplest, this connotation describes plainly "things that are determined" or "things that are set" in a particular fashion (see Gen 41:32; 1 Sam 20:31; 2 Sam 7:15, 26; 1 Kgs 2:12, 45, 46; Isa 2:2; Jer 30:20; Micah 4:1; Ezek 16:7; Psa 89:22; 89:38; 93:2; 102:29; 140:12; Job 15:23; 18:12; 21:8; Prov 4:18; 12:19; 19:29; 25:5; 29:14; 1 Chr 17:14, 24). Sometimes the word is used to describe things that are established or determined in such a way that they are prepared or are ready (see Exod 19:11, 15; 34:1; Josh 8:4; Amos 4:12; Ezekiel 26:7; Psa 38:18; Prov 12:3; Prov 20:18; Prov 22:18; Neh 8:10; 2 Chr 29:35; 2 Chr 35:10, 16).
[55] See Deut 13:15; 17:4; Hos 6:3; Psa 5:10; 101:7 also within a prepositional phrase אל נכון in 1 Sam 23:23 and 26:4.

that they are morally proper. For example, when Pharaoh offers for Moses to take the Israelites and sacrifice in the land of Egypt, Moses responds לא נכון לעשות כן "it would not be right to do so" because their offerings would be abominable to the Egyptians (Exod 8:22). Clearly not referring to actions that are factually inaccurate, Moses is referring to the morality or propriety of the proposed action. Similarly, in Psalm 51, the speaker asks God to "make new a right spirit within me" ורוח נכון חדש בקרבי (Psa 51:12). The speaker is not asking for a spirit that is consistent with facts in a literal sense. He is asking for a spirit that is right in a moral sense.[56] It is notable that there is some overlap between these two senses, as sometimes an action or thing can both be true in a factual sense and proper in a moral sense.

YHWH could be using נכונה to mean morally proper.[57] In addition, נכונה may be functioning either objectively, referring to the content of the speech, or adverbially, referring to

[56] See Exod 8:22; Psa 51:12; 78:37; 119:5; 141:2; Prov 4:26; 16:3, 12. The attestations listed in this and the previous footnotes account for all attestations of the niphal verbal forms of כו"נ except for two contextually ambiguous forms which modify the noun לב and describe a heart that is either correct or prepared (Psa 108:2; 112:7), and the two under examination here in Job 42:7 and 8.

[57] There is no contextual basis for YHWH to tell Job's interlocutors that they have not spoken of things that are established, set, or prepared. In recent years, several scholars have proposed alternative interpretations of נכונה in Job 42:7 and 8. However, none of these can be substantiated. Nam has claimed that here נכונה means "constructively" but this is contradicted by the passive sense of the niphal נכונה in all other attestations. See Nam, *Talking About God*, especially 22–24. Nam's analysis of נכונה was persuasively refuted by Edward Greenstein, review of *Talking About God: Job 42:7-9 and the Nature of God in the Book of Job*, by Duck-Woo Nam, *RBL* (2004). Ngwa proposed that the combination of words from the roots דב"ר and כו"נ formed an idiom referring to "a firm word" and refers in Gen 42:32 and Deut 13:15 to a statement that has been confirmed multiple times and thus has a sense of "certainty or inevitability." Ngwa, *The Hermeneutics of the "Happy" Ending in Job 42:7-17*, 15–16. Finally, Shveka and Van Hecke have argued that here נכונה communicates rightness or correctness in a legal sense, and that YHWH is condemning Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar for bringing charges against Job that could not be substantiated. Shveka and Van Hecke, "The Metaphor of Criminal Charge as a Paradigm for the Conflict between Job and His Friends," 117. However, it is difficult to accept either proposal for such an idiosyncratic usage of the term when the usages in question can be explained by the commonly attested meaning "true" or "correct."

the manner in which the speech was made.[58] Because it is possible that YHWH is using נכונה in a similar manner as its usage in Exod 8:22 and Psalm 51:12, YHWH may be describing Job's speech to be morally proper, appropriate, correct, or desirable.

YHWH's interest and lack of interest in speech throughout *Job* supports the interpretation that his use of נכונה in Job 42:7 and 8 refers to the propriety and impact of speech rather than factual accuracy. It explains YHWH's lack of reaction to the speech of Job's wife in the opening scenes. Even though her speech in Job 2:9 was based on the inaccurate premise that there was no reason for the afflicted Job to retain his integrity and even encouraged undesirable behavior, it was ultimately ineffective. Because Job refused her invitation to curse God, her speech had no impact and did not require YHWH's attention.[59]

As discussed above, that YHWH did not intervene or show any interest in what the interlocutors said until the conclusion, despite their speaking inaccurately throughout the dialogues, is best explained if it is not content or accuracy that is his concern. In contrast, YHWH has consistently shown that he cares about his reputation and especially about speech that elevates or reduces it. In the opening scenes, he sought to compel the opponent to speak in a way that elevated his reputation and was willing to go to great lengths to do so. It is only when the interlocutors' speech has an impact on Job and his speech begins to negatively affect his reputation in the second half of the dialogues that YHWH intervenes.[60] YHWH has shown that

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[58] Scholars have supported both. Those who have understood נכונה to be functioning objectively include Hartley, *Job*, 538–39: "they *have not spoken of him what is right [neḵônâ]*…Cf. Ps. 5:10 (Eng. 9)"; also Pope, *Job*, 347. Those who have understood נכונה to be functioning adverbially include Philipps, "Speaking Truthfully: Job's Friends and Job," 41: "to have spoken correctly"; Fokkelman, *The Book of Job in Form*, 319: "correctly"; and Oeming and Schmid, *Job's Journey*, 97: "The Niphal participle *neḥonah* can be understood as an adverbial accusative."

[59] See Chapter Three.

[60] While it is possible to situate such narrative features as when YHWH intervenes as consequences of authorial prerogative, the methodology of this dissertation is to reconstruct the

he cares about the impact of speech upon his reputation and glory. It is not surprising that this would be his motivation when he speaks to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar.

"About Me" or "To Me"

The most difficult part of YHWH's statement to interpret on the basis of linguistic evidence is the prepositional phrase אלי. The first-person pronominal suffix clearly refers to the speaker, YHWH, but the precise function of the preposition אל is unclear. The fundamental meaning of אל and its most common usage with verbs from דב"ר would suggest that a straightforward interpretation of לא דברתם אלי is "you have not spoken *to* me."[61] This would support the view, discussed above, that YHWH is praising Job for speaking to the deity and condemning the friends for failing to do so. In addition, in the majority of cases in the Hebrew Bible in which אל complements דבר or another verb of speech it indicates the addressee of the speech.[62] Scholars have also cited the usage of אל as a complement to verbs of speech in *Job*, in which it most often functions to indicate the addressee of the speech and should be translated as "to."[63]

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story world, including both characters and events, as depicted. Because of this, in this dissertation features of the story such as the timing of YHWH's intervention are evaluated as decisions made by characters.

[61] See *HALOT*, s.v. "אֶל," 50–51. Also *BDB* "אֶל," 39–41, here 41: 'denoting motion to or direction towards (whether physical or mental).' See also *IBHS* 11.2.2 that lists as meanings of אל the contingent locative, direction, a goal or termination, a limit or degree, dativel senses indicating possession or benefit, and comitative senses. For verbal forms of אמ"ר + אל indicating speech "to" see Gen 3:1; 12:11; 13:14; 24:39, 40, 44, 56; Deut 21:20; 22:16, and more.

[62] Philipps, "Speaking Truthfully: Job's Friends and Job," here 39, has surveyed the usage of verbal forms of דב"ר + אל and found that, out of 465 instances, "435 times it clearly means 'speak to…'"

[63] Every other time אל appears as a complement to verbal forms of דב"ר or אמ"ר in *Job* it means "speak to." In *Job* אל designates the addressee of the speech act expressed by verbal forms of אמ"ר eleven times (1:7, 8, 12; 2:2, 3, 6, 10; 9:12; 10:2; 34:31), and verbal forms of דב"ר seven times, including just before and just after the two occurrences in question (2:13; 13:3; 40:27; 42:7 (2x), 8, 9). See Oeming and Schmid, *Job's Journey: Stations of Suffering*, here 25 and 96–97. (Note that Oeming and Schmid said that אל expresses the addressee of forms of דב"ר nine

However, most commentators of Job 42:7–8 have not interpreted it this way, instead adopting a translation equivalent to "you have not spoken *about/of/concerning/regarding* me."[64] This interpretation is possible because there are cases in the MT in which the preposition אל functions to indicate the content rather than the addressee of verbs of speech in general and of verbal forms of דב"ר in particular.[65] Though the number of attestations of אל functioning to

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times but in 4:2 and 4:12 the preposition אל follows the noun דבר, a case which will reflect different syntactic rules than verbal complements.) Of particular note is the nearest context, in which the preposition אל indicates the addressee of speech in passages just before and after YHWH's speech, in the temporal clause mentioning YHWH's previous speech *to* Job and in the introduction of YHWH's speech *to* the friends: ויהי אחר דבר יהוה את הדברים האלה אֶל איוב ויאמר יהוה אליפז התימני אֶל (42:7). It also appears immediately following the quotation of YHWH's speech, in the description of Job's friends doing just as YHWH had said *to* them: וילכו אליפז התימני ובלדד השוחי צפר הנעמתי ויעשו כאשר דבר אֲלֵיהֶם יהוה (42:9).

[64] This position is very popular. See Driver and Gray, *Book of Job*, 2:348; Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job*, 578; Pope, *Job*, 347; Matitiahu Tsevat, "The Meaning of the Book of Job," *HUCA* 37 (1966): 81; Dhorme, *Job*, 648; H.H. Rowley, *Job* (London: Nelson, 1970), 344; Gordis, *The Book of Job*, 493–94; Habel, *Job*, 575; Hartley, *Job*, 538; Newsom, "The Book of Job: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," 4:633; also *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations*, 20–21; Ellen van Wolde, *Mr and Mrs Job*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1997), 141; Nam, *Talking About God*, 13–14; Samuel E. Balentine, *Job* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Pub., 2006), 708; Gerald H. Wilson, *Job*, NIBCOT (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 472; Tremper Longman, *Job* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 459 Katharine J. Dell, *Job: Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?*, Phoenix Guides to the Old Testament 14; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 103–4; Fox, "The Meanings of the Book of Job," 16; and Martin, "Concluding the Book of Job and YHWH: Reading Job from the End to the Beginning," 314.

[65] For verbal forms of אמ"ר + אל indicating speech 'about/concerning' see 2 Kgs 19:20, 32; Isa 37:21, 33; Jer 22:11, 18; 27:19; 29:16, 21, 31; 32:36; 40:16. For verbal forms of ספ"ר + אל indicating speech 'about/concerning' see Psa 2:7; 69:27. See also 1 Sam 1:27. Regarding דב"ר + אל, Phillipps' survey indicated that "There are only seven instances where this combination must be translated 'speak about…'…1 Sam 3:12; Isa 16:13; Jer 27:13; 40:2, 16; 50:1; 51:12. Jer 40:2 might be best translated 'against.'" See "Speaking Truthfully: Job's Friends and Job," 39. Gen 20:2 must also be added to Phillips's list, see Iwański, *The Dynamics of Job's Intercession*, 180. Driver and Gray, *Book of Job*, 1:374; took these attestations as erroneous forms of the more common marker of the topic of speech על and thus stated that here אלי should be emended to עלי. Note also that the alternation of אל and על has been interpreted as a marker of influence from Aramaic in texts such as Ezekiel, see Samuel L. Boyd, "Language Contact, Colonial Administration, and the Construction of Identity in Ancient Israel: Constructing the Context for Contact," HSM 66 (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 258 and 264. In the case of *Job*, the dataset is small

indicate topic or content in the MT are far fewer, the numerical superiority of the attestations in which אל indicates direction cannot be used to determine the meaning of the usage in YHWH's speech in Job 42:7–8.[66] As a result, the lexical and syntactical evidence cannot be used to definitively determine the function of the preposition אל.[67] YHWH does not provide additional information to indicate whether he was referring to speech either to or about him, leaving the statement ambiguous on purely linguistic grounds.[68]

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enough to limit conclusions regarding Aramaic influence without more extensive investigation beyond the scope of the present study.

[66] Even in arguing that YHWH is referring to speech to him, Oeming acknowledged that the grammar is not definitive, Oeming, "Ihr habt nicht recht von mir geredet wie mein Knecht Hiob," 112–14.

