

The Structure and Purpose of the Book of Job

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It is common knowledge that the Book of Job is universally admired as a literary masterpiece in world literature. Although most of the superlatives have been exhausted to describe its

literary excellence, it seems to defy more than a superficial analysis.¹ There has been little agreement with regard to the purpose and message of the book. This article will seek to delineate the literary structure of the Book of Job in order to determine the major purpose of the book. The goal is to demonstrate how the author of Job utilized certain key themes in developing the purpose and message of the book.

Literary Structure

The unity of the Book of Job will be assumed in the analysis of its literary structure. It is believed that each component of the book has a necessary place in the overall design and argument of Job.²

Job is a complex literary work in which there has been a skillful wedding of poetry and prose and a masterful mixture of several literary genres.³ The basic structure of Job consists of a prose framework (the prologue in chapters 1 and 2, and the epilogue in 42:7-17) which encloses an intricate poetic body.⁴ The prologue very concisely narrates how God's servant Job lost his family and his wealth in a rapid-fire succession of catastrophic events. Then it relates that when Job's health was removed his wife urged him to curse God and die. Job's three

friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, arrived to comfort Job who remained firm in his devotion to God in the midst of his intense suffering. The reader is taken behind the scenes and informed that the reason for these events is that God was permitting Satan to afflict Job in order to test the motivation for Job's piety. This is done by rapidly alternating between the earthly setting and the heavenly court.

The poetic body (3:1-42:6) begins with a personal lament by Job (chap. 3) in which he curses the day of his birth. This introductory soliloquy corresponds to the final soliloquy by Job (chaps. 29-31), and particularly to chapter 31 (his oath of innocence) which includes a self-curse: These two soliloquies enclose three cycles of disputations (*Streitgesprache*) between Job and his three friends. A cycle consists of speeches by the three friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, in that order) which are interspersed by a reply of Job to each speech.

This pattern is followed for the first two cycles of speeches (chapters 4-14 and 15-21) but breaks down in the third cycle (when Zophar fails to speak following Job's response to Bildad (chap. 26)).⁵ Rather than subjectively attempting to restore the allegedly jumbled text, one should recognize that this alteration of structure contributes to the development of the argument of the book. There are two basic lines of interaction which run through Job--Job's crying out to God and Job's disputations with his three friends. The absence of the third speech of Zophar is consistent with the fact that each of the speeches of the three friends is progressively shorter in each cycle and that Job's responses to each of the friends (which also are progressively shorter) are longer than the corresponding speech of the friends. This seems to signify Job's verbal victory over Zophar and the other two friends.⁶ It is also indicative of the bankruptcy and futility of dialogue when both Job and the three friends assume the retribution dogma⁷ (which for the friends implies Job's guilt and for Job implies God's injustice). Consequently, this structural design marks a very gradual swing toward a focus on Job's relationship and interaction with God in contrast to the earlier primary interaction between Job and his friends.⁸

This swing toward an emphasis on Job's dispute with God continues in chapters 27-31. Following a possible pause in which Job waited in vain for Zophar's third response,⁹ Job concluded his words to the friends in chapter 27 by collectively addressing them¹⁰ and declaring that they had failed to convince

him that he was a sinner who deserved his calamity.¹¹ Chapter 28, a wisdom hymn, may be a kind of interlude which marks the transition between the two major parts of the poetic body--the previous dialogue between Job and his friends, and the forthcoming long discourses by Job (chaps. 29-31), Elihu (chaps. 32-37), and God (chaps. 38-41) which are almost monologues.¹² Chapters 29-31 are comprised of Job's soliloquies¹³ in which he longs for his past blessed state of prosperity (chap. 29) and laments his present state of misery because of God's afflictions (chap. 30, which includes an aside to God in direct speech--vv. 21-23). The concluding chapter (31) consists of Job's loath of innocence (common in ancient Near Eastern juridical cases) in the form of a negative confession complete with self-imprecations.¹⁴ Job concludes the chapter with a legal indictment against God to present his charges in writing (31:35-37). The result is a pregnant expectation of God's response.

However, the Elihu speeches (chaps. 32-37), which seemingly interrupt the argument of the book,¹⁵ actually set the stage for the Yahweh speeches. Elihu appears as a type of mediator (an impartial witness) who speaks on behalf of God (36:2)¹⁶ by rebuking the three friends (cf. 32:3, 6-14; 34:2-15; cf. 35:4) and by suggesting that Job needed to repent of his pride which developed because of his suffering (cf. 33:17; 35:12-16). He recommended that Job should exalt God's works which are evident in nature (36:24-37:18) and fear Him who comes in golden splendor out of the north (37:22-24).¹⁷ These basic ideas of Elihu are either assumed or developed by the Lord in His speeches.

The climax to the Book of Job appears in the symmetrical Yahweh speeches (38:1-42:6)--the two divine speeches with Job's two responses--which are the culmination of the skillfully designed poetic body of the book.¹⁸ This pericope is comprised of two divine speeches (each of which is also divided into two principal parts) and two human responses. The precise symmetrical arrangement is illustrated in a comparison of the two "rounds" of divine-human interaction (see the following chart).

Thus except for the summary challenge in 40:2 for Job to respond (introduced by a transitional editorial remark), these two rounds are perfectly symmetrical in basic structure. That no summary challenge was needed at the end of the Lord's second speech is indicative that Job's second response (42:1-6) was a willing one in contrast to his initial reluctant reply (40:3-5).

	First Round (38: 1-40:5)	Second Round (40:6--42:6)
Divine Speech	38:1-40:2	40:6--41:34
Introductory editorial note	38:1	40:6
Thematic challenge	38:2-3	40:7-14
Main body (in two principal parts)	38:4-38 (Inanimate creation) 38:39-39:30 (Animate creation)	(Behemoth) 40:15-24 41:1-34 (Leviathan)
(Transitional editorial note)	40:1	--
Summary challenge	40:2	--
Human Response	40:3-5	42:1-6
Introductory editorial note	40:3	42:1
Reply per se	40:4-5	42:2-6

The epilogue (42:7-17) in prose is basically a counterbalance to the prologue. In the prologue Job offered intercessory sacrifices for his family; in the epilogue he offered an intercessory prayer for his three friends. In the former God commended Job as being of blameless character; in the latter God gave a qualified commendation of Job's words in contrast to the three friends. The prologue narrates the removal of Job's family, prosperity, and health, whereas the epilogue relates the restoration of Job's family and health and a doubling of his former wealth.

