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THE ELIHU SPEECHES[1]

THEIR PLACE AND SENSE IN THE BOOK OF JOB

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Summary

The different opinions about the Elihu speeches (Job 32–37) contribute greatly to confusion in research on the book of Job. In this paper I discuss whether the Elihu speeches are later interpolations or original to the writing, and I defend the latter position. Furthermore, I critically analyse current views on the speeches' role in the book as a whole and argue that Elihu is an inspired wisdom teacher who paves the way for Job's encounter with God. Elihu does not merely repeat the claims of Job's three friends.

1. Introduction

The extensive research on the book of Job reflects an increasing methodological pluralism and a diversity of research interests.[2] One can get the impression of a confusion of literary-critical and editorial-historical hypotheses, which dissolves the inner unity of the book and envisages complex ideas that not only complement but also compete

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[1] Based on my trial lecture for the degree of PhD at MF Norwegian School of Theology 2011 with my own chosen topics: 'Hvilken plass og betydning har Elihus taler i Jobs bok?'

[2] Cf. Jürgen van Oorschot, 'Tendenzen der Hiobforschung', *Theologische Rundschau* 60 (1995) 351-88, here 353, 374-75. For a comprehensive bibliography on Job, see David J.A. Clines, *Job 1–20* (WBC 17; Nashville: Nelson, 1989) lxiii-cxv. Cf. also T. Krüger, M. Oeming, K.Schmid, C. Uehlinger, eds., *Das Buch Hiob und seine Interpretationen: Beiträge zum Hiob-Symposion auf dem Monte Verità vom 14.–19. August 2005* (Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments 88; Zürich: Theologischer, 2007); T. Seidl, S. Ernst, eds., *Das Buch Ijob: Gesamtdeutungen – Einzeltexte – Zentrale Themen* (Österreichische Biblische Studien 31; Frankfurt am Main / Berlin / Bern / Bruxelles / New York / Oxford / Wien: Lang, 2007).

with one another.[3] This paper on the Elihu speeches contributes to the discussion on unity and consistency in the book of Job.

Elihu, who speaks in Job 32–37, is in Harald Martin Wahl's formulation 'one of the most differently judged personalities of the Old Testament'.[4]

In Ancient Judaism and the Early Church there are examples of perceptions of Elihu as a false prophet. However, Elihu is positively evaluated in Jewish exegesis in the Middle Ages. As for instance, according to Saadiah Gaon's commentary on Job from the tenth century or Abraham Ibn Ezra's commentary in 1140, Elihu has the solution to the question of the relationship between God's righteousness and Job's accident.[5] However, in the Church a devaluation of Elihu's speeches has been noticeable from Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Iob* and onward. Though surely regarding Elihu as orthodox, Gregory considered him as distastefully arrogant in form.[6] Luther is more critical, comparing Elihu with Zwingli and considering both as useless windbags.[7] However, Calvin (*Sermons sur le livre de Job*, 1554–55) holds Elihu in high esteem,[8] and the controversial pietist Johann Conrad Dippel takes Elihu's defence.[9] Nonetheless, with the onset of historical-critical research, doubt arises as to whether the Elihu speeches are originally part of the book of Job. A prerequisite for this discussion is the view on the book as a poem, and it has become a question whether the Elihu speeches could have been written by the same writer as the rest of the speech material. Many scholars perceive the speeches as later interpolations.

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3 Cf. van Oorschot, 'Tendenzen', 358-62; Jürgen van Oorschot, 'Die Entstehung des Hiobbuches' in T. Krüger et al., eds., *Das Buch Hiob und seine Interpretationen*, 165-84.

4 Wahl, *Der gerechte Schöpfer: Eine redaktions- und theologiegeschichtliche Untersuchung der Elihureden – Hiob 32–37* (BZAW 207; Berlin / New York: de Gruyter, 1993) 1.

5 That was in various ways the common opinion among medieval Jewish exegetes; cf. Robert Eisen, *The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 2004) 21, 204-205, 209-211; Choon-Leong Seow, 'Elihu's revelation', *Theology Today* 68/3 (2011) 253-71, here 254; Seow, *Job 1–21: Interpretation and Commentary* (Illuminations: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013) 128-29, 133-35, 140-41.

6 Cf. Wahl, *Der gerechte Schöpfer*, 3-5; Larry J. Waters, 'The Authenticity of the Elihu Speeches in Job 32–37', *BSac* 156 (1999) 28-41, here 33.

7 *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Tischreden* vol. 1 (Weimar: Böhlau, 1912) 68 lines 19-20 (Table talk no. 142, winter 1531/32).

8 Cf. Waters, 'Authenticity', 33; Seow, 'Elihu's Revelation', 255.

9 Dippel, *Licht und Recht anderer Theil* (Frankfurt am Main, 1704); see Wahl, *Der gerechte Schöpfer*, 5-7.

In this paper, I will briefly discuss two questions.

First: Are the controversial Elihu speeches later interpolations in the writing, or do they constitute an original part of the whole?

Second: Is Elihu a contrasting character to bring the message of the author in relief, or is he a right wisdom teacher and central figure who paves the way for Job's encounter with God?

There is a certain connection between these two questions. Researchers who believe that chapters 32–37 are later interpolations tend to have a low regard for the Elihu speeches, whereas researchers who believe that the material is original are inclined to highly appreciate the speeches.[10] However, these opposing views are not without exception. Thus, Brevard S. Childs asserts that while the chapters may be literarily secondary, this does not mean that they are insignificant as part of the book of Job as canonical scripture.[11] On the other hand, Norman C. Habel argues that the speeches constitute an original part, but he regards this as an anticlimax before YHWH speaks out of the whirlwind.[12]

2. Are Elihu's Speeches Later Interpolations?

Since Johann Gottfried Eichhorn raised the issue in the 1780s, and Matthias Heinrich Stuhlmann in his commentary on Job some years later argued against their originality, many scholars have believed that the Elihu speeches are interpolated in the book (e.g. Georg Fohrer; David J.A. Clines).[13] We may divide the objections to the originality of the speeches into three groups, concerning: 1) the place of the Elihu

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[10] Wahl, *Der gerechte Schöpfer*, 23.

[11] Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (3rd impression; London: SCM, 1987) 540. Cf. Hans Strauß, *Hiob: 2. Teilband 19,1–42,17* (BKAT XVI; Neukichen-Vluyn, 2000) 267.

[12] Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary* (OTL; London: SCM, 1985) 32-33, 36-37.

