

DISCUSSION ON A RULER'S
CORRUPTNESS IN THE WISDOM
LITERATURE, USING JOB 29–31
AS AN EXAMPLE¹

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JOB'S FINAL COMPLAINT AND AVOVAL
OF INNOCENCE

Job's final complaint and avowal of innocence in chapters 29–31 of the book of Job has been identified as the culmination of Old Testament ethics. Regarding Job's oath of innocence in chapter 31, this was claimed in particular by Bernhard Duhm in his commentary on the book of Job in 1897, and has been repeated afterwards.² Verse 29 of this oath ("If I have rejoiced at the ruin of those who hated me, / or exulted when evil overtook them"³) was pointed to by Duhm as its "crown jewel."⁴ The significant role of Job's last great speech within the structural framework of the book has been recognised forevermore.⁵

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² Bernhard **Duhm**, *Das Buch Hiob*. Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament, 16 (Freiburg i.B. etc.: J.C.B. Mohr ([Paul Siebeck], 1897), 145. Cf. Daniela **Opel**, *Hiobs Anspruch und Widerspruch. Die Herausforderungsreden Hiobs (Hi 29–31) im Kontext frühjüdischer Ethik*. Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament, 127 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2010), esp. 4f.

³ Translation according to the New Revised Standard Version (= NRSV).

⁴ Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob*, 149.

⁵ To name but a few: Michael **Cheney**, *Dust, Wind and Agony. Character, Speech and Genre in Job*. Coniectanea Biblica. Old Testament Series, 36 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1994); Melanie **Köhlmoos**, *Das Auge Gottes. Textstrategie im Hiobbuch*. Forschungen zum Alten Testament, 25 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1999), esp. 283–320; or, in a nutshell, by John E. **Hartley**, *The Book of Job*. The

Those three chapters, 29–31, at the end of the dialogue between Job and his friends and prior to Elihu’s and God’s speeches, once more look back on Job’s laments and reproofs, take advantage of multiple ideas and wordings featured by Job and his friends in the dialogue, and escalate the claim of the moral integrity of Job. The text can be divided into three parts entirely along the chapter boundaries. The first part, chapter 29, remembers Job’s former abundant life in social terms. As an elder, he was respected by representatives of all social strata. The second part, chapter 30, sharply confronts Job’s actual deep suffering with the previous poetic outline of his ideal past. Here, as well, social abandoning opens the description of his suffering, followed by a complaint of severe illness, and this is summed up in a direct reproof against God and in a self-lament. The last third of Job’s final speech, chapter 31, contains a series of oaths of innocence. Depending on a particular scholar, how he or she defines the oaths, arranges them into groups or differentiates text particles diachronically, the number of sins denied by Job and the number of oaths can vary from seven to fourteen.⁶

THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE AUTHORS OF THE BOOK OF JOB

Firstly, it is worth noting the roots of the so-called Joban literature in the Ancient Near East. Classical parallels such as *Ludlul bel nemeqi* represent the viewpoint of the wealthy elite. This can be seen not only from the focus on the upper class social situation⁷, but also from the fact that the education of the scribes writing these texts “was the prerogative of the upper classes.”⁸ The scribes reflected the questions of the elite and wrote

New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1988), 385f.

⁶ Cf., e.g., Georg **Fohrer**, *Das Buch Hiob*. Kommentar zum Alten Testament, 16 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1963), 427f.; Norman C. **Habel**, *The Book of Job. A Commentary*. The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), 429; Carol A. **Newsom**, *The Book of Job. A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 195–197.

⁷ See particularly *Ludlul bel nemeqi* I, 55–104.

⁸ Karel **van der Toorn**, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge,

for the upper class. The same is also the case in most parts of the book of Job. At the beginning, the Job of the frame story (chapters 1–2) is a fortunate and wealthy patriarch in a rural area. In the poem, the piousness of Job as well as of almost everyone is generally measured by his deeds towards poor and needy people. I offer two passages as examples; the first reflects the social position of Job in 19:13–16 (translation according to John E. Hartley):⁹

My brothers are¹⁰ far from me,
and my friends are utterly estranged from me.
My relatives and my associates have gone away;
my house guests have forgotten me.¹¹
My maidservants consider me a stranger;
I have become a foreigner in their sight.
I summon my servant, but he does not answer;
I entreat him with my mouth.

