

THE ARAMAIC AHIQAR AND THE BOOK OF JOB: WISDOM TEXTS IN THE PERSIAN PERIOD

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Abstract: The Aramaic Ahiqar was found in Elephantine (Yeb) at a Persian military garrison and does not contain the notion of Yahwism found in the Hebrew Bible. Neither does it refer to Moses or the Torah, although the Egyptian diaspora would probably have had contact with a religious group from Jerusalem. Yet Ahiqar is similar in interesting ways to the Book of Job, which belongs to the Israelite wisdom corpus if we assume that the final form is approximately dated to the late Persian period. These two wisdom materials in the Achaemenid period have similar literary elements and, even more significantly, reflect common scribal views on humans and God(s), even though they were written in different places and in distinctive religious settings. Notably, Ahiqar interweaves Achaemenid imperial ideology with its story and proverbs and has a polytheistic view. This paper will present an intertextual study of Ahiqar and Job and argue that the diaspora scribes of Ahiqar in ancient Egypt broadly share more commonalities with the Jewish scribes of Job than any other biblical books.

Keywords: Ahiqar, Job, Wisdom, Intertextuality, Elephantine

Scholars have generally investigated the affinities between the origin of the Aramaic Ahiqar papyrus and Mesopotamian texts.¹ However, it is reasonable to suppose that this Elephantine Aramaic text draws on compound literary characteristics from a larger pool of ancient Near Eastern culture, rather than to designate an exclusive inspiration from 7th–8th

¹ Lambert (1960: 90, 102–103) argues that the Babylonian ‘Counsel of Wisdom’ is the source of Ahiqar, also see McKane (1970: 151–152).

century BCE Assyrian literature.² The composition of Aramaic Ahiqar was discovered in the Elephantine Nile-Island of Upper Egypt opposite Aswan, the Jewish military colony of ancient Egypt under the Achaemenid Persian Empire. It existed alongside other Elephantine documents, which have been dated to the 5th century BCE, and was mainly attributed to the Judeans who were a community of mercenaries during the reign of the Persian government³. When it comes to comparing the Elephantine documents with the Judean religion there is little direct evidence to suppose that Elephantine Judeans observed a Yahwistic religion, as in the Yehudite community. Although references to the Torah or Moses have not yet been found, scholars have suggested that the religion of the Elephantine Jews was Judaistic (Knauf 2002; Porten 2003; Lemaire 2011; Granerød 2016). According to Reinhard Kratz, the “Bisitun Inscription of Darius,” the Persian King (Greenfield and Porten 1982), and the Story and Sayings of Ahiqar were circulated as “international literature,” along with, and sometimes instead of, the Hebrew Bible. (Kratz 2012: 42). Kratz supposes that Elephantine documents “provide evidence of a form of Judaism that worshipped YHWH (YHW or YHH) and maintained a temple,” although their Jewish religion “did not follow the Torah of Moses” and remained at the “pre-legal level” (Kratz 2007: 86–87).⁴ From another perspective, Lester Grabbe argues that the Elephantine documents presuppose the Torah of Moses, though omitting it, and that there would have

² The tale of Ahiqar is possibly dealt with as a “mixture of Akkadian and Egyptian genres.” See Dalley (2001: 155); also Quack (2011). The sayings of Ahiqar could broadly originate from Sumerian, Akkadian, and Egyptian proverbial forms, especially in reference to the demotic texts such as *The Instruction of Ankhsheshonq* and *The Instruction of Papyrus Insinger*. Bledsoe (2015b: 76) argues that Egyptian materials and influence on Ahiqar have been underestimated, but that Egyptian instruction and literature has significance in interpreting the context of Ahiqar.

³ Legal documents and letters in Elephantine papyri were written in Aramaic, but since Northern Israelites were Aramaic-speakers and Aramaic “was a diplomatic lingua franca in which both Assyrian and Judahite officials were conversant,” it has widely been accepted that the authors of Elephantine documents belong to Aramaic-speaking Jews. See Porten (1968: 17), Porten and Farber (1996).

⁴ Also, Kratz considers that “the Torah of Moses did not play an important role” in “the Persian provinces of Yehud and Samaria” as well as in the Judean Elephantine community. In another place, Kratz claims that “the Egyptian Jews probably had much more in common with the historical Israel of the pre- and post-exilic age in Palestine than do the biblical Jews”; e.g. Hananiah did not bring a book of the Mosaic Torah (Neh 13:15–16) (2006: 248).

been some communication between Jerusalem and the Elephantine Jews (Grabbe 2017; also see Porten 2003).

The connections between the literary tradition of Ahiqar and the Hebrew Bible, such as the Joseph story (Gen 37; 39–50), Proverbs, Qoheleth, Job, Psalms, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Esther, as well as the reception history of late Jewish writings such as Ben Sira and Tobit, have been widely researched.⁵ In particular, among biblical wisdom texts the Book of Proverbs has been compared with the sayings of Ahiqar. However, the affinities should not be limited to the notion of mutual dependence⁶ and should instead be viewed in the context of broader cultural interactions with Egyptian (e.g. Instruction of Amenemope) and Semitic wisdom materials (Day 1999).⁷ If the author of Ahiqar adopted the Book of Proverbs in his/her work, we can question why he/she hardly takes an interest in the notion of personified Wisdom, which is the dominant element in Proverbs 1–9.⁸

Instead of examining the links between the Proverbs and Ahiqar, what I set out to do in this essay is to suggest evidence of shared associations between the Book of Job and the Aramaic Ahiqar, a topic which has thus far received little scholarly attention apart from word-pairs.⁹ Although there have been a few mentions of the literary relationship between Job and Ahiqar¹⁰, they are restricted to the frame narrative in which the motif of the undeserved sufferer is commonplace in Egyptian and Mesopotamian

⁵ Lindenberger (1983: 25–26), Weigl (2010: 733–756) provide extensive occasions. Bledsoe (2015b: 59–68, 213–219), Bodi (2011: 19–21).

⁶ Fox (2011: 3) supposes there was the one-sided influence of Ahiqar on the Book of Proverbs. Just as Weigl (2010: 738–745) talks about the mutual dependence between the two, Fox does not provide any evidence of it.

⁷ Similarly, see Yonah (2007).

⁸ Bledsoe (2013) dismisses the association of Ahiqar in Saying 13 with the personified Wisdom to the biblical wisdom texts by reconstructing C1.1:187–189.

⁹ For the arrangement and reconstruction of the text of Aramaic Ahiqar and its English translation, I follow Porten and Yardeni (1993: 22–53), Lindenberger (1983) and Weigl (2010). In the translation of Porten and Yardeni, there might be difficulties when it comes to the vague reading of “the gods” as an assembly of deities. The polytheistic idea in the Aramaic Ahiqar contains names of the gods of “Aram, Canaan, and Mesopotamia”; “El”, “Shamash” (“the sun-god”), “Shamayn” (“the Lord of Heaven”). For a detailed understanding, see Lindenberger (1982). For the English translation of the Hebrew text of Job, I refer to the version of ESV.

