

A Reading of Job as a Theatrical Work: Challenging a Retributive Deuteronomistic Theodicy

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Introduction

The book of Job is a core text for understanding ideas about free will and determinism in the biblical period. The medieval Jewish scholar Maimonides thought that the book “set forth the opinions of people concerning providence”, and followed the views of the sages of the Talmud who regarded the story as a fiction and a parable.¹ This article will argue that the use of terminology and allusions in Job to themes which are abundant in the book of Deuteronomy suggest that the work was primarily intended as a polemic against a retributive worldview or a Deuteronomistic theodicy.² Abounding irony, satire and parody provide evidence that it contained comic elements which were not intended simply to entertain, but were intended to ridicule particular targets. These literary devices further suggest that the book of Job should be read as a dramatic or theatrical work. The frequent use of legal terminology suggests that it had a forensic setting and is best viewed as a courtroom drama that put the Deuteronomic views of providence on trial. The work was intended to appeal to an initial

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¹ Robert Eisen, *The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 48.

² In this article *Deuteronomistic* is used with reference to terminology, themes and ideas which are found in those biblical texts regarded by many scholars as coming from a common author or school of thought and sometimes called ‘the Deuteronomistic historian’ (namely, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings). The word *Deuteronomic* is used with reference to terminology, themes and ideas found in the biblical book of Deuteronomy.

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audience that was wrestling with the issues of free will and determinism against a background of exile and the prospect of extinction.

Job and Deuteronomy

The biblical book of Job is a dialogue between a man who has suffered personal losses and physical afflictions, and his three friends who attempt to ‘comfort’ him by debating various philosophies of suffering. Apart from a narrative prose ‘frame’ story in the prologue and epilogue, the speeches in the book are written as poetry. The book of Job shares some common language and themes with the biblical book of Deuteronomy, a mostly legal text traditionally purported to be a series of speeches by Moses to Israel on the verge of entering the land of Canaan. There is a consensus among textual critics that Deuteronomy was written or redacted in stages in the sixth and seventh centuries BCE. There are several noteworthy similarities between expressions in the biblical book of Job and those in Deuteronomy, especially in chapters 28 and 32. Wolfers has compiled a convincing list of these intertextualities, of which the following are the most impressive:³

Deuteronomy	Job
Your ox shall be slaughtered before your eyes, but you shall not eat of it; your ass shall be seized in front of you, and it shall not be returned to you; your flock shall be delivered to your enemies , with none to help you. Your sons and daughters shall be delivered to another people, while you look on; and your eyes shall strain for them constantly, but you shall be helpless. (28:31, 32 NJPS ⁴)	The oxen were ploughing and the she-asses were grazing alongside them when Sabeans attacked them and carried them off , and put the boys to the sword ... God’s fire fell from heaven, took hold of the sheep and the boys, and burned them up ... Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in the house of the eldest brother when suddenly a mighty wind came from the wilderness. It struck the four corners of the house so that it collapsed upon the young people and they died. (1:14-19)

³ D. Wolfers, *Deep Things Out of Darkness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 112-114.

⁴ Quotations from the Bible, unless otherwise noted, are from the *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh: The Traditional Hebrew Text and the New JPS Translation*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999).

<p>The LORD will afflict you at the knees and thighs with a severe inflammation from which you shall never recover - from the soul of your foot to the crown of your head.</p>	<p>The Adversary departed from the presence of the LORD and inflicted a severe inflammation on Job from the soul of his foot to the crown of his head.</p>
<p>In the morning, you shall say, “If only it were evening!” and in the evening you shall say, “If only it were morning!” - because of what your heart shall dread and your eyes shall see. (28:67)</p>	<p>When I lie down, I think, “when shall I arise?” Night drags on, and I am sated with tossings till morning twilight. (7:4)</p> <p>The Greek Septuagint version adds: When I rise, I say “when will it be evening?”</p>

The fact that the writer of Job draws so heavily on the language of Deuteronomy 28 suggests that Job’s miseries are used as metaphors for the invasion, destruction and degradation of the population under foreign assaults. Some of the speeches, especially those of Bildad, also use the language of exile and alienation, which suggests that the intended audience were still smarting from the pain of a recent exile. Job’s first speech concludes with the words: “I had no repose, no quiet, no rest, and trouble came” (3:26). This is restated in a *midrash*⁵ which says: “I had no ease from Babylon, no peace from Medea, no rest from Greece, and agony from Edom.”⁶ This indicates that this text has been interpreted metaphorically and applied to exiled Israel and Judah for a considerable period.

The epilogue includes the phrase, “and the Lord turned the captivity of Job (or, the Lord restored the fortunes of Job 42:10)”. In thirty biblical contexts this phrase recurs with slight variations with reference to Israel or Judah’s return from captivity.⁷ Wolfers argues that:

The fact that this explicit phrase occurs elsewhere so often, and only in connection with a people or a country, never an individual, is the most convincing evidence that Job in the Prologue-Epilogue at least is not an individual.⁸

⁵ In Judaism a *midrash* (plural *midrashim*) is a Talmudic commentary on a biblical text, which explained difficulties in the text or derived deeper meanings. Midrashim generally followed defined exegetical principles and were often highly metaphorical.

⁶ *Exodus Rabbah*, chapter 26. Cited by Wolfers, *Deep Things Out of Darkness*, p. 116.

⁷ Wolfers, *Deep Things Out of Darkness*, p. 103.

⁸ Wolfers, *Deep Things Out of Darkness*, p. 104.

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He concludes that the person Job is “surely no more than an allegorical mask” for an exiled nation obsessed with the fear of its final extinction.⁹ It could also be argued that the writer is deliberately using Deuteronomic language in order to target the teachings of the Deuteronomistic school or their texts. The philosophical or theological discussion of why a good God permits the existence of evil is known as *theodicy* and in these terms the Deuteronomistic school argued that suffering is retributive: calamity comes when the people, or their leaders, disobey the Deuteronomic laws. Suffering is therefore the direct consequence of human failure or rebellion against God. Exiles returning in the sixth century BCE from their period of captivity in Babylon, or a remnant left in the land who had escaped exile, would undoubtedly be troubled by the teaching of a prominent religious school that the nation was being, or had been, punished for their sins, whose precise nature was unknown to them, or for the transgressions of their forefathers. The purpose of the writer of Job was to challenge this explanation of evil and suffering and to reassure them in the face of potential extinction.

