

The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures

ISSN 1203-1542

<http://www.jhsonline.org> and
<http://purl.org/jhs>



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VOLUME 6, ARTICLE 1

**ARON PINKER, THE CORE STORY IN THE PROLOGUE-
EPILOGUE OF THE BOOK OF JOB**

THE CORE STORY IN THE PROLOGUE – EPILOGUE OF THE BOOK OF JOB

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1. INTRODUCTION

More than a century ago Macdonald observed with respect to the prose framework of the book of Job: “The writer of the main stem may have written the prologue and the epilogue. Or he may have taken them from some already existing source, written or oral, and used them as a frame for his own work. Or, finally, they may have been added by some later hand.”¹ Most scholars² consider now the Prologue-Epilogue (Job 1:1–3:1, 42:7–17) as based on an ancient folk tale, which the author of the Book of Job (subsequently author) rewrote as the framework for his poetic treatment of the problem of personal retribution.³ However, opinions vary regarding the ex-

¹ MacDonald, D.B. “The Original Form of the Legend of Job,” *JBL* 14 (1895) 63.

² Fohrer, G. *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press; 1958) 325. Fohrer says, “It is almost universally accepted that the framework [Chpts. 1–2; 42:7–17] was originally an independent narrative, a legend whose point was didactic and paraenetic.” Cf. Pfeiffer, R.H. *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Brothers; 1941) 670ff. Pfeiffer provides an extensive review of literature.

³ Sarna, N.M. “Epic Substratum in the Prose of Job,” *JBL* 76 (1957) 14. Commentators noted the patriarchal setting of the Prologue-Epilogue: wealth is measured in terms of living stock (Job 1:3, 42:12, cf. Gen 12:16, 32:5); religion is primitive, expressing itself in the early concept that God’s anger can be mollified with sacrifices (Job 1:5, 45:8, cf. Num 23:1, 14, 29); there is no priesthood or central shrine and the patriarch himself offers sacrifice (Job 1:5, 42:8), Sabeans and Chaldeans are still marauding bands of nomads (Job 1:15, 17); the *kesita* is still current (Job 42:11, cf. Gen 33:19, Josh 24:32); Job’s longevity (Job 42:16) is paralleled

tent of the author's borrowing from the ancient source. Duhm suggested that the entire prose part was excerpted from an ancient source, which predated the Dialogue (Job 3:2–42:6).⁴ Kautzsch, on the other hand, held that the author only appropriated the name of a righteous man from the ancient tradition.⁵ It is assumed in this study that the truth is somewhere between these extremes.⁶

Certainly, Ezekiel's extensive reference to Job strongly suggests the existence of a generally well-known core story that probably underlies the Prologue-Epilogue.⁷ This core story was not apparently an Israelite specific story but rather a human interest story of universal appeal and currency.⁸ If the Prologue-Epilogue were taken by the author from another source then

only in the patriarchal (Gen 25:7) and pre-patriarchal periods (Genesis 5); and the closing description (Job 42:17) is the same as that used of Abraham (Gen 25:8) and Isaac (Gen 25:29). The author seems to have archaized some of his additions to make them fit the archaic nature of the core story.

⁴ Duhm, B. *Das Buch Hiob* (Freiburg im Breisgau J.C.B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck; 1897) vii.

⁵ Kautzsch, K. *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 (Leipzig: Drugulin; 1900) 22–39.

⁶ There are scholars who consider the prose part in Job the author's original creation. For instance, Newsom says, "More likely, what we have is no more and no less than what the author of the whole book of Job wrote. But the prose tale has been crafted in order to create something analogous to an optical illusion. Just as there are some drawings in which the eye can 'see' a line that is not drawn on the page but that is necessary to complete the figure, so readers can perceive the outlines of the missing middle of the prose tale" (Newsom, Carol A. *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2003) 37). Habel raises the question "whether the book of Job consists of independent poetic speeches inserted into a traditional narrative context or whether the book is better understood as a narrative whose plot incorporates lengthy speeches, which are integral to the plot." He opts to view the book of Job as a traditional biblical narrative (Habel, N.C. *The Book of Job* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press; 1985] 26).

⁷ Spiegel, S. "Noah, Danel, and Job," in *Louis Ginzberg Jubilee volume: on the occasion of his seventieth birthday* (eds. Goldman, S. et al.; New York: The American Academy for Jewish Research; 1945) 305–307. Job is mentioned in Ezek 14:14, 20 among the three righteous who would be saved in a God decreed calamity, indicating that a version of the Job core story was known then. However, it is doubtful that it was the current version. Cf. Noth, M. "Noah, Daniel and Hiob in Ezekiel XIV," *V/T* 1 (1951) 251–60.

⁸ Tur-Sinai, N. H. *ספר איוב*. Tel Aviv: Yavneh (1956) 18. Tur-Sinai claims that from the frame story it is not absolutely clear whether Job believed in one God. All

Macdonald says that two questions arise: “What was the form of the story of Job in this source, and why did the writer of the poem use it when it was so antagonistic in many ways to his own views and feelings?”⁹ The purpose of this paper is to answer Macdonald’s first question, glean from the biblical text the core story and thereby establish a basis for the study of author induced changes. Only when a reasonable core story would become available could one attempt to answer the second question. Our working hypothesis is that the author substantially altered the core story, cleverly preparing the ground for the emergence in the Dialogue of a Job personality that is in utter contrast with that in the core story.

Pope felt that it is impossible to determine how much of the ancient folk tale does the Prologue-Epilogue retain and what modifications did the author make. He surmises, “Probably very little of the old tale has been lost because the Prologue and Epilogue together present a fairly complete story.”¹⁰ In Pope’s opinion the Prologue-Epilogue presents this ancient folk tale in essentially the same form as it was propagated in antiquity: “Whether this ancient folk tale was in written form or transmitted orally, it had probably attained a relatively fixed form and content which the author of the Dialogue could not modify in any radical fashion. It has epic style and the charm and flavor of an oft told tale.”¹¹

Indeed, it is reasonable to assume that the essence of the core story was preserved, since it was short, addressed a poignant issue, and offered a reassuring resolution to a tormenting conflict. Pope is also right that it would be now difficult to determine all the adaptations that were made by the author to the extraneous material or determine all the versions that might have existed. Still, some plausible deductions could perhaps be made based on textual and thematic assumptions. It can be assumed that the core story at least predates Ezekiel, and was neutral with respect to specific national, religious, or linguistic identifiers to become widely well known. One would naturally be suspicious of including in the core story elements of the Prologue-Epilogue that appear as overly serving the author’s needs. Finally, it remains to be seen if a self-contained consistent core story would emerge when these assumptions are applied to the Prologue-Epilogue. In the fol-

the references to a deity are in the plural, and the statement in 1:21 has been Judaized. Only at the end is it clear that God is the only ruler of the universe.

⁹ MacDonald, D.B. “The Original Form,” 65.

¹⁰ Pope, M.H. *Job* (AB 15; New-York: Doubleday; 1986) xxvi.

¹¹ *Ibid.* xxiv. This thesis was first introduced by Wellhausen in his review of A. Dillmann’s, *Das Buch Hiob* (Leipzig, 1980) that appeared in *Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie* 16 (1871) 555.

lowing sections I discuss the perceived adaptations and expansions of the core story, provide some speculations on their underlying motivations, and tentatively outline a core story.

2. PERCEIVED ADAPTATIONS AND EXPANSIONS OF THE CORE STORY AND THEIR MOTIVATION

2.1 The hemistich 1:1a illustrates the author's propensity for exactitude in number, name, and origin. Here, as he did with Job's friends, he also identifies Job as being from the archaic land of Utz. Perhaps, the author felt that without giving the hero a name and associating him with a locale the story would lose some of its credence.¹² Also, making Job a denizen of Utz would suggest to an Israelite that Job was a gentile, and consequently could take some extreme positions vis-à-vis God.¹³ Finally, the names **אויב** and **עוץ** conveniently suggest **אויב** "enemy" (cf. Job 13:24) and **עצה** "counsel,"¹⁴ setting Job up as God's enemy (or opponent) and as unable to find counsel with regard to his predicament.

