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*The Book of Job: Navigating between the Two Jobs from the
Perspective of Ritual*

By

L A W R E N C E P A N G

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements of
Degree of Master of Theology

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May 2010

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D R E L I Z A B E T H B O A S E

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| ABSTRACT | 3 |
| DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP | 4 |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENT | 5 |
| ABBREVIATIONS | 6 |
| 1. INTRODUCTION | 7 |
| Brief Review of Interpretation to Account for the Disparity of Job | 9 |
| Claim and Contour of Dissertation | 16 |
| 2. ANALYSIS OF RITUAL I | 19 |
| The Function of Ritual in the book of Job | 19 |
| Socio-Historical Analysis of Ritual | 24 |
| 3. ANALYSIS OF RITUAL II | 33 |
| Mourning and Rejoicing | 34 |
| Particular Rites..... | 40 |
| 4. RITUAL AND THE BOOK OF JOB | 47 |
| Assessments of Job’s Piety | 48 |
| The First Episode (1:4-5): Job’s Sacrificial Ritual for His Children | 52 |
| The Second Episode (1:6-22): Job Mourns for His Children | 53 |
| The Third Episode (2:1-10): Job Mourns for Himself..... | 56 |
| The Fourth Episode (2:11-42:7): Job’s Three Friends Mourns for Him..... | 58 |
| The Closing Narrative (42:8-17): The Movement from Mourning to Rejoicing in the Epilogue | 69 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 71 |

ABSTRACT

The overarching problem concerning the unity of the book of Job is its conflicting juxtaposition of Job's character. In the prose frame, Job does not charge God with any wrongdoing despite the afflictions against him and is acknowledged by God for his piety whereas in the dialogue, Job responds with words of accusation against God for his trouble and for mismanaging the affairs of the world according to the orthodoxy of reward and punishment. Various methodological approaches, ranging from the synchronic to the diachronic, have been advanced to account for the dissonance, however, to date, no attempt has been made to approach the problematic from the perspective of ritual even though rituals recur at critical junctures of the book and within a tight relational sequence of event-ritual-response-verdict. This dissertation will demonstrate how ritual can account for Job's dialectical responses and hence his mood swing between the turn of prose and poetry. It will be argued, in conjunction with the findings from a socio-historical analysis of the rituals in Job, that the mourning ritual action by Job's three friends is responsible for Job's outburst in chapter 3 leading to his defiant defence against the accusations by the friends that his misfortune is the consequence of sin and his indictment against YHWH. Concerning Job's final turnabout in the epilogue, it will be argued that Job, relieved by the theophany of YHWH, expresses in 42:6 his readiness to repudiate and be comforted of the mourning posture imposed on him by his three friends.

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

This dissertation is the candidate's own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other institution.

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, the dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the dissertation.

Lawrence Pang

Fremantle, Western Australia

May, 2010

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following is a list of abbreviations used throughout this dissertation.

| | |
|--------|--|
| ABD | Anchor Bible Dictionary |
| AB | Anchor Bible |
| CBQ | Catholic Biblical Quarterly |
| CD | Church Divinity |
| CurTM | Currents in Theology and Mission |
| DCH | Dictionary of Classical Hebrew |
| EBH | Early Biblical Hebrew |
| HALOT | Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament |
| HAR | Hebrew Annual Review |
| HR | History of Religions |
| HUCA | Hebrew Union College Annual |
| HTR | Harvard Theological Review |
| IESS | International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences |
| IDB | The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible |
| JAOS | Journal of the American Oriental Society |
| JBL | Journal of Biblical Literature |
| JSOT | Journal of Study of the Old Testament |
| LBH | Late Biblical Hebrew |
| LXX | Septuagint |
| MT | Masoretic Text |
| NIB | New Interpreter's Bible |
| NICOT | New International Commentary on the Old Testament |
| NIV | New International Version |
| NRSV | New Revised Standard Version |
| OS | Other Side |
| OTL | Old Testament Library |
| PRSt | Perspectives in Religious Studies |
| RevExp | Review and Expositor |
| RIL | Religion and Intellectual Life |
| TB | Tyndale Bulletin |
| TDOT | Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament |
| TWOT | Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament |
| VT | Vetus Testamentum |
| WBC | Word Biblical Commentary |
| WTJ | Westminster Theological Journal |

1. INTRODUCTION

Suffering is at the very heart of the book of Job and it has been a point of departure for many authors writing about this aspect of the human experience “that threatens the intactness of the person.”¹ Yet Job offers no clear solution to the problem of suffering.² To the contrary, Job’s reaction to his own suffering confuses rather than clarifies. On the one hand, Job clings to faith and refuses to hold YHWH responsible for his suffering (1:22, 2:10) and on different occasions, cries out in protest, almost to the point of blasphemy, against YHWH for moral mis-governance (6:1-30, 9:22-24, 21:7; 24:1-23). He struggles to maintain his innocence and integrity in the face of the accusations (4:1-5:27) and ridicule of his friends (15:1-35).

As a literary work, the book of Job has received much acclaim.³ At the same time, the book has long been regarded as a problematic text.⁴ Beneath its simplistic

¹ Smith distinguishes between “suffering” and “pain” citing Cassell’s definition of suffering as “. . . the state of severe distress associated with events that threaten the intactness of the person.” Robert Smith, “Theological Perspectives,” in *Suffering* (ed. Betty R Ferrell; London: Jones & Bartlett Publishers, 1996), 161.; examples of work employing this Joban theme are, Enrique D. Dussel, “The People of El Salvador : The Communal Sufferings of Job.,” in *Job and the Silence of God* (ed. Christian Duquoc, Floristan Samanes Casiano, and Marcus Lefebure; T&T Clark, 1983), 61-68; Gustavo Gutiérrez, “But Why Lord : On Job and the Suffering of the Innocent,” *Other Side* 23 (1987): 18-23; Robert Hora and David M. Robinson, “Does the Book of Job Offer an Adequate Pastoral Response to Suffering,” *Church Divinity* (1981): 67-73; Jack H. Kahn and Hester Solomon, *Job’s Illness: Loss, Grief, and Integration: A Psychological Interpretation* (London: Royal College of Psychiatrists Publications, 1986).; for a treatment of ‘suffering’ in the Hebrew Bible see, Erhard Gerstenberger and Wolfgang Schrage, *Suffering* (trans. John E Steely; Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 12-135.

² Jerome compares the book of Job to an eel, “if you close your hand to hold an eel or a little muraena, the more you squeeze it the sooner it escapes.” Carol A Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3.

³ Martin Luther and Victor Hugo hail the book of Job, respectively, as “more magnificent and sublime than any other book of Scripture” and “the greatest masterpiece of the human mind.” Thomas Carlyle says that “there is nothing written . . . of equal literary merit.” Herbert Lockyer, *All the Messianic Prophecies of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 9; Georg Fohrer places Job alongside Dante’s Divine Comedy and Goethe’s Faust. David J A. Clines, “On the Poetic Achievement of the Book of Job,” [cited 9 June 2009]. Online: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/bibs/DJACcurrres/Articles.html>.

closure and a gullible plot (1:1-2:13, 42:10-17), many textual, narrative, and thematic difficulties mar the integrity of the book.⁵ Most prominent amongst these is the disparity between the prose and poetry's presentation of Job's reaction to the afflictions sanctioned by the heavenly council (1:6-12, 2:1-6).

Interpretations employing different methodologies, as the following review will show, have been proffered to account for the dissonance. Despite the wide range of methodologies applied to the text, no attempt has been made to approach the dissonance from the perspective of ritual even though rituals recur at critical junctures of the book (1:5, 20; 2:8, 12b-13; 42:6, 8, 11-13).⁶ Their strategic occurrences give rise to four episodes (1:4-1:5c, 1:6-22, 2:1-10b, 2:11-42:7) within the book. There appears to be a tight relationship in the first three episodes between the event (1:4, 1:6-19, 2:1-7) leading up to the ritual (1:5, 20, 2:8) and the ritual itself and between the ritual and the subsequent response by Job (1:5b, 1:21, 2:10a) and verdict (1:5c, 1:22, 2:10b). If a similar relationship can be shown to exist in the fourth episode (2:11-42:7) as it does elsewhere in the book, then Job's outburst in chapter 3 and his ritualistic response of

⁴ Snaith states, "Everything in the book is formally united, but strangely detached: juxtaposition everywhere, but very little unity anywhere." Norman Henry Snaith, *The Book of Job: Its Origin and Purpose* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1968), 9; Zuckerman likens the prose and poetry to "oil and water." Bruce Zuckerman, *Job the Silent: A Study in Historical Counterpoint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 14.

⁵ On the problem of obscure Hebrew words and phrases see Norman C Habel, *The Book of Job* (London: SCM, 1985), 22; see also Robert Gordis, *The Book of God and Man: A Study of Job* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 157-168; for other difficulties relating to language and style, name of God, the presence and absence of the satan, the status of Job's sons and servants, Job's personality, the portrayal of God and the book's subject matter, see Yair Hoffman, "The Relation Between the Prologue and the Speech-Cycles in Job: A Reconsideration," *VT* 31 (1981): 162; on the juxtaposition of divine name from the perspective of development in Israelite religion, see Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 135-148.

⁶ Although 42:6 is not strictly speaking a ritual, "dust and ashes" has ritualistic connotation nonetheless.

42:6 may be explained through the ritual of 2:12b-13 and the event leading up this ritual (2:11-12a).

BRIEF REVIEW OF INTERPRETATION TO ACCOUNT FOR THE DISPARITY OF JOB

Solutions to account for the dialectical portrayal of Job, and thus for the book's integrity, may be represented on one end of the spectrum by diachronic approaches and on the other by synchronic approaches. The discussion that follows reviews some of these approaches before embarking, in the final section of this introduction, to state the claim of this dissertation and to chart the direction to be taken in accounting for the dramatic shift in Job's piety.

The poetic dialogue is, according to some scholars, an interpolation arising out of the Hebrew author's concern for Israelite conservatism regarding YHWH's justice.⁷ If this is case, then it is imperative that the book be read as a unit lest readers privilege either the prose or the poetry's presentation of Job's view concerning YHWH's role in human suffering. This imperative for a unified reading is made all the more compelling in view of Buber's identification of not two but four dialectic views of "God's

⁷ Snaith argues: After writing the first edition, the author "had other thoughts" about the problem of suffering and interpolated the sections about the three friends and the dialogue. Gordis (*Book of God and Man*, 73) holds a similar view. Snaith, *Job*, 8-11.; see also Habel, *Job*, 25; and Hoffman, "Prologue and Speech," 169; Clines appears to support this view. He argues that the prose and poetry are not oppositional and that the poet privileges neither mode. Clines, "Poetic Achievement," n.p.

relationship to [hu]man's suffering."⁸ The first of these views is in the "ironical and unreal" prologue that serves as a foundation for the three others presented in the dialogue. Clines, likewise, explains how the "false naivety" of the prologue serves a strategic purpose for the book. He argues that it is not some naive and primitive tale that does no more than set the scene for the dialogue's substantive argument, but a well-wrought narrative that seduces naive readers into finding a reflection of their own shallowness in the text and entrances more perceptive readers into a deep exploratory journey.⁹ That journey begins with Job's triumph over the satan, for despite the horrendous suffering, Job persists in faith and makes no attempt to hold God accountable for his misery (1:21, 2:9-10). However, before readers can rejoice and congratulate their hero, Job takes them, by surprise, in a completely new direction. They frown at Job's inexplicable dramatic change as he curses the day of his birth (3:1-26), in an opening soliloquy that leads to his defiant defence against the accusations by the friends that his misfortune is the consequence of sin (4:17-21) and his own indictment against YHWH (6:4, 10:2-3, 16:11-14, 21: 7-18).¹⁰

A number of scholars, arguing from a diachronic perspective, link prose and poetry to "distinct and independent sources," thus explaining the sudden dramatic shift

⁸ The first relationship befits the status of creature to creator hence Job's willingness to keep faith, to bless God, in the positive sense, even though God allows Godself to be enticed against Job "gratuitously." The second view is that of the friends, the dogmatic cause-effect nexus, that God punishes sinners. The third is the God of Job in his complaint and protest, God who hides and works against every reason and purpose, yet Job is hopeful that somehow, faith and justice will be re-united; and the fourth is the God of revelation, the relational God who speaks to individual sufferers from the tempest concerning the question of suffering. Martin Buber, *The Prophetic Faith* (New York: Harper, 1960), 189-196; for other perspectives see David J. A. Clines, *Job 1-20* (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), xxxviii-xxxix.

⁹ David J. A. Clines, "False Naivety in the Prologue to Job," *HAR* 9 (1985): 127-136; Cooper concurs in the main with Clines about the nature of the false naiveties, but takes issues with Clines' exegetical details. Alan Cooper, "Reading and Misreading the Prologue to Job," *JSTOR* 46 (1990): 68-69; Clines prefers the term framework (i.e. a structural frame) over frame. Clines, "Poetic Achievement," n.p..

¹⁰ According to Clines, the prologue's subject, the question of prosperity and piety, and that of the dialogue, the sin- suffering nexus, are two sides of one coin. Clines, "False Naivety," 133..

in Job's piety.¹¹ Amongst those who identify the existence of separate sources, debate exists as to the relationship between the sources. The speech section, according to Driver and Gray, antedates the prose story that was shaped to fit the former.¹² Tur-Sinai upholds this view and claims that the prose supplants an earlier story lost by the time the poem was put into its final form.¹³ Duhm reverses the order, situating the prose, an excerpt from a *volksbuch*, earlier on the chronological scale.¹⁴ Yates assigns the "great dialogue" to the exile and the written story to the pre-exilic period (possibly the 10th or 9th Century B.C.E.).¹⁵ These source arguments, despite their nuances, have the effect of reducing the impact that Job's dualistic pieties have on the reader.¹⁶

Against these source arguments are those who advocate a single author behind the work. Clines, from a literary (synchronic) perspective, maintains that the book cannot move from Job's patient acceptance of suffering to the restoration of his fortunes

¹¹ Gordis, *Book of God and Man*, 72; Zuckerman, *Job the Silent*, 25-33; the inconsistency and un-unified nature of Job, Pope argues, cannot be the work of a single author. Marvin H Pope, *Job* (3rd ed.; Garden City: Doubleday, 1973), XXX; Clines counters, "It is . . . more probable that the author of the prologue and the epilogue is also the poet of the dialogues, and wrote the prose framework deliberately for its present place in the book." Clines, *Job 1-20*, lviii.

¹² See footnote 1 in Hoffman, "Prologue and Speech," 160; on the integrity of chapter 28 and 32-37, see Edwin Marshall Good, *In Turns of Tempest: A Reading of Job with Translation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 290 and John E Hartley, *The Book of Job* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 28-30; on the cohesiveness of prologue and epilogue based on an epic substratum of an ancient Job, see Nahum M Sarna, "Epic Substratum in the Prose of Job," *JBL* 76 (1957): 13-25; S. R. Driver and George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job, Together with a New Translation* (WBC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1921), xxxv; Hurvitz argues that accumulation of LBH in the prose tale (Job 1-2, 42:7-17) is "incompatible with a date prior to the exile." Avi Hurvitz, "Date of the Prose-Tale of Job Linguistically Reconsidered," *HTR* 67 (1974): 17-34; Crenshaw supports Hurvitz's analysis. James L Crenshaw, "Job, Book of," *ABD* 3:863; Young counter-argues that the prose tale of Job does not exhibit sufficient LBH to place it within the core of LBH books. Instead, it aligns with EBH book. However, it does necessary indicate anything conclusive about the dating of the prose tale since EBH and LBH represent co-existing styles of Hebrew in the post-exilic and quite possibly pre-exilic periods. Ian Young, "Is the Prose Tale of Job in Late Biblical Hebrew?," *VT* 59 (2009): 606-629.

