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Speech from the Whirlwind as Religious Recovery Resource from the Babylonian Trauma
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Abstract

This introductory study examines Job 38.1-11 as an inspirational resource for recovery from the collective trauma experienced by the earliest waves of postexilic Hebrews who had returned to their homeland from Babylon and who faced the challenge of rebuilding their faith and society after many questioned their traditional religious beliefs in retributive justice and the Davidic covenant. It interprets the hero in several HB contexts, including the scriptures of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daughter Zion and the Suffering Servant in Second Isaiah that show him as another individual figure from the Babylonian period that these survivors could relate to in processing their trauma in beginning anew. The paper also examines the passage as a conclusion to Job's lamentation begun in chapter 3. In addition, this interpretation suggests benefits of the connotative language used throughout the book to support its function of promoting collective post-traumatic religious recovery.

Welcome. What do you know about Job? Have you heard that God let terrible things happen to him in order to test his faith? That he rejected his wife's call to curse God and die? That he debated with three friends whether he deserved his travails? That God spoke to him and put him in his place? That in the end his integrity and patience were rewarded by divine restorative justice? Does it sound like a stretch? (Jung C G (1952) *Answer to Job*)

I hope you will benefit from listening to my introductory study of the first eleven verses in the speech from the whirlwind. I will try to show you its part within the whole work as a post-exilic resource for recovery from the collective trauma of the Babylonian Period for an audience of the first waves of exiles who had returned to their homeland after 538 BCE.[1]

1. Introduction

God's[2] speeches to Job have befuddled readers for centuries. According to Will Kynes (forthcoming: 17-30), scholars have used twelve genres to interpret the book.[3] Collective trauma is not one of them. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the most popular approach has been to examine the text for a definitive theodicy. However, more recent interpreters generally agree that the conclusion of the book that begins with the speech from the sandstorm does not offer a conceptual or theoretical answer (Westermann, 2). Its language is not discursive, logical denotation and it does not resolve the disputations between Job and his friends about retributive justice as the explanation for the hero's suffering. In the words of David Clines (2004, 47), "Yahweh's speeches are famous for their refusal to address Job's questions." Could it be that the divine address was speaking to a different existential religious concern than "Why me (us)?, that is, "How can we trust divine providence in rebuilding our lives (literally) from the ground up after the prolonged trauma of the Babylonian defeats and exile?" In the words of Kierkegaard's famous observation, "Life can only be understood backwards, but must be lived forwards."[4]

I was introduced to the possibility of interpreting this scripture as recovery from collective trauma when I read *Holy Resilience: The Bible's Traumatic Origins* by David Carr. He wrote (90) that: "Together, the suffering servant (Is. 53), daughter of Zion (book of Lamentations), Ezekiel and Jeremiah stand as examples of the processing of exilic [sic] trauma through depictions of individual figures to whom exiles could relate."[5] But he didn't mention Job. Kathleen O'Connor is another scholar who has used knowledge of recovery from collective trauma in her study of the books of Jeremiah and Genesis. She has written (2018,6; 2020,6) that the book of Job should be added to the list of biblical writings that responded to the overwhelming trauma of the Babylonian period.[6,]

My study has **four main parts**. The **first** is to present linguistic and theological reasons for dating and locating the composition of most of this scripture within the specific historical and geographic context that I have mentioned. The **second** is to view the hero's travails as trauma instead of innocent suffering. The **third** part is to read this passage in the context of other Hebrew scriptures of the Babylonian and early post-exilic periods.[7] This approach may help us see what these scriptures have in common about dealing with the collective trauma of that time. **Finally,** I also will present form-critical reasons for appreciating how this passage completes the Lamentation[8] that Job begins in chapter 3, and its significance for encouraging recovery.