The second example concerns severe accusations against Job in the mouth of Eliphaz, Job 22:6–9 (according to Norman C. Habel):¹²

For you take your brother's pledge without cause
And so strip the naked of their garments.
You give no water to the weary
And you hold back bread from the hungry.
The land belongs to the one with a strong arm!
The privileged person inhabits it!
Widows you sent away empty,
And you¹³ broke the arms of orphans.

MS; London: Harvard University Press, 2007), 54, 72; on the establishment in Mesopotamia and Egypt see *ibid.*, 51–73.

⁹ Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 286f. Cf. the passage from *Ludlul bel nemeqi* mentioned in note 7.

¹⁰ The plural is preferred, according to Septuagint and Peshitta; so also Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 286, note 1; *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Eds. K. Elliger and W. Rudolph *et al.* Editio quarta emendata (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1990), and others.

¹¹ The end of v. 14 and the beginning of v. 15 have to be combined in order to result in a proper poetic colon; so also Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 286f., note 3; *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, and others.

¹² Habel, *The Book of Job*, 331.

¹³ The third person of the Hebrew text is emended into the second person according to

Job's final speech does not differ much; the only distinguishable characteristic is the profile of a wealthy and honourable person in urban surroundings—cf. 29:7–11. But the engagement of the upper class with the socially disadvantaged already comes into play in Job 29:12–16 (NRSV):

[B]ecause I delivered the poor who cried,
and the orphan who had no helper.
The blessing of the wretched came upon me,
and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.
I put on righteousness, and it clothed me;
my justice was like a robe and a turban.
I was eyes to the blind,
and feet to the lame.
I was a father to the needy,
and I championed the cause of the stranger.

One cannot escape the feeling that it is not only a matter of the narrative exposition which needs wealth and health in order to underline the dramatic effect of their loss—the righteous suffering as a topos in the Ancient Near East has been organically related to the elite.¹⁴

It is remarkable that the organic interdependence of the topic of righteous suffering and its context among the elite is disturbed in some parts of the Book of Job. After decades of redaction and critical scholarship, it

Septuagint and other versions; so Habel, *The Book of Job*, 332; *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, and others.

¹⁴ The observation has not been a subject of too many studies, and mostly socio-historical works have shown some interest, while not always addressing the similar background of the Book of Job and other Ancient Near Eastern literature; to offer one example, Rainer **Albertz**, “The Sage and Pious Wisdom in the Book of Job: The Friend’s Perspective” – *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. Eds. John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 243–261, esp. 247f., 259–261. A substantial discussion is provided by Konrad **Schmid**, “Scribes, Sages, and Seers in Second Temple Judah” – *Scribes, Sages, and Seers. The Sage in the Eastern Mediterranean World*. Ed. Leo G. Perdue. *Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments*, 219 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 145–153; of course, the second temple in Jerusalem is an obvious locus for scribal schools at the time of the emergence of the Book of Job, as maintained by Schmid, but a Judean upper class with some scholarly, existential and religious interests requiring the services of (autonomous) scribes probably makes the whole picture more complex—during the two hundred years of literary history of the Book of Job, the book probably changed hands between different scribes, schools and groups several times.

goes almost without saying that the disturbances appear in portions of the book that many scholars have often ascribed to later authors and editors.¹⁵ Extensive parts of chapters 24 and 27 belong to this group of texts; and so do the Elihu speeches in chapters 32–37, which are considered to be a literary expansion in the first place.¹⁶ Only two examples from those texts can be given here, but they will suffice. Firstly, in 27:16–19 “the late Job” reflects the destiny of the rich people (Hartley):¹⁷

If he heaps up silver like dust
and piles clothing like clay,
he may accumulate, but the righteous will wear it;
the innocent will divide the silver.
He built his house like a spider's web,
like a booth that a watchman makes.
He goes to bed rich, but for the last time;
he opens his eyes and nothing is left.