[13] Eichhorn in a review on J.D. Michaelis, 'Einleitung in die göttlichen Schriften des Alten Bundes' I.1 (1787), *Allgemeine Bibliothek der biblischen Litteratur 1* (Leipzig, 1787) 430-65; Eichhorn later in the 3rd ed. of his *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Leipzig, 1803); Stuhlmann, *Hiob: Ein religiöses Gedicht* (Hamburg, 1804); Fohrer, *Das Buch Hiob* (KAT XVI; Gütersloher, 1963) 40-41; Clines, *Job 1–20*, lviii-lix. Cf. Wahl, *Der gerechte Schöpfer*, 8-14; van Oorschot, 'Tendenzen', 362-64; Waters, 'Authenticity', 29-31. Late medieval rabbis were aware of the hypothesis that the final remark in Job 31:40 suggested that the entire section consisting of chapters 32–42 was added later; cf. Markus Witte, 'Noch einmal: Seit wann gelten die Elihureden im Hiobbuch (Kap. 32-37) als Einschub?', *Biblische Notizen* 67 (1993) 20-25, here 20-21.

speeches in relation to the book of Job as a whole, 2) their formal characteristics and 3) the content of the speeches.[14]

First, one can thus imagine the book without the Elihu speeches, although we do not know such a book of Job from the textual history. Chapter 31, which precedes the Elihu speeches, presents, so to speak, Job's final addresses in his case against God, and God answers Job in chapters 38–41. Some text in between is not presupposed. However, one may argue that Elihu's speeches fit very well in between the two last discourses of Job,[15] which have silenced his three friends, and God's speeches in chapters 38–41. Elihu is not mentioned outside of chapters 32–37; neither in the prologue (cf. 2:11) nor in the epilogue (cf. 42:7-9). Nonetheless, why should Elihu be mentioned in other parts of the book? I find no specific reason; neither is Satan nor Job's wife—except in 19:17, 31:10—mentioned outside of chapters 1–2.[16] Additionally, no unanimous opinion exists in the literary-critical tradition on the relationship between the last Elihu speech and the theophany.[17] Is this last speech an odd editorial transition, which anticipates God's speeches, or is it an original and relevant preparation for Job's meeting with God?[18]

Second, it is argued there are characteristic linguistic and stylistic features in Elihu's speeches. Some have thought that they could point out a larger portion of Aramaisms here than in the rest of the book,[19] but others have disputed that this is a correct observation.[20] Edward L.

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[14] Cf. Wahl on research history in *Der gerechte Schöpfer*, 10-14.

[15] Chapters 27–31; cf. the introductory formula in 27:1 and 29:1.

[16] John E. Hartley turns the argument around: 'Elihu's absence from the epilogue and the prologue seems inexplicable if one posits an interpolator who inserted the Elihu speeches', Hartley, *The Book of Job* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 28.

[17] Wahl, *Der gerechte Schöpfer*, 10-11.

[18] Hartley and Seow represent the latter understanding; cf. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 29, 427-28, 485-86; Seow, 'Elihu's revelation', 270; Seow, *Job 1–21*, 37. Martin A. Shields, 'Was Elihu Right?', *Journal for the Evangelical Study of the Old Testament* 3.2 (2014) 155-70 takes his point of departure from the tension between the explanation of Job's sufferings in the prologue and the explanation that Elihu gives. He suggests that the prologue does not give a comprehensive explanation, arguing that Elihu's explanation too might be correct.

[19] Cf. Max Wagner, *Die lexikalischen und grammatischen Aramaismen im alttestamentlichen Hebräisch* (BZAW 96; De Gruyter, 1966) 142, 145.

[20] Norman H. Snaith, *The Book of Job: Its Origin and Purpose* (Studies in Biblical Theology 2/11; London: SCM, 1968) 82-83, 104-105, 109-112, doubts whether according to a stricter definition, there are any real Aramaisms in Elihu's speeches; cf. Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation and Special Studies* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1978) 548; Waters, 'Authenticity', 36-37.

Greenstein finds the book of Job multilingual, using Hebrew and Aramaic in parallelisms as a poetic instrument.[21] According to Norman H. Snaith, there is not sufficient variation in the use of prepositions, the divine names, the two first-person singular pronouns, etc. 'to warrant the assumption of a different authorship for any part of the book'.[22] Compared with the dialogues between Job and his friends, with their rich visual poetry, Elihu's speeches have been regarded as prolix, repetitive, and didactic.[23] His style has been interpreted as both harder and milder than that of the three friends. However, stylistic differences may in fact reflect a distinctive stamp of Elihu, whether he is a historical person or only a literary figure.[24] Any consensus regarding the understanding of the stylistic differences seems to be remote. After all, these differences cannot prove that the Elihu speeches are literarily secondary.

Third, the Elihu speeches represent a solution to Job's problem, which critics believe a didactic writer has consciously wanted to add in as a tension to the original ductus of the book, or so to speak, an orthodox revision. Therefore, it is only natural that the Elihu speeches emerge as a rebuke of Job and his friends, interpolated where the dialogue stalls and before YHWH speaks the last word. However, if the book of Job is a book on conflicts, the Elihu speeches fit very well in the overall frame. Thus, in the dialogues in chapters 3–31 there is a conflict between Job and his friends. In his speeches, Elihu is in conflict with both Job and his friends, since all four of them are in conflict with God. In the concluding chapters 38–42, both Job's and his friend's conflicts with God are being solved.

In the historical-critical tradition, not only the originality, but also the unity of the Elihu speeches have been called into question.[25]

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[21] Greenstein, 'Features of Language in the Poetry of Job' in T. Krüger et al., eds., *Das Buch Hiob und seine Interpretationen*, 81-96, here 82, 87-88.

[22] Snaith, *The Book of Job*, 84.

[23] Childs, *Introduction*, 530 (cf. 540 with references) believes that the most important evidence that the Elihu speeches are literarily secondary, is that they quote and refute Job's statement so that it seems probable that they build on an already existing written fixation of the dialogues between Job and his three friends.

[24] Cf. Norman C. Habel, 'The Role of Elihu in the Design of the Book of Job' in W. Boyd Barrick and John S. Spencer, *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G.W. Ahlström* (JSOTSup 31; Sheffield: JSOT, 1984) 81-98, here 94: 'As a representative of the younger generation, Elihu tends to speak with a different "accent" and use fewer of the "archaisms" typical of Job and his aged companions.'

[25] On this, see Wahl, *Der gerechte Schöpfer*, 20-22; Waters, 'Authenticity', 31-32.