2) Dating of parts of the book of Job

I agree with those scholars who believe that this work was composed by multiple authors and assembled from many sources over a period of between 500 and 700 years (Zuckermann, 7). The first two chapters of the book tell a didactic tale[9] that initially was composed in the ancient Near East between 800 and 900 BCE. Scholars, such as Clines and Marvin Pope who argue for its older origin, cite the plain style of classic Hebrew used in the text (Vicchio, 34). I also think the story has characteristics of the written preservation of a traditional oral tale because of how it is structured with mnemonics and repetitive phrases.

Edward Greenstein (xxvii), however, claims that other aspects of the Hebrew used in the prose story indicate that it was edited after 538 BCE.[10] The strongest reason for the book's post-exilic dating and location in the Persian province of Yehud is the language of the text. Aramaic is used throughout. That language only became widely used during the Persian era after 538 BCE (Greenstein, xxvii). Bruce Zuckerman (138) also states that the use of the theophoric title of Yhwh for the Deity was reserved only for the God of Israel, and thus its use in the opening two chapters to address a character from the neighboring kingdom of Edom

functioned to adopt the older, foreign tale for "an Israelite/Jewish environment." Furthermore, the use of Hebrew limits the geographic radius of the text to in or very near Jerusalem (Vicchio, 45).

Proposed structure and dating of the book of Job									
Chapters	**1 – 2**	**3**	**4 – 27**	**28**	**29 – 31**	**32 – 37**	**38 – 41**	**42:1-9**	**42:10-17**
Descrip-tion	Modified extant didactic tale from Edom	Job's lamen-tation	Wisdom disputations with friends	Poem to wisdom	Job's monologue	Elihu's speeches	Speeches from the whirlwind	Speech from God to Job & 3 friends	Added conclusion to didactic tale
Dates BCE	ca. 1000 – 800, ca. 538-- 520	538 – 520		ca. 220 – 167	538 – 520	220 –167 (Under Seleucid rule)	538 – 520		538-- 520

There also is a theological reason for dating this work to the post-exilic years. The view of the Deity here is monotheistic, even though five names are used for the Divine.[11] Earlier prophets, such as Hosea, preached **henotheism** when they urged Israel to worship Yhwh alone among the gods known to them. But this view changed to monotheism during the Babylonian captivity. According to Carr (83), "Second Isaiah (45:5)... is the first datable text to deny that other gods even exist." Therefore, the book of Job was composed no earlier than that text, and more likely, after it**.** It also seems unlikely that the book was composed later than 520 BCE (*terminus ante quem)* because that was a period of optimism when construction of the Second Temple began (Vicchio, 36). I also am convinced by Clines (2006) and Zuckermann (139) that the poem to Wisdom in chapter 28 and Elihu's speeches in chapters 32-37 were inserted into the book more than 300 years later during another period of communal trauma, so I will not consider them in this study.

3. Introduction to the Trauma of the Babylonian period (597 - 538 BCE)

I propose viewing Job's travails as trauma instead of innocent suffering. Trauma involves one experience, or repeating events in which a person or people feel overwhelmed by extreme loss, emotional pain and/or fear for their lives "and which have lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being." (The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration of the U.S. Department of Public Health, 2014: 7) Schemas about self and others expressed in "spiritual meaning-making and religious beliefs" are highly vulnerable to trauma that is "interpersonal in causation and implementations and that occurs repeatedly." (Walker, Curtois, and Aten, 2014: 20)

The Hebrews in the earliest audiences for the book of Job were facing the challenge of rebuilding their society after the extended suffering, death, and physical destruction throughout the sixth century BCE had overwhelmed their traditional religious worldview about the safety of divine protection. Jerusalem lay in ruins; the Temple and city walls had been decimated.[12] Within the context of their collective land-based religious beliefs, most saw these ruins as symbols of God's abandonment of them as a people. It overwhelmed their faith in the Davidic covenant (Carr, p. 69, Ps. 89.39, Is. 49.14). The returnees felt shame both for having been exiles (Ps. 79.4; Knoppers, p. 37; Carr, p. 140) and also about being worse off upon their return than the poor of the land who had been left behind to tend the vineyards (Job 30. 3-10, 2 Kgs 25.12).[13] Many biblical archeologists believe that there were more people living in the countryside than in the city during this time (Lipschits, 2007, pp. 44-45). This shame was another wound of being overwhelmed by trauma (Curtois, Ford, and Cloitre, 2009).