[67] Scholars have also cited the ancient translations of this phrase in the Aramaic Targum of *Job* and the OG, both of which use a preposition that indicates that YHWH is referring to speech to him. But the evidence of the ancient translations cannot be conclusive because they represent an interpreter's view of the meaning of the passage. For more, see the translation by the preposition לותי "towards" in the Targum of Job, David M. Stec, *The Text of the Targum of Job: An Introduction and Critical Edition* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 305* [note dual pagination in this volume]. See also Luis Díez Merino, *Targum de Job: edición príncipe del Ms. Villa-Amil n. 5 de Alfonso de Zamora* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto "Francisco Suárez," 1984), 164. Note that this passage is not preserved in the Targum of *Job* found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, which preserves parts of 42:4–6 and 42:9–11, see Michael Sokoloff, *The Targum to Job from Qumran Cave XI* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1974), 100–3. Also the translation by the preposition ἐνώπιόν ""in person, face to face, in the presence of, in the view" and used as a translation of אל when it is used in the fundamental sense of "toward", in the OG, see T. Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, Rev. ed. (Louvain: Peeters, 2009), 243; also Raija Sollamo, "Some 'Improper' Prepositions, Such as EnΩΠIon, Enantion, Enanti, etc., in the Septuagint and Early Koine Greek," *VT* 25 (1975): 773–82. Note also that although in the MT the same phrase is duplicated twice in 42:7 and 8, in the LXX the second occurrence has a different meaning related to the way the friends spoke against Job, reading οὐ γὰρ ἐλαλήσατε ἀληθὲς κατὰ τοῦ θεράποντός μου Ιωβ.

[68] It is the case that Job speaks to YHWH on several occasions and the interlocutors do not attempt to speak to YHWH even once, as pointed out by Dale Patrick, "Job's Address of God," *ZAW* 91 (1979), 269, Iwański, *The Dynamics of Job's Intercession*, 205, and Walter Vogels, "Job a parlé correctement. Une approche structurale du livre de Job," 843. However, for the reasons discussed in this section, this is not enough to prove that YHWH is talking about speech directed to him.

However, the contextual evidence speaks against the view that YHWH's primary distinction between proper speech and the lack thereof is whether he was addressed directly. Most significantly, YHWH has shown no interest in whether the human characters had spoken to him before this point. When YHWH boasted of Job's righteousness in the opening scenes, he did not say anything about Job speaking to YHWH. YHWH has shown no interest in whether Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar speak to him elsewhere. YHWH had not expressed any clear interest in speech to him when he spoke to Job from the whirlwind. On the other hand, understanding YHWH to be primarily interested in the impact of speech upon his reputation aligns with the depiction of YHWH's priorities and character that is established in the opening scenes and speech from the whirlwind. This view also is supported by the timing and direction of YHWH's statement.

The Timing and Direction of YHWH's Statement

YHWH's statement does not appear in isolation. YHWH's evaluation of speech is directed to Eliphaz and explicitly include his two fellow interlocutors (ובשני רעיך: Job 42:7), with the verbal imperatives and pronominal references in the plural second person (דברתם (2x), קחו לכם, ולכו, והעליתם, בעדכם, עליכם, עמכם; Job 42:7–8). That YHWH's speech and instructions are addressed to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar is particularly notable because it is the only time anywhere in *Job* in which YHWH speaks to them.[69] The interlocutors have been on the scene since the end of the opening scenes when they encountered the sickly Job and sat in silence for a week (Job 2:11–

[69] Similarly, his speeches to Job are the only time he speaks to Job. For why YHWH speaks to Job and what he is seeking to accomplish, see Chapter Three.

13). But at no point before this speech has YHWH shown any interest in them or attempted to communicate with them. He has not even acknowledged their existence.

Most of the proposals cited above do not explain why YHWH develops an interest in the interlocutors and their speech at this point in the time of the story.[70] That may be why most understand YHWH to be articulating some sort of universal principle, but again without accounting for why YHWH articulates it in a speech to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar. A more compelling interpretation would explain why YHWH communicates his evaluation of speech to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar, but not other characters, such as Job, Job's wife, his other relatives who come to him, or even the opponent.

Another significant contextual element of this speech is that it takes place only after the friends' speeches had changed Job's speech. This aspect of the timing of YHWH's speech to the interlocutors is particularly noteworthy because while there is some development in the rhetoric of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar's speeches, they had been consistent from the beginning in accusing Job of sin and claiming that God blessed the righteous and afflicted the wicked since the beginning. If YHWH's statement about a lack of proper speech referred to their dishonesty, or their insistence upon Job's guilt, or their erroneous adherence to retribution theology, it is not clear why YHWH would intervene only now, after multiple cycles of speeches. Many who argue that YHWH's evaluation refers only to the content of Job's final speech in 42:1–6 explain the timing, but not why YHWH is interested in informing Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar about the

[70] For example, neither the claim that YHWH's description of proper speech refers to speaking honestly or that the interlocutors were wrong to insist Job had sinned or that God ruled according to the principle of retribution explains the timing or why YHWH addresses Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar. Similarly, the views advanced by Fox, Rogland, and Frankel that YHWH condemns the friends for bearing false witness against Job do not account for why YHWH intervenes only now, after multiple cycles and repeated false testimony.

distinction between proper speech and the lack of it. A more compelling interpretation of what YHWH is trying to communicate would explain specifically why YHWH relays this information to these people at this point in time, rather than earlier when they first started speaking.

Interpreting YHWH's evaluation to refer to the impact of the speech of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar provides an explanation for both its direction and timing. YHWH is reacting to the negative impact that the interlocutors' speech had upon his reputation by causing Job, YHWH's model of righteousness, to challenge God. He is speaking to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar about proper speech and the lack of it at this time because he means to prevent them from doing harm to his reputation again.

The content and direction of the speech of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar are relatively consistent since they started speaking. There is some variation and development throughout their speeches in the dialogues, but the characteristics of their speech that have been offered as explanations for what YHWH deems to be incorrect have not changed.[71] But its full impact does not materialize immediately. Only over time, as Job is persuaded by their claims, does their speech begin to impact YHWH's reputation. As discussed in the previous chapter, Job's mourning and lamentation do not threaten God's reputation. But YHWH perceives Job's suit against God that he begins in chapter 13 and continues in chapters 29–31 to be a threat to his reputation that requires direct and significant intervention. Job's suit occurs because of the impact of the speech of his three friends. They convince him that a just God should bless the

[71] One area of development is that the friends' speeches begin as more "carefully constructed arguments" that are "measured, and responsive to one another" before changing to consist "mostly of passionate asseverations and *ad hominem* attacks instead of arguments, with Job and the friends largely talking past each other in their charges and countercharges." Seow, *Job 1-21*, 67.

righteous and afflict the wicked, which leads him to decry the injustice of his innocent suffering.[72]

Once it became clear that the speech of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar threatened his reputation by way of its impact on Job and his speech, YHWH dealt with the threat. The greater threat was the speech of Job himself, and YHWH first dealt with him in the form of his speech from the whirlwind (Job 38–41). YHWH is successful in compelling Job to speak in a way that elevates YHWH's reputation: Job ends his suit, ceases his lamentation, and glorifies God (Job 42:1–6).[73] Once YHWH has dealt with the greatest threat to his glory, it makes sense that the deity would then deal with the secondary threat: the speech of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar. Just as he dealt with Job by speaking to him from the whirlwind, he dealt with the interlocutors by speaking to them directly to express his anger and threaten them with extreme consequences if they don't speak properly in the future (Job 42:7–8).

The Depth of YHWH's Anger

The accusation that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar had not spoken properly is accompanied by explicit and implicit indications of the deity's extreme anger and a set of instructions for what the three men must do to avoid the consequences of that anger. The extremity of YHWH's emotional response suggests that the lack of proper speech on the part of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar had impacted something very important to him. It has been shown throughout the text that YHWH's greatest priority has been his reputation and glory. In addition, requiring the interlocutors to

[72] See Chapter Three.

[73] Job's accurate description of his relationship to YHWH, in which he recognizes his ignorance and relents from challenging the deity, makes it possible for YHWH to describe him as speaking properly when his previous statements, the suit against YHWH, were clearly not proper. See also my discussion of Job's final speech in Chapter Three.

make sacrifices to him and to have Job pray on their behalf provides clear examples of speech that is proper because it contributes to YHWH's reputation. Both of these aspects of the context are best explained by the view that YHWH's description of proper speech and the lack of it is based upon the impact of speech upon his reputation.

The extent of YHWH's anger is suggested both explicitly and by the nature of the affliction that he proposes. YHWH begins by declaring that he is angry with Eliphaz, Bildad and Tsofar: "My anger is kindled against you and against your two friends" חרה אפי בך ובשני רעיך (Job 42:7). The proposed affliction is described in the portion of the speech in which YHWH describes how Job's intercession is necessary to avoid the consequences of that anger: "because I will grant him favor by not treating you disgracefully" כי את פניו אשא לבלתי עשות עמכם נבלה (Job 42:8).[74] The nature of the proposed affliction is described by the verbal clause עשות עמכם נבלה. To understand the extremity of YHWH's anger, it is necessary to analyze the grammar of the clause and the meaning of נבלה.[75]

The combination of the qal verbal form of עש"ה and the preposition עם indicates the manner or quality in which the subject of the verb behaves towards an object, functioning similarly to the colloquial English phrases "She treated him well" or "She treated him poorly." The quality or manner in which the subject treats the object of the preposition can be expressed in one of two ways. Sometimes an accompanying phrase expresses the way the subject of the

[74] On the reading כי את פניו, see notes on translation near the beginning of this chapter. For more on this clause and Job's involvement in averting the interlocutors' affliction, see below.
[75] Some scholars have understood the verbal complement עמכם נבלה to refer to a punishment that corresponds to the fallacious behavior of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar—translating with some version of "treat you according to your folly." See for example, Cho, "Job 2 and 42:7–10 as Narrative Bridge and Theological Pivot," 875; and Hartley, *Job*, 539. However, this is not grammatically possible, see Clines, *Job*, 1228 and 1232, and below.

verbal form of עשׂ"ה treats the object of the preposition.[76] When the verbal form of עשׂ"ה has in its verbal complement a single word functioning adverbially, as in Job 42:8, that single word describes the manner by which the subject treats the object of the preposition. In such cases, the most common adverbial word is the noun חסד. Other adverbial words include טובה "well," רעה/רע "evilly," and other adjectives which describe the way in which the subject treats the object of the preposition and should be translated adverbially.[77]

In YHWH's statement to Job's interlocutors the object of the preposition עם is the second person pronominal suffix referring to the interlocutors, and the adverbial word in the complement of the verb עשות is the noun נבלה. It is common to translate נבלה as "folly,"[78] and to focus in particular upon its relationship to sexual violations and sexual assault.[79] However, it is also used to describe disrespectful acts which are not sexual in nature, such as taking the חרם in defiance of YHWH's command (Josh 7:15), or in the description of Nabal by his wife in 1 Sam 25:25 (נבלה עמו) when she discusses his disrespectful behavior toward David and his messengers. In both cases, there is no allegation of sexual misconduct. This pattern of usage indicates that the

[76] See Gen 20:9 (object modified by relative phrase; מעשים אשר לא יעשו)Judg 9:19 (prepositional phrase באמת ובתמים); 2 Chr 2:2 (explanatory phrase marked by explicative *waw*); Jer 39:12 (prepositional phraseכן כאשר ידבר אליך); Ruth 1:8 (this verse contains two attestations, the quality of the treatment expressed by the second is qualified by the first which has the object חסד); Psa 119:124 (prepositional phrase כחסדך); Joel 2:26 (phrase occurs in relative clause describing the deity who the people were called to worship); Dan 1:13 (prepositional phrase כאשר תראה).
[77] See Gen 19:19 (חסד); 20:13 (חסד); 21:23 (חסד); 24:12 (חסד); 26:29 (טוב); 31:29 (רע); 40:14 (חסד); 47:29 (חסד); Exod 34:10 (נורא); Judg 8:35 (2x: חסד); 9:16 (טובה); 15:3 (רעה); Jos 2:12 (חסד); 1 Sam 20:14 (חסד); 2 Sam 2:5 (חסד); 3:8 (חסד); 9:7 (חסד); 10:2 (חסד); 13:16 (אחרת, referring to רעה); 1 Kgs 3:6 (חסד); 1 Chr 19:2 (חסד); Ruth 1:8 (חסד); and Job 10:12 (חסד). There are a few other attestations of the phrase when it refers more literally to "doing with" or "doing to," as in Job 13:20 (שתים; Job is asking that the deity not do two things to him).
[78] Among others, see Cho, "Job 2 and 42:7–10 as Narrative Bridge and Theological Pivot," 875; and Phillips, "Speaking Truthfully: Job's Friends and Job," 41–42.
[79] As it is used in Gen 34:6; Deut 22:21; Judg 19:23, 24; 20:10; 2 Sam 13:12; and Jer 29:23.

noun נבלה is associated with acts that show disrespect and bring disgrace upon the object.[80] Often the act or its impact is public.[81]

In the case of Job's friends, YHWH suggests that the punishment he will enact upon the interlocutors will be public and will disgrace them.[82] That YHWH says that he will treat Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar נבלה "disgracefully" indicates that his anger is extreme.[83] It is far greater than YHWH's previous responses to speech that would seem to be improper. The text does not record that YHWH reacts to Job's wife urging him to "curse God and die" (Job 2:9), nor does he

[80] Previous studies of נב"ל have identified the social dimensions expressed by words formed from the root, even as they have come to different conclusions regarding the exact sense. A survey of Akkadian and Biblical attestations of the root led Wolfgang M. Roth to conclude "The notion of 'tearing out,' 'separating from' underlies the group נָבָל/נְבָלָה as well as the group נָבָל/נְבָלָה" see "NBL," *VT* 10 (1960): 394–409, here 409. Anthony Phillips, "Nebalah: A Term for Serious Disorderly and Unruly Conduct," *VT* 25 (1975), 237–42, here 242, defined the word: "*nebalah* is a general expression for serious disorderly and unruly action resulting in the breakup of an existing relationship whether between tribes, within the family, in a business arrangement, in marriage or with God." Ngwa explores the meaning of the root נב"ל in this phrase and concludes that YHWH is threatening to act "in an 'outrageous' manner" see *The Hermeneutics of the "Happy" Ending in Job 42:7-17*, 17. But the common sense of all attestations of the root involve dishonor and disgrace. See the survey in J. Marböck, "נָבָל *nāḇāl*; נְבָלָה *neḇālâ*," *TDOT* 9:157–71.

