Does God come to bury Job or to praise him?¹

The significance of \( \text{YHWH} \)'s second speech from the whirlwind

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The book of Job has fascinated and attracted many readers over the past two and a half thousand years. The primary attraction of the book today is Job's searing honesty about suffering and his refusal to accept easy answers that explain his suffering away.

Here is a righteous man, affirmed as such by both the narrator (Job 1:1) and by God (1:8; 2:3). Yet Job loses all his wealth and his children are taken from him in terrible circumstances; then his body is afflicted with boils or sores from head to toe. The language used of Job's bodily affliction closely reflects the covenant curse concerning disease found in Deuteronomy 28:35. This language serves to portray Job as suffering from the stated consequences of disobedience to God, even though both the narrator and God have affirmed his exemplary righteousness (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3).

Initially, before his own bodily affliction, Job piously says: '\( \text{YHWH} \) gives and \( \text{YHWH} \) takes away—blessed be the name of \( \text{YHWH} \)' (1:21).² Later, after he is afflicted bodily, Job refuses to follow his wife's advice to curse God and die. Technically, Job's wife says, 'Bless God and die,' which is a euphemism, introduced into the text of Job, not only at this point, but every time a verb

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for ‘curse’ would have God as its object. This ambiguous use of bless begins with the Accuser’s claim that if God afflicts Job, he will ‘bless’ (that is, curse) God to his face (1:11; 2:5).  

Having genuinely (I think) ‘blessed’ God in 1:21 in response to the first set of calamities, Job rejects the option suggested by his wife, namely, of ‘blessing’ God in the other sense (cursing God). That, he said, would be ‘foolish’, which in a book of wisdom literature is a significant indicator of a path that should not be taken.

But Job’s response after his bodily affliction is slightly different from his earlier response of outright blessing. Job basically repeats his prior sentiment, saying, ‘Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?’ But it is telling that he no longer blesses God explicitly. In all this, the narrator says, Job did not sin with his lips (2:10).

Besides rejecting the option of cursing God, however, Job also rejects the explanations his friends give for his suffering, as they try to justify God and explain why Job’s suffering is legitimate, even deserved. Thankfully, they don’t start out with explanations. First, they sit with him in silence and solidarity for seven days (2:11–13).

But then Job breaks the silence (3:1) and utters a torrent of audacious words. He doesn’t directly address God (he certainly doesn’t bless God) and he doesn’t address his friends. Rather, he curses the day he was born (and here we do, indeed, find the Hebrew verb for curse).

After this Job opens his mouth and curses the day (and night) of his birth. Job says:

Let the day perish in which I was born,
    and the night that said, ‘A man-child is conceived.’ (3:1–3)

Then he expands on cursing the day:

Let that day be darkness!
    May God above not seek it,
    or light shine on it.

Let gloom and deep darkness claim it.
    Let clouds settle upon it;
    let the blackness of the day terrify it. (3:4–5)
Then Job curses the night that preceded his birth—he’s trying to be comprehensive:

That night—let thick darkness seize it!
    let it not rejoice among the days of the year;
    let it not come into the number of the months.
Yes, let that night be barren;
    let no joyful cry be heard in it.
Let those curse it who curse the Sea,
    those who are skilled to rouse up Leviathan.
Let the stars of its dawn be dark;
    let it hope for light, but have none;
    may it not see the eyelids of the morning—
because it did not shut the doors of my mother’s womb,
    and hide trouble from my eyes. (3:6–10)

Then begin a series of pained questions, starting with:

Why did I not die at birth,
    come forth from the womb and expire? (3:11)

And Job goes on to articulate his lamentable state—including his death wish—with remarkable honesty in the remainder of chapter 3.6

It is after this outburst that his friends begin to reprimand him for speaking so impiously, as they seek to trace the cause of his suffering back to his sinfulness; he must have done something terribly wrong for this to happen to him. Or they try to convince him that God is trying to teach him something, so he should simply accept his suffering, quietly and piously. And he might as well repent anyway, since no human being can be righteous before God.

But Job refuses to have any of it. He will accept no easy answers, especially answers or explanations that blame the victim. And he will not accept his friends’ advice to calm down and not be upset—especially with God.

This is very attractive to many contemporary readers, we who live in a world of massive suffering—with domestic violence, gang warfare, oppressive political regimes; virulent diseases; toxic waste; terrorism, torture, and slavery; massive tsunamis, earthquakes, and hurricanes that destroy life—where the media continually confronts us with the magnitude of global suffering.
Moreover, we ourselves have often experienced suffering personally, in many and various forms. So we are impatient with easy explanations, especially those that blame the victim. Thus we’re attracted to Job’s honesty—audacious as it is—and intrigued by his boldness in speaking his mind, even (ultimately) to God (which he starts doing explicitly in chapter 7).

**God’s speeches as a rebuke of Job for daring to question divine justice**

The book of Job is nevertheless problematic and troubling—in a number of ways. In my opinion, the most problematic aspect of the book is God’s response to Job’s complaint, since God seems to rebuke Job for his audacious speech, for daring to question the way God has ordered the world (and Job’s life). God tries to shut Job down, to make him feel inferior for his honesty and boldness.

The interpretation of God’s speeches to Job as a ringing rebuke or supreme put-down, intended to abase Job, has a long history and is in harmony with much traditional piety, which judges Job’s abrasive speech as unseemly, even arrogant, in need of divine rebuke.⁷

While Job initially blesses God after suffering the first set of calamities, and then passively acquiesces in whatever God sends his way after the second set of calamities (yet without blessing God explicitly), he later comes to quite audacious speech—even beyond cursing the day of his birth.

So, in chapter 19 he tells his friends that God has wronged him (19:6) and says that though he cries aloud he gets no justice (19:7). Indeed, God has (wrongly, in Job’s mind) uprooted his hope (19:10) and treated him as an adversary (19:11).⁸ And then in Job 27:4–6 Job swears adamantly that he is innocent, and that he is telling the truth about his innocence. Indeed, he swears this in a telling oath, which begins:

> As God lives, who has taken away my right,  
> And the Almighty who has made my soul bitter … (27:2)

This is Job’s fundamental judgment about who God is—as he has experienced the deity. God is *wrong*; God is *unjust*. So it makes perfect sense that God would want to shut him down.