Wolfers argues that the key character in the book of Job is actually the nation of Israel which suffers the torments predicted by Moses in his curses for disobedience listed in Deuteronomy 28. Israel, as Job, argues that it is being unjustly punished. Job, or the writer of the book, is therefore (according to Wolfers) a “heretic” disagreeing with the theodicy of the Deuteronomistic historian. Wolfers’ list of Deuteronomic quotations or allusions suggests that the writer of the book of Job was familiar with Deuteronomy; but did he refer to it because he was influenced by it, or because he disagreed with it? This article argues that the presence of comic elements in Job may suggest that the writer is making a parody of the theodicy of the Deuteronomistic historian, with which he apparently disagrees.

The Deuteronomistic school believed in a cause-and-effect relationship between sin and suffering, articulated first by Moses in Deuteronomy: “If you will obey ... all these blessings shall come upon you ... But if you do not obey ... all these curses shall come upon you and take effect” (Deuteronomy 28:1, 15). This is precisely what the Adversary argues in the prologue: “Does Job not have good reason to fear God? Why,

⁹ Wolfers, *Deep Things Out of Darkness*, p. 106.

it is you who have fenced him around ... You have blessed his efforts” (Job 1:9f). It is also the argument advanced by Job’s three friends and Elihu: Job’s sufferings *must* be the result of sin, and if he repents he will prosper again. It is a theme that is elaborated through the Deuteronomistic histories (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings), culminating in Israel and Judah’s captivity because of disobedience.

It is a consistent theme of the Deuteronomistic historian that God blesses the upright and punishes evildoers. Job’s three friends agree with this; so too does the Adversary. However, the Adversary argues that this policy is foolish, as the LORD can never know who is truly serving him without the motivation of a reward, or a threat of punishment. In fact, he might be arguing that no one ever serves God without an incentive. The writer of the book of Job is at least “testing” this theology. Is it possible to be upright, blameless or righteous without an incentive? The only way to test this is to reverse the situation: make a righteous person suffer for no cause, and remove all the blessings, for no good reason. Job undergoes the “test” and maintains his innocence while denouncing the injustice. In doing so he challenges the Deuteronomistic view that obedience and prosperity, disobedience and suffering, are cause-and-effect. The writer of Job not only tests the theodicy of the Deuteronomistic historian, he *disagrees* with it.

The purpose of irony, as Janzen puts it, is to subvert an attitude, conviction or set of beliefs indirectly and from within, rather than attacking it directly.¹⁰ As the book abounds in irony, he reads it as “an essay in the reversal of long-held views”.¹¹ Gerald Wilson concurs and identifies the target as “the predominant Deuteronomic stream of thought that played such a significant role in shaping canonical Scripture”.¹² The book provided an alternative that would have resonated with the experiences of the exilic and post-exilic generations. If Wolfers is correct then this was not just an academic argument. The playwright was writing for a nation that had gone into exile and was questioning the justice of their fate; a nation that was turning to its religious leaders for answers. On the one hand they were being told (by the Deuteronomistic school) that their suffering was the

¹⁰ J. Gerald Janzen, *Job* (Atlanta: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), p. 17.

¹¹ Janzen, *Job*, p. 22.

¹² Gerald Wilson, *Job* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), p. 10.

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result of sin,¹³ while on the other hand the writer of Job challenged the idea that their suffering was the result of sin and promised a restoration of their fortunes.

Job as Theatre

The book of Job is largely poetry: the speeches of Job, his three friends, and the LORD, are all in poetry. The narrative introduction and conclusion are written in prose. Poetry is common in the Hebrew Bible and several books are entirely, or almost entirely, written as poetry. However, biblical historical narratives are written almost entirely in prose, although they may incorporate older oral traditions that were preserved as poetry. This alone could tell us that the overwhelming majority of the book of Job is *not* historical narrative. Even if it was based on actual historical characters and events, the fact that it is in poetry should immediately suggest that this is not simply historical narrative.

Some scholars have detected varying degrees in the quality of the poetry in the speeches. Job's speeches are of a higher quality (whether in terms of the *poetry*, or of the arguments) than those of his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. The most refined poetry is found in the speeches by the LORD. A skilful poet was at work in the composition of these speeches. The poetical speeches are framed by a Prologue and Epilogue which are in narrative prose. The prose of the frame-story is straightforward Hebrew, and easier to translate than the rest of the book. The poetry, on the other hand, creates several difficulties for the translator and the book of Job has the largest concentration of *hapax legomena*¹⁴ in the Hebrew Bible, making it difficult for the translator.¹⁵ The footnotes or marginal notes of several translations comment that "the Hebrew is uncertain" (or words to that effect) more often in Job than in any other book in the Hebrew Bible. Several scholarly theories have been proposed to explain this, including a suggestion that the speeches were originally written in another Semitic language (now lost) and then incorporated at a

¹³ But we could ask, "whose sin?" The second book of Kings seems to place the blame for the captivity on the shoulders of Manasseh.

¹⁴ A *hapax legomenon* is a word occurring only once, or in one place, in the Bible. *Hapax legomena* is the plural.

¹⁵ Frederick E. Greenspahn, 'The Number and Distribution of *Hapax Legomena* in Biblical Hebrew,' *Vetus Testamentum*, vol. 30, no. 1 (1980), pp. 8-19.

later date into the form in which we now have the texts. We are told that Job was from the land of Uz, Eliphaz from Teman, Bildad from Shuah and Zophar from Naamah (possibly all in Arabia). The majority of *hapax legomena* may be words which were carried over from another Semitic language and incorporated into the book because the audience at the time were familiar enough with them, although their meaning is now lost to us.

This further suggests that the writer of the book of Job as we have it drew his material from another source, or sources, and then added material of his own.¹⁶ This is speculative, but it is possible that he based his story on real historical characters (although even if they were fictional ones it would not change the main point of the book), and used some of the native language of his characters in his re-telling of the story. It is also possible that the poetical speeches already existed in some form, in this other language, and that our writer framed a story around them.