However, neither the speculative, literary-critical trials (e.g. Theresia Mende)[26] nor the divergent form-critical attempts at dividing the Elihu speeches (Claus Westermann; Georg Fohrer)[27] have led to any consensus.

In his commentary on Job (1896), Karl Budde refuted the prevailing arguments against the originality of the Elihu speeches (although he felt they had been provided by later interpolations).[28] Budde was followed by Norbert Peters (1928).[29] In our days, there is a tendency to assume a single author or one main author of the book.[30] An increasing number of interpreters view the Elihu speeches as an integral part of the publication, between Job's questions and God's answer, Jürgen van Oorschot notes.[31] The structuralist reaction against literary criticism also advances the debate.[32] Structuralist hermeneutics has moved the issue into a new perspective.

As their point of departure, structuralist researchers (Robert M. Polzin; Norman C. Habel)[33] take the book of Job as a literary whole and refrain from trying to trace a literary growth process behind the existing totality.[34] In other words, their analysis is synchronic, not dia-

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[26] T. Mende, *Durch Leiden zur Vollendung: Die Elihureden im Buch Ijob (Ijob 32–37)* (Trierer Theologische Studien 9, Trier: Paulinus, 1990). Van Oorschot, *Entstehung*, believes that Elihu's claim concerning inspired wisdom belongs to a later editorial stage than Job's wisdom poem in chapter 28. The editors of the Elihu speeches reject both the learned wisdom skepticism (cf. chapter 28) and Job's self-righteousness. On the other side, David J.A. Clines, *Job 21–37* (WBC 18A; Nashville: Nelson, 2006) takes for his basis that chapter 28 simply does not present Job's words, but the closing part of Elihu's fourth speech. No doubt a confusing picture.

[27] Westermann, *Der Aufbau des Buches Hiob: Mit einer Einführung in die neuere Hiobforschung von Jürgen Kegler* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1977[2]) 134-39; Fohrer, 'Die Weisheit des Elihu' in Fohrer, *Studien zum Buche Hiob 1956–1979* (BZAW 159; Berlin / New York, 1983[2]) 94-113.

[28] Budde, *Das Buch Hiob* (Handkommentar zum Alten Testament II/I; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913[2]); cf. Wahl, *Der gerechte Schöpfer*, 15-16.

[29] Peters, *Das Buch Job* (Exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament 21; Münster: Aschendorff, 1928) 23*-29*; cf. Wahl, *Der gerechte Schöpfer*, 16.

[30] Van Oorschot, 'Tendenzen', 355-56.

[31] Van Oorschot, 'Tendenzen', 367-68, cf. Wahl, *Der gerechte Schöpfer*, 17-19; Waters, 'Authenticity', 33-38.

[32] Wahl, *Der gerechte Schöpfer*, 17; van Oorschot, 'Tendenzen', 375-76.

[33] Polzin, *Biblical Structuralism: Method and Subjectivity in the Study of Ancient Texts* (Philadelphia: Fortress / Missoula: Scholars, 1977); Habel, *The Book of Job*; cf. Wahl, *Der gerechte Schöpfer*, 17.

[34] Gerald H. Wilson, *Job* (Understanding the Bible Commentary Series; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012), too, treats the book in its final form.

chronic.[35] 'The integrity of the work is evident in its overall construction, the setting of its characters, and the interrelationship of its several parts', Habel claims.[36] Moreover, also other exegetes think that the Elihu speeches are original (so J. Gerald Janzen; John E. Hartley).[37] Choon-Leong Seow, too, regards the speeches as integral parts of the book, in response to Job's plaintive quest for wisdom and justice in chapters 27–41, and as mediated revelation to be read together with YHWH's immediate speeches.[38] Additionally, scholars from the 19th century to the present have thought that the author of the book of Job may have written the Elihu speeches at a later stage than the other material (e.g. Ernst Sellin; Norman H. Snaith; Robert Gordis).[39] Particular features in the speeches are thus given a biographical explanation. Another possibility is that the author deliberately distinguishes between the language and style of Job and his older friends, on the one hand, and that of the young Elihu, on the other hand, as has also been suggested.

Arguments against the view that the speeches are parts of the book from the beginning consist of hypotheses based on hypotheses. No one knows when the book of Job was written. The period details in the story are hardly distant from the time of the patriarchs, and nothing in the book reveals some specific later time of origin.[40] It is rather speculative when some researchers assign an initial version of the book without the Elihu speeches, on the one hand, and a revised version containing these speeches, on the other, to different stages of a supposed development of the notion of wisdom or angelology, for instance.[41] It seems to be a circular argumentation. After more than 200 years of discussion, it must be emphasised that there are no cogent

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[35] Cf. also Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger, 'Ijob: Vier Modelle der Interpretation', in T. Seidl / S. Ernst, eds., *Das Buch Ijob*, 25–27.

[36] Habel, *The Book of Job*, 35.

[37] Janzen, *Job* (Interpretation; Atlanta: Knox, 1985) 22-24, 218; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 28-30.

[38] Seow, 'Elihu's Revelation'; cf. Seow, *Job 1–21*, 33-37.

[39] Sellin, *Einleitung in Das Alte Testament* (Leipzig: Von Quelle & Meyer, 1925[4]) 142-44; Snaith, *The Book of Job*, 72-85; Gordis, *The Book of Job*, 547-50; cf. Wahl, *Der gerechte Schöpfer*, 18-19.

[40] Cf. Clines, *Job 1–20*, lvii.

[41] E.g. Fohrer, 'Weisheit', 106-110; Wahl, *Der gerechte Schöpfer*, 163-65; or Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford University Press, 2003), chap. 8, thinking of Elihu's speeches as a contribution of a reader in the late Persian or early Hellenistic period, with a perspective on God's rule like that in Dan. 1–6.

arguments for believing that the Elihu speeches are later interpolations in the book.

Thus, Elihu's voice is one of four voices in the book about God's acts in the world. The other voices are Job's, his three friends' and God's own. What is then the relationship between Elihu's speeches and these other voices?

3. Is Elihu a Contrasting Character to Bring the Message of the Author into Relief or a Wisdom Teacher Who Paves the Way for Job's Encounter with God?