¹² Kramer, S. N. "Man and his God? A Sumerian Variation on the 'Job' Motif," in Noth, M. and Thomas, D. W. (ed.), *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East Presented to Professor Harold Henry Rowley* (VTSup 3; Brill: Leiden, 1955) 170–182 & pls. i-iv (171). In the Sumerian Job story, pieced together by Kramer, the suffering man is unnamed.

¹³ Brenner, A. "Job the pious? The Characterization of Job in the narrative framework of the Book," *JSOT* 43 (1989) 40. Brenner feels that the foreign background of the framework story is intended to imply "that it deals with a separate and distant sphere, one that inspire curiosity and awe, but whose foreignness makes its credibility questionable." According to Kahana (Kahana, A. **ספר אויב** [Tel Aviv; 1928] 22–23) the reason for conveying Job as a Gentile is apologetic. One who ponders the attributes of God and questions His righteousness could not possibly be a Jew. However, in Weiss' opinion "The protagonist of the story is represented as a Gentile and not a Jew in order to teach that perfect fear of heaven is not solely the possession of the Jew" (Weiss, M. *The Story of Job's Beginning. Job 1–2: A Literary Analysis* [Jerusalem: Magnes Press; 1983] 22).

¹⁴ Maimonides, M. *The Guide for the Perplexed* (Trans. M. Friedlander) (New York: Dover, 1956) 296. Maimonides says, "... it is also imperative of the verb **עוץ** 'to take advice.' Comp. **עוץ** 'take counsel' (Isa 7:10). The name Uz, therefore expresses the exhortation to consider well this lesson, study it, grasp its ideas, and comprehend them," We find in b. B. Bat 16a: Rabbah said: Job blasphemed with [mention] of a tempest, and with a tempest he was answered. Job said to God: Perhaps a tempest has passed before thee, and caused you to confuse Iyob [**אויב**] and Oyeb [**אויב**]." Cf. also Rashi on 1:1.

We can assume that the name of the hero is authentic, since it is mentioned as a well-known name in Ezek 14:14 and 20. However, Job's origination from the archaic Utz must be doubted, because it only serves the author's needs with respect to his Israelite audience. Using Gen 6:9 as a prototype it would seem that 1:1a contributed to the core story only the words **היה איש**, **איש**, and **איוב**, which probably occurred in the core story as **היה איוב היה איש**. The author reversed this sequence to align it with the genre of his time (Esth 2:5).

2.2 One might have assumed that the second hemistich (1:1b) would show familiarity with Job and continue with **והיה איוב**. Instead, it uses the strange phrase "that man" (**האיש ההוא**), alluding to the first hemistich for sake of recognition. Furthermore, the phrase **והיה האיש ההוא** occurs again only in Jer 20:16 in a context strongly resembling Job 3:3, and a variant of it is found in Job 1:3. Moreover, the two parts of the verse are unbalanced. Finally, the influence of Gen 6:9 on Job 1:1 may have led to the use of **האיש**. These observations lead to the conclusion that in the second hemistich **והיה האיש ההוא** was inserted into the core story by the author for added emphasis and harmonization with Gen 6:9.

The description of Job's piety in the second hemistich, which is in accord with Ezekiel 14, appears authentic to the core story. This authenticity is also supported by the author's use of **תמתך** in 2:9, where Job's innocence, established in the core story, is exploited by the author in his own text. Yet, one may well question whether all the four attributes (**וסר מרע, ירא אלהים, ישר, תם**) were in the core story. The Bible, which deals with a number of outstanding personalities, never characterizes anyone as having all these attributes. Noah is described in Gen 6:9 as **אלהים תמים** **תם** **צדיק**, **התהלך** (cf. Gen 17:1 and 22:12), **ירא אלהים ישר**. Since Job was known to be in the same category as Noah, we can exclude from the core story the third quality **סר מרע** as a typical exaggeration by the author (perhaps under the influence of Isa 59:15). For metrical reasons I read **תסיושר** as a single word (cf. Ps 25:21).

2.3 It can be safely assumed that verse 1:2 is part of the core story. In Ezekiel 14 the text refers repeatedly (Ezek 14:16, 18, 20, 22) to **בנים ובנות** (or **בן** and **בת**) who would not be saved by the righteousness of their fathers. This strongly suggests a reference to a well-established core story that featured sons and daughters. Also, the archaic form **שבענה** of the parallel verse in Job 42:13 suggests an ancient source.¹⁵ The presence of the daugh-

¹⁵ The Targum has **ארבסר** "fourteen" for **שבענה**, in line with the principle of

ters in the core story apparently influenced inclusion of אֲחֵיוֹתַי in parallel with אֲחָיו in verse 42:11, though אֲחָיו would have included both genders of relatives.

Having seven children, and in particular seven sons, was considered a blessing (1 Sam 2:5, Jer 15:9, Ruth 4:15). Sarna notes, “Most striking of all is the fact that Baal, like Job, had seven sons and three daughters.”¹⁶ The respective numbers of children seem to correspond to some proportion that was considered auspicious in antiquity.

Finally, it should be noted that women did not usually partake with men in feasts of wine, where men got drunk and indecencies often occurred (Gen 19:3, 26:30, 40:20, 2 Sam 3:20, 1 Kgs 3:15, Esth1:3, 1:8, etc.).¹⁷ The author was, apparently, compelled to include females in the male feasts of wine, contrary to custom, because the core story referred twice to the number of daughters and sons.

2.4 It is doubtful that the core story mentioned specific numbers of animals as verses 1:3 and 42:12 do. Such numbers would have been easily distorted in oral transmission. Owners of sizeable herds seldom know the number of animals in each herd. Indeed, when Isaac’s wealth is described using similar assets no specific numbers are given (Gen 26:14, cf. Gen 12:16). The author needed specific numbers for three reasons: (a) to highlight Job’s riches and initial loss; (b) to specify the twofold restitution; and, (c) to imply authenticity by means of exactitude. Specific numbers of animals conveniently serve the author’s needs but are uncharacteristic of similar stories of antiquity. They could not be in the core story.

2.5 The link between verse 1:3 and Gen 26:13–14 is so obvious that the author’s intent cannot be doubted. Altogether Job 1:3 and Gen 26:13–14 share the terms, עֲבוּדָה רַבָּה, אִישׁ, מֵאֹד, גְּדוֹל, מִקְנֵה בָקָר, מִקְנֵה צֹאן, וַיְהִי, עֲבוּדָה רַבָּה. Certainly, a successful Job would have מִקְנֵה צֹאן גְּמִלִים בָּקָר וְאַתּוֹנוֹת, just as a successful Isaac would have. These descriptors of wealth would naturally also occur in the core story. However, the author added words that force the association with Isaac and these would not be in the core story. The term עֲבוּדָה רַבָּה occurs only in Job 1:3 and Gen 26:14; אִישׁ, גְּדוֹל, and מֵאֹד occur in Job 1:3 and Gen 26:13. The author implies that Job was blessed

double restitution.

¹⁶ Sarna, 21. Sarna assumes that ’nt (I:22ff.) refers to Baal’s three daughters. However, Cassuto rejects such an interpretation. Cf. Cassuto, U. *The goddess Anath*. (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute; 1965) 76.

¹⁷ Weddings seem to be the exception (Gen 29:22).

even more than Isaac, because he may have been even more pious than Isaac. Isaac became eventually very wealthy, but Job became wealthier than anyone in the East. Clearly, such linkage well serves the author's needs, and it would be meaningful only to an Israelite audience. It is highly unlikely that רבה מאד ויהי האיש ההוא גדול מכל בני קדם ועבדה was in the core story.

2.6 The author artificially inserted verses 1:4–5 to show Job's piety and to create a situation in which, for dramatic effect, all the children could perish at once.

