

Job Unveiled and Reimagined

Edited by
JISEONG JAMES KWON
and TOBIAS HÄNER

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172*

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Edited by

Corinna Körting (Hamburg) · Konrad Schmid (Zürich)
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Current Issues, Emerging Paradigms,
and Future Horizons

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In cherished memory of
David J. A. Clines

(21 Nov 1938 – 8 Dec 2022),

a luminary whose scholarly brilliance continues to inspire and guide us,
and who was a good friend to many of us.

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Throughout this journey, one name returned to us time and again – David J. A. Clines. His meticulous scholarship on *Job*, especially his landmark three-volume WBC commentary, shaped how many of us first encountered and continue to wrestle with this text. His readings were never mechanical; they were imaginative, deeply informed, and always attentive to nuance – linguistic, literary, and existential.

For many of us, Clines was not just a scholar to be cited, but a voice to be remembered – a scholar whose questions helped us frame our own. His legacy runs through these pages not as a conclusion, but as a provocation: to read better, to imagine more bravely, and to never lose sight of the strange and unsettling power of *Job*.

December 2024

JiSeong J. Kwon
Tobias Häner

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Introduction

Tobias Häner and JiSeong Kwon

“Where were you, when I laid the foundation of the earth?” (Job 38:4) The question addressed to Job in YHWH’s first speech is obviously rhetorical. Job was nowhere then. Yet, from the moment these words were written down, the book of Job began to conquer almost every corner of the earth. Biblical exegesis on the book today is grounded in a long, broad, and deep research history. Against this background, the present volume is guided by two questions addressed to the current state of research on Job: Where are you now? And *quo vadis* – where are you going to? To answer these questions, we have invited a variety of senior as well as young scholars who represent different fields of research.

The title of this edited volume, “Job Unveiled and Reimagined: Current Issues, Emerging Paradigms, and Future Horizons”, signifies a wide-ranging exploration of the book of Job, presenting fresh insights from Job, while addressing current issues, introducing new paradigms, and looking towards future horizons in biblical scholarship. While Job has traditionally been classified as a wisdom book along with Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, wisdom Psalms, Ben Sira, and the Wisdom of Solomon, recent scholarship has questioned this categorisation and highlighted Job’s distinctive ideology and theology, which diverge from the conventional wisdom genre. Moreover, the prose-tale and dialogue of Job have been shown to draw on a variety of non-Israelite and Israelite intertexts, reflecting its complex literary and historical context. In light of these developments, the twenty-three essays in this volume aim to reexamine and reinterpret the text of Job from multiple perspectives and disciplines. The contributors are leading scholars from Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Germany, Israel, New Zealand, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, and USA, who offer fresh insights to stimulate academic dialogue and foster cross-cultural communication. Evidently, important voices are missing in this volume, fellow researchers who for one reason or another, were not able to contribute on this occasion. In particular, we deplore the demise of David J. A. Clines, to whom this volume is dedicated.

By collecting answers to the aforementioned questions, we differentiate roughly between four major sections of the present research on Job:

Part I. Methodology and ancient versions: The first part of the volume collects studies in the field of both historic and contemporary linguistics, the question of the genre of the book, textual criticism, and ancient versions, in particular the Old Greek.

Part II. Intertextuality: The second part offers essays that range from intratextuality to hypertextuality, from intensely to less discussed relationships between the book of Job and other parts of the Hebrew Bible.

Part III. Individual texts: Several studies focus on either Job's opening lament (Job 3) or YHWH's speeches and Job's answers to them (Job 38:1–42:6), though texts in between (Job 29; 33) also come into view.

Part IV. Reception and new readings: Finally, the fourth part gathers perspectives on the book as a whole, arising from the history of reception as well as from contemporary approaches.

While presenting a mosaic of answers to current and emerging questions, the essays in this collection formulate new queries that outline future horizons our common endeavor is heading towards.

Part I. Methodology and Ancient Versions in the Study of the Book of Job

The essay of Urmas Nõmmik investigates the complex literary history and poetic forms in the Hebrew book of Job and underscores the significance of form criticism alongside a redactional approach in reading the various poetic structures and profiles contributed by different editors / scribes over time. His study is based on the formal hierarchy of ancient Hebrew poetry, examining basic elements such as cola, verses, strophes, and poems, along with their stylistic and rhythmic connections (e. g., Job 4:2–6, 12–21, 14:1–10, 33:23–30; 3:4–6, 9; 39:21–25). In addition, this diachronic observation provides insight into the compositional history of Job, underlining the necessity of analysis to distinguish between original texts and later additions.

