



BAKER COMMENTARY
on the OLD TESTAMENT
WISDOM AND PSALMS

Tremper Longman III, EDITOR

Job

Tremper Longman III



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WISDOM AND PSALMS

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Series Preface

At the end of the book of Ecclesiastes, a wise father warns his son concerning the multiplication of books: “Furthermore, of these, my son, be warned. There is no end to the making of many books!” (12:12). The targum to this biblical book characteristically expands the thought and takes it in a different, even contradictory, direction: “My son, take care to make many books of wisdom without end.”

When applied to commentaries, both statements are true. The past twenty years have seen a significant increase in the number of commentaries available on each book of the Bible. However, for those interested in grappling seriously with the meaning of the text, such proliferation should be seen as a blessing rather than a curse. No single commentary can do it all. In the first place, commentaries reflect different theological and methodological perspectives. We can learn from others who have a different understanding of the origin and nature of the Bible, but we also want commentaries that share our fundamental beliefs about the biblical text. Second, commentaries are written with different audiences in mind. Some are addressed primarily to laypeople, others to clergy, and still others to fellow scholars. A third consideration, related to the previous two, is the subdisciplines the commentator chooses to draw from to shed light on the biblical text. The possibilities are numerous, including philology, textual criticism, genre/form criticism, redaction criticism, ancient Near Eastern background, literary conventions, and more. Finally, commentaries differ in how extensively they interact with secondary literature, that is, with what others have said about a given passage.

The Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms has a definite audience in mind. We believe the primary users of commentaries are scholars, ministers, seminary students, and Bible study leaders. Of these groups, we have most in mind clergy and future clergy, namely, seminary students. We have tried to make the commentary accessible to nonscholars by putting most

of the technical discussion and interaction with secondary literature in the footnotes. We do not mean to suggest that such information is unimportant. We simply concede that, given the present state of the church, it is the rare layperson who will read such technical material with interest and profit. We hope we are wrong in this assessment, and if we are not, that the future will see a reverse in this trend. A healthy church is a church that nourishes itself with constant attention to God's words in Scripture, in all their glorious detail.

Since not all commentaries are alike, what are the features that characterize this series? The message of the biblical book is the primary focus of each commentary, and the commentators have labored to expose God's message for his people in the book they discuss. This series also distinguishes itself by restricting its coverage to one major portion of the Hebrew Scriptures, namely, the Psalms and Wisdom books (Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs). These biblical books provide a distinctive contribution to the canon. Although we can no longer claim that they are neglected, their unique content makes them harder to fit into the development of redemptive history and requires more effort to hear their distinctive message.

The book of Psalms is the literary sanctuary. Like the physical sanctuary structures of the Old Testament, it offers a textual holy place where humans share their joys and struggles with brutal honesty in God's presence. The book of Proverbs describes wisdom, which on one level is skill for living, the ability to navigate life's actual and potential pitfalls; but on another level, this wisdom presents a pervasive and deeply theological message: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. 1:7 NRSV). Proverbs also raises a disturbing issue: the sages often motivate wise behavior by linking it to reward, but in reality, bad things happen to good people, the wise are not always rewarded as they expect. This raises the question of the justice of God. Both Job and Ecclesiastes struggle with the apparent disconnect between God's justice and our actual life experience. Finally, the Song of Songs is a passionate, sensuous love poem that reminds us that God is interested in more than just our brains and our spirits; he wants us to enjoy our bodies. It reminds us that we are not merely a soul encased in a body but whole persons made in God's image.

Limiting the series to the Psalms and Wisdom books has allowed us to tailor our work to the distinctive nature of this portion of the canon. With some few exceptions in Job and Ecclesiastes, for instance, the material in these biblical books is poetic and highly literary, and so the commentators have highlighted the significant poetic conventions employed in each book. After an introduction discussing important issues that affect the interpretation of the book (title, authorship, date, language, style, text, ancient Near Eastern background, genre, canonicity, theological message, connection to the New Testament, and structure), each commentary proceeds section by section through the biblical text. The authors provide their own translation, with explanatory notes when necessary, followed by a substantial interpretive section

(titled “Interpretation”) and concluding with a section titled “Theological Implications.” In the interpretation section, the emphasis is on the meaning of the text in its original historical setting. In the theological implications section, connections with other parts of the canon, both Old and New Testament, are sketched out along with the continuing relevance of each passage for us today. The latter section is motivated by the recognition that, while it is important to understand the individual contribution and emphasis of each book, these books now find their place in a larger collection of writings, the canon as a whole, and it is within this broader context that the books must ultimately be interpreted.

No two commentators in this series see things in exactly the same way, though we all share similar convictions about the Bible as God’s Word and the belief that it must be appreciated not only as ancient literature but also as God’s Word for today. It is our hope and prayer that these volumes will inform readers and, more important, stimulate reflection on and passion for these valuable books.

Having written the Proverbs commentary in this series, I had hoped to assign Job to someone else. However, the scholars I approached to write it were already overcommitted, and Jim Kinney, editorial director at Baker Academic, urged me to write it myself. I had written on all the other wisdom books and knew I would eventually tackle Job, so I agreed to comment on the book for this series and am glad that I did. Job is a difficult book from start (translating its obscure Hebrew vocabulary) to finish (understanding its place in the canon), but it is also a profound exploration of wisdom and suffering. My hope and prayer is that this commentary will benefit others, particularly clergy, as they encounter this marvelous book.

Tremper Longman III
Robert H. Gundry Professor of Biblical Studies
Westmont College

Author's Preface

My work in wisdom literature came early in my career. I wish I could claim that my interest began with a passionate intellectual curiosity; however, that would not be true. It started when W. W. Hallo of Yale University essentially forced (strongly encouraged would probably be a more polite way of putting it) me to write a dissertation on Akkadian autobiographies. I wanted to work on Akkadian poetics, but he rightly pointed out that it would have been too speculative. He had a theory on a number of texts that he felt cohered in a single genre (he was right, of course), but this genre had subgenres, one of which was autobiographies that ended with wisdom sayings (e.g., “Cuthaeen Legend of Naram-Sin”). Hallo, to his credit, was one of only a few Assyriologists who felt it was beneficial to compare Near Eastern literature with biblical literature. To make a long story a little shorter, it turned out that this subgenre of Akkadian autobiographies had some very interesting and illuminating connections to the book of Ecclesiastes. After finishing my dissertation, I was asked to write a commentary on that biblical book, and once I studied that book, I was hooked on wisdom literature.

