

Literary Features of the Book of Job

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Literary Genre

The consensus that Job is a literary work of the highest magnitude does not make the task of classifying it with regard to its literary type any easier. Many literary critics have attempted to place the Book of Job into one overarching literary genre or category. However, this writer views all attempts to fit the book into one category as failing to do justice to the complex nature of its literary fabric.¹

Suggestions as to the basic (or comprehensive) literary genre of Job normally have fallen into three major categories: the lawsuit (רִיב), which is a legal or judicial genre; the lament genre, which is frequent in the Psalms; or the controversy dialogue or dispute, which is similar to the wisdom genre of contest literature in the ancient Near East.

BASIC VIEWS

Lawsuit. Because of the occurrence of legal terminology in Job, many scholars have argued that the juridical sphere is the backdrop of the book.² Richter understands the Book of Job as a secular lawsuit by Job against God whereby the friends serve as witnesses (who apparently place a counter-suit against Job). Chapters 4-14 are viewed as a preliminary attempt at reconciliation out of court, and chapters 15-31 are seen as formal court proceedings between Job and the friends. The resumption of the

case against Job by Elihu and the judgment of God (38:1-42:6) in the form of a secular counter-lawsuit between God and Job result in the withdrawal of the accusation by Job.³

Scholnick has presented a scholarly argument for viewing Job as a "lawsuit drama" whereby the man (Job) takes his opponent (God) to court. The issue of the legal guilt or innocence of the two parties involved is resolved through a lawsuit in which the friends are judges and witnesses.⁴

Lament. Although Westermann recognized the existence of a controversy dialogue in Job 4-27, he argued that the most important element in the book is the lament (the personal lament well known in the Psalms). The lament by Job, which begins (chap. 3) and ends (chaps. 29-31) the dialogue proper, completely encloses the controversy speeches.⁵

Gese suggested that the original "folk book" of Job, now allegedly extant only in the prose sections--the prologue, the epilogue, and in 3: 1 and 38:1--was a "paradigm of the answered lament" patterned after three Mesopotamian texts in which an answer of God came to the sufferer.⁶ However, Gese argued that the author of Job changed the original intent of the "paradigm of the answered lament," whose form he ironically employs, by substituting in the poetic sections a demand for a trial with God I instead of the allegedly original plea for mercy.⁷

Controversy dialogue. Some scholars have proposed that Job is a variant of the philosophical dialogue, namely a controversy dialogue similar to the disputation or contest literature in the ancient Near East.⁸ Although Crenshaw acknowledges that Job cannot be squeezed into one narrow genre, he considers the controversy dialogue, which is influenced by its function within prophetic literature as self-vindication, as the major literary type in the book.⁹

CONCLUSION

Three views which have been proposed to describe the comprehensive literary genre of the Book of Job have been cited. However, the realization that each of the three positions has at least some validity underlies the fact that none of them succeeds in adequately accounting for the diversified nature of this complex literary work.¹⁰ As a matter of fact, the author of the Book of Job skillfully interwove at least three major literary genres into the fabric of his composition. Using the terminology of Leveque, the author skillfully played from three different "keyboards"¹¹ in

his polyphonic work--wisdom types, a genre from Psalms, and a genre from the legal sphere. Consequently it can be concluded that the Book of Job is a "mixed genre" in which its author expertly blended a variety of literary types in order to serve the function of the book.¹²

Literary Devices

Two key literary devices which are employed by the writer of Job are the usage of irony and of mythopoeic language. The present author will analyze the significant manner in which these two major literary devices are utilized to assist the development of the argument and purpose of the book. Also less important literary devices will be briefly noted.

IRONY¹³

The Book of Job is truly a study in irony. Irony is a significant literary feature which saturates nearly every portion of the book.¹⁴

It is interesting that dramatic irony (similar to that used in Greek tragedy)¹⁵ plays an important role in the basic format of Job. The readers and the heavenly court share the knowledge presented in the prologue, of which Job and his friends are not aware--namely, that Job is innocent of wrongdoing and is being tested as part of the cosmic purpose of God.

It is precisely because of the reader's knowledge of Satan's statement that God had put a protective hedge (שָׂמַח) about Job (1:10), that the irony of Job's words in 3:23 becomes evident. Job bemoans that God had placed a hedge around him (גִּבּוֹרֵי) ¹⁶ so that he could not die. The very protective hedge which (although removed to a greater distance by God) prevents Job's death (cf. 2:6) and which was intended for good is conceived of as a restrictive hedge intended for evil.¹⁷ Job consciously speaks ironically about this "hedge" or security guard (מִשְׁמָר) in 7:12. His question drips with irony as he asks God the himself was so dangerous as the sea monster that he must be put under twenty-four-hour surveillance (vv. 17-20). In 13:27 Job again alludes to God's guard being restrictive. It is ironic that Job (in 29:2) longed for the bygone days when Yahweh's guard was a blessing rather than a restrictive hindrance.¹⁸ It is this background which enables the reader to understand the full impact of the irony of the Lord's words in 38:8 when He asks Job who hedged in the sea with

doors (cf. 7: 12). The Lord here uses the same verb—**אָנַח** --Job employed in 3:23.