A typical Near Eastern joint family, living in one compound, was normally rife with rivalries among adult sons and daughters, which could have cast some suspicion on the quality of the patriarch's leadership. The author removed this suspicion from Job by making each son have his own house and stressing the sons' respectful relationship with their sisters, even in Job's absence (Job is not mentioned as a participant in the daily feasts).¹⁸

The setting of continual (or repeated) feasts of wine in which young females participate is highly unusual and unrealistic.¹⁹ A משהה was normally made to celebrate a special event. However, verse 1:4 describes it as a daily routine (so LXX, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Ralbag, and many commentators). It was already noted that women did not usually partake with men in feasts of wine, where men got drunk and indecencies often occurred (Hab 2:15). Good notes "Quite exceptionally, the parties include the sisters. In those days one did not, it seems, deal socially with women, even one's sisters, as equals."²⁰ Notably Job is apprehensive of his *sons* being blasphemous (1:5).

Similarly unusual is Job's bringing a burnt offering for each child fearing they had some blasphemous thought during the feasts. There is no other example in the Hebrew Bible where a father absolves his children in such a manner, or for such a purpose. It is the only case of preemptive expiation for a sin of meditation. In the Hebrew Bible the burnt offering is a major cultic rite that usually follows outstanding events such as flood (Gen 8:20), appearance of an angel (Judg 6:26, 13:16), return of the holy ark (1 Sam

¹⁸ Good, E.M. *In Turns of Tempest, A Reading of Job* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press; 1990) 192. Good observes, "His family is unusual. That seven brothers would enjoy one another's company enough to have regular parties together might not seem surprising, though the fact, stated baldly, proposes a familial harmony that cannot be unremarkable."

¹⁹ Hacham, A. ספר איוב (Jerusalem: Mosad HaRav Kook; 1981) 5. Hacham sees in the four verbs, ועשו, ושלו, והלכו, and וקראו an indication that their custom was to have daily feasts.

²⁰ Good, 192.

6:14–15), stopping of a plague (2 Sam 24:22), etc. The Israelite reader would automatically consider such ritual as piety that goes well beyond the highest standards.²¹ It is a literary device that would work only on the conceptual framework of an Israelite, and consequently could not be part and parcel of a core story that circulated in the region.

2.7 Clearly, the heavenly scenes (Job 1:6–12, 2:1–6) are tailored to conveniently serve the author's needs and could not be part of the core story.²² Satan, their central figure, is a concept of a much later Persian period (perhaps, borrowed from Zoroastrianism)²³ than the apparent patriarchal background of the core story, or even Ezekiel. Hurvitz considers Satan an “exclusive feature of post-exilic literature” and characterizes the occurrence of Satan in Job as “a reflex of *post-exilic* angelology.”²⁴ Wolfers says, “The welding of the *adversary* of man with the *spirit* of the heavenly host from 1 Kings 22 to produce the *adversary of God*, which is how the Satan of Job functions, is precisely the sort of imaginative poetic leap that abound in Job. In any case, the *invention* of the Satan in a folk-tale is unthinkable. Perforce, folktales make use of the material already available to the culture of their time and place.”²⁵ It is interesting to note that Satan was not in the core story as Theodore of Mopsuestia (died 428/429 CE) knew it nor does Satan feature

²¹ Weiss, 30. Weiss says, “It is odd that, on the one hand Job's should be so slight, and on the other, that his fear concerned the greatest sin of all, blasphemy.” Jewish sages noted that the superlatives used with respect to Job go well beyond those used for Abraham. Rabbi Yochanan says, “What is said about Job is much more than what is said about Abraham” (*Yalqut Shimoni* on Job, 892).

²² Brandwein, Ch. N. “אגדת איוב לשלביה השונים.” *Tarbiz* 35 (1961) 4. Brandwein justifies deletion of the scenes in heaven by the fact that their exclusion from the story does not destroy continuity or logic. However, exclusion of literary material on this basis does not seem justified.

²³ Pinker, A. “Satanic Verses-Part II,” *JBQ* 25 (1997) 225. Pinker describes the evolution of the concept שטן in the Hebrew Bible, tracing the origin of the current meaning to the Persian period. Similarly Pope (p. xxxvi-xxxvii) suggests that “The presence of the Satan in the Prologue may be evidence of Persian influence. This particular designation of one of the members of the heavenly court may very well have been grafted onto the original tale.” Cf. Rowley, H. H. “The Book of Job and Its Meaning,” *BJRL* 41 (1958) 186, n. 5. We find in the Jerusalem Talmud שמות המלאכים עלו בידן מבבל (y. Roš Haš 1b).

²⁴ Hurvitz, A. “The Date of the Prose-Tale of Job Linguistically Reconsidered,” *HTR* 67 (1974) n. 12, 20.

²⁵ Wolfers, D. *Deep things out of darkness: the book of Job: essays and a new English translation* (Kampen: Pharos/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; 1995) 61.

in references to Job in the Qur'an.²⁶ The utility afforded the author by the heavenly scenes can be seen in the following observations.

a. While the concept of the divine assembly is a feature of early Near Eastern theology and consequently could have been in the core story, it is only used in the Prologue for introducing Satan and has no role of its own.²⁷ The **בני האלהים** feature in the scenes but have no function. Yet, they conveniently magnify the majesty of the setting and imply to the Israelite audience that Satan is just one among the many angels. The author's use of the late idiom **להתיצב על** additionally marks 1:6 and 2:1 as being of his hand.

b. The author needed a situation in which Job's travails are a consequence of a heavenly dictum, untainted by any earthly action, and which has a solid logic. Satan conveniently provides this logic.²⁸ I have already noted elsewhere, "While God is so proud of this authentic exemplar Job, Satan spoils God's state of well-being with a fundamental logical question that God cannot reject out of hand. 'Why, it is You who have fenced him round; him and his household and all that he has. You have blessed his efforts so that his possessions spread out in the land' (Job 1:10). Satan's argument is that in a system where good deeds lead to reward and God's protection, it is impossible to demonstrate decisively that the good deeds are sincere. Job may know that he is sincere and God may know that, but proof valid for a third party is so far lacking."²⁹

²⁶ See Suras 4:161; 6:84; 21:83-84; 38:40-44.

²⁷ Pope, M. *El in the Ugaritic Texts* (VTSup 2; Leiden: Brill, 1955) 48-49. The motif of the divine assembly is encountered in Mesopotamian literature and in Ugaritic mythological texts. Cf. 1 Kgs 22:9-23, Ps 82. Melamed suggested that the "divine beings" have been introduced by the author to magnify God's glory. See Melamed, E.Z. *Biblical Studies in Texts, Translations and Commentators* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press; 1984) 86-7.

²⁸ The artificiality of the construct comes through in the words of Rabbi Yochanan (b. B. Bat. 16a):

ואלמלא מקרא כתוב אי אפשר לאומרן, כאדם שמסיתין אותו וניסת

(Were it not expressly stated in the Bible, we would not dare to say it. [God is made to appear] like a man whom someone tries to incite and who is in the end incited).