[81] Even in those cases where נבלה does describe acts of sexuality, the impact of the act upon reputation and public disrespect is stressed. In the passage describing the actions of the young woman who had gone so far as לזנות בית אביה "to fornicate in the house of her father" (Deut 22:21) as having participated in נבלה, the punishment for a false accuser emphasizes the impact of such actions upon reputation (הוציא שם רע על בתולת ישראל; Deut 22:19). Tamar seeks to dissuade Amnon from raping her by speaking about its impact on her reputation, asking where she would bear her shame (2 Sam 13:12–13). The sons of Jacob become upset at Shechem's act of disrespect toward their family which is also public: Dinah is still at Shechem's house yet the brothers learned of it while they are in the fields, suggesting that word had gotten around (Gen 34:7). In two texts in Isaiah נבלה appears as the object of the verb דבר, describing spoken disrespect or public dishonor (Isa 9:16; 32:6). In both passages this is associated with a lack of service to the poor, the fatherless, or the widows, public acts which disrespect the individuals and the deity who commands to care for them.

[82] In agreement with Habel, *Job*, 575, "and not shame you"; Dhorme, *Job*, 648, "not inflicting on you any disgrace"; Clines, *Job*, 1227–28, "not to treat you outrageously."

[83] It is notable that this is comparable to the result of Job's afflictions, whose trials were public and in which his friends so confidently declared his unrighteousness. In at least some respects, the potential punishment of Job's interlocutors is similar to what they have contributed to Job enduring. There is some irony, then, that Job's prayer is essential for them to avoid it.

express any kind of response to Job's cursing of the day of his birth (Job 3:1). Even in the case of YHWH's speech from the whirlwind, in which he clearly contradicts Job's speech and acts to change his actions, there is no explicit expression of emotion like is expressed here. Nowhere else in *Job* is YHWH this angry.

The extent of YHWH's anger indicates that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar's failure to speak properly conflicts with YHWH's most significant priorities.[84] In *Job*, YHWH cares far more about his reputation than any of the other issues that have been proposed to be the basis of the evaluation of proper speech. YHWH has not shown an interest in the question of Job's innocence or the correct perception of it, even while Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar have been declaring Job's guilt. He has not shown an interest in compelling more people to speak directly to him or in speaking truth to power or being sincere.[85] Even when YHWH expressed disapproval of the opponent's suggestion in the opening scenes that Job only behaved righteously for selfish reasons, he did not respond with anger.[86]

On the other hand, YHWH has shown consistently throughout the text that he cares about his reputation and especially about speech either to him or about him that elevates or harms that reputation. He was deeply invested in how the opponent spoke to and about him in the opening

[84] Rogland, "»Speaking of Job«: A Philological and Exegetical Proposal on Job 42:7–8," 594: "The provocation of the Lord's wrath against the three friends and the need for blood atonement by sacrificing seven (!) bulls and rams as burnt offerings suggests that they have committed an offense of the gravest kind."
[85] Contra Greenstein, "Truth or Theodicy? Speaking Truth to Power in the Book of Job." See Oeming, " Ihr habt nicht recht von mir geredet wie mein Knecht Hiob," 107–11.
[86] See Chapter Two. I argue that YHWH is not angry, he is determined to get the opponent to acknowledge Job's righteousness. I would add that he is not angry about his conversations with the opponent because the opponent never impacted Job's righteousness or Job's speech, and thus never threatened YHWH's glory. In fact, one of the great ironies of *Job* is that Job is able to withstand all the afflictions of the opponent without speaking a word against God, but the false teachings and criticisms of his so-called friends cause him to accuse and criticize God.

scenes. He does not express anger, but he does show consistent interest in the opponent's speech. His interest in the speech of the opponent is so great that he allowed his previous determination of Job's fate to be overturned to compel the opponent to speak about him in a way that promoted YHWH's reputation.[87] He clearly cared about whether Job would respond to being afflicted with speech that contributed to his reputation and glory or by cursing him to his face. And YHWH intervened at the point in the dialogues at which Job's speech threatened YHWH's reputation.[88] It is not surprising that his intervention with the interlocutors in Job 42:7–8 is motivated by the same priority.

The Requirement for Sacrifice and Job's Intercessory Prayer

YHWH's instructions to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar require them to sacrifice and to get Job to pray for them: "Now, take[89] seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job. Then you will offer a sacrifice for your own sake, and my servant Job will pray on your behalf"[90] ועתה קחו לכם פרים ושבעה אילים ולכו אל עבדי איוב והעליתם עולה בעדכם ואיוב עבדי יתפלל עליכם שבעה (Job 42:8). YHWH then says that Job's prayer will protect them from the consequences of their failure to speak properly: "because I will grant him favor by not treating you disgracefully" כי את פניו אשא נבלה לבלתי עשות עמכם (Job 42:8).[91] The combination of the verb נשא and the object פנים means

[87] See Chapter Two.
[88] See Chapter Three.
[89] The literal translation of קחו לכם is "take for yourselves." The reflexive object is not included above.
[90] This is the same verb that is used in Job 42:10 to describe Job praying on the interlocutors' behalf, but with a different prepositional complement. The combination of the hithpael verb of פל"ל and the preposition על means to pray on behalf of someone or intercede on someone's behalf, see Neh 1:6 and 2 Chr 30:18. On the significance of the hithpael verb from פל"ל for intercession as a form of seeking consideration, see E. A. Speiser, "The Stem PLL in Hebrew," *JBL* 82.3 (1963): 301–6 especially 305.
[91] On the text-critical emendation כי את, see discussion above.

literally “to lift the face.” It is frequently used to describe the subject of the verb, often a deity or other individual holding authority, showing favor to the entity associated with the “face” that is the object.[92] Simeon Chavel has described the import of being in a position to see God’s face: “In the realm of human-divine relations, one may likewise see, seek and beseech the face of Yahweh for blessing, illumination or guidance.”[93] Sometimes the blessing comes in the form of a granted request.[94]

Because Job’s prayer is explicitly on the interlocutors’ behalf, it is clear that YHWH’s favor will be granting his intercessory request. The use of this particular construction indicates that it is Job’s intercession that spares Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar from consequences. Previous proposals have not adequately accounted for these elements of YHWH’s instructions. It is not apparent why a deity upset that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar had wrongly insisted that Job’s suffering was the result of his own sin or wrongly preached that God governed the world according to the principle of just retribution would require them to compel Job’s intercession. The view that YHWH is declaring that Job spoke properly because of his honesty or because he spoke to the deity or in his final speech alone also does not explain the requirement of

[92] For the phrase expressing a general showing of favor see Gen 32:21; Lev 19:15; Num 6:26; Deut 10:17; 28:50; 2 Kgs 3:14; Mal 1:8, 9; Job 13:8, 10; 32:21; 34:19; Ps 82:2; Prov 18:5; Lam 4:16. Koehler and Baumgartner give to the verb-object combination the meaning ‘to please, take into consideration, show clemency’ see *HALOT*, s.v. “פָּנָה” 940. See also the passive participle נש(ו)א + פנים n in 2 Kgs 5:1; Isa 3:3; 9:14; Job 22:8, describing a person held in esteem or respected. See also Gruber: “PN נשא פני >lift up PN's face< may denote either >cause PN to smile< or >show favor to PN< because the expression refers originally to the cheerful countenance which a person exhibits as a consequence of other persons’ showing him/her favor.” Mayer I. Gruber, “The Many Faces of Hebrew נשא פנים >lift up the face<,” *ZAW* 95 (1983): 252–60, here 254. Also Ngwa, *The Hermeneutics of the “Happy” Ending in Job 42:7-17*, 15–16.
[93] Simeon Chavel, “The Face of God and the Etiquette of Eye-Contact: Visitation, Pilgrimage, and Prophetic Vision in Ancient Israelite and Early Jewish Imagination,” *JSQ* 19 (2012): 1–55, here 15.
[94] For the phrase expressing the granting of a specific request see Gen 19:21 and 1 Sam 25:35.

intercession. Clines acknowledged that the requirement was striking and suggested forcing the interlocutors to admit to Job that all they said was wrong turned the tables and humiliated them before Job.[95] But it is unclear why this outcome would be desirable: YHWH has not expressed an interest in Job being vindicated or in him being proven superior to his interlocutors.

On the other hand, YHWH's requirements make sense if the deity's objective is his own glorification. Both requirements compel the human characters to demonstrate the deity's superiority. First, there is perhaps no more fundamental expression of the superiority of the deity and the subordination of the human than the act of sacrifice.[96] This functions on several levels, not the least of which is how "as a symbolic action, the act of formalized gift-giving communicated one's status with a given social group."[97] Sacrifice communicated the superiority of the divine receiver in several ways. The giving of gifts by faithful, fearful humans communicated both respect and a belief in the deity's ability to provide blessings in return. In addition, the exchange was not symmetrical: "the gods establish their superiority by giving more than they receive."[98] Even more, the asymmetry of what the human offers and the deity bestows suggests an equivalence of value that communicates divine superiority:

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[95] Clines, *Job*, 1233–34.

[96] While the theology of sacrifice as represented in the ancient Near East is complex and multifaceted, this motif of human subordination and divine aggrandizement appears in a number of sacrificial systems and their presentation, including in the conception that humans must purify the sanctuary in order to facilitate the presence of the divine (Jacob Milgrom, "Israel's Sanctuary: The Priestly Picture of 'Dorian Grey,'" *RB* 83 [1976]: 390–99); the conception that democratized sacrifice defines territory and nationhood by the relationship between human supplicants and their divine king (Simeon Chavel, "A Kingdom of Priests and Its Earthen Altars in Exodus 19-24," *VT* 65 [2015]: 169–222); and in the simple conception of sacrifice as a gift to a god or gods that was intended to show gratitude for blessings that were understood to come from the deity or to solicit blessings that the deity could bestow (Liane M. Feldman, "The Idea and Study of Sacrifice in Ancient Israel," *Religion Compass* 14.12 [2020]: 1–14, here 4 and 7).

[97] Gary A. Anderson, *Sacrifices and Offerings in Ancient Israel: Studies in Their Social and Political Importance*, HSM 41 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 57.

[98] Gary A. Anderson, "Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings (OT)," *ABD* 5:870–86, here 872.

> the value of the thing given is inversely proportional to that of the giver…for a god, giving much is giving little; for man, giving little is giving much. Hence man's small gift to the god is as valuable as god's big gift to man, but at the same time this equivalence of the gifts signifies and establishes the nonequivalence of the givers, of god and man. It is in this way that the reciprocity can coexist with hierarchy and the sacrificial exchange can represent the god's superiority over men.[99]

This non-commensurate reciprocity in the act of sacrifice enhances its function as an expression of human subservience and divine superiority. Instructing the interlocutors to sacrifice to him compels them to act in a way that aligns with his greatest priority: the acknowledgement of his greatness and elevating his reputation.

