

READING JOB 28 AS A RESTORATIVE SOCIAL PROCESS IN POST-EXILIC COMMUNITIES⁵⁷²

Uma Leitura de Jó 28 em um processo de restauração social nas comunidades pós-exílicas

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Abstract: After analyzing some syntactic and semantic aspects of Job 28, a possible inference for a post-exilic reading locale for this poem is possible. In addition, attesting that *Wisdom* is a work of a *literati stratum* with intentions and specific rhetorical effects, current readers should consider several social constructions that mediate these literary creations. Therefore, in the formative process of Israel in post exile, Job is among several texts that aim to build religious and social identity. Consequently, investigating some theological and anthropological assumptions in the lines of this specific poem is possible among postexilic literary school of thought.

Keywords: Job; Post-Exile; Restorative Social Process; *Wisdom*

Resumo: Após analisar algumas características semânticas e sintáticas de Jó 28, torna-se possível uma inferência para uma contextualização pós-exílica de leitura para esse poema. Ademais, atestando a origem dos textos sapienciais em uma *estratificação social literata*, com intenções e aplicações específicas, os leitores contemporâneos devem considerar em suas interpretações as variadas construções sociais mediadas por essas criações literárias. Desse modo, no processo formativo de Israel no pós-exílio, o livro de Jó encontra-se entre muitos textos que almejam a construir uma identidade social e religiosa. Consequentemente, torna-se possível investigar algumas considerações

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teológicas e antropológicas nos versos desse poema específico diante das ideias de escolas literárias no pós-exílio.

Palavras-chave: livro de Jó; Pós-exílio; Processo de Restauração Social; Sapienciais

The book of Job is some of the most challenging reading in all of scripture. God allows extreme pain and suffering of His *most blameless and upright servant*, resulting in the deaths of innocent livestock, house maids, and children; horrific, undeserved disease; and broken companionship. Current readers may see Job as a pawn played between God and Satan, as they watch from the sidelines until Job finally breaks. Radical distinctions among the literary constructions of these characters emphasize stark differences between God and human, as the narrative raises questions of justice, challenges conventions of omniscience, and disturbs even the most faithful readers after centuries of religious traditions. However, when reading this text with closer adherence to syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic perspectives, the book of Job reveals its significant position as a post-exilic narrative, aligned with the prophetic texts of Ezra, Nehemiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Haggai, and others. This position is crucial for contemporary audiences who explore the theological themes throughout various literary receptions of traditional schools of thought and well-known legends in the ancient Israel. By examining the macro and micro structures in Job, readers can understand the writer's attempt at crafting religious and social identities among the book's post-exilic audience, as well as being able to consider some important passages in this book in a restorative social process throughout literary inventions.

Accessing Wisdom between Darkness and Light Within Human Limitations

The structure of chapter 28 depends on the interest of the interpreter. Many scholars, such as Clines, emphasize the importance of the statement “where shall wisdom be found?” in verses 12 and 20 to think about this poem as well as the entire book, since a macro order is observed.⁵⁷⁴ Indeed, this

⁵⁷⁴ Clines proposes this division to the chapter 1-6; 7-11; 12-14; 15-19; 20-22; 23-28. Indeed, there is a transition after verse 7 which is introduced by the important notion of vision and the metonym for eyes. Consequently, the first two sections were not completely distinct but have a complementary sense. However, after verse 12, a different thematic is introduced and humankind cannot measure wisdom. Therefore,



perspective reveals some important theological considerations that are expressed semantically in terms of Creation, knowledge or vision, and hidden aspects of reality. It is not surprising that these elements are present in other parts of the book, since the poem has profound relations with the entire material. For instance, in the first chapters, the texts present a tension due to a hidden celestial court and the touchable suffering of Job; in the conclusion of the debate, the divine epiphany, using the creation, reveals part of what was hidden from Job.

However, the poem has a micro syntactic construction that functions through coordinative phrases. This syntactic construction is present in eighteen verses of the poem, which is more than fifty percent of this material. Consequently, exploring these macro and microstructures, the relationship between syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic perspectives in this biblical text can be explored. After discussing some possible syntactic considerations, and their respective implications in some verses of the poem, some semantic aspects are in order. The terms related to knowledge and vision, as well as gloom and darkness have a direct effect on readers and are reflected on the macro and microstructure of the poem.

Lambdin attests that subordinating conjunctions are rare in Hebrew syntax and affirms that there is a great differentiation in clause function according, for example, to the order of words in the clause or the variation of the verbal forms⁵⁷⁵. As in most of modern languages, the conjunction ו conjoins

verses 13 and 14 are important to this context, since they affirm this thesis. Again, the following verses of the refrain in verse 20 have a significant consideration for the context. Therefore, these textual elements of transition 7-8, 13-14, 21-22 emphasize the dichotomy present between light and darkness, observable and hidden things. Thus, in order to keep this structure, readers can add the first double of verses in the division, or incorporate the other two doubles to the following context. In addition, one must consider his purpose of transposition of chapters 32-37. If this thesis does not have a direct transformation in the theological message of the book, it transforms the structure of the book. This transposition has literary significance, since Elihu's speeches prepare for the intervention of Adonai and state the divine sovereignty and human limitations. Even though calculations on manuscripts demand concessions to be acceptable evidence, literary perspectives fit perfectly well as some semantic perspectives attest in a comparison between Job 28 with the speeches of Elihu and Adonai. Therefore, even without this *re-structure* these materials are directly related. CLINES, David. *Job 21-37. Word Biblical Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006, p. 250-255; 905-910.

