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'I know you can do all things'[1] (Job 42:2): A literary and theological analysis of Job's testimony about Yahweh's sovereignty

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The article presents a literary and theological analysis of Job 42:2 as a fitting resolution of the conflicting engagement between Yahweh and Job, which enables both parties to preserve their integrity. The article examines Israel's testimony about Yahweh's sovereignty as a background, it analyses Job's testimony in 42:2 and then demonstrates that this passage probes more deeply into the theology of creation – the inescapable purpose of what God does. The article shows that Job's testimony about the sovereignty of Yahweh indicates an unusual personality and potent force that is manifested in the events of Job's life as an agent whose sovereignty is remarkably unlimited. The substance of Job's testimony this article proposes, produces a dynamic figure that has an overwhelming task at the centre stage of its subject's well-being. This role, moreover, is the engine that drives Israel's testimony; the splendour of Israel's faith and the source of Israel's life. This role is a theological datum of substance.

Introduction

The book of Job has been described as the supreme literary masterpiece in the Old Testament and one of the greatest creations of the world's literature (Owens 1983:86; Rowley 1980:141; Webster 1997a:232). It is one of the most profound and complex attempts by the ancient Israelites, through the ages, to unravel the problem of undeserved evil (Archer 1982:56–57; Botica 2004:93; Burrell 2008:15, 107ff; Penchansky 2012:35). Like most Wisdom Literature,[2] Job consists of the philosophy and teachings of God-fearing men who received respect of their fellow men because of their age, knowledge and experience (Owens 1983:84). It is one of the most celebrated of the whole Bible and one of the least known (Terrien 1962:877). In magnificence of argument and beauty of style, it is one of the greatest texts ever written in literature. The question of its authorship is surrounded by clouds of mystery,[3] as well as to the character presented, and as to the period of its writing.[4] Again, there have been almost endless discussions with regard to its ultimate purpose and value (Home 1970:87; MacKenzie 1979:51f; Owens 1983:85; Rowley 1958:162f).

In spite of almost universal appreciation for the book and the existence of commentaries written on it (Alden 1993; Balentine 2006; Clines 2011; Seow 2013), the work possesses characteristics, which remain enigmatic (Hayes 1979:353). Besides, the literary structures and the quality of the rhetoric used display the author's literary genius (Seow 2013:38; Smick 1995:722). Its artistic brilliance makes it an attractive subject for literary scholars.[5] Its thematic range invites philosophic

1.While the Massoretic text accepted 1st person common singular, *yādha`tî*, and 2nd person masculine singular *yādha`tā*, this article followed the qere (*yādha`tî, 'I know'*) of Massoretic text.

2.This refers to that body of literature which consists of four books in the Hebrew Bible as well as one in the Septuagint (LXX). Those written in Hebrew are Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and Sirach (also known as Ecclesiasticus). Wisdom of Solomon, which is addressed to Jews living in Alexandria, uses Greek to communicate with those for whom Hebrew was no longer a viable language. Three of these books are attributed to King Solomon (Proverbs in large portion, Ecclesiastes, and Wisdom of Solomon) (Crenshaw 2010:5). Cf. also Roper and Groenewald (2013:1–2) with regard to the wisdom character of the Book of Job.

3.The book is Anonymous. Elihu, Job, Moses, Solomon, Isaiah, an anonymous writer in the reign of Manasseh, Ezekiel and Ezra have all been contended for (Ellison 1980:790; Harrison 1987:15; Home 1970:77).

4.There are no historical reference points to guide one as to when the book was written, and people have suggested dates from around 2000BCE down to the second or first century BCE. But the existence of a Greek translation of Job, from the first century BCE or earlier, and a very early Job paraphrase (Targum) found in the cave at Qumran, makes a date after 300 BCE most unlikely (Kidner 1986:35). The narrative of Job can be dated at least as early as the time of the patriarchs based on the similarities of Job's manner of life with that of the patriarchs in Genesis; he lived a phenomenally long life, just like Israel's ancestors of old (42:17) (Cranford 1985:15; Seow 2013:46–47).

