TANGAZA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF DUQUESNE

AMORE GREGORY ABANGIBA, OFMConv.

EXPERIENCE OF SUFFERING AS A WAY TO A DEEPER KNOWLEDGE OF GOD
An Analysis of Job 42:1-6

Supervisor

Rev. Fr. Ottone Cantore

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement
for the Master of Art in Theology

NAIROBI 2014

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this Thesis is my original work achieved through my personal readings, scientific method and critical reflection. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been quoted in full and acknowledged.

Signed:……..

Student: Amore Gregory Abangiba, O.F.M. Conv.

Date:……..

This Thesis has been submitted for Examination with the approval as the College Supervisor.

Signed:……

Supervisor: Rev. Fr. Ottone Cantore, IMC.

Date:…….

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To God be the glory great things he has done! Thanks to God for his guidance and protection. I also express my gratitude to my family – the Amores – for their care and support throughout my life journey.

My sincere thanks also goes to my Conventual Franciscan brothers for their brotherly care and support throughout my formation journey. Special mention goes to Bishop Enrique Montero who was my rector for three years, an inspiration in simplicity of life. My thanks also goes to Frs. Joe Kikuyu and Dennis Ntabo my formators, and all the brothers in St. Bonaventure formation house, especially Pius Tandoh and Stephen Amoh, for the good and bad times we have shared.

To those who have contributed in diverse ways to the success of this work I say God bless you. Mention must be made here of Fr. Ottone Cantore for guiding me as my moderator in this work; Fr. Anthony Bezo for his valuable ideas; Ryan Mutayomba, Stephen Ochieno, Paul Makembo, Benson Mapunda and Diana Akoth for their secretarial, editorial and technical contributions.

To my companion on my formation journey, Timothy Kuupine, I reserve special thanks and gratitude for being a brother and a friend. To my lecturers, classmates and colleagues in Tangaza College, especially Mucunguzi Africano, Linus Nviiri, Kajja Ronald, Akotha Raphael, Praxides Nafula and to all who made my stay in Kenya memorable, I say *Mungu awabariki!!*

To all who have touched my life in one way or the other may God grant you peace and serenity.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents Anthony Amore (late) and Elizabeth Amore for teaching me that life is still worth living even in the face unfathomable suffering.

ABBREVIATIONS

al	*alii,* other persons
Cf	Confer, Compare
Chap	Chapter
Cor	Corinthians
Deut	Deuteronomy
Ed	Edited by
Eph	Ephesians
Esth	Esther
Exod	Exodus
Ezek	Ezekiel
Gen	Genesis
GS	*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern*, *Gaudium et Spes*
Heb	Hebrews
Hos	Hosea
Isa	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Jon	Jonah
Josh	Joshua
Lev	Leviticus
LXX	The Septuagint
Matt	The Gospel According to Matthew
Mic	Micah
Nah	Nahum
Numb	Numbers
Pet	Peter
Prov	Proverbs
Psa, Pss	Psalm, Psalms
Rev	Revelation
Rom	Romans
Sam	Samuel
SD	*Salvifici Doloris*
Sir	Sirach
Thess	Thessalonians
v, vv	Verse, verses
Wis	Wisdom
Zech	Zechariah

CONTENTS

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Motivation and Purpose of the Study

Suffering has been a perennial problem for all human beings in all generations. When a person encounters suffering, he or she is forced to ask questions that are fundamental to human existence: Why suffering? Why me? What is the purpose of my existence? Recently I had an encounter with two different people at different times. Both of them had gone through some kind of misfortune in their lives. I met the first one in Ghana when I went for my holidays in July 2012, at a valley of prayer managed by the Conventual Franciscans. He had come for a monthly recollection organized by the friars. He had been involved in an accident in which his two kids passed away, and he had his leg amputated. The surprising thing is that he looked serene and sober, no sign of bitterness at his condition. As we got into a conversation he told me he is not bitter because surprisingly even for himself he has come much closer to God than he was. He said he feels God's presence in his life more than ever before. The accident has been a blessing in disguise for him.

I met the other man in Tanzania the following year, in July 2013. He had cancer and was struggling to find money for his treatment. I could see the pain and bitterness that was on his face. He was filled with anger, and as we talked the first thing that came out of his mouth was what everybody in his situation would ask:

why me? Like Job, he refused to understand why such a thing would happen to him. What sin had he committed to undergo such pain and suffering?

As I listened to him, I started making a comparison between this man and the other who had lost his two children and was himself amputated after an accident. I began to wonder what could have made the difference between the two of them. How come one was filled with joy and serenity and the other was full of bitterness and anger? Was it that one was suffering more than the other, or one had just learnt to let go and live the life he has?

As I pondered these questions in my mind, I thought of the answer Job made to God after the latter had spoken from the whirlwind: “I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee” (Job 42:5). I saw some kind of similarity in this answer of Job and the man who had lost his two children and had his leg amputated. I thought it might be a good idea to see why some people go through some misfortunes and come out stronger while others become bitter.

Through the lens of Job, I want to explore this phenomenon. I want to see how we can get to a deeper and personal communion with God through our experience of suffering. This is going to be done in an exegetical manner, using Job 42:1-6 as our guiding text. In analyzing this text, we will also see how suffering has been understood in the bible as well as how one comes to a deeper knowledge and understanding of God. This will lead us to our main concern: how suffering brings us into communion with God. It is worth mentioning here that in using the term “knowledge”, I refer not just to intellectual knowing, but knowing that embodies the whole person, leading to a deeper and intimate relationship between people.

Method, Structure and Content of study

The methodology adapted for this paper is going to be that put forward by Tangaza College for writing biblical essays. This involves exegesis of a biblical text and its application to a social reality. The data for this work will be gathered through library research, encounter with other people and personal reflection. The main task of this research is to collate and to synthesize, firstly, what some biblical scholars have said about our text: Job 42:1-6. Secondly, we will see how this applies to the situation of suffering as leading to a deeper experience and understanding of God.

The sources of information we will be using include: Bible commentaries, encyclopedias and dictionaries; documents of the Church and other books. I will also rely on some information from other people in the form of personal conversations, and on my own reflection on the matter. The biblical texts used here: Greek and Hebrew are from Bible Works, and the English translation is the Revised Standard Version. All these are found on a CD-Rom of Bible Works 9.

This work is divided into three chapters. Each chapter begins with an introduction and ends with a conclusion. The first chapter seeks to situate the text in the context of the Book of Job. Here we will delimit the text, seek its remote and immediate contexts and the historical setting. A parallel text to this passage, precisely Psalm 73, will be discussed briefly here, and we will see how it relates to our text.

The second chapter will focus on the text as it is. We will do a detailed exegesis of the text here, seeking to understand it in a deeper way. The third chapter will be a discussion of how suffering can lead us to a deeper experience and understanding of God. Here we will see how suffering is explained in the Bible, as

well as how knowledge of God is acquired. We will then see how suffering can lead to a knowledge of God.

The general conclusion will be a short reflection and synthesis of what has been discussed. I will seek to provide some insights into how to get into close communion with God even in the face of the suffering and pain of human existence.

CHAPTER I

EXEGESIS – INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

1. Introduction

In this first chapter of our work, we are going to talk about some introductory matters pertaining to the book of Job in general, and our text in particular. We will talk about the historical background of the book, and here, we will deal with the dating of the book as well as some of the ancient literature that may have had an influence on the author of the book of Job. We will then talk about the remote and immediate contexts of our text (42:1-6). We will then look at a parallel text, Psalm 73, because it also deals with the issue of faith in relation to one's prosperity.

2. Situating the Book of Job

We situate the historical setting of the text in the whole history behind the book itself. This is because scholars differ as to whether the book is a single unit or has come down to us through different traditions. A clear-cut example is the difference between the prose narrative of the prologue and epilogue and the poetic dialogue that constitutes the bulk of the book.

In seeking out the historical setting of the book, we are going to look at the historical background – the background in which the story is set; the date of composition of the book; and finally we will try to talk about the literary background – texts that may have influenced the author.

2.1 Historical Background

In the historical background we will deal with the context in which the story is set. The author puts the story in the distant past, probably during the time of the patriarchs. This is evident based on the fact that Job's wealth is counted in terms of livestock, and he lives not in Israel, but in the land of Uz. This setting confers a legendary status on Job, with reference to him found in the prophet Ezekiel (14:14, 20) alongside Noah and Daniel.[1] In talking about individual responsibility, Ezekiel states that "even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness, says the Lord GOD." (Ezek. 14:14 cf. v. 20). Based on this we can say that Job is an ancient prototype of righteousness.[2]

A pre-mosaic patriarchal setting is also supported by the fact that the author uses pre-mosaic names, except in the prose prologue where Yahweh is used as the name for God. The author puts the characters in a time when Yahweh's name was not yet revealed (cf. Exod. 6:2-3), and to a place outside the covenant land promised to his people, and puts archaic designations for God, such as, El, Shaddai and Eloah, on their lips whenever they speak of God or about God. In this way the author informs us the audience that Yahweh is the God behind this ancient plot.[3]

---

[1]Cf. S.L. MCKENZIE – J. KALTNER,*The Old Testament*, 108.
[2]Cf. N.K. GOTTWALD, *The Hebrew Bible: Socio-literary Introduction*, 477.
[3]Cf. N.C. HABEL,*The Book of Job*, 39.

Dillard and Temper also support a patriarchal period for the setting of the book. Apart from citing the wealth of Job as being measured in terms of livestock, they also make reference to the number of servants he has (cf. 1:3; 42:12). They also argue from the fact that Job has a large family, and himself acting as a priest (cf. 1:5), an action unthinkable after the institution of the priesthood at Sinai. His age – one hundred and forty years after his restoration (cf. 42:16) – also has a telling on the setting of the story.[4]

However, according to Hartley, there is no specific reference to the time when Job lived. He bases his argument on the fact that patriarchs in the Bible are usually introduced with a full genealogy, as in the case of Abraham (Gen. 11:26-29). Job however, is introduced without genealogy and without tribe or clan, thus making him a representative of all who suffer.[5] Hartley is right in pointing out that Job is not introduced with genealogies, clan or tribe, thus making him an ancient prototype of righteousness, but that does not make placing him in a distant patriarchal past an impossibility.

In framing the story in the ancient pre-mosaic, patriarchal period, Habel states that the author succeeds in taking the audience back to a time when people were still struggling to know God, as well as preventing the hero from knowing that he is framed by the covenant God of Israel, and also from knowing why he is suffering at all.[6] He states that in this setting "the author allows us to experience vicariously the primal nature of God discerned by the hero."[7]

Thus, although the author makes no reference to the setting of the story, it is plausible to say that the story is in the pre-mosaic patriarchal times, making Job an

---

[4]Cf. R.B. DILLARD – T. LONGMAN III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 200.
[5]Cf. J.E. HARTLEY, *The Book of Job*, 66.
[6]Cf. N.C. HABEL,*The Book of Job*, 40.
[7]N.C. HABEL,*The Book of Job*, 40.

ancient prototype of righteousness, but also with Hartley we add, a representative of all who suffer.

2.2 Date of Composition

After talking about the historical context in which the story of the book is set, we will now try to venture into the historical context in which the book is written – the date of composition – and the possible literary works that may have influenced the author.

It must be noted from the beginning that the author makes no allusion to history or historical event that will help us to date the book to a specific period. This has resulted in scholars postulating different dates, ranging from 8th century B.C. pre-exilic period to the 2nd century B.C. post-exilic period. The problem is also compounded by the disagreement among scholars as to the integrity of the book. The scholars base their disagreement on the striking difference between the Job of the prose prologue and epilogue, and the Job of the poetic dialogues. Some scholars also doubt the authenticity of the Elihu speeches as well as the speeches of Yahweh, arguing that they are not part of the original work but are later additions. In the words of Gerald H. Wilson, "any discussion of the date needs to take into consideration that the structure of the book implies different stages. The narrative in the prose prologue-epilogue is earlier than poetic dialogue, monologue, wisdom poem and the theophany."[8]But for our purpose, we are going to deal with the book as a literary whole, as it stands in its final form.

A lot of scholars, following Kissane, postulate that the book was written in post-exilic Judea. They advance their arguments as follows: first the language. The use of classical Hebrew, and a blend of Aramaic points to the post-exilic period.

[8]G.H. WILSON, "Job", 1.

Weiser argues that the book of Ecclesiasticus, written in 200 BC, takes knowledge of the book of Job for granted, and according to Kissane the classical Hebrew belongs to a period close to the second century. They also argue that the author's use of Aramaic shows his familiarity with the language which was gradually supplanting Hebrew as the spoken language.[9]

Secondly, in 3:14-15, there is a list of kings, counsellors and officials, and these scholars argue here that this corresponds to the Persian system of government (cf. Ezra 7:28; 8:25). And in 19:23-24 Job states, "Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were graven in the rock forever!" This they say presupposes a knowledge of the rock inscription of Darius I, in which he carved a famous inscription in the mountain of Behistun, in modern Iran, with iron rod and lead towards the end of the sixth century.[10] Thus some passages in the book point to the period when the Persians had overthrown the Babylonians as the super powers of the time, which was after the exile.

Also the theme of the book itself points to the post-exilic period. According to Kissane, the Wisdom Literature is a product of the post-exilic period, where the age of wise succeeded the age of the prophets. The wise collected and taught their students the traditional wisdom of the ages. And since there is a general consensus that Job belongs to this tradition of Wisdom Literature, it is in order to postulate the post-exilic period as the time for its composition.[11]

Other scholars propose the exilic period as the time for the composition of the book. Among them is Leo Perdue who argues that if the poetic section of the

[9]Cf. E.J. KISSANE, *The Book of Job*, xlviii; cf. A. WEISER,*The Old Testament: Its formation and Development*, 292.

[10]Cf. G. FOHRER,*Introduction to the Old Testament,*303; D.A. KNIGHT – A.J. LEVINE, *The Meaning of the Bible,*441.

[11]Cf. E.J. KISSANE,*The Book of Job*, xlix.

book is a response to the crisis of the exile, then the prose narrative of the prologue and epilogue (chap. 1-2; 42:7-17) would be pre-exilic literature that answers the question of innocent suffering in the form of the faithfulness and patience of Job. He says dating the book to the exilic period is plausible because of some internal and external factors found in the book.[12]

The first of these is thematic. The absence of the Torah and the themes of salvation history found in Ezra in the early fourth century and Sirach in the early second century, in the book points to an earlier period – the exile. He says these themes helped to shape the theology of the second temple sages and their absence point to an earlier period.[13]

Secondly, dating the book to the exilic period is supported by theological reasons. With the loss of land, temple and subsequent deportation, the people challenged traditional faith. The issues of government, religion and economy became prevalent in the efforts to survive in the exile and in the decimated homeland. They not only sought the communal creation of infrastructure, but also theological building of the people. In their quest for answers to this national catastrophe, they fell on a variety of traditions: from the doctrine of retribution for corporate and personal guilt, to the repudiation of the power and justice of God (for instance, the wicked in Ps. 73), to the anticipation of new acts of divine salvation and liberation (Second Isaiah).[14] The author of Job rejected the doctrine of retribution, placing the blame for their plight on a Deity who had rejected his people, leaving them at the mercy of their enemies. In this way the author sought to give

[12]Cf. L.G. PERDUE,*Wisdom Literature*, 84.
[13]Cf. L.G. PERDUE, *Wisdom Literature*, 84.
[14]Cf. L.G. PERDUE, *Wisdom Literature*, 78.

hope to his people, that the fault was not entirely theirs, and sought to provide new theological answers to a national tragedy, and re-interpret old ones.[15]

Also, the exile marked the period when the people reached the high point of theological creativity. With the loss of everything: economic devastation, destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, end of kingship, the people sought to preserve old traditions and seek out new theologies of national identity. In this period a hallowed and seemingly permanent religious and social structure had collapsed, and the people were now looking for new ways to adapt in their new world. The book of Job was most likely written in this period of national reconstruction.[16]

Another factor contributing to dating the book to the exilic period is the parallels that exist between the poetic dialogues of the book and Babylonian Wisdom literature. The parallels between the themes, language and form of Babylonian wisdom literature and the poetry of Job could only be the result of a knowledge of the Babylonian wisdom or even an acquaintance with their sages and teachers. It is also a sign of the ability of the Jewish sages to interact with the tradition and teaching of their captors.[17]

Lastly, dating the book to the exilic period is supported by linguistic factors. The pronounced similarity between Job's curse of his day of birth (chap. 3) and Jeremiah's curse (Jer. 20:14-18) make dependence one way or the other certain. Linguistic analysis suggests that Jeremiah's is the more spontaneous and original poem. This and the close affinity between the poetic part of the book of Job and

---

[15]Cf. L.G. PERDUE, *Wisdom Literature,* 84.

[16]Cf. L.G. PERDUE,*Wisdom Literature*, 84; cf. R. MACKENZIE, "The Cultural and Religious Background of the Book of Job" 7.

[17]Cf. L.G. PERDUE,*Wisdom Literature,* 84.

Second Isaiah, makes it logical to propose the exilic period as the time of composition of the book, since Second Isaiah is dated to this period.[18]

Some scholars also date the book to the pre-exilic period. According to Marvin Pope, the Israeli scholar, Kaufmann vouches for a pre-exilic period for the composition of the book. He says the story of Job suffering at the instigation of the Satan belongs together with the stories of the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, and Jonah. These are the ancient moralistic literature of Israel, and it is to this that Job belongs. He also says that the naïve images of God presented in the book of Job – God having a contest with the Satan, and the theophany – speaks for an ancient dating for the book.[19]

All the arguments made in support of one date or the other are plausible in their own ways but they also contain weaknesses that make them difficult as the criteria for dating the book. For instance, using the criterion of affinity with other Old Testament texts is difficult because we are not certain which of them was written first, and the dating of those books is itself questionable. Also, dating the book based on theological reasons, especially the theology of retribution as dealt with by the prophet Ezekiel, is problematic. This is because most of these doctrines were widespread in the wisdom literature of Israel and the ancient Near East, so that one does not have to make a connection between Job and any prophet so as to find a date for the book.[20]

Thus the dating of the book of Job cannot be pointed to a particular period with much certainty. But maybe our concern must be on something else, since the author wanted to create a work of universal dimension. As Habel says, "the author

---

[18]Cf. N.K. GOTTWALD,*The Hebrew Bible: Socio-literary Introduction,*475; cf. L.G. PERDUE, *Wisdom Literature*, 85.

[19]Cf. M.H. POPE, "Job", xxxvi.

[20]Cf. N.C. HABEL, *The Book of Job*, 40.41.

of Job has created an artistic work with universal dimensions rather than a text directed at a particular historical situation or theological issue alive in Israel at a specific time."[21]

Having said this however, I am in support of the Exilic period as the time for the composition of the book based on the fact that this is the period of national reconstruction when the people were looking for answers to the tragedy of the exile.