Or a passage from Elihu's speeches, 34:24–27 (Hartley):¹⁸

He shatters the mighty without inquiry,
and sets others in their place.
Because he regards their deeds,
he overthrows them in the night and they are crushed.
He strikes them for their wickedness

¹⁵ See the discussion, especially by Markus **Witte**, *Vom Leiden zur Lehre. Der dritte Redegang (Hiob 21–27) und die Redaktionsgeschichte des Hiobbuches*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft [=BZAW], 230 (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1994); Wolf-Dieter **Syring**, *Hiob und sein Anwalt. Die Prosatexte des Hiobbuches und ihre Rolle in seiner Redaktions- und Rezeptionsgeschichte*. BZAW, 336 (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004); Otto **Kaiser**, *Das Buch Hiob* (Stuttgart: Radius, 2006); Jürgen **van Oorschot**, “Die Entstehung des Hiobbuches” – *Das Buch Hiob und seine Interpretation. Beiträge zum Hiob-Symposium auf dem Monte Verità vom 14.–19. August 2005*. Eds. T. Krüger et al. *Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments*, 88 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2007), 165–184.

¹⁶ Cf. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 28–30, and one of the few supporters of the originality of Elihu's speeches, Habel, *The Book of Job*, 36f. *passim*. For a summary of numerous arguments, see Harald-Martin **Wahl**, *Der gerechte Schöpfer. Eine redaktions- und theologiegeschichtliche Untersuchung der Elihureden – Hiob 32–37*. BZAW, 207 (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1993), 8–20, 172–181.

¹⁷ Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 358.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 455f.

in a public place,
 because they turned from following him,
 and heeded not any of his ways.

It is no doubt that wealthy people are the subject of these passages. In the first instance, the rich are losing their wealth because they seem to be wicked—the opposition of the rich on the one hand and of the righteous and the innocent on the other hand lead to the conclusion that the rich must be corrupt. In the second example, the mighty are expressively considered wicked, but the wording “to shatter without inquiry” unmistakably strengthens the impression that the mighty can never be godly or righteous.

POLEMIC AGAINST RULERS’ FUNDAMENTAL CORRUPTNESS

Focusing on the province of Judea in the second temple period, we know that the discussion on the relationship between rich and poor was intense, occasionally even fierce. Several psalms and their sections are probably the best literary attestations to these social controversies. In these texts, a series of typical notions is used to identify the poor, the needy and the slaves on the one hand, and the nobles, kings, princes, chiefs and masters on the other hand. These groups have been sharply juxtaposed. Moreover, it is notable in these texts that the representatives of the social and political classes often tend to be evaluated in religious terms, such as the righteous, the unrighteous, the upright, the godless, the wicked, the workers of iniquity, etc. Being poor and needy becomes associated with piety, and being noble and wealthy becomes connected with godlessness. Despite numerous passages in the prophetic literature, a passage from the psalms illustrates the reflection here at its best. The description of the deeds of God towards princes in Ps 107:40–42 reads as follows (NRSV):

[H]e pours contempt on princes
 and makes them wander in trackless wastes;
 but he raises up the needy out of distress,
 and makes their families like flocks.

The upright see it and are glad;
and all wickedness stops its mouth.

One can also read Ps 118:8f.; 119:161 and other psalm passages; one can further realise the depth of religious self-confidence by reading Ps 119:23 (NRSV):

Even though princes sit plotting against me,
your servant will meditate on your statutes.

The tendency in certain psalms has been so concise, that for many years scholars have discussed a wave or several waves of redactions concerning social and religious (group) issues.¹⁹ Hence the discussion known to us from the psalms and elsewhere and not yet known to the author(s) of the original dialogue of Job has invaded the poem; a new viewpoint of social groups that refer to themselves with the social and religious notions referred to above and contrasting themselves to the nobles has been added.