The book of Job lends itself to dramatic presentation and it is easy to adapt to the stage. One could suspect it was actually *written* for the stage. In fact, Ahuva Belkin cites Yehuda Sommo, a sixteenth century Italian Jewish theatrical producer, who noticed the dramatic style of the book of Job and argued in his *Dialogues on the Art of the Stage* that Job was the first dramatic text in recorded history. He even asserted that this Biblical theatrical form was appropriated by the Greek playwrights.¹⁷ If he is right, then theatre began with the Hebrews rather than the Greeks, although it would need to be proven that the Greek tragedians knew the text of Job and were influenced by it. To my knowledge, despite some resemblances between Job and Greek tragedies, no such causal relationship has ever been established. In 1587 Theodore Beza divided the book into acts and scenes, and by the eighteenth century many scholars were counting the number of acts and discussing the structure of the “play” in a similar fashion to the discussion of an Attic tragedy.¹⁸ It is actually an old idea, that can be traced

¹⁶ References in this article to the ‘writer’, ‘author’, ‘narrator’ or ‘redactor’ of the book of Job are in the singular for the sake of brevity. It is recognised that the scholarly consensus is that the text shows clear signs of redaction and development by more than one hand.

¹⁷ Ahuva Belkin, ‘Jewish Theatre’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, eds Goodman et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 871.

¹⁸ Horace M. Kallen, *The Book of Job as a Greek Tragedy* (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1918), p. vii. Kallen dates the composition of the Job to about 400 BCE. He argued that it is a Greek tragedy in Hebrew specifically modelled after Euripides (485-406 BCE) who was frequently imitated in his lifetime and during the next century.

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back at least to Christian bishop Theodore the Interpreter (c. 350 – 428), who argued that the book of Job was a drama on the pattern of Greek tragedy (although, if Sommo is right, Greek tragedy was actually based on the pattern of Job).¹⁹

If the book of Job was indeed written for some kind of dramatic or theatrical performance, it is unique amongst biblical literature. While we can identify Hebrew poetry easily enough, we have no way of identifying biblical *drama*. If Job stands alone as the sole example of a biblical theatrical genre, we have no means of identifying the distinctive features of the genre. From a biblical studies perspective we can only note those elements in the work that are unusual or contrary to familiar or expected forms. As the history of the dramatic form and theatre studies are beyond the area of competence of this writer no attempt will be made to compare the biblical Job with other ancient dramatic or theatrical texts, and any conclusions that are drawn are solely on the basis of the uniqueness of Job in the biblical corpus.

This article will focus on the frame-story of the book of Job, with reference to elements elsewhere in the book which may best be understood as being ‘theatrical’ devices. Some of the dramatic elements in the prologue of Job are quite striking, and suggest that rather than being an historical account, the prologue is a dramatic backdrop designed to set the stage for the debate that follows. For example, the announcements to Job that he has lost his herds and his children come through four messengers and there is a striking pattern to their announcements. The first messenger tells Job that the Sabeans stole his oxen and donkeys and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, “and I alone have escaped to tell you”. Then “while he was yet speaking, there came another” messenger and said “fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you.” Then “while he was yet speaking, there came another” who announced a raiding band of Chaldeans had stolen his camels and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, “and I alone have escaped to tell you.” Then (wait for it ...) “while he was yet speaking, there came another”. By this stage the formula is predictable and the reader (or listener) can anticipate the words that conclude the messenger’s account. It is arguable that this is not meant to be

¹⁹ Theodore consequently excluded Job from his Bible as a work of fiction. See Kallen, *The Book of Job as a Greek Tragedy*, p. viii.

read as a telling of *history*: on the contrary, this is drama. The fourth and final messenger tells Job that all his children have been killed and, predictably, concludes with “I alone have escaped to tell you.” The repetition of the phrases “while he was yet speaking, there came another” and “I alone have escaped to tell you” (Job 1:15, 16, 17, 19) is unrealistic as historical narrative, but it is suspenseful and theatrical. This latest messenger told Job that all his children had been killed, yet Job later referred to his sons as though they were still alive: “I am loathsome to my children” (19:17),²⁰ which further supports a *dramatic* rather than *historical* reading of the prologue.

In Job’s first speech in chapter 3 he lamented his life and cursed the day he was born. Strangely, Job accepted the deaths of his children almost off-handedly (“the LORD has given and the LORD has taken away” [1:21]), but when he was afflicted with an illness, he said it would have been better not to have been born. There is something unrealistic about this. Given the choice of personal suffering or losing one’s children the usual human reaction would be to choose suffering rather than see one’s children die. This suggests that Job’s response may have been hyperbolic or satirical, making for good theatre, and the frequent use of irony, satire and parody is also widely acknowledged by commentators.²¹ While these are not exclusively dramatic or theatrical devices, they do support such a reading of the text and may provide further indications about how to interpret the book.

²⁰ Some translations interpret this as “the children of my own mother” (ESV) or “my brothers” (NIV), although the Hebrew literally reads “sons of my belly”. Elsewhere in Job the Hebrew word translated *belly* is ambiguous, being used in reference to a man’s belly as well as a womb. Moreover, as it is in the first person (*my* belly/womb) then it is more likely to be a reference to his own children who came “from his loins” rather than his mother’s womb. The NJPS translates this as a reference to Job’s actual children. It should also be noted that the prologue does not say Job’s children died, only that *a messenger said* his children had died (1:18-19), and if the meaning of *sons of my belly* proposed above is correct then it suggests that Job’s children were still alive later in the story.

²¹ For example, see Edwin M. Good, *Irony in the Old Testament*. (London: SPCK, 1965), pp. 196-240.; Janzen, *Job*, p. 17.