¹⁰ Cheney (1994: 36–38); Müller (1994, 1995: 70–71); Weigl (2010: 752); Perdue (2007: 88–89).

literature. Consequently, these studies focused on linguistic pairs without considering the corresponding context; e.g. Hans-Peter Müller compares the framework of Job's prose-tale with the narrative of Ahiqar as including the motif of the innocent sufferer (Müller 1994), Weigl suggests parallels between the two—(1) Job 13:18–19; 19:13–19// Ahiqar 139–140 [53–56]; (2) Job 9:2; 25:4// Ahiqar 96 [19]; (3) Job 15:32; 22:16// Ahiqar 85–86 [8]; (4) Job 34:21–22// Ahiqar 171–173 [82–83]; (5) Job 24:5–12, 14–16; 39:5–8// Ahiqar 203–204 [109]¹¹ (Weigl 2010: 752).

Of course, the contents and literary sub-genres of Job and Ahiqar are not the same. The prose-tale of Job does not contain the theme of conflict between a king and officers at the royal court, while the narrative of the Elephantine Ahiqar alludes to the imperial agenda in which its author underscores the loyalty to their kings. While the poetic dialogue in Job is established in the disputational speech between Job and his friends and Yahweh, the proverbial collection at the core of Ahiqar seems to be rooted in the genre of father-son instruction that is associated with Proverbs and Ben Sira among biblical wisdom materials. Nevertheless, I suggest that the theological idea of the Aramaic Ahiqar is closer to the Book of Job than any other biblical books. In this essay, I will look at the shared cultural and religious values and concerns of the Book of Job and the Elephantine Aramaic Ahiqar. Although the two types of literature were likely formed in different communities and provenances, they indicate common intellectual interests in God (or gods) who brings forth chaos and enmity against humans and behaves in an arbitrary way that is beyond human expectation.¹²

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF JOB AND AHIQAR

How can Job and Ahiqar be related to one another in our intertextual study? It is not easy to trace the chronological order of the two texts and both seem to emerge from a shared intellectual background. It is noteworthy that quotations of Ahiqar in the Book of Tobit indicate how Hellenistic Judaism later accepted the existing traditions of Ahiqar

¹¹ The approach of Weigl significantly misses how these parallels are matched in the corresponding context, so that there may not be enough evidence to attest the literary connections of early texts with later ones.

¹² For theological views of the Aramaic Ahiqar, I refer to works and analysis of Bledsoe (2015b: 306–374) and also see Granerød (2016: 311–320).

(Greenfield 1981; Kottsieper 2009; Weigl 2006), while the author of Tobit significantly echoes the episode of Job's wife (2:11–14) (Dimant 2017).

1. When and where

Firstly, one should be careful about attributing the date and place of the composition of Job based on linguistic affinities with Israelite or non-Israelite sources.¹³ Interpreters have suggested that the final composition of Job can be broadly dated to the early or late Persian period (Gordis 1978: 207–218; Gray 2010: 32–35), although some parts could have been added in the early Hellenistic period and the prose-tale was prevalent in the pre-exilic period. There is a consensus that it is not later than the 2nd century BCE since 4QpalaeoJob^c is dated to 225–150 BCE and the Greek version of Job to the first half of 2nd century BCE (Pope 1965: xxx–xxxvii; Seow 2013: 43–44). While it may be helpful to attribute particular layers to different periods, especially to the early or late Hellenistic period (e.g. Elihu speeches in Job 32–37) (e.g. Witte 1994; Syring 2004), the evidence of the compositional process is not compelling.

Furthermore, some scholars have claimed that the author of Job was an Edomite or was influenced by Edomite wisdom literature, as they have a pessimistic view of God.¹⁴ Ernst Knauf might be correct saying that the background of Job is geographically Trans-Jordan (1983; 1988; 2004). Nonetheless, we know very little about the compositional background of Job and whether or not it is Edomite wisdom¹⁵, agricultural or nomadic (Coogan 2009: 78), or anchored in the real world or based on fiction or fable. One, moreover, could assume that the setting of Job is linked with

¹³ I discussed the problem of the relative dating of Job. See Kwon (2016: 1–3, 26–30).

¹⁴ Pfeiffer (1926) argues that the original author of Job was an Edomite who had a pessimistic philosophy about an Edomite deity and humans and who was aware of Edomite wisdom literature, and afterwards Jewish editors added the folktales, and that Job and Genesis 1–11 (S [Seir or South]–document) shared the Edomite mythic documents and worldviews (Day 1994).

¹⁵ I will not deal with the issue of Edomite wisdom because we will lose sight of the main subject. In a nutshell, we have no clue as to what the origin of Edomite wisdom is, where it comes from, and how it affected the Book of Job. For recent reassessments, see Sasson (2005); Crowell (2008); Tebes (2009).

the city Babylon, signifying affinities with Deutero-Isaiah (Terrien 1966) or the priestly context in Jerusalem (Schmid 2008). However, none of these theories and intra-textual links can confirm the historical and geographical setting behind Job.

We can at least assume that the author of Job was a skilful scribe who was aware of literary traditions of the Hebrew Bible, including the Psalms, Pentateuch, prophetic texts such as Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah and Egyptian, Babylonian, and Ugaritic materials. Moreover, the fact that the divine name Yahweh was heavily used in the prose-tale (Job 1–2; also, Job 12:9) and in the late part of Yahweh's speech (Job 38–41), but are omitted in dialogue, implies that the author of Job subscribes to the religious substance central to Israel and, by putting Job in the patriarchal period, is anchoring the story in a crucial period of Israel's religious understanding (Habel 1985: 39–40). These diverse interrelationships may challenge the view held by some that the Book of Job was written in a particular setting and time (Seow 2013: 44–45; Coogan 2009). For instance, it is hard to determine whether there is a connection to the priestly groups in Jerusalem¹⁶ or the circle of sages. However, in any case, the Book of Job can be considered as Jewish literature that is substantially critical of the covenantal bond of Israel in Deuteronomy.

Secondly, many theories have been suggested for the date, language, and provenance of the Aramaic Ahiqar. The discovery of the Elephantine documents has weakened the earlier view that the Aramaic Ahiqar was based on a Hebrew original (Conybeare, Harris and Lewis 2009). Scholars like Friedrich Stummer and Arthur Cowley developed the hypothesis that the original Akkadian story was translated into Aramaic under the Achaemenid Empire and that the Akkadian original became dominant for decades (Stummer 1915; Cowley 1923). However, more recently scholars such as Kutscher, Greenfield, and Lindenberger dismissed the Akkadian original and contended that its narrative and proverbs were originally composed in Aramaic, not translated into Aramaic.¹⁷ Based on its linguis-

¹⁶ See Kwon (2018); Contra Balentine (2013).