2.3 Literary Parallels

Being a wisdom literature, the book of Job is not an island. There are other works – both Jewish and non-Jewish from the ancient Near East that may have had an influence, in one way or another on the author of the book. There is a great similarity between the book of Job and some Ancient Near Eastern Literature. Dillard and Longman have two reasons for this similarity: in the first place, Job is a wisdom literature, and wisdom has an international flavor; and secondly, suffering, and particularly suffering in relation to one's piety, is an important and difficult question to all religious systems not just the Bible.[22] We are listing a few works here that have a similarity with Job, and which, probably, may have influenced the author of Job.

First, there is the Sumerian Poem from the second Millennium B.C. called *A Man and his God.* The story is about a righteous sufferer who is afflicted with various diseases and is treated poorly by his acquaintances. He appeals to his god for relief and is eventually granted it. This is similar to Job in that it also talks about the suffering and restoration of a righteous man. However, it is also different from Job because it does not have the dialogue section and includes prayers of petition and

[21]N.C. HABEL, The Book of Job, 40.42.
[22]Cf. R.B. DILLARD – T. LONGMAN III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 206.

thanksgiving which are lacking in Job. The sufferer also acknowledges some wrongdoing, but our friend Job stuck to his innocence.[23]

The second book related to Job is *The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer* (*I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom*). This poem is from Babylon, and was written between the fourteenth and twelfth century B.C. It is a monologue by a nobleman who for no clear reasons loses his belongings, social standing, and health. Marduk had caused his suffering and eventually brings him healing and restoration.[24] This is an autobiographical narrative, and the sufferer speaks to his personal god, Marduk about his plight. After his restoration, the nobleman goes to the temple to express his thanksgiving and offer sacrifice to Marduk and his cohort.[25]

Another work close to Job is the *Babylonian Theodicy.* This is a dialogue, written around 1000B.C. It involves a sufferer and his friend, in which the sufferer, weakened by illness and loss of assets, questions divine justice and seeks support and understanding from his friend. After an initial exhortation to persevere in his piety and patience, the friend finally supports the suffering man in his arguments that piety and wisdom bring no respite since the gods are responsible for human suffering. In his conclusion, the sufferer pleads with the deity and the god of justice, Shamash, to redeem him from his unjust suffering.[26]

The last work we will like to consider is the Confessions of Jeremiah (Jer. 11:18-23; 12:1-6; 15:10-21; 17:14-18; 18:18-23; 20:7-13; 20:14-18). In these "confessions" the prophet describes his feeling of being abandoned by God, and complains bitterly against God. In the final diatribe, which we shall see later, he

---

[23]Cf. D.A. KNIGHT – A.J. LEVINE, *The Meaning of the Bible*, 440.
[24]Cf. D.A. KNIGHT – A.J. LEVINE,*The Meaning of the Bible*, 440.
[25]Cf. L.G. PERDUE, *Wisdom Literature*, 87.
[26]Cf. L.G. PERDUE,*Wisdom Literature*86; D.A. Knight – A.J. Levine, *The Meaning of the Bible*, 440.

curses the day of his birth (cf. Jer. 20:14-18). This will have an echo in Job chapter three, where Job also curses the day of his birth.[27]

Although the book of Job has some similarities with these other works, it is unique in its own right. Striking differences between the book of Job and these works suggests that Job was not dependent on any literary model, "it stands unique in the ancient Near East."[28] In the words of Anderson:

> Job stands far above its nearest competitors, in the coherence of its sustained treatment of the theme of human misery, in the scope of its many-sided examination of the problem, in the strength and clarity of its defiant monotheism, in the characterization of the protagonists, in the heights of its lyrical poetry, in its dramatic impact, and in the intellectual integrity with which it faces the "unintelligible burden" of human existence. In all this, Job stands alone. Nothing we know before it provided a model, and nothing since, including its numerous imitations, has risen to the same height. Comparison only serves to enhance the solitary greatness of the book of Job.[29]

3. Textual Criticism

A lot of difficulties abound in the book of Job mainly because of the obscure nature of some texts either because of the use of a rare word or because of a corrupt text. This difficulty is attested to be the various versions of the book, some of which help to restore the correct Hebrew reading while others even make it more complicated.[30] For the most part, the Masoretic Text which has been carefully preserved by generations of scribes, remains the primary witness to the book of Job.[31]

The LXX is for the most part a faithful translation of the Hebrew, although in some cases it paraphrases the Hebrew in an attempt to address some obscure passages[32] or elucidate a theological stance present in the Masoretic Text.[33] Other

---

[27]Cf. D.A. KNIGHT – A.J. LEVINE,*The Meaning of the Bible,* 441.
[28]G. FOHRER,*Introduction to the Old Testament,*332.
[29]As cited in R.B. DILLARD – T. LONGMAN III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 206.
[30]Cf. J.E. HARTLEY, "Job, Book of", 1064.
[31]Cf. G.H. WILSON, "Job", 6.
[32]Cf. J.E. HARTLEY, "Job, Book of", 1064.

translations such as the Targum, Peshitta and Latin Vulgate offer some help in understanding the book but they also come with their theological biases, thus making it difficult to know the exact meaning of the original text. It must however, be said that the difficulties in the text do not undermine the message of the book as a whole, they just make precise interpretation difficult.[34]

4. Delimiting the Text

4.1 Terminus a quo

Job 42:1-6 concludes the poetic section of the book of Job, which was began in chapter 3. It is Job's second reply to the speeches of Yahweh. According to Westermann, Job 40:3-5 and 42:1-6 form a single unit. The two are one because since the speech of God "in keeping with its nature as theophany can only be one, so also Job's final utterance in answer to this speech of God can only be one"[35]

For our purposes we keep to the structure as found in the text: two speeches of Yahweh and two responses from Job. In line with this, our point of departure will be verse 1, which states "and Job answered the Lord". With the conclusion of the second speech of Yahweh, Job also makes his second reply.

4.2 Terminus ad quem

The poetic section of the book ends with Job 40:6, where Job "repents in dust and ashes" – expressing remorse for what he has said. This concluding words of Job has been a thorn in biblical exegesis as we shall see later. It closes the poetic section of the book and also concludes Job's speeches in the whole drama. Our point

[33]Cf. J.L. CRENSHAW, "Job, Book of", 866.
[34]Cf. G.H. WILSON, "Job", 6.
[35]C. WESTERMANN, *The Structure of the Book of Job,* 125.

of arrival will thus be verse 6, since the next section resumes with the prose section of the book, and introduces the narrator again after chapter 1 and chapter 2.

With our main concern being the answer of Job to Yahweh, our *terminus a quo* will be 42:1 and *terminus ad quem* will be 42:6. But before dealing with the text, we first try to see to the context through which the text came about – immediate and remote contexts – because the text could not come out of the blue.

5. Context of the Text

To situate the text in the whole context of the book, we need first to understand the type of literary genre it is, and what is going on in the whole book. According to Westermann, the book of Job is a "dramatized lament", in which the proper role of the friends is that of consolation; they come to visit Job not to have a conversation with him nor a discussion, but to console him.[36] According to him, "The dialogue form of the book is a dialogue of consolation, even though from the beginning consolation is transformed into argument."[37] In the book we find that the friends only start talking after a seven-day silence, when Job "began to speak and cursed the day of his birth" (Job 3:1). In their bid to offer consolation, and try to make sense of what has happened to Job, their intended consolation misfires and dispute takes its place.

The whole book, as it stands is not a discussion about some problem or theme, but the lament of a man who is seeking an answer as to why he should suffer. His friends try to provide this answer by employing traditional wisdom – basically the doctrine of retribution. From the beginning Job's initial cry of lament in chapter 3 is not directed to his friends. By cursing the day of his birth and whining as to why

[36]Cf. C. WESTERMANN,*The Structure of the Book of Job,* 3.
[37]C. WESTERMANN,*The Structure of the Book of Job,*4.

life should be given to the bitter of spirit, his cry of lament is directed to the giver – God himself.

In chapters 29 to 31, Job turns his attention away from his friends and directs his speech to God once again. This time the litigation that has been building since his friends started their discussions with him reaches a crescendo. Job ends this speech by summoning God to appear in court and present his case (cf. Job 31:35-37), and finishes with "The words of Job are completed" (Job 31:40). He rests his case after summoning God to come and defend himself.

The dialogue between Job and his friends are thus bracketed by these laments. As Westermann puts it, "the dialogue stands *within* the lament."[38] We can say from this that the real dialogue is between Job and God, with the dialogue with his friends standing as a secondary dialogue, though it occupies the bulk of the book. It is a confrontation between Job and God, within which the confrontation between Job and his friends stands.[39]

After the intrusion of Elihu, God appears in the storm and answers Job. Westermann says this answer of God is a disputation speech, couched as a grand question to Job: "I will question you, and you shall declare to me" (Job 38:3; 40:7).[40] Since the text we are dealing with is a response of Job to God, we have to situate it in this context of Job confronting God and God giving a reply. Our remote context is chapter 3, in which Job laments about his suffering, and chapters 29-31, where he summons God to appear and defend his cause. The immediate context will be chapters 38-41, where God gives his reply to Job.

---

[38]C. WESTERMANN,*The Structure of the Book of Job,*4.
[39]Cf. C. WESTERMANN,*The Structure of the Book of Job,*5.
[40]Cf. C. WESTERMANN,*The. Structure of the Book of Job,*105.

5.1 Remote Context

The opening speech of Job in chapter 3, sets in motion a dramatic turn of events in the book. Here, the patient and humble Job, becomes the questioning Job, cursing the day of his birth and seeking to know the reasons behind his ordeal. Perdue says the poem has three well-defined strophes, similar to the individual laments – vv. 3-10, the cursing of day and night; vv. 11-19, the wish for premature death; and vv. 20-26, the desire to understand the enigma of human torment. In this curse and lament, there is a movement from the past (his birth) to the future (a wish for death) and then the present (desire to understand), which finally reaches the point where the desire to understand becomes so strong that it casts the wish for oblivion aside.[41]

Many scholars follow this line of dividing the poem into three parts[42] but M. Fishbane divides it into two parts: Job's curse of the day of his birth (vv. 3-13) and a lament (vv. 14-26). This division is supported by the parallel imagery and language in vv. 3 and 26. Job expresses his ardent longing for inner rest in both cases. Also, vv. 11-13 are balanced by vv. 24-26, where Job describes his sorrowful state. And in vv. 3-10 and 14-23, Job searches for death. This two-fold division of the text, makes the structure into a self-lament.[43]

The poem begins thus, "Then Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth" (3:1). This introduction gives us a hint of what is to come in the chapter, indeed the whole dialogue section: curse and lament, although this gives the impression that cursing is to dominate this speech.[44] And curses were thought to be automatic agents, efficacious formulae that summoned powers which were released

[41]Cf. L.G. PERDUE,*Wisdom and Creation*, 133.
[42]Cf. J.E. HARTLEY, *The Book of Job*, 88.
[43]Cf. J.E. HARTLEY, *The Book of Job*, 89.
[44]Cf. J.E. HARTLEY,*The Book of Job*, 91.

with the pronouncement of the formula (cf. Numb. 22:6). And so in uttering these curses, Job set in motion forces of destruction.[45]

Job curses the day of his birth and the night of his conception because they did not shut the womb of his mother, for with that he would have experienced rest, rest similar to that peaceful rest of God on the seventh day of creation (Job 3:13; cf. Gen. 2:1-3).[46] This rest he desires however, is not this rest of God, nor the rest associated with the repose in the Promised Land (Deut. 5:14). It is an end to all existence, a return to oblivion.[47]

In his curses Job wishes that the day of be removed from the calendar, through what Hartley calls, "a counter-cosmic incantation".[48] These incantations reverses the stages God took to create the world, and so returning the ordered universe to chaotic darkness. He says these counter-cosmic incantations are designed to reverse the creation of the day of his birth, which is essentially the same as the seven-day creation of the world. He then makes a comparison between Gen. 1:1-2:4, God's creative acts in seven days, and Job 3:3-13, the counter-cosmic curse of Job. We have here the comparison between these two – God's creative activity and Job's counter-cosmic incantation:[49]

[45]Cf.N.C. HABEL, *The Book of Job*, 107.
[46]Cf. J.E. HARTLEY,*The Book of Job,* 91.
[47]Cf. L.G. PERDUE, *Wisdom and Creation,* 133.
[48]J.E. HARTLEY,*The Book of Job,* 102.
[49]J.E. HARTLEY,*The Book of Job,*102.; cf. M. FISHBANE, "Jeremiah IV 23-6 and Job III 3-13: A Recovered Use of the Creation Pattern", 154. All the days of creation are accounted for, except the third day. Hartley explains this as the result of the power inherent in numbers. Seven is the number for order, and six is disorder, and so six must be crucial in the pronouncement of a curse.

Job 3:3-13	Gen. 1:1-2:4
Day I let it be darkness (v. 4a)	Let there be light (v. 3b)
Day II let not God above attend to it (v.4b)	And (God) divided between the waters below the firmament and he waters above the firmament (v. 7b)
Day IV that night…let it not be counted among the days of the year (v.6b)	Let there be light… to divide between to divide between the day and the night and let them be signs for years (v. 14)
	And God created the great sea monsters (v. 21b)
Day V those prepared to stir up Leviathan (v. 8b)	Let us make man (v. 26a)
Day VI why did I not die from the womb? (v. 11a)	
Day VII for now I would be lying down and quiet, I would be asleep and at rest (v.13)	And (God) rested on the seventh day from all his work…he sanctified it because in it he rested (2:2-3).

This counter-cosmic incantation of Job has a prophetic parallel in the Jer. 4:23-26. Here the prophet states:

> I looked on the earth, and lo, it was waste and void; and to the heavens, and they had no light.
>
> I looked on the mountains, and lo, they were quaking, and all the hills moved to and fro.
>
> I looked, and lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the air had fled.
>
> I looked, and lo, the fruitful land was a desert, and all its cities were laid in ruins before the LORD, before his fierce anger (Jer. 4:23-26).

The two differ, however, in the sense that in the design of Job's curse, it is the individual, personal origin which is juxtaposed with the primordial, whereas in Jeremiah, it is Israel's fate that is put in contrast with the origins of the universe.[50]

[50]Cf. N.C. HABEL,*The Book of Job,*104.

The creation image used predominantly in this curse of Job is light and darkness, and the word. "The light darkness duality evokes other pairs: day and night; life and death; birth and tomb; order and chaos; and knowledge and mystery."[51] According to O. Piper,

> The origination of light and its separation from darkness was the first act of creation in the Priestly narrative (Gen. 1:3-5). Light is more than a natural element; it is a fundamental power that brings life, the manifestation of the presence and power of God, illumination of insight and the force that overcomes darkness and keeps it at bay. Darkness is one of the features of chaos existing before the creation and is associated with Sheol and death, the absence of divine presence, the blindness of ignorance and folly, and the opponent of life and well-being.[52]

The curse also contrasts with God's act of creation by word of the mouth. The Priestly account of creation depicts God as the powerful Deity, who by the word of his mouth, brings into existence life and order, out of the *tohu wabohu.* By cursing, Job also wishes that by his word the whole of creation may return to nothingness. According to Fishbane, Job assumed that the universe centred around and depended on him, and so in the throes of his present plight, he utters incantations intended to banish the *causa materialis* of his condition.[53]

Although the curse of Job is just a wish because it will never come to pass, he expresses in the strongest terms the acuteness of his misery. He indirectly says that nothing he does can offer him a way out of his misery, and because his faith in God cannot allow him to even contemplate suicide.[54] The only option left for him is to wish that he has never existed in the first place, then all this turmoil would not befall him.

---

[51]L.G. PERDUE,*Wisdom and Creation*, 133.

[52]O. PIPER, "Light, Light and Darkness" 130-131.

[53]Cf. M. FISHBANE, "Jeremiah IV 23-6 and Job III 3-13: A Recovered Use of the Creation Pattern", 153.

[54]Cf. J.E. HARTLEY, *The Book of Job*, 102.

The second part of the speech, vv. 14-26, is a lament. Job laments his condition by asking some fundamental questions: "Why is light given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul?" (Job 3:20). He questions why light should be given to one whose way is hid, and whom God has hedged in. Way (*derek*), according to Hartley, refers to his destiny. That his destiny is hidden implies that in his present condition his life has no meaning or purpose. He sees himself as been fenced in by God, making it impossible for him to find an escape from his predicament. Ironically, the Satan accused God of hedging Job in, only this time it is meant to keep him from harm, making him prosper without any hindrance (cf. Job 1:10).[55]

All his complaints and laments are based on the fact that the rest which he hoped for (v. 13), the rest similar to that which God had on the seventh day of creation is completely lacking in his life. This rest is replaced by turmoil – physical torment, agony of mind and social discomfort. His life is in complete agitation, he is no better than a dead man, for such a man enjoys peace and tranquility.

This speech, indirectly addressed to God, ushers in the long and intense debate with his friends who had come to offer him consolation. With their failure to convince, Job turns once again to God, summoning him to come down and justify his treatment of him (Job). This leads us to the second part of our remote context of the text – Job's avowal of innocence in chapters 29-31.

In his final speech, Job decides to rest his case but before that he has to declare his innocence. The melancholic and cursing Job in chapter 3, has become progressively the daring Job. He swears an oath of innocence, compelling God to give an answer, to declare him innocent or guilty by activating the curses. Even if

[55]Cf. J.E. HARTLEY,*The Book of Job*, 99

God decides to keep quiet, that will be an answer because if the curses are not brought upon Job, he will be declared innocent by the community. This is a legal custom used in the time in which

> a person who was suffering economically or personally from the accusations of another person, could initiate a trial demanding that the plaintiff present the evidence that he had against him (cf. I Sam. 12:3). In such circumstances the defendant might swear an oath in order to prove to the public that he was guiltless, an effort also designed to force the hand of the accuser.[56]

This oath of innocence is made of three parts: Job's remembrance of his former abundant life (chapter 29), a lament (chapter 30), and an avowal of innocence (chap. 31). Hartley says that the remembrance portrays what the current state of affairs is by way of contrast, while the lament seeks to move God to respond favourably to Job. The two lead to Job's utterance of the oath of innocence.[57] He is "simultaneously a supplicant and an initiator of a legal proceeding."[58]

The three parts of the speech each serve to provoke God to action: the remembrance depicts Job as the ideal ruler, who challenges God's way of administering justice; in the lament Job bewails his predicament, accusing God of denying him justice whenever he cried out; and in the final oath, he clears himself of all misdeeds, summoning the divine adversary directly to appear in court and present the official writ stating his position.[59] After this, Job rests his case.