The Role of Satan

The role of Satan in the prologue provides further evidence that Job should be read as theatre. The Prologue (part of the frame story) has several ‘scenes’, alternating between a divine council (probably in heaven, although this is not explicitly stated) and corresponding events on earth. In the first scene *sons of God* (translated as “the divine beings” in the NJPS) presented themselves before the LORD and “the Adversary came along with them” (Job 1:6). The NJPS interprets this as “divine beings” while the *New International Version* (NIV) interprets the phrase as “angels.” Later, the sons of God are mentioned in the poetic section of Job, in a creation account. While it is a rare term in the Hebrew Bible, both the NJPS and the NIV have undoubtedly interpreted correctly and a heavenly angelic council is intended. There are similar Biblical descriptions of the heavenly court elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, and it has been suggested that the use of common phrases for “characteristics of the ‘heavenly council’ in the Mesopotamian, Ugaritic and ancient Israelite texts” categorise these as “type scenes.”²² Psalm 82:1 refers to a “divine assembly” where “God stands “among the gods” or “among the divine beings” (NJPS). Psalm 89:5-8 has a variety of terms for the heavenly assembly which parallel the Ugaritic texts: “assembly of holy beings”; “sons of God/gods” (or “divine beings”); and “council of holy beings” (NJPS).

In Daniel 7:9-10 the prophet has a vision of “the Ancient of Days” surrounded by “thousands upon thousands” and “myriads upon myriads” who attend him and sit in court. The Biblical description of the heavenly court which parallels the Job frame-story most closely is in 1 Kings 22:19 where the prophet Micaiah “saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left” (*English Standard Version* [ESV]). In this account the LORD enquires of his council “who will entice Ahab?” In Micaiah’s story “a spirit (lit. *the* spirit) came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, ‘I will entice him’”. The similarity with the Job frame-story is striking as in both stories a divine being deals with a human as a consequence of a dialogue in the heavenly council (confirming that the writer of the book of Job was familiar with the views of the Deuteronomistic historian, and may even

²² M.S. Kee, ‘The Heavenly Council and its Type-scene,’ *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, vol. 31, no. 3 (2007), p. 259.

have been responding to them).²³ “It is easy to recognize, in their *modus operandi*, the virtual identity of ‘the Spirit’ of this passage (1 Kings 22) and the Satan of the Book of Job. But in Kings, the Spirit is an extension of God’s own personality” and perversely invokes qualities “which could not with propriety be attributed directly to God.”²⁴

Translators differ about how to translate *ha-satan*, or “the Satan” (the Hebrew has the definite article). The NJPS translates this as “the Adversary” while most English translations transliterate as “Satan”. The NJPS translation is preferred here for three reasons: (a) it provides a translation rather than a transliteration; (b) it captures the definite article which is present in the Hebrew but omitted in translations which transliterate as *Satan* (*the Satan* would be better); and (c) the capitalised transliteration, *Satan*, suggests that this is a proper noun, the adversary’s name, while the NJPS capitalised translation, the Adversary, makes it clear that *ha-satan* is a title, rather than a name. “In biblical sources the Hebrew term the *satan* describes an adversarial role. It is not the name of a particular character.”²⁵ Some commentators and translators, while similar to the NJPS in translating rather than transliterating, prefer *the Prosecutor*.²⁶ “Whether the Satan [in the Job frame-story] is a regular member of the council or an unexpected visitor is left ambiguous.”²⁷ While some scholars regard the Adversary as an intruder, it is clear that he had access to the heavenly throne and likely that he was counted among the members of the divine council.²⁸ In Job the Adversary’s role is not malicious or evil, and he does not play the role of a tempter. Rather, he “seems to hold the office of a prosecutor intent on establishing justice” and Habel argues that, in fact, the whole of the book of Job is a legal metaphor.²⁹

²³ H.A. Kelly, *Satan: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 21.

²⁴ Wolfers, *Deep Things Out of Darkness*, p. 202.

²⁵ Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Random House, 1996), p. 39.; Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary* (London: SCM, 1985), p. 89. Habel notes that *ha-satan* “is not the personal name Satan but a role specification meaning ‘the accuser/adversary/doubter’.”

²⁶ For example, Edwin M. Good, ‘The Problem of Evil in the Book of Job,’ in *The Voice From the Whirlwind: Interpreting the Book of Job*, eds Leo G. Perdue and W. Clark Gilpin, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), p. 52.

²⁷ Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, p. 89.

²⁸ J.H. Walton, ‘Satan,’ in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings*, eds Tremper Longman III and Peter E. Enns (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2008), p. 715.

²⁹ Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, pp. 54, 89.

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Pagels observes that, “as he first appears in the Hebrew Bible, Satan is not necessarily evil, much less opposed to God. On the contrary, he appears in the book of Numbers and in Job as one of God’s obedient servants”.³⁰ In Job he is “subject to God’s control and was used by God to accomplish his purposes” and there is “a pronounced emphasis on his subordination” to God.³¹ Habel even suggests that as God himself raises the subject of Job’s piety, *ha-satan* may be verbalising the LORD’s “own latent misapprehensions”,³² an idea which is shared by Leslie Wilson who understands *ha-satan* to be “the *alter ego*” of the LORD.³³ In the dialogues between the LORD and the Adversary in the two scenes set in the heavenly council, it is the LORD who initiates the dialogue and asks the Adversary what he thinks about Job, raising the question about Job’s motivation in serving God. If God rewards worship with prosperity then perhaps Job is worshipping God in order to be prosperous, and God’s policy of rewarding faithfulness is therefore flawed. The Adversary is in fact challenging God’s policies rather than human behaviour; he is not acting maliciously against Job.³⁴ He is the LORD’s adversary, not Job’s. “If God is testing Job, one could just as easily argue that *hassatan* is testing God.”³⁵

If this reading is correct and what we have in the Prologue is *drama* rather than *history*, then it is conceivable that rather than being an actual divine being the Adversary was a dramatic character who articulated the LORD’s own doubts about Job’s piety. The discussion of Job’s righteousness is initiated by God, and the Adversary responds by challenging the LORD’s policy of rewarding righteousness with prosperity. The LORD does not discount the legitimacy of the challenge and responds by authorising the Adversary to put Job’s righteousness to the test. Thereafter the book of Job attributes the cause of Job’s sufferings as much to God as to the Adversary.

³⁰ Pagels, *The Origin of Satan*, p. 39.