5.Seow (2013:38) observes that there are all sorts of literary tensions within the book. Thus, instead of performing textual surgeries to suit modern preconceptions of coherence, it is vital to give the ancient narrator the benefit of the doubt and to grapple with those dissonances and asymmetry that may well be part of how the book means.

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discussion. The greatness of Job not only rests in its sheer literary artistry[6] and existential qualities but also in its content and themes, especially its shameless probing of questions and issues basic to human experience (Hill 1995:269). Although Job has probably inspired as much popular and critical writing as any Old Testament book (House 1998:424), its probing of questions into the character of God stands out above all obvious qualities. Yahweh's reply to Job and the counter-reply of Job is highly informative. In Chapter 38, Job was confronted by Yahweh and in the remainder of the chapters (39–42) Job was humiliated by Yahweh. Yahweh highlighted Job's far-reaching confines in disparity with his boundless splendour, magnificence, supremacy, rulership, power and wisdom (Ware 2000:65).

The function of Job's final speech in the overall plan of Job's book is interpreted in widely different ways. According to Habel (1985):

> Job's speech represents a complete surrender of his will to the will of God … Reconciliation rather than capitulation is the central focus of Job's speech. Consistent with the cosmic irony, which pervades the book, Job's final confession is made 'tongue in cheek' … Job's answer is thus an ironic closure. Job's closing speech is Job's final act of defiance … In the plot of the book, Job's final words are the ultimate defiant deed of the hero. (p. 577)

Job's natural and impulsive outburst, so different from the reserve of his reply to the first speech, is an expression of unrestrained admiration: 'I know you can do all things! And that none of your plan can be frustrated' (Job 42:2). It is an appropriate resolution of the conflict between Yahweh and Job, which enables both parties to preserve their integrity (Anderson 1976:291).

The following analysis of Job 42:2 will show that Job's testimony about the sovereignty of Yahweh indicates an unusual personality and potent force that is manifested in the events of Job's life as an agent whose sovereignty is remarkably unlimited. The substance of Job's testimony this article proposes, produces a dynamic figure that has an overwhelming task at the centre stage of its subject's well-being. This role, moreover, is the engine that drives Israel's testimony; the splendour of Israel's faith and the source of Israel's life. This role is a theological datum of substance. The article will examine Israel's testimony about Yahweh's sovereignty as a background, it will analyse Job's testimony in 42:2 and will demonstrate that this passage probes more deeply into the theology of creation – the inescapable purpose of what Yahweh does.

Yahweh's sovereignty in Israel's testimony

One of the subjects that creates disagreement among Christian communities today is probably the topic of Yahweh's sovereignty. Hasker (2000:195) defines Yahweh's sovereignty and omniscience from a pure traditional point of view. When one says that Yahweh is sovereign or omnipotent he affirms:

> God's power to do anything that is neither logically incoherent nor inconsistent with God's moral perfection. A singular exercise of his divine omnipotence is found in the divine creation of the universe *ex-nihilo*, out of nothing. Omnipotence also entails the ability to perform miracles, actions that lie beyond the natural potentialities of created being. Omniscience similarly, means that God knows everything that is capable of being known. (p.195)

This article will examine Israel's speech about Yahweh's sovereignty from the essential dimension of Israel's life of faith, which provides an outstanding contribution to the theology of God and man in the book of Job. The largest rubric under which one can consider Israel's speech about Yahweh's sovereignty is that of testimony. Israel speaks about God; therefore in the formulation of their credo the introduction to the formula is 'you shall make this response' (Dt 26:5), 'then you shall say' (Dt 6:21), 'and Joshua said' (Jos 24:1) (Von Rad 1966:1–8). From the dimension of ancient Israel's life of faith, ancient Israel's speech about Yahweh bears witness to his ability to conceive and establish, rule and direct in manners that affirm universal sovereignty and at the same time guarantee a consistent and logical regulation of events and life in the universe. The most sweeping doxologies are seen in the statement of Yahweh's incomparable power – that is the capacity to assert sovereignty: 'Indeed who is like Yahweh … there is none like Yahweh' (Brueggemann 1997:268). Consequently, the essential and basic assertion of Israel's confessional testimony, according to Brueggemann (1994:95), is that, 'Yahweh is an active agent who is the subject of an active verb, and so the testimony is that Yahweh, the God of Israel, has acted in decisive and transformative ways'.