²⁹ Pinker, A. "Satanic Verses-Part I," *JBQ* 25 (1997) 96. Cf. Kluger, R. S. *Satan in the Old Testament* (Evanston: Northwestern University; 1967) 9. Kluger says, "Satan (and the public opinion of the low-minded people he represents) has a right to demand a test before, he, too is convinced; and God's justice and impartiality compel him, against his inclination, to accede to the inquiry and submit his favorite to torture." See Job 2:3.

c. The figure of Satan conveniently shifts a reader's resentment of Job's treatment from God to Satan. Maimonides says, "[Job], the simple and righteous man, is given and handed to the adversary [Satan]; whatever evils and misfortunes befell Job as regards his property, children, and health, were all caused by this adversary."³⁰ Certainly, this shift is perceptual, and in a theological sense non-existent (Job 42:11). Still it restrains the reader's complete identification with Job, allowing a more objective consideration of the debate in the Dialogue.

d. The figure of Satan enables the author to conveniently bypass the issue of God's foreknowledge of the outcome, as this issue surfaces in Gen 22:1. One can readily surmise that God knew *a priori* that Job would not fail his trial. However, Satan, one of the **בני האלהים** was not in possession of such foreknowledge, and certainly no human could be. Job's sincerity could be proven to anyone besides God only through a harsh ordeal.³¹

e. The author needs the absolutes of Job's piety and denunciation of God to present a sharply defined problem. Hoffman noted "it is obvious enough that the author does not wish to depict a realistic character but makes an absolute idealization--to the point of abstraction--of Job's personality. Such an idealization is not suitable for introducing the problem of the existence of disinterested righteousness, since that is an empirical and not a theoretical question. ... The empirical problem necessitates the introduction of a realistic earthly character (like Noah, Abraham, Moses, whose human weaknesses are not concealed in the biblical stories) and not a sterilized, utopian, superhuman personage like Job. ... The abstract and theoretical problem in the dialogues, whether or not the Lord judges people according to criteria of justice intelligible to a human mind necessitates an axiomatic: (hence a theoretical) presupposition about Job's absolute righteousness. Any other starting point would inevitably weaken the essence of Job's argument and favor that of his friends, who explain his suffering-explicitly or implicitly as a consequence of his sins. In other words, for the sake of a clear and sharp

³⁰ Maimonides, 297. More recently, Finkelstein suggested that a later editor, unhappy with God meting out punishment and suffering to a righteous person, changed the Prologue by assigning Job's misfortunes to Satan (Finkelstein, L. *The Pharisees: the sociological background of their faith*, Vol I. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America (1938) 231). Buber also held a similar position See Buber, M. M. **דרכו של מקרא** (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute; 1978) 341.

³¹ Weiss, 39–40. Weiss says, "here the story-teller sought to preclude the notion that He who is all-knowing can have any doubt. This assumption concerning the narrator's motive, which offers a solution to all the difficulties in the description of Satan, is confirmed by both the wording and the structure of the heavenly scene."

introduction of the principal problem, the author of the dialogues was compelled to emphasize Job's absolute, axiomatic righteousness, in order to refute any superficial explanation for his suffering."³²

f. The second heavenly court scene (2:1–7a) is an obvious dramatic escalation that is essential for explaining Job's physical suffering and the harsh language that he adopts. Job's disasters seem to appear from the outer boundaries of his domain to eventually afflict his person. One would have expected Job to ponder about the turn of events and pray much earlier and certainly not just submit to fate (וישתחו). The author created a sequence of disasters that serves Satan's argument of human selfishness and bypasses normal human response. In actuality, the irreversible loss of progeny is the climax of the disaster sequence rather than the annoying affliction.

2.8 Verse 1:13 stands out as a syntactic discontinuity and as being unnecessary since it is repeated in 1:18. Spiegel noted that 1:13 would more naturally follow 1:5 and that the Satan scene is a later version grafted on to the core story.³³ This would not, however, remove the redundancy. It is obvious that the author intended by means of the redundancy to ascertain that Job's children were blameless when they perished. Job's children were in the house of the firstborn, for the start of the periodic cycle of feasts. This would be immediately after they have been absolved by the burnt sacrifices that Job brought on their behalf. The author may have used in this verse only the words ויהי היום of the core story.

2.9 The disasters described in verses 1:14–19 come in quick succession, intended to overwhelm the reader. Yet, the sequence of disasters that befell Job is strongly reminiscent of the misfortunes that happened to King Keret (Krt 14 ff.). There, too, King Keret's entire family was wiped out in a series of swift catastrophes. He was afflicted with disease and was confronted with the prospect of death, but recuperated and resumed his rule. Then, with the aid and favor of the god El, Keret acquired a new wife and begot a

³² Hoffman, Y. "The relation between the prologue and the speech-cycles in Job," *VT* 31 (1981) 165–6.

³³ Spiegel, 323–325.

second series of children.³⁴ It can be assumed that the core story started with 1:13 (ויהי היום) and continued with 1:14–20.

2.10 Repetition of the phrases *אמלטה רקאני* and *הנערים הכו* betrays the author's eagerness to highlight the absoluteness of the disasters that befell Job. Their intent is to numb the reader to catastrophes until Job himself is afflicted. This manipulation of the text also led to the inclusion of phrases including the word *הנערים* in cases where they would not make sense in the older core story.

While a number of shepherds would tend to cattle and sheep because of predators and thieves, herds of camels would be left to roam by themselves, as I have witnessed the Bedouin do. It must be assumed that the core story did not have this term, and the latterdays author, unfamiliar with the customs of the desert, added the term for his purposes. Similarly, the author added *על ידיהם* in 1:14 to include the she-asses in the disaster, unaware that the normal *modus operandi* was (and still is) for the she-asses to carry the equipment needed for plowing by the oxen, and then to graze besides them till the end of the day.

In an attack by raiding bands on a group of scattered field hands it is not immediately obvious who survived. The phrase *אמלטה רקאני* makes sense in 1:15 but not in the remaining cases (1:16–17, 19). Also, the author's attempt to exaggerate the disasters by adopting absolutism of description and repetition has led him to include the redundant *לבדי*, and poignantly hammer at Job with the focused *להגיד לך*. It is reasonable to assume that the phrase *לבדי להגיד לך* was not in the core story. The late 1:18 (*עד*) may indicate that the refrain *עוד זה מדבר וזה בא* came from the author. Certainly, a confluence of disasters would magnify their effect.

In verse 1:17 the phrase *שלשה ראשים* refers to a standard three-prong attack (Judg 9:43, 1 Sam 11:11). However, in Judg 9:43 a two-prong attack is used against "all that is in the field." Consequently, it makes sense to assume that the core story was not specific regarding the number of prongs in the attack, and used just "prong-attack." However, the author, who tends to be numerically exact, specified that it was a three-prong attack. Similarly, the author specifies in 1:19 that the wind from the desert struck *four* corners

³⁴ Pritchard, J.P. (ed.). *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (2nd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press; 1955) 142–9. The story of the Shipwrecked Sailor may also contain the motif of "loss of family." Unfortunately, the very different translations of the story from Egyptian hieratic script make such a conclusion tentative. Cf. Fensham, F.C. "The obliteration of the family as motif in the Near Eastern literature [i.a. Job]," *IONA* 19 (1969) 191–199.

of the house. In verse 1:18 the author probably added **ובנותיך** to magnify the disaster (cf. 1:5), **אכלים ושותים יין**, to create dramatic contrast, and **בכור** to emphasize the innocence of the victims. These words would be redundant in the core story. So would be the word **גדולה** in 1:19. It is possible that the core story had **ויפל הבית עליהם וימותו**, which the author changed to **ויפל הבית על הנערים** to harmonize with the repetitive use of **הנערים** in 1:15–17.

2.11 Job's reaction to the first sequence of disasters, as described in 1:20, is typical of customs of mourning and would naturally be part of the core story. For instance, an Ugaritic text tells of El's reaction to news about the death of Baal,

Thereupon Beneficent El Benign
 Descended the throne, sat on the footstool,
 From the footstool took seat on the ground.
 He strewed mourning straw on his head,
 Wallowing dust on his pate.
 Robe and loin cloth he ripped,
 Skin with stone he gashed,
 Incisions with stick he cut,
 Cheek and chin he furrowed,
 Upper arm he plowed,
 Like a garden his chest
 Like a valley he furrowed his back (67 VI 12–22).

Perhaps, 2:8) **ויקה לו חרש להתגרד בו** was part of the mourning routine in the core story, corresponding to *Skin with stone he gashed* (67 VI 12–22), and was later exploited by the author in the Job's affliction scene for a different purpose.³⁵ However, the word **וישתחו** “and he bowed,” reflecting piety even in the process of great emotional distress, appears to be the author's add on.