JOB'S FINAL SPEECH AS A SECONDARY ADDITION

Those additions in the Book of Job mentioned above which polemically address the mighty and the rich disturb the general framework of Job's dialogue. If certain writers could add this kind of polemic into the poem and if whole speeches like those of Elihu augmented the earlier work, the book had to be open to different extrapolations. Why not consider a similar possibility for writers being more in line with the common topos of the righteous suffering of the elite? There is no need to claim that the rich and the chiefs always act ethically, but the powerful generalising tendency of

¹⁹ See especially the works of Erich **Zenger** (to the theology of the poor in the psalms), like "Der Psalter als Buch. Beobachtungen zu seiner Entstehung, Komposition und Funktion" – *Der Psalter in Judentum und Christentum*. Ed. E. Zenger. Herders Biblische Studien, 18 (Freiburg i.B. etc.: Herder, 1998), 1–57; and Christoph **Levin**, "Das Gebetbuch der Gerechten. Literargeschichtliche Beobachtungen am Psalter" – *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 90 (1993), 355–381; Marko **Marttila**, *Collective Reinterpretation in the Psalms. A Study of the Redaction History of the Psalter*. Forschungen zum Alten Testament, II/13 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 2006); Johannes Un-Sok **Ro**, *Die sogenannte "Armenfrömmigkeit" im nachexilischen Israel*. BZAW, 322 (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002).

the critics towards the elite somewhere at the end of the Persian and at the beginning of the Hellenistic eras certainly became a problem for the ethos and self-understanding of the wealthy and political elite.

Job's final complaint and avowal in chapters 29–31 fit the framework of polemics against the polemics very well. It is possible that the authors of this massive tripartite speech more or less underline that the wealthy elite are still able to be exemplary and pious, and some of them certainly are. Perhaps this is why the tone is so suggestive and poetically challenging. An example: there is a *pointe* at the end of the first third of the speech, in the last verse (25) of chapter 29, where readers and listeners suddenly realise that the ideal protagonist described has been a king, or almost a king (Hartley):²⁰

I directed their course and sat as chief;
I dwelt as king among his troops;
I was as one who comforts mourners.

Attention is drawn to the noblest nature of the protagonist, and very effectively. The whole final complaint of Job could thus be titled “The poem about the innocent suffering of a noble king”.

Immediately after this verse, at the beginning of the next part in 30:1, a sharp turn occurs: the current situation of the complainer is addressed. He has lost everything; the tone is that of lamentations, as noted by scholars.²¹ And then, at the end, in the last third of the speech, in the avowal of innocence, it appears, as suggested by Manfred Oeming and newly by others, that the author has been well aware of the Decalogue and of Deuteronomistic theology.²² The noble protagonist of the final speech knows the Torah and has acted in accordance with it. But his fate is not in accordance with that; and this is a problem, since many people could claim that it is normal when a noble man suffers—it is just his nature to be corrupt and he deserves bad fate anyway.

It is quite obvious that due to the complex structure of these three

²⁰ Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 394.

²¹ See especially Claus **Westermann**, *The Structure of the Book of Job. A Form-Critical Analysis* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 31–70.

²² Manfred **Oeming**, “Hiob 31 und der Dekalog” – *The Book of Job*. Ed. W.A.M. Beuken. Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, 114 (Leuven University Press, 1994), 362–368.