Israel's existence itself is rooted in Yahweh's inescapable original commitment to Israel. According to its own unsolicited testimony, there was a time when Israel did not exist. Israel came to existence because of the decisive, initiatory action of Yahweh. This inexplicable irreversible commitment of Yahweh is rendered in two distinct narratives: the story of the ancestors (Gn 12–36) and the exodus Sinai narrative revolving around Moses (Ex 1–24) (Zuck 1991:26–34). Thus, in Israel, 'it was indisputable that God is almighty, that he is perfectly just and that no human is wholly innocent in his sight. These assumptions were also fundamental to the theology of Job and his friends' (Smick 1995:722). As noted, the faith of Israel is highly inquisitive, incisive, questioning, demanding and contrasting. Israel raises questions in its investigation and double-checking that are not hypothetical or abstract in nature. They are essentially questions of real feasible nature, emanating from practical experiences of life. Questions of such nature conform to Yahweh's character as witnessed in Israel's testimony. Israel's confessional testimony about Yahweh describes a God, whose sovereign majesty has the potential to provide a sustainable life in the world by means of convincing and revolutionary involvements by generous and compassionate attendance to

6.The book of Job, like some other ancient compositions has a sandwich literary structure: it is a combination of succinct prose narrative and a elaborate poetic dialogues approximating drama (Van Selms 1985:4). It contains a variety of literary genres, including dialogues (4–27), soliloquy (3), discourse (29–41), and a narrative (1–2), and a hymn (28) mixed in so sophisticated and skillful manner (Albertson 1983:213f; Alonso Schökel 1977:45f; Crenshaw 2010:97; Hill & Walton 1991:329; Seow 2013:47–61).

the needs of his people. Contrarily, Israel's realty of life indicates no delivery of such sustainable life, not even the generous and compassionate interventions. As a consequence, the lofty assertions of the core aspects of the confessional testimony suggest and necessitate the conflicting questions that make an important aspect of Israel's life of faith (Brueggemann 1997:318).

Ancient Israel did not dissipate energy in paralysing analysis of the fact that, regardless of Yahweh's power, greatness and pledges to be available to Israel as a faith community, life could be overwhelmingly hard and inequitable. Israel in her faith could accept and/or welcome both the certainty of a relationship with Yahweh and the reality of unbearable and awful conditions simultaneously (Kessler 2013:411; Miller 1994:58–62).[7] To Israel, it is senseless to deny the experience of lived realities in order to satisfy Yahweh and before a cynical and unconvinced society.[8] The readiness to make a case and engage Yahweh in genuine sense reflects an awareness of the divine-human relationship that is made up of two covenant partners who are believed to be devoted to each other. In this regard, 'Israel engages YHWH when the covenant is in disarray and is not functioning well, when the parties are experiencing some alienation' (Brueggemann 2002:147). For Israel, instead of announcing that all is well when it is apparently not, cries out to Yahweh in search of liberation and justice (Kessler 2013:411–12).[9]

The problem or question of undeserved suffering presents an enormous challenge for Wisdom Theology. 'If Yahweh is just and rewards the wise and righteous, how then does one understand the suffering of the innocent?' (Kessler 2013:484).[10] As noted by Kessler (2013):

> Wisdom Theology takes very seriously the issues of divine justice and theodicy. It recognises that evil is real, evildoers get away with it, and divine justice seems nowhere to be found (Ps. 73; Ec.). The reality of evil in the world and the apparent failure of divine justice pose a great threat to those who would seek to live in faithfulness to Yahweh. It can cause them to be angry and bitter and even abandon their own lives of faithfulness (Ps 37:8, 27). While calling of the faithful to wait upon Yahweh and persevere in doing good, knowing that ultimately evil will be judged and their faithfulness will be rewarded (cf. Ps 37:5, 6, 10–13, 35–35), in the interim however, Yahweh's faithfulness attends to the faithful in heart. (Ps 37:39–40) (p. 503)