5.2 Immediate Context

Elihu, comes to interrupt briefly, chastising Job's friends for not being able to silence Job, and goes on to defend God. God then comes out of the whirlwind to confront Job as Job had wished. In his laments and summons to God, he talks about

---

[56]J.E. HARTLEY, *The Book of Job*, 385-386.
[57]Cf. J.E. HARTLEY,*The Book of Job,* 385.
[58]C. WESTERMANN,*The Structure of the Book of Job*, 39.
[59]Cf. N.C. HABEL,*The Book of Job,*405.

his apparent abandonment by God. In his first response, God questions Job out of the whirlwind: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" (Job 38:2). Marvin Pope translates this as "Who is this that denies providence with words void of knowledge?" According to him, the rendering "darkens counsel" obscures the sense of the line because the real sense of the verb is "hide, conceal", and עֵצָה, "counsel, design, plan, scheme, purpose", is best rendered providence.[60]

I think this is in line with what we have said so far, because in his laments Job seems to suggest that God has stopped caring about him: ""Oh, that I were as in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me" (Job 29:2). In this first reply, God gives a lengthy speech about his providential care of creation, that he has a plan, עֵצָה, for his creation, unlike Job who out of his suffering, speaks with a cloud of thoughtless words. In 34:35, Elihu had accused Job of the same, "He speaks without knowledge", and in 35:16 he says that Job opens his mouth in vanity, without knowledge he multiplies words.

In this first speech, God, "the One challenged by Job, speaks as the Challenger".[61] He refuses to be submitted to questioning by Job, who had demanded to argue his case with him, bringing charges and specifications for his treatment of Job (cf. 31:35). But God does not levy charges and accusations, instead he bombards Job with questions about the nature and control of the universe, intending to show the folly and ignorance of Job.

Yahweh's interrogation of Job in this first speech presents him as the creator and Lord. As creator he established the earth firmly on its foundation (cf. 38:4-7), bound the sea (cf. 38:8-11), and created the light (cf. 38:12-15). As creator he also

[60]Cf. M. POPE, "Job", 250.
[61]C. WESTERMANN,*The Structure of the Book of Job,*107.

knows and rules the farthest recesses: the deep (cf. 38:16-18); the distant horizons (cf. 38:19-21); the height, the storehouse of snow and hail (cf. 38:22-24). As Lord, Yahweh providentially manages all elements in heaven (38:25-38) and all creatures on earth (38:39-39:30), although man is not mentioned but the implication is that he cares for man even more.[62]

In his second speech (40:6-41:34), God quizzes Job about two ominous beasts – Behemot and Leviathan. He quizzes Job in order to stop him from committing the ultimate sin of usurping God's power (cf. Gen 3:4-7). He tries through this speech to convince Job to submit to his Lordship. He intends to bring Job back to the awareness of his creatureliness, thus humbling himself and admitting anew God's presence in his life – his graciousness towards him.[63]

The second speech is more than just a continuation of the first. The first speech addresses issues of God's gracious and just maintenance of the world, while the second speech looks at the cosmic dimension of Job's plight. In the first speech Yahweh stressed that he put justice in the fabric of the created order, while in the second he stresses the fact that he has power to execute this justice. The two speeches are united by the fact that God acts for the good of his creation. Thus, in his graciousness he assures Job that he will act justly on his behalf, and in his power, Job is assured that God is able to carry out what he has willed for him.[64]

The answer of God converges the two lines that have ran through the book: the legal proceeding and the lament. In the line of the legal proceeding, Job appeals to a higher court after his friends accuse him of being a transgressor, a court which is at the same time the very opponent he summons to a lawsuit. In line with the lament,

---

[62]Cf. J.E. HARTLEY,*The Book of Job,* 489.
[63]Cf. J.E. HARTLEY, *The Book of Job*, 521.
[64]Cf. J.E. HARTLEY, The Book of Job, 522.

we have reached a point when God's answer is expected. And God answers. He does not however, respond by crushing Job but by speaking, and this speaking is the goodness, the assurance, the mercy of God which comes to Job.[65]

With God appearing and speaking to Job, the suffering Job can have some relief because he has been vindicated. In the words of Gordis:

> Throughout the dialogue, Job has contended that his maker oppresses him while remaining indifferent to his misfortune. This unconcern is disproved by the mere fact that God appears to Job in the whirlwind and speaks to him. Job has won because he has succeeded in compelling God to answer him, and his vindication is marked by his experiencing the nearness of God.[66]

6. Parallel Text: Psalm 73

Psalm 73 is considered one of the greatest psalms in the psalter. It is a fruit of the combination of the traditional problem of retribution and the personal crisis of faith. It begins with a declaration of God's goodness to the Israel, and the pure of heart. But the apparent contradiction between this belief and his experience troubles the psalmist. The main problem that troubles the psalmist is the prosperity of the wicked which almost leads him to lose his faith:

> But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had well-nigh slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For they have no pangs; their bodies are sound and sleek. They are not in trouble as other men are; they are not stricken like other men (Psa. 73:2-5).

The prosperity of the wicked disturbs the psalmist, which fills him with envy. But as A. Magnante puts it, "his envy is not jealousy of the happiness of another, but only an expression of his desire to share it with justice".[67] His disturbance is made worse by the fact that while the wicked are displaying their

---

[65]Cf. C. WESTERMANN,*The Structure of the Book of Job*, 106.
[66]R. GORDIS,*The Book of God and Man*, 128.
[67]A. MAGNANTE,*Why Suffering?,* 83.

pride and arrogance (cf. 73:6-9), he keeps his heart pure and his hands clean (cf. 73:13), and yet they prosper, while his lot is suffering.

This leads him leads to a crisis of faith, to the point where he almost abandons his faith. He is tempted to join the camp of these evil-doers for he sees no point in staying faithful. But his fidelity to the community does not allow him to give in to that temptation. He is

> …on the point of renouncing his personal relationship of faith with God for whom he is searching with burning eyes. However, there is something which keeps him from taking the last step – his loyalty to the community of the faithful. At the very moment when he is no longer able to see his God, he perceives, at least, the fellowship of the believers.[68]

Although his suffering is not overcome at this point, he tries to stay faithful so as not to repudiate the tradition that has come down to him from his fathers. He has to remain faithful so that he does not become a stumbling block for the others.

The turning point comes when he says he enters the sanctuary of the Lord, and understood what becomes of the wicked. There is a disagreement among scholars as to what exactly "entering the sanctuary of God" means. For some it means the physical, concrete precincts of the temple, as O. Keel says,

> How could the visit to the Temple have such an effect? The visit to the Temple, which especially for people outside the capital city would have been a fairly infrequent occurrence, conveyed not only the experience of the attentive countenance of God (Ps. 24:4), but, according to Pss. 42:5; 55:15; 122, also an experience of the most intense community. On passing through the gates of righteousness, by which only the righteous people with a hope of blessing could enter (cf. Ps. 118:19-20), the generation of those who seek his face (Ps. 24:6) took on flesh and blood and from a burdensome chain became a once more a fascinating reality in the face of which the success of the unscrupulous faded to nothing.[69]

Other scholars see entering the sanctuary of God in a metaphorical way. D. Michel insists that since nothing is good for the psalmist, but only to be with God,

---

[68]A. WEISER,*The Psalms*, 511.
[69]O. KEEL,*Schone, schwierige Welt*, 41, as cited in E. Zenger, Psalms 2, 230.

"the presence of God" (73:28), only a mystical immersion in which he is close to God and God is close to him, can explain the sanctuaries of God, not an act of worship in the temple. "God is so powerful that the person who finds himself near to God, who is 'with him', cannot be driven from this nearness by anything."[70]

Whatever the case maybe – whether the psalmist really entered the temple or not – one thing is clear: that the way out of the problem was presented to him by an experience of God which he tells in the language of temple theology. God revealed himself to the petitioner "as a sanctuary" – as saving, protecting and joy-bringing closeness; and experiencing God as "the good" in itself, all "the goods" of the wicked lost their fascination.[71]

This psalm and the book of Job have some commonalities. In the first place they both give "voice to those who experience the throes of suffering and pain".[72] In their pain and agony, they embody the pains and agonies of all the generations of people, people who are unable to voice out their ordeals, who, because of the traditions they have inherited, fail to call God into question, express their sense of displeasure at his treatment of them. Job and the psalmist speak on behalf of the vulnerable in all generations.

Secondly, they both experience the presence of God in the midst of their suffering, albeit in different ways. On the one hand, since Job had challenged the justice and mercy of God, God had to come to him as the providential and just God, in the form of a whirlwind, the very whirlwind Job had feared God will use to destroy him (cf. Job 30:22). On the other hand, the psalmist claimed that he had kept his heart and hands pure in vain. And so God had to hold him by the hand. This is

---

[70]D. MICHEL, *Tempora und Satztellung in den Psalmen*, 656, as cited in E. Zenger, Psalms 2, 230.

[71]Cf.E. ZENGER,*Psalms 2*, 232.

[72]A. MAGNANTE,*Why Suffering?,* 82.

significant because it assures the psalmist of continued divine presence.[73] This presence is both of compassion and justice – that God suffers with his people. "There is a divine suffering on account of men, but also a suffering *with* men, and there is a human suffering on account of God, but also a suffering with God."[74] And Crenshaw adds: "If a tear forms in the eyes, it is because the moisture first filled divine eyes."[75]

Finally, they both go through what Brueggemann calls the three stages of orientation, disorientation, and reorientation in human life. He says the season of well-being are times of orientation, the seasons of hurt, suffering, and death are times of disorientation; and the moments when we are overwhelmed with new gifts from God, when joy breaks through despair, are the times of reorientation.[76] Going through these stages, they both come to the realization that "vital faith has never been easy."[77]

7. Conclusion

In this chapter we have tried to situate the book of Job in its historical and literary contexts. Here we found out that it is difficult to situate the book to a particular period, but from our analysis we can postulate the exilic period as the time of composition, bearing in mind that the book came in different stages, and so some parts may be earlier than that. We also saw the remote and immediate contexts of the text we are dealing with (42:1-6). Finally, we had an overview of Psalm 73, which we think has a close affinity with Job, especially in dealing with the crisis of faith. In

---

[73]Cf. J.L. CRENSHAW,*A Whirlpool of Torment,* 98.
[74]K. MISKOTTE,*When the God's are Silent,* 392.
[75]J.L. CRENSHAW,*A Whirlpool of Torment,* 115.
[76]Cf. W. BRUEGGEMANN,*Message of the Psalms*, 19.
[77]Cf. J.L. CRENSHAW,*A Whirlpool of Torment*, 109.

the next chapter we are going to have a thorough discussion of the text – an exegetical analysis.

CHAPTER II

AN EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter we dealt with the introductory matters of the paper: seeking the historical context of the book as a whole, delimiting the text, and getting the text's context in the book. We also saw a parallel – Psalm 73 – and how it relates to our text. In this chapter we are going to talk quite extensively about the text. We will see the form of it – and here we will try to see how scholars view this text; we will also see its structure – the way its divided and how the ideas in it are connected; we will then go into a detailed analysis by seeing each verse as it stands, and interpreting some key words found in the text.

2. TheForm of the Text

This text marks the end of the long poetic section of the book, and being the reply of Job to God-from-the-whirlwind, the long discussions and arguments have come to an end. This paves the way for the prose epilogue that serves as a resolution to the story. This poetic speech of Job has had different interpretations from different authors.

According to Janzen, this poem is a confessional response of Job to the challenging questions that Yahweh threw at him. He bases his point on the fact that direct discussions in the book are either confrontational or confessional. He states that the confessional speech of Job, as the root of confession indicates, is a "speaking in agreement with Yahweh".[78] All the direct speeches in the book of Job, with the exception of Job's internal self-reflection (cf. Job 1:5), and his response to the first calamities (cf. Job 1:21), are spoken in disagreement. And so we find Job and his wife in disagreement with each other (2:9-10); Job in disagreement with God and his intentions and action of creating the world in his outburst in chapter 3; and Job in disagreement with his friends, beginning with the speech of Eliphaz, which is a relatively gentle disagreement and an effort to get Job to change his mind.[79]

In Genesis 11:1, people are portrayed as speaking the same language, meaning the same things by the words spoken. Here Janzen says that, where there is a confessional unity, people are able to bear and go through together the most difficult and painful things in life. Words thus have the function of holding together the fabric of reality intact. By their disagreement, Job and his friends threaten to disintegrate this reality, although ironically each of them is trying to hold it together: the friends, through their communally agreed upon form; Job, through his search for God as a just God, who will come and mend the fabric which according to him, has been torn in the middle by his experience.[80]

When God appears and speaks, he agrees with neither Job nor his friends, although he uses words, themes and motifs which have already appeared in their speeches. In this way Yahweh tries to mend the fabric of reality "rent by Job's

[78]J.G. JANZEN, *Job,*248.
[79]Cf. J.G. JANZEN, *Job,* 248.
[80]Cf. J.G. JANZEN,*Job,*249.

experience and tattered by the interminable arguments".[81] This time round the fabric is going to be in a new pattern that Job and his friends are invited to enter and inhabit. Job's confessional reply thus comes in agreement with what Yahweh has spoken, and so accepting the invitation to enter and inhabit this new pattern. The long and interminable arguments and disagreements can thus come to an end, and with this confessional unity between Job and Yahweh, Job can accept his creaturely status as dust and ashes – with its pain and suffering.[82]

J. Curtis on the other hand, sees this poetic speech of Job as an act of defiance. He says that Yahweh's speeches are not just a recitation of his might and power, but also they are filled with challenges to Job: in comparison to God, Job knows so little and has such insignificant power. It highlights God's overwhelming power as compared to the frailty and ignorance of Job. He says that in the face of such power and majesty, Job can either accept the universe as it is, and his place in it, or he can choose to reject God. Job chooses to "totally and unequivocally reject Yahweh."[83] By rejecting Yahweh, Job's final speech becomes an act of ultimate defiance.[84]

Another view of this poem is that it is an ironic closure to the poetic dialogues. This understanding is proposed by D. Robertson, who says that Job has exposed God "as a blind force and blustering orator who is threatened by Job's insight."[85] To appease God, who out of the whirlwind shows his power and majesty against Job's weakness and ignorance, something Job already knows, Job declares that he is guilty, and that nothing God plans to do can be thwarted.[86] J.G. Williams

---

[81]J.G. JANZEN,*Job,*250.
[82]Cf. J.G. JANZEN,*Job*, 250.
[83]J.B. CURTIS, "On Job's Response to Yahweh", 497.
[84]Cf. N.C. HABEL, *The Book of Job*, 578.
[85]N.C. HABEL, *The Book of Job*, 577.
[86]Cf. D. ROBERTSON,*The Old Testament and the Literary Critic*, 52.

follows this same line of irony, but applies this to the whole book. He says of 42:7 that it is a paradox to hear that Job has spoken truth about God and his friends have not.[87] In this regard he cites N. Snaith that 42:7 is a "surprising statement, since the three friends have been thoroughly orthodox… There are times when [Job] has gone as near to cursing God of unjust and irresponsible behavior as any man can well go."[88]

From all these I will go for the proposal of Janzen – seeing the text as a confessional response of Job to the speeches of Yahweh. After a lengthy debate and disagreement with his friends and God, Job finally comes to experience God as he really is in a first-hand way so that all he can do now is to speak in agreement with him.

3. The Structure of the Text

According to N. C. Habel, Job 42:6 is a resolution to the conflict that has ensued between Job and Yahweh. This resolution vindicates the integrity of both Yahweh and that of Job. This vindication is seen in the two-fold structure of the final response of Job, as presented below:[89]

Part I

A Acknowledgement (Job's Concession)

I*know* you control all schemes 42:2

B Quotation (Yahweh's Challenge)

Who is this who obscures my design *without*

knowledge

3a

[87]Cf. J.G WILLIAMS, "You have not spoken Truth of Me", 231.

[88]N. SNAITH,*The Book of Job: Its Origin and Purpose*, 4; cf. J.G. Williams, "You have not Spoken Truth of Me", 232.

[89]N.C. HABEL, *The Book of Job*, 578.

C Announcement (Job's Confession)

Indeed (*laken*), I am the one who spoke *without knowledge* 3b-c

Part II

B1 Quotation (Yahweh's Challenge)

First hear me, then I will ask and you inform me 4

A1 Acknowledgment (Job's Experience)

I have already*heard* but now I *see* you 5

C1 Announcement (Job's Reversal)

Therefore (*'al-ken*) I withdraw my case and leave my ashes 6

This structure serves as a response to the two-fold speeches of Yahweh, after an initial refusal to utter a word (cf. 40:3-5). In the first part, vv. 2-3, Job answers the first challenge of Yahweh, which is quoted almost verbatim: "who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?" (42:3; cf 38:2). The second part corresponds with the second challenge of Yahweh: "Hear and I will speak; I will question you, and you declare to me" (42:4; cf. 40:7).

In the first part, Job replies to Yahweh's challenge by conceding to the fact that Yahweh controls the universe, and at the same time confessing that he, the human adversary spoke without knowledge – he spoke out of ignorance. This first part thus vindicates Yahweh's integrity as Lord over the cosmic order – that he has a design which he carries out in his own way. The human adversary, Job, acknowledges that he speaks out of ignorance, and so admitting the superior wisdom of Yahweh.[90]

[90]Cf. N.C. HABEL,*The Book of Job*, 579.

In the second speech of Yahweh Job was challenged to hear and inform, he is to make known (40:7). Job is required to hear, to make a decision whether to respond to Yahweh's demands or not, but not necessarily to make a confession. Job responds by acknowledging that he has heard about God and more importantly, that he has seen him (42:5). Job had challenged God to appear and defend his cause, and God actually appeared. Job sees in his appearance a vindication of his integrity. God's appearance suffices, and so there is no need to continue his litigation. He thus submits to the superior power and design of Yahweh (42:6). Habel sums this up when he says that verse 6 serves "as a formal retraction of Job's suit against his adversary and a public announcement that his role as a lamenting litigant among dust and ashes has terminated."[91]

Another way of getting a structure for the text is based on the frequency of the root *yd',* "to know". In each of verses 2-4, the root occurs at least once, totaling four occurrences in all. According to Janzen, by the way it opens verse 2 and closes verse 4, the root brackets the three verses, 2-4, in an inclusion. It thus paves the way for the climactic words in verses 5 and 6.[92]

Going by this, the text can be divided into two, with verses 2-4 serving as an introduction to the climactic conclusion of verses 5 and 6. In this introduction we have Job responding to God's challenge of obscuring counsel with words without knowledge. The climactic conclusion of verses 5-6 thus serves as a resolution to a long struggle that has taken place throughout the book. The frequency of the root *yd'* fittingly serves as a conclusion of the book after "so many chapters of confused questions and conflicting opinions."[93]

---

[91]N.C. HABEL,*The Book of Job*, 579.
[92]Cf. J.G. JANZEN,*Job*, 253.
[93]J.G. JANZEN,*Job*, 253.

Gutierrez talks of three steps in this response of Job: an acknowledgment that God has plans and that these plans are being carried out; a discovery of previously unrecognized aspects of reality; and a joyous encounter with the lord. The consequence of all these is the abandonment of his complaint and sadness. The first answer of Job (40:3-5) was focused on himself, while the second (42:1-6) has God as its point of reference: God's plans, God's words, God's presence. And so the three-fold structure of Job's response corresponds with this.[94]

4. Detailed Analysis of the Text

Verse 1 *– Then job answered the Lord and said:*

This shows that the Yahweh speeches have come to an end and Job can now give his answer. Unlike his first response in 40:3-5 where he resorted to silence, here he can venture a word. The answer he gives here will determine whether he has truly been answered by Yahweh, and whether he is satisfied with the answer he has been given by Yahweh.