The "comforting" friends make use of irony in a subtle attempt to prove that Job is wicked. Their words are aimed at the wicked man with whom they implicitly identify Job by means of verbal irony, whereby they twist Job's words in an attempt to incriminate him.¹⁹ For example, Eliphaz's statements in 4:7-11 are an attempt to equate Job with the wicked man whose lot is trouble (**עָמַל**--cf. Job's usage of the same word in 3:10, 20 to describe his own condition).²⁰ In 4:10-11 Eliphaz obliquely refers to Job's "roar" (or "moaning," cf. 3:24) as actually the roar and groan of a lion (as a symbol of the wicked)²¹ whose cubs had been scattered and killed because of God's anger.²² However, a deeper irony (of which the reader is aware) overshadows this passage. Eliphaz's question, "Were the upright ever destroyed?" (4:7b) which implies, according to the retribution dogma, that no upright person was ever destroyed, is disproved by the very fact that Job sits before him on the ash heap (cf. 1: 1, 8; 2:3 where Job is designated **יָשָׁר**).²³ Rather than proving Job to be a sinner, Eliphaz displays his own naive acceptance of an invalid dogma. This not only reinforces Job's innocence in the eyes of the reader²⁴ but also emphasizes the absurdity of the retribution dogma. In similar fashion, Bildad's possible ironic twisting of Job's words (7:21) in 8:525 rebounds against him by the deeper irony of Bildad's own statements of 8:6 and 8:20.²⁶ Job counters the ironic jibes of the friends with his own ironic remarks. In 12:2 Job retorts sarcastically (or perhaps satirically)²⁷ that his friends had such a monopoly on wisdom that wisdom would cease when they died. On the other hand he ironically states that what they say is common knowledge to all men (12:3c). Job says that he himself was not inferior to them in knowledge (12:3b and 13:2b). Beneath the irony of this retort and his statement "what you know, I also know" in 13:2a lies the deeper irony that the equality of their knowledge (especially with regard to the assumption of the retribution dogma) consisted of virtual ignorance of the Lord's ways.²⁸ Once again Sophoclean irony reinforces the absurdity of the dogma of divine retribution. Here it also illustrates the futility of a "dialogue" between Job and the three friends and adumbrates the necessity for the divine perspective which comes in the Lord's speeches.²⁹

The usage of irony in the dialogue of Job, although especially frequent in the first cycle, occurs almost throughout the three

cycles. For example, from the second cycle, Bildad in 18:4 reverses the meaning of Job's words of 14:18 that the "rock is moved from its place."³⁰ Then Bildad seemingly presents the simple orthodox view of the wicked and his fate (18:5-21). However, it is more likely "a masterpiece of irony" in which Bildad fits the words Job had already spoken about his own condition into the description of the wicked man's fate.³¹ Job, who apparently sensed the irony of Bildad's words, responded in 19:2 by mocking Bildad's introductory words of his last two speeches (הַנְּאֻם־ךָ "how long?").³²

In the third cycle, for example, Eliphaz in 22:15-18 turns around Job's quotation of the wicked man (21:14-16) to support his contention that Job has ironically fallen into the same path as wicked men of old (cf. Job's statement in 7:19).³³ Consequently, Eliphaz counsels Job to put away his wickedness in order that "his prosperity would be restored (22:22-30). He concludes by stating (in 22:30) that if Job would repent his prayers would once again become efficacious, not only for those who are innocent, but even for the guilty (those not innocent).³⁴ This would later find ironic fulfillment (in a way not envisioned by Eliphaz) when Job's prayer for his three friends (including Eliphaz himself-42:8-10) was heard so that they, who were not innocent, were forgiven.³⁵ Again the reader is enabled to see the incongruity of the retribution dogma which Eliphaz champions.

Job's words in 27:5-6, where he insists that he would cling to integrity and maintain his righteousness till death despite the allegations of his friends, bears ironic resemblance to the Lord's analysis of Job in 2:3. The irony that results from the use of the word "integrity" (עֲדָרָה) causes the reader to wonder if the Lord would still describe Job in the same way after Job's long and blasphemous attacks on God.³⁶ The usage of this literary device causes the reader to desire (and anticipate) the voice of God from the "whirlwind."

There is a noticeable lessening of irony in chapters 29-31. Apart from the mild "self-irony" of 29:2³⁷ and 29:18-20, which contrasts Job's former state with his present state (chap. 30), there is almost no irony either about God (cf. perhaps 31:3-4) or toward the friends. There may be an "implied ironic slap" toward the friends in 29:25c ("like one who comforts mourners."³⁸ This technique of "deironization" (which allegedly verifies the spurious nature of 29-31)³⁹ is fitting for Job's soliloquy in which he ignores the friends and turns his hopes toward God (though

indirectly) in an almost hopeless "last-ditch" appeal for vindication. The brunt of the irony, which is directed toward Job, consists of a dual contrast--between his former expectations (chap. 29) and his present state, and between his earlier flagrant attacks on God and his present somber appeal for vindication. These contrasts are indicative of Job's desperate situation and prepare the way for the Lord's speeches.

The speeches of Elihu are particularly ironic (or even sarcastic) toward the friends for their failure to deal properly with Job (32:7, 9-11, 15-16). They also contain a few gently ironic utterances directed toward Job (cf. 34:33 and 37: 17-20).⁴⁰ This may illustrate the somewhat neutral (or perhaps mediatorial) role of Elihu.

The Lord's speeches (particularly the first) are permeated with obviously ironic remarks which border on sarcasm (38:4-5, 18,21). However, they also contain more subtly ironic remarks. For example, the Lord's usage of מוֹכֵיץ in 40:2 seems to be an implicit reference to Job's hypothetically מוֹכֵיץ (9:33).⁴¹

MYTHOPOEIC LANGUAGE

The observant reader of the Book of Job is struck by the prevalence of mythopoeic language (the poetic usage of mythological allusions) which is perhaps more prominent in Job than in any other biblical book.⁴² Smick has divided the mythological terminology into four categories: (1) the forces of nature (the fire, the sea, etc.); (2) "creatures cosmic or otherwise"; (3) cosmography; and (4) pagan cultic practices.⁴³ How do these various mythological allusions fit with an evangelical view of the origin and purpose of the Book of Job?⁴⁴