It is doubtful that the following verse (1:21) was in the core story. It apparently repeats a seemingly Hebrew truism (Qoh 5:14, Sir 40:1, cf. Exod 21:3), invokes the Tetragrammaton in the context of standard phrases of resignation (Ps 113:2), and states the obvious impotence of the underling (cf. 1 Kgs 11:35, 1 Sam 15:28, 8:14, 2 Sam 12:11), which is later exploited by Elihu (35:7).

The author apparently split the original:
בכל זאת לא חטא איוב בשפתיו ולא נתן תפילה

³⁵ The *hapax legomenon* להתגרד is generally assumed to mean “scrape, scratch.”

of the core story to create verses 1:22 and 2:10b, and thereby introduce suspicion regarding Job's reaction. However, if תפלה is connected with the Arabic *tafala* "expectorate" then the original would make excellent sense, "Job did not sin with his lips, he did not spit."³⁶

2.12 It is possible that the core story referred in some way to a sickness as the "Sumerian Job" and Keret stories do. The phrase ויך את איוב in 2:7 leaves open the question of "Who struck Job with a severe inflammation?" Could it be that the core story had את איוב [שד-החלי] ויך ("the sickness-demon struck Job")? The Epilogue surprisingly does not mention Job's physical recovery though it dwells on his familial and material restoration. Such an omission defies logic. It obviously cannot be a scribal error or accidental in a carefully crafted book as the book of Job is. In Spiegel's view the phrase ויהוה שב-שבות איוב (Job 42:10) "undoubtedly including the miracle of his cure as well has a wider range of meaning."³⁷ While it is possible to assume that 42:10 alludes to such cure, one may well wonder why nothing more explicit was said. For instance, when the "Sumerian Job" was restored "The encompassing sickness-demon, which had spread wide its wings, he swept away(?)."³⁸ Also, as Good noted, "We might think the order of events curious, tending as we do to think of physical suffering as having less magnitude than mental or psychic suffering. Yet the story clearly proposes a crescendo of difficulty, and Job's suffering in his own person implies a greater pain than the psychic suffering he has endured at the deaths of his children."³⁹ Job's affliction is a direct consequence of Satan's role in the story and helps considerably the author in creation of the personal drama that makes his position against God understandable. It must be concluded that in the core story Job was never physically harmed, and that the second heavenly scene is the author's addition. The author used Job's physical pain as a means for affording him the greatest latitude of argument in the Dialogue.

2.13 Job's wife makes a cameo appearance in 2:9. One notes that she does not partake with Job in the mourning of the death of their children and is

³⁶ Tur-Sinai, N.H. *The Book of Job* (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher; 1967) 21. Tur-Sinai says, "תפלה, originally means spittle, as Arabic *tijl*. This noun -and in Arabic also the verb, *tafala* "to spit" -apparently originate in an imitation of the noise produced by spitting between the teeth (t sound) and lips (f sound). Thus, to lay תפלה originally means "to throw spittle at, to spit at."

³⁷ Spiegel, 328–9.

³⁸ Kramer, 180.

³⁹ Good, 199.

not mentioned in the Epilogue.⁴⁰ Job does not hear from his wife words of comfort, encouragement, support, or hope. She does not say **נְבַרְךָ אֱלֹהִים וְנָמוּת** “Let us curse God and die,” but urges only Job to do so.⁴¹ She is the adversary at home, close to his bosom, yet utterly treacherous. Augustine called her “assistant to Satan” (*diaboli adiutrix*). Brandwein says, “The role of the wife in the Legend of Job, as her role in Genesis – is to support Satan’s plots. Despite the legends of her suffering that have been woven around her image, her role in the framework tale, as it appears in the MT, is clear and unequivocal.”⁴² She is mentioned in the Prologue as a means for advancing the plot; enable the author to make the point that she clearly urged Job to do what Satan predicted he would do, and more.⁴³ She allows the author to do away up front with the option of suicide.⁴⁴ She enables him to further highlight Job’s piety in uttering “You talk as any shameless woman might talk! Should we accept only good from God and not accept evil?”⁴⁵ Thus, the exchange between Job and his wife is too convenient for the author not to be his own creation. It could not have been in the core story.

2.14 It has been noted by Buber that the verb **בָּרַךְ** is a “leading word” in the Prologue-Epilogue.⁴⁶ Indeed, Satan’s argument is anchored in the diametrically opposite meanings of the verb **בָּרַךְ**, “bless” and “curse.” He

⁴⁰ The Septuagint, sensitive to this depiction of Job’s wife adds significantly to the text. For instance, it says that she passes “the night out of doors, wandering like a slave from place to place, from house to house waiting for the sun to set that I may rest from the grief and pains that overwhelm me.”

⁴¹ Orbach, I. “Job—A biblical Message About Suicide.” *Journal of Psychology and Judaism* 18 (1994) 243. Orbach says, “The wife projects her own anger with God onto Job and encourages him to commit suicide as a protest against God.”

⁴² Brandwein, 12

⁴³ It is possible to interpret 2:3 as expressing the wife’s advice that Job should pray to God that He should grant him death as long as he is still blameless. However, the textual similarities between the wife’s advice and Satan’s prediction make such an interpretation unlikely.

⁴⁴ Hoffman, Y. “The relation between the prologue and the speech-cycles in Job,” *VT* 31 (1981) 165–6. Cf. also Orbach, p. 246.

⁴⁵ Mathews McGinnis, C. “Playing the Devil’s Advocate in Job: On Job’s Wife,” in *The Whirlwind: Essays on Job, Hermeneutics and Theology in Memory of Jane Morse*. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press; 2001) 136. Mathews McGinnis suggests that Job’s wife played a positive role. She verbalized the option of cursing God so that Job would not do so. She leaves unexplained the similarity between Satan’s words and those that Job’s wife uses.

⁴⁶ Buber, 341. He also suggests that **בָּרַךְ** can mean “take leave with a blessing,” or “bless and leave.”

claims that Job's "blessing" of God is the consequence of God's "blessing" Job's enterprises. However, if God would do unto Job the opposite of "blessing" so would also Job do (1:10–11).⁴⁷ The verb בָּרַךְ occurs first in its negative sense when Job expresses his fear that his sons/children may have "blasphemed God" (1:5). The next two times Satan uses בָּרַךְ positively in 1:10 and negatively in the following verse. Then Job uses בָּרַךְ positively in 1:21. This is followed by two negative uses of בָּרַךְ by Satan (2:5) and his wife (2:9). Finally, בָּרַךְ is used positively in 42:12. The alternate uses of opposing meanings of בָּרַךְ and making the wife's negative sense of בָּרַךְ follow that of Satan's can not be accidental. The author apparently tried by means of the literary device of a "leading word" to convey to the reader that Job's wife should be considered in cahoots with Satan⁴⁸ and that at issue is the tension between "blessing" and "cursing."⁴⁹ He used the dual meaning of בָּרַךְ as a prelude to the real cursing with which Job opens the Dialogue (3:1).

The author creates a similar association by the clever use of the words בַּעַד ("around, for") and עוֹד ("still") (1:10, 2:3–4, 9, 42:10), which were probably homophones, and עוֹד ("still") (1:16–18). Satan insinuates that Job is righteous *as long as* [עוֹד] God is for (בַּעַד) him, though God (and Job's wife) states *he is still* (עוֹד), despite the disasters that pile (עוֹד and עוֹד) (cf. 29:5). These seemingly deliberate uses of delicate nuances of Hebrew language, appreciated only by the Israelite *cognoscenti*, but forming the fabric of the heavenly scenes, could not be in the core story.

⁴⁷ Linafelt, T. "The Undecidability of בָּרַךְ in the Prologue of Job and beyond," *BibInt* 4 (1996) 168–9. Linafelt observes, "had it not been for the great blessing bestowed on Job, the decidedly 'curse-like' things which befall him and his family would not have been necessary to test him ... Blessing for Job, is bound up with curse."

⁴⁸ Brenner, 38, 46. Brenner suggests that Job's wife is implied in the Epilogue and Satan "was incorporated into the figure of God through God's admission that both good and evil emanate from him." However, the linkage between Satan and Job is too strong and apparent to be explained by such arguments.