In 31:40 we hear Job saying he rests his case, his words are ended. He thus waits for his adversary to come and vindicate himself, and come he does. After Yahweh's long speeches in defense of his providential care of creation and his justice in the universe, Job must answer either in satisfaction or dissatisfaction. He must give an answer back to his adversary, and his answer must either reestablish their relationship or break it. And so Job answers.

Verse 2 *– I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be thwarted.*

[94]Cf. G. GUTIERREZ,*On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent,* 83.

The most important word in Job 42:1-6 is the verb *yäda*"to know".[95] The frequency of its occurrence shows that it is very important for an understanding of this passage. The root of the verb *yäda,* "to know", can have the meaning of a technical skill, or practical, emotional and volitional acquaintance and concern. The person who know must have the physical ability to comprehend: eyes which must be able to see (Isa. 44:18); ears which must be open and attentive (Isa. 48:8; 32:3) and a discerning heart (Isa. 44:18). In his pain and suffering, Job could not see what was going on around him (Job 14:21). He was blinded by his anguish so much so that he was cut off from reality, he senses were all closed.[96]

The verb also has the meaning of care and concern, having regard for oneself and for others. In Job 9:21, we find Job not regarding himself and loathing his own existence. He does not care about his life anymore, because he thinks in his anguish and pain that he better be dead. But God in his knowledge shows care and concern for his people: "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him" (Nah. 1:7); and he answers trust with care and protection (cf. Psa. 1:6; 31:8; 144:3).[97]

To know God then involves a practical, religio-ethical relationship. Knowledge of God has to do with a relationship with him, not just an intellectual act. Thus, only the upright of heart, those prepared to refrain from idolatry and sin, know God (cf. Psa. 36:10). The opposite is also true, that not knowing God is an expression of apostasy and religious decline. However, not knowing him could also be an expression of religious inexperience due to the absence of previous revelation or encounter as in the case of Samuel and Jacob (I Sam. 3:7; Gen. 28:16). This is

[95]It occurs four times in this small section.
[96]Cf. G.J. BOTTERWECK,*yäda`*, 462.
[97]Cf. G.J. BOTTERWECK, *yäda`*, 468.

where Job lies; he now knows God because God has deigned to reveal himself to him, to have an encounter with him, that is why he can say "Now my eye sees thee" (Job 42:5).[98] God's revelation, his answering Job and not destroying him, gave the understanding, the knowledge, which he had lost while he was reeling from his wounds.[99]

In his speeches Yahweh made known to Job his creative and providential activities in the universe. But Job actually knew all these before. And so his opening words is to acknowledge God's power and wisdom – his ability to create and sustain what he has made. Janzen says that it is better to translate this opening verse as "you know", instead of "I know". This is because without the vowel signs the text is in the 2nd masculine singular form of the verb, but the vowel signs indicate the Masorete's judgment that we should read the first common singular form. Also, following the text's nature as a confession, "you know" expresses a stronger sense of agreement than "I know." This will be in close resemblance to Ezekiel 37:3, in which the prophet responds to Yahweh's question of whether or not the dry bones can live again: "You know it, O Lord God."[100]

According to Janzen, saying "I know" has the implication that a finite creature has the adequacy to measure the resourcefulness of the infinite One. This subjective knowing has two possible implications: Either one defines what is known, too narrowly, or momentarily goes beyond structures of knowledge in an imaginative outreach of desperate faith (cf 19:25-27), which is "unsupported and unsupportable" and so falls back to the depths of despair. To say "you know" means bringing one's understanding, structures of judgment and views under the judgment

[98]Cf. G.J. BOTTERWECK,*yäda`*, 468.
[99]Cf. C. WESTERMANN, *The Structure of the Book of Job of Job,* 127.
[100]Cf. J.G. JANZEN,*Job*, 251.

of another; and at the same time binding oneself to the person affirmed as knowing. Thus, one establishes a covenantal relationship with the One acclaimed as "knowing".[101]

This verse also recalls Job's earlier assertion that God has power and wisdom to create and destroy, although his destructive tendencies dominate (cf. Job 12:13). But for Job, although God has the wisdom in carrying out his plans, hc'[these plans are only destructive (cf. Job 12:13). He useshM'zIm. "schemes," instead of hc'["designs," which God had challenged him to interpret (38:2). *Mezimma* is frequently used to imply evil and devious scheming (12:27; Jer. 11:15; Prov 12:2).[102]

But after the theophany, which has as its focus the wisdom of God, not his justice, Job will express his faith in God. The first speech deals with his wisdom in maintaining order in the cosmos. This is because order is at the heart of wisdom, and Job 38:4-38 deals exactly with this – cosmic geography and maintenance or order in these realms. The second speech deals with God's ability to respond to and harness threats to the cosmic order as his control of Behemoth and Leviathan signifies.[103] Behemoth and Leviathan are not simple zoological creature which not zoological species but rather cosmic creatures.[104] Yahweh demonstrates in his speech that no evil force is beyond his control; "he stands supreme, unchallenged, sovereign."[105]

---

[101]Cf. J.G. JANZEN,*Job,* 252.

[102]Cf. N.C. HABEL, *The Book of Job*, 587.

[103]Cf. J.H. WATSON, "Job 1: Book of", 339.

[104]N.C HABEL,*The Book of Job*, 557,summarizes the various interpretations of Behemoth and Leviathan: the two are symbols of the wicked to be hunted and conquered; they refer to the mighty historical enemies of Israel; symbols of the forces of chaos overcome by Baal in the Canaanite tradition, by Marduk in the Babylonian *Enuma Elish,* and by Horus in Egyptian mythology; the two are mortal creatures like Job, used as didactic images employed by Yahweh to teach Job about God's ways.

[105]J.E. HARTLEY, "Job", 1071.Hartley also sees Leviathan as a symbol of the primordial monster that embodies the essence of hostility to God (cf. Isa. 27:1).

The two speeches of Yahweh balance each other in that "the acclamation of Yahweh as the Lord of creation is balanced by his glorification as the Lord of history."[106]

This verse also expresses Job's trust in God's power and wisdom, it is his profession of faith in God. Job uses the same verb (I know, *yäda`*) that he used when he expressed his conviction that his *go'el*, the God who liberates, would defend him (cf. 19:25). God had reproached him for trying to obscure divine plans without knowledge, and asserts in his speeches that such plans really exist, and are controlled and carried out by him (God). Now Job expresses his faith in this God whose plans he tried to deny.[107]

Job had rejected, first of all, the moral order presented to him by his friends, and secondly, the God to whom they appealed. Gutierrez says that if there was no alternative to the doctrine of retribution, then anyone who undergoes what Job has undergone will see the world as total chaos. But as it is, like Jeremiah, Job in his lamentation has come closer to God than his friends in their theology. His lamentation, and God's eventual appearance has given him a different perspective on life, and so he can express his faith in this God,[108] a God who is neither just nor unjust, but simply God.[109] Job can now live a meaningful life, even in his suffering knowing that he is valued in the presence of God.[110]

Verse 3 *– Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.*

---

[106]N.C HABEL,*The Book of Job*, 557; cf. C. Westermann, *The structure of the Book of Job*, 109-110.

[107]Cf. G. GUTIERREZ,*On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent,* 83.

[108]Cf. GUTIERREZ,*On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent,* 84.

[109]Cf. M. TSEVAT,*The Meaning of the Book of Job,* 106.

[110]Cf. J.G. WILLIAMS, "You have not Spoken Truth of Me" 250.

This is a quotation from the first speech of Yahweh (38:1-40:2). It is a challenge to Job to come up as the adversary concealing the "design," hc'[of Yahweh through ignorance. By responding "I uttered things I did not know, wonderful things which I did not understand," Job makes a public confession that it is he that speaks in ignorance, obscuring Yahweh's design. The term "design," is often seen in parallel with "plan" (Prov. 33:10; Prov. 19:21), and usually linked to "wisdom," (12:13; Prov. 8:14; 21:30; Jer 49:7). In Isaiah 46:10, we find that Yahweh's "design" is a primordial plan at work from the beginning. The design of God is thus the total will and work of God in creation. This is mysterious, and Job's obscuring of it can only be interpreted as ignorance.[111] And after the long speeches, Job gets a glimpse of God's "design" and so confesses his ignorance and limitation. Out of his ignorance he only saw them as "schemes", not "designs" and so he makes his confession of his lack of knowledge to understand God's primordial design.[112]

Westermann, following Stier, reads *higgadtani,* "You have made known to me" instead of *haggadti,* "I have uttered" and inserts *gedōlṓt*, "great things" as found in the Septuagint. This is because of the general recognition that this text has been disrupted, and also by the fact that verse 2 and verse 3 are a praise of God. Verse 2 praises God's omnipotence, as found in the Psalms that praise God for his great and wonderful things (cf Ps 106:21-22; 136:4; 98:1; 111:2-4).[113] And so he translates verse 3 as follows: "'You' have made known 'great things' 'to me' which I did not comprehend; things too wonderful for me, which I did not understand."[114]

According to him, *nipla'ot,* usually occurs in specific contexts and most often denotes God's wonderful deeds for the benefits of his chosen people or his

[111]Cf. N.C. HABEL, *The Book of Job*, 538.
[112]Cf. N.C. HABEL, "Of Things Beyond Me: Wisdom in the Book of Job", 154.
[113]Cf. C. WESTERMANN,*The Structure of the Book of Job of Job*, 126.
[114]C. WESTERMANN, *The Structure of the Book of Job of Job*, 126.

righteous adherents (cf Judge 6:13; Ps 9:1). In Ps 106:7, "Our fathers, when they were in Egypt, did not consider thy wonderful works; they did not remember the abundance of thy steadfast love, but rebelled against the Most High at the Red Sea", *nipla'ot* is put in close parallel with *hasadeka*, "thy steadfast love." These great and wonderful things of God are not only his work as a creator, but his wonderful intervention for his people, his deeds upon which their history rests.[115]

So how does God's speech from the whirlwind, which just tells of his creative activities and control of the universe be conceived of as *nipla'ot,* as a saving activity, a sign of his compassion, providence and forgiveness*?* In other words, how did Job perceive God's appearing and speaking as something "wonderful" for him? According to Westermann God's saving activity is in the fact that he answered Job. Job could not understand that the God who created the world and sustains it would deign to come and speak to him, without thrusting him into the mire. This was wonderful for him. Now he knows that the God who created him and thrust him into the deep, who made the world as it is, is also a gracious and saving God.[116]

He recognizes that there is a God of plans, plans in which his gratuitous love is the ground for all existence. This recognition make Job realize his own limits – he is without "understanding"**.** A change then begins in him, a change not occasioned by the admiration of the magnificence of creation, but from his recognition of the plan of God.[117]

Verse 4 – *Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you declare to me.*

This verse is a quotation of from the opening address of the second speech of Yahweh. It must be noted however, that the first part, "hear and I will speak" does

[115]Cf. C. WESTERMANN, *The Structure of the Book of Job of Job,* 127. Westermann has made the observation that the activity of God as creator was never conceived of with the word *nipla'ot*.

[116]Cf. C. WESTERMANN,*The Structure of the Book of Job of Job,* 127.

[117]Cf. G. GUTIERREZ,*On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*, 82.

not occur in the speeches of Yahweh. It come as a replacement of "Gird your loins like a man" (38:3; 40:7). This is probably because it meant to set the stage for a proper entrance of 42:5. Job is to hear while Yahweh speaks; Yahweh will question him and he is to make Yahweh know.[118]

Job had demanded to argue his case with God in 9:22 and 13:3. But in 38:3 and 40:7, it is Yahweh who questions Job; he refuses to submit himself to questioning by Job. God comes not to levy charges against Job, as Job had challenged him to do (cf. Job 13:23; 31:35), but assails him with questions about the wonders of nature and the control of the universe. In this way God makes Job aware of his folly and ignorance in impugning God's wisdom and justice.[119]

Job had said that he would answer if summoned (cf. Job 13:22). But in his questions, God demanded more than simple answers, Job had to make him know, impart an expert knowledge to his uninformed God.[120] But was God simply being ironic, wanting to bring Job down? This could be, but there should be something more to this. In Exodus 33:13 we read: "Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found favor in thy sight, show me now thy ways that I may know thee and find favor in thy sight. Consider too that this nation is thy people." What is translated as "show me", is the word *hodi'eni*, which literally means "make me know". This is what may be implied to Yahweh's question to Job, that Job should make him know his stance in relation to the divine. All the questions were geared towards this, and by quoting it again, Job seems to say that he has been attentive to this basic request of Yahweh, he will now disclose to Yahweh who and what he is in relation to him.[121]

---

[118]Cf. J.G. JANZEN, *Job*, 253.
[119]Cf. M. POPE, *Job,* 250.
[120]Cf. N.C. HABEL,*The Book of Job*, 537.
[121]Cf. J.G. JANZEN, *Job,* 232.

Verse 5 – *I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee*

This verse has been conventionally interpreted as hearing about God from hearsay – what his friends have told him or what he has been taught about God or both. This hearing about God is contrasted with his seeing of God, which gives him a superior knowledge now. But according to Janzen, as good as this interpretation may be, it does not capture the real meaning of this text.[122]

Throughout the book, Job has sought the presence of God again and again but to no avail, only darkness and silence is what he gets (9:11; 23:5, 8-9). But he does not give up, as in 19:26-27, he is even convinced that he shall see God in his flesh as he is, something which is in stark contrast to his reality now. Verse 5 then comes as a contrast to 9:11, 23:5, 8-9, and as a fulfillment of his desire and conviction in 19:26-27 on the one hand, and on the other hand it comes as a response to his proximate context "Hear and I will speak" (42:4a). In this Job replies "I have heard you with my own ears, and seen you with my own eyes." This interpretation corresponds to what has been echoed throughout the book: "Will the silent God *speak*, that Job may *hear*? And will the absent God *appear* that Job may *see*?"[123]

Habel follows this line of interpretation. Job declares that not only has he heard God, but he has also seen him. He says that Job's declaration here fulfills his long search for God, and his hope of seeing him, even if it is a miracle (cf. Job 19:26-27). To see God for Job is to have his wish granted and his challenge answered.[124] Job has now achieved what he was seeking. God cares, listens, is accessible and acknowledges – all of which Job has now experienced not only

---

[122]Cf. J.G. JANZEN,*Job,* 252.
[123]J.G. JANZEN,*Job*, 254.
[124]Cf. N.C. HABEL, *The Book of Job*, 583.

through rumour or hearing, but also emotionally and personally. His love for God does not go unheeded any more, his contentions are listened to and answered. He has benefited from his ordeal by coming close to God.[125]

According to Gutierrez, Job acknowledges in this verse that there is another way of knowing and speaking about God: from hearsay, indirect knowing, to a direct unmediated seeing. This encounter makes Job surrender to God, and like Jeremiah in the time of crisis, he can exclaim: "The Lord is with me" (Jer. 20:11); and with the psalmist he can say: "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with beholding thy form" (Psa. 17:15). However, this encounter has not come easily; it has been a costly one. Like Jacob, he comes out of the encounter limping, but content. Content that he has seen his Lord, something he had longed for and spoken of in confidence: I shall see God; I myself shall see him (cf. 19:26).[126]

This verse shows that when a man stands face to face with God and learns what God really is, all other arguments and illustrations are unnecessary. It is the direct and immediate experience of God that satisfies and not evidence of men concerning him.[127] And Job can be the best witness to this, as Rowley says:

> In his prosperity he thought that he had known God. Now he realizes that compared with his former knowledge his present knowledge is as the joy of seeing compared with mere rumour. All his past experience of God was as nothing compared with the experience he had now found. He therefore no longer cries out to be delivered for his suffering. He rests in God even in his pain.[128]

Verse 6 *– therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*

---

[125]Cf. A. BRENNER, "God's Answer to Job", 136.
[126]Cf. G. GUTIERREZ,*On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*, 85.
[127]Cf. J. PATERSON, *The Wisdom of Israel: Job and Proverbs,* 46.
[128]As cited in J.H. WATSON, "Job 1: Book of", 342.

In the Hebrew it is rendered: עַל־כֵּ֣ן אֶמְאַ֣ס וְנִחַ֣מְתִּי עַל־עָפָ֣ר וָאֵ֑פֶר (*al-ken emeas wenihamti al-apar waeper*) This verse has been subject to various interpretations, depending on one's orientation. This has been occasioned by the difficult and ambiguous nature of the verse. The difficulty and ambiguity of this verse is a reflection of the difficulty and ambiguity of the book as a whole. It also holds the key to the understanding of the text and the book as a whole. We will thus go into it more deeply and see how we can interpret it.

עַל־כֵּ֣ן "Therefore" - In verse 3, Job uses "therefore" as a response and conclusion to Yahweh's question "who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?" In verse 6, the "therefore" comes as a response to verse 4 which was partially answered by verse 5. Verse 5 only answered the first part – "hear and I will speak," leaving the second part, "I will question and you declare to me." What God has sought from Job "to declare to me," by way of his self-disclosure in relation to God, has been answered by "I change my mind."[129]

אֶמְאַ֣ס This verb has been variously translated as "recant, despise, loathe." It is also a close cognate of *masas,* "to dissolve", "to melt". Melting serves as an image of the annihilation of God's enemies in theophany (cf. Psa. 68:3),[130] and it describes a typical response to a revelation and presence of the divine. This is seen in Habakkuk, who after challenging Yahweh for his apparent indifference to the suffering of the innocent, says that "I hear" and confesses that he is "undone" (3:16) after Yahweh made a visionary response to him. Here too, after Yahweh has appeared and spoken to him, Job "melts down" before His majesty.[131]

---

[129]Cf. J.G. JANZEN, *Job*, 254.
[130]H. RINGGREN, מסס, *mss, 438.*
[131]Cf. J.G. JANZEN,*Job,* 255.

D. Patrick sees this word as enigmatic because it is used here without any object. Some scholars have therefore, sought to supply an object by using the reflexive – myself, while others use "my words". However, the verb appears three times elsewhere in the book, (Job 7:16; 34:33; 36:5) and in all those instances there is no verb attached. Among those who argue that an object be supplied is M.V. Fox. He says that the verb can be both transitive and intransitive, and being a verb of emotion, even without a direct object, there is a contextual object, something that the emotion is directed towards. In this case it could be himself or his words, for he has spoken in a way he regrets, namely words without knowledge.[132]

וְנִחַמְתִּיThis is another enigma in the text. The verb *nhm* carries the meaning of "repent", "change one's mind" and when it is combined with *'l* it means "to repent concerning", or "be comforted for." While some scholars opt for "repent", others choose to translate it as be "comforted".[133] Janzen says that the problem with these two enigmatic verbs, אָמְאַסand נִחַמְתִּי, can be solved when they are seen as hendiadys, that is, one adverbially modifying the other. In this case it would mean that Job has utterly changed his mind.[134]

עַל־עָפָר וָאֵפֶרThis has been conventionally translated as "upon dust and ashes", or "in dust and ashes". There are several reasons why this translation has been adopted. Among them we have: In the first place it is partially related to 2:8 where Job is sitting "ashes." "Ashes" is where the wretched sit (cf. Sir. 40:3), and in Esther 4:3 and Isaiah 58:5, it refer to acts of repentance.[135] By this it is plausible to translate this phrase as upon dust and ashes. However, firstly, the preposition in 2:8,

[132]Cf. M.V. FOX, "God's Answer and Job's Response", 19; cf. M.H. Pope, *Job,* 290.