In what follows, this article will consider two basic claims that are typically remarkable in Israel's confessional testimony to Yahweh's sovereign actions. This does not rule out other confessional testimonies of Israel or simply to consider these as claims as the most viable means through which Israel bears witness to Yahweh's acts. Certainly, it does provide a platform from which one can begin his investigation. Firstly, Israel's testimony about Yahweh's sovereignty characterised Yahweh as creator. In such narrative testimony, Yahweh's sovereign purpose will be the capacity to call into existence as well as sustain life and will characterise the world as a warm, sustainable, hospitable and healthy community for livelihood (Brueggemann 1997:146). He is the God:

> … who creates the heavens and the earth and all that is, who summons, orders, sustains and governs all of reality. It can be insisted on that the generative capacity to bring to being what was not (cf. Rm 4:17) belongs intrinsically to Yahweh's character, so that where Yahweh is, that generative power is in effect. The ground for such elemental claim for Yahweh is the judgment that the name YHWH drives from the verb to be (*hāyāh*) which may be taken as a *Hiph'il* causative assertion, i.e. cause to be. (Clifford 1985:507)

One of the most superb of words for the action of Yahweh as creator is *bārā'*. He who created (*bārā'*)[11] the Heaven, he is God (Is 45:18). In addition to other significant verbs that are used beside *bārā'* in Israel's narrative testimony are: formed (*yātsar*), made (*'āśāh*) (Is 45:18), creator/producer (*qōnēh*) (Gn 14:19, 22), spoke, commanded (*'āmar*) (Ps 33:6, 9).

Secondly, in Israel there is only one God, and this God rules creation. As Kohler (1957:30) writes, 'the one fundamental statement in the Theology of the Old Testament is this: God is the ruling LORD'. This rending of Yahweh is predominant in the life and speech of Israel (Wright 1944:66). Israel's speech about Yahweh uses many metaphors to witness to the potential of Yahweh to rule and direct in ways and means that affirm supreme ability. Miller (1986:129f) has in different ways dealt with this cluster of images, in which one may include, judge, king, warrior and father, each pertaining to the use of power. These figurative speeches bear witness to a God who is compassionate, gracious and kind; slack in rage and overflowing in unwavering and reliable love. This God is capable of kind, gracious, restorative, rehabilitative, sustaining, liberating actions, with reference to ancient Israel, but not exclusively toward ancient Israel. He is a God of awesome power, who will enact that power and order life for Israel and for the world only on Yahweh's own terms (Brueggemann 1997:247–48). It is often affirmed in Israel's great doxology: 'The world is firmly established; it shall not be moved. He will judge the people with equity … for he is coming to judge the earth. He will Judge the world with righteousness and the people with his truth' (Ps 96:10, 13). Thus, Israel affirms that Yahweh's role, as judge is a source of solace and reassurance that exploitative social situations will be avenged. This content of Yahweh's role as judge becomes a ground for appeal, even from individual persons who plead their case before the judge of all the earth:

7.We see many times in the Psalms that a psalmist, in the midst of suffering, regards Yahweh not simply as a deity who rules the world in general, but as 'my God' (cf. Ps 22:10; 31:14; 140:6).

8.Cf also Roper and Groenewald (2013:3–5) who characterise Job (and Ecclesiastes) as 'Wisdom *in revolt*'.

9.According to Roper and Groenewald (2013:5) 'in the case of Job the revolt takes on the form of a personal account of the experiences of an undeserved sufferer … In both of these cases the rejection of the doctrine of retribution plays an important role … in the case of Job the author denies this doctrine any validity whilst accepting with acquiescence what cannot be understood'.

10.On the general question of divine justice and human suffering, that is the theodicy question, see Crenshaw (2003:175–191), Korpel (2005:138), Leeuwen (1993: 31–49), Roper and Groenewald (2013:3–5).

11.'As a special theological term *bārā'* is used to express clearly the incomparability of the creative work of God in contrast to all secondary products and likeness made from already existing material by man' (Bernhardt 1975:246).