⁵⁷⁵ LAMBDIN, Thomas. *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971, p. 162.

nouns in phrases and clauses. Waltke and O'Connor assert that after a clausal negative, ו with a noun has an alternative force and must be translated as (or). There are cases in which the conjunction has a conclusive sense or is used in order to intensify an action⁵⁷⁶. In terms of clauses, the conjunction ו does not indicate a hierarchical relation between sentences. Hence, like in the phrasal level, the use of ו can have different meanings such as a temporal sequence or disjunctive aspect. The *Epexegetical* ו is used to specify the meaning of the precedent clause. Lambdin asserts that this characteristic intensifies poetry and can be translated as an emphatic interjection⁵⁷⁷. A conclusive or introductory use of ו is not relevant at the first moment for Job 28, as one should expect in larger narratives such as the textual material present in Torah and in the Deuteronomistic History. Another possibility is that the ו with the imperfect can express purpose⁵⁷⁸. This notion, for example, can apply to the poem of Job 28 in verse 2 and 11. Lambdin aims to determine the time of the action in the conjunctive sequence, i.e., a change from a conclusive action expressed by the perfect to an inconclusive one denoted by the imperfect indicates a past tense in the development of the narrative⁵⁷⁹. In both cases in Job 28, verses 11 and 27, the LXX translated both verbs using aorist, which is well known to not have a specific time, but expresses linear punctuation. For instance, in many Greek narratives, the aorist functions as a historical present. This can be an indication of the reception of this structure. However, as one should expect, on poetical language, such as in the poem of Job 28, these patterns do not function precisely according to a predetermined model. On the other hand, the exchange from an imperfect to a perfect tense indicates duration. As we can see in verse 5, humans not only take the bread from the ground, but also use fire under the ground to prepare it.

In the context of verse eleven, human beings intensively work on rocks searching for something with value as well as in rivers. As a description of these facts, the first activity is described with verbs in the perfect and with an intensive stem. In addition, the sequence of the verbs are בָּקַעַת (to cut) in *piel*, רָאָה (to see) in *gal*, הִבֵּשׂ (to bind) in *piel*, and יָצָא (bring out) in *hiphil*. As a consequence, three verbs that describe human activity express intensity. These transformations on

⁵⁷⁶ WALTKE, Bruce and O'CONNOR, M. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990, p. 648-649.

⁵⁷⁷ LAMBDIN, 1971, p. 164; WALTKE, 1990, p. 652-653.

⁵⁷⁸ MARTIN, James. *Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar*. Edinburgh: T&T, 1993, p. 125.

⁵⁷⁹ LAMBDIN, 1971, p. 107-108.

mountains and rivers are centralized on humankind's vision or acknowledgement of the high value of their respective results. Ironically enough, what is hidden is not reached by human hands. The use of the causative implies that human action causes the hidden object to emerge in the light, even though he is not able to achieve the place where the secret object was located before. This description has a strong relation with the constant repetition of the claim: "and Wisdom is not found from any of this, where is this place of understanding?" (12 and 20). On the other hand, the sequence from 13 through 19 intensifies this idea, since it asserts that humans do not know the real value of wisdom: it is not equivalent to any precious stone. However, even though Wisdom is hidden from humans, animals, and every creature in the living or dying realms (21-22), *Elohim makes the path of Wisdom understandable*. In this verse, there is a syndetic coordination pattern with two perfects, the former in *hiphil* and the second in *qal*. Even though Wisdom is hidden, God knows / sees her and makes her accessible. As a consequence, in this verse, the use of ו has an explicative sense: since he knows and sees what is hidden, Elohim can make wisdom accessible to humans (v.23). This is the central thesis of the poem and, according to Elihu and Adonai's speeches (v.28), can be generalized to the entire book.

These are some examples that a semantic and syntactical study can assist on a better understanding of the poem and, consequently, of the entire book of Job. Thus, analyzing these syntactical constructions and the respective semantic connotations are important. In verse 3 the additive conjunction is not from a coordinative sentence with the existence of different verbs, but the junction occurs in the same phrase within the same verb clause. In verse 4, there is a case of parataxis, which means absence of coordination. In verse 6, there is just one clause with an additive particle. Verse 16 has just one clause and verse 22 has direct speech. The author does not use coordinative clauses in verse 24, but s/he exchanges the roots and stems of the verbs. Therefore, even though number, person, and gender in both verbs are the same, the first verb is in *hiphil* and the second one in *qal*. There is a semantic difference between נבט (look) and רָאָה (see) that must be considered. In addition, verse 27 has a parataxis among two coordinative clauses. Verse 5 is an example of other possible syntactical parallels in the poem. Despite the verbal syntactical parallel, it is possible to perceive another parallel with different prepositions with the same suffix, noun, and so forth. In verses 17 and 18, the reader also encounters sentences that start with the negative particle לֹא . However, instead of coordination, they have a conclusive sense expressing result or reason. A possible meaning inferred in these sentences is based on a logic proposition which affirms that the absence

of something brings, as a result, a determined consequence. Thus, since gold and glass cannot be evaluated on the same level as wisdom, the author affirms that wisdom cannot be exchanged for jewels in verse 17. Following a similar syntactical logic, in verse 18, the text affirms that since the corals and crystal are not remembered before wisdom, she has a value above pearls. Therefore, these verses prepare the conclusion of the poem, since humankind cannot access wisdom and nothing that humans do can be compared to her.