However, both Satan and Job's wife (who are prominent in the prologue as agents of evil who try to get Job to curse God)¹⁹ are intentionally omitted in the epilogue. This deliberate omission emphasizes a major teaching of the book, namely, that man's relationship to God is not a "give-and-get" bargain nor a business contract of mutual benefit.²⁰

Purpose of the Book

STATEMENT OF THE PURPOSE

It is this writer's belief that the purpose of the Book of Job is *to show that the proper relationship between God and man is based solely on the sovereign grace of God and man's response of faith and submissive trust.*

This involves (in a negative fashion) the refutation of "retribution theology" (a dogmatic employment of the concept of divine retribution so that there was an automatic connection between deed and state of being) and its corollary that man's relationship to God is a business contract of mutual claims that is binding in court. This statement of purpose involves the assumption that the relationship between God and man is the basic problem of the book.²¹ Although there are several sub-themes which have been cited by scholars as the main theme,²² it is the belief of this writer that only the basis of the proper relationship between God and man sufficiently encompasses these subthemes and qualifies, therefore, as the central focus of the book.

This problem is articulated in the prologue where Satan challenges the basis for Job's piety by claiming that he served God only for profit (i.e., because he prospers--see 1:9-11; 2:4-5).²³ Satan's challenge is reinforced by the fact that Job's wife urged Job to curse God and die (2:9). That Job refused to curse God (2: 10) was graphic testimony that his worship was genuine and that Satan's allegation was false.²⁴

Thus Job's suffering as an innocent party was not the main focus but was introduced only as a means of isolating and intensifying the question of the proper basis of man's relationship to God.²⁵

KEY THEMES

Certain key themes are employed by the author to serve the purpose of the book and to assist in developing its argument. Perhaps the most important theme is the doctrine of divine retribution which pervades the Book of Job. Other main motifs which are utilized include the concept of a "mediator" and the persistent employment of creation and of legal metaphors. These major motifs relate to the purpose of the Book of Job.²⁶ (The concept of a "mediator" will be mentioned in conjunction with legal metaphors since it seems to be employed in such a context.) The dogma of divine retribution. The principle of divine retribution, which is operative in some portions of the Old Testament,²⁷ and which lay at the core of ancient Near Eastern religions,²⁸ became a dogma for Job's friends. Because the validity of this principle (namely, that Yahweh the righteous Judge rewards the righteous with prosperity and punishes the wicked with calamity) had become an unquestioned dogma with no

exceptions, it was automatically assumed that all suffering was caused by sin.

Eliphaz and Bildad asserted that since God, who is an impartial judge, did not punish the upright man nor preserve the evildoer, Job's suffering was a sign of hidden sin (see 4:7-11; 5:8-16; 8:3, 11-22; cf. 18:5-21). Thus it seemed evident to the three friends that Job was a sinner who needed to repent of his sins and to become piously obedient so that God would bless him again (see 22:4-11, 21-30, for Eliphaz's words and 11:13-20 for Zophar's similar sentiment). Bildad also stated that Job's children were killed as punishment for their sins (8:4). Both Eliphaz (15:17-35) and Zophar (20:4-29) argued from experience and the traditional wisdom of old²⁹ that Job's initial prosperity was explained by the accepted idea that the wicked enjoy only temporary prosperity and bliss before God metes out retributive judgment.

Because of the friends' unquestioned acceptance of the dogma of divine retribution, they were championing the view that the basis of the relationship between God and man was "God's impartial, retributive justice and man's pious fear of God."³⁰ As man related to God in obedient piety, so God would bless him. As in Satan's challenge of Job's motive for serving God, the demarcation between piety and prosperity became blurred.³¹ Job patiently denied the accusation of the three friends that he was guilty of sin for which he was being recompensed; he openly questioned the validity of the dogma of divine retribution because of the prosperity of the wicked (21:31).³² Yet it is ironic that because Job accused God of injustice in order to maintain his own righteousness (see 40:8)--operating on the assumption that God was punishing him for sin, though unjustly--he was unconsciously retaining the dogma of divine retribution.³³ Because of this, Job could not harmonize his suffering with God's being an impartial judge. Rather, Job conceived of God as being an arbitrary and capricious Sovereign who abused His power (9:15-24; 12:13-25) and who maliciously treated innocent Job as a personal enemy (13:24-27; 16:7-17; 19:7-12). As a consequence of his suffering, Job viewed man's relationship to God as being based on God's sovereign caprice; therefore man could hope for happiness only by adhering to an ethical rightness superior to God's whereby he could demand vindication (Job 31; cf. 35:2b).³⁴ Although Elihu was closer to the truth than the three friends because he seems to have sensed that Job was guilty of pride

(33:17; cf. 35:12 and 36:9)³⁵ and emphasized suffering as mainly remedial in purpose (cf. 33:16-30; 36:8-12),³⁶ he also was wrong in assuming that Job was guilty of sin before his suffering (34:37) in order to defend God's justice.³⁷ The explanation for this reasoning was Elihu's failure to divorce himself from the dogma of divine retribution (see 34:11,25-27; cf. 34:33; 36:17; 37:13). However, Elihu was right in pointing out the fallacious nature of Job's position which implied that God owed man something for his righteousness (35:3-8).³⁸

Although a major thrust of the Lord's speeches (38:1-40:2; 40:6-41:34) was to polemicize against all potential rivals to His lordship over the cosmos,³⁹ there is also a subtle refutation of the dogma of divine retribution. Although granting that the control of chaotic forces of evil (which in some instances is inherent in the design of the universe--38:12-15) is somewhat consistent with the principle of divine retribution,⁴⁰ God demonstrates that the universe is not always geared to this principle. Rain, which not infrequently appears in the Bible as a vehicle of reward and punishment (cf. Job 37:13 [NIV] and 5:10), is inherently designed to fall on the desert where it has no relevance for man (38:26).⁴¹ In Job 41: 11 (3)⁴² the Lord may be refuting Job's apparent contention that God's relationship to man was a juridical relationship in which God was obligated to repay him.⁴³

The epilogue, which records the restoration of Job and a twofold recompense of his prosperity (42:10, 12-17), seems, at first glance, to confirm the doctrine of divine retribution. However, in actuality this restoration was not a reward or payment but a free gift based solely on God's sovereign grace.⁴⁴ This is clear from the import of the Lord's speeches and from the fact that Job's original prosperity was not directly related to his piety.⁴⁵