¹³ Sarna, "Epic Substratum," 13.

¹⁴ Sarna, "Epic Substratum," 13.

¹⁵ Kyle M Yates, "Understanding the Book of Job," *RevExp* 68 (1971): 447; Gordis argues for the book's post-Exilic (500-300 B.C.E) provenance. Gordis, *Book of God and Man*, 216-218.

¹⁶ The relation between the book's development and its discrepancies, here discussed historically, differs from Hoffman's literary approach. Hoffman, "Prologue and Speech," 160-161.

by YHWH without the intervening debates, which supports the idea that Job is the work of one author-poet.¹⁷ As a result, Clines would describe the first seam between the prose and poetry as a “momentous disjunction” and the last seam, though less dramatic, as one requiring careful deliberation.¹⁸

A third theory, which attempts to account for the disjunction, posits a final redactor who collated and revised the independent compositions.¹⁹ This theory, like the previous, accentuates the problem of dissonance between the two Jobs, failing to explain why the redactor has deliberately chosen to overlook an apparently gross incompatibility. What is not addressed in this approach, however, is the possibility that contemporary, and thus culturally distant and disadvantaged readers, may fail to appreciate, for example, the details of the text, like the rituals highlighted above, and are thus unable to account for the seeming incompatibility between sections of the book.

Again working from a synchronic perspective, narrative critics, also unsettled by the sudden change in Job’s attitude, attempt to even out the flow of the story. Weiss, for example, argues for a degradation of Job’s faith from 1:22 to 2:10. The difference between not sinning (1:22) and not sinning with his lips (2:10) leads Weiss to postulate that Job did sin with his heart though not with his lips.²⁰ Others argue for a psychological change in that “the seven days of silence (mentioned in the prologue) aggravated Job’s suffering to such a degree that he compulsively gave vent to his feelings using the drastic style of ch. iii.”²¹ Hoffman rejects both proposals. Weiss’

¹⁷ Clines, *Job 1-20*, lviii; see also H. H Rowley, *Job* (Rev. ed.; London: Oliphants, 1976), 8-12.

¹⁸ Clines, “Poetic Achievement,” 2..

¹⁹ M. Tsevat, “The Meaning of the Book of Job,” *HUCA* 37 (1966): 73.

²⁰ Hoffman, “Prologue and Speech,” 163-164.

²¹ No advocate of this theory is named by Hoffman, “Prologue and Speech,” 163-164.

argument is flawed on the basis of an absolute parallelism between 1:22 (“ . . . nor charged God foolishly”) and 2:10 (“did not sin with his lips”) and the second proposal, though valid, is without relevance on the literary level.²² Hence, “the sharp change in Job’s personality comes in ch. iii, and not the prologue.”²³ Bar-Efrat, on the other hand, corroborates Weiss’ argument for a development in Job’s attitude:

Not only are the words ‘or charge God with wrong’ omitted on the second occasion, thereby weakening the statement about Job’s firm stand, but the expression ‘with his lips’ is added. If it is said that Job did not sin with his lips, should this be regarded as a hint that he harboured sinful thoughts in his heart? This interpretation is supported by the fact that the Job narrative distinguishes between sinning in one’s heart and sinning with one’s lips, as is indicated by 1:5: ‘For Job said, “It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts”’. It can, therefore, be said that despite the obvious parallels, there are evident differences which indicate significant development.²⁴

Absent in any of these arguments is a consideration of the role of ritual and its ability to account for the change in Job’s attitude.

Another solution to the problem of the book can be found in the works of Polzin and Hoffman who maintain, from a structural (Polzin) and literary (Hoffman) angle, that the juxtaposition of disparities is an essential part of the book from which its message may be discovered.²⁵ Polzin argues that any attempt to remove the inconsistencies is an attempt to remove its message.²⁶ Hoffman, on the particular problem of the disparity in Job’s characterization, argues that the abstract and theoretical problem of the dialogue,

²² Hoffman, “Prologue and Speech,” 163.

²³ This dissertation will argue that the “sharp change in Job’s personality” has 2:12b-13 as its seedbed rather than chapter 3 as Hoffman argues. Hoffman, “Prologue and Speech,” 163-164.

²⁴ Shimeon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 109.

²⁵ For example, Hoffman, “Relation between Prologue and Speech.” 168-170.

²⁶ Robert Polzin, *Biblical Structuralism: Method and Subjectivity in the Study of Ancient Texts* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 58.

that of YHWH's justice (or injustice) from a human perspective, demands an axiomatic and ideal presupposition about Job's absolute righteousness. Any other starting point would weaken Job's plea for innocence and privilege his friends' claim that his suffering is the consequence of sin.²⁷ Accordingly, any effort to remove the book's incompatibilities, particularly of the two Jobs, which portray different perspectives concerning the problem of suffering, is an implicit approval of a narrow reflection on the matter. Polzin and Hoffman have produced new and important approaches in accounting for the book's inconsistencies without explaining them away. Their explanations, however, clash with the findings of source or narrative critics whose merit cannot be totally ignored.²⁸

The disjuncture at the end of Job is less drastic but still, nonetheless, contentious. Job's final turnabout has been interpreted based on the all-important verse 42:6. This single verse has generated wide-ranging interpretations dominated by lexical, grammatical, and syntactical discussion. Two overriding concerns dominate current debate: the translation of the verbs *מָאָס* and *נָחַם* and the direct object of *מָאָס מֵאָס* has been variously translated as "retract" (Habel, Janzen, Perdue), "reject/repudiate" (Dale), "abase" (Hartley), "reject" (Whybray), and "despise (myself)" (NRSV, NIV). The second verb *נָחַם* has been translated as "repent" (Habel), "changed (my mind)" (Janzen), "comforted" (Perdue), "recant" (Hartley) and "repent/forswear" (Dale). When it comes to the direct object of *מֵאָס*, views differ as well: "myself" i.e. Job (NRSV, Hartley,

²⁷ Hoffman, "Prologue and Speech," 166.

²⁸ For a discussion of the tension between diachronic versus synchronic approaches to Job, see Daniel C. Timmer, "God's Speeches, Job's Responses, and the Problem of Coherence in the Book of Job: Sapiential Pedagogy Revisited," *CBQ* 71 (2009): 286-305.; see also Newsom's treatment of the unity of Job as a polyphonic composition. Carol A Newsom, "The Book of Job as Polyphonic Text," *JSOT* 97 (2002): 87-108.; and Zuckerman, *Job the Silent*, 25-33.

Rowley), “(Job’s) words” (Habel, Janzen, Perdue), “dust and ashes (mourning)” (Dale).²⁹ Curtis deviates from these common views and proffers a more elaborate translation as a way to capture Job’s mood: “Therefore I feel loathing contempt and revulsion [toward you, O God]; and I am sorry for frail man.”³⁰ These wide-ranging interpretations have deep implication because depending on the interpretation one favours (though knowing none to be definitive on its own), one will inevitably privilege Job or his friends or YHWH’s position, which in effect is to establish (and possibly err), one or the other as *the* message of the book. As noted with the initial transition between prose and poetry, to date no interpretation has taken into account the ritual implication of 42:6 and its correlation with the comforting/rejoicing ritual that family members and acquaintances enact through the giving of gifts in 42:11.³¹ In addition, interpreters have also generally viewed YHWH’s final act of blessing Job (42:12-17) solely as restorative, overlooking the fact that YHWH’s action, following immediately that of Job’s family and acquaintances, actually mirrors their comforting /rejoicing ritual. No consideration has been given to these actions and their possible link with Job’s response in 42:6. Its omission has serious implications for interpretation. Communicative event, Muenchow argues, always occurs within a context of broadly shared assumptions. A writer or speaker connects with the audience through assumptions engendered by the societal and

²⁹ Carol A Newsom, “Job,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (vol. 4; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 628-629; R. N Whybray, *Job* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 171; Rowley, *Job*, 266; Patrick Dale, “The Translation of Job 42:6,” *VT* 26 (1976): 369-371; Leo G Perdue, *Wisdom in Revolt: Metaphysical Theology in the Book of Job* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1991), 232; Hartley, *Job*, 535.

³⁰ John Briggs Curtis, “On Job’s Response to Yahweh: (Job 40:4-5; 42:2-6),” *JBL* 98 (1979): 505.

³¹ Newsom, “The New Interpreter’s Bible,” 628-629.; See also, John E Hartley, *The Book of Job* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 537; Gordis, *Book of God and Man*, 304; R. N Whybray, *Job* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 171; Charles Muenchow, “Dust and Dirt in Job 42:6,” *JBL* 108 (1989): 597-611; Lester Jacob Kuyper, “Repentance of Job.,” *VT* 9 (1959): 91-94; John Briggs Curtis, “On Job’s Response to Yahweh: (Job 40:4-5; 42:2-6),” *JBL* 98 (1979): 497-511.; see footnote 34 for Muenchow’s (“Dust and Dirt in Job 42:6,” 597-611) interpretation from a sociological viewpoint.

cultural environment within which they both live. Unless these assumptions are analysed within the sociocultural matrix of the writer/speaker and audience, interpreters may miss the point of the communication.³²

CLAIM AND CONTOUR OF DISSERTATION

To this point, there has been no comprehensive study of Job from a socio-historical perspective despite the fact that Job belongs to a social milieu far removed from that of the modern interpreter.³³ Where rituals have been discussed in commentaries, books, and articles, they have been given little coverage and their implication for the transition that occurs within Job has not been considered.³⁴ As such, this study will attempt to bridge the gap between the modern and the ancient by reconstructing aspects of Job's cultural world, particularly his ritual world as a means of

³² Muenchow takes to task the suggestion that 42:6 is deliberately polysemous: "The suggestion of an originally deliberate polysemy here cannot help but give pause. In the presence of such a suggestion it is imperative to recall that any communicative event takes place within a context of broadly shared assumptions. That is, any writer or speaker is connected to his or her contemporary audience by more than the particular words that the writer or speaker composes on any given occasion. The two are also tied together by a whole array of assumptions engendered by the societal and cultural environment within which they both live, and these commonly shared assumptions restrict the scope of potential misunderstandings or ambiguities in actual acts of communication. The distinct sociocultural matrix within which a communicative event transpires, in other words, sets certain limits on the possibilities for perception of ambiguity. Moreover, the sociocultural matrix in question is at least somewhat amenable to analysis and explication. Thus, it remains a matter of investigation to determine the likelihood of any actually experienced ambiguity for the initial hearers/readers of Job 42:6. Furthermore, such an investigation can and must proceed precisely from an analysis of the sociocultural matrix within which the author of the book of Job attempted to communicate with the original audience, with an eye to determining assumptions and predispositions common to both. Muenchow, "Dust and Dirt."; earlier, Morrow argued that the author has been deliberately vague with 42:6, to "make it ring with several nuances." William S Morrow, "Consolation, Rejection, and Repentance in Job 42:6," *JBL* 105 (1986): 211-225.

³³ As far as the present writer is aware, only Muenchow offers a sociological study of Job from the perspective of the ancient values of shame and honour albeit restricting himself to the particular issue of Job 42:6. See preceding note.

³⁴ In commentaries, discussions about rituals appear only within verse-to-verse exegesis; Patrick Dale's article ("The Translation of Job 42:6," 1976), for example, gives little space to the consideration of ritual.

accounting for the dissonance in Job's piety.³⁵ This approach has the potential to complement previous readings of Job, especially those working from a synchronic perspective given that all "are concerned with the *Gestalt* of the text, with the attempt to grasp it as a comprehensible whole."³⁶

Rituals appear at critical junctures of the book (1:5, 20; 2:8, 12b-13; 42:6, 8, 11-13). It will be argued that their strategic occurrences establish in the book of Job four identifiable episodes. In each case, a tight relationship appears to exist between the event leading up to the ritual and the ritual itself, and between the ritual and the subsequent response by Job and a verdict by the author (by YHWH in the last episode). It will be argued that this relationship has the potential to explain the dramatic shift in Job's piety. The next chapter will explore the nature of this relationship (while leaving the detail and implication on the mood swing of Job to the final chapter) and analyse the general socio-historical data pertaining to the ancient Israelite rituals. Chapter 3 will deal with the specific mourning rites of 1:20, 2:8, and 2:11b-13 and the ritual referent in 42:6 to "dust and ashes" leading into the joyous ritual of 42:11-12 when family members and acquaintances (and YHWH) gather before Job to not only to offer him comfort but to rejoice with him as well. Finally, chapter 4 will apply the findings of chapters 2 and 3 in proposing two new perspectives regarding: [1] the transition from

³⁵ This approach parallels Pham's (*Mourning in the Ancient Near East*, 1999) study of Lamentation 1 and 2, and Isa 51:9-52:2. Pham "notes how an understanding of the rites of mourning alluded to in Lamentations helps us to understand the extent of the crisis." For a review of Pham's study, see Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible," *CBQ* 65 (2003): 266.

³⁶ John Barton, "Historical Criticism and Literary Interpretation: Is There Any Common Ground," in *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder* (ed. Stanley E. Porter, Paul M. Joyce, and David E. Orton; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 7.

Job's resolute piousness to his outrage at YHWH's deplorable behaviour;³⁷ and [2] Job's mood swing back to piousness, which has been commonly accepted as one corresponding to his repentance (42:6).³⁸

³⁷ Hoffman (Hoffman, "Prologue and Speech," 164), responding to Weiss (see above page 12-13), argues, "the sharp change in Job's personality comes in ch. iii, not in the prologue." This dissertation argues that the "sharp change" has as its seedbed 2:11-13.

³⁸ For various interpretations of 42:6, see Newsom, "The New Interpreter's Bible," 628-629.

2. ANALYSIS OF RITUAL I

Pursuant to the claim that the rituals in Job can account for the dissonance of Job's piety, this chapter will establish the existence and nature of a structural sequence of event-ritual-response-verdict in the book of Job. It will also analyse the socio-historical data pertaining to ritual in general.