This clear distinction between God and man is expressed in terms such as darkness and light, seen and hidden, accessible and inaccessible. These elements are important to understand the poem and the book of Job in a synchronic view. For instance, the description of humans searching for hidden stones in the gloom and profound darkness (וּצְלֵמוֹת אַפֵּל) can be compared with verse 7 in which the words יִרְע (to see / to know) and שִׁירָה (look on) represent the beginning of a literary sequence which will achieve its climax in the third part of the poem. The importance of the former term can be demonstrated by the number of appearances in the book, seventy times. In addition, this verse has a hyperbolic sense, since צְלֵמוֹת can mean deep dark or darker than darkness (חֹשֶׁךְ) itself⁵⁸⁰. Indeed, it is an abstract construction derived from צִלַּם which means “be dark”. In Job 10:21-22 the term is related to the underworld. The term appears nine times in the entire book (other occasions except for the mentioned are 12:22; 16:16; 24:17; 34:22; 38:17). As attested in Job 15:30 and 3:5 the word and its derivations are associate to death and the place of death⁵⁸¹. In conclusion,

⁵⁸⁰ KOEHLER, Ludwig and BAUMGARTNER, Walter. *The Hebrew and the Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament vol 1-4*. Leiden: Brill 1994-1999, p. 1029.

⁵⁸¹ BOTTERWECK, G. and Helmer Ringgren eds. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament vol 1-12*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974-2003, pp. 396-399. The personifications of destruction (אֲבִדוֹן) and death (מָוֶת) are important for hyperbolic statements placed in the center of the poem. Interestingly enough these embodiment of actions listen to wisdom. The meaning of אֲבִד is “to perish” and also “to be lost” or “run away.” The variation very rarely means destruction and often in Wisdom literature it means a place of destruction. KOEHLER, 1994-1999, p.19-23. The root, *mt*, includes the verbal, adjectival, and substantive forms in Egypt. In this context, death is part of the cosmic order. In Mesopotamia, death can be personalized and is described as a godly imputation on humans. Illman notes that the distribution of the term in the Hebrew Bible is interesting, since the majority of the occurrences are found in the narrative texts and mean simply the death of a person or animal. BOTTERWECK, 1974-2003, p.187. As a consequence, in the context of the book of Job, destruction and death are tangible in the character situations and can be used in the process of metaphorization.

these examples are enough to display the importance of different antithetical terms in the book of Job, specifically in the poem. In addition, this differentiation is the center of the theological message of the book, since just the divine has access to wisdom and reveals it to humankind. There are two verbs which are associated with hiding: עלים and סתר.

עלים has a meaning of becoming dark and also brings a connotation of the unknown. In verse 11, the poem attests that humans are able to bring the unknown / the hidden from the earth, but wisdom remains hidden (v.21)⁵⁸². However, God sees/ knows these hidden things. As a consequence, Job's confession (42:3) can be seen in parallel with verse 23 in the poem. Job re-states God's affirmation that he was without knowledge, and for that reason he makes counsel obscure (עלים). As in the poem, the words understand (בין) and knowledge (ידע) appear. As a consequence, there is a clear contrast, since God sees / knows the place where wisdom is and understands her and how to manifest her. On the other hand, Job assumes his own ignorance. In addition, the preoccupation of Job about some hidden acts committed by his sons is justified (1:5)⁵⁸³, since he cannot see their acts, but God can. Consequently, pragmatic applications of these theological statements are ambiguous. First, based on Job's confession, he can be accused of sins and be guilty for considerations he is not conscious about. On the other hand, the restoration of Job, in the context of the Persian imperial order, can be understood as a partial decision which was taken to preserve Job and, consequently, preserve a sense of election or a worship based on human interests. As a result, in his final format, the book of Job removes these ambiguities from a theological standard which has direct social consequences: God reveals wisdom to humans who have no means to understand without divine assistance. This theological assumption is useful to propagate social and theological ideas of an "empty land" as well as to reconstruct a post-exilic community based on election. Consequently, in its final

⁵⁸² BOTTERWECK, G, 1974-2003, p. 153.

⁵⁸³ In Lev 4:13 there is the possibility of the ignorance of sin which must be repaired as soon as they are discovered. In addition, Lev 5:2-4 states that even in ignorance, those who are unclean or make an oath for a negative purpose are guilty. As a consequence, Job's action can be a caricature of a pious man who, even before judgment or consent of guilt, repairs his faults and those of his family with religious rituals. However, these attitudes do not persist in the dialogue, being one of the numerous incongruities between the prose and poetic sections of the book. Job admits his limitations and ignorance after the epiphany, being reluctant to accept his previous condition.

format, the book of Job directly interacts with religious traditions and social relationships in the post-exile period.