> Let the assembly of the people be gathered around you … and over it take your seat on high. The Lord judges the people; judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me … God judges the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. (Ps 7:7–8, 11; cf. 9:8, 18)

It can be said, therefore, that the course of Israel's confessional testimony about Yahweh attends to the ways in which Yahweh, the God of Israel alive with steadfast love, supreme ability, and dedicatedly involved in the life of those in need, particularly the needs of his people, manifests in Israel's liturgical narratives and imaginative engagements (cf. Dt 10:12–22).

Analysis of Job's testimony about Yahweh's sovereignty (Job 42:2)

The famous confession of Job has been a source of numerous essays, monographs, sermons and opinions (Alden 1993:407). Job's testimony and or confession about Yahweh's sovereignty falls within the chapters that have been considered to be the high point of the book (Williams 1978:59). According to Webster (1997b:272), 'The poems 38–41 are a quadrat formed as in 29–31 but with a preliminary three-strophe unit. [The Lord's introduction (38:1–3), the exchange (40:1–7), and Job's conclusion (42:1–6) stand outside the strophe pattern, as does the introduction to Elihu's interjection (32:1–5)]'. The short speech though longer than Job's former speech (40:4–5), apparently constitutes a single strophe. The speech in 42:1–6 is structured in threefold: an acknowledgement of the sovereignty of Yahweh (v.2), acceptance of the fact that he (Job) had meddled into an area in which he lacks competence (v. 3), and abandonment of his case against Yahweh and determination to resume his normal life, having heard Yahweh's speeches (vv. 4–6) (Clines 2011:1211; Lambert 2015:564). Although the text does not specify what Job repented of, a theophany had to remind him of the fact that the God of the universe and Creator of all creatures is greater, grander and wiser than any mortal could ever imagine, much less challenge (Alden 1993:408; Clines 2011:1211).

Job has sought to arraign God so as to bring the matter of his human integrity before the highest possible court of appeal. Yahweh's two speeches from the whirlwind (38:1–40:5; 40:6–42:6),[12] however, did not focus on the question of Job's innocence, but on the subject of Yahweh's cosmic design and governance which Job had belittled as chaotic and cruel. Job had charged God with 'wrongful deprivation', with unlawfully taking away his wealth, family and health. He had accused God of having committed an offence and an act of unlawful conduct, 'there is no justice' (19:7) (Scholnick 1987:187; cf. also Lambert 2015:559f). Because Job has doubted that God consistently rules the world in righteousness, Yahweh queries him as to whether he has the understanding necessary to know fully the inner structure of the created order. Job is asked to make known his knowledge of the initial stages of the creation of the world as though he were the primordial man who had witnessed the laying of the earth's foundation (cf. Job 15:17).[13] From the Old Testament perspective however, wisdom was God's sole companion present at creation (Pr 8:22–312). Therefore, because Job lacks this essential knowledge, how could he expect to dispute successfully with God (Hartley 1988:495)?

Having been confronted by the amazing way God has created the world Job admits that matters are too wonderful for him to understand. He realises that the divine wisdom is beyond the ability of any human being even to grasp. Based on Yahweh's words, Job admits that Yahweh is true to justice in his governance of the cosmos. He expresses his submission to God's sovereignty by restating Yahweh's opening accusation (38:2) into a self-judgment (38:3). Job thus learns that divinely ordained justice in the world is God's governance (Scholnick 1987:529). By pointing to the magnitude of divine power, God has helped Job to move from a self-centred view of God's purpose to a wider vision of God's design for the universe (Owens 1983:136). Because Yahweh had challenged Job at the outset of each of the two divine responses to say what he knows (38:3; 42:7), Job concludes the exchange by admitting first of all that he knows that Yahweh can do anything and that no purpose (*mᵉzimmāʰ*) of him can be frustrated (42:2). The testimony and or confession is a reversal of his earlier claim in 21:27 'to know' God's thought and intention (*mᵉzimmôth*, cf. 'I know' in 9:28; 10:13; 30:23) (Seow 2013:73).