Second, prayer is a premier exemplar of speech that properly elevates God and contributes to his glory and reputation. In his survey of prayer in the Hebrew Bible, Patrick Miller described prayer as "the human cry for help" to God.[100] What is significant for understanding the conclusion to *Job* is the way that pleading to God for help impacts his reputation. Pleading for help fundamentally acknowledges the power of the one who is pleaded with and the relative inferiority of the one pleading: "By asking for help in prayer, humans not only express their dependence on God but also honor Him as God."[101]

Third, YHWH arranges for Job to engage in intercessory prayer because such an intercession is more likely to elevate YHWH's reputation more than if the friends were to sacrifice and pray on their own behalf. Job's intercessory prayer is more likely to elevate

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[99] Valerio Valeri, *Kingship and Sacrifice: Ritual and Society in Ancient Hawaii* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 66. This passage from Valeri is also quoted in Anderson, "Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings (OT)," 872.
[100] Likewise: "a plea to God for help." Miller, *They Cried to the Lord*, 3 and 55.
[101] Miller, *They Cried to the Lord*, 186.

YHWH's reputation for three reasons. First, Job has just demonstrated in Job 42:1–6 that he knows how to speak to God in a way that elevates his reputation while YHWH has no reason to think that the friends can. The whole reason for the problem that caused YHWH to speak to them is that they have not demonstrated they know how to speak properly to or about God. In fact, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar have not yet demonstrated that they understand God is worthy of their praise because of his superiority rather than because he upholds their ideals of justice. Asking them to pray risks additional offense by producing more of the type of speech they produced in the poetic dialogues. By asking Job to pray for them, there is a much higher likelihood that the prayer will include proper speech.

One way in which intercessory prayer is more likely to include proper speech is that it is more likely to include an acknowledgment of sin. The phenomenon of intercession is not rigidly determined, but amidst its diversity it almost always involves a pattern of events involving a crisis, intercession, and solution.[102] The crisis is very rarely unprompted but is spurred by sin and

[102] Iwański, *The Dynamics of Job's Intercession,* 299. The act of intercession, in which someone petitions the deity on behalf of a third party, appears throughout the Hebrew Bible. Abraham intercedes with God unsuccessfully on behalf of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:22–33) and successfully on behalf of Abimelek (Gen 20:14–18). For more on intercession, see the studies of Marian Broida, "Ritualization in Prophetic Intercession," in *Prophecy and its Cultic Dimensions*, ed. Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements 31 (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 17–37; Michael Widmer, *Standing in the Breach: An Old Testament Theology and Spirituality of Intercessory Prayer* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015); François Rossier, *L'intercession entre les hommes dans la Bible hébraïque: L'intercession entre les hommes aux origines de l'intercession auprès de Dieu*, OBO 152 (Freiburg: Editions Universitaires, 1996); and Patrick D. Miller, *They Cried to the Lord: The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994), 262–80. Miller described intercessory prayer to be restricted to "those who represented the people before God or spoke the word of the Lord to the people." See Miller, *They Cried to the Lord*, 263–65. See the examples of intercession by Nehemiah (Neh 1:6) and Hezekiah (2 Chr 30:18). For a challenge to the view that intercession was a common function of the prophetic office, see Samuel E. Balentine, "The Prophet as Intercessor: A Reassessment," *JBL* 103 (1984): 161–73, here 172.

the person or people asking for intercession are threatened by divine judgment.[103] By its very nature, intercessory prayer requires the one praying to acknowledge that an offense has been committed against the deity, that the deity has power to administer judgment, and to request that the deity refrain from casting judgment. If Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar were to pray on their own behalf, they might simply plea for relief or, again, praise aspects of God that they believe align with their own ideals without acknowledging their sin. While there are many types of prayer, intercession is more likely than most to acknowledge sin in a way that will help Job's friends' understand their errors and avoid future offense. By compelling Job to engage in intercession and making it likely for the friends to see Job doing so, YHWH makes certain that the friends can see an example of what kind of speech YHWH wants and how different it is than what they have spent the entirety of the poetic dialogues doing.[104]

Finally, requiring Job's intercession provides a clear example to the friends that blessing and affliction are influenced by things other than individual sin and righteousness. Intercessory prayer is an undeniable proof that their claims regarding absolute retributive justice are wrong. By giving them an indisputable proof of this that affects their own lives, YHWH minimizes the

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[103] This is always the case when the intercession is described using the hithpael verb התפלל and the prepositional complement בעד. Miller pointed out that this means that intercession described using the formulation in Job 42:8–10 always takes place in the context of attempting to change YHWH's administration of judgment: "By far the great majority of occasions, however, where intercession for others took place were situations in which individuals or, more often, the people as a whole were under threat or actuality of divine judgment. The whole purpose of the intercession was to avert the divine judgment and remove the present or pending disaster, which was God's punishment for the sin of the people or of the individual. The context of intercession in the Old Testament, therefore, is the reality of judgment. While such prayer might occur under other circumstances, the prayers of the servants of the Lord in behalf of others were most often lifted to try to avert the divine wrath that was upon them or at hand." Miller, *They Cried to the Lord*, 266. See also Widmer, *Standing in the Breach*, 186–87.

[104] While it is not reported that the friends observe Job's prayer on their behalf, the fact that he is interceding for them and the high stakes of the intercession make it possible, if not probable, that they do watch and hear Job's prayer.

possibility that they will miss the point and return to their harmful theologizing. Each of these three elements of Job's prayer elevate YHWH's reputation and contributes to his glory.

YHWH's Evaluation and the Consistency of the Conclusion

In this understanding, YHWH's evaluation of speech depends upon its impact upon his reputation: YHWH describes speech that glorifies him to be proper and describes the failure to glorify him as a failure to speak properly. Job's remarks in the dialogues do not prevent YHWH from describing his speech as proper because the overall impact of Job's speech upon YHWH's reputation is positive and is thus a suitable example for YHWH to point out to Job's interlocutors. Similarly, while the content and direction of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar's speeches are not specifically objectionable, the impact their speech had upon the reputation of YHWH, particularly because of how they influenced Job, is accurately described as improper. In light of this analysis, it is not tenable to cite YHWH's evaluation of speech as evidence of incoherence either in characterization or plot.

The difference between the two approaches YHWH takes in addressing Job and Job's friends highlights the differences in the nature and cause of the threat each poses to his reputation. In the opening scenes, Job had consistently spoken in a way that elevated Job's reputation, even after he began suffering. But midway through the poetic dialogues, Job was accusing YHWH of injustice and utilizing legal language that suggested the human and the deity were equals. Job's speech threatened YHWH's reputation, not because he was generally incapable of glorifying YHWH in speech, but because his circumstances and his new view of justice had led him to misunderstand his relationship with YHWH and deviate from his normal

way of speaking. In addition, Job's speech was particularly threatening because of the importance YHWH had placed upon Job as an individual.

YHWH's response was attuned both to the nature and magnitude of the impact Job's speech threatened. He appeared dramatically, מן הסערה "out of the whirlwind" (Job 38:1) and gave a lengthy, poetic discourse that demonstrated Job's knowledge was insufficient to evaluate justice and that the deity was superior to the human being, compelling Job to end his mourning and his suit. In addition, he compels Job to respond because once the problems were resolved, he knew Job was likely to again speak in a way that elevated YHWH's reputation, and Job's righteousness had been important to YHWH since the opening scenes.

YHWH does not prompt Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar to respond because their righteousness is not important to YHWH as a character, nor has it been important within the narrative. Instead, they harmed YHWH's reputation because their dogmatic insistence that justice requires God to afflict the wicked and bless the righteous impacted Job. This did not require a lengthy demonstration of divine superiority, YHWH needed only to prevent them from continuing to preach that message. And he pursues that objective in a short speech in which he tells them their speech is bad, that it makes him very angry, and he sets in motion a series of events that demonstrates that the theology they have been parroting is false and gives them an example of what proper speech looks like. The two speeches are different in form and content because they address different problems, even as YHWH's goal is consistent. In fact, YHWH's desire to prevent the interlocutors from threatening his reputation also explains why he reverses Job's fortunes for a second time.

THE SECOND REVERSAL OF JOB'S FORTUNES IN 42:10

At the end of *Job*, YHWH causes Job to gain great material wealth, father ten children, and receive the comfort and support of friends and family for the remainder of his long life (42:10–17). YHWH's decision to reverse the fortunes of Job a second time is crucial to the plot, the characterization of YHWH, and to a number of issues that have impacted interpretations of what the text says on the issue of human suffering. Despite the importance of the event, there is not an explicit articulation of the factors motivating YHWH's decision. YHWH does not speak of his intentions towards Job before or at the time of the reversal. The only character who speaks during or after the reversal is the narrator, and he only makes it explicit that YHWH is the agent of the change in the brief report of the event itself in 42:10 and then describes the details of Job's prosperity in 42:11–17 without providing YHWH's explicit rationale.

As scholars have attempted to interpret the conclusion of *Job*, they have advanced a number of proposals regarding YHWH's motivations for reversing Job's fortunes and the significance of this event in the text of *Job*. Some scholars have argued that YHWH blesses Job as just retribution for his righteousness.[105] Although this interpretation has been perceived to be in tension with other portions of *Job* which suggest YHWH does not administer blessings and affliction according to the principle of retribution, these scholars have explained this tension as the inevitable product of the combination of originally disparate materials,[106] or embraced the

[105] As described in Frankel, "The Speech about God in Job 42:7-8," 4: "why does God go on to restore Job so impressively and double his previous fortune at the end of the book? For many, this striking restoration of Job's fortunes immediately after the divine verdict of 42:7–8 has the appearance of a divine reward to Job for speaking the truth as opposed to Job's friends."
[106] See Jastrow, *The Book of Job*, 11–15; Pope, *Job*, XXIII–XXX, LXXXI; Gordis, *The Book of Job*, 574; and. Fisher, *The Many Voices of Job*, xii–xvi. Bruce Zuckerman said that the dialogues are meant to be a parody of the original prose tale, see *Job the Silent*, 104–117.

tension as a rhetorically motivated expression of the literary art of the work,[107] or suggested there is no conflict at all.[108]

Others suggest that the reversal of fortunes is a blessing to Job but is not a form of retribution because the deity acts of his own free choice rather than being bound by law. Some adherents of this solution have suggested that YHWH restores the previous set of affairs because Job's trial is over, and the purpose of his suffering had been fulfilled.[109] Some suggested that the reversal is restitution from the deity to compensate for what was wrongfully taken from Job.[110] Another group of scholars suggested that the reversal is a manifestation of the deity's freedom, or of divine grace, or a more thorough rejection of retribution theology.[111]

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[107] Dell, *The Book of Job as Sceptical Literature*, 208–209, said the final form of the book is deliberately contradictory to show that there are no solutions to the problem in accordance with the skepticism that is the major defining feature of the work. See also Dell, *Job: Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?*, 104. Chavel, "Knowledge of the Lord in the Hebrew Bible," suggests that *Job* is an intentionally broken story, challenging the idea that human beings can tell stories to make sense of what happens. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations*, 20–30, says that the ending prevents closure as part of the polyphonic disjunction of multiple perspectives set into conversation with one another.

[108] See Dhorme, *Job*, xxxiv: "As for the hero, he will enjoy the reward of his virtue…It must not be forgotten that, if God permits the righteous to suffer misfortune, it is a temporary affair and justified as a means of testing their worth.

[109] Driver and Gray, *Book of Job*, 1:lxi-lxii; Rowley, *Job*, 11–12; Whybray, *Job*, 10; and Wilson, *Job*, 469–70.

[110] See Martin, "Concluding the Book of Job and YHWH: Reading Job from the End to the Beginning," 314–15; and Seow, *Job 1-21*, 108, who described the twofold restitution as a stipulation of the law in Exod 22:4 for the person who deprives another of property unjustly. Abigail Pelham, *Contested Creations in the Book of Job: The-World-As-It-Ought-and-Ought-Not-To-Be* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 186, took the same approach but with the added twist that the opening and closing scenes appear in a world of Job's own creation.

[111] See Habel, *Job*, 584; Hartley, *Job*, 540; van Wolde, *Mr and Mrs Job*, 149–50; J. Gerald Janzen, *Job* (Atlanta: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 267. It is also proposed that the final reversal transcends the retributive component of the text, showing that God can stray from retribution, in an act of freedom that may resonate with mercy, see Ngwa, *The Hermeneutics of the "Happy" Ending in Job 42:7-17*, 145; and that Job's reversal of fortunes is an unconditional blessing granted freely by the deity, see Iwański, *The Dynamics of Job's Intercession*, 286.

For many of these scholars, the interpretation of YHWH's final reversal of Job's fortunes depends upon how it relates to the text's depiction of human suffering and its function as a theodicy. However, this has led to an insufficient consideration of the relationship between the reversal of fortunes with what happens immediately before: YHWH's speech to the interlocutors and Job's intercessory prayer. In fact, as I argue below, there is significant evidence indicating that there is a close relationship between Job's intercession and the reversal of Job's fortunes. In this section, I argue that it is necessary to identify an interpretation of the reversal of Job's fortunes that best explains this relationship to Job's intercession, and, by extension, the entire sequence of events that YHWH sets in motion with his speech in Job 42:7–9.