The second verb סָתַר has the sense of hiding something, covering, protecting, putting in secret⁵⁸⁴. The use of this root always involves a personal relationship, i.e. the subject is always a person. In contrast, from a theological point of view, no one can hide anything from Adonai, even the most hidden things such as described in the poem of chapter 28. In Dt 29:28 we read that the hidden things (הַנְּסֻתֹת) belong to Adonai and in Job 3:23 even the path (דֶּרֶךְ)⁵⁸⁵ of man is occult (נִסְתָּרָה) before the light. There is a clear ambiguity in the sense that the creation hides things that only Adonai can reveal. If we assume that both activities, creation and revelation of what is hidden, belong to divine actions, the question for things that man cannot understand or see must demand a theological standard. Therefore, as we can observe in the center of Adonai's answer to Job and in some claims spread in the book⁵⁸⁶, humans do not know

⁵⁸⁴ BOTTERWECK, G, 1974-2003, p. 361.

⁵⁸⁵ As it appears in many passages, this term can be translated as road; path; way; journey; manner, custom, or behavior. KOEHLER, 1994-1999 p. 230. The latter sense is found, for example, in Gn 19:21 or Jr 10:2; 12:16. The verses 8, 23, and 26 contain this term in the poem of chapter 28. Its first use is as a verb and can be interpreted as an indication of a formative process of behavior. In verse 23, the tension between the denotative significance and the metaphoric use is present, since Adonai knows how wisdom is expressed, God knows the manner in which wisdom (she) is organized and her place. In the last verse, the expression וְדֶרֶךְ לְחַיִּי קָלוֹת is also present in Job 38:25 and can have a connotative meaning in the poem (order / pattern) and literal or concrete sense in Adonai's discourse. As a consequence, the verse in Job can indicate that even concrete attitudes hide something that bring the indeterminateness of intention. Thus, the popular claim that nothing can be occult from God touches the notion of inner sins related to intentionality or unconscious practices.

⁵⁸⁶ In diverse forms, the differentiation between God and humankind appears in the book. As in the poem, the words for darkness (חֹשֶׁךְ) and profound darkness (צִלְמוֹת) are spread along the book, twenty and nine times respectively. In 3:5 they appear together as וְצִלְמוֹת וְחֹשֶׁךְ. In addition, there is a cumulative concentration of these terms in the book of Job which indicates a characteristic vocabulary. Consequently, other metaphoric forms following this separation between light and darkness are seen as day and night, visible and hidden, accessible and inaccessible, knowledge and ignorance. This is directly associated with the importance of vision (verb רָאָה) and eyes (עֵינַי). Additionally, the majesty of God and his power are

wisdom nor God's action, since they have access to limited realms. Consequently, Job's claim for justice is based on suffering *he sees*. Nevertheless, since Job does not have access to everything in the face of the existence of hidden aspects of reality, he demands a trial against God who can see everything under the skies. This discrepancy between human and divine understanding is present in the entire book, Job acknowledges his ignorance and points to his suffering. The epiphany, in the conclusion of the debate, shows a divine figure who does not reject the suffering of the main character nor is controlled by his desires. As emphasized in Job 38:3, there is a great difference between man and God. Ironically, the divine demands that Job, assuming his position as a man, answer some questions. Adonai who has access to wisdom, commands a human who is associated with obscure words and understanding to answer something that is beyond his sight. This argumentation has, as a corollary, the ignorance of Job which is aggravated by the structure of the poem in chapter 28. Would Job be able to bring the answer to light as humans do with precious stones? Job demands a trial; Adonai convenes a celestial trial in this divine epiphany. However, before answering Job's claims, God *tries* the limits of human knowledge. As a consequence, in the final format of the book, Job 28 functions as a literary preparation, not only to Elihu's discourses that accentuate the majesty of Adonai but to the conclusion of the debate. Thus, this fragment is located at the center of the book's message.

Therefore, the poem affirms that God knows the place where wisdom is and can make wisdom understandable to human beings. The word מְקוֹם appears twenty-one times in Job and can be translated as location; place; site, space; room; locality⁵⁸⁷. In addition, the LXX translates it as *topos*, even though different occurrences can be found. There is a relationship between place and cult that must be taken into consideration. Priesthood writing rubrics tend to emphasize specific action in specific places. There is a preference for a determined locality associated with a theophany⁵⁸⁸. This is well attested in the patriarch narratives, in the case of the ark that must return to its place, and in those narratives immediately associated with the temple. Consequently, this word can mean a specific place that appears often in relation to sacred activity. From the Deuteronomic perspective, this characteristic can be intensified for a

exalted in many chapters as a way of reducing man and silencing Job. In 12:22, God is responsible for manifesting what is hidden and in 34:22-23, he is able to see everything, including the innermost human thoughts and desires.

⁵⁸⁷ KOEHLER, 1994-1999, p. 629.

⁵⁸⁸ BOTTERWECK, 1974-2003, p. 537.

chosen place in a fictitious future. Therefore, as in Jeremiah⁵⁸⁹, the term carries a certain ambiguity that can be used to express a special place, even the Promised Land with the condition of eliminating wilderness. As a consequence, in the conclusion, the poem indicates that wisdom and understanding are the place in which this divine eschatological event occurs. Thus, God has access to wisdom and expresses it in Creation; and the best that humankind can do is to separate itself from evil.

The literary function and syntactical structure of the poem must be further explored. Additionally, the message announced through the poem is reflected in the entire book of Job. Consequently, the arrangement of the dialogues and the constitution of the prose sections must be analyzed. Thus, the reception of the book of Job can be associated with the post-exilic social construction through these theological statements. The centrality of Wisdom and the perpetuation of human limits in face of divine sovereignty are in the core of the Job 28 poem with theological and sociological repercussions in this entire book. At this moment, readers should ponder which *social stratum* would re-signify a traditional story in a new historical moment. An inquiry about the pragmatic results of this literary production through historical realities, semantic considerations and syntactical constructions is mandatory.