The Function of Ritual in the book of Job

The book of Job as a literary unit is undergirded by four episodes and framed by an opening and closing narrative.³⁹ Each episode in turn is supported by a tight relational fourfold substructure involving an ominous event that has a tendency to disorient Job, a ritual, a response, and a verdict. This pattern and rhythm may be delineated as follows:

| | | |
|--------------------------|---------------|--|
| Opening Narrative | 1:1-3 | Job's piety and prosperity |
| First Episode | 1:4-5c | |
| Event | 1:4 | Job's children's feasting activities |
| Ritual | 1:5a | Sacrificial ritual |
| Response | 1:5b | "Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts" |
| Verdict | 1:5c | "Thus Job always did all the days." |

³⁹ Habel (Habel, *Job*, 27-35., 79-80) divides the book into a pretemporal introduction (1:1-5) and three episodes (1:6-22; 2:1-10b; 3:11 onwards).

| | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|--|
| Second Episode | 1:6-22 | |
| Event | 1:6-19 | First heavenly wager /affliction |
| Ritual | 1:20 | Mourning ritual |
| Response | 1:21 | “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return there, the Lord gave, and the Lord took; blessed be the name of the Lord.” |
| Verdict | 1:22 | “In all this Job did not sin and he did not express contempt against God.” |
| | | |
| Third Episode | 2:1-10b | |
| Event | 2:1-7 | Second heavenly wager/affliction |
| Ritual | 2:8 | Mourning ritual |
| Response | 2:9-10a | |
| | 2:9 | Wife: “Still you persist in your integrity, curse God and die.” |
| | 2:10a | Job: “Shall we accept the good from God and not the evil?” |
| Verdict | 2:10b | “In all this Job did not sin with his lips.” |
| | | |
| Fourth Episode | 2:11-42:7 | |
| Event | 2:11-12a | Visitation by Job’s friends |
| Ritual | 2:12b-13 | Mourning ritual |
| Response | 3:1-42:6 | Disputation concerning the nature of Job’s affliction and Job’s final response ⁴⁰ |
| Verdict | 42:7 | YHWH: “My anger burned against you and against two of your friends for you have not spoken rightly about me like my servant Job.” |
| | | |
| Closing Narrative | 42:8-17 | |
| | 42:8-10 | Sacrificial ritual by Job on friends’ behalf |
| | 42:11 | Comforting/Rejoicing ritual by family members and acquaintances |
| | 42:12-17 | YHWH’s final act |

The above division reveals several important insights for the interpreter. Firstly, it clearly identifies each episode as a self-contained fragment of the overall plot of Job.

⁴⁰ In view of constraint, the exegetical discussion of the fourth episode in chapter 4 will deal summarily, but adequately, with the responses in 3:1-42:6 in support of our thesis.

The substructure also highlights how ritual functions as a hinge between the preceding ominous event and the subsequent response and verdict. Closely connected with this ‘hinge’ function is the notion that ritual is also a statement-making act in relation to the preceding event. Finally, each response and verdict is in essence a commentary on its preceding ritual activity. A preliminary discussion will help to clarify the significance and relational aspect of each element of the fourfold substructure, while leaving the exegetical detail and implication for Job’s mood swing to the final chapter.

With regard to the ominous events, the first of these describes the feasting activities of Job’s children and how it threatens, by Job’s reckoning (1:5b), the bliss that he currently enjoys.⁴¹ The second and third events recount the fateful meeting of the heavenly council, leading to the heavenly wager and the affliction against Job. The fourth describes the visitation of Job’s three friends. While this visitation could be seen as humane and a traditional sign of support, the action of the friends, in this particular instance, has an ominous character.⁴² With the benefit of hindsight, their arrival marks the prelude to the accusation by the friends that Job’s suffering is the result of sin. Eliphaz’s rhetorical imperative to Job to “recall now, who that was innocent ever perished” (4:7) defines the ominous character of the visit and marks the beginning of a series of indictments against Job. The visitation when juxtaposed against the gathering of the heavenly council before YHWH (1:6, 2:1) with its outcome, and the arrivals of

⁴¹ Job makes this calculation based on the prevailing worldview (established in 1:1-3) that his possession is “tangible evidence of his uprightness.” Clines, *Job 1-20*, 9.

⁴² Habel, *Job*, 97; Clines, *Job 1-20*, 55.

Job's messengers (1:14-19) with their tidings of ill fortune reinforces the idea that the visit presents itself as a threat to Job's well-being.⁴³

A ritual caps off each of the aforementioned events (1:4, 1:6-19, 2:1-7, 2:11-12a) as it turns and culminates in a conjunctive verbal response and verdict.⁴⁴ It will be argued that the ritual is not an embellishment but rather a statement-making act and a window through which one catches a glimpse of the disposition of the ritual performer. Hence, for example, when Job gathers his children after their feasting activity, sanctifies them, and offers on their behalf what appears to an expiatory sacrifice (1:4-5a), he betrays his belief in divine retribution.⁴⁵ His commentary-response of 1:5b ("Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts") is an outward affirmation of that inner disposition.

Pursuant to Job's ritual action and response, the first episode culminates in a verdict by the author of Job's scrupulous religiosity.⁴⁶ It is a verdict commensurate with Job's paranoiac ritual behaviour (1:5c). As demonstrated by Kahn and Solomon, Job's ritual action (and the verdict that ensues) appears to stem from the belief that had Job not performed the symbolic action he could very well have incurred YHWH's wrath.

⁴³ Although Habel does not explain his statement ("The friends assemble around Job in much the same way as the council gathers around Yahweh"), the inference is nevertheless clear: Job's trouble with his friends after their visitation mirrors the affliction following the gathering of the heavenly council. Habel, *Job*, 97; Clines adds that the visitation mirrors the gathering of the messengers to Job. Clines, *Job 1-20*, 55.

⁴⁴ I thank Norman Habel for noting, "[s]ignificantly, the ritual is but a summary description with no text of the ritual as such." It reflects the importance that the narrator ascribes to the ritual in Job.

⁴⁵ Habel, *Job*, 88.; "Ritual action in cultic and quasi-cultic contexts shapes social configuration, inscribing status on participating individuals and groups . . . heads of household (elders) create and re-create their superior status to others in their households through ritual . . ." Saul M. Olyan, *Rites and Rank* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 11.

⁴⁶ Job exhibits near obsessional *manie de perfection* when whatever is done must be done to perfection, and the desire to do so propels one to an endless repetition compulsion. Kahn and Solomon, *Job's Illness*, 18.

Many psychiatric case histories include details of rituals which people undertake in order to avert personal disaster or to avoid such a fate falling upon a member of the family. Any failure to carry out the ritual would result in misfortune. It is as if this person were saying. 'My omissions are my own and their omissions are mine also, because I know better; and, for that reason, I carry more responsibility than they do.' Job's religious activities were performed ostensibly to safeguard the fate of his children. They could just as well have been performed in order to safeguard his own peace of mind, for his sons and daughters, included amongst his possessions, are part of his sense of identity.⁴⁷

In the closing narrative (42:8-17), a combination of rituals brings the book to its climax and closure. These include the sacrificial offering by the three friends (42:8-9) and the joyful ritual action of family members and acquaintances (42:11) in response to YHWH's verdict (42:7), and YHWH's own action of mirroring their joyful act (42:12-17).

The ritual action of the friends in the fourth episode is of particular interest. Based on the above proposal concerning the role of ritual and its relationship with the event leading to it and with the response and verdict, Job's emotional outburst in chapter 3 leading into his protest against YHWH (Job 6:4) and against the accusations of his friends (4:17-21) can be linked to the ritual action of the friends (2:11b-13). However, it is not immediately clear just how this ritual affects Job's outburst in chapter 3 and his response to YHWH's speech (38:1-40:2, 40:6-41:34) in 42:6 when he invokes the ritual language of "dust and ashes." The remainder of this chapter will therefore concern itself with the study of the significance of ritual in general from a socio-historical perspective

⁴⁷ Kahn and Solomon, *Job's Illness*, 18.

with the aim of determining its correlation particularly with Job's response in 3:1-42:6.⁴⁸ Where the study incorporates texts from Job they serve only as a preview and, in certain cases, to preserve clarity in the final exegetical chapter that will account for the transition of Job's piety based on the sequence of event-ritual-response-verdict that has been established above.

Socio-Historical Analysis of Ritual

The analysis of ritual will draw principally on the works of Gary A. Anderson, who examines how the experiences of grief and joy function in Israelite religion and how mourning and rejoicing are represented as antithetical in both biblical and ancient Near Eastern texts, and Frank H. Gorman Jr., who analyses the Priestly rituals in the Pentateuch from a socio-cultural viewpoint.⁴⁹ They, in part, draw on cultural studies and theoretical models developed by anthropologists to inform their interpretation of ritual in biblical texts.

A Cautionary Note

Biblical scholars who have incorporated socio-historical studies into their research have expressed some concerns regarding its application for biblical texts. Olyan

⁴⁸ Concerning cultural analysis and biblical exegesis, Anderson states, "In approaching the distinctive vocabulary and idiom of the Semitic world, the biblical interpreter should exercise the same caution as cultural anthropologist observing a non-Western culture would take, for the Semitic philologist's task is, at times, not that different from the cultural anthropologist's. The Semitic philologist who attempts to translate ancient texts also engages in an ethnographic analysis of the foreign culture that produced those texts." Gary A Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, a Time to Dance: The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 9.

⁴⁹ Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*; Frank H Gorman, *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time, and Status in the Priestly Theology* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990).

stresses the need for socio-historical analysis to be subjected continually to critique and revision or even rejection.⁵⁰ Data and models from the social sciences, he points out, are stimulants for biblical research but they must never be permitted to pre-determine our conclusions.⁵¹ Theoretical models, Gorman echoes, are developed through data gathered “in the field” and care must be taken when applying them to texts that offer no opportunity for actual observation of the social processes being analysed.⁵² In this regard, discretion must be exercised when applying socio-historical data to biblical ritual text and/or comparing biblical ritual with those of the ancient Near East where there is no recourse to concrete cultural verification. Due care must therefore be at the fore of the interpreter’s consciousness when incorporating, for example, Jastrow’s analysis on the distinction between *Dust, Earth and Ashes as Symbols of Mourning*. His findings, based on the ancient Babylonian burial custom as depicted on the Stele of Vultures, however convincing, remains theoretical without any means of substantial validation.⁵³

Analytical Study

Defining Ritual

In the social sciences, ritual includes all “culturally defined sets of behaviour.”⁵⁴

In contrast, biblical scholars, according to Anderson, often use ritual in a restrictive

⁵⁰ Saul M. Olyan, *Biblical Mourning: Ritual and Social Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 5.

⁵¹ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 5.

⁵² Gorman, *Ideology of Ritual*, 30.

⁵³ Morris Jastrow, “Dust, Earth, and Ashes as Symbols of Mourning among the Ancient Hebrews,” *JAOS* 20 (1899): 141-146.

⁵⁴ E Leach, *IESS* (ed. David L Sills; vol. 13; New York: Macmillian and Free, 1968), 524.

sense by associating it with a sacred object or space.⁵⁵ Certainly, Gorman's analysis of ritual in the Priestly system suggests such a tight relation between ritual and the sacred. He argues that there are two classes of ritual: the general social ritual that covers a broad range of social behaviour, and the specific ritual, which serves a distinct purpose, and is performed in a specified situation and place, and at a specified time.⁵⁶ When Gorman discusses the specific Priestly rituals, they always have to do with the sacred. However, in distinguishing the two categories, Gorman does not himself keep them distinct and separate. In fact, the specific ritual includes a social dimension because, as Gorman states, it has as "one of its central goals the regulation of the social order."⁵⁷

Ritual and Emotion

In view of the tendency towards a restrictive use of ritual and the scope of his own study, Anderson broadens the definition to include behaviours that function in any form of religious ritual whether they are performed in association with a sacred place or not.⁵⁸ By adopting Anderson's extended definition in this research, it is possible to explore the mourning and rejoicing rituals in Job and their associated rites of garment tearing (1:20, 2:12) and weeping (2:12), head shaving (1:20), sitting on ashes (2:8) and throwing of dust (2:12); and comforting (2:11, 42:11) along with the reference to "dust and ashes" (42:6) as religious rituals even though contextually they are not connected to the sacred in a strict sense. As religious ritual, they have the capacity to establish within

⁵⁵ Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 3.

⁵⁶ Gorman, *Ideology of Ritual*, 19.

⁵⁷ Gorman is influenced by Victor Turner (*The Anthropology of Performance*, 60-93) and Geertz (*The Interpretation of Cultures*, 89-123). Gorman, *Ideology of Ritual*, 19.

⁵⁸ Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 3.

the performer powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations.⁵⁹ So, for example, when Job sits on the ash heap (2:8) and enacts the role of a social outcast, he is at the same time enacting a mourner and as such establishes in and around him, though the text is silent on this, an aura of death.⁶⁰ Anderson explains this process in terms of the ritual's performative value in that ritual has the power to create in the performer an emotive experience. Although this is thought to have been normal in the ancient world, this manner of relating emotion to ritual is alien to contemporary western culture; the performative element, for example the manifestation of grief or joy associated with the emotional life, is normally understood as flowing from that inner experience.⁶¹ Anderson cites Durkheim's study of the Australian Aborigines' reaction to the death of one of their own as a case in point.⁶² On hearing the news that a sick kinsman had passed away, Durkheim describes that their moaning became "even more penetrating. Caught up in the frenzy, men and women ran back and forth, cutting themselves with knives and pointed sticks; the women hit each other, with no one trying to fend off the blows."⁶³ Durkheim concludes that the outpouring of grief was not spontaneous but was created by the ritual demanded of individuals by custom:

If the relatives cry, lament, and beat themselves black and blue, the reason is not because that they feel personally touched by the death of their kinsman. In particular cases, to be sure, the sadness expressed may be truly felt. But generally there is no relationship between the feelings felt and the actions done by those who take part in the rite. If, at the very moment when

⁵⁹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 90.

⁶⁰ Citing Lev 13:45-46, Olyan states that a diseased person is a discrete type of mourner and this non-death related mourning, like other types of mourning, is modelled after mourning for the dead. Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 19-27.

⁶¹ Anderson cites an example from the Talmud where two rabbis legislate how a mourner is to feel during the ritual for the secondary burial of a deceased. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 1-2.

⁶² Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 1-2.

⁶³ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (trans. Karen Fields; New York: Free, 1995), 435-436.

the mourners seem most overcome by the pain, someone turns to them to talk about some secular interest, their faces and tone often change instantly, taking on a cheerful air, and they speak with all the gaiety in the world. Mourning is not the natural response of a private sensibility hurt by a cruel loss. It is an obligation imposed by the group. One laments not simply because one is sad but because one is obligated to lament. It is ritual facade that must be adopted out of respect for custom, but one that is largely independent of the individuals' emotional states.⁶⁴

Although Anderson believes that emotion can follow from behavioural action, he nevertheless acknowledges that there are times when feelings are so strong that no external cues are needed for an emotional response.⁶⁵

From a biblical perspective, Olyan holds that emotion and ritual are mutually influential since it is not clear that rituals always and in every instance will successfully create expected emotional responses in the individual.⁶⁶ He cites as examples of rituals creating an expected emotive experience the lamentation and weeping of Joab and the people of Judah over Abner in 2 Sam 3:31-37 and the role of mourning women in raising a dirge to “let our eyelids flow with water” in Jer 9:16-18.⁶⁷ In other cases, he explains, rituals fail to create the expected emotional response from the performer or participant. In Neh 8:9 the people weep in a ritual context devoted entirely to joyous expression and in Ezra 3:12-13 when many behave joyously during the establishment of the rebuilt Jerusalem temple, there are others who weep loudly.⁶⁸ In light of these competing evidences, it is crucial that interpreters scrutinise the socio-historical data and

⁶⁴ Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 400-401.

⁶⁵ Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 95-97.

⁶⁶ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 8.

⁶⁷ In Jer 9:18, the 3ppl jussive verb, יִלְיָן (“let them flow”), used in conjunction with “eyelids” emphasizes the power of the dirge singing (as ritual action) to provoke emotional response. Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 8.

⁶⁸ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 8-9.

the biblical context before making a judgment concerning the relationship between ritual and emotion.