The only reference to Smick's last category occurs in Job 3:8 where Job calls for enchanters to curse the day (of his birth) by arousing Leviathan (presumably to swallow the sun).⁴⁵ (Thus the context supports the retention of יָם in the Masoretic text instead of its emendation to יָם [sea or the god Yamm!--a chaos force in Ugaritic as the counterpart of Leviathan, the sea monster.) However, there may indeed be a subtle play on the similar sound of יָם ("day") and יָם ("sea") and the parallel between Leviathan and Yamm in Ugaritic mythology.⁴⁶ Job apparently employed "the most vivid and forceful proverbial language" available to him to emphasize the depths of his despair and the intensity of his anguish.⁴⁷ Because of Job's clear statement of his monotheism, (in 31:26-28), this mythological allusion (as well as others in the

book)⁴⁸ should not be considered as indicative of Job's belief in the validity of pagan cultic practices or of the existence of other deities.⁴⁹

As a matter of fact, at least two passages where Job speaks contain possible polemical overtones. The first passage (9:5-13), which includes a host of mythological allusions,⁵⁰ emphasizes the sovereignty of the Lord over the sea⁵¹ and the uniqueness of the Lord as the God who alone (לְבַדּוֹ) made the heavens, which are worshiped by pagans (9:8).⁵² Also 9:7 makes it clear that it is the Lord, not a monster, who is the cause of the eclipse of the sun.⁵³ The sun (here denoted by חָרָס) is never referred to as שֶׁמֶשׁ⁵⁴ by the man Job, which seems to be a conscious but subtle polemic : against sun worship.⁵⁵

The second passage, 26:5-14, also contains several mythological allusions.⁵⁶ However, the emphasis is clearly on the sovereignty of God over all the forces of nature. Verse 7 seems to contain a merism whereby the Lord's creation of the north (probably the "heavens" or "skies")⁵⁷ and His establishment of the earth upon nothing⁵⁸ indicate His total control of the universe (see vv. 8-14). Therefore verse 12 which refers to הַיָּם (the sea with definite article indicating not a proper name) seems to be at least an effort at "demythologizing,"⁵⁹ if not antimythical polemicizing.

In the speeches of the friends and of Elihu, besides the few references to cosmography⁶⁰ very little mythopoeic language is used. Eliphaz (in 5:7) speaks of בְּנֵי־רֶשֶׁף "the sons of Resheph" to describe the "flames" or "sparks" which fly upward. Resheph is well-attested as the Northwest Semitic god of plague and pestilence.⁶¹ Similarly Bildad in 18:13 refers to Death's firstborn (בְּכוֹר מָוֶת).⁶² The mention of "holy ones." (by Eliphaz in 5:1 and 15:15) is reminiscent of the "divine council" motif (cf. 15:7-8) of the ancient Near East in which the lesser divine beings participated in an assembly of the gods who made the decisions (cf. "the sons of God" in the prologue--1:6; 2:1).⁶³

Now that the basic data concerning mythopoeic language in Job have been cited,⁶⁴ how does one explain the usage of such mythological language? The fact that the mythopoeic language is much more frequent in the speeches of Job (where polemical overtones appear to be present) than in the friends' speeches strongly suggests that these allusions are merely borrowed imagery from the ancient Near Eastern cultural milieu.⁶⁵ Corroboration of this may be indicated by noting the presence of mythro-

poetic language in the Lord's speeches.⁶⁶ Mythopoeic allusions are clearly present in the descriptions of the restraining of the sea with bars and doors (38:8-10),⁶⁷ of Leviathan breathing fire and smoke (41:19-21 [11-13]),⁶⁸ and probably of the underworld as having gates (38:17). It is also probable that mythopoeic language occurs in the personification of the stars (38:7--parallelism with **בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים**),⁶⁹ of Dawn (**שֶׁחַר**) in 38: 12,⁷⁰ and of the constellation Orion (**כְּסִיל**) in 38:31.⁷¹

Why did God use mythopoeic language in His speeches to Job? The present writer has argued elsewhere⁷² that polemical overtones exist in the usage of this language. These polemical nuances stress the contrast between the uniquely sovereign Lord who operates by grace and the ancient Near Eastern gods who were bound by the dogma of retribution.

A twofold purpose may be seen in this subtle polemic against the gods: (a) to endorse Job's monotheistic stance⁷³ in the process of exposing the inconsistency of Job's action (unconscious self-deification) with his theological position: and (b) to emphasize that the Lord cannot be manipulated according to the dogma of retribution which bound the gods of the ancient Near East.⁷⁴ The scope of this article permits only one example of polemic from the Lord's speeches, namely, the subtle reaffirmation of Job's implicit polemic against sun worship.⁷⁵ The Lord's control over the sun is shown by His daily command for sunrise and sunset, although the word "sun" (**שֶׁמֶשׁ**) is never directly mentioned in His speeches.⁷⁶ This polemic against the sun, however, does much more than endorse Job's monotheistic stance. Since the sun god was almost universally considered to be the guardian of justice in the ancient Near East,⁷⁷ the Lord's control of the sun (and its limiting of the activities of the wicked--38:13-15)⁷⁸ demonstrated that the Lord (and the Lord alone) was the guarantor of justice.⁷⁹ Explicit in this was the fact that the Lord, not Job, was responsible for meting out justice (see 38:12-15 and 40:8-14).⁸⁰ Furthermore the portrayal of the Lord's sovereignty over Leviathan, not only a symbol of chaos and of the wicked and proud (see 40:12). but also of Satan himself,⁸¹ may involve a subtle double entendre for the reader which implies God's victory over Satan who has been proved wrong.⁸²

OTHER LITERARY DEVICES

The author of Job also employed several other literary devices in the composition of his masterpiece. Only some of

these can be noted, and then very briefly, because they do not contribute in an obvious way to the overall purpose of the book.