Since the groundbreaking works by J. L. Austin and J. R. Searle, the speech act theory has proven to offer a promising new methodological approach to biblical texts. Although Joban poetry consists of almost nothing but direct speech by Job, his friends and finally YHWH, only few exegetes have ventured to apply the theoretical framework developed by Austin, Searle, and others on these dialogic texts. Stephan Lauber's essay therefore opens a promising path by using the opening lament in Job 3 as an example to show how an interpretation based on speech act analysis can illuminate the communicative process in the book.

Mark Sneed attempts to challenge the recent claim that the book of Job does not belong in wisdom literature, despite his doubts about the established notion of a wisdom tradition. While Katharine Dell argues that Job's blend of literary genres disqualifies it from being classified as wisdom literature, Sneed maintains that the wisdom corpus is still a useful and reasonable categorization that complements other literary modes in the Hebrew Bible. He shows that the category of wisdom literature resonates with ancient grouping and that the wisdom tradition is essentially a scribal literary tradition, with wisdom writers being high-level scribes who produced various types of literature in the Hebrew Bible.

Text-critical research on the book of Job continues to constitute a challenging, but animated field of study. The contribution by Juliane Eckstein on the one hand offers an overview of recent developments and the present state of the research, and on the other hand gives an outlook on future perspectives, highlighting – among others – methodological issues as well as the focus on linguistic, translational, and theological nuances of the ancient versions.

Of particular interest in this regard is without any doubt the Old Greek version (OG Job). In his brief study, Maximilian Häberlein shows how the translation may be perceived and looked at within the framework of early Jewish literature in Greek language. Special attention is given thereby to intertextuality, exemplified by the allusion to Isa 40:23–25 in Job 4:21, and to the theological profile of the ancient version, particularly concerning God's sovereignty and oversight and the role of angels (ἄγγελοι) as agents.

Part II. Intertextuality in the Book of Job

Intertextuality, then, is the broad methodological concept that unites the contributions of the second part of this volume.

Walter Bührer's analysis is based on a diachronic approach, supposing that the oldest parts of the book are found in the narrative sections (Job 1:1–5, 13–22; 42:11–17), to which the poetic texts and the heavenly scenes were added in different stages. Additionally, Bührer makes use of Gérard Genette's terminological differentiation between intertextuality in the narrow sense and hypertextuality. By a variety of examples, namely Job 1:5; 2:7 and 11, as well as 42:11 and 17, he shows how the dialogue within the book itself and with other texts of the emerging Hebrew Bible is intensified in relatively younger texts.

Yasir Saleem instead reevaluates the findings of a well-established field of research. The analysis of the intertextual relations between the book of Job and the Pentateuch has delivered important insights regarding the adaptation and critique of theological premises of both priestly and deuteronomic textual material. However, as Saleem points out, questions regarding methodological assumptions have to be raised. In addition, whereas author-oriented perspectives have dominated so far, reader-oriented approaches might offer a promising field of research in the near future.

A largely unexplored field regarding intertextuality in the book of Job is its relation to the book of Samuel. JiSeong Kwon's contribution highlights significant common motifs shared by the two books: On the theological level, God appears as acting somehow arbitrarily and unpredictably, and on the level of anthropology, both Job and David are characterized as innocent sufferers. According to Kwon, these literary similarities are mainly the product of Persian period scribes.

James Harding explores a scholarly debate about Job's origin from "the Land of Uz", investigating its narrative function and implications. He highlights the association between the name of Uz and Edomite wisdom, drawing connections to

“Edom” and relevant traditions, and examining the interplay between Job’s characters and the cultural and historical context of the Persian and Hellenistic periods. While the origin of the figure of Job is not explicitly designated in any texts of Job and remains ambiguous, Harding, through intertextual allusions to Genesis, considers it related to Esau’s offsprings and Edomite wisdom, and relevant to the revelation of YHWH in the South.

Katharine Dell and Ellie Paley present the significance of “intratextuality” within the book of Job, particularly focusing on how the poetic dialogue (Job 3–41) relates to the prose-tale. The intricate connections between the prosaic and poetic sections of Job demonstrate the book’s literary coherence, challenging traditional historical-critical views that suggest a complex redactional history marked by structural issues and literary strata. Moreover, they highlight the skill of the implied author, who employs acquainted language and stylistic techniques to craft an interconnected composition, leading readers to view Job as a unified, final-form text.