Ritual and Worldview

Ritual always involves action. It produces its effects only in and through the performance and enactment of particular actions.⁶⁹ In a socio-cultural context, ritual performance is a meaningful way of acting out and publicizing an established worldview.⁷⁰ However, this does not mean that one is being told or shown the worldview but through the performance of the ritual act, a multisensory experience of that worldview (or a breached version of it) is given.⁷¹ “A worldview,” according to Gorman, “is one means by which society attempts to structure the world and human existence within that world. It attempts to bring order into existence.”⁷² The Joban worldview resembles what Brueggemann refers to as a “theodicy settlement, something of a consensus in the community about the kinds of actions that produce (and deserve) good outcomes (according to God's good pleasure) and bad outcomes (according to God's displeasure).”⁷³ Under this scheme, one is enjoined to live in a way that will be conducive to the outpouring of divine blessing and any irregularity must immediately be followed by some form of penitential action if one is to avoid divine wrath. Job's friends testify to this doctrine when they dogmatically attribute Job's suffering (2:13) to sin he

⁶⁹ Gorman, *Ideology of Ritual*, 36.

⁷⁰ Gorman, *Ideology of Ritual*, 13; Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 148-153.

⁷¹ Catherine M. Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 160.

⁷² Gorman, *Ideology of Ritual*, 15-16.

⁷³ Walter Brueggemann, “Some Aspects of Theodicy in Old Testament Faith,” *PRSt* 26 (1999): 253; for a discussion of the worldview from the perspective of Job as a wisdom literature see R. N Whybray, “The Social World of the Wisdom Writers,” in *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological and Political Perspectives* (ed. R.E. Clements; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 227-228 and Norman Karol Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 567-571.

committed (4:1-21) and counsel him to take reparative measures to restore his status before YHWH (8:5-6).⁷⁴ Job is not unfamiliar with this arrangement; it was on this basis that he would arise early in the morning to offer sacrifice for his children (1:5). Ritual is for Job a way of restoring divine blessing. From a cultural perspective and employing a different terminology, Turner describes this ritual act as a “social drama” and like its religious counterpart is to be enacted whenever there is a breach or break in the established social order, one that demands resolution.⁷⁵ Job’s worldview, however, fails him in light of his particular circumstances (27:1-6), and he rejects the friends’ counsel to implore divine favour and compassion (5:6-11, 8:1-6).⁷⁶

Ritual and Symbolism

Ritual performance is characterized by formality, order, and sequence; these are apparent in the rituals in the book of Job, particularly 2:12b-13.⁷⁷ Ritual utilizes symbols as basic building blocks and as such all ritual action is symbolic action and the meaning it embodies is derived from the cultural system in which human beings live their lives.⁷⁸ Symbolic action mediates meaning by inviting the performer or participant of the ritual

⁷⁴ For the distinctive view of the moral order of each character, see Clines, *Job 1-20.*, xxxix-xlii.

⁷⁵ Gorman, *Ideology of Ritual*, 20; Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), 61-88, 91.

⁷⁶ The texts do not explicitly mention that Job should offer ritual sacrifice for his trouble but based on 1:5 and 42:7-9, ritual sacrifice appears to be on the agenda of Job’s friends.

⁷⁷ Form refers to quality, style, and the traditional nature; order refers to structure, predictability, control and manageability; and sequence refers to how a first act is followed by a second, and the second is followed by a third and so on. Gorman, *Ideology of Ritual*, 25-27.

⁷⁸ Gorman, *Ideology of Ritual*, 22-25; Geertz defines culture as “an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions, expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.” Geertz, *Interpretation Of Cultures*, 89.

to partake in that meaning.⁷⁹ On the meaningfulness of symbols, Douglas' opinion concerning the Bog Irishman's abstinence from meat on Good Friday is noteworthy. In response to the effort by the English Catholic hierarchy to exhort her members towards almsgiving, not abstinence, as a more meaningful way of celebrating Good Friday, Douglas argues that the denial of abstinence from meat as a symbolic action can only cause confusion. "Symbols," she stresses, "are the only means of communication. They are the only means of expressing value; the main instrument of thought, the only regulators of experience."⁸⁰ In other words, to deny Bog Irishmen their symbol is as good as denying them the experience and meaning of Calvary.

Summary

In sum, this analysis concerning the nature of ritual, its function and characteristics offer some important guidelines for interpreting the ritual in Job and its relation to Job's piety. Ritual plays a 'hinge' role leading up to Job's response and the verdict. Ritual action is symbolic action; it is a vehicle of thought and meaning. It is a meaningful way of acting out and experiencing an established worldview or, for that matter, a breach of that worldview. The performer of a ritual in adopting the ritual behavioural state, say of mourning or rejoicing, depending on the context, creates in himself or herself according to the ancient pattern, a corresponding emotive value. In some cases, the performer may simply be expressing through the ritual a prior emotional experience. Nevertheless, the performer publicizes his or her emotive judgment

⁷⁹ Lucretia B. Yaghjian, *Writing Theology Well* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 220-232.; participation may be explained in Anderson's terminology as the behavioural state one adopts in a ritual. Ritual has the capacity to produce in the performer a certain emotive disposition.

⁸⁰ Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 8-9; Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1973), 60.

regarding the state of the existing worldview (either order or disorder). Applying this to the rituals in Job, it may be argued that the rites of garment tearing (1:20, 2:12) and weeping (2:12), head shaving (1:20), sitting on ashes (2:8), throwing of dust (2:8), the reference to “dust and ashes” (42:6), and comforting (2:11, 42:11-17) are a way of acting out or publicizing the dispositions of the respective performers. In view of this, the task for the following chapter will be to investigate the nature of these specific rituals under the broad category of mourning and rejoicing before finally applying its findings in the final chapter to the Job text in question.

3. ANALYSIS OF RITUAL II

The central argument of the preceding chapter concerning each of the four episodes in Job is that ritual functions as a hinge between the prior event and the subsequent conjunctive response and verdict. From a reverse perspective, this means that the response and verdict are meaningful only in light of the preceding ritual action. In view of this argument, the socio-historical discussion has established some guidelines relevant to the task ahead of determining how ritual influences Job, particularly his response in the fourth episode. This current chapter will complete the analysis of ritual by focusing on biblical mourning and rejoicing, and their associated rites of head shaving (1:20), lacerating while sitting on ashes (2:8), the throwing of dust on/over the head (2:12), garment tearing (1:20, 2:12), weeping (2:12) and comforting (2:11, 42:11).⁸¹ As ancient rites, these practices are well attested in the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and ancient Near Eastern literatures. An analysis of these rites, to identify their functions and symbolism, will enhance existing interpretations of the Job text by casting them in new light.⁸²

⁸¹ These are well-established rites which tend not be innovative are therefore open to investigation. The performers do not specify its acts and utterances; they follow, more or less punctiliously, orders established or taken to have been established, by others. While new rituals do appear from time to time, they are seldom attempted because they will appear as “forced or even false” and be unfamiliar to performers or participants. Roy A Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 32; this explains why “ritual practice – especially anything associated with mortuary rites – is extremely conservative . . .” Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 60; on the tenacity of mourning rites, see E Jacob, “Mourning,” in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (ed. George Arthur Buttrick; vol. 3; Nashville: Abingdon P, 1962), 3:454; The discussion of “dust and ashes” in 42:6 will occur in chapter 4.

⁸² Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 61-95; Xuan Huong Thi Pham, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1999), 16-26.

Mourning and Rejoicing

Anderson's seminal study on the experiences of grief and joy and their function in Israelite religion underpin much of the current investigation on ritual. Mourning and rejoicing, Anderson explains, are represented in biblical and other ancient Near Eastern texts as antithetical.⁸³ Given the current task, it will not be necessary to dwell on the details of this representation; instead, it suffices to highlight the essential opposition between mourning and rejoicing in terms of their discrete behavioural states and how each state parallels the other:⁸⁴

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Joy | Mourning |
| Eating and drinking | Fasting |
| Sexual relations | Sexual continence |
| Praise of God | Lamentation |
| Anointing with oil | Putting on ashes or dust on one's head |
| Festal garments | Sackcloth or torn clothes |

Since each ritual state is antithetical of the other and has its own distinct behavioural features, any movement between them must, therefore, be accompanied by suitable behavioural changes. Anderson cites two examples to illustrate this movement. The first is the ancient Babylonian account of Gilgamesh's encounter with the barmaid. After mourning for seven days and seven nights following the death of Enkidu, his dear friend, the barmaid entreats Gilgamesh to stop mourning and to rejoice. He is to feast, dance and play, wash his head, bathe, put on fresh garments and resume sexual relations

⁸³ For details concerning the antithetical nature of mourning and rejoicing, see Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 49-73; Olyan (*Biblical Mourning*, 13 [fn 32], 124-136) observes how a mixing of mourning and rejoicing rituals occurs in a number of biblical texts, e.g. Amos 8:3 and Jer 41:4-5.

⁸⁴ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 49.

with his spouse.⁸⁵ The same parallel movement is evident in 2 Sam 12:15-24. When David laments over his dying child, he fasts, lies on the ground, and weeps as part of the mourning ritual. Upon the death of his son, he rejoices by rising from the ground, washing and anointing himself, changing his clothes, eating, and having sexual relations with Bathsheba. Although David's behaviour matches his state of rejoicing, the phenomenon itself is rather peculiar for it is odd that he should cease to mourn upon his son's death.⁸⁶ David's mourning is penitential in nature, Gerleman explains, and so should end when his appeal to YHWH fails to accomplish the result he desires.⁸⁷ According to this interpretation, mourning need not always be mourning for the dead but may serve a petitionary function while adopting the practices and mood of the mortuary rite. The earlier interpretation concerning Job on the ash heap (2:8) already alludes to the possibility that mourning may deviate from the traditional context while retaining some of its original characteristics: "when Job sits on the ash heap and enacts the role of a social outcast, he is at the same time enacting a mourner and as such establishes in and around him, though the text is silent on this, an aura of death."

Types of Biblical Mourning

Mourning for the dead (e.g. Gen 37:34-35; 2 Sam 3:31-7; Jer 16:5-7), Olyan argues, is paradigmatic for three other types of biblical mourning ritual: mourning of penitents and petitioners, mourning at a time of disaster and mourning of a person

⁸⁵ Anderson offers a good explanation of the movement from mourning to joy from the perspective of the Gilgamesh story noting (his footnote 69 on page 82) the similarity between Gilgamesh and Job's inability to stop mourning. Instead of ceasing mourning after the prescribed seven days, Job begins to lament (Job 3). Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 74-84.

⁸⁶ Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 82-84; see also, Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 13-19.

⁸⁷ Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 83.

stricken with a skin disease.⁸⁸ “Biblical representations of mourning the dead employ a distinct and particular vocabulary of mourning which is also used by other biblical texts to describe the ritual activity of petitioners and others who do not mourn the dead.”⁸⁹ This analysis will be important for interpretation in the next chapter and is especially so as Olyan has found that the reverse comparison is never attested in any biblical text.⁹⁰ Typically, mourning the dead includes one or more of these rites:

Mourners may tear their garments, put on sackcloth, weep, wail, toss ashes or dust on their heads, roll in ashes or dust, and sit or lie on the ground. They may fast, groan or sigh, move their bodies back and forth (נוד), utter dirges or mourning cries, avoid anointing with oil, lacerate themselves, and manipulate head and beard hair by means of shaving or depilation. Mourners have contact with the corpse and become polluted thereby. They may walk barefoot, strike the thigh, allow their hair to hang loose and uncovered, avoid washing themselves or their garments, abstain from sexual relations, cover or avoid grooming the moustache or face, and eat foods associated with the mourning. Partial or total nudity, the covering of head, and the laying of the hand on the head were very likely also Israelite mourning practices.⁹¹

Mourners enact the above rites as a way of identifying themselves with the dead. The account of Gilgamesh’s act of dishevelment following Enkidu’s demise represents this movement from the realm of the living to the realm of the dead.⁹² Likewise, the conspiracy of Joseph’s brothers (Gen 37:12-36) so traumatizes Jacob that he refuses re-integration into the community but says instead, “In mourning I will go down to my son, to Sheol”.⁹³

⁸⁸ Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 24-27.

⁸⁹ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 19.-20, 25.

⁹⁰ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 24-25.

⁹¹ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 30.

⁹² Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 74-75.

⁹³ Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 86-87; see also Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 43-45.

The second type of biblical mourning is penitential/petitionary mourning and two examples of this type of mourning are: David's mourning over his dying child (2 Sam 12:15-24) and Ezra's mourning as a response to the Israelite's acceptance of intermarriage (Ezra 10:6).⁹⁴

The third type of mourning ritual occurs in conjunction with a disaster. As a communal or individual practice, it has no petitionary element. Besides marking the calamity, such mourning serves also to create a context for mourners to communicate sorrow, shame, and personal or corporate diminishment as well as to create, affirm or modify social relationships.⁹⁵ Examples of this type are Tamar's reaction to her rape by Ammon (2 Sam 13:19), the Tyrians' mourning for their destroyed city (Ezek 27:28-36) and Haman's humiliation before Mordecai (Esth 6:12).⁹⁶

The last class of biblical mourning involves the mourning of a person stricken with a skin disease.⁹⁷ Lev 13:45-46 enjoins this person to put on torn garments, to let loose the hair, to cover the upper lips and to cry "unclean, unclean," apparently to warn others of the communicable disease. He or she must remain alone, outside of the camp, for the duration of the affliction.⁹⁸ Basson explains, from a different perspective, why a person with bodily blemish becomes an object of society's contempt and derision:

⁹⁴ Olyan (*Biblical Mourning*, 25) cites Joel 1-2 (penitential) and 1 Sam 1, Ezra 8:21-23, 2 Chr 20:1-19 (petitionary) as further examples of rituals that use languages associated with mortuary ritual.

⁹⁵ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 98.

⁹⁶ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 26., 98-104; in the Hebrew bible, dust, and earth are often used on the head as symbols of mourning. 2 Sam 13:19 is the only one reference to the use of ashes on the head Jastrow (Jastrow, "Dust, Earth, and Ashes," 133-141) argues that only dust and earth are used as synonymous symbols of mourning. Through a series of emendations, he argues the reference to ashes in 2 Sam 13:19 reflects scribal error.

⁹⁷ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 104-106.

⁹⁸ See Lev 13-14 for laws pertaining to leprosy.

In ancient Israel where bodily wholeness stood parallel to the wholeness of society, Job's unwhole body impinges on the ordered structure, fullness and harmony of society and endangers the corporate character of the social group . . . Given that his body brings about disorder and disequilibrium to the social matrix, Job is excluded from the social milieu.⁹⁹

Hence, the ritual of the diseased person, though similar to the previous in communicating sorrow, shame, and personal diminishment, has a social implication that is vastly different.

In all three other types of mourning, mourning rites separate an individual or group from others, and provide an important ritual context in which the affected persons and their intimates or allies can affirm, create, adjust or sunder social ties. In contrast, the mourning behaviour of the skin-diseased person is a component of a larger constellation of rites intended to isolate the individual from all social interactions with affected persons, including intimates.

Since the diseased person receives no comforter for the period of the affliction, he or she may legitimately be described as socially dead.¹⁰⁰ In Num 12:1-12, the stricken person is even associated with the physically dead. When Aaron and Miriam speak against Moses for marrying a Cushite woman, YHWH responds by striking Miriam with a skin disease (Num 12:1-10). Aaron, realizing what had happened, appeals to Moses to not judge their foolishness as sinful and to "not let her be like the dead" (Num 12:12).

Mourning Period and the Role of Comforter

While the mourner for the dead mourns for a set period of time, usually seven but up to thirty days if the dead person is a prominent figure (Deut 34:8, Num 20:29),

⁹⁹ Basson cites the work of Malul. Alec Basson, "Just Skin and Bones: The Longing for Wholeness of the Body in the Book of Job," *VT* 58 (2008): 288.