Job is the final wisdom book on which I have completed a commentary, and it was the toughest on many levels. First, as everyone knows who has read it in the original, the Hebrew is arguably the most difficult in the Hebrew Bible. Thus I would like to express my thanks to D. J. A. Clines. I do not always (or perhaps even often) agree with his conclusions, but he has amassed all the relevant linguistic and textual data. The design of this present commentary does not call for such extensive philological discussion, though it does require an original translation, and Clines's commentary presents the data so fully that no scholar will have to do that for another generation. Second, the subject matter of the book of Job is disturbing. The book raises important and difficult theological and practical issues, and the present series emphasizes these concerns in both the exposition sections and the theological implications sections.

The latter require some explanation. Let me be frank. Job is a repetitive book. The human participants hammer away at the same basic points. For instance, the three friends constantly insist that sin is always connected to suffering, so suffering is always the result of sin. Job, for his part, agrees with this viewpoint but says that in his case God is unjust (for more, see the introduction and throughout). To avoid some repetition, in the forty-four reflective essays, I pick up on leading, but not necessarily dominant, ideas in the various speeches and develop them for further consideration. A list of these essays appears following the table of contents. Since many of these essays are relevant to more than one portion of Job, readers may find it helpful to consult the list for topics appropriate to the particular portion of Job they are studying.

Commentaries are meant for specific readers, and this volume is no exception. The primary audience I had in mind while writing this book was composed of ministers and future ministers, that is, seminary students. Yet I hope that I have written it in a way that makes the commentary accessible to interested laypersons. I also hope that some of my scholarly colleagues will read it and offer their critique. Job is not a book for which one ever comes to a definitive and final interpretation.

Finally, I would like to offer my thanks to a number of people who have helped me write this book. First, I mention students in classes in which I taught the book over the past eight years I have been working on it. Class discussions helped me change and refine my ideas. I hope I do not forget any, and I wish I could list the individual students, but they include classes at Fuller Theological Seminary, California Coast, Ambrose University College (Calgary), Reformed Theological Seminary (DC and Orlando), Providence Theological Seminary (Winnipeg), and my upper-division Psalms and Wisdom classes at Westmont College. Second, I thank Rick Love of Ambrose University College for sharing with me his syllabus on the biblical theology of suffering; and Reed Jolley, pastor of my church, Santa Barbara Community Church, for giving me his notes on an excellent sermon on suffering based on Luke 8:40–56. Third, since I am the editor of this series, Baker Publishing used an anonymous reader (thanks, Peter Enns) to give me feedback that was very helpful. Finally, and very importantly, I appreciate Jim Kinney of Baker Academic for his continued support of my work. He is not only an excellent editor but also a good friend. Thanks, too, go to Wells Turner at Baker for making sure the manuscript turned into a good-looking and coherent book. Of course, while I was greatly helped by all the above-mentioned and others (for whom I will later kick myself for not remembering), the work in the final analysis is my own, so any errors or infelicitous interpretations should be blamed on me.

I dedicated my Proverbs commentary in this series to my first granddaughter, Gabrielle, so it is only fitting that this commentary should be dedicated to my second, my red-headed and bagel-sharing two-year-old granddaughter, Mia Katherine Longman, born to Tremper IV and Jill. Your Nanny and Poppy love

you, and though intellectually knowing that no one escapes the difficulties of this life, we are constantly praying for you and your sister to love God and enjoy life. Always remember that God loves you.

Tremper Longman III
Westmont College
Summer 2011

Abbreviations

Bibliographic and General

[]	encloses versification of the MT when it differs from the English
AEL	<i>Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings</i> , by M. Lichtheim, 3 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971–80)
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , ed. J. B. Pritchard, 3rd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969)
b.	Babylonian Talmud
BDB	F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907)
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> , ed. K. Elliger and W. Rudolph (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1967–77)
ca.	circa (about)
CHALOT	<i>A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament Based upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner</i> , ed. W. L. Holladay (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971)
chap(s).	chapter(s)
col.	column
COS	<i>Context of Scripture</i> , ed. W. W. Hallo with K. L. Younger, 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1997–2002)
CTA	<i>Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques découvertes à Ras Shamra-Ugarit de 1929 à 1939</i> , ed. A. Herdner, 2 vols. (Paris: Geuthner, 1963)
DOTWPW	<i>Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings</i> , ed. T. Longman III and P. Enns (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008)
ed.	edited by, editor, edition
Gen. Rab.	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i>
HALOT	<i>Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , ed. L. Koehler et al., trans. M. E. J. Richardson, 2 vols. (repr., Leiden: Brill, 2001)
Heb.	Hebrew

KJV	King James Version
lit.	literally
LXX	Septuagint
<i>m.</i>	Mishnah
mg.	margin
MSS	manuscripts
MT	Masoretic Text
NAB	New American Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEAEHL	<i>The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land</i> , ed. E. Stern, 4 vols. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993)
NEB	New English Bible
NET	New English Translation
NIDOTTE	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> , ed. W. VanGemeren, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997)
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NJPS	New Jewish Publication Society Translation
NKJV	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation (2nd ed.)
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
<i>T. Job</i>	<i>Testament of Job</i>
TNIV	Today's New International Version
trans.	translator, translated by, translation
v(v).	verse(s)
y.	Jerusalem Talmud

Old Testament

Gen.	Genesis	Esther	Esther
Exod.	Exodus	Job	Job
Lev.	Leviticus	Ps(s).	Psalms
Num.	Numbers	Prov.	Proverbs
Deut.	Deuteronomy	Eccles.	Ecclesiastes
Josh.	Joshua	Song	Song of Songs
Judg.	Judges	Isa.	Isaiah
Ruth	Ruth	Jer.	Jeremiah
1–2 Sam.	1–2 Samuel	Lam.	Lamentations
1–2 Kings	1–2 Kings	Ezek.	Ezekiel
1–2 Chron.	1–2 Chronicles	Dan.	Daniel
Ezra	Ezra	Hosea	Hosea
Neh.	Nehemiah	Joel	Joel

Abbreviations

Amos	Amos	Hab.	Habakkuk
Obad.	Obadiah	Zeph.	Zephaniah
Jon.	Jonah	Hag.	Haggai
Mic.	Micah	Zech.	Zechariah
Nah.	Nahum	Mal.	Malachi

Old Testament Apocrypha

Sir.	Sirach	Wis.	Wisdom
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New Testament