chapters, the reader cannot escape literary critical observations and specifications. As indicated above, however, there exists a further solution, that of the overall secondary nature of Job's final complaint and avowal. Almost a hundred years ago, Morris Jastrow Jr. suggested the idea that these chapters may not have been part of the original poem of Job.²³ In recent decades, some scholars, such as Victor Maag, John C. Holbert, Wolf-Dieter Syring and Otto Kaiser, have followed the idea in a more differentiated way.²⁴ In addition, the recent situation of research into the book of Job has changed: after the emergence of the new redaction historical model in Germany in the 1990s and 2000s (Markus Witte, Jürgen van Oorschot, Wolf-Dieter Syring, Otto Kaiser, etc.), it is far more appropriate to ask whether Job's soliloquy should really be considered as being of an autonomous origin, added to later or written later for the book of Job. Furthermore, if one considers the numerous literary layers discovered by Witte and others, to be a majesty redaction (*Majestätsbearbeitung*), a righteousness redaction (*Gerechtigkeitsbearbeitung*) or a lowliness redaction (*Niedrigkeitsbearbeitung*)²⁵ or some other layers proposed later, e.g., an innocence extrapolation (*Unschuldserweiterung*) and late

²³ Morris **Jastrow**, *The Book of Job. Its Origin, Growth and Interpretation* (Philadelphia, London: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1920). Something similar was hinted at already by Duncan B. **MacDonald**, "The Original Form of the Legend of Job" – *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 14 (1895), 63–71, 69. An overview of other authors in John C. **Holbert**, "The Rehabilitation of the Sinner: The Function of Job 29–31" – *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 95 (1983), 229–237, 229–230, note 1.

²⁴ Victor **Maag**, *Hiob. Wandlung und Verarbeitung des Problems in Novelle, Dialogdichtung und Spätfassungen. Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments*, 128 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 152–154; Holbert, "The Rehabilitation of the Sinner"; Syring, *Hiob und sein Anwalt*, 139–142; Kaiser, *Das Buch Hiob*, 115. It has been a solution for some scholars to rearrange the chapters somewhere else, as Harry **Torczyner** (*Das Buch Hiob. Eine kritische Analyse des überlieferten Hiobtextes* [Wien, Berlin: R. Löwit Verlag, 1920, 202, 233]) did: some parts should belong to some of the first Joban speeches, some parts are similar to chapters 16 and 19, and chapter 30 is "vielfach sehr beschädigt und aus Stücken verschiedener Herkunft zusammengesetzt" (p. 207).

²⁵ Witte, *Vom Leiden zur Lehre*. English translations of German notions are open to discussion: Carol A. **Newsom**, "Re-considering Job" – *Catholic Biblical Review*, 5 (2007), 155–182, translates with given notions; the "lowness-redaction" is also possible, as stated by Markus **Witte**, "Does the Torah Keep Its Promise? Job's Critical Intertextual Dialogue with Deuteronomy" – *Reading Job Intertextually*. Eds. Katharine Dell and Will Kynes. Library of Hebrew Bible / Old Testament Studies, 574 (New York etc.: Bloomsbury, 2013), 54–65, 55.

redactors (*späte Bearbeiter*) by Otto Kaiser²⁶ or a fear-of-God redaction (*Gottesfurcht-Redaktion*) by Jürgen van Oorschot²⁷, the question of the interdependence between Job's avowal in chapters 29–31 and the redaction layers should be investigated.

Without tackling the numerous arguments and different literary and redaction critical models of chapters 29–31, some reasons for presupposing that the chapters were added later, perhaps even in two parts, i.e. first chapters 29–30 and then chapter 31, will be summed up here. Firstly, form-critical criteria: one of the most important results of the diverse research work of recent decades is the observation that in the earliest version of the dialogue between Job and his three friends (excluding the Elihu speeches), the speeches were considerably shorter. This is particularly true of Job's speeches; only some of them, like chapters 3, 19, and 21, have maintained the approximate original extent (the word "approximate" should be emphasised). Of course, several later additions have been suggested even in chapters 29–31 (depending on various criteria and premises, verses such as 29:17–20; 30:1b–8; 31:1–3, 11–12, 15, 18, 23, 28, 33–34, 38–40, i.e., a total of 26 bicola and tricola are candidates).²⁸ But even then the number of verses left for the oldest stratum in the speech amounts to as many as 70, and this is by far too many for a normal speech by Job in the original dialogue.²⁹

The more one studies different forms of poetry in the book of Job, the more it becomes apparent that those parts of the poem which could be read as "traditional" make use of poetical forms that are in many ways balanced and regular, while the other parts which openly focus only on certain theological or social matters tend to disregard balance and regularity. If all of the parts of Job's speeches were written by one author, then one would expect an approximately similar poetic handwriting, but that is not

²⁶ Kaiser, *Das Buch Hiob*, 115; preceded by observations made by Syring, *Hiob und sein Anwalt*, 139–142, 168.