I argue that YHWH reverses the fortunes of Job in the conclusion for the same reason that he reversed the fortunes of Job in the opening scenes: to influence a third party to speak in a way that contributes to his glory. In the opening scenes, YHWH afflicted Job to demonstrate his righteousness as part of a plan to compel the opponent to speak in a way that glorified the deity. This time, YHWH blesses Job to demonstrate that he manipulates human fortunes not to provide just retribution but instead for often inaccessible reasons[112] as part of a plan to compel Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar to avoid speaking in a way that harms his reputation in the future. By demonstrating to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar that their previous speech was inaccurate and therefore does not contribute to his glory, YHWH seeks to prevent them from speaking in a way that has a negative impact upon his reputation and instead engage in proper speech, such as sacrifice and prayer, that elevates his glory.

[112] While the reader is made aware of the reason for the first reversal of Job's fortunes because they are granted access to the celestial conversations in Job 1–2, the humans in the story are never told of these conversations, making the reason for Job's suffering totally inaccessible to them.

The Grammatical Connection between the Reversal and the Prayer

After YHWH's speech in 42:7–8, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar follow YHWH's instructions. They sacrifice and compel Job to pray for them. Job's prayer is not described in detail, but the text indicates that YHWH accepts Job's intercession and then describes the reversal of Job's fortunes. Most scholars who have interpreted the reversal of Job's fortunes have treated it as unrelated to Job's intercessory prayer aside from noting the temporal relationship. However, the grammatical construction of the two clauses describing Job's intercessory prayer and YHWH's reversal of Job's fortunes expresses a close relationship between the two verbal actions. I argue in this section of the chapter that the best interpretation of the reversal of Job's fortunes accounts for this relationship.

The description of Job's prayer and YHWH's reversal of Job's fortunes appears in Job 42:9–10. It follows the concise description of the interlocutors' obedience and YHWH's acceptance of Job's intercession and precedes the more detailed description in 42:11–17 of Job's newfound wealth, the support of his family and friends, his new children and the remainder of his long life.

Job 42:9–10

[9]וילכו אליפז התימני ובלדד השוחי צפר	[9]So Eliphaz the Teymanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and
הנעמתי ויעשו כאשר דבר אליהם יהוה	Tsofar the Na'amatite went and did as YHWH told
וישא יהוה את פני איוב [10]ויהוה שב את	them, and YHWH granted Job favor. [10]Because he
שבית איוב בהתפללו בעד רעהו ויסף יהוה	prayed on behalf of his friends, YHWH reversed the
את כל אשר לאיוב למשנה	fortunes of Job, adding double to what Job had.

There are several grammatical and lexical issues that impact the interpretation of this portion of the text and the elements of the story that it describes.

The first is the particular combination of subject, verb, and object. YHWH's action is described in an independent clause that includes YHWH as the subject of the qal verb from the root שׁו"ב that also takes the object שבית איוב.[113] It is not uncommon for these events to be described as the "restoration of Job," perhaps because this combination of subject (an appellation of deity), verb (qal form of שׁו"ב) and object (a form of the noun שבית) most regularly appears in Exilic and post-Exilic prophetic literature and refers to YHWH gathering the remnant of a people after bringing about the destruction of their homeland and scattering them.[114] Thus, even though it is clear that restoration after exile is not the sense of the phrase in Job 42:10, the interpretation is sometimes articulated in a form reminiscent of other attestations in which the verbal form of שׁו"ב is translated "return" and the substantive שבית as a nominal form of the root שׁב"ה relating to captivity and the phrase literally translated "to bring back the captives."[115]

However, the lexical data supports an interpretation of reversal rather than restoration. Although verbal forms of the root שׁו"ב are often interpreted in the sense "to return,"[116] David Lambert has shown that they are better understood to describe "a dramatic change in direction,

[113] Marked as such by the definite direct object marker. The qal verb שׁב is usually intransitive and transitivity usually occurs in hiphil verbs derived from the root. However, there are several exceptions, such as in the qal imperative form in Psalm 85:5 that has a pronominal objective suffix: שׁובנו. See also those discussed below.

[114] See Deut 30:3; Jer 29:14; 30:3, 18; 31:23; 33:26 (Qere and other MS read hiphil); 48:47; 49:39; Ezek 16:53; 29:14; Hos 6:11; Joel 4:1; Amos 9:14; Zeph 2:7; 3:20; Psalm 14:7 = 53:7; Psa 85:2; and Psa 126:1, 4. There is also an attestation of the qal verb שׁב with the object גאון in Nah 2:3. See also variations of the phrase with the hiphil verb השיב in Jer 32:44; 33:7, 11; 49:6; Ezek 39:25; and Lam 2:14.

[115] See Dhorme, *Job*, 651; Habel, *Job*, 584; and Hartley, *Job*, 540. The exact meaning of the phrase has been the subject of much discussion for some time. See, for example, bibliography spanning 1895 to 1958 in Hartley, *Job*, 540. Pope, *Job*, 351, pointed out that in this case, and perhaps in general, a better interpretation is to be sought.

[116] See *HALOT,* s.v. "שׁוב," 1430; and *BDB*, s.v. "שׁוּב," 996–1000.

motion that is opposite in some fashion, a turning away/aside/around/back off."[117] Similarly, the understanding of the noun שבות/שבית [118] has likely been impacted by its graphic similarity with forms of the weak root שׁב"ה often associated with captivity, especially national captivity and restoration, in the contexts in which it appears.[119] However, the appearance of the form in Job 42:10 and a cognate expression in the Aramaic language Sefire III stele (lines 24–25 of KAI 224), both of which cannot be dealing with the return of captives or captivity, suggests that the noun שבות/שבית is more likely derived from the root שׁו"ב and must also relate to reversal in some way.[120]

In Sefire III, the noun appears as the object of the verb השבו and refers to a positive reversal of fortunes of a royal dynasty: וכעת השבו אלהן שיבת בי[ת אבי] "and now the gods have reversed the fortunes of the hou[se of my father.]"[121] This evidence led Joseph Fitzmeyer to

[117] David A. Lambert, *How Repentance Became Biblical* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 73–74, here 73. Note that this aligns with the definition put forth in the comprehensive study of the lexeme by William L. Holladay, who in his description of "the central or 'core' meaning of *šubh*" in the qal emphasizes the reversal of direction and relegates the sense of return to a likely implication: "*having moved in a particular direction, to move thereupon in the opposite direction, the implication being (unless there is evidence to the contrary) that one will arrive again at the initial point of departure.*" [italics original] See William L. Holladay, *The Root Šûbh in the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1958), 53.

[118] The *qere* reads שבות in the place of שבית. Note that these are simply alternative spellings of the same word and there is no interpretive difference between them. See R. Borger, "Zu שׁוב שׁבו/ית," *ZAW* 66 (1954): 315–16, "Das ist um so auffälliger, als zwischen שׁבות und שׁבית kein Unterschied erkennbar ist," also the single entry for them in *HALOT*, s.v. "שְׁבוּת, שְׁבִית." See additional comment in *HALOT*, s.v. "שׁוב," 1430.

[119] See translations "captivity" and "restoration" given in *DCH* 8, s.v. "שְׁבוּת I," and "שְׁבוּת II," 229; and "captivity" given in *BDB*, s.v. "שְׁבִית, שְׁבוּת," 986.

[120] The attestation of the noun שבית in Num 21:29 appears to refer to daughters being made into captives, and would support the derivation of the noun from the root שׁב"ה. However, the presence of at least two manuscripts in which the passage reads בשבי instead of בשבית suggests that it is possible that the superior text critical reading of the passage contains the noun שבי "captivity, captives" and that it cannot be used as evidence for the usage of שבות/שבית .

[121] See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire*, rev. ed (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1995), 141.

conclude that the Hebrew noun also deals with reversal: "The Hebrew noun has always been puzzling, and some interpreters have wanted to derive it from שבי, 'capture,' whereas others from שוב 'return.' The Aramaic expression shows that the noun is a cognate accusative and so supports the interpretation that derives *šĕbût* from *šwb*."[122] This indicates that the literal meaning of the combination of the verb שב and the object שבית/שבות is "turn the turning."

The context of Job 42:10, reinforced by the cognate expression in the Aramaic Sefire III stele, indicates that what is being "turned" is Job's general state of being. Therefore, I translate the phrase ויהוה שב את שבית איוב in Job 42:10 with the colloquial phrase "YHWH reversed the fortunes of Job."[123] That the phrase emphasizes reversal is suggestive regarding the importance of the event in the narrative. The events in Job 42:10 are not primarily about returning Job to his former state, even if that is in some ways the practical effect. Instead, the phrase emphasizes that YHWH changed Job's state of blessedness or affliction and that the change was dramatic: a complete reversal of his state before the deity's intervention.

The relationships of the several clauses and their constituent verbs are also significant.[124] The reversal of Job's fortunes is narrated in an independent clause with a finite verb that is

[122] Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire*, 160.
[123] See Driver and Gray, *Book of Job*, 2:349. Ngwa said "the verb is used in a double manner to express both the idea of preventing or stopping something that is ongoing, as well as restoring what has been lost," *The Hermeneutics of the "Happy" Ending in Job 42:7-17*, 18–20. The concept of reversal is supported, although not identically, in the study of John M. Bracke, "*šûb šᵉbût*: A Reappraisal," *ZAW* 97 (1985), 233–44, here 243: "Most frequently, *šûb šᵉbût* is associated with promises which indicate Yahweh's reversal of his judgment, and the restoration of a condition of well-being. Additionally, the vision of restoration connected with *šûb šᵉbût* often includes Yahweh's correction of that which led to his judgment."
[124] The final clause of 42:10 provides additional specification about the nature of YHWH's reversal of Job's fortunes. See *IBHS* 33.2.2 and 39.2.4 and their examples of clauses providing additional specification to the preceding in Exod 24:7 and 2 Sam 14:5.

linked to a dependent clause that describes Job's intercessory prayer: בהתפללו בעד רעהו.[125] The grammatical construction of the two clauses—an independent clause with a finite verb and a dependent clause containing an infinitive construct preceded by the preposition ב—indicates that the actions expressed by the two verbs in the two clauses are closely linked. In every case of this construction, there is a temporal relationship between the verbal actions in the two clauses: the action expressed by the finite verb occurs within the period that the action expressed by the ב + infinitive construction takes place, or at least starts to occur within that period.[126] For example this construction is used in Moses's description of YHWH's manipulation of the waters to destroy the Egyptians during the time period in which they were pursuing the Israelites: הציף את מי ים סוף על פניהם ברדפם אחריכם "He caused the water of the Reed Sea to flow upon them while they pursued after you" (Deut 11:4).[127] In this example, the manipulation of the water must have occurred during the pursuit. The actions in the two clauses share a close temporal relationship.

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[125] The dependent clause contains a hithpael infinitive construct form of the root פל"ל, a common verb for intercessory prayer (see examples in *HALOT*, s.v. "פלל," 933–34, who gives as the meaning of the hithpael "to make intercession for, act as an intercessor for." Also *BDB*, s.v. "פָּלַל," 813, "intercede." For more on Job's intercession and its importance to the plot, see Iwański, *The Dynamics of Job's Intercession*) and the prepositional phrase בעד רעהו indicating that the intercession is on behalf of his friends. The combination of the hithpael of פל"ל and the complement introduced by בעד is the most common expression used to describe intercession, see Balentine, "The Prophet as Intercessor: A Reassessment," 162. The preposition בעד often has a spatial sense, but it can also carry the sense 'for the benefit of', see Gen 20:7; Exod 8:24; Exod 32:30; Lev 9:7 (3x); Lev 16:6 (2x), 11 (2x), 17 (3x); 24 (2x); Num 21:7; Deut 9:20; 1 Sam 7:5, 9; 12:19, 23; 2 Sam 10:12 (2x); 12:16; 1 Kings 13:6; 2 Kings 19:4; 22:13 (3x); Isa 8:19; 37:4; Jer 7:16 (2x); 11:14 (2x); 14:11; Jer 2:1; 29:7; 37:3; 42:2 (2x), 20; Ezek 22:30; 45:17, 22 (2x); Zech 12:8; Psa 72:15; 138:8; Job 2:4; Job 6:22; 1 Chr 19:13 (2x); 2 Chr 30:18; 2 Chr 34:21 (2x).

[126] As described in Joüon §166l: "ב [with the infinitive] indicates, properly speaking, the inclusion of an action *within* the period of another." This more precise definition is preferable to those given in *GKC* §114d–e and *IBHS* 36.2.2b, the latter stating that the construction "denotes in general the temporal proximity of one event to another."