Beyond traditional piety, however, there are at least five indicators from the text of Job itself that suggest that God is indeed reprimanding Job for his arrogance.
1. No mention of humans in the first speech

First, as is often pointed out by commentators, there is no explicit mention of humans in the amazing catalog of creatures surveyed in God’s first speech (38:1–39:30). This speech begins with a challenge to Job (38:1–3), then describes the basic structure of the inanimate cosmos (38:4–18), mentions various astronomical and meteorological phenomena (38:19–38), and celebrates a series of strange, wild animals (38:39–39:30). However, reference to humans is conspicuously missing.

The absence in God’s first speech of any reference to the human role in the created order is often taken as a ‘decentering’ of Job’s anthropocentric point of view—humans are insignificant from God’s perspective and Job has an over-inflated sense of his own importance in the cosmic scheme of things, which has led to his insistent and arrogant questioning of God.

2. The display of God’s power in both speeches

The second indicator that the intent of God’s speeches is to put Job in his place is the overwhelming display of God’s raw power in creation found in the two speeches. The barrage of questions God throws at Job in the first speech (who is this? were you there? do you know?), along with the vivid panorama of creatures (which God boasts that he both made and controls), seems like a rhetorical ‘shock and awe’ campaign meant to abase Job and put him in his place. In particular, the inclusion in the second speech of the two beasts, Behemoth and Leviathan—who seem to represent the chaos monsters of ancient Near Eastern mythology—suggests the vast extent of God’s power.

Whether it is the ancient Mesopotamian deity Ninurta subduing the fabled Anzu bird or the later Babylonian god Marduk subduing the sea monster Tiamat, this well-known ancient mythology of conquest extols the power of the creator over the forces of chaos. If God is able to subdue even the cosmic forces of chaos, how could Job be any match for God?

3. God’s challenge to Job to exercise power over the cosmos in the second speech

Connected to this overwhelming display of divine power is the third indicator, namely, God’s explicit challenge to Job at the start of the second speech to exercise power as Creator and to govern the cosmos if he is able
to (40:9–14). This would, of course, need to include mastering Leviathan, the chaos beast—an impossible task, as 41:8–9 indicates.

Lay hands on it;
think of the battle; you will not do it again!
Any hope will be disappointed;
one is overwhelmed at the sight of it. (41:8–9)

This challenge to Job in 40:9–14 is often read as God’s quite understandable response to Job’s audacity at having questioned divine governance of the cosmos. Indeed, according to the introduction to the first speech, the Creator seems upset that Job has darkened ‘counsel’ or ‘design’ (‘ešā)—that is, God’s design of the cosmos—without knowledge (38:2); and according to the introduction to God’s second speech, God clearly says that Job has tried to discredit his justice (mišpāt), and has condemned the Creator while justifying himself (40:8). God thus lays down the gauntlet in 40:9–14. Job had better put up or shut up.

Have you an arm like God,
and can you thunder with a voice like his?
Deck yourself with majesty and dignity;
clothe yourself with glory and splendor.
Pour out the overflowings of your anger,
and look on all who are proud, and abase them.
Look on all who are proud, and bring them low;
tread down the wicked where they stand.
Hide them all in the dust together;
bind their faces in the world below.
Then I will also acknowledge to you
that your own right hand can give you victory. (40:9–14)

The implication, of course, is that Job can do no such thing. And, in coming to realize this, he will change his attitude to one that is more appropriately submissive to the true Ruler of creation.

4. The comparison of Job with the beasts of the second speech

The fourth indicator that God wants to abase Job is found in an intriguing though implicit comparison between Job and the two beasts of the second speech. One possible reason for God’s appeal to these monsters is that Job
is like them in significant ways. Like these beasts, especially Leviathan, Job has become (by his speech) a monstrous, chaotic creature, in need of subduing.\textsuperscript{16} If Job is, indeed, being compared to primordial chaos, would this not be the supreme denigration of Job, on God’s part?\textsuperscript{17}

5. Job’s ‘repentance’ after the second speech

But the clincher (the fifth indicator) that God’s speeches are intended to reprimand and abase Job is Job’s response after the second speech (in 42:6). As almost all modern translations render it, Job replies to God’s rhetorical ‘shock and awe’ tactics by admitting: ‘I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes’ (42:6).

And yet . . . A reason for questioning this interpretation of God’s speeches

The initial problem for this traditional interpretation of God’s speeches (namely, that they are intended to rebuke Job for his audacity and to put him in his place) is that the two verses immediately following Job’s ‘repentance’ contain God’s explicit approval of Job’s speech. As God says twice to Eliphaz about him and his two friends in 42:7 and 8: ‘You [plural] have not spoken of me what is right [nēkōnā], as my servant Job has.’

Then God goes on in 42:8 (according to most translations) to call the speech of Eliphaz and his two friends ‘folly’ (nēbālā). The Hebrew simply says that God will not deal with them according to folly (‘your’ is supplied by the translators). But the traditional translations are not far wrong, if God is saying that he will not respond in kind.

Thus we seem to have two opposing forms of foolish speech in the book of Job—Job’s wife’s advice to curse God and Job’s friends’ attempt to explain suffering. In contrast to these two options, the implication is that Job’s speech has embodied wisdom.\textsuperscript{18}

Does this mean that Job’s outrageous curse on the day of his birth (in chapter 3), followed by his abrasive discourses with his friends, and his seemingly impious and insistent demand upon God to answer him—that this could all be faithful speech, theological discourse characterized by wisdom? And could there be unanimity in this judgment between the epilogue to the book and God’s speeches from the whirlwind?\textsuperscript{19} These questions impel me to explore the wild possibility that God’s speeches (and Job’s response) might cohere with the explicit approbation Job receives in the prose epilogue. Is
it possible that God answers Job from the whirlwind not to bury him, but to praise him?

To explore this possibility, I will address the status of God’s appeal to the primordial monsters, Behemoth and Leviathan, in the second speech. This will take up most of the rest of this study. In tandem with this, however, I will try to answer two other questions. First, of what does Job ‘repent’ in his response to God’s second speech? And why is there a second speech at all? Why didn’t the first suffice?²⁰

**Why does God appeal to the beasts in the second speech?**

So, first of all, what is the status of God’s appeal to the primordial monsters? Why does God introduce them? And what is the basic point (or points) that the second speech tries to make, by reference to Behemoth and Leviathan?