Several somewhat related literary devices employed in Job may be conveniently lumped together under the general term "paronomasia."⁸³ Selected examples of various types of paronomasia which occur in Job will be briefly noted. Some indication of the existence of alliteration is found in 5:8 where every word begins with the letter א except the last word.⁸⁴ Another common literary device is assonance. This is used, for example, in 12:2 where six of the seven Hebrew words contain the humming sound ("m") which accentuates Job's mocking sarcasm.⁸⁵ Rhyme occurs occasionally as in 10:8-18⁸⁶ and in 19:3-4, 17-21.

The use of assonance in Job 3:8 borders that of a play on words (or "sense"--paronomasia) where the use of יום (which is suggestive of ים)⁸⁷ is heightened by the pun between אָרְרִי ("those who curse") and עֲרִיר ("those who arouse"), two virtual homonyms. Eliphaz's play on the words "ground" (אֲדָמָה) and "man" (C1~) in conjunction with the repetition of the word עָמַל "trouble" (5:6-7) serves as an effective device to aid his clever argument that trouble does not spring from the ground but from man.⁸⁸

Job 13:24 may contain a pun by Job on his own name (אִיּוֹב) with the use of אֹיֵב "enemy") to describe his relationship to God.⁸⁹ This pun is similar to the subtle device of double entendre or what Gordis designates *talhin*, after the Arabic rhetoricians) which sometimes occurs. The author wished to bring both meanings of a word (especially when homonyms existed) to the consciousness of the reader simultaneously. For example, in 7:6 the use of תִּקְוָה ("hope") also brings to mind its homonym which means "thread" because of the figure of the weaver employed in the verse.⁹⁰

Conclusion

It has been argued that the Book of Job does not fit into a single literary genre; rather, its author skillfully interwove literary forms from at least three major genres (the lawsuit, the lament, and the controversy dialogue) into the fabric of the book in order to serve its function.

In a previous article the present writer suggested that the purpose of Job (stated in a negative fashion) was the refutation of the retribution dogma and its corollary that man's relationship to

God is a business contract binding in court.⁹¹ In the present article this contention is supported by demonstrating how two major literary devices (irony and mythopoeic language) were expertly employed in the development of this purpose. Furthermore several other literary features (such as assonance, alliteration, and double entendre, which may be collectively called paronomasia) were noted. These less obvious strokes from the poetic brush, which often do not contribute significantly to the overall purpose, may be called the "finishing touches" to the literary masterpiece known as the Book of Job.

Notes

¹ Even scholars who attempt to fit Job into one literary genre normally acknowledge the presence of other elements. However, they modify what they view as the overall genre in an attempt to include these other literary elements.

² However, as noted by Michael Brennan Dick, "legal language, itself does not constitute a distinct literary form, for the juridicial sphere encompasses a broad area of human life and does not correspond to a specific situation (Sitz im Leben)." ("The Legal Metaphor in Job 31; *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 41 (1979): 37).

³ Heinz Richter, *Studien zu Hiob: Der Aufbau des Hiobbuches, dargestellt an den Gattungen des Rechtsleben* (Berlin: Evangelisches Verlagsanstalt, (1958)). Cf. James L. Crenshaw, "Wisdom," in *Old Testament Form Criticism*, ed. John H. Hayes (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1974), p. 254.

⁴ Sylvia Huberman Scholnick, "Lawsuit Drama in the Book of Job" (Ph. D. diss., Brandeis University, 1975). Scholnick's view is the most persuasive of any writer who tries to fit Job into one Gattung; however, she fails to recognize that the Lord's speeches actually serve to discontinue this metaphor. See this writer's previous article ("The Structure and Purpose of the Book of Job;" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138 (April-June 1981): 139-57). Scholnick provides a convenient summary of some other scholars who have noted the idea that Job represents the proceedings of a lawsuit ("Lawsuit Drama," pp. x-xi; cf. also Crenshaw, "Wisdom," pp. 253-54).

⁵ Claus Westermann, *Der Ausbau des Buches Hiob* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1956), pp. 4-5; and his *Handbook to the Old Testament*, trans. and ed. Robert H. Boyd (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1967), pp. 226-33.

⁶ See James B. Pritchard, ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3d ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 589-91; 596-601. Note the actual contrasts between Job and these three texts as pointed out by the present writer ("A Biblical Theology of Job 38:1-42:6" (Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1980), pp. 21-22, 24).

⁷ See Hartmut Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit in der alten Weisheit: Studien zu Spruchen Salomos und dem Buche Hiob* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1958), pp. 63-64, 73. For a helpful summary of Gese's argument, see John Charles Holbert, "The Function and significance of the Klage in the book of Job with Special Reference to the incidence of Formal and Verbal Irony" (Ph.D. diss., Southern } Methodist University, 1975), pp. 41-43. Note, however, that Horst Dietrich Preuss states that Gese no longer holds to this theory ("Jahwes Antwort an Hiob und die sogenannte Hiobliteratur des alten Vorderen Orients," *Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Theologie: Festschrift für Walther Zimmerli zum 70. Geburtstag* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977], pp. 333, n. 47).

⁸ Crenshaw, "Wisdom," pp. 228, 254. See W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1960), pp. 150-212, for contest ! literature in Mesopotamia.

⁹ Crenshaw, "Wisdom," pp. 253-54.

¹⁰ For instance, none of these adequately accounts for the prose framework of the book. Note the interesting suggestion of Francis I. Andersen, that Job stands . closest to the epic history of Israel in which a major point of interest is the speeches, often in poetic form (cf. Genesis and Samuel) (*Job: An Introduction and Commentary* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976], pp. 36-37).

¹¹ Jean Leveque, *Job et son Dieu; Essai d 'Exegese et de Theologie Biblique*, 2 vols. (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1970), 1 :235. On the combination of these three genres see Georg Fohrer, *Das Buch Hiob* (Gutersloh: Gutersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1963), pp. 50-51; and his *Studien zum Buche Hiob* (Gutersloh: GutersloherVerlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1963). p. 70.