Matt.	Matthew	1–2 Thess.	1–2 Thessalonians
Mark	Mark	1–2 Tim.	1–2 Timothy
Luke	Luke	Titus	Titus
John	John	Philem.	Philemon
Acts	Acts	Heb.	Hebrews
Rom.	Romans	James	James
1–2 Cor.	1–2 Corinthians	1–2 Pet.	1–2 Peter
Gal.	Galatians	1–3 John	1–3 John
Eph.	Ephesians	Jude	Jude
Phil.	Philippians	Rev.	Revelation
Col.	Colossians		

Introduction

Title and Place in the Canon

Unlike some biblical books that have different names in different traditions, the title of this book is invariably given as “Job,” after its main character. In addition, there have been no serious reservations concerning Job’s presence in the canon.¹ The various ancient witnesses agree less about Job’s location in the order of the books. Jewish sources and lists place the book in the Ketubim (Writings), the third section of the Hebrew canon. There are, however, variations as to where within the Writings the book is located. The Talmud begins the Writings with Ruth, then Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Daniel, and finally Esther, Ezra–Nehemiah, and Chronicles. This list is chronologically ordered with the exception of Job. The Talmud itself answers why Job, whose story is set in the far distant past, does not begin the list: “We do not begin with a calamity!”² Though there is variation of the sequence of Proverbs (*mēšālīm*) and Job (*’īyôb*), these two books are always connected with Psalms (*tēhillīm*) and form a kind of trilogy. Early Jewish traditions spoke of the variant orders as *’mt* and *t’m*, after the first letters of the three books. Interestingly, Jesus apparently understood the order of the Ketubim to begin with Psalms (thus *t’m*), since in Luke 24:44 he cites the three parts of the Hebrew canon as “the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms.”

Early Christian tradition showed even greater diversity in order. However, eventually the order Job, Psalms, Proverbs won the day in Western Christianity under the influence of Jerome and his Vulgate. This chronological order (Job,

1. With the exception of Theodore of Mopsuestia (AD 350–428), who also questioned the Song of Songs (as well as the deuterocanonical books). See Dhorme, *Job*, vii.

2. *Ibid.*, viii.

David, Solomon)³ was affirmed by the Council of Trent and is used in all modern Christian translations.

Authorship and Date

The book of Job names no author; it is anonymous. Of course, tradition rarely lets such matters stand unaddressed and thus often attributes authorship to Moses (see *b. Baba Batra* 14b). Nothing in the book itself or anywhere in the Bible suggests Moses as the author, but the fact that the events of the story of Job come from a very early period of time (patriarchal or before) compels some to connect the book with the earlier known writer of Scripture, Moses. Archer, a modern exegete, leans toward a Mosaic date of writing for the book and argues, against those who hold a Solomonic date of the book,⁴ that a date near the events is the only view that assures historical accuracy.⁵ This view may be questioned. First, why must a book be written near the events to be true, especially if it is the product of divine revelation? Second, is the book intending to be historically accurate? (See “The Genre of the Book of Job” below.)

In any case, such early dates for the composition of the book are not widely held today. Indeed, the question that has dominated much recent discussion is whether the book of Job was written at one time or over a long period. As we will see, this discussion cannot be solved with certainty and is based largely on speculation and a sense that the different parts of the book are in tension with one another, a view that is belied by a coherent reading of the book (see “The Theological Message of the Book of Job” below for such a reading). That said, there is nothing inherently threatening about the idea that the book of Job as we know it may be the end result of a lengthy history of composition and the product of many hands. It is arguable that most OT books were written by more than one anonymous author/editor over a long period of time before they achieved their final, canonical form. However, what is of interest to us in this commentary is the final form of the book, the form recognized as canonical by the synagogue and the church over the millennia.

That said, not everyone agrees about a canonical approach to the book. Thus, in the following paragraphs, I will review some of the leading ideas of those who want to reconstruct the compositional history of the book and some of the interpretive implications that they draw from their hypotheses.

3. Major portions of Psalms and Proverbs are attributed to David and Solomon, respectively.

4. Like E. J. Young, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 319–23.

5. G. L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1964), 465–73. See also R. Laird Harris, “The Doctrine of God in the Book of Job,” in *Sitting with Job*, ed. R. B. Zuck, 156, for another example of confusing the plot’s setting with the date of the book.

Such reconstructions typically begin with the belief that the prose framework, the prologue (1:1–2:13) and the epilogue (42:7–17), is an original folktale that serves as the foundation of the book. Much is made of the different attitudes expressed by Job toward his suffering in the prose framework and in the later poetical portions. In the former, Job is patient, accepting his suffering. In the latter, he is angry, challenging God’s sense of justice. Indeed, Fisher believes that the poetical portion of the book was written by someone who was sickened by the passive piety represented in the prose story and wanted to challenge it. Fisher expresses his personal animosity toward the prose writer: “I want to thank the poet of Job 3–26 whose anger burned against the ancient story of Job, and whose fiery poem was extinguished by wrapping it in the ancient story of Job.”⁶ In other words, the story and the poem conflict with each other. A close reading of the prologue, though, makes one question whether the prose story was ever independent of the poem. After all, the three friends are introduced at the end of the prologue (2:11–13). When the story begins again, God is reprimanding Eliphaz and the three friends for not speaking correctly about him to Job. The debate section supplies the reason for God’s reaction here. To speak of later additions to the prose story to make it compatible with the poetic dialogue is all too convenient to the theory. It is possible to read the book in a way that understands the change in Job from prologue to poem as a matter of character development, as Clines rightfully points out: “All these differences between the prose and poetry of the book can be better explained, however, on literary grounds. Thus, it is dramatically satisfying that Job should change from his initial acceptance of his suffering to a violent questioning of it.”⁷

The Elihu speeches are often treated as a later insertion into the story. The textual evidence for this belief is that Elihu appears out of nowhere (especially that he is not mentioned in the prologue, which introduces all the other characters of the story) and that he is not mentioned at all in the epilogue. No one responds to Elihu, not Job and not God. While it is impossible to prove definitively that the Elihu speech was part of the original story,⁸ neither is it particularly relevant to the interpretation of the final form of the book. The lack of response to Elihu is the ultimate put-down of the school of thought he represents.