⁴⁹ Davis, E. F. "Job and Jacob: The Integrity of Faith," in *The Whirlwind: Essays on Job, Hermeneutics and Theology in Memory of Jane Morse*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press (2001) 104. Davis notes that the challenge of Job's wife "is commonly heard as a mocking question ('Do you still persist in your integrity?'), implying that Job's vaunted integrity has availed him nothing. But it may also be read as a statement rather than a question: a sad affirmation that integrity is the one thing of value which Job has left, and that very integrity demands that he curse the God who senselessly destroyed everything else."

Hurvitz convincingly argued that לקבל “to receive, take,” is typical of post-exilic Hebrew.⁵⁰ The author’s efforts to make the frame text archaic speak against his mere replacement of a single word in a verse. It is more likely that he picked up an entire current phrase.

2.15 The three friends, which are introduced in 2:11–13, are not part of the core story. The author invented them for presenting in the Dialogue diverse philosophical and theological opinions on the issues of “uncalculated piety” and “unmerited suffering.”⁵¹ The author obviously needed the friends properly named for the Dialogue, while in case of a mere condolence visit their names are of no consequence. They could have been easily considered among all his ידעיו (Job 42:11) who came to comfort Job and break bread with him, without singling them out.

The friends do not follow normal customs of mourning. Instead of placing dust upon their head (Josh 7:6, Ezek 27:30, Lam 2:10) they exaggerate by tossing it upwards, as if the norm is inadequate. In contrast to the condoling of his acquaintances and relatives the friends do not try to ease the pain by engaging Job in some normal activity as eating and sympathetic conversation.⁵² Their silence for seven days and night is highly irregular for a condolence visit and only serves the author’s design of creating a charged dramatic opening for the debate. Indeed, Gordis suggested that the passages introducing them in the Prologue (2:11–13) and dealing with them in the Epilogue (42:7–10) are simply “hinge” passages for integrating the poetic Dialogue. The core story, in his view, had only two characters, God and Job, the three friends were added by the author for the development of the Dialogue.⁵³

2.16 The introduction of the three friends and the author’s effort to conclude the Dialogue maintaining Job’s piety and moral superiority have led to a clumsy Epilogue. God’s anger turns at Job’s friends who are accused of being untruthful. Pope says, “In the Dialogue we meet quite a different Job

⁵⁰ Hurvitz, 20–23. The word appears 8 times in Esther, Ezra, and Chronicles, which are of the Persian period, and once in Proverbs, which is of disputable date.

⁵¹ MacDonald, D. B. “Some External Evidence,” 163. MacDonald says, “[o]f the friends of Job we find no trace [in the Koran], but that does not necessarily involve that they were not there.”

⁵² Bittenwieser, M. *The Book of Job* (New York: Macmillan; 1922) 43–6. Even if Bittenwieser is correct, and the friends actions are intended to ward off the curse that has fallen on Job, their behavior would distance them from Job.

⁵³ Gordis, R. *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary; 1977) 573–75.

whose bitter complaints and charges of injustice against God shock his pious friends who doggedly defend divine justice and persistently reaffirm the doctrine of exact individual retribution.⁵⁴ In view of these attitudes, the Epilogue, in which the friends, not Job, are rebuked for not having spoken the truth about Yahweh comes as something of a shock.⁵⁵

To atone for their sin the friends have to make substantial sacrifices, which are numerically suggestive by the 3 (friends ==> sisters) to 7 (bullocks and rams ==> sons) ratio, and require prayer by Job. These special and unusual requirements appear to be the author's invention intended to make the friends appear as weaklings and Job as magnanimous. Only when Job prays for his friends is he himself restored.

God's sentiment toward Job's friends and His instructions to them have long baffled commentators. It led to the assumption that in the core story the friends counseled Job (as his wife had done) to curse God and die.⁵⁶ Such an act, if true, would explain God's censure of the friends and praise of Job in the Epilogue. However, whatever additional material the core story might have had, apart of the material that can be gleaned from the MT, is highly speculative. As has been already discussed, the three friends of Job are not part of the core story and so cannot be in 42:7-9.

2.17 The Epilogue mentions twice Job's praying (42:8, 10). This seems to indicate that the core story contained an element of prayer. Such an act would be natural and an obviously necessary feature in light of the actions taken by the Sumerian Job. Indeed, the main thesis of the Sumerian poet-theologian was "that in cases of suffering and adversity, no matter how seemingly unjustified, the victim has but one valid and effective recourse, and that is to continually glorify his god and keep wailing and lamenting before him until he turns a favourable ear to his prayer."⁵⁷ It is very likely that the core story contained a lament/prayer by Job to his god/gods and that they responded favorably. The author could not do away with the element of Job's praying, but at the same time he could not say that God responded to Job since that happened already before (from the whirlwind). His solu-

⁵⁴ Ginsberg, H. L. "Job the Patient and Job the Impatient," *Conservative Judaism* 21/3 (1967) 12-28.

⁵⁵ Pope, *Job*, xxiii.

⁵⁶ Fine, H. A. "Tradition of a patient Job," *JBL* 74, 1 (1955) 28-32; Ginsberg, 12-28.

⁵⁷ Kramer, 171. The Sumerian view was that no man is without guilt. In spite of surface appearances to the contrary, there are no cases of unjust and undeserved human suffering, it is always man who is to blame, not the gods. Cf. Qoh 7:20.

tion was to make Job pray not for himself but for his friends.⁵⁸ Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that after the condolences were over Job lamented on his situation and prayed *על כל הרעה* and God responded (*וישא* יהוה את פני איוב). Elements of the lament/prayer were probably integrated into the dialogue to such a degree that their reconstruction would be highly speculative. It is likely that Job prayed to his “personal god” or to the supreme El. The author, however, had no choice but to use the Tetragrammaton (this he does repeatedly, 42:7, 9 (twice), 10, 11 (twice), 12). I have opted to include in the core story (*וישא אל פני איוב*) on the basis of the generality of El, and to delete *את* as unfitting the poetic nature of the text.⁵⁹

2.18 Twice in the Epilogue it is mentioned that Job’s original (at least) status was restored. First is Job’s restoration mentioned in short in 42:10 and then in some detail in 42:12–15. If the same author penned the two statements, Alt argued, then one might have expected them to complement each other and together provide a full picture of the restoration. Yet, the general statement in 42:10 and the particular statement in 42:12–15 can stand alone.⁶⁰ Moreover, the two statements do not follow each other but are interrupted by a description of an event that has no relation to them. Alt concludes that the Book of Job has two conclusions; a younger one consisting of verses 42:7–10 and an older one consisting of verses 42:11–17. One has to choose between the two conclusions.⁶¹

⁵⁸ The author may have relied on an Israelite tradition, which was later expressed in b. B. Qam. 92a:

כל המבקש רחמים על חברו והוא צריך לאותו דבר הוא נענה תחילה

(Anyone who prays for mercy on his friend and himself needs the same thing is granted first). Hurvitz notes that “להתפלל על” ‘intercede’ in Job XLII 8 reflects Late Hebrew phraseology” (p. 23).

⁵⁹ Eissfeldt, O. “El and Yahweh,” *JSS* 1 (1956) 25. Eissfeldt notes that “new finds of text have now proved the veneration of a great god named El for the first part of the second millennium B.C.; a veneration which had hitherto been securely known only for the first millennium B.C.” Cf. Isa 14:13, Ezek28:2, and Gen 14:18–24.

⁶⁰ Alt, A. “Zur Vorgeschichte des Buches Hiob,” *ZAW* 55 (1937) 265. Alt says, “Schon diese Unabhängigkeit der beiden Darstellungen voneinander spricht meines Erachtens entschieden gegen die Annahme ihrer Herkunft von dem gleichen Autor.”