¹² The Berlin Papyrus 3024 from Egypt, which bears a resemblance in form to Job with its prose framework surrounding its poetic body, also employs several different literary genres. The theme of the dispute between the man and his Ba is developed by using three or four different literary forms including a legal dispute, a direct dispute, and two prose allegories. See Hans Goedicke, *The Report about the Dispute of a Man with His Ba: Papyrus Berlin 3024* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), pp. 14-17. Thus it should be recognized that literary types are not frozen forms but are utilized in various situations which may deviate from the supposed original Sitz im Leben.

¹³ A concise definition of irony is practically impossible because it involves several nuances of meaning. There are at least three major types of irony: (1) Socratic irony (or irony of character) which is closest to the meaning of the Greek word εἰρωνεία--"dissimulation" (i.e. ignorance purposely feigned to provoke or confound an opponent); (2) verbal irony, which is a figure of speech in which the intended meaning is the opposite (or a modification) of the literal sense of the words used; and (3) irony of even ts (in drama being called drama tic or Sophoclean irony and in real life called cosmic irony or irony of Fate), which involves an audience (or onlooker) who "perceives that a character is acting in complete ignorance of his true condition." The last type of irony was prominent in Greek drama in which the audience knew in advance the outcome of the legend being enacted in contrast to the actor's own limited understanding of his own actions. See William Joseph Ambrose Power, "A Study of Irony in the Book of Job" (Ph.D. diss.. University of Toronto, 1961), pp. 19-26. Holbert, a student of Power, has suggested another classification of irony in Job, namely, "formal irony" to designate those instances in which it is assumed that Job borrowed Old Testament literary formulas and then altered them in such a way as to heighten the ironic intent of the verbal ironies (see Holbert, "Function and Significance of the Klage in the Book of Job," p. 4, n. 6). However, Holbert's suggestion is too subjective and involves too many assumptions which cannot be proved. His assumption that elements in Job are parodies on the biblical Psalms depends on a date of Job after the Psalms and ignores similar forms in the ancient Near East from a much earlier date. Thus only verbal irony and irony of events are clearly present in the Book of Job.

¹⁴ Since an exhaustive study of irony is impossible here, only selected examples Will be noted. For other possible examples (some of which are questionable) see the excellent studies by Power ("A Study of Irony in the Book of Job") and Holbert ("Function and Significance of the Klage in the Book of Job"). See also Edwin M. Good, *Irony in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), pp. 196-240.

¹⁵ See supra, n. 13.

¹⁶ The root 𐤒𐤓 used in 3:23 is related to the root 𐤒𐤓 used in 1: 10. Between three and ten Hebrew manuscripts have 𐤒𐤓 (from the root 𐤒𐤓) in 1:10. For a concise

summary of the relationship between אֱלֹהִים and אֱלֹהִים as well as אֱלֹהִים and אֱלֹהִים , see E, Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, trans. Harold Knight (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1967). p. 7.

¹⁷ This is technically called Sophoclean irony since the use of the root אֱלֹהִים in this verse is a device which brings the reader's attention to his superior understanding of Job's situation in contrast to Job's complete ignorance of it (see Power, "A Study of Irony in the Book of Job:" pp. 39, 25). The irony is accentuated by the fact (that, when the hedge is moved outward, Job interprets it as becoming unbearably restrictive (cf. 13:27).

¹⁸ Power notes that the Sophoclean irony is "the the hedge and guard that once were forsaken and despised but now are desired and esteemed have throughout the long and tortuous struggle at all times been present" (ibid., p. 138). It is not necessary to emend אֱלֹהִים to אֱלֹהִים in verse 4 (as Power, p. 136, and others do) to gather this from verse 2 and the overall context.

¹⁹ See Good, *Irony in the Old Testament*, pp. 201-12.

²⁰ Whereas Job seems to blame God for his trouble (3:20), Eliphaz plainly implies that the fault is Job's alone because of his wickedness (Holbert, "Function , and Significance of Klage in the Book of Job," pp. 120-21; cf. Power, "A Study of , Irony in the Book of Job:" pp. 42-43).

²¹ See Pritchard for the comparable usage of the lion as a symbol of the impious in the "Babylonian Theodicy" (Ancient Near Eastern Texts, p. 602, lines 48-55, 11 59-64).

²² Job's children had been killed as described in the prologue (1:18-19). See I Power, "A Study of Irony in the Book of Job," pp. 42-43, and Holbert, "Function and Significance of Klage in the book of Job," p. 121,

²³ Holbert calls this verbal irony ("Function and Significance of Klage in the Book of Job," p. 122). However, this is more accurately dramatic or Sophoclean irony since Eliphaz is unaware of the events of the prologue.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 123, .

²⁵ It is possible that Bildad intentionally reverses the way אֱלֹהִים is employed by implying that Job should be more concerned with seeking God than with Gods hypothetically seeking him (ibid.,p. 157, and Power, "A Study of Irony in the Book of Job, pp.57-58)."

²⁶ Holbert, "Function and Significance of Klage in the Book of Job, p. 157.

²⁷ Sarcasm, which is often used interchangeably with irony, often can only be differentiated from it by the tone of voice used. Its tone is ordinarily very heavy and seldom hides its feelings in contrast to irony which uses a lighter tone and has a far more ambiguous effect (Good, *Irony In the Old Testament*, p. 26). The distinction between irony and satire seems to be that the latter, which involves subtle ridicule, is "militant irony." It has a bit of fantasy which the reader recognizes as grotesque or absurd (i.e., inconsistent with reality). See Northrup Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 223-24, and *The Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. Satire. Sarcasm, a biting and cutting criticism, is similar to satire in that its intention is to wound and even destroy, which is not usually the case with irony. (Good, *Irony in the Old Testament*, pp. 26-29, 214; and *The Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. Sarcasm).