Almost 50 years before their return, Judah had been decimated by a two year Babylonian siege in 586 BCE because of a second rebellion after their first defeat eleven years before (in 597). Both those left behind and the educated elite, artisans and craftsmen who were deported to Babylon were traumatized by the destruction of their homeland, their

prolonged suffering and shame of living as exiles in the ghettos of Babylon. As O'Connor says in her introduction to the book of Genesis, this period of "...Israel's turbulent history shows why stories of beginnings were necessary to help Israel/Judah begin life together again." (2018, 3; 2020, 3)

3. Reading Job in the context of other scriptures from the Babylonian period

When we read Job in the context of other Hebrew scriptures composed during the sixth century BCE, we can see how his story was part of a new literary tradition of presenting individuals teaching their audience about coping with their communal trauma through the ways that these spiritual leaders handled their own personal suffering. Jeremiah says that he did not marry nor have offspring in order to proclaim the terrible fate that the children of Judah faced from the impending Babylonian conquest. Ezekiel is told that God is going to take his beloved wife from him and that he should not mourn her sudden death. The prophet explains to the people that he is following divine instructions to show them how to relate to their imminent defeat by the Chaldeans (Ez 24.1-24; Jer. 16.1-4). Carr (80) argues that the stories of these prophets' suffering helped establish an empathetic rapport between them and their audiences. This literary method also was used in the portrait of the suffering servant in Second Isaiah (Carr, 90).

In the book of Job, the man from Uz is presented as a hero for this post-exilic Hebrew audience, although this champion was not one of their own religious figures but a character from a neighboring people's legends.[14] The author of his story uses the connotative language of religious drama, poetry, and lamentation in a way that tried to elicit faith in divine providence and existential recovery from the extended collective trauma that had overwhelmed their religious worldview. In her trauma-informed study of the book of Jeremiah,

O'Connor (2014, 214) writes that:

> ...literal retellings of traumatic events can call forth recurring memories of the original violence and re-traumatize victims, who then remain stuck in the recurring memories of the violence. To protect victims from being overwhelmed again, language has to be flexible, allusive, and evocative...[15]

What she is pointing out is the value of this kind of language to help trauma survivors recover from their central wound of not feeling safe.[16]

4. Speech from the whirlwind as completion of Job's Lamentation

Now let's turn to reading Job's Lamentation in chapter 3 with this background. The biblical Lamentation allows the faithful to express to the Almighty without blasphemy, the supplicants' individual and communal pain and confusion in a cathartic way that often ends in praise or thanksgiving. In his study of the book of Job, Claus Westermann (3) argues that "A lament does not arise out of mournful reflection on suffering...On the contrary, a lament is an existential process which has its own structure." Instead of cursing God as Job was urged to do at the end of chapter 2, the suffering hero instead curses the night of his birth, modifying Jeremiah's similar plaint (Jer. 20:14-18).[17] He expresses his pain in images of feeling overwhelmed in darkness. He wishes the stars had not shone on the night of his birth and craves that those skilled at invoking the sea monster, Leviathan, representing the forces of chaos, also would curse that night[18].

Westerman (3) contends that Job's lament "can be appreciated only against the background of the whole history of the lament in the Old Testament, from whence these forms derive." In Carleen Mandolfo's (2014) study of the approximately forty-two psalms of Lament, she notes that about thirty of them are individual Laments and the rest are communal. I believe that Job's Lament here is the first part of a communal lament presented in the form of an individual Lamentation. The patriarch's cry seems to express the difficulty that this

audience had with hope. Besides providing an empathetic voice, the personal story of Job and his lamentation cut through divisions between the returning exiles who had opposed Babylon and those left behind who had followed Jeremiah in not resisting as well as all those afraid of provoking their neighbors to additional attacks.