Perhaps the most difficult chapter to make sense of in the narrative flow of the book is Job 28. This poem is very odd in its context. According to

6. Fisher, *Many Voices of Job*, ix. He goes on to say, “I believe strongly the two Jobs should be kept separate.” For a similar view, see Stevenson, *Poem of Job*, iii; Zuckerman, *Job the Silent*, 47; as well as Penchansky, *Betrayal of God*.

7. Clines, *Job 1–20*, lviii.

8. Alter (*Wisdom Books*, 127) argues that the poetry of the Elihu speeches is not as aesthetically pleasing as that of the disputation and thus the author must be different. An equally plausible view is that a gifted poet shifted poetic styles in such a way as to characterize Elihu in a negative way as arrogant and bombastic.

the rubrics, it appears that Job is still speaking, but what is said seems out of character with his frame of mind both immediately before and after this chapter. The climax of Job 28 (v. 28, “Behold, the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and turning aside from evil is understanding”) also anticipates the final resolution of the book, which comes only with Yahweh’s speeches and Job’s response. Admittedly, this is difficult, but it is not impossible to incorporate into the narrative as a whole. In the commentary proper, I will present my understanding of its place in the story; but again, as with the other component parts of the book, there is no definitive proof whether it was part of the original book or added later.

For those who argue for a compositional history to the book, there is no clarity on when the different parts were written or when the whole came to completion. Even the mention of Job in Ezek. 14:14 and 20 does not help us much, since Ezekiel may only have known the Job of the ancient prose tale, not the completed book. Attempts to date the book or its parts based on linguistic or orthographic arguments have led interpreters to different conclusions,⁹ thus demonstrating how weak these types of arguments are for dating a composition.¹⁰

That said, most scholars suggest a date between the seventh century and the second century BC for the final form of the book. Various lines of argument are used to try to date the book. For instance, some want to date it to the sixth century BC because the message of the book was timely for Israelites exiled to Babylon.¹¹ Hartley disagrees and feels more comfortable with a seventh-century date because of the use of Canaanite mythological imagery and also literary affinities with Isaiah.¹²

In conclusion, it is admittedly impossible to prove that Job was an original authorial whole. Nor is it possible to prove that it was written over an extended period of time. Neither point is important. What is crucial, at least for the church, which has received the final form of the book as canonical, is to interpret the book as it presently stands.¹³ It’s not that there aren’t “many voices” in the book of Job (as Fisher’s title states), but these many voices

9. On linguistic grounds, Robertson (*Linguistic Evidence*, 155) dates the book to the monarchic (Solomonic period), Freedman (“Orthographic Peculiarities”) to the seventh/early sixth century BC, and Hurvitz (“Date”) to the time of the exile or thereafter.

10. However, Seow (“Orthography”) successfully argues that Freedman’s (“Orthographic Peculiarities”) attempt to date Job to the seventh/early sixth century BC fails because the author could have been using archaic forms in order to create the impression that the book is older than it is and match the book’s literary setting.

11. Janzen, *Job*, 5.

12. Hartley, *Job*, 15–20.

13. I agree wholeheartedly with Janzen (*Job*, 24): “The issue comes down to how one reads the book. Can it be read as a whole? Can it be read as a whole inclusive of much tension and turbulence between its parts, such that the very form of the book itself contains part of its meaning (so that neglect or tampering with the form distorts the meaning)?”

ultimately yield to the one Voice that speaks at the end and brings the book to a dramatic resolution. Determining a precise date for the final form of the book is not possible, nor is it important for interpretation.¹⁴

Text, Language, and Translation

The difficulty of translating Job is acknowledged by everyone who makes the attempt. The percentage of rare words in Job is greater than any other OT book except the Song of Songs.¹⁵ But the difficulty extends beyond the presence of rare words. The grammar itself is difficult. Although the grammar of poetry does not function like that of prose, even among poetical books Job presents special problems.

Why is Job so hard to translate? The answers to this question vary. Some believe that our distance from the Hebrew means that we do not know the language well enough to catch all the nuances of these rare words and peculiar grammar. Those who make this diagnosis of the problem resort to comparative Semitic philology as the remedy.¹⁶ Certainly the study of other Semitic languages has deepened our understanding of the meaning of Hebrew words, especially many that appear only rarely in the Bible. Care must be taken, however, not to exaggerate the ability of comparative Semitics to resolve all the textual difficulties of Job. Dahood and his students, for instance, developed a reputation for uncontrolled use of other languages, such as Ugaritic, to explain the Hebrew text.

Some studies of Job have argued that the Hebrew of Job is strange because it is the translation of a work originally composed in a different language. Among the languages proposed for the original composition are Edomite,¹⁷ Arabic,¹⁸ and Aramaic.¹⁹ Without going into detail, the strongest argument against such theories is that translations would tend to smooth over textual difficulties rather than generate or retain them. For this and other reasons, most scholars today believe that Job is an original Hebrew composition.

Of course, the problem of translating Job could theoretically be the result of a corrupt text. The textual resources available for translation tell an interesting

14. See the similar view given by Habel, *Job*, 40–42.

15. There are about one hundred words in Job that occur only one time in all the OT. The technical term for a word that occurs only one time is *hapax legomenon*.

16. Dahood is the leading proponent of this approach. See his “Some Northwest Semitic Words”; and idem, “Northwest Semitic Philology.” See also the work of his student A. Blommerde, *Northwest Semitic Grammar*. In his commentary, Pope (*Job*) makes a more judicious use of Ugaritic materials and evaluates some of the suggestions made by Dahood, Blommerde, and others. Grabbe (*Comparative Philology and the Text of Job*) utilizes insights of Barr (*Comparative Philology*) in order to critique and appropriate insights from the Dahood school.

17. Pfeiffer, “Edomite Wisdom.”

18. A. Guillaume, “Arabic Background.”

19. Tur-Sinai (Torczyner), *Job*.

story. The length of the Greek text as we know it from the fourth-century MSS (Alexandrinus, Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, dated ca. AD 400) is equal to that of the MT, but there is evidence that the earliest versions of the Greek (from ca. 100 BC) were much shorter, by as much as one-sixth.²⁰ Indeed, the longer Greek text was created by Origen in his Hexapla.²¹ There is much scholarly discussion of the reasons for this difference. Some believe that the LXX is shorter because it deviated from and simplified the difficult Hebrew,²² while others believe that the shorter Greek text reflects a shorter Hebrew text that differed from the Hebrew textual tradition represented by the MT.²³ Dhorme supports the former position and states that the LXX “abounds in errors . . . but it represents a text which has been shortened at pleasure, as if the translator was in a hurry to finish. Quite often it is an explanation *ad usum Graecorum* rather than a literal translation of the Hebrew.”²⁴

It seems unlikely that the earlier, shorter Greek text represents a more authentic (in the sense of closer to the original canonical) text than the Hebrew Masoretic tradition. Even so, in some cases the LXX does help us resolve textual issues and will be cited in the commentary when appropriate. The LXX is also relevant to the history of interpretation of Job (see below) and may explain certain traditional understandings of the book (see “The Patience of Job” following my comments on Job 21).