Budde (1896) views Elihu *as the Joban author's special mouthpiece*, clearly expressing the author's opinion, that when the righteous meet suffering, it is sent as purification.[42] H.D. Beeby (1965) interprets Elihu as a 'covenant mediator', in the context of his overall perception of the book of Job as a missionary writing that answers the question of righteous non-Israelites' relationship to YHWH, a relationship based rather on his revelation through nature than in history.[43] There are also other scholars who interpret Elihu as a charismatic mediator (so McKay, 1979; Hemraj, 1980; Seow, 2011).[44] Theresia Mende (1990) and Harald-Martin Wahl (1993) also turn against the tendency to reduce Elihu's importance, despite their literary-critical perceptions about the issue of the time of origin.

However, other authors such as Hendrik Viviers (1997) interpret Elihu as a literary figure whose speeches are meant to be *counter-productive* and constitute a *contrast* against the critical wisdom circles of which the book is a product and Job is an exponent, or as a foolish character which the author of the book introduces to compromise the retaliation dogma.[45] Robert V. McCabe Jr (1997) is to some degree on

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[42] Cf. Wahl, *Der gerechte Schöpfer*, 23-24.

[43] Beeby, 'Elihu, Job's Mediator?', *South East Asia Journal of Theology* 7 (1965) 33-54.

[44] John W. McKay, 'Elihu – A Proto-Charismatic?', *ExpTim* 90 (1979); S. Hemraj, 'Elihu's "Missionary" Role in Job 32–37', *Bible Bhashyam* 6 (1980) 49-80; Seow, 'Elihu's Revelation'. Cf. also Fohrer, 'Weisheit', 109; Harald-Martin Wahl, 'Ein Beitrag zum alttestamenlichen Vergeltungsglauben am Beispiel von Hiob 32–37', *BZ* 36 (1992) 254.

[45] Viviers, 'Elihu (Job 32–37), Garrulous but Poor Rhetor? Why Is He Ignored?' in S.E. Porter and T.H. Olbricht, eds., *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference* (JSNTSup 146; Sheffield, 1997) 138; cf. Robert V. McCabe, 'Elihu's Contribution to the Thought of the Book of Job', *Detroit Baptist*

the same track, but at the same time, he puts emphasis on the Elihu speeches as the link to God's speeches in the following chapters.[46] I will discuss these articles, but let me first briefly outline the contents of the Elihu speeches, beginning with his introduction in Job 32:2-5.

Elihu is introduced as a young man who has heard the dialogues between Job and his three friends. For two reasons—which in reality are the same—he becomes angry; first, because Job 'justified himself rather than God' (32:2 NKJV) and, second, because his friends did not find any answer, as if they consented to the charge against God and thus 'condemned God' (v. 3). My rendering is based on a margin note stating that the scribes wanted to 'improve' the text by inserting Job instead of God here (one of the so-called *tiqqun soferim*).[47] This is probably the case, as the majority of modern commentators maintain,[48] though the Masoretic text seems to be supported by the Septuagint. These two reasons for anger are thus essentially one and the same; Elihu is angry, because Job and also Job's friends are offending God. Moreover, when Elihu speaks, his anger is reflected more in content than in form. He is an apologist who will defend God (36:2).

Elihu from the land of Buz[49] is introduced in Job 32:2 explicitly as a historical person. He is mentioned not only with a geographical connection (like Job himself, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar), but also with his father's name Barachel, meaning God has blessed, and perhaps with an affiliation to the tribe of Judah.[50] Thus, he is probably emphasised as an *important* person. In contrast to Job and his friends, he (probably) has an Israelite name, Elihu, meaning 'My God is he'.[51]

Seminary Journal 2 (1997) 47-80 <http://www.dbts.edu/journals/1997/elihu.pdf>, here 47. Habel, *The Book of Job*, 53, believes that Elihu as an irony is being exposed as a foolish contrast to Job.

[46] McCabe, 'Elihu's Contribution'; the same tendency in Wilson, *Job*, who uses Job 42:7 against Elihu's severe criticism of Job, cf. p. 378, and contrasts Job's blamelessness (תָּם), 1:1) with Elihu's claim to be perfect in knowledge (תְּמִים דֵּעוֹת, 36:4); cf. p. 401.

[47] Cf. Ernst Würthwein, *Der Text des Alten Testaments: Eine Einführung in die Biblia Hebraica* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1966[3]) 24, but also the discussion in Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress; Assen / Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1992) 65-67.

[48] Cf. T. Mende, *Durch Leiden zur Vollendung*, 17.

[49] Job 1:1 and 32:2 may imply that Elihu, as well as Job, descended from Uz and Buz, sons of Abraham's brother Nahor, cf. Gen. 22:21, while Jer. 25:23, cf. 49:7-8, may indicate a connection with the Edomites.

[50] Possibly his ancestor Ram is identical to one of David's ancestors; cf. Ruth 4:19-22; 1 Chr. 2:9-15; Matt. 1:3-6.

[51] Cf. McKay, 'Elihu', 167-68.

3.1 Elihu's First Speech, 32:6–33:33

With a long rhetorical introduction (32:6–33:7), Elihu justifies why he speaks out and says something worth listening to. The authority of age is limited and relative, while true wisdom is a God-given insight (32:8-9).[52] Therefore, Elihu as a younger man may say, 'Listen to me, I also will declare what I know' (32:10, my translation). We notice that certainty which is expressed in Elihu's repeated 'what I know' (דֵּעִי) (32:6, 10, 17); it is not just an opinion (contra, e.g., NKJV) but *knowledge* (cf. also 36:3). Personally acquired knowledge (דַּעַת) is what Elihu wants to convey (33:3).

Elihu puts his finger on Job's self-righteousness[53] and complaint about God[54] (33:8-13). Job has dared to ignore the dividing line between Creator and creature; he has made a cognitive image of God in order to become a judicial counterpart to him. 'Why do you contend with Him? For He does not give an accounting of any of His words' (33:13 NKJV).[55] To be sure a lot of translations render otherwise, but the plain meaning of דְּבָרָיו is his words (or his doings),[56] and the verb ענה may (at least tentatively) be rendered account for / give an account of.[57] Provided that 'for judgement and great righteousness, he does not account' is read in 37:23—the penultimate verse in the Elihu speeches (cf. later)—we have an *inclusio* in these two verses, framing Elihu's defence of God.[58] Interpreting this way, I suggest that it is a basic thesis of Elihu that God does not answer to men, which means that he does not render an account to them. Still Elihu says that God warns men in different ways. He does it by a dream and a vision of the night, to correct human beings, eradicate their pride and free them from death (33:14-18). However, if the warning is unheeded, God speaks through bodily sufferings (33:19-22; reminder in 1 Cor. 5:5). The sufferings—these silent preachers—are preparing for the preaching on the way of

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[52] Cf. Gen. 40–41 (Joseph); Ps. 119:99-100; Jer. 1:6-10; Dan. 1 (Daniel and his friends).