³¹ S.H.T. Page, ‘Satan: God’s Servant,’ *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50, no. 3 (2007): p. 449.

³² Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, p. 89.

³³ Leslie S. Wilson, *The Book of Job: Judaism in the 2nd Century BCE: An Intertextual Reading* (Maryland: University Press of America, 2006), p. 62.

³⁴ Walton, ‘Satan,’ p. 716.

³⁵ T.J. Wray and G. Mobley, *The Birth of Satan: Tracing the Devil’s Biblical Roots* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 64.

Reference was made earlier to some “unrealistic” elements in the Prologue, and there is a further example here of an unrealistic element in the dialogues between the Adversary and the LORD. God responded to the Adversary’s report at their second meeting by saying: “You have incited me against [Job] to destroy him for no good reason” (2:3). Having admitted to being deceived or tricked by the Adversary (which is the implied meaning behind “you incited me”), God then gives his permission for the Adversary to conduct a further trial, practically setting himself up to be tricked again and for the adversary to destroy Job *for no good reason* a second time. This is more theatre: the audience is drawn further into the plot and the suspense builds as they wait to see if the Almighty can be tricked again. The portrayal of God as capable of being tricked, hence somewhat weak, and certainly less than omniscient, may seem to be so irreverent that it could not possibly be biblical. However, this is a comic element that targets a school of thinking whose views about God are being parodied here by the writer, rather than God himself. Commenting on the argument made by several scholars that some of the material in the third cycle of speeches has been displaced, Good conjectures that the writer may have “bought Job to heights of blasphemy even beyond those he had reached before, and that the pious readers and copyists disarranged the material to remove the offence”. He readily admits that this is beyond the possibility of demonstration.³⁶ It is possible that *irreverence* is a form of parody that may seem to later readers to be out of place in sacred scriptures, yet it may have been less shocking to the initial audience. Yehuda Radday argues that “the effect of ancient parody, satire, irony and comedy might be lost on a modern reader” although more easily recognised by contemporary audiences.³⁷ Another possibility is that the writer *intended* to shock the audience.

After his two appearances in the heavenly court the Adversary disappears from the scene. Nowhere is he blamed for Job’s misfortune. On the contrary, Job blamed the LORD for all his miseries: “Your hands

³⁶ Good, *Irony in the Old Testament*, p. 200.

³⁷ Yehuda T. Radday, ‘On Missing the Humour in the Bible,’ in *On Humour and the Comic in the Hebrew Bible*, eds Yehuda T. Radday and Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1990), p. 33. Elsewhere in the same work, William Whedbee makes a similar point while arguing that the book of Job is best understood as comedy: “we do not exactly know what might have elicited laughter from the ancient Israelites”, p. 220.

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shaped and fashioned me, then destroyed every part of me” (11:8). “The hand of God has struck me!” (19:21). Even at the end the reader is reminded of “all the misfortune that the LORD had brought upon [Job]” (42:11), and “the ambivalence ... concerning whose hand it is that strikes Job shows that the Satan acts as an agent” of the LORD.³⁸ Perhaps surprisingly, there is no mention of the Adversary in the epilogue and, while Job acts in a priestly role in offering sacrifices for his three friends who did not speak well of God (42:8), no mention is made of the part the Adversary played. As an aside, Habel makes this interesting observation about Job’s priestly role in acting as mediator for his friends:

Job is reinstated as mediator even before his family and possessions are restored. He is again to act as a patriarchal intercessor like Abraham (Gen 18:23ff.). Job had previously looked for a friend who would support him against God if necessary (6:14), an arbiter who would handle his case with God (9:33), an advocate who would defend his suit with God (16:19-20), and a redeemer to vindicate him after his death (19:25). But Job stood alone and achieved his own meeting with God. Now the one who sought a mediator becomes the mediator.³⁹

If in fact in the epilogue Job “repents” (42:6 ESV) or recants and relents (NJPS), this would suggest that the Adversary was right in his presumption about Job and that he did indeed in some way curse God. The Hebrew of Job 42:1-6 is uncertain and somewhat ambiguous.⁴⁰ While Job confessed his ignorance he “nowhere repents, repudiates his words, or shows any remorse”.⁴¹ The epilogue does, however, imply that the LORD, rather than the Adversary, was “guilty” in bringing misfortune on Job. The number of Job’s animals was doubled (and possibly also his sons⁴²), and this emphasis on economics and doubling at the end of the epilogue is reminiscent of the Mosaic laws of restitution. The doubling of Job’s possessions and sons

³⁸ Page, ‘Satan: God’s Servant,’ p. 452.

³⁹ Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, p. 584.

⁴⁰ I will deal further with this point later in this article.

⁴¹ Philippe Guillaume, ‘Dismantling the Deconstruction of Job,’ *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 127, no. 3 (2008), p. 494.

⁴² Job 42:13 says Job was given seven sons and Philippe Guillaume (‘Dismantling the Deconstruction of Job’, p. 492) argues that the Hebrew uses the dual form (i.e. fourteen), quoting Dhorme’s *Commentary on the Book of Job*, Koehler and Baumgartner’s *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, and Alfred Guillaume’s *Studies in the Book of Job*. In Job 1:2 Job had seven sons, so the later dual form suggests his sons were doubled (in the same way as his herds).

implies legal compensation was paid for the damages incurred. However, divine culpability is not an easy theological point to swallow.⁴³

We encounter several more unexpected *twists* in the story right at the end. As the prologue was theatrical so these twists in the epilogue are also dramatic devices, leaving the audience with new questions to ponder. To the end Job is unaware of the wager made in heaven between the LORD and his Adversary: though the audience has this information (in itself a dramatic irony), this knowledge creates further puzzles to solve. If God is culpable of Job's suffering, made clear by the fact that he pays restitution, then this has important implications regarding the cause of human suffering. From Job's speeches it seems that he does not have an explanation himself for human suffering, and his polemical responses do not propose a new theodicy. Job simply demolishes his friends' theories without providing an alternative explanation. For him the issues are not simply theoretical: they are deeply personal. He is innocent, yet he suffers; he is guiltless, yet he is being punished. This, he argues, is unjust and he is forced by the weight of his own argument to demand justice. But from whom? Who will speak in his defense, or right the wrongs?