The formula 'I know' (*yādhaʿtî*, 42:2) typically heads a supplicant's answer to an oracle given in response to his prayer of lament (cf. Ps. 20:7). *yādhaʿ* generally describes the process whereby one gains knowledge through experience with objects and circumstances; to know, implies faith (Job 19:25). Clines (2011:1214) notes that the term *yādhaʿ* signifies an experience that embraces the whole of existence, a knowledge that liberates and supports. It includes the action of knowing both as commencing and as completed (Tregelles 1979:333). Job consents to the argument of Yahweh as the solution to his protest and declaration of innocence, by confessing that Yahweh 'can do all things' (42:2). The wording in verse 2 means that Job agrees with Yahweh's second speech. He is an ordinary human being, unfitted by capacity or knowledge for the management of the universe. In comparison with Yahweh, he is of little account (40:4) (Clines 2011:1213).

In the light of his heightened understanding of the sovereignty of Yahweh, Job admits that none of Yahweh's intention can be frustrated. An interesting remark may be felt in Job's use of the term *mᵉzimmāʰ* (purpose, scheme) as an alternative to the likely word *ʿētsāʰ* (plan, design), which Yahweh had challenged Job to interpret (38:2 cf. 12:13). *mᵉzimmāʰ* is generally translated as 'wicked plan, plot', but is adequately attested in the morally neutral sense 'purpose, intention, thinking'. The negative ideas that sometimes accompany it

12.See Timmer (2009:291–301) for a discussion of the two speeches.

13.For the picture of the earth constructed as a building compare (Ps 24:2; Pr3:19; Is 48:13, 51:13, 16; Zch 12:1). The metaphor in Psalm 104:5 emphasizes the earth's stability.

derive from the context rather than the term itself. In this regard, there is no problem in accrediting Yahweh with *mᵉzimmāh* (Clines 2011:1205). From the perspective of Jeremiah, Habel (1985) remarks:

> Yahweh's 'schemes' are expression of his anger, which mortals may consider evil but which are revealed in the course of time to be otherwise. Perhaps the author employed this expression to remind the audience of the original scheme devised by Yahweh and the Satan to test Job's integrity and that Job is in fact suspicious of some such plan. Yet the celestial schemes of Yahweh remain inscrutable, even to Job. (p. 581)

His informed surrender implies that he has confidence in the fact that nothing happens on earth outside the wisdom and framework of Yahweh. No hostile force, whether earthly or heavenly can prevent God from carrying out his purpose (Carson 2000:41). What Yahweh's designs in cosmology, meteorology and zoology have all gone to show in Job's confession or testimony is that Yahweh's purposes always succeed, which implies for the Job of the dialogues that he cannot ever be other than Yahweh's victim (Clines 2011:1213).

Theological synthesis and conclusion

If the above analysis is correct, what is the point of this passage? Can the conception of God as creator and Lord over creation from this perspective play not only a useful, but an indispensable role in one's own theology? To answer these questions, one must focus attention on the theme of Yahweh's sovereignty. In Israel, the graciousness of Yahweh's actions is the background for the recitation of Israel's faithless acts in response. Not only is creation the setting of praise for the creator, but as in Genesis and in the trilogy of Psalm 104–106, the creative and redemptive acts of God are immediately associated. In the epic literature, second Isaiah, and the royal theology in Jerusalem, Israel understood creation in terms of power and purpose. The God who created the world is the same power, which redeemed Israel from Egypt, which will redeem her again and again in the second Exodus, and which in history carries on the conflict that works salvation for the poor and needy (Wright 1969:95). Thus, creation is both the establishment of the conditions of our existence and the release into time and history of the creative power, which has worked and is working positively to put the broken together, to heal the sick, and to release the captives (Wright 1969:78–79).