²⁸ Cf. Henry L. Rowold, "The Theology of Creation in the Yahweh Speeches of the Book of Job as a Solution to the Problem Posed by the Book of Job" (Th.D. diss., Concordia Seminary in Exile, 1977), pp. 69-70, esp. n. 9.

²⁹ Also it neutralizes Job's ironic exposition of God's wisdom and power (12: 13-25). It seems clear from the contexts of verses 14-25 and from Job's earlier attacks on God that verse 13 was spoken "tongue in cheek" by Job. I

³⁰ See Good, *Irony in the Old Testament*, p. 206, for the precise meaning of this reversal.

³¹ For an elaboration of how this was done, see Power, "A Study of Irony in the Book of Job," pp. 100-102.

³² See 8:2 (יָנֹחַ דַּעַב) and 18:2 (הִנָּחֵ דַּעַב). Job is tired of hearing Bildad's "how long?" (ibid., pp. 102-3).

³³ Ibid., pp. 118-19; cf. Roy B. Zuck, *Job. Everyman's Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), p. 105.

³⁴ Cf. Job 1 where Job offered sacrifices on behalf of his children. The retention of the Masoretic text (both in its text and vocalization), as found in the NIV, is preferred for two reasons: (1) it is theologically more difficult, that is, it appears to contradict the argument of the friends that the innocent--not the guilty--are saved; and (2) the versions (namely the Theodotonic addition to the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Syriac) had to change the person of verse 30b to fit their translation of "innocent one." Cf. Lester L. Grabbe, *Comparative Philology and the Text of Job* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), p. 85. As Gordis has proved, this understanding of verse 30 is in perfect harmony with the Jewish doctrine of corporate responsibility (as in Abraham's appeal to God to save Sodom) (Robert Gordis, "Corporate Personality in Job: A Note on 22:29-30," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 4 [1945]:54-55. ;

³⁵ Ibid.; cf. Grabbe, *Comparative Philology and the Text of Job*, p. 85.

³⁶ Power, "A Study of Irony in the Book of Job," pp. 127-28.

³⁷ Cf. supra, p. 215. !

³⁸ See Good, *Irony in the Old Testament*, pp. 224-25, 234.

³⁹ See Holbert's allegation, "Function and Significance of Klage in the Book of Job," pp. 258 ff. ;

⁴⁰ Good, *Irony in the Old Testament*, pp. 208-12.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 234-36. See the present writer's "A Biblical Theology of Job 38:1-42:6," pp. 110-12, for the significance of these and other ironic remarks. See also Elihu's use of מוֹכֵיַי in 32:12 where he says that there is no מוֹכֵיַי for Job. See Power, "A Study of Irony in the Book of Job," pp. 139-40.

⁴² Matitiah Tsevat, "The Meaning of the Book of Job," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 37 (1966):86. Although obviously genuine mythological allusions are innumerable, one must be careful not to be victimized by the mythological approach of Walter L. Michel, "The Ugaritic Texts and the Mythological Expressions in the Book of Job" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1970), which attempts to read mythology (esp. Ugaritic) into almost every verse by textual emendation and by speculation. Pope is also often guilty of a mythological approach to Job (Marvin H. Pope, *Job*, 3d ed. [Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1973]). However, neither ought one to go to the extreme to deny that any mythological expressions occur in Job "in a strained attempt to remove the writers of Scripture from such contamination" (Elmer B. Smick, "Mythology and the Book of Job," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 13 [1970]:101-2).

⁴³ Smick, "Mythology," p. 101.

⁴⁴ Ibid. The amazing thing is that the mythological allusions abound most in Job's speeches and in the Lord's speeches (where one would least expect them). In contrast, the friends employ little mythopoeic language.

⁴⁵ It was a common belief among ancient peoples all over the world that a solar eclipse was caused by a dragon or monster which swallowed the sun. For a collection of several of these traditions see Theodor H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 878-88. and also his book, *Thespis: Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient Near East*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1961; reprint ed., New York: Harper Torch Books, 1966), pp. 228-29. The daily opposition of the sun god Re by the serpentine monster Apophis in Egyptian mythology probably also included the concept that a total solar eclipse indicated the temporary triumph of Apophis who had swallowed the sun (cf. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 6-7, 12; and Luis I. J. Stadelmann, *The Hebrew Conception of the World: A Philological and Literary Study* [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1970], pp. 21-22). Gaster has suggested that the promise of the protection and friendship of the sun goddess

by Koshar-wa-Khasas (in the Ugaritic text--UT 62 :35-52) belies a similar concept (Thespis, pp. 228-30).

⁴⁶ Elmer B. Smick, "Another Look at the Mythological Elements in the Book of Job," *Westminster Theological Journal* 40 (1978):215.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ See, for instance, the use of עֵפֶפַי־שְׁחַר in 3:9, "the eyelids of Dawn," a personification of dawn which is equivalent to the Ugaritic goddess shrt ("Dawn"). See also Job 38: 12 and 41: 18(10).

⁴⁹ However, Job's error in chapter 3 was questioning the sovereign purpose of God by condemning the day of his birth (Smick, "Another Look," p. 215).

⁵⁰ Job 9:6 describes mountains as "the pillars"(of the earth) (cf. 26: 11). In verse 8 יָם | בְּמַתְיָא, literally, "the high places of Yamm" (no article), has been translated as the "back of Yamm (or Sea)" by many scholars because of the Ugaritic cognate *bmt* ("back"). For example, see Pope, Job, pp. 68, 70, and Charles Lee Feinberg, "Ugaritic Literature and the Book of Job" (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1945), p. 55. Verse 9 speaks of the constellation Orion which was conceived of as a giant hunter in ancient mythology (see 38:31). Verse 13 mentions עֲזָרַי־רָהַב the helpers of Rahab, רָהַב ("boisterous, arrogant") being the peculiarly Israelite name for Leviathan (see Ronald Barclay Allen, "The Leviathan-Rahab-Dragon Motif in the Old Testament" [Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1968], pp. 2-5, 66-67, 76). See also Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 923; and Mary K. Wakeman, *Gods Battle with the Monster: A Study in Biblical Imagery* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), pp. 58 and 79.