The Book of Job shows that only by dispensing with the traditional dogma of divine retribution was it possible to reconcile Job's innocence with God's permitting him to suffer.⁴⁶ The refutation of this dogma aids in the demolition of its corollary (which undergirds ancient Near Eastern religions) that man's relationship to God is based on a juridical claim. Consequently, it complements the purpose of Job which is to demonstrate the only proper basis for the relationship between God and man. Creation motif. During Job's lament in which he cursed the day of his birth and deplored its creation (i.e., wishing that he had never been born [3:1-10] or that he had died at birth

[3:11-19]), he summons the agents of chaos to annihilate that created day in order that he might live in peace (3:8-10). Job seems to have employed an anti-creation motif in which he wishes for the reversal of creation.⁴⁷ This motif was apparently utilized to emphasize the depths of his despair and the intensity of his anguish as a result of his abrupt transition from a life of bliss to a mere agonizing existence. Because life and creation had become hopeless and inexplicable to him, he preferred to abandon the created order to the confines of Sheol (nonexistence) (cf. 7:15-16, 21).⁴⁸

Forrest has cogently argued that the reason Job desired nonexistence was his lack of perception of his own relationship to God or to the universe (i.e., Job's belonging within the universe). Thus Forrest has suggested that since creation must "somehow be explicable to him to be worthy of credence (i.e., illustrative of the divine-human relationship in a comprehensible manner so that Job would want to live in the universe)," creation provides the scenario for Job's basic inquiries into the nature of God's relationship to man.⁴⁹ The evidence from the text seems to support this hypothesis,

Job said that the wondrous acts of God in nature are inexplicable to him. He could not perceive God's nature⁵⁰ in these sovereign works (see 9:10-12; cf, 26:14 and perhaps chap, 28). Rather, God's sovereign control of nature (creation) appeared to -. indicate an arbitrary abuse of power and wisdom (9:12, 14-24; 12:13-25; cf. 30:18-23).⁵¹ At the same time, Job appeals to nature to be a witness for him of the obvious injustices of God against him (12:7-10; 16:18-19) and of his own ethical purity (see 31:8, 12, 38-40).⁵²

This latter tactic of Job was diametrically opposed to the friends' appeal to creation to support their theory of retributive justice as the basis of God's relationship to man (Eliphaz in 4:9-11; Zophar in 20:27-29; and Bildad in 22: 15-18 [cf. vv. 19-20]; cf. also 5:8-16), Eliphaz advised that if Job would submit under God's corrective punishment, even the wild animals (as chaotic forces opposed to man) would be at peace with him (5:23).

Elihu's speeches include a lengthy section on God's; sovereign and benevolent dealings in nature (36:26-37:24).⁵³ Elihu cited these acts of God as proof that God's sovereign power and justice are beyond man's comprehension. (Thus he apparently empathized with Job's failure to perceive God's

nature in creation. Although Elihu acknowledged that God used nature for His retributive purposes (37:13, NIV) and that nature is sometimes in chaotic opposition to man (37:6-7), he argued that the proper response of man to the sovereign (though inexplicably just) God is reverential trust (37:23-24). In this advice to Job from creation, Elihu prepared the way for the Lord's speeches. The Lord's speeches (which are saturated with the creation motif) demonstrate that God's sovereign cosmic power was not the retributive justice (as the friends had argued) nor the "uncontrolled caprice" (as Job had perceived it) of an impersonal cosmos, but rather the majestic omnipotence and mysterious creative genius of a personal and gracious God.⁵⁴ The absence of a reference to the creation of man is part of a polemic against Job (and man in general) which has as one purpose to show that God was not obligated to Job's defiant demand for vindication because of his ethical righteousness (cf. 41:11 [3]).⁵⁵ God could not be manipulated or coerced like the impotent and immanent gods of the ancient Near East.

Because of Job's perception of this and of God's active participation in creation, Job responded in repentance and trust (42:2-3, 5-6).⁵⁶ Thus it is clear that the Book of Job teaches that the basis of the relationship between God and man is not one of mutual benefit or of a juridical obligation which binds God; rather, it is to be based on the Lord's sovereign "creative, life-affirming, joyous grace and of man's open, joyous trust"⁵⁷ in Him.

Legal metaphors. The Book of Job extensively employs legal terms and metaphors in the process of its dialogue concerning the disputed innocence of Job before God. That the dialogue is saturated with judicial terminology is quite consistent with the prominent role Job had previously played in the legal affairs of his town (29:7-17).⁵⁸ The use of legal metaphor also plays a part in illustrating the proper basis for man's relationship to God. Scholnick's valuable study of the legal terminology in the Book of Job has demonstrated that the terms **נָקָה**, **טָהֵר**, **יָבֵן**, and **נִצָּה** (which can be employed in the Old Testament in the sphere of worship--"pure, clean"--or in the sphere of the court--"innocent, free of legal claim") are employed in Job almost exclusively in a forensic context to explore the question of Job's legal status, both before God and in his community.⁵⁹ Other legal terms employed include **יָשָׁר** (1:1,8; 2:3; 8:6; 23:7), **צָדִיק** (which is used by each speaker, e.g., 6:29; 8:6; 9:15, 20; 11:2; 22:3; 35:2, 7-8; 40:8) and **תְּמִים** (1:1, 8; 2:3; 27:5; 31:6).⁶⁰

Perhaps the most significant single legal term used is the root **רִיב** which is used eleven times in Job (seven times as a verb --9:3; 10:2; 13:8, 19; 23:6; 33:13; 40:2; and four times as a noun --13:6; 29:16; 31:13, 35). As a verb in the Old Testament, it means "to make a complaint or accusation (by engaging in hostile unilateral speech activity) against an aggrieving party." As a noun, it denotes "a complaint or accusation by an aggrieved party against one held responsible for a grievance."⁶¹ Although the word **רִיב** in the Old Testament sometimes describes a dispute outside court, it is used in Job solely in a legal sense as a metaphor to portray a "lawsuit" between Job and God.⁶²

This idea of a man going to court with God is unprecedented in the Old Testament.⁶³ Thus at first Job was somewhat dubious that he could raise litigation with God (9:3; cf. 9: 16) since he views God as a sovereign and unjust judge who has abused His authority (9: 19-24, 28; 23:7). But Job insists that God make His charges as a legal opponent rather than His verdict as an unjust judge (10:2).⁶⁴ Job's legal plight before God, who is simultaneously his legal adversary⁶⁵ and his judge, accentuates the urgency (and yet the hopelessness) of Job's cry for a neutral party to hear his case.⁵⁶

The concept of a mediator (or neutral party) is introduced in Job 9:33 where Job wished for an impartial **מוֹכֵיץ** to arbitrate a settlement between God and himself.⁶⁷ This arbitrator was probably the ancient Near Eastern judge whose "verdict" was probably no more than a "settlement proposal" which could be accepted or rejected by the parties involved.⁶⁸ Job's appeal for an impartial trial is continued in 13:7-12 where he accused the three friends of being partial witnesses on God's behalf who argue His case for Him.⁶⁹ The theme of a mediator (or arbitrator) is continued in 16:18-21. Job expressed confidence that surely someone in heaven was his witness or advocate (v. 19, which uses **עֵד** followed by its Aramaic equivalent **עֵדָא**).⁷⁰ The context (especially v. 21) supports the NIV translation of **מְלִיצִי** (v. 20) as "intercessor": "My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend.