Diverse Rhetoric Speeches to a Post- Exilic Audience

There is an idea that after the exile a literary revision in Israel occurred. For instance, the claim of existence of a continuous narrative from Genesis through 2 Kings is supported by several textual elements which indicate post-exilic demands. This material is framed with the word “*land*”. This is the place from which one is exiled. Adam, Eve, and Cain were banished from the land. Also, Judah was exiled from this land as it is described in 2 Kgs 25:21. As a consequence, one must consider the importance of the patriarchal narratives in the Persian period: the promise of the land, the existence of sacred places, and the ambiguity of an eschatological notion between fulfillment of promise in the possession of the land or in a future realization⁵⁹⁰. In addition, Jean Louis Ska attests that there are strong foundations for a post-exilic composition of the

⁵⁸⁹ BOTTERWECK, 1974-2003, p. 542.

⁵⁹⁰ BOORER, Suzanne. The Envisioning of the Land in the Priestly Material: Fulfilled Promise or Future Hope? In: DOZEMAN, Thomas; ROMER Thomas; and SCHMID, Konrad (Ed.). *Pentateuch, Hexateuch or Enneateuch? Identifying Literary Works in Genesis Through Kings*. Atlanta: SBL, 2011, p. 124-125.

Pentateuch without a pre-exilic source. Thus, even though pre-exilic traditions are part of the process of composition, the Persian imperial reality must have preeminence in order to understand the social functions and pragmatic applications of the Torah⁵⁹¹. As a result, the process of composition of the Torah and the Deuteronomic History are amalgamated in several perspectives. For example, the sapiential elements in these books and Deuteronomic incursions on the prophetic writings are well attested.

In terms of exilic and post-exilic characteristics in the biblical narratives, certain authors suggest a reading of the Hebrew Bible as “*a series of narratives, tales, and depictions of deportation and displacement*”⁵⁹²; other scholars require attention to the ideological literary patterns that sustain an oriented and specific social perspective⁵⁹³; while other thinkers observe the absence of continuous accounts of the exile⁵⁹⁴. The book of Job can be seen as a metaphor of Israel’s condition after the exile, by criticizing the retributive tradition and, in the end, presenting a restored Job even in the face of his ignorance. Thus, this material can be used to vindicate Golah’s restoration and popular claims for justice based on retribution at the same time. Therefore, as von Rad asserts, while discussing the notion of wisdom in Israel, rationality, such as that described in the biblical texts, occurs and sustains itself when it is related to a broad stratum in the social construction of a period⁵⁹⁵. As a consequence, every “nation” that acknowledges itself and its respective culture develops a literary material about different experiential knowledge. This literary production is historically located and interacts with cultural frameworks. Then, even though wisdom is a scholarly term created to designate an ancient movement, these literary texts reveal a formative process in which Israel confronts itself in its historical circumstance⁵⁹⁶.

The date of the book of Job would be a strong support for studying the reception of the book in post exile; nonetheless, it is an open perspective. This

⁵⁹¹ SKA, Jean. *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006, p. 184-187.

⁵⁹² CUÉLLAR, Gregory Lee. *Voices of Marginality: Exile and Return in Second Isaiah 40-55 and the Mexican Immigrant Experience*. New York: Peter Lang, 2003, p. 1.

⁵⁹³ CARROLL, Robert. Exile! What Exile? Deportation and the Discourses of Diaspora. In: GRABBE, Lester (Ed.). *Leading Captivity Captive. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 278*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998, p. 62-69.

⁵⁹⁴ ALBERTZ, Rainer. *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.* Atlanta: SBL, 2003, p. 1-4.

⁵⁹⁵ von RAD, Gerhard. *Wisdom in Israel*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1972, p.3.

⁵⁹⁶ von RAD, 1972, p. 14.

means that there are arguments to a pre-exilic or post-exilic final date. There exist evidences of a Targum in the Qumran caves⁵⁹⁷ which would suggest a *terminus ad quem*. In terms of linguistic consideration, the famous argument of Avi Hurvitz that “*certain phrases which are unmistakably characteristic of post-exilic Hebrew, thus betraying his actual late date*”⁵⁹⁸ has been contested. Ian Young affirms the existence of Early Biblical Hebrew in its composition; nevertheless, this does not alter the post-exilic date for the prose in the book, since Early and Late Biblical Hebrew are co-existent styles in this later period⁵⁹⁹. It is even harder to discuss the poetical composition, consequently, since scholars cannot trust linguistic stratification and concentration. If the thesis of different styles persists, readers have historical, literary, and theological considerations for understanding the book of Job.

There is an intriguing correspondence between the suffering servant in Isaiah and Job that can be explained for a further argument on subjectivity and intertextuality in the promotion of social order and identity. As Poppe mentions, if we agree on an exilic or early post-exilic date, it would be impossible to ignore this social crisis, and the book of Job may reflect not only individual suffering but a “national” catastrophe⁶⁰⁰. Feinberg, in 1939⁶⁰¹, compares the personal dissatisfaction of Job with the literary compositions that express a national displeasure also found in late writings of the prophets Zechariah, third Isaiah, and Jeremiah⁶⁰². Therefore, Israel and Job are scattered by God (Jer 31:10); and

⁵⁹⁷ POPE, Marvin. *Job: Introduction, translation, and notes. Anchor Bible Commentary Vol 15*. New York: Doubleday, 1965, p. xl.