None of the protagonists in the book deny that God is sovereign or suggest that God is not in control. His sovereignty is *assumed*, rather than *affirmed*. So Job argues that God must be the cause of his suffering (which is exactly what the prologue tells us through the wager in heaven unknown to Job). In a dramatic twist Job accuses God of injustice and demands his day in court: he summons God to defend himself.⁴⁴ The book is rich in legal metaphors and terminology. If it is theatre then it is a courtroom drama, beginning with the first scenes in the court of heaven where the heavenly Prosecutor challenges the LORD's policy of rewarding Job's piety with prosperity, and shifting to earth where the trial continues. The Adversary's role in the drama is to oppose, to challenge, and to test, specifically to challenge the theodicy of the Deuteronomistic historian that asserted that the LORD puts a fence around those who obey and punishes the disobedient.

⁴³ Guillaume, 'Dismantling the Deconstruction of Job', p. 497.

⁴⁴ There is "a sudden explosion of legal terminology" commencing in Job's third speech in the first cycle, including references to "a trial in court" (9:19) and God being "summoned" (9:16). See Robert Sutherland, *Putting God on Trial: The Biblical Book of Job* (Victoria B.C.: Trafford Publishing, 2004), p. 51.

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The focus of the debate (or *the spotlight*, to use a modern theatrical metaphor) shifts away from Job and whatever sins he may have committed, either wittingly or unwittingly, and whether he is being punished through his sufferings. It is God who is now on trial (or on trial *again* if the opening scenes portray the Prosecutor challenging God). He has inflicted terrible suffering on Job, apparently for no good reason, and Job demands an answer for this injustice and summons God to appear in court.

God on Trial

In Job 19:25-27 Job calls for a redeemer. The Hebrew word translated here as “Redeemer” is used most frequently with reference to the God of Israel, and a superficial reading suggests that Job is expressing his confidence in God and his assurance of eternal salvation:

For I know that my Redeemer lives,
and at the last he will stand upon the earth.
And after my skin has been thus destroyed,
yet in my flesh I shall see God,
whom I shall see for myself,
and my eyes shall behold, and not another. (ESV)

The word has been translated in various ways, including “my Avenger,”⁴⁵ and “my vindicator.”⁴⁶ It is possible that “the Vindicator” might be intended as a sort of counterpart to the Prosecutor (*ha-satan*) in the Prologue; similar to a modern Defense Counsel. If so, his identity is unknown. There may actually be two forensic terms here: the Vindicator, and the Guarantor (translated *at the last* in the ESV). Both terms appear in parallel elsewhere⁴⁷ and Marvin Pope notes the Talmudic and Mishnaic usage of a related term in the sense of *guarantor*.⁴⁸ In a legal sense the guarantor is the last resort for payment (that is, “the last (one)”). Some Christian interpreters read this as an eschatological reference to “the last days” (although “days” is unstated) and hence interpret this as an after-death resurrection experience. It could just as easily mean “at the end” or “at last” (in the sense of “eventually”).

⁴⁵ Wilson, *The Book of Job: Judaism in the 2nd Century BCE: An Intertextual Reading*, p. 143.

⁴⁶ NJPS. See also Marvin H. Pope, *Job: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1974), p. 146.

⁴⁷ Isaiah 44:6.

⁴⁸ Pope, *Job*, p. 146.

There is no contextual indication that Job was here expressing his hope in a resurrection, or that his vindication would come after his death, especially as he later referred to the terrors and finality of death.⁴⁹ The Hebrew Bible has very little to say about the afterlife.⁵⁰ In the context, it would be odd if Job was here putting his hope in vindication in an afterlife. As P. S. Johnston has rightly pointed out: “Job still continues his legal argument after chapter 19: he wants to find God, present his case, be acquitted, be tested and emerge like gold (Job 23:3-10). His defiant summation still longs for fair judgment and a divine hearing (Job 31:6, 35). What Job ‘knows’ in Job 19:25 affects neither this subsequent argumentation nor the closing chapters of the book ...”⁵¹

Some commentators argue that the words “after my skin has been thus destroyed” necessitate a reference to resurrection. It could equally be a reference to his extreme suffering and physical deterioration. And while scholars differ as to whether the Hebrew means “*in my flesh*” or “*without my flesh*” the context seems to demand, as Gerald Wilson puts it, “that Job would be expressing in these verses his heartfelt desire that even though he has come so close to death and has almost no hope left, that even now – in this life – God might appear and provide vindication.”⁵² There is no need to read this text as eschatological or messianic.

Robert Sutherland understands the Hebrew word translated “he will stand” (ESV) as a legal term meaning “to stand up in court” as an “advocate”,⁵³ which supports Habel’s argument that the whole of the Book of Job is “a legal metaphor.”⁵⁴ The idea of a lawsuit against God was first mooted in Job’s second speech in the second cycle, and here he continues the theme by expressing his desire that a vindicator or advocate will eventually stand up to argue his case, which is consistent with his previous longing for an advocate (Job 9:33; 16:19). Sutherland argues that this advocate is none other than God himself and sees no difficulty in God

⁴⁹ Job 23:14-17; 26:6; 30:23.

⁵⁰ Psalm 16:10-11; 49:15; 73:27-28. Isaiah 26:19 and Daniel 12:2 are probably the only texts which refer with any certainty to an afterlife.

⁵¹ P. Johnston, ‘Afterlife,’ in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings* eds. Longman III and Enns (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2008), p. 6.

⁵² Wilson, *Job*, p. 209.

⁵³ Sutherland, *Putting God on Trial: The Biblical Book of Job*, p. 57.

⁵⁴ Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, p. 54.

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being the judge, the advocate and the defendant at the same time. “Job’s complaint has become an appeal to God, through God and against God”.⁵⁵ However, Sutherland’s argument here is not convincing as the text reads more naturally as Job saying, “I am confident that eventually someone will stand up and speak in my defense and vindicate me [my Vindicator and Guarantor], and that I will have my day in court. But I want to face God myself while I am still alive, and not be defended by an unknown advocate after I am dead.” Somewhat surprisingly, Job’s vindication does come unexpectedly at the end of the book, and the LORD himself pronounces a sentence in favour of Job, apparently without the intercession of an advocate.