Similar to Job's plea for an impartial "go-between" (9:33) and his confidence of a heavenly witness or intercessor (16: 18-21) is his confident assertion that his **גַּאֵל** was alive (19:25). Because of the acknowledged complex difficulties and the diverse interpretations of Job 19:25-27,⁷² it is impossible to speak

dogmatically about verse 25. However, because of the widespread usage of the legal metaphor in Job, it seems likely that Job spoke metaphorical of the **לְנִסְיָא** as one who was “helper in a lawsuit to see that justice was done to his protegee”⁷³ (cf. Ps. 119:154; Prov. 23:11; Jer. 50:34; Lam. 3:58). Job's thinking seems to have progressed somewhat from the thought of a mere impartial arbitrator (9:33) to a legal advocate who could present his case and vindicate him as innocent before God (cf. 16:18-21). Consequently it appears unlikely that Job conceived of his “kinsman redeemer” (or legal advocate) as being God Himself. Rather, by using the legal metaphor Job expressed his conviction that he would be vindicated as innocent (which in an earthly lawsuit might require a vindicator or legal advocate).

The point in Job 19:25 is that just as there is a vindicator in an earthly lawsuit, so in Job's dispute with God there must also be one who intercedes for him, but it does not make clear who this vindicator might be. Accordingly, what we have here is an inexact statement: Job wishes to express the conviction that he must be acquitted in the end, and he clothes this thought in the figurative language of the lawsuit: someone must vindicate him to prove his innocence.⁷⁴

However, in light of Job's legal plight in which God is both judge and legal opponent, Job realized that his hope for an impartial judge was futile. Thus Job could only wish for someone to hear him (31:35). (Possibly the concept of an impartial judge [or arbiter] is continued here.)⁷⁵

Elihu, who stated that he would be an impartial witness (32:21-22),⁷⁶ suggested that if there were an angel, a **מַלְאָךְ** (a mediator or intercessor), available to Job to plead for God's clemency, actually this “mediator would be on God's side, interpreting God's will and leading Job to repentance rather than defending his integrity (33:23-30).⁷⁷

The legal metaphor often employed heretofore in the Book of Job rarely appears in the Lord's speeches (38: 1-42:6). This rare usage of legal metaphor (cf. 40:2, 8 and perhaps 38:3 which is identical to 40:7, and the absence of legal metaphor in Job's responses) which may be used ironically (in contrast to the frequent usage earlier in the book) is significant.

Although impossible to prove, it seems likely that the Lord employed the verb **אַרְבַּע** “gird up [the loins]” in a forensic sense in 38:3 (and 40:7) in order to heighten the irony of his twofold interrogation of Job.⁷⁸ A main function of the Lord's speeches is

to show the absurdity of Job's attempt to manipulate God by a "lawsuit," which assumed that his relationship to God is a juridical one. Consequently the Lord virtually ignored Job's allegations of His injustice (except for 40:8).⁷⁹

In 40:2 the Lord summarized His interrogation of Job concerning the universe by ironically asking Job, "Can he who contends with the Almighty correct (or instruct) him? Let him who accuses God answer all this" (author's translation). Yahweh ironically challenged Job to teach (or correct) Him in the matters of the universe to prove that he was equal to God and thus capable of arguing with God in court.⁸⁰

In 40:8-14 God demonstrated the fallacy of Job's impugning His justice in order to vindicate himself. The Lord's usage of **מִשְׁפָּט** (in the context of divine kingship over the universe, 40:8-10; cf. Elihu's usage in 34: 17 and 37:23) serves as a corrective to the misunderstanding of justice (**מִשְׁפָּט**) by Job and his friends. The friends viewed **מִשְׁפָּע** as God's retributive judgment on guilty Job (8:3-4; cf. Elihu's usage in 34: 11-12,23-30); Job considered **מִשְׁפָּט** as litigation in court to prove his innocence (9: 19,32; 14:3; 19:7) or the processing of a case (13: 18; 23:4; 31: 13).⁸¹ Both understandings were faulty because of an improper perception of the relationship between God and man.

This improper perception is refuted in the Book of Job. By the incongruity of the legal metaphor in which the Lord functions both as Job's judge and legal adversary and by the Lord's ignoring Job's plea for vindication (or even a trial),⁸² the Book of Job "reveals the bankruptcy of conceiving the man-God relationship along the lines of legal justice."⁸³ Thus it is the legal metaphor "which most forcefully communicates the thesis of the \ Book of Job that religious piety is not amenable to the quid pro quo principle of divine retribution."⁸⁴

Conclusion

The basic literary structure of the Book of Job (a prose framework--prologue and epilogue--which encloses the intricate poetic body) is a part of the almost architectonic symmetry of the book which is also evident in the poetic body. Three cycles of disputations between Job and his three friends are enclosed by two soliloquies of Job (chaps. 3 and 29-31). However, the fact that the symmetry is lacking at the end of the third cycle of speeches (where Zophar did not speak) focuses the reader's

attention on the futility of dialogue between Job and his friends and aids in focusing on the interaction between Job and God. It also accentuates the need to resolve the main problem of the book (which was articulated in the prologue, 1:9-11; 2:4-5), namely, the basis of the proper relationship between God and man.

Thus the main purpose of Job is to show that the proper relationship between God and man is based solely on the sovereign grace of God and man's response of faith and submissive trust. This involves (in a negative fashion) the refutation of the retribution dogma and its corollary that man's relationship to God is a business contract binding in court. Three key themes (the dogma of divine retribution, the creation motif, and legal metaphors) were expertly employed in the development of this purpose.