⁵⁹⁸ HURVITZ, Avi. The Date of the Prose Tale of Job Linguistically Reconsidered. *In: Harvard Theological Review*. Cambridge. v.67, 1974, p. 18.

⁵⁹⁹ YOUNG, Ian. Is the Prose Tale of Job in Late Biblical Hebrew? *In: Vetust Testamentum*, Leiden. v.59 n.4, 2009, p. 606-662.

⁶⁰⁰ POPE, 1965, p. xxxi.

⁶⁰¹ FEINBERG, Charles. Job and the Nation Israel. First Study: In the Hands of the Enemy. *In: Bibliotheca Sacra*. Dallas. v.96, 1939, p. 405-411.

⁶⁰² The idea of exile can be used as a metaphor and functions as an expression of diverse contemporary dissatisfaction in the post-exilic community. This is tangible in the words of 2 Esdras, 4 Ezra, and Daniel 9, for example. HALVORSON-TAYLOR, Martien. *Enduring exile: the metaphorization of the exile in the Hebrew Bible*. Leiden: Brill, 2011. There is a strong theological and ideological consideration regarding exile, since, from an abstract or generalization process, there is a perennial discourse about a restoration that is never fully completed. For instance, the realized eschatological aspects that affirm the consolidation of the temple and the city, as well as in later perspectives in which a Babylonian location serves as a literary construction to address the apocalyptic message of the book of Daniel. Halvarson-Taylor indicates

Israel is judged by the nations as Job faces his friends. Assuming this perspective implies a relation with a social order that aims to justify previous humiliation and actual hope for restoration. As a result, the perennial ambiguity in the book of Job is perpetuated in order to answer these two different historical challenges that have crucial importance in the post-exilic period. In addition, since the literary process and the social creation of identity are performed by an elite, readers must consider an application of ideological or social criticism in several texts in order to delineate this post-exilic process. This does not mean that we must accept a catastrophic historical exile or several traumatic deportations, but we must recognize a beginning of a process of Israel's self identification through literary texts and the function of the exile as a strong image that inspires it.

Literacy in the ancient world is an important consideration in order to support this argumentation. Still, the definition of literacy and its respective application in the ancient world must be discussed. As Richard Hess asserts, considering different types of texts, including administrative, religious, and inscriptions is necessary. A literary formative society requires literacy from part of its members. In addition, the existence of scribal schools or different organizations in urban contexts is not mandatory either⁶⁰³. Consequently, literacy goes beyond formal concepts of reading and writing. This problem is also observed by Ian Young who affirms that literate groups revealed in ancient Israelite literature had certain capability of reading and writing, even though it is hard to know to what degree these characteristics appear in different contexts⁶⁰⁴. Indeed, literacy cannot be easily defined, since it is a complex system that encompasses reading, writing, and the correspondent performative acts in society. However, from a naïve analogy to our current society and many common historical examples, it is possible to deduce that literary constructions have a social purpose and usually emerge from a higher class given the expensive demands for these procedures.

Therefore, from a literacy aspect, this is not an inquiry to discover how much of the population has access to the textual information produced, but a

that the exile was associated earlier with “death, sterility, and futility” (38). Thus, in order to recover ideas of the exile, the process of metaphorization occurs in an interactive model that is described in many texts from the Hebrew Bible. Consequently, in his literary constitution, Job can be seen as a metaphor to the exile.

⁶⁰³ HESS, Richard. Questions of Reading and Writing in Ancient Israel. In: *Bulletin for Biblical Research*. Pennsylvania. v.19, n.1, 2009, p. 1-9.

⁶⁰⁴ YOUNG, Ian. Israelite Literacy: Interpreting the Evidence Part 1. In: *Vetus Testamentum* Leiden. v.48, n.2, 1998, p. 239-255.

question regarding the purpose of this production and how we can best understand it from a literary point of view. In addition, the importance of a synchronic reading of the book of Job is primordial. It does not mean that diachronic considerations must be put aside; rather, there is a mixture of both perspectives in every exegetical work⁶⁰⁵. Therefore, investigations should affirm the ambiguities present in the text of Job, notice the innumerable possibilities of intertextual processes and considerations for intersubjectivity, but they must also discuss polyphonic readings of this text⁶⁰⁶. Therefore, after accurate exegetical research, a community of scholars would be able to discuss the literary functions of this book and its pragmatic implications in the post-exilic community. Remembering that Wisdom Literature, Apocalypticism, and Gnosticism are scholarly inventions is never an exaggeration. Consequently, refining our methodologies is a mandatory action for a better understanding. In the case of Job, a study of the reception of the text in the ancient world and in the current society is paramount⁶⁰⁷. Nevertheless, in this specific approach, research of the *social locale* of literary production and the respective construction of identity are essential. Thus, diverse contemporary hermeneutic theories must be articulated to diversify literary criticism in order to understand, at least partially, the *Sitz im Leben* of some texts⁶⁰⁸. This article has a much more modest interest associated with these former perspectives. While studying the poem in Job 28, a discussion about the place of wisdom in the book of Job is a central task. In addition, there is a tension between the author and text. As Ricoeur affirms in *Temps et Récit*, the narrative has three *mimesis*: pre-figuration; figuration; and re-figuration⁶⁰⁹. According to Ricoeur, the author is rooted in a historical *milieu* that, in connection with the Self, promotes several pre-figurations. This can be clearly seen in our cultural and traditional interactions. On the other hand, the text produces a reconfiguration of the reality. Professor Robert Corrington⁶¹⁰ asserts

⁶⁰⁵ CLINES, David. Beyond Synchronic / Diachronic. In: CLINES, David (Ed.). *On the way to the Postmodern: Old Testament Essays 1967-1998 vl.1. JSOT Supplement Series 292*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998, p. 68.