From Qumran we have two targumim of Job, discovered in 1956, that are of interest for the textual history of the book. 11QtgJob (11Q10) and 4QtgJob (4Q157), written in Palestinian Aramaic, are the oldest MSS of the book of Job still in existence.²⁵ The former is fragmentary but extensive, covering 17:4–42:11.²⁶ The exact date is debated. Pope argues for a second-century BC date,²⁷ but the predominant opinion today is first century AD. The second targum is composed of two small fragments that contain about twelve verses from Job 3–5. While these targumim, especially the longer one, are very close to the later MT, they do seem to share with the LXX a tendency to demythologize

20. Smick (“Job,” 690) states, “Origen, who expressly tells us about the omissions and additions, filled in the missing lines largely from Theodotion’s minor Greek version using diacritical marks to show the differences.” Kutz (*Old Greek of Job*, 5) points out that, even though it is shorter, the Old Greek text expands the speech of Job’s wife and gives a “closing statement referring to Job’s place in the resurrection (42:17a), and an appendix identifying Job with Jobab, the Edomite king (42:17b–e).”

21. Kutz, *Old Greek of Job*, 1.

22. Gerleman, *Studies in the Septuagint*.

23. Orlinsky did this in a series of articles, “Studies in the Septuagint.”

24. Dhorme, *Job*, xcxi. For a position that sees value in both Gerleman and Orlinsky’s views, see Cook, “Aspects of Wisdom.”

25. They are also, along with a third text on Ezekiel, the oldest examples of the genre of targum (i.e., an Aramaic paraphrase of the Hebrew text).

26. The initial translation was done by van der Ploeg and van der Woude, *Targum de Job*, but a superior translation is found in Sokoloff, *Targum of Job*.

27. Pope, *Job*, xlvi.

the book and make Job look less rebellious. They also avoid any language that might cast a bad light on the character of God.

Other ancient translations (the Syriac Peshitta²⁸ and the Vulgate) are also available for consultation. Both are translated from the LXX and so are only occasionally helpful in reconstructing the text.

In this commentary, I rely on the MT (B19a, Codex Leningradensis) for my translation, while occasionally appealing to other versions for corrections. With the possible exception of Clines's massive three-volume commentary, all other commentaries (including my own) must make the same admission as Pope: "In fairness to the reader, it should be explained that the translation offered in this volume—as with every attempt to translate an ancient text—glosses over a multitude of difficulties and uncertainties."²⁹ That said, commentators writing after Clines owe him a debt of gratitude for providing detailed discussions of textual and philological issues. His conclusions may not always be correct, but he has provided the fullest discussion of these issues to date, rendering a repetition of such discussions unnecessary.

The Genre of the Book of Job

Perhaps nothing influences our interpretation of a text more than what we conclude about its genre or literary type.³⁰ Genre triggers reading strategy. Authors send signals to readers through certain conventions in order to help shape the reception of their words. Those genre signals can be quite blatant, as when a modern book includes the words "A Novel" on its title page. Ancient texts on occasion send similarly obvious clues, such as "An Apocalypse of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:1), "Song of Songs" (Song 1:1), or when a Gospel writer identifies one of Jesus's stories as a parable. Genre signals are usually more subtle than that, however, and sometimes, because of the chronological and cultural distance between us and the ancient texts, the precise genre of a biblical book is difficult to identify and describe. In such cases, the genre can only be determined by reading the text and coming to an understanding of the whole. Even after the genre has been identified, one must still discuss precisely how the ancient author intended the genre to be read, something that was better understood by the contemporary audience. The interpretive debates over apocalyptic literature such as the book of Revelation are a case

28. Vicchio (*Job in the Ancient World*, 202) points out that Job is found right after the Torah in the Peshitta, which placed it there perhaps because of its setting during the patriarchal period (and the identification of Job with Jobab) or because it was thought to be authored by Moses.

29. Pope, *Job*, xlili.

30. For a lengthier statement of my approach to genre, see Tremper Longman III, *Fictional Akkadian Autobiography* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1991), 3–21; idem, "Form Criticism"; idem, *Literary Approaches*.

in point. Determining the genre of the book of Job is particularly challenging because not many texts are quite like it, and a genre is a set of literary texts that share features in common. The more examples of a particular type of text one has, the easier it is to understand the genre.

As one surveys the secondary literature on Job, it is easy to be overwhelmed by the variety of genre identifications for the book. A partial list would include dramatized lament,³¹ “forensic” literature (*Rechtsleben*),³² tragedy,³³ comedy,³⁴ drama, parody,³⁵ and apocalyptic literature.³⁶ To interact in detail with these and other suggestions would lengthen our discussion without major benefit. Let me briefly say that each of these may capture elements of the book of Job, but none is suitable as an overarching categorization. I will content myself with providing an argument for a particular way of approaching the book.

Before we do so, however, we should take note of a not infrequent categorization of the book as *sui generis*,³⁷ that is, as a unique piece of literature that has no genre category. This conclusion is impossible, however. Our ability to comprehend a literary work depends on our previous reading experience of other similar, though not identical, texts. If Job were truly *sui generis*, then it would be unreadable. Such an identification, though rightly recognizing the book’s literary genius, is simply giving up in light of the complexity of the book. I will not take this counsel of despair, but rather will attempt to describe the book’s genre, an identification that will guide the interpretation in the pages to come.

Job as Prose and Poetry

As the word suggests, a genre is a generalization from a specific text. It recognizes a text as sharing features (content, subject matter, form, tone, etc.) with other compositions. Genre exists at different levels of generalization from the particular text, and a broad genre shares fewer features in common but includes more examples. As one narrows the generic categorization, more features are shared.