Notes

¹ See Henry L. Rowold, "The Theology of Creation in the Yahweh Speeches as a Solution to the Problem Posed by the Book of Job" (Th.D. diss., Concordia Seminary in Exile, 1977), p. 1.

² In order to do accurate exegesis of the Old Testament, it is necessary that one examine the extant text in its final canonical form with emphasis on synchronic analysis as opposed to diachronic analysis. The latter dissects the text in an attempt to hypothesize about the original form of the text and its transmission but never seems to put things back together again (Allen Paul Ross, "The Table of Nations in Genesis" [Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1977], pp. 14-17). One definite contribution of "structural analysis" has been its stress on dealing with the text as it is rather than preoccupation with a "dehusking" process to eliminate "what does not fit" (Robert Polzin, "The Framework of the Book of Job:" *Interpretation* 28 [1974]: 182-83). Cf. Robert Polzin, *Biblical Structuralism: Method and Subjectivity in the Study of Ancient Texts*, Semeia Supplements (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), for the nature of structuralism.

This "dehusking" procedure has been often employed (in varying degrees) on the Book of Job. The outer "folktale" is separated from the inner speeches because it contains "a patient Job.. whereas the dialogue displays an Impatient Job." The speeches of Elihu are discarded as a later insertion because they seem to contribute nothing to the argument and appear to anticipate much in the Yahweh speeches. The hymn of wisdom (chap. 28) is isolated as a foreign insertion into Job's speeches (chaps. 27-31). The literary scalpel then slices off, at least, the Behemoth and Leviathan pericopes (40:15-41:26) from the Yahweh speeches because they seem unnecessary and are "obviously" inferior to the rest of the speeches. Others have even eliminated the Yahweh speeches altogether as irrelevant. It is ironic that with regard to the Book of Job (itself a study in irony), which teaches the mysterious nature of God's ways, man attempts to judge this divine book by subjective human standards. To fall into this trap is to miss one of the main teachings of the book.

³ As Andersen has noted, the Book of Job is an amazing mixture of almost every kind of literature which is found in the Old Testament (Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976], p. 33). Besides the main genres -the lawsuit, the lament, and the controversy dialogue or dispute (see this author's forthcoming article in the July-September 1981 issue of

Bibliotheca Sacra)--many riddles, hymns, curses, and proverbs can be isolated within the various speeches of the book.)

⁴ For two Egyptian parallels to this arrangement, see Berlin papyrus 3024 and "The Protests of the Eloquent Peasant" in James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 405-10.

⁵ Many different speculative attempts have been made to juggle the speeches of the final cycle or to attribute portions of chapter 27 (Job's reply in the extant canonical book) to Zophar. This has been attempted because portions of chapter 27 (esp. vv. 13-23) seem to be more consistent with Zophar's arguments than Job's. For a concise defense of retaining all of chapter 27 as Job's speech, see Roy B. Zuck, *Job, Everyman's Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), pp. 119, 121.

⁶ The only exceptions to the rule that both the friends' and Job's speeches are progressively shorter are the second speech of Zophar (chap. 20) and the third response of Job to Eliphaz (chaps. 23 and 24). See the similar conclusion of Zuck (Job, pp. 30, 121). Cf. also *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. "Job," by Andrew Bruce Davidson and Crawford Howell Toy (reprinted in *The Voice of the Whirlwind: The Book of Job*, ed. Ralph E. Hone [San Francisco: Chandler Publishing, 1960, p. 93]). Note also the remarks by Elihu concerning the failure of the argumentation of the three friends (Job 32:3).

⁷ This dogma will be discussed later in this article.

⁸ This is not to say that Job's focus of attention was always on his friends. He was constantly either crying out to God for response (cf. 10:2-22) or making accusations against Him (16:7-17; 19:7-12; 24:1-12) but was constantly being sidetracked by the dogmatic and virtually unsympathetic speeches of the friends. From the first cycle of the dialogue onward, Job often directly addressed God (see 7: 12-21; 16:7-8; 17:3-4; and 30:20-23). Good argues that this indicates the hopelessness of appealing to God (Edwin M. Good, *Irony in the Old Testament* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965], pp. 231-32). This appears at first glance to contradict the author's own sensing of a change to a focus on Job's relationship to God. However, Job often talks about God in the third person as an enemy, etc., in these sections, which indicates the impersonal nature of God to him. After chapter 27, Job ignored the friends completely (except indirectly in 29:25) and looked to God (though indirectly) in his soliloquy.

⁹ Zuck, *Job*, p. 119.)

¹⁰ The plural personal pronoun "you" is employed in verses 5, 11, and 12 and the plural verb in verse 12 (Zuck, *Job*, p. 119).

¹¹ Moller argues that in 27:2-12 Job summarized his own basic arguments of the three cycles of speeches which he juxtaposed with the utterly nonsensical argument of the friends which he satirized in 27: 13-23 (Hans Moller, *Sinn und Aufbau des Buches Hiob* [Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1955], pp. 61-63).

¹² Andersen suggests that this interlude was written by the anonymous author of the Book of Job (*Job*, pp. 222-29). However, it is possible to understand this wisdom poem as Job's words which summed up the typical wisdom teaching he had heard all his life (to fear God and depart from evil- see 28:28, i.e., to trust and obey Yahweh because He alone has the wisdom by which the world was created and is to be governed; cf. 42:5) (Robert Laurin, "The Theological Structure, I of Job," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 84 [1972]; 86-89). This would sum up Job's stance before God (cf. 1:1,8; 2:3) in contrast to the friends' assertion that he must repent of his sins and fear God (cf. 4:6-11; 11:13-20; 15:4-5; 22:4-30). The last verse of chapter 28 (v. 28) may also serve as a fitting link to Job 29-31 wherein Job gave evidence that he had feared God (namely, his past virtues -chap. 29) and had departed from evil (his oath of innocence -chap. 31) (Zuck, *Job*, pp. 126-27).

¹³ These correspond to the initial soliloquy by Job (chap. 3).

¹⁴ Although this oath was common in ancient Near Eastern court cases, the emphatic nature of Job's oath is indicated by its length and its rare self-imprecation (Michael Brennan Dick, "The Legal Metaphor in Job 31," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 41 [1979]:42, 47). This is strikingly similar to the Egyptian "Protestation of Innocence" in chapter 125 of the Book of the Dead (Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 34-36). Because Job denied some of the charges made by Eliphaz against him (cf. 31:16-22 with 22:6-11), it is evident that he was saying to God that he was innocent of the charges brought against him by his friends.