¹⁰⁰ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 108.; see also Basson, "Just skin and bones," 289; Emanuel Feldman, *Biblical and Post-Biblical Defilement and Mourning* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1977), 37-41.; and Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 87.

the diseased person remains in mourning for the duration of the affliction.¹⁰¹ The diseased person like the mourner for the dead is considered unclean. The person is prevented from coming before the Lord in the temple and experiences divine absence. It is only after the mourning period that these mourners begin to re-experience the presence of the divine.¹⁰²

Closely connected with mourning and rejoicing is the role of comforters. Anderson identifies two types of comforting associated with the verb *נָחַם* (“to comfort”). “Comfort can imply either the symbolic action of *assuming the state of mourning* alongside the mourner, or it can have the nuance of *bringing about the cessation of mourning.*”¹⁰³ Anderson cites as an example of the former type the initiative of Job’s friends to share his grief when they hear of his trouble (2:11-13). Of the latter, he points to Isa 40:1 (“Comfort, comfort, my people”).¹⁰⁴ However, Job 42:11 would provide a more fitting contrast to the earlier example. The verse describes the gathering of sympathetic yet jubilant family members and acquaintances around Job. Bearing gifts of money and a gold ring, and in response to YHWH’s verdict (42:7), they seek to end Job’s mourning.

¹⁰¹ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 106; Pham, *Mourning*, 17-22; In Gen 37:33, however, Jacob, devastated by Joseph’s death, refuses to stop mourning despite having already mourned for many days.

¹⁰² Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 108-109.

¹⁰³ Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 84.

¹⁰⁴ Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 84-85.

Particular Rites

It is important to reiterate before the following discussion that mourning for the dead is the paradigm for all the other mourning rituals. Petitionary mourning, mourning at the time of a disaster, and the mourning of a person stricken with a skin disease adopt the language and the mood of the mortuary ritual, and its particular customary rites.

Laceration and Shaving

Biblical texts attest to a variety of rites for mourning.¹⁰⁵ This analysis will, however, confine itself to those that the book of Job portrays, that is the rites of laceration and sitting on ashes (2:8), head-shaving (1:20), throwing of dust on or upon the head (2:12), tearing of garments (1:20, 2:12), weeping (2:12) and comforting (2:11, 42:11).

Views concerning the nature of Job's scraping action (2:8) differ amongst scholars. Pope argues that Job's action is most likely an act of laceration.¹⁰⁶ Others like Clines, Hartley and Rowley are more inclined to think that Job was relieving himself of the itchiness that accompanies his bodily sores.¹⁰⁷ The LXX explicitly mentions that Job "took the potsherd in order to scrape the pus, and sat upon the dunghill outside the city." Janzen believes that the text may be interpreted either way.¹⁰⁸ Several factors do, however, indicate that Job is performing the ritual of laceration rather than an act for

¹⁰⁵ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 30.-31; See especially the Ugaritic portrayal of the mourning of El and Anat over the death of Baal. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 60-67.

¹⁰⁶ Pope, *Job*, 21.

¹⁰⁷ J. Gerald Janzen, *Job* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 48; Hartley, *Job*, 81; Clines, *Job 1-20*, 50; Rowley, *Job*, 36.

¹⁰⁸ Janzen, *Job*, 48.

practical reasons. If the author has provided details of Job's sores that extend from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head (2:7), one would imagine the author would also have provided details about the itchiness and/or pus, but there is none. The literary proximity between the act of scrapping and sitting among the ashes suggests that the former action is ritualistic rather than one performed to relieve the itchiness or for the removal of pus.¹⁰⁹ Finally, if the previous argument concerning the sequence of event-ritual-response-verdict is correct, then this episode, which exhibits the same sequence as the other three, Job's action while sitting on ash is in all likelihood a ritual act of laceration.

Amos 8:10, Jer 16:6, Ezek 7:18 and Mic 1:16 attest the use of mutilation and shaving as symbols of grief.¹¹⁰ The Holiness Code and Deuteronomy strictly prohibit both the use of shaving and laceration for priests (Lev 21:5) and for all Israelites (Lev 19:27-28, Deut 14:1). The injunction in Lev 19:28 against cutting one's flesh when mourning for "the dead" (שִׁנְיָה) is indicative of its use within mortuary rites.¹¹¹ Although the reasons for these injunctions cannot be ascertained with accuracy, laceration and shaving are not easily reversible unlike other mourning practices that separate and mark the mourners temporarily.¹¹² Laceration leaves long-lasting or even permanent scars on the person while shaving is at best only reversible over an extended period.¹¹³ "Thus, the

¹⁰⁹ Since Job's sitting on ash points to an act of mourning, the verb "to scratch oneself" might be read as "to cut oneself." Brian B. Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead: Ancestor Cult and Necromancy in Ancient Israelite Religion and Tradition* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 169.

¹¹⁰ For fuller discussion, see Maurice H Farbridge, *Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism* (New York: KTAV, 1970), 226.-239.

¹¹¹ Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*, 167.

¹¹² Lev 21:23 stipulates that a priest with blemish is not permitted to approach the altar. Shaving and laceration are a threat to the people's holiness (Lev 19:2). Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 111, 117, 121; the practices are thought to be Canaanite in origin (see 1 Kgs 18:26) and therefore be unsuitable. Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*, 166-178.

¹¹³ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 115.

carefully constructed boundaries that separate the mourner from others are obscured by the continued presence of shaved head or lacerated body parts in non-mourning contexts.”¹¹⁴

As for “sitting among the ash” (2:8), biblical (e.g. Jonah 3:6) and ancient Near Eastern texts attest its use as symbolic of grief, distress, and bereavement or figuratively as humility and repentance.¹¹⁵ It is an appropriate counterpart to the act of laceration; both symbolise a mournful disposition but “sitting among the ash,” covered with bodily sores, in Job’s case, also marks him as shameful and ostracized by society (29:7-11).

Weeping

The arrival of Job’s three friends (2:11-13) marks a turning point in Job’s attitude. When they spot him from a distance, “they raised their voice and they wept and each man tore his robe and they tossed dust upon their heads, to the heavens” (2:12). Their intention to console and comfort Job (2:11) turns against them when Job erupts into a flood of imprecations against himself (3:1-26).¹¹⁶

Weeping is a display and an outpouring of emotional pain, especially in response to death (Gen 23:2, Deut 34:8, 2 Sam 1:12).¹¹⁷ In his sociological study on the Andaman Islanders, Radcliffe-Brown finds that “in certain circumstances men and women are required by custom to embrace one another and weep, and if they neglected to do so it

¹¹⁴ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 116.

¹¹⁵ For more detail, see Farbridge, *Biblical and Semitic Symbolism*, 249. Charles L. Feinberg, “אפר,” *TWOT* 66; see also Berlin Wachter, “עפר,” *TDOT* 257-265.

¹¹⁶ Job’s anguish is seen in the manner of his outburst. He begins by wishing he had not been born (3:1-10) but knowing that to be futile thinking, wishes instead he had died a stillborn (3:11-19). Finally, he wishes that life be withdrawn from his miserable self.

¹¹⁷ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 33.

would be an offence condemned by all right-thinking persons.”¹¹⁸ Western contemporary societies would consider the display a travesty of what real emotion is. In an insightful study on the function of ritual weeping, Ebersole takes this Western mindset to task.¹¹⁹ He argues, “It is not the role of the historian of religions to judge tears to be real or fake; rather, we must pay careful attention to how and why situated individuals cry.”¹²⁰ Performative tears shed in a ritual context, whether religious or otherwise, “serve a variety of social purposes, including marking out social and hierarchical relationships at times, dissolving them at others, inviting or demanding specific social relationships, or marking/protesting the abrogation of social and moral contracts.”¹²¹ In 2 Sam 12:15-24, Ebersole notices how David’s tears were not spontaneous tears while not judging them to be false. David could apparently turn them on as he appeals to YHWH (thus, acknowledging his inferior status) to spare the life of his son and he could just as well turn them off at will when YHWH ignores his plea. Had he continued to weep, he would have been deemed, politically, as an “overly emotional and weak” king.¹²² In another example, Ebersole cites the story of Koundounara, a Greek wife, who uses ritual weeping as a powerful moral indictment against a dead husband who had abused her when he was alive.¹²³ Hence, Ebersole concludes, “more than ‘custom’ motivates ritual actors to weep or to withhold their tears. Ritual tears –

¹¹⁸ A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, *The Andaman Islanders* (New York: Free Press, 1964), 239-240; see also Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 394, 400-401.

¹¹⁹ Gary L. Ebersole, “The Function of Ritual Weeping Revisited: Affective Expression and Moral Discourse,” *History of Religions* 39 (2000): 213-215.

¹²⁰ Ebersole, “Ritual Weeping,” 214.

¹²¹ Ebersole, “Ritual Weeping,” 214.

¹²² Ebersole, “Ritual Weeping,” 241-243.

¹²³ Ebersole, “Ritual Weeping,” 245-246.

both shed and unshed – are telling . . . we must develop new ways of listening carefully for the tales they tell.”¹²⁴

Tearing of Garment and the Use of Dust on/upon the Head

The tearing of garments and the putting on of sackcloth are commonly portrayed as conjunctive actions. In the Hebrew Bible, they are enacted in association with death (Gen 37:34; 2 Sam 3:31) and in non-death contexts (1 Kgs 21:27; 2 Kgs 19:1; Esth 4:1) as symbols of grief and despair.¹²⁵ The verb עָרַק (“to tear”) connotes a violent tearing off of the garment (1 Sam 15:28). According to Jastrow, it was once customary for a Hebrew to strip entirely when mourning. However, when nudity became disgraceful and dishonourable, the donning of sackcloth became a common practice. Prior to the use of sackcloth, made from a coarse material, a loincloth was used and it hung from the loins to cover the parts of the body which the Semites considers to be one’s “‘nakedness’ par excellence.”¹²⁶ As the custom of tearing off one’s garment and the wearing of sackcloth evolve, it becomes conventional to make a simple but violent incision in the seam of one’s cloth.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Ebersole, “Ritual Weeping,” 246.

¹²⁵ Morris Jastrow, “The Tearing of Garments as a Symbol of Mourning, with Especial Reference to the Customs of the Ancient Hebrews,” *JAOS* 21 (1900): 23-24; Farbridge suggests the rites also represent the mourner’s submission to the dead or his readiness to give up all his pleasures and luxuries as a result of the bereavement. Farbridge, *Biblical and Semitic Symbolism*, 224; tearing the garment may also represent the physical separation of the dead from the living. Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 33.

¹²⁶ Jastrow, “Tearing of Garments,” 24-26.

¹²⁷ Jastrow, “Dust, Earth, and Ashes,” 145.

Jastrow bases his analysis on a fragment of the Stele of Vultures that depicts workers, stripped to the waist and wearing only a loincloth as mourning garb, in the process of building a mound over the neatly piled bodies of the dead.¹²⁸



¹²⁸ This monument was dedicated to the triumph of King Eannatum of Lagash over Timma around 2500 B.C.E; Jastrow, "Dust, Earth, and Ashes," 144-145.

This Babylonian inscription, Jastrow believes, provides the original context for the biblical representation on the use of loincloth (i.e. as mourning garb worn when burying the dead). Jastrow further links the use of dust on/upon the mourner's head to the fragment's representation of burying the dead. The fragment depicts two figures carrying on their heads baskets of earth that was to be brought to the top of the mound to build it up. This custom of carrying earth on the head eventually gave way to the practice of placing dust on or over the head and into the air (as Job's friends did in 2:12) as a symbol of mourning.¹²⁹ While it is difficult to verify Jastrow's etiological arguments, it is nevertheless safe to conclude, in view of collaborating biblical and other ancient Near Eastern attestations, that the use of dust on/upon the head and the tearing of garments, even in non-death contexts, hark back to the ritual of mourning for the dead.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Jastrow, "Dust, Earth, and Ashes," 141-146; see also footnote 99.

¹³⁰ When El mourns the death of Baal, he "pours dust of mourning on his head . . . and puts on sackcloth and loincloth." James Bennett Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament* (2nd ed.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 139; "dust," figuratively, signifies multitude, worthlessness, devastation, humiliation and in reference to the divine, it refers to abasement, the transitoriness of human life, the grave and the Netherworld. Berlin Wachter, "עפר," *TDOT*, 261.

4. RITUAL AND THE BOOK OF JOB

This chapter will propose new perspectives to account for Job's dichotomous behaviour by applying the analyses of ritual from the previous chapters to the four episodes in Job. After a review of the assessment of Job's piety, it will be demonstrated that the rituals in the first three episodes are Job's public statements of his piety in relation to the preceding event, which the subsequent responses and verdicts (both meaningful only in light of the ritual) affirm. In the fourth episode, there is a reverse dynamic. Job's friends are now the performers of the ritual. The dissimilarity between the ritual performers of this (the friends) and the previous (Job) episodes serves to emphasize the significance of the ritual. It is through ritual that Job's response becomes discernible. The friends' mourning action (2:12b-13), it will be argued, publicizes their inner conviction that Job is a transgressor of the retributive system and is responsible for Job's outburst in chapter three. It signals their impending indictment against Job for committing grievous sin (22:5-9) and abandoning his reverence for YHWH (15:4). Concerning Job's final turnabout in the epilogue, it will be argued that Job, relieved by the theophany of YHWH, expresses in 42:6 his readiness to repudiate and be comforted of the mourning posture imposed on him through the ritual of 2:12b-13. With the cessation of mourning, joy returns as Job enjoys once again the company of family members and acquaintances, and the blessing of YHWH (42:11-17).

Assessments of Job's Piety

Throughout the poetic dialogue, Job considers his credentials as a God-fearer to be impeccable (12:4) and he holds to this claim resolutely and conscientiously to the end of the speech cycles (27:1-6).¹³¹ He cries out in perplexity against the seeming injustice arrayed against him (6:2-4). Job is not aware that he has been made the subject of a heavenly wager solely because of his quality as a God-fearer and a man of integrity (1:6-12; 2:1-6). The readers of the text are led to accept Job's claim of integrity as they are privy to the heavenly scenes (1:6-12; 2:1-6) and have the privilege of 'hearing' first hand the author (1:1) and YHWH's (1:8; 2:3) declaration of Job's piety and integrity.¹³²

The author asserts from the outset this quality of Job's character. Employing four cognate adjectives and pairing them in a tight and parallelistic character statement, Job is portrayed as an ideal figure (1:1b):¹³³

הָאִישׁ הַהוּא תָם וְיָשָׁר / וְיִרְאֵ אֶל־הַיָּהוָה וְסָר מִרָע //

That man was blameless and upright / and a fearer of God and turning from
evil //¹³⁴

With this one verse, the author sets the mood for the rest of the book. Unfortunately, each time Job's integrity and piety is mentioned or emphasized in the prologue, chaos

¹³¹ Contra the consensus, Wolfer argues there are only two speech cycles of seven speeches each. Each cycle begins and ends with Eliphaz and include three speeches by Job and one each from Bildad and Zophar. David Wolfers, "The Speech-Cycles in the Book of Job," *VT* 43 (1993): 385-402.

¹³² Readers "therefore can feel almost like the angels looking down on to the debate." Bernard Ehrlich, "The Book of Job as a Book of Morality," *JBQ* 34 (2006): 31.