¹⁷ The composition has been viewed as having different dialects of the Aramaic, namely that the proverbs are more archaic and closer to the Canaanite language than the narrative that contains the standard imperial language. See Kutscher (1970); Greenfield (1978)—originally published in 1967 (Hebrew); Lindenberger (1983: 16–17; 1985: 481).

tic features, Greenfield maintains that its narrative belongs to the eastern provenance near Canaan and the proverbial part originated in Mesopotamia (Greenfield 1979: 45–46). Lindenberger cautiously suggests that the narrative possibly has its origin in Mesopotamia, not in Egypt, and “the Canaanite parallels” in the proverbs “point to a locale in Northern Syria,” although it is not possible to know where the two portions come together (Lindenberger 1983: 296). The Northern Syrian theory has been supported by many until now (Weigl 2010: 670–691; Niehr 2007: 13–14).¹⁸ The combined composition date of the Aramaic Ahiqar as received in the Elephantine community is no later than the late fifth century BCE, probably between 550–450 BCE (Bledsoe 2015b: 42), although the reference to the Assyrian kings Sennacherib (reign 705–681) and Esarhaddon (681–669) in the narrative gives a much earlier dating *terminus post quem* than the dating of late fifth century BCE (Lindenberger 1983: 19–20). It is not possible to resolve the question of the historicity of all the figures and occasions at the court described in the Aramaic Ahiqar. However, what we can know at least is that the Aramaic papyrus is an international work that shares a common West Semitic tradition (Day 1999: 63)¹⁹, suggesting probable links with the Book of Proverbs and Job.²⁰

2. God and gods

Ahiqar and Job not only present different literary origins but also under the Achaemenid Empire they have differing views of God and deities. The narrative of Ahiqar barely mentions the name of a deity, but its proverbs contain the god Šamaš who is presented as a god of justice (7.107) or as a sun-god in Neo-Assyrian/Babylonian literature (6.92; 9.138) and as El/gods in the Canaanite pantheon (אל, אלהים, אלהו, בעל קדשן, cf. 6.79; 7.97; 8.109; 10.151, 153–154; 11.172) (Lindenberger 1982). Polytheism in Ahiqar is non-Israelite and has its origin in the Canaanite and Assyrian religions. There is no equivalence with the God of Israel. Each deity in the Aramaic Ahiqar has different roles and characteristics, and in later

¹⁸ Contra Kottsieper (1990: 241–242) who argues that the proverbs of Ahiqar originated in southern Syria.

¹⁹ Similarly, see Weeks (2007: 25–29, 35).

²⁰ Fox (2011: 3) argues Ahiqar “influenced Proverbs in several places.” The work of Weigl (2010: 744) sees their connections as reciprocal.

versions polytheism is changed into a monotheistic idea (Lindenberger 1985: 486).

Likewise, God in Job is portrayed in various names and roles. Divine names אלהים, אלוה, אל, and שדי are predominantly employed in the poetic dialogue to the exclusion of the Tetragrammaton. Except for 12:9, the divine name יהוה is only mentioned in the prose-tale and Yahweh's speech in Job 38–42.²¹ Moreover, Yahweh in Job 38:1 and 40:6 reveals himself as a storm-god in his theophany (Weeks 2010: 118). The deity of Job is not presented according to a religious view of monotheism. In the prologue, polytheistic words are found in the scene of the heavenly council with בני האלהים (“the sons of God”) and השטן (“the Adversary”) who are summoned by Yahweh (1:6; 2:1).²² God in Job is, however, portrayed as a single Creator “Almighty” who intervenes and controls human lives and nature.²³ The divinity does not work exclusively for Israel but for the whole universe, frequently using human suffering and even evil force like Leviathan.

3. The social world and history

The Book of Job is not connected to any historical figures or occasions, although Job along with Noah and Daniel in Ezek 14:14, 20 are mentioned as exemplary and righteous heroes. However, there are conceivable claims that Job's disaster is linked to the exile of Judah. If Job's context involves the political situation of the exiled Israel drawn from Deutero-Isaiah and Jeremiah, one can suppose that the political circumstance of Job's innocent suffering coincides with the national disaster of the captivity in Babylon and that his restoration could be read as the coming salvation or restoration by the Persian king Cyrus who liberates Israel (Bastiaens 1997; Janzen 1994). Alternatively, Job's prose-tale could be associated with the beginning of the history of Israel's monarchy in 1 Samuel 1–4. Heckl, for instance, claims that Job's theology of history is against the Deuteronomistic History of Samuel–Kings and is eschatologically “influenced by the messianic implications of the song of Hannah” (Heckl 2013: 89;

²¹ It is unnecessary to assume different divine names were caused by different redactional layers (Dhorme 1967: lxx–lxxii); Nielsen (1990).

²² Also, mythological implication could be seen in בני־ירושף (“children of flame”) in Job 5:7.

²³ Nielsen (1990) describes the dominant usage of Shadday in Job's dialogue.

2010; also see Otto 2000: 203).²⁴ Otherwise, if Job makes conceivable connections with priestly literature and if the figure of Job may be viewed in a priestly profile, as many still argue, its author might be intentionally aiming to protest against the authority to oppress the post-exilic priestly group (Balentine 2002; 2013; Schmid 2008). However, these endeavours to pin down Job to specific political and religious contexts are somewhat less convincing and plausible.

On the other hand, the Aramaic *Ahiqar* and related texts discovered in the Persian military garrison at Elephantine give us more evidence of the historical and social setting of the so-called “Judeans,” distinct from native Egyptians and Arameans-Syrians²⁵, than the Book of Job (Porten 1968: 103–186; Porten and Farber 1996: 274–276). The Judean religion at Elephantine is not identified with the typical Jerusalem-centered Yahwism that developed in Deuteronomy and Ezra, which calls for radical devotion to the Mosaic Torah (Becking 2011; Kratz 2015: 137–147). The Persian force in the fifth century reigned over the inhabitants of Elephantine, though the story of *Ahiqar* describes the Assyrian Empire and the Assyrian gods. This would influence how the texts were copied and read under an Achaemenid imperial and religious hegemony. Conceivably, *Ahiqar* might propagandize the imperial rule of Persian kings (maybe Darius II) as inaugurated by gods. For example, in “The Bisitun Inscription of Darius the Great Aramaic Version,” Persian kings require unconditional and absolute “loyalty and integrity” from nations (Greenfield and Porten 1982; Mathys 2010). Thus, Kratz argues that *Ahiqar*’s main theme—“Fear god and the king”—is a deeply internalized imperial ideology that demonstrates reverence both to the Persian chief god, Ahuramazda, and to the Achaemenid king (Kratz 2012: 52–54; n.d.: 14–15). However, although loyalty towards king and gods is an essential theme in the frame-narrative, the sayings of *Ahiqar* show that the critique of personal gods and indeed

²⁴ To contrast, if the claim of Hutzli (2007: 141–145) that 1 Sam 1–2 (MT, LXX, 4QSam^a) is later revised and omitted is correct, it is hard to decide the chronological order between Job and 1 Sam 1–2.

²⁵ Granerød (2016: 29–32) gives several reasons why Judeans in the Elephantine community belonged to a distinct group from others in Upper Egypt, although there is no single criteria used to designate the Elephantine Judean community; (1) a letter from Mauziah son of Nathan (“us”; “we”); (2) divine names (YHW); (3) particular religious festivals in the letter of Hananiah; (4) the conflict around the temple of YHW; (5) the community affiliated with Judah.

the fear of the Lord is not merely what Ahiqar wants to say.