¹⁵ These speeches have almost universally been rejected as a later insertion into the book because the flow of the book is smoother without them, because Elihu is not mentioned in the prologue or epilogue, and because of the alleged differences in literary style and vocabulary. See William Ewart Staples, *The Speeches of Elihu: A Study of Job XXXII-XXXVII*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1924), pp. 12-24. However, the present author holds that the Elihu speeches are a necessary complement to the Yahweh speeches. The speeches of Elihu, who served as a self-styled mediator in God's behalf, are assumed by Yahweh in His speeches; thus Elihu was not condemned since his arguments were essentially correct. For an excellent summary of the objections to the authenticity of the Elihu speeches followed by a rebuttal, see John Peter Lange, ed., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, 25 vols., vol. 8: *The Book of Job*, by Tayler Lewis and Otto Zockler, trans. L. J. Evans (New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1874), pp. 268-73; and H. D. Beeby, "Elihu--Job's Mediator?", *Southeast Asia Journal of Theology* 7 (October 1965):47-50. Also it seems providentially significant that three of the four manuscript fragments of Job which are extant from Qumran are portions of the Elihu speeches -namely two manuscripts from chapter 36 (4Q Joba and 4Q Job^b) yet unpublished (see Christoph Burchard, *Bibliographie zu den Handschriften von Toten Meer*, 2 vols. [Berlin: Alfred Topelmann, 1965], 2:327) and a tiny portion of 33:18-20 from Cave 2 (published by M. Baillet, J. T. Milik, and Roland de Vaux, *Les "Petites Grottes" de Qumran*, 2 vols., DJD [Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1962], 2:13 [#15], cf. 1:71).

¹⁶ This theme, which is prevalent in Job, provides a connecting link to the previous dialogue and at the same time is proleptic of Yahweh's theophany.

¹⁷ Zuck, *Job*, pp. 141-42.

¹⁸ Because the double exchange between God and Job is similar to the double exchange between God and Satan in the prologue, Andersen has suggested an unorthodox division of the Book of Job: introduction (1:1-5), speeches (1:6-42:6) and conclusion (42:7-17) (*Job*, pp. 20, 49). The speeches would be divided as follows: the interviews of Yahweh with Satan (1:6-2:13), the dialogue of Job with his friends (3:1-37:24), and the two interviews of Yahweh with Job (38:1-42:6).

¹⁹ See 1:9-12; 2:4-6, 9-10. Cf. Wilhelm Vischer, "God's Truth and Man's Lie," *Interpretation* 15 (1961):132.

²⁰ Zuck, *Job*, pp. 15, 19, 189-90. This biblical concept, which is in direct contrast to the ancient Near Eastern concept of man's relationship to God, will be developed further in the next section of this article.

²¹ Others who have recognized this as the main problem of the Book of Job include Rowold ("Theology of Creation," pp. II, 19); John W. Wevers (*The Way of the Righteous: Psalms and the Books of Wisdom* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961], p. 75. "The basic problem of Job. . . is the relation of finite man to an infinite God" [italics his]); and Robert William Edward Forrest who says that the main issue is "what, if any, is the nature of the divine-human relationship and how may a man live in this universe" ("The Creation Motif in the Book of Job" [Ph.D. diss., McMaster University, 1975], p. 20). Cf. also Good, *Irony in the Old*

Testament, pp. 197-98; Zuck, who writes that "one of the grand purposes in the book" is "to deal with motive behind worship, to demonstrate that it is possible to View life as other than a give-and-get bargain with God" (*Job*, p. 189); and Alfred von Rohr Sauer, "Salvation by Grace: The Heart of Job's Theology," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 37 (May 1966):259-70.

²² These suggestions include the significance of the suffering of the innocent, the right behavior in suffering, the refutation of the principle of divine retribution, and the meaning of faith. Rowold gives a sampling of scholars who have held to these options as the main theme of Job ("Theology of Creation," p., 18). He notes that these subthemes have hindered the recognition of the real central problem.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

²⁴ Zuck, *Job*, p. 189.

²⁵ That this is true is demonstrated by the fact that the main problem of the book was posed before suffering entered the scene and was resolved (see 38: 1-42:6) before Job's suffering was removed (Rowold, "Theology of Creation," pp. 20, 29, n. 22).

²⁶ Though these are not the only motifs used, they seem to be the most significant ones.

²⁷ This principle occurs particularly in Deuteronomy and many of the prophets.

²⁸ See the present writer's work, "A Biblical Theology of Job 38:1-42:6," (Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1980), chapter 1.

²⁹ Cf. Job 8:8-10, where Bildad also appealed to tradition to support his argument.

³⁰ Rowold, "Theology of Creation," p. 22.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² In 21: 19 Job objects to the friends' argument that God stores up punishment for a wicked man's sons by questioning why God does not recompense the wicked themselves.

³³ In Job 31:2-3 he assumes God punishes the wicked; in 19:11 and 16:9 Job's assumption that God was angry with him implies that Job subconsciously felt that God was punishing him for some unknown sin of which Job was unaware. He wished that God would reveal this to him (10:2). This is consistent with Elihu's interpretation of Job's position as believing that God owed him something (or was obligated to him) because of his righteousness (35:3: cf. Elihu's quotation in 34:9). He refuted Job's position by appealing to God's transcendence (35:4-8; cf. Eliphaz's similar understanding in 22:2-3, 12).

³⁴ Rowold, "Theology of Creation," pp. 23, 27. Two possible translations of this verse are given in the NIV and its margin. Job's hope of vindication because of his valid legal claim of righteousness assumes that he considered his relationship to God as a judiciary one in which God was obligated to repay him.

³⁵ Zuck, *Job*, p. 149. The divine analysis was that Job was guilty of hubris (after his suffering began) in his challenge of God's justice. He unconsciously became a rival to God's position as ruler of the cosmos.

³⁶ However, this angle of disciplinary suffering was also approached once by Eliphaz (see 5: 17-27). That Elihu's argument had much truth seems to be implied by Yahweh's absence of rebuke of Elihu in contrast to the three friends.

³⁷ Zuck, *Job*, pp. 148-49, 152.

³⁸ See note 33.

³⁹ This is the purpose stated in a negative fashion. See the author's, "A Biblical Theology of Job 38: 1-42:6," chapter 3.