⁵¹ Although the absence of the article permits 0: to be a proper noun, the article is not mandatory in poetry. The presence of the plural "1~~ (lit., "backs") emphasizes that Yamm has many "backs" or waves because he is actually nothing more than a natural force (the waves of the sea) and not a deity at all.

⁵² Smick, "Another Look," pp. 218-19.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

⁵⁴ שֶׁמֶשׁ is cognate to Akkadian *samas* and Ugaritic *sps*, both of which are employed to designate the "sun" as well as the "sun deity."

⁵⁵ חֶרֶס is a rare Hebrew word for "sun" used elsewhere only in Judges 14:18 (except for place names) (Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 357). In Job's disavowal of sun worship (31:26), he employs the word אֹר "light" (cf. Elihu's usage in 37:21); in 30:28 he uses the word חֶמֶה "heat" which is rarely used in the Old Testament to describe the sun (see Song of Sol. 6:10; Isa. 24:23; 30:26) (Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew Lexicon*, pp. 328-29). The only occurrence of שֶׁמֶשׁ in the Book of Job is in 8: 16 where Bildad speaks.

⁵⁶ " In 26:711;£1' : "the north") was the cosmic mountain in Ugaritic mythology verses 10-11 may denote a primitive cosmography of the earth as a flat disk floating in the subterranean waters (cf, v. 7) and of the mountains as pillars supporting the heavens. However, this is more likely phenomenological language (language describing the way things appear -such as meteorologists use "sunrise" or "sunset"--without necessarily endorsing this scientifically). Verses 12-13 describe Rahab, the chaotic monster (see supra, n. 50) which the Lord smashed to pieces. (See the similar description in UT 67:1: 1-3, 27-30, where Mot seems to question the possibility of Baal's defeating the chaos monster.) In 26:13 the monster is designated נָחַשׁ בָּרֵיחַ "the fleeing serpent" whom the Lord pierced (cf. Isa. 27:1 and also Anat's claim of destroying the serpent in 'nt 111:38-39),

⁵⁷ See Smick, "Another Look," pp. 222-23, and the NIV translation.

⁵⁸ This assertion of faith supports the probability that 26:10-11 (and other verses where Job speaks) describe the cosmos in a phenomenological manner.

⁵⁹ The present writer uses this term to describe a neutralization of the mythical concepts of the ancient Near East. This usage in 26:12 is in contrast to 7:12 where

Job asked if he were Yamm (יָם without the article) or the sea-monster (תַּיִם) that God placed a guard over him (cf. 'nt III:37 where Anat claims to have muzzled the dragon, tnn). See Smick, "Another Look," p. 223. תַּיִם, unlike Leviathan and Rahab which are personal names for the monster, is more properly a generic term for the sea-monster (Wakeman, *God's Battle with the Monster*, p. 79).

⁶⁰ See 22:14 and 37:18 where the sky seemed to be a solid dome (רָקִיעַ) over the earth. This is also probably phenomenological language.

⁶¹ Thus the term "sons of Resheph" describes the various types of pestilence (here "flames") (see Smick, "Mythology," p. 105, and "Another Look," pp. 219-20; also Pope, *Job*, pp. 42-43). For references to Resheph, see Gaster, *Myth. Legend, and Custom*, pp. 670-71, 789.

⁶² Mot was the Ugaritic god of drought, death, and the underworld. See Smick, "Mythology," p. 105, and "Another Look," p. 220.

⁶³ See Smick, "Another Look," pp. 216-17.

⁶⁴ The evidence from the Lord's speeches has been deliberately omitted so far. Also some evidence was not included from the rest of the book such as several instances of personification of the forces of nature (cf. אֲבֵרֵי יָם (28:22; 31:12) and תְּהוֹם [28:14]).

⁶⁵ This is consistent with the strict monotheism of Job (31 :26-28) and his friends as well as all the Old Testament writers. Allen's excellent analysis of the Leviathan motif concludes that the mythopoeic language of the Old Testament --was merely literary allusion, not "borrowed mythology" ("The Leviathan-Rahab-Dragon Motif in the Old Testament," pp. 60, 63; cf. Bruce K. Waltke, *Creation and Chaos* [Portland: Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1974], pp. 13-14).

⁶⁶ If one assumes that these speeches are really the words of the Lord and not merely words placed in His mouth by the poet (the typical neoorthodox view), the presence of mythological language is a cogent indication that mere imagery is being employed.

⁶⁷ In the so-called Akkadian creation epic *Enuma Elish*, the goddess Ti'amat (Old Akkadian word for "sea"), who apparently represented the powers in the primeval salt water ocean, was slain and bound by Marduk in his storm chariot. After her corpse was cut in half to make the sky out of one half, Marduk provided for bars and posted guards so that her waters could not escape. (See tablet IV, lines 93ff., and esp. 139-40 in Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 67.) Also see Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951; reprint ed., Phoenix Books, 1963), pp. 40-42. Heidel interprets the guard to refer only to the waters contained in the sky (see p. 42, n. 94).

⁶⁸ See Job's allusion in 3:8 to the mythical Leviathan as a force of chaos.

⁶⁹ The stars were worshiped as mighty gods in pagan cults of the ancient Near East (cf. Deut. 4:19). For instance, the Ugaritic poem sometimes called "The Birth of the Gracious Gods" (UT 52) celebrates the birth of the astral deities Dawn (sl:lr) and Dusk (slm)--lines 52 and 53 --probably the brilliant star Venus regarded by many as both the morning and evening star (cf. Pope, *Job*, p. 292). For a transliteration and translation of UT 52 (= SS), see G. R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), pp. 120-25. The mention of "the sons of God" (cf. Job 1:6 and 2: 1) bears a resemblance to the assembly of lesser gods in the ancient Near East.