¹³³ Hartley (*Job*, 67) identifies two hendiadys: "blameless and upright," characterizes Job as a man of untarnished character and "a fearer of God and turning from evil," describes Job's devout faith; see also Clines, *Job 1-20*, 12-13 and Athalya Brenner, "Job the Pious : The Characterization of Job in the Narrative Framework of the Book.," *JSOT* 43 (1989): 37-52 who discusses disparity between the idealized Job of the prose and the realistic Job of the poetry.

¹³⁴ All translation from the Hebrew into English is made by this writer.

strikes! The first incident occurs after the initial assessment by the author when the feasting activity of Job's children throws him into disarray as he speculates on its implication (1:5b). Chaos strikes again when the satan afflicts Job following YHWH's assessments of him in 1:8 and 2:3. Finally, after Job's wife (implicitly) acknowledges his integrity (2:9), the friends arrive on the scene only to disorient Job with their doctrine (4:7).

YHWH recapitulates verbatim the author's assessment of Job while incrementally exalting it as the prologue unfolds. Beginning with the second episode (1:6-22), YHWH, through the hand of the author, epitomizes Job as the ideal man by adding a prefix to the author's statement (1:8b):

//אין כִּמוֹהוּ בְּאֶרֶץ אִישׁ תָּם וְיָשָׁר / יִרָא אֶל־הַיָּם וְסָר מִרָע//

(There is none like him on the earth,) a man blameless and upright / and a fearer
of God and turning from evil//

In the third episode (2:1-10b) after Job's positive response to the first of the satan's tests, YHWH adds a further postscript to Job's credentials raising him to the rank of a pious sufferer (2:3b-ca).

//אין כִּמוֹהוּ בְּאֶרֶץ אִישׁ תָּם וְיָשָׁר / יִרָא אֶל־הַיָּם וְסָר מִרָע / (וְעַד דָּנוּ מִחֲזִיק בְּתַמְתּוֹ)//

(There is none like him on the earth,) a man blameless and upright / and fearer
of God and turning from evil (and he still persists in his integrity)//

In the epilogue following Job's final response (42:6), YHWH re-establishes Job as "servant," employing the term twice more (42:7-8) than in the prologue (1:8, 2:3).¹³⁵

¹³⁵ For discussion of the term 'servant,' see Clines, *Job 1-20*, 24.

The satan in 1:9 implicitly acknowledges Job's piety but raises questions as to the motivation for this piety. The satan's premise is that Job's fear of God is not for nothing, which raises the possibility that Job is not "blameless and upright" or virtuous but reflects self-interest.¹³⁶ In this regard, the satan will reserve his judgement concerning the exact nature of Job's piety, and challenges YHWH to do likewise (1:10-11), pending the outcome of the test against him (1:12). If Job should finally curse YHWH as the satan claims he would do (2:4-5), then Job would not be the blameless and upright man that YHWH makes him out to be.

The question (2:9a), עָרַךְ מִיָּדְךָ מִיִּשְׁרָיִךָ מִיְּמֵיךָ (‘‘Do you still persist in your integrity?’’), by Job's wife presupposes his integrity. It also betrays her disenchantment with the ways of YHWH. Her word choice, יִשְׁרָיִךָ (‘‘integrity’’), mimics the author and YHWH's assessment of Job as יָשָׁר or ‘‘blameless’’ (1:1, 8; 2:3) but in contrast to the satan's, she omits the rest of the character statement (‘‘a fearer of God and turning from evil’’).¹³⁷ Cast as *diaboli adjutrix*, she invites Job to ‘‘curse God, and die’’ (2:9b), which effectively means forgoing his fear of God and turning to evil.¹³⁸ Yet, it is a proposal delivered in the interest of her husband; dying is for her a better alternative than suffering the pain and anguish from which no recovery seems possible.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ ‘‘The ‘fear of God’ is in many texts an anxiety in the face of the numinous, but here a respect or reverence of the divine will which is conceived as an ethical behaviour.’’ Clines, *Job 1-20*, 13; Wilson argues that ‘fear of God’ is not being proposed as the answer to Job's dilemma. Lamenting and protest is a legitimate human response to God whereas an appeal to ‘fear God’ can stifle authentic, honest faith in times of great hardship. Lindsay Wilson, ‘‘The Book of Job and the Fear of God,’’ *TB* 46 (1995): 59-79.

¹³⁷ For the use of repetitive words/themes by the author, see Habel, *Job*, 82-85.; יִשְׁרָיִךָ may be defined as ‘‘completeness with regard to one's relationship with God,’’ *HALOT*, 1744; see also Ellen J Van Wolde, *Mr and Mrs Job* (London: SCM, 1997), 24.

¹³⁸ *Diaboli adjutrix* is Augustine's description of Job's wife. Pope, *Job*, 21.

¹³⁹ Clines, *Job 1-20*, 51.

The extent of Job's bodily blemish gives Job's friends cause to re-assess his character.¹⁴⁰ Once regarded as a God-fearer and person of integrity (4:6), he is now thought of as unrighteous (4:7), ungodly (15:4), and evil (22:5). He is accused of being merciless with the poor (22:7), withholding food and drink from the hungry and thirsty (22:7), abusing his power (22:8) and dealing appallingly with widows and orphans (22:9). In reaction, Job rails, taunts, protests and summons his divine assailant, which in effect is to cast aside his rebuke to his wife and to do as she suggests (2:9).¹⁴¹ He names YHWH as the cause of his suffering (6:4) and charges the same with an injustice according to the traditional religious worldview that the wicked are to be punished and the blameless and God-fearer rewarded (9:22-24; 21:7; 24:1-20).¹⁴² Though Job's behaviour is arguably understandable in light of his claim to integrity, his initial outburst (3:1-26) seems totally out of character with his earlier responses (1:21, 2:9-10a). His effort to overturn the cosmic order is a protest against YHWH's cosmic sovereignty. It leads one to ask, "What is Job's reason for harbouring misgiving towards YHWH at this early stage?" "What sparks the change?" and finally "How should Job's change of heart in the epilogue (42:6) be explained?" The rest of this chapter will be dedicated to explaining how the ritual action of 2:12b-13 provides the context for navigating between the Job of the frame and the Job of the dialogue. The exegeses of the first three episodes will not only bolster the argument of chapter two concerning the tightness of the sequence of event-ritual-response-verdict, it will show that the Joban ritual is critical for

¹⁴⁰ It is not clear, on the literary level, if the friends also base their evaluation on the loss of Job's property and children. There is only literary link, as the below exegesis will show, between the third and fourth episode.

¹⁴¹ Clines, *Job 1-20*, 52; see Van Wolde's (Mr and Mrs Job, 24) comment concerning the Hebrew term רָרַב in footnote 156.

¹⁴² See "theodicy settlement" on page 29-30; Pro 8:33-36 attests to this ideology; "Suffering opens Job's eyes to the discrepancy between the belief that God punishes the wicked and the reality that in numerous cases the wicked are never punished and the innocent are caught by sudden disaster." Hartley, *Job*, 49.

appreciating the response that follows. These two criteria are also evident in the fourth episode and are crucial for explaining the dramatic development in Job's piety.

The First Episode (1:4-5): Job's Sacrificial Ritual for His Children

Job, from the outset, is portrayed as pious and virtuous (1:1).

אִישׁ הָיָה בְּאֶרֶץ-עוּז אִיּוֹב שְׁמוֹ וְהָיָה הָאִישׁ הַהוּא תָם וְיָשָׁר וִירָא אֶל-הַיָּם וְסָר מִרָע

There was man in the land of Uz and Job was his name and that man was blameless and upright and a God-fearer and turning from evil

Subtly, by way of a *vav* conversive, the author leaves open the possibility of a causal nexus between Job's piety and his prosperity, the latter represented by his offspring and other assets (1:2-3). This concept has become for Job a way of life.

וַיִּנְלְדוּ לוֹ שִׁבְעָה בָנִים וְשְׁלוֹשׁ בָּנוֹת

וַיְהִי מְקַנְהוֹ שִׁבְעַת אֶלְפִי-צֹאן וְשֵׁלֶשֶׁת אֶלְפֵי גְמָלִים וְחֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת צֹמֶד-בָּקָר וְחֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת אֲתוֹנֹת וְעֶבְדָּה רַבָּה מֵאֵד וַיְהִי הָאִישׁ הַהוּא גָדוֹל מְכָל-בְּנֵי-קְדָם

. . . *and* born to him were seven sons and three daughters and his property was seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels and five hundred pair of oxen and five hundred donkeys and a great many servants and that man was the greatest of all people of the east.¹⁴³

Having established Job's impeccable character at the beginning of the book, the first episode launches into a description of the feasting activity of his children and its effect on him. His paranoiac fear (1:5bα) is demonstrated by the extent to which he would go to insure against possible divine wrath: sending for his children, sanctifying

¹⁴³ Although the conjunction is missing in some English translations of the MT, the connection between Job's piety/integrity and his wealth is hardly missed.

them, rising early in the morning and offering up not one but plural burnt offerings “according to the number of them all,” מִסְפָּר כָּלֵם (1:5).¹⁴⁴ In view of Job’s obsessional *manie de perfection*, it is possible that his ritual behaviour is not הַקֶּזֶם (“for nothing”) performed solely out of duty (Lev 4:14-19).¹⁴⁵ It is a public statement endorsing the prevailing retributive worldview, which Job’s verbal response (meaningful only in light of the ritual action) re-affirms (1:5b α). Job treats his children, like his other assets, as sign of YHWH’s blessing and therefore worth the investment of his obsessive behaviour. The verdict, “Thus Job always did all the days” (1:5b β), as a response to Job’s ritual action is less a statement about routine than an affirmation of Job’s religious character.

The Second Episode (1:6-22): Job Mourns for His Children

The event in the second episode consists of two connecting scenes. The first (1:6-12) describes the gathering of the sons of God and the satan before YHWH and the wager to evaluate the satan’s dispute with YHWH’s assessment of Job. The second (1:13-22) is the execution on earth of the heavenly initiative to gauge if Job fears God “for nothing” (1:9). The pericope describing the systematic and unremitting destruction of Job’s property begins and ends with references to the children (1:13-19) thus bringing into relief the conflict between the disaster and the ritual sacrifice that Job has recently offered up. The net result of the conflict is to disorient on Job in view of his obsessive

¹⁴⁴ Sanctification can be viewed as a preparation for the actual sacrificial ritual. Clines, *Job 1-20*, 16.

¹⁴⁵ Merker argues, from a psychoanalytical perspective, that the poem reflects Job’s internal struggle. Dan Merkur, “Psychotherapeutic Change in the Book of Job,” in *Psychology and the Bible: From Genesis to Apocalyptic Vision* (ed. J. Harold Ellens and Wayne G. Rollins; Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004), 120.

nature.¹⁴⁶ Job is unaware that it is the result of the satan's proposal to YHWH to touch (עגג) all of Job's possessions (1:11) that "a great wind came . . . and struck (using the same Hebrew verb עגג) the four corners of the house" causing it to fall on the children (1:19).¹⁴⁷

Job's mourning action (1:20) is a display of his reverence for the divine will in the face of a perplexing disaster.

וַיָּקָם אִיּוֹב וַיִּקְרַע אֶת־מָעֵלוֹ וַיִּגְזַר אֶת־רֹאשׁוֹ וַיִּפֹּל אֶל־אַרְצָה וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה

Then Job stood up, and he tore his garment and he shaved his head and he fell to the ground and he prostrated himself in worship

Only the rites of garment tearing, head shaving, and the act of falling to the ground are typical features pertaining to the ritual of mourning for the dead.¹⁴⁸ "To arise" (סוּק) and "to prostrate in worship" (הוֹח) serve to enhance the ritual act. Job's arising presupposes a prior sitting position, which is thought to be the appropriate posture to receive visitors.¹⁴⁹

The bodily movement therefore appears to be indicative of Job's shocking disbelief that the evil onslaught has not spared the lives of his children. *Yet*, after his ritual action of

¹⁴⁶ According to Clines, "all that we are unquestionably supposed to understand is that no cause for the disaster lay in the behaviour of any of the human actors. No such thought occurs to Job, either." The statement is true of readers, given their privileged position and the absence of textual evidence of the possibility of any wrongdoing by Job's children. As for Job, his obsessive nature must surely lead him to repeat the question of 1:5b. Clines, *Job 1-20*, 31.

¹⁴⁷ Although the clause וַיִּגְדַּל הַיָּדוּל ("a great wind") is feminine, the verb וַיִּנְעַע ("and he/it touched") has a masculine prefix, thus pointing to אֱלֹהֵימָה ("God") as originator of the "great wind".

¹⁴⁸ Note El's response to the death of Baal: "Straightway Kindly El Benign, descends from the throne, sits on the footstool, from the footstool, and sits on the ground." Pritchard, *Ancient Near East in Pictures*, 139; Clines notes that "Job's actions in response to the news have been few: there has been no gashing of the body, no donning sackcloth, no scattering dust, no lamentation, no weeping, no fasting." The economy, he adds, appears to represent a disproportional restraint that will be burst open in the dialogue. Clines, *Job 1-20*, 35; in this regard, Olyan explains: "Typically, a text might mention one or several of the many attested mourning rites, probably with the intent to suggest a larger combination of practices" Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 29; there is no biblical example of mourning that features all the rites associated with a mourning ritual.

¹⁴⁹ It is customary in many contemporary Middle Eastern societies to receive visitors in a sitting position. Clines, *Job 1-20*, 34.

mourning their death, Job prostrates himself in worship of YHWH. Whether the mourning ritual induces in Job a corresponding emotive experience according to the ancient formula or not, is of no major concern at this juncture since the focus is less on Job's bereavement than it is on his response to YHWH (1:10-11). In this respect, the complement of rites gives Job the agency to manage the impact of the disaster and to formulate his response to YHWH.¹⁵⁰

Despite distress and disorientation, Job emphatically vocalizes his unflinching reverence and praise for YHWH (1:21):¹⁵¹

עָרָם יִצְתִי מִבֶּטֶן אִמִּי וְעָרָם אֲשׁוּב שָׁמָּה יְהוָה נָתַן וַיְהוּה לָקַח יְהִי שֵׁם יְהוָה מְבֹרָךְ

Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will return there / the Lord
gave and the Lord took / let the name of the Lord be blessed//

In the first two colons of the ternary verse, Job ascribes to YHWH the sovereign right to recall his entire belongings (even his children), which by Job's reckoning were an

¹⁵⁰ Carol Ochs ("To Make All Creatures Green Again," in press) describes how a mourning process encompassing weeping, silence and song helps the sufferer cope with suffering. Kathleen A. Lentz, "'But These Little Ones' : Reflections on Suffering and Children.," *RIL* 3 (1985): 87; according to Clines, unlike the act of falling to the ground which makes Job's inner attitude plain, the rites of garment tearing and head shaving because of conventionality, cloaks any individual expression of feeling. If by "feeling," Clines refers to Job's bereavement, then the text is vague about his "feeling." However, if by "feeling" is meant Job's reaction to the affliction, then it is argued that the rites of garment tearing, head shaving, the act of falling to the ground and prostrating in worship (in light of Job's subsequent response) has made plain Job's inner feeling of reverence for YHWH. Clines, *Job 1-20*, 35; "הוה," *HALOT*, 295.

¹⁵¹ In the first part of the verbal response, Job identifies himself with the realm of the dead (עָרָם or "there" is a euphemism for Sheol), which is typical of a mourning ritual; also Clines, *Job 1-20*, 36; concerning the ambiguity of the word עָרָם, Rowley (*Job*, 34) thinks that the first colon is best translated as "Naked I came into life and naked I will die.;" given the ensuing poetic utterance by Job, Nasuti makes a helpful comment: "Psalms have a unique power . . . one rooted in their special ability to have a decisive effect on those who use them." Harry P Nasuti, "The Sacramental Function of the Psalms in Contemporary Scholarship and Liturgical Practice," in *Psalms and Practice: Worship, Virtue and Authority* (ed. Stephen Breck Reid; Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2001), 78.