⁴⁰ However, this may be an ironic statement which shows that the wicked are indeed not broken but only controlled. Tsevat argues that this passage teaches that no provision for retribution nor its manifestation is found in the order of the world. He says that although "the dawn of every day provides an occasion to

punish the wicked, ...this possibility is not in practice realized and is therefore not in the plan of the world" (Matitiahu Tsevat, "The Meaning of the Book of Job," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 37 [1966]:99).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 100. However, perhaps the main function is found in its implication man is not the center of the universe. This is part of the polemic against man (who is not even mentioned with respect to his creation).

⁴² The enumeration of verses in parts of Job 40 and all of chapter 41 of the Hebrew Bible differs from that in English Bibles. In this article the English verse numbers will be cited with the Hebrew counterpart in parentheses (when noted).

⁴³ See Job 35:3 and *supra*, note 33. The NIV translates 41: 11 as follows: "Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me."

⁴⁴ Rowold, "Theology of Creation," p. 29, n. 22.

⁴⁵ See note 25.

⁴⁶ According to Tsevat, Job demonstrates the impossibility of the coexistence of the three ideas of an accessible God who turns His face to man (G), Job as an innocent man (J), and the philosophy of retributive justice (R). The friends eliminated J, and Job practically gives up G in order to maintain J. Only by giving up R can the other two be reconciled ("The Meaning of the Book of Job," pp.372-73).

⁴⁷ Job seems to castigate light (3:20), the first act of creation (Gen. 1 :3-4), and wished that it would become darkness (3:4-5, 9). Also he disparaged the goodness of life (3:20), which was extolled in Gen. 1:27-31; 2:7, wishing that he had perished at birth (3: 11-19) so that he would have tranquillity in the grave (Forrest, "The Creation Motif in the Book of Job," pp. 71-73). Fishbane's argument that Job 3:3-13 is a systematic bouleversement, or reversal. of the cosmic acts of creation in Genesis 1: 1-2:4a by the use of magic spells and incantations is intriguing but lacks much evidence to support it (Michael Fishbane, "Jeremiah IV 23-26 and Job III 3-13: A Recovered Use of the Creation Pattern," *Vetus Testamentum* 21 [1971]: 153-54). It is probable that if Job had gone this far, he would have taken his wife's advice and perished or committed suicide (Forrest, "The Creation Motif in the Book of Job," pp. 68-69). However, in contrast to the "Dialogue of Pessimism" (Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 437-38, 600-601) and to the Egyptian Papyrus 3024, it is doubtful that Job ever considered suicide.

⁴⁸ Forrest, "The Creation Motif in the Book of Job," pp. 67, 74-75. 188-89. This is apparently the reason Job also identified himself with the forces of chaos (see 7:12).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 56, 67, 185; cf, p. 188. This is also a major reason the creation motif is employed in the Yahweh speeches. Job failed to see the significance of this doctrine for actual life situations.

⁵⁰ Job admitted his inability to understand God's power and knowledge especially as manifested in creation. Apparently he could not truly appreciate God's role in creation because of the overtones of arbitrariness (*ibid.*, p. 82).

⁵¹ Because of God's sovereign comprehensive power which includes even Sheol, Job had to abandon his wish for safety in Sheol as mere fancy (cf. 26:5-14).

⁵² This may be explainable in light of the ancient Near Eastern concept of the unity of the natural cosmos with the moral cosmos and the cosmos as a whole. See the author's "A Biblical Theology of Job 38:1-42:6," chapter 1.

⁵³ Zuck, *Job*, pp. 158-62.

⁵⁴ Rowold, "Theology of Creation," pp. 168, 171. I

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 168. I

⁵⁶ Job was shown the inconsistency of his theoretical knowledge of God's sovereignty and his haughty actions against God. The root cause was Job's faulty perception of Yahweh's sovereignty cf. notes 33 and 45).

⁵⁷ Rowold, "Theology of Creation," p. 183.

⁵⁸ Sylvia Huberman Scholnick, "Lawsuit Drama in the Book of Job.. (Ph.D. f diss., Brandeis University, 1975), pp. vi, 103-04. i

⁵⁹ These four terms are employed in the speeches of all characters except God. Few exceptions occur to this forensic usage: **רָצַח** in the context of sanitation in 9:30 and in an "astrological" context in 15: 15 and 25:5, and **טָהַר** in a metallurgical context (28:19) and in an "astrological" sense in 37:21 (ibid.. pp. 3-4). In some cases it is man in general whose lack of legal innocence before God is mentioned (e.g., 25:4), but this is ultimately done to explore Job's innocence or guilt.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 3.

⁶¹ See *ibid*" pp, 109-10, and cf. James Limburg, "The Root **רָצַח** and the Prophectic Lawsuit Speeches," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88 (1969):291-304, esp. 293-96, 301.

⁶² In all but two instances Job is the speaker, Also in two instances Job describes his previous judicial activity in the city gate (29: 16 and 31: 13). Scholnick's suggestion that Job is a "lawsuit drama" is not comprehensive enough to explain the multifaceted genres employed in Job. Scholnick overlooks the possibility that the Yahweh speeches may discontinue the legal metaphor, See the author's forthcoming article in the July-September 1981 issue of *Bibliotheca Sacra*.

⁶³ However, a servant could litigate against his master (Job 31: 13) or a subject against his king (1 Sam. 24:8-22). See Scholnick, "Lawsuit Drama," p. 132. This unprecedented act perfectly illustrates Job's audacity and hubris for which he must repent.

⁶⁴ See Scholnick, "Lawsuit Drama," pp, 133, 136, and Dick, "The Legal Metaphor," p. 50,

⁶⁵ In Job 31:35 God is called Job's **אִישׁ רִיב** (literally, "man of complaint"), a technical term for a legal adversary (see Judg, 12:2; Isa. 41:11; Jer. 15:10) (Limburg, "The Root **רָצַח**," p. 298); cf. Scholnick, "Lawsuit Drama," p. 149.

⁶⁶ See Dick, "The Legal Metaphor," p. 50.

⁶⁷ The NIV has suggested this nuance of the word.

⁶⁸ Dick, "The Legal Metaphor," p. 46. Veenker gives a summary of scholars who favor this as the function of the ancient Near Eastern judge and of those who question it (Ronald A. Veenker, "An Old Babylonian Legal Procedure for Appeal," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 45 [1974]:4, n. 14).