⁷⁰ See the reference to the Ugaritic god Sahar in n. 69. See also the reference to the "eyelids of Dawn" (עַפְפֵי יְהוֹרֵם) in Job 41 :18 (10) and 3:9. The star Venus, likely called Sattar in Ugaritic, was also venerated and associated with Inanna in (Sumerian myths, with Ishtar in Akkadian, and with Attar (Astarte) in Ugaritic myths. See Helmer Ringgren, *Religions of the Ancient Near East*, trans. John Sturdy (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), pp. 9, 59-60, 141-42.

⁷¹ In ancient mythology Orion was a giant hunter. According to Dhorme (*Com-*

mentary on the Book of Job, p. 132) and Theodor H. Gaster (Thespis, p. 322), Orion was the Babylonian god of the chase and war called Ninib (equivalent to Sumerian Ninurta, the stalwart warrior god with his hunting gear of bows and nets). In Egyptian literature the god Osiris (forebear and prototype of all dead kings) was alive in Orion. The dead king could go to the "Field of Rushes" (the Hereafter) with Orion; even the common (nonroyal) men rose and set with Orion as night stars. See Henri Frankfort, *Ancient Egyptian Religion: An Interpretation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), pp. 102-3, 105-6, 109-11.

⁷² See the writer's "A Biblical Theology of Job 38: 1-42:6,"

⁷³ This included not only a belief in the sovereignty of God (see the writer's article, "The Structure and Purpose of the Book of Job") but even polemical statements against other gods (Job 9:5-13; 26:5-14).

⁷⁴ Job's failure to part with this dogma (see 40:8) was not only inconsistent with his theology, but also caused him to adopt a distorted view of God's sovereignty, namely, that it was cruel caprice.

⁷⁵ See supra, p. 219, ;

⁷⁶ Indirect mentions occur in the use of בֹּקֶר ("morning") and שֶׁחַר ("dawn") in 38:12-15 and of אֹר ("light") in 38: 19-20.

⁷⁷ See chapter 1 of the writer's, "A Biblical Theology of Job 38: 1-42:6,"

⁷⁸ In the ancient Near East, it was believed that the sun god drove the demons and other chaotic forces (often embodied in animals) back into their hiding places each morning. See the representation of the god of light (probably Shamash) in opposition to demons in Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*, trans. Timothy J. Hallett (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), p. 54, fig. 53. See also Shamash seated in judgment of a lion-headed demon (ibid., p. 208, fig. 286). In Egypt the concept was that of Re in his sun boat emerging victoriously over the underworld serpent of darkness, Apophis (see Frankfort, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, p. 18 and fig. 8).

⁷⁹ Job 38: 12-15 is an answer to Job's objections of 24:13-17 that wickedness was rampant at night.

⁸⁰ Job assumed that the Lord was bound to the dogma of retribution like the sun god and in doing so unconsciously placed himself as judge.

⁸¹ See Revelation 12:3-17 (esp, v. 9) and 20:2 where Satan is called a serpent and a dragon, See also Allen, who argues that the Leviathan motif is consistently an Iemblem of Satan in the Old Testament ("The Leviathan-Rahab-Dragon Motif in the Old Testament").

⁸² See Smick, "Another Look at the Mythological Elements in the Book of Job," p. 227. (While the present writer arrived at virtually the same conclusion independently of Smick, it was a real encouragement to find another evangelical who recognized the significance of the mythological overtones of Leviathan for understanding the Book of Job. Except for Allen ("The Leviathan-Rahab-Dragon Motif in the Old Testament," pp. 82-84), other evangelicals have minimized the mythological aspect of Leviathan for the Lord's speeches and have ignored the possible significance of it as a Satanic emblem.) It is only through the permission of the Lord that Satan was allowed to use his forces of chaos and evil against Job. Although Job is quite ignorant of Satan's role as described in the prologue, it may be through the familiar anti-creation symbol of chaos (Leviathan) that the Lord communicated the fact that chaos forces (within the sovereign restraint set by the Creator) were responsible for the calamities which befell Job and the apparent injustices which Job had observed and lamented.

⁸³ Immanuel M. Casanowicz (*Paronomasia in the Old Testament* [Boston: Norwood Press, 1894]) divides this term into "sound-paronomasia" and "sense-paronomasia." The former includes alliteration ("the recurrence of the same initial letter or its phonetic equivalent in two or more words in close or immediate succession"), rhyme (the agreement of sound at the end of words), and assonance (the coincidence of sound in the middle of words). The latter, sense-paronomasia,

is a "play on words" or pun in which the combination of words of similar sounds produces a witticism or jest (see pp. 3-4, 8, 12). Casanowicz lists some fifty-two examples of paronomasia in Job (pp. 91-93), but his list is far from exhaustive.

⁸⁴ Robert Gordis, *The Book of God and Man: A Study of Job* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 166.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 166-67.

⁸⁶ Charles Lee Feinberg, "The Poetic Structure of the Book of Job and the Ugaritic Literature," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 103 (1946):290.

⁸⁷ See *supra*, p. 218.

⁸⁸ Good, *Irony in the Old Testament*, p. 203.

⁸⁹ This was suggested as long ago as the Talmud (Baba Bathra, 15a). See Holbert, "Function and Significance of the Klage in the Book of Job," p. 182, and Good, *Irony in the Old Testament*, p. 230. The plene spelling of "enemy" (rather than **אֹיֵב**) seems to confirm this.

⁹⁰ Gordis, *The Book of God and Man*, pp. 167-68. He suggests that this device also occurs in 3:6-7,22; 5:24; 9:17; 12:6; 21:13; and 22:25 (see p. 347, n. 51).

⁹¹ Parsons, "The Structure and Purpose of the Book of Job," pp. 139-57.

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