**The beasts as embodiments of chaos**

The conventional interpretation (that God is showing off his power to abase Job) usually involves assuming that these beasts represent the forces of chaos that God conquered or subdued at creation. That is, they assume an ancient Near Eastern ‘combat myth’ or *Chaoskampf* background here, in which God defeats the primordial waters (usually the sea) and/or various monsters associated with water (usually understood as serpents or dragons) in order to create the ordered world. In the Babylonian myth *Enuma Elish*, the god Marduq conquers the primordial ocean/monster Tiamat, while in Ugaritic myth, Baal conquers Sea/River and also Lotan/Litan, a seven-headed dragon.²¹ But are Behemoth and Leviathan in God’s second speech intended to represent the primordial forces of chaos?

The assumption that the ancient Near Eastern combat myth is in the background of these two beasts is not entirely unwarranted. Although it is possible to see existing zoological species as the observational basis or model for these beasts (Behemoth deriving from the hippopotamus or possibly the water buffalo and Leviathan from the crocodile), there is enough of a mythic overlay to suggest more than particular zoological species.

Behemoth is the plural of majesty of *bēhēmā*, the typical Hebrew word for a large (usually domesticated) land animal (indeed, the singular is often used as a collective noun, rendered ‘cattle’ or ‘livestock’). So the plural here seems to designate a mega animal, a beast *par excellence*, though this beast is equally at home in the water as on land (and it certainly cannot be
domesticated). This, combined with the description of Behemoth in 40:19 as the ‘first of the great acts of God’ (an expression almost identical to what is said about wisdom in Proverbs 8:22), suggests something more than a mere hippopotamus or water buffalo.²²

In the case of Leviathan, we have the vivid description of its fire-breathing abilities (41:18–21 [MT 41:10–13]) and the comment in 41:25 that even the gods tremble at its power; this certainly suggests something beyond an ordinary crocodile. Such descriptions evoke the chaos monster of Ugaritic mythology—the seven-headed dragon or serpent known as Lotan or Litan, a word cognate to Hebrew Leviathan.

In the Baal cycle, the goddess Anat claims to have defeated Baal’s enemies, including the twisting serpent with seven heads:

What enemy has risen against Baal,
    what foe against the Rider on the Clouds?
Didn’t I demolish El’s Darling, Sea?
    Didn’t I finish off the divine River, the Mighty?
    Didn’t I snare the Dragon and destroy him?
I demolished the Twisting Serpent,
    the seven-headed monster.²³

Elsewhere the god Mot (Death) gives Baal credit for the victory:

When you killed Litan, the Fleeing Serpent,
    finished off the Twisting Serpent,
    the seven-headed monster . . .²⁴

This fleeing and twisting serpent shows up in the Bible, in a text that announces YHWH’s eschatological victory over the forces of evil:

On that day YHWH
    with his cruel and great and strong sword
will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent,
    Leviathan the twisting serpent,
and he will kill the dragon that is in the sea. (Isa 27:1)

Another biblical text, which pictures the battle in primordial time (at creation), mentions the heads of Leviathan, without specifying their number.
You divided the sea by your might; 
you broke the heads of the dragons in the waters. 
You crushed the heads of Leviathan . . . (Ps 74:13–14)

Furthermore, the book of Job itself contains at least one cosmology in which God clearly vanquishes primordial chaos in order to found the world (Job 26:5–14). According to Job:

The pillars of heaven tremble, 
and are astounded at his [God’s] rebuke.
By his power he stilled the Sea; 
by his understanding he struck down Rahab.
By his wind the heavens were made fair; 
his hand pierced the fleeing serpent. (26:11–13)

Even though this particular text does not mention Leviathan by name, the epithet ‘the fleeing serpent’ is a dead giveaway. So this account of creation, which is placed in Job’s mouth (though sometimes thought to be Bildad’s words displaced), shows that the book of Job is indeed acquainted with the Chaoskampf motif.

How the beasts differ from the forces of chaos

Yet the description of both Behemoth and Leviathan in God’s second speech differs from the typical conception of the chaos monster that God subdued to create the world, on at least three counts. First, neither Behemoth nor Leviathan is presented as intrinsically aggressive or violent. While they are indeed fierce and dangerous, a close reading of the second speech reveals that these beasts are to be feared only if someone tries to capture or subdue them. In that case, they will fight back.

Second, Behemoth is explicitly said to be created by God in Job 40:15. In ancient Near Eastern mythology God does not create the forces of chaos. God conquers them in order to create (they are impediments to an ordered cosmos). Yet here, God presents this wild beast as part of the created order (as Leviathan is portrayed in Ps 104:26).25

Third, there is absolutely no conflict portrayed between God and either Behemoth or Leviathan; although God is able to conquer them, the text suggests that God has no reason to do so.26 On the contrary, God is clearly proud of these two wild beasts! In much the same way that God celebrates
the irrepressible wildness of the cavalcade of animals in his first speech (38:39–39:30), here God boasts to Job about the fierce, untamable strength of Behemoth and Leviathan. Sounding like the writer of Hebrews recounting the heroes of faith (Hebrews 11:32), God says of Leviathan in 41:12, 'I will not keep silence concerning its limbs, or its mighty strength, or its splendid frame.' God is here like a proud father showing photos of his children and telling of their accomplishments.27

So the point of God's appeal to Behemoth and Leviathan in the second speech is not that Job (unlike God) is unable to subdue the forces of chaos (and so he should shut up). Nor is it that Job (like these beasts) is himself in need of subduing.

The similarity between Job and the beasts

Yet, on one point the conventional reading of the second speech is probably right. Job is, indeed, being compared to these beasts. The first clue is the opening description of Behemoth in 40:15. 'Look at Behemoth / which I made just as I made you' (NRSV) or 'which I made along with you' (NIV). This is the only specific reference to the creation of humans in God's speeches and it suggests a parallel of sorts between Job and this particular beast.

We should note that Job had earlier compared himself to the mythic forces of chaos in a manner that agrees with the assumptions of many contemporary interpreters. Thus in 7:12 he asks God, 'Am I the Sea, or the Dragon, / that you set a guard over me?'28 This question, coming right after Job's assertion in 7:11 that he will not restrain his mouth, but that he will, indeed, give voice to his anguish and complain in his bitterness, suggests that he expects that God wants to subdue him, like the chaos monster, especially because of his untamed, wild speech.29 That is certainly what Job's friends would like God to do.