²⁷ Van Oorschot, "Die Entstehung des Hiobbuches", 176–179; in his eyes, the redaction is similar to the majesty redaction proposed by Witte.

²⁸ Cf. the discussion by Opel, *Hiobs Anspruch und Widerspruch*, 21–157, on literary and redaction critical matters.

²⁹ Cf. Jastrow, *The Book of Job*, 68; Syring, *Hiob und sein Anwalt*, 141, and Urmas Nõmmik, *Die Freundesreden des ursprünglichen Hiobdialogs. Eine form- und traditionskritische Untersuchung*. BZAW, 410 (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 286–288.

the case. Traditional poetry and unrestricted glosses and reflections stand side by side. Even then, when the author or authors of Job 29–31 wished to come close to the traditional forms in the book of Job—some consider those chapters as a school text, i.e. as a traditional text—there are slight differences with the earlier portions elsewhere. Four stanzas in the second, complaining part of the speech, 30:16–19, 20–23, 24–27, 28–31, serve as an example. The repetition of certain phrases gives a hint of the original division of the poem into stanzas of regular length. The phrase “days of affliction” (30:16, 27) builds an inclusio around the first three stanzas, the word “my bones” (30:17, 30) builds another inclusio in the first and fourth stanza, and the phrase “to cry out (to you)” (30:20, 24, 28) always stands somewhere in the first verse of the second, third and fourth stanzas. The very same structural repetition of phraseology is already known in the oldest layer of the dialogue of Job, but not to a comparable degree. Moreover, a further comparison shows that the length of stanzas in chapters 30–31 tends to be four bicola, whereas in chapter 29 it is five. As to the literary and form-critical observations on the whole book of Job, this kind of change within one speech has not been the case in earlier strata.³⁰

As to the contents, the evaluations of the interrelationship of chapters 29–31 with the remainder of the dialogue have been extremely diverse, from the thesis of very close connections to the assessment of Jastrow, who observes, “[i]n these three chapters, however, Job does not argue at all. He does not refer to his friends nor to their contentions or rebukes, and he merely refers to his present condition.”³¹ It is true that there is nothing that refers to Job’s previous discussion with friends or much that refers to the deeply existential tone of Job’s previous speeches. John C. Holbert emphasises that “the most powerful and sharp rejoinders to the friends and to God in entire book” in 27:2–6 is not comparable to chapter 29 at all.³² This is particularly true if one considers the fact that two stanzas in chapters 30 and 31, sharper in their diction, could originate in the older stratum of Job’s final speech (according to Syring and Kaiser, 30:20–23

³⁰ Cf. Nömmik, *Die Freundesreden des ursprünglichen Hiobdialogs*, 85–88, 286–288, and *Iiobi raamat*. Tõlkinud ja kommenteerinud Ürmas Nömmik. Piibel kontekstis, 1 (Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2013), 20–21, and the whole layout of the poem *ibid*.

³¹ Jastrow, *The Book of Job*, 69.

³² Holbert, “The Rehabilitation of the Sinner”, 230, note 3.

and 31:35–37 once directly followed 27,2–4).³³

Instead of coming to terms with most of the rest of the poem of Job, chapters 29–31 presuppose the noble stand of Job and his exemplary moral integrity from the prose frame story.³⁴ As there is enough cause to claim the later addition of the frame story to the poem of Job,³⁵ there are equally grounds to believe that the addition of chapter 29–31 had something in common with the whole redaction process. Job's final complaint and oaths belong to the advanced phase of the development of the book, namely to the time when Job's character was considered to be a legendary and ideal, even absolute case.