In addition, his lament in Chapter 3 is incomplete. Greenstein (16) argues that its last ten verses have been shifted to the end of the first speech of his friend, Eliphaz (Job 4.12-21) which concludes the next chapter. In his recent translation, this scholar returns these verses from chapter 4 to the end of chapter 3. I question that approach. *Could it be more significant to appreciate why that ending was moved forward, thus intentionally leaving Job's Lamentation incomplete?*

Perhaps these verses were moved, so that Yhwh's speech from the sandstorm could provide a different ending to chapter 3. The main reason for this suggestion are the thirteen psalms of Lamentations (Pss. 4; 7; 9; 12; 25; 27; 28; 30-32; 55; 102; and 130) in which the psalmist ends the prayer in a third person voice of moral instruction after praying in the first person voice of supplication (Mandolfo, 2002, 1). Mandollfo contends that this shift has didactic and performative functions.[19] Of course, the significant difference in that the third person voice from the storm is that of God and not a person.

5. First part of the speech from the whirlwind (38:1-11)

Now let's look at Adonai's first speech to Job. Chapter 38 begins 1) "Then the Lord (Adonai, Yhwh) answered Job out of the whirlwind: 2) "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? 3) Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me."[20] Because connotative language provides options for multiple interpretations,[21] this scene may be viewed several ways in different contexts of the book and the Bible. I will mention only four. **First,** the man from Uz does not die from his encounter with the Deity. This

detail implies that Job's Lamentation in the earlier chapter and his disputations with his friends about retributive justice are not blasphemous. **Second,** the immediacy of the message from the storm suggests a closer expression of divine steadfast love than Adonai's admiration of the patriarch expressed in the far-removed heavenly dialogue in the opening tale. **Third,** the sandstorm also suggests the psychological and spiritual confusion of being overwhelmed by prolonged trauma, being stripped bare to one's most vulnerable, naked soul and providing the opportunity of beginning again with the possibility of deep, authentic answers emerging from the confusion.[22]

    Finally, I want to suggest that the rhetorical challenges to the hero from Uz was part of setting religious limits or a new "container"[23] for voicing objections, but in a different way than the didactic dichotomy presented to Job in chapter 2.9 by his wife. The speech uses rhetorical questions that "...convey an indirect assertion and have a primarily persuasive intention" (Haener, 4). "Michael V. Fox has established the unique ability of rhetorical questions to mollify while conveying instruction and eliciting response..." (Timmer, 291). The Almighty's challenge does not use blame. Adonai asks, "Who is this that darkens counsel..." instead of stating, "You darkened counsel without knowledge..." The rhetorical challenges have a persuasive function that are not rebuke or reprobation.

    In the next three verses of the speech (4-6), the Deity continues to challenge the suffering hero while also evoking awe at the Creator's conquest of chaos by building the world from the earth and waters up.[24] These images also offered the audience a mythic religious context for viewing their task of rebuilding their homeland as participating in the Almighty's work.

    The next five verses continue to elicit acclaim by reframing Job's images of suffering in chapter 3. Verse 7 of the speech from the sandstorm exclaims that the morning stars sang for joy when the foundation of the world was laid. This image offers a hopeful alternative to Job's

wish in chapter 3.9 that the stars of the night of his birth would have gone dark. In the next verse of chapter 3, he laments that night "...because it did not shut the doors of my mother's womb, and hide trouble from my eyes." In the Deity's speech, though, verses 8-9 reframe the negative associations in those images to viewing them as caring maternal power that contains chaos. "Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb? – when I made the clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band." (Job 38.8-9)[25]

Thus, we see that in addition to the rhetorical challenge to the hero, the divine speech also provides indirect praise of the creator (Murphy, 90; Westermann, 107). The challenge and praise are intertwined to reinforce each other as an exhortation to having renewed faith in divine providence. Read in the historical context of the early post-exilic years, these verses seem to be trying to elicit hope in the traumatized audience for safety in a new beginning.