But that is not the way God treats the Sea, according to Job 38:8–11. There, in God's first speech from the whirlwind, this traditional symbol of watery chaos is portrayed not as an enemy to be subdued, but as a rambunctious infant that God wraps in swaddling clothes when it first bursts energetically from the womb. And while it does need boundaries, as children do (and God prescribes them), the picture is less like a warlike conquest and more like a parent setting limits for a toddler who has hit the 'terrible twos', or putting up a child gate to protect an overactive child. The picture is of energetic nurture, rather than anything adversarial.30
And this is true not only of God’s relationship to the Sea, but also of
God’s relationship to Behemoth and Leviathan (and thus, by implication,
of God’s relationship to Job). Through a complex web of associations, Job’s
fearless and courageous strength, by which he stood up to the verbal and
emotional assaults of his friends, is evoked in the description of Behemoth
and Leviathan.31 Like them, Job has been impervious to the assaults of his
adversaries, and this is a good thing.

The core of the comparison is found in the description of the powerful
mouth of each beast. Whereas Job 40:23 pictures Behemoth standing
fearlessly facing the turbulent Jordan, as its waters rush against its open
mouth, Job had previously (in 6:15–21) compared his friends’ attempts at
consolation to a treacherous wadi or torrent bed that at first seemed full
of rushing water but that quickly dried up and disappeared in the face of
Job’s sufferings and complaint. That Job was able verbally to stand against
and outlast his companions (much as Behemoth is able to stand against the
raging Jordan) belies his own sense of impotence only a few verses before
(6:12–13). Indeed, Job’s own self-description in 6:12 (‘Is my strength the
strength of stones? Or is my flesh bronze?’) is echoed in God’s description
of Behemoth in 40:18 (‘its bones are tubes of bronze, its limbs are like bars
of iron’). The implication is that Job, in standing up to his friends, is more
powerful than he thinks.

But even Behemoth’s strength is as nothing to Leviathan’s, since he
‘counts iron as straw and bronze as rotten wood’ (41:27 [MT 41:19]). And
Job is indeed like Leviathan, this most powerful of all beasts. Thus Job 41:1
portrays Leviathan as having an irrepressible tongue, and 41:3–4 explains
that this beast won’t plead for mercy and speak soft words of acquiescence
to its attackers (just like Job, we may add). On the contrary, we are told (in
41:18–21) of Leviathan’s fearful visage (his eyes, mouth, nostrils, breath)
from which come heat, light, flames, and smoke.

Its [Leviathan’s] sneezes flash forth light,
        and its eyes are like the eyelids of the dawn.
From its mouth go flaming torches;
        sparks of fire leap out.
Out of its nostrils come smoke,
        as from a boiling pot and burning rushes.
Its breath kindles coals,  
and a flame comes out of its mouth. (41:18–21)

Leviathan is thus a living, breathing version of the Sinai theophany, mirroring in his wildness the manifestation of God’s blazing glory at the mountain in Exodus 19.32 And Job’s friends had certainly experienced his incendiary speech and criticized his fiery, untamable talk as inappropriate.33

**Different estimates of the human condition**34

A particularly important critique of Job’s speech by one of his friends is found in 4:17–21, where Eliphaz paints a particularly dreary portrait of the human condition. Using the word ēnōš for mortal humanity (a term also found in Psalm 8), Eliphaz asks:

Can mortals [ēnōš] be righteous before God?  
Can human beings [geber] be pure before their Maker?  
Even in his servants he [God] puts no trust,  
and his angels he charges with error;  
how much more those who live in houses of clay,  
whose foundation is in the dust  
who are crushed like a moth! (Job 4:17–21)

So Job, don’t expect much from God. You’re insignificant. This is dreary, indeed, and quite different from the royal picture of humanity found in Psalm 8, which asks: ‘What is ēnōš [this mortal creature] that you care about him / and the son of ādām that you visit him?’ (8:4 [MT 8:5]; my translation). And the psalm goes on to speak of the glory and honor with which mortals have been crowned and the rule over various creatures with which God has entrusted them (8:5 [MT 8:6]). In all this, the text says, they are little less than God (or the gods), a very high status indeed.

It is, of course, important that Job himself echoes Psalm 8 in his answer to Eliphaz (in chapter 7).35 The trouble is, he seems to have internalized Eliphaz’s negative evaluation of the human condition and thus Job’s appeal to the psalm takes the form of a parody or satire. What is ēnōš? asks Job in 7:17–19.

What are human beings [ēnōš] that you make so much of them,  
that you set your mind on them,
visit them every morning,  
test them every moment?  
Will you not look away from me for a while,  
let me alone until I swallow my spittle? (Job 7:17–19)

And he accuses God, the watcher of humanity, of targeting him (7:20).

The intertextuality of Psalm 8 with Job 7 (and the similarity of Job’s and Eliphaz’s estimate of the human condition in chapters 4 and 7) suggests that a significant part of the issue here is the question of the appropriate status and function of humanity vis-à-vis God.36 In God’s world, are humans merely insignificant, even degraded, beings (Eliphaz) or powerless victims (Job)? Or, on the contrary, do they have a God-ordained (and God-affirmed) royal dignity and status (Psalm 8)? And if the latter, what are the implications of this dignity for human speech, even speech vis-à-vis God?

It is intriguing that there are royal overtones to the description of Leviathan in the book of Job. At the end of the second speech, God says of Leviathan: ‘On earth it has no equal, / a creature without fear. / It surveys everything that is lofty; / it is king over all that are proud’ (41:33–34 [MT 41: 25–26]). The first phrase, ‘On earth it has no equal,’ can also mean ‘it has no ruler’ since the participle mošel (from māšal) can refer either to likeness or governance. Perhaps this is a double entendre. At any rate, this description of Leviathan as the most royal of God’s creatures evokes the description of the human vocation—found not only in Psalm 8:3–5, but also in Genesis 1:26–28, where humans, in God’s image and likeness, are granted dominion over the earth.