[133]Among those who translate it as repent is Pope, while Curtis, in "On Job's Response to Yahweh", translates it as "to be sorry".

[134]Cf. J.G. JANZEN,*Job*, 255.

[135]Cf. M.V. FOX, "God's Answer and Job's Response", 20.

betok, is locative whereas in 42:6 the prepositions *'al* is relational (concerning). Secondly, dust and ashes have been used to signify man's self-negation and as symbols of mourning. They thus suggest Job's stance as an innocent sufferer and a humiliated litigant, separated from the community. Since they signify man's finitude and self-abandonment, they function well in repudiating what one has said, as such accepting one's lot.[136] Thirdly, it has been the view throughout the dialogues that Job's words and questions have been presumptuous and proud and so as a resolution Job must repent of these presumptions and abase himself before God.[137]

J.B. Curtis sees this verse as Job's direct repudiation of God, a rejection of the god who responds to the anguished plea of his faithful worshipper with contemptuous and arrogant boasting. And so, he translates it as "Therefore I feel loathing contempt [towards you O God], and I am sorry for frail man."[138] This idea is supported by Greenstein, who understands dust and ashes as the debased human condition and Job's words as an expression of contempt and a refusal to surrender his autonomy.[139]

I agree with those who translate this verse as "I repent of/concerning dust and ashes".[140] This is because the word *naham* "to repent", when used with the preposition *'al,* means "to change one's mind" or "to reverse an opinion" about something (cf. Exod. 32:12, 14; Jer. 18:18; Amos 7:3, 6). And in most of these cases it is God who will or will not change his mind about evil (judgment) that he plans to

[136]Cf. N.C. HABEL, *The Book of Job*, 583.
[137]Cf. J.G. JANZEN,*Job,* 257.
[138]J.B. CURTIS, "On Job's Response to Yahweh", 505.
[139]Cf. E.L. GREESTEIN, "In Job's Face/Facing Job", 310.
[140]Among them we have J.G. Janzen and D Patrick, and Pope is among those who for "repent in dust and ashes".

do to his people. In Jeremiah 8:6, the combination refers to human repentance of a moral-religious character, and the object is evil, that which is repented of.[141]

Although ashes generally signify mourning and repentance (cf. Esth. 4:3), the combination of the two – dust and ashes – occur only twice in the Old Testament apart from this text in Genesis 18:27 and Job 30:19. In Genesis 18:27, "dust and ashes," expresses Abraham's status as a creature before God, and yet who is able to stand before God in audacity to talk about justice. Here, "dust and ashes," is not used as a sign of mourning or self-repentance, but as a reference to Abraham as a creature. Although one who being a creature, still takes upon himself to speak to Yahweh.[142]

In Job 30:19, Job says God has cast him into the mire and he has become like dust and ashes. Dust and ashes here signify the origin and end of humanity – ashes being the residue of once an organic life. This verse sums up all the instances where clay, ash and dust are used in the book of Job. It also comes as a critique to the Israelite tradition of seeing humanity as *'adam* – "earthling," (Gen. 1 and 2, Psa. 8; cf. Prov. 29:25; 7:17-18). On the other hand, his experience also, in spite of his despair, led him to use images of royalty for himself and humankind as a whole. (Job 22:23-25; 23:10; 31:35-37). His dilemma was in his inability to have one consistent image of God and humanity – his fears and hopes could not be reconciled.[143]

It is in this dilemma, this confusion of humanity as simultaneously dust and ashes and at the same time being made of gold – wretchedness and royalty – that God spoke to Job. In speaking, he did not thrust him into the mire, but spoke to him

[141]Cf. D. PATRICK, "The Translation of Job XLII 6" 370.
[142]Cf. J.G. JANZEN,*Job,* 257.
[143]Cf. J.G. JANZEN, Job, 257.

as a *geber*, a man of vigour. God speaks to Job as a creator delighting in his work, "sufficiently ordered to make life possible and worthwhile, but sufficiently free to allow for the possibility of bilateral participation."[144] Job is not described as a creature among creatures but is addressed as a man and is expected to give an answer. The reply he gives will confirm his status as another creature, or as a creature capable of a relationship with his creator. And this he does, a creature of dust and ashes yet having the image of the divine and so having the ability of a relationship with him.

Also "dust and ashes," is not incompatible with royalty, but is the very condition under which royalty manifests itself. Dust and ashes may continue to function as symbols of contrition for sin and guilt, nonetheless our understanding of humanity as dust and ashes need not be seen as self-abasement. Our affirmation of humanity as dust and ashes may also be an affirmation of humanity's royal vocation, a vocation to become humanity, the image of God, in all its suffering and weakness. And "to be in God's image is to enjoy and to be responsible for the order manifest in creation; it is to enjoy and to be responsible for the freedom which is also manifest in the events of the world and which resides by God's gift in the human soul."[145]

From the above, we can deduce some plausible interpretations of this verse. First, Job's repentance could be about what he had said beforehand – about his speaking in ignorance and summoning God to court. Job genuinely repents, not of any sin that justified his calamity though, but of having spoken in ignorance. His ignorance was not a sin, but it was arrogant. He therefore abandons his status as an ignorant litigant, changes his mind about proceeding with his litigation with

[144]Cf. J.G. JANZEN, *Job*, 257
[145]Cf. J.G. JANZEN, *Job,* 259.

Yahweh, and returns to normal life with the community again.[146] His argument was based on the wrong foundation: retribution. God's answer "released him from the prison of the contradiction between his innocence and the doctrine of retribution."[147] Tsevat puts it well when he says that in his answer to Job God said:

> "No retribution is provided in the blueprint of the world, nor does it exist anywhere in it. None is planned for the nonhuman world and none for the human world. Divine justice is not an element of reality. It is a figment existing only in the misguided philosophy with which you have been inculcated. The world in which you and the friends are spun is a dream. Wake up, Job!"- And wake up is what Job does at the end.[148]

After experiencing God as he is, he now repents of his accusations, his complaints now acquiesce to profound silence, he no longer sees himself as the measure of all things.[149]

Secondly, when Job says he repents of dust and ashes he means that he is "removing himself from the physical setting associated with mourning and lamentation."[150] This translation is apt because in 42:2-6 Job neither recants nor shows remorse for what he said prior to God's answer. On the contrary, verse 2 and 5 are expressions of praise, the former of God's power and the latter of his wonderful revelation. The praises Job render are about the things recounted by God as well as his gracious condescension to Job. God has changed Job's lament into praise, and this last verse expresses Job's intention of abandoning the posture of mourning.[151]

Again, Job now stands as a creature before his God, a child before his father. The conclusion "therefore", stems from the fact that God has revealed to Job a plan

---

[146]Cf. N.C. HABEL, *The Book of Job*, 583.
[147]G. GUTIERREZ,*On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*, 82.
[148]M. TSEVAT, "The Meaning of the Book of Job," 31.
[149]Cf. J.L. CRENSHAW, "Job, Book of", 859.
[150]D. PATRICK, "The Translation of Job XLII 6" 370.
[151]Cf. D. PATRICK, "The Translation of Job XLII 6" 371.

and the meaning of a justice that cannot be boxed in the doctrine of retribution.[152] Job does not repent of any sin, but his accusations against God and his doubts about God. The book is more interested in one's view of God and of oneself in relation to God than in one's understanding of the causes of suffering – Job's friends are reprimanded for not speaking rightly about God. Job accepts his creaturely status as made of dust and ashes.[153]

This text is subject to many interpretations, but the way one interprets this passage depends on the expectation the reader carries to it. Balentine put this well when he says:

> If one construes the objective of the divine speeches to be God's vindication, then interpretive options that stipulate Job's repentance may carry more weight. If one is sympathetic with Job's complaints, then interpretive options that do not sacrifice his integrity on the altar of repentance may command more attention. Alternatively, if ambiguity is intentionally encoded in this remarkable exchange between God and Job, then the interpretive imperative may be to yield to its refusal to provide answers.[154]

5. The Message of the Job

In responding to Job, God showed that he is not an indifferent monster enjoying man's pain, but is touched with a feeling of our infirmity – he sympathizes with us, that is, he suffers with us. The problem however, is not about God's indifference which Job had charged God earlier because he soon sloughed that off. The real issue is the transcendence of God which his friends defended passionately: the holiness of God, his justice, his wisdom, are infinitely beyond man. This stance inevitably pushes God steadily farther from the daily needs of perplexed and suffering man. But in his appearing and speaking to Job, God shows that in his infinite fullness there is infinite compassion, as the Psalmist proclaims: "The LORD is

---

[152]Cf. G. GUTIERREZ,*On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*, 85.
[153]Cf. J.H. WATSON, "Job 1: Book of", 339.
[154]S.E. BALENTINE, "Job, Book of", 332.

gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The LORD is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made" (Psa. 145:8-9). Job realized that God the creator, in all his might and majesty, is at the same time the compassionate healer and redeemer.[155]

The friends' behavior towards Job shows that "even though religion can show us a way to God, it can also, unfortunately and paradoxically, sometimes prevent us from truly seeing the reality of God. Religion can actually on occasion block our way to God, rather than opening it up."[156] When it colours experience to suit one's view of God it does an injustice to what is happening in life. It paints a false picture of God, of humanity, and of the relationship that exists between them.[157] Thus blocking us from seeing what God is really like. Because Job's friends were unwilling to recognize Job's innocence, they robbed themselves of the opportunity to share Job's experience of God. They miss the chance to grow in their knowledge of God; by fitting God within their system of justice, they lost touch with the real God.[158]

In his response, Job acknowledges God's control over the universe as against his speaking without knowledge. The most important thing though, is that he has encountered God, and under God's warmth and awe, his complaints dissolve into nothingness for his ear has heard and his eye has seen. Job now confesses, not any sin but his unworthy creatureliness before God – he despises himself and entreats God's mercy on depraved humanity. His suffering does not bring a barrier any more before God and himself, it has rather become the means through which he encountered the silent, distant and unmoved God. This encounter makes him melt

[155]Cf. W.A. IRWIN, "Job's Redeemer", 228.
[156]M. HENRY, "Is Religion a help or a Hindrance in Finding God?", 31.
[157]Cf. W.F. DITTRICH, "An Experience of Developing Relationship", 170.
[158]Cf. W.F. DITTRICH, "An Experience of Developing Relationship", 172.

before the dynamic love of God which reaches out, restores and uplifts the resigned worshiper.[159]

Job's story functions as a model of an unanswered lament, a model for those undergoing suffering. That the sufferer can give free rein to the expression of his anger, while at the same time submitting humbly to the mystery and majesty of creation.[160] He did not want a relief that ignored his reality. He chose to struggle with God because of his belief in himself and his truth. And it is this choice, this struggle, which enhanced his relationship with God. Without confrontation, without struggle, there would be no relationship and no growth. If reality is open to relationship, then participation, confrontation, and involvement with the other will touch both parties and reveal something of what they are.[161]

His story serves as a model of a human being who can bear terrible suffering without compromising his integrity or honour; and also vindicates God's confidence in humans to worship him free from selfish motivations.[162] Job stands his ground, and challenges even God.He is like Jacob and Moses who could contend with God, complain to God, and yet expect God to uphold them. Like these two, Job contends with God and God responds. God also contends with Job, addressing him as a person, and so acknowledging his willingness to enter into a relationship with him. In the end, Job acknowledges his ignorance when he recognizes the awesome presence of God.[163]

---

[159]Cf. J.E. HARTLEY, "Job", 1071.
[160]Cf. J.L. CRENSHAW, "Job, Book of", 862.
[161]Cf. W.F. DITTRICH, "An Experience of Developing Relationship", 172.
[162]Cf. J.E. HARTLEY, "Job 2", 360.
[163]Cf. W.F. DITTRICH, "An Experience of Developing Relationship",173.

6. Conclusion

We have tried to analyze the text in this chapter by first of all getting the form of the text, its structure and a verse-by-verse analysis. Depending on how one sympathizes with Job, one's understanding of the preceding debates between Job and his friends, and the speeches of Yahweh, one will have a particular interpretation of this text, whose ambiguity reflects the ambiguity of the whole book. Thus, while some scholars see it as a submission of Job to the power and majesty of God, others see it as a total act of defiance to God. Still others see it as a repentance on the part of Job for his arrogance, and finally for some it is a tongue-in-cheek response to Yahweh.

However one may understand and interpret it, for Job, it is his vision of God that made all the difference. God did not give any explanation to Job as to why he suffered because there is no explanation that really satisfies. The resolution of the conflict is not for Job to see a new explanation but to see God. Suffering can hold us in bondage as a kind of idol if we think that it must be explained. Job's transformation is not presented as the result of a conclusion of a theological reasoning about God's relationship with humans when they suffer, but by the appearance of Yahweh. The seeing of Yahweh is what changed him.[164]

From ancient times man's concern has never been to know "why?" The main concern of man has always been "how?" and "whence?" How are humans related to one another and to the absolute? Whence have humanity come, and where are they headed? The "how" was answered by God in his answer to Job – Job is related to God as a creature, but a creature able to enter a relationship with his creator, and so he is addressed by God as *geber*, a man of vigour. The whence was answered in

[164]Cf. C.P. GAVALER, "The Transformation of Job", 211.

ancient times in myths – myths understood as giving grounds not explanations; *archai,*"beginnings" not *aitia*, "causes." There are two *archai* – absolute *arche* of one's beginnings and the relative *arche* where one becomes a continuation of one's ancestors. For Job, only the absolute *arche* is given, from it he must build a world as he will or can. His relative *arche,* his place and time to be, are left open. This is because the theophany has collapsed his world-view leaving a blank page on which to write his own story; to create a new history based on his new understanding.[165]

Having dealt quite extensively with the book of Job as a whole in the first chapter, and the text in particular in chapter two, we will now try to see how suffering leads us to a deeper understanding of God, as well as a deeper communion with him.

[165]Cf. J.G. WILLIAMS, "You have not spoken Truth of Me", 249.

CHAPTER III

SUFFERING AS A MEANS TO A DEEPER KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

1. Introduction

Suffering is part and parcel of human existence. In itself suffering is an experience of evil. But, as John Paul II says, "Christ has made it the firmest basis of the definitive good, namely, the good of eternal salvation" (*SD*, 26). The anguish of suffering is not the suffering itself, but its seeming meaninglessness. It does not necessarily call the meaning of life into question because it is part of the givenness of human existence. It is not a problem to be solved but an experience to be undergone and overcome. People have tried to fashion meaning out of suffering in diverse ways. They come up with language that will help to lessen the misery of suffering. This language is both a window to what people of a given time and place care about deeply, as well as a means of constructing meaningful narratives about how to live when life exacts its inevitable purchase on what we love.[166]

In the previous two chapters, we dealt with the book of Job in general and a detailed analysis of 42:1-6. In the concluding chapter we will go into how suffering can be meaningful to us by looking at how it puts us into a deeper relationship with

[166]Cf. S.E. BALENTINE, "Suffering and Evil", 391.

God. The book of Job, seen as a treatise on suffering, is actually concerned with Job's commitment to God in the face of material privation and physical suffering.[167] Like Job, how do we relate with God when we encounter personal loss, physical pain and broken relationships? How do we sustain our relationship with God when suffering strikes? In short, how does suffering help us to know God in a better and deeper way?

We will try to answer these questions by looking at how the Bible deals with suffering – suffering as punishment, as a means of education and discipline, and as redemptive and vicarious. We will then speak about knowledge as used in the scriptures – in its deeper sense as interpersonal communion – and how it is acquired and transmitted. The last part of the chapter will focus on how suffering can lead us to this knowledge, in its deepest sense.

2. Biblical View on Suffering

The Bible takes suffering for granted as part of the normal human lot. However, the extent of suffering in the world raises profound questions about the nature of God. God is presented as a good, loving father who takes care of his creation and chosen people. Why then does he permit evil?[168] Genesis 2-3 gives a perspective on suffering – suffering as the consequence of the disobedience of the man and woman. After their disobedience, God pronounced curses on the snake, the woman and the man (cf. Gen. 3:14-19), and the world has been filled with pain and misery ever since. This is the story of the whole human race, we are born into a world in which we are vulnerable to suffering.[169]

[167]Cf. P.F. COTTERELL, "Suffering", 802.
[168]Cf. R.B. EDWARDS, "Suffering", 650.
[169]Cf. D.J. SIMUNDSON, "Suffering", 220.

Though the predominant view of the Bible as far as suffering is concerned is that suffering is the consequence of sin, there are other ways of viewing suffering. We consider some of them here.

2.1 Suffering as Retributive

Sin contains its own punishment – suffering, and this can be as far as suffering damnation. Adam and Eve suffered the consequences of their sin – separation from God, friction and division among themselves and death (Gen. 3). The Israelites were carried off to Assyria as exiles "because the people of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God" (2 Kings 17:6-7). In Nehemiah 9:26-27 we read that God gave the people (Israelites) into the hands of their enemies, who made them suffer because they rebelled against God and killed the prophets.[170]

The Jewish people had a strong sense of the justice of God – God rewards all according to their deeds (cf. Psa. 62:12; Prov. 24:12). If their deeds are evil, suffering will ensue (cf. Gen. 12:17; 42:21; Amos 1:13-15). In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve suffered for their disobedience; the flood came as a punishment for the sinful people, but Noah and his family were delivered for their faithfulness (cf. Gen. 6:13ff). The covenant theology presupposes reward for obedience and punishment for disobedience.

The Old Testament emphasis is on Israel's suffering as a consequence of its disobedience – suffering here is retributive and restorative. This doctrine of retribution cuts across the major sections of the Old Testament – Torah, Prophets and Writings. The experiences of suffering are understood in terms of the fact that

[170]Cf. T.G. WEINANDY,*Does God Suffer?,* 263.