A broad genre categorization of Job notes that it is composed of both prose (1:1–2:13; 42:7–17) and poetry (3:1–42:6).³⁸ The prose framework gives the book a narrative feel throughout; that is, it tells a story that has a plot. Like any plot, it has a beginning, middle, and end. The plot is generated by a conflict that seeks and finally achieves resolution. In the commentary, as well

31. Westermann, *Structure*.

32. Richter, *Studien zu Hiob*.

33. Hoffman, *Blemished Perspective*, 40.

34. Whedbee, “Comedy of Job.”

35. Zuckerman, *Job the Silent*.

36. Johnson, *Now My Eye Sees You*.

37. Pope, *Job*, xxxi; Gladson, “Job,” 232; Fyall, *Now My Eyes*, 23.

38. There are, however, snippets of prose in the poetical portion, including the rubrics to the speeches (i.e., 4:1; 6:1; etc.) and the introduction to Elihu’s speech (32:1–6a).

as in the section titled “The Theological Message of the Book of Job” below, I will delineate the plot and also discuss the characters and setting.³⁹

The bulk of the book is poetry. Hebrew poetry has different conventions and triggers different reading strategies. The conventions include parallelism, imagery, and terse lines. Poetry says a lot using only a few words. Thus, one reading strategy that poetry triggers is to slow down and meditate on the richness of meaning and feeling evoked by the language. The terseness of the language heightens the difficulty of interpretation and leads to a higher level of ambiguity than in prose. This ambiguity must be respected by the interpreter, who should not try to turn the poem into prose. Ancient Hebrew poets also employed a number of more occasional literary devices that lend interest to their lines but are virtually impossible to reproduce in English translation (wordplays, sound-plays, etc.); some of these will be pointed out in the commentary.⁴⁰

In sum, Job is a poetical book framed by a prose narrative. The prose narrative is highly literary. For instance, the two scenes in heaven are reported in a parallel fashion (1:6–12; 2:1–7a) with God’s receiving and questioning the accuser in identical fashion. In addition, the description of Job’s family and wealth includes numbers that carry symbolic significance. The description of the four disasters that befell Job at the end of chap. 1 is also repetitive, most notably in that each ends with a sole survivor saying “I alone escaped to tell you” (vv. 15, 16, 17, 19). Poetry is inherently artificial, especially in reported speech. People do not converse in poetry, especially when one of them is in deep pain. The highly literary nature of the book, especially the large poetical part, triggers certain expectations and reading strategies:

1. As mentioned above, it calls on the reader to slow down and reflect on the compact meaning of the composition.
2. It imparts a universal quality to the topic of the book. It signals that the issues, debates, and conclusions are not just relevant to this particular situation but are important to all who read it.
3. It distances the action of the story from a concrete historical event (see “Job and History: Was Job an Actual Person, and Does It Matter?” below).

Job as a Wisdom Debate

Wisdom is indisputably a major theme of the book of Job. In the discussion under “The Theological Message of the Book of Job” below and in the

39. For the principles that delineate the analysis of prose narrative in the Bible, see Longman, “Biblical Narrative.”

40. For the principles that delineate the analysis of poetry in the OT, see Longman, “Biblical Poetry.”

commentary proper, I will highlight its significance in the book. While the talk is about Job's suffering, the resource that the human participants call on to grapple with his situation is their wisdom. As we will see, the various parties in the disputation (Job, the three friends, and Elihu) assert their own variety of wisdom and ridicule the wisdom of the others. They each vie to demonstrate that their wisdom is superior and able to handle the problems that life presents (as made concrete in Job's affliction).

The polyphony of voices, however, does not reach resolution. The talk goes on and on until it is silenced by God himself, who asserts his wisdom and power. The message of the book of Job is that wisdom does not come from human beings, but that God is the only wise one.⁴¹ The human response is "fear" (28:28), as is exemplified by Job's response to the divine speeches (particularly 42:1–6). He repents and submits himself to God's superior wisdom and power.

Thus Job is a wisdom book. But not all wisdom books are alike.⁴² Proverbs contains instructional literature (discourses and proverbs) that encourage wise behavior by connecting (but not guaranteeing) rewards with such behavior. Ecclesiastes contains the autobiography of a man who has sought for meaning in life "under the sun" but is thwarted in his efforts by, among other things, a sense of injustice. Indeed, the message of both the book of Job and Ecclesiastes should keep people from reading the rewards of Proverbs with undue optimism.⁴³

Job and History: Was Job an Actual Person, and Does It Matter?

Was Job an actual person who lived in Uz at a particular point in time? Did he suffer as described in the book? Did he engage in debate with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, and suffer further the scolding of Elihu? Did God actually converse with the accuser during a meeting of the divine assembly and give him permission to afflict Job? From the prologue of the book, do we learn how heaven is organized and how it operates?

To answer these questions, we must first engage in an analysis of the book's genre and therefore intention. Does the author of Job intend for us to understand its contents to actually have happened? This question is not as easy to answer as one might expect. There are arguments in favor and arguments against the idea that Job is a historical book. The opening line of the book that introduces Job informs us of his name, his character, and his hometown.

41. In a recent article, Shields ("Malevolent or Mysterious?" 257–58) rightly states, "In its present form, the book of Job is primarily about demonstrating the limitations of human wisdom and offering specific application of those limitations to the doctrine of retribution."

42. Contra Johnson (*Now My Eye Sees You*, 18–20), who oddly argues that Job is not wisdom because it is not like Proverbs.

43. See the subsection titled "Suffering: Job and Retribution Theology" below as well as Longman, "Why Do Bad Things Happen?"

We know that more than one town in antiquity was named Uz, so we have no reason to doubt that Uz was a real place. But, of course, historical fictions set their action in real places as well (think, for instance, of the parable of the Good Samaritan).⁴⁴

Some point to Ezek. 14:14 (repeated in v. 20) to solve this issue. Ezekiel tells the people that even the presence of famous righteous men would not save them from God's coming judgment. Specifically, he says, "even if Noah, Daniel, and Job, these three, were in it, they would save only their own lives by their righteousness" (NRSV). There is little doubt that Ezekiel is speaking of the Job of the book of Job here (or at least that this Job is the Job of some version of this story known in either oral or written form), but does that mean that he is a historical character? Not necessarily. It certainly means that at least some form of the book of Job was known. Ezekiel's (God's) point here is made whether Job is a historical or a literary character. Indeed, from the spelling (*Dāni'el* [Dan. 1:6] versus *Dānīyē'l* [Ezek. 14:14, 20] in the Hebrew) and the relative chronology, the reference to Daniel is possibly, even probably, not the Daniel of the biblical book but an ancient Near Eastern king known for his piety.⁴⁵ The same ambiguity relates to the reference to Job in James 5:11. James's example of the "patience" or "perseverance" of Job stands whether Job was a historical character or a literary figure.