But the connection of Leviathan’s royal status to his gaze over the lofty and his rule over the proud at the end of God’s second speech (41:33–34 [MT 41:25–26]) is important also for interpreting God’s challenge to Job at the start of this same speech (40:6–14). If God positively values Leviathan’s power over the proud, then perhaps we need to reevaluate God’s challenge to Job (in 40:10–13) to look at the proud and abase them.37 Perhaps this is not meant as a put-down of Job, but as a challenge that Job might actually rise to.

Indeed, the challenge to Job in 40:10 to ‘Deck yourself with majesty and dignity; / clothe yourself with glory and splendor’ might well be alluding to the royal status of humans in Psalm 8, who are there said to be crowned with ‘glory and honor’ (and one of the words in each case is the same). Indeed, the very same word pair from Job 40:10, ‘glory and splendor’ (hōd wēhādār),
is used in Psalm 21:5 [MT 21:6] to describe what God endows the king with. And the fact that this very Hebrew word pair is used of God in other psalms (Ps 96:6 [= 1 Chron 16:27]; 104:1; 111:3) suggests a clear *imago Dei* theme.\(^{38}\) And, indeed, both Psalm 8 and Genesis 1 compare humans to God in their royal power and status. Consonant with both Psalm 8 and Genesis 1, the royal motif in God’s second speech to Job is a matter of likeness to God. So when God asks Job in 40:9, ‘Have you an arm *like* God, / and can you thunder with a voice *like* his?’ it is entirely possible that such bracing questions (much like the rhetorical questions addressed to the dispirited exiles in Isaiah 40) are meant not as a put-down, but to push Job beyond his passivity to take up his royal vocation.

**Why is there a second speech?**

But what passivity is this? Hasn’t Job been enacting his royal fearlessness, abasing the pride of his three friends by his fiery discourse, throughout the book? Indeed, he has. But after God’s first speech, which was intended to correct his misjudgment of God’s governance of the cosmos, Job is rendered mute. God began the first speech by telling Job, ‘Gird up your loins like a man [like a *geber*—a word with often vigorous connotations] / I will question you, and you shall declare to me’ (Job 38:3).\(^{39}\) But when God finishes his survey of the irrepressible wildness of the animal kingdom in 39:30 (ending admittedly on a somewhat distasteful and grisly note about birds of prey feeding on blood), there is only ringing silence. This is why the narrator adds a speech resumption formula in 40:1, followed by another challenge. ‘And *YHWH* [again] said to Job, / “Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? / Anyone who argues with God *must respond!*”’ And Job finally does speak in 40:3–5, but only to admit his insignificance (Eliphaz’s perspective has won out); he lays his hand over his mouth, *refusing to answer.*

The irrepressible human speaker, who has poured out a torrent of honest, abrasive words to his friends, is here silenced by God, who actually wants a vigorous conversation partner—one who bracingly faces his creator, in accordance with his royal calling. God, it seems, has unintentionally overpowered Job.\(^{40}\)

So God speaks again. And his opening challenge to Job in the second speech (40:7) repeats the words from the beginning of the first speech: ‘Gird up your loins like a *geber* / I will question you and you *will* declare to me!’ By now it should be clear why there is a second speech. God is not
satisfied with Job’s abased silence. God desires a worthy dialogue partner.\textsuperscript{41} Why else would the Creator of the cosmos address Job personally—and at such length? God deems Job worthy of an answer (which, parenthetically, subverts the notion that humans are insignificant in God’s world, which a surface reading of the speeches might suggest). Humans are so significant that God speaks at length to at least one of them in a personal theophany.\textsuperscript{42} Indeed, God speaks twice to Job. And in his second speech, God encourages Job in his untamed (royal) wildness by praising (indeed, glorying in) two powerful beasts who, like Job (at his best), will not be subdued.

And Job understands. The second speech has the intended effect. Job girds up his loins and rises to the challenge. He acknowledges (in 42:3) that he spoke without really understanding. He had questioned God’s cosmic governance, assuming that God ruled unjustly, wreaking havoc in the world, with capricious power.\textsuperscript{43} But now Job has come to understand that God celebrates the wildness of creation, giving untamable creatures great freedom to be themselves. He acknowledges that God does not micromanage the cosmos. That, at least, is my reading of the import of Job’s response in 42:3, given the context of the two speeches.

**Of what does Job ‘repent’?**

As for the meaning of Job 42:6, I am aware that there are numerous proposed translations for this interpretive crux. Suffice it to say that few (if any) contemporary biblical scholars are satisfied with the rendering found in standard published translations of the Bible (from the KJV to the NIV to the NRSV), as it is unsupported from the Hebrew.\textsuperscript{44}

The first verb, ‘em’as, typically translated ‘I despise myself,’ has no object here (‘myself’ is supplied by translators) and it is never used in the Hebrew Qal stem for despising oneself. In all likelihood, Job here says, ‘I retract [or recant],’ referring to his response to God after the first speech, when he refused to answer (40:3–5).\textsuperscript{45} He retracts his inappropriate passive response to God.\textsuperscript{46}

The second verb in 42:6 is from the root n-h-m, and can refer either to repentance (that is, to changing one’s mind) or to consoling or comforting oneself (depending on whether the Hebrew stem is taken to be a Niphal or Piel; the form here is ambiguous) and the preposition ‘a/ does not mean ‘in; but rather ‘upon’ or ‘over’ (if taken spatially) or ‘concerning’ or ‘about’ (more metaphorically). So, here there are two possibilities.
On the one hand, Job could be ‘repenting’ of (changing his position about) his previous ‘dust and ashes’ stance of abasement. In that case, the line, ‘I repent concerning dust and ashes,’ would basically repeat (and expand on) the first line, ‘I retract’ (that is, my first speech or position, which was equivalent to ‘dust and ashes’).47

On the other hand, Job may be saying that he is ‘consoled’ (or has consoled himself) about the fact that he is simply ‘dust and ashes.’ In other words, he may have come to accept that the fragile nature of the human condition, with all its suffering (the human status as ‘dust and ashes,’ which he has experienced), is not incompatible with the royal dignity and importance of humanity in God’s sight, evident in God’s willingness both to hear Job’s complaint and to answer him.

This second possibility draws on the only other two uses of the expression ‘dust and ashes’ in the Hebrew Bible. In Job 30:19, Job had complained that God had cast him into the mire so he has become ‘dust and ashes.’ Given that negative usage, it seems that in 42:6 Job has moved beyond his despair and come to accept that despite being but ‘dust and ashes’ he has been heard—and taken seriously—by the Creator of the cosmos.