⁶⁰⁶ NEWSON, Carol. The Book of Job as a polyphonic Text. In: *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*. New York. v.91, 2002, p. 95-99

⁶⁰⁷ NEWSON, Carol. Re-considering Job. In: *Currents in Biblical Research*. New York. v.5, n. 2, 2007. p. 155-182.

⁶⁰⁸ BYRSKOG, Samuel. A Century with the Sitz im Leben: From Form-Critical Setting to Gospel Community and Beyond. In: *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*. Berlin. v.98, 2007, p. 1-27.

⁶⁰⁹ RICOEUR, Paul. *Time and Narrative vl.1*. Chicago: University Press, 1984, 52-90.

⁶¹⁰ CORRINGTON, Robert. *Nature and Spirit: An essay in Ecstatic Naturalism*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1992, 93-101; *The Community of Interpreters: on the*

the existence of a community of interpreters which is established through signs and symbols in the human cultural set. Therefore, in both thinkers, the reality can be accessed through a *great detour* in the symbolic construction of culture. In addition, constant processes of interaction permit the creation of different signs and symbols that promote a social action or an ethical transformation in the *nature nutured*. This later consideration can be seen in the Ricoeurian studies of the metaphoric language and his concerns about the *praxis*; and the latter in the foundational aspect of hope of Corrington.

Consequently, there is a need for a metaphysical discussion in our interpretative methodologies as well. Job is a particular example in which the relationship between *literary fiction* and *social praxis* emerges. Job can be received as a tragedy and promote *catharsis*. It is a tragedy in the sense that the *irruption of chaos* in the narrative order promotes the development of the narrative. The poem of Job 28 functions as a choir which attests to the destiny of the character who has an *extreme excellence* and defies divine power. As in the Greek dramas, humankind is reduced to ignorance. Therefore, as Aristotle discusses the role of the tragedies in his *Poetics* and *Politics*, we can infer the function of the text of Job in ancient society. In the end, there is a theological statement at the center of the literary creation and in the heart of its subsequent social constructions. This essay focuses on the use of these theological claims and their respective consequences in the poem of Job 28, which is at the center of this book's message.

Final Remarks: Conclusion: A Possible Reading of Job in The Persian Empire

Words express and construct historicity. In the process of communication, humans build different *language games* and diverse *communicative acts* that reflect and shape social reality. In terms of the sapiential expression in Israel, Shupak affirms that wisdom in the ancient world is connected with elegance, eloquence, excellence, and efficacy. Thus, moral perfection, delight, and rhetorical influence are at the core of sapiential expressions⁶¹¹. These characteristics can be observed in the writing style and the respective use of

Hermeneutics of Nature and the Bible in the American Philosophical Tradition. Studies in American Biblical Hermeneutics 3. Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1995, vii-xix.

⁶¹¹ SHUPAK, Nili. Where can Wisdom be Found? The Sage's Language in the Bible and in Ancient Egyptian Literature. Freiburg Schweiz: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993, p. 332-333.

Wisdom in Courts. Weeks stresses that we have some literary conventions in the *wisdom corpus* that reflect traditional aspects, such as the father's instruction to his son. However, this scholar affirms that foreign or international influences are stronger sources of evidences. For instance, in Egypt and Mesopotamia, it would be hard to separate scribes into exclusive groups or strata in society. As a consequence, he concludes: "For all that it is possible to align certain types of composition with the interests of certain groups within the literate substratum of a society, not all literature is so easily placed, and such groups are rarely watertight compartments within their society"⁶¹². Therefore, these literary expressions reconfigure ancient traditions and reshape social order while defending particular interests.

Wisdom is a work of the *literati* with intentionality and specific social applications. It is not an arbitrary collection, even in the dialogues in the book of Job, some psalms or parts of Proverbs. Despite a familiar and agrarian set, those who select, write, and ordain have the power to change these materials in a court setting. These texts are not only about the courts, but "to and for them"⁶¹³. Shupak considers a development from family, through school circles to court activities⁶¹⁴. Therefore, the idea of *Wisdom* is present in diverse social stratifications and assumes different literary formats and perspectives.

Furthermore, that the second temple era is a rich and creative period for literary and theological diversity is well known. Social religious movements

⁶¹² WEEKS, Stuart. *An Introduction to the Study of Wisdom Literature*. New York: T&T Clark, 2010, p. 134.

⁶¹³ FOX, Michael. The Social Location of the Book of Proverbs. In: FOX, Michael et al (Ed.). *Texts, temples, and traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1996, p. 230-232.