[53] Cf. 9:21; 16:17; 23:10-12; 27:5-6.

[54] Cf. Job 10; 13:24-28; 19:11.

[55] Whether כִּי introduces a quotation from Job or Elihu's own statement, the point might be the same.

[56] While the 3rd person suffix in אֵלָיו points to אֱלוֹהַּ (v. 12), it is improbable that the equal suffix in דְּבָרָיו should point to אֱנוֹשׁ (v. 12).

[57] Cf. also NAB, NASB95.

[58] There are a lot of other inclusios in the Elihu speeches, e.g. 32:6b, 10b; 33:1, 5, 31-33; 36:8-10, 15.

life and the salvation of the sinner (see vv. 23-30), but the silent preachers must be completed by someone 'to tell a man what is right for him' (33:23, my translation). Elihu's words may imply that such a witness is rare, a messenger (מַלְאָךְ), an interpreter (מֵלִיץ), *one among a thousand.*[59] Many scholars think that this verse alludes to a heavenly mediator (both a preacher and an advocate or an intercessor or even the special Angel of the LORD, Malak YHWH),[60] and a Christian reading of the book of Job may indicate its reference both to Christ and to the Holy Spirit.[61] However, in my opinion, Elihu in 33:23 immediately speaks of a common yet unusual man who preaches the true word of God, an angel, that is, a messenger from the Lord, like what the priest should be, according to Mal. 2:7.[62] Without pointing out himself as the one among a thousand, Elihu must have understood his own role as that of such a true preacher.[63] The turning point arrives if the proclamation of the right way is really accepted in the sinner's heart. God is moved with compassion for him and commands that he be delivered from the suffering that threatens to kill him; God declares that a ransom has been found (33:24).[64] God graciously 'restores to man his righteousness' (33:26 NKJV). The sinner confesses that he has perverted what is right, and God redeems his soul from going into the grave. Similar to the three friends' exhortation, Elihu calls Job to repent, but as Fohrer says, Elihu places more emphasis on God's help and merciful intervention than on what humans have to do and struggle with.[65] Additionally, Elihu assures Job that God is willing to restore human life in this way, not only once, but two or three times (33:29). Elihu seeks to turn the attention from the question of the cause of the suffering to that of its purpose.[66] As Ezekiel declares (cf. Ezek. 33:11),

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[59] Others interpret אֶחָד מִנִּי־אָלֶף as one of a thousand similar angels in God's service, cf. Clines, *Job 21–37*, 700.

[60] Cf. Fohrer, *Das Buch Hiob*, 460; Hemraj, 'Elihu's "Missionary" Role', 76-77; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 446-47; Strauß, *Hiob 19,1–42,17*, 289-90; Gordis, *The Book of Job*, 377; Wahl, *Der gerechte Schöpfer*, 63–67; Clines, *Job 21–37*, 735-37.

[61] Cf. Alfred von Rohr Sauer, 'Salvation by Grace: The Heart of Job's Theology', *Concordia Theological Monthly* 37 (May 1966) 263-64.

[62] מֵלִיץ means interpreter in Gen. 42:23, ambassador in 2 Chr. 32:31 and probably spokesman in Isa. 43:27.

[63] Cf. Wilson, *Job*, 377.

[64] It is disputable if v. 24 is talking about God's or about the messenger's compassion.

[65] Fohrer, 'Weisheit', 110.

[66] Fohrer, 'Weisheit', 110.

Elihu proclaims that God does not want the sinner's death; on the contrary, he desires that the sinner turn from his evil ways and live.

3.2 Elihu's Second Speech, Chapter 34

In his second speech, Elihu rebukes Job anew for his haughty talk and accusation against God.[67] The tone is sharpened (cf. vv. 7-8, 34-37), but basically Elihu refutes Job's same assertion that he rebuts in chapter 33.[68] In his first speech, Elihu does it succinctly (33:12), *but in chapter 34, Elihu further justifies why he rejects Job's assertion.* He points out first, that Job's claim in itself is sinful, yes, blasphemous and second, that God is not doing anything wrong, but that he repays everybody according to their ways. Certainly, righteousness is on the side of God, who impartially governs in his omniscience and omnipotence, and unrighteousness is on the side of Job, who suffers for his sin. In his first speech, Elihu particularly has pointed out God's *saving will*, and now in his second speech, he emphasises God's *righteous judgment*. Righteousness and governance, justice and might form a unit.[69] All prudent and wise people will agree that Job speaks without knowledge and understanding (vv. 34-35, cf. 35:16). He deserves to be tried without cease, because to his sin he adds rebellion (vv. 36-37).

3.3 Elihu's Third Speech, Chapter 35

I believe that Elihu continually refutes *the same assertion of Job,*[70] pushing Job's self-witness to the extreme: Job says he is more righteous than God (35:2),[71] which has provoked Elihu's anger (32:2). He then grabs hold of the question of what is the use of refraining from sin (35:3), and he disputes the reasoning that human righteousness or human sins count as benevolent deeds or harmful works against God in some kind of barter with him (vv. 6-7). Instead, wickedness affects other people, just like righteousness benefits them (v. 8). Job has to refrain from empty and foolish talk and wait for God.

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[67] Cf. 27:2-6, 9:22, chapter 21.

[68] Compare the assertion in 33:8-11 with the assertion in 34:5-6, 9.

[69] Cf. Fohrer, 'Weisheit', 106.

[70] Compare 33:8-11 and 34:5-6,9 with 35:2-3.

[71] Though the Hebrew text is ambiguous: צִדְקִי מֵאֵל may also mean that Job expects his righteousness from God.

The third speech can be regarded as a conclusion of the direct confrontation and an introduction to the doctrine speech in chapters 36–37.[72] Alternatively, one can say that Elihu in his third speech refutes the assertion in 35:2 and answers the question in verse 3 but in reverse order, so the refutation of Job's self-testimony continues in the fourth speech.[73]

3.4 Elihu's Fourth Speech, Chapters 36–37

Elihu's fourth and final speech is a doctrine speech, more specifically a theodicy,[74] with an exhortation addressed to Job.[75] Elihu again justifies his claim for attention, asserting that he preaches the pure knowledge that he has acquired. His theodicy is primarily *theology*. God is mighty, wise and righteous. Punishment hits the wicked, but the righteous receive their rights. However, Elihu speaks about human destiny with nuances. People's destinies are in God's hand, but God acts in relation to their attitude towards him.[76] Accident and distress put people to the test. God will warn and exhort human beings to repentance. Distress becomes a means of repentance and salvation: 'He delivers the poor by [or: in] his accident, And opens their ear by [or: in] oppression' (36:15, my translation; בְּ may be understood as either *by* or *in*). However, a time of test is a time of crisis: 'Take heed, do not turn to iniquity, For you have chosen this rather than affliction' (36:21 NKJV).