Part III. Texts of the Book of Job

The third and most spacious part of the volume collects essays that focus on individual textual sections of the book of Job.

Françoise Mies argues in her contribution that Job’s fundamental question is not why God permits that the blameless is struck by evil; rather Job asks about the meaning of his own existence in view of his suffering – a question raised verbosely in the opening lament (Job 3) and then taken up intensively in Job 10. The issue of God’s justice versus unjust evil instead according to Mies is introduced by Job’s friends from Eliphaz’ first speech (Job 4–5) onwards, affecting consequently also Job’s own perspective.

Similar to Mies, also Jakob Böckle focuses on Job 3. His main interest, however, is on the presentation of Job’s aesthetic experience. In his opening lament, Job’s perception is centered on death, and it is only towards the end of the book and by YHWH’s speeches that a shift towards the contemplation of God occurs, which then provokes a fundamental change in Job’s perspective on death.

Tova Forti explores the enigmatic use of the word “with my nest” in Job 29:18a (MT) where Job laments his coming death, alongside his hope for longevity in 29:18b-19. This essay compares the versions of the MT and LXX to uncover the Greek translator’s changes as highlighting the significance of nesting metaphors and to show the relevance between the imagery of “roots open to water” in 29:19 and Job 14:9. By employing the technique of “anaphoric translation”, the translation associates 29:18–19 with 14:7–10, indicating the difference between a tree’s ability to renew itself even when cut down and humans’ inherent limitations in overcoming mortality.

Stefan Fischer re-examines Elihu’s role as the fourth friend in the book of Job and highlights Elihu’s unique themes, particularly his distinctive view on human suffering. According to Elihu, human suffering is not merely an act of God’s retribution

but also serves a pedagogical function to restore the disturbed relationship between God and man. Fischer argues that Elihu's speeches reiterate the concept of retribution and fail to accept that an innocent sufferer can be righteous. Despite his attempt to bridge Job's discourse with YHWH's speech, Elihu's arguments are seen as delaying the encounter between Job and YHWH, and his introduction of the *angelus interpres* and the pedagogy of grace do not provide the necessary encouragement to Job.

The series of contributions on YHWH's speeches and Job's brief answers is opened by Lisa Plantin who presents an analysis of the depiction of young wild animals in Job 38–39. Based on the Blending theory, she argues that YHWH in the first address to Job is imagined as a parent by supervising the birth of the wild animals, hearing the cry of the young ones, providing food for them and assuring their freedom. Additionally, Plantin draws parallels to Akkadian, Greek, and Ugaritic myths and their portrait of goddesses in relation to young animals.

Challenging traditional scholarly approaches, Hanneke van Loon offers a reinterpretation of Behemoth in Job (40:15–24) by presenting a metaphorical reading of this mythological beast after Exile. Van Loon maintains that the portrayal of Behemoth transcends mythological and naturalistic interpretations and instead functions as a complex anthropological metaphor that critically examines human nature, bodily existence, and moral agency. Her analysis is that Behemoth's text in YHWH's speeches deconstructs contemporary negative anthropologies that viewed the human body as inherently problematic and presents human physicality as simultaneously powerful and vulnerable.

Different from van Loon's metaphorical reading of Behemoth, Tobias Häner examines the unexpected depictions of Behemoth and Leviathan in Job 40:15–41:26 from the perspective of the notion of beauty in the Hebrew Bible (for example, the Song of Songs; Ps 45). He deals with semantic, stylistic, formal, and pragmatic aspects of the given texts and considers them as belonging to the genre of *Beschreibungslieder*. He investigates the concept of beauty within the text, showing how the imagery of Behemoth and Leviathan conveys their magnificent beauty in creation. YHWH's praise of the beasts' beauty is rekindled through and changed into the beauty of Job's daughters in the epilogue (42:15), which is commonly related to the theme of the beauty of creation.