Between this speech by Job and the LORD’s response the writer (or redactor) included a long speech by Elihu which went unanswered and was apparently completely ignored by all the other players, leading to the possible conclusion that this speech was a later addition, although the reasons why it would have been inserted later are unclear. Some commentators note the use of Aramaic and Greek terms in Elihu’s speech, and that the Hebrew of Elihu’s speech appears to be *later* or, at least *different* in vocabulary and style to most of the work. These differences could also be the result of being rewritten or modified by a later hand, or the deliberate intention of the writer to cast Elihu as being “different” to the other characters. Rather than being an interpolation, Kallen argues that Elihu’s role is identical to that of the messenger in Euripidean plays. His appearance, therefore, would be expected to someone familiar with Euripides’ style. By having the other players ignore Elihu the writer may, through another dramatic device, be revealing his own contempt for the scandalous assertions of an angry young man. There are also some comic elements in Elihu’s speech, such as his description of himself as being like a bag full of wind, with a flatulent belly (18-20), leading Sutherland to identify Elihu as “Satan’s dupe”.⁵⁶ If so, this would be an interesting correspondence between the speeches and the frame-story, with Elihu articulating some of the same arguments as the Adversary about the nature of Job’s righteousness.

The LORD’s response from the whirlwind is both dramatic and unexpected, yet in many ways it is also disappointing. Using the

⁵⁵ Sutherland, *Putting God on Trial*, p. 58.

⁵⁶ Sutherland, *Putting God on Trial*, p. 76.

authoritative tone of a parent who dismisses a child's complaint by saying "I'm your parent, that's why", the LORD asserts his authority and his right as creator to do with his creation whatever he pleases. He effectively affirms that he *does* inflict suffering, and he *does* have a reason for it; but by keeping silent with regard to his reasons he denies by implication that he has to provide an answer except to say that suffering is *not* a punishment for sins.⁵⁷ The voice from the whirlwind is more intimidating than comforting, yet, perhaps to the audience's surprise and in a dramatic twist, Job is satisfied. The final twist comes in the frame-epilogue: God pays restitution for Job's wrongful suffering, and by implication he admits liability.

Did Job Repent?

There is, however, some doubt about Job's innocence, with some translations leading the reader towards the conclusion that Job confessed some fault which he previously denied. After two speeches by the Almighty we read Job's final uncharacteristically brief words in 42:1-6 where he says: "I know that you can do everything" (42:2). He then repeats two of the LORD's own challenges to him, although in a slightly altered format, responding to each challenge by confessing that he did indeed speak without understanding.

The LORD's challenge	Job's response
Who is this who obscures counsel without knowledge? (42:3, cp. 38:2)	Indeed, I spoke without understanding, of things beyond me, which I did not know (42:3).
I will ask, and you will inform me (42:4, cp. 38:2; 40:7).	I had heard you with my ears, but now I see you with my eyes (42:5).

This seems to be the climactic answer to the whole book, namely, that God has to be *experienced through a personal encounter* to be understood ("seeing") rather than just through a theoretical or theological approach

⁵⁷ The audience already knows this: they know that Job's suffering is the result of a wager in heaven.

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(“hearing”). But then Job adds something odd: “Therefore, I recant and relent, being but dust and ashes” (42:6). In some translations Job “repents” (ESV for example). The King James Version (KJV) is certainly wrong when it has Job repenting “*in* dust and ashes” because he has been sitting in dust and ashes since his torments began (2:8). This might be an allusion to Genesis 3:19, “for you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (where the Hebrew word for “dust” is the same as in this text in Job). It is almost certainly an allusion to Genesis 18:27 where an identical phrase occurs when Abraham says: “I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes”. Job put himself in the same position as Abraham in daring to challenge the Almighty.

According to the KJV, Job said, “I abhor myself, and repent”. Some translations give the impression that Job is confessing his faults, although without naming them, and repenting, recognising that there was some hidden sin or character fault and in a truly repentant fashion he loathes himself for it. However, there are significant problems with this translation, or interpretation. First, there is no equivalent for “myself” in the Hebrew text in this verse as the verb has no object.⁵⁸ There is no textual or grammatical justification for interpreting the verb reflexively, and by doing so translators are *interpreting* rather than *translating*. Did Job “repent” or “relent”? The book begins by saying he was upright and blameless, and throughout the ensuing debate and legal arguments no sin was proven. Guillaume rightly points out: “Anyone insisting that Job repented because he was guilty ends up in the precarious position of Job’s friends, whom YHWH declares guilty (42:7-8).”⁵⁹ Job did not specify of what he “repents”, and the translations that have him repenting leave some readers wondering. According to Koehler and Baumgartner, following Gesenius, the Hebrew verb here is reflexive and means *to comfort oneself* or to be comforted, not “on” but “on account of” something.⁶⁰ In other words, Job

⁵⁸ Pope notes that, “it is usually explained that the object of the verb has been lost from the text” and prefers the addition of “my words” as the correct interpretation. See Pope, *Job*, p. 348, n. 6.

⁵⁹ Guillaume, ‘Dismantling the Deconstruction of Job’, p. 3.

⁶⁰ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), Vol. 1, p. 688; Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, *Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1971), p. 544.

said “I am comforted on account of the fact that I am but dust and ashes”. Job was unable to be comforted by his “mischievous comforters” with their “empty consolations”, but finally he finds comfort from the LORD’s rebuke and his assertions that he is sovereign and in control.