Similar to Job in chapters 12 and 26 and God himself in chapters 38–41, Elihu also refers to nature as evidence of God's power and wisdom (cf. 36:26, 37:5). God uses nature for chastening and blessing. Elihu urges Job to listen to his [Elihu's] God-given wisdom, stand still and consider the wonders of God. Job must not regard himself as wise but fear God.

The thought of God's greatness and power *leads to humility*; Elihu also knows that God uses his power according to his righteousness.[77] As for the second part of 37:23, we may take up Luther's understanding of the Hebrew text, 'Denn er wird von seinem Recht vnd

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72 So Strauß, *Hiob 19:1–42:17*, 272.

73 Cf. Fohrer, 'Weisheit', 102.

74 לֶאֱלוֹהַּ מִלִּים (words to speak on God's behalf), 36:2. מִלִּים is the plural form of מִלָּה (word, speech); the term is typical of the book of Job, where it occurs 34 times in and outside the Elihu speeches, and elsewhere in the Old Testament only five times.

75 Cf. 36:16-21, 24; 37:14-18.

76 Wisdom style and Psalm style interlock; cf. Fohrer, 'Weisheit', 101.

77 Cf. Fohrer, 'Weisheit', 106.

guter sachen nicht rechenschafft geben'[78] ('For he will not account for his right and good things'). If we follow Luther's interpretation, we have, as mentioned above, an inclusio in 33:13b (כָּל־דְּבָרָיו לֹא־יַעֲנֶה) and 37:23b (וּמִשְׁפָּט וְרֹב־צְדָקָה לֹא יַעֲנֶה)[79] that frames Elihu's argumentation in defence of God. The Masoretes supposedly took the last four consonants in 37:23 as the *piel*, יְעַנֶּה (*y*ᵉ*'anneh*), meaning offend, and their accentuation shows that they did *not* take 'judgement and great righteousness' as objects of *y*ᵉ*'anneh*. However, conjectures have been proposed.[80] In my opinion, the best solution may be (similar to that of the New American Bible [NAB]) to assume that the word is the *niphal*, יֵעָנֶה (*yē'āneh*), which may mean be moved to give an answer, thus matching Luther's translation. I suggest the following translation: 'The Almighty, we do not find him; he is excellent in power, and for judgement and great righteousness he does not account.'[81] God owes no one an accounting. He is sovereign. This seems to be the beginning and end of Elihu's defence of God.

3.5 Is Elihu a Figure in Contrast to Job?

According to Hendrik Viviers, Elihu is a puppet who dances in front of the audience, a 'creation of an ingenious poet who deliberately, but subtly, exposes him and his values'.[82] Viviers expresses his contempt for this literary figure. He considers Elihu 'a brash young fool who suffers from megalomania, an opportunist and a manipulator and also a fabricator of evidence.'[83] On what reasoning does Viviers build his opinion? First, he believes it is obvious that Elihu's self-conscious behaviour violates Aristotle's and Quintilian's claims to the speaker's ethos.[84] The fact that Viviers uses Greek and Roman rhetoric as a measure of an Old Testament figure is likely to surprise readers. Is it so

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[78] D. Martin Luther, *Die gantze Heilige Schrifft Deudsch* (Wittenberg, 1545; Unter Mitarbeit von Heinz Blanke herausgegeben von Hans Volz; Rogner & Bernhard: München, 1972 (vol. I)) 957

[79] With the tentative vocalization of the last word, which I am arguing for.

[80] Habel, *The Book of Job*, 501, suggests reading יַעֲנֶה (*ya'ᵃneh*), that is the *qal* of a word with the same radicals, but with another meaning: answer. However, Habel's translation of verse 23 (p. 497) seems to imply a contradiction between Elihu's words and the fact that YHWH answers Job at last, which fits Habel's view on Elihu's role (cf. p. 516).

[81] Cf. Clines, *Job 21–37*, 850.

[82] Viviers, 'Elihu', 151.

[83] Viviers, 'Elihu', 151.

[84] Cf. Viviers, 'Elihu', 141, 151.

certain that Elihu and Aristotle are on a collision course, because Elihu becomes angry, while Aristotle requires insight, virtue and benevolence, or because Elihu emphasises his knowledge despite his young age and in contrast to Job's three friends? Aristotle is also keen to utilise pathos such as anger. The speaker must be able to portray his opponents as suspect individuals so that people become angry, he says.[85] Plato also lets Socrates begin his defence with a hard criticism of his prosecutors. What seems to be crucial for Viviers' negative evaluation is *that Elihu contradicts Job and partially concurs with the three friends' view on Job and his suffering*. Viviers assumes that the author or authors of the book of Job, similar to the addressees, belong to a *critical wisdom circle*, with *Job* as an exponent.[86] Thus, Elihu automatically becomes an outsider. His function in the book is to expose the retaliation doctrine that he advocates as a blind postulate. Viviers believes that although Elihu presents himself as Job's peer (33:6), he puts himself in God's place (cf. 33:7, 37:14-20) and makes himself equal with God (cf. 36:4). More interested in defending God than understanding Job's situation, Elihu exaggerates what Job has said about his innocence (compare 33:9-11 with 13:26) and constructs on the whole a straw man with whom he disputes. He emphasises God's greatness, which Job has not called into question at all, and he tries to compel Job to acknowledge sins that he has never committed. Elihu does not act impartially, as he says in 32:21, but has prejudged Job. However, when YHWH finally answers Job, He overrules Elihu's image of God and his argumentation, since Elihu has rejected that God would reveal himself to Job (35:12-13, 37:20-24).

Viviers thinks that Elihu plays an ironic role in the book of Job, as he believes that Elihu by a circular argument discredits the doctrine of retaliation and stands as an example of puffed-up quasi logic. However, Viviers does not prove that the author or authors do not realise that Job has the faults which Elihu accuses him of.[87] Compared with this consistent interpretation of Elihu as an antithesis to the author and the critical wisdom circles, Robert V. McCabe Jr approaches Elihu in a nuanced way.[88]

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[85] Aristotle, *Rhetoric* II, 2 [1380a]; cf. II, 1 [1378a]; and cf. Wahl, *Der gerechte Schöpfer*, 52-53.