⁶¹⁴ SHUPAK, 1993, p. 352. First, a differentiation between education and schools is necessary (Davies: 207-208). This is clear since there is no clear evidence of schooling in ancient Israel and yet, there is the existence of internal pedagogical and didactical messages in the sapiential books. Shupak considers that the existence of school in Ancient Israel is supported by analogy to ANE civilizations; projection from later attestations, mainly Ben Sira; allusion in the Hebrew Bible, for example, Is 8:16; Pv 5:13; and, finally, the thesis that part of canonical texts represents school exercises in their format and vocabulary (347-348). In addition, as in Egypt, Hebrew wisdom has a didactic aspect as well as terminology and semantic equivalence (350). Davies insists that the existence of schools in Ancient Israel has provisional, hypothetical, and slight evidence. He thinks that the scholarship about this topic has a trajectory from confident assumptions, through doubt to denial. A positive answer is based on indirect constructions from ANE contexts and the demand for a setting or audience for sapiential books (199-202).

envision legitimating their expressions while inheriting and transforming tradition⁶¹⁵. Therefore, the multiplicity of perspectives is silenced for the conception of a national catastrophe. Moreover, the creation of a notion about an “empty land” in textual evidence corroborates the post-exilic belief in terms of election and dominance over the population on “the promised land”. Thus, patriarchal stories (specifically Abraham’s narratives), claims of a desolated and abandoned land (Jer 44:2-3), affirmations that the presence of God leaves behind the real Israel (Ez 11), or the image of the good and bad figs (Jer 24) create a social dichotomy that gradually generates a separation between urban and rural, Priest and Levite, those who are exiled and people on the land⁶¹⁶. Therefore, how can the book of Job be read in a situation such as this? Which elements in the text support restoration and support the creation of a selective process that restricts power while constituting a social order in the post-exilic community?

The Poem in Job 28 is viewed as an erratic intrusion, inspired intermezzo, superfluous prelude, later orthodox inscription, and so forth⁶¹⁷. In addition, these verses are placed in the center of the book’s message, which is based on the conflict between God and Job’s integrity⁶¹⁸ and function as a rhetorical element that reflects and transforms the audience⁶¹⁹. The negative theology present in this section constitutes a *matrix* of the initial problems and the possible interpretative solutions in the book, since Job, in response to his situation in the beginning, cannot be silent but, before his attested incapacity, he must be quieted. Therefore, the limitation of human knowledge is also a strategy for criticizing traditional theodicies⁶²⁰ while accentuating an ethical praxis as the last verse in the poem positively attests. As Clines asserts, “*Wisdom* in Job 28 is not the accumulation of knowledge, nor is it the uncovering of secrets. *Wisdom* consists in a certain way of being and behaving, which is within the capacity of humans, generally”⁶²¹.

⁶¹⁵ Anderson, Jeff. *The Internal diversification of Second Temple Judaism: An Introduction to the Second Temple Period*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002, p. 4-5.

⁶¹⁶ ANDERSON, 2002, p. 60-68.

⁶¹⁷ LO, Alison. *Job as Rhetoric: An Analysis of Job 28 in the Context of Job 22-31*. Leiden: Brill, 2003, p. 1-28.

⁶¹⁸ LO, 2003, p. 53.

⁶¹⁹ LO, 2003, p. 71.

⁶²⁰ LO, 2003, p. 234-236.

⁶²¹ CLINES, 2006, p. 925.

Ironically, *Wisdom* and the tree of life have a similar history of interpretation. In some traditions, they can be accessed and, in others, they become inaccessible. For instance, there is a contrast between the accessibility of wisdom in Prov 8, and the unattainable aspect in Job. Davies affirms, based on verse 28, that humans should be content with what they have access to, moral and ethical wisdom⁶²². Therefore, Job can be used to validate the return and restoration of the Israelite elite and, at the same time, can function as an ethical constitution in the Persian Empire. For further research, a deep discussion about the following considerations is crucial. The process of myth and the respective literary production; the formative process of identity through literary artifacts; the function of these texts in a specific culture or social group; the re-signification of textual elements and a pragmatic approach of meaning; a study of historicity and the cognitive process as elements of dialect interaction. For instance, the application of cognitive methodologies to understand how the discourse present in Job 28 interacts with the narrative world of the book and its locale of reception is necessary⁶²³. In addition, a cognitive process works for a better understanding of the context of use and process of *metaphorization* in terms of “ground” and meaning⁶²⁴, i.e., the base on which semantic and syntactic constructions may occur. These considerations have a profound philosophical orientation as can be well expressed in hermeneutical and semiotic terms. Consequently, a historical linguistic attestation of a post-exilic date must be taken into consideration, as well as the *performative use of language* and its rhetoric devices in the interaction with a partially reconstructed audience.

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⁶²² DAVIES, G. Were there schools in Ancient Israel? *In: DAY, John. Wisdom in Israel: Essays in honor of J.A. Emerton.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 242.

⁶²³ KAMP, Albert. World Building in Job 28: A Case of Conceptual Logic. *In: van WOLDE, Ellen (Ed.). Job 28: Cognition in context.* Leiden: Brill, 2003, p. 308-310.

⁶²⁴ van WOLDEN, Ellen. Wisdom, who can Find It? *In: van WOLDE, Ellen (Ed.). Job 28: Cognition in context.* Leiden: Brill, 2003, p. 22-28.

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