Could Job’s speech be an answer to Abraham’s silence?

The only other place the phrase is found is Genesis 18:27, where Abraham describes himself as ‘dust and ashes;’ although this is combined with great boldness towards God, even audacity.48 The context is Abraham’s dispute with God over the justice of destroying Sodom if there are righteous/innocent people living there. In that context, Abraham tells God that he is going to be bold enough to speak—to try to change God’s mind—even though he is but ‘dust and ashes.’ The paradox is that having been so bold as to upbraid God over the possible destruction of Sodom, he is silent when instructed to sacrifice his own son as a burnt offering (Gen 22:1–19).

Having stood up for the righteous/innocent who lived in Sodom in Genesis 18—indeed, challenging God on their behalf—when God commands the sacrifice of his own (innocent) son in Genesis 22, Abraham is mute. He says nothing in response to the command; in deathly silence he packs the boy up for the journey to the mountain (Gen 22:3, 6), binds him (the source of the Jewish name for the episode, the Aqedah or ‘binding’ of Isaac), and raises the knife ‘to slay his son’ (Gen 22:9–10).
This reversal of Abraham from bold speech to silence may well be addressed by Job's own move in the other direction—from silence to speech, a move that happens twice. Having sat for seven days with his friends, saying nothing (Job 2:13), Job then takes up his lament (3:1). Later, having been (unintentionally) rendered silent by God's first speech, Job retracts this refusal to answer. By the end of the book he has come to a realization (similar to Abraham's in Genesis 18) that even 'dust and ashes' may address the divine Ruler of the cosmos—and expect an answer.⁴⁹

Beyond the possible link between the interplay of silence and speech in the Aqedah and Job, and the occurrence of the phrase 'dust and ashes' on the lips of both Abraham and Job (and nowhere else in the Bible), there are several further intertextual connections or parallels between Abraham and Job. The most important of these are that both Abraham and Job are tested by God and that both are said to fear God.

Whereas 'God tested Abraham' (Gen 22:1) by instructing him to sacrifice his son, the entire book of Job functions as an analogue to the Aqedah in which Job responds to a series of calamities that come upon him at the prompting of the Adversary (the Satan). This connection was already seen in the book of Jubilees (chaps. 17–18), which has Mastema incite God to test Abraham in much the same way that the Satan figure does in Job 1–2. Beyond that, the term 'God-fearer' (which is rare in the Hebrew Bible) is applied to both Abraham and Job—Abraham after his test (Gen 22:12), Job at the outset of his (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3).⁵⁰ These intertextual links (and there are others⁵¹) suggest that the book of Job may well be a response to the Aqedah, contrasting Abraham's silent and subservient mode of fearing God with the vocal, bold—yet still God-fearing—protests of Job.⁵²

Perhaps because of the differing responses of Abraham and Job to God, there are also, arguably, different impacts of Abraham's silence and Job's speech on their offspring (on Isaac, in the one case, and on Job's daughters, in the other). It is telling that the likely traumatized Isaac does not return with the father who attempted to sacrifice him to his God (Gen 22:19). Later Isaac returns from the Negev where he has been living since the Moriah episode (Gen 24:62) with his new bride, Rebekah—but this is only after Abraham is old and Sarah is dead (Gen 24:67). Even then he goes to live in Sarah's tent in Haran, not with Abraham in Beersheba. Father and son never meet again after Genesis 22.
Does God come to bury Job or to praise him?

Indeed, unlike the other ancestors (Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph) in the book of Genesis, Isaac is a diminished figure, with only one chapter (Genesis 26) devoted fully to him. We can infer, further, the traumatizing effects on Isaac of the episode on Moriah by attending to Jacob’s description of the God of his father as ‘the Fear of Isaac’ (Gen 31:42; repeated in 31:53).

But Job, who has stood up for himself to God and to his friends—in passionate speech—ends up giving his new daughters an inheritance like his sons; and they, unlike his sons, are explicitly named in the epilogue—Jemimah, Keziah, and Keren-happuch (Job 42:13–15). Is it possible that Job’s protest about the injustice he felt was being done to him has spilled over into advocacy on behalf of those suffering the injustice of patriarchy?53

At any rate, it is my conclusion that Job’s response to God at the end of the second speech involves a retraction of his earlier abased silence because he has come to understand that God values this human dialogue partner, especially for his honest, abrasive, unsubdued speech. And Job is appropriately consoled or comforted over this. Whatever we think of the possible intertextual connections between the biblical accounts of Job and Abraham, a careful reading of the book of Job suggests a fundamental coherence between God’s intent in the speeches from the whirlwind, on the one hand, and God’s explicit approval of Job in the prose epilogue, on the other.

The book of Job thus suggests that between the extremes of blessing God explicitly (which is, of course, appropriate speech and which Job does at the outset) and cursing God (which is clearly folly, and which Job therefore avoids), there is the viable option of honest, forthright challenge to God in prayer, which God (as Creator) both wants and expects of those made in the divine image—and this is right speech too.

Indeed, Job’s abrasive, honest speech is explicitly contrasted with that of his friends, who tried to justify God and blame the victim. Not only does God describe their speech as ‘folly’ (42:8), thus contrasting (to some extent) the content of Job’s speeches with what his friends had argued, but God more explicitly affirms that Job has addressed him directly (in prayer). This does not mean that God simply endorses all that Job has said; rather, the first speech from the whirlwind critiques Job’s expectations concerning how God runs the cosmos. That Job spoke to God is affirmed, however. It is telling that a literal rendering of God’s words to Eliaphaz and his friends is: ‘You have not spoken to [‘el] me what is right, as my servant Job has’ (42:7; repeated in 42:8). While most translations take the Hebrew preposition ‘el
as here equivalent to ‘al, meaning that Job spoke about God, the point being made here is that whereas the friends simply spoke about God, Job actually spoke to God—which is what God wants.54

While I do not expect this essay to settle decisively the meaning of YHWH's second speech, or of Job's response to this speech—the text of Job remains fundamentally polyvalent and will undoubtedly continue to exercise interpreters for millennia to come—there is no good reason to maintain the traditional interpretation of God as an abusive tyrant attempting to silence Job (that would be to take the point of view of Job's friends, which is 'folly'). On the contrary, it makes eminently better sense of the text to conclude that God does not come to bury Job, but precisely to praise him.