[86] Viviers, 'Elihu', 138-39.

[87] Cf. Viviers, 'Elihu', 145, 'The irony is: Job who is not guilty must confess.'

[88] Cf. McCabe, 'Elihu's Contribution'.

3.6 Are Elihu's Speeches a Contrast to the Wisdom of God?

McCabe is of the opinion that the discussion about the *content* of the Elihu speeches has obscured the importance of their *function* in chapters 28–37 as a transition section in the book of Job. They largely recapitulate the dialogues between Job and his friends, but Elihu's fourth speech also has a theocentric perspective, pointing forward to God's speeches. Elihu's appearance is an intermezzo, which prepares Job for the meeting with God on his terms, not on Job's terms. McCabe believes that even though Elihu says he will not answer with the friends' words (32:14), he still employs their argumentation, and that the author of the book of Job thus signals that Elihu is not to be taken literally.[89] McCabe presents the following arguments against perceiving Elihu as normative or the author's mouthpiece:

First, Job is portrayed as 'blameless and upright' (1:1, 8, 2:3), while Elihu—based on the doctrine of retaliation—takes for granted that Job suffers for his sin.

Second, McCabe thinks that there is a contradiction between the author's emphasis on Elihu's anger (32:2-5) and Elihu's perception of himself as patient, rational and driven by the breath of the Almighty, implying that Elihu is more emotional than rational, and McCabe is of the opinion that the author intends a dramatic irony.

Third, there is a nuanced assessment of Job's words in God's speeches, whereas Elihu accuses Job as a blasphemer (34:7) who answers like wicked men (34:36), a rebel against God (34:37). In fact, both Elihu (34:35, 35:16) and God (38:2) say that Job speaks without knowledge, and Job acknowledges that he has done so (42:3). However, God also affirms that Job, in contrast to his three friends, has spoken of God what is right (42:7-8).

Fourth, the background of Job's sufferings is hidden, whereas Elihu will explain it similarly as the three friends have tried to do, though he considers the case as a disciplinary measure rather than as punishment.

McCabe bases his arguments on the view that *the author's* theological 'tendency' is expressed in the prose pericopes, God's speeches and Job's humble responses to God. McCabe says that Elihu's theology 'is fundamentally a reincarnation of the friends'',[90] a theology that is no more than human wisdom, which inevitably falls

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[89] Cf. McCabe, 'Elihu's Contribution', 57 and note 48 there.

[90] McCabe, 'Elihu's Contribution', 61.

short.[91] There is a distinction between human wisdom and God's wisdom. Human wisdom cannot solve Job's problem, and *Elihu is no exception, although he may have more right than Job's friends*. With God's voice comes a *theocentric* perspective, instead of an anthropocentric one. Job's sufferings do have a place in the framework of God's governance of the world, but they are not explained. McCabe's position is that Elihu's wisdom is a contrast to the wisdom of God.

3.7 Is Elihu a Witness of God—In Contrast to Job's Friends?

In my opinion, McCabe thus puts too much emphasis on the *similarities* between the argumentation of Elihu and that of the three friends and too little emphasis on the *differences*. Concerning forms, Elihu, not Job's three friends, seems to be a highly cultivated conversation partner.[92] Moreover, he has new things to say. Eliphaz also believes that Job's righteousness is no gain for God (22:2-3), whereas Elihu adds that it is good for fellow humans (35:8).[93] Gordis may be right in saying that although Eliphaz in 5:17 has interpreted sufferings as disciplinary means (and even if such an idea is present in Prov. 3:11-12 too), it is a distinctive feature when Elihu says that chastening is able to prevent sin.[94]

Initially, Job was tested without having caused his own suffering, but he rebels against God and is therefore about to succumb in the time of testing (cf. 36:21). Indeed, Job has succumbed to the temptation that Asaph resisted (Ps. 73:15). Eliphaz has already rebuked Job for that (15:2-6). Moreover, when Elihu depicts Job's unrepentant speech, it is *not* Job of happy times, but Job in the time of testing who has not accepted suffering as a warning, on the contrary, has *presumptuously and rebelliously protested* against it (cf. 34:33-37). Therefore, the

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[91] According to McCabe, Eliphaz in 5:17-18 has introduced in its kernel form Elihu's disciplinary view of suffering (33:19-30), often understood as Elihu's unique contribution to the book of Job ('Elihu's Contribution', 54).

[92] Cf. Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Ein Weg durch das Leid: Das Buch Ijob* (Freiburg: Herder, 2007) 192-93.

[93] Clines, *Job 21–37*, 795, says, 'Elihu's significant move in this chapter [i.e. ch. 35] is to open up the issue—as none of the friends nor Job has—of the benefits of right living.'

[94] Cf. Gordis, *The Book of Job*, 551. According to Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Ein Weg durch das Leid*, 189, Elihu takes up and strengthens an argument, which has played no role since Eliphaz mentioned it early in the dialogues. Cf. also Peters, *Das Buch Job*, 26*-27*, who distinguishes between Eliphaz talking about punishing and Elihu talking about purifying. Cf. also Shields, 'Elihu', 164-65, who somehow seems to miss the point that Elihu too accuses Job of sin.

suffering is converted to chastening and punishment. In reality, Elihu also teaches—with all of Scripture—judgment according to works. Nonetheless, Elihu recognises that suffering may have several causes. Whereas the three friends believe that suffering must be a punishment for specific sins, Elihu is open to other possible reasons.[95] In fact, he confirms Job's rejection of his friends' retaliation doctrine (cf. chapters 12–13). The three friends want Job to admit that he suffers because he has sinned, but Elihu wants him to refrain from sinning because he suffers.[96]

Therefore, far from being insensitive to Job's sufferings, Elihu is keen to be of help. Thus he has pointed to Job's pride (cf. 33:17), which rebels against God (cf. 40:11-12). Job's demand to meet God for a legal settlement stems from an intolerable arrogance. Job presupposes that he has moral arguments that can be prevailed upon God.

God does not answer to people. I regard this as one basic thesis of Elihu.[97] Yet YHWH answers Job out of the whirlwind (38:1), but what kind of response is it? It is Job being required to render an account: Whoever reproves God has to answer (cf. 40:2).