Marlen Bunzel and Kathrin Ritzka analyze the use of the Hebrew root נחם in the book of Job. Although occurring only ten times, it has a central function concerning the theme of consolation in the book: The three friends visit Job in order to console and comfort him (2:11), but they eventually fail to do so (6:10; 16:2; 21:34). Yet, in the end Job declares himself comforted after YHWH's speeches (42:6) and finds consolation by the visit of his relatives (42:11). Finally, widening the perceptive Bunzel and Ritzka highlight parallels to the motif of consolation in modern literature (Joseph Roth, Nelly Sachs, Philip Roth).

Despite their shortness, Job's two responses to YHWH in Job 40:3–5 and 42:1–6 have sparked a lot of scholarly interest due to their prominent function in the conclusion of the book. Walter Bühner's study reevaluates the research regarding

their redaction-historical classification and argues that in the original text, Job signals that he finally has found comfort. Therefore according to Bühner, Job's brief responses function as a bridge between the poetic and the narrative parts of the book.

The essay by Stuart Weeks offers an analysis of the book of Job, highlighting the interplay between Job's desire for respect from the community and God's demand for respect towards Job, which challenges conventional interpretations of divine justice and human virtue. According to Weeks, Job's relationship with his community – his nostalgia as a respected leader, his humiliation from being marginalized, and his declaration of innocence in Job 29–31 – corresponds with Job's relationship with his deity (1:9–12). The portrayal of Job's wealth and social status, alongside God's motivations, underscores a resistance to oversimplified moral conclusions, presenting the idea of self-respect and divine-human relationships.

Part IV. The Reception and New Readings of the Book of Job

According to Jason Kalman, both ancient and medieval Jewish and Christian interpreters used the strategic marriage of Job and Dinah, along with a happy ending after her traumatic experience with Shechem, to resolve theological problems in the book of Job. By connecting Job to the Israelite patriarchal family through Dinah, ancient interpreters could integrate Job's story into the broader biblical traditions, addressing concerns about endogamy and intermarriage. The reception history reveals that some Jewish, Christian, and Muslim authors found the idea of a marriage between Job and Dinah both credible and useful for exegesis, as it provided missing details and firmly tied Job into the Genesis narrative, thereby securing his place within the Torah.

Lance Hawley deals with anthropological perspectives in the book of Job and argues that although the text challenges the notion of human exceptionalism (as suggested in Psalm 8), it still acknowledges human value and uniqueness through God's direct engagement with Job. According to Hawley, this last interaction between YHWH and Job sets humans apart from other creatures and maintains the high human value by showing God's direct engagement with Job. YHWH's speeches (Job 38–41) emphasize functional distinctions among species while recognizing human dignity and uniqueness without supporting a hierarchical value system.

Last but not least, Silvia Schroer offers a retrospect on gender-related exegeses of Job, showing how the book challenges a patriarchal world view. In particular, recent patriarchy-critical readings of the book brought to the fore that the figure of Job may be seen as a symbol of a human self-image that needs to be corrected in the twenty-first century, as in YHWH's address to Job, human beings are moved from the center and placed among other creatures. Beyond that, Schroer envisions future perspectives of feminist, womanist and queer exegesis, highlighting the connections to questions of anthropology and creation in general and to the imminent climate catastrophe in particular.

Part I:

Methodology and Ancient Versions
in the Study of the Book of Job

Hebrew Job through the Lens of Diachronic Poetics

*Urmas Nõmmik*¹

1. Introduction to Diachronic Poetics

Since most parts of the Hebrew Book of Job are poetry, poetic analysis of the text is appropriate. However, the book also has a complex literary history, which suggests that not all of its authors over a couple of hundreds of years had precisely the same idea of the poetic form. One of the definite future perspectives in studying Job will be form-critical research sensitive to any finesse in strophic and verse structures, sound patterns and rhetorical features. The approach used in this essay assumes that several authors have inserted not only occasional glosses or verses in the text of the Dialogue of Job but also whole poems and series of *Fortschreibungen*. This view helps to profile the dialogue's first author better and extract and differentiate manifold younger poetic profiles.

A premise of an analysis of a poetic profile is the formal hierarchy of four basic levels in Ancient Hebrew poetry:

1. A colon (alternatively: half-line or hemistich) is the shortest poetic unit, usually formulating a statement and having some stylistic and rhythmical connection to the neighbouring cola.
2. A verse (alternatively: verse-line or stich) is built of two cola (bicolon) or three cola (tricolon), having a solid mutual relationship in terms of form and content.
3. A strophe (alternatively: stanza) is a combination of several verses aligned with one another in terms of form and content.
4. A poem is a set of strophes², a thematically and formally coherent poetic text. Four essential criteria allow a description of a poetic profile to be sufficiently sensitive to compare with other profiles:

¹ This work was supported by the Estonian Research Council grant (PRG938).