The truth may be between the view that Job was a historical character, with the book describing events of his life in detail, and the view that Job is a purely literary figure. Job could have been known as a particularly righteous person who suffered. His story would then lend itself to further elaboration for the purposes of discussing the issue of an innocent sufferer and wisdom. Indeed, the highly literary nature of the prose and poetry noted above would suggest that this at least is true. The genre signals help us see that the book of Job is certainly not a precise historical report. It is either the elaborated story of an actual historical figure or of a literary figure.

I have restricted discussion to the book of Job itself. Does it intend us to understand Job to be historical? After all, no external evidence exists concerning Job, nor should we necessarily expect any. We must decide this issue, if indeed it can be decided, only by appeal to the book itself.⁴⁶ The conclusion of the above considerations is that it is impossible to be dogmatic about the book's intention here.

44. Alter (*Wisdom Books*, 11) points out that the opening of Job (*'iš hāyā*, "There was a man") is similar to the opening of the Nathan parable in 2 Sam. 12.

45. See the debate in Dressler, "Identification of the Ugaritic *Danil*"; and J. Day, "Daniel of Ugarit."

46. Of course, for those who require extrabiblical attestation of persons and events to corroborate the biblical account before accepting its historical authenticity, the question is decided negatively from the start, since, as we have already admitted, there is no contemporary extrabiblical evidence of Job or the events of the book.

Crucial, then, is the question whether the historicity (or lack thereof) of Job makes any difference to the truth of the book. Elsewhere I have argued that certain biblical events must have happened in order for their associated theological message to be true.

Take the exodus, in particular the crossing of the Reed Sea, for instance. Here the theological significance of the event depends on its historical veracity. The story teaches that God saved Israel from certain death when human resources were exhausted. This story provides confidence and hope for Israel and individual Israelites in later generations (see in particular Ps. 77). When later Israelites encounter insoluble problems in their lives, they can look back on the crossing of the sea and gain hope that God will intervene in their life as well. If God did not rescue Israel at the sea, then there would be no basis for such hope. In other words, the story of crossing the Reed Sea establishes a track record for God.⁴⁷

On the other hand, the theological value of the story of Job does not depend on its being historically true.⁴⁸ Job is not part of the Bible's redemptive history, which records events in space and time when God accomplishes and applies his grace to his people. Job is a didactic story. It intends to explore weighty issues like the nature of wisdom and the mystery of suffering. The truthfulness of the insights conveyed by the book of Job does not depend on the actual existence of Job.

In sum, we cannot be dogmatic about the historicity of Job.⁴⁹ It is highly likely, in my opinion, that Job is not a historical person, or at best there was a well-known ancient sufferer named Job, whose life provided the grist for the author to create a scenario where he could reflect on wisdom and suffering. But, in the final analysis, neither the truth nor the interpretation of the book of Job depends on its being a historical book. Such a view is not new, being advocated since early in the book's history of interpretation.

Legal Metaphors: Is the Book of Job the Account of a Trial?

The book of Job clearly uses legal terminology in the process of describing the relationship between God and Job. Chapter 9 is filled with the language of the court, as when Job queries:

If someone wants to take him to court [*rib*],
one could not answer him one out of a thousand times. (v. 3)

47. See Longman, *How to Read Exodus*, 68–92.

48. The view that Job was not a historical book is as old as the Babylonian Talmud (*b. Baba Batra* 15a; cf. *y. Soṭah* 5.8/20c; *Gen. Rab.* 57.4), which calls it a parable (*māšāl*). See Dhorme, *Job*, xv.

49. Contra Dow (*When Storms Come*, 4), who is “writing from the conviction that the story of Job actually happened.”

Though I am righteous,⁵⁰ I could not answer him.
I could only plead for mercy with my judge.
If I summoned him, and he answered me,
I do not believe that he would hear my voice. (vv. 15–16)

In 13:17–19 he states,

Listen closely to my words;
let my declaration be in your ear.
See, I am prepared for the judgment;
I know I am righteous.
Who is it that accuses me
so now I would be silent and die?

In my opinion, the legal language is less frequent by far with the three friends, but occasionally we hear them say something that suggests the courtroom, as when Eliphaz says to Job, “Does he reprove you for your ‘fear’? Will he enter into judgment with you?” (22:4). Elihu too uses familiar legal language, for instance, as he characterizes Job’s position as a trial:

For Job has said, “I am righteous.
God has turned justice away from me.
But concerning my case, I am considered a liar.” (34:5–6a)

This handful of quotations demonstrates that the book utilizes legal language, the language of the courtroom, in discussing Job’s situation. Thus it is not surprising that many commentators believe that the controlling metaphor of the book is the courtroom, and they exert great effort in delineating the exact nature of the legal situation. One of the most recent and interesting examples of this effort comes from Magdalene,⁵¹ who utilizes what we know about Neo-Babylonian trials to understand the dynamics of the book. She argues that the accuser initiates the trial of Job by his charge of blasphemy, delivered before the divine assembly, and that there is nothing God can do about it—short of upsetting the whole divine system of justice—but see the trial through. The stakes are high in this trial because the charge against Job is actually a charge against God, who has put a hedge around Job, and as a result “God would be stripped of power if Job should blaspheme against

50. Some translations (e.g., NRSV) make the legal connection even stronger by translating *šādaqti* as “I am innocent.”

51. Magdalene, *On the Scales of Righteousness*. Notable earlier studies include Dick, “Legal Metaphor in Job,” based on his doctoral dissertation at Johns Hopkins University; Richter, *Studien zu Hiob*; Scholnick, “Meaning of *Mišpat*,” based on her doctoral dissertation at Brandeis University.

God.”⁵² In keeping with ancient Near Eastern legal procedure, once Job is accused, he is arrested, his property is confiscated, and he is tortured. The accuser tries to elicit a confession from Job because that is the best evidence for a conviction. On the other hand, Job is unaware of the accuser’s accusation and actions and understands his suffering to come from the hand of God. He believes that his pain is undeserved, so he brings a countersuit against God. Magdalene cites Job 10:2–7 and 19:6–7 in support of the idea that Job is accusing God of “abuse of authority” in that God has hit him with a charge that is unsubstantiated.