⁶¹ Alt, 266. Alt says, “Dieses völlig unausgeglichene Nebeneinander zweier Erzählungsschlüsse läßt sich nicht so erklären, als sollte die bis dahin einheitlich verlaufene Darstellung der Schicksale Hiobs nun an ihrem Ende mit einmal in zwei parallele Fassungen gegabelt werden, zwischen denen man beliebig wählen dürfte.” Using literary considerations Brandwein tried to reconstruct the two stories in the

Unfortunately, it is impossible to declare any one of the statements superfluous, since the author has tempered with both, as at least the occurrence of the Tetragrammaton indicates. The insistence on twofold restitution echoes Exod 22:3 implying thereby that an injustice was done to Job. Pope notes, "... the doubling of the material possessions is a highly artificial device and incompatible with Job's realistic observations in the Dialogue."⁶² We have also seen that the core story could not be judgmental. Thus, 42:10b could not have been in the core story. Removing from 42:10 also the Tetragrammaton and reference to actions on behalf of the friends we are left with **וישב איוב**. This is now complemented by 42:12 in which the first hemistich must be deleted since it contains the Tetragrammaton and is redundant. As in the description of Job's original status all the references to the size of the herds must also be deleted.

2.19 It has been noted by many that the condolence call of Job's family and friends in the Epilogue (42:11) is both belated and pointless. At that time Job's situation has been favorably reversed (42:10).⁶³ The donation of a coin and an earring would be inconsequential after the restoration and doubling of Job's fortunes. The appearance of family and friends at this point is certainly inconvenient for the author, and consequently must have been an element of the core story that he could not do away with. Alt made the reasonable suggestion that 42:12–17 originally followed 1:22, which is adopted here.⁶⁴ However, a comparison of 2:11 with 42:11 shows that the core story had **על כל הרעה הבאה עלי** and did not include the Tetragrammaton as in 42:11. The author was compelled to add the Tetragrammaton because at that point in the text God appeared to Job and it was obvious that He was the cause of Job's catastrophes.

2.20 The names of Job's first set of daughters were not spelled out in the Prologue and it is not clear what the names of the second set, given in the Epilogue, contribute to the story. Perhaps, the man-given names express Job's hopes for the future. In that case they would be region-specific, since the names would have to connote meaning. A well-known core story that crosses regions could not be name-specific. It would seem prudent to assume that the author added the names for the daughters to tell his Israelite audience that Job found eventually personal tranquility (**ימימה**), fame (**קציעה**), and reversal of fortune (**קרן הפוך**). Since the book only highlights

Prologue-Epilogue that have been suggested by Alt (Brandwein, 16–17).

⁶² Pope, *Job*, xxix.

⁶³ Spiegel, 328–9.

⁶⁴ Alt, 265 ff.

the trio consisting of loss of personal tranquility, fame, and fortune, the large number of sons was unsuitable for this purpose. Consequently, the sons were not named to maintain the focus of the book. The core story did not contain 42:14.

2.21 It is possible that the beauty of Job's daughters was mentioned in the core story. However, the author's tendency to speak in absolutes and the fact that the daughters' beauty was not mentioned in the Prologue speak against including such description in the core story. It seems more likely that the author included this exaggeration to validate his assertion that Job received double of everything when restored. Since the author could not change the number of the daughters he made them exceedingly beautiful.

Surprisingly, nothing extravagant is said about the sons.⁶⁵ Perhaps, one has to deduce that they were successful, since they did not mind that their sisters would be equal heirs with them. Normally daughters inherited only when there was no son. The sons could have rightfully objected to this unusual procedure. The author apparently chose this legalistic device to convey to the reader that the sons were rich enough not to care.⁶⁶ Since laws of inheritance by daughters differed from place to place and this detail is irrelevant it seems reasonable to assume that 42:15 was not in the core story.

2.22 According to 42:16 Job lived an additional 140 years after the tragedy that befell him. The number 140 = 70x2 neatly reflects the assumed human longevity (Ps 90:10) and the scheme of double restitution of all Job's fortunes. According to the author, Job appears to have lived a total of three lives (210 years), and saw four generations of his descendents.⁶⁷ Normally, a

⁶⁵ Resh Lakish's question to R' Yochanan "Why was not the number of Job's daughters doubled?" (TB Baba Bathra 16b) presumes that the number of the sons was doubled. Apparently, the unusual **שבענה** in 42:13 was understood as meaning twice seven (Cf. Targum). R' Yochanan felt that the extraordinary beauty of Job's daughters made up for not doubling their number.

⁶⁶ Sasson, V. "The Literary and Theological Function of Job's Wife in the Book of Job," *Bib* 79 (1998) 88. Sasson felt that the author described Job as giving the daughters an inheritance because he wanted to show the "continued fairness and generosity of the new, restored Job." It is interesting to note that the author of *Testament of Job* could not accept this act and made the daughters' inheritance a spiritual one; they inherited faith, piety, and access to heavenly secrets. See Kraft, R. A. et al., *The Testament of Job, according to the SV Text / Greek text and English translation*. (New York: Society of Biblical Literature, 1974) chapter 46.

⁶⁷ The Septuagint (Codex Vaticanus) reads "And Job lived after his affliction 170 years: and all the years he lived were 240." It seems that the Septuagint tries to harmonize with Gen 6:3 rather than with Ps 90:10. Pope's suggestion that "The

man could have expected to see two generations of his descendents. The fact that Joseph saw three generations of descendents was highlighted by the Hebrew Bible as being a singular blessing (Gen 50:23). That Job saw four generations of his descendents, double the regular norm, is the author's repeated attempt to emphasize the validity of the principle of double restitution. Verse 42:16 is too self-serving to be an element of the core story. Hurvitz notes that “the peculiar **אחרי זאת** –as well as **אחרי כל זאת** and **אחר זה** –is entirely missing not only from the book of Genesis, but from classical Biblical prose as a whole. On the other hand, **אחרי (כל) זאת** and **אחר זה** ... appear in Ezra and 2 Chronicles.”⁶⁸

2.23 Lastly, verse 42:17, echoing primeval history, sparse but majestic, eternal in its finality, and universal in its sentiment, was certainly also the end of the core story.

3. THE CORE STORY

The core story emerging from the preceding considerations might resemble what follows.

איוב היה איש תם־וישר וירא אלהים
 ויולדו לו שבעה בנים ושלוש בנות
 ויהי מקנהו צאן גמלים בקר ואתונות
 ויהי היום ומלאך בא אל איוב ויאמר
 הבקר חרשות והאתנות רעות ותפל שבא
 ותקח אותם והנערים הכו ואמלטה רק אני
 זה מדבר וזה בא ויאמר אש
 נפלה מן השמים ותבער בצאן ובנערים ותאכלם
 זה מדבר וזה בא ויאמר כשדים
 שמו ראשים ויפשטו על הגמלים ויקחו אותם
 זה מדבר וזה בא ויאמר בניך
 בבית אחיהם ורוח באה מעבר המדבר
 ויגע בפנות ויפל הבית וימותו הנערים
 ויקם איוב וקרע מעלו ויגז ראשו
 ויקח לו חרש להתגרד בו ויפל ארצה
 בכל זאת לא חטא איוב בשפתיו ולא נתן תפלה
 ויבאו אליו כל אחיו וכל ידעיו ויאכלו עמו לחם בביתו

LXX figure 170, and the resultant total of 240, may be explained as confusion, conflation, or contamination of the expressed figures 70 and 140” (*Job*, p. 353–4) is unlikely.

