

JOB

(All comments by Carol Newsome unless otherwise indicated)

INTRO – The story of Job is a “sophisticated re-working of the Mesopotamian tradition of ‘the righteous sufferer,’” particularly the “Babylonian Theodicy” written c. 1,000 BCE, a dialogue between a sufferer and a friend. (See NIB pp.329-332 for the many similarities). Ezekiel probably knew the legend. He lived in Babylon during the Exile. In Ezekiel 14:13-14, he quotes God's warning that evil-doers will not escape God's wrath because of the merits of the pious, among them Noah, Daniel, Job. Noah was a pre-Israelite figure. Daniel was a legendary Canaanite king. Job's story was probably a pre-Israelite story incorporated into Israelite religious culture by the 6th century BCE. Ezekiel's audience knew these stories, too. So the book was probably written after the exile. Satan, e.g., is never mentioned in pre-exilic writings.

Explanations of Job: 1) Satire -- the idea of the God in Job is unacceptable -- there is no divine retribution. With this explanation, the epilogue makes sense. 2) Traditional -- Job obediently follows the Almighty God -- meets him face to face in 42:5. Then the epilogue does not make sense. 3) God is less powerful -- it's not easy being God -- in the act of creation, he relinquished some of his power -- there are some things God can't do.

Structure: Two distinct forms: 1) 1:1-2:13 and 42:7-17 are simple prose stories describing Job's life before and after the trial by Satan. 2) An intervening dialogue “in elegant, sophisticated poetry, full of rare words and striking images.” Following Job's initial speech in Chapter 3, there is a symmetrical pattern in three cycles: Eliphaz–Job, Bildad–Job, Zophar–Job (except for cycle 3 when Zophar doesn't speak). Between the end of the third cycle and Job's long speech in chapters 29-31, is a poem on the elusiveness of wisdom (chapter 28), so different from the rest of Job. Then, following Job's speech, instead of a reply from God, a new character (Elihu) is introduced, who interrupts the book for six chapters (32-37), and only then does the divine answer occur. (See NIB p 321 [stage 3] for explanation.)

Theological issues: 1) The motive for piety. 1:9-11 and chapters 38-41 answer the question: Why does Job (or anyone) reverence God? *Should* one serve God unconditionally, without question? 2) The “meaning” of suffering: judgment of the wicked – 15:2-25. 3) Ethically unsteady, warning – 33:14-30. 4) Morally immature: discipline – 5:17-19. 5) Righteous: confidence that God will restore well-being – 4:4-7, 8:20-21. But Job demands an explanation from God – 7:20, 10:2, 13:23, 23:5, 31:35. Job initially rejects the notion of unconditional piety. He depicts God as a violator of justice (7:17-20, 10:8-14). God allows the wicked to prosper (21:30). Etcetcetc. But the friends argue for the goodness of God from different authoritative stances. And God is ultimately revealed as a God of justice (13:15-22, 23:3-7) 6) “Where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?” One voice cannot triumph, but “at the intersection of the various voices...” (28:12) (Very good exegesis of this pp. 337-338 [marked] in NIB.)

Pattern of traditional folklore in chapters 1-2: repetition, economy of plot, type characters, testing of one who doesn't know it's a test, which itself occurs in many other cultures (including Hebrew, e.g. Abraham in Genesis 22 [sacrifice of Isaac]) . But there is more to it: exaggeratedly schematized style, extensive repetition of key words, phrases, whole passages; many symbolic numbers, exaggerated characters and events, distinctive syntax; didactic prose which is challenged by the poetic prose to follow.

- 1) 1:1 – The “land of Uz” is probably Edom (where Eliphaz also came from – see 2:11 and note). Some scholars think Job may be the Jobab of Genesis 36:33. Jobab was a king in Edom, and when he died he was replaced by a Temanite (see Eliphaz below). Uz was the first son of Nahor, Abraham’s brother. In Lamentations 4:21 we read, “...O daughters of Edom, you that live in the land of Uz.” But Job’s origin plays no role in the story itself.
- 2) 1:2-3 – All the numbers are symbolic: $7 + 3 = 10$ (twice), $500 + 500 = 100 \times 10$. A mark of divine blessing.
- 3) 1:5 – The actual Hebrew word translated here as “cursed” is “blessed,” originally correctly translated as a euphemism, not a later redaction.
- 4) 1:6 – Israel imagined God “holding court,” taking counsel, rendering judgments (see 1 Kings 22:19, Psalm 82:1-2, etcetc). Those “divine beings” come to report and to receive their assignments (see Zechariah 6:5, where the chariots of the four winds set out to patrol the earth after having presented themselves to Yahweh). The name “satan” is a common noun in Hebrew, meaning merely “the accuser,” seriously misunderstood later as a personal name, not at all related to the much later notion of “Satan.”
- 5) **EXCURSUS** – “satan” in the Old Testament:
In early post-exilic times, ha-satan (“ha” in Hebrew meaning “the”) was the accuser, the adversary of disloyal and/or sinful persons, therefore a subordinate of God who acts as his eyes and ears, defending God’s honor. But, beginning with Zechariah 3:2 (written in early post-exilic times), ha-satan subtly becomes God’s adversary. This change occurs between the writing of 2 Samuel 24:1 (where David is incited by God to census Israel) and 1 Chronicles 21:1 (where Satan is the inciter). Then, in later centuries Satan becomes an opponent of God and is a hostile image in the New Testament (Mark 3:22-31, Luke 22:131, etc). But in Job, “the accuser is simply the wily spirit who embodies his given function to perfection.”
- 6) 1:7 – To look for disloyalty or sinful behavior to indict.
- 7) 1:9-12 – “fear God for nothing?” Questioning Job’s motive and sincerity, casting doubt on “disinterested piety” Are both God and Job self-deceived in thinking that piety can be freely offered when it is routinely met with blessing?
- 8) 1:13-19 – “an astonishing piece of verbal art”: using the number ‘4’ to represent “totality”– Job’s four blessings, four reports of disaster by messengers – as in the four gospels, Ezekiel’s four creatures (1:4-19), Ezekiel’s four-fold destruction (14:12-21), Zechariah’s four winds of destruction (2:6), the epic of Gilgamesh, and many others.
- 9) 1:20-21 – Job uses traditional words to orient himself after his great losses: almost word for word from Ecclesiastes 5:15, paraphrased from Sirach 40:1. The image is more apt if you recall that bodies then were arranged in the fetal position for burial. /// God’s character becomes the main issue: “for no reason” is *hinn_m*, the same word translated “for nothing” in 1:9. It can also be translated “undeservedly,” “in vain,” or even “gratuitously,” suggesting “dark possibilities” inherent.
- 10) 2:4 – “skin for skin” : a market-place term better translated “skin up to the value of my skin.” A trader is not willing to trade a skin (pelt) for anything less than the value of his skin.
- 11) 2:7 – Disease in general and skin disease in particular were considered signs of divine displeasure. (Attempts at diagnosis are beside the point.) See Deuteronomy 28:35, where Moses warns the Israelites in a very long speech what will happen to them if they

- don't obey God's laws after they cross the Jordan into Canaan (identical to 7b).
- 12) 2:9 – Again the word translated as “curse” is actually “bless” in Hebrew, meant to be a euphemism for “curse.” In the Septuagint and the Talmud of Job, his wife is “a character of pathos,” who suffers as she cares for Job. And her words are echoed by Job later in 3:1-5, where he curses the day of his birth. /// The Talmud adds to the last sentence, “but in his heart he did.”
- 13) 2:11-13 – **Eliphaz** (*El ee faz*) the Temanite: Teman means "south" in Hebrew, and is often used poetically as a synonym for Edom, which in turn is another name for Esau. One of Esau's sons was named Eliphaz. He was the father of Amalek, so thus the eponymous ancestor of several Edomite tribes, including the Amalakites.
- Bildad** the Shuhite: Shuah was one of the sons of Keturah, Abraham's wife after Sarah died. Keturah's sons are eponymous ancestors of Arabian tribes, Midianites, etc. So Bildad was an Arab.
- Zophar** the Naamathite (*Nay am - a thite*): origin unknown. /// But Carol Newsome in the latest NIB writes that “the three are presented as Edomites and therefore countrymen of Job.” (JBD: irrelevant?) /// But the sense of “perfection” continues – three friends, seven days (but not seven nights). /// Tossing dust into the air (Hebrew: *haššam_ymâ* – heavenward) is probably a magical act to protect them from a similar fate.

14) REFLECTIONS, CHAPTER 1-2

- “Divine blessings make people flourish (Psalm 128).” God makes a covenant: if you do this, this will happen (Deuteronomy 28) – a bargain with God. People are unaware of this until a crisis occurs: if God does not act on their prayer, they reject him in rage. Yet praying for others is an act of caring and can be an act of reconciliation. Job's response to his sudden status shows that his piety was *not* a bargaining stance. There is nothing sinful about caring about loved ones, health, security, etc. but one must be prepared to “let them go” without bitterness if one loses them, accepting their finality. Job was able to do this because he “knew” that all things – bad and good – come from God. “It is God... from whom we receive both what we yearn for and what we dread.”
- The representation of God as king of the universe is familiar imagery. So why is God here provoking the satan and responding to his counter-provocation? Answer: God and the satan represent the values of a culture of honor. If the satan besmirches God's honor (by suggesting that humans do not love God for his own sake), God must prove him wrong to uphold his own honor. Contrary to modern thought by many. Yet the story honors Job because he puts no condition on his loyalty to God, and God has no doubts about Job, so there is tension between God's honor and Job's piety under most extreme circumstances.
- 15) 3:1 - 31:40 – Not really a dialogue. A disputation re: traditional religious theology and its ability to make sense of misfortune.
- 16) 3:1 – “Cursed” is not the euphemistic “blessed” (*b_r_k* in Hebrew [Arabic: *barak*; Swahili: *baraka*]) but actual “cursed” (*quill_1*). /// Copies Jeremiah 20:14-18 about word for word, which was written at least 100 years earlier. Similar to Sirach 24:14 but there it is only a threat to one who uses “coarse, foul language” in public. This is Job's way of not blaming God, not asking for deliverance; even in extremis he curses the day of his birth rather than God.
- 17) 3:6 – “let us not rejoice” in NRSV is a literal translation of “*al-yihad*,” whereas the NIV “not be included” is a play on words in Hebrew: “*ál-y_had*.” So the reader of either should

hear echoes of the other.

- 18) 3:7 – In this context (barrenness), the cry of joy has sexual connotation.
- 19) 3:8 – The NRSV has it right – “Sea” – not “that day” as in NIV.
- 20) 3:11-23 – A lament, but not to God, a rhetorical wish that he had never been born. And not a wish to die, as Rebecca in Genesis 17:46 (when Jacob takes up with a Hittite woman), as Elijah in 1 Kings 19:4 (after he had angered Jezebel by killing 250 of her prophets on Mt. Carmel), as Jonah in 4:3, etcetera.
- 21) 3:24-26 – What has Job feared? Turmoil! No ease, no quiet, no rest. The reliability of his world has been shattered.

22) REFLECTIONS on Job 3:1-26

The three stages in the response to suffering: theologian Dorothee Soele:

Mute suffering – numbness, sense of helplessness (Job’s seven days of quiet)

Voicing – in language of despair, anger to the point of nihilism (Job cursing the day he was born)

Changing – active behavior in changing one’s perspective (Job’s disputation of his friend’s accusations)

- 23) 4:1 – Eliphaz – Kent Ingraham: the “televangelist” type. Newsome: great dignity and urbanity. Traditional language about Job’s blamelessness
- 24) 4:3 – “instruct” – Hebrew “yissar” – with connotation of “correction.”
- 25) 4:6 – Indicates that Eliphaz does not assume that Job is sinful, but rather that his ultimate well-being is inherently linked to his piety and integrity.
- 26) 4:10-11 -- Five different terms for lion, all symbols for the wicked.
- 27) 4:12-21 – An example of “mantic vision” – revelatory dreams and visions, as in Daniel 1:17 and 2:9-23, and a host of other OT men (see p. 377, NIB for list). A “space” of power but also vulnerability, likened by Isaiah to an unclean person entering the Holy Temple (Isa :5 – “a man of unclean lips,” etc).
- 28) 4:15 – “spirit” here is “ruah” – often translated “wind” – an eerie movement of air across Eliphaz’s face, making his hair bristle, indicating his terror.
- 29) 4:17 – Even translating “before” as “more than,” doesn’t quite get it right – “in relation to” is better.
- 30) 5:1-7 – The most difficult part of Eliphaz’s speech to understand.
- 31) 5:2 – A proverb rebuking Job’s violent outburst in Chapter 3. But “vexation” and “jealousy” are not appropriate. “Resentment” and “anger” are better.
- 32) 5:3-5 – Text is garbled, seemingly a digression. E.g. the “fool takes root,” then encounters disaster. His children are helpless at the gate, taken advantage of by unscrupulous men. If v. 5 is a warning of the dangers of persisting in his folly, this is “grotesque” because he has already lost everything.
- 33) 5:6-7 – Misery and trouble do not come from nature but from human nature, that is, people create their own trouble whether intentional or not. Genesis 3:1-19 and this passage both contain a play on words: earth (d mâ) and humans (â d m).
- 34) 5:8-16 – All but the last verse begin with an “aleph.” This is a doxology formed from a series of passages familiar to Job (see NIB p. 380 for entire list). The last line contains a word that is Eliphaz’s theme throughout – hope.
- 35) 5:17-19 – A “macarism” – “Happy is X who...” But it is unusual to apply it to something painful. But it was not uncommon then to believe that misfortune corrected a sinful person – see Psalm 38, where David pleads with God not to punish him *in anger* for his

misdeeds.

36) 5:20-27 – Evocative of Psalm 23, where a figure of death in the final verse is likened to the harvest of grain from a shock.

37) REFLECTION ON CHAPTERS 4 & 5

At the heart of Eliphaz's speech is fear and anger, afraid of what has happened to Job, and afraid of Job himself. His fear and anger make him want to silence Job. Incriminating Job of how he used to talk to others (4:3-4), he is deceiving himself. It's a silencing like, "It was God's will," or, "God needed your baby in heaven," or "God works miracles." This is "deeply offensive." Eliphaz tried to justify Job's suffering as divine discipline, a common notion in both Judaism and Christianity up to the present. This gives meaning and purpose to suffering. But in Job's case, the discipline is disproportionate – e.g., it includes the death of ten children. Eliphaz also justifies suffering by contrasting the divine and the human, bizarre to many moderns. But it occurs in various forms of biblically based religion: God is absolute, Man is nothing. This ignores the goodness of creation.

38) 6:4 – Such devastation is the result of divine anger, according to Job's world view. Yet that implies that God's compassion can override his anger.

39) 6:5-7 – Two proverbs with the imbedded metaphor that life is food, and the will to live is the appetite. ("Mallow" in NIV is "egg white," merely food that has no taste.)

40) 6:10 – The word translated "exult" in both NIV and NRSV is better rendered as "recoiled" as in the TNK. The word translated as "denied" is actually "concealed," as in 1 Samuel 3:17-18, where Eli tells Samuel not to *conceal* anything he has been told by God. Here it would mean that Job has not hidden the fact that it is God who has decreed his affliction.

41) 6:11-13 – The "patience of Job" is here exposed. The strength to be patient has been driven from him.

42) 6:19 – Tema (pronounced Taymah) is still in northern Saudi Arabia. We visited it and took pictures of the huge dug well, the size of a huge house foundation, that one climbed down into it on cut steps to get water. (See pictures) It is still used as a source of water. Sheba is Yemen, at the southern end of the Arabic peninsula.

43) 6:21a – A play on words: "you see" (tir û) and "you are afraid" (tîr_ û).

44) 6:25-27 – "Forceful" misses the point. "Painful" in NIV is much better. But then Job dismisses Eliphaz's arguments as meaningless. Again the NIV is better: refusing to treat his words as meaningless is equivalent to casting lots for an orphan or bartering away for a friend.

45) REFLECTIONS – 6:1-30

"The body in all its physicality serves as a reference point for Job." Moral and religious language can become abstract, but Job graphically portrays his affliction in terms of his body: penetrating arrows, pain, limited strength, drinking poison, tasteless food, thirsty, hungry. He struggles to get his viewpoint across the Eliphaz.

46) 7:1-6 – "A relentlessly negative depiction of human existence..." Job warrants not even a worker's pay, a slave's sleep, a weaver's hope of rest.

47) 7:12 – Near East stories: Mesopotamian god Marduk and primordial sea Tiamat, Baal overcomes Yam (the sea), goddess Anat fights Yam and muzzles Tiamat, Yahweh's victory over Yam and Tasmin (the dragon Leviathan – Psalm 74:13, Isaiah 27:1, 51:9, Job 41).

48) 7:17-21 – Clever play on words: "p_qad" in 17b means "make so much of" (NRSV) or "give

- so much attention” (NIV), but in 18 means “test them every moment.” /// Newsome: an “anti-psalm,” because in Psalm 39 the psalmist pleads with God to “deliver me from all my sins,” whereas Job’s words are no prayer, rather a parody, insisting that he cannot have harmed God, questioning why God doesn’t just pardon whatever he has done. And then Job ends his speech with the pronouncement that when God looks for him, he “will be no more,” “a fitting conclusion for Job’s anti-psalm.” /// Note that each of his speeches in the first cycle addresses God but are not prayers. In chapter 7, as noted above, he burlesques the language of lament and praise. In chapter 10:2-22 he casts his words in legal speech. In chapter 14:20-14:22, he introduces his words in legal terms, then starts to be drawn into the language of prayer (vv 13-17) but then reverts to legalese.
- 49) 8:2 – Calling Job’s words a “great wind” (NRSV) or a “blustering wind”(NIV) draws attention to their emptiness (according to Bildad), and their destructiveness.
- 50) 8:3-7 – Bildad’s rhetorical questions assume great importance in his indictment of Job when one considers that justice and righteousness are the two most intrinsic attributes of God’s nature. See Psalm 33:5 (what God loves), Psalm 72:1-2 (God’s gift to a king), Psalm 97:2 (the foundation of God’s throne), Psalm 33:5 (what God loves), Isaiah 5:7 (what God expects of Israel, and what God will give Zion), Hosea 2:19 (with love and mercy, God’s covenant with Israel), and Amos 5:29 (God’s demands). For Job to return to God’s favor he must meet these two criteria (vv 5,6).
- 51) 8:8-10 – Bildad presents himself as a conduit through which the tradition of the ages is passed to Job. This appeal to ancient authorities is common in the bible (cf e.g. Deuteronomy 4:32-35, 32:7-9, Isaiah 40:21-24, 46:8-11)
- 52) 8:11-15 – A common proverb (v. 11). See also Psalm 1:3-4 and 92:12-15 for other plant metaphors.
- 53) 8:16-19 – Most difficult exegesis in chapter 8 – Summary: a blameless person endures harsh conditions and thrives after apparent disaster.
v.16 – NRSV’s “wicked” is very misleading. NIV has it better: in contrast to vv11-12 where the plant lacks water, it now is “well-watered.”
v.17 – The plant grows healthy in the sun and becomes strong , anchored in stone.
v.18 – Unexpected disaster for the plant, applied by Bildad to Job’s situation.
v. 19 – Very difficult: NIV says the plant now withers away. NRSV says these are the happy ways. Newsome prefers the latter, an echo of the “restoration to come.”
- 54) 8:20-22 – Bildad draws on the traditional language of the psalmist. The persons who turn against the sufferer will become enemies and suffer shame themselves, which is what happens in the rest of the dialogue.
- 55) 9:2-4 – The question indicates Job’s understanding of his situation: a lawsuit with God. (See REFLECTIONS below.)
- 56) 9:5-13 – But Job’s suit is impossible because of the disparity between them. /// 9:9 – The Bear here is called Aldebaran in some translations, and may be either Arcturus or the constellation Ursa Major. /// The Hebrew word translated as Orion is *kesil*, meaning "fool." The Jews in Babylonian captivity pictured the constellation as Nimrod, a fool for defying God and bound as punishment for erecting the Tower of Babel. /// The Pleiades in Hebrew is *kimah*, meaning "closely bound group of stars," in Greek mythology the 7 sisters pursued by Orion. Also see Job 38:31. /// 9:13 – Probably Egypt, a mythical monster-dragon. See also Psalm 89:4, Ezekiel 29:3, Isa 51:4, Ps 89:10.
- 57) 9:14-21 – Though impossible, Job explores the idea and is convinced that God will assure a

just outcome. Many commentators emend “crush me with a tempest” to “crush me for a hair,” that is, for no reason, as he does in 17b.

58) 9:22-24 --Job becomes increasingly negative. He criticizes God’s governance of the world, mocking the death of the innocent and corrupting the use of his judicial powers.

59) 9:25-26 – Job laments the brevity of his life.

60) 9:27-35 – Job tries three times to imagine a resolution. In v. 28 he addresses God for the first time. In 29-31 he shows the deeply imbedded metaphorical connection between uncleanness and guilt. In 32-35 he asserts the essence of the “legal” problem – the two adversaries are not equal in power. Traditionally the “arbitrator/umpire” **was** God. Here he is one of two “at the gate” being judged.

61) 10:1-7 – Job imagines a speech he could make if he could just engage God. He asks for a statement of charges, then parodies the theme of God’s complete knowledge of humans, complains that God is actually acting like a human who cannot see into the heart of another – God is searching for something he already knows about.

62) 10:8-17 – Job slips gradually into speculation about God’s intention, combining pathos with bitter accusation.

63) 10:18-22 – Job appeals for a moment’s respite before the darkness of death. But now his view that death is preferable to life has changed to a dread of it.

64) REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTERS 9-10

Job had entered the second phase of Soele’s three phases of suffering – lamenting. And now he finds a metaphor for his sense of being treated wrongly: legal language. Which gives him the first glimmer of hope and a desire to live. Metaphors are basic to theology. I.e., we can think of God only in metaphors because he is transcendent and we are finite. E.g., God as a rock speaks of security. God as a parent evokes a different image, that of a loving but governing entity. God as a ruler leads to a rich theological vocabulary. (See Reflections on chapter 31 for the suggestion that Job has abandoned this metaphor, but meanwhile it has sustained him.)

65) 11:1 – Kent Ingraham: Zophar – the “priest” type. Newsome: dogmatic and mean-spirited in accusing Job of “guilt about something.”

66) 11:2-3 – Quoting Proverb 10:8, 14: “a babbling fool will come to ruin,” and Psalm 10:19: “In a multitude of words, sin is not lacking.”

67) 11:4 – Both NIV and NRSV have translated “liqhi” wrong. It is actually “my teaching,” indicating that Zophar hears Job engaging in theology rather than in the agony of a person whose world has collapsed. He doesn’t want to argue with Job in forensic terms.

68) 11:6 – Zophar assumes Job’s guilt but claims that God has already tempered justice with mercy.

69) 11:8-9 – The number 4 is a “symbol of totality,” so Zophar identifies height, depth, length and breadth with heaven, Sheol, land and sea.

70) 11:12 – The NIV has a much better translation (as it often does, at least in Job [JB]): “But a witless man can no more become a wise man than a wild donkey’s colt can be born a man.” /// The reflective reader knows that the saying applies more readily to Zophar than to Job.

71) 11:13-20 – “Directing the heart” was to the rabbis a preparation for prayer, preceding the proper position of the hands. Lifting up his face was denied by Zophar (15a), but Job now lifts it without fear. Then follows other striking images for the transformation of the self. This all to prove that Job is guilty and Zophar is right about that, and reinforcing

both Job's and Zophar's belief that God is responsible for everything that happens to a person.

- 72) 12:1-3 – V. 2 should be translated, “you are people with whom wisdom will die.”
- 73) 12:4-6 – For the special misery of being mocked by friends, see Psalm 55:12-16. // V. 6b should read, “those with whom God has in his own power.”
- 74) 12:9 – Exact quote from Isaiah 41:20b, which for Isaiah was probably a cliché.
- 75) 12:11 – A traditional saying used to invite agreement with the speaker, and asserts that the speaker is right.
- 76) 12:12-13 – Using another cliché (age bringing wisdom and understanding), Job introduces the satirical doxology that occupies the rest of the chapter.
- 77) 12:14-25 — Phrases and themes from Psalm 107, Daniel 2:20-23, Isaiah 44:24-28, but in a distinctly negative way. Job describes activities of God that destroy just governance, depriving rulers of reason, wisdom, victory, etc, celebrating God's knowledge of things “deep and dark.”

78) REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTER 12

The most important issue is “Job's devastating critique of a theological language constructed of cliché's and platitudes.” The problem as Job sees it is that these phrases are empty. (See for examples 4:7, 5:17, 8:3, 8:5-6.) They misapply words until they literally have no meaning, become a substitute for seeing and hearing. Job counters this with parody: mimicking their debased speech, exaggerating the characteristic features of wisdom figures, proverbs, traditional sayings and hymnic forms. After Job has spoken, one can no longer hear Psalm 107's claim about God's leading a people to a settled life without also hearing Job's counter example of a whole leadership class and a nation destroyed.

- 78) 13:1-2 – Job insists on the authority of his own experience.
- 80) 13:4 – “Smear” in NIV and “whitewash” in NRSV should be interpreted to mean that what the friends have done to help Job has failed, in a medical sense.
- 81) 13:7-10 – The friends have not yet thought of themselves as being in a trial. Job now insists that they be impartial as if they were judges, as ordered in Exodus 24:2-3,6-8.
- 82) 13:12 – In the wisdom tradition, proverbs and maxims compare words to precious objects: choice silver (Prov 10:20), honeycomb (16:24), apples of gold (25:11). In contrast, the friends' resources of language are clay and ashes.
- 83) 13:15 – Note totally different translations in NIV and NRSV. This arises because the verbs used can be translated differently and this was known to the rabbis in ancient times. See NIB pp 434-5 for exegesis.

84) REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTER 13:3-19

Job is an example of the victim taking the blame for his/her situation, but he chooses to speak out, contrary to many victims of rape, incest, genocide, who feel an undeserved shame for themselves and friends and relatives. Note Isaiah 53:3 where the Messiah is shunned and despised for his suffering. Job has faith that when people find out the truth about him, he will be vindicated, even though in this speech he accuses God of indifference, if not cruelty.

- 85) 13:27 – The NIV says that it were as if God had marked the soles of the slaves' feet with the owner's name, but Newsome thinks the NRSV is better, where God creates a *boundary* to restrict movement.
- 86) 14:1-6 – Job turns from a legal challenge to contemplate the ephemerality of human

existence. NIV's v. 6, "so look away from him and let him alone, till he has put in his time like a hired man," is much better than the NRSV's, "look away from them, and desist, that they might enjoy like laborers their days."

- 87) 14:7-12 – Bitter irony. In the ancient Near East, the tree was a symbol of life and longevity (Psalm 1:3, Prov 3:18, Dan 4: 101-12, etc.). Here this capacity for regeneration is definitely excluded from human's capacity.
- 88) 14:13-17 – "Trapped between the anger of God and the inexorability of death, Job's imagination attempts to secure a place for hope." He wants his relation with God restored. Again, in v. 15, the NIV puts it better: "You (God) will long for the creature your hands have made," but Job's death threatens the restoration of that bond.
- 89) 14:18-22 – The erosion images move from mountains to rock to stone to soil, with water overcoming all: a metaphor for God and mankind being inevitable opponents, with the slow destruction of what is human. This attitude permeated ancient Near East thinking, as in Ecclesiastes and Gilgamesh. And death is the realm where man is cut off from God and for Job in v. 20 is utter desolation.
- 90) 15: 1-6 – Eliphaz discredits Job's claims to speak as a sage, that "sin prompts his mouth." Eliphaz is faced with the contradiction between his personal knowledge of Job's goodness and Job's rejection of their shared religious ideology: he chooses faithfulness to his ideology over faithfulness to his friend.
- 91) 15:14-16 – Not very consoling to the modern reader, but to the reader of the ancient wisdom it opens the door for Job to repent and return to God's favor.
- 92) 15:17-19 – That the ancestral tradition dates back to a time when there were no aliens in the land is not understood by scholars.
- 93) 15:27-30 – Probably referring to the idea that bodily fatness does not provide security for the wicked.
- 94) 15:31-35 – All metaphors that symbolize the inability of the wicked to become established.

95) REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTER 15

The friends argument groups into three types:

1) Appeal to non-human authority

a. Divine authority, 4:17-19, 11:5-6 (beware of false teachers)

b. Nature, 4:10-11, 19; 5:6-7; 8:10-19

2) authority of consensus – what "everyone believes," in every speech – a weighty claim)

3) Individual experience, 5:13 (very persuasive)

The problem with all three is that they prove nothing. But each is a resource for the work of moral reflection.

- 96) 16:2 – The Hebrew for "miserable comforters" is actually "comforters of misery" – an entirely different connotation unless one interprets "miserable" as "poor" or "ineffectual."
- 97) 16:7-17 – So similar to Lamentations 3:1-21 that Job may be referring to it.
- 98) 16:9 "Tearing" is the Hebrew word used for animals tearing flesh, and is the same image as in Lamentations 3:11.
- 99) 16:9-15 – The English reader misses the powerful effect generated by the repetition of sounds, the relentlessly repeated assaults of God – in v. 12, "wayparp_r_nî...waspa_p_n", and in v. 14, "yepr_s_nî peres 'al-p_nê-p_res" – literally "he breaches me breach upon breach." // v. 13 – to the ancients, the kidneys were an essential part of the emotional being, here followed by bitter gall being spilled out. // The NIV's "buried my brow" and the NRSV's "laid my strength" in the dust, is literally,

- “thrust my horn in the dust,” a reversal of lifting his horn in strength.
- 100) 16:16-17 – The lament ends with Job’s assertion of innocence, a declaration of righteousness.
- 101) 16:18-19 – Covering Job’s shed blood would prevent him from being avenged, with help from heaven by “someone” who will argue his case with God.
- 102) 16:20 – Obscure – see p. 460 NIB for various interpretations.
- 103 – 17: 1-5 – No matter how upright one feels, ostracism by one’s community is devastating. To be rejected by God is absolutely crucial. No wonder Job addresses God directly in vv. 3-4. /// As written, the verb in v. 3 doesn’t make sense, so every translator emends it. NRSV is best, “lay down a pledge...”.
- 104) 17:13 – Ossuaries were commonly built in the shape of a house, the bier like a bed.

105) REFLECTIONS CHAPTERS 16 & 17

- The violence of God is woven into the language of piety. See esp. Psalms 32:4, 38:2, 39:10b, 51:8b, 88:6, 102:10b, 118:18. The new testament is not exempt (Hebrews 12:5-11, entire book of Revelation). If the root metaphor is that of parent and child, it is difficult not to place God as an abusive parent, so it’s important to see God also as loving and tender. “There is something grotesquely wrong with a religious language that deals with suffering as justified abuse.” But Job does this, taking the language of violence out of the language of prayer by insisting that one consider it in the context of criminality. One way to deal with this, Job’s exposure of the scandal that lies in the traditional language of lament, is to change the metaphor of a personal God and depict God as part of the rhythms of nature – a world in which God is creator and sustainer but not a father. (This may be what the divine speeches in chapters 38-41 do – see those notes.) Another alternative is to recognize that God **is** abusive, at times, while being loving etc. at other times. Abraham accuses God of just that in Genesis 18:23-25. The psalmist in Psalm 44 accuses God of total neglect of his people, which amounts to abuse. It is God, not Job, who should repent. It is God who must confess to being a bystander during the Holocaust. But only if one believes that God is literally like a parent, is it necessary to confront God as abusive. On the other hand, giving up personal language of God would change Judeo-Christian religion beyond recognition. So one should not try to resolve the paradox, but do as the Bible does, not try to define a single true image that resolves all contradictions, but experiences God as the foundation that restrains chaos but does not protect the individual from the risks of life.
- 106) 18:2 – The Hebrew word “bîn” can mean either “be sensible” (NIV) or “consider” (NRSV), since it has here the connotation of both perceptions and understanding.
- 107) 18:3 – Bildad in chastising Job for calling them cattle rightly perceives that Job is accusing the friends of a herd mentality by using clichés and platitudes.
- 108) 18:8-10 – Six different Hebrew words used to indicate that the wicked are blundering into unseen destruction.
- 109) 18:13-14 – “Death” should be in caps (so NRSV) because it refers to a Mesopotamian myth: the plague god Namtor is the first born of Erishkigal, queen of the underworld.
- 110) 18:19 – This is the worst of all possible fates – to have no offspring to carry on the name. Witness the variety of social practices to ensure offspring: polygamy, concubinage, adoption, Levirate marriage.

111) REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTER 18

If one thinks of good and evil as being actual forces, as Bildad does, it can follow that in

Job's case evil has triumphed over good. We moderns can become uneasy with people who have cancer, leprosy, AIDs, or even lesser diseases or deformities, and drive them away, literally or figuratively, believing that the sick person is accursed and becomes an object of horror.

- 112) 19:3 – “reproach” doesn’t capture the nuance of the Hebrew: “insult” or “humiliate” comes closer.
- 113) 19:4-5 – “remains with me” is better rendered “remains my concern alone” (so NIV), because the fact is that the wrongdoing is God’s, not Job’s.
- 114) 19:7-12 – Very similar to Lamentations 3:5-9. Note the disproportion of God’s preparation as for a siege of a city, not merely a “tent.” The NIV translates v. 7 as, “I have been wronged.”
- 115) 19:13 – The NIV’s “brothers” is inaccurate – should be “kin” or “family” (so NRSV)
- 116) 19:15 – “Serving girls” were almost always war captives or slaves, representing a total collapse of social relationships.
- 117) 19:20 – “escape by the skin of my teeth” here does not mean a narrow escape, but “nothing.”
- 118) 19:21 – Rather than asking God for pity (as the Psalmist does 18 times), Job asks his friends, subverting God’s rule. A second irony is that Job knows that his friends have already taken God’s side.
- 119) 19:25-29 are corrupt, especially 27-29, which are often termed "nonsense passages." E.g. the Hebrew word for vindicator and witness is "go'el," translated by some as someone who will kill God. But Newsome says that "go'el" means simply a kinsman defender, usually a near male relative who buys back family property or a kinsman who has been sold into slavery. Neither “vindicator” nor “redeemer” should be capitalized because that Christianizes Job’s lament, which would be an error. /// Vv 25-26a and 26b-27 should probably not be read to mean Job’s vindication by God *after* his death. Rather, a vindication he sees before he dies, in his flesh, with his own eyes. /// Newsome’s suggested revision of three verses: V. 25: I know that my vindicator lives, and that in the end he will stand upon my grave. V. 26: and after my skin has been destroyed, and after I wake, apart from my flesh I will see God. V. 29b: and then you may come to know the Almighty.
- 120) 19:28-29 – Though God is not mentioned, the sword will be God’s.

121) REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTER 19

“Job has recast the nature of the story,” from that of a suffering man to a man unjustly accused. A paradigm of our culture: *The Oxbow Incident*, *To Kill a Mocking Bird*, and countless other novels and documentaries. Arises in a culture based on law and justice (Psalm 89:14a). The story can be organized by placing the focus on the community, or the defender of justice, but most compelling on the unjustly accused, as here in Job. The moment arises when the accused either gives in to the pressure or fights back. This has happened in chapter 19.

- 122) 20:1-3 – “Now that Zophar and Job have cast their dispute in terms of personal insult, the dialogue is doomed.”
- 123) 20:8-9 – The imagery is that of a dream/vision “flying away” as soon as the sleeper awakens.
- 124) 20:10-11 – Misplaced, and deleted by some as “unsuitable” (Cline). Neither NIV or NSV give it adequate translation. TNK is better: “His sons ingratiate themselves with the

- poor; his own hands must give back the wealth.” (JB: I don’t see much difference.)
- 125) 20:12-23 – All metaphors related to the life-giving activity of eating, which is self-destructive in the wicked persons obsession with evil (see Proverbs 9:17, 20:17, 26:22). V. 16: the venom of snakes was thought to be their bitter bile released by the tongue. Vv. 20-23 – “a certain fascinating energy in phenomena that do not know the regulating limits of satiety” (see Proverbs 15b-16). The NRSV’s v. 23 echoes the manna “rained down” on the ancient Israelites, where as the NIV “rain down his (God’s) blows upon him (the wicked).
- 126) 20:24-28 – The NIV begins the verse with “although,” carrying out a conventional motif (see Isaiah 24:18, Amos 5:19). /// V. 26: Poorly translated here and misses the point in English: in Hebrew, there are “things hidden away” that the darkness conceals to keep it from the wicked. /// v. 28b: although all the elements act directly they are elements of divine anger.

127) REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTER 20

- Zophar’s position that evil will eventually self-destruct explains how Jim Crow, apartheid, USSR, Chinese oppression, would eventually disintegrate. But it doesn’t account for the insidious persistence of evil. In Near Eastern mythic tradition, as in the Bible, evil is constrained by God but never eliminated, will always be a part of the world. This means however that the decisive struggle is already won and hope is assured. A second model is the apocalyptic: two forces, good and evil, constantly waging war in heaven and on earth, but with the ultimate victory by God. A third model, in Genesis 2 & 3, locates the issue in the human desire to imitate God’s ability to choose what is good and what isn’t, which breaks down because of human’s limited wisdom causing a cruel mix of good and evil.
- 128) 21:4 – “Impatient” doesn’t catch the nuance of the Hebrew, where it means a severe “can’t wait” attitude. E. G. Israelites’ “impatience” with Moses because they aren’t reaching the Promised Land fast enough (Numbers 21:4), the Lord waiting for the Israelites to put away foreign gods (Judges 16:16), Zechariah “disposing” three community leaders because they aren’t reforming the people fast enough. “The pent-up tension can no longer be held in.”
- 129) 21:6-17 – Job completely contradicts the claims of his friends that the wicked will perish and the righteous prosper.
- 130) 21:28 – One of the most pervasive moral themes in biblical piety (see Proverbs 6:15, 10:30, 14:11, and Psalm 37:10, 20,35-36; 52:7, 73:18-20, 110:12).
- 131) 21:29 – Those who travel the roads (traders, vagabonds, itinerant laborers, etc.) whose experience is broad, can contradict those who claim the wicked are punished on this earth.

132) REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTER 21

“Those who are hostile to doubt fail to understand that doubt is not merely compatible with faith but also essential to it.” “Fearful, unexamined faith is brittle and unsustainable.” Is Job right, that there is no moral order in the world? Moral order is not automatic; it must be worked for. Is God responsible for it, or has he commanded morality but has given man the ability to reject it? Newsome’s answer: Yes, God brings the moral order into being by His judgment that every being is “good.” Then the relationships between them must operate on cooperative behavior of all. But it requires “the cultivation of insight, the perception of the wisdom that lies at the heart of creation,

the righteousness and justice that are the foundations of God's throne." So no matter how destructive the folly and malice of those who lack this insight, grounding the moral order in creation provides it with a vitality that ultimately cannot be destroyed.

- 133) 22:1-3 – All rhetorical questions denying that God receives any benefit from human righteousness.
- 134) 22:4-5 – Since God is impartial, Job must be wicked.
- 135) 22:6-11 – In vv 6-9 Elihaz makes his accusations, and in vv 10-11 the judgment.
- 136) 22:17 – Almost identical to **Job's** words in 21:14!
- 137) 22:18 – Elihaz surprisingly agrees with Job that the prosperity of the wicked comes from God, but Elihaz says that that shows the ingratitude of the wicked, accepting the bounty but rejecting the giver.
- 138) 22:24 – Neither the NIV nor NRSV quite catch the full significance of this passage. Eliphaz is suggesting that Job's materialism be done away with by **returning** the gold to the ground where it was found, or to the legendary land of Ophir.
- 139) 22:27 – The NRSV obscures Eliphaz's image of Job's ability to intervene on behalf of sinners. The NIV does a better job: "When men are brought low and you (Job) say, 'Lift them up,' then he (God) will save the downcast."

140) REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTER 22

- "Eliphaz's speech is a masterpiece of prophetic and pastoral counseling...a powerful evocation of the fundamental theme of sin and redemption." Eliphaz thinks this paradigm can resolve Job's problem. The problem is that he's wrong about the reality of Job's situation. How can Eliphaz believe this about his friend? It's a phenomenon not comfortable to admit to. Witness anti-Semitism, 17th century Salem, 50's "red scare," etc.
- 141) 23:1-7 – v.2: "Bitter" can also be translated "defiant," perhaps better here. In chapter 9-10, Job treats the possibility of a trial as satire. In chapter 13 he vacillates between confidence and fear of God's judgment. In chapter 16 he gives up defending himself, envisions an advocate. Now he imagines a fair trial.
- 142) 23:12 – The NIV's "more than my daily bread" does not give the reader the same feeling as "in (from) my bosom (heart)" of the NRSV and LXX, the traditional relationship of the pious with God (Deuteronomy 6:6, Psalm 119:11, Jeremiah 31:33).
- 143) 23:13 – "Stands alone" is literally "as one," an idiom for "unchangeable" or "divine sovereignty," an unopposable God who does what he pleases.
- 144) 23:17 – A better reading than either the NIV or NRSV is, "Yet I am not silenced by the darkness, or by the thick darkness that covers my face." (Dhorme)
- 145) **Chapter 24** – In opposition to all that traditional religion has claimed, oppression and criminality flourish without God's judgment.
- 146) 24:1 – Very badly translated in both NIV & NRSV (JB: **totally** obscure in NRSV). Gordis: "Why, since times of judgment are not hidden from Shaddai (the Almighty) do His Friends not see his day of judgment?"
- 147) 24:8 – The rock is a traditional image of God as protector, so Job's use gives it an added sting.
- 148) 24:11 – Echoes Deuteronomy 25:4 which prohibits a farmer from muzzling his ox as it treads the grain.
- 149) 24:12b – NIV's "God charges no one with wrongdoing," is the more exact translation, the NRSV's more poetic: "Yet God pays no attention to their prayers." Take both together for a better understanding of the writer's intent.

- 150) 24:18-25 – Taken as is (declarative sentences) this passage is so incongruous that many commentators believe that it is misplaced, should be part of the missing speech of Zophar or Bildad. Newsome believes the entire passage should be re-written as Job's *wish* for what should happen.
- 151) 24:18 – The NIV's "foam" on the water is much better than the NRSV's "swift." The Revised English Bible is even better: "such men are scum..."
- 152) 24:24 – "A bewildering variety of translations because of grammatical ambiguities and wide range of possible meanings." Newsome offers her own: "Exalted for a little while, let them be brought low and shriveled up like grass and like the heads of grain let them be cut off."
- 153) REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTER 24** – for a thorough, penetrating exegesis of this chapter, refer to the NIB, pp 513-514.
- 154) 25:1-6 – Considered by many to employ a sequence of themes similar to the creation poem in Psalm 104. /// "Makes peace," "establishes order," refers to the conflict in heaven among the gods. The concept of holy warriors in (from) heaven is common (Deuteronomy 33:2-3, Judges 5:20, Psalm 68:17, Isaiah 40:26, etc.).
- 155) 26:5-14 – Considered by most to be a resumption of Bildad's speech. /// V. 5 – Many places in the OT refers to the "underworld" as being at the bottom of the sea (2 Samuel 22:5-6, Psalm 18:4-5, Jonah 2:2-6, etc). /// Vv 7-9 – Note @ Psalm 48:2-3 reads, "Zion is literally Saphon (or Sapan) – meaning simply 'north.' According to Robert Wright in 'The Evolution of God' the King is Baal, and Wright tries to equate Baal with Yahweh." Newsome states simply that Mt. Zaphon "has the same function" in Ugaritic mythology, neatly side-stepping Wright's proposal that Baal and Yahweh are the same god to the Ugarits and Israelites at that time. /// vv.11-14 – Newsome continues her (possibly unwitting) refutation of Wright by stating the Yahweh's battle with the Sea and Rahab has the *same significance* as Baal's battle with Yam (Hebrew for sea) in Ugaritic mythology, and Marduk's battle with Tiamat in Mesopotamian religion. (See also Isaiah 27:1 and 51:9.)
- 156) REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTERS 25 & 26**
- "A clash of perspectives." Job: a God who is personal and ethical. Bildad: a God who is holy and transcendent. So different that it is clear why they can't communicate with each other. Bildad finds unacceptable that Job's 'personal' image of God destroys the awe that he should have. He would be appalled at the language in many contemporary morning services. That is, the parental image that Christians confide their innermost pains to. Bildad's God has characteristics that demand awe, an overpowering sense of majesty, the images of whirlwind, fire, numinous clouds that shield the divine presence from view.
- 157) **Chapter 27** – "...difficulties, incoherencies, and tensions are an apt representation of a disintegrating dialogue." /// Many consider vv 13-23 to be said by Zophar.
- 158) 27:2 – An irony: Job swears by a God who he claims in the same sentence has denied him justice.
- 159) 27:4 – NIV's "wickedness" is too general.
- 160) 27:6 – "for many of my days" is better in the NIV: "for me as long as I live."
- 161) 27:7-10 – Job is asking if he himself can hope for God to hear him. (Answer in ch. 31)
- 162) 27:11b – "...that which is with the Almighty..." is better in the NIV: "...the ways of the Almighty I will..."
- 163) 27:12b – "...why then have you become altogether vain..." is better in NIV: "...why then

this meaningless talk...”

- 164) 27:13-23 – Job imitates the friends’ speech, beginning with a repetition of Zophar’s speech in 20:29.
- 165) 27:14-15 – “...it is for the sword...” better in NIV: “...their fate is the sword...” /// Ezekiel 6:11: “...they (idolaters) shall fall by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence.”
- 166) 27: 16-17 – “...and pile up clothing like clay...” better in NIV: “...and clothes like piles of clay...” /// Zechariah 9:3: “(The wicked in Tyre) have heaped up silver like dust and gold like the dirt of the streets...”
- 167) 27:18 – NIV’s is better: The house he builds is like a moth’s cocoon. The house of the wicked is like the flimsy shelters put by guards. /// Isaiah 1:8 – “...like a booth in a vineyard, like a shelter in a cucumber field...”
- 168) 27:19 – Proverbs 23:5 – “when your eyes light upon it (wealth, when you wake up) it is gone...takes wings to itself...”
- 169) 27:23 – better in NIV: “It claps its hands in derision.”

170) REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTER 27

Vv 9:24 and 12:13-25 in particular and the entire chapter in general are blasphemous, according to Newsome, who adds that Job’s apparent repudiation of God shows that he is telling the searing truth about a God he will not leave. She sites modern parallels: political opposition to the policies of your government does not mean you don’t love it. In the church, e.g., the true dissidents show their love by remaining in the organization and fighting for what they believe is right. A danger is that one can slide into self-righteousness.

- 171) **Chapter 28** is a poem. Not a continuation of Job’s speech (see line 1, chapter 29). Not Zophar’s missing speech in the third cycle, either. The style and mood are completely different. Perhaps added later, but so similar to chapter 38 that it must belong in the book.
- 172) 28:3-4 – A metaphor for man’s search for wisdom in the far reaches of the world, fraught with power and danger.
- 173) 28:9-11 – Divine overtones in the activities of the prospectors, the same language used in 12:22 and Daniel 2:22.
- 174) 28:12-19 – Reverses the imagery in Proverbs 16:16 where the advice is to buy wisdom instead of gold. /// The Hebrew uses five different expressions for “gold,” impossible to render in English, and seven different gemstones.
- 175) 28:25-27 – the grammatical construction “when...when...then” is common to many creation stories, e.g. Genesis 2:4b-7, the Babylonian creation myths in Enuma Elish, Proverbs 8:22-31.
- 176) 28:28 – Shocking “to be met” by a cliché after such a profound poem. “To be met with dross instead of gold is disconcerting.” Newsome suggests that this is a pedagogical tool to make one look at the familiar in a new way. Note the similarity of this verse to the first verse in the book.

177) REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTER 28

The essence of what is portrayed by the Job of the prose tale: “In the disciplines of piety and moral order, human beings may also perceive and participate in wisdom, experiencing in mindfulness (piety, “fear” of the Lord, orientation toward God), and in moral action, the integrity of creation. Through the participation in wisdom comes a peace and security that are not a denial of the tragic dimension of life, but an ability to be

- sustained in tragedy by experiencing the creating sustaining presence of God.”
- 178) 29:6 – “Milk” or “cream” (NIV) denotes a yogurt-like food, associated with hospitality (Genesis 18:8). As does oil in bathing the feet or anointing the head or beard.
- 179) 29:13 – To Job, the recognition by the powerless is as important as the approbation of his peers.
- 180) 29:18 – “Phoenix” is better than NIV’s “sand,” and “nest” better than “house” because Job rises up out of the ashes of his nest like the phoenix did.
- 181) 29:20 – The bow is a familiar symbol for masculine prowess (Genesis 49:24, 1 Samuel 2:4, etc)
- 182) 29:21-25 – Many of Job’s images are elsewhere applied to kings and even God: light of the face, rain, wise counsel, protection of the powerless, righteousness, justice.

183) REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTER 29

- Job’s paternalistic moral sense requires a dominant/subordinate or donor/recipient attitude, which is limited in that it was a reward system. Today’s citizen might consider family very important, but more a *nuclear* family with at least one romantic relationship rather than the extended kinship group. This makes it easier for the modern to build his life on *choices* (job, mate, church, etc.), whereas Job and his contemporaries couldn’t. The modern seeks the respect of his peers, primarily in the work place, whereas Job sought respect by his efforts with the poor, widows, etc.
- 184) 30:1 – The ultimate insult in that society: not fit to even be associated with dogs. Newsome: should we be shocked at the contempt Job shows for the outcasts who mock him? This points to a problem in modern society where the down and out must have a moral problem whereas the well-to-do must be blameless – associating poverty with what is contemptible.
- 185) 30:2-8 – Though Job was born to privilege, he has been deeply hurt because even the young dregs of society scorn and make fun of him.
- 186) 30:18 – Very difficult to know what image Job uses to describe God’s action against him.
- 187) 30:23 – Job addresses God directly for the first time since 16:20-23.
- 188) 30:25 – Extremely obscure. Literally: “surely one does not stretch out a hand against ruin if in his calamity therefore a cry.” Probably stating the moral principle that one does not do violence to a man in distress. (JB: don’t kick a man when he’s down!)
- 189) 30:29 – Jackals, ostriches (and wild asses) are associated with wild places.
- 190) **Chapter 31** – Cast in the form of an elaborate oath, called by Newsome an “oath of clearance,” but in which there are ten abbreviated oaths: vv 5,13,16,19,24,25,26,29,31,33, all beginning with “if I...”
- 191) 31:1-12 – First four oaths have to do with sexual ethics: 1-4 : toward a virgin, 5-8: general ethical conduct, 9-12: toward another man’s wife. In v 9, “door” is a sexual double entendre: literally lying in wait at the door, figuratively at the door of the womb. V. 10: “grind” and “kneel” recognize the vulnerability of female servants, but also describes Job’s punishment by letting other men sleep with his wife (so the NIV), a concept abhorrent to us today.
- 192) 31:13-23 – Oaths concerning justice and social obligation to slaves, poor, other vulnerable people.
- 193) 31:24-28 : Oaths concerning outside allegiance: wealth (many, many strictures throughout the OT), worshipping sun and moon and stars (denounced in Deuteronomy 4:19, 17:2-3, and many other places).

- 194) 31:29-34 – Diverse situations in which the bonds of social solidarity are threatened.
- 195) 31:35-37 – Job interrupts his oaths of clearance to indicate that he will sign any legal papers given him by anyone who will give him a legal hearing. V 36 is obscure, but may refer to Isaiah 22:22 where an official wears a key on his shoulder as a sign of authority.
- 196) 32:1 - 37:24 – **Overview** – almost certainly a much later addition, possibly as late as the hellenistic period in the 1st century BCE. Elihu (eh *lie* hew) is not introduced in the prose tale that begins the book. He’s not mentioned by name – as Job’s three friends are – when God rebukes them. He is the only character with an Israelite name. Many compositional and stylistic differences. Differences in language used – preference for “El” when referring to God, short form of the 1st-person pronoun, use of the word for knowledge (‘_nî), not found elsewhere in the book, presence of more Aramaisms than in the other speeches, and most importantly, that Elihu calls Job by name many times, and quotes Job’s speeches as if the author knows the text and is intent on refuting specific statements, trying to “correct” the entire book. Arguments against this conclusion “are more ingenious than persuasive.”
- 197) 32:1 – Concerning Elihu’s father, Barakel the Buzite, see Gen 22:21 and also Jer 25:23. In Jeremiah, Buz is listed with Tema and Dedan, in northwest Arabia. /// “Elihu” means, “He is my God,” a variant of “Elijah,” meaning “Yahweh is my God.”
- 198) 32:3 – The Masoretic text: “...and so put God in the wrong,” which fits well with Elihu’s anger against the friends.
- 199) 32:6 – Precedents: Gideon (Judges 6:15), Saul (1 Samuel 9:21), Jeremiah (1:6).
- 200) 32:14 – In order to make a place for himself, Elihu must claim that his arguments will be different.
- 201) REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTER 32**
 Modern readers consider Elihu to be “a pompous insensitive bore,” “a fanatic and a bigot,” and “ridiculous.” He implies that he alone has the answer. By the end of chapter 37 he has distanced the reader from the immediacy of Job’s passion, changes the experience of the divine speeches yet to come. Elihu’s need to control is on display when he speaks. Also troubling is that Elihu’s speeches don’t integrate into the whole, and don’t allow for a rebuttal.
- 202) 33:4-7 – the unrestrained power of God makes dialogue impossible, but Elihu claims that he can.
- 203) 33:9-11 – Four claims of innocence paired with four complaints against God.
- 204) 33:15-18 – Elihu claims that Job’s complaint that God terrified him in dreams (7:14) is incorrect, that God is trying only to turn Job away from wrongful deeds and pridefulness. /// In the NIV, “traversing the River” is “perishing by the sword.”
- 205) 33:19-22 – Illness as a divine punishment, but not done in anger (as in most other biblical references and in Eliphaz’s speeches), but salvific (see v. 30).
- 206) 33:23-28 – Of utmost importance to Elihu is that it is possible for a person in trouble to call out to God through an angelic mediator. That angel tells a man “what is right for him” (NIV), does not “declare him upright” (NRSV).
- 207) 33:31-33 – We should look at these words as coming from the *Author*, not Elihu, to prevent Job from turning the monologue into a dialogue!
- 208) REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTER 33**
 Elihu’s powerful idea that God intentionally sends suffering to people in order to make them better, even to save them, is echoed by C. S. Lewis in “the Problem of Pain,” but refuted by him in “A Grief Observed.” In the former he writes that God does not believe

- a person's prosperity and happiness is not enough to make them blessed, so he troubles them, warning them in advance of an insufficiency that they will one day have to discover. But in the latter, after losing his wife to cancer, he writes that the real danger is not that he will cease to believe in God, but that he will begin to believe such dreadful things about Him that He will desert a person in times of sorrow and/or need. Newsome: we learn from suffering, but should not believe that learning is the **purpose** of suffering.
- 209) 34:3 – Cites the same proverb that Job cited in 12:11, suggesting Elihu's attempt to turn Job's words to his own purpose. Job used it to introduce his satirical doxology of God's governance (13-25). Elihu uses it as an invitation to determine "what is right," what God could not have used unjustly in Job's case. Both assume they are right.
- 210) 34:11b – The NIV makes it much clearer: "He brings upon him what his conduct deserves."
- 211) 34:17-20: The answer to Elihu's rhetorical question with "Yes" misses his point, which is that if God is chosen by a free people to govern, he cannot be both righteous and wicked. Elihu substantiates this with God's behavior toward human rulers.
- 212) 34:23 – NIV's syntax is tortuous, NRSV's meaning is not clear. R. Gordis: "It is not for man to set the times to go to God for judgment."
- 213) 34:31-37 – Difficult to interpret. Newsome: "Elihu contrasts a properly repentant and teachable person with the obdurate Job...who expects restoration even though he refuses to repent."

214) REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTER 34

- Dogmatic rigid fundamentalist religion avoids individual experience. Elihu does not believe that Job's experience can be trusted, because it "impossible that the Almighty would pervert justice." This attitude in the fundamentalist churches lines up propositions to "prove" their claim, and this often fails to sustain someone whose experiences come in conflict with such attitudes. A theology that does not admit the legitimacy of questioning, leaves people without the resources to sustain faith. "A mature and resilient faith requires a willingness to let go of the need for absolute certainty."
- 215) 35:10 – The word translated "strength" in NRSV has a homonym that means "songs"(NIV), either plausible here.
- 216) 35:11 – Elihu answered Job's question in 12:7.
- 217) 35:13 – Elihu is clearly referring to Job here.
- 218) 35:16 – Similar words to those that God will use in 38:2, creating the impression that God is endorsing Elihu's words.

219) REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTER 35

- Job's failure to pray properly to God (in Elihu's judgment), causes Elihu to declare it illegitimate and that God only hears cries when they are addressed in the traditionally approved form. Moderns can take this attitude and affect a "smug superiority," believing that they have perceived something to which others are blind. So Elihu is potentially more dangerous to faith, arrogantly usurping God's role, declaring what language God feels acceptable.
- 220) 36:4 The term "perfect in knowledge" can also be translated "of sound" or "of wholesome" knowledge, a less arrogant claim.
- 221) 36:11-12 – A word play: "serve" is ' _bad, "perish" is ' _bar.
- 222) 36:14 – "in shame" is "among male prostitutes" in NIV and most other translations.
- 223) 36:16-21 – "Extremely difficult and obscure, leading to significantly different translations." Newsome: The repetition of "sût" (woo allure, entice) and " _ar" (narrow strait, distress)

suggest that Elihu is contrasting what God has done for Job with the destructive dangers posed by anger (NRSV) or wealth (NIV). All that is clear in vv. 18-19 is that Elihu describes the enticement of a dangerous alternative that will lead to distress rather than away from it. However, it's not clear why Job should be enticed by riches (NIV).

- 224) 36:22-25 – Very similar to Isaiah 40:12-14. The theme of God as teacher is very important to Elihu. His rhetorical question, “Can God be wrong?” has in fact been answered “Yes” by Job in 19:7 and 24:12 (and elsewhere).
- 225) 36:27 – The “mist” in NRSV (Missed in NIV) refers to the primordial underground reservoir from which rivers emerge (Genesis 2:5-6).
- 226) 36:30 – Obscure – many translations, none satisfactory. Newsome: “The roots of the sea are his throne.”
- 227) 36:33 – Obscure, but Newsome believes both miss NIV and NRSV the point and prefers Gordi's version: “His thunderclap proclaims his presence, his mighty wrath, the storm.”
- 228) 37:7 – Newsome doesn't like either NRSV or NIV's rendering. Rather: “He shuts in every person so that all people may know his work.” (JB: even this is obscure!)
- 229) 37:14-20 – Elihu mimics the style of the divine speeches to come, with the theme of human inability to comprehend the ways of God, and contrasts God's power and wisdom with Job's ignorance and lack of control
- 230) 37:21-24 – Elihu invites the reader “to imagine the brilliance of the sun, only to overlay that image with one of surpassing brilliance, the theophany of God appearing in golden splendor.”
- 231) 37:24 – Very obscure, and the NRSV is negative rather than positive, and should read, “surely all the wise of heart fear him.”

232) REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTERS 36-37

Elihu's attempt to relate nature to moral order warrants a closer look. God judges the nations with rain and lightning (36:31), provision of food (36:32), etc. A traditional notion: Exodus 14:21-22 and 15:8, Judges 5:20-21, Deuteronomy 28:22-24, I Kings 17-18, Amos 4:7-9. But note a counter observation in Matthew 5:45 (rain falls on the just and unjust). This OT attitude (still occasionally heard) is part of the pre-scientific understanding of nature. Most now believe that God using nature as a moral force is nonsense. We believe that giving value to a being makes it a proper object of concern, that the goodness of anything (earth, seas, plants, animals, humans) is establishing merely by being that of God. “Thus the moral obligation to do justice is indeed a part of the structure of creation.” Contemplation of nature leads inevitably to the perception of the order it embodies, the “rightness” of it (Ecclesiastes 3:10). The “horror of being human is the ability to violate that rightness.” Elihu is right in intuiting that God's speaking to Job in terms of creation and the orders of nature, answered Job's questions about the moral order of the world, but he seriously misunderstands God's speech in the whirlwind (to come).

233) OVERVIEW CHAPTER 38 – NIB -- not inserted.

- 234) 38:1-3 – Ezekiel 1:4 used the word s_ ' _r_ for a violent storm, as does the NIV. /// Only here and in the prose narration (1:1-2:13, 42:7-17) is the name for the divine “Yahweh.” Elsewhere it's El Eloah, Elohim, or Shaddai. In v.2, the word “counsel” is better translated “plan” or “design.” (See vv. 4-7 where the construction of the world is described.) In v.3b God echoes Job's words in 13:22.
- 235) 38:8-11-12 – The sea is often represented as a hostile force (Ps 74:1-14, 89:9-13) but here

- God is a midwife who births the sea and wraps it in swaddling bands, an indication of divine care. Job had in 3:9 commanded the dawn in a curse.
- 236) 38:13 – Implies that the wicked are vermin to be shaken out of the cover of the warm skirts. NIV misses this point by translating it “edges of the earth.”
- 237) 38:16-21 – Vv16-17 – the primordial waters (Gen. 1:6). Vv 18-19 – the most primordial of all the acts of creation: the creation of light and its separation from darkness.
- 238) 38:22-24 – Store houses for weather phenomena is common: Deut 28:12, Jer 10:13, Sir 39:29, 1 Enoch 41:4 and 60:11-21 (where he examines the cosmic store houses). “Light” in 24a should be “lightening,” not “light” nor “lightning.”
- 239) 38:25-30 – (I don’t understand this and don’t follow Newsome’s exegesis.)
- 240) 38:31-33 – “Binding the Pleiades” refers to the period when they aren’t visible. The Bear is Ursa Major. This passage (JB: plus maybe vv 25-30?) emphasize the things God can do compared to man, specifically Job.
- 241) 38:34-38 – Continuing the comparison. In v. 36, “wind” and “heart” may also be translated “ibis”(announcing the rising of the Nile) and “cock” (announcing the beginning of the rains.)
- 242) 38:39-41 – The lion’s roar was interpreted as the lion’s request for food from God. (Psalm 104:21: The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God.)
- 243) **Chapter 39** – In the ancient world, the wilderness and its wild animals was a dangerous place, a symbol of chaos. Divine punishment was often depicted as letting wild animals savage a land, typically the lion, raven, wild ass (onager), and ostrich (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, etc). In this chapter, God points out with rhetorical questions what he can do that Job can’t.
- 244) 39:1 – “Observe” (NRSV) and “watch” (NIV) are better translated “watch over” or “guard,” an alien notion for Job.
- 245) 39:5-12 – The aurochs is utterly alien, impossible to domesticate. The onager stands for everything opposed to the world of human order and culture. (Ishmael is “a wild ass of a man.” [Genesis 16:12]) A powerful symbol of rejection and dehumanization: while the onager and the aurochs are at home in the wilderness, away from the noises, oppression of the city, Job sees a place of God’s rejection of him.
- 246) 39:13-18 – The word translated here as “ostrich” is in fact “r_n_nîm,” meaning “screechers,” or “cries of joy,” so may be an owl. Both inhabit wild places, so the symbolism is clear – the ass, jackal, aurochs and ostrich (or owl) are all happy in the wilderness, this joy given by God.
- 247) 39:19-25 – The horse can be domesticated but not given the lust for battle, which makes it not a “servant” any more than the onager. Translators have tried to domesticate the horse by giving it a mane, but the word is actually “thunder.” “Right,” “thunder,” “majesty,” and “terror” are all characteristics of a warrior god. “Leaping like a locust” is the same imagery that Joel used in comparing a locust plague to an approaching army of horses, the army of God on the day of Yahweh (Joel 2:1-11).
- 248) 39: 26-30 – “In the most disconcerting way, the divine speech asks Job and the reader to look at battle...through the eyes of the horse, who finds it exhilarating, and through the eyes of the eagle, who finds it nourishing.”
- 249) 40:1-5 – Compare this humility with Job’s defiance in 31:35-37, where Job challenges God to answer him, declaring he would approach God “like a prince.” Job seems ready to concede to God without understanding the issue, which is that Job’s words have obscured

the design of God.

- 250) 40:11b-12a – God implies that Job **cannot** do this because of his pride, so God will never recognize him. This sets the scene for Behemoth and Leviathan, examples of the proud, whom Job is challenged to bring low.
- 251) 40:15-24 – Possibly hippopotamus or elephant – the hippo was an “ominous figure” in Egyptian mythology, but a bull in Ugaritic and Mesopotamian mythology. Gilgamesh killed the “Bull of Heaven.” In 2 Esdras 6:49-52, both Behemoth and Leviathan were formed on the fifth day of creation but since the sea was not large enough for both, Behemoth was given dry land where a thousand mountains stood, and Leviathan was left in the sea. Newsome thinks it’s a bull and the “tail stiff as a cedar” is an erect penis. Both NIV and NRSV imply in v. 19 that God confronts Behemoth, but the literal translation is, “He is the first of the ways of God, his maker brings near his sword,” which Newsome re-interprets, “He is the first in the ways of God, made to dominate his companions.”
- 252) 41:9-12 – Many interpretations because of textual problems and ambiguous references (P. 622-23 NIB), none of which seem of importance to me in the over-all interpretation of the book of Job.
- 253) 41:15 – “Back” is “pride” in Hebrew and Greek, so the passage should read: “his rows of shields are his pride.”
- 254) 41:19-21 – In Psalm 18:8, God is depicted as a storm God: “Smoke went up from his nostrils, and devouring fire from his mouth, glowing coals from it.”

255) REFLECTIONS ON THE DIVINE SPEECHES, CHAPTERS 38-41

The divine speeches do not contain an explicit moral teaching that can be simply summarized. But God provides Job and the reader with resources with which to remake his moral world. Job’s “horizon” was the village and family (chapters 29-31), but God challenges this parochialism by making all of creation as the starting point, a challenge to remind **us** that the moral world is not simply human-to-human relations, but a matter of not abusing the whole of creation. But there is clearly a suggestion of a formation of a moral order in the imagery of place, limit, and non-encroachment, a language of balance in the ecology of the world, every person and thing having a place that must not be violated. Applied to criminals, means that they are part of the community, however disruptive.

- 256) 42:1-6 – Newsome devotes over five full pages to all the different ways this little speech can be interpreted. It’s on pp. 627-632 (NIB), is interesting but not apropos to understanding the passage because the reader – in the end – doesn’t know what to think. So I will accept the way the NIV and the NRSV reads, which are almost identical, and take it to mean that Job admits God’s effective power, that he (Job) has spoken without knowledge but now has transformed his understanding of himself and his situation and now repents on dust and ashes.
- 257) 42:7-17 – Two functions, diametrically opposed: as conclusion to the didactic story (chapters 1, 2), it is a happy ending, a satisfying conclusion. As conclusion to the book as a whole, the ending creates disruption and dissonance. “The position taken in this commentary is that the dissonance is part of the narrative strategy of the book. By leaving the tension between the two parts unresolved, the book as a whole allows the frame story and dialogue to explore different dimensions of the complex question of the moral basis for divine-human relations. That dissonance both recognizes and refuses the

reader's desire for closure to the story and a definitive resolution of the issues it has raised."

258) 42:7-9 – Job cannot be both “correct”(in this passage) and “wrong” (God’s rebuke in 38:2 for speaking “words without knowledge). /// See Numbers 23, the Balaam story, where seven bulls and seven rams are sacrificed on seven altars.

259) 42:10-17 – In Israelite tradition (Exodus 22:7,9), a thief must pay back double, so there is irony at God’s expense, performing the act of restitution like a criminal. /// Another irony: the friends repeatedly urged Job to endorse the wisdom of traditional piety, trusting God to restore his peace and security. In fact, Bildad said, “your latter days will be very great(8:7).And Eliphaz predicted that God would restore Job to a blessed old age (5:19-26