In Neo-Babylonian law, a second witness strengthens a case. Job often wishes he had such a second witness (see 9:32–35), but he is unable to produce one. On the other hand, the accuser finds a second witness in Elihu, who takes up his case against Job.

The conclusion of the book, according to Magdalene, is an out-of-court settlement. The two suits are stymied: Job cannot come up with a second witness and is frightened by God’s speeches (chaps. 38–41), and God has to stop the case against Job because he admits that it is unjust (42:8, 11). Even so, God gives Job the same kind of settlement (double his original possessions) he might have given if Job had won the case against him.

Needless to say, this is an interesting and ingenious reading of the book—perhaps too ingenious. In my opinion, it suffers from the same problem as many other attempts to turn Job’s occasional use of legal metaphors into an overarching understanding of the book. To make it work, as Magdalene has attempted to do, scholars must fill in the gaps and read legal significance into parts of the book that are not obviously legal.⁵³ For example, no legal language is used in the discussion between the accuser and God.⁵⁴ The context seems not to be a courtroom but rather a king receiving a report from one of his spies (see my comments on Job 1–2). The accuser does not come with a charge; God himself initiates the conversation. In addition, there is a notable absence of legal language precisely where one would expect it, namely, in the denouement of the story in chaps. 38–42. Magdalene herself admits the need to fill in the gaps of the story to flesh out the legal situation behind the action. This explains why there are so many different legal readings of the book: “Much disagreement exists among scholars regarding who brings the

52. Magdalene, *On the Scales of Righteousness*, 117.

53. In connection with this, there is also a question as to whether one should translate vocabulary in a legal sense. Magdalene herself recognizes this issue in connection with the verb (and associated nouns) *ykh*. She rightly points out that the word can mean either, on the one hand, “to accuse,” “to correct,” or the like or, on the other hand, “to decide a lawsuit” or the like. A similar issue confronts the translation of words connected with *sedeq* and with *mišpāt*.

54. I am not certain how the accuser’s strong suspicion that Job will blaspheme can be construed as a crime that would justify the kind of pretrial interrogation (torture and confiscation of property) that Job supposedly experienced.

legal action in Job, the nature of the action, the bases of the charge, when the charge is brought, who is the trial's judge, and so forth."⁵⁵ With this many imponderables, one wonders whether the attempt to answer the questions is worthwhile.⁵⁶ There is no doubt about the presence of legal language in Job, and in my comments I will draw attention to it when it is relevant, but no attempt will be made to explain the entire book as a courtroom drama.

Structure

When read a first time, a book's structure is not immediately obvious to a reader. In a highly literary book like Job, however, the structure is quite intentional⁵⁷ and, as I point out in the next section ("The Theological Message of the Book of Job"), supports the plot and the development of the characters in such a way that it fuels the message of the book.

A number of factors contribute to Job's clear structure at least for most of the book. First, the prose style of the prologue and epilogue differentiate these portions from the vast poetic middle. The poetical parts may be divided based on who is speaking. Following the explicit markers (particularly the prose rubrics that introduce new speakers), this outline emerges:

- Prose prologue introducing the characters and plot (1:1–2:13)
- Job's lament (3:1–26)
- Three cycles of dialogues (4:1–27:23)
- Job's monologue (28:1–31:40)
- Elihu's monologue (32:1–37:24)
- Yahweh speaks and Job repents (38:1–42:6)
- Prose epilogue drawing the action to a close (42:7–17)

The only really controversial element of this structure has to do with Job 28, a problem that I will deal with in detail in the commentary. Briefly, the

55. Magdalene, "Law," *DOTWPW* 422.

56. The issue is similar to (what I consider to be the futile) attempts to read the Song of Songs as a drama or to detect a detailed or overarching editorial structure to the book of Psalms or to Prov. 10–31.

57. In a book like Job, with (perhaps) a complex compositional history, "intentional" is a complex word. Above, I have concluded that one cannot be certain about how many hands were involved in the production of the book. Whose intention, then, is meant when we say that the structure of the book of Job is "intentional"? Interpreting the final form of the book as we do presumes that we are interested in the intention of the final anonymous author/editor. Of course, we have no independent access to this person's mind, so our understanding of that intention comes through interaction with the text itself. For more on authorial intention, including the additional complexity of the interaction of human and divine intentions, see Longman, "Literary Approaches," 134–37; as well as Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation*, 114–15.

problem has to do with the tension between the thought and tone of the chapter and the thought and tone of the rest of Job's speeches. Its insight that the "fear of the Lord" is critical to true wisdom conflicts with Job's own pretensions toward wisdom before and after that chapter. Later, I will argue that such confusion is typical of the mind of a sufferer, and therefore we can understand Job 28 as part of Job's monologue rather than, say, a reversion to a narrative voice.

The only other major controversy concerning the structure of Job arises from a closer analysis of the dialogue section. Here we have three cycles of debate between Job and his three friends. The first two cycles are straightforward as Job responds to each of his friends in turn, first Eliphaz, then Bildad, and finally Zophar:

First Cycle	Second Cycle
Eliphaz (chaps. 4–5)	Eliphaz (chap. 15)
Job (chaps. 6–7)	Job (chaps. 16–17)
Bildad (chap. 8)	Bildad (chap. 18)
Job (chaps. 9–10)	Job (chap. 19)
Zophar (chap. 11)	Zophar (chap. 20)
Job (chaps. 12–14)	Job (chap. 21)

Issues arise in the third cycle. Eliphaz initiates the third round in typical fashion (chap. 22), followed, as we have come to expect, by a robust response from Job (chaps. 23–24). Bildad's speech is surprisingly short (chap. 25, a mere six verses), followed by a lengthy response from Job (chaps. 26–27). There is no speech from Zophar in the third cycle.

The complexity of the third cycle is heightened by some of the content of Job's speeches in this section. In particular, 24:18–25 and 27:7–23 articulate and apparently affirm the idea that the wicked are cursed, the argument that Job has refuted throughout his speeches. These passages are more appropriate to the three friends. Thus scholars debate whether these two passages are part of Job's speech or are wrongly ascribed to him.⁵⁸ While the issue is difficult and does not allow a dogmatic conclusion, it is my view that rather than assigning these passages to Bildad (24:18–25) and Zophar (27:7–23), we should interpret them in their present context as speeches of Job. Thus the third cycle has the following form:

Third Cycle
Eliphaz (chap. 22)
Job (chaps. 23–24)
Bildad (chap. 25)
Job (chaps. 26–27)

58. See the relevant parts of the commentary.