² In a detailed analysis, sometimes several distinctive levels are needed; a strophe can often be divided into two or three sub-strophes consisting, e.g., of verse pairs; on strophes and sub-strophes in Job see Samuel Terrien, *Job*, CAT 13 (Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1963), 33–34, and Urmas Nõmmik, *Die Freundesreden des ursprünglichen Hiobdialog: Eine form- und traditions-geschichtliche Studie*, BZAW 410 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 85–88. Several strophes are combined into stanzas, which form a poem by W. G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 160–200, and J. P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Poetry: An Introductory Guide*, trans. Ineke Smit (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001); see on Job, pp. 175–88. Several strophes can also be combined into cantos (with an intermediate level of canticles, if needed), which make up a poem, as suggested by Pieter van der Lugt, *Rhetorical Criticism and the Poetry of the Book of Job*, OTS 32 (Leiden: Brill, 1995); see on his method, pp. 31–49.

1. Bicola and tricola. Three types of strophes and/or poems are possible, either consisting only of bicola or tricola or combining them. In rare cases, a monocolon can be involved.
2. Parallel and extrapolative verses. The most common verse type is a synonymously parallel bicolon. But parallel tricola are also possible. The same is true for verses having no synonymous components at all, representing, thus, extrapolative verses.³ The latter verses include enjambment.
3. Colometry. The study of verse types can be refined by observations on the length of the cola.⁴ The absolute length of a colon can be regular, too short or too long. A regular bicolon has an average of 12–15 consonants per colon; single cola can occasionally have different lengths. If the average colon length is shorter than 12, the verse is short; if it is longer than 17, the verse is long and approaches prose. Additionally, the relative difference between the cola of a verse is significant. If the colometrical length of the cola is similar, i. e., does not usually differ by more than four consonants, then the verse is balanced. If the variation is more extensive, the verse is unbalanced.⁵ The latter can indicate a deliberate choice: (1) Qinah verse is a relatively short bicolon where the second colon is one-third shorter than the first one; (2) inverted Qinah verse is a bicolon, where the second colon is considerably longer.⁶
4. Strophic structure. Strophes can have a similar, i. e., balanced length in one poem, but the strophic length may also vary. Different authors had different understandings of strophic structures, and it was not always the case that another scribe followed the existing strophic structure in their addition.⁷ Furthermore, due to several minor additions and textual corruption at some point in literary history, the text's original structure got so confused that adding a new poem with its strophic structure seemed like bringing order into the poetic chaos.

³ See Urmas Nõmmik, "The Idea of Ancient Hebrew Verse," *ZAW* 124 (2012): 400–408. Since Robert Lowth, "synthetic parallelism" has been the usual notion, but with "extrapolative verse", several of its problems can be avoided.

⁴ The colometrical study counts consonants in cola and compares the results within bicola and tricola as well as within strophes and poems. The method was introduced by Oswald Loretz and Ingo Kottsieper, *Colometry in Ugaritic and Biblical Poetry: Introduction, Illustrations and Topical Bibliography*, UBL 5 (Altenberge: CIS-Verlag, 1987). For Job, see Nõmmik, *Die Freundesreden*, 89–91. As ever, counting words, stresses, and syllables is possible; however, counting consonants is a productive and convincing alternative; see also Markus Witte, *Das Buch Hiob*, ATD 13 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021), 18–19.

⁵ See Nõmmik, "The Idea of Ancient Hebrew Verse".

⁶ See also Urmas Nõmmik, "Qinah Meter: From Genre Periphery to Theological Center – A Sketch," in *Centres and Peripheries in the Early Second Temple Period*, ed. Christoph Levin and Ehud Ben Zvi, FAT 108 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 411–36.

⁷ It is particularly instructive to read the analysis of strophic structures in Psalms by Klaus Seybold, *Poetik der Psalmen*, Poetologische Studien zum Alten Testament 1 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2003), 161–92. There are several attempts to (rightly) maintain balanced strophic structures in Job; however, they do not improve the results through the literary- and redaction-critical lens, e. g., Patrick W. Skehan, "Strophic Patterns in the Book of Job," *CBQ* 23 (1961): 125–42.

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