Endnotes

1. My title alludes to Mark Antony's words: 'Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears; I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him' (William Shakespeare, Julius Caesar, Act 3, Scene 2). The ideas for this essay have been developing for many years; some of the ideas were tested out at the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies (2004), and then presented as the Peter C. Craigie Lecture at the University of Calgary (2005) and the Manoia Lecture at Greenville College (2014). I am grateful for the opportunity to rework the material for the Biblical Seminar at St Mark's National Theological Centre, Canberra (October 2016).

2. Unless otherwise noted, biblical quotations are from the NRSV (although I will depart from the NRSV in replacing 'the LORD' with YHWH). I will sometimes use italics in biblical quotations for emphasis.

3. An analogous euphemism might be when Whoopi Goldberg exclaims, near the end of Sister Act I (Touchstone Pictures, 1992): 'Well, bless you!' The audience knows that she means a very different word.

4. Job's words in 1:21 have been immortalized in a praise song that has been popular in many churches, called 'Blessed be Your Name', written by Matt and Beth Redman (recorded on the album by Matt Redman, Where Angels Fear To Tread [Thankyou Music, 2002]). Although it is a beautiful song, it articulates a relatively superficial spirituality since it utilizes Job's response at the end of the first chapter only and ignores the complexity of the rest of the book.

6. Job moves through a series of three pained questions in this chapter: Why didn’t I die at birth? (3:11–15); Why didn’t I die before birth (in the womb)? (3:12–19); Why am I still alive? (3:20–26). All three questions articulate his deep yearning for an alternative to his present suffering.

7. This is the classic interpretation of John Calvin, Sermons from Job, trans. Leroy Nixon (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 220–223. See Susan E. Schreiner, Where Shall Wisdom Be Found? Calvin’s Exegesis of Job from Medieval and Modern Perspectives (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). But it is found throughout the history of interpretation, both by those moderns who disagree with God’s perspective and (especially) by those of pious persuasion who think that Job oversteps his bounds in complaining to God. I can testify that despite the initial attractiveness of Job’s honesty to many in the church, it is common for both clergy and laypeople to think that God’s speeches constitute a harsh reprimand of Job (and that it was ultimately deserved). Archibald MacLeish takes up the modern critique of God’s perspective in J.B. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958). See especially the words MacLeish has the Adversary say in scene 10, lines 57–60: ‘What? That God knows more than he does. / That God’s more powerful than he!— / Throwing the whole creation at him! / Throwing the Glory and the Power!’

8. The word for ‘adversary’ in 19:11 is šar. But when Job accuses God of treating him as an ‘enemy’ in 13:24 and 33:10, the word is ḥyēb, a participle from the verb ḥyab, ‘to be hostile’; ironically, this seems to be the derivation of his own name (Job = ḫōb).


10. It might be thought that the first speech concludes with a final challenge to Job (40:1–2), since the second speech begins at 40:3. But 40:1–2 has a particular rhetorical function, coming as it does between both speeches, which will be explored below.

12. ‘Shock and awe’ is the colloquial phrase used for the U.S. military doctrine of Rapid Dominance developed by Harlan K. Ullman and James P. Wade in 1996 and used in the U.S. attack on Iraq in 2003. See Harlan K. Ullman and James P. Wade, Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance (National Defense University, 1996), xxv: ‘The key objective of Rapid Dominance is to impose this overwhelming level of Shock and Awe against an adversary on an immediate or sufficiently timely basis to paralyze its will to carry on. In crude terms, Rapid Dominance would seize control of the environment and paralyze or so overload an adversary’s perceptions and understanding of events so that the enemy would be incapable of resistance at tactical and strategic levels.’


14. This darkening of God’s counsel/design may hark back to Job’s desire, expressed in his first speech, to reverse creation and turn light back into darkness (Job 3:4–6, 9).

15. Among other places where Job has challenged God’s mišpāt, while justifying himself, we may think of his words in 19:7—‘I call aloud, but there is no justice [mišpāṭ]’; or in 27:2—‘As God lives, who has taken away my right [mišpāṭ]’.

16. Habel thinks that ‘the control of Behemoth implies the control and subjugation of Job’; see Habel, The Book of Job, 566.

17. Kathryn Shifferdecker makes a slightly different point about the comparison of Job to the beasts, suggesting that Job comes off as seriously wanting (they are much more powerful—even more important—than he is). This is another form of the idea that God is centering Job’s anthropocentrism. See Shifferdecker, Out of the Whirlwind, 87–88, 92.
18. C. L. Seow proposes that the book of Job is 'about theology, or more specifically, how one speaks of God in the face of chaos.' Seow, *Job 1–21: Interpretation and Commentary*, Illuminations (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 108. Gustavo Gutierrez is more specific in suggesting that the book addresses 'the question of how we are to talk about God. More particularly: how we are to talk about God from within a specific situation—namely, the suffering of the innocent.' Gustavo Gutierrez, *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987), xviii (emphasis in original).

19. Carol Newsom is only one among many interpreters who thinks that there is a fundamental contradiction between the poetic dialogues and the prose epilogue. See Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 234. This assumed contradiction allows interpreters to downplay God's affirmation of Job's speech in 42:7–8, while taking the divine speeches as a critique of Job.

20. Although there is a great deal of scholarly literature that could be cited on these three issues, the argument presented here was not developed primarily through dialogue with the literature, but by engagement with the book of Job through teaching in both church and academy. Nevertheless, I have tried to make reference to some of the relevant secondary literature at various points in the essay, while being aware that I have only scratched the surface.

21. John Day draws extensively on the Ugaritic background of the combat myth for his view that Behemoth and Leviathan represent 'demonic creatures' that God defeated at the time of creation. See Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea*, 83.

22. A more literal translation of Job 40:19 would be that Behemoth 'is the beginning of the ways of God,' while in Proverbs 8:22 Wisdom says: 'YHWH created me at the beginning of his way.'


24. *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, 139.