GENRES IN JOB AND AHIQAR

How can we compare the literary genres of the two books? Both the Book of Job and the Aramaic Ahiqar are frequently classified as ancient wisdom texts. However, it is doubtful that neither work has distinctive features of wisdom literature when compared to the Book of Proverbs. Rather than restricting them to the ambiguous category of “wisdom” as a genre, it would be better to leave Ahiqar and Job within the broad category of instructional literature, a prevalent genre of Mesopotamian and Egyptian materials (Weeks 2007: 2–32; 2010: 9–22; Bledsoe 2015b: 178–192). Thus, Stuart Weeks maintains that Israelite wisdom texts should be interpreted in the literary tradition of Egyptian instructional forms, alongside the Instructions of Any and Amenemope in the New Kingdom, and the later Demotic instructions such as the Instruction of Ankhsheshonq and the Papyrus Insinger (Weeks 2010: 15–16). The theme that human behaviour does not match personal success or failure is widely found in Babylonian literature, including “Dialogue between a Man and his God”, “Ludlul bel nemeqi”, and in Egyptian text such as “The Protests of the Eloquence Peasant” (Kwon 2016: 152–164). Likewise, the Aramaic Ahiqar is included in the literary tradition of the Egyptian instruction genre. For instance, the representative Demotic text, the Instruction of Ankhsheshonq dating from the late Ptolemaic period, portrays a priest at the royal court. The priest failed to reveal the plot to kill the Pharaoh after hearing about a political coup and was unjustifiably sent to prison. The narrative is followed by an instruction for teaching his youngest son, which Ankhsheshonq composes in his imprisonment. When it comes to the “quarrel” theme in both texts, the author of Ankhsheshonq was probably aware of an international best-seller like Ahiqar (Lichtheim 1983: 15, 21–22; Weeks 2007: 25–29).

Of course, these two literary works consist of mixed literary forms and subgenres, and it is not easy to designate and divide dominant literary genres in either case. The Aramaic Ahiqar includes many West Semitic and Mesopotamian admonitions and proverbs that are framed in the tale and probably influenced by Assyrian-Egyptian stories (Dalley 2001: 155). The Book of Job consists of the prose-tale combined with many different

types of dialogue in Job 3–41 such as lawsuits, disputations, instructions, maxims, laments, and hymns.

However, tales in both books create fictional contexts which lead to composite discourses in order to stimulate readers' imagination and thoughts on the issues raised in narratives.²⁶ On the one hand, in Ahiqar the two parts of the tale and instruction were independently formed. If the Elephantine Jewish community had the present Aramaic text, the undeserved suffering of Ahiqar could be read as a collection of instructions by Ahiqar told to his nephew Nadin. On the other hand, the Book of Job puts forth a prose-tale at the beginning and end, in which the meaning of Job's suffering is reinterpreted in repetitive dialogical forms as a reflective discourse between Job and his three friends, and between Job and Yahweh. Reflective discourses in both pieces of literature, namely as sayings and maxims in Ahiqar and as dialogue in Job, are assembled with introductory narratives to give context.

Moreover, these two pieces of literature contain the common motif of the righteous sufferer, a hero, such as Joseph, at the royal court (Spiegel 1945; Gnuse 2010; Mattingly 1990; Bricker 2001). Yet, in each text the motif is examined in distinctive situations. Ahiqar in the narrative is betrayed by his family member, while Job is mistreated by Yahweh, cursed by his wife, and distrusted by his friends. When they criticise their unjust contemporary surroundings the protagonists' doubts obliquely involve a distortion of the divine justice and government. However, it is unnecessary to classify the texts either as "sceptical literature," which contradict to some degree traditional modes of teachings or sayings such as Proverbs, or as "resistance literature," which oppose the ideal political-social authority, since the same inconsistency and incongruity are found in advice literature in general ancient Near Eastern texts, e.g. Prov 26:4–5 (Weeks 2010: 18–21).²⁷ As recent wisdom scholarship has debated, the long-standing linear model that the wisdom corpus was transfigured or

²⁶ Parkinson (1996: 303–304) provides a schema of literary genres in Middle Kingdom studies to "clarify the relationships of the various texts." He argues that "the wisdom texts are predominantly sapiential discourses, all concerned with certain ultimate values" and that "the wisdom texts can be divided into two groups": the "didactic genre" and the "reflective discourse." Also, see Parkinson 2010: 109–111.

²⁷ Hatton (2008) challenges the misleading presupposition that Job and Qoheleth are contradictory to the conception of traditional wisdom and teachings shown in Proverbs.

revolutionised from the principle of *Tun-Ergehen Zusammenhang* based on the impersonal causality to the advanced religious idea of the divine freedom is an anachronism.²⁸

GOD AND HUMANITY

The view of God(s) in Ahiqar and Job covers both destructive and negative assessments, in which the traditional retributive principle is entirely questionable. This will be researched in two ways: (1) the problem of retribution; (2) the erratic nature of the divine.

1. The problem of retribution

There is no doubt that part of Ahiqar and Job seems to support the principle of retribution towards human affairs. However, such a voice is not straightforward and is complicated by the negative views of their deities with respect to the subject of divine intervention.

In Ahiqar, the devastation of the wicked and the triumph of the righteous are manifest in 7.103–104, 7.107–108, 9.126–129, and 10.156–157. “All the attackers” (כל נטחוהי) against “the righteous” (צדיק) will perish then (7.103), and “the city of the wicked” (קרית רשעין) will be swept away by the storm-wind (7.104). When there is any unjust violence from the wicked, Ahiqar advises the sufferer that the gods will avenge their loss:

107 If the wicked seize the corners of your garment, leave (it) in his hand. Then, submit (your case/yourself) to Shamash; he

108 [will] take his and give it to you (7.107–108[27]).

Gard Granerød points out that the expression “the corners of your garment” implies a “pledge” or a “deposit” for a loan as a legal symbol and “the wicked one” is featured as “a pawnbroker” (Granerød 2016: 316). As such, if the wicked are a sort of pawnbrokers, he illegitimately seems to confiscate the garment from the debtor by illegal force (cf. Exod 22:25–28; Deut 24:10–13) (Lindenberger 1983: 174). Rather than appealing to humane authorities, sufferers are encouraged to “submit” their cases to Shamash, the god of justice, because Shamash will bring back what the

²⁸ For instance, Schmid (1966) argues the theory of the secular-to-religious wisdom. Contra Weeks (1999: 57–73); Adams (2008).

wicked snatched away and will reimburse the debtor. What is worse for the pious is that the divine does not constantly work in the framework of the retributive principle (7.105–106). Here, the emphasis is not to confirm the retributive principle but to invoke the problem of the innocent suffering in the world; similarly, refer to 7.105–106.

In another example, one should not treat the righteous unjustly if one knows the divine vengeance in which gods (אלהים) will help the oppressed and will retaliate against the persecutors (9.126) as “it is a sin against gods (אלהים)” (9.128).

126 [Do not bend] your [b]ow and do not mount (=shoot) your arrow at a righteous (man) lest the gods proceed to his help and turn it back against you.

127 [...] you, O my son. Harvest any harvest and do any work. Then, you will eat and be satisfied and give to your children.

128 [Why do] you [b]end your bow and mount (=shoot) your arrow at (one more) righteous than you? It is a sin from (against) gods.

129 [...] you, O my son. Borrow the grain and the wheat that you may eat and be satisfied and give to your children with you (9.126–129 [42–45]).

In the arrangement of ABAB in 9.126–129 (Porten, Yardeni 1993: 43), the father-son instructions of 9.127 and 9.129 state that farmers’ efforts for a plentiful harvest will in no way betray all their expectations and will provide proper compensation. However, this is not about the reward and prosperity of having good behaviours and keeping an ethical life (Bledsoe 2015b: 342–343), as the Job and Proverbs texts indicate (Job 5:17–27; 8:5–7; 11:14–20; Prov 10:27; 22:4), but at most a fair return for their labours, satisfaction, and for feeding their children according to the golden rule.²⁹

Moreover, it is the poet’s conviction that the treacherous who infringed his sworn words against El will be harshly punished by having a disfigured “mouth” and “tongue” as a divine retaliation (10.156; cf. Prov 10:32) (Lindenberger 1983: 156–157). On the contrary, the good

²⁹ Ahiqar pleads with Nabusumiskun for saving his life, depending on what Ahiqar gave a favour to him before; “just as I did for you, so, then, do for me” (4.52).

body parts such as “eyes” and “ears” of the upright person who gives a wise speech will be sustained (10.157). Again, what has been promised according to Ahiqar is that the gods may not act as expected and there is no clear statement which promises a reward for living a pious life (Bledsoe 2015b: 343). Although Ahiqar’s belief rests on the punishment of the wicked, the author of Ahiqar is not assured that the gods will act for prosperity and correspondingly respond to individual moral and ethical behaviours. All humans have to do is submit to divine autonomy (6.91–92).

For Job’s three friends the issue of justice is closely related to the retribution theology, namely that the wicked will perish and the innocent will prosper, and although the righteous may suffer temporarily they will finally be restored and blessed (Job 4:7–11; 8:15, 22; 15:34). The total amount of human suffering is always proportional to his/her misbehaviour towards God, thus Job’s huge suffering implies how sinful Job is (22:4–11). The advice of Job’s friends is that if Job actively utilises the effectual means of prayer, God’s deliverance will be given to him (8:5–6; 11:13–15). For Job’s friends the world is an ideal place where the punishment of evil and the rewarding of the good function completely (18:1–21). Although Eliphaz and Elihu sometimes recognise the constructive purpose of suffering as a divine discipline (5:17; 33:14–33; 36:10, 15), the three friends including Elihu do not deviate far from the foundations of the act-consequence rule (34:35–37). Nevertheless, Job in his response to three friends attests that an individual’s religiosity may trigger sudden loss as being contradictory to the principle of divine retribution (Job 6:29–30; 27:1–6; 31:1–40). For Job, the world is not a place where the judgment of the wicked and the righteous is ideally achieved (9:22–24; 12:6; 21:7–34; 24:1–17). In the conflicting discourses, the author of Job reveals more dramatically than Ahiqar the deep suspicion of the system of divine justice. Of course, both Job and Job’s friends recognise the divine intervention in the created world (5:9–16; 11:7–11), but to Job’s friends the divine act should not betray the act-consequence rule without any exceptions (8:3; 18:1–21), while Job’s experience witnesses that the divine act is no more than violence (19:7–12).

Therefore, both books more or less agree on the rule of the act-consequence, and witness the breakdown of the moral order as a protest to the arbitrary control of the divinity. In Job’s experience, the destruction of the

wicked and their offspring hardly occurs (Job 21:7–21), and the innocent and marginalised are persecuted in the social system (24:1–17) so that the divine justice in his view seems to have deadly flaws. On the other hand, the author of Ahiqar has more to say in the proverbs about the capricious nature of the gods (7.105–106; 11.171–172) than about the gods who have consistent rules. This is what we will see in the next section.

2. Ahiqar: Arbitrariness and destructiveness of the divine

The major literary achievement in Job's dialogue between Job and his friends (Job 4–37) is the theological tension between the retribution dogma by which God acts and the unpredicted divine control epitomised by undeserved suffering. Such an intricate arrangement appears in Ahiqar's proverbs side by side. For instance, while a pious person whose appearance coincides with his inner virtues is like a fortified city equipped with a water system (7.95), a wicked person is destined for devastation like a fragile city in imminent danger of wind (7.104).

95 A man whose stature is beautiful and whose heart is good is like a strong ci[t]y in [whose] mi[dst] there is wat[er]. 96 How can a man guard himself with (=against) gods and how can he watch himself relying on his inner strength (OR: against his inner wickedness)?³⁰ (7.95–96)

104 [A town] of wicked (men) on a day of wind will split (asunder) and in calm (or: into ruins) its gates will incline for it shall be despoiled (or: the spoil of).

105 My eyes which I lifted up to you and my heart which I gave to you in wisdom 106 [...] you [m]ake my name into foulne[ss] (7.104–106).

Yet, the author is sceptical of human beings having the capability to behave well because of the intervention of gods and their wicked inner motivations (7.96). It is the gods who humiliate the speaker and implant dishonour (א[ת]וֹתֵרֶשֶׁב) in him, although the worshipper did not commit any evil acts (7.105–106) (Weigl 2001: 73).³¹

³⁰ Lindenberger (1983: 161) makes 7.96a a subordinate clause of 7.96b. and renders this saying as “[if] a man is [not] under the care of the gods, then how can he guard himself against his inner wickedness?”

³¹ Weigl comments that “the repetition of the root יִהַב between 7.105 (b) and 7.106 (d)

In another proverb, when a poor man becomes significant and wealthy and has won the favour of the gods, they will control his mouth regardless of the man's preferences and he will be expected to speak of things appropriate to them (11.162–163):

162 A little man, when he becomes big, his words soar above him, for the opening of his mouth is an utterance (or: concern) of

163 god[s]. And if he is beloved of gods, they will put (something) good in his palate to say (11.162–163).

Another occasion is found in the expression of 10.151³²:

151 How can the lips of the indi[vid]ual damn (what) [gods have] n[ot damned]?

Humans are unable to curse anyone if gods do not permit it and this saying implies that humans lack the autonomy of communication under divine authority. Divine unpredictability and freedom should, however, be distinguished from the Greek notion of determinism or fatalism (Granerød 2016: 313–314; Bledsoe 2015b: 345; Porten and Yardeni 1993), and be related instead to the constraint of human activity in every moment under divine power.³³

2.1. Animal fables in Ahiqar

Animal fables in Ahiqar represent the concept of the arbitrariness of the divinity or the deity's hostility against human beings. For instance, the hostility of predators such as leopards and bears, and the alertness of gazelles and lambs, can be read in the context of divine-human relations (Bledsoe 2015b: 346–347):

166 The leopard met the goat and she was naked. The leopard answered and said to the goat, "Come and I will cover you (with) my skin." 167

intensifies the malignancy of the slander committed." This portion (also 9.139–140) likely is a later editorial addition "to harmonize story and proverbs."

³² The given status of papyrus in 10.151.b badly deteriorates. In general, the reconstruction of this fragment is followed by the Targumic interpretation of Num 23:8 (מה אקב לא קבה אל). See also Weigl (2010: 367–368): "(a) Was verfluchen die Lippen der Menschen (b) was [die Götter nicht verfluchen]?"; Lindenberger (1985: 505, note h).

³³ I explained why the term determinism is not a proper term to describe the divine-human relationship in the Hebrew Bible (Kwon 2016: 191–195).

The goat 166 [answered] 167 and said to the leopard, “Why do I (need) your covering? My hide does not take from me.” For [the leopard] will not [see]k 168 the welfare of the gazelle but to suck its blood.

The bear went to [the] lamb[s...], “...169 I will be silent.” The lambs answered and said to him, “Carry (away) what you [will] carry from us. We ...[...] 170 for it is not in the hands of the indivi[dual] (to) carry (=lift) their feet and put them down apart fr[om (the) god]s. ... [...] 171 for it is not in your hands (to) carry (=lift) your foot to put it down (11.166–171a [80–81]).

Although this fragment is partially lost, these fables convey the brutal force of the deities.³⁴ The leopard’s suggestion to provide a naked goat with a hiding place in the leopard’s pelt is rejected since the goat is aware that a leopard is not interested in the safety of the gazelle, but instead such a predator will certainly slaughter it (11.166–168a). The cited saying by the goat (167–168) contextualises the welfare of the gazelle in relation to that of the goat by implying that the hospitality of the leopard is no more than a sinister trick. As Weigl points out, *Streit um die Haut* between the leopard and the goat might represent the conflict of two social classes, in which the goat symbolises the feebleness of poor people and the leopard represents the aggressiveness of the powerful (2010: 413). In Ahiqar, the animal fable might express resistance to the hegemony of the high social class. However, it is significant that two fables (11.166–171) are related to deities’ evasive acts in 11.162–164 and 11.172. “Gods” control human utterances by their “palate” (162–163), whether they are good or bad, while humans have access to divine knowledge. The goat acknowledges the danger of the divinity—not other human authorities—which will deprive it of its life under the cloak of providing help. Likewise, the motif of poor nudity (ערום) without a garment appears in the Job’s disputation of the social injustice, where oppressed labourers paradoxically starve in the plenty of harvests (Job 24:7, 10; cf. 31:19). The failure to achieve justice for the marginalised

³⁴ Bledsoe is cautious in saying that there is “a veiled critique of the gods as inherently vindictive entities, arbitrarily perpetrating violence upon humanity.” He, however, comments that “this fable is simply using the gods as the embodied emblem of the complexities, vicissitudes, and happenstances that take place in the cosmic word” (Bledsoe 2015b: 347). Granerød (2016) says that this parable means that “a person does not do the slightest thing without the gods’ knowledge and consent.”

who are suffering and dying under oppression is because of Shaddai, who is not interested in the immediate rectification (24:1, 12).

The next parable of the bear/lamb likewise describes the compulsory and inevitable destiny of the lambs that result in destruction. Just as there is nothing that lambs can do when faced with a bear's attack except submit to the predator, so too should human beings put their fate into the hands of the gods (168b–171a). What these two disputational fables imply are the untrustworthiness and unpredictable brutality of a divinity which leads to the distress of humans (Bledsoe 2015b: 346). Ahiqar, by identifying the gods with leopards and bears, implicitly criticises the cruelty of divine acts in a truculent reality which even innocent humans encounter.

Similarly, another example of the arbitrariness of divinity appears in the lion-stag parable of 12.183–184:

183 The lion would lie in wait for the stag in the concealment of a hid-
ing place and he [...] 184 and his blood he will shed and his flesh he
will eat. Behold, this is the meeting of the [individ]ual (=mankind)
(12.183–184[92]).

Despite the observed lexical omissions in 12.183, the implication is that there is a prey which the lion will spot, hunt, and eat successfully. This context of predator-prey is also compared to the god-mankind relationship (12.184), where individuals should submit themselves to the unpredictable act of the gods even if it is an unfair game for the victims.

2.2. God-like king in the fable

In addition to the charge about the arbitrariness of deities, the Aramaic Ahiqar speaks about the theme of god-like kings in the proverbial form (e.g. 6.90, 91–92) to perhaps reinforce the imperial ideology and call for the Elephantine community to be loyal to the Persian king (Becking 2011; Niehr 2007: 23; Kratz 2012: 51–54). This is a plausible deduction because Assyrian and Egyptian kings were regarded as agents of the gods, possessing divine characteristics and performing imperialistic tasks such as warfare and government.³⁵ Ahiqar's contemplation of kings' roles and

³⁵ Karlsson (2016: 113) comments that Assyrian kings are portrayed as great warriors of Mesopotamian deities who perform the holy and imperialistic war. For the relation between Egyptian Pharaoh and gods, see Wilkinson (2003: 60–63).

royal ideology can then be replaced by another way of presenting their deities who are arbitrary and destructive to humanity.³⁶ In this respect, it is important to discuss the sayings of 6.84–92 in terms of the king-god relation.

Firstly, the sayings of 6.84–90 take place in the setting of a royal court and are addressed either to courtiers or subordinates who are advised to devote themselves to the king's words, although its compositional arrangement is far from coherent. Courtiers should not overlook the significance of the king's emollient words since they have a healing power (6.84a), but at the same time the words are fatal like "a double-edged dagger" and bring forth a devastating consequence (6.84b and 6.89c–90a).³⁷ Surprisingly, although royal words are not forceful, their authority is powerful enough to break the ribs of the Canaanite mythological figure (תנין in 6.90; cf. Ps 74:13; Dan 7:15) (Lindenberger 1983: 91). In 6.85–88, the speaker warns hearers neither to disobey the king's decrees nor to take them lightly, because if one delays his command there will be immediate and devastating rage from the king, metaphorically articulated as "lightening" and speech of "a burning fire" (6.87). The motivation of these human behaviours at court is unlikely to have been drawn from moral judgment, but the emphasis is on the danger of opposing a king's sovereignty and the obedient actions required to avoid premature death. Courtiers in 6.88a should not act against the king's commands and should gladly obey, whether those royal commands are morally right or wrong because the king immediately consumes his subordinates. This is indicated by metaphorical pairs such as wood/fire, flesh/knife, and man/king in 6.88b.

Themes of poverty in 6.89a–b and offspring in 6.90 are separated from the preceding sayings of the dedicated conduct toward the king's commands:³⁸

³⁶ Bledsoe (2015b: 356) claims that "the king stands at the intersection between humanity and the divine" and "this is what I call the "God-King Complex". In another place, Bledsoe (2015a: 264) comments that "the narrative and sayings of Ahiqar present a complicated, indeed, conflicting view of kingship."

³⁷ Weigl (2001: 42) thinks that "6.84 (7) and 6.89–90 (12) definitely belong together as a proverbial pair."

³⁸ Lindenberger (1983: 89) supposes that "this form of saying is identical to that of" sayings of 11.159–160.

I have tasted the bitter medlar and the [taste] is strong and (=but) there is not (anything) which is more [bi]tter than poverty (6.89a–b [11]).

In an abundance of sons let not your heart rejoice and in their fewness [do not mourn] (6.90 [13]).

In a given context, however, the bodily perception of taste in 6.89a–b refers to the bitterness of life in general and metaphorically to “the bitter consequence of misdemeanour at the royal court.”³⁹ When the saying 6.90c gives advice not to pay any regard to whether one has many or few progeny, and not to commit any rash acts concerning their offspring, the keyword ܠܒ (“heart”) is associated with conformity to the king’s commands.⁴⁰ With regard to this expression (6.90c), Weigl considers it an allusion to the childlessness of Ahiqar and an encouragement not to be deluded by such a situation.⁴¹ Perhaps, at the same time, poverty and the offspring can be regarded as what God can grant erratically (cf. Sir 16:1).⁴² The following proverbs in 6.91–92 then identify a king to the divinity, both El and Shamash:

91 A King is like (the) Merciful (OR: indeed merciful); moreover, his voice i[s] high. Who is there who can stand before him (=serve him) but (he) with whom El is? 92 Beautiful is the king to see like (the) sun (OR: Shamash) and precious is his glory to (them that) tread the earth (as) f[ree] men (OR: in tran[quility]) (6.91–92 [14–15]).

On the one hand, it is argued that “the Merciful” (ܪܚܡܢ) corresponds to the epithet of the Ugaritic god El (Lindenberger 1982: 110).⁴³ His commanding

³⁹ Weigl (2001: 48) comments that “poverty” possibly implies “the inescapable outcome of inappropriate behaviour” and that this proverb “fits the hero’s tragic destiny” in the Ahiqar narrative.

⁴⁰ Among other examples in column 6, the saying of 6.82 is associated with the carefulness of “speaking,” 6.88c to enthusiastically observing king’s words, and 6.93 to the importance of the heart for hiding one’s words.

⁴¹ Weigl (2001: 49–50) argues that this is also a late editorial addition to reinforce the thematic coherence between the Aramaic narrative and consequential proverbs.

⁴² In 6.90, Lindenberger (1983: 92) gives an Aramean saying: “Son, in the multitude of thy children rejoice not, and in their deficiency be not distressed; for thy possessions are bestowed by God. The rich man is made poor, and the poor man is enriched.”

⁴³ To the contrary, Weigl (2001: 50) renders this phrase as an adjective: “As a king is merciful.”

voice is “high” or “haughty” (גבה) and none of the humans can “resist” him in 6.91. On the other hand, the splendour of a king is in 6.92 compared to that of a sun-god, שמש (Lindenberger 1982: 112). Here, “glorious” (יקיר) could be used as another epithet (cf. Ez 4:10) (Lindenberger 1983: 94). The last line of column 6 ends up with the incomplete animal fable about a lion/ass:

94 The lion went, approached (to inquire) about the we[lfare of the ass], saying, “May it be well with you.” The ass answered and said to the lion, [“...”] (6:94 [17]).

The dialogue between the two protagonists (the lion and the ass) is similar to the other animal proverbs about the leopard/goat and the bear/lamb in 11.166–171. In the broad context of the theme of how to behave in the right way in relation to a king this fable likely signifies the potential danger of unrestrained behaviours at the royal court.

3. Job: Destructiveness of the divine arbitrariness

The idea of the divine sovereignty in Ahiqar saying 6.91b—“Who is there who can stand before him (=serve him) but (he) with whom El is?”—is frequently mentioned in Job’s confessions (e.g. Job 9:12–13; 13:18–19; 19:22). For instance, although the literary form of Job 9:5–10 partly contains doxology or hymns, the overall language is “legal controversy” (Roberts 1973; Magdalene 2003) communicating the impossibility of disputation against God (9:2–3, 14–16). Whether the issues Job raises concern something related to divine force or justice, any legal trials at courts turn out to be useless and hopeless (9:19). The metaphors used by Job in 9:1–35 are a consequence of his antagonistic experience of God, leading him to call God a thief or robbery (יחטף “snatch away”) against the innocent (9:12) (Seow 2013: 561):

12 Behold, he snatched away; who can turn him back? Who will say to him, “What are you doing?” (9:12)

Nothing can restrict God’s anger and even the cosmic sea-monster are subjugated to God (9:13). “A storm-wind” (שערה) appointed by God crushed Job just as it slew Job’s children (9:17):

17 For he crushes me with a tempest and multiplies my wounds without cause (9:17).

What Job has experienced in the poetic dialogue is that destruction indiscriminately comes upon the blameless and the success of the wicked may imply the perversity of God. Even wild and savage characteristics of God are accentuated in the expression, where God mocks (יִלְעַג) the “sudden death” of the innocent:

22 It is all one; therefore I say, “He destroys both the blameless and the wicked.”

23 When disaster brings sudden death, he mocks at the calamity of the innocent (9:22–23).

3.1. Metaphors of god as a human-destroyer

Job’s body parts are fractured and disintegrated by his physical and mental illness, and this is conveyed by the corporeal parts such as bone, face, hand, skin, and flesh which are in agony as a result of God’s assault and enmity (Job 6:9; 7:5, 15; 9:18, 27–31; 14:20; 16:7, 15; 30:17, 28, 30). This reveals the human weakness and limitation to resist God’s force (Newsom 1997: 390–392). We cannot examine all the detailed metaphors, but let us look at the significant metaphors where God afflicts the human body (for corporeal metaphors in Job, see Erickson 2013; Jones 2013; Greenstein 2017). Firstly, God is portrayed as a military enemy shooting arrows at Job and spreading poison in his body (6:4; cf. 10:17; 16:14; 19:7–12)⁴⁴:

For the arrows of the Almighty are in me; my spirit drinks their poison; the terrors of God are arrayed against me (6:4; cf. 16:13).

Secondly, Job is treated as a mythological being (תַּיִן, תַּיִן) in the primordial battle with divine control, leading God to set a guard to monitor Job (Job 7:12) (Clines 1989: 188–189).

Am I the sea, or a sea monster, that you set a guard over me? (7:12)

Thirdly, God is portrayed as lion hunting, tearing down, and consuming Job (Job 10:16; cf. 16:9, 12; Ahiqar 12.183–184).

⁴⁴ Clines (1989: 171) comments: “It is neither the physical pain nor the mental anguish that weighs him down, but the consciousness that he has become God’s enemy.”

And were my head lifted up, you would hunt me like a lion and again work wonders against me (10:16).

The “lion” metaphor frequently appears in Ps 10:8–11 (cf. 17:12), where a lion symbolises the wicked and the prey the powerless and innocent, but the psalmist does not compare the lion to the divine and does not denounce God directly. Moreover, there are other similar metaphors in the Hebrew Bible—Psalms (Ps 7:3; 10:9; 17:12; 22:14; 35:17; 57:5), Jeremiah (49:19; 50:44), and Hosea (13:7–8)—but the major difference is that such divine wrath in Job is against an innocent person. The closest occasion to the brutality of God in Job 10:16 may be found in Lam 3:10–11, where God is metaphorically viewed as a bear and a lion (Lam 3:1–18), but the speaker confesses the hope and goodness of Yahweh in 3:22–24 (Labahn 2005: 86–93).

God’s life-threatening attitude towards Job not only amounts to corporeal injury but also extends to Job’s psychological obsession and spiritual depression. Job’s cognition of justice is derived from the fact that it is God who breaks the retributive principle in the world (9:22–24; 10:3). There is nothing which Job can hear from his friends and his deity. Instead Job persistently complains about the prosperity of the wicked and their offspring (21:7–15), and about the delay of divine punishment upon them (21:17–22). Job’s sadness comes from this disproportionateness of divine order (21:23–34). Though Job’s emotional sadness mostly comes from what he has lost, such as health, property, children, and friendship, his genuine rage is provoked by God’s indifference in the matter of justice.⁴⁵ In Job 23:1–9, the desire of Job’s vindication at the court is not to be shattered by the judgment of his wrongdoings but to be frustrated by the absence of God (vv. 8–9). God does not appear in the presence of Job because his deity knows that Job is innocent and looks like “pure gold” (זָהָב) in v. 10. Job’s friends advised him that if he seeks God by the means of prayer, God will deliver him from his imperious situation (8:5–6; 11:13–15). However, although he cried out for help, no answer from God will be given to him (19:7). No gods can assure Job for protection:

⁴⁵ Merkur (2004: 131) comments that “the negative transference was provoked by the asymmetry of the relationship and the abstinence of the transference object.”

Lay down a pledge for me with you; who is there who will put up security for me? (17:3)

Job's doubt concerning divine justice is not limited to his personal experience but is expanded to the whole social and moral system (Job 24:5–17). In Job's view, God seems to be indifferent to the marginalised who are troubled by wealthy oppressors (ch. 31), so much so that the ultimate charge is upon God who is inattentive to seeking the punishment of that evil.

3.2. Yahweh as a destructive deity

Yahweh's theophany to Job begins with the destructive "whirlwind" (סער) in Job 38:1 and 40:6. Yahweh's demand that Job gird his loins is a call for heroes to go to battle or to carry out a strenuous task (cf. Isa 5:27; 1 Kgs 18:46)⁴⁶:

Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me (Job 38:3).

Job is then treated as a rival or an adversary of Yahweh in the legal disputation of strength (Rowold 1985; Habel 1985: 536). Yahweh challenges Job to answer his questions of how the cosmos functions and whether or not Job has the level of knowledge of creation and power to control the universe (Job 38:4–38). Job's plea for justice is ignored and instead Yahweh is depicted as the Provider and Sustainer of the animal world (38:39–39:30). Although Job accused Yahweh of divine brutality by threatening Job like a hostile animal (10:16), a lion in Yahweh's speech is simply a creature which cannot live without God's benefit and protection in 38:39–40:

Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, when they crouch in their dens or lie in wait in their thicket? (38:39–40)

A lion cannot be classified as a hostile animal to threaten the order of the animal kingdom and is no more than a part of the divine design of the universe (Job 38:2). Interestingly, if Yahweh may perhaps be represented

⁴⁶ Girding one's loins here can be viewed as an ancient custom of belt wrestling; see Gordon 1950.

as a lion that hunts prey for its cubs, just as Yahweh assaults Job as a victim without a purpose (10:16; 16:9), the author may sarcastically allude to divine injustice in the world.⁴⁷ The sequence of the animal kingdom in 38:39–39:30 presents the self-sufficiency and autonomy of God’s creatures as far away from the authority of the human world. In God’s cosmic design (38:2), faculties and instincts granted to animals (the lion, the raven, the mountain goat, the wild ass, the wild ox, the ostrich, the horse, the hawk, and the eagle) (Clines 2011: 1117–1118) are all diverse and random, e.g. the flightlessness, but high-speed, and stupidity of the mother ostrich who leaves her eggs unshielded (39:13–18).

The two monsters, Behemoth (Job 40:15–24) and Leviathan (Job 40:25–41:26 [Eng. 41:1–34]), which either refer to mythological beings in *primaeva* chaos (Day 1985; Keel 1978; Smick 1978), to real animals or the symbolic figure of evil (Job 40:15–24), are presented as revealing divine nature. Compared to these beasts humans are powerless and consequently attempts to fight against the two monsters and to approach their world are reckless (40:32; 41:10). Unexpectedly, Yahweh does not boast about humans (41:12), who are the centre in the creation narrative in the priestly document (Gen 1:1–2:3) (Kwon 2018), but rather about the grotesque and merciless monsters. Humans will not attempt to hunt, capture, enslave, barter, and entertain Leviathan if they acknowledge the otherness of this wild beast (40:25–32). “Leviathan” in Yahweh’s speech is neither used as the archetype of a mythological being nor as a symbol of the worldly king. Leviathan, which is autonomous (Job 40:25–32), impregnable (41:5–23), fearless (41:25), and selfish (41:26), reflects Yahweh’s uncontrollability not restrained by human rules and covenants (40:28). What this teaches the feeble Job is that one should not make any judicious disputes with Yahweh and that Yahweh is not interested in the body and mind of suffering humans, but rather in the grotesque body of such a violent beast. Unlike the king-god complex found in Ahiqar, in Job there is no indication of the oblique reproach against the political ruler as the agency of God. Instead, Yahweh says:

⁴⁷ Newsom (1997: 609) considers that there is a parody of Job; Clines (2011: 1118) supposes that “the rhetorical questions in 38:39–41 do not necessarily imply that what Job cannot do, Yahweh himself does.”

He sees everything that is high: he is king over all the sons of pride (41:26).

Namely, if Leviathan as the symbolic being of chaos is placed at the apex of all earthly forces and rulers, this means that no kings should be against the Creator of Leviathan. Modern interpreters were not assured that the rebellious Job accepted this vision of a destructive Yahweh after the encounter with God (42:1–6) (Krüger 2007; Newell 1984). It remains an open-ended question whether he resolved all the questions of God's justice or not.

CONCLUSION

The Book of Job as part of Israelite wisdom literature and the story and proverbs of the Aramaic Ahiqar of the Elephantine Jewish diaspora were composed in different geographical and social settings under the Achaemenid Persian Empire. Although written in different circumstances, they allude to certain common themes and, significantly, cover shared theological affinities. In particular, the recognition of divine arbitrariness and destructiveness are important themes in both texts. It is unnecessary to conclude that the author of Job was aware of the story and proverb of Ahiqar or the author of Ahiqar was inspired by Israelite wisdom texts like Job. What we confirm is that scribal ideas about humanity and the divine in Job are not different from the religious thoughts of the Elephantine Jewish scribes in the Persian period.

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