The verb translated “abhor myself” in the KJV comes from a root meaning “to reject”. It is the same word that is used in 1 Samuel 16:1 where God said “I have *rejected* [Saul] from being king over Israel.” In the few places where English versions translate it as “abhor” or cognates it is clear from the context that “reject” or “rejected” is what is meant.⁶¹ Gerald Janzen translates this last verse: “Therefore I recant and change my mind concerning dust and ashes”.⁶² The NJPS also has “I recant” and the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) has “retract”, which are all better but still do not provide an object. Kallen provides an object with his translation: “I recant my challenge, and am comforted amid dust and ashes”.⁶³ Samuel Balentine refers to the “textual ambiguities” of this verse and writes: “Whatever Job’s last words may mean, they convey anything but a simple confession of sin.”⁶⁴ He argues that, “God’s disclosure invites a transformation in Job’s understanding about what it means to be ‘dust and ashes’”. This interpretation is supported by the translation of Stephen Mitchell who translates this difficult verse this way: “Therefore I will be quiet, comforted that I am dust.”⁶⁵

However one translates this verse, there are several implications for the issues of theodicy. The first problem is that on several occasions the book makes the point that Job was “blameless”. The narrator in the prologue introduces Job as a “man [who] was blameless and upright, one who feared God and shunned evil” (1:1). The LORD twice gives his own assessment of Job as “a blameless and upright man, who fears God and shuns evil” (1:8; 2:3). Job consistently maintains his own innocence to the end, and in the epilogue Job was called to offer sacrifices for his three friends, but apparently not for himself. This implies that he had no personal need of a sacrifice for sin. It would be strange indeed if the writer now has

⁶¹ For example to “abhor” God’s judgments and statutes in Leviticus 26:15, verse 43 has the sense of rejecting them.

⁶² Janzen, *Job*, p. 251.

⁶³ Kallen, *The Book of Job as a Greek Tragedy*, p. 81.

⁶⁴ Samuel Balentine, *Job* (Macon: Smyth and Helwys, 2006), p. 693.

⁶⁵ Stephen Mitchell, *The Book of Job* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992), p. 88.

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Job confessing a sin without providing any clue as to what that sin might be. There is also no suggestion in the book that Job's experiences were necessary for character development, and having been declared to be "blameless" it is difficult to imagine how he might become "more blameless." The best way to interpret this verse is as Mitchell, Balentine, Janzen, Kallen and others have done. They understand Job to be saying that he now has a new understanding of what it means to be "dust and ashes". The only reason provided in the book for Job's ordeals was to *prove* that Job was upright and would maintain his integrity in the face of trials. One implication of this is that humanity is not "fallen" in the sense that human nature is inherently depraved or sinful.⁶⁶ Though blameless, an innocent person may suffer; there is, therefore, no causal relationship between sin and suffering. This challenges a retributive worldview based on rewards and punishments.

To Speak Well of God

At the end of the book the LORD said twice to Eliphaz: "You have not spoken the truth about me as did my servant Job" (42:7-8), or, as some translations put it, "you have not spoken well of me". This comment could only refer to the friends' speeches during the dialogue with Job, so the words "as did my servant Job" must also refer to Job's *speeches* during the same dialogue, and not to his final brief response to the LORD. Habel observes that:

The blunt and forthright accusations of Job from the depths of his agony are closer to the truth than the conventional unquestioning pronouncements of the friends ... Job's answers correspond with reality. They are devoid of dissembling and flattery.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Those translators who have Job abhorring himself and repenting generally come from a theological position which regards the human race as fallen, depraved and inevitably sinful, so that even the most upright person is guilty of some sin, and in need of redemption. Consequently Job's self-abhorrence was a sign of true repentance and a necessary step to being put back into a right relationship with God. It is understandable how a translator with this bias would see this verse as a confession of hidden sin. However, there is a problem with this. To argue that Job was guilty of some hidden sin or character fault would be to take the position of the Adversary and Job's three friends, despite the LORD's own comment on the position of the friends that they did not speak well of God. It would make the Adversary and the three friends correct and both Job and the LORD mistaken!

⁶⁷ Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, p. 583.

Eugene Peterson described the “raw honesty” in the poetry of the Book of Psalms as “earthy and rough. They are not genteel. They are not the prayers of nice people, couched in cultured language.”⁶⁸ The writer of Job may be encouraging his audience to approach God in a similar way: not with carefully worked out theological truths, but with raw honesty, articulating their despair, anger, disappointment and frustration.⁶⁹ To speak well of God is to challenge him when his world appears to be unfair and his ways unjust. Wolfers came to a similar conclusion about how Job spoke the truth concerning God:

Job has penetrated to the truth about the moral conduct of the world, that the quality of an individual’s life is unrelated to his moral deserts; that disaster is a random occurrence as likely to befall the righteous as the wicked; that God does reject the innocent and reward the wicked as individuals as often as He does the reverse. What Eliphaz and his friends have maintained ... is sentimental rubbish, at odds with all experience of life.⁷⁰

Conclusion

The book of Job is excellent theatre, an epic courtroom drama abounding in irony, satire, parody and humour which combine, not simply to entertain, but to challenge and possibly to ridicule the prevailing religious ideology which held to a retributive worldview, a Deuteronomistic theodicy. The drama of Job appealed to an initial audience that was wrestling with exile and the prospect of extinction, and was tortured about an apparently severed covenantal relationship with their God. It analysed the prevailing philosophies about providence and concluded that in the raw honesty of confronting the Divine about the apparent injustices and unfairness of the relationship, by articulating despair, anger, disappointment and frustration,

⁶⁸ Eugene Peterson, *Psalms* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1994), pp. 3f.

⁶⁹ In 42:7 the Hebrew could be translated as “to me” rather than “about me” and this would be the most natural reading, although none of the popular translations consulted translate it this way, even though when the same word occurs earlier in the same verse it is translated *to*. It makes good sense in the context to translate it as “to me” so that it was the forthright, blunt, robust *manner* in which Job spoke to the LORD that was being commended, rather than what he actually said. The Hebrew word is primarily a preposition denoting “motion to or direction towards (whether physical or mental)” while a similar word would be more often used to convey the meaning “in regard to, concerning, or on account of.” It should be noted, however, that the interchange of these two prepositions is a well-known phenomenon in biblical texts. See Ian Young et al., *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts* (London: Equinox, 2008), Vol. 1, p. 40.

⁷⁰ Wolfers, *Deep Things Out of Darkness*, p. 462.

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one may speak well to God. The book of Job is an example of scripture in conversation with itself as it draws on other biblical texts, challenges their veracity and relevance, and draws new conclusions.