“unmerited loan” from YHWH.¹⁵² Since he is in this sense no worse off than before, Job blesses the name of YHWH. Thus, the verdict (1:22) commensurate with Job’s response effectively reverses the claim of the satan (1:11) and is a resounding endorsement of Job’s blameless and upright character (1:1, 8).

The Third Episode (2:1-10): Job Mourns for Himself

The event in this episode, like the previous, consists of two scenes. The first (2:1-7a) is largely a repetition of the previous episode (1:6-12) albeit a more intense version.¹⁵³ In the earlier heavenly scene, the satan proposes that YHWH touches (עגג) all of Job’s possessions, whereas now the satan challenges YHWH to touch (עגג) “his bone and his flesh” (2:4). Hence the second scene (2:7b), depicting the affliction of Job, is also an intensification of its counterpart (1:13-19). Unlike the previous indirect assault against Job, the satan now strikes Job with terrible sores that cover his entire body.¹⁵⁴

Job again enacts a ritual following the affliction. He mourns as a person stricken with a skin disease (2:8).

וַיִּקַּח-לוֹ חֶרֶשׁ לְהִתְגַּדֵּד בּוֹ וְהוּא יָשָׁב בְּתוֹךְ-הָאָפֶר

And he took to himself a potsherd to scarp himself as he sat amongst the ashes

¹⁵² According to Kugel, the difference between ternary and binary lines is not crucial and ternary lines can be read as binary (though line may become “lopsided”). The formula “A and what’s more B” is still maintained, that is the final colon is still emphatic. James L Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 1.

¹⁵³ From the perspective of narrative criticism, the similarity in content and language between the first and second heavenly scene emphasizes the difference. Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 109; concerning repetition as a narrative device, see Whybray, *Job*, 33.; for discussion of biblical intensification, see Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 62-84.

¹⁵⁴ The MT employs the Hebrew verb *הכנ* to describe the satan’s action of afflicting Job (2:7b) in the second round and *עגג* to describe YHWH action (1:19a) in the first, thus distinguishing between the originators of the afflictions.

Job's mourning ritual, of which laceration is a feature, communicates sorrow, shame, and personal diminishment. The ritual act is also figurative of Job's fall from grace. When Job was at the prime of his life, people in the city square regarded him with high respect and revered him for his morality and wisdom (29:1-25). Now, reduced to a diseased body, rejected and mocked by society (30:1-15), and shunned by his own family and acquaintances (19:13-19), he inhabits a place outside the city amongst the ashes. Not only does Job's ritual behaviour portray him as socially dead, its affective performance creates in him feelings associated with death. As a vehicle of thought and meaning, Job's symbolic ritual act coupled with his non-petitionary response (2:10) communicates a resounding testimony of his unwavering piety.

Job's wife speaks up with unrestrained indignation at the apparent injustice.¹⁵⁵ If the affliction is what Job gets in return for his integrity then he should show his displeasure by forgoing his reverence for the divine and to "curse God and die" (2:9).¹⁵⁶ The proposal has a similar disorienting effect on Job in light of his impeccable credentials, which even his wife acknowledges. Yet, Job remains unperturbed (2:10b).

גַּם אֶת־הַטּוֹב נִקְבֵּל מֵאֵת הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֶת־הַרָע לֹא נִקְבֵּל

Shall we receive only the good from God, and not the evil?

¹⁵⁵ In the LXX, Job's wife premises her suggestion that Job should speak up against God with an account of the trauma of the loss of her children and the troubles that Job's affliction will bring to her. However, this account is absent in MT, which renders the 1cpl "we" in Job's response ambiguous.

¹⁵⁶ Job's wife's disillusioned outpouring and Job's rebuke foreshadow Job's poetic outburst and debate with his friends; "Like the satan, she did not believe in piety for its own sake." Whybray, *Job*, 34. ךרב (2:9) is ambiguous. It could mean curse or bless. Interpretations, Van Wolde argues, must allow both translations to do justice to the ambiguity. Van Wolde, *Mr and Mrs Job*, 24.

This new response from Job is compatible with his previous response (2:10b α //1:21b α and 2:10b β //1:21b β). In both, Job respects God as the source of all happenings and accepts the events that befall him. Where it differs is in the omission of praise for God in this response, which may lend itself to an argument for a growing scepticism within Job concerning God's justice in light of his miserable condition.¹⁵⁷ The evidence for such a development at this stage of the narrative remains circumstantial. Job has demonstrated, implicitly through his ritual and explicitly through his commentary-response, his willingness to accept his fate as a pious sufferer. The verdict that "*in all this* Job did not sin with his lips" (2:10c) is therefore a clear re-endorsement of Job's impeccable piety.¹⁵⁸

The Fourth Episode (2:11-42:7): Job's Three Friends Mourns for Him

The critical role of ritual, as the above exegeses show, cannot be over-emphasized; its absence from the narrative might not be missed but Job's verbal response and the verdict that ensues would be less convincing (unintelligible in the case of the fourth episode, especially Job's response in chapter 3 and 42:6).

Episode four, depicting the fateful visitation of Job's three friends, maintains chronological and literary ties with episode three when it begins with "And the three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him" (2:11) and they arranged

¹⁵⁷ In Kahn and Solomon's view, reality is beginning to dawn upon Job: "His body is already speaking for him; the damaged and broken skin represents the onset of Job's breakdown." Kahn and Solomon, *Job's Illness*, 35.; the difference between Job's response in this episode support the arguments of Weiss (in Hoffman, "Prologue and Speech," 163) and Bar-Efrat ("*Narrative Art in the Bible*," 13) with regard to the-164) development in Job's faith. See pages 12-13 for details.

¹⁵⁸ Italic added.

to journey together to Uz.¹⁵⁹ Additionally, the phrase “all this evil” (כָּל־הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת) links this current episode back to the previous, which refers to Job’s response of 2:10b (וְאֶת־הָרָע לֹא נִקְבַּל) which in turn points to the “evil sores” (שָׁחִין רָע) of 2:7.¹⁶⁰ Thus, episode three forms an indispensable part of the interpretation of episode four.

The friends come to Job to console (דוּג) and to comfort (סָחַג) him (they will later come to him again so that he may appease God on their behalf). They seek also to identify with his suffering and to help him to reintegrate back into society when mourning ceases at an appropriate time. Their presence, however, exacerbates Job’s misery and a quarrelsome Job emerges in the poetic dialogue beginning with his systematic imprecation against himself (3:1-16).¹⁶¹

The trouble starts with the friends’ arrival (2:12a), specifically when “they lifted their eyes from afar and they did not recognize him” (וַיִּשְׂאוּ אֶת־עֵינֵיהֶם מִרְחֹק וְלֹא הִכִּירוּהוּ). The simple verse belies an ambiguity that requires further reflection. A similar verse is found in Gen 22:4. After a three days’ journey, “Abraham lifted his eyes and he saw the place from afar” (וַיִּשְׂא אַבְרָהָם אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא אֶת־הַמָּקוֹם מִרְחֹק). The Hebrew verb הָאָר unambiguously shows that Abraham visually and mentally identifies (“see”) the mountain on which he is to make a sacrificial offering. In contrast, 2:12a, which employs the Hebrew verb רָכַג (“recognize”) rather than הָאָר (“see”), is less

¹⁵⁹ Habel translates 2:11 as “When Job’s three friends . . .”; the friends would have speculated on the nature of Job’s ill fortune and formulated their appropriate response.

¹⁶⁰ רָעָה (2:11) may also be defined as “misfortune” (so Clines, *Job 1-20*, 3; Hartley, *Job*, 85); “רָעָה,” *HALOT*, 1262.

¹⁶¹ First, he curses the day of his birth (3:1-10). Next, he wishes that he had been stillborn (3:11-19). In desperation, he finally longs for life to be withdrawn from his miserable self (3:20-26); Job’s resistance to this friends’ comforting gesture mirrors Jacob’s rejection of his son’s effort (Gen 37:34-35). Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 86-87; in the poetry, the friends becomes tempters as they “played a foil to Job’s pious and silent refusal to question God.” Zuckerman, *Job the Silent*, 47.

straightforward. The sense that Job is too far away and therefore not recognizable is improbable since it would be an irrelevant remark. It is possible that the sores disfigured Job to such extent as to render him unrecognizable but the explanation is still problematic. It makes little sense for the friends to weep (2:12b) for someone they do not recognize (רכנו) as Job.¹⁶² Instead, the Hebrew hifil verb רכנו (“recognize”) goes beyond visual recognition to acknowledging or regarding a person with approval or disapproval.¹⁶³ Jer 24:5 conveys this sense when YHWH says, “Like these good figs, thus I will regard (רכנו) the exile of Judah which I sent from this place to the land of the Chaldean.”¹⁶⁴ Within the book of Job, this same sense is conveyed in 34:19 when Elihu claims that God does not “regard (רכנו) the noble more than the poor.” Hence, when the friends lift their eyes and spot a figure from afar (on the ash-heap) it does not mean that they fail to recognize the person as Job but that they do not acknowledge or regard him as they used to do in view of “all this evil” that has come upon him. Now, like the people in the city (30:1-15), they look on him with contempt and through their symbolic ritual action regard him as dead.

The ritual act (2:12b-13) which the three friends perform is momentarily different from Job’s. Job, through his rituals, establishes his piety before YHWH, whereas the friends in their ritual reject Job’s claim to piety and integrity. The friends’ ritual is less a spontaneous act than a thoughtfully constructed one reflecting their

¹⁶² For various interpretations concerning 2:12a, see Clines, *Job 1-20*, 60.

¹⁶³ Clines supports this interpretation. The hifil רכנו means to recognize a person or thing known, face (as in Job 2:12) to show partiality (as in Dtr 1:17, 16:19, Pr 24:23). Clines notes that for Job 2:12 the subject of the verb is Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar and the object being Job. “רכנו,” *DCH*, V:692-694; note how 2:13 later uses האר, “. . . no one spoke a word to him because they saw (האר) that his suffering was very great” which denotes a visual act. This suggests a different usage of the verb רכנו (“recognize”), such as the one adopted here.

¹⁶⁴ “רכנו,” *HALOT*, 699.

revised opinion of Job. It is characterized by formality, order, and sequence and is intentionally more elaborate in terms of features (five in one and a half verses) compared to the previous rituals in Job. The number of times the third common plural pronoun “they” is used to identify the friends as performers, though such Hebrew syntax is common (2 Sam 12:15, 20), accentuates their denunciative disposition towards Job in accordance with their doctrine of divine retribution. Moreover, the *vav conversive* that introduces the ritual action makes explicit link with 2:12a (i.e. their refusal to “recognize” Job). Since the friends already harbour contempt against Job before the ritual act, the act seems to flow from, rather than creating the emotion. The reverse appears to be happening in Job; the ritual the friends enact creates in him a corresponding mournful emotion.

וַיִּשְׂאוּ קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכוּ וַיִּקְרְעוּ אִישׁ מֵעִלּוֹ וַיִּזְרְקוּ עָפָר עַל־רֹאשֵׁיהֶם הַשָּׁמַיְמָה
וַיֵּשְׁבוּ אִתּוֹ לְאָרֶץ שְׁבַעַת יָמִים וְשִׁבְעַת לַיְלוֹת וְאִי־דָבַר אֵלָיו דְּבַר כִּי רָאוּ כִּי־גָדֹל הַפָּאֵב מֵאֲדָר

And they lifted their voice and they wept and each tore their robes and they tossed dust over their head heavenward and they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven night and no one spoke a word to him for they saw that his suffering was very great.

The ritual act is a statement-making act and a “social drama.” Through the medium of ritual, the friends publicize what they perceive to be a breach of the religious worldview by Job. Job’s chaos and suffering, they reckon, are the consequences of sin he has committed (4:1-5:27). Job is familiar with this doctrine, which essentially underpins his own reparative ritual act on his children’s behalf (1:5b).

Wailing is a normal mourning practice. It is obligatory (2 Sam 3:31-32) and professional wailers are sometimes employed to help mourners to weep (Jer 9:17).¹⁶⁵ The Hebrew verbs ללי and יהג are often used to portray deep grieving/wailing and lamenting in the context of death (actual or impending).¹⁶⁶ Although, these verbs are not used in 2:12b, the combined act of lifting the voice and weeping, like in 2 Sam 3:31, essentially amounts to the same practice.¹⁶⁷ The singular voice that they raise (וַיִּשְׂאוּ קוֹלָם) has the effect of emphasizing its statement-making or “telling” function.¹⁶⁸ It marks what the friends deem as an abrogation of Job’s social and ethical status as community patriarch and of his harmonious relationship with God (30:1-15; 22:1-30).

Tearing of garment and tossing of dust on/upon/over the head are features of mortuary rituals. The awkward construction of the phrase וַיִּזְרְקוּ עָפָר עַל־רֵאשֵׁיהֶם הַשָּׁמַיְמָה (“and they tossed dust over their heads heavenward”) does not distract from the fact it refers to the same custom of putting dust on the head. Its performance, in conjunction with the lifting of the voice, weeping, tearing of garment and sitting on the ground (2:12b-13) has as its paradigm the ritual of mourning for the dead.¹⁶⁹ The ritual has Job as its object of mourning; collectively, the mourning rites signify Job as ‘dead.’ Eliphaz affirms this symbolism behind the complex of rites when he rhetorically argues that the evildoers and unrighteous will always perish by the breath of God (4:7-9). Although a period of seven days (and up to thirty for more prominent figures) is typically

¹⁶⁵ For further information concerning biblical representation of professional mourners, see Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 49-51.

¹⁶⁶ “ללי,” *HALOT*, 413; “יהג” *HALOT*, 675.

¹⁶⁷ The verb יהג (to wail, lament) is used synonymously with הכב (to weep). “הכב,” *DCH*, V:629-630.

¹⁶⁸ This biblical syntax is common (e.g. Ps 28:1; Is 58:1; Judg 21:1) and has the effect of lending force to the utterance.

¹⁶⁹ For a summary of the various interpretations of the phrase, especially those that seem highly improbable, see Clines, *Job 1-20*, 62-63.

represented in biblical representations of mourning the dead, the phrase “seven days and seven nights” is unique. Its occurrence in Job serves as a timely lead-up to the poetic dialogue. Contrary to the expectation that Job would cease to mourn and to identify with the dead at the end of the prescribed period, Job bursts out with a string of death curses against himself (3:1-26). While readers may treat Job’s sudden outburst as odd since it is incompatible with his earlier responses (1:5b, 1:21, 2:10a), it is hardly the case from Job’s perspective. Standing within the same cultural and moral horizon as the friends, Job understands the implication of the ritual action.¹⁷⁰ The ritual act, of which Job is a passive participant, usurps his previous piety and replaces it with an emotion that aggravates his mental and physical torment (already felt as Job sits on the ash heap) to the point of invoking death curses on himself.