God repays sin with punishment, which includes suffering in all its physical and psychic manifestations.[171]

Leviticus 26 promises a life of plenty, lived in harmony with nature, as a reward for obedience to the covenant, but threatens illness, famine and calamity as a punishment for disobedience. Inthe same way, we find a series of blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 27-28, which make that there is a direct connection between ethical behavior and what will surely follow. Times of prosperity will be the rewards for faithfulness to God, while disaster and chaos are punishment for sins committed by the people.[172]

Because of the Hebrew belief in collective responsibility and the solidarity of the family, the Old Testament depicts whole communities suffering for the sins of their kings, children for their parents and wives for their husbands (cf. Exod. 20:5; Josh. 7:24-26; 1 Kings 21:29).[173] And in Joshua 7 we find that suffering can be due to the sins caused by another. There is a cause and effect relationship built into the order of creation, and the sins one commit will have consequences on him and on his offspring (cf. Exod. 20:5-7; 34:6-7; Deut. 5:9-10; Numb. 14:18). Suffering resulting from sin is a corporate matter, infecting the whole society, not necessarily seeking out the most wicked perpetrator of evil upon whom to inflict the most severe suffering. The victims of suffering include both the deserving as well as those who are innocent bystanders, for instance, Jeremiah and Baruch.[174]

However, much as the doctrine of retribution was mostly seen in its communal aspect, individuals also had to bear the consequences of their sins. With their emphasis on personal responsibility (cf. Ezek. 18 and Jer. 31:29-30), Ezekiel

---

[171]Cf. S.E. BALENTINE, "Suffering and Evil", 391.
[172]Cf. D.J. SIMUNDSON, "Suffering", 220.
[173]Cf. R.B. EDWARDS, "Suffering", 650.
[174]Cf. D.J. SIMUNDSON, "Suffering", 221.

and Jeremiah spoke of suffering as the consequence of personal sin. The emphasis on personal responsibility is seen already in some earlier writings of the Bible, but it is considered as the chief message of Ezekiel because the exile shattered national solidarity. Matthews speaks of this in this way:

> While national solidarity had been the preaching of the earlier prophets, the query must often have risen as to the justice of the saint suffering with the sinner. That the sins of fathers should be visited on the children, to the fourth generation, was questionable justice. In national practice individuals, not families, had been condemned (cf. 2 Kings 14:5-6); and this had been written into the code of the Deuteronomy as something new (cf. Deut. 24:16). But it was the destruction of the city that shattered group life, thereby shattering national solidarity that furnished an incentive for the new philosophy, individualism.[175]

God holds each person accountable for his/her actions and thus each person suffers the inevitable consequence of his/her sins.[176]One cannot act with impunity and expect to escape justice. People's decisions can determine what fate awaits them, and suffering is an indication that wrong choices have been made.[177] This idea is what pervades the book of Job, where despite Job's protests to the contrary, the friends emphatically interpret his suffering as the result of some sin he has committed.

In the New Testament, there are few references to the retributive function of suffering in this life (cf. 1 Cor. 11:28-30), but there are solemn warnings about future judgment of the unrepentant, whose suffering is described in terms of exclusion from God's presence (cf. 2 Thess. 1:9; Matt. 25:10-12); tribulation and distress (cf. Rom. 2:9), and eternal punishment (cf. 2Thess. 1:9) symbolized by the lake of fire (cf. Rev. 20:10, 15). However, these passages are to be read in the light of the good news of God's free forgiveness of sins for all who will accept it through

---

[175]I. MATTHEWS, *Ezekiel: A American Commentary on the Old Testament,*as cited in J.U. Ro, "The Theological Concept of YHWH's Punitive Justice in the Hebrew Bible," 416-417.

[176]Cf. T.G. WEINANDY,*Does God Suffer?,* 263.

[177]Cf.D.J. SIMUNDSON, "Suffering", 220.

his grace. The New Testament's main emphasis is not the threat of punishment but the promise of pardon, peace and joy.[178]

The idea of seeing suffering as punishment for sins – for one's own sins or those of others, is seen in the episode of Jesus' healing of the man born blind (cf. John 9:1ff) and the two events recounted in Luke involving suffering on a much wider scale – the Galileans whose blood Pilate mingles with their sacrifices and the eighteen people upon whom the tower of Siloam fell. (cf. Luke 13:1-5). In both cases Jesus goes beyond the doctrine of retribution. On the one hand he talks of God's glory being revealed in the man born blind, and on the other hand, he calls for repentance on his listeners lest they also perish.

2.2 Suffering as Educative and Disciplinary

But suffering due to sin can also lead to good. This is due to the fact that suffering can lead to repentance. The sinner can turn to God in humble repentance because of the guilt, shame and embarrassment that comes with his/her suffering.[179] John Paul II states in *Salvifici Doloris* that "suffering must serve for conversion that is for the rebuilding of goodness in the subject, who can recognize the divine mercy in this call to repentance" (SD, 12).

God uses suffering not only to punish, but also to discipline and teach persons right behavior (cf. Deut. 8:5-6; 11:1-2; Jer. 6:9; Hos. 7:12, 15). Israel's sages used parenting metaphor (cf. Prov. 13:24) to describe God's correcting discipline that should be welcomed more as an assurance of love than an indication of God's anger. Even extreme suffering can be a reminder of the depths of God's relationship and hence an invitation to rejoice for God only disciplines those whom

[178]Cf. R.B. EDWARDS, "Suffering", 651.
[179]Cf. T.G. WEINANDY,*Does God Suffer?.* 264.

he loves (cf. Prov. 3:12; Job 5:17-18; Sir. 30:1-2). God speaks in multiple ways, including "chastening with pain",[180] but the ultimate purpose is always to save those whom God loves from a course of certain destruction (cf. Prov. 6:23; 10:17).[181]

In the ancient world children were regularly disciplined and if God is a loving father, it is right to expect that he disciplines his children. Such chastening is usually through testing by suffering. For example, Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son Isaac, and the mere thought of it could have caused him great anguish (cf. Gen. 22), and Job suffered though he was an upright man. Job's suffering serves as an example to encourage those who find their faith severely tested.[182]

Suffering as educative and disciplinary serves as the means through which God chastises in order to free people from sin, and so lead them on the path of holiness. Citing Prov. 3:11-12, the author of the letter to the Hebrews speaks of the discipline that his readers must expect, a discipline that comes in the form of trials and tests that involve suffering, if they are to be considered children of God.

> Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation which addresses you as sons? -- "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor lose courage when you are punished by him. For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time at their pleasure, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it (Heb. 12:3-11).

Testing and purification through suffering advances the living of a holy life. Within the discipline and accompanying suffering a person is able to advance in

---

[180]S.E. BALENTINE, "Suffering and Evil", 392.
[181]Cf. S.E. BALENTINE, "Suffering and Evil", 392.
[182]Cf. R.B. EDWARDS, "Suffering", 651.

holiness and hence manifesting that he is worthy of God. In Sirach 2:1-6 those who come to serve the Lord are told to prepare themselves for testing as gold is tested in fire. Through such testing God finds his servants faithful.[183] This is even seen in Jesus Christ who had to learn what it meant for him to be a loyal son to the Father through what he suffered: "Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him" (Heb. 5:8-9).

Thus through suffering God disciplines us giving each person the opportunity to grow in perfection and to manifest one's holiness: "Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself; like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them" (Wis. 3:5-6).

C.H. Talbert sees the suffering of Christians as having the purpose of disciplining, refining and educating. In his words:

> Suffering is the arena in which the Christian can be (1) disciplined, in the sense of training that develops strength; (2) refined, in the sense of smelting processes as of fire to purify precious metal; and (3) educated, in the sense of learning the right way to live. Looked at in this way suffering and adversity as divine education are not only compatible with God's loving nature but also inherent in Christian existence in the world.[184]

The suffering of Christians is two-fold: suffering which is common to all humanity, and suffering which is the consequence of Christian rebirth, the new resurrection life. The reason for the first kind of suffering may be a mystery, but the reason for the second is because just as Christ "learned obedience through what he suffered" (Heb. 5:8), so the Christian learns obedience through suffering.[185]

---

[183]Cf. T.G. WEINANDY, *Does God Suffer?,* 270.
[184]C.H. TALBERT,*Learning Through Suffering*, 92.
[185]Cf. P.F. COTTERELL, "Suffering", 805.

2.3 Suffering as Redemptive and Vicarious

The Bible also speaks of suffering as vicarious and redemptive. This can be found especially in the servant songs of Isaiah, especially in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. The prophet speaks of an unidentified person who suffers for his people and of one who will suffer for his people.[186] He suffers that his people might be saved. This gives a new orientation to suffering. Suffering, for sure, can be the result of sin but that is not the only way to understand it. The people are God's witnesses (Isa. 43:9-10) called to be light to the nations (Isa. 42:6; 49:6). Israel, the servant of Yahweh, has a mission to reach out to the world, through them other nations will be persuaded to join in worship of the one true God. God will work some greater good out of the suffering of his faithful.[187]

Vicarious suffering is linked with one's vocation – suffering for the sake of others. God's calling always entails an element of suffering, and suffering itself can be a vocation for us because it is a vocation for God – suffering is God's chief way of being powerful in the world. This suffering is not for the sake of suffering in and of itself, but suffering that enters into the lives of others especially, those who bear misfortune and pain.[188]

This is what we see in the prophets who suffered for and because of their people. Moses shared in the suffering of the people and felt as if their burdens were laid on himself (cf. Numb 11:1-15). Hosea suffered in his marital relationship which served as an enacted parable of God's loving and forgiving relationship with unfaithful Israel (cf Hos. 1-3). Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah all bore the anguish of their prophetic vocations. At times Jeremiah even failed to bear it (cf. Jer. 15:18;

[186]Cf. P.F. COTTERELL, "Suffering", 804.
[187]Cf. D.J. SIMUNDSON, "Suffering", 222.
[188]Cf. T.E. FRETHEIM,*Creation Untamed,* 117.

20:7-12). The supreme Old Testament example of vicarious suffering is the Suffering Servant of Second Isaiah. It is said of him in Isaiah 53:5: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed." In the New Testament Jesus Christ, who though innocent, suffered representatively and vicariously for others that their sins might be forgiven.[189]

In this vicarious suffering, God calls us to be responsible – for ourselves, for others and for him. When Jesus said "take up your cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23), he did not mean any specific kind of suffering, but the daily decision to enter the suffering lives of others. We cannot leave everything to God; God needs our cooperation, for what we do counts, for others and for God.[190]

This kind of suffering is seen in Moses who often suffered at the hands of his people, in Jeremiah, and in the Suffering Servant in Isaiah, who willingly took the way of suffering and death for the sake of all people (cf. Isa. 53:12). First Peter emphasizes the redemptive nature of Christ's suffering, which is not an accident but foreordained (cf. 1 Pet. 1:11). It is the result of his decision to bear the sins of humanity and to be an example to his followers (1 Pet. 2:21; 2:24; 3:18). Thus, Jesus, by his death on the cross becomes the fulfillment of all vicarious sufferings, and through him we all share in that suffering that brings relief and healing to others.[191]

3. Knowledge in the Scriptures

The Old Testament esteems the knowledge of God as a real decisive element of religion, a knowledge that can be defined as the intimate communion with God,

[189]Cf. R.B. EDWARDS, "Suffering", 651.
[190]Cf. T.E. FRETHEIM, *Creation Untamed,* 118.
[191]Cf. T.E. FRETHEIM,*Creation Untamed,* 118

whose being is a mystery and who is holy. God is directly and personally concerned with the things of this world. First of all, Israel as a nation, the individual Israelite, the nations of the world, man in general and the world at large. The experience with the holy one always implies a sense of distance between God and man, expressed either in the form of confession of guilt (Isa. 6), of fear (Gen. 28) or of wonder (Psa. 8:1-2).[192]

Scripture distinguishes between knowledge possessed by God and that which is possessed by mankind. God's knowledge transcends time and even anticipates events (Jer. 1:5). He knows people through and through – both physical make up and moral behavior; and nothing can be concealed from him (Psa. 139:16). His omniscience allows God to treat people appropriately, rewarding the believer and punishing the wicked.[193]

Human beings' knowledge is limited and progressive. In Jer 9:23-24 God enjoins on the people to understand and know him; they are not to boast about their wisdom, strength or riches, but in the fact of knowing God, who exercises kindness, righteousness and justice. Thus, God is the supreme reality of the believers, who deigned to reveal himself mostly through signs and wonders (cf. Exod. 7:17; 1Kings 18:36-39), and through his laws and commandments.[194]

The Hebrew word *yäda* has the implication of an active involvement with its object and covers various stages, extending from the full range of skill acquired through a specific activity to sexual intercourse.[195] It has an important emotional as well as intellectual aspect especially when used in connection with persons. "To know" someone in Hebrew has a deeper emotional aspect to the extent that it can be

[192]Cf. T.C. VRIEZEN, "The Nature of the Knowledge of God", 88.
[193]Cf. C.F. HENRY – R.K. HARRISON, "Knowledge", 48.
[194]Cf. C.F. HENRY – R.K. HARRISON, "Knowledge", 48.
[195]Cf. J.L. CRENSHAW, 'Knowledge", 539.

equivalent to the verb "to love". This is seen in its connection with sexual intercourse in Gen 4:1, where, "Adam knew his wife and she conceived and bore Cain".[196]

In ancient Israel, when people spoke of the knowledge of God

> they were not merely talking about information concerning God, but of an intimate personal attachment to him. Intellectual knowledge is not depreciated as the people are expected to know certain theological facts: that Yahweh is the God of Israel (Deut. 29:6; 1Sam 17:46; Ezek. 6:7); that he is the only God there is (Deut. 4:39); that he has a definitive moral character (Ps 119:75; Jon 4:2); that he has done certain mighty acts for his people (Judges 2:10;Ps 78:4; Mic. 6:5) and that his will has been revealed in formulas that can be learned (Ps 78:5;119:125). However, this 2nd hand knowledge of mere facts about God cannot substitute for the personal relationship and experience of God. The knowledge of God is not simply an accurate absorption by the mind of accurate theological information, but the involvement of a person with a Person.[197]

Another dimension of knowing God, aside the emotions and intellectual cognition is the aspect of the will. This is because knowledge of God always issues in ethical behavior. Genuine knowledge involves the whole of a man's personality – his mind, his feelings and his deeds and so knowledge that did not issue in appropriate action was not true knowledge in ancient Israel.[198] To know the Lord thus went beyond a reaching out for him with the mind. It involved embracing his concern for the poor and the needy (Jer. 22:16) and acknowledgement of him as the God of the nation and that there is no other god (Joel 2:27).

In the New Testament, emphasis is laid on Jesus Christ who possesses special relationship with God the father. Because of this he is portrayed as possessing extraordinary knowledge and growing in wisdom. He knew the needs of the human family as well as the will of the father for him including his sacrificial death (Luke 22:42; Heb. 10:5-7). Also because of his special relationship with God,

---

[196]Cf. R.C DENTAN,*The Knowledge of God in Ancient Israel,* 38.
[197]R.C DENTAN, *The Knowledge of God in Ancient Israel,* 39.
[198]Cf.R.C DENTAN,*The Knowledge of God in Ancient Israel,* 40.

anyone who wishes to understand and know God more clearly has to pass through him. God can be known in a personal and saving way, only through knowing the Son (cf. John 14:6).[199]

3.1 Transmission of Knowledge

Knowledge is of no use if it is not handed down to the next generation. This is even truer when it concerns knowledge of the Supreme Being. The transmission of knowledge is seen as a duty laid upon the entire people because of the communal nature of people. The acquisition and transmission of knowledge calls for active and attentive participation on one hand, as well as humility and patience on the other. A person has to be attentive to everything that goes on around him, he has to take an active part in the teaching and learning process, as well as the humility to be a "student". It also requires that the one teaching be patient and tolerant, especially towards those who are slow learners.

There was a great importance attached to the knowledge of God – a knowledge that leads to a deep and intimate communion with him. Because of this, great care and emphasis was laid on the transmission of the knowledge and traditions of the people of Israel about God to the younger generation. The transmission took diverse forms and some of these are considered here.

3.1.1 Experience

The active involvement of the subject requires the use of the senses. There was a belief among the sages that the creator had implanted within the visible universe an order governing reality and it was the responsibility of humans to discover this order for living and regulate their lives accordingly. Discovering these

[199]Cf.C.F. HENRY – R.K. HARRISON, "Knowledge", 48.

rules required careful searching and a rigorous thinking. Thus, attentive eyes for the observation of patterns of behavior in others, animals and nature were required. Of equal importance is an open ear, to hear and understand the commandments meant for a rightful living in society.[200]

Knowledge can also be the result of a direct communication from God, in which he reveals something to people in an instant. This is clearly seen in the prophetic declaration that God communicates a specific word to chosen messengers. Humans could also acquire knowledge through intimate personal relationships. This insight is seen in the Gilgamesh Epic, where Enkidu is introduced to culture through a week-long sexual experience.[201]

3.1.2 The Prophets

Prophecy is the deepest and strongest revelation of the communion between the holy one and man; through God's saving activity in history the basis for the certainty of his relationship with man is formed. God allows man to share in his saving activity through his spirit or word. God performs nothing without revealing his mind to his servants, the prophets (cf Amos 3:7). The prophet is allowed to be a witness to God's saving activity in history and sees reality through God's eyes. The prophets did not just explain God's work in history, but also revealed it, because God reveals his mind to man – his saving activity is accompanied by prophetic revelation.[202]

The prophets in the Bible are portrayed as having a special calling with the ability to see more clearly than their contemporaries and also as having a special relationship with the divine. Among their functions were the denunciation of evil

[200]Cf. J.L. CRENSHAW, 'Knowledge", 540.
[201]Cf. J.L. CRENSHAW, 'Knowledge", 540.
[202]Cf. T.C. VRIEZEN, "The Nature of the Knowledge of God", 88.

and the annunciation of a decisive action by Yahweh in a future time. They also had the task of attending to the transmission of the divine word that was thought to possess the power to renew life by stimulating repentance. Thus, we see that the prophetic calling was basically for the purpose of transforming the people through words and symbolic actions. These two, the word and symbolic action, were meant to reveal the nature of Yahweh to the people. We see this in Hosea, who portrays Yahweh as a faithful husband, and Israel as a faithless bride, by marrying a harlot. By revealing Yahweh's nature to the people they had to live their lives according to that nature with some requirements imposed by Yahweh himself; as Micah sums it up in 6:6-8; and Amos in the two Hebrew words "seek me and live" (Amos 5:4).[203]

The consciousness of their having met with God revolutionized the thoughts of the prophets and gave them a burning message of truth for the people who needed God's revelation in their various situations. The main theological underpinnings of their message was "Yahweh's character and his sovereign rule in history: Yahweh alone was God, and in his divine justice and mercy he gave order and meaning to the experience of mankind".[204]

The prophetic experience of explaining and revealing are what makes the two elements of knowledge of God: the holy one and communion with men is clearly linked. After experiencing God as the Holy One in the experience of his vocation, Isaiah proclaims forcefully the judgment that is coming on the people; but at the same time he proclaims faith and confidence (Isa. 7:9; 30:15). So it is with Hosea, who preaches God's love as well as his dreadful nature (cf. Hos. 5:12, 14; 13:7).[205]

---

[203]Cf. J.L. CRENSHAW, 'Knowledge", 543.
[204]G.V. SMITH, "Prophet; Prophecy", 998.
[205]Cf. T.C. VRIEZEN, "The Nature of the Knowledge of God", 93.