⁶⁸ Hurvitz, 24. Classical Bible Hebrew makes intense use of **אחרי כן** or **אחרי (י) הדברים האלה**

וינדו לו וינחמו אותו על כל הרעה הבאה עליו
 ויתנו לו איש קשיטה אחת ואיש נזם אחד
 ויתפלל איוב על כל הרעה
 וישא אל פני איוב
 וישב איוב והי לו
 שבענה בנים ושלוש בנות
 צאן גמלים בקר ואתונות
 וימת איוב זקן ושבוע ימים

Job was, a blameless and upright man, and fearing God. He had seven sons and three daughters. His livestock consisted of sheep, camels, oxen, and she-asses. One day, a messenger came to Job and said, “The oxen were plowing, and the she-asses were grazing, when Sabeans attacked and carried them off, and smote the boys. I alone have escaped to tell you.” This one is speaking and this one came and said, “Fire! It fell from heaven, and burned the sheep and the boys consuming all.” This one is speaking and this one came and said, “Chaldeans! They formed columns and raided the camels and carried them off. This one is speaking and this one came and said, “Your children! In the house of their brother, and a wind from the desert struck the corners of the house so that it collapsed upon the young people and they died.” Then Job arose, tore his robe, cut off his hair, took a potsherd to gash himself, and fell on the ground. For all that, Job did not sin with his lips nor did he cast reproach. All his relatives and acquaintances came and had a meal with him in his house. They consoled and comforted him for all the misfortune that came upon him. Each gave him one קשיטה and each one gold ring. Job prayed about all the misfortunes, and El showed favor to Job. Job recouped. He had seven sons and three daughters, sheep, camels, oxen, and she-asses. Job died old and contented.

One observes that the core story that was obtained by means of the stated guidelines is rather subdued, without the drama imbued into it by the author. Such a low key, stoic, recitation has its charm and seems to fit the message of patience and perseverance. Its language is simple and accessible, yet balanced, restrained in expression, but charged with sorrow. The core story is self-contained, has clear structure, logic, and continuity. It is essentially a case for human hope in face of catastrophe.⁶⁹ As Noah could and did hope when faced with global flood, and as Daniel could and did hope for return to Zion when the Temple was destroyed and Judah was exiled, so

⁶⁹ Kramer, 171–2. The Sumerian Job story is embedded as an example in a treatise dealing with human suffering and ways of forestalling it. Most of it is complaint on ill treatment by society, lament on the sufferer’s fate, confession of guilt, and plea for deliverance.

Job could and did hope when he faced a personal tragedy.⁷⁰ It is certainly impossible to say whether the core story contained only the material that can be gleaned from the Prologue-Epilogue sections of the Book of Job, or it also contained additional material. It is conceivable that it contained a lament and some local color crept into it as well as regional religious elements. Yet these regional influences could not, apparently, distort the main outline of the story or mar its universal appeal of human hope.⁷¹

The framework of the book of Job has been considered an epic prose tale, while the Dialogue is obviously poetic. Yet, the core story that emerges from our analysis is in main poetic too. Three cola per line, with two words to a colon, are the norm in the first part of the story. The longer three colon lines convey at the beginning a relaxed and routine atmosphere and later the seemingly unceasing disasters. This sequence of rhythmic phrases culminates with a declaration of Job's steadfastness. A few prose sentences follow and then again a quicker rhythm is picked up, consisting of two-colon lines. The second part describes Job's restoration for which the quicker pace is more suitable. These features attest to the appealing literary design of the structured core story. Brenner suggested that the author intentionally chose the prose framework for demarcation between his own work (poem) and the work appended (the framework). Thereby he conveyed to the reader from the beginning that "the introduction and the end of the story of Job are basically not his, since they contain ideas that he does not subscribe to and which he proceeds to challenge and demolish."⁷² In that case,

⁷⁰ MacDonald, D. B. "Some External Evidence," 139. MacDonald says, "But why, we may ask has he chosen these three names? Is it not because they stood to him for men who had successfully passed through trouble and temptation, and lived an upright life in the midst of evil, as righteous men in a sinful land? Noah, the preacher of righteousness to an evil generation before the flood; Daniel, the Jew who preserved his purity at the heathen court; these were true examples of such uprightness. And evidently the story of Job which had reached Ezekiel was the story of another who had passed through temptation unscathed." Spiegel considers Danel (\neq Daniel) to be the father of Aqhat, and the trio in Ezekiel 14 having in common the saving of their children (p. 319). This would require assuming that Aqhat was resurrected.

⁷¹ Moster, J. "Punishment of Job's Friends," *JBQ* 25 (1997) 218. Moster says, "The obvious message here is one of hope to anyone who can identify with Job: Just as Job ended up in highly favorable circumstances so can they." Indeed, that is how the Midrash perceived the Job story. Cf. Bialik, Ch. N. and Ravnitzky, Y. Ch. *Sefer Ha'aggada* (Tel Aviv: Dvir; 1987) (108–9).

⁷² Brenner, 48

the author had to convert the poetic core story into prose, which might explain some awkward insertions.

It seems that the author elaborated on the core story in a twofold manner. He expanded the core story by giving it a setting more suitable for his period, sharpened the conflict by imbuing Job with absolute religious piety, and gave it a Judaic nuance while retaining its alien nature.⁷³ It is very likely that the author incorporated the original lament into the theological dialogue, the poetic body of the book. Extrinsication of the original lament from the dialogue appears formidable because of the masterful integration. The lament elements in the dialogue are often natural backgrounds for the theological arguments or are the essence of the argument itself.

Why did the author use this literary device of a story as a framework for presenting his poetic dialogue on personal retribution and unmerited suffering? In Spiegel's view the author was prompted to use the framework of the story "by the desire to communicate to the reader something of his own assurance of innocence despite all affliction. Without the setting provided by the tale of Job; the unceasing insistence on being blameless could easily be misunderstood. Where a cornerstone of the creed is at stake, one will always prefer to suspect that the writer was a trifle self-righteous rather than surrender a cherished belief. By the choice of the story of Job the poet succeeded in putting his entire argument upon a rock of certainty: there is undeserved suffering."⁷⁴ However, it is possible that the author found the core story well suited for his purpose because it aptly reflected his theological views on personal retribution. The core story suggests that the concept of personal retribution is a valid one. However, for unusual reasons unknown to humans, it sometimes fails. Man should not blame himself or denounce god/gods but persist in his righteousness. Eventually this aberration would be corrected and personal retribution would be reasserted.

⁷³ Roberts, J.J.M. "Job and the Israelite Religious Tradition," *ZAW* 89 (1977) 109. Roberts notes that "Nearly everyone tries to fit Job into the unilinear typological sequence of theological development provided by datable Hebrew prophecy and historiography." He finds no justification for such practices, though he has no doubt that the book of Job is of Israelite origin because of Job's oath (31:26–28), the list of moral norms (22:6–9, 24: 2–17, 21), and dependence on psalmic traditions.

⁷⁴ Spiegel, 334.

4. CONCLUSION

The author of the Book of Job appropriated a well-known core story dealing with a righteous person who suffers a sequence of tragedies but maintains his righteousness, and his fortunes are eventually restored. The author apparently made significant changes in the core story to fit the needs of his theological Dialogue. However, because the core story was well known the author had to retain its chief features. Taking into account the author's literary requirements, as well as the ancient background of the core story, it is possible to extract from the Prologue-Epilogue of the Book of Job most of the elements in the core story. Obviously, the existence of a core story does not preclude the possibility that a series of variants of the Job story were in circulation.⁷⁵ It is hoped that availability of a reasonably acceptable core story would contribute to the resolution of the many inconsistencies between the Prologue and the Epilogue. Juxtaposition of the MT story with the core story should bring into sharper relief the author's literary prowess.⁷⁶ It should highlight by contrast the author's subtle meanings and intents.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Weiss, 16 note 1. Weiss says, "Had Ezekiel's listeners known the fate of Job as our story ... tells it, the prophet could not have mentioned Job at all. ... There probably circulated many legends about the righteous Job which told of the hero's lot in many and varied ways."

⁷⁶ Clines, D.J.A. "False Naivety in the Prologue of Job," *HAR* 9 (1985) 127–8. Clines says, "Subtle and complex as the argument of the book as a whole is, its naive prologue is no less subtle: it is not some primitive tale that does no more than set the scene for the substantive argument of the dialogues, but a well wrought narrative that plunges directly into issues of substance that reach as deep as the fraught dialogues themselves." Cf. Cooper, A. M., "Reading and Misreading the Prologue in Job," *JSOT* 46 (1990) 68.

⁷⁷ I am indebted to Prof. S. Shnider for his insightful comments.