The story of Job stands in the biblical canon as a testament of Yahweh's sovereign rule over mischievous and even satanically-wrought suffering all so that Yahweh might bring to glorious end his good intentions, yet hidden from man (Ware 2000:64). Job acknowledged the sovereignty of God by admitting his own unworthiness (40:3–5) and also his ignorance, 'I spoke of things I did not understand' (42:3), and by repenting (42:6). In questioning Yahweh's ways, Job had positioned himself as a rival to God. But through constant questioning, Job – the plaintiff – came to recognise that it was inappropriate and useless to challenge God and to try to defend his innocence (Zuck 1991:224). In Job, God revealed his justice: 'would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?' (40:8). Justice here may suggest sovereignty or rulership as well as judgeship. What Job thus had to learn is that God's governance in the world is divinely ordained justice. Accusing God of injustice was therefore an act of arrogance as God, as a ruler, has a system of justice that surpasses what Job sensed in the human legal forum (Zuck 1991:225). Through numerous rhetorical questions and statements of irony in the speeches of God, it was demonstrated to Job that he could not possibly assume this role and bring order into the moral realm. If Job cannot even subdue the symbols of chaos, mere animals (cf. 40: 15–20; 41), he is in no position to discredit God – his creator and maker – for treating him unjustly (Hartley 1988:534).

Instinctively, Job acknowledges that he could not have gone through any experience of life without Yahweh's approval. In brief, every form of contrast is completely disregarded. He will not dissipate energy in paralysing analysis as to whether his experience was the will of God. There is no doubt that it was the work of Satan.[14] However, in Yahweh's world the work of Satan[15] is still within the confines of the sovereignty of Yahweh. In the book of Job, this is what provokes the question 'why'? and at the same time inspires hope (Carson 2000:41). It may be suggested that the whole drama of the book of Job correlates roughly with the grid of humanness: blessed equilibrium, disruption and restoration. This human life as modelled by Job, never arise at a stasis; it is a dramatic process that stays always open. But the open, dramatic process fully credits Yahweh as the key, in presence and in absence, who is the overriding and shaping reality of Job's existence (Brueggemann 1997:490). In this view, the role of Satan is marginal to the drama of the book, but Satan is there, as the serpent is in Genesis 3. Not a great deal is made of Satan in the book of Job. It is noted, however, that the character of Satan constitutes (at least in Israel's testimony) the statement that the issues of human life are both more inscrutable and more ominous than simple moralism either covenantal or sapiential, will allow. There is something large and external at work in the world that is antagonistic to human life (Brueggemann 1997:490).

14. With regard to this common noun occurring in the book of Job, Day (1995:1372ff) infers as follows: 'The opening chapter of the book of Job describes a gathering of the "sons of God," that is a meeting of the divine council. Present at this gathering is a being called *haśśāṭān*: this is the common noun *śāṭān* preceded by the definite article. The definite article makes it virtually certain that *śāṭān* is not a proper name. Most scholars translate *haśśāṭān* as "the Accuser" ... The force of the definite article is to deemphasize precise identity and focus on the status of the character as it is relevant to the narrative plot ... Attributing this force to the definite article of *haśśāṭān* in Job 1:6 would lead us to understand that a certain divine being whose precise identity is unimportant and who has the current and temporary status of accuser is being introduced into the narrative. The advantage of this interpretation is that it is consistent with known Israelite (and Mesopotamian) legal practice in that "accuser" was a legal status that various people temporarily acquired in the appropriate circumstances, and not a post or office ... In Job, the *śāṭān* seems clearly to be a divine being, although most scholars would agree that *śāṭān* is not a proper name. Though he challenges God at a very profound level, he is nonetheless subject to God's power and, like Yahweh's messenger in Numbers 22, acts on Yahweh's instructions. He is certainly not an independent, inimical force'.

15. Walton (2008:716) makes the following important remark: 'The result of this profile is that we are not in a position to claim that the satan in the book of Job should be identified with Satan as we know him in the NT on the premise that they act the same way. In fact, there is little if any overlap between their two profiles. This does not prove that they are not the same individual; it merely reduces (if not eliminates) the basis for claiming that they must be equated. The profile of the Hebrew satan in the book of Job does not answer to the same description as the Christian view of Satan in the NT. The pictures are not contradictory, and they may even be complementary, but we could not consider them homogeneouos'.