[127] See also the following passages: ויהי בהיותם בשדה ויקם קין אל חבל אחיו ויהרגהו "While they were in the field, Qayin rose up against Hevel his brother and killed him" (Gen 4:8); ובא אהרן ובניו בנסע המחנה "Aaron and his sons will go when the camp departs" (Num 4:5); and ויהי בהיות יהושע ביריחו וישא עיניו "When Joshua was in Jericho, he lifted his eyes" (Josh 5:13).

In some cases, this construction expresses both a temporal relationship and an additional, causal relationship between the verbal actions in the two clauses. In over one hundred attestations of this construction, the action expressed by the finite verb in the independent clause is caused, either in whole or in part, by the action expressed by the infinitive in the dependent clause.[128] In the example above, the construction could also express causality: YHWH manipulated the water because the Egyptians were pursuing after Israel. Other cases are more clear. The construction is used to express the causal relationship between YHWH hearing the Israelites' grumbling and them seeing his glory: ובקר וראיתם את כבוד יהוה בשמעו את תלנתיכם על יהוה "In the morning you will see the glory of YHWH because he has heard your grumblings against YHWH" (Exod 16:7). In the same way, the construction expresses the cause of Nadav and Abihu's deaths וימתו בקרבתם לפני יהוה "They died because they approached YHWH" (Lev 16:1); the causal relationship between YHWH's actions against Egypt and their subsequent knowledge of him וידעו מצרים כי אני יהוה בנטתי את ידי על מצרים "Egypt will know that I am YHWH because I reached out my hand against Egypt" (Exod 7:5); and the closing of the skies as the cause of the lack of rain בהעצר שמים ולא יהיה מטר "Because the skies are closed there is no rain" (1 Kings 8:35). In these cases, it is clear that the action in the dependent clause is the cause of the action in the independent clause.

[128] See Gen 19:29; 30:42; 32:26; 34:25; 35:17; 45:1; 50:17; Exod 7:5; 12:13; 13:17; 14:18; 16:7; Exod 19:13; 21:8; 28:29, 30, 35, 43; 29:36; 30:20; 33:16; 33:22; 34:34; 40:32, 36; Lev 10:9; 15:23, 31; 16:1, 17, 23; 18:28; 24:16; 26:26, 35, 43; Num 3:4; 4:15, 19; 6:7; 8:2, 19; 25:11; 26:9, 10, 61; Deut 5:28; 11:4, 19; 15:10, 18; 25:4; Josh 2:10; 4:7; 5:4, 12; 6:5; 23:16; Judg 2:19; 5:4; 8:3; 11:16, 31; 16:9; 1 Sam 11:6; 17:24; 18:26; 2 Sam 1:2; 3:6; 4:4; 7:14; 8:3, 13; 15:5; 18:5; 19:4; 24:17; 1 Kgs 2:7; 1 Kgs 8:35; 13:31; 18:4, 13, 36; 2 Kgs 22:19; Isa 2:19, 21; 9:2; 20:1; 27:9, 11; 55:6; 57:13; Jer 21:1; 22:23; 28:9; 31:23; 42:18; Ezek 3:18, 20; 5:13, 15, 16; 6:13; 9:8; 12:15; 13:19; 15:7; and 16:21.

Therefore, the construction in Job 42:10 indicates that there is, at the least, a close temporal relationship between the two actions. It is certain that YHWH reversed or began to reverse Job's fortunes during the period in which Job prayed on behalf of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar.[129] In addition, it is possible that the construction also expresses a causal relationship. It is possible that the passage ויהוה שב את שבית איוב בהתפללו בעד רעהו should be understood as "Because he prayed on behalf of his friends, YHWH reversed the fortunes of Job."

While it is impossible to determine by grammar alone whether the relationship is indeed causal, the relationship between the two actions is close. Even if the grammar expresses only a temporal relationship, it is difficult to see how such a temporal relationship could be understood as coincidental or in any other way that does not recognize a significant connection between the reversal and the prayer. Yitzak Berger recently noted the strength of this connection:

> The text makes a point of connecting Job's prayer to the restoration of his wealth. This immediately suggests that it is specifically his prayer—and not his speech—that prompts his favorable turn of fortune…. the restoration of Job's wealth does not occur after the friends' absolution. Instead, in some unspecified way, Job gains a spectacular windfall "upon"—i.e., during, and possibly because of—his praying for his friends, before he completes his petition and elicits divine forgiveness for them. If this is correct, Job's prayer and restoration could hardly be more tightly linked.[130]

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[129] For examples of this construction being used to describe situations in which an action expressed by the finite verb begins within the period of the action expressed by the dependent infinitive, see Deut 27:4, 12; Num 8:2; and Exod 19:13.

[130] Berger, "On the Restoration of Job: Poetics and Meaning in Job 42," 15–16. Berger argued that the reason for this relationship between the two actions is that it establishes a contrast with the interactions between Joseph and his brothers in the Joseph cycle. I focus not on possible intertextuality but on the meaning of the connection between the two actions in the story of *Job*.

I argue that the best interpretation of Job 42:10 is the one that best accounts for this close relationship between Job's prayer and YHWH's reversal of Job's fortunes. In addition, the temporal connection between the two actions establishes the reversal of Job's fortunes as the final event in a sequence that began with YHWH's speaking to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar and that included their sacrifice and Job's intercession on their behalf. Because of this, I argue that the best interpretation of Job 42:10 accounts for the relationship between YHWH's reversal of Job's fortunes and YHWH's speech and the events that occur as a result of it.

Some scholars have already offered explanations of Job 42:10 that take this relationship into account. Some have argued that the reversal of fortune is a reward for Job's righteous intercession on behalf of his friends. For example, Edouard Dhorme stated that the text ended with Job enjoying "the reward of his virtue, which in its fullness overflows his own life and goes out to save his neighbours."[131] A few other scholars have adopted this view or one similar to it.[132] However, the events of the opening scenes have clearly established that in the story, YHWH does not consistently reward righteousness. It is not clear why YHWH would abandon his previous stance and start blessing Job just for one righteous act at this point of the story, nor why the single act of intercession would earn Job twice the blessings he had in the beginning.[133]

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[131] Dhorme, *Job*, xxxiv. For the translation of 42:10 indicating the causal relationship, see Dhorme, *Job*, 649.

[132] Marvin Pope notes the possibility that the relationship was casual, and suggests that if this were the case then the blessings Job receives at the end of the text are a reward for acting on his friends' behalf. Pope, *Job*, LXXXI–LXXXII. See also the interpretation of בהתפללו by Ngwa as a form that "not only suggests the idea of cause and effect, but also of simultaneity." Ngwa, *The Hermeneutics of the "Happy" Ending in Job 42:7-17*, 21.

[133] See, for example, Edwin Good, who stated that the syntax indicates that the relationship between the prayer and the reversal is "not a mere temporal sequence," suggested that this depiction of the deity acting according to the principle of retribution contradicts the theological claims elsewhere and is therefore part of the theological multivocality and incoherence of *Job*. Good, "The Problem of Evil in the Book of Job," 68–69: "No book of any depth speaks with a single voice. Every one contradicts itself somewhere along the line, and so no book provides the

For these and related reasons, others have explicitly rejected the possibility that Job earned his reversal.[134] Iwański, for example, suggested that the relationship between the two events is merely temporal and argued that the blessings Job receives at the end of the story are a "free gift" given by the deity without condition.[135] This view correctly identifies that the story emphasizes YHWH's freedom to bless and afflict freely. However, this view does not explain the relationship between Job's reversal and the prayer or the other events associated with YHWH's previous speech. Fortunately, neither the view that the blessing is disassociated from the context nor that Job earns the final reversal of fortunes are the only ways that there could be a causal relationship between the intercessory prayer and the reversal of Job's fortunes. In fact, when the reversal is viewed as the culmination in the sequence of events that YHWH initiated with his speech to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar and in relation to YHWH's actions in the opening scenes, another interpretation emerges as the most likely.

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definitive answer to anything…I think we see in the book several different, and incompatible answers to the same profound questions."

[134] For example, Clines says that the translation "Yahweh restored Job's fortunes, because he had prayed for his friends" creates "a rather implausible sense." Clines also rejects this interpretation on the grounds that the preposition ב doesn't function in this way, although this claim is contradicted by the analysis discussed above. See Clines, *Job*, 1228. Also Driver and Gray, *Book of Job*, 1:374–75; and Wagner, "Theologischer Versuch über Ijob 42,7-9 (10a)," 223, especially n. 32.

[135] Iwański, *The Dynamics of Job's Intercession*, 286: "We think there is no reason to suppose that the condition for changing Job's fortunes was his intercession for the friends. Never before was such a condition explicitly verbalized. On the contrary Job, in the Epilogue, was rather presented to the friends as the one who merited God's blessing with no additional conditions. It would be unnatural to think of such a condition as one set in secret (so that the reader might not know it). The blessing is actually unconditioned." See also Whybray, *Job*, 172–73. Gordis merely acknowledged the possibility in the history of Jewish interpretation, citing a Talmudic passage: "Whoever seeks mercy for his friend when he himself is in need of the same blessings is answered first (*B. Baba Kamma* 92a)." See Gordis, *The Book of Job*, 495.

The Reversal of Job's Fortunes as a Repudiation of Retribution

I argue that YHWH reverses Job's fortunes to prove to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar that the deity blesses people who have not necessarily earned it through righteousness. By making sure that they witness a clear and dramatic refutation of the idea of retribution, he seeks to prevent them from once again speaking in a way that threatens his reputation as they had throughout the dialogues. This explanation accounts for several features of the text, including the relationship to YHWH's speech that occurs just before it, why the reversal is timed so that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar will witness it, and the narrative symmetry between the opening scenes and the conclusion.

Neither YHWH nor the narrator explicitly state the reason why Job's fortunes are reversed. However, the connection to YHWH's speech in Job 42:7–9 is best explained if it is intended to contribute to the same outcome. The grammatical association with Job's prayer makes the reversal of Job's fortunes the last in a tightly bound sequence of events that YHWH sets in motion: (1) YHWH tells Job's interlocutors that they have not spoken properly as Job did, suggesting that Job's speech has in general contributed to YHWH's reputation and glory while theirs has failed to do so; (2) YHWH instructs Job's interlocutors to avoid the harm of his wrath by going to Job, performing a sacrifice, and asking Job to pray on their behalf; (3) the interlocutors do as YHWH instructs; (4) Job prays on behalf of his interlocutors; and, finally (5) YHWH reverses the fortunes of Job. There is a clear reason why YHWH would set this sequence of events in motion and it is the same as the reason for his speech to Job's interlocutors: to compel speech that elevated his reputation.

Understanding Job's reversal as a demonstration also explains why it occurs or begins at the same time as Job's intercessory prayer. The sequence of events and the friends' interest in the

prayer's outcome suggest that it is likely that they were present when Job prayed. That would mean that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar witness, perhaps in whole or at least in part, YHWH reversing Job's fortunes. The narrator does not include an explicit account of them observing Job's reversal nor reacting to it because Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar because the point of these actions in the narrative is to demonstrate what YHWH cares about and what motivates his actions. The effect of leaving out the friends' reactions is similar to that of leaving out the opponents final reaction in the opening scenes: it puts the focus of the narrative on YHWH and his interest in Job. In other words, the desired outcomes are left out of the narrative because the outcomes are not important. What is important is what YHWH's efforts to secure these outcomes reveals about his priorities and how they affect his actions.

The timing of the reversal and its place as the culmination of a sequence of events YHWH are best explained by the view that YHWH wanted the interlocutors to be aware of his decision to reverse Job's fortunes because it would help compel them to produce speech that contributes to his reputation and discourage them from producing speech that harms it. How does the one result in the other? By demonstrating to them that YHWH does not automatically bless the righteous and afflict the wicked. It was their dogmatic insistence that the deity dispensed blessing and affliction in accordance with the principle of retribution that had led Job to challenge YHWH. Above, I argued that making Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar's escape from YHWH wrath contingent upon Job's prayer immediately indicates to them that blessing and affliction are, at the least, influenced by factors outside of individual righteousness.

The second reversal of Job's fortunes sends the same message far more dramatically. The interlocutors have been in Job's presence since shortly after his suffering began (Job 2:11–13). They are aware that Job has refused to admit sin or do anything to gain absolution for sins that

could have caused his suffering. Job's declaration that he will relent in his final speech of the dialogues (Job 42:1–6) clearly refers to his complaints, suit, and mourning during the dialogues, and he does not signal acknowledgement of wrongdoing that preceded his suffering.