Even though there are other issues that I have not addressed about the beginning of the speech from the whirlwind, I will summarize my study thus far.[26] The Lord's exhortation completes Job's Lamentation begun earlier in chapter 3.The hero's lament gave voice to the pain in the hearts of traumatized post-exilic people in Yehud. It was a positive alternative to the didactic choice presented by Job's wife and also to the stolid response taught by Ezekiel. Instead of a prose message of reassurance directed to their minds such as "Everything will be all right," its imagery of the Deity's creation from the ground up sought to evoke renewed faith and hope in divine providence.[27] The view of the divine power and wisdom in creation also began reconstructing a religious worldview of safety. Nor is the speech from the whirlwind a theodicy that attempts to explain their past suffering.[28]

Another question that the trauma perspective raises is whether it is possible to maintain a multivalent tension between listening to Job's lamentation as a legitimate biblical way to pray about collective and individual trauma and the didactic message of endurance in the hero's exemplary suffering. Over the centuries, the latter view has been a valuable

resource within Christianity, (e.g. NT James 5.11-12), for encouraging faith in the face of immense suffering. But one of its limits is that it blames trauma survivors for weak faith when their worldview have been overwhelmed by the immensity of their travails. It does not appreciate how Job's lamentation and the rest of the book composed in the postexilic years supported post-traumatic recovery of faith.

In this study, I have presented reasons for understanding how the rest of the book presents a faithful religious alternative to the didactic dichotomy presented in the opening story (Job 2.9). Job's lamentation and disputations about retributive justice escape the trap presented in the scene with his wife and Ezekiel's stoicism. He does not speak against God, but engages in disputations about the theodicy of retributive justice that blames victims for what they have endured. He is allowed to express his pain in prayer rather than repress it. Job's story, along with the other post-exilic biblical literature (e.g. Genesis, Jeremiah and Psalm 147), helped the people recover and develop a new religious perspective in which they moved from being blinded by the whirlwind to becoming a whirlwind of activity in rebuilding their lives (Zech. 8:13).

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1   I agree with those scholars who believe that the book of Ezra does not provide an accurate historical presentation of the first return.

2   The name that is used for the Deity in the book of Job when God speaks is Yhwh. The New Revised Standard version of this scripture translates that name as Lord. Jews use the alias of Adonai out of respect for the special sacredness of the divine name of Yhwh. In this paper I will use both Jewish and Christian aliases for that name out of recognition of the place of this scripture in both religions. But I will use Yhwh in presenting the verses of the scripture where that name is used. I provide further information about the significance of that name in the paper for understanding its use in the book.

3   The genres he has identified are: lament, exemplary sufferer, poetry, drama, controversy dialogue, prophecy, lawsuit, apocalyptic, parody, citation, and polyphony.

4   Paraphrase by Julia Watkin. *Journalen* JJ:167 (1843), *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, Søren Kierkegaard Research Center, Copenhagen,18, 306, 1997. "It is really true what philosophy tells us, that life must be understood backwards. But with this, one forgets the second proposition, that it must be lived forwards. A proposition which, the more it is subjected to careful thought, the more it ends up concluding precisely that life at any given moment cannot really ever be fully understood; exactly because there is no single moment where time stops completely in order for me to take position [to do this]: going backwards." English translation of Kierkegaard's original statement by Palle Jorgensen <http://homepage.divms.uiowa.edu/~jorgen/kierkegaardquotesource.html> Accessed 17 January 2021.

5   The word "exilic," excludes the impact of trauma on those Hebrews who were left behind. I agree with Kathleen O'Connor that the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations was written people in that group for that audience. She uses the term "Babylonian period" to include the experiences of these people and the exiles. (2014, 212) Thanks to Samuel Balentine for referring me to the collection of articles that includes this one by O'Connor.

6   In addition to Carr's *Holy Resilience* and O'Connor's articles cited in the present study, also see the following list cited by O'Connor of other scholarship that uses trauma studies to interpret books of the Hebrew Bible composed during the Babylonian Period. O'Connor K (2011), *Jeremiah: Pain and Promise*, Mineappolis: Fortress Press, 19-34; Garber, Jr. DG (2015)"Trauma Theory and Biblical Studies," *CBR* 14(1): 24-44; Kelle BE, Ames FR, and Wright JL (eds) (2011) *Interpreting Exile: Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts* (AIL 10; Atlanta: SBL; see also (2015) "Trauma and Faith," *Int* 69 (1): 7-75; Rambo S (2010) *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox; and Rambo (2017) *Resurrecting Wounds: Living in the Afterlife of Trauma*, Waco: Baylor University Press.

7   I am using a diachronic intertextual reading of prophetic scriptures and the book of Job throughout the Babylonian period. I find general support for this approach in the work of Dalit Rom-Shiloni. "This study has shown that the diachronic connections between the prophetic compositions spanning the entire 6th century B.C.E. (Judah, Babylon, and then, Yehud) are stronger than the relative synchronic cross-connections between the prophetic and the historiographic compositions of Persian-period Yehud." (2019, 51).

8   When capitalizing Lamentation, I am referring to the specific prayer form of the Psalms and the Book of Job.

9   VonRad (208) argues that "This prose narrative... is certainly to be understood as a didactic narrative. It is not a simply-formed 'folk-narrative' but a highly cultivated literary prose." Carol Newsom (41) also writes that "The Job tale appears to be best understood as a type of didactic tale...."

10   Most Joban scholars treat the last chapter (42) in the book as part of the same prose didactic story of the first two chapters. I disagree because it has a different style. It does not use oral storytelling mnemonics and repretitive phrasing techniques. That is swhy I think it was part of the text that was added later in the sixth century BCE

11   Zuckerman (138) also points out that the name of Yhwh is used primarily when the Deity speaks. The other names used in the book are El, Elohah, Elohim, and El Shaddai. See the use of three names for the Deity in Job 40.1-2.

12   "Biblical archeologists and historians argue over the extent of Judah's destruction during the Babylonian Period. Aathe least, the Babylonians destoyred much of the capital city of Jerusalem, removed the king, burned down the temple, undermined the economy, and occupied the land. Debates have centered on how far and wide the disruption of life was for people who remained in the land under the Babylonian occupation (see Lipschits(2003))." (O'Connor, 2018, 5).

13   It is also possible that there were educated people, such as followers of Jeremiah, who opposed defiance of Babylon, had been left behind and were more established than those exiles who had returned.

14   "The character Job is legendary, not an invention of the poet." Greenstein (2019, xxiii). In a footnote to this statement, Greenstein also says that "It is possible, but far from likely, that the legendary Job is based on this historical figure (a fourteenth century BCE king, Ayyabu, of Ashtarot in the Transjordan)." The names of Job and his three friends are Edomite names. Uz was a poetic way of referring to Edom.

15   Carr (74) writes that the Bible does not tell stories about what life was like during the exile. "Only hundreds of years later did Jews start to write stories about exilic figures like Daniel (Daniel 1-6)."