So the prophets, proclaiming God's dreadful judgment based on their vision of him as the holy one, also proclaim the actualization of communion with God: Yahweh shall be Israel's God and Israel shall be Yahweh's people (Hos. 2; 14; Isa. 2; Jer. 31, Ezek. 36, Isa. 45; 51; Zech. 8). In so doing, they not only proclaimed something about God but the nature of God himself – a God who is just and merciful, and one who wishes to be in communion with human beings.[206]

3.1.3 The Priests

Apart from their primary role of attending to the various offerings and of making sure they took place at the right time, the priests also had the responsibility of instructing the people in religious matters. Deuteronomy is presented as instruction by the revered lawgiver, Moses, who then entrusts the Levites with a task that often takes sermonic forms. Because access to the holy was considered dangerous the priests had to be careful about ritual purity. They had the responsibility of making sure that those who entered the sacred precincts were prepared, so as not to incur the wrath of Yahweh, either through ritual impurity or moral transgression. To do this they composed liturgies that explained Yahweh's expectations.[207]

They also gave oracles to worshippers (cf. Deut. 33:8-11) on whom Yahweh looked with favor just as Eli comforted distraught Hannah at the shrine of Shiloh. They gave oracles to the people concerning the will of God in a wide range of purposes, from military actions to matters concerning tribal customs and behavior. It was their responsibility to teach the people the will of God expressed in the Torah,

[206]Cf. T.C. VRIEZEN, "The Nature of the Knowledge of God", 93.
[207]Cf. J.L. CRENSHAW, 'Knowledge", 543.

and this duty even comes before their sacrificial ministry as found in Deuteronomy 33:8-11.[208]

3.1.4 Parents

The home is the first place of learning under the watchful eyes of one's parents. Experience enables parents to offer valuable instructions that sometimes consist of personal examples, or through the observation of others. Deuteronomy enjoins parents to transmit religious instruction as well as non-religious ones to the young who are expected to obey the elders. The book of proverbs also sees the role of parents in this task with the usual vocative "my son".[209] At the age of four, as soon as the child could speak distinctly, their religious training began.[210]

In Ancient Israel the instruction of children was a religious duty, and the content of what was taught was the religious traditions of the people. The family was a religious as well as a social and political unit,[211] and because the family was a religious entity, every parent had the solemn duty of instructing the children in religious matters. In Genesis 18:19, God speaks of Abraham as having chosen him to charge his children and his household to keep the ways of the Lord. The main purpose of this was for the children to live righteously and justly, so that the promises made to Abraham might be fulfilled.

From the time of Josiah, the *Shema* (cf. Deut. 6:4-9) became the central religious teaching given in the home. It had the injunction to teach one's children attached to it: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord […] and you shall teach them diligently to your children […]" (Deut. 6:4; 7). Along with the *Shema,*

[208]Cf. W.O. MCCREADY, "Priests and Levites", 968.
[209]Cf. J.L. CRENSHAW, 'Knowledge", 541.
[210]Cf. A.W. FORTUNE, "Child", 645.
[211]Cf. N. Isaacs – E.D. Isaacs, "Relationships, Family" 75.

parents had the responsibility of teaching the commandments for righteous living (cf. Deut. 4:9ff.), and the father had the duty of explaining the commandments by telling the story of the history of the nation (cf. Deut. 6:20-25).[212]

The celebration of the major festivals in the home and in the community was also used as an opportunity for the parents to impart the religious traditions they had inherited on their children. In line with Exodus 12:26ff., it became the practice that the youngest child in the family asked at the appropriate point in the Passover meal what the meal was all about, giving the father the opportunity to tell the story of the Lord's deliverance of his people from Egypt. Through the instructions in the home, children were taught how God had manifested himself to them in the past, how they were to live the present, and the promises that God had made regarding the future for the people.[213]

4. Suffering and our Knowledge of God

Quests for the meaning of suffering has occupied men of all ages and religions. It is a religious problem, and "as a religious problem, the problem of suffering is, paradoxically, not how to avoid suffering but how to suffer, how to make physical pain, personal loss, worldly defeat, or hopeless contemplation of others' agony, something bearable, supportable – something as we say, sufferable."[214]

In Job 38, God appears out of the whirlwind and throws challenging questions at Job, questions that ask Job about what he knows: "who?" and "what do you know?" These questions drive Job and us, the readers, beyond the knowledge we ordinarily conceive. This knowledge is not, however, the formal knowledge

[212]Cf. R.A. CULPEPPER, "Education", 22.
[213]Cf. R.A. CULPEPPER, "Education", 22.
[214]C. GEERTZ,*The Interpretation of Cultures,* 104.

pertaining to theodicy but even more the kind of knowledge that is based on personal experience.[215] The challenging questions of God are not meant to silence Job, but to help him move out of his own world and see reality differently, to have a different view of God.

The questions are meant to create a relationship, an interaction between two persons. In the words of M.V. Fox,

> God uses rhetorical questions to elicit knowledge from Job and the reader, thereby making them participants in the depiction. The questions create a community of knowledge – there is much that Job does not know, but there is much that is also within his grasp: potential knowledge he can activate by looking at the world around him and seeing evidence of God's power and providence.[216]

God could have given straight answer to Job but he refrains from doing that because he wanted Job to be part of the conversation. Job had dared to address him, and so he addresses Job, with questions so that the two of them could relate as persons.

In Job 42:5, we hear Job saying he has now seen, while previously he had only heard. According to Olson, hearing in this instance has to do with experiencing, knowing, judging, doing, and Job is a master of all those. But the reason why he had not seen is because all the dialectical and objective thinking had failed him, especially in the face of his harrowing experience of suffering.[217] He only comes to know God, the God who is already there and has always been, in a different way in the face of his inexplicable suffering.

Through his suffering Job is able to take a step back, which becomes a step forward, he renounces his being at the appearance of God, so that God can truly reveal himself to him. He come to know God through the severity of his suffering.

---

[215]Cf. A.M. OLSON, "The Silence of Job as the Key to the Text", 115.
[216]M.V. FOX, "God's Answer and Job's Response", 14.
[217]Cf. A.M. OLSON, "The Silence of Job as the Key to the Text", 119.

F.M. Cross argues that "the God who called Israel out of Egypt, who spoke by prophet, the covenant God of Deuteronomy, did not reveal himself to Job".[218] But even if this God did not reveal himself to Job, I think the God Job found helped him to live his life with meaning even in the face of unfathomable suffering.

According to Moltmann, "anyone who suffers without cause first thinks that he has been forsaken by God."[219] If Job came to experience God in the depths of his suffering, how does suffering then lead us to know and understand God better? How do we encounter God in moments when he seems absent, silent and distant from us? God reveals himself to humanity in diverse and different ways, and surely suffering *must* be one of the means of God's self-revelation.

"Revelation", according to Moltmann, "is that specifically religious mode of experience that puts us in touch with God, with the gracious foundations of our being."[220] In revelation we come into contact with the God of relationships, the God of life. God does this, reveals himself by revealing us to ourselves, in our negativity and in our possibility for goodness. He reveals himself to us in the suffering of the cross, but it is also because we suffer that God's self is revealed to us.[221]

4.1 Discovery of our Limitation through Suffering

As previously quoted, Moltmann says that God reveals himself to us, by revealing humanity to itself. There can be no evident way of being human than in suffering. John Paul II says that what makes suffering uniquely human is that it gives rise to the question "why?" "Only the suffering human being knows that he is suffering and wonders why; and he suffers in a humanly speaking still deeper way if

---

[218]F.M. CROSS,*Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 344. As cited in J.J.M. ROBERTS, Job and the Israelite Religious Tradition, 112.

[219]J. MOLTMANN,*The Crucified God,* 252.

[220]J. MOLTMANN,*Theology of Suffering,* 41.

[221]Cf. J. MOLTMANN,*Theology of Suffering,* 52.

he does not find a satisfactory answer" (*SD*, 9). Suffering makes us realize the limitations of our being human; it is painful yet in it our humanity is revealed.

Pain and suffering are nature's way of telling us that something is wrong. We suffer not because we are weak, but simply because we are human – and this means that we are imperfect, we are in process.[222] And in the words of Rabbi Kushner, "pain is the price we pay for being alive".[223] Pain and suffering remind us that we are limited and finite, that we are not God. In this way we are made aware of that fact that there is someone who is in control, someone who is absolute, someone who is supreme.

Suffering thus throws a challenge to us to accept our human lot. It is a challenge to us to look above and raise our eyes beyond pain and mortality – beyond our limitations.[224] In so doing we honor God because God himself suffers. He suffers in the manner in which he can- because of his people and for his people. And a God who suffers at his people's rejection of him, with his suffering people and on behalf of his people is a challenging God. He is a challenging God because in all his might and majesty, he deigns to take on suffering for the good of his people.[225]

The suffering of God begins in creation when God decides to create humankind with freedom. It is a divine adventure full of risk, as Schillebeekx says:

> By giving creative space to human beings, God makes himself vulnerable. It is an adventure full of risks […] The creation of human beings is a blank cheque for which God alone is guarantor. By creating human beings with their own finite and free will, God voluntarily renounces power. That makes him to a high degree dependent on human beings and thus vulnerable.[226]

---

[222]Cf. R. ROHR,*Job and the Mystery of Suffering*, 177.
[223]H.S. KUSHNER,*When Bad Things Happen to Good People,* 64.
[224]Cf. W. HARRINGTON, "God of Justice and Mercy", 14.
[225]Cf. W. HARRINGTON, "God of Justice and Mercy", 14.
[226]E. SCHILLEBEEKX, *For the Sake of the Gospel,* 93.

Suffering becomes a reminder that we are over stretching our limits, that we are abusing our freedom and betraying the trust God has put in us. It calls us to accept and appreciate our finiteness.

Suffering is important for us because its acceptance helps to affirm life – for ourselves and for others. Life without suffering will make us apathetic and brutal towards others. One group of people will oppress other groups, when we see the ideal of life as that which is without suffering.[227] Moltmann says this clearly when he says that "the ideal of Western progress – to lead a life free from pain or suffering – is intolerable because it inflicts suffering and pain on others."[228] And Schillebeekx affirms this by saying, "a world in which there was no place for suffering and sorrow, even deep grief, would seem to be inhuman, a world of robots, even an unreal world."[229]

By making us aware of our limitation and finiteness, suffering becomes a source of growth and renewal because it leads to a greater solidarity with one's fellow human beings, harmony with nature, and openness to the transcendent. This idea of renewal through suffering lies within the Old Testament image of God the one who daily recreates and renews (cf. Psa. 104:30), who will accomplish new and hidden things (Isa. 48:6), who takes delight in the broken and contrite heart and puts new heart and pours his Spirit upon men and women.[230] It is worth noting that the context of all these activities of God are usually in the suffering of his people.

The most striking expression of renewal as coming through suffering is seen in the paradoxical image of God who grows and changes and becomes more human

---

[227]Cf. J. MOLTMANN,*The Way of Christ,* 167.
[228]J. MOLTMANN,*The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 167.
[229]E. SCHILLEBEEKX,*Christ,* 724.
[230]Cf. J. LAMBRECHT, *God and Human Suffering*, 27.

through the suffering he inflicts on humanity.[231] In Hosea 11:8, we find God changing his heart towards his people after observing their misery and suffering, and in the same way, in Jeremiah 42:10 he repents of the evil he has inflicted upon his people, and in this way vows to modify his behavior. God's wrath is softened when he observes the misery and pain of the sufferer, he becomes compassionate – suffers with them.

4.2 Suffering as a New Way of Knowing God

Human beings learn through experience, and experience is "what happens when a human subject encounters given reality."[232] Learning though experience implies learning through direct contact with people, things and events. In this way, our experiences can be disclosive of God because some of our experiences bring about a discovery of our ordinary existence that makes us question the meaning of human existence.[233]

Suffering and pain can be such experiences because they push us out of the immediacy of our existence towards a reality that transcends us. They disclose to us our limitation and finiteness, and at the same time point to a future that is radically different from the present.[234] Suffering thus reveals not only our limitation and finiteness, but also indirectly reveals God. This is because as Schillebeekx says, revelation can be understood as "the crossing of a boundary within the dimensions of human existence."[235] And being a "limit" or "boundary" experience, suffering

[231]Cf. P. FIDDES, *The Creative Suffering of God,* 20.
[232]R. LUCIEN, *What are They Saying About the Theology of Suffering?,* 25.
[233]Cf. R. LUCIEN,*What are They Saying About the Theology of Suffering?*, 26.
[234]Cf. R. LUCIEN,*What are They Saying About the Theology of Suffering?,* 26.
[235]E. SCHILLEBEEKX,*Christ,* 62.

thus becomes revelatory. It is, in a sense, the privileged point of revelation of both what lies beyond us and of what makes us be who we truly are.[236]

Our world today is characterized by selfishness and self-centeredness, God is viewed through the lenses of utilitarianism, he is like a candy machine up in the heavens who gives us the goods we long for. Suffering is a reminder that this view has to change, that our relationship with God must be different from the way it is. Like Job, we must be able to fear God "for no reason", fear him simply because he is God. We must be able to see in him someone who wishes to enter into a relationship with us, and relate with him accordingly.[237]

The most obvious place of coming to know who God is, is on the cross. God is revealed to us as the God of suffering and compassion on the cross. Moltmann sees the suffering of Christ as the suffering of God. According to him,

> "The sufferings of Christ" are God's sufferings because through them God shows his solidarity with human beings and his whole creation: *God is with us.*
>
> "The sufferings of Christ" are God's sufferings because through them God intervenes vicariously on our behalf, saving us at the point where we are unable to stand but are forced to sink into nothingness: *God is for us.*
>
> "The sufferings of Christ" are God's suffering, finally, because out of them the new creation of all things is born: *we come from God.*[238]

By the cross of Golgotha, understood as open vulnerability and as the love of God for loveless and unloved, dehumanized mankind, God's being and God's life is open to man. There is no one outside the gate as far as God is concerned, if God himself is the one who died outside the gate on Golgotha for those who are outside.[239] On the cross the Father delivers up the Son in order to be the father of

---

[236]Cf. R. LUCIEN,*What are They Saying About the Theology of Suffering?,* 29.
[237]Cf. R. LUCIEN,*What are They Saying About the Theology of Suffering?*, 22.
[238]J. MOLTMANN,*The Way of Jesus Christ*, 152.
[239]Cf. J. MOLTMANN, *The Crucified God*, 249.

those who are delivered up. On the cross God becomes a father to all, especially those who are cast out of the community.

Thus through suffering, we come to know God as the God of compassion and love. When God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham was confronted with a contradiction. The God who formally seemed to be his best friend, now appears to be an enemy and a tyrant.[240] But in the long run, Abraham came to realize that God was more than he imagined. Through his ordeal, Abraham came to realize that the God who called him out of his homeland to an unknown destination, was also a providential God, a God who delivers on his promise no matter how long it takes.

Suffering opens us up to know God for who he is by making us encounter him as the Absolute Other. Encountering God as the other we are freed from our "perpetual hall of mirrors that only validates and deepens our existing worldviews."[241] Through suffering we are moved from our "hall of mirrors", the prison of the self where we are unable to see or understand. Like Job, we are pruned of our autonomy and the burdens that go with it – self-validation and self-criticism. Suffering puts us in front of God, as the other, giving us a different view of God from the one we had previously known.[242]

4.3 Communion with God as the Fruit of Suffering

Man develops his manhood always in relationship to the Godhead of his God. He experiences his existence in relationship to that which illumines him as the Supreme Being. He orients his life on the ultimate value. His fundamental decisions

[240]Cf. S.D. PODMORE, "The Sacrifice of Silence", 88.
[241]R. ROHR, *Job and the Mystery of Suffering*, 157.
[242]Cf. R. ROHR,*Job and the Mystery of Suffering",* 158.

are made with what unconditionally concerns him. Thus the divine is the situation in which man experiences, develops and shapes himself.[243]

According to W. Brueggemann, the central focus of the Bible is the suffering of the people and the suffering of God. He takes his clue from the prophets who he sees as sharing in the suffering of the people and in that of God. This is because of their deep communion with God, which made them not only to know God, but to see reality as God saw it and to feel as God felt. They offered the truth about God because "it is the experience of pain which brings about the truth. Those who offer truth without experiencing the pain are likely not to be trusted."[244]

The Old Testament bears witness to a strong tension which must be kept in mind as far as God's relationship with man is concerned: the holiness of God and His communion with man. All through the Old Testament, we find that man cannot behold God, let alone describe Him. In those texts where there appears to be a vision of God, for instance, in Exodus 24:10ff where the elders of Israel see God, God's appearance is not described, and Exodus 33:11 where Moses spoke to God face to face, we find that God's face could not be seen. His holiness moved him far away from man, and when he came close it was only an aspect of him that could be seen. He could not be described wholly.[245]

On the other hand, the communion between God and the people is also real, as given in the stories of the patriarchs where God is described in anthropomorphic terms. This may be a primitive way of expressing God's relationship with the people but it is also meant to make the people share in the original intimate relationship between God and man.[246] And in most cases the communion between them was

[243]Cf. J. MOLTMANN,*The Crucified God,* 267.
[244]W. BRUEGGEMANN,*The Prophetic Imagination,* 9.
[245]Cf. T.C. VRIEZEN, "The Nature of the Knowledge of God", 90.
[246]Cf. T.C. VRIEZEN, "The Nature of the Knowledge of God", 91.

formed as a result of the suffering of the people: Abraham's pain of not having an heir and his anguish of having to sacrifice his beloved son; Joseph's ordeal of being sold as a slave by his own brothers; and the Israelites suffering in Egypt.

The most painful experiences we have are the ones that arise out of interpersonal relationships; those that come out of the fact that we are always interdependent. According to Brueggemann, "the most immediate pain consists in relations violated, in intimacy fractured, in alienations, in parents that have lived too long, in children who have stayed too long or left too soon."[247] This explains why suffering draws us closer to the one whose love is steadfast, who is always faithful because in him we realize the communion that cannot be fractured.