In the perspective of Job's friends, there is nothing Job has done since his afflictions began that would cause the deity to bless him in this dramatic fashion if such decisions were determined wholly by individual righteousness or sin. The single act of the intercessory prayer could not have elevated Job's righteousness to such a point that YHWH was compelled to bless him so greatly. Not when his blessings were double what he had gained after a lifetime of unparalleled righteousness at the beginning of the story. The famous doubling of Job's material wealth further severs the lack of connection between human righteousness and prosperity. Even if the interlocutors were to misunderstand and think that Job's actions at the end of this story represent some sort of justification for being blessed, there is no discernible reason that Job's righteousness would earn him double what he had at the beginning of the story. The blessings that YHWH pours out upon Job are disproportionate to any righteous acts the human could possibly have committed. By reversing Job's fortunes at this point in time, when there cannot be a meaningful connection to Job's righteousness or sin, YHWH demonstrates to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar that he does not determine blessings and afflictions in accordance with righteousness or wickedness. By disproving the theology that they had spouted for so long, YHWH made it far less likely that they would speak it in a way that would threaten his reputation again.

There are several additional elements of the text that are best explained by this interpretation of the second reversal of Job's fortunes. First, YHWH's intervention to compel speech of a certain type is consistent with his actions and priorities throughout the story of *Job*. In the opening scenes, he attempted repeatedly to compel the opponent to speak in a particular

way. In the dialogues, YHWH intervened in order to bring an end to Job's speaking in a way he didn't like and compel Job to begin speaking properly.

In addition, the view that the whole sequence of events is intended to minimize the possibility of improper speech is supported by the fact that YHWH arranges to provide Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar with several examples of proper speech. Contrasting their failure with Job's correct speech indicates that they should begin speaking more like him. Instructing them to sacrifice reveals that his priority is his own elevation through their acknowledgment of his superiority and their deference.

At the level of the narrative, the parallel between Job's affliction and its reversal is one component of a pattern of symmetry between the opening and closing scenes that creates a relationship between them. Norman C. Habel said "The design of the final prose section is clearly intended to parallel key features of the opening prose narrative," and he lists the following features:[136]

1. Job's intercession for his friends corresponds to his prior intercession for his family. In addition, the sins requiring intercession are similar in nature: Job intercedes because Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar have sinned verbally just as he intercedes because of the possibility that his children have sinned verbally in the opening scenes (42:8–10; 1:5).

[136] Habel, *Job*, 580. He includes another parallel, but it is less persuasive: The description of Job at his death in the final sentences of the book reflects the language used to describe Abraham at his death "an old man, sated with days" (Gen 25:8) forming a "grand inclusio" with the language describing Job in his introduction which is also reminiscent of the description of Abraham "'blameless' (*tām*) and fears God" (Gen 17:1; 22:12); (Job 42:17; 1:1). This parallel depends upon the recognition of an allusion to a specific textual tradition about Abraham that cannot be assumed.

2. YHWH says Job did not speak incorrectly like the narrator says Job spoke no wrong (42:7–8; 1:22; 2:10).
3. The action of Job's friends and family "comforting" Job is expressed using the same two verbs (נח"מ; נו"ד) used to describe the actions of Job's three friends when they first arrive after his affliction (42:11; 2:11).
4. After his afflictions Job's material possessions are doubled in comparison to what they were before (42:12; 1:3).
5. YHWH refers to Job as "my servant" multiple times in both scenes (42:7, 8; 1:8; 2:3).

To Habel's list can be added the following parallels:

6. Job has the same number of sons and daughters at the end of the story as he does in the beginning (42:13; 1:2)
7. The root נב"ל describes the disrespect YHWH threatens to visit upon Job's interlocutors in his speech in the closing scenes and the inappropriate speech of Job's wife in the opening scenes (42:8; 2:10)

This concentration of literary parallels suggest that there is a pattern of narrative symmetry binding together the beginning and ending of the story. This, in turn, supports the interpretation that YHWH's motivation for blessing Job in the end is the same as his motivation for afflicting him in the beginning. Both times, YHWH uses Job as an instrument to demonstrate something to a third party. In the beginning, he afflicts Job to demonstrate his righteousness to the opponent. In the end, he blesses Job to demonstrate to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar their inability to

comprehend divine administration of justice.[137] Both outcomes are intended to lead to speech that elevates YHWH's reputation.

YHWH does not ever express this intention. He does not even explicitly describe what makes speech proper or improper. This, too, is in line with his character and with the style of *Job*. The character of YHWH in *Job* operates indirectly and communicates obliquely. In the opening scenes, instead of ordering the opponent what to say, he brings up Job and asks the opponent if he has been paying attention to him. His answer to Job from the whirlwind explicitly solicits a verbal response but utilizes rhetorical questions and implicit assertions instead of stating exactly what kind of speech YHWH wants. In the conclusion, he condemns the friends for their lack of proper speech but never tells them exactly how to speak. It is not surprising that he reverses Job's fortunes as a demonstration but does not clearly express what the demonstration is meant to accomplish or whom it is for. This description of YHWH's character could also be fairly applied to *Job* as a whole. The text rarely provides easy, direct answers. Perhaps the inscrutability of divine actions and even the difficulty in understanding the causes of commonplace events is part of the text's narrative communication.

Thus, understanding YHWH's reversal of Job's fortunes to be a demonstration for the benefit of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar is supported by several elements. First, there is no contradiction with other elements of the story or the narrative. Because YHWH is not rewarding Job for righteous behavior, there is no contradiction with either YHWH's disposition to the theology of just retribution or to any perceived rhetorical message on the topic. On the contrary,

[137] YHWH's intent is easier to discern in the opening scenes because there is more information: YHWH speaks and acts at greater length and the passage is simply longer. However, in both the opening and closing scenes, YHWH does not express his intentions (see below) and does not explicitly indicate exactly what he wants to happen or his motivations for reversing Job's fortunes.

it reinforces a major theme running throughout all of *Job*: the distinction between improper human speech, which harms the deity's reputation, and proper human speech, which glorifies the deity. Second, it shows that the grammatical relationship between Job's prayer and the reversal (Job 42:10) expresses causation and explains how the reversal is connected to the immediately preceding events, including Job's final speech to YHWH (Job 42:1–6) and YHWH's speech to Job's friends (Job 42:7–8). Third, it aligns with the characterization of YHWH throughout *Job*, and especially with the symmetry between the opening scenes and the conclusion. Each aspect of the text is explained by the interpretation that YHWH reverses Job's fortunes in the conclusion as part of his efforts to compel his interlocutors to speak properly, in prayer, in sacrifice, in praise, by preventing them from preaching a theology of just retribution again.[138]

CHARACTERIZATION AND COHERENCE IN THE CONCLUSION

The novel interpretation of Job 42:7–17 put forth in this chapter indicates that the conclusion of *Job* is consistent with the opening scenes and the dialogues. The depiction of each one of the characters is consistent with their characterization in the rest of the text. Furthermore, the events

[138] Of course, Job enjoys the benefits of his reversal of fortune: the final verses of *Job* tell of Job's long and happy life, including greater wealth than he had at the beginning, the support of friends and family, ten new children, and a long life until the age of 140. These details serve to reinforce the disconnect between human fortune and righteousness in the world depicted in *Job*. For example, the inclusion of the renowned beauty of Job's daughters, their inheritance, and their names provides extra detail to the depiction of Job's prosperity, which, in a narrative where such details are rare, contributes significantly to the depiction of his blessedness as just as extreme as his afflictions. Because the narrative has shown that Job's afflictions and his prosperity both were the consequence of YHWH's manipulations of third parties and not the consequence of Job's righteousness or lack thereof, every added detail puts an aesthetic exclamation point on the repudiation of retribution theology in the story. Thus, while I do not take a position on the precise meaning of the names of Job's daughters (which some have seen as expressions of his wealth [for example, Clines, *Job*, 1237–38]; others as indications of Job's ongoing trauma [Chavel, "Knowledge of the Lord in the Hebrew Bible," 72]), I point out that their inclusion in the narrative emphasizes this feature of the story.

of the story depict a consistent picture of how the character YHWH administers the blessing and affliction of human beings, providing no evidence for an inconsistency in rhetoric or the theological viewpoint promoted in the text.

Just as in other portions of *Job*, YHWH's words and actions in the conclusion are motivated by a single-minded focus on elevating his reputation. YHWH's anger at Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar is the inevitable result of the impact of their speeches in the dialogues that detracted from the deity's reputation and glory. His actions are intended to eliminate the threat to his reputation posed by these speeches. After dealing with the immediate threat by compelling Job to end his challenge, YHWH speaks to the interlocutors to set in motion a sequence of events intended to prevent improper speech and instead compel them to speak properly—in a way that elevates his reputation—moving forward. YHWH's reversal of the fortunes of Job a second time is linked grammatically to this sequence of events, indicating that the deity's motivation is similar to his motivation for reversing Job's fortunes the first time: demonstrating something to a third party. These actions characterize YHWH consistently with the rest of the text by showing that he cares first and foremost about elevating his reputation and glory. Furthermore, he is willing to manipulate the fortunes of human beings in whatever way is necessary to advance that goal.

This improved understanding of YHWH also reveals that the perceived problems associated with his descriptions of the speech of Job and of his interlocutors do not create inconsistency. The depth of YHWH's anger towards Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar, which has been described as incommensurate for three well-meaning men who merely preached an inadequate theology, makes sense when it is understood that YHWH is reacting not to the content but to the impact of their speech upon his most important priority. YHWH does not deem the preaching of

retribution theology to be harmless when it poses a major threat to his reputation, as it did when it caused Job, whose faithfulness YHWH had singled out as evidence for his greatness, to begin challenging YHWH. By the same token, the positive characterization of Job's speech is consistent with how he had frequently spoken in a way that elevated YHWH's reputation. The characterization of each of these characters in the conclusion contributes to the coherence of *Job*.

Finally, this understanding of the conclusion to *Job* indicates that allegations of inconsistency related to the theology of just retribution are unfounded. Neither the characters, the narrator, nor any aspect of the text of the conclusion to *Job* can be seen to affirm a theology of just retribution. In fact, YHWH's decision to reverse Job's fortunes in the conclusion is motivated by a desire to disprove the very possibility of such an understanding of the deity's character. In all these aspects, the conclusion is consistent with the rest of the text of *Job* and contributes to the coherence of the text.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Throughout the past several centuries and into the present, scholars have argued for a wide variety of views regarding the coherence of the combination of the prose and poetic portions of *Job*. While in recent decades there has been an increase in popularity of various proposals for viewing the text as coherent, the claim that the combination of the prose and poetic portions of *Job* is incoherent remains influential. The variety of views—which is itself partly a consequence of differences in the methods employed to evaluate coherence—has created an impasse that has limited investigation regarding the composition of *Job*, the interpretation of its various parts and the whole, and its utility as a source for understanding ancient Israelite religious thought. In this dissertation, I have sought to identify a way forward by investigating the evidence regarding the coherence of the combination of the prose and poetic portions of *Job*.

I began by surveying the history of arguments alleging that the combination of the prose and poetry of *Job* is incoherent. I identified the characterization of YHWH, Job, and Job's interlocutors and the impact of the absence of Job's wife and the *saṭan* upon the plot as major issues that have been alleged to create incoherence. Scholars have reached differing conclusions on how these features impact coherence not only because they have interpreted the text differently, but also because they have employed different methods for evaluating textual coherence. Many scholars have employed their own, individually determined standards of what makes a text coherent in their evaluations of *Job*, not often stating what those standards are and less often making a case for why those standards are most effective. To acquire a stronger basis

for evaluation, I drew upon empirical research in fields such as cognitive psychology and text linguistics and argued that the coherence of *Job* depends upon whether it is possible to construct a single, interconnected representation out of the characters, events, and other elements of the world that the narrative depicts. In other words, the coherence of *Job* depends upon the coherence of its story.

These conclusions informed how I evaluated the coherence of the prose and poetic portions of *Job* in the remainder of the dissertation. I identified the elements of the story of *Job* that have been understood to create incoherence and then undertook philological and narratological interpretations of the passages in which these elements are depicted. Upon the basis of these interpretations, I constructed how each portion depicts characters and the plot, and then evaluated whether it is possible to create a single, interconnected representation of these narrative elements as they appear in both the prose and poetic portions of the text of *Job*.

I began with the opening scenes (Job 1–2). In Chapter Two, I showed that the *saṭan* is defined as an opponent because he hinders YHWH's attempts to compel the acknowledgment of Job's righteousness, and, by implication, speech that glorifies YHWH. Because of the *saṭan*'s obstinance, YHWH allows Job to be afflicted, not as a wager or because YHWH is uncertain, but as a demonstration intended to compel the *saṭan* to admit that Job really is as righteous as YHWH says. The opening scenes show that YHWH acts to prioritize his own reputation and to compel speech that elevates that reputation. I showed that the *saṭan* is a minor character whose function is to demonstrate this aspect of YHWH's characterization. Because it is common for minor characters in biblical narrative not to appear after fulfilling their narrative function, the absence of the *saṭan* after fulfilling his narrative function in the opening scenes does not create incoherence.