Self-critical Job finally says to YHWH, 'I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor *myself*, And repent in dust and ashes' (42:5-6 NKJV).[98] Job and his three friends seem to have been dependent on *'Hörensagen'*, on hearsay about God (לְשֵׁמַע־אֹזֶן שְׁמַעְתִּיךָ). It may refer to fragments of the revelation that Israel had, but it may also have been shaped by more or less experience-based wisdom traditions[99] and by more or less speculative, ancient Oriental wisdom traditions. In a way, such traditions formed a god in people's own image, a god who had

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[95] This is a main point of view in Shields, 'Elihu', who emphasizes the mystery of suffering in a complex universe, insisting that Elihu's account is tentative (p. 163), and so neither being affirmed nor denied (p. 169). This again obviously sticks together with how Shields interprets Job 32:8, taking 'understanding' as a result of creation and not of a particular divine inspiration (p. 159 n. 12).

[96] Cf. Roy B. Zuck, 'They [i.e. the three friends] had claimed that Job was suffering because he had sinned, but Elihu said that Job was sinning (in an attitude of pride) because he was suffering.' Zuck, 'Job', in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck , eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty: Old Testament* (Wheaton: Victor, 1985) 755.

[97] Cf. Seow, *Job 1–21*, 98.

[98] For a discussion of the Hebrew מאס and נחם cf. Wilson, *Job*, 467-68. However, even if Job retracts a lot of his statements instead of despising himself, it would be appropriately also to repent and not only change his mind.

[99] Cf. 8:8-19; 15:17-30.

undertaken obligations to his worshippers as they had undertaken to him, who could be accused if he did not fulfil his obligations when people fulfilled theirs.[100] Elihu consistently rejects this kind of anthropomorphic theology: 'Who has assigned Him His way, Or who has said, 'You have done wrong'?' (36:23 NKJV).

Similar to Psalm 73, the book of Job eradicates the opinion that the godly always have prosperity in the world. The book of Job shows tested people the way from dogmatisation of practical wisdom to acceptance of God's sovereignty and, we could say, acceptance of the thesis of *perdeitas boni*—the good is good, *because God wants it*. Here the Elihu speeches, in my view, have a key function.

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar all fail the examination. They are heretics. God is angry with them for their foolish speaking. Job must minister as a priest to them, as he has done for his sons. Compared with the three friends, Job is righteous, but he too has spoken without knowledge and wisdom. Elihu is the one who calls Job to sound reflection and prepares him for the encounter with God. Elihu is the great theologian in the book of Job. He must be a sincere witness of God and the author's special mouthpiece. How?

To the extent that human wisdom is associated with tradition and one's own experience,[101] it is fallible,[102] because the only one who really makes us humans wise is God (35:11). Human experience may be interpreted in different ways.[103] However, against fallible, experiential wisdom, Elihu presents what he calls 'my knowledge', דֵּעִי (32:6:10:17, 36:3; cf. 33:3).[104] In contrast to Job, with his limited experience and erroneous conclusions, Elihu acts as perfect, or perhaps rather infallible, in wisdom (תְּמִים דֵּעוֹת, 36:4). In 37:16, he uses almost the same expression about God as omniscient: תְּמִים דֵּעִים.[105]

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[100] Cf. Franz Sedlmeier, 'Ijob und die Auseinandersetzungsliteratur im alten Mesopotamien', in T. Seidl / S. Ernst , eds., *Das Buch Ijob*, 85-136, here 92, rendering the retaliation doctrine of the old poem called 'The Sumerian Job' (which may be over 4,000 years old).

[101] Cf. 15:9-10.

[102] Cf. 32:7, 9.

[103] Cf. Fohrer, 'Weisheit', 107.

[104] Throughout the Old Testament, the masculine form דֵּעַ is used only in Elihu's speeches, and he distinguishes between דֵּעַ and the much more common term דַּעַת; cf. Seow, *Job 1–21*, 34.

[105] Cf. also 1 Sam. 2:3. דֵּעוֹת is the plural form of דֵּעָה, while דֵּעִים is the plural form of דֵּעַ. Clines, *Job 21–37*, 855, points out the challenge to provide a relevant translation for תְּמִים דֵּעוֹת, and he suggests, 'a man sincere in his ideas'; cf. Clines, *Job 21–37*,

Through divine inspiration, Elihu has obtained superior understanding and insight (cf. 32:8), knowledge that has taken shape in words which break forth from his inner life (cf. 32:18-20).[106]

The Elihu speeches actually overturn an unnatural distinction between prophecy and wisdom tradition.[107] The true wisdom teacher, like the true prophet, is taught by God. It is imperative for Elihu to carry forward his message (32:18-20) in the same way as it is for Jeremiah (Jer. 20:7-9). Elihu confronts Job with the knowledge of God, which the wicked deny (Ps. 73:11), and Job has also called into question, according to Eliphaz (22:13-14). Such confrontation has a clearing effect in relation to the debate between Job and his friends.[108]

In summary, we may say that the book of Job exposes a narrow-minded and one-dimensional wisdom tradition, which teaches the law of retaliation without realising that God's governance of the world may contain elements that are incomprehensible to us. Elihu stands on God's side not only against Job's three friends, but also against Job. Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar insist that Job's sins must have caused his great sufferings. Job shares their theoretical basis, but his conscience acquits him. his experience contests their retribution theory. The theory seems to lead towards a belief in being able to control one's life. '*Is* not your reverence your confidence? And the integrity of your ways your hope?' asks Eliphaz (4:6 NKJV). No, it is not our reverence, fear of God and ways of life on which we have to rely, but on God himself and his word. Job's three friends believe that we human beings can search God's judgements and track his routes. Elihu says otherwise. Like Paul, who also exposes the world's narrow-minded wisdom tradition and declares that the world through its wisdom did not know God in his wisdom (1 Cor. 1:21; cf. Rom. 11:33-36).

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806. However, I would argue that תְּמִים דֵּעוֹת must have a more objective content, such as a man with an infallible, unadulterated, acquired knowledge, cf. the introduction to Elihu's first speech, 32:6–33:7.

[106] Habel, *The Book of Job*, 453-54, believes that Elihu's words ironically stamp him as a windbag and a fool, but Clines, *Job 21–37*, 722-23, rejects this and the alleged allusion to 15:2.

[107] Neither according to form nor according to contents does the book of Job, with the story, dialogues and God speeches, slide easily into wisdom literature as a form type. Cf. van Oorschot, 'Tendenzen', 380.

[108] Cf. McKay, 'Elihu', 168, on Elihu, 'his sole function being to take up the important threads of the discussion, dispose of some misleading implications and reorientate it in the direction of healing.'

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