The reality of the Exodus is driven by the hurt and suffering of the Israelites. The voicing out of this hurt and suffering moves God to act on their behalf. God, by hearing and acting on their behalf, binds himself to them – his hearing becomes expressive of his solidarity with the hurting and suffering people.[248] Suffering, in this way, raises hope, hope that things will be decisively and radically reordered for a more peaceful and just society. This hope is rooted in God, the God of relationships, but it originates in suffering for when suffering is voiced and noticed, it is noticed as unacceptable.[249]

This hope is what underlies the doctrine of the covenant which expresses the unbreakable bond between God and Israel. In the covenant, the hope for meaningful life and the promise of unbroken relationships meet. The most remarkable characteristic of the covenant is seen in its enduring feature in the face of seeming failure and insurmountable odds. From the point of view of God it is a gift that

---

[247]W. BRUEGGEMANN, *David's Truth in Israel's Imagination and Memory*, 18.
[248]Cf.R. LUCIEN, *What are They Saying About the Theology of Suffering?*, 17.
[249]Cf. R. LUCIEN, *What are They Saying About the Theology of Suffering?*, 18.

expresses God's relentless commitment to stay in relationship with Israel. When Israel fails to live up to the covenantal requirement of obedience, God keeps up the partnership through judgment tempered by grace and the promise of forgiveness. On the other hand, Israel is convinced that God can be trusted to keep the covenantal promises, a conviction that makes them approach God not only with praise and penitence, but also with lament and protest.[250]

The place where this covenant relationship is expressed is in the liturgy. The liturgy expresses voiced and unvoiced hurt. Bruggemann says that the liturgy socializes the young and initiates them into the experience of speech, social perception and public life as far as suffering is concerned, so that they do not let hurt and suffering go unnoticed and unvoiced, so that they do not let the world become settled, so that they do not reckon social hurt to be a normal, acceptable cost for social tranquility.[251]

The liturgy also serves rehabilitative and restorative functions. It serves "both to enable the experience so that dimensions of it are not lost and to limit the experience so that dimensions are denied legitimacy."[252] The liturgy thus provides a medium for articulating and expressing one's pain and suffering legitimately. These are seen in the laments which "witnesses to a robust form of faith which affirms that God seriously honors his part of the exchange."[253]

The laments express the hope that God will respond and will act because of covenantal promises. They are based on the intimate relationship between God and his people. In this way suffering becomes a means by which this relationship is affirmed and deepened, for there is always a movement from petition to praise, from

[250]Cf. S.E. BALENTINE, "For No Reason", 361.
[251]Cf. R. LUCIEN,*What are They Saying About the Theology of Suffering?,* 18.
[252]W. BRUEGGEMANN, "The Formfulness of Grief", 265.
[253]W. BRUEGGEMANN,*The Prophetic Imagination,* 21.

alienation to trust.[254] Arising out of suffering, the laments are founded on the belief that it is only in the embrace of pain and its submission to God can pain and suffering be resolved.[255] They thus allow us to be open to our suffering and at the same time opens us to healing and newness.

In the cross we see this communion between God and man that arises out of suffering more clearly. The cross is not just an act of redemption, but also a revelation of God's identification with humankind because on it God takes on himself the suffering and pain of humanity. Through the cross God comes into solidarity with humanity, revealing himself as the God of love, who opens up a hope and a future through the most negative side of history. God's decision to create the world in a particular way may have the consequence of suffering for humankind, but he actively shares in this experience too.[256]

The New Testament depict the Church as the Body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 4:12; Col. 1:18). This is significant because we are not just incorporated into Christ, we are, at the same time, inducted into his suffering. In Philippians 3:10 Paul speaks of "*koinonia* in suffering" – sharing in the suffering of Christ. *Koinonia* has a positive connotation: sharing in good things. Thus, we cannot know Christ and his power without, at the same time, accepting his suffering. By sharing in his suffering we enter into communion with him, becoming like him in his suffering so that we can become like him in his glory.[257]

---

[254]Cf. W. BRUEGGEMANN, "From Hurt to Joy, From Death toLife", 5.
[255]Cf. R. LUCIEN,*What are They Saying About the Theology of Suffering?*, 18.
[256]Cf. P.F. COTTERELL, "Suffering", 804.
[257]Cf. P.F. Cotterell, "Suffering", 805.

5. Conclusion

After a long struggle to find answers for his suffering, Job came to know God in a more personal and deeper way. He could exclaim “I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee” (Job 42:5). His second-hand knowledge of God gave way to his personal experience and encounter of him. And this was precisely through his suffering. In the same way, our own sufferings, even those which seem to be “for no reason”, can lead us to a deeper and personal union with God.

This is what I have tried to show in this chapter by first of all looking at suffering and how it is treated in the Bible, then going on to talk about the Biblical understanding of knowledge and how it is transmitted. Finally, we looked at how suffering can foster the relationship between us and God by showing that suffering gives us an awareness of our limitedness; that suffering becomes a new way of knowing God; and that communion with God can be the fruit of suffering. We may not be able to explain why we are suffering, but our acceptance of the fact that suffering is part of human existence, and submitting it to God can go a long way to help in dealing with it as and when it comes. In this way we will be able to live life to the full even in the face of inexplicable pain and anguish.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Our discussion throughout this book has been about how suffering can be meaningful to us as far as our relationship with God is concerned. This has been done through the lenses of Job, specifically, Job 42:1-6. We did this by first of all, taking a general look of the book of Job, in its literary and historical context. We proceeded to look at the text (42:1-6) by making a textual criticism as well as the context within which the textis placed. We concluded chapter one by taking a look at Psalm 73 since it bears some resemblance to the story of Job, and the text in particular.

In chapter two we had an analysis of the text, seeing how various authors have dealt with that section of the book of Job. There is a general view that this part is the key to understanding the whole book. In chapter three we dealt with how the Bible treats suffering and knowledge, and how knowledge is transmitted from the Biblical perspective. We then concluded it with the role suffering plays in bringing us to a deeper knowledge of God, a knowledge that puts us in communion with him.

In concluding this work, I would like to talk about how our relationship with others and with God can help us to cope with the reality of suffering. When we put ourselves in a deep relationship with others and with God, we are able to cope with the seeming meaninglessness of life when we are struck with suffering.

Our relationship with others often causes us pain and suffering because of the total solidarity of human beings. Whatever we are is the result of our interaction and interrelatedness with others in society. We are influenced and we influence others through conscious attitudes and actions, or simply by being part of a whole. And this is simply because our lives are inextricably interwoven with those of other people.[258]

In this interrelatedness we become vulnerable to the deeds and attitudes of other people. We suffer because of others, and especially through separation from others – either temporarily or by the finality of death, and also because of the sufferings of others, for instance, parents suffering because of their addicted children; friends and family for the sickness of their dear one. However, much as we suffer because of our social solidarity, we also gain a lot through our intricate network of relationships. When we loosen our social solidarity we stop hurting one another but at the same time we destroy our ability to help one another and so destroy the most precious values of life, as well as life itself.[259]

When we commit ourselves to others in friendship or marriage we become vulnerable to their disloyalty or infidelity, but such commitments are what gives us some of life's deepest satisfactions. Our close association with others is costly because we become vulnerable to their mistakes and sins, but this vulnerability marks our human existence, it is the necessary price for our personal and social enrichment for our life together. We must therefore, not be afraid to open up ourselves to others in love and friendship. It is painful but it is also worthwhile.

We must also bear in mind that God is always present in our lives, especially in moments of suffering. This awareness imparts strength to endure the ills that

---

[258] Cf. S.P. Schiling, *God and Human Anguish*, 216.
[259]Cf. S.P. Schiling, *God and Human Anguish,* 219.

assail us and points to the way of healing. Whenever the Israelites went into exile, such as in Egypt and Babylon, the *Shekinah* – the presence of God – went into exile with them. They may be in exile, but they will never be cut off from the divine presence, who will ultimately bring redemption to them. Faith that the Lord goes with his people when they are exiled to pain, terror, oppression or misery of any kind brings courage and sustaining power that nothing else can give.[260]

The suffering and death of Christ shows us that it is through suffering that God attains his ends. His power reaches its climax in the compassionate love that takes to itself the agony and tragedy of the world and thereby heals and transforms it. When God goes into exile with his people, the land of exile is not a foreign country but a part of his own creation.[261] This means the meaning and value of suffering and how it puts us in communion with God must always be sought within history and the concrete lives of human beings for it is there that we encounter evil and endure suffering. We must never relegate the meaning of suffering, or explain it only in terms of life after death.

Bringing this work to an end I would like to say that the awareness that our life is inextricably bound to that of others and that God is involved in our struggle against evil to the point of suffering must move us, as concerned human beings to strive with him.This has been done in a variety of ways - in research directed towards the conquest of disease, in attempts to understand and protect the environment and in the struggle against oppression and for just human relations.

Our little efforts aimed at making life bearable and livable make us co-workers with God, who shares our suffering so as to transform us from within. This brings us and others into that healing, transforming relationship with him that

[260]Cf. S.P. Schiling, God and Human Anguish, 256.
[261]Cf. S.P. Schiling, God and Human Anguish, 258.

provides the most convincing answer of all to the problem of human anguish. We can be sure that these little things we do will never be a waste but go to promote the greater good of all humanity and creation. *Gaudium et Spes* puts this nicely when it says that

> all our virtuous deeds – the promotion of the goods of human dignity, familial communion, and freedom, that is to say, all the good fruits of our nature and effort – will be found in heaven, but cleansed of all dirt, lit up, and transformed, when Christ gives back to the Father an eternal and universal kingdom (*GS* 39).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABBOT, W.M., ed., *The Documents Of Vatican II*, New York: Guild Press 1966.

BALENTINE, S.E., "Job, Book of", in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible II*, K.D. Sakenfield – *al*., ed., Nashville: Abingdon Press 2009, 319 – 336.

———, "Suffering and Evil", in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible IV*, K.D. Sakenfield – *al*., ed., Nashville: Abingdon Press 2009, 390-394.

———, "For No Reason", *Interpretation* 55 (2003)349-369.

BOTTERWECK, G.J., yäda`, in *Theological Dictionary of the Old TestamentV*, G.J. Botterweck – H. Ringgren – H.F. Fabry, ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company, 1986.

BRENNER, A., "God's Answer to Job", *Vetus Testamentum* 31 (1981) 129-137.

BRUEGGEMANN, W., "From Hurt to Joy, From Death to life" *Interpretation* 28 (1974) 3–19.

———, "The formfulness of Grief" *Interpretation* 31 (1979) 263-275.

———, *David's Truth in Israel's Imagination and Memory*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

———, *The Message of the Psalms*: *A theological Commentary*, Minneapolis: Augsburg 1984.

———, *The Prophetic Imagination*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1978.

CERESKO, A.R.,*Introduction to Old Testament Wisdom: A Spirituality for Liberation*, Maryknokll, New York: Orbis Books 1999.

COTTERELL, P.F., "Suffering" in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, T.D. Alexander – *al*., ed., Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press 200, 802-806.

CRENSHAW, J.L., "Knowledge", in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible II*, K.D. Sakenfield – *al*., ed., Nashville: Abingdon Press 2009, 539 – 546.

———,*Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction,* Westminster: John Knox Press 1998.

———, "Job, Book of", in *Anchor Bible Dictionary II,* D.N. Freedman – *al*., ed., New York: Doubleday 1992, 858 – 868.

———,*Whirlpool of Torment: Israelite Traditions of God as an Oppressive Presence, Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1984.*

CULPEPPER, R. A., "Education" in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia II,* G.W. Bromiley – *al*., ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company 1988, 21-27.

CURTIS, J.B., "On Job's Response to Yahweh", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98(1979) 497-511.

DENTAN, R. C., *The Knowledge of God in Ancient Israel*, New York: The Seabury Press 1968.

DILLARD, R.B. – LONGMAN III, T.,*An Introduction to the Old Testament,* Leiceter: Apollos 1995.

DITTRICH, W. F., "An Experience of Developing Relationship" *The Bible Today* 3 (1991) 169-174.

DOUGLAS, A.K. – LEVINE, A.J.,*The Meaning of the Bible*, New York: Harper Collins 2011.

EDWARDS, R.B., "Suffering", in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia IV*, G.W. Bromiley – *al.,* ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company 1988, 649 – 652.

FIDDES, P.,*The Creative Suffering of God*, Oxford: The Oxford University Press.

FISHBANE, M., "Jeremiah IV 23-26 and Job 111 3-13: A Recovered Use of the Creation Pattern" *Vetus Testamentum* 21 (1971) 151-167.

FOHRER, G.,*Introduction to the Old Testament,* New York: Abingdon Press 1965.

FORTUNE, A.W., "Child" in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia I,* G.W. Bromiley – *al.,* ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company 1988, 644-646

FOX, M.V., "God's Answer and Job's Response" *Biblica* 94 (2013) 1-23.

———, "Job the Pious", *Zeitschrift fur die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 117 (2005) 351-366.

FREEDMAN, D.N, "The Structure of Job 3" *Biblica*49 (1968) 503-509.

FRETHEIM, T.E.,*Creation Untamed: The Bible, God and Natural Disasters,* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic 2010.

GAVALER, C.P., "The Transformation of Job" *The Bible Today* 4 (1992) 208-212.

GEERTZ, C.,*The Interpretation of Cultures,* New York: Basic Books 1973.

GERSTENBERGER, E. S., "Psalms, Part 2 and Lamentations" in *The Forms Of Old Testament Literature*, R.P. Knierim – G.M Tucker – M. A Sweeney, eds., Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmanns 2001.

GORDIS, R.,*The Book of God and Man: A Study of Job*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1965.

GOTTWALD, N.K., *The Hebrew Bible: Socio-Literary Introduction,* Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1985.

GUTIERREZ, G.,*On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent,* New York; Orbis Books 1997.

HABEL, N.C., "Of Things Beyond Me: Wisdom in the Book of Job", *Interpretation 26* (1972) 143-54.

———, *The Book Of Job: A Commentary*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press 1985.

HARRINGTON, W., "God of Justice and Mercy", *Doctrine and Life* 62 (2012) 8–20

HARTLEY, J.E., "Job", in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia II*, G.W. Bromiley – *al*., ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company 1968, 1064-076,

———, *The Book of Job*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publication Company 1988.

HENRY, C.F.H – HARRISON, R.K., "Knowledge" in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia II,* G.W. Bromiley – *al.,* ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company 1968, 48-50.

HENRY, M., "Is Religion a Help or Hindrance in Finding God?", *Doctrine and Life* 62 (2012) 30-32.

IRWIN, W.A., "Job's Redeemer", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81 (1962) 217-229.

———, "You have not spoken Truth of me: Mystery and Irony in Job", *Zeitschrift fur die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 86 (1974) 231-255.

ISAACS, N – ISAACS E, D., " Relationships, Family " in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia IV,* G.W. Bromiley – *al*., ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company 1988, 75-78.

JANZEN, J.G.,*Job*, Atlanta: John Knox 1985.

JOHN PAUL II, *Apostolic Letter "Salvifici Doloris" on the Christian Meaning of Suffering* (1984), http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/1984/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_11021984_salvifici-doloris_en.html.

KISSANE, E.J.,*The Book of Job*, New York: Sheed and Ward 1946.

KUSHNER, H.S.,*When Bad Things Happen to Good People,* New York: Schocken Books 1981.

LAMBRECHT, J.,*God and Human Suffering*, Louvain: Peeters Press 1990.

LONGMAN III, T., "Job 4: The Person", in *Dictionary of The Old Testament: Wisdom, Peotry and Writings,* T. Longman III — P. Enns, ed., Nortingham: Inter-Varsity Press 2008, 371-374.

LUCIEN, R.,*What are They Saying About the Theology of Suffering?,* New Jersey: Paulist Press 1992.

MACKENZIE, R., "The Cultural and Religious Background of the Book of Job" in *Job and the Silence of God*, C. Duquoc – C. Floristan, ed., New York: The Seabury Press 1983.

MAGNANTE, A.,*Why Suffering: The Mystery of Suffering in the Bible,* Nairobi: Paulines Publication 1997.

MCCREADY, W. O., "Priests and Levites", in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia III,* G.W. Bromiley – *al*., ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company 1988, 965-970.

MCKENZIE, S.L. – Kaltner, J., *The Old Testament, Its Background, Growth and Content*, Nashville: Abingdon Press 2007.

MISKOTTE, K., *When the Gods are Silent,* New York: Harper and Row 1967.

MOLTMANN, J.,*The Way of Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, San Francisco: Harper Press 1989.

———,*The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology,* London: SCM Press 1977.

———,*Theology of Suffering*, London: SCM Press 1976.

———, *The Crucified God,* New York: Harper and Row 1974.

OLSON, A.M., "The Silence of Job as the Key to the Text", *Semeia* 19 (1981) 113-119.

PATERSON, J.,*The Wisdom of Israel: Job and Proverbs*, London: Lutherworth Press 1961.

PATRICK, D., "The Translation of Job XLII6", *Vetus Testamentum* 26 (1976) 369-371.

PERDUE, L. G.,*Wisdom Literature: A Theological History*, Westminister: John Knox Press 2007.

———,*Wisdom and Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature*, Nashville: Abingdon Press 1994.

PIPER, O., "Light, Light and Darkness", in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible III*, G.A. Buttrick – *al*., ed., Nashville: Abingdon Press 1962, 130-131.

PODMORE, S.D., "The Sacrifice of Silence: Fear and Trembling and the Secret of Faith", *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 14 (2012) 70-90.

POPE, M.H., *Job*, New York: Doubleday 1965.

RINGGREN, H.,*mss*, in *Theological Dictionary of the Old TestamentVIII,* G.J. Botterweck – H. Ringgren – H.F. Fabry, ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company, 1986.

RO, J.U., "The Theological Concept of YHWH's Punitive Justice in the Hebrew Bible: Historical Development in the context of the Judean City in Persian Period", *Vetus Testamentum* 61(2011) 406-425,

ROBERTS, J.J.M. "Job and Israelite Religious Tradition", *Zeitschrift fur die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 89 (1977) 107-114.

ROBERTSON, D.,*The Old Testament and the Literary Critic*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1977.

ROHR, R.,*Job and the Mystery of Suffering*, New York: Crossroad 1996.

SCHILLEBEEKX, E.,*Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord*, New York: Crossroad 1980.

———,*For the Sake of the Gospel*, New York: Sheed and Ward 1986.

SCHILLING, S. P.,*God and Human anguish*, Nashville: Abingdon Press 1997.

SIMMUNDSON, D.J., "Suffering" in *Anchor Bible Dictionary IV,* D.N. Freedman – *al*., ed., New York: Doubleday 1992*,* 219 – 225.

SMITH, G. V., "Prophet; Prophecy", in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia III,* G.W. Bromiley – *al*., ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company 1988, 986-1004.

SNAITH, N.,*The Book of Job: Its Origin and Purpose*, Naperville: Alec R. Allenson 1968.

TALBERT, C.H.,*Learning Through suffering: The Educative Value of Suffering in the New Testament and its Milieu*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press 1991.

TATE, M. E., "Psalms" *Word Biblical Commentary*, Dallas, Texas: Word Books 1990.

THIEL, J.E.,*God, Evil, and Innocent Suffering: A Theological Reflection,* New York: Crossroad 2002.

TSEVAT, M., "The Meaning of the Book of Job", *Hebrew Union College Annu*al 37 (1966) 73 – 106.

VRIEZEN, T.C., "The Nature of the Knowledge of God", in *The Flowering of Old Testament Theology*, B.C. Ollenburger – E.A Martens – G.F. Hasel, ed., Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrains 1992, 79-99.

WEINANDY, T.G.,*Does God suffer?,* Edinburg: T&T Clark 2000.

WEISER, A.,*The Old Testament: Its formation and Development*, New York: Association Press 1961.

WESTERMANN, C.,*The Structure of the Book of Job*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1981.

WILLIAMS, J.G., "You have not spoken Truth of Me", *Zeitschrift fur die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 83 (1971) 231 – 255.

WILSON, G.H., "Job", *New International Biblical Commentary*, R.L. Hubbard – R.K. Johnston, ed., MAssachessetts: Hendrickson Publishers 2007.

ZENGER, E.,*Psalms 2*, ed. K. Baltzer, Minneapolis: Augsburg 2005.