In any case, what matters for the practice of humanness here is that Yahweh governs and finally overrules and dispenses with this ominous force. Whatever it is that militates against viable human life is subject to the will and purpose of Yahweh. Job therefore not only has no knowledge about Satan, he also has no occasion to spend his time on this character. He needs to deal only with Yahweh, with whom his destiny is deeply embedded. Job is sure that it can only be God and no other power besides God who is capable of interfering with his life in this way (Andersen 1976:278). His testimony indicates that his entire life span, at both margins of the spectrum, as it were, and everything in-between are in the control of God. In several biblical passages, Yahweh is regarded as demonstrating his dominion over every area of life; both the good and the bad. Such continuum citations clearly reveal that Yahweh regulates all of life. For instance:

> And the LORD said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes *him* dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?' (Exod. 4:11). 'Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, unless the Lord has commanded *it*? Is *it* not from the mouth of the Most High that both good and calamities go forth?' (Lm 3:37–38)[16]

Although it must be noted that these statements apply to particular historical circumstances, it is also of importance to state that the truths they proclaim within those particular circumstances are truths that go beyond place and time. They are truths that validate Yahweh and his sovereign and all-embracing rulership of the universe. He cannot afford to fail or do less, if truly he is God (Ware 2000:67).

Surmise it to say here, therefore, that Yahweh the God who creates and rules is the one who can transform any circumstance of chaos into an ordered context where fruitfulness, blessings, prosperity and well-being are obtainable. These can be observed again and again in human history by eyes trained to see and interpret by faith. What is clear from the book of Job and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible is that, Israel tends to perceive and no doubt expects Yahweh to see underserved suffering and oppression from their perspective as an urgent category. Yahweh makes Job to realise that he should not be placed in the circle of human perception. The Yahweh speeches do not indicate that Job's perception and method of reaction are improper for humans. What has become very clear to Job is that his fresh vision of Yahweh's privileges and the mode of his government of the world help him to arbitrate the ambiguity that exists in the divine and human perceptions of justice, and thus keeps alive the moral and human ecology of the universe (Lasine 1997:276).

Suffering can come suddenly and inexplicably to anyone, even to a righteous person. Unexpected, undeserved suffering raises the question of justice in the world and ultimately the sovereignty of God. Human wisdom is not adequate to solve the problem of undeserved suffering. Only Yahweh can meet our needs in time of suffering. Although this book grapples with the questions of how or when sin relates to suffering and why a just God permits evil to exist, Job's testimony illustrates Yahweh's permanence in contrast to the transience of earthly possessions. Most of all, however, Job's testimony or confession conveys the message that human beings can never fully comprehend or understand the mystery of suffering. Therefore God has to be trusted to sustain righteous persons in suffering, rather than to try to understand why they have to suffer. Modern readers can both empathise with and learn from Job's experiences in his journey of faith.

The primary effect of God's speeches to Job has been to change the dimension or orientation of the problem (Kelly 1962:150). Job has been concerned with himself and with the necessity to justify himself and his ways. Now he knows that God is sufficient for everything. One may say that the real change for Job is to have come to the place where God alone is important. He can now accept the fact that God and his governance of a human's life, and even his disposition of rewards and retribution, are ultimately beyond humankind's power to comprehend. To argue that Job's testimony probes into the inescapable purpose of Yahweh in creation is not unreasonable when the context of biblical assertions about the creator and redeemer is observed.

In this brief review of Job's testimony about Yahweh's sovereignty, the article has examined what is surely the dominant story line of Israel's most treasured and most characteristic testimony about Yahweh. Yahweh's characteristic presentation in Israel's rhetoric is that Yahweh acts powerfully, decisively and transformatively. This is what Job has demonstrated. The testimony provides a place (safe) where believers and the world may be fruitful and multiply. Viewed more positively, it points to the wisdom and power of the creator.

16.Further examples of such passages include: Deuteronomy 32:3, 9; 1 Samuel 2:6–7; Isaiah 45:5–7; Ecclesiastes7:l3–14; Amos 3:6; Proverbs 16:33; Ephesians 1:9–11.

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