I continued by examining several passages in the poetic dialogues, with attention to determining how they depict Job, YHWH, and Job's wife. In Chapter Three, I showed that Job's first speech in the dialogues is not a challenge against God or a curse of divine creation, but a complaint through which Job continues the state of mourning that he entered during the opening scenes. This creates continuity in Job's characterization between the opening scenes and the beginning of the poetic dialogues that, alongside the absence of criticism—Job's challenge to God will not appear until later in the poetic dialogues—disproves the view that the beginning of Job 3 is a clear dividing line between two separate and irreconcilable depictions of Job in the prose and poetic portions of the text. In addition, I argued that the absence of Job's wife from the latter portions of the text does not create incoherence, because in the opening scenes she fulfills her narrative function of demonstrating Job's righteousness.

Also in Chapter Three, I investigated YHWH's speeches from the whirlwind (Job 38–41) and argued that YHWH speaks to bring an end to Job's mourning and to compel Job to verbally acknowledge his own inferiority and the deity's superiority. Throughout the opening scenes and the poetic dialogues YHWH's characterization is consistent: the deity is concerned foremost with elevating his reputation by compelling others to affirm his greatness. YHWH's speech from the whirlwind is successful: in his final speech (Job 42:1–6) Job declares that his mourning is over and affirms YHWH's superiority in power and his own inferiority in knowledge. The transition out of mourning and back to affirmation is the last of several points of the narrative in which Job's characterization changes. By analyzing several other ancient Near Eastern and biblical texts, I showed that variety in characterization does not create incoherence when there is a proximate, clear, and logical cause for the change. I then identified causes for each change in

Job's character, demonstrating that the variation in Job's character is better understood as coherent character development and not as inexplicable inconsistency that creates incoherence.

The depiction of YHWH's investment in the impact of speech upon his reputation continues in the conclusion of *Job* (Job 42:7–17). In Chapter Four, I showed that YHWH speaks to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar to compel them to begin speaking properly. I argued that the reason that YHWH says that they failed to speak properly is because their speech in the poetic dialogues had a negative impact upon his reputation: their insistence upon the false doctrine of retribution pushed Job to challenge YHWH's justice. By contrast, even as Job's criticism of God's injustice was not positive, YHWH deemed the cumulative impact of Job's speech to be proper because Job had repeatedly spoken in a way that elevated YHWH's reputation. To compel Job's friends to speak properly, YHWH's speech in Job 42:7–9 sets in motion a sequence of events that disproves retribution theology and demonstrates what proper speech looks like. I argued that the second reversal of Job's fortunes (Job 42:10) is the final event in this sequence, and that the conclusion aligns with the rest of *Job* in depicting YHWH as not acting in accordance with a theology of retribution. Not only does this interpretation of the conclusion show that YHWH's evaluation of speech is coherent; it reveals that the depiction of YHWH in the conclusion is consistent with the rest of the story. In every part of *Job*, YHWH's foremost priority is elevating his own reputation, and he acts to compel others to glorify him, especially in their speech.

The findings of this dissertation have implications in several areas of research. Among the primary contributions are the novel interpretations of *Job*, both of individual portions and of the whole. In addition, these interpretations show that the combination of the prose and poetic portions of *Job* is best understood as coherent. Arguments that depend on claims that the

characters or plot of *Job* are incoherent must be reevaluated. This challenges interpretations of *Job* that posit that incoherence is intentionally employed as a rhetorical technique. Similarly, while this study does not speak directly to the composition of *Job*, it does challenge reconstructions of a multi-state process of the combination of the prose and poetry that are justified, even in part, by claims that the received text is incoherent. Those who wish to talk about a prose tale and poetic dialogue as two separate entities need to identify different justifications for treating them as independent.

In addition, discussion of genre and comparison to other ancient Near Eastern texts need to account for how the combination of prose and poetry functions as a coherent story. For example, comparisons of *Job* with so-called "pious sufferer" texts should not overlook the difference between, for example, Mesopotamian texts that are completely made up of speech between a small number of parties, and *Job*, where the dialogues are an inextricable part of a story and occur alongside other narrative features. Similarly, instead of making or reifying textual divisions on the basis of differing form or perceived genre, such discussions should account for the way each part of the work functions as part of a story. For example, finding that *Job* is a coherent story raises questions about the efficacy of viewing individual parts of the poetic dialogues as a theodicy, particularly when it is not also determined how the prose portions would contribute to that function. Studies of *Job* should now depart from the common tendency of beginning with a view that the text is incoherent and instead begin with the understanding that the combination of prose and poetry forms a coherent narrative text that tells a coherent story about events involving the characters Job and YHWH.

In addition, the findings of this study have implications for the use of *Job* as a source for the study of Israelite religious thought in the first millennium BCE. While I did not argue for a

particular *Sitz im Leben* or associate the text with a specific period or set of historical events, the interpretations of the characters and events argued herein are consequential for the investigation of the role *Job* played in religious and theological discourse. It is not necessary to determine the exact historical circumstances in which *Job* was composed in order to consider the significance of the ideas it represents. Whether *Job* functioned to assert that the world it depicts was an accurate representation of reality or not is impossible to determine without paratextual information that is not available. But its inclusion of religious ideas and motifs is evidence that they played some role in ancient Israelite religious thought. It is possible to investigate what that role might have been without denying the limitations of such investigation. To start, the depiction of YHWH in *Job*, including both his values and priorities and how he pursues them, can be placed alongside the depictions of YHWH in other biblical texts in order to deepen understanding of the diverse ways in which YHWH was characterized and the various forms his worship took in the ancient Israelite religious sphere.

The depiction of YHWH as not choosing to bless human beings in retribution for righteousness or afflict them in retribution for sin suggests that *Job* represents a view in which such an ideology was rejected. This is contrary to the view that *Job* represents an ambiguous stance towards retribution theology. Taking the story told in *Job* seriously indicates that this work rejects retribution theology as not only factually inaccurate, but antithetical to the proper worship of YHWH. Without going beyond the analysis of the text undertaken in this study, it is possible to suggest that *Job* may have been utilized not only to repudiate retribution theology, but as part of a campaign to aggressively suppress the ideology by suggesting that anyone who argued that justice required God to bless the righteous and afflict the wicked offended YHWH so greatly that it would elicit the deity's extreme anger.

At the same time, *Job*'s characterization of YHWH as concerned with his reputation above all else adds to the variety of depictions of YHWH and of his intervention in human fortunes as well as his expectations of his worshippers. The story of *Job* provides an explanation for human suffering that is both simple and provocative. In *Job*, YHWH's prioritization of his reputation leads him to allow or cause humans to suffer or prosper because of circumstances that are beyond their control and even beyond their capacity to perceive. One of the great ironies of *Job* is that the human characters spend chapter after chapter trying to find an explanation for Job's suffering when the cause is spelled out in detail in the opening scenes. The reader is in a substantially advantaged position over the characters in relation to the plot. This situation also puts the reader in an advantaged theological position. The human characters have no chance of ever figuring out the real cause of Job's suffering, no matter how much they engage in reciting received wisdom or debating theology with one another. Each chapter of the poetic dialogues again brings home the point that there is simply no possibility that Job or his friends would ever come up with the explanation that Job was afflicted to demonstrate his righteousness so that the *saṭan* would acknowledge it.

In short, in a world like that depicted in *Job*, the specific causes of human suffering are often completely out of reach to human beings, but the general cause is clear: because YHWH intervened, or did not, in order to create circumstances that he thought would elevate his reputation and increase his glory. Whether *Job* functioned to promote the accuracy of such a representation, or to undermine it—if it possibly functioned as a parody of such a view, for example, this depiction of YHWH illustrates an explanation for human suffering, particularly suffering that appears unjust, that could have been utilized as a reaction to individual or corporate trauma. This view of YHWH's administration of human fortunes can be included and

studied alongside those found in biblical texts including the Deuteronomistic History, Lamentations, Ezekiel, various portions of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and others. In fact, the degree to which YHWH demands recognition suggests the possibility that he and, by extension, those propagating this depiction of him, are overcompensating. In very basic psychological terms, the extremity of YHWH's obsession with his reputation could be a reaction to feelings of insecurity. In addition, *Job* depicts YHWH as depending on the adulation of humans in a way that makes his position more precarious than is commonly understood. These features contribute to the diversity of depictions of YHWH in ancient Hebrew literature.

In addition, the depiction of YHWH's interest in speech suggests the existence of a view in which verbal affirmations of YHWH's superiority were of such great importance that they were prioritized over other elements of worship. That verbal praise played a role in the worship of YHWH is far from groundbreaking, but in the story of *Job*, YHWH's consistent attempts to compel speech that he deemed proper, including repeated interventions up to even the reversal of human fortunes, indicates a level of importance for speech that is greater than his attention on other forms of worship. *Job* should be included alongside the Psalms and other evidence in analyses of the significance of glorifying speech as part of Israelite worship practices.

Conversely, *Job* depicts YHWH as being very angry at Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tsofar's attempts to explain aspects of his nature and actions. This depiction suggests that among some who participated in religious discourse in ancient Israel there was a hostility to many types of theological and philosophical investigation of YHWH's character and administration of human fortunes. This view was at least significant enough to be included in the depiction of the world in *Job*. This inclusion is particularly fortunate because it would otherwise be difficult to detect among the extant sources, which likely disproportionately reflect views common among those

with elite intellectual inclinations and training. Taken together, these two aspects of the depiction of speech in *Job* provide evidence for the efficacy of additional study of the function of speech in various traditions of ancient Israelite religion.

One noteworthy feature of the depiction of worship in *Job* is that verbal praise and sacrifice are depicted to be of central importance, while things such as covenant, temple worship, and even tribal and national identity, things that play a central role in the worship of YHWH in the Pentateuch, the Former Prophets, and other biblical texts, are completely absent. This feature of *Job* might contribute to investigations about the relationship between the depiction of religion in various biblical texts and the evidence of archaeology and other sources that reflect different constituencies. This is another example of how the findings of this study can be considered beside other textual evidence for what Yahwism looked like in its various forms in ancient Israel.

Finally, this study suggests new directions to be taken in addressing the challenges associated with the evaluation of the coherence of biblical texts. While this work has historically involved the use of individually determined methods and standards, the survey of research from cognitive psychology and text linguistics in Chapter One illuminates a path toward a more objective and less idiosyncratic methodology. Research from these fields of study regarding how human beings comprehend texts and evaluate textual coherence offers an empirical and theoretical foundation that makes it possible to more rigorously define coherence and investigate how to evaluate the coherence of biblical texts most effectively.

The foundation provided by this research has specific implications for narrative texts. The coherence of biblical narrative texts should begin with the evaluation of the coherence of the story that they depict. Findings from research on textual coherence indicate that the coherence of a narrative text is best determined by interpreting the events, characters, and other features of the

story and then determining if they can be assembled into a single model. This indicates that the use of approaches that prioritize the perceived rhetorical functions or underlying ideologies of disparate portions of the narrative and determining if they appear to align should be reconsidered.

More specifically, the evaluation of the coherence of biblical narrative texts should incorporate the following principles. First, because readers create coherence whenever possible, evaluation of biblical texts should begin by attempting to identify a way for a received text to be understood as coherent rather than beginning with the assumption of incoherence. Second, the standards of coherence employed in the analysis should be explicitly stated and, as much as possible, their effectiveness should be justified. Such justifications should be based upon the evaluated text itself or comparable examples from biblical or ancient Near Eastern texts. Third, any vestigial influence of the view that ancient biblical literature is incapable of complexity must be eliminated. The view that coherent characters must be unchanging and simply consistent is to be rejected. The possibility of dynamic characters that develop over the course of a narrative, even a short one, must be taken seriously as an explanation for variation in characterization rather than the identification of such variation leading to premature determination of incoherence. This does not mean that all variation should be viewed as coherent. In the case of biblical narrative, for example, variation can be the result of coherent character development when an appropriate cause of the character change can be identified. If no such internal explanation for variation is forthcoming, a claim to incoherence is possible.

This study models one approach to constructing and carrying out an empirically founded method for evaluating the coherence of biblical narrative texts. The method employed herein accounts for the ways readers create genre categories and include texts within them, identifies

and describes the appropriate standards of coherence, and determines whether it is possible to assemble narrative features into a single, coherent model. But is not necessarily the only effective method. I intend it to be one contribution to the larger conversation regarding the best methods for evaluating the coherence of narrative biblical texts.

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