The speeches of Job and he three friends, Elihu, and YHWH make up the response section in this final episode.¹⁷¹ Job’s systematic imprecation against himself (3:1-26) forms his initial and immediate response to the friends’ ritual. The friends’ responses appear in the intervening dialogue before Job’s final response (42:6) to YHWH’s speech (38:1-40:2, 40:6-41:34). The speeches make explicit the theological basis behind the ritual of 2:12b-13. Eliphaz (4:7-11) and Bildad’s (8:3-4) rhetoric not only affirms the existence of a system of retributive justice but argue also for its effective rule. It forms their justification for their ritual act of marking Job as a transgressor. Without naming

¹⁷⁰ This idea is self-evident but Muenchow’s argument (footnote 32) concerning the relevance of culture for interpreting 42:6 may be raised as support for this observation.

¹⁷¹ Discussion will focus primarily on the responses of Job and his friends since they are the key participants of the ritual of 2:11-13. The breakdown of responses are: Job, 3:1-26, 6:1-7:21, 9:1-10:22, 12:1-14:22, 16:1-17:16, 19:1-29, 21:1-34, 23:1-24:25, 26:1-31:40, 40:1-5, 42:1-6; Friends, 4:1-5:27, 8:1-22, 11:1-20, 15:1-35, 18:1-21, 20:1-29, 22:1-30, 25:1-6; Elihu, 32:1-37:24; YHWH, 38:1-40:2, 40:6-41:34; Clines considers 24:18-24 as Zophar’s third speech rather than Job’s and follows 27:17. David J. A. Clines, *Job 21-37* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2006), 572.

the exact nature of Job's crime, Zophar claims that God has overlooked part of his sin (11:6b). Eliphaz, in contrast, becomes more specific. He accuses Job of taking pledges from his brothers, stripping the naked of their clothes, denying water to the weary, withholding bread from the hungry, sending widows away empty-handed, and crushing the arms of the orphans (22:6-9). "Therefore" (עַל־כֵּן), Eliphaz concludes, God has ensnared and overwhelmed Job with sudden terror (22:10).

Job, on the other hand, vehemently and conscientiously responds with claims of innocent suffering (27:6):

בְּצַדִּיקוֹתַי הִחַזַּקְתִּי וְלֹא אֶרְפֶּה לְאִי־יְהַרְרֵךְ לְרַבִּי מִיָּמַי

I hold fast my righteousness and I will not let it go, and my heart will not reproach me for any of my days.

He argues that his suffering is the result of God's injustice (21:1-34, 24:1-17) and maltreatment of him (30:18-21). Yet, surprisingly, Job exhibits a change of heart following YHWH's theophany (38:1-40:2, 40:6-41:34). His final response (42:6) is frequently interpreted as contrition for the charges he brings against YHWH.¹⁷² Common translations of the MT reflect this understanding:

עַל־כֵּן אֶמְאָס וְנִחַמְתִּי עַל־עֵפֶר וְנֹאֶפֶר

Therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes¹⁷³

Therefore I retract and repent of dust and ashes¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² For summary of interpretation and Curtis's unconventional view concerning 42:6, see page 15; also see Lynne Newell, "Job : Repentant or Rebellious.," *Westminster Theological Journal* 46 (1984): 298-316; Kuyper, "Repentance of Job"; Muenchow, "Dust and Dirt"; Timmer, "God's Speeches, Job's Responses," 298-301; Morrow, "Consolation." 211-225.

¹⁷³ NRSV, NIV.

Therefore I abase myself and recant in dust and ashes¹⁷⁵

Therefore I recant and repent in dust and ashes¹⁷⁶

Accordingly, what Job retracts/recants/rejects (מִסָּד) or despises himself of doing and from which he repents (נִתְנַחֵם) in dust and ashes, which symbolizes his worthlessness, is his words of indictment against YHWH.¹⁷⁷

Admittedly, there is a sense of remorse concerning his claim that YHWH is aloof from the affairs of the world. However, that is conveyed in 42:2-5 but not in 42:6. It is here argued that Job, with a sense of relief from having heard and seen YHWH (42:2-5), announces in 42:6 his readiness to forgo the mourning posture imposed on him through the ritual of 2:12b-13, which “dust and ashes” symbolizes.¹⁷⁸ Given this reading, 42:6 may initially be translated as:

Therefore I will repudiate and will be comforted of dust and ashes.

¹⁷⁴ Job’s final confession, Habel argues, is made “tongue in cheek.” Habel, *Job*, 575, 577.

¹⁷⁵ Hartley, *Job*, 535.

¹⁷⁶ Pope, *Job*, 347.

¹⁷⁷ Rowley, like the NRSV, translates מִסָּד as “despise myself.” He argues (so also Whybray, *Job*, 171) that Job’s repentance is not of any sin but of what he said in the course of his debate with his friends (for which he despises himself). Rowley, *Job*, 266; see Gen 18:27 for the use of “dust and ashes” by Abraham to denote his worthlessness; from the perspective of the ancient conception of ‘shame and honour,’ “dust and ashes” denotes Job’s shame. It has roughly same meaning as “worthlessness.” Muenchow, “Dust and Dirt,” 609.

¹⁷⁸ This translation adopted here resembles Dale’s: “Therefore I repudiate and repent/forswear dust and ashes.” He correctly argues against a reflexive translation of מִסָּד (“repudiate”) and further argues that מִסָּד and נִתְנַחֵם (“repent/forswear”) shares the same object “dust and ashes.” Dale, “Job 42:6,” 24.; commenting on 42:5b, Pope writes: “Job is now convinced of what he had doubted, viz., God’s providential care,” Pope, *Job*, 348; some biblical texts attest the danger of seeing God (e.g. Ex 3:6, 33:20, Deut 4:15) while others indicate differently (e.g. Ex 24:9, Ps 11:7; Gen 16:13); according to Hendel, “The belief that one cannot see God and live is best understood as a motif of Israelite folklore, rooted in popular conceptions concerning purity and danger. That which is holy is also dangerous, and that which is most holy is most dangerous. Ronald S Hendel, “Aniconism and Athropomorphism in Ancient Israel,” in *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. K. van der Toorn; Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 1997), 221.

The second Hebrew clause/verb וַיִּנְחַמְתִּי from the root נחם and the precise meaning of its object, “dust and ashes” (which it shares with the first verb repudiate or מָאַס), are ambiguous. It is here argued that וַיִּנְחַמְתִּי employs a niph'al imperfect form of the root נחם and translates as “and I will be comforted.” Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the niph'al form of נחם (48 times), means either to turn away from a previous action or to be sorrowful/sorry or to be comforted, the latter of which is adopted here.¹⁷⁹ The piel form, used in 2:11, 7:13, 16:2; 21:34, 29:25, 42:11 to denote the act of comforting or bringing relief to someone in times of distress, would make no sense in 42:6. Concerning “dust and ashes,” the only other place in Job where the idiom is used is in 30:16. In that verse, Job claims that God has cast him into the mire and for that, he has become like “dust and ashes.” Humiliated and having his honour thrown to the ground, Job is regarded as dead.¹⁸⁰ It explains his bitter complaint four verses later, “I know you will deliver me to death and to the house of meeting for all the living” (30:23).¹⁸¹ Thus, the “dust and ashes” of which Job will repudiate (מָאַס) and will be comforted (וַיִּנְחַמְתִּי), refers to his mournful disposition (and its association with death) in connection with 2:12b-13 and

¹⁷⁹ 48 times in 46 verses in the Hebrew Bible: Gen 6:6, 7, 24:67, 38:12, Ex 13:17, 32:12, 14, Judg 2:18, 21:6, 15, 1 Sam 15:11, 29 (2x), 25, 2 Sam 13:39, 24:16, Isa 1:24, 49:13, 51:3 (2x), 52:9, 57:6, Jer 4:28, 8:6, 15:6, 18:8, 10, 20:16, 26:3, 13, 19, 31:13, 15, 19, 42:10, Eze 14:22, 24:14, 31:16, 32:31, Joel 2:13, 14, Amos 7:3, 6, Jonah 3:9, 10, 4:2, Zech 1:17, 8:14.

¹⁸⁰ Clines, *Job 21-37*, 1007; Hartley, *Job*, 403.

¹⁸¹ The literal translation of “deliver” (שׁוּב hiph) “cause him to return (to death)” alludes to Job’s desire to return to his mother’s womb (3:1-10). Clines, *Job 21-37*, 1008.

2:8.¹⁸² A recapitulation of several factors will confirm that this interpretation of 42:6 is plausible.

Foremost amongst these is the friends' statement-making ritual action (2:12b-13) that marks Job's violation of the principle governing his amicable relationship with YHWH. On the flipside of this is Job's initial and immediate response to the ritual and his protestation in the dialogue as an innocent sufferer. Besides the direct afflictions he receives, Job also suffers the loss of his status as a highly distinguished and esteemed member of the community. At his prime, both young and old acknowledged him with respect, and officials and princes remained silent in his presence (29:7-11). Now, in the wake of the tragedy, he becomes an object of disgrace and scorn (30:1-15).

Honour and shame were key aspects of life in the Mediterranean basin. Honour is not a personal virtue but is a social phenomenon. It is based on a claim to precedence and is closely connected with power and authority. Honour is won when this claim to precedence is accepted and approved by others and it persists as long as the claim continues to be acknowledged. Conversely, shame is the penalty one pays when the claim to precedence is questioned and rebuffed. Shame like honour is more than a

¹⁸² The expression "dust and ashes," according to Newsom (*NIB*, 628-629), consists of "two related yet metaphorical meanings," which may refer to human mortality viz-a-viz Gen 18:27 and Sir 10:9 and/or humiliation or degradation viz-a-viz Job 30:19 and Sir 40:3. She does not think it has anything to do with the ash heap on which Job sits (2:8) or to the dust as symbol of mourning (2:12), though this is not impossible. The contention here is that the expression does refer to 2:8 and 2:12b-13, but not in the sense of splitting up the expression into "dust" and "ashes." When Job repudiates the "dust and ashes," he does not reject the dust of 2:12b-13 but the complex of the ritual act, and ultimately for the motivation behind its enactment – that Job's suffering is the result of YHWH's wrath. Considering the ritual act is done in response to Job's situation on the ash heap, "dust and ashes" does refer to 2:8 as well. However, it does not mean that Job wants to repudiate his action on the ash heap, which would run contrary to his earlier response (2:9-10). What Job repudiates is the accusation that his circumstance is the direct result of God's punishment; see also the above discussion on the friends' ritual and response; Dale (*The Translation of Job 42:6*, 369-371) argues for "dust and ashes" as the object for both the verb includes; similarly Van Wolde. She argues from 42:3 where האלפנ ("things too wonderful") is the common object of העד ("knowledge") and בן ("understand"). Ellen J Van Wolde, "Job 42:1-6: The Reversal of Job," in *The Book of Job* (ed. W.A.M Beuken; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994), 249-250.

private matter; it arises out of public rejection.¹⁸³ Job's primary desire is to bring this grievance and his direct suffering before YHWH (23:1-5, 13:3). He does not seek physical healing or compensation; he aims only to defend his honour and integrity (6:10; 13:3; 31:1-40). YHWH, however, does not respond specifically to Job's grievances; ironically, the speech is aimed at defending the divine honour that Job has called into question. Nevertheless, YHWH's assurance of divine omnipotence and cosmic order gives Job cause, amidst his own personal chaos, to modify his stance towards YHWH. Having heard and seen YHWH (לְשִׁמְעָא זֶן שְׁמַעְתִּיךָ וְנִעַתָה עֵינַי רְאִתִּיךָ) and assured of divine omnipotence, Job is relieved. He is ready therefore to repudiate his mourning disposition (imposed on him by the friends' mourning ritual) and to be comforted of it (42:5-6), which, in essence, is to revert to his God-fearing self (1:5c, 1:21, 2:10a).

As with the previous occasions, a verdict follows Job's response; where it differs is in the identity of the adjudicator. In this instance, the author retreats into the background and hands over the role to YHWH. In this manner, YHWH not only gives the verdict (42:7) greater authority but also brings to a closure what YHWH initiated through the heavenly council (1:12, 2:6).

תָּרָה אַפִּי בָךְ וּבְשֵׁנֵי רֵעֶיךָ כִּי לֹא דִבַּרְתֶּם אֵלַי נְכוֹנָה כְּעַבְדִּי אִיּוֹב

My anger burned against you and your two friends for you have not spoken
rightly about me like my servant Job.

¹⁸³ Although this understanding of honour and shame is compiled by twentieth-century anthropologists, Muenchow argues for its relevance based on ample support for it in the Hebrew Bible. Muenchow, "Dust and Dirt," 600-601.

There is a general agreement concerning the nature of the friends' offence and conversely, the rightness of Job' speech.¹⁸⁴ Job's friends mistakenly indict Job in strict retributive terms when they do not have full knowledge of the ways of YHWH (and of the two heavenly conspiracies).¹⁸⁵ Job, on the other hand, attempts to speak honestly about the seeming injustice. Following Job's response in 42:6, YHWH re-establishes Job as "servant," employing the term twice more (42:7-8) than in the prologue (1:8, 2:3).

The Closing Narrative (42:8-17): The Movement from Mourning to Rejoicing in the Epilogue

The book of Job climaxes with a series of rejoicing activities that contrast the torrent of afflictions against Job in the prologue. Job, at the apogee of his mourning in chapter 3, yearns for "rest" amongst dead kings and their advisers and princes (3:13-14) and in anguish, laments the absence of YHWH (13:24). Now that mourning has ceased, joy returns as Job once again enjoys the company of family members and acquaintances, and the symbols of YHWH's blessing (42: 11-17).

Jubilation begins when "YHWH lifted the face of Job" (וַיִּשָּׂא יְהוָה אֶת-פְּנֵי אִיּוֹב) thus acknowledging him with approval (as opposed to 2:12a when the friends "lifted their eyes from afar and they did not recognize him") as he resumes his role as a patriarch

¹⁸⁴ Ehrlich, "The Book of Job as a Book of Morality," 32-36; Pope, *Job*, 350; Rowley, *Job*, 267; Whybray, *Job*, 172; Zuckerman, *Job the Silent*, 25; the divine evaluation of the rightness of Job's speech is complicated when Job at times agrees with the theology of his friends. Terence E. Fretheim, "God in the Book of Job," *CurTM* 26 (1999): 86.

¹⁸⁵ In 13:7-12, Job warns his friends of the consequences when God uncovers their falsehood and deceit.

offering sacrifices for his friends (42:8-9).¹⁸⁶ With a reversal of fortune comes a change of heart as family members and acquaintances flock back to Job (19:13-19, 42:11a α). When in the past they had shunned him as the rest of society had done (30:5-17), now they come to share a meal with him in his house (42:11a β). They come to pick up where Job's three friends have left off in their duty to comfort Job (42:11c), when they were overtaken by their zeal to defend their doctrine (21:34). All the drinking and eating had ceased following the death of Job's children (1:4, 2:13); now the feasting and rejoicing return as they join him in marking the end of his mourning. They bring with them money and a gold ring (42:11d) as further symbols of the happy occasion. YHWH caps off the celebration with a two-fold restoration of Job's original wealth (42:10-17) and completes the movement from mourning to joy by blessing Job with new children as he resumes sexual relations with his wife (42:13).¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ If "hanging the head" is a visible manifestation of shame, the lifting of Job's face is therefore a restoration of his honour. Muenchow, "Dust and Dirt," 602.

¹⁸⁷ No mention is made of the restoration of Job's health although readers have presumed that that be the case. Inference may be drawn by contrasting the wife's past (19:17) and present attitude towards Job or the author may have felt it necessary to omit the information for fear that its mention might trivialise (Job's) suffering.

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