16   For further psychological elaboration of the benefits orf story and other connotative language to speak about traumatic experience indirectly, see: Naparstek B (2004) *Invisible Heroes: Survivors of Trauma and How They Heal.* New York: Bantam Books. For a fuller discussion of contemporary psychological therapy for trauma survivors and where this approach fits in with the whole process, see Curtois CA, Ford JD and Cloitre M (2009) Best Practices in Psychotherapy

for Adults. In: Curtois CA and Ford JD (eds) *Treating Complex Traumatic Stress Disorders: An Evidence-Based Guide.* New York: Guilford, pp.82-103 and Briere J and Scott C (2015) *Principles of Trauma Therapy: A Guide to Symptoms, Evaluation, and Treatment* (Second ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications

[17] See Todd Linafelt's (2021) discussion about how this poetic curse in Job transformed Jeremiah's prose plaint. Also, the use of the verse from Jeremiah may be significant because he called for not opposing the Babylonians and was not exiled, while the returning exiles may have been those who had opposed the Babylonians. Was the author of Job trying to facilitate reconciliation between the two groups or was the use of Jeremiah's complaint in Job's Lamentation, when combined with its didactic ending in the speech from the whirlwind, trying to provide a different religious outlook to those trauma survivors in the homeland who had added to Jeremiah's story in opposition to the ancestors of the exiles who had opposed the Babylonians?

[18] See Robert D. Miller 's (2019, 43) article about biblical dragon imagery and chaos.

[19] In each of the other twenty-nine psalms of Lamentation, the lament is voiced only in the first person of the supplicant.

[20] NRSV, but substituting Adonai for Lord.

[21] "multivalence: the quality or state of having many values, meanings, or appeals" Merriam Webster Dictionary.

[22] In his description of a West Texas whirlwind, Christian Wiman (13) writes, "Worse than snow, worse than ice, a bad sandstorm shrinks the world to the slit of your eyes, lifting from the fields an inchoate, creaturely mass that claws at any exposed skin as if the dust remembered what it was, which is what you are—alive, alive—and sought return."

[23] "Container" is the term that Richard Rohr (2011: 25) uses to describe "law, tradition, custom, authority, boundaries and morality of some clear sort."

[24] Westermann (111-112) observes that, while praise of the Almighty's creation is common in the Bible, what is unique about this speech is "its transformation of praise of God (in the language of men) into speech by God." The only other time it occurs in the Bible is in Second-Isaiah (Is.44: 24; cf. Job 38:4). "In both cases this rejoinder is directed against an accusation against God, in Deutero-Isaiah it being an accusation of the people and in Job an accusation of an individual." I believe that, in light of Job as personal representative of the people, these rejoinders to the accusation of Job are a different way of also responding to "an accusation of the people."

[25] Thank you to Alexandria Morrison (2019) for sharing her paper reading Job 38:1-11 in relation to chapter 3 and referring me to O'Connor's essay(2003, 173) about the relationship between chapter 3 and the speech from the whirlwind.

[26] One issue is that the book of Job, however, is not a handbook for recovery from collective trauma, even if listening to this story in postexilic Yehud contributed to recovery by creating a communal experience that normalized their pain and helped them emerge from a shadow of shame. Using a trauma-informed hermeneutic also points out issues with the text. For example, there is a problem with Job's restitution in the final chapter exceeding the standards in the book of Deuteronomy because of how these images suggest the only possibility for communal recovery will be a stronger pre-traumatic Davidic monarchy. This understanding can blind the faithful to appreciation of the actual historical post-traumatic recovery which Knoppers (29-62) convincingly argues was a combination of homeland recovery with development of an international diaspora. A second issue I have not addressed is the omission within the speeches tof praise of God's rule on earth for mankind or of God as the Lord of history ("...no doubt intentionally" Westermann, 113), unlike the extensive description of divine providence for the animals.n

[27] "God's activity 'on earth as it is in heaven' obviously has two sides to it: his work in heaven (light, rain, stars, thunder and clouds) has the character of ruling activity; his work on earth quite clearly has the character of providential care. On earth God's wisdom and power bring about life and wholeness and beauty and joy." Westermann (114).

[28] The multivalent quality of its imagery also gave it the possibility of reaching more people in its initial audiences than a single definitive theodicy that people could debate.