The concept of an intermediary figure to advocate his case before God is reminiscent of one role of the personal god in the ancient Near East. For thorough documentation of this intermediary role of the personal god in Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, and Syria-Palestine, see Hermann Vorlander, *Mein Gott: Die Vorstellungen vom persönlichen Gott im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament*, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: NeukirchenerVerlag, 1975), pp. 87-90, 132-34, 162-63. Although it is impossible to prove, it maybe that this concept could have surfaced in Job's mind for an instant. However, Job's monotheistic conviction (cf. 31 :26-28) would have prevented him from seriously considering such a possibility (Marvin H. Pope, *Job: Introduction, Translation and Notes*, 3d ed., *The Anchor Bible* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1973], ; p.76).

⁶⁹ Scholnick argues that Job summoned the friends to act as judges and witnesses, a role which apparently was not clearly differentiated ("Lawsuit Drama," p. 138). In Job 31 :21 Job himself spoke of his having previous legal help in his city court.

⁷⁰ Cf. the NIV, and see Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 962.

⁷¹ Job 16:20-21, NIV. Less likely (but possible) is the understanding of **מְלִיצֵי** as

"scoffer" or "one who mocks" Job. Cf. NASB and the NIV margin. For the nuance "mediator" or "intercessor," see Job 33:23.

⁷² For an introduction to some of the difficulties, see the recent helpful work of William Modawell Kruidenier, "The Interpretation and Theological Contribution of Job 19:25-27" (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1978), esp. pp. 2-10.

⁷³ Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, s. v. "לְגַלְגַל," by Helmer Ringgren, 2.352.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 355. It might be argued that verses 26-27, which mention Job's seeing God, indicate that the לְגַלְגַל Job expected was God. But since the legal

advocate or vindicator (לְגַלְגַל) as previously sought for (9:33 and 16: 18-21) was to be an impartial middle party between Job and God. the לְגַלְגַל need not be (indeed probably is not) synonymous with God. Although it is unlikely that Job conceived of God per se as his לְגַלְגַל, this is not to say, in the final analysis, that God was not his לְגַלְגַל (in Job 42:7 Job was vindicated to some extent). Also, in light of the New Testament (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:25; 8:6; 9: 15; 12:24), Zuck is undoubtedly correct in stating that Job's "longed-for Arbiter (9:33), Witness-Advocate (16:19)" and "living Redeemer-Vindicator" (19:25) was the person "whom we know as Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (*Job*, p. 92). However, one must be carefullest he should be guilty of imposing the New Testament back onto the Old Testament by saying dogmatically that Job knew who his לְגַלְגַל was.

⁷⁵ In light of Job's oath of innocence in chapter 31 (a common juridical procedure in the ancient Near East), Dick has suggested that the participle is the equivalent of מוֹכֵחַ (9:33), the arbitration-judge. Second Samuel 15:3-4 may indicate that this person "was an official appointed by the king to mediate legal disputes" (Dick, "The Legal Metaphor," pp. 47-48). The forensic usage of the cognates of שָׁפַט to designate the activity of a judge (as documented by Scholnick, "Lawsuit Drama," pp. 188-89) seems to confirm this.

⁷⁶ Because Elihu was apparently a mere bystander from the beginning (or a silent observer who came on the scene a little later than the friends), he qualified to be more neutral and objective in the dispute than either Job or his friends. Thus Elihu appears to serve as a type of arbiter who recommends a settlement. The fact that he was not actually a part of the dispute may explain why he was not rebuked (nor mentioned) by God in the epilogue nor mentioned earlier in the book. Beeby suggests that Elihu was Job's "covenant mediator" necessary for Job, a non-Israelite, to know God face-to-face ("Elihu--Job's Mediator," pp. 42, 48).

⁷⁷ Norman Habel, "Only the Jackal Is My Friend," *Interpretation* 31 (1977):235. It is ironic that Job himself played the role of an intercessor in 42:8-9 when he prayed for his three friends at the Lord's beckoning.

⁷⁸ It is possible that belt-wrestling as an ordeal in court (as found in a Nuzu tablet in which it was proscribed by the judges) lay behind the usage of 'ל~ as a legal metaphor (Cyrus H. Gordon, "Belt-Wrestling in the Bible World," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 23 [1950-51]: 131-36, esp. 134-36). Contrast Zuck, *Job*, p. 165, n. 6. The present author considers forensic overtones probable for 'ל~ because of the ironic usage of the legal metaphor in 40:2 and because of the function of the Yahweh speeches in showing that man's relationship to God is not a juridical one.

⁷⁹ Zuck, *Job*, p. 163.

⁸⁰ מוֹכֵחַ ("the one who accuses or argues") is probably a "pun on Job 9:33 which prepares the way for the Lord's suggestion that Job had tried to be his own "mediator" or "redeemer" (esp. 40: 14).

⁸¹ Scholnick, "Lawsuit Drama," p. 265.

⁸² This is heightened by the infrequent (and ironic) usage of legal terminology in the Yahweh speeches (see nn. 79 and 80, and cf. nn. 59 and 62).

⁸³ Dick, "The Legal Metaphor," p. 50.

⁸⁴ Ibid. See also Job 41: 11 (NIV).

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The Book of Job: God's Answer to the Problem of Undeserved Suffering. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982. Baker, Wesley C. More than a man Can Take: A Study of Job. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966. Barnes, Albert. Notes, Critical, Illustrative, and Practical, on the Book of Job. 2 vols. Glasgow: Blackie & Son, 1847. Reprint. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950. Blackwood, Andrew W., Jr. Out of the Whirlwind. What was the Purpose of Job? Why did Job or whoever it was write this book? Knowing that all Scripture is God-breathed we can actually ask, why did God write this book? Was it to explain the problem of suffering? Was it to comfort those who are suffering? Why did Job have to suffer so much since he strived to live a holy life? Jack Wellman is Pastor of the Mulvane Brethren Church in Mulvane Kansas. Jack is also the Senior Writer at What Christians Want To Know whose mission is to equip, encourage, and energize Christians and to address questions about the believer's daily walk with God and the Bible. You can follow Jack on Google Plus or check out his book Teaching Children the Gospel available on Amazon. Tagged with: Bible Answers. Purpose of Writing: The Book of Job helps us to understand the following: Satan cannot bring financial and physical destruction upon us unless it is by God's permission. God has power over what Satan can and cannot do. It is beyond our human ability to understand the "why's" behind all the suffering in the world. God remains enough, and He deserves and requests our love and praise in all circumstances of life. Key Verses. Job 1:1, "In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil." Job 1:21, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." Job 38:1-2, "Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm.