

The Faithful Job and His Journey Toward A Deep Awareness of Wisdom (Job 42,1-6)

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Abstract

The Book of Job is one of the most profound works of wisdom literature in the Old Testament, addressing themes of suffering, divine justice, and human righteousness. This study aims to examine the roles of various characters in the Book of Job and how their interactions contribute to Job's journey in seeking true wisdom. A qualitative method is used with a narrative analysis approach, focusing on the prologue, dialogue, and epilogue sections of the text. The findings reveal that each character—God, Satan, Job's three friends, his family, and Job himself—plays a crucial role in shaping the narrative and Job's spiritual transformation. Throughout his suffering, Job moves from questioning God's justice to gaining a deeper understanding of divine wisdom and presence. He emerges as a renewed individual who remains faithful despite adversity and is ultimately restored. This study highlights that the Book of Job is not solely about suffering but also about spiritual growth and the human role as co-creators in God's continuing work in the world.

Keywords: Job; God; Wisdom; Faith; Mercy; Injustice; and Relationship.

1. Introduction

Reading the book of Job, the reader will encounter many tensions. The author has presented some actors: God, Satan, Job's three friends, Job's family and of course the main character, Job. Every character plays their own role that has the connection with Job. Satan, as the heavenly figure came down to see the world and then reported to God. When Job lost his sons and wealth, his three friends came to encourage him to be aware of his sins and ask for God's pardon and mercy. But, Job found himself as having no sin and as a righteous person. So, he keeps asking and questioning about God's injustice. Is God unjust to Job or is Job the one who is not able to understand the nature of God's justice?

The book of Job offers to the reader a beautiful and well-developed drama about the life of Job, the innocent who suffered. It is a surprise for the reader that Job begins his fight for God's injustice with a curse on the day he was born (3,1) and ends this long dialogue (3,1—

42,6) with changes his mind before God (42,6). In this paper, I will study the character of Job: Does Job faithfully journey with God? What should he say about God and how should he act before God? In this The topic: "The Faithful Job and His Journey toward a deep Awareness of Wisdom", I will observe how the author has presented Job in prologue and epilogue; and the contrast character in the beginning and ending of his dialogue with God.

The observation will focus on the changes and development of Job's character in every level of dialogue. My point is to look at how the camera focuses on the character of Job and at the end, what can the audience say about Job when he moves away from the camera and slowly disappears from their eyes? I will invite the reader to read these selected texts (Job 42,1-6) as the new way Job understands his relationship with God and wisdom. This exegetical article will be developed in three main parts: Literary Analysis of the text; the development of Job's character in his Journey with God and toward the understanding of Wisdom; and some Theological Wisdom Insight by learning from Job.

2. Research Method

I will use an exegetical method to read Job 42,1-6. Using this approach, I will use a critical interpretation and explanation upon the text. It is the process of discovering the original and intended meaning of a passage of text: in its literary context, its message for the reader, and theological reflection. Some questions to be asked: Who is Job? What is the genre of our selected text? who is the main character of the text and how the main character plays his role in the dynamic of the text? How does Job develop his understanding about God? These series of questions will become the guide line to understand deeper the biblical context and the whole of what was happening in the text. An overview of the book of Job and the close reading on Job 42,1-6 will point out new understanding of Job about God and his wisdom for human and the new relationship between job and God.

3. Result and Discussion

Close reading toward Job 42,1-6 will be discussed and reflected in some points: Literary Analysis of the text; the development of Job's character in his Journey with God and toward the understanding of Wisdom; and Theological Wisdom Insight by learning from Job.

3.1 Literary Analysis of Job 42,1-6

For the basic understanding of this text, in this part, I will provide the Hebrew text and its translation; a general introduction of delimitation and context; structure and dynamic.

a. Hebrew Text and Translation

ויען איוב את־יהוה ויאמר:	¹ Then, Job answered the Lord:
ידעתי כִּי־כָל תּוּכַל וְלֹא־יִבָּצֵר מִמֶּךָּ מִזְמָה:	² I know that you are able to do all things, and no plan from you will be impossible.
מִי זֶה אֲנִי מַעֲלִים עֲצָה בְּלִי דַעַת לִכֵּן הִגַּדְתִּי וְלֹא אֲבִין נִפְלְאוֹת מִמֶּנִּי וְלֹא אֶדְעָה:	³ <i>Who is this that hiding counsel without knowledge?</i> Therefore, I came to know what I did not understand; for me, these things are too wonderful, and I am not able to know.
שִׁמְעֵנָּה וְאֲנֹכִי אֲדַבֵּר אֲשַׁאלְךָ וְהוֹדִיעֵנִי:	⁴ Listen, and I will speak; <i>I will question you, and you declare to me.</i>

⁵By the hearing of the ear, I had heard of
 you,
 לשמע-אזן שמעתך ועתה עיני ראתך:
 but now with my own eyes, I came to know
 you;
 על-כן אמאס ונחמתי על-עפר ואפר: פ
⁶Therefore, I retract and repent of dust and
 ashes.

b. Delimitation and Context

Job 42,1-6 is an interesting text to be read for reflecting on the character of Job in his life journey with God and toward a holistic understanding of wisdom. This text is placed by the author after a long challenge from God to Job (40,6—41,34) and before the epilogue (42,7-17). These texts “contain Job’s reply to Yahweh’s *second* speech (40:7—41:26), v.1 being the ordinary introductory formula; and vv.2–6 formed the conclusion (immediately following 40:4,5) of Job’s reply to Yahweh’s *only* speech”¹. These six verses explain the new character of Job in some verbs: know (ידע); hear (שמע); see (ראה); despise (מאס); and comfort (נחם). After prologue, Job starts to question and argue about God’s care for him, but before the epilogue Job surrenders himself before God and changes his mind. So, it is meaningful to use the perspective from Job 42,1-6 to study the development of Job’s character in prologue and epilogue. The tone of these six verses is surprise and even problematic for the readers in reading the book of Job. It gives climax and turning point for the readers to understand who Job is and the message behind Job’s story. Leo Purdue issued that “The book addresses not simply the problem of evil, but more importantly the issue of the justice of God”². The problem is what did Job see in God?

The context gives the background for Job’s narrative and invites the community to reflect on the meaning of human suffering. Job 42,1-6 makes the turning point for Job and the readers to think about the nature of God. The image of God is not like in Job’s complaint, but God is omnipotent and just. At the end, the reader will encounter the image of God who is caring for Job. The three friends who were optimistic about Job’s sin, now being accused by God that they did not speak honestly about Him (God), like his servant Job. They should offer sacrifice through Job’s prayer. Then, God accepts Job’s prayer and Job receives a double blessing and enjoys long life.

c. Structure and Dynamics

The structure of the poetry is clear. The initial situation is described in v.1, the courage of Job to answer to God for the second time. It will be his last answer to God. Here, at the end Job committed himself to behave in a new attitude before God (v.6). Job changes and develops his understanding about God. Job acknowledges his limitation before God and addresses God as more powerful (v.2) and it is not just by hearing from others, but he saw it by his own eyes (v.5). The image of seeing God is understood as the way Job came to have a deep awareness of how God cares for his life. It makes him not to speak from his own authority of knowledge but by quoting the response of God (vv.3a.4b).

¹ S. R. DRIVER DAN G. B. GRAY, *A CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF JOB* (INTERNATIONAL CRITICAL COMMENTARY; EDINBURGH: T&T CLARK, 1921), 371.

² LEO G. PERDUE, *WISDOM AND CREATION: THE THEOLOGY OF WISDOM LITERATURE* (NASHVILLE: ABINGDON PRESS, 1994), 117.

These small units can be displayed in the formal structure ABCB'A'. Here, it shows that the dynamic in this text formulate a chiasm structure:

A	Job is ready to answer God (v.1)
B	Knowing God as Omnipotent (v.2)
C	Job is quoting God's word (vv.3-4)
B'	Deep understanding of God (v.5)
A'	Job changes his mind before God (v.6)

The poetry opens with the narrator's voice about the reaction of Job toward a long response of God upon the complaint from Job about his injustice to the righteous and innocent Job. In this final response, Job seems to have no more word to speak and no courage to complain, rather he should accept to give up and surrender before God (v.6). Job surrenders because he saw with his own eyes the manifestation of God's glory upon his own weaknesses.

A- A' : The true answer: despise and comfort before God (vv.1.6)

A and A' are respectively the opening and the closing units of the poetry. A (v.1) provides the information statement about what is going to happen in this poetry. The most important character is Job himself, who is presented by the narrator. A' (v.6) explains the purpose of the poetry and its result. In his commentary, Pope explains that "What Job now despises, refuses, rejects are his former attitude and utterances"³. The final response of Job to God has a new purpose as the moment of revealing God's glory to Job and leads Job to believe in God and be wiser.

B- B' : Knowledge and understanding of God (vv.2.5)

In B and B', God becomes the main topic of Job's internal dialogue with himself. In B (v.2), Job confesses that God is able to do all things. Job is convinced that God is powerful. Job believes that "everything occurring on earth takes place within the framework of the divine wisdom"⁴. By this, Job is invited to find the purpose from God in every moment and experience in his life. Then, B' (v.5) gives a strong emphasize in this point. God's response enables him to be aware that "Job had a direct encounter with the living God and heard him speak clearly"⁵. Job comes to witness those things by his own eyes and personal experience in journeying with God. In which that "Job is now convinced of what he had doubted"⁶. For Job, everything occurring on earth takes place within the framework of the divine wisdom: "God is not against him or estranged from him; and his wish has been more than fulfilled, for the vision has come to him before death"⁷. Here, Job aware that his deepest longing to come closer and unite with his creator with his own eyes has been fulfilled.

³ MARVIN H. POPE, *JOB: INTRODUCTION, TRANSLATION, AND NOTES* (ANCHOR YALE BIBLE, VOL. XV; NEW HAVEN AND LONDON: YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2008), 384.

⁴ John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 535.

⁵ Ibid., 537.

⁶ Pope, *Job: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, 384.

⁷ DRIVER DAN GRAY, *A CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF JOB*, 373.

C : Faith in God's word as the approval of his true innocence (vv.3-4)

Job was struggling with the question why should the innocent, like him suffer? In unit C, Job reaches the climax point of his limitation. He stops the fighting against God. In these two verses (vv.3-4), Job is quoting and repeating the word of God. Job changes his mind from complaining to wondering God's beauty in his creation. Job reached the point to admit that "he has spoken beyond his knowledge and insight. God has made him aware of the danger of his self-confidence turning into pride"⁸. Job becomes aware that he was wrong in his action before God. Job should move to the new perspective that he serves God for himself alone and not for any personal gain or benefit, not even for his own justification. Job changes his attitude in dialogue with God. Before, he was asking God to speak and answer him. And now, he opens himself and enjoys listening to God.

3.2. Job, his Journey with God and toward a Deep Understanding of Wisdom

The structure of this text (42,1-6) communicates a genuine identity of Job to the readers. In the second speech of God, God addressed Job as the one who is in his darkest moments and thought that God had abandoned him. God encourages him to see and to become aware of God's creation that is filled with wonderful, yet also strange and threatening realities. 42,6, shows that Job is humbled before his Creator's power and love, and liberated by his experience of God. Job has been brought to a new and profound understanding of appreciation for the relationship between the Creator and His creature. This new perspective contradicts the character of Job in 3,1, where Job starts to curse the day of his birth. The development of Job's character is shown in three levels: prologue (1-2); dialogue speeches (3,1—42,6); and epilogue (42,7-17). This unity builds up "a total artistic work through this plot structure"⁹.

Both in prologue and epilogue, God who takes the initiative in the conversation. In prologue, God dialogues with Satan about Job. When Job was in great suffering, his three friends came to be the mediator between him and God, if he has sin, he should repent before God. But, in epilogue, God accused them as the ones who did not tell the truth about Him like his servant Job. Both in prologue and epilogue, God addresses Job in a special way "Job, my servant" and looks at him as the righteous man. Job remains faithful to keep his relationship with God by offering sacrifice. In prologue, Job offers the sacrifice for his son and in epilogue, he prays for his three friends.

a. Job in Prologue (1,1—2,14)

The author introduced Job as a righteous, rich and faithful person. He is right because he has no sin and is blessed by God. He is being faithful to God by offering sacrifice in the morning. It is for his sons, he thought that his sons might have committed sin. The tension comes when he would lose them, his wealth and sons. It seems that God puts him to a situation of nothing. In this situation, what shall Job say and react to God? Shall he still continue to honor God or curse him? Leo G. Perdue pointed out that "The prologue consists of six scenes alternating between earth and heaven in which the omniscient narrator describes the disaster that befalls Job due to the wager in heaven between Yahweh and the Satan"¹⁰. Satan believes that Job's piety is grounded in his considerable material wealth. So, if God takes that away, Job will curse God to his face.

God is more hopeful, believing that Job does serve God disinterestedly. Job will continue to serve God even under the conditions of extreme suffering. It shows in Job's action and

⁸ HARTLEY, *The Book of Job*, 536.

⁹ Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary* (Old Testament Library; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1985), 35.

¹⁰ Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation*, 124.

statement at the end of two sufferings he experienced (Job 1,20-22; 2,10). Job is the only human figure in the book who actually addresses God directly. Job becomes the main actor in the narrative. Satan just appears in prologue, as Perdue observed that “the Satan” plays a prominent role in chs. 1-2, but then disappears altogether in the poetry, never to reemerge, even in the epilogue¹¹. The end of prologue brings Job to new character: “Job’s explosion of anger breaks the seven-day silence. Job’s curse is a catalytic action, which creates a dramatic complication that is not resolved until his final words in 42:1-6”¹². Job’s three friends learn of his misfortune and now gather around the disfigured hero, remaining with him seven days in a majestic silence. Job sitting on the ash heap, covered with terrible sores, mourning the loss of his children, the loss of his fortune and social status, and the ostracism of his wife. He is surrounded by three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, who have come to comfort him.

In prologue, the author invites the reader to notice that even the focus is on Job, but the drama begins with God not with Job, in particular, with the Satan’s question: Does Job fear God for nothing? This question will be the main focus throughout Job’s narrative. God accepts the challenge and permits the testing of Job in the form of the destruction of his animals, servants, and children. Job submits without question: Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 1,21).

b. Job in Dialogue: with his friends, himself and God (3,1—42,6).

Having experienced many losses, Job could no longer identify with the God of his friends, but he had not yet met the God who invited him to imaginatively contemplate cosmological truths, indirectly recognizing Job’s significant losses. In his attack against God, Job is restrained, focusing on the day of his birth. In chapter 3 of the book, “Job initiates the lengthy speech cycles that follow with a decretive plea”¹³. The main point in this lament is “The curse has fallen not on Yahweh but on the day of Job’s birth. The rest of the book of Job elaborates on the how of that decision. How does Job maintain relationship with YHWH despite the undeserved torments that he has experienced”¹⁴.

The curse against the day of his birth is an implied complaint against God, the Creator of that (and every) day. Distinctions are important here: it is a curse against the day but a complaint against God. Job puts his trouble in God’s hands, the God who does not leave the devout and the weak without help. The three friends forced Job to acknowledge of his sins be righteous, then you will have hope. The dialogue points out that “his friends continue to insist that the theology of the wisdom tradition formula has not failed. Job must be suffering because of some skeleton in his closet. Job refuses to accept those accusations; he knows differently”¹⁵. Job had a true but limited knowledge of God; he had heard of God. Just as much as the friends he could speak in accurate theological terms about God. Job reflected on the earth, mountains, sea, and constellations such as the Bear and Orion to imagine God as not only the source behind his misery but also his only hope.

As the God spoke to Job of His relationship to His creation, this understanding of God’s involvement in his life became for Job a more profound reality than even he ever knew. In this

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 126

¹² Richard J. Clifford, *The Wisdom Literature* (Interpreting Biblical Texts; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 77.

¹³ Jamie A. Grant, “Complaint and Transformation: Decreation at the Outset of Job,” *Southeastern Theological Review* 10, no. 2 (2019): 60.

¹⁴ *IBID.*, 63.

¹⁵ J. CARNEY, “Holding the faith: Lessons on suffering and transformation in the book of Job”, (*Review & Expositor*) III (2014) 283.

sense then, Job spoke true things about God, but also things that really were too wonderful for him. God Himself teaches Job of His sovereign, powerful, yet loving involvement in creation. The long dialogue pictured out that “The integrity of Job’s faith shines brightly. He humbles himself before God because communion with God is more important to him than release from his affliction”¹⁶. Job is now able to embrace the reality of God in relationship not only to the wider creation but to him personally, in a new way. Job exposes his true self to God and admits his foolishness, his act of reparation. Job no longer had to live a life of compliance to the theology of retribution. His confessions and conversion experience brought new life and possibility.

c. Job in Epilogue: the fruit of the Renewal of Spirit (42,7-17)

In epilogue, the story of Job’s suffering reached the point of how God trained Job to be in Job’s true self and in coming out as the person who has the control, purpose, and destiny in strong faith in God. Like in prologue, here God comes back as the initiator of the dialogue. God plays his role as the judge between Job and his three friends; and as the one who faithfully cares for the life of Job. God’s anger turns towards three friends and Job remains as his servant. This title points out the special character of Job as the one who is “a close, bonded relationship and honor in serving God”¹⁷. God made him as the true mediator between God and three friends. “The friends who had appealed to Job to plead for God’s mercy now find themselves in need of Job’s intercessory prayers”¹⁸. It shows that “Job was fully restored to God’s favor and that he had gained spiritual authority by faithfully enduring his trial”¹⁹.

God teaches Job that “To follow in God’s footsteps is to move in various ways, and God’s questions challenge Job to follow God by walking the many paths of life”²⁰. God restores the identity of Job. In his dialogue with God, Job has struggled about his identity as servant of God. He is like a slave and not being trusted by God, his master (3,19;4,18). The restoration of his identity is shown in a double blessing he received from God (God calls Job as his servant 4x, vv.7-8; wealth:14, v.12; long life: died on the age 140, vv.16.17) and live in perfect family (with 10 children: 7 sons +3 daughters, vv.13-15). “The doubling of Job’s estate does not mean that he received a bountiful reward for the endurance of undeserved affliction, but rather that Yahweh freely and abundantly blessed him. The blessing proves that Yahweh is a life-giving God, not a capricious deity who takes pleasure in the suffering of those who fear him”²¹. The dynamic in Job’s family opened up the new perspective in Israel tradition. “By giving his daughters an inheritance with their brothers Job demonstrates that he continued a policy of justice and equity in his life which went beyond the normal practice of the ancient world”²². Job, in his life “he not only enjoyed double prosperity, but enjoyed it for double as long”²³.

3.3. Wisdom Theological Reflection

The book of Job presents various number of theological reflections. Many scholars have struggled to find out the message of this narrative. The narrative discourse invokes the feeling of the reader into a raising disturbing images and questions about God’s way and humanity’s place in creation. The question is not about why the righteous persons suffer, but what can the

¹⁶ HARTLEY, *The Book of Job*, 537.

¹⁷ IBID., 539.

¹⁸ HABEL, *The Book of Job*, 584.

¹⁹ HARTLEY, *The Book of Job*, 540.

²⁰ A. PELHAM, “Metaphorical Paths and the End of Wisdom in the Book of Job”, *Word & World* 31 (2011) 387.

²¹ HARTLEY, *The Book of Job*, 540.

²² HABEL, *The Book of Job*, 585.

²³ DRIVER – GRAY, *A critical and exegetical commentary on the book of Job*, 376.

righteous person say about God in every moment of his life, even in the time of suffering? What can we learn from Job? In reading the prologue and epilogue as the key point to understand the character of Job, Clifford suggests two points²⁴:

First, it tells us that Job's protests and even accusations against God were, strange as it may seem, "telling the truth" about God (42:7). Job has withdrawn his suit, but Yahweh speaks admiringly of him, just as he did in 1:8 and 2:3, and blesses him above others. *Second*, the prologue and epilogue imply (like the divine speeches) that the universe is entirely God's; it is theocentric, not anthropo-centric. Job's travails arose because of a wager in the divine assembly between God and the satan, about which Job knew nothing. God essentially says the same to Job in the divine speeches. Yet Yahweh remains Job's God, who, in God's own way, is respectful of Job.

The dialogue proves to the reader that "Job serves Yahweh from a pure heart. He trusts Yahweh for no ulterior motive, but solely for Yahweh's presence in his life. So when he is given the opportunity, he mercifully prays for his three friends, whose tirades have increased his suffering"²⁵. Here, suffering does not mean as punishment but as the part of human life in journeying with God and towards the true joy and happiness. Such episode in Job's story is a painful one, as Job himself would testify. Job came to know that only the revelation of God could bring him comfort. God's attention upon Job was no longer a painful reality, but one that lead to his liberation, as he experienced God's loving and powerful freedom in the world and in his life in a new way.

4. Conclusion

The conversion of Job in his final response to God describes his restoration. Job has found consolation in the revelation of the Creator to him, so that his time of mourning and of complaint can finally come to an end. Job's new orientation in 42,6 builds up the new relationship between God and Job. With a restored sense of self and a new way of looking at things, Job become a co-creator and player in the new world of life. Job remains being faithful to God in prologue and epilogue. The long dialogue between him with his three friends and God become a training discourse for him to go to a deep understanding about the image of God and the way to build up relationship with God. God proves Job's identity as "his servant" by giving him a double blessing.

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²⁴ Clifford, *The Wisdom Literature*, 95–96.

²⁵ HARTLEY, J. E., *The Book of Job*, 544.

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