And, last but not least, a perceptive reader and observer can indeed already draw conclusions from the heading of Job's final great speech: "Job again took up his teaching and said" (29:1), which is, together with 27:1, one of the only two examples of such a heading in the whole book, and clearly an attestation of literary growth.³⁶

CONCLUSION: JOB'S FINAL COMPLAINT AND AVOWAL AS A POLEMICAL ADDITION

In her 2008 dissertation, Daniela Opel draws attention to the fact, which has already been suggested by a few others, that the overall atmosphere of Job's final great speech indicates a remarkable step in the theological development of second temple Judaism. It prepares the kind of theology which surfaces in the book of Ben Sira in the 2nd century BC.³⁷ Ben Sira does not

³³ Syring, *Hiob und sein Anwalt*, 139–142 (cf. also the contra-arguments of Opel, *Hiobs Anspruch und Widerspruch*, 14–16); Kaiser, *Das Buch Hiob*, 48f., 57, 89, 92. According to Holbert, "The Rehabilitation of the Sinner", 231, 30:16–31 are a composition based upon older speeches of Job, and 31,35–37 "has been interpolated into the series of oaths, perhaps borrowed from the mutilated third cycle of speeches, and partially moulded to fit the surrounding material".

³⁴ Jastrow, *The Book of Job*, 69; Syring, *Hiob und sein Anwalt*, 140–142; cf. Kaiser, *Das Buch Hiob*, 115.

³⁵ See esp. Syring, *Hiob und sein Anwalt*.

³⁶ Once more, cf. Jastrow, *The Book of Job*, 69, and note 44; Holbert, "The Rehabilitation of the Sinner", 230; Fohrer, *Das Buch Hiob*, 377; Witte, *Vom Leiden zur Lehre*; and Syring, *Hiob und sein Anwalt*, 141.

³⁷ Opel, *Hiobs Anspruch und Widerspruch*, 275–325; she also involves 1/4QInstruction in her study. Concerning the likely date of the original Dialogue of Job in the 4th cen-

confront social or political groups but underlines the general ethos, the advantage of the fear of Yahweh and the Torah-piousness regarding Hellenistic virtues. This applies to everyone, regardless of their affiliation to certain groups. The point is: against the backdrop of the harsh discussion on the relationship between the rich and the poor at the beginning of the Hellenistic period, the path to the claim of the overall ethos of human beings no matter which class they belong to could be found through critically reconsidering the polemic against human misbehaviour. If every human being can be corrupt, not only the rich and the nobles, then one can also start to consider the possibility that living according to Torah is similarly available to anyone; like the poor and the needy, the wealthy and the ruling class are capable of fearing God.

Methodologically, the readers of the book of Job have to struggle with the problem of the complex plexus of interrelations between different parts of the book. It constantly gives ground for speculations regarding the intentions of the book or of one or another of its authors. Historically, it is of importance to distinguish the aims of several authors of the book from the whole potentiality of the hermeneutical room created intentionally and unintentionally in the received text. The answer may lie outside of the book, firstly in the received, Ancient Near Eastern tradition of the noble sufferer, and secondly in the discussion of the essence of piety in the Jewish society of the 4th and 3rd century BC. A hint can be found in the complex synthesis of religious, political and particularly societal matters, as it reveals itself in parts of the psalms, the book of Proverbs, etc.

The book of Job must have been an increasing problem in those times, because its viewpoint has organically been that of the elite. The figure of Job was becoming a legend to such a degree that the canonisation of the book was unavoidable. The more religiously, nationally, and even fundamentally minded members of society have often clearly challenged the elite's worldview. Job's final complaint and avowal can be seen as a reaction to such a tendency, especially by people that do not belong to extremist groups. The suggestion that Job's final speech has been added later certainly supports this claim, whether speculative or not.

ture BC (*ibid.*, 17–19), one could question Opel's assignment of Job 29–31 to the oldest layer, whereas her thesis of a certain closeness of Job's final speech to Ben Sira is convincing and would suggest a date closer to the 2nd century.