25. Likewise, God is said to have created the great sea beasts or dragons (*iamninitum*) in Genesis 1:21.

26. C. L. Seow notes that 'nothing is said of the subjugation of these entities that seem utterly dangerous to human existence'; Seow, *Job 1–21*, 103.
27. Seow speaks of God’s ‘tribute’ to the monsters (Job 1–21, 104). And Robert Alter writes: ‘What is remarkable about this whole powerfully vivid evocation of Leviathan is that the monotheistic poet has taken a figure from mythology, traditionally seen as the cosmic enemy of the god of order, and transformed it into this daunting creature that is preeminent in, but also very much a part of, God’s teeming creation.’ See Alter, The Wisdom Books: Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes: A Translation with Commentary (New York: Norton, 2010), 175.

28. Note the echo with Anat’s claim to have snared the dragon.


32. There is a parallel also in the danger of coming too close; anyone who touches the mountain will die (Exod 19:12)

33. According to Brown, Wisdom’s Wonder, 124: ‘Both Job and Leviathan are linked together by their overpowering discourse.’

34. One sign of the importance of this question is the recurrence of terms for being human (including geber, ēnōs, and ūdām) at key places throughout the book.

35. Although it is traditional to claim that Job is parodying the psalm, Seow acknowledges the ambiguous directionality of the texts (Seow, Job 1–21, 41–44). Raymond C. Van Leeuwen has argued that Psalm 8 deviates from a more common negative estimate of the human condition (in which Job’s complaint participates); see Van Leeuwen, ‘Psalm 8.5 and Job 7.17–18: A Mistaken Scholarly Commonplace?’ in The World of the Arameans I: Biblical Studies in Honor of Paul-Eugene Dion, ed. P. M. Michèle Daviau et al., JSOT Supp 324 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 205–215.
36. Kathryn Shifferdecker agrees that the question ‘What is Humanity?’ is important for understanding the book of Job, though she comes to quite different conclusions than I do about how the book answers this question. See Shifferdecker, Out of the Whirlwind, 82, where she suggests that God’s initial question to Job (38:2) is ‘designed to put Job in his place.’

37. The term used for the ‘proud’ that Job is to bring low is ḡē, while the phrase in the Leviathan passage is bēnē-šāḥas (literally ‘sons of pride’), which occurs in only one other place in the Hebrew Bible (Job 28:8), where context suggests it is a reference to wild beasts (thus JPS Tanak translates the phrase as ‘proud beasts’ in both places). Perhaps just as Leviathan rules the proud wild animals, Job is to exercise his rulership over proud humans (and, indeed, Job had been taking the pride and confidence of his friends down a notch in his replies to them; see, for example, Job 13:2–13).

38. The NRSV translates this word pair in reference to the king as ‘splendor and majesty’ (Psalm 21:5) and in reference to God as ‘honor and majesty’ (Psalms 96:6; 104:1; 111:3).

39. And here we may remember Eliphaz’s put-down: ‘Can a geber be pure before his maker?’ (Job 4:17).

40. This has often been my experience with students. Having challenged a student to clarify their ideas or having suggested an alternative way of thinking, I have waited for a response, only to find that the student is intimidated and unwilling to engage in dialogue (without some further prompting and assurance that I won’t simply dismiss their reply).

41. Almost every interpretive move made in this paper can be found somewhere in the secondary literature, though my particular synthesis of these moves may be distinctive. This distinctiveness is rooted in the reason that I propose here for YHWH’s second speech. I have been unable to discover any reference in the literature to a similar proposal; indeed, few interpreters wonder why God needed to speak twice to Job.

42. Some commentators, like Gerhard von Rad, have suggested that it is the mere fact that God answers Job (not the content of what God says) that is important about the divine speeches. Job has demanded a direct encounter with God prior to this (13:22; 14:15; 23:5; 31:35), so he is finally getting his desire. See von Rad, Wisdom in Israel (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 221–26.

43. YHWH’s first speech from the whirlwind requires a paper devoted entirely to its significance, a project that is on my radar.

45. Robert Alter translates the first line of 42:6 as 'Therefore do I recant,' but his translation of the second line does not diverge from the standard versions; he has: 'and repent in dust and ashes' (Alter, *The Wisdom Books*, 176; my emphasis).

46. There is another possibility for the meaning of the root m-‘s, namely, 'melt' or 'dissolve,' which is represented by the LXX. William Brown draws on this possibility in his translation: 'Therefore I waste away, / yet am comforted over dust and ashes' (Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*, 126).


48. It may also be relevant to consider that Leviathan's royal dignity is connected to the fact that no one on earth (lit. 'dust') is his ruler/master (though perhaps one on dust may be his equal/likeness—namely, Job).

49. This essay is part of a larger project, which explores the relationship of the Aqedah to the book of Job, with the working title: *The Silence of Abraham, The Passion of Job: Explorations in the Theology of Lament* (under contract with Baker Academic).

50. While the idea of fearing God or fearing YHWH is common in the Hebrew Bible, the term 'God-fearer' (yêrê 'êlohim) occurs in only five places; Ecc 7:18 is its only occurrence apart from Gen 22:12 and Job 1:1, 8; 2:3. The term 'YHWH-fearer' is just as rare, found only in Ps 25:12; 128:1, 4; Prov 14:2; and Isa 50:10. In these ten cases yr' is pointed in the MT as a verbal adjective (in the construct).

51. Other connections between Abraham and Job include the similarity of the narrator's description of both at the end of their lives. Abraham dies 'old and full,' that is, contented (Gen 25:8), while Job dies 'old and full of years' (Job 42:17). Then, whereas God tells Abimelech in Gen 20:7 that Abraham (who has just interceded for Sodom in chapter 18) will pray for him, so God tells Eliphaz in Job 42:8 that Job will pray for him and his friends.
Both Abraham and Job intercede on behalf of others—Abraham *prior* to his lapse into silence (Gen 20:17), Job *after* his move away from silence (Job 42:8–9). And is it simple coincidence that three of the names from the genealogy that follows the Aqedah (Gen 22:20–24) show up also in Job—one as a place name (Uz in Job 1:17), one as a gentilic (Buz in Job 32:1) and one (Chesed) in the plural for a people group (the Chaldeans, who kill Job’s servants and steal his camels [Job 1:17]; and, of course, Abraham is from Ur of the Chaldeans [Gen 11:31])?


53. I am indebted to a discussion with my son Kevin for this suggestion.

54. This interpretation of 42:7 is also advanced by Breitkopf, ‘The Importance of Response in the Interpretation of Job’, 10–13.
Encountering God

Teasing (out) themes in biblical theology